Complete Works of

JACK LONDON

DELPHI CLASSICS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
JACK LONDON

(1876 - 1916)

Contents

The Novels

THE CRUISE OF THE DAZZLER
A DAUGHTER OF THE SNOWS
THE CALL OF THE WILD
THE KEMPTON-WACE LETTERS
THE SEA-WOLF
THE GAME
WHITE FANG
BEFORE ADAM
THE IRON HEEL
MARTIN EDEN
BURNING DAYLIGHT
ADVENTURE
SMOKE BELLEW
THE SCARLET PLAGUE
A SON OF THE SUN
THE ABYSMAL BRUTE
THE VALLEY OF THE MOON
THE MUTINY OF THE ELSINORE
THE STAR ROVER
THE JACKET
THE LITTLE LADY OF THE BIG HOUSE
JERRY OF THE ISLANDS

MICHAEL, BROTHER OF JERRY
HEARTS OF THREE

The Short Stories
LIST OF THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES

The Plays
THEFT
THE ACORN-PLANTER
A WICKED WOMAN
THE BIRTH MARK
THE FIRST POET
THE RETURN OF ULYSSES--A MODERN VERSION

The Poetry
LIST OF THE COMPLETE POETRY

The Memoirs
THE ROAD
JOHN BARLEYCORN

The Non-Fiction
THE PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS
WAR OF THE CLASSES
HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST
REVOLUTION AND OTHER ESSAYS
THE CRUISE OF THE SNARK
WHAT COMMUNITIES LOSE BY THE COMPETITIVE SYSTEM
THE HUMAN DRIFT
THE STORY OF AN EYEWITNESS
EDITORIAL CRIMES – A PROTEST
THE FUTURE OF WAR
MEXICO’S ARMY AND OURS
A LETTER TO HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.
A LETTER TO WOMAN’S HOME COMPANION
PHENOMENA OF LITERARY EVOLUTION
AGAIN THE LITERARY ASPIRANT
THE RED GAME OF WAR
WITH FUNSTON’S MEN
STALKING THE PESTILENCE

THE TROUBLE MAKERS OF MEXICO
LAWGIVERS
OUR ADVENTURES IN TAMPICO
HOUSEKEEPING IN THE KLONDIKE

The Biography
BOOK OF JACK LONDON By Charmian London

Jack London

© *Delphi Classics 2012*

Version 2

The World's Greatest Writers

Which Delphi eBook will you buy next?

ANTHONY TROLLOPE
ANTON CHEKHOV
CHARLES DICKENS
D.H. LAWRENCE
EDGAR ALLAN POE
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD
GEORGE ELIOT
H.G. WELLS
HONORÉ DE BALZAC
JACK LONDON
JAMES JOYCE
JULES VERNE
JANE AUSTEN
JOSEPH CONRAD
LEO TOLSTOY
MARK TWAIN
OSCAR WILDE
O. HENRY
R.L STEVENSON
RUDYARD KIPLING
SIR A. CONAN DOYLE
THOMAS HARDY
THE BRONTËS
VIRGINIA WOOLF
WILKIE COLLINS
W. M. THACKERAY

www.delphiclassics.com

Buy direct, receive free downloads and browse our vast range of titles

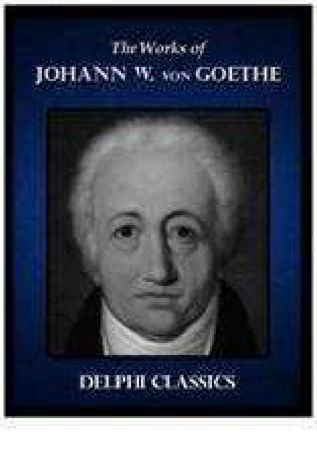
The Works of
JOHANN W. von GOETHE
DELPHI CLASSICS

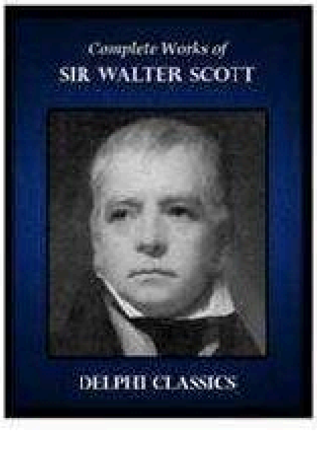
Complete Works of
SIR WALTER SCOTT
DELPHI CLASSICS

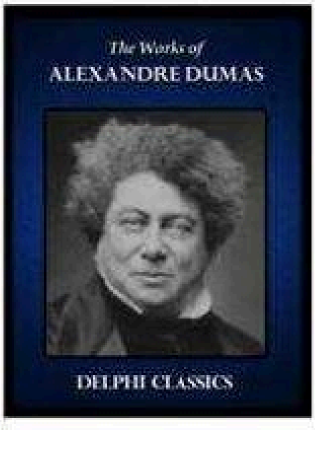
The Works of
ALEXANDRE DUMAS
DELPHI CLASSICS

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF
JACK LONDON

The Novels

3rd Street
3rd Street
BUS

London's birthplace, Third Street, San Francisco-the original house on this site was destroyed in a fire in 1906

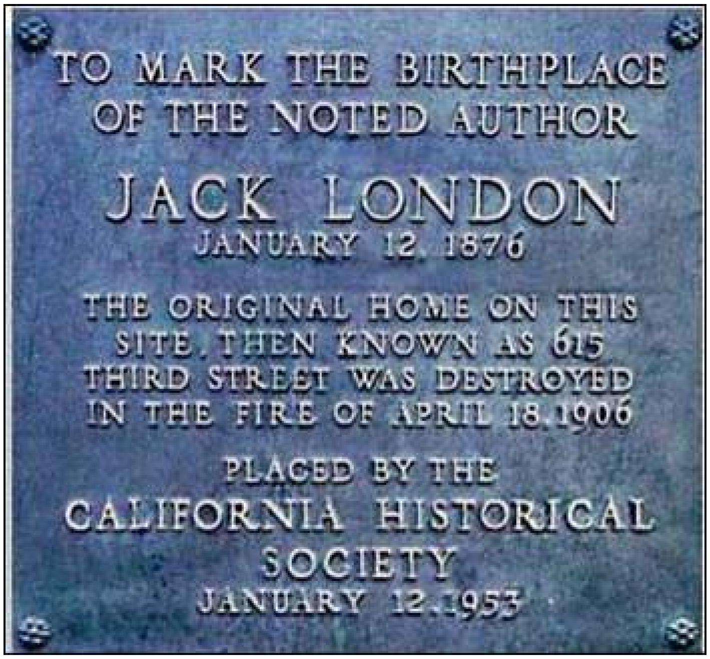

TO MARK THE BIRTHPLACE
OF THE NOTED AUTHOR

JACK LONDON
JANUARY 12, 1876

THE ORIGINAL HOME ON THIS
SITE, THEN KNOWN AS 615
THIRD STREET WAS DESTROYED
IN THE FIRE OF APRIL 18, 1906

PLACED BY THE
CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
JANUARY 12, 1953

THE CRUISE OF THE DAZZLER

This is London’s first full-length novel, which was published in 1902. Set in old San FranciscoBay, the story concerns a young man who becomes involved with “oyster pirates” making raids on commercial oyster beds.

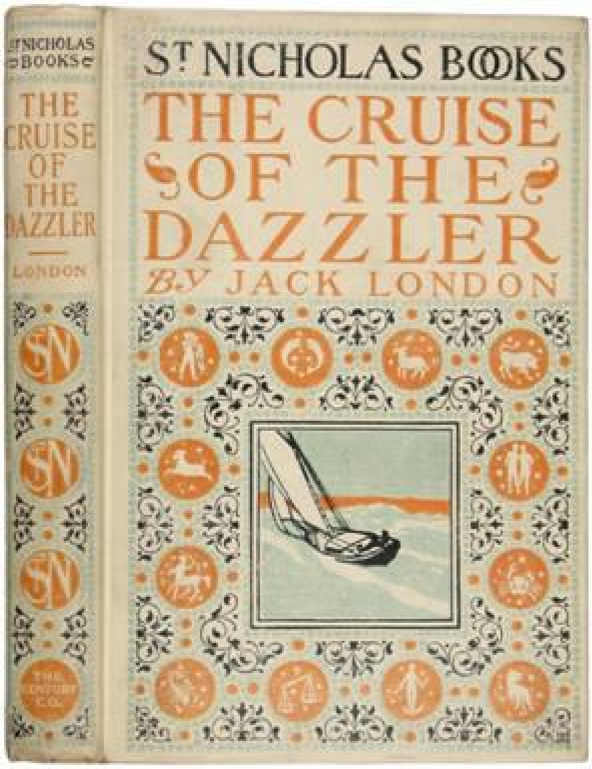
ST NICHOLAS BOOKS
THE CRUISE OF THE DAZZLER
BY JACK LONDON
LONDON
THE CENTURY CO.

The first edition

CONTENTS

FOREWORD
PART I
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
PART II
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI

FOREWORD

Tempting boys to be what they should be — giving them in wholesome form what they want — that is the purpose and power of Scouting. To help parents and leaders of youth secure ***books boys like best*** that are also best for boys, the Boy Scouts of America organized EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY. The books included, formerly sold at prices ranging from $1.50 to $2.00 but, by special arrangement with the several publishers interested, are now sold in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition at $1.00 per volume.

The books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY were selected by the Library Commission of the Boy Scouts of America, consisting of George F. Bowerman, Librarian, Public Library of the District of Columbia; Harrison W. Craver, Director, Engineering Societies Library, New York City; Claude G. Leland, Superintendent, Bureau of Libraries, Board of Education, New York City; Edward F. Stevens, Librarian, Pratt Institute Free Library, Brooklyn, N.Y., and Franklin K. Mathiews, Chief Scout Librarian. Only such books were chosen by the Commission as proved to be, by ***a nation wide canvas***, most in demand by the boys themselves. Their popularity is further attested by the fact that in the EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY Edition, more than a million and a quarter copies of these books have already been sold.

We know so well, are reminded so often of the worth of the good book and great, that too often we fail to observe or understand the influence for good of a boy's recreational reading. Such books may influence him for good or ill as profoundly as his play activities, of which they are a vital part. The needful thing is to find stories in which the heroes have the characteristics boys so much admire — unquenchable courage, immense resourcefulness, absolute fidelity, conspicuous greatness. We believe the books of EVERY BOY'S LIBRARY measurably well meet this challenge.

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA,
James E. West
Chief Scout Executive.

PART I

CHAPTER I

BROTHER AND SISTER

They ran across the shining sand, the Pacific thundering its long surge at their backs, and when they gained the roadway leaped upon bicycles and dived at faster pace into the green avenues of the park. There were three of them, three boys, in as many bright-colored sweaters, and they “scorched” along the cycle-path as dangerously near the speed-limit as is the custom of boys in bright-colored sweaters to go. They may have exceeded the speed-limit. A mounted park policeman thought so, but was not sure, and contented himself with cautioning them as they flashed by. They acknowledged the warning promptly, and on the next turn of the path as promptly forgot it, which is also a custom of boys in bright-colored sweaters.

Shooting out through the entrance to Golden GatePark, they turned into San Francisco, and took the long sweep of the descending hills at a rate that caused pedestrians to turn and watch them anxiously. Through the city streets the bright sweaters flew, turning and twisting to escape climbing the steeper hills, and, when the steep hills were unavoidable, doing stunts to see which would first gain the top.

The boy who more often hit up the pace, led the scorching, and instituted the stunts was called Joe by his companions. It was “follow the leader,” and he led, the merriest and boldest in the bunch. But as they pedaled into the Western Addition, among the large and comfortable residences, his laughter became less loud and frequent, and he unconsciously lagged in the rear. At Laguna and Vallejo streets his companions turned off to the right.

“So long, Fred,” he called as he turned his wheel to the left. “So long, Charley.”

“See you to-night!” they called back.

“No — I can’t come,” he answered.

“Aw, come on,” they begged.

"No, I've got to dig. — So long!"

As he went on alone, his face grew grave and a vague worry came into his eyes. He began resolutely to whistle, but this dwindled away till it was a thin and very subdued little sound, which ceased altogether as he rode up the driveway to a large two-storied house.

"Oh, Joe!"

He hesitated before the door to the library. Bessie was there, he knew, studiously working up her lessons. She must be nearly through with them, too, for she was always done before dinner, and dinner could not be many minutes away. As for his lessons, they were as yet untouched. The thought made him angry. It was bad enough to have one's sister — and two years younger at that — in the same grade, but to have her continually head and shoulders above him in scholarship was a most intolerable thing. Not that he was dull. No one knew better than himself that he was not dull. But somehow — he did not quite know how — his mind was on other things and he was usually unprepared.

"Joe — please come here." There was the slightest possible plaintive note in her voice this time.

"Well?" he said, thrusting aside the portière with an impetuous movement.

He said it gruffly, but he was half sorry for it the next instant when he saw a slender little girl regarding him with wistful eyes across the big reading-table heaped with books. She was curled up, with pencil and pad, in an easy-chair of such generous dimensions that it made her seem more delicate and fragile than she really was.

"What is it, Sis?" he asked more gently, crossing over to her side.

She took his hand in hers and pressed it against her cheek, and as he stood beside her came closer to him with a nestling movement.

"What is the matter, Joe dear?" she asked softly. "Won't you tell me?"

He remained silent. It struck him as ridiculous to confess his troubles to a little sister, even if her reports ***were*** higher than his. And the little sister struck him as ridiculous to demand his troubles of him. "What a soft cheek she has!" he thought as she pressed her face gently against his hand. If he could but tear himself away — it was all so foolish! Only he might hurt her feelings, and, in his experience, girls' feelings were very easily hurt.

She opened his fingers and kissed the palm of his hand. It was like a rose-leaf falling; it was also her way of asking her question over again.

“Nothing’s the matter,” he said decisively. And then, quite inconsistently, he blurted out, “Father!”

His worry was now in her eyes. “But father is so good and kind, Joe,” she began. “Why don’t you try to please him? He doesn’t ask much of you, and it’s all for your own good. It’s not as though you were a fool, like some boys. If you would only study a little bit — ”

“That’s it! Lecturing!” he exploded, tearing his hand roughly away. “Even you are beginning to lecture me now. I suppose the cook and the stable-boy will be at it next.”

He shoved his hands into his pockets and looked forward into a melancholy and desolate future filled with interminable lectures and lecturers innumerable.

“Was that what you wanted me for?” he demanded, turning to go.

She caught at his hand again. “No, it wasn’t; only you looked so worried that I thought — I — ” Her voice broke, and she began again freshly. “What I wanted to tell you was that we’re planning a trip across the bay to Oakland, next Saturday, for a tramp in the hills.”

“Who’s going?”

“Myrtle Hayes — ”

“What! That little softy?” he interrupted.

“I don’t think she is a softy,” Bessie answered with spirit. “She’s one of the sweetest girls I know.”

“Which isn’t saying much, considering the girls you know. But go on. Who are the others?”

“Pearl Sayther, and her sister Alice, and Jessie Hilborn, and Sadie French, and Edna Crothers. That’s all the girls.”

Joe sniffed disdainfully. “Who are the fellows, then?”

“Maurice and Felix Clement, Dick Schofield, Burt Layton, and — ”

“That’s enough. Milk-and-water chaps, all of them.”

“I — I wanted to ask you and Fred and Charley,” she said in a quavering voice. “That’s what I called you in for — to ask you to come.”

“And what are you going to do?” he asked.

“Walk, gather wild flowers, — the poppies are all out now, — eat luncheon at some nice place, and — and — ”

“Come home,” he finished for her.

Bessie nodded her head. Joe put his hands in his pockets again, and walked up and down.

“A sissy outfit, that’s what it is,” he said abruptly; “and a sissy program. None of it in mine, please.”

She tightened her trembling lips and struggled on bravely. “What would you rather do?” she asked.

“I’d sooner take Fred and Charley and go off somewhere and do something — well, anything.”

He paused and looked at her. She was waiting patiently for him to proceed. He was aware of his inability to express in words what he felt and wanted, and all his trouble and general dissatisfaction rose up and gripped hold of him.

“Oh, you can’t understand!” he burst out. “You can’t understand. You’re a girl. You like to be prim and neat, and to be good in deportment and ahead in your studies. You don’t care for danger and adventure and such things, and you don’t care for boys who are rough, and have life and go in them, and all that. You like good little boys in white collars, with clothes always clean and hair always combed, who like to stay in at recess and be petted by the teacher and told how they’re always up in their studies; nice little boys who never get into scrapes — who are too busy walking around and picking flowers and eating lunches with girls, to get into scrapes. Oh, I know the kind — afraid of their own shadows, and no more spunk in them than in so many sheep. That’s what they are — sheep. Well, I’m not a sheep, and there’s no more to be said. And I don’t want to go on your picnic, and, what’s more, I’m not going.”

The tears welled up in Bessie’s brown eyes, and her lips were trembling. This angered him unreasonably. What were girls good for, anyway? — always blubbering, and interfering, and carrying on. There was no sense in them.

“A fellow can’t say anything without making you cry,” he began, trying to appease her. “Why, I didn’t mean anything, Sis. I didn’t, sure. I — ”

He paused helplessly and looked down at her. She was sobbing, and at the same time shaking with the effort to control her sobs, while big tears were rolling down her cheeks.

“Oh, you — you girls!” he cried, and strode wrathfully out of the room.

CHAPTER II

“THE DRACONIAN REFORMS”

A few minutes later, and still wrathful, Joe went in to dinner. He ate silently, though his father and mother and Bessie kept up a genial flow of conversation. There she was, he communed savagely with his plate, crying one minute, and the next all smiles and laughter. Now that wasn’t his way. If ***he*** had anything sufficiently important to cry about, rest assured he wouldn’t get over it for days. Girls were hypocrites, that was all there was to it. They didn’t feel one hundredth part of all that they said when they cried. It stood to reason that they didn’t. It must be that they just carried on because they enjoyed it. It made them feel good to make other people miserable, especially boys. That was why they were always interfering.

Thus reflecting sagely, he kept his eyes on his plate and did justice to the fare; for one cannot scorch from the Cliff House to the Western Addition via the park without being guilty of a healthy appetite.

Now and then his father directed a glance at him in a certain mildly anxious way. Joe did not see these glances, but Bessie saw them, every one. Mr. Bronson was a middle-aged man, well developed and of heavy build, though not fat. His was a rugged face, square-jawed and stern-featured, though his eyes were kindly and there were lines about the mouth that betokened laughter rather than severity. A close examination was not required to discover the resemblance between him and Joe. The same broad forehead and strong jaw characterized them both, and the eyes, taking into consideration the difference of age, were as like as peas from one pod.

“How are you getting on, Joe?” Mr. Bronson asked finally. Dinner was over and they were about to leave the table.

“Oh, I don’t know,” Joe answered carelessly, and then added: “We have examinations to-morrow. I’ll know then.”

“Whither bound?” his mother questioned, as he turned to leave the room. She was a slender, willowy woman, whose brown eyes Bessie’s were, and likewise her tender ways.

“To my room,” Joe answered. “To work,” he supplemented.

She rumpled his hair affectionately, and bent and kissed him. Mr. Bronson smiled approval at him as he went out, and he hurried up the stairs, resolved to dig hard and pass the examinations of the coming day.

Entering his room, he locked the door and sat down at a desk most comfortably arranged for a boy's study. He ran his eye over his text-books. The history examination came the first thing in the morning, so he would begin on that. He opened the book where a page was turned down, and began to read:

Shortly after the Draconian reforms, a war broke out between Athens and Megara respecting the island of Salamis, to which both cities laid claim.

That was easy; but what were the Draconian reforms? He must look them up. He felt quite studious as he ran over the back pages, till he chanced to raise his eyes above the top of the book and saw on a chair a baseball mask and a catcher's glove. They shouldn't have lost that game last Saturday, he thought, and they wouldn't have, either, if it hadn't been for Fred. He wished Fred wouldn't fumble so. He could hold a hundred difficult balls in succession, but when a critical point came, he'd let go of even a dewdrop. He'd have to send him out in the field and bring in Jones to first base. Only Jones was so excitable. He could hold any kind of a ball, no matter how critical the play was, but there was no telling what he would do with the ball after he got it.

Joe came to himself with a start. A pretty way of studying history! He buried his head in his book and began:

Shortly after the Draconian reforms —

He read the sentence through three times, and then recollected that he had not looked up the Draconian reforms.

A knock came at the door. He turned the pages over with a noisy flutter, but made no answer.

The knock was repeated, and Bessie's "Joe, dear" came to his ears.

"What do you want?" he demanded. But before she could answer he hurried on: "No admittance. I'm busy."

"I came to see if I could help you," she pleaded. "I'm all done, and I thought — "

"Of course you're all done!" he shouted. "You always are!"

He held his head in both his hands to keep his eyes on the book. But the baseball mask bothered him. The more he attempted to keep his mind on the history the more in his mind's eye he saw the mask resting on the chair and all the games in which it had played its part.

This would never do. He deliberately placed the book face downward on the desk and walked over to the chair. With a swift sweep he sent both mask and glove hurtling under the bed, and so violently that he heard the mask rebound from the wall.

Shortly after the Draconian reforms, a war broke out between Athens and Megara —

The mask had rolled back from the wall. He wondered if it had rolled back far enough for him to see it. No, he wouldn't look. What did it matter if it had rolled out? That wasn't history. He wondered —

He peered over the top of the book, and there was the mask peeping out at him from under the edge of the bed. This was not to be borne. There was no use attempting to study while that mask was around. He went over and fished it out, crossed the room to the closet, and tossed it inside, then locked the door. That was settled, thank goodness! Now he could do some work.

He sat down again.

Shortly after the Draconian reforms, a war broke out between Athens and Megara respecting the island of Salamis, to which, both cities laid claim.

Which was all very well, if he had only found out what the Draconian reforms were. A soft glow pervaded the room, and he suddenly became aware of it. What could cause it? He looked out of the window. The setting sun was slanting its long rays against low-hanging masses of summer clouds, turning them to warm scarlet and rosy red; and it was from them that the red light, mellow and glowing, was flung earthward.

His gaze dropped from the clouds to the bay beneath. The sea-breeze was dying down with the day, and off Fort Point a fishing-boat was creeping into port before the last light breeze. A little beyond, a tug was sending up a twisted pillar of smoke as it towed a three-masted schooner to sea. His eyes wandered over toward the Marin County shore. The line where land and water met was already in darkness, and long shadows were creeping up the hills toward Mount Tamalpais, which was sharply silhouetted against the western sky.

Oh, if he, Joe Bronson, were only on that fishing-boat and sailing in with a deep-sea catch! Or if he were on that schooner, heading out into the sunset, into the world! That was life, that was living, doing something and being something in the world. And, instead, here he was, pent up in a close room, racking his brains about people dead and gone thousands of years before he was born.

He jerked himself away from the window as though held there by some physical force, and resolutely carried his chair and history into the farthest corner of the room, where he sat down with his back to the window.

An instant later, so it seemed to him, he found himself again staring out of the window and dreaming. How he had got there he did not know. His last recollection was the finding of a subheading on a page on the right-hand side of the book which read: “The Laws and Constitution of Draco.” And then, evidently like walking in one’s sleep, he had come to the window. How long had he been there? he wondered. The fishing-boat which he had seen off Fort Point was now crawling into Meiggs’s Wharf. This denoted nearly an hour’s lapse of time. The sun had long since set; a solemn grayness was brooding over the water, and the first faint stars were beginning to twinkle over the crest of Mount Tamalpais.

He turned, with a sigh, to go back into his corner, when a long whistle, shrill and piercing, came to his ears. That was Fred. He sighed again. The whistle repeated itself. Then another whistle joined it. That was Charley. They were waiting on the corner — lucky fellows!

Well, they wouldn’t see him this night. Both whistles arose in duet. He writhed in his chair and groaned. No, they wouldn’t see him this night, he reiterated, at the same time rising to his feet. It was certainly impossible for him to join them when he had not yet learned about the Draconian reforms. The same force which had held him to the window now seemed drawing him across the room to the desk. It made him put the history on top of his school-books, and he had the door unlocked and was half-way into the hall before he realized it. He started to return, but the thought came to him that he could go out for a little while and then come back and do his work.

A very little while, he promised himself, as he went down-stairs. He went down faster and faster, till at the bottom he was going three steps at a time. He popped his cap on his head and went out of the side entrance in a rush; and ere he reached the corner the reforms of Draco were as far away in the past as Draco himself, while the examinations on the morrow were equally far away in the future.

CHAPTER III

“BRICK,” “SORREL-TOP,” AND “REDDY”

“What’s up?” Joe asked, as he joined Fred and Charley.

“Kites,” Charley answered. “Come on. We’re tired out waiting for you.”

The three set off down the street to the brow of the hill, where they looked down upon Union Street, far below and almost under their feet. This they called the Pit, and it was well named. Themselves they called the Hill-dwellers, and a descent into the Pit by the Hill-dwellers was looked upon by them as a great adventure.

Scientific kite-flying was one of the keenest pleasures of these three particular Hill-dwellers, and six or eight kites strung out on a mile of twine and soaring into the clouds was an ordinary achievement for them. They were compelled to replenish their kite-supply often; for whenever an accident occurred, and the string broke, or a ducking kite dragged down the rest, or the wind suddenly died out, their kites fell into the Pit, from which place they were unrecoverable. The reason for this was the young people of the Pit were a piratical and robber race with peculiar ideas of ownership and property rights.

On a day following an accident to a kite of one of the Hill-dwellers, the self-same kite could be seen riding the air attached to a string which led down into the Pit to the lairs of the Pit People. So it came about that the Pit People, who were a poor folk and unable to afford scientific kite-flying, developed great proficiency in the art when their neighbors the Hill-dwellers took it up.

There was also an old sailorman who profited by this recreation of the Hill-dwellers; for he was learned in sails and air-currents, and being deft of hand and cunning, he fashioned the best-flying kites that could be obtained. He lived in a rattletrap shanty close to the water, where he could still watch with dim eyes the ebb and flow of the tide, and the ships pass out and in, and where he could revive old memories of the days when he, too, went down to the sea in ships.

To reach his shanty from the Hill one had to pass through the Pit, and thither the three boys were bound. They had often gone for kites in the daytime, but this was their first trip after dark, and they felt it to be, as it indeed was, a hazardous adventure.

In simple words, the Pit was merely the cramped and narrow quarters of the poor, where many nationalities crowded together in cosmopolitan confusion, and lived as best they could, amid much dirt and squalor. It was still early evening when the boys passed through on their way to the sailorman's shanty, and no mishap befell them, though some of the Pit boys stared at them savagely and hurled a taunting remark after them, now and then.

The sailorman made kites which were not only splendid fliers but which folded up and were very convenient to carry. Each of the boys bought a few, and, with them wrapped in compact bundles and under their arms, started back on the return journey.

"Keep a sharp lookout for the b'ys," the kite-maker cautioned them. "They're like to be cruisin' round after dark."

"We're not afraid," Charley assured him; "and we know how to take care of ourselves."

Used to the broad and quiet streets of the Hill, the boys were shocked and stunned by the life that teemed in the close-packed quarter. It seemed some thick and monstrous growth of vegetation, and that they were wading through it. They shrank closely together in the tangle of narrow streets as though for protection, conscious of the strangeness of it all, and how unrelated they were to it.

Children and babies sprawled on the sidewalk and under their feet. Bareheaded and unkempt women gossiped in the doorways or passed back and forth with scant marketings in their arms. There was a general odor of decaying fruit and fish, a smell of staleness and putridity. Big hulking men slouched by, and ragged little girls walked gingerly through the confusion with foaming buckets of beer in their hands. There was a clatter and garble of foreign tongues and brogues, shrill cries, quarrels and wrangles, and the Pit pulsed with a great and steady murmur, like the hum of the human hive that it was.

"Phew! I'll be glad when we're out of it," Fred said.

He spoke in a whisper, and Joe and Charley nodded grimly that they agreed with him. They were not inclined to speech, and they walked as rapidly as the crowd permitted, with much the same feelings as those of travelers in a dangerous and hostile jungle.

And danger and hostility stalked in the Pit. The inhabitants seemed to resent the presence of these strangers from the Hill. Dirty little urchins abused them as they passed, snarling with assumed bravery, and prepared to run away at the first sign of attack. And still other little urchins formed a noisy parade at the heels of the boys, and grew bolder with increasing numbers.

"Don't mind them," Joe cautioned. "Take no notice, but keep right on. We'll soon be out of it."

"No; we're in for it," said Fred, in an undertone. "Look there!"

On the corner they were approaching, four or five boys of about their own age were standing. The light from a street-lamp fell upon them and disclosed one with vivid red hair. It could be no other than "Brick" Simpson, the redoubtable leader of a redoubtable gang. Twice within their memory he had led his gang up the Hill and spread panic and terror among the Hill-dwelling young folk, who fled wildly to their homes, while their fathers and mothers hurriedly telephoned for the police.

At sight of the group on the corner, the rabble at the heels of the three boys melted away on the instant with like manifestations of fear. This but increased the anxiety of the boys, though they held boldly on their way.

The red-haired boy detached himself from the group, and stepped before them, blocking their path. They essayed to go around him, but he stretched out his arm.

"Wot yer doin' here?" he snarled. "Why don't yer stay where yer b'long?"

"We're just going home," Fred said mildly.

Brick looked at Joe. "Wot yer got under yer arm?" he demanded.

Joe contained himself and took no heed of him. "Come on," he said to Fred and Charley, at the same time starting to brush past the gang-leader.

But with a quick blow Brick Simpson struck him in the face, and with equal quickness snatched the bundle of kites from under his arm.

Joe uttered an inarticulate cry of rage, and, all caution flung to the winds, sprang at his assailant.

This was evidently a surprise to the gang-leader, who expected least of all to be attacked in his own territory. He retreated backward, still clutching the kites, and divided between desire to fight and desire to retain his capture.

The latter desire dominated him, and he turned and fled swiftly down the narrow side-street into a labyrinth of streets and alleys. Joe knew that he was plunging into the wilderness of the enemy's country, but his sense of both property and pride had been offended, and he took up the pursuit hot-footed.

Fred and Charley followed after, though he outdistanced them, and behind came the three other members of the gang, emitting a whistling call while they ran which was evidently intended for the assembling of the rest of the band. As the chase proceeded, these whistles were answered from many different directions, and soon a score of dark figures were tagging at the heels of Fred and Charley, who, in turn, were straining every muscle to keep the swifter-footed Joe in sight.

Brick Simpson darted into a vacant lot, aiming for a "slip," as such things are called which are prearranged passages through fences and over sheds and houses and around dark holes and corners, where the unfamiliar pursuer must go more carefully and where the chances are many that he will soon lose the track.

But Joe caught Brick before he could attain his end, and together they rolled over and over in the dirt, locked in each other's arms. By the time Fred and Charley and the gang had come up, they were on their feet, facing each other.

"Wot d' ye want, eh?" the red-headed gang-leader was saying in a bullying tone. "Wot d' ye want? That's wot I wanter know."

"I want my kites," Joe answered.

Brick Simpson's eyes sparkled at the intelligence. Kites were something he stood in need of himself.

"Then you've got to fight fer'em," he announced.

"Why should I fight for them?" Joe demanded indignantly. "They're mine." Which went to show how ignorant he was of the ideas of ownership and property rights which obtained among the People of the Pit.

A chorus of jeers and catcalls went up from the gang, which clustered behind its leader like a pack of wolves.

"Why should I fight for them?" Joe reiterated.

"'Cos I say so," Simpson replied. "An' wot I say goes. Understand?"

But Joe did not understand. He refused to understand that Brick Simpson's word was law in San Francisco, or any part of San Francisco. His love of honesty and right dealing was offended, and all his fighting blood was up.

"You give those kites to me, right here and now," he threatened, reaching out his hand for them.

But Simpson jerked them away. "D' ye know who I am?" he demanded. "I'm Brick Simpson, an' I don't'low no one to talk to me in that tone of voice."

"Better leave him alone," Charley whispered in Joe's ear. "What are a few kites? Leave him alone and let's get out of this."

"They're my kites," Joe said slowly in a dogged manner. "They're my kites, and I'm going to have them."

"You can't fight the crowd," Fred interfered; "and if you do get the best of him they'll all pile on you."

The gang, observing this whispered colloquy, and mistaking it for hesitancy on the part of Joe, set up its wolf-like howling again.

"Afraid! afraid!" the young roughs jeered and taunted. "He's too high-toned, he is! Mebbe he'll spoil his nice clean shirt, and then what'll mama say?"

"Shut up!" their leader snapped authoritatively, and the noise obediently died away.

"Will you give me those kites?" Joe demanded, advancing determinedly.

"Will you fight for'em?" was Simpson's counter-demand.

"Yes," Joe answered.

"Fight! fight!" the gang began to howl again.

"And it's me that'll see fair play," said a man's heavy voice.

All eyes were instantly turned upon the man who had approached unseen and made this announcement. By the electric light, shining brightly on them from the corner, they made him out to be a big, muscular fellow, clad in a working-man's garments. His feet were incased in heavy brogans, a narrow strap of black leather held his overalls about his waist, and a black and greasy cap was on his head. His face was grimed with coal-dust, and a coarse blue shirt, open at the neck, revealed a wide throat and massive chest.

"An' who're you?" Simpson snarled, angry at the interruption.

"None of yer business," the newcomer retorted tartly. "But, if it'll do you any good, I'm a fireman on the China steamers, and, as I said, I'm goin' to see fair play. That's my business. Your business is to give fair play. So pitch in, and don't be all night about it."

The three boys were as pleased by the appearance of the fireman as Simpson and his followers were displeased. They conferred together for several minutes, when Simpson deposited the bundle of kites in the arms of one of his gang and stepped forward.

“Come on, then,” he said, at the same time pulling off his coat.

Joe handed his to Fred, and sprang toward Brick. They put up their fists and faced each other. Almost instantly Simpson drove in a fierce blow and ducked cleverly away and out of reach of the blow which Joe returned. Joe felt a sudden respect for the abilities of his antagonist, but the only effect upon him was to arouse all the doggedness of his nature and make him utterly determined to win.

Awed by the presence of the fireman, Simpson’s followers confined themselves to cheering Brick and jeering Joe. The two boys circled round and round, attacking, feinting, and guarding, and now one and then the other getting in a telling blow. Their positions were in marked contrast. Joe stood erect, planted solidly on his feet, with legs wide apart and head up. On the other hand, Simpson crouched till his head was nearly lost between his shoulders, and all the while he was in constant motion, leaping and springing and manoeuvering in the execution of a score or more of tricks quite new and strange to Joe.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, both were very tired, though Joe was much fresher. Tobacco, ill food, and unhealthy living were telling on the gang-leader, who was panting and sobbing for breath. Though at first (and because of superior skill) he had severely punished Joe, he was now weak and his blows were without force. Growing desperate, he adopted what might be called not an unfair but a mean method of attack: he would manoeuver, leap in and strike swiftly, and then, ducking forward, fall to the ground at Joe’s feet. Joe could not strike him while he was down, and so would step back until he could get on his feet again, when the thing would be repeated.

But Joe grew tired of this, and prepared for him. Timing his blow with Simpson’s attack, he delivered it just as Simpson was ducking forward to fall. Simpson fell, but he fell over on one side, whither he had been driven by the impact of Joe’s fist upon his head. He rolled over and got half-way to his feet, where he remained, crying and gasping. His followers called upon him to get up, and he tried once or twice, but was too exhausted and stunned.

“I give in,” he said. “I’m licked.”

The gang had become silent and depressed at its leader’s defeat.

Joe stepped forward.

“I’ll trouble you for those kites,” he said to the boy who was holding them.

“Oh, I dunno,” said another member of the gang, shoving in between Joe and his property. His hair was also a vivid red. “You’ve got to lick me before you kin have’em.”

“I don’t see that,” Joe said bluntly. “I’ve fought and I’ve won, and there’s nothing more to it.”

“Oh, yes, there is,” said the other. “I’m’Sorrel-top’ Simpson. Brick’s my brother. See?”

And so, in this fashion, Joe learned another custom of the Pit People of which he had been ignorant.

“All right,” he said, his fighting blood more fully aroused than ever by the unjustness of the proceeding. “Come on.”

Sorrel-top Simpson, a year younger than his brother, proved to be a most unfair fighter, and the good-natured fireman was compelled to interfere several times before the second of the Simpson clan lay on the ground and acknowledged defeat.

This time Joe reached for his kites without the slightest doubt that he was to get them. But still another lad stepped in between him and his property. The telltale hair, vividly red, sprouted likewise on this lad’s head, and Joe knew him at once for what he was, another member of the Simpson clan. He was a younger edition of his brothers, somewhat less heavily built, with a face covered with a vast quantity of freckles, which showed plainly under the electric light.

“You don’t git them there kites till you git me,” he challenged in a piping little voice. “I’m’Reddy’ Simpson, an’ you ain’t licked the fambly till you’ve licked me.”

The gang cheered admiringly, and Reddy stripped a tattered jacket preparatory for the fray.

“Git ready,” he said to Joe.

Joe’s knuckles were torn, his nose was bleeding, his lip was cut and swollen, while his shirt had been ripped down from throat to waist. Further, he was tired, and breathing hard.

“How many more are there of you Simpsons?” he asked. “I’ve got to get home, and if your family’s much larger this thing is liable to keep on all night.”

“I’m the last an’ the best,” Reddy replied. “You gits me an’ you gits the kites. Sure.”

“All right,” Joe sighed. “Come on.”

While the youngest of the clan lacked the strength and skill of his elders, he made up for it by a wildcat manner of fighting that taxed Joe severely. Time and again it seemed to him that he must give in to the little whirlwind; but each time he pulled himself together and went doggedly on. For he felt that he was fighting for principle, as his forefathers had fought for principle; also, it seemed to him that the honor of the Hill was at stake, and that he, as its representative, could do nothing less than his very best.

So he held on and managed to endure his opponent’s swift and continuous rushes till that young and less experienced person at last wore himself out with his own exertions, and from the ground confessed that, for the first time in its history, the “Simpson fambly was beat.”

CHAPTER IV

THE BITER BITTEN

But life in the Pit at best was a precarious affair, as the three Hill-dwellers were quickly to learn. Before Joe could even possess himself of his kites, his astonished eyes were greeted with the spectacle of all his enemies, the fireman included, taking to their heels in wild flight. As the little girls and urchins had melted away before the Simpson gang, so was melting away the Simpson gang before some new and correspondingly awe-inspiring group of predatory creatures.

Joe heard terrified cries of “Fish gang!” “Fish gang!” from those who fled, and he would have fled himself from this new danger, only he was breathless from his last encounter, and knew the impossibility of escaping whatever threatened. Fred and Charley felt mighty longings to run away from a danger great enough to frighten the redoubtable Simpson gang and the valorous fireman, but they could not desert their comrade.

Dark forms broke into the vacant lot, some surrounding the boys and others dashing after the fugitives. That the laggards were overtaken was evidenced by the cries of distress that went up, and when later the pursuers returned, they brought with them the luckless and snarling Brick, still clinging fast to the bundle of kites.

Joe looked curiously at this latest band of marauders. They were young men of from seventeen and eighteen to twenty-three and-four years of age, and bore the unmistakable stamp of the hoodlum class. There were vicious faces among them — faces so vicious as to make Joe’s flesh creep as he looked at them. A couple grasped him tightly by the arms, and Fred and Charley were similarly held captive.

“Look here, you,” said one who spoke with the authority of leader, “we’ve got to inquire into this. Wot’s be’n goin’ on here? Wot’re you up to, Red-head? Wot you be’n doin’?”

“Ain’t be’n doin’ nothin’,” Simpson whined.

“Looks like it.” The leader turned up Brick’s face to the electric light. “Who’s been paintin’ you up like that?” he demanded.

Brick pointed at Joe, who was forthwith dragged to the front.

“Wot was you scrappin’ about?”

"Kites — my kites," Joe spoke up boldly. "That fellow tried to take them away from me. He's got them under his arm now."

"Oh, he has, has he? Look here, you Brick, we don't put up with stealin' in this territory. See? You never rightly owned nothin'. Come, fork over the kites. Last call."

The leader tightened his grasp threateningly, and Simpson, weeping tears of rage, surrendered the plunder.

"Wot yer got under yer arm?" the leader demanded abruptly of Fred, at the same time jerking out the bundle. "More kites, eh? Reg'lar kite-factory gone and got itself lost," he remarked finally, when he had appropriated Charley's bundle. "Now, wot I wants to know is wot we're goin' to do to you t'ree chaps?" he continued in a judicial tone.

"What for?" Joe demanded hotly. "For being robbed of our kites?"

"Not at all, not at all," the leader responded politely; "but for luggin' kites round these quarters an' causin' all this unseemly disturbance. It's disgraceful; that's wot it is — disgraceful."

At this juncture, when the Hill-dwellers were the center of attraction, Brick suddenly wormed out of his jacket, squirmed away from his captors, and dashed across the lot to the slip for which he had been originally headed when overtaken by Joe. Two or three of the gang shot over the fence after him in noisy pursuit. There was much barking and howling of back-yard dogs and clattering of shoes over sheds and boxes. Then there came a splashing of water, as though a barrel of it had been precipitated to the ground. Several minutes later the pursuers returned, very sheepish and very wet from the deluge presented them by the wily Brick, whose voice, high up in the air from some friendly housetop, could be heard defiantly jeering them.

This event apparently disconcerted the leader of the gang, and just as he turned to Joe and Fred and Charley, a long and peculiar whistle came to their ears from the street — the warning signal, evidently, of a scout posted to keep a lookout. The next moment the scout himself came flying back to the main body, which was already beginning to retreat.

"Cops!" he panted.

Joe looked, and he saw two helmeted policemen approaching, with bright stars shining on their breasts.

"Let's get out of this," he whispered to Fred and Charley.

The gang had already taken to flight, and they blocked the boys' retreat in one quarter, and in another they saw the policemen advancing. So they took to their heels in the direction of Brick Simpson's slip, the policemen hot after them and yelling bravely for them to halt.

But young feet are nimble, and young feet when frightened become something more than nimble, and the boys were first over the fence and plunging wildly through a maze of back yards. They soon found that the policemen were discreet. Evidently they had had experiences in slips, and they were satisfied to give over the chase at the first fence.

No street-lamps shed their light here, and the boys blundered along through the blackness with their hearts in their mouths. In one yard, filled with mountains of crates and fruit-boxes, they were lost for a quarter of an hour. Feel and quest about as they would, they encountered nothing but endless heaps of boxes. From this wilderness they finally emerged by way of a shed roof, only to fall into another yard, cumbered with countless empty chicken-coops.

Farther on they came upon the contrivance which had soaked Brick Simpson's pursuers with water. It was a cunning arrangement. Where the slip led through a fence with a board missing, a long slat was so arranged that the ignorant wayfarer could not fail to strike against it. This slat was the spring of the trap. A light touch upon it was sufficient to disconnect a heavy stone from a barrel perched overhead and nicely balanced. The disconnecting of the stone permitted the barrel to turn over and spill its contents on the one beneath who touched the slat.

The boys examined the arrangement with keen appreciation. Luckily for them, the barrel was overturned, or they too would have received a ducking, for Joe, who was in advance, had blundered against the slat.

"I wonder if this is Simpson's back yard?" he queried softly.

"It must be," Fred concluded, "or else the back yard of some member of his gang."

Charley put his hands warningly on both their arms.

"Hist! What's that?" he whispered.

They crouched down on the ground. Not far away was the sound of some one moving about. Then they heard a noise of falling water, as from a faucet into a bucket. This was followed by steps boldly approaching. They crouched lower, breathless with apprehension.

A dark form passed by within arm’s reach and mounted on a box to the fence. It was Brick himself, resetting the trap. They heard him arrange the slat and stone, then right the barrel and empty into it a couple of buckets of water. As he came down from the box to go after more water, Joe sprang upon him, tripped him up, and held him to the ground.

“Don’t make any noise,” he said. “I want you to listen to me.”

“Oh, it’s you, is it?” Simpson replied, with such obvious relief in his voice as to make them feel relieved also. “Wot d’ ye want here?”

“We want to get out of here,” Joe said, “and the shortest way’s the best. There’s three of us, and you’re only one — ”

“That’s all right, that’s all right,” the gang-leader interrupted. “I’d just as soon show you the way out as not. I ain’t got nothin’‘gainst you. Come on an’ follow me, an’ don’t step to the side, an’ I’ll have you out in no time.”

Several minutes later they dropped from the top of a high fence into a dark alley.

“Follow this to the street,” Simpson directed; “turn to the right two blocks, turn to the right again for three, an’ yer on Union. Tra-la-loo.”

They said good-by, and as they started down the alley received the following advice:

“Nex’ time you bring kites along, you’d best leave’em to home.”

CHAPTER V

HOME AGAIN

Following Brick Simpson's directions, they came into Union Street, and without further mishap gained the Hill. From the brow they looked down into the Pit, whence arose that steady, indefinable hum which comes from crowded human places.

"I'll never go down there again, not as long as I live," Fred said with a great deal of savagery in his voice. "I wonder what became of the fireman."

"We're lucky to get back with whole skins," Joe cheered them philosophically.

"I guess we left our share, and you more than yours," laughed Charley.

"Yes," Joe answered. "And I've got more trouble to face when I get home. Good night, fellows."

As he expected, the door on the side porch was locked, and he went around to the dining-room and entered like a burglar through a window. As he crossed the wide hall, walking softly toward the stairs, his father came out of the library. The surprise was mutual, and each halted aghast.

Joe felt a hysterical desire to laugh, for he thought that he knew precisely how he looked. In reality he looked far worse than he imagined. What Mr. Bronson saw was a boy with hat and coat covered with dirt, his whole face smeared with the stains of conflict, and, in particular, a badly swollen nose, a bruised eyebrow, a cut and swollen lip, a scratched cheek, knuckles still bleeding, and a shirt torn open from throat to waist.

"What does this mean, sir?" Mr. Bronson finally managed to articulate.

Joe stood speechless. How could he tell, in one brief sentence, all the whole night's happenings? — for all that must be included in the explanation of what his luckless disarray meant.

"Have you lost your tongue?" Mr. Bronson demanded with an appearance of impatience.

"I've — I've — "

"Yes, yes," his father encouraged.

"I've — well, I've been down in the Pit," Joe succeeded in blurting out.

"I must confess that you look like it — very much like it indeed." Mr. Bronson spoke severely, but if ever by great effort he conquered a smile, that was the time. “I presume,” he went on, “that you do not refer to the abiding-place of sinners, but rather to some definite locality in San Francisco. Am I right?”

Joe swept his arm in a descending gesture toward Union Street, and said: “Down there, sir.”

“And who gave it that name?”

“I did,” Joe answered, as though confessing to a specified crime.

“It’s most appropriate, I’m sure, and denotes imagination. It couldn’t really be bettered. You must do well at school, sir, with your English.”

This did not increase Joe’s happiness, for English was the only study of which he did not have to feel ashamed.

And, while he stood thus a silent picture of misery and disgrace, Mr. Bronson looked upon him through the eyes of his own boyhood with an understanding which Joe could not have believed possible.

“However, what you need just now is not a discourse, but a bath and court-plaster and witch-hazel and cold-water bandages,” Mr. Bronson said; “so to bed with you. You’ll need all the sleep you can get, and you’ll feel stiff and sore to-morrow morning, I promise you.”

The clock struck one as Joe pulled the bedclothes around him; and the next he knew he was being worried by a soft, insistent rapping, which seemed to continue through several centuries, until at last, unable to endure it longer, he opened his eyes and sat up.

The day was streaming in through the window — bright and sunshiny day. He stretched his arms to yawn; but a shooting pain darted through all the muscles, and his arms came down more rapidly than they had gone up. He looked at them with a bewildered stare, till suddenly the events of the night rushed in upon him, and he groaned.

The rapping still persisted, and he cried: “Yes, I hear. What time is it?”

“Eight o’clock,” Bessie’s voice came to him through the door. “Eight o’clock, and you’ll have to hurry if you don’t want to be late for school.”

“Goodness!” He sprang out of bed precipitately, groaned with the pain from all his stiff muscles, and collapsed slowly and carefully on a chair. “Why didn’t you call me sooner?” he growled.

“Father said to let you sleep.”

Joe groaned again, in another fashion Then his history-book caught his eye, and he groaned yet again and in still another fashion.

“All right,” he called. “Go on. I’ll be down in a jiffy.”

He did come down in fairly brief order; but if Bessie had watched him descend the stairs she would have been astounded at the remarkable caution he observed and at the twinges of pain that every now and then contorted his face. As it was, when she came upon him in the dining-room she uttered a frightened cry and ran over to him.

“What’s the matter, Joe?” she asked tremulously. “What has happened?”

“Nothing,” he grunted, putting sugar on his porridge.

“But surely — ” she began.

“Please don’t bother me,” he interrupted. “I’m late, and I want to eat my breakfast.”

And just then Mrs. Bronson caught Bessie’s eye, and that young lady, still mystified, made haste to withdraw herself.

Joe was thankful to his mother for that, and thankful that she refrained from remarking upon his appearance. Father had told her; that was one thing sure. He could trust her not to worry him; it was never her way.

And, meditating in this way, he hurried through with his solitary breakfast, vaguely conscious in an uncomfortable way that his mother was fluttering anxiously about him. Tender as she always was, he noticed that she kissed him with unusual tenderness as he started out with his books swinging at the end of a strap; and he also noticed, as he turned the corner, that she was still looking after him through the window.

But of more vital importance than that, to him, was his stiffness and soreness. As he walked along, each step was an effort and a torment. Severely as the reflected sunlight from the cement sidewalk hurt his bruised eye, and severely as his various wounds pained him, still more severely did he suffer from his muscles and joints. He had never imagined such stiffness. Each individual muscle in his whole body protested when called upon to move. His fingers were badly swollen, and it was agony to clasp and unclasp them; while his arms were sore from wrist to elbow. This, he said to himself, was caused by the many blows which he had warded off from his face and body. He wondered if Brick Simpson was in similar plight, and the thought of their mutual misery made him feel a certain kinship for that redoubtable young ruffian.

When he entered the school-yard he quickly became aware that he was the center of attraction for all eyes. The boys crowded around in an awe-stricken way, and even his classmates and those with whom he was well acquainted looked at him with a certain respect he had never seen before.

CHAPTER VI

EXAMINATION DAY

It was plain that Fred and Charley had spread the news of their descent into the Pit, and of their battle with the Simpson clan and the Fishes. He heard the nine-o'clock bell with feelings of relief, and passed into the school, a mark for admiring glances from all the boys. The girls, too, looked at him in a timid and fearful way — as they might have looked at Daniel when he came out of the lions' den, Joe thought, or at David after his battle with Goliath. It made him uncomfortable and painfully self-conscious, this hero-worshiping, and he wished heartily that they would look in some other direction for a change.

Soon they did look in another direction. While big sheets of foolscap were being distributed to every desk, Miss Wilson, the teacher (an austere-looking young woman who went through the world as though it were a refrigerator, and who, even on the warmest days in the classroom, was to be found with a shawl or cape about her shoulders), arose, and on the blackboard where all could see wrote the Roman numeral "I." Every eye, and there were fifty pairs of them, hung with expectancy upon her hand, and in the pause that followed the room was quiet as the grave.

Underneath the Roman numeral "I" she wrote: "***(a) What were the laws of Draco? (b) Why did an Athenian orator say that they were written'not in ink, but in blood'?***"

Forty-nine heads bent down and forty-nine pens scratched lustily across as many sheets of foolscap. Joe's head alone remained up, and he regarded the blackboard with so blank a stare that Miss Wilson, glancing over her shoulder after having written "II," stopped to look at him. Then she wrote:

"***(a) How did the war between Athens and Megara, respecting the island of Salamis, bring about the reforms of Solon? (b) In what way did they differ from the laws of Draco?***"

She turned to look at Joe again. He was staring as blankly as ever.

"What is the matter, Joe?" she asked. "Have you no paper?"

"Yes, I have, thank you," he answered, and began moodily to sharpen a lead-pencil.

He made a fine point to it. Then he made a very fine point. Then, and with infinite patience, he proceeded to make it very much finer. Several of his classmates raised their heads inquiringly at the noise. But he did not notice. He was too absorbed in his pencil-sharpening and in thinking thoughts far away from both pencil-sharpening and Greek history.

"Of course you all understand that the examination papers are to be written with ink."

Miss Wilson addressed the class in general, but her eyes rested on Joe.

Just as it was about as fine as it could possibly be the point broke, and Joe began over again.

"I am afraid, Joe, that you annoy the class," Miss Wilson said in final desperation.

He put the pencil down, closed the knife with a snap, and returned to his blank staring at the blackboard. What did he know about Draco? or Solon? or the rest of the Greeks? It was a flunk, and that was all there was to it. No need for him to look at the rest of the questions, and even if he did know the answers to two or three, there was no use in writing them down. It would not prevent the flunk. Besides, his arm hurt him too much to write. It hurt his eyes to look at the blackboard, and his eyes hurt even when they were closed; and it seemed positively to hurt him to think.

So the forty-nine pens scratched on in a race after Miss Wilson, who was covering the blackboard with question after question; and he listened to the scratching, and watched the questions growing under her chalk, and was very miserable indeed. His head seemed whirling around. It ached inside and was sore outside, and he did not seem to have any control of it at all.

He was beset with memories of the Pit, like scenes from some monstrous nightmare, and, try as he would, he could not dispel them. He would fix his mind and eyes on Miss Wilson's face, who was now sitting at her desk, and even as he looked at her the face of Brick Simpson, impudent and pugnacious, would arise before him. It was of no use. He felt sick and sore and tired and worthless. There was nothing to be done but flunk. And when, after an age of waiting, the papers were collected, his went in a blank, save for his name, the name of the examination, and the date, which were written across the top.

After a brief interval, more papers were given out, and the examination in arithmetic began. He did not trouble himself to look at the questions. Ordinarily he might have pulled through such an examination, but in his present state of mind and body he knew it was impossible. He contented himself with burying his face in his hands and hoping for the noon hour. Once, lifting his eyes to the clock, he caught Bessie looking anxiously at him across the room from the girls' side. This but added to his discomfort. Why was she bothering him? No need for her to trouble. She was bound to pass. Then why couldn't she leave him alone? So he gave her a particularly glowering look and buried his face in his hands again. Nor did he lift it till the twelve-o'clock gong rang, when he handed in a second blank paper and passed out with the boys.

Fred and Charley and he usually ate lunch in a corner of the yard which they had arrogated to themselves; but this day, by some remarkable coincidence, a score of other boys had elected to eat their lunches on the same spot. Joe surveyed them with disgust. In his present condition he did not feel inclined to receive hero-worship. His head ached too much, and he was troubled over his failure in the examinations; and there were more to come in the afternoon.

He was angry with Fred and Charley. They were chattering like magpies over the adventures of the night (in which, however, they did not fail to give him chief credit), and they conducted themselves in quite a patronizing fashion toward their awed and admiring schoolmates. But every attempt to make Joe talk was a failure. He grunted and gave short answers, and said "yes" and "no" to questions asked with the intention of drawing him out.

He was longing to get away somewhere by himself, to throw himself down some place on the green grass and forget his aches and pains and troubles. He got up to go and find such a place, and found half a dozen of his following tagging after him. He wanted to turn around and scream at them to leave him alone, but his pride restrained him. A great wave of disgust and despair swept over him, and then an idea flashed through his mind. Since he was sure to flunk in his examinations, why endure the afternoon's torture, which could not but be worse than the morning's? And on the impulse of the moment he made up his mind.

He walked straight on to the schoolyard gate and passed out. Here his worshipers halted in wonderment, but he kept on to the corner and out of sight. For some time he wandered along aimlessly, till he came to the tracks of a cable road. A down-town car happening to stop to let off passengers, he stepped aboard and ensconced himself in an outside corner seat. The next thing he was aware of, the car was swinging around on its turn-table and he was hastily scrambling off. The big ferry building stood before him. Seeing and hearing nothing, he had been carried through the heart of the business section of San Francisco.

He glanced up at the tower clock on top of the ferry building. It was ten minutes after one — time enough to catch the quarter-past-one boat. That decided him, and without the least idea in the world as to where he was going, he paid ten cents for a ticket, passed through the gate, and was soon speeding across the bay to the pretty city of Oakland.

In the same aimless and unwitting fashion, he found himself, an hour later, sitting on the string-piece of the Oakland city wharf and leaning his aching head against a friendly timber. From where he sat he could look down upon the decks of a number of small sailing-craft. Quite a crowd of curious idlers had collected to look at them, and Joe found himself growing interested.

There were four boats, and from where he sat he could make out their names. The one directly beneath him had the name ***Ghost*** painted in large green letters on its stern. The other three, which lay beyond, were called respectively ***La Caprice***, the ***Oyster Queen***, and the ***Flying Dutchman***.

Each of these boats had cabins built amidships, with short stovepipes projecting through the roofs, and from the pipe of the ***Ghost*** smoke was ascending. The cabin doors were open and the roof-slide pulled back, so that Joe could look inside and observe the inmate, a young fellow of nineteen or twenty who was engaged just then in cooking. He was clad in long sea-boots which reached the hips, blue overalls, and dark woolen shirt. The sleeves, rolled back to the elbows, disclosed sturdy, sun-bronzed arms, and when the young fellow looked up his face proved to be equally bronzed and tanned.

The aroma of coffee arose to Joe’s nose, and from a light iron pot came the unmistakable smell of beans nearly done. The cook placed a frying-pan on the stove, wiped it around with a piece of suet when it had heated, and tossed in a thick chunk of beefsteak. While he worked he talked with a companion on deck, who was busily engaged in filling a bucket overside and flinging the salt water over heaps of oysters that lay on the deck. This completed, he covered the oysters with wet sacks, and went into the cabin, where a place was set for him on a tiny table, and where the cook served the dinner and joined him in eating it.

All the romance of Joe's nature stirred at the sight. That was life. They were living, and gaining their living, out in the free open, under the sun and sky, with the sea rocking beneath them, and the wind blowing on them, or the rain falling on them, as the chance might be. Each day and every day he sat in a room, pent up with fifty more of his kind, racking his brains and cramming dry husks of knowledge, while they were doing all this, living glad and careless and happy, rowing boats and sailing, and cooking their own food, and certainly meeting with adventures such as one only dreams of in the crowded school-room.

Joe sighed. He felt that he was made for this sort of life and not for the life of a scholar. As a scholar he was undeniably a failure. He had flunked in his examinations, while at that very moment, he knew, Bessie was going triumphantly home, her last examination over and done, and with credit. Oh, it was not to be borne! His father was wrong in sending him to school. That might be well enough for boys who were inclined to study, but it was manifest that he was not so inclined. There were more careers in life than that of the schools. Men had gone down to the sea in the lowest capacity, and risen in greatness, and owned great fleets, and done great deeds, and left their names on the pages of time. And why not he, Joe Bronson?

He closed his eyes and felt immensely sorry for himself; and when he opened his eyes again he found that he had been asleep, and that the sun was sinking fast.

It was after dark when he arrived home, and he went straight to his room and to bed without meeting any one. He sank down between the cool sheets with a sigh of satisfaction at the thought that, come what would, he need no longer worry about his history. Then another and unwelcome thought obtruded itself, and he knew that the next school term would come, and that six months thereafter, another examination in the same history awaited him.

CHAPTER VII

FATHER AND SON

On the following morning, after breakfast, Joe was summoned to the library by his father, and he went in almost with a feeling of gladness that the suspense of waiting was over. Mr. Bronson was standing by the window. A great chattering of sparrows outside seemed to have attracted his attention. Joe joined him in looking out, and saw a fledgeling sparrow on the grass, tumbling ridiculously about in its efforts to stand on its feeble baby legs. It had fallen from the nest in the rose-bush that climbed over the window, and the two parent sparrows were wild with anxiety over its plight.

"It's a way young birds have," Mr. Bronson remarked, turning to Joe with a serious smile; "and I dare say you are on the verge of a somewhat similar predicament, my boy," he went on. "I am afraid things have reached a crisis, Joe. I have watched it coming on for a year now — your poor scholarship, your carelessness and inattention, your constant desire to be out of the house and away in search of adventures of one sort or another."

He paused, as though expecting a reply; but Joe remained silent.

"I have given you plenty of liberty. I believe in liberty. The finest souls grow in such soil. So I have not hedged you in with endless rules and irksome restrictions. I have asked little of you, and you have come and gone pretty much as you pleased. In a way, I have put you on your honor, made you largely your own master, trusting to your sense of right to restrain you from going wrong and at least to keep you up in your studies. And you have failed me. What do you want me to do? Set you certain bounds and time-limits? Keep a watch over you? Compel you by main strength to go through your books?

"I have here a note," Mr. Bronson said after another pause, in which he picked up an envelop from the table and drew forth a written sheet.

Joe recognized the stiff and uncompromising scrawl of Miss Wilson, and his heart sank.

His father began to read:

"Listlessness and carelessness have characterized his term's work, so that when the examinations came he was wholly unprepared. In neither history nor arithmetic did he attempt to answer a question, passing in his papers perfectly blank. These examinations took place in the morning. In the afternoon he did not take the trouble even to appear for the remainder."

Mr. Bronson ceased reading and looked up.

"Where were you in the afternoon?" he asked.

"I went across on the ferry to Oakland," Joe answered, not caring to offer his aching head and body in extenuation.

"That is what is called'playing hooky,' is it not?"

"Yes, sir," Joe answered.

"The night before the examinations, instead of studying, you saw fit to wander away and involve yourself in a disgraceful fight with hoodlums. I did not say anything at the time. In my heart I think I might almost have forgiven you that, if you had done well in your school-work."

Joe had nothing to say. He knew that there was his side to the story, but he felt that his father did not understand, and that there was little use of telling him.

"The trouble with you, Joe, is carelessness and lack of concentration. What you need is what I have not given you, and that is rigid discipline. I have been debating for some time upon the advisability of sending you to some military school, where your tasks will be set for you, and what you do every moment in the twenty-four hours will be determined for you — "

"Oh, father, you don't understand, you can't understand!" Joe broke forth at last. "I try to study — I honestly try to study; but somehow — I don't know how — I can't study. Perhaps I am a failure. Perhaps I am not made for study. I want to go out into the world. I want to see life — to live. I don't want any military academy; I'd sooner go to sea — anywhere where I can do something and be something."

Mr. Bronson looked at him kindly. "It is only through study that you can hope to do something and be something in the world," he said.

Joe threw up his hand with a gesture of despair.

"I know how you feel about it," Mr. Bronson went on; "but you are only a boy, very much like that young sparrow we were watching. If at home you have not sufficient control over yourself to study, then away from home, out in the world which you think is calling to you, you will likewise not have sufficient control over yourself to do the work of that world.

"But I am willing, Joe, I am willing, after you have finished high school and before you go into the university, to let you out into the world for a time."

“Let me go now?” Joe asked impulsively.

“No; it is too early. You haven’t your wings yet. You are too unformed, and your ideals and standards are not yet thoroughly fixed.”

“But I shall not be able to study,” Joe threatened. “I know I shall not be able to study.”

Mr. Bronson consulted his watch and arose to go. “I have not made up my mind yet,” he said. “I do not know what I shall do — whether I shall give you another trial at the public school or send you to a military academy.”

He stopped a moment at the door and looked back. “But remember this, Joe,” he said. “I am not angry with you; I am more grieved and hurt. Think it over, and tell me this evening what you intend to do.”

His father passed out, and Joe heard the front door close after him. He leaned back in the big easy-chair and closed his eyes. A military school! He feared such an institution as the animal fears a trap. No, he would certainly never go to such a place. And as for public school — He sighed deeply at the thought of it. He was given till evening to make up his mind as to what he intended to do. Well, he knew what he would do, and he did not have to wait till evening to find it out.

He got up with a determined look on his face, put on his hat, and went out the front door. He would show his father that he could do his share of the world’s work, he thought as he walked along — he would show him.

By the time he reached the school he had his whole plan worked out definitely. Nothing remained but to put it through. It was the noon hour, and he passed in to his room and packed up his books unnoticed. Coming out through the yard, he encountered Fred and Charley.

“What’s up?” Charley asked.

“Nothing,” Joe grunted.

“What are you doing there?”

“Taking my books home, of course. What did you suppose I was doing?”

“Come, come,” Fred interposed. “Don’t be so mysterious. I don’t see why you can’t tell us what has happened.”

“You’ll find out soon enough,” Joe said significantly — more significantly than he had intended.

And, for fear that he might say more, he turned his back on his astonished chums and hurried away. He went straight home and to his room, where he busied himself at once with putting everything in order. His clothes he hung carefully away, changing the suit he had on for an older one. From his bureau he selected a couple of changes of underclothing, a couple of cotton shirts, and half a dozen pairs of socks. To these he added as many handkerchiefs, a comb, and a tooth-brush.

When he had bound the bundle in stout wrapping-paper he contemplated it with satisfaction. Then he went over to his desk and took from a small inner compartment his savings for some months, which amounted to several dollars. This sum he had been keeping for the Fourth of July, but he thrust it into his pocket with hardly a regret. Then he pulled a writing-pad over to him, sat down and wrote:

Don’t look for me. I am a failure and I am going away to sea. Don’t worry about me. I am all right and able to take care of myself. I shall come back some day, and then you will all be proud of me. Good-by, papa, and mama, and Bessie.

JOE.

This he left lying on his desk where it could easily be seen. He tucked the bundle under his arm, and, with a last farewell look at the room, stole out.

PART II

CHAPTER VIII

‘FRISCO KID AND THE NEW BOY

‘Frisco Kid was discontented — discontented and disgusted. This would have seemed impossible to the boys who fished from the dock above and envied him greatly. True, they wore cleaner and better clothes, and were blessed with fathers and mothers; but his was the free floating life of the bay, the domain of moving adventure, and the companionship of men — theirs the rigid discipline and dreary sameness of home life. They did not dream that’Frisco Kid ever looked up at them from the cockpit of the ***Dazzler*** and in turn envied them just those things which sometimes were the most distasteful to them and from which they suffered to repletion. Just as the romance of adventure sang its siren song in their ears and whispered vague messages of strange lands and lusty deeds, so the delicious mysteries of home enticed’Frisco Kid’s roving fancies, and his brightest day-dreams were of the thing’s he knew not — brothers, sisters, a father’s counsel, a mother’s kiss.

He frowned, got up from where he had been sunning himself on top of the ***Dazzler’s*** cabin, and kicked off his heavy rubber boots. Then he stretched himself on the narrow side-deck and dangled his feet in the cool salt water.

“Now that’s freedom,” thought the boys who watched him. Besides, those long sea-boots, reaching to the hips and buckled to the leather strap about the waist, held a strange and wonderful fascination for them. They did not know that’Frisco Kid did not possess such things as shoes — that the boots were an old pair of Pete Le Maire’s and were three sizes too large for him. Nor could they guess how uncomfortable they were to wear on a hot summer day.

The cause of’Frisco Kid’s discontent was those very boys who sat on the string-piece and admired him; but his disgust was the result of quite another event. The ***Dazzler*** was short one in its crew, and he had to do more work than was justly his share. He did not mind the cooking, nor the washing down of the decks and the pumping; but when it came to the paint-scrubbing and dishwashing he rebelled. He felt that he had earned the right to be exempt from such scullion work. That was all the green boys were fit for, while he could make or take in sail, lift anchor, steer, and make landings.

"Stan' from un'er!" Pete Le Maire or "French Pete," captain of the ***Dazzler*** and lord and master of'Frisco Kid, threw a bundle into the cockpit and came aboard by the starboard rigging.

"Come! Queeck!" he shouted to the boy who owned the bundle and who now hesitated on the dock. It was a good fifteen feet to the deck of the sloop, and he could not reach the steel stay by which he must descend.

"Now! One, two, three!" the Frenchman counted good-naturedly, after the manner of captains when their crews are short-handed.

The boy swung his body into space and gripped the rigging. A moment later he struck the deck, his hands tingling warmly from the friction.

"Kid, dis is ze new sailor. I make your acquaintance." French Pete smirked and bowed, and stood aside. "Mistaire Sho Bronson," he added as an afterthought.

The two boys regarded each other silently for a moment. They were evidently about the same age, though the stranger looked the heartier and stronger of the two.'Frisco Kid put out his hand, and they shook.

"So you're thinking of tackling the water, eh?" he said.

Joe Bronson nodded and glanced curiously about him before answering: "Yes; I think the bay life will suit me for a while, and then, when I've got used to it, I'm going to sea in the forecastle."

"In the what?"

"In the forecastle — the place where the sailors live," he explained, flushing and feeling doubtful of his pronunciation.

"Oh, the fo'c'sle. Know anything about going to sea?"

"Yes — no; that is, except what I've read."

'Frisco Kid whistled, turned on his heel in a lordly manner, and went into the cabin.

"Going to sea," he chuckled to himself as he built the fire and set about cooking supper; "in the'forecastle,' too; and thinks he'll like it."

In the meanwhile French Pete was showing the newcomer about the sloop as though he were a guest. Such affability and charm did he display that'Frisco Kid, popping his head up through the scuttle to call them to supper, nearly choked in his effort to suppress a grin.

Joe Bronson enjoyed that supper. The food was rough but good, and the smack of the salt air and the sea-fittings around him gave zest to his appetite. The cabin was clean and snug, and, though not large, the accommodations surprised him. Every bit of space was utilized. The table swung to the centerboard-case on hinges, so that when not in use it actually occupied no room at all. On either side and partly under the deck were two bunks. The blankets were rolled back, and the boys sat on the well-scrubbed bunk boards while they ate. A swinging sea-lamp of brightly polished brass gave them light, which in the daytime could be obtained through the four deadeyes, or small round panes of heavy glass which were fitted into the walls of the cabin. On one side of the door was the stove and wood-box, on the other the cupboard. The front end of the cabin was ornamented with a couple of rifles and a shot-gun, while exposed by the rolled-back blankets of French Pete's bunk was a cartridge-lined belt carrying a brace of revolvers.

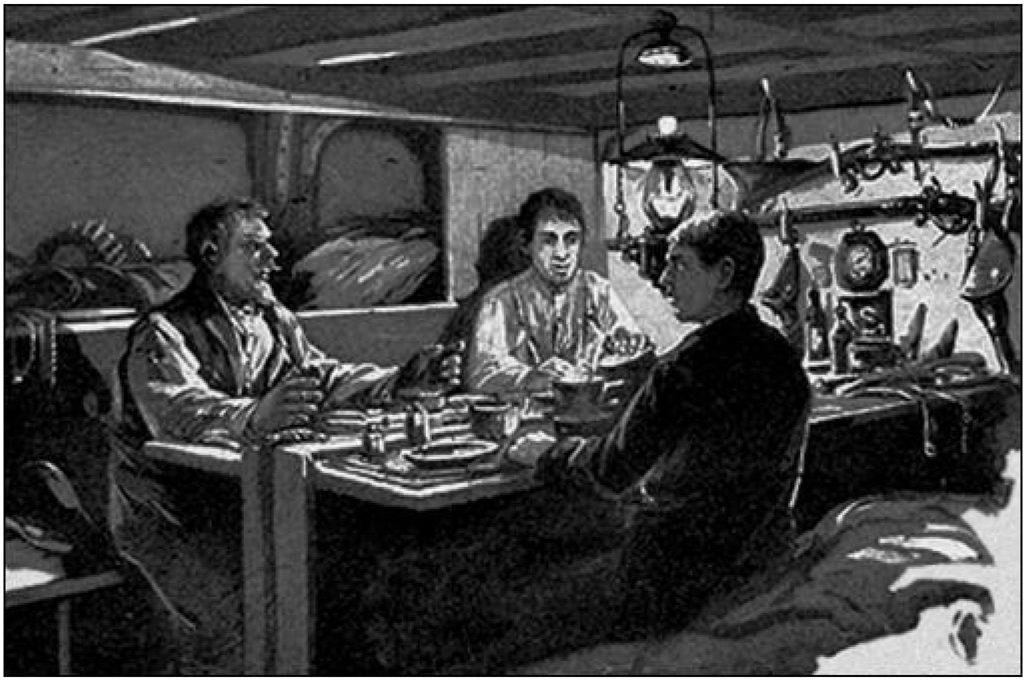

It all seemed like a dream to Joe. Countless times he had imagined scenes somewhat similar to this; but here he was right in the midst of it, and already it seemed as though he had known his two companions for years. French Pete was smiling genially at him across the board. It really was a villainous countenance, but to Joe it seemed only weather-beaten.'Frisco Kid was describing to him, between mouthfuls, the last sou'easter the ***Dazzler*** had weathered, and Joe experienced an increasing awe for this boy who had lived so long upon the water and knew so much about it.

The captain, however, drank a glass of wine, and topped it off with a second and a third, and then, a vicious flush lighting his swarthy face, stretched out on top of his blankets, where he soon was snoring loudly.

“Better turn in and get a couple of hours’ sleep,”‘Frisco Kid said kindly, pointing Joe’s bunk out to him. “We’ll most likely be up the rest of the night.”

Joe obeyed, but he could not fall asleep so readily as the others. He lay with his eyes wide open, watching the hands of the alarm-clock that hung in the cabin, and thinking how quickly event had followed event in the last twelve hours. Only that very morning he had been a school-boy, and now he was a sailor, shipped on the ***Dazzler*** and bound he knew not whither. His fifteen years increased to twenty at the thought of it, and he felt every inch a man — a sailorman at that. He wished Charley and Fred could see him now. Well, they would hear of it soon enough. He could see them talking it over, and the other boys crowding around. “Who?” “Oh, Joe Bronson; he’s gone to sea. Used to chum with us.”

Joe pictured the scene proudly. Then he softened at the thought of his mother worrying, but hardened again at the recollection of his father. Not that his father was not good and kind; but he did not understand boys, Joe thought. That was where the trouble lay. Only that morning he had said that the world wasn’t a play-ground, and that the boys who thought it was were liable to make sore mistakes and be glad to get home again. Well, ***he*** knew that there was plenty of hard work and rough experience in the world; but ***he*** also thought boys had some rights. He’d show him he could take care of himself; and, anyway, he could write home after he got settled down to his new life.

CHAPTER IX

ABOARD THE DAZZLER

A skiff grazed the side of the ***Dazzler*** softly and interrupted Joe’s reveries. He wondered why he had not heard the sound of the oars in the rowlocks. Then two men jumped over the cockpit-rail and came into the cabin.

“Bli’ me, if’ere they ain’t snoozin’,” said the first of the newcomers, deftly rolling’Frisco Kid out of his blankets with one hand and reaching for the wine-bottle with the other.

French Pete put his head up on the other side of the centerboard, his eyes heavy with sleep, and made them welcome.

“‘Oo’s this?” asked the Cockney, as he was called, smacking his lips over the wine and rolling Joe out upon the floor. “Passenger?”

“No, no,” French Pete made haste to answer. “Ze new sailorman. Vaire good boy.”

“Good boy or not, he’s got to keep his tongue atween his teeth,” growled the second newcomer, who had not yet spoken, glaring fiercely at Joe.

“I say,” queried the other man, “‘ow does’e whack up on the loot? I’ope as me and Bill’ave a square deal.”

“Ze ***Dazzler*** she take one share — what you call — one third; den we split ze rest in five shares. Five men, five shares. Vaire good.”

French Pete insisted in excited gibberish that the ***Dazzler*** had the right to have three men in its crew, and appealed to’Frisco Kid to bear him out. But the latter left them to fight it over by themselves, and proceeded to make hot coffee.

It was all Greek to Joe, except he knew that he was in some way the cause of the quarrel. In the end French Pete had his way, and the newcomers gave in after much grumbling. After they had drunk their coffee, all hands went on deck.

“Just stay in the cockpit and keep out of their way,”‘Frisco Kid whispered to Joe. “I’ll teach you about the ropes and everything when we ain’t in a hurry.”

Joe’s heart went out to him in sudden gratitude, for the strange feeling came to him that of those on board, to’Frisco Kid, and to’Frisco Kid only, could he look for help in time of need. Already a dislike for French Pete was growing up within him. Why, he could not say; he just simply felt it.

A creaking of blocks for'ard, and the huge mainsail loomed above him in the night. Bill cast off the bowline, the Cockney followed suit with the stern,'Frisco Kid gave her the jib as French Pete jammed up the tiller, and the ***Dazzler*** caught the breeze, heeling over for mid-channel. Joe heard talk of not putting up the side-lights, and of keeping a sharp lookout, though all he could comprehend was that some law of navigation was being violated.

The water-front lights of Oakland began to slip past. Soon the stretches of docks and the shadowy ships began to be broken by dim sweeps of marshland, and Joe knew that they were heading out for San Francisco Bay. The wind was blowing from the north in mild squalls, and the ***Dazzler*** cut noiselessly through the landlocked water.

"Where are we going?" Joe asked the Cockney, in an endeavor to be friendly and at the same time satisfy his curiosity.

"Oh, my pardner'ere, Bill, we're goin' to take a cargo from'is factory," that worthy airily replied.

Joe thought he was rather a funny-looking individual to own a factory; but, conscious that even stranger things might be found in this new world he was entering, he said nothing. He had already exposed himself to'Frisco Kid in the matter of his pronunciation of "fo'c'sle," and he had no desire further to advertise his ignorance.

A little after that he was sent in to blow out the cabin lamp. The ***Dazzler*** tacked about and began to work in toward the north shore. Everybody kept silent, save for occasional whispered questions and answers which passed between Bill and the captain. Finally the sloop was run into the wind, and the jib and mainsail lowered cautiously.

"Short hawse," French Pete whispered to'Frisco Kid, who went for'ard and dropped the anchor, paying out the slightest quantity of slack.

The ***Dazzler's*** skiff was brought alongside, as was also the small boat in which the two strangers had come aboard.

"See that that cub don't make a fuss," Bill commanded in an undertone, as he joined his partner in his own boat.

"Can you row?"'Frisco Kid asked as they got into the other boat.

Joe nodded his head.

"Then take these oars, and don't make a racket."

‘Frisco Kid took the second pair, while French Pete steered. Joe noticed that the oars were muffled with sennit, and that even the rowlock sockets were protected with leather. It was impossible to make a noise except by a mis-stroke, and Joe had learned to row on Lake Merrit well enough to avoid that. They followed in the wake of the first boat, and, glancing aside, he saw they were running along the length of a pier which jutted out from the land. A couple of ships, with riding-lanterns burning brightly, were moored to it, but they kept just beyond the edge of the light. He stopped rowing at the whispered command of’Frisco Kid. Then the boats grounded like ghosts on a tiny beach, and they clambered out.

Joe followed the men, who picked their way carefully up a twenty-foot bank. At the top he found himself on a narrow railway track which ran between huge piles of rusty scrap-iron. These piles, separated by tracks, extended in every direction he could not tell how far, though in the distance he could see the vague outlines of some great factory-like building. The men began to carry loads of the iron down to the beach, and French Pete, gripping him by the arm and again warning him not to make any noise, told him to do likewise. At the beach they turned their burdens over to’Frisco Kid, who loaded them, first in the one skiff and then in the other. As the boats settled under the weight, he kept pushing them farther and farther out, in order that they should keep clear of the bottom.

Joe worked away steadily, though he could not help marveling at the queerness of the whole business. Why should there be such a mystery about it? and why such care taken to maintain silence? He had just begun to ask himself these questions, and a horrible suspicion was forming itself in his mind, when he heard the hoot of an owl from the direction of the beach. Wondering at an owl being in so unlikely a place, he stooped to gather a fresh load of iron. But suddenly a man sprang out of the gloom, flashing a dark lantern full upon him. Blinded by the light, he staggered back. Then a revolver in the man’s hand went off like the roar of a cannon. All Joe realized was that he was being shot at, while his legs manifested an overwhelming desire to get away. Even if he had so wished, he could not very well have stayed to explain to the excited man with the smoking revolver. So he took to his heels for the beach, colliding with another man with a dark lantern who came running around the end of one of the piles of iron. This second man quickly regained his feet, and peppered away at Joe as he flew down the bank.

He dashed out into the water for the boat. French Pete at the bow-oars and'Frisco Kid at the stroke had the skiff's nose pointed seaward and were calmly awaiting his arrival. They had their oars ready for the start, but they held them quietly at rest, for all that both men on the bank had begun to fire at them. The other skiff lay closer inshore, partially aground. Bill was trying to shove it off, and was calling on the Cockney to lend a hand; but that gentleman had lost his head completely, and came floundering through the water hard after Joe. No sooner had Joe climbed in over the stern than he followed him. This extra weight on the stern of the heavily loaded craft nearly swamped them. As it was, a dangerous quantity of water was shipped. In the meantime the men on the bank had reloaded their pistols and opened fire again, this time with better aim. The alarm had spread. Voices and cries could be heard from the ships on the pier, along which men were running. In the distance a police whistle was being frantically blown.

"Get out!"'Frisco Kid shouted. "You ain't a-going to sink us if I know it. Go and help your pardner."

But the Cockney's teeth were chattering with fright, and he was too unnerved to move or speak.

"T'row ze crazy man out!" French Pete ordered from the bow. At this moment a bullet shattered an oar in his hand, and he coolly proceeded to ship a spare one.

"Give us a hand, Joe,"'Frisco Kid commanded.

Joe understood, and together they seized the terror-stricken creature and flung him overboard. Two or three bullets splashed about him as he came to the surface, just in time to be picked up by Bill, who had at last succeeded in getting clear.

"Now!" French Pete called, and a few strokes into the darkness quickly took them out of the zone of fire.

So much water had been shipped that the light skiff was in danger of sinking at any moment. While the other two rowed, and by the Frenchman's orders, Joe began to throw out the iron. This saved them for the time being. But just as they swept alongside the ***Dazzler*** the skiff lurched, shoved a side under, and turned turtle, sending the remainder of the iron to bottom. Joe and'Frisco Kid came up side by side, and together they clambered aboard with the skiff's painter in tow. French Pete had already arrived, and now helped them out.

By the time they had canted the water out of the swamped boat, Bill and his partner appeared on the scene. All hands worked rapidly, and, almost before Joe could realize, the mainsail and jib had been hoisted, the anchor broken out, and the ***Dazzler*** was leaping down the channel. Off a bleak piece of marshland Bill and the Cockney said good-by and cast loose in their skiff. French Pete, in the cabin, bewailed their bad luck in various languages, and sought consolation in the wine-bottle.

CHAPTER X

WITH THE BAY PIRATES

The wind freshened as they got clear of the land, and soon the ***Dazzler*** was heeling it with her lee deck buried and the water churning by, half-way up the cockpit-rail. Side-lights had been hung out.'Frisco Kid was steering, and by his side sat Joe, pondering over the events of the night.

He could no longer blind himself to the facts. His mind was in a whirl of apprehension. If he had done wrong, he reasoned, he had done it through ignorance; and he did not feel shame for the past so much as he did fear for the future. His companions were thieves and robbers — the bay pirates, of whose wild deeds he had heard vague tales. And here he was, right in the midst of them, already possessing information which could send them to State's prison. This very fact, he knew, would force them to keep a sharp watch upon him and so lessen his chances of escape. But escape he would, at the very first opportunity.

At this point his thoughts were interrupted by a sharp squall, which hurled the ***Dazzler*** over till the sea rushed inboard.'Frisco Kid luffed quickly, at the same time slacking off the main-sheet. Then, single-handed, — for French Pete remained below, — and with Joe looking idly on, he proceeded to reef down.

The squall which had so nearly capsized the ***Dazzler*** was of short duration, but it marked the rising of the wind, and soon puff after puff was shrieking down upon them out of the north. The mainsail was spilling the wind, and slapping and thrashing about till it seemed it would tear itself to pieces. The sloop was rolling wildly in the quick sea which had come up. Everything was in confusion; but even Joe's untrained eye showed him that it was an orderly confusion. He could see that'Frisco Kid knew just what to do and just how to do it. As he watched him he learned a lesson, the lack of which has made failures of the lives of many men — ***the value of knowledge of one's own capacities***.'Frisco Kid knew what he was able to do, and because of this he had confidence in himself. He was cool and self-possessed, working hurriedly but not carelessly. There was no bungling. Every reef-point was drawn down to stay. Other accidents might occur, but the next squall, or the next forty squalls, would not carry one of those reef-knots away.

He called Joe for'ard to help stretch the mainsail by means of swinging on the peak and throat-halyards. To lay out on the long bowsprit and put a single reef in the jib was a slight task compared with what had been already accomplished; so a few moments later they were again in the cockpit. Under the other lad's directions, Joe flattened down the jib-sheet, and, going into the cabin, let down a foot or so of centerboard. The excitement of the struggle had chased all unpleasant thoughts from his mind. Patterning after the other boy, he had retained his coolness. He had executed his orders without fumbling, and at the same time without undue slowness. Together they had exerted their puny strength in the face of violent nature, and together they had outwitted her.

He came back to where his companion stood at the tiller steering, and he felt proud of him and of himself; and when he read the unspoken praise in'Frisco Kid's eyes he blushed like a girl at her first compliment. But the next instant the thought flashed across him that this boy was a thief, a common thief; and he instinctively recoiled. His whole life had been sheltered from the harsher things of the world. His reading, which had been of the best, had laid a premium upon honesty and uprightness, and he had learned to look with abhorrence upon the criminal classes. So he drew a little away from'Frisco Kid and remained silent. But'Frisco Kid, devoting all his energies to the handling of the sloop, had no time in which to remark this sudden change of feeling on the part of his companion.

But there was one thing Joe found in himself that surprised him. While the thought of'Frisco Kid being a thief was repulsive to him,'Frisco Kid himself was not. Instead of feeling an honest desire to shun him, he felt drawn toward him. He could not help liking him, though he knew not why. Had he been a little older he would have understood that it was the lad's good qualities which appealed to him — his coolness and self-reliance, his manliness and bravery, and a certain kindliness and sympathy in his nature. As it was, he thought it his own natural badness which prevented him from disliking'Frisco Kid; but, while he felt shame at his own weakness, he could not smother the warm regard which he felt growing up for this particular bay pirate.

"Take in two or three feet on the skiff's painter," commanded'Frisco Kid, who had an eye for everything.

The skiff was towing with too long a painter, and was behaving very badly. Every once in a while it would hold back till the tow-rope tautened, then come leaping ahead and sheering and dropping slack till it threatened to shove its nose under the huge whitecaps which roared so hungrily on every hand. Joe climbed over the cockpit-rail to the slippery after-deck, and made his way to the bitt to which the skiff was fastened.

"Be careful,"'Frisco Kid warned, as a heavy puff struck the ***Dazzler*** and careened her dangerously over on her side. "Keep one turn round the bitt, and heave in on it when the painter slacks."

It was ticklish work for a greenhorn. Joe threw off all the turns save the last, which he held with one hand, while with the other he attempted to bring in on the painter. But at that instant it tightened with a tremendous jerk, the boat sheering sharply into the crest of a heavy sea. The rope slipped from his hands and began to fly out over the stern. He clutched it frantically, and was dragged after it over the sloping deck.

"Let her go! Let her go!"'Frisco Kid shouted.

Joe let go just as he was on the verge of going overboard, and the skiff dropped rapidly astern. He glanced in a shamefaced way at his companion, expecting to be sharply reprimanded for his awkwardness. But'Frisco Kid smiled good-naturedly.

"That's all right," he said. "No bones broke and nobody overboard. Better to lose a boat than a man any day; that's what I say. Besides, I shouldn't have sent you out there. And there's no harm done. We can pick it up all right. Go in and drop some more centerboard, — a couple of feet, — and then come out and do what I tell you. But don't be in a hurry. Take it easy and sure."

Joe dropped the centerboard and returned, to be stationed at the jib-sheet.

"Hard a-lee!"'Frisco Kid cried, throwing the tiller down, and following it with his body. "Cast off! That's right. Now lend a hand on the main-sheet!"

Together, hand over hand, they came in on the reefed mainsail. Joe began to warm up with the work. The ***Dazzler*** turned on her heel like a race-horse, and swept into the wind, her canvas snarling and her sheets slatting like hail.

"Draw down the jib-sheet!"

Joe obeyed, and, the head-sail filling, forced her off on the other tack. This manoeuver had turned French Pete's bunk from the lee to the weather side, and rolled him out on the cabin floor, where he lay in a drunken stupor.

‘Frisco Kid, with his back against the tiller and holding the sloop off that it might cover their previous course, looked at him with an expression of disgust, and muttered: “The dog! We could well go to the bottom, for all he’d care or do!”

Twice they tacked, trying to go over the same ground; and then Joe discovered the skiff bobbing to windward in the star-lit darkness.

“Plenty of time,”‘Frisco Kid cautioned, shooting the ***Dazzler*** into the wind toward it and gradually losing headway. “Now!”

Joe leaned over the side, grasped the trailing painter, and made it fast to the bitt. Then they tacked ship again and started on their way. Joe still felt ashamed for the trouble he had caused; but’Frisco Kid quickly put him at ease.

“Oh, that’s nothing,” he said. “Everybody does that when they’re beginning. Now some men forget all about the trouble they had in learning, and get mad when a greeny makes a mistake. I never do. Why, I remember — ”

And then he told Joe of many of the mishaps which fell to him when, as a little lad, he first went on the water, and of some of the severe punishments for the same which were measured out to him. He had passed the running end of a lanyard over the tiller-neck, and as they talked they sat side by side and close against each other in the shelter of the cockpit.

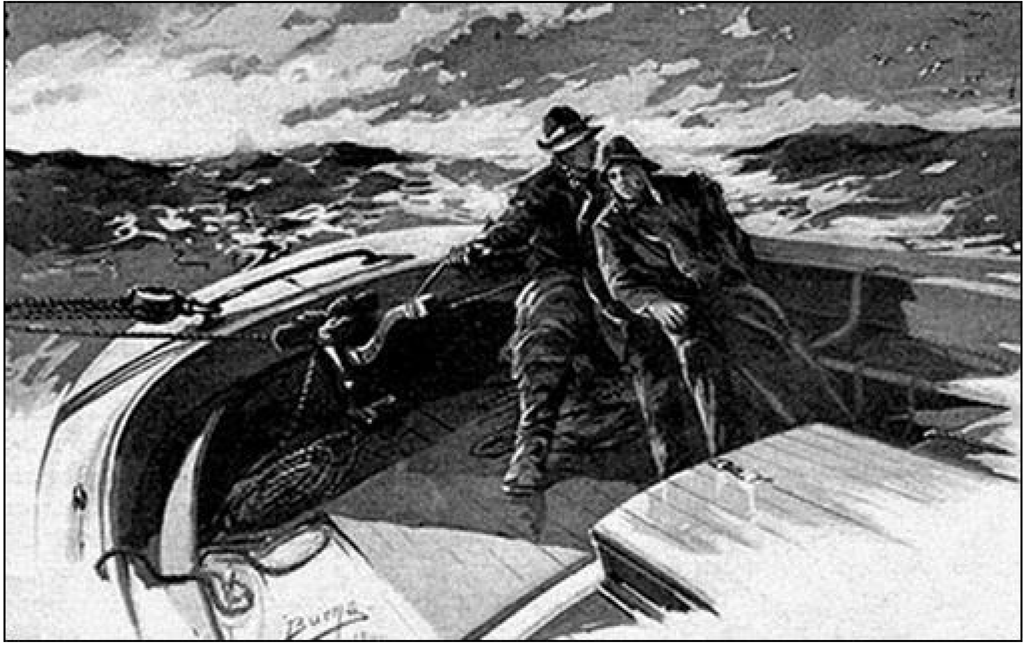

"What place is that?" Joe asked, as they flew by a lighthouse blinking from a rocky headland.

"Goat Island. They've got a naval training station for boys over on the other side, and a torpedo-magazine. There's jolly good fishing, too — rock-cod. We'll pass to the lee of it, and make across, and anchor in the shelter of Angel Island. There's a quarantine station there. Then when French Pete gets sober we'll know where he wants to go. You can turn in now and get some sleep. I can manage all right."

Joe shook his head. There had been too much excitement for him to feel in the least like sleeping. He could not bear to think of it with the ***Dazzler*** leaping and surging along and shattering the seas into clouds of spray on her weather bow. His clothes had half dried already, and he preferred to stay on deck and enjoy it.

The lights of Oakland had dwindled till they made only a hazy flare against the sky; but to the south the San Francisco lights, topping hills and sinking into valleys, stretched miles upon miles. Starting from the great ferry building, and passing on to Telegraph Hill, Joe was soon able to locate the principal places of the city. Somewhere over in that maze of light and shadow was the home of his father, and perhaps even now they were thinking and worrying about him; and over there Bessie was sleeping cozily, to wake up in the morning and wonder why her brother Joe did not come down to breakfast. Joe shivered. It was almost morning. Then slowly his head dropped over on'Frisco Kid's shoulder and he was fast asleep.

CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN AND CREW

“Come! Wake up! We’re going into anchor.”

Joe roused with a start, bewildered at the unusual scene; for sleep had banished his troubles for the time being, and he knew not where he was. Then he remembered. The wind had dropped with the night. Beyond, the heavy after-sea was still rolling; but the ***Dazzler*** was creeping up in the shelter of a rocky island. The sky was clear, and the air had the snap and vigor of early morning about it. The rippling water was laughing in the rays of the sun just shouldering above the eastern sky-line. To the south lay Alcatraz Island, and from its gun-crowned heights a flourish of trumpets saluted the day. In the west the Golden Gate yawned between the Pacific Ocean and San Francisco Bay. A full-rigged ship, with her lightest canvas, even to the sky-sails, set, was coming slowly in on the flood-tide.

It was a pretty sight. Joe rubbed the sleep from his eyes and drank in the glory of it till’Frisco Kid told him to go for’ard and make ready for dropping the anchor.

“Overhaul about fifty fathoms of chain,” he ordered, “and then stand by.” He eased the sloop gently into the wind, at the same time casting off the jib-sheet. “Let go the jib-halyards and come in on the downhaul!”

Joe had seen the manoeuver performed the previous night, and so was able to carry it out with fair success.

“Now! Over with the mud-hook! Watch out for turns! Lively, now!”

The chain flew out with startling rapidity and brought the ***Dazzler*** to rest.’Frisco Kid went for’ard to help, and together they lowered the mainsail, furled it in shipshape manner and made all fast with the gaskets, and put the crutches under the main-boom.

“Here’s a bucket,” said’Frisco Kid, as he passed him the article in question. “Wash down the decks, and don’t be afraid of the water, nor of the dirt either. Here’s a broom. Give it what for, and have everything shining. When you get that done bail out the skiff. She opened her seams a little last night. I’m going below to cook breakfast.”

The water was soon slushing merrily over the deck, while the smoke pouring from the cabin stove carried a promise of good things to come.

Time and again Joe lifted his head from his task to take in the scene. It was one to appeal to any healthy boy, and he was no exception. The romance of it stirred him strangely, and his happiness would have been complete could he have escaped remembering who and what his companions were. The thought of this, and of French Pete in his bleary sleep below, marred the beauty of the day. He had been unused to such things and was shocked at the harsh reality of life. But instead of hurting him, as it might a lad of weaker nature, it had the opposite effect. It strengthened his desire to be clean and strong, and to not be ashamed of himself in his own eyes. He glanced about him and sighed. Why could not men be honest and true? It seemed too bad that he must go away and leave all this; but the events of the night were strong upon him, and he knew that in order to be true to himself he must escape.

At this juncture he was called to breakfast. He discovered that'Frisco Kid was as good a cook as he was a sailor, and made haste to do justice to the fare. There were mush and condensed milk, beefsteak and fried potatoes, and all topped off with good French bread, butter, and coffee. French Pete did not join them, though'Frisco Kid attempted a couple of times to rouse him. He mumbled and grunted, half opened his bleared eyes, then fell to snoring again.

“Can’t tell when he’s going to get those spells,”‘Frisco Kid explained, when Joe, having finished washing dishes, came on deck. “Sometimes he won’t get that way for a month, and others he won’t be decent for a week at a stretch. Sometimes he’s good-natured, and sometimes he’s dangerous; so the best thing to do is to let him alone and keep out of his way; and don’t cross him, for if you do there’s liable to be trouble.

“Come on; let’s take a swim,” he added, abruptly changing the subject to one more agreeable. “Can you swim?”

Joe nodded.

“What’s that place?” he asked, as he poised before diving, pointing toward a sheltered beach on the island where there were several buildings and a large number of tents.

“Quarantine station. Lots of smallpox coming in now on the China steamers, and they make them go there till the doctors say they’re safe to land. I tell you, they’re strict about it, too. Why — ”

Splash! Had'Frisco Kid finished his sentence just then, instead of diving overboard, much trouble might have been saved to Joe. But he did not finish it, and Joe dived after him.

"I'll tell you what,"'Frisco Kid suggested half an hour later, while they clung to the bobstay preparatory to climbing out. "Let's catch a mess of fish for dinner, and then turn in and make up for the sleep we lost last night. What d' you say?"

They made a race to clamber aboard, but Joe was shoved over the side again. When he finally did arrive, the other lad had brought to light a pair of heavily leaded, large-hooked lines and a mackerel-keg of salt sardines.

"Bait," he said. "Just shove a whole one on. They're not a bit partic'lar. Swallow the bait, hook and all, and go — that's their caper. The fellow that doesn't catch the first fish has to clean'em."

Both sinkers started on their long descent together, and seventy feet of line whizzed out before they came to rest. But at the instant his sinker touched the bottom Joe felt the struggling jerks of a hooked fish. As he began to haul in he glanced at'Frisco Kid and saw that he too had evidently captured a finny prize. The race between them was exciting. Hand over hand the wet lines flashed inboard. But'Frisco Kid was more expert, and his fish tumbled into the cockpit first. Joe's followed an instant later — a three-pound rock-cod. He was wild with joy. It was magnificent — the largest fish he had ever landed or ever seen landed. Over went the lines again, and up they came with two mates of the ones already captured. It was sport royal. Joe would certainly have continued till he had fished the bay empty, had not'Frisco Kid persuaded him to stop.

"We've got enough for three meals now," he said, "so there's no use in having them spoil. Besides, the more you catch the more you clean, and you'd better start in right away. I'm going to bed."

CHAPTER XII

JOE TRIES TO TAKE FRENCH LEAVE

Joe did not mind. In fact, he was glad he had not caught the first fish, for it helped out a little plan which had come to him while swimming. He threw the last cleaned fish into a bucket of water and glanced about him. The quarantine station was a bare half-mile away, and he could make out a soldier pacing up and down at sentry duty on the beach. Going into the cabin, he listened to the heavy breathing of the sleepers. He had to pass so close to'Frisco Kid to get his bundle of clothes that he decided not to take it. Returning outside, he carefully pulled the skiff alongside, got aboard with a pair of oars, and cast off.

At first he rowed very gently in the direction of the station, fearing the chance of noise if he made undue haste. But gradually he increased the strength of his strokes till he had settled down to the regular stride. When he had covered half the distance he glanced about. Escape was sure now, for he knew, even if he were discovered, that it would be impossible for the ***Dazzler*** to get under way and head him off before he made the land and the protection of that man who wore the uniform of Uncle Sam's soldiers.

The report of a gun came to him from the shore, but his back was in that direction and he did not bother to turn around. A second report followed, and a bullet cut the water within a couple of feet of his oar-blade. This time he did turn around. The soldier on the beach was leveling his rifle at him for a third shot.

Joe was in a predicament, and a very tantalizing one at that. A few minutes of hard rowing would bring him to the beach and to safety; but on that beach, for some unaccountable reason, stood a United States soldier who persisted in firing at him. When Joe saw the gun aimed at him for the third time, he backed water hastily. As a result, the skiff came to a standstill, and the soldier, lowering his rifle, regarded him intently.

"I want to come ashore! Important!" Joe shouted out to him.

The man in uniform shook his head.

"But it's important, I tell you! Won't you let me come ashore?"

He took a hurried look in the direction of the ***Dazzler***. The shots had evidently awakened French Pete, for the mainsail had been hoisted, and as he looked he saw the anchor broken out and the jib flung to the breeze.

"Can't land here!" the soldier shouted back. "Smallpox!"

"But I must!" he cried, choking down a half-sob and preparing to row.

"Then I'll shoot you," was the cheering response, and the rifle came to shoulder again.

Joe thought rapidly. The island was large. Perhaps there were no soldiers farther on, and if he only once got ashore he did not care how quickly they captured him. He might catch the smallpox, but even that was better than going back to the bay pirates. He whirled the skiff half about to the right, and threw all his strength against the oars. The cove was quite wide, and the nearest point which he must go around a good distance away. Had he been more of a sailor, he would have gone in the other direction for the opposite point, and thus had the wind on his pursuers. As it was, the ***Dazzler*** had a beam wind in which to overtake him.

It was nip and tuck for a while. The breeze was light and not very steady, so sometimes he gained and sometimes they. Once it freshened till the sloop was within a hundred yards of him, and then it dropped suddenly flat, the ***Dazzler's*** big mainsail flapping idly from side to side.

"Ah! you steal ze skiff, eh?" French Pete howled at him, running into the cabin for his rifle. "I fix you! You come back queeck, or I kill you!" But he knew the soldier was watching them from the shore, and did not dare to fire, even over the lad's head.

Joe did not think of this, for he, who had never been shot at in all his previous life, had been under fire twice in the last twenty-four hours. Once more or less couldn't amount to much. So he pulled steadily away, while French Pete raved like a wild man, threatening him with all manner of punishments once he laid hands upon him again. To complicate matters,'Frisco Kid waxed mutinous.

"Just you shoot him, and I'll see you hung for it — see if I don't," he threatened. "You'd better let him go. He's a good boy and all right, and not raised for the dirty life you and I are leading."

"You too, eh!" the Frenchman shrieked, beside himself with rage. "Den I fix you, you rat!"

He made a rush for the boy, but'Frisco Kid led him a lively chase from cockpit to bowsprit and back again. A sharp capful of wind arriving just then, French Pete abandoned the one chase for the other. Springing to the tiller and slacking away on the main-sheet, — for the wind favored, — he headed the sloop down upon Joe. The latter made one tremendous spurt, then gave up in despair and hauled in his oars. French Pete let go the mainsheet, lost steerageway as he rounded up alongside the motionless skiff, and dragged Joe out.

"Keep mum,"'Frisco Kid whispered to him while the irate Frenchman was busy fastening the painter. "Don't talk back. Let him say all he wants to, and keep quiet. It'll be better for you."

But Joe's Anglo-Saxon blood was up, and he did not heed.

"Look here, Mr. French Pete, or whatever your name is," he commenced; "I give you to understand that I want to quit, and that I'm going to quit. So you'd better put me ashore at once. If you don't I'll put you in prison, or my name's not Joe Bronson."

'Frisco Kid waited the outcome fearfully. French Pete was aghast. He was being defied aboard his own vessel — and by a boy! Never had such a thing been heard of. He knew he was committing an unlawful act in detaining him, but at the same time he was afraid to let him go with the information he had gathered concerning the sloop and its occupation. The boy had spoken the unpleasant truth when he said he could send him to prison. The only thing for him to do was to bully him.

"You will, eh?" His shrill voice rose wrathfully. "Den you come too. You row ze boat last-a night — answer me dat! You steal ze iron — answer me dat! You run away — answer me dat! And den you say you put me in jail? Bah!"

"But I didn't know," Joe protested.

"Ha, ha! Dat is funny. You tell dat to ze judge; mebbe him laugh, eh?"

"I say I didn't," he reiterated manfully. "I didn't know I'd shipped along with a lot of thieves."

'Frisco Kid winced at this epithet, and had Joe been looking at him he would have seen a red flush mount to his face.

"And now that I do know," he continued, "I wish to be put ashore. I don't know anything about the law, but I do know something of right and wrong; and I'm willing to take my chance with any judge for whatever wrong I have done — with all the judges in the United States, for that matter. And that's more than you can say, Mr. Pete."

"You say dat, eh? Vaire good. But you are one big t'ief — "

"I'm not — don't you dare call me that again!" Joe's face was pale, and he was trembling — but not with fear.

"T'ief!" the Frenchman taunted back.

"You lie!"

Joe had not been a boy among boys for nothing. He knew the penalty which attached itself to the words he had just spoken, and he expected to receive it. So he was not overmuch surprised when he picked himself up from the floor of the cockpit an instant later, his head still ringing from a stiff blow between the eyes.

"Say dat one time more," French Pete bullied, his fist raised and prepared to strike.

Tears of anger stood in Joe's eyes, but he was calm and in deadly earnest. "When you say I am a thief, Pete, you lie. You can kill me, but still I will say you lie."

"No, you don't!"'Frisco Kid had darted in like a cat, preventing a second blow, and shoving the Frenchman back across the cockpit.

"You leave the boy alone!" he continued, suddenly unshipping and arming himself with the heavy iron tiller, and standing between them. "This thing's gone just about as far as it's going to go. You big fool, can't you see the stuff the boy's made of? He speaks true. He's right, and he knows it, and you could kill him and he wouldn't give in. There's my hand on it, Joe." He turned and extended his hand to Joe, who returned the grip. "You've got spunk and you're not afraid to show it."

French Pete's mouth twisted itself in a sickly smile, but the evil gleam in his eyes gave it the lie. He shrugged his shoulders and said, "Ah! So? He does not dee-sire dat I call him pet names. Ha, ha! It is only ze sailorman play. Let us — what you call — forgive and forget, eh? Vaire good; forgive and forget."

He reached out his hand, but Joe refused to take it.'Frisco Kid nodded approval, while French Pete, still shrugging his shoulders and smiling, passed into the cabin.

"Slack off ze main-sheet," he called out, "and run down for Hunter's Point. For one time I will cook ze dinner, and den you will say dat it is ze vaire good dinner. Ah! French Pete is ze great cook!"

"That's the way he always does — gets real good and cooks when he wants to make up,"'Frisco Kid hazarded, slipping the tiller into the rudder-head and obeying the order. "But even then you can't trust him."

Joe nodded his head, but did not speak. He was in no mood for conversation. He was still trembling from the excitement of the last few moments, while deep down he questioned himself on how he had behaved, and found nothing to be ashamed of.

CHAPTER XIII

BEFRIENDING EACH OTHER

The afternoon sea-breeze had sprung up and was now rioting in from the Pacific. Angel Island was fast dropping astern, and the water-front of San Francisco showing up, as the ***Dazzler*** plowed along before it. Soon they were in the midst of the shipping, passing in and out among the vessels which had come from the ends of the earth. Later they crossed the fairway, where the ferry steamers, crowded with passengers, passed to and fro between San Francisco and Oakland. One came so close that the passengers crowded to the side to see the gallant little sloop and the two boys in the cockpit. Joe gazed enviously at the row of down-turned faces. They were all going to their homes, while he — he was going he knew not whither, at the will of French Pete. He was half tempted to cry out for help; but the foolishness of such an act struck him, and he held his tongue. Turning his head, his eyes wandered along the smoky heights of the city, and he fell to musing on the strange way of men and ships on the sea.

‘Frisco Kid watched him from the corner of his eye, following his thoughts as accurately as though he spoke them aloud.

“Got a home over there somewheres?” he queried suddenly, waving his hand in the direction of the city.

Joe started, so correctly had his thought been guessed. “Yes,” he said simply.

“Tell us about it.”

Joe rapidly described his home, though forced to go into greater detail because of the curious questions of his companion.’Frisco Kid was interested in everything, especially in Mrs. Bronson and Bessie. Of the latter he could not seem to tire, and poured forth question after question concerning her. So peculiar and artless were some of them that Joe could hardly forbear to smile.

“Now tell me about yours,” he said when he at last had finished.

‘Frisco Kid seemed suddenly to harden, and his face took on a stern look which the other had never seen there before. He swung his foot idly to and fro, and lifted a dull eye aloft to the main-peak blocks, with which, by the way, there was nothing the matter.

"Go ahead," the other encouraged.

"I haven't no home."

The four words left his mouth as though they had been forcibly ejected, and his lips came together after them almost with a snap.

Joe saw he had touched a tender spot, and strove to ease the way out of it again. "Then the home you did have." He did not dream that there were lads in the world who never had known homes, or that he had only succeeded in probing deeper.

"Never had none."

"Oh!" His interest was aroused, and he now threw solicitude to the winds. "Any sisters?"

"Nope."

"Mother?"

"I was so young when she died that I don't remember her."

"Father?"

"I never saw much of him. He went to sea — anyhow, he disappeared."

"Oh!" Joe did not know what to say, and an oppressive silence, broken only by the churn of the ***Dazzler's*** forefoot, fell upon them.

Just then Pete came out to relieve at the tiller while they went in to eat. Both lads hailed his advent with feelings of relief, and the awkwardness vanished over the dinner, which was all their skipper had claimed it to be. Afterward'Frisco Kid relieved Pete, and while he was eating Joe washed up the dishes and put the cabin shipshape. Then they all gathered in the stern, where the captain strove to increase the general cordiality by entertaining them with descriptions of life among the pearl-divers of the South Seas.

In this fashion the afternoon wore away. They had long since left San Francisco behind, rounded Hunter's Point, and were now skirting the San Mateo shore. Joe caught a glimpse, once, of a party of cyclists rounding a cliff on the San Bruno Road, and remembered the time when he had gone over the same ground on his own wheel. It was only a month or two before, but it seemed an age to him now, so much had there been to come between.

By the time supper had been eaten and the things cleared away, they were well down the bay, off the marshes behind which Redwood City clustered. The wind had gone down with the sun, and the ***Dazzler*** was making but little headway, when they sighted a sloop bearing down upon them on the dying wind.'Frisco Kid instantly named it as the ***Reindeer***, to which French

Pete, after a deep scrutiny, agreed. He seemed very much pleased at the meeting.

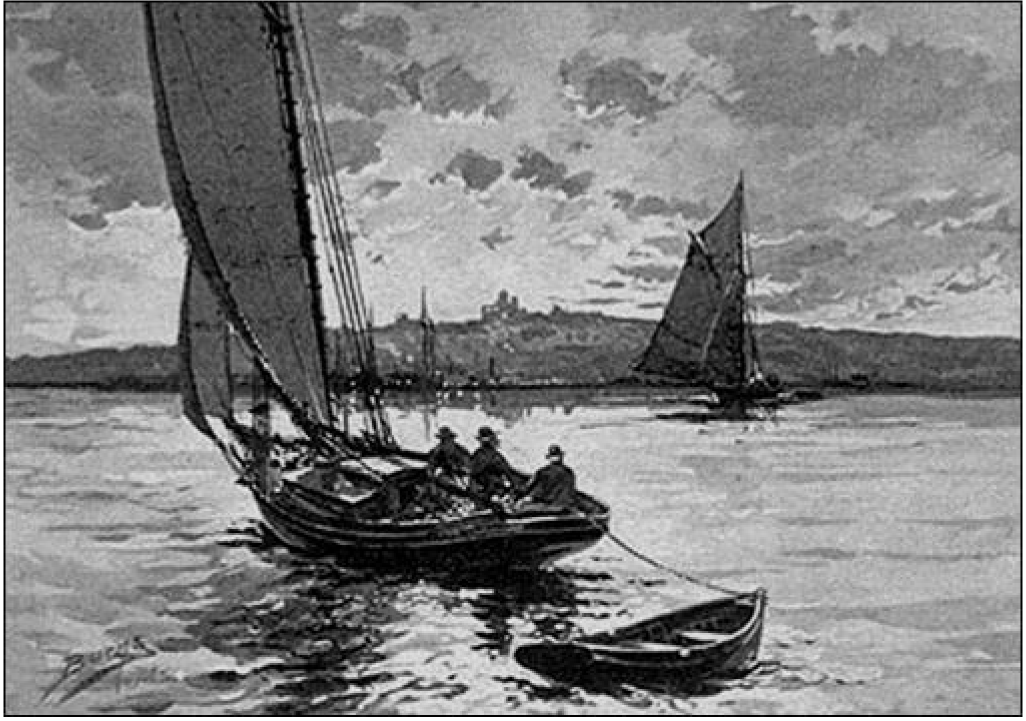

“Red Nelson runs her,”‘Frisco Kid informed Joe. “And he’s a terror and no mistake. I’m always afraid of him when he comes near. They’ve got something big down here, and they’re always after French Pete to tackle it with them. He knows more about it, whatever it is.”

Joe nodded, and looked at the approaching craft curiously. Though somewhat larger, it was built on about the same lines as the ***Dazzler*** which meant, above everything else, that it was built for speed. The mainsail was so large that it was more like that of a racing-yacht, and it carried the points for no less than three reefs in case of rough weather. Aloft and on deck everything was in place — nothing was untidy or useless. From running-gear to standing rigging, everything bore evidence of thorough order and smart seamanship.

The ***Reindeer*** came up slowly in the gathering twilight and went to anchor a biscuit-toss away. French Pete followed suit with the ***Dazzler***, and then went in the skiff to pay them a visit. The two lads stretched themselves out on top the cabin and awaited his return.

“Do you like the life?” Joe broke silence.

The other turned on his elbow. “Well — I do, and then again I don’t. The fresh air, and the salt water, and all that, and the freedom — that’s all right;

but I don’t like the — the — ” He paused a moment, as though his tongue had failed in its duty, and then blurted out: “the stealing.”

“Then why don’t you quit it?” Joe liked the lad more than he dared confess to himself, and he felt a sudden missionary zeal come upon him.

“I will just as soon as I can turn my hand to something else.”

“But why not now?”

Now is the accepted time was ringing in Joe’s ears, and if the other wished to leave, it seemed a pity that he did not, and at once.

“Where can I go? What can I do? There’s nobody in all the world to lend me a hand, just as there never has been. I tried it once, and learned my lesson too well to do it again in a hurry.”

“Well, when I get out of this I’m going home. Guess my father was right, after all. And I don’t see, maybe — what’s the matter with you going with me?” He said this last without thinking, impulsively, and’Frisco Kid knew it.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about,” he answered. “Fancy me going off with you! What’d your father say? and — and the rest? How would he think of me? And what’d he do?”

Joe felt sick at heart. He realized that in the spirit of the moment he had given an invitation which, on sober thought, he knew would be impossible to carry out. He tried to imagine his father receiving in his own house a stranger like’Frisco Kid — no, that was not to be thought of. Then, forgetting his own plight, he fell to racking his brains for some other method by which’Frisco Kid could get away from his present surroundings.

“He might turn me over to the police,” the other went on, “and send me to a refuge. I’d die first, before I’d let that happen to me. And besides, Joe, I’m not of your kind, and you know it. Why, I’d be like a fish out of water, what with all the things I didn’t know. Nope; I guess I’ll have to wait a little before I strike out. But there’s only one thing for you to do, and that’s to go straight home. First chance I get I’ll land you, and then I’ll deal with French Pete — ”

“No, you don’t,” Joe interrupted hotly. “When I leave I’m not going to leave you in trouble on my account. So don’t you try anything like that. I’ll get away, never fear, and if I can figure it out I want you to come along too; come along anyway, and figure it out afterward. What d’ you say?”

‘Frisco Kid shook his head, and, gazing up at the starlit heavens, wandered off into dreams of the life he would like to lead but from which he seemed inexorably shut out. The seriousness of life was striking deeper than ever into Joe's heart, and he lay silent, thinking hard. A mumble of heavy voices came to them from the ***Reindeer***; and from the land the solemn notes of a church bell floated across the water, while the summer night wrapped them slowly in its warm darkness.

CHAPTER XIV

AMONG THE OYSTER-BEDS

Time and the world slipped away, and both boys were aroused by the harsh voice of French Pete from the sleep into which they had fallen.

"Get under way!" he was bawling. "Here, you Sho! Cast off ze gaskets! Queeck! Lively! You Kid, ze jib!"

Joe was clumsy in the darkness, not knowing the names of things and the places where they were to be found; but he made fair progress, and when he had tossed the gaskets into the cockpit was ordered forward to help hoist the mainsail. After that the anchor was hove in and the jib set. Then they coiled down the halyards and put everything in order before they returned aft.

"Vaire good, vaire good," the Frenchman praised, as Joe dropped in over the rail. "Splendeed! You make ze good sailorman, I know for sure."

'Frisco Kid lifted the cover of one of the cockpit lockers and glanced questioningly at French Pete.

"For sure," that mariner replied. "Put up ze side-lights."

'Frisco Kid took the red and green lanterns into the cabin to light them, and then went forward with Joe to hang them in the rigging.

"They're not goin' to tackle it,"'Frisco Kid said in an undertone.

"What?" Joe asked.

"That big thing I was tellin' you was down here somewhere. It's so big, I guess, that French Pete's'most afraid to go in for it. Red Nelson'd go in quicker'n a wink, but he don't know enough about it. Can't go in, you see, till Pete gives the word."

"Where are we going now?" Joe questioned.

"Don't know; oyster-beds most likely, from the way we're heading."

It was an uneventful trip. A breeze sprang up out of the night behind them, and held steady for an hour or more. Then it dropped and became aimless and erratic, puffing gently first from one quarter and then another. French Pete remained at the tiller, while occasionally Joe or'Frisco Kid took in or slacked off a sheet.

Joe sat and marveled that the Frenchman should know where he was going. To Joe it seemed that they were lost in the impenetrable darkness which shrouded them. A high fog had rolled in from the Pacific, and though they were beneath, it came between them and the stars, depriving them of the little light from that source.

But French Pete seemed to know instinctively the direction he should go, and once, in reply to a query from Joe, bragged of his ability to go by the "feel" of things.

"I feel ze tide, ze wind, ze speed," he explained. "Even do I feel ze land. Dat I tell you for sure. How? I do not know. Only do I know dat I feel ze land, just like my arm grow long, miles and miles long, and I put my hand upon ze land and feel it, and know dat it is there."

Joe looked incredulously at'Frisco Kid.

"That's right," he affirmed. "After you've been on the water a good while you come to feel the land. And if your nose is any account, you can usually smell it."

An hour or so later, Joe surmised from the Frenchman's actions that they were approaching their destination. He seemed on the alert, and was constantly peering into the darkness ahead as though he expected to see something at any moment. Joe looked very hard, but saw only the darkness.

"Try ze stick, Kid," French Pete ordered. "I t'ink it is about ze time."

'Frisco Kid unlashed a long and slender pole from the top of the cabin, and, standing on the narrow deck amidships, plunged one end of it into the water and drove it straight down.

"About fifteen feet," he said.

"What ze bottom?"

"Mud," was the answer.

"Wait one while, den we try some more."

Five minutes afterward the pole was plunged overside again.

"Two fathoms," Joe answered — "shells."

French Pete rubbed his hands with satisfaction. "Vaire good, vaire well," he said. "I hit ze ground every time. You can't fool-a ze old man; I tell you dat for sure."

'Frisco Kid continued operating the pole and announcing the results, to the mystification of Joe, who could not comprehend their intimate knowledge of the bottom of the bay.

"Ten feet — shells,"'Frisco Kid went on in a monotonous voice. "'Leven feet — shells. Fourteen feet — soft. Sixteen feet — mud. No bottom."

"Ah, ze channel," said French Pete at this.

For a few minutes it was “No bottom”; and then, suddenly, came’Frisco Kid’s cry: “Eight feet — hard!”

“Dat’ll do,” French Pete commanded. “Run for’ard, you Sho, an’ let go ze jib. You, Kid, get all ready ze hook.”

Joe found the jib-halyard and cast it off the pin, and, as the canvas fluttered down, came in hand over hand on the downhaul.

“Let’er go!” came the command, and the anchor dropped into the water, carrying but little chain after it.

‘Frisco Kid threw over plenty of slack and made fast. Then they furled the sails, made things tidy, and went below and to bed.

It was six o’clock when Joe awoke and went out into the cockpit to look about. Wind and sea had sprung up, and the ***Dazzler*** was rolling and tossing and now and again fetching up on her anchor-chain with a savage jerk. He was forced to hold on to the boom overhead to steady himself. It was a gray and leaden day, with no signs of the rising sun, while the sky was obscured by great masses of flying clouds.

Joe sought for the land. A mile and a half away it lay — a long, low stretch of sandy beach with a heavy surf thundering upon it. Behind appeared desolate marshlands, while far beyond towered the Contra Costa Hills.

Changing the direction of his gaze, Joe was startled by the sight of a small sloop rolling and plunging at her anchor not a hundred yards away. She was nearly to windward, and as she swung off slightly he read her name on the stern, the ***Flying Dutchman***, one of the boats he had seen lying at the city wharf in Oakland. A little to the left of her he discovered the ***Ghost***, and beyond were half a dozen other sloops at anchor.

“What I tell you?”

Joe looked quickly over his shoulder. French Pete had come out of the cabin and was triumphantly regarding the spectacle.

“What I tell you? Can’t fool-a ze old man, dat’s what. I hit it in ze dark just so well as in ze sunshine. I know — I know.”

“Is she goin’ to howl?”‘Frisco Kid asked from the cabin, where he was starting the fire.

The Frenchman gravely studied sea and sky for a couple of minutes.

“Mebbe blow over — mebbe blow up,” was his doubtful verdict. “Get breakfast queeck, and we try ze dredging.”

Smoke was rising from the cabins of the different sloops, denoting that they were all bent on getting the first meal of the day. So far as the ***Dazzler*** was concerned, it was a simple matter, and soon they were putting a single reef in the mainsail and getting ready to weigh anchor.

Joe was curious. These were undoubtedly the oyster-beds; but how under the sun, in that wild sea, were they to get oysters? He was quickly to learn the way. Lifting a section of the cockpit flooring, French Pete brought out two triangular frames of steel. At the apex of one of these triangles; in a ring for the purpose, he made fast a piece of stout rope. From this the sides (inch rods) diverged at almost right angles, and extended down for a distance of four feet or more, where they were connected by the third side of the triangle, which was the bottom of the dredge. This was a flat plate of steel over a yard in length, to which was bolted a row of long, sharp teeth, likewise of steel. Attached to the toothed plate, and to the sides of the frame was a net of very coarse fishing-twine, which Joe correctly surmised was there to catch the oysters raked loose by the teeth from the bottom of the bay.

A rope being made fast to each of the dredges, they were dropped overboard from either side of the ***Dazzler***. When they had reached the bottom, and were dragging with the proper length of line out, they checked her speed quite noticeably. Joe touched one of the lines with his hands, and could feel plainly the shock and jar and grind as it tore over the bottom.

“All in!” French Pete shouted.

The boys laid hold of the line and hove in the dredge. The net was full of mud and slime and small oysters, with here and there a large one. This mess they dumped on the deck and picked over while the dredge was dragging again. The large oysters they threw into the cockpit, and shoveled the rubbish overboard. There was no rest, for by this time the other dredge required emptying. And when this was done and the oysters sorted, both dredges had to be hauled aboard, so that French Pete could put the ***Dazzler*** about on the other tack.

The rest of the fleet was under way and dredging back in similar fashion. Sometimes the different sloops came quite close to them, and they hailed them and exchanged snatches of conversation and rough jokes. But in the main it was hard work, and at the end of an hour Joe’s back was aching from the unaccustomed strain, and his fingers were cut and bleeding from his clumsy handling of the sharp-edged oysters.

"Dat's right," French Pete said approvingly. "You learn queeck. Vaire soon you know how."

Joe grinned ruefully and wished it was dinner-time. Now and then, when a light dredge was hauled, the boys managed to catch breath and say a couple of words.

"That's Asparagus Island,"'Frisco Kid said, indicating the shore. "At least, that's what the fishermen and scow-sailors call it. The people who live there call it Bay Farm Island." He pointed more to the right. "And over there is San Leandro. You can't see it, but it's there."

"Ever been there?" Joe asked.

'Frisco Kid nodded his head and signed to him to help heave in the starboard dredge.

"These are what they call the deserted beds," he said again. "Nobody owns them, so the oyster pirates come down and make a bluff at working them."

"Why a bluff?"

"'Cause they're pirates, that's why, and because there's more money in raiding the private beds."

He made a sweeping gesture toward the east and southeast. "The private beds are over yonder, and if it don't storm the whole fleet'll be raidin''em to-night."

"And if it does storm?" Joe asked.

"Why, we won't raid them, and French Pete'll be mad, that's all. He always hates being put out by the weather. But it don't look like lettin' up, and this is the worst possible shore in a sou'wester. Pete may try to hang on, but it's best to get out before she howls."

At first it did seem as though the weather were growing better. The stiff southwest wind dropped perceptibly, and by noon, when they went to anchor for dinner, the sun was breaking fitfully through the clouds.

"That's all right,"'Frisco Kid said prophetically. "But I ain't been on the bay for nothing. She's just gettin' ready to let us have it good an' hard."

"I t'ink you're right, Kid," French Pete agreed; "but ze ***Dazzler*** hang on all ze same. Last-a time she run away, an' fine night come. Dis time she run not away. Eh? Vaire good."

CHAPTER XV

GOOD SAILORS IN A WILD ANCHORAGE

All afternoon the ***Dazzler*** pitched and rolled at her anchorage, and as evening drew on the wind deceitfully eased down. This, and the example set by French Pete, encouraged the rest of the oyster-boats to attempt to ride out the night; but they looked carefully to their moorings and put out spare anchors.

French Pete ordered the two boys into the skiff, and, at the imminent risk of swamping, they carried out a second anchor, at nearly right angles to the first one, and dropped it over. French Pete then ran out a great quantity of chain and rope, so that the ***Dazzler*** dropped back a hundred feet or more, where she rode more easily.

It was a wild stretch of water which Joe looked upon from the shelter of the cockpit. The oyster-beds were out in the open bay, utterly unprotected, and the wind, sweeping the water for a clean twelve miles, kicked up so tremendous a sea that at every moment it seemed as though the wallowing sloops would roll their masts overside. Just before twilight a patch of sail sprang up to windward, and grew and grew until it resolved itself into the huge mainsail of the ***Reindeer***.

“Ze beeg fool!” French Pete cried, running out of the cabin to see. “Sometime — ah, sometime, I tell you — he crack on like dat, an’ he go, pouf! just like dat, pouf! — an’ no more Nelson, no more ***Reindeer***, no more nothing.”

Joe looked inquiringly at’Frisco Kid.

“That’s right,” he answered. “Nelson ought to have at least one reef in. Two’d be better. But there he goes, every inch spread, as though some fiend was after’im. He drives too hard; he’s too reckless, when there ain’t the smallest need for it. I’ve sailed with him, and I know his ways.”

Like some huge bird of the air, the ***Reindeer*** lifted and soared down on them on the foaming crest of a wave.

“Don’t mind,”‘Frisco Kid warned. “He’s only tryin’ to see how close he can come to us without hittin’ us.”

Joe nodded, and stared with wide eyes at the thrilling sight. The ***Reindeer*** leaped up in the air, pointing her nose to the sky till they could see her whole churning forefoot; then she plunged downward till her for'ard deck was flush with the foam, and with a dizzying rush she drove past them, her main-boom missing the ***Dazzler's*** rigging by scarcely a foot.

Nelson, at the wheel, waved his hand to them as he hurtled past, and laughed joyously in French Pete's face, who was angered by the dangerous trick.

When to leeward, the splendid craft rounded to the wind, rolling once till her brown bottom showed to the centerboard and they thought she was over, then righting and dashing ahead again like a thing possessed. She passed abreast of them on the starboard side. They saw the jib run down with a rush and an anchor go overboard as she shot into the wind; and as she fell off and back and off and back with a spilling mainsail, they saw a second anchor go overboard, wide apart from the first. Then the mainsail came down on the run, and was furled and fastened by the time she had tightened to her double hawsers.

"Ah, ah! Never was there such a man!"

The Frenchman's eyes were glistening with admiration for such perfect seamanship, and'Frisco Kid's were likewise moist.

"Just like a yacht," he said as he went back into the cabin. "Just like a yacht, only better."

As night came on the wind began to rise again, and by eleven o'clock had reached the stage which'Frisco Kid described as "howlin'." There was little sleep on the ***Dazzler***. He alone closed his eyes. French Pete was up and down every few minutes. Twice, when he went on deck, he paid out more chain and rope. Joe lay in his blankets and listened, the while vainly courting sleep. He was not frightened, but he was untrained in the art of sleeping in the midst of such turmoil and uproar and violent commotion. Nor had he imagined a boat could play as wild antics as did the ***Dazzler*** and still survive. Often she wallowed over on her beam till he thought she would surely capsize. At other times she leaped and plunged in the air and fell upon the seas with thunderous crashes as though her bottom were shattered to fragments. Again, she would fetch up taut on her hawsers so suddenly and so fiercely as to reel from the shock and to groan and protest through every timber.

'Frisco Kid awoke once, and smiled at him, saying:

"This is what they call hangin' on. But just you wait till daylight comes, and watch us clawin' off. If some of the sloops don't go ashore, I'm not me, that's all."

And thereat he rolled over on his side and was off to sleep. Joe envied him. About three in the morning he heard French Pete crawl up for'ard and rummage around in the eyes of the boat. Joe looked on curiously, and by the dim light of the wildly swinging sea-lamp saw him drag out two spare coils of line. These he took up on deck, and Joe knew he was bending them on to the hawsers to make them still longer.

At half-past four French Pete had the fire going, and at five he called the boys for coffee. This over, they crept into the cockpit to gaze on the terrible scene. The dawn was breaking bleak and gray over a wild waste of tumbling water. They could faintly see the beach-line of Asparagus Island, but they could distinctly hear the thunder of the surf upon it; and as the day grew stronger they made out that they had dragged fully half a mile during the night.

The rest of the fleet had likewise dragged. The ***Reindeer*** was almost abreast of them; ***La Caprice*** lay a few hundred yards away; and to leeward, straggling between them and shore, were five more of the struggling oyster-boats.

"Two missing,"'Frisco Kid announced, putting the glasses to his eyes and searching the beach.

"And there's one!" he cried. And after studying it carefully he added: "The ***Go Ask Her***. She'll be in pieces in no time. I hope they got ashore."

French Pete looked through the glasses, and then Joe. He could clearly see the unfortunate sloop lifting and pounding in the surf, and on the beach he spied the men who made up her crew.

"Where's ze ***Ghost***?" French Pete queried.

'Frisco Kid looked for her in vain along the beach; but when he turned the glass seaward he quickly discovered her riding safely in the growing light, half a mile or more to windward.

"I'll bet she didn't drag a hundred feet all night," he said. "Must've struck good holding-ground."

"Mud," was French Pete's verdict. "Just one vaire small patch of mud right there. If she get t'rough it she's a sure-enough goner, I tell you dat. Her anchors vaire light, only good for mud. I tell ze boys get more heavy anchors, but dey laugh. Some day be sorry, for sure."

One of the sloops to leeward raised a patch of sail and began the terrible struggle out of the jaws of destruction and death. They watched her for a space, rolling and plunging fearfully, and making very little headway.

French Pete put a stop to their gazing. “Come on!” he shouted. “Put two reef in ze mainsail! We get out queeck!”

While occupied with this a shout aroused them. Looking up, they saw the ***Ghost*** dead ahead and right on top of them, and dragging down upon them at a furious rate.

French Pete scrambled forward like a cat, at the same time drawing his knife, with one stroke of which he severed the rope that held them to the spare anchor. This threw the whole weight of the ***Dazzler*** on the chain-anchor. In consequence she swung off to the left, and just in time; for the next instant, drifting stern foremost, the ***Ghost*** passed over the spot she had vacated.

“Why, she’s got four anchors out!” Joe exclaimed, at sight of four taut ropes entering the water almost horizontally from her bow.

“Two of’em’s dredges,”‘Frisco Kid grinned; “and there goes the stove.”

As he spoke, two young fellows appeared on deck and dropped the cooking-stove overside with a line attached.

“Phew!”‘Frisco Kid cried. “Look at Nelson. He’s got one reef in, and you can just bet that’s a sign she’s howlin’!”

The ***Reindeer*** came foaming toward them, breasting the storm like some magnificent sea-animal. Red Nelson waved to them as he passed astern, and fifteen minutes later, when they were breaking out the one anchor that remained to them, he passed well to windward on the other tack.

French Pete followed her admiringly, though he said ominously: “Some day, pouf! he go just like dat, I tell you, sure.”

A moment later the ***Dazzler’s*** reefed jib was flung out, and she was straining and struggling in the thick of the fight. It was slow work, and hard and dangerous, clawing off that lee shore, and Joe found himself marveling often that so small a craft could possibly endure a minute in such elemental fury. But little by little she worked off the shore and out of the ground-swell into the deeper waters of the bay, where the main-sheet was slacked away a bit, and she ran for shelter behind the rock wall of the Alameda Mole a few miles away. Here they found the ***Reindeer*** calmly at anchor; and here, during the next several hours, straggled in the remainder of the fleet, with the exception of the ***Ghost***, which had evidently gone ashore to keep the ***Go Ask Her*** company.

By afternoon the wind had dropped away with surprising suddenness, and the weather had turned almost summer-like.

“It doesn’t look right,”‘Frisco Kid said in the evening, after French Pete had rowed over in the skiff to visit Nelson.

“What doesn’t look right?” Joe asked.

“Why, the weather. It went down too sudden. It didn’t have a chance to blow itself out, and it ain’t going to quit till does blow itself out. It’s likely to puff up and howl at any moment, if I know anything about it.”

“Where will we go from here?” Joe asked. “Back to the oyster-beds?”

‘Frisco Kid shook his head. “I can’t say what French Pete’ll do. He’s been fooled on the iron, and fooled on the oysters, and he’s that disgusted he’s liable to do’most anything desperate. I wouldn’t be surprised to see him go off with Nelson towards Redwood City, where that big thing is that I was tellin’ you about. It’s somewhere over there.”

“Well, I won’t have anything to do with it,” Joe announced decisively.

“Of course not,”‘Frisco Kid answered. “And with Nelson and his two men an’ French Pete, I don’t think there’ll be any need for you anyway.”

CHAPTER XVI

'FRISCO KID'S DITTY-BOX

After the conversation died away, the two lads lay upon the cabin for perhaps an hour. Then, without saying a word,'Frisco Kid went below and struck a light. Joe could hear him fumbling about, and a little later heard his own name called softly. On going into the cabin, he saw'Frisco Kid sitting on the edge of the bunk, a sailor's ditty-box on his knees, and in his hand a carefully folded page from a magazine.

"Does she look like this?" he asked, smoothing it out and turning it that the other might see.

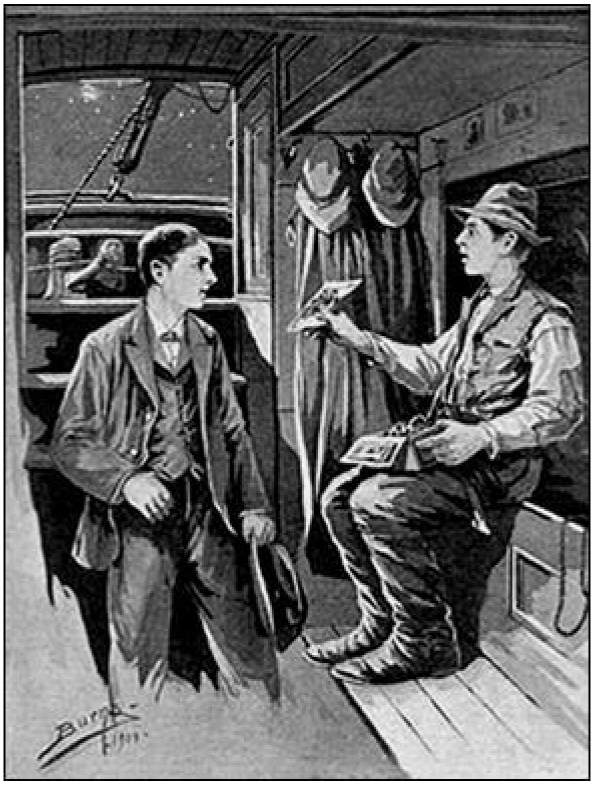

It was a half-page illustration of two girls and a boy, grouped, evidently, in an old-fashioned roomy attic, and holding a council of some sort. The girl who was talking faced the onlooker, while the backs of the other two were turned.

"Who?" Joe queried, glancing in perplexity from the picture to'Frisco Kid's face.

"Your — your sister — Bessie."

The word seemed reluctant in coming to his lips, and he expressed himself with a certain shy reverence, as though it were something unspeakably sacred.

Joe was nonplussed for the moment. He could see no bearing between the two in point, and, anyway, girls were rather silly creatures to waste one's time over. "He's actually blushing," he thought, regarding the soft glow on the other's cheeks. He felt an irresistible desire to laugh, and tried to smother it down.

"No, no; don't!"'Frisco Kid cried, snatching the paper away and putting it back in the ditty-box with shaking fingers. Then he added more slowly: "I thought — I — I kind o' thought you would understand, and — and — "

His lips trembled and his eyes glistened with unwonted moistness as he turned hastily away.

The next instant Joe was by his side on the bunk, his arm around him. Prompted by some instinctive monitor, he had done it before he thought. A week before he could not have imagined himself in such an absurd situation — his arm around a boy; but now it seemed the most natural thing in the world. He did not comprehend, but he knew, whatever it was, that it was of deep importance to his companion.

"Go ahead and tell us," he urged. "I'll understand."

"No, you won't. You can't."

"Yes, sure. Go ahead."

'Frisco Kid choked and shook his head. "I don't think I could, anyway. It's more the things I feel, and I don't know how to put them in words." Joe's hand patted his shoulder reassuringly, and he went on: "Well, it's this way. You see, I don't know much about the land, and people, and things, and I never had any brothers or sisters or playmates. All the time I didn't know it, but I was lonely — sort of missed them down in here somewheres." He placed a hand over his breast. "Did you ever feel downright hungry? Well, that's just the way I used to feel, only a different kind of hunger, and me not knowing what it was. But one day, oh, a long time back, I got a-hold of a magazine and saw a picture — that picture, with the two girls and the boy talking together. I thought it must be fine to be like them, and I got to thinking about the things they said and did, till it came to me all of a sudden like, and I knew it was just loneliness was the matter with me.

"But, more than anything else, I got to wondering about the girl who looks out of the picture right at you. I was thinking about her all the time, and by and by she became real to me. You see, it was making believe, and I knew it all the time, and then again I didn't. Whenever I'd think of the men, and the work, and the hard life, I'd know it was make-believe; but when I'd think of her, it wasn't. I don't know; I can't explain it."

Joe remembered all his own adventures which he had imagined on land and sea, and nodded. He at least understood that much.

"Of course it was all foolishness, but to have a girl like that for a comrade or friend seemed more like heaven to me than anything else I knew of. As I said, it was a long while back, and I was only a little kid — that was when Red Nelson gave me my name, and I've never been anything but'Frisco Kid ever since. But the girl in the picture: I was always getting that picture out to look at her, and before long, if I wasn't square — why, I felt ashamed to look at her. Afterwards, when I was older, I came to look at it in another way. I thought,'Suppose, Kid, some day you were to meet a girl like that, what would she think of you? Could she like you? Could she be even the least bit of a friend to you?' And then I'd make up my mind to be better, to try and do something with myself so that she or any of her kind of people would not be ashamed to know me.

"That's why I learned to read. That's why I ran away. Nicky Perrata, a Greek boy, taught me my letters, and it wasn't till after I learned to read that I found out there was anything really wrong in bay-pirating. I'd been used to it ever since I could remember, and almost all the people I knew made their living that way. But when I did find out, I ran away, thinking to quit it for good. I'll tell you about it sometime, and how I'm back at it again.

"Of course she seemed a real girl when I was a youngster, and even now she sometimes seems that way, I've thought so much about her. But while I'm talking to you it all clears up and she comes to me in this light: she stands just for a plain idea, a better, cleaner life than this, and one I'd like to live; and if I could live it, why, I'd come to know that kind of girls, and their kind of people — your kind, that's what I mean. So I was wondering about your sister and you, and that's why — I don't know; I guess I was just wondering. But I suppose you know lots of girls like that, don't you?"

Joe nodded his head.

"Then tell me about them — something, anything," he added as he noted the fleeting expression of doubt in the other's eyes.

“Oh, that’s easy,” Joe began valiantly. To a certain extent he did understand the lad’s hunger, and it seemed a simple enough task to at least partially satisfy him. “To begin with, they’re like — hem! — why, they’re like — girls, just girls.” He broke off with a miserable sense of failure.

‘Frisco Kid waited patiently, his face a study in expectancy.

Joe struggled valiantly to marshal his forces. To his mind, in quick succession, came the girls with whom he had gone to school — the sisters of the boys he knew, and those who were his sister’s friends: slim girls and plump girls, tall girls and short girls, blue-eyed and brown-eyed, curly-haired, black-haired, golden-haired; in short, a procession of girls of all sorts and descriptions. But, to save himself, he could say nothing about them. Anyway, he’d never been a “sissy,” and why should he be expected to know anything about them? “All girls are alike,” he concluded desperately. “They’re just the same as the ones you know, Kid — sure they are.”

“But I don’t know any.”

Joe whistled. “And never did?”

“Yes, one. Carlotta Gispardi. But she couldn’t speak English, and I couldn’t speak Dago; and she died. I don’t care; though I never knew any, I seem to know as much about them as you do.”

“And I guess I know more about adventures all over the world than you do,” Joe retorted.

Both boys laughed. But a moment later, Joe fell into deep thought. It had come upon him quite swiftly that he had not been duly grateful for the good things of life he did possess. Already home, father, and mother had assumed a greater significance to him; but he now found himself placing a higher personal value upon his sister and his chums and friends. He had never appreciated them properly, he thought, but henceforth — well, there would be a different tale to tell.

The voice of French Pete hailing them put a finish to the conversation, for they both ran on deck.

CHAPTER XVII

‘FRISCO KID TELLS HIS STORY

“Get up ze mainsail and break out ze hook!” the Frenchman shouted. “And den tail on to ze ***Reindeer***! No side-lights!”

“Come! Cast off those gaskets — lively!”‘Frisco Kid ordered. “Now lay on to the peak-halyards — there, that rope — cast it off the pin. And don’t hoist ahead of me. There! Make fast! We’ll stretch it afterwards. Run aft and come in on the main-sheet! Shove the helm up!”

Under the sudden driving power of the mainsail, the ***Dazzler*** strained and tugged at her anchor like an impatient horse till the muddy iron left the bottom with a rush and she was free.

“Let go the sheet! Come for’ard again and lend a hand on the chain! Stand by to give her the jib!”‘Frisco Kid the boy who mooned over girls in pictorial magazines had vanished, and’Frisco Kid the sailor, strong and dominant, was on deck. He ran aft and tacked about as the jib rattled aloft in the hands of Joe, who quickly joined him. Just then the ***Reindeer***, like a monstrous bat, passed to leeward of them in the gloom.

“Ah, dose boys! Dey take all-a night!” they heard French Pete exclaim, and then the gruff voice of Red Nelson, who said: “Never you mind, Frenchy. I taught the Kid his sailorizing, and I ain’t never been ashamed of him yet.”

The ***Reindeer*** was the faster boat, but by spilling the wind from her sails they managed so that the boys could keep them in sight. The breeze came steadily in from the west, with a promise of early increase. The stars were being blotted out by masses of driving clouds, which indicated a greater velocity in the upper strata.’Frisco Kid surveyed the sky.

“Going to have it good and stiff before morning,” he said, “just as I told you.”

Several hours later, both boats stood in for the San Mateo shore, and dropped anchor not more than a cable’s-length away. A little wharf ran out, the bare end of which was perceptible to them, though they could discern a small yacht lying moored to a buoy a short distance away.

According to their custom, everything was put in readiness for hasty departure. The anchors could be tripped and the sails flung out on a moment's notice. Both skiffs came over noiselessly from the ***Reindeer***. Red Nelson had given one of his two men to French Pete, so that each skiff was doubly manned. They were not a very prepossessing group of men, — at least, Joe did not think so, — for their faces bore a savage seriousness which almost made him shiver. The captain of the ***Dazzler*** buckled on his pistol-belt, and placed a rifle and a stout double-block tackle in the boat. Then he poured out wine all around, and, standing in the darkness of the little cabin, they pledged success to the expedition. Red Nelson was also armed, while his men wore at their hips the customary sailor's sheath-knife. They were very slow and careful to avoid noise in getting into the boats, French Pete pausing long enough to warn the boys to remain quietly aboard and not try any tricks.

"Now'd be your chance, Joe, if they hadn't taken the skiff,"'Frisco Kid whispered, when the boats had vanished into the loom of the land.

"What's the matter with the ***Dazzler***?" was the unexpected answer. "We could up sail and away before you could say Jack Robinson."

'Frisco Kid hesitated. The spirit of comradeship was strong in the lad, and deserting a companion in a pinch could not but be repulsive to him.

"I don't think it'd be exactly square to leave them in the lurch ashore," he said. "Of course," he went on hurriedly, "I know the whole thing's wrong; but you remember that first night, when you came running through the water for the skiff, and those fellows on the bank busy popping away? We didn't leave you in the lurch, did we?"

Joe assented reluctantly, and then a new thought flashed across his mind. "But they're pirates — and thieves — and criminals. They're breaking the law, and you and I are not willing to be lawbreakers. Besides, they'll not be left. There's the ***Reindeer***. There's nothing to prevent them from getting away on her, and they'll never catch us in the dark."

"Come on, then." Though he had agreed,'Frisco Kid did not quite like it, for it still seemed to savor of desertion.

They crawled forward and began to hoist the mainsail. The anchor they could slip, if necessary, and save the time of pulling it up. But at the first rattle of the halyards on the sheaves a warning "Hist!" came to them through the darkness, followed by a loudly whispered "Drop that!"

Glancing in the direction from which these sounds proceeded, they made out a white face peering at them from over the rail of the other sloop.

"Aw, it's only the ***Reindeer's*** boy,"'Frisco Kid said. "Come on."

Again they were interrupted at the first rattling of the blocks.

“I say, you fellers, you’d better let go them halyards pretty quick, I’m a-tellin’ you, or I’ll give you what for!”

This threat being dramatically capped by the click of a cocking pistol,’Frisco Kid obeyed and went grumblingly back to the cockpit. “Oh, there’s plenty more chances to come,” he whispered consolingly to Joe. “French Pete was cute, wasn’t he? He thought you might be trying to make a break, and put a guard on us.”

Nothing came from the shore to indicate how the pirates were faring. Not a dog barked, not a light flared. Yet the air seemed quivering with an alarm about to burst forth. The night had taken on a strained feeling of intensity, as though it held in store all kinds of terrible things. The boys felt this keenly as they huddled against each other in the cockpit and waited.

“You were going to tell me about your running away,” Joe ventured finally, “and why you came back again.”

‘Frisco Kid took up the tale at once, speaking in a muffled undertone close to the other’s ear.

“You see, when I made up my mind to quit the life, there wasn’t a soul to lend me a hand; but I knew that the only thing for me to do was to get ashore and find some kind of work, so I could study. Then I figured there’d be more chance in the country than in the city; so I gave Red Nelson the slip — I was on the ***Reindeer*** then. One night on the Alameda oyster-beds, I got ashore and headed back from the bay as fast as I could sprint. Nelson didn’t catch me. But they were all Portuguese farmers thereabouts, and none of them had work for me. Besides, it was in the wrong time of the year — winter. That shows how much I knew about the land.

“I’d saved up a couple of dollars, and I kept traveling back, deeper and deeper into the country, looking for work, and buying bread and cheese and such things from the storekeepers. I tell you, it was cold, nights, sleeping out without blankets, and I was always glad when morning came. But worse than that was the way everybody looked on me. They were all suspicious, and not a bit afraid to show it, and sometimes they’d set their dogs on me and tell me to get along. Seemed as though there wasn’t any place for me on the land. Then my money gave out, and just about the time I was good and hungry I got captured.”

“Captured! What for?”

“Nothing. Living, I suppose. I crawled into a haystack to sleep one night, because it was warmer, and along comes a village constable and arrests me for being a tramp. At first they thought I was a runaway, and telegraphed my description all over. I told them I didn’t have any people, but they wouldn’t believe me for a long while. And then, when nobody claimed me, the judge sent me to a boys’ ‘refuge’ in San Francisco.”

He stopped and peered intently in the direction of the shore. The darkness and the silence in which the men had been swallowed up was profound. Nothing was stirring save the rising wind.

“I thought I’d die in that’refuge.’ It was just like being in jail. We were locked up and guarded like prisoners. Even then, if I could have liked the other boys it might have been all right. But they were mostly street-boys of the worst kind — lying, and sneaking, and cowardly, without one spark of manhood or one idea of square dealing and fair play. There was only one thing I did like, and that was the books. Oh, I did lots of reading, I tell you! But that couldn’t make up for the rest. I wanted the freedom and the sunlight and the salt water. And what had I done to be kept in prison and herded with such a gang? Instead of doing wrong, I had tried to do right, to make myself better, and that’s what I got for it. I wasn’t old enough, you see, to reason anything out.

“Sometimes I’d see the sunshine dancing on the water and showing white on the sails, and the ***Reindeer*** cutting through it just as you please, and I’d get that sick I would know hardly what I did. And then the boys would come against me with some of their meannesses, and I’d start in to lick the whole kit of them. Then the men in charge would lock me up and punish me. Well, I couldn’t stand it any longer; I watched my chance and ran for it. Seemed as though there wasn’t any place on the land for me, so I picked up with French Pete and went back on the bay. That’s about all there is to it, though I’m going to try it again when I get a little older — old enough to get a square deal for myself.”

“You’re going to go back on the land with me,” Joe said authoritatively, laying a hand on his shoulder. “That’s what you’re going to do. As for — ”

Bang! a revolver-shot rang out from the shore. Bang! bang! More guns were speaking sharply and hurriedly. A man’s voice rose wildly on the air and died away. Somebody began to cry for help. Both boys were on their feet on the instant, hoisting the mainsail and getting everything ready to run. The ***Reindeer*** boy was doing likewise. A man, roused from his sleep on the yacht, thrust an excited head through the skylight, but withdrew it hastily at sight of the two stranger sloops. The intensity of waiting was broken, the time for action come.

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW RESPONSIBILITY FOR JOE

Heaving in on the anchor-chain till it was up and down,'Frisco Kid and Joe ceased from their exertions. Everything was in readiness to give the ***Dazzler*** the jib, and go. They strained their eyes in the direction of the shore. The clamor had died away, but here and there lights were beginning to flash. The creaking of a block and tackle came to their ears, and they heard Red Nelson's voice singing out: "Lower away!" and "Cast off!"

"French Pete forgot to oil it,"'Frisco Kid commented, referring to the tackle.

"Takin' their time about it, ain't they?" the boy on the ***Reindeer*** called over to them, sitting down on the cabin and mopping his face after the exertion of hoisting the mainsail single-handed.

"Guess they're all right,"'Frisco Kid rejoined. "All ready?"

"Yes — all right here."

"Say, you," the man on the yacht cried through the skylight, not venturing to show his head. "You'd better go away."

"And you'd better stay below and keep quiet," was the response. "We'll take care of ourselves. You do the same."

"If I was only out of this, I'd show you!" he threatened.

"Lucky for you you're not," responded the boy on the ***Reindeer***; and thereat the man kept quiet.

"Here they come!" said'Frisco Kid suddenly to Joe.

The two skiffs shot out of the darkness and came alongside. Some kind of an altercation was going on, as French Pete's voice attested.

"No, no!" he cried. "Put it on ze ***Dazzler***. Ze ***Reindeer*** she sail too fast-a, and run away, oh, so queeck, and never more I see it. Put it on ze ***Dazzler***. Eh? Wot you say?"

"All right then," Red Nelson agreed. "We'll whack up afterwards. But, say, hurry up. Out with you, lads, and heave her up! My arm's broke."

The men tumbled out, ropes were cast inboard, and all hands, with the exception of Joe, tailed on. The shouting of men, the sound of oars, and the rattling and slapping of blocks and sails, told that the men on shore were getting under way for the pursuit.

“Now!” Red Nelson commanded. “All together! Don’t let her come back or you’ll smash the skiff. There she takes it! A long pull and a strong pull! Once again! And yet again! Get a turn there, somebody, and take a spell.”

Though the task was but half accomplished, they were exhausted by the strenuous effort, and hailed the rest eagerly. Joe glanced over the side to discover what the heavy object might be, and saw the vague outlines of a small office-safe.

“Now all together!” Red Nelson began again. “Take her on the run and don’t let her stop! Yo, ho! heave, ho! Once again! And another! Over with her!”

Straining and gasping, with tense muscles and heaving chests, they brought the cumbersome weight over the side, rolled it on top of the rail, and lowered it into the cockpit on the run. The cabin doors were thrown apart, and it was moved along, end for end, till it lay on the cabin floor, snug against the end of the centerboard-case. Red Nelson had followed it aboard to superintend. His left arm hung helpless at his side, and from the finger-tips blood dripped with monotonous regularity. He did not seem to mind it, however, nor even the mutterings of the human storm he had raised ashore, and which, to judge by the sounds, was even then threatening to break upon them.

“Lay your course for the Golden Gate,” he said to French Pete, as he turned to go. “I’ll try to stand by you, but if you get lost in the dark I’ll meet you outside, off the Farralones, in the morning.” He sprang into the skiff after the men, and, with a wave of his uninjured arm, cried heartily: “And then it’s for Mexico, my lads — Mexico and summer weather!”

Just as the ***Dazzler***, freed from her anchor, paid off under the jib and filled away, a dark sail loomed under their stern, barely missing the skiff in tow. The cockpit of the stranger was crowded with men, who raised their voices angrily at sight of the pirates. Joe had half a mind to run forward and cut the halyards so that the ***Dazzler*** might be captured. As he had told French Pete the day before, he had done nothing to be ashamed of, and was not afraid to go before a court of justice. But the thought of’Frisco Kid restrained him. He wanted to take him ashore with him, but in so doing he did not wish to take him to jail. So he, too, began to experience a keen interest in the escape of the ***Dazzler***.

The pursuing sloop rounded up hurriedly to come about after them, and in the darkness fouled the yacht which lay at anchor. The man aboard of her, thinking that at last his time had come, gave one wild yell, ran on deck, and leaped overboard. In the confusion of the collision, and while they were endeavoring to save him, French Pete and the boys slipped away into the night.

The ***Reindeer*** had already disappeared, and by the time Joe and'Frisco Kid had the running-gear coiled down and everything in shape, they were standing out in open water. The wind was freshening constantly, and the ***Dazzler*** heeled a lively clip through the comparatively smooth stretch. Before an hour had passed, the lights of Hunter's Point were well on her starboard beam.'Frisco Kid went below to make coffee, but Joe remained on deck, watching the lights of South San Francisco grow, and speculating on their destination. Mexico! They were going to sea in such a frail craft! Impossible! At least, it seemed so to him, for his conceptions of ocean travel were limited to steamers and full-rigged ships. He was beginning to feel half sorry that he had not cut the halyards, and longed to ask French Pete a thousand questions; but just as the first was on his lips that worthy ordered him to go below and get some coffee and then to turn in. He was followed shortly afterward by'Frisco Kid, French Pete remaining at his lonely task of beating down the bay and out to sea. Twice he heard the waves buffeted back from some flying forefoot, and once he saw a sail to leeward on the opposite tack, which luffed sharply and came about at sight of him. But the darkness favored, and he heard no more of it — perhaps because he worked into the wind closer by a point, and held on his way with a shaking after-leech.

Shortly after dawn, the two boys were called and came sleepily on deck. The day had broken cold and gray, while the wind had attained half a gale. Joe noted with astonishment the white tents of the quarantine station on Angel Island. San Francisco lay a smoky blur on the southern horizon, while the night, still lingering on the western edge of the world, slowly withdrew before their eyes. French Pete was just finishing a long reach into the Raccoon Straits, and at the same time studiously regarding a plunging sloop-yacht half a mile astern.

"Dey t'ink to catch ze ***Dazzler***, eh? Bah!" And he brought the craft in question about, laying a course straight for the Golden Gate.

The pursuing yacht followed suit. Joe watched her a few moments. She held an apparently parallel course to them, and forged ahead much faster.

"Why, at this rate they'll have us in no time!" he cried.

French Pete laughed. “You t’ink so? Bah! Dey outfoot; we outpoint. Dey are scared of ze wind; we wipe ze eye of ze wind. Ah! you wait, you see.”

“They’re traveling ahead faster,”‘Frisco Kid explained, “but we’re sailing closer to the wind. In the end we’ll beat them, even if they have the nerve to cross the bar — which I don’t think they have. Look! See!”

Ahead could be seen the great ocean surges, flinging themselves skyward and bursting into roaring caps of smother. In the midst of it, now rolling her dripping bottom clear, now sousing her deck-load of lumber far above the guards, a coasting steam-schooner was lumbering drunkenly into port. It was magnificent — this battle between man and the elements. Whatever timidity he had entertained fled away, and Joe’s nostrils began to dilate and his eyes to flash at the nearness of the impending struggle.

French Pete called for his oilskins and sou’wester, and Joe also was equipped with a spare suit. Then he and’Frisco Kid were sent below to lash and cleat the safe in place. In the midst of this task Joe glanced at the firm-name, gilt-lettered on the face of it, and read: “Bronson & Tate.” Why, that was his father and his father’s partner. That was their safe, their money!’Frisco Kid, nailing the last cleat on the floor of the cabin, looked up and followed his fascinated gaze.

“That’s rough, isn’t it,” he whispered. “Your father?”

Joe nodded. He could see it all now. They had run into San Andreas, where his father worked the big quarries, and most probably the safe contained the wages of the thousand men or more whom he employed. “Don’t say anything,” he cautioned.

‘Frisco Kid agreed knowingly. “French Pete can’t read, anyway,” he muttered, “and the chances are that Red Nelson won’t know what ***your*** name is. But, just the same, it’s pretty rough. They’ll break it open and divide up as soon as they can, so I don’t see what you’re going to do about it.”

“Wait and see.” Joe had made up his mind that he would do his best to stand by his father’s property. At the worst, it could only be lost; and that would surely be the case were he not along, while, being along, he at least had a fighting chance to save it, or to be in position to recover it. Responsibilities were showering upon him thick and fast. But a few days back he had had but himself to consider; then, in some subtle way, he had felt a certain accountability for’Frisco Kid’s future welfare; and after that, and still more subtly, he had become aware of duties which he owed to his position, to his sister, to his chums and friends; and now, by a most unexpected chain of circumstances, came the pressing need of service for his father's sake. It was a call upon his deepest strength, and he responded bravely. While the future might be doubtful, he had no doubt of himself; and this very state of mind, this self-confidence, by a generous alchemy, gave him added resolution. Nor did he fail to be vaguely aware of it, and to grasp dimly at the truth that confidence breeds confidence — strength, strength.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BOYS PLAN AN ESCAPE

“Now she takes it!” French Pete cried.

Both lads ran into the cockpit. They were on the edge of the breaking bar. A huge forty-footer reared a foam-crested head far above them, stealing their wind for the moment and threatening to crush the tiny craft like an egg-shell. Joe held his breath. It was the supreme moment. French Pete luffed straight into it, and the ***Dazzler*** mounted the steep slope with a rush, poised a moment on the giddy summit, and fell into the yawning valley beyond. Keeping off in the intervals to fill the mainsail, and luffing into the combers, they worked their way across the dangerous stretch. Once they caught the tail-end of a whitecap and were well-nigh smothered in the froth, but otherwise the sloop bobbed and ducked with the happy facility of a cork.

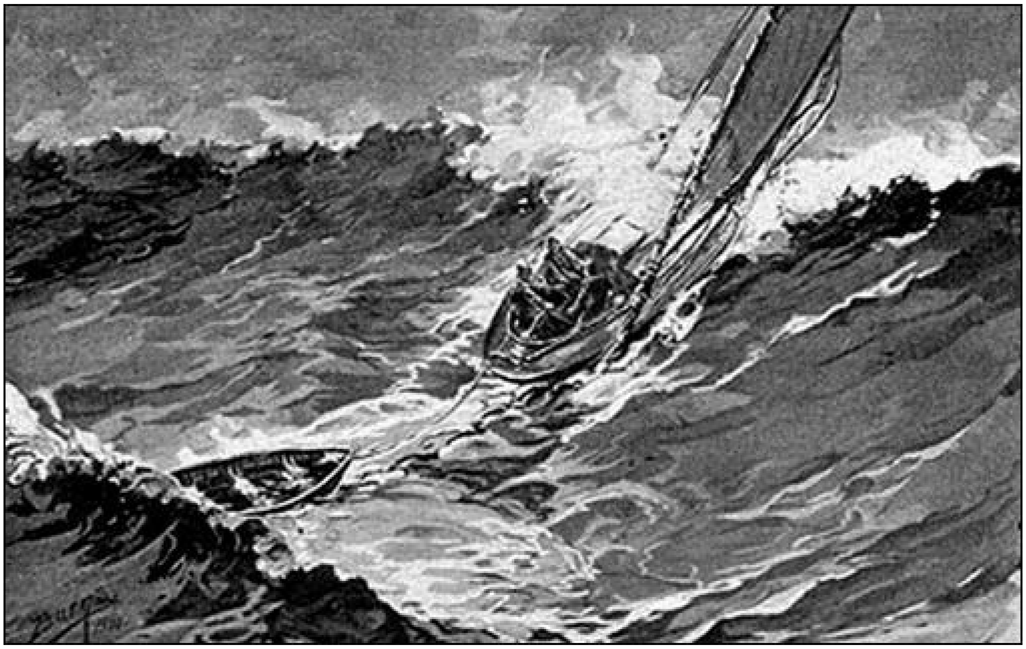

To Joe it seemed as though he had been lifted out of himself — out of the world. Ah, this was life! this was action! Surely it could not be the old, commonplace world he had lived in so long! The sailors, grouped on the streaming deck-load of the steamer, waved their sou’westers, and, on the bridge, even the captain was expressing his admiration for the plucky craft.

“Ah, you see! you see!” French Pete pointed astern.

The sloop-yacht had been afraid to venture it, and was skirting back and forth on the inner edge of the bar. The chase was over. A pilot-boat, running for shelter from the coming storm, flew by them like a frightened bird, passing the steamer as though the latter were standing still.

Half an hour later the ***Dazzler*** sped beyond the last smoking sea and was sliding up and down on the long Pacific swell. The wind had increased its velocity and necessitated a reefing down of jib and mainsail. Then they laid off again, full and free on the starboard tack, for the Farralones, thirty miles away. By the time breakfast was cooked and eaten they picked up the ***Reindeer***, which was hove to and working offshore to the south and west. The wheel was lashed down, and there was not a soul on deck.

French Pete complained bitterly against such recklessness. “Dat is ze one fault of Red Nelson. He no care. He is afraid of not’ing. Some day he will die, oh, so vaire queeck! I know he will.”

Three times they circled about the ***Reindeer***, running under her weather quarter and shouting in chorus, before they brought anybody on deck. Sail was then made at once, and together the two cockle-shells plunged away into the vastness of the Pacific. This was necessary, as’Frisco Kid informed Joe, in order to have an offing before the whole fury of the storm broke upon them. Otherwise they would be driven on the lee shore of the California coast. Grub and water, he said, could be obtained by running into the land when fine weather came. He congratulated Joe upon the fact that he was not seasick, which circumstance likewise brought praise from French Pete and put him in better humor with his mutinous young sailor.

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do,”‘Frisco Kid whispered, while cooking dinner. “To-night we’ll drag French Pete down — ”

“Drag French Pete down!”

“Yes, and tie him up good and snug, as soon as it gets dark; then put out the lights and make a run for land; get to port anyway, anywhere, just so long as we shake loose from Red Nelson.”

“Yes,” Joe deliberated; “that would be all right — if I could do it alone. But as for asking you to help me — why, that would be treason to French Pete.”

“That’s what I’m coming to. I’ll help you if you promise me a few things. French Pete took me aboard when I ran away from the’refuge,’ when I was starving and had no place to go, and I just can’t repay him for that by sending him to jail.'T wouldn't be square. Your father wouldn't have you break your word, would he?"

"No; of course not." Joe knew how sacredly his father held his word of honor.

"Then you must promise, and your father must see it carried out, not to press any charge against French Pete."

"All right. And now, what about yourself? You can't very well expect to go away with him again on the ***Dazzler***!"

"Oh, don't bother about me. There's nobody to miss me. I'm strong enough, and know enough about it, to ship to sea as ordinary seaman. I'll go away somewhere over on the other side of the world, and begin all over again."

"Then we'll have to call it off, that's all."

"Call what off?"

"Tying French Pete up and running for it."

"No, sir. That's decided upon."

"Now listen here: I'll not have a thing to do with it. I'll go on to Mexico first, if you don't make me one promise."

"And what's the promise?"

"Just this: you place yourself in my hands from the moment we get ashore, and trust to me. You don't know anything about the land, anyway — you said so. And I'll fix it with my father — I know I can — so that you can get to know people of the right sort, and study and get an education, and be something else than a bay pirate or a sailor. That's what you'd like, isn't it?"

Though he said nothing,'Frisco Kid showed how well he liked it by the expression of his face.

"And it'll be no more than your due, either," Joe continued. "You will have stood by me, and you'll have recovered my father's money. He'll owe it to you."

"But I don't do things that way. I don't think much of a man who does a favor just to be paid for it."

"Now you keep quiet. How much do you think it would cost my father for detectives and all that to recover that safe? Give me your promise, that's all, and when I've got things arranged, if you don't like them you can back out. Come on; that's fair."

They shook hands on the bargain, and proceeded to map out their line of action for the night.

But the storm, yelling down out of the northwest, had something entirely different in store for the ***Dazzler*** and her crew. By the time dinner was over they were forced to put double reefs in mainsail and jib, and still the gale had not reached its height. The sea, also, had been kicked up till it was a continuous succession of water-mountains, frightful and withal grand to look upon from the low deck of the sloop. It was only when the sloops were tossed upon the crests of the waves at the same time that they caught sight of each other. Occasional fragments of seas swashed into the cockpit or dashed aft over the cabin, and Joe was stationed at the small pump to keep the well dry.

At three o'clock, watching his chance, French Pete motioned to the ***Reindeer*** that he was going to heave to and get out a sea-anchor. This latter was of the nature of a large shallow canvas bag, with the mouth held open by triangularly lashed spars. To this the towing-ropes were attached, on the kite principle, so that the greatest resisting surface was presented to the water. The sloop, drifting so much faster, would thus be held bow on to both wind and sea — the safest possible position in a storm. Red Nelson waved his hand in response that he understood and to go ahead.

French Pete went forward to launch the sea-anchor himself, leaving it to'Frisco Kid to put the helm down at the proper moment and run into the wind. The Frenchman poised on the slippery fore-deck, waiting an opportunity. But at that moment the ***Dazzler*** lifted into an unusually large sea, and, as she cleared the summit, caught a heavy snort of the gale at the very instant she was righting herself to an even keel. Thus there was not the slightest yield to this sudden pressure on her sails and mast-gear.

There was a quick snap, followed by a crash. The steel weather-rigging carried away at the lanyards, and mast, jib, mainsail, blocks, stays, sea-anchor, French Pete — everything — went over the side. Almost by a miracle, the captain clutched at the bobstay and managed to get one hand up and over the bowsprit. The boys ran forward to drag him into safety, and Red Nelson, observing the disaster, put up his helm and ran down to the rescue.

CHAPTER XX

PERILOUS HOURS

French Pete was uninjured from the fall overboard with the ***Dazzler's*** mast; but the sea-anchor, which had gone with him, had not escaped so easily. The gaff of the mainsail had been driven through it, and it refused to work. The wreckage, thumping alongside, held the sloop in a quartering slant to the seas — not so dangerous a position as it might be, nor so safe, either. "Good-by, old-a ***Dazzler***. Never no more you wipe ze eye of ze wind. Never no more you kick your heels at ze crack gentlemen-yachts."

So the captain lamented, standing in the cockpit and surveying the ruin with wet eyes. Even Joe, who bore him great dislike, felt sorry for him at this moment. A heavier blast of the wind caught the jagged crest of a wave and hurled it upon the helpless craft.

"Can't we save her?" Joe spluttered.

'Frisco Kid shook his head.

"Nor the safe?"

"Impossible," he answered. "Couldn't lay another boat alongside for a United States mint. As it is, it'll keep us guessing to save ourselves."

Another sea swept over them, and the skiff, which had long since been swamped, dashed itself to pieces against the stern. Then the ***Reindeer*** towered above them on a mountain of water. Joe caught himself half shrinking back, for it seemed she would fall down squarely on top of them; but the next instant she dropped into the gaping trough, and they were looking down upon her far below. It was a striking picture — one Joe was destined never to forget. The ***Reindeer*** was wallowing in the snow-white smother, her rails flush with the sea, the water scudding across her deck in foaming cataracts. The air was filled with flying spray, which made the scene appear hazy and unreal. One of the men was clinging to the perilous after-deck and striving to cast off the water-logged skiff. The boy, leaning far over the cockpit-rail and holding on for dear life, was passing him a knife. The second man stood at the wheel, putting it up with flying hands and forcing the sloop to pay off. Beside him, his injured arm in a sling, was Red Nelson, his sou'wester gone and his fair hair plastered in wet, wind-blown ringlets about his face. His whole attitude breathed indomitability, courage, strength. It seemed almost as though the divine were blazing forth from him. Joe looked upon him in sudden awe, and, realizing the enormous possibilities of the man, felt sorrow for the way in which they had been wasted. A thief and a robber! In that flashing moment Joe caught a glimpse of human truth, grasped at the mystery of success and failure. Life threw back its curtains that he might read it and understand. Of such stuff as Red Nelson were heroes made; but they possessed wherein he lacked — the power of choice, the careful poise of mind, the sober control of soul: in short, the very things his father had so often "preached" to him about.

These were the thoughts which came to Joe in the flight of a second. Then the ***Reindeer*** swept skyward and hurtled across their bow to leeward on the breast of a mighty billow.

"Ze wild man! ze wild man!" French Pete shrieked, watching her in amazement. "He t'inks he can jibe! He will die! We will all die! He must come about. Oh, ze fool, ze fool!"

But time was precious, and Red Nelson ventured the chance. At the right moment he jibed the mainsail over and hauled back on the wind.

"Here she comes! Make ready to jump for it,"'Frisco Kid cried to Joe.

The ***Reindeer*** dashed by their stern, heeling over till the cabin windows were buried, and so close that it appeared she must run them down. But a freak of the waters lurched the two crafts apart. Red Nelson, seeing that the manoeuver had miscarried, instantly instituted another. Throwing the helm hard up, the ***Reindeer*** whirled on her heel, thus swinging her overhanging main-boom closer to the ***Dazzler***. French Pete was the nearest, and the opportunity could last no longer than a second. Like a cat he sprang, catching the foot-rope with both hands. Then the ***Reindeer*** forged ahead, dipping him into the sea at every plunge. But he clung on, working inboard every time he emerged, till he dropped into the cockpit as Red Nelson squared off to run down to leeward and repeat the manoeuver.

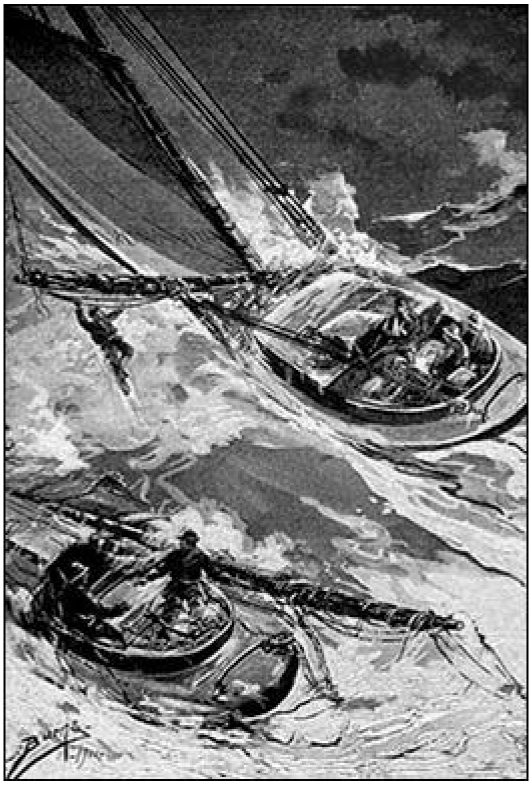

“Your turn next,”‘Frisco Kid said.

“No; yours,” Joe replied.

“But I know more about the water,”‘Frisco Kid insisted.

“And I can swim as well as you,” the other retorted.

It would have been hard to forecast the outcome of this dispute; but, as it was, the swift rush of events made any settlement needless. The ***Reindeer*** had jibed over and was plowing back at breakneck speed, careening at such an angle that it seemed she must surely capsize. It was a gallant sight. Just then the storm burst in all its fury, the shouting wind flattening the ragged crests till they boiled. The ***Reindeer*** dipped from view behind an immense wave. The wave rolled on, but the next moment, where the sloop had been, the boys noted with startled eyes only the angry waters! Doubting, they looked a second time. There was no ***Reindeer***. They were alone on the torn crest of the ocean!

“God have mercy on their souls!”‘Frisco Kid said solemnly.

Joe was too horrified at the suddenness of the catastrophe to utter a sound.

“Sailed her clean under, and, with the ballast she carried, went straight to bottom,”‘Frisco Kid gasped. Then, turning to their own pressing need, he said: “Now we’ve got to look out for ourselves. The back of the storm broke in that puff, but the sea'll kick up worse yet as the wind eases down. Lend a hand and hang on with the other. We've got to get her head-on."

Together, knives in hand, they crawled forward to where the pounding wreckage hampered the boat sorely.'Frisco Kid took the lead in the ticklish work, but Joe obeyed orders like a veteran. Every minute or two the bow was swept by the sea, and they were pounded and buffeted about like a pair of shuttlecocks. First the main portion of the wreckage was securely fastened to the forward bitts; then, breathless and gasping, more often under the water than out, they cut and hacked at the tangle of halyards, sheets, stays, and tackles. The cockpit was taking water rapidly, and it was a race between swamping and completing the task. At last, however, everything stood clear save the lee rigging.'Frisco Kid slashed the lanyards. The storm did the rest. The ***Dazzler*** drifted swiftly to leeward of the wreckage till the strain on the line fast to the forward bitts jerked her bow into place and she ducked dead into the eye of the wind and sea.

Pausing only for a cheer at the success of their undertaking, the two lads raced aft, where the cockpit was half full and the dunnage of the cabin all afloat. With a couple of buckets procured from the stern lockers, they proceeded to fling the water overboard. It was heartbreaking work, for many a barrelful was flung back upon them again; but they persevered, and when night fell the ***Dazzler***, bobbing merrily at her sea-anchor, could boast that her pumps sucked once more. As'Frisco Kid had said, the backbone of the storm was broken, though the wind had veered to the west, where it still blew stiffly.

"If she holds,"'Frisco Kid said, referring to the breeze, "we'll drift to the California coast sometime to-morrow. Nothing to do now but wait."

They said little, oppressed by the loss of their comrades and overcome with exhaustion, preferring to huddle against each other for the sake of warmth and companionship. It was a miserable night, and they shivered constantly from the cold. Nothing dry was to be obtained aboard, food, blankets, everything being soaked with the salt water. Sometimes they dozed; but these intervals were short and harassing, for it seemed each took turn in waking with such sudden starts as to rouse the other.

At last day broke, and they looked about. Wind and sea had dropped considerably, and there was no question as to the safety of the ***Dazzler***. The coast was nearer than they had expected, its cliffs showing dark and forbidding in the gray of dawn. But with the rising of the sun they could see the yellow beaches, flanked by the white surf, and beyond — it seemed too good to be true — the clustering houses and smoking chimneys of a town.

“Santa Cruz!”‘Frisco Kid cried, “and no chance of being wrecked in the surf!”

“Then the safe ***is*** safe?” Joe queried.

“Safe! I should say so. It ain’t much of a sheltered harbor for large vessels, but with this breeze we’ll run right up the mouth of the San Lorenzo River. Then there’s a little lake like, and a boat-house. Water smooth as glass and hardly over your head. You see, I was down here once before, with Red Nelson. Come on. We’ll be in in time for breakfast.”

Bringing to light some spare coils of rope from the lockers, he put a clove-hitch on the standing part of the sea-anchor hawser, and carried the new running-line aft, making it fast to the stern bitts. Then he cast off from the forward bitts. The ***Dazzler*** swung off into the trough, completed the evolution, and pointed her nose toward shore. A couple of spare oars from below, and as many water-soaked blankets, sufficed to make a jury-mast and sail. When this was in place, Joe cast loose from the wreckage, which was now towing astern, while’Frisco Kid took the tiller.

CHAPTER XXI

JOE AND HIS FATHER

“How’s that?” cried’Frisco Kid, as he finished making the ***Dazzler*** fast fore and aft, and sat down on the stringpiece of the tiny wharf. “What’ll we do next, captain?”

Joe looked up in quick surprise. “Why — I — what’s the matter?”

“Well, ain’t you captain now? Haven’t we reached land? I’m crew from now on, ain’t I? What’s your orders?”

Joe caught the spirit of it. “Pipe all hands for breakfast — that is — wait a minute.”

Diving below, he possessed himself of the money he had stowed away in his bundle when he came aboard. Then he locked the cabin door, and they went uptown in search of a restaurant. Over the breakfast Joe planned the next move, and, when they had done, communicated it to’Frisco Kid.

In response to his inquiry, the cashier told him when the morning train started for San Francisco. He glanced at the clock.

“Just time to catch it,” he said to’Frisco Kid. “Keep the cabin doors locked, and don’t let anybody come aboard. Here’s money. Eat at the restaurants. Dry your blankets and sleep in the cockpit. I’ll be back to-morrow. And don’t let anybody into that cabin. Good-by.”

With a hasty hand-grip, he sped down the street to the depot. The conductor looked at him with surprise when he punched his ticket. And well he might, for it was not the custom of his passengers to travel in sea-boots and sou’westers. But Joe did not mind. He did not even notice. He had bought a paper and was absorbed in its contents. Before long his eyes caught an interesting paragraph:

SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN LOST

The tug ***Sea Queen***, chartered by Bronson & Tate, has returned from a fruitless cruise outside the Heads. No news of value could be obtained concerning the pirates who so daringly carried off their safe at San Andreas last Tuesday night. The lighthouse-keeper at the Farralones mentions having sighted the two sloops Wednesday morning, clawing offshore in the teeth of the gale. It is supposed by shipping men that they perished in the storm with, their ill-gotten treasure. Rumor has it that, in addition to the ten thousand dollars in gold, the safe contained papers of great importance.

When Joe had read this he felt a great relief. It was evident no one had been killed at San Andreas the night of the robbery, else there would have been some comment on it in the paper. Nor, if they had had any clue to his own whereabouts, would they have omitted such a striking bit of information.

At the depot in San Francisco the curious onlookers were surprised to see a boy clad conspicuously in sea-boots and sou'wester hail a cab and dash away. But Joe was in a hurry. He knew his father's hours, and was fearful lest he should not catch him before he went to lunch.

The office-boy scowled at him when he pushed open the door and asked to see Mr. Bronson; nor could the head clerk, when summoned by this disreputable intruder, recognize him.

"Don't you know me, Mr. Willis?"

Mr. Willis looked a second time. "Why, it's Joe Bronson! Of all things under the sun, where did you drop from? Go right in. Your father's in there."

Mr. Bronson stopped dictating to his stenographer and looked up. "Hello! Where have you been?" he said.

"To sea," Joe answered demurely, not sure of just what kind of a reception he was to get, and fingering his sou'wester nervously.

"Short trip, eh? How did you make out?"

"Oh, so-so." He had caught the twinkle in his father's eye and knew that it was all clear sailing. "Not so bad — er — that is, considering."

"Considering?"

"Well, not exactly that; rather, it might have been worse, while it couldn't have been better."

"That's interesting. Sit down." Then, turning to the stenographer: "You may go, Mr. Brown, and — hum! — I won't need you any more to-day."

It was all Joe could do to keep from crying, so kindly and naturally had his father received him, making him feel at once as if not the slightest thing uncommon had occurred. It seemed as if he had just returned from a vacation, or, man-grown, had come back from some business trip.

"Now go ahead, Joe. You were speaking to me a moment ago in conundrums, and you have aroused my curiosity to a most uncomfortable degree."

Whereupon Joe sat down and told what had happened — all that had happened — from Monday night to that very moment. Each little incident he related, — every detail, — not forgetting his conversations with'Frisco Kid nor his plans concerning him. His face flushed and he was carried away with the excitement of the narrative, while Mr. Bronson was almost as eager, urging him on whenever he slackened his pace, but otherwise remaining silent.

"So you see," Joe concluded, "it couldn't possibly have turned out any better."

"Ah, well," Mr. Bronson deliberated judiciously, "it may be so, and then again it may not."

"I don't see it." Joe felt sharp disappointment at his father's qualified approval. It seemed to him that the return of the safe merited something stronger.

That Mr. Bronson fully comprehended the way Joe felt about it was clearly in evidence, for he went on: "As to the matter of the safe, all hail to you, Joe! Credit, and plenty of it, is your due. Mr. Tate and myself have already spent five hundred dollars in attempting to recover it. So important was it that we have also offered five thousand dollars reward, and but this morning were considering the advisability of increasing the amount. But, my son," — Mr. Bronson stood up, resting a hand affectionately on his boy's shoulder, — "there are certain things in this world which are of still greater importance than gold, or papers which represent what gold may buy. How about ***yourself***? That's the point. Will you sell the best possibilities of your life right now for a million dollars?"

Joe shook his head.

"As I said, that's the point. A human life the money of the world cannot buy; nor can it redeem one which is misspent; nor can it make full and complete and beautiful a life which is dwarfed and warped and ugly. How about yourself? What is to be the effect of all these strange adventures on your life — ***your*** life, Joe? Are you going to pick yourself up to-morrow and try it over again? or the next day? or the day after? Do you understand? Why, Joe, do you think for one moment that I would place against the best value of my son's life the paltry value of a safe? And ***can*** I say, until time has told me, whether this trip of yours could not possibly have been better? Such an experience is as potent for evil as for good. One dollar is exactly like another — there are many in the world: but no Joe is like my Joe, nor can there be any others in the world to take his place. Don’t you see, Joe? Don’t you understand?”

Mr. Bronson’s voice broke slightly, and the next instant Joe was sobbing as though his heart would break. He had never understood this father of his before, and he knew now the pain he must have caused him, to say nothing of his mother and sister. But the four stirring days he had lived had given him a clearer view of the world and humanity, and he had always possessed the power of putting his thoughts into speech; so he spoke of these things and the lessons he had learned — the conclusions he had drawn from his conversations with’Frisco Kid, from his intercourse with French Pete, from the graphic picture he retained of the ***Reindeer*** and Red Nelson as they wallowed in the trough beneath him. And Mr. Bronson listened and, in turn, understood.

“But what of’Frisco Kid, father?” Joe asked when he had finished.

“Hum! there seems to be a great deal of promise in the boy, from what you say of him.” Mr. Bronson hid the twinkle in his eye this time. “And, I must confess, he seems perfectly capable of shifting for himself.”

“Sir?” Joe could not believe his ears.

“Let us see, then. He is at present entitled to the half of five thousand dollars, the other half of which belongs to you. It was you two who preserved the safe from the bottom of the Pacific, and if you only had waited a little longer, Mr. Tate and myself would have increased the reward.”

“Oh!” Joe caught a glimmering of the light. “Part of that is easily arranged. I simply refuse to take my half. As to the other — that isn’t exactly what’Frisco Kid desires. He wants friends — and — and — though you didn’t say so, they are far higher than money, nor can money buy them. He wants friends and a chance for an education, not twenty-five hundred dollars.”

“Don’t you think it would be better for him to choose for himself?”

“Ah, no. That’s all arranged.”

“Arranged?”

“Yes, sir. He’s captain on sea, and I’m captain on land. So he’s under my charge now.”

“Then you have the power of attorney for him in the present negotiations? Good. I’ll make you a proposition. The twenty-five hundred dollars shall be held in trust by me, on his demand at any time. We’ll settle about yours afterward. Then he shall be put on probation for, say, a year — in our office. You can either coach him in his studies, for I am confident now that you will be up in yours hereafter, or he can attend night-school. And after that, if he comes through his period of probation with flying colors, I'll give him the same opportunities for an education that you possess. It all depends on himself. And now, Mr. Attorney, what have you to say to my offer in the interests of your client?"

"That I close with it at once."

Father and son shook hands.

"And what are you going to do now, Joe?"

"Send a telegram to'Frisco Kid first, and then hurry home."

"Then wait a minute till I call up San Andreas and tell Mr. Tate the good news, and then I'll go with you."

"Mr. Willis," Mr. Bronson said as they left the outer office, "the San Andreas safe is recovered, and we'll all take a holiday. Kindly tell the clerks that they are free for the rest of the day. And I say," he called back as they entered the elevator, "don't forget the office-boy."

A DAUGHTER OF THE SNOWS

Published in 1902, this novel is set in the Yukon, and tells the story of Frona Welse, “a Stanford graduate and physical Valkyrie” who takes to the trail after upsetting her wealthy father’s community by her forthright manner and befriending the town’s prostitute. She is also torn between love for two suitors: Gregory St Vincent, a local man who turns out to be cowardly and treacherous; and Vance Corliss, a Yale-trained mining engineer. The novel is noteworthy for its strong-willed and independent heroine, one of many such characters that would feature in his later works.

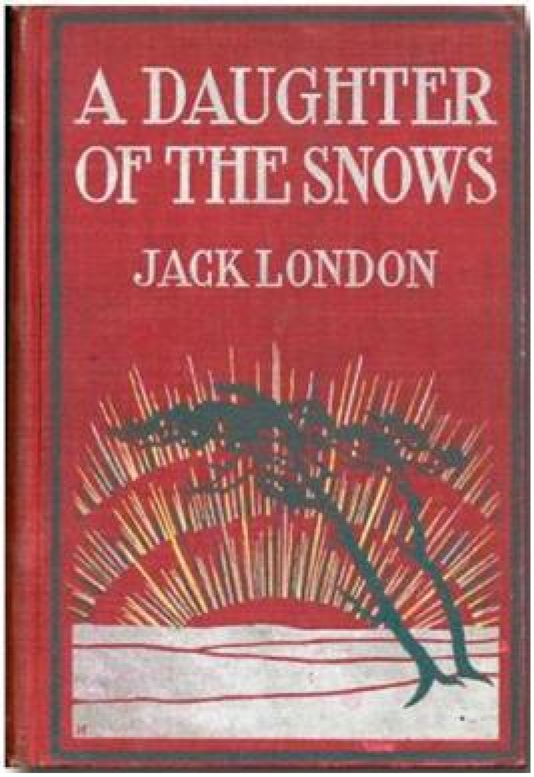
A DAUGHTER OF THE SNOWS
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII
CHAPTER XXVIII
CHAPTER XXIX
CHAPTER XXX

London, aged 9

CHAPTER I

"All ready, Miss Welse, though I'm sorry we can't spare one of the steamer's boats."

Frona Welse arose with alacrity and came to the first officer's side.

"We're so busy," he explained, "and gold-rushers are such perishable freight, at least — "

"I understand," she interrupted, "and I, too, am behaving as though I were perishable. And I am sorry for the trouble I am giving you, but — but — " She turned quickly and pointed to the shore. "Do you see that big log-house? Between the clump of pines and the river? I was born there."

"Guess I'd be in a hurry myself," he muttered, sympathetically, as he piloted her along the crowded deck.

Everybody was in everybody else's way; nor was there one who failed to proclaim it at the top of his lungs. A thousand gold-seekers were clamoring for the immediate landing of their outfits. Each hatchway gaped wide open, and from the lower depths the shrieking donkey-engines were hurrying the misassorted outfits skyward. On either side of the steamer, rows of scows received the flying cargo, and on each of these scows a sweating mob of men charged the descending slings and heaved bales and boxes about in frantic search. Men waved shipping receipts and shouted over the steamer-rails to them. Sometimes two and three identified the same article, and war arose. The "two-circle" and the "circle-and-dot" brands caused endless jangling, while every whipsaw discovered a dozen claimants.

"The purser insists that he is going mad," the first officer said, as he helped Frona Welse down the gangway to the landing stage, "and the freight clerks have turned the cargo over to the passengers and quit work. But we're not so unlucky as the Star of Bethlehem," he reassured her, pointing to a steamship at anchor a quarter of a mile away. "Half of her passengers have pack-horses for Skaguay and White Pass, and the other half are bound over the Chilcoot. So they've mutinied and everything's at a standstill."

"Hey, you!" he cried, beckoning to a Whitehall which hovered discreetly on the outer rim of the floating confusion.

A tiny launch, pulling heroically at a huge tow-barge, attempted to pass between; but the boatman shot nervily across her bow, and just as he was clear, unfortunately, caught a crab. This slewed the boat around and brought it to a stop.

"Watch out!" the first officer shouted.

A pair of seventy-foot canoes, loaded with outfits, gold-rushers, and Indians, and under full sail, drove down from the counter direction. One of them veered sharply towards the landing stage, but the other pinched the Whitehall against the barge. The boatman had unshipped his oars in time, but his small craft groaned under the pressure and threatened to collapse. Whereat he came to his feet, and in short, nervous phrases consigned all canoe-men and launch-captains to eternal perdition. A man on the barge leaned over from above and baptized him with crisp and crackling oaths, while the whites and Indians in the canoe laughed derisively.

"Aw, g'wan!" one of them shouted. "Why don't yeh learn to row?"

The boatman's fist landed on the point of his critic's jaw and dropped him stunned upon the heaped merchandise. Not content with this summary act he proceeded to follow his fist into the other craft. The miner nearest him tugged vigorously at a revolver which had jammed in its shiny leather holster, while his brother argonauts, laughing, waited the outcome. But the canoe was under way again, and the Indian helmsman drove the point of his paddle into the boatman's chest and hurled him backward into the bottom of the Whitehall.

When the flood of oaths and blasphemy was at full tide, and violent assault and quick death seemed most imminent, the first officer had stolen a glance at the girl by his side. He had expected to find a shocked and frightened maiden countenance, and was not at all prepared for the flushed and deeply interested face which met his eyes.

"I am sorry," he began.

But she broke in, as though annoyed by the interruption, "No, no; not at all. I am enjoying it every bit. Though I am glad that man's revolver stuck. If it had not — "

"We might have been delayed in getting ashore." The first officer laughed, and therein displayed his tact.

"That man is a robber," he went on, indicating the boatman, who had now shoved his oars into the water and was pulling alongside. "He agreed to charge only twenty dollars for putting you ashore. Said he'd have made it twenty-five had it been a man. He's a pirate, mark me, and he will surely hang some day. Twenty dollars for a half-hour's work! Think of it!"

"Easy, sport! Easy!" cautioned the fellow in question, at the same time making an awkward landing and dropping one of his oars over-side. "You've no call to be flingin' names about," he added, defiantly, wringing out his shirt-sleeve, wet from rescue of the oar.

"You've got good ears, my man," began the first officer.

"And a quick fist," the other snapped in.

"And a ready tongue."

"Need it in my business. No gettin' 'long without it among you sea-sharks. Pirate, am I? And you with a thousand passengers packed like sardines! Charge 'em double first-class passage, feed 'em steerage grub, and bunk 'em worse 'n pigs! Pirate, eh! Me?"

A red-faced man thrust his head over the rail above and began to bellow lustily.

"I want my stock landed! Come up here, Mr. Thurston! Now! Right away! Fifty cayuses of | mine eating their heads off in this dirty kennel of yours, and it'll be a sick time you'll have if you don't hustle them ashore as fast as God'll let you! I'm losing a thousand dollars a day, and I won't stand it! Do you hear? I won't stand it! You've robbed me right and left from the time you cleared dock in Seattle, and by the hinges of hell I won't stand it any more! I'll break this company as sure as my name's Thad Ferguson! D'ye hear my spiel? I'm Thad Ferguson, and you can't come and see me any too quick for your health! D'ye hear?"

"Pirate; eh?" the boatman soliloquized. "Who? Me?"

Mr. Thurston waved his hand appeasingly at the red-faced man, and turned to the girl. "I'd like to go ashore with you, and as far as the store, but you see how busy we are. Good-by, and a lucky trip to you. I'll tell off a couple of men at once and break out your baggage. Have it up at the store to-morrow morning, sharp."

She took his hand lightly and stepped aboard. Her weight gave the leaky boat a sudden lurch, and the water hurtled across the bottom boards to her shoe-tops: but she took it coolly enough, settling herself in the stern-sheets and tucking her feet under her.

"Hold on!" the officer cried. "This will never do, Miss Welse. Come on back, and I'll get one of our boats over as soon as I can."

"I'll see you in — in heaven first," retorted the boatman, shoving off.

"Let go!" he threatened.

Mr. Thurston gripped tight hold of the gunwale, and as reward for his chivalry had his knuckles rapped sharply by the oar-blade. Then he forgot himself, and Miss Welse also, and swore, and swore fervently.

"I dare say our farewell might have been more dignified," she called back to him, her laughter rippling across the water.

"Jove!" he muttered, doffing his cap gallantly. "There is a *woman*!" And a sudden hunger seized him, and a yearning to see himself mirrored always in the gray eyes of Frona Welse. He was not analytical; he did not know why; but he knew that with her he could travel to the end of the earth. He felt a distaste for his profession, and a temptation to throw it all over and strike out for the Klondike whither she was going; then he glanced up the beetling side of the ship, saw the red face of Thad Ferguson, and forgot the dream he had for an instant dreamed.

Splash! A handful of water from his strenuous oar struck her full in the face. "Hope you don't mind it, miss," he apologized. "I'm doin' the best I know how, which ain't much."

"So it seems," she answered, good-naturedly.

"Not that I love the sea," bitterly; "but I've got to turn a few honest dollars somehow, and this seemed the likeliest way. I oughter 'a ben in Klondike by now, if I'd had any luck at all. Tell you how it was. I lost my outfit on Windy Arm, half-way in, after packin' it clean across the Pass — "

Zip! Splash! She shook the water from her eyes, squirming the while as some of it ran down her warm back.

"You'll do," he encouraged her. "You're the right stuff for this country. Goin' all the way in?"

She nodded cheerfully.

"Then you'll do. But as I was sayin', after I lost my outfit I hit back for the coast, bein' broke, to hustle up another one. That's why I'm chargin' high-pressure rates. And I hope you don't feel sore at what I made you pay. I'm no worse than the rest, miss, sure. I had to dig up a hundred for this old tub, which ain't worth ten down in the States. Same kind of prices everywhere. Over on the Skaguay Trail horseshoe nails is just as good as a quarter any day. A man goes up to the bar and calls for a whiskey. Whiskey's half a dollar. Well, he drinks his whiskey, plunks down two horseshoe nails, and it's O.K. No kick comin' on horseshoe nails. They use 'em to make change."

"You must be a brave man to venture into the country again after such an experience. Won't you tell me your name? We may meet on the Inside."

"Who? Me? Oh, I'm Del Bishop, pocket-miner; and if ever we run across each other, remember I'd give you the last shirt — I mean, remember my last bit of grub is yours."

"Thank you," she answered with a sweet smile; for she was a woman who loved the things which rose straight from the heart.

He stopped rowing long enough to fish about in the water around his feet for an old cornbeef can.

"You'd better do some bailin'," he ordered, tossing her the can.
"She's leakin' worse since that squeeze."

Frona smiled mentally, tucked up her skirts, and bent to the work. At every dip, like great billows heaving along the sky-line, the glacier-fretted mountains rose and fell. Sometimes she rested her back and watched the teeming beach towards which they were heading, and again, the land-locked arm of the sea in which a score or so of great steamships lay at anchor. From each of these, to the shore and back again, flowed a steady stream of scows, launches, canoes, and all sorts of smaller craft. Man, the mighty toiler, reacting upon a hostile environment, she thought, going back in memory to the masters whose wisdom she had shared in lecture-room and midnight study. She was a ripened child of the age, and fairly understood the physical world and the workings thereof. And she had a love for the world, and a deep respect.

For some time Del Bishop had only punctuated the silence with splashes from his oars; but a thought struck him.

"You haven't told me your name," he suggested, with complacent delicacy.

"My name is Welse," she answered. "Frona Welse."

A great awe manifested itself in his face, and grew to a greater and greater awe. "You — are — Frona — Welse?" he enunciated slowly. "Jacob Welse ain't your old man, is he?"

"Yes; I am Jacob Welse's daughter, at your service."

He puckered his lips in a long low whistle of understanding and stopped rowing. "Just you climb back into the stern and take your feet out of that water," he commanded. "And gimme holt that can."

"Am I not bailing satisfactorily?" she demanded, indignantly.

"Yep. You're doin' all right; but, but, you are — are — "

"Just what I was before you knew who I was. Now you go on rowing, — that's your share of the work; and I'll take care of mine."

"Oh, you'll do!" he murmured ecstatically, bending afresh to the oars. "And Jacob Welse is your old man? I oughter 'a known it, sure!"

When they reached the sand-spit, crowded with heterogeneous piles of merchandise and buzzing with men, she stopped long enough to shake hands with her ferryman. And though such a proceeding on the part of his feminine patrons was certainly unusual, Del Bishop squared it easily with the fact that she was Jacob Welse's daughter.

"Remember, my last bit of grub is yours," he reassured her, still holding her hand.

"And your last shirt, too; don't forget."

"Well, you're a — a — a crackerjack!" he exploded with a final squeeze. "Sure!"

Her short skirt did not block the free movement of her limbs, and she discovered with pleasurable surprise that the quick tripping step of the city pavement had departed from her, and that she was swinging off in the long easy stride which is born of the trail and which comes only after much travail and endeavor. More than one gold-rusher, shooting keen glances at her ankles and gray-gaitered calves, affirmed Del Bishop's judgment. And more than one glanced up at her face, and glanced again; for her gaze was frank, with the frankness of comradeship; and in her eyes there was always a smiling light, just trembling on the verge of dawn; and did the onlooker smile, her eyes smiled also. And the smiling light was protean-mooded, — merry, sympathetic, joyous, quizzical, — the complement of whatsoever kindled it. And sometimes the light spread over all her face, till the smile prefigured by it was realized. But it was always in frank and open comradeship.

And there was much to cause her to smile as she hurried through the crowd, across the sand-spit, and over the flat towards the log-building she had pointed out to Mr. Thurston. Time had rolled back, and locomotion and transportation were once again in the most primitive stages. Men who had never carried more than parcels in all their lives had now become bearers of burdens. They no longer walked upright under the sun, but stooped the body forward and bowed the head to the earth. Every back had become a pack-saddle, and the strap-galls were beginning to form. They staggered beneath the unwonted effort, and legs became drunken with weariness and titubated in divers directions till the sunlight darkened and bearer and burden fell by the way. Other men, exulting secretly, piled their goods on two-wheeled go-carts and pulled out blithely enough, only to stall at the first spot where the great round boulders invaded the trail. Whereat they generalized anew upon the principles of Alaskan travel, discarded the go-cart, or trundled it back to the beach and sold it at fabulous price to the last man landed. Tenderfeet, with ten pounds of Colt's revolvers, cartridges, and hunting-knives belted about them, wandered valiantly up the trail, and crept back softly, shedding revolvers, cartridges, and knives in despairing showers. And so, in gasping and bitter sweat, these sons of Adam suffered for Adam's sin.

Frona felt vaguely disturbed by this great throbbing rush of gold-mad men, and the old scene with its clustering associations seemed blotted out by these toiling aliens. Even the old landmarks appeared strangely unfamiliar. It was the same, yet not the same. Here, on the grassy flat, where she had played as a child and shrunk back at the sound of her voice echoing from glacier to glacier, ten thousand men tramped ceaselessly up and down, grinding the tender herbage into the soil and mocking the stony silence. And just up the trail were ten thousand men who had passed by, and over the Chilcoot were ten thousand more. And behind, all down the island-studded Alaskan coast, even to the Horn, were yet ten thousand more, harnessers of wind and steam, hasteners from the ends of the earth. The Dyea River as of old roared turbulently down to the sea; but its ancient banks were gored by the feet of many men, and these men labored in surging rows at the dripping tow-lines, and the deep-laden boats followed them as they fought their upward way. And the will of man strove with the will of the water, and the men laughed at the old Dyea River and gored its banks deeper for the men who were to follow.

The doorway of the store, through which she had once run out and in, and where she had looked with awe at the unusual sight of a stray trapper or fur-trader, was now packed with a clamorous throng of men. Where of old one letter waiting a claimant was a thing of wonder, she now saw, by peering through the window, the mail heaped up from floor to ceiling. And it was for this mail the men were clamoring so insistently. Before the store, by the scales, was another crowd. An Indian threw his pack upon the scales, the white owner jotted down the weight in a note-book, and another pack was thrown on. Each pack was in the straps, ready for the packer's back and the precarious journey over the Chilcoot. Frona edged in closer. She was interested in freights. She remembered in her day when the solitary prospector or trader had his outfit packed over for six cents, — one hundred and twenty dollars a ton.

The tenderfoot who was weighing up consulted his guide-book. “Eight cents,” he said to the Indian. Whereupon the Indians laughed scornfully and chorused, “Forty cents!” A pained expression came into his face, and he looked about him anxiously. The sympathetic light in Frona’s eyes caught him, and he regarded her with intent blankness. In reality he was busy reducing a three-ton outfit to terms of cash at forty dollars per hundred-weight. “Twenty-four hundred dollars for thirty miles!” he cried. “What can I do?”

Frona shrugged her shoulders. “You’d better pay them the forty cents,” she advised, “else they will take off their straps.”

The man thanked her, but instead of taking heed went on with his haggling. One of the Indians stepped up and proceeded to unfasten his pack-straps. The tenderfoot wavered, but just as he was about to give in, the packers jumped the price on him to forty-five cents. He smiled after a sickly fashion, and nodded his head in token of surrender. But another Indian joined the group and began whispering excitedly. A cheer went up, and before the man could realize it they had jerked off their straps and departed, spreading the news as they went that freight to Lake Linderman was fifty cents.

Of a sudden, the crowd before the store was perceptibly agitated. Its members whispered excitedly one to another, and all their eyes were focussed upon three men approaching from up the trail. The trio were ordinary-looking creatures, ill-clad and even ragged. In a more stable community their apprehension by the village constable and arrest for vagrancy would have been immediate. “French Louis,” the tenderfeet whispered and passed the word along. “Owns three Eldorado claims in a block,” the man next to Frona confided to her. “Worth ten millions at the very least.” French Louis, striding a little in advance of his companions, did not look it. He had parted company with his hat somewhere along the route, and a frayed silk kerchief was wrapped carelessly about his head. And for all his ten millions, he carried his own travelling pack on his broad shoulders. “And that one, the one with the beard, that’s Swiftwater Bill, another of the Eldorado kings.”

“How do you know?” Frona asked, doubtingly.

“Know!” the man exclaimed. “Know! Why his picture has been in all the papers for the last six weeks. See!” He unfolded a newspaper. “And a pretty good likeness, too. I’ve looked at it so much I’d know his mug among a thousand.”

“Then who is the third one?” she queried, tacitly accepting him as a fount of authority.

Her informant lifted himself on his toes to see better. “I don’t know,” he confessed sorrowfully, then tapped the shoulder of the man next to him. “Who is the lean, smooth-faced one? The one with the blue shirt and the patch on his knee?”

Just then Frona uttered a glad little cry and darted forward. “Matt!” she cried. “Matt McCarthy!”

The man with the patch shook her hand heartily, though he did not know her and distrust was plain in his eyes.

“Oh, you don’t remember me!” she chattered. “And don’t you dare say you do! If there weren’t so many looking, I’d hug you, you old bear!

“And so Big Bear went home to the Little Bears,” she recited, solemnly. “And the Little Bears were very hungry. And Big Bear said, ‘Guess what I have got, my children.’ And one Little Bear guessed berries, and one Little Bear guessed salmon, and t’other Little Bear guessed porcupine. Then Big Bear laughed ‘Whoof! Whoof!’ and said, ‘*A Nice Big Fat Man*!’“

As he listened, recollection avowed itself in his face, and, when she had finished, his eyes wrinkled up and he laughed a peculiar, laughable silent laugh.

“Sure, an’ it’s well I know ye,” he explained; “but for the life iv me I can’t put me finger on ye.”

She pointed into the store and watched him anxiously.

“Now I have ye!” He drew back and looked her up and down, and his expression changed to disappointment. “It cuddent be. I mistook ye. Ye cud niver a-lived in that shanty,” thrusting a thumb in the direction of the store.

Frona nodded her head vigorously.

“Thin it’s yer ownself afther all? The little motherless darlin’, with the goold hair I combed the knots out iv many’s the time? The little witch that run barefoot an’ barelegged over all the place?”

“Yes, yes,” she corroborated, gleefully.

"The little divil that stole the dog-team an' wint over the Pass in the dead o' winter for to see where the world come to an ind on the ither side, just because old Matt McCarthy was afther tellin' her fairy stories?"

"O Matt, dear old Matt! Remember the time I went swimming with the Siwash girls from the Indian camp?"

"An' I dragged ye out by the hair o' yer head?"

"And lost one of your new rubber boots?"

"Ah, an' sure an' I do. And a most shockin' an' immodest affair it was! An' the boots was worth tin dollars over yer father's counter."

"And then you went away, over the Pass, to the Inside, and we never heard a word of you. Everybody thought you dead."

"Well I recollect the day. An' ye cried in me arms an' wuddent kiss yer old Matt good-by. But ye did in the ind," he exclaimed, triumphantly, "whin ye saw I was goin' to lave ye for sure. What a wee thing ye were!"

"I was only eight."

"An' 'tis twelve year agone. Twelve year I've spint on the Inside, with niver a trip out. Ye must be twinty now?"

"And almost as big as you," Frona affirmed.

"A likely woman ye've grown into, tall, an' shapely, an' all that." He looked her over critically. "But ye cud 'a' stood a bit more flesh, I'm thinkin'."

"No, no," she denied. "Not at twenty, Matt, not at twenty. Feel my arm, you'll see." She doubled that member till the biceps knotted.

"'Tis muscle," he admitted, passing his hand admiringly over the swelling bunch; "just as though ye'd been workin' hard for yer livin'."

"Oh, I can swing clubs, and box, and fence," she cried, successively striking the typical postures; "and swim, and make high dives, chin a bar twenty times, and — and walk on my hands. There!"

"Is that what ye've been doin'? I thought ye wint away for book-larnin'," he commented, dryly.

"But they have new ways of teaching, now, Matt, and they don't turn you out with your head crammed — "

"An' yer legs that spindly they can't carry it all! Well, an' I forgive ye yer muscle."

"But how about yourself, Matt?" Frona asked. "How has the world been to you these twelve years?"

“Behold!” He spread his legs apart, threw his head back, and his chest out. “Ye now behold Mister Matthew McCarthy, a king iv the noble Eldorado Dynasty by the strength iv his own right arm. Me possessions is limitless. I have more dust in wan minute than iver I saw in all me life before. Me intintion for makin’ this trip to the States is to look up me ancestors. I have a firm belafe that they wance existed. Ye may find nuggets in the Klondike, but niver good whiskey. ‘Tis likewise me intintion to have wan drink iv the rate stuff before I die. Afther that ‘tis me sworn resolve to return to the superveeshion iv me Klondike properties. Indade, and I’m an Eldorado king; an’ if ye’ll be wantin’ the lind iv a tidy bit, it’s meself that’ll loan it ye.”

“The same old, old Matt, who never grows old,” Frona laughed.

“An’ it’s yerself is the thrue Welse, for all yer prize-fighter’s muscles an’ yer philosopher’s brains. But let’s wander inside on the heels of Louis an’ Swiftwater. Andy’s still tindin’ store, I’m told, an’ we’ll see if I still linger in the pages iv his mimory.”

“And I, also.” Frona seized him by the hand. It was a bad habit she had of seizing the hands of those she loved. “It’s ten years since I went away.”

The Irishman forged his way through the crowd like a pile-driver, and Frona followed easily in the lee of his bulk. The tenderfeet watched them reverently, for to them they were as Northland divinities. The buzz of conversation rose again.

“Who’s the girl?” somebody asked. And just as Frona passed inside the door she caught the opening of the answer: “Jacob Welse’s daughter. Never heard of Jacob Welse? Where have you been keeping yourself?”

CHAPTER II

She came out of the wood of glistening birch, and with the first fires of the sun blazoning her unbound hair raced lightly across the dew-dripping meadow. The earth was fat with excessive moisture and soft to her feet, while the dank vegetation slapped against her knees and cast off flashing sprays of liquid diamonds. The flush of the morning was in her cheek, and its fire in her eyes, and she was aglow with youth and love. For she had nursed at the breast of nature, — in forfeit of a mother, — and she loved the old trees and the creeping green things with a passionate love; and the dim murmur of growing life was a gladness to her ears, and the damp earth-smells were sweet to her nostrils.

Where the upper-reach of the meadow vanished in a dark and narrow forest aisle, amid clean-stemmed dandelions and color-bursting buttercups, she came upon a bunch of great Alaskan violets. Throwing herself at full length, she buried her face in the fragrant coolness, and with her hands drew the purple heads in circling splendor about her own. And she was not ashamed. She had wandered away amid the complexities and smirch and withering heats of the great world, and she had returned, simple, and clean, and wholesome. And she was glad of it, as she lay there, slipping back to the old days, when the universe began and ended at the sky-line, and when she journeyed over the Pass to behold the Abyss.

It was a primitive life, that of her childhood, with few conventions, but such as there were, stern ones. And they might be epitomized, as she had read somewhere in her later years, as “the faith of food and blanket.” This faith had her father kept, she thought, remembering that his name sounded well on the lips of men. And this was the faith she had learned, — the faith she had carried with her across the Abyss and into the world, where men had wandered away from the old truths and made themselves selfish dogmas and casuistries of the subtlest kinds; the faith she had brought back with her, still fresh, and young, and joyous. And it was all so simple, she had contended; why should not their faith be as her faith — *the faith of food and blanket*? The faith of trail and hunting camp? The faith with which strong clean men faced the quick danger and sudden death by field and flood? Why not? The faith of Jacob Welse? Of Matt McCarthy? Of the Indian boys she had played with? Of the Indian girls she had led to

Amazonian war? Of the very wolf-dogs straining in the harnesses and running with her across the snow? It was healthy, it was real, it was good, she thought, and she was glad.

The rich notes of a robin saluted her from the birch wood, and opened her ears to the day. A partridge boomed afar in the forest, and a tree-squirrel launched unerringly into space above her head, and went on, from limb to limb and tree to tree, scolding graciously the while. From the hidden river rose the shouts of the toiling adventurers, already parted from sleep and fighting their way towards the Pole.

Frona arose, shook back her hair, and took instinctively the old path between the trees to the camp of Chief George and the Dyea tribesmen. She came upon a boy, breech-clouted and bare, like a copper god. He was gathering wood, and looked at her keenly over his bronze shoulder. She bade him good-morning, blithely, in the Dyea tongue; but he shook his head, and laughed insultingly, and paused in his work to hurl shameful words after her. She did not understand, for this was not the old way, and when she passed a great and glowering Sitkan buck she kept her tongue between her teeth. At the fringe of the forest, the camp confronted her. And she was startled. It was not the old camp of a score or more of lodges clustering and huddling together in the open as though for company, but a mighty camp. It began at the very forest, and flowed in and out among the scattered tree-clumps on the flat, and spilled over and down to the river bank where the long canoes were lined up ten and twelve deep. It was a gathering of the tribes, like unto none in all the past, and a thousand miles of coast made up the tally. They were all strange Indians, with wives and chattels and dogs. She rubbed shoulders with Juneau and Wrangel men, and was jostled by wild-eyed Sticks from over the Passes, fierce Chilcats, and Queen Charlotte Islanders. And the looks they cast upon her were black and frowning, save — and far worse — where the merrier souls leered patronizingly into her face and chuckled unmentionable things.

She was not frightened by this insolence, but angered; for it hurt her, and embittered the pleasurable home-coming. Yet she quickly grasped the significance of it: the old patriarchal status of her father’s time had passed away, and civilization, in a scorching blast, had swept down upon this people in a day. Glancing under the raised flaps of a tent, she saw haggard-faced bucks squatting in a circle on the floor. By the door a heap of broken bottles advertised the vigils of the night. A white man, low of visage and shrewd, was dealing cards about, and gold and silver coins leaped into heaping bets upon the blanket board. A few steps farther on she heard the cluttering whirl of a wheel of fortune, and saw the Indians, men and women, chancing eagerly their sweat-earned wages for the gaudy prizes of the game. And from tepee and lodge rose the cracked and crazy strains of cheap music-boxes.

An old squaw, peeling a willow pole in the sunshine of an open doorway, raised her head and uttered a shrill cry.

"Hee-Hee! Tenas Hee-Hee!" she muttered as well and as excitedly as her toothless gums would permit.

Frona thrilled at the cry. Tenas Hee-Hee! Little Laughter! Her name of the long gone Indian past! She turned and went over to the old woman.

"And hast thou so soon forgotten, Tenas Hee-Hee?" she mumbled. "And thine eyes so young and sharp! Not so soon does Neepoosa forget."

"It is thou, Neepoosa?" Frona cried, her tongue halting from the disuse of years.

"Ay, it is Neepoosa," the old woman replied, drawing her inside the tent, and despatching a boy, hot-footed, on some errand. They sat down together on the floor, and she patted Frona's hand lovingly, peering, meanwhile, blear-eyed and misty, into her face. "Ay, it is Neepoosa, grown old quickly after the manner of our women. Neepoosa, who dandled thee in her arms when thou wast a child. Neepoosa, who gave thee thy name, Tenas Hee-Hee. Who fought for thee with Death when thou wast ailing; and gathered growing things from the woods and grasses of the earth and made of them tea, and gave thee to drink. But I mark little change, for I knew thee at once. It was thy very shadow on the ground that made me lift my head. A little change, mayhap. Tall thou art, and like a slender willow in thy grace, and the sun has kissed thy cheeks more lightly of the years; but there is the old hair, flying wild and of the color of the brown seaweed floating on the tide, and the mouth, quick to laugh and loth to cry. And the eyes are as clear and true as in the days when Neepoosa chid thee for wrong-doing, and thou wouldst not put false words upon thy tongue. Ai! Ai! Not as thou art the other women who come now into the land!"

"And why is a white woman without honor among you?" Frona demanded. "Your men say evil things to me in the camp, and as I came through the woods, even the boys. Not in the old days, when I played with them, was this shame so."

"Ai! Ai!" Neepoosa made answer. "It is so. But do not blame them. Pour not thine anger upon their heads. For it is true it is the fault of thy women who come into the land these days. They can point to no man and say, 'That is my man.' And it is not good that women should he thus. And they look upon all men, bold-eyed and shameless, and their tongues are unclean, and their hearts bad. Wherefore are thy women without honor among us. As for the boys, they are but boys. And the men; how should they know?"

The tent-flaps were poked aside and an old man came in. He grunted to Frona and sat down. Only a certain eager alertness showed the delight he took in her presence.

"So Tenas Hee-Hee has come back in these bad days," he vouchsafed in a shrill, quavering voice.

"And why bad days, Muskim?" Frona asked. "Do not the women wear brighter colors? Are not the bellies fuller with flour and bacon and white man's grub? Do not the young men contrive great wealth what of their pack-straps and paddles? And art thou not remembered with the ancient offerings of meat and fish and blanket? Why bad days, Muskim?"

"True," he replied in his fine, priestly way, a reminiscent flash of the old fire lighting his eyes. "It is very true. The women wear brighter colors. But they have found favor, in the eyes of thy white men, and they look no more upon the young men of their own blood. Wherefore the tribe does not increase, nor do the little children longer clutter the way of our feet. It is so. The bellies are fuller with the white man's grub; but also are they fuller with the white man's bad whiskey. Nor could it be otherwise that the young men contrive great wealth; but they sit by night over the cards, and it passes from them, and they speak harsh words one to another, and in anger blows are struck, and there is bad blood between them. As for old Muskim, there are few offerings of meat and fish and blanket. For the young women have turned aside from the old paths, nor do the young men longer honor the old totems and the old gods. So these are bad days, Tenas Hee-Hee, and they behold old Muskim go down in sorrow to the grave."

"Ai! Ai! It is so!" wailed Neepoosa.

"Because of the madness of thy people have my people become mad," Muskim continued. "They come over the salt sea like the waves of the sea, thy people, and they go — ah! who knoweth where?"

"Ai! Who knoweth where?" Neepoosa lamented, rocking slowly back and forth.

"Ever they go towards the frost and cold; and ever do they come, more people, wave upon wave!"

"Ai! Ai! Into the frost and cold! It is a long way, and dark and cold!" She shivered, then laid a sudden hand on Frona's arm. "And thou goest?"

Frona nodded.

"And Tenas Hee-Hee goest! Ai! Ai! Ai!"

The tent-flap lifted, and Matt McCarthy peered in. "It's yerself, Frona, is it? With breakfast waitin' this half-hour on ye, an' old Andy fumin' an' frettin' like the old woman he is. Good-mornin' to ye, Neepoosa," he addressed Frona's companions, "an' to ye, Muskim, though, belike ye've little mimory iv me face."

The old couple grunted salutation and remained stolidly silent.

"But hurry with ye, girl," turning back to Frona. "Me steamer starts by mid-day, an' it's little I'll see iv ye at the best. An' likewise there's Andy an' the breakfast pipin' hot, both iv them."

CHAPTER III

Frona waved her hand to Andy and swung out on the trail. Fastened tightly to her back were her camera and a small travelling satchel. In addition, she carried for alpenstock the willow pole of Neepoosa. Her dress was of the mountaineering sort, short-skirted and scant, allowing the greatest play with the least material, and withal gray of color and modest.

Her outfit, on the backs of a dozen Indians and in charge of Del Bishop, had got under way hours before. The previous day, on her return with Matt McCarthy from the Siwash camp, she had found Del Bishop at the store waiting her. His business was quickly transacted, for the proposition he made was terse and to the point. She was going into the country. He was intending to go in. She would need somebody. If she had not picked any one yet, why he was just the man. He had forgotten to tell her the day he took her ashore that he had been in the country years before and knew all about it. True, he hated the water, and it was mainly a water journey; but he was not afraid of it. He was afraid of nothing. Further, he would fight for her at the drop of the hat. As for pay, when they got to Dawson, a good word from her to Jacob Welse, and a year's outfit would be his. No, no; no grub-stake about it, no strings on him! He would pay for the outfit later on when his sack was dusted. What did she think about it, anyway? And Frona did think about it, for ere she had finished breakfast he was out hustling the packers together.

She found herself making better speed than the majority of her fellows, who were heavily laden and had to rest their packs every few hundred yards. Yet she found herself hard put to keep the pace of a bunch of Scandinavians ahead of her. They were huge strapping blond-haired giants, each striding along with a hundred pounds on his back, and all harnessed to a go-cart which carried fully six hundred more. Their faces were as laughing suns, and the joy of life was in them. The toil seemed child's play and slipped from them lightly. They joked with one another, and with the passers-by, in a meaningless tongue, and their great chests rumbled with cavern-echoing laughs. Men stood aside for them, and looked after them enviously; for they took the rises of the trail on the run, and rattled down the counter slopes, and ground the iron-rimmed wheels harshly over the rocks. Plunging through a dark stretch of woods, they came out upon the river at the ford. A drowned man lay on his back on the sand-bar, staring upward, unblinking, at the sun. A man, in irritated tones, was questioning over and over, “Where’s his pardner? Ain’t he got a pardner?” Two more men had thrown off their packs and were coolly taking an inventory of the dead man’s possessions. One called aloud the various articles, while the other checked them off on a piece of dirty wrapping-paper. Letters and receipts, wet and pulpy, strewed the sand. A few gold coins were heaped carelessly on a white handkerchief. Other men, crossing back and forth in canoes and skiffs, took no notice.

The Scandinavians glanced at the sight, and their faces sobered for a moment. “Where’s his pardner? Ain’t he got a pardner?” the irritated man demanded of them. They shook their heads. They did not understand English. They stepped into the water and splashed onward. Some one called warningly from the opposite bank, whereat they stood still and conferred together. Then they started on again. The two men taking the inventory turned to watch. The current rose nigh to their hips, but it was swift and they staggered, while now and again the cart slipped sideways with the stream. The worst was over, and Frona found herself holding her breath. The water had sunk to the knees of the two foremost men, when a strap snapped on one nearest the cart. His pack swung suddenly to the side, overbalancing him. At the same instant the man next to him slipped, and each jerked the other under. The next two were whipped off their feet, while the cart, turning over, swept from the bottom of the ford into the deep water. The two men who had almost emerged threw themselves backward on the pull-ropes. The effort was heroic, but giants though they were, the task was too great and they were dragged, inch by inch, downward and under.

Their packs held them to the bottom, save him whose strap had broken. This one struck out, not to the shore, but down the stream, striving to keep up with his comrades. A couple of hundred feet below, the rapid dashed over a toothed-reef of rocks, and here, a minute later, they appeared. The cart, still loaded, showed first, smashing a wheel and turning over and over into the next plunge. The men followed in a miserable tangle. They were beaten against the submerged rocks and swept on, all but one. Frona, in a canoe (a dozen canoes were already in pursuit), saw him grip the rock with bleeding fingers. She saw his white face and the agony of the effort; but his hold relaxed and he was jerked away, just as his free comrade, swimming mightily, was reaching for him. Hidden from sight, they took the next plunge, showing for a second, still struggling, at the shallow foot of the rapid.

A canoe picked up the swimming man, but the rest disappeared in a long stretch of swift, deep water. For a quarter of an hour the canoes plied fruitlessly about, then found the dead men gently grounded in an eddy. A tow-rope was requisitioned from an up-coming boat, and a pair of horses from a pack-train on the bank, and the ghastly jetsam hauled ashore. Frona looked at the five young giants lying in the mud, broken-boned, limp, uncaring. They were still harnessed to the cart, and the poor worthless packs still clung to their backs, The sixth sat in the midst, dry-eyed and stunned. A dozen feet away the steady flood of life flowed by and Frona melted into it and went on.

The dark spruce-shrouded mountains drew close together in the Dyea Canyon, and the feet of men churned the wet sunless earth into mire and bog-hole. And when they had done this they sought new paths, till there were many paths. And on such a path Frona came upon a man spread carelessly in the mud. He lay on his side, legs apart and one arm buried beneath him, pinned down by a bulky pack. His cheek was pillowed restfully in the ooze, and on his face there was an expression of content. He brightened when he saw her, and his eyes twinkled cheerily.

"'Bout time you hove along," he greeted her. "Been waitin' an hour on you as it is."

"That's it," as Frona bent over him. "Just unbuckle that strap. The pesky thing! 'Twas just out o' my reach all the time."

"Are you hurt?" she asked.

He slipped out of his straps, shook himself, and felt the twisted arm. "Nope. Sound as a dollar, thank you. And no kick to register, either." He reached over and wiped his muddy hands on a low-bowed spruce. "Just my luck; but I got a good rest, so what's the good of makin' a beef about it? You see, I tripped on that little root there, and slip! slump! slam! and slush! — there I was, down and out, and the buckle just out o' reach. And there I lay for a blasted hour, everybody hitting the lower path."

"But why didn't you call out to them?"

"And make 'em climb up the hill to me? Them all tuckered out with their own work? Not on your life! Wasn't serious enough. If any other man 'd make me climb up just because he'd slipped down, I'd take him out o' the mud all right, all right, and punch and punch him back into the mud again.

Besides, I knew somebody was bound to come along my way after a while."

"Oh, you'll do!" she cried, appropriating Del Bishop's phrase. "You'll do for this country!"

"Yep," he called back, shouldering his pack and starting off at a lively clip. "And, anyway, I got a good rest."

The trail dipped through a precipitous morass to the river's brink. A slender pine-tree spanned the screaming foam and bent midway to touch the water. The surge beat upon the taper trunk and gave it a rhythmical swaying motion, while the feet of the packers had worn smooth its wave-washed surface. Eighty feet it stretched in ticklish insecurity. Frona stepped upon it, felt it move beneath her, heard the bellowing of the water, saw the mad rush — and shrank back. She slipped the knot of her shoe-laces and pretended great care in the tying thereof as a bunch of Indians came out of the woods above and down through the mud. Three or four bucks led the way, followed by many squaws, all bending in the head-straps to the heavy packs. Behind came the children burdened according to their years, and in the rear half a dozen dogs, tongues lagging out and dragging forward painfully under their several loads.

The men glanced at her sideways, and one of them said something in an undertone. Frona could not hear, but the snicker which went down the line brought the flush of shame to her brow and told her more forcibly than could the words. Her face was hot, for she sat disgraced in her own sight; but she gave no sign. The leader stood aside, and one by one, and never more than one at a time, they made the perilous passage. At the bend in the middle their weight forced the tree under, and they felt for their footing, up to the ankles in the cold, driving torrent. Even the little children made it without hesitancy, and then the dogs whining and reluctant but urged on by the man. When the last had crossed over, he turned to Frona.

"Um horse trail," he said, pointing up the mountain side. "Much better you take um horse trail. More far; much better."

But she shook her head and waited till he reached the farther bank; for she felt the call, not only upon her own pride, but upon the pride of her race; and it was a greater demand than her demand, just as the race was greater than she. So she put foot upon the log, and, with the eyes of the alien people upon her, walked down into the foam-white swirl.

She came upon a man weeping by the side of the trail. His pack, clumsily strapped, sprawled on the ground. He had taken off a shoe, and one naked foot showed swollen and blistered.

"What is the matter?" she asked, halting before him.

He looked up at her, then down into the depths where the Dyea River cut the gloomy darkness with its living silver. The tears still welled in his eyes, and he sniffled.

"What is the matter?" she repeated. "Can I be of any help?"

"No," he replied. "How can you help? My feet are raw, and my back is nearly broken, and I am all tired out. Can you help any of these things?"

"Well," judiciously, "I am sure it might be worse. Think of the men who have just landed on the beach. It will take them ten days or two weeks to back-trip their outfits as far as you have already got yours."

"But my partners have left me and gone on," he moaned, a sneaking appeal for pity in his voice. "And I am all alone, and I don't feel able to move another step. And then think of my wife and babies. I left them down in the States. Oh, if they could only see me now! I can't go back to them, and I can't go on. It's too much for me. I can't stand it, this working like a horse. I was not made to work like a horse. I'll die, I know I will, if I do. Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Why did your comrades leave you?"

"Because I was not so strong as they; because I could not pack as much or as long. And they laughed at me and left me."

"Have you ever roughed it?" Frona asked.

"No."

"You look well put up and strong. Weigh probably one hundred and sixty-five?"

"One hundred-and seventy," he corrected.

"You don't look as though you had ever been troubled with sickness. Never an invalid?"

"N-no."

"And your comrades? They are miners?"

"Never mining in their lives. They worked in the same establishment with me. That's what makes it so hard, don't you see! We'd known one another for years! And to go off and leave me just because I couldn't keep up!"

“My friend,” and Frona knew she was speaking for the race, “you are strong as they. You can work just as hard as they; pack as much. But you are weak of heart. This is no place for the weak of heart. You cannot work like a horse because you will not. Therefore the country has no use for you. The north wants strong men, — strong of soul, not body. The body does not count. So go back to the States. We do not want you here. If you come you will die, and what then of| your wife and babies? So sell out your outfit and go back. You will be home in three weeks. Good-by.”

She passed through Sheep Camp. Somewhere above, a mighty glacier, under the pent pressure of a subterranean reservoir, had burst asunder and hurled a hundred thousand tons of ice and water down the rocky gorge. The trail was yet slippery with the slime of the flood, and men were rummaging disconsolately in the rubbish of overthrown tents and caches. But here and there they worked with nervous haste, and the stark corpses by the trail-side attested dumbly to their labor. A few hundred yards beyond, the work of the rush went on uninterrupted. Men rested their packs on jutting stones, swapped escapes whilst they regained their breath, then stumbled on to their toil again.

The mid-day sun beat down upon the stone “Scales.” The forest had given up the struggle, and the dizzying heat recoiled from the unclothed rock. On either hand rose the ice-marred ribs of earth, naked and strenuous in their nakedness. Above towered storm-beaten Chilcoot. Up its gaunt and ragged front crawled a slender string of men. But it was an endless string. It came out of the last fringe of dwarfed shrub below, drew a black line across a dazzling stretch of ice, and filed past Frona where she ate her lunch by the way. And it went on, up the pitch of the steep, growing fainter and smaller, till it squirmed and twisted like a column of ants and vanished over the crest of the pass.

Even as she looked, Chilcoot was wrapped in rolling mist and whirling cloud, and a storm of sleet and wind roared down upon the toiling pigmies. The light was swept out of the day, and a deep gloom prevailed; but Frona knew that somewhere up there, clinging and climbing and immortally striving, the long line of ants still twisted towards the sky. And she thrilled at the thought, strong with man’s ancient love of mastery, and stepped into the line which came out of the storm behind and disappeared into the storm before.

She blew through the gap of the pass in a whirlwind of vapor, with hand and foot clambered down the volcanic ruin of Chilcoot's mighty father, and stood on the bleak edge of the lake which filled the pit of the crater. The lake was angry and white-capped, and though a hundred caches were waiting ferriage, no boats were plying back and forth. A rickety skeleton of sticks, in a shell of greased canvas, lay upon the rocks. Frona sought out the owner, a bright-faced young fellow, with sharp black eyes and a salient jaw. Yes, he was the ferryman, but he had quit work for the day. Water too rough for freighting. He charged twenty-five dollars for passengers, but he was not taking passengers to-day. Had he not said it was too rough? That was why.

"But you will take me, surely?" she asked.

He shook his head and gazed out over the lake. "At the far end it's rougher than you see it here. Even the big wooden boats won't tackle it. The last that tried, with a gang of packers aboard, was blown over on the west shore. We could see them plainly. And as there's no trail around from there, they'll have to camp it out till the blow is over."

"But they're better off than I am. My camp outfit is at Happy Camp, and I can't very well stay here," Frona smiled winsomely, but there was no appeal in the smile; no feminine helplessness throwing itself on the strength and chivalry of the male. "Do reconsider and take me across."

"No."

"I'll give you fifty."

"No, I say."

"But I'm not afraid, you know."

The young fellow's eyes flashed angrily. He turned upon her suddenly, but on second thought did not utter the words forming on his lips. She realized the unintentional slur she had cast, and was about to explain. But on second thought she, too, remained silent; for she read him, and knew that it was perhaps the only way for her to gain her point. They stood there, bodies inclined to the storm in the manner of seamen on sloped decks, unyieldingly looking into each other's eyes. His hair was plastered in wet ringlets on his forehead, while hers, in longer wisps, beat furiously about her face.

"Come on, then!" He flung the boat into the water with an angry jerk, and tossed the oars aboard. "Climb in! I'll take you, but not for your fifty dollars. You pay the regulation price, and that's all."

A gust of the gale caught the light shell and swept it broadside for a score of feet. The spray drove inboard in a continuous stinging shower, and Frona at once fell to work with the bailing-can.

“I hope we’re blown ashore,” he shouted, stooping forward to the oars. “It would be embarrassing — for you.” He looked up savagely into her face.

“No,” she modified; “but it would be very miserable for both of us, — a night without tent, blankets, or fire. Besides, we’re not going to blow ashore.”

She stepped out on the slippery rocks and helped him heave up the canvas craft and tilt the water out. On either side uprose bare wet walls of rock. A heavy sleet was falling steadily, through which a few streaming caches showed in the gathering darkness.

“You’d better hurry up,” he advised, thanking her for the assistance and relaunching the boat. “Two miles of stiff trail from here to Happy Camp. No wood until you get there, so you’d best hustle along. Good-by.”

Frona reached out and took his hand, and said, “You are a brave man.”

“Oh, I don’t know.” He returned the grip with usury and looked his admiration.

A dozen tents held grimly to their pegs on the extreme edge of the timber line at Happy Camp. Frona, weary with the day, went from tent to tent. Her wet skirts clung heavily to her tired limbs, while the wind buffeted her brutally about. Once, through a canvas wall, she heard a man apostrophizing gorgeously, and felt sure that it was Del Bishop. But a peep into the interior told a different tale; so she wandered fruitlessly on till she reached the last tent in the camp. She untied the flap and looked in. A spluttering candle showed the one occupant, a man, down on his knees and blowing lustily into the fire-box of a smoky Yukon stove.

CHAPTER IV

She cast off the lower flap-fastenings and entered. The man still blew into the stove, unaware of his company. Frona coughed, and he raised a pair of smoke-reddened eyes to hers.

"Certainly," he said, casually enough. "Fasten the flaps and make yourself comfortable." And thereat returned to his borean task.

"Hospitable, to say the least," she commented to herself, obeying his command and coming up to the stove.

A heap of dwarfed spruce, gnarled and wet and cut to proper stove-length, lay to one side. Frona knew it well, creeping and crawling and twisting itself among the rocks of the shallow alluvial deposit, unlike its arboreal prototype, rarely lifting its head more than a foot from the earth. She looked into the oven, found it empty, and filled it with the wet wood. The man arose to his feet, coughing from the smoke which had been driven into his lungs, and nodding approval.

When he had recovered his breath, "Sit down and dry your skirts. I'll get supper."

He put a coffee-pot on the front lid of the stove, emptied the bucket into it, and went out of the tent after more water. As his back disappeared, Frona dived for her satchel, and when he returned a moment later he found her with a dry skirt on and wringing the wet one out. While he fished about in the grub-box for dishes and eating utensils, she stretched a spare bit of rope between the tent-poles and hung the skirt on it to dry. The dishes were dirty, and, as he bent over and washed them, she turned her back and deftly changed her stockings. Her childhood had taught her the value of well-cared feet for the trail. She put her wet shoes on a pile of wood at the back of the stove, substituting for them a pair of soft and dainty house-moccasins of Indian make. The fire had now grown strong, and she was content to let her under-garments dry on her body.

During all this time neither had spoken a word. Not only had the man remained silent, but he went about his work in so preoccupied a way that it seemed to Frona that he turned a deaf ear to the words of explanation she would have liked to utter. His whole bearing conveyed the impression that it was the most ordinary thing under the sun for a young woman to come in out of the storm and night and partake of his hospitality. In one way, she liked this; but in so far as she did not comprehend it, she was troubled. She had a perception of a something being taken for granted which she did not understand. Once or twice she moistened her lips to speak, but he appeared so oblivious of her presence that she withheld.

After opening a can of corned beef with the axe, he fried half a dozen thick slices of bacon, set the frying-pan back, and boiled the coffee. From the grub-box he resurrected the half of a cold heavy flapjack. He looked at it dubiously, and shot a quick glance at her. Then he threw the sodden thing out of doors and dumped the contents of a sea-biscuit bag upon a camp cloth. The sea-biscuit had been crumbled into chips and fragments and generously soaked by the rain till it had become a mushy, pulpy mass of dirty white.

"It's all I have in the way of bread," he muttered; "but sit down and we will make the best of it."

"One moment — " And before he could protest, Frona had poured the sea-biscuit into the frying-pan on top of the grease and bacon. To this she added a couple of cups of water and stirred briskly over the fire. When it had sobbed and sighed with the heat for some few minutes, she sliced up the corned beef and mixed it in with the rest. And by the time she had seasoned it heavily with salt and black pepper, a savory steam was rising from the concoction.

"Must say it's pretty good stuff," he said, balancing his plate on his knee and sampling the mess avidiously. "What do you happen to call it?"

"Slumgullion," she responded curtly, and thereafter the meal went on in silence.

Frona helped him to the coffee, studying him intently the while. And not only was it not an unpleasant face, she decided, but it was strong. Strong, she amended, potentially rather than actually. A student, she added, for she had seen many students' eyes and knew the lasting impress of the midnight oil long continued; and his eyes bore the impress. Brown eyes, she concluded, and handsome as the male's should be handsome; but she noted with surprise, when she refilled his plate with slumgullion, that they were not at all brown in the ordinary sense, but hazel-brown. In the daylight, she felt certain, and in times of best health, they would seem gray, and almost blue-gray. She knew it well; her one girl chum and dearest friend had had such an eye.

His hair was chestnut-brown, glinting in the candle-light to gold, and the hint of waviness in it explained the perceptible droop to his tawny moustache. For the rest, his face was clean-shaven and cut on a good masculine pattern. At first she found fault with the more than slight cheek-hollows under the cheek-bones, but when she measured his well-knit, slenderly muscular figure, with its deep chest and heavy shoulders, she discovered that she preferred the hollows; at least they did not imply lack of nutrition. The body gave the lie to that; while they themselves denied the vice of over-feeding. Height, five feet, nine, she summed up from out of her gymnasium experience; and age anywhere between twenty-five and thirty, though nearer the former most likely.

“Haven’t many blankets,” he said abruptly, pausing to drain his cup and set it over on the grub-box. “I don’t expect my Indians back from Lake Linderman till morning, and the beggars have packed over everything except a few sacks of flour and the bare camp outfit. However, I’ve a couple of heavy ulsters which will serve just as well.”

He turned his back, as though he did not expect a reply, and untied a rubber-covered roll of blankets. Then he drew the two ulsters from a clothes-bag and threw them down on the bedding.

“Vaudeville artist, I suppose?”

He asked the question seemingly without interest, as though to keep the conversation going, and, in fact, as if he knew the stereotyped answer beforehand. But to Frona the question was like a blow in the face. She remembered Neepoosa’s philippic against the white women who were coming into the land, and realized the falseness of her position and the way in which he looked upon her.

But he went on before she could speak. “Last night I had two vaudeville queens, and three the night before. Only there was more bedding then. It’s unfortunate, isn’t it, the aptitude they display in getting lost from their outfits? Yet somehow I have failed to find any lost outfits so far. And they are all queens, it seems. No under-studies or minor turns about them, — no, no. And I presume you are a queen, too?”

The too-ready blood sprayed her cheek, and this made her angrier than did he; for whereas she was sure of the steady grip she had on herself, her flushed face betokened a confusion which did not really possess her.

“No,” she answered, coolly; “I am not a vaudeville artist.”

He tossed several sacks of flour to one side of the stove, without replying, and made of them the foundation of a bed; and with the remaining sacks he duplicated the operation on the opposite side of the stove.

“But you are some kind of an artist, then,” he insisted when he had finished, with an open contempt on the “artist.”

“Unfortunately, I am not any kind of an artist at all.”

He dropped the blanket he was folding and straightened his back. Hitherto he had no more than glanced at her; but now he scrutinized her carefully, every inch of her, from head to heel and back again, the cut of her garments and the very way she did her hair. And he took his time about it.

“Oh! I beg pardon,” was his verdict, followed by another stare. “Then you are a very foolish woman dreaming of fortune and shutting your eyes to the dangers of the pilgrimage. It is only meet that two kinds of women come into this country. Those who by virtue of wifehood and daughterhood are respectable, and those who are not respectable. Vaudeville stars and artists, they call themselves for the sake of decency; and out of courtesy we countenance it. Yes, yes, I know. But remember, the women who come over the trail must be one or the other. There is no middle course, and those who attempt it are bound to fail. So you are a very, very foolish girl, and you had better turn back while there is yet a chance. If you will view it in the light of a loan from a stranger, I will advance your passage back to the States, and start an Indian over the trail with you to-morrow for Dyea.”

Once or twice Frona had attempted to interrupt him, but he had waved her imperatively to silence with his hand.

“I thank you,” she began; but he broke in, —

“Oh, not at all, not at all.”

“I thank you,” she repeated; but it happens that — a — that you are mistaken. I have just come over the trail from Dyea and expect to meet my outfit already in camp here at Happy Camp. They started hours ahead of me, and I can’t understand how I passed them — yes I do, too! A boat was blown over to the west shore of Crater Lake this afternoon, and they must have been in it. That is where I missed them and came on. As for my turning back, I appreciate your motive for suggesting it, but my father is in Dawson, and I have not seen him for three years. Also, I have come through from Dyea this day, and am tired, and I would like to get some rest. So, if you still extend your hospitality, I’ll go to bed.”

“Impossible!” He kicked the blankets to one side, sat down on the flour sacks, and directed a blank look upon her.

“Are — are there any women in the other tents?” she asked, hesitatingly.
“I did not see any, but I may have overlooked.”

“A man and his wife were, but they pulled stakes this morning. No; there are no other women except — except two or three in a tent, which — er — which will not do for you.”

“Do you think I am afraid of their hospitality?” she demanded, hotly.
“As you said, they are women.”

“But I said it would not do,” he answered, absently, staring at the straining canvas and listening to the roar of the storm. “A man would die in the open on a night like this.

“And the other tents are crowded to the walls,” he mused. “I happen to know. They have stored all their caches inside because of the water, and they haven’t room to turn around. Besides, a dozen other strangers are storm-bound with them. Two or three asked to spread their beds in here to-night if they couldn’t pinch room elsewhere. Evidently they have; but that does not argue that there is any surplus space left. And anyway — ”

He broke off helplessly. The inevitableness of the situation was growing.

“Can I make Deep Lake to-night?” Frona asked, forgetting herself to sympathize with him, then becoming conscious of what she was doing and bursting into laughter.

“But you couldn’t ford the river in the dark.” He frowned at her levity. “And there are no camps between.”

“Are you afraid?” she asked with just the shadow of a sneer.

“Not for myself.”

“Well, then, I think I’ll go to bed.”

“I might sit up and keep the fire going,” he suggested after a pause.

“Fiddlesticks!” she cried. “As though your foolish little code were saved in the least! We are not in civilization. This is the trail to the Pole. Go to bed.”

He elevated his shoulders in token of surrender. “Agreed. What shall
I do then?”

“Help me make my bed, of course. Sacks laid crosswise! Thank you, sir, but I have bones and muscles that rebel. Here — Pull them around this way.”

Under her direction he laid the sacks lengthwise in a double row. This left an uncomfortable hollow with lumpy sack-corners down the middle; but she smote them flat with the side of the axe, and in the same manner lessened the slope to the walls of the hollow. Then she made a triple longitudinal fold in a blanket and spread it along the bottom of the long depression.

"Hum!" he soliloquized. "Now I see why I sleep so badly. Here goes!" And he speedily flung his own sacks into shape.

"It is plain you are unused to the trail," she informed him, spreading the topmost blanket and sitting down.

"Perhaps so," he made answer. "But what do you know about this trail life?" he growled a little later.

"Enough to conform," she rejoined equivocally, pulling out the dried wood from the oven and replacing it with wet.

"Listen to it! How it storms!" he exclaimed. "It's growing worse, if worse be possible."

The tent reeled under the blows of the wind, the canvas booming hollowly at every shock, while the sleet and rain rattled overhead like skirmish-fire grown into a battle. In the lulls they could hear the water streaming off at the side-walls with the noise of small cataracts. He reached up curiously and touched the wet roof. A burst of water followed instantly at the point of contact and coursed down upon the grub-box.

"You mustn't do that!" Frona cried, springing to her feet. She put her finger on the spot, and, pressing tightly against the canvas, ran it down to the side-wall. The leak at once stopped. "You mustn't do it, you know," she reproved.

"Jove!" was his reply. "And you came through from Dyea to-day! Aren't you stiff?"

"Quite a bit," she confessed, candidly, "and sleepy."

"Good-night," she called to him several minutes later, stretching her body luxuriously in the warm blankets. And a quarter of an hour after that, "Oh, I say! Are you awake?"

"Yes," his voice came muffled across the stove. "What is it?"

"Have you the shavings cut?"

"Shavings?" he queried, sleepily. "What shavings?"

"For the fire in the morning, of course. So get up and cut them."

He obeyed without a word; but ere he was done she had ceased to hear him.

The ubiquitous bacon was abroad on the air when she opened her eyes. Day had broken, and with it the storm. The wet sun was shining cheerily over the drenched landscape and in at the wide-spread flaps. Already work had begun, and groups of men were filing past under their packs. Frona turned over on her side. Breakfast was cooked. Her host had just put the bacon and fried potatoes in the oven, and was engaged in propping the door ajar with two sticks of firewood.

“Good-morning,” she greeted.

“And good-morning to you,” he responded, rising to his feet and picking up the water-bucket. “I don’t hope that you slept well, for I know you did.”

Frona laughed.

“I’m going out after some water,” he vouchsafed. “And when I return I shall expect you ready for breakfast.”

After breakfast, basking herself in the sun, Frona descried a familiar bunch of men rounding the tail of the glacier in the direction of Crater Lake. She clapped her hands.

“There comes my outfit, and Del Bishop as shame-faced as can be, I’m sure, at his failure to connect.” Turning to the man, and at the same time slinging camera and satchel over her shoulder, “So I must say good-by, not forgetting to thank you for your kindness.”

“Oh, not at all, not at all. Pray don’t mention it. I’d do the same for any — ”

“Vaudeville artist!”

He looked his reproach, but went on. “I don’t know your name, nor do I wish to know it.”

“Well, I shall not be so harsh, for I do know your name, MISTER VANCE CORLISS! I saw it on the shipping tags, of course,” she explained. “And I want you to come and see me when you get to Dawson. My name is Frona Welse. Good-by.”

“Your father is not Jacob Welse?” he called after her as she ran lightly down towards the trail.

She turned her head and nodded.

But Del Bishop was not shamefaced, nor even worried. “Trust a Welse to land on their feet on a soft spot,” he had consoled himself as he dropped off to sleep the night before. But he was angry — ”madder ‘n hops,” in his own vernacular.

“Good-mornin’,” he saluted. “And it’s plain by your face you had a comfortable night of it, and no thanks to me.”

“You weren’t worried, were you?” she asked.

“Worried? About a Welse? Who? Me? Not on your life. I was too busy tellin’ Crater Lake what I thought of it. I don’t like the water. I told you so. And it’s always playin’ me scurvy — not that I’m afraid of it, though.”

“Hey, you Pete!” turning to the Indians. “Hit ‘er up! Got to make Linderman by noon!”

“Frona Welse?” Vance Corliss was repeating to himself.

The whole thing seemed a dream, and he reassured himself by turning and looking after her retreating form. Del Bishop and the Indians were already out of sight behind a wall of rock. Frona was just rounding the base. The sun was full upon her, and she stood out radiantly against the black shadow of the wall beyond. She waved her alpenstock, and as he doffed his cap, rounded the brink and disappeared.

CHAPTER V

The position occupied by Jacob Welse was certainly an anomalous one. He was a giant trader in a country without commerce, a ripened product of the nineteenth century flourishing in a society as primitive as that of the Mediterranean vandals. A captain of industry and a splendid monopolist, he dominated the most independent aggregate of men ever drawn together from the ends of the earth. An economic missionary, a commercial St. Paul, he preached the doctrines of expediency and force. Believing in the natural rights of man, a child himself of democracy, he bent all men to his absolutism. Government of Jacob Welse, for Jacob Welse and the people, by Jacob Welse, was his unwritten gospel. Single-handed he had carved out his dominion till he gripped the domain of a dozen Roman provinces. At his ukase the population ebbed and flowed over a hundred thousand miles of territory, and cities sprang up or disappeared at his bidding.

Yet he was a common man. The air of the world first smote his lungs on the open prairie by the River Platte, the blue sky over head, and beneath, the green grass of the earth pressing against his tender nakedness. On the horses his eyes first opened, still saddled and gazing in mild wonder on the miracle; for his trapper father had but turned aside from the trail that the wife might have quiet and the birth be accomplished. An hour or so and the two, which were now three, were in the saddle and overhauling their trapper comrades. The party had not been delayed; no time lost. In the morning his mother cooked the breakfast over the camp-fire, and capped it with a fifty-mile ride into the next sun-down.

The trapper father had come of the sturdy Welsh stock which trickled into early Ohio out of the jostling East, and the mother was a nomadic daughter of the Irish emigrant settlers of Ontario. From both sides came the Wanderlust of the blood, the fever to be moving, to be pushing on to the edge of things. In the first year of his life, ere he had learned the way of his legs, Jacob Welse had wandered a-horse through a thousand miles of wilderness, and wintered in a hunting-lodge on the head-waters of the Red River of the North. His first foot-gear was moccasins, his first taffy the tallow from a moose. His first generalizations were that the world was composed of great wastes and white vastnesses, and populated with Indians and white hunters like his father. A town was a cluster of deer-skin lodges; a trading-post a seat of civilization; and a factor God Almighty Himself. Rivers and lakes existed chiefly for man’s use in travelling. Viewed in this light, the mountains puzzled him; but he placed them away in his classification of the Inexplicable and did not worry. Men died, sometimes. But their meat was not good to eat, and their hides worthless, — perhaps because they did not grow fur. Pelts were valuable, and with a few bales a man might purchase the earth. Animals were made for men to catch and skin. He did not know what men were made for, unless, perhaps, for the factor.

As he grew older he modified these concepts, but the process was a continual source of naive apprehension and wonderment. It was not until he became a man and had wandered through half the cities of the States that this expression of childish wonder passed out of his eyes and left them wholly keen and alert. At his boy’s first contact with the cities, while he revised his synthesis of things, he also generalized afresh. People who lived in cities were effeminate. They did not carry the points of the compass in their heads, and they got lost easily. That was why they elected to stay in the cities. Because they might catch cold and because they were afraid of the dark, they slept under shelter and locked their doors at night. The women were soft and pretty, but they could not lift a snowshoe far in a day’s journey. Everybody talked too much. That was why they lied and were unable to work greatly with their hands. Finally, there was a new human force called “bluff.” A man who made a bluff must be dead sure of it, or else be prepared to back it up. Bluff was a very good thing — when exercised with discretion.

Later, though living his life mainly in the woods and mountains, he came to know that the cities were not all bad; that a man might live in a city and still be a man. Accustomed to do battle with natural forces, he was attracted by the commercial battle with social forces. The masters of marts and exchanges dazzled but did not blind him, and he studied them, and strove to grasp the secrets of their strength. And further, in token that some good did come out of Nazareth, in the full tide of manhood he took to himself a city-bred woman. But he still yearned for the edge of things, and the leaven in his blood worked till they went away, and above the Dyea Beach, on the rim of the forest, built the big log trading-post. And here, in the mellow of time, he got a proper focus on things and unified the phenomena of society precisely as he had already unified the phenomena of nature. There was naught in one which could not be expressed in terms of the other. The same principles underlaid both; the same truths were manifest of both. Competition was the secret of creation. Battle was the law and the way of progress. The world was made for the strong, and only the strong inherited it, and through it all there ran an eternal equity. To be honest was to be strong. To sin was to weaken. To bluff an honest man was to be dishonest. To bluff a bluffer was to smite with the steel of justice. The primitive strength was in the arm; the modern strength in the brain. Though it had shifted ground, the struggle was the same old struggle. As of old time, men still fought for the mastery of the earth and the delights thereof. But the sword had given way to the ledger; the mail-clad baron to the soft-garbed industrial lord, and the centre of imperial political power to the seat of commercial exchanges. The modern will had destroyed the ancient brute. The stubborn earth yielded only to force. Brain was greater than body. The man with the brain could best conquer things primitive.

He did not have much education as education goes. To the three R’s his mother taught him by camp-fire and candle-light, he had added a somewhat miscellaneous book-knowledge; but he was not burdened with what he had gathered. Yet he read the facts of life understandingly, and the sobriety which comes of the soil was his, and the clear earth-vision.

And so it came about that Jacob Welse crossed over the Chilcoot in an early day, and disappeared into the vast unknown. A year later he emerged at the Russian missions clustered about the mouth of the Yukon on Bering Sea. He had journeyed down a river three thousand miles long, he had seen things, and dreamed a great dream. But he held his tongue and went to work, and one day the defiant whistle of a crazy stern-wheel tub saluted the midnight sun on the dank river-stretch by Fort o’ Yukon. It was a magnificent adventure. How he achieved it only Jacob Welse can tell; but with the impossible to begin with, plus the impossible, he added steamer to steamer and heaped enterprise upon enterprise. Along many a thousand miles of river and tributary he built trading-posts and warehouses. He forced the white man’s axe into the hands of the aborigines, and in every village and between the villages rose the cords of four-foot firewood for his boilers. On an island in Bering Sea, where the river and the ocean meet, he established a great distributing station, and on the North Pacific he put big ocean steamships; while in his offices in Seattle and San Francisco it took clerks by the score to keep the order and system of his business.

Men drifted into the land. Hitherto famine had driven them out, but Jacob Welse was there now, and his grub-stores; so they wintered in the frost and groped in the frozen muck for gold. He encouraged them, grub-staked them, carried them on the books of the company. His steamers dragged them up the Koyokuk in the old days of Arctic City. Wherever pay was struck he built a warehouse and a store. The town followed. He explored; he speculated; he developed. Tireless, indomitable, with the steel-glitter in his dark eyes, he was everywhere at once, doing all things. In the opening up of a new river he was in the van; and at the tail-end also, hurrying forward the grub. On the Outside he fought trade-combinations; made alliances with the corporations of the earth, and forced discriminating tariffs from the great carriers. On the Inside he sold flour, and blankets, and tobacco; built saw-mills, staked townsites, and sought properties in copper, iron, and coal; and that the miners should be well-equipped, ransacked the lands of the Arctic even as far as Siberia for native-made snow-shoes, muclucs, and parkas.

He bore the country on his shoulders; saw to its needs; did its work. Every ounce of its dust passed through his hands; every post-card and letter of credit. He did its banking and exchange; carried and distributed its mails. He frowned upon competition; frightened out predatory capital; bluffed militant syndicates, and when they would not, backed his bluff and broke them. And for all, yet found time and place to remember his motherless girl, and to love her, and to fit her for the position he had made.

CHAPTER VI

“So I think, captain, you will agree that we must exaggerate the seriousness of the situation.” Jacob Welse helped his visitor into his fur great-coat and went on. “Not that it is not serious, but that it may not become more serious. Both you and I have handled famines before. We must frighten them, and frighten them now, before it is too late. Take five thousand men out of Dawson and there will be grub to last. Let those five thousand carry their tale of famine to Dyea and Skaguay, and they will prevent five thousand more coming in over the ice.”

“Quite right! And you may count on the hearty co-operation of the police, Mr. Welse.” The speaker, a strong-faced, grizzled man, heavy-set and of military bearing, pulled up his collar and rested his hand on the door-knob. “I see already, thanks to you, the newcomers are beginning to sell their outfits and buy dogs. Lord! won’t there be a stampede out over the ice as soon as the river closes down! And each that sells a thousand pounds of grub and goes lessens the proposition by one empty stomach and fills another that remains. When does the Laura start?”

“This morning, with three hundred grubless men aboard. Would that they were three thousand!”

Amen to that! And by the way, when does your daughter arrive?”

“‘Most any day, now.” Jacob Welse’s eyes warmed. “And I want you to dinner when she does, and bring along a bunch of your young bucks from the Barracks. I don’t know all their names, but just the same extend the invitation as though from me personally. I haven’t cultivated the social side much, — no time, but see to it that the girl enjoys herself. Fresh from the States and London, and she’s liable to feel lonesome. You understand.”

Jacob Welse closed the door, tilted his chair back, and cocked his feet on the guard-rail of the stove. For one half-minute a girlish vision wavered in the shimmering air above the stove, then merged into a woman of fair Saxon type.

The door opened. “Mr. Welse, Mr. Foster sent me to find out if he is to go on filling signed warehouse orders?”

“Certainly, Mr. Smith. But tell him to scale them down by half. If a man holds an order for a thousand pounds, give him five hundred.”

He lighted a cigar and tilted back again in his chair.

“Captain McGregor wants to see you, sir.”

“Send him in.”

Captain McGregor strode in and remained standing before his employer. The rough hand of the New World had been laid upon the Scotsman from his boyhood; but sterling honesty was written in every line of his bitter-seamed face, while a prognathous jaw proclaimed to the onlooker that honesty was the best policy, — for the onlooker at any rate, should he wish to do business with the owner of the jaw. This warning was backed up by the nose, side-twisted and broken, and by a long scar which ran up the forehead and disappeared in the gray-grizzled hair.

“We throw off the lines in an hour, sir; so I’ve come for the last word.”

“Good.” Jacob Welse whirled his chair about. “Captain McGregor.”

“Ay.”

“I had other work cut out for you this winter; but I have changed my mind and chosen you to go down with the Laura. Can you guess why?”

Captain McGregor swayed his weight from one leg to the other, and a shrewd chuckle of a smile wrinkled the corners of his eyes. “Going to be trouble,” he grunted.

“And I couldn’t have picked a better man. Mr. Bally will give you detailed instructions as you go aboard. But let me say this: If we can’t scare enough men out of the country, there’ll be need for every pound of grub at Fort Yukon. Understand?”

“Ay.”

“So no extravagance. You are taking three hundred men down with you. The chances are that twice as many more will go down as soon as the river freezes. You’ll have a thousand to feed through the winter. Put them on rations, — working rations, — and see that they work. Cordwood, six dollars per cord, and piled on the bank where steamers can make a landing. No work, no rations. Understand?”

“Ay.”

“A thousand men can get ugly, if they are idle. They can get ugly anyway. Watch out they don’t rush the caches. If they do, — do your duty.”

The other nodded grimly. His hands gripped unconsciously, while the scar on his forehead took on a livid hue.

“There are five steamers in the ice. Make them safe against the spring break-up. But first transfer all their cargoes to one big cache. You can defend it better, and make the cache impregnable. Send a messenger down to Fort Burr, asking Mr. Carter for three of his men. He doesn't need them. Nothing much is doing at Circle City. Stop in on the way down and take half of Mr. Burdwell's men. You'll need them. There'll be gun-fighters in plenty to deal with. Be stiff. Keep things in check from the start. Remember, the man who shoots first comes off with the whole hide. And keep a constant eye on the grub."

"And on the forty-five-nineties," Captain McGregor rumbled back as he passed out the door.

"John Melton — Mr. Melton, sir. Can he see you?"

"See here, Welse, what's this mean?" John Melton followed wrathfully on the heels of the clerk, and he almost walked over him as he flourished a paper before the head of the company. "Read that! What's it stand for?"

Jacob Welse glanced over it and looked up coolly. "One thousand pounds of grub."

"That's what I say, but that fellow you've got in the warehouse says no, — five hundred's all it's good for."

"He spoke the truth."

"But — "

"It stands for one thousand pounds, but in the warehouse it is only good for five hundred."

"That your signature?" thrusting the receipt again into the other's line of vision.

"Yes."

"Then what are you going to do about it?"

"Give you five hundred. What are you going to do about it?"

"Refuse to take it."

"Very good. There is no further discussion."

"Yes there is. I propose to have no further dealings with you. I'm rich enough to freight my own stuff in over the Passes, and I will next year. Our business stops right now and for all time."

"I cannot object to that. You have three hundred thousand dollars in dust deposited with me. Go to Mr. Atsheler and draw it at once."

The man fumed impotently up and down. "Can't I get that other five hundred? Great God, man! I've paid for it! You don't intend me to starve?"

"Look here, Melton." Jacob Welse paused to knock the ash from his cigar. "At this very moment what are you working for? What are you trying to get?"

“A thousand pounds of grub.”

“For your own stomach?”

The Bonanzo king nodded his head.

“Just so.” The lines showed more sharply on Jacob Welse’s forehead. “You are working for your own stomach. I am working for the stomachs of twenty thousand.”

“But you filled Tim McReady’s thousand pounds yesterday all right.”

“The scale-down did not go into effect until to-day.”

“But why am I the one to get it in the neck hard?”

“Why didn’t you come yesterday, and Tim McReady to-day?”

Melton’s face went blank, and Jacob Welse answered his own question with shrugging shoulders.

“That’s the way it stands, Melton. No favoritism. If you hold me responsible for Tim McReady, I shall hold you responsible for not coming yesterday. Better we both throw it upon Providence. You went through the Forty Mile Famine. You are a white man. A Bonanzo property, or a block of Bonanzo properties, does not entitle you to a pound more than the oldest penniless ‘sour-dough’ or the newest baby born. Trust me. As long as I have a pound of grub you shall not starve. Stiffen up. Shake hands. Get a smile on your face and make the best of it.”

Still savage of spirit, though rapidly toning down, the king shook hands and flung out of the room. Before the door could close on his heels, a loose-jointed Yankee shambled in, thrust a moccasined foot to the side and hooked a chair under him, and sat down.

“Say,” he opened up, confidentially, “people’s gittin’ scairt over the grub proposition, I guess some.”

“Hello, Dave. That you?”

“S’pose so. But ez I was saying there’ll be a lively stampede fer the Outside soon as the river freezes.”

“Think so?”

“Unh huh.”

“Then I’m glad to hear it. It’s what the country needs. Going to join them?”

“Not in a thousand years.” Dave Harney threw his head back with smug complacency. “Freighted my truck up to the mine yesterday. Wa’n’t a bit too soon about it, either. But say . . . Suthin’ happened to the sugar. Had it all on the last sled, an’ jest where the trail turns off the Klondike into

Bonanzo, what does that sled do but break through the ice! I never seen the beat of it — the last sled of all, an' all the sugar! So I jest thought I'd drop in to-day an' git a hundred pounds or so. White or brown, I ain't pertickler."

Jacob Welse shook his head and smiled, but Harney hitched his chair closer.

"The clerk of yourn said he didn't know, an' ez there wa'n't no call to pester him, I said I'd jest drop round an' see you. I don't care what it's wuth. Make it a hundred even; that'll do me handy.

"Say," he went on easily, noting the decidedly negative poise of the other's head. "I've got a tolerable sweet tooth, I have. Recollect the taffy I made over on Preacher Creek that time? I declare! how time does fly! That was all of six years ago if it's a day. More'n that, surely. Seven, by the Jimcracky! But ez I was sayin', I'd ruther do without my plug of 'Star' than sugar. An' about that sugar? Got my dogs outside. Better go round to the warehouse an' git it, eh? Pretty good idea."

But he saw the "No" shaping on Jacob Welse's lips, and hurried on before it could be uttered.

"Now, I don't want to hog it. Wouldn't do that fer the world. So if yer short, I can put up with seventy-five — " (he studied the other's face), "an' I might do with fifty. I 'preciate your position, an' I ain't low-down critter enough to pester — "

"What's the good of spilling words, Dave? We haven't a pound of sugar to spare — "

"Ez I was sayin', I ain't no hog; an' seein' 's it's you, Welse, I'll make to scrimp along on twenty-five — "

"Not an ounce!"

"Not the least leetle mite? Well, well, don't git het up. We'll jest fergit I ast you fer any, an' I'll drop round some likelier time. So long. Say!" He threw his jaw to one side and seemed to stiffen the muscles of his ear as he listened intently. "That's the Laura's whistle. She's startin' soon. Goin' to see her off? Come along."

Jacob Welse pulled on his bearskin coat and mittens, and they passed through the outer offices into the main store. So large was it, that the tenscore purchasers before the counters made no apparent crowd. Many were serious-faced, and more than one looked darkly at the head of the company as he passed. The clerks were selling everything except grub, and it was grub that was in demand. "Holding it for a rise. Famine prices," a red-whiskered miner sneered. Jacob Welse heard it, but took no notice. He expected to hear it many times and more unpleasantly ere the scare was over.

On the sidewalk he stopped to glance over the public bulletins posted against the side of the building. Dogs lost, found, and for sale occupied some space, but the rest was devoted to notices of sales of outfits. The timid were already growing frightened. Outfits of five hundred pounds were offering at a dollar a pound, without flour; others, with flour, at a dollar and a half. Jacob Welse saw Melton talking with an anxious-faced newcomer, and the satisfaction displayed by the Bonanzo king told that he had succeeded in filling his winter's cache.

"Why don't you smell out the sugar, Dave?" Jacob Welse asked, pointing to the bulletins.

Dave Harney looked his reproach. "Mebbe you think I ain't ben smellin'. I've clean wore my dogs out chasin' round from Klondike City to the Hospital. Can't git yer fingers on it fer love or money."

They walked down the block-long sidewalk, past the warehouse doors and the long teams of waiting huskies curled up in wolfish comfort in the snow. It was for this snow, the first permanent one of the fall, that the miners up-creek had waited to begin their freighting.

"Curious, ain't it?" Dave hazarded suggestively, as they crossed the main street to the river bank. "Mighty curious — me ownin' two five-hundred-foot Eldorado claims an' a fraction, wuth five millions if I'm wuth a cent, an' no sweetenin' fer my coffee or mush! Why, gosh-dang-it! this country kin go to blazes! I'll sell out! I'll quit it cold! I'll — I'll — go back to the States!"

"Oh, no, you won't," Jacob Welse answered. "I've heard you talk before. You put in a year up Stuart River on straight meat, if I haven't forgotten. And you ate salmon-belly and dogs up the Tanana, to say nothing of going through two famines; and you haven't turned your back on the country yet. And you never will. And you'll die here as sure as that's the Laura's spring being hauled aboard. And I look forward confidently to the day when I shall ship you out in a lead-lined box and burden the San Francisco end with the trouble of winding up your estate. You are a fixture, and you know it."

As he talked he constantly acknowledged greetings from the passers-by. Those who knew him were mainly old-timers and he knew them all by name, though there was scarcely a newcomer to whom his face was not familiar.

“I’ll jest bet I’ll be in Paris in 1900,” the Eldorado king protested feebly.

But Jacob Welse did not hear. There was a jangling of gongs as McGregor saluted him from the pilot-house and the Laura slipped out from the bank. The men on the shore filled the air with good-luck farewells and last advice, but the three hundred grubless ones, turning their backs on the golden dream, were moody and dispirited, and made small response. The Laura backed out through a channel cut in the shore-ice, swung about in the current, and with a final blast put on full steam ahead.

The crowd thinned away and went about its business, leaving Jacob Welse the centre of a group of a dozen or so. The talk was of the famine, but it was the talk of men. Even Dave Harney forgot to curse the country for its sugar shortage, and waxed facetious over the newcomers, — *chechaquos*, he called them, having recourse to the Siwash tongue. In the midst of his remarks his quick eye lighted on a black speck floating down with the mush-ice of the river. “Jest look at that!” he cried. “A Peterborough canoe runnin’ the ice!”

Twisting and turning, now paddling, now shoving clear of the floating cakes, the two men in the canoe worked in to the rim-ice, along the edge of which they drifted, waiting for an opening. Opposite the channel cut out by the steamer, they drove their paddles deep and darted into the calm dead water. The waiting group received them with open arms, helping them up the bank and carrying their shell after them.

In its bottom were two leather mail-pouches, a couple of blankets, coffee-pot and frying-pan, and a scant grub-sack. As for the men, so frosted were they, and so numb with the cold, that they could hardly stand. Dave Harney proposed whiskey, and was for haling them away at once; but one delayed long enough to shake stiff hands with Jacob Welse.

“She’s coming,” he announced. “Passed her boat an hour back. It ought to be round the bend any minute. I’ve got despatches for you, but I’ll see you later. Got to get something into me first.” Turning to go with Harney, he stopped suddenly and pointed up stream. “There she is now. Just coming out past the bluff.”

“Run along, boys, an’ git yer whiskey,” Harney admonished him and his mate. “Tell ‘m it’s on me, double dose, an’ jest excuse me not drinkin’ with you, fer I’m goin’ to stay.”

The Klondike was throwing a thick flow of ice, partly mush and partly solid, and swept the boat out towards the middle of the Yukon. They could see the struggle plainly from the bank, — four men standing up and poling a way through the jarring cakes. A Yukon stove aboard was sending up a trailing pillar of blue smoke, and, as the boat drew closer, they could see a woman in the stern working the long steering-sweep. At sight of this there was a snap and sparkle in Jacob Welse's eyes. It was the first omen, and it was good, he thought. She was still a Welse; a struggler and a fighter. The years of her culture had not weakened her. Though tasting of the fruits of the first remove from the soil, she was not afraid of the soil; she could return to it gleefully and naturally.

So he mused till the boat drove in, ice-rimed and battered, against the edge of the rim-ice. The one white man aboard sprang: out, painter in hand, to slow it down and work into the channel. But the rim-ice was formed of the night, and the front of it shelved off with him into the current. The nose of the boat sheered out under the pressure of a heavy cake, so that he came up at the stern. The woman's arm flashed over the side to his collar, and at the same instant, sharp and authoritative, her voice rang out to the Indian oarsmen to back water. Still holding the man's head above water, she threw her body against the sweep and guided the boat stern-foremost into the opening. A few more strokes and it grounded at the foot of the bank. She passed the collar of the chattering man to Dave Harney, who dragged him out and started him off on the trail of the mail-carriers.

Frona stood up, her cheeks glowing from the quick work. Jacob Welse hesitated. Though he stood within reach of the gunwale, a gulf of three years was between. The womanhood of twenty, added unto the girl of seventeen, made a sum more prodigious than he had imagined. He did not know whether to bear-hug the radiant young creature or to take her hand and help her ashore. But there was no apparent hitch, for she leaped beside him and was into his arms. Those above looked away to a man till the two came up the bank hand in hand.

"Gentlemen, my daughter." There was a great pride in his face.

Frona embraced them all with a comrade smile, and each man felt that for an instant her eyes had looked straight into his.

CHAPTER VII

That Vance Corliss wanted to see more of the girl he had divided blankets with, goes with the saying. He had not been wise enough to lug a camera into the country, but none the less, by a yet subtler process, a sun-picture had been recorded somewhere on his cerebral tissues. In the flash of an instant it had been done. A wave message of light and color, a molecular agitation and integration, a certain minute though definite corrugation in a brain recess, — and there it was, a picture complete! The blazing sunlight on the beetling black; a slender gray form, radiant, starting forward to the vision from the marge where light and darkness met; a fresh young morning smile wreathed in a flame of burning gold.

It was a picture he looked at often, and the more he looked the greater was his desire, to see Frona Welse again. This event he anticipated with a thrill, with the exultancy over change which is common of all life. She was something new, a fresh type, a woman unrelated to all women he had met. Out of the fascinating unknown a pair of hazel eyes smiled into his, and a hand, soft of touch and strong of grip, beckoned him. And there was an allurement about it which was as the allurement of sin.

Not that Vance Corliss was anybody's fool, nor that his had been an anchorite's existence; but that his upbringing, rather, had given his life a certain puritanical bent. Awakening intelligence and broader knowledge had weakened the early influence of an austere mother, but had not wholly eradicated it. It was there, deep down, very shadowy, but still a part of him. He could not get away from it. It distorted, ever so slightly, his concepts of things. It gave a squint to his perceptions, and very often, when the sex feminine was concerned, determined his classifications. He prided himself on his largeness when he granted that there were three kinds of women. His mother had only admitted two. But he had outgrown her. It was incontestable that there were three kinds, — the good, the bad, and the partly good and partly bad. That the last usually went bad, he believed firmly. In its very nature such a condition could not be permanent. It was the intermediary stage, marking the passage from high to low, from best to worst.

All of which might have been true, even as he saw it; but with definitions for premises, conclusions cannot fail to be dogmatic. What was good and bad? There it was. That was where his mother whispered with dead lips to him. Nor alone his mother, but divers conventional generations, even back to the sturdy ancestor who first uplifted from the soil and looked down. For Vance Corliss was many times removed from the red earth, and, though he did not know it, there was a clamor within him for a return lest he perish.

Not that he pigeon-holed Frona according to his inherited definitions. He refused to classify her at all. He did not dare. He preferred to pass judgment later, when he had gathered more data. And there was the allurement, the gathering of the data; the great critical point where purity reaches dreamy hands towards pitch and refuses to call it pitch — till defiled. No; Vance Corliss was not a cad. And since purity is merely a relative term, he was not pure. That there was no pitch under his nails was not because he had manicured diligently, but because it had not been his luck to run across any pitch. He was not good because he chose to be, because evil was repellant; but because he had not had opportunity to become evil. But from this, on the other hand, it is not to be argued that he would have gone bad had he had a chance.

He was a product of the sheltered life. All his days had been lived in a sanitary dwelling; the plumbing was excellent. The air he had breathed had been mostly ozone artificially manufactured. He had been sun-bathed in balmy weather, and brought in out of the wet when it rained. And when he reached the age of choice he had been too fully occupied to deviate from the straight path, along which his mother had taught him to creep and toddle, and along which he now proceeded to walk upright, without thought of what lay on either side.

Vitality cannot be used over again. If it be expended on one thing, there is none left for the other thing. And so with Vance Corliss. Scholarly lucubrations and healthy exercises during his college days had consumed all the energy his normal digestion extracted from a wholesome omnivorous diet. When he did discover a bit of surplus energy, he worked it off in the society of his mother and of the conventional minds and prim teas she surrounded herself with. Result: A very nice young man, of whom no maid’s mother need ever be in trepidation; a very strong young man, whose substance had not been wasted in riotous living; a very learned young man, with a Freiberg mining engineer’s diploma and a B.A. sheepskin from Yale; and, lastly, a very self-centred, self-possessed young man.

Now his greatest virtue lay in this: he had not become hardened in the mould baked by his several forbears and into which he had been pressed by his mother's hands. Some atavism had been at work in the making of him, and he had reverted to that ancestor who sturdily uplifted. But so far this portion of his heritage had lain dormant. He had simply remained adjusted to a stable environment. There had been no call upon the adaptability which was his. But whensoever the call came, being so constituted, it was manifest that he should adapt, should adjust himself to the unwonted pressure of new conditions. The maxim of the rolling stone may be all true; but notwithstanding, in the scheme of life, the inability to become fixed is an excellence par excellence. Though he did not know it, this inability was Vance Corliss's most splendid possession.

But to return. He looked forward with great sober glee to meeting Frona Welse, and in the meanwhile consulted often the sun-picture he carried of her. Though he went over the Pass and down the lakes and river with a push of money behind him (London syndicates are never niggardly in such matters). Frona beat him into Dawson by a fortnight. While on his part money in the end overcame obstacles, on hers the name of Welse was a talisman greater than treasure. After his arrival, a couple of weeks were consumed in buying a cabin, presenting his letters of introduction, and settling down. But all things come in the fulness of time, and so, one night after the river closed, he pointed his moccasins in the direction of Jacob Welse's house. Mrs. Schoville, the Gold Commissioner's wife, gave him the honor of her company.

Corliss wanted to rub his eyes. Steam-heating apparatus in the Klondike! But the next instant he had passed out of the hall through the heavy portieres and stood inside the drawing-room. And it was a drawing-room. His moose-hide moccasins sank luxuriantly into the deep carpet, and his eyes were caught by a Turner sunrise on the opposite wall. And there were other paintings and things in bronze. Two Dutch fireplaces were roaring full with huge back-logs of spruce. There was a piano; and somebody was singing. Frona sprang from the stool and came forward, greeting him with both hands. He had thought his sun-picture perfect, but this fire-picture, this young creature with the flush and warmth of ringing life, quite eclipsed it. It was a whirling moment, as he held her two hands in his, one of those moments when an incomprehensible orgasm quickens the blood and dizzies the brain. Though the first syllables came to him faintly, Mrs. Schoville's voice brought him back to himself.

"Oh!" she cried. "You know him!"

And Frona answered, "Yes, we met on the Dyea Trail; and those who meet on the Dyea Trail can never forget."

"How romantic!"

The Gold Commissioner's wife clapped her hands. Though fat and forty, and phlegmatic of temperament, between exclamations and hand-clappings her waking existence was mostly explosive. Her husband secretly averred that did God Himself deign to meet her face to face, she would smite together her chubby hands and cry out, "How romantic!"

"How did it happen?" she continued. "He didn't rescue you over a cliff, or that sort of thing, did he? Do say that he did! And you never said a word about it, Mr. Corliss. Do tell me. I'm just dying to know!"

"Oh, nothing like that," he hastened to answer. "Nothing much. I, that is we — "

He felt a sinking as Frona interrupted. There was no telling what this remarkable girl might say.

"He gave me of his hospitality, that was all," she said. "And I can vouch for his fried potatoes; while for his coffee, it is excellent — when one is very hungry."

"Ingrate!" he managed to articulate, and thereby to gain a smile, ere he was introduced to a cleanly built lieutenant of the Mounted Police, who stood by the fireplace discussing the grub proposition with a dapper little man very much out of place in a white shirt and stiff collar.

Thanks to the particular niche in society into which he happened to be born, Corliss drifted about easily from group to group, and was much envied therefore by Del Bishop, who sat stiffly in the first chair he had dropped into, and who was waiting patiently for the first person to take leave that he might know how to compass the manoeuvre. In his mind's eye he had figured most of it out, knew just how many steps required to carry him to the door, was certain he would have to say good-by to Frona, but did not know whether or not he was supposed to shake hands all around. He had just dropped in to see Frona and say "Howdee," as he expressed it, and had unwittingly found himself in company.

Corliss, having terminated a buzz with a Miss Mortimer on the decadence of the French symbolists, encountered Del Bishop. But the pocket-miner remembered him at once from the one glimpse he had caught of Corliss standing by his tent-door in Happy Camp. Was almighty obliged to him for his night's hospitality to Miss Frona, seein' as he'd ben side-tracked down the line; that any kindness to her was a kindness to him; and that he'd remember it, by God, as long as he had a corner of a blanket to pull over him. Hoped it hadn't put him out. Miss Frona'd said that bedding was scarce, but it wasn't a cold night (more blowy than crisp), so he reckoned there couldn't 'a' ben much shiverin'. All of which struck Corliss as perilous, and he broke away at the first opportunity, leaving the pocket-miner yearning for the door.

But Dave Harney, who had not come by mistake, avoided gluing himself to the first chair. Being an Eldorado king, he had felt it incumbent to assume the position in society to which his numerous millions entitled him; and though unused all his days to social amenities other than the out-hanging latch-string and the general pot, he had succeeded to his own satisfaction as a knight of the carpet. Quick to take a cue, he circulated with an aplomb which his striking garments and long shambling gait only heightened, and talked choppy and disconnected fragments with whomsoever he ran up against. The Miss Mortimer, who spoke Parisian French, took him aback with her symbolists; but he evened matters up with a goodly measure of the bastard lingo of the Canadian *voyageurs*, and left her gasping and meditating over a proposition to sell him twenty-five pounds of sugar, white or brown. But she was not unduly favored, for with everybody he adroitly turned the conversation to grub, and then led up to the eternal proposition. "Sugar or bust," he would conclude gayly each time and wander on to the next.

But he put the capstone on his social success by asking Frona to sing the touching ditty, "I Left My Happy Home for You." This was something beyond her, though she had him hum over the opening bars so that she could furnish the accompaniment. His voice was more strenuous than sweet, and Del Bishop, discovering himself at last, joined in raucously on the choruses. This made him feel so much better that he disconnected himself from the chair, and when he finally got home he kicked up his sleepy tent-mate to tell him about the high time he'd had over at the Welse's. Mrs. Schoville tittered and thought it all so unique, and she thought it so unique several times more when the lieutenant of Mounted Police and a couple of compatriots roared "Rule Britannia" and "God Save the Queen," and the Americans responded with "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" and "John Brown." Then big Alec Beaubien, the Circle City king, demanded the "Marseillaise," and the company broke up chanting "Die Wacht am Rhein" to the frosty night.

"Don't come on these nights," Frona whispered to Corliss at parting. "We haven't spoken three words, and I know we shall be good friends. Did Dave Harney succeed in getting any sugar out of you?"

They mingled their laughter, and Corliss went home under the aurora borealis, striving to reduce his impressions to some kind of order.

CHAPTER VIII

"And why should I not be proud of my race?"

Frona's cheeks were flushed and her eyes sparkling. They had both been harking back to childhood, and she had been telling Corliss of her mother, whom she faintly remembered. Fair and flaxen-haired, typically Saxon, was the likeness she had drawn, filled out largely with knowledge gained from her father and from old Andy of the Dyea Post. The discussion had then turned upon the race in general, and Frona had said things in the heat of enthusiasm which affected the more conservative mind of Corliss as dangerous and not solidly based on fact. He deemed himself too large for race egotism and insular prejudice, and had seen fit to laugh at her immature convictions.

"It's a common characteristic of all peoples," he proceeded, "to consider themselves superior races, — a naive, natural egoism, very healthy and very good, but none the less manifestly untrue. The Jews conceived themselves to be God's chosen people, and they still so conceive themselves — "

"And because of it they have left a deep mark down the page of history," she interrupted.

"But time has not proved the stability of their conceptions. And you must also view the other side. A superior people must look upon all others as inferior peoples. This comes home to you. To be a Roman were greater than to be a king, and when the Romans rubbed against your savage ancestors in the German forests, they elevated their brows and said, 'An inferior people, barbarians.'"

"But we are here, now. We are, and the Romans are not. The test is time. So far we have stood the test; the signs are favorable that we shall continue to stand it. We are the best fitted!"

"Egotism."

"But wait. Put it to the test."

As she spoke her hand flew out impulsively to his. At the touch his heart pulsed upward, there was a rush Of blood and a tightening across the temples. Ridiculous, but delightful, he thought. At this rate he could argue with her the night through.

"The test," she repeated, withdrawing her hand without embarrassment. "We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-encirclers and zone-conquerors. We toil and struggle, and stand by the toil and struggle no matter how hopeless it may be. While we are persistent and resistant, we are so made that we fit ourselves to the most diverse conditions. Will the Indian, the Negro, or the Mongol ever conquer the Teuton? Surely not! The Indian has persistence without variability; if he does not modify he dies, if he does try to modify he dies anyway. The Negro has adaptability, but he is servile and must be led. As for the Chinese, they are permanent. All that the other races are not, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton if you please, is. All that the other races have not, the Teuton has. What race is to rise up and overwhelm us?"

"Ah, you forget the Slav," Corliss suggested slyly.

"The Slav!" Her face fell. "True, the Slav! The only stripling in this world of young men and gray-beards! But he is still in the future, and in the future the decision rests. In the mean time we prepare. If may be we shall have such a start that we shall prevent him growing. You know, because he was better skilled in chemistry, knew how to manufacture gunpowder, that the Spaniard destroyed the Aztec. May not we, who are possessing ourselves of the world and its resources, and gathering to ourselves all its knowledge, may not we nip the Slav ere he grows a thatch to his lip?"

Vance Corliss shook his head non-committally, and laughed.

"Oh! I know I become absurd and grow over-warm!" she exclaimed. "But after all, one reason that we are the salt of the earth is because we have the courage to say so."

"And I am sure your warmth spreads," he responded. "See, I'm beginning to glow myself. We are not God's, but Nature's chosen people, we Angles, and Saxons, and Normans, and Vikings, and the earth is our heritage. Let us arise and go forth!"

"Now you are laughing at me, and, besides, we have already gone forth. Why have you fared into the north, if not to lay hands on the race legacy?"

She turned her head at the sound of approaching footsteps, and cried for greeting, "I appeal to you, Captain Alexander! I summon you to bear witness!"

The captain of police smiled in his sternly mirthful fashion as he shook hands with Frona and Corliss. "Bear witness?" he questioned. "Ah, yes!

"'Bear witness, O my comrades, what a hard-bit gang were we, —
The servants of the sweep-head, but the masters of the sea!'"

He quoted the verse with a savage solemnity exulting through his deep voice. This, and the appositeness of it, quite carried Frona away, and she had both his hands in hers on the instant. Corliss was aware of an inward wince at the action. It was uncomfortable. He did not like to see her so promiscuous with those warm, strong hands of hers. Did she so favor all men who delighted her by word or deed? He did not mind her fingers closing round his, but somehow it seemed wanton when shared with the next comer. By the time he had thought thus far, Frona had explained the topic under discussion, and Captain Alexander was testifying.

"I don't know much about your Slav and other kin, except that they are good workers and strong; but I do know that the white man is the greatest and best breed in the world. Take the Indian, for instance. The white man comes along and beats him at all his games, outworks him, out-roughs him, out-fishes him, out-hunts him. As far back as their myths go, the Alaskan Indians have packed on their backs. But the gold-rushers, as soon as they had learned the tricks of the trade, packed greater loads and packed them farther than did the Indians. Why, last May, the Queen's birthday, we had sports on the river. In the one, two, three, four, and five men canoe races we beat the Indians right and left. Yet they had been born to the paddle, and most of us had never seen a canoe until man-grown."

"But why is it?" Corliss queried.

"I do not know why. I only know that it is. I simply bear witness. I do know that we do what they cannot do, and what they can do, we do better."

Frona nodded her head triumphantly at Corliss. "Come, acknowledge your defeat, so that we may go in to dinner. Defeat for the time being, at least. The concrete facts of paddles and pack-straps quite overcome your dogmatics. Ah, I thought so. More time? All the time in the world. But let us go in. We'll see what my father thinks of it, — and Mr. Kellar. A symposium on Anglo-Saxon supremacy!"

Frost and enervation are mutually repellant. The Northland gives a keenness and zest to the blood which cannot be obtained in warmer climes. Naturally so, then, the friendship which sprang up between Corliss and Frona was anything but languid. They met often under her father's roof-tree, and went many places together. Each found a pleasurable attraction in the other, and a satisfaction which the things they were not in accord with could not mar. Frona liked the man because he was a man. In her wildest flights she could never imagine linking herself with any man, no matter how exalted spiritually, who was not a man physically. It was a delight to her and a joy to look upon the strong males of her kind, with bodies comely in the sight of God and muscles swelling with the promise of deeds and work. Man, to her, was preeminently a fighter. She believed in natural selection and in sexual selection, and was certain that if man had thereby become possessed of faculties and functions, they were for him to use and could but tend to his good. And likewise with instincts. If she felt drawn to any person or thing, it was good for her to be so drawn, good for herself. If she felt impelled to joy in a well-built frame and well-shaped muscle, why should she restrain? Why should she not love the body, and without shame? The history of the race, and of all races, sealed her choice with approval. Down all time, the weak and effeminate males had vanished from the world-stage. Only the strong could inherit the earth. She had been born of the strong, and she chose to cast her lot with the strong.

Yet of all creatures, she was the last to be deaf and blind to the things of the spirit. But the things of the spirit she demanded should be likewise strong. No halting, no stuttered utterance, tremulous waiting, minor wailing! The mind and the soul must be as quick and definite and certain as the body. Nor was the spirit made alone for immortal dreaming. Like the flesh, it must strive and toil. It must be workaday as well as idle day. She could understand a weakling singing sweetly and even greatly, and in so far she could love him for his sweetness and greatness; but her love would have fuller measure were he strong of body as well. She believed she was just. She gave the flesh its due and the spirit its due; but she had, over and above, her own choice, her own individual ideal. She liked to see the two go hand in hand. Prophecy and dyspepsia did not affect her as a felicitous admixture. A splendid savage and a weak-kneed poet! She could admire the one for his brawn and the other for his song; but she would prefer that they had been made one in the beginning.

As to Vance Corliss. First, and most necessary of all, there was that physiological affinity between them that made the touch of his hand a pleasure to her. Though souls may rush together, if body cannot endure body, happiness is reared on sand and the structure will be ever unstable and tottery. Next, Corliss had the physical potency of the hero without the grossness of the brute. His muscular development was more qualitative than quantitative, and it is the qualitative development which gives rise to beauty of form. A giant need not be proportioned in the mould; nor a thew be symmetrical to be massive.

And finally, — none the less necessary but still finally, — Vance Corliss was neither spiritually dead nor decadent. He affected her as fresh and wholesome and strong, as reared above the soil but not scorning the soil. Of course, none of this she reasoned out otherwise than by subconscious processes. Her conclusions were feelings, not thoughts.

Though they quarrelled and disagreed on innumerable things, deep down, underlying all, there was a permanent unity. She liked him for a certain stern soberness that was his, and for his saving grace of humor. Seriousness and banter were not incompatible. She liked him for his gallantry, made to work with and not for display. She liked the spirit of his offer at Happy Camp, when he proposed giving her an Indian guide and passage-money back to the United States. He could *do* as well as talk. She liked him for his outlook, for his innate liberality, which she felt to be there, somehow, no matter that often he was narrow of expression. She liked him for his mind. Though somewhat academic, somewhat tainted with latter-day scholasticism, it was still a mind which permitted him to be classed with the "Intellectuals." He was capable of divorcing sentiment and emotion from reason. Granted that he included all the factors, he could not go wrong. And here was where she found chief fault with him, — his narrowness which precluded all the factors; his narrowness which gave the lie to the breadth she knew was really his. But she was aware that it was not an irremediable defect, and that the new life he was leading was very apt to rectify it. He was filled with culture; what he needed was a few more of life's facts.

And she liked him for himself, which is quite different from liking the parts which went to compose him. For it is no miracle for two things, added together, to produce not only the sum of themselves, but a third thing which is not to be found in either of them. So with him. She liked him for himself, for that something which refused to stand out as a part, or a sum of parts; for that something which is the corner-stone of Faith and which has ever baffled Philosophy and Science. And further, to like, with Frona Welse, did not mean to love.

First, and above all, Vance Corliss was drawn to Frona Welse because of the clamor within him for a return to the soil. In him the elements were so mixed that it was impossible for women many times removed to find favor in his eyes. Such he had met constantly, but not one had ever drawn from him a superfluous heart-beat. Though there had been in him a growing instinctive knowledge of lack of unity, — the lack of unity which must precede, always, the love of man and woman, — not one of the daughters of Eve he had met had flashed irresistibly in to fill the void. Elective affinity, sexual affinity, or whatsoever the intangible essence known as love is, had never been manifest. When he met Frona it had at once sprung, full-fledged, into existence. But he quite misunderstood it, took it for a mere attraction towards the new and unaccustomed.

Many men, possessed of birth and breeding, have yielded to this clamor for return. And giving the apparent lie to their own sanity and moral stability, many such men have married peasant girls or barmaids, And those to whom evil apportioned itself have been prone to distrust the impulse they obeyed, forgetting that nature makes or mars the individual for the sake, always, of the type. For in every such case of return, the impulse was sound, — only that time and space interfered, and propinquity determined whether the object of choice should be bar-maid or peasant girl.

Happily for Vance Corliss, time and space were propitious, and in Frona he found the culture he could not do without, and the clean sharp tang of the earth he needed. In so far as her education and culture went, she was an astonishment. He had met the scientifically smattered young woman before, but Frona had something more than smattering. Further, she gave new life to old facts, and her interpretations of common things were coherent and vigorous and new. Though his acquired conservatism was alarmed and cried danger, he could not remain cold to the charm of her philosophizing, while her scholarly attainments were fully redeemed by her enthusiasm. Though he could not agree with much that she passionately held, he yet recognized that the passion of sincerity and enthusiasm was good.

But her chief fault, in his eyes, was her unconventionality. Woman was something so inexpressibly sacred to him, that he could not bear to see any good woman venturing where the footing was precarious. Whatever good woman thus ventured, overstepping the metes and bounds of sex and status, he deemed did so of wantonness. And wantonness of such order was akin to — well, he could not say it when thinking of Frona, though she hurt him often by her unwise acts. However, he only felt such hurts when away from her. When with her, looking into her eyes which always looked back, or at greeting and parting pressing her hand which always pressed honestly, it seemed certain that there was in her nothing but goodness and truth.

And then he liked her in many different ways for many different things. For her impulses, and for her passions which were always elevated. And already, from breathing the Northland air, he had come to like her for that comradeship which at first had shocked him. There were other acquired likings, her lack of prudishness, for instance, which he awoke one day to find that he had previously confounded with lack of modesty. And it was only the day before that day that he drifted, before he thought, into a discussion with her of "Camille." She had seen Bernhardt, and dwelt lovingly on the recollection. He went home afterwards, a dull pain gnawing at his heart, striving to reconcile Frona with the ideal impressed upon him by his mother that innocence was another term for ignorance. Notwithstanding, by the following day he had worked it out and loosened another finger of the maternal grip.

He liked the flame of her hair in the sunshine, the glint of its gold by the firelight, and the waywardness of it and the glory. He liked her neat-shod feet and the gray-gaitered calves, — alas, now hidden in long-skirted Dawson. He liked her for the strength of her slenderness; and to walk with her, swinging her step and stride to his, or to merely watch her come across a room or down the street, was a delight. Life and the joy of life romped through her blood, abstemiously filling out and rounding off each shapely muscle and soft curve. And he liked it all. Especially he liked the swell of her forearm, which rose firm and strong and tantalizing and sought shelter all too quickly under the loose-flowing sleeve.

The co-ordination of physical with spiritual beauty is very strong in normal men, and so it was with Vance Corliss. That he liked the one was no reason that he failed to appreciate the other. He liked Frona for both, and for herself as well. And to like, with him, though he did not know it, was to love.

CHAPTER IX

Vance Corliss proceeded at a fair rate to adapt himself to the Northland life, and he found that many adjustments came easy. While his own tongue was alien to the brimstone of the Lord, he became quite used to strong language on the part of other men, even in the most genial conversation. Carthey, a little Texan who went to work for him for a while, opened or closed every second sentence, on an average, with the mild expletive, "By damn!" It was also his invariable way of expressing surprise, disappointment, consternation, or all the rest of the tribe of sudden emotions. By pitch and stress and intonation, the protean oath was made to perform every function of ordinary speech. At first it was a constant source of irritation and disgust to Corliss, but erelong he grew not only to tolerate it, but to like it, and to wait for it eagerly. Once, Carthey's wheel-dog lost an ear in a hasty contention with a dog of the Hudson Bay, and when the young fellow bent over the animal and discovered the loss, the blended endearment and pathos of the "by damn" which fell from his lips was a relation to Corliss. All was not evil out of Nazareth, he concluded sagely, and, like Jacob Welse of old, revised his philosophy of life accordingly.

Again, there were two sides to the social life of Dawson. Up at the Barracks, at the Welse's, and a few other places, all men of standing were welcomed and made comfortable by the womenkind of like standing. There were teas, and dinners, and dances, and socials for charity, and the usual run of things; all of which, however, failed to wholly satisfy the men. Down in the town there was a totally different though equally popular other side. As the country was too young for club-life, the masculine portion of the community expressed its masculinity by herding together in the saloons, — the ministers and missionaries being the only exceptions to this mode of expression. Business appointments and deals were made and consummated in the saloons, enterprises projected, shop talked, the latest news discussed, and a general good fellowship maintained. There all life rubbed shoulders, and kings and dog-drivers, old-timers and chechaquos, met on a common level. And it so happened, probably because saw-mills and house-space were scarce, that the saloons accommodated the gambling tables and the polished dance-house floors. And here, because he needs must bend to custom, Corliss's adaptation went on rapidly. And as Carthey, who appreciated him, soliloquized, “The best of it is he likes it damn well, by damn!”

But any adjustment must have its painful periods, and while Corliss’s general change went on smoothly, in the particular case of Frona it was different. She had a code of her own, quite unlike that of the community, and perhaps believed woman might do things at which even the saloon-inhabiting males would be shocked. And because of this, she and Corliss had their first disagreeable disagreement.

Frona loved to run with the dogs through the biting frost, cheeks tingling, blood bounding, body thrust forward, and limbs rising and falling ceaselessly to the pace. And one November day, with the first cold snap on and the spirit thermometer frigidly marking sixty-five below, she got out the sled, harnessed her team of huskies, and flew down the river trail. As soon as she cleared the town she was off and running. And in such manner, running and riding by turns, she swept through the Indian village below the bluff’s, made an eight-mile circle up Moosehide Creek and back, crossed the river on the ice, and several hours later came flying up the west bank of the Yukon opposite the town. She was aiming to tap and return by the trail for the wood-sleds which crossed thereabout, but a mile away from it she ran into the soft snow and brought the winded dogs to a walk.

Along the rim of the river and under the frown of the overhanging cliffs, she directed the path she was breaking. Here and there she made detours to avoid the out-jutting talus, and at other times followed the ice in against the precipitous walls and hugged them closely around the abrupt bends. And so, at the head of her huskies, she came suddenly upon a woman sitting in the snow and gazing across the river at smoke-canopied Dawson. She had been crying, and this was sufficient to prevent Frona’s scrutiny from wandering farther. A tear, turned to a globule of ice, rested on her cheek, and her eyes were dim and moist; there was an-expression of hopeless, fathomless woe.

“Oh!” Frona cried, stopping the dogs and coming up to her. “You are hurt? Can I help you?” she queried, though the stranger shook her head. “But you mustn’t sit there. It is nearly seventy below, and you’ll freeze in a few minutes. Your cheeks are bitten already.” She rubbed the afflicted parts vigorously with a mitten of snow, and then looked down on the warm returning glow.

“I beg pardon.” The woman rose somewhat stiffly to her feet. “And I thank you, but I am perfectly warm, you see” (settling the fur cape more closely about her with a snuggling movement), “and I had just sat down for the moment.”

Frona noted that she was very beautiful, and her woman’s eye roved over and took in the splendid furs, the make of the gown, and the bead-work of the moccasins which peeped from beneath. And in view of all this, and of the fact that the face was unfamiliar, she felt an instinctive desire to shrink back.

“And I haven’t hurt myself,” the woman went on. “Just a mood, that was all, looking out over the dreary endless white.”

“Yes,” Frona replied, mastering herself; “I can understand. There must be much of sadness in such a landscape, only it never comes that way to me. The sombreness and the sternness of it appeal to me, but not the sadness.”

“And that is because the lines of our lives have been laid in different places,” the other ventured, reflectively. “It is not what the landscape is, but what we are. If we were not, the landscape would remain, but without human significance. That is what we invest it with.

“‘Truth is within ourselves; it takes no rise
From outward things, whate’er you may believe.’“

Frona’s eyes brightened, and she went on to complete the passage:

“‘There is an inmost centre in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around.’

“And — and — how does it go? I have forgotten.”

“‘Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in — ’“

The woman ceased abruptly, her voice trilling off into silvery laughter with a certain bitter reckless ring to it which made Frona inwardly shiver. She moved as though to go back to her dogs, but the woman’s hand went out in a familiar gesture, — twin to Frona’s own, — which went at once to Frona’s heart.

“Stay a moment,” she said, with an undertone of pleading in the words, “and talk with me. It is long since I have met a woman” — she paused while her tongue wandered for the word — ”who could quote ‘Paracelsus.’ You are, — I know you, you see, — you are Jacob Welse’s daughter, Frona Welse, I believe.”

Frona nodded her identity, hesitated, and looked at the woman with secret intentness. She was conscious of a great and pardonable curiosity, of a frank out-reaching for fuller knowledge. This creature, so like, so different; old as the oldest race, and young as the last rose-tinted babe; flung far as the farthermost fires of men, and eternal as humanity itself — where were they unlike, this woman and she? Her five senses told her not; by every law of life they were no; only, only by the fast-drawn lines of social caste and social wisdom were they not the same. So she thought, even as for one searching moment she studied the other's face. And in the situation she found an uplifting awfulness, such as comes when the veil is thrust aside and one gazes on the mysteriousness of Deity. She remembered: "Her feet take hold of hell; her house is the way to the grave, going down to the chamber of death," and in the same instant strong upon her was the vision of the familiar gesture with which the woman's hand had gone out in mute appeal, and she looked aside, out over the dreary endless white, and for her, too, the day became filled with sadness.

She gave an involuntary, half-nervous shiver, though she said, naturally enough, "Come, let us walk on and get the blood moving again. I had no idea it was so cold till I stood still." She turned to the dogs: "Mush-on! King! You Sandy! Mush!" And back again to the woman, "I am quite chilled, and as for you, you must be — "

"Quite warm, of course. You have been running and your clothes are wet against you, while I have kept up the needful circulation and no more. I saw you when you leaped off the sled below the hospital and vanished down the river like a Diana of the snows. How I envied you! You must enjoy it."

"Oh, I do," Frona answered, simply. "I was raised with the dogs."

"It savors of the Greek."

Frona did not reply, and they walked on in silence. Yet Frona wished, though she dared not dare, that she could give her tongue free rein, and from out of the other's bitter knowledge, for her own soul's sake and sanity, draw the pregnant human generalizations which she must possess. And over her welled a wave of pity and distress; and she felt a discomfort, for she knew not what to say or how to voice her heart. And when the other's speech broke forth, she hailed it with a great relief.

"Tell me," the woman demanded, half-eagerly, half-masterly, "tell me about yourself. You are new to the Inside. Where were you before you came in? Tell me."

So the difficulty was solved, in a way, and Frona talked on about herself, with a successfully feigned girlhood innocence, as though she did not appreciate the other or understand her ill-concealed yearning for that which she might not have, but which was Frona's.

“There is the trail you are trying to connect with.” They had rounded the last of the cliffs, and Frona’s companion pointed ahead to where the walls receded and wrinkled to a gorge, out of which the sleds drew the firewood across the river to town. “I shall leave you there,” she concluded.

“But are you not going back to Dawson?” Frona queried. “It is growing late, and you had better not linger.”

“No . . . I . . .”

Her painful hesitancy brought Frona to a realization of her own thoughtlessness. But she had made the step, and she knew she could not retrace it.

“We will go back together,” she said, bravely. And in candid all-knowledge of the other, “I do not mind.”

Then it was that the blood surged into the woman’s cold face, and her hand went out to the girl in the old, old way.

“No, no, I beg of you,” she stammered. “I beg of you . . . I . . . I prefer to continue my walk a little farther. See! Some one is coming now!”

By this time they had reached the wood-trail, and Frona’s face was flaming as the other’s had flamed. A light sled, dogs a-lope and swinging down out of the gorge, was just upon them. A man was running with the team, and he waved his hand to the two women.

“Vance!” Frona exclaimed, as he threw his lead-dogs in the snow and brought the sled to a halt. “What are you doing over here? Is the syndicate bent upon cornering the firewood also?”

“No. We’re not so bad as that.” His face was full of smiling happiness at the meeting as he shook hands with her. “But Carthey is leaving me, — going prospecting somewhere around the North Pole, I believe, — and I came across to look up Del Bishop, if he’ll serve.”

He turned his head to glance expectantly at her companion, and she saw the smile go out of his face and anger come in. Frona was helplessly aware that she had no grip over the situation, and, though a rebellion at the cruelty and injustice of it was smouldering somewhere deep down, she could only watch the swift culmination of the little tragedy. The woman met his gaze with a half-shrinking, as from an impending blow, and with a softness of expression which entreated pity. But he regarded her long and coldly, then deliberately turned his back. As he did this, Frona noted her face go tired and gray, and the hardness and recklessness of her laughter were there painted in harsh tones, and a bitter devil rose up and lurked in her eyes. It was evident that the same bitter devil rushed hotly to her tongue. But it chanced just then that she glanced at Frona, and all expression was brushed from her face save the infinite tiredness. She smiled wistfully at the girl, and without a word turned and went down the trail.

And without a word Frona sprang upon her sled and was off. The way was wide, and Corliss swung in his dogs abreast of hers. The smouldering rebellion flared up, and she seemed to gather to herself some of the woman's recklessness.

"You brute!"

The words left her mouth, sharp, clear-cut, breaking the silence like the lash of a whip. The unexpectedness of it, and the savagery, took Corliss aback. He did not know what to do or say.

"Oh, you coward! You coward!"

"Frona! Listen to me — "

But she cut him off. "No. Do not speak. You can have nothing to say. You have behaved abominably. I am disappointed in you. It is horrible! horrible!"

"Yes, it was horrible, — horrible that she should walk with you, have speech with you, be seen with you."

"'Not until the sun excludes you, do I exclude you,'" she flung back at him.

"But there is a fitness of things — "

"Fitness!" She turned upon him and loosed her wrath. "If she is unfit, are you fit? May you cast the first stone with that smugly sanctimonious air of yours?"

"You shall not talk to me in this fashion. I'll not have it."

He clutched at her sled, and even in the midst of her anger she noticed it with a little thrill of pleasure.

"Shall not? You coward!"

He reached out as though to lay hands upon her, and she raised her coiled whip to strike. But to his credit he never flinched; his white face calmly waited to receive the blow. Then she deflected the stroke, and the long lash hissed out and fell among the dogs. Swinging the whip briskly, she rose to her knees on the sled and called frantically to the animals. Hers was the better team, and she shot rapidly away from Corliss. She wished to get away, not so much from him as from herself, and she encouraged the huskies into wilder and wilder speed. She took the steep river-bank in full career and dashed like a whirlwind through the town and home. Never in her life had she been in such a condition; never had she experienced such terrible anger. And not only was she already ashamed, but she was frightened and afraid of herself.

CHAPTER X

The next morning Corliss was knocked out of a late bed by Bash, one of Jacob Welse's Indians. He was the bearer of a brief little note from Frona, which contained a request for the mining engineer to come and see her at his first opportunity. That was all that was said, and he pondered over it deeply. What did she wish to say to him? She was still such an unknown quantity, — and never so much as now in the light of the day before, — that he could not guess. Did she desire to give him his dismissal on a definite, well-understood basis? To take advantage of her sex and further humiliate him? To tell him what she thought of him in coolly considered, cold-measured terms? Or was she penitently striving to make amends for the unmerited harshness she had dealt him? There was neither contrition nor anger in the note, no clew, nothing save a formally worded desire to see him.

So it was in a rather unsettled and curious frame of mind that he walked in upon her as the last hour of the morning drew to a close. He was neither on his dignity nor off, his attitude being strictly non-committal against the moment she should disclose hers. But without beating about the bush, in that way of hers which he had come already to admire, she at once showed her colors and came frankly forward to him. The first glimpse of her face told him, the first feel of her hand, before she had said a word, told him that all was well.

"I am glad you have come," she began. "I could not be at peace with myself until I had seen you and told you how sorry I am for yesterday, and how deeply ashamed I — "

"There, there. It's not so bad as all that." They were still standing, and he took a step nearer to her. "I assure you I can appreciate your side of it; and though, looking at it theoretically, it was the highest conduct, demanding the fullest meed of praise, still, in all frankness, there is much to — to — "

"Yes."

"Much to deplore in it from the social stand-point. And unhappily, we cannot leave the social stand-point out of our reckoning. But so far as I may speak for myself, you have done nothing to feel sorry for or be ashamed of."

"It is kind of you," she cried, graciously. "Only it is not true, and you know it is not true. You know that you acted for the best; you know that I hurt you, insulted you; you know that I behaved like a fish-wife, and you do know that I disgusted you — "

"No, no!" He raised his hand as though to ward from her the blows she dealt herself.

"But yes, yes. And I have all reason in the world to be ashamed. I can only say this in defence: the woman had affected me deeply — so deeply that I was close to weeping. Then you came on the scene, — you know what you did, — and the sorrow for her bred an indignation against you, and — well, I worked myself into a nervous condition such as I had never experienced in my life. It was hysteria, I suppose. Anyway, I was not myself."

"We were neither of us ourselves."

"Now you are untrue. I did wrong, but you were yourself, as much so then as now. But do be seated. Here we stand as though you were ready to run away at first sign of another outbreak."

"Surely you are not so terrible!" he laughed, adroitly pulling his chair into position so that the light fell upon her face.

"Rather, you are not such a coward. I must have been terrible yesterday. I — I almost struck you. And you were certainly brave when the whip hung over you. Why, you did not even attempt to raise a hand and shield yourself."

"I notice the dogs your whip falls among come nevertheless to lick your hand and to be petted."

"Ergo?" she queried, audaciously.

"Ergo, it all depends," he equivocated.

"And, notwithstanding, I am forgiven?"

"As I hope to be forgiven."

"Then I am glad — only, you have done nothing to be forgiven for. You acted according to your light, and I to mine, though it must be acknowledged that mine casts the broader flare. Ah! I have it," clapping her hands in delight, "I was not angry with you yesterday; nor did I behave rudely to you, or even threaten you. It was utterly impersonal, the whole of it. You simply stood for society, for the type which aroused my indignation and anger; and, as its representative, you bore the brunt of it. Don't you see?"

“I see, and cleverly put; only, while you escape the charge of maltreating me yesterday; you throw yourself open to it to-day. You make me out all that is narrow-minded and mean and despicable, which is very unjust. Only a few minutes past I said that your way of looking at it, theoretically considered, was irreproachable. But not so when we include society.”

“But you misunderstand me, Vance. Listen.” Her hand went out to his, and he was content to listen. “I have always upheld that what is is well. I grant the wisdom of the prevailing social judgment in this matter. Though I deplore it, I grant it; for the human is so made. But I grant it socially only. I, as an individual, choose to regard such things differently. And as between individuals so minded, why should it not be so regarded? Don’t you see? Now I find you guilty. As between you and me, yesterday, on the river, you did not so regard it. You behaved as narrow-mindedly as would have the society you represent.”

“Then you would preach two doctrines?” he retaliated. “One for the elect and one for the herd? You would be a democrat in theory and an aristocrat in practice? In fact, the whole stand you are making is nothing more or less than Jesuitical.”

“I suppose with the next breath you will be contending that all men are born free and equal, with a bundle of natural rights thrown in? You are going to have Del Bishop work for you; by what equal free-born right will he work for you, or you suffer him to work?”

“No,” he denied. “I should have to modify somewhat the questions of equality and rights.”

“And if you modify, you are lost!” she exulted. “For you can only modify in the direction of my position, which is neither so Jesuitical nor so harsh as you have defined it. But don’t let us get lost in dialectics. I want to see what I can see, so tell me about this woman.”

“Not a very tasteful topic,” Corliss objected.

“But I seek knowledge.”

“Nor can it be wholesome knowledge.”

Frona tapped her foot impatiently, and studied him.

“She is beautiful, very beautiful,” she suggested. “Do you not think so?”

“As beautiful as hell.”

“But still beautiful,” she insisted.

“Yes, if you will have it so. And she is as cruel, and hard, and hopeless as she is beautiful.”

"Yet I came upon her, alone, by the trail, her face softened, and tears in her eyes. And I believe, with a woman's ken, that I saw a side of her to which you are blind. And so strongly did I see it, that when you appeared my mind was blank to all save the solitary wail, *Oh, the pity of it*! *The pity of it*! And she is a woman, even as I, and I doubt not that we are very much alike. Why, she even quoted Browning — "

"And last week," he cut her short, "in a single sitting, she gambled away thirty thousand of Jack Dorsey's dust, — Dorsey, with two mortgages already on his dump! They found him in the snow next morning, with one chamber empty in his revolver."

Frona made no reply, but, walking over to the candle, deliberately thrust her finger into the flame. Then she held it up to Corliss that he might see the outraged skin, red and angry.

"And so I point the parable. The fire is very good, but I misuse it, and I am punished."

"You forget," he objected. "The fire works in blind obedience to natural law. Lucile is a free agent. That which she has chosen to do, that she has done."

"Nay, it is you who forget, for just as surely Dorsey was a free agent. But you said Lucile. Is that her name? I wish I knew her better."

Corliss winced. "Don't! You hurt me when you say such things."

"And why, pray?"

"Because — because — "

"Yes?"

"Because I honor woman highly. Frona, you have always made a stand for frankness, and I can now advantage by it. It hurts me because of the honor in which I hold you, because I cannot bear to see taint approach you. Why, when I saw you and that woman together on the trail, I — you cannot understand what I suffered."

"Taint?" There was a tightening about her lips which he did not notice, and a just perceptible lustre of victory lighted her eyes.

"Yes, taint, — contamination," he reiterated. "There are some things which it were not well for a good woman to understand. One cannot dabble with mud and remain spotless."

"That opens the field wide." She clasped and unclasped her hands gleefully. "You have said that her name was Lucile; you display a knowledge of her; you have given me facts about her; you doubtless retain many which you dare not give; in short, if one cannot dabble and remain spotless, how about you?"

"But I am — "

"A man, of course. Very good. Because you are a man, you may court contamination. Because I am a woman, I may not. Contamination contaminates, does it not? Then you, what do you here with me? Out upon you!"

Corliss threw up his hands laughingly. "I give in. You are too much for me with your formal logic. I can only fall back on the higher logic, which you will not recognize."

"Which is — "

"Strength. What man wills for woman, that will he have."

"I take you, then, on your own ground," she rushed on. "What of Lucile? What man has willed that he has had. So you, and all men, have willed since the beginning of time. So poor Dorsey willed. You cannot answer, so let me speak something that occurs to me concerning that higher logic you call strength. I have met it before. I recognized it in you, yesterday, on the sleds."

"In me?"

"In you, when you reached out and clutched at me. You could not down the primitive passion, and, for that matter, you did not know it was uppermost. But the expression on your face, I imagine, was very like that of a woman-stealing cave-man. Another instant, and I am sure you would have laid violent hands upon me."

"Then I ask your pardon. I did not dream — "

"There you go, spoiling it all! I — I quite liked you for it. Don't you remember, I, too, was a cave-woman, brandishing the whip over your head?

"But I am not done with you yet, Sir Doubleface, even if you have dropped out of the battle." Her eyes were sparkling mischievously, and the wee laughter-creases were forming on her cheek. "I purpose to unmask you."

"As clay in the hands of the potter," he responded, meekly.

"Then you must remember several things. At first, when I was very humble and apologetic, you made it easier for me by saying that you could only condemn my conduct on the ground of being socially unwise. Remember?"

Corliss nodded.

“Then, just after you branded me as Jesuitical, I turned the conversation to Lucile, saying that I wished to see what I could see.”

Again he nodded.

“And just as I expected, I saw. For in only a few minutes you began to talk about taint, and contamination, and dabbling in mud, — and all in relation to me. There are your two propositions, sir. You may only stand on one, and I feel sure that you stand on the last one. Yes, I am right. You do. And you were insincere, confess, when you found my conduct unwise only from the social point of view. I like sincerity.”

“Yes,” he began, “I was unwittingly insincere. But I did not know it until further analysis, with your help, put me straight. Say what you will, Frona, my conception of woman is such that she should not court defilement.”

“But cannot we be as gods, knowing good and evil?”

“But we are not gods,” he shook his head, sadly.

“Only the men are?”

“That is new-womanish talk,” he frowned. “Equal rights, the ballot, and all that.”

“Oh! Don’t!” she protested. “You won’t understand me; you can’t. I am no woman’s rights’ creature; and I stand, not for the new woman, but for the new womanhood. Because I am sincere; because I desire to be natural, and honest, and true; and because I am consistent with myself, you choose to misunderstand it all and to lay wrong strictures upon me. I do try to be consistent, and I think I fairly succeed; but you can see neither rhyme nor reason in my consistency. Perhaps it is because you are unused to consistent, natural women; because, more likely, you are only familiar with the hot-house breeds, — pretty, helpless, well-rounded, stall-fatted little things, blissfully innocent and criminally ignorant. They are not natural or strong; nor can they mother the natural and strong.”

She stopped abruptly. They heard somebody enter the hall, and a heavy, soft-moccasined tread approaching.

“We are friends,” she added hurriedly, and Corliss answered with his eyes.

“Ain’t intrudin’, am I?” Dave Harney grinned broad insinuation and looked about ponderously before coming up to shake hands.

“Not at all,” Corliss answered. “We’ve bored each other till we were pining for some one to come along. If you hadn’t, we would soon have been quarrelling, wouldn’t we, Miss Welse?”

“I don’t think he states the situation fairly,” she smiled back. “In fact, we had already begun to quarrel.”

“You do look a mite flustered,” Harney criticised, dropping his loose-jointed frame all over the pillows of the lounging couch.

“How’s the famine?” Corliss asked. “Any public relief started yet?”

“Won’t need any public relief. Miss Frona’s old man was too forehanded fer ‘em. Scairt the daylights out of the critters, I do b’lieve. Three thousand went out over the ice hittin’ the high places, an’ half ez many again went down to the caches, and the market’s loosened some considerable. Jest what Welse figgered on, everybody speculated on a rise and held all the grub they could lay hand to. That helped scare the shorts, and away they stampeded fer Salt Water, the whole caboodle, a-takin’ all the dogs with ‘em. Say!” he sat up solemnly, “corner dogs! They’ll rise suthin’ unheard on in the spring when freightin’ gits brisk. I’ve corralled a hundred a’ready, an’ I figger to clear a hundred dollars clean on every hide of ‘em.”

“Think so?”

“Think so! I guess yes. Between we three, confidential, I’m startin’ a couple of lads down into the Lower Country next week to buy up five hundred of the best huskies they kin spot. Think so! I’ve limbered my jints too long in the land to git caught nappin’.”

Frona burst out laughing. “But you got pinched on the sugar, Dave.”

“Oh, I dunno,” he responded, complacently. “Which reminds me. I’ve got a noospaper, an’ only four weeks’ old, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.”

“Has the United States and Spain — ”

“Not so fast, not so fast!” The long Yankee waved his arms for silence, cutting off Frona’s question which was following fast on that of Corliss.

“But have you read it?” they both demanded.

“Unh huh, every line, advertisements an’ all.”

“Then do tell me,” Frona began. “Has — ”

“Now you keep quiet, Miss Frona, till I tell you about it reg’lar. That noospaper cost me fifty dollars — caught the man comin’ in round the bend above Klondike City, an’ bought it on the spot. The dummy could a-got a hundred fer it, easy, if he’d held on till he made town — ”

“But what does it say? Has — ”

“Ez I was sayin’, that noospaper cost me fifty dollars. It’s the only one that come in. Everybody’s jest dyin’ to hear the noos. So I invited a select number of ‘em to come here to yer parlors to-night, Miss Frona, ez the only likely place, an’ they kin read it out loud, by shifts, ez long ez they want or till they’re tired — that is, if you’ll let ‘em have the use of the place.”

“Why, of course, they are welcome. And you are very kind to — ”

He waved her praise away. “Jest ez I kalkilated. Now it so happens, ez you said, that I was pinched on sugar. So every mother’s son and daughter that gits a squint at that paper to-night got to pony up five cups of sugar. Savve? Five cups, — big cups, white, or brown, or cube, — an’ I’ll take their IOU’s, an’ send a boy round to their shacks the day followin’ to collect.”

Frona’s face went blank at the telling, then the laughter came back into it. “Won’t it be jolly? I’ll do it if it raises a scandal. To-night, Dave? Sure to-night?”

“Sure. An’ you git a complimentary, you know, fer the loan of yer parlor.”

“But papa must pay his five cups. You must insist upon it, Dave.”

Dave’s eyes twinkled appreciatively. “I’ll git it back on him, you bet!”

“And I’ll make him come,” she promised, “at the tail of Dave Harney’s chariot.”

“Sugar cart,” Dave suggested. “An’ to-morrow night I’ll take the paper down to the Opery House. Won’t be fresh, then, so they kin git in cheap; a cup’ll be about the right thing, I reckon.” He sat up and cracked his huge knuckles boastfully. “I ain’t ben a-burnin’ daylight sence navigation closed; an’ if they set up all night they won’t be up early enough in the mornin’ to git ahead of Dave Harney — even on a sugar proposition.”

CHAPTER XI

Over in the corner Vance Corliss leaned against the piano, deep in conversation with Colonel Trethaway. The latter, keen and sharp and wiry, for all his white hair and sixty-odd years, was as young in appearance as a man of thirty. A veteran mining engineer, with a record which put him at the head of his profession, he represented as large American interests as Corliss did British. Not only had a cordial friendship sprung up between them, but in a business way they had already been of large assistance to each other. And it was well that they should stand together, — a pair who held in grip and could direct at will the potent capital which two nations had contributed to the development of the land under the Pole.

The crowded room was thick with tobacco smoke. A hundred men or so, garbed in furs and warm-colored wools, lined the walls and looked on. But the mumble of their general conversation destroyed the spectacular feature of the scene and gave to it the geniality of common comradeship. For all its *bizarre* appearance, it was very like the living-room of the home when the members of the household come together after the work of the day. Kerosene lamps and tallow candles glimmered feebly in the murky atmosphere, while large stoves roared their red-hot and white-hot cheer.

On the floor a score of couples pulsed rhythmically to the swinging waltz-time music. Starched shirts and frock coats were not. The men wore their wolf-and beaver-skin caps, with the gay-tasselled ear-flaps flying free, while on their feet were the moose-skin moccasins and walrus-hide muclucs of the north. Here and there a woman was in moccasins, though the majority danced in frail ball-room slippers of silk and satin. At one end of the hall a great open doorway gave glimpse of another large room where the crowd was even denser. From this room, in the lulls in the music, came the pop of corks and the clink of glasses, and as an undertone the steady click and clatter of chips and roulette balls.

The small door at the rear opened, and a woman, befurred and muffled, came in on a wave of frost. The cold rushed in with her to the warmth, taking form in a misty cloud which hung close to the floor, hiding the feet of the dancers, and writhing and twisting until vanquished by the heat.

"A veritable frost queen, my Lucile," Colonel Trethaway addressed her.

She tossed her head and laughed, and, as she removed her capes and street-moccasins, chatted with him gayly. But of Corliss, though he stood within a yard of her, she took no notice. Half a dozen dancing men were waiting patiently at a little distance till she should have done with the colonel. The piano and violin played the opening bars of a schottische, and she turned to go; but a sudden impulse made Corliss step up to her. It was wholly unpremeditated; he had not dreamed of doing it.

"I am very sorry," he said.

Her eyes flashed angrily as she turned upon him.

"I mean it," he repeated, holding out his hand. "I am very sorry. I was a brute and a coward. Will you forgive me?"

She hesitated, and, with the wisdom bought of experience, searched him for the ulterior motive. Then, her face softened, and she took his hand. A warm mist dimmed her eyes.

"Thank you," she said.

But the waiting men had grown impatient, and she was whirled away in the arms of a handsome young fellow, conspicuous in a cap of yellow Siberian wolf-skin. Corliss came back to his companion, feeling unaccountably good and marvelling at what he had done.

"It's a damned shame." The colonel's eye still followed Lucile, and Vance understood. "Corliss, I've lived my threescore, and lived them well, and do you know, woman is a greater mystery than ever. Look at them, look at them all!" He embraced the whole scene with his eyes. "Butterflies, bits of light and song and laughter, dancing, dancing down the last tail-reach of hell. Not only Lucile, but the rest of them. Look at May, there, with the brow of a Madonna and the tongue of a gutter-devil. And Myrtle — for all the world one of Gainsborough's old English beauties stepped down from the canvas to riot out the century in Dawson's dance-halls. And Laura, there, wouldn't she make a mother? Can't you see the child in the curve of her arm against her breast! They're the best of the boiling, I know, — a new country always gathers the best, — but there's something wrong, Corliss, something wrong. The heats of life have passed with me, and my vision is truer, surer. It seems a new Christ must arise and preach a new salvation — economic or sociologic — in these latter days, it matters not, so long as it is preached. The world has need of it."

The room was wont to be swept by sudden tides, and notably between the dances, when the revellers ebbed through the great doorway to where corks popped and glasses tinkled. Colonel Trethaway and Corliss followed out on the next ebb to the bar, where fifty men and women were lined up. They found themselves next to Lucile and the fellow in the yellow wolf-skin cap. He was undeniably handsome, and his looks were enhanced by a warm overplus of blood in the cheeks and a certain mellow fire in the eyes. He was not technically drunk, for he had himself in perfect physical control; but his was the soul-exhilaration which comes of the juice of the grape. His voice was raised the least bit and joyous, and his tongue made quick and witty — just in the unstable condition when vices and virtues are prone to extravagant expression.

As he raised his glass, the man next to him accidentally jostled his arm. He shook the wine from his sleeve and spoke his mind. It was not a nice word, but one customarily calculated to rouse the fighting blood. And the other man's blood roused, for his fist landed under the wolf-skin cap with force sufficient to drive its owner back against Corliss. The insulted man followed up his attack swiftly. The women slipped away, leaving a free field for the men, some of whom were for crowding in, and some for giving room and fair play.

The wolf-skin cap did not put up a fight or try to meet the wrath he had invoked, but, with his hands shielding his face, strove to retreat. The crowd called upon him to stand up and fight. He nerved himself to the attempt, but weakened as the man closed in on him, and dodged away.

"Let him alone. He deserves it," the colonel called to Vance as he showed signs of interfering. "He won't fight. If he did, I think I could almost forgive him."

"But I can't see him pummelled," Vance objected. "If he would only stand up, it wouldn't seem so brutal."

The blood was streaming from his nose and from a slight cut over one eye, when Corliss sprang between. He attempted to hold the two men apart, but pressing too hard against the truculent individual, overbalanced him and threw him to the floor. Every man has friends in a bar-room fight, and before Vance knew what was taking place he was staggered by a blow from a chum of the man he had downed. Del Bishop, who had edged in, let drive promptly at the man who had attacked his employer, and the fight became general. The crowd took sides on the moment and went at it.

Colonel Trethaway forgot that the heats of life had passed, and swinging a three-legged stool, danced nimbly into the fray. A couple of mounted police, on liberty, joined him, and with half a dozen others safeguarded the man with the wolf-skin cap.

Fierce though it was, and noisy, it was purely a local disturbance. At the far end of the bar the barkeepers still dispensed drinks, and in the next room the music was on and the dancers afoot. The gamblers continued their play, and at only the near tables did they evince any interest in the affair.

“Knock’m down an’ drag’m out!” Del Bishop grinned, as he fought for a brief space shoulder to shoulder with Corliss.

Corliss grinned back, met the rush of a stalwart dog-driver with a clinch, and came down on top of him among the stamping feet. He was drawn close, and felt the fellow’s teeth sinking into his ear. Like a flash, he surveyed his whole future and saw himself going one-eared through life, and in the same dash, as though inspired, his thumbs flew to the man’s eyes and pressed heavily on the balls. Men fell over him and trampled upon him, but it all seemed very dim and far away. He only knew, as he pressed with his thumbs, that the man’s teeth wavered reluctantly. He added a little pressure (a little more, and the man would have been eyeless), and the teeth slackened and slipped their grip.

After that, as he crawled out of the fringe of the melee and came to his feet by the side of the bar, all distaste for fighting left him. He had found that he was very much like other men after all, and the imminent loss of part of his anatomy had scraped off twenty years of culture. Gambling without stakes is an insipid amusement, and Corliss discovered, likewise, that the warm blood which rises from hygienic gymnasium work is something quite different from that which pounds hotly along when thew matches thew and flesh impacts on flesh and the stake is life and limb. As he dragged himself to his feet by means of the bar-rail, he saw a man in a squirrel-skin parka lift a beer-mug to hurl at Trethaway, a couple of paces off. And the fingers, which were more used to test-tubes and water colors, doubled into a hard fist which smote the mug-thrower cleanly on the point of the jaw. The man merely dropped the glass and himself on the floor. Vance was dazed for the moment, then he realized that he had knocked the man unconscious, — the first in his life, — and a pang of delight thrilled through him.

Colonel Trethaway thanked him with a look, and shouted, “Get on the outside! Work to the door, Corliss! Work to the door!”

Quite a struggle took place before the storm-doors could be thrown open; but the colonel, still attached to the three-legged stool, effectually dissipated the opposition, and the Opera House disgorged its turbulent contents into the street. This accomplished, hostilities ceased, after the manner of such fights, and the crowd scattered. The two policemen went back to keep order, accompanied by the rest of the allies, while Corliss and the colonel, followed by the Wolf-Skin Cap and Del Bishop, proceeded up the street.

“Blood and sweat! Blood and sweat!” Colonel Trethaway exulted. “Talk about putting the vim into one! Why, I’m twenty years younger if I’m a day! Corliss, your hand. I congratulate you, I do, I heartily do. Candidly, I didn’t think it was in you. You’re a surprise, sir, a surprise!”

“And a surprise to myself,” Corliss answered. The reaction had set in, and he was feeling sick and faint. “And you, also, are a surprise. The way you handled that stool — ”

“Yes, now! I flatter myself I did fairly well with it. Did you see — well, look at that!” He held up the weapon in question, still tightly clutched, and joined in the laugh against himself.

“Whom have I to thank, gentlemen?”

They had come to a pause at the corner, and the man they had rescued was holding out his hand.

“My name is St. Vincent,” he went on, “and — ”

“What name?” Del Bishop queried with sudden interest.

“St. Vincent, Gregory St. Vincent — ”

Bishop’s fist shot out, and Gregory St. Vincent pitched heavily into the snow. The colonel instinctively raised the stool, then helped Corliss to hold the pocket-miner back.

“Are you crazy, man?” Vance demanded.

“The skunk! I wish I’d hit ‘m harder!” was the response. Then, “Oh, that’s all right. Let go o’ me. I won’t hit ‘m again. Let go o’ me, I’m goin’ home. Good-night.”

As they helped St. Vincent to his feet, Vance could have sworn he heard the colonel giggling. And he confessed to it later, as he explained, “It was so curious and unexpected.” But he made amends by taking it upon himself to see St. Vincent home.

“But why did you hit him?” Corliss asked, unavailingly, for the fourth time after he had got into his cabin.

“The mean, crawlin’ skunk!” the pocket-miner gritted in his blankets. “What’d you stop me for, anyway? I wish I’d hit ‘m twice as hard!”

CHAPTER XII

"Mr. Harney, pleased to meet you. Dave, I believe, Dave Harney?" Dave Harney nodded, and Gregory St. Vincent turned to Frona. "You see, Miss Welse, the world is none so large. Mr. Harney and I are not strangers after all."

The Eldorado king studied the other's face until a glimmering intelligence came to him. "Hold on!" he cried, as St. Vincent started to speak, "I got my finger on you. You were smooth-faced then. Let's see, — '86, fall of '87, summer of '88, — yep, that's when. Summer of '88 I come floatin' a raft out of Stewart River, loaded down with quarters of moose an' strainin' to make the Lower Country 'fore they went bad. Yep, an' down the Yukon you come, in a Linderman boat. An' I was holdin' strong, ez it was Wednesday, an' my pardner ez it was Friday, an' you put us straight — Sunday, I b'lieve it was. Yep, Sunday. I declare! Nine years ago! And we swapped moose-steaks fer flour an' bakin' soda, an' — an' — an' sugar! By the Jimcracky! I'm glad to see you!"

He shoved out his hand and they shook again.

"Come an' see me," he invited, as he moved away. "I've a right tidy little shack up on the hill, and another on Eldorado. Latch-string's always out. Come an' see me, an' stay ez long ez you've a mind to. Sorry to quit you cold, but I got to traipse down to the Opery House and collect my taxes, — sugar. Miss Frona'll tell you."

"You are a surprise, Mr. St. Vincent." Frona switched back to the point of interest, after briefly relating Harney's saccharine difficulties. "The country must indeed have been a wilderness nine years ago, and to think that you went through it at that early day! Do tell me about it."

Gregory St. Vincent shrugged his shoulders, "There is very little to tell. It was an ugly failure, filled with many things that are not nice, and containing nothing of which to be proud."

"But do tell me, I enjoy such things. They seem closer and truer to life than the ordinary every-day happenings. A failure, as you call it, implies something attempted. What did you attempt?"

He noted her frank interest with satisfaction. "Well, if you will, I can tell you in few words all there is to tell. I took the mad idea into my head of breaking a new path around the world, and in the interest of science and journalism, particularly journalism, I proposed going through Alaska, crossing the Bering Straits on the ice, and journeying to Europe by way of Northern Siberia. It was a splendid undertaking, most of it being virgin ground, only I failed. I crossed the Straits in good order, but came to grief in Eastern Siberia — all because of Tamerlane is the excuse I have grown accustomed to making."

"A Ulysses!" Mrs. Schoville clapped her hands and joined them. "A modern Ulysses! How romantic!"

"But not an Othello," Frona replied. "His tongue is a sluggard. He leaves one at the most interesting point with an enigmatical reference to a man of a bygone age. You take an unfair advantage of us, Mr. St. Vincent, and we shall be unhappy until you show how Tamerlane brought your journey to an untimely end."

He laughed, and with an effort put aside his reluctance to speak of his travels. "When Tamerlane swept with fire and sword over Eastern Asia, states were disrupted, cities overthrown, and tribes scattered like star-dust. In fact, a vast people was hurled broadcast over the land. Fleeing before the mad lust of the conquerors, these refugees swung far into Siberia, circling to the north and east and fringing the rim of the polar basin with a spray of Mongol tribes — am I not tiring you?"

"No, no!" Mrs. Schoville exclaimed. "It is fascinating! Your method of narration is so vivid! It reminds me of — of — "

"Of Macaulay," St. Vincent laughed, good-naturedly. "You know I am a journalist, and he has strongly influenced my style. But I promise you I shall tone down. However, to return, had it not been for these Mongol tribes, I should not have been halted in my travels. Instead of being forced to marry a greasy princess, and to become proficient in interclannish warfare and reindeer-stealing, I should have travelled easily and peaceably to St. Petersburg."

"Oh, these heroes! Are they not exasperating, Frona? But what about the reindeer-stealing and the greasy princesses?"

The Gold Commissioner's wife beamed upon him, and glancing for permission to Frona, he went on.

"The coast people were Esquimo stock, merry-natured and happy, and inoffensive. They called themselves the Oukilion, or the Sea Men. I bought dogs and food from them, and they treated me splendidly. But they were subject to the Chow Chuen, or interior people, who were known as the Deer

Men. The Chow Chuen were a savage, indomitable breed, with all the fierceness of the untamed Mongol, plus double his viciousness. As soon as I left the coast they fell upon me, confiscated my goods, and made me a slave."

"But were there no Russians?" Mrs. Schoville asked.

"Russians? Among the Chow Chuen?" He laughed his amusement. "Geographically, they are within the White Tsar's domain; but politically, no. I doubt if they ever heard of him. Remember, the interior of North-Eastern Siberia is hidden in the polar gloom, a terra incognita, where few men have gone and none has returned."

"But you — "

"I chance to be the exception. Why I was spared, I do not know. It just so happened. At first I was vilely treated, beaten by the women and children, clothed in vermin-infested mangy furs, and fed on refuse. They were utterly heartless. How I managed to survive is beyond me; but I know that often and often, at first, I meditated suicide. The only thing that saved me during that period from taking my own life was the fact that I quickly became too stupefied and bestial, what of my suffering and degradation. Half-frozen, half-starved, undergoing untold misery and hardship, beaten many and many a time into insensibility, I became the sheerest animal.

"On looking back much of it seems a dream. There are gaps which my memory cannot fill. I have vague recollections of being lashed to a sled and dragged from camp to camp and tribe to tribe. Carted about for exhibition purposes, I suppose, much as we do lions and elephants and wild men. How far I so journeyed up and down that bleak region I cannot guess, though it must have been several thousand miles. I do know that when consciousness returned to me and I really became myself again, I was fully a thousand miles to the west of the point where I was captured.

"It was springtime, and from out of a forgotten past it seemed I suddenly opened my eyes. A reindeer thong was about my waist and made fast to the tail-end of a sled. This thong I clutched with both hands, like an organ-grinder's monkey; for the flesh of my body was raw and in great sores from where the thong had cut in.

"A low cunning came to me, and I made myself agreeable and servile. That night I danced and sang, and did my best to amuse them, for I was resolved to incur no more of the maltreatment which had plunged me into darkness. Now the Deer Men traded with the Sea Men, and the Sea Men with the whites, especially the whalers. So later I discovered a deck of cards in the possession of one of the women, and I proceeded to mystify the Chow Chuen with a few commonplace tricks. Likewise, with fitting solemnity, I perpetrated upon them the little I knew of parlor legerdemain. Result: I was appreciated at once, and was better fed and better clothed.

"To make a long story short, I gradually became a man of importance. First the old people and the women came to me for advice, and later the chiefs. My slight but rough and ready knowledge of medicine and surgery stood me in good stead, and I became indispensable. From a slave, I worked myself to a seat among the head men, and in war and peace, so soon as I had learned their ways, was an unchallenged authority. Reindeer was their medium of exchange, their unit of value as it were, and we were almost constantly engaged in cattle forays among the adjacent clans, or in protecting our own herds from their inroads. I improved upon their methods, taught them better strategy and tactics, and put a snap and go into their operations which no neighbor tribe could withstand.

"But still, though I became a power, I was no nearer my freedom. It was laughable, for I had over-reached myself and made myself too valuable. They cherished me with exceeding kindness, but they were jealously careful. I could go and come and command without restraint, but when the trading parties went down to the coast I was not permitted to accompany them. That was the one restriction placed upon my movements.

"Also, it is very tottery in the high places, and when I began altering their political structures I came to grief again. In the process of binding together twenty or more of the neighboring tribes in order to settle rival claims, I was given the over-lordship of the federation. But Old Pi-Une was the greatest of the under-chiefs, — a king in a way, — and in relinquishing his claim to the supreme leadership he refused to forego all the honors. The least that could be done to appease him was for me to marry his daughter Ilswunga. Nay, he demanded it. I offered to abandon the federation, but he would not hear of it. And — "

"And?" Mrs. Schoville murmured ecstatically.

"And I married Ilswunga, which is the Chow Chuen name for Wild Deer. Poor Ilswunga! Like Swinburne's Iseult of Brittany, and I Tristram! The last I saw of her she was playing solitaire in the Mission of Irkutsky and stubbornly refusing to take a bath."

"Oh, mercy! It's ten o'clock!" Mrs. Schoville suddenly cried, her husband having at last caught her eye from across the room. "I'm so sorry I can't hear the rest, Mr. St. Vincent, how you escaped and all that. But you must come and see me. I am just dying to hear!"

"And I took you for a tenderfoot, a *chechaquo*," Frona said meekly, as St. Vincent tied his ear-flaps and turned up his collar preparatory to leaving.

"I dislike posing," he answered, matching her meekness. "It smacks of insincerity; it really is untrue. And it is so easy to slip into it. Look at the old-timers, — 'sour-doughs' as they proudly call themselves. Just because they have been in the country a few years, they let themselves grow wild and woolly and glorify in it. They may not know it, but it is a pose. In so far as they cultivate salient peculiarities, they cultivate falseness to themselves and live lies."

"I hardly think you are wholly just," Frona said, in defence of her chosen heroes. "I do like what you say about the matter in general, and I detest posing, but the majority of the old-timers would be peculiar in any country, under any circumstances. That peculiarity is their own; it is their mode of expression. And it is, I am sure, just what makes them go into new countries. The normal man, of course, stays at home."

"Oh, I quite agree with you, Miss Welse," he temporized easily. "I did not intend it so sweepingly. I meant to brand that sprinkling among them who are *poseurs*. In the main, as you say, they are honest, and sincere, and natural."

"Then we have no quarrel. But Mr. St. Vincent, before you go, would you care to come to-morrow evening? We are getting up theatricals for Christmas. I know you can help us greatly, and I think it will not be altogether unenjoyable to you. All the younger people are interested, — the officials, officers of police, mining engineers, gentlemen rovers, and so forth, to say nothing of the nice women. You are bound to like them."

"I am sure I shall," as he took her hand. "Tomorrow, did you say?"

"To-morrow evening. Good-night."

A brave man, she told herself as she went bade from the door, and a splendid type of the race.

CHAPTER XIII

Gregory St. Vincent swiftly became an important factor in the social life of Dawson. As a representative of the Amalgamated Press Association, he had brought with him the best credentials a powerful influence could obtain, and over and beyond, he was well qualified socially by his letters of introduction. It developed in a quiet way that he was a wanderer and explorer of no small parts, and that he had seen life and strife pretty well all over the earth's crust. And withal, he was so mild and modest about it, that nobody, not even among the men, was irritated by his achievements. Incidentally, he ran across numerous old acquaintances. Jacob Welse he had met at St. Michael's in the fall of '88, just prior to his crossing Bering Straits on the ice. A month or so later, Father Barnum (who had come up from the Lower River to take charge of the hospital) had met him a couple of hundred miles on his way north of St. Michael's. Captain Alexander, of the Police, had rubbed shoulders with him in the British Legation at Peking. And Bettles, another old-timer of standing, had met him at Fort o' Yukon nine years before.

So Dawson, ever prone to look askance at the casual comer, received him with open arms. Especially was he a favorite with the women. As a promoter of pleasures and an organizer of amusements he took the lead, and it quickly came to pass that no function was complete without him. Not only did he come to help in the theatricals, but insensibly, and as a matter of course, he took charge. Frona, as her friends charged, was suffering from a stroke of Ibsen, so they hit upon the "Doll's House," and she was cast for Nora. Corliss, who was responsible, by the way, for the theatricals, having first suggested them, was to take Torvald's part; but his interest seemed to have died out, or at any rate he begged off on the plea of business rush. So St. Vincent, without friction, took Torvald's lines. Corliss did manage to attend one rehearsal. It might have been that he had come tired from forty miles with the dogs, and it might have been that Torvald was obliged to put his arm about Nora at divers times and to toy playfully with her ear; but, one way or the other, Corliss never attended again.

Busy he certainly was, and when not away on trail he was closeted almost continually with Jacob Welse and Colonel Trethaway. That it was a deal of magnitude was evidenced by the fact that Welse's mining interests involved alone mounted to several millions. Corliss was primarily a worker and doer, and on discovering that his thorough theoretical knowledge lacked practical experience, he felt put upon his mettle and worked the harder. He even marvelled at the silliness of the men who had burdened him with such responsibilities, simply because of his pull, and he told Trethaway as much. But the colonel, while recognizing his shortcomings, liked him for his candor, and admired him for his effort and for the quickness with which he came to grasp things actual.

Del Bishop, who had refused to play any hand but his own, had gone to work for Corliss because by so doing he was enabled to play his own hand better. He was practically unfettered, while the opportunities to further himself were greatly increased. Equipped with the best of outfits and a magnificent dog-team, his task was mainly to run the various creeks and keep his eyes and ears open. A pocket-miner, first, last, and always, he was privately on the constant lookout for pockets, which occupation did not interfere in the least with the duty he owed his employer. And as the days went by he stored his mind with miscellaneous data concerning the nature of the various placer deposits and the lay of the land, against the summer when the thawed surface and the running water would permit him to follow a trace from creek-bed to side-slope and source.

Corliss was a good employer, paid well, and considered it his right to work men as he worked himself. Those who took service with him either strengthened their own manhood and remained, or quit and said harsh things about him. Jacob Welse noted this trait with appreciation, and he sounded the mining engineer’s praises continually. Frona heard and was gratified, for she liked the things her father liked; and she was more gratified because the man was Corliss. But in his rush of business she saw less of him than formerly, while St. Vincent came to occupy a greater and growing portion of her time. His healthful, optimistic spirit pleased her, while he corresponded well to her idealized natural man and favorite racial type. Her first doubt — that if what he said was true — had passed away. All the evidence had gone counter. Men who at first questioned the truth of his wonderful adventures gave in after hearing him talk. Those to any extent conversant with the parts of the world he made mention of, could not but acknowledge that he knew what he talked about. Young Soley, representing Bannock’s News Syndicate, and Holmes of the Fairweather, recollected his return to the world in ‘91, and the sensation created thereby. And Sid

Winslow, Pacific Coast journalist, had made his acquaintance at the Wanderers' Club shortly after he landed from the United States revenue cutter which had brought him down from the north. Further, as Frona well saw, he bore the ear-marks of his experiences; they showed their handiwork in his whole outlook on life. Then the primitive was strong in him, and his was a passionate race pride which fully matched hers. In the absence of Corliss they were much together, went out frequently with the dogs, and grew to know each other thoroughly.

All of which was not pleasant to Corliss, especially when the brief intervals he could devote to her were usually intruded upon by the correspondent. Naturally, Corliss was not drawn to him, and other men, who knew or had heard of the Opera House occurrence, only accepted him after a tentative fashion. Trethaway had the indiscretion, once or twice, to speak slightingly of him, but so fiercely was he defended by his admirers that the colonel developed the good taste to thenceforward keep his tongue between his teeth. Once, Corliss, listening to an extravagant panegyric bursting from the lips of Mrs. Schoville, permitted himself the luxury of an incredulous smile; but the quick wave of color in Frona's face, and the gathering of the brows, warned him.

At another time he was unwise enough and angry enough to refer to the Opera House broil. He was carried away, and what he might have said of that night's happening would have redounded neither to St. Vincent's credit nor to his own, had not Frona innocently put a seal upon his lips ere he had properly begun.

"Yes," she said. "Mr. St. Vincent told me about it. He met you for the first time that night, I believe. You all fought royally on his side, — you and Colonel Trethaway. He spoke his admiration unreservedly and, to tell the truth, with enthusiasm."

Corliss made a gesture of depreciation.

"No! no! From what he said you must have behaved splendidly. And I was most pleased to hear. It must be great to give the brute the rein now and again, and healthy, too. Great for us who have wandered from the natural and softened to sickly ripeness. Just to shake off artificiality and rage up and down! and yet, the inmost mentor, serene and passionless, viewing all and saying: 'This is my other self. Behold! I, who am now powerless, am the power behind and ruleth still! This other self, mine ancient, violent, elder self, rages blindly as the beast, but ‘tis I, sitting apart, who discern the merit of the cause and bid him rage or bid him cease!’ Oh, to be a man!”

Corliss could not help a humoring smile, which put Frona upon defence at once.

“Tell me, Vance, how did it feel? Have I not described it rightly? Were the symptoms yours? Did you not hold aloof and watch yourself play the brute?”

He remembered the momentary daze which came when he stunned the man with his fist, and nodded.

“And pride?” she demanded, inexorably. “Or shame?”

“A — a little of both, and more of the first than the second,” he confessed. “At the time I suppose I was madly exultant; then afterwards came the shame, and I tossed awake half the night.”

“And finally?”

“Pride, I guess. I couldn’t help it, couldn’t down it. I awoke in the morning feeling as though I had won my spurs. In a subconscious way I was inordinately proud of myself, and time and again, mentally, I caught myself throwing chests. Then came the shame again, and I tried to reason back my self-respect. And last of all, pride. The fight was fair and open. It was none of my seeking. I was forced into it by the best of motives. I am not sorry, and I would repeat it if necessary.”

“And rightly so.” Frona’s eyes were sparkling. “And how did Mr. St. Vincent acquit himself?”

“He? . . . . Oh, I suppose all right, creditably. I was too busy watching my other self to take notice.”

“But he saw you.”

“Most likely so. I acknowledge my negligence. I should have done better, the chances are, had I thought it would have been of interest to you — pardon me. Just my bungling wit. The truth is, I was too much of a greenhorn to hold my own and spare glances on my neighbors.”

So Corliss went away, glad that he had not spoken, and keenly appreciating St. Vincent’s craft whereby he had so adroitly forestalled adverse comment by telling the story in his own modest, self-effacing way.

Two men and a woman! The most potent trinity of factors in the creating of human pathos and tragedy! As ever in the history of man, since the first father dropped down from his arboreal home and walked upright, so at Dawson. Necessarily, there were minor factors, not least among which was

Del Bishop, who, in his aggressive way, stepped in and accelerated things. This came about in a trail-camp on the way to Miller Creek, where Corliss was bent on gathering in a large number of low-grade claims which could only be worked profitably on a large scale.

"I'll not be wastin' candles when I make a strike, savve!" the pocket-miner remarked savagely to the coffee, which he was settling with a chunk of ice. "Not on your life, I guess rather not!"

"Kerosene?" Corliss queried, running a piece of bacon-rind round the frying-pan and pouring in the batter.

"Kerosene, hell! You won't see my trail for smoke when I get a gait on for God's country, my wad in my poke and the sunshine in my eyes. Say! How'd a good juicy tenderloin strike you just now, green onions, fried potatoes, and fixin's on the side? S'help me, that's the first proposition I'll hump myself up against. Then a general whoop-la! for a week — Seattle or 'Frisco, I don't care a rap which, and then — "

"Out of money and after a job."

"Not on your family tree!" Bishop roared. "Cache my sack before I go on the tear, sure pop, and then, afterwards, Southern California. Many's the day I've had my eye on a peach of a fruit farm down there — forty thousand'll buy it. No more workin' for grub-stakes and the like. Figured it out long; ago, — hired men to work the ranch, a manager to run it, and me ownin' the game and livin' off the percentage. A stable with always a couple of bronchos handy; handy to slap the packs and saddles on and be off and away whenever the fever for chasin' pockets came over me. Great pocket country down there, to the east and along the desert."

"And no house on the ranch?"

"Cert! With sweet peas growin' up the sides, and in back a patch for vegetables — string-beans and spinach and radishes, cucumbers and 'sparagrass, turnips, carrots, cabbage, and such. And a woman inside to draw me back when I get to runnin' loco after the pockets. Say, you know all about minin'. Did you ever go snoozin' round after pockets? No? Then just steer clear. They're worse than whiskey, horses, or cards. Women, when they come afterwards, ain't in it. Whenever you get a hankerin' after pockets, go right off and get married. It's the only thing'll save you; and even then, mebbe, it won't. I ought 'a' done it years ago. I might 'a' made something of myself if I had. Jerusalem! the jobs I've jumped and the good things chucked in my time, just because of pockets! Say, Corliss, you want to get married, you do, and right off. I'm tellin' you straight. Take warnin' from me and don't stay single any longer than God'll let you, sure!"

Corliss laughed.

"Sure, I mean it. I'm older'n you, and know what I'm talkin'. Now there's a bit of a thing down in Dawson I'd like to see you get your hands on. You was made for each other, both of you."

Corliss was past the stage when he would have treated Bishop's meddling as an impertinence. The trail, which turns men into the same blankets and makes them brothers, was the great leveller of distinctions, as he had come to learn. So he flopped a flapjack and held his tongue.

"Why don't you waltz in and win?" Del demanded, insistently. "Don't you cotton to her? I know you do, or you wouldn't come back to cabin, after bein' with her, a-walkin'-like on air. Better waltz in while you got a chance. Why, there was Emmy, a tidy bit of flesh as women go, and we took to each other on the jump. But I kept a-chasin' pockets and chasin' pockets, and delayin'. And then a big black lumberman, a Kanuck, began sidlin' up to her, and I made up my mind to speak — only I went off after one more pocket, just one more, and when I got back she was Mrs. Somebody Else.

"So take warnin'. There's that writer-guy, that skunk I poked outside the Opera House. He's walkin' right in and gettin' thick; and here's you, just like me, a-racin' round all creation and lettin' matrimony slide. Mark my words, Corliss! Some fine frost you'll come slippin' into camp and find 'em housekeepin'. Sure! With nothin' left for you in life but pocketing!"

The picture was so unpleasant that Corliss turned surly and ordered him to shut up.

"Who? Me?" Del asked so aggrievedly that Corliss laughed.

"What would you do, then?" he asked.

"Me? In all kindness I'll tell you. As soon as you get back you go and see her. Make dates with her ahead till you got to put 'em on paper to remember 'em all. Get a cinch on her spare time ahead so as to shut the other fellow out. Don't get down in the dirt to her, — she's not that kind, — but don't be too high and mighty, neither. Just so-so — savve? And then, some time when you see she's feelin' good, and smilin' at you in that way of hers, why up and call her hand. Of course I can't say what the showdown'll be. That's for you to find out. But don't hold off too long about it. Better married early than never. And if that writer-guy shoves in, poke him in the breadbasket —

hard! That'll settle him plenty. Better still, take him off to one side and talk to him. Tell'm you're a bad man, and that you staked that claim before he was dry behind the ears, and that if he comes nosin' around tryin' to file on it you'll beat his head off."

Bishop got up, stretched, and went outside to feed the dogs. "Don't forget to beat his head off," he called back. "And if you're squeamish about it, just call on me. I won't keep 'm waitin' long."

CHAPTER XIV

"Ah, the salt water, Miss Welse, the strong salt water and the big waves and the heavy boats for smooth or rough — that I know. But the fresh water, and the little canoes, egg-shells, fairy bubbles; a big breath, a sigh, a heart-pulse too much, and pouf! over you go; not so, that I do not know." Baron Courbertin smiled self-commiseratingly and went on. "But it is delightful, magnificent. I have watched and envied. Some day I shall learn."

"It is not so difficult," St. Vincent interposed. "Is it, Miss Welse? Just a sure and delicate poise of mind and body — "

"Like the tight-rope dancer?"

"Oh, you are incorrigible," Frona laughed. "I feel certain that you know as much about canoes as we."

"And you know? — a woman?" Cosmopolitan as the Frenchman was, the independence and ability for doing of the Yankee women were a perpetual wonder to him. "How?"

"When I was a very little girl, at Dyea, among the Indians. But next spring, after the river breaks, we'll give you your first lessons, Mr. St. Vincent and I. So you see, you will return to civilization with accomplishments. And you will surely love it."

"Under such charming tutorship," he murmured, gallantly. "But you, Mr. St. Vincent, do you think I shall be so successful that I may come to love it? Do you love it? — you, who stand always in the background, sparing of speech, inscrutable, as though able but unwilling to speak from out the eternal wisdom of a vast experience." The baron turned quickly to Frona. "We are old friends, did I not tell you? So I may, what you Americans call, *josh* with him. Is it not so, Mr. St. Vincent?"

Gregory nodded, and Frona said, "I am sure you met at the ends of the earth somewhere."

"Yokohama," St. Vincent cut in shortly; "eleven years ago, in cherry-blossom time. But Baron Courbertin does me an injustice, which stings, unhappily, because it is not true. I am afraid, when I get started, that I talk too much about myself."

"A martyr to your friends," Frona conciliated. "And such a teller of good tales that your friends cannot forbear imposing upon you."

“Then tell us a canoe story,” the baron begged. “A good one! A — what you Yankees call — a *hair-raiser*!”

They drew up to Mrs. Schoville’s fat wood-burning stove, and St. Vincent told of the great whirlpool in the Box Canyon, of the terrible corkscrew in the mane of the White Horse Rapids, and of his cowardly comrade, who, walking around, had left him to go through alone — nine years before when the Yukon was virgin.

Half an hour later Mrs. Schoville bustled in, with Corliss in her wake.

“That hill! The last of my breath!” she gasped, pulling off her mittens. “Never saw such luck!” she declared none the less vehemently the next moment.

“This play will never come off! I never shall be Mrs. Linden! How can I? Krogstad’s gone on a stampede to Indian River, and no one knows when he’ll be back! Krogstad” (to Corliss) “is Mr. Maybrick, you know. And Mrs. Alexander has the neuralgia and can’t stir out. So there’s no rehearsal to-day, that’s flat!” She attitudinized dramatically: “‘*Yes, in my first terror! But a day has passed, and in that day I have seen incredible things in this house! Helmer must know everything! There must be an end to this unhappy secret! O Krogstad, you need me, and I — I need you*,’ and you are over on the Indian River making sour-dough bread, and I shall never see you more!”

They clapped their applause.

“My only reward for venturing out and keeping you all waiting was my meeting with this ridiculous fellow.” She shoved Corliss forward. “Oh! you have not met! Baron Courbertin, Mr. Corliss. If you strike it rich, baron, I advise you to sell to Mr. Corliss. He has the money-bags of Croesus, and will buy anything so long as the title is good. And if you don’t strike, sell anyway. He’s a professional philanthropist, you know.

“But would you believe it!” (addressing the general group) “this ridiculous fellow kindly offered to see me up the hill and gossip along the way — gossip! though he refused point-blank to come in and watch the rehearsal. But when he found there wasn’t to be any, he changed about like a weather-vane. So here he is, claiming to have been away to Miller Creek; but between ourselves there is no telling what dark deeds — ”

“Dark deeds! Look!” Frona broke in, pointing to the tip of an amber mouth-piece which projected from Vance’s outside breast-pocket. “A pipe! My congratulations.”

She held out her hand and he shook good-humoredly.

"All Del's fault," he laughed. "When I go before the great white throne, it is he who shall stand forth and be responsible for that particular sin."

"An improvement, nevertheless," she argued. "All that is wanting is a good round swear-word now and again."

"Oh, I assure you I am not unlearned," he retorted. "No man can drive dogs else. I can swear from hell to breakfast, by damn, and back again, if you will permit me, to the last link of perdition. By the bones of Pharaoh and the blood of Judas, for instance, are fairly efficacious with a string of huskies; but the best of my dog-driving nomenclature, more's the pity, women cannot stand. I promise you, however, in spite of hell and high water — "

"Oh! Oh!" Mrs. Schoville screamed, thrusting her fingers into her ears.

"Madame," Baron Courbertin spoke up gravely, "it is a fact, a lamentable fact, that the dogs of the north are responsible for more men's souls than all other causes put together. Is it not so? I leave it to the gentlemen."

Both Corliss and St. Vincent solemnly agreed, and proceeded to detonate the lady by swapping heart-rending and apposite dog tales.

St. Vincent and the baron remained behind to take lunch with the Gold Commissioner's wife, leaving Frona and Corliss to go down the hill together. Silently consenting, as though to prolong the descent, they swerved to the right, cutting transversely the myriad foot-paths and sled roads which led down into the town. It was a mid-December day, clear and cold; and the hesitant high-noon sun, having laboriously dragged its pale orb up from behind the southern land-rim, balked at the great climb to the zenith, and began its shamefaced slide back beneath the earth. Its oblique rays refracted from the floating frost particles till the air was filled with glittering jewel-dust — resplendent, blazing, flashing light and fire, but cold as outer space.

They passed down through the scintillant, magical sheen, their moccasins rhythmically crunching the snow and their breaths wreathing mysteriously from their lips in sprayed opalescence. Neither spoke, nor cared to speak, so wonderful was it all. At their feet, under the great vault of heaven, a speck in the midst of the white vastness, huddled the golden city — puny and sordid, feebly protesting against immensity, man's challenge to the infinite!

Calls of men and cries of encouragement came sharply to them from close at hand, and they halted. There was an eager yelping, a scratching of feet, and a string of ice-rimed wolf-dogs, with hot-lolling tongues and dripping jaws, pulled up the slope and turned into the path ahead of them. On the sled, a long and narrow box of rough-sawed spruce told the nature of the freight. Two dog-drivers, a woman walking blindly, and a black-robed priest, made up the funeral cortege. A few paces farther on the dogs were again put against the steep, and with whine and shout and clatter the unheeding clay was hauled on and upward to its ice-hewn hillside chamber.

“A zone-conqueror,” Frona broke voice.

Corliss found his thought following hers, and answered, “These battlers of frost and fighters of hunger! I can understand how the dominant races have come down out of the north to empire. Strong to venture, strong to endure, with infinite faith and infinite patience, is it to be wondered at?”

Frona glanced at him in eloquent silence.

“‘We smote with our swords,’“ he chanted; “‘to me it was a joy like having my bright bride by me on the couch.’ ‘I have marched with my bloody sword, and the raven has followed me. Furiously we fought; the fire passed over the dwellings of men; we slept in the blood of those who kept the gates.’“

“But do you feel it, Vance?” she cried, her hand flashing out and resting on his arm.

“I begin to feel, I think. The north has taught me, is teaching me. The old thing’s come back with new significance. Yet I do not know. It seems a tremendous egotism, a magnificent dream.”

“But you are not a negro or a Mongol, nor are you descended from the negro or Mongol.”

“Yes,” he considered, “I am my father’s son, and the line goes back to the sea-kings who never slept under the smoky rafters of a roof or drained the ale-horn by inhabited hearth. There must be a reason for the dead-status of the black, a reason for the Teuton spreading over the earth as no other race has ever spread. There must be something in race heredity, else I would not leap at the summons.”

“A great race, Vance. Half of the earth its heritage, and all of the sea! And in threescore generations it has achieved it all — think of it! threescore generations! — and to-day it reaches out wider-armed than ever. The smiter and the destroyer among nations! the builder and the law-giver! Oh, Vance, my love is passionate, but God will forgive, for it is good. A great race, greatly conceived; and if to perish, greatly to perish! Don’t you remember:

"'Trembles Yggdrasil's ash yet standing; groans that ancient tree, and the Jotun Loki is loosed. The shadows groan on the ways of Hel, until the fire of Surt has consumed the tree. Hrym steers from the east, the waters rise, the mundane snake is coiled in jotun-rage. The worm heats the water, and the eagle screams; the pale of beak tears carcases; the ship Naglfar is loosed. Surt from the south comes with flickering flame; shines from his sword the Val-god's sun.'"

Swaying there like a furred Valkyrie above the final carnage of men and gods, she touched his imagination, and the blood surged exultingly along unknown channels, thrilling and uplifting.

"'The stony hills are dashed together, the giantesses totter; men tread the path of Hel, and heaven is cloven. The sun darkens, earth in ocean sinks, fall from heaven the bright stars, fire's breath assails the all-nourishing tree, towering fire plays against heaven itself.'"

Outlined against the blazing air, her brows and lashes white with frost, the jewel-dust striking and washing against hair and face, and the south-sun lighting her with a great redness, the man saw her as the genius of the race. The traditions of the blood laid hold of him, and he felt strangely at one with the white-skinned, yellow-haired giants of the younger world. And as he looked upon her the mighty past rose before him, and the caverns of his being resounded with the shock and tumult of forgotten battles. With bellowing of storm-winds and crash of smoking North Sea waves, he saw the sharp-beaked fighting galleys, and the sea-flung Northmen, great-muscled, deep-chested, sprung from the elements, men of sword and sweep, marauders and scourgers of the warm south-lands! The din of twenty centuries of battle was roaring in his ear, and the clamor for return to type strong upon him. He seized her hands passionately.

"Be the bright bride by me, Frona! Be the bright bride by me on the couch!"

She started and looked down at him, questioningly. Then the import of it reached her and she involuntarily drew back. The sun shot a last failing flicker across the earth and vanished. The fire went out of the air, and the day darkened. Far above, the hearse-dogs howled mournfully.

"No," he interrupted, as words formed on her lips. "Do not speak. I know my answer, your answer . . . now . . . I was a fool . . . Come, let us go down."

It was not until they had left the mountain behind them, crossed the flat, and come out on the river by the saw-mill, that the bustle and skurry of human life made it seem possible for them to speak. Corliss had walked with his eyes moodily bent to the ground; and Frona, with head erect and looking everywhere, stealing an occasional glance to his face. Where the road rose over the log run-way of the mill the footing was slippery, and catching at her to save her from falling, their eyes met.

"I — I am grieved," she hesitated. And then, in unconscious self-defence, "It was so . . . I had not expected it — just then."

"Else you would have prevented?" he asked, bitterly.

"Yes. I think I should have. I did not wish to give you pain — "

"Then you expected it, some time?"

"And feared it. But I had hoped . . . I . . . Vance, I did not come into the Klondike to get married. I liked you at the beginning, and I have liked you more and more, — never so much as to-day, — but — "

"But you had never looked upon me in the light of a possible husband — that is what you are trying to say."

As he spoke, he looked at her side-wise, and sharply; and when her eyes met his with the same old frankness, the thought of losing her maddened him.

"But I have," she answered at once. "I have looked upon you in that light, but somehow it was not convincing. Why, I do not know. There was so much I found to like in you, so much — "

He tried to stop her with a dissenting gesture, but she went on.

"So much to admire. There was all the warmth of friendship, and closer friendship, — a growing *camaraderie*, in fact; but nothing more. Though I did not wish more, I should have welcomed it had it come."

"As one welcomes the unwelcome guest."

"Why won't you help me, Vance, instead of making it harder? It is hard on you, surely, but do you imagine that I am enjoying it? I feel because of your pain, and, further, I know when I refuse a dear friend for a lover the dear friend goes from me. I do not part with friends lightly."

"I see; doubly bankrupt; friend and lover both. But they are easily replaced. I fancy I was half lost before I spoke. Had I remained silent, it would have been the same anyway. Time softens; new associations, new thoughts and faces; men with marvellous adventures — "

She stopped him abruptly.

“It is useless, Vance, no matter what you may say. I shall not quarrel with you. I can understand how you feel — ”

“If I am quarrelsome, then I had better leave you.” He halted suddenly, and she stood beside him. “Here comes Dave Harney. He will see you home. It’s only a step.”

“You are doing neither yourself nor me kindness.” She spoke with final firmness. “I decline to consider this the end. We are too close to it to understand it fairly. You must come and see me when we are both calmer. I refuse to be treated in this fashion. It is childish of you.” She shot a hasty glance at the approaching Eldorado king. “I do not think I deserve it at your hands. I refuse to lose you as a friend. And I insist that you come and see me, that things remain on the old footing.”

He shook his head.

“Hello!” Dave Harney touched his cap and slowed down loose-jointedly. “Sorry you didn’t take my tip? Dogs gone up a dollar a pound since yesterday, and still a-whoopin’. Good-afternoon, Miss Frona, and Mr. Corliss. Goin’ my way?”

“Miss Welse is.” Corliss touched the visor of his cap and half-turned on his heel.

“Where’re you off to?” Dave demanded.

“Got an appointment,” he lied.

“Remember,” Frona called to him, “you must come and see me.”

“Too busy, I’m afraid, just now. Good-by. So long, Dave.”

“Jemimy!” Dave remarked, staring after him; “but he’s a hustler. Always busy — with big things, too. Wonder why he didn’t go in for dogs?”

CHAPTER XV

But Corliss did go back to see her, and before the day was out. A little bitter self-communion had not taken long to show him his childishness. The sting of loss was hard enough, but the thought, now they could be nothing to each other, that her last impressions of him should be bad, hurt almost as much, and in a way, even more. And further, putting all to the side, he was really ashamed. He had thought that he could have taken such a disappointment more manfully, especially since in advance he had not been at all sure of his footing.

So he called upon her, walked with her up to the Barracks, and on the way, with her help, managed to soften the awkwardness which the morning had left between them. He talked reasonably and meekly, which she countenanced, and would have apologized roundly had she not prevented him.

"Not the slightest bit of blame attaches to you," she said. "Had I been in your place, I should probably have done the same and behaved much more outrageously. For you were outrageous, you know."

"But had you been in my place, and I in yours," he answered, with a weak attempt at humor, "there would have been no need."

She smiled, glad that he was feeling less strongly about it.

"But, unhappily, our social wisdom does not permit such a reversal," he added, more with a desire to be saying something.

"Ah!" she laughed. "There's where my Jesuitism comes in. I can rise above our social wisdom."

"You don't mean to say, — that — ?"

"There, shocked as usual! No, I could not be so crude as to speak outright, but I might *finesse*, as you whist-players say. Accomplish the same end, only with greater delicacy. After all, a distinction without a difference."

"Could you?" he asked.

"I know I could, — if the occasion demanded. I am not one to let what I might deem life-happiness slip from me without a struggle. That" (judicially) "occurs only in books and among sentimentalists. As my father always says, I belong to the strugglers and fighters. That which appeared to me great and sacred, that would I battle for, though I brought heaven tumbling about my ears."

"You have made me very happy, Vance," she said at parting by the Barracks gates. "And things shall go along in the same old way. And mind, not a bit less of you than formerly; but, rather, much more."

But Corliss, after several perfunctory visits, forgot the way which led to Jacob Welse's home, and applied himself savagely to his work. He even had the hypocrisy, at times, to felicitate himself upon his escape, and to draw bleak fireside pictures of the dismal future which would have been had he and Frona incompatibly mated. But this was only at times. As a rule, the thought of her made him hungry, in a way akin to physical hunger; and the one thing he found to overcome it was hard work and plenty of it. But even then, what of trail and creek, and camp and survey, he could only get away from her in his waking hours. In his sleep he was ignobly conquered, and Del Bishop, who was with him much, studied his restlessness and gave a ready ear to his mumbled words.

The pocket-miner put two and two together, and made a correct induction from the different little things which came under his notice. But this did not require any great astuteness. The simple fact that he no longer called on Frona was sufficient evidence of an unprospering suit. But Del went a step farther, and drew the corollary that St. Vincent was the cause of it all. Several times he had seen the correspondent with Frona, going one place and another, and was duly incensed thereat.

"I'll fix 'm yet!" he muttered in camp one evening, over on Gold Bottom.

"Whom?" Corliss queried.

"Who? That newspaper man, that's who!"

"What for?"

"Aw — general principles. Why'n't you let me paste 'm that night at the Opera House?"

Corliss laughed at the recollection. "Why did you strike him, Del?"

"General principles," Del snapped back and shut up.

But Del Bishop, for all his punitive spirit, did not neglect the main chance, and on the return trip, when they came to the forks of Eldorado and Bonanza, he called a halt.

"Say, Corliss," he began at once, "d'you know what a hunch is?" His employer nodded his comprehension. "Well, I've got one. I ain't never asked favors of you before, but this once I want you to lay over here till to-morrow. Seems to me my fruit ranch is 'most in sight. I can damn near smell the oranges a-ripenin'."

"Certainly," Corliss agreed. "But better still, I'll run on down to Dawson, and you can come in when you've finished hunching."

"Say!" Del objected. "I said it was a hunch; and I want to ring you in on it, savve? You're all right, and you've learned a hell of a lot out of books. You're a regular high-roller when it comes to the laboratory, and all that; but it takes yours truly to get down and read the face of nature without spectacles. Now I've got a theory — "

Corliss threw up his hands in affected dismay, and the pocket-miner began to grow angry.

"That's right! Laugh! But it's built right up on your own pet theory of erosion and changed riverbeds. And I didn't pocket among the Mexicans two years for nothin'. Where d'you s'pose this Eldorado gold came from? — rough, and no signs of washin'? Eh? There's where you need your spectacles. Books have made you short-sighted. But never mind how. 'Tisn't exactly pockets, neither, but I know what I'm spelling about. I ain't been keepin' tab on traces for my health. I can tell you mining sharps more about the lay of Eldorado Creek in one minute than you could figure out in a month of Sundays. But never mind, no offence. You lay over with me till to-morrow, and you can buy a ranch 'longside of mine, sure." "Well, all right. I can rest up and look over my notes while you're hunting your ancient river-bed."

"Didn't I tell you it was a hunch?" Del reproachfully demanded.

"And haven't I agreed to stop over? What more do you want?"

"To give you a fruit ranch, that's what! Just to go with me and nose round a bit, that's all."

"I do not want any of your impossible fruit ranches. I'm tired and worried; can't you leave me alone? I think I am more than fair when I humor you to the extent of stopping over. You may waste your time nosing around, but I shall stay in camp. Understand?"

"Burn my body, but you're grateful! By the Jumpin' Methuselah, I'll quit my job in two minutes if you don't fire me. Me a-layin' 'wake nights and workin' up my theory, and calculatin' on lettin' you in, and you a-snorin' and Frona-this and Frona-that — "

"That'll do! Stop it!"

"The hell it will! If I didn't know more about gold-mining than you do about courtin' — "

Corliss sprang at him, but Del dodged to one side and put up his fists. Then he ducked a wild right and left swing and side-stepped his way into firmer footing on the hard trail.

"Hold on a moment," he cried, as Corliss made to come at him again. "Just a second. If I lick you, will you come up the hillside with me?"

"Yes."

"And if I don't, you can fire me. That's fair. Come on."

Vance had no show whatever, as Del well knew, who played with him, feinting, attacking, retreating, dazzling, and disappearing every now and again out of his field of vision in a most exasperating way. As Vance speedily discovered, he possessed very little correlation between mind and body, and the next thing he discovered was that he was lying in the snow and slowly coming back to his senses.

"How — how did you do it?" he stammered to the pocket-miner, who had his head on his knee and was rubbing his forehead with snow.

"Oh, you'll do!" Del laughed, helping him limply to his feet. "You're the right stuff. I'll show you some time. You've got lots to learn yet what you won't find in books. But not now. We've got to wade in and make camp, then you're comin' up the hill with me."

"Hee! hee!" he chuckled later, as they fitted the pipe of the Yukon stove. "Slow sighted and short. Couldn't follow me, eh? But I'll show you some time, oh, I'll show you all right, all right!"

"Grab an axe an' come on," he commanded when the camp was completed.

He led the way up Eldorado, borrowed a pick, shovel, and pan at a cabin, and headed up among the benches near the mouth of French Creek. Vance, though feeling somewhat sore, was laughing at himself by this time and enjoying the situation. He exaggerated the humility with which he walked at the heel of his conqueror, while the extravagant servility which marked his obedience to his hired man made that individual grin.

"You'll do. You've got the makin's in you!" Del threw down the tools and scanned the run of the snow-surface carefully. "Here, take the axe, shinny up the hill, and lug me down some *skookum* dry wood."

By the time Corliss returned with the last load of wood, the pocket-miner had cleared away the snow and moss in divers spots, and formed, in general design, a rude cross.

"Cuttin' her both ways," he explained. "Mebbe I'll hit her here, or over there, or up above; but if there's anything in the hunch, this is the place. Bedrock dips in above, and it's deep there and most likely richer, but too much work. This is the rim of the bench. Can't be more'n a couple of feet down. All we want is indications; afterwards we can tap in from the side."

As he talked, he started fires here and there on the uncovered spaces. "But look here, Corliss, I want you to mind this ain't pocketin'. This is just plain ordinary 'prentice work; but pocketin'" — he straightened up his back and spoke reverently — "but pocketin' is the deepest science and the finest art. Delicate to a hair's-breadth, hand and eye true and steady as steel. When you've got to burn your pan blue-black twice a day, and out of a shovelful of gravel wash down to the one wee speck of flour gold, — why, that's washin', that's what it is. Tell you what, I'd sooner follow a pocket than eat."

"And you would sooner fight than do either." Bishop stopped to consider. He weighed himself with care equal to that of retaining the one wee speck of flour gold. "No, I wouldn't, neither. I'd take pocketin' in mine every time. It's as bad as dope; Corliss, sure. If it once gets a-hold of you, you're a goner. You'll never shake it. Look at me! And talk about pipe-dreams; they can't burn a candle 'longside of it."

He walked over and kicked one of the fires apart. Then he lifted the pick, and the steel point drove in and stopped with a metallic clang, as though brought up by solid cement.

"Ain't thawed two inches," he muttered, stooping down and groping with his fingers in the wet muck. The blades of last year's grass had been burned away, but he managed to gather up and tear away a handful of the roots.

"Hell!"

"What's the matter?" Corliss asked.

"Hell!" he repeated in a passionless way, knocking the dirt-covered roots against the pan.

Corliss went over and stooped to closer inspection. "Hold on!" he cried, picking up two or three grimy bits of dirt and rubbing them with his fingers. A bright yellow flashed forth.

"Hell!" the pocket-miner reiterated tonelessly. "First rattle out the box. Begins at the grass roots and goes all the way down."

Head turned to the side and up, eyes closed, nostrils distended and quivering, he rose suddenly to his feet and sniffed the air. Corliss looked up wonderingly.

“Huh!” the pocket-miner grunted. Then he drew a deep breath. “Can’t you smell them oranges?”

CHAPTER XVI

The stampede to French Hill was on by the beginning of Christmas week. Corliss and Bishop had been in no hurry to record for they looked the ground over carefully before blazing their stakes, and let a few close friends into the secret, — Harney, Welse, Trethaway, a Dutch *chechaquo* who had forfeited both feet to the frost, a couple of the mounted police, an old pal with whom Del had prospected through the Black Hills Country, the washerwoman at the Forks, and last, and notably, Lucile. Corliss was responsible for her getting in on the lay, and he drove and marked her stakes himself, though it fell to the colonel to deliver the invitation to her to come and be rich.

In accordance with the custom of the country, those thus benefited offered to sign over half-interests to the two discoverers. Corliss would not tolerate the proposition. Del was similarly minded, though swayed by no ethical reasons. He had enough as it stood. “Got my fruit ranch paid for, double the size I was calculatin’ on,” he explained; “and if I had any more, I wouldn’t know what to do with it, sure.”

After the strike, Corliss took it upon himself as a matter of course to look about for another man; but when he brought a keen-eyed Californian into camp, Del was duly wroth.

“Not on your life,” he stormed.

“But you are rich now,” Vance answered, “and have no need to work.”

“Rich, hell!” the pocket-miner rejoined. “Accordin’ to covenant, you can’t fire me; and I’m goin’ to hold the job down as long as my sweet will’ll let me. Savve?”

On Friday morning, early, all interested parties appeared before the Gold Commissioner to record their claims. The news went abroad immediately. In five minutes the first stampeders were hitting the trail. At the end of half an hour the town was afoot. To prevent mistakes on their property, — jumping, moving of stakes, and mutilation of notices, — Vance and Del, after promptly recording, started to return. But with the government seal attached to their holdings, they took it leisurely, the stampeders sliding past them in a steady stream. Midway, Del chanced to look behind. St. Vincent was in sight, footing it at a lively pace, the regulation stampeding pack on his shoulders. The trail made a sharp bend at that place, and with the exception of the three of them no one was in sight.

"Don't speak to me. Don't recognize me," Del cautioned sharply, as he spoke, buttoning his nose-strap across his face, which served to quite hide his identity. "There's a water-hole over there. Get down on your belly and make a blind at gettin' a drink. Then go on by your lonely to the claims; I've business of my own to handle. And for the love of your bother don't say a word to me or to the skunk. Don't let 'm see your face."

Corliss obeyed wonderingly, stepping aside from the beaten path, lying down in the snow, and dipping into the water-hole with an empty condensed milk-can. Bishop bent on one knee and stooped as though fastening his moccasin. Just as St. Vincent came up with him he finished tying the knot, and started forward with the feverish haste of a man trying to make up for lost time.

"I say, hold on, my man," the correspondent called out to him.

Bishop shot a hurried glance at him and pressed on. St. Vincent broke into a run till they were side by side again.

"Is this the way — "

"To the benches of French Hill?" Del snapped him short. "Betcher your life. That's the way I'm headin'. So long."

He ploughed forward at a tremendous rate, and the correspondent, half-running, swung in behind with the evident intention of taking the pace. Corliss, still in the dark, lifted his head and watched them go; but when he saw the pocket-miner swerve abruptly to the right and take the trail up Adams Creek, the light dawned upon him and he laughed softly to himself.

Late that night Del arrived in camp on Eldorado exhausted but jubilant.

"Didn't do a thing to him," he cried before he was half inside the tent-flaps. "Gimme a bite to eat" (grabbing at the teapot and running a hot flood down his throat), — "cookin'-fat, slush, old moccasins, candle-ends, anything!"

Then he collapsed upon the blankets and fell to rubbing his stiff leg-muscles while Corliss fried bacon and dished up the beans.

"What about 'm?" he exulted between mouthfuls. "Well, you can stack your chips that he didn't get in on the French Hill benches. *How far is it, my man*?" (in the well-mimicked, patronizing tones of St. Vincent). "*How far is it*?" with the patronage left out. "*How far to French Hill*?" weakly. "*How* *far do you think it is*?" very weakly, with a tremolo which hinted of repressed tears. "*How far* — "

The pocket-miner burst into roars of laughter, which were choked by a misdirected flood of tea, and which left him coughing and speechless.

"Where'd I leave 'm?" when he had recovered. "Over on the divide to Indian River, winded, plum-beaten, done for. Just about able to crawl into the nearest camp, and that's about all. I've covered fifty stiff miles myself, so here's for bed. Good-night. Don't call me in the mornin'."

He turned into the blankets all-standing, and as he dozed off Vance could hear him muttering, "*How far is it, my man*? *I say, how far is it*?"

Regarding Lucile, Corliss was disappointed. "I confess I cannot understand her," he said to Colonel Trethaway. "I thought her bench claim would make her independent of the Opera House."

"You can't get a dump out in a day," the colonel interposed.

"But you can mortgage the dirt in the ground when it prospects as hers does. Yet I took that into consideration, and offered to advance her a few thousand, non-interest bearing, and she declined. Said she didn't need it, — in fact, was really grateful; thanked me, and said that any time I was short to come and see her."

Trethaway smiled and played with his watch-chain. "What would you? Life, even here, certainly means more to you and me than a bit of grub, a piece of blanket, and a Yukon stove. She is as gregarious as the rest of us, and probably a little more so. Suppose you cut her off from the Opera House, — what then? May she go up to the Barracks and consort with the captain's lady, make social calls on Mrs. Schoville, or chum with Frona? Don't you see? Will you escort her, in daylight, down the public street?"

"Will you?" Vance demanded.

"Ay," the colonel replied, unhesitatingly, "and with pleasure."

"And so will I; but — " He paused and gazed gloomily into the fire. "But see how she is going on with St. Vincent. As thick as thieves they are, and always together."

"Puzzles me," Trethaway admitted. "I can grasp St. Vincent's side of it. Many irons in the fire, and Lucile owns a bench claim on the second tier of French Hill. Mark me, Corliss, we can tell infallibly the day that Frona consents to go to his bed and board, — if she ever does consent."

"And that will be?"

"The day St. Vincent breaks with Lucile."

Corliss pondered, and the colonel went on.

"But I can't grasp Lucile's side of it. What she can see in St. Vincent — "

"Her taste is no worse than — than that of the rest of the women," Vance broke in hotly. "I am sure that — "

"Frona could not display poor taste, eh?" Corliss turned on his heel and walked out, and left Colonel Trethaway smiling grimly.

Vance Corliss never knew how many people, directly and indirectly, had his cause at heart that Christmas week. Two men strove in particular, one for him and one for the sake of Frona. Pete Whipple, an old-timer in the land, possessed an Eldorado claim directly beneath French Hill, also a woman of the country for a wife, — a swarthy *breed*, not over pretty, whose Indian mother had mated with a Russian fur-trader some thirty years before at Kutlik on the Great Delta. Bishop went down one Sunday morning to yarn away an hour or so with Whipple, but found the wife alone in the cabin. She talked a bastard English gibberish which was an anguish to hear, so the pocket-miner resolved to smoke a pipe and depart without rudeness. But he got her tongue wagging, and to such an extent that he stopped and smoked many pipes, and whenever she lagged, urged her on again. He grunted and chuckled and swore in undertones while he listened, punctuating her narrative regularly with *hells*! which adequately expressed the many shades of interest he felt.

In the midst of it, the woman fished an ancient leather-bound volume, all scarred and marred, from the bottom of a dilapidated chest, and thereafter it lay on the table between them. Though it remained unopened, she constantly referred to it by look and gesture, and each time she did so a greedy light blazed in Bishop's eyes. At the end, when she could say no more and had repeated herself from two to half a dozen times, he pulled out his sack. Mrs. Whipple set up the gold scales and placed the weights, which he counterbalanced with a hundred dollars' worth of dust. Then he departed up the hill to the tent, hugging the purchase closely, and broke in on Corliss, who sat in the blankets mending moccasins.

"I'll fix 'm yet," Del remarked casually, at the same time patting the book and throwing it down on the bed.

Corliss looked up inquiringly and opened it. The paper was yellow with age and rotten from the weather-wear of trail, while the text was printed in

Russian. “I didn’t know you were a Russian scholar, Del,” he quizzed. “But I can’t read a line of it.”

“Neither can I, more’s the pity; nor does Whipple’s woman savve the lingo. I got it from her. But her old man — he was full Russian, you know — he used to read it aloud to her. But she knows what she knows and what her old man knew, and so do I.”

“And what do the three of you know?”

“Oh, that’s tellin’,” Bishop answered, coyly. “But you wait and watch my smoke, and when you see it risin’, you’ll know, too.”

Matt McCarthy came in over the ice Christmas week, summed up the situation so far as Frona and St. Vincent were concerned, and did not like it. Dave Harney furnished him with full information, to which he added that obtained from Lucile, with whom he was on good terms. Perhaps it was because he received the full benefit of the sum of their prejudice; but no matter how, he at any rate answered roll-call with those who looked upon the correspondent with disfavor. It was impossible for them to tell why they did not approve of the man, but somehow St. Vincent was never much of a success with men. This, in turn, might have been due to the fact that he shone so resplendently with women as to cast his fellows in eclipse; for otherwise, in his intercourse with men, he was all that a man could wish. There was nothing domineering or over-riding about him, while he manifested a good fellowship at least equal to their own.

Yet, having withheld his judgment after listening to Lucile and Harney, Matt McCarthy speedily reached a verdict upon spending an hour with St. Vincent at Jacob Welse’s, — and this in face of the fact that what Lucile had said had been invalidated by Matt’s learning of her intimacy with the man in question. Strong of friendship, quick of heart and hand, Matt did not let the grass grow under his feet. “‘Tis I’ll be takin’ a social fling meself, as befits a mimber iv the noble Eldorado Dynasty,” he explained, and went up the hill to a whist party in Dave Harney’s cabin. To himself he added, “An’ belike, if Satan takes his eye off his own, I’ll put it to that young cub iv his.”

But more than once during the evening he discovered himself challenging his own judgment. Probe as he would with his innocent wit, Matt found himself baffled. St. Vincent certainly rang true. Simple, light-hearted, unaffected, joking and being joked in all good-nature, thoroughly democratic. Matt failed to catch the faintest echo of insincerity.

"May the dogs walk on me grave," he communed with himself while studying a hand which suffered from a plethora of trumps. "Is it the years are tellin', puttin' the frost in me veins and chillin' the blood? A likely lad, an' is it for me to misjudge because his is a-takin' way with the ladies? Just because the swate creatures smile on the lad an' flutter warm at the sight iv him? Bright eyes and brave men! 'Tis the way they have iv lovin' valor. They're shuddered an' shocked at the cruel an' bloody dades iv war, yet who so quick do they lose their hearts to as the brave butcher-bye iv a sodger? Why not? The lad's done brave things, and the girls give him the warm soft smile. Small reason, that, for me to be callin' him the devil's own cub. Out upon ye, Matt McCarthy, for a crusty old sour-dough, with vitals frozen an' summer gone from yer heart! 'Tis an ossification ye've become! But bide a wee, Matt, bide a wee," he supplemented. "Wait till ye've felt the fale iv his flesh."

The opportunity came shortly, when St. Vincent, with Frona opposite, swept in the full thirteen tricks.

"A rampse!" Matt cried. "Vincent, me lad, a rampse! Yer hand on it, me brave!"

It was a stout grip, neither warm nor clammy, but Matt shook his head dubiously. "What's the good iv botherin'?" he muttered to himself as he shuffled the cards for the next deal. "Ye old fool! Find out first how Frona darlin' stands, an' if it's pat she is, thin 'tis time for doin'."

"Oh, McCarthy's all hunky," Dave Harney assured them later on, coming to the rescue of St. Vincent, who was getting the rough side of the Irishman's wit. The evening was over and the company was putting on its wraps and mittens. "Didn't tell you 'bout his visit to the cathedral, did he, when he was on the Outside? Well, it was suthin' like this, ez he was explainin' it to me. He went to the cathedral durin' service, an' took in the priests and choir-boys in their surplices, — *parkas*, he called 'em, — an' watched the burnin' of the holy incense. 'An' do ye know, Dave, he sez to me, 'they got in an' made a smudge, and there wa'n't a darned mosquito in sight.'"

"True, ivery word iv it." Matt unblushingly fathered Harney's yarn. "An' did ye niver hear tell iv the time Dave an' me got drunk on condensed milk?"

"Oh! Horrors!" cried Mrs. Schoville. "But how? Do tell us."

"'Twas durin' the time iv the candle famine at Forty Mile. Cold snap on, an' Dave slides into me shack to pass the time o' day, and glues his eyes on me case iv condensed milk. 'How'd ye like a sip iv Moran's good whiskey?' he sez, eyin' the case iv milk the while. I confiss me mouth went wet at the naked thought iv it. 'But what's the use iv likin'?' sez I, with me sack bulgin' with emptiness.' 'Candles worth tin dollars the dozen,' sez he, 'a dollar apiece. Will ye give six cans iv milk for a bottle iv the old stuff?' 'How'll ye do it?' sez I. 'Trust me,' sez he. 'Give me the cans. 'Tis cold out iv doors, an' I've a pair iv candle-moulds.'

"An' it's the sacred truth I'm tellin' ye all, an' if ye run across Bill Moran he'll back me word; for what does Dave Harney do but lug off me six cans, freeze the milk into his candle-moulds, an' trade them in to bill Moran for a bottle iv tanglefoot!"

As soon as he could be heard through the laughter, Harney raised his voice. "It's true, as McCarthy tells, but he's only told you the half. Can't you guess the rest, Matt?"

Matt shook his head.

"Bein' short on milk myself, an' not over much sugar, I doctored three of your cans with water, which went to make the candles. An' by the bye, I had milk in my coffee for a month to come."

"It's on me, Dave," McCarthy admitted. "'Tis only that yer me host, or I'd be shockin' the ladies with yer nortorious disgraces. But I'll lave ye live this time, Dave. Come, spade the partin' guests; we must be movin'."

"No ye don't, ye young laddy-buck," he interposed, as St. Vincent started to take Frona down the hill, "'Tis her foster-daddy sees her home this night."

McCarthy laughed in his silent way and offered his arm to Frona, while St. Vincent joined in the laugh against himself, dropped back, and joined Miss Mortimer and Baron Courbertin.

"What's this I'm hearin' about you an' Vincent?" Matt bluntly asked as soon as they had drawn apart from the others.

He looked at her with his keen gray eyes, but she returned the look quite as keenly.

"How should I know what you have been hearing?" she countered.

"Whin the talk goes round iv a maid an' a man, the one pretty an' the other not unhandsome, both young an' neither married, does it 'token aught but the one thing?"

"Yes?"

"An' the one thing the greatest thing in all the world."

"Well?" Frona was the least bit angry, and did not feel inclined to help him.

"Marriage, iv course," he blurted out. "'Tis said it looks that way with the pair of ye."

"But is it said that it *is* that way?"

"Isn't the looks iv it enough ?" he demanded.

"No; and you are old enough to know better. Mr. St. Vincent and I — we enjoy each other as friends, that is all. But suppose it is as you say, what of it?"

"Well," McCarthy deliberated, "there's other talk goes round, 'Tis said Vincent is over-thick with a jade down in the town — Lucile, they speak iv her."

"All of which signifies?"

She waited, and McCarthy watched her dumbly.

"I know Lucile, and I like her," Frona continued, filling the gap of his silence, and ostentatiously manoeuvring to help him on. "Do you know her? Don't you like her?"

Matt started to speak, cleared his throat, and halted. At last, in desperation, he blurted out, "For two cents, Frona, I'd lay ye acrost me knee."

She laughed. "You don't dare. I'm not running barelegged at Dyea."

"Now don't be tasin'," he blarneyed.

"I'm not teasing. Don't you like her? — Lucile?"

"An' what iv it?" he challenged, brazenly.

"Just what I asked, — what of it?"

"Thin I'll tell ye in plain words from a man old enough to be yer father. 'Tis undacent, damnably undacent, for a man to kape company with a good young girl — "

"Thank you," she laughed, dropping a courtesy. Then she added, half in bitterness, "There have been others who — "

"Name me the man!" he cried hotly.

"There, there, go on. You were saying?"

"That it's a crying shame for a man to kape company with — with you, an' at the same time be chake by jowl with a woman iv her stamp."

"And why?"

"To come drippin' from the muck to dirty yer claneness! An' ye can ask why?"

"But wait, Matt, wait a moment. Granting your premises — "

"Little I know iv primises," he growled. "'Tis facts I'm dalin' with."

Frona bit her lip. "Never mind. Have it as you will; but let me go on and I will deal with facts, too. When did you last see Lucile?"

"An' why are ye askin'?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"Never mind why. The fact."

"Well, thin, the fore part iv last night, an' much good may it do ye."

"And danced with her?"

"A rollickin' Virginia reel, an' not sayin' a word iv a quadrille or so. Tis at square dances I excel meself."

Frona walked on in a simulated brown study, no sound going up from the twain save the complaint of the snow from under their moccasins.

"Well, thin?" he questioned, uneasily.

"An' what iv it?" he insisted after another silence.

"Oh, nothing," she answered. "I was just wondering which was the muckiest, Mr. St. Vincent or you — or myself, with whom you have both been cheek by jowl."

Now, McCarthy was unversed in the virtues of social wisdom, and, though he felt somehow the error of her position, he could not put it into definite thought; so he steered wisely, if weakly, out of danger.

"It's gettin' mad ye are with yer old Matt," he insinuated, "who has yer own good at heart, an' because iv it makes a fool iv himself."

"No, I'm not."

"But ye are."

"There!" leaning swiftly to him and kissing him. "How could I remember the Dyea days and be angry?"

"Ah, Frona darlin', well may ye say it. I'm the dust iv the dirt under yer feet, an' ye may walk on me — anything save get mad. I cud die for ye, swing for ye, to make ye happy. I cud kill the man that gave ye sorrow, were it but a thimbleful, an' go plump into hell with a smile on me face an' joy in me heart."

They had halted before her door, and she pressed his arm gratefully. "I am not angry, Matt. But with the exception of my father you are the only person I would have permitted to talk to me about this — this affair in the way you have. And though I like you, Matt, love you better than ever, I shall nevertheless be very angry if you mention it again. You have no right. It is something that concerns me alone. And it is wrong of you — ”

“To prevint ye walkin’ blind into danger?”

“If you wish to put it that way, yes.”

He growled deep down in his throat.

“What is it you are saying?” she asked.

“That ye may shut me mouth, but that ye can’t bind me arm.”

“But you mustn’t, Matt, dear, you mustn’t.”

Again he answered with a subterranean murmur.

“And I want you to promise me, now, that you will not interfere in my life that way, by word or deed.”

“I’ll not promise.”

“But you must.”

“I’ll not. Further, it’s gettin’ cold on the stoop, an’ ye’ll be frostin’ yer toes, the pink little toes I fished splinters out iv at Dyea. So it’s in with ye, Frona girl, an’ good-night.”

He thrust her inside and departed. When he reached the corner he stopped suddenly and regarded his shadow on the snow. “Matt McCarthy, yer a damned fool! Who iver heard iv a Welse not knowin’ their own mind? As though ye’d niver had dalin’s with the stiff-necked breed, ye calamitous son iv misfortune!”

Then he went his way, still growling deeply, and at every growl the curious wolf-dog at his heels bristled and bared its fangs.

CHAPTER XVII

"Tired?"

Jacob Welse put both hands on Frona's shoulders, and his eyes spoke the love his stiff tongue could not compass. The tree and the excitement and the pleasure were over with, a score or so of children had gone home frostily happy across the snow, the last guest had departed, and Christmas Eve and Christmas Day were blending into one.

She returned his fondness with glad-eyed interest, and they dropped into huge comfortable chairs on either side the fireplace, in which the back-log was falling to ruddy ruin.

"And this time next year?" He put the question seemingly to the glowing log, and, as if in ominous foreshadow, it flared brightly and crumbled away in a burst of sparks.

"It is marvellous," he went on, dismissing the future in an effort to shake himself into a wholesomer frame of mind. "It has been one long continuous miracle, the last few months, since you have been with me. We have seen very little of each other, you know, since your childhood, and when I think upon it soberly it is hard to realize that you are really mine, sprung from me, bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. As the tangle-haired wild young creature of Dyea, — a healthy, little, natural animal and nothing more, — it required no imagination to accept you as one of the breed of Welse. But as Frona, the woman, as you were to-night, as you are now as I look at you, as you have been since you came down the Yukon, it is hard . . . I cannot realize . . . I . . ." He faltered and threw up his hands helplessly. "I almost wish that I had given you no education, that I had kept you with me, faring with me, adventuring with me, achieving with me, and failing with me. I would have known you, now, as we sit by the fire. As it is, I do not. To that which I did know there has been added, somehow (what shall I call it?), a subtlety; complexity, — favorite words of yours, — which is beyond me.

"No." He waved the speech abruptly from her lips. She came over and knelt at his feet, resting her head on his knee and clasping his hand in firm sympathy. "No, that is not true. Those are not the words. I cannot find them. I fail to say what I feel. Let me try again. Underneath all you do carry the stamp of the breed. I knew I risked the loss of that when I sent you away, but I had faith in the persistence of the blood and I took the chance; doubted and feared when you were gone; waited and prayed dumbly, and hoped oftentimes hopelessly; and then the day dawned, the day of days! When they said your boat was coming, death rose and walked on the one hand of me, and on the other life everlasting. *Made or marred; made or marred*, — the words rang through my brain till they maddened me. Would the Welse remain the Welse? Would the blood persist? Would the young shoot rise straight and tall and strong, green with sap and fresh and vigorous? Or would it droop limp and lifeless, withered by the heats of the world other than the little simple, natural Dyea world?

"It was the day of days, and yet it was a lingering, watching, waiting tragedy. You know I had lived the years lonely, fought the lone fight, and you, away, the only kin. If it had failed . . . But your boat shot from the bluffs into the open, and I was half-afraid to look. Men have never called me coward, but I was nearer the coward then than ever and all before. Ay, that moment I had faced death easier. And it was foolish, absurd. How could I know whether it was for good or ill when you drifted a distant speck on the river? Still, I looked, and the miracle began, for I did know. You stood at the steering-sweep. You were a Welse. It seems so little; in truth it meant so much. It was not to be expected of a mere woman, but of a Welse, yes. And when Bishop went over the side, and you gripped the situation as imperatively as the sweep, and your voice rang out, and the Siwashes bent their backs to your will, — then was it the day of days."

"I tried always, and remembered," Frona whispered. She crept up softly till her arm was about his neck and her head against his breast. He rested one arm lightly on her body, and poured her bright hair again and again from his hand in glistening waves.

"As I said, the stamp of the breed was unmarred, but there was yet a difference. There is a difference. I have watched it, studied it, tried to make it out. I have sat at table, proud by the side of you, but dwarfed. When you talked of little things I was large enough to follow; when of big things, too small. I knew you, had my hand on you, when *presto*! and you were away, gone — I was lost. He is a fool who knows not his own ignorance; I was wise enough to know mine. Art, poetry, music, — what do I know of them? And they were the great things, are the great things to you, mean more to you than the little things I may comprehend. And I had hoped, blindly, foolishly, that we might be one in the spirit as well as the one flesh. It has been bitter, but I have faced it, and understand. But to see my own red blood get away from me, elude me, rise above me! It stuns. God! I have heard you read from your Browning — no, no; do not speak — and watched the play of your face, the uplift and the passion of it, and all the while the words droning in upon me, meaningless, musical, maddening. And Mrs. Schoville sitting there, nursing an expression of idiotic ecstasy, and understanding no more than I. I could have strangled her.

“Why, I have stolen away, at night, with your Browning, and locked myself in like a thief in fear. The text was senseless, I have beaten my head with my fist like a wild man, to try and knock some comprehension into it. For my life had worked itself out along one set groove, deep and narrow. I was in the rut. I had done those things which came to my hand and done them well; but the time was past; I could not turn my hand anew. I, who am strong and dominant, who have played large with destiny, who could buy body and soul a thousand painters and versifiers, was baffled by a few paltry cents’ worth of printed paper!”

He spilled her hair for a moment’s silence.

“To come back. I had attempted the impossible, gambled against the inevitable. I had sent you from me to get that which I had not, dreaming that we would still be one. As though two could be added to two and still remain two. So, to sum up, the breed still holds, but you have learned an alien tongue. When you speak it I am deaf. And bitterest of all, I know that the new tongue is the greater. I do not know why I have said all this, made my confession of weakness — ”

“Oh, father mine, greatest of men!” She raised her head and laughed into his eyes, the while brushing back the thick iron-gray hair which thatched the dome of his forehead. “You, who have wrestled more mightily, done greater things than these painters and versifiers. You who know so well the law of change. Might not the same plaint fall from your father’s lips were he to sit now beside you and look upon your work and you?”

“Yes, yes. I have said that I understand. Do not let us discuss it . . . a moment’s weakness. My father was a great man.”

“And so mine.”

“A struggler to the end of his days. He fought the great lone fight — ”

“And so mine.”

“And died fighting.”

“And so shall mine. So shall we all, we Welses.”

He shook her playfully, in token of returning spirits. “But I intend to sell out, — mines, Company, everything, — and study Browning.”

“Still the fight. You can’t discount the blood, father.”

“Why were you not a boy?” he demanded, abruptly. “You would have been a splendid one. As it is, a woman, made to be the delight of some man, you must pass from me — to-morrow, next day, this time next year, who knows how soon? Ah? now I know the direction my thought has been trending. Just as I know you do, so do I recognize the inevitableness of it and the justness. But the man, Frona, the man?”

“Don’t,” she demurred. “Tell me of your father’s fight, the last fight, the great lone fight at Treasure City. Ten to one it was, and well fought. Tell me.”

“No, Frona. Do you realize that for the first time in our lives we talk together seriously, as father and daughter, — for the first time? You have had no mother to advise; no father, for I trusted the blood, and wisely, and let you go. But there comes a time when the mother’s counsel is needed, and you, you who never knew one?”

Frona yielded, in instant recognition, and waiting, snuggled more closely to him.

“This man, St. Vincent — how is it between you?”

“I . . . I do not know. How do you mean?”

“Remember always, Frona, that you have free choice, yours is the last word. Still, I would like to understand. I could . . . perhaps . . . I might be able to suggest. But nothing more. Still, a suggestion . . .”

There was something inexpressibly sacred about it, yet she found herself tongue-tied. Instead of the one definite thing to say, a muddle of ideas fluttered in her brain. After all, could he understand? Was there not a difference which prevented him from comprehending the motives which, for her, were impelling? For all her harking back to the primitive and stout defence of its sanity and truth, did his native philosophy give him the same code which she drew from her acquired philosophy? Then she stood aside and regarded herself and the queries she put, and drew apart from them, for they breathed of treason.

“There is nothing between us, father,” she spoke up resolutely. “Mr. St. Vincent has said nothing, nothing. We are good friends, we like each other, we are very good friends. I think that is all.”

"But you like each other; you like him. Is it in the way a woman must like a man before she can honestly share her life with him, lose herself in him? Do you feel with Ruth, so that when the time comes you can say, 'Thy people are my people, and thy God my God'?"

"N —-o. It may be; but I cannot, dare not face it, say it or not say it, think it or not think it — now. It is the great affirmation. When it comes it must come, no one may know how or why, in a great white flash, like a revelation, hiding nothing, revealing everything in dazzling, blinding truth. At least I so imagine."

Jacob Welse nodded his head with the slow meditation of one who understands, yet stops to ponder and weigh again.

"But why have you asked, father? Why has Mr. St. Vincent been raised? I have been friends with other men."

"But I have not felt about other men as I do of St. Vincent. We may be truthful, you and I, and forgive the pain we give each other. My opinion counts for no more than another's. Fallibility is the commonest of curses. Nor can I explain why I feel as I do — I oppose much in the way you expect to when your great white flash sears your eyes. But, in a word, I do not like St. Vincent."

"A very common judgment of him among the men," Frona interposed, driven irresistibly to the defensive.

"Such consensus of opinion only makes my position stronger," he returned, but not disputatively. "Yet I must remember that I look upon him as men look. His popularity with women must proceed from the fact that women look differently than men, just as women do differ physically and spiritually from men. It is deep, too deep for me to explain. I but follow my nature and try to be just."

"But have you nothing more definite?" she asked, groping for better comprehension of his attitude. "Can you not put into some sort of coherence some one certain thing of the things you feel?"

"I hardly dare. Intuitions can rarely be expressed in terms of thought. But let me try. We Welses have never known a coward. And where cowardice is, nothing can endure. It is like building on sand, or like a vile disease which rots and rots and we know not when it may break forth."

"But it seems to me that Mr. St. Vincent is the last man in the world with whom cowardice may be associated. I cannot conceive of him in that light."

The distress in her face hurt him. “I know nothing against St. Vincent. There is no evidence to show that he is anything but what he appears. Still, I cannot help feeling it, in my fallible human way. Yet there is one thing I have heard, a sordid pot-house brawl in the Opera House. Mind you, Frona, I say nothing against the brawl or the place, — men are men, but it is said that he did not act as a man ought that night.”

“But as you say, father, men are men. We would like to have them other than they are, for the world surely would be better; but we must take them as they are. Lucile — ”

“No, no; you misunderstand. I did not refer to her, but to the fight.
He did not . . . he was cowardly.”

“But as you say, it is *said*. He told me about it, not long afterwards, and I do not think he would have dared had there been anything — ”

“But I do not make it as a charge,” Jacob Welse hastily broke in. “Merely hearsay, and the prejudice of the men would be sufficient to account for the tale. And it has no bearing, anyway. I should not have brought it up, for I have known good men funk in my time — buck fever, as it were. And now let us dismiss it all from our minds. I merely wished to suggest, and I suppose I have bungled. But understand this, Frona,” turning her face up to his, “understand above all things and in spite of them, first, last, and always, that you are my daughter, and that I believe your life is sacredly yours, not mine, yours to deal with and to make or mar. Your life is yours to live, and in so far that I influence it you will not have lived your life, nor would your life have been yours. Nor would you have been a Welse, for there was never a Welse yet who suffered dictation. They died first, or went away to pioneer on the edge of things.

“Why, if you thought the dance house the proper or natural medium for self-expression, I might be sad, but to-morrow I would sanction your going down to the Opera House. It would be unwise to stop you, and, further, it is not our way. The Welses have ever stood by, in many a lost cause and forlorn hope, knee to knee and shoulder to shoulder. Conventions are worthless for such as we. They are for the swine who without them would wallow deeper. The weak must obey or be crushed; not so with the strong. The mass is nothing; the individual everything; and it is the individual, always, that rules the mass and gives the law. A fig for what the world says! If the Welse should procreate a bastard line this day, it would be the way of the Welse, and you would be a daughter of the Welse, and in the face of hell and heaven, of God himself, we would stand together, we of the one blood, Frona, you and I."

"You are larger than I," she whispered, kissing his forehead, and the caress of her lips seemed to him the soft impact of a leaf falling through the still autumn air.

And as the heat of the room ebbed away, he told of her foremother and of his, and of the sturdy Welse who fought the great lone fight, and died, fighting, at Treasure City.

CHAPTER XVIII

The “Doll’s House” was a success. Mrs. Schoville ecstasized over it in terms so immeasurable, so unqualifiable, that Jacob Welse, standing near, bent a glittering gaze upon her plump white throat and unconsciously clutched and closed his hand on an invisible windpipe. Dave Harney proclaimed its excellence effusively, though he questioned the soundness of Nora’s philosophy and swore by his Puritan gods that Torvald was the longest-eared Jack in two hemispheres. Even Miss Mortimer, antagonistic as she was to the whole school, conceded that the players had redeemed it; while Matt McCarthy announced that he didn’t blame Nora darlin’ the least bit, though he told the Gold Commissioner privately that a song or so and a skirt dance wouldn’t have hurt the performance.

“Iv course the Nora girl was right,” he insisted to Harney, both of whom were walking on the heels of Frona and St. Vincent. “I’d be seein’ — ”

“Rubber — ”

“Rubber yer gran’mother!” Matt wrathfully exclaimed.

“Ez I was sayin’,” Harney continued, imperturbably, “rubber boots is goin’ to go sky-high ‘bout the time of wash-up. Three ounces the pair, an’ you kin put your chips on that for a high card. You kin gather ‘em in now for an ounce a pair and clear two on the deal. A cinch, Matt, a dead open an’ shut.”

“The devil take you an’ yer cinches! It’s Nora darlin’ I have in me mind the while.”

They bade good-by to Frona and St. Vincent and went off disputing under the stars in the direction of the Opera House.

Gregory St. Vincent heaved an audible sigh. “At last.”

“At last what?” Frona asked, incuriously.

“At last the first opportunity for me to tell you how well you did. You carried off the final scene wonderfully; so well that it seemed you were really passing out of my life forever.”

“What a misfortune!”

“It was terrible.”

“No.”

“But, yes. I took the whole condition upon myself. You were not Nora, you were Frona; nor I Torvald, but Gregory. When you made your exit, capped and jacketed and travelling-bag in hand, it seemed I could not possibly stay and finish my lines. And when the door slammed and you were gone, the only thing that saved me was the curtain. It brought me to myself, or else I would have rushed after you in the face of the audience."

"It is strange how a simulated part may react upon one," Frona speculated.

"Or rather?" St. Vincent suggested.

Frona made no answer, and they walked on without speech. She was still under the spell of the evening, and the exaltation which had come to her as Nora had not yet departed. Besides, she read between the lines of St. Vincent's conversation, and was oppressed by the timidity which comes over woman when she faces man on the verge of the greater intimacy.

It was a clear, cold night, not over-cold, — not more than forty below, — and the land was bathed in a soft, diffused flood of light which found its source not in the stars, nor yet in the moon, which was somewhere over on the other side of the world. From the south-east to the northwest a pale-greenish glow fringed the rim of the heavens, and it was from this the dim radiance was exhaled.

Suddenly, like the ray of a search-light, a band of white light ploughed overhead. Night turned to ghostly day on the instant, then blacker night descended. But to the southeast a noiseless commotion was apparent. The glowing greenish gauze was in a ferment, bubbling, uprearing, downfalling, and tentatively thrusting huge bodiless hands into the upper ether. Once more a cyclopean rocket twisted its fiery way across the sky, from horizon to zenith, and on, and on, in tremendous flight, to horizon again. But the span could not hold, and in its wake the black night brooded. And yet again, broader, stronger, deeper, lavishly spilling streamers to right and left, it flaunted the midmost zenith with its gorgeous flare, and passed on and down to the further edge of the world. Heaven was bridged at last, and the bridge endured!

At this flaming triumph the silence of earth was broken, and ten thousand wolf-dogs, in long-drawn unisoned howls, sobbed their dismay and grief. Frona shivered, and St. Vincent passed his arm about her waist. The woman in her was aware of the touch of man, and of a slight tingling thrill of vague delight; but she made no resistance. And as the wolf-dogs mourned at her feet and the aurora wantoned overhead, she felt herself drawn against him closely.

“Need I tell my story?” he whispered.

She drooped her head in tired content on his shoulder, and together they watched the burning vault wherein the stars dimmed and vanished. Ebbing, flowing, pulsing to some tremendous rhythm, the prism colors hurled themselves in luminous deluge across the firmament. Then the canopy of heaven became a mighty loom, wherein imperial purple and deep sea-green blended, wove, and interwove, with blazing woof and flashing warp, till the most delicate of tulles, fluorescent and bewildering, was daintily and airily shaken in the face of the astonished night.

Without warning the span was sundered by an arrogant arm of black. The arch dissolved in blushing confusion. Chasms of blackness yawned, grew, and rushed together. Broken masses of strayed color and fading fire stole timidly towards the sky-line. Then the dome of night towered imponderable, immense, and the stars came back one by one, and the wolf-dogs mourned anew.

“I can offer you so little, dear,” the man said with a slightly perceptible bitterness. “The precarious fortunes of a gypsy wanderer.”

And the woman, placing his hand and pressing it against her heart, said, as a great woman had said before her, “A tent and a crust of bread with you, Richard.”

CHAPTER XIX

How-ha was only an Indian woman, bred of a long line of fish-eating, meat-rending carnivores, and her ethics were as crude and simple as her blood. But long contact with the whites had given her an insight into their way of looking at things, and though she grunted contemptuously in her secret soul, she none the less understood their way perfectly. Ten years previous she had cooked for Jacob Welse, and served him in one fashion or another ever since; and when on a dreary January morning she opened the front door in response to the deep-tongued knocker, even her stolid presence was shaken as she recognized the visitor. Not that the average man or woman would have so recognized. But How-ha's faculties of observing and remembering details had been developed in a hard school where death dealt his blow to the lax and life saluted the vigilant.

How-ha looked up and down the woman who stood before her. Through the heavy veil she could barely distinguish the flash of the eyes, while the hood of the *parka* effectually concealed the hair, and the *parka* proper the particular outlines of the body. But How-ha paused and looked again. There was something familiar in the vague general outline. She quested back to the shrouded head again, and knew the unmistakable poise. Then How-ha's eyes went blear as she traversed the simple windings of her own brain, inspecting the bare shelves taciturnly stored with the impressions of a meagre life. No disorder; no confused mingling of records; no devious and interminable impress of complex emotions, tangled theories, and bewildering abstractions — nothing but simple facts, neatly classified and conveniently collated. Unerringly from the stores of the past she picked and chose and put together in the instant present, till obscurity dropped from the woman before her, and she knew her, word and deed and look and history.

"Much better you go 'way quickety-quick," How-ha informed her.

"Miss Welse. I wish to see her."

The strange woman spoke in firm, even tones which betokened the will behind, but which failed to move How-ha.

"Much better you go," she repeated, stolidly.

"Here, take this to Frona Welse, and — ah! would you!" (thrusting her knee between the door and jamb) "and leave the door open."

How-ha scowled, but took the note; for she could not shake off the grip of the ten years of servitude to the superior race.

May I see you?

LUCILE.

So the note ran. Frona glanced up expectantly at the Indian woman.

“Um kick toes outside,” How-ha explained. “Me tell um go ‘way quickety-quick? Eh? You t’ink yes? Um no good. Um — ”

“No. Take her,” — Frona was thinking quickly, — ”no; bring her up here.”

“Much better — ”

“Go!”

How-ha grunted, and yielded up the obedience she could not withhold; though, as she went down the stairs to the door, in a tenebrous, glimmering way she wondered that the accident of white skin or swart made master or servant as the case might be.

In the one sweep of vision, Lucile took in Frona smiling with extended hand in the foreground, the dainty dressing-table, the simple finery, the thousand girlish evidences; and with the sweet wholesomeness of it pervading her nostrils, her own girlhood rose up and smote her. Then she turned a bleak eye and cold ear on outward things.

“I am glad you came,” Frona was saying. “I have *so* wanted to see you again, and — but do get that heavy *parka* off, please. How thick it is, and what splendid fur and workmanship!”

“Yes, from Siberia.” A present from St. Vincent, Lucile felt like adding, but said instead, “The Siberians have not yet learned to scamp their work, you know.”

She sank down into the low-seated rocker with a native grace which could not escape the beauty-loving eye of the girl, and with proud-poised head and silent tongue listened to Frona as the minutes ticked away, and observed with impersonal amusement Frona’s painful toil at making conversation.

“What has she come for?” Frona asked herself, as she talked on furs and weather and indifferent things.

“If you do not say something, Lucile, I shall get nervous, soon,” she ventured at last in desperation. “Has anything happened?”

Lucile went over to the mirror and picked up, from among the trinkets beneath, a tiny open-work miniature of Frona. “This is you? How old were you?”

“Sixteen.”

“A sylph, but a cold northern one.”

“The blood warms late with us,” Frona reproved; “but is — ”

“None the less warm for that,” Lucile laughed. “And how old are you now?”

“Twenty.”

“Twenty,” Lucile repeated, slowly. “Twenty,” and resumed her seat.
“You are twenty. And I am twenty-four.”

“So little difference as that!”

“But our blood warms early.” Lucile voiced her reproach across the unfathomable gulf which four years could not plumb.

Frona could hardly hide her vexation. Lucile went over and looked at the miniature again and returned.

“What do you think of love?” she asked abruptly, her face softening unheralded into a smile.

“Love?” the girl quavered.

“Yes, love. What do you know about it? What do you think of it?”

A flood of definitions, glowing and rosy, sped to her tongue, but
Frona swept them aside and answered, “Love is immolation.”

“Very good — sacrifice. And, now, does it pay?”

“Yes, it pays. Of course it pays. Who can doubt it?”

Lucile’s eyes twinkled amusedly.

“Why do you smile?” Frona asked.

“Look at me, Frona.” Lucile stood up and her face blazed. “I am twenty-four. Not altogether a fright; not altogether a dunce. I have a heart. I have good red blood and warm. And I have loved. I do not remember the pay. I know only that I have paid.”

“And in the paying were paid,” Frona took up warmly. “The price was the reward. If love be fallible, yet you have loved; you have done, you have served. What more would you?”

“The whelpage love,” Lucile sneered.

“Oh! You are unfair.”

“I do you justice,” Lucile insisted firmly. “You would tell me that you know; that you have gone unveiled and seen clear-eyed; that without placing more than lips to the brim you have divined the taste of the dregs, and that the taste is good. Bah! The whelpage love! And, oh, Frona, I know; you are full womanly and broad, and lend no ear to little things, but" — she tapped a slender finger to forehead — "it is all here. It is a heady brew, and you have smelled the fumes overmuch. But drain the dregs, turn down the glass, and say that it is good. No, God forbid!" she cried, passionately. "There are good loves. You should find no masquerade, but one fair and shining."

Frona was up to her old trick, — their common one, — and her hand slid down Lucile's arm till hand clasped in hand. "You say things which I feel are wrong, yet may not answer. I can, but how dare I? I dare not put mere thoughts against your facts. I, who have lived so little, cannot in theory give the lie to you who have lived so much — "

"'For he who lives more lives than one, more lives than one must die.'"

From out of her pain, Lucile spoke the words of her pain, and Frona, throwing arms about her, sobbed on her breast in understanding. As for Lucile, the slight nervous ingathering of the brows above her eyes smoothed out, and she pressed the kiss of motherhood, lightly and secretly, on the other's hair. For a space, — then the brows ingathered, the lips drew firm, and she put Frona from her.

"You are going to marry Gregory St. Vincent?"

Frona was startled. It was only a fortnight old, and not a word had been breathed. "How do you know?"

"You have answered." Lucile watched Frona's open face and the bold running advertisement, and felt as the skilled fencer who fronts a tyro, weak of wrist, each opening naked to his hand. "How do I know?" She laughed harshly. "When a man leaves one's arms suddenly, lips wet with last kisses and mouth areek with last lies!"

"And — ?"

"Forgets the way back to those arms."

"So?" The blood of the Welse pounded up, and like a hot sun dried the mists from her eyes and left them flashing. "Then that is why you came. I could have guessed it had I given second thought to Dawson's gossip."

"It is not too late." Lucile's lip curled. "And it is your way."

"And I am mindful. What is it? Do you intend telling me what he has done, what he has been to you. Let me say that it is useless. He is a man, as you and I are women."

"No," Lucile lied, swallowing her astonishment.

"I had not thought that any action of his would affect you. I knew you were too great for that. But — have you considered me?"

Frona caught her breath for a moment. Then she straightened out her arms to hold the man in challenge to the arms of Lucile.

"Your father over again," Lucile exclaimed. "Oh, you impossible Welses!"

"But he is not worthy of you, Frona Welse," she continued; "of me, yes. He is not a nice man, a great man, nor a good. His love cannot match with yours. Bah! He does not possess love; passion, of one sort and another, is the best he may lay claim to. That you do not want. It is all, at the best, he can give you. And you, pray what may you give him? Yourself? A prodigious waste! But your father's yellow — "

"Don't go on, or I shall refuse to listen. It is wrong of you." So Frona made her cease, and then, with bold inconsistency, "And what may the woman Lucile give him?"

"Some few wild moments," was the prompt response; "a burning burst of happiness, and the regrets of hell — which latter he deserves, as do I. So the balance is maintained, and all is well."

"But — but — "

"For there is a devil in him," she held on, "a most alluring devil, which delights me, on my soul it does, and which, pray God, Frona, you may never know. For you have no devil; mine matches his and mates. I am free to confess that the whole thing is only an attraction. There is nothing permanent about him, nor about me. And there's the beauty, the balance is preserved."

Frona lay back in her chair and lazily regarded her visitor, Lucile waited for her to speak. It was very quiet.

"Well?" Lucile at last demanded, in a low, curious tone, at the same time rising to slip into her parka.

"Nothing. I was only waiting."

"I am done."

"Then let me say that I do not understand you," Frona summed up, coldly. "I cannot somehow just catch your motive. There is a flat ring to what you have said. However, of this I am sure: for some unaccountable reason you have been untrue to yourself to-day. Do not ask me, for, as I said before, I do not know where or how; yet I am none the less convinced. This

I do know, you are not the Lucile I met by the wood trail across the river. That was the true Lucile, little though I saw of her. The woman who is here to-day is a strange woman. I do not know her. Sometimes it has seemed she was Lucile, but rarely. This woman has lied, lied to me, and lied to me about herself. As to what she said of the man, at the worst that is merely an opinion. It may be she has lied about him likewise. The chance is large that she has. What do you think about it?"

"That you are a very clever girl, Frona. That you speak sometimes more truly than you know, and that at others you are blinder than you dream."

"There is something I could love in you, but you have hidden it away so that I cannot find it."

Lucile's lips trembled on the verge of speech. But she settled her parka about her and turned to go.

Frona saw her to the door herself, and How-ha pondered over the white who made the law and was greater than the law.

When the door had closed, Lucile spat into the street. "Faugh! St. Vincent! I have defiled my mouth with your name!" And she spat again.

"Come in."

At the summons Matt McCarthy pulled the latch-string, pushed the door open, and closed it carefully behind him.

"Oh, it is you!" St. Vincent regarded his visitor with dark abstraction, then, recollecting himself, held out his hand. "Why, hello, Matt, old man. My mind was a thousand miles away when you entered. Take a stool and make yourself comfortable. There's the tobacco by your hand. Take a try at it and give us your verdict."

"An' well may his mind be a thousand miles away," Matt assured himself; for in the dark he had passed a woman on the trail who looked suspiciously like Lucile. But aloud, "Sure, an' it's day-dramin' ye mane. An' small wondher."

"How's that?" the correspondent asked, cheerily.

"By the same token that I met Lucile down the trail a piece, an' the heels iv her moccasins pointing to yer shack. It's a bitter tongue the jade slings on occasion," Matt chuckled.

"That's the worst of it." St. Vincent met him frankly. "A man looks sidewise at them for a passing moment, and they demand that the moment be eternal."

Off with the old love's a stiff proposition, eh?"

"I should say so. And you understand. It's easy to see, Matt, you've had some experience in your time."

"In me time? I'll have ye know I'm not too old to still enjoy a bit iv a fling."

"Certainly, certainly. One can read it in your eyes. The warm heart and the roving eye, Matt!" He slapped his visitor on the shoulder with a hearty laugh.

"An' I've none the best iv ye, Vincent. 'Tis a wicked lad ye are, with a takin' way with the ladies — as plain as the nose on yer face. Manny's the idle kiss ye've given, an' manny's the heart ye've broke. But, Vincent, bye, did ye iver know the rale thing?"

"How do you mean?"

"The rale thing, the rale thing — that is — well, have ye been iver a father?"

St. Vincent shook his head.

"And niver have I. But have ye felt the love iv a father, thin?"

"I hardly know. I don't think so."

"Well, I have. An' it's the rale thing, I'll tell ye. If iver a man suckled a child, I did, or the next door to it. A girl child at that, an' she's woman grown, now, an' if the thing is possible, I love her more than her own blood-father. Bad luck, exciptin' her, there was niver but one woman I loved, an' that woman had mated beforetime. Not a soul did I brathe a word to, trust me, nor even herself. But she died. God's love be with her."

His chin went down upon his chest and he quested back to a flaxen-haired Saxon woman, strayed like a bit of sunshine into the log store by the Dyea River. He looked up suddenly, and caught St. Vincent's stare bent blankly to the floor as he mused on other things.

"A truce to foolishness, Vincent."

The correspondent returned to himself with an effort and found the Irishman's small blue eyes boring into him.

"Are ye a brave man, Vincent?"

For a second's space they searched each other's souls. And in that space Matt could have sworn he saw the faintest possible flicker or flutter in the man's eyes.

He brought his fist down on the table with a triumphant crash. "By God, yer not!"

The correspondent pulled the tobacco jug over to him and rolled a cigarette. He rolled it carefully, the delicate rice paper crisping in his hand without a tremor; but all the while a red tide mounting up from beneath the collar of his shirt, deepening in the hollows of the cheeks and thinning against the cheekbones above, creeping, spreading, till all his face was aflame.

"'Tis good. An' likely it saves me fingers a dirty job. Vincent, man, the girl child which is woman grown slapes in Dawson this night. God help us, you an' me, but we'll niver hit again the pillow as clane an' pure as she! Vincent, a word to the wise: ye'll niver lay holy hand or otherwise upon her."

The devil, which Lucile had proclaimed, began to quicken, — a fuming, fretting, irrational devil.

"I do not like ye. I kape me raysons to meself. It is sufficient. But take this to heart, an' take it well: should ye be mad enough to make her yer wife, iv that damned day ye'll niver see the inding, nor lay eye upon the bridal bed. Why, man, I cud bate ye to death with me two fists if need be. But it's to be hoped I'll do a nater job. Rest aisy. I promise ye."

"You Irish pig!"

So the devil burst forth, and all unaware, for McCarthy found himself eye-high with the muzzle of a Colt's revolver.

"Is it loaded?" he asked. "I belave ye. But why are ye lingerin'?
Lift the hammer, will ye?"

The correspondent's trigger-finger moved and there was a warning click.

"Now pull it. Pull it, I say. As though ye cud, with that flutter to yer eye."

St. Vincent attempted to turn his head aside.

"Look at me, man!" McCarthy commanded. "Kape yer eyes on me when ye do it."

Unwillingly the sideward movement was arrested, and his eyes returned and met the Irishman's.

"Now!"

St. Vincent ground his teeth and pulled the trigger — at least he thought he did, as men think they do things in dreams. He willed the deed, flashed the order forth; but the flutter of his soul stopped it.

"'Tis paralyzed, is it, that shaky little finger?" Matt grinned into the face of the tortured man. "Now turn it aside, so, an' drop it, gently . . . gently . . . gently." His voice crooned away in soothing diminuendo.

When the trigger was safely down, St. Vincent let the revolver fall from his hand, and with a slight audible sigh sank nervelessly upon a stool. He tried to straighten himself, but instead dropped down upon the table and buried his face in his palsied hands. Matt drew on his mittens, looking down upon him pityingly the while, and went out, closing the door softly behind him.

CHAPTER XX

Where nature shows the rough hand, the sons of men are apt to respond with kindred roughness. The amenities of life spring up only in mellow lands, where the sun is warm and the earth fat. The damp and soggy climate of Britain drives men to strong drink; the rosy Orient lures to the dream splendors of the lotus. The big-bodied, white-skinned northern dweller, rude and ferocious, bellows his anger uncouthly and drives a gross fist into the face of his foe. The supple south-sojourner, silken of smile and lazy of gesture, waits, and does his work from behind, when no man looketh, gracefully and without offence. Their ends are one; the difference lies in their ways, and therein the climate, and the cumulative effect thereof, is the determining factor. Both are sinners, as men born of women have ever been; but the one does his sin openly, in the clear sight of God; the other — as though God could not see — veils his iniquity with shimmering fancies, hiding it like it were some splendid mystery.

These be the ways of men, each as the sun shines upon him and the wind blows against him, according to his kind, and the seed of his father, and the milk of his mother. Each is the resultant of many forces which go to make a pressure mightier than he, and which moulds him in the predestined shape. But, with sound legs under him, he may run away, and meet with a new pressure. He may continue running, each new pressure prodding him as he goes, until he dies and his final form will be that predestined of the many pressures. An exchange of cradle-babes, and the base-born slave may wear the purple imperially, and the royal infant begs an alms as wheedlingly or cringe to the lash as abjectly as his meanest subject. A Chesterfield, with an empty belly, chancing upon good fare, will gorge as faithfully as the swine in the next sty. And an Epicurus, in the dirt-igloo of the Eskimos, will wax eloquent over the whale oil and walrus blubber, or die.

Thus, in the young Northland, frosty and grim and menacing, men stripped off the sloth of the south and gave battle greatly. And they stripped likewise much of the veneer of civilization — all of its follies, most of its foibles, and perhaps a few of its virtues. Maybe so; but they reserved the great traditions and at least lived frankly, laughed honestly, and looked one another in the eyes.

And so it is not well for women, born south of fifty-three and reared gently, to knock loosely about the Northland, unless they be great of heart. They may be soft and tender and sensitive, possessed of eyes which have not lost the lustre and the wonder, and of ears used only to sweet sounds; but if their philosophy is sane and stable, large enough to understand and to forgive, they will come to no harm and attain comprehension. If not, they will see things and hear things which hurt, and they will suffer greatly, and lose faith in man — which is the greatest evil that may happen them. Such should be sedulously cherished, and it were well to depute this to their menfolk, the nearer of kin the better. In line, it were good policy to seek out a cabin on the hill overlooking Dawson, or — best of all — across the Yukon on the western bank. Let them not move abroad unheralded and unaccompanied; and the hillside back of the cabin may be recommended as a fit field for stretching muscles and breathing deeply, a place where their ears may remain undefiled by the harsh words of men who strive to the utmost.

Vance Corliss wiped the last tin dish and filed it away on the shelf, lighted his pipe, and rolled over on his back on the bunk to contemplate the moss-chinked roof of his French Hill cabin. This French Hill cabin stood on the last dip of the hill into Eldorado Creek, close to the main-travelled trail; and its one window blinked cheerily of nights at those who journeyed late.

The door was kicked open, and Del Bishop staggered in with a load of fire-wood. His breath had so settled on his face in a white rime that he could not speak. Such a condition was ever a hardship with the man, so he thrust his face forthwith into the quivering heat above the stove. In a trice the frost was started and the thawed streamlets dancing madly on the white-hot surface beneath. Then the ice began to fall from is beard in chunks, rattling on the lid-tops and simmering spitefully till spurted upward in clouds of steam.

“And so you witness an actual phenomenon, illustrative of the three forms of matter,” Vance laughed, mimicking the monotonous tones of the demonstrator; “solid, liquid, and vapor. In another moment you will have the gas.”

“Th — th — that’s all very well,” Bishop spluttered, wrestling with an obstructing piece of ice until it was wrenched from his upper lip and slammed stoveward with a bang.

“How cold do you make it, Del? Fifty?”

"Fifty?" the pocket-miner demanded with unutterable scorn, wiping his face. "Quicksilver's been solid for hours, and it's been gittin' colder an' colder ever since. Fifty? I'll bet my new mittens against your old moccasins that it ain't a notch below seventy."

"Think so?"

"D'ye want to bet?"

Vance nodded laughingly.

"Centigrade or Fahrenheit?" Bishop asked, suddenly suspicious.

"Oh, well, if you want my old moccasins so badly," Vance rejoined, feigning to be hurt by the other's lack of faith, "why, you can have them without betting."

Del snorted and flung himself down on the opposite bunk. "Think yer funny, don't you?" No answer forthcoming, he deemed the retort conclusive, rolled over, and fell to studying the moss chinks.

Fifteen minutes of this diversion sufficed. "Play you a rubber of crib before bed," he challenged across to the other bunk.

"I'll go you." Corliss got up, stretched, and moved the kerosene lamp from the shelf to the table, "Think it will hold out?" he asked, surveying the oil-level through the cheap glass.

Bishop threw down the crib-board and cards, and measured the contents of the lamp with his eye. "Forgot to fill it, didn't I? Too late now. Do it to-morrow. It'll last the rubber out, sure."

Corliss took up the cards, but paused in the shuffling. "We've a big trip before us, Del, about a month from now, the middle of March as near as I can plan it, — up the Stuart River to McQuestion; up McQuestion and back again down the Mayo; then across country to Mazy May, winding up at Henderson Creek — "

"On the Indian River?"

"No," Corliss replied, as he dealt the hands; "just below where the Stuart taps the Yukon. And then back to Dawson before the ice breaks."

The pocket-miner's eyes sparkled. "Keep us hustlin'; but, say, it's a trip, isn't it! Hunch?"

"I've received word from the Parker outfit on the Mayo, and McPherson isn't asleep on Henderson — you don't know him. They're keeping quiet, and of course one can't tell, but . . ."

Bishop nodded his head sagely, while Corliss turned the trump he had cut. A sure vision of a "twenty-four" hand was dazzling him, when there was a sound of voices without and the door shook to a heavy knock.

“Come in!” he bawled. “An’ don’t make such a row about it! Look at that” — to Corliss, at the same time facing his hand — ”fifteen-eight, fifteen-sixteen, and eight are twenty-four. Just my luck!”

Corliss started swiftly to his feet. Bishop jerked his head about. Two women and a man had staggered clumsily in through the door, and were standing just inside, momentarily blinded by the light.

“By all the Prophets! Cornell!” The pocket-miner wrung the man’s hand and led him forward. “You recollect Cornell, Corliss? Jake Cornell, Thirty-Seven and a Half Eldorado.”

“How could I forget?” the engineer acknowledged warmly, shaking his hand. “That was a miserable night you put us up last fall, about as miserable as the moose-steak was good that you gave us for breakfast.”

Jake Cornell, hirsute and cadaverous of aspect, nodded his head with emphasis and deposited a corpulent demijohn on the table. Again he nodded his head, and glared wildly about him. The stove caught his eye and he strode over to it, lifted a lid, and spat out a mouthful of amber-colored juice. Another stride and he was back.

“‘Course I recollect the night,” he rumbled, the ice clattering from his hairy jaws. “And I’m danged glad to see you, that’s a fact.” He seemed suddenly to remember himself, and added a little sheepishly, “The fact is, we’re all danged glad to see you, ain’t we, girls?” He twisted his head about and nodded his companions up. “Blanche, my dear, Mr. Corliss — hem — it gives me . . . hem . . . it gives me pleasure to make you acquainted. Cariboo Blanche, sir. Cariboo Blanche.”

“Pleased to meet you.” Cariboo Blanche put out a frank hand and looked him over keenly. She was a fair-featured, blondish woman, originally not unpleasing of appearance, but now with lines all deepened and hardened as on the faces of men who have endured much weather-beat.

Congratulating himself upon his social proficiency, Jake Cornell cleared his throat and marshalled the second woman to the front. “Mr. Corliss, the Virgin; I make you both acquainted. Hem!” in response to the query in Vance’s eyes — ”Yes, the Virgin. That’s all, just the Virgin.”

She smiled and bowed, but did not shake hands. “A toff” was her secret comment upon the engineer; and from her limited experience she had been led to understand that it was not good form among “toffs” to shake hands.

Corliss fumbled his hand, then bowed, and looked at her curiously. She was a pretty, low-browed creature; darkly pretty, with a well-favored body, and for all that the type was mean, he could not escape the charm of her over-brimming vitality. She seemed bursting with it, and every quick, spontaneous movement appeared to spring from very excess of red blood and superabundant energy.

“Pretty healthy proposition, ain’t she?” Jake Cornell demanded, following his host’s gaze with approval.

“None o’ your gammon, Jake,” the Virgin snapped back, with lip curled contemptuously for Vance’s especial benefit. “I fancy it’d be more in keeping if you’d look to pore Blanche, there.”

“Fact is, we’re plum ding dong played out,” Jake said. “An’ Blanche went through the ice just down the trail, and her feet’s like to freezin’.”

Blanche smiled as Corliss piloted her to a stool by the fire, and her stern mouth gave no indication of the pain she was suffering. He turned away when the Virgin addressed herself to removing the wet footgear, while Bishop went rummaging for socks and moccasins.

“Didn’t go in more’n to the ankles,” Cornell explained confidentially; “but that’s plenty a night like this.”

Corliss agreed with a nod of the head.

“Spotted your light, and — hem — and so we come. Don’t mind, do you?”

“Why, certainly not — ”

“No intrudin’?”

Corliss reassured him by laying hand on his shoulder and cordially pressing him to a seat. Blanche sighed luxuriously. Her wet stockings were stretched up and already steaming, and her feet basking in the capacious warmth of Bishop’s Siwash socks. Vance shoved the tobacco canister across, but Cornell pulled out a handful of cigars and passed them around.

“Uncommon bad piece of trail just this side of the turn,” he remarked stentoriously, at the same time flinging an eloquent glance at the demijohn. “Ice rotten from the springs and no sign till you’re into it.” Turning to the woman by the stove, “How’re you feeling, Blanche?”

“Tony,” she responded, stretching her body lazily and redisposing her feet; “though my legs ain’t as limber as when we pulled out.”

Looking to his host for consent, Cornell tilted the demijohn over his arm and partly filled the four tin mugs and an empty jelly glass.

“Wot’s the matter with a toddy?” the Virgin broke in; “or a punch?”

“Got any lime juice?” she demanded of Corliss.

“You ‘ave? Jolly!” She directed her dark eyes towards Del. “‘Ere, you, cookie! Trot out your mixing-pan and sling the kettle for ‘ot water. Come on! All hands! Jake’s treat, and I’ll show you ‘ow! Any sugar, Mr. Corliss? And nutmeg? Cinnamon, then? O.K. It’ll do. Lively now, cookie!”

“Ain’t she a peach?” Cornell confided to Vance, watching her with mellow eyes as she stirred the steaming brew.

But the Virgin directed her attentions to the engineer. “Don’t mind ‘im, sir,” she advised. “‘E’s more’n arf-gorn a’ready, a-‘itting the jug every blessed stop.”

“Now, my dear — ” Jake protested.

“Don’t you my-dear me,” she sniffed. “I don’t like you.”

“Why?”

“Cos . . .” She ladled the punch carefully into the mugs and meditated. “Cos you chew tobacco. Cos you’re whiskery. Wot I take to is smooth-faced young chaps.”

“Don’t take any stock in her nonsense,” the Fraction King warned, “She just does it a-purpose to get me mad.”

“Now then!” she commanded, sharply. “Step up to your licker! ‘Ere’s ‘ow!”

“What’ll it be?” cried Blanche from the stove.

The elevated mugs wavered and halted.

“The Queen, Gawd bless ‘er!” the Virgin toasted promptly.

“And Bill!” Del Bishop interrupted.

Again the mugs wavered.

“Bill ‘oo?” the Virgin asked, suspiciously.

“McKinley.”

She favored him with a smile. “Thank you, cookie, you’re a trump. Now! ‘Ere’s a go, gents! Take it standing. The Queen, Gawd bless ‘er, and Bill McKinley!”

“Bottoms up!” thundered Jake Cornell, and the mugs smote the table with clanging rims.

Vance Corliss discovered himself amused and interested. According to Frona, he mused ironically, — this was learning life, was adding to his sum of human generalizations. The phrase was hers, and he rolled it over a couple of times. Then, again, her engagement with St. Vincent crept into his thought, and he charmed the Virgin by asking her to sing. But she was coy, and only after Bishop had rendered the several score stanzas of “Flying Cloud” did she comply. Her voice, in a weakly way, probably registered an octave and a half; below that point it underwent strange metamorphoses, while on the upper levels it was devious and rickety. Nevertheless she sang “Take Back Your Gold” with touching effect, which brought a fiery moisture into the eyes of the Fraction King, who listened greedily, for the time being experiencing unwonted ethical yearnings.

The applause was generous, followed immediately by Bishop, who toasted the singer as the “Enchantress of Bow Bells,” to the reverberating “bottoms up!” of Jake Cornell.

Two hours later, Frona Welse rapped. It was a sharp, insistent rap, penetrating the din within and bringing Corliss to the door.

She gave a glad little cry when she saw who it was. “Oh; it is you, Vance! I didn’t know you lived here.”

He shook hands and blocked the doorway with his body. Behind him the Virgin was laughing and Jake Cornell roaring:

“Oh, cable this message along the track;
The Prod’s out West, but he’s coming back;
Put plenty of veal for one on the rack,
Trolla lala, la la la, la la!”

“What is it?” Vance questioned. “Anything up?”

“I think you might ask me in.” There was a hint of reproach in Frona’s voice, and of haste. “I blundered through the ice, and my feet are freezing.”

“O Gawd!” in the exuberant tones of the Virgin, came whirling over Vance’s shoulder, and the voices of Blanche and Bishop joining in a laugh against Cornell, and that worthy’s vociferous protestations. It seemed to him that all the blood of his body had rushed into his face. “But you can’t come in, Frona. Don’t you hear them?”

“But I must,” she insisted. “My feet are freezing.”

With a gesture of resignation he stepped aside and closed the door after her. Coming suddenly in from the darkness, she hesitated a moment, but in that moment recovered her sight and took in the scene. The air was thick with tobacco smoke, and the odor of it, in the close room, was sickening to one fresh from the pure outside. On the table a column of steam was ascending from the big mixing-pan. The Virgin, fleeing before Cornell, was defending herself with a long mustard spoon. Evading him and watching her chance, she continually daubed his nose and cheeks with the yellow smear. Blanche had twisted about from the stove to see the fun, and Del Bishop, with a mug at rest half-way to his lips, was applauding the successive strokes. The faces of all were flushed.

Vance leaned nervelessly against the door. The whole situation seemed so unthinkably impossible. An insane desire to laugh came over him, which resolved itself into a coughing fit. But Frona, realizing her own pressing need by the growing absence of sensation in her feet, stepped forward.

"Hello, Del!" she called.

The mirth froze on his face at the familiar sound and he slowly and unwilling turned his head to meet her. She had slipped the hood of her parka back, and her face, outlined against the dark fur, rosy with the cold and bright, was like a shaft of the sun shot into the murk of a boozing-ken. They all knew her, for who did not know Jacob Welse's daughter? The Virgin dropped the mustard-spoon with a startled shriek, while Cornell, passing a dazed hand across his yellow markings and consummating the general smear, collapsed on the nearest stool. Cariboo Blanche alone retained her self-possession, and laughed softly.

Bishop managed to articulate "Hello!" but was unable to stave off the silence which settled down.

Frona waited a second, and then said, "Good-evening, all."

"This way." Vance had recovered himself, and seated her by the stove opposite Blanche. "Better get your things off quickly, and be careful of the heat. I'll see what I can find for you."

"Some cold water, please," she asked. "It will take the frost out.
Del will get it."

"I hope it is not serious?"

"No." She shook her head and smiled up to him, at the same time working away at her ice-coated moccasins. "There hasn't been time for more than surface-freezing. At the worst the skin will peel off."

An unearthly silence brooded in the cabin, broken only by Bishop filling a basin from the water-bucket, and by Corliss seeking out his smallest and daintiest house-moccasins and his warmest socks.

Frona, rubbing her feet vigorously, paused and looked up. "Don't let me chill the festivities just because I'm cold," she laughed. "Please go on."

Jake Cornell straightened up and cleared his throat inanely, and the Virgin looked over-dignified; but Blanche came over and took the towel out of Frona's hands.

"I wet my feet in the same place," she said, kneeling down and bringing a glow to the frosted feet.

"I suppose you can manage some sort of a fit with them. Here!" Vance tossed over the house-moccasins and woollen wrappings, which the two women, with low laughs and confidential undertones, proceeded to utilize.

"But what in the world were you doing on trail, alone, at this time of night?" Vance asked. In his heart he was marvelling at the coolness and pluck with which she was carrying off the situation.

"I know beforehand that you will censure me," she replied, helping Blanche arrange the wet gear over the fire. "I was at Mrs. Stanton's; but first, you must know, Miss Mortimer and I are staying at the Pently's for a week. Now, to start fresh again. I intended to leave Mrs. Stanton's before dark; but her baby got into the kerosene, her husband had gone down to Dawson, and — well, we weren't sure of the baby up to half an hour ago. She wouldn't hear of me returning alone; but there was nothing to fear; only I had not expected soft ice in such a snap."

"How'd you fix the kid?" Del asked, intent on keeping the talk going now that it had started.

"Chewing tobacco." And when the laughter had subsided, she went on: "There wasn't any mustard, and it was the best I could think of. Besides, Matt McCarthy saved my life with it once, down at Dyea when I had the croup. But you were singing when I came in," she suggested. "Do go on."

Jake Cornell hawed prodigiously. "And I got done."

"Then you, Del. Sing 'Flying Cloud' as you used to coming down the river."

"Oh, 'e 'as!" said the Virgin.

"Then you sing. I am sure you do."

She smiled into the Virgin's eyes, and that lady delivered herself of a coster ballad with more art than she was aware. The chill of Frona's advent was quickly dissipated, and song and toast and merriment went round again. Nor was Frona above touching lips to the jelly glass in fellowship; and she contributed her quota by singing "Annie Laurie" and "Ben Bolt." Also, but privily, she watched the drink saturating the besotted souls of Cornell and the Virgin. It was an experience, and she was glad of it, though sorry in a way for Corliss, who played the host lamely.

But he had little need of pity. “Any other woman — ” he said to himself a score of times, looking at Frona and trying to picture numerous women he had known by his mother’s teapot, knocking at the door and coming in as Frona had done. Then, again, it was only yesterday that it would have hurt him, Blanche’s rubbing her feet; but now he gloried in Frona’s permitting it, and his heart went out in a more kindly way to Blanche. Perhaps it was the elevation of the liquor, but he seemed to discover new virtues in her rugged face.

Frona had put on her dried moccasins and risen to her feet, and was listening patiently to Jake Cornell, who hiccoughed a last incoherent toast.

“To the — hic — man,” he rumbled, cavernously, “the man — hic — that made — that made — ”

“The blessed country,” volunteered the Virgin.

“True, my dear — hic. To the man that made the blessed country.
To — hic — to Jacob Welse!”

“And a rider!” Blanche cried. “To Jacob Welse’s daughter!”

“Ay! Standing! And bottoms up!”

“Oh! she’s a jolly good fellow,” Del led off, the drink ruddying his cheek.

“I’d like to shake hands with you, just once,” Blanche said in a low voice, while the rest were chorusing.

Frona slipped her mitten, which she had already put on, and the pressure was firm between them.

“No,” she said to Corliss, who had put on his cap and was tying the ear-flaps; “Blanche tells me the Pently’s are only half a mile from here. The trail is straight. I’ll not hear of any one accompanying me.

“No!” This time she spoke so authoritatively that he tossed his cap into the bunk. “Good-night, all!” she called, sweeping the roisterers with a smile.

But Corliss saw her to the door and stepped outside. She glanced up to him. Her hood was pulled only partly up, and her face shone alluringly under the starlight.

“I — Frona . . . I wish — ”

“Don’t be alarmed,” she whispered. “I’ll not tell on you, Vance.”

He saw the mocking glint in her eyes, but tried to go on. “I wish to explain just how — ”

“No need. I understand. But at the same time I must confess I do not particularly admire your taste — ”

"Frona!" The evident pain in his voice reached her.

"Oh, you big foolish!" she laughed. "Don't I know? Didn't Blanche tell me she wet her feet?"

Corliss bowed his head. "Truly, Frona, you are the most consistent woman I ever met. Furthermore," with a straightening of his form and a dominant assertion in his voice, "this is not the last."

She tried to stop him, but he continued. "I feel, I know that things will turn out differently. To fling your own words back at you, all the factors have not been taken into consideration. As for St. Vincent . . . I'll have you yet. For that matter, now could not be too soon!"

He flashed out hungry arms to her, but she read quicker than he moved, and, laughing, eluded him and ran lightly down the trail.

"Come back, Frona! Come back!" he called, "I am sorry."

"No, you're not," came the answer. "And I'd be sorry if you were.
Good-night."

He watched her merge into the shadows, then entered the cabin. He had utterly forgotten the scene within, and at the first glance it startled him. Cariboo Blanche was crying softly to herself. Her eyes were luminous and moist, and, as he looked, a lone tear stole down her cheek. Bishop's face had gone serious. The Virgin had sprawled head and shoulders on the table, amid overturned mugs and dripping lees, and Cornell was tittubating over her, hiccoughing, and repeating vacuously, "You're all right, my dear. You're all right."

But the Virgin was inconsolable. "O Gawd! Wen I think on wot is, an' was . . . an' no fault of mine. No fault of mine, I tell you!" she shrieked with quick fierceness. "'Ow was I born, I ask? Wot was my old man? A drunk, a chronic. An' my old woman? Talk of Whitechapel! 'Oo guv a cent for me, or 'ow I was dragged up? 'Oo cared a rap, I say? 'Oo cared a rap?"

A sudden revulsion came over Corliss. "Hold your tongue!" he ordered.

The Virgin raised her head, her loosened hair streaming about her like a Fury's. "Wot is she?" she sneered. "Sweet'eart?"

Corliss whirled upon her savagely, face white and voice shaking with passion.

The Virgin cowered down and instinctively threw up her hands to protect her face. "Don't 'it me, sir!" she whined. "Don't 'it me!"

He was frightened at himself, and waited till he could gather control.
"Now," he said, calmly, "get into your things and go. All of you.

Clear out. Vamose.”

“You’re no man, you ain’t,” the Virgin snarled, discovering that physical assault was not imminent.

But Corliss herded her particularly to the door, and gave no heed.

“A-turning ladies out!” she sniffed, with a stumble over the threshold;

“No offence,” Jake Cornell muttered, pacifically; “no offence.”

“Good-night. Sorry,” Corliss said to Blanche, with the shadow of a forgiving smile, as she passed out.

“You’re a toff! That’s wot you are, a bloomin’ toff!” the Virgin howled back as he shut the door.

He looked blankly at Del Bishop and surveyed the sodden confusion on the table. Then he walked over and threw himself down on his bunk. Bishop leaned an elbow on the table and pulled at his wheezy pipe. The lamp smoked, flickered, and went out; but still he remained, filling his pipe again and again and striking endless matches.

“Del! Are you awake?” Corliss called at last.

Del grunted.

“I was a cur to turn them out into the snow. I am ashamed.”

“Sure,” was the affirmation.

A long silence followed. Del knocked the ashes out and raised up.

“‘Sleep?” he called.

There was no reply, and he walked to the bunk softly and pulled the blankets over the engineer.

CHAPTER XXI

"Yes; what does it all mean?" Corliss stretched lazily, and cocked up his feet on the table. He was not especially interested, but Colonel Trethaway persisted in talking seriously.

"That's it! The very thing — the old and ever young demand which man slaps into the face of the universe." The colonel searched among the scraps in his note-book. "See," holding up a soiled slip of typed paper, "I copied this out years ago. Listen. 'What a monstrous spectre is this man, this disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown up with hair like grass, fitted with eyes that glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming. Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent; savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow-lives. Infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down to debate of right or wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to battle for an egg or die for an idea!'

"And all to what end?" he demanded, hotly, throwing down the paper, "this disease of the agglutinated dust?"

Corliss yawned in reply. He had been on trail all day and was yearning for between-blankets.

"Here am I, Colonel Trethaway, modestly along in years, fairly well preserved, a place in the community, a comfortable bank account, no need to ever exert myself again, yet enduring life bleakly and working ridiculously with a zest worthy of a man half my years. And to what end? I can only eat so much, smoke so much, sleep so much, and this tail-dump of earth men call Alaska is the worst of all possible places in the matter of grub, tobacco, and blankets."

"But it is the living strenuously which holds you," Corliss interjected.

"Frona's philosophy," the colonel sneered.

"And my philosophy, and yours."

"And of the agglutinated dust — "

"Which is quickened with a passion you do not take into account, — the passion of duty, of race, of God!"

"And the compensation?" Trethaway demanded.

"Each breath you draw. The Mayfly lives an hour."

"I don't see it."

"Blood and sweat! Blood and sweat! You cried that after the rough and tumble in the Opera House, and every word of it was receipt in full."

"Frona's philosophy."

"And yours and mine."

The colonel threw up his shoulders, and after a pause confessed. "You see, try as I will, I can't make a pessimist out of myself. We are all compensated, and I more fully than most men. What end? I asked, and the answer forthcame: Since the ultimate end is beyond us, then the immediate. More compensation, here and now!"

"Quite hedonistic."

"And rational. I shall look to it at once. I can buy grub and blankets for a score; I can eat and sleep for only one; ergo, why not for two?"

Corliss took his feet down and sat up. "In other words?"

"I shall get married, and — give the community a shock. Communities like shocks. That's one of their compensations for being agglutinative."

"I can't think of but one woman," Corliss essayed tentatively, putting out his hand.

Trethaway shook it slowly. "It is she."

Corliss let go, and misgiving shot into his face. "But St. Vincent?"

"Is your problem, not mine."

"Then Lucile — ?"

"Certainly not. She played a quixotic little game of her own and botched it beautifully."

"I — I do not understand." Corliss brushed his brows in a dazed sort of way.

Trethaway parted his lips in a superior smile. "It is not necessary that you should. The question is, Will you stand up with me?"

"Surely. But what a confoundedly long way around you took. It is not your usual method."

"Nor was it with her," the colonel declared, twisting his moustache proudly.

A captain of the North-West Mounted Police, by virtue of his magisterial office, may perform marriages in time of stress as well as execute exemplary justice. So Captain Alexander received a call from Colonel Trethaway, and after he left jotted down an engagement for the next morning. Then the impending groom went to see Frona. Lucile did not make the request, he hastened to explain, but — well, the fact was she did not know any women, and, furthermore, he (the colonel) knew whom Lucile would like to ask, did she dare. So he did it upon his own responsibility. And coming as a surprise, he knew it would be a great joy to her.

Frona was taken aback by the suddenness of it. Only the other day, it was, that Lucile had made a plea to her for St. Vincent, and now it was Colonel Trethaway! True, there had been a false quantity somewhere, but now it seemed doubly false. Could it be, after all, that Lucile was mercenary? These thoughts crowded upon her swiftly, with the colonel anxiously watching her face the while. She knew she must answer quickly, yet was distracted by an involuntary admiration for his bravery. So she followed, perforce, the lead of her heart, and consented.

Yet the whole thing was rather strained when the four of them came together, next day, in Captain Alexander's private office. There was a gloomy chill about it. Lucile seemed ready to cry, and showed a repressed perturbation quite unexpected of her; while, try as she would, Frona could not call upon her usual sympathy to drive away the coldness which obtruded intangibly between them. This, in turn, had a consequent effect on Vance, and gave a certain distance to his manner which forced him out of touch even with the colonel.

Colonel Trethaway seemed to have thrown twenty years off his erect shoulders, and the discrepancy in the match which Frona had felt vanished as she looked at him. "He has lived the years well," she thought, and prompted mysteriously, almost with vague apprehension she turned her eyes to Corliss. But if the groom had thrown off twenty years, Vance was not a whit behind. Since their last meeting he had sacrificed his brown moustache to the frost, and his smooth face, smitten with health and vigor, looked uncommonly boyish; and yet, withal, the naked upper lip advertised a stiffness and resolution hitherto concealed. Furthermore, his features portrayed a growth, and his eyes, which had been softly firm, were now firm with the added harshness or hardness which is bred of coping with things and coping quickly, — the stamp of executiveness which is pressed upon men who do, and upon all men who do, whether they drive dogs, buck the sea, or dictate the policies of empires.

When the simple ceremony was over, Frona kissed Lucile; but Lucile felt that there was a subtle something wanting, and her eyes filled with unshed tears. Trethaway, who had felt the aloofness from the start, caught an opportunity with Frona while Captain Alexander and Corliss were being pleasant to Mrs. Trethaway.

"What's the matter, Frona?" the colonel demanded, bluntly. "I hope you did not come under protest. I am sorry, not for you, because lack of frankness deserves nothing, but for Lucile. It is not fair to her."

"There has been a lack of frankness throughout." Her voice trembled. "I tried my best, — I thought I could do better, — but I cannot feign what I do not feel. I am sorry, but I . . . I am disappointed. No, I cannot explain, and to you least of all."

"Let's be above-board, Frona. St. Vincent's concerned?"

She nodded.

"And I can put my hand right on the spot. First place," he looked to the side and saw Lucile stealing an anxious glance to him, — "first place, only the other day she gave you a song about St. Vincent. Second place, and therefore, you think her heart's not in this present proposition; that she doesn't care a rap for me; in short, that she's marrying me for reinstatement and spoils. Isn't that it?"

"And isn't it enough? Oh, I am disappointed, Colonel Trethaway, grievously, in her, in you, in myself."

"Don't be a fool! I like you too well to see you make yourself one. The play's been too quick, that is all. Your eye lost it. Listen. We've kept it quiet, but she's in with the elect on French Hill. Her claim's prospected the richest of the outfit. Present indication half a million at least. In her own name, no strings attached. Couldn't she take that and go anywhere in the world and reinstate herself? And for that matter, you might presume that I am marrying her for spoils. Frona, she cares for me, and in your ear, she's too good for me. My hope is that the future will make up. But never mind that — haven't got the time now.

"You consider her affection sudden, eh? Let me tell you we've been growing into each other from the time I came into the country, and with our eyes open. St. Vincent? Pshaw! I knew it all the time. She got it into her head that the whole of him wasn't worth a little finger of you, and she tried to break things up. You'll never know how she worked with him. I told her she didn’t know the Welse, and she said so, too, after. So there it is; take it or leave it.”

“But what do you think about St. Vincent?”

“What I think is neither here nor there; but I’ll tell you honestly that I back her judgment. But that’s not the point. What are you going to do about it? about her? now?”

She did not answer, but went back to the waiting group. Lucile saw her coming and watched her face.

“He’s been telling you — ?”

“That I am a fool,” Frona answered. “And I think I am.” And with a smile, “I take it on faith that I am, anyway. I — I can’t reason it out just now, but. . .”

Captain Alexander discovered a prenuptial joke just about then, and led the way over to the stove to crack it upon the colonel, and Vance went along to see fair play.

“It’s the first time,” Lucile was saying, “and it means more to me, so much more, than to . . . most women. I am afraid. It is a terrible thing for me to do. But I do love him, I do!” And when the joke had been duly digested and they came back, she was sobbing, “Dear, dear Frona.”

It was just the moment, better than he could have chosen; and capped and mittened, without knocking, Jacob Welse came in.

“The uninvited guest,” was his greeting. “Is it all over? So?” And he swallowed Lucile up in his huge bearskin. “Colonel, your hand, and your pardon for my intruding, and your regrets for not giving me the word. Come, out with them! Hello, Corliss! Captain Alexander, a good day.”

“What have I done?” Frona wailed, received the bear-hug, and managed to press his hand till it almost hurt.

“Had to back the game,” he whispered; and this time his hand did hurt.

“Now, colonel, I don’t know what your plans are, and I don’t care. Call them off. I’ve got a little spread down to the house, and the only honest case of champagne this side of Circle. Of course, you’re coming, Corliss, and — ” His eye roved past Captain Alexander with hardly a pause.

“Of course,” came the answer like a flash, though the Chief Magistrate of the Northwest had had time to canvass the possible results of such unofficial action. “Got a hack?”

Jacob Welse laughed and held up a moccasined foot. “Walking be — chucked!” The captain started impulsively towards the door. “I’ll have the sleds up before you're ready. Three of them, and bells galore!"

So Trethaway's forecast was correct, and Dawson vindicated its agglutinativeness by rubbing its eyes when three sleds, with three scarlet-tuniced policemen swinging the whips, tore down its main street; and it rubbed its eyes again when it saw the occupants thereof.

"We shall live quietly," Lucile told Frona. "The Klondike is not all the world, and the best is yet to come."

But Jacob Welse said otherwise. "We've got to make this thing go," he said to Captain Alexander, and Captain Alexander said that he was unaccustomed to backing out.

Mrs. Schoville emitted preliminary thunders, marshalled the other women, and became chronically seismic and unsafe.

Lucile went nowhere save to Frona's. But Jacob Welse, who rarely went anywhere, was often to be found by Colonel Trethaway's fireside, and not only was he to be found there, but he usually brought somebody along. "Anything on hand this evening?" he was wont to say on casual meeting. "No? Then come along with me." Sometimes he said it with lamb-like innocence, sometimes with a challenge brooding under his bushy brows, and rarely did he fail to get his man. These men had wives, and thus were the germs of dissolution sown in the ranks of the opposition.

Then, again, at Colonel Trethaway's there was something to be found besides weak tea and small talk; and the correspondents, engineers, and gentlemen rovers kept the trail well packed in that direction, though it was the Kings, to a man, who first broke the way. So the Trethaway cabin became the centre of things, and, backed commercially, financially, and officially, it could not fail to succeed socially.

The only bad effect of all this was to make the lives of Mrs. Schoville and divers others of her sex more monotonous, and to cause them to lose faith in certain hoary and inconsequent maxims. Furthermore, Captain Alexander, as highest official, was a power in the land, and Jacob Welse was the Company, and there was a superstition extant concerning the unwisdom of being on indifferent terms with the Company. And the time was not long till probably a bare half-dozen remained in outer cold, and they were considered a warped lot, anyway.

CHAPTER XXII

Quite an exodus took place in Dawson in the spring. Men, because they had made stakes, and other men, because they had made none, bought up the available dogs and rushed out for Dyea over the last ice. Incidentally, it was discovered that Dave Harney possessed most of these dogs.

"Going out?" Jacob Welse asked him on a day when the meridian sun for the first time felt faintly warm to the naked skin.

"Well, I calkilate not. I'm clearin' three dollars a pair on the moccasins I cornered, to say nothing but saw wood on the boots. Say, Welse, not that my nose is out of joint, but you jest cinched me everlastin' on sugar, didn't you?"

Jacob Welse smiled.

"And by the Jimcracky I'm squared! Got any rubber boots?"

"No; went out of stock early in the winter." Dave snickered slowly.

"And I'm the pertickler party that hocus-pocused 'em."

"Not you. I gave special orders to the clerks. They weren't sold in lots."

"No more they wa'n't. One man to the pair and one pair to the man, and a couple of hundred of them; but it was my dust they chucked into the scales an nobody else's. Drink? Don't mind. Easy! Put up your sack. Call it rebate, for I kin afford it. . . Goin' out? Not this year, I guess. Wash-up's comin'."

A strike on Henderson the middle of April, which promised to be sensational, drew St. Vincent to Stewart River. And a little later, Jacob Welse, interested on Gallagher Gulch and with an eye riveted on the copper mines of White River, went up into the same district, and with him went Frona, for it was more vacation than business. In the mean time, Corliss and Bishop, who had been on trail for a month or more running over the Mayo and McQuestion Country, rounded up on the left fork of Henderson, where a block of claims waited to be surveyed.

But by May, spring was so far advanced that travel on the creeks became perilous, and on the last of the thawing ice the miners travelled down to the bunch of islands below the mouth of the Stewart, where they went into temporary quarters or crowded the hospitality of those who possessed cabins. Corliss and Bishop located on Split-up Island (so called through the habit parties from the Outside had of dividing there and going several ways), where Tommy McPherson was comfortably situated. A couple of days later, Jacob Welse and Frona arrived from a hazardous trip out of White River, and pitched tent on the high ground at the upper end of Split-up. A few *chechaquos*, the first of the spring rush, strung in exhausted and went into camp against the breaking of the river. Also, there were still men going out who, barred by the rotten ice, came ashore to build poling-boats and await the break-up or to negotiate with the residents for canoes. Notably among these was the Baron Courbertin.

"Ah! Excruciating! Magnificent! Is it not?"

So Frona first ran across him on the following day. "What?" she asked, giving him her hand.

"You! You!" doffing his cap. "It is a delight!"

"I am sure — " she began.

"No! No!" He shook his curly mop warmly. "It is not you. See!" He turned to a Peterborough, for which McPherson had just mulcted him of thrice its value. "The canoe! Is it not — not — what you Yankees call — a bute?"

"Oh, the canoe," she repeated, with a falling inflection of chagrin.

"No! No! Pardon!" He stamped angrily upon the ground. "It is not so. It is not you. It is not the canoe. It is — ah! I have it now! It is your promise. One day, do you not remember, at Madame Schoville's, we talked of the canoe, and of my ignorance, which was sad, and you promised, you said — "

"I would give you your first lesson?"

"And is it not delightful? Listen! Do you not hear? The rippling — ah! the rippling! — deep down at the heart of things! Soon will the water run free. Here is the canoe! Here we meet! The first lesson! Delightful! Delightful!"

The next island below Split-up was known as Roubeau's Island, and was separated from the former by a narrow back-channel. Here, when the bottom had about dropped out of the trail, and with the dogs swimming as often as not, arrived St. Vincent — the last man to travel the winter trail. He went into the cabin of John Borg, a taciturn, gloomy individual, prone to segregate himself from his kind. It was the mischance of St. Vincent's life that of all cabins he chose Borg's for an abiding-place against the break-up.

"All right," the man said, when questioned by him. "Throw your blankets into the corner. Bella'll clear the litter out of the spare bunk."

Not till evening did he speak again, and then, “You’re big enough to do your own cooking. When the woman’s done with the stove you can fire away.”

The woman, or Bella, was a comely Indian girl, young, and the prettiest St. Vincent had run across. Instead of the customary greased swarthiness of the race, her skin was clear and of a light-bronze tone, and her features less harsh, more felicitously curved, than those common to the blood.

After supper, Borg, both elbows on table and huge misshapen hands supporting chin and jaws, sat puffing stinking Siwash tobacco and staring straight before him. It would have seemed ruminative, the stare, had his eyes been softer or had he blinked; as it was, his face was set and trance-like.

“Have you been in the country long?” St. Vincent asked, endeavoring to make conversation.

Borg turned his sullen-black eyes upon him, and seemed to look into him and through him and beyond him, and, still regarding him, to have forgotten all about him. It was as though he pondered some great and weighty matter — probably his sins, the correspondent mused nervously, rolling himself a cigarette. When the yellow cube had dissipated itself in curling fragrance, and he was deliberating about rolling a second, Borg suddenly spoke.

“Fifteen years,” he said, and returned to his tremendous cogitation.

Thereat, and for half an hour thereafter, St. Vincent, fascinated, studied his inscrutable countenance. To begin with, it was a massive head, abnormal and top-heavy, and its only excuse for being was the huge bull-throat which supported it. It had been cast in a mould of elemental generousness, and everything about it partook of the asymmetrical crudeness of the elemental. The hair, rank of growth, thick and unkempt, matted itself here and there into curious splotches of gray; and again, grinning at age, twisted itself into curling locks of lustreless black — locks of unusual thickness, like crooked fingers, heavy and solid. The shaggy whiskers, almost bare in places, and in others massing into bunchgrass-like clumps, were plentifully splashed with gray. They rioted monstrously over his face and fell raggedly to his chest, but failed to hide the great hollowed cheeks or the twisted mouth. The latter was thin-lipped and cruel, but cruel only in a passionless sort of way. But the forehead was the anomaly, — the anomaly required to complete the irregularity of the face. For it was a perfect forehead, full and broad, and rising superbly strong to its high dome. It was as the seat and bulwark of some vast intelligence; omniscience might have brooded there.

Bella, washing the dishes and placing them away on the shelf behind Borg's back, dropped a heavy tin cup. The cabin was very still, and the sharp rattle came without warning. On the instant, with a brute roar, the chair was overturned and Borg was on his feet, eyes blazing and face convulsed. Bella gave an inarticulate, animal-like cry of fear and cowered at his feet. St. Vincent felt his hair bristling, and an uncanny chill, like a jet of cold air, played up and down his spine. Then Borg righted the chair and sank back into his old position, chin on hands and brooding ponderously. Not a word was spoken, and Bella went on unconcernedly with the dishes, while St. Vincent rolled, a shaky cigarette and wondered if it had been a dream.

Jacob Welse laughed when the correspondent told him. "Just his way," he said; "for his ways are like his looks, — unusual. He's an unsociable beast. Been in the country more years than he can number acquaintances. Truth to say, I don't think he has a friend in all Alaska, not even among the Indians, and he's chummed thick with them off and on. 'Johnny Sorehead,' they call him, but it might as well be 'Johnny Break-um-head,' for he's got a quick temper and a rough hand. Temper! Some little misunderstanding popped up between him and the agent at Arctic City. He was in the right, too, — agent's mistake, — but he tabooed the Company on the spot and lived on straight meat for a year. Then I happened to run across him at Tanana Station, and after due explanations he consented to buy from us again."

"Got the girl from up the head-waters of the White," Bill Brown told St. Vincent. "Welse thinks he's pioneering in that direction, but Borg could give him cards and spades on it and then win out. He's been over the ground years ago. Yes, strange sort of a chap. Wouldn't hanker to be bunk-mates with him."

But St. Vincent did not mind the eccentricities of the man, for he spent most of his time on Split-up Island with Frona and the Baron. One day, however, and innocently, he ran foul of him. Two Swedes, hunting tree-squirrels from the other end of Roubeau Island, had stopped to ask for matches and to yarn a while in the warm sunshine of the clearing. St. Vincent and Borg were accommodating them, the latter for the most part in meditative monosyllables. Just to the rear, by the cabin-door, Bella was washing clothes. The tub was a cumbersome home-made affair, and half-full of water, was more than a fair match for an ordinary woman. The correspondent noticed her struggling with it, and stepped back quickly to her aid.

With the tub between them, they proceeded to carry it to one side in order to dump it where the ground drained from the cabin. St. Vincent slipped in the thawing snow and the soapy water splashed up. Then Bella slipped, and then they both slipped. Bella giggled and laughed, and St. Vincent laughed back. The spring was in the air and in their blood, and it was very good to be alive. Only a wintry heart could deny a smile on such a day. Bella slipped again, tried to recover, slipped with the other foot, and sat down abruptly. Laughing gleefully, both of them, the correspondent caught her hands to pull her to her feet. With a bound and a bellow, Borg was upon them. Their hands were torn apart and St. Vincent thrust heavily backward. He staggered for a couple of yards and almost fell. Then the scene of the cabin was repeated. Bella cowered and grovelled in the muck, and her lord towered wrathfully over her.

“Look you,” he said in stifled gutturals, turning to St. Vincent. “You sleep in my cabin and you cook. That is enough. Let my woman alone.”

Things went on after that as though nothing had happened; St. Vincent gave Bella a wide berth and seemed to have forgotten her existence. But the Swedes went back to their end of the island, laughing at the trivial happening which was destined to be significant.

CHAPTER XXIII

Spring, smiting with soft, warm hands, had come like a miracle, and now lingered for a dreamy spell before bursting into full-blown summer. The snow had left the bottoms and valleys and nestled only on the north slopes of the ice-scarred ridges. The glacial drip was already in evidence, and every creek in roaring spate. Each day the sun rose earlier and stayed later. It was now chill day by three o'clock and mellow twilight at nine. Soon a golden circle would be drawn around the sky, and deep midnight become bright as high noon. The willows and aspens had long since budded, and were now decking themselves in liveries of fresh young green, and the sap was rising in the pines.

Mother nature had heaved her waking sigh and gone about her brief business. Crickets sang of nights in the stilly cabins, and in the sunshine mosquitoes crept from out hollow logs and snug crevices among the rocks, — big, noisy, harmless fellows, that had procreated the year gone, lain frozen through the winter, and were now rejuvenated to buzz through swift senility to second death. All sorts of creeping, crawling, fluttering life came forth from the warming earth and hastened to mature, reproduce, and cease. Just a breath of balmy air, and then the long cold frost again — ah! they knew it well and lost no time. Sand martins were driving their ancient tunnels into the soft clay banks, and robins singing on the spruce-garbed islands. Overhead the woodpecker knocked insistently, and in the forest depths the partridge boom-boomed and strutted in virile glory.

But in all this nervous haste the Yukon took no part. For many a thousand miles it lay cold, unsmiling, dead. Wild fowl, driving up from the south in wind-jamming wedges, halted, looked vainly for open water, and quested dauntlessly on into the north. From bank to bank stretched the savage ice. Here and there the water burst through and flooded over, but in the chill nights froze solidly as ever. Tradition has it that of old time the Yukon lay unbroken through three long summers, and on the face of it there be traditions less easy of belief.

So summer waited for open water, and the tardy Yukon took to stretching of days and cracking its stiff joints. Now an air-hole ate into the ice, and ate and ate; or a fissure formed, and grew, and failed to freeze again. Then the ice ripped from the shore and uprose bodily a yard. But still the river was loth to loose its grip. It was a slow travail, and man, used to nursing nature with pigmy skill, able to burst waterspouts and harness waterfalls, could avail nothing against the billions of frigid tons which refused to run down the hill to Bering Sea.

On Split-up Island all were ready for the break-up. Waterways have ever been first highways, and the Yukon was the sole highway in all the land. So those bound up-river pitched their poling-boats and shod their poles with iron, and those bound down caulked their scows and barges and shaped spare sweeps with axe and drawing-knife. Jacob Welse loafed and joyed in the utter cessation from work, and Frona joyed with him in that it was good. But Baron Courbertin was in a fever at the delay. His hot blood grew riotous after the long hibernation, and the warm sunshine dazzled him with warmer fancies.

“Oh! Oh! It will never break! Never!” And he stood gazing at the surly ice and raining politely phrased anathema upon it. “It is a conspiracy, poor La Bijou, a conspiracy!” He caressed La Bijou like it were a horse, for so he had christened the glistening Peterborough canoe.

Frona and St. Vincent laughed and preached him the gospel of patience, which he proceeded to tuck away into the deepest abysses of perdition till interrupted by Jacob Welse.

“Look, Courbertin! Over there, south of the bluff. Do you make out anything? Moving?”

“Yes; a dog.”

“It moves too slowly for a dog. Frona, get the glasses.”

Courbertin and St. Vincent sprang after them, but the latter knew their abiding-place and returned triumphant. Jacob Welse put the binoculars to his eyes and gazed steadily across the river. It was a sheer mile from the island to the farther bank, and the sunglare on the ice was a sore task to the vision.

“It is a man.” He passed the glasses to the Baron and strained absently with his naked eyes. “And something is up.”

“He creeps!” the baron exclaimed. “The man creeps, he crawls, on hand and knee! Look! See!” He thrust the glasses tremblingly into Frona’s hands.

Looking across the void of shimmering white, it was difficult to discern a dark object of such size when dimly outlined against an equally dark background of brush and earth. But Frona could make the man out with fair distinctness; and as she grew accustomed to the strain she could distinguish each movement, and especially so when he came to a wind-thrown pine. Sue watched painfully. Twice, after tortuous effort, squirming and twisting, he failed in breasting the big trunk, and on the third attempt, after infinite exertion, he cleared it only to topple helplessly forward and fall on his face in the tangled undergrowth.

"It is a man." She turned the glasses over to St. Vincent. "And he is crawling feebly. He fell just then this side of the log."

"Does he move?" Jacob Welse asked, and, on a shake of St. Vincent's head, brought his rifle from the tent.

He fired six shots skyward in rapid succession. "He moves!" The correspondent followed him closely. "He is crawling to the bank. Ah! . . . No; one moment . . . Yes! He lies on the ground and raises his hat, or something, on a stick. He is waving it." (Jacob Welse fired six more shots.) "He waves again. Now he has dropped it and lies quite still."

All three looked inquiringly to Jacob Welse.

He shrugged his shoulders. "How should I know? A white man or an Indian; starvation most likely, or else he is injured."

"But he may be dying," Frona pleaded, as though her father, who had done most things, could do all things.

"We can do nothing."

"Ah! Terrible! terrible!" The baron wrung his hands. "Before our very eyes, and we can do nothing! No!" he exclaimed, with swift resolution, "it shall not be! I will cross the ice!"

He would have started precipitately down the bank had not Jacob Welse caught his arm.

"Not such a rush, baron. Keep your head."

"But — "

"But nothing. Does the man want food, or medicine, or what? Wait a moment. We will try it together."

"Count me in," St. Vincent volunteered promptly, and Frona's eyes sparkled.

While she made up a bundle of food in the tent, the men provided and rigged themselves with sixty or seventy feet of light rope. Jacob Welse and St. Vincent made themselves fast to it at either end, and the baron in the middle. He claimed the food as his portion, and strapped it to his broad shoulders. Frona watched their progress from the bank. The first hundred yards were easy going, but she noticed at once the change when they had passed the limit of the fairly solid shore-ice. Her father led sturdily, feeling ahead and to the side with his staff and changing direction continually.

St. Vincent, at the rear of the extended line, was the first to go through, but he fell with the pole thrust deftly across the opening and resting on the ice. His head did not go under, though the current sucked powerfully, and the two men dragged him out after a sharp pull. Frona saw them consult together for a minute, with much pointing and gesticulating on the part of the baron, and then St. Vincent detach himself and turn shoreward.

“Br-r-r-r,” he shivered, coming up the bank to her. “It’s impossible.”

“But why didn’t they come in?” she asked, a slight note of displeasure manifest in her voice.

“Said they were going to make one more try, first. That Courbertin is hot-headed, you know.”

“And my father just as bull-headed,” she smiled. “But hadn’t you better change? There are spare things in the tent.”

“Oh, no.” He threw himself down beside her. “It’s warm in the sun.”

For an hour they watched the two men, who had become mere specks of black in the distance; for they had managed to gain the middle of the river and at the same time had worked nearly a mile up-stream. Frona followed them closely with the glasses, though often they were lost to sight behind the ice-ridges.

“It was unfair of them,” she heard St. Vincent complain, “to say they were only going to have one more try. Otherwise I should not have turned back. Yet they can’t make it — absolutely impossible.”

“Yes . . . No . . . Yes! They’re turning back,” she announced. “But listen! What is that?”

A hoarse rumble, like distant thunder, rose from the midst of the ice.

She sprang to her feet. “Gregory, the river can’t be breaking!”

“No, no; surely not. See, it is gone.” The noise which had come from above had died away downstream.

“But there! There!”

Another rumble, hoarser and more ominous than before, lifted itself and hushed the robins and the squirrels. When abreast of them, it sounded like a railroad train on a distant trestle. A third rumble, which approached a roar and was of greater duration, began from above and passed by.

“Oh, why don’t they hurry!”

The two specks had stopped, evidently in conversation. She ran the glasses hastily up and down the river. Though another roar had risen, she could make out no commotion. The ice lay still and motionless. The robins resumed their singing, and the squirrels were chattering with spiteful glee.

"Don't fear, Frona." St. Vincent put his arm about her protectingly. "If there is any danger, they know it better than we, and they are taking their time."

"I never saw a big river break up," she confessed, and resigned herself to the waiting.

The roars rose and fell sporadically, but there were no other signs of disruption, and gradually the two men, with frequent duckings, worked inshore. The water was streaming from them and they were shivering severely as they came up the bank.

"At last!" Frona had both her father's hands in hers. "I thought you would never come back."

"There, there. Run and get dinner," Jacob Welse laughed. "There was no danger."

"But what was it?"

"Stewart River's broken and sending its ice down under the Yukon ice. We could hear the grinding plainly out there."

"Ah! And it was terrible! terrible!" cried the baron. "And that poor, poor man, we cannot save him!"

"Yes, we can. We'll have a try with the dogs after dinner. Hurry, Frona."

But the dogs were a failure. Jacob Welse picked out the leaders as the more intelligent, and with grub-packs on them drove them out from the bank. They could not grasp what was demanded of them. Whenever they tried to return they were driven back with sticks and clods and imprecations. This only bewildered them, and they retreated out of range, whence they raised their wet, cold paws and whined pitifully to the shore.

"If they could only make it once, they would understand, and then it would go like clock-work. Ah! Would you? Go on! Chook, Miriam! Chook! The thing is to get the first one across."

Jacob Welse finally succeeded in getting Miriam, lead-dog to Frona's team, to take the trail left by him and the baron. The dog went on bravely, scrambling over, floundering through, and sometimes swimming; but when she had gained the farthest point reached by them, she sat down helplessly.

Later on, she cut back to the shore at a tangent, landing on the deserted island above; and an hour afterwards trotted into camp minus the grub-pack. Then the two dogs, hovering just out of range, compromised matters by devouring each other's burdens; after which the attempt was given over and they were called in.

During the afternoon the noise increased in frequency, and by nightfall was continuous, but by morning it had ceased utterly. The river had risen eight feet, and in many places was running over its crust. Much crackling and splitting were going on, and fissures leaping into life and multiplying in all directions.

"The under-tow ice has jammed below among the islands," Jacob Welse explained. "That's what caused the rise. Then, again, it has jammed at the mouth of the Stewart and is backing up. When that breaks through, it will go down underneath and stick on the lower jam."

"And then? and then?" The baron exulted.

"La Bijou will swim again."

As the light grew stronger, they searched for the man across the river. He had not moved, but in response to their rifle-shots waved feebly.

"Nothing for it till the river breaks, baron, and then a dash with La Bijou. St. Vincent, you had better bring your blankets up and sleep here to-night. We'll need three paddles, and I think we can get McPherson."

"No need," the correspondent hastened to reply. "The back-channel is like adamant, and I'll be up by daybreak."

"But I? Why not?" Baron Courbertin demanded. Frona laughed. "Remember, we haven't given you your first lessons yet."

"And there'll hardly be time to-morrow," Jacob Welse added. "When she goes, she goes with a rush. St. Vincent, McPherson, and I will have to make the crew, I'm afraid. Sorry, baron. Stay with us another year and you'll be fit."

But Baron Courbertin was inconsolable, and sulked for a full half-hour.

CHAPTER XXIV

"Awake! You dreamers, wake!"

Frona was out of her sleeping-furs at Del Bishop's first call; but ere she had slipped a skirt on and bare feet into moccasins, her father, beyond the blanket-curtain, had thrown back the flaps of the tent and stumbled out.

The river was up. In the chill gray light she could see the ice rubbing softly against the very crest of the bank; it even topped it in places, and the huge cakes worked inshore many feet. A hundred yards out the white field merged into the dim dawn and the gray sky. Subdued splits and splutters whispered from out the obscureness, and a gentle grinding could be heard.

"When will it go?" she asked of Del.

"Not a bit too lively for us. See there!" He pointed with his toe to the water lapping out from under the ice and creeping greedily towards them. "A foot rise every ten minutes."

"Danger?" he scoffed. "Not on your life. It's got to go. Them islands" — waving his hand indefinitely down river — "can't hold up under more pressure. If they don't let go the ice, the ice'll scour them clean out of the bed of the Yukon. Sure! But I've got to be chasin' back. Lower ground down our way. Fifteen inches on the cabin floor, and McPherson and Corliss hustlin' perishables into the bunks."

"Tell McPherson to be ready for a call," Jacob Welse shouted after him. And then to Frona, "Now's the time for St. Vincent to cross the back-channel."

The baron, shivering barefooted, pulled out his watch. "Ten minutes to three," he chattered.

"Hadn't you better go back and get your moccasins?" Frona asked. "There will be time."

"And miss the magnificence? Hark!"

From nowhere in particular a brisk crackling arose, then died away. The ice was in motion. Slowly, very slowly, it proceeded down stream. There was no commotion, no ear-splitting thunder, no splendid display of force; simply a silent flood of white, an orderly procession of tight-packed ice — packed so closely that not a drop of water was in evidence. It was there, somewhere, down underneath; but it had to be taken on faith. There was a dull hum or muffled grating, but so low in pitch that the ear strained to catch it.

“Ah! Where is the magnificence? It is a fake!”

The baron shook his fists angrily at the river, and Jacob Welse’s thick brows seemed to draw down in order to hide the grim smile in his eyes.

“Ha! ha! I laugh! I snap my fingers! See! I defy!”

As the challenge left his lips. Baron Courbertin stepped upon a cake which rubbed lightly past at his feet. So unexpected was it, that when Jacob Welse reached after him he was gone.

The ice was picking up in momentum, and the hum growing louder and more threatening. Balancing gracefully, like a circus-rider, the Frenchman whirled away along the rim of the bank. Fifty precarious feet he rode, his mount becoming more unstable every instant, and he leaped neatly to the shore. He came back laughing, and received for his pains two or three of the choicest phrases Jacob Welse could select from the essentially masculine portion of his vocabulary.

“And for why?” Courbertin demanded, stung to the quick.

“For why?” Jacob Welse mimicked wrathfully, pointing into the sleek stream sliding by.

A great cake had driven its nose into the bed of the river thirty feet below and was struggling to up-end. All the frigid flood behind crinkled and bent back like so much paper. Then the stalled cake turned completely over and thrust its muddy nose skyward. But the squeeze caught it, while cake mounted cake at its back, and its fifty feet of muck and gouge were hurled into the air. It crashed upon the moving mass beneath, and flying fragments landed at the feet of those that watched. Caught broadside in a chaos of pressures, it crumbled into scattered pieces and disappeared.

“God!” The baron spoke the word reverently and with awe.

Frona caught his hand on the one side and her father’s on the other. The ice was now leaping past in feverish haste. Somewhere below a heavy cake butted into the bank, and the ground swayed under their feet. Another followed it, nearer the surface, and as they sprang back, upreared mightily, and, with a ton or so of soil on its broad back, bowled insolently onward. And yet another, reaching inshore like a huge hand, ripped three careless pines out by the roots and bore them away.

Day had broken, and the driving white gorged the Yukon from shore to shore. What of the pressure of pent water behind, the speed of the flood had become dizzying. Down all its length the bank was being gashed and gouged, and the island was jarring and shaking to its foundations.

“Oh, great! Great!” Frona sprang up and down between the men. “Where is your fake, baron?”

“Ah!” He shook his head. “Ah! I was wrong. I am miserable. But the magnificence! Look!”

He pointed down to the bunch of islands which obstructed the bend. There the mile-wide stream divided and subdivided again, — which was well for water, but not so well for packed ice. The islands drove their wedged heads into the frozen flood and tossed the cakes high into the air. But cake pressed upon cake and shelved out of the water, out and up, sliding and grinding and climbing, and still more cakes from behind, till hillocks and mountains of ice upreared and crashed among the trees.

“A likely place for a jam,” Jacob Welse said. “Get the glasses, Frona.” He gazed through them long and steadily. “It’s growing, spreading out. A cake at the right time and the right place . . .”

“But the river is falling!” Frona cried.

The ice had dropped six feet below the top of the bank, and the Baron Courbertin marked it with a stick.

“Our man’s still there, but he doesn’t move.”

It was clear day, and the sun was breaking forth in the north-east. They took turn about with the glasses in gazing across the river.

“Look! Is it not marvellous?” Courbertin pointed to the mark he had made. The water had dropped another foot. “Ah! Too bad! too bad! The jam; there will be none!”

Jacob Welse regarded him gravely.

“Ah! There will be?” he asked, picking up hope.

Frona looked inquiringly at her father.

“Jams are not always nice,” he said, with a short laugh. “It all depends where they take place and where you happen to be.”

“But the river! Look! It falls; I can see it before my eyes.”

“It is not too late.” He swept the island-studded bend and saw the ice-mountains larger and reaching out one to the other. “Go into the tent, Courbertin, and put on the pair of moccasins you’ll find by the stove. Go on. You won’t miss anything. And you, Frona, start the fire and get the coffee under way.”

Half an hour after, though the river had fallen twenty feet, they found the ice still pounding along.

"Now the fun begins. Here, take a squint, you hot-headed Gaul. The left-hand channel, man. Now she takes it!"

Courbertin saw the left-hand channel close, and then a great white barrier heave up and travel from island to island. The ice before them slowed down and came to rest. Then followed the instant rise of the river. Up it came in a swift rush, as though nothing short of the sky could stop it. As when they were first awakened, the cakes rubbed and slid inshore over the crest of the bank, the muddy water creeping in advance and marking the way.

"Mon Dieu! But this is not nice!"

"But magnificent, baron," Frona teased. "In the meanwhile you are getting your feet wet."

He retreated out of the water, and in time, for a small avalanche of cakes rattled down upon the place he had just left. The rising water had forced the ice up till it stood breast-high above the island like a wall.

"But it will go down soon when the jam breaks. See, even now it comes up not so swift. It has broken."

Frona was watching the barrier. "No, it hasn't," she denied.

"But the water no longer rises like a race-horse."

"Nor does it stop rising."

He was puzzled for the nonce. Then his face brightened. "Ah! I have it! Above, somewhere, there is another jam. Most excellent, is it not?"

She caught his excited hand in hers and detained him. "But, listen.
Suppose the upper jam breaks and the lower jam holds?"

He looked at her steadily till he grasped the full import. His face flushed, and with a quick intake of the breath he straightened up and threw back his head. He made a sweeping gesture as though to include the island. "Then you, and I, the tent, the boats, cabins, trees, everything, and La Bijou! Pouf! and all are gone, to the devil!"

Frona shook her head. "It is too bad."

"Bad? Pardon. Magnificent!"

"No, no, baron; not that. But that you are not an Anglo-Saxon. The race could well be proud of you."

"And you, Frona, would you not glorify the French!"

"At it again, eh? Throwing bouquets at yourselves." Del Bishop grinned at them, and made to depart as quickly as he had come. "But twist yourselves. Some sick men in a cabin down here. Got to get ‘em out. You’re needed. And don’t be all day about it,” he shouted over his shoulder as he disappeared among the trees.

The river was still rising, though more slowly, and as soon as they left the high ground they were splashing along ankle-deep in the water. Winding in and out among the trees, they came upon a boat which had been hauled out the previous fall. And three *chechaquos*, who had managed to get into the country thus far over the ice, had piled themselves into it, also their tent, sleds, and dogs. But the boat was perilously near the ice-gorge, which growled and wrestled and over-topped it a bare dozen feet away.

“Come! Get out of this, you fools!” Jacob Welse shouted as he went past.

Del Bishop had told them to “get the hell out of there” when he ran by, and they could not understand. One of them turned up an unheeding, terrified face. Another lay prone and listless across the thwarts as though bereft of strength; while the third, with the face of a clerk, rocked back and forth and moaned monotonously, “My God! My God!”

The baron stopped long enough to shake him. “Damn!” he cried. “Your legs, man! — not God, but your legs! Ah! ah! — hump yourself! Yes, hump! Get a move on! Twist! Get back from the bank! The woods, the trees, anywhere!”

He tried to drag him out, but the man struck at him savagely and held back.

“How one collects the vernacular,” he confided proudly to Frona as they hurried on. “Twist! It is a strong word, and suitable.”

“You should travel with Del,” she laughed. “He’d increase your stock in no time.”

“You don’t say so.”

“Yes, but I do.”

“Ah! Your idioms. I shall never learn.” And he shook his head despairingly with both his hands.

They came out in a clearing, where a cabin stood close to the river. On its flat earth-roof two sick men, swathed in blankets, were lying, while Bishop, Corliss, and Jacob Welse were splashing about inside the cabin after the clothes-bags and general outfit. The mean depth of the flood was a couple of feet, but the floor of the cabin had been dug out for purposes of warmth, and there the water was to the waist.

“Keep the tobacco dry,” one of the sick men said feebly from the roof.

“Tobacco, hell!” his companion advised. “Look out for the flour. And the sugar,” he added, as an afterthought.

“That’s ‘cause Bill he don’t smoke, miss,” the first man explained. “But keep an eye on it, won’t you?” he pleaded.

“Here. Now shut up.” Del tossed the canister beside him, and the man clutched it as though it were a sack of nuggets.

“Can I be of any use?” she asked, looking up at them.

“Nope. Scurvy. Nothing’ll do ‘em any good but God’s country and raw potatoes.” The pocket-miner regarded her for a moment. “What are you doing here, anyway? Go on back to high ground.”

But with a groan and a crash, the ice-wall bulged in. A fifty-ton cake ended over, splashing them with muddy water, and settled down before the door. A smaller cake drove against the out-jutting corner-logs and the cabin reeled. Courbertin and Jacob Welse were inside.

“After you,” Frona heard the baron, and then her father’s short amused laugh; and the gallant Frenchman came out last, squeezing his way between the cake and the logs.

“Say, Bill, if that there lower jam holds, we’re goners;” the man with the canister called to his partner.

“Ay, that it will,” came the answer. “Below Nulato I saw Bixbie Island swept clean as my old mother’s kitchen floor.”

The men came hastily together about Frona.

“This won’t do. We’ve got to carry them over to your shack, Corliss.” As he spoke, Jacob Welse clambered nimbly up the cabin and gazed down at the big barrier. “Where’s McPherson?” he asked.

“Petrified astride the ridge-pole this last hour.”

Jacob Welse waved his arm. “It’s breaking! There she goes!”

“No kitchen floor this time. Bill, with my respects to your old woman,” called he of the tobacco.

“Ay,” answered the imperturbable Bill.

The whole river seemed to pick itself up and start down the stream. With the increasing motion the ice-wall broke in a hundred places, and from up and down the shore came the rending and crashing of uprooted trees.

Corliss and Bishop laid hold of Bill and started off to McPherson’s, and Jacob Welse and the baron were just sliding his mate over the eaves, when a huge block of ice rammed in and smote the cabin squarely. Frona saw it, and cried a warning, but the tiered logs were overthrown like a house of cards. She saw Courbertin and the sick man hurled clear of the wreckage, and her father go down with it. She sprang to the spot, but he did not rise. She pulled at him to get his mouth above water, but at full stretch his head, barely showed. Then she let go and felt about with her hands till she found his right arm jammed between the logs. These she could not move, but she thrust between them one of the roof-poles which had underlaid the dirt and moss. It was a rude handspike and hardly equal to the work, for when she threw her weight upon the free end it bent and crackled. Heedful of the warning, she came in a couple of feet and swung upon it tentatively and carefully till something gave and Jacob Welse shoved his muddy face into the air.

He drew half a dozen great breaths, and burst out, “But that tastes good!” And then, throwing a quick glance about him, Frona, Del Bishop is a most veracious man.”

“Why?” she asked, perplexedly.

“Because he said you’d do, you know.”

He kissed her, and they both spat the mud from their lips, laughing. Courbertin floundered round a corner of the wreckage.

“Never was there such a man!” he cried, gleefully. “He is mad, crazy! There is no appeasement. His skull is cracked by the fall, and his tobacco is gone. It is chiefly the tobacco which is lamentable.”

But his skull was not cracked, for it was merely a slit of the scalp of five inches or so.

“You’ll have to wait till the others come back. I can’t carry.” Jacob Welse pointed to his right arm, which hung dead. “Only wrenched,” he explained. “No bones broken.”

The baron struck an extravagant attitude and pointed down at Frona’s foot. “Ah! the water, it is gone, and there, a jewel of the flood, a pearl of price!”

Her well-worn moccasins had gone rotten from the soaking, and a little white toe peeped out at the world of slime.

“Then I am indeed wealthy, baron; for I have nine others.”

“And who shall deny? who shall deny?” he cried, fervently.

“What a ridiculous, foolish, lovable fellow it is!”

“I kiss your hand.” And he knelt gallantly in the muck.

She jerked her hand away, and, burying it with its mate in his curly mop, shook his head back and forth. “What shall I do with him, father?”

Jacob Welse shrugged his shoulders and laughed; and she turned Courbertin's face up and kissed him on the lips. And Jacob Welse knew that his was the larger share in that manifest joy.

The river, fallen to its winter level, was pounding its ice-glut steadily along. But in falling it had rimmed the shore with a twenty-foot wall of stranded floes. The great blocks were spilled inland among the thrown and standing trees and the slime-coated flowers and grasses like the titanic vomit of some Northland monster. The sun was not idle, and the steaming thaw washed the mud and foulness from the bergs till they blazed like heaped diamonds in the brightness, or shimmered opalescent-blue. Yet they were reared hazardously one on another, and ever and anon flashing towers and rainbow minarets crumbled thunderously into the flood. By one of the gaps so made lay La Bijou, and about it, saving *chechaquos* and sick men, were grouped the denizens of Split-up.

"Na, na, lad; twa men'll be a plenty." Tommy McPherson sought about him with his eyes for corroboration. "Gin ye gat three i' the canoe 'twill be ower comfortable."

"It must be a dash or nothing," Corliss spoke up. "We need three men, Tommy, and you know it."

"Na, na; twa's a plenty, I'm tellin' ye."

"But I'm afraid we'll have to do with two."

The Scotch-Canadian evinced his satisfaction openly. "Mair'd be a bother; an' I doot not ye'll mak' it all richt, lad."

"And you'll make one of those two, Tommy," Corliss went on, inexorably.

"Na; there's ithers a plenty wi'oot coontin' me."

"No, there's not. Courbertin doesn't know the first thing. St. Vincent evidently cannot cross the slough. Mr. Welse's arm puts him out of it. So it's only you and I, Tommy."

"I'll not be inqueesitive, but yon son of Anak's a likely mon. He maun pit oop a guid stroke." While the Scot did not lose much love for the truculent pocket-miner, he was well aware of his grit, and seized the chance to save himself by shoving the other into the breach.

Del Bishop stepped into the centre of the little circle, paused, and looked every man in the eyes before he spoke.

"Is there a man here'll say I'm a coward?" he demanded without preface. Again he looked each one in the eyes. "Or is there a man who'll even hint that I ever did a curlike act?” And yet again he searched the circle. “Well and good. I hate the water, but I’ve never been afraid of it. I don’t know how to swim, yet I’ve been over the side more times than it’s good to remember. I can’t pull an oar without batting my back on the bottom of the boat. As for steering — well, authorities say there’s thirty-two points to the compass, but there’s at least thirty more when I get started. And as sure as God made little apples, I don’t know my elbow from my knee about a paddle. I’ve capsized damn near every canoe I ever set foot in. I’ve gone right through the bottom of two. I’ve turned turtle in the Canyon and been pulled out below the White Horse. I can only keep stroke with one man, and that man’s yours truly. But, gentlemen, if the call comes, I’ll take my place in La Bijou and take her to hell if she don’t turn over on the way.”

Baron Courbertin threw his arms about him, crying, “As sure as God made little apples, thou art a man!”

Tommy’s face was white, and he sought refuge in speech from the silence which settled down. “I’ll deny I lift a guid paddle, nor that my wind is fair; but gin ye gang a tithe the way the next jam’ll be on us. For my pairt I conseeder it ay rash. Bide a wee till the river’s clear, say I.”

“It’s no go, Tommy,” Jacob Welse admonished. “You can’t cash excuses here.”

“But, mon! It doesna need discreemeenation — ”

“That’ll do!” from Corliss. “You’re coming.”

“I’ll naething o’ the sort. I’ll — ”

“Shut up!” Del had come into the world with lungs of leather and larynx of brass, and when he thus jerked out the stops the Scotsman quailed and shrank down.

“Oyez! Oyez!” In contrast to Del’s siren tones, Frona’s were purest silver as they rippled down-island through the trees. “Oyez! Oyez! Open water! Open water! And wait a minute. I’ll be with you.”

Three miles up-stream, where the Yukon curved grandly in from the west, a bit of water appeared. It seemed too marvellous for belief, after the granite winter; but McPherson, untouched of imagination, began a crafty retreat.

“Bide a wee, bide a wee,” he protested, when collared by the pocket-miner. “A’ve forgot my pipe.”

“Then you’ll bide with us, Tommy,” Del sneered. “And I’d let you have a draw of mine if your own wasn’t sticking out of your pocket.”

"'Twas the baccy I'd in mind."

"Then dig into this." He shoved his pouch into McPherson's shaking hands. "You'd better shed your coat. Here! I'll help you. And private, Tommy, if you don't act the man, I won't do a thing to you. Sure."

Corliss had stripped his heavy flannel shirt for freedom; and it was plain, when Frona joined them, that she also had been shedding. Jacket and skirt were gone, and her underskirt of dark cloth ceased midway below the knee.

"You'll do," Del commended.

Jacob Welse looked at her anxiously, and went over to where she was testing the grips of the several paddles. "You're not — ?" he began.

She nodded.

"You're a guid girl," McPherson broke in. "Now, a've a wumman to home, to say naething o' three bairns — "

"All ready!" Corliss lifted the bow of La Bijou and looked back.

The turbid water lashed by on the heels of the ice-run. Courbertin took the stern in the steep descent, and Del marshalled Tommy's reluctant rear. A flat floe, dipping into the water at a slight incline, served as the embarking-stage.

"Into the bow with you, Tommy!"

The Scotsman groaned, felt Bishop breathe heavily at his back, and obeyed; Frona meeting his weight by slipping into the stern.

"I can steer," she assured Corliss, who for the first time was aware that she was coming.

He glanced up to Jacob Welse, as though for consent, and received it.

"Hit 'er up! Hit 'er up!" Del urged impatiently. "You're burnin' daylight!"

CHAPTER XXV

La Bijou was a perfect expression of all that was dainty and delicate in the boat-builder's soul. Light as an egg-shell, and as fragile, her three-eighths-inch skin offered no protection from a driving chunk of ice as small as a man's head. Nor, though the water was open, did she find a clear way, for the river was full of scattered floes which had crumbled down from the rim-ice. And here, at once, through skilful handling, Corliss took to himself confidence in Frona.

It was a great picture: the river rushing blackly between its crystalline walls; beyond, the green woods stretching upward to touch the cloud-flecked summer sky; and over all, like a furnace blast, the hot sun beating down. A great picture, but somehow Corliss's mind turned to his mother and her perennial tea, the soft carpets, the prim New England maid-servants, the canaries singing in the wide windows, and he wondered if she could understand. And when he thought of the woman behind him, and felt the dip and lift, dip and lift, of her paddle, his mother's women came back to him, one by one, and passed in long review, — pale, glimmering ghosts, he thought, caricatures of the stock which had replenished the earth, and which would continue to replenish the earth.

La Bijou skirted a pivoting floe, darted into a nipping channel, and shot out into the open with the walls grinding together behind. Tommy groaned.

"Well done!" Corliss encouraged.

"The fule wumman!" came the backward snarl. "Why couldna she bide a bit?"

Frona caught his words and flung a laugh defiantly. Vance darted a glance over his shoulder to her, and her smile was witchery. Her cap, perched precariously, was sliding off, while her flying hair, aglint in the sunshine, framed her face as he had seen it framed on the Dyea Trail.

"How I should like to sing, if it weren't for saving one's breath. Say the 'Song of the Sword,' or the 'Anchor Chanty.'"

"Or the 'First Chanty,'" Corliss answered. "'Mine was the woman, darkling I found her,'" he hummed, significantly.

She flashed her paddle into the water on the opposite side in order to go wide of a jagged cake, and seemed not to hear. "I could go on this way forever."

“And I,” Corliss affirmed, warmly.

But she refused to take notice, saying, instead, “Vance, do you know I’m glad we’re friends?”

“No fault of mine we’re not more.”

“You’re losing your stroke, sir,” she reprimanded; and he bent silently to the work.

La Bijou was driving against the current at an angle of forty-five degrees, and her resultant course was a line at right angles to the river. Thus, she would tap the western bank directly opposite the starting-point, where she could work up-stream in the slacker flood. But a mile of indented shore, and then a hundred yards of bluffs rising precipitously from out a stiff current would still lie between them and the man to be rescued.

“Now let us ease up,” Corliss advised, as they slipped into an eddy and drifted with the back-tide under the great wall of rim-ice.

“Who would think it mid-May?” She glanced up at the carelessly poised cakes. “Does it seem real to you, Vance?”

He shook his head.

“Nor to me. I know that I, Frona, in the flesh, am here, in a Peterborough, paddling for dear life with two men; year of our Lord eighteen hundred and ninety-eight, Alaska, Yukon River; this is water, that is ice; my arms are tired, my heart up a few beats, and I am sweating, — and yet it seems all a dream. Just think! A year ago I was in Paris!” She drew a deep breath and looked out over the water to the further shore, where Jacob Welse’s tent, like a snowy handkerchief, sprawled against the deep green of the forest. “I do not believe there is such a place,” she added. “There is no Paris.”

“And I was in London a twelvemonth past,” Corliss meditated. “But I have undergone a new incarnation. London? There is no London now. It is impossible. How could there be so many people in the world? This is the world, and we know of fact that there are very few people in it, else there could not be so much ice and sea and sky. Tommy, here, I know, thinks fondly of a place he calls Toronto. He mistakes. It exists only in his mind, — a memory of a former life he knew. Of course, he does not think so. That is but natural; for he is no philosopher, nor does he bother — ”

“Wheest, will ye!” Tommy fiercely whispered. “Your gabble’ll bring it doon aboot oor heads.”

Life is brief in the Northland, and fulfilment ever clutters the heels of prophecy. A premonitory tremor sighed down the air, and the rainbow wall swayed above them. The three paddles gripped the water with common accord. La Bijou leaped out from under. Broadside after broadside flared and crashed, and a thousand frigid tons thundered down behind them. The displaced water surged outward in a foamy, upstanding circle, and La Bijou, striving wildly to rise, ducked through the stiff overhang of the crest and wallowed, half-full, in the trough.

"Dinna I tell ye, ye gabbling fules!"

"Sit still, and bail!" Corliss checked him sharply. "Or you'll not have the comfort of telling us anything."

He shook his head at Frona, and she winked back; then they both chuckled, much like children over an escapade which looks disastrous but turns out well.

Creeping timidly under the shadow of the impending avalanches, La Bijou slipped noiselessly up the last eddy. A corner of the bluff rose savagely from the river — a monstrous mass of naked rock, scarred and battered of the centuries; hating the river that gnawed it ever; hating the rain that graved its grim face with unsightly seams; hating the sun that refused to mate with it, whereof green life might come forth and hide its hideousness. The whole force of the river hurled in against it, waged furious war along its battlements, and caromed off into mid-stream again. Down all its length the stiff waves stood in serried rows, and its crevices and water-worn caverns were a-bellow with unseen strife.

"Now! Bend to it! Your best!"

It was the last order Corliss could give, for in the din they were about to enter a man's voice were like a cricket's chirp amid the growling of an earthquake. La Bijou sprang forward, cleared the eddy with a bound, and plunged into the thick. *Dip and lift, dip and lift*, the paddles worked with rhythmic strength. The water rippled and tore, and pulled all ways at once; and the fragile shell, unable to go all ways at once, shook and quivered with the shock of resistance. It veered nervously to the right and left, but Frona held it with a hand of steel. A yard away a fissure in the rock grinned at them. La Bijou leaped and shot ahead, and the water, slipping away underneath, kept her always in one place. Now they surged out from the fissure, now in; ahead for half a yard, then back again; and the fissure mocked their toil.

Five minutes, each of which sounded a separate eternity, and the fissure was past. Ten minutes, and it was a hundred feet astern. *Dip and lift, dip* *and lift*, till sky and earth and river were blotted out, and consciousness dwindled to a thin line, — a streak of foam, fringed on the one hand with sneering rock, on the other with snarling water. That thin line summed up all. Somewhere below was the beginning of things; somewhere above, beyond the roar and traffic, was the end of things; and for that end they strove.

And still Frona held the egg-shell with a hand of steel. What they gained they held, and fought for more, inch by inch, *dip and lift*; and all would have been well but for the flutter of Tommy's soul. A cake of ice, sucked beneath by the current, rose under his paddle with a flurry of foam, turned over its toothed edge, and was dragged back into the depths. And in that sight he saw himself, hair streaming upward and drowned hands clutching emptiness, going feet first, down and down. He stared, wide-eyed, at the portent, and his poised paddle refused to strike. On the instant the fissure grinned in their faces, and the next they were below the bluffs, drifting gently in the eddy.

Frona lay, head thrown back, sobbing at the sun; amidships Corliss sprawled panting; and forward, choking and gasping and nerveless, the Scotsman drooped his head upon his knees. La Bijou rubbed softly against the rim-ice and came to rest. The rainbow-wall hung above like a fairy pile; the sun, flung backward from innumerable facets, clothed it in jewelled splendor. Silvery streams tinkled down its crystal slopes; and in its clear depths seemed to unfold, veil on veil, the secrets of life and death and mortal striving, — vistas of pale-shimmering azure opening like dream-visions, and promising, down there in the great cool heart, infinite rest, infinite cessation and rest.

The topmost tower, delicately massive, a score of feet above them, swayed to and fro, gently, like the ripple of wheat in light summer airs. But Corliss gazed at it unheeding. Just to lie there, on the marge of the mystery, just to lie there and drink the air in great gulps, and do nothing! — he asked no more. A dervish, whirling on heel till all things blur, may grasp the essence of the universe and prove the Godhead indivisible; and so a man, plying a paddle, and plying and plying, may shake off his limitations and rise above time and space. And so Corliss.

But gradually his blood ceased its mad pounding, and the air was no longer nectar-sweet, and a sense of things real and pressing came back to him.

“We’ve got to get out of this,” he said. His voice sounded like a man’s whose throat has been scorched by many and long potations. It frightened him, but he limply lifted a shaking paddle and shoved off.

“Yes; let us start, by all means,” Frona said in a dim voice, which seemed to come to him from a far distance.

Tommy lifted his head and gazed about. “A doot we’ll juist hae to gie it oop.”

“Bend to it!”

“Ye’ll no try it anither?”

“Bend to it!” Corliss repeated.

“Till your heart bursts, Tommy,” Frona added.

Once again they fought up the thin line, and all the world vanished, save the streak of foam, and the snarling water, and the grinning fissure. But they passed it, inch by inch, and the broad bend welcomed them from above, and only a rocky buttress of implacable hate, around whose base howled the tides of an equal hate, stood between. Then La Bijou leaped and throbbed and shook again, and the current slid out from under, and they remained ever in one place. *Dip and lift, dip and lift*, through an infinity of time and torture and travail, till even the line dimmed and faded and the struggle lost its meaning. Their souls became merged in the rhythm of the toil. Ever lifting, ever falling, they seemed to have become great pendulums of time. And before and behind glimmered the eternities, and between the eternities, ever lifting, ever falling, they pulsed in vast rhythmical movement. They were no longer humans, but rhythms. They surged in till their paddles touched the bitter rock, but they did not know; surged out, where chance piloted them unscathed through the lashing ice, but they did not see. Nor did they feel the shock of the smitten waves, nor the driving spray that cooled their faces. . .

La Bijou veered out into the stream, and their paddles, flashing mechanically in the sunshine, held her to the return angle across the river. As time and matter came back to them, and Split-up Island dawned upon their eyes like the foreshore of a new world, they settled down to the long easy stroke wherein breath and strength may be recovered.

“A third attempt would have been useless,” Corliss said, in a dry, cracked whisper.

And Frona answered, “Yes; our hearts would have surely broken.”

Life, and the pleasant camp-fire, and the quiet rest in the noonday shade, came back to Tommy as the shore drew near, and more than all, blessed Toronto, its houses that never moved, and its jostling streets. Each time his head sank forward and he reached out and clutched the water with his paddle, the streets enlarged, as though gazing through a telescope and adjusting to a nearer focus. And each time the paddle drove clear and his head was raised, the island bounded forward. His head sank, and the streets were of the size of life; it raised, and Jacob Welse and the two men stood on the bank three lengths away.

"Dinna I tell ye!" he shouted to them, triumphantly.

But Frona jerked the canoe parallel with the bank, and he found himself gazing at the long up-stream stretch. He arrested a stroke midway, and his paddle clattered in the bottom.

"Pick it up!" Corliss's voice was sharp and relentless.

"I'll do naething o' the kind." He turned a rebellious face on his tormentor, and ground his teeth in anger and disappointment.

The canoe was drifting down with the current, and Frona merely held it in place. Corliss crawled forward on his knees.

"I don't want to hurt you, Tommy," he said in a low, tense voice, "so . . . well, just pick it up, that's a good fellow."

"I'll no."

"Then I shall kill you," Corliss went on, in the same calm, passionless way, at the same time drawing his hunting-knife from its sheath.

"And if I dinna?" the Scotsman queried stoutly, though cowering away.

Corliss pressed gently with the knife. The point of the steel entered Tommy's back just where the heart should be, passed slowly through the shirt, and bit into the skin. Nor did it stop there; neither did it quicken, but just as slowly held on its way. He shrank back, quivering.

"There! there! man! Pit it oop!" he shrieked. "I maun gie in!"

Frona's face was quite pale, but her eyes were hard, brilliantly hard, and she nodded approval.

"We're going to try this side, and shoot across from above," she called to her father. "What? I can't hear. Tommy? Oh, his heart's weak. Nothing serious." She saluted with her paddle. "We'll be back in no time, father mine. In no time."

Stewart River was wide open, and they ascended it a quarter of a mile before they shot its mouth and continued up the Yukon. But when they were well abreast of the man on the opposite bank a new obstacle faced them. A mile above, a wreck of an island clung desperately to the river bed. Its tail dwindled to a sand-spit which bisected the river as far down as the impassable bluffs. Further, a few hundred thousand tons of ice had grounded upon the spit and upreared a glittering ridge.

"We'll have to portage," Corliss said, as Frona turned the canoe from the bank.

La Bijou darted across the narrower channel to the sand-spit and slipped up a little ice ravine, where the walls were less precipitous. They landed on an out-jutting cake, which, without support, overhung the water for sheer thirty feet. How far its other end could be buried in the mass was matter for conjecture. They climbed to the summit, dragging the canoe after them, and looked out over the dazzle. Floe was piled on floe in titanic confusion. Huge blocks topped and overtopped one another, only to serve as pedestals for great white masses, which blazed and scintillated in the sun like monstrous jewels.

"A bonny place for a bit walk," Tommy sneered, "wi' the next jam fair to come ony time." He sat down resolutely. "No, thank ye kindly, I'll no try it."

Frona and Corliss clambered on, the canoe between them.

"The Persians lashed their slaves into battle," she remarked, looking back. "I never understood before. Hadn't you better go back after him?"

Corliss kicked him up, whimpering, and forced him to go on in advance. The canoe was an affair of little weight, but its bulk, on the steep rises and sharp turns, taxed their strength. The sun burned down upon them. Its white glare hurt their eyes, the sweat oozed out from every pore, and they panted for breath.

"Oh, Vance, do you know . . ."

"What?" He swept the perspiration from his forehead and flung it from him with a quick flirt of the hand.

"I wish I had eaten more breakfast."

He grunted sympathetically. They had reached the midmost ridge and could see the open river, and beyond, quite clearly, the man and his signal of distress. Below, pastoral in its green quiet, lay Split-up Island. They looked up to the broad bend of the Yukon, smiling lazily, as though it were not capable at any moment of spewing forth a flood of death. At their feet the ice sloped down into a miniature gorge, across which the sun cast a broad shadow.

"Go on, Tommy," Frona bade. "We're half-way over, and there's water down there."

"It's water ye'd be thinkin' on, is it?" he snarled, "and you a-leadin' a buddie to his death!"

"I fear you have done some great sin, Tommy," she said, with a reproving shake of the head, "or else you would not be so afraid of death." She sighed and picked up her end of the canoe. "Well, I suppose it is natural. You do not know how to die — "

"No more do I want to die," he broke in fiercely.

"But there come times for all men to die, — times when to die is the only thing to do. Perhaps this is such a time."

Tommy slid carefully over a glistening ledge and dropped his height to a broad foothold. "It's a' vera guid," he grinned up; "but dinna ye think a've suffeecient discreemeenation to judge for mysel'? Why should I no sing my ain sang?"

"Because you do not know how. The strong have ever pitched the key for such as you. It is they that have taught your kind when and how to die, and led you to die, and lashed you to die."

"Ye pit it fair," he rejoined. "And ye do it weel. It doesna behoove me to complain, sic a michty fine job ye're makin' on it."

"You are doing well," Corliss chuckled, as Tommy dropped out of sight and landed into the bed of the gorge. "The cantankerous brute! he'd argue on the trail to Judgment."

"Where did you learn to paddle?" she asked.

"College — exercise," he answered, shortly. "But isn't that fine?
Look!"

The melting ice had formed a pool in the bottom of the gorge. Frona stretched out full length, and dipped her hot mouth in its coolness. And lying as she did, the soles of her dilapidated moccasins, or rather the soles of her feet (for moccasins and stockings had gone in shreds), were turned upward. They were very white, and from contact with the ice were bruised and cut. Here and there the blood oozed out, and from one of the toes it streamed steadily.

"So wee, and pretty, and salt-like," Tommy gibed. "One wouldna think they could lead a strong man to hell."

“By the way you grumble, they’re leading you fast enough,” Corliss answered angrily.

“Forty mile an hour,” Tommy retorted, as he walked away, gloating over having the last word.

“One moment. You’ve two shirts. Lend me one.”

The Scotsman’s face lighted inquisitively, till he comprehended. Then he shook his head and started on again.

Frona scrambled to her feet. “What’s the matter?”

“Nothing. Sit down.”

“But what is the matter?”

Corliss put his hands on her shoulders and pressed her back. “Your feet. You can’t go on in such shape. They’re in ribbons. See!” He brushed the sole of one of them and held up a blood-dripping palm. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Oh, they didn’t bother — much.”

“Give me one of your skirts,” he demanded.

“I . . .” She faltered. “I only have one.”

He looked about him. Tommy had disappeared among the ice-floes.

“We must be getting on,” Frona said, attempting to rise.

But he held her back. “Not another step till I fix you. Here goes, so shut your eyes.”

She obeyed, and when she opened them he was naked to the waist, and his undershirt, torn in strips, was being bound about her feet.

“You were in the rear, and I did not know — ”

“Don’t apologize, pray,” she interrupted. “I could have spoken.”

“I’m not; I’m reproaching you. Now, the other one. Put it up!”

The nearness to her bred a madness, and he touched his lips lightly to the same white little toe that had won the Baron Courbertin a kiss.

Though she did not draw back, her face flushed, and she thrilled as she had thrilled once before in her life. “You take advantage of your own goodness,” she rebuked him.

“Then I will doubly advantage myself.”

“Please don’t,” she begged.

“And why not? It is a custom of the sea to broach the spirits as the ship prepares to sink. And since this is a sort of a forlorn hope, you know, why not?”

“But . . .”

"But what, Miss Prim?"

"Oh! Of all things, you know I do not deserve that! If there were nobody else to be considered, why, under the circumstances . . ."

He drew the last knot tight and dropped her foot. "Damn St. Vincent, anyway! Come on!"

"So would I, were I you," she laughed, taking up her end of the canoe. "But how you have changed, Vance. You are not the same man I met on the Dyea Trail. You hadn't learned to swear, then, among other things."

"No, I'm not the same; for which I thank God and you. Only I think I am honester than you. I always live up to my philosophy."

"Now confess that's unfair. You ask too much under the circumstances — "

"Only a little toe."

"Or else, I suppose, you just care for me in a kind, big-brotherly way. In which case, if you really wish it, you may — "

"Do keep quiet," he broke in, roughly, "or I'll be making a gorgeous fool of myself."

"Kiss all my toes," she finished.

He grunted, but did not deign a reply. The work quickly took their breath, and they went on in silence till they descended the last steep to where McPherson waited by the open river.

"Del hates St. Vincent," she said boldly. "Why?"

"Yes, it seems that way." He glanced back at her curiously. "And wherever he goes, Del lugs an old Russian book, which he can't read but which he nevertheless regards, in some sort of way, as St. Vincent's Nemesis. And do you know, Frona, he has such faith in it that I can't help catching a little myself. I don't know whether you'll come to me, or whether I'll go to you, but — "

She dropped her end of the canoe and broke out in laughter. He was annoyed, and a hurt spread of blood ruddied his face.

"If I have — " he began.

"Stupid!" she laughed. "Don't be silly! And above all don't be dignified. It doesn't exactly become you at the present moment, — your hair all tangled, a murderous knife in your belt, and naked to the waist like a pirate stripped for battle. Be fierce, frown, swear, anything, but please don't be dignified. I do wish I had my camera. In after years I could say: 'This, my friends, is Corliss, the great Arctic explorer, just as he looked at the conclusion of his world-famous trip *Through Darkest Alaska*.'"

He pointed an ominous finger at her and said sternly, "Where is your skirt?"

She involuntarily looked down. But its tatterdemalion presence relieved her, and her face jerked up scarlet.

"You should be ashamed!"

"Please, please do not be dignified," he laughed. "Very true, it doesn't exactly become you at the present moment. Now, if I had my camera — "

"Do be quiet and go on," she said. "Tommy is waiting. I hope the sun takes the skin all off your back," she panted vindictively, as they slid the canoe down the last shelf and dropped it into the water.

Ten minutes later they climbed the ice-wall, and on and up the bank, which was partly a hillside, to where the signal of distress still fluttered. Beneath it, on the ground, lay stretched the man. He lay very quietly, and the fear that they were too late was upon them, when he moved his head slightly and moaned. His rough clothes were in rags, and the black, bruised flesh of his feet showed through the remnants of his moccasins. His body was thin and gaunt, without flesh-pads or muscles, while the bones seemed ready to break through the tight-stretched skin. As Corliss felt his pulse, his eyes fluttered open and stared glassily. Frona shuddered.

"Man, it's fair gruesome," McPherson muttered, running his hand up a shrunken arm.

"You go on to the canoe, Frona," Corliss said. "Tommy and I will carry him down."

But her lips set firmly. Though the descent was made easier by her aid, the man was well shaken by the time they laid him in the bottom of the canoe, — so well shaken that some last shreds of consciousness were aroused. He opened his eyes and whispered hoarsely, "Jacob Welse . . . despatches . . . from the Outside." He plucked feebly at his open shirt, and across his emaciated chest they saw the leather strap, to which, doubtless, the despatch-pouch was slung.

At either end of the canoe there was room to spare, but amidships Corliss was forced to paddle with the man between his knees. La Bijou swung out blithely from the bank. It was down-stream at last, and there was little need for exertion.

Vance's arms and shoulders and back, a bright scarlet, caught Frona's attention. "My hopes are realized," she exulted, reaching out and softly stroking a burning arm. "We shall have to put cold cream on it when we get back."

"Go ahead," he encouraged. "That feels awfully good."

She splashed his hot back with a handful of the ice-cold water from overside. He caught his breath with a gasp, and shivered. Tommy turned about to look at them.

"It's a guid deed we'll 'a doon this day," he remarked, pleasantly.
"To gie a hand in distress is guid i' the sight of God."

"Who's afeared ?" Frona laughed.

"Weel," he deliberated, "I was a bit fashed, no doot, but — "

His utterance ceased, and he seemed suddenly to petrify. His eyes fixed themselves in a terrible stare over Frona's shoulder. And then, slowly and dreamily, with the solemnity fitting an invocation of Deity, murmured, "Guid Gawd Almichty!"

They whirled their heads about. A wall of ice was sweeping round the bend, and even as they looked the right-hand flank, unable to compass the curve, struck the further shore and flung up a ridge of heaving mountains.

"Guid Gawd! Guid Gawd! Like rats i' the trap!" Tommy jabbed his paddle futilely in the water.

"Get the stroke!" Corliss hissed in his ear, and La Bijou sprang away.

Frona steered straight across the current, at almost right angles, for Split-up; but when the sandspit, over which they had portaged, crashed at the impact of a million tons, Corliss glanced at her anxiously. She smiled and shook her head, at the same time slacking off the course.

"We can't make it," she whispered, looking back at the ice a couple of hundred feet away. "Our only chance is to run before it and work in slowly."

She cherished every inward inch jealously, holding the canoe up as sharply as she dared and at the same time maintaining a constant distance ahead of the ice-rim.

"I canna stand the pace," Tommy whimpered once; but the silence of Corliss and Frona seemed ominous, and he kept his paddle going.

At the very fore of the ice was a floe five or six feet thick and a couple of acres in extent. Reaching out in advance of the pack, it clove through the water till on either side there formed a bore like that of a quick flood-tide in an inland passage. Tommy caught sight of it, and would have collapsed had not Corliss prodded him, between strokes, with the point of his paddle.

"We can keep ahead," Frona panted; "but we must get time to make the landing?"

"When the chance comes, drive her in, bow on," Corliss counselled; "and when she strikes, jump and run for it."

"Climb, rather. I'm glad my skirt is short."

Repulsed by the bluffs of the left bank, the ice was forced towards the right. The big floe, in advance, drove in upon the precise point of Split-up Island.

"If you look back, I'll brain you with the paddle," Corliss threatened.

"Ay," Tommy groaned.

But Corliss looked back, and so did Frona. The great berg struck the land with an earthquake shock. For fifty feet the soft island was demolished. A score of pines swayed frantically and went down, and where they went down rose up a mountain of ice, which rose, and fell, and rose again. Below, and but a few feet away, Del Bishop ran out to the bank, and above the roar they could hear faintly his "Hit 'er up! Hit 'er up!" Then the ice-rim wrinkled up and he sprang back to escape it.

"The first opening," Corliss gasped.

Frona's lips spread apart; she tried to speak but failed, then nodded her head that she had heard. They swung along in rapid rhythm under the rainbow-wall, looking for a place where it might be quickly cleared. And down all the length of Split-up Island they raced vainly, the shore crashing behind them as they fled.

As they darted across the mouth of the back-channel to Roubeau Island they found themselves heading directly for an opening in the rim-ice. La Bijou drove into it full tilt, and went half her length out of water on a shelving cake. The three leaped together, but while the two of them gripped the canoe to run it up, Tommy, in the lead, strove only to save himself. And he would have succeeded had he not slipped and fallen midway in the climb. He half arose, slipped, and fell again. Corliss, hauling on the bow of the canoe, trampled over him. He reached up and clutched the gunwale. They did not have the strength, and this clog brought them at once to a standstill. Corliss looked back and yelled for him to leave go, but he only turned upward a piteous face, like that of a drowning man, and clutched more tightly. Behind them the ice was thundering. The first flurry of coming destruction was upon them. They endeavored desperately to drag up the canoe, but the added burden was too much, and they fell on their knees. The sick man sat up suddenly and laughed wildly. “Blood of my soul!” he ejaculated, and laughed again.

Roubeau Island swayed to the first shock, and the ice was rocking under their feet. Frona seized a paddle and smashed the Scotsman’s knuckles; and the instant he loosed his grip, Corliss carried the canoe up in a mad rush, Frona clinging on and helping from behind. The rainbow-wall curled up like a scroll, and in the convolutions of the scroll, like a bee in the many folds of a magnificent orchid, Tommy disappeared.

They fell, breathless, on the earth. But a monstrous cake shoved up from the jam and balanced above them. Frona tried to struggle to her feet, but sank on her knees; and it remained for Corliss to snatch her and the canoe out from underneath. Again they fell, this time under the trees, the sun sifting down upon them through the green pine needles, the robins singing overhead, and a colony of crickets chirping in the warmth.

CHAPTER XXVI

Frona woke, slowly, as though from a long dream. She was lying where she had fallen, across Corliss's legs, while he, on his back, faced the hot sun without concern. She crawled up to him. He was breathing regularly, with closed eyes, which opened to meet hers. He smiled, and she sank down again. Then he rolled over on his side, and they looked at each other.

"Vance."

"Yes."

She reached out her hand; his closed upon it, and their eyelids fluttered and drooped down. The river still rumbled en, somewhere in the infinite distance, but it came to them like the murmur of a world forgotten. A soft languor encompassed them. The golden sunshine dripped down upon them through the living green, and all the life of the warm earth seemed singing. And quiet was very good. Fifteen long minutes they drowsed, and woke again.

Frona sat up. "I — I was afraid," she said.

"Not you."

"Afraid that I might be afraid," she amended, fumbling with her hair.

"Leave it down. The day merits it."

She complied, with a toss of the head which circled it with a nimbus of rippling yellow.

"Tommy's gone," Corliss mused, the race with the ice coming slowly back.

"Yes," she answered. "I rapped him on the knuckles. It was terrible. But the chance is we've a better man in the canoe, and we must care for him at once. Hello! Look there!" Through the trees, not a score of feet away, she saw the wall of a large cabin. "Nobody in sight. It must be deserted, or else they're visiting, whoever they are. You look to our man, Vance, — I'm more presentable, — and I'll go and see."

She skirted the cabin, which was a large one for the Yukon country, and came around to where it fronted on the river. The door stood open, and, as she paused to knock, the whole interior flashed upon her in an astounding picture, — a cumulative picture, or series of pictures, as it were. For first she was aware of a crowd of men, and of some great common purpose upon which all were seriously bent. At her knock they instinctively divided, so that a lane opened up, flanked by their pressed bodies, to the far end of the room. And there, in the long bunks on either side, sat two grave rows of men. And midway between, against the wall, was a table. This table seemed the centre of interest. Fresh from the sun-dazzle, the light within was dim and murky, but she managed to make out a bearded American sitting by the table and hammering it with a heavy caulking-mallet. And on the opposite side sat St. Vincent. She had time to note his worn and haggard face, before a man of Scandinavian appearance slouched up to the table.

The man with the mallet raised his right hand and said glibly, “You do most solemnly swear that what you are about to give before the court — ” He abruptly stopped and glowered at the man before him. “Take off your hat!” he roared, and a snicker went up from the crowd as the man obeyed.

Then he of the mallet began again. “You do most solemnly swear that what you are about to give before the court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?”

The Scandinavian nodded and dropped his hand.

“One moment, gentlemen.” Frona advanced up the lane, which closed behind her.

St. Vincent sprang to his feet and stretched out his arms to her.

“Frona,” he cried, “oh, Frona, I am innocent!”

It struck her like a blow, the unexpectedness of it, and for the instant, in the sickly light, she was conscious only of the ring of white faces, each face set with eyes that burned. Innocent of what? she thought, and as she looked at St. Vincent, arms still extended, she was aware, in a vague, troubled way, of something distasteful. Innocent of what? He might have had more reserve. He might have waited till he was charged. She did not know that he was charged with anything.

“Friend of the prisoner,” the man with the mallet said authoritatively.

“Bring a stool for’ard, some of you.”

“One moment . . .” She staggered against the table and rested a hand on it. “I do not understand. This is all new . . .” But her eyes happened to come to rest on her feet, wrapped in dirty rags, and she knew that she was clad in a short and tattered skirt, that her arm peeped forth through a rent in her sleeve, and that her hair was down and flying. Her cheek and neck on one side seemed coated with some curious substance. She brushed it with her hand, and caked mud rattled to the floor.

"That will do," the man said, not unkindly. "Sit down. We're in the same box. We do not understand. But take my word for it, we're here to find out. So sit down."

She raised her hand. "One moment — "

"Sit down!" he thundered. "The court cannot be disturbed."

A hum went up from the crowd, words of dissent, and the man pounded the table for silence. But Frona resolutely kept her feet.

When the noise had subsided, she addressed the man in the chair. "Mr. Chairman: I take it that this is a miners' meeting." (The man nodded.) "Then, having an equal voice in the managing of this community's affairs, I demand to be heard. It is important that I should be heard."

"But you are out of order. Miss — er — "

"Welse!" half a dozen voices prompted.

"Miss Welse," he went on, an added respect marking his demeanor, "it grieves me to inform you that you are out of order. You had best sit down."

"I will not," she answered. "I rise to a question of privilege, and if I am not heard, I shall appeal to the meeting."

She swept the crowd with her eyes, and cries went up that she be given a fair show. The chairman yielded and motioned her to go on.

"Mr. Chairman and men: I do not know the business you have at present before you, but I do know that I have more important business to place before you. Just outside this cabin is a man probably dying from starvation. We have brought him from across the river. We should not have bothered you, but we were unable to make our own island. This man I speak of needs immediate attention."

"A couple of you nearest the door go out and look after him," the chairman ordered. "And you, Doc Holiday, go along and see what you can do."

"Ask for a recess," St. Vincent whispered.

Frona nodded her head. "And, Mr. Chairman, I make a motion for a recess until the man is cared for."

Cries of "No recess!" and "Go on with the business!" greeted the putting of it, and the motion was lost.

"Now, Gregory," with a smile and salutation as she took the stool beside him, "what is it?"

He gripped her hand tightly. "Don't believe them, Frona. They are trying to" — with a gulping swallow — "to kill me."

"Why? Do be calm. Tell me."

"Why, last night," he began hurriedly, but broke off to listen to the Scandinavian previously sworn, who was speaking with ponderous slowness.

"I wake wide open quick," he was saying. "I coom to the door. I there hear one shot more."

He was interrupted by a warm-complexioned man, clad in faded mackinaws.

"What did you think?" he asked.

"Eh?" the witness queried, his face dark and troubled with perplexity.

"When you came to the door, what was your first thought?"

"A-w-w," the man sighed, his face clearing and infinite comprehension sounding in his voice. "I have no moccasins. I t'ink pretty damn cold." His satisfied expression changed to naive surprise when an outburst of laughter greeted his statement, but he went on stolidly. "One more shot I hear, and I run down the trail."

Then Corliss pressed in through the crowd to Frona, and she lost what the man was saying.

"What's up?" the engineer was asking. "Anything serious? Can I be of any use?"

"Yes, yes." She caught his hand gratefully. "Get over the back-channel somehow and tell my father to come. Tell him that Gregory St. Vincent is in trouble; that he is charged with — What are you charged with, Gregory?" she asked, turning to him.

"Murder."

"Murder?" from Corliss.

"Yes, yes. Say that he is charged with murder; that I am here; and that I need him. And tell him to bring me some clothes. And, Vance," — with a pressure of the hand and swift upward look, — "don't take any . . . any big chances, but do try to make it."

"Oh, I'll make it all right." He tossed his head confidently and proceeded to elbow his way towards the door.

"Who is helping you in your defence?" she asked St. Vincent.

He shook his head. "No. They wanted to appoint some one, — a renegade lawyer from the States, Bill Brown, — but I declined him. He's taken the other side, now. It's lynch law, you know, and their minds are made up. They're bound to get me."

"I wish there were time to hear your side."

"But, Frona, I am innocent. I — "

"S-sh!" She laid her hand on his arm to hush him, and turned her attention to the witness.

"So the noospaper feller, he fight like anything; but Pierre and me, we pull him into the shack. He cry and stand in one place — "

"Who cried?" interrupted the prosecuting lawyer.

"Him. That feller there." The Scandinavian pointed directly at St. Vincent. "And I make a light. The slush-lamp I find spilt over most everything, but I have a candle in my pocket. It is good practice to carry a candle in the pocket," he affirmed gravely. "And Borg he lay on the floor dead. And the squaw say he did it, and then she die, too."

"Said who did it?"

Again his accusing finger singled out St. Vincent. "Him. That feller there."

"Did she?" Frona whispered.

"Yes," St. Vincent whispered back, "she did. But I cannot imagine what prompted her. She must have been out of her head."

The warm-faced man in the faded mackinaws then put the witness through a searching examination, which Frona followed closely, but which elicited little new.

"You have the right to cross-examine the witness," the chairman informed St. Vincent. "Any questions you want to ask?"

The correspondent shook his head.

"Go on," Frona urged.

"What's the use?" he asked, hopelessly. "I'm fore-doomed. The verdict was reached before the trial began."

"One moment, please." Frona's sharp command arrested the retiring witness. "You do not know of your own knowledge who committed this murder?"

The Scandinavian gazed at her with a bovine expression on his leaden features, as though waiting for her question to percolate to his understanding.

"You did not see who did it?" she asked again.

"Aw, yes. That feller there," accusative finger to the fore. "She say he did."

There was a general smile at this.

"But you did not see it?"

"I hear some shooting."

"But you did not see who did the shooting?"

"Aw, no; but she said — "

"That will do, thank you," she said sweetly, and the man retired.

The prosecution consulted its notes. "Pierre La Flitche!" was called out.

A slender, swart-skinned man, lithe of figure and graceful, stepped forward to the open space before the table. He was darkly handsome, with a quick, eloquent eye which roved frankly everywhere. It rested for a moment on Frona, open and honest in its admiration, and she smiled and half-nodded, for she liked him at first glance, and it seemed as though they had met of old time. He smiled pleasantly back, the smooth upper lip curling brightly and showing beautiful teeth, immaculately white.

In answer to the stereotyped preliminaries he stated that his name was that of his father's, a descendant of the *coureurs du bois*. His mother — with a shrug of the shoulders and flash of teeth — was a *breed*. He was born somewhere in the Barrens, on a hunting trip, he did not know where. Ah, *oui*, men called him an old-timer. He had come into the country in the days of Jack McQuestion, across the Rockies from the Great Slave.

On being told to go ahead with what he knew of the matter in hand, he deliberated a moment, as though casting about for the best departure.

"In the spring it is good to sleep with the open door," he began, his words sounding clear and flute-like and marked by haunting memories of the accents his forbears put into the tongue. "And so I sleep last night. But I sleep like the cat. The fall of the leaf, the breath of the wind, and my ears whisper to me, whisper, whisper, all the night long. So, the first shot," with a quick snap of the fingers, "and I am awake, just like that, and I am at the door."

St. Vincent leaned forward to Frona. "It was not the first shot."

She nodded, with her eyes still bent on La Flitche, who gallantly waited.

"Then two more shot," he went on, "quick, together, boom-boom, just like that. 'Borg's shack,' I say to myself, and run down the trail. I think Borg kill Bella, which was bad. Bella very fine girl," he confided with one of his irresistible smiles. "I like Bella. So I run. And John he run from his cabin like a fat cow, with great noise. 'What the matter?' he say; and I say, 'I don't know.' And then something come, wheugh! out of the dark, just like that, and knock John down, and knock me down. We grab everywhere all at once. It is a man. He is in undress. He fight. He cry, ‘Oh! Oh! Oh!’ just like that. We hold him tight, and bime-by pretty quick, he stop. Then we get up, and I say, ‘Come along back.’“

“Who was the man?”

La Flitche turned partly, and rested his eyes on St. Vincent.

“Go on.”

“So? The man he will not go back; but John and I say yes, and he go.”

“Did he say anything?”

“I ask him what the matter; but he cry, he . . . he sob, *huh-tsch*, *huh-tsch*, just like that.”

“Did you see anything peculiar about him?”

La Flitche’s brows drew up interrogatively.

^Anything uncommon, out of the ordinary?”

“Ah, *oui*; blood on the hands.” Disregarding the murmur in the room, he went on, his facile play of feature and gesture giving dramatic value to the recital. “John make a light, and Bella groan, like the hair-seal when you shoot him in the body, just like that when you shoot him in the body under the flipper. And Borg lay over in the corner. I look. He no breathe ‘tall.

“Then Bella open her eyes, and I look in her eyes, and I know she know me, La Flitche. ‘Who did it, Bella?’ I ask. And she roll her head on the floor and whisper, so low, so slow, ‘Him dead?’ I know she mean Borg, and I say yes. Then she lift up on one elbow, and look about quick, in big hurry, and when she see Vincent she look no more, only she look at Vincent all the time. Then she point at him, just like that.” Suiting the action to the word, La Flitche turned and thrust a wavering finger at the prisoner. “And she say, ‘Him, him, him.’ And I say, ‘Bella, who did it?’ And she say, ‘Him, him, him. St. Vincha, him do it.’ And then” — La Flitche’s head felt limply forward on his chest, and came back naturally erect, as he finished, with a flash of teeth, “Dead.”

The warm-faced man, Bill Brown, put the quarter-breed through the customary direct examination, which served to strengthen his testimony and to bring out the fact that a terrible struggle must have taken place in the killing of Borg. The heavy table was smashed, the stool and the bunk-board splintered, and the stove over-thrown. “Never did I see anything like it,” La Flitche concluded his description of the wreck. “No, never.”

Brown turned him over to Frona with a bow, which a smile of hers paid for in full. She did not deem it unwise to cultivate cordiality with the lawyer. What she was working for was time — time for her father to come, time to be closeted with St. Vincent and learn all the details of what really had occurred. So she put questions, questions, interminable questions, to La Flitche. Twice only did anything of moment crop up.

"You spoke of the first shot, Mr. La Flitche. Now, the walls of a log cabin are quite thick. Had your door been closed, do you think you could have heard that first shot?"

He shook his head, though his dark eyes told her he divined the point she was endeavoring to establish.

"And had the door of Borg's cabin been closed, would you have heard?"

Again he shook his head.

"Then, Mr. La Flitche, when you say the first shot, you do not mean necessarily the first shot fired, but rather the first shot you heard fired?"

He nodded, and though she had scored her point she could not see that it had any material bearing after all.

Again she worked up craftily to another and stronger climax, though she felt all the time that La Flitche fathomed her.

"You say it was very dark, Mr. La Flitche?"

"Ah, oui; quite dark."

"How dark? How did you know it was John you met?"

"John make much noise when he run. I know that kind of noise."

"Could you see him so as to know that it was he?"

"Ah, no."

"Then, Mr. La Flitche," she demanded, triumphantly, "will you please state how you knew there was blood on the hands of Mr. St. Vincent?"

His lip lifted in a dazzling smile, and he paused a moment. "How? I feel it warm on his hands. And my nose — ah, the smoke of the hunter camp long way off, the hole where the rabbit hide, the track of the moose which has gone before, does not my nose tell me?" He flung his head back, and with tense face, eyes closed, nostrils quivering and dilated, he simulated the quiescence of all the senses save one and the concentration of his whole being upon that one. Then his eyes fluttered partly open and he regarded her dreamily. "I smell the blood on his hands, the warm blood, the hot blood on his hands."

"And by gad he can do it!" some man exclaimed.

And so convinced was Frona that she glanced involuntarily at St. Vincent's hands, and saw there the rusty-brown stains on the cuffs of his flannel shirt.

As La Flitche left the stand, Bill Brown came over to her and shook hands. “No more than proper I should know the lawyer for the defence,” he said, good-naturedly, running over his notes for the next witness.

“But don’t you think it is rather unfair to me?” she asked, brightly. “I have not had time to prepare my case. I know nothing about it except what I have gleaned from your two witnesses. Don’t you think, Mr. Brown,” her voice rippling along in persuasive little notes, “don’t you think it would be advisable to adjourn the meeting until to-morrow?”

“Hum,” he deliberated, looking at his watch.

“Wouldn’t be a bad idea. It’s five o’clock, anyway, and the men ought to be cooking their suppers.”

She thanked him, as some women can, without speech; yet, as he looked down into her face and eyes, he experienced a subtler and greater satisfaction than if she had spoken.

He stepped to his old position and addressed the room. “On consultation of the defence and the prosecution, and upon consideration of the lateness of the hour and the impossibility of finishing the trial within a reasonable limit, I — hum — I take the liberty of moving an adjournment until eight o’clock to-morrow morning.”

“The ayes have it,” the chairman proclaimed, coming down from his place and proceeding to build the fire, for he was a part-owner of the cabin and cook for his crowd.

CHAPTER XXVII

Frona turned to St. Vincent as the last of the crowd filed out. He clutched her hands spasmodically, like a drowning man.

"Do believe me, Frona. Promise me."

Her face flushed. "You are excited," she said, "or you would not say such things. Not that I blame you," she relented. "I hardly imagine the situation can be anything else but exciting."

"Yes, and well I know it," he answered, bitterly. "I am acting like a fool, and I can't help it. The strain has been terrible. And as though the horror of Borg's end were not enough, to be considered the murderer, and haled up for mob justice! Forgive me, Frona. I am beside myself. Of course, I know that you will believe me."

"Then tell me, Gregory."

"In the first place, the woman, Bella, lied. She must have been crazed to make that dying statement when I fought as I did for her and Borg. That is the only explanation — "

"Begin at the beginning," she interrupted. "Remember, I know nothing."

He settled himself more comfortably on the stool, and rolled a cigarette as he took up the history of the previous night.

"It must have been about one in the morning when I was awakened by the lighting of the slush-lamp. I thought it was Borg; wondered what he was prowling about for, and was on the verge of dropping off to sleep, when, though I do not know what prompted me, I opened my eyes. Two strange men were in the cabin. Both wore masks and fur caps with the flaps pulled down, so that I could see nothing of their faces save the glistening of the eyes through the eye-slits.

"I had no first thought, unless it was that danger threatened. I lay quietly for a second and deliberated. Borg had borrowed my pistol, and I was actually unarmed. My rifle was by the door. I decided to make a rush for it. But no sooner had I struck the floor than one of the men turned on me, at the same time firing his revolver. That was the first shot, and the one La Flitche did not hear. It was in the struggle afterwards that the door was burst open, which enabled him to hear the last three.

"Well; I was so close to the man, and my leap out of the bunk was so unexpected, that he missed me. The next moment we grappled and rolled on the floor. Of course, Borg was aroused, and the second man turned his attention to him and Bella. It was this second man who did the killing, for my man, naturally, had his hands full. You heard the testimony. From the way the cabin was wrecked, you can picture the struggle. We rolled and tossed about and fought till stools, table, shelves — everything was smashed.

"Oh, Frona, it was terrible! Borg fighting for life, Bella helping him, though wounded and groaning, and I unable to aid. But finally, in a very short while, I began to conquer the man with whom I was struggling. I had got him down on his back, pinioned his arms with my knees, and was slowly throttling him, when the other man finished his work and turned on me also. What could I do? Two to one, and winded! So I was thrown into the corner, and they made their escape. I confess that I must have been badly rattled by that time, for as soon as I caught my breath I took out after them, and without a weapon. Then I collided with La Flitche and John, and — and you know the rest. Only," he knit his brows in puzzlement, "only, I cannot understand why Bella should accuse me."

He looked at her appealingly, and, though she pressed his hand sympathetically, she remained silent, weighing pro and con what she had heard.

She shook her head slowly. "It's a bad case, and the thing is to convince them — "

"But, my God, Frona, I am innocent! I have not been a saint, perhaps, but my hands are clean from blood."

"But remember, Gregory," she said, gently, "I am not to judge you. Unhappily, it rests with the men of this miners' meeting, and the problem is: how are they to be convinced of your innocence? The two main points are against you, — Bella's dying words and the blood on your sleeve."

"The place was areek with blood," St. Vincent cried passionately, springing to his feet. "I tell you it was areek! How could I avoid floundering in it, fighting as I was for life? Can you not take my word — "

"There, there, Gregory. Sit down. You are truly beside yourself. If your case rested with me, you know you would go free and clean. But these men, — you know what mob rule is, — how are we to persuade them to let you go? Don't you see? You have no witnesses. A dying woman's words are more sacred than a living man's. Can you show cause for the woman to die with a lie on her lips? Had she any reason to hate you? Had you done her or her husband an injury?”

He shook his head.

“Certainly, to us the thing is inexplicable; but the miners need no explanation. To them it is obvious. It rests with us to disprove the obvious. Can we do it?”

The correspondent sank down despondently, with a collapsing of the chest and a drooping forward of the shoulders. “Then am I indeed lost.”

“No, it’s not so bad as that. You shall not be hanged. Trust me for that.”

“But what can you do?” he asked, despairingly. “They have usurped the law, have made themselves the law.”

“In the first place, the river has broken. That means everything. The Governor and the territorial judges may be expected in at any moment with a detachment of police at their backs. And they’re certain to stop here. And, furthermore, we may be able to do something ourselves. The river is open, and if it comes to the worst, escape would be another way out; and escape is the last thing they would dream of.”

“No, no; impossible. What are you and I against the many?”

“But there’s my father and Baron Courbertin. Four determined people, acting together, may perform miracles, Gregory, dear. Trust me, it shall come out well.”

She kissed him and ran her hand through his hair, but the worried look did not depart.

Jacob Welse crossed over the back-channel long before dark, and with him came Del, the baron, and Corliss. While Frona retired to change her clothes in one of the smaller cabins, which the masculine owners readily turned over to her, her father saw to the welfare of the mail-carrier. The despatches were of serious import, so serious that long after Jacob Welse had read and re-read them his face was dark and clouded; but he put the anxiety from him when he returned to Frona. St. Vincent, who was confined in an adjoining cabin, was permitted to see them.

“It looks bad,” Jacob Welse said, on parting for the night. “But rest assured, St. Vincent, bad or not, you’ll not be stretched up so long as I’ve a hand to play in the rumpus. I am certain you did not kill Borg, and there’s my fist on it.”

“A long day,” Corliss remarked, as he walked back with Frona to her cabin.

"And a longer to-morrow," she answered, wearily. "And I'm so sleepy."

"You're a brave little woman, and I'm proud of you." It was ten o'clock, and he looked out through the dim twilight to the ghostly ice drifting steadily by. "And in this trouble," he went on, "depend upon me in any way."

"In any way?" she queried, with a catch in her voice.

"If I were a hero of the melodrama I'd say; 'To the death!' but as I'm not; I'll just repeat, in any way."

"You are good to me, Vance. I can never repay — "

"Tut! tut! I do not put myself on sale. Love is service, I believe."

She looked at him for a long time, but while her face betrayed soft wonder, at heart she was troubled, she knew not why, and the events of the day, and of all the days since she had known him, came fluttering through her mind.

"Do you believe in a white friendship?" she asked at last. "For I do hope that such a bond may hold us always. A bright, white friendship, a comradeship, as it were?" And as she asked, she was aware that the phrase did not quite express what she felt and would desire. And when he shook his head, she experienced a glad little inexplicable thrill.

"A comradeship?" he questioned. "When you know I love you?"

"Yes," she affirmed in a low voice.

"I am afraid, after all, that your knowledge of man is very limited. Believe me, we are not made of such clay. A comradeship? A coming in out of the cold to sit by your fire? Good. But a coming in when another man sits with you by your fire? No. Comradeship would demand that I delight in your delights, and yet, do you think for a moment that I could see you with another man's child in your arms, a child which might have been mine; with that other man looking out at me through the child's eyes, laughing at me through its mouth? I say, do you think I could delight in your delights? No, no; love cannot shackle itself with white friendships."

She put her hand on his arm.

"Do you think I am wrong?" he asked, bewildered by the strange look in her face.

She was sobbing quietly.

"You are tired and overwrought. So there, good-night. You must get to bed."

"No, don't go, not yet." And she arrested him. "No, no; I am foolish. As you say, I am tired. But listen, Vance. There is much to be done. We must plan to-morrow's work. Come inside. Father and Baron Courbertin are together, and if the worst comes, we four must do big things."

"Spectacular," Jacob Welse commented, when Frona had briefly outlined the course of action and assigned them their parts. "But its very unexpectedness ought to carry it through."

"A *coup d'etat*!" was the Baron's verdict. "Magnificent! Ah! I feel warm all over at the thought. 'Hands up!' I cry, thus, and very fierce.

"And if they do not hold up their hands?" he appealed to Jacob Welse.

"Then shoot. Never bluff when you're behind a gun, Courbertin. It's held by good authorities to be unhealthy."

"And you are to take charge of La Bijou, Vance," Frona said. "Father thinks there will be little ice to-morrow if it doesn't jam to-night. All you've to do is to have the canoe by the bank just before the door. Of course, you won't know what is happening until St. Vincent comes running. Then in with him, and away you go — Dawson! So I'll say good-night and good-by now, for I may not have the opportunity in the morning."

"And keep the left-hand channel till you're past the bend," Jacob Welse counselled him; "then take the cut-offs to the right and follow the swiftest water. Now off with you and into your blankets. It's seventy miles to Dawson, and you'll have to make it at one clip."

CHAPTER XXVIII

Jacob Welse was given due respect when he arose at the convening of the miners' meeting and denounced the proceedings. While such meetings had performed a legitimate function in the past, he contended, when there was no law in the land, that time was now beyond recall; for law was now established, and it was just law. The Queen's government had shown itself fit to cope with the situation, and for them to usurp its powers was to step backward into the night out of which they had come. Further, no lighter word than "criminal" could characterize such conduct. And yet further, he promised them, in set, sober terms, if anything serious were the outcome, to take an active part in the prosecution of every one of them. At the conclusion of his speech he made a motion to hold the prisoner for the territorial court and to adjourn, but was voted down without discussion.

"Don't you see," St. Vincent said to Frona, "there is no hope?"

"But there is. Listen!" And she swiftly outlined the plot of the night before.

He followed her in a half-hearted way, too crushed to partake of her enthusiasm. "It's madness to attempt it," he objected, when she had done.

"And it looks very much like hanging not to attempt it," she answered a little spiritedly. "Surely you will make a fight?"

"Surely," he replied, hollowly.

The first witnesses were two Swedes, who told of the wash-tub incident, when Borg had given way to one of his fits of anger. Trivial as the incident was, in the light of subsequent events it at once became serious. It opened the way for the imagination into a vast familiar field. It was not so much what was said as what was left unsaid. Men born of women, the rudest of them, knew life well enough to be aware of its significance, — a vulgar common happening, capable of but one interpretation. Heads were wagged knowingly in the course of the testimony, and whispered comments went the rounds.

Half a dozen witnesses followed in rapid succession, all of whom had closely examined the scene of the crime and gone over the island carefully, and all of whom were agreed that there was not the slightest trace to be found of the two men mentioned by the prisoner in his preliminary statement.

To Frona's surprise, Del Bishop went upon the stand. She knew he disliked St. Vincent, but could not imagine any evidence he could possess which would bear upon the case.

Being sworn, and age and nationality ascertained, Bill Brown asked him his business.

"Pocket-miner," he challenged back, sweeping the assemblage with an aggressive glance.

Now, it happens that a very small class of men follow pocketing, and that a very large class of men, miners, too, disbelieve utterly in any such method or obtaining gold.

"Pocket-miner!" sneered a red-shirted, patriarchal-looking man, a man who had washed his first pan in the Californian diggings in the early fifties.

"Yep," Del affirmed.

"Now, look here, young feller," his interlocutor continued, "d'ye mean to tell me you ever struck it in such-fangled way?"

"Yep."

"Don't believe it," with a contemptuous shrug.

Del swallowed fast and raised his head with a jerk. "Mr. Chairman, I rise to make a statement. I won't interfere with the dignity of the court, but I just wish to simply and distinctly state that after the meeting's over I'm going to punch the head of every man that gets gay. Understand?"

"You're out of order," the chairman replied, rapping the table with the caulking-mallet.

"And your head, too," Del cried, turning upon him. "Damn poor order you preserve. Pocketing's got nothing to do with this here trial, and why don't you shut such fool questions out? I'll take care of you afterwards, you potwolloper!"

"You will, will you?" The chairman grew red in the face, dropped the mallet, and sprang to his feet.

Del stepped forward to meet him, but Bill Brown sprang in between and held them apart.

"Order, gentlemen, order," he begged. "This is no time for unseemly exhibitions. And remember there are ladies present."

The two men grunted and subsided, and Bill Brown asked, "Mr. Bishop, we understand that you are well acquainted with the prisoner. Will you please tell the court what you know of his general character?"

Del broadened into a smile. “Well, in the first place, he’s an extremely quarrelsome disposition — ”

“Hold! I won’t have it!” The prisoner was on his feet, trembling with anger. “You shall not swear my life away in such fashion! To bring a madman, whom I have only met once in my life, to testify as to my character!”

The pocket-miner turned to him. “So you don’t know me, eh, Gregory St. Vincent?”

“No,” St. Vincent replied, coldly, “I do not know you, my man.”

“Don’t you man me!” Del shouted, hotly.

But St. Vincent ignored him, turning to the crowd.

“I never saw the fellow but once before, and then for a few brief moments in Dawson.”

“You’ll remember before I’m done,” Del sneered; “so hold your hush and let me say my little say. I come into the country with him way back in ‘84.”

St. Vincent regarded him with sudden interest.

“Yep, Mr. Gregory St. Vincent. I see you begin to recollect. I sported whiskers and my name was Brown, Joe Brown, in them days.”

He grinned vindictively, and the correspondent seemed to lose all interest.

“Is it true, Gregory?” Frona whispered.

“I begin to recognize,” he muttered, slowly. “I don’t know . . . no, folly! The man must have died.”

“You say in ‘84, Mr. Bishop?” Bill Brown prompted.

“Yep, in ‘84. He was a newspaper-man, bound round the world by way of Alaska and Siberia. I’d run away from a whaler at Sitka, — that squares it with Brown, — and I engaged with him for forty a month and found. Well, he quarrelled with me — ”

A snicker, beginning from nowhere in particular, but passing on from man to man and swelling in volume, greeted this statement. Even Frona and Del himself were forced to smile, and the only sober face was the prisoner’s.

“But he quarrelled with Old Andy at Dyea, and with Chief George of the Chilcoots, and the Factor at Pelly, and so on down the line. He got us into no end of trouble, and ‘specially woman-trouble. He was always monkeying around — ”

“Mr. Chairman, I object.” Frona stood up, her face quite calm and blood under control. “There is no necessity for bringing in the amours of Mr. St. Vincent. They have no bearing whatsoever upon the case; and, further, none of the men of this meeting are clean enough to be prompted by the right motive in conducting such an inquiry. So I demand that the prosecution at least confine itself to relevant testimony.”

Bill Brown came up smugly complacent and smiling. “Mr. Chairman, we willingly accede to the request made by the defence. Whatever we have brought out has been relevant and material. Whatever we intend to bring out shall be relevant and material. Mr. Bishop is our star witness, and his testimony is to the point. It must be taken into consideration that we nave no direct evidence as to the murder of John Borg. We can bring no eye-witnesses into court. Whatever we have is circumstantial. It is incumbent upon us to show cause. To show cause it is necessary to go into the character of the accused. This we intend to do. We intend to show his adulterous and lustful nature, which has culminated in a dastardly deed and jeopardized his neck. We intend to show that the truth is not in him; that he is a liar beyond price; that no word he may speak upon the stand need be accepted by a jury of his peers. We intend to show all this, and to weave it together, thread by thread, till we have a rope long enough and strong enough to hang him with before the day is done. So I respectfully submit, Mr. Chairman, that the witness be allowed to proceed.”

The chairman decided against Frona, and her appeal to the meeting was voted down. Bill Brown nodded to Del to resume.

“As I was saying, he got us into no end of trouble. Now, I’ve been mixed up with water all my life, — never can get away from it, it seems, — and the more I’m mixed the less I know about it. St. Vincent knew this, too, and him a clever hand at the paddle; yet he left me to run the Box Canyon alone while he walked around. Result: I was turned over, lost half the outfit and all the tobacco, and then he put the blame on me besides. Right after that he got tangled up with the Lake Le Barge Sticks, and both of us came near croaking.”

“And why was that?” Bill Brown interjected.

“All along of a pretty squaw that looked too kindly at him. After we got clear, I lectured him on women in general and squaws in particular, and he promised to behave. Then we had a hot time with the Little Salmons. He was cuter this time, and I didn’t know for keeps, but I guessed. He said it was the medicine man who got horstile; but nothing'll stir up a medicine man quicker'n women, and the facts pointed that way. When I talked it over with him in a fatherly way he got wrathy, and I had to take him out on the bank and give him a threshing. Then he got sulky, and didn't brighten up till we ran into the mouth of the Reindeer River, where a camp of Siwashes were fishing salmon. But he had it in for me all the time, only I didn't know it, — was ready any time to give me the double cross.

"Now, there's no denying he's got a taking way with women. All he has to do is to whistle 'em up like dogs. Most remarkable faculty, that. There was the wickedest, prettiest squaw among the Reindeers. Never saw her beat, excepting Bella. Well, I guess he whistled her up, for he delayed in the camp longer than was necessary. Being partial to women — "

"That will do, Mr. Bishop," interrupted the chairman, who, from profitless watching of Frona's immobile face, had turned to her hand, the nervous twitching and clinching of which revealed what her face had hidden. "That will do, Mr. Bishop. I think we have had enough of squaws."

"Pray do not temper the testimony," Frona chirruped, sweetly. "It seems very important."

"Do you know what I am going to say next?" Del demanded hotly of the chairman. "You don't, eh? Then shut up. I'm running this particular sideshow."

Bill Brown sprang in to avert hostilities, but the chairman restrained himself, and Bishop went on.

"I'd been done with the whole shooting-match, squaws and all, if you hadn't broke me off. Well, as I said, he had it in for me, and the first thing I didn't know, he'd hit me on the head with a rifle-stock, bundled the squaw into the canoe, and pulled out. You all know what the Yukon country was in '84. And there I was, without an outfit, left alone, a thousand miles from anywhere. I got out all right, though there's no need of telling how, and so did he. You've all heard of his adventures in Siberia. Well," with an impressive pause, "I happen to know a thing or two myself."

He shoved a hand into the big pocket of his mackinaw jacket and pulled out a dingy leather-bound volume of venerable appearance.

"I got this from Pete Whipple's old woman, — Whipple of Eldorado. It concerns her grand-uncle or great-grand-uncle, I don't know which; and if there's anybody here can read Russian, why, it'll go into the details of that Siberian trip. But as there's no one here that can — "

“Courbertin! He can read it!” some one called in the crowd.

A way was made for the Frenchman forthwith, and he was pushed and shoved, protestingly, to the front.

“Savve the lingo?” Del demanded.

“Yes; but so poorly, so miserable,” Courbertin demurred. “It is a long time. I forget.”

“Go ahead. We won’t criticise.”

“No, but — ”

“Go ahead!” the chairman commanded.

Del thrust the book into his hands, opened at the yellow title-page. “I’ve been itching to get my paws on some buck like you for months and months,” he assured him, gleefully. “And now I’ve got you, you can’t shake me, Charley. So fire away.”

Courbertin began hesitatingly: “‘The Journal of Father Yakontsk, Comprising an Account in Brief of his Life in the Benedictine Monastery at Obidorsky, and in Full of his Marvellous Adventures in East Siberia among the Deer Men.’“

The baron looked up for instructions.

“Tell us when it was printed,” Del ordered him.

“In Warsaw, 1807.”

The pocket-miner turned triumphantly to the room. “Did you hear that? Just keep track of it. 1807, remember!”

The baron took up the opening paragraph. “‘*It was because of Tamerlane*,’“ he commenced, unconsciously putting his translation into a construction with which he was already familiar.

At his first words Frona turned white, and she remained white throughout the reading. Once she stole a glance at her father, and was glad that he was looking straight before him, for she did not feel able to meet his gaze just them. On the other hand, though she knew St. Vincent was eying her narrowly, she took no notice of him, and all he could see was a white face devoid of expression.

“‘When Tamerlane swept with fire and sword over Eastern Asia,’“ Courbertin read slowly, “‘states were disrupted, cities overthrown, and tribes scattered like — like star-dust. A vast people was hurled broadcast over the land. Fleeing before the conquerors,’ — no, no, — ’before the mad lust of the conquerors, these refugees swung far into Siberia, circling,

circling to the north and east and fringing the rim of the polar basin with a spray of Mongol tribes.'"

"Skip a few pages," Bill Brown advised, "and read here and there. We haven't got all night."

Courbertin complied. "'The coast people are Eskimo stock, merry of nature and not offensive. They call themselves the Oukilion, or the Sea Men. From them I bought dogs and food. But they are subject to the Chow Chuen, who live in the interior and are known as the Deer Men. The Chow Chuen are a fierce and savage race. When I left the coast they fell upon me, took from me my goods, and made me a slave.'" He ran over a few pages. "'I worked my way to a seat among the head men, but I was no nearer my freedom. My wisdom was of too great value to them for me to depart. . . Old Pi-Une was a great chief, and it was decreed that I should marry his daughter Ilswunga. Ilswunga was a filthy creature. She would not bathe, and her ways were not good . . . I did marry Ilswunga, but she was a wife to me only in name. Then did she complain to her father, the old Pi-Une, and he was very wroth. And dissension was sown among the tribes; but in the end I became mightier than ever, what of my cunning and resource; and Ilswunga made no more complaint, for I taught her games with cards which she might play by herself, and other things.'"

"Is that enough?" Courbertin asked.

"Yes, that will do," Bill Brown answered. "But one moment. Please state again the date of publication."

"1807, in Warsaw."

"Hold on, baron," Del Bishop spoke up. "Now that you're on the stand, I've got a question or so to slap into you." He turned to the court-room. "Gentlemen, you've all heard somewhat of the prisoner's experiences in Siberia. You've caught on to the remarkable sameness between them and those published by Father Yakontsk nearly a hundred years ago. And you have concluded that there's been some wholesale cribbing somewhere. I propose to show you that it's more than cribbing. The prisoner gave me the shake on the Reindeer River in '88. Fall of '88 he was at St. Michael's on his way to Siberia. '89 and '90 he was, by his talk, cutting up antics in Siberia. '91 he come back to the world, working the conquering-hero graft in 'Frisco. Now let's see if the Frenchman can make us wise.

"You were in Japan?" he asked.

Courbertin, who had followed the dates, made a quick calculation, and could but illy conceal his surprise. He looked appealingly to Frona, but she did not help him. "Yes," he said, finally.

"And you met the prisoner there?"

"Yes."

"What year was it?"

There was a general craning forward to catch the answer.

"1889," and it came unwillingly.

"Now, how can that be, baron?" Del asked in a wheedling tone. "The prisoner was in Siberia at that time."

Courbertin shrugged his shoulders that it was no concern of his, and came off the stand. An impromptu recess was taken by the court-room for several minutes, wherein there was much whispering and shaking of heads.

"It is all a lie." St. Vincent leaned close to Frona's ear, but she did not hear.

"Appearances are against me, but I can explain it all."

But she did not move a muscle, and he was called to the stand by the chairman. She turned to her father, and the tears rushed up into her eyes when he rested his hand on hers.

"Do you care to pull out?" he asked after a momentary hesitation.

She shook her head, and St. Vincent began to speak. It was the same story he had told her, though told now a little more fully, and in nowise did it conflict with the evidence of La Flitche and John. He acknowledged the wash-tub incident, caused, he explained, by an act of simple courtesy on his part and by John Borg's unreasoning anger. He acknowledged that Bella had been killed by his own pistol, but stated that the pistol had been borrowed by Borg several days previously and not returned. Concerning Bella's accusation he could say nothing. He could not see why she should die with a lie on her lips. He had never in the slightest way incurred her displeasure, so even revenge could not be advanced. It was inexplicable. As for the testimony of Bishop, he did not care to discuss it. It was a tissue of falsehood cunningly interwoven with truth. It was true the man had gone into Alaska with him in 1888, but his version of the things which happened there was maliciously untrue. Regarding the baron, there was a slight mistake in the dates, that was all.

In questioning him. Bill Brown brought out one little surprise. From the prisoner's story, he had made a hard fight against the two mysterious men.

"If," Brown asked, "such were the case, how can you explain away the fact that you came out of the struggle unmarked? On examination of the body of John Borg, many bruises and contusions were noticeable. How is it, if you put up such a stiff fight, that you escaped being battered?"

St. Vincent did not know, though he confessed to feeling stiff and sore all over. And it did not matter, anyway. He had killed neither Borg nor his wife, that much he did know.

Frona prefaced her argument to the meeting with a pithy discourse on the sacredness of human life, the weaknesses and dangers of circumstantial evidence, and the rights of the accused wherever doubt arose. Then she plunged into the evidence, stripping off the superfluous and striving to confine herself to facts. In the first place, she denied that a motive for the deed had been shown. As it was, the introduction of such evidence was an insult to their intelligence, and she had sufficient faith in their manhood and perspicacity to know that such puerility would not sway them in the verdict they were to give.

And, on the other hand, in dealing with the particular points at issue, she denied that any intimacy had been shown to have existed between Bella and St. Vincent; and she denied, further, that it had been shown that any intimacy had been attempted on the part of St. Vincent. Viewed honestly, the wash-tub incident — the only evidence brought forward — was a laughable little affair, portraying how the simple courtesy of a gentleman might be misunderstood by a mad boor of a husband. She left it to their common sense; they were not fools.

They had striven to prove the prisoner bad-tempered. She did not need to prove anything of the sort concerning John Borg. They all knew his terrible fits of anger; they all knew that his temper was proverbial in the community; that it had prevented him having friends and had made him many enemies. Was it not very probable, therefore, that the masked men were two such enemies? As to what particular motive actuated these two men, she could not say; but it rested with them, the judges, to know whether in all Alaska there were or were not two men whom John Borg could have given cause sufficient for them to take his life.

Witness had testified that no traces had been found of these two men; but the witness had not testified that no traces had been found of St. Vincent, Pierre La Flitche, or John the Swede. And there was no need for them so to testify. Everybody knew that no foot-marks were left when St. Vincent ran up the trail, and when he came back with La Flitche and the other man. Everybody knew the condition of the trail, that it was a hard-packed groove in the ground, on which a soft moccasin could leave no impression; and that had the ice not gone down the river, no traces would have been left by the murderers in passing from and to the mainland.

At this juncture La Flitche nodded his head in approbation, and she went on.

Capital had been made out of the blood on St. Vincent's hands. If they chose to examine the moccasins at that moment on the feet of Mr. La Flitche, they would also find blood. That did not argue that Mr. La Flitche had been a party to the shedding of the blood.

Mr. Brown had drawn attention to the fact that the prisoner had not been bruised or marked in the savage encounter which had taken place. She thanked him for having done so. John Borg's body showed that it had been roughly used. He was a larger, stronger, heavier man than St. Vincent. If, as charged, St. Vincent had committed the murder, and necessarily, therefore, engaged in a struggle severe enough to bruise John Borg, how was it that he had come out unharmed? That was a point worthy of consideration.

Another one was, why did he run down the trail? It was inconceivable, if he had committed the murder, that he should, without dressing or preparation for escape, run towards the other cabins. It was, however, easily conceivable that he should take up the pursuit of the real murderers, and in the darkness — exhausted, breathless, and certainly somewhat excited — run blindly down the trail.

Her summing up was a strong piece of synthesis; and when she had done, the meeting applauded her roundly. But she was angry and hurt, for she knew the demonstration was for her sex rather than for her cause and the work she had done.

Bill Brown, somewhat of a shyster, and his ear ever cocked to the crowd, was not above taking advantage when opportunity offered, and when it did not offer, to dogmatize artfully. In this his native humor was a strong factor, and when he had finished with the mysterious masked men they were as exploded sun-myths, — which phrase he promptly applied to them.

They could not have got off the island. The condition of the ice for the three or four hours preceding the break-up would not have permitted it. The prisoner had implicated none of the residents of the island, while every one of them, with the exception of the prisoner, had been accounted for elsewhere. Possibly the prisoner was excited when he ran down the trail into the arms of La Flitche and John the Swede. One should have thought, however, that he had grown used to such things in Siberia. But that was immaterial; the facts were that he was undoubtedly in an abnormal state of excitement, that he was hysterically excited, and that a murderer under such circumstances would take little account of where he ran. Such things had happened before. Many a man had butted into his own retribution.

In the matter of the relations of Borg, Bella, and St. Vincent, he made a strong appeal to the instinctive prejudices of his listeners, and for the time being abandoned matter-of-fact reasoning for all-potent sentimental platitudes. He granted that circumstantial evidence never proved anything absolutely. It was not necessary it should. Beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt was all that was required. That this had been done, he went on to review the testimony.

“And, finally,” he said, “you can’t get around Bella’s last words. We know nothing of our own direct knowledge. We’ve been feeling around in the dark, clutching at little things, and trying to figure it all out. But, gentlemen,” he paused to search the faces of his listeners, “Bella knew the truth. Hers is no circumstantial evidence. With quick, anguished breath, and life-blood ebbing from her, and eyeballs glazing, she spoke the truth. With dark night coming on, and the death-rattle in her throat, she raised herself weakly and pointed a shaking finger at the accused, thus, and she said, ‘Him, him, him. St. Vincha, him do it.’“

With Bill Brown’s finger still boring into him, St. Vincent struggled to his feet. His face looked old and gray, and he looked about him speechlessly. “Funk! Funk!” was whispered back and forth, and not so softly but what he heard. He moistened his lips repeatedly, and his tongue fought for articulation. “It is as I have said,” he succeeded, finally. “I did not do it. Before God, I did not do it!” He stared fixedly at John the Swede, waiting the while on his laggard thought. “I . . . I did not do it . . . I did not . . . I . . . I did not.”

He seemed to have become lost in some supreme meditation wherein John the Swede figured largely, and as Frona caught him by the hand and pulled him gently down, some man cried out, “Secret ballot!”

But Bill Brown was on his feet at once. “No! I say no! An open ballot! We are men, and as men are not afraid to put ourselves on record.”

A chorus of approval greeted him, and the open ballot began. Man after man, called upon by name, spoke the one word, “Guilty.”

Baron Courbertin came forward and whispered to Frona. She nodded her head and smiled, and he edged his way back, taking up a position by the door. He voted “Not guilty” when his turn came, as did Frona and Jacob Welse. Pierre La Flitche wavered a moment, looking keenly at Frona and St. Vincent, then spoke up, clear and flute-like, “Guilty.”

As the chairman arose, Jacob Welse casually walked over to the opposite side of the table and stood with his back to the stove. Courbertin, who had missed nothing, pulled a pickle-keg out from the wall and stepped upon it.

The chairman cleared his throat and rapped for order. “Gentlemen,” he announced, “the prisoner — ”

“Hands up!” Jacob Welse commanded peremptorily, and a fraction of a second after him came the shrill “Hands up, gentlemen!” of Courbertin.

Front and rear they commanded the crowd with their revolvers. Every hand was in the air, the chairman’s having gone up still grasping the mallet. There was no disturbance. Each stood or sat in the same posture as when the command went forth. Their eyes, playing here and there among the central figures, always returned to Jacob Welse.

St. Vincent sat as one dumfounded. Frona thrust a revolver into his hand, but his limp fingers refused to close on it.

“Come, Gregory,” she entreated. “Quick! Corliss is waiting with the canoe. Come!”

She shook him, and he managed to grip the weapon. Then she pulled and tugged, as when awakening a heavy sleeper, till he was on his feet. But his face was livid, his eyes like a somnambulist’s, and he was afflicted as with a palsy. Still holding him, she took a step backward for him to come on. He ventured it with a shaking knee. There was no sound save the heavy breathing of many men. A man coughed slightly and cleared his throat. It was disquieting, and all eyes centred upon him rebukingly. The man became embarrassed, and shifted his weight uneasily to the other leg. Then the heavy breathing settled down again.

St. Vincent took another step, but his fingers relaxed and the revolver fell with a loud noise to the floor. He made no effort to recover it. Frona stooped hurriedly, but Pierre La Flitche had set his foot upon it. She looked up and saw his hands above his head and his eyes fixed absently on Jacob Welse. She pushed at his leg, and the muscles were tense and hard, giving the lie to the indifference on his face. St. Vincent looked down helplessly, as though he could not understand.

But this delay drew the attention of Jacob Welse, and, as he tried to make out the cause, the chairman found his chance. Without crooking, his right arm swept out and down, the heavy caulking-mallet leaping from his hand. It spanned the short distance and smote Jacob Welse below the ear. His revolver went off as he fell, and John the Swede grunted and clapped a hand to his thigh.

Simultaneous with this the baron was overcome. Del Bishop, with hands still above his head and eyes fixed innocently before him, had simply kicked the pickle-keg out from under the Frenchman and brought him to the floor. His bullet, however, sped harmlessly through the roof. La Flitche seized Frona in his arms. St. Vincent, suddenly awakening, sprang for the door, but was tripped up by the breed's ready foot.

The chairman pounded the table with his fist and concluded his broken sentence, "Gentlemen, the prisoner is found guilty as charged."

CHAPTER XXIX

Frona had gone at once to her father's side, but he was already recovering. Courbertin was brought forward with a scratched face, sprained wrist, and an insubordinate tongue. To prevent discussion and to save time, Bill Brown claimed the floor.

"Mr. Chairman, while we condemn the attempt on the part of Jacob Welse, Frona Welse, and Baron Courbertin to rescue the prisoner and thwart justice, we cannot, under the circumstances, but sympathize with them. There is no need that I should go further into this matter. You all know, and doubtless, under a like situation, would have done the same. And so, in order that we may expeditiously finish the business, I make a motion to disarm the three prisoners and let them go."

The motion was carried, and the two men searched for weapons. Frona was saved this by giving her word that she was no longer armed. The meeting then resolved itself into a hanging committee, and began to file out of the cabin.

"Sorry I had to do it," the chairman said, half-apologetically, half-defiantly.

Jacob Welse smiled. "You took your chance," he answered, "and I can't blame you. I only wish I'd got you, though."

Excited voices arose from across the cabin. "Here, you! Leggo!" "Step on his fingers, Tim!" "Break that grip!" "Ouch! Ow!" "Pry his mouth open!"

Frona saw a knot of struggling men about St. Vincent, and ran over. He had thrown himself down on the floor and, tooth and nail, was fighting like a madman. Tim Dugan, a stalwart Celt, had come to close quarters with him, and St. Vincent's teeth were sunk in the man's arm.

"Smash 'm, Tim! Smash 'm!"

"How can I, ye fule? Get a pry on his mouth, will ye?"

"One moment, please." The men made way for her, drawing back and leaving St. Vincent and Tim.

Frona knelt down by him. "Leave go, Gregory. Do leave go."

He looked up at her, and his eyes did not seem human. He breathed stertorously, and in his throat were the queer little gasping noises of one overwrought.

"It is I, Gregory." She brushed her hand soothingly across his brow. "Don't you understand? It is I, Frona. Do leave go."

His whole body slowly relaxed, and a peaceful expression grew upon his face. His jaw dropped, and the man's arm was withdrawn.

"Now listen, Gregory. Though you are to die — "

"But I cannot! I cannot!" he groaned. "You said that I could trust to you, that all would come well."

She thought of the chance which had been given, but said nothing.

"Oh, Frona! Frona!" He sobbed and buried his face in her lap.

"At least you can be a man. It is all that remains."

"Come on!" Tim Dugan commanded. "Sorry to bother ye, miss, but we've got to fetch 'm along. Drag 'm out, you fellys! Catch 'm by the legs, Blackey, and you, too, Johnson."

St. Vincent's body stiffened at the words, the rational gleam went out of his eyes, and his fingers closed spasmodically on Frona's. She looked entreaty at the men, and they hesitated.

"Give me a minute with him," she begged, "just a minute."

"He ain't worth it," Dugan sneered, after they had drawn apart. "Look at 'm."

"It's a damned shame," corroborated Blackey, squinting sidewise at Frona whispering in St. Vincent's ear, the while her hand wandered caressingly through his hair.

What she said they did not hear, but she got him on his feet and led him forward. He walked as a dead man might walk, and when he entered the open air gazed forth wonderingly upon the muddy sweep of the Yukon. The crowd had formed by the bank, about a pine tree. A boy, engaged in running a rope over one of the branches, finished his task and slid down the trunk to the ground. He looked quickly at the palms of his hands and blew upon them, and a laugh went up. A couple of wolf-dogs, on the outskirts, bristled up to each other and bared their fangs. Men encouraged them. They closed in and rolled over, but were kicked aside to make room for St. Vincent.

Corliss came up the bank to Frona. "What's up?" he whispered. "Is it off?"

She tried to speak, but swallowed and nodded her head.

"This way, Gregory." She touched his arm and guided him to the box beneath the rope.

Corliss, keeping step with them, looked over the crowd speculatively and felt into his jacket-pocket. "Can I do anything?" he asked, gnawing his under lip impatiently. "Whatever you say goes, Frona. I can stand them off."

She looked at him, aware of pleasure in the sight. She knew he would dare it, but she knew also that it would be unfair. St. Vincent had had his chance, and it was not right that further sacrifice should be made. "No, Vance. It is too late. Nothing can be done."

"At least let me try," he persisted.

"No; it is not our fault that our plan failed, and . . . and . . ." Her eyes filled. "Please do not ask it of me."

"Then let me take you away. You cannot remain here."

"I must," she answered, simply, and turned to St. Vincent, who seemed dreaming.

Blackey was tying the hangman's knot in the rope's end, preparatory to slipping the noose over St. Vincent's head.

"Kiss me, Gregory," she said, her hand on his arm.

He started at the touch, and saw all eager eyes centred upon him, and the yellow noose, just shaped, in the hands of the hangman. He threw up his arms, as though to ward it off, and cried loudly, "No! no! Let me confess! Let me tell the truth, then you'll believe me!"

Bill Brown and the chairman shoved Blackey back, and the crowd gathered in. Cries and protestations rose from its midst. "No, you don't," a boy's shrill voice made itself heard. "I'm not going to go. I climbed the tree and made the rope fast, and I've got a right to stay." "You're only a kid," replied a man's voice, "and it ain't good for you." "I don't care, and I'm not a kid. I'm — I'm used to such things. And, anyway, I climbed the tree. Look at my hands." "Of course he can stay," other voices took up the trouble. "Leave him alone, Curley." "You ain't the whole thing." A laugh greeted this, and things quieted down.

"Silence!" the chairman called, and then to St. Vincent, "Go ahead, you, and don't take all day about it."

"Give us a chance to hear!" the crowd broke out again. "Put 'm on the box! Put 'm on the box!"

St. Vincent was helped up, and began with eager volubility.

"I didn't do it, but I saw it done. There weren't two men — only one.
He did it, and Bella helped him."

A wave of laughter drowned him out.

“Not so fast,” Bill Brown cautioned him. “Kindly explain how Bella helped this man kill herself. Begin at the beginning.”

“That night, before he turned in, Borg set his burglar alarm — ”

“Burglar alarm?”

“That’s what I called it, — a tin bread-pan attached to the latch so the door couldn’t open without tumbling it down. He set it every night, as though he were afraid of what might happen, — the very thing which did happen, for that matter. On the night of the murder I awoke with the feeling that some one was moving around. The slush-lamp was burning low, and I saw Bella at the door. Borg was snoring; I could hear him plainly. Bella was taking down the bread-pan, and she exercised great care about it. Then she opened the door, and an Indian came in softly. He had no mask, and I should know him if ever I see him again, for a scar ran along the forehead and down over one eye.”

“I suppose you sprang out of bed and gave the alarm?”

“No, I didn’t,” St. Vincent answered, with a defiant toss of the head, as though he might as well get the worst over with. “I just lay there and waited.”

“What did you think?”

“That Bella was in collusion with the Indian, and that Borg was to be murdered. It came to me at once.”

“And you did nothing?”

“Nothing.” His voice sank, and his eyes dropped to Frona, leaning against the box beneath him and steadying it. She did not seem to be affected. “Bella came over to me, but I closed my eyes and breathed regularly. She held the slush-lamp to me, but I played sleep naturally enough to fool her. Then I heard a snort of sudden awakening and alarm, and a cry, and I looked out. The Indian was hacking at Borg with a knife, and Borg was warding off with his arms and trying to grapple him. When they did grapple, Bella crept up from behind and threw her arm in a strangle-hold about her husband’s neck. She put her knee into the small of his back, and bent him backward and, with the Indian helping, threw him to the floor.”

“And what did you do?”

“I watched.”

“Had you a revolver?”

"Yes."

"The one you previously said John Borg had borrowed?"

"Yes; but I watched."

"Did John Borg call for help?"

"Yes."

"Can you give his words?"

"He called, 'St. Vincent! Oh, St. Vincent! Oh, my God! Oh, St. Vincent, help me!'" He shuddered at the recollection, and added, "It was terrible."

"I should say so," Brown grunted. "And you?"

"I watched," was the dogged reply, while a groan went up from the crowd. "Borg shook clear of them, however, and got on his legs. He hurled Bella across the cabin with a back-sweep of the arm and turned upon the Indian. Then they fought. The Indian had dropped the knife, and the sound of Borg's blows was sickening. I thought he would surely beat the Indian to death. That was when the furniture was smashed. They rolled and snarled and struggled like wild beasts. I wondered the Indian's chest did not cave in under some of Borg's blows. But Bella got the knife and stabbed her husband repeatedly about the body. The Indian had clinched with him, and his arms were not free; so he kicked out at her sideways. He must have broken her legs, for she cried out and fell down, and though she tried, she never stood up again. Then he went down, with the Indian under him, across the stove."

"Did he call any more for help?"

"He begged me to come to him."

"And?"

"I watched. He managed to get clear of the Indian and staggered over to me. He was streaming blood, and I could see he was very weak. 'Give me your gun,' he said; 'quick, give me it.' He felt around blindly. Then his mind seemed to clear a bit, and he reached across me to the holster hanging on the wall and took the pistol. The Indian came at him with the knife again, but he did not try to defend himself. Instead, he went on towards Bella, with the Indian still hanging to him and hacking at him. The Indian seemed to bother and irritate him, and he shoved him away. He knelt down and turned Bella's face up to the light; but his own face was covered with blood and he could not see. So he stopped long enough to brush the blood from his eyes. He appeared to look in order to make sure. Then he put the revolver to her breast and fired.

“The Indian went wild at this, and rushed at him with the knife, at the same time knocking the pistol out of his hand. It was then the shelf with the slush-lamp was knocked down. They continued to fight in the darkness, and there were more shots fired, though I do not know by whom. I crawled out of the bunk, but they struck against me in their struggles, and I fell over Bella. That’s when the blood got on my hands. As I ran out the door, more shots were fired. Then I met La Flitche and John, and . . . and you know the rest. This is the truth I have told you, I swear it!”

He looked down at Frona. She was steadying the box, and her face was composed. He looked out over the crowd and saw unbelief. Many were laughing.

“Why did you not tell this story at first?” Bill Brown demanded.

“Because . . . because . . .”

“Well?”

“Because I might have helped.”

There was more laughter at this, and Bill Brown turned away from him. “Gentlemen, you have heard this pipe dream. It is a wilder fairy story than his first. At the beginning of the trial we promised to show that the truth was not in him. That we succeeded, your verdict is ample testimony. But that he should likewise succeed, and more brilliantly, we did not expect. That he has, you cannot doubt. What do you think of him? Lie upon lie he has given us; he has been proven a chronic liar; are you to believe this last and fearfully impossible lie? Gentlemen, I can only ask that you reaffirm your judgment. And to those who may doubt his mendacity, — surely there are but few, — let me state, that if his story is true; if he broke salt with this man, John Borg, and lay in his blankets while murder was done; if he did hear, unmoved, the voice of the man calling to him for help; if he did lie there and watch that carnival of butchery without his manhood prompting him, — let me state, gentlemen, I say, let me state that he is none the less deserveful of hanging. We cannot make a mistake. What shall it be?”

“Death!” “String him up!” “Stretch ‘m!” were the cries.

But the crowd suddenly turned its attention to the river, and even Blackey refrained from his official task. A large raft, worked by a sweep at either end, was slipping past the tail of Split-up Island, close to the shore. When it was at their feet, its nose was slewed into the bank, and while its free end swung into the stream to make the consequent circle, a snubbing-rope was flung ashore and several turns taken about the tree under which St. Vincent stood. A cargo of moose-meat, red and raw, cut into quarters, peeped from beneath a cool covering of spruce boughs. And because of this, the two men on the raft looked up to those on the bank with pride in their eyes.

"Tryin' to make Dawson with it," one of them explained, "and the sun's all-fired hot."

"Nope," said his comrade, in reply to a query, "don't care to stop and trade. It's worth a dollar and a half a pound down below, and we're hustlin' to get there. But we've got some pieces of a man we want to leave with you." He turned and pointed to a loose heap of blankets which slightly disclosed the form of a man beneath. "We gathered him in this mornin', 'bout thirty mile up the Stewart, I should judge."

"Stands in need of doctorin'," the other man spoke up, "and the meat's spoilin', and we ain't got time for nothin'." "Beggar don't have anythin' to say. Don't savve the burro." "Looks as he might have been mixin' things with a grizzly or somethin', — all battered and gouged. Injured internally, from the looks of it. Where'll you have him?"

Frona, standing by St. Vincent, saw the injured man borne over the crest of the bank and through the crowd. A bronzed hand drooped down and a bronzed face showed from out the blankets. The bearers halted near them while a decision could be reached as to where he should be carried. Frona felt a sudden fierce grip on her arm.

"Look! look!" St. Vincent was leaning forward and pointing wildly at the injured man. "Look! That scar!"

The Indian opened his eyes and a grin of recognition distorted his face.

"It is he! It is he!" St. Vincent, trembling with eagerness, turned upon the crowd. "I call you all to witness! That is the man who killed John Borg!"

No laughter greeted this, for there was a terrible earnestness in his manner. Bill Brown and the chairman tried to make the Indian talk, but could not. A miner from British Columbia was pressed into service, but his Chinook made no impression. Then La Flitche was called. The handsome breed bent over the man and talked in gutturals which only his mother's heredity made possible. It sounded all one, yet it was apparent that he was trying many tongues. But no response did he draw, and he paused disheartened. As though with sudden recollection, he made another attempt. At once a gleam of intelligence shot across the Indian's face, and his larynx vibrated to similar sounds.

"It is the Stick talk of the Upper White," La Flitche stopped long enough to explain.

Then, with knit brows and stumbling moments when he sought dim-remembered words, he plied the man with questions. To the rest it was like a pantomime, — the meaningless grunts and waving arms and facial expressions of puzzlement, surprise, and understanding. At times a passion wrote itself on the face of the Indian, and a sympathy on the face of La Flitche. Again, by look and gesture, St. Vincent was referred to, and once a sober, mirthless laugh shaped the mouths of them.

"So? It is good," La Flitche said, when the Indian's head dropped back. "This man make true talk. He come from White River, way up. He cannot understand. He surprised very much, so many white men. He never think so many white men in the world. He die soon. His name Gow.

"Long time ago, three year, this man John Borg go to this man Gow's country. He hunt, he bring plenty meat to the camp, wherefore White River Sticks like him. Gow have one squaw, Pisk-ku. Bime-by John Borg make preparation to go 'way. He go to Gow, and he say, 'Give me your squaw. We trade. For her I give you many things.' But Gow say no. Pisk-ku good squaw. No woman sew moccasin like she. She tan moose-skin the best, and make the softest leather. He like Pisk-ku. Then John Borg say he don't care; he want Pisk-ku. Then they have a *skookum* big fight, and Pisk-ku go 'way with John Borg. She no want to go 'way, but she go anyway. Borg call her 'Bella,' and give her plenty good things, but she like Gow all the time." La Flitche pointed to the scar which ran down the forehead and past the eye of the Indian. "John Borg he do that."

"Long time Gow pretty near die. Then he get well, but his head sick. He don't know nobody. Don't know his father, his mother, or anything. Just like a little baby. Just like that. Then one day, quick, click! something snap, and his head get well all at once. He know his father and mother, he remember Pisk-ku, he remember everything. His father say John Borg go down river. Then Gow go down river. Spring-time, ice very bad. He very much afraid, so many white men, and when he come to this place he travel by night. Nobody see him 'tall, but he see everybody. He like a cat, see in the dark. Somehow, he come straight to John Borg's cabin. He do not know how this was, except that the work he had to do was good work."

St. Vincent pressed Frona's hand, but she shook her fingers clear and withdrew a step.

“He see Pisk-ku feed the dogs, and he have talk with her. That night he come and she open the door. Then you know that which was done. St. Vincent do nothing, Borg kill Bella. Gow kill Borg. Borg kill Gow, for Gow die pretty quick. Borg have strong arm. Gow sick inside, all smashed up. Gow no care; Pisk-ku dead.

“After that he go ‘cross ice to the land. I tell him all you people say it cannot be; no man can cross the ice at that time. He laugh, and say that it is, and what is, must be. Anyway, he have very hard time, but he get ‘cross all right. He very sick inside. Bime-by he cannot walk; he crawl. Long time he come to Stewart River. Can go no more, so he lay down to die. Two white men find him and bring him to this place. He don’t care. He die anyway.”

La Flitche finished abruptly, but nobody spoke. Then he added, “I think Gow damn good man.”

Frona came up to Jacob Welse. “Take me away, father,” she said. “I am so tired.”

CHAPTER XXX

Next morning, Jacob Welse, for all of the Company and his millions in mines, chopped up the day's supply of firewood, lighted a cigar, and went down the island in search of Baron Courbertin. Frona finished the breakfast dishes, hung out the robes to air, and fed the dogs. Then she took a worn Wordsworth from her clothes-bag, and, out by the bank, settled herself comfortably in a seat formed by two uprooted pines. But she did no more than open the book; for her eyes strayed out and over the Yukon to the eddy below the bluffs, and the bend above, and the tail of the spit which lay in the midst of the river. The rescue and the race were still fresh with her, though there were strange lapses, here and there, of which she remembered little. The struggle by the fissure was immeasurable; she knew not how long it lasted; and the race down Split-up to Roubeau Island was a thing of which her reason convinced her, but of which she recollected nothing.

The whim seized her, and she followed Corliss through the three days' events, but she tacitly avoided the figure of another man whom she would not name. Something terrible was connected therewith, she knew, which must be faced sooner or later; but she preferred to put that moment away from her. She was stiff and sore of mind as well as of body, and will and action were for the time being distasteful. It was more pleasant, even, to dwell on Tommy, on Tommy of the bitter tongue and craven heart; and she made a note that the wife and children in Toronto should not be forgotten when the Northland paid its dividends to the Welse.

The crackle of a foot on a dead willow-twig roused her, and her eyes met St. Vincent's.

"You have not congratulated me upon my escape," he began, breezily. "But you must have been dead-tired last night. I know I was. And you had that hard pull on the river besides."

He watched her furtively, trying to catch some cue as to her attitude and mood.

"You're a heroine, that's what you are, Frona," he began again, with exuberance. "And not only did you save the mail-man, but by the delay you wrought in the trial you saved me. If one more witness had gone on the stand that first day, I should have been duly hanged before Gow put in an appearance. Fine chap, Gow. Too bad he's going to die."

“I am glad that I could be of help,” she replied, wondering the while what she could say.

“And of course I am to be congratulated — ”

“Your trial is hardly a thing for congratulation,” she spoke up quickly, looking him straight in the eyes for the moment. “I am glad that it came out as it did, but surely you cannot expect me to congratulate you.”

“O-o-o,” with long-drawn inflection. “So that’s where it pinches.” He smiled good-humoredly, and moved as though to sit down, but she made no room for him, and he remained standing. “I can certainly explain. If there have been women — ”

Frona had been clinching her hand nervously, but at the word burst out in laughter.

“Women?” she queried. “Women?” she repeated. “Do not be ridiculous, Gregory.”

“After the way you stood by me through the trial,” he began, reproachfully, “I thought — ”

“Oh, you do not understand,” she said, hopelessly. “You do not understand. Look at me, Gregory, and see if I can make you understand. Your presence is painful to me. Your kisses hurt me. The memory of them still burns my cheek, and my lips feel unclean. And why? Because of women, which you may explain away? How little do you understand! But shall I tell you?”

Voices of men came to her from down the river-bank, and the splashing of water. She glanced quickly and saw Del Bishop guiding a poling-boat against the current, and Corliss on the bank, bending to the tow-rope.

“Shall I tell you why, Gregory St. Vincent?” she said again. “Tell you why your kisses have cheapened me? Because you broke the faith of food and blanket. Because you broke salt with a man, and then watched that man fight unequally for life without lifting your hand. Why, I had rather you had died in defending him; the memory of you would have been good. Yes, I had rather you had killed him yourself. At least, it would have shown there was blood in your body.”

“So this is what you would call love?” he began, scornfully, his fretting, fuming devil beginning to rouse. “A fair-weather love, truly. But, Lord, how we men learn!”

“I had thought you were well lessoned,” she retorted; “what of the other women?”

“But what do you intend to do?” he demanded, taking no notice. “I am not an easy man to cross. You cannot throw me over with impunity. I shall not stand for it, I warn you. You have dared do things in this country which would blacken you were they known. I have ears. I have not been asleep. You will find it no child’s play to explain away things which you may declare most innocent.”

She looked at him with a smile which carried pity in its cold mirth, and it goaded him.

“I am down, a thing to make a jest upon, a thing to pity, but I promise you that I can drag you with me. My kisses have cheapened you, eh? Then how must you have felt at Happy Camp on the Dyea Trail?”

As though in answer, Corliss swung down upon them with the tow-rope.

Frona beckoned a greeting to him. “Vance,” she said, “the mail-carrier has brought important news to father, so important that he must go outside. He starts this afternoon with Baron Courbertin in La Bijou. Will you take me down to Dawson? I should like to go at once, to-day.

“He . . . he suggested you,” she added shyly, indicating St. Vincent.

THE CALL OF THE WILD

This famous novel was first published in 1903 and is London's most-read book. It is remarkable for being told from the first person perspective of a dog. The plot concerns the previously domesticated Buck, whose primordial instincts return after tragic events lead to his serving as a sled dog in the Yukon during the 19th-century Klondike Gold Rush.

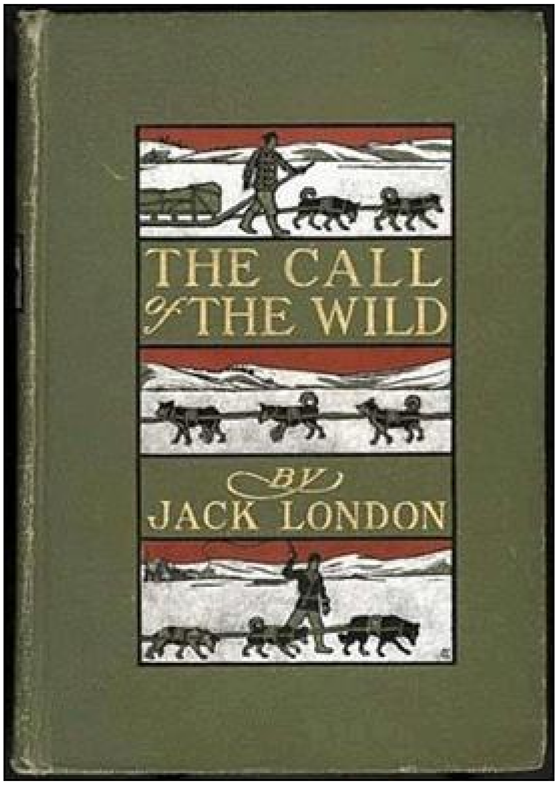
THE CALL of THE WILD
BY
JACK LONDON

The rare first edition

London studying at his schoolwork, aged 10

CONTENTS

Chapter I. Into the Primitive
Chapter II. The Law of Club and Fang
Chapter III. The Dominant Primordial Beast
Chapter IV. Who Has Won to Mastership
Chapter V. The Toil of Trace and Trail
Chapter VI. For the Love of a Man
Chapter VII. The Sounding of the Call

Chapter I. Into the Primitive

“Old longings nomadic leap,
Chafing at custom’s chain;
Again from its brumal sleep
Wakens the ferine strain.”

Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was brewing, not alone for himself, but for every tide-water dog, strong of muscle and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men, groping in the Arctic darkness, had found a yellow metal, and because steamship and transportation companies were booming the find, thousands of men were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted dogs, and the dogs they wanted were heavy dogs, with strong muscles by which to toil, and furry coats to protect them from the frost.

Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. Judge Miller’s place, it was called. It stood back from the road, half hidden among the trees, through which glimpses could be caught of the wide cool veranda that ran around its four sides. The house was approached by gravelled driveways which wound about through wide-spreading lawns and under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars. At the rear things were on even a more spacious scale than at the front. There were great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants’ cottages, an endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches. Then there was the pumping plant for the artesian well, and the big cement tank where Judge Miller’s boys took their morning plunge and kept cool in the hot afternoon.

And over this great demesne Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. It was true, there were other dogs, There could not but be other dogs on so vast a place, but they did not count. They came and went, resided in the populous kennels, or lived obscurely in the recesses of the house after the fashion of Toots, the Japanese pug, or Ysabel, the Mexican hairless, — strange creatures that rarely put nose out of doors or set foot to ground. On the other hand, there were the fox terriers, a score of them at least, who yelped fearful promises at Toots and Ysabel looking out of the windows at them and protected by a legion of housemaids armed with brooms and mops.

But Buck was neither house-dog nor kennel-dog. The whole realm was his. He plunged into the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge's sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge's daughters, on long twilight or early morning rambles; on wintry nights he lay at the Judge's feet before the roaring library fire; he carried the Judge's grandsons on his back, or rolled them in the grass, and guarded their footsteps through wild adventures down to the fountain in the stable yard, and even beyond, where the paddocks were, and the berry patches. Among the terriers he stalked imperiously, and Toots and Ysabel he utterly ignored, for he was king, — king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included.

His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard, had been the Judge's inseparable companion, and Buck bid fair to follow in the way of his father. He was not so large, — he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds, — for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd dog. Nevertheless, one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and universal respect, enabled him to carry himself in right royal fashion. During the four years since his puppyhood he had lived the life of a sated aristocrat; he had a fine pride in himself, was even a trifle egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become because of their insular situation. But he had saved himself by not becoming a mere pampered house-dog. Hunting and kindred outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles; and to him, as to the cold-tubbing races, the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver.

And this was the manner of dog Buck was in the fall of 1897, when the Klondike strike dragged men from all the world into the frozen North. But Buck did not read the newspapers, and he did not know that Manuel, one of the gardener's helpers, was an undesirable acquaintance. Manuel had one besetting sin. He loved to play Chinese lottery. Also, in his gambling, he had one besetting weakness — faith in a system; and this made his damnation certain. For to play a system requires money, while the wages of a gardener's helper do not lap over the needs of a wife and numerous progeny.

The Judge was at a meeting of the Raisin Growers' Association, and the boys were busy organizing an athletic club, on the memorable night of Manuel's treachery. No one saw him and Buck go off through the orchard on what Buck imagined was merely a stroll. And with the exception of a solitary man, no one saw them arrive at the little flag station known as College Park. This man talked with Manuel, and money chinked between them.

"You might wrap up the goods before you deliver 'm," the stranger said gruffly, and Manuel doubled a piece of stout rope around Buck's neck under the collar.

"Twist it, an' you'll choke 'm plentee," said Manuel, and the stranger grunted a ready affirmative.

Buck had accepted the rope with quiet dignity. To be sure, it was an unwonted performance: but he had learned to trust in men he knew, and to give them credit for a wisdom that outreached his own. But when the ends of the rope were placed in the stranger's hands, he growled menacingly. He had merely intimated his displeasure, in his pride believing that to intimate was to command. But to his surprise the rope tightened around his neck, shutting off his breath. In quick rage he sprang at the man, who met him halfway, grappled him close by the throat, and with a deft twist threw him over on his back. Then the rope tightened mercilessly, while Buck struggled in a fury, his tongue lolling out of his mouth and his great chest panting futilely. Never in all his life had he been so vilely treated, and never in all his life had he been so angry. But his strength ebbed, his eyes glazed, and he knew nothing when the train was flagged and the two men threw him into the baggage car.

The next he knew, he was dimly aware that his tongue was hurting and that he was being jolted along in some kind of a conveyance. The hoarse shriek of a locomotive whistling a crossing told him where he was. He had travelled too often with the Judge not to know the sensation of riding in a baggage car. He opened his eyes, and into them came the unbridled anger of a kidnapped king. The man sprang for his throat, but Buck was too quick for him. His jaws closed on the hand, nor did they relax till his senses were choked out of him once more.

"Yep, has fits," the man said, hiding his mangled hand from the baggageman, who had been attracted by the sounds of struggle. "I'm takin' 'm up for the boss to 'Frisco. A crack dog-doctor there thinks that he can cure 'm."

Concerning that night's ride, the man spoke most eloquently for himself, in a little shed back of a saloon on the San Francisco water front.

"All I get is fifty for it," he grumbled; "an' I wouldn't do it over for a thousand, cold cash."

His hand was wrapped in a bloody handkerchief, and the right trouser leg was ripped from knee to ankle.

"How much did the other mug get?" the saloon-keeper demanded.

"A hundred," was the reply. "Wouldn't take a sou less, so help me."

"That makes a hundred and fifty," the saloon-keeper calculated; "and he's worth it, or I'm a squarehead."

The kidnapper undid the bloody wrappings and looked at his lacerated hand. "If I don't get the hydrophoby — "

"It'll be because you was born to hang," laughed the saloon-keeper. "Here, lend me a hand before you pull your freight," he added.

Dazed, suffering intolerable pain from throat and tongue, with the life half throttled out of him, Buck attempted to face his tormentors. But he was thrown down and choked repeatedly, till they succeeded in filing the heavy brass collar from off his neck. Then the rope was removed, and he was flung into a cagelike crate.

There he lay for the remainder of the weary night, nursing his wrath and wounded pride. He could not understand what it all meant. What did they want with him, these strange men? Why were they keeping him pent up in this narrow crate? He did not know why, but he felt oppressed by the vague sense of impending calamity. Several times during the night he sprang to his feet when the shed door rattled open, expecting to see the Judge, or the boys at least. But each time it was the bulging face of the saloon-keeper that peered in at him by the sickly light of a tallow candle. And each time the joyful bark that trembled in Buck's throat was twisted into a savage growl.

But the saloon-keeper let him alone, and in the morning four men entered and picked up the crate. More tormentors, Buck decided, for they were evil-looking creatures, ragged and unkempt; and he stormed and raged at them through the bars. They only laughed and poked sticks at him, which he promptly assailed with his teeth till he realized that that was what they wanted. Whereupon he lay down sullenly and allowed the crate to be lifted into a wagon. Then he, and the crate in which he was imprisoned, began a passage through many hands. Clerks in the express office took charge of him; he was carted about in another wagon; a truck carried him, with an assortment of boxes and parcels, upon a ferry steamer; he was trucked off the steamer into a great railway depot, and finally he was deposited in an express car.

For two days and nights this express car was dragged along at the tail of shrieking locomotives; and for two days and nights Buck neither ate nor drank. In his anger he had met the first advances of the express messengers with growls, and they had retaliated by teasing him. When he flung himself against the bars, quivering and frothing, they laughed at him and taunted him. They growled and barked like detestable dogs, mewed, and flapped their arms and crowed. It was all very silly, he knew; but therefore the more outrage to his dignity, and his anger waxed and waxed. He did not mind the hunger so much, but the lack of water caused him severe suffering and fanned his wrath to fever-pitch. For that matter, high-strung and finely sensitive, the ill treatment had flung him into a fever, which was fed by the inflammation of his parched and swollen throat and tongue.

He was glad for one thing: the rope was off his neck. That had given them an unfair advantage; but now that it was off, he would show them. They would never get another rope around his neck. Upon that he was resolved. For two days and nights he neither ate nor drank, and during those two days and nights of torment, he accumulated a fund of wrath that boded ill for whoever first fell foul of him. His eyes turned blood-shot, and he was metamorphosed into a raging fiend. So changed was he that the Judge himself would not have recognized him; and the express messengers breathed with relief when they bundled him off the train at Seattle.

Four men gingerly carried the crate from the wagon into a small, high-walled back yard. A stout man, with a red sweater that sagged generously at the neck, came out and signed the book for the driver. That was the man, Buck divined, the next tormentor, and he hurled himself savagely against the bars. The man smiled grimly, and brought a hatchet and a club.

“You ain’t going to take him out now?” the driver asked.

“Sure,” the man replied, driving the hatchet into the crate for a pry.

There was an instantaneous scattering of the four men who had carried it in, and from safe perches on top the wall they prepared to watch the performance.

Buck rushed at the splintering wood, sinking his teeth into it, surging and wrestling with it. Wherever the hatchet fell on the outside, he was there on the inside, snarling and growling, as furiously anxious to get out as the man in the red sweater was calmly intent on getting him out.

“Now, you red-eyed devil,” he said, when he had made an opening sufficient for the passage of Buck’s body. At the same time he dropped the hatchet and shifted the club to his right hand.

And Buck was truly a red-eyed devil, as he drew himself together for the spring, hair bristling, mouth foaming, a mad glitter in his blood-shot eyes. Straight at the man he launched his one hundred and forty pounds of fury, surcharged with the pent passion of two days and nights. In mid air, just as his jaws were about to close on the man, he received a shock that checked his body and brought his teeth together with an agonizing clip. He whirled over, fetching the ground on his back and side. He had never been struck by a club in his life, and did not understand. With a snarl that was part bark and more scream he was again on his feet and launched into the air. And again the shock came and he was brought crushingly to the ground. This time he was aware that it was the club, but his madness knew no caution. A dozen times he charged, and as often the club broke the charge and smashed him down.

After a particularly fierce blow, he crawled to his feet, too dazed to rush. He staggered limply about, the blood flowing from nose and mouth and ears, his beautiful coat sprayed and flecked with bloody slaver. Then the man advanced and deliberately dealt him a frightful blow on the nose. All the pain he had endured was as nothing compared with the exquisite agony of this. With a roar that was almost lionlike in its ferocity, he again hurled himself at the man. But the man, shifting the club from right to left, coolly caught him by the under jaw, at the same time wrenching downward and backward. Buck described a complete circle in the air, and half of another, then crashed to the ground on his head and chest.

For the last time he rushed. The man struck the shrewd blow he had purposely withheld for so long, and Buck crumpled up and went down, knocked utterly senseless.

“He’s no slouch at dog-breakin’, that’s wot I say,” one of the men on the wall cried enthusiastically.

“Druther break cayuses any day, and twice on Sundays,” was the reply of the driver, as he climbed on the wagon and started the horses.

Buck’s senses came back to him, but not his strength. He lay where he had fallen, and from there he watched the man in the red sweater.

“‘Answers to the name of Buck,’“ the man soliloquized, quoting from the saloon-keeper’s letter which had announced the consignment of the crate and contents. “Well, Buck, my boy,” he went on in a genial voice, “we’ve had our little ruction, and the best thing we can do is to let it go at that. You’ve learned your place, and I know mine. Be a good dog and all ‘ll go well and the goose hang high. Be a bad dog, and I’ll whale the stuffin’ outa you. Understand?”

As he spoke he fearlessly patted the head he had so mercilessly pounded, and though Buck’s hair involuntarily bristled at touch of the hand, he endured it without protest. When the man brought him water he drank eagerly, and later bolted a generous meal of raw meat, chunk by chunk, from the man’s hand.

He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw, once for all, that he stood no chance against a man with a club. He had learned the lesson, and in all his after life he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law, and he met the introduction halfway. The facts of life took on a fiercer aspect; and while he faced that aspect uncowed, he faced it with all the latent cunning of his nature aroused. As the days went by, other dogs came, in crates and at the ends of ropes, some docilely, and some raging and roaring as he had come; and, one and all, he watched them pass under the dominion of the man in the red sweater. Again and again, as he looked at each brutal performance, the lesson was driven home to Buck: a man with a club was a lawgiver, a master to be obeyed, though not necessarily conciliated. Of this last Buck was never guilty, though he did see beaten dogs that fawned upon the man, and wagged their tails, and licked his hand. Also he saw one dog, that would neither conciliate nor obey, finally killed in the struggle for mastery.

Now and again men came, strangers, who talked excitedly, wheedlingly, and in all kinds of fashions to the man in the red sweater. And at such times that money passed between them the strangers took one or more of the dogs away with them. Buck wondered where they went, for they never came back; but the fear of the future was strong upon him, and he was glad each time when he was not selected.

Yet his time came, in the end, in the form of a little weazened man who spat broken English and many strange and uncouth exclamations which Buck could not understand.

“Sacredam!” he cried, when his eyes lit upon Buck. “Dat one dam bully dog! Eh? How moch?”

“Three hundred, and a present at that,” was the prompt reply of the man in the red sweater. “And seem’ it’s government money, you ain’t got no kick coming, eh, Perrault?”

Perrault grinned. Considering that the price of dogs had been boomed skyward by the unwonted demand, it was not an unfair sum for so fine an animal. The Canadian Government would be no loser, nor would its despatches travel the slower. Perrault knew dogs, and when he looked at Buck he knew that he was one in a thousand — ”One in ten t’ousand,” he commented mentally.

Buck saw money pass between them, and was not surprised when Curly, a good-natured Newfoundland, and he were led away by the little weazened man. That was the last he saw of the man in the red sweater, and as Curly and he looked at receding Seattle from the deck of the Narwhal, it was the last he saw of the warm Southland. Curly and he were taken below by Perrault and turned over to a black-faced giant called Francois. Perrault was a French-Canadian, and swarthy; but Francois was a French-Canadian half-breed, and twice as swarthy. They were a new kind of men to Buck (of which he was destined to see many more), and while he developed no affection for them, he none the less grew honestly to respect them. He speedily learned that Perrault and Francois were fair men, calm and impartial in administering justice, and too wise in the way of dogs to be fooled by dogs.

In the ‘tween-decks of the Narwhal, Buck and Curly joined two other dogs. One of them was a big, snow-white fellow from Spitzbergen who had been brought away by a whaling captain, and who had later accompanied a Geological Survey into the Barrens. He was friendly, in a treacherous sort of way, smiling into one’s face the while he meditated some underhand trick, as, for instance, when he stole from Buck’s food at the first meal. As Buck sprang to punish him, the lash of Francois’s whip sang through the air, reaching the culprit first; and nothing remained to Buck but to recover the bone. That was fair of Francois, he decided, and the half-breed began his rise in Buck’s estimation.

The other dog made no advances, nor received any; also, he did not attempt to steal from the newcomers. He was a gloomy, morose fellow, and he showed Curly plainly that all he desired was to be left alone, and further, that there would be trouble if he were not left alone. “Dave” he was called, and he ate and slept, or yawned between times, and took interest in nothing, not even when the Narwhal crossed Queen Charlotte Sound and rolled and pitched and bucked like a thing possessed. When Buck and Curly grew excited, half wild with fear, he raised his head as though annoyed, favored them with an incurious glance, yawned, and went to sleep again.

Day and night the ship throbbed to the tireless pulse of the propeller, and though one day was very like another, it was apparent to Buck that the weather was steadily growing colder. At last, one morning, the propeller was quiet, and the Narwhal was pervaded with an atmosphere of excitement. He felt it, as did the other dogs, and knew that a change was at hand. Francois leashed them and brought them on deck. At the first step upon the cold surface, Buck's feet sank into a white mushy something very like mud. He sprang back with a snort. More of this white stuff was falling through the air. He shook himself, but more of it fell upon him. He sniffed it curiously, then licked some up on his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next instant was gone. This puzzled him. He tried it again, with the same result. The onlookers laughed uproariously, and he felt ashamed, he knew not why, for it was his first snow.

Chapter II. The Law of Club and Fang

Buck's first day on the Dyea beach was like a nightmare. Every hour was filled with shock and surprise. He had been suddenly jerked from the heart of civilization and flung into the heart of things primordial. No lazy, sun-kissed life was this, with nothing to do but loaf and be bored. Here was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety. All was confusion and action, and every moment life and limb were in peril. There was imperative need to be constantly alert; for these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They were savages, all of them, who knew no law but the law of club and fang.

He had never seen dogs fight as these wolfish creatures fought, and his first experience taught him an unforgetable lesson. It is true, it was a vicarious experience, else he would not have lived to profit by it. Curly was the victim. They were camped near the log store, where she, in her friendly way, made advances to a husky dog the size of a full-grown wolf, though not half so large as she. There was no warning, only a leap in like a flash, a metallic clip of teeth, a leap out equally swift, and Curly's face was ripped open from eye to jaw.

It was the wolf manner of fighting, to strike and leap away; but there was more to it than this. Thirty or forty huskies ran to the spot and surrounded the combatants in an intent and silent circle. Buck did not comprehend that silent intentness, nor the eager way with which they were licking their chops. Curly rushed her antagonist, who struck again and leaped aside. He met her next rush with his chest, in a peculiar fashion that tumbled her off her feet. She never regained them, This was what the onlooking huskies had waited for. They closed in upon her, snarling and yelping, and she was buried, screaming with agony, beneath the bristling mass of bodies.

So sudden was it, and so unexpected, that Buck was taken aback. He saw Spitz run out his scarlet tongue in a way he had of laughing; and he saw Francois, swinging an axe, spring into the mess of dogs. Three men with clubs were helping him to scatter them. It did not take long. Two minutes from the time Curly went down, the last of her assailants were clubbed off. But she lay there limp and lifeless in the bloody, trampled snow, almost literally torn to pieces, the swart half-breed standing over her and cursing horribly. The scene often came back to Buck to trouble him in his sleep. So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you. Well, he would see to it that he never went down. Spitz ran out his tongue and laughed again, and from that moment Buck hated him with a bitter and deathless hatred.

Before he had recovered from the shock caused by the tragic passing of Curly, he received another shock. Francois fastened upon him an arrangement of straps and buckles. It was a harness, such as he had seen the grooms put on the horses at home. And as he had seen horses work, so he was set to work, hauling Francois on a sled to the forest that fringed the valley, and returning with a load of firewood. Though his dignity was sorely hurt by thus being made a draught animal, he was too wise to rebel. He buckled down with a will and did his best, though it was all new and strange. Francois was stern, demanding instant obedience, and by virtue of his whip receiving instant obedience; while Dave, who was an experienced wheeler, nipped Buck's hind quarters whenever he was in error. Spitz was the leader, likewise experienced, and while he could not always get at Buck, he growled sharp reproof now and again, or cunningly threw his weight in the traces to jerk Buck into the way he should go. Buck learned easily, and under the combined tuition of his two mates and Francois made remarkable progress. Ere they returned to camp he knew enough to stop at "ho," to go ahead at "mush," to swing wide on the bends, and to keep clear of the wheeler when the loaded sled shot downhill at their heels.

"T'ree vair' good dogs," Francois told Perrault. "Dat Buck, heem pool lak hell. I tich heem queek as anyt'ing."

By afternoon, Perrault, who was in a hurry to be on the trail with his despatches, returned with two more dogs. "Billee" and "Joe" he called them, two brothers, and true huskies both. Sons of the one mother though they were, they were as different as day and night. Billee's one fault was his excessive good nature, while Joe was the very opposite, sour and introspective, with a perpetual snarl and a malignant eye. Buck received them in comradely fashion, Dave ignored them, while Spitz proceeded to thrash first one and then the other. Billee wagged his tail appeasingly, turned to run when he saw that appeasement was of no avail, and cried (still appeasingly) when Spitz's sharp teeth scored his flank. But no matter how Spitz circled, Joe whirled around on his heels to face him, mane bristling, ears laid back, lips writhing and snarling, jaws clipping together as fast as he could snap, and eyes diabolically gleaming — the incarnation of belligerent fear. So terrible was his appearance that Spitz was forced to forego disciplining him; but to cover his own discomfiture he turned upon the inoffensive and wailing Billee and drove him to the confines of the camp.

By evening Perrault secured another dog, an old husky, long and lean and gaunt, with a battle-scarred face and a single eye which flashed a warning of prowess that commanded respect. He was called Sol-leks, which means the Angry One. Like Dave, he asked nothing, gave nothing, expected nothing; and when he marched slowly and deliberately into their midst, even Spitz left him alone. He had one peculiarity which Buck was unlucky enough to discover. He did not like to be approached on his blind side. Of this offence Buck was unwittingly guilty, and the first knowledge he had of his indiscretion was when Sol-leks whirled upon him and slashed his shoulder to the bone for three inches up and down. Forever after Buck avoided his blind side, and to the last of their comradeship had no more trouble. His only apparent ambition, like Dave's, was to be left alone; though, as Buck was afterward to learn, each of them possessed one other and even more vital ambition.

That night Buck faced the great problem of sleeping. The tent, illumined by a candle, glowed warmly in the midst of the white plain; and when he, as a matter of course, entered it, both Perrault and Francois bombarded him with curses and cooking utensils, till he recovered from his consternation and fled ignominiously into the outer cold. A chill wind was blowing that nipped him sharply and bit with especial venom into his wounded shoulder. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but the frost soon drove him shivering to his feet. Miserable and disconsolate, he wandered about among the many tents, only to find that one place was as cold as another. Here and there savage dogs rushed upon him, but he bristled his neck-hair and snarled (for he was learning fast), and they let him go his way unmolested.

Finally an idea came to him. He would return and see how his own team-mates were making out. To his astonishment, they had disappeared. Again he wandered about through the great camp, looking for them, and again he returned. Were they in the tent? No, that could not be, else he would not have been driven out. Then where could they possibly be? With drooping tail and shivering body, very forlorn indeed, he aimlessly circled the tent. Suddenly the snow gave way beneath his fore legs and he sank down.

Something wriggled under his feet. He sprang back, bristling and snarling, fearful of the unseen and unknown. But a friendly little yelp reassured him, and he went back to investigate. A whiff of warm air ascended to his nostrils, and there, curled up under the snow in a snug ball, lay Billee. He whined placatingly, squirmed and wriggled to show his good will and intentions, and even ventured, as a bribe for peace, to lick Buck's face with his warm wet tongue.

Another lesson. So that was the way they did it, eh? Buck confidently selected a spot, and with much fuss and waste effort proceeded to dig a hole for himself. In a trice the heat from his body filled the confined space and he was asleep. The day had been long and arduous, and he slept soundly and comfortably, though he growled and barked and wrestled with bad dreams.

Nor did he open his eyes till roused by the noises of the waking camp. At first he did not know where he was. It had snowed during the night and he was completely buried. The snow walls pressed him on every side, and a great surge of fear swept through him — the fear of the wild thing for the trap. It was a token that he was harking back through his own life to the lives of his forebears; for he was a civilized dog, an unduly civilized dog, and of his own experience knew no trap and so could not of himself fear it. The muscles of his whole body contracted spasmodically and instinctively, the hair on his neck and shoulders stood on end, and with a ferocious snarl he bounded straight up into the blinding day, the snow flying about him in a flashing cloud. Ere he landed on his feet, he saw the white camp spread out before him and knew where he was and remembered all that had passed from the time he went for a stroll with Manuel to the hole he had dug for himself the night before.

A shout from Francois hailed his appearance. "Wot I say?" the dog-driver cried to Perrault. "Dat Buck for sure learn queek as anyt'ing."

Perrault nodded gravely. As courier for the Canadian Government, bearing important despatches, he was anxious to secure the best dogs, and he was particularly gladdened by the possession of Buck.

Three more huskies were added to the team inside an hour, making a total of nine, and before another quarter of an hour had passed they were in harness and swinging up the trail toward the Dyea Canon. Buck was glad to be gone, and though the work was hard he found he did not particularly despise it. He was surprised at the eagerness which animated the whole team and which was communicated to him; but still more surprising was the change wrought in Dave and Sol-leks. They were new dogs, utterly transformed by the harness. All passiveness and unconcern had dropped from them. They were alert and active, anxious that the work should go well, and fiercely irritable with whatever, by delay or confusion, retarded that work. The toil of the traces seemed the supreme expression of their being, and all that they lived for and the only thing in which they took delight.

Dave was wheeler or sled dog, pulling in front of him was Buck, then came Sol-leks; the rest of the team was strung out ahead, single file, to the leader, which position was filled by Spitz.

Buck had been purposely placed between Dave and Sol-leks so that he might receive instruction. Apt scholar that he was, they were equally apt teachers, never allowing him to linger long in error, and enforcing their teaching with their sharp teeth. Dave was fair and very wise. He never nipped Buck without cause, and he never failed to nip him when he stood in need of it. As Francois's whip backed him up, Buck found it to be cheaper to mend his ways than to retaliate. Once, during a brief halt, when he got tangled in the traces and delayed the start, both Dave and Solleks flew at him and administered a sound trouncing. The resulting tangle was even worse, but Buck took good care to keep the traces clear thereafter; and ere the day was done, so well had he mastered his work, his mates about ceased nagging him. Francois's whip snapped less frequently, and Perrault even honored Buck by lifting up his feet and carefully examining them.

It was a hard day's run, up the Canon, through Sheep Camp, past the Scales and the timber line, across glaciers and snowdrifts hundreds of feet deep, and over the great Chilcoot Divide, which stands between the salt water and the fresh and guards forbiddingly the sad and lonely North. They made good time down the chain of lakes which fills the craters of extinct volcanoes, and late that night pulled into the huge camp at the head of Lake Bennett, where thousands of goldseekers were building boats against the break-up of the ice in the spring. Buck made his hole in the snow and slept the sleep of the exhausted just, but all too early was routed out in the cold darkness and harnessed with his mates to the sled.

That day they made forty miles, the trail being packed; but the next day, and for many days to follow, they broke their own trail, worked harder, and made poorer time. As a rule, Perrault travelled ahead of the team, packing the snow with webbed shoes to make it easier for them. Francois, guiding the sled at the gee-pole, sometimes exchanged places with him, but not often. Perrault was in a hurry, and he prided himself on his knowledge of ice, which knowledge was indispensable, for the fall ice was very thin, and where there was swift water, there was no ice at all.

Day after day, for days unending, Buck toiled in the traces. Always, they broke camp in the dark, and the first gray of dawn found them hitting the trail with fresh miles reeled off behind them. And always they pitched camp after dark, eating their bit of fish, and crawling to sleep into the snow. Buck was ravenous. The pound and a half of sun-dried salmon, which was his ration for each day, seemed to go nowhere. He never had enough, and suffered from perpetual hunger pangs. Yet the other dogs, because they weighed less and were born to the life, received a pound only of the fish and managed to keep in good condition.

He swiftly lost the fastidiousness which had characterized his old life. A dainty eater, he found that his mates, finishing first, robbed him of his unfinished ration. There was no defending it. While he was fighting off two or three, it was disappearing down the throats of the others. To remedy this, he ate as fast as they; and, so greatly did hunger compel him, he was not above taking what did not belong to him. He watched and learned. When he saw Pike, one of the new dogs, a clever malingerer and thief, slyly steal a slice of bacon when Perrault’s back was turned, he duplicated the performance the following day, getting away with the whole chunk. A great uproar was raised, but he was unsuspected; while Dub, an awkward blunderer who was always getting caught, was punished for Buck’s misdeed.

This first theft marked Buck as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment. It marked his adaptability, his capacity to adjust himself to changing conditions, the lack of which would have meant swift and terrible death. It marked, further, the decay or going to pieces of his moral nature, a vain thing and a handicap in the ruthless struggle for existence. It was all well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, whoso took such things into account was a fool, and in so far as he observed them he would fail to prosper.

Not that Buck reasoned it out. He was fit, that was all, and unconsciously he accommodated himself to the new mode of life. All his days, no matter what the odds, he had never run from a fight. But the club of the man in the red sweater had beaten into him a more fundamental and primitive code. Civilized, he could have died for a moral consideration, say the defence of Judge Miller's riding-whip; but the completeness of his decivilization was now evidenced by his ability to flee from the defence of a moral consideration and so save his hide. He did not steal for joy of it, but because of the clamor of his stomach. He did not rob openly, but stole secretly and cunningly, out of respect for club and fang. In short, the things he did were done because it was easier to do them than not to do them.

His development (or retrogression) was rapid. His muscles became hard as iron, and he grew callous to all ordinary pain. He achieved an internal as well as external economy. He could eat anything, no matter how loathsome or indigestible; and, once eaten, the juices of his stomach extracted the last least particle of nutriment; and his blood carried it to the farthest reaches of his body, building it into the toughest and stoutest of tissues. Sight and scent became remarkably keen, while his hearing developed such acuteness that in his sleep he heard the faintest sound and knew whether it heralded peace or peril. He learned to bite the ice out with his teeth when it collected between his toes; and when he was thirsty and there was a thick scum of ice over the water hole, he would break it by rearing and striking it with stiff fore legs. His most conspicuous trait was an ability to scent the wind and forecast it a night in advance. No matter how breathless the air when he dug his nest by tree or bank, the wind that later blew inevitably found him to leeward, sheltered and snug.

And not only did he learn by experience, but instincts long dead became alive again. The domesticated generations fell from him. In vague ways he remembered back to the youth of the breed, to the time the wild dogs ranged in packs through the primeval forest and killed their meat as they ran it down. It was no task for him to learn to fight with cut and slash and the quick wolf snap. In this manner had fought forgotten ancestors. They quickened the old life within him, and the old tricks which they had stamped into the heredity of the breed were his tricks. They came to him without effort or discovery, as though they had been his always. And when, on the still cold nights, he pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolflike, it was his ancestors, dead and dust, pointing nose at star and howling down through the centuries and through him. And his cadences were their cadences, the cadences which voiced their woe and what to them was the meaning of the stiffness, and the cold, and dark.

Thus, as token of what a puppet thing life is, the ancient song surged through him and he came into his own again; and he came because men had found a yellow metal in the North, and because Manuel was a gardener's helper whose wages did not lap over the needs of his wife and divers small copies of himself.

Chapter III. The Dominant Primordial Beast

The dominant primordial beast was strong in Buck, and under the fierce conditions of trail life it grew and grew. Yet it was a secret growth. His newborn cunning gave him poise and control. He was too busy adjusting himself to the new life to feel at ease, and not only did he not pick fights, but he avoided them whenever possible. A certain deliberateness characterized his attitude. He was not prone to rashness and precipitate action; and in the bitter hatred between him and Spitz he betrayed no impatience, shunned all offensive acts.

On the other hand, possibly because he divined in Buck a dangerous rival, Spitz never lost an opportunity of showing his teeth. He even went out of his way to bully Buck, striving constantly to start the fight which could end only in the death of one or the other. Early in the trip this might have taken place had it not been for an unwonted accident. At the end of this day they made a bleak and miserable camp on the shore of Lake Le Barge. Driving snow, a wind that cut like a white-hot knife, and darkness had forced them to grope for a camping place. They could hardly have fared worse. At their backs rose a perpendicular wall of rock, and Perrault and Francois were compelled to make their fire and spread their sleeping robes on the ice of the lake itself. The tent they had discarded at Dyea in order to travel light. A few sticks of driftwood furnished them with a fire that thawed down through the ice and left them to eat supper in the dark.

Close in under the sheltering rock Buck made his nest. So snug and warm was it, that he was loath to leave it when Francois distributed the fish which he had first thawed over the fire. But when Buck finished his ration and returned, he found his nest occupied. A warning snarl told him that the trespasser was Spitz. Till now Buck had avoided trouble with his enemy, but this was too much. The beast in him roared. He sprang upon Spitz with a fury which surprised them both, and Spitz particularly, for his whole experience with Buck had gone to teach him that his rival was an unusually timid dog, who managed to hold his own only because of his great weight and size.

Francois was surprised, too, when they shot out in a tangle from the disrupted nest and he divined the cause of the trouble. “A-a-ah!” he cried to Buck. “Gif it to heem, by Gar! Gif it to heem, the dirty t’eef!”

Spitz was equally willing. He was crying with sheer rage and eagerness as he circled back and forth for a chance to spring in. Buck was no less eager, and no less cautious, as he likewise circled back and forth for the advantage. But it was then that the unexpected happened, the thing which projected their struggle for supremacy far into the future, past many a weary mile of trail and toil.

An oath from Perrault, the resounding impact of a club upon a bony frame, and a shrill yelp of pain, heralded the breaking forth of pandemonium. The camp was suddenly discovered to be alive with skulking furry forms, — starving huskies, four or five score of them, who had scented the camp from some Indian village. They had crept in while Buck and Spitz were fighting, and when the two men sprang among them with stout clubs they showed their teeth and fought back. They were crazed by the smell of the food. Perrault found one with head buried in the grub-box. His club landed heavily on the gaunt ribs, and the grub-box was capsized on the ground. On the instant a score of the famished brutes were scrambling for the bread and bacon. The clubs fell upon them unheeded. They yelped and howled under the rain of blows, but struggled none the less madly till the last crumb had been devoured.

In the meantime the astonished team-dogs had burst out of their nests only to be set upon by the fierce invaders. Never had Buck seen such dogs. It seemed as though their bones would burst through their skins. They were mere skeletons, draped loosely in draggled hides, with blazing eyes and slavered fangs. But the hunger-madness made them terrifying, irresistible. There was no opposing them. The team-dogs were swept back against the cliff at the first onset. Buck was beset by three huskies, and in a trice his head and shoulders were ripped and slashed. The din was frightful. Billee was crying as usual. Dave and Sol-leks, dripping blood from a score of wounds, were fighting bravely side by side. Joe was snapping like a demon. Once, his teeth closed on the fore leg of a husky, and he crunched down through the bone. Pike, the malingerer, leaped upon the crippled animal, breaking its neck with a quick flash of teeth and a jerk, Buck got a frothing adversary by the throat, and was sprayed with blood when his teeth sank through the jugular. The warm taste of it in his mouth goaded him to greater fierceness. He flung himself upon another, and at the same time felt teeth sink into his own throat. It was Spitz, treacherously attacking from the side.

Perrault and Francois, having cleaned out their part of the camp, hurried to save their sled-dogs. The wild wave of famished beasts rolled back before them, and Buck shook himself free. But it was only for a moment. The two men were compelled to run back to save the grub, upon which the huskies returned to the attack on the team. Billee, terrified into bravery, sprang through the savage circle and fled away over the ice. Pike and Dub followed on his heels, with the rest of the team behind. As Buck drew himself together to spring after them, out of the tail of his eye he saw Spitz rush upon him with the evident intention of overthrowing him. Once off his feet and under that mass of huskies, there was no hope for him. But he braced himself to the shock of Spitz's charge, then joined the flight out on the lake.

Later, the nine team-dogs gathered together and sought shelter in the forest. Though unpursued, they were in a sorry plight. There was not one who was not wounded in four or five places, while some were wounded grievously. Dub was badly injured in a hind leg; Dolly, the last husky added to the team at Dyea, had a badly torn throat; Joe had lost an eye; while Billee, the good-natured, with an ear chewed and rent to ribbons, cried and whimpered throughout the night. At daybreak they limped warily back to camp, to find the marauders gone and the two men in bad tempers. Fully half their grub supply was gone. The huskies had chewed through the sled lashings and canvas coverings. In fact, nothing, no matter how remotely eatable, had escaped them. They had eaten a pair of Perrault's moose-hide moccasins, chunks out of the leather traces, and even two feet of lash from the end of Francois's whip. He broke from a mournful contemplation of it to look over his wounded dogs.

"Ah, my frien's," he said softly, "mebbe it mek you mad dog, dose many bites. Mebbe all mad dog, sacredam! Wot you t'ink, eh, Perrault?"

The courier shook his head dubiously. With four hundred miles of trail still between him and Dawson, he could ill afford to have madness break out among his dogs. Two hours of cursing and exertion got the harnesses into shape, and the wound-stiffened team was under way, struggling painfully over the hardest part of the trail they had yet encountered, and for that matter, the hardest between them and Dawson.

The Thirty Mile River was wide open. Its wild water defied the frost, and it was in the eddies only and in the quiet places that the ice held at all. Six days of exhausting toil were required to cover those thirty terrible miles.

And terrible they were, for every foot of them was accomplished at the risk of life to dog and man. A dozen times, Perrault, nosing the way broke through the ice bridges, being saved by the long pole he carried, which he so held that it fell each time across the hole made by his body. But a cold snap was on, the thermometer registering fifty below zero, and each time he broke through he was compelled for very life to build a fire and dry his garments.

Nothing daunted him. It was because nothing daunted him that he had been chosen for government courier. He took all manner of risks, resolutely thrusting his little weazened face into the frost and struggling on from dim dawn to dark. He skirted the frowning shores on rim ice that bent and crackled under foot and upon which they dared not halt. Once, the sled broke through, with Dave and Buck, and they were half-frozen and all but drowned by the time they were dragged out. The usual fire was necessary to save them. They were coated solidly with ice, and the two men kept them on the run around the fire, sweating and thawing, so close that they were singed by the flames.

At another time Spitz went through, dragging the whole team after him up to Buck, who strained backward with all his strength, his fore paws on the slippery edge and the ice quivering and snapping all around. But behind him was Dave, likewise straining backward, and behind the sled was Francois, pulling till his tendons cracked.

Again, the rim ice broke away before and behind, and there was no escape except up the cliff. Perrault scaled it by a miracle, while Francois prayed for just that miracle; and with every thong and sled lashing and the last bit of harness rove into a long rope, the dogs were hoisted, one by one, to the cliff crest. Francois came up last, after the sled and load. Then came the search for a place to descend, which descent was ultimately made by the aid of the rope, and night found them back on the river with a quarter of a mile to the day's credit.

By the time they made the Hootalinqua and good ice, Buck was played out. The rest of the dogs were in like condition; but Perrault, to make up lost time, pushed them late and early. The first day they covered thirty-five miles to the Big Salmon; the next day thirty-five more to the Little Salmon; the third day forty miles, which brought them well up toward the Five Fingers.

Buck's feet were not so compact and hard as the feet of the huskies. His had softened during the many generations since the day his last wild ancestor was tamed by a cave-dweller or river man. All day long he limped in agony, and camp once made, lay down like a dead dog. Hungry as he was, he would not move to receive his ration of fish, which Francois had to bring to him. Also, the dog-driver rubbed Buck's feet for half an hour each night after supper, and sacrificed the tops of his own moccasins to make four moccasins for Buck. This was a great relief, and Buck caused even the weazened face of Perrault to twist itself into a grin one morning, when Francois forgot the moccasins and Buck lay on his back, his four feet waving appealingly in the air, and refused to budge without them. Later his feet grew hard to the trail, and the worn-out foot-gear was thrown away.

At the Pelly one morning, as they were harnessing up, Dolly, who had never been conspicuous for anything, went suddenly mad. She announced her condition by a long, heartbreaking wolf howl that sent every dog bristling with fear, then sprang straight for Buck. He had never seen a dog go mad, nor did he have any reason to fear madness; yet he knew that here was horror, and fled away from it in a panic. Straight away he raced, with Dolly, panting and frothing, one leap behind; nor could she gain on him, so great was his terror, nor could he leave her, so great was her madness. He plunged through the wooded breast of the island, flew down to the lower end, crossed a back channel filled with rough ice to another island, gained a third island, curved back to the main river, and in desperation started to cross it. And all the time, though he did not look, he could hear her snarling just one leap behind. Francois called to him a quarter of a mile away and he doubled back, still one leap ahead, gasping painfully for air and putting all his faith in that Francois would save him. The dog-driver held the axe poised in his hand, and as Buck shot past him the axe crashed down upon mad Dolly's head.

Buck staggered over against the sled, exhausted, sobbing for breath, helpless. This was Spitz's opportunity. He sprang upon Buck, and twice his teeth sank into his unresisting foe and ripped and tore the flesh to the bone. Then Francois's lash descended, and Buck had the satisfaction of watching Spitz receive the worst whipping as yet administered to any of the teams.

"One devil, dat Spitz," remarked Perrault. "Some dam day heem keel dat Buck."

“Dat Buck two devils,” was Francois’s rejoinder. “All de tam I watch dat Buck I know for sure. Lissen: some dam fine day heem get mad lak hell an’ den heem chew dat Spitz all up an’ spit heem out on de snow. Sure. I know.”

From then on it was war between them. Spitz, as lead-dog and acknowledged master of the team, felt his supremacy threatened by this strange Southland dog. And strange Buck was to him, for of the many Southland dogs he had known, not one had shown up worthily in camp and on trail. They were all too soft, dying under the toil, the frost, and starvation. Buck was the exception. He alone endured and prospered, matching the husky in strength, savagery, and cunning. Then he was a masterful dog, and what made him dangerous was the fact that the club of the man in the red sweater had knocked all blind pluck and rashness out of his desire for mastery. He was preeminently cunning, and could bide his time with a patience that was nothing less than primitive.

It was inevitable that the clash for leadership should come. Buck wanted it. He wanted it because it was his nature, because he had been gripped tight by that nameless, incomprehensible pride of the trail and trace — that pride which holds dogs in the toil to the last gasp, which lures them to die joyfully in the harness, and breaks their hearts if they are cut out of the harness. This was the pride of Dave as wheel-dog, of Sol-leks as he pulled with all his strength; the pride that laid hold of them at break of camp, transforming them from sour and sullen brutes into straining, eager, ambitious creatures; the pride that spurred them on all day and dropped them at pitch of camp at night, letting them fall back into gloomy unrest and uncontent. This was the pride that bore up Spitz and made him thrash the sled-dogs who blundered and shirked in the traces or hid away at harness-up time in the morning. Likewise it was this pride that made him fear Buck as a possible lead-dog. And this was Buck’s pride, too.

He openly threatened the other’s leadership. He came between him and the shirks he should have punished. And he did it deliberately. One night there was a heavy snowfall, and in the morning Pike, the malingerer, did not appear. He was securely hidden in his nest under a foot of snow. Francois called him and sought him in vain. Spitz was wild with wrath. He raged through the camp, smelling and digging in every likely place, snarling so frightfully that Pike heard and shivered in his hiding-place.

But when he was at last unearthed, and Spitz flew at him to punish him, Buck flew, with equal rage, in between. So unexpected was it, and so shrewdly managed, that Spitz was hurled backward and off his feet. Pike, who had been trembling abjectly, took heart at this open mutiny, and sprang upon his overthrown leader. Buck, to whom fair play was a forgotten code, likewise sprang upon Spitz. But Francois, chuckling at the incident while unswerving in the administration of justice, brought his lash down upon Buck with all his might. This failed to drive Buck from his prostrate rival, and the butt of the whip was brought into play. Half-stunned by the blow, Buck was knocked backward and the lash laid upon him again and again, while Spitz soundly punished the many times offending Pike.

In the days that followed, as Dawson grew closer and closer, Buck still continued to interfere between Spitz and the culprits; but he did it craftily, when Francois was not around, With the covert mutiny of Buck, a general insubordination sprang up and increased. Dave and Sol-leks were unaffected, but the rest of the team went from bad to worse. Things no longer went right. There was continual bickering and jangling. Trouble was always afoot, and at the bottom of it was Buck. He kept Francois busy, for the dog-driver was in constant apprehension of the life-and-death struggle between the two which he knew must take place sooner or later; and on more than one night the sounds of quarrelling and strife among the other dogs turned him out of his sleeping robe, fearful that Buck and Spitz were at it.

But the opportunity did not present itself, and they pulled into Dawson one dreary afternoon with the great fight still to come. Here were many men, and countless dogs, and Buck found them all at work. It seemed the ordained order of things that dogs should work. All day they swung up and down the main street in long teams, and in the night their jingling bells still went by. They hauled cabin logs and firewood, freighted up to the mines, and did all manner of work that horses did in the Santa Clara Valley. Here and there Buck met Southland dogs, but in the main they were the wild wolf husky breed. Every night, regularly, at nine, at twelve, at three, they lifted a nocturnal song, a weird and eerie chant, in which it was Buck’s delight to join.

With the aurora borealis flaming coldly overhead, or the stars leaping in the frost dance, and the land numb and frozen under its pall of snow, this song of the huskies might have been the defiance of life, only it was pitched in minor key, with long-drawn wailings and half-sobs, and was more the pleading of life, the articulate travail of existence. It was an old song, old as the breed itself — one of the first songs of the younger world in a day when songs were sad. It was invested with the woe of unnumbered generations, this plaint by which Buck was so strangely stirred. When he moaned and sobbed, it was with the pain of living that was of old the pain of his wild fathers, and the fear and mystery of the cold and dark that was to them fear and mystery. And that he should be stirred by it marked the completeness with which he harked back through the ages of fire and roof to the raw beginnings of life in the howling ages.

Seven days from the time they pulled into Dawson, they dropped down the steep bank by the Barracks to the Yukon Trail, and pulled for Dyea and Salt Water. Perrault was carrying despatches if anything more urgent than those he had brought in; also, the travel pride had gripped him, and he purposed to make the record trip of the year. Several things favored him in this. The week's rest had recuperated the dogs and put them in thorough trim. The trail they had broken into the country was packed hard by later journeyers. And further, the police had arranged in two or three places deposits of grub for dog and man, and he was travelling light.

They made Sixty Mile, which is a fifty-mile run, on the first day; and the second day saw them booming up the Yukon well on their way to Pelly. But such splendid running was achieved not without great trouble and vexation on the part of Francois. The insidious revolt led by Buck had destroyed the solidarity of the team. It no longer was as one dog leaping in the traces. The encouragement Buck gave the rebels led them into all kinds of petty misdemeanors. No more was Spitz a leader greatly to be feared. The old awe departed, and they grew equal to challenging his authority. Pike robbed him of half a fish one night, and gulped it down under the protection of Buck. Another night Dub and Joe fought Spitz and made him forego the punishment they deserved. And even Billee, the good-natured, was less good-natured, and whined not half so placatingly as in former days. Buck never came near Spitz without snarling and bristling menacingly. In fact, his conduct approached that of a bully, and he was given to swaggering up and down before Spitz's very nose.

The breaking down of discipline likewise affected the dogs in their relations with one another. They quarrelled and bickered more than ever among themselves, till at times the camp was a howling bedlam. Dave and

Sol-leks alone were unaltered, though they were made irritable by the unending squabbling. Francois swore strange barbarous oaths, and stamped the snow in futile rage, and tore his hair. His lash was always singing among the dogs, but it was of small avail. Directly his back was turned they were at it again. He backed up Spitz with his whip, while Buck backed up the remainder of the team. Francois knew he was behind all the trouble, and Buck knew he knew; but Buck was too clever ever again to be caught red-handed. He worked faithfully in the harness, for the toil had become a delight to him; yet it was a greater delight slyly to precipitate a fight amongst his mates and tangle the traces.

At the mouth of the Tahkeena, one night after supper, Dub turned up a snowshoe rabbit, blundered it, and missed. In a second the whole team was in full cry. A hundred yards away was a camp of the Northwest Police, with fifty dogs, huskies all, who joined the chase. The rabbit sped down the river, turned off into a small creek, up the frozen bed of which it held steadily. It ran lightly on the surface of the snow, while the dogs ploughed through by main strength. Buck led the pack, sixty strong, around bend after bend, but he could not gain. He lay down low to the race, whining eagerly, his splendid body flashing forward, leap by leap, in the wan white moonlight. And leap by leap, like some pale frost wraith, the snowshoe rabbit flashed on ahead.

All that stirring of old instincts which at stated periods drives men out from the sounding cities to forest and plain to kill things by chemically propelled leaden pellets, the blood lust, the joy to kill — all this was Buck’s, only it was infinitely more intimate. He was ranging at the head of the pack, running the wild thing down, the living meat, to kill with his own teeth and wash his muzzle to the eyes in warm blood.

There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad on a stricken field and refusing quarter; and it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food that was alive and that fled swiftly before him through the moonlight. He was sounding the deeps of his nature, and of the parts of his nature that were deeper than he, going back into the womb of Time. He was mastered by the sheer surging of life, the tidal wave of being, the perfect joy of each separate muscle, joint, and sinew in that it was everything that was not death, that it was aglow and rampant, expressing itself in movement, flying exultantly under the stars and over the face of dead matter that did not move.

But Spitz, cold and calculating even in his supreme moods, left the pack and cut across a narrow neck of land where the creek made a long bend around. Buck did not know of this, and as he rounded the bend, the frost wraith of a rabbit still flitting before him, he saw another and larger frost wraith leap from the overhanging bank into the immediate path of the rabbit. It was Spitz. The rabbit could not turn, and as the white teeth broke its back in mid air it shrieked as loudly as a stricken man may shriek. At sound of this, the cry of Life plunging down from Life's apex in the grip of Death, the fall pack at Buck's heels raised a hell's chorus of delight.

Buck did not cry out. He did not check himself, but drove in upon Spitz, shoulder to shoulder, so hard that he missed the throat. They rolled over and over in the powdery snow. Spitz gained his feet almost as though he had not been overthrown, slashing Buck down the shoulder and leaping clear. Twice his teeth clipped together, like the steel jaws of a trap, as he backed away for better footing, with lean and lifting lips that writhed and snarled.

In a flash Buck knew it. The time had come. It was to the death. As they circled about, snarling, ears laid back, keenly watchful for the advantage, the scene came to Buck with a sense of familiarity. He seemed to remember it all, — the white woods, and earth, and moonlight, and the thrill of battle. Over the whiteness and silence brooded a ghostly calm. There was not the faintest whisper of air — nothing moved, not a leaf quivered, the visible breaths of the dogs rising slowly and lingering in the frosty air. They had made short work of the snowshoe rabbit, these dogs that were ill-tamed wolves; and they were now drawn up in an expectant circle. They, too, were silent, their eyes only gleaming and their breaths drifting slowly upward. To Buck it was nothing new or strange, this scene of old time. It was as though it had always been, the wonted way of things.

Spitz was a practised fighter. From Spitzbergen through the Arctic, and across Canada and the Barrens, he had held his own with all manner of dogs and achieved to mastery over them. Bitter rage was his, but never blind rage. In passion to rend and destroy, he never forgot that his enemy was in like passion to rend and destroy. He never rushed till he was prepared to receive a rush; never attacked till he had first defended that attack.

In vain Buck strove to sink his teeth in the neck of the big white dog. Wherever his fangs struck for the softer flesh, they were countered by the fangs of Spitz. Fang clashed fang, and lips were cut and bleeding, but Buck could not penetrate his enemy's guard. Then he warmed up and enveloped Spitz in a whirlwind of rushes. Time and time again he tried for the snow-white throat, where life bubbled near to the surface, and each time and every time Spitz slashed him and got away. Then Buck took to rushing, as though for the throat, when, suddenly drawing back his head and curving in from the side, he would drive his shoulder at the shoulder of Spitz, as a ram by which to overthrow him. But instead, Buck's shoulder was slashed down each time as Spitz leaped lightly away.

Spitz was untouched, while Buck was streaming with blood and panting hard. The fight was growing desperate. And all the while the silent and wolfish circle waited to finish off whichever dog went down. As Buck grew winded, Spitz took to rushing, and he kept him staggering for footing. Once Buck went over, and the whole circle of sixty dogs started up; but he recovered himself, almost in mid air, and the circle sank down again and waited.

But Buck possessed a quality that made for greatness — imagination. He fought by instinct, but he could fight by head as well. He rushed, as though attempting the old shoulder trick, but at the last instant swept low to the snow and in. His teeth closed on Spitz's left fore leg. There was a crunch of breaking bone, and the white dog faced him on three legs. Thrice he tried to knock him over, then repeated the trick and broke the right fore leg. Despite the pain and helplessness, Spitz struggled madly to keep up. He saw the silent circle, with gleaming eyes, lolling tongues, and silvery breaths drifting upward, closing in upon him as he had seen similar circles close in upon beaten antagonists in the past. Only this time he was the one who was beaten.

There was no hope for him. Buck was inexorable. Mercy was a thing reserved for gentler climes. He manoeuvred for the final rush. The circle had tightened till he could feel the breaths of the huskies on his flanks. He could see them, beyond Spitz and to either side, half crouching for the spring, their eyes fixed upon him. A pause seemed to fall. Every animal was motionless as though turned to stone. Only Spitz quivered and bristled as he staggered back and forth, snarling with horrible menace, as though to frighten off impending death. Then Buck sprang in and out; but while he was in, shoulder had at last squarely met shoulder. The dark circle became a dot on the moon-flooded snow as Spitz disappeared from view. Buck stood and looked on, the successful champion, the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good.

Chapter IV. Who Has Won to Mastership

“Eh? Wot I say? I spik true w’en I say dat Buck two devils.” This was Francois’s speech next morning when he discovered Spitz missing and Buck covered with wounds. He drew him to the fire and by its light pointed them out.

“Dat Spitz fight lak hell,” said Perrault, as he surveyed the gaping rips and cuts.

“An’ dat Buck fight lak two hells,” was Francois’s answer. “An’ now we make good time. No more Spitz, no more trouble, sure.”

While Perrault packed the camp outfit and loaded the sled, the dog-driver proceeded to harness the dogs. Buck trotted up to the place Spitz would have occupied as leader; but Francois, not noticing him, brought Sol-leks to the coveted position. In his judgment, Sol-leks was the best lead-dog left. Buck sprang upon Sol-leks in a fury, driving him back and standing in his place.

“Eh? eh?” Francois cried, slapping his thighs gleefully. “Look at dat Buck. Heem keel dat Spitz, heem t’ink to take de job.”

“Go ‘way, Chook!” he cried, but Buck refused to budge.

He took Buck by the scruff of the neck, and though the dog growled threateningly, dragged him to one side and replaced Sol-leks. The old dog did not like it, and showed plainly that he was afraid of Buck. Francois was obdurate, but when he turned his back Buck again displaced Sol-leks, who was not at all unwilling to go.

Francois was angry. “Now, by Gar, I feex you!” he cried, coming back with a heavy club in his hand.

Buck remembered the man in the red sweater, and retreated slowly; nor did he attempt to charge in when Sol-leks was once more brought forward. But he circled just beyond the range of the club, snarling with bitterness and rage; and while he circled he watched the club so as to dodge it if thrown by Francois, for he was become wise in the way of clubs. The driver went about his work, and he called to Buck when he was ready to put him in his old place in front of Dave. Buck retreated two or three steps. Francois followed him up, whereupon he again retreated. After some time of this, Francois threw down the club, thinking that Buck feared a thrashing. But Buck was in open revolt. He wanted, not to escape a clubbing, but to have the leadership. It was his by right. He had earned it, and he would not be content with less.

Perrault took a hand. Between them they ran him about for the better part of an hour. They threw clubs at him. He dodged. They cursed him, and his fathers and mothers before him, and all his seed to come after him down to the remotest generation, and every hair on his body and drop of blood in his veins; and he answered curse with snarl and kept out of their reach. He did not try to run away, but retreated around and around the camp, advertising plainly that when his desire was met, he would come in and be good.

Francois sat down and scratched his head. Perrault looked at his watch and swore. Time was flying, and they should have been on the trail an hour gone. Francois scratched his head again. He shook it and grinned sheepishly at the courier, who shrugged his shoulders in sign that they were beaten. Then Francois went up to where Sol-leks stood and called to Buck. Buck laughed, as dogs laugh, yet kept his distance. Francois unfastened Sol-leks's traces and put him back in his old place. The team stood harnessed to the sled in an unbroken line, ready for the trail. There was no place for Buck save at the front. Once more Francois called, and once more Buck laughed and kept away.

"T'row down de club," Perrault commanded.

Francois complied, whereupon Buck trotted in, laughing triumphantly, and swung around into position at the head of the team. His traces were fastened, the sled broken out, and with both men running they dashed out on to the river trail.

Highly as the dog-driver had forevalued Buck, with his two devils, he found, while the day was yet young, that he had undervalued. At a bound Buck took up the duties of leadership; and where judgment was required, and quick thinking and quick acting, he showed himself the superior even of Spitz, of whom Francois had never seen an equal.

But it was in giving the law and making his mates live up to it, that Buck excelled. Dave and Sol-leks did not mind the change in leadership. It was none of their business. Their business was to toil, and toil mightily, in the traces. So long as that were not interfered with, they did not care what happened. Billee, the good-natured, could lead for all they cared, so long as he kept order. The rest of the team, however, had grown unruly during the last days of Spitz, and their surprise was great now that Buck proceeded to lick them into shape.

Pike, who pulled at Buck's heels, and who never put an ounce more of his weight against the breast-band than he was compelled to do, was swiftly and repeatedly shaken for loafing; and ere the first day was done he was pulling more than ever before in his life. The first night in camp, Joe, the sour one, was punished roundly — a thing that Spitz had never succeeded in doing. Buck simply smothered him by virtue of superior weight, and cut him up till he ceased snapping and began to whine for mercy.

The general tone of the team picked up immediately. It recovered its old-time solidarity, and once more the dogs leaped as one dog in the traces. At the Rink Rapids two native huskies, Teek and Koona, were added; and the celerity with which Buck broke them in took away Francois's breath.

"Nevaire such a dog as dat Buck!" he cried. "No, nevaire! Heem worth one t'ousan' dollair, by Gar! Eh? Wot you say, Perrault?"

And Perrault nodded. He was ahead of the record then, and gaining day by day. The trail was in excellent condition, well packed and hard, and there was no new-fallen snow with which to contend. It was not too cold. The temperature dropped to fifty below zero and remained there the whole trip. The men rode and ran by turn, and the dogs were kept on the jump, with but infrequent stoppages.

The Thirty Mile River was comparatively coated with ice, and they covered in one day going out what had taken them ten days coming in. In one run they made a sixty-mile dash from the foot of Lake Le Barge to the White Horse Rapids. Across Marsh, Tagish, and Bennett (seventy miles of lakes), they flew so fast that the man whose turn it was to run towed behind the sled at the end of a rope. And on the last night of the second week they topped White Pass and dropped down the sea slope with the lights of Skaguay and of the shipping at their feet.

It was a record run. Each day for fourteen days they had averaged forty miles. For three days Perrault and Francois threw chests up and down the main street of Skaguay and were deluged with invitations to drink, while the team was the constant centre of a worshipful crowd of dog-busters and mushers. Then three or four western bad men aspired to clean out the town, were riddled like pepper-boxes for their pains, and public interest turned to other idols. Next came official orders. Francois called Buck to him, threw his arms around him, wept over him. And that was the last of Francois and Perrault. Like other men, they passed out of Buck's life for good.

A Scotch half-breed took charge of him and his mates, and in company with a dozen other dog-teams he started back over the weary trail to Dawson. It was no light running now, nor record time, but heavy toil each day, with a heavy load behind; for this was the mail train, carrying word from the world to the men who sought gold under the shadow of the Pole.

Buck did not like it, but he bore up well to the work, taking pride in it after the manner of Dave and Sol-leks, and seeing that his mates, whether they prided in it or not, did their fair share. It was a monotonous life, operating with machine-like regularity. One day was very like another. At a certain time each morning the cooks turned out, fires were built, and breakfast was eaten. Then, while some broke camp, others harnessed the dogs, and they were under way an hour or so before the darkness fell which gave warning of dawn. At night, camp was made. Some pitched the flies, others cut firewood and pine boughs for the beds, and still others carried water or ice for the cooks. Also, the dogs were fed. To them, this was the one feature of the day, though it was good to loaf around, after the fish was eaten, for an hour or so with the other dogs, of which there were fivescore and odd. There were fierce fighters among them, but three battles with the fiercest brought Buck to mastery, so that when he bristled and showed his teeth they got out of his way.

Best of all, perhaps, he loved to lie near the fire, hind legs crouched under him, fore legs stretched out in front, head raised, and eyes blinking dreamily at the flames. Sometimes he thought of Judge Miller's big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley, and of the cement swimming-tank, and Ysabel, the Mexican hairless, and Toots, the Japanese pug; but oftener he remembered the man in the red sweater, the death of Curly, the great fight with Spitz, and the good things he had eaten or would like to eat. He was not homesick. The Sunland was very dim and distant, and such memories had no power over him. Far more potent were the memories of his heredity that gave things he had never seen before a seeming familiarity; the instincts (which were but the memories of his ancestors become habits) which had lapsed in later days, and still later, in him, quickened and become alive again.

Sometimes as he crouched there, blinking dreamily at the flames, it seemed that the flames were of another fire, and that as he crouched by this other fire he saw another and different man from the half-breed cook before him. This other man was shorter of leg and longer of arm, with muscles that were stringy and knotty rather than rounded and swelling. The hair of this man was long and matted, and his head slanted back under it from the eyes. He uttered strange sounds, and seemed very much afraid of the darkness, into which he peered continually, clutching in his hand, which hung midway between knee and foot, a stick with a heavy stone made fast to the end. He was all but naked, a ragged and fire-scorched skin hanging part way down his back, but on his body there was much hair. In some places, across the chest and shoulders and down the outside of the arms and thighs, it was matted into almost a thick fur. He did not stand erect, but with trunk inclined forward from the hips, on legs that bent at the knees. About his body there was a peculiar springiness, or resiliency, almost catlike, and a quick alertness as of one who lived in perpetual fear of things seen and unseen.

At other times this hairy man squatted by the fire with head between his legs and slept. On such occasions his elbows were on his knees, his hands clasped above his head as though to shed rain by the hairy arms. And beyond that fire, in the circling darkness, Buck could see many gleaming coals, two by two, always two by two, which he knew to be the eyes of great beasts of prey. And he could hear the crashing of their bodies through the undergrowth, and the noises they made in the night. And dreaming there by the Yukon bank, with lazy eyes blinking at the fire, these sounds and sights of another world would make the hair to rise along his back and stand on end across his shoulders and up his neck, till he whimpered low and suppressedly, or growled softly, and the half-breed cook shouted at him, “Hey, you Buck, wake up!” Whereupon the other world would vanish and the real world come into his eyes, and he would get up and yawn and stretch as though he had been asleep.

It was a hard trip, with the mail behind them, and the heavy work wore them down. They were short of weight and in poor condition when they made Dawson, and should have had a ten days’ or a week’s rest at least. But in two days’ time they dropped down the Yukon bank from the Barracks, loaded with letters for the outside. The dogs were tired, the drivers grumbling, and to make matters worse, it snowed every day. This meant a soft trail, greater friction on the runners, and heavier pulling for the dogs; yet the drivers were fair through it all, and did their best for the animals.

Each night the dogs were attended to first. They ate before the drivers ate, and no man sought his sleeping-robe till he had seen to the feet of the dogs he drove. Still, their strength went down. Since the beginning of the winter they had travelled eighteen hundred miles, dragging sleds the whole weary distance; and eighteen hundred miles will tell upon life of the toughest. Buck stood it, keeping his mates up to their work and maintaining discipline, though he, too, was very tired. Billee cried and whimpered regularly in his sleep each night. Joe was sourer than ever, and Sol-leks was unapproachable, blind side or other side.

But it was Dave who suffered most of all. Something had gone wrong with him. He became more morose and irritable, and when camp was pitched at once made his nest, where his driver fed him. Once out of the harness and down, he did not get on his feet again till harness-up time in the morning. Sometimes, in the traces, when jerked by a sudden stoppage of the sled, or by straining to start it, he would cry out with pain. The driver examined him, but could find nothing. All the drivers became interested in his case. They talked it over at meal-time, and over their last pipes before going to bed, and one night they held a consultation. He was brought from his nest to the fire and was pressed and prodded till he cried out many times. Something was wrong inside, but they could locate no broken bones, could not make it out.

By the time Cassiar Bar was reached, he was so weak that he was falling repeatedly in the traces. The Scotch half-breed called a halt and took him out of the team, making the next dog, Sol-leks, fast to the sled. His intention was to rest Dave, letting him run free behind the sled. Sick as he was, Dave resented being taken out, grunting and growling while the traces were unfastened, and whimpering broken-heartedly when he saw Sol-leks in the position he had held and served so long. For the pride of trace and trail was his, and, sick unto death, he could not bear that another dog should do his work.

When the sled started, he floundered in the soft snow alongside the beaten trail, attacking Sol-leks with his teeth, rushing against him and trying to thrust him off into the soft snow on the other side, striving to leap inside his traces and get between him and the sled, and all the while whining and yelping and crying with grief and pain. The half-breed tried to drive him away with the whip; but he paid no heed to the stinging lash, and the man had not the heart to strike harder. Dave refused to run quietly on the trail behind the sled, where the going was easy, but continued to flounder alongside in the soft snow, where the going was most difficult, till exhausted. Then he fell, and lay where he fell, howling lugubriously as the long train of sleds churned by.

With the last remnant of his strength he managed to stagger along behind till the train made another stop, when he floundered past the sleds to his own, where he stood alongside Sol-leks. His driver lingered a moment to get a light for his pipe from the man behind. Then he returned and started his dogs. They swung out on the trail with remarkable lack of exertion, turned their heads uneasily, and stopped in surprise. The driver was surprised, too; the sled had not moved. He called his comrades to witness the sight. Dave had bitten through both of Sol-leks's traces, and was standing directly in front of the sled in his proper place.

He pleaded with his eyes to remain there. The driver was perplexed. His comrades talked of how a dog could break its heart through being denied the work that killed it, and recalled instances they had known, where dogs, too old for the toil, or injured, had died because they were cut out of the traces. Also, they held it a mercy, since Dave was to die anyway, that he should die in the traces, heart-easy and content. So he was harnessed in again, and proudly he pulled as of old, though more than once he cried out involuntarily from the bite of his inward hurt. Several times he fell down and was dragged in the traces, and once the sled ran upon him so that he limped thereafter in one of his hind legs.

But he held out till camp was reached, when his driver made a place for him by the fire. Morning found him too weak to travel. At harness-up time he tried to crawl to his driver. By convulsive efforts he got on his feet, staggered, and fell. Then he wormed his way forward slowly toward where the harnesses were being put on his mates. He would advance his fore legs and drag up his body with a sort of hitching movement, when he would advance his fore legs and hitch ahead again for a few more inches. His strength left him, and the last his mates saw of him he lay gasping in the snow and yearning toward them. But they could hear him mournfully howling till they passed out of sight behind a belt of river timber.

Here the train was halted. The Scotch half-breed slowly retraced his steps to the camp they had left. The men ceased talking. A revolver-shot rang out. The man came back hurriedly. The whips snapped, the bells tinkled merrily, the sleds churned along the trail; but Buck knew, and every dog knew, what had taken place behind the belt of river trees.

Chapter V. The Toil of Trace and Trail

Thirty days from the time it left Dawson, the Salt Water Mail, with Buck and his mates at the fore, arrived at Skaguay. They were in a wretched state, worn out and worn down. Buck's one hundred and forty pounds had dwindled to one hundred and fifteen. The rest of his mates, though lighter dogs, had relatively lost more weight than he. Pike, the malingerer, who, in his lifetime of deceit, had often successfully feigned a hurt leg, was now limping in earnest. Sol-leks was limping, and Dub was suffering from a wrenched shoulder-blade.

They were all terribly footsore. No spring or rebound was left in them. Their feet fell heavily on the trail, jarring their bodies and doubling the fatigue of a day's travel. There was nothing the matter with them except that they were dead tired. It was not the dead-tiredness that comes through brief and excessive effort, from which recovery is a matter of hours; but it was the dead-tiredness that comes through the slow and prolonged strength drainage of months of toil. There was no power of recuperation left, no reserve strength to call upon. It had been all used, the last least bit of it. Every muscle, every fibre, every cell, was tired, dead tired. And there was reason for it. In less than five months they had travelled twenty-five hundred miles, during the last eighteen hundred of which they had had but five days' rest. When they arrived at Skaguay they were apparently on their last legs. They could barely keep the traces taut, and on the down grades just managed to keep out of the way of the sled.

"Mush on, poor sore feets," the driver encouraged them as they tottered down the main street of Skaguay. "Dis is de las'. Den we get one long res'. Eh? For sure. One bully long res'."

The drivers confidently expected a long stopover. Themselves, they had covered twelve hundred miles with two days' rest, and in the nature of reason and common justice they deserved an interval of loafing. But so many were the men who had rushed into the Klondike, and so many were the sweethearts, wives, and kin that had not rushed in, that the congested mail was taking on Alpine proportions; also, there were official orders. Fresh batches of Hudson Bay dogs were to take the places of those worthless for the trail. The worthless ones were to be got rid of, and, since dogs count for little against dollars, they were to be sold.

Three days passed, by which time Buck and his mates found how really tired and weak they were. Then, on the morning of the fourth day, two men from the States came along and bought them, harness and all, for a song. The men addressed each other as “Hal” and “Charles.” Charles was a middle-aged, lightish-colored man, with weak and watery eyes and a mustache that twisted fiercely and vigorously up, giving the lie to the limply drooping lip it concealed. Hal was a youngster of nineteen or twenty, with a big Colt’s revolver and a hunting-knife strapped about him on a belt that fairly bristled with cartridges. This belt was the most salient thing about him. It advertised his callowness — a callowness sheer and unutterable. Both men were manifestly out of place, and why such as they should adventure the North is part of the mystery of things that passes understanding.

Buck heard the chaffering, saw the money pass between the man and the Government agent, and knew that the Scotch half-breed and the mail-train drivers were passing out of his life on the heels of Perrault and Francois and the others who had gone before. When driven with his mates to the new owners’ camp, Buck saw a slipshod and slovenly affair, tent half stretched, dishes unwashed, everything in disorder; also, he saw a woman. “Mercedes” the men called her. She was Charles’s wife and Hal’s sister — a nice family party.

Buck watched them apprehensively as they proceeded to take down the tent and load the sled. There was a great deal of effort about their manner, but no businesslike method. The tent was rolled into an awkward bundle three times as large as it should have been. The tin dishes were packed away unwashed. Mercedes continually fluttered in the way of her men and kept up an unbroken chattering of remonstrance and advice. When they put a clothes-sack on the front of the sled, she suggested it should go on the back; and when they had put it on the back, and covered it over with a couple of other bundles, she discovered overlooked articles which could abide nowhere else but in that very sack, and they unloaded again.

Three men from a neighboring tent came out and looked on, grinning and winking at one another.

“You’ve got a right smart load as it is,” said one of them; “and it’s not me should tell you your business, but I wouldn’t tote that tent along if I was you.”

“Undreamed of!” cried Mercedes, throwing up her hands in dainty dismay. “However in the world could I manage without a tent?”

“It’s springtime, and you won’t get any more cold weather,” the man replied.

She shook her head decidedly, and Charles and Hal put the last odds and ends on top the mountainous load.

“Think it’ll ride?” one of the men asked.

“Why shouldn’t it?” Charles demanded rather shortly.

“Oh, that’s all right, that’s all right,” the man hastened meekly to say. “I was just a-wonderin’, that is all. It seemed a mite top-heavy.”

Charles turned his back and drew the lashings down as well as he could, which was not in the least well.

“An’ of course the dogs can hike along all day with that contraption behind them,” affirmed a second of the men.

“Certainly,” said Hal, with freezing politeness, taking hold of the gee-pole with one hand and swinging his whip from the other. “Mush!” he shouted. “Mush on there!”

The dogs sprang against the breast-bands, strained hard for a few moments, then relaxed. They were unable to move the sled.

“The lazy brutes, I’ll show them,” he cried, preparing to lash out at them with the whip.

But Mercedes interfered, crying, “Oh, Hal, you mustn’t,” as she caught hold of the whip and wrenched it from him. “The poor dears! Now you must promise you won’t be harsh with them for the rest of the trip, or I won’t go a step.”

“Precious lot you know about dogs,” her brother sneered; “and I wish you’d leave me alone. They’re lazy, I tell you, and you’ve got to whip them to get anything out of them. That’s their way. You ask any one. Ask one of those men.”

Mercedes looked at them imploringly, untold repugnance at sight of pain written in her pretty face.

“They’re weak as water, if you want to know,” came the reply from one of the men. “Plum tuckered out, that’s what’s the matter. They need a rest.”

“Rest be blanked,” said Hal, with his beardless lips; and Mercedes said, “Oh!” in pain and sorrow at the oath.

But she was a clannish creature, and rushed at once to the defence of her brother. “Never mind that man,” she said pointedly. “You’re driving our dogs, and you do what you think best with them."

Again Hal's whip fell upon the dogs. They threw themselves against the breast-bands, dug their feet into the packed snow, got down low to it, and put forth all their strength. The sled held as though it were an anchor. After two efforts, they stood still, panting. The whip was whistling savagely, when once more Mercedes interfered. She dropped on her knees before Buck, with tears in her eyes, and put her arms around his neck.

"You poor, poor dears," she cried sympathetically, "why don't you pull hard? — then you wouldn't be whipped." Buck did not like her, but he was feeling too miserable to resist her, taking it as part of the day's miserable work.

One of the onlookers, who had been clenching his teeth to suppress hot speech, now spoke up: —

"It's not that I care a whoop what becomes of you, but for the dogs' sakes I just want to tell you, you can help them a mighty lot by breaking out that sled. The runners are froze fast. Throw your weight against the gee-pole, right and left, and break it out."

A third time the attempt was made, but this time, following the advice, Hal broke out the runners which had been frozen to the snow. The overloaded and unwieldy sled forged ahead, Buck and his mates struggling frantically under the rain of blows. A hundred yards ahead the path turned and sloped steeply into the main street. It would have required an experienced man to keep the top-heavy sled upright, and Hal was not such a man. As they swung on the turn the sled went over, spilling half its load through the loose lashings. The dogs never stopped. The lightened sled bounded on its side behind them. They were angry because of the ill treatment they had received and the unjust load. Buck was raging. He broke into a run, the team following his lead. Hal cried "Whoa! whoa!" but they gave no heed. He tripped and was pulled off his feet. The capsized sled ground over him, and the dogs dashed on up the street, adding to the gayety of Skaguay as they scattered the remainder of the outfit along its chief thoroughfare.

Kind-hearted citizens caught the dogs and gathered up the scattered belongings. Also, they gave advice. Half the load and twice the dogs, if they ever expected to reach Dawson, was what was said. Hal and his sister and brother-in-law listened unwillingly, pitched tent, and overhauled the outfit. Canned goods were turned out that made men laugh, for canned goods on the Long Trail is a thing to dream about. “Blankets for a hotel” quoth one of the men who laughed and helped. “Half as many is too much; get rid of them. Throw away that tent, and all those dishes, — who’s going to wash them, anyway? Good Lord, do you think you’re travelling on a Pullman?”

And so it went, the inexorable elimination of the superfluous. Mercedes cried when her clothes-bags were dumped on the ground and article after article was thrown out. She cried in general, and she cried in particular over each discarded thing. She clasped hands about knees, rocking back and forth broken-heartedly. She averred she would not go an inch, not for a dozen Charleses. She appealed to everybody and to everything, finally wiping her eyes and proceeding to cast out even articles of apparel that were imperative necessaries. And in her zeal, when she had finished with her own, she attacked the belongings of her men and went through them like a tornado.

This accomplished, the outfit, though cut in half, was still a formidable bulk. Charles and Hal went out in the evening and bought six Outside dogs. These, added to the six of the original team, and Teek and Koona, the huskies obtained at the Rink Rapids on the record trip, brought the team up to fourteen. But the Outside dogs, though practically broken in since their landing, did not amount to much. Three were short-haired pointers, one was a Newfoundland, and the other two were mongrels of indeterminate breed. They did not seem to know anything, these newcomers. Buck and his comrades looked upon them with disgust, and though he speedily taught them their places and what not to do, he could not teach them what to do. They did not take kindly to trace and trail. With the exception of the two mongrels, they were bewildered and spirit-broken by the strange savage environment in which they found themselves and by the ill treatment they had received. The two mongrels were without spirit at all; bones were the only things breakable about them.

With the newcomers hopeless and forlorn, and the old team worn out by twenty-five hundred miles of continuous trail, the outlook was anything but bright. The two men, however, were quite cheerful. And they were proud, too. They were doing the thing in style, with fourteen dogs. They had seen other sleds depart over the Pass for Dawson, or come in from Dawson, but never had they seen a sled with so many as fourteen dogs. In the nature of Arctic travel there was a reason why fourteen dogs should not drag one sled, and that was that one sled could not carry the food for fourteen dogs.

But Charles and Hal did not know this. They had worked the trip out with a pencil, so much to a dog, so many dogs, so many days, Q.E.D. Mercedes looked over their shoulders and nodded comprehensively, it was all so very simple.

Late next morning Buck led the long team up the street. There was nothing lively about it, no snap or go in him and his fellows. They were starting dead weary. Four times he had covered the distance between Salt Water and Dawson, and the knowledge that, jaded and tired, he was facing the same trail once more, made him bitter. His heart was not in the work, nor was the heart of any dog. The Outsides were timid and frightened, the Insides without confidence in their masters.

Buck felt vaguely that there was no depending upon these two men and the woman. They did not know how to do anything, and as the days went by it became apparent that they could not learn. They were slack in all things, without order or discipline. It took them half the night to pitch a slovenly camp, and half the morning to break that camp and get the sled loaded in fashion so slovenly that for the rest of the day they were occupied in stopping and rearranging the load. Some days they did not make ten miles. On other days they were unable to get started at all. And on no day did they succeed in making more than half the distance used by the men as a basis in their dog-food computation.

It was inevitable that they should go short on dog-food. But they hastened it by overfeeding, bringing the day nearer when underfeeding would commence. The Outside dogs, whose digestions had not been trained by chronic famine to make the most of little, had voracious appetites. And when, in addition to this, the worn-out huskies pulled weakly, Hal decided that the orthodox ration was too small. He doubled it. And to cap it all, when Mercedes, with tears in her pretty eyes and a quaver in her throat, could not cajole him into giving the dogs still more, she stole from the fish-sacks and fed them slyly. But it was not food that Buck and the huskies needed, but rest. And though they were making poor time, the heavy load they dragged sapped their strength severely.

Then came the underfeeding. Hal awoke one day to the fact that his dog-food was half gone and the distance only quarter covered; further, that for love or money no additional dog-food was to be obtained. So he cut down even the orthodox ration and tried to increase the day's travel. His sister and brother-in-law seconded him; but they were frustrated by their heavy outfit and their own incompetence. It was a simple matter to give the dogs less food; but it was impossible to make the dogs travel faster, while their own inability to get under way earlier in the morning prevented them from travelling longer hours. Not only did they not know how to work dogs, but they did not know how to work themselves.

The first to go was Dub. Poor blundering thief that he was, always getting caught and punished, he had none the less been a faithful worker. His wrenched shoulder-blade, untreated and unrested, went from bad to worse, till finally Hal shot him with the big Colt's revolver. It is a saying of the country that an Outside dog starves to death on the ration of the husky, so the six Outside dogs under Buck could do no less than die on half the ration of the husky. The Newfoundland went first, followed by the three short-haired pointers, the two mongrels hanging more grittily on to life, but going in the end.

By this time all the amenities and gentlenesses of the Southland had fallen away from the three people. Shorn of its glamour and romance, Arctic travel became to them a reality too harsh for their manhood and womanhood. Mercedes ceased weeping over the dogs, being too occupied with weeping over herself and with quarrelling with her husband and brother. To quarrel was the one thing they were never too weary to do. Their irritability arose out of their misery, increased with it, doubled upon it, outdistanced it. The wonderful patience of the trail which comes to men who toil hard and suffer sore, and remain sweet of speech and kindly, did not come to these two men and the woman. They had no inkling of such a patience. They were stiff and in pain; their muscles ached, their bones ached, their very hearts ached; and because of this they became sharp of speech, and hard words were first on their lips in the morning and last at night.

Charles and Hal wrangled whenever Mercedes gave them a chance. It was the cherished belief of each that he did more than his share of the work, and neither forbore to speak this belief at every opportunity. Sometimes Mercedes sided with her husband, sometimes with her brother. The result was a beautiful and unending family quarrel. Starting from a dispute as to which should chop a few sticks for the fire (a dispute which concerned only Charles and Hal), presently would be lugged in the rest of the family, fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins, people thousands of miles away, and some of them dead. That Hal's views on art, or the sort of society plays his mother's brother wrote, should have anything to do with the chopping of a few sticks of firewood, passes comprehension; nevertheless the quarrel was as likely to tend in that direction as in the direction of Charles's political prejudices. And that Charles's sister's tale-bearing tongue should be relevant to the building of a Yukon fire, was apparent only to Mercedes, who disburdened herself of copious opinions upon that topic, and incidentally upon a few other traits unpleasantly peculiar to her husband's family. In the meantime the fire remained unbuilt, the camp half pitched, and the dogs unfed.

Mercedes nursed a special grievance — the grievance of sex. She was pretty and soft, and had been chivalrously treated all her days. But the present treatment by her husband and brother was everything save chivalrous. It was her custom to be helpless. They complained. Upon which impeachment of what to her was her most essential sex-prerogative, she made their lives unendurable. She no longer considered the dogs, and because she was sore and tired, she persisted in riding on the sled. She was pretty and soft, but she weighed one hundred and twenty pounds — a lusty last straw to the load dragged by the weak and starving animals. She rode for days, till they fell in the traces and the sled stood still. Charles and Hal begged her to get off and walk, pleaded with her, entreated, the while she wept and importuned Heaven with a recital of their brutality.

On one occasion they took her off the sled by main strength. They never did it again. She let her legs go limp like a spoiled child, and sat down on the trail. They went on their way, but she did not move. After they had travelled three miles they unloaded the sled, came back for her, and by main strength put her on the sled again.

In the excess of their own misery they were callous to the suffering of their animals. Hal's theory, which he practised on others, was that one must get hardened. He had started out preaching it to his sister and brother-in-law. Failing there, he hammered it into the dogs with a club. At the Five Fingers the dog-food gave out, and a toothless old squaw offered to trade them a few pounds of frozen horse-hide for the Colt's revolver that kept the big hunting-knife company at Hal's hip. A poor substitute for food was this hide, just as it had been stripped from the starved horses of the cattlemen six months back. In its frozen state it was more like strips of galvanized iron, and when a dog wrestled it into his stomach it thawed into thin and innutritious leathery strings and into a mass of short hair, irritating and indigestible.

And through it all Buck staggered along at the head of the team as in a nightmare. He pulled when he could; when he could no longer pull, he fell down and remained down till blows from whip or club drove him to his feet again. All the stiffness and gloss had gone out of his beautiful furry coat. The hair hung down, limp and draggled, or matted with dried blood where Hal's club had bruised him. His muscles had wasted away to knotty strings, and the flesh pads had disappeared, so that each rib and every bone in his frame were outlined cleanly through the loose hide that was wrinkled in folds of emptiness. It was heartbreaking, only Buck's heart was unbreakable. The man in the red sweater had proved that.

As it was with Buck, so was it with his mates. They were perambulating skeletons. There were seven all together, including him. In their very great misery they had become insensible to the bite of the lash or the bruise of the club. The pain of the beating was dull and distant, just as the things their eyes saw and their ears heard seemed dull and distant. They were not half living, or quarter living. They were simply so many bags of bones in which sparks of life fluttered faintly. When a halt was made, they dropped down in the traces like dead dogs, and the spark dimmed and paled and seemed to go out. And when the club or whip fell upon them, the spark fluttered feebly up, and they tottered to their feet and staggered on.

There came a day when Billee, the good-natured, fell and could not rise. Hal had traded off his revolver, so he took the axe and knocked Billee on the head as he lay in the traces, then cut the carcass out of the harness and dragged it to one side. Buck saw, and his mates saw, and they knew that this thing was very close to them. On the next day Koona went, and but five of them remained: Joe, too far gone to be malignant; Pike, crippled and limping, only half conscious and not conscious enough longer to malinger; Sol-leks, the one-eyed, still faithful to the toil of trace and trail, and mournful in that he had so little strength with which to pull; Teek, who had not travelled so far that winter and who was now beaten more than the others because he was fresher; and Buck, still at the head of the team, but no longer enforcing discipline or striving to enforce it, blind with weakness half the time and keeping the trail by the loom of it and by the dim feel of his feet.

It was beautiful spring weather, but neither dogs nor humans were aware of it. Each day the sun rose earlier and set later. It was dawn by three in the morning, and twilight lingered till nine at night. The whole long day was a blaze of sunshine. The ghostly winter silence had given way to the great spring murmur of awakening life. This murmur arose from all the land, fraught with the joy of living. It came from the things that lived and moved again, things which had been as dead and which had not moved during the long months of frost. The sap was rising in the pines. The willows and aspens were bursting out in young buds. Shrubs and vines were putting on fresh garbs of green. Crickets sang in the nights, and in the days all manner of creeping, crawling things rustled forth into the sun. Partridges and woodpeckers were booming and knocking in the forest. Squirrels were chattering, birds singing, and overhead honked the wild-fowl driving up from the south in cunning wedges that split the air.

From every hill slope came the trickle of running water, the music of unseen fountains. All things were thawing, bending, snapping. The Yukon was straining to break loose the ice that bound it down. It ate away from beneath; the sun ate from above. Air-holes formed, fissures sprang and spread apart, while thin sections of ice fell through bodily into the river. And amid all this bursting, rending, throbbing of awakening life, under the blazing sun and through the soft-sighing breezes, like wayfarers to death, staggered the two men, the woman, and the huskies.

With the dogs falling, Mercedes weeping and riding, Hal swearing innocuously, and Charles's eyes wistfully watering, they staggered into John Thornton's camp at the mouth of White River. When they halted, the dogs dropped down as though they had all been struck dead. Mercedes dried her eyes and looked at John Thornton. Charles sat down on a log to rest. He sat down very slowly and painstakingly what of his great stiffness. Hal did the talking. John Thornton was whittling the last touches on an axe-handle he had made from a stick of birch. He whittled and listened, gave monosyllabic replies, and, when it was asked, terse advice. He knew the breed, and he gave his advice in the certainty that it would not be followed.

“They told us up above that the bottom was dropping out of the trail and that the best thing for us to do was to lay over,” Hal said in response to Thornton's warning to take no more chances on the rotten ice. “They told us we couldn't make White River, and here we are.” This last with a sneering ring of triumph in it.

“And they told you true,” John Thornton answered. “The bottom’s likely to drop out at any moment. Only fools, with the blind luck of fools, could have made it. I tell you straight, I wouldn’t risk my carcass on that ice for all the gold in Alaska.”

“That’s because you’re not a fool, I suppose,” said Hal. “All the same, we’ll go on to Dawson.” He uncoiled his whip. “Get up there, Buck! Hi! Get up there! Mush on!”

Thornton went on whittling. It was idle, he knew, to get between a fool and his folly; while two or three fools more or less would not alter the scheme of things.

But the team did not get up at the command. It had long since passed into the stage where blows were required to rouse it. The whip flashed out, here and there, on its merciless errands. John Thornton compressed his lips. Solleks was the first to crawl to his feet. Teek followed. Joe came next, yelping with pain. Pike made painful efforts. Twice he fell over, when half up, and on the third attempt managed to rise. Buck made no effort. He lay quietly where he had fallen. The lash bit into him again and again, but he neither whined nor struggled. Several times Thornton started, as though to speak, but changed his mind. A moisture came into his eyes, and, as the whipping continued, he arose and walked irresolutely up and down.

This was the first time Buck had failed, in itself a sufficient reason to drive Hal into a rage. He exchanged the whip for the customary club. Buck refused to move under the rain of heavier blows which now fell upon him. Like his mates, he was barely able to get up, but, unlike them, he had made up his mind not to get up. He had a vague feeling of impending doom. This had been strong upon him when he pulled in to the bank, and it had not departed from him. What of the thin and rotten ice he had felt under his feet all day, it seemed that he sensed disaster close at hand, out there ahead on the ice where his master was trying to drive him. He refused to stir. So greatly had he suffered, and so far gone was he, that the blows did not hurt much. And as they continued to fall upon him, the spark of life within flickered and went down. It was nearly out. He felt strangely numb. As though from a great distance, he was aware that he was being beaten. The last sensations of pain left him. He no longer felt anything, though very faintly he could hear the impact of the club upon his body. But it was no longer his body, it seemed so far away.

And then, suddenly, without warning, uttering a cry that was inarticulate and more like the cry of an animal, John Thornton sprang upon the man who wielded the club. Hal was hurled backward, as though struck by a falling tree. Mercedes screamed. Charles looked on wistfully, wiped his watery eyes, but did not get up because of his stiffness.

John Thornton stood over Buck, struggling to control himself, too convulsed with rage to speak.

"If you strike that dog again, I'll kill you," he at last managed to say in a choking voice.

"It's my dog," Hal replied, wiping the blood from his mouth as he came back. "Get out of my way, or I'll fix you. I'm going to Dawson."

Thornton stood between him and Buck, and evinced no intention of getting out of the way. Hal drew his long hunting-knife. Mercedes screamed, cried, laughed, and manifested the chaotic abandonment of hysteria. Thornton rapped Hal's knuckles with the axe-handle, knocking the knife to the ground. He rapped his knuckles again as he tried to pick it up. Then he stooped, picked it up himself, and with two strokes cut Buck's traces.

Hal had no fight left in him. Besides, his hands were full with his sister, or his arms, rather; while Buck was too near dead to be of further use in hauling the sled. A few minutes later they pulled out from the bank and down the river. Buck heard them go and raised his head to see, Pike was leading, Sol-leks was at the wheel, and between were Joe and Teek. They were limping and staggering. Mercedes was riding the loaded sled. Hal guided at the gee-pole, and Charles stumbled along in the rear.

As Buck watched them, Thornton knelt beside him and with rough, kindly hands searched for broken bones. By the time his search had disclosed nothing more than many bruises and a state of terrible starvation, the sled was a quarter of a mile away. Dog and man watched it crawling along over the ice. Suddenly, they saw its back end drop down, as into a rut, and the gee-pole, with Hal clinging to it, jerk into the air. Mercedes's scream came to their ears. They saw Charles turn and make one step to run back, and then a whole section of ice give way and dogs and humans disappear. A yawning hole was all that was to be seen. The bottom had dropped out of the trail.

John Thornton and Buck looked at each other.

"You poor devil," said John Thornton, and Buck licked his hand.

Chapter VI. For the Love of a Man

When John Thornton froze his feet in the previous December his partners had made him comfortable and left him to get well, going on themselves up the river to get out a raft of saw-logs for Dawson. He was still limping slightly at the time he rescued Buck, but with the continued warm weather even the slight limp left him. And here, lying by the river bank through the long spring days, watching the running water, listening lazily to the songs of birds and the hum of nature, Buck slowly won back his strength.

A rest comes very good after one has travelled three thousand miles, and it must be confessed that Buck waxed lazy as his wounds healed, his muscles swelled out, and the flesh came back to cover his bones. For that matter, they were all loafing, — Buck, John Thornton, and Skeet and Nig, — waiting for the raft to come that was to carry them down to Dawson. Skeet was a little Irish setter who early made friends with Buck, who, in a dying condition, was unable to resent her first advances. She had the doctor trait which some dogs possess; and as a mother cat washes her kittens, so she washed and cleansed Buck's wounds. Regularly, each morning after he had finished his breakfast, she performed her self-appointed task, till he came to look for her ministrations as much as he did for Thornton's. Nig, equally friendly, though less demonstrative, was a huge black dog, half bloodhound and half deerhound, with eyes that laughed and a boundless good nature.

To Buck's surprise these dogs manifested no jealousy toward him. They seemed to share the kindliness and largeness of John Thornton. As Buck grew stronger they enticed him into all sorts of ridiculous games, in which Thornton himself could not forbear to join; and in this fashion Buck romped through his convalescence and into a new existence. Love, genuine passionate love, was his for the first time. This he had never experienced at Judge Miller's down in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. With the Judge's sons, hunting and tramping, it had been a working partnership; with the Judge's grandsons, a sort of pompous guardianship; and with the Judge himself, a stately and dignified friendship. But love that was feverish and burning, that was adoration, that was madness, it had taken John Thornton to arouse.

This man had saved his life, which was something; but, further, he was the ideal master. Other men saw to the welfare of their dogs from a sense of duty and business expediency; he saw to the welfare of his as if they were his own children, because he could not help it. And he saw further. He never forgot a kindly greeting or a cheering word, and to sit down for a long talk with them ("gas" he called it) was as much his delight as theirs. He had a way of taking Buck's head roughly between his hands, and resting his own head upon Buck's, of shaking him back and forth, the while calling him ill names that to Buck were love names. Buck knew no greater joy than that rough embrace and the sound of murmured oaths, and at each jerk back and forth it seemed that his heart would be shaken out of his body so great was its ecstasy. And when, released, he sprang to his feet, his mouth laughing, his eyes eloquent, his throat vibrant with unuttered sound, and in that fashion remained without movement, John Thornton would reverently exclaim, "God! you can all but speak!"

Buck had a trick of love expression that was akin to hurt. He would often seize Thornton's hand in his mouth and close so fiercely that the flesh bore the impress of his teeth for some time afterward. And as Buck understood the oaths to be love words, so the man understood this feigned bite for a caress.

For the most part, however, Buck's love was expressed in adoration. While he went wild with happiness when Thornton touched him or spoke to him, he did not seek these tokens. Unlike Skeet, who was wont to shove her nose under Thornton's hand and nudge and nudge till petted, or Nig, who would stalk up and rest his great head on Thornton's knee, Buck was content to adore at a distance. He would lie by the hour, eager, alert, at Thornton's feet, looking up into his face, dwelling upon it, studying it, following with keenest interest each fleeting expression, every movement or change of feature. Or, as chance might have it, he would lie farther away, to the side or rear, watching the outlines of the man and the occasional movements of his body. And often, such was the communion in which they lived, the strength of Buck's gaze would draw John Thornton's head around, and he would return the gaze, without speech, his heart shining out of his eyes as Buck's heart shone out.

For a long time after his rescue, Buck did not like Thornton to get out of his sight. From the moment he left the tent to when he entered it again, Buck would follow at his heels. His transient masters since he had come into the Northland had bred in him a fear that no master could be permanent. He was afraid that Thornton would pass out of his life as Perrault and Francois and the Scotch half-breed had passed out. Even in the night, in his dreams, he was haunted by this fear. At such times he would shake off sleep and creep through the chill to the flap of the tent, where he would stand and listen to the sound of his master's breathing.

But in spite of this great love he bore John Thornton, which seemed to bespeak the soft civilizing influence, the strain of the primitive, which the Northland had aroused in him, remained alive and active. Faithfulness and devotion, things born of fire and roof, were his; yet he retained his wildness and wiliness. He was a thing of the wild, come in from the wild to sit by John Thornton's fire, rather than a dog of the soft Southland stamped with the marks of generations of civilization. Because of his very great love, he could not steal from this man, but from any other man, in any other camp, he did not hesitate an instant; while the cunning with which he stole enabled him to escape detection.

His face and body were scored by the teeth of many dogs, and he fought as fiercely as ever and more shrewdly. Skeet and Nig were too good-natured for quarrelling, — besides, they belonged to John Thornton; but the strange dog, no matter what the breed or valor, swiftly acknowledged Buck's supremacy or found himself struggling for life with a terrible antagonist. And Buck was merciless. He had learned well the law of club and fang, and he never forewent an advantage or drew back from a foe he had started on the way to Death. He had lessoned from Spitz, and from the chief fighting dogs of the police and mail, and knew there was no middle course. He must master or be mastered; while to show mercy was a weakness. Mercy did not exist in the primordial life. It was misunderstood for fear, and such misunderstandings made for death. Kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, was the law; and this mandate, down out of the depths of Time, he obeyed.

He was older than the days he had seen and the breaths he had drawn. He linked the past with the present, and the eternity behind him throbbed through him in a mighty rhythm to which he swayed as the tides and seasons swayed. He sat by John Thornton's fire, a broad-breasted dog, white-fanged and long-furred; but behind him were the shades of all manner of dogs, half-wolves and wild wolves, urgent and prompting, tasting the savor of the meat he ate, thirsting for the water he drank, scenting the wind with him, listening with him and telling him the sounds made by the wild life in the forest, dictating his moods, directing his actions, lying down to sleep with him when he lay down, and dreaming with him and beyond him and becoming themselves the stuff of his dreams.

So peremptorily did these shades beckon him, that each day mankind and the claims of mankind slipped farther from him. Deep in the forest a call was sounding, and as often as he heard this call, mysteriously thrilling and luring, he felt compelled to turn his back upon the fire and the beaten earth around it, and to plunge into the forest, and on and on, he knew not where or why; nor did he wonder where or why, the call sounding imperiously, deep in the forest. But as often as he gained the soft unbroken earth and the green shade, the love for John Thornton drew him back to the fire again.

Thornton alone held him. The rest of mankind was as nothing. Chance travellers might praise or pet him; but he was cold under it all, and from a too demonstrative man he would get up and walk away. When Thornton's partners, Hans and Pete, arrived on the long-expected raft, Buck refused to notice them till he learned they were close to Thornton; after that he tolerated them in a passive sort of way, accepting favors from them as though he favored them by accepting. They were of the same large type as Thornton, living close to the earth, thinking simply and seeing clearly; and ere they swung the raft into the big eddy by the saw-mill at Dawson, they understood Buck and his ways, and did not insist upon an intimacy such as obtained with Skeet and Nig.

For Thornton, however, his love seemed to grow and grow. He, alone among men, could put a pack upon Buck's back in the summer travelling. Nothing was too great for Buck to do, when Thornton commanded. One day (they had grub-staked themselves from the proceeds of the raft and left Dawson for the head-waters of the Tanana) the men and dogs were sitting on the crest of a cliff which fell away, straight down, to naked bed-rock three hundred feet below. John Thornton was sitting near the edge, Buck at his shoulder. A thoughtless whim seized Thornton, and he drew the attention of Hans and Pete to the experiment he had in mind. "Jump, Buck!" he commanded, sweeping his arm out and over the chasm. The next instant he was grappling with Buck on the extreme edge, while Hans and Pete were dragging them back into safety.

"It's uncanny," Pete said, after it was over and they had caught their speech.

Thornton shook his head. “No, it is splendid, and it is terrible, too. Do you know, it sometimes makes me afraid.”

“I’m not hankering to be the man that lays hands on you while he’s around,” Pete announced conclusively, nodding his head toward Buck.

“Py Jingo!” was Hans’s contribution. “Not mineself either.”

It was at Circle City, ere the year was out, that Pete’s apprehensions were realized. “Black” Burton, a man evil-tempered and malicious, had been picking a quarrel with a tenderfoot at the bar, when Thornton stepped good-naturedly between. Buck, as was his custom, was lying in a corner, head on paws, watching his master’s every action. Burton struck out, without warning, straight from the shoulder. Thornton was sent spinning, and saved himself from falling only by clutching the rail of the bar.

Those who were looking on heard what was neither bark nor yelp, but a something which is best described as a roar, and they saw Buck’s body rise up in the air as he left the floor for Burton’s throat. The man saved his life by instinctively throwing out his arm, but was hurled backward to the floor with Buck on top of him. Buck loosed his teeth from the flesh of the arm and drove in again for the throat. This time the man succeeded only in partly blocking, and his throat was torn open. Then the crowd was upon Buck, and he was driven off; but while a surgeon checked the bleeding, he prowled up and down, growling furiously, attempting to rush in, and being forced back by an array of hostile clubs. A “miners’ meeting,” called on the spot, decided that the dog had sufficient provocation, and Buck was discharged. But his reputation was made, and from that day his name spread through every camp in Alaska.

Later on, in the fall of the year, he saved John Thornton’s life in quite another fashion. The three partners were lining a long and narrow poling-boat down a bad stretch of rapids on the Forty-Mile Creek. Hans and Pete moved along the bank, snubbing with a thin Manila rope from tree to tree, while Thornton remained in the boat, helping its descent by means of a pole, and shouting directions to the shore. Buck, on the bank, worried and anxious, kept abreast of the boat, his eyes never off his master.

At a particularly bad spot, where a ledge of barely submerged rocks jutted out into the river, Hans cast off the rope, and, while Thornton poled the boat out into the stream, ran down the bank with the end in his hand to snub the boat when it had cleared the ledge. This it did, and was flying down-stream in a current as swift as a mill-race, when Hans checked it with the rope and checked too suddenly. The boat flirted over and snubbed in to the bank bottom up, while Thornton, flung sheer out of it, was carried down-stream toward the worst part of the rapids, a stretch of wild water in which no swimmer could live.

Buck had sprung in on the instant; and at the end of three hundred yards, amid a mad swirl of water, he overhauled Thornton. When he felt him grasp his tail, Buck headed for the bank, swimming with all his splendid strength. But the progress shoreward was slow; the progress down-stream amazingly rapid. From below came the fatal roaring where the wild current went wilder and was rent in shreds and spray by the rocks which thrust through like the teeth of an enormous comb. The suck of the water as it took the beginning of the last steep pitch was frightful, and Thornton knew that the shore was impossible. He scraped furiously over a rock, bruised across a second, and struck a third with crushing force. He clutched its slippery top with both hands, releasing Buck, and above the roar of the churning water shouted: “Go, Buck! Go!”

Buck could not hold his own, and swept on down-stream, struggling desperately, but unable to win back. When he heard Thornton’s command repeated, he partly reared out of the water, throwing his head high, as though for a last look, then turned obediently toward the bank. He swam powerfully and was dragged ashore by Pete and Hans at the very point where swimming ceased to be possible and destruction began.

They knew that the time a man could cling to a slippery rock in the face of that driving current was a matter of minutes, and they ran as fast as they could up the bank to a point far above where Thornton was hanging on. They attached the line with which they had been snubbing the boat to Buck’s neck and shoulders, being careful that it should neither strangle him nor impede his swimming, and launched him into the stream. He struck out boldly, but not straight enough into the stream. He discovered the mistake too late, when Thornton was abreast of him and a bare half-dozen strokes away while he was being carried helplessly past.

Hans promptly snubbed with the rope, as though Buck were a boat. The rope thus tightening on him in the sweep of the current, he was jerked under the surface, and under the surface he remained till his body struck against the bank and he was hauled out. He was half drowned, and Hans and Pete threw themselves upon him, pounding the breath into him and the water out of him. He staggered to his feet and fell down. The faint sound of

Thornton's voice came to them, and though they could not make out the words of it, they knew that he was in his extremity. His master's voice acted on Buck like an electric shock, He sprang to his feet and ran up the bank ahead of the men to the point of his previous departure.

Again the rope was attached and he was launched, and again he struck out, but this time straight into the stream. He had miscalculated once, but he would not be guilty of it a second time. Hans paid out the rope, permitting no slack, while Pete kept it clear of coils. Buck held on till he was on a line straight above Thornton; then he turned, and with the speed of an express train headed down upon him. Thornton saw him coming, and, as Buck struck him like a battering ram, with the whole force of the current behind him, he reached up and closed with both arms around the shaggy neck. Hans snubbed the rope around the tree, and Buck and Thornton were jerked under the water. Strangling, suffocating, sometimes one uppermost and sometimes the other, dragging over the jagged bottom, smashing against rocks and snags, they veered in to the bank.

Thornton came to, belly downward and being violently propelled back and forth across a drift log by Hans and Pete. His first glance was for Buck, over whose limp and apparently lifeless body Nig was setting up a howl, while Skeet was licking the wet face and closed eyes. Thornton was himself bruised and battered, and he went carefully over Buck's body, when he had been brought around, finding three broken ribs.

"That settles it," he announced. "We camp right here." And camp they did, till Buck's ribs knitted and he was able to travel.

That winter, at Dawson, Buck performed another exploit, not so heroic, perhaps, but one that put his name many notches higher on the totem-pole of Alaskan fame. This exploit was particularly gratifying to the three men; for they stood in need of the outfit which it furnished, and were enabled to make a long-desired trip into the virgin East, where miners had not yet appeared. It was brought about by a conversation in the Eldorado Saloon, in which men waxed boastful of their favorite dogs. Buck, because of his record, was the target for these men, and Thornton was driven stoutly to defend him. At the end of half an hour one man stated that his dog could start a sled with five hundred pounds and walk off with it; a second bragged six hundred for his dog; and a third, seven hundred.

"Pooh! pooh!" said John Thornton; "Buck can start a thousand pounds."

"And break it out? and walk off with it for a hundred yards?" demanded Matthewson, a Bonanza King, he of the seven hundred vaunt.

"And break it out, and walk off with it for a hundred yards," John Thornton said coolly.

"Well," Matthewson said, slowly and deliberately, so that all could hear, "I've got a thousand dollars that says he can't. And there it is." So saying, he slammed a sack of gold dust of the size of a bologna sausage down upon the bar.

Nobody spoke. Thornton's bluff, if bluff it was, had been called. He could feel a flush of warm blood creeping up his face. His tongue had tricked him. He did not know whether Buck could start a thousand pounds. Half a ton! The enormousness of it appalled him. He had great faith in Buck's strength and had often thought him capable of starting such a load; but never, as now, had he faced the possibility of it, the eyes of a dozen men fixed upon him, silent and waiting. Further, he had no thousand dollars; nor had Hans or Pete.

"I've got a sled standing outside now, with twenty fiftypound sacks of flour on it," Matthewson went on with brutal directness; "so don't let that hinder you."

Thornton did not reply. He did not know what to say. He glanced from face to face in the absent way of a man who has lost the power of thought and is seeking somewhere to find the thing that will start it going again. The face of Jim O'Brien, a Mastodon King and old-time comrade, caught his eyes. It was as a cue to him, seeming to rouse him to do what he would never have dreamed of doing.

"Can you lend me a thousand?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

"Sure," answered O'Brien, thumping down a plethoric sack by the side of Matthewson's. "Though it's little faith I'm having, John, that the beast can do the trick."

The Eldorado emptied its occupants into the street to see the test. The tables were deserted, and the dealers and gamekeepers came forth to see the outcome of the wager and to lay odds. Several hundred men, furred and mittened, banked around the sled within easy distance. Matthewson's sled, loaded with a thousand pounds of flour, had been standing for a couple of hours, and in the intense cold (it was sixty below zero) the runners had frozen fast to the hard-packed snow. Men offered odds of two to one that Buck could not budge the sled. A quibble arose concerning the phrase "break out." O'Brien contended it was Thornton's privilege to knock the runners loose, leaving Buck to "break it out" from a dead standstill. Matthewson insisted that the phrase included breaking the runners from the frozen grip of the snow. A majority of the men who had witnessed the making of the bet decided in his favor, whereat the odds went up to three to one against Buck.

There were no takers. Not a man believed him capable of the feat. Thornton had been hurried into the wager, heavy with doubt; and now that he looked at the sled itself, the concrete fact, with the regular team of ten dogs curled up in the snow before it, the more impossible the task appeared. Matthewson waxed jubilant.

"Three to one!" he proclaimed. "I'll lay you another thousand at that figure, Thornton. What d'ye say?"

Thornton's doubt was strong in his face, but his fighting spirit was aroused — the fighting spirit that soars above odds, fails to recognize the impossible, and is deaf to all save the clamor for battle. He called Hans and Pete to him. Their sacks were slim, and with his own the three partners could rake together only two hundred dollars. In the ebb of their fortunes, this sum was their total capital; yet they laid it unhesitatingly against Matthewson's six hundred.

The team of ten dogs was unhitched, and Buck, with his own harness, was put into the sled. He had caught the contagion of the excitement, and he felt that in some way he must do a great thing for John Thornton. Murmurs of admiration at his splendid appearance went up. He was in perfect condition, without an ounce of superfluous flesh, and the one hundred and fifty pounds that he weighed were so many pounds of grit and virility. His furry coat shone with the sheen of silk. Down the neck and across the shoulders, his mane, in repose as it was, half bristled and seemed to lift with every movement, as though excess of vigor made each particular hair alive and active. The great breast and heavy fore legs were no more than in proportion with the rest of the body, where the muscles showed in tight rolls underneath the skin. Men felt these muscles and proclaimed them hard as iron, and the odds went down to two to one.

"Gad, sir! Gad, sir!" stuttered a member of the latest dynasty, a king of the Skookum Benches. "I offer you eight hundred for him, sir, before the test, sir; eight hundred just as he stands."

Thornton shook his head and stepped to Buck's side.

“You must stand off from him,” Matthewson protested. “Free play and plenty of room.”

The crowd fell silent; only could be heard the voices of the gamblers vainly offering two to one. Everybody acknowledged Buck a magnificent animal, but twenty fifty-pound sacks of flour bulked too large in their eyes for them to loosen their pouch-strings.

Thornton knelt down by Buck’s side. He took his head in his two hands and rested cheek on cheek. He did not playfully shake him, as was his wont, or murmur soft love curses; but he whispered in his ear. “As you love me, Buck. As you love me,” was what he whispered. Buck whined with suppressed eagerness.

The crowd was watching curiously. The affair was growing mysterious. It seemed like a conjuration. As Thornton got to his feet, Buck seized his mittened hand between his jaws, pressing in with his teeth and releasing slowly, half-reluctantly. It was the answer, in terms, not of speech, but of love. Thornton stepped well back.

“Now, Buck,” he said.

Buck tightened the traces, then slacked them for a matter of several inches. It was the way he had learned.

“Gee!” Thornton’s voice rang out, sharp in the tense silence.

Buck swung to the right, ending the movement in a plunge that took up the slack and with a sudden jerk arrested his one hundred and fifty pounds. The load quivered, and from under the runners arose a crisp crackling.

“Haw!” Thornton commanded.

Buck duplicated the manoeuvre, this time to the left. The crackling turned into a snapping, the sled pivoting and the runners slipping and grating several inches to the side. The sled was broken out. Men were holding their breaths, intensely unconscious of the fact.

“Now, MUSH!”

Thornton’s command cracked out like a pistol-shot. Buck threw himself forward, tightening the traces with a jarring lunge. His whole body was gathered compactly together in the tremendous effort, the muscles writhing and knotting like live things under the silky fur. His great chest was low to the ground, his head forward and down, while his feet were flying like mad, the claws scarring the hard-packed snow in parallel grooves. The sled swayed and trembled, half-started forward. One of his feet slipped, and one man groaned aloud. Then the sled lurched ahead in what appeared a rapid succession of jerks, though it never really came to a dead stop again...half an inch...an inch... two inches... The jerks perceptibly diminished; as the sled gained momentum, he caught them up, till it was moving steadily along.

Men gasped and began to breathe again, unaware that for a moment they had ceased to breathe. Thornton was running behind, encouraging Buck with short, cheery words. The distance had been measured off, and as he neared the pile of firewood which marked the end of the hundred yards, a cheer began to grow and grow, which burst into a roar as he passed the firewood and halted at command. Every man was tearing himself loose, even Matthewson. Hats and mittens were flying in the air. Men were shaking hands, it did not matter with whom, and bubbling over in a general incoherent babel.

But Thornton fell on his knees beside Buck. Head was against head, and he was shaking him back and forth. Those who hurried up heard him cursing Buck, and he cursed him long and fervently, and softly and lovingly.

“Gad, sir! Gad, sir!” spluttered the Skookum Bench king. “I’ll give you a thousand for him, sir, a thousand, sir — twelve hundred, sir.”

Thornton rose to his feet. His eyes were wet. The tears were streaming frankly down his cheeks. “Sir,” he said to the Skookum Bench king, “no, sir. You can go to hell, sir. It’s the best I can do for you, sir.”

Buck seized Thornton’s hand in his teeth. Thornton shook him back and forth. As though animated by a common impulse, the onlookers drew back to a respectful distance; nor were they again indiscreet enough to interrupt.

Chapter VII. The Sounding of the Call

When Buck earned sixteen hundred dollars in five minutes for John Thornton, he made it possible for his master to pay off certain debts and to journey with his partners into the East after a fabled lost mine, the history of which was as old as the history of the country. Many men had sought it; few had found it; and more than a few there were who had never returned from the quest. This lost mine was steeped in tragedy and shrouded in mystery. No one knew of the first man. The oldest tradition stopped before it got back to him. From the beginning there had been an ancient and ramshackle cabin. Dying men had sworn to it, and to the mine the site of which it marked, clinching their testimony with nuggets that were unlike any known grade of gold in the Northland.

But no living man had looted this treasure house, and the dead were dead; wherefore John Thornton and Pete and Hans, with Buck and half a dozen other dogs, faced into the East on an unknown trail to achieve where men and dogs as good as themselves had failed. They sledded seventy miles up the Yukon, swung to the left into the Stewart River, passed the Mayo and the McQuestion, and held on until the Stewart itself became a streamlet, threading the upstanding peaks which marked the backbone of the continent.

John Thornton asked little of man or nature. He was unafraid of the wild. With a handful of salt and a rifle he could plunge into the wilderness and fare wherever he pleased and as long as he pleased. Being in no haste, Indian fashion, he hunted his dinner in the course of the day's travel; and if he failed to find it, like the Indian, he kept on travelling, secure in the knowledge that sooner or later he would come to it. So, on this great journey into the East, straight meat was the bill of fare, ammunition and tools principally made up the load on the sled, and the time-card was drawn upon the limitless future.

To Buck it was boundless delight, this hunting, fishing, and indefinite wandering through strange places. For weeks at a time they would hold on steadily, day after day; and for weeks upon end they would camp, here and there, the dogs loafing and the men burning holes through frozen muck and gravel and washing countless pans of dirt by the heat of the fire. Sometimes they went hungry, sometimes they feasted riotously, all according to the abundance of game and the fortune of hunting. Summer arrived, and dogs and men packed on their backs, rafted across blue mountain lakes, and descended or ascended unknown rivers in slender boats whipsawed from the standing forest.

The months came and went, and back and forth they twisted through the uncharted vastness, where no men were and yet where men had been if the Lost Cabin were true. They went across divides in summer blizzards, shivered under the midnight sun on naked mountains between the timber line and the eternal snows, dropped into summer valleys amid swarming gnats and flies, and in the shadows of glaciers picked strawberries and flowers as ripe and fair as any the Southland could boast. In the fall of the year they penetrated a weird lake country, sad and silent, where wildfowl had been, but where then there was no life nor sign of life — only the blowing of chill winds, the forming of ice in sheltered places, and the melancholy rippling of waves on lonely beaches.

And through another winter they wandered on the obliterated trails of men who had gone before. Once, they came upon a path blazed through the forest, an ancient path, and the Lost Cabin seemed very near. But the path began nowhere and ended nowhere, and it remained mystery, as the man who made it and the reason he made it remained mystery. Another time they chanced upon the time-graven wreckage of a hunting lodge, and amid the shreds of rotted blankets John Thornton found a long-barrelled flint-lock. He knew it for a Hudson Bay Company gun of the young days in the Northwest, when such a gun was worth its height in beaver skins packed flat, And that was all — no hint as to the man who in an early day had reared the lodge and left the gun among the blankets.

Spring came on once more, and at the end of all their wandering they found, not the Lost Cabin, but a shallow placer in a broad valley where the gold showed like yellow butter across the bottom of the washing-pan. They sought no farther. Each day they worked earned them thousands of dollars in clean dust and nuggets, and they worked every day. The gold was sacked in moose-hide bags, fifty pounds to the bag, and piled like so much firewood outside the spruce-bough lodge. Like giants they toiled, days flashing on the heels of days like dreams as they heaped the treasure up.

There was nothing for the dogs to do, save the hauling in of meat now and again that Thornton killed, and Buck spent long hours musing by the fire. The vision of the short-legged hairy man came to him more frequently, now that there was little work to be done; and often, blinking by the fire, Buck wandered with him in that other world which he remembered.

The salient thing of this other world seemed fear. When he watched the hairy man sleeping by the fire, head between his knees and hands clasped above, Buck saw that he slept restlessly, with many starts and awakenings, at which times he would peer fearfully into the darkness and fling more wood upon the fire. Did they walk by the beach of a sea, where the hairy man gathered shellfish and ate them as he gathered, it was with eyes that roved everywhere for hidden danger and with legs prepared to run like the wind at its first appearance. Through the forest they crept noiselessly, Buck at the hairy man's heels; and they were alert and vigilant, the pair of them, ears twitching and moving and nostrils quivering, for the man heard and smelled as keenly as Buck. The hairy man could spring up into the trees and travel ahead as fast as on the ground, swinging by the arms from limb to limb, sometimes a dozen feet apart, letting go and catching, never falling, never missing his grip. In fact, he seemed as much at home among the trees as on the ground; and Buck had memories of nights of vigil spent beneath trees wherein the hairy man roosted, holding on tightly as he slept.

And closely akin to the visions of the hairy man was the call still sounding in the depths of the forest. It filled him with a great unrest and strange desires. It caused him to feel a vague, sweet gladness, and he was aware of wild yearnings and stirrings for he knew not what. Sometimes he pursued the call into the forest, looking for it as though it were a tangible thing, barking softly or defiantly, as the mood might dictate. He would thrust his nose into the cool wood moss, or into the black soil where long grasses grew, and snort with joy at the fat earth smells; or he would crouch for hours, as if in concealment, behind fungus-covered trunks of fallen trees, wide-eyed and wide-eared to all that moved and sounded about him. It might be, lying thus, that he hoped to surprise this call he could not understand. But he did not know why he did these various things. He was impelled to do them, and did not reason about them at all.

Irresistible impulses seized him. He would be lying in camp, dozing lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head would lift and his ears cock up, intent and listening, and he would spring to his feet and dash away, and on and on, for hours, through the forest aisles and across the open spaces where the niggerheads bunched. He loved to run down dry watercourses, and to creep and spy upon the bird life in the woods. For a day at a time he would lie in the underbrush where he could watch the partridges drumming and strutting up and down. But especially he loved to run in the dim twilight of the summer midnights, listening to the subdued and sleepy murmurs of the forest, reading signs and sounds as man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called — called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come.

One night he sprang from sleep with a start, eager-eyed, nostrils quivering and scenting, his mane bristling in recurrent waves. From the forest came the call (or one note of it, for the call was many noted), distinct and definite as never before, — a long-drawn howl, like, yet unlike, any noise made by husky dog. And he knew it, in the old familiar way, as a sound heard before. He sprang through the sleeping camp and in swift silence dashed through the woods. As he drew closer to the cry he went more slowly, with caution in every movement, till he came to an open place among the trees, and looking out saw, erect on haunches, with nose pointed to the sky, a long, lean, timber wolf.

He had made no noise, yet it ceased from its howling and tried to sense his presence. Buck stalked into the open, half crouching, body gathered compactly together, tail straight and stiff, feet falling with unwonted care. Every movement advertised commingled threatening and overture of friendliness. It was the menacing truce that marks the meeting of wild beasts that prey. But the wolf fled at sight of him. He followed, with wild leapings, in a frenzy to overtake. He ran him into a blind channel, in the bed of the creek where a timber jam barred the way. The wolf whirled about, pivoting on his hind legs after the fashion of Joe and of all cornered husky dogs, snarling and bristling, clipping his teeth together in a continuous and rapid succession of snaps.

Buck did not attack, but circled him about and hedged him in with friendly advances. The wolf was suspicious and afraid; for Buck made three of him in weight, while his head barely reached Buck’s shoulder. Watching his chance, he darted away, and the chase was resumed. Time and again he was cornered, and the thing repeated, though he was in poor condition, or Buck could not so easily have overtaken him. He would run till Buck’s head was even with his flank, when he would whirl around at bay, only to dash away again at the first opportunity.

But in the end Buck’s pertinacity was rewarded; for the wolf, finding that no harm was intended, finally sniffed noses with him. Then they became friendly, and played about in the nervous, half-coy way with which fierce beasts belie their fierceness. After some time of this the wolf started off at an easy lope in a manner that plainly showed he was going somewhere. He made it clear to Buck that he was to come, and they ran side by side through the sombre twilight, straight up the creek bed, into the gorge from which it issued, and across the bleak divide where it took its rise.

On the opposite slope of the watershed they came down into a level country where were great stretches of forest and many streams, and through these great stretches they ran steadily, hour after hour, the sun rising higher and the day growing warmer. Buck was wildly glad. He knew he was at last answering the call, running by the side of his wood brother toward the place from where the call surely came. Old memories were coming upon him fast, and he was stirring to them as of old he stirred to the realities of which they were the shadows. He had done this thing before, somewhere in that other and dimly remembered world, and he was doing it again, now, running free in the open, the unpacked earth underfoot, the wide sky overhead.

They stopped by a running stream to drink, and, stopping, Buck remembered John Thornton. He sat down. The wolf started on toward the place from where the call surely came, then returned to him, sniffing noses and making actions as though to encourage him. But Buck turned about and started slowly on the back track. For the better part of an hour the wild brother ran by his side, whining softly. Then he sat down, pointed his nose upward, and howled. It was a mournful howl, and as Buck held steadily on his way he heard it grow faint and fainter until it was lost in the distance.

John Thornton was eating dinner when Buck dashed into camp and sprang upon him in a frenzy of affection, overturning him, scrambling upon him, licking his face, biting his hand — ”playing the general tom-fool,” as John Thornton characterized it, the while he shook Buck back and forth and cursed him lovingly.

For two days and nights Buck never left camp, never let Thornton out of his sight. He followed him about at his work, watched him while he ate, saw him into his blankets at night and out of them in the morning. But after two days the call in the forest began to sound more imperiously than ever. Buck’s restlessness came back on him, and he was haunted by recollections of the wild brother, and of the smiling land beyond the divide and the run side by side through the wide forest stretches. Once again he took to wandering in the woods, but the wild brother came no more; and though he listened through long vigils, the mournful howl was never raised.

He began to sleep out at night, staying away from camp for days at a time; and once he crossed the divide at the head of the creek and went down into the land of timber and streams. There he wandered for a week, seeking vainly for fresh sign of the wild brother, killing his meat as he travelled and travelling with the long, easy lope that seems never to tire. He fished for salmon in a broad stream that emptied somewhere into the sea, and by this stream he killed a large black bear, blinded by the mosquitoes while likewise fishing, and raging through the forest helpless and terrible. Even so, it was a hard fight, and it aroused the last latent remnants of Buck's ferocity. And two days later, when he returned to his kill and found a dozen wolverenes quarrelling over the spoil, he scattered them like chaff; and those that fled left two behind who would quarrel no more.

The blood-longing became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived, unaided, alone, by virtue of his own strength and prowess, surviving triumphantly in a hostile environment where only the strong survived. Because of all this he became possessed of a great pride in himself, which communicated itself like a contagion to his physical being. It advertised itself in all his movements, was apparent in the play of every muscle, spoke plainly as speech in the way he carried himself, and made his glorious furry coat if anything more glorious. But for the stray brown on his muzzle and above his eyes, and for the splash of white hair that ran midmost down his chest, he might well have been mistaken for a gigantic wolf, larger than the largest of the breed. From his St. Bernard father he had inherited size and weight, but it was his shepherd mother who had given shape to that size and weight. His muzzle was the long wolf muzzle, save that it was larger than the muzzle of any wolf; and his head, somewhat broader, was the wolf head on a massive scale.

His cunning was wolf cunning, and wild cunning; his intelligence, shepherd intelligence and St. Bernard intelligence; and all this, plus an experience gained in the fiercest of schools, made him as formidable a creature as any that roamed the wild. A carnivorous animal living on a straight meat diet, he was in full flower, at the high tide of his life, overspilling with vigor and virility. When Thornton passed a caressing hand along his back, a snapping and crackling followed the hand, each hair discharging its pent magnetism at the contact. Every part, brain and body, nerve tissue and fibre, was keyed to the most exquisite pitch; and between all the parts there was a perfect equilibrium or adjustment. To sights and sounds and events which required action, he responded with lightning-like rapidity. Quickly as a husky dog could leap to defend from attack or to attack, he could leap twice as quickly. He saw the movement, or heard sound, and responded in less time than another dog required to compass the mere seeing or hearing. He perceived and determined and responded in the same instant. In point of fact the three actions of perceiving, determining, and responding were sequential; but so infinitesimal were the intervals of time between them that they appeared simultaneous. His muscles were surcharged with vitality, and snapped into play sharply, like steel springs. Life streamed through him in splendid flood, glad and rampant, until it seemed that it would burst him asunder in sheer ecstasy and pour forth generously over the world.

“Never was there such a dog,” said John Thornton one day, as the partners watched Buck marching out of camp.

“When he was made, the mould was broke,” said Pete.

“Py jingo! I t’ink so mineself,” Hans affirmed.

They saw him marching out of camp, but they did not see the instant and terrible transformation which took place as soon as he was within the secrecy of the forest. He no longer marched. At once he became a thing of the wild, stealing along softly, cat-footed, a passing shadow that appeared and disappeared among the shadows. He knew how to take advantage of every cover, to crawl on his belly like a snake, and like a snake to leap and strike. He could take a ptarmigan from its nest, kill a rabbit as it slept, and snap in mid air the little chipmunks fleeing a second too late for the trees. Fish, in open pools, were not too quick for him; nor were beaver, mending their dams, too wary. He killed to eat, not from wantonness; but he preferred to eat what he killed himself. So a lurking humor ran through his deeds, and it was his delight to steal upon the squirrels, and, when he all but had them, to let them go, chattering in mortal fear to the treetops.

As the fall of the year came on, the moose appeared in greater abundance, moving slowly down to meet the winter in the lower and less rigorous valleys. Buck had already dragged down a stray part-grown calf; but he wished strongly for larger and more formidable quarry, and he came upon it one day on the divide at the head of the creek. A band of twenty moose had crossed over from the land of streams and timber, and chief among them was a great bull. He was in a savage temper, and, standing over six feet from the ground, was as formidable an antagonist as even Buck could desire. Back and forth the bull tossed his great palmated antlers, branching to fourteen points and embracing seven feet within the tips. His small eyes burned with a vicious and bitter light, while he roared with fury at sight of Buck.

From the bull's side, just forward of the flank, protruded a feathered arrow-end, which accounted for his savageness. Guided by that instinct which came from the old hunting days of the primordial world, Buck proceeded to cut the bull out from the herd. It was no slight task. He would bark and dance about in front of the bull, just out of reach of the great antlers and of the terrible splay hoofs which could have stamped his life out with a single blow. Unable to turn his back on the fanged danger and go on, the bull would be driven into paroxysms of rage. At such moments he charged Buck, who retreated craftily, luring him on by a simulated inability to escape. But when he was thus separated from his fellows, two or three of the younger bulls would charge back upon Buck and enable the wounded bull to rejoin the herd.

There is a patience of the wild — dogged, tireless, persistent as life itself — that holds motionless for endless hours the spider in its web, the snake in its coils, the panther in its ambuscade; this patience belongs peculiarly to life when it hunts its living food; and it belonged to Buck as he clung to the flank of the herd, retarding its march, irritating the young bulls, worrying the cows with their half-grown calves, and driving the wounded bull mad with helpless rage. For half a day this continued. Buck multiplied himself, attacking from all sides, enveloping the herd in a whirlwind of menace, cutting out his victim as fast as it could rejoin its mates, wearing out the patience of creatures preyed upon, which is a lesser patience than that of creatures preying.

As the day wore along and the sun dropped to its bed in the northwest (the darkness had come back and the fall nights were six hours long), the young bulls retraced their steps more and more reluctantly to the aid of their beset leader. The down-coming winter was harrying them on to the lower levels, and it seemed they could never shake off this tireless creature that held them back. Besides, it was not the life of the herd, or of the young bulls, that was threatened. The life of only one member was demanded, which was a remoter interest than their lives, and in the end they were content to pay the toll.

As twilight fell the old bull stood with lowered head, watching his mates — the cows he had known, the calves he had fathered, the bulls he had mastered — as they shambled on at a rapid pace through the fading light. He could not follow, for before his nose leaped the merciless fanged terror that would not let him go. Three hundredweight more than half a ton he weighed; he had lived a long, strong life, full of fight and struggle, and at the end he faced death at the teeth of a creature whose head did not reach beyond his great knuckled knees.

From then on, night and day, Buck never left his prey, never gave it a moment's rest, never permitted it to browse the leaves of trees or the shoots of young birch and willow. Nor did he give the wounded bull opportunity to slake his burning thirst in the slender trickling streams they crossed. Often, in desperation, he burst into long stretches of flight. At such times Buck did not attempt to stay him, but loped easily at his heels, satisfied with the way the game was played, lying down when the moose stood still, attacking him fiercely when he strove to eat or drink.

The great head drooped more and more under its tree of horns, and the shambling trot grew weak and weaker. He took to standing for long periods, with nose to the ground and dejected ears dropped limply; and Buck found more time in which to get water for himself and in which to rest. At such moments, panting with red lolling tongue and with eyes fixed upon the big bull, it appeared to Buck that a change was coming over the face of things. He could feel a new stir in the land. As the moose were coming into the land, other kinds of life were coming in. Forest and stream and air seemed palpitant with their presence. The news of it was borne in upon him, not by sight, or sound, or smell, but by some other and subtler sense. He heard nothing, saw nothing, yet knew that the land was somehow different; that through it strange things were afoot and ranging; and he resolved to investigate after he had finished the business in hand.

At last, at the end of the fourth day, he pulled the great moose down. For a day and a night he remained by the kill, eating and sleeping, turn and turn about. Then, rested, refreshed and strong, he turned his face toward camp and John Thornton. He broke into the long easy lope, and went on, hour after hour, never at loss for the tangled way, heading straight home through strange country with a certitude of direction that put man and his magnetic needle to shame.

As he held on he became more and more conscious of the new stir in the land. There was life abroad in it different from the life which had been there throughout the summer. No longer was this fact borne in upon him in some subtle, mysterious way. The birds talked of it, the squirrels chattered about it, the very breeze whispered of it. Several times he stopped and drew in the fresh morning air in great sniffs, reading a message which made him leap on with greater speed. He was oppressed with a sense of calamity happening, if it were not calamity already happened; and as he crossed the last watershed and dropped down into the valley toward camp, he proceeded with greater caution.

Three miles away he came upon a fresh trail that sent his neck hair rippling and bristling, It led straight toward camp and John Thornton. Buck hurried on, swiftly and stealthily, every nerve straining and tense, alert to the multitudinous details which told a story — all but the end. His nose gave him a varying description of the passage of the life on the heels of which he was travelling. He remarked the pregnant silence of the forest. The bird life had flitted. The squirrels were in hiding. One only he saw, — a sleek gray fellow, flattened against a gray dead limb so that he seemed a part of it, a woody excrescence upon the wood itself.

As Buck slid along with the obscureness of a gliding shadow, his nose was jerked suddenly to the side as though a positive force had gripped and pulled it. He followed the new scent into a thicket and found Nig. He was lying on his side, dead where he had dragged himself, an arrow protruding, head and feathers, from either side of his body.

A hundred yards farther on, Buck came upon one of the sled-dogs Thornton had bought in Dawson. This dog was thrashing about in a death-struggle, directly on the trail, and Buck passed around him without stopping. From the camp came the faint sound of many voices, rising and falling in a sing-song chant. Bellying forward to the edge of the clearing, he found Hans, lying on his face, feathered with arrows like a porcupine. At the same instant Buck peered out where the spruce-bough lodge had been and saw what made his hair leap straight up on his neck and shoulders. A gust of overpowering rage swept over him. He did not know that he growled, but he growled aloud with a terrible ferocity. For the last time in his life he allowed passion to usurp cunning and reason, and it was because of his great love for John Thornton that he lost his head.

The Yeehats were dancing about the wreckage of the spruce-bough lodge when they heard a fearful roaring and saw rushing upon them an animal the like of which they had never seen before. It was Buck, a live hurricane of fury, hurling himself upon them in a frenzy to destroy. He sprang at the foremost man (it was the chief of the Yeehats), ripping the throat wide open till the rent jugular spouted a fountain of blood. He did not pause to worry the victim, but ripped in passing, with the next bound tearing wide the throat of a second man. There was no withstanding him. He plunged about in their very midst, tearing, rending, destroying, in constant and terrific motion which defied the arrows they discharged at him. In fact, so inconceivably rapid were his movements, and so closely were the Indians tangled together, that they shot one another with the arrows; and one young hunter, hurling a spear at Buck in mid air, drove it through the chest of another hunter with such force that the point broke through the skin of the back and stood out beyond. Then a panic seized the Yeehats, and they fled in terror to the woods, proclaiming as they fled the advent of the Evil Spirit.

And truly Buck was the Fiend incarnate, raging at their heels and dragging them down like deer as they raced through the trees. It was a fateful day for the Yeehats. They scattered far and wide over the country, and it was not till a week later that the last of the survivors gathered together in a lower valley and counted their losses. As for Buck, wearying of the pursuit, he returned to the desolated camp. He found Pete where he had been killed in his blankets in the first moment of surprise. Thornton’s desperate struggle was fresh-written on the earth, and Buck scented every detail of it down to the edge of a deep pool. By the edge, head and fore feet in the water, lay Skeet, faithful to the last. The pool itself, muddy and discolored from the sluice boxes, effectually hid what it contained, and it contained John Thornton; for Buck followed his trace into the water, from which no trace led away.

All day Buck brooded by the pool or roamed restlessly about the camp. Death, as a cessation of movement, as a passing out and away from the lives of the living, he knew, and he knew John Thornton was dead. It left a great void in him, somewhat akin to hunger, but a void which ached and ached, and which food could not fill, At times, when he paused to contemplate the carcasses of the Yeehats, he forgot the pain of it; and at such times he was aware of a great pride in himself, — a pride greater than any he had yet experienced. He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he had killed in the face of the law of club and fang. He sniffed the bodies curiously. They had died so easily. It was harder to kill a husky dog than them. They were no match at all, were it not for their arrows and spears and clubs. Thenceforward he would be unafraid of them except when they bore in their hands their arrows, spears, and clubs.

Night came on, and a full moon rose high over the trees into the sky, lighting the land till it lay bathed in ghostly day. And with the coming of the night, brooding and mourning by the pool, Buck became alive to a stirring of the new life in the forest other than that which the Yeehats had made, He stood up, listening and scenting. From far away drifted a faint, sharp yelp, followed by a chorus of similar sharp yelps. As the moments passed the yelps grew closer and louder. Again Buck knew them as things heard in that other world which persisted in his memory. He walked to the centre of the open space and listened. It was the call, the many-noted call, sounding more luringly and compellingly than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey. John Thornton was dead. The last tie was broken. Man and the claims of man no longer bound him.

Hunting their living meat, as the Yeehats were hunting it, on the flanks of the migrating moose, the wolf pack had at last crossed over from the land of streams and timber and invaded Buck's valley. Into the clearing where the moonlight streamed, they poured in a silvery flood; and in the centre of the clearing stood Buck, motionless as a statue, waiting their coming. They were awed, so still and large he stood, and a moment's pause fell, till the boldest one leaped straight for him. Like a flash Buck struck, breaking the neck. Then he stood, without movement, as before, the stricken wolf rolling in agony behind him. Three others tried it in sharp succession; and one after the other they drew back, streaming blood from slashed throats or shoulders.

This was sufficient to fling the whole pack forward, pell-mell, crowded together, blocked and confused by its eagerness to pull down the prey. Buck's marvellous quickness and agility stood him in good stead. Pivoting on his hind legs, and snapping and gashing, he was everywhere at once, presenting a front which was apparently unbroken so swiftly did he whirl and guard from side to side. But to prevent them from getting behind him, he was forced back, down past the pool and into the creek bed, till he brought up against a high gravel bank. He worked along to a right angle in the bank which the men had made in the course of mining, and in this angle he came to bay, protected on three sides and with nothing to do but face the front.

And so well did he face it, that at the end of half an hour the wolves drew back discomfited. The tongues of all were out and lolling, the white fangs showing cruelly white in the moonlight. Some were lying down with heads raised and ears pricked forward; others stood on their feet, watching him; and still others were lapping water from the pool. One wolf, long and lean and gray, advanced cautiously, in a friendly manner, and Buck recognized the wild brother with whom he had run for a night and a day. He was whining softly, and, as Buck whined, they touched noses.

Then an old wolf, gaunt and battle-scarred, came forward. Buck writhed his lips into the preliminary of a snarl, but sniffed noses with him, Whereupon the old wolf sat down, pointed nose at the moon, and broke out the long wolf howl. The others sat down and howled. And now the call came to Buck in unmistakable accents. He, too, sat down and howled. This over, he came out of his angle and the pack crowded around him, sniffing in half-friendly, half-savage manner. The leaders lifted the yelp of the pack and sprang away into the woods. The wolves swung in behind, yelping in chorus. And Buck ran with them, side by side with the wild brother, yelping as he ran.

And here may well end the story of Buck. The years were not many when the Yeehats noted a change in the breed of timber wolves; for some were seen with splashes of brown on head and muzzle, and with a rift of white centring down the chest. But more remarkable than this, the Yeehats tell of a Ghost Dog that runs at the head of the pack. They are afraid of this Ghost Dog, for it has cunning greater than they, stealing from their camps in fierce winters, robbing their traps, slaying their dogs, and defying their bravest hunters.

Nay, the tale grows worse. Hunters there are who fail to return to the camp, and hunters there have been whom their tribesmen found with throats slashed cruelly open and with wolf prints about them in the snow greater than the prints of any wolf. Each fall, when the Yeehats follow the movement of the moose, there is a certain valley which they never enter.

And women there are who become sad when the word goes over the fire of how the Evil Spirit came to select that valley for an abiding-place.

In the summers there is one visitor, however, to that valley, of which the Yeehats do not know. It is a great, gloriously coated wolf, like, and yet unlike, all other wolves. He crosses alone from the smiling timber land and comes down into an open space among the trees. Here a yellow stream flows from rotted moose-hide sacks and sinks into the ground, with long grasses growing through it and vegetable mould overrunning it and hiding its yellow from the sun; and here he muses for a time, howling once, long and mournfully, ere he departs.

But he is not always alone. When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack.

THE KEMPTON-WACE LETTERS

This 1903 epistolary novel was published anonymously by London and Anna Strunsky. It is a discussion of the philosophy of love and sex, written in the form of a series of letters between two men, "Herbert Wace," a young scientist, and "Dane Kempton," an elderly poet. Jack London wrote "Wace's" letters, Anna Strunsky wrote "Kempton's." Kempton makes the case for feeling and emotion, while Wace analyzes love in Darwinian terms.

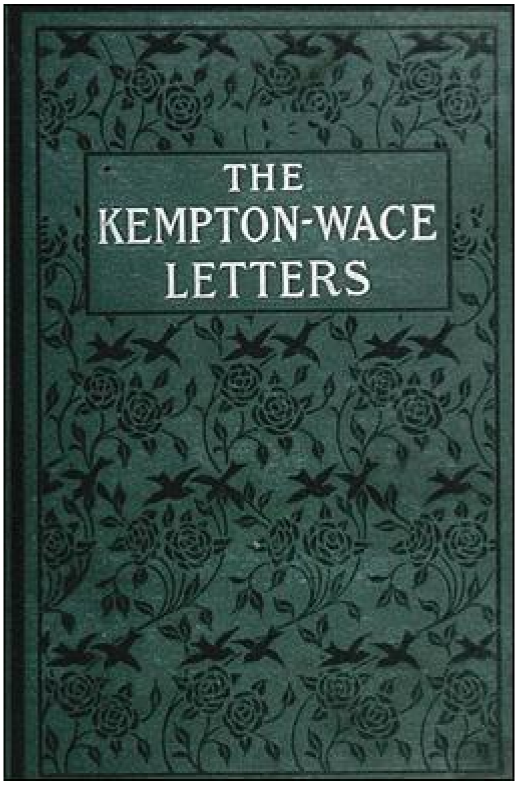
THE
KEMPTON-WACE
LETTERS

The first edition

CONTENTS

I
II
III
IV
V
VI
VII
VIII
IX
X
XI
XII
XIII
XIV
XV
XVI
XVII
XVIII
XIX
XX
XXI
XXII
XXIII
XXIV
XXV
XXVI
XXVII
XXVIII
XXIX
XXX
XXXI
XXXII
XXXIII
XXXIV
XXXV
XXXVI

XXXVII
XXXVIII
XXXIX

I

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
3 a Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
August 14, 19 — .

Yesterday I wrote formally, rising to the occasion like the conventional happy father rather than the man who believes in the miracle and lives for it. Yesterday I stinted myself. I took you in my arms, glad of what is and stately with respect for the fulness of your manhood. It is to-day that I let myself leap into yours in a passion of joy. I dwell on what has come to pass and inflate myself with pride in your fulfilment, more as a mother would, I think, and she your mother.

But why did you not write before? After all, the great event was not when you found your offer of marriage accepted, but when you found you had fallen in love. Then was your hour. Then was the time for congratulation, when the call was first sounded and the reveille of Time and About fell upon your soul and the march to another’s destiny was begun. It is always more important to love than to be loved. I wish it had been vouchsafed me to be by when your spirit of a sudden grew willing to bestow itself without question or let or hope of return, when the self broke up and you grew fain to beat out your strength in praise and service for the woman who was soaring high in the blue wastes. You have known her long, and you must have been hers long, yet no word of her and of your love reached me. It was not kind to be silent.

Barbara spoke yesterday of your fastidiousness, and we told each other that you had gained a triumph of happiness in your love, for you are not of those who cheat themselves. You choose rigorously, straining for the heart of the end as do all rigorists who are also hedonists. Because we are in possession of this bit of data as to your temperamental cosmos we can congratulate you with the more abandon. Oh, Herbert, do you know that this is a rampant spring, and that on leaving Barbara I tramped out of the confines into the green, happier, it almost seems, than I have ever been? Do you know that because you love a woman and she loves you, and that because you are swept along by certain forces, that I am happy and feel myself in sight of my portion of immortality on earth, far more than because of my books, dear lad, far more?

I wish I could fly England and get to you. Should I have a shade less of you than formerly, if we were together now? From your too much green of wealth, a barrenness of friendship? It does not matter; what is her gain cannot be my loss. One power is mine, — without hindrance, in freedom and in right, to say to Ellen’s son, “Godspeed!” to place Hester Stebbins’s hand in his, and bid them forth to the sunrise, into the glory of day!

Ever your devoted father,
Dane Kempton.

II

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
September 3, 19 — .

Here I am, back in the old quarters once more, with the old afternoon climb across the campus and up into the sky, up to the old rooms, the old books, and the old view. You poor fog-begirt Dane Kempton, could you but have lounged with me on the window couch, an hour past, and watched the light pass out of the day through the Golden Gate and the night creep over the Berkeley Hills and down out of the east! Why should you linger on there in London town! We grow away from each other, it seems — you with your wonder-singing, I with my joyful science.

Poesy and economics! Alack! alack! How did I escape you, Dane, when mind and mood you mastered me? The auguries were fair. I, too, should have been a singer, and lo, I strive for science. All my boyhood was singing, what of you; and my father was a singer, too, in his own fine way. Dear to me is your likening of him to Waring. — ”What’s become of Waring?” He *was* Waring. I can think of him only as one who went away, “chose land travel or seafaring.”

Gwynne says I am sometimes almost a poet — Gwynne, you know, Arthur Gwynne, who has come to live with me at The Ridge. “If it were not for your dismal science,” he is sure to add; and to fire him I lay it to the defects of early training. I know he thinks that I never half appreciated you, and that I do not appreciate you now. If you will recollect, you praised his verses once. He cherishes that praise amongst his sweetest treasures. Poor dear good old Gwynne, tender, sensitive, shrinking, with the face of a seraph and the heart of a maid. Never were two men more incongruously companioned. I love him for himself. He tolerates me, I do secretly believe, because of you. He longs to meet you, — he knew you well through my father, — and we often talk you over. Be sure at every opportunity I tear off your halo and trundle it about. Trust me, you receive scant courtesy.

How I wander on. My pen is unruly after the long vacation; my thought yet wayward, what of the fever of successful wooing. And besides, ... how shall I say?... such was the gracious warmth of your letter, of both your letters, that I am at a loss. I feel weak, inadequate. It almost seems as though you had made a demand upon something that is not in me. Ah, you poets! It would seem your delight in my marriage were greater than mine. In my present mood, it is you who are young, you who love; I who have lived and am old.

Yes, I am going to be married. At this present moment, I doubt not, a million men and women are saying the same thing. Hewers of wood and drawers of water, princes and potentates, shy-shrinking maidens and brazen-faced hussies, all saying, "I am going to be married." And all looking forward to it as a crisis in their lives? No. After all, marriage is the way of the world. Considered biologically, it is an institution necessary for the perpetuation of the species. Why should it be a crisis? These million men and women will marry, and the work of the world go on just as it did before. Shuffle them about, and the work of the world would yet go on.

True, a month ago it did seem a crisis. I wrote you as much. It did seem a disturbing element in my life-work. One cannot view with equanimity that which appears to be totally disruptive of one's dear little system of living. But it only appeared so; I lacked perspective, that was all. As I look upon it now, everything fits well and all will run smoothly I am sure.

You know I had two years yet to work for my Doctorate. I still have them. As you see, I am back to the old quarters, settled down in the old groove, hammering away at the old grind. Nothing is changed. And besides my own studies, I have taken up an assistant instructorship in the Department of Economics. It is an ambitious course, and an important one. I don't know how they ever came to confide it to me, or how I found the temerity to attempt it, — which is neither here nor there. It is all agreed. Hester is a sensible girl.

The engagement is to be long. I shall continue my career as charted. Two years from now, when I shall have become a Doctor of Social Sciences (and candidate for numerous other things), I shall also become a benedict. My marriage and the presumably necessary honeymoon chime in with the summer vacation. There is no disturbing element even there. Oh, we are very practical, Hester and I. And we are both strong enough to lead each our own lives.

Which reminds me that you have not asked about her. First, let me shock you — she, too, is a scientist. It was in my undergraduate days that we met, and ere the half-hour struck we were quarrelling felicitously over Weismann and the neo-Darwinians. I was at Berkeley at the time, a cocksure junior; and she, far maturer as a freshman, was at Stanford, carrying more culture with her into her university than is given the average student to carry out.

Next, and here your arms open to her, she is a poet. Pre-eminently she is a poet — this must be always understood. She is the greater poet, I take it, in this dawning twentieth century, because she is a scientist; not in spite of being a scientist as some would hold. How shall I describe her? Perhaps as a George Eliot, fused with an Elizabeth Barrett, with a hint of Huxley and a trace of Keats. I may say she is something like all this, but I must say she is something other and different. There is about her a certain lightsomeness, a glow or flash almost Latin or oriental, or perhaps Celtic. Yes, that must be it — Celtic. But the high-stomached Norman is there and the stubborn Saxon. Her quickness and fine audacity are checked and poised, as it were, by that certain conservatism which gives stability to purpose and power to achievement. She is unafraid, and wide-looking and far-looking, but she is not over-looking. The Saxon grapples with the Celt, and the Norman forces the twain to do what the one would not dream of doing and what the other would dream beyond and never do. Do you catch me? Her most salient charm, is I think, her perfect poise, her exquisite adjustment.

Altogether she is a most wonderful woman, take my word for it. And after all she is described vicariously. Though she has published nothing and is exceeding shy, I shall send you some of her work. There will you find and know her. She is waiting for stronger voice and sings softly as yet. But hers will be no minor note, no middle flight. She is — well, she is Hester. In two years we shall be married. Two years, Dane. Surely you will be with us.

One thing more; in your letter a certain undertone which I could not fail to detect. A shade less of me than formerly? — I turn and look into your face — Waring’s handiwork you remember — his painter’s fancy of you in those golden days when I stood on the brink of the world, and you showed me the delights of the world and the way of my feet therein. So I turn and look, and look and wonder. *A shade less* of me, of you? Poesy and economics! Where lies the blame?

Herbert.

III

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
September 30, 19 — .

It is because you know not what you do that I cannot forgive you. Could you know that your letter with its catalogue of advantages and arrangements must offend me as much as it belies (let us hope) you and the woman of your love, I would pardon the affront of it upon us all, and ascribe the unseemly want of warmth to reserve or to the sadness which grips the heart when joy is too palpitant. But something warns me that you are unaware of the chill your words breathe, and that is a lapse which it is impossible to meet with indulgence.

"He does not love her," was Barbara's quick decision, and she laid the open letter down with a definiteness which said that you, too, are laid out and laid low. Your sister's very wrists can be articulate. However, I laughed at her and she soon joined me. We do not mean to be extravagant with our fears. Who shall prescribe the letters of lovers to their sisters and foster-fathers? Yet there are some things their letters should be incapable of saying, and amongst them that love is not a crisis and a rebirth, but that it is common as the commonplace, a hit or miss affair which "shuffling" could not affect.

Barbara showed me your note to her. "Had I written like this of myself and Earl — "

"You could not," I objected.

"Then Herbert should have been as little able to do it," she deduced with emphasis. Here I might have told her that men and women are races apart, but no one talks cant to Barbara. So I did not console her, and it stands against you in our minds that on this critical occasion you have baffled us with coldness.

An absence of six years, broken into twice by a brief few months, must work changes. When Barbara called your letter unnatural, she forgot how little she knows what is natural to you. She and I have been wont to predetermine you, your character, foothold, and outlook, by — say by the fact that you knew your Wordsworth and that you knew him without being able to take for yourself his austere peace. Youth which lives by hope is riven by unrest.

“I made no vows; vows were made for me,
Bond unknown to me was given
That I should be, else sinning gently,
A dedicated spirit.”

That pale sunrise seen from Mt. Tamalpais and your voice vibrant to fierceness on the “else sinning gently” — to me the splendour of rose on piled-up ridges of mist spoke all for you, so dear have you always been. It rested on the possible wonder of your life. It threw you into the scintillant Dawn with an abandon meet to a son of Waring.

Tell me, do you still read your Wordsworth on your knees? I am bent with regret for the time when your mind had no surprises for me, when the days were flushed halcyon with my hope in you. I resent your development if it is because of it that you speak prosaically of a prosaic marriage and of a honeymoon simultaneous with the Degree. I think you are too well pleased with the simultaneousness.

Yet the fact of the letter is fair. It cannot be that the soul of it is not. Hester Stebbins is a poet. I lean forward and think it out as I did some days ago when the news came. I conjure up the look of love. If the woman is content (how much more than content the feeling she bounds with in knowing you hers as she is yours), what better test that all is well? I conjure up the look of love. It is thus at meeting and thus at parting. Even here, to-night, when all is chill and hard to understand, I catch the flash and the warmth, and what I see restores you to me, but how deep the plummet of my mind needed to sound before it reached you. It is because you permitted yourself to speak when silence had expressed you better.

Show me the ideally real Hester Stebbins, the spark of fire which is she. The storms have not broken over her head. She will laugh and make poetry of her laughter. If before she met you she wept, that, too, will help the smiling. There is laughter which is the echo of a Miserere sobbed by the ages. Men chuckle in the irony of pain, and they smile cold, lessoned smiles in resignation; they laugh in forgetfulness and they laugh lest they die of sadness. A shrug of the shoulders, a widening of the lips, a heaving forth of sound, and the life is saved. The remedy is as drastic as are the drugs used for epilepsy, which in quelling the spasm bring idiocy to the patient. If we are made idiots by our laughter, we are paying dearly for the privilege of continuing in life.

Hester shall laugh because she is glad and must tell her joy, and she will not lose it in the telling. Greet her for me and hasten to prove yourself, for

"The Poet, gentle creature that he is,
Hath like the Lover, his unruly times;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts."

You will judge by this letter that I am neither sick nor well, and that I reach for a distress which is not near. If I were Merchant rather than Poet, it would be otherwise with me.

Dane.

IV

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
October 27, 19 — .

Do I still read my Wordsworth on my knees? Well, we may as well have it out. I have foreseen this day so long and shunned it that now I meet it almost with extended hands. No, I do not read my Wordsworth on my knees. My mind is filled with other things. I have not the time. I am not the Herbert Wace of six years gone. It is fair that you should know this; fair, also, that you should know the Herbert Wace of six years gone was not quite the lad you deemed him.

There is no more pathetic and terrible thing than the prejudice of love. Both you and I have suffered from it. Six years ago, ay, and before that, I felt and resented the growing difference between us. When under your spell, it seemed that I was born to lisp in numbers and devote myself to singing, that the world was good and all of it fit for singing. But away from you, even then, doubts faced me, and I knew in vague fashion that we lived in different worlds. At first in vague fashion, I say; and when with you again, your spell dominated me and I could not question. You were true, you were good, I argued, all that was wonderful and glorious; therefore, you were also right. You mastered me with your charm, as you were wont to master those who loved you.

But there came times when your sympathy failed me and I stood alone on outlooks I had achieved alone. There was no response from you. I could not hear your voice. I looked down upon a real world; you were caught up in a beautiful cloudland and shut away from me. Possibly it was because life of itself appealed to you, while to me appealed the mechanics of life. But be it as it may, yours was a world of ideas and fancies, mine a world of things and facts.

Enters here the prejudice of love. It was the lad that discovered our difference and concealed; it was the man who was blind and could not discover. There we erred, man and boy; and here, both men now, we make all well again.

Let me be explicit. Do you remember the passion with which I read the "Intellectual Development of Europe?" I understood not the tithe of it, but I was thrilled. My common sense was thrilled, I suppose; but it was all very joyous, gripping hold of the tangible world for the first time. And when I came to you, warm with the glow of adventure, you looked blankly, then smiled indulgently and did not answer. You regarded my ardour complacently. A passing humour of adolescence, you thought; and I thought: "Dane does not read his Draper on his knees." Wordsworth was great to me; Draper was great also. You had no patience with him, and I know now, as I felt then, your consistent revolt against his materialistic philosophy.

Only the other day you complained of a letter of mine, calling it cold and analytical. That I should be cold and analytical despite all the prodding and pressing and moulding I have received at your hands, and the hands of Waring, marks only more clearly our temperamental difference; but it does not mark that one or the other of us is less a dedicated spirit. If I have wandered away from the warmth of poesy and become practical, have you not remained and become confirmed in all that is beautifully impractical? If I have adventured in a new world of common things, have you not lingered in the old world of great and impossible things? If I have shivered in the gray dawn of a new day, have you not crouched over the dying embers of the fire of yesterday? Ah, Dane, you cannot rekindle that fire. The whirl of the world scatters its ashes wide and far, like volcanic dust, to make beautiful crimson sunsets for a time and then to vanish.

None the less are you a dedicated spirit, priest that you are of a dying faith. Your prayers are futile, your altars crumbling, and the light flickers and drops down into night. Poetry is empty these days, empty and worthless and dead. All the old-world epic and lyric-singing will not put this very miserable earth of ours to rights. So long as the singers sing of the things of yesterday, glorifying the things of yesterday and lamenting their departure, so long will poetry be a vain thing and without avail. The old world is dead, dead and buried along with its heroes and Helens and knights and ladies and tournaments and pageants. You cannot sing of the truth and wonder of to-day in terms of yesterday. And no one will listen to your singing till you sing of to-day in terms of to-day.

This is the day of the common man. Do you glorify the common man? This is the day of the machine. When have you sung of the machine? The crusades are here again, not the Crusades of Christ but the Crusades of the Machine — have you found motive in them for your song? We are crusading to-day, not for the remission of sins, but for the abolition of sinning, of economic and industrial sinning. The crusade to Christ's sepulchre was paltry compared with the splendour and might of our crusade to-day toward manhood. There are millions of us afoot. In the stillness of the night have you never listened to the trampling of our feet and been caught up by the glory and the romance of it? Oh, Dane! Dane! Our captains sit in council, our heroes take the field, our fighting men are buckling on their harness, our martyrs have already died, and you are blind to it, blind to it all!

We have no poets these days, and perforce we are singing with our hands. The walking delegate is a greater singer and a finer singer than you, Dane Kempton. The cold, analytical economist, delving in the dynamics of society, is more the prophet than you. The carpenter at his bench, the blacksmith by his forge, the boiler-maker clanging and clattering, are all warbling more sweetly than you. The sledge-wielder pours out more strength and certitude and joy in every blow than do you in your whole sheaf of songs. Why, the very socialist agitator, hustled by the police on a street corner amid the jeers of the mob, has caught the romance of to-day as you have not caught it and where you have missed it. He knows life and is living. Are you living, Dane Kempton?

Forgive me. I had begun to explain and reconcile our difference. I find I am lecturing and censuring you. In defending myself, I offend. But this I wish to say: We are so made, you and I, that your function in life is to dream, mine to work. That you failed to make a dreamer of me is no cause for heartache and chagrin. What of my practical nature and analytical mind, I have generalised in my own way upon the data of life and achieved a different code from yours. Yet I seek truth as passionately as you. I still believe myself to be a dedicated spirit.

And what boots it, all of it? When the last word is said, we are two men, by a thousand ties very dear to each other. There is room in our hearts for each other as there is room in the world for both of us. Though we have many things not in common, yet you are my dearest friend on earth, you who have been a second father to me as well.

You have long merited this explanation, and it was cowardly of me not to have made it before. My hope is that I have been sufficiently clear for you

to understand.
    Herbert.

V

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
3 a Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
November 16, 19 — .

You sigh “Poesy and Economics,” supplying the cause and thereby admitting the fact. I wish you had shown some reluctance to see my meaning, that you had preferred to waive the matter on the ground of insufficient data, that you had been less eager to ferret out the science of the thing. Do you remember how your boy’s respect rose for little Barbara whenever she cried when too readily forgiven? “She dreads a double standard,” you explained to me with generous heat. You sympathised with her fear lest I demand less of her than of you, honouring her insistence on an equality of duty as well as of privilege. Is the man Herbert less proud than the child Barbara, that you speak of a temperamental difference and ask for a special dispensation?

You are not in love (this you say in not gainsaying my attack on you, and so far I understand), because you are a student of Economics. At the last I stop. What is this about economics and poesy? About your emancipation from my riotously lyric sway? The hand of the forces by which you have been moulded cannot detain you from going out upon the love-quest. The fact of your preference for Draper cannot forestall your spirit’s need of love. There are many codes, but there is one law, binding alike on the economist and poet. It springs out of the common and unappeasable hunger, commanding that love seek love through night to day and through day to night.

Yet it is possible to put oneself outside the pale of the law, to refuse the gift of life and snap the tie between time and space and creature. It is possible to be too emaciated for interest or feeling. The men and women of the People know neither love nor art because they are too weary. They lie in sleep prostrate from great fatigue. Their bodies are too much tried with the hungers of the body and their spirits too dimly illumined with the hope of fair chances. It is also possible to fill oneself so full with an interest that all else is crowded out. You have done this. Like the cobbler who is a cobbler typically, the teacher who is a pedagogue, the physician and the lawyer who are pathologists merely, you are a fanatic of a text. You are in the toils of an idea, the idea of selection, as I well know, and you exploit it like a drudge. When a man finds that he cannot deal in petroleum without smelling of it, it is time that he turn to something else. Every man is engaged in the cause of keeping himself whole, in watching himself lest his man turn machine, in watching lest the outside world assail the inner. Nature spares the type, but the individual must spare himself. He is strong who is sensitive and who responds subtly to everything in his environment, but his response must be characteristic; he must sustain his personality and become more himself through the years. He alone is vital in the social scheme who lets nothing in him atrophy and who persists in being varied from all others in the scale of character to the degree of variability that was his at the beginning.

I read in your letter nothing but a decision to stop short and give over, as if you had strength for no more than your book and your theory! You have become slave to a small point of inquiry, and you call it the advance to a new time. “The crusade is on,” you say. Coronation rites for the commoners and destruction to superstition. I put my hand out to you in joy. The joy is in unholy worship of a fetish, the pain that there is no joy also deference to a fetish. Your creed thunders “Thou shalt not.” Love is a thing of yesterday. No room for anything that intimately concerns the self. But what are the apostles of the young thought preaching if it is not the right of men to their own, and what would it avail them to come into their own if life be stripped of romance?

I am dissatisfied because you are willing to live as others must live. You should stay aristocrat. Ferdinand Lassalle dressed with elegance for his working-men audiences, with the hope, he said, of reminding them that there was something better than their shabbiness. You are of the favoured, Herbert. It devolves upon you to endear your life to yourself. You do not agree with me. You do not believe that love is the law which controls freedom and life. Slave to your theory and rebel to the law, you lose your soul and imperil another’s.

“Gently! Gently!” I say to myself. Old sorrows and wrongs oppress me and I grow harsh. My heat only helps to convince you that my position is not based on the *rational rightness* you hold so essential and that therefore it is unlivable. I will state calmly, then, that it is wrong to marry without love. “For the perpetuation of the species” — that is noble of you! So you strip yourself of the thousand years of civilisation that have fostered you,

you abandon your prerogative as a creature high in the scale of existence to obey an instinct and fulfil a function? You say: “These men and women will marry, and the work of the world go on just as it did before. Shuffle them about and the work of the world would yet go on.” And you are content. You feel no need of anything different from this condition.

Believe me, Herbert, these million men and women will not let you shuffle them about. There are forces stronger than force, shadows more real than reality. We know that the need of the unhungered for the one friend, one comrade, one mate, is good. We honour the love that persists in loving. More beautiful than starlight is the face of the lover when the Voice and the Vision enfold him. The race is consecrated to the worship of idea, and the lover who lays his all on the altar of romance (which is idea) is at one with the race. The arms of the unloved girl close about the formless air and more real than her loneliness and her sorrow is the imagined embrace, the awaited warm, close pressure of the hands, the fancied gaze. What does it mean? What secret was there for Leonardo in Mona Lisa’s smile, what for him in the motion of waters? You cannot explain the bloom, the charm, the smile of life, that which rains sunshine into our hearts, which tells us we are wise to hope and to have faith, which buckles on us an armour of activity, which lights the fires of the spirit, which gives us Godhead and renders us indomitable. Comparative anatomy cannot reason it down. It is sensibility, romance, idea. It is a fact of life toward which all other facts make. For the flush of rose-light in the heavens, the touch of a hand, the colour and shape of fruit, the tears that come for unnamed sorrows, the regrets of old men, are more significant than all the building and inventing done since the first social compact.

Forgive my tediousness. I have flaunted these truisms before you in order to exorcise that modern slang of yours which is more false than the overstrained forms of a feudal France. To shut out glory is not to be practical. You are not adjusting your life artistically; there is too much strain, too little warmth, too much self-complacence. I see that you are really younger than I thought. The world never censures the crimes of the spirit. You are safe from the world’s tongue lashings, and in that safety is the danger against which my friendship warns you.

I have been reading Hester’s poems, and I know that she is like them, nervous, vibrant, throbbing, sensitive. I have been reading your letters, and I think her soul will escape yours. If you have not love like hers, you have nothing with which to keep her. This I have undertaken to say to you. It is a strange role, yet conventional. I am the father whose matrimonial whims are not met by the son. The stock measure is to disinherit. But the cause of our quarrel is somewhat unusual, and I can be neither so practical nor so vulgar as to set about making codicils. Love is of no value to financiers; there is no bank for it nor may it be made over in a will. Rather is it carried on in the blood, even as Barbara carried it on into the life of her girl-babe. Your sister keeps me strong with the faith of love. May God be good to her! It was five years ago that she came to me and whispered, “Earl.” When she saw I could not turn to her in joy, she leaned her little head back against the roses of the porch and wept, more than was right, I fear, for a girl just betrothed. Earl was a cripple and poor and helpless, but Barbara knew better than we, for she knew how to give herself. Poor little one, whom nobody congratulated! She sends you and Hester her love, unfolding you both in her eager tenderness.

Dane.

VI

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

London.
November 19, 19 — .

Metaphysics is contagious. I caught it from Barbara, and I cannot resist the impulse to pass it on, and to you of all others.

The mood leapt upon Barbara out of the pages of “Katia,” a story by Tolstoy. To my mind, it is a painful tale of lovers who outlive their love, killing it with their own hands, but the author means it to be a happily ending novel. Tolstoy attempts to show that men and women can find happiness only when they grow content to give over seeking love from one another. They may keep the memory but must banish the hope. “Hereafter, think of me only as the father of your children,” and the woman who had pined for that which had been theirs in the beginning of their union weeps softly, and agrees. Tolstoy calls this peace, but for Barbara and me this gain is loss, this end an end indeed, replete with all the tragedy of ending.

I found Barbara to-day on the last page of “Katia,” and much disturbed. “Dear, I saw a spirit break,” she said. I waited before asking whose, and when I did, she answered, “That of three-quarters of the world. The ghost of a Dream walked to-day — when after the spirit broke, I saw it — and myself and my Earl vanished in shadow. We and our love thinned away before the thought-shape.”

“Your dreaming, Barbara, can scarce be better than your living.”

We looked long at each other. She knew herself a happy woman, yet to-day the ghost had walked in the light, and her eyes were not held, and she saw. Even her life was not sufficient, even her plans were paltry, even her heart’s love was cramped. Such times of seeing come to happy men and to happy women. Barbara was reading the opinions of the world and the acceptances of the world, and in disliking them she came to doubt herself. Perhaps she, too, should be less at peace, she too may be amongst Pharisees a Pharisee.

“In the midst of the breaking of spirit, how can I know?” she demanded. “Love is sure,” I prompted, my hand on her forehead. “Earl and I are sure, dear,” she laughed low, and a drift of sobbing swept through the music; “it is not that we are in doubt about ourselves, but sometimes, like to-day, you understand, one finds oneself bitten by the sharp tooth of the world, and a despair courses through the veins and blinds the eyes, and then, in the midst of the bitterest throe, comes a great visioning."

I heard her and understood, and my heart leapt as it had not done for long. Think of it, Herbert, fifty-three and still young! When was it that I last fluttered with joy? Ah, yes, that time the summer and the woods had a great deal to do with it, and a few words spoken by a boy. I think Barbara's majesty of attainment through vicarious breaking of spirit a greater cause for rejoicing.

And then, in the midst of the bitterest throe, came a great visioning. When pain is good and to be thanked for, how good life is! By this alone may you know the proportion and the value of the good of being. Three-quarters of the world are broken spirited, but from out the wreckage a thought-shape, and it is well. The Vision fastens upon us, and what was full seems shrunken, what whole and of all time a passing bit, an untraceable flash. And that is well, for the dream recalls the hope, and the heart grows hardy with hoping and dreaming.

So Barbara.

And you? You do not repine because of these things. Let the Grand Mujik mutter a thousand heresies, let three-quarters of the world accept and live them, you would not think the unaspiring three-quarters broken-spirited. You would hail them right practical. And if you held a thought as firmly as your sister holds the thought of love, and you found yourself alone in your esteem of it, you would part from it and go over to the others. You would not be the fanatic your sister is, to stay so much the closer by it that of necessity she must doubt her own allegiance, fearing in her devotion that, without knowing it, she, too, is cold and but half alive. You would not see visions that would put your best to shame. The thought-shape of the more you could be, were you and the whole world finer and greater, would not walk before you. You would rest content and assured, and — I regret your assurance.

Always yours,
Dane Kempton.

VII

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
December 6, 19 — .

No, I am not in love. I am very thankful that I am not. I pride myself on the fact. As you say, I may not be adjusting my life artistically to its environment (there is room for discussion there), but I do know that I am adjusting it scientifically. I am arranging my life so that I may get the most out of it, while the one thing to disorder it, worse than flood and fire and the public enemy, is love.

I have told you, from time to time, of my book. I have decided to call it “The Economic Man.” I am going over the proofs now, and my brain is in perfect working order. On the other hand, there is Professor Bidwell, who is likewise correcting proofs. Poor devil, he is in despair. He can do nothing with them. “I positively cannot think,” he complains to me, his hair rumpled and face flushed. He did not answer my knock the other day, and I came upon him with the neglected proofs under his elbows and his absent gaze directed through window and out of doors to some rosy cloudland beyond my ken. “It will be a failure, I know it will,” he growled to me. “My brain is dull. It refuses to act. I cannot imagine what has come over me.” But I could imagine very easily. He is in love (madly in love with what I take to be a very ordinary sort of girl), and expects shortly to be married. “Postpone the book for a time,” I suggested. He looked at me for a moment, then brought his fist down on the general disarray with a thumping “I will!” And take my word for it, Dane, a year hence, when the very ordinary girl greets him with the matronly kiss and his fever and folly have left him, he will take up the book and make a success of it.

Of course I am not in love. I have just come back from Hester — I ran down Saturday to Stanford and stopped over Sunday. Time did not pass tediously on the train. I did not look at my watch every other minute. I read the morning papers with interest and without impatience. The scenery was charming and I was unaware of the slightest hurry to reach my destination. I remember noting, when I came up the gravel walk between the rose-bushes, that my heart was not in my mouth as it should have been according to convention. In fact, the sun was uncomfortable, and I mopped my brow and decided that the roses stood in need of trimming. And really, you know, I had seen brighter days, and fairer views, and the world in more beautiful moods.

And when Hester stood on the veranda and held out her hands, my heart did not leap as though it were going to part company with me. Nor was I dizzy with — rapture, I believe. Nor did all the world vanish, and everything blot out, and leave only Hester standing there, lips curved and arms outstretched in welcome. Oh, I saw the curved lips and outstretched arms, and all the splendid young womanhood swaying there, and I was pleased and all that; but I did not think it too wonderful and impossible and miraculous and the rest of the fond rubbish I am sure poor Bidwell thinks when his eyes are gladdened by his ordinary sort of girl when he calls upon her.

What a comely young woman, is what I thought as I pressed Hester's hands; and none of the ordinary sort either. She has health and strength and beauty and youth, and she will certainly make a most charming wife and excellent mother. Thus I thought, and then we chatted, had lunch, and passed a delightful afternoon together — an afternoon such as I might pass with you, or any good comrade, or with my wife.

All of which rational rightness is, I know, distasteful to you, Dane. And I confess I depict it with brutal frankness, failing to give credit to the gentler, tenderer side of me. Believe me, I am very fond of Hester. I respect and admire her. I am proud of her, too, and proud of myself that so fine a creature should find enough in me to be willing to mate with me. It will be a happy marriage. There is nothing cramped or narrow or incompatible about it. We know each other well — a wisdom that is acquired by lovers only after marriage, and even then with the likelihood of it being a painful wisdom. We, on the other hand, are not blinded by love madness, and we see clearly and sanely and are confident of our ability to live out the years together.

Herbert.

VIII

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
December 11, 19 — .

I have been thinking about your romance and my rational rightness, and so this letter.

"*One loves because he loves: this explanation is, as yet, the most serious and most decisive that has been found for the solution of this problem.*" I do not know who has said this, but it might well have been you. And you might well say with Mlle. de Scudéri: "*Love is — I know not what: which comes — I know not when: which is formed — I know not how: which enchants — I know not by what: and which ends — I know not when or why*."

You explain love by asserting that it is not to be explained. And therein lies our difference. You accept results; I search for causes. You stop at the gate of the mystery, worshipful and content. I go on and through, flinging the gate wide and formulating the law of the mystery which is a mystery no longer. It is our way. You worship the idea; I believe in the fact. If the stone fall, the wind blow, the grass and green things sprout; if the inorganic be vitalised, and take on sensibility, and perform functions, and die; if there be passions and pains, dreams and ambitions, flickerings of infinity and glimmerings of Godhead — it is for you to be smitten with the wonder of it and to memorialise it in pretty song, while for me remains to classify it as so much related phenomena, so much play and interplay of force and matter in obedience to ascertainable law.

There are two kinds of men: the wonderers and the doers; the feelers and the thinkers; the emotionals and the intellectuals. You take an emotional delight in living; I an intellectual delight. You feel a thing to be beautiful and joyful; I seek to know why it is beautiful and joyful. You are content that it is, no matter how it came to be; I, when I have learned why, strive that we may have more beautiful and joyful things. "The bloom, the charm, the smile of life" is all too wonderful for you to know; to me it is chiefly wonderful because I may know.

Oh, well, it is an ancient quarrel which neither you nor I shall outlive. I am rational, you are romantic, — that is all there is to it. You are more beautiful; I am more useful; and though you will not see it and will never be able to see it, you and your beauty rest on me. I came into the world before you, and I made the way for you. I was a hunter of beasts and a fighter of men. I discovered fire and covered my nakedness with the skins of animals. I builded cunning traps, and wove branches and long grasses and rushes and reeds into the thatch and roof-tree. I fashioned arrows and spears of bone and flint. I drew iron from the earth, and broke the first ground, and planted the first seed. I gave law and order to the tribe and taught it to fight with craft and wisdom. I enabled the young men to grow strong and lusty, and the women to find favour with them; and I gave safety to the women when their progeny came forth, and safety to the progeny while it gathered strength and years.

I did many things. Out of my blood and sweat and toil I made it possible that all men need not all the time hunt and fish and fight. The muscle and brain of every man were no longer called to satisfy the belly need. And then, when of my blood and sweat and toil I had made room, you came, high priest of mystery and things unknowable, singer of songs and seer of visions.

And I did you honour, and gave you place by feast and fire. And of the meat I gave you the tenderest, and of the furs the softest. Need I say that of women you took the fairest? And you sang of the souls of dead men and of immortality, of the hidden things, and of the wonder; you sang of voices whispering down the wind, of the secrets of light and darkness, and the ripple of running fountains. You told of the powers that pulsed the tides, swept the sun across the firmaments, and held the stars in their courses. Ay, and you scaled the sky and created for me the hierarchy of heaven.

These things you did, Dane; but it was I who made you, and fed you, and protected you. While you dreamed and sang, I laboured sore. And when danger came, and there was a cry in the night, and women and children huddling in fear, and strong men broken, and blare of trumpets and cry of battle at the outer gate — you fled to your altars and called vainly on your phantoms of earth and sea and sky. And I? I girded my loins, and strapped my harness on, and smote in the fighting line; and died, perchance, that you and the women and children might live.

And in times of peace you throve and waxed fat. But only by our brain and blood did we men of the fighting line make possible those times of peace. And when you throve, you looked about you and saw the beauty of the world and fancied yet greater beauty. And because of me your fancy became fact, and marvels arose in stone and bronze and costly wood.

And while your brows were bright, and you visioned things of the spirit, and rose above time and space to probe eternity, I concerned myself with the work of head and hand. I employed myself with the mastery of matter. I studied the times and seasons and the crops, and made the earth fruitful. I builded roads and bridges and moles, and won the secrets of metals and virtues of the elements. Bit by bit, and with great travail, I have conquered and enslaved the blind forces. I builded ships and ventured the sea, and beyond the baths of sunset found new lands. I conquered peoples, and organised nations and knit empires, and gave periods of peace to vast territories.

And the arts of peace flourished, and you multiplied yourself in divers ways. You were priest and singer and dancer and musician. You expressed your fancies in colours and metals and marbles. You wrote epics and lyrics — ay, as you to-day write lyrics, Dane Kempton. And I multiplied myself. I kept hunger afar off, and fire and sword from your habitation, and the bondsmen in obedience under you. I solved methods of government and invented systems of jurisprudence. Out of my toil sprang forms and institutions. You sang of them and were the slave of them, but I was the maker of them and the changer of them.

You worshipped at the shrine of the idea. I sought the fact and the law behind the fact. I was the worker and maker and liberator. You were conventional. Tradition bound you. You were full bellied and content, and you sang of the things that were. You were mastered by dogma. Did the Mediæval Church say the earth was flat, you sang of an earth that was flat, and danced and made your little shows on an earth that was flat. And you helped to bind me with chains and burn me with fire when my facts and the laws behind my facts shook your dogmas. Dante's highest audacity could not transcend a material inferno. Milton could not shake off Lucifer and hell.

You were more beautiful. But not only was I more useful, but I made the way for you that there might be greater beauty. You did not reck of that. To you the heart was the seat of the emotions. I formulated the circulation of the blood. You gave charms and indulgences to the world; I gave it medicine and surgery. To you, famine and pestilence were acts of providence and punishment of sin: I made the world a granary and drained its cities. To you the mass of the people were poor lost wretches who would be rewarded in paradise or baked in hell. You could offer them no earthly happiness of decency. Forsooth, beggars as well as kings were of divine right. But I shattered the royal prerogatives and overturned the thrones of the one and lifted the other somewhat out of the dirt.

Nor is my work done. With my inventions and discoveries and rational enterprise, I draw the world together and make it kin. The uplift is but begun. And in the great world I am making I shall be as of old to you, Dane. I, who have made you and freed you, shall give you space and greater freedom. And, as of old, we shall quarrel as when first you came to me and found me at my rude earth-work. You shall be the scorner of matter, and I the master of matter. You may laugh at me and my work, but you shall not be absent from the feast nor shall your voice be silent. For, when I have conquered the globe, and enthralled the elements, and harnessed the stars, you shall sing the epic of man, and as of old it shall be of the deeds I have done.

Herbert.

IX

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

3a Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
December 28, 19 — .

The curtain is rung down on an illusion, but it rises again on another, this time, as before, with the look of the absolute Good and True upon it. It is because we are at once actor and spectator that we find no fault with blinking sight and slothful thought. We are finite branded and content, except during the shrill, undermining moments when the orchestra is tuning up. “Thus we half-men struggle.”

I follow your letter and wonder whether your illusions have qualities of beauty which escape me. I give you the benefit of every doubt which it is possible for me to harbour with regard to my own system of illusions. You glorify the crowd practical. You attach yourself to the ranks that carried thought into action. You inspire yourself with rugged strength by dwelling on the achievements of ruggedness, forgetting that the progress of the world is not marshalled by those who work with line and rule. It was not his crew, but Columbus, who discovered America. The crew stood between the Old and the New, as indeed the crew always does. Between the idealist and his hope were hosts of practical enemies whom he had to subdue before he reached land. But I must not fall into your mistake of dividing men into categories. Men are not either intellectual or emotional; they are both. It is a rounded not an angular development which we follow. Feeling and thinking are not mutually exclusive, and the great personality feels deeply because he thinks highly, feels keenly because he sees widely. Common sense is not incompatible with uncommon sense, evil does not of necessity attend beauty, nor weakness the strength of genius.

I shall sing of the deeds you have done if your deeds are worthy of song. I shall sing a Song of the Sword, too, should the sword “thrust through the fatuous, thrust through the fungous brood.” Whatever helps the races to better life sings itself into racial lore, and I alone shall not refuse the tribute. When you come to see that the Iliad is as great a gift to the race as the doings of Achilles, that the Iliads are more significant than the doings they celebrate, you will cease to classify men into doers and singers. You will cease to dishonour yourself in the eyes of the singers with the hope that in so doing you gain somewhat elsewhere.

Professor Bidwell is in love and it interferes with his work. You have the advantage of him there, no doubt. However, you lose more than you gain. You have shattered the dream and have awakened. To what? What is this reality in which your universe is hung? Where shine the stars of your scientific heaven? By the beauty of your dreaming alone, Herbert, shall you be judged and known. You dream that you have learned the lesson, solved the problem, pierced the mystery, and become a prophet of matter. But matter does not include spirit, so the motif of your dream grows all confused. Your race epic omits the race. You sing the branch and the leaf rather than the sunlit and tenebral wood. Bidwell thinks his ordinary sort of girl a "lyric love, half angel and half bird, and all a wonder and a wild desire." Bidwell exaggerates, perhaps, but unless he feels this for his wife, he has no wife. Barbara obeyed the voice of her heart. That sounds sentimental, but it is none the less a courageous thing to do. I was inconsistent enough to be sorry because she loved a crippled man. Bidwell and Barbara are wiser and happier than you can be, Herbert, than you from whose hand the map of Parnassus Hill has been filched.

Is there one state of consciousness better than another? I think yes. Better to have long, youthful thoughts and to thrill to vibrant emotions than to grovel sluggishly; better to hope and dream and aspire and sway to great harmonies than to be blind and deaf and dumb — better for the type, better for the immortality of the world's soul. This to me is a vital thought, therefore life or death is in the issue. For the rest I know not. By the glimmer of light lent me, I can but guess greatness and descry vagueness. You go further and would touch the phantasmagorial veil. "Right!" I say, and I pray, "Godspeed." But there must be intensity. Are you thrilled? Do you stretch out your arms and dream the beauty? It is only when you gaze into a reality empty of the voices of life that I would wake you to bid you dream better.

Well, Herbert, I have quarrelled with you and shall to the end, I promise. I wish I could take you away, hide you from your Hester's sight, and pour my poetic spleen out on you. Oh, I shall torment you into reason and passion! Whatever you may choose to be, you are my son. I must take you and keep you as you are, of course, but I choose to tell the truth to you though I do love you and hold you mine. Disagreeable of me, but how else?

Dane.

X

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

London.
Sunday, January 1, 19 — .

Behold, I have lived! I press your face to the breathing, stinging roses of my days, and bid you drink in the sweet and throb with the pain. What is my philosophy but a translation of the facts which have stamped me? Perhaps if I let you read these facts, you will the sooner come to share my consecration and my faith. I must teach you to know that you are the fact of my whole tangled web of facts, and that all that I have and am, and all that might have been I and mine, stretches itself out in the unmarked path which is before you.

I take you back with me to the road, white with dust, upon which like a Viking and like a feeble girl I have travelled. It is not long, but how many paths, what byways and what turns! What sudden glimpses of sea and sky, what inaccessibleness! Hark, from the wood on either side murmurings of hope and hard sobbing of despair, young laughter of joy and aged renunciations! See from amongst the pines the farewell gleam of a white hand. All of it dear — dearly bought and precious and miraculous, the heartache even as the gladness.

“Life is worth living
Through every grain of it,
From the foundations
To the last edge
Of the cornerstone, death.”

Ay, through every grain of it. Even that morning in the wood, thirty years ago, when your mother put her hand in mine and looked a great pity into my eyes. Indeed, she loved me well, but romance shone on the brow of John Wace. For her his face was sunlit, and she needs must take it between her hands and hold it forever. He was her Siegfried, her master. Thus the gods decreed, and we three obeyed. What else was there to do? We must be honest before all, and Ellen did not love me any more, and I must know it, and wipe out a past of deepest mutuality, and strengthen and console and restore the woman whose hand held mine while her eyes were turned elsewhere.

Before that bright, black summer morning which saw me woman-pitied, I knew I should have to renounce her. Their souls rushed together in their first meeting. John had been away, knocking about museums and colleges, and carrying on tempestuous radical work. He was splendidly picturesque. I was a youth of twenty-three, almost ten years his junior, a boy full of half-defined aims and groping powers, reaching toward what he had firm in his grasp. Ellen talked of his coming, and she planned that she should meet this my one friend in the environment she loved best — in my rooms, whose atmosphere, she declared, belonged to an earlier time and place. (She found in me Nolly Goldsmith and all of Grub Street.) So they met at the tea-table in my study, and a great warmth stole over your father. He spoke without looking at either of us, while Ellen looked as if her destiny had just begun.

Without, it rained. I strode to the window and in a dazed way stared at the lamp-post which was sticking out its flaming little tongue to the night. Why was I mocked? There was no mocking and there should have been no bitterness. Of that there was none either, after a while.

Ellen put her hand on my hair, and a strong primal emotion rose in me. In that moment civilisation was as if it had not been. I reverted to the primitive. The blood of forgotten ancestors, cave-men and river-men, reasoned me my ethics. I turned to her, met her flushed cheeks and moved being and the glory of dawning in her eyes. I measured my strength with hers and your father's, Herbert. Easily, great strength was mine in my passion, easily I could carry her off!

You, too, have had moments of upheaval when you heard the growling of the tiger and the bear, when the brute crowded out the man. Then your soul writhed in derision, you scoffed at that which you had held to be the nobility of the soul, and you minced words satirically over the exquisiteness of the type which we have evolved. Then the experiment of life turned farce, the heavens fell about your ears and "Fool!" was upon your lips. Oh, the hurricane that sweeps over the soul when it is cheated of its joy! In the first instant of Ellen's indifference, when I felt myself pushed out of her life, I forgot everything but my desire. I could not renounce her. I was in the throes of the passion for ownership.

Gentle girl between whom and myself there had been naught but sweetness and fellowship! How often had we talked large (we were very young!) of our sublimities and potentialities, how often had we pictured tragedies of surrender and greatened in the speaking! Ah, it should come true. For her and for me there must be miracles, and there were. So was the strength of the spirit proven, so was it shown to be “pure waft of the Will.” So was I confirmed in the creed which believes that to keep we must lose, and to live we must die. So was I assured that there may be but one way, and that, the way of service.

I did not grip her passionately in my arms. I withdrew; I did much to make her task of leaving me an easy one. Were it not for my efforts, it would have been harder for her to obey a mandate which made for my pain. She could not quite drown an old, Puritan voice, speaking with the authority of tradition, which bade her hold to her vows. Yes, I made it easy for her. Harrow my soul with theories of selection and survival if you dare!

In those days the spires of the temple were golden, the shrine white. The door was seen from every point in the fog-begirt world. We who worshipped knew not of doubt. Stirred by the rumbling organ tones of causes and ideas, we immolated our lives gladly. High priests of thought, we swung the censers and rose on the breast of the incense. Ellen and John and myself glorified God and enjoyed Him forever, — God, the Type, the Final Humanity, the giant Body Soul of man. In our hearts dwelt a religion which compelled us to serve the ideal. We strove to become what organically we felt the “Human with his drippings of warm tears” may become. We were the standard-bearers of the advancing margin of the world. We were the high-water mark toward which all the tides forever make. We were soldiers and priests.

And so when Ellen loved, and lacked courage for her love, I helped her. A past of kindness and ardour riveted her to my side. She knew that we were in feeling and fact divorced from each other by virtue of her stronger love for John, yet did she do battle with the rich young love. For two years we had been close; she had been so much my friend, she could not in maiden charity seal for me a so unwelcome fate. I had awakened her slumbering soul with my first look into the sphinx wonder of her eyes. For me she had become fire and dew, flame of the sun, and flower of the hill. Without me to help her do it she could not leave me.

To the master of matter this coping with spiritual abstractions must appear like juggling with intellectual phantasmagoria. Yet I protest that life is finally for intangible triumphs. Unnamed fragrances steal upon the senses and the soul revels and greatens. Unseen hands draw us to worlds afar, and we are gathered up in the dignity of the human spirit. Unknown ideas attract and hold us, and we take our place in the universe as intellectual factors. In giving up Ellen I helped her, and, sacredly better still, I sent on into a world of vague thinking and weak acting the impulse of devotion to revealed truth.

She had a sweet way of sitting low and resting her head on my knee. She sat through one whole day with me thus, and for hours I could have thought her asleep were it not for the waves of feeling which surged in her upturned face. Toward the end she raised her head, ecstasy in her eyes and on her cheek and lip. “Dane, I love you. Dane! Dane!” The whole of me was caught up in the accents of that tremulousness. She had know John three months; but her love for him was young, it had come unexpectedly, it was still unexpressed and ineffable. Her yearning for him led to softness toward me, and though she rose out of her mood as one does from a dream, the hours when we were like the angels, all love and all speech, were mine. So much was vouchsafed me.

Memories and echoes, gusts of sweet breath from the violets on your mother’s grave — the prophet of matter will have none of them, and, I fear, will pity me that I am so much theirs. I am yours also, dear lad, and I wish to serve you.

Dane Kempton.

XI

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
January 20, 19 — .

I do not know whether to laugh or weep. I have just finished reading your letter, and I can hardly think. Words seem to have lost their meaning, and words, used as you use them, are without significance. You appear to speak a tongue strangely familiar, yet one I cannot understand. You are unintelligible, as, I dare say, I am to you.

And small wonder that we are unintelligible. Our difference presents itself quite clearly to the scientific mind, and somewhat in this fashion: Man acquires knowledge of the outer world through his sensations and perceptions. Sensation ends in sentiment, and perception ends in reason. These are the two sides of man’s nature, and the individual is determined and ruled by whichever side in him happens to be temperamentally dominant. I have already classed you as a feeler, myself as a thinker. This is, I *think* true. You, I am confident, *feel* it to be true. I reason why it is true. You accept it on faith as true, lose sight of the argument forthwith, and proceed to express it in emotional terms — which is to say that you take it to heart and feel badly because it happens to be so.

You feign to know this modern scientific slang, and you are contemptuous of it because you do not know it. The terms I use freight no ideas to you. They are sounds, rhythmic and musical, but they are not definite symbols of thought. Their facts you do not grasp. For instance, the prehensile organs of insects, the great toothed mandibles of the black stag-beetle, the amorous din of the male cicada and the muteness of his mate — these are facts which you cannot relate, one with the other, nor can you generalise upon them. Let me add to these related characters, and you cannot discern the law which is alike to all. What to you the fluttering moth, decked in gold and crimson, brilliant, iridescent, splendid? The beauty of it bids you bend to deity, otherwise it has no worth; it is a stimulus to religion, and that is all. So with the glowing incandescence of the stickleback and its polished scales of silver. What make you of the hoarse voice of the gorilla? Is not the dewlap of the ox inscrutable? the mane of the lion? the tusks of the boar? the musk-sack of the deer? In the amethyst and sapphire of the peacock's wing you find no rationality; to you it is a manifestation of the wonder which is taboo. And so with the cock bird, displaying his feathered ruffs and furbelows, dancing strange antics and spilling out his heart in song.

I, on the other hand, dare to gather all these phenomena together, and find out the common truth, the common fact, the common law, which is generalisation, which is Science. I learn that there are two functions which all life must perform: Nutrition and Reproduction. And I learn that in all life, the performance, according to time and space and degree, is very like. The slug must take to itself food, else it will perish; and so I. The slug must procreate its kind, or its kind will perish; and so I. The need being the same, the only difference is in the expression. In all life come times and seasons when the individuals are aware of dim yearnings and blind compulsions and masterful desires. The senses are quickened and alert to the call of kind. And just as the fish and the reptile glimmeringly adumbrate man, so do these yearnings and desires adumbrate what man in himself calls "love," spelled all out in capitals. I repeat, the need is the same. From the amœba, up the ladder of life to you and me, comes this passion of perpetuation. And in yourself, refine and sublimate as you will, it is none the less blind, unreasoning, and compelling.

And now we come to the point. In the development of life from low to high, there came a dividing of the ways. Instinct, as a factor of development, had its limitations. It culminated in that remarkable mechanism, the bee-swarm. It could go no farther. In that direction life was thwarted. But life, splendid and invincible, not to be thwarted, changed the direction of its advance, and reason became the all-potent developmental factor. Reason dawned far down in the scale of life; but it culminates in man and the end is not yet.

The lever in his arm he duplicates in wood and steel; the lenses in his eyes in glass; the visual impressions of his brain on chemically sensitised wood-pulp. He is able, reasoning from events and knowing the law, to control the blind forces and direct their operation. Having ascertained the laws of development, he is able to take hold of life and mould and knead it into more beautiful and useful forms. Domestic selection it is called. Does he wish horses which are fast, he selects the fastest. He studies the physics of velocity in relation to equine locomotion, and with an eye to withers, loins, hocks, and haunches, he segregates his brood mares and his stallions. And behold, in the course of a few years, he has a thoroughbred stock, swifter of foot than any ever in the world before.

Since he takes sexual selection into his own hands and scientifically breeds the fish and the fowl, the beast and the vegetable, why may he not scientifically breed his own kind? The fish and the fowl and the beast and the vegetable obey dim yearnings and vague desires and reproduce themselves. “Poor the reproduction,” says Man to Mother Nature; “allow me.” And Mother Nature is thrust aside and exceeded by this new creator, this Man-god.

These yearnings and desires of the beast and the vegetable are the best tools nature has succeeded in devising. Having devised them, she leaves their operation to the blindness of chance. Steps in man and controls and directs them. For the first time in the history of life conscious intelligence forms and transforms life. These yearnings and desires, promptings of the “abysmal fecundity,” have in man evolved into what is called “love.” They arise in instinct and sensation and culminate in sentiment and emotion. They master man, and the intellect of man, as they master the beast and all the acts of the beast. And they operate in the development of man with the same blindness of chance that they operate in the development of the beast.

Now this is the law: *Love, as a means for the perpetuation and development of the human type, is very crude and open to improvement. What the intellect of man has done with the beast, the intellect of man may do with man*.

It is a truism to say that my intellect is wiser than my emotions. So, knowing the precise value and use of this erotic phenomenon, this sexual madness, this love, I, for one, elect to choose my mate with my intellect. Thus I choose Hester. And I do truly love her, but in the intellectual sense and not the sense you fanatically demand. I am not seized with a loutish vertigo when I look upon her and touch her hand. Nor do I feel impelled to leave her presence if I would live, as did Dante the presence of Beatrice; nor the painful confusion of Rousseau, when, in the same room with Madame Goton, he seemed impelled to leap into the flaming fireplace. But I do feel for Hester what happily mated men and women, after they have lived down the passion, feel in the afternoon of life. It is the affection of man for woman, which is sanity. It is the sanity of intercourse which replaces love madness; the sanity which comes upon sparrows after the ardour of mating, when they leave off wrangling and chattering and set soberly to work to build their nest for the coming brood.

Pre-nuptial love is the madness of non-understanding and part-understanding. Post-nuptial affection is the sanity of complete understanding; it is based upon reason and service and healthy sacrifice. The first is a blind mating of the blind; the second, a clear and open-eyed union of male and female who find enough in common to warrant that union. In a word and in the fullest sense of the word, it is sex comradeship. Pre-nuptial love cannot survive marriage any considerable time. It is doomed inexorably to flicker out, and when it has flickered out it must be replaced by affection, or else the parties to it must separate. We well know that many men and women, unable to build up affection on the ruins of love, do separate, or if they do not, continue to live together in cold tolerance or bitter hatred.

Now, Hester is my mate. We have much in common. There is intellectual, spiritual, and physical affinity. The caress of her voice and the feel of her mind are pleasurable to me; likewise the touch of her hand (and you know that in the union of man and woman the higher affinities are not possible unless there first be physiological affinity). We shall go through life as comrades go, hand in hand, Hester and I; and great happiness will be ours. And because of all this I say you have no right to challenge my happiness, and vex my days, and feel for me as one dead.

My dear, bewildered Dane, come down out of the clouds. If I am wrong, I have gone over the ground. Then do you go over that ground with me and show where I am wrong. But do not pour out on me your romantic and poetic spleen. Confine yourself to the Fact, man, to the irrefragable Fact.

Herbert.

Ah, your later letter has just arrived. I can only say that I understand. But withal, I am pained that I am not nearer to you. These intellectual phantasmagoria rise up like huge amorphous ghosts and hold me from you. I cannot get through the mists and glooms to press your hand and tell you how dear I hold you. Do, Dane, do let us cease from this. Let us discuss no further. Let me care for Hester in my own way so long as I do no sin and harm no one; and be you father to us, and bless us who else must go unblessed. For Hester, also, is fatherless and motherless, and you must be to her as you are to me.

Herbert.

XII

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
3a Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
February 10, 19 — .

So we have got into an argument! I have been poring over your last two or three letters, and they read like a set of briefs for a debate. Doubtless mine have the same forensic quality. Our letters have become rebuttals, pure and simple. This discovery gave my pen pause for a week. It occurred to me that Walt Whitman must have meant didactic letters too, when he said of the fretters of our little world, “They make me sick talking of their duty to God.” Yet friend should speak to friend, should utter the word than which nothing is more sacred. “Let there be light, and there was light” — a ripple of light, and a flash, then the darkness broke and dispersed from the face of the waters. It was a trumpet-call of words bringing drama into a nebulous creation. Let the Word break up our night and let us not only grant, but avow the conviction it brings us, no matter what the consequence. Let us worship the irrefragable Fact.

You hold that marriage is an institution having for its purpose the perpetuation of the species, and that respect and affection are sufficient to bring two people into this most intimate possible relation. You also hold that the business of the world, pressing hard upon men, makes “love from their lives a thing apart,” and that this is as it should be. Your letters are an exposition and a defence of what I may loosely call the practical theory. You show that the world is for work and workers, and that life is for results as seen in institutions and visible achievements. I, on the other hand, maintain that it takes a greater dowry to marry upon than affection, and that men love as intensely and with as much abandon as women. People love in proportion to the depth of their natures, and the finest man in the world has an infinite capacity for giving and receiving love store. The spell is strongest upon the finest.

This, briefly, is what we have been saying to each other. You attack my idealism, call me dreamer, and accuse me of being out of joint with the time, which itself is rigorously in joint with the laws of growth. And I class you with the Philistine because of your exaggeration of practical values. I hold that it is gross to respect the fact tangible at the expense of the feeling ineffable.

In your last letter you exploit the theory of Nutrition and Reproduction with a charm and warmth which helps me see you as I have so long known you, and which tells me again that you are worth fighting for and saving. But to trace love to its biologic beginning is not to deny its existence. Love has a history as significant as that of life. When, eons ago, the primitive man looked at his neighbour and recognised him as a fellow to himself, consciousness of kind awoke and a cell was exploded which functioned love. When, through the ages, economic forces taught men the need of mutual aid, when everywhere in life the law of development charged men with leanings and desires and outreachings, then the sway of love began in life. What was subconscious became conscious, what, back in the past, was a mere adumbration gloried out in Aurora splendours. The love of a Juliet is the outgrowth of natural processes manifesting themselves everywhere down the scale, but it is also the gift of the last evolution, and it speaks to us from the topmost notch in the scale. The charm of morning rests on a Juliet's love because its hour is young and yet old, striking the time of the past and the future. It is thus that the hunger of the race and the passion of the race become in the individual the need for happiness. The need of the race and the need of the individual are at once the same and different.

What was the point of your letter? That sexual selection obtains? I grant it. That it is incumbent upon us as intelligent men and women to call to the aid of instinct our social wisdom? I grant and avow it. But our social wisdom insists that we obey the choices of instinct; our social wisdom is only another phase of our refinement, which, in impelling us to a love of the beautiful, does not the less impel us to love. Our social wisdom educates our taste without lessening our taste for the thing. "Love a beautiful person nobly, but be sure you love her," says our social wisdom with interesting tautology. Besides, you are a heretic to your own breed, Herbert. It is you who would forsake our present social wisdom, ruling modern men by laws which obtained in primitive life. It is you who steadily hark back to the past, and to states of consciousness which were but can never be again. The early facts of biology cannot include that which transcends them. To borrow from Ernest Seton Thompson, man is evolved with the lower orders in the same way that water is changed into steam, and the nature of the change, when it is effected, is as radical. Add a number of degrees of heat to water and it is still water. Let one degree be wanting to the necessary number, and the substance is still intact. Add the last degree, and water is no longer water. From water to steam is a radical change and a transformation.

You agree to improve upon the beasts of the fields and upon our own race in the past, and in this you go farther than you have need if marriage is for nothing else than to serve the instinct for perpetuation. You shew some respect for what is natural and instinctive, yet you say that all would be as well if individual choice had not prevailed, and men and women were "shuffled about." You draw up a cold programme for action in affairs of the spirit and formulate a code of procedure in matters of the heart.

I have a programme too. Mine does not break with nature. On the contrary, it obeys every instinct and listens to every call on the senses. My love begins in my biologic self, grows with my growth, takes its hues from visioned sunsets in corn-flower skies, its grace from swaying rivers of grain seen in dreams. It is for me what it is for fish and fowl, beast and vegetable. It is my passion for perpetuation, but it is also something as different from this as I am different from beast and vegetable. My love is "blind, unreasoning, and compelling," and for that I trust it. I do not conceive myself Man-god, therefore I do not say to Nature, "Allow me." I cannot be sure that when I say it in the case of the horse, who obeys like me "dim yearning and vague desires," I do not sacrifice him to a lust of my own. The lust for owning and spoiling is hard to cope with. Perhaps a purer time is near, when, upborne by a sense of the dignity of romance and the sacredness of life, man will refrain from laying rough hands on his mute brothers.

The romance which is my proof of the good of being does not rest on passion. The unclean fires that consume the loutish and degenerate are not of love. You quote instances of the hyperphysical and hysterical. The feeling that I would have you obey for your soul's sake and without which you are but half alive, is not the blind passion of an oversexed sentimentalism. Rousseau was never in love in his life, though to say it were to accuse him of perjury.

One word more. Do you wish to know why I care? I care because I know you to be of those who are capable of love. Probably it was one little twist in your development that has turned you into alien ways of thinking and living. Yes, and more than for this I care because you are the fulfilment of a sacred past. You are the son of my sacrifice and your mother's love.

I care very much indeed. I do not wish you to awake some terrible night to find that you had ended your romance before you had begun it. I vex your days and call you dead? It is because I know the life that is by the grace of God yours, and because I cannot bear to let you coffin it. Herbert, there is misery when the blood pales, and the tears dry up, and the flame of the heart sinks, and all that is left is a memory of a thought — a memory of very long ago when one was young and might have chosen to live.

I am sorry we darken the days for each other.

Your friend always,
Dane Kempton.

XIII

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

London,
3a Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
February 12, 19 — .

Barbara and Earl celebrated their anniversary yesterday. Invitations were sent out, the guests consisting of Melville and myself. “Anniversary of what?” we asked. For answer we received inscrutable smiles. Birthdays are accidents of fate. You may regret the accident or you may be thick enough in illusion to rejoice over it, but you cannot in decency celebrate an occurrence wholly independent of personal control and yet concerning itself with you! Leave the merrymaking for appreciative friends. So rules Barbara. Not a birthday, then, nor the date of their marriage. The occasion was in some flash struck from Being, the memory of which enriches them, — in a mood that for an hour held them in strong grasp, in the utterance of a word charged with destiny, in the avowal of their love if their love awaited avowal. Whatever the cause, they honoured it with a will.

Barbara’s eyes flashed, her cheeks were sweetly suffused, and her voice was vibrant. Earl, too, was at his best. My heart loved this man who had lain all his life with death. His health is at its bad worst this winter, which fact made of the “Celebration” a rather heart-rending affair. He has been obliged to abandon the *Journal*, but we hope he can stay with the school. Meanwhile, his chronic invalidism of body and purse does not too much affect him. He keeps his charm of tenderness and strength. He rivets his pupils to him almost as he riveted his Barbara.

I have discovered my proof of this couple’s happiness. It is that I have always taken it for granted. Simple, is it not? And absolute. Often in their presence I catch myself imagining their mutual lives and seeing vaguely the graces that each brings to each. “How she must delight him!” I say. “How his eyes speak to her!” “They can never come to the end of each other,” and so on. The ordinary married couple so often brings a sense of distressed surprise: “How can these two foot it together?” “How did it happen?” “How can it go on?”

Last night counted to me. Your father and I have had such evenings, but I did not think I could do it all over again. We spoke with the fire (and conceit) of young students, exciting ourselves with expired theories, hoping old hopes, smarting under blows that perhaps had long ceased to fall. What then? What if we were ill-read in the facts? We could not have been wrong in the feeling. For the old hope that has been proven vain, a new; for the ancient hurt, a modern wrong, as great and as crying. It was good to feel that we had not grown too wise to harbour thoughts of change and redress, or too much ironed out with doctrine to be resigned. I confess it is long since I have eaten my heart in fury, in impatience, in wildness, but last night we awoke the radical in one another. We condemned the system. We placed ourselves outside the régime, refusing aught at its hands, registering our protest, hating the inordinate scheme of things only as hotly as we loved the juster Hand of a future time.

It is curious that we, offsprings of parvenue success, should be capable of such repudiation. Barbara accepts the Management without the trouble of a question. "What do you know? What do you know?" the girl demands, a radiant little angel in white, and a conservative. "You must know yourselves in the wrong, else would you smite your way through the world."

Ah, Barbara has yet to learn that it is hard to live. It is not so hard to fight, and it is easy to rest neutral, but to be fighter and bearer both, to stand staunch, holding ever to the issue, and yet, without tameness, to take rebuff and wait, there's the true course and the heroic. It is difficult when one has been conquered to know it. It is difficult to honour an outgrown ideal, which cost us, nevertheless, comfort and prestige — prizes which youth scorns and which oncoming age, pathetically enough, holds dear. It is difficult to pull up when driving too fast and too far, when galloping towards fanaticism, and it is impossible to whip oneself into passion and martyrdom. It is difficult to live, little Barbara.

For me it is also difficult to report a social function. At this one Browning presided, for Melville took up "Caponsacchi" and read it to us. That voice of his is in itself an interpretation, but Browning needs interpreting less than any other man who wrote great poems, because he wrote the greatest. It was four in the morning when the "O great, just, good God! Miserable me!" of the soldier-saint fell upon our ears. How we had listened! Earl steadily paced the floor, Barbara leaned her cheek upon my hand. Her soul was doing battle, and so was mine. We were all fighting the gallant fight. Read "Pompilia" and you are filled with reverence, read "Caponsacchi" and you are caught up by the spirit of action. You must rise and forth to burn your way like he, though you may have been too weary in spirit before to answer to your name when opportunity called roll.

It was Earl who broke the silence caused by the inner tumult. In a dreamy voice, his eyes very eager and intent, he told us how at one time he had gone up a hill that faced the house in which he lived. A hard rain was driving, he fell at every step up the slippery steepness, but at every step the beauty of it became more and more wondrous, hardly bearable. The little village sank lower and lower, and about him were soft hills, graceful and verdant, a stretch of water lying dark under the clouded sky, and the mountain gray and watchful in the distance. It was then, in the chill of a January rain, on an oak-clad hill of a western spot, that he recognised the dear features of the Mother, knew her his as hers he was, and loved her with passion. The sea is vast and wondrous, but it is alien. It holds you apart; it is not of you. But the gentle earth with her undulating form and the growing life in her lap, soothes with wordless harmonies. It was then that he forgave the fate which deformed him. A twisted oak, that is all — no less a tree and no less beautiful in the landscape! And it was sufficient to live. In the bosom of so much beauty sufficient also to die. As he stood, thinking it out, feeling the wonder and the glory, at times sorry for those who can see no longer the slanting sheets of rain and the grass at the feet, at times feeling that since this is good, in some impalpable way oblivion to all this may be also good, as he stood there, flushed with the climbing and sad with great joy, the thought came: With whom? It cannot be lived alone. With whom? He turned at the touch of an arm at his shoulder to meet the smile and the look and the quick breath of her who had sent herself his Eve.

In the dawn stealing over the world of London, Earl told the story, and there and then we saw it all — the hill in the heart of the hills, the reconciled boy who had climbed its brow, the rain-drenched woman hurrying to overtake him, with the gift of all of herself in her eyes. We looked neither at Barbara nor at Earl. Possessed of the secret, we spoke a few words and left. Our host had divulged what the anniversary sought to celebrate. We understood and were glad.

Good night, lad. Would you could have shared our heyday at the dawning!

Dane.

XIV

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
February 31, 19 — .

Love is a something that begins in sensation and ends in sentiment. Thanks to beautiful and permissible hyperbole, you have begun with sensation in your description of love, and have ended with sentiment. You have told me about love, in terms of love, which is a vain performance and unscientific. Now let me make you a definition. *Love is a disorder of mind and body, and is produced by passion under the stimulus of imagination.*

Love is a phase of the operation of the function of reproduction, and it occurs solely in man. Love, adhering to the common understanding of the term, is an emotional excitement which does not obtain among the lower animals. The lower animals lack the stimulus of imagination, and with them the passion for perpetuation remains a mere passion. But man has developed imagination. The pure sexual passion is glossed over and obscured by a cloud of fancies, mistaken yearnings, and distorted dreams. And so well is the real intent of the function obscured, that it is actually lost to him, especially during the period of love madness, so that there seems an apparent divorce between the parts which go to make up love, between passion and imagination.

The romantic lover of to-day (expressing sensation in terms of sentiment, and fondly imagining that he is reasoning) cannot reconcile his soul-exaltation with bodily grossness, cannot conceive that soul can turn body, and in the embrace of body tell out all the wonder of soul. To all sensitive and spiritual men and women come times of anguish and tears and self-revolt, when they are confounded and heart-broken by the physical aspect of love. Poor men and women! they suffer keenly and sincerely through lack of something more than a sentimental concept of love. To them, body and soul appear things apart, to be kept apart, lest the one contaminate the other. And in the end, loving well and truly, they prove their love by enduring, though unable ever quite to shake off the sense of sin and shame and personal degradation. They do not understand life, that is the trouble. The beast, lacking imagination, needs no rational rightness for the various acts of living, such as they need, and which they do not possess. Because of their unchecked and unbalanced imagination they mistake the half of life for the whole, and when forced to face the whole are affrighted and shocked. They do not reason that the need for perpetuation is the cause of passion; and that human passion, working through imagination and worked upon by imagination, becomes love.

And while I am in this vein, I may as well deny that a greater spiritual dowry than affection is required for marriage. (For that matter, I fail to see anything so spiritual in erotic phenomena.) If a man may achieve affection for a woman, without undergoing pre-nuptial madness, — if a man may take the short cut, as it were, — then I see no reason why he should not marry that woman. He is certainly justified, since affection is what romantic love must evolve into after marriage. But do not mistake me, Dane. I do not intend this sweepingly. It will not do for the whole human herd; for at once enters that abhorrent thing you rightly fear, the marriage for convenience. Alas, it too often masquerades under the guise of romantic love. Certainly, every man is not capable of taking this short cut and at the same time of avoiding a violation of true sexual selection. Having little brain, the average man can only act in line with sexual selection by undergoing the romantic love malady. But for some few of us, and I dare to include myself, the short cut is permissible. This short cut I shall take, and far be it from any worldly sense of stocks and bonds and comfortable housekeeping.

Marriage means less to man than to woman? Yes, by all means, at least to the normal man or woman. As surely as reproduction is woman's peculiar function, and nutrition man's, just so surely does marriage sum up more to woman than to man. It becomes the whole life of the woman, while to the man it is rather an episode, rather a mere side to his many-sided life. Natural selection has made it so. The countless men of the past, even from before the time they swung down out of the trees, who devoted more time and energy to their love-affairs than to the winning of food and shelter, died from innutrition in various ways. Only the men, normal men, with a proper respect for the mechanism of life, survived and perpetuated their kind. The chance was large that the abnormal lover did not win a wife at all. At least it is so to-day. The abnormal lover is not a successful bidder for women, and is usually passed by.

But while we are on this topic, do not let us forget Dante Alighieri, your prince of lovers. Has a suitable explanation ever occurred to you concerning how he came to marry Gemma, daughter of Manetto Donati, who bore him seven children, and was never once mentioned in the “Divina Commedia?” You remember what he said of his first meeting with Beatrice, “At that moment I saw most truly that the spirit of life which hath its dwelling in the secretest chambers of the heart began to tremble so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith.” And he later had seven children by Gemma, daughter of Manetto Donati, and whom, as the historian has recorded, “there was no reason to suppose other than a good wife.”

As for the primitive, I hark back to it because we are still very primitive. How many thousands years of culture, think you, have rubbed and polished at our raw edges? One, probably; at the best, not more than two. And that takes us back to screaming savagery, when, gross of body and deed, we drank blood from the skulls of our enemies, and hailed as highest paradise the orgies and carnage of Valhalla. And before that time, think you, how many thousands of years of savagery did we endure? and how many myriads of thousands in the long procession of life up from the first vitalised inorganic? Two thousand years are an extremely thin veneer with which to cover the many millions.

And further, our much-vaunted two thousand years of culture is a thing of the mind, an acquired character. We are not born with it. Each must gather it for himself after he is born, from the spoken and written words of his fellow and forerunners. Isolate a babe from all of its kind and it will never learn to speak, and without speech words, it can never think save in the concretest possible way. Yet it will possess all the brute instincts and passions — the raw edges which do constantly shove through the culture varnish of the civilised man.

Our culture is the last to come, the first to go. I have seen it go from a man in an hour, nay, on the instant. Our culture is nothing more than the accumulated wisdom of the race. It is not part of us, not a thing or attribute handed down from father to son. It is a something acquired in varying degree by each individual for himself. Yes, I do well to hark back to the primitive. It tells me where I am to-day and describes to me the world I am living in. You, Dane, are hyper-refined, or refined beyond the times. You are like the idealistic and advanced zealots, who, when such action would mean destruction, advise these United States to disarm in the face of the war-harnessed world.

But no more of this jerky letter. Soon I shall proceed to make my contention good. I shall show the higher part intellect plays in conjugal love, the control, restraint, forbearance, sacrifice. And I shall show that conjugal love is higher and finer than romantic love.

Herbert.

XV

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
3a Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
March 15, 19 — .

Clyde Stebbins was here an hour after your theories and definitions reached me. The fact that I had been reading treason against his sister made me pick my subjects a little too carefully for smooth conversation. Your letter, partly open, was on the table before us, and my eyes fell upon it often as I wondered what it would mean to Hester’s brother — if he could read it. I no longer think only of you.

I reject your definition of love. It is not a disorder of the mind and body, nor is it solely the instrument of reproduction. I reject and resent your distinction between the pre-nuptial and post-nuptial states of feelings. Further, I hold that marriage may not be based on affection alone, and I disagree with you that population is better than principle. Children need not be brought into the world at any cost.

Love is not a disorder, but a growth. There is spiritual as well as physical growth. Some men and women never grow up strong enough to love. Their development is arrested, or they are, from the beginning, poor creatures born of starvelings, and perhaps fated to give birth to pale, sapless beings like themselves. Others there are who love, and this is no ill chance, no disease of the mind and body calling for psychiater and physician. It is a strength, a becoming, a fulfilment. Let us reason from the effect to the cause. How does this madness manifest itself? Not in weakness. You never saw a man or woman in love who was the worse for it. The lover carries all things before him, and not for himself alone, but for a larger world than ever had been his. He who loves one must perforce love all the world and all the unborn worlds. This is the way life goes, which is another way of saying it is a scientific fact. That which makes men capable of consecration is not a disorder of the mind and body. It is the greatest of all forces, and it turns the wrangling and grabbing human creature into an inspired poet.

And the cause? The passion for perpetuation and the imagination. We agree. But there are other and more immediate needs than the need of perpetuation that call out love, needs that are peculiarly of the present, being bound up with the steady outreaching for help, for fellowship in the jerky journey through the universe. If love were no more than an instrument of reproduction, you would be right in maintaining that the fastidiousness I insist on is unnecessary and unnatural. If love were that and that alone, there would be no love, which is a paradox indeed.

"Because of our souls' yearning that we meet
And mix in soul through flesh, which yours and mine
Wear and impress, and make their visible selves, —
All which means, for the love of you and me,
Let us become one flesh, being one soul."

I dare a formula: In the beginning love arose in the passion for perpetuation; to-day, the passion for perpetuation arises in love. Just as we put ourselves in the way of natural selection, pitting the microcosm against the macrocosm in a passion of ethical feeling, just so do we reverse for ourselves processes that seem indeed to have all the force of law. This reversal is civilisation.

The lover is impelled to perpetuate himself in the Here and the Now. The law of life exacts from him the tribute of love. Imagination gives the lover the key to the object of his love. He enters and he beholds only the ideal which is hers; for him her clay self and the mere facts of her do not exist. The conditions of love are inherent in civilisation. When purpose is high and feeling rich, when "the everlasting possession of the good" is desired, then is heard the I Am of love.

Now to my definition. Negatively, love is not a disorder of the mind and body, not a madness, since it arises in the eternally most valuable, since it is the culmination of high processes, and since it makes for sanity of vision and strength and happiness. Positively, love is the awakening of the personality to the beauty and worth of some one being, caused by the passion for perpetuation and by imagination. It is a desire to hold to the good everlastingly, and to merge with it.

Aristotle proved to the satisfaction of his time that women have fewer teeth than men. Aristotle was a great man, and besides being a philosopher was the foremost scientist of his day. I cannot help thinking of this prodigious blunder. Perhaps (who knows?) the same famous fate which a sexual classification of teeth enjoys awaits a definition calling love a disorder.

I will continue to-morrow. A note has just been given me calling me to Earl, who is ill, but not seriously. Barbara has prescribed for him a game of chess. The desire to see you again has got into my blood. I think I shall be in the new West and with you before long.

Your friend always,
Dane Kempton.

XVI

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

London.
Sunday morning.

I must proceed with the three other points of my letter, so I shall stay here and write, though there is a sharp breeze this morning and a coquettishly escaping sunlight, and something tugs at me to go out upon the city streets. It is not restlessness, but the love of the open. I am fain to leave a walled house, and, better still, to get outside of the walls within and join the city in friendship and let the city join me. I never feel greater fellowship than when I walk —

Except when I write to you. Then do I greaten with the pride of life. My sympathies quicken and I grow young again. I constitute myself advocate of the world, and enthusiasm does not fail me in this high calling. It is but natural that in the face of scepticism which I cannot share I should feel greater faith, that in the face of revilement a sense of the glory of the thing belittled should settle upon me. I turn zealot and spend myself in long-drawn praising. I lay myself under a spell of harmony because I am serving and defending and approving what I hold to be good.

So when you insist that romantic love is pre-nuptial and that it dies at marriage as others suppose it to die at the approach of poverty, I grow glad with the knowledge that this is not true. I scrutinize facts which I hitherto took for granted, and become doubly sure. You dogmatise when you say that the lover and the husband are mutually exclusive. If there was love in the beginning, it will be at the end. Love doubles upon itself. Propinquity tightens bonds and there is a steady blossoming of the character in a radiant atmosphere. The marriages that fail are the unions which are based on liking. In these, weariness must set in, for marriage demands that men and women be all in all to each other, and unless it be so with them, the lives of the “contracting parties” are, by the laws of logic, and by the force of the laws of delicacy in the art of living, forever spoilt.

Yes, and people who truly love come to regret their married love, these too. But these have at least begun well. Their lives are infinitely richer for this fact. Their failure itself is made by it more bearable than the failure of those others who act the vulgarian and demand so little of life that even that little escapes them. No world-stains on these who are, at least, would-be lovers. They stand mistaken but irreproachable. It was neither their fault nor love's, and "life more abundant" comes to them even with the mistake.

You are consistent. Just as you maintain that love is passion, so do you think that it is no more than a preliminary thrill. You note a change; the flutter and the excitement felt in the presence of the unknown go, and you do not know that they give place to the steadier joys of the unknown, that after the promise comes the fulfilment, that the hope is not more beautiful than the realisation, that there is divinity in both, and that love does not disappoint.

Tell me, are the placid marriages of affection you are preparing to describe so very placid? Do these jog along so well? Is the control, restraint, forbearance, sacrifice, of which you speak, as readily practised for the person who is that to you which twenty others may quite as easily be, as it is for the one beyond all whom you love and deify, whom the laws of your being command that you serve, living and dying? God knows, the average marriage does not exhibit a striking picture of the practice of these virtues! Rather are such phrases ideals on stilts on which suffering marital partners attempt to hobble across their extremity. On the other hand, to some extent everybody practises restraint and sacrifice since everybody is to some extent moral. But it goes very hard with your average man and woman in your average marriage, and there is a decided setting of the mouth and narrowing of the eyes with the effort.

Whatever placidity there is is attained by means of vampirism. Diderot, the husband of a stupid seamstress, had no right to the love of a Mlle. Voland. It was vampirism and sin to take all from this woman, and to return her favour with so much less than all, as surely as cowardice and selfishness are sin. But the illicit relation will exist because custom cannot rid men and women of subtle sympathies and dear yearnings, because men and women will love though the world consider it cheap and mad. Individually, we have no difficulty in finding our happiness, but we are made advance toward it through the twisted byways of an unfrank world. "No straight road! Keep turning!" has been the scream of convention since convention began.

So for every commonplace marriage there is a canonised love, and the story is told in the old Greek civilisation by the Hetairæ. You remember how it reads in the history: "The low position generally assigned the wife in the home had a most disastrous effect upon Greek morals. She could exert no such elevating or refining influence as she casts over the modern home. The men were led to seek social and intellectual sympathy and companionship outside the family circle, among a class of women known as Hetairæ, who were esteemed chiefly for their brilliancy of intellect. As the most noted representative of this class stands Aspasia, the friend of Pericles. The influence of the Hetairæ was most harmful to social morality." And the practice persisted through many a renaissance where Lauras and Beatrices were besung, down to the brilliant encyclopædists of the eighteenth century with their avowed loves, down to our Goethe and John Stuart Mill. All of these loves rose in very different motives and environments, yet were they the same fundamentally, — strong, sweet love between man and woman, very much spoiled by the fact that custom permitted the loveless marriage at the same time, but yet love which was good since it was the best that could be had. And when the historian permits himself to say, "The influence of the Hetairæ was most harmful to social morality," it is evident that he also thinks that a marriage which compels husband or wife to seek soul's help elsewhere than in their union is bad and wrong.

To-day there is a change in attitude. Woman is new-born in strength and dignity, and the highest chivalry the world has ever known is in blossom. She is an equal, a comrade, a right regal person. She is no longer a means but an end in herself, not alone fit to mother men but fit to live in equality with men. I repeat, she is not a means but an individual, with a soul of her own to rear. Because of the greater and more general emancipation of woman the subtlety of modern love has become possible.

Now for the last point, the question of perpetuation. Just as function precedes organ, so the love of life is inherent in the living for the maintenance of life. But even the primitive man, in whom instinct is strongest, proves himself capable of death. Some men have always been able to give up their lives for some cause. (Indeed there is thought to be suicide amongst animals.) And to-day we certainly no longer say a man must live. Quite as often must he die. Men have found it wise to die at the stake or on the gallows. If this be true of our relation to the life which courses through us, how much more true is it of our instinct to perpetuate ourselves, which pertains to the love of life biologically only, which is often, in the social manifestation of that instinct, a cold intellectual concept and never a dominating thought! We are not driven to procreate. In fact, every child born into the world competes hard for its morsel. Under our unimaginable economic régime all increase in population is a menace.

I call bringing children into the world a codfish act which causes an overflux of vulgar little earthlings, if the process be not humanised and spiritualised. If the child is conceived not in lust but in love, it is rightly born. If it is the child of your ideal, the offspring of that which is your truest life, then is your progeny your immortality, and then, and then only, have you reason for pride and joy in that which you have caused to be.

My dear, dear Herbert, my love has not failed. This you must come to understand. Love never fails. The children that might have been mine are better unborn, since I could not give them a mother whom I loved. You remind me that Dante married Gemma, daughter of Manetto Donati, and she bore him seven children. Yet, Herbert, was this wife not mentioned in the "Commedia," nor in "La Vita Nuova," nor anywhere else in his writings. Dante was a Conformist. He was not in all respects above his time; witness his theology. Convention permitted the dispassionate marriage side by side with love. He was conventional, and the infinite moment of meeting in paradise with his Lady was embittered by her "cold, lessoned smiles."

"Ah, from what agonies of heart and brain,
What exultations trampling on despair,
What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,
What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This mediaeval miracle of song!"

It was for Beatrice that this man vexed his spirit with immortal effort and raised a Titan voice which yet is heard in charmed echoes. It was for Beatrice that he descended into the dead regions and climbed the hills of purgatory and soared towards the Rose of Paradise, — "And 'She, where is She?' instantly I cried."

Dante, our prince of lovers, might have lived better, but he loved well.

This in answer to your letter. To meet your argument I have found it best to employ something of your own method, but I cannot rid myself of the feeling that I have vulgarised the subject by saying so much about it. I fear my letter would provoke a smile from those who know love and the wonder of its simplicity through all the subtlety. "We, in loving, have no cause to speak so much!" would be their unanswerable criticism. It is easier to live than to argue about life.

The thought has suddenly assailed me that what I have said may sound derogatory to Hester. Know, then, that I do not think there is a woman in the world who is not capable of inspiring true and abiding love in the heart of some man. Besides, Hester to me looms up as a heroine. Not a hair's breadth of what I know of her that is not beautiful. My regret is that she, who could be "a vision eterne," should be doomed to receive episodically your considerate affection. She does not know your programme. She is a girl who takes your love for granted in the same way as she gives hers, without niggardliness. It is the woman who cannot be content with less than all that is slowly starved to death on a bread-and-water diet and who does not find it out until the end.

Until the carnival time when you and Hester come to love each other, if that time is to be, you two must be as separate in deed as you are in fact. Forgive me and write soon.

Yours ever,
Dane.

XVII

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
April 2, 19 — .

So you have met Hester's brother? Well, I have had an outing with Hester. She loves me well, I know, and I cannot but confess a thrill at the thought. On the other hand, well do I know the significance of that love, the significance and the cause. Notwithstanding that wonderful soul of hers, she is in no wise constituted differently from her millions of sisters on the planet to-day. She loves — she knows not why; she knows — only that she loves. In other words, she does not reason her emotions.

But let us reason, we men, after the manner of men. And be thou patient, Dane, and follow me down and under the phenomena of love to things sexless and loveless. And from there, as the proper point of departure, let us return and chart love, its phases and occurrences, from its first beginnings to its last manifestations.

Things sexless and loveless! Yes, and as such may be classed the drops of life known as unicellular organisms. Such a creature is a tiny cell, capable of performing in itself all the functions of life. That one pulsating morsel of matter is invested with an irritability which, as Herbert Spencer says, enables it "to adjust the inner relations with outer relations," to correspond to its environment — in short, to live. That single cell contracts and recoils from the things in its environment uncongenial to its constitution, and the things congenial it draws to itself and absorbs. It has no mouth, no stomach, no alimentary canal. It is all mouth, all stomach, all alimentary canal.

But at that low plane the functions of life are few and simple. This bit of vitalised inorganic has no sex, and because of that it cannot love. Reproduction is growth. When it grows over-large it splits in half, and where was one cell there are two. Nor can the parent cell be called *mother* or *father*: and for that matter, the parent cell cannot be determined. The original cell split into two cells; one has as much claim to parenthood as the other.

It lives dimly, to be sure, this mote of life and light; but before it is a vast evolution, Dane, on the pinnacle of which are to be found men and women, Hester Stebbins, my mother, you!

A step higher we find the cell cluster, and with it begins that differentiation which has continued to this day and which still continues. Simplicity has yielded to complexity and a new epoch of life been inaugurated. The outer cells of the cluster are more exposed to environmental forces than are the inner cells; they cohere more tenaciously and a rudimentary skin is formed. Through the pores of this skin food is absorbed, and in these food-absorbing pores is foreshadowed the mouth. Division of labour has set in, and groups of cells specialise in the performance of functions. Thus, a cell group forms the skinny covering of the cluster, another cell group the mouth. And likewise, internally, the stomach, a sac for the reception and digestion of food, takes shape; and the juices of the body begin to circulate with greater definiteness, breaking channels in their passage and keeping those channels open. And, as the generations pass, still more groups of cells segregate themselves from the mass, and the heart, the lungs, the liver, and other internal organs are formed. The jelly-like organism develops a bony structure, muscles by which to move itself, and a nervous system —

Be not bored, Dane, and be not offended. These are our ancestors, and their history is our history. Remember that as surely as we one day swung down out of the trees and walked upright, just so surely, on a far earlier day, did we crawl up out of the sea and achieve our first adventure on land.

But to be brief. In the course of specialisation of function, as I have outlined, just as other organs arose, so arose sex-differentiation. Previous to that time there was no sex. A single organism realised all potentialities, fulfilled all functions. Male and female, the creative factors, were incoherently commingled. Such an individual was both male and female. It was complete in itself, — mark this, Dane, for here individual completeness ends.

The labour of reproduction was divided, and male and female, as separate entities, came into the world. They shared the work of reproduction between them. Neither was complete alone. Each was the complement of the other. In times and seasons each felt a vital need for the other. And in the satisfying of this vital need, of this yearning for completeness, we have the first manifestation of love. Male and female loved they one another — but dimly, Dane. We would not to-day call it love, yet it foreshadowed love as the food-absorbing pore foreshadowed the mouth.

As long and tedious as has been the development of this rudimentary love to the highly evolved love of to-day, just so long and tedious would be my sketch of that development. However, the factors may be hinted. The increasing correspondence of life with its environment brought about wider and wider generalisations upon that environment and the relations of the individual to it. There is no missing link to the chain that connects the first and lowest life to the last and the highest. There is no gap between the physical and psychical. From *simple reflex action*, on and up through *compound reflex action*, *instinct*, and *memory*, the passage is made, without break, to *reason*. And hand in hand with these, all acting and reacting upon one another, comes the development of the imagination and of the higher passions, feelings, and emotions. But all of this is in the books, and there is no need for me to go over the ground.

So let me sum up with an analysis of that most exquisite of poets' themes, a maiden in love. In the first place, this maiden must come of an ancestry mastered by the passion for perpetuation. It is only through those so mastered that the line comes down. The individual perishes, you know; for it is the race that lives. In this maiden is incorporated all the experience of the race. This race experience is her heritage. Her function is to pass it on to posterity. If she is disobedient, she is unfruitful; her line ceases with her; and she is without avail among the generations to come. And, be it not forgotten, there are many obedient whose lines *will* pass down.

But this maiden is obedient. By her acts she will link the past to the future, bind together the two eternities. But she is incomplete, this maiden, and being immature she is unaware of her incompleteness. Nevertheless she is the creature of the law of the race, and from her infancy she prepares herself for the task she is to perform. Hers is a certain definite organism, somewhat different from all other female organisms. Consequently there is one male in all the world whose organism is most nearly the complement of hers; one male for whom she will feel the greatest, intensest, and most vital need; one male who of all males is the fittest, organically, to be the father of her children. And so, in pinafores and pigtails, she plays with little boys and likes and dislikes according to her organic need. She comes in contact with all manner of boys, from the butcher's boy to the son of her father's friend; and likewise with men, from the gardener to her father's associates. And she is more or less attracted by those who, in greater or less degree, answer to her organic demand, or, as it were, organic ideal.

And upon creatures male she early proceeds to generalise. This kind of man she likes, that she does not like; and this kind she likes more than that kind. She does not know why she does this; nor, with the highest probability, does she know she is doing it. She simply has her likes and dislikes, that is all. She is the slave of the law, unwittingly generalising upon sex-impressions against the day when she must identify the male who most nearly completes her.

She drifts across the magic borderland to womanhood, where dreams and fancies rise and intermingle and the realities of life are lost. A dissatisfaction and a restlessness come upon her. There seems no sanity in things, and life is topsy-turvy. She is filled with vague, troubled yearnings, and the woman in her quickens and cries out for unity. It is an organic cry, old as the race, and she cannot shut out the sound of it or still the clamour in her blood.

But there is one male in all the world who is most nearly her complement, and he may be over on the other side of the world where she may not find him. So propinquity determines her fate. Of the males she is in contact with, the one who can more nearly give her the completeness she craves will be the one she loves.

All of which is well and good in its way, but let us analyze further. What is all this but the symptoms of an extreme over-excitation and nervous disorder? The equilibrium of the organism has been overthrown and there is a wild scrambling for the restoration of that equilibrium. The choice made may be good or ill, as chance and time may dictate, but the impelling excitement forces a choice. What if it be ill? What if to-morrow a male who is a far better complement should appear? The time is now. Nature is not neglectful, and well she knows the disaster of delay. She is prodigal of the individual and is satisfied with one match out of many mismatches, just as she is satisfied that of a million cod eggs one only should develop into a full-grown cod. And so this love of the human in no wise differs from that of the sparrow which forgets preservation in procreation. Thus nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on.

For the lesser creatures the trick serves the purpose well. There is need for a compelling madness, else would self-preservation overcome procreation and there be no lesser creatures. And man is content to rest coequal with the beast in the matter of mating. Notwithstanding his intelligence, which has made him the master of matter and enabled him to enslave the great blind forces, he is unable to perpetuate his species without the aid of the impelling madness. Nay, men will not have it otherwise; and when an individual urges that his reason has placed him above the beast, and that, without the impelling madness, he can mate with greater wisdom and potency, then the poets and singers rise up and fling potsherds at him. To improve upon nature by draining a malarial swamp is permitted him; to improve upon nature's methods and breed swifter carrier-pigeons and finer horses than she has ever bred is also permitted; but to improve upon nature in the breeding of the human, that is a sacrilege which cannot be condoned! Down with him! He is a brute to question our divine Love, God-given and glorious!

Ah, Dane, remember the first dim yearning of divided life, and the soils and smirches and frenzies put upon it by the spawn of multitudinous generations. There is your love, the whole history of it. There is no intrinsic shame in the thing itself, but the shame lies in that we are not greater than it.

Herbert.

XVIII

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
April 4, 19 — .

There were several things in your letter which I forgot to answer. Much of beauty and wonder is there in what you have said, and unrelated facts without end. Many of those facts I endorse heartily, but it seems to me you fail to embody them in a coherent argument.

I have stated, in so many words, that there are two functions common to all life — nutrition and reproduction. Of this you have missed the significance in your rejection of my definition of love, so I must explain further. Unless these two functions be carried on, life must perish from the planet. Therefore they are the most essential concerns of life. The individual must preserve its own life and the life of its kind. It is more prone to preserve its own life than the life of its kind, less prone to sacrifice itself for its species. So natural selection has developed a passion of madness which forces the individual to make the sacrifice. In all forms of life below man the struggle for existence is keen and merciless. The least weakness in an individual is the signal for its destruction. Therefore it is counter to the welfare of the individual to do aught that will tend to weaken it. On the other hand, the law is that the individual must procreate. But procreation means a weakening and a temporary state of helplessness. Problem: How may the individual be brought to procreate? to do that which is inimical to its welfare? Answer: It must be forced by something deeper than reason, and that something is unreasoning passion. Did the individual reason on the matter, it would certainly abstain. It is because the passion is not rational that life has persisted to this day. Man, coming up from the walks of lower life, brought with him this most necessary passion. Developing imagination, he commingled the two; love was the product.

Now, because of our imagination, do not let us confuse the issue. The great task demanded of man is reproduction. He is urged by passion to perform this task. Passion, working through the imagination, produces love. Passion is the impelling factor, imagination the disturbing factor; and the disturbance of passion by imagination produces love.

Stripped of all its superfluities, what function does love serve in the scheme of life? That of reproduction. Nay, now, do not object, Dane; for you state the same thing, though less clearly, in your own definition of love. You say, “Love is the awakening of the personality to the beauty and worth of some one being” and is a desire to merge the life with that of the beloved being. In other words, your definition tells that the passion for perpetuation is the cause of love, and perpetuation the end to be accomplished. Thus nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on.

Then you say negatively, “Love is not a disorder of mind and body, not a madness, since it arises in the eternally most valuable, since it is the culmination of high processes, and since it makes for strength and sanity of vision and happiness.” I have shown the value of passion, and the processes of which love is the culmination, and I have shown that both are unreasoning and why they are unreasoning. Do you demonstrate where I am wrong.

Then again, you dare a formula: “In the beginning love arose in the passion for perpetuation; to-day the passion for perpetuation arises in love.” It is clever, but is it true? Yes, as true as this formula I dare to pattern after yours: In the beginning man ate because he was hungry; to-day he is hungry because he eats.

There are many things more I should like to answer, but I am writing this ‘twixt breakfast and lecture hour, and time presses and students will not wait.

Herbert.

XIX

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
3a, Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.
April 22, 19 — .

Nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on, and I, overcivilised, decadent dreamer that I am, rejoice that the past binds us, am proud of a history so old and so significant and of an heritage so marvellous. Nature tricks her creatures and the race lives on, and I am prayerfully grateful. The difference between us is that you are not. You are suffering from what has been well called, the sadness of science. You accept the thesis of a common origin only to regret it. You discover that romance has a history, and lo! romance has vanished! You are a Werther of science, sad to the heart with a melancholy all your own and dropping inert tears on the shrine of your accumulated facts.

In this you are with your generation. Just as every age has its prevailing disease of the body so has it its characteristic spiritual ailment. To-day we are in the throes of travail. In our arms is the child of our ever-delving intellect, but another deliverance is about to be and the suffering is great. After science comes the philosophy of science. Our eyes are bathed in Revelation, but upon our ears the music of the Word has not yet fallen. Until that time when the meaning of it all shall flash out upon the world, the race will be hidebound in callousness and in faint-hearted melancholy. As yet we do not know what to do with all which we know, and we are afflicted with the pessimism of inertia and the pessimism of dyspepsia. Intellectually, we have been living too high the last hundred years or so. In this is the secret of our difference. You insist upon cheapening life for yourself because it has become evident to you that the phenomenon is common, and I, on the other hand, shout its glory because it is universal. To myself I am breathless with wonder, but to you and in my work I needs must shout it.

Here let me be clear. I take it that you are under the sway of a contemporary mood, that your position is an accidental phase of to-day's materialism. Broadly, our quarrel is that of pessimism and optimism, only your pessimism is unconscious, which makes it the more dangerous to yourself. You are too sad to know that you are not happy or to care. Does my diagnosis surprise you? Analyze the argument of your last letter. You trace the growth of the emotion of love from protoplasm to man. You follow the progress of the force which is stronger than hunger and cold and swifter and more final than death, from its potential state in the unicellular stage where life goes on by division, up through the multifarious forms of instinctive animal mating, till you reach the love of the sexes in the human world. And the exploring leads you to the belief that nothing has been reserved for the human worth his cherishing, to the conviction that the plan of life is simple and unvaried and therefore unacceptable.

You raise the wail of Ecclesiastes, "All is vanity and a striving after wind, and there is no profit under the sun." The Preacher and Omar and Swinburne are pathetically human, and we who are also human respond to their finality, to their quizzical indifference and their stinging resentment. We also say, "Vanity of vanities," and bow our heads murmuring "Ilicet," and stretch out our hands to "turn down an empty glass," but all this in twilight moods when a dimness as of dying rests upon the soul. There are a few with whom it is always morning, and others who remember something of the radiance of the young day even in the heart of midnight. These disprove the postulates of sameness and satiety, these are not smitten by the seen fact as are you of the microscopic retina, these "see life steadily and see it whole."

We need not fear the label of an idea. When I say that your position is that of the pessimist, it is not more of an accusation than if I said it was that of the optimist. The thing to concern oneself with is the question, "which of these makes the nearer approach to the truth?" You have been asking me, "What is love worth?" And you have answered your question often enough and to your satisfaction, "In itself it is worth nothing, being but the catspaw to scheming forces." With your denial of any intrinsic beauty in the emotion, with your acceptance of it as an unfortunate incident in human affairs, comes a vague hope that the race will outgrow this force. Here is your rift in the cloud. You picture a scientific Utopia where there are no lovers and no back-harkings to the primitive passion, and you appoint yourself pioneer to the promised land of the children of biology.

Ah! I speak as if I were vexed instead of simply being sure I am in the right. I wish to help you to see that there is another reading to your facts. If love is essentially the same from protoplasm to man, it does not for this reason become worthless. By virtue of being universal it is enhanced and most divinely humanly binding. You tell me that love is involuntary, compelled by external forces as old as time and as binding as instinct, and I say that because of this, life is finally for love. What! The cavemen, and the birds, too, and the fish and the plants, forsooth! What! The inorganic, perhaps, as well as the organic, swayed by this force which is wholly physical and yet wholly psychical! And does it not fire you? You are not caught up and held by this giant fact? You find that love is not sporadic, not individual, that it does not begin with you or end with you, that it does not dissociate you, and you do not warm to the world-organic kinship, you do not hear the overword of the poets and philosophers of all times, you do not see the visions that gladdened the star-forgotten nights of saints?

The same surprise sweeps over the mind in reading Ecclesiastes. Is it a sorry scheme of things that one generation goes and another comes and the world abides forever? If the same generation peopled the earth for a million years, the dignity of life would not be increased. It is not necessary to have the assurance of eternal life as the dole for having come to be, in order to live under the aspect of eternity. It is larger to be short-lived, to be but a wave of the sea rolling for one sunful day and starry night towards a great inclusiveness. It is a higher majesty to be inalien and a part — a ringed ripple in the Vastness — than to lie broad and smiling in meaningless endlessness.

So it is a strange thing that men who are schooled by evolution to relate themselves to all that exists, and to seek for new kinships, should lament that there is no new thing under the sun. And whose eye would be satisfied with seeing and whose ear with hearing? Who would rather have the truth than the power to seek it? There is a way of reading Ecclesiastes and Schopenhauer with a triumphant lilt in the voice. After all, it is the modulation that carries the message of the text. When you write the history of love, I find it fair reading. When you tell me love is primal and engrossing, I hold it the more a sin to crouch away from its fires.

“Love is the assertion of the will to live as a definitely determined individual.” This is Schopenhauer’s thesis and (unnecessarily enough) he apologises for it, as if it belittled love to say that it affects man in his *essentia æterna*. The genius of the race takes the lover conscript and makes him a soldier in life’s battalions.

"The genius of the race," a metaphysical term, but meaning what you do when you speak of the function of love. Schopenhauer is a pessimist consciously, you, unconsciously; and you have both missed the living value of your facts. "Love is ruled by race welfare," says Schopenhauer. "It (the race welfare) alone corresponds to the profoundness with which it is felt, to the seriousness with which it appears, to the importance which it attributes even to the trifling details of its sphere and occasion." Love concerns itself with "The composition of the next generation," therefore you find it common as the commonplace, therefore Schopenhauer regards it as a force treacherous to happiness, since to live is to be miserable. "These lovers are the traitors who seek to perpetuate the whole want and drudgery which would otherwise speedily reach an end; this they wish to frustrate as others like them have frustrated it before."

Because love frustrates the death of the race, it is the joy of my senses and the goal of my striving.

Says Schopenhauer: "Through love man shows that the species lies closer to him than the individual, and he lives more immediately in the former than in the latter. Why does the lover hang with complete abandon on the eyes of his chosen one, and is ready to make every sacrifice for her? *Because it is his immortal part that longs after her, while it is merely his mortal part that desires everything else.*" Because this is so, love is the God of my faith.

You see where our subject takes us! And all the while I care nothing for the points of argument except where they prick you from your position. One must scale the skies and swim the seas in order to reach you. Well, have I approached within your hearing?

I was sitting amongst the fennel in Barbara's garden when your letter was brought, and I read it twice to make sure I understood. When the sun lies warm on waving fennel and a city is before you, mysterious in a veil of mist, it is easier to feel love than to think about it. For a while, it was difficult to see the bearing of the data which you marshalled so well in defence of your denial. You went far in order to answer why you are content to marry a woman you do not love. Your methods are not the methods of the practical mind. I am glad for that. You idealise your attitude, you go far back in time, you enmesh yourself in theories and generalisations, you ride your imagination proudly, in order to reconcile yourself to something which suggests itself as more ideal than that for which the unreasoning heart hungers. You are sad, but you are not practical and you are not blasé.

Of Barbara, of myself, and of London doings, this is no time to write. Tell Hester your friend thinks of her.

Yours with great memories and greater hopes,

Dane Kempton.

XX

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
May 18, 19 — .

I stand aloof and laugh at myself and you. Oh, believe me, I see it very clearly myself in the heyday and cocksureness of youth, flinging at you, with much energy and little skill, my immature generalisations from science; and you with an elderly beneficence and tolerance, smiling shrewdly and affectionately upon me, secure in the knowledge that sooner or later I am sure to get through with it all and join you in your broad and placid philosophy. It is the penalty age exacts from youth. Well, I accept it.

So I am suffering from the sadness of science. I had been prone to ascribe my feelings to the passion of science. But it does not matter in the least — only, somehow, I would rather you did not misunderstand me so dreadfully. I do not raise the wail of Ecclesiastes. I am not sad, but glad. I discover romance has a history, and in history I am quicker to read the romance. I accept the thesis of a common origin, not to regret it, but to make the best of it. That is the key to my life — to make the best of it, but not drearily, with the passiveness of a slave, but passionately and with desire. Invention is an artifice man employs to overcome the roundabout. It is the short cut to satisfaction. It makes man potent, so that he can do more things in a span. I am a worker and doer. The common origin is not a despair to me; it has a value, and it strengthens my arm in the work to be done.

The play and interplay of force and matter we call “evolution.” The more man understands force and matter, and the play and interplay, the more is he enabled to direct the trend of evolution, at least in human affairs. Here is a great and weltering mass of individuals which we call society. The problem is: How may it be directed so that the sum of its happiness greatens? This is my work. I would invent, overcome the roundabout, seek the short cut. And I consider all matter, all force, all factors, so that I may invent wisely and justly. And considering all factors, I consider romance, and I consider you. I weigh your value in the scheme of things, and your necessity, and I find that you are both valuable and necessary.

But the history of progress is the history of the elimination of waste. One boy, running twenty-five machines, turns out a thousand pairs of socks a day. His granny toiled a thousand days to do the same. Waste has been eliminated, the roundabout overcome. And so with romance. I strive not to be blinded by its beauty, but to give it exact appraisal. Oftentimes it is the roundabout, the wasteful, and must needs be eliminated. Thus chivalry and its romance vanished before the chemist and the engineer, before the man who mixed gunpowder and the man who dug ditches.

I melancholy? Sir, I have not the time — so may I model my answer after the great Agassiz. I am not a Werther of science, but rather you are a John Ruskin of these latter days. He wept at the profanation of the world, at the steam-launches violating the sanctity of the Venetian canals and the electric cars running beneath the shadow of the pyramids; and you weep at the violation of like sanctities in the spiritual world. A gondola is more beautiful, but the steam-launch takes one places, and an electric car is more comfortable than the hump of a camel. It is too bad, but waste romance, as waste energy, must be eliminated.

Enough. I shall go on with the argument. I have drawn the line between pre-nuptial love and post-nuptial love. The former, which is the real sexual love, the love of which the poets sing and which "makes the world go round," I have called romantic love. The latter, which in actuality is sex comradeship, I call conjugal affection or friendship. To be more definite, I shall call the one "love," the other "affection" or "friendship." Now love is not affection or friendship, yet they are ofttimes mistaken, one for the other, for it so happens that the friendship, which is akin to conjugal affection, is in many instances pre-nuptial in its development — a token, I take it, of the higher evolution of the human, an audaciousness which dares to shake off the blind passion and evade nature's trick as man evaded when he harnessed steam and rested his feet. It is of common occurrence that a man and woman, through long and tried friendship, reach a fine appreciation of each other and marry; and the run of such marriages is the happiest. Neither blinded nor frenzied by the unreasoned passion of love, they have weighed each other, — faults, virtues, and all, — and found a compatibility strong enough to withstand the strain of years and misfortune, and wise enough to compromise the individual clashes which must inevitably arise when soul shares never ending bed and board with soul. They have achieved before marriage what the love-impelled man and woman must achieve after marriage if they would continue to live together; that is, they have sought and found compatibility before binding themselves, instead of binding themselves first and then seeking if there be compatibility or not.

Let me apparently digress for the moment and bring all clear and straight. The emotions have no basis in reason. We smile or are sad at the manifestation of jealousy in another. We smile or are sad because of the unreasonableness of it. Likewise we smile at the antics of the lover. The absurdities he is guilty of, the capers he cuts, excite our philosophic risibility. We say he is mad as a March hare. (Have you ever wondered, Dane, why a March hare is deemed mad? The saying is a pregnant one.) However, love, as you have tacitly agreed, is unreasonable. In fact, in all the walks of animal life no rational sanction can be found for the love-acts of the individual. Each love act is a hazarding of the individual's life; this we know, and it is only impelled to perform such acts because of the madness of the trick, which, though it strikes at the particular life, makes for the general life.

So I think there is no discussion over the fact that this emotion of love has no basis in reason. As the old French proverb runs, "The first sigh of love is the last of wisdom." On the other hand, the individual not yet afflicted by love, or recovered from it, conducts his life in a rational manner. Every act he performs has a basis in reason — so long as it is not some other of the emotional acts. The stag, locking horns with a rival over the possession of a doe, is highly irrational; but the same stag, hiding its trail from the hounds by taking to water, is performing a highly rational act. And so with the human. We model our lives on a basis of reason — of the best reason we possess. We do not put the scullery in the drawing-room, nor do we repair our bicycles in the bedchamber. We strive not to exceed our income, and we deliberate long before investing our savings. We demand good recommendations from our cook, and take letters of introduction with us when we go abroad. We overlook the petulant manner of our friend who rowed in the losing barges at the race, and we forgive on the moment the sharp answer of the man who has sat three nights by a sick-bed. And we do all this because our acts have a basis in reason.

Comes the lover, tricked by nature, blind of passion, impelled madly toward the loved one. He is as blind to her salient imperfections as he is to her petty vices. He does not interrogate her disposition and temperament, or speculate as to how they will coördinate with his for two score years and odd. He questions nothing, desires nothing, save to possess her. And this is the paradox: *By nature he is driven to contract a temporary tie, which, by social observance and demand, must endure for a lifetime.* Too much stress cannot be laid upon this, Dane, for herein lies the secret of the whole difficulty.

But we go on with our lover. In the throes of desire — for desire is pain, whether it be heart hunger or belly hunger — he seeks to possess the loved one. The desire is a pain which seeks easement through possession. Love cannot in its very nature be peaceful or content. It is a restlessness, an unsatisfaction. I can grant a lasting love just as I can grant a lasting satisfaction; but the lasting love cannot be coupled with possession, for love is pain and desire, and possession is easement and fulfilment. Pursuit and possession are accompanied by states of consciousness so wide apart that they can never be united. What is true of pursuit cannot be true of possession, no more than the child, grasping the bright ball, can deem it the most wonderful thing in the world — an appraisement which it certainly made when the ball was beyond reach.

Let us suppose the loved one is as madly impelled toward the lover. In a few days, in an hour, nay, in an instant — for there is such a thing as love at first sight — this man and woman, two unrelated individuals, who may never have seen each other before, conceive a passion, greater, intenser, than all other affections, friendships, and social relations. So great, so intense is it, that the world could crumble to star-dust so long as their souls rushed together. If necessary, they would break all ties, forsake all friends, abandon all blood kin, run away from all moral responsibilities. There can be no discussion, Dane. We see it every day, for love is the most perfectly selfish thing in the universe.

But this is easily reconcilable with the scheme of things. The true lover is the child of nature. Natural selection has determined that exogamy produces fitter progeny than endogamy. Cross fertilisation has made stronger individuals and types, and likewise it has maintained them. On the other hand, were family affection stronger than love, there would be much intermarriage of blood relations and a consequent weakening of the breed. And in such cases it would be stamped out by the stronger-breeding exogamists. Here and there, even of old time, the wise men recognised it; and we so recognise it to-day, as witness our bars against consanguineous marriage.

But be not misled into the belief that love is finer and higher than affection and friendship, that the yielding to its blandishments is higher wisdom on the part of our lovers. Not so; they are puppets and know and think nothing about it. They come of those who yielded likewise in the past. They obey forces beyond them, greater than they, their kind, and all life, great as the great forces of the physical universe. Our lovers are children of nature, natural and uninventive. Duty and moral responsibility are less to them than passion. They will obey and procreate, though the heavens roll up as a scroll and all things come to judgment. And they are right if this is what we understand to be "the bloom, the charm, the smile of life."

Yet man is man because he chanced to develop intelligence instead of instinct; otherwise he would to this day have remained among the anthropoid apes. He has turned away from nature, become unnatural, as it were, disliked the earth upon which he found himself, and changed the face of it somewhat to his liking. His trend has been, and still is, to perform more and more acts with a rational sanction. He has developed a moral nature, made laws, and by the sheer force of his will and reason curbed his lyings and his lusts.

However, our lovers are natural and uninventive. They get married. Pursuit, with all its Tantalus delights, its sighings and its songs, is gone, never to return. And in its place is possession, which is satisfaction, familiarity, knowledge. It heralds the return of rationality, the return to duty of the weighing and measuring qualities of the mind. Our lovers discover each other to be mere man and woman after all. That ethereal substance which the man took for the body of the loved one becomes flesh and blood, prone to the common weaknesses and ills of flesh and blood. He, on the other hand, betrays little petulancies of disposition, little faults and predispositions of which she never dreamed in the pre-nuptial days, and which she now finds eminently distasteful. But at first these things are not openly unpleasant. There are no scenes. One or the other gives in on the instant, without self-betrayal, and one or the other retires to have a secret cry or to ruminate about it over a cigar — the first faint hints, I may slyly suggest, of the return of rationality. *They are beginning to think.*

Ah, these are little things, you say. Precisely; wherefore I lay emphasis upon them. The sum of the innumerable little things becomes a mighty thing to test the human soul. Moreover, many a home has been broken because of disagreement as to the uses or abuses of couch cushions, and more than one divorce induced by the lingering of tobacco odours in the curtains.

If the marriage of our lovers conform to the majority of marriages, the first year of their wedded life will determine whether they are able to share bed and board through the lengthening years. For this first year — often the first months of it — marks the transition from love to conjugal affection, or witnesses a rupture which nothing less than omnipotence can ever mend. In the first year a serious readjustment must take place. Unreason, as a basis for the relation, must give way to reason; blind, ignorant, selfish little love must flutter away, so that friendship, clear-eyed and wise, may step in. There will come moments when wills clash and desires do not chime; these must be moments of sober thought and compromise, when one or the other sacrifices self on the altar of their nascent friendship. Upon this ability to compromise depends their married happiness. Returning to the rationality which they forsook during mating-time, they cannot live a joint rational existence without compromising. If they be compatible, they will gradually grow to fit, each with the other, into the common life; compromise, on certain definite points, will become automatic; and for the rest they will exhibit a tacit and reasoned recognition of the imperfections and frailties of life.

All this reason will dictate. If they be incapable of rising to compromise, sacrifice, and unselfishness, reason will dictate separation. In such cases, when they will have become rational once more, they will reason the impossibility of a continued relation and give it up. In which case the true-love disciple may contend that there was no real love in the beginning. But he is wrong. It was just as real as that of any marriage, only it failed in the post-nuptial quest after compatibility. In all marriages love — passionate, romantic love — must disappear, to be replaced by conjugal affection or by nothing. The former are the happy marriages, the latter the mistaken ones.

As I close, the saying of La Bruyère comes to me, “The love which arises suddenly takes longest to cure.” This generalisation upon all the love-affairs within the scope of a single lifetime cannot but be true, and it is quite in line with the general argument. I have shown that the love (so called) which grows slowly is akin to friendship, that it is friendship, in fact, conjugal friendship. On the other hand, the more sudden a love the more intense it must be; also the less rationality can it have. And because of its intensity and unreasonableness, the longer period must elapse ere its frenzy dies out and cool, calm thought comes in.

Herbert.

P.S. — My book is out — ”The Economic Man.” I send it to you. I cannot imagine you will care for the thing.

XXI

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
May 26, 19 — .

“Pretty nineteen-year-old Louisa Naveret, because her slower-minded fiancé, Charles J. Johnson, could not understand a joke, is dying with a bullet in her brain, and he, her murderer, lies dead at the morgue. They were to have been married to-day.”

From to-day’s paper I quote the above introduction to a column murder-sensation in simple life. Simple it was, and elemental — the man loving steadily and doggedly and madly, after the manner of the male before possession; the woman fluttering, and teasing, and tantalising, after the manner of the female courting possession. They had been engaged for some time. The woman loved the man and fully intended to marry him. The engagement neared its close, and on the day before that of the wedding, the man, slow minded, loving intensely, procured the marriage licence. The woman read the document, and with the last coy flutter before surrender told him that she would not marry him.

“I meant it as a jest,” she said as she lay on a cot at the receiving hospital; but four bullets were in her body, and Charles J. Johnson, clumsy and natural lover, lay dead in an adjoining room with the fifth bullet in his brain.

In this pitiful little tragedy appear two of the most salient characteristics of love; namely, madness and selfishness. Let us analyze Charles J. Johnson’s condition. He was a lineman for a telegraph company, healthy and strong, used to open-air life and hard work. He had steady employment and good wages. Can’t you see the man, content with a good digestion, unailing body, and mild pleasures, and enjoying life with bovine placidity? But pretty Louisa Naveret entered his life. The “abysmal fecundity” was stirred and life clamoured to be created. Peacefulness and content vanished. All the forces of his existence impelled him to seize upon and possess “nineteen-year-old” Louisa Naveret. He was afflicted with a disorder of mind and body, a madness so great, a delusion so powerful, a pain and unrest so pressing, that the possession of that particular “nineteen-year-old” woman became the dearest thing in the world, dearer than life itself and more potent than the "will to live."

I do well to call love a madness. Any departure from rationality is madness, and for a man of Charles J. Johnson's calibre, suicide is an extremely irrational act. But he also killed Louisa Naveret, wherein he was as selfish as he was mad. Convinced that he was not to possess her, he was determined that no other man should possess her.

While on this matter of love considered as a disorder of mind and body, I recall a recent magazine article of Mr. Finck's, in which he analyzes Sappho's conception of love. "In that famous poem of Sappho," he says, "that has been so often declared a compendium of all the emotions that make up love, I have not been able to find anything but a comic catalogue of such feelings as might overwhelm a woman if she met a bear in the woods — 'deadly pallor,' 'a cold sweat,' 'a fluttering heart,' 'tongue paralyzed,' 'trembling all over,' 'a fainting fit.'"

Dante suffered similarly from the disorder of love, if you will recollect. In this connection may be cited the following passage from Diderot's "Paradox of Acting ": —

"Take two lovers, both of whom have their declarations to make. Who will come out of it best? Not I, I promise you. I remember that I approached the beloved object with fear and trembling; my heart beat, my ideas grew confused, my voice failed me, I mangled all I said; I cried *yes* for *no*; I made a thousand blunders; I was illimitably inept; I was absurd from top to toe, and the more I saw it the more absurd I became. Meanwhile, under my very eyes, a gay rival, light hearted and agreeable, master of himself, pleased with himself, losing no opportunity for the finest flattery, made himself entertaining and agreeable, enjoyed himself; he implored the touch of a hand which was at once given him, he sometimes caught it without asking leave, he kissed it once and again. I, the while, alone in a corner, avoided a sight which irritated me; stifling my sighs, cracking my fingers with grasping my wrists, plunged in melancholy, covered with a cold sweat, I could neither show nor conceal my vexation."

Oh, the clamour of life to be born is a masterful thing, and so far as the individual is concerned, a most irrational thing; and so far as the world of beasts and emotional men and women is concerned, it is a most necessary thing. That life may live and continue to live, a driving force is needed that is greater than the puny will of life. And in the disorder produced by the passion for perpetuation, whether or not assisted by imagination, is found this driving force. As Ernest Haeckel, that brave old hero of Jena, explains:—

“The irresistible passion that draws Edward to the sympathetic Otillia, or Paris to Helen, and leaps all bounds of reason and morality, is the same *powerful, unconscious*, attractive force which impels the living spermatozoon to force an entrance into the ovum in the fertilisation of the egg of the animal or plant — the same impetuous movement which unites two atoms of hydrogen to one atom of oxygen for the formation of a molecule of water.”

But with the advent of intellectual man, there is no longer need for obeying blind and irresistible compulsion. Intellectual man, changing the face of life with his inventions and artifices, performing telic actions, adjusting himself and his concerns to remote ends and ultimate compensations, will grapple with the problem of perpetuation as he has grappled with that of gravitation. As he controls and directs the great natural forces so that, instead of menacing, they are made to labour for his safety and comfort, so will he control and direct the operation of the reproductive force so that life will not only be perpetuated but developed and made higher and finer. This is not more impossible than is the steam-engine impossible or democracy impossible.

Herbert.

XXII

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
3a, Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
June 12, 19 — .

Please remember that these letters are written to you alone. I do not think that there is less love in the world than ever before. I make you representative of a class, which, in turn, is characteristic of the modern scientific type, but I do not make you representative of all that to-day’s world has lived up to and lived down. So I do not join my Ruskin in lamenting the past. To be sure, you are contemporary and you are parvenu. What then? You are few, nevertheless, and like the parvenu rich, you must pass into something quite unlike yourself. It is the law of growth. I ask you to account for yourself as an individual. The thing is fiercely personal. But you choose the roundabout method of answering me. For a view of what in your eyes is pertinent to this matter, you stretch a canvas wide as the world. You are resolved that your course should dramatise the whole play and interplay of force and matter. It is ideally ambitious of you and I am glad. It puts you in the ranks with the students of the ideal tendencies. It shows that you are not always impatient for short cuts, and that you begin to be of those who harness “horses of the sun to plough in earth’s rough furrows.”

Your letter sounds conclusive. Romance is waste, love is unreasoning; compatibility alone is worth while. You think this, and are ready to encrust yourself with what is conventional and practical. Ah, no, it is not even decently conventional! The formal world pretends, at least, to love. It also reaches for the fires that thrill and thaw, whereas you stand before a cold hearth and think the chill well and welcome, since you understand its cause. You have grasped part of a truth, and though my mind complete your arc into the perfection of a circle, I cannot place it about your head as a halo. My confusion comes from thinking of you more than of my creed. A pregnant factor in our debate is the debater. The Hafiz of the Hafiz maxims, the philosopher of your philosophy happens to interest me. You have been building yourself up before my eyes, and for watching I cannot speak.

With what does romance interfere? If it implied a waste of vital force, a giving up, a postponement of life, it were a roundabout path to development and happiness. But we live most when we are most under its sway, and it is for such self-promised sparks that we live at all. Romance quickens and controls as does nothing else, and because of this it is not only a means but an end in itself. It is stirred-up life. We live most when we love most. The love of romance and the romance of love is the only coin for which the heart-hurt sell their death. A trick? Perhaps. The love of life is a trick to save the races from self-murder. Nature makes legitimate her tricks. Let the Genius of the Race lure us with passion and dreaming! We are not the losers by it. And if the dream fades and we grow gray despite what has been lived, then it is something to remember that soul and sense have leapt and pulsed. I am thankful that romance has an aftermath, and that old men and women can prattle about days that were robust. I am thankful that the soldiers of life are at the end given a furlough in which to fondle the arms they wielded with clumsiness and with spirit, and in which to pass themselves in review before their pension expires and their days are over. Youth has the romance of loving, and age the romance of remembering.

Lovers are not always compatible, you say, and, before all, you insist upon good partnership. How will you insure yourself against unfitness? Surely not by a registering and weighing of qualities, not by bargaining and speculating. We do not choose our wives as we do our saddle-horses; we do not plan our marriages as we plan our houses. It may sound paradoxical, but there is a higher compatibility than that of quality and degree. It is not whether people can live together, but whether they should live together. “It is an awkward thing to play with souls,” — you override the fastidiousness of the soul in marrying your companion. Unless you are an automaton, you cannot rest happy in the fact that you and she do not disagree. For comfort’s sake you would have a negative dimension to your cosmos, forgetting that your longings and your needs and, it may be, your dreams, are positive. If sex-comradeship and affection were not as accidental and as dependent on mood as love itself, your position would have much in its favour. You could then arrange for compatibility in marriage.

You speak of the methods in economics that conserve energy and capital, such as the employ of the machine-guiding boy, which saves the labour power of a hundred men, and you hold that in the realm of personal life like methods may obtain with value and dignity. I can see how natural it has become for you to take this viewpoint. One can be a zealot in matters frigid. The law behind the fact has you in its coil, and your passion goes to ice.

You burn for that cold thing, compatibility. You, too, are in the market-place bound to a stake — it is not for such as you to escape the fire. If you look to compatibility and want it intensely, as others want love, then you suffer, and from your standpoint (not mine) you raise a vain cry; for compatibility, like everything else, is illusory. The illusions of love are a strength, and the ways of love are divine; through them we come to that feeling of completion which is compatibility and which is as ineffable as the white-lipped promise of waves heard by those who have also listened to weeping. Love is not responsible for institutionalism. There would be no fewer marriages if people married for convenience, nor would the law make such unions less binding. It is not the fault of love that the great social paradox exists. In the precipitancy of feeling, you say, the lover fastens upon an unsuitable mate, and, with possession, love dies. Here I attack your facts. If an awakening comes, it is not for either of these reasons. Love is not essentially rational, but then it is love. There is some consistency in affairs natural, and the esoteric draught that enchanted at one time cannot poison at another.

Love is not essentially rational, and it will not of a sudden become so at the possession of the loved one. People who marry from convenience may wake to find their union most inconvenient. “There are more things in heaven and earth,” and there are more intricacies of feeling and more sloughs and depths, than are dreamed of in your philosophy. A definite understanding as to sofa cushions and tobacco smoke does not always insure unwearied forbearance and devotion. With love, on the other hand, disappointment is very much less likely to spring up, for the reason that it is free from calculation. Love is a sympathy. It takes hold, it grows upon the soul and the senses, and it does not flee before argument and explanation.

Still less can I admit that possession kills love. Do we give up living because the world is based on Will and Idea? Yet to will is to want, Schopenhauer tells us, and to want is to be in pain. Do we know ourselves in pain every minute of our lives? Hardly. This applies. You hold that, with the fulfilled hope and the appeased hunger, indifference takes the place of desire. It reads so in logic, but not in life. If what is in our possession be good, we prize it more highly for its being within reach. The good in our keeping does not sate; it pains with divine hungers. We do not tire of what we have; we rise to it. We do not know the sweetness of being steadfast until we are so impelled by the love with which we have grown great. The lover may well say: “She was not my ideal; before I knew her I was not great enough to think her. She taught me.”

Besides, an acquaintance with your wife’s faults does not kill your love. You cannot turn from your brother or your friend if he commit even a lurid act; you cannot turn from a stranger; much less can you turn from your beloved. Herbert, when men set themselves to judge, they are invariably ridiculous and an offence to high heaven. Believe me, it is artificial. The true judge cares not for the fact of the deed, but for its motive. And the lover knows the motive. He has the key to the life. He knows his beloved, not as she is, but “as she was born to be.” His lips press and his arms enfold not her so much as the ideal of her, and unless she unmake herself, he cannot unlove her. “To judge a man by the fruit of his actions,” says Professor Edward Howard Griggs, “it is necessary to know all of the fruit, which is impossible. You can only know what he eternally must be if you catch the aspect of his soul and grow to understand his aspirations and his loves.” To idealise, therefore, is not to be blind, but to be far-seeing.

There is another way of looking on this question of the paradox. Granted that it is caused by romantic love, romantic love is still exclusively the best thing in the world. You cannot pay too dearly for the good of life. I know that the misery of being in the intimacy of wedlock with one who is not loved is unutterable. It is to become degraded and unrecognisable, it is to wear the brand of liar before God! The man whose outer life belies the inner is an enforced suicide. There is something of majesty on “laying one’s self down with a will,” and there is something of strength in cloistering the body for the spirit’s health’s sake, but to die when all within is warm and clamorous for life is terrible. Such a death they die who are held together, not by the bonds of the spirit, but by those of convention. They who would go from each other and dare not, die the ignominious death of fear. The suicide is contemptible, besides being pitiable, when he is hounded out of life despite himself, when he is a little embezzler of a clerk who rushes from the music hall to the Thames and thinks of the unfinished glass with his last breath. No, I do not underestimate the tragedy of the paradox. Yet I say that if love were accountable for it (which it is not), it would still be folly to forswear love. Do you ask why? Because its dangers are the dangers common to all life, and we are so made that we cannot be frightened away from our portion of experience. We are as loth to give up our nights as our days. The winters as the summers, all the seasons and all the climes, the fears as the hopes, all the travail of deepest, fullest living, we claim as our own forever. We guard jealously our heritage of feeling. Would you for all the world sleep rather than wake, forget rather than remember? Then cease the requiem of your speech about the dangers of disillusion!

Madness and selfishness were the cause of Louisa Naveret's death, and the man who was mad and selfish was her lover. The poor man had not the strength to renounce when he thought he found himself face to face with the necessity of renouncing. But all lovers are not too weak to cope with love. John Ruskin, if you remember, loved his wife, and he shot neither himself, nor her, nor Millais. Charles J. Johnson is not a Ruskin, and Ruskin's love was not a madness.

And, Herbert, to me there is nothing comic in a stress of feeling. Let the lover pale and flutter and faint; in the presence of his deity it is an acceptable form of worship. The very self-possessed lover is more preposterous!

Your book has not yet reached me. To-morrow I shall write again, providing I remember how to write a natural letter.

Yours,
Dane Kempton.

XXIII

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

London.
June 20, 19 — .

There are impersonal hours when the things of the day drop below consciousness and the spirit grows devotional and wends a pilgrimage to larger spheres, there to sit apart. Such a respite was mine to-day. There had been a call to rouse and put forth work, and I wrought with all the puniness of my might (woe is me!), and earned my post at the window that looks out upon the large things. The best of nights and days of toil is that there comes a twilight in which fatigued eyes see clear. I said it did not matter how you do about your marriage. Time may right you in a way I cannot know. I said it did not matter if you are not righted in this, there being so much that never rights itself. Both hope and despair were followed by a calm of neutrality. The inquiry waited no solution. The stress no longer touched me, and my twilight became luminous. I saw things as from a height and forms dropped out of my range, when Barbara came tugging at me, and my pale while of abstraction was at an end.

She wanted to know what troubled me. She made her way to me, hurried but resolved, and stated her demand. "You catechised me yesterday; to-night you shall answer."

She had come to defend herself. My talk having of late taken on the sameness of that of the man of one idea, Barbara was aroused. I was gauging her because she distressed me, was her thought. (I had been trying to find whether it is possible to live differently from her and live happily and well.) "You think I am not close enough to Earl, because I mourn for my little one, perhaps. You think me not sufficiently happy to be wifely." Could I suppose aught else from such an utterance but that there was an estrangement and hidden pain? How, unless there were sorrow, could the woman see herself sorrowed for? My mind leapt to possibilities. Little Barbara on the rack was more than I could bear. I groped for her hands. It was a fault in her to be so much on her guard. She had no sorrow to confess, and spoke — only to ward off what was not directed toward her.

"The tenour of your talk led me on to believe — " she stammered with hot cheeks. It is a standing offence of hers to imagine herself accused, and she admits it is a weakness born of lack of poise. “But I took all for granted, I thought you fortunate beyond any other woman,” I protested. At this the radiance broke forth. I forgave the chill that her first words on entering the room struck to my heart, and she forgot what she had imagined.

There is nothing more important than the play and interplay of feeling. Were Barbara “unwifely,” I could not blame her, but neither could I have at hand my proof of dear miracles. My proof remained to me, for there she stood, her face lifted toward mine, her mouth tremulous, her grey eyes swimming. The mate woman was stirred. Barbara is twenty-six and has been married seven years, and she still vibrates with the old wonder to find herself loving and beloved.

I meant to tell you of what we spoke later, in the hope that I could show you a little better what I hold dear and why. But my hand grows nerveless. The twilight of abstraction has set in. A little while ago this hand was quick to rest on Barbara’s as I called her my heroine. She is that, not alone because she is pure and good and strong, but because she can accept the test of her instincts. It takes both faith and strength to obey oneself. “When shows break up, what but one’s Self remains?” asks Whitman. The shows are but shows for Barbara. Will I look into your eyes on the morrow and find them, like hers, clear? Grant that it be!

Dane.

XXIV

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
July 1, 19 — .

Somewhere in Ward you may read, “It must constantly be borne in mind that all progress consists in the arbitrary alteration, by human efforts and devices, of the normal course of nature, so that civilisation is wholly an artificial product.” Why, Dane, this is large enough to base a sociology upon. And I must ask you first, is it true? Second, do you understand, do you appreciate, the tremendous significance of it? And third, how can you bring your philosophy of love in accord with it?

Romantic love is certainly not natural. It is an artifice, blunderingly and unwittingly introduced by man into the natural order. Is this audacious? Let us see. In a state of nature the love which obtains is merely the passion for perpetuation devoid of all imagination. The male possesses the prehensile organs and the superior strength. Beyond the ardour of pursuit the female has no charms for him. But he is driven irresistibly to pursuit. And by virtue of his prehensile organs and superior strength he ravishes the females of his species and goes his way. But life creeps slowly upward, increasing in complexity and necessarily in intelligence. When some forgotten inventor of the older world smote his rival or enemy with a branch of wood and found that it was good and thereafter made a practice of smiting rivals and enemies with branches of wood, then, and on that day, artificiality may be said to have begun. Then, and on that day, was begun a revolution destined to change the history of life. Then, and on that day, was laid the cornerstone of that most tremendous of artifices, CIVILISATION!

Trace it up. Our ape-like and arboreal ancestors entered upon the first of many short cuts. To crack a marrow-bone with a rock was the act which fathered the tool, and between the cracking of a marrow-bone and the riding down town in an automobile lies only a difference of degree. The one is crudely artificial, the other consummately artificial. That is all. There have been improvements. The first inventors grasped that truthful paradox, “the longest way round is the shortest way home,” and forsook the direct pursuit of happiness for the indirect pursuit of happiness. If the happiness of a savage depended upon his crossing an extensive body of water, he did not directly proceed to swim it, but turned his back upon it, selected a tree from the forest, shaped it with his rude tools and hollowed it out with fire, then launched it in the water and paddled toward where his happiness lay.

Now concerning love. In the state of nature it is a brutal passion, nothing more. There is no romance attached. But life creeps upward, and the gregarious human forms social groups the like of which never existed before. Consider the family group, for instance. Such a group becomes in itself an entity. By means of the group man is better enabled to pursue happiness. But to maintain the group it must be regulated; so man formulates rules, codes, dim ethical laws for the conduct of the group members. Sexual ties are made less promiscuous and more orderly. A greater privacy is observed. And out of order and privacy spring respect and sacredness.

But life creeps upward, and the family group itself becomes but a unit of greater and greater groups. And rules and codes change in accordance, until the marriage tie becomes possessed of a history and takes to itself traditions. This history and these traditions form a great fund, to which changing conditions and growing imagination constantly add. And the traditions, more especially, bear heavily upon the individual, overmastering his natural expression of the love instinct and forcing him to an artificial expression of that love instinct. He loves, not as his savage forebears loved, but as his group loves. And the love method of his group is determined by its love traditions. Does the individual compare his beloved’s eyes to the stars — it is a trick of old time which has come down to him. Does he serenade under her window or compose an ode to her beauty or virtue — his father did it before him. In his lover’s voice throb the voices of myriads of lovers all dead and dust. The singers of a thousand songs are the ghostly chorus to the song of love he sings. His ideas, his very feelings are not his, but the ideas and feelings of countless lovers who lived and loved and whose lives and loves are remembered. Their mistaken facts and foolish precepts are his, and likewise their imaginative absurdities and sentimental philanderings. Without an erotic literature, a history of great loves and lovers, a garland of love songs and ballads, a sheaf of spoken love tales and adventures — without all this, which is the property of his group, he could not possibly love in the way he does.

To illustrate: Isolate a boy babe and a girl babe of cultured breed upon a desert isle. Let them feed and grow strong on shell-fish and fruit; but let them see none other of their species; hear no speech of mouth, nor acquire knowledge in any way of their kind and the things their kind has done. Well, and what then? They will grow to man and woman and mate as the beasts mate, without romance and without imagination. Does the woman oppose her will to that of the man — he will beat her. Does he become over-violent in the manifestation of his regard, she will flee away, if she can, to secret hiding-places. He will not compare her eyes to the stars; nor will she dream that he is Apollo; nor will the pair moon in the twilight over the love of Hero and Leander. And the many monogamic generations out of which he has descended would fail to prevent polygamy did another woman chance to strand on that particular isle.

It is the common practice of the man of the London slum to kick his wife to death when she has offended him. And the man of the London slum is a very natural beast who expresses himself in a very natural manner. He has never heard of Hero and Leander, and the comparison of the missus' eyes to the stars would to him be arrant bosh. The gentle, tender, considerate male is an artificial product. And so is the romantic lover, who is fashioned by the love traditions which come down to him and by the erotic literature to which he has access.

And now to the point. Romantic love being an artificial product, you cannot base its retention upon the claim that it is natural. Your only claim can be that it is the best possible artifice for the perpetuation of life, or that it is the only perfect, all-sufficient, and all-satisfying artifice that man can devise. On the one hand, for the perpetuation of life, man demonstrates the inefficiency of romantic love by his achievements in the domestic selection of animals. And on the other hand, the very irrationality of romantic love will tend to its gradual elimination as the human grows wiser and wiser. Also, because it is such a crude artifice, it forces far too many to contract the permanent marriage tie without possessing compatibility. During the time romantic love runs its course in an individual, that individual is in a diseased, abnormal, irrational condition. Mental or spiritual health, which is rationality, makes for progress, and the future demands greater and greater mental or spiritual health, greater and greater rationality. The brain must dominate and direct both the individual and society in the time to come, not the belly and the heart. Granted that the function romantic love has served has been necessary; that is no reason to conclude that it must always be necessary, that it is eternally necessary. There is such a thing as rudimentary organs which served functions long since fallen in disuse and now unremembered.

The world has changed, Dane. Sense delights are no longer the sole end of existence. The brain is triumphing over the belly and the heart. The intellectual joy of living is finer and higher than the mere sexual joy of living. Darwin, at the conclusion of his “Origin of Species,” experienced a nobler and more exquisite pleasure than did ever Solomon with his thousand concubines and wives. And while our sense delights themselves have become refined, their very refinement has been due to the increasing dominion over them of the intellect. Our canons of art are not founded on the heart. No emotion elaborated the laws of composition. We cannot experience a sense of delight in any art object unless it satisfies our intellectual discrimination. “He is a *natural* singer,” we say of the poet who works unscientifically; “but he is lame, his numbers halt, and he has no knowledge of technique.”

The intellect, not the heart, made man, and is continuing to make him — ah, slowly, Dane, for life creeps slowly upward. The “Advanced Margin” is a favourite shibboleth of yours. And I take it that the Advanced Margin is that portion of our race which is more dominated by intellect than the race proper. And I, as a member of that group, propose to order my affairs in a rational manner. My reason tells me that the mere passion of begetting and the paltry romance of pursuit are not the greatest and most exquisite delights of living. Intellectual delight is my bribe for living, and though the bargain be a hard one, I shall endeavour to exact the last shekel which is my due.

Wherefore I marry Hester Stebbins. I am not impelled by the archaic sex madness of the beast, nor by the obsolescent romance madness of later-day man. I contract a tie which my reason tells me is based upon health and sanity and compatibility. My intellect shall delight in that tie. My life shall be free and broad and great, and I will not be the slave to the sense delights which chained my ancient ancestry. I reject the heritage. I break the entail. And who are you to say I am unwise?

Herbert Wace.

XXV

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
July 5, 19 — .

I had not intended to answer your letter critically, but, on re-reading, find I am forced to speak if for no other reason than your epithet “parvenu.” The word has no reproach. It was ever thus that the old and perishing recognised the vigorous and new. Parvenu, upstart — the term is replete with significance and health. I doubt not Elijah himself was dubbed parvenu when he fluttered with his golden harp into that bright-browed throng, pride-swollen for that they had fought with Michael when Lucifer was hurled into hell.

“We do not choose our wives as we buy our saddle-horses; we do not plan our marriages as we do the building of our houses,” — so you say, and it is said excellently. No better indictment of romantic love do I ask. And oh, how many good men and women have I heard bitterly arraign society in that in the begetting of children it does not exercise the judgment which it exercises in breeding its horses and its dogs! Marriage is something more than the mere pulsating to romance, the thrilling to vague-sweet strains, the singing idly in empty days, the sating of self with pleasure — what of the children?

“Never mind the children,” says selfish little Love. “It has been our wont never to give any thought to the children; they were incidental. Always have we sought our own pleasure; let us continue to seek our own pleasure.” So Society continues to breed its horses and dogs with judgment and forethought and to trust to luck for its children.

But it won’t do, Dane. Life, in a sense, is living and surviving. And all that makes for living and surviving is good. He who follows the fact cannot go astray, while he who has no reverence for the fact wanders afar. Chivalry went mad over an idea. It idealised, if you please. It made of love a fine art, and countless knights-errant devoted themselves to the service of the little god. It sentimentalised over ladies’ gloves and forgot to make for living and surviving. And while chivalry committed suicide over its ladies’ gloves, the stout, wooden-headed burghers, with an eye to the facts of life, dickered and bickered in trade. And on the wreck and ruin of chivalry they flaunted their parvenu insolence. God, how they triumphed! The children and cobblers and shop-keepers buying with the yellow gold the “thousand years old names!” buying with their yellow gold the proud flesh and blood of their lords to breed with them and theirs! patronising the arts, speaking a kind word to science, and patting God on the back! But they triumphed, that is the point. They reverenced the fact and made for living and surviving.

Love is life, you say, and you seem to hold it the achievement of existence. But I cannot say that life is love. Life? It is a toy, i’ faith, given to us, we know not why, to play with as we chance to please. Some elect to dream, some to love, and some to fight. Some choose immediate happiness, and some ultimate happiness. One stakes the Here and Now upon the Hereafter; another takes the Here and Now and lets the Hereafter go. But each grasps the toy and does with it according to his fancy And while none may know the end of life, all know that life is the end of love. Love, poor little, crude little, love, is the means to life — and so we complete the circle. Life? It is a toy, i’ faith, given us, we know not why, to play with as we chance to please.

But this we know, that love is the means to life, and it is subject to inevitable improvement. By our intellect will we improve upon it. Life abundant! finer life! higher life! fuller life! When we scientifically breed our race-horses and our draught-horses, we make for life abundant. And when we come scientifically to breed the human, we shall make for life abundant, for humanity abundant.

You say an acquaintance with the petty vices of one’s wife does not kill one’s love. Oh yes, it does, and out of the ashes of that love rises affection, comradeship, in kind somewhat similar to the affection and comradeship which I have for my brother. I do not *love* my brother, and it is because I do not love him, and because I do have *affection* and *comradeship* for him, that I do not turn away when he commits even a lurid act. Love, you will remember, takes its rise in the emotions, and is unstable and wanton and capricious. But affection takes its rise in the intellect, is based upon judgment of the brain. Love is unyielding tyranny; affection is compromise. Love never compromises, no more than does the mad little mating sparrow compromise.

My brother? — I played with him as a boy. His weaknesses and faults incensed and hurt me, as mine incensed and hurt him. Many were our quarrels. But he had also good qualities which pleased me, and at times performed gracious acts and even sacrifices. And I likewise. And with my brain I weighed his weaknesses and faults against his gracious acts and sacrifices, and I achieved a judgment upon him. The ethics of the family group also contributed to this judgment. The duties of kinship and the responsibilities of blood ties were impressed upon me. We grew up at our mother's knee, and she and our father became factors in determining what my conduct should be. They, too, taught me that my brother was my brother, and that in so far as he was my brother, my relations with him must be different from my relations with those who were not my brothers. And all went to crystallise an intellectual judgment, or a set of criteria, as it were, to guide all sane, unemotional acts and even to control and repress any emotional acts. These criteria, I say, became crystallised, became automatic in my thought processes.

And now, in manhood, my brother commits a lurid act, an act repulsive to me, one capable of arousing emotions of anger, of bitterness, of hatred. I experience an emotional impulse to pour my wrath upon him, to be bitter toward him, to hate him. Then I experience an intellectual impulse. Whatever way I may act, I must first settle with my crystallised criteria. The personal bonds of my boyhood and manhood press upon me — the gracious acts and sacrifices and compromises, our father and our mother, the duties of kinship and the responsibilities of blood. Thus two counter-impulses strive with me. I desire to do two counter things. Heart and head the fight is waged, and heart or head I shall act according to which is the stronger impulse. And if my affection be stronger, I shall not turn away, but clasp my brother in my arms.

I fear I have not made myself clear. It is difficult to write hurriedly of things psychological, when the extreme demand is made upon intellect and vocabulary; but at least you may roughly catch my drift. What I have striven to say is, that I forgive my brother, not because I *love* him, but because of the *affection* I bear him; also that this affection is the product of reason, is the sum of the judgments I have achieved.

Herbert.

XXVI

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE
London,
3a, Queen's Road, Chelsea, S.W.
July 21, 19 — .

"Progress is an arbitrary alteration, by human efforts and devices, of the normal course of nature, so that civilisation is wholly an artificial product." You ask me to consider this refracted bit of sociology and by its light to cast out my exalted notion of love. As if you have proven that love is incompatible with civilisation! We make over life with each successive step, but we do not give over living. In developing new forms and in establishing more and more subtle social relations we are only building upon what we find ready to hand. The paradox of creature and creator does not exist. When your sociologist speaks of arbitrary alterations, he has reference to polities and governments and criteria, to the material and ideal forces which a progressive society may wield for itself. He cannot include under progress an alteration of those needs of existence which make up the quality of existence. Speak of a community which equally distributes the products of labour and I will grant that there has been an arbitrary alteration, the normal course of nature being that the stronger, openly, and even with the common assent, takes to the repletion of his desire from the weaker. But speak of a condition so progressive that it subverts the need, so that where in the one case hunger was equitably gratified, in the other, hunger was done away with, and I will say that you are giving an Arabian Nights' entertainment.

Love is of a piece with life, like hunger, like joy, like death. Your progress cannot leave it behind; your civilisation must become the exponent of it.

Your last letter is formal and elaborate, and — equivocal. In it you remind me, menacingly, of the possibilities of progress, you posit that love is at best artificial, and you apotheosise the brain. As an emancipated rationality, you say you cut yourself loose from the convention of feeling. Progress cannot affect the need and the power to love. This I have already stated. "How is it under our control to love or not to love?" Life is elaborate or it is simple (it depends upon the point of view), and you may call love the paraphernalia of its wedding-feast or you may call it more — the Blood and Body of all that quickens, a Transubstantiation which all accept, reverently or irreverently, as the case may be.

I can more readily conceive the existence of a central committee elected for the purpose of regulating the marriages of a community, than of a community satisfied with such a committee. There is no logic in social events. The world persists in not taking the next step, and what to the social scout looked a dusty bypath may prove to be the highway of progress for the hoboing millions. Side issues are constantly cropping up to knock out the main issues of the stump orator; so let us be humble. For this reason I refuse to discuss possibilities in infinity. You and I cannot have become products of an environment which is not in existence. It is safe to suppose that our needs are like those of the race and that in us nothing is vestigial that is active in others. You cannot have become too rational to love. The device has not yet been formed.

You think I should take your word for it? But why? Have you never found yourself in the wrong, never disobeyed your best promptings never meant to take the good and grasped the bad? Is it not possible that you are not yet awake, or, God pity you, that you are hidebound in the dogmatism of your bit of thinking.

It is for the second point of your letter that I called you equivocal. Earlier in our discussion, I remember, you laid stress on the fact that love is an instinct common to all forms of life; now you go to great lengths in order to show that it is artificial.

How do you differentiate between the artificial and nature? Surely a development is not artificial because it is recent! Surely man is as integral to life as his progenitors! When we come to civilisation, we are face to face with the largest and subtlest thing in life, and the civilisation of human society is not artificial. It is the fulfilment of the nature of man, the promise made good, the career established, the influence sent out. A universe of mind-stuff and a civilising force constantly causing change, for change is growth, constantly compelling expression of that change — to conceive it is to conceive infinitude. And the purpose? Development, always development. To that end the individual perishes, to that end the race is conserved, to that end the peril and the sacrifice, and the agony of triumph in the overcharged heart at its last bound. And what is this refining of the type, this goal for which we all make with such tragic directness, but the gaining in the power to love? We begin with love to end with greater love, and that is progress. To write the epic of civilisation is a task for some giant artist who shall combine in himself Homer and Shakespeare, and the work will be a love story.

We do not throw away the grain and keep the chaff, nor do we transmit the "absurdities" and "philanderings" alone. If in the lover's voice throb the voices of myriads of lovers, it is because he is stirred even as they. If a ballad wakes a response in him, it is because its motif has been singing itself of its own accord in his heart, and its rhythm was the dream nightingale to which he bade Her hearken. Behind the tradition lies the fact. The expression may be ephemeral, the song flat, the motto conventional, but the feeling which prompted it is true. Else it could not have survived. And it has more than survived. It has grown with growth. For centuries it lodged in the nature of man, lulled in acquiescence, then, when the sense of recognition awoke, back in those wondrous young days, it wakened to pale life, and now the feeling is man's whole support, giving him courage to work and purpose to live.

But the half brute of the London slums kicks his wife when she offends him and knows nothing of love. Well for the honour of love that it is so! The half brute of the London slums had not food enough when a child, and malnutrition is deadly. Later, he stole and lied in order to eat, and he was bullied and kicked for it out of human shape. The trick was passed on to him. The unfortunate of the London slums will push us all from heaven's gate, because we do not do battle with the conditions that make him. It is not such as he that should lead you to scorn love, for he is a mistake and a crime.

In your example of the isolated boy babe and girl babe we meet with a different condition. The individual repeats the history of the race, and as these have been left out by the civilising forces, they revert to past racial states. For these it is natural to live stolidly — is it therefore natural for us? The point I make is that our refinement, crying in us with great voice, is as much a part of us as are the simple few hungers of the racial infant. We are not the less natural for being subtle. And can it not be that the face of romance reveals itself even to savage eyes? According to the need is the power, and the early man needs must hope and desire; he is curbed by waiting and taught by loss in the hunting, he is hungry, and he dreams that he is feasting. This dream is his romance — a red flicker in the dawn, then still the gray. To suppose this is not to be unscientific, for what is true of us must have had a beginning, and feeling, as well as being, cannot have been spontaneously generated.

There is an absolute gravitation to justice in nature. This was the creed preached by Huxley to Kingsley a week after his boy's death. Grief had turned the mind upon itself, and in the upheaval he formulated a philosophy of faith and joy!

Our reward is meted out according to our obedience to all of the law, spiritual and physical. Nature keeps a ledger paying glad life's arrears each minute of time. And the creed rises to my lips when I hear you cry shame upon the delight of love. It must be good, this thing which is so fraught with joy! You brand it sense delight, but all delight is of the senses, and Darwin at the conclusion of "The Descent of Man," if he was not overtaken by a feeling of incompleteness in the work and a consuming fever for the further task, was glad in a human way, with the senses and through the emotions. Darwin's supreme moment may have come at quite a different time. What can we know of the moments of repletion that fall into another's life? With Huxley we may only know that our hearts bound high when we strike a chord of harmony and prove ourselves obedient to "all of the law," and our hearts bound high when we love. It is nature's way of showing her approval. Oh, the strength of love and the miracles of its compensations! The sense of becoming that it gives, even in its defeats, the gladness that ripples in its sob-strangled throat!

The day for asceticism is gone, or shall we say the night? We are not afraid of sense delights. We are intent upon living on all sides of our natures, roundly and naturally. You have a fine gospel of work and I congratulate you upon it, but you make no mention of the purpose of it all. It must not be work for work's sake. "When I heard the learned astronomer — " says Whitman. Do you remember? He caught in one hour the whole majesty, caught to himself the wonder that was unseen by the watching astronomers. Somehow you feel the learned ones had made a mistake in calculating so long that they had no time to see with personal eyes the glory of the stars, and that Whitman had been philosopher and had gained where they failed. The inspiration of the poet, of the painter, of the economist, and biologist, is in the revelation which they receive of what to do and why to do. For this reason philosophy, which treats of the life and works of man, is in the highest sense sociological. The generalisations of philosophy go to improve our methods so that we may have greater proneness for sense of delight and greater possibility for sense delight. Why, what else is there? You are a poet, and you give an unrestorable day, when the sun is shining and the hills lie purple in the distance, to writing a sonnet. If you do so merely to employ yourself, it must be that the wolf of despair is at your being's door. You have come to the end, and the sun and the hills do not matter. You and they have parted company. But if you write, impelled by the wish that others should read and recognise, read and remember, and grow to know and feel better, and perhaps to love the sun and hills better, then is yours a work of love, and it will be made good to you, so that for the day which you have not seen, your night shall be instinct with light. And if your labours are more especially in the service of art, then, also, with each approach toward expression, you are warmed through with the delight of achievement.

Is my meaning quite dashed away by this torrent of speech? It is simply this: Before we think we feel, and the end of thinking is feeling. The century of Voltaire and Dr. Johnson held that man is rational, the century of James, Ribot, Lange, and Wundt is thrilled to the heart with the doctrine that first, last, and always man is emotional. To speak loosely, the dimensions of the human cosmos are feeling, emotion, and sensation.

Build your fine structures. We like to see the foundations laid well and the thick walls go up. Keep to your wizard inventions. We like to live in a magic world. And ah, the indomitable machines with their austere promise of free days for weary hands, and ah, the locomotives and the ships steaming their ways toward intercourse, toward comity, toward fellowship! We like the intricacy and the vastness of the world in which we live. But "an unconsidered life is not fit to be lived by any man," says Aristotle. We must consider the phenomenon, civilisation, searching down for the nucleus of its worth. We will find that the stone structure without hope were a pitiable thing, that the making of compacts and the banking of capital, without hope, were pitiable. This hope that is the life germane, the immortal flash of mortality, the most keenly human point in all humanity, is the hope for greater and greater social happiness. Our world is an ever unfinished house which we are employed in building. If we are imbued with the spirit of the architect and not of the hod-carrier, we will hope sweetly for the work. The house beautiful will begin to mean our life, and each night we will consult our drawings, looking to it that on the house built of our days the sun shall wester, and that within shall be intimacy, and laughter, great speech and close love, looking to it that the home be such as to better today's tenant so that he be more loving and lovable than the one of yesterday.

We are wrong, perhaps. Long ago we were no less than now. When we reached a hand in the darkness and grasped that of our fellow, the love and the strongly frail human abandon were no less. We have not grown in heart's munificence, perhaps. It is one of the illusions only. But the hope is ours. For what do you hope?

Dane.

XXVII

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

London.
July 22, 19 — .

Your birthday, Herbert, and for greeting I state that I walk your length with you. A truce to quarrelling! It is now a year since you informed me you were going to be married, and since then the gods have thundered their laughter at the sight of two muttering men who sat themselves on the axes of earth to dangle their legs into orbit vastness. Chronic somnambulists that they are, they took their monopolist way thither in their sleep.

I cannot tell you how full of vagary the correspondence we have fallen into seems to me. I deliberately attempted to write you into passion and for months you deliberately continued to convict yourself out of your own mouth, and we did not see that it was tragic and comic and preposterous. Could we personify this our dealing, we would do well to call it a kind of Caliban. And the tentacles we threw out, clawing at everything, stealing for prop to our little theory all of man and God! It is the conceit of us that I find utterly hopeless of grace. So I drop my rôle of omniscience. I take my form off the hub, believing the system will maintain its gravity though I go my private way, and I promise to let you alone. Forgive me, and God bless you. Ah, yes, and many happy returns of the day. All my heart in the blessing and the wish.

I did some remembering to-day, dear lad. When you were born, I was five years younger than you are now, yet I felt myself old. “If we were as old as we feel, we would die of old age at twenty-one.” My life seemed all behind me, long, turbulent, packed with pain, useless. I spoke of myself as if all were over. “It had been full of purpose, but what came of it? A few rhymes and a spoilt hope.” To my morbid fancy your having come to be was a signal for me to go. I had no thought of dying, yet I accepted you as the proof of my failure. In the exacting eyes of the genius of the race I was insolvent. You were not mine. I looked into Time, and saw none of me there.

Yet the letter I wrote to your parents was sincere, — how else? And that night and the next and the next, I wrote “Gentleman Adventurers,” which the critics called the epitome of all that is balladesque. One pitied the dead because they could go forth no more on water and under sky. This poem, written in a mood which beneficent nature sends on the too-sick spirit, has served for more than a quarter of a century as the complete and accepted catalogue of the reasons for living. Well, I must not laugh at it. It may be true that the passion of my heart incarnated itself in it beyond the rest, that my one song sang itself out those first three days of your life. If so, it is true that love is never cheated of its fruit, and that the joy which might have been for the individual oozes out of him to the race, that the strength which would have settled upon itself in the calm of satisfied hope, filters through him outwards.

Good night, lad. My hand is on your shoulder and I am loath to take it off. For a while I would like what cannot be, to travel with you the red-brown country-roads fragrant with hay, to cross the stiles and knock upon the cabin doors, and enter where sorrow and where gladness is, big with greeting and sure of welcome. I have often pleased myself with the fancy that the outer aspects of life are patterned after the inner, so that in the map of the spirit are to be found city and country, wood, desert, and sea, so that we know these outer worlds through having travelled the worlds within. Though I stay behind, my eyes can follow you from this night's landmark along the stretch, on to the city avenues, up the highways, tracing the twists of the bypaths, clambering untrod trails of wilderness and mountain, on, on, till out upon the sea.

In one of the near turnings a woman with waiting face smiles subtly. Her hands beckon you to the tryst. Godspeed, my son.

Dane.

XXVIII

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
August 6, 19 — .

As I have constantly insisted, our difference is temperamental. The common words we lay hold of mean one thing to you and another thing to me. I do not equivocate when I say that love is instinctive, and that the latter-day expression of love is artificial. “Art,” as I understand the term in its broadness, contradistinguishes from nature. Whatever man contrives or devises is an artifice, a thing of art not of nature, and therefore artificial.

As for ourselves, among animals we are the only real inventors and artificers. Instead of hair and hide, we have soft skins, and we weave cunning textures and wear wondrous garments. In cold weather, in place of eating much fat meat, we keep ourselves warm by grate fires and steam heat. We cut up our blood-dripping meat chunks with pieces of iron hardened by fire and sharpened by stone, and we eat fish with a fork instead of our fingers. We put a roof over our heads to keep out storm and sunshine, sleep in pent rooms, and are afraid of the good night air and the open sky. In short, we are consummately artificial.

As I recollect, I have shown that the natural expression of the love instinct is bestial and brutal and violent. I have shown how imagination entered into the development of the expression of this love instinct till it became *romantic*. And, in turn, I have shown how artificial was the romantic expression of this love instinct, by isolating a boy babe and a girl babe in a natural state wherein they expressed their love instinct bestially and brutally and violently. As you say, they have simply been “left out by the civilising force.” And this civilising, or socialising force is simply the sum of our many inventions. The isolated pair merely expressed their instincts in the unartificial, natural way. They had not been taught a certain particular fashion in which to express those instincts as have you and I and all artificial beings been taught.

As Mr. Finck has said, “Not till Dante’s ‘Vita Nuova’ appeared was the gospel of modern love — the romantic adoration of a maiden by a youth —

revealed for the first time in definite language."

Dante, and the men who foreshadowed and followed him, were inventors. They introduced an artifice for protracting one of our most vital pleasures. Well, they succeeded. And what of it? There are artifices and artifices, and some are better than others. The automobile is a more cunning artifice than the ox-cart, the subway than a palanquin. Devices come and devices go. Change is the essence of progress. All is development. The end of rapes and romances is the same — perpetuation. There may be head love as well as heart love. And in the time to come, when the brain ceases to be the servant of the belly, the head the lackey of the heart, in that time stirpiculture, which is scientific perpetuation, will take the place of romantic love. And in the present there may be men ready for that time. There must be a beginning, else would we still be jolting in ox-carts. And I am ready for that time now.

You say, "Love is of a piece with life, like hunger, like joy, like death." Quite true. And civilisation is merely the expression of life — a variform utterance which includes love, and hunger, and joy, and death. Else what is this civilisation for? How did it happen to be? And I answer: It is the sum of the many inventions we have made to aid us in our pursuit of life and love and joy. It helps us to live more abundantly, to love more fruitfully, to joy more intelligently, and to get grim old Death by his knotty throat and hold him at arm's length as long as possible.

I stated that "all progress consists in the arbitrary alteration, by human efforts and devices, of the normal course of nature." This sociological concept comes inevitably into accord with my philosophy of love. It is the law of development, and all things of human life (which includes love) come inside of it. Wherefore, certainly, I am not outside our province when I demand of you to bring your philosophy of love into like accord.

Incidentally, I will state that I *have* fallen in love. I have grown feverish with desire, gone mad with dumb yearning. I have felt my intellect lose dominion, and learned that I was only a garmented beast, for all the many inventions very like the other beasts ungarmented. Nay, I am no cold-blooded theorist, no thick-hided dogmatist; nor am I a chastely simple young man mooning in virginal innocence. My generalisations have been tempered in the heats of passion, and what I know I know, and without hearsay.

I have seen a learned man, drunk with wine, interrogate the new states of consciousness of his unwonted condition, and so doing, gain a more comprehensive psychological insight. So I, with my loves. I was impelled toward the women I shall presently particularise. I asked why the impulsion. I reasoned to see if there were a difference between these illicit passions of mine and the illicit passions of my respectable and respected friends. And I found no difference. Separated from codes and conventions, shorn of imagination, divested of romance, stripped naked down to the core of the matter, it was old Mother Nature crying through us, every man and woman of us, for progeny. Her one unceasing and eternal cry — Progeny! Progeny! Progeny!

Just as little girls, instinctively foreshadowing motherhood, play with dolls, so children feel vague sex promptings, and in sweetly ridiculous ways love and quarrel and make up after the approved fashion of lovers. You loved little girls in pigtails and pinafores. We all did. And in our lives there is nothing fairer and more joyful to look back upon than those same little pigtails and pinafores. But I shall pass the child loves by, and instance first my calf love.

Do you remember the incident of the torn jacket and the blackened eyes? — so inexplicable at the time. Try as you would, neither you nor Waring could get anything out of me. Oh, believe me, it was tragic! I was fifteen. Fifteen, and athrill with a strange new pulse; flushed, as the dawn, with the promise of day. And, of course, I thought it was the day, that I loved as a man loved, and that no man ever loved more. Well, well, I laugh now. I was only fifteen — a young calf who went out and butted heads with another calf in the back pasture.

She was a demure little coquette, Celia Genoine, Professor Genoine's daughter, if you will recollect. "Ah," I hear you remonstrate, "but she was a woman." Just so. Fifteen and twenty-two is usually the way of calf loves. I invested her with all the glow and colour of first youth, and in her presence became a changed being. I blushed if she looked at me; trembled at the touch of her hand or the scent of her hair. To be in her presence was to be closeted with the awfulness and splendour of God. I read immortality in her eyes. A smile from her blinded me, a gentle word or caressing look and I went faint and dizzy, and I was content to lurk in some corner and gaze upon her secretly with all my soul. And I took long, solitary walks, with book of verse beneath my arm, and learned to love as lovers had loved before me.

Sufficient romance was engendered for me to pass more than one night worshipping beneath her window. I mooned and sentimentalised and fell into a gentle melancholy, until you and Waring began to worry over an early decline, to consult specialists, and by trick and stratagem to entice me into eating more and reading less. But she married — ah, I have forgotten whom. Anyway, she married, and there was trouble about it, too, and I bade adieu to love forever.

Then came the love of my whelpage. I was twenty, and she a mad, wanton creature, wonderful and unmoral and filled with life to the brim. My blood pounds hot even now as I conjure her up. The ungarmented beast, my dear Dane, the great primordial ungarmented beast, mighty to procreate, indomitable in battle, invincible in love. Love? Do I not know it? Can I not understand how that splendid fighting animal, Antony, quartered the globe with his sword and pillowed his head between the slim breasts of Egyptian Cleopatra while that hard-won world crashed to wrack and ruin?

As I say, This was the love of my whelpage, and it was vigorous, masterful, masculine. There was no sentimentalising, no fond foolishness of youth; nor was there that cool, calm poise which comes of the calculation and discretion of age. Man and woman, we were in full tide, strong, simple, and elemental. Life rioted in our veins; we were a-bubble with the ferment; and it is out of such abundance that Mother Nature has always exacted her progeny. From the strictly emotional and naturalistic viewpoint, I must consider it, even now, the perfect love. But it was decreed that I should develop into an intellectual animal, and be something more than a mere unconscious puppet of the reproductive forces. So head mastered my heart, and I laid the grip of my will over the passion and went my way.

And then came another man’s wife, a proud-breasted woman, the perfect mother, made pre-eminently to know the lip clasp of a child. You know the kind, the type. “The mothers of men,” I call them. And so long as there are such women on this earth, that long may we keep faith in the breed of men. The wanton was the Mate Woman, but this was the Mother Woman, the last and highest and holiest in the hierarchy of life. In her all criteria were satisfied, and I reasoned my need of her.

And by this I take it that I was passing out of my blind puppetdom. I was becoming a conscious selective factor in the scheme of reproduction, choosing a mate, not in the lust of my eyes, but in the desire of my fatherhood. Oh, Dane, she was glorious, but she was another man's wife. Had I been living unartificially, in a state of nature, I would certainly have brained her husband (a really splendid fellow), and dragged her off with me shameless under the sky. Or had her husband not been a man, or had he been but half a man, I doubt not that I would have wrested her from him. As it was, I yearned dumbly and observed the conventions.

Nor are these experiences heart soils and smirches. They have educated me, fitted me for that which is yet to be. And I have written of them to show you that I am no closet naturalist, that I speak authoritatively out of adequate understanding. Since the end of love, when all is said and done, is progeny; and since the love of to-day is crude and wasteful; as an inventor and artificer I take it upon myself to substitute reasoned foresight and selection for the short-sighted and blundering selection of Mother Nature. What would you? The old dame would have made a mess of it had I let her have her way. She tried hard to mate me with the wanton, for it was not her method to look into the future to see if a better mother for my progeny awaited me.

And now comes Hester. I approach her, not with the milk-and-water ardours of first youth, nor with the lusty love madness of young manhood, but as an intellectual man, seeking for self and mate the ripe and rounded manhood and womanhood which comes only through the having of children — children which must be properly born and bred. In this way, and in this way only, can we fully express ourselves and the life that is in us. We shall utter ourselves in the finest speech in the world, and, our children being properly born and bred, it shall be in the finest terms of the finest speech in the world. To do this is to have lived.

Herbert.

XXIX

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
3a, Queen’s Road, Chelsea, S.W.
August 26, 19 — .

You insist that the question is not on the value of love but on the significance of the artificial. Be that as it may. To me love is integral with life, and to speak of civilising it away, seems, in point of fact, as preposterous and as anomalous as a Hamletless play of Hamlet. You forget that in developing you carry yourself along; you change, yet you remain racial and natural. Else there were too many missing links in all your departments. We read Homer to-day — telling proof that the chain of sympathy stretches unbroken through epochs of inventions and discoveries and revolutions. Truism that it is, it presents itself with particular force at this stage.

With how much force? We stand in danger of exaggerating these vociferous thoughts. This question of naturalness as opposed to artificiality is not immediately pertinent to our problem, nor is the matter of optimism and pessimism, nor the biologic idea of survival. We should have looked more to the way of love in the lives of men and women and become historians of the method and conduct of the force. There would have been less confusion. So I write, “Be that as it may,” and go back to more immediate considerations. And yet we were not far wrong! The little flower in the crannied wall could tell what God and man is. This is of all thoughts the most charged with truth. Let me understand one of your conclusions, root and all, and all in all, and such is the gracious plan of oneness in the branching and leafage and uptowering, that I must know and name the tree. Your winding bypath, could I but follow it to the end, must bring me to the highway of your thought, every step tell-tale of the journey’s destination. But soon I shall be with you (the fifth of next month, after all; the arrangements as planned). Then we will begin to know each other, and we will no longer be tormented by the irksomeness of writing. Therefore, until easier and more fluent times, to the heart of the subject straight.

Your love-affairs — how well you have outgrown them and how ably you criticise them! They have not withstood the test of time, for you bear them no loyalty. Calfdom and whelpage, vagaries of adolescence, you call them. You do not show them much respect! For this reason your examples lose what weight they might have borne. They belong so wholly to the past, they are mere wraiths of bygone stirrings, they cannot clothe you with knowledge of love. Cold now, what boots it that you have been afire? You cannot be taught by what is utterly over.

You are catching what I aim to say, I hope, for I aim to say much. Put it that instead of a girl whom you idealised, it was a principle — some scheme of reform which you honoured with all the passion of young hope and dream, and which knit your alert being into a Laocoon of striving. Your maturer eyes see this ideal impossible and narrow. In no wise can it satisfy your bolder reach and larger sympathy. But you do not laugh at what has been. If you strove for it sincerely at any time, no matter how remote, you could never again deride it. Because once you loved it you are eternal keeper of the key to its good. What has been wholly yours you never quite desert. Nothing has remained to you of your love-affairs, therefore your recital of them is empty of meaning. If you were in love to-day, and because of your philosophy you determined to do battle with your feeling, your experience would be more authoritative.

You have known love, and having known you refuse it. Henceforth, it must be reason and not feeling. "What is your objection?" you ask. This merely, that the thing cannot be. Marriage to be marriage must come through love, through the reddest romance of love, through fire of the spirit, yes, even through the love of calfdom and whelpage. Else it is a mockery. Where is the woman of character who would sell the be-all and end-all of her existence for a neat catalogue of possible advantages? Where is the man who would frankly and without embellishment dare make such proposal? You point to yourself. But you have never explained yourself to Hester, and even to me you are embellishing the matter with all the might in your persuasive pen.

The ardours of calfdom and whelpage that you smile at I would have you throb with. You underrate the firstlings of the heart, the rose and white blossoming, the call upon the senses and the readiness to respond and to fulfil, to give and to take, to be and make happy — the great pride and utter abandon which is young love. At fifteen, fortunately for the development of mind and character, hope is placed where hope must pine. Love, then, is doomed to be tragic. The youth "attains to be denied." But he sounds his depth. Thereafter, he knows what to expect of himself. He has a precedent. After this he will count it a sin to forget, and to accept the solace of mediocrity. In this lies the value of the tragedy.

I sometimes think that whatever is youngest is best. It is the young that, timid and bold, pay greatest reverence to knowledge, receiving without chill of prejudice and shameful cowardice of quibbling the brave new thought. Wisdom may be of age, but passion for scholarships, trail-breaking, and hardy prospecting in the treasure mines of research, is of young pioneerhood alone. It is a youth who dares be radical, who dares, in splendid largess, build mistake upon mistake, bleeding his life out in service. And it is a youth, standing tiptoe upon the earth, now waiting in unperturbed ease, now searching with unbridled zeal, who is lover and mystic. “The best is yet to be,” says Rabbi Ben Ezra, “the last of life, for which the first is made.” Yes, the last of life will be good, but only if it is like youth, beating with its pulse and instinct with its spirit.

The unhappy youth is left on the battle-field but not to die. The sword-thrusts challenge him to put forth greater strength in fiercer wars. He learns hard and well.

Indeed, I cannot leave this subject of first love. How do you know it was not good for you to love as you did? It is strange you should resolve to love no more because at one time you loved deeply enough almost to remain in love. It cannot be that you have grown old and that nature is resolving for you. You tell me of your experiences in order that I may be convinced that you know whereof you speak and I listen in wonder. Your conclusions are unwonted.

Then something was amiss, for you have outgrown and forgotten, but how is it with you in the present when your indifference waits not upon time? You approach your future wife clothed in indifference as in mail, and you do violence. How can I show you? I speak as I would to a child to whom it is necessary to explain that it is bad to abandon an education. Life is a school, and to me it seems that you are about to resign long before diploma and degree, so I interpose. I was taught by first love, and I honour that time beyond any other. I was Ellen’s. I have been lonely. For the mere human need, for the sake of that which to the lonely is very dear, I have thought of marriage, but I remembered and I refused to do violence to myself remembering. Long ago my standard was established. I learned how deeply I could feel, and I refuse to acknowledge myself bankrupt, I refuse to approach an honourable human being with less than my all. Until my soul flower out again, until suns flame about my head as in that dear yoretime, I shall keep teeming with dreams and make no affront. I who have seen love, dare not live without love.

I would not give in to fate, Herbert. I would assert my manhood. I would abide in the strength of the first output, going with the flush of the first glow into the gloom. I would spurn the calm of compromise and mediocrity and register a high claim. I would keep the peace with Romance and fly her colours to the last. You have lived? It is well, and it might have been better, but do not give over and talk of stirpiculture. You are not wiser than the laws which made you.

Dane.

XXX

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
September 18, 19 — .

How abominable I must seem to you, Dane! For certainly a creature is abominable that lays rough hands on one's dearest possessions. I doubt if even you realise how deeply you are stirred by my conduct towards love. My marriage with Hester, considering the quality and degree of the contracting parties, must appear as terrible to you as the sodomies that caused God's ancient wrath to destroy cities. You see, I take your side for the time, see with your eyes, live your thoughts, suffer what you suffer; and then I become myself again and steel myself to continue in what I think is the right.

After all, mine is the harder part. There are easier tasks than those of the illusion-shatterer. That which is established is hard to overthrow. It has the nine points of possession, and woe to him who attempts its disestablishment; for it will persist till it be drowned and washed away in the blood of the reformers and radicals.

Love is a convention. Men and women are attached to it as they are attached to material things, as a king is attached to his crown or an old family to its ancestral home. We have all been led to believe that love is splendid and wonderful, and the greatest thing in the world, and it pains us to part with it. Faith, we will not part with it. The man who would bid us put it by is a knave and a fool, a vile, degraded wretch, who will receive pardon neither in this world nor the next.

This is nothing new. It is the attitude of the established whenever its conventions are attacked. It was the attitude of the Jew toward Christ, of the Roman toward the Christian, of the Christian toward the infidel and the heretic. And it is sincere and natural. All things desire to endure, and they die hard. Love will die hard, as died the idolatries of our forefathers, the geocentric theory of the universe, and the divine right of kings.

So, I say, the rancour and warmth of the established when attacked is sincere. The world is mastered by the convention of love, and when one profanes love's Holy of Holies the world is unutterably shocked and hurt.

Love is a thing for lovers only. It must not be approached by the sacrilegious scientist. Let him keep to his physics and chemistry, things definite and solid and gross. Love is for ardent speculation, not laboratory analysis. Love is (as the reverend prior and the learned bodies told brother Lippo of man's soul): —

“ — a fire, smoke ... no, it's not ...
It's vapour done up like a new-born babe —
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's ... well, what matters talking, it's the soul!”

I thoroughly understand the popular sentimental repugnance to a scientific discussion of love. Because I dissect love, and weigh and calculate, it is denied that I am capable of experiencing love. It is too radiant and glorious a thing for a dull clod like me to know. And because I cannot experience love and be made mad by it, my fitness to describe its phenomena is likewise denied. Only the lover may describe love. And only the lunatic, I suppose, may compose a medical brochure on insanity.

Herbert.

XXXI

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

London,
October 7, 19 — .

It is true that you have a hard task before you, but it is not because you are fighting convention and shattering illusion; it is because you are assailing a good. Love has never acquired the prestige of the established, and the run of marriages are prompted by advantage, routine, or passion. So you are no innovator, Herbert. The idolatry of love will not be overthrown by a drawn battle between those of the Faith and those of the Reformation. Nothing so spectacular awaits us.

I have a friend who has undertaken to translate "Inferno" into English, keeping to the *terza rima*. "It is like climbing the Matterhorn," he says gravely. "I get to places where I feel I can go neither forward nor back. The task is prodigious." And it is. But whom will it concern if he succeeds in going forward? There are few who will read his book. The translation is of more importance to the translator than to anyone else. Yet the professor's *magnum opus* confers a degree upon us all. Because a standard is upheld and a man is willing and able to climb a Matterhorn of thought, we can ourselves stride forward with better courage. The work will be an output of heroism, and it will ennoble even those who will not know of it.

I have another friend who ruined his life for love, so says the world that you think steeped in the idolatry of love. A priest, who by a few strokes was able to quell in America a strong and bitter movement, a gifted orator, a man of giant powers, and who was won away at the age of forty from his career by a mere girl. The girl planned nothing. She found herself a force in his life almost despite herself. The mere fact that she lived was enough to wrest this Titan from the arms of the Church. He told me that she criticised him with the directness of a simple nature, and that he came to understand her truths better than she herself. I think she must have loved him at first, but she did not go to him when all grew calm. I wish it could have been otherwise, and that she could have brought him a woman's heart.

The priest, as the professor, is a hero. Both made great outputs.

There are few who can live like these. But because there are a few who can love and work, the game is saved. And because there are a few of these, we must ever quarrel with the many who are not like them.

“Give all to love;
Obey thy heart;
Friends, kindred, days,
Estate, good fame,
Plans, credit, and the Muse, —
Nothing refuse.”

Does this really seem such poor philosophy to you? And when, Herbert, will you marry?

Dane Kempton.

XXXII

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

Stanford University.
November 20, 19 — .

Hester met me at the station, and we walked through the Arboretum to her home on the campus. Then followed an evening together in the dormitory parlour. I have just left her. Her face was tumultuously joyous when I murmured my “At last!” Her tearful excitement was like Barbara’s. You did not tell me she is so young. You must have made her feel our closeness, or she may have found a bit of my verse that all expressed her, and presto, the whole-hearted one is my friend. Her poet is now her father, brother, comrade, — what she chooses, and all she chooses.

At one time, before we were well out of the Arboretum, our eyes met, and there was something so sad and mild and strange in the burn of her gaze that I felt her frank spirit was unveiling itself in an utterness of speech. But I have become too much spoilt by mere length of living to be able to remember back and recognise what young eyes mean when they look like that. From London to Palo Alto is a short trip, if at the end of it you meet a Hester. Yet I am sad. The mood crept on me the moment we grew aware that evening had come, and we stopped a little in front of the arch to observe the night-look of the foot-hills. Lights had begun to appear in the corridors of the quadrangle, and here and there in a professor’s office, while Roble and Encina looked like lit-up ferries. There was a spell of mystery and promise in the quiet which was deeper for being suggestive of the seething student-life just subsided. It was a silence that seemed to echo with bells and recitations, and babble and laughter and heartache. I fell into thought. One generation cometh and another passeth away. There is no respite. March with time and find death, mayhap, before it has found you. As years ago the flamelet of the street-lamp, so now these outposts of the colossal embryo of a world derided me and seemed to point me out and away. The evening grew chill with “a greeting in which no kindness is.”

“Your coming has been announced in every class, and your lecture is on the bulletin-boards. After that, can you be depressed?”

The light words were spoken low, as if doubtful whether they could be taken in good part, and they came with something that was like music. Was it the voice or some inexplicable feeling? I turned in wonder. Her head was raised, and in the indistinctness I caught that sweet look of hers which besought me, and which I answered without knowing to what question.

I owe you a great happiness. Good-night.

Dane Kempton.

XXXIII

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

Stanford University.
Wednesday.

Last night I delivered my address to the student body. Behold the chapel crowded to the doors, aisles and window-seats crammed, and faces peering in from without, those of boys and girls who had perched themselves on the outer sills. A student audience is at the same time most critical and the most generous. I spoke on Literature and Democracy.

Hester approved my effort. “How does it feel to be great?” she laughed. “How does it feel to be cruel?” I retorted. “But think, Mr. Kempton, when you visited the English classes you were just so much text for us. It should count us a unit merely to have seen you.”

A memory stood up and had its revenge on me. It taunted me for the half-expressed thought, for the fled insight, for the swelling note that midmost broke. Praise the artist, and he feels himself betrayer. Blear-eyed, the poet recalls the poem’s sunrise, straightens himself with the old pride, is held again by the splendour which forecasts the about-to-be-steadier glory of day, and even with the recalling he shrinks together before what he knows was a false dawn. There was never a day. The song’s note never sang itself at all.

Hester looked up with that wistfulness which so draws me. Her look said: “I pity you. I wish you were as happy as I.” And a thought leaped out in answer to her look which would have smote her had it spoken. It was, “You, too, are awakened by a false dawning.” Why is she so sure of herself and of you? Is she sure? The puny bit of writing had a vigorous rising. The ragged author was clad in it as in ermine. So the seeming love makes a strong call, for a while holding the girl intent upon a splendour of unfolding, her nature roused, her being expectant. But later, for poet and lover, the failure and the waste! Were it otherwise with your feeling for your betrothed, the comparison would not hold.

Hester does not think these things, and she is beautiful and happy.

Yours devotedly,
Dane Kempton.

XXXIV

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

Stanford University.
Saturday.

Her happiness wrung it from me. Before I could intervene, the question asked itself, “How will it be with you in after years?”

Straight the answer came, “There will be Herbert.”

Hester is proud. To-night I saw it in the lift of her chin, in the set of her neck, in the brilliance of her cheek. She knows herself endowed. So when she prattled with abandon of all you both meant to be and do, her form erect before me, her hands eloquent with excitement, her voice pleading for the right to her very conscious self-esteem, I asked her to look still further. Further she saw you, and was content.

That was before dinner. Later we were walking. “I have a friend in Orion,” she said. The witchery of starshine played in her eyes and about her mouth. Where were you, Herbert? This night will never return. Yet what has been was for you — the more, perhaps, that you seemed away. So it is with lovers. She thinks you love her.

“I am sorry for your mood,” she said. “You are holding yourself to account these days in a way I know.” Then she spoke, and I learned with new heaviness of spirit that she does know the way of it. You never thought Hester had much to struggle with?

“I am difficult,” she said. And again, “There are times when no power can hold me.” Then she quoted Browning: —

“Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?”

“Are you unhappy, Hester?” I asked.

“Yes, but with no more reason than you for your unhappiness. Since you have come here, you have renewed your demands upon yourself. You wish to go to school with the youngest and find you cannot. You suffer because more seems behind you than before.” Her voice rose as if she were fighting tears. It was different with her, I told her. Nothing was behind her.

“You test your work and I test my love. When you are sad, it is because the soul of the song spent itself to gain body — ” She did not finish. Why is she sad? Because the soul of her love is narrower than she hoped?

On our return from our walk she sank on the seat under the ‘95 oak. “Did you think I meant I was always unhappy?” she asked. Her words seem always to say more than her meaning. She imparts something of her own elaborateness to them. I laughed.

“How could I with the ‘Herbert is’ in my ears?” Then her love became voluble. I forgot what I knew of your theories and grew aflame with her ardour. I anticipated as largely as she. She was again possessed by her hopes.

There, under the shadow of the quadrangle which her young strides measured, she spoke of what, with you in her life, the years must be. Beyond words you are blessed, Herbert. But if she mistakes?

D.K.

XXXV

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME

Stanford University.
November 27, 19 — .

Be outspoken! What will happen I can only surmise, but you must tell her what she is to you. Set her right.

This is the fourth letter in seven days about Hester. I am endeavouring to make you acquainted with her. I had no need if you loved her. How she loves you! Yet she thinks that your calm is depth, your silence prayer. Her pride protects her, but she strains for the word which does not come. She has never been quite sure, and I thank God for that. Hester has been fearing somewhat, and she has been doubting, and it is this that may save her when the night sets in and the storm breaks over her head.

You, too, are thankful that her instincts served her true and that she never quite accepted the gift that seemed to have been proffered?

You have a right to demand the reason for my renewed attack. It is because I have learned the strength of her love. “You are blessed beyond words,” I said two days ago, but as you reject the blessing, Hester must know it and you must tell her. Herbert, I am your friend.

Dane Kempton.

XXXVI

FROM HERBERT WACE TO DANE KEMPTON

The Ridge,
Berkeley, California.
November 29, 19 — .

What a flutter of letters! And what a fluttery Dane Kempton it is! The wine of our western sunshine has bitten into your blood and you are grown over-warm. I am glad that you and Hester have found each other so quickly and intimately; glad that you are under her charm, as I know her to be under yours; but I am not glad when you spell yourself into her and write out your heart's forebodings on her heart. For you are strangely morbid, and you are certainly guilty of reading your own doubts and fears into her unspoken and unguessed thoughts.

Believe me, rather than the soul of her love seeming narrower than she hopes, the truth is she gives her love little thought at all. She is too busy — and too sensible. Like me, she has not the time. We are workers, not dreamers; and the minutes are too full for us to lavish them on an eternal weighing and measuring of heart throbs.

Besides, Hester is too large for that sort of stuff. She is the last woman in the world to peer down at the scales to see if she is getting full value. We leave that to the lesser creatures, who spend their courtship loudly protesting how unutterable, immeasurable, and inextinguishable is their love, as though, forsooth, each dreaded lest the other deem it a bad bargain. We do not bargain and chaffer over our feelings, Hester and I. Surely you mistake, and stir storms in teacups.

"Be outspoken," you say. If my conscience were not clear, I should be troubled by that. As it is, what have I hidden? What sharp business have I driven? And who is it that cried "cheated!"? Be outspoken — about what, pray?

You bid me tell her what she is to me. Which is to bid me tell her what she already knows, to tell her that she is the Mother Woman; that of all women she is dearest to me; that of all the walks of life, that one is pleasantest wherein I may walk with her; that with her I shall find the supreme expression of myself and the life that is in me; that in all this I honour her in the finest, loftiest fashion that man can honour woman. Tell her this, Dane. By all means tell her.

"Ah, I do not mean that," I hear you say. Well, let me tell you what you mean, in my own way, and bid you tell her for me. In the lust of my eyes she is nothing to me. She is not a mere sense delight, a toy for the debauchery of my intellect and the enthronement of emotion. She is not the woman to make my pulse go fevered and me go mad. Nor is she the woman to make me forget my manhood and pride, to tumble me down doddering at her feet and gibbering like an ape. She is not the woman to put my thoughts out of joint and the world out of gear, and so to befuddle and make me drunk with the beast that is in me, that I am ready to sacrifice truth, honesty, duty, and purpose for the sake of possession. She is not the woman ever to make me swamp honour and poise and right conduct in the vortex of blind sex passion. She is not the woman to arouse in me such uncontrolled desire that for gratification I would do one ill deed, or put the slightest hurt upon the least of human creatures. She is not the most beautiful woman God Almighty ever planted on His footstool. (There have been and are many women as true and pure and noble). She is not the woman for whose bedazzlement I must advertise the value of my goods by sweating sonnets to her, or shivering serenades at her, or perpetuating follies for her. In short, she is not anything to me that the woman of conventional love is to the man.

And again, what *is* she to me? She is my other self, as it were, my good comrade, and fellow-worker and joy-sharer. With her woman she complements my man and makes us one, and this is the highest civilised sense of union. She is to me the culmination of the thousands of generations of women. It took civilisation to make her, as it takes civilisation to make our marriage. She is to me the partner in a marriage of the gods, for we become gods, we half brutes, when we muzzle the beast and are not menaced by his growls. Under heaven she is my wife and the mother of my children.

Tell her, then, tell her all you wish, you dear old fluttery, mothery poet father — as though it made any difference.

Herbert.

XXXVII

FROM DANE KEMPTON TO HERBERT WACE

Stanford University.
December 3, 19 — .

Not three weeks ago you were sitting opposite me and speaking of Hester. You admitted many things that night, amongst them that the girl never carried you off your feet. You stated over again with precision all you had written. You betrothed yourself, not because Hester is different from everybody else in the world, but because she is like. You took her for what is typical in her, not for what is individual. You preferred to walk toward her before your steps were impelled, because you feared that impulsion would preclude rational choice. With the hope of out-tricking nature, you reached for Hester Stebbins, in order that there might be a wall between your heart's fancy and yourself, should your heart become rebellious. I was to understand that this is the new school, that so live the masters of matter and of self.

And as you spoke, I wondered about the woman Hester and the form of love-making which existed between you, and whether she was simple and without any charm despite her culture and her gift of song. "She either loves him too well to know or to have the strength to care, or she is, like him, of the new school," I thought. I sat and watched you, noting your youth, surprised by the scorn in your eyes and the sadness on your lips. You seemed hopeless and helpless. I closed my eyes. "What has he left himself?" I kept asking. "How will he tread 'The paths gray heads abhor?'" My own head bowed itself as before an irreparable loss. I had rejoined the child of my care only to find him blasted as by grief, the first sunshine smitten from his face and his heart weighted. One word, one ray lighting your looks in a wonted way, one uncontrolled movement of the hand, one little silence following the mention of her, would have led me to believe that I had not understood and that all was well. The night grew old with your plans and analyses. We parted with a sense of shame upon us that we should have written and spoken so long and with such heat, and to such little purpose.

You do not see how this answers your last letter. I will tell you. It shows you that you have explained yourself fully the night we spoke face to face.

You say that Hester is the woman to complement your man. This sounds like a lover, only I happen to know that she is not the irresistible woman. I found it out quite by accident — a few words dropped into a letter, a corroboration of the fact and further committal, a protracted defence of your position, running through a correspondence of over a year, and, finally, a face-to-face declaration. What boots it now that you write prettily? You do not love Hester. You want her to mother your children, and you install her in your life for the purpose before the need.

Love is not lust, and it is good. The irresistible marriage, alone, is the right one. Upon it, alone, does the sacrament rest. The chivalry of your last letter refers less to the girl than to your own ends. It is not because Hester is what she is, that "of all the walks in life that one is pleasantest wherein you may walk with her," but because that walk is the one you choose beyond any other for your wife to follow. The mother woman is legion, and you refuse to specialise.

Hester does not peer down at the scales to see if she is getting full value, yet she does look to her dignity, and, being poor, will not account herself rich. Hester has felt since you made known to her that you wished her to be yours, that she counted punily in your scheme, that you placed little of yourself in charge of her. She loved you and avowed it, but she has never been happy. The tragedy of love is not (what it is thought to be) the unreciprocated love, but the meagerly returned love. It is better to be rejected, equal turned from equal, than to be held with slim desire for slight purpose. Can you see this, Herbert? You are hurting the girl's life. She will ask for what you withhold, though not a word rise to her lips; will thirst for it through the years, will herself grow cramped with your denial till her own love seem a thing of dream, unstable and vague and illusive. And all the time you are gentle. You are devoted to her interests, furthering her happiness to the best in your power; but your power cannot touch her happiness. It is not what you do; it is the motive to your acts, and Hester would know that she has left you unmoved. You respect the function of motherhood, but you do not love Hester. Tell her this, and prevent her from entering a union in which she must feel herself half useful, half wifely, half happy, and therefore all unhappy.

It is not Hester's fault that you cannot love her, and perhaps it is not her misfortune. There is no need for panic. Of two persons, one loving and one loath, the indifferent one is in the right. Can a tree defend itself from the hewer’s axe? What would avail it, then, to feel pain at the blows? It is beyond our control to love or not to love, and no effort that we may put forth can draw love to us when it is denied. It does not avail us to suffer from unrequited love.

This which I have just said is an article of faith which the doctrine of experience often contradicts, for there may be mistake, and the one who does not love may be in the wrong. If only you could wait to see the beauty which is she before you call her! A year later and Hester may flower for you in a passionate blossoming; her face may challenge you to live. A year later and you may find that she is indeed the woman to guide you and to follow you; her voice a song; her eyes a light in the day. As yet, you have not gauged her, and you would put her to small uses. Stand aside, dear Herbert. It will be better.

I have played a surly part. I may be accused of having been to you both a Dmitri Roudin and an Iago. I beg you to believe that it has not been easy for me. I have uttered the earnest word, have driven you on by the goad of friendship, which drives far. I looked upon the days that came tripping toward you out of the blue-white horizon of time and saw them gray for a dear woman, gray and silent as the tomb over a dead love, and heavy hearted for a man who is my son.

Ever wholly yours,
Dane Kempton.

XXXVIII

FROM HESTER STEBBINS TO HERBERT WACE

Stanford University.
December 15, 19 — .

Over and ended. It shall be as I said last night. Herbert, there is no call for anger; believe me, there is not. I am doing what I cannot help doing. You have not changed, but my faith in you has, and I cannot pretend to a happiness I do not feel.

Oh, but I laugh, my very dear one, I laugh that I could seem to choose to wrest myself from you. Did you at one time love me? That morning of wild sunshine when you took my hand and asked me to be your wife seems very long ago. I should have understood — the blame is all mine — I should have known you did not love me, I should have been filled with anger and shame instead of happiness. The blame is all mine.

Last night, while you were speaking, I was standing in the window wondering what all the trouble was about. I could afford to be calm since I knew I was not hurting you very deeply. At most I was disappointing a very self-sufficient man. How do women find courage, O God, to take from men who love them the love they gave? No such ordeal mine?

Farewell, Herbert. Let us think calmly of each other since we have helped each other for so long a stretch of life. Farewell, dear.

Always your friend,
Hester Stebbins.

XXXIX

FROM HESTER STEBBINS TO DANE KEMPTON

Stanford University.
December 18, 19 — .

Herbert has analyzed the situation and has arrived at the conclusion that my dissatisfaction arises in an inordinate desire for happiness. You should not care so much about yourself, he says. Poor, dear, young Herbert! He is very young and cannot as yet conceive how much there is about oneself that demands care. I thought it out in the hills to-day. It was gray and there was a fitful wind. What is this selfishness but a prompting to make much of life? You and I and people of our kind are old before our time, that is the reason we are not reckless. Our dreams mature us. I was a mere girl when Herbert said he wished to marry me, but I was old enough to grasp the full meaning of the pact, as he could not grasp it. In a moment I had travelled my way to the grave and back. I looked at the sheer, quick clouds that flitted past the blue, and I felt that I had caught up with life; I had overtaken the wonders that hung in the sky of my dreaming. Then I looked at him and the sunshine got in my face and made me laugh (or cry) — I was so more than happy, being so much too sure of his need of me. I am glad I walked to-day. The view from the hills was beautiful. (You see I am not unhappy!) I stood on a rock and looked about me, thinking of you, of Barbara, — I feel I know her, — and of Herbert. He and I had often come to these spots. Oh, the hungry memories! Yet what were we but a young man and a young woman, who, without being battered into apathy by misfortune, without being wearied or ill, were taking each other for better or for worse because they seemed compatible? We were doing just that, to Herbert's certain knowledge! I failed him; he hoped for more complaisance. Marriage is a hazard, Mr. Kempton, confess it is, and a man does much when he binds himself to make a woman the mother of his children — nay, the grandmother of theirs, even that. What else and what more? I would never have been wholly in my husband's life, comrade and fellow to it. Herbert knew this clearly, and I vaguely but I acted with clearness on my vagueness. It was hard to do. It has left me breathless and a little afraid to be myself, — as if I had killed a dear thing, — and tearful, too, and spasmodic for your sympathy and sanction.

I told him that for a long time I did not understand, supposing myself beloved and desired and chosen for him by God, thinking he yearned for the subtlety and mystery of me, thinking all of him needed me and cleaved earths and parted seas to come to me. Later, when I became oppressed by a lack and was made to hear the stillness that followed my unechoed words, I became grave and still myself. He had unloved me, I said, and I waited. Something seemed pending, and meanwhile I could love! I made much of every word of comfort that he dropped me, and dwelt with hope on the future. All this I told Herbert the night when I explained, and he turned pale. “You people fly away with yourselves. I cannot follow you. What is wrong, Hester?” He smiled in his distress. Yet was there in his softness an imperiousness, commanding me to be other than I am, forbidding me the right to crave in secret what I had made bold to ask for openly. His man was stronger than my woman, and I leapt to him again. “My husband,” I whispered, my hands in his. This, even after I understood, dearest Mr. Kempton.

It is a sorry tangle. If only one could suit feeling to theory! It is not for a theory that I refuse to be Herbert’s wife. Yet if I loved him enough, I could give up love itself for him. He hinted it, looking as from a distance at me in my attitude of protest and restraint. If I loved him enough, I could forego love itself for him. Somewhere there is a fault, it would seem, somewhere in my abandon is restraint, in my love, self-seeking. Remorse overcame me just as he was about to leave, and I schooled myself to think that there had been no affront, that it honours a woman to be wanted no matter for what end, that every use is a noble use, that we die the same, loved or used. If Herbert Wace wants a wife and thinks me fitting, why, it is well. I thought all this and aged as I thought. Nevertheless, my hand did not put itself out a second time to detain the man who had forced me to face this.

There is a youth here who loves me. If Herbert’s face could shine like his for one hour, I believe I would be happier than I have ever been. And it would not spoil that happiness if this love were toward another than myself. Say you believe me. You must know it of me that before everything else in the world I pray that knowledge of love come to the man over whom the love of my girlhood was spilled.

Do you ask what is left me, dear friend? Work and tears and the intact dream. Believe me, I am not pitiable.

Hester.

THE SEA-WOLF

This 1904 psychological adventure novel features a literary critic as the protagonist. He is the survivor of an ocean collision, who comes under the dominance of Wolf Larsen, the powerful and amoral sea captain that rescues him. Its first printing of forty thousand copies were immediately sold out before publication due to the success of the previous novel *The Call of the Wild*.

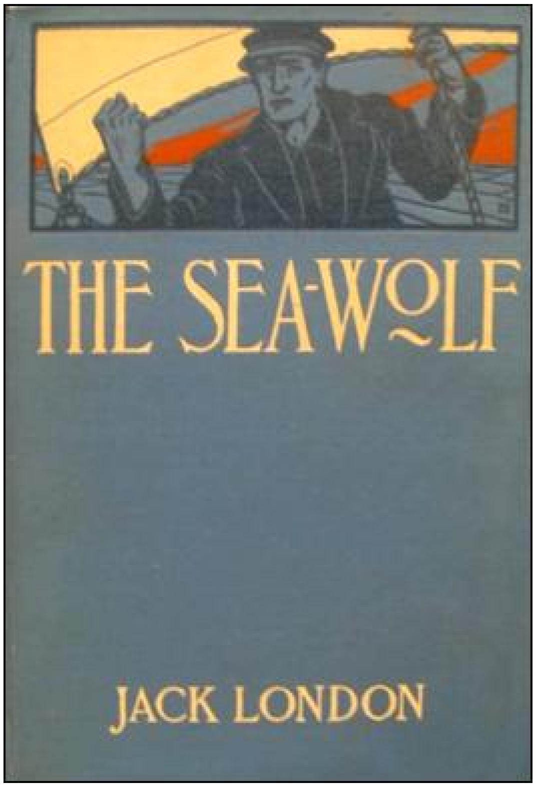
THE SEA-WOLF
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII
CHAPTER XXVIII
CHAPTER XXIX
CHAPTER XXX
CHAPTER XXXI
CHAPTER XXXII
CHAPTER XXXIIII

CHAPTER XXXIV
CHAPTER XXXV
CHAPTER XXXVI
CHAPTER XXXVII
CHAPTER XXXVIII
CHAPTER XXXIX

CHAPTER I

I scarcely know where to begin, though I sometimes facetiously place the cause of it all to Charley Furuseth's credit. He kept a summer cottage in Mill Valley, under the shadow of Mount Tamalpais, and never occupied it except when he loafed through the winter months and read Nietzsche and Schopenhauer to rest his brain. When summer came on, he elected to sweat out a hot and dusty existence in the city and to toil incessantly. Had it not been my custom to run up to see him every Saturday afternoon and to stop over till Monday morning, this particular January Monday morning would not have found me afloat on San Francisco Bay.

Not but that I was afloat in a safe craft, for the *Martinez* was a new ferry-steamer, making her fourth or fifth trip on the run between Sausalito and San Francisco. The danger lay in the heavy fog which blanketed the bay, and of which, as a landsman, I had little apprehension. In fact, I remember the placid exaltation with which I took up my position on the forward upper deck, directly beneath the pilot-house, and allowed the mystery of the fog to lay hold of my imagination. A fresh breeze was blowing, and for a time I was alone in the moist obscurity — yet not alone, for I was dimly conscious of the presence of the pilot, and of what I took to be the captain, in the glass house above my head.

I remember thinking how comfortable it was, this division of labour which made it unnecessary for me to study fogs, winds, tides, and navigation, in order to visit my friend who lived across an arm of the sea. It was good that men should be specialists, I mused. The peculiar knowledge of the pilot and captain sufficed for many thousands of people who knew no more of the sea and navigation than I knew. On the other hand, instead of having to devote my energy to the learning of a multitude of things, I concentrated it upon a few particular things, such as, for instance, the analysis of Poe's place in American literature — an essay of mine, by the way, in the current *Atlantic*. Coming aboard, as I passed through the cabin, I had noticed with greedy eyes a stout gentleman reading the *Atlantic*, which was open at my very essay. And there it was again, the division of labour, the special knowledge of the pilot and captain which permitted the stout gentleman to read my special knowledge on Poe while they carried him safely from Sausalito to San Francisco.

A red-faced man, slamming the cabin door behind him and stumping out on the deck, interrupted my reflections, though I made a mental note of the topic for use in a projected essay which I had thought of calling “The Necessity for Freedom: A Plea for the Artist.” The red-faced man shot a glance up at the pilot-house, gazed around at the fog, stumped across the deck and back (he evidently had artificial legs), and stood still by my side, legs wide apart, and with an expression of keen enjoyment on his face. I was not wrong when I decided that his days had been spent on the sea.

“It’s nasty weather like this here that turns heads grey before their time,” he said, with a nod toward the pilot-house.

“I had not thought there was any particular strain,” I answered. “It seems as simple as A, B, C. They know the direction by compass, the distance, and the speed. I should not call it anything more than mathematical certainty.”

“Strain!” he snorted. “Simple as A, B, C! Mathematical certainty!”

He seemed to brace himself up and lean backward against the air as he stared at me. “How about this here tide that’s rushin’ out through the Golden Gate?” he demanded, or bellowed, rather. “How fast is she ebbin’? What’s the drift, eh? Listen to that, will you? A bell-buoy, and we’re a-top of it! See ’em alterin’ the course!”

From out of the fog came the mournful tolling of a bell, and I could see the pilot turning the wheel with great rapidity. The bell, which had seemed straight ahead, was now sounding from the side. Our own whistle was blowing hoarsely, and from time to time the sound of other whistles came to us from out of the fog.

“That’s a ferry-boat of some sort,” the new-comer said, indicating a whistle off to the right. “And there! D’ye hear that? Blown by mouth. Some scow schooner, most likely. Better watch out, Mr. Schooner-man. Ah, I thought so. Now hell’s a poppin’ for somebody!”

The unseen ferry-boat was blowing blast after blast, and the mouth-blown horn was tooting in terror-stricken fashion.

“And now they’re payin’ their respects to each other and tryin’ to get clear,” the red-faced man went on, as the hurried whistling ceased.

His face was shining, his eyes flashing with excitement as he translated into articulate language the speech of the horns and sirens. “That’s a steam-siren a-goin’ it over there to the left. And you hear that fellow with a frog in his throat — a steam schooner as near as I can judge, crawlin' in from the Heads against the tide."

A shrill little whistle, piping as if gone mad, came from directly ahead and from very near at hand. Gongs sounded on the *Martinez*. Our paddle-wheels stopped, their pulsing beat died away, and then they started again. The shrill little whistle, like the chirping of a cricket amid the cries of great beasts, shot through the fog from more to the side and swiftly grew faint and fainter. I looked to my companion for enlightenment.

"One of them dare-devil launches," he said. "I almost wish we'd sunk him, the little rip! They're the cause of more trouble. And what good are they? Any jackass gets aboard one and runs it from hell to breakfast, blowin' his whistle to beat the band and tellin' the rest of the world to look out for him, because he's comin' and can't look out for himself! Because he's comin'! And you've got to look out, too! Right of way! Common decency! They don't know the meanin' of it!"

I felt quite amused at his unwarranted choler, and while he stumped indignantly up and down I fell to dwelling upon the romance of the fog. And romantic it certainly was — the fog, like the grey shadow of infinite mystery, brooding over the whirling speck of earth; and men, mere motes of light and sparkle, cursed with an insane relish for work, riding their steeds of wood and steel through the heart of the mystery, groping their way blindly through the Unseen, and clamouring and clanging in confident speech the while their hearts are heavy with incertitude and fear.

The voice of my companion brought me back to myself with a laugh. I too had been groping and floundering, the while I thought I rode clear-eyed through the mystery.

"Hello! somebody comin' our way," he was saying. "And d'ye hear that? He's comin' fast. Walking right along. Guess he don't hear us yet. Wind's in wrong direction."

The fresh breeze was blowing right down upon us, and I could hear the whistle plainly, off to one side and a little ahead.

"Ferry-boat?" I asked.

He nodded, then added, "Or he wouldn't be keepin' up such a clip." He gave a short chuckle. "They're gettin' anxious up there."

I glanced up. The captain had thrust his head and shoulders out of the pilot-house, and was staring intently into the fog as though by sheer force of will he could penetrate it. His face was anxious, as was the face of my companion, who had stumped over to the rail and was gazing with a like intentness in the direction of the invisible danger.

Then everything happened, and with inconceivable rapidity. The fog seemed to break away as though split by a wedge, and the bow of a steamboat emerged, trailing fog-wreaths on either side like seaweed on the snout of Leviathan. I could see the pilot-house and a white-bearded man leaning partly out of it, on his elbows. He was clad in a blue uniform, and I remember noting how trim and quiet he was. His quietness, under the circumstances, was terrible. He accepted Destiny, marched hand in hand with it, and coolly measured the stroke. As he leaned there, he ran a calm and speculative eye over us, as though to determine the precise point of the collision, and took no notice whatever when our pilot, white with rage, shouted, “Now you’ve done it!”

On looking back, I realize that the remark was too obvious to make rejoinder necessary.

“Grab hold of something and hang on,” the red-faced man said to me. All his bluster had gone, and he seemed to have caught the contagion of preternatural calm. “And listen to the women scream,” he said grimly — almost bitterly, I thought, as though he had been through the experience before.

The vessels came together before I could follow his advice. We must have been struck squarely amidships, for I saw nothing, the strange steamboat having passed beyond my line of vision. The *Martinez* heeled over, sharply, and there was a crashing and rending of timber. I was thrown flat on the wet deck, and before I could scramble to my feet I heard the scream of the women. This it was, I am certain, — the most indescribable of blood-curdling sounds, — that threw me into a panic. I remembered the life-preservers stored in the cabin, but was met at the door and swept backward by a wild rush of men and women. What happened in the next few minutes I do not recollect, though I have a clear remembrance of pulling down life-preservers from the overhead racks, while the red-faced man fastened them about the bodies of an hysterical group of women. This memory is as distinct and sharp as that of any picture I have seen. It is a picture, and I can see it now, — the jagged edges of the hole in the side of the cabin, through which the grey fog swirled and eddied; the empty upholstered seats, littered with all the evidences of sudden flight, such as packages, hand satchels, umbrellas, and wraps; the stout gentleman who had been reading my essay, encased in cork and canvas, the magazine still in his hand, and asking me with monotonous insistence if I thought there was any danger; the red-faced man, stumping gallantly around on his artificial legs and buckling life-preservers on all comers; and finally, the screaming bedlam of women.

This it was, the screaming of the women, that most tried my nerves. It must have tried, too, the nerves of the red-faced man, for I have another picture which will never fade from my mind. The stout gentleman is stuffing the magazine into his overcoat pocket and looking on curiously. A tangled mass of women, with drawn, white faces and open mouths, is shrieking like a chorus of lost souls; and the red-faced man, his face now purplish with wrath, and with arms extended overhead as in the act of hurling thunderbolts, is shouting, “Shut up! Oh, shut up!”

I remember the scene impelled me to sudden laughter, and in the next instant I realized I was becoming hysterical myself; for these were women of my own kind, like my mother and sisters, with the fear of death upon them and unwilling to die. And I remember that the sounds they made reminded me of the squealing of pigs under the knife of the butcher, and I was struck with horror at the vividness of the analogy. These women, capable of the most sublime emotions, of the tenderest sympathies, were open-mouthed and screaming. They wanted to live, they were helpless, like rats in a trap, and they screamed.

The horror of it drove me out on deck. I was feeling sick and squeamish, and sat down on a bench. In a hazy way I saw and heard men rushing and shouting as they strove to lower the boats. It was just as I had read descriptions of such scenes in books. The tackles jammed. Nothing worked. One boat lowered away with the plugs out, filled with women and children and then with water, and capsized. Another boat had been lowered by one end, and still hung in the tackle by the other end, where it had been abandoned. Nothing was to be seen of the strange steamboat which had caused the disaster, though I heard men saying that she would undoubtedly send boats to our assistance.

I descended to the lower deck. The *Martinez* was sinking fast, for the water was very near. Numbers of the passengers were leaping overboard. Others, in the water, were clamouring to be taken aboard again. No one heeded them. A cry arose that we were sinking. I was seized by the consequent panic, and went over the side in a surge of bodies. How I went over I do not know, though I did know, and instantly, why those in the water were so desirous of getting back on the steamer. The water was cold — so cold that it was painful. The pang, as I plunged into it, was as quick and sharp as that of fire. It bit to the marrow. It was like the grip of death. I gasped with the anguish and shock of it, filling my lungs before the life-preserver popped me to the surface. The taste of the salt was strong in my mouth, and I was strangling with the acrid stuff in my throat and lungs.

But it was the cold that was most distressing. I felt that I could survive but a few minutes. People were struggling and floundering in the water about me. I could hear them crying out to one another. And I heard, also, the sound of oars. Evidently the strange steamboat had lowered its boats. As the time went by I marvelled that I was still alive. I had no sensation whatever in my lower limbs, while a chilling numbness was wrapping about my heart and creeping into it. Small waves, with spiteful foaming crests, continually broke over me and into my mouth, sending me off into more strangling paroxysms.

The noises grew indistinct, though I heard a final and despairing chorus of screams in the distance, and knew that the *Martinez* had gone down. Later, — how much later I have no knowledge, — I came to myself with a start of fear. I was alone. I could hear no calls or cries — only the sound of the waves, made weirdly hollow and reverberant by the fog. A panic in a crowd, which partakes of a sort of community of interest, is not so terrible as a panic when one is by oneself; and such a panic I now suffered. Whither was I drifting? The red-faced man had said that the tide was ebbing through the Golden Gate. Was I, then, being carried out to sea? And the life-preserver in which I floated? Was it not liable to go to pieces at any moment? I had heard of such things being made of paper and hollow rushes which quickly became saturated and lost all buoyancy. And I could not swim a stroke. And I was alone, floating, apparently, in the midst of a grey primordial vastness. I confess that a madness seized me, that I shrieked aloud as the women had shrieked, and beat the water with my numb hands.

How long this lasted I have no conception, for a blankness intervened, of which I remember no more than one remembers of troubled and painful sleep. When I aroused, it was as after centuries of time; and I saw, almost above me and emerging from the fog, the bow of a vessel, and three triangular sails, each shrewdly lapping the other and filled with wind.

Where the bow cut the water there was a great foaming and gurgling, and I seemed directly in its path. I tried to cry out, but was too exhausted. The bow plunged down, just missing me and sending a swash of water clear over my head. Then the long, black side of the vessel began slipping past, so near that I could have touched it with my hands. I tried to reach it, in a mad resolve to claw into the wood with my nails, but my arms were heavy and lifeless. Again I strove to call out, but made no sound.

The stern of the vessel shot by, dropping, as it did so, into a hollow between the waves; and I caught a glimpse of a man standing at the wheel, and of another man who seemed to be doing little else than smoke a cigar. I saw the smoke issuing from his lips as he slowly turned his head and glanced out over the water in my direction. It was a careless, unpremeditated glance, one of those haphazard things men do when they have no immediate call to do anything in particular, but act because they are alive and must do something.

But life and death were in that glance. I could see the vessel being swallowed up in the fog; I saw the back of the man at the wheel, and the head of the other man turning, slowly turning, as his gaze struck the water and casually lifted along it toward me. His face wore an absent expression, as of deep thought, and I became afraid that if his eyes did light upon me he would nevertheless not see me. But his eyes did light upon me, and looked squarely into mine; and he did see me, for he sprang to the wheel, thrusting the other man aside, and whirled it round and round, hand over hand, at the same time shouting orders of some sort. The vessel seemed to go off at a tangent to its former course and leapt almost instantly from view into the fog.

I felt myself slipping into unconsciousness, and tried with all the power of my will to fight above the suffocating blankness and darkness that was rising around me. A little later I heard the stroke of oars, growing nearer and nearer, and the calls of a man. When he was very near I heard him crying, in vexed fashion, “Why in hell don’t you sing out?” This meant me, I thought, and then the blankness and darkness rose over me.

CHAPTER II

I seemed swinging in a mighty rhythm through orbit vastness. Sparkling points of light spluttered and shot past me. They were stars, I knew, and flaring comets, that peopled my flight among the suns. As I reached the limit of my swing and prepared to rush back on the counter swing, a great gong struck and thundered. For an immeasurable period, lapped in the rippling of placid centuries, I enjoyed and pondered my tremendous flight.

But a change came over the face of the dream, for a dream I told myself it must be. My rhythm grew shorter and shorter. I was jerked from swing to counter swing with irritating haste. I could scarcely catch my breath, so fiercely was I impelled through the heavens. The gong thundered more frequently and more furiously. I grew to await it with a nameless dread. Then it seemed as though I were being dragged over rasping sands, white and hot in the sun. This gave place to a sense of intolerable anguish. My skin was scorching in the torment of fire. The gong clanged and knelled. The sparkling points of light flashed past me in an interminable stream, as though the whole sidereal system were dropping into the void. I gasped, caught my breath painfully, and opened my eyes. Two men were kneeling beside me, working over me. My mighty rhythm was the lift and forward plunge of a ship on the sea. The terrific gong was a frying-pan, hanging on the wall, that rattled and clattered with each leap of the ship. The rasping, scorching sands were a man's hard hands chafing my naked chest. I squirmed under the pain of it, and half lifted my head. My chest was raw and red, and I could see tiny blood globules starting through the torn and inflamed cuticle.

"That'll do, Yonson," one of the men said. "Carn't yer see you've bloomin' well rubbed all the gent's skin orf?"

The man addressed as Yonson, a man of the heavy Scandinavian type, ceased chafing me, and arose awkwardly to his feet. The man who had spoken to him was clearly a Cockney, with the clean lines and weakly pretty, almost effeminate, face of the man who has absorbed the sound of Bow Bells with his mother's milk. A draggled muslin cap on his head and a dirty gunny-sack about his slim hips proclaimed him cook of the decidedly dirty ship's galley in which I found myself.

"An' 'ow yer feelin' now, sir?" he asked, with the subservient smirk which comes only of generations of tip-seeking ancestors.

For reply, I twisted weakly into a sitting posture, and was helped by Yonson to my feet. The rattle and bang of the frying-pan was grating horribly on my nerves. I could not collect my thoughts. Clutching the woodwork of the galley for support, — and I confess the grease with which it was scummed put my teeth on edge, — I reached across a hot cooking-range to the offending utensil, unhooked it, and wedged it securely into the coal-box.

The cook grinned at my exhibition of nerves, and thrust into my hand a steaming mug with an "'Ere, this'll do yer good." It was a nauseous mess, — ship's coffee, — but the heat of it was revivifying. Between gulps of the molten stuff I glanced down at my raw and bleeding chest and turned to the Scandinavian.

"Thank you, Mr. Yonson," I said; "but don't you think your measures were rather heroic?"

It was because he understood the reproof of my action, rather than of my words, that he held up his palm for inspection. It was remarkably calloused. I passed my hand over the horny projections, and my teeth went on edge once more from the horrible rasping sensation produced.

"My name is Johnson, not Yonson," he said, in very good, though slow, English, with no more than a shade of accent to it.

There was mild protest in his pale blue eyes, and withal a timid frankness and manliness that quite won me to him.

"Thank you, Mr. Johnson," I corrected, and reached out my hand for his.

He hesitated, awkward and bashful, shifted his weight from one leg to the other, then blunderingly gripped my hand in a hearty shake.

"Have you any dry clothes I may put on?" I asked the cook.

"Yes, sir," he answered, with cheerful alacrity. "I'll run down an' tyke a look over my kit, if you've no objections, sir, to wearin' my things."

He dived out of the galley door, or glided rather, with a swiftness and smoothness of gait that struck me as being not so much cat-like as oily. In fact, this oiliness, or greasiness, as I was later to learn, was probably the most salient expression of his personality.

"And where am I?" I asked Johnson, whom I took, and rightly, to be one of the sailors. "What vessel is this, and where is she bound?"

"Off the Farallones, heading about sou-west," he answered, slowly and methodically, as though groping for his best English, and rigidly observing the order of my queries. "The schooner *Ghost*, bound seal-hunting to Japan."

"And who is the captain? I must see him as soon as I am dressed."

Johnson looked puzzled and embarrassed. He hesitated while he groped in his vocabulary and framed a complete answer. "The cap'n is Wolf Larsen, or so men call him. I never heard his other name. But you better speak soft with him. He is mad this morning. The mate — "

But he did not finish. The cook had glided in.

"Better sling yer 'ook out of 'ere, Yonson," he said. "The old man'll be wantin' yer on deck, an' this ayn't no d'y to fall foul of 'im."

Johnson turned obediently to the door, at the same time, over the cook's shoulder, favouring me with an amazingly solemn and portentous wink as though to emphasize his interrupted remark and the need for me to be soft-spoken with the captain.

Hanging over the cook's arm was a loose and crumpled array of evil-looking and sour-smelling garments.

"They was put aw'y wet, sir," he vouchsafed explanation. "But you'll 'ave to make them do till I dry yours out by the fire."

Clinging to the woodwork, staggering with the roll of the ship, and aided by the cook, I managed to slip into a rough woollen undershirt. On the instant my flesh was creeping and crawling from the harsh contact. He noticed my involuntary twitching and grimacing, and smirked:

"I only 'ope yer don't ever 'ave to get used to such as that in this life, 'cos you've got a bloomin' soft skin, that you 'ave, more like a lydy's than any I know of. I was bloomin' well sure you was a gentleman as soon as I set eyes on yer."

I had taken a dislike to him at first, and as he helped to dress me this dislike increased. There was something repulsive about his touch. I shrank from his hand; my flesh revolted. And between this and the smells arising from various pots boiling and bubbling on the galley fire, I was in haste to get out into the fresh air. Further, there was the need of seeing the captain about what arrangements could be made for getting me ashore.

A cheap cotton shirt, with frayed collar and a bosom discoloured with what I took to be ancient blood-stains, was put on me amid a running and apologetic fire of comment. A pair of workman's brogans encased my feet, and for trousers I was furnished with a pair of pale blue, washed-out overalls, one leg of which was fully ten inches shorter than the other. The abbreviated leg looked as though the devil had there clutched for the Cockney's soul and missed the shadow for the substance.

"And whom have I to thank for this kindness?" I asked, when I stood completely arrayed, a tiny boy's cap on my head, and for coat a dirty, striped cotton jacket which ended at the small of my back and the sleeves of which reached just below my elbows.

The cook drew himself up in a smugly humble fashion, a deprecating smirk on his face. Out of my experience with stewards on the Atlantic liners at the end of the voyage, I could have sworn he was waiting for his tip. From my fuller knowledge of the creature I now know that the posture was unconscious. An hereditary servility, no doubt, was responsible.

"Mugridge, sir," he fawned, his effeminate features running into a greasy smile. "Thomas Mugridge, sir, an' at yer service."

"All right, Thomas," I said. "I shall not forget you — when my clothes are dry."

A soft light suffused his face and his eyes glistened, as though somewhere in the deeps of his being his ancestors had quickened and stirred with dim memories of tips received in former lives.

"Thank you, sir," he said, very gratefully and very humbly indeed.

Precisely in the way that the door slid back, he slid aside, and I stepped out on deck. I was still weak from my prolonged immersion. A puff of wind caught me, — and I staggered across the moving deck to a corner of the cabin, to which I clung for support. The schooner, heeled over far out from the perpendicular, was bowing and plunging into the long Pacific roll. If she were heading south-west as Johnson had said, the wind, then, I calculated, was blowing nearly from the south. The fog was gone, and in its place the sun sparkled crisply on the surface of the water, I turned to the east, where I knew California must lie, but could see nothing save low-lying fog-banks — the same fog, doubtless, that had brought about the disaster to the *Martinez* and placed me in my present situation. To the north, and not far away, a group of naked rocks thrust above the sea, on one of which I could distinguish a lighthouse. In the south-west, and almost in our course, I saw the pyramidal loom of some vessel's sails.

Having completed my survey of the horizon, I turned to my more immediate surroundings. My first thought was that a man who had come through a collision and rubbed shoulders with death merited more attention than I received. Beyond a sailor at the wheel who stared curiously across the top of the cabin, I attracted no notice whatever.

Everybody seemed interested in what was going on amid ships. There, on a hatch, a large man was lying on his back. He was fully clothed, though his shirt was ripped open in front. Nothing was to be seen of his chest, however, for it was covered with a mass of black hair, in appearance like the furry coat of a dog. His face and neck were hidden beneath a black beard, intershot with grey, which would have been stiff and bushy had it not been limp and draggled and dripping with water. His eyes were closed, and he was apparently unconscious; but his mouth was wide open, his breast, heaving as though from suffocation as he laboured noisily for breath. A sailor, from time to time and quite methodically, as a matter of routine, dropped a canvas bucket into the ocean at the end of a rope, hauled it in hand under hand, and sluiced its contents over the prostrate man.

Pacing back and forth the length of the hatchways and savagely chewing the end of a cigar, was the man whose casual glance had rescued me from the sea. His height was probably five feet ten inches, or ten and a half; but my first impression, or feel of the man, was not of this, but of his strength. And yet, while he was of massive build, with broad shoulders and deep chest, I could not characterize his strength as massive. It was what might be termed a sinewy, knotty strength, of the kind we ascribe to lean and wiry men, but which, in him, because of his heavy build, partook more of the enlarged gorilla order. Not that in appearance he seemed in the least gorilla-like. What I am striving to express is this strength itself, more as a thing apart from his physical semblance. It was a strength we are wont to associate with things primitive, with wild animals, and the creatures we imagine our tree-dwelling prototypes to have been — a strength savage, ferocious, alive in itself, the essence of life in that it is the potency of motion, the elemental stuff itself out of which the many forms of life have been moulded; in short, that which writhes in the body of a snake when the head is cut off, and the snake, as a snake, is dead, or which lingers in the shapeless lump of turtle-meat and recoils and quivers from the prod of a finger.

Such was the impression of strength I gathered from this man who paced up and down. He was firmly planted on his legs; his feet struck the deck squarely and with surety; every movement of a muscle, from the heave of the shoulders to the tightening of the lips about the cigar, was decisive, and seemed to come out of a strength that was excessive and overwhelming. In fact, though this strength pervaded every action of his, it seemed but the advertisement of a greater strength that lurked within, that lay dormant and no more than stirred from time to time, but which might arouse, at any moment, terrible and compelling, like the rage of a lion or the wrath of a storm.

The cook stuck his head out of the galley door and grinned encouragingly at me, at the same time jerking his thumb in the direction of the man who paced up and down by the hatchway. Thus I was given to understand that he was the captain, the "Old Man," in the cook's vernacular, the individual whom I must interview and put to the trouble of somehow getting me ashore. I had half started forward, to get over with what I was certain would be a stormy five minutes, when a more violent suffocating paroxysm seized the unfortunate person who was lying on his back. He wrenched and writhed about convulsively. The chin, with the damp black beard, pointed higher in the air as the back muscles stiffened and the chest swelled in an unconscious and instinctive effort to get more air. Under the whiskers, and all unseen, I knew that the skin was taking on a purplish hue.

The captain, or Wolf Larsen, as men called him, ceased pacing and gazed down at the dying man. So fierce had this final struggle become that the sailor paused in the act of flinging more water over him and stared curiously, the canvas bucket partly tilted and dripping its contents to the deck. The dying man beat a tattoo on the hatch with his heels, straightened out his legs, and stiffened in one great tense effort, and rolled his head from side to side. Then the muscles relaxed, the head stopped rolling, and a sigh, as of profound relief, floated upward from his lips. The jaw dropped, the upper lip lifted, and two rows of tobacco-discoloured teeth appeared. It seemed as though his features had frozen into a diabolical grin at the world he had left and outwitted.

Then a most surprising thing occurred. The captain broke loose upon the dead man like a thunderclap. Oaths rolled from his lips in a continuous stream. And they were not namby-pamby oaths, or mere expressions of indecency. Each word was a blasphemy, and there were many words. They crisped and crackled like electric sparks. I had never heard anything like it in my life, nor could I have conceived it possible. With a turn for literary expression myself, and a penchant for forcible figures and phrases, I appreciated, as no other listener, I dare say, the peculiar vividness and strength and absolute blasphemy of his metaphors. The cause of it all, as near as I could make out, was that the man, who was mate, had gone on a debauch before leaving San Francisco, and then had the poor taste to die at the beginning of the voyage and leave Wolf Larsen short-handed.

It should be unnecessary to state, at least to my friends, that I was shocked. Oaths and vile language of any sort had always been repellent to me. I felt a wilting sensation, a sinking at the heart, and, I might just as well say, a giddiness. To me, death had always been invested with solemnity and dignity. It had been peaceful in its occurrence, sacred in its ceremonial. But death in its more sordid and terrible aspects was a thing with which I had been unacquainted till now. As I say, while I appreciated the power of the terrific denunciation that swept out of Wolf Larsen's mouth, I was inexpressibly shocked. The scorching torrent was enough to wither the face of the corpse. I should not have been surprised if the wet black beard had frizzled and curled and flared up in smoke and flame. But the dead man was unconcerned. He continued to grin with a sardonic humour, with a cynical mockery and defiance. He was master of the situation.

CHAPTER III

Wolf Larsen ceased swearing as suddenly as he had begun. He relighted his cigar and glanced around. His eyes chanced upon the cook.

"Well, Cooky?" he began, with a suaveness that was cold and of the temper of steel.

"Yes, sir," the cook eagerly interpolated, with appeasing and apologetic servility.

"Don't you think you've stretched that neck of yours just about enough? It's unhealthy, you know. The mate's gone, so I can't afford to lose you too. You must be very, very careful of your health, Cooky. Understand?"

His last word, in striking contrast with the smoothness of his previous utterance, snapped like the lash of a whip. The cook quailed under it.

"Yes, sir," was the meek reply, as the offending head disappeared into the galley.

At this sweeping rebuke, which the cook had only pointed, the rest of the crew became uninterested and fell to work at one task or another. A number of men, however, who were lounging about a companion-way between the galley and hatch, and who did not seem to be sailors, continued talking in low tones with one another. These, I afterward learned, were the hunters, the men who shot the seals, and a very superior breed to common sailor-folk.

"Johansen!" Wolf Larsen called out. A sailor stepped forward obediently. "Get your palm and needle and sew the beggar up. You'll find some old canvas in the sail-locker. Make it do."

"What'll I put on his feet, sir?" the man asked, after the customary "Ay, ay, sir."

"We'll see to that," Wolf Larsen answered, and elevated his voice in a call of "Cooky!"

Thomas Mugridge popped out of his galley like a jack-in-the-box.

"Go below and fill a sack with coal."

"Any of you fellows got a Bible or Prayer-book?" was the captain's next demand, this time of the hunters lounging about the companion-way.

They shook their heads, and some one made a jocular remark which I did not catch, but which raised a general laugh.

Wolf Larsen made the same demand of the sailors. Bibles and Prayer-books seemed scarce articles, but one of the men volunteered to pursue the quest amongst the watch below, returning in a minute with the information that there was none.

The captain shrugged his shoulders. “Then we’ll drop him over without any palavering, unless our clerical-looking castaway has the burial service at sea by heart.”

By this time he had swung fully around and was facing me. “You’re a preacher, aren’t you?” he asked.

The hunters, — there were six of them, — to a man, turned and regarded me. I was painfully aware of my likeness to a scarecrow. A laugh went up at my appearance, — a laugh that was not lessened or softened by the dead man stretched and grinning on the deck before us; a laugh that was as rough and harsh and frank as the sea itself; that arose out of coarse feelings and blunted sensibilities, from natures that knew neither courtesy nor gentleness.

Wolf Larsen did not laugh, though his grey eyes lighted with a slight glint of amusement; and in that moment, having stepped forward quite close to him, I received my first impression of the man himself, of the man as apart from his body, and from the torrent of blasphemy I had heard him spew forth. The face, with large features and strong lines, of the square order, yet well filled out, was apparently massive at first sight; but again, as with the body, the massiveness seemed to vanish, and a conviction to grow of a tremendous and excessive mental or spiritual strength that lay behind, sleeping in the deeps of his being. The jaw, the chin, the brow rising to a goodly height and swelling heavily above the eyes, — these, while strong in themselves, unusually strong, seemed to speak an immense vigour or virility of spirit that lay behind and beyond and out of sight. There was no sounding such a spirit, no measuring, no determining of metes and bounds, nor neatly classifying in some pigeon-hole with others of similar type.

The eyes — and it was my destiny to know them well — were large and handsome, wide apart as the true artist’s are wide, sheltering under a heavy brow and arched over by thick black eyebrows. The eyes themselves were of that baffling protean grey which is never twice the same; which runs through many shades and colourings like intershot silk in sunshine; which is grey, dark and light, and greenish-grey, and sometimes of the clear azure of the deep sea. They were eyes that masked the soul with a thousand guises, and that sometimes opened, at rare moments, and allowed it to rush up as though it were about to fare forth nakedly into the world on some wonderful adventure, — eyes that could brood with the hopeless sombreness of leaden skies; that could snap and crackle points of fire like those which sparkle from a whirling sword; that could grow chill as an arctic landscape, and yet again, that could warm and soften and be all a-dance with love-lights, intense and masculine, luring and compelling, which at the same time fascinate and dominate women till they surrender in a gladness of joy and of relief and sacrifice.

But to return. I told him that, unhappily for the burial service, I was not a preacher, when he sharply demanded:

"What do you do for a living?"

I confess I had never had such a question asked me before, nor had I ever canvassed it. I was quite taken aback, and before I could find myself had sillily stammered, "I — I am a gentleman."

His lip curled in a swift sneer.

"I have worked, I do work," I cried impetuously, as though he were my judge and I required vindication, and at the same time very much aware of my arrant idiocy in discussing the subject at all.

"For your living?"

There was something so imperative and masterful about him that I was quite beside myself — "rattled," as Furuseth would have termed it, like a quaking child before a stern school-master.

"Who feeds you?" was his next question.

"I have an income," I answered stoutly, and could have bitten my tongue the next instant. "All of which, you will pardon my observing, has nothing whatsoever to do with what I wish to see you about."

But he disregarded my protest.

"Who earned it? Eh? I thought so. Your father. You stand on dead men's legs. You've never had any of your own. You couldn't walk alone between two sunrises and hustle the meat for your belly for three meals. Let me see your hand."

His tremendous, dormant strength must have stirred, swiftly and accurately, or I must have slept a moment, for before I knew it he had stepped two paces forward, gripped my right hand in his, and held it up for inspection. I tried to withdraw it, but his fingers tightened, without visible effort, till I thought mine would be crushed. It is hard to maintain one's dignity under such circumstances. I could not squirm or struggle like a schoolboy. Nor could I attack such a creature who had but to twist my arm to break it. Nothing remained but to stand still and accept the indignity. I had time to notice that the pockets of the dead man had been emptied on the deck, and that his body and his grin had been wrapped from view in canvas, the folds of which the sailor, Johansen, was sewing together with coarse white twine, shoving the needle through with a leather contrivance fitted on the palm of his hand.

Wolf Larsen dropped my hand with a flirt of disdain.

“Dead men’s hands have kept it soft. Good for little else than dish-washing and scullion work.”

“I wish to be put ashore,” I said firmly, for I now had myself in control. “I shall pay you whatever you judge your delay and trouble to be worth.”

He looked at me curiously. Mockery shone in his eyes.

“I have a counter proposition to make, and for the good of your soul. My mate’s gone, and there’ll be a lot of promotion. A sailor comes aft to take mate’s place, cabin-boy goes for’ard to take sailor’s place, and you take the cabin-boy’s place, sign the articles for the cruise, twenty dollars per month and found. Now what do you say? And mind you, it’s for your own soul’s sake. It will be the making of you. You might learn in time to stand on your own legs, and perhaps to toddle along a bit.”

But I took no notice. The sails of the vessel I had seen off to the south-west had grown larger and plainer. They were of the same schooner-rig as the *Ghost*, though the hull itself, I could see, was smaller. She was a pretty sight, leaping and flying toward us, and evidently bound to pass at close range. The wind had been momentarily increasing, and the sun, after a few angry gleams, had disappeared. The sea had turned a dull leaden grey and grown rougher, and was now tossing foaming whitecaps to the sky. We were travelling faster, and heeled farther over. Once, in a gust, the rail dipped under the sea, and the decks on that side were for the moment awash with water that made a couple of the hunters hastily lift their feet.

“That vessel will soon be passing us,” I said, after a moment’s pause. “As she is going in the opposite direction, she is very probably bound for San Francisco.”

“Very probably,” was Wolf Larsen’s answer, as he turned partly away from me and cried out, “Cooky! Oh, Cooky!”

The Cockney popped out of the galley.

"Where's that boy? Tell him I want him."

"Yes, sir;" and Thomas Mugridge fled swiftly aft and disappeared down another companion-way near the wheel. A moment later he emerged, a heavy-set young fellow of eighteen or nineteen, with a glowering, villainous countenance, trailing at his heels.

"'Ere 'e is, sir," the cook said.

But Wolf Larsen ignored that worthy, turning at once to the cabin-boy.

"What's your name, boy?"

"George Leach, sir," came the sullen answer, and the boy's bearing showed clearly that he divined the reason for which he had been summoned.

"Not an Irish name," the captain snapped sharply. "O'Toole or McCarthy would suit your mug a damn sight better. Unless, very likely, there's an Irishman in your mother's woodpile."

I saw the young fellow's hands clench at the insult, and the blood crawl scarlet up his neck.

"But let that go," Wolf Larsen continued. "You may have very good reasons for forgetting your name, and I'll like you none the worse for it as long as you toe the mark. Telegraph Hill, of course, is your port of entry. It sticks out all over your mug. Tough as they make them and twice as nasty. I know the kind. Well, you can make up your mind to have it taken out of you on this craft. Understand? Who shipped you, anyway?"

"McCready and Swanson."

"Sir!" Wolf Larsen thundered.

"McCready and Swanson, sir," the boy corrected, his eyes burning with a bitter light.

"Who got the advance money?"

"They did, sir."

"I thought as much. And damned glad you were to let them have it. Couldn't make yourself scarce too quick, with several gentlemen you may have heard of looking for you."

The boy metamorphosed into a savage on the instant. His body bunched together as though for a spring, and his face became as an infuriated beast's as he snarled, "It's a — "

"A what?" Wolf Larsen asked, a peculiar softness in his voice, as though he were overwhelmingly curious to hear the unspoken word.

The boy hesitated, then mastered his temper. “Nothin’, sir. I take it back.”

“And you have shown me I was right.” This with a gratified smile. “How old are you?”

“Just turned sixteen, sir,”

“A lie. You’ll never see eighteen again. Big for your age at that, with muscles like a horse. Pack up your kit and go for’ard into the fo’c’sle. You’re a boat-puller now. You’re promoted; see?”

Without waiting for the boy’s acceptance, the captain turned to the sailor who had just finished the gruesome task of sewing up the corpse. “Johansen, do you know anything about navigation?”

“No, sir,”

“Well, never mind; you’re mate just the same. Get your traps aft into the mate’s berth.”

“Ay, ay, sir,” was the cheery response, as Johansen started forward.

In the meantime the erstwhile cabin-boy had not moved. “What are you waiting for?” Wolf Larsen demanded.

“I didn’t sign for boat-puller, sir,” was the reply. “I signed for cabin-boy. An’ I don’t want no boat-pullin’ in mine.”

“Pack up and go for’ard.”

This time Wolf Larsen’s command was thrillingly imperative. The boy glowered sullenly, but refused to move.

Then came another stirring of Wolf Larsen’s tremendous strength. It was utterly unexpected, and it was over and done with between the ticks of two seconds. He had sprung fully six feet across the deck and driven his fist into the other’s stomach. At the same moment, as though I had been struck myself, I felt a sickening shock in the pit of my stomach. I instance this to show the sensitiveness of my nervous organization at the time, and how unused I was to spectacles of brutality. The cabin-boy — and he weighed one hundred and sixty-five at the very least — crumpled up. His body wrapped limply about the fist like a wet rag about a stick. He lifted into the air, described a short curve, and struck the deck alongside the corpse on his head and shoulders, where he lay and writhed about in agony.

“Well?” Larsen asked of me. “Have you made up your mind?”

I had glanced occasionally at the approaching schooner, and it was now almost abreast of us and not more than a couple of hundred yards away. It was a very trim and neat little craft. I could see a large, black number on one of its sails, and I had seen pictures of pilot-boats.

"What vessel is that?" I asked.

"The pilot-boat *Lady Mine*," Wolf Larsen answered grimly. "Got rid of her pilots and running into San Francisco. She'll be there in five or six hours with this wind."

"Will you please signal it, then, so that I may be put ashore."

"Sorry, but I've lost the signal book overboard," he remarked, and the group of hunters grinned.

I debated a moment, looking him squarely in the eyes. I had seen the frightful treatment of the cabin-boy, and knew that I should very probably receive the same, if not worse. As I say, I debated with myself, and then I did what I consider the bravest act of my life. I ran to the side, waving my arms and shouting:

"*Lady Mine* ahoy! Take me ashore! A thousand dollars if you take me ashore!"

I waited, watching two men who stood by the wheel, one of them steering. The other was lifting a megaphone to his lips. I did not turn my head, though I expected every moment a killing blow from the human brute behind me. At last, after what seemed centuries, unable longer to stand the strain, I looked around. He had not moved. He was standing in the same position, swaying easily to the roll of the ship and lighting a fresh cigar.

"What is the matter? Anything wrong?"

This was the cry from the *Lady Mine*.

"Yes!" I shouted, at the top of my lungs. "Life or death! One thousand dollars if you take me ashore!"

"Too much 'Frisco tanglefoot for the health of my crew!" Wolf Larsen shouted after. "This one" — indicating me with his thumb — "fancies sea-serpents and monkeys just now!"

The man on the *Lady Mine* laughed back through the megaphone. The pilot-boat plunged past.

"Give him hell for me!" came a final cry, and the two men waved their arms in farewell.

I leaned despairingly over the rail, watching the trim little schooner swiftly increasing the bleak sweep of ocean between us. And she would probably be in San Francisco in five or six hours! My head seemed bursting. There was an ache in my throat as though my heart were up in it.

A curling wave struck the side and splashed salt spray on my lips. The wind puffed strongly, and the *Ghost* heeled far over, burying her lee rail. I could hear the water rushing down upon the deck.

When I turned around, a moment later, I saw the cabin-boy staggering to his feet. His face was ghastly white, twitching with suppressed pain. He looked very sick.

"Well, Leach, are you going for'ard?" Wolf Larsen asked.

"Yes, sir," came the answer of a spirit cowed.

"And you?" I was asked.

"I'll give you a thousand — " I began, but was interrupted.

"Stow that! Are you going to take up your duties as cabin-boy? Or do I have to take you in hand?"

What was I to do? To be brutally beaten, to be killed perhaps, would not help my case. I looked steadily into the cruel grey eyes. They might have been granite for all the light and warmth of a human soul they contained. One may see the soul stir in some men's eyes, but his were bleak, and cold, and grey as the sea itself.

"Well?"

"Yes," I said.

"Say 'yes, sir.'"

"Yes, sir," I corrected.

"What is your name?"

"Van Weyden, sir."

"First name?"

"Humphrey, sir; Humphrey Van Weyden."

"Age?"

"Thirty-five, sir."

"That'll do. Go to the cook and learn your duties."

And thus it was that I passed into a state of involuntary servitude to Wolf Larsen. He was stronger than I, that was all. But it was very unreal at the time. It is no less unreal now that I look back upon it. It will always be to me a monstrous, inconceivable thing, a horrible nightmare.

"Hold on, don't go yet."

I stopped obediently in my walk toward the galley.

"Johansen, call all hands. Now that we've everything cleaned up, we'll have the funeral and get the decks cleared of useless lumber."

While Johansen was summoning the watch below, a couple of sailors, under the captain's direction, laid the canvas-swathed corpse upon a hatch-cover. On either side the deck, against the rail and bottoms up, were lashed a number of small boats. Several men picked up the hatch-cover with its ghastly freight, carried it to the lee side, and rested it on the boats, the feet pointing overboard. To the feet was attached the sack of coal which the cook had fetched.

I had always conceived a burial at sea to be a very solemn and awe-inspiring event, but I was quickly disillusioned, by this burial at any rate. One of the hunters, a little dark-eyed man whom his mates called "Smoke," was telling stories, liberally intersprinkled with oaths and obscenities; and every minute or so the group of hunters gave mouth to a laughter that sounded to me like a wolf-chorus or the barking of hell-hounds. The sailors trooped noisily aft, some of the watch below rubbing the sleep from their eyes, and talked in low tones together. There was an ominous and worried expression on their faces. It was evident that they did not like the outlook of a voyage under such a captain and begun so inauspiciously. From time to time they stole glances at Wolf Larsen, and I could see that they were apprehensive of the man.

He stepped up to the hatch-cover, and all caps came off. I ran my eyes over them — twenty men all told; twenty-two including the man at the wheel and myself. I was pardonably curious in my survey, for it appeared my fate to be pent up with them on this miniature floating world for I knew not how many weeks or months. The sailors, in the main, were English and Scandinavian, and their faces seemed of the heavy, stolid order. The hunters, on the other hand, had stronger and more diversified faces, with hard lines and the marks of the free play of passions. Strange to say, and I noted it all once, Wolf Larsen's features showed no such evil stamp. There seemed nothing vicious in them. True, there were lines, but they were the lines of decision and firmness. It seemed, rather, a frank and open countenance, which frankness or openness was enhanced by the fact that he was smooth-shaven. I could hardly believe — until the next incident occurred — that it was the face of a man who could behave as he had behaved to the cabin-boy.

At this moment, as he opened his mouth to speak, puff after puff struck the schooner and pressed her side under. The wind shrieked a wild song through the rigging. Some of the hunters glanced anxiously aloft. The lee rail, where the dead man lay, was buried in the sea, and as the schooner lifted and righted the water swept across the deck wetting us above our shoe-tops. A shower of rain drove down upon us, each drop stinging like a hailstone. As it passed, Wolf Larsen began to speak, the bare-headed men swaying in unison, to the heave and lunge of the deck.

"I only remember one part of the service," he said, "and that is, 'And the body shall be cast into the sea.' So cast it in."

He ceased speaking. The men holding the hatch-cover seemed perplexed, puzzled no doubt by the briefness of the ceremony. He burst upon them in a fury.

"Lift up that end there, damn you! What the hell's the matter with you?"

They elevated the end of the hatch-cover with pitiful haste, and, like a dog flung overside, the dead man slid feet first into the sea. The coal at his feet dragged him down. He was gone.

"Johansen," Wolf Larsen said briskly to the new mate, "keep all hands on deck now they're here. Get in the topsails and jibs and make a good job of it. We're in for a sou'-easter. Better reef the jib and mainsail too, while you're about it."

In a moment the decks were in commotion, Johansen bellowing orders and the men pulling or letting go ropes of various sorts — all naturally confusing to a landsman such as myself. But it was the heartlessness of it that especially struck me. The dead man was an episode that was past, an incident that was dropped, in a canvas covering with a sack of coal, while the ship sped along and her work went on. Nobody had been affected. The hunters were laughing at a fresh story of Smoke's; the men pulling and hauling, and two of them climbing aloft; Wolf Larsen was studying the clouding sky to windward; and the dead man, dying obscenely, buried sordidly, and sinking down, down —

Then it was that the cruelty of the sea, its relentlessness and awfulness, rushed upon me. Life had become cheap and tawdry, a beastly and inarticulate thing, a soulless stirring of the ooze and slime. I held on to the weather rail, close by the shrouds, and gazed out across the desolate foaming waves to the low-lying fog-banks that hid San Francisco and the California coast. Rain-squalls were driving in between, and I could scarcely see the fog. And this strange vessel, with its terrible men, pressed under by wind and sea and ever leaping up and out, was heading away into the south-west, into the great and lonely Pacific expanse.

CHAPTER IV

What happened to me next on the sealing-schooner *Ghost*, as I strove to fit into my new environment, are matters of humiliation and pain. The cook, who was called “the doctor” by the crew, “Tommy” by the hunters, and “Cooky” by Wolf Larsen, was a changed person. The difference worked in my status brought about a corresponding difference in treatment from him. Servile and fawning as he had been before, he was now as domineering and bellicose. In truth, I was no longer the fine gentleman with a skin soft as a “lydy’s,” but only an ordinary and very worthless cabin-boy.

He absurdly insisted upon my addressing him as Mr. Mugridge, and his behaviour and carriage were insufferable as he showed me my duties. Besides my work in the cabin, with its four small state-rooms, I was supposed to be his assistant in the galley, and my colossal ignorance concerning such things as peeling potatoes or washing greasy pots was a source of unending and sarcastic wonder to him. He refused to take into consideration what I was, or, rather, what my life and the things I was accustomed to had been. This was part of the attitude he chose to adopt toward me; and I confess, ere the day was done, that I hated him with more lively feelings than I had ever hated any one in my life before.

This first day was made more difficult for me from the fact that the *Ghost*, under close reefs (terms such as these I did not learn till later), was plunging through what Mr. Mugridge called an “’owlin’ sou’-easter.” At half-past five, under his directions, I set the table in the cabin, with rough-weather trays in place, and then carried the tea and cooked food down from the galley. In this connection I cannot forbear relating my first experience with a boarding sea.

“Look sharp or you’ll get doused,” was Mr. Mugridge’s parting injunction, as I left the galley with a big tea-pot in one hand, and in the hollow of the other arm several loaves of fresh-baked bread. One of the hunters, a tall, loose-jointed chap named Henderson, was going aft at the time from the steerage (the name the hunters facetiously gave their midships sleeping quarters) to the cabin. Wolf Larsen was on the poop, smoking his everlasting cigar.

“’Ere she comes. Sling yer ’ook!” the cook cried.

I stopped, for I did not know what was coming, and saw the galley door slide shut with a bang. Then I saw Henderson leaping like a madman for the main rigging, up which he shot, on the inside, till he was many feet higher than my head. Also I saw a great wave, curling and foaming, poised far above the rail. I was directly under it. My mind did not work quickly, everything was so new and strange. I grasped that I was in danger, but that was all. I stood still, in trepidation. Then Wolf Larsen shouted from the poop:

"Grab hold something, you — you Hump!"

But it was too late. I sprang toward the rigging, to which I might have clung, and was met by the descending wall of water. What happened after that was very confusing. I was beneath the water, suffocating and drowning. My feet were out from under me, and I was turning over and over and being swept along I knew not where. Several times I collided against hard objects, once striking my right knee a terrible blow. Then the flood seemed suddenly to subside and I was breathing the good air again. I had been swept against the galley and around the steerage companion-way from the weather side into the lee scuppers. The pain from my hurt knee was agonizing. I could not put my weight on it, or, at least, I thought I could not put my weight on it; and I felt sure the leg was broken. But the cook was after me, shouting through the lee galley door:

"'Ere, you! Don't tyke all night about it! Where's the pot? Lost overboard? Serve you bloody well right if yer neck was broke!"

I managed to struggle to my feet. The great tea-pot was still in my hand. I limped to the galley and handed it to him. But he was consumed with indignation, real or feigned.

"Gawd blime me if you ayn't a slob. Wot 're you good for anyw'y, I'd like to know? Eh? Wot 're you good for any'wy? Cawn't even carry a bit of tea aft without losin' it. Now I'll 'ave to boil some more.

"An' wot 're you snifflin' about?" he burst out at me, with renewed rage. "'Cos you've 'urt yer pore little leg, pore little mamma's darlin'."

I was not sniffling, though my face might well have been drawn and twitching from the pain. But I called up all my resolution, set my teeth, and hobbled back and forth from galley to cabin and cabin to galley without further mishap. Two things I had acquired by my accident: an injured knee-cap that went undressed and from which I suffered for weary months, and the name of "Hump," which Wolf Larsen had called me from the poop.

Thereafter, fore and aft, I was known by no other name, until the term became a part of my thought-processes and I identified it with myself, thought of myself as Hump, as though Hump were I and had always been I.

It was no easy task, waiting on the cabin table, where sat Wolf Larsen, Johansen, and the six hunters. The cabin was small, to begin with, and to move around, as I was compelled to, was not made easier by the schooner's violent pitching and wallowing. But what struck me most forcibly was the total lack of sympathy on the part of the men whom I served. I could feel my knee through my clothes, swelling, and swelling, and I was sick and faint from the pain of it. I could catch glimpses of my face, white and ghastly, distorted with pain, in the cabin mirror. All the men must have seen my condition, but not one spoke or took notice of me, till I was almost grateful to Wolf Larsen, later on (I was washing the dishes), when he said:

"Don't let a little thing like that bother you. You'll get used to such things in time. It may cripple you some, but all the same you'll be learning to walk.

"That's what you call a paradox, isn't it?" he added.

He seemed pleased when I nodded my head with the customary "Yes, sir."

"I suppose you know a bit about literary things? Eh? Good. I'll have some talks with you some time."

And then, taking no further account of me, he turned his back and went up on deck.

That night, when I had finished an endless amount of work, I was sent to sleep in the steerage, where I made up a spare bunk. I was glad to get out of the detestable presence of the cook and to be off my feet. To my surprise, my clothes had dried on me and there seemed no indications of catching cold, either from the last soaking or from the prolonged soaking from the foundering of the *Martinez*. Under ordinary circumstances, after all that I had undergone, I should have been fit for bed and a trained nurse.

But my knee was bothering me terribly. As well as I could make out, the kneecap seemed turned up on edge in the midst of the swelling. As I sat in my bunk examining it (the six hunters were all in the steerage, smoking and talking in loud voices), Henderson took a passing glance at it.

"Looks nasty," he commented. "Tie a rag around it, and it'll be all right."

That was all; and on the land I would have been lying on the broad of my back, with a surgeon attending on me, and with strict injunctions to do nothing but rest. But I must do these men justice. Callous as they were to my suffering, they were equally callous to their own when anything befell them. And this was due, I believe, first, to habit; and second, to the fact that they were less sensitively organized. I really believe that a finely-organized, high-strung man would suffer twice and thrice as much as they from a like injury.

Tired as I was, — exhausted, in fact, — I was prevented from sleeping by the pain in my knee. It was all I could do to keep from groaning aloud. At home I should undoubtedly have given vent to my anguish; but this new and elemental environment seemed to call for a savage repression. Like the savage, the attitude of these men was stoical in great things, childish in little things. I remember, later in the voyage, seeing Kerfoot, another of the hunters, lose a finger by having it smashed to a jelly; and he did not even murmur or change the expression on his face. Yet I have seen the same man, time and again, fly into the most outrageous passion over a trifle.

He was doing it now, vociferating, bellowing, waving his arms, and cursing like a fiend, and all because of a disagreement with another hunter as to whether a seal pup knew instinctively how to swim. He held that it did, that it could swim the moment it was born. The other hunter, Latimer, a lean, Yankee-looking fellow with shrewd, narrow-slitted eyes, held otherwise, held that the seal pup was born on the land for no other reason than that it could not swim, that its mother was compelled to teach it to swim as birds were compelled to teach their nestlings how to fly.

For the most part, the remaining four hunters leaned on the table or lay in their bunks and left the discussion to the two antagonists. But they were supremely interested, for every little while they ardently took sides, and sometimes all were talking at once, till their voices surged back and forth in waves of sound like mimic thunder-rolls in the confined space. Childish and immaterial as the topic was, the quality of their reasoning was still more childish and immaterial. In truth, there was very little reasoning or none at all. Their method was one of assertion, assumption, and denunciation. They proved that a seal pup could swim or not swim at birth by stating the proposition very bellicosely and then following it up with an attack on the opposing man's judgment, common sense, nationality, or past history. Rebuttal was precisely similar. I have related this in order to show the mental calibre of the men with whom I was thrown in contact. Intellectually they were children, inhabiting the physical forms of men.

And they smoked, incessantly smoked, using a coarse, cheap, and offensive-smelling tobacco. The air was thick and murky with the smoke of it; and this, combined with the violent movement of the ship as she struggled through the storm, would surely have made me sea-sick had I been a victim to that malady. As it was, it made me quite squeamish, though this nausea might have been due to the pain of my leg and exhaustion.

As I lay there thinking, I naturally dwelt upon myself and my situation. It was unparalleled, undreamed-of, that I, Humphrey Van Weyden, a scholar and a dilettante, if you please, in things artistic and literary, should be lying here on a Bering Sea seal-hunting schooner. Cabin-boy! I had never done any hard manual labour, or scullion labour, in my life. I had lived a placid, uneventful, sedentary existence all my days — the life of a scholar and a recluse on an assured and comfortable income. Violent life and athletic sports had never appealed to me. I had always been a book-worm; so my sisters and father had called me during my childhood. I had gone camping but once in my life, and then I left the party almost at its start and returned to the comforts and conveniences of a roof. And here I was, with dreary and endless vistas before me of table-setting, potato-peeling, and dish-washing. And I was not strong. The doctors had always said that I had a remarkable constitution, but I had never developed it or my body through exercise. My muscles were small and soft, like a woman's, or so the doctors had said time and again in the course of their attempts to persuade me to go in for physical-culture fads. But I had preferred to use my head rather than my body; and here I was, in no fit condition for the rough life in prospect.

These are merely a few of the things that went through my mind, and are related for the sake of vindicating myself in advance in the weak and helpless *rôle* I was destined to play. But I thought, also, of my mother and sisters, and pictured their grief. I was among the missing dead of the *Martinez* disaster, an unrecovered body. I could see the head-lines in the papers; the fellows at the University Club and the Bibelot shaking their heads and saying, "Poor chap!" And I could see Charley Furuseth, as I had said good-bye to him that morning, lounging in a dressing-gown on the be-pillowed window couch and delivering himself of oracular and pessimistic epigrams.

And all the while, rolling, plunging, climbing the moving mountains and falling and wallowing in the foaming valleys, the schooner *Ghost* was fighting her way farther and farther into the heart of the Pacific — and I was on her. I could hear the wind above. It came to my ears as a muffled roar. Now and again feet stamped overhead. An endless creaking was going on all about me, the woodwork and the fittings groaning and squeaking and complaining in a thousand keys. The hunters were still arguing and roaring like some semi-human amphibious breed. The air was filled with oaths and indecent expressions. I could see their faces, flushed and angry, the brutality distorted and emphasized by the sickly yellow of the sea-lamps which rocked back and forth with the ship. Through the dim smoke-haze the bunks looked like the sleeping dens of animals in a menagerie. Oilskins and sea-boots were hanging from the walls, and here and there rifles and shotguns rested securely in the racks. It was a sea-fitting for the buccaneers and pirates of by-gone years. My imagination ran riot, and still I could not sleep. And it was a long, long night, weary and dreary and long.

CHAPTER V

But my first night in the hunters' steerage was also my last. Next day Johansen, the new mate, was routed from the cabin by Wolf Larsen, and sent into the steerage to sleep thereafter, while I took possession of the tiny cabin state-room, which, on the first day of the voyage, had already had two occupants. The reason for this change was quickly learned by the hunters, and became the cause of a deal of grumbling on their part. It seemed that Johansen, in his sleep, lived over each night the events of the day. His incessant talking and shouting and bellowing of orders had been too much for Wolf Larsen, who had accordingly foisted the nuisance upon his hunters.

After a sleepless night, I arose weak and in agony, to hobble through my second day on the *Ghost*. Thomas Mugridge routed me out at half-past five, much in the fashion that Bill Sykes must have routed out his dog; but Mr. Mugridge's brutality to me was paid back in kind and with interest. The unnecessary noise he made (I had lain wide-eyed the whole night) must have awakened one of the hunters; for a heavy shoe whizzed through the semi-darkness, and Mr. Mugridge, with a sharp howl of pain, humbly begged everybody's pardon. Later on, in the galley, I noticed that his ear was bruised and swollen. It never went entirely back to its normal shape, and was called a "cauliflower ear" by the sailors.

The day was filled with miserable variety. I had taken my dried clothes down from the galley the night before, and the first thing I did was to exchange the cook's garments for them. I looked for my purse. In addition to some small change (and I have a good memory for such things), it had contained one hundred and eighty-five dollars in gold and paper. The purse I found, but its contents, with the exception of the small silver, had been abstracted. I spoke to the cook about it, when I went on deck to take up my duties in the galley, and though I had looked forward to a surly answer, I had not expected the belligerent harangue that I received.

"Look 'ere, 'Ump," he began, a malicious light in his eyes and a snarl in his throat; "d'ye want yer nose punched? If you think I'm a thief, just keep it to yerself, or you'll find 'ow bloody well mistyken you are. Strike me blind if this ayn't gratitude for yer! 'Ere you come, a pore mis'rable specimen of 'uman scum, an' I tykes yer into my galley an' treats yer

’ansom, an’ this is wot I get for it. Nex’ time you can go to ’ell, say I, an’ I’ve a good mind to give you what-for anyw’y.”

So saying, he put up his fists and started for me. To my shame be it, I cowered away from the blow and ran out the galley door. What else was I to do? Force, nothing but force, obtained on this brute-ship. Moral suasion was a thing unknown. Picture it to yourself: a man of ordinary stature, slender of build, and with weak, undeveloped muscles, who has lived a peaceful, placid life, and is unused to violence of any sort — what could such a man possibly do? There was no more reason that I should stand and face these human beasts than that I should stand and face an infuriated bull.

So I thought it out at the time, feeling the need for vindication and desiring to be at peace with my conscience. But this vindication did not satisfy. Nor, to this day can I permit my manhood to look back upon those events and feel entirely exonerated. The situation was something that really exceeded rational formulas for conduct and demanded more than the cold conclusions of reason. When viewed in the light of formal logic, there is not one thing of which to be ashamed; but nevertheless a shame rises within me at the recollection, and in the pride of my manhood I feel that my manhood has in unaccountable ways been smirched and sullied.

All of which is neither here nor there. The speed with which I ran from the galley caused excruciating pain in my knee, and I sank down helplessly at the break of the poop. But the Cockney had not pursued me.

“Look at ’im run! Look at ’im run!” I could hear him crying. “An’ with a gyme leg at that! Come on back, you pore little mamma’s darling. I won’t ’it yer; no, I won’t.”

I came back and went on with my work; and here the episode ended for the time, though further developments were yet to take place. I set the breakfast-table in the cabin, and at seven o’clock waited on the hunters and officers. The storm had evidently broken during the night, though a huge sea was still running and a stiff wind blowing. Sail had been made in the early watches, so that the *Ghost* was racing along under everything except the two topsails and the flying jib. These three sails, I gathered from the conversation, were to be set immediately after breakfast. I learned, also, that Wolf Larsen was anxious to make the most of the storm, which was driving him to the south-west into that portion of the sea where he expected to pick up with the north-east trades. It was before this steady wind that he hoped to make the major portion of the run to Japan, curving south into the tropics and north again as he approached the coast of Asia.

After breakfast I had another unenviable experience. When I had finished washing the dishes, I cleaned the cabin stove and carried the ashes up on deck to empty them. Wolf Larsen and Henderson were standing near the wheel, deep in conversation. The sailor, Johnson, was steering. As I started toward the weather side I saw him make a sudden motion with his head, which I mistook for a token of recognition and good-morning. In reality, he was attempting to warn me to throw my ashes over the lee side. Unconscious of my blunder, I passed by Wolf Larsen and the hunter and flung the ashes over the side to windward. The wind drove them back, and not only over me, but over Henderson and Wolf Larsen. The next instant the latter kicked me, violently, as a cur is kicked. I had not realized there could be so much pain in a kick. I reeled away from him and leaned against the cabin in a half-fainting condition. Everything was swimming before my eyes, and I turned sick. The nausea overpowered me, and I managed to crawl to the side of the vessel. But Wolf Larsen did not follow me up. Brushing the ashes from his clothes, he had resumed his conversation with Henderson. Johansen, who had seen the affair from the break of the poop, sent a couple of sailors aft to clean up the mess.

Later in the morning I received a surprise of a totally different sort. Following the cook's instructions, I had gone into Wolf Larsen's state-room to put it to rights and make the bed. Against the wall, near the head of the bunk, was a rack filled with books. I glanced over them, noting with astonishment such names as Shakespeare, Tennyson, Poe, and De Quincey. There were scientific works, too, among which were represented men such as Tyndall, Proctor, and Darwin. Astronomy and physics were represented, and I remarked Bulfinch's *Age of Fable*, Shaw's *History of English and American Literature*, and Johnson's *Natural History* in two large volumes. Then there were a number of grammars, such as Metcalf's, and Reed and Kellogg's; and I smiled as I saw a copy of *The Dean's English*.

I could not reconcile these books with the man from what I had seen of him, and I wondered if he could possibly read them. But when I came to make the bed I found, between the blankets, dropped apparently as he had sunk off to sleep, a complete Browning, the Cambridge Edition. It was open at "In a Balcony," and I noticed, here and there, passages underlined in pencil. Further, letting drop the volume during a lurch of the ship, a sheet of paper fell out. It was scrawled over with geometrical diagrams and calculations of some sort.

It was patent that this terrible man was no ignorant clod, such as one would inevitably suppose him to be from his exhibitions of brutality. At once he became an enigma. One side or the other of his nature was perfectly comprehensible; but both sides together were bewildering. I had already remarked that his language was excellent, marred with an occasional slight inaccuracy. Of course, in common speech with the sailors and hunters, it sometimes fairly bristled with errors, which was due to the vernacular itself; but in the few words he had held with me it had been clear and correct.

This glimpse I had caught of his other side must have emboldened me, for I resolved to speak to him about the money I had lost.

"I have been robbed," I said to him, a little later, when I found him pacing up and down the poop alone.

"Sir," he corrected, not harshly, but sternly.

"I have been robbed, sir," I amended.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

Then I told him the whole circumstance, how my clothes had been left to dry in the galley, and how, later, I was nearly beaten by the cook when I mentioned the matter.

He smiled at my recital. "Pickings," he concluded; "Cooky's pickings. And don't you think your miserable life worth the price? Besides, consider it a lesson. You'll learn in time how to take care of your money for yourself. I suppose, up to now, your lawyer has done it for you, or your business agent."

I could feel the quiet sneer through his words, but demanded, "How can I get it back again?"

"That's your look-out. You haven't any lawyer or business agent now, so you'll have to depend on yourself. When you get a dollar, hang on to it. A man who leaves his money lying around, the way you did, deserves to lose it. Besides, you have sinned. You have no right to put temptation in the way of your fellow-creatures. You tempted Cooky, and he fell. You have placed his immortal soul in jeopardy. By the way, do you believe in the immortal soul?"

His lids lifted lazily as he asked the question, and it seemed that the deeps were opening to me and that I was gazing into his soul. But it was an illusion. Far as it might have seemed, no man has ever seen very far into Wolf Larsen's soul, or seen it at all, — of this I am convinced. It was a very lonely soul, I was to learn, that never unmasked, though at rare moments it played at doing so.

"I read immortality in your eyes," I answered, dropping the "sir," — an experiment, for I thought the intimacy of the conversation warranted it.

He took no notice. "By that, I take it, you see something that is alive, but that necessarily does not have to live for ever."

"I read more than that," I continued boldly.

"Then you read consciousness. You read the consciousness of life that it is alive; but still no further away, no endlessness of life."

How clearly he thought, and how well he expressed what he thought! From regarding me curiously, he turned his head and glanced out over the leaden sea to windward. A bleakness came into his eyes, and the lines of his mouth grew severe and harsh. He was evidently in a pessimistic mood.

"Then to what end?" he demanded abruptly, turning back to me. "If I am immortal — why?"

I halted. How could I explain my idealism to this man? How could I put into speech a something felt, a something like the strains of music heard in sleep, a something that convinced yet transcended utterance?

"What do you believe, then?" I countered.

"I believe that life is a mess," he answered promptly. "It is like yeast, a ferment, a thing that moves and may move for a minute, an hour, a year, or a hundred years, but that in the end will cease to move. The big eat the little that they may continue to move, the strong eat the weak that they may retain their strength. The lucky eat the most and move the longest, that is all. What do you make of those things?"

He swept his arm in an impatient gesture toward a number of the sailors who were working on some kind of rope stuff amidships.

"They move, so does the jelly-fish move. They move in order to eat in order that they may keep moving. There you have it. They live for their belly's sake, and the belly is for their sake. It's a circle; you get nowhere. Neither do they. In the end they come to a standstill. They move no more. They are dead."

"They have dreams," I interrupted, "radiant, flashing dreams — "

"Of grub," he concluded sententiously.

"And of more — "

"Grub. Of a larger appetite and more luck in satisfying it." His voice sounded harsh. There was no levity in it. "For, look you, they dream of making lucky voyages which will bring them more money, of becoming the mates of ships, of finding fortunes — in short, of being in a better position for preying on their fellows, of having all night in, good grub and somebody else to do the dirty work. You and I are just like them. There is no difference, except that we have eaten more and better. I am eating them now, and you too. But in the past you have eaten more than I have. You have slept in soft beds, and worn fine clothes, and eaten good meals. Who made those beds? and those clothes? and those meals? Not you. You never made anything in your own sweat. You live on an income which your father earned. You are like a frigate bird swooping down upon the boobies and robbing them of the fish they have caught. You are one with a crowd of men who have made what they call a government, who are masters of all the other men, and who eat the food the other men get and would like to eat themselves. You wear the warm clothes. They made the clothes, but they shiver in rags and ask you, the lawyer, or business agent who handles your money, for a job."

"But that is beside the matter," I cried.

"Not at all." He was speaking rapidly now, and his eyes were flashing. "It is piggishness, and it is life. Of what use or sense is an immortality of piggishness? What is the end? What is it all about? You have made no food. Yet the food you have eaten or wasted might have saved the lives of a score of wretches who made the food but did not eat it. What immortal end did you serve? or did they? Consider yourself and me. What does your boasted immortality amount to when your life runs foul of mine? You would like to go back to the land, which is a favourable place for your kind of piggishness. It is a whim of mine to keep you aboard this ship, where my piggishness flourishes. And keep you I will. I may make or break you. You may die to-day, this week, or next month. I could kill you now, with a blow of my fist, for you are a miserable weakling. But if we are immortal, what is the reason for this? To be piggish as you and I have been all our lives does not seem to be just the thing for immortals to be doing. Again, what's it all about? Why have I kept you here? — "

"Because you are stronger," I managed to blurt out.

"But why stronger?" he went on at once with his perpetual queries. "Because I am a bigger bit of the ferment than you? Don't you see? Don't you see?"

"But the hopelessness of it," I protested.

"I agree with you," he answered. "Then why move at all, since moving is living? Without moving and being part of the yeast there would be no hopelessness. But, — and there it is, — we want to live and move, though we have no reason to, because it happens that it is the nature of life to live and move, to want to live and move. If it were not for this, life would be dead. It is because of this life that is in you that you dream of your immortality. The life that is in you is alive and wants to go on being alive for ever. Bah! An eternity of piggishness!"

He abruptly turned on his heel and started forward. He stopped at the break of the poop and called me to him.

"By the way, how much was it that Cooky got away with?" he asked.

"One hundred and eighty-five dollars, sir," I answered.

He nodded his head. A moment later, as I started down the companion stairs to lay the table for dinner, I heard him loudly cursing some men amidships.

CHAPTER VI

By the following morning the storm had blown itself quite out and the *Ghost* was rolling slightly on a calm sea without a breath of wind. Occasional light airs were felt, however, and Wolf Larsen patrolled the poop constantly, his eyes ever searching the sea to the north-eastward, from which direction the great trade-wind must blow.

The men were all on deck and busy preparing their various boats for the season's hunting. There are seven boats aboard, the captain's dingey, and the six which the hunters will use. Three, a hunter, a boat-puller, and a boat-steerer, compose a boat's crew. On board the schooner the boat-pullers and steerers are the crew. The hunters, too, are supposed to be in command of the watches, subject, always, to the orders of Wolf Larsen.

All this, and more, I have learned. The *Ghost* is considered the fastest schooner in both the San Francisco and Victoria fleets. In fact, she was once a private yacht, and was built for speed. Her lines and fittings — though I know nothing about such things — speak for themselves. Johnson was telling me about her in a short chat I had with him during yesterday's second dog-watch. He spoke enthusiastically, with the love for a fine craft such as some men feel for horses. He is greatly disgusted with the outlook, and I am given to understand that Wolf Larsen bears a very unsavoury reputation among the sealing captains. It was the *Ghost* herself that lured Johnson into signing for the voyage, but he is already beginning to repent.

As he told me, the *Ghost* is an eighty-ton schooner of a remarkably fine model. Her beam, or width, is twenty-three feet, and her length a little over ninety feet. A lead keel of fabulous but unknown weight makes her very stable, while she carries an immense spread of canvas. From the deck to the truck of the maintopmast is something over a hundred feet, while the foremast with its topmast is eight or ten feet shorter. I am giving these details so that the size of this little floating world which holds twenty-two men may be appreciated. It is a very little world, a mote, a speck, and I marvel that men should dare to venture the sea on a contrivance so small and fragile.

Wolf Larsen has, also, a reputation for reckless carrying on of sail. I overheard Henderson and another of the hunters, Standish, a Californian, talking about it. Two years ago he dismasted the *Ghost* in a gale on Bering

Sea, whereupon the present masts were put in, which are stronger and heavier in every way. He is said to have remarked, when he put them in, that he preferred turning her over to losing the sticks.

Every man aboard, with the exception of Johansen, who is rather overcome by his promotion, seems to have an excuse for having sailed on the *Ghost*. Half the men forward are deep-water sailors, and their excuse is that they did not know anything about her or her captain. And those who do know, whisper that the hunters, while excellent shots, were so notorious for their quarrelsome and rascally proclivities that they could not sign on any decent schooner.

I have made the acquaintance of another one of the crew, — Louis he is called, a rotund and jovial-faced Nova Scotia Irishman, and a very sociable fellow, prone to talk as long as he can find a listener. In the afternoon, while the cook was below asleep and I was peeling the everlasting potatoes, Louis dropped into the galley for a "yarn." His excuse for being aboard was that he was drunk when he signed. He assured me again and again that it was the last thing in the world he would dream of doing in a sober moment. It seems that he has been seal-hunting regularly each season for a dozen years, and is accounted one of the two or three very best boat-steerers in both fleets.

"Ah, my boy," he shook his head ominously at me, "'tis the worst schooner ye could iv selected, nor were ye drunk at the time as was I. 'Tis sealin' is the sailor's paradise — on other ships than this. The mate was the first, but mark me words, there'll be more dead men before the trip is done with. Hist, now, between you an' meself and the stanchion there, this Wolf Larsen is a regular devil, an' the *Ghost'll* be a hell-ship like she's always ben since he had hold iv her. Don't I know? Don't I know? Don't I remember him in Hakodate two years gone, when he had a row an' shot four iv his men? Wasn't I a-layin' on the *Emma L.*, not three hundred yards away? An' there was a man the same year he killed with a blow iv his fist. Yes, sir, killed 'im dead-oh. His head must iv smashed like an eggshell. An' wasn't there the Governor of Kura Island, an' the Chief iv Police, Japanese gentlemen, sir, an' didn't they come aboard the *Ghost* as his guests, a-bringin' their wives along — wee an' pretty little bits of things like you see 'em painted on fans. An' as he was a-gettin' under way, didn't the fond husbands get left astern-like in their sampan, as it might be by accident? An' wasn't it a week later that the poor little ladies was put ashore on the other side of the island, with nothin' before 'em but to walk home acrost the mountains on their weeny-teeny little straw sandals which wouldn't hang together a mile? Don't I know? 'Tis the beast he is, this Wolf Larsen — the great big beast mentioned iv in Revelation; an' no good end will he ever come to. But I've said nothin' to ye, mind ye. I've whispered never a word; for old fat Louis'll live the voyage out if the last mother's son of yez go to the fishes."

"Wolf Larsen!" he snorted a moment later. "Listen to the word, will ye! Wolf — 'tis what he is. He's not black-hearted like some men. 'Tis no heart he has at all. Wolf, just wolf, 'tis what he is. D'ye wonder he's well named?"

"But if he is so well-known for what he is," I queried, "how is it that he can get men to ship with him?"

"An' how is it ye can get men to do anything on God's earth an' sea?" Louis demanded with Celtic fire. "How d'ye find me aboard if 'twasn't that I was drunk as a pig when I put me name down? There's them that can't sail with better men, like the hunters, and them that don't know, like the poor devils of wind-jammers for'ard there. But they'll come to it, they'll come to it, an' be sorry the day they was born. I could weep for the poor creatures, did I but forget poor old fat Louis and the troubles before him. But 'tis not a whisper I've dropped, mind ye, not a whisper."

"Them hunters is the wicked boys," he broke forth again, for he suffered from a constitutional plethora of speech. "But wait till they get to cutting up iv jinks and rowin' 'round. He's the boy'll fix 'em. 'Tis him that'll put the fear of God in their rotten black hearts. Look at that hunter iv mine, Horner. 'Jock' Horner they call him, so quiet-like an' easy-goin', soft-spoken as a girl, till ye'd think butter wouldn't melt in the mouth iv him. Didn't he kill his boat-steerer last year? 'Twas called a sad accident, but I met the boat-puller in Yokohama an' the straight iv it was given me. An' there's Smoke, the black little devil — didn't the Roosians have him for three years in the salt mines of Siberia, for poachin' on Copper Island, which is a Roosian preserve? Shackled he was, hand an' foot, with his mate. An' didn't they have words or a ruction of some kind? — for 'twas the other fellow Smoke sent up in the buckets to the top of the mine; an' a piece at a time he went up, a leg to-day, an' to-morrow an arm, the next day the head, an' so on."

"But you can't mean it!" I cried out, overcome with the horror of it.

"Mean what!" he demanded, quick as a flash. "'Tis nothin' I've said. Deef I am, and dumb, as ye should be for the sake iv your mother; an' never once have I opened me lips but to say fine things iv them an' him, God curse his soul, an' may he rot in purgatory ten thousand years, and then go down to the last an' deepest hell iv all!"

Johnson, the man who had chafed me raw when I first came aboard, seemed the least equivocal of the men forward or aft. In fact, there was nothing equivocal about him. One was struck at once by his straightforwardness and manliness, which, in turn, were tempered by a modesty which might be mistaken for timidity. But timid he was not. He seemed, rather, to have the courage of his convictions, the certainty of his manhood. It was this that made him protest, at the commencement of our acquaintance, against being called Yonson. And upon this, and him, Louis passed judgment and prophecy.

"'Tis a fine chap, that squarehead Johnson we've for'ard with us," he said. "The best sailorman in the fo'c'sle. He's my boat-puller. But it's to trouble he'll come with Wolf Larsen, as the sparks fly upward. It's meself that knows. I can see it brewin' an' comin' up like a storm in the sky. I've talked to him like a brother, but it's little he sees in takin' in his lights or flyin' false signals. He grumbles out when things don't go to suit him, and there'll be always some tell-tale carryin' word iv it aft to the Wolf. The Wolf is strong, and it's the way of a wolf to hate strength, an' strength it is he'll see in Johnson — no knucklin' under, and a 'Yes, sir, thank ye kindly, sir,' for a curse or a blow. Oh, she's a-comin'! She's a-comin'! An' God knows where I'll get another boat-puller! What does the fool up an' say, when the old man calls him Yonson, but 'Me name is Johnson, sir,' an' then spells it out, letter for letter. Ye should iv seen the old man's face! I thought he'd let drive at him on the spot. He didn't, but he will, an' he'll break that squarehead's heart, or it's little I know iv the ways iv men on the ships iv the sea."

Thomas Mugridge is becoming unendurable. I am compelled to Mister him and to Sir him with every speech. One reason for this is that Wolf Larsen seems to have taken a fancy to him. It is an unprecedented thing, I take it, for a captain to be chummy with the cook; but this is certainly what Wolf Larsen is doing. Two or three times he put his head into the galley and chaffed Mugridge good-naturedly, and once, this afternoon, he stood by the break of the poop and chatted with him for fully fifteen minutes. When it was over, and Mugridge was back in the galley, he became greasily radiant, and went about his work, humming coster songs in a nerve-racking and discordant falsetto.

"I always get along with the officers," he remarked to me in a confidential tone. "I know the w'y, I do, to myke myself uppreci-yted. There was my last skipper — w'y I thought nothin' of droppin' down in the cabin for a little chat and a friendly glass. 'Mugridge,' sez 'e to me, 'Mugridge,' sez 'e, 'you've missed yer vokytion.' 'An' 'ow's that?' sez I. 'Yer should 'a been born a gentleman, an' never 'ad to work for yer livin'.' God strike me dead, 'Ump, if that ayn't wot 'e sez, an' me a-sittin' there in 'is own cabin, jolly-like an' comfortable, a-smokin' 'is cigars an' drinkin' 'is rum."

This chitter-chatter drove me to distraction. I never heard a voice I hated so. His oily, insinuating tones, his greasy smile and his monstrous self-conceit grated on my nerves till sometimes I was all in a tremble. Positively, he was the most disgusting and loathsome person I have ever met. The filth of his cooking was indescribable; and, as he cooked everything that was eaten aboard, I was compelled to select what I ate with great circumspection, choosing from the least dirty of his concoctions.

My hands bothered me a great deal, unused as they were to work. The nails were discoloured and black, while the skin was already grained with dirt which even a scrubbing-brush could not remove. Then blisters came, in a painful and never-ending procession, and I had a great burn on my forearm, acquired by losing my balance in a roll of the ship and pitching against the galley stove. Nor was my knee any better. The swelling had not gone down, and the cap was still up on edge. Hobbling about on it from morning till night was not helping it any. What I needed was rest, if it were ever to get well.

Rest! I never before knew the meaning of the word. I had been resting all my life and did not know it. But now, could I sit still for one half-hour and do nothing, not even think, it would be the most pleasurable thing in the world. But it is a revelation, on the other hand. I shall be able to appreciate the lives of the working people hereafter. I did not dream that work was so terrible a thing. From half-past five in the morning till ten o'clock at night I am everybody's slave, with not one moment to myself, except such as I can steal near the end of the second dog-watch. Let me pause for a minute to look out over the sea sparkling in the sun, or to gaze at a sailor going aloft to the gaff-topsails, or running out the bowsprit, and I am sure to hear the hateful voice, "'Ere, you, 'Ump, no sodgerin'. I've got my peepers on yer."

There are signs of rampant bad temper in the steerage, and the gossip is going around that Smoke and Henderson have had a fight. Henderson seems the best of the hunters, a slow-going fellow, and hard to rouse; but roused he must have been, for Smoke had a bruised and discoloured eye, and looked particularly vicious when he came into the cabin for supper.

A cruel thing happened just before supper, indicative of the callousness and brutishness of these men. There is one green hand in the crew, Harrison by name, a clumsy-looking country boy, mastered, I imagine, by the spirit of adventure, and making his first voyage. In the light baffling airs the schooner had been tacking about a great deal, at which times the sails pass from one side to the other and a man is sent aloft to shift over the fore-gaff-topsail. In some way, when Harrison was aloft, the sheet jammed in the block through which it runs at the end of the gaff. As I understood it, there were two ways of getting it cleared, — first, by lowering the foresail, which was comparatively easy and without danger; and second, by climbing out the peak-halyards to the end of the gaff itself, an exceedingly hazardous performance.

Johansen called out to Harrison to go out the halyards. It was patent to everybody that the boy was afraid. And well he might be, eighty feet above the deck, to trust himself on those thin and jerking ropes. Had there been a steady breeze it would not have been so bad, but the *Ghost* was rolling emptily in a long sea, and with each roll the canvas flapped and boomed and the halyards slacked and jerked taut. They were capable of snapping a man off like a fly from a whip-lash.

Harrison heard the order and understood what was demanded of him, but hesitated. It was probably the first time he had been aloft in his life. Johansen, who had caught the contagion of Wolf Larsen's masterfulness, burst out with a volley of abuse and curses.

"That'll do, Johansen," Wolf Larsen said brusquely. "I'll have you know that I do the swearing on this ship. If I need your assistance, I'll call you in."

"Yes, sir," the mate acknowledged submissively.

In the meantime Harrison had started out on the halyards. I was looking up from the galley door, and I could see him trembling, as if with ague, in every limb. He proceeded very slowly and cautiously, an inch at a time.

Outlined against the clear blue of the sky, he had the appearance of an enormous spider crawling along the tracery of its web.

It was a slight uphill climb, for the foresail peaked high; and the halyards, running through various blocks on the gaff and mast, gave him separate holds for hands and feet. But the trouble lay in that the wind was not strong enough nor steady enough to keep the sail full. When he was half-way out, the *Ghost* took a long roll to windward and back again into the hollow between two seas. Harrison ceased his progress and held on tightly. Eighty feet beneath, I could see the agonized strain of his muscles as he gripped for very life. The sail emptied and the gaff swung amid-ships. The halyards slackened, and, though it all happened very quickly, I could see them sag beneath the weight of his body. Then the gag swung to the side with an abrupt swiftness, the great sail boomed like a cannon, and the three rows of reef-points slatted against the canvas like a volley of rifles. Harrison, clinging on, made the giddy rush through the air. This rush ceased abruptly. The halyards became instantly taut. It was the snap of the whip. His clutch was broken. One hand was torn loose from its hold. The other lingered desperately for a moment, and followed. His body pitched out and down, but in some way he managed to save himself with his legs. He was hanging by them, head downward. A quick effort brought his hands up to the halyards again; but he was a long time regaining his former position, where he hung, a pitiable object.

“I’ll bet he has no appetite for supper,” I heard Wolf Larsen’s voice, which came to me from around the corner of the galley. “Stand from under, you, Johansen! Watch out! Here she comes!”

In truth, Harrison was very sick, as a person is sea-sick; and for a long time he clung to his precarious perch without attempting to move. Johansen, however, continued violently to urge him on to the completion of his task.

“It is a shame,” I heard Johnson growling in painfully slow and correct English. He was standing by the main rigging, a few feet away from me. “The boy is willing enough. He will learn if he has a chance. But this is — ” He paused awhile, for the word “murder” was his final judgment.

“Hist, will ye!” Louis whispered to him, “For the love iv your mother hold your mouth!”

But Johnson, looking on, still continued his grumbling.

“Look here,” the hunter Standish spoke to Wolf Larsen, “that’s my boat-puller, and I don’t want to lose him.”

“That’s all right, Standish,” was the reply. “He’s your boat-puller when you’ve got him in the boat; but he’s my sailor when I have him aboard, and I’ll do what I damn well please with him.”

“But that’s no reason — ” Standish began in a torrent of speech.

“That’ll do, easy as she goes,” Wolf Larsen counselled back. “I’ve told you what’s what, and let it stop at that. The man’s mine, and I’ll make soup of him and eat it if I want to.”

There was an angry gleam in the hunter’s eye, but he turned on his heel and entered the steerage companion-way, where he remained, looking upward. All hands were on deck now, and all eyes were aloft, where a human life was at grapples with death. The callousness of these men, to whom industrial organization gave control of the lives of other men, was appalling. I, who had lived out of the whirl of the world, had never dreamed that its work was carried on in such fashion. Life had always seemed a peculiarly sacred thing, but here it counted for nothing, was a cipher in the arithmetic of commerce. I must say, however, that the sailors themselves were sympathetic, as instance the case of Johnson; but the masters (the hunters and the captain) were heartlessly indifferent. Even the protest of Standish arose out of the fact that he did not wish to lose his boat-puller. Had it been some other hunter’s boat-puller, he, like them, would have been no more than amused.

But to return to Harrison. It took Johansen, insulting and reviling the poor wretch, fully ten minutes to get him started again. A little later he made the end of the gaff, where, astride the spar itself, he had a better chance for holding on. He cleared the sheet, and was free to return, slightly downhill now, along the halyards to the mast. But he had lost his nerve. Unsafe as was his present position, he was loath to forsake it for the more unsafe position on the halyards.

He looked along the airy path he must traverse, and then down to the deck. His eyes were wide and staring, and he was trembling violently. I had never seen fear so strongly stamped upon a human face. Johansen called vainly for him to come down. At any moment he was liable to be snapped off the gaff, but he was helpless with fright. Wolf Larsen, walking up and down with Smoke and in conversation, took no more notice of him, though he cried sharply, once, to the man at the wheel:

“You’re off your course, my man! Be careful, unless you’re looking for trouble!”

“Ay, ay, sir,” the helmsman responded, putting a couple of spokes down.

He had been guilty of running the *Ghost* several points off her course in order that what little wind there was should fill the foresail and hold it steady. He had striven to help the unfortunate Harrison at the risk of incurring Wolf Larsen’s anger.

The time went by, and the suspense, to me, was terrible. Thomas Mugridge, on the other hand, considered it a laughable affair, and was continually bobbing his head out the galley door to make jocose remarks. How I hated him! And how my hatred for him grew and grew, during that fearful time, to cyclopean dimensions. For the first time in my life I experienced the desire to murder — “saw red,” as some of our picturesque writers phrase it. Life in general might still be sacred, but life in the particular case of Thomas Mugridge had become very profane indeed. I was frightened when I became conscious that I was seeing red, and the thought flashed through my mind: was I, too, becoming tainted by the brutality of my environment? — I, who even in the most flagrant crimes had denied the justice and righteousness of capital punishment?

Fully half-an-hour went by, and then I saw Johnson and Louis in some sort of altercation. It ended with Johnson flinging off Louis’s detaining arm and starting forward. He crossed the deck, sprang into the fore rigging, and began to climb. But the quick eye of Wolf Larsen caught him.

“Here, you, what are you up to?” he cried.

Johnson’s ascent was arrested. He looked his captain in the eyes and replied slowly:

“I am going to get that boy down.”

“You’ll get down out of that rigging, and damn lively about it! D’ye hear? Get down!”

Johnson hesitated, but the long years of obedience to the masters of ships overpowered him, and he dropped sullenly to the deck and went on forward.

At half after five I went below to set the cabin table, but I hardly knew what I did, for my eyes and my brain were filled with the vision of a man, white-faced and trembling, comically like a bug, clinging to the thrashing gaff. At six o’clock, when I served supper, going on deck to get the food from the galley, I saw Harrison, still in the same position. The conversation at the table was of other things. Nobody seemed interested in the wantonly imperilled life. But making an extra trip to the galley a little later, I was gladdened by the sight of Harrison staggering weakly from the rigging to the forecastle scuttle. He had finally summoned the courage to descend.

Before closing this incident, I must give a scrap of conversation I had with Wolf Larsen in the cabin, while I was washing the dishes.

"You were looking squeamish this afternoon," he began. "What was the matter?"

I could see that he knew what had made me possibly as sick as Harrison, that he was trying to draw me, and I answered, "It was because of the brutal treatment of that boy."

He gave a short laugh. "Like sea-sickness, I suppose. Some men are subject to it, and others are not."

"Not so," I objected.

"Just so," he went on. "The earth is as full of brutality as the sea is full of motion. And some men are made sick by the one, and some by the other. That's the only reason."

"But you, who make a mock of human life, don't you place any value upon it whatever?" I demanded.

"Value? What value?" He looked at me, and though his eyes were steady and motionless, there seemed a cynical smile in them. "What kind of value? How do you measure it? Who values it?"

"I do," I made answer.

"Then what is it worth to you? Another man's life, I mean. Come now, what is it worth?"

The value of life? How could I put a tangible value upon it? Somehow, I, who have always had expression, lacked expression when with Wolf Larsen. I have since determined that a part of it was due to the man's personality, but that the greater part was due to his totally different outlook. Unlike other materialists I had met and with whom I had something in common to start on, I had nothing in common with him. Perhaps, also, it was the elemental simplicity of his mind that baffled me. He drove so directly to the core of the matter, divesting a question always of all superfluous details, and with such an air of finality, that I seemed to find myself struggling in deep water, with no footing under me. Value of life? How could I answer the question on the spur of the moment? The sacredness of life I had accepted as axiomatic. That it was intrinsically valuable was a truism I had never questioned. But when he challenged the truism I was speechless.

"We were talking about this yesterday," he said. "I held that life was a ferment, a yeasty something which devoured life that it might live, and that living was merely successful piggishness. Why, if there is anything in supply and demand, life is the cheapest thing in the world. There is only so much water, so much earth, so much air; but the life that is demanding to be born is limitless. Nature is a spendthrift. Look at the fish and their millions of eggs. For that matter, look at you and me. In our loins are the possibilities of millions of lives. Could we but find time and opportunity and utilize the last bit and every bit of the unborn life that is in us, we could become the fathers of nations and populate continents. Life? Bah! It has no value. Of cheap things it is the cheapest. Everywhere it goes begging. Nature spills it out with a lavish hand. Where there is room for one life, she sows a thousand lives, and it's life eats life till the strongest and most piggish life is left."

"You have read Darwin," I said. "But you read him misunderstandingly when you conclude that the struggle for existence sanctions your wanton destruction of life."

He shrugged his shoulders. "You know you only mean that in relation to human life, for of the flesh and the fowl and the fish you destroy as much as I or any other man. And human life is in no wise different, though you feel it is and think that you reason why it is. Why should I be parsimonious with this life which is cheap and without value? There are more sailors than there are ships on the sea for them, more workers than there are factories or machines for them. Why, you who live on the land know that you house your poor people in the slums of cities and loose famine and pestilence upon them, and that there still remain more poor people, dying for want of a crust of bread and a bit of meat (which is life destroyed), than you know what to do with. Have you ever seen the London dockers fighting like wild beasts for a chance to work?"

He started for the companion stairs, but turned his head for a final word. "Do you know the only value life has is what life puts upon itself? And it is of course over-estimated since it is of necessity prejudiced in its own favour. Take that man I had aloft. He held on as if he were a precious thing, a treasure beyond diamonds or rubies. To you? No. To me? Not at all. To himself? Yes. But I do not accept his estimate. He sadly overrates himself. There is plenty more life demanding to be born. Had he fallen and dripped his brains upon the deck like honey from the comb, there would have been no loss to the world. He was worth nothing to the world. The supply is too large. To himself only was he of value, and to show how fictitious even this value was, being dead he is unconscious that he has lost himself. He alone rated himself beyond diamonds and rubies. Diamonds and rubies are gone, spread out on the deck to be washed away by a bucket of sea-water, and he does not even know that the diamonds and rubies are gone. He does not lose anything, for with the loss of himself he loses the knowledge of loss. Don’t you see? And what have you to say?”

“That you are at least consistent,” was all I could say, and I went on washing the dishes.

CHAPTER VII

At last, after three days of variable winds, we have caught the north-east trades. I came on deck, after a good night's rest in spite of my poor knee, to find the *Ghost* foaming along, wing-and-wing, and every sail drawing except the jibs, with a fresh breeze astern. Oh, the wonder of the great trade-wind! All day we sailed, and all night, and the next day, and the next, day after day, the wind always astern and blowing steadily and strong. The schooner sailed herself. There was no pulling and hauling on sheets and tackles, no shifting of topsails, no work at all for the sailors to do except to steer. At night when the sun went down, the sheets were slackened; in the morning, when they yielded up the damp of the dew and relaxed, they were pulled tight again — and that was all.

Ten knots, twelve knots, eleven knots, varying from time to time, is the speed we are making. And ever out of the north-east the brave wind blows, driving us on our course two hundred and fifty miles between the dawns. It saddens me and gladdens me, the gait with which we are leaving San Francisco behind and with which we are foaming down upon the tropics. Each day grows perceptibly warmer. In the second dog-watch the sailors come on deck, stripped, and heave buckets of water upon one another from overside. Flying-fish are beginning to be seen, and during the night the watch above scrambles over the deck in pursuit of those that fall aboard. In the morning, Thomas Mugridge being duly bribed, the galley is pleasantly areek with the odour of their frying; while dolphin meat is served fore and aft on such occasions as Johnson catches the blazing beauties from the bowsprit end.

Johnson seems to spend all his spare time there or aloft at the crosstrees, watching the *Ghost* cleaving the water under press of sail. There is passion, adoration, in his eyes, and he goes about in a sort of trance, gazing in ecstasy at the swelling sails, the foaming wake, and the heave and the run of her over the liquid mountains that are moving with us in stately procession.

The days and nights are "all a wonder and a wild delight," and though I have little time from my dreary work, I steal odd moments to gaze and gaze at the unending glory of what I never dreamed the world possessed. Above, the sky is stainless blue — blue as the sea itself, which under the forefoot is of the colour and sheen of azure satin. All around the horizon are pale, fleecy clouds, never changing, never moving, like a silver setting for the flawless turquoise sky.

I do not forget one night, when I should have been asleep, of lying on the forecastle-head and gazing down at the spectral ripple of foam thrust aside by the *Ghost's* forefoot. It sounded like the gurgling of a brook over mossy stones in some quiet dell, and the crooning song of it lured me away and out of myself till I was no longer Hump the cabin-boy, nor Van Weyden, the man who had dreamed away thirty-five years among books. But a voice behind me, the unmistakable voice of Wolf Larsen, strong with the invincible certitude of the man and mellow with appreciation of the words he was quoting, aroused me.

"'O the blazing tropic night, when the wake's a welt of light
That holds the hot sky tame,
And the steady forefoot snores through the planet-powdered floors
Where the scared whale flukes in flame.
Her plates are scarred by the sun, dear lass,
And her ropes are taut with the dew,
For we're booming down on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,
We're sagging south on the Long Trail — the trail that is always new.'"

"Eh, Hump? How's it strike you?" he asked, after the due pause which words and setting demanded.

I looked into his face. It was aglow with light, as the sea itself, and the eyes were flashing in the starshine.

"It strikes me as remarkable, to say the least, that you should show enthusiasm," I answered coldly.

"Why, man, it's living! it's life!" he cried.

"Which is a cheap thing and without value." I flung his words at him.

He laughed, and it was the first time I had heard honest mirth in his voice.

"Ah, I cannot get you to understand, cannot drive it into your head, what a thing this life is. Of course life is valueless, except to itself. And I can tell you that my life is pretty valuable just now — to myself. It is beyond price, which you will acknowledge is a terrific overrating, but which I cannot help, for it is the life that is in me that makes the rating."

He appeared waiting for the words with which to express the thought that was in him, and finally went on.

"Do you know, I am filled with a strange uplift; I feel as if all time were echoing through me, as though all powers were mine. I know truth, divine good from evil, right from wrong. My vision is clear and far. I could almost believe in God. But," and his voice changed and the light went out of his face, — "what is this condition in which I find myself? this joy of living? this exultation of life? this inspiration, I may well call it? It is what comes when there is nothing wrong with one's digestion, when his stomach is in trim and his appetite has an edge, and all goes well. It is the bribe for living, the champagne of the blood, the effervescence of the ferment — that makes some men think holy thoughts, and other men to see God or to create him when they cannot see him. That is all, the drunkenness of life, the stirring and crawling of the yeast, the babbling of the life that is insane with consciousness that it is alive. And — bah! To-morrow I shall pay for it as the drunkard pays. And I shall know that I must die, at sea most likely, cease crawling of myself to be all a-crawl with the corruption of the sea; to be fed upon, to be carrion, to yield up all the strength and movement of my muscles that it may become strength and movement in fin and scale and the guts of fishes. Bah! And bah! again. The champagne is already flat. The sparkle and bubble has gone out and it is a tasteless drink."

He left me as suddenly as he had come, springing to the deck with the weight and softness of a tiger. The *Ghost* ploughed on her way. I noted the gurgling forefoot was very like a snore, and as I listened to it the effect of Wolf Larsen's swift rush from sublime exultation to despair slowly left me. Then some deep-water sailor, from the waist of the ship, lifted a rich tenor voice in the "Song of the Trade Wind":

"Oh, I am the wind the seamen love —
I am steady, and strong, and true;
They follow my track by the clouds above,
O'er the fathomless tropic blue.

* * * * *

Through daylight and dark I follow the bark
I keep like a hound on her trail;
I'm strongest at noon, yet under the moon,
I stiffen the bunt of her sail."

CHAPTER VIII

Sometimes I think Wolf Larsen mad, or half-mad at least, what of his strange moods and vagaries. At other times I take him for a great man, a genius who has never arrived. And, finally, I am convinced that he is the perfect type of the primitive man, born a thousand years or generations too late and an anachronism in this culminating century of civilization. He is certainly an individualist of the most pronounced type. Not only that, but he is very lonely. There is no congeniality between him and the rest of the men aboard ship. His tremendous virility and mental strength wall him apart. They are more like children to him, even the hunters, and as children he treats them, descending perforce to their level and playing with them as a man plays with puppies. Or else he probes them with the cruel hand of a vivisectionist, groping about in their mental processes and examining their souls as though to see of what soul-stuff is made.

I have seen him a score of times, at table, insulting this hunter or that, with cool and level eyes and, withal, a certain air of interest, pondering their actions or replies or petty rages with a curiosity almost laughable to me who stood onlooker and who understood. Concerning his own rages, I am convinced that they are not real, that they are sometimes experiments, but that in the main they are the habits of a pose or attitude he has seen fit to take toward his fellow-men. I know, with the possible exception of the incident of the dead mate, that I have not seen him really angry; nor do I wish ever to see him in a genuine rage, when all the force of him is called into play.

While on the question of vagaries, I shall tell what befell Thomas Mugridge in the cabin, and at the same time complete an incident upon which I have already touched once or twice. The twelve o'clock dinner was over, one day, and I had just finished putting the cabin in order, when Wolf Larsen and Thomas Mugridge descended the companion stairs. Though the cook had a cubby-hole of a state-room opening off from the cabin, in the cabin itself he had never dared to linger or to be seen, and he flitted to and fro, once or twice a day, a timid spectre.

"So you know how to play 'Nap,'" Wolf Larsen was saying in a pleased sort of voice. "I might have guessed an Englishman would know. I learned it myself in English ships."

Thomas Mugridge was beside himself, a blithering imbecile, so pleased was he at chumming thus with the captain. The little airs he put on and the painful striving to assume the easy carriage of a man born to a dignified place in life would have been sickening had they not been ludicrous. He quite ignored my presence, though I credited him with being simply unable to see me. His pale, wishy-washy eyes were swimming like lazy summer seas, though what blissful visions they beheld were beyond my imagination.

"Get the cards, Hump," Wolf Larsen ordered, as they took seats at the table. "And bring out the cigars and the whisky you'll find in my berth."

I returned with the articles in time to hear the Cockney hinting broadly that there was a mystery about him, that he might be a gentleman's son gone wrong or something or other; also, that he was a remittance man and was paid to keep away from England — "p'yed 'ansomely, sir," was the way he put it; "p'yed 'ansomely to sling my 'ook an' keep slingin' it."

I had brought the customary liquor glasses, but Wolf Larsen frowned, shook his head, and signalled with his hands for me to bring the tumblers. These he filled two-thirds full with undiluted whisky — "a gentleman's drink?" quoth Thomas Mugridge, — and they clinked their glasses to the glorious game of "Nap," lighted cigars, and fell to shuffling and dealing the cards.

They played for money. They increased the amounts of the bets. They drank whisky, they drank it neat, and I fetched more. I do not know whether Wolf Larsen cheated or not, — a thing he was thoroughly capable of doing, — but he won steadily. The cook made repeated journeys to his bunk for money. Each time he performed the journey with greater swagger, but he never brought more than a few dollars at a time. He grew maudlin, familiar, could hardly see the cards or sit upright. As a preliminary to another journey to his bunk, he hooked Wolf Larsen's buttonhole with a greasy forefinger and vacuously proclaimed and reiterated, "I got money, I got money, I tell yer, an' I'm a gentleman's son."

Wolf Larsen was unaffected by the drink, yet he drank glass for glass, and if anything his glasses were fuller. There was no change in him. He did not appear even amused at the other's antics.

In the end, with loud protestations that he could lose like a gentleman, the cook's last money was staked on the game — and lost. Whereupon he leaned his head on his hands and wept. Wolf Larsen looked curiously at him, as though about to probe and vivisect him, then changed his mind, as from the foregone conclusion that there was nothing there to probe.

“Hump,” he said to me, elaborately polite, “kindly take Mr. Mugridge’s arm and help him up on deck. He is not feeling very well.”

“And tell Johnson to douse him with a few buckets of salt water,” he added, in a lower tone for my ear alone.

I left Mr. Mugridge on deck, in the hands of a couple of grinning sailors who had been told off for the purpose. Mr. Mugridge was sleepily spluttering that he was a gentleman’s son. But as I descended the companion stairs to clear the table I heard him shriek as the first bucket of water struck him.

Wolf Larsen was counting his winnings.

“One hundred and eighty-five dollars even,” he said aloud. “Just as I thought. The beggar came aboard without a cent.”

“And what you have won is mine, sir,” I said boldly.

He favoured me with a quizzical smile. “Hump, I have studied some grammar in my time, and I think your tenses are tangled. ‘Was mine,’ you should have said, not ’is mine.’”

“It is a question, not of grammar, but of ethics,” I answered.

It was possibly a minute before he spoke.

“D’ye know, Hump,” he said, with a slow seriousness which had in it an indefinable strain of sadness, “that this is the first time I have heard the word ‘ethics’ in the mouth of a man. You and I are the only men on this ship who know its meaning.”

“At one time in my life,” he continued, after another pause, “I dreamed that I might some day talk with men who used such language, that I might lift myself out of the place in life in which I had been born, and hold conversation and mingle with men who talked about just such things as ethics. And this is the first time I have ever heard the word pronounced. Which is all by the way, for you are wrong. It is a question neither of grammar nor ethics, but of fact.”

“I understand,” I said. “The fact is that you have the money.”

His face brightened. He seemed pleased at my perspicacity. “But it is avoiding the real question,” I continued, “which is one of right.”

“Ah,” he remarked, with a wry pucker of his mouth, “I see you still believe in such things as right and wrong.”

“But don’t you? — at all?” I demanded.

"Not the least bit. Might is right, and that is all there is to it. Weakness is wrong. Which is a very poor way of saying that it is good for oneself to be strong, and evil for oneself to be weak — or better yet, it is pleasurable to be strong, because of the profits; painful to be weak, because of the penalties. Just now the possession of this money is a pleasurable thing. It is good for one to possess it. Being able to possess it, I wrong myself and the life that is in me if I give it to you and forego the pleasure of possessing it."

"But you wrong me by withholding it," I objected.

"Not at all. One man cannot wrong another man. He can only wrong himself. As I see it, I do wrong always when I consider the interests of others. Don't you see? How can two particles of the yeast wrong each other by striving to devour each other? It is their inborn heritage to strive to devour, and to strive not to be devoured. When they depart from this they sin."

"Then you don't believe in altruism?" I asked.

He received the word as if it had a familiar ring, though he pondered it thoughtfully. "Let me see, it means something about coöperation, doesn't it?"

"Well, in a way there has come to be a sort of connection," I answered unsurprised by this time at such gaps in his vocabulary, which, like his knowledge, was the acquirement of a self-read, self-educated man, whom no one had directed in his studies, and who had thought much and talked little or not at all. "An altruistic act is an act performed for the welfare of others. It is unselfish, as opposed to an act performed for self, which is selfish."

He nodded his head. "Oh, yes, I remember it now. I ran across it in Spencer."

"Spencer!" I cried. "Have you read him?"

"Not very much," was his confession. "I understood quite a good deal of *First Principles*, but his *Biology* took the wind out of my sails, and his *Psychology* left me butting around in the doldrums for many a day. I honestly could not understand what he was driving at. I put it down to mental deficiency on my part, but since then I have decided that it was for want of preparation. I had no proper basis. Only Spencer and myself know how hard I hammered. But I did get something out of his *Data of Ethics*.

There’s where I ran across ‘altruism,’ and I remember now how it was used.”

I wondered what this man could have got from such a work. Spencer I remembered enough to know that altruism was imperative to his ideal of highest conduct. Wolf Larsen, evidently, had sifted the great philosopher’s teachings, rejecting and selecting according to his needs and desires.

“What else did you run across?” I asked.

His brows drew in slightly with the mental effort of suitably phrasing thoughts which he had never before put into speech. I felt an elation of spirit. I was groping into his soul-stuff as he made a practice of groping in the soul-stuff of others. I was exploring virgin territory. A strange, a terribly strange, region was unrolling itself before my eyes.

“In as few words as possible,” he began, “Spencer puts it something like this: First, a man must act for his own benefit — to do this is to be moral and good. Next, he must act for the benefit of his children. And third, he must act for the benefit of his race.”

“And the highest, finest, right conduct,” I interjected, “is that act which benefits at the same time the man, his children, and his race.”

“I wouldn’t stand for that,” he replied. “Couldn’t see the necessity for it, nor the common sense. I cut out the race and the children. I would sacrifice nothing for them. It’s just so much slush and sentiment, and you must see it yourself, at least for one who does not believe in eternal life. With immortality before me, altruism would be a paying business proposition. I might elevate my soul to all kinds of altitudes. But with nothing eternal before me but death, given for a brief spell this yeasty crawling and squirming which is called life, why, it would be immoral for me to perform any act that was a sacrifice. Any sacrifice that makes me lose one crawl or squirm is foolish, — and not only foolish, for it is a wrong against myself and a wicked thing. I must not lose one crawl or squirm if I am to get the most out of the ferment. Nor will the eternal movelessness that is coming to me be made easier or harder by the sacrifices or selfishnesses of the time when I was yeasty and acrawl.”

“Then you are an individualist, a materialist, and, logically, a hedonist.”

“Big words,” he smiled. “But what is a hedonist?”

He nodded agreement when I had given the definition. “And you are also,” I continued, “a man one could not trust in the least thing where it was possible for a selfish interest to intervene?”

“Now you’re beginning to understand,” he said, brightening.

“You are a man utterly without what the world calls morals?”

“That’s it.”

“A man of whom to be always afraid — ”

“That’s the way to put it.”

“As one is afraid of a snake, or a tiger, or a shark?”

“Now you know me,” he said. “And you know me as I am generally known. Other men call me ‘Wolf.’”

“You are a sort of monster,” I added audaciously, “a Caliban who has pondered Setebos, and who acts as you act, in idle moments, by whim and fancy.”

His brow clouded at the allusion. He did not understand, and I quickly learned that he did not know the poem.

“I’m just reading Browning,” he confessed, “and it’s pretty tough. I haven’t got very far along, and as it is I’ve about lost my bearings.”

Not to be tiresome, I shall say that I fetched the book from his state-room and read “Caliban” aloud. He was delighted. It was a primitive mode of reasoning and of looking at things that he understood thoroughly. He interrupted again and again with comment and criticism. When I finished, he had me read it over a second time, and a third. We fell into discussion — philosophy, science, evolution, religion. He betrayed the inaccuracies of the self-read man, and, it must be granted, the sureness and directness of the primitive mind. The very simplicity of his reasoning was its strength, and his materialism was far more compelling than the subtly complex materialism of Charley Furuseth. Not that I — a confirmed and, as Furuseth phrased it, a temperamental idealist — was to be compelled; but that Wolf Larsen stormed the last strongholds of my faith with a vigour that received respect, while not accorded conviction.

Time passed. Supper was at hand and the table not laid. I became restless and anxious, and when Thomas Mugridge glared down the companion-way, sick and angry of countenance, I prepared to go about my duties. But Wolf Larsen cried out to him:

“Cooky, you’ve got to hustle to-night. I’m busy with Hump, and you’ll do the best you can without him.”

And again the unprecedented was established. That night I sat at table with the captain and the hunters, while Thomas Mugridge waited on us and washed the dishes afterward — a whim, a Caliban-mood of Wolf Larsen’s, and one I foresaw would bring me trouble. In the meantime we talked and talked, much to the disgust of the hunters, who could not understand a word.

CHAPTER IX

Three days of rest, three blessed days of rest, are what I had with Wolf Larsen, eating at the cabin table and doing nothing but discuss life, literature, and the universe, the while Thomas Mugridge fumed and raged and did my work as well as his own.

“Watch out for squalls, is all I can say to you,” was Louis’s warning, given during a spare half-hour on deck while Wolf Larsen was engaged in straightening out a row among the hunters.

“Ye can’t tell what’ll be happenin’,” Louis went on, in response to my query for more definite information. “The man’s as contrary as air currents or water currents. You can never guess the ways iv him. ’Tis just as you’re thinkin’ you know him and are makin’ a favourable slant along him, that he whirls around, dead ahead and comes howlin’ down upon you and a-rippin’ all iv your fine-weather sails to rags.”

So I was not altogether surprised when the squall foretold by Louis smote me. We had been having a heated discussion, — upon life, of course, — and, grown over-bold, I was passing stiff strictures upon Wolf Larsen and the life of Wolf Larsen. In fact, I was vivisecting him and turning over his soul-stuff as keenly and thoroughly as it was his custom to do it to others. It may be a weakness of mine that I have an incisive way of speech; but I threw all restraint to the winds and cut and slashed until the whole man of him was snarling. The dark sun-bronze of his face went black with wrath, his eyes were ablaze. There was no clearness or sanity in them — nothing but the terrific rage of a madman. It was the wolf in him that I saw, and a mad wolf at that.

He sprang for me with a half-roar, gripping my arm. I had steeled myself to brazen it out, though I was trembling inwardly; but the enormous strength of the man was too much for my fortitude. He had gripped me by the biceps with his single hand, and when that grip tightened I wilted and shrieked aloud. My feet went out from under me. I simply could not stand upright and endure the agony. The muscles refused their duty. The pain was too great. My biceps was being crushed to a pulp.

He seemed to recover himself, for a lucid gleam came into his eyes, and he relaxed his hold with a short laugh that was more like a growl. I fell to the floor, feeling very faint, while he sat down, lighted a cigar, and watched me as a cat watches a mouse. As I writhed about I could see in his eyes that curiosity I had so often noted, that wonder and perplexity, that questing, that everlasting query of his as to what it was all about.

I finally crawled to my feet and ascended the companion stairs. Fair weather was over, and there was nothing left but to return to the galley. My left arm was numb, as though paralysed, and days passed before I could use it, while weeks went by before the last stiffness and pain went out of it. And he had done nothing but put his hand upon my arm and squeeze. There had been no wrenching or jerking. He had just closed his hand with a steady pressure. What he might have done I did not fully realize till next day, when he put his head into the galley, and, as a sign of renewed friendliness, asked me how my arm was getting on.

“It might have been worse,” he smiled.

I was peeling potatoes. He picked one up from the pan. It was fair-sized, firm, and unpeeled. He closed his hand upon it, squeezed, and the potato squirted out between his fingers in mushy streams. The pulpy remnant he dropped back into the pan and turned away, and I had a sharp vision of how it might have fared with me had the monster put his real strength upon me.

But the three days’ rest was good in spite of it all, for it had given my knee the very chance it needed. It felt much better, the swelling had materially decreased, and the cap seemed descending into its proper place. Also, the three days’ rest brought the trouble I had foreseen. It was plainly Thomas Mugridge’s intention to make me pay for those three days. He treated me vilely, cursed me continually, and heaped his own work upon me. He even ventured to raise his fist to me, but I was becoming animal-like myself, and I snarled in his face so terribly that it must have frightened him back. It is no pleasant picture I can conjure up of myself, Humphrey Van Weyden, in that noisome ship’s galley, crouched in a corner over my task, my face raised to the face of the creature about to strike me, my lips lifted and snarling like a dog’s, my eyes gleaming with fear and helplessness and the courage that comes of fear and helplessness. I do not like the picture. It reminds me too strongly of a rat in a trap. I do not care to think of it; but it was elective, for the threatened blow did not descend.

Thomas Mugridge backed away, glaring as hatefully and viciously as I glared. A pair of beasts is what we were, penned together and showing our teeth. He was a coward, afraid to strike me because I had not quailed sufficiently in advance; so he chose a new way to intimidate me. There was only one galley knife that, as a knife, amounted to anything. This, through many years of service and wear, had acquired a long, lean blade. It was unusually cruel-looking, and at first I had shuddered every time I used it. The cook borrowed a stone from Johansen and proceeded to sharpen the knife. He did it with great ostentation, glancing significantly at me the while. He whetted it up and down all day long. Every odd moment he could find he had the knife and stone out and was whetting away. The steel acquired a razor edge. He tried it with the ball of his thumb or across the nail. He shaved hairs from the back of his hand, glanced along the edge with microscopic acuteness, and found, or feigned that he found, always, a slight inequality in its edge somewhere. Then he would put it on the stone again and whet, whet, whet, till I could have laughed aloud, it was so very ludicrous.

It was also serious, for I learned that he was capable of using it, that under all his cowardice there was a courage of cowardice, like mine, that would impel him to do the very thing his whole nature protested against doing and was afraid of doing. "Cooky's sharpening his knife for Hump," was being whispered about among the sailors, and some of them twitted him about it. This he took in good part, and was really pleased, nodding his head with direful foreknowledge and mystery, until George Leach, the erstwhile cabin-boy, ventured some rough pleasantry on the subject.

Now it happened that Leach was one of the sailors told off to douse Mugridge after his game of cards with the captain. Leach had evidently done his task with a thoroughness that Mugridge had not forgiven, for words followed and evil names involving smirched ancestries. Mugridge menaced with the knife he was sharpening for me. Leach laughed and hurled more of his Telegraph Hill Billingsgate, and before either he or I knew what had happened, his right arm had been ripped open from elbow to wrist by a quick slash of the knife. The cook backed away, a fiendish expression on his face, the knife held before him in a position of defence. But Leach took it quite calmly, though blood was spouting upon the deck as generously as water from a fountain.

"I'm goin' to get you, Cooky," he said, "and I'll get you hard. And I won't be in no hurry about it. You'll be without that knife when I come for you."

So saying, he turned and walked quietly forward. Mugridge's face was livid with fear at what he had done and at what he might expect sooner or later from the man he had stabbed. But his demeanour toward me was more ferocious than ever. In spite of his fear at the reckoning he must expect to pay for what he had done, he could see that it had been an object-lesson to me, and he became more domineering and exultant. Also there was a lust in him, akin to madness, which had come with sight of the blood he had drawn. He was beginning to see red in whatever direction he looked. The psychology of it is sadly tangled, and yet I could read the workings of his mind as clearly as though it were a printed book.

Several days went by, the *Ghost* still foaming down the trades, and I could swear I saw madness growing in Thomas Mugridge's eyes. And I confess that I became afraid, very much afraid. Whet, whet, whet, it went all day long. The look in his eyes as he felt the keen edge and glared at me was positively carnivorous. I was afraid to turn my shoulder to him, and when I left the galley I went out backwards — to the amusement of the sailors and hunters, who made a point of gathering in groups to witness my exit. The strain was too great. I sometimes thought my mind would give way under it — a meet thing on this ship of madmen and brutes. Every hour, every minute of my existence was in jeopardy. I was a human soul in distress, and yet no soul, fore or aft, betrayed sufficient sympathy to come to my aid. At times I thought of throwing myself on the mercy of Wolf Larsen, but the vision of the mocking devil in his eyes that questioned life and sneered at it would come strong upon me and compel me to refrain. At other times I seriously contemplated suicide, and the whole force of my hopeful philosophy was required to keep me from going over the side in the darkness of night.

Several times Wolf Larsen tried to inveigle me into discussion, but I gave him short answers and eluded him. Finally, he commanded me to resume my seat at the cabin table for a time and let the cook do my work. Then I spoke frankly, telling him what I was enduring from Thomas Mugridge because of the three days of favouritism which had been shown me. Wolf Larsen regarded me with smiling eyes.

"So you're afraid, eh?" he sneered.

"Yes," I said defiantly and honestly, "I am afraid."

"That's the way with you fellows," he cried, half angrily, "sentimentalizing about your immortal souls and afraid to die. At sight of a sharp knife and a cowardly Cockney the clinging of life to life overcomes all your fond foolishness. Why, my dear fellow, you will live for ever. You are a god, and God cannot be killed. Cooky cannot hurt you. You are sure of your resurrection. What's there to be afraid of?

"You have eternal life before you. You are a millionaire in immortality, and a millionaire whose fortune cannot be lost, whose fortune is less perishable than the stars and as lasting as space or time. It is impossible for you to diminish your principal. Immortality is a thing without beginning or end. Eternity is eternity, and though you die here and now you will go on living somewhere else and hereafter. And it is all very beautiful, this shaking off of the flesh and soaring of the imprisoned spirit. Cooky cannot hurt you. He can only give you a boost on the path you eternally must tread.

"Or, if you do not wish to be boosted just yet, why not boost Cooky? According to your ideas, he, too, must be an immortal millionaire. You cannot bankrupt him. His paper will always circulate at par. You cannot diminish the length of his living by killing him, for he is without beginning or end. He's bound to go on living, somewhere, somehow. Then boost him. Stick a knife in him and let his spirit free. As it is, it's in a nasty prison, and you'll do him only a kindness by breaking down the door. And who knows? — it may be a very beautiful spirit that will go soaring up into the blue from that ugly carcass. Boost him along, and I'll promote you to his place, and he's getting forty-five dollars a month."

It was plain that I could look for no help or mercy from Wolf Larsen. Whatever was to be done I must do for myself; and out of the courage of fear I evolved the plan of fighting Thomas Mugridge with his own weapons. I borrowed a whetstone from Johansen. Louis, the boat-steerer, had already begged me for condensed milk and sugar. The lazarette, where such delicacies were stored, was situated beneath the cabin floor. Watching my chance, I stole five cans of the milk, and that night, when it was Louis's watch on deck, I traded them with him for a dirk as lean and cruel-looking as Thomas Mugridge's vegetable knife. It was rusty and dull, but I turned the grindstone while Louis gave it an edge. I slept more soundly than usual that night.

Next morning, after breakfast, Thomas Mugridge began his whet, whet, whet. I glanced warily at him, for I was on my knees taking the ashes from the stove. When I returned from throwing them overside, he was talking to Harrison, whose honest yokel's face was filled with fascination and wonder.

“Yes,” Mugridge was saying, “an’ wot does ’is worship do but give me two years in Reading. But blimey if I cared. The other mug was fixed plenty. Should ’a seen ’im. Knife just like this. I stuck it in, like into soft butter, an’ the w’y ’e squealed was better’n a tu-penny gaff.” He shot a glance in my direction to see if I was taking it in, and went on. “‘I didn’t mean it Tommy,’ ’e was snifflin’; ‘so ’elp me Gawd, I didn’t mean it!’ ‘I’ll fix yer bloody well right,’ I sez, an’ kept right after ’im. I cut ’im in ribbons, that’s wot I did, an’ ’e a-squealin’ all the time. Once ’e got ’is ’and on the knife an’ tried to ’old it. ‘Ad ’is fingers around it, but I pulled it through, cuttin’ to the bone. O, ’e was a sight, I can tell yer.”

A call from the mate interrupted the gory narrative, and Harrison went aft. Mugridge sat down on the raised threshold to the galley and went on with his knife-sharpening. I put the shovel away and calmly sat down on the coal-box facing him. He favoured me with a vicious stare. Still calmly, though my heart was going pitapat, I pulled out Louis’s dirk and began to whet it on the stone. I had looked for almost any sort of explosion on the Cockney’s part, but to my surprise he did not appear aware of what I was doing. He went on whetting his knife. So did I. And for two hours we sat there, face to face, whet, whet, whet, till the news of it spread abroad and half the ship’s company was crowding the galley doors to see the sight.

Encouragement and advice were freely tendered, and Jock Horner, the quiet, self-spoken hunter who looked as though he would not harm a mouse, advised me to leave the ribs alone and to thrust upward for the abdomen, at the same time giving what he called the “Spanish twist” to the blade. Leach, his bandaged arm prominently to the fore, begged me to leave a few remnants of the cook for him; and Wolf Larsen paused once or twice at the break of the poop to glance curiously at what must have been to him a stirring and crawling of the yeasty thing he knew as life.

And I make free to say that for the time being life assumed the same sordid values to me. There was nothing pretty about it, nothing divine — only two cowardly moving things that sat whetting steel upon stone, and a group of other moving things, cowardly and otherwise, that looked on. Half of them, I am sure, were anxious to see us shedding each other’s blood. It would have been entertainment. And I do not think there was one who would have interfered had we closed in a death-struggle.

On the other hand, the whole thing was laughable and childish. Whet, whet, whet, — Humphrey Van Weyden sharpening his knife in a ship’s galley and trying its edge with his thumb! Of all situations this was the most inconceivable. I know that my own kind could not have believed it possible. I had not been called “Sissy” Van Weyden all my days without reason, and that “Sissy” Van Weyden should be capable of doing this thing was a revelation to Humphrey Van Weyden, who knew not whether to be exultant or ashamed.

But nothing happened. At the end of two hours Thomas Mugridge put away knife and stone and held out his hand.

“Wot’s the good of mykin’ a ’oly show of ourselves for them mugs?” he demanded. “They don’t love us, an’ bloody well glad they’d be a-seein’ us cuttin’ our throats. Yer not ’arf bad, ’Ump! You’ve got spunk, as you Yanks s’y, an’ I like yer in a w’y. So come on an’ shyke.”

Coward that I might be, I was less a coward than he. It was a distinct victory I had gained, and I refused to forego any of it by shaking his detestable hand.

“All right,” he said pridelessly, “tyke it or leave it, I’ll like yer none the less for it.” And to save his face he turned fiercely upon the onlookers. “Get outa my galley-doors, you bloomin’ swabs!”

This command was reinforced by a steaming kettle of water, and at sight of it the sailors scrambled out of the way. This was a sort of victory for Thomas Mugridge, and enabled him to accept more gracefully the defeat I had given him, though, of course, he was too discreet to attempt to drive the hunters away.

“I see Cooky’s finish,” I heard Smoke say to Horner.

“You bet,” was the reply. “Hump runs the galley from now on, and Cooky pulls in his horns.”

Mugridge heard and shot a swift glance at me, but I gave no sign that the conversation had reached me. I had not thought my victory was so far-reaching and complete, but I resolved to let go nothing I had gained. As the days went by, Smoke’s prophecy was verified. The Cockney became more humble and slavish to me than even to Wolf Larsen. I mistered him and sirred him no longer, washed no more greasy pots, and peeled no more potatoes. I did my own work, and my own work only, and when and in what fashion I saw fit. Also I carried the dirk in a sheath at my hip, sailor-fashion, and maintained toward Thomas Mugridge a constant attitude which was composed of equal parts of domineering, insult, and contempt.

CHAPTER X

My intimacy with Wolf Larsen increases — if by intimacy may be denoted those relations which exist between master and man, or, better yet, between king and jester. I am to him no more than a toy, and he values me no more than a child values a toy. My function is to amuse, and so long as I amuse all goes well; but let him become bored, or let him have one of his black moods come upon him, and at once I am relegated from cabin table to galley, while, at the same time, I am fortunate to escape with my life and a whole body.

The loneliness of the man is slowly being borne in upon me. There is not a man aboard but hates or fears him, nor is there a man whom he does not despise. He seems consuming with the tremendous power that is in him and that seems never to have found adequate expression in works. He is as Lucifer would be, were that proud spirit banished to a society of soulless, Tomlinsonian ghosts.

This loneliness is bad enough in itself, but, to make it worse, he is oppressed by the primal melancholy of the race. Knowing him, I review the old Scandinavian myths with clearer understanding. The white-skinned, fair-haired savages who created that terrible pantheon were of the same fibre as he. The frivolity of the laughter-loving Latins is no part of him. When he laughs it is from a humour that is nothing else than ferocious. But he laughs rarely; he is too often sad. And it is a sadness as deep-reaching as the roots of the race. It is the race heritage, the sadness which has made the race sober-minded, clean-lived and fanatically moral, and which, in this latter connection, has culminated among the English in the Reformed Church and Mrs. Grundy.

In point of fact, the chief vent to this primal melancholy has been religion in its more agonizing forms. But the compensations of such religion are denied Wolf Larsen. His brutal materialism will not permit it. So, when his blue moods come on, nothing remains for him, but to be devilish. Were he not so terrible a man, I could sometimes feel sorry for him, as instance three mornings ago, when I went into his stateroom to fill his water-bottle and came unexpectedly upon him. He did not see me. His head was buried in his hands, and his shoulders were heaving convulsively as with sobs. He seemed torn by some mighty grief. As I softly withdrew I could hear him groaning, “God! God! God!” Not that he was calling upon God; it was a mere expletive, but it came from his soul.

At dinner he asked the hunters for a remedy for headache, and by evening, strong man that he was, he was half-blind and reeling about the cabin.

“I’ve never been sick in my life, Hump,” he said, as I guided him to his room. “Nor did I ever have a headache except the time my head was healing after having been laid open for six inches by a capstan-bar.”

For three days this blinding headache lasted, and he suffered as wild animals suffer, as it seemed the way on ship to suffer, without plaint, without sympathy, utterly alone.

This morning, however, on entering his state-room to make the bed and put things in order, I found him well and hard at work. Table and bunk were littered with designs and calculations. On a large transparent sheet, compass and square in hand, he was copying what appeared to be a scale of some sort or other.

“Hello, Hump,” he greeted me genially. “I’m just finishing the finishing touches. Want to see it work?”

“But what is it?” I asked.

“A labour-saving device for mariners, navigation reduced to kindergarten simplicity,” he answered gaily. “From to-day a child will be able to navigate a ship. No more long-winded calculations. All you need is one star in the sky on a dirty night to know instantly where you are. Look. I place the transparent scale on this star-map, revolving the scale on the North Pole. On the scale I’ve worked out the circles of altitude and the lines of bearing. All I do is to put it on a star, revolve the scale till it is opposite those figures on the map underneath, and presto! there you are, the ship’s precise location!”

There was a ring of triumph in his voice, and his eyes, clear blue this morning as the sea, were sparkling with light.

“You must be well up in mathematics,” I said. “Where did you go to school?”

“Never saw the inside of one, worse luck,” was the answer. “I had to dig it out for myself.”

“And why do you think I have made this thing?” he demanded, abruptly. “Dreaming to leave footprints on the sands of time?” He laughed one of his horrible mocking laughs. “Not at all. To get it patented, to make money from it, to revel in piggishness with all night in while other men do the work. That's my purpose. Also, I have enjoyed working it out."

"The creative joy," I murmured.

"I guess that's what it ought to be called. Which is another way of expressing the joy of life in that it is alive, the triumph of movement over matter, of the quick over the dead, the pride of the yeast because it is yeast and crawls."

I threw up my hands with helpless disapproval of his inveterate materialism and went about making the bed. He continued copying lines and figures upon the transparent scale. It was a task requiring the utmost nicety and precision, and I could not but admire the way he tempered his strength to the fineness and delicacy of the need.

When I had finished the bed, I caught myself looking at him in a fascinated sort of way. He was certainly a handsome man — beautiful in the masculine sense. And again, with never-failing wonder, I remarked the total lack of viciousness, or wickedness, or sinfulness in his face. It was the face, I am convinced, of a man who did no wrong. And by this I do not wish to be misunderstood. What I mean is that it was the face of a man who either did nothing contrary to the dictates of his conscience, or who had no conscience. I am inclined to the latter way of accounting for it. He was a magnificent atavism, a man so purely primitive that he was of the type that came into the world before the development of the moral nature. He was not immoral, but merely unmoral.

As I have said, in the masculine sense his was a beautiful face. Smooth-shaven, every line was distinct, and it was cut as clear and sharp as a cameo; while sea and sun had tanned the naturally fair skin to a dark bronze which bespoke struggle and battle and added both to his savagery and his beauty. The lips were full, yet possessed of the firmness, almost harshness, which is characteristic of thin lips. The set of his mouth, his chin, his jaw, was likewise firm or harsh, with all the fierceness and indomitableness of the male — the nose also. It was the nose of a being born to conquer and command. It just hinted of the eagle beak. It might have been Grecian, it might have been Roman, only it was a shade too massive for the one, a shade too delicate for the other. And while the whole face was the incarnation of fierceness and strength, the primal melancholy from which he suffered seemed to greaten the lines of mouth and eye and brow, seemed to give a largeness and completeness which otherwise the face would have lacked.

And so I caught myself standing idly and studying him. I cannot say how greatly the man had come to interest me. Who was he? What was he? How had he happened to be? All powers seemed his, all potentialities — why, then, was he no more than the obscure master of a seal-hunting schooner with a reputation for frightful brutality amongst the men who hunted seals?

My curiosity burst from me in a flood of speech.

"Why is it that you have not done great things in this world? With the power that is yours you might have risen to any height. Unpossessed of conscience or moral instinct, you might have mastered the world, broken it to your hand. And yet here you are, at the top of your life, where diminishing and dying begin, living an obscure and sordid existence, hunting sea animals for the satisfaction of woman's vanity and love of decoration, revelling in a piggishness, to use your own words, which is anything and everything except splendid. Why, with all that wonderful strength, have you not done something? There was nothing to stop you, nothing that could stop you. What was wrong? Did you lack ambition? Did you fall under temptation? What was the matter? What was the matter?"

He had lifted his eyes to me at the commencement of my outburst, and followed me complacently until I had done and stood before him breathless and dismayed. He waited a moment, as though seeking where to begin, and then said:

"Hump, do you know the parable of the sower who went forth to sow? If you will remember, some of the seed fell upon stony places, where there was not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprung up and choked them."

"Well?" I said.

"Well?" he queried, half petulantly. "It was not well. I was one of those seeds."

He dropped his head to the scale and resumed the copying. I finished my work and had opened the door to leave, when he spoke to me.

“Hump, if you will look on the west coast of the map of Norway you will see an indentation called Romsdal Fiord. I was born within a hundred miles of that stretch of water. But I was not born Norwegian. I am a Dane. My father and mother were Danes, and how they ever came to that bleak bight of land on the west coast I do not know. I never heard. Outside of that there is nothing mysterious. They were poor people and unlettered. They came of generations of poor unlettered people — peasants of the sea who sowed their sons on the waves as has been their custom since time began. There is no more to tell.”

“But there is,” I objected. “It is still obscure to me.”

“What can I tell you?” he demanded, with a recrudescence of fierceness. “Of the meagreness of a child’s life? of fish diet and coarse living? of going out with the boats from the time I could crawl? of my brothers, who went away one by one to the deep-sea farming and never came back? of myself, unable to read or write, cabin-boy at the mature age of ten on the coastwise, old-country ships? of the rough fare and rougher usage, where kicks and blows were bed and breakfast and took the place of speech, and fear and hatred and pain were my only soul-experiences? I do not care to remember. A madness comes up in my brain even now as I think of it. But there were coastwise skippers I would have returned and killed when a man’s strength came to me, only the lines of my life were cast at the time in other places. I did return, not long ago, but unfortunately the skippers were dead, all but one, a mate in the old days, a skipper when I met him, and when I left him a cripple who would never walk again.”

“But you who read Spencer and Darwin and have never seen the inside of a school, how did you learn to read and write?” I queried.

“In the English merchant service. Cabin-boy at twelve, ship’s boy at fourteen, ordinary seamen at sixteen, able seaman at seventeen, and cock of the fo’c’sle, infinite ambition and infinite loneliness, receiving neither help nor sympathy, I did it all for myself — navigation, mathematics, science, literature, and what not. And of what use has it been? Master and owner of a ship at the top of my life, as you say, when I am beginning to diminish and die. Paltry, isn’t it? And when the sun was up I was scorched, and because I had no root I withered away.”

“But history tells of slaves who rose to the purple,” I chided.

“And history tells of opportunities that came to the slaves who rose to the purple,” he answered grimly. “No man makes opportunity. All the great men ever did was to know it when it came to them. The Corsican knew. I have dreamed as greatly as the Corsican. I should have known the opportunity, but it never came. The thorns sprung up and choked me. And, Hump, I can tell you that you know more about me than any living man, except my own brother."

"And what is he? And where is he?"

"Master of the steamship *Macedonia*, seal-hunter," was the answer. "We will meet him most probably on the Japan coast. Men call him 'Death' Larsen."

"Death Larsen!" I involuntarily cried. "Is he like you?"

"Hardly. He is a lump of an animal without any head. He has all my — my — "

"Brutishness," I suggested.

"Yes, — thank you for the word, — all my brutishness, but he can scarcely read or write."

"And he has never philosophized on life," I added.

"No," Wolf Larsen answered, with an indescribable air of sadness. "And he is all the happier for leaving life alone. He is too busy living it to think about it. My mistake was in ever opening the books."

CHAPTER XI

The *Ghost* has attained the southernmost point of the arc she is describing across the Pacific, and is already beginning to edge away to the west and north toward some lone island, it is rumoured, where she will fill her water-casks before proceeding to the season's hunt along the coast of Japan. The hunters have experimented and practised with their rifles and shotguns till they are satisfied, and the boat-pullers and steerers have made their spritsails, bound the oars and rowlocks in leather and sennit so that they will make no noise when creeping on the seals, and put their boats in apple-pie order — to use Leach's homely phrase.

His arm, by the way, has healed nicely, though the scar will remain all his life. Thomas Mugridge lives in mortal fear of him, and is afraid to venture on deck after dark. There are two or three standing quarrels in the forecastle. Louis tells me that the gossip of the sailors finds its way aft, and that two of the telltales have been badly beaten by their mates. He shakes his head dubiously over the outlook for the man Johnson, who is boat-puller in the same boat with him. Johnson has been guilty of speaking his mind too freely, and has collided two or three times with Wolf Larsen over the pronunciation of his name. Johansen he thrashed on the amidships deck the other night, since which time the mate has called him by his proper name. But of course it is out of the question that Johnson should thrash Wolf Larsen.

Louis has also given me additional information about Death Larsen, which tallies with the captain's brief description. We may expect to meet Death Larsen on the Japan coast. "And look out for squalls," is Louis's prophecy, "for they hate one another like the wolf whelps they are." Death Larsen is in command of the only sealing steamer in the fleet, the *Macedonia*, which carries fourteen boats, whereas the rest of the schooners carry only six. There is wild talk of cannon aboard, and of strange raids and expeditions she may make, ranging from opium smuggling into the States and arms smuggling into China, to blackbirding and open piracy. Yet I cannot but believe for I have never yet caught him in a lie, while he has a cyclopædic knowledge of sealing and the men of the sealing fleets.

As it is forward and in the galley, so it is in the steerage and aft, on this veritable hell-ship. Men fight and struggle ferociously for one another's lives. The hunters are looking for a shooting scrape at any moment between Smoke and Henderson, whose old quarrel has not healed, while Wolf Larsen says positively that he will kill the survivor of the affair, if such affair comes off. He frankly states that the position he takes is based on no moral grounds, that all the hunters could kill and eat one another so far as he is concerned, were it not that he needs them alive for the hunting. If they will only hold their hands until the season is over, he promises them a royal carnival, when all grudges can he settled and the survivors may toss the non-survivors overboard and arrange a story as to how the missing men were lost at sea. I think even the hunters are appalled at his cold-bloodedness. Wicked men though they be, they are certainly very much afraid of him.

Thomas Mugridge is cur-like in his subjection to me, while I go about in secret dread of him. His is the courage of fear, — a strange thing I know well of myself, — and at any moment it may master the fear and impel him to the taking of my life. My knee is much better, though it often aches for long periods, and the stiffness is gradually leaving the arm which Wolf Larsen squeezed. Otherwise I am in splendid condition, feel that I am in splendid condition. My muscles are growing harder and increasing in size. My hands, however, are a spectacle for grief. They have a parboiled appearance, are afflicted with hang-nails, while the nails are broken and discoloured, and the edges of the quick seem to be assuming a fungoid sort of growth. Also, I am suffering from boils, due to the diet, most likely, for I was never afflicted in this manner before.

I was amused, a couple of evenings back, by seeing Wolf Larsen reading the Bible, a copy of which, after the futile search for one at the beginning of the voyage, had been found in the dead mate’s sea-chest. I wondered what Wolf Larsen could get from it, and he read aloud to me from Ecclesiastes. I could imagine he was speaking the thoughts of his own mind as he read to me, and his voice, reverberating deeply and mournfully in the confined cabin, charmed and held me. He may be uneducated, but he certainly knows how to express the significance of the written word. I can hear him now, as I shall always hear him, the primal melancholy vibrant in his voice as he read:

“I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

“So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem; also my wisdom returned with me.

“Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought and on the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

“All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

“This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all; yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

“For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

“For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten.

“Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in anything that is done under the sun.”

“There you have it, Hump,” he said, closing the book upon his finger and looking up at me. “The Preacher who was king over Israel in Jerusalem thought as I think. You call me a pessimist. Is not this pessimism of the blackest? — ‘All is vanity and vexation of spirit,’ ‘There is no profit under the sun,’ ‘There is one event unto all,’ to the fool and the wise, the clean and the unclean, the sinner and the saint, and that event is death, and an evil thing, he says. For the Preacher loved life, and did not want to die, saying, ‘For a living dog is better than a dead lion.’ He preferred the vanity and vexation to the silence and unmovableness of the grave. And so I. To crawl is piggish; but to not crawl, to be as the clod and rock, is loathsome to contemplate. It is loathsome to the life that is in me, the very essence of which is movement, the power of movement, and the consciousness of the power of movement. Life itself is unsatisfaction, but to look ahead to death is greater unsatisfaction.”

“You are worse off than Omar,” I said. “He, at least, after the customary agonizing of youth, found content and made of his materialism a joyous thing.”

“Who was Omar?” Wolf Larsen asked, and I did no more work that day, nor the next, nor the next.

In his random reading he had never chanced upon the Rubáiyát, and it was to him like a great find of treasure. Much I remembered, possibly two-thirds of the quatrains, and I managed to piece out the remainder without difficulty. We talked for hours over single stanzas, and I found him reading into them a wail of regret and a rebellion which, for the life of me, I could not discover myself. Possibly I recited with a certain joyous lilt which was my own, for — his memory was good, and at a second rendering, very often the first, he made a quatrain his own — he recited the same lines and invested them with an unrest and passionate revolt that was well-nigh convincing.

I was interested as to which quatrain he would like best, and was not surprised when he hit upon the one born of an instant’s irritability, and quite at variance with the Persian’s complacent philosophy and genial code of life:

“What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!”

“Great!” Wolf Larsen cried. “Great! That’s the keynote. Insolence! He could not have used a better word.”

In vain I objected and denied. He deluged me, overwhelmed me with argument.

“It’s not the nature of life to be otherwise. Life, when it knows that it must cease living, will always rebel. It cannot help itself. The Preacher found life and the works of life all a vanity and vexation, an evil thing; but death, the ceasing to be able to be vain and vexed, he found an eviler thing. Through chapter after chapter he is worried by the one event that cometh to all alike. So Omar, so I, so you, even you, for you rebelled against dying when Cooky sharpened a knife for you. You were afraid to die; the life that was in you, that composes you, that is greater than you, did not want to die. You have talked of the instinct of immortality. I talk of the instinct of life, which is to live, and which, when death looms near and large, masters the instinct, so called, of immortality. It mastered it in you (you cannot deny it), because a crazy Cockney cook sharpened a knife.

"You are afraid of him now. You are afraid of me. You cannot deny it. If I should catch you by the throat, thus," — his hand was about my throat and my breath was shut off, — "and began to press the life out of you thus, and thus, your instinct of immortality will go glimmering, and your instinct of life, which is longing for life, will flutter up, and you will struggle to save yourself. Eh? I see the fear of death in your eyes. You beat the air with your arms. You exert all your puny strength to struggle to live. Your hand is clutching my arm, lightly it feels as a butterfly resting there. Your chest is heaving, your tongue protruding, your skin turning dark, your eyes swimming. 'To live! To live! To live!' you are crying; and you are crying to live here and now, not hereafter. You doubt your immortality, eh? Ha! ha! You are not sure of it. You won't chance it. This life only you are certain is real. Ah, it is growing dark and darker. It is the darkness of death, the ceasing to be, the ceasing to feel, the ceasing to move, that is gathering about you, descending upon you, rising around you. Your eyes are becoming set. They are glazing. My voice sounds faint and far. You cannot see my face. And still you struggle in my grip. You kick with your legs. Your body draws itself up in knots like a snake's. Your chest heaves and strains. To live! To live! To live — "

I heard no more. Consciousness was blotted out by the darkness he had so graphically described, and when I came to myself I was lying on the floor and he was smoking a cigar and regarding me thoughtfully with that old familiar light of curiosity in his eyes.

"Well, have I convinced you?" he demanded. "Here take a drink of this. I want to ask you some questions."

I rolled my head negatively on the floor. "Your arguments are too — er — forcible," I managed to articulate, at cost of great pain to my aching throat.

"You'll be all right in half-an-hour," he assured me. "And I promise I won't use any more physical demonstrations. Get up now. You can sit on a chair."

And, toy that I was of this monster, the discussion of Omar and the Preacher was resumed. And half the night we sat up over it.

CHAPTER XII

The last twenty-four hours have witnessed a carnival of brutality. From cabin to forecastle it seems to have broken out like a contagion. I scarcely know where to begin. Wolf Larsen was really the cause of it. The relations among the men, strained and made tense by feuds, quarrels and grudges, were in a state of unstable equilibrium, and evil passions flared up in flame like prairie-grass.

Thomas Mugridge is a sneak, a spy, an informer. He has been attempting to curry favour and reinstate himself in the good graces of the captain by carrying tales of the men forward. He it was, I know, that carried some of Johnson's hasty talk to Wolf Larsen. Johnson, it seems, bought a suit of oilskins from the slop-chest and found them to be of greatly inferior quality. Nor was he slow in advertising the fact. The slop-chest is a sort of miniature dry-goods store which is carried by all sealing schooners and which is stocked with articles peculiar to the needs of the sailors. Whatever a sailor purchases is taken from his subsequent earnings on the sealing grounds; for, as it is with the hunters so it is with the boat-pullers and steerers — in the place of wages they receive a "lay," a rate of so much per skin for every skin captured in their particular boat.

But of Johnson's grumbling at the slop-chest I knew nothing, so that what I witnessed came with a shock of sudden surprise. I had just finished sweeping the cabin, and had been inveigled by Wolf Larsen into a discussion of Hamlet, his favourite Shakespearian character, when Johansen descended the companion stairs followed by Johnson. The latter's cap came off after the custom of the sea, and he stood respectfully in the centre of the cabin, swaying heavily and uneasily to the roll of the schooner and facing the captain.

"Shut the doors and draw the slide," Wolf Larsen said to me.

As I obeyed I noticed an anxious light come into Johnson's eyes, but I did not dream of its cause. I did not dream of what was to occur until it did occur, but he knew from the very first what was coming and awaited it bravely. And in his action I found complete refutation of all Wolf Larsen's materialism. The sailor Johnson was swayed by idea, by principle, and truth, and sincerity. He was right, he knew he was right, and he was unafraid. He would die for the right if needs be, he would be true to himself, sincere with his soul. And in this was portrayed the victory of the spirit over the flesh, the indomitability and moral grandeur of the soul that knows no restriction and rises above time and space and matter with a surety and invincibleness born of nothing else than eternity and immortality.

But to return. I noticed the anxious light in Johnson's eyes, but mistook it for the native shyness and embarrassment of the man. The mate, Johansen, stood away several feet to the side of him, and fully three yards in front of him sat Wolf Larsen on one of the pivotal cabin chairs. An appreciable pause fell after I had closed the doors and drawn the slide, a pause that must have lasted fully a minute. It was broken by Wolf Larsen.

"Yonson," he began.

"My name is Johnson, sir," the sailor boldly corrected.

"Well, Johnson, then, damn you! Can you guess why I have sent for you?"

"Yes, and no, sir," was the slow reply. "My work is done well. The mate knows that, and you know it, sir. So there cannot be any complaint."

"And is that all?" Wolf Larsen queried, his voice soft, and low, and purring.

"I know you have it in for me," Johnson continued with his unalterable and ponderous slowness. "You do not like me. You — you — "

"Go on," Wolf Larsen prompted. "Don't be afraid of my feelings."

"I am not afraid," the sailor retorted, a slight angry flush rising through his sunburn. "If I speak not fast, it is because I have not been from the old country as long as you. You do not like me because I am too much of a man; that is why, sir."

"You are too much of a man for ship discipline, if that is what you mean, and if you know what I mean," was Wolf Larsen's retort.

"I know English, and I know what you mean, sir," Johnson answered, his flush deepening at the slur on his knowledge of the English language.

"Johnson," Wolf Larsen said, with an air of dismissing all that had gone before as introductory to the main business in hand, "I understand you're not quite satisfied with those oilskins?"

"No, I am not. They are no good, sir."

"And you've been shooting off your mouth about them."

"I say what I think, sir," the sailor answered courageously, not failing at the same time in ship courtesy, which demanded that "sir" be appended to each speech he made.

It was at this moment that I chanced to glance at Johansen. His big fists were clenching and unclenching, and his face was positively fiendish, so malignantly did he look at Johnson. I noticed a black discoloration, still faintly visible, under Johansen's eye, a mark of the thrashing he had received a few nights before from the sailor. For the first time I began to divine that something terrible was about to be enacted, — what, I could not imagine.

"Do you know what happens to men who say what you've said about my slop-chest and me?" Wolf Larsen was demanding.

"I know, sir," was the answer.

"What?" Wolf Larsen demanded, sharply and imperatively.

"What you and the mate there are going to do to me, sir."

"Look at him, Hump," Wolf Larsen said to me, "look at this bit of animated dust, this aggregation of matter that moves and breathes and defies me and thoroughly believes itself to be compounded of something good; that is impressed with certain human fictions such as righteousness and honesty, and that will live up to them in spite of all personal discomforts and menaces. What do you think of him, Hump? What do you think of him?"

"I think that he is a better man than you are," I answered, impelled, somehow, with a desire to draw upon myself a portion of the wrath I felt was about to break upon his head. "His human fictions, as you choose to call them, make for nobility and manhood. You have no fictions, no dreams, no ideals. You are a pauper."

He nodded his head with a savage pleasantness. "Quite true, Hump, quite true. I have no fictions that make for nobility and manhood. A living dog is better than a dead lion, say I with the Preacher. My only doctrine is the doctrine of expediency, and it makes for surviving. This bit of the ferment we call 'Johnson,' when he is no longer a bit of the ferment, only dust and ashes, will have no more nobility than any dust and ashes, while I shall still be alive and roaring."

"Do you know what I am going to do?" he questioned.

I shook my head.

"Well, I am going to exercise my prerogative of roaring and show you how fares nobility. Watch me."

Three yards away from Johnson he was, and sitting down. Nine feet! And yet he left the chair in full leap, without first gaining a standing position. He left the chair, just as he sat in it, squarely, springing from the sitting posture like a wild animal, a tiger, and like a tiger covered the intervening space. It was an avalanche of fury that Johnson strove vainly to fend off. He threw one arm down to protect the stomach, the other arm up to protect the head; but Wolf Larsen's fist drove midway between, on the chest, with a crushing, resounding impact. Johnson's breath, suddenly expelled, shot from his mouth and as suddenly checked, with the forced, audible expiration of a man wielding an axe. He almost fell backward, and swayed from side to side in an effort to recover his balance.

I cannot give the further particulars of the horrible scene that followed. It was too revolting. It turns me sick even now when I think of it. Johnson fought bravely enough, but he was no match for Wolf Larsen, much less for Wolf Larsen and the mate. It was frightful. I had not imagined a human being could endure so much and still live and struggle on. And struggle on Johnson did. Of course there was no hope for him, not the slightest, and he knew it as well as I, but by the manhood that was in him he could not cease from fighting for that manhood.

It was too much for me to witness. I felt that I should lose my mind, and I ran up the companion stairs to open the doors and escape on deck. But Wolf Larsen, leaving his victim for the moment, and with one of his tremendous springs, gained my side and flung me into the far corner of the cabin.

"The phenomena of life, Hump," he girded at me. "Stay and watch it. You may gather data on the immortality of the soul. Besides, you know, we can't hurt Johnson's soul. It's only the fleeting form we may demolish."

It seemed centuries — possibly it was no more than ten minutes that the beating continued. Wolf Larsen and Johansen were all about the poor fellow. They struck him with their fists, kicked him with their heavy shoes, knocked him down, and dragged him to his feet to knock him down again. His eyes were blinded so that he could not see, and the blood running from ears and nose and mouth turned the cabin into a shambles. And when he could no longer rise they still continued to beat and kick him where he lay.

"Easy, Johansen; easy as she goes," Wolf Larsen finally said.

But the beast in the mate was up and rampant, and Wolf Larsen was compelled to brush him away with a back-handed sweep of the arm, gentle enough, apparently, but which hurled Johansen back like a cork, driving his head against the wall with a crash. He fell to the floor, half stunned for the moment, breathing heavily and blinking his eyes in a stupid sort of way.

"Jerk open the doors, — Hump," I was commanded.

I obeyed, and the two brutes picked up the senseless man like a sack of rubbish and hove him clear up the companion stairs, through the narrow doorway, and out on deck. The blood from his nose gushed in a scarlet stream over the feet of the helmsman, who was none other than Louis, his boat-mate. But Louis took and gave a spoke and gazed imperturbably into the binnacle.

Not so was the conduct of George Leach, the erstwhile cabin-boy. Fore and aft there was nothing that could have surprised us more than his consequent behaviour. He it was that came up on the poop without orders and dragged Johnson forward, where he set about dressing his wounds as well as he could and making him comfortable. Johnson, as Johnson, was unrecognizable; and not only that, for his features, as human features at all, were unrecognizable, so discoloured and swollen had they become in the few minutes which had elapsed between the beginning of the beating and the dragging forward of the body.

But of Leach's behaviour — By the time I had finished cleansing the cabin he had taken care of Johnson. I had come up on deck for a breath of fresh air and to try to get some repose for my overwrought nerves. Wolf Larsen was smoking a cigar and examining the patent log which the *Ghost* usually towed astern, but which had been hauled in for some purpose. Suddenly Leach's voice came to my ears. It was tense and hoarse with an overmastering rage. I turned and saw him standing just beneath the break of the poop on the port side of the galley. His face was convulsed and white, his eyes were flashing, his clenched fists raised overhead.

"May God damn your soul to hell, Wolf Larsen, only hell's too good for you, you coward, you murderer, you pig!" was his opening salutation.

I was thunderstruck. I looked for his instant annihilation. But it was not Wolf Larsen's whim to annihilate him. He sauntered slowly forward to the break of the poop, and, leaning his elbow on the corner of the cabin, gazed down thoughtfully and curiously at the excited boy.

And the boy indicted Wolf Larsen as he had never been indicted before. The sailors assembled in a fearful group just outside the forecastle scuttle and watched and listened. The hunters piled pell-mell out of the steerage, but as Leach's tirade continued I saw that there was no levity in their faces.

Even they were frightened, not at the boy's terrible words, but at his terrible audacity. It did not seem possible that any living creature could thus beard Wolf Larsen in his teeth. I know for myself that I was shocked into admiration of the boy, and I saw in him the splendid invincibleness of immortality rising above the flesh and the fears of the flesh, as in the prophets of old, to condemn unrighteousness.

And such condemnation! He haled forth Wolf Larsen's soul naked to the scorn of men. He rained upon it curses from God and High Heaven, and withered it with a heat of invective that savoured of a mediæval excommunication of the Catholic Church. He ran the gamut of denunciation, rising to heights of wrath that were sublime and almost Godlike, and from sheer exhaustion sinking to the vilest and most indecent abuse.

His rage was a madness. His lips were flecked with a soapy froth, and sometimes he choked and gurgled and became inarticulate. And through it all, calm and impassive, leaning on his elbow and gazing down, Wolf Larsen seemed lost in a great curiosity. This wild stirring of yeasty life, this terrific revolt and defiance of matter that moved, perplexed and interested him.

Each moment I looked, and everybody looked, for him to leap upon the boy and destroy him. But it was not his whim. His cigar went out, and he continued to gaze silently and curiously.

Leach had worked himself into an ecstasy of impotent rage.

"Pig! Pig! Pig!" he was reiterating at the top of his lungs. "Why don't you come down and kill me, you murderer? You can do it! I ain't afraid! There's no one to stop you! Damn sight better dead and outa your reach than alive and in your clutches! Come on, you coward! Kill me! Kill me! Kill me!"

It was at this stage that Thomas Mugridge's erratic soul brought him into the scene. He had been listening at the galley door, but he now came out, ostensibly to fling some scraps over the side, but obviously to see the killing he was certain would take place. He smirked greasily up into the face of Wolf Larsen, who seemed not to see him. But the Cockney was unabashed, though mad, stark mad. He turned to Leach, saying:

"Such langwidge! Shockin'!"

Leach's rage was no longer impotent. Here at last was something ready to hand. And for the first time since the stabbing the Cockney had appeared outside the galley without his knife. The words had barely left his mouth when he was knocked down by Leach. Three times he struggled to his feet, striving to gain the galley, and each time was knocked down.

“Oh, Lord!” he cried. “’Elp! ’Elp! Tyke ’im aw’y, carn’t yer? Tyke ’im aw’y!”

The hunters laughed from sheer relief. Tragedy had dwindled, the farce had begun. The sailors now crowded boldly aft, grinning and shuffling, to watch the pummelling of the hated Cockney. And even I felt a great joy surge up within me. I confess that I delighted in this beating Leach was giving to Thomas Mugridge, though it was as terrible, almost, as the one Mugridge had caused to be given to Johnson. But the expression of Wolf Larsen’s face never changed. He did not change his position either, but continued to gaze down with a great curiosity. For all his pragmatic certitude, it seemed as if he watched the play and movement of life in the hope of discovering something more about it, of discerning in its maddest writhings a something which had hitherto escaped him, — the key to its mystery, as it were, which would make all clear and plain.

But the beating! It was quite similar to the one I had witnessed in the cabin. The Cockney strove in vain to protect himself from the infuriated boy. And in vain he strove to gain the shelter of the cabin. He rolled toward it, grovelled toward it, fell toward it when he was knocked down. But blow followed blow with bewildering rapidity. He was knocked about like a shuttlecock, until, finally, like Johnson, he was beaten and kicked as he lay helpless on the deck. And no one interfered. Leach could have killed him, but, having evidently filled the measure of his vengeance, he drew away from his prostrate foe, who was whimpering and wailing in a puppyish sort of way, and walked forward.

But these two affairs were only the opening events of the day’s programme. In the afternoon Smoke and Henderson fell foul of each other, and a fusillade of shots came up from the steerage, followed by a stampede of the other four hunters for the deck. A column of thick, acrid smoke — the kind always made by black powder — was arising through the open companion-way, and down through it leaped Wolf Larsen. The sound of blows and scuffling came to our ears. Both men were wounded, and he was thrashing them both for having disobeyed his orders and crippled themselves in advance of the hunting season. In fact, they were badly wounded, and, having thrashed them, he proceeded to operate upon them in a rough surgical fashion and to dress their wounds. I served as assistant while he probed and cleansed the passages made by the bullets, and I saw the two men endure his crude surgery without anæsthetics and with no more to uphold them than a stiff tumbler of whisky.

Then, in the first dog-watch, trouble came to a head in the forecastle. It took its rise out of the tittle-tattle and tale-bearing which had been the cause of Johnson's beating, and from the noise we heard, and from the sight of the bruised men next day, it was patent that half the forecastle had soundly drubbed the other half.

The second dog-watch and the day were wound up by a fight between Johansen and the lean, Yankee-looking hunter, Latimer. It was caused by remarks of Latimer's concerning the noises made by the mate in his sleep, and though Johansen was whipped, he kept the steerage awake for the rest of the night while he blissfully slumbered and fought the fight over and over again.

As for myself, I was oppressed with nightmare. The day had been like some horrible dream. Brutality had followed brutality, and flaming passions and cold-blooded cruelty had driven men to seek one another's lives, and to strive to hurt, and maim, and destroy. My nerves were shocked. My mind itself was shocked. All my days had been passed in comparative ignorance of the animality of man. In fact, I had known life only in its intellectual phases. Brutality I had experienced, but it was the brutality of the intellect — the cutting sarcasm of Charley Furuseth, the cruel epigrams and occasional harsh witticisms of the fellows at the Bibelot, and the nasty remarks of some of the professors during my undergraduate days.

That was all. But that men should wreak their anger on others by the bruising of the flesh and the letting of blood was something strangely and fearfully new to me. Not for nothing had I been called "Sissy" Van Weyden, I thought, as I tossed restlessly on my bunk between one nightmare and another. And it seemed to me that my innocence of the realities of life had been complete indeed. I laughed bitterly to myself, and seemed to find in Wolf Larsen's forbidding philosophy a more adequate explanation of life than I found in my own.

And I was frightened when I became conscious of the trend of my thought. The continual brutality around me was degenerative in its effect. It bid fair to destroy for me all that was best and brightest in life. My reason dictated that the beating Thomas Mugridge had received was an ill thing, and yet for the life of me I could not prevent my soul joying in it. And even while I was oppressed by the enormity of my sin, — for sin it was, — I chuckled with an insane delight. I was no longer Humphrey Van Weyden. I was Hump, cabin-boy on the schooner *Ghost*. Wolf Larsen was my captain, Thomas Mugridge and the rest were my companions, and I was receiving repeated impresses from the die which had stamped them all.

CHAPTER XIII

For three days I did my own work and Thomas Mugridge's too; and I flatter myself that I did his work well. I know that it won Wolf Larsen's approval, while the sailors beamed with satisfaction during the brief time my *régime* lasted.

"The first clean bite since I come aboard," Harrison said to me at the galley door, as he returned the dinner pots and pans from the forecastle. "Somehow Tommy's grub always tastes of grease, stale grease, and I reckon he ain't changed his shirt since he left 'Frisco."

"I know he hasn't," I answered.

"And I'll bet he sleeps in it," Harrison added.

"And you won't lose," I agreed. "The same shirt, and he hasn't had it off once in all this time."

But three days was all Wolf Larsen allowed him in which to recover from the effects of the beating. On the fourth day, lame and sore, scarcely able to see, so closed were his eyes, he was haled from his bunk by the nape of the neck and set to his duty. He sniffled and wept, but Wolf Larsen was pitiless.

"And see that you serve no more slops," was his parting injunction. "No more grease and dirt, mind, and a clean shirt occasionally, or you'll get a tow over the side. Understand?"

Thomas Mugridge crawled weakly across the galley floor, and a short lurch of the *Ghost* sent him staggering. In attempting to recover himself, he reached for the iron railing which surrounded the stove and kept the pots from sliding off; but he missed the railing, and his hand, with his weight behind it, landed squarely on the hot surface. There was a sizzle and odour of burning flesh, and a sharp cry of pain.

"Oh, Gawd, Gawd, wot 'ave I done?" he wailed; sitting down in the coal-box and nursing his new hurt by rocking back and forth. "W'y 'as all this come on me? It mykes me fair sick, it does, an' I try so 'ard to go through life 'armless an' 'urtin' nobody."

The tears were running down his puffed and discoloured cheeks, and his face was drawn with pain. A savage expression flitted across it.

"Oh, 'ow I 'ate 'im! 'Ow I 'ate 'im!" he gritted out.

"Whom?" I asked; but the poor wretch was weeping again over his misfortunes. Less difficult it was to guess whom he hated than whom he did not hate. For I had come to see a malignant devil in him which impelled him to hate all the world. I sometimes thought that he hated even himself, so grotesquely had life dealt with him, and so monstrously. At such moments a great sympathy welled up within me, and I felt shame that I had ever joyed in his discomfiture or pain. Life had been unfair to him. It had played him a scurvy trick when it fashioned him into the thing he was, and it had played him scurvy tricks ever since. What chance had he to be anything else than he was? And as though answering my unspoken thought, he wailed:

"I never 'ad no chance, not 'arf a chance! 'Oo was there to send me to school, or put tommy in my 'ungry belly, or wipe my bloody nose for me, w'en I was a kiddy? 'Oo ever did anything for me, heh? 'Oo, I s'y?"

"Never mind, Tommy," I said, placing a soothing hand on his shoulder. "Cheer up. It'll all come right in the end. You've long years before you, and you can make anything you please of yourself."

"It's a lie! a bloody lie!" he shouted in my face, flinging off the hand. "It's a lie, and you know it. I'm already myde, an' myde out of leavin's an' scraps. It's all right for you, 'Ump. You was born a gentleman. You never knew wot it was to go 'ungry, to cry yerself asleep with yer little belly gnawin' an' gnawin', like a rat inside yer. It carn't come right. If I was President of the United Stytes to-morrer, 'ow would it fill my belly for one time w'en I was a kiddy and it went empty?

"'Ow could it, I s'y? I was born to sufferin' and sorrer. I've had more cruel sufferin' than any ten men, I 'ave. I've been in orspital arf my bleedin' life. I've 'ad the fever in Aspinwall, in 'Avana, in New Orleans. I near died of the scurvy and was rotten with it six months in Barbadoes. Smallpox in 'Onolulu, two broken legs in Shanghai, pnuemonia in Unalaska, three busted ribs an' my insides all twisted in 'Frisco. An' 'ere I am now. Look at me! Look at me! My ribs kicked loose from my back again. I'll be coughin' blood before eyght bells. 'Ow can it be myde up to me, I arsk? 'Oo's goin' to do it? Gawd? 'Ow Gawd must 'ave 'ated me w'en 'e signed me on for a voyage in this bloomin' world of 'is!"

This tirade against destiny went on for an hour or more, and then he buckled to his work, limping and groaning, and in his eyes a great hatred for all created things. His diagnosis was correct, however, for he was seized with occasional sicknesses, during which he vomited blood and suffered great pain. And as he said, it seemed God hated him too much to let him die, for he ultimately grew better and waxed more malignant than ever.

Several days more passed before Johnson crawled on deck and went about his work in a half-hearted way. He was still a sick man, and I more than once observed him creeping painfully aloft to a topsail, or drooping wearily as he stood at the wheel. But, still worse, it seemed that his spirit was broken. He was abject before Wolf Larsen and almost grovelled to Johansen. Not so was the conduct of Leach. He went about the deck like a tiger cub, glaring his hatred openly at Wolf Larsen and Johansen.

"I'll do for you yet, you slab-footed Swede," I heard him say to Johansen one night on deck.

The mate cursed him in the darkness, and the next moment some missile struck the galley a sharp rap. There was more cursing, and a mocking laugh, and when all was quiet I stole outside and found a heavy knife imbedded over an inch in the solid wood. A few minutes later the mate came fumbling about in search of it, but I returned it privily to Leach next day. He grinned when I handed it over, yet it was a grin that contained more sincere thanks than a multitude of the verbosities of speech common to the members of my own class.

Unlike any one else in the ship's company, I now found myself with no quarrels on my hands and in the good graces of all. The hunters possibly no more than tolerated me, though none of them disliked me; while Smoke and Henderson, convalescent under a deck awning and swinging day and night in their hammocks, assured me that I was better than any hospital nurse, and that they would not forget me at the end of the voyage when they were paid off. (As though I stood in need of their money! I, who could have bought them out, bag and baggage, and the schooner and its equipment, a score of times over!) But upon me had devolved the task of tending their wounds, and pulling them through, and I did my best by them.

Wolf Larsen underwent another bad attack of headache which lasted two days. He must have suffered severely, for he called me in and obeyed my commands like a sick child. But nothing I could do seemed to relieve him. At my suggestion, however, he gave up smoking and drinking; though why such a magnificent animal as he should have headaches at all puzzles me.

"'Tis the hand of God, I'm tellin' you," is the way Louis sees it. "'Tis a visitation for his black-hearted deeds, and there's more behind and comin', or else — "

“Or else,” I prompted.

“God is noddin’ and not doin’ his duty, though it’s me as shouldn’t say it.”

I was mistaken when I said that I was in the good graces of all. Not only does Thomas Mugridge continue to hate me, but he has discovered a new reason for hating me. It took me no little while to puzzle it out, but I finally discovered that it was because I was more luckily born than he — “gentleman born,” he put it.

“And still no more dead men,” I twitted Louis, when Smoke and Henderson, side by side, in friendly conversation, took their first exercise on deck.

Louis surveyed me with his shrewd grey eyes, and shook his head portentously. “She’s a-comin’, I tell you, and it’ll be sheets and halyards, stand by all hands, when she begins to howl. I’ve had the feel iv it this long time, and I can feel it now as plainly as I feel the rigging iv a dark night. She’s close, she’s close.”

“Who goes first?” I queried.

“Not fat old Louis, I promise you,” he laughed. “For ’tis in the bones iv me I know that come this time next year I’ll be gazin’ in the old mother’s eyes, weary with watchin’ iv the sea for the five sons she gave to it.”

“Wot’s ’e been s’yin’ to yer?” Thomas Mugridge demanded a moment later.

“That he’s going home some day to see his mother,” I answered diplomatically.

“I never ’ad none,” was the Cockney’s comment, as he gazed with lustreless, hopeless eyes into mine.

CHAPTER XIV

It has dawned upon me that I have never placed a proper valuation upon womankind. For that matter, though not amative to any considerable degree so far as I have discovered, I was never outside the atmosphere of women until now. My mother and sisters were always about me, and I was always trying to escape them; for they worried me to distraction with their solicitude for my health and with their periodic inroads on my den, when my orderly confusion, upon which I prided myself, was turned into worse confusion and less order, though it looked neat enough to the eye. I never could find anything when they had departed. But now, alas, how welcome would have been the feel of their presence, the frou-frou and swish-swish of their skirts which I had so cordially detested! I am sure, if I ever get home, that I shall never be irritable with them again. They may dose me and doctor me morning, noon, and night, and dust and sweep and put my den to rights every minute of the day, and I shall only lean back and survey it all and be thankful in that I am possessed of a mother and some several sisters.

All of which has set me wondering. Where are the mothers of these twenty and odd men on the *Ghost*? It strikes me as unnatural and unhealthful that men should be totally separated from women and herd through the world by themselves. Coarseness and savagery are the inevitable results. These men about me should have wives, and sisters, and daughters; then would they be capable of softness, and tenderness, and sympathy. As it is, not one of them is married. In years and years not one of them has been in contact with a good woman, or within the influence, or redemption, which irresistibly radiates from such a creature. There is no balance in their lives. Their masculinity, which in itself is of the brute, has been over-developed. The other and spiritual side of their natures has been dwarfed — atrophied, in fact.

They are a company of celibates, grinding harshly against one another and growing daily more calloused from the grinding. It seems to me impossible sometimes that they ever had mothers. It would appear that they are a half-brute, half-human species, a race apart, wherein there is no such thing as sex; that they are hatched out by the sun like turtle eggs, or receive life in some similar and sordid fashion; and that all their days they fester in brutality and viciousness, and in the end die as unlovely as they have lived.

Rendered curious by this new direction of ideas, I talked with Johansen last night — the first superfluous words with which he has favoured me since the voyage began. He left Sweden when he was eighteen, is now thirty-eight, and in all the intervening time has not been home once. He had met a townsman, a couple of years before, in some sailor boarding-house in Chile, so that he knew his mother to be still alive.

"She must be a pretty old woman now," he said, staring meditatively into the binnacle and then jerking a sharp glance at Harrison, who was steering a point off the course.

"When did you last write to her?"

He performed his mental arithmetic aloud. "Eighty-one; no — eighty-two, eh? no — eighty-three? Yes, eighty-three. Ten years ago. From some little port in Madagascar. I was trading.

"You see," he went on, as though addressing his neglected mother across half the girth of the earth, "each year I was going home. So what was the good to write? It was only a year. And each year something happened, and I did not go. But I am mate, now, and when I pay off at 'Frisco, maybe with five hundred dollars, I will ship myself on a windjammer round the Horn to Liverpool, which will give me more money; and then I will pay my passage from there home. Then she will not do any more work."

"But does she work? now? How old is she?"

"About seventy," he answered. And then, boastingly, "We work from the time we are born until we die, in my country. That's why we live so long. I will live to a hundred."

I shall never forget this conversation. The words were the last I ever heard him utter. Perhaps they were the last he did utter, too. For, going down into the cabin to turn in, I decided that it was too stuffy to sleep below. It was a calm night. We were out of the Trades, and the *Ghost* was forging ahead barely a knot an hour. So I tucked a blanket and pillow under my arm and went up on deck.

As I passed between Harrison and the binnacle, which was built into the top of the cabin, I noticed that he was this time fully three points off. Thinking that he was asleep, and wishing him to escape reprimand or worse, I spoke to him. But he was not asleep. His eyes were wide and staring. He seemed greatly perturbed, unable to reply to me.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Are you sick?"

He shook his head, and with a deep sign as of awakening, caught his breath.

“You’d better get on your course, then,” I chided.

He put a few spokes over, and I watched the compass-card swing slowly to N.N.W. and steady itself with slight oscillations.

I took a fresh hold on my bedclothes and was preparing to start on, when some movement caught my eye and I looked astern to the rail. A sinewy hand, dripping with water, was clutching the rail. A second hand took form in the darkness beside it. I watched, fascinated. What visitant from the gloom of the deep was I to behold? Whatever it was, I knew that it was climbing aboard by the log-line. I saw a head, the hair wet and straight, shape itself, and then the unmistakable eyes and face of Wolf Larsen. His right cheek was red with blood, which flowed from some wound in the head.

He drew himself inboard with a quick effort, and arose to his feet, glancing swiftly, as he did so, at the man at the wheel, as though to assure himself of his identity and that there was nothing to fear from him. The sea-water was streaming from him. It made little audible gurgles which distracted me. As he stepped toward me I shrank back instinctively, for I saw that in his eyes which spelled death.

“All right, Hump,” he said in a low voice. “Where’s the mate?”

I shook my head.

“Johansen!” he called softly. “Johansen!”

“Where is he?” he demanded of Harrison.

The young fellow seemed to have recovered his composure, for he answered steadily enough, “I don’t know, sir. I saw him go for’ard a little while ago.”

“So did I go for’ard. But you will observe that I didn’t come back the way I went. Can you explain it?”

“You must have been overboard, sir.”

“Shall I look for him in the steerage, sir?” I asked.

Wolf Larsen shook his head. “You wouldn’t find him, Hump. But you’ll do. Come on. Never mind your bedding. Leave it where it is.”

I followed at his heels. There was nothing stirring amidships.

“Those cursed hunters,” was his comment. “Too damned fat and lazy to stand a four-hour watch.”

But on the forecastle-head we found three sailors asleep. He turned them over and looked at their faces. They composed the watch on deck, and it was the ship's custom, in good weather, to let the watch sleep with the exception of the officer, the helmsman, and the look-out.

"Who's look-out?" he demanded.

"Me, sir," answered Holyoak, one of the deep-water sailors, a slight tremor in his voice. "I winked off just this very minute, sir. I'm sorry, sir. It won't happen again."

"Did you hear or see anything on deck?"

"No, sir, I — "

But Wolf Larsen had turned away with a snort of disgust, leaving the sailor rubbing his eyes with surprise at having been let of so easily.

"Softly, now," Wolf Larsen warned me in a whisper, as he doubled his body into the forecastle scuttle and prepared to descend.

I followed with a quaking heart. What was to happen I knew no more than did I know what had happened. But blood had been shed, and it was through no whim of Wolf Larsen that he had gone over the side with his scalp laid open. Besides, Johansen was missing.

It was my first descent into the forecastle, and I shall not soon forget my impression of it, caught as I stood on my feet at the bottom of the ladder. Built directly in the eyes of the schooner, it was of the shape of a triangle, along the three sides of which stood the bunks, in double-tier, twelve of them. It was no larger than a hall bedroom in Grub Street, and yet twelve men were herded into it to eat and sleep and carry on all the functions of living. My bedroom at home was not large, yet it could have contained a dozen similar forecastles, and taking into consideration the height of the ceiling, a score at least.

It smelled sour and musty, and by the dim light of the swinging sea-lamp I saw every bit of available wall-space hung deep with sea-boots, oilskins, and garments, clean and dirty, of various sorts. These swung back and forth with every roll of the vessel, giving rise to a brushing sound, as of trees against a roof or wall. Somewhere a boot thumped loudly and at irregular intervals against the wall; and, though it was a mild night on the sea, there was a continual chorus of the creaking timbers and bulkheads and of abysmal noises beneath the flooring.

The sleepers did not mind. There were eight of them, — the two watches below, — and the air was thick with the warmth and odour of their breathing, and the ear was filled with the noise of their snoring and of their sighs and half-groans, tokens plain of the rest of the animal-man. But were they sleeping? all of them? Or had they been sleeping? This was evidently Wolf Larsen's quest — to find the men who appeared to be asleep and who were not asleep or who had not been asleep very recently. And he went about it in a way that reminded me of a story out of Boccaccio.

He took the sea-lamp from its swinging frame and handed it to me. He began at the first bunks forward on the star-board side. In the top one lay Oofty-Oofty, a Kanaka and splendid seaman, so named by his mates. He was asleep on his back and breathing as placidly as a woman. One arm was under his head, the other lay on top of the blankets. Wolf Larsen put thumb and forefinger to the wrist and counted the pulse. In the midst of it the Kanaka roused. He awoke as gently as he slept. There was no movement of the body whatever. The eyes, only, moved. They flashed wide open, big and black, and stared, unblinking, into our faces. Wolf Larsen put his finger to his lips as a sign for silence, and the eyes closed again.

In the lower bunk lay Louis, grossly fat and warm and sweaty, asleep unfeignedly and sleeping laboriously. While Wolf Larsen held his wrist he stirred uneasily, bowing his body so that for a moment it rested on shoulders and heels. His lips moved, and he gave voice to this enigmatic utterance:

"A shilling's worth a quarter; but keep your lamps out for thruppenny-bits, or the publicans 'll shove 'em on you for sixpence."

Then he rolled over on his side with a heavy, sobbing sigh, saying:

"A sixpence is a tanner, and a shilling a bob; but what a pony is I don't know."

Satisfied with the honesty of his and the Kanaka's sleep, Wolf Larsen passed on to the next two bunks on the starboard side, occupied top and bottom, as we saw in the light of the sea-lamp, by Leach and Johnson.

As Wolf Larsen bent down to the lower bunk to take Johnson's pulse, I, standing erect and holding the lamp, saw Leach's head rise stealthily as he peered over the side of his bunk to see what was going on. He must have divined Wolf Larsen's trick and the sureness of detection, for the light was at once dashed from my hand and the forecastle was left in darkness. He must have leaped, also, at the same instant, straight down on Wolf Larsen.

The first sounds were those of a conflict between a bull and a wolf. I heard a great infuriated bellow go up from Wolf Larsen, and from Leach a snarling that was desperate and blood-curdling. Johnson must have joined him immediately, so that his abject and grovelling conduct on deck for the past few days had been no more than planned deception.

I was so terror-stricken by this fight in the dark that I leaned against the ladder, trembling and unable to ascend. And upon me was that old sickness at the pit of the stomach, caused always by the spectacle of physical violence. In this instance I could not see, but I could hear the impact of the blows — the soft crushing sound made by flesh striking forcibly against flesh. Then there was the crashing about of the entwined bodies, the laboured breathing, the short quick gasps of sudden pain.

There must have been more men in the conspiracy to murder the captain and mate, for by the sounds I knew that Leach and Johnson had been quickly reinforced by some of their mates.

“Get a knife somebody!” Leach was shouting.

“Pound him on the head! Mash his brains out!” was Johnson’s cry.

But after his first bellow, Wolf Larsen made no noise. He was fighting grimly and silently for life. He was sore beset. Down at the very first, he had been unable to gain his feet, and for all of his tremendous strength I felt that there was no hope for him.

The force with which they struggled was vividly impressed on me; for I was knocked down by their surging bodies and badly bruised. But in the confusion I managed to crawl into an empty lower bunk out of the way.

“All hands! We’ve got him! We’ve got him!” I could hear Leach crying.

“Who?” demanded those who had been really asleep, and who had wakened to they knew not what.

“It’s the bloody mate!” was Leach’s crafty answer, strained from him in a smothered sort of way.

This was greeted with whoops of joy, and from then on Wolf Larsen had seven strong men on top of him, Louis, I believe, taking no part in it. The forecastle was like an angry hive of bees aroused by some marauder.

“What ho! below there!” I heard Latimer shout down the scuttle, too cautious to descend into the inferno of passion he could hear raging beneath him in the darkness.

“Won’t somebody get a knife? Oh, won’t somebody get a knife?” Leach pleaded in the first interval of comparative silence.

The number of the assailants was a cause of confusion. They blocked their own efforts, while Wolf Larsen, with but a single purpose, achieved his. This was to fight his way across the floor to the ladder. Though in total darkness, I followed his progress by its sound. No man less than a giant could have done what he did, once he had gained the foot of the ladder. Step by step, by the might of his arms, the whole pack of men striving to drag him back and down, he drew his body up from the floor till he stood erect. And then, step by step, hand and foot, he slowly struggled up the ladder.

The very last of all, I saw. For Latimer, having finally gone for a lantern, held it so that its light shone down the scuttle. Wolf Larsen was nearly to the top, though I could not see him. All that was visible was the mass of men fastened upon him. It squirmed about, like some huge many-legged spider, and swayed back and forth to the regular roll of the vessel. And still, step by step with long intervals between, the mass ascended. Once it tottered, about to fall back, but the broken hold was regained and it still went up.

"Who is it?" Latimer cried.

In the rays of the lantern I could see his perplexed face peering down.

"Larsen," I heard a muffled voice from within the mass.

Latimer reached down with his free hand. I saw a hand shoot up to clasp his. Latimer pulled, and the next couple of steps were made with a rush. Then Wolf Larsen's other hand reached up and clutched the edge of the scuttle. The mass swung clear of the ladder, the men still clinging to their escaping foe. They began to drop off, to be brushed off against the sharp edge of the scuttle, to be knocked off by the legs which were now kicking powerfully. Leach was the last to go, falling sheer back from the top of the scuttle and striking on head and shoulders upon his sprawling mates beneath. Wolf Larsen and the lantern disappeared, and we were left in darkness.

CHAPTER XV

There was a deal of cursing and groaning as the men at the bottom of the ladder crawled to their feet.

"Somebody strike a light, my thumb's out of joint," said one of the men, Parsons, a swarthy, saturnine man, boat-steerer in Standish's boat, in which Harrison was puller.

"You'll find it knockin' about by the bitts," Leach said, sitting down on the edge of the bunk in which I was concealed.

There was a fumbling and a scratching of matches, and the sea-lamp flared up, dim and smoky, and in its weird light bare-legged men moved about nursing their bruises and caring for their hurts. Oofty-Oofty laid hold of Parsons's thumb, pulling it out stoutly and snapping it back into place. I noticed at the same time that the Kanaka's knuckles were laid open clear across and to the bone. He exhibited them, exposing beautiful white teeth in a grin as he did so, and explaining that the wounds had come from striking Wolf Larsen in the mouth.

"So it was you, was it, you black beggar?" belligerently demanded one Kelly, an Irish-American and a longshoreman, making his first trip to sea, and boat-puller for Kerfoot.

As he made the demand he spat out a mouthful of blood and teeth and shoved his pugnacious face close to Oofty-Oofty. The Kanaka leaped backward to his bunk, to return with a second leap, flourishing a long knife.

"Aw, go lay down, you make me tired," Leach interfered. He was evidently, for all of his youth and inexperience, cock of the forecastle. "G'wan, you Kelly. You leave Oofty alone. How in hell did he know it was you in the dark?"

Kelly subsided with some muttering, and the Kanaka flashed his white teeth in a grateful smile. He was a beautiful creature, almost feminine in the pleasing lines of his figure, and there was a softness and dreaminess in his large eyes which seemed to contradict his well-earned reputation for strife and action.

"How did he get away?" Johnson asked.

He was sitting on the side of his bunk, the whole pose of his figure indicating utter dejection and hopelessness. He was still breathing heavily from the exertion he had made. His shirt had been ripped entirely from him in the struggle, and blood from a gash in the cheek was flowing down his naked chest, marking a red path across his white thigh and dripping to the floor.

"Because he is the devil, as I told you before," was Leach's answer; and thereat he was on his feet and raging his disappointment with tears in his eyes.

"And not one of you to get a knife!" was his unceasing lament.

But the rest of the hands had a lively fear of consequences to come and gave no heed to him.

"How'll he know which was which?" Kelly asked, and as he went on he looked murderously about him — "unless one of us peaches."

"He'll know as soon as ever he claps eyes on us," Parsons replied. "One look at you'd be enough."

"Tell him the deck flopped up and gouged yer teeth out iv yer jaw," Louis grinned. He was the only man who was not out of his bunk, and he was jubilant in that he possessed no bruises to advertise that he had had a hand in the night's work. "Just wait till he gets a glimpse iv yer mugs to-morrow, the gang iv ye," he chuckled.

"We'll say we thought it was the mate," said one. And another, "I know what I'll say — that I heered a row, jumped out of my bunk, got a jolly good crack on the jaw for my pains, and sailed in myself. Couldn't tell who or what it was in the dark and just hit out."

"An' 'twas me you hit, of course," Kelly seconded, his face brightening for the moment.

Leach and Johnson took no part in the discussion, and it was plain to see that their mates looked upon them as men for whom the worst was inevitable, who were beyond hope and already dead. Leach stood their fears and reproaches for some time. Then he broke out:

"You make me tired! A nice lot of gazabas you are! If you talked less with yer mouth and did something with yer hands, he'd a-ben done with by now. Why couldn't one of you, just one of you, get me a knife when I sung out? You make me sick! A-beefin' and bellerin' 'round, as though he'd kill you when he gets you! You know damn well he wont. Can't afford to. No shipping masters or beach-combers over here, and he wants yer in his business, and he wants yer bad. Who's to pull or steer or sail ship if he loses yer? It's me and Johnson have to face the music. Get into yer bunks, now, and shut yer faces; I want to get some sleep."

“That’s all right all right,” Parsons spoke up. “Mebbe he won’t do for us, but mark my words, hell ’ll be an ice-box to this ship from now on.”

All the while I had been apprehensive concerning my own predicament. What would happen to me when these men discovered my presence? I could never fight my way out as Wolf Larsen had done. And at this moment Latimer called down the scuttles:

“Hump! The old man wants you!”

“He ain’t down here!” Parsons called back.

“Yes, he is,” I said, sliding out of the bunk and striving my hardest to keep my voice steady and bold.

The sailors looked at me in consternation. Fear was strong in their faces, and the devilishness which comes of fear.

“I’m coming!” I shouted up to Latimer.

“No you don’t!” Kelly cried, stepping between me and the ladder, his right hand shaped into a veritable strangler’s clutch. “You damn little sneak! I’ll shut yer mouth!”

“Let him go,” Leach commanded.

“Not on yer life,” was the angry retort.

Leach never changed his position on the edge of the bunk. “Let him go, I say,” he repeated; but this time his voice was gritty and metallic.

The Irishman wavered. I made to step by him, and he stood aside. When I had gained the ladder, I turned to the circle of brutal and malignant faces peering at me through the semi-darkness. A sudden and deep sympathy welled up in me. I remembered the Cockney’s way of putting it. How God must have hated them that they should be tortured so!

“I have seen and heard nothing, believe me,” I said quietly.

“I tell yer, he’s all right,” I could hear Leach saying as I went up the ladder. “He don’t like the old man no more nor you or me.”

I found Wolf Larsen in the cabin, stripped and bloody, waiting for me. He greeted me with one of his whimsical smiles.

“Come, get to work, Doctor. The signs are favourable for an extensive practice this voyage. I don’t know what the *Ghost* would have been without you, and if I could only cherish such noble sentiments I would tell you her master is deeply grateful.”

I knew the run of the simple medicine-chest the *Ghost* carried, and while I was heating water on the cabin stove and getting the things ready for dressing his wounds, he moved about, laughing and chatting, and examining his hurts with a calculating eye. I had never before seen him stripped, and the sight of his body quite took my breath away. It has never been my weakness to exalt the flesh — far from it; but there is enough of the artist in me to appreciate its wonder.

I must say that I was fascinated by the perfect lines of Wolf Larsen's figure, and by what I may term the terrible beauty of it. I had noted the men in the forecastle. Powerfully muscled though some of them were, there had been something wrong with all of them, an insufficient development here, an undue development there, a twist or a crook that destroyed symmetry, legs too short or too long, or too much sinew or bone exposed, or too little. Oofty-Oofty had been the only one whose lines were at all pleasing, while, in so far as they pleased, that far had they been what I should call feminine.

But Wolf Larsen was the man-type, the masculine, and almost a god in his perfectness. As he moved about or raised his arms the great muscles leapt and moved under the satiny skin. I have forgotten to say that the bronze ended with his face. His body, thanks to his Scandinavian stock, was fair as the fairest woman's. I remember his putting his hand up to feel of the wound on his head, and my watching the biceps move like a living thing under its white sheath. It was the biceps that had nearly crushed out my life once, that I had seen strike so many killing blows. I could not take my eyes from him. I stood motionless, a roll of antiseptic cotton in my hand unwinding and spilling itself down to the floor.

He noticed me, and I became conscious that I was staring at him.

"God made you well," I said.

"Did he?" he answered. "I have often thought so myself, and wondered why."

"Purpose — " I began.

"Utility," he interrupted. "This body was made for use. These muscles were made to grip, and tear, and destroy living things that get between me and life. But have you thought of the other living things? They, too, have muscles, of one kind and another, made to grip, and tear, and destroy; and when they come between me and life, I out-grip them, out-tear them, out-destroy them. Purpose does not explain that. Utility does."

"It is not beautiful," I protested.

"Life isn't, you mean," he smiled. "Yet you say I was made well. Do you see this?"

He braced his legs and feet, pressing the cabin floor with his toes in a clutching sort of way. Knots and ridges and mounds of muscles writhed and bunched under the skin.

“Feel them,” he commanded.

They were hard as iron. And I observed, also, that his whole body had unconsciously drawn itself together, tense and alert; that muscles were softly crawling and shaping about the hips, along the back, and across the shoulders; that the arms were slightly lifted, their muscles contracting, the fingers crooking till the hands were like talons; and that even the eyes had changed expression and into them were coming watchfulness and measurement and a light none other than of battle.

“Stability, equilibrium,” he said, relaxing on the instant and sinking his body back into repose. “Feet with which to clutch the ground, legs to stand on and to help withstand, while with arms and hands, teeth and nails, I struggle to kill and to be not killed. Purpose? Utility is the better word.”

I did not argue. I had seen the mechanism of the primitive fighting beast, and I was as strongly impressed as if I had seen the engines of a great battleship or Atlantic liner.

I was surprised, considering the fierce struggle in the forecastle, at the superficiality of his hurts, and I pride myself that I dressed them dexterously. With the exception of several bad wounds, the rest were merely severe bruises and lacerations. The blow which he had received before going overboard had laid his scalp open several inches. This, under his direction, I cleansed and sewed together, having first shaved the edges of the wound. Then the calf of his leg was badly lacerated and looked as though it had been mangled by a bulldog. Some sailor, he told me, had laid hold of it by his teeth, at the beginning of the fight, and hung on and been dragged to the top of the forecastle ladder, when he was kicked loose.

“By the way, Hump, as I have remarked, you are a handy man,” Wolf Larsen began, when my work was done. “As you know, we’re short a mate. Hereafter you shall stand watches, receive seventy-five dollars per month, and be addressed fore and aft as Mr. Van Weyden.”

“I — I don’t understand navigation, you know,” I gasped.

“Not necessary at all.”

“I really do not care to sit in the high places,” I objected. “I find life precarious enough in my present humble situation. I have no experience. Mediocrity, you see, has its compensations.”

He smiled as though it were all settled.

“I won’t be mate on this hell-ship!” I cried defiantly.

I saw his face grow hard and the merciless glitter come into his eyes. He walked to the door of his room, saying:

“And now, Mr. Van Weyden, good-night.”

“Good-night, Mr. Larsen,” I answered weakly.

CHAPTER XVI

I cannot say that the position of mate carried with it anything more joyful than that there were no more dishes to wash. I was ignorant of the simplest duties of mate, and would have fared badly indeed, had the sailors not sympathized with me. I knew nothing of the minutiæ of ropes and rigging, of the trimming and setting of sails; but the sailors took pains to put me to rights, — Louis proving an especially good teacher, — and I had little trouble with those under me.

With the hunters it was otherwise. Familiar in varying degree with the sea, they took me as a sort of joke. In truth, it was a joke to me, that I, the veriest landsman, should be filling the office of mate; but to be taken as a joke by others was a different matter. I made no complaint, but Wolf Larsen demanded the most punctilious sea etiquette in my case, — far more than poor Johansen had ever received; and at the expense of several rows, threats, and much grumbling, he brought the hunters to time. I was "Mr. Van Weyden" fore and aft, and it was only unofficially that Wolf Larsen himself ever addressed me as "Hump."

It was amusing. Perhaps the wind would haul a few points while we were at dinner, and as I left the table he would say, "Mr. Van Weyden, will you kindly put about on the port tack." And I would go on deck, beckon Louis to me, and learn from him what was to be done. Then, a few minutes later, having digested his instructions and thoroughly mastered the manœuvre, I would proceed to issue my orders. I remember an early instance of this kind, when Wolf Larsen appeared on the scene just as I had begun to give orders. He smoked his cigar and looked on quietly till the thing was accomplished, and then paced aft by my side along the weather poop.

"Hump," he said, "I beg pardon, Mr. Van Weyden, I congratulate you. I think you can now fire your father's legs back into the grave to him. You've discovered your own and learned to stand on them. A little rope-work, sail-making, and experience with storms and such things, and by the end of the voyage you could ship on any coasting schooner."

It was during this period, between the death of Johansen and the arrival on the sealing grounds, that I passed my pleasantest hours on the *Ghost*. Wolf Larsen was quite considerate, the sailors helped me, and I was no longer in irritating contact with Thomas Mugridge. And I make free to say, as the days went by, that I found I was taking a certain secret pride in myself. Fantastic as the situation was, — a land-lubber second in command, — I was, nevertheless, carrying it off well; and during that brief time I was proud of myself, and I grew to love the heave and roll of the *Ghost* under my feet as she wallowed north and west through the tropic sea to the islet where we filled our water-casks.

But my happiness was not unalloyed. It was comparative, a period of less misery slipped in between a past of great miseries and a future of great miseries. For the *Ghost*, so far as the seamen were concerned, was a hell-ship of the worst description. They never had a moment's rest or peace. Wolf Larsen treasured against them the attempt on his life and the drubbing he had received in the forecastle; and morning, noon, and night, and all night as well, he devoted himself to making life unlivable for them.

He knew well the psychology of the little thing, and it was the little things by which he kept the crew worked up to the verge of madness. I have seen Harrison called from his bunk to put properly away a misplaced paintbrush, and the two watches below haled from their tired sleep to accompany him and see him do it. A little thing, truly, but when multiplied by the thousand ingenious devices of such a mind, the mental state of the men in the forecastle may be slightly comprehended.

Of course much grumbling went on, and little outbursts were continually occurring. Blows were struck, and there were always two or three men nursing injuries at the hands of the human beast who was their master. Concerted action was impossible in face of the heavy arsenal of weapons carried in the steerage and cabin. Leach and Johnson were the two particular victims of Wolf Larsen's diabolic temper, and the look of profound melancholy which had settled on Johnson's face and in his eyes made my heart bleed.

With Leach it was different. There was too much of the fighting beast in him. He seemed possessed by an insatiable fury which gave no time for grief. His lips had become distorted into a permanent snarl, which at mere sight of Wolf Larsen broke out in sound, horrible and menacing and, I do believe, unconsciously. I have seen him follow Wolf Larsen about with his eyes, like an animal its keeper, the while the animal-like snarl sounded deep in his throat and vibrated forth between his teeth.

I remember once, on deck, in bright day, touching him on the shoulder as preliminary to giving an order. His back was toward me, and at the first feel of my hand he leaped upright in the air and away from me, snarling and turning his head as he leaped. He had for the moment mistaken me for the man he hated.

Both he and Johnson would have killed Wolf Larsen at the slightest opportunity, but the opportunity never came. Wolf Larsen was too wise for that, and, besides, they had no adequate weapons. With their fists alone they had no chance whatever. Time and again he fought it out with Leach who fought back always, like a wildcat, tooth and nail and fist, until stretched, exhausted or unconscious, on the deck. And he was never averse to another encounter. All the devil that was in him challenged the devil in Wolf Larsen. They had but to appear on deck at the same time, when they would be at it, cursing, snarling, striking; and I have seen Leach fling himself upon Wolf Larsen without warning or provocation. Once he threw his heavy sheath-knife, missing Wolf Larsen's throat by an inch. Another time he dropped a steel marlinspike from the mizzen crosstree. It was a difficult cast to make on a rolling ship, but the sharp point of the spike, whistling seventy-five feet through the air, barely missed Wolf Larsen's head as he emerged from the cabin companion-way and drove its length two inches and over into the solid deck-planking. Still another time, he stole into the steerage, possessed himself of a loaded shot-gun, and was making a rush for the deck with it when caught by Kerfoot and disarmed.

I often wondered why Wolf Larsen did not kill him and make an end of it. But he only laughed and seemed to enjoy it. There seemed a certain spice about it, such as men must feel who take delight in making pets of ferocious animals.

"It gives a thrill to life," he explained to me, "when life is carried in one's hand. Man is a natural gambler, and life is the biggest stake he can lay. The greater the odds, the greater the thrill. Why should I deny myself the joy of exciting Leach's soul to fever-pitch? For that matter, I do him a kindness. The greatness of sensation is mutual. He is living more royally than any man for'ard, though he does not know it. For he has what they have not — purpose, something to do and be done, an all-absorbing end to strive to attain, the desire to kill me, the hope that he may kill me. Really, Hump, he is living deep and high. I doubt that he has ever lived so swiftly and keenly before, and I honestly envy him, sometimes, when I see him raging at the summit of passion and sensibility."

"Ah, but it is cowardly, cowardly!" I cried. "You have all the advantage."

"Of the two of us, you and I, who is the greater coward?" he asked seriously. "If the situation is unpleasing, you compromise with your conscience when you make yourself a party to it. If you were really great, really true to yourself, you would join forces with Leach and Johnson. But you are afraid, you are afraid. You want to live. The life that is in you cries out that it must live, no matter what the cost; so you live ignominiously, untrue to the best you dream of, sinning against your whole pitiful little code, and, if there were a hell, heading your soul straight for it. Bah! I play the braver part. I do no sin, for I am true to the promptings of the life that is in me. I am sincere with my soul at least, and that is what you are not."

There was a sting in what he said. Perhaps, after all, I was playing a cowardly part. And the more I thought about it the more it appeared that my duty to myself lay in doing what he had advised, lay in joining forces with Johnson and Leach and working for his death. Right here, I think, entered the austere conscience of my Puritan ancestry, impelling me toward lurid deeds and sanctioning even murder as right conduct. I dwelt upon the idea. It would be a most moral act to rid the world of such a monster. Humanity would be better and happier for it, life fairer and sweeter.

I pondered it long, lying sleepless in my bunk and reviewing in endless procession the facts of the situation. I talked with Johnson and Leach, during the night watches when Wolf Larsen was below. Both men had lost hope — Johnson, because of temperamental despondency; Leach, because he had beaten himself out in the vain struggle and was exhausted. But he caught my hand in a passionate grip one night, saying:

"I think yer square, Mr. Van Weyden. But stay where you are and keep yer mouth shut. Say nothin' but saw wood. We're dead men, I know it; but all the same you might be able to do us a favour some time when we need it damn bad."

It was only next day, when Wainwright Island loomed to windward, close abeam, that Wolf Larsen opened his mouth in prophecy. He had attacked Johnson, been attacked by Leach, and had just finished whipping the pair of them.

"Leach," he said, "you know I'm going to kill you some time or other, don't you?"

A snarl was the answer.

"And as for you, Johnson, you'll get so tired of life before I'm through with you that you'll fling yourself over the side. See if you don't."

"That's a suggestion," he added, in an aside to me. "I'll bet you a month's pay he acts upon it."

I had cherished a hope that his victims would find an opportunity to escape while filling our water-barrels, but Wolf Larsen had selected his spot well. The *Ghost* lay half-a-mile beyond the surf-line of a lonely beach. Here debauched a deep gorge, with precipitous, volcanic walls which no man could scale. And here, under his direct supervision — for he went ashore himself — Leach and Johnson filled the small casks and rolled them down to the beach. They had no chance to make a break for liberty in one of the boats.

Harrison and Kelly, however, made such an attempt. They composed one of the boats' crews, and their task was to ply between the schooner and the shore, carrying a single cask each trip. Just before dinner, starting for the beach with an empty barrel, they altered their course and bore away to the left to round the promontory which jutted into the sea between them and liberty. Beyond its foaming base lay the pretty villages of the Japanese colonists and smiling valleys which penetrated deep into the interior. Once in the fastnesses they promised, and the two men could defy Wolf Larsen.

I had observed Henderson and Smoke loitering about the deck all morning, and I now learned why they were there. Procuring their rifles, they opened fire in a leisurely manner, upon the deserters. It was a cold-blooded exhibition of marksmanship. At first their bullets zipped harmlessly along the surface of the water on either side the boat; but, as the men continued to pull lustily, they struck closer and closer.

"Now, watch me take Kelly's right oar," Smoke said, drawing a more careful aim.

I was looking through the glasses, and I saw the oar-blade shatter as he shot. Henderson duplicated it, selecting Harrison's right oar. The boat slewed around. The two remaining oars were quickly broken. The men tried to row with the splinters, and had them shot out of their hands. Kelly ripped up a bottom board and began paddling, but dropped it with a cry of pain as its splinters drove into his hands. Then they gave up, letting the boat drift till a second boat, sent from the shore by Wolf Larsen, took them in tow and brought them aboard.

Late that afternoon we hove up anchor and got away. Nothing was before us but the three or four months' hunting on the sealing grounds. The outlook was black indeed, and I went about my work with a heavy heart. An almost funereal gloom seemed to have descended upon the *Ghost*. Wolf Larsen had taken to his bunk with one of his strange, splitting headaches. Harrison stood listlessly at the wheel, half supporting himself by it, as though wearied by the weight of his flesh. The rest of the men were morose and silent. I came upon Kelly crouching to the lee of the forecastle scuttle, his head on his knees, his arms about his head, in an attitude of unutterable despondency.

Johnson I found lying full length on the forecastle head, staring at the troubled churn of the forefoot, and I remembered with horror the suggestion Wolf Larsen had made. It seemed likely to bear fruit. I tried to break in on the man's morbid thoughts by calling him away, but he smiled sadly at me and refused to obey.

Leach approached me as I returned aft.

"I want to ask a favour, Mr. Van Weyden," he said. "If it's yer luck to ever make 'Frisco once more, will you hunt up Matt McCarthy? He's my old man. He lives on the Hill, back of the Mayfair bakery, runnin' a cobbler's shop that everybody knows, and you'll have no trouble. Tell him I lived to be sorry for the trouble I brought him and the things I done, and — and just tell him 'God bless him,' for me."

I nodded my head, but said, "We'll all win back to San Francisco, Leach, and you'll be with me when I go to see Matt McCarthy."

"I'd like to believe you," he answered, shaking my hand, "but I can't. Wolf Larsen 'll do for me, I know it; and all I can hope is, he'll do it quick."

And as he left me I was aware of the same desire at my heart. Since it was to be done, let it be done with despatch. The general gloom had gathered me into its folds. The worst appeared inevitable; and as I paced the deck, hour after hour, I found myself afflicted with Wolf Larsen's repulsive ideas. What was it all about? Where was the grandeur of life that it should permit such wanton destruction of human souls? It was a cheap and sordid thing after all, this life, and the sooner over the better. Over and done with! I, too, leaned upon the rail and gazed longingly into the sea, with the certainty that sooner or later I should be sinking down, down, through the cool green depths of its oblivion.

CHAPTER XVII

Strange to say, in spite of the general foreboding, nothing of especial moment happened on the *Ghost*. We ran on to the north and west till we raised the coast of Japan and picked up with the great seal herd. Coming from no man knew where in the illimitable Pacific, it was travelling north on its annual migration to the rookeries of Bering Sea. And north we travelled with it, ravaging and destroying, flinging the naked carcasses to the shark and salting down the skins so that they might later adorn the fair shoulders of the women of the cities.

It was wanton slaughter, and all for woman's sake. No man ate of the seal meat or the oil. After a good day's killing I have seen our decks covered with hides and bodies, slippery with fat and blood, the scuppers running red; masts, ropes, and rails spattered with the sanguinary colour; and the men, like butchers plying their trade, naked and red of arm and hand, hard at work with ripping and flensing-knives, removing the skins from the pretty sea-creatures they had killed.

It was my task to tally the pelts as they came aboard from the boats, to oversee the skinning and afterward the cleansing of the decks and bringing things ship-shape again. It was not pleasant work. My soul and my stomach revolted at it; and yet, in a way, this handling and directing of many men was good for me. It developed what little executive ability I possessed, and I was aware of a toughening or hardening which I was undergoing and which could not be anything but wholesome for "Sissy" Van Weyden.

One thing I was beginning to feel, and that was that I could never again be quite the same man I had been. While my hope and faith in human life still survived Wolf Larsen's destructive criticism, he had nevertheless been a cause of change in minor matters. He had opened up for me the world of the real, of which I had known practically nothing and from which I had always shrunk. I had learned to look more closely at life as it was lived, to recognize that there were such things as facts in the world, to emerge from the realm of mind and idea and to place certain values on the concrete and objective phases of existence.

I saw more of Wolf Larsen than ever when we had gained the grounds. For when the weather was fair and we were in the midst of the herd, all hands were away in the boats, and left on board were only he and I, and Thomas Mugridge, who did not count. But there was no play about it. The six boats, spreading out fan-wise from the schooner until the first weather boat and the last lee boat were anywhere from ten to twenty miles apart, cruised along a straight course over the sea till nightfall or bad weather drove them in. It was our duty to sail the *Ghost* well to leeward of the last lee boat, so that all the boats should have fair wind to run for us in case of squalls or threatening weather.

It is no slight matter for two men, particularly when a stiff wind has sprung up, to handle a vessel like the *Ghost*, steering, keeping look-out for the boats, and setting or taking in sail; so it devolved upon me to learn, and learn quickly. Steering I picked up easily, but running aloft to the crosstrees and swinging my whole weight by my arms when I left the ratlines and climbed still higher, was more difficult. This, too, I learned, and quickly, for I felt somehow a wild desire to vindicate myself in Wolf Larsen's eyes, to prove my right to live in ways other than of the mind. Nay, the time came when I took joy in the run of the masthead and in the clinging on by my legs at that precarious height while I swept the sea with glasses in search of the boats.

I remember one beautiful day, when the boats left early and the reports of the hunters' guns grew dim and distant and died away as they scattered far and wide over the sea. There was just the faintest wind from the westward; but it breathed its last by the time we managed to get to leeward of the last lee boat. One by one — I was at the masthead and saw — the six boats disappeared over the bulge of the earth as they followed the seal into the west. We lay, scarcely rolling on the placid sea, unable to follow. Wolf Larsen was apprehensive. The barometer was down, and the sky to the east did not please him. He studied it with unceasing vigilance.

"If she comes out of there," he said, "hard and snappy, putting us to windward of the boats, it's likely there'll be empty bunks in steerage and fo'c'sle."

By eleven o'clock the sea had become glass. By midday, though we were well up in the northerly latitudes, the heat was sickening. There was no freshness in the air. It was sultry and oppressive, reminding me of what the old Californians term "earthquake weather." There was something ominous about it, and in intangible ways one was made to feel that the worst was about to come. Slowly the whole eastern sky filled with clouds that over-towered us like some black sierra of the infernal regions. So clearly could one see cañon, gorge, and precipice, and the shadows that lie therein, that one looked unconsciously for the white surf-line and bellowing caverns where the sea charges on the land. And still we rocked gently, and there was no wind.

"It's no square" Wolf Larsen said. "Old Mother Nature's going to get up on her hind legs and howl for all that's in her, and it'll keep us jumping, Hump, to pull through with half our boats. You'd better run up and loosen the topsails."

"But if it is going to howl, and there are only two of us?" I asked, a note of protest in my voice.

"Why we've got to make the best of the first of it and run down to our boats before our canvas is ripped out of us. After that I don't give a rap what happens. The sticks 'll stand it, and you and I will have to, though we've plenty cut out for us."

Still the calm continued. We ate dinner, a hurried and anxious meal for me with eighteen men abroad on the sea and beyond the bulge of the earth, and with that heaven-rolling mountain range of clouds moving slowly down upon us. Wolf Larsen did not seem affected, however; though I noticed, when we returned to the deck, a slight twitching of the nostrils, a perceptible quickness of movement. His face was stern, the lines of it had grown hard, and yet in his eyes — blue, clear blue this day — there was a strange brilliancy, a bright scintillating light. It struck me that he was joyous, in a ferocious sort of way; that he was glad there was an impending struggle; that he was thrilled and upborne with knowledge that one of the great moments of living, when the tide of life surges up in flood, was upon him.

Once, and unwitting that he did so or that I saw, he laughed aloud, mockingly and defiantly, at the advancing storm. I see him yet standing there like a pigmy out of the *Arabian Nights* before the huge front of some malignant genie. He was daring destiny, and he was unafraid.

He walked to the galley. "Cooky, by the time you've finished pots and pans you'll be wanted on deck. Stand ready for a call."

"Hump," he said, becoming cognizant of the fascinated gaze I bent upon him, "this beats whisky and is where your Omar misses. I think he only half lived after all."

The western half of the sky had by now grown murky. The sun had dimmed and faded out of sight. It was two in the afternoon, and a ghostly twilight, shot through by wandering purplish lights, had descended upon us. In this purplish light Wolf Larsen's face glowed and glowed, and to my excited fancy he appeared encircled by a halo. We lay in the midst of an unearthly quiet, while all about us were signs and omens of oncoming sound and movement. The sultry heat had become unendurable. The sweat was standing on my forehead, and I could feel it trickling down my nose. I felt as though I should faint, and reached out to the rail for support.

And then, just then, the faintest possible whisper of air passed by. It was from the east, and like a whisper it came and went. The drooping canvas was not stirred, and yet my face had felt the air and been cooled.

"Cooky," Wolf Larsen called in a low voice. Thomas Mugridge turned a pitiable scared face. "Let go that foreboom tackle and pass it across, and when she's willing let go the sheet and come in snug with the tackle. And if you make a mess of it, it will be the last you ever make. Understand?"

"Mr. Van Weyden, stand by to pass the head-sails over. Then jump for the topsails and spread them quick as God'll let you — the quicker you do it the easier you'll find it. As for Cooky, if he isn't lively bat him between the eyes."

I was aware of the compliment and pleased, in that no threat had accompanied my instructions. We were lying head to north-west, and it was his intention to jibe over all with the first puff.

"We'll have the breeze on our quarter," he explained to me. "By the last guns the boats were bearing away slightly to the south'ard."

He turned and walked aft to the wheel. I went forward and took my station at the jibs. Another whisper of wind, and another, passed by. The canvas flapped lazily.

"Thank Gawd she's not comin' all of a bunch, Mr. Van Weyden," was the Cockney's fervent ejaculation.

And I was indeed thankful, for I had by this time learned enough to know, with all our canvas spread, what disaster in such event awaited us. The whispers of wind became puffs, the sails filled, the *Ghost* moved. Wolf Larsen put the wheel hard up, to port, and we began to pay off. The wind was now dead astern, muttering and puffing stronger and stronger, and my head-sails were pounding lustily. I did not see what went on elsewhere, though I felt the sudden surge and heel of the schooner as the wind-pressures changed to the jibing of the fore-and main-sails. My hands were full with the flying-jib, jib, and staysail; and by the time this part of my task was accomplished the *Ghost* was leaping into the south-west, the wind on her quarter and all her sheets to starboard. Without pausing for breath, though my heart was beating like a trip-hammer from my exertions, I sprang to the topsails, and before the wind had become too strong we had them fairly set and were coiling down. Then I went aft for orders.

Wolf Larsen nodded approval and relinquished the wheel to me. The wind was strengthening steadily and the sea rising. For an hour I steered, each moment becoming more difficult. I had not the experience to steer at the gait we were going on a quartering course.

"Now take a run up with the glasses and raise some of the boats. We've made at least ten knots, and we're going twelve or thirteen now. The old girl knows how to walk."

I contested myself with the fore crosstrees, some seventy feet above the deck. As I searched the vacant stretch of water before me, I comprehended thoroughly the need for haste if we were to recover any of our men. Indeed, as I gazed at the heavy sea through which we were running, I doubted that there was a boat afloat. It did not seem possible that such frail craft could survive such stress of wind and water.

I could not feel the full force of the wind, for we were running with it; but from my lofty perch I looked down as though outside the *Ghost* and apart from her, and saw the shape of her outlined sharply against the foaming sea as she tore along instinct with life. Sometimes she would lift and send across some great wave, burying her starboard-rail from view, and covering her deck to the hatches with the boiling ocean. At such moments, starting from a windward roll, I would go flying through the air with dizzying swiftness, as though I clung to the end of a huge, inverted pendulum, the arc of which, between the greater rolls, must have been seventy feet or more. Once, the terror of this giddy sweep overpowered me, and for a while I clung on, hand and foot, weak and trembling, unable to search the sea for the missing boats or to behold aught of the sea but that which roared beneath and strove to overwhelm the *Ghost*.

But the thought of the men in the midst of it steadied me, and in my quest for them I forgot myself. For an hour I saw nothing but the naked, desolate sea. And then, where a vagrant shaft of sunlight struck the ocean and turned its surface to wrathful silver, I caught a small black speck thrust skyward for an instant and swallowed up. I waited patiently. Again the tiny point of black projected itself through the wrathful blaze a couple of points off our port-bow. I did not attempt to shout, but communicated the news to Wolf Larsen by waving my arm. He changed the course, and I signalled affirmation when the speck showed dead ahead.

It grew larger, and so swiftly that for the first time I fully appreciated the speed of our flight. Wolf Larsen motioned for me to come down, and when I stood beside him at the wheel gave me instructions for heaving to.

"Expect all hell to break loose," he cautioned me, "but don't mind it. Yours is to do your own work and to have Cooky stand by the fore-sheet."

I managed to make my way forward, but there was little choice of sides, for the weather-rail seemed buried as often as the lee. Having instructed Thomas Mugridge as to what he was to do, I clambered into the fore-rigging a few feet. The boat was now very close, and I could make out plainly that it was lying head to wind and sea and dragging on its mast and sail, which had been thrown overboard and made to serve as a sea-anchor. The three men were bailing. Each rolling mountain whelmed them from view, and I would wait with sickening anxiety, fearing that they would never appear again. Then, and with black suddenness, the boat would shoot clear through the foaming crest, bow pointed to the sky, and the whole length of her bottom showing, wet and dark, till she seemed on end. There would be a fleeting glimpse of the three men flinging water in frantic haste, when she would topple over and fall into the yawning valley, bow down and showing her full inside length to the stern upreared almost directly above the bow. Each time that she reappeared was a miracle.

The *Ghost* suddenly changed her course, keeping away, and it came to me with a shock that Wolf Larsen was giving up the rescue as impossible. Then I realized that he was preparing to heave to, and dropped to the deck to be in readiness. We were now dead before the wind, the boat far away and abreast of us. I felt an abrupt easing of the schooner, a loss for the moment of all strain and pressure, coupled with a swift acceleration of speed. She was rushing around on her heel into the wind.

As she arrived at right angles to the sea, the full force of the wind (from which we had hitherto run away) caught us. I was unfortunately and ignorantly facing it. It stood up against me like a wall, filling my lungs with air which I could not expel. And as I choked and strangled, and as the *Ghost* wallowed for an instant, broadside on and rolling straight over and far into the wind, I beheld a huge sea rise far above my head. I turned aside, caught my breath, and looked again. The wave over-topped the *Ghost*, and I gazed sheer up and into it. A shaft of sunlight smote the over-curl, and I caught a glimpse of translucent, rushing green, backed by a milky smother of foam.

Then it descended, pandemonium broke loose, everything happened at once. I was struck a crushing, stunning blow, nowhere in particular and yet everywhere. My hold had been broken loose, I was under water, and the thought passed through my mind that this was the terrible thing of which I had heard, the being swept in the trough of the sea. My body struck and pounded as it was dashed helplessly along and turned over and over, and when I could hold my breath no longer, I breathed the stinging salt water into my lungs. But through it all I clung to the one idea — *I must get the jib backed over to windward*. I had no fear of death. I had no doubt but that I should come through somehow. And as this idea of fulfilling Wolf Larsen's order persisted in my dazed consciousness, I seemed to see him standing at the wheel in the midst of the wild welter, pitting his will against the will of the storm and defying it.

I brought up violently against what I took to be the rail, breathed, and breathed the sweet air again. I tried to rise, but struck my head and was knocked back on hands and knees. By some freak of the waters I had been swept clear under the forecastle-head and into the eyes. As I scrambled out on all fours, I passed over the body of Thomas Mugridge, who lay in a groaning heap. There was no time to investigate. I must get the jib backed over.

When I emerged on deck it seemed that the end of everything had come. On all sides there was a rending and crashing of wood and steel and canvas. The *Ghost* was being wrenched and torn to fragments. The foresail and fore-topsail, emptied of the wind by the manœuvre, and with no one to bring in the sheet in time, were thundering into ribbons, the heavy boom threshing and splintering from rail to rail. The air was thick with flying wreckage, detached ropes and stays were hissing and coiling like snakes, and down through it all crashed the gaff of the foresail.

The spar could not have missed me by many inches, while it spurred me to action. Perhaps the situation was not hopeless. I remembered Wolf Larsen's caution. He had expected all hell to break loose, and here it was. And where was he? I caught sight of him toiling at the main-sheet, heaving it in and flat with his tremendous muscles, the stern of the schooner lifted high in the air and his body outlined against a white surge of sea sweeping past. All this, and more, — a whole world of chaos and wreck, — in possibly fifteen seconds I had seen and heard and grasped.

I did not stop to see what had become of the small boat, but sprang to the jib-sheet. The jib itself was beginning to slap, partially filling and emptying with sharp reports; but with a turn of the sheet and the application of my whole strength each time it slapped, I slowly backed it. This I know: I did my best. I pulled till I burst open the ends of all my fingers; and while I pulled, the flying-jib and staysail split their cloths apart and thundered into nothingness.

Still I pulled, holding what I gained each time with a double turn until the next slap gave me more. Then the sheet gave with greater ease, and Wolf Larsen was beside me, heaving in alone while I was busied taking up the slack.

"Make fast!" he shouted. "And come on!"

As I followed him, I noted that in spite of rack and ruin a rough order obtained. The *Ghost* was hove to. She was still in working order, and she was still working. Though the rest of her sails were gone, the jib, backed to windward, and the mainsail hauled down flat, were themselves holding, and holding her bow to the furious sea as well.

I looked for the boat, and, while Wolf Larsen cleared the boat-tackles, saw it lift to leeward on a big sea an not a score of feet away. And, so nicely had he made his calculation, we drifted fairly down upon it, so that nothing remained to do but hook the tackles to either end and hoist it aboard. But this was not done so easily as it is written.

In the bow was Kerfoot, Oofty-Oofty in the stern, and Kelly amidships. As we drifted closer the boat would rise on a wave while we sank in the trough, till almost straight above me I could see the heads of the three men craned overside and looking down. Then, the next moment, we would lift and soar upward while they sank far down beneath us. It seemed incredible that the next surge should not crush the *Ghost* down upon the tiny eggshell.

But, at the right moment, I passed the tackle to the Kanaka, while Wolf Larsen did the same thing forward to Kerfoot. Both tackles were hooked in a trice, and the three men, deftly timing the roll, made a simultaneous leap aboard the schooner. As the *Ghost* rolled her side out of water, the boat was lifted snugly against her, and before the return roll came, we had heaved it in over the side and turned it bottom up on the deck. I noticed blood spouting from Kerfoot's left hand. In some way the third finger had been crushed to a pulp. But he gave no sign of pain, and with his single right hand helped us lash the boat in its place.

"Stand by to let that jib over, you Oofty!" Wolf Larsen commanded, the very second we had finished with the boat. "Kelly, come aft and slack off the main-sheet! You, Kerfoot, go for'ard and see what's become of Cooky! Mr. Van Weyden, run aloft again, and cut away any stray stuff on your way!"

And having commanded, he went aft with his peculiar tigerish leaps to the wheel. While I toiled up the fore-shrouds the *Ghost* slowly paid off. This time, as we went into the trough of the sea and were swept, there were no sails to carry away. And, halfway to the crosstrees and flattened against the rigging by the full force of the wind so that it would have been impossible for me to have fallen, the *Ghost* almost on her beam-ends and the masts parallel with the water, I looked, not down, but at almost right angles from the perpendicular, to the deck of the *Ghost*. But I saw, not the deck, but where the deck should have been, for it was buried beneath a wild tumbling of water. Out of this water I could see the two masts rising, and that was all. The *Ghost*, for the moment, was buried beneath the sea. As she squared off more and more, escaping from the side pressure, she righted herself and broke her deck, like a whale's back, through the ocean surface.

Then we raced, and wildly, across the wild sea, the while I hung like a fly in the crosstrees and searched for the other boats. In half-an-hour I sighted the second one, swamped and bottom up, to which were desperately clinging Jock Horner, fat Louis, and Johnson. This time I remained aloft, and Wolf Larsen succeeded in heaving to without being swept. As before, we drifted down upon it. Tackles were made fast and lines flung to the men, who scrambled aboard like monkeys. The boat itself was crushed and splintered against the schooner's side as it came inboard; but the wreck was securely lashed, for it could be patched and made whole again.

Once more the *Ghost* bore away before the storm, this time so submerging herself that for some seconds I thought she would never reappear. Even the wheel, quite a deal higher than the waist, was covered and swept again and again. At such moments I felt strangely alone with God, alone with him and watching the chaos of his wrath. And then the wheel would reappear, and Wolf Larsen's broad shoulders, his hands gripping the spokes and holding the schooner to the course of his will, himself an earth-god, dominating the storm, flinging its descending waters from him and riding it to his own ends. And oh, the marvel of it! the marvel of it! That tiny men should live and breathe and work, and drive so frail a contrivance of wood and cloth through so tremendous an elemental strife.

As before, the *Ghost* swung out of the trough, lifting her deck again out of the sea, and dashed before the howling blast. It was now half-past five, and half-an-hour later, when the last of the day lost itself in a dim and furious twilight, I sighted a third boat. It was bottom up, and there was no sign of its crew. Wolf Larsen repeated his manœuvre, holding off and then rounding up to windward and drifting down upon it. But this time he missed by forty feet, the boat passing astern.

"Number four boat!" Oofty-Oofty cried, his keen eyes reading its number in the one second when it lifted clear of the foam, and upside down.

It was Henderson's boat and with him had been lost Holyoak and Williams, another of the deep-water crowd. Lost they indubitably were; but the boat remained, and Wolf Larsen made one more reckless effort to recover it. I had come down to the deck, and I saw Horner and Kerfoot vainly protest against the attempt.

"By God, I'll not be robbed of my boat by any storm that ever blew out of hell!" he shouted, and though we four stood with our heads together that we might hear, his voice seemed faint and far, as though removed from us an immense distance.

"Mr. Van Weyden!" he cried, and I heard through the tumult as one might hear a whisper. "Stand by that jib with Johnson and Oofty! The rest of you tail aft to the mainsheet! Lively now! or I'll sail you all into Kingdom Come! Understand?"

And when he put the wheel hard over and the *Ghost's* bow swung off, there was nothing for the hunters to do but obey and make the best of a risky chance. How great the risk I realized when I was once more buried beneath the pounding seas and clinging for life to the pinrail at the foot of the foremast. My fingers were torn loose, and I swept across to the side and over the side into the sea. I could not swim, but before I could sink I was swept back again. A strong hand gripped me, and when the *Ghost* finally emerged, I found that I owed my life to Johnson. I saw him looking anxiously about him, and noted that Kelly, who had come forward at the last moment, was missing.

This time, having missed the boat, and not being in the same position as in the previous instances, Wolf Larsen was compelled to resort to a different manœuvre. Running off before the wind with everything to starboard, he came about, and returned close-hauled on the port tack.

"Grand!" Johnson shouted in my ear, as we successfully came through the attendant deluge, and I knew he referred, not to Wolf Larsen's seamanship, but to the performance of the *Ghost* herself.

It was now so dark that there was no sign of the boat; but Wolf Larsen held back through the frightful turmoil as if guided by unerring instinct. This time, though we were continually half-buried, there was no trough in which to be swept, and we drifted squarely down upon the upturned boat, badly smashing it as it was heaved inboard.

Two hours of terrible work followed, in which all hands of us — two hunters, three sailors, Wolf Larsen and I — reefed, first one and then the other, the jib and mainsail. Hove to under this short canvas, our decks were comparatively free of water, while the *Ghost* bobbed and ducked amongst the combers like a cork.

I had burst open the ends of my fingers at the very first, and during the reefing I had worked with tears of pain running down my cheeks. And when all was done, I gave up like a woman and rolled upon the deck in the agony of exhaustion.

In the meantime Thomas Mugridge, like a drowned rat, was being dragged out from under the forecastle head where he had cravenly ensconced himself. I saw him pulled aft to the cabin, and noted with a shock of surprise that the galley had disappeared. A clean space of deck showed where it had stood.

In the cabin I found all hands assembled, sailors as well, and while coffee was being cooked over the small stove we drank whisky and crunched hard-tack. Never in my life had food been so welcome. And never had hot coffee tasted so good. So violently did the *Ghost*, pitch and toss and tumble that it was impossible for even the sailors to move about without holding on, and several times, after a cry of "Now she takes it!" we were heaped upon the wall of the port cabins as though it had been the deck.

"To hell with a look-out," I heard Wolf Larsen say when we had eaten and drunk our fill. "There's nothing can be done on deck. If anything's going to run us down we couldn't get out of its way. Turn in, all hands, and get some sleep."

The sailors slipped forward, setting the side-lights as they went, while the two hunters remained to sleep in the cabin, it not being deemed advisable to open the slide to the steerage companion-way. Wolf Larsen and I, between us, cut off Kerfoot's crushed finger and sewed up the stump. Mugridge, who, during all the time he had been compelled to cook and serve coffee and keep the fire going, had complained of internal pains, now swore that he had a broken rib or two. On examination we found that he had three. But his case was deferred to next day, principally for the reason that I did not know anything about broken ribs and would first have to read it up.

"I don't think it was worth it," I said to Wolf Larsen, "a broken boat for Kelly's life."

"But Kelly didn't amount to much," was the reply. "Good-night."

After all that had passed, suffering intolerable anguish in my finger-ends, and with three boats missing, to say nothing of the wild capers the *Ghost* was cutting, I should have thought it impossible to sleep. But my eyes must have closed the instant my head touched the pillow, and in utter exhaustion I slept throughout the night, the while the *Ghost*, lonely and undirected, fought her way through the storm.

CHAPTER XVIII

The next day, while the storm was blowing itself out, Wolf Larsen and I crammed anatomy and surgery and set Mugridge's ribs. Then, when the storm broke, Wolf Larsen cruised back and forth over that portion of the ocean where we had encountered it, and somewhat more to the westward, while the boats were being repaired and new sails made and bent. Sealing schooner after sealing schooner we sighted and boarded, most of which were in search of lost boats, and most of which were carrying boats and crews they had picked up and which did not belong to them. For the thick of the fleet had been to the westward of us, and the boats, scattered far and wide, had headed in mad flight for the nearest refuge.

Two of our boats, with men all safe, we took off the *Cisco*, and, to Wolf Larsen's huge delight and my own grief, he culled Smoke, with Nilson and Leach, from the *San Diego*. So that, at the end of five days, we found ourselves short but four men — Henderson, Holyoak, Williams, and Kelly, — and were once more hunting on the flanks of the herd.

As we followed it north we began to encounter the dreaded sea-fogs. Day after day the boats lowered and were swallowed up almost ere they touched the water, while we on board pumped the horn at regular intervals and every fifteen minutes fired the bomb gun. Boats were continually being lost and found, it being the custom for a boat to hunt, on lay, with whatever schooner picked it up, until such time it was recovered by its own schooner. But Wolf Larsen, as was to be expected, being a boat short, took possession of the first stray one and compelled its men to hunt with the *Ghost*, not permitting them to return to their own schooner when we sighted it. I remember how he forced the hunter and his two men below, a riffle at their breasts, when their captain passed by at biscuit-toss and hailed us for information.

Thomas Mugridge, so strangely and pertinaciously clinging to life, was soon limping about again and performing his double duties of cook and cabin-boy. Johnson and Leach were bullied and beaten as much as ever, and they looked for their lives to end with the end of the hunting season; while the rest of the crew lived the lives of dogs and were worked like dogs by their pitiless master. As for Wolf Larsen and myself, we got along fairly well; though I could not quite rid myself of the idea that right conduct, for me, lay in killing him. He fascinated me immeasurably, and I feared him immeasurably. And yet, I could not imagine him lying prone in death. There was an endurance, as of perpetual youth, about him, which rose up and forbade the picture. I could see him only as living always, and dominating always, fighting and destroying, himself surviving.

One diversion of his, when we were in the midst of the herd and the sea was too rough to lower the boats, was to lower with two boat-pullers and a steerer and go out himself. He was a good shot, too, and brought many a skin aboard under what the hunters termed impossible hunting conditions. It seemed the breath of his nostrils, this carrying his life in his hands and struggling for it against tremendous odds.

I was learning more and more seamanship; and one clear day — a thing we rarely encountered now — I had the satisfaction of running and handling the *Ghost* and picking up the boats myself. Wolf Larsen had been smitten with one of his headaches, and I stood at the wheel from morning until evening, sailing across the ocean after the last lee boat, and heaving to and picking it and the other five up without command or suggestion from him.

Gales we encountered now and again, for it was a raw and stormy region, and, in the middle of June, a typhoon most memorable to me and most important because of the changes wrought through it upon my future. We must have been caught nearly at the centre of this circular storm, and Wolf Larsen ran out of it and to the southward, first under a double-reefed jib, and finally under bare poles. Never had I imagined so great a sea. The seas previously encountered were as ripples compared with these, which ran a half-mile from crest to crest and which upreared, I am confident, above our masthead. So great was it that Wolf Larsen himself did not dare heave to, though he was being driven far to the southward and out of the seal herd.

We must have been well in the path of the trans-Pacific steamships when the typhoon moderated, and here, to the surprise of the hunters, we found ourselves in the midst of seals — a second herd, or sort of rear-guard, they declared, and a most unusual thing. But it was “Boats over!” the boom-boom of guns, and the pitiful slaughter through the long day.

It was at this time that I was approached by Leach. I had just finished tallying the skins of the last boat aboard, when he came to my side, in the darkness, and said in a low tone:

"Can you tell me, Mr. Van Weyden, how far we are off the coast, and what the bearings of Yokohama are?"

My heart leaped with gladness, for I knew what he had in mind, and I gave him the bearings — west-north-west, and five hundred miles away.

"Thank you, sir," was all he said as he slipped back into the darkness.

Next morning No. 3 boat and Johnson and Leach were missing. The water-breakers and grub-boxes from all the other boats were likewise missing, as were the beds and sea bags of the two men. Wolf Larsen was furious. He set sail and bore away into the west-north-west, two hunters constantly at the mastheads and sweeping the sea with glasses, himself pacing the deck like an angry lion. He knew too well my sympathy for the runaways to send me aloft as look-out.

The wind was fair but fitful, and it was like looking for a needle in a haystack to raise that tiny boat out of the blue immensity. But he put the *Ghost* through her best paces so as to get between the deserters and the land. This accomplished, he cruised back and forth across what he knew must be their course.

On the morning of the third day, shortly after eight bells, a cry that the boat was sighted came down from Smoke at the masthead. All hands lined the rail. A snappy breeze was blowing from the west with the promise of more wind behind it; and there, to leeward, in the troubled silver of the rising sun, appeared and disappeared a black speck.

We squared away and ran for it. My heart was as lead. I felt myself turning sick in anticipation; and as I looked at the gleam of triumph in Wolf Larsen's eyes, his form swam before me, and I felt almost irresistibly impelled to fling myself upon him. So unnerved was I by the thought of impending violence to Leach and Johnson that my reason must have left me. I know that I slipped down into the steerage in a daze, and that I was just beginning the ascent to the deck, a loaded shot-gun in my hands, when I heard the startled cry:

"There's five men in that boat!"

I supported myself in the companion-way, weak and trembling, while the observation was being verified by the remarks of the rest of the men. Then my knees gave from under me and I sank down, myself again, but overcome by shock at knowledge of what I had so nearly done. Also, I was very thankful as I put the gun away and slipped back on deck.

No one had remarked my absence. The boat was near enough for us to make out that it was larger than any sealing boat and built on different lines. As we drew closer, the sail was taken in and the mast unstepped. Oars were shipped, and its occupants waited for us to heave to and take them aboard.

Smoke, who had descended to the deck and was now standing by my side, began to chuckle in a significant way. I looked at him inquiringly.

“Talk of a mess!” he giggled.

“What’s wrong?” I demanded.

Again he chuckled. “Don’t you see there, in the stern-sheets, on the bottom? May I never shoot a seal again if that ain’t a woman!”

I looked closely, but was not sure until exclamations broke out on all sides. The boat contained four men, and its fifth occupant was certainly a woman. We were agog with excitement, all except Wolf Larsen, who was too evidently disappointed in that it was not his own boat with the two victims of his malice.

We ran down the flying jib, hauled the jib-sheets to wind-ward and the main-sheet flat, and came up into the wind. The oars struck the water, and with a few strokes the boat was alongside. I now caught my first fair glimpse of the woman. She was wrapped in a long ulster, for the morning was raw; and I could see nothing but her face and a mass of light brown hair escaping from under the seaman’s cap on her head. The eyes were large and brown and lustrous, the mouth sweet and sensitive, and the face itself a delicate oval, though sun and exposure to briny wind had burnt the face scarlet.

She seemed to me like a being from another world. I was aware of a hungry out-reaching for her, as of a starving man for bread. But then, I had not seen a woman for a very long time. I know that I was lost in a great wonder, almost a stupor, — this, then, was a woman? — so that I forgot myself and my mate’s duties, and took no part in helping the new-comers aboard. For when one of the sailors lifted her into Wolf Larsen’s downstretched arms, she looked up into our curious faces and smiled amusedly and sweetly, as only a woman can smile, and as I had seen no one smile for so long that I had forgotten such smiles existed.

“Mr. Van Weyden!”

Wolf Larsen’s voice brought me sharply back to myself.

"Will you take the lady below and see to her comfort? Make up that spare port cabin. Put Cooky to work on it. And see what you can do for that face. It's burned badly."

He turned brusquely away from us and began to question the new men. The boat was cast adrift, though one of them called it a "bloody shame" with Yokohama so near.

I found myself strangely afraid of this woman I was escorting aft. Also I was awkward. It seemed to me that I was realizing for the first time what a delicate, fragile creature a woman is; and as I caught her arm to help her down the companion stairs, I was startled by its smallness and softness. Indeed, she was a slender, delicate woman as women go, but to me she was so ethereally slender and delicate that I was quite prepared for her arm to crumble in my grasp. All this, in frankness, to show my first impression, after long denial of women in general and of Maud Brewster in particular.

"No need to go to any great trouble for me," she protested, when I had seated her in Wolf Larsen's arm-chair, which I had dragged hastily from his cabin. "The men were looking for land at any moment this morning, and the vessel should be in by night; don't you think so?"

Her simple faith in the immediate future took me aback. How could I explain to her the situation, the strange man who stalked the sea like Destiny, all that it had taken me months to learn? But I answered honestly:

"If it were any other captain except ours, I should say you would be ashore in Yokohama to-morrow. But our captain is a strange man, and I beg of you to be prepared for anything — understand? — for anything."

"I — I confess I hardly do understand," she hesitated, a perturbed but not frightened expression in her eyes. "Or is it a misconception of mine that shipwrecked people are always shown every consideration? This is such a little thing, you know. We are so close to land."

"Candidly, I do not know," I strove to reassure her. "I wished merely to prepare you for the worst, if the worst is to come. This man, this captain, is a brute, a demon, and one can never tell what will be his next fantastic act."

I was growing excited, but she interrupted me with an "Oh, I see," and her voice sounded weary. To think was patently an effort. She was clearly on the verge of physical collapse.

She asked no further questions, and I vouchsafed no remark, devoting myself to Wolf Larsen's command, which was to make her comfortable. I bustled about in quite housewifely fashion, procuring soothing lotions for her sunburn, raiding Wolf Larsen’s private stores for a bottle of port I knew to be there, and directing Thomas Mugridge in the preparation of the spare state-room.

The wind was freshening rapidly, the *Ghost* heeling over more and more, and by the time the state-room was ready she was dashing through the water at a lively clip. I had quite forgotten the existence of Leach and Johnson, when suddenly, like a thunderclap, “Boat ho!” came down the open companion-way. It was Smoke’s unmistakable voice, crying from the masthead. I shot a glance at the woman, but she was leaning back in the arm-chair, her eyes closed, unutterably tired. I doubted that she had heard, and I resolved to prevent her seeing the brutality I knew would follow the capture of the deserters. She was tired. Very good. She should sleep.

There were swift commands on deck, a stamping of feet and a slapping of reef-points as the *Ghost* shot into the wind and about on the other tack. As she filled away and heeled, the arm-chair began to slide across the cabin floor, and I sprang for it just in time to prevent the rescued woman from being spilled out.

Her eyes were too heavy to suggest more than a hint of the sleepy surprise that perplexed her as she looked up at me, and she half stumbled, half tottered, as I led her to her cabin. Mugridge grinned insinuatingly in my face as I shoved him out and ordered him back to his galley work; and he won his revenge by spreading glowing reports among the hunters as to what an excellent “lydy’s-myde” I was proving myself to be.

She leaned heavily against me, and I do believe that she had fallen asleep again between the arm-chair and the state-room. This I discovered when she nearly fell into the bunk during a sudden lurch of the schooner. She aroused, smiled drowsily, and was off to sleep again; and asleep I left her, under a heavy pair of sailor’s blankets, her head resting on a pillow I had appropriated from Wolf Larsen’s bunk.

CHAPTER XIX

I came on deck to find the *Ghost* heading up close on the port tack and cutting in to windward of a familiar spritsail close-hauled on the same tack ahead of us. All hands were on deck, for they knew that something was to happen when Leach and Johnson were dragged aboard.

It was four bells. Louis came aft to relieve the wheel. There was a dampness in the air, and I noticed he had on his oilskins.

"What are we going to have?" I asked him.

"A healthy young slip of a gale from the breath iv it, sir," he answered, "with a splatter iv rain just to wet our gills an' no more."

"Too bad we sighted them," I said, as the *Ghost's* bow was flung off a point by a large sea and the boat leaped for a moment past the jibs and into our line of vision.

Louis gave a spoke and temporized. "They'd never iv made the land, sir, I'm thinkin'."

"Think not?" I queried.

"No, sir. Did you feel that?" (A puff had caught the schooner, and he was forced to put the wheel up rapidly to keep her out of the wind.) "'Tis no egg-shell'll float on this sea an hour come, an' it's a stroke iv luck for them we're here to pick 'em up."

Wolf Larsen strode aft from amidships, where he had been talking with the rescued men. The cat-like springiness in his tread was a little more pronounced than usual, and his eyes were bright and snappy.

"Three oilers and a fourth engineer," was his greeting. "But we'll make sailors out of them, or boat-pullers at any rate. Now, what of the lady?"

I know not why, but I was aware of a twinge or pang like the cut of a knife when he mentioned her. I thought it a certain silly fastidiousness on my part, but it persisted in spite of me, and I merely shrugged my shoulders in answer.

Wolf Larsen pursed his lips in a long, quizzical whistle.

"What's her name, then?" he demanded.

"I don't know," I replied. "She is asleep. She was very tired. In fact, I am waiting to hear the news from you. What vessel was it?"

"Mail steamer," he answered shortly. "*The City of Tokio*, from 'Frisco, bound for Yokohama. Disabled in that typhoon. Old tub. Opened up top and bottom like a sieve. They were adrift four days. And you don't know who or what she is, eh? — maid, wife, or widow? Well, well."

He shook his head in a bantering way, and regarded me with laughing eyes.

"Are you — " I began. It was on the verge of my tongue to ask if he were going to take the castaways into Yokohama.

"Am I what?" he asked.

"What do you intend doing with Leach and Johnson?"

He shook his head. "Really, Hump, I don't know. You see, with these additions I've about all the crew I want."

"And they've about all the escaping they want," I said. "Why not give them a change of treatment? Take them aboard, and deal gently with them. Whatever they have done they have been hounded into doing."

"By me?"

"By you," I answered steadily. "And I give you warning, Wolf Larsen, that I may forget love of my own life in the desire to kill you if you go too far in maltreating those poor wretches."

"Bravo!" he cried. "You do me proud, Hump! You've found your legs with a vengeance. You're quite an individual. You were unfortunate in having your life cast in easy places, but you're developing, and I like you the better for it."

His voice and expression changed. His face was serious. "Do you believe in promises?" he asked. "Are they sacred things?"

"Of course," I answered.

"Then here's a compact," he went on, consummate actor. "If I promise not to lay my hands upon Leach will you promise, in turn, not to attempt to kill me?"

"Oh, not that I'm afraid of you, not that I'm afraid of you," he hastened to add.

I could hardly believe my ears. What was coming over the man?

"Is it a go?" he asked impatiently.

"A go," I answered.

His hand went out to mine, and as I shook it heartily I could have sworn I saw the mocking devil shine up for a moment in his eyes.

We strolled across the poop to the lee side. The boat was close at hand now, and in desperate plight. Johnson was steering, Leach bailing. We overhauled them about two feet to their one. Wolf Larsen motioned Louis to keep off slightly, and we dashed abreast of the boat, not a score of feet to windward. The *Ghost* blanketed it. The spritsail flapped emptily and the boat righted to an even keel, causing the two men swiftly to change position. The boat lost headway, and, as we lifted on a huge surge, toppled and fell into the trough.

It was at this moment that Leach and Johnson looked up into the faces of their shipmates, who lined the rail amidships. There was no greeting. They were as dead men in their comrades' eyes, and between them was the gulf that parts the living and the dead.

The next instant they were opposite the poop, where stood Wolf Larsen and I. We were falling in the trough, they were rising on the surge. Johnson looked at me, and I could see that his face was worn and haggard. I waved my hand to him, and he answered the greeting, but with a wave that was hopeless and despairing. It was as if he were saying farewell. I did not see into the eyes of Leach, for he was looking at Wolf Larsen, the old and implacable snarl of hatred strong as ever on his face.

Then they were gone astern. The spritsail filled with the wind, suddenly, careening the frail open craft till it seemed it would surely capsize. A whitecap foamed above it and broke across in a snow-white smother. Then the boat emerged, half swamped, Leach flinging the water out and Johnson clinging to the steering-oar, his face white and anxious.

Wolf Larsen barked a short laugh in my ear and strode away to the weather side of the poop. I expected him to give orders for the *Ghost* to heave to, but she kept on her course and he made no sign. Louis stood imperturbably at the wheel, but I noticed the grouped sailors forward turning troubled faces in our direction. Still the *Ghost* tore along, till the boat dwindled to a speck, when Wolf Larsen's voice rang out in command and he went about on the starboard tack.

Back we held, two miles and more to windward of the struggling cockle-shell, when the flying jib was run down and the schooner hove to. The sealing boats are not made for windward work. Their hope lies in keeping a weather position so that they may run before the wind for the schooner when it breezes up. But in all that wild waste there was no refuge for Leach and Johnson save on the *Ghost*, and they resolutely began the windward beat. It was slow work in the heavy sea that was running. At any moment they were liable to be overwhelmed by the hissing combers. Time and again and countless times we watched the boat luff into the big whitecaps, lose headway, and be flung back like a cork.

Johnson was a splendid seaman, and he knew as much about small boats as he did about ships. At the end of an hour and a half he was nearly alongside, standing past our stern on the last leg out, aiming to fetch us on the next leg back.

"So you've changed your mind?" I heard Wolf Larsen mutter, half to himself, half to them as though they could hear. "You want to come aboard, eh? Well, then, just keep a-coming."

"Hard up with that helm!" he commanded Oofty-Oofty, the Kanaka, who had in the meantime relieved Louis at the wheel.

Command followed command. As the schooner paid off, the fore-and main-sheets were slacked away for fair wind. And before the wind we were, and leaping, when Johnson, easing his sheet at imminent peril, cut across our wake a hundred feet away. Again Wolf Larsen laughed, at the same time beckoning them with his arm to follow. It was evidently his intention to play with them, — a lesson, I took it, in lieu of a beating, though a dangerous lesson, for the frail craft stood in momentary danger of being overwhelmed.

Johnson squared away promptly and ran after us. There was nothing else for him to do. Death stalked everywhere, and it was only a matter of time when some one of those many huge seas would fall upon the boat, roll over it, and pass on.

"'Tis the fear iv death at the hearts iv them," Louis muttered in my ear, as I passed forward to see to taking in the flying jib and staysail.

"Oh, he'll heave to in a little while and pick them up," I answered cheerfully. "He's bent upon giving them a lesson, that's all."

Louis looked at me shrewdly. "Think so?" he asked.

"Surely," I answered. "Don't you?"

"I think nothing but iv my own skin, these days," was his answer. "An' 'tis with wonder I'm filled as to the workin' out iv things. A pretty mess that 'Frisco whisky got me into, an' a prettier mess that woman's got you into aft there. Ah, it's myself that knows ye for a blitherin' fool."

"What do you mean?" I demanded; for, having sped his shaft, he was turning away.

"What do I mean?" he cried. "And it's you that asks me! 'Tis not what I mean, but what the Wolf 'll mean. The Wolf, I said, the Wolf!"

“If trouble comes, will you stand by?” I asked impulsively, for he had voiced my own fear.

“Stand by? ’Tis old fat Louis I stand by, an’ trouble enough it’ll be. We’re at the beginnin’ iv things, I’m tellin’ ye, the bare beginnin’ iv things.”

“I had not thought you so great a coward,” I sneered.

He favoured me with a contemptuous stare. “If I raised never a hand for that poor fool,” — pointing astern to the tiny sail, — “d’ye think I’m hungerin’ for a broken head for a woman I never laid me eyes upon before this day?”

I turned scornfully away and went aft.

“Better get in those topsails, Mr. Van Weyden,” Wolf Larsen said, as I came on the poop.

I felt relief, at least as far as the two men were concerned. It was clear he did not wish to run too far away from them. I picked up hope at the thought and put the order swiftly into execution. I had scarcely opened my mouth to issue the necessary commands, when eager men were springing to halyards and downhauls, and others were racing aloft. This eagerness on their part was noted by Wolf Larsen with a grim smile.

Still we increased our lead, and when the boat had dropped astern several miles we hove to and waited. All eyes watched it coming, even Wolf Larsen’s; but he was the only unperturbed man aboard. Louis, gazing fixedly, betrayed a trouble in his face he was not quite able to hide.

The boat drew closer and closer, hurling along through the seething green like a thing alive, lifting and sending and uptossing across the huge-backed breakers, or disappearing behind them only to rush into sight again and shoot skyward. It seemed impossible that it could continue to live, yet with each dizzying sweep it did achieve the impossible. A rain-squall drove past, and out of the flying wet the boat emerged, almost upon us.

“Hard up, there!” Wolf Larsen shouted, himself springing to the wheel and whirling it over.

Again the *Ghost* sprang away and raced before the wind, and for two hours Johnson and Leach pursued us. We hove to and ran away, hove to and ran away, and ever astern the struggling patch of sail tossed skyward and fell into the rushing valleys. It was a quarter of a mile away when a thick squall of rain veiled it from view. It never emerged. The wind blew the air clear again, but no patch of sail broke the troubled surface. I thought I saw, for an instant, the boat’s bottom show black in a breaking crest. At the best, that was all. For Johnson and Leach the travail of existence had ceased.

The men remained grouped amidships. No one had gone below, and no one was speaking. Nor were any looks being exchanged. Each man seemed stunned — deeply contemplative, as it were, and, not quite sure, trying to realize just what had taken place. Wolf Larsen gave them little time for thought. He at once put the *Ghost* upon her course — a course which meant the seal herd and not Yokohama harbour. But the men were no longer eager as they pulled and hauled, and I heard curses amongst them, which left their lips smothered and as heavy and lifeless as were they. Not so was it with the hunters. Smoke the irrepressible related a story, and they descended into the steerage, bellowing with laughter.

As I passed to leeward of the galley on my way aft I was approached by the engineer we had rescued. His face was white, his lips were trembling.

“Good God! sir, what kind of a craft is this?” he cried.

“You have eyes, you have seen,” I answered, almost brutally, what of the pain and fear at my own heart.

“Your promise?” I said to Wolf Larsen.

“I was not thinking of taking them aboard when I made that promise,” he answered. “And anyway, you’ll agree I’ve not laid my hands upon them.”

“Far from it, far from it,” he laughed a moment later.

I made no reply. I was incapable of speaking, my mind was too confused. I must have time to think, I knew. This woman, sleeping even now in the spare cabin, was a responsibility, which I must consider, and the only rational thought that flickered through my mind was that I must do nothing hastily if I were to be any help to her at all.

CHAPTER XX

The remainder of the day passed uneventfully. The young slip of a gale, having wetted our gills, proceeded to moderate. The fourth engineer and the three oilers, after a warm interview with Wolf Larsen, were furnished with outfits from the slop-chests, assigned places under the hunters in the various boats and watches on the vessel, and bundled forward into the forecastle. They went protestingly, but their voices were not loud. They were awed by what they had already seen of Wolf Larsen's character, while the tale of woe they speedily heard in the forecastle took the last bit of rebellion out of them.

Miss Brewster — we had learned her name from the engineer — slept on and on. At supper I requested the hunters to lower their voices, so she was not disturbed; and it was not till next morning that she made her appearance. It had been my intention to have her meals served apart, but Wolf Larsen put down his foot. Who was she that she should be too good for cabin table and cabin society? had been his demand.

But her coming to the table had something amusing in it. The hunters fell silent as clams. Jock Horner and Smoke alone were unabashed, stealing stealthy glances at her now and again, and even taking part in the conversation. The other four men glued their eyes on their plates and chewed steadily and with thoughtful precision, their ears moving and wobbling, in time with their jaws, like the ears of so many animals.

Wolf Larsen had little to say at first, doing no more than reply when he was addressed. Not that he was abashed. Far from it. This woman was a new type to him, a different breed from any he had ever known, and he was curious. He studied her, his eyes rarely leaving her face unless to follow the movements of her hands or shoulders. I studied her myself, and though it was I who maintained the conversation, I know that I was a bit shy, not quite self-possessed. His was the perfect poise, the supreme confidence in self, which nothing could shake; and he was no more timid of a woman than he was of storm and battle.

"And when shall we arrive at Yokohama?" she asked, turning to him and looking him squarely in the eyes.

There it was, the question flat. The jaws stopped working, the ears ceased wobbling, and though eyes remained glued on plates, each man listened greedily for the answer.

"In four months, possibly three if the season closes early," Wolf Larsen said.

She caught her breath and stammered, "I — I thought — I was given to understand that Yokohama was only a day's sail away. It — " Here she paused and looked about the table at the circle of unsympathetic faces staring hard at the plates. "It is not right," she concluded.

"That is a question you must settle with Mr. Van Weyden there," he replied, nodding to me with a mischievous twinkle. "Mr. Van Weyden is what you may call an authority on such things as rights. Now I, who am only a sailor, would look upon the situation somewhat differently. It may possibly be your misfortune that you have to remain with us, but it is certainly our good fortune."

He regarded her smilingly. Her eyes fell before his gaze, but she lifted them again, and defiantly, to mine. I read the unspoken question there: was it right? But I had decided that the part I was to play must be a neutral one, so I did not answer.

"What do you think?" she demanded.

"That it is unfortunate, especially if you have any engagements falling due in the course of the next several months. But, since you say that you were voyaging to Japan for your health, I can assure you that it will improve no better anywhere than aboard the *Ghost*."

I saw her eyes flash with indignation, and this time it was I who dropped mine, while I felt my face flushing under her gaze. It was cowardly, but what else could I do?

"Mr. Van Weyden speaks with the voice of authority," Wolf Larsen laughed.

I nodded my head, and she, having recovered herself, waited expectantly.

"Not that he is much to speak of now," Wolf Larsen went on, "but he has improved wonderfully. You should have seen him when he came on board. A more scrawny, pitiful specimen of humanity one could hardly conceive. Isn't that so, Kerfoot?"

Kerfoot, thus directly addressed, was startled into dropping his knife on the floor, though he managed to grunt affirmation.

"Developed himself by peeling potatoes and washing dishes. Eh, Kerfoot?"

Again that worthy grunted.

"Look at him now. True, he is not what you would term muscular, but still he has muscles, which is more than he had when he came aboard. Also, he has legs to stand on. You would not think so to look at him, but he was quite unable to stand alone at first."

The hunters were snickering, but she looked at me with a sympathy in her eyes which more than compensated for Wolf Larsen's nastiness. In truth, it had been so long since I had received sympathy that I was softened, and I became then, and gladly, her willing slave. But I was angry with Wolf Larsen. He was challenging my manhood with his slurs, challenging the very legs he claimed to be instrumental in getting for me.

"I may have learned to stand on my own legs," I retorted. "But I have yet to stamp upon others with them."

He looked at me insolently. "Your education is only half completed, then," he said dryly, and turned to her.

"We are very hospitable upon the *Ghost*. Mr. Van Weyden has discovered that. We do everything to make our guests feel at home, eh, Mr. Van Weyden?"

"Even to the peeling of potatoes and the washing of dishes," I answered, "to say nothing to wringing their necks out of very fellowship."

"I beg of you not to receive false impressions of us from Mr. Van Weyden," he interposed with mock anxiety. "You will observe, Miss Brewster, that he carries a dirk in his belt, a — ahem — a most unusual thing for a ship's officer to do. While really very estimable, Mr. Van Weyden is sometimes — how shall I say? — er — quarrelsome, and harsh measures are necessary. He is quite reasonable and fair in his calm moments, and as he is calm now he will not deny that only yesterday he threatened my life."

I was well-nigh choking, and my eyes were certainly fiery. He drew attention to me.

"Look at him now. He can scarcely control himself in your presence. He is not accustomed to the presence of ladies anyway. I shall have to arm myself before I dare go on deck with him."

He shook his head sadly, murmuring, "Too bad, too bad," while the hunters burst into guffaws of laughter.

The deep-sea voices of these men, rumbling and bellowing in the confined space, produced a wild effect. The whole setting was wild, and for the first time, regarding this strange woman and realizing how incongruous she was in it, I was aware of how much a part of it I was myself. I knew these men and their mental processes, was one of them myself, living the seal-hunting life, eating the seal-hunting fare, thinking, largely, the seal-hunting thoughts. There was for me no strangeness to it, to the rough clothes, the coarse faces, the wild laughter, and the lurching cabin walls and swaying sea-lamps.

As I buttered a piece of bread my eyes chanced to rest upon my hand. The knuckles were skinned and inflamed clear across, the fingers swollen, the nails rimmed with black. I felt the mattress-like growth of beard on my neck, knew that the sleeve of my coat was ripped, that a button was missing from the throat of the blue shirt I wore. The dirk mentioned by Wolf Larsen rested in its sheath on my hip. It was very natural that it should be there, — how natural I had not imagined until now, when I looked upon it with her eyes and knew how strange it and all that went with it must appear to her.

But she divined the mockery in Wolf Larsen's words, and again favoured me with a sympathetic glance. But there was a look of bewilderment also in her eyes. That it was mockery made the situation more puzzling to her.

"I may be taken off by some passing vessel, perhaps," she suggested.

"There will be no passing vessels, except other sealing-schooners," Wolf Larsen made answer.

"I have no clothes, nothing," she objected. "You hardly realize, sir, that I am not a man, or that I am unaccustomed to the vagrant, careless life which you and your men seem to lead."

"The sooner you get accustomed to it, the better," he said.

"I'll furnish you with cloth, needles, and thread," he added. "I hope it will not be too dreadful a hardship for you to make yourself a dress or two."

She made a wry pucker with her mouth, as though to advertise her ignorance of dressmaking. That she was frightened and bewildered, and that she was bravely striving to hide it, was quite plain to me.

"I suppose you're like Mr. Van Weyden there, accustomed to having things done for you. Well, I think doing a few things for yourself will hardly dislocate any joints. By the way, what do you do for a living?"

She regarded him with amazement unconcealed.

"I mean no offence, believe me. People eat, therefore they must procure the wherewithal. These men here shoot seals in order to live; for the same reason I sail this schooner; and Mr. Van Weyden, for the present at any rate, earns his salty grub by assisting me. Now what do you do?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

“Do you feed yourself? Or does some one else feed you?”

“I’m afraid some one else has fed me most of my life,” she laughed, trying bravely to enter into the spirit of his quizzing, though I could see a terror dawning and growing in her eyes as she watched Wolf Larsen.

“And I suppose some one else makes your bed for you?”

“I *have* made beds,” she replied.

“Very often?”

She shook her head with mock ruefulness.

“Do you know what they do to poor men in the States, who, like you, do not work for their living?”

“I am very ignorant,” she pleaded. “What do they do to the poor men who are like me?”

“They send them to jail. The crime of not earning a living, in their case, is called vagrancy. If I were Mr. Van Weyden, who harps eternally on questions of right and wrong, I’d ask, by what right do you live when you do nothing to deserve living?”

“But as you are not Mr. Van Weyden, I don’t have to answer, do I?”

She beamed upon him through her terror-filled eyes, and the pathos of it cut me to the heart. I must in some way break in and lead the conversation into other channels.

“Have you ever earned a dollar by your own labour?” he demanded, certain of her answer, a triumphant vindictiveness in his voice.

“Yes, I have,” she answered slowly, and I could have laughed aloud at his crestfallen visage. “I remember my father giving me a dollar once, when I was a little girl, for remaining absolutely quiet for five minutes.”

He smiled indulgently.

“But that was long ago,” she continued. “And you would scarcely demand a little girl of nine to earn her own living.”

“At present, however,” she said, after another slight pause, “I earn about eighteen hundred dollars a year.”

With one accord, all eyes left the plates and settled on her. A woman who earned eighteen hundred dollars a year was worth looking at. Wolf Larsen was undisguised in his admiration.

“Salary, or piece-work?” he asked.

“Piece-work,” she answered promptly.

"Eighteen hundred," he calculated. "That's a hundred and fifty dollars a month. Well, Miss Brewster, there is nothing small about the *Ghost*. Consider yourself on salary during the time you remain with us."

She made no acknowledgment. She was too unused as yet to the whims of the man to accept them with equanimity.

"I forgot to inquire," he went on suavely, "as to the nature of your occupation. What commodities do you turn out? What tools and materials do you require?"

"Paper and ink," she laughed. "And, oh! also a typewriter."

"You are Maud Brewster," I said slowly and with certainty, almost as though I were charging her with a crime.

Her eyes lifted curiously to mine. "How do you know?"

"Aren't you?" I demanded.

She acknowledged her identity with a nod. It was Wolf Larsen's turn to be puzzled. The name and its magic signified nothing to him. I was proud that it did mean something to me, and for the first time in a weary while I was convincingly conscious of a superiority over him.

"I remember writing a review of a thin little volume — " I had begun carelessly, when she interrupted me.

"You!" she cried. "You are — "

She was now staring at me in wide-eyed wonder.

I nodded my identity, in turn.

"Humphrey Van Weyden," she concluded; then added with a sigh of relief, and unaware that she had glanced that relief at Wolf Larsen, "I am so glad."

"I remember the review," she went on hastily, becoming aware of the awkwardness of her remark; "that too, too flattering review."

"Not at all," I denied valiantly. "You impeach my sober judgment and make my canons of little worth. Besides, all my brother critics were with me. Didn't Lang include your 'Kiss Endured' among the four supreme sonnets by women in the English language?"

"But you called me the American Mrs. Meynell!"

"Was it not true?" I demanded.

"No, not that," she answered. "I was hurt."

"We can measure the unknown only by the known," I replied, in my finest academic manner. "As a critic I was compelled to place you. You have now become a yardstick yourself. Seven of your thin little volumes are on my shelves; and there are two thicker volumes, the essays, which, you will pardon my saying, and I know not which is flattered more, fully equal your verse. The time is not far distant when some unknown will arise in England and the critics will name her the English Maud Brewster."

"You are very kind, I am sure," she murmured; and the very conventionality of her tones and words, with the host of associations it aroused of the old life on the other side of the world, gave me a quick thrill — rich with remembrance but stinging sharp with home-sickness.

"And you are Maud Brewster," I said solemnly, gazing across at her.

"And you are Humphrey Van Weyden," she said, gazing back at me with equal solemnity and awe. "How unusual! I don't understand. We surely are not to expect some wildly romantic sea-story from your sober pen."

"No, I am not gathering material, I assure you," was my answer. "I have neither aptitude nor inclination for fiction."

"Tell me, why have you always buried yourself in California?" she next asked. "It has not been kind of you. We of the East have seen to very little of you — too little, indeed, of the Dean of American Letters, the Second."

I bowed to, and disclaimed, the compliment. "I nearly met you, once, in Philadelphia, some Browning affair or other — you were to lecture, you know. My train was four hours late."

And then we quite forgot where we were, leaving Wolf Larsen stranded and silent in the midst of our flood of gossip. The hunters left the table and went on deck, and still we talked. Wolf Larsen alone remained. Suddenly I became aware of him, leaning back from the table and listening curiously to our alien speech of a world he did not know.

I broke short off in the middle of a sentence. The present, with all its perils and anxieties, rushed upon me with stunning force. It smote Miss Brewster likewise, a vague and nameless terror rushing into her eyes as she regarded Wolf Larsen.

He rose to his feet and laughed awkwardly. The sound of it was metallic.

"Oh, don't mind me," he said, with a self-depreciatory wave of his hand. "I don't count. Go on, go on, I pray you."

But the gates of speech were closed, and we, too, rose from the table and laughed awkwardly.

CHAPTER XXI

The chagrin Wolf Larsen felt from being ignored by Maud Brewster and me in the conversation at table had to express itself in some fashion, and it fell to Thomas Mugridge to be the victim. He had not mended his ways nor his shirt, though the latter he contended he had changed. The garment itself did not bear out the assertion, nor did the accumulations of grease on stove and pot and pan attest a general cleanliness.

"I've given you warning, Cooky," Wolf Larsen said, "and now you've got to take your medicine."

Mugridge's face turned white under its sooty veneer, and when Wolf Larsen called for a rope and a couple of men, the miserable Cockney fled wildly out of the galley and dodged and ducked about the deck with the grinning crew in pursuit. Few things could have been more to their liking than to give him a tow over the side, for to the forecastle he had sent messes and concoctions of the vilest order. Conditions favoured the undertaking. The *Ghost* was slipping through the water at no more than three miles an hour, and the sea was fairly calm. But Mugridge had little stomach for a dip in it. Possibly he had seen men towed before. Besides, the water was frightfully cold, and his was anything but a rugged constitution.

As usual, the watches below and the hunters turned out for what promised sport. Mugridge seemed to be in rabid fear of the water, and he exhibited a nimbleness and speed we did not dream he possessed. Cornered in the right-angle of the poop and galley, he sprang like a cat to the top of the cabin and ran aft. But his pursuers forestalling him, he doubled back across the cabin, passed over the galley, and gained the deck by means of the steerage-scuttle. Straight forward he raced, the boat-puller Harrison at his heels and gaining on him. But Mugridge, leaping suddenly, caught the jib-boom-lift. It happened in an instant. Holding his weight by his arms, and in mid-air doubling his body at the hips, he let fly with both feet. The oncoming Harrison caught the kick squarely in the pit of the stomach, groaned involuntarily, and doubled up and sank backward to the deck.

Hand-clapping and roars of laughter from the hunters greeted the exploit, while Mugridge, eluding half of his pursuers at the foremast, ran aft and through the remainder like a runner on the football field. Straight aft he held, to the poop and along the poop to the stern. So great was his speed that as he curved past the corner of the cabin he slipped and fell. Nilson was standing at the wheel, and the Cockney's hurtling body struck his legs. Both went down together, but Mugridge alone arose. By some freak of pressures, his frail body had snapped the strong man's leg like a pipe-stem.

Parsons took the wheel, and the pursuit continued. Round and round the decks they went, Mugridge sick with fear, the sailors hallooing and shouting directions to one another, and the hunters bellowing encouragement and laughter. Mugridge went down on the fore-hatch under three men; but he emerged from the mass like an eel, bleeding at the mouth, the offending shirt ripped into tatters, and sprang for the main-rigging. Up he went, clear up, beyond the ratlines, to the very masthead.

Half-a-dozen sailors swarmed to the crosstrees after him, where they clustered and waited while two of their number, Oofty-Oofty and Black (who was Latimer's boat-steerer), continued up the thin steel stays, lifting their bodies higher and higher by means of their arms.

It was a perilous undertaking, for, at a height of over a hundred feet from the deck, holding on by their hands, they were not in the best of positions to protect themselves from Mugridge's feet. And Mugridge kicked savagely, till the Kanaka, hanging on with one hand, seized the Cockney's foot with the other. Black duplicated the performance a moment later with the other foot. Then the three writhed together in a swaying tangle, struggling, sliding, and falling into the arms of their mates on the crosstrees.

The aërial battle was over, and Thomas Mugridge, whining and gibbering, his mouth flecked with bloody foam, was brought down to deck. Wolf Larsen rove a bowline in a piece of rope and slipped it under his shoulders. Then he was carried aft and flung into the sea. Forty, — fifty, — sixty feet of line ran out, when Wolf Larsen cried "Belay!" Oofty-Oofty took a turn on a bitt, the rope tautened, and the *Ghost*, lunging onward, jerked the cook to the surface.

It was a pitiful spectacle. Though he could not drown, and was nine-lived in addition, he was suffering all the agonies of half-drowning. The *Ghost* was going very slowly, and when her stern lifted on a wave and she slipped forward she pulled the wretch to the surface and gave him a moment in which to breathe; but between each lift the stern fell, and while the bow lazily climbed the next wave the line slacked and he sank beneath.

I had forgotten the existence of Maud Brewster, and I remembered her with a start as she stepped lightly beside me. It was her first time on deck since she had come aboard. A dead silence greeted her appearance.

“What is the cause of the merriment?” she asked.

“Ask Captain Larsen,” I answered composedly and coldly, though inwardly my blood was boiling at the thought that she should be witness to such brutality.

She took my advice and was turning to put it into execution, when her eyes lighted on Oofty-Oofty, immediately before her, his body instinct with alertness and grace as he held the turn of the rope.

“Are you fishing?” she asked him.

He made no reply. His eyes, fixed intently on the sea astern, suddenly flashed.

“Shark ho, sir!” he cried.

“Heave in! Lively! All hands tail on!” Wolf Larsen shouted, springing himself to the rope in advance of the quickest.

Mugridge had heard the Kanaka’s warning cry and was screaming madly. I could see a black fin cutting the water and making for him with greater swiftness than he was being pulled aboard. It was an even toss whether the shark or we would get him, and it was a matter of moments. When Mugridge was directly beneath us, the stern descended the slope of a passing wave, thus giving the advantage to the shark. The fin disappeared. The belly flashed white in swift upward rush. Almost equally swift, but not quite, was Wolf Larsen. He threw his strength into one tremendous jerk. The Cockney’s body left the water; so did part of the shark’s. He drew up his legs, and the man-eater seemed no more than barely to touch one foot, sinking back into the water with a splash. But at the moment of contact Thomas Mugridge cried out. Then he came in like a fresh-caught fish on a line, clearing the rail generously and striking the deck in a heap, on hands and knees, and rolling over.

But a fountain of blood was gushing forth. The right foot was missing, amputated neatly at the ankle. I looked instantly to Maud Brewster. Her face was white, her eyes dilated with horror. She was gazing, not at Thomas Mugridge, but at Wolf Larsen. And he was aware of it, for he said, with one of his short laughs:

“Man-play, Miss Brewster. Somewhat rougher, I warrant, than what you have been used to, but still-man-play. The shark was not in the reckoning. It — ”

But at this juncture, Mugridge, who had lifted his head and ascertained the extent of his loss, floundered over on the deck and buried his teeth in Wolf Larsen's leg. Wolf Larsen stooped, coolly, to the Cockney, and pressed with thumb and finger at the rear of the jaws and below the ears. The jaws opened with reluctance, and Wolf Larsen stepped free.

"As I was saying," he went on, as though nothing unwonted had happened, "the shark was not in the reckoning. It was — ahem — shall we say Providence?"

She gave no sign that she had heard, though the expression of her eyes changed to one of inexpressible loathing as she started to turn away. She no more than started, for she swayed and tottered, and reached her hand weakly out to mine. I caught her in time to save her from falling, and helped her to a seat on the cabin. I thought she might faint outright, but she controlled herself.

"Will you get a tourniquet, Mr. Van Weyden," Wolf Larsen called to me.

I hesitated. Her lips moved, and though they formed no words, she commanded me with her eyes, plainly as speech, to go to the help of the unfortunate man. "Please," she managed to whisper, and I could but obey.

By now I had developed such skill at surgery that Wolf Larsen, with a few words of advice, left me to my task with a couple of sailors for assistants. For his task he elected a vengeance on the shark. A heavy swivel-hook, baited with fat salt-pork, was dropped overside; and by the time I had compressed the severed veins and arteries, the sailors were singing and heaving in the offending monster. I did not see it myself, but my assistants, first one and then the other, deserted me for a few moments to run amidships and look at what was going on. The shark, a sixteen-footer, was hoisted up against the main-rigging. Its jaws were pried apart to their greatest extension, and a stout stake, sharpened at both ends, was so inserted that when the pries were removed the spread jaws were fixed upon it. This accomplished, the hook was cut out. The shark dropped back into the sea, helpless, yet with its full strength, doomed — to lingering starvation — a living death less meet for it than for the man who devised the punishment.

CHAPTER XXII

I knew what it was as she came toward me. For ten minutes I had watched her talking earnestly with the engineer, and now, with a sign for silence, I drew her out of earshot of the helmsman. Her face was white and set; her large eyes, larger than usual what of the purpose in them, looked penetratingly into mine. I felt rather timid and apprehensive, for she had come to search Humphrey Van Weyden's soul, and Humphrey Van Weyden had nothing of which to be particularly proud since his advent on the *Ghost*.

We walked to the break of the poop, where she turned and faced me. I glanced around to see that no one was within hearing distance.

"What is it?" I asked gently; but the expression of determination on her face did not relax.

"I can readily understand," she began, "that this morning's affair was largely an accident; but I have been talking with Mr. Haskins. He tells me that the day we were rescued, even while I was in the cabin, two men were drowned, deliberately drowned — murdered."

There was a query in her voice, and she faced me accusingly, as though I were guilty of the deed, or at least a party to it.

"The information is quite correct," I answered. "The two men were murdered."

"And you permitted it!" she cried.

"I was unable to prevent it, is a better way of phrasing it," I replied, still gently.

"But you tried to prevent it?" There was an emphasis on the "tried," and a pleading little note in her voice.

"Oh, but you didn't," she hurried on, divining my answer. "But why didn't you?"

I shrugged my shoulders. "You must remember, Miss Brewster, that you are a new inhabitant of this little world, and that you do not yet understand the laws which operate within it. You bring with you certain fine conceptions of humanity, manhood, conduct, and such things; but here you will find them misconceptions. I have found it so," I added, with an involuntary sigh.

She shook her head incredulously.

"What would you advise, then?" I asked. "That I should take a knife, or a gun, or an axe, and kill this man?"

She half started back.

"No, not that!"

"Then what should I do? Kill myself?"

"You speak in purely materialistic terms," she objected. "There is such a thing as moral courage, and moral courage is never without effect."

"Ah," I smiled, "you advise me to kill neither him nor myself, but to let him kill me." I held up my hand as she was about to speak. "For moral courage is a worthless asset on this little floating world. Leach, one of the men who were murdered, had moral courage to an unusual degree. So had the other man, Johnson. Not only did it not stand them in good stead, but it destroyed them. And so with me if I should exercise what little moral courage I may possess.

"You must understand, Miss Brewster, and understand clearly, that this man is a monster. He is without conscience. Nothing is sacred to him, nothing is too terrible for him to do. It was due to his whim that I was detained aboard in the first place. It is due to his whim that I am still alive. I do nothing, can do nothing, because I am a slave to this monster, as you are now a slave to him; because I desire to live, as you will desire to live; because I cannot fight and overcome him, just as you will not be able to fight and overcome him."

She waited for me to go on.

"What remains? Mine is the role of the weak. I remain silent and suffer ignominy, as you will remain silent and suffer ignominy. And it is well. It is the best we can do if we wish to live. The battle is not always to the strong. We have not the strength with which to fight this man; we must dissimulate, and win, if win we can, by craft. If you will be advised by me, this is what you will do. I know my position is perilous, and I may say frankly that yours is even more perilous. We must stand together, without appearing to do so, in secret alliance. I shall not be able to side with you openly, and, no matter what indignities may be put upon me, you are to remain likewise silent. We must provoke no scenes with this man, nor cross his will. And we must keep smiling faces and be friendly with him no matter how repulsive it may be."

She brushed her hand across her forehead in a puzzled way, saying, "Still I do not understand."

"You must do as I say," I interrupted authoritatively, for I saw Wolf Larsen's gaze wandering toward us from where he paced up and down with Latimer amidships. "Do as I say, and ere long you will find I am right."

"What shall I do, then?" she asked, detecting the anxious glance I had shot at the object of our conversation, and impressed, I flatter myself, with the earnestness of my manner.

"Dispense with all the moral courage you can," I said briskly. "Don't arouse this man's animosity. Be quite friendly with him, talk with him, discuss literature and art with him — he is fond of such things. You will find him an interested listener and no fool. And for your own sake try to avoid witnessing, as much as you can, the brutalities of the ship. It will make it easier for you to act your part."

"I am to lie," she said in steady, rebellious tones, "by speech and action to lie."

Wolf Larsen had separated from Latimer and was coming toward us. I was desperate.

"Please, please understand me," I said hurriedly, lowering my voice. "All your experience of men and things is worthless here. You must begin over again. I know, — I can see it — you have, among other ways, been used to managing people with your eyes, letting your moral courage speak out through them, as it were. You have already managed me with your eyes, commanded me with them. But don't try it on Wolf Larsen. You could as easily control a lion, while he would make a mock of you. He would — I have always been proud of the fact that I discovered him," I said, turning the conversation as Wolf Larsen stepped on the poop and joined us. "The editors were afraid of him and the publishers would have none of him. But I knew, and his genius and my judgment were vindicated when he made that magnificent hit with his 'Forge.'"

"And it was a newspaper poem," she said glibly.

"It did happen to see the light in a newspaper," I replied, "but not because the magazine editors had been denied a glimpse at it."

"We were talking of Harris," I said to Wolf Larsen.

"Oh, yes," he acknowledged. "I remember the 'Forge.' Filled with pretty sentiments and an almighty faith in human illusions. By the way, Mr. Van Weyden, you'd better look in on Cooky. He's complaining and restless."

Thus was I bluntly dismissed from the poop, only to find Mugridge sleeping soundly from the morphine I had given him. I made no haste to return on deck, and when I did I was gratified to see Miss Brewster in animated conversation with Wolf Larsen. As I say, the sight gratified me. She was following my advice. And yet I was conscious of a slight shock or hurt in that she was able to do the thing I had begged her to do and which she had notably disliked.

CHAPTER XXIII

Brave winds, blowing fair, swiftly drove the *Ghost* northward into the seal herd. We encountered it well up to the forty-fourth parallel, in a raw and stormy sea across which the wind harried the fog-banks in eternal flight. For days at a time we could never see the sun nor take an observation; then the wind would sweep the face of the ocean clean, the waves would ripple and flash, and we would learn where we were. A day of clear weather might follow, or three days or four, and then the fog would settle down upon us, seemingly thicker than ever.

The hunting was perilous; yet the boats, lowered day after day, were swallowed up in the grey obscurity, and were seen no more till nightfall, and often not till long after, when they would creep in like sea-wraiths, one by one, out of the grey. Wainwright — the hunter whom Wolf Larsen had stolen with boat and men — took advantage of the veiled sea and escaped. He disappeared one morning in the encircling fog with his two men, and we never saw them again, though it was not many days when we learned that they had passed from schooner to schooner until they finally regained their own.

This was the thing I had set my mind upon doing, but the opportunity never offered. It was not in the mate's province to go out in the boats, and though I manœuvred cunningly for it, Wolf Larsen never granted me the privilege. Had he done so, I should have managed somehow to carry Miss Brewster away with me. As it was, the situation was approaching a stage which I was afraid to consider. I involuntarily shunned the thought of it, and yet the thought continually arose in my mind like a haunting spectre.

I had read sea-romances in my time, wherein figured, as a matter of course, the lone woman in the midst of a shipload of men; but I learned, now, that I had never comprehended the deeper significance of such a situation — the thing the writers harped upon and exploited so thoroughly. And here it was, now, and I was face to face with it. That it should be as vital as possible, it required no more than that the woman should be Maud Brewster, who now charmed me in person as she had long charmed me through her work.

No one more out of environment could be imagined. She was a delicate, ethereal creature, swaying and willowy, light and graceful of movement. It never seemed to me that she walked, or, at least, walked after the ordinary manner of mortals. Hers was an extreme lithesomeness, and she moved with a certain indefinable airiness, approaching one as down might float or as a bird on noiseless wings.

She was like a bit of Dresden china, and I was continually impressed with what I may call her fragility. As at the time I caught her arm when helping her below, so at any time I was quite prepared, should stress or rough handling befall her, to see her crumble away. I have never seen body and spirit in such perfect accord. Describe her verse, as the critics have described it, as sublimated and spiritual, and you have described her body. It seemed to partake of her soul, to have analogous attributes, and to link it to life with the slenderest of chains. Indeed, she trod the earth lightly, and in her constitution there was little of the robust clay.

She was in striking contrast to Wolf Larsen. Each was nothing that the other was, everything that the other was not. I noted them walking the deck together one morning, and I likened them to the extreme ends of the human ladder of evolution — the one the culmination of all savagery, the other the finished product of the finest civilization. True, Wolf Larsen possessed intellect to an unusual degree, but it was directed solely to the exercise of his savage instincts and made him but the more formidable a savage. He was splendidly muscled, a heavy man, and though he strode with the certitude and directness of the physical man, there was nothing heavy about his stride. The jungle and the wilderness lurked in the uplift and downput of his feet. He was cat-footed, and lithe, and strong, always strong. I likened him to some great tiger, a beast of prowess and prey. He looked it, and the piercing glitter that arose at times in his eyes was the same piercing glitter I had observed in the eyes of caged leopards and other preying creatures of the wild.

But this day, as I noted them pacing up and down, I saw that it was she who terminated the walk. They came up to where I was standing by the entrance to the companion-way. Though she betrayed it by no outward sign, I felt, somehow, that she was greatly perturbed. She made some idle remark, looking at me, and laughed lightly enough; but I saw her eyes return to his, involuntarily, as though fascinated; then they fell, but not swiftly enough to veil the rush of terror that filled them.

It was in his eyes that I saw the cause of her perturbation. Ordinarily grey and cold and harsh, they were now warm and soft and golden, and all a-dance with tiny lights that dimmed and faded, or welled up till the full orbs were flooded with a glowing radiance. Perhaps it was to this that the golden colour was due; but golden his eyes were, enticing and masterful, at the same time luring and compelling, and speaking a demand and clamour of the blood which no woman, much less Maud Brewster, could misunderstand.

Her own terror rushed upon me, and in that moment of fear — the most terrible fear a man can experience — I knew that in inexpressible ways she was dear to me. The knowledge that I loved her rushed upon me with the terror, and with both emotions gripping at my heart and causing my blood at the same time to chill and to leap riotously, I felt myself drawn by a power without me and beyond me, and found my eyes returning against my will to gaze into the eyes of Wolf Larsen. But he had recovered himself. The golden colour and the dancing lights were gone. Cold and grey and glittering they were as he bowed brusquely and turned away.

“I am afraid,” she whispered, with a shiver. “I am so afraid.”

I, too, was afraid, and what of my discovery of how much she meant to me my mind was in a turmoil; but, I succeeded in answering quite calmly:

“All will come right, Miss Brewster. Trust me, it will come right.”

She answered with a grateful little smile that sent my heart pounding, and started to descend the companion-stairs.

For a long while I remained standing where she had left me. There was imperative need to adjust myself, to consider the significance of the changed aspect of things. It had come, at last, love had come, when I least expected it and under the most forbidding conditions. Of course, my philosophy had always recognized the inevitableness of the love-call sooner or later; but long years of bookish silence had made me inattentive and unprepared.

And now it had come! Maud Brewster! My memory flashed back to that first thin little volume on my desk, and I saw before me, as though in the concrete, the row of thin little volumes on my library shelf. How I had welcomed each of them! Each year one had come from the press, and to me each was the advent of the year. They had voiced a kindred intellect and spirit, and as such I had received them into a camaraderie of the mind; but now their place was in my heart.

My heart? A revulsion of feeling came over me. I seemed to stand outside myself and to look at myself incredulously. Maud Brewster!

Humphrey Van Weyden, “the cold-blooded fish,” the “emotionless monster,” the “analytical demon,” of Charley Furuseth’s christening, in love! And then, without rhyme or reason, all sceptical, my mind flew back to a small biographical note in the red-bound *Who’s Who*, and I said to myself, “She was born in Cambridge, and she is twenty-seven years old.” And then I said, “Twenty-seven years old and still free and fancy free?” But how did I know she was fancy free? And the pang of new-born jealousy put all incredulity to flight. There was no doubt about it. I was jealous; therefore I loved. And the woman I loved was Maud Brewster.

I, Humphrey Van Weyden, was in love! And again the doubt assailed me. Not that I was afraid of it, however, or reluctant to meet it. On the contrary, idealist that I was to the most pronounced degree, my philosophy had always recognized and guerdoned love as the greatest thing in the world, the aim and the summit of being, the most exquisite pitch of joy and happiness to which life could thrill, the thing of all things to be hailed and welcomed and taken into the heart. But now that it had come I could not believe. I could not be so fortunate. It was too good, too good to be true. Symons’s lines came into my head:

“I wandered all these years among
A world of women, seeking you.”

And then I had ceased seeking. It was not for me, this greatest thing in the world, I had decided. Furuseth was right; I was abnormal, an “emotionless monster,” a strange bookish creature, capable of pleasuring in sensations only of the mind. And though I had been surrounded by women all my days, my appreciation of them had been æsthetic and nothing more. I had actually, at times, considered myself outside the pale, a monkish fellow denied the eternal or the passing passions I saw and understood so well in others. And now it had come! Undreamed of and unheralded, it had come. In what could have been no less than an ecstasy, I left my post at the head of the companion-way and started along the deck, murmuring to myself those beautiful lines of Mrs. Browning:

“I lived with visions for my company
Instead of men and women years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.”

But the sweeter music was playing in my ears, and I was blind and oblivious to all about me. The sharp voice of Wolf Larsen aroused me.

“What the hell are you up to?” he was demanding.

I had strayed forward where the sailors were painting, and I came to myself to find my advancing foot on the verge of overturning a paint-pot.

“Sleep-walking, sunstroke, — what?” he barked.

“No; indigestion,” I retorted, and continued my walk as if nothing untoward had occurred.

CHAPTER XXIV

Among the most vivid memories of my life are those of the events on the *Ghost* which occurred during the forty hours succeeding the discovery of my love for Maud Brewster. I, who had lived my life in quiet places, only to enter at the age of thirty-five upon a course of the most irrational adventure I could have imagined, never had more incident and excitement crammed into any forty hours of my experience. Nor can I quite close my ears to a small voice of pride which tells me I did not do so badly, all things considered.

To begin with, at the midday dinner, Wolf Larsen informed the hunters that they were to eat thenceforth in the steerage. It was an unprecedented thing on sealing-schooners, where it is the custom for the hunters to rank, unofficially as officers. He gave no reason, but his motive was obvious enough. Horner and Smoke had been displaying a gallantry toward Maud Brewster, ludicrous in itself and inoffensive to her, but to him evidently distasteful.

The announcement was received with black silence, though the other four hunters glanced significantly at the two who had been the cause of their banishment. Jock Horner, quiet as was his way, gave no sign; but the blood surged darkly across Smoke's forehead, and he half opened his mouth to speak. Wolf Larsen was watching him, waiting for him, the steely glitter in his eyes; but Smoke closed his mouth again without having said anything.

"Anything to say?" the other demanded aggressively.

It was a challenge, but Smoke refused to accept it.

"About what?" he asked, so innocently that Wolf Larsen was disconcerted, while the others smiled.

"Oh, nothing," Wolf Larsen said lamely. "I just thought you might want to register a kick."

"About what?" asked the imperturbable Smoke.

Smoke's mates were now smiling broadly. His captain could have killed him, and I doubt not that blood would have flowed had not Maud Brewster been present. For that matter, it was her presence which enabled. Smoke to act as he did. He was too discreet and cautious a man to incur Wolf Larsen's anger at a time when that anger could be expressed in terms stronger than words. I was in fear that a struggle might take place, but a cry from the helmsman made it easy for the situation to save itself.

"Smoke ho!" the cry came down the open companion-way.

"How's it bear?" Wolf Larsen called up.

"Dead astern, sir."

"Maybe it's a Russian," suggested Latimer.

His words brought anxiety into the faces of the other hunters. A Russian could mean but one thing — a cruiser. The hunters, never more than roughly aware of the position of the ship, nevertheless knew that we were close to the boundaries of the forbidden sea, while Wolf Larsen's record as a poacher was notorious. All eyes centred upon him.

"We're dead safe," he assured them with a laugh. "No salt mines this time, Smoke. But I'll tell you what — I'll lay odds of five to one it's the *Macedonia*."

No one accepted his offer, and he went on: "In which event, I'll lay ten to one there's trouble breezing up."

"No, thank you," Latimer spoke up. "I don't object to losing my money, but I like to get a run for it anyway. There never was a time when there wasn't trouble when you and that brother of yours got together, and I'll lay twenty to one on that."

A general smile followed, in which Wolf Larsen joined, and the dinner went on smoothly, thanks to me, for he treated me abominably the rest of the meal, sneering at me and patronizing me till I was all a-tremble with suppressed rage. Yet I knew I must control myself for Maud Brewster's sake, and I received my reward when her eyes caught mine for a fleeting second, and they said, as distinctly as if she spoke, "Be brave, be brave."

We left the table to go on deck, for a steamer was a welcome break in the monotony of the sea on which we floated, while the conviction that it was Death Larsen and the *Macedonia* added to the excitement. The stiff breeze and heavy sea which had sprung up the previous afternoon had been moderating all morning, so that it was now possible to lower the boats for an afternoon's hunt. The hunting promised to be profitable. We had sailed since daylight across a sea barren of seals, and were now running into the herd.

The smoke was still miles astern, but overhauling us rapidly, when we lowered our boats. They spread out and struck a northerly course across the ocean. Now and again we saw a sail lower, heard the reports of the shotguns, and saw the sail go up again. The seals were thick, the wind was dying away; everything favoured a big catch. As we ran off to get our leeward position of the last lee boat, we found the ocean fairly carpeted with sleeping seals. They were all about us, thicker than I had ever seen them before, in twos and threes and bunches, stretched full length on the surface and sleeping for all the world like so many lazy young dogs.

Under the approaching smoke the hull and upper-works of a steamer were growing larger. It was the *Macedonia*. I read her name through the glasses as she passed by scarcely a mile to starboard. Wolf Larsen looked savagely at the vessel, while Maud Brewster was curious.

"Where is the trouble you were so sure was breezing up, Captain Larsen?" she asked gaily.

He glanced at her, a moment's amusement softening his features.

"What did you expect? That they'd come aboard and cut our throats?"

"Something like that," she confessed. "You understand, seal-hunters are so new and strange to me that I am quite ready to expect anything."

He nodded his head. "Quite right, quite right. Your error is that you failed to expect the worst."

"Why, what can be worse than cutting our throats?" she asked, with pretty naïve surprise.

"Cutting our purses," he answered. "Man is so made these days that his capacity for living is determined by the money he possesses."

"'Who steals my purse steals trash,'" she quoted.

"Who steals my purse steals my right to live," was the reply, "old saws to the contrary. For he steals my bread and meat and bed, and in so doing imperils my life. There are not enough soup-kitchens and bread-lines to go around, you know, and when men have nothing in their purses they usually die, and die miserably — unless they are able to fill their purses pretty speedily."

"But I fail to see that this steamer has any designs on your purse."

"Wait and you will see," he answered grimly.

We did not have long to wait. Having passed several miles beyond our line of boats, the *Macedonia* proceeded to lower her own. We knew she carried fourteen boats to our five (we were one short through the desertion of Wainwright), and she began dropping them far to leeward of our last boat, continued dropping them athwart our course, and finished dropping them far to windward of our first weather boat. The hunting, for us, was spoiled. There were no seals behind us, and ahead of us the line of fourteen boats, like a huge broom, swept the herd before it.

Our boats hunted across the two or three miles of water between them and the point where the *Macedonia's* had been dropped, and then headed for home. The wind had fallen to a whisper, the ocean was growing calmer and calmer, and this, coupled with the presence of the great herd, made a perfect hunting day — one of the two or three days to be encountered in the whole of a lucky season. An angry lot of men, boat-pullers and steerers as well as hunters, swarmed over our side. Each man felt that he had been robbed; and the boats were hoisted in amid curses, which, if curses had power, would have settled Death Larsen for all eternity — "Dead and damned for a dozen iv eternities," commented Louis, his eyes twinkling up at me as he rested from hauling taut the lashings of his boat.

"Listen to them, and find if it is hard to discover the most vital thing in their souls," said Wolf Larsen. "Faith? and love? and high ideals? The good? the beautiful? the true?"

"Their innate sense of right has been violated," Maud Brewster said, joining the conversation.

She was standing a dozen feet away, one hand resting on the main-shrouds and her body swaying gently to the slight roll of the ship. She had not raised her voice, and yet I was struck by its clear and bell-like tone. Ah, it was sweet in my ears! I scarcely dared look at her just then, for the fear of betraying myself. A boy's cap was perched on her head, and her hair, light brown and arranged in a loose and fluffy order that caught the sun, seemed an aureole about the delicate oval of her face. She was positively bewitching, and, withal, sweetly spirituelle, if not saintly. All my old-time marvel at life returned to me at sight of this splendid incarnation of it, and Wolf Larsen's cold explanation of life and its meaning was truly ridiculous and laughable.

"A sentimentalist," he sneered, "like Mr. Van Weyden. Those men are cursing because their desires have been outraged. That is all. What desires? The desires for the good grub and soft beds ashore which a handsome pay-day brings them — the women and the drink, the gorging and the beastliness which so truly expresses them, the best that is in them, their highest aspirations, their ideals, if you please. The exhibition they make of their feelings is not a touching sight, yet it shows how deeply they have been touched, how deeply their purses have been touched, for to lay hands on their purses is to lay hands on their souls.”

“’You hardly behave as if your purse had been touched,” she said, smilingly.

“Then it so happens that I am behaving differently, for my purse and my soul have both been touched. At the current price of skins in the London market, and based on a fair estimate of what the afternoon’s catch would have been had not the *Macedonia* hogged it, the *Ghost* has lost about fifteen hundred dollars’ worth of skins.”

“You speak so calmly — ” she began.

“But I do not feel calm; I could kill the man who robbed me,” he interrupted. “Yes, yes, I know, and that man my brother — more sentiment! Bah!”

His face underwent a sudden change. His voice was less harsh and wholly sincere as he said:

“You must be happy, you sentimentalists, really and truly happy at dreaming and finding things good, and, because you find some of them good, feeling good yourself. Now, tell me, you two, do you find me good?”

“You are good to look upon — in a way,” I qualified.

“There are in you all powers for good,” was Maud Brewster’s answer.

“There you are!” he cried at her, half angrily. “Your words are empty to me. There is nothing clear and sharp and definite about the thought you have expressed. You cannot pick it up in your two hands and look at it. In point of fact, it is not a thought. It is a feeling, a sentiment, a something based upon illusion and not a product of the intellect at all.”

As he went on his voice again grew soft, and a confiding note came into it. “Do you know, I sometimes catch myself wishing that I, too, were blind to the facts of life and only knew its fancies and illusions. They’re wrong, all wrong, of course, and contrary to reason; but in the face of them my reason tells me, wrong and most wrong, that to dream and live illusions gives greater delight. And after all, delight is the wage for living. Without delight, living is a worthless act. To labour at living and be unpaid is worse than to be dead. He who delights the most lives the most, and your dreams and unrealities are less disturbing to you and more gratifying than are my facts to me.”

He shook his head slowly, pondering.

"I often doubt, I often doubt, the worthwhileness of reason. Dreams must be more substantial and satisfying. Emotional delight is more filling and lasting than intellectual delight; and, besides, you pay for your moments of intellectual delight by having the blues. Emotional delight is followed by no more than jaded senses which speedily recuperate. I envy you, I envy you."

He stopped abruptly, and then on his lips formed one of his strange quizzical smiles, as he added:

"It's from my brain I envy you, take notice, and not from my heart. My reason dictates it. The envy is an intellectual product. I am like a sober man looking upon drunken men, and, greatly weary, wishing he, too, were drunk."

"Or like a wise man looking upon fools and wishing he, too, were a fool," I laughed.

"Quite so," he said. "You are a blessed, bankrupt pair of fools. You have no facts in your pocketbook."

"Yet we spend as freely as you," was Maud Brewster's contribution.

"More freely, because it costs you nothing."

"And because we draw upon eternity," she retorted.

"Whether you do or think you do, it's the same thing. You spend what you haven't got, and in return you get greater value from spending what you haven't got than I get from spending what I have got, and what I have sweated to get."

"Why don't you change the basis of your coinage, then?" she queried teasingly.

He looked at her quickly, half-hopefully, and then said, all regretfully: "Too late. I'd like to, perhaps, but I can't. My pocketbook is stuffed with the old coinage, and it's a stubborn thing. I can never bring myself to recognize anything else as valid."

He ceased speaking, and his gaze wandered absently past her and became lost in the placid sea. The old primal melancholy was strong upon him. He was quivering to it. He had reasoned himself into a spell of the blues, and within few hours one could look for the devil within him to be up and stirring. I remembered Charley Furuseth, and knew this man's sadness as the penalty which the materialist ever pays for his materialism.

CHAPTER XXV

"You've been on deck, Mr. Van Weyden," Wolf Larsen said, the following morning at the breakfast-table, "How do things look?"

"Clear enough," I answered, glancing at the sunshine which streamed down the open companion-way. "Fair westerly breeze, with a promise of stiffening, if Louis predicts correctly."

He nodded his head in a pleased way. "Any signs of fog?"

"Thick banks in the north and north-west."

He nodded his head again, evincing even greater satisfaction than before.

"What of the *Macedonia*?"

"Not sighted," I answered.

I could have sworn his face fell at the intelligence, but why he should be disappointed I could not conceive.

I was soon to learn. "Smoke ho!" came the hail from on deck, and his face brightened.

"Good!" he exclaimed, and left the table at once to go on deck and into the steerage, where the hunters were taking the first breakfast of their exile.

Maud Brewster and I scarcely touched the food before us, gazing, instead, in silent anxiety at each other, and listening to Wolf Larsen's voice, which easily penetrated the cabin through the intervening bulkhead. He spoke at length, and his conclusion was greeted with a wild roar of cheers. The bulkhead was too thick for us to hear what he said; but whatever it was it affected the hunters strongly, for the cheering was followed by loud exclamations and shouts of joy.

From the sounds on deck I knew that the sailors had been routed out and were preparing to lower the boats. Maud Brewster accompanied me on deck, but I left her at the break of the poop, where she might watch the scene and not be in it. The sailors must have learned whatever project was on hand, and the vim and snap they put into their work attested their enthusiasm. The hunters came trooping on deck with shot-guns and ammunition-boxes, and, most unusual, their rifles. The latter were rarely taken in the boats, for a seal shot at long range with a rifle invariably sank before a boat could reach it. But each hunter this day had his rifle and a large supply of cartridges. I noticed they grinned with satisfaction whenever they looked at the *Macedonia's* smoke, which was rising higher and higher as she approached from the west.

The five boats went over the side with a rush, spread out like the ribs of a fan, and set a northerly course, as on the preceding afternoon, for us to follow. I watched for some time, curiously, but there seemed nothing extraordinary about their behaviour. They lowered sails, shot seals, and hoisted sails again, and continued on their way as I had always seen them do. The *Macedonia* repeated her performance of yesterday, "hogging" the sea by dropping her line of boats in advance of ours and across our course. Fourteen boats require a considerable spread of ocean for comfortable hunting, and when she had completely lapped our line she continued steaming into the north-east, dropping more boats as she went.

"What's up?" I asked Wolf Larsen, unable longer to keep my curiosity in check.

"Never mind what's up," he answered gruffly. "You won't be a thousand years in finding out, and in the meantime just pray for plenty of wind."

"Oh, well, I don't mind telling you," he said the next moment. "I'm going to give that brother of mine a taste of his own medicine. In short, I'm going to play the hog myself, and not for one day, but for the rest of the season, — if we're in luck."

"And if we're not?" I queried.

"Not to be considered," he laughed. "We simply must be in luck, or it's all up with us."

He had the wheel at the time, and I went forward to my hospital in the forecastle, where lay the two crippled men, Nilson and Thomas Mugridge. Nilson was as cheerful as could be expected, for his broken leg was knitting nicely; but the Cockney was desperately melancholy, and I was aware of a great sympathy for the unfortunate creature. And the marvel of it was that still he lived and clung to life. The brutal years had reduced his meagre body to splintered wreckage, and yet the spark of life within burned brightly as ever.

"With an artificial foot — and they make excellent ones — you will be stumping ships' galleys to the end of time," I assured him jovially.

But his answer was serious, nay, solemn. "I don't know about wot you s'y, Mr. Van W'yden, but I do know I'll never rest 'appy till I see that 'ell-'ound bloody well dead. 'E cawn't live as long as me. 'E's got no right to live, an' as the Good Word puts it, ''E shall shorely die,' an' I s'y, 'Amen, an' damn soon at that.'"

When I returned on deck I found Wolf Larsen steering mainly with one hand, while with the other hand he held the marine glasses and studied the situation of the boats, paying particular attention to the position of the *Macedonia*. The only change noticeable in our boats was that they had hauled close on the wind and were heading several points west of north. Still, I could not see the expediency of the manœuvre, for the free sea was still intercepted by the *Macedonia's* five weather boats, which, in turn, had hauled close on the wind. Thus they slowly diverged toward the west, drawing farther away from the remainder of the boats in their line. Our boats were rowing as well as sailing. Even the hunters were pulling, and with three pairs of oars in the water they rapidly overhauled what I may appropriately term the enemy.

The smoke of the *Macedonia* had dwindled to a dim blot on the north-eastern horizon. Of the steamer herself nothing was to be seen. We had been loafing along, till now, our sails shaking half the time and spilling the wind; and twice, for short periods, we had been hove to. But there was no more loafing. Sheets were trimmed, and Wolf Larsen proceeded to put the *Ghost* through her paces. We ran past our line of boats and bore down upon the first weather boat of the other line.

"Down that flying jib, Mr. Van Weyden," Wolf Larsen commanded. "And stand by to back over the jibs."

I ran forward and had the downhaul of the flying jib all in and fast as we slipped by the boat a hundred feet to leeward. The three men in it gazed at us suspiciously. They had been hogging the sea, and they knew Wolf Larsen, by reputation at any rate. I noted that the hunter, a huge Scandinavian sitting in the bow, held his rifle, ready to hand, across his knees. It should have been in its proper place in the rack. When they came opposite our stern, Wolf Larsen greeted them with a wave of the hand, and cried:

"Come on board and have a 'gam'!"

"To gam," among the sealing-schooners, is a substitute for the verbs "to visit," "to gossip." It expresses the garrulity of the sea, and is a pleasant break in the monotony of the life.

The *Ghost* swung around into the wind, and I finished my work forward in time to run aft and lend a hand with the mainsheet.

"You will please stay on deck, Miss Brewster," Wolf Larsen said, as he started forward to meet his guest. "And you too, Mr. Van Weyden."

The boat had lowered its sail and run alongside. The hunter, golden bearded like a sea-king, came over the rail and dropped on deck. But his hugeness could not quite overcome his apprehensiveness. Doubt and distrust showed strongly in his face. It was a transparent face, for all of its hairy shield, and advertised instant relief when he glanced from Wolf Larsen to me, noted that there was only the pair of us, and then glanced over his own two men who had joined him. Surely he had little reason to be afraid. He towered like a Goliath above Wolf Larsen. He must have measured six feet eight or nine inches in stature, and I subsequently learned his weight — 240 pounds. And there was no fat about him. It was all bone and muscle.

A return of apprehension was apparent when, at the top of the companion-way, Wolf Larsen invited him below. But he reassured himself with a glance down at his host — a big man himself but dwarfed by the propinquity of the giant. So all hesitancy vanished, and the pair descended into the cabin. In the meantime, his two men, as was the wont of visiting sailors, had gone forward into the forecastle to do some visiting themselves.

Suddenly, from the cabin came a great, choking bellow, followed by all the sounds of a furious struggle. It was the leopard and the lion, and the lion made all the noise. Wolf Larsen was the leopard.

"You see the sacredness of our hospitality," I said bitterly to Maud Brewster.

She nodded her head that she heard, and I noted in her face the signs of the same sickness at sight or sound of violent struggle from which I had suffered so severely during my first weeks on the *Ghost*.

"Wouldn't it be better if you went forward, say by the steerage companion-way, until it is over?" I suggested.

She shook her head and gazed at me pitifully. She was not frightened, but appalled, rather, at the human animality of it.

"You will understand," I took advantage of the opportunity to say, "whatever part I take in what is going on and what is to come, that I am compelled to take it — if you and I are ever to get out of this scrape with our lives."

"It is not nice — for me," I added.

"I understand," she said, in a weak, far-away voice, and her eyes showed me that she did understand.

The sounds from below soon died away. Then Wolf Larsen came alone on deck. There was a slight flush under his bronze, but otherwise he bore no signs of the battle.

"Send those two men aft, Mr. Van Weyden," he said.

I obeyed, and a minute or two later they stood before him. "Hoist in your boat," he said to them. "Your hunter's decided to stay aboard awhile and doesn't want it pounding alongside."

"Hoist in your boat, I said," he repeated, this time in sharper tones as they hesitated to do his bidding.

"Who knows? you may have to sail with me for a time," he said, quite softly, with a silken threat that belied the softness, as they moved slowly to comply, "and we might as well start with a friendly understanding. Lively now! Death Larsen makes you jump better than that, and you know it!"

Their movements perceptibly quickened under his coaching, and as the boat swung inboard I was sent forward to let go the jibs. Wolf Larsen, at the wheel, directed the *Ghost* after the *Macedonia's* second weather boat.

Under way, and with nothing for the time being to do, I turned my attention to the situation of the boats. The *Macedonia's* third weather boat was being attacked by two of ours, the fourth by our remaining three; and the fifth, turn about, was taking a hand in the defence of its nearest mate. The fight had opened at long distance, and the rifles were cracking steadily. A quick, snappy sea was being kicked up by the wind, a condition which prevented fine shooting; and now and again, as we drew closer, we could see the bullets zip-zipping from wave to wave.

The boat we were pursuing had squared away and was running before the wind to escape us, and, in the course of its flight, to take part in repulsing our general boat attack.

Attending to sheets and tacks now left me little time to see what was taking place, but I happened to be on the poop when Wolf Larsen ordered the two strange sailors forward and into the forecastle. They went sullenly, but they went. He next ordered Miss Brewster below, and smiled at the instant horror that leapt into her eyes.

"You'll find nothing gruesome down there," he said, "only an unhurt man securely made fast to the ring-bolts. Bullets are liable to come aboard, and I don't want you killed, you know."

Even as he spoke, a bullet was deflected by a brass-capped spoke of the wheel between his hands and screeched off through the air to windward.

"You see," he said to her; and then to me, "Mr. Van Weyden, will you take the wheel?"

Maud Brewster had stepped inside the companion-way so that only her head was exposed. Wolf Larsen had procured a rifle and was throwing a cartridge into the barrel. I begged her with my eyes to go below, but she smiled and said:

"We may be feeble land-creatures without legs, but we can show Captain Larsen that we are at least as brave as he."

He gave her a quick look of admiration.

"I like you a hundred per cent. better for that," he said. "Books, and brains, and bravery. You are well-rounded, a blue-stocking fit to be the wife of a pirate chief. Ahem, we'll discuss that later," he smiled, as a bullet struck solidly into the cabin wall.

I saw his eyes flash golden as he spoke, and I saw the terror mount in her own.

"We are braver," I hastened to say. "At least, speaking for myself, I know I am braver than Captain Larsen."

It was I who was now favoured by a quick look. He was wondering if I were making fun of him. I put three or four spokes over to counteract a sheer toward the wind on the part of the *Ghost*, and then steadied her. Wolf Larsen was still waiting an explanation, and I pointed down to my knees.

"You will observe there," I said, "a slight trembling. It is because I am afraid, the flesh is afraid; and I am afraid in my mind because I do not wish to die. But my spirit masters the trembling flesh and the qualms of the mind. I am more than brave. I am courageous. Your flesh is not afraid. You are not afraid. On the one hand, it costs you nothing to encounter danger; on the other hand, it even gives you delight. You enjoy it. You may be unafraid, Mr. Larsen, but you must grant that the bravery is mine."

"You're right," he acknowledged at once. "I never thought of it in that way before. But is the opposite true? If you are braver than I, am I more cowardly than you?"

We both laughed at the absurdity, and he dropped down to the deck and rested his rifle across the rail. The bullets we had received had travelled nearly a mile, but by now we had cut that distance in half. He fired three careful shots. The first struck fifty feet to windward of the boat, the second alongside; and at the third the boat-steerer let loose his steering-oar and crumpled up in the bottom of the boat.

"I guess that'll fix them," Wolf Larsen said, rising to his feet. "I couldn't afford to let the hunter have it, and there is a chance the boat-puller doesn't know how to steer. In which case, the hunter cannot steer and shoot at the same time."

His reasoning was justified, for the boat rushed at once into the wind and the hunter sprang aft to take the boat-steerer's place. There was no more shooting, though the rifles were still cracking merrily from the other boats.

The hunter had managed to get the boat before the wind again, but we ran down upon it, going at least two feet to its one. A hundred yards away, I saw the boat-puller pass a rifle to the hunter. Wolf Larsen went amidships and took the coil of the throat-halyards from its pin. Then he peered over the rail with levelled rifle. Twice I saw the hunter let go the steering-oar with one hand, reach for his rifle, and hesitate. We were now alongside and foaming past.

"Here, you!" Wolf Larsen cried suddenly to the boat-puller. "Take a turn!"

At the same time he flung the coil of rope. It struck fairly, nearly knocking the man over, but he did not obey. Instead, he looked to his hunter for orders. The hunter, in turn, was in a quandary. His rifle was between his knees, but if he let go the steering-oar in order to shoot, the boat would sweep around and collide with the schooner. Also he saw Wolf Larsen's rifle bearing upon him and knew he would be shot ere he could get his rifle into play.

"Take a turn," he said quietly to the man.

The boat-puller obeyed, taking a turn around the little forward thwart and paying the line as it jerked taut. The boat sheered out with a rush, and the hunter steadied it to a parallel course some twenty feet from the side of the *Ghost*.

"Now, get that sail down and come alongside!" Wolf Larsen ordered.

He never let go his rifle, even passing down the tackles with one hand. When they were fast, bow and stern, and the two uninjured men prepared to come aboard, the hunter picked up his rifle as if to place it in a secure position.

"Drop it!" Wolf Larsen cried, and the hunter dropped it as though it were hot and had burned him.

Once aboard, the two prisoners hoisted in the boat and under Wolf Larsen's direction carried the wounded boat-steerer down into the forecastle.

"If our five boats do as well as you and I have done, we'll have a pretty full crew," Wolf Larsen said to me.

"The man you shot — he is — I hope?" Maud Brewster quavered.

"In the shoulder," he answered. "Nothing serious, Mr. Van Weyden will pull him around as good as ever in three or four weeks."

"But he won't pull those chaps around, from the look of it," he added, pointing at the *Macedonia's* third boat, for which I had been steering and which was now nearly abreast of us. "That's Horner's and Smoke's work. I told them we wanted live men, not carcasses. But the joy of shooting to hit is a most compelling thing, when once you've learned how to shoot. Ever experienced it, Mr. Van Weyden?"

I shook my head and regarded their work. It had indeed been bloody, for they had drawn off and joined our other three boats in the attack on the remaining two of the enemy. The deserted boat was in the trough of the sea, rolling drunkenly across each comber, its loose spritsail out at right angles to it and fluttering and flapping in the wind. The hunter and boat-puller were both lying awkwardly in the bottom, but the boat-steerer lay across the gunwale, half in and half out, his arms trailing in the water and his head rolling from side to side.

"Don't look, Miss Brewster, please don't look," I had begged of her, and I was glad that she had minded me and been spared the sight.

"Head right into the bunch, Mr. Van Weyden," was Wolf Larsen's command.

As we drew nearer, the firing ceased, and we saw that the fight was over. The remaining two boats had been captured by our five, and the seven were grouped together, waiting to be picked up.

"Look at that!" I cried involuntarily, pointing to the north-east.

The blot of smoke which indicated the *Macedonia's* position had reappeared.

"Yes, I've been watching it," was Wolf Larsen's calm reply. He measured the distance away to the fog-bank, and for an instant paused to feel the weight of the wind on his cheek. "We'll make it, I think; but you can depend upon it that blessed brother of mine has twigged our little game and is just a-humping for us. Ah, look at that!"

The blot of smoke had suddenly grown larger, and it was very black.

"I'll beat you out, though, brother mine," he chuckled. "I'll beat you out, and I hope you no worse than that you rack your old engines into scrap."

When we hove to, a hasty though orderly confusion reigned. The boats came aboard from every side at once. As fast as the prisoners came over the rail they were marshalled forward to the forecastle by our hunters, while our sailors hoisted in the boats, pell-mell, dropping them anywhere upon the deck and not stopping to lash them. We were already under way, all sails set and drawing, and the sheets being slacked off for a wind abeam, as the last boat lifted clear of the water and swung in the tackles.

There was need for haste. The *Macedonia*, belching the blackest of smoke from her funnel, was charging down upon us from out of the north-east. Neglecting the boats that remained to her, she had altered her course so as to anticipate ours. She was not running straight for us, but ahead of us. Our courses were converging like the sides of an angle, the vertex of which was at the edge of the fog-bank. It was there, or not at all, that the *Macedonia* could hope to catch us. The hope for the *Ghost* lay in that she should pass that point before the *Macedonia* arrived at it.

Wolf Larsen was steering, his eyes glistening and snapping as they dwelt upon and leaped from detail to detail of the chase. Now he studied the sea to windward for signs of the wind slackening or freshening, now the *Macedonia*; and again, his eyes roved over every sail, and he gave commands to slack a sheet here a trifle, to come in on one there a trifle, till he was drawing out of the *Ghost* the last bit of speed she possessed. All feuds and grudges were forgotten, and I was surprised at the alacrity with which the men who had so long endured his brutality sprang to execute his orders. Strange to say, the unfortunate Johnson came into my mind as we lifted and surged and heeled along, and I was aware of a regret that he was not alive and present; he had so loved the *Ghost* and delighted in her sailing powers.

"Better get your rifles, you fellows," Wolf Larsen called to our hunters; and the five men lined the lee rail, guns in hand, and waited.

The *Macedonia* was now but a mile away, the black smoke pouring from her funnel at a right angle, so madly she raced, pounding through the sea at a seventeen-knot gait — "'Sky-hooting through the brine," as Wolf Larsen quoted while gazing at her. We were not making more than nine knots, but the fog-bank was very near.

A puff of smoke broke from the *Macedonia's* deck, we heard a heavy report, and a round hole took form in the stretched canvas of our mainsail. They were shooting at us with one of the small cannon which rumour had said they carried on board. Our men, clustering amidships, waved their hats and raised a derisive cheer. Again there was a puff of smoke and a loud report, this time the cannon-ball striking not more than twenty feet astern and glancing twice from sea to sea to windward ere it sank.

But there was no rifle-firing for the reason that all their hunters were out in the boats or our prisoners. When the two vessels were half-a-mile apart, a third shot made another hole in our mainsail. Then we entered the fog. It was about us, veiling and hiding us in its dense wet gauze.

The sudden transition was startling. The moment before we had been leaping through the sunshine, the clear sky above us, the sea breaking and rolling wide to the horizon, and a ship, vomiting smoke and fire and iron missiles, rushing madly upon us. And at once, as in an instant's leap, the sun was blotted out, there was no sky, even our mastheads were lost to view, and our horizon was such as tear-blinded eyes may see. The grey mist drove by us like a rain. Every woollen filament of our garments, every hair of our heads and faces, was jewelled with a crystal globule. The shrouds were wet with moisture; it dripped from our rigging overhead; and on the underside of our booms drops of water took shape in long swaying lines, which were detached and flung to the deck in mimic showers at each surge of the schooner. I was aware of a pent, stifled feeling. As the sounds of the ship thrusting herself through the waves were hurled back upon us by the fog, so were one's thoughts. The mind recoiled from contemplation of a world beyond this wet veil which wrapped us around. This was the world, the universe itself, its bounds so near one felt impelled to reach out both arms and push them back. It was impossible, that the rest could be beyond these walls of grey. The rest was a dream, no more than the memory of a dream.

It was weird, strangely weird. I looked at Maud Brewster and knew that she was similarly affected. Then I looked at Wolf Larsen, but there was nothing subjective about his state of consciousness. His whole concern was with the immediate, objective present. He still held the wheel, and I felt that he was timing Time, reckoning the passage of the minutes with each forward lunge and leeward roll of the *Ghost*.

"Go for'ard and hard alee without any noise," he said to me in a low voice. "Clew up the topsails first. Set men at all the sheets. Let there be no rattling of blocks, no sound of voices. No noise, understand, no noise."

When all was ready, the word "hard-a-lee" was passed forward to me from man to man; and the *Ghost* heeled about on the port tack with practically no noise at all. And what little there was, — the slapping of a few reef-points and the creaking of a sheave in a block or two, — was ghostly under the hollow echoing pall in which we were swathed.

We had scarcely filled away, it seemed, when the fog thinned abruptly and we were again in the sunshine, the wide-stretching sea breaking before us to the sky-line. But the ocean was bare. No wrathful *Macedonia* broke its surface nor blackened the sky with her smoke.

Wolf Larsen at once squared away and ran down along the rim of the fog-bank. His trick was obvious. He had entered the fog to windward of the steamer, and while the steamer had blindly driven on into the fog in the chance of catching him, he had come about and out of his shelter and was now running down to re-enter to leeward. Successful in this, the old simile of the needle in the haystack would be mild indeed compared with his brother's chance of finding him. He did not run long. Jibing the fore-and main-sails and setting the topsails again, we headed back into the bank. As we entered I could have sworn I saw a vague bulk emerging to windward. I looked quickly at Wolf Larsen. Already we were ourselves buried in the fog, but he nodded his head. He, too, had seen it — the *Macedonia*, guessing his manœuvre and failing by a moment in anticipating it. There was no doubt that we had escaped unseen.

"He can't keep this up," Wolf Larsen said. "He'll have to go back for the rest of his boats. Send a man to the wheel, Mr. Van Weyden, keep this course for the present, and you might as well set the watches, for we won't do any lingering to-night."

"I'd give five hundred dollars, though," he added, "just to be aboard the *Macedonia* for five minutes, listening to my brother curse."

"And now, Mr. Van Weyden," he said to me when he had been relieved from the wheel, "we must make these new-comers welcome. Serve out plenty of whisky to the hunters and see that a few bottles slip for'ard. I'll wager every man Jack of them is over the side to-morrow, hunting for Wolf Larsen as contentedly as ever they hunted for Death Larsen."

"But won't they escape as Wainwright did?" I asked.

He laughed shrewdly. “Not as long as our old hunters have anything to say about it. I’m dividing amongst them a dollar a skin for all the skins shot by our new hunters. At least half of their enthusiasm to-day was due to that. Oh, no, there won’t be any escaping if they have anything to say about it. And now you’d better get for’ard to your hospital duties. There must be a full ward waiting for you.”

CHAPTER XXVI

Wolf Larsen took the distribution of the whisky off my hands, and the bottles began to make their appearance while I worked over the fresh batch of wounded men in the forecastle. I had seen whisky drunk, such as whisky-and-soda by the men of the clubs, but never as these men drank it, from pannikins and mugs, and from the bottles — great brimming drinks, each one of which was in itself a debauch. But they did not stop at one or two. They drank and drank, and ever the bottles slipped forward and they drank more.

Everybody drank; the wounded drank; Oofty-Oofty, who helped me, drank. Only Louis refrained, no more than cautiously wetting his lips with the liquor, though he joined in the revels with an abandon equal to that of most of them. It was a saturnalia. In loud voices they shouted over the day's fighting, wrangled about details, or waxed affectionate and made friends with the men whom they had fought. Prisoners and captors hiccoughed on one another's shoulders, and swore mighty oaths of respect and esteem. They wept over the miseries of the past and over the miseries yet to come under the iron rule of Wolf Larsen. And all cursed him and told terrible tales of his brutality.

It was a strange and frightful spectacle — the small, bunk-lined space, the floor and walls leaping and lurching, the dim light, the swaying shadows lengthening and fore-shortening monstrously, the thick air heavy with smoke and the smell of bodies and iodoform, and the inflamed faces of the men — half-men, I should call them. I noted Oofty-Oofty, holding the end of a bandage and looking upon the scene, his velvety and luminous eyes glistening in the light like a deer's eyes, and yet I knew the barbaric devil that lurked in his breast and belied all the softness and tenderness, almost womanly, of his face and form. And I noticed the boyish face of Harrison, — a good face once, but now a demon's, — convulsed with passion as he told the new-comers of the hell-ship they were in and shrieked curses upon the head of Wolf Larsen.

Wolf Larsen it was, always Wolf Larsen, enslaver and tormentor of men, a male Circe and these his swine, suffering brutes that grovelled before him and revolted only in drunkenness and in secrecy. And was I, too, one of his swine? I thought. And Maud Brewster? No! I ground my teeth in my anger and determination till the man I was attending winced under my hand and Oofty-Oofty looked at me with curiosity. I felt endowed with a sudden strength. What of my new-found love, I was a giant. I feared nothing. I would work my will through it all, in spite of Wolf Larsen and of my own thirty-five bookish years. All would be well. I would make it well. And so, exalted, upborne by a sense of power, I turned my back on the howling inferno and climbed to the deck, where the fog drifted ghostly through the night and the air was sweet and pure and quiet.

The steerage, where were two wounded hunters, was a repetition of the forecastle, except that Wolf Larsen was not being cursed; and it was with a great relief that I again emerged on deck and went aft to the cabin. Supper was ready, and Wolf Larsen and Maud were waiting for me.

While all his ship was getting drunk as fast as it could, he remained sober. Not a drop of liquor passed his lips. He did not dare it under the circumstances, for he had only Louis and me to depend upon, and Louis was even now at the wheel. We were sailing on through the fog without a look-out and without lights. That Wolf Larsen had turned the liquor loose among his men surprised me, but he evidently knew their psychology and the best method of cementing in cordiality, what had begun in bloodshed.

His victory over Death Larsen seemed to have had a remarkable effect upon him. The previous evening he had reasoned himself into the blues, and I had been waiting momentarily for one of his characteristic outbursts. Yet nothing had occurred, and he was now in splendid trim. Possibly his success in capturing so many hunters and boats had counteracted the customary reaction. At any rate, the blues were gone, and the blue devils had not put in an appearance. So I thought at the time; but, ah me, little I knew him or knew that even then, perhaps, he was meditating an outbreak more terrible than any I had seen.

As I say, he discovered himself in splendid trim when I entered the cabin. He had had no headaches for weeks, his eyes were clear blue as the sky, his bronze was beautiful with perfect health; life swelled through his veins in full and magnificent flood. While waiting for me he had engaged Maud in animated discussion. Temptation was the topic they had hit upon, and from the few words I heard I made out that he was contending that temptation was temptation only when a man was seduced by it and fell.

“For look you,” he was saying, “as I see it, a man does things because of desire. He has many desires. He may desire to escape pain, or to enjoy pleasure. But whatever he does, he does because he desires to do it."

"But suppose he desires to do two opposite things, neither of which will permit him to do the other?" Maud interrupted.

"The very thing I was coming to," he said.

"And between these two desires is just where the soul of the man is manifest," she went on. "If it is a good soul, it will desire and do the good action, and the contrary if it is a bad soul. It is the soul that decides."

"Bosh and nonsense!" he exclaimed impatiently. "It is the desire that decides. Here is a man who wants to, say, get drunk. Also, he doesn't want to get drunk. What does he do? How does he do it? He is a puppet. He is the creature of his desires, and of the two desires he obeys the strongest one, that is all. His soul hasn't anything to do with it. How can he be tempted to get drunk and refuse to get drunk? If the desire to remain sober prevails, it is because it is the strongest desire. Temptation plays no part, unless — " he paused while grasping the new thought which had come into his mind — "unless he is tempted to remain sober.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed. "What do you think of that, Mr. Van Weyden?"

"That both of you are hair-splitting," I said. "The man's soul is his desires. Or, if you will, the sum of his desires is his soul. Therein you are both wrong. You lay the stress upon the desire apart from the soul, Miss Brewster lays the stress on the soul apart from the desire, and in point of fact soul and desire are the same thing.

"However," I continued, "Miss Brewster is right in contending that temptation is temptation whether the man yield or overcome. Fire is fanned by the wind until it leaps up fiercely. So is desire like fire. It is fanned, as by a wind, by sight of the thing desired, or by a new and luring description or comprehension of the thing desired. There lies the temptation. It is the wind that fans the desire until it leaps up to mastery. That's temptation. It may not fan sufficiently to make the desire overmastering, but in so far as it fans at all, that far is it temptation. And, as you say, it may tempt for good as well as for evil."

I felt proud of myself as we sat down to the table. My words had been decisive. At least they had put an end to the discussion.

But Wolf Larsen seemed voluble, prone to speech as I had never seen him before. It was as though he were bursting with pent energy which must find an outlet somehow. Almost immediately he launched into a discussion on love. As usual, his was the sheer materialistic side, and Maud's was the idealistic. For myself, beyond a word or so of suggestion or correction now and again, I took no part.

He was brilliant, but so was Maud, and for some time I lost the thread of the conversation through studying her face as she talked. It was a face that rarely displayed colour, but to-night it was flushed and vivacious. Her wit was playing keenly, and she was enjoying the tilt as much as Wolf Larsen, and he was enjoying it hugely. For some reason, though I know not why in the argument, so utterly had I lost it in the contemplation of one stray brown lock of Maud's hair, he quoted from Iseult at Tintagel, where she says:

"Blessed am I beyond women even herein,
That beyond all born women is my sin,
And perfect my transgression."

As he had read pessimism into Omar, so now he read triumph, stinging triumph and exultation, into Swinburne's lines. And he read rightly, and he read well. He had hardly ceased reading when Louis put his head into the companion-way and whispered down:

"Be easy, will ye? The fog's lifted, an' 'tis the port light iv a steamer that's crossin' our bow this blessed minute."

Wolf Larsen sprang on deck, and so swiftly that by the time we followed him he had pulled the steerage-slide over the drunken clamour and was on his way forward to close the forecastle-scuttle. The fog, though it remained, had lifted high, where it obscured the stars and made the night quite black. Directly ahead of us I could see a bright red light and a white light, and I could hear the pulsing of a steamer's engines. Beyond a doubt it was the *Macedonia*.

Wolf Larsen had returned to the poop, and we stood in a silent group, watching the lights rapidly cross our bow.

"Lucky for me he doesn't carry a searchlight," Wolf Larsen said.

"What if I should cry out loudly?" I queried in a whisper.

"It would be all up," he answered. "But have you thought upon what would immediately happen?"

Before I had time to express any desire to know, he had me by the throat with his gorilla grip, and by a faint quiver of the muscles — a hint, as it were — he suggested to me the twist that would surely have broken my neck. The next moment he had released me and we were gazing at the *Macedonia's* lights.

"What if I should cry out?" Maud asked.

"I like you too well to hurt you," he said softly — nay, there was a tenderness and a caress in his voice that made me wince.

"But don't do it, just the same, for I'd promptly break Mr. Van Weyden's neck."

"Then she has my permission to cry out," I said defiantly.

"I hardly think you'll care to sacrifice the Dean of American Letters the Second," he sneered.

We spoke no more, though we had become too used to one another for the silence to be awkward; and when the red light and the white had disappeared we returned to the cabin to finish the interrupted supper.

Again they fell to quoting, and Maud gave Dowson's "Impenitentia Ultima." She rendered it beautifully, but I watched not her, but Wolf Larsen. I was fascinated by the fascinated look he bent upon Maud. He was quite out of himself, and I noticed the unconscious movement of his lips as he shaped word for word as fast as she uttered them. He interrupted her when she gave the lines:

"And her eyes should be my light while the sun went out behind me,
And the viols in her voice be the last sound in my ear."

"There are viols in your voice," he said bluntly, and his eyes flashed their golden light.

I could have shouted with joy at her control. She finished the concluding stanza without faltering and then slowly guided the conversation into less perilous channels. And all the while I sat in a half-daze, the drunken riot of the steerage breaking through the bulkhead, the man I feared and the woman I loved talking on and on. The table was not cleared. The man who had taken Mugridge's place had evidently joined his comrades in the forecastle.

If ever Wolf Larsen attained the summit of living, he attained it then. From time to time I forsook my own thoughts to follow him, and I followed in amaze, mastered for the moment by his remarkable intellect, under the spell of his passion, for he was preaching the passion of revolt. It was inevitable that Milton's Lucifer should be instanced, and the keenness with which Wolf Larsen analysed and depicted the character was a revelation of his stifled genius. It reminded me of Taine, yet I knew the man had never heard of that brilliant though dangerous thinker.

"He led a lost cause, and he was not afraid of God's thunderbolts," Wolf Larsen was saying. "Hurled into hell, he was unbeaten. A third of God's angels he had led with him, and straightway he incited man to rebel against God, and gained for himself and hell the major portion of all the generations of man. Why was he beaten out of heaven? Because he was less brave than God? less proud? less aspiring? No! A thousand times no! God was more powerful, as he said, Whom thunder hath made greater. But Lucifer was a free spirit. To serve was to suffocate. He preferred suffering in freedom to all the happiness of a comfortable servility. He did not care to serve God. He cared to serve nothing. He was no figure-head. He stood on his own legs. He was an individual."

"The first Anarchist," Maud laughed, rising and preparing to withdraw to her state-room.

"Then it is good to be an anarchist!" he cried. He, too, had risen, and he stood facing her, where she had paused at the door of her room, as he went on:

"'Here at least
We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
Here for his envy; will not drive us hence;
Here we may reign secure; and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition, though in hell:
Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven."

It was the defiant cry of a mighty spirit. The cabin still rang with his voice, as he stood there, swaying, his bronzed face shining, his head up and dominant, and his eyes, golden and masculine, intensely masculine and insistently soft, flashing upon Maud at the door.

Again that unnamable and unmistakable terror was in her eyes, and she said, almost in a whisper, "You are Lucifer."

The door closed and she was gone. He stood staring after her for a minute, then returned to himself and to me.

"I'll relieve Louis at the wheel," he said shortly, "and call upon you to relieve at midnight. Better turn in now and get some sleep."

He pulled on a pair of mittens, put on his cap, and ascended the companion-stairs, while I followed his suggestion by going to bed. For some unknown reason, prompted mysteriously, I did not undress, but lay down fully clothed. For a time I listened to the clamour in the steerage and marvelled upon the love which had come to me; but my sleep on the *Ghost* had become most healthful and natural, and soon the songs and cries died away, my eyes closed, and my consciousness sank down into the half-death of slumber.

I knew not what had aroused me, but I found myself out of my bunk, on my feet, wide awake, my soul vibrating to the warning of danger as it might have thrilled to a trumpet call. I threw open the door. The cabin light was burning low. I saw Maud, my Maud, straining and struggling and crushed in the embrace of Wolf Larsen's arms. I could see the vain beat and flutter of her as she strove, pressing her face against his breast, to escape from him. All this I saw on the very instant of seeing and as I sprang forward.

I struck him with my fist, on the face, as he raised his head, but it was a puny blow. He roared in a ferocious, animal-like way, and gave me a shove with his hand. It was only a shove, a flirt of the wrist, yet so tremendous was his strength that I was hurled backward as from a catapult. I struck the door of the state-room which had formerly been Mugridge's, splintering and smashing the panels with the impact of my body. I struggled to my feet, with difficulty dragging myself clear of the wrecked door, unaware of any hurt whatever. I was conscious only of an overmastering rage. I think I, too, cried aloud, as I drew the knife at my hip and sprang forward a second time.

But something had happened. They were reeling apart. I was close upon him, my knife uplifted, but I withheld the blow. I was puzzled by the strangeness of it. Maud was leaning against the wall, one hand out for support; but he was staggering, his left hand pressed against his forehead and covering his eyes, and with the right he was groping about him in a dazed sort of way. It struck against the wall, and his body seemed to express a muscular and physical relief at the contact, as though he had found his bearings, his location in space as well as something against which to lean.

Then I saw red again. All my wrongs and humiliations flashed upon me with a dazzling brightness, all that I had suffered and others had suffered at his hands, all the enormity of the man's very existence. I sprang upon him, blindly, insanely, and drove the knife into his shoulder. I knew, then, that it was no more than a flesh wound, — I had felt the steel grate on his shoulder-blade, — and I raised the knife to strike at a more vital part.

But Maud had seen my first blow, and she cried, "Don't! Please don't!"

I dropped my arm for a moment, and a moment only. Again the knife was raised, and Wolf Larsen would have surely died had she not stepped between. Her arms were around me, her hair was brushing my face. My pulse rushed up in an unwonted manner, yet my rage mounted with it. She looked me bravely in the eyes.

"For my sake," she begged.

"I would kill him for your sake!" I cried, trying to free my arm without hurting her.

"Hush!" she said, and laid her fingers lightly on my lips. I could have kissed them, had I dared, even then, in my rage, the touch of them was so sweet, so very sweet. "Please, please," she pleaded, and she disarmed me by the words, as I was to discover they would ever disarm me.

I stepped back, separating from her, and replaced the knife in its sheath. I looked at Wolf Larsen. He still pressed his left hand against his forehead. It covered his eyes. His head was bowed. He seemed to have grown limp. His body was sagging at the hips, his great shoulders were drooping and shrinking forward.

"Van, Weyden!" he called hoarsely, and with a note of fright in his voice. "Oh, Van Weyden! where are you?"

I looked at Maud. She did not speak, but nodded her head.

"Here I am," I answered, stepping to his side. "What is the matter?"

"Help me to a seat," he said, in the same hoarse, frightened voice.

"I am a sick man; a very sick man, Hump," he said, as he left my sustaining grip and sank into a chair.

His head dropped forward on the table and was buried in his hands. From time to time it rocked back and forward as with pain. Once, when he half raised it, I saw the sweat standing in heavy drops on his forehead about the roots of his hair.

"I am a sick man, a very sick man," he repeated again, and yet once again.

"What is the matter?" I asked, resting my hand on his shoulder. "What can I do for you?"

But he shook my hand off with an irritated movement, and for a long time I stood by his side in silence. Maud was looking on, her face awed and frightened. What had happened to him we could not imagine.

"Hump," he said at last, "I must get into my bunk. Lend me a hand. I'll be all right in a little while. It's those damn headaches, I believe. I was afraid of them. I had a feeling — no, I don't know what I'm talking about. Help me into my bunk."

But when I got him into his bunk he again buried his face in his hands, covering his eyes, and as I turned to go I could hear him murmuring, "I am a sick man, a very sick man."

Maud looked at me inquiringly as I emerged. I shook my head, saying:

"Something has happened to him. What, I don't know. He is helpless, and frightened, I imagine, for the first time in his life. It must have occurred before he received the knife-thrust, which made only a superficial wound. You must have seen what happened."

She shook her head. "I saw nothing. It is just as mysterious to me. He suddenly released me and staggered away. But what shall we do? What shall I do?"

"If you will wait, please, until I come back," I answered.

I went on deck. Louis was at the wheel.

"You may go for'ard and turn in," I said, taking it from him.

He was quick to obey, and I found myself alone on the deck of the *Ghost*. As quietly as was possible, I clewed up the topsails, lowered the flying jib and staysail, backed the jib over, and flattened the mainsail. Then I went below to Maud. I placed my finger on my lips for silence, and entered Wolf Larsen's room. He was in the same position in which I had left him, and his head was rocking — almost writhing — from side to side.

"Anything I can do for you?" I asked.

He made no reply at first, but on my repeating the question he answered, "No, no; I'm all right. Leave me alone till morning."

But as I turned to go I noted that his head had resumed its rocking motion. Maud was waiting patiently for me, and I took notice, with a thrill of joy, of the queenly poise of her head and her glorious, calm eyes. Calm and sure they were as her spirit itself.

"Will you trust yourself to me for a journey of six hundred miles or so?" I asked.

"You mean — ?" she asked, and I knew she had guessed aright.

"Yes, I mean just that," I replied. "There is nothing left for us but the open boat."

"For me, you mean," she said. "You are certainly as safe here as you have been."

"No, there is nothing left for us but the open boat," I iterated stoutly. "Will you please dress as warmly as you can, at once, and make into a bundle whatever you wish to bring with you."

"And make all haste," I added, as she turned toward her state-room.

The lazarette was directly beneath the cabin, and, opening the trap-door in the floor and carrying a candle with me, I dropped down and began overhauling the ship's stores. I selected mainly from the canned goods, and by the time I was ready, willing hands were extended from above to receive what I passed up.

We worked in silence. I helped myself also to blankets, mittens, oilskins, caps, and such things, from the slop-chest. It was no light adventure, this trusting ourselves in a small boat to so raw and stormy a sea, and it was imperative that we should guard ourselves against the cold and wet.

We worked feverishly at carrying our plunder on deck and depositing it amidships, so feverishly that Maud, whose strength was hardly a positive quantity, had to give over, exhausted, and sit on the steps at the break of the poop. This did not serve to recover her, and she lay on her back, on the hard deck, arms stretched out, and whole body relaxed. It was a trick I remembered of my sister, and I knew she would soon be herself again. I knew, also, that weapons would not come in amiss, and I re-entered Wolf Larsen's state-room to get his rifle and shot-gun. I spoke to him, but he made no answer, though his head was still rocking from side to side and he was not asleep.

"Good-bye, Lucifer," I whispered to myself as I softly closed the door.

Next to obtain was a stock of ammunition, — an easy matter, though I had to enter the steerage companion-way to do it. Here the hunters stored the ammunition-boxes they carried in the boats, and here, but a few feet from their noisy revels, I took possession of two boxes.

Next, to lower a boat. Not so simple a task for one man. Having cast off the lashings, I hoisted first on the forward tackle, then on the aft, till the boat cleared the rail, when I lowered away, one tackle and then the other, for a couple of feet, till it hung snugly, above the water, against the schooner's side. I made certain that it contained the proper equipment of oars, rowlocks, and sail. Water was a consideration, and I robbed every boat aboard of its breaker. As there were nine boats all told, it meant that we should have plenty of water, and ballast as well, though there was the chance that the boat would be overloaded, what of the generous supply of other things I was taking.

While Maud was passing me the provisions and I was storing them in the boat, a sailor came on deck from the forecastle. He stood by the weather rail for a time (we were lowering over the lee rail), and then sauntered slowly amidships, where he again paused and stood facing the wind, with his back toward us. I could hear my heart beating as I crouched low in the boat. Maud had sunk down upon the deck and was, I knew, lying motionless, her body in the shadow of the bulwark. But the man never turned, and, after stretching his arms above his head and yawning audibly, he retraced his steps to the forecastle scuttle and disappeared.

A few minutes sufficed to finish the loading, and I lowered the boat into the water. As I helped Maud over the rail and felt her form close to mine, it was all I could do to keep from crying out, "I love you! I love you!" Truly Humphrey Van Weyden was at last in love, I thought, as her fingers clung to mine while I lowered her down to the boat. I held on to the rail with one hand and supported her weight with the other, and I was proud at the moment of the feat. It was a strength I had not possessed a few months before, on the day I said good-bye to Charley Furuseth and started for San Francisco on the ill-fated *Martinez*.

As the boat ascended on a sea, her feet touched and I released her hands. I cast off the tackles and leaped after her. I had never rowed in my life, but I put out the oars and at the expense of much effort got the boat clear of the *Ghost*. Then I experimented with the sail. I had seen the boat-steerers and hunters set their spritsails many times, yet this was my first attempt. What took them possibly two minutes took me twenty, but in the end I succeeded in setting and trimming it, and with the steering-oar in my hands hauled on the wind.

"There lies Japan," I remarked, "straight before us."

"Humphrey Van Weyden," she said, "you are a brave man."

"Nay," I answered, "it is you who are a brave woman."

We turned our heads, swayed by a common impulse to see the last of the *Ghost*. Her low hull lifted and rolled to windward on a sea; her canvas loomed darkly in the night; her lashed wheel creaked as the rudder kicked; then sight and sound of her faded away, and we were alone on the dark sea.

CHAPTER XXVII

Day broke, grey and chill. The boat was close-hauled on a fresh breeze and the compass indicated that we were just making the course which would bring us to Japan. Though stoutly mittened, my fingers were cold, and they pained from the grip on the steering-oar. My feet were stinging from the bite of the frost, and I hoped fervently that the sun would shine.

Before me, in the bottom of the boat, lay Maud. She, at least, was warm, for under her and over her were thick blankets. The top one I had drawn over her face to shelter it from the night, so I could see nothing but the vague shape of her, and her light-brown hair, escaped from the covering and jewelled with moisture from the air.

Long I looked at her, dwelling upon that one visible bit of her as only a man would who deemed it the most precious thing in the world. So insistent was my gaze that at last she stirred under the blankets, the top fold was thrown back and she smiled out on me, her eyes yet heavy with sleep.

"Good-morning, Mr. Van Weyden," she said. "Have you sighted land yet?"

"No," I answered, "but we are approaching it at a rate of six miles an hour."

She made a *mouè* of disappointment.

"But that is equivalent to one hundred and forty-four miles in twenty-four hours," I added reassuringly.

Her face brightened. "And how far have we to go?"

"Siberia lies off there," I said, pointing to the west. "But to the south-west, some six hundred miles, is Japan. If this wind should hold, we'll make it in five days."

"And if it storms? The boat could not live?"

She had a way of looking one in the eyes and demanding the truth, and thus she looked at me as she asked the question.

"It would have to storm very hard," I temporized.

"And if it storms very hard?"

I nodded my head. "But we may be picked up any moment by a sealing-schooner. They are plentifully distributed over this part of the ocean."

"Why, you are chilled through!" she cried. "Look! You are shivering. Don't deny it; you are. And here I have been lying warm as toast."

"I don't see that it would help matters if you, too, sat up and were chilled," I laughed.

"It will, though, when I learn to steer, which I certainly shall."

She sat up and began making her simple toilet. She shook down her hair, and it fell about her in a brown cloud, hiding her face and shoulders. Dear, damp brown hair! I wanted to kiss it, to ripple it through my fingers, to bury my face in it. I gazed entranced, till the boat ran into the wind and the flapping sail warned me I was not attending to my duties. Idealist and romanticist that I was and always had been in spite of my analytical nature, yet I had failed till now in grasping much of the physical characteristics of love. The love of man and woman, I had always held, was a sublimated something related to spirit, a spiritual bond that linked and drew their souls together. The bonds of the flesh had little part in my cosmos of love. But I was learning the sweet lesson for myself that the soul transmuted itself, expressed itself, through the flesh; that the sight and sense and touch of the loved one's hair was as much breath and voice and essence of the spirit as the light that shone from the eyes and the thoughts that fell from the lips. After all, pure spirit was unknowable, a thing to be sensed and divined only; nor could it express itself in terms of itself. Jehovah was anthropomorphic because he could address himself to the Jews only in terms of their understanding; so he was conceived as in their own image, as a cloud, a pillar of fire, a tangible, physical something which the mind of the Israelites could grasp.

And so I gazed upon Maud's light-brown hair, and loved it, and learned more of love than all the poets and singers had taught me with all their songs and sonnets. She flung it back with a sudden adroit movement, and her face emerged, smiling.

"Why don't women wear their hair down always?" I asked. "It is so much more beautiful."

"If it didn't tangle so dreadfully," she laughed. "There! I've lost one of my precious hair-pins!"

I neglected the boat and had the sail spilling the wind again and again, such was my delight in following her every movement as she searched through the blankets for the pin. I was surprised, and joyfully, that she was so much the woman, and the display of each trait and mannerism that was characteristically feminine gave me keener joy. For I had been elevating her too highly in my concepts of her, removing her too far from the plane of the human, and too far from me. I had been making of her a creature goddess-like and unapproachable. So I hailed with delight the little traits that proclaimed her only woman after all, such as the toss of the head which flung back the cloud of hair, and the search for the pin. She was woman, my kind, on my plane, and the delightful intimacy of kind, of man and woman, was possible, as well as the reverence and awe in which I knew I should always hold her.

She found the pin with an adorable little cry, and I turned my attention more fully to my steering. I proceeded to experiment, lashing and wedging the steering-oar until the boat held on fairly well by the wind without my assistance. Occasionally it came up too close, or fell off too freely; but it always recovered itself and in the main behaved satisfactorily.

"And now we shall have breakfast," I said. "But first you must be more warmly clad."

I got out a heavy shirt, new from the slop-chest and made from blanket goods. I knew the kind, so thick and so close of texture that it could resist the rain and not be soaked through after hours of wetting. When she had slipped this on over her head, I exchanged the boy's cap she wore for a man's cap, large enough to cover her hair, and, when the flap was turned down, to completely cover her neck and ears. The effect was charming. Her face was of the sort that cannot but look well under all circumstances. Nothing could destroy its exquisite oval, its well-nigh classic lines, its delicately stencilled brows, its large brown eyes, clear-seeing and calm, gloriously calm.

A puff, slightly stronger than usual, struck us just then. The boat was caught as it obliquely crossed the crest of a wave. It went over suddenly, burying its gunwale level with the sea and shipping a bucketful or so of water. I was opening a can of tongue at the moment, and I sprang to the sheet and cast it off just in time. The sail flapped and fluttered, and the boat paid off. A few minutes of regulating sufficed to put it on its course again, when I returned to the preparation of breakfast.

"It does very well, it seems, though I am not versed in things nautical," she said, nodding her head with grave approval at my steering contrivance.

"But it will serve only when we are sailing by the wind," I explained. "When running more freely, with the wind astern abeam, or on the quarter, it will be necessary for me to steer."

"I must say I don't understand your technicalities," she said, "but I do your conclusion, and I don't like it. You cannot steer night and day and for ever. So I shall expect, after breakfast, to receive my first lesson. And then you shall lie down and sleep. We'll stand watches just as they do on ships."

"I don't see how I am to teach you," I made protest. "I am just learning for myself. You little thought when you trusted yourself to me that I had had no experience whatever with small boats. This is the first time I have ever been in one."

"Then we'll learn together, sir. And since you've had a night's start you shall teach me what you have learned. And now, breakfast. My! this air does give one an appetite!"

"No coffee," I said regretfully, passing her buttered sea-biscuits and a slice of canned tongue. "And there will be no tea, no soups, nothing hot, till we have made land somewhere, somehow."

After the simple breakfast, capped with a cup of cold water, Maud took her lesson in steering. In teaching her I learned quite a deal myself, though I was applying the knowledge already acquired by sailing the *Ghost* and by watching the boat-steerers sail the small boats. She was an apt pupil, and soon learned to keep the course, to luff in the puffs and to cast off the sheet in an emergency.

Having grown tired, apparently, of the task, she relinquished the oar to me. I had folded up the blankets, but she now proceeded to spread them out on the bottom. When all was arranged snugly, she said:

"Now, sir, to bed. And you shall sleep until luncheon. Till dinner-time," she corrected, remembering the arrangement on the *Ghost*.

What could I do? She insisted, and said, "Please, please," whereupon I turned the oar over to her and obeyed. I experienced a positive sensuous delight as I crawled into the bed she had made with her hands. The calm and control which were so much a part of her seemed to have been communicated to the blankets, so that I was aware of a soft dreaminess and content, and of an oval face and brown eyes framed in a fisherman's cap and tossing against a background now of grey cloud, now of grey sea, and then I was aware that I had been asleep.

I looked at my watch. It was one o'clock. I had slept seven hours! And she had been steering seven hours! When I took the steering-oar I had first to unbend her cramped fingers. Her modicum of strength had been exhausted, and she was unable even to move from her position. I was compelled to let go the sheet while I helped her to the nest of blankets and chafed her hands and arms.

“I am so tired,” she said, with a quick intake of the breath and a sigh, drooping her head wearily.

But she straightened it the next moment. “Now don’t scold, don’t you dare scold,” she cried with mock defiance.

“I hope my face does not appear angry,” I answered seriously; “for I assure you I am not in the least angry.”

“N-no,” she considered. “It looks only reproachful.”

“Then it is an honest face, for it looks what I feel. You were not fair to yourself, nor to me. How can I ever trust you again?”

She looked penitent. “I’ll be good,” she said, as a naughty child might say it. “I promise — ”

“To obey as a sailor would obey his captain?”

“Yes,” she answered. “It was stupid of me, I know.”

“Then you must promise something else,” I ventured.

“Readily.”

“That you will not say, ‘Please, please,’ too often; for when you do you are sure to override my authority.”

She laughed with amused appreciation. She, too, had noticed the power of the repeated “please.”

“It is a good word — ” I began.

“But I must not overwork it,” she broke in.

But she laughed weakly, and her head drooped again. I left the oar long enough to tuck the blankets about her feet and to pull a single fold across her face. Alas! she was not strong. I looked with misgiving toward the south-west and thought of the six hundred miles of hardship before us — ay, if it were no worse than hardship. On this sea a storm might blow up at any moment and destroy us. And yet I was unafraid. I was without confidence in the future, extremely doubtful, and yet I felt no underlying fear. It must come right, it must come right, I repeated to myself, over and over again.

The wind freshened in the afternoon, raising a stiffer sea and trying the boat and me severely. But the supply of food and the nine breakers of water enabled the boat to stand up to the sea and wind, and I held on as long as I dared. Then I removed the sprit, tightly hauling down the peak of the sail, and we raced along under what sailors call a leg-of-mutton.

Late in the afternoon I sighted a steamer's smoke on the horizon to leeward, and I knew it either for a Russian cruiser, or, more likely, the *Macedonia* still seeking the *Ghost*. The sun had not shone all day, and it had been bitter cold. As night drew on, the clouds darkened and the wind freshened, so that when Maud and I ate supper it was with our mittens on and with me still steering and eating morsels between puffs.

By the time it was dark, wind and sea had become too strong for the boat, and I reluctantly took in the sail and set about making a drag or sea-anchor. I had learned of the device from the talk of the hunters, and it was a simple thing to manufacture. Furling the sail and lashing it securely about the mast, boom, sprit, and two pairs of spare oars, I threw it overboard. A line connected it with the bow, and as it floated low in the water, practically unexposed to the wind, it drifted less rapidly than the boat. In consequence it held the boat bow on to the sea and wind — the safest position in which to escape being swamped when the sea is breaking into whitecaps.

"And now?" Maud asked cheerfully, when the task was accomplished and I pulled on my mittens.

"And now we are no longer travelling toward Japan," I answered. "Our drift is to the south-east, or south-south-east, at the rate of at least two miles an hour."

"That will be only twenty-four miles," she urged, "if the wind remains high all night."

"Yes, and only one hundred and forty miles if it continues for three days and nights."

"But it won't continue," she said with easy confidence. "It will turn around and blow fair."

"The sea is the great faithless one."

"But the wind!" she retorted. "I have heard you grow eloquent over the brave trade-wind."

"I wish I had thought to bring Wolf Larsen's chronometer and sextant," I said, still gloomily. "Sailing one direction, drifting another direction, to say nothing of the set of the current in some third direction, makes a resultant which dead reckoning can never calculate. Before long we won't know where we are by five hundred miles."

Then I begged her pardon and promised I should not be disheartened any more. At her solicitation I let her take the watch till midnight, — it was then nine o'clock, but I wrapped her in blankets and put an oilskin about her before I lay down. I slept only cat-naps. The boat was leaping and pounding as it fell over the crests, I could hear the seas rushing past, and spray was continually being thrown aboard. And still, it was not a bad night, I mused — nothing to the nights I had been through on the *Ghost*; nothing, perhaps, to the nights we should go through in this cockle-shell. Its planking was three-quarters of an inch thick. Between us and the bottom of the sea was less than an inch of wood.

And yet, I aver it, and I aver it again, I was unafraid. The death which Wolf Larsen and even Thomas Mugridge had made me fear, I no longer feared. The coming of Maud Brewster into my life seemed to have transformed me. After all, I thought, it is better and finer to love than to be loved, if it makes something in life so worth while that one is not loath to die for it. I forget my own life in the love of another life; and yet, such is the paradox, I never wanted so much to live as right now when I place the least value upon my own life. I never had so much reason for living, was my concluding thought; and after that, until I dozed, I contented myself with trying to pierce the darkness to where I knew Maud crouched low in the stern-sheets, watchful of the foaming sea and ready to call me on an instant's notice.

CHAPTER XXVIII

There is no need of going into an extended recital of our suffering in the small boat during the many days we were driven and drifted, here and there, willy-nilly, across the ocean. The high wind blew from the north-west for twenty-four hours, when it fell calm, and in the night sprang up from the south-west. This was dead in our teeth, but I took in the sea-anchor and set sail, hauling a course on the wind which took us in a south-south-easterly direction. It was an even choice between this and the west-north-westerly course which the wind permitted; but the warm airs of the south fanned my desire for a warmer sea and swayed my decision.

In three hours — it was midnight, I well remember, and as dark as I had ever seen it on the sea — the wind, still blowing out of the south-west, rose furiously, and once again I was compelled to set the sea-anchor.

Day broke and found me wan-eyed and the ocean lashed white, the boat pitching, almost on end, to its drag. We were in imminent danger of being swamped by the whitecaps. As it was, spray and spume came aboard in such quantities that I bailed without cessation. The blankets were soaking. Everything was wet except Maud, and she, in oilskins, rubber boots, and sou'wester, was dry, all but her face and hands and a stray wisp of hair. She relieved me at the bailing-hole from time to time, and bravely she threw out the water and faced the storm. All things are relative. It was no more than a stiff blow, but to us, fighting for life in our frail craft, it was indeed a storm.

Cold and cheerless, the wind beating on our faces, the white seas roaring by, we struggled through the day. Night came, but neither of us slept. Day came, and still the wind beat on our faces and the white seas roared past. By the second night Maud was falling asleep from exhaustion. I covered her with oilskins and a tarpaulin. She was comparatively dry, but she was numb with the cold. I feared greatly that she might die in the night; but day broke, cold and cheerless, with the same clouded sky and beating wind and roaring seas.

I had had no sleep for forty-eight hours. I was wet and chilled to the marrow, till I felt more dead than alive. My body was stiff from exertion as well as from cold, and my aching muscles gave me the severest torture whenever I used them, and I used them continually. And all the time we were being driven off into the north-east, directly away from Japan and toward bleak Bering Sea.

And still we lived, and the boat lived, and the wind blew unabated. In fact, toward nightfall of the third day it increased a trifle and something more. The boat's bow plunged under a crest, and we came through quarter-full of water. I bailed like a madman. The liability of shipping another such sea was enormously increased by the water that weighed the boat down and robbed it of its buoyancy. And another such sea meant the end. When I had the boat empty again I was forced to take away the tarpaulin which covered Maud, in order that I might lash it down across the bow. It was well I did, for it covered the boat fully a third of the way aft, and three times, in the next several hours, it flung off the bulk of the down-rushing water when the bow shoved under the seas.

Maud's condition was pitiable. She sat crouched in the bottom of the boat, her lips blue, her face grey and plainly showing the pain she suffered. But ever her eyes looked bravely at me, and ever her lips uttered brave words.

The worst of the storm must have blown that night, though little I noticed it. I had succumbed and slept where I sat in the stern-sheets. The morning of the fourth day found the wind diminished to a gentle whisper, the sea dying down and the sun shining upon us. Oh, the blessed sun! How we bathed our poor bodies in its delicious warmth, reviving like bugs and crawling things after a storm. We smiled again, said amusing things, and waxed optimistic over our situation. Yet it was, if anything, worse than ever. We were farther from Japan than the night we left the *Ghost*. Nor could I more than roughly guess our latitude and longitude. At a calculation of a two-mile drift per hour, during the seventy and odd hours of the storm, we had been driven at least one hundred and fifty miles to the north-east. But was such calculated drift correct? For all I knew, it might have been four miles per hour instead of two. In which case we were another hundred and fifty miles to the bad.

Where we were I did not know, though there was quite a likelihood that we were in the vicinity of the *Ghost*. There were seals about us, and I was prepared to sight a sealing-schooner at any time. We did sight one, in the afternoon, when the north-west breeze had sprung up freshly once more. But the strange schooner lost itself on the sky-line and we alone occupied the circle of the sea.

Came days of fog, when even Maud's spirit drooped and there were no merry words upon her lips; days of calm, when we floated on the lonely immensity of sea, oppressed by its greatness and yet marvelling at the miracle of tiny life, for we still lived and struggled to live; days of sleet and wind and snow-squalls, when nothing could keep us warm; or days of drizzling rain, when we filled our water-breakers from the drip of the wet sail.

And ever I loved Maud with an increasing love. She was so many-sided, so many-mooded — "protean-mooded" I called her. But I called her this, and other and dearer things, in my thoughts only. Though the declaration of my love urged and trembled on my tongue a thousand times, I knew that it was no time for such a declaration. If for no other reason, it was no time, when one was protecting and trying to save a woman, to ask that woman for her love. Delicate as was the situation, not alone in this but in other ways, I flattered myself that I was able to deal delicately with it; and also I flattered myself that by look or sign I gave no advertisement of the love I felt for her. We were like good comrades, and we grew better comrades as the days went by.

One thing about her which surprised me was her lack of timidity and fear. The terrible sea, the frail boat, the storms, the suffering, the strangeness and isolation of the situation, — all that should have frightened a robust woman, — seemed to make no impression upon her who had known life only in its most sheltered and consummately artificial aspects, and who was herself all fire and dew and mist, sublimated spirit, all that was soft and tender and clinging in woman. And yet I am wrong. She *was* timid and afraid, but she possessed courage. The flesh and the qualms of the flesh she was heir to, but the flesh bore heavily only on the flesh. And she was spirit, first and always spirit, etherealized essence of life, calm as her calm eyes, and sure of permanence in the changing order of the universe.

Came days of storm, days and nights of storm, when the ocean menaced us with its roaring whiteness, and the wind smote our struggling boat with a Titan's buffets. And ever we were flung off, farther and farther, to the north-east. It was in such a storm, and the worst that we had experienced, that I cast a weary glance to leeward, not in quest of anything, but more from the weariness of facing the elemental strife, and in mute appeal, almost, to the wrathful powers to cease and let us be. What I saw I could not at first believe. Days and nights of sleeplessness and anxiety had doubtless turned my head. I looked back at Maud, to identify myself, as it were, in time and space. The sight of her dear wet cheeks, her flying hair, and her brave brown eyes convinced me that my vision was still healthy. Again I turned my face to leeward, and again I saw the jutting promontory, black and high and naked, the raging surf that broke about its base and beat its front high up with spouting fountains, the black and forbidden coast-line running toward the south-east and fringed with a tremendous scarf of white.

"Maud," I said. "Maud."

She turned her head and beheld the sight.

"It cannot be Alaska!" she cried.

"Alas, no," I answered, and asked, "Can you swim?"

She shook her head.

"Neither can I," I said. "So we must get ashore without swimming, in some opening between the rocks through which we can drive the boat and clamber out. But we must be quick, most quick — and sure."

I spoke with a confidence she knew I did not feel, for she looked at me with that unfaltering gaze of hers and said:

"I have not thanked you yet for all you have done for me but — "

She hesitated, as if in doubt how best to word her gratitude.

"Well?" I said, brutally, for I was not quite pleased with her thanking me.

"You might help me," she smiled.

"To acknowledge your obligations before you die? Not at all. We are not going to die. We shall land on that island, and we shall be snug and sheltered before the day is done."

I spoke stoutly, but I did not believe a word. Nor was I prompted to lie through fear. I felt no fear, though I was sure of death in that boiling surge amongst the rocks which was rapidly growing nearer. It was impossible to hoist sail and claw off that shore. The wind would instantly capsize the boat; the seas would swamp it the moment it fell into the trough; and, besides, the sail, lashed to the spare oars, dragged in the sea ahead of us.

As I say, I was not afraid to meet my own death, there, a few hundred yards to leeward; but I was appalled at the thought that Maud must die. My cursed imagination saw her beaten and mangled against the rocks, and it was too terrible. I strove to compel myself to think we would make the landing safely, and so I spoke, not what I believed, but what I preferred to believe.

I recoiled before contemplation of that frightful death, and for a moment I entertained the wild idea of seizing Maud in my arms and leaping overboard. Then I resolved to wait, and at the last moment, when we entered on the final stretch, to take her in my arms and proclaim my love, and, with her in my embrace, to make the desperate struggle and die.

Instinctively we drew closer together in the bottom of the boat. I felt her mittened hand come out to mine. And thus, without speech, we waited the end. We were not far off the line the wind made with the western edge of the promontory, and I watched in the hope that some set of the current or send of the sea would drift us past before we reached the surf.

"We shall go clear," I said, with a confidence which I knew deceived neither of us.

"By God, we *will* go clear!" I cried, five minutes later.

The oath left my lips in my excitement — the first, I do believe, in my life, unless "trouble it," an expletive of my youth, be accounted an oath.

"I beg your pardon," I said.

"You have convinced me of your sincerity," she said, with a faint smile. "I do know, now, that we shall go clear."

I had seen a distant headland past the extreme edge of the promontory, and as we looked we could see grow the intervening coastline of what was evidently a deep cove. At the same time there broke upon our ears a continuous and mighty bellowing. It partook of the magnitude and volume of distant thunder, and it came to us directly from leeward, rising above the crash of the surf and travelling directly in the teeth of the storm. As we passed the point the whole cove burst upon our view, a half-moon of white sandy beach upon which broke a huge surf, and which was covered with myriads of seals. It was from them that the great bellowing went up.

"A rookery!" I cried. "Now are we indeed saved. There must be men and cruisers to protect them from the seal-hunters. Possibly there is a station ashore."

But as I studied the surf which beat upon the beach, I said, "Still bad, but not so bad. And now, if the gods be truly kind, we shall drift by that next headland and come upon a perfectly sheltered beach, where we may land without wetting our feet."

And the gods were kind. The first and second headlands were directly in line with the south-west wind; but once around the second, — and we went perilously near, — we picked up the third headland, still in line with the wind and with the other two. But the cove that intervened! It penetrated deep into the land, and the tide, setting in, drifted us under the shelter of the point. Here the sea was calm, save for a heavy but smooth ground-swell, and I took in the sea-anchor and began to row. From the point the shore curved away, more and more to the south and west, until at last it disclosed a cove within the cove, a little land-locked harbour, the water level as a pond, broken only by tiny ripples where vagrant breaths and wisps of the storm hurtled down from over the frowning wall of rock that backed the beach a hundred feet inshore.

Here were no seals whatever. The boat's stern touched the hard shingle. I sprang out, extending my hand to Maud. The next moment she was beside me. As my fingers released hers, she clutched for my arm hastily. At the same moment I swayed, as about to fall to the sand. This was the startling effect of the cessation of motion. We had been so long upon the moving, rocking sea that the stable land was a shock to us. We expected the beach to lift up this way and that, and the rocky walls to swing back and forth like the sides of a ship; and when we braced ourselves, automatically, for these various expected movements, their non-occurrence quite overcame our equilibrium.

"I really must sit down," Maud said, with a nervous laugh and a dizzy gesture, and forthwith she sat down on the sand.

I attended to making the boat secure and joined her. Thus we landed on Endeavour Island, as we came to it, land-sick from long custom of the sea.

CHAPTER XXIX

"Fool!" I cried aloud in my vexation.

I had unloaded the boat and carried its contents high up on the beach, where I had set about making a camp. There was driftwood, though not much, on the beach, and the sight of a coffee tin I had taken from the *Ghost's* larder had given me the idea of a fire.

"Blithering idiot!" I was continuing.

But Maud said, "Tut, tut," in gentle reproval, and then asked why I was a blithering idiot.

"No matches," I groaned. "Not a match did I bring. And now we shall have no hot coffee, soup, tea, or anything!"

"Wasn't it — er — Crusoe who rubbed sticks together?" she drawled.

"But I have read the personal narratives of a score of shipwrecked men who tried, and tried in vain," I answered. "I remember Winters, a newspaper fellow with an Alaskan and Siberian reputation. Met him at the Bibelot once, and he was telling us how he attempted to make a fire with a couple of sticks. It was most amusing. He told it inimitably, but it was the story of a failure. I remember his conclusion, his black eyes flashing as he said, 'Gentlemen, the South Sea Islander may do it, the Malay may do it, but take my word it's beyond the white man.'"

"Oh, well, we've managed so far without it," she said cheerfully. "And there's no reason why we cannot still manage without it."

"But think of the coffee!" I cried. "It's good coffee, too, I know. I took it from Larsen's private stores. And look at that good wood."

I confess, I wanted the coffee badly; and I learned, not long afterward, that the berry was likewise a little weakness of Maud's. Besides, we had been so long on a cold diet that we were numb inside as well as out. Anything warm would have been most gratifying. But I complained no more and set about making a tent of the sail for Maud.

I had looked upon it as a simple task, what of the oars, mast, boom, and sprit, to say nothing of plenty of lines. But as I was without experience, and as every detail was an experiment and every successful detail an invention, the day was well gone before her shelter was an accomplished fact. And then, that night, it rained, and she was flooded out and driven back into the boat.

The next morning I dug a shallow ditch around the tent, and, an hour later, a sudden gust of wind, whipping over the rocky wall behind us, picked up the tent and smashed it down on the sand thirty yards away.

Maud laughed at my crestfallen expression, and I said, "As soon as the wind abates I intend going in the boat to explore the island. There must be a station somewhere, and men. And ships must visit the station. Some Government must protect all these seals. But I wish to have you comfortable before I start."

"I should like to go with you," was all she said.

"It would be better if you remained. You have had enough of hardship. It is a miracle that you have survived. And it won't be comfortable in the boat rowing and sailing in this rainy weather. What you need is rest, and I should like you to remain and get it."

Something suspiciously akin to moistness dimmed her beautiful eyes before she dropped them and partly turned away her head.

"I should prefer going with you," she said in a low voice, in which there was just a hint of appeal.

"I might be able to help you a — " her voice broke, — "a little. And if anything should happen to you, think of me left here alone."

"Oh, I intend being very careful," I answered. "And I shall not go so far but what I can get back before night. Yes, all said and done, I think it vastly better for you to remain, and sleep, and rest and do nothing."

She turned and looked me in the eyes. Her gaze was unfaltering, but soft.

"Please, please," she said, oh, so softly.

I stiffened myself to refuse, and shook my head. Still she waited and looked at me. I tried to word my refusal, but wavered. I saw the glad light spring into her eyes and knew that I had lost. It was impossible to say no after that.

The wind died down in the afternoon, and we were prepared to start the following morning. There was no way of penetrating the island from our cove, for the walls rose perpendicularly from the beach, and, on either side of the cove, rose from the deep water.

Morning broke dull and grey, but calm, and I was awake early and had the boat in readiness.

"Fool! Imbecile! Yahoo!" I shouted, when I thought it was meet to arouse Maud; but this time I shouted in merriment as I danced about the beach, bareheaded, in mock despair.

Her head appeared under the flap of the sail.

"What now?" she asked sleepily, and, withal, curiously.

"Coffee!" I cried. "What do you say to a cup of coffee? hot coffee? piping hot?"

"My!" she murmured, "you startled me, and you are cruel. Here I have been composing my soul to do without it, and here you are vexing me with your vain suggestions."

"Watch me," I said.

From under clefts among the rocks I gathered a few dry sticks and chips. These I whittled into shavings or split into kindling. From my note-book I tore out a page, and from the ammunition box took a shot-gun shell. Removing the wads from the latter with my knife, I emptied the powder on a flat rock. Next I pried the primer, or cap, from the shell, and laid it on the rock, in the midst of the scattered powder. All was ready. Maud still watched from the tent. Holding the paper in my left hand, I smashed down upon the cap with a rock held in my right. There was a puff of white smoke, a burst of flame, and the rough edge of the paper was alight.

Maud clapped her hands gleefully. "Prometheus!" she cried.

But I was too occupied to acknowledge her delight. The feeble flame must be cherished tenderly if it were to gather strength and live. I fed it, shaving by shaving, and sliver by sliver, till at last it was snapping and crackling as it laid hold of the smaller chips and sticks. To be cast away on an island had not entered into my calculations, so we were without a kettle or cooking utensils of any sort; but I made shift with the tin used for bailing the boat, and later, as we consumed our supply of canned goods, we accumulated quite an imposing array of cooking vessels.

I boiled the water, but it was Maud who made the coffee. And how good it was! My contribution was canned beef fried with crumbled sea-biscuit and water. The breakfast was a success, and we sat about the fire much longer than enterprising explorers should have done, sipping the hot black coffee and talking over our situation.

I was confident that we should find a station in some one of the coves, for I knew that the rookeries of Bering Sea were thus guarded; but Maud advanced the theory — to prepare me for disappointment, I do believe, if disappointment were to come — that we had discovered an unknown rookery. She was in very good spirits, however, and made quite merry in accepting our plight as a grave one.

“If you are right,” I said, “then we must prepare to winter here. Our food will not last, but there are the seals. They go away in the fall, so I must soon begin to lay in a supply of meat. Then there will be huts to build and driftwood to gather. Also we shall try out seal fat for lighting purposes. Altogether, we’ll have our hands full if we find the island uninhabited. Which we shall not, I know.”

But she was right. We sailed with a beam wind along the shore, searching the coves with our glasses and landing occasionally, without finding a sign of human life. Yet we learned that we were not the first who had landed on Endeavour Island. High up on the beach of the second cove from ours, we discovered the splintered wreck of a boat — a sealer’s boat, for the rowlocks were bound in sennit, a gun-rack was on the starboard side of the bow, and in white letters was faintly visible *Gazelle* No. 2. The boat had lain there for a long time, for it was half filled with sand, and the splintered wood had that weather-worn appearance due to long exposure to the elements. In the stern-sheets I found a rusty ten-gauge shot-gun and a sailor’s sheath-knife broken short across and so rusted as to be almost unrecognizable.

“They got away,” I said cheerfully; but I felt a sinking at the heart and seemed to divine the presence of bleached bones somewhere on that beach.

I did not wish Maud’s spirits to be dampened by such a find, so I turned seaward again with our boat and skirted the north-eastern point of the island. There were no beaches on the southern shore, and by early afternoon we rounded the black promontory and completed the circumnavigation of the island. I estimated its circumference at twenty-five miles, its width as varying from two to five miles; while my most conservative calculation placed on its beaches two hundred thousand seals. The island was highest at its extreme south-western point, the headlands and backbone diminishing regularly until the north-eastern portion was only a few feet above the sea. With the exception of our little cove, the other beaches sloped gently back for a distance of half-a-mile or so, into what I might call rocky meadows, with here and there patches of moss and tundra grass. Here the seals hauled out, and the old bulls guarded their harems, while the young bulls hauled out by themselves.

This brief description is all that Endeavour Island merits. Damp and soggy where it was not sharp and rocky, buffeted by storm winds and lashed by the sea, with the air continually a-tremble with the bellowing of two hundred thousand amphibians, it was a melancholy and miserable sojourning-place. Maud, who had prepared me for disappointment, and who had been sprightly and vivacious all day, broke down as we landed in our own little cove. She strove bravely to hide it from me, but while I was kindling another fire I knew she was stifling her sobs in the blankets under the sail-tent.

It was my turn to be cheerful, and I played the part to the best of my ability, and with such success that I brought the laughter back into her dear eyes and song on her lips; for she sang to me before she went to an early bed. It was the first time I had heard her sing, and I lay by the fire, listening and transported, for she was nothing if not an artist in everything she did, and her voice, though not strong, was wonderfully sweet and expressive.

I still slept in the boat, and I lay awake long that night, gazing up at the first stars I had seen in many nights and pondering the situation. Responsibility of this sort was a new thing to me. Wolf Larsen had been quite right. I had stood on my father's legs. My lawyers and agents had taken care of my money for me. I had had no responsibilities at all. Then, on the *Ghost* I had learned to be responsible for myself. And now, for the first time in my life, I found myself responsible for some one else. And it was required of me that this should be the gravest of responsibilities, for she was the one woman in the world — the one small woman, as I loved to think of her.

CHAPTER XXX

No wonder we called it Endeavour Island. For two weeks we toiled at building a hut. Maud insisted on helping, and I could have wept over her bruised and bleeding hands. And still, I was proud of her because of it. There was something heroic about this gently-bred woman enduring our terrible hardship and with her pittance of strength bending to the tasks of a peasant woman. She gathered many of the stones which I built into the walls of the hut; also, she turned a deaf ear to my entreaties when I begged her to desist. She compromised, however, by taking upon herself the lighter labours of cooking and gathering driftwood and moss for our winter's supply.

The hut's walls rose without difficulty, and everything went smoothly until the problem of the roof confronted me. Of what use the four walls without a roof? And of what could a roof be made? There were the spare oars, very true. They would serve as roof-beams; but with what was I to cover them? Moss would never do. Tundra grass was impracticable. We needed the sail for the boat, and the tarpaulin had begun to leak.

"Winters used walrus skins on his hut," I said.

"There are the seals," she suggested.

So next day the hunting began. I did not know how to shoot, but I proceeded to learn. And when I had expended some thirty shells for three seals, I decided that the ammunition would be exhausted before I acquired the necessary knowledge. I had used eight shells for lighting fires before I hit upon the device of banking the embers with wet moss, and there remained not over a hundred shells in the box.

"We must club the seals," I announced, when convinced of my poor marksmanship. "I have heard the sealers talk about clubbing them."

"They are so pretty," she objected. "I cannot bear to think of it being done. It is so directly brutal, you know; so different from shooting them."

"That roof must go on," I answered grimly. "Winter is almost here. It is our lives against theirs. It is unfortunate we haven't plenty of ammunition, but I think, anyway, that they suffer less from being clubbed than from being all shot up. Besides, I shall do the clubbing."

"That's just it," she began eagerly, and broke off in sudden confusion.

"Of course," I began, "if you prefer — "

“But what shall I be doing?” she interrupted, with that softness I knew full well to be insistence.

“Gathering firewood and cooking dinner,” I answered lightly.

She shook her head. “It is too dangerous for you to attempt alone.”

“I know, I know,” she waived my protest. “I am only a weak woman, but just my small assistance may enable you to escape disaster.”

“But the clubbing?” I suggested.

“Of course, you will do that. I shall probably scream. I’ll look away when — ”

“The danger is most serious,” I laughed.

“I shall use my judgment when to look and when not to look,” she replied with a grand air.

The upshot of the affair was that she accompanied me next morning. I rowed into the adjoining cove and up to the edge of the beach. There were seals all about us in the water, and the bellowing thousands on the beach compelled us to shout at each other to make ourselves heard.

“I know men club them,” I said, trying to reassure myself, and gazing doubtfully at a large bull, not thirty feet away, upreared on his fore-flippers and regarding me intently. “But the question is, How do they club them?”

“Let us gather tundra grass and thatch the roof,” Maud said.

She was as frightened as I at the prospect, and we had reason to be gazing at close range at the gleaming teeth and dog-like mouths.

“I always thought they were afraid of men,” I said.

“How do I know they are not afraid?” I queried a moment later, after having rowed a few more strokes along the beach. “Perhaps, if I were to step boldly ashore, they would cut for it, and I could not catch up with one.” And still I hesitated.

“I heard of a man, once, who invaded the nesting grounds of wild geese,” Maud said. “They killed him.”

“The geese?”

“Yes, the geese. My brother told me about it when I was a little girl.”

“But I know men club them,” I persisted.

“I think the tundra grass will make just as good a roof,” she said.

Far from her intention, her words were maddening me, driving me on. I could not play the coward before her eyes. “Here goes,” I said, backing water with one oar and running the bow ashore.

I stepped out and advanced valiantly upon a long-maned bull in the midst of his wives. I was armed with the regular club with which the boat-pullers killed the wounded seals gaffed aboard by the hunters. It was only a foot and a half long, and in my superb ignorance I never dreamed that the club used ashore when raiding the rookeries measured four to five feet. The cows lumbered out of my way, and the distance between me and the bull decreased. He raised himself on his flippers with an angry movement. We were a dozen feet apart. Still I advanced steadily, looking for him to turn tail at any moment and run.

At six feet the panicky thought rushed into my mind, What if he will not run? Why, then I shall club him, came the answer. In my fear I had forgotten that I was there to get the bull instead of to make him run. And just then he gave a snort and a snarl and rushed at me. His eyes were blazing, his mouth was wide open; the teeth gleamed cruelly white. Without shame, I confess that it was I who turned and footed it. He ran awkwardly, but he ran well. He was but two paces behind when I tumbled into the boat, and as I shoved off with an oar his teeth crunched down upon the blade. The stout wood was crushed like an egg-shell. Maud and I were astounded. A moment later he had dived under the boat, seized the keel in his mouth, and was shaking the boat violently.

"My!" said Maud. "Let's go back."

I shook my head. "I can do what other men have done, and I know that other men have clubbed seals. But I think I'll leave the bulls alone next time."

"I wish you wouldn't," she said.

"Now don't say, 'Please, please,'" I cried, half angrily, I do believe.

She made no reply, and I knew my tone must have hurt her.

"I beg your pardon," I said, or shouted, rather, in order to make myself heard above the roar of the rookery. "If you say so, I'll turn and go back; but honestly, I'd rather stay."

"Now don't say that this is what you get for bringing a woman along," she said. She smiled at me whimsically, gloriously, and I knew there was no need for forgiveness.

I rowed a couple of hundred feet along the beach so as to recover my nerves, and then stepped ashore again.

"Do be cautious," she called after me.

I nodded my head and proceeded to make a flank attack on the nearest harem. All went well until I aimed a blow at an outlying cowls head and fell short. She snorted and tried to scramble away. I ran in close and struck another blow, hitting the shoulder instead of the head.

"Watch out!" I heard Maud scream.

In my excitement I had not been taking notice of other things, and I looked up to see the lord of the harem charging down upon me. Again I fled to the boat, hotly pursued; but this time Maud made no suggestion of turning back.

"It would be better, I imagine, if you let harems alone and devoted your attention to lonely and inoffensive-looking seals," was what she said. "I think I have read something about them. Dr. Jordan's book, I believe. They are the young bulls, not old enough to have harems of their own. He called them the holluschickie, or something like that. It seems to me if we find where they haul out — "

"It seems to me that your fighting instinct is aroused," I laughed.

She flushed quickly and prettily. "I'll admit I don't like defeat any more than you do, or any more than I like the idea of killing such pretty, inoffensive creatures."

"Pretty!" I sniffed. "I failed to mark anything pre-eminently pretty about those foamy-mouthed beasts that raced me."

"Your point of view," she laughed. "You lacked perspective. Now if you did not have to get so close to the subject — "

"The very thing!" I cried. "What I need is a longer club. And there's that broken oar ready to hand."

"It just comes to me," she said, "that Captain Larsen was telling me how the men raided the rookeries. They drive the seals, in small herds, a short distance inland before they kill them."

"I don't care to undertake the herding of one of those harems," I objected.

"But there are the holluschickie," she said. "The holluschickie haul out by themselves, and Dr. Jordan says that paths are left between the harems, and that as long as the holluschickie keep strictly to the path they are unmolested by the masters of the harem."

"There's one now," I said, pointing to a young bull in the water. "Let's watch him, and follow him if he hauls out."

He swam directly to the beach and clambered out into a small opening between two harems, the masters of which made warning noises but did not attack him. We watched him travel slowly inward, threading about among the harems along what must have been the path.

"Here goes," I said, stepping out; but I confess my heart was in my mouth as I thought of going through the heart of that monstrous herd.

"It would be wise to make the boat fast," Maud said.

She had stepped out beside me, and I regarded her with wonderment.

She nodded her head determinedly. "Yes, I'm going with you, so you may as well secure the boat and arm me with a club."

"Let's go back," I said dejectedly. "I think tundra grass, will do, after all."

"You know it won't," was her reply. "Shall I lead?"

With a shrug of the shoulders, but with the warmest admiration and pride at heart for this woman, I equipped her with the broken oar and took another for myself. It was with nervous trepidation that we made the first few rods of the journey. Once Maud screamed in terror as a cow thrust an inquisitive nose toward her foot, and several times I quickened my pace for the same reason. But, beyond warning coughs from either side, there were no signs of hostility. It was a rookery which had never been raided by the hunters, and in consequence the seals were mild-tempered and at the same time unafraid.

In the very heart of the herd the din was terrific. It was almost dizzying in its effect. I paused and smiled reassuringly at Maud, for I had recovered my equanimity sooner than she. I could see that she was still badly frightened. She came close to me and shouted:

"I'm dreadfully afraid!"

And I was not. Though the novelty had not yet worn off, the peaceful comportment of the seals had quieted my alarm. Maud was trembling.

"I'm afraid, and I'm not afraid," she chattered with shaking jaws. "It's my miserable body, not I."

"It's all right, it's all right," I reassured her, my arm passing instinctively and protectingly around her.

I shall never forget, in that moment, how instantly conscious I became of my manhood. The primitive deeps of my nature stirred. I felt myself masculine, the protector of the weak, the fighting male. And, best of all, I felt myself the protector of my loved one. She leaned against me, so light and lily-frail, and as her trembling eased away it seemed as though I became aware of prodigious strength. I felt myself a match for the most ferocious bull in the herd, and I know, had such a bull charged upon me, that I should have met it unflinchingly and quite coolly, and I know that I should have killed it.

"I am all right now," she said, looking up at me gratefully. "Let us go on."

And that the strength in me had quieted her and given her confidence, filled me with an exultant joy. The youth of the race seemed burgeoning in me, over-civilized man that I was, and I lived for myself the old hunting days and forest nights of my remote and forgotten ancestry. I had much for which to thank Wolf Larsen, was my thought as we went along the path between the jostling harems.

A quarter of a mile inland we came upon the holluschickie — sleek young bulls, living out the loneliness of their bachelorhood and gathering strength against the day when they would fight their way into the ranks of the Benedicts.

Everything now went smoothly. I seemed to know just what to do and how to do it. Shouting, making threatening gestures with my club, and even prodding the lazy ones, I quickly cut out a score of the young bachelors from their companions. Whenever one made an attempt to break back toward the water, I headed it off. Maud took an active part in the drive, and with her cries and flourishings of the broken oar was of considerable assistance. I noticed, though, that whenever one looked tired and lagged, she let it slip past. But I noticed, also, whenever one, with a show of fight, tried to break past, that her eyes glinted and showed bright, and she rapped it smartly with her club.

"My, it's exciting!" she cried, pausing from sheer weakness. "I think I'll sit down."

I drove the little herd (a dozen strong, now, what of the escapes she had permitted) a hundred yards farther on; and by the time she joined me I had finished the slaughter and was beginning to skin. An hour later we went proudly back along the path between the harems. And twice again we came down the path burdened with skins, till I thought we had enough to roof the hut. I set the sail, laid one tack out of the cove, and on the other tack made our own little inner cove.

"It's just like home-coming," Maud said, as I ran the boat ashore.

I heard her words with a responsive thrill, it was all so dearly intimate and natural, and I said:

"It seems as though I have lived this life always. The world of books and bookish folk is very vague, more like a dream memory than an actuality. I surely have hunted and forayed and fought all the days of my life. And you, too, seem a part of it. You are — " I was on the verge of saying, "my woman, my mate," but glibly changed it to — "standing the hardship well."

But her ear had caught the flaw. She recognized a flight that midmost broke. She gave me a quick look.

"Not that. You were saying — ?"

"That the American Mrs. Meynell was living the life of a savage and living it quite successfully," I said easily.

"Oh," was all she replied; but I could have sworn there was a note of disappointment in her voice.

But "my woman, my mate" kept ringing in my head for the rest of the day and for many days. Yet never did it ring more loudly than that night, as I watched her draw back the blanket of moss from the coals, blow up the fire, and cook the evening meal. It must have been latent savagery stirring in me, for the old words, so bound up with the roots of the race, to grip me and thrill me. And grip and thrill they did, till I fell asleep, murmuring them to myself over and over again.

CHAPTER XXXI

"It will smell," I said, "but it will keep in the heat and keep out the rain and snow."

We were surveying the completed seal-skin roof.

"It is clumsy, but it will serve the purpose, and that is the main thing," I went on, yearning for her praise.

And she clapped her hands and declared that she was hugely pleased.

"But it is dark in here," she said the next moment, her shoulders shrinking with a little involuntary shiver.

"You might have suggested a window when the walls were going up," I said. "It was for you, and you should have seen the need of a window."

"But I never do see the obvious, you know," she laughed back. "And besides, you can knock a hole in the wall at any time."

"Quite true; I had not thought of it," I replied, wagging my head sagely. "But have you thought of ordering the window-glass? Just call up the firm, — Red, 4451, I think it is, — and tell them what size and kind of glass you wish."

"That means — " she began.

"No window."

It was a dark and evil-appearing thing, that hut, not fit for aught better than swine in a civilized land; but for us, who had known the misery of the open boat, it was a snug little habitation. Following the housewarming, which was accomplished by means of seal-oil and a wick made from cotton calking, came the hunting for our winter's meat and the building of the second hut. It was a simple affair, now, to go forth in the morning and return by noon with a boatload of seals. And then, while I worked at building the hut, Maud tried out the oil from the blubber and kept a slow fire under the frames of meat. I had heard of jerking beef on the plains, and our seal-meat, cut in thin strips and hung in the smoke, cured excellently.

The second hut was easier to erect, for I built it against the first, and only three walls were required. But it was work, hard work, all of it. Maud and I worked from dawn till dark, to the limit of our strength, so that when night came we crawled stiffly to bed and slept the animal-like sleep exhaustion. And yet Maud declared that she had never felt better or stronger in her life. I knew this was true of myself, but hers was such a lily strength that I feared she would break down. Often and often, her last-reserve force gone, I have seen her stretched flat on her back on the sand in the way she had of resting and recuperating. And then she would be up on her feet and toiling hard as ever. Where she obtained this strength was the marvel to me.

"Think of the long rest this winter," was her reply to my remonstrances. "Why, we'll be clamorous for something to do."

We held a housewarming in my hut the night it was roofed. It was the end of the third day of a fierce storm which had swung around the compass from the south-east to the north-west, and which was then blowing directly in upon us. The beaches of the outer cove were thundering with the surf, and even in our land-locked inner cove a respectable sea was breaking. No high backbone of island sheltered us from the wind, and it whistled and bellowed about the hut till at times I feared for the strength of the walls. The skin roof, stretched tightly as a drumhead, I had thought, sagged and bellied with every gust; and innumerable interstices in the walls, not so tightly stuffed with moss as Maud had supposed, disclosed themselves. Yet the seal-oil burned brightly and we were warm and comfortable.

It was a pleasant evening indeed, and we voted that as a social function on Endeavour Island it had not yet been eclipsed. Our minds were at ease. Not only had we resigned ourselves to the bitter winter, but we were prepared for it. The seals could depart on their mysterious journey into the south at any time, now, for all we cared; and the storms held no terror for us. Not only were we sure of being dry and warm and sheltered from the wind, but we had the softest and most luxurious mattresses that could be made from moss. This had been Maud's idea, and she had herself jealously gathered all the moss. This was to be my first night on the mattress, and I knew I should sleep the sweeter because she had made it.

As she rose to go she turned to me with the whimsical way she had, and said:

"Something is going to happen — is happening, for that matter. I feel it. Something is coming here, to us. It is coming now. I don't know what, but it is coming."

"Good or bad?" I asked.

She shook her head. "I don't know, but it is there, somewhere."

She pointed in the direction of the sea and wind.

"It's a lee shore," I laughed, "and I am sure I'd rather be here than arriving, a night like this."

“You are not frightened?” I asked, as I stepped to open the door for her.

Her eyes looked bravely into mine.

“And you feel well? perfectly well?”

“Never better,” was her answer.

We talked a little longer before she went.

“Good-night, Maud,” I said.

“Good-night, Humphrey,” she said.

This use of our given names had come about quite as a matter of course, and was as unpremeditated as it was natural. In that moment I could have put my arms around her and drawn her to me. I should certainly have done so out in that world to which we belonged. As it was, the situation stopped there in the only way it could; but I was left alone in my little hut, glowing warmly through and through with a pleasant satisfaction; and I knew that a tie, or a tacit something, existed between us which had not existed before.

CHAPTER XXXII

I awoke, oppressed by a mysterious sensation. There seemed something missing in my environment. But the mystery and oppressiveness vanished after the first few seconds of waking, when I identified the missing something as the wind. I had fallen asleep in that state of nerve tension with which one meets the continuous shock of sound or movement, and I had awakened, still tense, bracing myself to meet the pressure of something which no longer bore upon me.

It was the first night I had spent under cover in several months, and I lay luxuriously for some minutes under my blankets (for once not wet with fog or spray), analysing, first, the effect produced upon me by the cessation of the wind, and next, the joy which was mine from resting on the mattress made by Maud's hands. When I had dressed and opened the door, I heard the waves still lapping on the beach, garrulously attesting the fury of the night. It was a clear day, and the sun was shining. I had slept late, and I stepped outside with sudden energy, bent upon making up lost time as befitted a dweller on Endeavour Island.

And when outside, I stopped short. I believed my eyes without question, and yet I was for the moment stunned by what they disclosed to me. There, on the beach, not fifty feet away, bow on, dismasted, was a black-hulled vessel. Masts and booms, tangled with shrouds, sheets, and rent canvas, were rubbing gently alongside. I could have rubbed my eyes as I looked. There was the home-made galley we had built, the familiar break of the poop, the low yacht-cabin scarcely rising above the rail. It was the *Ghost*.

What freak of fortune had brought it here — here of all spots? what chance of chances? I looked at the bleak, inaccessible wall at my back and know the profundity of despair. Escape was hopeless, out of the question. I thought of Maud, asleep there in the hut we had reared; I remembered her "Good-night, Humphrey"; "my woman, my mate," went ringing through my brain, but now, alas, it was a knell that sounded. Then everything went black before my eyes.

Possibly it was the fraction of a second, but I had no knowledge of how long an interval had lapsed before I was myself again. There lay the *Ghost*, bow on to the beach, her splintered bowsprit projecting over the sand, her tangled spars rubbing against her side to the lift of the crooning waves. Something must be done, must be done.

It came upon me suddenly, as strange, that nothing moved aboard. Wearied from the night of struggle and wreck, all hands were yet asleep, I thought. My next thought was that Maud and I might yet escape. If we could take to the boat and make round the point before any one awoke? I would call her and start. My hand was lifted at her door to knock, when I recollected the smallness of the island. We could never hide ourselves upon it. There was nothing for us but the wide raw ocean. I thought of our snug little huts, our supplies of meat and oil and moss and firewood, and I knew that we could never survive the wintry sea and the great storms which were to come.

So I stood, with hesitant knuckle, without her door. It was impossible, impossible. A wild thought of rushing in and killing her as she slept rose in my mind. And then, in a flash, the better solution came to me. All hands were asleep. Why not creep aboard the *Ghost*, — well I knew the way to Wolf Larsen's bunk, — and kill him in his sleep? After that — well, we would see. But with him dead there was time and space in which to prepare to do other things; and besides, whatever new situation arose, it could not possibly be worse than the present one.

My knife was at my hip. I returned to my hut for the shot-gun, made sure it was loaded, and went down to the *Ghost*. With some difficulty, and at the expense of a wetting to the waist, I climbed aboard. The forecastle scuttle was open. I paused to listen for the breathing of the men, but there was no breathing. I almost gasped as the thought came to me: What if the *Ghost* is deserted? I listened more closely. There was no sound. I cautiously descended the ladder. The place had the empty and musty feel and smell usual to a dwelling no longer inhabited. Everywhere was a thick litter of discarded and ragged garments, old sea-boots, leaky oilskins — all the worthless forecastle dunnage of a long voyage.

Abandoned hastily, was my conclusion, as I ascended to the deck. Hope was alive again in my breast, and I looked about me with greater coolness. I noted that the boats were missing. The steerage told the same tale as the forecastle. The hunters had packed their belongings with similar haste. The *Ghost* was deserted. It was Maud's and mine. I thought of the ship's stores and the lazarette beneath the cabin, and the idea came to me of surprising Maud with something nice for breakfast.

The reaction from my fear, and the knowledge that the terrible deed I had come to do was no longer necessary, made me boyish and eager. I went up the steerage companion-way two steps at a time, with nothing distinct in my mind except joy and the hope that Maud would sleep on until the surprise breakfast was quite ready for her. As I rounded the galley, a new satisfaction was mine at thought of all the splendid cooking utensils inside. I sprang up the break of the poop, and saw — Wolf Larsen. What of my impetus and the stunning surprise, I clattered three or four steps along the deck before I could stop myself. He was standing in the companion-way, only his head and shoulders visible, staring straight at me. His arms were resting on the half-open slide. He made no movement whatever — simply stood there, staring at me.

I began to tremble. The old stomach sickness clutched me. I put one hand on the edge of the house to steady myself. My lips seemed suddenly dry and I moistened them against the need of speech. Nor did I for an instant take my eyes off him. Neither of us spoke. There was something ominous in his silence, his immobility. All my old fear of him returned and by new fear was increased an hundred-fold. And still we stood, the pair of us, staring at each other.

I was aware of the demand for action, and, my old helplessness strong upon me, I was waiting for him to take the initiative. Then, as the moments went by, it came to me that the situation was analogous to the one in which I had approached the long-maned bull, my intention of clubbing obscured by fear until it became a desire to make him run. So it was at last impressed upon me that I was there, not to have Wolf Larsen take the initiative, but to take it myself.

I cocked both barrels and levelled the shot-gun at him. Had he moved, attempted to drop down the companion-way, I know I would have shot him. But he stood motionless and staring as before. And as I faced him, with levelled gun shaking in my hands, I had time to note the worn and haggard appearance of his face. It was as if some strong anxiety had wasted it. The cheeks were sunken, and there was a wearied, puckered expression on the brow. And it seemed to me that his eyes were strange, not only the expression, but the physical seeming, as though the optic nerves and supporting muscles had suffered strain and slightly twisted the eyeballs.

All this I saw, and my brain now working rapidly, I thought a thousand thoughts; and yet I could not pull the triggers. I lowered the gun and stepped to the corner of the cabin, primarily to relieve the tension on my nerves and to make a new start, and incidentally to be closer. Again I raised the gun. He was almost at arm's length. There was no hope for him. I was resolved. There was no possible chance of missing him, no matter how poor my marksmanship. And yet I wrestled with myself and could not pull the triggers.

"Well?" he demanded impatiently.

I strove vainly to force my fingers down on the triggers, and vainly I strove to say something.

"Why don't you shoot?" he asked.

I cleared my throat of a huskiness which prevented speech. "Hump," he said slowly, "you can't do it. You are not exactly afraid. You are impotent. Your conventional morality is stronger than you. You are the slave to the opinions which have credence among the people you have known and have read about. Their code has been drummed into your head from the time you lisped, and in spite of your philosophy, and of what I have taught you, it won't let you kill an unarmed, unresisting man."

"I know it," I said hoarsely.

"And you know that I would kill an unarmed man as readily as I would smoke a cigar," he went on. "You know me for what I am, — my worth in the world by your standard. You have called me snake, tiger, shark, monster, and Caliban. And yet, you little rag puppet, you little echoing mechanism, you are unable to kill me as you would a snake or a shark, because I have hands, feet, and a body shaped somewhat like yours. Bah! I had hoped better things of you, Hump."

He stepped out of the companion-way and came up to me.

"Put down that gun. I want to ask you some questions. I haven't had a chance to look around yet. What place is this? How is the *Ghost* lying? How did you get wet? Where's Maud? — I beg your pardon, Miss Brewster — or should I say, 'Mrs. Van Weyden'?"

I had backed away from him, almost weeping at my inability to shoot him, but not fool enough to put down the gun. I hoped, desperately, that he might commit some hostile act, attempt to strike me or choke me; for in such way only I knew I could be stirred to shoot.

"This is Endeavour Island," I said.

"Never heard of it," he broke in.

"At least, that's our name for it," I amended.

"Our?" he queried. "Who's our?"

"Miss Brewster and myself. And the *Ghost* is lying, as you can see for yourself, bow on to the beach."

"There are seals here," he said. "They woke me up with their barking, or I'd be sleeping yet. I heard them when I drove in last night. They were the first warning that I was on a lee shore. It's a rookery, the kind of a thing I've hunted for years. Thanks to my brother Death, I've lighted on a fortune. It's a mint. What's its bearings?"

"Haven't the least idea," I said. "But you ought to know quite closely. What were your last observations?"

He smiled inscrutably, but did not answer.

"Well, where's all hands?" I asked. "How does it come that you are alone?"

I was prepared for him again to set aside my question, and was surprised at the readiness of his reply.

"My brother got me inside forty-eight hours, and through no fault of mine. Boarded me in the night with only the watch on deck. Hunters went back on me. He gave them a bigger lay. Heard him offering it. Did it right before me. Of course the crew gave me the go-by. That was to be expected. All hands went over the side, and there I was, marooned on my own vessel. It was Death's turn, and it's all in the family anyway."

"But how did you lose the masts?" I asked.

"Walk over and examine those lanyards," he said, pointing to where the mizzen-rigging should have been.

"They have been cut with a knife!" I exclaimed.

"Not quite," he laughed. "It was a neater job. Look again."

I looked. The lanyards had been almost severed, with just enough left to hold the shrouds till some severe strain should be put upon them.

"Cooky did that," he laughed again. "I know, though I didn't spot him at it. Kind of evened up the score a bit."

"Good for Mugridge!" I cried.

"Yes, that's what I thought when everything went over the side. Only I said it on the other side of my mouth."

"But what were you doing while all this was going on?" I asked.

"My best, you may be sure, which wasn't much under the circumstances."

I turned to re-examine Thomas Mugridge's work.

"I guess I'll sit down and take the sunshine," I heard Wolf Larsen saying.

There was a hint, just a slight hint, of physical feebleness in his voice, and it was so strange that I looked quickly at him. His hand was sweeping nervously across his face, as though he were brushing away cobwebs. I was puzzled. The whole thing was so unlike the Wolf Larsen I had known.

"How are your headaches?" I asked.

"They still trouble me," was his answer. "I think I have one coming on now."

He slipped down from his sitting posture till he lay on the deck. Then he rolled over on his side, his head resting on the biceps of the under arm, the forearm shielding his eyes from the sun. I stood regarding him wonderingly.

"Now's your chance, Hump," he said.

"I don't understand," I lied, for I thoroughly understood.

"Oh, nothing," he added softly, as if he were drowsing; "only you've got me where you want me."

"No, I haven't," I retorted; "for I want you a few thousand miles away from here."

He chuckled, and thereafter spoke no more. He did not stir as I passed by him and went down into the cabin. I lifted the trap in the floor, but for some moments gazed dubiously into the darkness of the lazarette beneath. I hesitated to descend. What if his lying down were a ruse? Pretty, indeed, to be caught there like a rat. I crept softly up the companion-way and peeped at him. He was lying as I had left him. Again I went below; but before I dropped into the lazarette I took the precaution of casting down the door in advance. At least there would be no lid to the trap. But it was all needless. I regained the cabin with a store of jams, sea-biscuits, canned meats, and such things, — all I could carry, — and replaced the trap-door.

A peep at Wolf Larsen showed me that he had not moved. A bright thought struck me. I stole into his state-room and possessed myself of his revolvers. There were no other weapons, though I thoroughly ransacked the three remaining state-rooms. To make sure, I returned and went through the steerage and forecastle, and in the galley gathered up all the sharp meat and vegetable knives. Then I bethought me of the great yachtsman's knife he always carried, and I came to him and spoke to him, first softly, then loudly. He did not move. I bent over and took it from his pocket. I breathed more freely. He had no arms with which to attack me from a distance; while I, armed, could always forestall him should he attempt to grapple me with his terrible gorilla arms.

Filling a coffee-pot and frying-pan with part of my plunder, and taking some chinaware from the cabin pantry, I left Wolf Larsen lying in the sun and went ashore.

Maud was still asleep. I blew up the embers (we had not yet arranged a winter kitchen), and quite feverishly cooked the breakfast. Toward the end, I heard her moving about within the hut, making her toilet. Just as all was ready and the coffee poured, the door opened and she came forth.

"It's not fair of you," was her greeting. "You are usurping one of my prerogatives. You know you I agreed that the cooking should be mine, and — "

"But just this once," I pleaded.

"If you promise not to do it again," she smiled. "Unless, of course, you have grown tired of my poor efforts."

To my delight she never once looked toward the beach, and I maintained the banter with such success all unconsciously she sipped coffee from the china cup, ate fried evaporated potatoes, and spread marmalade on her biscuit. But it could not last. I saw the surprise that came over her. She had discovered the china plate from which she was eating. She looked over the breakfast, noting detail after detail. Then she looked at me, and her face turned slowly toward the beach.

"Humphrey!" she said.

The old unnamable terror mounted into her eyes.

"Is — he?" she quavered.

I nodded my head.

CHAPTER XXXIIII

We waited all day for Wolf Larsen to come ashore. It was an intolerable period of anxiety. Each moment one or the other of us cast expectant glances toward the *Ghost*. But he did not come. He did not even appear on deck.

"Perhaps it is his headache," I said. "I left him lying on the poop. He may lie there all night. I think I'll go and see."

Maud looked entreaty at me.

"It is all right," I assured her. "I shall take the revolvers. You know I collected every weapon on board."

"But there are his arms, his hands, his terrible, terrible hands!" she objected. And then she cried, "Oh, Humphrey, I am afraid of him! Don't go — please don't go!"

She rested her hand appealingly on mine, and sent my pulse fluttering. My heart was surely in my eyes for a moment. The dear and lovely woman! And she was so much the woman, clinging and appealing, sunshine and dew to my manhood, rooting it deeper and sending through it the sap of a new strength. I was for putting my arm around her, as when in the midst of the seal herd; but I considered, and refrained.

"I shall not take any risks," I said. "I'll merely peep over the bow and see."

She pressed my hand earnestly and let me go. But the space on deck where I had left him lying was vacant. He had evidently gone below. That night we stood alternate watches, one of us sleeping at a time; for there was no telling what Wolf Larsen might do. He was certainly capable of anything.

The next day we waited, and the next, and still he made no sign.

"These headaches of his, these attacks," Maud said, on the afternoon of the fourth day; "Perhaps he is ill, very ill. He may be dead."

"Or dying," was her afterthought when she had waited some time for me to speak.

"Better so," I answered.

"But think, Humphrey, a fellow-creature in his last lonely hour."

"Perhaps," I suggested.

"Yes, even perhaps," she acknowledged. "But we do not know. It would be terrible if he were. I could never forgive myself. We must do something."

"Perhaps," I suggested again.

I waited, smiling inwardly at the woman of her which compelled a solicitude for Wolf Larsen, of all creatures. Where was her solicitude for me, I thought, — for me whom she had been afraid to have merely peep aboard?

She was too subtle not to follow the trend of my silence. And she was as direct as she was subtle.

"You must go aboard, Humphrey, and find out," she said. "And if you want to laugh at me, you have my consent and forgiveness."

I arose obediently and went down the beach.

"Do be careful," she called after me.

I waved my arm from the forecastle head and dropped down to the deck. Aft I walked to the cabin companion, where I contented myself with hailing below. Wolf Larsen answered, and as he started to ascend the stairs I cocked my revolver. I displayed it openly during our conversation, but he took no notice of it. He appeared the same, physically, as when last I saw him, but he was gloomy and silent. In fact, the few words we spoke could hardly be called a conversation. I did not inquire why he had not been ashore, nor did he ask why I had not come aboard. His head was all right again, he said, and so, without further parley, I left him.

Maud received my report with obvious relief, and the sight of smoke which later rose in the galley put her in a more cheerful mood. The next day, and the next, we saw the galley smoke rising, and sometimes we caught glimpses of him on the poop. But that was all. He made no attempt to come ashore. This we knew, for we still maintained our night-watches. We were waiting for him to do something, to show his hand, so to say, and his inaction puzzled and worried us.

A week of this passed by. We had no other interest than Wolf Larsen, and his presence weighed us down with an apprehension which prevented us from doing any of the little things we had planned.

But at the end of the week the smoke ceased rising from the galley, and he no longer showed himself on the poop. I could see Maud's solicitude again growing, though she timidly — and even proudly, I think — forbore a repetition of her request. After all, what censure could be put upon her?

She was divinely altruistic, and she was a woman. Besides, I was myself aware of hurt at thought of this man whom I had tried to kill, dying alone with his fellow-creatures so near. He was right. The code of my group was stronger than I. The fact that he had hands, feet, and a body shaped somewhat like mine, constituted a claim which I could not ignore.

So I did not wait a second time for Maud to send me. I discovered that we stood in need of condensed milk and marmalade, and announced that I was going aboard. I could see that she wavered. She even went so far as to murmur that they were non-essentials and that my trip after them might be inexpedient. And as she had followed the trend of my silence, she now followed the trend of my speech, and she knew that I was going aboard, not because of condensed milk and marmalade, but because of her and of her anxiety, which she knew she had failed to hide.

I took off my shoes when I gained the forecastle head, and went noiselessly aft in my stocking feet. Nor did I call this time from the top of the companion-way. Cautiously descending, I found the cabin deserted. The door to his state-room was closed. At first I thought of knocking, then I remembered my ostensible errand and resolved to carry it out. Carefully avoiding noise, I lifted the trap-door in the floor and set it to one side. The slop-chest, as well as the provisions, was stored in the lazarette, and I took advantage of the opportunity to lay in a stock of underclothing.

As I emerged from the lazarette I heard sounds in Wolf Larsen's state-room. I crouched and listened. The door-knob rattled. Furtively, instinctively, I slunk back behind the table and drew and cocked my revolver. The door swung open and he came forth. Never had I seen so profound a despair as that which I saw on his face, — the face of Wolf Larsen the fighter, the strong man, the indomitable one. For all the world like a woman wringing her hands, he raised his clenched fists and groaned. One fist unclosed, and the open palm swept across his eyes as though brushing away cobwebs.

"God! God!" he groaned, and the clenched fists were raised again to the infinite despair with which his throat vibrated.

It was horrible. I was trembling all over, and I could feel the shivers running up and down my spine and the sweat standing out on my forehead. Surely there can be little in this world more awful than the spectacle of a strong man in the moment when he is utterly weak and broken.

But Wolf Larsen regained control of himself by an exertion of his remarkable will. And it was exertion. His whole frame shook with the struggle. He resembled a man on the verge of a fit. His face strove to compose itself, writhing and twisting in the effort till he broke down again. Once more the clenched fists went upward and he groaned. He caught his breath once or twice and sobbed. Then he was successful. I could have thought him the old Wolf Larsen, and yet there was in his movements a vague suggestion of weakness and indecision. He started for the companion-way, and stepped forward quite as I had been accustomed to see him do; and yet again, in his very walk, there seemed that suggestion of weakness and indecision.

I was now concerned with fear for myself. The open trap lay directly in his path, and his discovery of it would lead instantly to his discovery of me. I was angry with myself for being caught in so cowardly a position, crouching on the floor. There was yet time. I rose swiftly to my feet, and, I know, quite unconsciously assumed a defiant attitude. He took no notice of me. Nor did he notice the open trap. Before I could grasp the situation, or act, he had walked right into the trap. One foot was descending into the opening, while the other foot was just on the verge of beginning the uplift. But when the descending foot missed the solid flooring and felt vacancy beneath, it was the old Wolf Larsen and the tiger muscles that made the falling body spring across the opening, even as it fell, so that he struck on his chest and stomach, with arms outstretched, on the floor of the opposite side. The next instant he had drawn up his legs and rolled clear. But he rolled into my marmalade and underclothes and against the trap-door.

The expression on his face was one of complete comprehension. But before I could guess what he had comprehended, he had dropped the trap-door into place, closing the lazarette. Then I understood. He thought he had me inside. Also, he was blind, blind as a bat. I watched him, breathing carefully so that he should not hear me. He stepped quickly to his state-room. I saw his hand miss the door-knob by an inch, quickly fumble for it, and find it. This was my chance. I tiptoed across the cabin and to the top of the stairs. He came back, dragging a heavy sea-chest, which he deposited on top of the trap. Not content with this he fetched a second chest and placed it on top of the first. Then he gathered up the marmalade and underclothes and put them on the table. When he started up the companion-way, I retreated, silently rolling over on top of the cabin.

He shoved the slide part way back and rested his arms on it, his body still in the companion-way. His attitude was of one looking forward the length of the schooner, or staring, rather, for his eyes were fixed and unblinking. I was only five feet away and directly in what should have been his line of vision. It was uncanny. I felt myself a ghost, what of my invisibility. I waved my hand back and forth, of course without effect; but when the moving shadow fell across his face I saw at once that he was susceptible to the impression. His face became more expectant and tense as he tried to analyze and identify the impression. He knew that he had responded to something from without, that his sensibility had been touched by a changing something in his environment; but what it was he could not discover. I ceased waving my hand, so that the shadow remained stationary. He slowly moved his head back and forth under it and turned from side to side, now in the sunshine, now in the shade, feeling the shadow, as it were, testing it by sensation.

I, too, was busy, trying to reason out how he was aware of the existence of so intangible a thing as a shadow. If it were his eyeballs only that were affected, or if his optic nerve were not wholly destroyed, the explanation was simple. If otherwise, then the only conclusion I could reach was that the sensitive skin recognized the difference of temperature between shade and sunshine. Or, perhaps, — who can tell? — it was that fabled sixth sense which conveyed to him the loom and feel of an object close at hand.

Giving over his attempt to determine the shadow, he stepped on deck and started forward, walking with a swiftness and confidence which surprised me. And still there was that hint of the feebleness of the blind in his walk. I knew it now for what it was.

To my amused chagrin, he discovered my shoes on the forecastle head and brought them back with him into the galley. I watched him build the fire and set about cooking food for himself; then I stole into the cabin for my marmalade and underclothes, slipped back past the galley, and climbed down to the beach to deliver my barefoot report.

CHAPTER XXXIV

“It’s too bad the *Ghost* has lost her masts. Why we could sail away in her. Don’t you think we could, Humphrey?”

I sprang excitedly to my feet.

“I wonder, I wonder,” I repeated, pacing up and down.

Maud’s eyes were shining with anticipation as they followed me. She had such faith in me! And the thought of it was so much added power. I remembered Michelet’s “To man, woman is as the earth was to her legendary son; he has but to fall down and kiss her breast and he is strong again.” For the first time I knew the wonderful truth of his words. Why, I was living them. Maud was all this to me, an unfailing, source of strength and courage. I had but to look at her, or think of her, and be strong again.

“It can be done, it can be done,” I was thinking and asserting aloud. “What men have done, I can do; and if they have never done this before, still I can do it.”

“What? for goodness’ sake,” Maud demanded. “Do be merciful. What is it you can do?”

“We can do it,” I amended. “Why, nothing else than put the masts back into the *Ghost* and sail away.”

“Humphrey!” she exclaimed.

And I felt as proud of my conception as if it were already a fact accomplished.

“But how is it possible to be done?” she asked.

“I don’t know,” was my answer. “I know only that I am capable of doing anything these days.”

I smiled proudly at her — too proudly, for she dropped her eyes and was for the moment silent.

“But there is Captain Larsen,” she objected.

“Blind and helpless,” I answered promptly, waving him aside as a straw.

“But those terrible hands of his! You know how he leaped across the opening of the lazarette.”

“And you know also how I crept about and avoided him,” I contended gaily.

“And lost your shoes.”

“You’d hardly expect them to avoid Wolf Larsen without my feet inside of them.”

We both laughed, and then went seriously to work constructing the plan whereby we were to step the masts of the *Ghost* and return to the world. I remembered hazily the physics of my school days, while the last few months had given me practical experience with mechanical purchases. I must say, though, when we walked down to the *Ghost* to inspect more closely the task before us, that the sight of the great masts lying in the water almost disheartened me. Where were we to begin? If there had been one mast standing, something high up to which to fasten blocks and tackles! But there was nothing. It reminded me of the problem of lifting oneself by one’s boot-straps. I understood the mechanics of levers; but where was I to get a fulcrum?

There was the mainmast, fifteen inches in diameter at what was now the butt, still sixty-five feet in length, and weighing, I roughly calculated, at least three thousand pounds. And then came the foremast, larger in diameter, and weighing surely thirty-five hundred pounds. Where was I to begin? Maud stood silently by my side, while I evolved in my mind the contrivance known among sailors as “shears.” But, though known to sailors, I invented it there on Endeavour Island. By crossing and lashing the ends of two spars, and then elevating them in the air like an inverted “V,” I could get a point above the deck to which to make fast my hoisting tackle. To this hoisting tackle I could, if necessary, attach a second hoisting tackle. And then there was the windlass!

Maud saw that I had achieved a solution, and her eyes warmed sympathetically.

“What are you going to do?” she asked.

“Clear that raffle,” I answered, pointing to the tangled wreckage overside.

Ah, the decisiveness, the very sound of the words, was good in my ears. “Clear that raffle!” Imagine so salty a phrase on the lips of the Humphrey Van Weyden of a few months gone!

There must have been a touch of the melodramatic in my pose and voice, for Maud smiled. Her appreciation of the ridiculous was keen, and in all things she unerringly saw and felt, where it existed, the touch of sham, the overshading, the overtone. It was this which had given poise and penetration to her own work and made her of worth to the world. The serious critic, with the sense of humour and the power of expression, must inevitably command the world's ear. And so it was that she had commanded. Her sense of humour was really the artist's instinct for proportion.

"I'm sure I've heard it before, somewhere, in books," she murmured gleefully.

I had an instinct for proportion myself, and I collapsed forthwith, descending from the dominant pose of a master of matter to a state of humble confusion which was, to say the least, very miserable.

Her hand leapt out at once to mine.

"I'm so sorry," she said.

"No need to be," I gulped. "It does me good. There's too much of the schoolboy in me. All of which is neither here nor there. What we've got to do is actually and literally to clear that raffle. If you'll come with me in the boat, we'll get to work and straighten things out."

"'When the topmen clear the raffle with their clasp-knives in their teeth,'" she quoted at me; and for the rest of the afternoon we made merry over our labour.

Her task was to hold the boat in position while I worked at the tangle. And such a tangle — halyards, sheets, guys, down-hauls, shrouds, stays, all washed about and back and forth and through, and twined and knotted by the sea. I cut no more than was necessary, and what with passing the long ropes under and around the booms and masts, of unreeving the halyards and sheets, of coiling down in the boat and uncoiling in order to pass through another knot in the bight, I was soon wet to the skin.

The sails did require some cutting, and the canvas, heavy with water, tried my strength severely; but I succeeded before nightfall in getting it all spread out on the beach to dry. We were both very tired when we knocked off for supper, and we had done good work, too, though to the eye it appeared insignificant.

Next morning, with Maud as able assistant, I went into the hold of the *Ghost* to clear the steps of the mast-butts. We had no more than begun work when the sound of my knocking and hammering brought Wolf Larsen.

"Hello below!" he cried down the open hatch.

The sound of his voice made Maud quickly draw close to me, as for protection, and she rested one hand on my arm while we parleyed.

"Hello on deck," I replied. "Good-morning to you."

"What are you doing down there?" he demanded. "Trying to scuttle my ship for me?"

"Quite the opposite; I'm repairing her," was my answer.

"But what in thunder are you repairing?" There was puzzlement in his voice.

"Why, I'm getting everything ready for re-stepping the masts," I replied easily, as though it were the simplest project imaginable.

"It seems as though you're standing on your own legs at last, Hump," we heard him say; and then for some time he was silent.

"But I say, Hump," he called down. "You can't do it."

"Oh, yes, I can," I retorted. "I'm doing it now."

"But this is my vessel, my particular property. What if I forbid you?"

"You forget," I replied. "You are no longer the biggest bit of the ferment. You were, once, and able to eat me, as you were pleased to phrase it; but there has been a diminishing, and I am now able to eat you. The yeast has grown stale."

He gave a short, disagreeable laugh. "I see you're working my philosophy back on me for all it is worth. But don't make the mistake of under-estimating me. For your own good I warn you."

"Since when have you become a philanthropist?" I queried. "Confess, now, in warning me for my own good, that you are very consistent."

He ignored my sarcasm, saying, "Suppose I clap the hatch on, now? You won't fool me as you did in the lazarette."

"Wolf Larsen," I said sternly, for the first time addressing him by this his most familiar name, "I am unable to shoot a helpless, unresisting man. You have proved that to my satisfaction as well as yours. But I warn you now, and not so much for your own good as for mine, that I shall shoot you the moment you attempt a hostile act. I can shoot you now, as I stand here; and if you are so minded, just go ahead and try to clap on the hatch."

"Nevertheless, I forbid you, I distinctly forbid your tampering with my ship."

"But, man!" I expostulated, "you advance the fact that it is your ship as though it were a moral right. You have never considered moral rights in your dealings with others. You surely do not dream that I'll consider them in dealing with you?"

I had stepped underneath the open hatchway so that I could see him. The lack of expression on his face, so different from when I had watched him unseen, was enhanced by the unblinking, staring eyes. It was not a pleasant face to look upon.

"And none so poor, not even Hump, to do him reverence," he sneered.

The sneer was wholly in his voice. His face remained expressionless as ever.

"How do you do, Miss Brewster," he said suddenly, after a pause.

I started. She had made no noise whatever, had not even moved. Could it be that some glimmer of vision remained to him? or that his vision was coming back?

"How do you do, Captain Larsen," she answered. "Pray, how did you know I was here?"

"Heard you breathing, of course. I say, Hump's improving, don't you think so?"

"I don't know," she answered, smiling at me. "I have never seen him otherwise."

"You should have seen him before, then."

"Wolf Larsen, in large doses," I murmured, "before and after taking."

"I want to tell you again, Hump," he said threateningly, "that you'd better leave things alone."

"But don't you care to escape as well as we?" I asked incredulously.

"No," was his answer. "I intend dying here."

"Well, we don't," I concluded defiantly, beginning again my knocking and hammering.

CHAPTER XXXV

Next day, the mast-steps clear and everything in readiness, we started to get the two topmasts aboard. The maintopmast was over thirty feet in length, the foretopmast nearly thirty, and it was of these that I intended making the shears. It was puzzling work. Fastening one end of a heavy tackle to the windlass, and with the other end fast to the butt of the foretopmast, I began to heave. Maud held the turn on the windlass and coiled down the slack.

We were astonished at the ease with which the spar was lifted. It was an improved crank windlass, and the purchase it gave was enormous. Of course, what it gave us in power we paid for in distance; as many times as it doubled my strength, that many times was doubled the length of rope I heaved in. The tackle dragged heavily across the rail, increasing its drag as the spar arose more and more out of the water, and the exertion on the windlass grew severe.

But when the butt of the topmast was level with the rail, everything came to a standstill.

"I might have known it," I said impatiently. "Now we have to do it all over again."

"Why not fasten the tackle part way down the mast?" Maud suggested.

"It's what I should have done at first," I answered, hugely disgusted with myself.

Slipping off a turn, I lowered the mast back into the water and fastened the tackle a third of the way down from the butt. In an hour, what of this and of rests between the heaving, I had hoisted it to the point where I could hoist no more. Eight feet of the butt was above the rail, and I was as far away as ever from getting the spar on board. I sat down and pondered the problem. It did not take long. I sprang jubilantly to my feet.

"Now I have it!" I cried. "I ought to make the tackle fast at the point of balance. And what we learn of this will serve us with everything else we have to hoist aboard."

Once again I undid all my work by lowering the mast into the water. But I miscalculated the point of balance, so that when I heaved the top of the mast came up instead of the butt. Maud looked despair, but I laughed and said it would do just as well.

Instructing her how to hold the turn and be ready to slack away at command, I laid hold of the mast with my hands and tried to balance it inboard across the rail. When I thought I had it I cried to her to slack away; but the spar righted, despite my efforts, and dropped back toward the water. Again I heaved it up to its old position, for I had now another idea. I remembered the watch-tackle — a small double and single block affair — and fetched it.

While I was rigging it between the top of the spar and the opposite rail, Wolf Larsen came on the scene. We exchanged nothing more than good-mornings, and, though he could not see, he sat on the rail out of the way and followed by the sound all that I did.

Again instructing Maud to slack away at the windlass when I gave the word, I proceeded to heave on the watch-tackle. Slowly the mast swung in until it balanced at right angles across the rail; and then I discovered to my amazement that there was no need for Maud to slack away. In fact, the very opposite was necessary. Making the watch-tackle fast, I hove on the windlass and brought in the mast, inch by inch, till its top tilted down to the deck and finally its whole length lay on the deck.

I looked at my watch. It was twelve o'clock. My back was aching sorely, and I felt extremely tired and hungry. And there on the deck was a single stick of timber to show for a whole morning's work. For the first time I thoroughly realized the extent of the task before us. But I was learning, I was learning. The afternoon would show far more accomplished. And it did; for we returned at one o'clock, rested and strengthened by a hearty dinner.

In less than an hour I had the maintopmast on deck and was constructing the shears. Lashing the two topmasts together, and making allowance for their unequal length, at the point of intersection I attached the double block of the main throat-halyards. This, with the single block and the throat-halyards themselves, gave me a hoisting tackle. To prevent the butts of the masts from slipping on the deck, I nailed down thick cleats. Everything in readiness, I made a line fast to the apex of the shears and carried it directly to the windlass. I was growing to have faith in that windlass, for it gave me power beyond all expectation. As usual, Maud held the turn while I heaved. The shears rose in the air.

Then I discovered I had forgotten guy-ropes. This necessitated my climbing the shears, which I did twice, before I finished guying it fore and aft and to either side. Twilight had set in by the time this was accomplished. Wolf Larsen, who had sat about and listened all afternoon and never opened his mouth, had taken himself off to the galley and started his supper. I felt quite stiff across the small of the back, so much so that I straightened up with an effort and with pain. I looked proudly at my work. It was beginning to show. I was wild with desire, like a child with a new toy, to hoist something with my shears.

“I wish it weren’t so late,” I said. “I’d like to see how it works.”

“Don’t be a glutton, Humphrey,” Maud chided me. “Remember, to-morrow is coming, and you’re so tired now that you can hardly stand.”

“And you?” I said, with sudden solicitude. “You must be very tired. You have worked hard and nobly. I am proud of you, Maud.”

“Not half so proud as I am of you, nor with half the reason,” she answered, looking me straight in the eyes for a moment with an expression in her own and a dancing, tremulous light which I had not seen before and which gave me a pang of quick delight, I know not why, for I did not understand it. Then she dropped her eyes, to lift them again, laughing.

“If our friends could see us now,” she said. “Look at us. Have you ever paused for a moment to consider our appearance?”

“Yes, I have considered yours, frequently,” I answered, puzzling over what I had seen in her eyes and puzzled by her sudden change of subject.

“Mercy!” she cried. “And what do I look like, pray?”

“A scarecrow, I’m afraid,” I replied. “Just glance at your draggled skirts, for instance. Look at those three-cornered tears. And such a waist! It would not require a Sherlock Holmes to deduce that you have been cooking over a camp-fire, to say nothing of trying out seal-blubber. And to cap it all, that cap! And all that is the woman who wrote ‘A Kiss Endured.’”

She made me an elaborate and stately courtesy, and said, “As for you, sir — ”

And yet, through the five minutes of banter which followed, there was a serious something underneath the fun which I could not but relate to the strange and fleeting expression I had caught in her eyes. What was it? Could it be that our eyes were speaking beyond the will of our speech? My eyes had spoken, I knew, until I had found the culprits out and silenced them. This had occurred several times. But had she seen the clamour in them and understood? And had her eyes so spoken to me? What else could that expression have meant — that dancing, tremulous light, and a something more which words could not describe. And yet it could not be. It was impossible. Besides, I was not skilled in the speech of eyes. I was only Humphrey Van Weyden, a bookish fellow who loved. And to love, and to wait and win love, that surely was glorious enough for me. And thus I thought, even as we chaffed each other's appearance, until we arrived ashore and there were other things to think about.

"It's a shame, after working hard all day, that we cannot have an uninterrupted night's sleep," I complained, after supper.

"But there can be no danger now? from a blind man?" she queried.

"I shall never be able to trust him," I averred, "and far less now that he is blind. The liability is that his part helplessness will make him more malignant than ever. I know what I shall do to-morrow, the first thing — run out a light anchor and kedge the schooner off the beach. And each night when we come ashore in the boat, Mr. Wolf Larsen will be left a prisoner on board. So this will be the last night we have to stand watch, and because of that it will go the easier."

We were awake early and just finishing breakfast as daylight came.

"Oh, Humphrey!" I heard Maud cry in dismay and suddenly stop.

I looked at her. She was gazing at the *Ghost*. I followed her gaze, but could see nothing unusual. She looked at me, and I looked inquiry back.

"The shears," she said, and her voice trembled.

I had forgotten their existence. I looked again, but could not see them.

"If he has — " I muttered savagely.

She put her hand sympathetically on mine, and said, "You will have to begin over again."

"Oh, believe me, my anger means nothing; I could not hurt a fly," I smiled back bitterly. "And the worst of it is, he knows it. You are right. If he has destroyed the shears, I shall do nothing except begin over again."

"But I'll stand my watch on board hereafter," I blurted out a moment later. "And if he interferes — "

"But I dare not stay ashore all night alone," Maud was saying when I came back to myself. "It would be so much nicer if he would be friendly with us and help us. We could all live comfortably aboard."

"We will," I asserted, still savagely, for the destruction of my beloved shears had hit me hard. "That is, you and I will live aboard, friendly or not with Wolf Larsen."

"It's childish," I laughed later, "for him to do such things, and for me to grow angry over them, for that matter."

But my heart smote me when we climbed aboard and looked at the havoc he had done. The shears were gone altogether. The guys had been slashed right and left. The throat-halyards which I had rigged were cut across through every part. And he knew I could not splice. A thought struck me. I ran to the windlass. It would not work. He had broken it. We looked at each other in consternation. Then I ran to the side. The masts, booms, and gaffs I had cleared were gone. He had found the lines which held them, and cast them adrift.

Tears were in Maud's eyes, and I do believe they were for me. I could have wept myself. Where now was our project of remasting the *Ghost*? He had done his work well. I sat down on the hatch-combing and rested my chin on my hands in black despair.

"He deserves to die," I cried out; "and God forgive me, I am not man enough to be his executioner."

But Maud was by my side, passing her hand soothingly through my hair as though I were a child, and saying, "There, there; it will all come right. We are in the right, and it must come right."

I remembered Michelet and leaned my head against her; and truly I became strong again. The blessed woman was an unfailing fount of power to me. What did it matter? Only a set-back, a delay. The tide could not have carried the masts far to seaward, and there had been no wind. It meant merely more work to find them and tow them back. And besides, it was a lesson. I knew what to expect. He might have waited and destroyed our work more effectually when we had more accomplished.

"Here he comes now," she whispered.

I glanced up. He was strolling leisurely along the poop on the port side.

"Take no notice of him," I whispered. "He's coming to see how we take it. Don't let him know that we know. We can deny him that satisfaction. Take off your shoes — that's right — and carry them in your hand."

And then we played hide-and-seek with the blind man. As he came up the port side we slipped past on the starboard; and from the poop we watched him turn and start aft on our track.

He must have known, somehow, that we were on board, for he said "Good-morning" very confidently, and waited, for the greeting to be returned. Then he strolled aft, and we slipped forward.

"Oh, I know you're aboard," he called out, and I could see him listen intently after he had spoken.

It reminded me of the great hoot-owl, listening, after its booming cry, for the stir of its frightened prey. But we did not fir, and we moved only when he moved. And so we dodged about the deck, hand in hand, like a couple of children chased by a wicked ogre, till Wolf Larsen, evidently in disgust, left the deck for the cabin. There was glee in our eyes, and suppressed titters in our mouths, as we put on our shoes and clambered over the side into the boat. And as I looked into Maud's clear brown eyes I forgot the evil he had done, and I knew only that I loved her, and that because of her the strength was mine to win our way back to the world.

CHAPTER XXXVI

For two days Maud and I ranged the sea and explored the beaches in search of the missing masts. But it was not till the third day that we found them, all of them, the shears included, and, of all perilous places, in the pounding surf of the grim south-western promontory. And how we worked! At the dark end of the first day we returned, exhausted, to our little cove, towing the mainmast behind us. And we had been compelled to row, in a dead calm, practically every inch of the way.

Another day of heart-breaking and dangerous toil saw us in camp with the two topmasts to the good. The day following I was desperate, and I rafted together the foremast, the fore and main booms, and the fore and main gaffs. The wind was favourable, and I had thought to tow them back under sail, but the wind baffled, then died away, and our progress with the oars was a snail's pace. And it was such dispiriting effort. To throw one's whole strength and weight on the oars and to feel the boat checked in its forward lunge by the heavy drag behind, was not exactly exhilarating.

Night began to fall, and to make matters worse, the wind sprang up ahead. Not only did all forward motion cease, but we began to drift back and out to sea. I struggled at the oars till I was played out. Poor Maud, whom I could never prevent from working to the limit of her strength, lay weakly back in the stern-sheets. I could row no more. My bruised and swollen hands could no longer close on the oar handles. My wrists and arms ached intolerably, and though I had eaten heartily of a twelve-o'clock lunch, I had worked so hard that I was faint from hunger.

I pulled in the oars and bent forward to the line which held the tow. But Maud's hand leaped out restrainingly to mine.

"What are you going to do?" she asked in a strained, tense voice.

"Cast it off," I answered, slipping a turn of the rope.

But her fingers closed on mine.

"Please don't," she begged.

"It is useless," I answered. "Here is night and the wind blowing us off the land."

"But think, Humphrey. If we cannot sail away on the *Ghost*, we may remain for years on the island — for life even. If it has never been discovered all these years, it may never be discovered."

“You forget the boat we found on the beach,” I reminded her.

“It was a seal-hunting boat,” she replied, “and you know perfectly well that if the men had escaped they would have been back to make their fortunes from the rookery. You know they never escaped.”

I remained silent, undecided.

“Besides,” she added haltingly, “it’s your idea, and I want to see you succeed.”

Now I could harden my heart. As soon as she put it on a flattering personal basis, generosity compelled me to deny her.

“Better years on the island than to die to-night, or to-morrow, or the next day, in the open boat. We are not prepared to brave the sea. We have no food, no water, no blankets, nothing. Why, you’d not survive the night without blankets: I know how strong you are. You are shivering now.”

“It is only nervousness,” she answered. “I am afraid you will cast off the masts in spite of me.”

“Oh, please, please, Humphrey, don’t!” she burst out, a moment later.

And so it ended, with the phrase she knew had all power over me. We shivered miserably throughout the night. Now and again I fitfully slept, but the pain of the cold always aroused me. How Maud could stand it was beyond me. I was too tired to thrash my arms about and warm myself, but I found strength time and again to chafe her hands and feet to restore the circulation. And still she pleaded with me not to cast off the masts. About three in the morning she was caught by a cold cramp, and after I had rubbed her out of that she became quite numb. I was frightened. I got out the oars and made her row, though she was so weak I thought she would faint at every stroke.

Morning broke, and we looked long in the growing light for our island. At last it showed, small and black, on the horizon, fully fifteen miles away. I scanned the sea with my glasses. Far away in the south-west I could see a dark line on the water, which grew even as I looked at it.

“Fair wind!” I cried in a husky voice I did not recognize as my own.

Maud tried to reply, but could not speak. Her lips were blue with cold, and she was hollow-eyed — but oh, how bravely her brown eyes looked at me! How piteously brave!

Again I fell to chafing her hands and to moving her arms up and down and about until she could thrash them herself. Then I compelled her to stand up, and though she would have fallen had I not supported her, I forced her to walk back and forth the several steps between the thwart and the stern-sheets, and finally to spring up and down.

"Oh, you brave, brave woman," I said, when I saw the life coming back into her face. "Did you know that you were brave?"

"I never used to be," she answered. "I was never brave till I knew you. It is you who have made me brave."

"Nor I, until I knew you," I answered.

She gave me a quick look, and again I caught that dancing, tremulous light and something more in her eyes. But it was only for the moment. Then she smiled.

"It must have been the conditions," she said; but I knew she was wrong, and I wondered if she likewise knew. Then the wind came, fair and fresh, and the boat was soon labouring through a heavy sea toward the island. At half-past three in the afternoon we passed the south-western promontory. Not only were we hungry, but we were now suffering from thirst. Our lips were dry and cracked, nor could we longer moisten them with our tongues. Then the wind slowly died down. By night it was dead calm and I was toiling once more at the oars — but weakly, most weakly. At two in the morning the boat's bow touched the beach of our own inner cove and I staggered out to make the painter fast. Maud could not stand, nor had I strength to carry her. I fell in the sand with her, and, when I had recovered, contented myself with putting my hands under her shoulders and dragging her up the beach to the hut.

The next day we did no work. In fact, we slept till three in the afternoon, or at least I did, for I awoke to find Maud cooking dinner. Her power of recuperation was wonderful. There was something tenacious about that lily-frail body of hers, a clutch on existence which one could not reconcile with its patent weakness.

"You know I was travelling to Japan for my health," she said, as we lingered at the fire after dinner and delighted in the movelessness of loafing. "I was not very strong. I never was. The doctors recommended a sea voyage, and I chose the longest."

"You little knew what you were choosing," I laughed.

"But I shall be a different women for the experience, as well as a stronger woman," she answered; "and, I hope a better woman. At least I shall understand a great deal more life."

Then, as the short day waned, we fell to discussing Wolf Larsen's blindness. It was inexplicable. And that it was grave, I instanced his statement that he intended to stay and die on Endeavour Island. When he, strong man that he was, loving life as he did, accepted his death, it was plain that he was troubled by something more than mere blindness. There had been his terrific headaches, and we were agreed that it was some sort of brain break-down, and that in his attacks he endured pain beyond our comprehension.

I noticed as we talked over his condition, that Maud's sympathy went out to him more and more; yet I could not but love her for it, so sweetly womanly was it. Besides, there was no false sentiment about her feeling. She was agreed that the most rigorous treatment was necessary if we were to escape, though she recoiled at the suggestion that I might some time be compelled to take his life to save my own — "our own," she put it.

In the morning we had breakfast and were at work by daylight. I found a light kedge anchor in the fore-hold, where such things were kept; and with a deal of exertion got it on deck and into the boat. With a long running-line coiled down in the stem, I rowed well out into our little cove and dropped the anchor into the water. There was no wind, the tide was high, and the schooner floated. Casting off the shore-lines, I kedged her out by main strength (the windlass being broken), till she rode nearly up and down to the small anchor — too small to hold her in any breeze. So I lowered the big starboard anchor, giving plenty of slack; and by afternoon I was at work on the windlass.

Three days I worked on that windlass. Least of all things was I a mechanic, and in that time I accomplished what an ordinary machinist would have done in as many hours. I had to learn my tools to begin with, and every simple mechanical principle which such a man would have at his finger ends I had likewise to learn. And at the end of three days I had a windlass which worked clumsily. It never gave the satisfaction the old windlass had given, but it worked and made my work possible.

In half a day I got the two topmasts aboard and the shears rigged and guyed as before. And that night I slept on board and on deck beside my work. Maud, who refused to stay alone ashore, slept in the forecastle. Wolf Larsen had sat about, listening to my repairing the windlass and talking with Maud and me upon indifferent subjects. No reference was made on either side to the destruction of the shears; nor did he say anything further about my leaving his ship alone. But still I had feared him, blind and helpless and listening, always listening, and I never let his strong arms get within reach of me while I worked.

On this night, sleeping under my beloved shears, I was aroused by his footsteps on the deck. It was a starlight night, and I could see the bulk of him dimly as he moved about. I rolled out of my blankets and crept noiselessly after him in my stocking feet. He had armed himself with a draw-knife from the tool-locker, and with this he prepared to cut across the throat-halyards I had again rigged to the shears. He felt the halyards with his hands and discovered that I had not made them fast. This would not do for a draw-knife, so he laid hold of the running part, hove taut, and made fast. Then he prepared to saw across with the draw-knife.

“I wouldn’t, if I were you,” I said quietly.

He heard the click of my pistol and laughed.

“Hello, Hump,” he said. “I knew you were here all the time. You can’t fool my ears.”

“That’s a lie, Wolf Larsen,” I said, just as quietly as before. “However, I am aching for a chance to kill you, so go ahead and cut.”

“You have the chance always,” he sneered.

“Go ahead and cut,” I threatened ominously.

“I’d rather disappoint you,” he laughed, and turned on his heel and went aft.

“Something must be done, Humphrey,” Maud said, next morning, when I had told her of the night’s occurrence. “If he has liberty, he may do anything. He may sink the vessel, or set fire to it. There is no telling what he may do. We must make him a prisoner.”

“But how?” I asked, with a helpless shrug. “I dare not come within reach of his arms, and he knows that so long as his resistance is passive I cannot shoot him.”

“There must be some way,” she contended. “Let me think.”

“There is one way,” I said grimly.

She waited.

I picked up a seal-club.

“It won’t kill him,” I said. “And before he could recover I’d have him bound hard and fast.”

She shook her head with a shudder. “No, not that. There must be some less brutal way. Let us wait.”

But we did not have to wait long, and the problem solved itself. In the morning, after several trials, I found the point of balance in the foremast and attached my hoisting tackle a few feet above it. Maud held the turn on the windlass and coiled down while I heaved. Had the windlass been in order it would not have been so difficult; as it was, I was compelled to apply all my weight and strength to every inch of the heaving. I had to rest frequently. In truth, my spells of resting were longer than those of working. Maud even contrived, at times when all my efforts could not budge the windlass, to hold the turn with one hand and with the other to throw the weight of her slim body to my assistance.

At the end of an hour the single and double blocks came together at the top of the shears. I could hoist no more. And yet the mast was not swung entirely inboard. The butt rested against the outside of the port rail, while the top of the mast overhung the water far beyond the starboard rail. My shears were too short. All my work had been for nothing. But I no longer despaired in the old way. I was acquiring more confidence in myself and more confidence in the possibilities of windlasses, shears, and hoisting tackles. There was a way in which it could be done, and it remained for me to find that way.

While I was considering the problem, Wolf Larsen came on deck. We noticed something strange about him at once. The indecisiveness, or feebleness, of his movements was more pronounced. His walk was actually tottery as he came down the port side of the cabin. At the break of the poop he reeled, raised one hand to his eyes with the familiar brushing gesture, and fell down the steps — still on his feet — to the main deck, across which he staggered, falling and flinging out his arms for support. He regained his balance by the steerage companion-way and stood there dizzily for a space, when he suddenly crumpled up and collapsed, his legs bending under him as he sank to the deck.

“One of his attacks,” I whispered to Maud.

She nodded her head; and I could see sympathy warm in eyes.

We went up to him, but he seemed unconscious, breathing spasmodically. She took charge of him, lifting his head to keep the blood out of it and despatching me to the cabin for a pillow. I also brought blankets, and we made him comfortable. I took his pulse. It beat steadily and strong, and was quite normal. This puzzled me. I became suspicious.

“What if he should be feigning this?” I asked, still holding his wrist.

Maud shook her head, and there was reproof in her eyes. But just then the wrist I held leaped from my hand, and the hand clasped like a steel trap about my wrist. I cried aloud in awful fear, a wild inarticulate cry; and I caught one glimpse of his face, malignant and triumphant, as his other hand compassed my body and I was drawn down to him in a terrible grip.

My wrist was released, but his other arm, passed around my back, held both my arms so that I could not move. His free hand went to my throat, and in that moment I knew the bitterest foretaste of death earned by one's own idiocy. Why had I trusted myself within reach of those terrible arms? I could feel other hands at my throat. They were Maud's hands, striving vainly to tear loose the hand that was throttling me. She gave it up, and I heard her scream in a way that cut me to the soul, for it was a woman's scream of fear and heart-breaking despair. I had heard it before, during the sinking of the *Martinez*.

My face was against his chest and I could not see, but I heard Maud turn and run swiftly away along the deck. Everything was happening quickly. I had not yet had a glimmering of unconsciousness, and it seemed that an interminable period of time was lapsing before I heard her feet flying back. And just then I felt the whole man sink under me. The breath was leaving his lungs and his chest was collapsing under my weight. Whether it was merely the expelled breath, or his consciousness of his growing impotence, I know not, but his throat vibrated with a deep groan. The hand at my throat relaxed. I breathed. It fluttered and tightened again. But even his tremendous will could not overcome the dissolution that assailed it. That will of his was breaking down. He was fainting.

Maud's footsteps were very near as his hand fluttered for the last time and my throat was released. I rolled off and over to the deck on my back, gasping and blinking in the sunshine. Maud was pale but composed, — my eyes had gone instantly to her face, — and she was looking at me with mingled alarm and relief. A heavy seal-club in her hand caught my eyes, and at that moment she followed my gaze down to it. The club dropped from her hand as though it had suddenly stung her, and at the same moment my heart surged with a great joy. Truly she was my woman, my mate-woman, fighting with me and for me as the mate of a caveman would have fought, all the primitive in her aroused, forgetful of her culture, hard under the softening civilization of the only life she had ever known.

"Dear woman!" I cried, scrambling to my feet.

The next moment she was in my arms, weeping convulsively on my shoulder while I clasped her close. I looked down at the brown glory of her hair, glinting gems in the sunshine far more precious to me than those in the treasure-chests of kings. And I bent my head and kissed her hair softly, so softly that she did not know.

Then sober thought came to me. After all, she was only a woman, crying her relief, now that the danger was past, in the arms of her protector or of the one who had been endangered. Had I been father or brother, the situation would have been in nowise different. Besides, time and place were not meet, and I wished to earn a better right to declare my love. So once again I softly kissed her hair as I felt her receding from my clasp.

"It was a real attack this time," I said: "another shock like the one that made him blind. He feigned at first, and in doing so brought it on."

Maud was already rearranging his pillow.

"No," I said, "not yet. Now that I have him helpless, helpless he shall remain. From this day we live in the cabin. Wolf Larsen shall live in the steerage."

I caught him under the shoulders and dragged him to the companionway. At my direction Maud fetched a rope. Placing this under his shoulders, I balanced him across the threshold and lowered him down the steps to the floor. I could not lift him directly into a bunk, but with Maud's help I lifted first his shoulders and head, then his body, balanced him across the edge, and rolled him into a lower bunk.

But this was not to be all. I recollected the handcuffs in his state-room, which he preferred to use on sailors instead of the ancient and clumsy ship irons. So, when we left him, he lay handcuffed hand and foot. For the first time in many days I breathed freely. I felt strangely light as I came on deck, as though a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I felt, also, that Maud and I had drawn more closely together. And I wondered if she, too, felt it, as we walked along the deck side by side to where the stalled foremast hung in the shears.

CHAPTER XXXVII

At once we moved aboard the *Ghost*, occupying our old state-rooms and cooking in the galley. The imprisonment of Wolf Larsen had happened most opportunely, for what must have been the Indian summer of this high latitude was gone and drizzling stormy weather had set in. We were very comfortable, and the inadequate shears, with the foremast suspended from them, gave a business-like air to the schooner and a promise of departure.

And now that we had Wolf Larsen in irons, how little did we need it! Like his first attack, his second had been accompanied by serious disablement. Maud made the discovery in the afternoon while trying to give him nourishment. He had shown signs of consciousness, and she had spoken to him, eliciting no response. He was lying on his left side at the time, and in evident pain. With a restless movement he rolled his head around, clearing his left ear from the pillow against which it had been pressed. At once he heard and answered her, and at once she came to me.

Pressing the pillow against his left ear, I asked him if he heard me, but he gave no sign. Removing the pillow and, repeating the question he answered promptly that he did.

"Do you know you are deaf in the right ear?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered in a low, strong voice, "and worse than that. My whole right side is affected. It seems asleep. I cannot move arm or leg."

"Feigning again?" I demanded angrily.

He shook his head, his stern mouth shaping the strangest, twisted smile. It was indeed a twisted smile, for it was on the left side only, the facial muscles of the right side moving not at all.

"That was the last play of the Wolf," he said. "I am paralysed. I shall never walk again. Oh, only on the other side," he added, as though divining the suspicious glance I flung at his left leg, the knee of which had just then drawn up, and elevated the blankets.

"It's unfortunate," he continued. "I'd liked to have done for you first, Hump. And I thought I had that much left in me."

"But why?" I asked; partly in horror, partly out of curiosity.

Again his stern mouth framed the twisted smile, as he said:

"Oh, just to be alive, to be living and doing, to be the biggest bit of the ferment to the end, to eat you. But to die this way."

He shrugged his shoulders, or attempted to shrug them, rather, for the left shoulder alone moved. Like the smile, the shrug was twisted.

"But how can you account for it?" I asked. "Where is the seat of your trouble?"

"The brain," he said at once. "It was those cursed headaches brought it on."

"Symptoms," I said.

He nodded his head. "There is no accounting for it. I was never sick in my life. Something's gone wrong with my brain. A cancer, a tumour, or something of that nature, — a thing that devours and destroys. It's attacking my nerve-centres, eating them up, bit by bit, cell by cell — from the pain."

"The motor-centres, too," I suggested.

"So it would seem; and the curse of it is that I must lie here, conscious, mentally unimpaired, knowing that the lines are going down, breaking bit by bit communication with the world. I cannot see, hearing and feeling are leaving me, at this rate I shall soon cease to speak; yet all the time I shall be here, alive, active, and powerless."

"When you say *you* are here, I'd suggest the likelihood of the soul," I said.

"Bosh!" was his retort. "It simply means that in the attack on my brain the higher psychical centres are untouched. I can remember, I can think and reason. When that goes, I go. I am not. The soul?"

He broke out in mocking laughter, then turned his left ear to the pillow as a sign that he wished no further conversation.

Maud and I went about our work oppressed by the fearful fate which had overtaken him, — how fearful we were yet fully to realize. There was the awfulness of retribution about it. Our thoughts were deep and solemn, and we spoke to each other scarcely above whispers.

"You might remove the handcuffs," he said that night, as we stood in consultation over him. "It's dead safe. I'm a paralytic now. The next thing to watch out for is bed sores."

He smiled his twisted smile, and Maud, her eyes wide with horror, was compelled to turn away her head.

"Do you know that your smile is crooked?" I asked him; for I knew that she must attend him, and I wished to save her as much as possible.

"Then I shall smile no more," he said calmly. "I thought something was wrong. My right cheek has been numb all day. Yes, and I've had warnings of this for the last three days; by spells, my right side seemed going to sleep, sometimes arm or hand, sometimes leg or foot."

"So my smile is crooked?" he queried a short while after. "Well, consider henceforth that I smile internally, with my soul, if you please, my soul. Consider that I am smiling now."

And for the space of several minutes he lay there, quiet, indulging his grotesque fancy.

The man of him was not changed. It was the old, indomitable, terrible Wolf Larsen, imprisoned somewhere within that flesh which had once been so invincible and splendid. Now it bound him with insentient fetters, walling his soul in darkness and silence, blocking it from the world which to him had been a riot of action. No more would he conjugate the verb "to do in every mood and tense." "To be" was all that remained to him — to be, as he had defined death, without movement; to will, but not to execute; to think and reason and in the spirit of him to be as alive as ever, but in the flesh to be dead, quite dead.

And yet, though I even removed the handcuffs, we could not adjust ourselves to his condition. Our minds revolted. To us he was full of potentiality. We knew not what to expect of him next, what fearful thing, rising above the flesh, he might break out and do. Our experience warranted this state of mind, and we went about our work with anxiety always upon us.

I had solved the problem which had arisen through the shortness of the shears. By means of the watch-tackle (I had made a new one), I heaved the butt of the foremast across the rail and then lowered it to the deck. Next, by means of the shears, I hoisted the main boom on board. Its forty feet of length would supply the height necessary properly to swing the mast. By means of a secondary tackle I had attached to the shears, I swung the boom to a nearly perpendicular position, then lowered the butt to the deck, where, to prevent slipping, I spiked great cleats around it. The single block of my original shears-tackle I had attached to the end of the boom. Thus, by carrying this tackle to the windlass, I could raise and lower the end of the boom at will, the butt always remaining stationary, and, by means of guys, I could swing the boom from side to side. To the end of the boom I had likewise rigged a hoisting tackle; and when the whole arrangement was completed I could not but be startled by the power and latitude it gave me.

Of course, two days' work was required for the accomplishment of this part of my task, and it was not till the morning of the third day that I swung the foremast from the deck and proceeded to square its butt to fit the step. Here I was especially awkward. I sawed and chopped and chiselled the weathered wood till it had the appearance of having been gnawed by some gigantic mouse. But it fitted.

"It will work, I know it will work," I cried.

"Do you know Dr. Jordan's final test of truth?" Maud asked.

I shook my head and paused in the act of dislodging the shavings which had drifted down my neck.

"Can we make it work? Can we trust our lives to it? is the test."

"He is a favourite of yours," I said.

"When I dismantled my old Pantheon and cast out Napoleon and Cæsar and their fellows, I straightway erected a new Pantheon," she answered gravely, "and the first I installed as Dr. Jordan."

"A modern hero."

"And a greater because modern," she added. "How can the Old World heroes compare with ours?"

I shook my head. We were too much alike in many things for argument. Our points of view and outlook on life at least were very alike.

"For a pair of critics we agree famously," I laughed.

"And as shipwright and able assistant," she laughed back.

But there was little time for laughter in those days, what of our heavy work and of the awfulness of Wolf Larsen's living death.

He had received another stroke. He had lost his voice, or he was losing it. He had only intermittent use of it. As he phrased it, the wires were like the stock market, now up, now down. Occasionally the wires were up and he spoke as well as ever, though slowly and heavily. Then speech would suddenly desert him, in the middle of a sentence perhaps, and for hours, sometimes, we would wait for the connection to be re-established. He complained of great pain in his head, and it was during this period that he arranged a system of communication against the time when speech should leave him altogether — one pressure of the hand for "yes," two for "no." It was well that it was arranged, for by evening his voice had gone from him. By hand pressures, after that, he answered our questions, and when he wished to speak he scrawled his thoughts with his left hand, quite legibly, on a sheet of paper.

The fierce winter had now descended upon us. Gale followed gale, with snow and sleet and rain. The seals had started on their great southern migration, and the rookery was practically deserted. I worked feverishly. In spite of the bad weather, and of the wind which especially hindered me, I was on deck from daylight till dark and making substantial progress.

I profited by my lesson learned through raising the shears and then climbing them to attach the guys. To the top of the foremast, which was just lifted conveniently from the deck, I attached the rigging, stays and throat and peak halyards. As usual, I had underrated the amount of work involved in this portion of the task, and two long days were necessary to complete it. And there was so much yet to be done — the sails, for instance, which practically had to be made over.

While I toiled at rigging the foremast, Maud sewed on canvas, ready always to drop everything and come to my assistance when more hands than two were required. The canvas was heavy and hard, and she sewed with the regular sailor's palm and three-cornered sail-needle. Her hands were soon sadly blistered, but she struggled bravely on, and in addition doing the cooking and taking care of the sick man.

"A fig for superstition," I said on Friday morning. "That mast goes in to-day."

Everything was ready for the attempt. Carrying the boom-tackle to the windlass, I hoisted the mast nearly clear of the deck. Making this tackle fast, I took to the windlass the shears-tackle (which was connected with the end of the boom), and with a few turns had the mast perpendicular and clear.

Maud clapped her hands the instant she was relieved from holding the turn, crying:

"It works! It works! We'll trust our lives to it!"

Then she assumed a rueful expression.

"It's not over the hole," she add. "Will you have to begin all over?"

I smiled in superior fashion, and, slacking off on one of the boom-guys and taking in on the other, swung the mast perfectly in the centre of the deck. Still it was not over the hole. Again the rueful expression came on her face, and again I smiled in a superior way. Slacking away on the boom-tackle and hoisting an equivalent amount on the shears-tackle, I brought the butt of the mast into position directly over the hole in the deck. Then I gave Maud careful instructions for lowering away and went into the hold to the step on the schooner's bottom.

I called to her, and the mast moved easily and accurately. Straight toward the square hole of the step the square butt descended; but as it descended it slowly twisted so that square would not fit into square. But I had not even a moment's indecision. Calling to Maud to cease lowering, I went on deck and made the watch-tackle fast to the mast with a rolling hitch. I left Maud to pull on it while I went below. By the light of the lantern I saw the butt twist slowly around till its sides coincided with the sides of the step. Maud made fast and returned to the windlass. Slowly the butt descended the several intervening inches, at the same time slightly twisting again. Again Maud rectified the twist with the watch-tackle, and again she lowered away from the windlass. Square fitted into square. The mast was stepped.

I raised a shout, and she ran down to see. In the yellow lantern light we peered at what we had accomplished. We looked at each other, and our hands felt their way and clasped. The eyes of both of us, I think, were moist with the joy of success.

"It was done so easily after all," I remarked. "All the work was in the preparation."

"And all the wonder in the completion," Maud added. "I can scarcely bring myself to realize that that great mast is really up and in; that you have lifted it from the water, swung it through the air, and deposited it here where it belongs. It is a Titan's task."

"And they made themselves many inventions," I began merrily, then paused to sniff the air.

I looked hastily at the lantern. It was not smoking. Again I sniffed.

"Something is burning," Maud said, with sudden conviction.

We sprang together for the ladder, but I raced past her to the deck. A dense volume of smoke was pouring out of the steerage companion-way.

"The Wolf is not yet dead," I muttered to myself as I sprang down through the smoke.

It was so thick in the confined space that I was compelled to feel my way; and so potent was the spell of Wolf Larsen on my imagination, I was quite prepared for the helpless giant to grip my neck in a strangle hold. I hesitated, the desire to race back and up the steps to the deck almost overpowering me. Then I recollected Maud. The vision of her, as I had last seen her, in the lantern light of the schooner's hold, her brown eyes warm and moist with joy, flashed before me, and I knew that I could not go back.

I was choking and suffocating by the time I reached Wolf Larsen's bunk. I reached my hand and felt for his. He was lying motionless, but moved slightly at the touch of my hand. I felt over and under his blankets. There was no warmth, no sign of fire. Yet that smoke which blinded me and made me cough and gasp must have a source. I lost my head temporarily and dashed frantically about the steerage. A collision with the table partially knocked the wind from my body and brought me to myself. I reasoned that a helpless man could start a fire only near to where he lay.

I returned to Wolf Larsen's bunk. There I encountered Maud. How long she had been there in that suffocating atmosphere I could not guess.

"Go up on deck!" I commanded peremptorily.

"But, Humphrey — " she began to protest in a queer, husky voice.

"Please! please!" I shouted at her harshly.

She drew away obediently, and then I thought, What if she cannot find the steps? I started after her, to stop at the foot of the companion-way. Perhaps she had gone up. As I stood there, hesitant, I heard her cry softly:

"Oh, Humphrey, I am lost."

I found her fumbling at the wall of the after bulkhead, and, half leading her, half carrying her, I took her up the companion-way. The pure air was like nectar. Maud was only faint and dizzy, and I left her lying on the deck when I took my second plunge below.

The source of the smoke must be very close to Wolf Larsen — my mind was made up to this, and I went straight to his bunk. As I felt about among his blankets, something hot fell on the back of my hand. It burned me, and I jerked my hand away. Then I understood. Through the cracks in the bottom of the upper bunk he had set fire to the mattress. He still retained sufficient use of his left arm to do this. The damp straw of the mattress, fired from beneath and denied air, had been smouldering all the while.

As I dragged the mattress out of the bunk it seemed to disintegrate in mid-air, at the same time bursting into flames. I beat out the burning remnants of straw in the bunk, then made a dash for the deck for fresh air.

Several buckets of water sufficed to put out the burning mattress in the middle of the steerage floor; and ten minutes later, when the smoke had fairly cleared, I allowed Maud to come below. Wolf Larsen was unconscious, but it was a matter of minutes for the fresh air to restore him. We were working over him, however, when he signed for paper and pencil.

“Pray do not interrupt me,” he wrote. “I am smiling.”

“I am still a bit of the ferment, you see,” he wrote a little later.

“I am glad you are as small a bit as you are,” I said.

“Thank you,” he wrote. “But just think of how much smaller I shall be before I die.”

“And yet I am all here, Hump,” he wrote with a final flourish. “I can think more clearly than ever in my life before. Nothing to disturb me. Concentration is perfect. I am all here and more than here.”

It was like a message from the night of the grave; for this man’s body had become his mausoleum. And there, in so strange sepulchre, his spirit fluttered and lived. It would flutter and live till the last line of communication was broken, and after that who was to say how much longer it might continue to flutter and live?

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"I think my left side is going," Wolf Larsen wrote, the morning after his attempt to fire the ship. "The numbness is growing. I can hardly move my hand. You will have to speak louder. The last lines are going down."

"Are you in pain?" I asked.

I was compelled to repeat my question loudly before he answered:

"Not all the time."

The left hand stumbled slowly and painfully across the paper, and it was with extreme difficulty that we deciphered the scrawl. It was like a "spirit message," such as are delivered at séances of spiritualists for a dollar admission.

"But I am still here, all here," the hand scrawled more slowly and painfully than ever.

The pencil dropped, and we had to replace it in the hand.

"When there is no pain I have perfect peace and quiet. I have never thought so clearly. I can ponder life and death like a Hindoo sage."

"And immortality?" Maud queried loudly in the ear.

Three times the hand essayed to write but fumbled hopelessly. The pencil fell. In vain we tried to replace it. The fingers could not close on it. Then Maud pressed and held the fingers about the pencil with her own hand and the hand wrote, in large letters, and so slowly that the minutes ticked off to each letter:

"B-O-S-H."

It was Wolf Larsen's last word, "bosh," sceptical and invincible to the end. The arm and hand relaxed. The trunk of the body moved slightly. Then there was no movement. Maud released the hand. The fingers spread slightly, falling apart of their own weight, and the pencil rolled away.

"Do you still hear?" I shouted, holding the fingers and waiting for the single pressure which would signify "Yes." There was no response. The hand was dead.

"I noticed the lips slightly move," Maud said.

I repeated the question. The lips moved. She placed the tips of her fingers on them. Again I repeated the question. "Yes," Maud announced. We looked at each other expectantly.

"What good is it?" I asked. "What can we say now?"

“Oh, ask him — ”

She hesitated.

“Ask him something that requires no for an answer,” I suggested. “Then we will know for certainty.”

“Are you hungry?” she cried.

The lips moved under her fingers, and she answered, “Yes.”

“Will you have some beef?” was her next query.

“No,” she announced.

“Beef-tea?”

“Yes, he will have some beef-tea,” she said, quietly, looking up at me. “Until his hearing goes we shall be able to communicate with him. And after that — ”

She looked at me queerly. I saw her lips trembling and the tears swimming up in her eyes. She swayed toward me and I caught her in my arms.

“Oh, Humphrey,” she sobbed, “when will it all end? I am so tired, so tired.”

She buried her head on my shoulder, her frail form shaken with a storm of weeping. She was like a feather in my arms, so slender, so ethereal. “She has broken down at last,” I thought. “What can I do without her help?”

But I soothed and comforted her, till she pulled herself bravely together and recuperated mentally as quickly as she was wont to do physically.

“I ought to be ashamed of myself,” she said. Then added, with the whimsical smile I adored, “but I am only one, small woman.”

That phrase, the “one small woman,” startled me like an electric shock. It was my own phrase, my pet, secret phrase, my love phrase for her.

“Where did you get that phrase?” I demanded, with an abruptness that in turn startled her.

“What phrase?” she asked.

“One small woman.”

“Is it yours?” she asked.

“Yes,” I answered. “Mine. I made it.”

“Then you must have talked in your sleep,” she smiled.

The dancing, tremulous light was in her eyes. Mine, I knew, were speaking beyond the will of my speech. I leaned toward her. Without volition I leaned toward her, as a tree is swayed by the wind. Ah, we were very close together in that moment. But she shook her head, as one might shake off sleep or a dream, saying:

"I have known it all my life. It was my father's name for my mother."

"It is my phrase too," I said stubbornly.

"For your mother?"

"No," I answered, and she questioned no further, though I could have sworn her eyes retained for some time a mocking, teasing expression.

With the foremast in, the work now went on apace. Almost before I knew it, and without one serious hitch, I had the mainmast stepped. A derrick-boom, rigged to the foremast, had accomplished this; and several days more found all stays and shrouds in place, and everything set up taut. Topsails would be a nuisance and a danger for a crew of two, so I heaved the topmasts on deck and lashed them fast.

Several more days were consumed in finishing the sails and putting them on. There were only three — the jib, foresail, and mainsail; and, patched, shortened, and distorted, they were a ridiculously ill-fitting suit for so trim a craft as the *Ghost*.

"But they'll work!" Maud cried jubilantly. "We'll make them work, and trust our lives to them!"

Certainly, among my many new trades, I shone least as a sail-maker. I could sail them better than make them, and I had no doubt of my power to bring the schooner to some northern port of Japan. In fact, I had crammed navigation from text-books aboard; and besides, there was Wolf Larsen's star-scale, so simple a device that a child could work it.

As for its inventor, beyond an increasing deafness and the movement of the lips growing fainter and fainter, there had been little change in his condition for a week. But on the day we finished bending the schooner's sails, he heard his last, and the last movement of his lips died away — but not before I had asked him, "Are you all there?" and the lips had answered, "Yes."

The last line was down. Somewhere within that tomb of the flesh still dwelt the soul of the man. Walled by the living clay, that fierce intelligence we had known burned on; but it burned on in silence and darkness. And it was disembodied. To that intelligence there could be no objective knowledge of a body. It knew no body. The very world was not. It knew only itself and the vastness and profundity of the quiet and the dark.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The day came for our departure. There was no longer anything to detain us on Endeavour Island. The *Ghost's* stumpy masts were in place, her crazy sails bent. All my handiwork was strong, none of it beautiful; but I knew that it would work, and I felt myself a man of power as I looked at it.

"I did it! I did it! With my own hands I did it!" I wanted to cry aloud.

But Maud and I had a way of voicing each other's thoughts, and she said, as we prepared to hoist the mainsail:

"To think, Humphrey, you did it all with your own hands?"

"But there were two other hands," I answered. "Two small hands, and don't say that was a phrase, also, of your father."

She laughed and shook her head, and held her hands up for inspection.

"I can never get them clean again," she wailed, "nor soften the weather-beat."

"Then dirt and weather-beat shall be your guerdon of honour," I said, holding them in mine; and, spite of my resolutions, I would have kissed the two dear hands had she not swiftly withdrawn them.

Our comradeship was becoming tremulous, I had mastered my love long and well, but now it was mastering me. Wilfully had it disobeyed and won my eyes to speech, and now it was winning my tongue — ay, and my lips, for they were mad this moment to kiss the two small hands which had toiled so faithfully and hard. And I, too, was mad. There was a cry in my being like bugles calling me to her. And there was a wind blowing upon me which I could not resist, swaying the very body of me till I leaned toward her, all unconscious that I leaned. And she knew it. She could not but know it as she swiftly drew away her hands, and yet, could not forbear one quick searching look before she turned away her eyes.

By means of deck-tackles I had arranged to carry the halyards forward to the windlass; and now I hoisted the mainsail, peak and throat, at the same time. It was a clumsy way, but it did not take long, and soon the foresail as well was up and fluttering.

"We can never get that anchor up in this narrow place, once it has left the bottom," I said. "We should be on the rocks first."

"What can you do?" she asked.

“Slip it,” was my answer. “And when I do, you must do your first work on the windlass. I shall have to run at once to the wheel, and at the same time you must be hoisting the jib.”

This manœuvre of getting under way I had studied and worked out a score of times; and, with the jib-halyard to the windlass, I knew Maud was capable of hoisting that most necessary sail. A brisk wind was blowing into the cove, and though the water was calm, rapid work was required to get us safely out.

When I knocked the shackle-bolt loose, the chain roared out through the hawse-hole and into the sea. I raced aft, putting the wheel up. The *Ghost* seemed to start into life as she heeled to the first fill of her sails. The jib was rising. As it filled, the *Ghost’s* bow swung off and I had to put the wheel down a few spokes and steady her.

I had devised an automatic jib-sheet which passed the jib across of itself, so there was no need for Maud to attend to that; but she was still hoisting the jib when I put the wheel hard down. It was a moment of anxiety, for the *Ghost* was rushing directly upon the beach, a stone’s throw distant. But she swung obediently on her heel into the wind. There was a great fluttering and flapping of canvas and reef-points, most welcome to my ears, then she filled away on the other tack.

Maud had finished her task and come aft, where she stood beside me, a small cap perched on her wind-blown hair, her cheeks flushed from exertion, her eyes wide and bright with the excitement, her nostrils quivering to the rush and bite of the fresh salt air. Her brown eyes were like a startled deer’s. There was a wild, keen look in them I had never seen before, and her lips parted and her breath suspended as the *Ghost*, charging upon the wall of rock at the entrance to the inner cove, swept into the wind and filled away into safe water.

My first mate’s berth on the sealing grounds stood me in good stead, and I cleared the inner cove and laid a long tack along the shore of the outer cove. Once again about, and the *Ghost* headed out to open sea. She had now caught the bosom-breathing of the ocean, and was herself a-breath with the rhythm of it as she smoothly mounted and slipped down each broad-backed wave. The day had been dull and overcast, but the sun now burst through the clouds, a welcome omen, and shone upon the curving beach where together we had dared the lords of the harem and slain the holluschickie. All Endeavour Island brightened under the sun. Even the grim south-western promontory showed less grim, and here and there, where the sea-spray wet its surface, high lights flashed and dazzled in the sun.

“I shall always think of it with pride,” I said to Maud.

She threw her head back in a queenly way but said, “Dear, dear Endeavour Island! I shall always love it.”

“And I,” I said quickly.

It seemed our eyes must meet in a great understanding, and yet, loath, they struggled away and did not meet.

There was a silence I might almost call awkward, till I broke it, saying:

“See those black clouds to windward. You remember, I told you last night the barometer was falling.”

“And the sun is gone,” she said, her eyes still fixed upon our island, where we had proved our mastery over matter and attained to the truest comradeship that may fall to man and woman.

“And it’s slack off the sheets for Japan!” I cried gaily. “A fair wind and a flowing sheet, you know, or however it goes.”

Lashing the wheel I ran forward, eased the fore and mainsheets, took in on the boom-tackles and trimmed everything for the quartering breeze which was ours. It was a fresh breeze, very fresh, but I resolved to run as long as I dared. Unfortunately, when running free, it is impossible to lash the wheel, so I faced an all-night watch. Maud insisted on relieving me, but proved that she had not the strength to steer in a heavy sea, even if she could have gained the wisdom on such short notice. She appeared quite heart-broken over the discovery, but recovered her spirits by coiling down tackles and halyards and all stray ropes. Then there were meals to be cooked in the galley, beds to make, Wolf Larsen to be attended upon, and she finished the day with a grand house-cleaning attack upon the cabin and steerage.

All night I steered, without relief, the wind slowly and steadily increasing and the sea rising. At five in the morning Maud brought me hot coffee and biscuits she had baked, and at seven a substantial and piping hot breakfast put new lift into me.

Throughout the day, and as slowly and steadily as ever, the wind increased. It impressed one with its sullen determination to blow, and blow harder, and keep on blowing. And still the *Ghost* foamed along, racing off the miles till I was certain she was making at least eleven knots. It was too good to lose, but by nightfall I was exhausted. Though in splendid physical trim, a thirty-six-hour trick at the wheel was the limit of my endurance. Besides, Maud begged me to heave to, and I knew, if the wind and sea increased at the same rate during the night, that it would soon be impossible to heave to. So, as twilight deepened, gladly and at the same time reluctantly, I brought the *Ghost* up on the wind.

But I had not reckoned upon the colossal task the reefing of three sails meant for one man. While running away from the wind I had not appreciated its force, but when we ceased to run I learned to my sorrow, and well-nigh to my despair, how fiercely it was really blowing. The wind balked my every effort, ripping the canvas out of my hands and in an instant undoing what I had gained by ten minutes of severest struggle. At eight o'clock I had succeeded only in putting the second reef into the foresail. At eleven o'clock I was no farther along. Blood dripped from every finger-end, while the nails were broken to the quick. From pain and sheer exhaustion I wept in the darkness, secretly, so that Maud should not know.

Then, in desperation, I abandoned the attempt to reef the mainsail and resolved to try the experiment of heaving to under the close-reefed foresail. Three hours more were required to gasket the mainsail and jib, and at two in the morning, nearly dead, the life almost buffeted and worked out of me, I had barely sufficient consciousness to know the experiment was a success. The close-reefed foresail worked. The *Ghost* clung on close to the wind and betrayed no inclination to fall off broadside to the trough.

I was famished, but Maud tried vainly to get me to eat. I dozed with my mouth full of food. I would fall asleep in the act of carrying food to my mouth and waken in torment to find the act yet uncompleted. So sleepily helpless was I that she was compelled to hold me in my chair to prevent my being flung to the floor by the violent pitching of the schooner.

Of the passage from the galley to the cabin I knew nothing. It was a sleep-walker Maud guided and supported. In fact, I was aware of nothing till I awoke, how long after I could not imagine, in my bunk with my boots off. It was dark. I was stiff and lame, and cried out with pain when the bed-clothes touched my poor finger-ends.

Morning had evidently not come, so I closed my eyes and went to sleep again. I did not know it, but I had slept the clock around and it was night again.

Once more I woke, troubled because I could sleep no better. I struck a match and looked at my watch. It marked midnight. And I had not left the deck until three! I should have been puzzled had I not guessed the solution. No wonder I was sleeping brokenly. I had slept twenty-one hours. I listened for a while to the behaviour of the *Ghost*, to the pounding of the seas and the muffled roar of the wind on deck, and then turned over on my ride and slept peacefully until morning.

When I arose at seven I saw no sign of Maud and concluded she was in the galley preparing breakfast. On deck I found the *Ghost* doing splendidly under her patch of canvas. But in the galley, though a fire was burning and water boiling, I found no Maud.

I discovered her in the steerage, by Wolf Larsen's bunk. I looked at him, the man who had been hurled down from the topmost pitch of life to be buried alive and be worse than dead. There seemed a relaxation of his expressionless face which was new. Maud looked at me and I understood.

"His life flickered out in the storm," I said.

"But he still lives," she answered, infinite faith in her voice.

"He had too great strength."

"Yes," she said, "but now it no longer shackles him. He is a free spirit."

"He is a free spirit surely," I answered; and, taking her hand, I led her on deck.

The storm broke that night, which is to say that it diminished as slowly as it had arisen. After breakfast next morning, when I had hoisted Wolf Larsen's body on deck ready for burial, it was still blowing heavily and a large sea was running. The deck was continually awash with the sea which came inboard over the rail and through the scuppers. The wind smote the schooner with a sudden gust, and she heeled over till her lee rail was buried, the roar in her rigging rising in pitch to a shriek. We stood in the water to our knees as I bared my head.

"I remember only one part of the service," I said, "and that is, 'And the body shall be cast into the sea.'"

Maud looked at me, surprised and shocked; but the spirit of something I had seen before was strong upon me, impelling me to give service to Wolf Larsen as Wolf Larsen had once given service to another man. I lifted the end of the hatch cover and the canvas-shrouded body slipped feet first into the sea. The weight of iron dragged it down. It was gone.

"Good-bye, Lucifer, proud spirit," Maud whispered, so low that it was drowned by the shouting of the wind; but I saw the movement of her lips and knew.

As we clung to the lee rail and worked our way aft, I happened to glance to leeward. The *Ghost*, at the moment, was uptossed on a sea, and I caught a clear view of a small steamship two or three miles away, rolling and pitching, head on to the sea, as it steamed toward us. It was painted black, and from the talk of the hunters of their poaching exploits I recognized it as a United States revenue cutter. I pointed it out to Maud and hurriedly led her aft to the safety of the poop.

I started to rush below to the flag-locker, then remembered that in rigging the *Ghost*. I had forgotten to make provision for a flag-halyard.

"We need no distress signal," Maud said. "They have only to see us."

"We are saved," I said, soberly and solemnly. And then, in an exuberance of joy, "I hardly know whether to be glad or not."

I looked at her. Our eyes were not loath to meet. We leaned toward each other, and before I knew it my arms were about her.

"Need I?" I asked.

And she answered, "There is no need, though the telling of it would be sweet, so sweet."

Her lips met the press of mine, and, by what strange trick of the imagination I know not, the scene in the cabin of the *Ghost* flashed upon me, when she had pressed her fingers lightly on my lips and said, "Hush, hush."

"My woman, my one small woman," I said, my free hand petting her shoulder in the way all lovers know though never learn in school.

"My man," she said, looking at me for an instant with tremulous lids which fluttered down and veiled her eyes as she snuggled her head against my breast with a happy little sigh.

I looked toward the cutter. It was very close. A boat was being lowered.

"One kiss, dear love," I whispered. "One kiss more before they come."

"And rescue us from ourselves," she completed, with a most adorable smile, whimsical as I had never seen it, for it was whimsical with love.

THE END

THE GAME

This novel was first published in 1906. The novel deals with the theme of boxing, one of London's passionate interests. *The Game* is one of the most powerful and evocative portraits ever given of prizefighters in the grip of their fervor.

London's mother, who was a music teacher and a spiritualist

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER I

Many patterns of carpet lay rolled out before them on the floor — two of Brussels showed the beginning of their quest, and its ending in that direction; while a score of ingrains lured their eyes and prolonged the debate between desire pocket-book. The head of the department did them the honor of waiting upon them himself — or did Joe the honor, as she well knew, for she had noted the open-mouthed awe of the elevator boy who brought them up. Nor had she been blind to the marked respect shown Joe by the urchins and groups of young fellows on corners, when she walked with him in their own neighborhood down at the west end of the town.

But the head of the department was called away to the telephone, and in her mind the splendid promise of the carpets and the irk of the pocket-book were thrust aside by a greater doubt and anxiety.

“But I don’t see what you find to like in it, Joe,” she said softly, the note of insistence in her words betraying recent and unsatisfactory discussion.

For a fleeting moment a shadow darkened his boyish face, to be replaced by the glow of tenderness. He was only a boy, as she was only a girl — two young things on the threshold of life, house-renting and buying carpets together.

“What’s the good of worrying?” he questioned. “It’s the last go, the very last.”

He smiled at her, but she saw on his lips the unconscious and all but breathed sigh of renunciation, and with the instinctive monopoly of woman for her mate, she feared this thing she did not understand and which gripped his life so strongly.

“You know the go with O’Neil cleared the last payment on mother’s house,” he went on. “And that’s off my mind. Now this last with Ponta will give me a hundred dollars in bank — an even hundred, that’s the purse — for you and me to start on, a nest-egg.”

She disregarded the money appeal. “But you like it, this — this ‘game’ you call it. Why?”

He lacked speech-expression. He expressed himself with his hands, at his work, and with his body and the play of his muscles in the squared ring; but to tell with his own lips the charm of the squared ring was beyond him.

Yet he essayed, and haltingly at first, to express what he felt and analyzed when playing the Game at the supreme summit of existence.

"All I know, Genevieve, is that you feel good in the ring when you've got the man where you want him, when he's had a punch up both sleeves waiting for you and you've never given him an opening to land 'em, when you've landed your own little punch an' he's goin' groggy, an' holdin' on, an' the referee's dragging him off so's you can go in an' finish 'm, an' all the house is shouting an' tearin' itself loose, an' you know you're the best man, an' that you played m' fair an' won out because you're the best man. I tell you — "

He ceased brokenly, alarmed by his own volubility and by Genevieve's look of alarm. As he talked she had watched his face while fear dawned in her own. As he described the moment of moments to her, on his inward vision were lined the tottering man, the lights, the shouting house, and he swept out and away from her on this tide of life that was beyond her comprehension, menacing, irresistible, making her love pitiful and weak. The Joe she knew receded, faded, became lost. The fresh boyish face was gone, the tenderness of the eyes, the sweetness of the mouth with its curves and pictured corners. It was a man's face she saw, a face of steel, tense and immobile; a mouth of steel, the lips like the jaws of a trap; eyes of steel, dilated, intent, and the light in them and the glitter were the light and glitter of steel. The face of a man, and she had known only his boy face. This face she did not know at all.

And yet, while it frightened her, she was vaguely stirred with pride in him. His masculinity, the masculinity of the fighting male, made its inevitable appeal to her, a female, moulded by all her heredity to seek out the strong man for mate, and to lean against the wall of his strength. She did not understand this force of his being that rose mightier than her love and laid its compulsion upon him; and yet, in her woman's heart she was aware of the sweet pang which told her that for her sake, for Love's own sake, he had surrendered to her, abandoned all that portion of his life, and with this one last fight would never fight again.

"Mrs. Silverstein doesn't like prize-fighting," she said. "She's down on it, and she knows something, too."

He smiled indulgently, concealing a hurt, not altogether new, at her persistent inappreciation of this side of his nature and life in which he took the greatest pride. It was to him power and achievement, earned by his own effort and hard work; and in the moment when he had offered himself and all that he was to Genevieve, it was this, and this alone, that he was proudly conscious of laying at her feet. It was the merit of work performed, a guerdon of manhood finer and greater than any other man could offer, and it had been to him his justification and right to possess her. And she had not understood it then, as she did not understand it now, and he might well have wondered what else she found in him to make him worthy.

"Mrs. Silverstein is a dub, and a softy, and a knocker," he said good-humoredly. "What's she know about such things, anyway? I tell you it *is* good, and healthy, too," — this last as an afterthought. "Look at me. I tell you I have to live clean to be in condition like this. I live cleaner than she does, or her old man, or anybody you know — baths, rub-downs, exercise, regular hours, good food and no makin' a pig of myself, no drinking, no smoking, nothing that'll hurt me. Why, I live cleaner than you, Genevieve — "

"Honest, I do," he hastened to add at sight of her shocked face. "I don't mean water an' soap, but look there." His hand closed reverently but firmly on her arm. "Soft, you're all soft, all over. Not like mine. Here, feel this."

He pressed the ends of her fingers into his hard arm-muscles until she winced from the hurt.

"Hard all over just like that," he went on. "Now that's what I call clean. Every bit of flesh an' blood an' muscle is clean right down to the bones — and they're clean, too. No soap and water only on the skin, but clean all the way in. I tell you it feels clean. It knows it's clean itself. When I wake up in the morning an' go to work, every drop of blood and bit of meat is shouting right out that it is clean. Oh, I tell you — "

He paused with swift awkwardness, again confounded by his unwonted flow of speech. Never in his life had he been stirred to such utterance, and never in his life had there been cause to be so stirred. For it was the Game that had been questioned, its verity and worth, the Game itself, the biggest thing in the world — or what had been the biggest thing in the world until that chance afternoon and that chance purchase in Silverstein's candy store, when Genevieve loomed suddenly colossal in his life, overshadowing all other things. He was beginning to see, though vaguely, the sharp conflict between woman and career, between a man's work in the world and woman's need of the man. But he was not capable of generalization. He saw only the antagonism between the concrete, flesh-and-blood Genevieve and the great, abstract, living Game. Each resented the other, each claimed him; he was torn with the strife, and yet drifted helpless on the currents of their contention.

His words had drawn Genevieve's gaze to his face, and she had pleasured in the clear skin, the clear eyes, the cheek soft and smooth as a girl's. She saw the force of his argument and disliked it accordingly. She revolted instinctively against this Game which drew him away from her, robbed her of part of him. It was a rival she did not understand. Nor could she understand its seductions. Had it been a woman rival, another girl, knowledge and light and sight would have been hers. As it was, she grappled in the dark with an intangible adversary about which she knew nothing. What truth she felt in his speech made the Game but the more formidable.

A sudden conception of her weakness came to her. She felt pity for herself, and sorrow. She wanted him, all of him, her woman's need would not be satisfied with less; and he eluded her, slipped away here and there from the embrace with which she tried to clasp him. Tears swam into her eyes, and her lips trembled, turning defeat into victory, routing the all-potent Game with the strength of her weakness.

"Don't, Genevieve, don't," the boy pleaded, all contrition, though he was confused and dazed. To his masculine mind there was nothing relevant about her break-down; yet all else was forgotten at sight of her tears.

She smiled forgiveness through her wet eyes, and though he knew of nothing for which to be forgiven, he melted utterly. His hand went out impulsively to hers, but she avoided the clasp by a sort of bodily stiffening and chill, the while the eyes smiled still more gloriously.

"Here comes Mr. Clausen," she said, at the same time, by some transforming alchemy of woman, presenting to the newcomer eyes that showed no hint of moistness.

"Think I was never coming back, Joe?" queried the head of the department, a pink-and-white-faced man, whose austere side-whiskers were belied by genial little eyes.

"Now let me see — hum, yes, we was discussing ingrains," he continued briskly. "That tasty little pattern there catches your eye, don't it now, eh? Yes, yes, I know all about it. I set up housekeeping when I was getting fourteen a week. But nothing's too good for the little nest, eh? Of course I know, and it's only seven cents more, and the dearest is the cheapest, I say.

Tell you what I'll do, Joe," — this with a burst of philanthropic impulsiveness and a confidential lowering of voice, — "seein's it's you, and I wouldn't do it for anybody else, I'll reduce it to five cents. Only," — here his voice became impressively solemn, — "only you mustn't ever tell how much you really did pay."

"Sewed, lined, and laid — of course that's included," he said, after Joe and Genevieve had conferred together and announced their decision.

"And the little nest, eh?" he queried. "When do you spread your wings and fly away? To-morrow! So soon? Beautiful! Beautiful!"

He rolled his eyes ecstatically for a moment, then beamed upon them with a fatherly air.

Joe had replied sturdily enough, and Genevieve had blushed prettily; but both felt that it was not exactly proper. Not alone because of the privacy and holiness of the subject, but because of what might have been prudery in the middle class, but which in them was the modesty and reticence found in individuals of the working class when they strive after clean living and morality.

Mr. Clausen accompanied them to the elevator, all smiles, patronage, and beneficence, while the clerks turned their heads to follow Joe's retreating figure.

"And to-night, Joe?" Mr. Clausen asked anxiously, as they waited at the shaft. "How do you feel? Think you'll do him?"

"Sure," Joe answered. "Never felt better in my life."

"You feel all right, eh? Good! Good! You see, I was just a-wonderin' — you know, ha! ha! — goin' to get married and the rest — thought you might be unstrung, eh, a trifle? — nerves just a bit off, you know. Know how gettin' married is myself. But you're all right, eh? Of course you are. No use asking *you* that. Ha! ha! Well, good luck, my boy! I know you'll win. Never had the least doubt, of course, of course."

"And good-by, Miss Pritchard," he said to Genevieve, gallantly handing her into the elevator. "Hope you call often. Will be charmed — charmed — I assure you."

"Everybody calls you 'Joe'," she said reproachfully, as the car dropped downward. "Why don't they call you 'Mr. Fleming'? That's no more than proper."

But he was staring moodily at the elevator boy and did not seem to hear.

"What's the matter, Joe?" she asked, with a tenderness the power of which to thrill him she knew full well.

"Oh, nothing," he said. "I was only thinking — and wishing."

"Wishing? — what?" Her voice was seduction itself, and her eyes would have melted stronger than he, though they failed in calling his up to them.

Then, deliberately, his eyes lifted to hers. "I was wishing you could see me fight just once."

She made a gesture of disgust, and his face fell. It came to her sharply that the rival had thrust between and was bearing him away.

"I — I'd like to," she said hastily with an effort, striving after that sympathy which weakens the strongest men and draws their heads to women's breasts.

"Will you?"

Again his eyes lifted and looked into hers. He meant it — she knew that. It seemed a challenge to the greatness of her love.

"It would be the proudest moment of my life," he said simply.

It may have been the apprehensiveness of love, the wish to meet his need for her sympathy, and the desire to see the Game face to face for wisdom's sake, — and it may have been the clarion call of adventure ringing through the narrow confines of uneventful existence; for a great daring thrilled through her, and she said, just as simply, "I will."

"I didn't think you would, or I wouldn't have asked," he confessed, as they walked out to the sidewalk.

"But can't it be done?" she asked anxiously, before her resolution could cool.

"Oh, I can fix that; but I didn't think you would."

"I didn't think you would," he repeated, still amazed, as he helped her upon the electric car and felt in his pocket for the fare.

CHAPTER II

Genevieve and Joe were working-class aristocrats. In an environment made up largely of sordidness and wretchedness they had kept themselves unsullied and wholesome. Theirs was a self-respect, a regard for the niceties and clean things of life, which had held them aloof from their kind. Friends did not come to them easily; nor had either ever possessed a really intimate friend, a heart-companion with whom to chum and have things in common. The social instinct was strong in them, yet they had remained lonely because they could not satisfy that instinct and at that same time satisfy their desire for cleanness and decency.

If ever a girl of the working class had led the sheltered life, it was Genevieve. In the midst of roughness and brutality, she had shunned all that was rough and brutal. She saw but what she chose to see, and she chose always to see the best, avoiding coarseness and uncouthness without effort, as a matter of instinct. To begin with, she had been peculiarly unexposed. An only child, with an invalid mother upon whom she attended, she had not joined in the street games and frolics of the children of the neighbourhood. Her father, a mild-tempered, narrow-chested, anæmic little clerk, domestic because of his inherent disability to mix with men, had done his full share toward giving the home an atmosphere of sweetness and tenderness.

An orphan at twelve, Genevieve had gone straight from her father’s funeral to live with the Silversteins in their rooms above the candy store; and here, sheltered by kindly aliens, she earned her keep and clothes by waiting on the shop. Being Gentile, she was especially necessary to the Silversteins, who would not run the business themselves when the day of their Sabbath came round.

And here, in the uneventful little shop, six maturing years had slipped by. Her acquaintances were few. She had elected to have no girl chum for the reason that no satisfactory girl had appeared. Nor did she choose to walk with the young fellows of the neighbourhood, as was the custom of girls from their fifteenth year. “That stuck-up doll-face,” was the way the girls of the neighbourhood described her; and though she earned their enmity by her beauty and aloofness, she none the less commanded their respect. “Peaches and cream,” she was called by the young men — though softly and amongst themselves, for they were afraid of arousing the ire of the other girls, while they stood in awe of Genevieve, in a dimly religious way, as a something mysteriously beautiful and unapproachable.

For she was indeed beautiful. Springing from a long line of American descent, she was one of those wonderful working-class blooms which occasionally appear, defying all precedent of forebears and environment, apparently without cause or explanation. She was a beauty in color, the blood spraying her white skin so deliciously as to earn for her the apt description, "peaches and cream." She was a beauty in the regularity of her features; and, if for no other reason, she was a beauty in the mere delicacy of the lines on which she was moulded. Quiet, low-voiced, stately, and dignified, she somehow had the knack of dress, and but befitted her beauty and dignity with anything she put on. Withal, she was sheerly feminine, tender and soft and clinging, with the smouldering passion of the mate and the motherliness of the woman. But this side of her nature had lain dormant through the years, waiting for the mate to appear.

Then Joe came into Silverstein's shop one hot Saturday afternoon to cool himself with ice-cream soda. She had not noticed his entrance, being busy with one other customer, an urchin of six or seven who gravely analyzed his desires before the show-case wherein truly generous and marvellous candy creations reposed under a cardboard announcement, "Five for Five Cents."

She had heard, "Ice-cream soda, please," and had herself asked, "What flavor?" without seeing his face. For that matter, it was not a custom of hers to notice young men. There was something about them she did not understand. The way they looked at her made her uncomfortable, she knew not why; while there was an uncouthness and roughness about them that did not please her. As yet, her imagination had been untouched by man. The young fellows she had seen had held no lure for her, had been without meaning to her. In short, had she been asked to give one reason for the existence of men on the earth, she would have been nonplussed for a reply.

As she emptied the measure of ice-cream into the glass, her casual glance rested on Joe's face, and she experienced on the instant a pleasant feeling of satisfaction. The next instant his eyes were upon her face, her eyes had dropped, and she was turning away toward the soda fountain. But at the fountain, filling the glass, she was impelled to look at him again — but for no more than an instant, for this time she found his eyes already upon her, waiting to meet hers, while on his face was a frankness of interest that caused her quickly to look away.

That such pleasingness would reside for her in any man astonished her. “What a pretty boy,” she thought to herself, innocently and instinctively trying to ward off the power to hold and draw her that lay behind the mere prettiness. “Besides, he isn’t pretty,” she thought, as she placed the glass before him, received the silver dime in payment, and for the third time looked into his eyes. Her vocabulary was limited, and she knew little of the worth of words; but the strong masculinity of his boy’s face told her that the term was inappropriate.

“He must be handsome, then,” was her next thought, as she again dropped her eyes before his. But all good-looking men were called handsome, and that term, too, displeased her. But whatever it was, he was good to see, and she was irritably aware of a desire to look at him again and again.

As for Joe, he had never seen anything like this girl across the counter. While he was wiser in natural philosophy than she, and could have given immediately the reason for woman’s existence on the earth, nevertheless woman had no part in his cosmos. His imagination was as untouched by woman as the girl’s was by man. But his imagination was touched now, and the woman was Genevieve. He had never dreamed a girl could be so beautiful, and he could not keep his eyes from her face. Yet every time he looked at her, and her eyes met his, he felt painful embarrassment, and would have looked away had not her eyes dropped so quickly.

But when, at last, she slowly lifted her eyes and held their gaze steadily, it was his own eyes that dropped, his own cheek that mantled red. She was much less embarrassed than he, while she betrayed her embarrassment not at all. She was aware of a flutter within, such as she had never known before, but in no way did it disturb her outward serenity. Joe, on the contrary, was obviously awkward and delightfully miserable.

Neither knew love, and all that either was aware was an overwhelming desire to look at the other. Both had been troubled and roused, and they were drawing together with the sharpness and imperativeness of uniting elements. He toyed with his spoon, and flushed his embarrassment over his soda, but lingered on; and she spoke softly, dropped her eyes, and wove her witchery about him.

But he could not linger forever over a glass of ice-cream soda, while he did not dare ask for a second glass. So he left her to remain in the shop in a waking trance, and went away himself down the street like a somnambulist. Genevieve dreamed through the afternoon and knew that she was in love. Not so with Joe. He knew only that he wanted to look at her again, to see her face. His thoughts did not get beyond this, and besides, it was scarcely a thought, being more a dim and inarticulate desire.

The urge of this desire he could not escape. Day after day it worried him, and the candy shop and the girl behind the counter continually obtruded themselves. He fought off the desire. He was afraid and ashamed to go back to the candy shop. He solaced his fear with, “I ain’t a ladies’ man.” Not once, nor twice, but scores of times, he muttered the thought to himself, but it did no good. And by the middle of the week, in the evening, after work, he came into the shop. He tried to come in carelessly and casually, but his whole carriage advertised the strong effort of will that compelled his legs to carry his reluctant body thither. Also, he was shy, and awkwarder than ever. Genevieve, on the contrary, was serener than ever, though fluttering most alarmingly within. He was incapable of speech, mumbled his order, looked anxiously at the clock, despatched his ice-cream soda in tremendous haste, and was gone.

She was ready to weep with vexation. Such meagre reward for four days’ waiting, and assuming all the time that she loved! He was a nice boy and all that, she knew, but he needn’t have been in so disgraceful a hurry. But Joe had not reached the corner before he wanted to be back with her again. He just wanted to look at her. He had no thought that it was love. Love? That was when young fellows and girls walked out together. As for him — And then his desire took sharper shape, and he discovered that that was the very thing he wanted her to do. He wanted to see her, to look at her, and well could he do all this if she but walked out with him. Then that was why the young fellows and girls walked out together, he mused, as the week-end drew near. He had remotely considered this walking out to be a mere form or observance preliminary to matrimony. Now he saw the deeper wisdom in it, wanted it himself, and concluded therefrom that he was in love.

Both were now of the same mind, and there could be but the one ending; and it was the mild nine days’ wonder of Genevieve’s neighborhood when she and Joe walked out together.

Both were blessed with an avarice of speech, and because of it their courtship was a long one. As he expressed himself in action, she expressed herself in repose and control, and by the love-light in her eyes — though this latter she would have suppressed in all maiden modesty had she been conscious of the speech her heart printed so plainly there. “Dear” and “darling” were too terribly intimate for them to achieve quickly; and, unlike most mating couples, they did not overwork the love-words. For a long time they were content to walk together in the evenings, or to sit side by side on a bench in the park, neither uttering a word for an hour at a time, merely gazing into each other’s eyes, too faintly luminous in the starshine to be a cause for self-consciousness and embarrassment.

He was as chivalrous and delicate in his attention as any knight to his lady. When they walked along the street, he was careful to be on the outside, — somewhere he had heard that this was the proper thing to do, — and when a crossing to the opposite side of the street put him on the inside, he swiftly side-stepped behind her to gain the outside again. He carried her parcels for her, and once, when rain threatened, her umbrella. He had never heard of the custom of sending flowers to one’s lady-love, so he sent Genevieve fruit instead. There was utility in fruit. It was good to eat. Flowers never entered his mind, until, one day, he noticed a pale rose in her hair. It drew his gaze again and again. It was *her* hair, therefore the presence of the flower interested him. Again, it interested him because *she* had chosen to put it there. For these reasons he was led to observe the rose more closely. He discovered that the effect in itself was beautiful, and it fascinated him. His ingenuous delight in it was a delight to her, and a new and mutual love-thrill was theirs — because of a flower. Straightway he became a lover of flowers. Also, he became an inventor in gallantry. He sent her a bunch of violets. The idea was his own. He had never heard of a man sending flowers to a woman. Flowers were used for decorative purposes, also for funerals. He sent Genevieve flowers nearly every day, and so far as he was concerned the idea was original, as positive an invention as ever arose in the mind of man.

He was tremulous in his devotion to her — as tremulous as was she in her reception of him. She was all that was pure and good, a holy of holies not lightly to be profaned even by what might possibly be the too ardent reverence of a devotee. She was a being wholly different from any he had ever known. She was not as other girls. It never entered his head that she was of the same clay as his own sisters, or anybody's sister. She was more than mere girl, than mere woman. She was — well, she was Genevieve, a being of a class by herself, nothing less than a miracle of creation.

And for her, in turn, there was in him but little less of illusion. Her judgment of him in minor things might be critical (while his judgment of her was sheer worship, and had in it nothing critical at all); but in her judgment of him as a whole she forgot the sum of the parts, and knew him only as a creature of wonder, who gave meaning to life, and for whom she could die as willingly as she could live. She often beguiled her waking dreams of him with fancied situations, wherein, dying for him, she at last adequately expressed the love she felt for him, and which, living, she knew she could never fully express.

Their love was all fire and dew. The physical scarcely entered into it, for such seemed profanation. The ultimate physical facts of their relation were something which they never considered. Yet the immediate physical facts they knew, the immediate yearnings and raptures of the flesh — the touch of finger tips on hand or arm, the momentary pressure of a hand-clasp, the rare lip-caress of a kiss, the tingling thrill of her hair upon his cheek, of her hand lightly thrusting back the locks from above his eyes. All this they knew, but also, and they knew not why, there seemed a hint of sin about these caresses and sweet bodily contacts.

There were times when she felt impelled to throw her arms around him in a very abandonment of love, but always some sanctity restrained her. At such moments she was distinctly and unpleasantly aware of some unguessed sin that lurked within her. It was wrong, undoubtedly wrong, that she should wish to caress her lover in so unbecoming a fashion. No self-respecting girl could dream of doing such a thing. It was unwomanly. Besides, if she had done it, what would he have thought of it? And while she contemplated so horrible a catastrophe, she seemed to shrivel and wilt in a furnace of secret shame.

Nor did Joe escape the prick of curious desires, chiefest among which, perhaps, was the desire to hurt Genevieve. When, after long and tortuous degrees, he had achieved the bliss of putting his arm round her waist, he felt spasmodic impulses to make the embrace crushing, till she should cry out with the hurt. It was not his nature to wish to hurt any living thing. Even in the ring, to hurt was never the intention of any blow he struck. In such case he played the Game, and the goal of the Game was to down an antagonist and keep that antagonist down for a space of ten seconds. So he never struck merely to hurt; the hurt was incidental to the end, and the end was quite another matter. And yet here, with this girl he loved, came the desire to hurt. Why, when with thumb and forefinger he had ringed her wrist, he should desire to contract that ring till it crushed, was beyond him. He could not understand, and felt that he was discovering depths of brutality in his nature of which he had never dreamed.

Once, on parting, he threw his arms around her and swiftly drew her against him. Her gasping cry of surprise and pain brought him to his senses and left him there very much embarrassed and still trembling with a vague and nameless delight. And she, too, was trembling. In the hurt itself, which was the essence of the vigorous embrace, she had found delight; and again she knew sin, though she knew not its nature nor why it should be sin.

Came the day, very early in their walking out, when Silverstein chanced upon Joe in his store and stared at him with saucer-eyes. Came likewise the scene, after Joe had departed, when the maternal feelings of Mrs. Silverstein found vent in a diatribe against all prize-fighters and against Joe Fleming in particular. Vainly had Silverstein striven to stay the spouse's wrath. There was need for her wrath. All the maternal feelings were hers but none of the maternal rights.

Genevieve was aware only of the diatribe; she knew a flood of abuse was pouring from the lips of the Jewess, but she was too stunned to hear the details of the abuse. Joe, her Joe, was Joe Fleming the prize-fighter. It was abhorrent, impossible, too grotesque to be believable. Her clear-eyed, girl-cheeked Joe might be anything but a prize-fighter. She had never seen one, but he in no way resembled her conception of what a prize-fighter must be — the human brute with tiger eyes and a streak for a forehead. Of course she had heard of Joe Fleming — who in West Oakland had not? — but that there should be anything more than a coincidence of names had never crossed her mind.

She came out of her daze to hear Mrs. Silverstein's hysterical sneer, "keepin' company vit a bruiser." Next, Silverstein and his wife fell to differing on "noted" and "notorious" as applicable to her lover.

"But he iss a good boy," Silverstein was contending. "He make der money, an' he safe der money."

"You tell me dat!" Mrs. Silverstein screamed. "Vat you know? You know too much. You spend good money on der prize-fighters. How you know? Tell me dat! How you know?"

"I know vat I know," Silverstein held on sturdily — a thing Genevieve had never before seen him do when his wife was in her tantrums. "His fader die, he go to work in Hansen's sail-loft. He haf six brudders an' sisters younger as he iss. He iss der liddle fader. He vork hard, all der time. He buy der pread an' der meat, an' pay der rent. On Saturday night he bring home ten dollar. Den Hansen gif him twelve dollar — vat he do? He iss der liddle fader, he bring it home to der mudder. He vork all der time, he get twenty dollar — vat he do? He bring it home. Der liddle brudders an' sisters go to school, vear good clothes, haf better pread an' meat; der mudder lif fat, dere iss joy in der eye, an' she iss proud of her good boy Joe.

"But he haf der beautiful body — ach, Gott, der beautiful body! — stronger as der ox, k-vicker as der tiger-cat, der head cooler as der ice-box, der eyes vat see eferytings, k-vick, just like dat. He put on der gloves vit der boys at Hansen's loft, he put on der gloves vit de boys at der varehouse. He go before der club; he knock out der Spider, k-vick, one punch, just like dat, der first time. Der purse iss five dollar — vat he do? He bring it home to der mudder.

"He go many times before der clubs; he get many purses — ten dollar, fifty dollar, one hundred dollar. Vat he do? Tell me dat! Quit der job at Hansen's? Haf der good time vit der boys? No, no; he iss der good boy. He vork efery day. He fight at night before der clubs. He say, 'Vat for I pay der rent, Silverstein?' — to me, Silverstein, he say dat. Nefer mind vat I say, but he buy der good house for der mudder. All der time he vork at Hansen's and fight before der clubs to pay for der house. He buy der piano for der sisters, der carpets, der pictures on der vall. An' he iss all der time straight. He bet on himself — dat iss der good sign. Ven der man bets on himself dat is der time you bet too — "

Here Mrs. Silverstein groaned her horror of gambling, and her husband, aware that his eloquence had betrayed him, collapsed into voluble assurances that he was ahead of the game. "An' all because of Joe Fleming," he concluded. "I back him efery time to vin."

But Genevieve and Joe were preëminently mated, and nothing, not even this terrible discovery, could keep them apart. In vain Genevieve tried to steel herself against him; but she fought herself, not him. To her surprise she discovered a thousand excuses for him, found him lovable as ever; and she entered into his life to be his destiny, and to control him after the way of women. She saw his future and hers through glowing vistas of reform, and her first great deed was when she wrung from him his promise to cease fighting.

And he, after the way of men, pursuing the dream of love and striving for possession of the precious and deathless object of desire, had yielded. And yet, in the very moment of promising her, he knew vaguely, deep down, that he could never abandon the Game; that somewhere, sometime, in the future, he must go back to it. And he had had a swift vision of his mother and brothers and sisters, their multitudinous wants, the house with its painting and repairing, its street assessments and taxes, and of the coming of children to him and Genevieve, and of his own daily wage in the sail-making loft. But the next moment the vision was dismissed, as such warnings are always dismissed, and he saw before him only Genevieve, and he knew only his hunger for her and the call of his being to her; and he accepted calmly her calm assumption of his life and actions.

He was twenty, she was eighteen, boy and girl, the pair of them, and made for progeny, healthy and normal, with steady blood pounding through their bodies; and wherever they went together, even on Sunday outings across the bay amongst people who did not know him, eyes were continually drawn to them. He matched her girl’s beauty with his boy’s beauty, her grace with his strength, her delicacy of line and fibre with the harsher vigor and muscle of the male. Frank-faced, fresh-colored, almost ingenuous in expression, eyes blue and wide apart, he drew and held the gaze of more than one woman far above him in the social scale. Of such glances and dim maternal promptings he was quite unconscious, though Genevieve was quick to see and understand; and she knew each time the pang of a fierce joy in that he was hers and that she held him in the hollow of her hand. He did see, however, and rather resented, the men’s glances drawn by her. These, too, she saw and understood as he did not dream of understanding.

CHAPTER III

Genevieve slipped on a pair of Joe's shoes, light-soled and dapper, and laughed with Lottie, who stooped to turn up the trousers for her. Lottie was his sister, and in the secret. To her was due the inveigling of his mother into making a neighborhood call so that they could have the house to themselves. They went down into the kitchen where Joe was waiting. His face brightened as he came to meet her, love shining frankly forth.

"Now get up those skirts, Lottie," he commanded. "Haven't any time to waste. There, that'll do. You see, you only want the bottoms of the pants to show. The coat will cover the rest. Now let's see how it'll fit.

"Borrowed it from Chris; he's a dead sporty sport — little, but oh, my!" he went on, helping Genevieve into an overcoat which fell to her heels and which fitted her as a tailor-made overcoat should fit the man for whom it is made.

Joe put a cap on her head and turned up the collar, which was generous to exaggeration, meeting the cap and completely hiding her hair. When he buttoned the collar in front, its points served to cover the cheeks, chin and mouth were buried in its depths, and a close scrutiny revealed only shadowy eyes and a little less shadowy nose. She walked across the room, the bottom of the trousers just showing as the bang of the coat was disturbed by movement.

"A sport with a cold and afraid of catching more, all right all right," the boy laughed, proudly surveying his handiwork. "How much money you got? I'm layin' ten to six. Will you take the short end?"

"Who's short?" she asked.

"Ponta, of course," Lottie blurted out her hurt, as though there could be any question of it even for an instant.

"Of course," Genevieve said sweetly, "only I don't know much about such things."

This time Lottie kept her lips together, but the new hurt showed on her face. Joe looked at his watch and said it was time to go. His sister's arms went about his neck, and she kissed him soundly on the lips. She kissed Genevieve, too, and saw them to the gate, one arm of her brother about her waist.

"What does ten to six mean?" Genevieve asked, the while their footfalls rang out on the frosty air.

"That I'm the long end, the favorite," he answered. "That a man bets ten dollars at the ring side that I win against six dollars another man is betting that I lose."

"But if you're the favorite and everybody thinks you'll win, how does anybody bet against you?"

"That's what makes prize-fighting — difference of opinion," he laughed. "Besides, there's always the chance of a lucky punch, an accident. Lots of chance," he said gravely.

She shrank against him, clingingly and protectingly, and he laughed with surety.

"You wait, and you'll see. An' don't get scared at the start. The first few rounds'll be something fierce. That's Ponta's strong point. He's a wild man, with an kinds of punches, — a whirlwind, — and he gets his man in the first rounds. He's put away a whole lot of cleverer and better men than him. It's up to me to live through it, that's all. Then he'll be all in. Then I go after him, just watch. You'll know when I go after him, an' I'll get'm, too."

They came to the hall, on a dark street-corner, ostensibly the quarters of an athletic club, but in reality an institution designed for pulling off fights and keeping within the police ordinance. Joe drew away from her, and they walked apart to the entrance.

"Keep your hands in your pockets whatever you do," Joe warned her, "and it'll be all right. Only a couple of minutes of it."

"He's with me," Joe said to the door-keeper, who was talking with a policeman.

Both men greeted him familiarly, taking no notice of his companion.

"They never tumbled; nobody'll tumble," Joe assured her, as they climbed the stairs to the second story. "And even if they did, they wouldn't know who it was and they's keep it mum for me. Here, come in here!"

He whisked her into a little office-like room and left her seated on a dusty, broken-bottomed chair. A few minutes later he was back again, clad in a long bath robe, canvas shoes on his feet. She began to tremble against him, and his arm passed gently around her.

"It'll be all right, Genevieve," he said encouragingly. "I've got it all fixed. Nobody'll tumble."

“It’s you, Joe,” she said. “I don’t care for myself. It’s you.”

“Don’t care for yourself! But that’s what I thought you were afraid of!”

He looked at her in amazement, the wonder of woman bursting upon him in a more transcendent glory than ever, and he had seen much of the wonder of woman in Genevieve. He was speechless for a moment, and then stammered: —

“You mean me? And you don’t care what people think? or anything? — or anything?”

A sharp double knock at the door, and a sharper “Get a move on yerself, Joe!” brought him back to immediate things.

“Quick, one last kiss, Genevieve,” he whispered, almost holily. “It’s my last fight, an’ I’ll fight as never before with you lookin’ at me.”

The next she knew, the pressure of his lips yet warm on hers, she was in a group of jostling young fellows, none of whom seemed to take the slightest notice of her. Several had their coats off and their shirt sleeves rolled up. They entered the hall from the rear, still keeping the casual formation of the group, and moved slowly up a side aisle.

It was a crowded, ill-lighted hall, barn-like in its proportions, and the smoke-laden air gave a peculiar distortion to everything. She felt as though she would stifle. There were shrill cries of boys selling programmes and soda water, and there was a great bass rumble of masculine voices. She heard a voice offering ten to six on Joe Fleming. The utterance was monotonous — hopeless, it seemed to her, and she felt a quick thrill. It was her Joe against whom everybody was to bet.

And she felt other thrills. Her blood was touched, as by fire, with romance, adventure — the unknown, the mysterious, the terrible — as she penetrated this haunt of men where women came not. And there were other thrills. It was the only time in her life she had dared the rash thing. For the first time she was overstepping the bounds laid down by that harshest of tyrants, the Mrs. Grundy of the working class. She felt fear, and for herself, though the moment before she had been thinking only of Joe.

Before she knew it, the front of the hall had been reached, and she had gone up half a dozen steps into a small dressing-room. This was crowded to suffocation — by men who played the Game, she concluded, in one capacity or another. And here she lost Joe. But before the real personal fright could soundly clutch her, one of the young fellows said gruffly, "Come along with me, you," and as she wedged out at his heels she noticed that another one of the escort was following her.

They came upon a sort of stage, which accommodated three rows of men; and she caught her first glimpse of the squared ring. She was on a level with it, and so near that she could have reached out and touched its ropes. She noticed that it was covered with padded canvas. Beyond the ring, and on either side, as in a fog, she could see the crowded house.

The dressing-room she had left abutted upon one corner of the ring. Squeezing her way after her guide through the seated men, she crossed the end of the hall and entered a similar dressing-room at the other corner of the ring.

"Now don't make a noise, and stay here till I come for you," instructed her guide, pointing out a peep-hole arrangement in the wall of the room.

CHAPTER IV

She hurried to the peep-hole, and found herself against the ring. She could see the whole of it, though part of the audience was shut off. The ring was well lighted by an overhead cluster of patent gas-burners. The front row of the men she had squeezed past, because of their paper and pencils, she decided to be reporters from the local papers up-town. One of them was chewing gum. Behind them, on the other two rows of seats, she could make out firemen from the near-by engine-house and several policemen in uniform. In the middle of the front row, flanked by the reporters, sat the young chief of police. She was startled by catching sight of Mr. Clausen on the opposite side of the ring. There he sat, austere, side-whiskered, pink and white, close up against the front of the ring. Several seats farther on, in the same front row, she discovered Silverstein, his weazen features glowing with anticipation.

A few cheers heralded the advent of several young fellows, in shirt-sleeves, carrying buckets, bottles, and towels, who crawled through the ropes and crossed to the diagonal corner from her. One of them sat down on a stool and leaned back against the ropes. She saw that he was bare-legged, with canvas shoes on his feet, and that his body was swathed in a heavy white sweater. In the meantime another group had occupied the corner directly against her. Louder cheers drew her attention to it, and she saw Joe seated on a stool still clad in the bath robe, his short chestnut curls within a yard of her eyes.

A young man, in a black suit, with a mop of hair and a preposterously tall starched collar, walked to the centre of the ring and held up his hand.

“Gentlemen will please stop smoking,” he said.

His effort was applauded by groans and cat-calls, and she noticed with indignation that nobody stopped smoking. Mr. Clausen held a burning match in his fingers while the announcement was being made, and then calmly lighted his cigar. She felt that she hated him in that moment. How was her Joe to fight in such an atmosphere? She could scarcely breathe herself, and she was only sitting down.

The announcer came over to Joe. He stood up. His bath robe fell away from him, and he stepped forth to the centre of the ring, naked save for the low canvas shoes and a narrow hip-cloth of white. Genevieve’s eyes dropped. She sat alone, with none to see, but her face was burning with shame at sight of the beautiful nakedness of her lover. But she looked again, guiltily, for the joy that was hers in beholding what she knew must be sinful to behold. The leap of something within her and the stir of her being toward him must be sinful. But it was delicious sin, and she did not deny her eyes. In vain Mrs. Grundy admonished her. The pagan in her, original sin, and all nature urged her on. The mothers of all the past were whispering through her, and there was a clamour of the children unborn. But of this she knew nothing. She knew only that it was sin, and she lifted her head proudly, recklessly resolved, in one great surge of revolt, to sin to the uttermost.

She had never dreamed of the form under the clothes. The form, beyond the hands and the face, had no part in her mental processes. A child of garmented civilization, the garment was to her the form. The race of men was to her a race of garmented bipeds, with hands and faces and hair-covered heads. When she thought of Joe, the Joe instantly visualized on her mind was a clothed Joe — girl-cheeked, blue-eyed, curly-headed, but clothed. And there he stood, all but naked, godlike, in a white blaze of light. She had never conceived of the form of God except as nebulously naked, and the thought-association was startling. It seemed to her that her sin partook of sacrilege or blasphemy.

Her chromo-trained æsthetic sense exceeded its education and told her that here were beauty and wonder. She had always liked the physical presentment of Joe, but it was a presentment of clothes, and she had thought the pleasingness of it due to the neatness and taste with which he dressed. She had never dreamed that this lurked beneath. It dazzled her. His skin was fair as a woman's, far more satiny, and no rudimentary hair-growth marred its white lustre. This she perceived, but all the rest, the perfection of line and strength and development, gave pleasure without her knowing why. There was a cleanness and grace about it. His face was like a cameo, and his lips, parted in a smile, made it very boyish.

He smiled as he faced the audience, when the announcer, placing a hand on his shoulder, said: "Joe Fleming, the Pride of West Oakland."

Cheers and hand-clappings stormed up, and she heard affectionate cries of "Oh, you, Joe!" Men shouted it at him again and again.

He walked back to his corner. Never to her did he seem less a fighter than then. His eyes were too mild; there was not a spark of the beast in them, nor in his face, while his body seemed too fragile, what of its fairness and smoothness, and his face too boyish and sweet-tempered and intelligent. She did not have the expert's eye for the depth of chest, the wide nostrils, the recuperative lungs, and the muscles under their satin sheaths — crypts of energy wherein lurked the chemistry of destruction. To her he looked like a something of Dresden china, to be handled gently and with care, liable to be shattered to fragments by the first rough touch.

John Ponta, stripped of his white sweater by the pulling and hauling of two of his seconds, came to the centre of the ring. She knew terror as she looked at him. Here was the fighter — the beast with a streak for a forehead, with beady eyes under lowering and bushy brows, flat-nosed, thick-lipped, sullen-mouthed. He was heavy-jawed, bull-necked, and the short, straight hair of the head seemed to her frightened eyes the stiff bristles on a hog's back. Here were coarseness and brutishness — a thing savage, primordial, ferocious. He was swarthy to blackness, and his body was covered with a hairy growth that matted like a dog's on his chest and shoulders. He was deep-chested, thick-legged, large-muscled, but unshapely. His muscles were knots, and he was gnarled and knobby, twisted out of beauty by excess of strength.

"John Ponta, West Bay Athletic Club," said the announcer.

A much smaller volume of cheers greeted him. It was evident that the crowd favored Joe with its sympathy.

"Go in an' eat 'm, Ponta! Eat 'm up!" a voice shouted in the lull.

This was received by scornful cries and groans. He did not like it, for his sullen mouth twisted into a half-snarl as he went back to his corner. He was too decided an atavism to draw the crowd's admiration. Instinctively the crowd disliked him. He was an animal, lacking in intelligence and spirit, a menace and a thing of fear, as the tiger and the snake are menaces and things of fear, better behind the bars of a cage than running free in the open.

And he felt that the crowd had no relish for him. He was like an animal in the circle of its enemies, and he turned and glared at them with malignant eyes. Little Silverstein, shouting out Joe's name with high glee, shrank away from Ponta's gaze, shrivelled as in fierce heat, the sound gurgling and dying in his throat. Genevieve saw the little by-play, and as Ponta's eyes slowly swept round the circle of their hate and met hers, she, too, shrivelled and shrank back. The next moment they were past, pausing to centre long on Joe. It seemed to her that Ponta was working himself into a rage. Joe returned the gaze with mild boy's eyes, but his face grew serious.

The announcer escorted a third man to the centre of the ring, a genial-faced young fellow in shirt-sleeves.

"Eddy Jones, who will referee this contest," said the announcer.

"Oh, you, Eddy!" men shouted in the midst of the applause, and it was apparent to Genevieve that he, too, was well beloved.

Both men were being helped into the gloves by their seconds, and one of Ponta's seconds came over and examined the gloves before they went on Joe's hands. The referee called them to the centre of the ring. The seconds followed, and they made quite a group, Joe and Ponta facing each other, the referee in the middle, the seconds leaning with hands on one another's shoulders, their heads craned forward. The referee was talking, and all listened attentively.

The group broke up. Again the announcer came to the front.

"Joe Fleming fights at one hundred and twenty-eight," he said; "John Ponta at one hundred and forty. They will fight as long as one hand is free, and take care of themselves in the breakaway. The audience must remember that a decision must be given. There are no draws fought before this club."

He crawled through the ropes and dropped from the ring to the floor. There was a scuttling in the corners as the seconds cleared out through the ropes, taking with them the stools and buckets. Only remained in the ring the two fighters and the referee. A gong sounded. The two men advanced rapidly to the centre. Their right hands extended and for a fraction of an instant met in a perfunctory shake. Then Ponta lashed out, savagely, right and left, and Joe escaped by springing back. Like a projectile, Ponta hurled himself after him and upon him.

The fight was on. Genevieve clutched one hand to her breast and watched. She was bewildered by the swiftness and savagery of Ponta's assault, and by the multitude of blows he struck. She felt that Joe was surely being destroyed. At times she could not see his face, so obscured was it by the flying gloves. But she could hear the resounding blows, and with the sound of each blow she felt a sickening sensation in the pit of her stomach. She did not know that what she heard was the impact of glove on glove, or glove on shoulder, and that no damage was being done.

She was suddenly aware that a change had come over the fight. Both men were clutching each other in a tense embrace; no blows were being struck at all. She recognized it to be what Joe had described to her as the “clinch.” Ponta was struggling to free himself, Joe was holding on.

The referee shouted, “Break!” Joe made an effort to get away, but Ponta got one hand free and Joe rushed back into a second clinch, to escape the blow. But this time, she noticed, the heel of his glove was pressed against Ponta’s mouth and chin, and at the second “Break!” of the referee, Joe shoved his opponent’s head back and sprang clear himself.

For a brief several seconds she had an unobstructed view of her lover. Left foot a trifle advanced, knees slightly bent, he was crouching, with his head drawn well down between his shoulders and shielded by them. His hands were in position before him, ready either to attack or defend. The muscles of his body were tense, and as he moved about she could see them bunch up and writhe and crawl like live things under the white skin.

But again Ponta was upon him and he was struggling to live. He crouched a bit more, drew his body more compactly together, and covered up with his hands, elbows, and forearms. Blows rained upon him, and it looked to her as though he were being beaten to death.

But he was receiving the blows on his gloves and shoulders, rocking back and forth to the force of them like a tree in a storm, while the house cheered its delight. It was not until she understood this applause, and saw Silverstein half out of his seat and intensely, madly happy, and heard the “Oh, you, Joe’s!” from many throats, that she realized that instead of being cruelly punished he was acquitting himself well. Then he would emerge for a moment, again to be enveloped and hidden in the whirlwind of Ponta’s ferocity.

CHAPTER V

The gong sounded. It seemed they had been fighting half an hour, though from what Joe had told her she knew it had been only three minutes. With the crash of the gong Joe's seconds were through the ropes and running him into his corner for the blessed minute of rest. One man, squatting on the floor between his outstretched feet and elevating them by resting them on his knees, was violently chafing his legs. Joe sat on the stool, leaning far back into the corner, head thrown back and arms outstretched on the ropes to give easy expansion to the chest. With wide-open mouth he was breathing the towel-driven air furnished by two of the seconds, while listening to the counsel of still another second who talked with low voice in his ear and at the same time sponged off his face, shoulders, and chest.

Hardly had all this been accomplished (it had taken no more than several seconds), when the gong sounded, the seconds scuttled through the ropes with their paraphernalia, and Joe and Ponta were advancing against each other to the centre of the ring. Genevieve had no idea that a minute could be so short. For a moment she felt that this rest had been cut, and was suspicious of she knew not what.

Ponta lashed out, right and left, savagely as ever, and though Joe blocked the blows, such was the force of them that he was knocked backward several steps. Ponta was after him with the spring of a tiger. In the involuntary effort to maintain equilibrium, Joe had uncovered himself, flinging one arm out and lifting his head from beneath the sheltering shoulders. So swiftly had Ponta followed him, that a terrible swinging blow was coming at his unguarded jaw. He ducked forward and down, Ponta's fist just missing the back of his head. As he came back to the perpendicular, Ponta's left fist drove at him in a straight punch that would have knocked him backward through the ropes. Again, and with a swiftness an inappreciable fraction of time quicker than Ponta's, he ducked forward. Ponta's fist grazed the backward slope of the shoulder, and glanced off into the air. Ponta's right drove straight out, and the graze was repeated as Joe ducked into the safety of a clinch.

Genevieve sighed with relief, her tense body relaxing and a faintness coming over her. The crowd was cheering madly. Silverstein was on his feet, shouting, gesticulating, completely out of himself. And even Mr. Clausen was yelling his enthusiasm, at the top of his lungs, into the ear of his nearest neighbor.

The clinch was broken and the fight went on. Joe blocked, and backed, and slid around the ring, avoiding blows and living somehow through the whirlwind onslaughts. Rarely did he strike blows himself, for Ponta had a quick eye and could defend as well as attack, while Joe had no chance against the other's enormous vitality. His hope lay in that Ponta himself should ultimately consume his strength.

But Genevieve was beginning to wonder why her lover did not fight. She grew angry. She wanted to see him wreak vengeance on this beast that had persecuted him so. Even as she waxed impatient, the chance came, and Joe whipped his fist to Ponta's mouth. It was a staggering blow. She saw Ponta's head go back with a jerk and the quick dye of blood upon his lips. The blow, and the great shout from the audience, angered him. He rushed like a wild man. The fury of his previous assaults was as nothing compared with the fury of this one. And there was no more opportunity for another blow. Joe was too busy living through the storm he had already caused, blocking, covering up, and ducking into the safety and respite of the clinches.

But the clinch was not all safety and respite. Every instant of it was intense watchfulness, while the breakaway was still more dangerous. Genevieve had noticed, with a slight touch of amusement, the curious way in which Joe snuggled his body in against Ponta's in the clinches; but she had not realized why, until, in one such clinch, before the snuggling in could be effected, Ponta's fist whipped straight up in the air from under, and missed Joe's chin by a hair's-breadth. In another and later clinch, when she had already relaxed and sighed her relief at seeing him safely snuggled, Ponta, his chin over Joe's shoulder, lifted his right arm and struck a terrible downward blow on the small of the back. The crowd groaned its apprehension, while Joe quickly locked his opponent's arms to prevent a repetition of the blow.

The gong struck, and after the fleeting minute of rest, they went at it again — in Joe's corner, for Ponta had made a rush to meet him clear across the ring. Where the blow had been over the kidneys, the white skin had become bright red. This splash of color, the size of the glove, fascinated and frightened Genevieve so that she could scarcely take her eyes from it.

Promptly, in the next clinch, the blow was repeated; but after that Joe usually managed to give Ponta the heel of the glove on the mouth and so hold his head back. This prevented the striking of the blow; but three times more, before the round ended, Ponta effected the trick, each time striking the same vulnerable part.

Another rest and another round went by, with no further damage to Joe and no diminution of strength on the part of Ponta. But in the beginning of the fifth round, Joe, caught in a corner, made as though to duck into a clinch. Just before it was effected, and at the precise moment that Ponta was ready with his own body to receive the snuggling in of Joe's body, Joe drew back slightly and drove with his fists at his opponent's unprotected stomach. Lightning-like blows they were, four of them, right and left; and heavy they were, for Ponta winced away from them and staggered back, half dropping his arms, his shoulders drooping forward and in, as though he were about to double in at the waist and collapse. Joe's quick eye saw the opening, and he smashed straight out upon Ponta's mouth, following instantly with a half swing, half hook, for the jaw. It missed, striking the cheek instead, and sending Ponta staggering sideways.

The house was on its feet, shouting, to a man. Genevieve could hear men crying, "He's got 'm, he's got 'm!" and it seemed to her the beginning of the end. She, too, was out of herself; softness and tenderness had vanished; she exulted with each crushing blow her lover delivered.

But Ponta's vitality was yet to be reckoned with. As, like a tiger, he had followed Joe up, Joe now followed him up. He made another half swing, half hook, for Ponta's jaw, and Ponta, already recovering his wits and strength, ducked cleanly. Joe's fist passed on through empty air, and so great was the momentum of the blow that it carried him around, in a half twirl, sideways. Then Ponta lashed out with his left. His glove landed on Joe's unguarded neck. Genevieve saw her lover's arms drop to his sides as his body lifted, went backward, and fell limply to the floor. The referee, bending over him, began to count the seconds, emphasizing the passage of each second with a downward sweep of his right arm.

The audience was still as death. Ponta had partly turned to the house to receive the approval that was his due, only to be met by this chill, graveyard silence. Quick wrath surged up in him. It was unfair. His opponent only was applauded — if he struck a blow, if he escaped a blow; he, Ponta, who had forced the fighting from the start, had received no word of cheer.

His eyes blazed as he gathered himself together and sprang to his prostrate foe. He crouched alongside of him, right arm drawn back and ready for a smashing blow the instant Joe should start to rise. The referee, still bending over and counting with his right hand, shoved Ponta back with his left. The latter, crouching, circled around, and the referee circled with him, thrusting him back and keeping between him and the fallen man.

"Four — five — six — " the count went on, and Joe, rolling over on his face, squirmed weakly to draw himself to his knees. This he succeeded in doing, resting on one knee, a hand to the floor on either side and the other leg bent under him to help him rise. "Take the count! Take the count!" a dozen voices rang out from the audience.

"For God's sake, take the count!" one of Joe's seconds cried warningly from the edge of the ring. Genevieve gave him one swift glance, and saw the young fellow's face, drawn and white, his lips unconsciously moving as he kept the count with the referee.

"Seven — eight — nine — " the seconds went.

The ninth sounded and was gone, when the referee gave Ponta a last backward shove and Joe came to his feet, bunched up, covered up, weak, but cool, very cool. Ponta hurled himself upon him with terrific force, delivering an uppercut and a straight punch. But Joe blocked the two, ducked a third, stepped to the side to avoid a fourth, and was then driven backward into a corner by a hurricane of blows. He was exceedingly weak. He tottered as he kept his footing, and staggered back and forth. His back was against the ropes. There was no further retreat. Ponta paused, as if to make doubly sure, then feinted with his left and struck fiercely with his right with all his strength. But Joe ducked into a clinch and was for a moment saved.

Ponta struggled frantically to free himself. He wanted to give the finish to this foe already so far gone. But Joe was holding on for life, resisting the other's every effort, as fast as one hold or grip was torn loose finding a new one by which to cling. "Break!" the referee commanded. Joe held on tighter. "Make 'm break! Why the hell don't you make 'm break?" Ponta panted at the referee. Again the latter commanded the break. Joe refused, keeping, as he well knew, within his rights. Each moment of the clinch his strength was coming back to him, his brain was clearing, the cobwebs were disappearing from before his eyes. The round was young, and he must live, somehow, through the nearly three minutes of it yet to run.

The referee clutched each by the shoulder and sundered them violently, passing quickly between them as he thrust them backward in order to make a clean break of it. The moment he was free, Ponta sprang at Joe like a wild animal bearing down its prey. But Joe covered up, blocked, and fell into a clinch. Again Ponta struggled to get free, Joe held on, and the referee thrust them apart. And again Joe avoided damage and clinched.

Genevieve realized that in the clinches he was not being beaten — why, then, did not the referee let him hold on? It was cruel. She hated the genial-faced Eddy Jones in those moments, and she partly rose from her chair, her hands clenched with anger, the nails cutting into the palms till they hurt. The rest of the round, the three long minutes of it, was a succession of clinches and breaks. Not once did Ponta succeed in striking his opponent the deadly final blow. And Ponta was like a madman, raging because of his impotency in the face of his helpless and all but vanquished foe. One blow, only one blow, and he could not deliver it! Joe's ring experience and coolness saved him. With shaken consciousness and trembling body, he clutched and held on, while the ebbing life turned and flooded up in him again. Once, in his passion, unable to hit him, Ponta made as though to lift him up and hurl him to the floor.

"V'y don't you bite him?" Silverstein taunted shrilly.

In the stillness the sally was heard over the whole house, and the audience, relieved of its anxiety for its favorite, laughed with an uproariousness that had in it the note of hysteria. Even Genevieve felt that there was something irresistibly funny in the remark, and the relief of the audience was communicated to her; yet she felt sick and faint, and was overwrought with horror at what she had seen and was seeing.

"Bite 'm! Bite 'm!" voices from the recovered audience were shouting. "Chew his ear off, Ponta! That's the only way you can get 'm! Eat 'm up! Eat 'm up! Oh, why don't you eat 'm up?"

The effect was bad on Ponta. He became more frenzied than ever, and more impotent. He panted and sobbed, wasting his effort by too much effort, losing sanity and control and futilely trying to compensate for the loss by excess of physical endeavor. He knew only the blind desire to destroy, shook Joe in the clinches as a terrier might a rat, strained and struggled for freedom of body and arms, and all the while Joe calmly clutched and held on. The referee worked manfully and fairly to separate them. Perspiration ran down his face. It took all his strength to split those clinging bodies, and no sooner had he split them than Joe fell unharmed into another embrace and the work had to be done all over again. In vain, when freed, did Ponta try to avoid the clutching arms and twining body. He could not keep away. He had to come close in order to strike, and each time Joe baffled him and caught him in his arms.

And Genevieve, crouched in the little dressing-room and peering through the peep-hole, was baffled, too. She was an interested party in what seemed a death-struggle — was not one of the fighters her Joe? — but the audience understood and she did not. The Game had not unveiled to her. The lure of it was beyond her. It was greater mystery than ever. She could not comprehend its power. What delight could there be for Joe in that brutal surging and straining of bodies, those fierce clutches, fiercer blows, and terrible hurts? Surely, she, Genevieve, offered more than that — rest, and content, and sweet, calm joy. Her bid for the heart of him and the soul of him was finer and more generous than the bid of the Game; yet he dallied with both — held her in his arms, but turned his head to listen to that other and siren call she could not understand.

The gong struck. The round ended with a break in Ponta's corner. The white-faced young second was through the ropes with the first clash of sound. He seized Joe in his arms, lifted him clear of the floor, and ran with him across the ring to his own corner. His seconds worked over him furiously, chafing his legs, slapping his abdomen, stretching the hip-cloth out with their fingers so that he might breathe more easily. For the first time Genevieve saw the stomach-breathing of a man, an abdomen that rose and fell far more with every breath than her breast rose and fell after she had run for a car. The pungency of ammonia bit her nostrils, wafted to her from the soaked sponge wherefrom he breathed the fiery fumes that cleared his brain. He gargled his mouth and throat, took a suck at a divided lemon, and all the while the towels worked like mad, driving oxygen into his lungs to purge the pounding blood and send it back revivified for the struggle yet to come. His heated body was sponged with water, doused with it, and bottles were turned mouth-downward on his head.

CHAPTER VI

The gong for the sixth round struck, and both men advanced to meet each other, their bodies glistening with water. Ponta rushed two-thirds of the way across the ring, so intent was he on getting at his man before full recovery could be effected. But Joe had lived through. He was strong again, and getting stronger. He blocked several vicious blows and then smashed back, sending Ponta reeling. He attempted to follow up, but wisely forbore and contented himself with blocking and covering up in the whirlwind his blow had raised.

The fight was as it had been at the beginning — Joe protecting, Ponta rushing. But Ponta was never at ease. He did not have it all his own way. At any moment, in his fiercest onslaughts, his opponent was liable to lash out and reach him. Joe saved his strength. He struck one blow to Ponta's ten, but his one blow rarely missed. Ponta overwhelmed him in the attacks, yet could do nothing with him, while Joe's tiger-like strokes, always imminent, compelled respect. They toned Ponta's ferocity. He was no longer able to go in with the complete abandon of destructiveness which had marked his earlier efforts.

But a change was coming over the fight. The audience was quick to note it, and even Genevieve saw it by the beginning of the ninth round. Joe was taking the offensive. In the clinches it was he who brought his fist down on the small of the back, striking the terrible kidney blow. He did it once, in each clinch, but with all his strength, and he did it every clinch. Then, in the breakaways, he began to uppercut Ponta on the stomach, or to hook his jaw or strike straight out upon the mouth. But at first sign of a coming of a whirlwind, Joe would dance nimbly away and cover up.

Two rounds of this went by, and three, but Ponta's strength, though perceptibly less, did not diminish rapidly. Joe's task was to wear down that strength, not with one blow, nor ten, but with blow after blow, without end, until that enormous strength should be beaten sheer out of its body. There was no rest for the man. Joe followed him up, step by step, his advancing left foot making an audible tap, tap, tap, on the hard canvas. Then there would come a sudden leap in, tiger-like, a blow struck, or blows, and a swift leap back, whereupon the left foot would take up again its tapping advance.

When Ponta made his savage rushes, Joe carefully covered up, only to emerge, his left foot going tap, tap, tap, as he immediately followed up.

Ponta was slowly weakening. To the crowd the end was a foregone conclusion.

"Oh, you, Joe!" it yelled its admiration and affection.

"It's a shame to take the money!" it mocked. "Why don't you eat 'm, Ponta? Go on in an' eat 'm!"

In the one-minute intermissions Ponta's seconds worked over him as they had not worked before. Their calm trust in his tremendous vitality had been betrayed. Genevieve watched their excited efforts, while she listened to the white-faced second cautioning Joe.

"Take your time," he was saying. "You've got 'm, but you got to take your time. I've seen 'm fight. He's got a punch to the end of the count. I've seen 'm knocked out and clean batty, an' go on punching just the same. Mickey Sullivan had 'm goin'. Puts 'm to the mat as fast as he crawls up, six times, an' then leaves an opening. Ponta reaches for his jaw, an two minutes afterward Mickey's openin' his eyes an' askin' what's doin'. So you've got to watch 'm. No goin' in an' absorbin' one of them lucky punches, now. I got money on this fight, but I don't call it mine till he's counted out."

Ponta was being doused with water. As the gong sounded, one of his seconds inverted a water bottle on his head. He started toward the centre of the ring, and the second followed him for several steps, keeping the bottle still inverted. The referee shouted at him, and he fled the ring, dropping the bottle as he fled. It rolled over and over, the water gurgling out upon the canvas till the referee, with a quick flirt of his toe, sent the bottle rolling through the ropes.

In all the previous rounds Genevieve had not seen Joe's fighting face which had been prefigured to her that morning in the department store. Sometimes his face had been quite boyish; other times, when taking his fiercest punishment, it had been bleak and gray; and still later, when living through and clutching and holding on, it had taken on a wistful expression. But now, out of danger himself and as he forced the fight, his fighting face came upon him. She saw it and shuddered. It removed him so far from her. She had thought she knew him, all of him, and held him in the hollow of her hand; but this she did not know — this face of steel, this mouth of steel, these eyes of steel flashing the light and glitter of steel. It seemed to her the passionless face of an avenging angel, stamped only with the purpose of the Lord.

Ponta attempted one of his old-time rushes, but was stopped on the mouth. Implacable, insistent, ever menacing, never letting him rest, Joe followed him up. The round, the thirteenth, closed with a rush, in Ponta's corner. He attempted a rally, was brought to his knees, took the nine seconds' count, and then tried to clinch into safety, only to receive four of Joe's terrible stomach punches, so that with the gong he fell back, gasping, into the arms of his seconds.

Joe ran across the ring to his own corner.

"Now I'm going to get 'm," he said to his second.

"You sure fixed 'm that time," the latter answered. "Nothin' to stop you now but a lucky punch. Watch out for it."

Joe leaned forward, feet gathered under him for a spring, like a foot-racer waiting the start. He was waiting for the gong. When it sounded he shot forward and across the ring, catching Ponta in the midst of his seconds as he rose from his stool. And in the midst of his seconds he went down, knocked down by a right-hand blow. As he arose from the confusion of buckets, stools, and seconds, Joe put him down again. And yet a third time he went down before he could escape from his own corner.

Joe had at last become the whirlwind. Genevieve remembered his "just watch, you'll know when I go after him." The house knew it, too. It was on its feet, every voice raised in a fierce yell. It was the blood-cry of the crowd, and it sounded to her like what she imagined must be the howling of wolves. And what with confidence in her lover's victory she found room in her heart to pity Ponta.

In vain he struggled to defend himself, to block, to cover up, to duck, to clinch into a moment's safety. That moment was denied him. Knockdown after knockdown was his portion. He was knocked to the canvas backwards, and sideways, was punched in the clinches and in the breakaways — stiff, jolty blows that dazed his brain and drove the strength from his muscles. He was knocked into the corners and out again, against the ropes, rebounding, and with another blow against the ropes once more. He fanned the air with his arms, showering savage blows upon emptiness. There was nothing human left in him. He was the beast incarnate, roaring and raging and being destroyed. He was smashed down to his knees, but refused to take the count, staggering to his feet only to be met stiff-handed on the mouth and sent hurling back against the ropes.

In sore travail, gasping, reeling, panting, with glazing eyes and sobbing breath, grotesque and heroic, fighting to the last, striving to get at his antagonist, he surged and was driven about the ring. And in that moment Joe's foot slipped on the wet canvas. Ponta's swimming eyes saw and knew the chance. All the fleeing strength of his body gathered itself together for the lightning lucky punch. Even as Joe slipped the other smote him, fairly on the point of the chin. He went over backward. Genevieve saw his muscles relax while he was yet in the air, and she heard the thud of his head on the canvas.

The noise of the yelling house died suddenly. The referee, stooping over the inert body, was counting the seconds. Ponta tottered and fell to his knees. He struggled to his feet, swaying back and forth as he tried to sweep the audience with his hatred. His legs were trembling and bending under him; he was choking and sobbing, fighting to breathe. He reeled backward, and saved himself from falling by a blind clutching for the ropes. He clung there, drooping and bending and giving in all his body, his head upon his chest, until the referee counted the fatal tenth second and pointed to him in token that he had won.

He received no applause, and he squirmed through the ropes, snakelike, into the arms of his seconds, who helped him to the floor and supported him down the aisle into the crowd. Joe remained where he had fallen. His seconds carried him into his corner and placed him on the stool. Men began climbing into the ring, curious to see, but were roughly shoved out by the policemen, who were already there.

Genevieve looked on from her peep-hole. She was not greatly perturbed. Her lover had been knocked out. In so far as disappointment was his, she shared it with him; but that was all. She even felt glad in a way. The Game had played him false, and he was more surely hers. She had heard of knockouts from him. It often took men some time to recover from the effects. It was not till she heard the seconds asking for the doctor that she felt really worried.

They passed his limp body through the ropes to the stage, and it disappeared beyond the limits of her peep-hole. Then the door of her dressing-room was thrust open and a number of men came in. They were carrying Joe. He was laid down on the dusty floor, his head resting on the knee of one of the seconds. No one seemed surprised by her presence. She came over and knelt beside him. His eyes were closed, his lips slightly parted. His wet hair was plastered in straight locks about his face. She lifted one of his hands. It was very heavy, and the lifelessness of it shocked her. She looked suddenly at the faces of the seconds and of the men about her. They seemed frightened, all save one, and he was cursing, in a low voice, horribly. She looked up and saw Silverstein standing beside her. He, too, seemed frightened. He rested a kindly hand on her shoulder, tightening the fingers with a sympathetic pressure.

This sympathy frightened her. She began to feel dazed. There was a bustle as somebody entered the room. The person came forward, proclaiming irritably: "Get out! Get out! You've got to clear the room!"

A number of men silently obeyed.

"Who are you?" he abruptly demanded of Genevieve. "A girl, as I'm alive!"

"That's all right, she's his girl," spoke up a young fellow she recognized as her guide.

"And you?" the other man blurted explosively at Silverstein.

"I'm vit her," he answered truculently.

"She works for him," explained the young fellow. "It's all right, I tell you."

The newcomer grunted and knelt down. He passed a hand over the damp head, grunted again, and arose to his feet.

"This is no case for me," he said. "Send for the ambulance."

Then the thing became a dream to Genevieve. Maybe she had fainted, she did not know, but for what other reason should Silverstein have his arm around her supporting her? All the faces seemed blurred and unreal. Fragments of a discussion came to her ears. The young fellow who had been her guide was saying something about reporters. "You vill get your name in der papers," she could hear Silverstein saying to her, as from a great distance; and she knew she was shaking her head in refusal.

There was an eruption of new faces, and she saw Joe carried out on a canvas stretcher. Silverstein was buttoning the long overcoat and drawing the collar about her face. She felt the night air on her cheek, and looking up saw the clear, cold stars. She jammed into a seat. Silverstein was beside her. Joe was there, too, still on his stretcher, with blankets over his naked body; and there was a man in blue uniform who spoke kindly to her, though she did not know what he said. Horses' hoofs were clattering, and she was lurching somewhere through the night.

Next, light and voices, and a smell of iodoform. This must be the receiving hospital, she thought, this the operating table, those the doctors. They were examining Joe. One of them, a dark-eyed, dark-bearded, foreign-looking man, rose up from bending over the table.

"Never saw anything like it," he was saying to another man. "The whole back of the skull."

Her lips were hot and dry, and there was an intolerable ache in her throat. But why didn't she cry? She ought to cry; she felt it incumbent upon her. There was Lottie (there had been another change in the dream), across the little narrow cot from her, and she was crying. Somebody was saying something about the coma of death. It was not the foreign-looking doctor, but somebody else. It did not matter who it was. What time was it? As if in answer, she saw the faint white light of dawn on the windows.

"I was going to be married to-day," she said to Lottie.

And from across the cot his sister wailed, "Don't, don't!" and, covering her face, sobbed afresh.

This, then, was the end of it all — of the carpets, and furniture, and the little rented house; of the meetings and walking out, the thrilling nights of starshine, the deliciousness of surrender, the loving and the being loved. She was stunned by the awful facts of this Game she did not understand — the grip it laid on men's souls, its irony and faithlessness, its risks and hazards and fierce insurgences of the blood, making woman pitiful, not the be-all and end-all of man, but his toy and his pastime; to woman his mothering and caretaking, his moods and his moments, but to the Game his days and nights of striving, the tribute of his head and hand, his most patient toil and wildest effort, all the strain and the stress of his being — to the Game, his heart's desire.

Silverstein was helping her to her feet. She obeyed blindly, the daze of the dream still on her. His hand grasped her arm and he was turning her toward the door.

"Oh, why don't you kiss him?" Lottie cried out, her dark eyes mournful and passionate.

Genevieve stooped obediently over the quiet clay and pressed her lips to the lips yet warm. The door opened and she passed into another room.

There stood Mrs. Silverstein, with angry eyes that snapped vindictively at sight of her boy's clothes.

Silverstein looked beseechingly at his spouse, but she burst forth savagely: —

"Vot did I tell you, eh? Vot did I tell you? You vood haf a bruiser for your steady! An' now your name vill be in all der papers! At a prize fight — vit boy's clothes on! You liddle strumpet! You hussy! You — "

But a flood of tears welled into her eyes and voice, and with her fat arms outstretched, ungainly, ludicrous, holy with motherhood, she tottered over to the quiet girl and folded her to her breast. She muttered gasping, inarticulate love-words, rocking slowly to and fro the while, and patting Genevieve's shoulder with her ponderous hand.

WHITE FANG

This famous novel was first serialised in *Outing* magazine, and published in book format in 1906. The story takes place in Yukon Territory, Canada, during the Klondike Gold Rush at the end of the 19th-century, and details a wild wolfdog's journey to domestication, and serves as a companion novel to *The Call of the Wild*. The majority of the novel is written from the viewpoint of a canine character, enabling London to explore how animals view their world and their human companions.

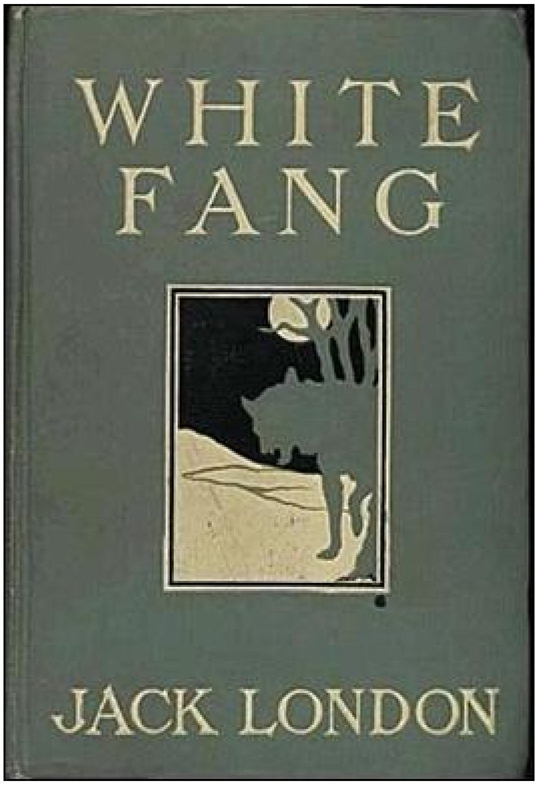
WHITE FANG
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

PART I
CHAPTER I — THE TRAIL OF THE MEAT
CHAPTER II — THE SHE-WOLF
CHAPTER III — THE HUNGER CRY
PART II
CHAPTER I — THE BATTLE OF THE FANGS
CHAPTER II — THE LAIR
CHAPTER III — THE GREY CUB
CHAPTER IV — THE WALL OF THE WORLD
CHAPTER V — THE LAW OF MEAT
PART III
CHAPTER I — THE MAKERS OF FIRE
CHAPTER II — THE BONDAGE
CHAPTER III — THE OUTCAST
CHAPTER IV — THE TRAIL OF THE GODS
CHAPTER V — THE COVENANT
CHAPTER VI — THE FAMINE
PART IV
CHAPTER I — THE ENEMY OF HIS KIND
CHAPTER II — THE MAD GOD
CHAPTER III — THE REIGN OF HATE
CHAPTER IV — THE CLINGING DEATH
CHAPTER V — THE INDOMITABLE
CHAPTER VI — THE LOVE-MASTER
PART V
CHAPTER I — THE LONG TRAIL
CHAPTER II — THE SOUTHLAND
CHAPTER III — THE GOD’S DOMAIN
CHAPTER IV — THE CALL OF KIND
CHAPTER V — THE SLEEPING WOLF

PART I

CHAPTER I — THE TRAIL OF THE MEAT

Dark spruce forest frowned on either side the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of frost, and they seemed to lean towards each other, black and ominous, in the fading light. A vast silence reigned over the land. The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness. There was a hint in it of laughter, but of a laughter more terrible than any sadness — a laughter that was mirthless as the smile of the sphinx, a laughter cold as the frost and partaking of the grimness of infallibility. It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life. It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.

But there *was* life, abroad in the land and defiant. Down the frozen waterway toiled a string of wolfish dogs. Their bristly fur was rimed with frost. Their breath froze in the air as it left their mouths, spouting forth in spumes of vapour that settled upon the hair of their bodies and formed into crystals of frost. Leather harness was on the dogs, and leather traces attached them to a sled which dragged along behind. The sled was without runners. It was made of stout birch-bark, and its full surface rested on the snow. The front end of the sled was turned up, like a scroll, in order to force down and under the bore of soft snow that surged like a wave before it. On the sled, securely lashed, was a long and narrow oblong box. There were other things on the sled — blankets, an axe, and a coffee-pot and frying-pan; but prominent, occupying most of the space, was the long and narrow oblong box.

In advance of the dogs, on wide snowshoes, toiled a man. At the rear of the sled toiled a second man. On the sled, in the box, lay a third man whose toil was over, — a man whom the Wild had conquered and beaten down until he would never move nor struggle again. It is not the way of the Wild to like movement. Life is an offence to it, for life is movement; and the Wild aims always to destroy movement. It freezes the water to prevent it running to the sea; it drives the sap out of the trees till they are frozen to their mighty hearts; and most ferociously and terribly of all does the Wild harry and crush into submission man — man who is the most restless of life, ever in revolt against the dictum that all movement must in the end come to the cessation of movement.

But at front and rear, unawed and indomitable, toiled the two men who were not yet dead. Their bodies were covered with fur and soft-tanned leather. Eyelashes and cheeks and lips were so coated with the crystals from their frozen breath that their faces were not discernible. This gave them the seeming of ghostly masques, undertakers in a spectral world at the funeral of some ghost. But under it all they were men, penetrating the land of desolation and mockery and silence, puny adventurers bent on colossal adventure, pitting themselves against the might of a world as remote and alien and pulseless as the abysses of space.

They travelled on without speech, saving their breath for the work of their bodies. On every side was the silence, pressing upon them with a tangible presence. It affected their minds as the many atmospheres of deep water affect the body of the diver. It crushed them with the weight of unending vastness and unalterable decree. It crushed them into the remotest recesses of their own minds, pressing out of them, like juices from the grape, all the false ardours and exaltations and undue self-values of the human soul, until they perceived themselves finite and small, specks and motes, moving with weak cunning and little wisdom amidst the play and inter-play of the great blind elements and forces.

An hour went by, and a second hour. The pale light of the short sunless day was beginning to fade, when a faint far cry arose on the still air. It soared upward with a swift rush, till it reached its topmost note, where it persisted, palpitant and tense, and then slowly died away. It might have been a lost soul wailing, had it not been invested with a certain sad fierceness and hungry eagerness. The front man turned his head until his eyes met the eyes of the man behind. And then, across the narrow oblong box, each nodded to the other.

A second cry arose, piercing the silence with needle-like shrillness. Both men located the sound. It was to the rear, somewhere in the snow expanse they had just traversed. A third and answering cry arose, also to the rear and to the left of the second cry.

“They’re after us, Bill,” said the man at the front.

His voice sounded hoarse and unreal, and he had spoken with apparent effort.

"Meat is scarce," answered his comrade. "I ain't seen a rabbit sign for days."

Thereafter they spoke no more, though their ears were keen for the hunting-cries that continued to rise behind them.

At the fall of darkness they swung the dogs into a cluster of spruce trees on the edge of the waterway and made a camp. The coffin, at the side of the fire, served for seat and table. The wolf-dogs, clustered on the far side of the fire, snarled and bickered among themselves, but evinced no inclination to stray off into the darkness.

"Seems to me, Henry, they're stayin' remarkable close to camp," Bill commented.

Henry, squatting over the fire and settling the pot of coffee with a piece of ice, nodded. Nor did he speak till he had taken his seat on the coffin and begun to eat.

"They know where their hides is safe," he said. "They'd sooner eat grub than be grub. They're pretty wise, them dogs."

Bill shook his head. "Oh, I don't know."

His comrade looked at him curiously. "First time I ever heard you say anything about their not bein' wise."

"Henry," said the other, munching with deliberation the beans he was eating, "did you happen to notice the way them dogs kicked up when I was a-feedin' 'em?"

"They did cut up more'n usual," Henry acknowledged.

"How many dogs 've we got, Henry?"

"Six."

"Well, Henry . . . " Bill stopped for a moment, in order that his words might gain greater significance. "As I was sayin', Henry, we've got six dogs. I took six fish out of the bag. I gave one fish to each dog, an', Henry, I was one fish short."

"You counted wrong."

"We've got six dogs," the other reiterated dispassionately. "I took out six fish. One Ear didn't get no fish. I came back to the bag afterward an' got 'm his fish."

"We've only got six dogs," Henry said.

“Henry,” Bill went on. “I won’t say they was all dogs, but there was seven of ’m that got fish.”

Henry stopped eating to glance across the fire and count the dogs.

“There’s only six now,” he said.

“I saw the other one run off across the snow,” Bill announced with cool positiveness. “I saw seven.”

Henry looked at him commiseratingly, and said, “I’ll be almighty glad when this trip’s over.”

“What d’ye mean by that?” Bill demanded.

“I mean that this load of ourn is gettin’ on your nerves, an’ that you’re beginnin’ to see things.”

“I thought of that,” Bill answered gravely. “An’ so, when I saw it run off across the snow, I looked in the snow an’ saw its tracks. Then I counted the dogs an’ there was still six of ’em. The tracks is there in the snow now. D’ye want to look at ’em? I’ll show ’em to you.”

Henry did not reply, but munched on in silence, until, the meal finished, he topped it with a final cup of coffee. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and said:

“Then you’re thinkin’ as it was — ”

A long wailing cry, fiercely sad, from somewhere in the darkness, had interrupted him. He stopped to listen to it, then he finished his sentence with a wave of his hand toward the sound of the cry, “ — one of them?”

Bill nodded. “I’d a blame sight sooner think that than anything else. You noticed yourself the row the dogs made.”

Cry after cry, and answering cries, were turning the silence into a bedlam. From every side the cries arose, and the dogs betrayed their fear by huddling together and so close to the fire that their hair was scorched by the heat. Bill threw on more wood, before lighting his pipe.

“I’m thinking you’re down in the mouth some,” Henry said.

“Henry . . . ” He sucked meditatively at his pipe for some time before he went on. “Henry, I was a-thinkin’ what a blame sight luckier he is than you an’ me’ll ever be.”

He indicated the third person by a downward thrust of the thumb to the box on which they sat.

“You an’ me, Henry, when we die, we’ll be lucky if we get enough stones over our carcases to keep the dogs off of us.”

"But we ain't got people an' money an' all the rest, like him," Henry rejoined. "Long-distance funerals is somethin' you an' me can't exactly afford."

"What gets me, Henry, is what a chap like this, that's a lord or something in his own country, and that's never had to bother about grub nor blankets; why he comes a-buttin' round the Godforsaken ends of the earth — that's what I can't exactly see."

"He might have lived to a ripe old age if he'd stayed at home," Henry agreed.

Bill opened his mouth to speak, but changed his mind. Instead, he pointed towards the wall of darkness that pressed about them from every side. There was no suggestion of form in the utter blackness; only could be seen a pair of eyes gleaming like live coals. Henry indicated with his head a second pair, and a third. A circle of the gleaming eyes had drawn about their camp. Now and again a pair of eyes moved, or disappeared to appear again a moment later.

The unrest of the dogs had been increasing, and they stampeded, in a surge of sudden fear, to the near side of the fire, cringing and crawling about the legs of the men. In the scramble one of the dogs had been overturned on the edge of the fire, and it had yelped with pain and fright as the smell of its singed coat possessed the air. The commotion caused the circle of eyes to shift restlessly for a moment and even to withdraw a bit, but it settled down again as the dogs became quiet.

"Henry, it's a blame misfortune to be out of ammunition."

Bill had finished his pipe and was helping his companion to spread the bed of fur and blanket upon the spruce boughs which he had laid over the snow before supper. Henry grunted, and began unlacing his mocassins.

"How many cartridges did you say you had left?" he asked.

"Three," came the answer. "An' I wisht 'twas three hundred. Then I'd show 'em what for, damn 'em!"

He shook his fist angrily at the gleaming eyes, and began securely to prop his moccasins before the fire.

"An' I wisht this cold snap'd break," he went on. "It's ben fifty below for two weeks now. An' I wisht I'd never started on this trip, Henry. I don't like the looks of it. I don't feel right, somehow. An' while I'm wishin', I wisht the trip was over an' done with, an' you an' me a-sittin' by the fire in Fort McGurry just about now an' playing cribbage — that's what I wisht."

Henry grunted and crawled into bed. As he dozed off he was aroused by his comrade's voice.

"Say, Henry, that other one that come in an' got a fish — why didn't the dogs pitch into it? That's what's botherin' me."

"You're botherin' too much, Bill," came the sleepy response. "You was never like this before. You jes' shut up now, an' go to sleep, an' you'll be all hunkydory in the mornin'. Your stomach's sour, that's what's botherin' you."

The men slept, breathing heavily, side by side, under the one covering. The fire died down, and the gleaming eyes drew closer the circle they had flung about the camp. The dogs clustered together in fear, now and again snarling menacingly as a pair of eyes drew close. Once their uproar became so loud that Bill woke up. He got out of bed carefully, so as not to disturb the sleep of his comrade, and threw more wood on the fire. As it began to flame up, the circle of eyes drew farther back. He glanced casually at the huddling dogs. He rubbed his eyes and looked at them more sharply. Then he crawled back into the blankets.

"Henry," he said. "Oh, Henry."

Henry groaned as he passed from sleep to waking, and demanded, "What's wrong now?"

"Nothin'," came the answer; "only there's seven of 'em again. I just counted."

Henry acknowledged receipt of the information with a grunt that slid into a snore as he drifted back into sleep.

In the morning it was Henry who awoke first and routed his companion out of bed. Daylight was yet three hours away, though it was already six o'clock; and in the darkness Henry went about preparing breakfast, while Bill rolled the blankets and made the sled ready for lashing.

"Say, Henry," he asked suddenly, "how many dogs did you say we had?"

"Six."

"Wrong," Bill proclaimed triumphantly.

"Seven again?" Henry queried.

"No, five; one's gone."

"The hell!" Henry cried in wrath, leaving the cooking to come and count the dogs.

"You're right, Bill," he concluded. "Fatty's gone."

“An’ he went like greased lightnin’ once he got started. Couldn’t ’ve seen ’m for smoke.”

“No chance at all,” Henry concluded. “They jes’ swallowed ’m alive. I bet he was yelpin’ as he went down their throats, damn ’em!”

“He always was a fool dog,” said Bill.

“But no fool dog ought to be fool enough to go off an’ commit suicide that way.” He looked over the remainder of the team with a speculative eye that summed up instantly the salient traits of each animal. “I bet none of the others would do it.”

“Couldn’t drive ’em away from the fire with a club,” Bill agreed. “I always did think there was somethin’ wrong with Fatty anyway.”

And this was the epitaph of a dead dog on the Northland trail — less scant than the epitaph of many another dog, of many a man.

CHAPTER II — THE SHE-WOLF

Breakfast eaten and the slim camp-outfit lashed to the sled, the men turned their backs on the cheery fire and launched out into the darkness. At once began to rise the cries that were fiercely sad — cries that called through the darkness and cold to one another and answered back. Conversation ceased. Daylight came at nine o'clock. At midday the sky to the south warmed to rose-colour, and marked where the bulge of the earth intervened between the meridian sun and the northern world. But the rose-colour swiftly faded. The grey light of day that remained lasted until three o'clock, when it, too, faded, and the pall of the Arctic night descended upon the lone and silent land.

As darkness came on, the hunting-cries to right and left and rear drew closer — so close that more than once they sent surges of fear through the toiling dogs, throwing them into short-lived panics.

At the conclusion of one such panic, when he and Henry had got the dogs back in the traces, Bill said:

"I wisht they'd strike game somewheres, an' go away an' leave us alone."

"They do get on the nerves horrible," Henry sympathised.

They spoke no more until camp was made.

Henry was bending over and adding ice to the babbling pot of beans when he was startled by the sound of a blow, an exclamation from Bill, and a sharp snarling cry of pain from among the dogs. He straightened up in time to see a dim form disappearing across the snow into the shelter of the dark. Then he saw Bill, standing amid the dogs, half triumphant, half crestfallen, in one hand a stout club, in the other the tail and part of the body of a sun-cured salmon.

"It got half of it," he announced; "but I got a whack at it jes' the same. D'ye hear it squeal?"

"What'd it look like?" Henry asked.

"Couldn't see. But it had four legs an' a mouth an' hair an' looked like any dog."

"Must be a tame wolf, I reckon."

"It's damned tame, whatever it is, comin' in here at feedin' time an' gettin' its whack of fish."

That night, when supper was finished and they sat on the oblong box and pulled at their pipes, the circle of gleaming eyes drew in even closer than before.

"I wisht they'd spring up a bunch of moose or something, an' go away an' leave us alone," Bill said.

Henry grunted with an intonation that was not all sympathy, and for a quarter of an hour they sat on in silence, Henry staring at the fire, and Bill at the circle of eyes that burned in the darkness just beyond the firelight.

"I wisht we was pullin' into McGurry right now," he began again.

"Shut up your wishin' and your croakin'," Henry burst out angrily. "Your stomach's sour. That's what's ailin' you. Swallow a spoonful of sody, an' you'll sweeten up wonderful an' be more pleasant company."

In the morning Henry was aroused by fervid blasphemy that proceeded from the mouth of Bill. Henry propped himself up on an elbow and looked to see his comrade standing among the dogs beside the replenished fire, his arms raised in objurgation, his face distorted with passion.

"Hello!" Henry called. "What's up now?"

"Frog's gone," came the answer.

"No."

"I tell you yes."

Henry leaped out of the blankets and to the dogs. He counted them with care, and then joined his partner in cursing the power of the Wild that had robbed them of another dog.

"Frog was the strongest dog of the bunch," Bill pronounced finally.

"An' he was no fool dog neither," Henry added.

And so was recorded the second epitaph in two days.

A gloomy breakfast was eaten, and the four remaining dogs were harnessed to the sled. The day was a repetition of the days that had gone before. The men toiled without speech across the face of the frozen world. The silence was unbroken save by the cries of their pursuers, that, unseen, hung upon their rear. With the coming of night in the mid-afternoon, the cries sounded closer as the pursuers drew in according to their custom; and the dogs grew excited and frightened, and were guilty of panics that tangled the traces and further depressed the two men.

"There, that'll fix you fool critters," Bill said with satisfaction that night, standing erect at completion of his task.

Henry left the cooking to come and see. Not only had his partner tied the dogs up, but he had tied them, after the Indian fashion, with sticks. About the neck of each dog he had fastened a leather thong. To this, and so close to the neck that the dog could not get his teeth to it, he had tied a stout stick four or five feet in length. The other end of the stick, in turn, was made fast to a stake in the ground by means of a leather thong. The dog was unable to gnaw through the leather at his own end of the stick. The stick prevented him from getting at the leather that fastened the other end.

Henry nodded his head approvingly.

“It’s the only contraption that’ll ever hold One Ear,” he said. “He can gnaw through leather as clean as a knife an’ jes’ about half as quick. They all’ll be here in the mornin’ hunkydory.”

“You jes’ bet they will,” Bill affirmed. “If one of em’ turns up missin’, I’ll go without my coffee.”

“They jes’ know we ain’t loaded to kill,” Henry remarked at bed-time, indicating the gleaming circle that hemmed them in. “If we could put a couple of shots into ’em, they’d be more respectful. They come closer every night. Get the firelight out of your eyes an’ look hard — there! Did you see that one?”

For some time the two men amused themselves with watching the movement of vague forms on the edge of the firelight. By looking closely and steadily at where a pair of eyes burned in the darkness, the form of the animal would slowly take shape. They could even see these forms move at times.

A sound among the dogs attracted the men’s attention. One Ear was uttering quick, eager whines, lunging at the length of his stick toward the darkness, and desisting now and again in order to make frantic attacks on the stick with his teeth.

“Look at that, Bill,” Henry whispered.

Full into the firelight, with a stealthy, sidelong movement, glided a doglike animal. It moved with commingled mistrust and daring, cautiously observing the men, its attention fixed on the dogs. One Ear strained the full length of the stick toward the intruder and whined with eagerness.

“That fool One Ear don’t seem scairt much,” Bill said in a low tone.

“It’s a she-wolf,” Henry whispered back, “an’ that accounts for Fatty an’ Frog. She’s the decoy for the pack. She draws out the dog an’ then all the rest pitches in an’ eats ’m up.”

The fire crackled. A log fell apart with a loud spluttering noise. At the sound of it the strange animal leaped back into the darkness.

"Henry, I'm a-thinkin'," Bill announced.

"Thinkin' what?"

"I'm a-thinkin' that was the one I lambasted with the club."

"Ain't the slightest doubt in the world," was Henry's response.

"An' right here I want to remark," Bill went on, "that that animal's familyarity with campfires is suspicious an' immoral."

"It knows for certain more'n a self-respectin' wolf ought to know," Henry agreed. "A wolf that knows enough to come in with the dogs at feedin' time has had experiences."

"Ol' Villan had a dog once that run away with the wolves," Bill cogitates aloud. "I ought to know. I shot it out of the pack in a moose pasture over 'on Little Stick. An' Ol' Villan cried like a baby. Hadn't seen it for three years, he said. Ben with the wolves all that time."

"I reckon you've called the turn, Bill. That wolf's a dog, an' it's eaten fish many's the time from the hand of man."

"An if I get a chance at it, that wolf that's a dog'll be jes' meat," Bill declared. "We can't afford to lose no more animals."

"But you've only got three cartridges," Henry objected.

"I'll wait for a dead sure shot," was the reply.

In the morning Henry renewed the fire and cooked breakfast to the accompaniment of his partner's snoring.

"You was sleepin' jes' too comfortable for anything," Henry told him, as he routed him out for breakfast. "I hadn't the heart to rouse you."

Bill began to eat sleepily. He noticed that his cup was empty and started to reach for the pot. But the pot was beyond arm's length and beside Henry.

"Say, Henry," he chided gently, "ain't you forgot somethin'?"

Henry looked about with great carefulness and shook his head. Bill held up the empty cup.

"You don't get no coffee," Henry announced.

"Ain't run out?" Bill asked anxiously.

"Nope."

"Ain't thinkin' it'll hurt my digestion?"

"Nope."

A flush of angry blood pervaded Bill's face.

"Then it's jes' warm an' anxious I am to be hearin' you explain yourself," he said.

"Spanker's gone," Henry answered.

Without haste, with the air of one resigned to misfortune Bill turned his head, and from where he sat counted the dogs.

"How'd it happen?" he asked apathetically.

Henry shrugged his shoulders. "Don't know. Unless One Ear gnawed 'm loose. He couldn't a-done it himself, that's sure."

"The darned cuss." Bill spoke gravely and slowly, with no hint of the anger that was raging within. "Jes' because he couldn't chew himself loose, he chews Spanker loose."

"Well, Spanker's troubles is over anyway; I guess he's digested by this time an' cavortin' over the landscape in the bellies of twenty different wolves," was Henry's epitaph on this, the latest lost dog. "Have some coffee, Bill."

But Bill shook his head.

"Go on," Henry pleaded, elevating the pot.

Bill shoved his cup aside. "I'll be ding-dong-danged if I do. I said I wouldn't if ary dog turned up missin', an' I won't."

"It's darn good coffee," Henry said enticingly.

But Bill was stubborn, and he ate a dry breakfast washed down with mumbled curses at One Ear for the trick he had played.

"I'll tie 'em up out of reach of each other to-night," Bill said, as they took the trail.

They had travelled little more than a hundred yards, when Henry, who was in front, bent down and picked up something with which his snowshoe had collided. It was dark, and he could not see it, but he recognised it by the touch. He flung it back, so that it struck the sled and bounced along until it fetched up on Bill's snowshoes.

"Mebbe you'll need that in your business," Henry said.

Bill uttered an exclamation. It was all that was left of Spanker — the stick with which he had been tied.

"They ate 'm hide an' all," Bill announced. "The stick's as clean as a whistle. They've ate the leather offen both ends. They're damn hungry, Henry, an' they'll have you an' me guessin' before this trip's over."

Henry laughed defiantly. "I ain't been trailed this way by wolves before, but I've gone through a whole lot worse an' kept my health. Takes more'n a handful of them pesky critters to do for yours truly, Bill, my son."

"I don't know, I don't know," Bill muttered ominously.

"Well, you'll know all right when we pull into McGurry."

"I ain't feelin' special enthusiastic," Bill persisted.

"You're off colour, that's what's the matter with you," Henry dogmatised. "What you need is quinine, an' I'm goin' to dose you up stiff as soon as we make McGurry."

Bill grunted his disagreement with the diagnosis, and lapsed into silence. The day was like all the days. Light came at nine o'clock. At twelve o'clock the southern horizon was warmed by the unseen sun; and then began the cold grey of afternoon that would merge, three hours later, into night.

It was just after the sun's futile effort to appear, that Bill slipped the rifle from under the sled-lashings and said:

"You keep right on, Henry, I'm goin' to see what I can see."

"You'd better stick by the sled," his partner protested. "You've only got three cartridges, an' there's no tellin' what might happen."

"Who's croaking now?" Bill demanded triumphantly.

Henry made no reply, and plodded on alone, though often he cast anxious glances back into the grey solitude where his partner had disappeared. An hour later, taking advantage of the cut-offs around which the sled had to go, Bill arrived.

"They're scattered an' rangin' along wide," he said: "keeping up with us an' lookin' for game at the same time. You see, they're sure of us, only they know they've got to wait to get us. In the meantime they're willin' to pick up anything eatable that comes handy."

"You mean they *think* they're sure of us," Henry objected pointedly.

But Bill ignored him. "I seen some of them. They're pretty thin. They ain't had a bite in weeks I reckon, outside of Fatty an' Frog an' Spanker; an' there's so many of 'em that that didn't go far. They're remarkable thin. Their ribs is like wash-boards, an' their stomachs is right up against their backbones. They're pretty desperate, I can tell you. They'll be goin' mad, yet, an' then watch out."

A few minutes later, Henry, who was now travelling behind the sled, emitted a low, warning whistle. Bill turned and looked, then quietly stopped the dogs. To the rear, from around the last bend and plainly into view, on the very trail they had just covered, trotted a furry, slinking form.

Its nose was to the trail, and it trotted with a peculiar, sliding, effortless gait. When they halted, it halted, throwing up its head and regarding them steadily with nostrils that twitched as it caught and studied the scent of them.

"It's the she-wolf," Bill answered.

The dogs had lain down in the snow, and he walked past them to join his partner in the sled. Together they watched the strange animal that had pursued them for days and that had already accomplished the destruction of half their dog-team.

After a searching scrutiny, the animal trotted forward a few steps. This it repeated several times, till it was a short hundred yards away. It paused, head up, close by a clump of spruce trees, and with sight and scent studied the outfit of the watching men. It looked at them in a strangely wistful way, after the manner of a dog; but in its wistfulness there was none of the dog affection. It was a wistfulness bred of hunger, as cruel as its own fangs, as merciless as the frost itself.

It was large for a wolf, its gaunt frame advertising the lines of an animal that was among the largest of its kind.

"Stands pretty close to two feet an' a half at the shoulders," Henry commented. "An' I'll bet it ain't far from five feet long."

"Kind of strange colour for a wolf," was Bill's criticism. "I never seen a red wolf before. Looks almost cinnamon to me."

The animal was certainly not cinnamon-coloured. Its coat was the true wolf-coat. The dominant colour was grey, and yet there was to it a faint reddish hue — a hue that was baffling, that appeared and disappeared, that was more like an illusion of the vision, now grey, distinctly grey, and again giving hints and glints of a vague redness of colour not classifiable in terms of ordinary experience.

"Looks for all the world like a big husky sled-dog," Bill said. "I wouldn't be s'prised to see it wag its tail."

"Hello, you husky!" he called. "Come here, you whatever-your-name-is."

"Ain't a bit scairt of you," Henry laughed.

Bill waved his hand at it threateningly and shouted loudly; but the animal betrayed no fear. The only change in it that they could notice was an accession of alertness. It still regarded them with the merciless wistfulness of hunger. They were meat, and it was hungry; and it would like to go in and eat them if it dared.

"Look here, Henry," Bill said, unconsciously lowering his voice to a whisper because of what he imitated. "We've got three cartridges. But it's a dead shot. Couldn't miss it. It's got away with three of our dogs, an' we oughter put a stop to it. What d'ye say?"

Henry nodded his consent. Bill cautiously slipped the gun from under the sled-lashing. The gun was on the way to his shoulder, but it never got there. For in that instant the she-wolf leaped sidewise from the trail into the clump of spruce trees and disappeared.

The two men looked at each other. Henry whistled long and comprehendingly.

"I might have knowed it," Bill chided himself aloud as he replaced the gun. "Of course a wolf that knows enough to come in with the dogs at feedin' time, 'd know all about shooting-irons. I tell you right now, Henry, that critter's the cause of all our trouble. We'd have six dogs at the present time, 'stead of three, if it wasn't for her. An' I tell you right now, Henry, I'm goin' to get her. She's too smart to be shot in the open. But I'm goin' to lay for her. I'll bushwhack her as sure as my name is Bill."

"You needn't stray off too far in doin' it," his partner admonished. "If that pack ever starts to jump you, them three cartridges'd be wuth no more'n three whoops in hell. Them animals is damn hungry, an' once they start in, they'll sure get you, Bill."

They camped early that night. Three dogs could not drag the sled so fast nor for so long hours as could six, and they were showing unmistakable signs of playing out. And the men went early to bed, Bill first seeing to it that the dogs were tied out of gnawing-reach of one another.

But the wolves were growing bolder, and the men were aroused more than once from their sleep. So near did the wolves approach, that the dogs became frantic with terror, and it was necessary to replenish the fire from time to time in order to keep the adventurous marauders at safer distance.

"I've hearn sailors talk of sharks followin' a ship," Bill remarked, as he crawled back into the blankets after one such replenishing of the fire. "Well, them wolves is land sharks. They know their business better'n we do, an' they ain't a-holdin' our trail this way for their health. They're goin' to get us. They're sure goin' to get us, Henry."

“They’ve half got you a’ready, a-talkin’ like that,” Henry retorted sharply. “A man’s half licked when he says he is. An’ you’re half eaten from the way you’re goin’ on about it.”

“They’ve got away with better men than you an’ me,” Bill answered.

“Oh, shet up your croakin’. You make me all-fired tired.”

Henry rolled over angrily on his side, but was surprised that Bill made no similar display of temper. This was not Bill’s way, for he was easily angered by sharp words. Henry thought long over it before he went to sleep, and as his eyelids fluttered down and he dozed off, the thought in his mind was: “There’s no mistakin’ it, Bill’s almighty blue. I’ll have to cheer him up to-morrow.”

CHAPTER III — THE HUNGER CRY

The day began auspiciously. They had lost no dogs during the night, and they swung out upon the trail and into the silence, the darkness, and the cold with spirits that were fairly light. Bill seemed to have forgotten his forebodings of the previous night, and even waxed facetious with the dogs when, at midday, they overturned the sled on a bad piece of trail.

It was an awkward mix-up. The sled was upside down and jammed between a tree-trunk and a huge rock, and they were forced to unharness the dogs in order to straighten out the tangle. The two men were bent over the sled and trying to right it, when Henry observed One Ear sidling away.

“Here, you, One Ear!” he cried, straightening up and turning around on the dog.

But One Ear broke into a run across the snow, his traces trailing behind him. And there, out in the snow of their back track, was the she-wolf waiting for him. As he neared her, he became suddenly cautious. He slowed down to an alert and mincing walk and then stopped. He regarded her carefully and dubiously, yet desirefully. She seemed to smile at him, showing her teeth in an ingratiating rather than a menacing way. She moved toward him a few steps, playfully, and then halted. One Ear drew near to her, still alert and cautious, his tail and ears in the air, his head held high.

He tried to sniff noses with her, but she retreated playfully and coyly. Every advance on his part was accompanied by a corresponding retreat on her part. Step by step she was luring him away from the security of his human companionship. Once, as though a warning had in vague ways flitted through his intelligence, he turned his head and looked back at the overturned sled, at his team-mates, and at the two men who were calling to him.

But whatever idea was forming in his mind, was dissipated by the she-wolf, who advanced upon him, sniffed noses with him for a fleeting instant, and then resumed her coy retreat before his renewed advances.

In the meantime, Bill had bethought himself of the rifle. But it was jammed beneath the overturned sled, and by the time Henry had helped him to right the load, One Ear and the she-wolf were too close together and the distance too great to risk a shot.

Too late One Ear learned his mistake. Before they saw the cause, the two men saw him turn and start to run back toward them. Then, approaching at right angles to the trail and cutting off his retreat they saw a dozen wolves, lean and grey, bounding across the snow. On the instant, the she-wolf's coyness and playfulness disappeared. With a snarl she sprang upon One Ear. He thrust her off with his shoulder, and, his retreat cut off and still intent on regaining the sled, he altered his course in an attempt to circle around to it. More wolves were appearing every moment and joining in the chase. The she-wolf was one leap behind One Ear and holding her own.

"Where are you goin'?" Henry suddenly demanded, laying his hand on his partner's arm.

Bill shook it off. "I won't stand it," he said. "They ain't a-goin' to get any more of our dogs if I can help it."

Gun in hand, he plunged into the underbrush that lined the side of the trail. His intention was apparent enough. Taking the sled as the centre of the circle that One Ear was making, Bill planned to tap that circle at a point in advance of the pursuit. With his rifle, in the broad daylight, it might be possible for him to awe the wolves and save the dog.

"Say, Bill!" Henry called after him. "Be careful! Don't take no chances!"

Henry sat down on the sled and watched. There was nothing else for him to do. Bill had already gone from sight; but now and again, appearing and disappearing amongst the underbrush and the scattered clumps of spruce, could be seen One Ear. Henry judged his case to be hopeless. The dog was thoroughly alive to its danger, but it was running on the outer circle while the wolf-pack was running on the inner and shorter circle. It was vain to think of One Ear so outdistancing his pursuers as to be able to cut across their circle in advance of them and to regain the sled.

The different lines were rapidly approaching a point. Somewhere out there in the snow, screened from his sight by trees and thickets, Henry knew that the wolf-pack, One Ear, and Bill were coming together. All too quickly, far more quickly than he had expected, it happened. He heard a shot, then two shots, in rapid succession, and he knew that Bill's ammunition was gone. Then he heard a great outcry of snarls and yelps. He recognised One Ear's yell of pain and terror, and he heard a wolf-cry that bespoke a stricken animal. And that was all. The snarls ceased. The yelping died away. Silence settled down again over the lonely land.

He sat for a long while upon the sled. There was no need for him to go and see what had happened. He knew it as though it had taken place before his eyes. Once, he roused with a start and hastily got the axe out from underneath the lashings. But for some time longer he sat and brooded, the two remaining dogs crouching and trembling at his feet.

At last he arose in a weary manner, as though all the resilience had gone out of his body, and proceeded to fasten the dogs to the sled. He passed a rope over his shoulder, a man-trace, and pulled with the dogs. He did not go far. At the first hint of darkness he hastened to make a camp, and he saw to it that he had a generous supply of firewood. He fed the dogs, cooked and ate his supper, and made his bed close to the fire.

But he was not destined to enjoy that bed. Before his eyes closed the wolves had drawn too near for safety. It no longer required an effort of the vision to see them. They were all about him and the fire, in a narrow circle, and he could see them plainly in the firelight lying down, sitting up, crawling forward on their bellies, or slinking back and forth. They even slept. Here and there he could see one curled up in the snow like a dog, taking the sleep that was now denied himself.

He kept the fire brightly blazing, for he knew that it alone intervened between the flesh of his body and their hungry fangs. His two dogs stayed close by him, one on either side, leaning against him for protection, crying and whimpering, and at times snarling desperately when a wolf approached a little closer than usual. At such moments, when his dogs snarled, the whole circle would be agitated, the wolves coming to their feet and pressing tentatively forward, a chorus of snarls and eager yelps rising about him. Then the circle would lie down again, and here and there a wolf would resume its broken nap.

But this circle had a continuous tendency to draw in upon him. Bit by bit, an inch at a time, with here a wolf bellying forward, and there a wolf bellying forward, the circle would narrow until the brutes were almost within springing distance. Then he would seize brands from the fire and hurl them into the pack. A hasty drawing back always resulted, accompanied by angry yelps and frightened snarls when a well-aimed brand struck and scorched a too daring animal.

Morning found the man haggard and worn, wide-eyed from want of sleep. He cooked breakfast in the darkness, and at nine o’clock, when, with the coming of daylight, the wolf-pack drew back, he set about the task he had planned through the long hours of the night. Chopping down young saplings, he made them cross-bars of a scaffold by lashing them high up to the trunks of standing trees. Using the sled-lashing for a heaving rope, and with the aid of the dogs, he hoisted the coffin to the top of the scaffold.

"They got Bill, an' they may get me, but they'll sure never get you, young man," he said, addressing the dead body in its tree-sepulchre.

Then he took the trail, the lightened sled bounding along behind the willing dogs; for they, too, knew that safety lay open in the gaining of Fort McGurry. The wolves were now more open in their pursuit, trotting sedately behind and ranging along on either side, their red tongues lolling out, their lean sides showing the undulating ribs with every movement. They were very lean, mere skin-bags stretched over bony frames, with strings for muscles — so lean that Henry found it in his mind to marvel that they still kept their feet and did not collapse forthright in the snow.

He did not dare travel until dark. At midday, not only did the sun warm the southern horizon, but it even thrust its upper rim, pale and golden, above the sky-line. He received it as a sign. The days were growing longer. The sun was returning. But scarcely had the cheer of its light departed, than he went into camp. There were still several hours of grey daylight and sombre twilight, and he utilised them in chopping an enormous supply of fire-wood.

With night came horror. Not only were the starving wolves growing bolder, but lack of sleep was telling upon Henry. He dozed despite himself, crouching by the fire, the blankets about his shoulders, the axe between his knees, and on either side a dog pressing close against him. He awoke once and saw in front of him, not a dozen feet away, a big grey wolf, one of the largest of the pack. And even as he looked, the brute deliberately stretched himself after the manner of a lazy dog, yawning full in his face and looking upon him with a possessive eye, as if, in truth, he were merely a delayed meal that was soon to be eaten.

This certitude was shown by the whole pack. Fully a score he could count, staring hungrily at him or calmly sleeping in the snow. They reminded him of children gathered about a spread table and awaiting permission to begin to eat. And he was the food they were to eat! He wondered how and when the meal would begin.

As he piled wood on the fire he discovered an appreciation of his own body which he had never felt before. He watched his moving muscles and was interested in the cunning mechanism of his fingers. By the light of the fire he crooked his fingers slowly and repeatedly now one at a time, now all together, spreading them wide or making quick gripping movements. He studied the nail-formation, and prodded the finger-tips, now sharply, and again softly, gauging the while the nerve-sensations produced. It fascinated him, and he grew suddenly fond of this subtle flesh of his that worked so beautifully and smoothly and delicately. Then he would cast a glance of fear at the wolf-circle drawn expectantly about him, and like a blow the realisation would strike him that this wonderful body of his, this living flesh, was no more than so much meat, a quest of ravenous animals, to be torn and slashed by their hungry fangs, to be sustenance to them as the moose and the rabbit had often been sustenance to him.

He came out of a doze that was half nightmare, to see the red-hued she-wolf before him. She was not more than half a dozen feet away sitting in the snow and wistfully regarding him. The two dogs were whimpering and snarling at his feet, but she took no notice of them. She was looking at the man, and for some time he returned her look. There was nothing threatening about her. She looked at him merely with a great wistfulness, but he knew it to be the wistfulness of an equally great hunger. He was the food, and the sight of him excited in her the gustatory sensations. Her mouth opened, the saliva drooled forth, and she licked her chops with the pleasure of anticipation.

A spasm of fear went through him. He reached hastily for a brand to throw at her. But even as he reached, and before his fingers had closed on the missile, she sprang back into safety; and he knew that she was used to having things thrown at her. She had snarled as she sprang away, baring her white fangs to their roots, all her wistfulness vanishing, being replaced by a carnivorous malignity that made him shudder. He glanced at the hand that held the brand, noticing the cunning delicacy of the fingers that gripped it, how they adjusted themselves to all the inequalities of the surface, curling over and under and about the rough wood, and one little finger, too close to the burning portion of the brand, sensitively and automatically writhing back from the hurtful heat to a cooler gripping-place; and in the same instant he seemed to see a vision of those same sensitive and delicate fingers being crushed and torn by the white teeth of the she-wolf. Never had he been so fond of this body of his as now when his tenure of it was so precarious.

All night, with burning brands, he fought off the hungry pack. When he dozed despite himself, the whimpering and snarling of the dogs aroused him. Morning came, but for the first time the light of day failed to scatter the wolves. The man waited in vain for them to go. They remained in a circle about him and his fire, displaying an arrogance of possession that shook his courage born of the morning light.

He made one desperate attempt to pull out on the trail. But the moment he left the protection of the fire, the boldest wolf leaped for him, but leaped short. He saved himself by springing back, the jaws snapping together a scant six inches from his thigh. The rest of the pack was now up and surging upon him, and a throwing of firebrands right and left was necessary to drive them back to a respectful distance.

Even in the daylight he did not dare leave the fire to chop fresh wood. Twenty feet away towered a huge dead spruce. He spent half the day extending his campfire to the tree, at any moment a half dozen burning faggots ready at hand to fling at his enemies. Once at the tree, he studied the surrounding forest in order to fell the tree in the direction of the most firewood.

The night was a repetition of the night before, save that the need for sleep was becoming overpowering. The snarling of his dogs was losing its efficacy. Besides, they were snarling all the time, and his benumbed and drowsy senses no longer took note of changing pitch and intensity. He awoke with a start. The she-wolf was less than a yard from him. Mechanically, at short range, without letting go of it, he thrust a brand full into her open and snarling mouth. She sprang away, yelling with pain, and while he took delight in the smell of burning flesh and hair, he watched her shaking her head and growling wrathfully a score of feet away.

But this time, before he dozed again, he tied a burning pine-knot to his right hand. His eyes were closed but few minutes when the burn of the flame on his flesh awakened him. For several hours he adhered to this programme. Every time he was thus awakened he drove back the wolves with flying brands, replenished the fire, and rearranged the pine-knot on his hand. All worked well, but there came a time when he fastened the pine-knot insecurely. As his eyes closed it fell away from his hand.

He dreamed. It seemed to him that he was in Fort McGurry. It was warm and comfortable, and he was playing cribbage with the Factor. Also, it seemed to him that the fort was besieged by wolves. They were howling at the very gates, and sometimes he and the Factor paused from the game to listen and laugh at the futile efforts of the wolves to get in. And then, so strange was the dream, there was a crash. The door was burst open. He could see the wolves flooding into the big living-room of the fort. They were leaping straight for him and the Factor. With the bursting open of the door, the noise of their howling had increased tremendously. This howling now bothered him. His dream was merging into something else — he knew not what; but through it all, following him, persisted the howling.

And then he awoke to find the howling real. There was a great snarling and yelping. The wolves were rushing him. They were all about him and upon him. The teeth of one had closed upon his arm. Instinctively he leaped into the fire, and as he leaped, he felt the sharp slash of teeth that tore through the flesh of his leg. Then began a fire fight. His stout mittens temporarily protected his hands, and he scooped live coals into the air in all directions, until the campfire took on the semblance of a volcano.

But it could not last long. His face was blistering in the heat, his eyebrows and lashes were singed off, and the heat was becoming unbearable to his feet. With a flaming brand in each hand, he sprang to the edge of the fire. The wolves had been driven back. On every side, wherever the live coals had fallen, the snow was sizzling, and every little while a retiring wolf, with wild leap and snort and snarl, announced that one such live coal had been stepped upon.

Flinging his brands at the nearest of his enemies, the man thrust his smouldering mittens into the snow and stamped about to cool his feet. His two dogs were missing, and he well knew that they had served as a course in the protracted meal which had begun days before with Fatty, the last course of which would likely be himself in the days to follow.

“You ain’t got me yet!” he cried, savagely shaking his fist at the hungry beasts; and at the sound of his voice the whole circle was agitated, there was a general snarl, and the she-wolf slid up close to him across the snow and watched him with hungry wistfulness.

He set to work to carry out a new idea that had come to him. He extended the fire into a large circle. Inside this circle he crouched, his sleeping outfit under him as a protection against the melting snow. When he had thus disappeared within his shelter of flame, the whole pack came curiously to the rim of the fire to see what had become of him. Hitherto they had been denied access to the fire, and they now settled down in a close-drawn circle, like so many dogs, blinking and yawning and stretching their lean bodies in the unaccustomed warmth. Then the she-wolf sat down, pointed her nose at a star, and began to howl. One by one the wolves joined her, till the whole pack, on haunches, with noses pointed skyward, was howling its hunger cry.

Dawn came, and daylight. The fire was burning low. The fuel had run out, and there was need to get more. The man attempted to step out of his circle of flame, but the wolves surged to meet him. Burning brands made them spring aside, but they no longer sprang back. In vain he strove to drive them back. As he gave up and stumbled inside his circle, a wolf leaped for him, missed, and landed with all four feet in the coals. It cried out with terror, at the same time snarling, and scrambled back to cool its paws in the snow.

The man sat down on his blankets in a crouching position. His body leaned forward from the hips. His shoulders, relaxed and drooping, and his head on his knees advertised that he had given up the struggle. Now and again he raised his head to note the dying down of the fire. The circle of flame and coals was breaking into segments with openings in between. These openings grew in size, the segments diminished.

“I guess you can come an’ get me any time,” he mumbled. “Anyway, I’m goin’ to sleep.”

Once he awakened, and in an opening in the circle, directly in front of him, he saw the she-wolf gazing at him.

Again he awakened, a little later, though it seemed hours to him. A mysterious change had taken place — so mysterious a change that he was shocked wider awake. Something had happened. He could not understand at first. Then he discovered it. The wolves were gone. Remained only the trampled snow to show how closely they had pressed him. Sleep was welling up and gripping him again, his head was sinking down upon his knees, when he roused with a sudden start.

There were cries of men, and churn of sleds, the creaking of harnesses, and the eager whimpering of straining dogs. Four sleds pulled in from the river bed to the camp among the trees. Half a dozen men were about the man who crouched in the centre of the dying fire. They were shaking and prodding him into consciousness. He looked at them like a drunken man and maundered in strange, sleepy speech.

“Red she-wolf. . . . Come in with the dogs at feedin’ time. . . . First she ate the dog-food. . . . Then she ate the dogs. . . . An’ after that she ate Bill. . . . ”

“Where’s Lord Alfred?” one of the men bellowed in his ear, shaking him roughly.

He shook his head slowly. “No, she didn’t eat him. . . . He’s roostin’ in a tree at the last camp.”

“Dead?” the man shouted.

“An’ in a box,” Henry answered. He jerked his shoulder petulantly away from the grip of his questioner. “Say, you lemme alone. . . . I’m jes’ plump tuckered out. . . . Goo’ night, everybody.”

His eyes fluttered and went shut. His chin fell forward on his chest. And even as they eased him down upon the blankets his snores were rising on the frosty air.

But there was another sound. Far and faint it was, in the remote distance, the cry of the hungry wolf-pack as it took the trail of other meat than the man it had just missed.

PART II

CHAPTER I — THE BATTLE OF THE FANGS

It was the she-wolf who had first caught the sound of men's voices and the whining of the sled-dogs; and it was the she-wolf who was first to spring away from the cornered man in his circle of dying flame. The pack had been loath to forego the kill it had hunted down, and it lingered for several minutes, making sure of the sounds, and then it, too, sprang away on the trail made by the she-wolf.

Running at the forefront of the pack was a large grey wolf — one of its several leaders. It was he who directed the pack's course on the heels of the she-wolf. It was he who snarled warningly at the younger members of the pack or slashed at them with his fangs when they ambitiously tried to pass him. And it was he who increased the pace when he sighted the she-wolf, now trotting slowly across the snow.

She dropped in alongside by him, as though it were her appointed position, and took the pace of the pack. He did not snarl at her, nor show his teeth, when any leap of hers chanced to put her in advance of him. On the contrary, he seemed kindly disposed toward her — too kindly to suit her, for he was prone to run near to her, and when he ran too near it was she who snarled and showed her teeth. Nor was she above slashing his shoulder sharply on occasion. At such times he betrayed no anger. He merely sprang to the side and ran stiffly ahead for several awkward leaps, in carriage and conduct resembling an abashed country swain.

This was his one trouble in the running of the pack; but she had other troubles. On her other side ran a gaunt old wolf, grizzled and marked with the scars of many battles. He ran always on her right side. The fact that he had but one eye, and that the left eye, might account for this. He, also, was addicted to crowding her, to veering toward her till his scarred muzzle touched her body, or shoulder, or neck. As with the running mate on the left, she repelled these attentions with her teeth; but when both bestowed their attentions at the same time she was roughly jostled, being compelled, with quick snaps to either side, to drive both lovers away and at the same time to maintain her forward leap with the pack and see the way of her feet before her. At such times her running mates flashed their teeth and growled threateningly across at each other. They might have fought, but even wooing and its rivalry waited upon the more pressing hunger-need of the pack.

After each repulse, when the old wolf sheered abruptly away from the sharp-toothed object of his desire, he shouldered against a young three-year-old that ran on his blind right side. This young wolf had attained his full size; and, considering the weak and famished condition of the pack, he possessed more than the average vigour and spirit. Nevertheless, he ran with his head even with the shoulder of his one-eyed elder. When he ventured to run abreast of the older wolf (which was seldom), a snarl and a snap sent him back even with the shoulder again. Sometimes, however, he dropped cautiously and slowly behind and edged in between the old leader and the she-wolf. This was doubly resented, even triply resented. When she snarled her displeasure, the old leader would whirl on the three-year-old. Sometimes she whirled with him. And sometimes the young leader on the left whirled, too.

At such times, confronted by three sets of savage teeth, the young wolf stopped precipitately, throwing himself back on his haunches, with fore-legs stiff, mouth menacing, and mane bristling. This confusion in the front of the moving pack always caused confusion in the rear. The wolves behind collided with the young wolf and expressed their displeasure by administering sharp nips on his hind-legs and flanks. He was laying up trouble for himself, for lack of food and short tempers went together; but with the boundless faith of youth he persisted in repeating the manoeuvre every little while, though it never succeeded in gaining anything for him but discomfiture.

Had there been food, love-making and fighting would have gone on apace, and the pack-formation would have been broken up. But the situation of the pack was desperate. It was lean with long-standing hunger. It ran below its ordinary speed. At the rear limped the weak members, the very young and the very old. At the front were the strongest. Yet all were more like skeletons than full-bodied wolves. Nevertheless, with the exception of the ones that limped, the movements of the animals were effortless and tireless. Their stringy muscles seemed founts of inexhaustible energy. Behind every steel-like contraction of a muscle, lay another steel-like contraction, and another, and another, apparently without end.

They ran many miles that day. They ran through the night. And the next day found them still running. They were running over the surface of a world frozen and dead. No life stirred. They alone moved through the vast inertness. They alone were alive, and they sought for other things that were alive in order that they might devour them and continue to live.

They crossed low divides and ranged a dozen small streams in a lower-lying country before their quest was rewarded. Then they came upon moose. It was a big bull they first found. Here was meat and life, and it was guarded by no mysterious fires nor flying missiles of flame. Splay hoofs and palmated antlers they knew, and they flung their customary patience and caution to the wind. It was a brief fight and fierce. The big bull was beset on every side. He ripped them open or split their skulls with shrewdly driven blows of his great hoofs. He crushed them and broke them on his large horns. He stamped them into the snow under him in the wallowing struggle. But he was foredoomed, and he went down with the she-wolf tearing savagely at his throat, and with other teeth fixed everywhere upon him, devouring him alive, before ever his last struggles ceased or his last damage had been wrought.

There was food in plenty. The bull weighed over eight hundred pounds — fully twenty pounds of meat per mouth for the forty-odd wolves of the pack. But if they could fast prodigiously, they could feed prodigiously, and soon a few scattered bones were all that remained of the splendid live brute that had faced the pack a few hours before.

There was now much resting and sleeping. With full stomachs, bickering and quarrelling began among the younger males, and this continued through the few days that followed before the breaking-up of the pack. The famine was over. The wolves were now in the country of game, and though they still hunted in pack, they hunted more cautiously, cutting out heavy cows or crippled old bulls from the small moose-herds they ran across.

There came a day, in this land of plenty, when the wolf-pack split in half and went in different directions. The she-wolf, the young leader on her left, and the one-eyed elder on her right, led their half of the pack down to the Mackenzie River and across into the lake country to the east. Each day this remnant of the pack dwindled. Two by two, male and female, the wolves were deserting. Occasionally a solitary male was driven out by the sharp teeth of his rivals. In the end there remained only four: the she-wolf, the young leader, the one-eyed one, and the ambitious three-year-old.

The she-wolf had by now developed a ferocious temper. Her three suitors all bore the marks of her teeth. Yet they never replied in kind, never defended themselves against her. They turned their shoulders to her most savage slashes, and with wagging tails and mincing steps strove to placate her wrath. But if they were all mildness toward her, they were all fierceness toward one another. The three-year-old grew too ambitious in his fierceness. He caught the one-eyed elder on his blind side and ripped his ear into ribbons. Though the grizzled old fellow could see only on one side, against the youth and vigour of the other he brought into play the wisdom of long years of experience. His lost eye and his scarred muzzle bore evidence to the nature of his experience. He had survived too many battles to be in doubt for a moment about what to do.

The battle began fairly, but it did not end fairly. There was no telling what the outcome would have been, for the third wolf joined the elder, and together, old leader and young leader, they attacked the ambitious three-year-old and proceeded to destroy him. He was beset on either side by the merciless fangs of his erstwhile comrades. Forgotten were the days they had hunted together, the game they had pulled down, the famine they had suffered. That business was a thing of the past. The business of love was at hand — ever a sterner and crueller business than that of food-getting.

And in the meanwhile, the she-wolf, the cause of it all, sat down contentedly on her haunches and watched. She was even pleased. This was her day — and it came not often — when manes bristled, and fang smote fang or ripped and tore the yielding flesh, all for the possession of her.

And in the business of love the three-year-old, who had made this his first adventure upon it, yielded up his life. On either side of his body stood his two rivals. They were gazing at the she-wolf, who sat smiling in the snow. But the elder leader was wise, very wise, in love even as in battle. The younger leader turned his head to lick a wound on his shoulder. The curve of his neck was turned toward his rival. With his one eye the elder saw the opportunity. He darted in low and closed with his fangs. It was a long, ripping slash, and deep as well. His teeth, in passing, burst the wall of the great vein of the throat. Then he leaped clear.

The young leader snarled terribly, but his snarl broke midmost into a tickling cough. Bleeding and coughing, already stricken, he sprang at the elder and fought while life faded from him, his legs going weak beneath him, the light of day dulling on his eyes, his blows and springs falling shorter and shorter.

And all the while the she-wolf sat on her haunches and smiled. She was made glad in vague ways by the battle, for this was the love-making of the Wild, the sex-tragedy of the natural world that was tragedy only to those that died. To those that survived it was not tragedy, but realisation and achievement.

When the young leader lay in the snow and moved no more, One Eye stalked over to the she-wolf. His carriage was one of mingled triumph and caution. He was plainly expectant of a rebuff, and he was just as plainly surprised when her teeth did not flash out at him in anger. For the first time she met him with a kindly manner. She sniffed noses with him, and even condescended to leap about and frisk and play with him in quite puppyish fashion. And he, for all his grey years and sage experience, behaved quite as puppyishly and even a little more foolishly.

Forgotten already were the vanquished rivals and the love-tale red-written on the snow. Forgotten, save once, when old One Eye stopped for a moment to lick his stiffening wounds. Then it was that his lips half writhed into a snarl, and the hair of his neck and shoulders involuntarily bristled, while he half crouched for a spring, his claws spasmodically clutching into the snow-surface for firmer footing. But it was all forgotten the next moment, as he sprang after the she-wolf, who was coyly leading him a chase through the woods.

After that they ran side by side, like good friends who have come to an understanding. The days passed by, and they kept together, hunting their meat and killing and eating it in common. After a time the she-wolf began to grow restless. She seemed to be searching for something that she could not find. The hollows under fallen trees seemed to attract her, and she spent much time nosing about among the larger snow-piled crevices in the rocks and in the caves of overhanging banks. Old One Eye was not interested at all, but he followed her good-naturedly in her quest, and when her investigations in particular places were unusually protracted, he would lie down and wait until she was ready to go on.

They did not remain in one place, but travelled across country until they regained the Mackenzie River, down which they slowly went, leaving it often to hunt game along the small streams that entered it, but always returning to it again. Sometimes they chanced upon other wolves, usually in pairs; but there was no friendliness of intercourse displayed on either side, no gladness at meeting, no desire to return to the pack-formation. Several times they encountered solitary wolves. These were always males, and they were pressingly insistent on joining with One Eye and his mate. This he resented, and when she stood shoulder to shoulder with him, bristling and showing her teeth, the aspiring solitary ones would back off, turn-tail, and continue on their lonely way.

One moonlight night, running through the quiet forest, One Eye suddenly halted. His muzzle went up, his tail stiffened, and his nostrils dilated as he scented the air. One foot also he held up, after the manner of a dog. He was not satisfied, and he continued to smell the air, striving to understand the message borne upon it to him. One careless sniff had satisfied his mate, and she trotted on to reassure him. Though he followed her, he was still dubious, and he could not forbear an occasional halt in order more carefully to study the warning.

She crept out cautiously on the edge of a large open space in the midst of the trees. For some time she stood alone. Then One Eye, creeping and crawling, every sense on the alert, every hair radiating infinite suspicion, joined her. They stood side by side, watching and listening and smelling.

To their ears came the sounds of dogs wrangling and scuffling, the guttural cries of men, the sharper voices of scolding women, and once the shrill and plaintive cry of a child. With the exception of the huge bulks of the skin-lodges, little could be seen save the flames of the fire, broken by the movements of intervening bodies, and the smoke rising slowly on the quiet air. But to their nostrils came the myriad smells of an Indian camp, carrying a story that was largely incomprehensible to One Eye, but every detail of which the she-wolf knew.

She was strangely stirred, and sniffed and sniffed with an increasing delight. But old One Eye was doubtful. He betrayed his apprehension, and started tentatively to go. She turned and touched his neck with her muzzle in a reassuring way, then regarded the camp again. A new wistfulness was in her face, but it was not the wistfulness of hunger. She was thrilling to a desire that urged her to go forward, to be in closer to that fire, to be squabbling with the dogs, and to be avoiding and dodging the stumbling feet of men.

One Eye moved impatiently beside her; her unrest came back upon her, and she knew again her pressing need to find the thing for which she searched. She turned and trotted back into the forest, to the great relief of One Eye, who trotted a little to the fore until they were well within the shelter of the trees.

As they slid along, noiseless as shadows, in the moonlight, they came upon a run-way. Both noses went down to the footprints in the snow. These footprints were very fresh. One Eye ran ahead cautiously, his mate at his heels. The broad pads of their feet were spread wide and in contact with the snow were like velvet. One Eye caught sight of a dim movement of white in the midst of the white. His sliding gait had been deceptively swift, but it was as nothing to the speed at which he now ran. Before him was bounding the faint patch of white he had discovered.

They were running along a narrow alley flanked on either side by a growth of young spruce. Through the trees the mouth of the alley could be seen, opening out on a moonlit glade. Old One Eye was rapidly overhauling the fleeing shape of white. Bound by bound he gained. Now he was upon it. One leap more and his teeth would be sinking into it. But that leap was never made. High in the air, and straight up, soared the shape of white, now a struggling snowshoe rabbit that leaped and bounded, executing a fantastic dance there above him in the air and never once returning to earth.

One Eye sprang back with a snort of sudden fright, then shrank down to the snow and crouched, snarling threats at this thing of fear he did not understand. But the she-wolf coolly thrust past him. She poised for a moment, then sprang for the dancing rabbit. She, too, soared high, but not so high as the quarry, and her teeth clipped emptily together with a metallic snap. She made another leap, and another.

Her mate had slowly relaxed from his crouch and was watching her. He now evinced displeasure at her repeated failures, and himself made a mighty spring upward. His teeth closed upon the rabbit, and he bore it back to earth with him. But at the same time there was a suspicious crackling movement beside him, and his astonished eye saw a young spruce sapling bending down above him to strike him. His jaws let go their grip, and he leaped backward to escape this strange danger, his lips drawn back from his fangs, his throat snarling, every hair bristling with rage and fright. And in that moment the sapling reared its slender length upright and the rabbit soared dancing in the air again.

The she-wolf was angry. She sank her fangs into her mate's shoulder in reproof; and he, frightened, unaware of what constituted this new onslaught, struck back ferociously and in still greater fright, ripping down the side of the she-wolf's muzzle. For him to resent such reproof was equally unexpected to her, and she sprang upon him in snarling indignation. Then he discovered his mistake and tried to placate her. But she proceeded to punish him roundly, until he gave over all attempts at placation, and whirled in a circle, his head away from her, his shoulders receiving the punishment of her teeth.

In the meantime the rabbit danced above them in the air. The she-wolf sat down in the snow, and old One Eye, now more in fear of his mate than of the mysterious sapling, again sprang for the rabbit. As he sank back with it between his teeth, he kept his eye on the sapling. As before, it followed him back to earth. He crouched down under the impending blow, his hair bristling, but his teeth still keeping tight hold of the rabbit. But the blow did not fall. The sapling remained bent above him. When he moved it moved, and he growled at it through his clenched jaws; when he remained still, it remained still, and he concluded it was safer to continue remaining still. Yet the warm blood of the rabbit tasted good in his mouth.

It was his mate who relieved him from the quandary in which he found himself. She took the rabbit from him, and while the sapling swayed and teetered threateningly above her she calmly gnawed off the rabbit's head. At once the sapling shot up, and after that gave no more trouble, remaining in the decorous and perpendicular position in which nature had intended it to grow. Then, between them, the she-wolf and One Eye devoured the game which the mysterious sapling had caught for them.

There were other run-ways and alleys where rabbits were hanging in the air, and the wolf-pair prospected them all, the she-wolf leading the way, old One Eye following and observant, learning the method of robbing snares — a knowledge destined to stand him in good stead in the days to come.

CHAPTER II — THE LAIR

For two days the she-wolf and One Eye hung about the Indian camp. He was worried and apprehensive, yet the camp lured his mate and she was loath to depart. But when, one morning, the air was rent with the report of a rifle close at hand, and a bullet smashed against a tree trunk several inches from One Eye's head, they hesitated no more, but went off on a long, swinging lope that put quick miles between them and the danger.

They did not go far — a couple of days' journey. The she-wolf's need to find the thing for which she searched had now become imperative. She was getting very heavy, and could run but slowly. Once, in the pursuit of a rabbit, which she ordinarily would have caught with ease, she gave over and lay down and rested. One Eye came to her; but when he touched her neck gently with his muzzle she snapped at him with such quick fierceness that he tumbled over backward and cut a ridiculous figure in his effort to escape her teeth. Her temper was now shorter than ever; but he had become more patient than ever and more solicitous.

And then she found the thing for which she sought. It was a few miles up a small stream that in the summer time flowed into the Mackenzie, but that then was frozen over and frozen down to its rocky bottom — a dead stream of solid white from source to mouth. The she-wolf was trotting wearily along, her mate well in advance, when she came upon the overhanging, high clay-bank. She turned aside and trotted over to it. The wear and tear of spring storms and melting snows had underwashed the bank and in one place had made a small cave out of a narrow fissure.

She paused at the mouth of the cave and looked the wall over carefully. Then, on one side and the other, she ran along the base of the wall to where its abrupt bulk merged from the softer-lined landscape. Returning to the cave, she entered its narrow mouth. For a short three feet she was compelled to crouch, then the walls widened and rose higher in a little round chamber nearly six feet in diameter. The roof barely cleared her head. It was dry and cosey. She inspected it with painstaking care, while One Eye, who had returned, stood in the entrance and patiently watched her. She dropped her head, with her nose to the ground and directed toward a point near to her closely bunched feet, and around this point she circled several times; then, with a tired sigh that was almost a grunt, she curled her body in, relaxed her legs, and dropped down, her head toward the entrance. One Eye, with pointed, interested ears, laughed at her, and beyond, outlined against the white light, she could see the brush of his tail waving good-naturedly. Her own ears, with a snuggling movement, laid their sharp points backward and down against the head for a moment, while her mouth opened and her tongue lolled peaceably out, and in this way she expressed that she was pleased and satisfied.

One Eye was hungry. Though he lay down in the entrance and slept, his sleep was fitful. He kept awaking and cocking his ears at the bright world without, where the April sun was blazing across the snow. When he dozed, upon his ears would steal the faint whispers of hidden trickles of running water, and he would rouse and listen intently. The sun had come back, and all the awakening Northland world was calling to him. Life was stirring. The feel of spring was in the air, the feel of growing life under the snow, of sap ascending in the trees, of buds bursting the shackles of the frost.

He cast anxious glances at his mate, but she showed no desire to get up. He looked outside, and half a dozen snow-birds fluttered across his field of vision. He started to get up, then looked back to his mate again, and settled down and dozed. A shrill and minute singing stole upon his heating. Once, and twice, he sleepily brushed his nose with his paw. Then he woke up. There, buzzing in the air at the tip of his nose, was a lone mosquito. It was a full-grown mosquito, one that had lain frozen in a dry log all winter and that had now been thawed out by the sun. He could resist the call of the world no longer. Besides, he was hungry.

He crawled over to his mate and tried to persuade her to get up. But she only snarled at him, and he walked out alone into the bright sunshine to find the snow-surface soft under foot and the travelling difficult. He went up the frozen bed of the stream, where the snow, shaded by the trees, was yet hard and crystalline. He was gone eight hours, and he came back through the darkness hungrier than when he had started. He had found game, but he had not caught it. He had broken through the melting snow crust, and wallowed, while the snowshoe rabbits had skimmed along on top lightly as ever.

He paused at the mouth of the cave with a sudden shock of suspicion. Faint, strange sounds came from within. They were sounds not made by his mate, and yet they were remotely familiar. He bellied cautiously inside and was met by a warning snarl from the she-wolf. This he received without perturbation, though he obeyed it by keeping his distance; but he remained interested in the other sounds — faint, muffled sobbings and slubberings.

His mate warned him irritably away, and he curled up and slept in the entrance. When morning came and a dim light pervaded the lair, he again sought after the source of the remotely familiar sounds. There was a new note in his mate's warning snarl. It was a jealous note, and he was very careful in keeping a respectful distance. Nevertheless, he made out, sheltering between her legs against the length of her body, five strange little bundles of life, very feeble, very helpless, making tiny whimpering noises, with eyes that did not open to the light. He was surprised. It was not the first time in his long and successful life that this thing had happened. It had happened many times, yet each time it was as fresh a surprise as ever to him.

His mate looked at him anxiously. Every little while she emitted a low growl, and at times, when it seemed to her he approached too near, the growl shot up in her throat to a sharp snarl. Of her own experience she had no memory of the thing happening; but in her instinct, which was the experience of all the mothers of wolves, there lurked a memory of fathers that had eaten their new-born and helpless progeny. It manifested itself as a fear strong within her, that made her prevent One Eye from more closely inspecting the cubs he had fathered.

But there was no danger. Old One Eye was feeling the urge of an impulse, that was, in turn, an instinct that had come down to him from all the fathers of wolves. He did not question it, nor puzzle over it. It was there, in the fibre of his being; and it was the most natural thing in the world that he should obey it by turning his back on his new-born family and by trotting out and away on the meat-trail whereby he lived.

Five or six miles from the lair, the stream divided, its forks going off among the mountains at a right angle. Here, leading up the left fork, he came upon a fresh track. He smelled it and found it so recent that he crouched swiftly, and looked in the direction in which it disappeared. Then he turned deliberately and took the right fork. The footprint was much larger than the one his own feet made, and he knew that in the wake of such a trail there was little meat for him.

Half a mile up the right fork, his quick ears caught the sound of gnawing teeth. He stalked the quarry and found it to be a porcupine, standing upright against a tree and trying his teeth on the bark. One Eye approached carefully but hopelessly. He knew the breed, though he had never met it so far north before; and never in his long life had porcupine served him for a meal. But he had long since learned that there was such a thing as Chance, or Opportunity, and he continued to draw near. There was never any telling what might happen, for with live things events were somehow always happening differently.

The porcupine rolled itself into a ball, radiating long, sharp needles in all directions that defied attack. In his youth One Eye had once sniffed too near a similar, apparently inert ball of quills, and had the tail flick out suddenly in his face. One quill he had carried away in his muzzle, where it had remained for weeks, a rankling flame, until it finally worked out. So he lay down, in a comfortable crouching position, his nose fully a foot away, and out of the line of the tail. Thus he waited, keeping perfectly quiet. There was no telling. Something might happen. The porcupine might unroll. There might be opportunity for a deft and ripping thrust of paw into the tender, unguarded belly.

But at the end of half an hour he arose, growled wrathfully at the motionless ball, and trotted on. He had waited too often and futilely in the past for porcupines to unroll, to waste any more time. He continued up the right fork. The day wore along, and nothing rewarded his hunt.

The urge of his awakened instinct of fatherhood was strong upon him. He must find meat. In the afternoon he blundered upon a ptarmigan. He came out of a thicket and found himself face to face with the slow-witted bird. It was sitting on a log, not a foot beyond the end of his nose. Each saw the other. The bird made a startled rise, but he struck it with his paw, and smashed it down to earth, then pounced upon it, and caught it in his teeth as it scuttled across the snow trying to rise in the air again. As his teeth crunched through the tender flesh and fragile bones, he began naturally to eat. Then he remembered, and, turning on the back-track, started for home, carrying the ptarmigan in his mouth.

A mile above the forks, running velvet-footed as was his custom, a gliding shadow that cautiously prospected each new vista of the trail, he came upon later imprints of the large tracks he had discovered in the early morning. As the track led his way, he followed, prepared to meet the maker of it at every turn of the stream.

He slid his head around a corner of rock, where began an unusually large bend in the stream, and his quick eyes made out something that sent him crouching swiftly down. It was the maker of the track, a large female lynx. She was crouching as he had crouched once that day, in front of her the tight-rolled ball of quills. If he had been a gliding shadow before, he now became the ghost of such a shadow, as he crept and circled around, and came up well to leeward of the silent, motionless pair.

He lay down in the snow, depositing the ptarmigan beside him, and with eyes peering through the needles of a low-growing spruce he watched the play of life before him — the waiting lynx and the waiting porcupine, each intent on life; and, such was the curiousness of the game, the way of life for one lay in the eating of the other, and the way of life for the other lay in being not eaten. While old One Eye, the wolf crouching in the covert, played his part, too, in the game, waiting for some strange freak of Chance, that might help him on the meat-trail which was his way of life.

Half an hour passed, an hour; and nothing happened. The balls of quills might have been a stone for all it moved; the lynx might have been frozen to marble; and old One Eye might have been dead. Yet all three animals were keyed to a tenseness of living that was almost painful, and scarcely ever would it come to them to be more alive than they were then in their seeming petrifaction.

One Eye moved slightly and peered forth with increased eagerness. Something was happening. The porcupine had at last decided that its enemy had gone away. Slowly, cautiously, it was unrolling its ball of impregnable armour. It was agitated by no tremor of anticipation. Slowly, slowly, the bristling ball straightened out and lengthened. One Eye watching, felt a sudden moistness in his mouth and a drooling of saliva, involuntary, excited by the living meat that was spreading itself like a repast before him.

Not quite entirely had the porcupine unrolled when it discovered its enemy. In that instant the lynx struck. The blow was like a flash of light. The paw, with rigid claws curving like talons, shot under the tender belly and came back with a swift ripping movement. Had the porcupine been entirely unrolled, or had it not discovered its enemy a fraction of a second before the blow was struck, the paw would have escaped unscathed; but a side-flick of the tail sank sharp quills into it as it was withdrawn.

Everything had happened at once — the blow, the counter-blow, the squeal of agony from the porcupine, the big cat’s squall of sudden hurt and astonishment. One Eye half arose in his excitement, his ears up, his tail straight out and quivering behind him. The lynx's bad temper got the best of her. She sprang savagely at the thing that had hurt her. But the porcupine, squealing and grunting, with disrupted anatomy trying feebly to roll up into its ball-protection, flicked out its tail again, and again the big cat squalled with hurt and astonishment. Then she fell to backing away and sneezing, her nose bristling with quills like a monstrous pin-cushion. She brushed her nose with her paws, trying to dislodge the fiery darts, thrust it into the snow, and rubbed it against twigs and branches, and all the time leaping about, ahead, sidewise, up and down, in a frenzy of pain and fright.

She sneezed continually, and her stub of a tail was doing its best toward lashing about by giving quick, violent jerks. She quit her antics, and quieted down for a long minute. One Eye watched. And even he could not repress a start and an involuntary bristling of hair along his back when she suddenly leaped, without warning, straight up in the air, at the same time emitting a long and most terrible squall. Then she sprang away, up the trail, squalling with every leap she made.

It was not until her racket had faded away in the distance and died out that One Eye ventured forth. He walked as delicately as though all the snow were carpeted with porcupine quills, erect and ready to pierce the soft pads of his feet. The porcupine met his approach with a furious squealing and a clashing of its long teeth. It had managed to roll up in a ball again, but it was not quite the old compact ball; its muscles were too much torn for that. It had been ripped almost in half, and was still bleeding profusely.

One Eye scooped out mouthfuls of the blood-soaked snow, and chewed and tasted and swallowed. This served as a relish, and his hunger increased mightily; but he was too old in the world to forget his caution. He waited. He lay down and waited, while the porcupine grated its teeth and uttered grunts and sobs and occasional sharp little squeals. In a little while, One Eye noticed that the quills were drooping and that a great quivering had set up. The quivering came to an end suddenly. There was a final defiant clash of the long teeth. Then all the quills drooped quite down, and the body relaxed and moved no more.

With a nervous, shrinking paw, One Eye stretched out the porcupine to its full length and turned it over on its back. Nothing had happened. It was surely dead. He studied it intently for a moment, then took a careful grip with his teeth and started off down the stream, partly carrying, partly dragging the porcupine, with head turned to the side so as to avoid stepping on the prickly mass. He recollected something, dropped the burden, and trotted back to where he had left the ptarmigan. He did not hesitate a moment. He knew clearly what was to be done, and this he did by promptly eating the ptarmigan. Then he returned and took up his burden.

When he dragged the result of his day's hunt into the cave, the she-wolf inspected it, turned her muzzle to him, and lightly licked him on the neck. But the next instant she was warning him away from the cubs with a snarl that was less harsh than usual and that was more apologetic than menacing. Her instinctive fear of the father of her progeny was toning down. He was behaving as a wolf-father should, and manifesting no unholy desire to devour the young lives she had brought into the world.

CHAPTER III — THE GREY CUB

He was different from his brothers and sisters. Their hair already betrayed the reddish hue inherited from their mother, the she-wolf; while he alone, in this particular, took after his father. He was the one little grey cub of the litter. He had bred true to the straight wolf-stock — in fact, he had bred true to old One Eye himself, physically, with but a single exception, and that was he had two eyes to his father's one.

The grey cub's eyes had not been open long, yet already he could see with steady clearness. And while his eyes were still closed, he had felt, tasted, and smelled. He knew his two brothers and his two sisters very well. He had begun to romp with them in a feeble, awkward way, and even to squabble, his little throat vibrating with a queer rasping noise (the forerunner of the growl), as he worked himself into a passion. And long before his eyes had opened he had learned by touch, taste, and smell to know his mother — a fount of warmth and liquid food and tenderness. She possessed a gentle, caressing tongue that soothed him when it passed over his soft little body, and that impelled him to snuggle close against her and to doze off to sleep.

Most of the first month of his life had been passed thus in sleeping; but now he could see quite well, and he stayed awake for longer periods of time, and he was coming to learn his world quite well. His world was gloomy; but he did not know that, for he knew no other world. It was dim-lighted; but his eyes had never had to adjust themselves to any other light. His world was very small. Its limits were the walls of the lair; but as he had no knowledge of the wide world outside, he was never oppressed by the narrow confines of his existence.

But he had early discovered that one wall of his world was different from the rest. This was the mouth of the cave and the source of light. He had discovered that it was different from the other walls long before he had any thoughts of his own, any conscious volitions. It had been an irresistible attraction before ever his eyes opened and looked upon it. The light from it had beat upon his sealed lids, and the eyes and the optic nerves had pulsated to little, sparklike flashes, warm-coloured and strangely pleasing. The life of his body, and of every fibre of his body, the life that was the very substance of his body and that was apart from his own personal life, had yearned toward this light and urged his body toward it in the same way that the cunning chemistry of a plant urges it toward the sun.

Always, in the beginning, before his conscious life dawned, he had crawled toward the mouth of the cave. And in this his brothers and sisters were one with him. Never, in that period, did any of them crawl toward the dark corners of the back-wall. The light drew them as if they were plants; the chemistry of the life that composed them demanded the light as a necessity of being; and their little puppet-bodies crawled blindly and chemically, like the tendrils of a vine. Later on, when each developed individuality and became personally conscious of impulsions and desires, the attraction of the light increased. They were always crawling and sprawling toward it, and being driven back from it by their mother.

It was in this way that the grey cub learned other attributes of his mother than the soft, soothing, tongue. In his insistent crawling toward the light, he discovered in her a nose that with a sharp nudge administered rebuke, and later, a paw, that crushed him down and rolled him over and over with swift, calculating stroke. Thus he learned hurt; and on top of it he learned to avoid hurt, first, by not incurring the risk of it; and second, when he had incurred the risk, by dodging and by retreating. These were conscious actions, and were the results of his first generalisations upon the world. Before that he had recoiled automatically from hurt, as he had crawled automatically toward the light. After that he recoiled from hurt because he *knew* that it was hurt.

He was a fierce little cub. So were his brothers and sisters. It was to be expected. He was a carnivorous animal. He came of a breed of meat-killers and meat-eaters. His father and mother lived wholly upon meat. The milk he had sucked with his first flickering life, was milk transformed directly from meat, and now, at a month old, when his eyes had been open for but a week, he was beginning himself to eat meat — meat half-digested by the she-wolf and disgorged for the five growing cubs that already made too great demand upon her breast.

But he was, further, the fiercest of the litter. He could make a louder rasping growl than any of them. His tiny rages were much more terrible than theirs. It was he that first learned the trick of rolling a fellow-cub over with a cunning paw-stroke. And it was he that first gripped another cub by the ear and pulled and tugged and growled through jaws tight-clenched.

And certainly it was he that caused the mother the most trouble in keeping her litter from the mouth of the cave.

The fascination of the light for the grey cub increased from day to day. He was perpetually departing on yard-long adventures toward the cave's entrance, and as perpetually being driven back. Only he did not know it for an entrance. He did not know anything about entrances — passages whereby one goes from one place to another place. He did not know any other place, much less of a way to get there. So to him the entrance of the cave was a wall — a wall of light. As the sun was to the outside dweller, this wall was to him the sun of his world. It attracted him as a candle attracts a moth. He was always striving to attain it. The life that was so swiftly expanding within him, urged him continually toward the wall of light. The life that was within him knew that it was the one way out, the way he was predestined to tread. But he himself did not know anything about it. He did not know there was any outside at all.

There was one strange thing about this wall of light. His father (he had already come to recognise his father as the one other dweller in the world, a creature like his mother, who slept near the light and was a bringer of meat) — his father had a way of walking right into the white far wall and disappearing. The grey cub could not understand this. Though never permitted by his mother to approach that wall, he had approached the other walls, and encountered hard obstruction on the end of his tender nose. This hurt. And after several such adventures, he left the walls alone. Without thinking about it, he accepted this disappearing into the wall as a peculiarity of his father, as milk and half-digested meat were peculiarities of his mother.

In fact, the grey cub was not given to thinking — at least, to the kind of thinking customary of men. His brain worked in dim ways. Yet his conclusions were as sharp and distinct as those achieved by men. He had a method of accepting things, without questioning the why and wherefore. In reality, this was the act of classification. He was never disturbed over why a thing happened. How it happened was sufficient for him. Thus, when he had bumped his nose on the back-wall a few times, he accepted that he would not disappear into walls. In the same way he accepted that his father could disappear into walls. But he was not in the least disturbed by desire to find out the reason for the difference between his father and himself. Logic and physics were no part of his mental make-up.

Like most creatures of the Wild, he early experienced famine. There came a time when not only did the meat-supply cease, but the milk no longer came from his mother's breast. At first, the cubs whimpered and cried, but for the most part they slept. It was not long before they were reduced to a coma of hunger. There were no more spats and squabbles, no more tiny rages nor attempts at growling; while the adventures toward the far white wall ceased altogether. The cubs slept, while the life that was in them flickered and died down.

One Eye was desperate. He ranged far and wide, and slept but little in the lair that had now become cheerless and miserable. The she-wolf, too, left her litter and went out in search of meat. In the first days after the birth of the cubs, One Eye had journeyed several times back to the Indian camp and robbed the rabbit snares; but, with the melting of the snow and the opening of the streams, the Indian camp had moved away, and that source of supply was closed to him.

When the grey cub came back to life and again took interest in the far white wall, he found that the population of his world had been reduced. Only one sister remained to him. The rest were gone. As he grew stronger, he found himself compelled to play alone, for the sister no longer lifted her head nor moved about. His little body rounded out with the meat he now ate; but the food had come too late for her. She slept continuously, a tiny skeleton flung round with skin in which the flame flickered lower and lower and at last went out.

Then there came a time when the grey cub no longer saw his father appearing and disappearing in the wall nor lying down asleep in the entrance. This had happened at the end of a second and less severe famine. The she-wolf knew why One Eye never came back, but there was no way by which she could tell what she had seen to the grey cub. Hunting herself for meat, up the left fork of the stream where lived the lynx, she had followed a day-old trail of One Eye. And she had found him, or what remained of him, at the end of the trail. There were many signs of the battle that had been fought, and of the lynx's withdrawal to her lair after having won the victory. Before she went away, the she-wolf had found this lair, but the signs told her that the lynx was inside, and she had not dared to venture in.

After that, the she-wolf in her hunting avoided the left fork. For she knew that in the lynx's lair was a litter of kittens, and she knew the lynx for a fierce, bad-tempered creature and a terrible fighter. It was all very well for half a dozen wolves to drive a lynx, spitting and bristling, up a tree; but it was quite a different matter for a lone wolf to encounter a lynx — especially when the lynx was known to have a litter of hungry kittens at her back.

But the Wild is the Wild, and motherhood is motherhood, at all times fiercely protective whether in the Wild or out of it; and the time was to come when the she-wolf, for her grey cub's sake, would venture the left fork, and the lair in the rocks, and the lynx's wrath.

CHAPTER IV — THE WALL OF THE WORLD

By the time his mother began leaving the cave on hunting expeditions, the cub had learned well the law that forbade his approaching the entrance. Not only had this law been forcibly and many times impressed on him by his mother's nose and paw, but in him the instinct of fear was developing. Never, in his brief cave-life, had he encountered anything of which to be afraid. Yet fear was in him. It had come down to him from a remote ancestry through a thousand thousand lives. It was a heritage he had received directly from One Eye and the she-wolf; but to them, in turn, it had been passed down through all the generations of wolves that had gone before. Fear! — that legacy of the Wild which no animal may escape nor exchange for pottage.

So the grey cub knew fear, though he knew not the stuff of which fear was made. Possibly he accepted it as one of the restrictions of life. For he had already learned that there were such restrictions. Hunger he had known; and when he could not appease his hunger he had felt restriction. The hard obstruction of the cave-wall, the sharp nudge of his mother's nose, the smashing stroke of her paw, the hunger unappeased of several famines, had borne in upon him that all was not freedom in the world, that to life there was limitations and restraints. These limitations and restraints were laws. To be obedient to them was to escape hurt and make for happiness.

He did not reason the question out in this man fashion. He merely classified the things that hurt and the things that did not hurt. And after such classification he avoided the things that hurt, the restrictions and restraints, in order to enjoy the satisfactions and the remunerations of life.

Thus it was that in obedience to the law laid down by his mother, and in obedience to the law of that unknown and nameless thing, fear, he kept away from the mouth of the cave. It remained to him a white wall of light. When his mother was absent, he slept most of the time, while during the intervals that he was awake he kept very quiet, suppressing the whimpering cries that tickled in his throat and strove for noise.

Once, lying awake, he heard a strange sound in the white wall. He did not know that it was a wolverine, standing outside, all a-trembling with its own daring, and cautiously scenting out the contents of the cave. The cub knew only that the sniff was strange, a something unclassified, therefore unknown and terrible — for the unknown was one of the chief elements that went into the making of fear.

The hair bristled upon the grey cub's back, but it bristled silently. How was he to know that this thing that sniffed was a thing at which to bristle? It was not born of any knowledge of his, yet it was the visible expression of the fear that was in him, and for which, in his own life, there was no accounting. But fear was accompanied by another instinct — that of concealment. The cub was in a frenzy of terror, yet he lay without movement or sound, frozen, petrified into immobility, to all appearances dead. His mother, coming home, growled as she smelt the wolverine's track, and bounded into the cave and licked and nozzled him with undue vehemence of affection. And the cub felt that somehow he had escaped a great hurt.

But there were other forces at work in the cub, the greatest of which was growth. Instinct and law demanded of him obedience. But growth demanded disobedience. His mother and fear impelled him to keep away from the white wall. Growth is life, and life is for ever destined to make for light. So there was no damming up the tide of life that was rising within him — rising with every mouthful of meat he swallowed, with every breath he drew. In the end, one day, fear and obedience were swept away by the rush of life, and the cub straddled and sprawled toward the entrance.

Unlike any other wall with which he had had experience, this wall seemed to recede from him as he approached. No hard surface collided with the tender little nose he thrust out tentatively before him. The substance of the wall seemed as permeable and yielding as light. And as condition, in his eyes, had the seeming of form, so he entered into what had been wall to him and bathed in the substance that composed it.

It was bewildering. He was sprawling through solidity. And ever the light grew brighter. Fear urged him to go back, but growth drove him on. Suddenly he found himself at the mouth of the cave. The wall, inside which he had thought himself, as suddenly leaped back before him to an immeasurable distance. The light had become painfully bright. He was dazzled by it. Likewise he was made dizzy by this abrupt and tremendous extension of space. Automatically, his eyes were adjusting themselves to the brightness, focusing themselves to meet the increased distance of objects. At first, the wall had leaped beyond his vision. He now saw it again; but it had taken upon itself a remarkable remoteness. Also, its appearance had changed. It was now a variegated wall, composed of the trees that fringed the stream, the opposing mountain that towered above the trees, and the sky that out-towered the mountain.

A great fear came upon him. This was more of the terrible unknown. He crouched down on the lip of the cave and gazed out on the world. He was very much afraid. Because it was unknown, it was hostile to him. Therefore the hair stood up on end along his back and his lips wrinkled weakly in an attempt at a ferocious and intimidating snarl. Out of his puniness and fright he challenged and menaced the whole wide world.

Nothing happened. He continued to gaze, and in his interest he forgot to snarl. Also, he forgot to be afraid. For the time, fear had been routed by growth, while growth had assumed the guise of curiosity. He began to notice near objects — an open portion of the stream that flashed in the sun, the blasted pine-tree that stood at the base of the slope, and the slope itself, that ran right up to him and ceased two feet beneath the lip of the cave on which he crouched.

Now the grey cub had lived all his days on a level floor. He had never experienced the hurt of a fall. He did not know what a fall was. So he stepped boldly out upon the air. His hind-legs still rested on the cave-lip, so he fell forward head downward. The earth struck him a harsh blow on the nose that made him yelp. Then he began rolling down the slope, over and over. He was in a panic of terror. The unknown had caught him at last. It had gripped savagely hold of him and was about to wreak upon him some terrific hurt. Growth was now routed by fear, and he ki-yi'd like any frightened puppy.

The unknown bore him on he knew not to what frightful hurt, and he yelped and ki-yi'd unceasingly. This was a different proposition from crouching in frozen fear while the unknown lurked just alongside. Now the unknown had caught tight hold of him. Silence would do no good. Besides, it was not fear, but terror, that convulsed him.

But the slope grew more gradual, and its base was grass-covered. Here the cub lost momentum. When at last he came to a stop, he gave one last agonised yell and then a long, whimpering wail. Also, and quite as a matter of course, as though in his life he had already made a thousand toilets, he proceeded to lick away the dry clay that soiled him.

After that he sat up and gazed about him, as might the first man of the earth who landed upon Mars. The cub had broken through the wall of the world, the unknown had let go its hold of him, and here he was without hurt. But the first man on Mars would have experienced less unfamiliarity than did he. Without any antecedent knowledge, without any warning whatever that such existed, he found himself an explorer in a totally new world.

Now that the terrible unknown had let go of him, he forgot that the unknown had any terrors. He was aware only of curiosity in all the things about him. He inspected the grass beneath him, the moss-berry plant just beyond, and the dead trunk of the blasted pine that stood on the edge of an open space among the trees. A squirrel, running around the base of the trunk, came full upon him, and gave him a great fright. He cowered down and snarled. But the squirrel was as badly scared. It ran up the tree, and from a point of safety chattered back savagely.

This helped the cub's courage, and though the woodpecker he next encountered gave him a start, he proceeded confidently on his way. Such was his confidence, that when a moose-bird impudently hopped up to him, he reached out at it with a playful paw. The result was a sharp peck on the end of his nose that made him cower down and ki-yi. The noise he made was too much for the moose-bird, who sought safety in flight.

But the cub was learning. His misty little mind had already made an unconscious classification. There were live things and things not alive. Also, he must watch out for the live things. The things not alive remained always in one place, but the live things moved about, and there was no telling what they might do. The thing to expect of them was the unexpected, and for this he must be prepared.

He travelled very clumsily. He ran into sticks and things. A twig that he thought a long way off, would the next instant hit him on the nose or rake along his ribs. There were inequalities of surface. Sometimes he overstepped and stubbed his nose. Quite as often he understepped and stubbed his feet. Then there were the pebbles and stones that turned under him when he trod upon them; and from them he came to know that the things not alive were not all in the same state of stable equilibrium as was his cave — also, that small things not alive were more liable than large things to fall down or turn over. But with every mishap he was learning. The longer he walked, the better he walked. He was adjusting himself. He was learning to calculate his own muscular movements, to know his physical limitations, to measure distances between objects, and between objects and himself.

His was the luck of the beginner. Born to be a hunter of meat (though he did not know it), he blundered upon meat just outside his own cave-door on his first foray into the world. It was by sheer blundering that he chanced upon the shrewdly hidden ptarmigan nest. He fell into it. He had essayed to walk along the trunk of a fallen pine. The rotten bark gave way under his feet, and with a despairing yelp he pitched down the rounded crescent, smashed through the leafage and stalks of a small bush, and in the heart of the bush, on the ground, fetched up in the midst of seven ptarmigan chicks.

They made noises, and at first he was frightened at them. Then he perceived that they were very little, and he became bolder. They moved. He placed his paw on one, and its movements were accelerated. This was a source of enjoyment to him. He smelled it. He picked it up in his mouth. It struggled and tickled his tongue. At the same time he was made aware of a sensation of hunger. His jaws closed together. There was a crunching of fragile bones, and warm blood ran in his mouth. The taste of it was good. This was meat, the same as his mother gave him, only it was alive between his teeth and therefore better. So he ate the ptarmigan. Nor did he stop till he had devoured the whole brood. Then he licked his chops in quite the same way his mother did, and began to crawl out of the bush.

He encountered a feathered whirlwind. He was confused and blinded by the rush of it and the beat of angry wings. He hid his head between his paws and yelped. The blows increased. The mother ptarmigan was in a fury. Then he became angry. He rose up, snarling, striking out with his paws. He sank his tiny teeth into one of the wings and pulled and tugged sturdily. The ptarmigan struggled against him, showering blows upon him with her free wing. It was his first battle. He was elated. He forgot all about the unknown. He no longer was afraid of anything. He was fighting, tearing at a live thing that was striking at him. Also, this live thing was meat. The lust to kill was on him. He had just destroyed little live things. He would now destroy a big live thing. He was too busy and happy to know that he was happy. He was thrilling and exulting in ways new to him and greater to him than any he had known before.

He held on to the wing and growled between his tight-clenched teeth. The ptarmigan dragged him out of the bush. When she turned and tried to drag him back into the bush's shelter, he pulled her away from it and on into the open. And all the time she was making outcry and striking with her free wing, while feathers were flying like a snow-fall. The pitch to which he was aroused was tremendous. All the fighting blood of his breed was up in him and surging through him. This was living, though he did not know it. He was realising his own meaning in the world; he was doing that for which he was made — killing meat and battling to kill it. He was justifying his existence, than which life can do no greater; for life achieves its summit when it does to the uttermost that which it was equipped to do.

After a time, the ptarmigan ceased her struggling. He still held her by the wing, and they lay on the ground and looked at each other. He tried to growl threateningly, ferociously. She pecked on his nose, which by now, what of previous adventures was sore. He winced but held on. She pecked him again and again. From wincing he went to whimpering. He tried to back away from her, oblivious to the fact that by his hold on her he dragged her after him. A rain of pecks fell on his ill-used nose. The flood of fight ebbed down in him, and, releasing his prey, he turned tail and scampered on across the open in inglorious retreat.

He lay down to rest on the other side of the open, near the edge of the bushes, his tongue lolling out, his chest heaving and panting, his nose still hurting him and causing him to continue his whimper. But as he lay there, suddenly there came to him a feeling as of something terrible impending. The unknown with all its terrors rushed upon him, and he shrank back instinctively into the shelter of the bush. As he did so, a draught of air fanned him, and a large, winged body swept ominously and silently past. A hawk, driving down out of the blue, had barely missed him.

While he lay in the bush, recovering from his fright and peering fearfully out, the mother-ptarmigan on the other side of the open space fluttered out of the ravaged nest. It was because of her loss that she paid no attention to the winged bolt of the sky. But the cub saw, and it was a warning and a lesson to him — the swift downward swoop of the hawk, the short skim of its body just above the ground, the strike of its talons in the body of the ptarmigan, the ptarmigan’s squawk of agony and fright, and the hawk’s rush upward into the blue, carrying the ptarmigan away with it.

It was a long time before the cub left its shelter. He had learned much. Live things were meat. They were good to eat. Also, live things when they were large enough, could give hurt. It was better to eat small live things like ptarmigan chicks, and to let alone large live things like ptarmigan hens. Nevertheless he felt a little prick of ambition, a sneaking desire to have another battle with that ptarmigan hen — only the hawk had carried her away. May be there were other ptarmigan hens. He would go and see.

He came down a shelving bank to the stream. He had never seen water before. The footing looked good. There were no inequalities of surface. He stepped boldly out on it; and went down, crying with fear, into the embrace of the unknown. It was cold, and he gasped, breathing quickly. The water rushed into his lungs instead of the air that had always accompanied his act of breathing. The suffocation he experienced was like the pang of death. To him it signified death. He had no conscious knowledge of death, but like every animal of the Wild, he possessed the instinct of death. To him it stood as the greatest of hurts. It was the very essence of the unknown; it was the sum of the terrors of the unknown, the one culminating and unthinkable catastrophe that could happen to him, about which he knew nothing and about which he feared everything.

He came to the surface, and the sweet air rushed into his open mouth. He did not go down again. Quite as though it had been a long-established custom of his he struck out with all his legs and began to swim. The near bank was a yard away; but he had come up with his back to it, and the first thing his eyes rested upon was the opposite bank, toward which he immediately began to swim. The stream was a small one, but in the pool it widened out to a score of feet.

Midway in the passage, the current picked up the cub and swept him downstream. He was caught in the miniature rapid at the bottom of the pool. Here was little chance for swimming. The quiet water had become suddenly angry. Sometimes he was under, sometimes on top. At all times he was in violent motion, now being turned over or around, and again, being smashed against a rock. And with every rock he struck, he yelped. His progress was a series of yelps, from which might have been adduced the number of rocks he encountered.

Below the rapid was a second pool, and here, captured by the eddy, he was gently borne to the bank, and as gently deposited on a bed of gravel. He crawled frantically clear of the water and lay down. He had learned some more about the world. Water was not alive. Yet it moved. Also, it looked as solid as the earth, but was without any solidity at all. His conclusion was that things were not always what they appeared to be. The cub’s fear of the unknown was an inherited distrust, and it had now been strengthened by experience. Thenceforth, in the nature of things, he would possess an abiding distrust of appearances. He would have to learn the reality of a thing before he could put his faith into it.

One other adventure was destined for him that day. He had recollected that there was such a thing in the world as his mother. And then there came to him a feeling that he wanted her more than all the rest of the things in the world. Not only was his body tired with the adventures it had undergone, but his little brain was equally tired. In all the days he had lived it had not worked so hard as on this one day. Furthermore, he was sleepy. So he started out to look for the cave and his mother, feeling at the same time an overwhelming rush of loneliness and helplessness.

He was sprawling along between some bushes, when he heard a sharp intimidating cry. There was a flash of yellow before his eyes. He saw a weasel leaping swiftly away from him. It was a small live thing, and he had no fear. Then, before him, at his feet, he saw an extremely small live thing, only several inches long, a young weasel, that, like himself, had disobediently gone out adventuring. It tried to retreat before him. He turned it over with his paw. It made a queer, grating noise. The next moment the flash of yellow reappeared before his eyes. He heard again the intimidating cry, and at the same instant received a sharp blow on the side of the neck and felt the sharp teeth of the mother-weasel cut into his flesh.

While he yelped and ki-yi’d and scrambled backward, he saw the mother-weasel leap upon her young one and disappear with it into the neighbouring thicket. The cut of her teeth in his neck still hurt, but his feelings were hurt more grievously, and he sat down and weakly whimpered. This mother-weasel was so small and so savage. He was yet to learn that for size and weight the weasel was the most ferocious, vindictive, and terrible of all the killers of the Wild. But a portion of this knowledge was quickly to be his.

He was still whimpering when the mother-weasel reappeared. She did not rush him, now that her young one was safe. She approached more cautiously, and the cub had full opportunity to observe her lean, snakelike body, and her head, erect, eager, and snake-like itself. Her sharp, menacing cry sent the hair bristling along his back, and he snarled warningly at her. She came closer and closer. There was a leap, swifter than his unpractised sight, and the lean, yellow body disappeared for a moment out of the field of his vision. The next moment she was at his throat, her teeth buried in his hair and flesh.

At first he snarled and tried to fight; but he was very young, and this was only his first day in the world, and his snarl became a whimper, his fight a struggle to escape. The weasel never relaxed her hold. She hung on, striving to press down with her teeth to the great vein where his life-blood bubbled. The weasel was a drinker of blood, and it was ever her preference to drink from the throat of life itself.

The grey cub would have died, and there would have been no story to write about him, had not the she-wolf come bounding through the bushes. The weasel let go the cub and flashed at the she-wolf's throat, missing, but getting a hold on the jaw instead. The she-wolf flirted her head like the snap of a whip, breaking the weasel's hold and flinging it high in the air. And, still in the air, the she-wolf's jaws closed on the lean, yellow body, and the weasel knew death between the crunching teeth.

The cub experienced another access of affection on the part of his mother. Her joy at finding him seemed even greater than his joy at being found. She nozzled him and caressed him and licked the cuts made in him by the weasel's teeth. Then, between them, mother and cub, they ate the blood-drinker, and after that went back to the cave and slept.

CHAPTER V — THE LAW OF MEAT

The cub's development was rapid. He rested for two days, and then ventured forth from the cave again. It was on this adventure that he found the young weasel whose mother he had helped eat, and he saw to it that the young weasel went the way of its mother. But on this trip he did not get lost. When he grew tired, he found his way back to the cave and slept. And every day thereafter found him out and ranging a wider area.

He began to get accurate measurement of his strength and his weakness, and to know when to be bold and when to be cautious. He found it expedient to be cautious all the time, except for the rare moments, when, assured of his own intrepidity, he abandoned himself to petty rages and lusts.

He was always a little demon of fury when he chanced upon a stray ptarmigan. Never did he fail to respond savagely to the chatter of the squirrel he had first met on the blasted pine. While the sight of a moose-bird almost invariably put him into the wildest of rages; for he never forgot the peck on the nose he had received from the first of that ilk he encountered.

But there were times when even a moose-bird failed to affect him, and those were times when he felt himself to be in danger from some other prowling meat hunter. He never forgot the hawk, and its moving shadow always sent him crouching into the nearest thicket. He no longer sprawled and straddled, and already he was developing the gait of his mother, slinking and furtive, apparently without exertion, yet sliding along with a swiftness that was as deceptive as it was imperceptible.

In the matter of meat, his luck had been all in the beginning. The seven ptarmigan chicks and the baby weasel represented the sum of his killings. His desire to kill strengthened with the days, and he cherished hungry ambitions for the squirrel that chattered so volubly and always informed all wild creatures that the wolf-cub was approaching. But as birds flew in the air, squirrels could climb trees, and the cub could only try to crawl unobserved upon the squirrel when it was on the ground.

The cub entertained a great respect for his mother. She could get meat, and she never failed to bring him his share. Further, she was unafraid of things. It did not occur to him that this fearlessness was founded upon experience and knowledge. Its effect on him was that of an impression of power. His mother represented power; and as he grew older he felt this power in the sharper admonishment of her paw; while the reproving nudge of her nose gave place to the slash of her fangs. For this, likewise, he respected his mother. She compelled obedience from him, and the older he grew the shorter grew her temper.

Famine came again, and the cub with clearer consciousness knew once more the bite of hunger. The she-wolf ran herself thin in the quest for meat. She rarely slept any more in the cave, spending most of her time on the meat-trail, and spending it vainly. This famine was not a long one, but it was severe while it lasted. The cub found no more milk in his mother's breast, nor did he get one mouthful of meat for himself.

Before, he had hunted in play, for the sheer joyousness of it; now he hunted in deadly earnestness, and found nothing. Yet the failure of it accelerated his development. He studied the habits of the squirrel with greater carefulness, and strove with greater craft to steal upon it and surprise it. He studied the wood-mice and tried to dig them out of their burrows; and he learned much about the ways of moose-birds and woodpeckers. And there came a day when the hawk's shadow did not drive him crouching into the bushes. He had grown stronger and wiser, and more confident. Also, he was desperate. So he sat on his haunches, conspicuously in an open space, and challenged the hawk down out of the sky. For he knew that there, floating in the blue above him, was meat, the meat his stomach yearned after so insistently. But the hawk refused to come down and give battle, and the cub crawled away into a thicket and whimpered his disappointment and hunger.

The famine broke. The she-wolf brought home meat. It was strange meat, different from any she had ever brought before. It was a lynx kitten, partly grown, like the cub, but not so large. And it was all for him. His mother had satisfied her hunger elsewhere; though he did not know that it was the rest of the lynx litter that had gone to satisfy her. Nor did he know the desperateness of her deed. He knew only that the velvet-furred kitten was meat, and he ate and waxed happier with every mouthful.

A full stomach conduces to inaction, and the cub lay in the cave, sleeping against his mother's side. He was aroused by her snarling. Never had he heard her snarl so terribly. Possibly in her whole life it was the most terrible snarl she ever gave. There was reason for it, and none knew it better than she. A lynx's lair is not despoiled with impunity. In the full glare of the afternoon light, crouching in the entrance of the cave, the cub saw the lynx-mother. The hair rippled up along his back at the sight. Here was fear, and it did not require his instinct to tell him of it. And if sight alone were not sufficient, the cry of rage the intruder gave, beginning with a snarl and rushing abruptly upward into a hoarse screech, was convincing enough in itself.

The cub felt the prod of the life that was in him, and stood up and snarled valiantly by his mother's side. But she thrust him ignominiously away and behind her. Because of the low-roofed entrance the lynx could not leap in, and when she made a crawling rush of it the she-wolf sprang upon her and pinned her down. The cub saw little of the battle. There was a tremendous snarling and spitting and screeching. The two animals threshed about, the lynx ripping and tearing with her claws and using her teeth as well, while the she-wolf used her teeth alone.

Once, the cub sprang in and sank his teeth into the hind leg of the lynx. He clung on, growling savagely. Though he did not know it, by the weight of his body he clogged the action of the leg and thereby saved his mother much damage. A change in the battle crushed him under both their bodies and wrenched loose his hold. The next moment the two mothers separated, and, before they rushed together again, the lynx lashed out at the cub with a huge fore-paw that ripped his shoulder open to the bone and sent him hurtling sidewise against the wall. Then was added to the uproar the cub's shrill yelp of pain and fright. But the fight lasted so long that he had time to cry himself out and to experience a second burst of courage; and the end of the battle found him again clinging to a hind-leg and furiously growling between his teeth.

The lynx was dead. But the she-wolf was very weak and sick. At first she caressed the cub and licked his wounded shoulder; but the blood she had lost had taken with it her strength, and for all of a day and a night she lay by her dead foe's side, without movement, scarcely breathing. For a week she never left the cave, except for water, and then her movements were slow and painful. At the end of that time the lynx was devoured, while the she-wolf's wounds had healed sufficiently to permit her to take the meat-trail again.

The cub's shoulder was stiff and sore, and for some time he limped from the terrible slash he had received. But the world now seemed changed. He went about in it with greater confidence, with a feeling of prowess that had not been his in the days before the battle with the lynx. He had looked upon life in a more ferocious aspect; he had fought; he had buried his teeth in the flesh of a foe; and he had survived. And because of all this, he carried himself more boldly, with a touch of defiance that was new in him. He was no longer afraid of minor things, and much of his timidity had vanished, though the unknown never ceased to press upon him with its mysteries and terrors, intangible and ever-menacing.

He began to accompany his mother on the meat-trail, and he saw much of the killing of meat and began to play his part in it. And in his own dim way he learned the law of meat. There were two kinds of life — his own kind and the other kind. His own kind included his mother and himself. The other kind included all live things that moved. But the other kind was divided. One portion was what his own kind killed and ate. This portion was composed of the non-killers and the small killers. The other portion killed and ate his own kind, or was killed and eaten by his own kind. And out of this classification arose the law. The aim of life was meat. Life itself was meat. Life lived on life. There were the eaters and the eaten. The law was: EAT OR BE EATEN. He did not formulate the law in clear, set terms and moralise about it. He did not even think the law; he merely lived the law without thinking about it at all.

He saw the law operating around him on every side. He had eaten the ptarmigan chicks. The hawk had eaten the ptarmigan-mother. The hawk would also have eaten him. Later, when he had grown more formidable, he wanted to eat the hawk. He had eaten the lynx kitten. The lynx-mother would have eaten him had she not herself been killed and eaten. And so it went. The law was being lived about him by all live things, and he himself was part and parcel of the law. He was a killer. His only food was meat, live meat, that ran away swiftly before him, or flew into the air, or climbed trees, or hid in the ground, or faced him and fought with him, or turned the tables and ran after him.

Had the cub thought in man-fashion, he might have epitomised life as a voracious appetite and the world as a place wherein ranged a multitude of appetites, pursuing and being pursued, hunting and being hunted, eating and being eaten, all in blindness and confusion, with violence and disorder, a chaos of gluttony and slaughter, ruled over by chance, merciless, planless, endless.

But the cub did not think in man-fashion. He did not look at things with wide vision. He was single-purposed, and entertained but one thought or desire at a time. Besides the law of meat, there were a myriad other and lesser laws for him to learn and obey. The world was filled with surprise. The stir of the life that was in him, the play of his muscles, was an unending happiness. To run down meat was to experience thrills and elations. His rages and battles were pleasures. Terror itself, and the mystery of the unknown, led to his living.

And there were easements and satisfactions. To have a full stomach, to doze lazily in the sunshine — such things were remuneration in full for his ardours and toils, while his ardours and tolls were in themselves self-remunerative. They were expressions of life, and life is always happy when it is expressing itself. So the cub had no quarrel with his hostile environment. He was very much alive, very happy, and very proud of himself.

PART III

CHAPTER I — THE MAKERS OF FIRE

The cub came upon it suddenly. It was his own fault. He had been careless. He had left the cave and run down to the stream to drink. It might have been that he took no notice because he was heavy with sleep. (He had been out all night on the meat-trail, and had but just then awakened.) And his carelessness might have been due to the familiarity of the trail to the pool. He had travelled it often, and nothing had ever happened on it.

He went down past the blasted pine, crossed the open space, and trotted in amongst the trees. Then, at the same instant, he saw and smelt. Before him, sitting silently on their haunches, were five live things, the like of which he had never seen before. It was his first glimpse of mankind. But at the sight of him the five men did not spring to their feet, nor show their teeth, nor snarl. They did not move, but sat there, silent and ominous.

Nor did the cub move. Every instinct of his nature would have impelled him to dash wildly away, had there not suddenly and for the first time arisen in him another and counter instinct. A great awe descended upon him. He was beaten down to movelessness by an overwhelming sense of his own weakness and littleness. Here was mastery and power, something far and away beyond him.

The cub had never seen man, yet the instinct concerning man was his. In dim ways he recognised in man the animal that had fought itself to primacy over the other animals of the Wild. Not alone out of his own eyes, but out of the eyes of all his ancestors was the cub now looking upon man — out of eyes that had circled in the darkness around countless winter camp-fires, that had peered from safe distances and from the hearts of thickets at the strange, two-legged animal that was lord over living things. The spell of the cub's heritage was upon him, the fear and the respect born of the centuries of struggle and the accumulated experience of the generations. The heritage was too compelling for a wolf that was only a cub. Had he been full-grown, he would have run away. As it was, he cowered down in a paralysis of fear, already half proffering the submission that his kind had proffered from the first time a wolf came in to sit by man's fire and be made warm.

One of the Indians arose and walked over to him and stooped above him. The cub cowered closer to the ground. It was the unknown, objectified at last, in concrete flesh and blood, bending over him and reaching down to seize hold of him. His hair bristled involuntarily; his lips writhed back and his little fangs were bared. The hand, poised like doom above him, hesitated, and the man spoke laughing, "*Wabam wabisca ip pit tah*." ("Look! The white fangs!")

The other Indians laughed loudly, and urged the man on to pick up the cub. As the hand descended closer and closer, there raged within the cub a battle of the instincts. He experienced two great impulsions — to yield and to fight. The resulting action was a compromise. He did both. He yielded till the hand almost touched him. Then he fought, his teeth flashing in a snap that sank them into the hand. The next moment he received a clout alongside the head that knocked him over on his side. Then all fight fled out of him. His puppyhood and the instinct of submission took charge of him. He sat up on his haunches and ki-yi'd. But the man whose hand he had bitten was angry. The cub received a clout on the other side of his head. Whereupon he sat up and ki-yi'd louder than ever.

The four Indians laughed more loudly, while even the man who had been bitten began to laugh. They surrounded the cub and laughed at him, while he wailed out his terror and his hurt. In the midst of it, he heard something. The Indians heard it too. But the cub knew what it was, and with a last, long wail that had in it more of triumph than grief, he ceased his noise and waited for the coming of his mother, of his ferocious and indomitable mother who fought and killed all things and was never afraid. She was snarling as she ran. She had heard the cry of her cub and was dashing to save him.

She bounded in amongst them, her anxious and militant motherhood making her anything but a pretty sight. But to the cub the spectacle of her protective rage was pleasing. He uttered a glad little cry and bounded to meet her, while the man-animals went back hastily several steps. The she-wolf stood over against her cub, facing the men, with bristling hair, a snarl rumbling deep in her throat. Her face was distorted and malignant with menace, even the bridge of the nose wrinkling from tip to eyes so prodigious was her snarl.

Then it was that a cry went up from one of the men. "Kiche!" was what he uttered. It was an exclamation of surprise. The cub felt his mother wilting at the sound.

"Kiche!" the man cried again, this time with sharpness and authority.

And then the cub saw his mother, the she-wolf, the fearless one, crouching down till her belly touched the ground, whimpering, wagging her tail, making peace signs. The cub could not understand. He was appalled. The awe of man rushed over him again. His instinct had been true. His mother verified it. She, too, rendered submission to the man-animals.

The man who had spoken came over to her. He put his hand upon her head, and she only crouched closer. She did not snap, nor threaten to snap. The other men came up, and surrounded her, and felt her, and pawed her, which actions she made no attempt to resent. They were greatly excited, and made many noises with their mouths. These noises were not indication of danger, the cub decided, as he crouched near his mother still bristling from time to time but doing his best to submit.

"It is not strange," an Indian was saying. "Her father was a wolf. It is true, her mother was a dog; but did not my brother tie her out in the woods all of three nights in the mating season? Therefore was the father of Kiche a wolf."

"It is a year, Grey Beaver, since she ran away," spoke a second Indian.

"It is not strange, Salmon Tongue," Grey Beaver answered. "It was the time of the famine, and there was no meat for the dogs."

"She has lived with the wolves," said a third Indian.

"So it would seem, Three Eagles," Grey Beaver answered, laying his hand on the cub; "and this be the sign of it."

The cub snarled a little at the touch of the hand, and the hand flew back to administer a clout. Whereupon the cub covered its fangs, and sank down submissively, while the hand, returning, rubbed behind his ears, and up and down his back.

"This be the sign of it," Grey Beaver went on. "It is plain that his mother is Kiche. But his father was a wolf. Wherefore is there in him little dog and much wolf. His fangs be white, and White Fang shall be his name. I have spoken. He is my dog. For was not Kiche my brother's dog? And is not my brother dead?"

The cub, who had thus received a name in the world, lay and watched. For a time the man-animals continued to make their mouth-noises. Then Grey Beaver took a knife from a sheath that hung around his neck, and went into the thicket and cut a stick. White Fang watched him. He notched the stick at each end and in the notches fastened strings of raw-hide. One string he tied around the throat of Kiche. Then he led her to a small pine, around which he tied the other string.

White Fang followed and lay down beside her. Salmon Tongue's hand reached out to him and rolled him over on his back. Kiche looked on anxiously. White Fang felt fear mounting in him again. He could not quite suppress a snarl, but he made no offer to snap. The hand, with fingers crooked and spread apart, rubbed his stomach in a playful way and rolled him from side to side. It was ridiculous and ungainly, lying there on his back with legs sprawling in the air. Besides, it was a position of such utter helplessness that White Fang's whole nature revolted against it. He could do nothing to defend himself. If this man-animal intended harm, White Fang knew that he could not escape it. How could he spring away with his four legs in the air above him? Yet submission made him master his fear, and he only growled softly. This growl he could not suppress; nor did the man-animal resent it by giving him a blow on the head. And furthermore, such was the strangeness of it, White Fang experienced an unaccountable sensation of pleasure as the hand rubbed back and forth. When he was rolled on his side he ceased to growl, when the fingers pressed and prodded at the base of his ears the pleasurable sensation increased; and when, with a final rub and scratch, the man left him alone and went away, all fear had died out of White Fang. He was to know fear many times in his dealing with man; yet it was a token of the fearless companionship with man that was ultimately to be his.

After a time, White Fang heard strange noises approaching. He was quick in his classification, for he knew them at once for man-animal noises. A few minutes later the remainder of the tribe, strung out as it was on the march, trailed in. There were more men and many women and children, forty souls of them, and all heavily burdened with camp equipage and outfit. Also there were many dogs; and these, with the exception of the part-grown puppies, were likewise burdened with camp outfit. On their backs, in bags that fastened tightly around underneath, the dogs carried from twenty to thirty pounds of weight.

White Fang had never seen dogs before, but at sight of them he felt that they were his own kind, only somehow different. But they displayed little difference from the wolf when they discovered the cub and his mother. There was a rush. White Fang bristled and snarled and snapped in the face of the open-mouthed oncoming wave of dogs, and went down and under them, feeling the sharp slash of teeth in his body, himself biting and tearing at the legs and bellies above him. There was a great uproar. He could hear the snarl of Kiche as she fought for him; and he could hear the cries of the man-animals, the sound of clubs striking upon bodies, and the yelps of pain from the dogs so struck.

Only a few seconds elapsed before he was on his feet again. He could now see the man-animals driving back the dogs with clubs and stones, defending him, saving him from the savage teeth of his kind that somehow was not his kind. And though there was no reason in his brain for a clear conception of so abstract a thing as justice, nevertheless, in his own way, he felt the justice of the man-animals, and he knew them for what they were — makers of law and executors of law. Also, he appreciated the power with which they administered the law. Unlike any animals he had ever encountered, they did not bite nor claw. They enforced their live strength with the power of dead things. Dead things did their bidding. Thus, sticks and stones, directed by these strange creatures, leaped through the air like living things, inflicting grievous hurts upon the dogs.

To his mind this was power unusual, power inconceivable and beyond the natural, power that was godlike. White Fang, in the very nature of him, could never know anything about gods; at the best he could know only things that were beyond knowing — but the wonder and awe that he had of these man-animals in ways resembled what would be the wonder and awe of man at sight of some celestial creature, on a mountain top, hurling thunderbolts from either hand at an astonished world.

The last dog had been driven back. The hubbub died down. And White Fang licked his hurts and meditated upon this, his first taste of pack-cruelty and his introduction to the pack. He had never dreamed that his own kind consisted of more than One Eye, his mother, and himself. They had constituted a kind apart, and here, abruptly, he had discovered many more creatures apparently of his own kind. And there was a subconscious resentment that these, his kind, at first sight had pitched upon him and tried to destroy him. In the same way he resented his mother being tied with a stick, even though it was done by the superior man-animals. It savoured of the trap, of bondage. Yet of the trap and of bondage he knew nothing. Freedom to roam and run and lie down at will, had been his heritage; and here it was being infringed upon. His mother's movements were restricted to the length of a stick, and by the length of that same stick was he restricted, for he had not yet got beyond the need of his mother's side.

He did not like it. Nor did he like it when the man-animals arose and went on with their march; for a tiny man-animal took the other end of the stick and led Kiche captive behind him, and behind Kiche followed White Fang, greatly perturbed and worried by this new adventure he had entered upon.

They went down the valley of the stream, far beyond White Fang's widest ranging, until they came to the end of the valley, where the stream ran into the Mackenzie River. Here, where canoes were cached on poles high in the air and where stood fish-racks for the drying of fish, camp was made; and White Fang looked on with wondering eyes. The superiority of these man-animals increased with every moment. There was their mastery over all these sharp-fanged dogs. It breathed of power. But greater than that, to the wolf-cub, was their mastery over things not alive; their capacity to communicate motion to unmoving things; their capacity to change the very face of the world.

It was this last that especially affected him. The elevation of frames of poles caught his eye; yet this in itself was not so remarkable, being done by the same creatures that flung sticks and stones to great distances. But when the frames of poles were made into tepees by being covered with cloth and skins, White Fang was astounded. It was the colossal bulk of them that impressed him. They arose around him, on every side, like some monstrous quick-growing form of life. They occupied nearly the whole circumference of his field of vision. He was afraid of them. They loomed ominously above him; and when the breeze stirred them into huge movements, he cowered down in fear, keeping his eyes warily upon them, and prepared to spring away if they attempted to precipitate themselves upon him.

But in a short while his fear of the tepees passed away. He saw the women and children passing in and out of them without harm, and he saw the dogs trying often to get into them, and being driven away with sharp words and flying stones. After a time, he left Kiche's side and crawled cautiously toward the wall of the nearest tepee. It was the curiosity of growth that urged him on — the necessity of learning and living and doing that brings experience. The last few inches to the wall of the tepee were crawled with painful slowness and precaution. The day's events had prepared him for the unknown to manifest itself in most stupendous and unthinkable ways. At last his nose touched the canvas. He waited. Nothing happened. Then he smelled the strange fabric, saturated with the man-smell. He closed on the canvas with his teeth and gave a gentle tug. Nothing happened, though the adjacent portions of the tepee moved. He tugged harder. There was a greater movement. It was delightful. He tugged still harder, and repeatedly, until the whole tepee was in motion. Then the sharp cry of a squaw inside sent him scampering back to Kiche. But after that he was afraid no more of the looming bulks of the tepees.

A moment later he was straying away again from his mother. Her stick was tied to a peg in the ground and she could not follow him. A part-grown puppy, somewhat larger and older than he, came toward him slowly, with ostentatious and belligerent importance. The puppy's name, as White Fang was afterward to hear him called, was Lip-lip. He had had experience in puppy fights and was already something of a bully.

Lip-lip was White Fang's own kind, and, being only a puppy, did not seem dangerous; so White Fang prepared to meet him in a friendly spirit. But when the strangers walk became stiff-legged and his lips lifted clear of his teeth, White Fang stiffened too, and answered with lifted lips. They half circled about each other, tentatively, snarling and bristling. This lasted several minutes, and White Fang was beginning to enjoy it, as a sort of game. But suddenly, with remarkable swiftness, Lip-lip leaped in, delivering a slashing snap, and leaped away again. The snap had taken effect on the shoulder that had been hurt by the lynx and that was still sore deep down near the bone. The surprise and hurt of it brought a yelp out of White Fang; but the next moment, in a rush of anger, he was upon Lip-lip and snapping viciously.

But Lip-lip had lived his life in camp and had fought many puppy fights. Three times, four times, and half a dozen times, his sharp little teeth scored on the newcomer, until White Fang, yelping shamelessly, fled to the protection of his mother. It was the first of the many fights he was to have with Lip-lip, for they were enemies from the start, born so, with natures destined perpetually to clash.

Kiche licked White Fang soothingly with her tongue, and tried to prevail upon him to remain with her. But his curiosity was rampant, and several minutes later he was venturing forth on a new quest. He came upon one of the man-animals, Grey Beaver, who was squatting on his hams and doing something with sticks and dry moss spread before him on the ground.

White Fang came near to him and watched. Grey Beaver made mouth-noises which White Fang interpreted as not hostile, so he came still nearer.

Women and children were carrying more sticks and branches to Grey Beaver. It was evidently an affair of moment. White Fang came in until he touched Grey Beaver's knee, so curious was he, and already forgetful that this was a terrible man-animal. Suddenly he saw a strange thing like mist beginning to arise from the sticks and moss beneath Grey Beaver's hands. Then, amongst the sticks themselves, appeared a live thing, twisting and turning, of a colour like the colour of the sun in the sky. White Fang knew nothing about fire. It drew him as the light, in the mouth of the cave had drawn him in his early puppyhood. He crawled the several steps toward the flame. He heard Grey Beaver chuckle above him, and he knew the sound was not hostile. Then his nose touched the flame, and at the same instant his little tongue went out to it.

For a moment he was paralysed. The unknown, lurking in the midst of the sticks and moss, was savagely clutching him by the nose. He scrambled backward, bursting out in an astonished explosion of ki-yi's. At the sound, Kiche leaped snarling to the end of her stick, and there raged terribly because she could not come to his aid. But Grey Beaver laughed loudly, and slapped his thighs, and told the happening to all the rest of the camp, till everybody was laughing uproariously. But White Fang sat on his haunches and ki-yi'd and ki-yi'd, a forlorn and pitiable little figure in the midst of the man-animals.

It was the worst hurt he had ever known. Both nose and tongue had been scorched by the live thing, sun-coloured, that had grown up under Grey Beaver's hands. He cried and cried interminably, and every fresh wail was greeted by bursts of laughter on the part of the man-animals. He tried to soothe his nose with his tongue, but the tongue was burnt too, and the two hurts coming together produced greater hurt; whereupon he cried more hopelessly and helplessly than ever.

And then shame came to him. He knew laughter and the meaning of it. It is not given us to know how some animals know laughter, and know when they are being laughed at; but it was this same way that White Fang knew it. And he felt shame that the man-animals should be laughing at him. He turned and fled away, not from the hurt of the fire, but from the laughter that sank even deeper, and hurt in the spirit of him. And he fled to

Kiche, raging at the end of her stick like an animal gone mad — to Kiche, the one creature in the world who was not laughing at him.

Twilight drew down and night came on, and White Fang lay by his mother's side. His nose and tongue still hurt, but he was perplexed by a greater trouble. He was homesick. He felt a vacancy in him, a need for the hush and quietude of the stream and the cave in the cliff. Life had become too populous. There were so many of the man-animals, men, women, and children, all making noises and irritations. And there were the dogs, ever squabbling and bickering, bursting into uproars and creating confusions. The restful loneliness of the only life he had known was gone. Here the very air was palpitant with life. It hummed and buzzed unceasingly. Continually changing its intensity and abruptly variant in pitch, it impinged on his nerves and senses, made him nervous and restless and worried him with a perpetual imminence of happening.

He watched the man-animals coming and going and moving about the camp. In fashion distantly resembling the way men look upon the gods they create, so looked White Fang upon the man-animals before him. They were superior creatures, of a verity, gods. To his dim comprehension they were as much wonder-workers as gods are to men. They were creatures of mastery, possessing all manner of unknown and impossible potencies, overlords of the alive and the not alive — making obey that which moved, imparting movement to that which did not move, and making life, sun-coloured and biting life, to grow out of dead moss and wood. They were fire-makers! They were gods.

CHAPTER II — THE BONDAGE

The days were thronged with experience for White Fang. During the time that Kiche was tied by the stick, he ran about over all the camp, inquiring, investigating, learning. He quickly came to know much of the ways of the man-animals, but familiarity did not breed contempt. The more he came to know them, the more they vindicated their superiority, the more they displayed their mysterious powers, the greater loomed their god-likeness.

To man has been given the grief, often, of seeing his gods overthrown and his altars crumbling; but to the wolf and the wild dog that have come in to crouch at man's feet, this grief has never come. Unlike man, whose gods are of the unseen and the overguessed, vapours and mists of fancy eluding the garmenture of reality, wandering wraiths of desired goodness and power, intangible out-croppings of self into the realm of spirit — unlike man, the wolf and the wild dog that have come in to the fire find their gods in the living flesh, solid to the touch, occupying earth-space and requiring time for the accomplishment of their ends and their existence. No effort of faith is necessary to believe in such a god; no effort of will can possibly induce disbelief in such a god. There is no getting away from it. There it stands, on its two hind-legs, club in hand, immensely potential, passionate and wrathful and loving, god and mystery and power all wrapped up and around by flesh that bleeds when it is torn and that is good to eat like any flesh.

And so it was with White Fang. The man-animals were gods unmistakable and unescapable. As his mother, Kiche, had rendered her allegiance to them at the first cry of her name, so he was beginning to render his allegiance. He gave them the trail as a privilege indubitably theirs. When they walked, he got out of their way. When they called, he came. When they threatened, he cowered down. When they commanded him to go, he went away hurriedly. For behind any wish of theirs was power to enforce that wish, power that hurt, power that expressed itself in clouts and clubs, in flying stones and stinging lashes of whips.

He belonged to them as all dogs belonged to them. His actions were theirs to command. His body was theirs to maul, to stamp upon, to tolerate. Such was the lesson that was quickly borne in upon him. It came hard, going as it did, counter to much that was strong and dominant in his own nature; and, while he disliked it in the learning of it, unknown to himself he was learning to like it. It was a placing of his destiny in another's hands, a shifting of the responsibilities of existence. This in itself was compensation, for it is always easier to lean upon another than to stand alone.

But it did not all happen in a day, this giving over of himself, body and soul, to the man-animals. He could not immediately forego his wild heritage and his memories of the Wild. There were days when he crept to the edge of the forest and stood and listened to something calling him far and away. And always he returned, restless and uncomfortable, to whimper softly and wistfully at Kiche's side and to lick her face with eager, questioning tongue.

White Fang learned rapidly the ways of the camp. He knew the injustice and greediness of the older dogs when meat or fish was thrown out to be eaten. He came to know that men were more just, children more cruel, and women more kindly and more likely to toss him a bit of meat or bone. And after two or three painful adventures with the mothers of part-grown puppies, he came into the knowledge that it was always good policy to let such mothers alone, to keep away from them as far as possible, and to avoid them when he saw them coming.

But the bane of his life was Lip-lip. Larger, older, and stronger, Lip-lip had selected White Fang for his special object of persecution. While Fang fought willingly enough, but he was outclassed. His enemy was too big. Lip-lip became a nightmare to him. Whenever he ventured away from his mother, the bully was sure to appear, trailing at his heels, snarling at him, picking upon him, and watchful of an opportunity, when no man-animal was near, to spring upon him and force a fight. As Lip-lip invariably won, he enjoyed it hugely. It became his chief delight in life, as it became White Fang's chief torment.

But the effect upon White Fang was not to cow him. Though he suffered most of the damage and was always defeated, his spirit remained unsubdued. Yet a bad effect was produced. He became malignant and morose. His temper had been savage by birth, but it became more savage under this unending persecution. The genial, playful, puppyish side of him found little expression. He never played and gambolled about with the other puppies of the camp. Lip-lip would not permit it. The moment White

Fang appeared near them, Lip-lip was upon him, bullying and hectoring him, or fighting with him until he had driven him away.

The effect of all this was to rob White Fang of much of his puppyhood and to make him in his comportment older than his age. Denied the outlet, through play, of his energies, he recoiled upon himself and developed his mental processes. He became cunning; he had idle time in which to devote himself to thoughts of trickery. Prevented from obtaining his share of meat and fish when a general feed was given to the camp-dogs, he became a clever thief. He had to forage for himself, and he foraged well, though he was oft-times a plague to the squaws in consequence. He learned to sneak about camp, to be crafty, to know what was going on everywhere, to see and to hear everything and to reason accordingly, and successfully to devise ways and means of avoiding his implacable persecutor.

It was early in the days of his persecution that he played his first really big crafty game and got there from his first taste of revenge. As Kiche, when with the wolves, had lured out to destruction dogs from the camps of men, so White Fang, in manner somewhat similar, lured Lip-lip into Kiche’s avenging jaws. Retreating before Lip-lip, White Fang made an indirect flight that led in and out and around the various tepees of the camp. He was a good runner, swifter than any puppy of his size, and swifter than Lip-lip. But he did not run his best in this chase. He barely held his own, one leap ahead of his pursuer.

Lip-lip, excited by the chase and by the persistent nearness of his victim, forgot caution and locality. When he remembered locality, it was too late. Dashing at top speed around a tepee, he ran full tilt into Kiche lying at the end of her stick. He gave one yelp of consternation, and then her punishing jaws closed upon him. She was tied, but he could not get away from her easily. She rolled him off his legs so that he could not run, while she repeatedly ripped and slashed him with her fangs.

When at last he succeeded in rolling clear of her, he crawled to his feet, badly dishevelled, hurt both in body and in spirit. His hair was standing out all over him in tufts where her teeth had mauled. He stood where he had arisen, opened his mouth, and broke out the long, heart-broken puppy wail. But even this he was not allowed to complete. In the middle of it, White Fang, rushing in, sank his teeth into Lip-lip’s hind leg. There was no fight left in Lip-lip, and he ran away shamelessly, his victim hot on his heels and worrying him all the way back to his own tepee. Here the squaws came to his aid, and White Fang, transformed into a raging demon, was finally driven off only by a fusillade of stones.

Came the day when Grey Beaver, deciding that the liability of her running away was past, released Kiche. White Fang was delighted with his mother's freedom. He accompanied her joyfully about the camp; and, so long as he remained close by her side, Lip-lip kept a respectful distance. White-Fang even bristled up to him and walked stiff-legged, but Lip-lip ignored the challenge. He was no fool himself, and whatever vengeance he desired to wreak, he could wait until he caught White Fang alone.

Later on that day, Kiche and White Fang strayed into the edge of the woods next to the camp. He had led his mother there, step by step, and now when she stopped, he tried to inveigle her farther. The stream, the lair, and the quiet woods were calling to him, and he wanted her to come. He ran on a few steps, stopped, and looked back. She had not moved. He whined pleadingly, and scurried playfully in and out of the underbrush. He ran back to her, licked her face, and ran on again. And still she did not move. He stopped and regarded her, all of an intentness and eagerness, physically expressed, that slowly faded out of him as she turned her head and gazed back at the camp.

There was something calling to him out there in the open. His mother heard it too. But she heard also that other and louder call, the call of the fire and of man — the call which has been given alone of all animals to the wolf to answer, to the wolf and the wild-dog, who are brothers.

Kiche turned and slowly trotted back toward camp. Stronger than the physical restraint of the stick was the clutch of the camp upon her. Unseen and occultly, the gods still gripped with their power and would not let her go. White Fang sat down in the shadow of a birch and whimpered softly. There was a strong smell of pine, and subtle wood fragrances filled the air, reminding him of his old life of freedom before the days of his bondage. But he was still only a part-grown puppy, and stronger than the call either of man or of the Wild was the call of his mother. All the hours of his short life he had depended upon her. The time was yet to come for independence. So he arose and trotted forlornly back to camp, pausing once, and twice, to sit down and whimper and to listen to the call that still sounded in the depths of the forest.

In the Wild the time of a mother with her young is short; but under the dominion of man it is sometimes even shorter. Thus it was with White

Fang. Grey Beaver was in the debt of Three Eagles. Three Eagles was going away on a trip up the Mackenzie to the Great Slave Lake. A strip of scarlet cloth, a bearskin, twenty cartridges, and Kiche, went to pay the debt. White Fang saw his mother taken aboard Three Eagles' canoe, and tried to follow her. A blow from Three Eagles knocked him backward to the land. The canoe shoved off. He sprang into the water and swam after it, deaf to the sharp cries of Grey Beaver to return. Even a man-animal, a god, White Fang ignored, such was the terror he was in of losing his mother.

But gods are accustomed to being obeyed, and Grey Beaver wrathfully launched a canoe in pursuit. When he overtook White Fang, he reached down and by the nape of the neck lifted him clear of the water. He did not deposit him at once in the bottom of the canoe. Holding him suspended with one hand, with the other hand he proceeded to give him a beating. And it *was* a beating. His hand was heavy. Every blow was shrewd to hurt; and he delivered a multitude of blows.

Impelled by the blows that rained upon him, now from this side, now from that, White Fang swung back and forth like an erratic and jerky pendulum. Varying were the emotions that surged through him. At first, he had known surprise. Then came a momentary fear, when he yelped several times to the impact of the hand. But this was quickly followed by anger. His free nature asserted itself, and he showed his teeth and snarled fearlessly in the face of the wrathful god. This but served to make the god more wrathful. The blows came faster, heavier, more shrewd to hurt.

Grey Beaver continued to beat, White Fang continued to snarl. But this could not last for ever. One or the other must give over, and that one was White Fang. Fear surged through him again. For the first time he was being really man-handled. The occasional blows of sticks and stones he had previously experienced were as caresses compared with this. He broke down and began to cry and yelp. For a time each blow brought a yelp from him; but fear passed into terror, until finally his yelps were voiced in unbroken succession, unconnected with the rhythm of the punishment.

At last Grey Beaver withheld his hand. White Fang, hanging limply, continued to cry. This seemed to satisfy his master, who flung him down roughly in the bottom of the canoe. In the meantime the canoe had drifted down the stream. Grey Beaver picked up the paddle. White Fang was in his way. He spurned him savagely with his foot. In that moment White

Fang's free nature flashed forth again, and he sank his teeth into the moccasined foot.

The beating that had gone before was as nothing compared with the beating he now received. Grey Beaver's wrath was terrible; likewise was White Fang's fright. Not only the hand, but the hard wooden paddle was used upon him; and he was bruised and sore in all his small body when he was again flung down in the canoe. Again, and this time with purpose, did Grey Beaver kick him. White Fang did not repeat his attack on the foot. He had learned another lesson of his bondage. Never, no matter what the circumstance, must he dare to bite the god who was lord and master over him; the body of the lord and master was sacred, not to be defiled by the teeth of such as he. That was evidently the crime of crimes, the one offence there was no condoning nor overlooking.

When the canoe touched the shore, White Fang lay whimpering and motionless, waiting the will of Grey Beaver. It was Grey Beaver's will that he should go ashore, for ashore he was flung, striking heavily on his side and hurting his bruises afresh. He crawled tremblingly to his feet and stood whimpering. Lip-lip, who had watched the whole proceeding from the bank, now rushed upon him, knocking him over and sinking his teeth into him. White Fang was too helpless to defend himself, and it would have gone hard with him had not Grey Beaver's foot shot out, lifting Lip-lip into the air with its violence so that he smashed down to earth a dozen feet away. This was the man-animal's justice; and even then, in his own pitiable plight, White Fang experienced a little grateful thrill. At Grey Beaver's heels he limped obediently through the village to the tepee. And so it came that White Fang learned that the right to punish was something the gods reserved for themselves and denied to the lesser creatures under them.

That night, when all was still, White Fang remembered his mother and sorrowed for her. He sorrowed too loudly and woke up Grey Beaver, who beat him. After that he mourned gently when the gods were around. But sometimes, straying off to the edge of the woods by himself, he gave vent to his grief, and cried it out with loud whimperings and wailings.

It was during this period that he might have harkened to the memories of the lair and the stream and run back to the Wild. But the memory of his mother held him. As the hunting man-animals went out and came back, so she would come back to the village some time. So he remained in his bondage waiting for her.

But it was not altogether an unhappy bondage. There was much to interest him. Something was always happening. There was no end to the strange things these gods did, and he was always curious to see. Besides, he was learning how to get along with Grey Beaver. Obedience, rigid, undeviating obedience, was what was exacted of him; and in return he escaped beatings and his existence was tolerated.

Nay, Grey Beaver himself sometimes tossed him a piece of meat, and defended him against the other dogs in the eating of it. And such a piece of meat was of value. It was worth more, in some strange way, then a dozen pieces of meat from the hand of a squaw. Grey Beaver never petted nor caressed. Perhaps it was the weight of his hand, perhaps his justice, perhaps the sheer power of him, and perhaps it was all these things that influenced White Fang; for a certain tie of attachment was forming between him and his surly lord.

Insidiously, and by remote ways, as well as by the power of stick and stone and clout of hand, were the shackles of White Fang's bondage being riveted upon him. The qualities in his kind that in the beginning made it possible for them to come in to the fires of men, were qualities capable of development. They were developing in him, and the camp-life, replete with misery as it was, was secretly endearing itself to him all the time. But White Fang was unaware of it. He knew only grief for the loss of Kiche, hope for her return, and a hungry yearning for the free life that had been his.

CHAPTER III — THE OUTCAST

Lip-lip continued so to darken his days that White Fang became wickeder and more ferocious than it was his natural right to be. Savageness was a part of his make-up, but the savageness thus developed exceeded his make-up. He acquired a reputation for wickedness amongst the man-animals themselves. Wherever there was trouble and uproar in camp, fighting and squabbling or the outcry of a squaw over a bit of stolen meat, they were sure to find White Fang mixed up in it and usually at the bottom of it. They did not bother to look after the causes of his conduct. They saw only the effects, and the effects were bad. He was a sneak and a thief, a mischief-maker, a fomenter of trouble; and irate squaws told him to his face, the while he eyed them alert and ready to dodge any quick-flung missile, that he was a wolf and worthless and bound to come to an evil end.

He found himself an outcast in the midst of the populous camp. All the young dogs followed Lip-lip's lead. There was a difference between White Fang and them. Perhaps they sensed his wild-wood breed, and instinctively felt for him the enmity that the domestic dog feels for the wolf. But be that as it may, they joined with Lip-lip in the persecution. And, once declared against him, they found good reason to continue declared against him. One and all, from time to time, they felt his teeth; and to his credit, he gave more than he received. Many of them he could whip in single fight; but single fight was denied him. The beginning of such a fight was a signal for all the young dogs in camp to come running and pitch upon him.

Out of this pack-persecution he learned two important things: how to take care of himself in a mass-fight against him — and how, on a single dog, to inflict the greatest amount of damage in the briefest space of time. To keep one's feet in the midst of the hostile mass meant life, and this he learnt well. He became cat-like in his ability to stay on his feet. Even grown dogs might hurtle him backward or sideways with the impact of their heavy bodies; and backward or sideways he would go, in the air or sliding on the ground, but always with his legs under him and his feet downward to the mother earth.

When dogs fight, there are usually preliminaries to the actual combat — snarlings and bristlings and stiff-legged struttings. But White Fang learned to omit these preliminaries. Delay meant the coming against him of all the young dogs. He must do his work quickly and get away. So he learnt to give no warning of his intention. He rushed in and snapped and slashed on the instant, without notice, before his foe could prepare to meet him. Thus he learned how to inflict quick and severe damage. Also he learned the value of surprise. A dog, taken off its guard, its shoulder slashed open or its ear ripped in ribbons before it knew what was happening, was a dog half whipped.

Furthermore, it was remarkably easy to overthrow a dog taken by surprise; while a dog, thus overthrown, invariably exposed for a moment the soft underside of its neck — the vulnerable point at which to strike for its life. White Fang knew this point. It was a knowledge bequeathed to him directly from the hunting generation of wolves. So it was that White Fang's method when he took the offensive, was: first to find a young dog alone; second, to surprise it and knock it off its feet; and third, to drive in with his teeth at the soft throat.

Being but partly grown his jaws had not yet become large enough nor strong enough to make his throat-attack deadly; but many a young dog went around camp with a lacerated throat in token of White Fang's intention. And one day, catching one of his enemies alone on the edge of the woods, he managed, by repeatedly overthrowing him and attacking the throat, to cut the great vein and let out the life. There was a great row that night. He had been observed, the news had been carried to the dead dog's master, the squaws remembered all the instances of stolen meat, and Grey Beaver was beset by many angry voices. But he resolutely held the door of his tepee, inside which he had placed the culprit, and refused to permit the vengeance for which his tribespeople clamoured.

White Fang became hated by man and dog. During this period of his development he never knew a moment's security. The tooth of every dog was against him, the hand of every man. He was greeted with snarls by his kind, with curses and stones by his gods. He lived tensely. He was always keyed up, alert for attack, wary of being attacked, with an eye for sudden and unexpected missiles, prepared to act precipitately and coolly, to leap in with a flash of teeth, or to leap away with a menacing snarl.

As for snarling he could snarl more terribly than any dog, young or old, in camp. The intent of the snarl is to warn or frighten, and judgment is required to know when it should be used. White Fang knew how to make it and when to make it. Into his snarl he incorporated all that was vicious, malignant, and horrible. With nose serrulated by continuous spasms, hair bristling in recurrent waves, tongue whipping out like a red snake and whipping back again, ears flattened down, eyes gleaming hatred, lips wrinkled back, and fangs exposed and dripping, he could compel a pause on the part of almost any assailant. A temporary pause, when taken off his guard, gave him the vital moment in which to think and determine his action. But often a pause so gained lengthened out until it evolved into a complete cessation from the attack. And before more than one of the grown dogs White Fang's snarl enabled him to beat an honourable retreat.

An outcast himself from the pack of the part-grown dogs, his sanguinary methods and remarkable efficiency made the pack pay for its persecution of him. Not permitted himself to run with the pack, the curious state of affairs obtained that no member of the pack could run outside the pack. White Fang would not permit it. What of his bushwhacking and waylaying tactics, the young dogs were afraid to run by themselves. With the exception of Lip-lip, they were compelled to hunch together for mutual protection against the terrible enemy they had made. A puppy alone by the river bank meant a puppy dead or a puppy that aroused the camp with its shrill pain and terror as it fled back from the wolf-cub that had waylaid it.

But White Fang's reprisals did not cease, even when the young dogs had learned thoroughly that they must stay together. He attacked them when he caught them alone, and they attacked him when they were bunched. The sight of him was sufficient to start them rushing after him, at which times his swiftness usually carried him into safety. But woe the dog that outran his fellows in such pursuit! White Fang had learned to turn suddenly upon the pursuer that was ahead of the pack and thoroughly to rip him up before the pack could arrive. This occurred with great frequency, for, once in full cry, the dogs were prone to forget themselves in the excitement of the chase, while White Fang never forgot himself. Stealing backward glances as he ran, he was always ready to whirl around and down the overzealous pursuer that outran his fellows.

Young dogs are bound to play, and out of the exigencies of the situation they realised their play in this mimic warfare. Thus it was that the hunt of White Fang became their chief game — a deadly game, withal, and at all times a serious game. He, on the other hand, being the fastest-footed, was unafraid to venture anywhere. During the period that he waited vainly for his mother to come back, he led the pack many a wild chase through the adjacent woods. But the pack invariably lost him. Its noise and outcry warned him of its presence, while he ran alone, velvet-footed, silently, a moving shadow among the trees after the manner of his father and mother before him. Further he was more directly connected with the Wild than they; and he knew more of its secrets and stratagems. A favourite trick of his was to lose his trail in running water and then lie quietly in a near-by thicket while their baffled cries arose around him.

Hated by his kind and by mankind, indomitable, perpetually warred upon and himself waging perpetual war, his development was rapid and one-sided. This was no soil for kindliness and affection to blossom in. Of such things he had not the faintest glimmering. The code he learned was to obey the strong and to oppress the weak. Grey Beaver was a god, and strong. Therefore White Fang obeyed him. But the dog younger or smaller than himself was weak, a thing to be destroyed. His development was in the direction of power. In order to face the constant danger of hurt and even of destruction, his predatory and protective faculties were unduly developed. He became quicker of movement than the other dogs, swifter of foot, craftier, deadlier, more lithe, more lean with ironlike muscle and sinew, more enduring, more cruel, more ferocious, and more intelligent. He had to become all these things, else he would not have held his own nor survive the hostile environment in which he found himself.

CHAPTER IV — THE TRAIL OF THE GODS

In the fall of the year, when the days were shortening and the bite of the frost was coming into the air, White Fang got his chance for liberty. For several days there had been a great hubbub in the village. The summer camp was being dismantled, and the tribe, bag and baggage, was preparing to go off to the fall hunting. White Fang watched it all with eager eyes, and when the tepees began to come down and the canoes were loading at the bank, he understood. Already the canoes were departing, and some had disappeared down the river.

Quite deliberately he determined to stay behind. He waited his opportunity to slink out of camp to the woods. Here, in the running stream where ice was beginning to form, he hid his trail. Then he crawled into the heart of a dense thicket and waited. The time passed by, and he slept intermittently for hours. Then he was aroused by Grey Beaver's voice calling him by name. There were other voices. White Fang could hear Grey Beaver's squaw taking part in the search, and Mit-sah, who was Grey Beaver's son.

White Fang trembled with fear, and though the impulse came to crawl out of his hiding-place, he resisted it. After a time the voices died away, and some time after that he crept out to enjoy the success of his undertaking. Darkness was coming on, and for a while he played about among the trees, pleasuring in his freedom. Then, and quite suddenly, he became aware of loneliness. He sat down to consider, listening to the silence of the forest and perturbed by it. That nothing moved nor sounded, seemed ominous. He felt the lurking of danger, unseen and unguessed. He was suspicious of the looming bulks of the trees and of the dark shadows that might conceal all manner of perilous things.

Then it was cold. Here was no warm side of a tepee against which to snuggle. The frost was in his feet, and he kept lifting first one fore-foot and then the other. He curved his bushy tail around to cover them, and at the same time he saw a vision. There was nothing strange about it. Upon his inward sight was impressed a succession of memory-pictures. He saw the camp again, the tepees, and the blaze of the fires. He heard the shrill voices of the women, the gruff basses of the men, and the snarling of the dogs. He was hungry, and he remembered pieces of meat and fish that had been thrown him. Here was no meat, nothing but a threatening and inedible silence.

His bondage had softened him. Irresponsibility had weakened him. He had forgotten how to shift for himself. The night yawned about him. His senses, accustomed to the hum and bustle of the camp, used to the continuous impact of sights and sounds, were now left idle. There was nothing to do, nothing to see nor hear. They strained to catch some interruption of the silence and immobility of nature. They were appalled by inaction and by the feel of something terrible impending.

He gave a great start of fright. A colossal and formless something was rushing across the field of his vision. It was a tree-shadow flung by the moon, from whose face the clouds had been brushed away. Reassured, he whimpered softly; then he suppressed the whimper for fear that it might attract the attention of the lurking dangers.

A tree, contracting in the cool of the night, made a loud noise. It was directly above him. He yelped in his fright. A panic seized him, and he ran madly toward the village. He knew an overpowering desire for the protection and companionship of man. In his nostrils was the smell of the camp-smoke. In his ears the camp-sounds and cries were ringing loud. He passed out of the forest and into the moonlit open where were no shadows nor darknesses. But no village greeted his eyes. He had forgotten. The village had gone away.

His wild flight ceased abruptly. There was no place to which to flee. He slunk forlornly through the deserted camp, smelling the rubbish-heaps and the discarded rags and tags of the gods. He would have been glad for the rattle of stones about him, flung by an angry squaw, glad for the hand of Grey Beaver descending upon him in wrath; while he would have welcomed with delight Lip-lip and the whole snarling, cowardly pack.

He came to where Grey Beaver’s tepee had stood. In the centre of the space it had occupied, he sat down. He pointed his nose at the moon. His throat was afflicted by rigid spasms, his mouth opened, and in a heart-broken cry bubbled up his loneliness and fear, his grief for Kiche, all his past sorrows and miseries as well as his apprehension of sufferings and dangers to come. It was the long wolf-howl, full-throated and mournful, the first howl he had ever uttered.

The coming of daylight dispelled his fears but increased his loneliness. The naked earth, which so shortly before had been so populous; thrust his loneliness more forcibly upon him. It did not take him long to make up his mind. He plunged into the forest and followed the river bank down the stream. All day he ran. He did not rest. He seemed made to run on for ever. His iron-like body ignored fatigue. And even after fatigue came, his heritage of endurance braced him to endless endeavour and enabled him to drive his complaining body onward.

Where the river swung in against precipitous bluffs, he climbed the high mountains behind. Rivers and streams that entered the main river he forded or swam. Often he took to the rim-ice that was beginning to form, and more than once he crashed through and struggled for life in the icy current. Always he was on the lookout for the trail of the gods where it might leave the river and proceed inland.

White Fang was intelligent beyond the average of his kind; yet his mental vision was not wide enough to embrace the other bank of the Mackenzie. What if the trail of the gods led out on that side? It never entered his head. Later on, when he had travelled more and grown older and wiser and come to know more of trails and rivers, it might be that he could grasp and apprehend such a possibility. But that mental power was yet in the future. Just now he ran blindly, his own bank of the Mackenzie alone entering into his calculations.

All night he ran, blundering in the darkness into mishaps and obstacles that delayed but did not daunt. By the middle of the second day he had been running continuously for thirty hours, and the iron of his flesh was giving out. It was the endurance of his mind that kept him going. He had not eaten in forty hours, and he was weak with hunger. The repeated drenchings in the icy water had likewise had their effect on him. His handsome coat was draggled. The broad pads of his feet were bruised and bleeding. He had begun to limp, and this limp increased with the hours. To make it worse, the light of the sky was obscured and snow began to fall — a raw, moist, melting, clinging snow, slippery under foot, that hid from him the landscape he traversed, and that covered over the inequalities of the ground so that the way of his feet was more difficult and painful.

Grey Beaver had intended camping that night on the far bank of the Mackenzie, for it was in that direction that the hunting lay. But on the near bank, shortly before dark, a moose coming down to drink, had been espied by Kloo-kooch, who was Grey Beaver's squaw. Now, had not the moose come down to drink, had not Mit-sah been steering out of the course because of the snow, had not Kloo-kooch sighted the moose, and had not Grey Beaver killed it with a lucky shot from his rifle, all subsequent things would have happened differently. Grey Beaver would not have camped on the near side of the Mackenzie, and White Fang would have passed by and gone on, either to die or to find his way to his wild brothers and become one of them — a wolf to the end of his days.

Night had fallen. The snow was flying more thickly, and White Fang, whimpering softly to himself as he stumbled and limped along, came upon a fresh trail in the snow. So fresh was it that he knew it immediately for what it was. Whining with eagerness, he followed back from the river bank and in among the trees. The camp-sounds came to his ears. He saw the blaze of the fire, Kloo-kooch cooking, and Grey Beaver squatting on his hams and mumbling a chunk of raw tallow. There was fresh meat in camp!

White Fang expected a beating. He crouched and bristled a little at the thought of it. Then he went forward again. He feared and disliked the beating he knew to be waiting for him. But he knew, further, that the comfort of the fire would be his, the protection of the gods, the companionship of the dogs — the last, a companionship of enmity, but none the less a companionship and satisfying to his gregarious needs.

He came cringing and crawling into the firelight. Grey Beaver saw him, and stopped munching the tallow. White Fang crawled slowly, cringing and grovelling in the abjectness of his abasement and submission. He crawled straight toward Grey Beaver, every inch of his progress becoming slower and more painful. At last he lay at the master's feet, into whose possession he now surrendered himself, voluntarily, body and soul. Of his own choice, he came in to sit by man's fire and to be ruled by him. White Fang trembled, waiting for the punishment to fall upon him. There was a movement of the hand above him. He cringed involuntarily under the expected blow. It did not fall. He stole a glance upward. Grey Beaver was breaking the lump of tallow in half! Grey Beaver was offering him one piece of the tallow! Very gently and somewhat suspiciously, he first smelled the tallow and then proceeded to eat it. Grey Beaver ordered meat to be brought to him, and guarded him from the other dogs while he ate. After that, grateful and content, White Fang lay at Grey Beaver's feet, gazing at the fire that warmed him, blinking and dozing, secure in the knowledge that the morrow would find him, not wandering forlorn through bleak forest-stretches, but in the camp of the man-animals, with the gods to whom he had given himself and upon whom he was now dependent.

CHAPTER V — THE COVENANT

When December was well along, Grey Beaver went on a journey up the Mackenzie. Mit-sah and Kloo-kooch went with him. One sled he drove himself, drawn by dogs he had traded for or borrowed. A second and smaller sled was driven by Mit-sah, and to this was harnessed a team of puppies. It was more of a toy affair than anything else, yet it was the delight of Mit-sah, who felt that he was beginning to do a man's work in the world. Also, he was learning to drive dogs and to train dogs; while the puppies themselves were being broken in to the harness. Furthermore, the sled was of some service, for it carried nearly two hundred pounds of outfit and food.

White Fang had seen the camp-dogs toiling in the harness, so that he did not resent overmuch the first placing of the harness upon himself. About his neck was put a moss-stuffed collar, which was connected by two pulling-traces to a strap that passed around his chest and over his back. It was to this that was fastened the long rope by which he pulled at the sled.

There were seven puppies in the team. The others had been born earlier in the year and were nine and ten months old, while White Fang was only eight months old. Each dog was fastened to the sled by a single rope. No two ropes were of the same length, while the difference in length between any two ropes was at least that of a dog's body. Every rope was brought to a ring at the front end of the sled. The sled itself was without runners, being a birch-bark toboggan, with upturned forward end to keep it from ploughing under the snow. This construction enabled the weight of the sled and load to be distributed over the largest snow-surface; for the snow was crystal-powder and very soft. Observing the same principle of widest distribution of weight, the dogs at the ends of their ropes radiated fan-fashion from the nose of the sled, so that no dog trod in another's footsteps.

There was, furthermore, another virtue in the fan-formation. The ropes of varying length prevented the dogs attacking from the rear those that ran in front of them. For a dog to attack another, it would have to turn upon one at a shorter rope. In which case it would find itself face to face with the dog attacked, and also it would find itself facing the whip of the driver. But the most peculiar virtue of all lay in the fact that the dog that strove to attack one in front of him must pull the sled faster, and that the faster the sled travelled, the faster could the dog attacked run away. Thus, the dog behind could never catch up with the one in front. The faster he ran, the faster ran the one he was after, and the faster ran all the dogs. Incidentally, the sled went faster, and thus, by cunning indirection, did man increase his mastery over the beasts.

Mit-sah resembled his father, much of whose grey wisdom he possessed. In the past he had observed Lip-lip's persecution of White Fang; but at that time Lip-lip was another man's dog, and Mit-sah had never dared more than to shy an occasional stone at him. But now Lip-lip was his dog, and he proceeded to wreak his vengeance on him by putting him at the end of the longest rope. This made Lip-lip the leader, and was apparently an honour! but in reality it took away from him all honour, and instead of being bully and master of the pack, he now found himself hated and persecuted by the pack.

Because he ran at the end of the longest rope, the dogs had always the view of him running away before them. All that they saw of him was his bushy tail and fleeing hind legs — a view far less ferocious and intimidating than his bristling mane and gleaming fangs. Also, dogs being so constituted in their mental ways, the sight of him running away gave desire to run after him and a feeling that he ran away from them.

The moment the sled started, the team took after Lip-lip in a chase that extended throughout the day. At first he had been prone to turn upon his pursuers, jealous of his dignity and wrathful; but at such times Mit-sah would throw the stinging lash of the thirty-foot cariboo-gut whip into his face and compel him to turn tail and run on. Lip-lip might face the pack, but he could not face that whip, and all that was left him to do was to keep his long rope taut and his flanks ahead of the teeth of his mates.

But a still greater cunning lurked in the recesses of the Indian mind. To give point to unending pursuit of the leader, Mit-sah favoured him over the other dogs. These favours aroused in them jealousy and hatred. In their presence Mit-sah would give him meat and would give it to him only. This was maddening to them. They would rage around just outside the throwing-distance of the whip, while Lip-lip devoured the meat and Mit-sah protected him. And when there was no meat to give, Mit-sah would keep the team at a distance and make believe to give meat to Lip-lip.

White Fang took kindly to the work. He had travelled a greater distance than the other dogs in the yielding of himself to the rule of the gods, and he had learned more thoroughly the futility of opposing their will. In addition, the persecution he had suffered from the pack had made the pack less to him in the scheme of things, and man more. He had not learned to be dependent on his kind for companionship. Besides, Kiche was well-nigh forgotten; and the chief outlet of expression that remained to him was in the allegiance he tendered the gods he had accepted as masters. So he worked hard, learned discipline, and was obedient. Faithfulness and willingness characterised his toil. These are essential traits of the wolf and the wild-dog when they have become domesticated, and these traits White Fang possessed in unusual measure.

A companionship did exist between White Fang and the other dogs, but it was one of warfare and enmity. He had never learned to play with them. He knew only how to fight, and fight with them he did, returning to them a hundred-fold the snaps and slashes they had given him in the days when Lip-lip was leader of the pack. But Lip-lip was no longer leader — except when he fled away before his mates at the end of his rope, the sled bounding along behind. In camp he kept close to Mit-sah or Grey Beaver or Kloo-kooch. He did not dare venture away from the gods, for now the fangs of all dogs were against him, and he tasted to the dregs the persecution that had been White Fang's.

With the overthrow of Lip-lip, White Fang could have become leader of the pack. But he was too morose and solitary for that. He merely thrashed his team-mates. Otherwise he ignored them. They got out of his way when he came along; nor did the boldest of them ever dare to rob him of his meat. On the contrary, they devoured their own meat hurriedly, for fear that he would take it away from them. White Fang knew the law well: *to oppress the weak and obey the strong*. He ate his share of meat as rapidly as he could. And then woe the dog that had not yet finished! A snarl and a flash of fangs, and that dog would wail his indignation to the uncomforting stars while White Fang finished his portion for him.

Every little while, however, one dog or another would flame up in revolt and be promptly subdued. Thus White Fang was kept in training. He was jealous of the isolation in which he kept himself in the midst of the pack, and he fought often to maintain it. But such fights were of brief duration. He was too quick for the others. They were slashed open and bleeding before they knew what had happened, were whipped almost before they had begun to fight.

As rigid as the sled-discipline of the gods, was the discipline maintained by White Fang amongst his fellows. He never allowed them any latitude. He compelled them to an unremitting respect for him. They might do as they pleased amongst themselves. That was no concern of his. But it *was* his concern that they leave him alone in his isolation, get out of his way when he elected to walk among them, and at all times acknowledge his mastery over them. A hint of stiff-leggedness on their part, a lifted lip or a bristle of hair, and he would be upon them, merciless and cruel, swiftly convincing them of the error of their way.

He was a monstrous tyrant. His mastery was rigid as steel. He oppressed the weak with a vengeance. Not for nothing had he been exposed to the pitiless struggles for life in the day of his cubhood, when his mother and he, alone and unaided, held their own and survived in the ferocious environment of the Wild. And not for nothing had he learned to walk softly when superior strength went by. He oppressed the weak, but he respected the strong. And in the course of the long journey with Grey Beaver he walked softly indeed amongst the full-grown dogs in the camps of the strange man-animals they encountered.

The months passed by. Still continued the journey of Grey Beaver. White Fang's strength was developed by the long hours on trail and the steady toil at the sled; and it would have seemed that his mental development was well-nigh complete. He had come to know quite thoroughly the world in which he lived. His outlook was bleak and materialistic. The world as he saw it was a fierce and brutal world, a world without warmth, a world in which caresses and affection and the bright sweetnesses of the spirit did not exist.

He had no affection for Grey Beaver. True, he was a god, but a most savage god. White Fang was glad to acknowledge his lordship, but it was a lordship based upon superior intelligence and brute strength. There was something in the fibre of White Fang's being that made his lordship a thing to be desired, else he would not have come back from the Wild when he did to tender his allegiance. There were deeps in his nature which had never been sounded. A kind word, a caressing touch of the hand, on the part of Grey Beaver, might have sounded these deeps; but Grey Beaver did not caress, nor speak kind words. It was not his way. His primacy was savage, and savagely he ruled, administering justice with a club, punishing transgression with the pain of a blow, and rewarding merit, not by kindness, but by withholding a blow.

So White Fang knew nothing of the heaven a man's hand might contain for him. Besides, he did not like the hands of the man-animals. He was suspicious of them. It was true that they sometimes gave meat, but more often they gave hurt. Hands were things to keep away from. They hurled stones, wielded sticks and clubs and whips, administered slaps and clouts, and, when they touched him, were cunning to hurt with pinch and twist and wrench. In strange villages he had encountered the hands of the children and learned that they were cruel to hurt. Also, he had once nearly had an eye poked out by a toddling papoose. From these experiences he became suspicious of all children. He could not tolerate them. When they came near with their ominous hands, he got up.

It was in a village at the Great Slave Lake, that, in the course of resenting the evil of the hands of the man-animals, he came to modify the law that he had learned from Grey Beaver: namely, that the unpardonable crime was to bite one of the gods. In this village, after the custom of all dogs in all villages, White Fang went foraging, for food. A boy was chopping frozen moose-meat with an axe, and the chips were flying in the snow. White Fang, sliding by in quest of meat, stopped and began to eat the chips. He observed the boy lay down the axe and take up a stout club. White Fang sprang clear, just in time to escape the descending blow. The boy pursued him, and he, a stranger in the village, fled between two tepees to find himself cornered against a high earth bank.

There was no escape for White Fang. The only way out was between the two tepees, and this the boy guarded. Holding his club prepared to strike, he drew in on his cornered quarry. White Fang was furious. He faced the boy, bristling and snarling, his sense of justice outraged. He knew the law of forage. All the wastage of meat, such as the frozen chips, belonged to the dog that found it. He had done no wrong, broken no law, yet here was this boy preparing to give him a beating. White Fang scarcely knew what happened. He did it in a surge of rage. And he did it so quickly that the boy did not know either. All the boy knew was that he had in some unaccountable way been overturned into the snow, and that his club-hand had been ripped wide open by White Fang's teeth.

But White Fang knew that he had broken the law of the gods. He had driven his teeth into the sacred flesh of one of them, and could expect nothing but a most terrible punishment. He fled away to Grey Beaver, behind whose protecting legs he crouched when the bitten boy and the boy's family came, demanding vengeance. But they went away with vengeance unsatisfied. Grey Beaver defended White Fang. So did Mit-sah and Kloo-kooch. White Fang, listening to the wordy war and watching the angry gestures, knew that his act was justified. And so it came that he learned there were gods and gods. There were his gods, and there were other gods, and between them there was a difference. Justice or injustice, it was all the same, he must take all things from the hands of his own gods. But he was not compelled to take injustice from the other gods. It was his privilege to resent it with his teeth. And this also was a law of the gods.

Before the day was out, White Fang was to learn more about this law. Mit-sah, alone, gathering firewood in the forest, encountered the boy that had been bitten. With him were other boys. Hot words passed. Then all the boys attacked Mit-sah. It was going hard with him. Blows were raining upon him from all sides. White Fang looked on at first. This was an affair of the gods, and no concern of his. Then he realised that this was Mit-sah, one of his own particular gods, who was being maltreated. It was no reasoned impulse that made White Fang do what he then did. A mad rush of anger sent him leaping in amongst the combatants. Five minutes later the landscape was covered with fleeing boys, many of whom dripped blood upon the snow in token that White Fang's teeth had not been idle. When Mit-sah told the story in camp, Grey Beaver ordered meat to be given to White Fang. He ordered much meat to be given, and White Fang, gorged and sleepy by the fire, knew that the law had received its verification.

It was in line with these experiences that White Fang came to learn the law of property and the duty of the defence of property. From the protection of his god's body to the protection of his god's possessions was a step, and this step he made. What was his god's was to be defended against all the world — even to the extent of biting other gods. Not only was such an act sacrilegious in its nature, but it was fraught with peril. The gods were all-powerful, and a dog was no match against them; yet White Fang learned to face them, fiercely belligerent and unafraid. Duty rose above fear, and thieving gods learned to leave Grey Beaver's property alone.

One thing, in this connection, White Fang quickly learnt, and that was that a thieving god was usually a cowardly god and prone to run away at the sounding of the alarm. Also, he learned that but brief time elapsed between his sounding of the alarm and Grey Beaver coming to his aid. He came to know that it was not fear of him that drove the thief away, but fear of Grey Beaver. White Fang did not give the alarm by barking. He never barked. His method was to drive straight at the intruder, and to sink his teeth in if he could. Because he was morose and solitary, having nothing to do with the other dogs, he was unusually fitted to guard his master's property; and in this he was encouraged and trained by Grey Beaver. One result of this was to make White Fang more ferocious and indomitable, and more solitary.

The months went by, binding stronger and stronger the covenant between dog and man. This was the ancient covenant that the first wolf that came in from the Wild entered into with man. And, like all succeeding wolves and wild dogs that had done likewise, White Fang worked the covenant out for himself. The terms were simple. For the possession of a flesh-and-blood god, he exchanged his own liberty. Food and fire, protection and companionship, were some of the things he received from the god. In return, he guarded the god's property, defended his body, worked for him, and obeyed him.

The possession of a god implies service. White Fang's was a service of duty and awe, but not of love. He did not know what love was. He had no experience of love. Kiche was a remote memory. Besides, not only had he abandoned the Wild and his kind when he gave himself up to man, but the terms of the covenant were such that if ever he met Kiche again he would not desert his god to go with her. His allegiance to man seemed somehow a law of his being greater than the love of liberty, of kind and kin.

CHAPTER VI — THE FAMINE

The spring of the year was at hand when Grey Beaver finished his long journey. It was April, and White Fang was a year old when he pulled into the home villages and was loosed from the harness by Mit-sah. Though a long way from his full growth, White Fang, next to Lip-lip, was the largest yearling in the village. Both from his father, the wolf, and from Kiche, he had inherited stature and strength, and already he was measuring up alongside the full-grown dogs. But he had not yet grown compact. His body was slender and rangy, and his strength more stringy than massive, His coat was the true wolf-grey, and to all appearances he was true wolf himself. The quarter-strain of dog he had inherited from Kiche had left no mark on him physically, though it had played its part in his mental make-up.

He wandered through the village, recognising with staid satisfaction the various gods he had known before the long journey. Then there were the dogs, puppies growing up like himself, and grown dogs that did not look so large and formidable as the memory pictures he retained of them. Also, he stood less in fear of them than formerly, stalking among them with a certain careless ease that was as new to him as it was enjoyable.

There was Baseek, a grizzled old fellow that in his younger days had but to uncover his fangs to send White Fang cringing and crouching to the right about. From him White Fang had learned much of his own insignificance; and from him he was now to learn much of the change and development that had taken place in himself. While Baseek had been growing weaker with age, White Fang had been growing stronger with youth.

It was at the cutting-up of a moose, fresh-killed, that White Fang learned of the changed relations in which he stood to the dog-world. He had got for himself a hoof and part of the shin-bone, to which quite a bit of meat was attached. Withdrawn from the immediate scramble of the other dogs — in fact out of sight behind a thicket — he was devouring his prize, when Baseek rushed in upon him. Before he knew what he was doing, he had slashed the intruder twice and sprung clear. Baseek was surprised by the other’s temerity and swiftness of attack. He stood, gazing stupidly across at White Fang, the raw, red shin-bone between them.

Baseek was old, and already he had come to know the increasing valour of the dogs it had been his wont to bully. Bitter experiences these, which, perforce, he swallowed, calling upon all his wisdom to cope with them. In the old days he would have sprung upon White Fang in a fury of righteous wrath. But now his waning powers would not permit such a course. He bristled fiercely and looked ominously across the shin-bone at White Fang. And White Fang, resurrecting quite a deal of the old awe, seemed to wilt and to shrink in upon himself and grow small, as he cast about in his mind for a way to beat a retreat not too inglorious.

And right here Baseek erred. Had he contented himself with looking fierce and ominous, all would have been well. White Fang, on the verge of retreat, would have retreated, leaving the meat to him. But Baseek did not wait. He considered the victory already his and stepped forward to the meat. As he bent his head carelessly to smell it, White Fang bristled slightly. Even then it was not too late for Baseek to retrieve the situation. Had he merely stood over the meat, head up and glowering, White Fang would ultimately have slunk away. But the fresh meat was strong in Baseek's nostrils, and greed urged him to take a bite of it.

This was too much for White Fang. Fresh upon his months of mastery over his own team-mates, it was beyond his self-control to stand idly by while another devoured the meat that belonged to him. He struck, after his custom, without warning. With the first slash, Baseek's right ear was ripped into ribbons. He was astounded at the suddenness of it. But more things, and most grievous ones, were happening with equal suddenness. He was knocked off his feet. His throat was bitten. While he was struggling to his feet the young dog sank teeth twice into his shoulder. The swiftness of it was bewildering. He made a futile rush at White Fang, clipping the empty air with an outraged snap. The next moment his nose was laid open, and he was staggering backward away from the meat.

The situation was now reversed. White Fang stood over the shin-bone, bristling and menacing, while Baseek stood a little way off, preparing to retreat. He dared not risk a fight with this young lightning-flash, and again he knew, and more bitterly, the enfeeblement of oncoming age. His attempt to maintain his dignity was heroic. Calmly turning his back upon young dog and shin-bone, as though both were beneath his notice and unworthy of his consideration, he stalked grandly away. Nor, until well out of sight, did he stop to lick his bleeding wounds.

The effect on White Fang was to give him a greater faith in himself, and a greater pride. He walked less softly among the grown dogs; his attitude toward them was less compromising. Not that he went out of his way looking for trouble. Far from it. But upon his way he demanded consideration. He stood upon his right to go his way unmolested and to give trail to no dog. He had to be taken into account, that was all. He was no longer to be disregarded and ignored, as was the lot of puppies, and as continued to be the lot of the puppies that were his team-mates. They got out of the way, gave trail to the grown dogs, and gave up meat to them under compulsion. But White Fang, uncompanionable, solitary, morose, scarcely looking to right or left, redoubtable, forbidding of aspect, remote and alien, was accepted as an equal by his puzzled elders. They quickly learned to leave him alone, neither venturing hostile acts nor making overtures of friendliness. If they left him alone, he left them alone — a state of affairs that they found, after a few encounters, to be pre-eminently desirable.

In midsummer White Fang had an experience. Trotting along in his silent way to investigate a new tepee which had been erected on the edge of the village while he was away with the hunters after moose, he came full upon Kiche. He paused and looked at her. He remembered her vaguely, but he *remembered* her, and that was more than could be said for her. She lifted her lip at him in the old snarl of menace, and his memory became clear. His forgotten cubhood, all that was associated with that familiar snarl, rushed back to him. Before he had known the gods, she had been to him the centre-pin of the universe. The old familiar feelings of that time came back upon him, surged up within him. He bounded towards her joyously, and she met him with shrewd fangs that laid his cheek open to the bone. He did not understand. He backed away, bewildered and puzzled.

But it was not Kiche’s fault. A wolf-mother was not made to remember her cubs of a year or so before. So she did not remember White Fang. He was a strange animal, an intruder; and her present litter of puppies gave her the right to resent such intrusion.

One of the puppies sprawled up to White Fang. They were half-brothers, only they did not know it. White Fang sniffed the puppy curiously, whereupon Kiche rushed upon him, gashing his face a second time. He backed farther away. All the old memories and associations died down again and passed into the grave from which they had been resurrected. He looked at Kiche licking her puppy and stopping now and then to snarl at him. She was without value to him. He had learned to get along without her. Her meaning was forgotten. There was no place for her in his scheme of things, as there was no place for him in hers.

He was still standing, stupid and bewildered, the memories forgotten, wondering what it was all about, when Kiche attacked him a third time, intent on driving him away altogether from the vicinity. And White Fang allowed himself to be driven away. This was a female of his kind, and it was a law of his kind that the males must not fight the females. He did not know anything about this law, for it was no generalisation of the mind, not a something acquired by experience of the world. He knew it as a secret prompting, as an urge of instinct — of the same instinct that made him howl at the moon and stars of nights, and that made him fear death and the unknown.

The months went by. White Fang grew stronger, heavier, and more compact, while his character was developing along the lines laid down by his heredity and his environment. His heredity was a life-stuff that may be likened to clay. It possessed many possibilities, was capable of being moulded into many different forms. Environment served to model the clay, to give it a particular form. Thus, had White Fang never come in to the fires of man, the Wild would have moulded him into a true wolf. But the gods had given him a different environment, and he was moulded into a dog that was rather wolfish, but that was a dog and not a wolf.

And so, according to the clay of his nature and the pressure of his surroundings, his character was being moulded into a certain particular shape. There was no escaping it. He was becoming more morose, more uncompanionable, more solitary, more ferocious; while the dogs were learning more and more that it was better to be at peace with him than at war, and Grey Beaver was coming to prize him more greatly with the passage of each day.

White Fang, seeming to sum up strength in all his qualities, nevertheless suffered from one besetting weakness. He could not stand being laughed at. The laughter of men was a hateful thing. They might laugh among themselves about anything they pleased except himself, and he did not mind. But the moment laughter was turned upon him he would fly into a most terrible rage. Grave, dignified, sombre, a laugh made him frantic to ridiculousness. It so outraged him and upset him that for hours he would behave like a demon. And woe to the dog that at such times ran foul of him. He knew the law too well to take it out of Grey Beaver; behind Grey

Beaver were a club and godhead. But behind the dogs there was nothing but space, and into this space they flew when White Fang came on the scene, made mad by laughter.

In the third year of his life there came a great famine to the Mackenzie Indians. In the summer the fish failed. In the winter the cariboo forsook their accustomed track. Moose were scarce, the rabbits almost disappeared, hunting and preying animals perished. Denied their usual food-supply, weakened by hunger, they fell upon and devoured one another. Only the strong survived. White Fang's gods were always hunting animals. The old and the weak of them died of hunger. There was wailing in the village, where the women and children went without in order that what little they had might go into the bellies of the lean and hollow-eyed hunters who trod the forest in the vain pursuit of meat.

To such extremity were the gods driven that they ate the soft-tanned leather of their mocassins and mittens, while the dogs ate the harnesses off their backs and the very whip-lashes. Also, the dogs ate one another, and also the gods ate the dogs. The weakest and the more worthless were eaten first. The dogs that still lived, looked on and understood. A few of the boldest and wisest forsook the fires of the gods, which had now become a shambles, and fled into the forest, where, in the end, they starved to death or were eaten by wolves.

In this time of misery, White Fang, too, stole away into the woods. He was better fitted for the life than the other dogs, for he had the training of his cubhood to guide him. Especially adept did he become in stalking small living things. He would lie concealed for hours, following every movement of a cautious tree-squirrel, waiting, with a patience as huge as the hunger he suffered from, until the squirrel ventured out upon the ground. Even then, White Fang was not premature. He waited until he was sure of striking before the squirrel could gain a tree-refuge. Then, and not until then, would he flash from his hiding-place, a grey projectile, incredibly swift, never failing its mark — the fleeing squirrel that fled not fast enough.

Successful as he was with squirrels, there was one difficulty that prevented him from living and growing fat on them. There were not enough squirrels. So he was driven to hunt still smaller things. So acute did his hunger become at times that he was not above rooting out wood-mice from their burrows in the ground. Nor did he scorn to do battle with a weasel as hungry as himself and many times more ferocious.

In the worst pinches of the famine he stole back to the fires of the gods. But he did not go into the fires. He lurked in the forest, avoiding discovery and robbing the snares at the rare intervals when game was caught. He even robbed Grey Beaver's snare of a rabbit at a time when Grey Beaver staggered and tottered through the forest, sitting down often to rest, what of weakness and of shortness of breath.

One day While Fang encountered a young wolf, gaunt and scrawny, loose-jointed with famine. Had he not been hungry himself, White Fang might have gone with him and eventually found his way into the pack amongst his wild brethren. As it was, he ran the young wolf down and killed and ate him.

Fortune seemed to favour him. Always, when hardest pressed for food, he found something to kill. Again, when he was weak, it was his luck that none of the larger preying animals chanced upon him. Thus, he was strong from the two days' eating a lynx had afforded him when the hungry wolf-pack ran full tilt upon him. It was a long, cruel chase, but he was better nourished than they, and in the end outran them. And not only did he outrun them, but, circling widely back on his track, he gathered in one of his exhausted pursuers.

After that he left that part of the country and journeyed over to the valley wherein he had been born. Here, in the old lair, he encountered Kiche. Up to her old tricks, she, too, had fled the inhospitable fires of the gods and gone back to her old refuge to give birth to her young. Of this litter but one remained alive when White Fang came upon the scene, and this one was not destined to live long. Young life had little chance in such a famine.

Kiche's greeting of her grown son was anything but affectionate. But White Fang did not mind. He had outgrown his mother. So he turned tail philosophically and trotted on up the stream. At the forks he took the turning to the left, where he found the lair of the lynx with whom his mother and he had fought long before. Here, in the abandoned lair, he settled down and rested for a day.

During the early summer, in the last days of the famine, he met Lip-lip, who had likewise taken to the woods, where he had eked out a miserable existence.

White Fang came upon him unexpectedly. Trotting in opposite directions along the base of a high bluff, they rounded a corner of rock and found themselves face to face. They paused with instant alarm, and looked at each other suspiciously.

White Fang was in splendid condition. His hunting had been good, and for a week he had eaten his fill. He was even gorged from his latest kill. But in the moment he looked at Lip-lip his hair rose on end all along his back. It was an involuntary bristling on his part, the physical state that in the past had always accompanied the mental state produced in him by Lip-lip's bullying and persecution. As in the past he had bristled and snarled at sight of Lip-lip, so now, and automatically, he bristled and snarled. He did not waste any time. The thing was done thoroughly and with despatch. Lip-lip essayed to back away, but White Fang struck him hard, shoulder to shoulder. Lip-lip was overthrown and rolled upon his back. White Fang's teeth drove into the scrawny throat. There was a death-struggle, during which White Fang walked around, stiff-legged and observant. Then he resumed his course and trotted on along the base of the bluff.

One day, not long after, he came to the edge of the forest, where a narrow stretch of open land sloped down to the Mackenzie. He had been over this ground before, when it was bare, but now a village occupied it. Still hidden amongst the trees, he paused to study the situation. Sights and sounds and scents were familiar to him. It was the old village changed to a new place. But sights and sounds and smells were different from those he had last had when he fled away from it. There was no whimpering nor wailing. Contented sounds saluted his ear, and when he heard the angry voice of a woman he knew it to be the anger that proceeds from a full stomach. And there was a smell in the air of fish. There was food. The famine was gone. He came out boldly from the forest and trotted into camp straight to Grey Beaver's tepee. Grey Beaver was not there; but Kloo-kooch welcomed him with glad cries and the whole of a fresh-caught fish, and he lay down to wait Grey Beaver's coming.

PART IV

CHAPTER I — THE ENEMY OF HIS KIND

Had there been in White Fang's nature any possibility, no matter how remote, of his ever coming to fraternise with his kind, such possibility was irretrievably destroyed when he was made leader of the sled-team. For now the dogs hated him — hated him for the extra meat bestowed upon him by Mit-sah; hated him for all the real and fancied favours he received; hated him for that he fled always at the head of the team, his waving brush of a tail and his perpetually retreating hind-quarters for ever maddening their eyes.

And White Fang just as bitterly hated them back. Being sled-leader was anything but gratifying to him. To be compelled to run away before the yelling pack, every dog of which, for three years, he had thrashed and mastered, was almost more than he could endure. But endure it he must, or perish, and the life that was in him had no desire to perish out. The moment Mit-sah gave his order for the start, that moment the whole team, with eager, savage cries, sprang forward at White Fang.

There was no defence for him. If he turned upon them, Mit-sah would throw the stinging lash of the whip into his face. Only remained to him to run away. He could not encounter that howling horde with his tail and hind-quarters. These were scarcely fit weapons with which to meet the many merciless fangs. So run away he did, violating his own nature and pride with every leap he made, and leaping all day long.

One cannot violate the promptings of one's nature without having that nature recoil upon itself. Such a recoil is like that of a hair, made to grow out from the body, turning unnaturally upon the direction of its growth and growing into the body — a rankling, festering thing of hurt. And so with White Fang. Every urge of his being impelled him to spring upon the pack that cried at his heels, but it was the will of the gods that this should not be; and behind the will, to enforce it, was the whip of cariboo-gut with its biting thirty-foot lash. So White Fang could only eat his heart in bitterness and develop a hatred and malice commensurate with the ferocity and indomitability of his nature.

If ever a creature was the enemy of its kind, White Fang was that creature. He asked no quarter, gave none. He was continually marred and scarred by the teeth of the pack, and as continually he left his own marks upon the pack. Unlike most leaders, who, when camp was made and the dogs were unhitched, huddled near to the gods for protection, White Fang disdained such protection. He walked boldly about the camp, inflicting punishment in the night for what he had suffered in the day. In the time before he was made leader of the team, the pack had learned to get out of his way. But now it was different. Excited by the day-long pursuit of him, swayed subconsciously by the insistent iteration on their brains of the sight of him fleeing away, mastered by the feeling of mastery enjoyed all day, the dogs could not bring themselves to give way to him. When he appeared amongst them, there was always a squabble. His progress was marked by snarl and snap and growl. The very atmosphere he breathed was surcharged with hatred and malice, and this but served to increase the hatred and malice within him.

When Mit-sah cried out his command for the team to stop, White Fang obeyed. At first this caused trouble for the other dogs. All of them would spring upon the hated leader only to find the tables turned. Behind him would be Mit-sah, the great whip singing in his hand. So the dogs came to understand that when the team stopped by order, White Fang was to be let alone. But when White Fang stopped without orders, then it was allowed them to spring upon him and destroy him if they could. After several experiences, White Fang never stopped without orders. He learned quickly. It was in the nature of things, that he must learn quickly if he were to survive the unusually severe conditions under which life was vouchsafed him.

But the dogs could never learn the lesson to leave him alone in camp. Each day, pursuing him and crying defiance at him, the lesson of the previous night was erased, and that night would have to be learned over again, to be as immediately forgotten. Besides, there was a greater consistence in their dislike of him. They sensed between themselves and him a difference of kind — cause sufficient in itself for hostility. Like him, they were domesticated wolves. But they had been domesticated for generations. Much of the Wild had been lost, so that to them the Wild was the unknown, the terrible, the ever-menacing and ever warring. But to him, in appearance and action and impulse, still clung the Wild. He symbolised it, was its personification: so that when they showed their teeth to him they were defending themselves against the powers of destruction that lurked in the shadows of the forest and in the dark beyond the camp-fire.

But there was one lesson the dogs did learn, and that was to keep together. White Fang was too terrible for any of them to face single-handed. They met him with the mass-formation, otherwise he would have killed them, one by one, in a night. As it was, he never had a chance to kill them. He might roll a dog off its feet, but the pack would be upon him before he could follow up and deliver the deadly throat-stroke. At the first hint of conflict, the whole team drew together and faced him. The dogs had quarrels among themselves, but these were forgotten when trouble was brewing with White Fang.

On the other hand, try as they would, they could not kill White Fang. He was too quick for them, too formidable, too wise. He avoided tight places and always backed out of it when they bade fair to surround him. While, as for getting him off his feet, there was no dog among them capable of doing the trick. His feet clung to the earth with the same tenacity that he clung to life. For that matter, life and footing were synonymous in this unending warfare with the pack, and none knew it better than White Fang.

So he became the enemy of his kind, domesticated wolves that they were, softened by the fires of man, weakened in the sheltering shadow of man's strength. White Fang was bitter and implacable. The clay of him was so moulded. He declared a vendetta against all dogs. And so terribly did he live this vendetta that Grey Beaver, fierce savage himself, could not but marvel at White Fang's ferocity. Never, he swore, had there been the like of this animal; and the Indians in strange villages swore likewise when they considered the tale of his killings amongst their dogs.

When White Fang was nearly five years old, Grey Beaver took him on another great journey, and long remembered was the havoc he worked amongst the dogs of the many villages along the Mackenzie, across the Rockies, and down the Porcupine to the Yukon. He revelled in the vengeance he wreaked upon his kind. They were ordinary, unsuspecting dogs. They were not prepared for his swiftness and directness, for his attack without warning. They did not know him for what he was, a lightning-flash of slaughter. They bristled up to him, stiff-legged and challenging, while he, wasting no time on elaborate preliminaries, snapping into action like a steel spring, was at their throats and destroying them before they knew what was happening and while they were yet in the throes of surprise.

He became an adept at fighting. He economised. He never wasted his strength, never tussled. He was in too quickly for that, and, if he missed, was out again too quickly. The dislike of the wolf for close quarters was his to an unusual degree. He could not endure a prolonged contact with another body. It smacked of danger. It made him frantic. He must be away, free, on his own legs, touching no living thing. It was the Wild still clinging to him, asserting itself through him. This feeling had been accentuated by the Ishmaelite life he had led from his puppyhood. Danger lurked in contacts. It was the trap, ever the trap, the fear of it lurking deep in the life of him, woven into the fibre of him.

In consequence, the strange dogs he encountered had no chance against him. He eluded their fangs. He got them, or got away, himself untouched in either event. In the natural course of things there were exceptions to this. There were times when several dogs, pitching on to him, punished him before he could get away; and there were times when a single dog scored deeply on him. But these were accidents. In the main, so efficient a fighter had he become, he went his way unscathed.

Another advantage he possessed was that of correctly judging time and distance. Not that he did this consciously, however. He did not calculate such things. It was all automatic. His eyes saw correctly, and the nerves carried the vision correctly to his brain. The parts of him were better adjusted than those of the average dog. They worked together more smoothly and steadily. His was a better, far better, nervous, mental, and muscular co-ordination. When his eyes conveyed to his brain the moving image of an action, his brain without conscious effort, knew the space that limited that action and the time required for its completion. Thus, he could avoid the leap of another dog, or the drive of its fangs, and at the same moment could seize the infinitesimal fraction of time in which to deliver his own attack. Body and brain, his was a more perfected mechanism. Not that he was to be praised for it. Nature had been more generous to him than to the average animal, that was all.

It was in the summer that White Fang arrived at Fort Yukon. Grey Beaver had crossed the great watershed between Mackenzie and the Yukon in the late winter, and spent the spring in hunting among the western outlying spurs of the Rockies. Then, after the break-up of the ice on the Porcupine, he had built a canoe and paddled down that stream to where it effected its junction with the Yukon just under the Artic circle. Here stood the old Hudson's Bay Company fort; and here were many Indians, much food, and unprecedented excitement. It was the summer of 1898, and thousands of gold-hunters were going up the Yukon to Dawson and the Klondike. Still hundreds of miles from their goal, nevertheless many of them had been on the way for a year, and the least any of them had travelled to get that far was five thousand miles, while some had come from the other side of the world.

Here Grey Beaver stopped. A whisper of the gold-rush had reached his ears, and he had come with several bales of furs, and another of gut-sewn mittens and moccasins. He would not have ventured so long a trip had he not expected generous profits. But what he had expected was nothing to what he realised. His wildest dreams had not exceeded a hundred per cent. profit; he made a thousand per cent. And like a true Indian, he settled down to trade carefully and slowly, even if it took all summer and the rest of the winter to dispose of his goods.

It was at Fort Yukon that White Fang saw his first white men. As compared with the Indians he had known, they were to him another race of beings, a race of superior gods. They impressed him as possessing superior power, and it is on power that godhead rests. White Fang did not reason it out, did not in his mind make the sharp generalisation that the white gods were more powerful. It was a feeling, nothing more, and yet none the less potent. As, in his puppyhood, the looming bulks of the tepees, man-reared, had affected him as manifestations of power, so was he affected now by the houses and the huge fort all of massive logs. Here was power. Those white gods were strong. They possessed greater mastery over matter than the gods he had known, most powerful among which was Grey Beaver. And yet Grey Beaver was as a child-god among these white-skinned ones.

To be sure, White Fang only felt these things. He was not conscious of them. Yet it is upon feeling, more often than thinking, that animals act; and every act White Fang now performed was based upon the feeling that the white men were the superior gods. In the first place he was very suspicious of them. There was no telling what unknown terrors were theirs, what unknown hurts they could administer. He was curious to observe them, fearful of being noticed by them. For the first few hours he was content with slinking around and watching them from a safe distance. Then he saw that no harm befell the dogs that were near to them, and he came in closer.

In turn he was an object of great curiosity to them. His wolfish appearance caught their eyes at once, and they pointed him out to one another. This act of pointing put White Fang on his guard, and when they tried to approach him he showed his teeth and backed away. Not one succeeded in laying a hand on him, and it was well that they did not.

White Fang soon learned that very few of these gods — not more than a dozen — lived at this place. Every two or three days a steamer (another and colossal manifestation of power) came into the bank and stopped for several hours. The white men came from off these steamers and went away on them again. There seemed untold numbers of these white men. In the first day or so, he saw more of them than he had seen Indians in all his life; and as the days went by they continued to come up the river, stop, and then go on up the river out of sight.

But if the white gods were all-powerful, their dogs did not amount to much. This White Fang quickly discovered by mixing with those that came ashore with their masters. They were irregular shapes and sizes. Some were short-legged — too short; others were long-legged — too long. They had hair instead of fur, and a few had very little hair at that. And none of them knew how to fight.

As an enemy of his kind, it was in White Fang's province to fight with them. This he did, and he quickly achieved for them a mighty contempt. They were soft and helpless, made much noise, and floundered around clumsily trying to accomplish by main strength what he accomplished by dexterity and cunning. They rushed bellowing at him. He sprang to the side. They did not know what had become of him; and in that moment he struck them on the shoulder, rolling them off their feet and delivering his stroke at the throat.

Sometimes this stroke was successful, and a stricken dog rolled in the dirt, to be pounced upon and torn to pieces by the pack of Indian dogs that waited. White Fang was wise. He had long since learned that the gods were made angry when their dogs were killed. The white men were no exception to this. So he was content, when he had overthrown and slashed wide the throat of one of their dogs, to drop back and let the pack go in and do the cruel finishing work. It was then that the white men rushed in, visiting their wrath heavily on the pack, while White Fang went free. He would stand off at a little distance and look on, while stones, clubs, axes, and all sorts of weapons fell upon his fellows. White Fang was very wise.

But his fellows grew wise in their own way; and in this White Fang grew wise with them. They learned that it was when a steamer first tied to the bank that they had their fun. After the first two or three strange dogs had been downed and destroyed, the white men hustled their own animals back on board and wrecked savage vengeance on the offenders. One white man, having seen his dog, a setter, torn to pieces before his eyes, drew a revolver. He fired rapidly, six times, and six of the pack lay dead or dying — another manifestation of power that sank deep into White Fang's consciousness.

White Fang enjoyed it all. He did not love his kind, and he was shrewd enough to escape hurt himself. At first, the killing of the white men's dogs had been a diversion. After a time it became his occupation. There was no work for him to do. Grey Beaver was busy trading and getting wealthy. So White Fang hung around the landing with the disreputable gang of Indian dogs, waiting for steamers. With the arrival of a steamer the fun began. After a few minutes, by the time the white men had got over their surprise, the gang scattered. The fun was over until the next steamer should arrive.

But it can scarcely be said that White Fang was a member of the gang. He did not mingle with it, but remained aloof, always himself, and was even feared by it. It is true, he worked with it. He picked the quarrel with the strange dog while the gang waited. And when he had overthrown the strange dog the gang went in to finish it. But it is equally true that he then withdrew, leaving the gang to receive the punishment of the outraged gods.

It did not require much exertion to pick these quarrels. All he had to do, when the strange dogs came ashore, was to show himself. When they saw him they rushed for him. It was their instinct. He was the Wild — the unknown, the terrible, the ever-menacing, the thing that prowled in the darkness around the fires of the primeval world when they, cowering close to the fires, were reshaping their instincts, learning to fear the Wild out of which they had come, and which they had deserted and betrayed. Generation by generation, down all the generations, had this fear of the Wild been stamped into their natures. For centuries the Wild had stood for terror and destruction. And during all this time free licence had been theirs, from their masters, to kill the things of the Wild. In doing this they had protected both themselves and the gods whose companionship they shared.

And so, fresh from the soft southern world, these dogs, trotting down the gang-plank and out upon the Yukon shore had but to see White Fang to experience the irresistible impulse to rush upon him and destroy him. They might be town-reared dogs, but the instinctive fear of the Wild was theirs just the same. Not alone with their own eyes did they see the wolfish creature in the clear light of day, standing before them. They saw him with the eyes of their ancestors, and by their inherited memory they knew White Fang for the wolf, and they remembered the ancient feud.

All of which served to make White Fang's days enjoyable. If the sight of him drove these strange dogs upon him, so much the better for him, so much the worse for them. They looked upon him as legitimate prey, and as legitimate prey he looked upon them.

Not for nothing had he first seen the light of day in a lonely lair and fought his first fights with the ptarmigan, the weasel, and the lynx. And not for nothing had his puppyhood been made bitter by the persecution of Lip-lip and the whole puppy pack. It might have been otherwise, and he would then have been otherwise. Had Lip-lip not existed, he would have passed his puppyhood with the other puppies and grown up more doglike and with more liking for dogs. Had Grey Beaver possessed the plummet of affection and love, he might have sounded the deeps of White Fang's nature and brought up to the surface all manner of kindly qualities. But these things had not been so. The clay of White Fang had been moulded until he became what he was, morose and lonely, unloving and ferocious, the enemy of all his kind.

CHAPTER II — THE MAD GOD

A small number of white men lived in Fort Yukon. These men had been long in the country. They called themselves Sour-doughs, and took great pride in so classifying themselves. For other men, new in the land, they felt nothing but disdain. The men who came ashore from the steamers were newcomers. They were known as *chechaquos*, and they always wilted at the application of the name. They made their bread with baking-powder. This was the invidious distinction between them and the Sour-doughs, who, forsooth, made their bread from sour-dough because they had no baking-powder.

All of which is neither here nor there. The men in the fort disdained the newcomers and enjoyed seeing them come to grief. Especially did they enjoy the havoc worked amongst the newcomers' dogs by White Fang and his disreputable gang. When a steamer arrived, the men of the fort made it a point always to come down to the bank and see the fun. They looked forward to it with as much anticipation as did the Indian dogs, while they were not slow to appreciate the savage and crafty part played by White Fang.

But there was one man amongst them who particularly enjoyed the sport. He would come running at the first sound of a steamboat's whistle; and when the last fight was over and White Fang and the pack had scattered, he would return slowly to the fort, his face heavy with regret. Sometimes, when a soft southland dog went down, shrieking its death-cry under the fangs of the pack, this man would be unable to contain himself, and would leap into the air and cry out with delight. And always he had a sharp and covetous eye for White Fang.

This man was called "Beauty" by the other men of the fort. No one knew his first name, and in general he was known in the country as Beauty Smith. But he was anything save a beauty. To antithesis was due his naming. He was pre-eminently unbeautiful. Nature had been niggardly with him. He was a small man to begin with; and upon his meagre frame was deposited an even more strikingly meagre head. Its apex might be likened to a point. In fact, in his boyhood, before he had been named Beauty by his fellows, he had been called "Pinhead."

Backward, from the apex, his head slanted down to his neck and forward it slanted uncompromisingly to meet a low and remarkably wide forehead. Beginning here, as though regretting her parsimony, Nature had spread his features with a lavish hand. His eyes were large, and between them was the distance of two eyes. His face, in relation to the rest of him, was prodigious. In order to discover the necessary area, Nature had given him an enormous prognathous jaw. It was wide and heavy, and protruded outward and down until it seemed to rest on his chest. Possibly this appearance was due to the weariness of the slender neck, unable properly to support so great a burden.

This jaw gave the impression of ferocious determination. But something lacked. Perhaps it was from excess. Perhaps the jaw was too large. At any rate, it was a lie. Beauty Smith was known far and wide as the weakest of weak-kneed and snivelling cowards. To complete his description, his teeth were large and yellow, while the two eye-teeth, larger than their fellows, showed under his lean lips like fangs. His eyes were yellow and muddy, as though Nature had run short on pigments and squeezed together the dregs of all her tubes. It was the same with his hair, sparse and irregular of growth, muddy-yellow and dirty-yellow, rising on his head and sprouting out of his face in unexpected tufts and bunches, in appearance like clumped and wind-blown grain.

In short, Beauty Smith was a monstrosity, and the blame of it lay elsewhere. He was not responsible. The clay of him had been so moulded in the making. He did the cooking for the other men in the fort, the dish-washing and the drudgery. They did not despise him. Rather did they tolerate him in a broad human way, as one tolerates any creature evilly treated in the making. Also, they feared him. His cowardly rages made them dread a shot in the back or poison in their coffee. But somebody had to do the cooking, and whatever else his shortcomings, Beauty Smith could cook.

This was the man that looked at White Fang, delighted in his ferocious prowess, and desired to possess him. He made overtures to White Fang from the first. White Fang began by ignoring him. Later on, when the overtures became more insistent, White Fang bristled and bared his teeth and backed away. He did not like the man. The feel of him was bad. He sensed the evil in him, and feared the extended hand and the attempts at soft-spoken speech. Because of all this, he hated the man.

With the simpler creatures, good and bad are things simply understood. The good stands for all things that bring easement and satisfaction and surcease from pain. Therefore, the good is liked. The bad stands for all things that are fraught with discomfort, menace, and hurt, and is hated accordingly. White Fang's feel of Beauty Smith was bad. From the man's distorted body and twisted mind, in occult ways, like mists rising from malarial marshes, came emanations of the unhealth within. Not by reasoning, not by the five senses alone, but by other and remoter and uncharted senses, came the feeling to White Fang that the man was ominous with evil, pregnant with hurtfulness, and therefore a thing bad, and wisely to be hated.

White Fang was in Grey Beaver's camp when Beauty Smith first visited it. At the faint sound of his distant feet, before he came in sight, White Fang knew who was coming and began to bristle. He had been lying down in an abandon of comfort, but he arose quickly, and, as the man arrived, slid away in true wolf-fashion to the edge of the camp. He did not know what they said, but he could see the man and Grey Beaver talking together. Once, the man pointed at him, and White Fang snarled back as though the hand were just descending upon him instead of being, as it was, fifty feet away. The man laughed at this; and White Fang slunk away to the sheltering woods, his head turned to observe as he glided softly over the ground.

Grey Beaver refused to sell the dog. He had grown rich with his trading and stood in need of nothing. Besides, White Fang was a valuable animal, the strongest sled-dog he had ever owned, and the best leader. Furthermore, there was no dog like him on the Mackenzie nor the Yukon. He could fight. He killed other dogs as easily as men killed mosquitoes. (Beauty Smith's eyes lighted up at this, and he licked his thin lips with an eager tongue). No, White Fang was not for sale at any price.

But Beauty Smith knew the ways of Indians. He visited Grey Beaver's camp often, and hidden under his coat was always a black bottle or so. One of the potencies of whisky is the breeding of thirst. Grey Beaver got the thirst. His fevered membranes and burnt stomach began to clamour for more and more of the scorching fluid; while his brain, thrust all awry by the unwonted stimulant, permitted him to go any length to obtain it. The money he had received for his furs and mittens and moccasins began to go.

It went faster and faster, and the shorter his money-sack grew, the shorter grew his temper.

In the end his money and goods and temper were all gone. Nothing remained to him but his thirst, a prodigious possession in itself that grew more prodigious with every sober breath he drew. Then it was that Beauty Smith had talk with him again about the sale of White Fang; but this time the price offered was in bottles, not dollars, and Grey Beaver's ears were more eager to hear.

"You ketch um dog you take um all right," was his last word.

The bottles were delivered, but after two days. "You ketch um dog," were Beauty Smith's words to Grey Beaver.

White Fang slunk into camp one evening and dropped down with a sigh of content. The dreaded white god was not there. For days his manifestations of desire to lay hands on him had been growing more insistent, and during that time White Fang had been compelled to avoid the camp. He did not know what evil was threatened by those insistent hands. He knew only that they did threaten evil of some sort, and that it was best for him to keep out of their reach.

But scarcely had he lain down when Grey Beaver staggered over to him and tied a leather thong around his neck. He sat down beside White Fang, holding the end of the thong in his hand. In the other hand he held a bottle, which, from time to time, was inverted above his head to the accompaniment of gurgling noises.

An hour of this passed, when the vibrations of feet in contact with the ground foreran the one who approached. White Fang heard it first, and he was bristling with recognition while Grey Beaver still nodded stupidly. White Fang tried to draw the thong softly out of his master's hand; but the relaxed fingers closed tightly and Grey Beaver roused himself.

Beauty Smith strode into camp and stood over White Fang. He snarled softly up at the thing of fear, watching keenly the deportment of the hands. One hand extended outward and began to descend upon his head. His soft snarl grew tense and harsh. The hand continued slowly to descend, while he crouched beneath it, eyeing it malignantly, his snarl growing shorter and shorter as, with quickening breath, it approached its culmination. Suddenly he snapped, striking with his fangs like a snake. The hand was jerked back, and the teeth came together emptily with a sharp click. Beauty Smith was frightened and angry. Grey Beaver clouted White Fang alongside the head, so that he cowered down close to the earth in respectful obedience.

White Fang's suspicious eyes followed every movement. He saw Beauty Smith go away and return with a stout club. Then the end of the thong was given over to him by Grey Beaver. Beauty Smith started to walk away. The thong grew taut. White Fang resisted it. Grey Beaver clouted him right and left to make him get up and follow. He obeyed, but with a rush, hurling himself upon the stranger who was dragging him away. Beauty Smith did not jump away. He had been waiting for this. He swung the club smartly, stopping the rush midway and smashing White Fang down upon the ground. Grey Beaver laughed and nodded approval. Beauty Smith tightened the thong again, and White Fang crawled limply and dizzily to his feet.

He did not rush a second time. One smash from the club was sufficient to convince him that the white god knew how to handle it, and he was too wise to fight the inevitable. So he followed morosely at Beauty Smith's heels, his tail between his legs, yet snarling softly under his breath. But Beauty Smith kept a wary eye on him, and the club was held always ready to strike.

At the fort Beauty Smith left him securely tied and went in to bed. White Fang waited an hour. Then he applied his teeth to the thong, and in the space of ten seconds was free. He had wasted no time with his teeth. There had been no useless gnawing. The thong was cut across, diagonally, almost as clean as though done by a knife. White Fang looked up at the fort, at the same time bristling and growling. Then he turned and trotted back to Grey Beaver's camp. He owed no allegiance to this strange and terrible god. He had given himself to Grey Beaver, and to Grey Beaver he considered he still belonged.

But what had occurred before was repeated — with a difference. Grey Beaver again made him fast with a thong, and in the morning turned him over to Beauty Smith. And here was where the difference came in. Beauty Smith gave him a beating. Tied securely, White Fang could only rage futilely and endure the punishment. Club and whip were both used upon him, and he experienced the worst beating he had ever received in his life. Even the big beating given him in his puppyhood by Grey Beaver was mild compared with this.

Beauty Smith enjoyed the task. He delighted in it. He gloated over his victim, and his eyes flamed dully, as he swung the whip or club and listened to White Fang's cries of pain and to his helpless bellows and snarls. For Beauty Smith was cruel in the way that cowards are cruel. Cringing and snivelling himself before the blows or angry speech of a man, he revenged himself, in turn, upon creatures weaker than he. All life likes power, and Beauty Smith was no exception. Denied the expression of power amongst his own kind, he fell back upon the lesser creatures and there vindicated the life that was in him. But Beauty Smith had not created himself, and no blame was to be attached to him. He had come into the world with a twisted body and a brute intelligence. This had constituted the clay of him, and it had not been kindly moulded by the world.

White Fang knew why he was being beaten. When Grey Beaver tied the thong around his neck, and passed the end of the thong into Beauty Smith's keeping, White Fang knew that it was his god's will for him to go with Beauty Smith. And when Beauty Smith left him tied outside the fort, he knew that it was Beauty Smith's will that he should remain there. Therefore, he had disobeyed the will of both the gods, and earned the consequent punishment. He had seen dogs change owners in the past, and he had seen the runaways beaten as he was being beaten. He was wise, and yet in the nature of him there were forces greater than wisdom. One of these was fidelity. He did not love Grey Beaver, yet, even in the face of his will and his anger, he was faithful to him. He could not help it. This faithfulness was a quality of the clay that composed him. It was the quality that was peculiarly the possession of his kind; the quality that set apart his species from all other species; the quality that has enabled the wolf and the wild dog to come in from the open and be the companions of man.

After the beating, White Fang was dragged back to the fort. But this time Beauty Smith left him tied with a stick. One does not give up a god easily, and so with White Fang. Grey Beaver was his own particular god, and, in spite of Grey Beaver's will, White Fang still clung to him and would not give him up. Grey Beaver had betrayed and forsaken him, but that had no effect upon him. Not for nothing had he surrendered himself body and soul to Grey Beaver. There had been no reservation on White Fang's part, and the bond was not to be broken easily.

So, in the night, when the men in the fort were asleep, White Fang applied his teeth to the stick that held him. The wood was seasoned and dry, and it was tied so closely to his neck that he could scarcely get his teeth to it. It was only by the severest muscular exertion and neck-arching that he succeeded in getting the wood between his teeth, and barely between his teeth at that; and it was only by the exercise of an immense patience, extending through many hours, that he succeeded in gnawing through the stick. This was something that dogs were not supposed to do. It was unprecedented. But White Fang did it, trotting away from the fort in the early morning, with the end of the stick hanging to his neck.

He was wise. But had he been merely wise he would not have gone back to Grey Beaver who had already twice betrayed him. But there was his faithfulness, and he went back to be betrayed yet a third time. Again he yielded to the tying of a thong around his neck by Grey Beaver, and again Beauty Smith came to claim him. And this time he was beaten even more severely than before.

Grey Beaver looked on stolidly while the white man wielded the whip. He gave no protection. It was no longer his dog. When the beating was over White Fang was sick. A soft southland dog would have died under it, but not he. His school of life had been sterner, and he was himself of sterner stuff. He had too great vitality. His clutch on life was too strong. But he was very sick. At first he was unable to drag himself along, and Beauty Smith had to wait half-an-hour for him. And then, blind and reeling, he followed at Beauty Smith's heels back to the fort.

But now he was tied with a chain that defied his teeth, and he strove in vain, by lunging, to draw the staple from the timber into which it was driven. After a few days, sober and bankrupt, Grey Beaver departed up the Porcupine on his long journey to the Mackenzie. White Fang remained on the Yukon, the property of a man more than half mad and all brute. But what is a dog to know in its consciousness of madness? To White Fang, Beauty Smith was a veritable, if terrible, god. He was a mad god at best, but White Fang knew nothing of madness; he knew only that he must submit to the will of this new master, obey his every whim and fancy.

CHAPTER III — THE REIGN OF HATE

Under the tutelage of the mad god, White Fang became a fiend. He was kept chained in a pen at the rear of the fort, and here Beauty Smith teased and irritated and drove him wild with petty torments. The man early discovered White Fang's susceptibility to laughter, and made it a point after painfully tricking him, to laugh at him. This laughter was uproarious and scornful, and at the same time the god pointed his finger derisively at White Fang. At such times reason fled from White Fang, and in his transports of rage he was even more mad than Beauty Smith.

Formerly, White Fang had been merely the enemy of his kind, withal a ferocious enemy. He now became the enemy of all things, and more ferocious than ever. To such an extent was he tormented, that he hated blindly and without the faintest spark of reason. He hated the chain that bound him, the men who peered in at him through the slats of the pen, the dogs that accompanied the men and that snarled malignantly at him in his helplessness. He hated the very wood of the pen that confined him. And, first, last, and most of all, he hated Beauty Smith.

But Beauty Smith had a purpose in all that he did to White Fang. One day a number of men gathered about the pen. Beauty Smith entered, club in hand, and took the chain off from White Fang's neck. When his master had gone out, White Fang turned loose and tore around the pen, trying to get at the men outside. He was magnificently terrible. Fully five feet in length, and standing two and one-half feet at the shoulder, he far outweighed a wolf of corresponding size. From his mother he had inherited the heavier proportions of the dog, so that he weighed, without any fat and without an ounce of superfluous flesh, over ninety pounds. It was all muscle, bone, and sinew-fighting flesh in the finest condition.

The door of the pen was being opened again. White Fang paused. Something unusual was happening. He waited. The door was opened wider. Then a huge dog was thrust inside, and the door was slammed shut behind him. White Fang had never seen such a dog (it was a mastiff); but the size and fierce aspect of the intruder did not deter him. Here was some thing, not wood nor iron, upon which to wreak his hate. He leaped in with a flash of fangs that ripped down the side of the mastiff's neck. The mastiff shook his head, growled hoarsely, and plunged at White Fang. But White

Fang was here, there, and everywhere, always evading and eluding, and always leaping in and slashing with his fangs and leaping out again in time to escape punishment.

The men outside shouted and applauded, while Beauty Smith, in an ecstasy of delight, gloated over the ripping and mangling performed by White Fang. There was no hope for the mastiff from the first. He was too ponderous and slow. In the end, while Beauty Smith beat White Fang back with a club, the mastiff was dragged out by its owner. Then there was a payment of bets, and money clinked in Beauty Smith's hand.

White Fang came to look forward eagerly to the gathering of the men around his pen. It meant a fight; and this was the only way that was now vouchsafed him of expressing the life that was in him. Tormented, incited to hate, he was kept a prisoner so that there was no way of satisfying that hate except at the times his master saw fit to put another dog against him. Beauty Smith had estimated his powers well, for he was invariably the victor. One day, three dogs were turned in upon him in succession. Another day a full-grown wolf, fresh-caught from the Wild, was shoved in through the door of the pen. And on still another day two dogs were set against him at the same time. This was his severest fight, and though in the end he killed them both he was himself half killed in doing it.

In the fall of the year, when the first snows were falling and mush-ice was running in the river, Beauty Smith took passage for himself and White Fang on a steamboat bound up the Yukon to Dawson. White Fang had now achieved a reputation in the land. As "the Fighting Wolf" he was known far and wide, and the cage in which he was kept on the steam-boat's deck was usually surrounded by curious men. He raged and snarled at them, or lay quietly and studied them with cold hatred. Why should he not hate them? He never asked himself the question. He knew only hate and lost himself in the passion of it. Life had become a hell to him. He had not been made for the close confinement wild beasts endure at the hands of men. And yet it was in precisely this way that he was treated. Men stared at him, poked sticks between the bars to make him snarl, and then laughed at him.

They were his environment, these men, and they were moulding the clay of him into a more ferocious thing than had been intended by Nature. Nevertheless, Nature had given him plasticity. Where many another animal would have died or had its spirit broken, he adjusted himself and lived, and at no expense of the spirit. Possibly Beauty Smith, arch-fiend and tormentor, was capable of breaking White Fang's spirit, but as yet there were no signs of his succeeding.

If Beauty Smith had in him a devil, White Fang had another; and the two of them raged against each other unceasingly. In the days before, White Fang had had the wisdom to cower down and submit to a man with a club in his hand; but this wisdom now left him. The mere sight of Beauty Smith was sufficient to send him into transports of fury. And when they came to close quarters, and he had been beaten back by the club, he went on growling and snarling, and showing his fangs. The last growl could never be extracted from him. No matter how terribly he was beaten, he had always another growl; and when Beauty Smith gave up and withdrew, the defiant growl followed after him, or White Fang sprang at the bars of the cage bellowing his hatred.

When the steamboat arrived at Dawson, White Fang went ashore. But he still lived a public life, in a cage, surrounded by curious men. He was exhibited as "the Fighting Wolf," and men paid fifty cents in gold dust to see him. He was given no rest. Did he lie down to sleep, he was stirred up by a sharp stick — so that the audience might get its money's worth. In order to make the exhibition interesting, he was kept in a rage most of the time. But worse than all this, was the atmosphere in which he lived. He was regarded as the most fearful of wild beasts, and this was borne in to him through the bars of the cage. Every word, every cautious action, on the part of the men, impressed upon him his own terrible ferocity. It was so much added fuel to the flame of his fierceness. There could be but one result, and that was that his ferocity fed upon itself and increased. It was another instance of the plasticity of his clay, of his capacity for being moulded by the pressure of environment.

In addition to being exhibited he was a professional fighting animal. At irregular intervals, whenever a fight could be arranged, he was taken out of his cage and led off into the woods a few miles from town. Usually this occurred at night, so as to avoid interference from the mounted police of the Territory. After a few hours of waiting, when daylight had come, the audience and the dog with which he was to fight arrived. In this manner it came about that he fought all sizes and breeds of dogs. It was a savage land, the men were savage, and the fights were usually to the death.

Since White Fang continued to fight, it is obvious that it was the other dogs that died. He never knew defeat. His early training, when he fought with Lip-lip and the whole puppy-pack, stood him in good stead. There was the tenacity with which he clung to the earth. No dog could make him lose his footing. This was the favourite trick of the wolf breeds — to rush in upon him, either directly or with an unexpected swerve, in the hope of striking his shoulder and overthrowing him. Mackenzie hounds, Eskimo and Labrador dogs, huskies and Malemutes — all tried it on him, and all failed. He was never known to lose his footing. Men told this to one another, and looked each time to see it happen; but White Fang always disappointed them.

Then there was his lightning quickness. It gave him a tremendous advantage over his antagonists. No matter what their fighting experience, they had never encountered a dog that moved so swiftly as he. Also to be reckoned with, was the immediateness of his attack. The average dog was accustomed to the preliminaries of snarling and bristling and growling, and the average dog was knocked off his feet and finished before he had begun to fight or recovered from his surprise. So often did this happen, that it became the custom to hold White Fang until the other dog went through its preliminaries, was good and ready, and even made the first attack.

But greatest of all the advantages in White Fang's favour, was his experience. He knew more about fighting than did any of the dogs that faced him. He had fought more fights, knew how to meet more tricks and methods, and had more tricks himself, while his own method was scarcely to be improved upon.

As the time went by, he had fewer and fewer fights. Men despaired of matching him with an equal, and Beauty Smith was compelled to pit wolves against him. These were trapped by the Indians for the purpose, and a fight between White Fang and a wolf was always sure to draw a crowd. Once, a full-grown female lynx was secured, and this time White Fang fought for his life. Her quickness matched his; her ferocity equalled his; while he fought with his fangs alone, and she fought with her sharp-clawed feet as well.

But after the lynx, all fighting ceased for White Fang. There were no more animals with which to fight — at least, there was none considered worthy of fighting with him. So he remained on exhibition until spring, when one Tim Keenan, a faro-dealer, arrived in the land. With him came the first bull-dog that had ever entered the Klondike. That this dog and White Fang should come together was inevitable, and for a week the anticipated fight was the mainspring of conversation in certain quarters of the town.

CHAPTER IV — THE CLINGING DEATH

Beauty Smith slipped the chain from his neck and stepped back.

For once White Fang did not make an immediate attack. He stood still, ears pricked forward, alert and curious, surveying the strange animal that faced him. He had never seen such a dog before. Tim Keenan shoved the bulldog forward with a muttered “Go to it.” The animal waddled toward the centre of the circle, short and squat and ungainly. He came to a stop and blinked across at White Fang.

There were cries from the crowd of, “Go to him, Cherokee! Sick ’m, Cherokee! Eat ’m up!”

But Cherokee did not seem anxious to fight. He turned his head and blinked at the men who shouted, at the same time wagging his stump of a tail good-naturedly. He was not afraid, but merely lazy. Besides, it did not seem to him that it was intended he should fight with the dog he saw before him. He was not used to fighting with that kind of dog, and he was waiting for them to bring on the real dog.

Tim Keenan stepped in and bent over Cherokee, fondling him on both sides of the shoulders with hands that rubbed against the grain of the hair and that made slight, pushing-forward movements. These were so many suggestions. Also, their effect was irritating, for Cherokee began to growl, very softly, deep down in his throat. There was a correspondence in rhythm between the growls and the movements of the man’s hands. The growl rose in the throat with the culmination of each forward-pushing movement, and ebbed down to start up afresh with the beginning of the next movement. The end of each movement was the accent of the rhythm, the movement ending abruptly and the growling rising with a jerk.

This was not without its effect on White Fang. The hair began to rise on his neck and across the shoulders. Tim Keenan gave a final shove forward and stepped back again. As the impetus that carried Cherokee forward died down, he continued to go forward of his own volition, in a swift, bow-legged run. Then White Fang struck. A cry of startled admiration went up. He had covered the distance and gone in more like a cat than a dog; and with the same cat-like swiftness he had slashed with his fangs and leaped clear.

The bull-dog was bleeding back of one ear from a rip in his thick neck. He gave no sign, did not even snarl, but turned and followed after White Fang. The display on both sides, the quickness of the one and the steadiness of the other, had excited the partisan spirit of the crowd, and the men were making new bets and increasing original bets. Again, and yet again, White Fang sprang in, slashed, and got away untouched, and still his strange foe followed after him, without too great haste, not slowly, but deliberately and determinedly, in a businesslike sort of way. There was purpose in his method — something for him to do that he was intent upon doing and from which nothing could distract him.

His whole demeanour, every action, was stamped with this purpose. It puzzled White Fang. Never had he seen such a dog. It had no hair protection. It was soft, and bled easily. There was no thick mat of fur to baffle White Fang's teeth as they were often baffled by dogs of his own breed. Each time that his teeth struck they sank easily into the yielding flesh, while the animal did not seem able to defend itself. Another disconcerting thing was that it made no outcry, such as he had been accustomed to with the other dogs he had fought. Beyond a growl or a grunt, the dog took its punishment silently. And never did it flag in its pursuit of him.

Not that Cherokee was slow. He could turn and whirl swiftly enough, but White Fang was never there. Cherokee was puzzled, too. He had never fought before with a dog with which he could not close. The desire to close had always been mutual. But here was a dog that kept at a distance, dancing and dodging here and there and all about. And when it did get its teeth into him, it did not hold on but let go instantly and darted away again.

But White Fang could not get at the soft underside of the throat. The bull-dog stood too short, while its massive jaws were an added protection. White Fang darted in and out unscathed, while Cherokee's wounds increased. Both sides of his neck and head were ripped and slashed. He bled freely, but showed no signs of being disconcerted. He continued his plodding pursuit, though once, for the moment baffled, he came to a full stop and blinked at the men who looked on, at the same time wagging his stump of a tail as an expression of his willingness to fight.

In that moment White Fang was in upon him and out, in passing ripping his trimmed remnant of an ear. With a slight manifestation of anger, Cherokee took up the pursuit again, running on the inside of the circle

White Fang was making, and striving to fasten his deadly grip on White Fang’s throat. The bull-dog missed by a hair’s-breadth, and cries of praise went up as White Fang doubled suddenly out of danger in the opposite direction.

The time went by. White Fang still danced on, dodging and doubling, leaping in and out, and ever inflicting damage. And still the bull-dog, with grim certitude, toiled after him. Sooner or later he would accomplish his purpose, get the grip that would win the battle. In the meantime, he accepted all the punishment the other could deal him. His tufts of ears had become tassels, his neck and shoulders were slashed in a score of places, and his very lips were cut and bleeding — all from these lightning snaps that were beyond his foreseeing and guarding.

Time and again White Fang had attempted to knock Cherokee off his feet; but the difference in their height was too great. Cherokee was too squat, too close to the ground. White Fang tried the trick once too often. The chance came in one of his quick doublings and counter-circlings. He caught Cherokee with head turned away as he whirled more slowly. His shoulder was exposed. White Fang drove in upon it: but his own shoulder was high above, while he struck with such force that his momentum carried him on across over the other’s body. For the first time in his fighting history, men saw White Fang lose his footing. His body turned a half-somersault in the air, and he would have landed on his back had he not twisted, catlike, still in the air, in the effort to bring his feet to the earth. As it was, he struck heavily on his side. The next instant he was on his feet, but in that instant Cherokee’s teeth closed on his throat.

It was not a good grip, being too low down toward the chest; but Cherokee held on. White Fang sprang to his feet and tore wildly around, trying to shake off the bull-dog’s body. It made him frantic, this clinging, dragging weight. It bound his movements, restricted his freedom. It was like the trap, and all his instinct resented it and revolted against it. It was a mad revolt. For several minutes he was to all intents insane. The basic life that was in him took charge of him. The will to exist of his body surged over him. He was dominated by this mere flesh-love of life. All intelligence was gone. It was as though he had no brain. His reason was unseated by the blind yearning of the flesh to exist and move, at all hazards to move, to continue to move, for movement was the expression of its existence.

Round and round he went, whirling and turning and reversing, trying to shake off the fifty-pound weight that dragged at his throat. The bull-dog did little but keep his grip. Sometimes, and rarely, he managed to get his feet to the earth and for a moment to brace himself against White Fang. But the next moment his footing would be lost and he would be dragging around in the whirl of one of White Fang's mad gyrations. Cherokee identified himself with his instinct. He knew that he was doing the right thing by holding on, and there came to him certain blissful thrills of satisfaction. At such moments he even closed his eyes and allowed his body to be hurled hither and thither, willy-nilly, careless of any hurt that might thereby come to it. That did not count. The grip was the thing, and the grip he kept.

White Fang ceased only when he had tired himself out. He could do nothing, and he could not understand. Never, in all his fighting, had this thing happened. The dogs he had fought with did not fight that way. With them it was snap and slash and get away, snap and slash and get away. He lay partly on his side, panting for breath. Cherokee still holding his grip, urged against him, trying to get him over entirely on his side. White Fang resisted, and he could feel the jaws shifting their grip, slightly relaxing and coming together again in a chewing movement. Each shift brought the grip closer to his throat. The bull-dog's method was to hold what he had, and when opportunity favoured to work in for more. Opportunity favoured when White Fang remained quiet. When White Fang struggled, Cherokee was content merely to hold on.

The bulging back of Cherokee's neck was the only portion of his body that White Fang's teeth could reach. He got hold toward the base where the neck comes out from the shoulders; but he did not know the chewing method of fighting, nor were his jaws adapted to it. He spasmodically ripped and tore with his fangs for a space. Then a change in their position diverted him. The bull-dog had managed to roll him over on his back, and still hanging on to his throat, was on top of him. Like a cat, White Fang bowed his hind-quarters in, and, with the feet digging into his enemy's abdomen above him, he began to claw with long tearing-strokes. Cherokee might well have been disembowelled had he not quickly pivoted on his grip and got his body off of White Fang's and at right angles to it.

There was no escaping that grip. It was like Fate itself, and as inexorable. Slowly it shifted up along the jugular. All that saved White

Fang from death was the loose skin of his neck and the thick fur that covered it. This served to form a large roll in Cherokee's mouth, the fur of which well-nigh defied his teeth. But bit by bit, whenever the chance offered, he was getting more of the loose skin and fur in his mouth. The result was that he was slowly throttling White Fang. The latter's breath was drawn with greater and greater difficulty as the moments went by.

It began to look as though the battle were over. The backers of Cherokee waxed jubilant and offered ridiculous odds. White Fang's backers were correspondingly depressed, and refused bets of ten to one and twenty to one, though one man was rash enough to close a wager of fifty to one. This man was Beauty Smith. He took a step into the ring and pointed his finger at White Fang. Then he began to laugh derisively and scornfully. This produced the desired effect. White Fang went wild with rage. He called up his reserves of strength, and gained his feet. As he struggled around the ring, the fifty pounds of his foe ever dragging on his throat, his anger passed on into panic. The basic life of him dominated him again, and his intelligence fled before the will of his flesh to live. Round and round and back again, stumbling and falling and rising, even uprearing at times on his hind-legs and lifting his foe clear of the earth, he struggled vainly to shake off the clinging death.

At last he fell, toppling backward, exhausted; and the bull-dog promptly shifted his grip, getting in closer, mangling more and more of the fur-folded flesh, throttling White Fang more severely than ever. Shouts of applause went up for the victor, and there were many cries of "Cherokee!" "Cherokee!" To this Cherokee responded by vigorous wagging of the stump of his tail. But the clamour of approval did not distract him. There was no sympathetic relation between his tail and his massive jaws. The one might wag, but the others held their terrible grip on White Fang's throat.

It was at this time that a diversion came to the spectators. There was a jingle of bells. Dog-mushers' cries were heard. Everybody, save Beauty Smith, looked apprehensively, the fear of the police strong upon them. But they saw, up the trail, and not down, two men running with sled and dogs. They were evidently coming down the creek from some prospecting trip. At sight of the crowd they stopped their dogs and came over and joined it, curious to see the cause of the excitement. The dog-musher wore a moustache, but the other, a taller and younger man, was smooth-shaven, his skin rosy from the pounding of his blood and the running in the frosty air.

White Fang had practically ceased struggling. Now and again he resisted spasmodically and to no purpose. He could get little air, and that little grew less and less under the merciless grip that ever tightened. In spite of his armour of fur, the great vein of his throat would have long since been torn open, had not the first grip of the bull-dog been so low down as to be practically on the chest. It had taken Cherokee a long time to shift that grip upward, and this had also tended further to clog his jaws with fur and skin-fold.

In the meantime, the abysmal brute in Beauty Smith had been rising into his brain and mastering the small bit of sanity that he possessed at best. When he saw White Fang's eyes beginning to glaze, he knew beyond doubt that the fight was lost. Then he broke loose. He sprang upon White Fang and began savagely to kick him. There were hisses from the crowd and cries of protest, but that was all. While this went on, and Beauty Smith continued to kick White Fang, there was a commotion in the crowd. The tall young newcomer was forcing his way through, shouldering men right and left without ceremony or gentleness. When he broke through into the ring, Beauty Smith was just in the act of delivering another kick. All his weight was on one foot, and he was in a state of unstable equilibrium. At that moment the newcomer's fist landed a smashing blow full in his face. Beauty Smith's remaining leg left the ground, and his whole body seemed to lift into the air as he turned over backward and struck the snow. The newcomer turned upon the crowd.

"You cowards!" he cried. "You beasts!"

He was in a rage himself — a sane rage. His grey eyes seemed metallic and steel-like as they flashed upon the crowd. Beauty Smith regained his feet and came toward him, sniffling and cowardly. The new-comer did not understand. He did not know how abject a coward the other was, and thought he was coming back intent on fighting. So, with a "You beast!" he smashed Beauty Smith over backward with a second blow in the face. Beauty Smith decided that the snow was the safest place for him, and lay where he had fallen, making no effort to get up.

"Come on, Matt, lend a hand," the newcomer called the dog-musher, who had followed him into the ring.

Both men bent over the dogs. Matt took hold of White Fang, ready to pull when Cherokee's jaws should be loosened. This the younger man endeavoured to accomplish by clutching the bulldog's jaws in his hands and trying to spread them. It was a vain undertaking. As he pulled and tugged and wrenched, he kept exclaiming with every expulsion of breath, “Beasts!”

The crowd began to grow unruly, and some of the men were protesting against the spoiling of the sport; but they were silenced when the newcomer lifted his head from his work for a moment and glared at them.

“You damn beasts!” he finally exploded, and went back to his task.

“It’s no use, Mr. Scott, you can’t break ’m apart that way,” Matt said at last.

The pair paused and surveyed the locked dogs.

“Ain’t bleedin’ much,” Matt announced. “Ain’t got all the way in yet.”

“But he’s liable to any moment,” Scott answered. “There, did you see that! He shifted his grip in a bit.”

The younger man’s excitement and apprehension for White Fang was growing. He struck Cherokee about the head savagely again and again. But that did not loosen the jaws. Cherokee wagged the stump of his tail in advertisement that he understood the meaning of the blows, but that he knew he was himself in the right and only doing his duty by keeping his grip.

“Won’t some of you help?” Scott cried desperately at the crowd.

But no help was offered. Instead, the crowd began sarcastically to cheer him on and showered him with facetious advice.

“You’ll have to get a pry,” Matt counselled.

The other reached into the holster at his hip, drew his revolver, and tried to thrust its muzzle between the bull-dog’s jaws. He shoved, and shoved hard, till the grating of the steel against the locked teeth could be distinctly heard. Both men were on their knees, bending over the dogs. Tim Keenan strode into the ring. He paused beside Scott and touched him on the shoulder, saying ominously:

“Don’t break them teeth, stranger.”

“Then I’ll break his neck,” Scott retorted, continuing his shoving and wedging with the revolver muzzle.

“I said don’t break them teeth,” the faro-dealer repeated more ominously than before.

But if it was a bluff he intended, it did not work. Scott never desisted from his efforts, though he looked up coolly and asked:

“Your dog?”

The faro-dealer grunted.

"Then get in here and break this grip."

"Well, stranger," the other drawled irritatingly, "I don't mind telling you that's something I ain't worked out for myself. I don't know how to turn the trick."

"Then get out of the way," was the reply, "and don't bother me. I'm busy."

Tim Keenan continued standing over him, but Scott took no further notice of his presence. He had managed to get the muzzle in between the jaws on one side, and was trying to get it out between the jaws on the other side. This accomplished, he pried gently and carefully, loosening the jaws a bit at a time, while Matt, a bit at a time, extricated White Fang's mangled neck.

"Stand by to receive your dog," was Scott's peremptory order to Cherokee's owner.

The faro-dealer stooped down obediently and got a firm hold on Cherokee.

"Now!" Scott warned, giving the final pry.

The dogs were drawn apart, the bull-dog struggling vigorously.

"Take him away," Scott commanded, and Tim Keenan dragged Cherokee back into the crowd.

White Fang made several ineffectual efforts to get up. Once he gained his feet, but his legs were too weak to sustain him, and he slowly wilted and sank back into the snow. His eyes were half closed, and the surface of them was glassy. His jaws were apart, and through them the tongue protruded, draggled and limp. To all appearances he looked like a dog that had been strangled to death. Matt examined him.

"Just about all in," he announced; "but he's breathin' all right."

Beauty Smith had regained his feet and come over to look at White Fang.

"Matt, how much is a good sled-dog worth?" Scott asked.

The dog-musher, still on his knees and stooped over White Fang, calculated for a moment.

"Three hundred dollars," he answered.

"And how much for one that's all chewed up like this one?" Scott asked, nudging White Fang with his foot.

"Half of that," was the dog-musher's judgment. Scott turned upon Beauty Smith.

"Did you hear, Mr. Beast? I'm going to take your dog from you, and I'm going to give you a hundred and fifty for him."

He opened his pocket-book and counted out the bills.

Beauty Smith put his hands behind his back, refusing to touch the proffered money.

"I ain't a-sellin'," he said.

"Oh, yes you are," the other assured him. "Because I'm buying. Here's your money. The dog's mine."

Beauty Smith, his hands still behind him, began to back away.

Scott sprang toward him, drawing his fist back to strike. Beauty Smith cowered down in anticipation of the blow.

"I've got my rights," he whimpered.

"You've forfeited your rights to own that dog," was the rejoinder. "Are you going to take the money? or do I have to hit you again?"

"All right," Beauty Smith spoke up with the alacrity of fear. "But I take the money under protest," he added. "The dog's a mint. I ain't a-goin' to be robbed. A man's got his rights."

"Correct," Scott answered, passing the money over to him. "A man's got his rights. But you're not a man. You're a beast."

"Wait till I get back to Dawson," Beauty Smith threatened. "I'll have the law on you."

"If you open your mouth when you get back to Dawson, I'll have you run out of town. Understand?"

Beauty Smith replied with a grunt.

"Understand?" the other thundered with abrupt fierceness.

"Yes," Beauty Smith grunted, shrinking away.

"Yes what?"

"Yes, sir," Beauty Smith snarled.

"Look out! He'll bite!" some one shouted, and a guffaw of laughter went up.

Scott turned his back on him, and returned to help the dog-musher, who was working over White Fang.

Some of the men were already departing; others stood in groups, looking on and talking. Tim Keenan joined one of the groups.

"Who's that mug?" he asked.

"Weedon Scott," some one answered.

"And who in hell is Weedon Scott?" the faro-dealer demanded.

“Oh, one of them crackerjack minin’ experts. He’s in with all the big bugs. If you want to keep out of trouble, you’ll steer clear of him, that’s my talk. He’s all hunky with the officials. The Gold Commissioner’s a special pal of his.”

“I thought he must be somebody,” was the faro-dealer’s comment. “That’s why I kept my hands offen him at the start.”

CHAPTER V — THE INDOMITABLE

“It’s hopeless,” Weedon Scott confessed.

He sat on the step of his cabin and stared at the dog-musher, who responded with a shrug that was equally hopeless.

Together they looked at White Fang at the end of his stretched chain, bristling, snarling, ferocious, straining to get at the sled-dogs. Having received sundry lessons from Matt, said lessons being imparted by means of a club, the sled-dogs had learned to leave White Fang alone; and even then they were lying down at a distance, apparently oblivious of his existence.

“It’s a wolf and there’s no taming it,” Weedon Scott announced.

“Oh, I don’t know about that,” Matt objected. “Might be a lot of dog in ’m, for all you can tell. But there’s one thing I know sure, an’ that there’s no gettin’ away from.”

The dog-musher paused and nodded his head confidentially at Moosehide Mountain.

“Well, don’t be a miser with what you know,” Scott said sharply, after waiting a suitable length of time. “Spit it out. What is it?”

The dog-musher indicated White Fang with a backward thrust of his thumb.

“Wolf or dog, it’s all the same — he’s ben tamed ’ready.”

“No!”

“I tell you yes, an’ broke to harness. Look close there. D’ye see them marks across the chest?”

“You’re right, Matt. He was a sled-dog before Beauty Smith got hold of him.”

“And there’s not much reason against his bein’ a sled-dog again.”

“What d’ye think?” Scott queried eagerly. Then the hope died down as he added, shaking his head, “We’ve had him two weeks now, and if anything he’s wilder than ever at the present moment.”

“Give ’m a chance,” Matt counselled. “Turn ’m loose for a spell.”

The other looked at him incredulously.

“Yes,” Matt went on, “I know you’ve tried to, but you didn’t take a club.”

“You try it then.”

The dog-musher secured a club and went over to the chained animal. White Fang watched the club after the manner of a caged lion watching the whip of its trainer.

"See 'm keep his eye on that club," Matt said. "That's a good sign. He's no fool. Don't dast tackle me so long as I got that club handy. He's not clean crazy, sure."

As the man's hand approached his neck, White Fang bristled and snarled and crouched down. But while he eyed the approaching hand, he at the same time contrived to keep track of the club in the other hand, suspended threateningly above him. Matt unsnapped the chain from the collar and stepped back.

White Fang could scarcely realise that he was free. Many months had gone by since he passed into the possession of Beauty Smith, and in all that period he had never known a moment of freedom except at the times he had been loosed to fight with other dogs. Immediately after such fights he had always been imprisoned again.

He did not know what to make of it. Perhaps some new devilry of the gods was about to be perpetrated on him. He walked slowly and cautiously, prepared to be assailed at any moment. He did not know what to do, it was all so unprecedented. He took the precaution to sheer off from the two watching gods, and walked carefully to the corner of the cabin. Nothing happened. He was plainly perplexed, and he came back again, pausing a dozen feet away and regarding the two men intently.

"Won't he run away?" his new owner asked.

Matt shrugged his shoulders. "Got to take a gamble. Only way to find out is to find out."

"Poor devil," Scott murmured pityingly. "What he needs is some show of human kindness," he added, turning and going into the cabin.

He came out with a piece of meat, which he tossed to White Fang. He sprang away from it, and from a distance studied it suspiciously.

"Hi-yu, Major!" Matt shouted warningly, but too late.

Major had made a spring for the meat. At the instant his jaws closed on it, White Fang struck him. He was overthrown. Matt rushed in, but quicker than he was White Fang. Major staggered to his feet, but the blood spouting from his throat reddened the snow in a widening path.

"It's too bad, but it served him right," Scott said hastily.

But Matt's foot had already started on its way to kick White Fang. There was a leap, a flash of teeth, a sharp exclamation. White Fang, snarling fiercely, scrambled backward for several yards, while Matt stooped and investigated his leg.

“He got me all right,” he announced, pointing to the torn trousers and undercloths, and the growing stain of red.

“I told you it was hopeless, Matt,” Scott said in a discouraged voice. “I’ve thought about it off and on, while not wanting to think of it. But we’ve come to it now. It’s the only thing to do.”

As he talked, with reluctant movements he drew his revolver, threw open the cylinder, and assured himself of its contents.

“Look here, Mr. Scott,” Matt objected; “that dog’s ben through hell. You can’t expect ’m to come out a white an’ shinin’ angel. Give ’m time.”

“Look at Major,” the other rejoined.

The dog-musher surveyed the stricken dog. He had sunk down on the snow in the circle of his blood and was plainly in the last gasp.

“Served ’m right. You said so yourself, Mr. Scott. He tried to take White Fang’s meat, an’ he’s dead-O. That was to be expected. I wouldn’t give two whoops in hell for a dog that wouldn’t fight for his own meat.”

“But look at yourself, Matt. It’s all right about the dogs, but we must draw the line somewhere.”

“Served me right,” Matt argued stubbornly. “What’d I want to kick ’m for? You said yourself that he’d done right. Then I had no right to kick ’m.”

“It would be a mercy to kill him,” Scott insisted. “He’s untamable.”

“Now look here, Mr. Scott, give the poor devil a fightin’ chance. He ain’t had no chance yet. He’s just come through hell, an’ this is the first time he’s ben loose. Give ’m a fair chance, an’ if he don’t deliver the goods, I’ll kill ’m myself. There!”

“God knows I don’t want to kill him or have him killed,” Scott answered, putting away the revolver. “We’ll let him run loose and see what kindness can do for him. And here’s a try at it.”

He walked over to White Fang and began talking to him gently and soothingly.

“Better have a club handy,” Matt warned.

Scott shook his head and went on trying to win White Fang’s confidence.

White Fang was suspicious. Something was impending. He had killed this god’s dog, bitten his companion god, and what else was to be expected than some terrible punishment? But in the face of it he was indomitable.

He bristled and showed his teeth, his eyes vigilant, his whole body wary and prepared for anything. The god had no club, so he suffered him to approach quite near. The god's hand had come out and was descending upon his head. White Fang shrank together and grew tense as he crouched under it. Here was danger, some treachery or something. He knew the hands of the gods, their proved mastery, their cunning to hurt. Besides, there was his old antipathy to being touched. He snarled more menacingly, crouched still lower, and still the hand descended. He did not want to bite the hand, and he endured the peril of it until his instinct surged up in him, mastering him with its insatiable yearning for life.

Weedon Scott had believed that he was quick enough to avoid any snap or slash. But he had yet to learn the remarkable quickness of White Fang, who struck with the certainty and swiftness of a coiled snake.

Scott cried out sharply with surprise, catching his torn hand and holding it tightly in his other hand. Matt uttered a great oath and sprang to his side. White Fang crouched down, and backed away, bristling, showing his fangs, his eyes malignant with menace. Now he could expect a beating as fearful as any he had received from Beauty Smith.

"Here! What are you doing?" Scott cried suddenly.

Matt had dashed into the cabin and come out with a rifle.

"Nothin'," he said slowly, with a careless calmness that was assumed, "only goin' to keep that promise I made. I reckon it's up to me to kill 'm as I said I'd do."

"No you don't!"

"Yes I do. Watch me."

As Matt had pleaded for White Fang when he had been bitten, it was now Weedon Scott's turn to plead.

"You said to give him a chance. Well, give it to him. We've only just started, and we can't quit at the beginning. It served me right, this time. And — look at him!"

White Fang, near the corner of the cabin and forty feet away, was snarling with blood-curdling viciousness, not at Scott, but at the dog-musher.

"Well, I'll be everlastingly gosh-swoggled!" was the dog-musher's expression of astonishment.

"Look at the intelligence of him," Scott went on hastily. "He knows the meaning of firearms as well as you do. He's got intelligence and we've got to give that intelligence a chance. Put up the gun."

"All right, I'm willin'," Matt agreed, leaning the rifle against the woodpile.

"But will you look at that!" he exclaimed the next moment.

White Fang had quieted down and ceased snarling. "This is worth investigatin'. Watch."

Matt, reached for the rifle, and at the same moment White Fang snarled. He stepped away from the rifle, and White Fang's lifted lips descended, covering his teeth.

"Now, just for fun."

Matt took the rifle and began slowly to raise it to his shoulder. White Fang's snarling began with the movement, and increased as the movement approached its culmination. But the moment before the rifle came to a level on him, he leaped sidewise behind the corner of the cabin. Matt stood staring along the sights at the empty space of snow which had been occupied by White Fang.

The dog-musher put the rifle down solemnly, then turned and looked at his employer.

"I agree with you, Mr. Scott. That dog's too intelligent to kill."

CHAPTER VI — THE LOVE-MASTER

As White Fang watched Weedon Scott approach, he bristled and snarled to advertise that he would not submit to punishment. Twenty-four hours had passed since he had slashed open the hand that was now bandaged and held up by a sling to keep the blood out of it. In the past White Fang had experienced delayed punishments, and he apprehended that such a one was about to befall him. How could it be otherwise? He had committed what was to him sacrilege, sunk his fangs into the holy flesh of a god, and of a white-skinned superior god at that. In the nature of things, and of intercourse with gods, something terrible awaited him.

The god sat down several feet away. White Fang could see nothing dangerous in that. When the gods administered punishment they stood on their legs. Besides, this god had no club, no whip, no firearm. And furthermore, he himself was free. No chain nor stick bound him. He could escape into safety while the god was scrambling to his feet. In the meantime he would wait and see.

The god remained quiet, made no movement; and White Fang's snarl slowly dwindled to a growl that ebbed down in his throat and ceased. Then the god spoke, and at the first sound of his voice, the hair rose on White Fang's neck and the growl rushed up in his throat. But the god made no hostile movement, and went on calmly talking. For a time White Fang growled in unison with him, a correspondence of rhythm being established between growl and voice. But the god talked on interminably. He talked to White Fang as White Fang had never been talked to before. He talked softly and soothingly, with a gentleness that somehow, somewhere, touched White Fang. In spite of himself and all the pricking warnings of his instinct, White Fang began to have confidence in this god. He had a feeling of security that was belied by all his experience with men.

After a long time, the god got up and went into the cabin. White Fang scanned him apprehensively when he came out. He had neither whip nor club nor weapon. Nor was his uninjured hand behind his back hiding something. He sat down as before, in the same spot, several feet away. He held out a small piece of meat. White Fang pricked his ears and investigated it suspiciously, managing to look at the same time both at the meat and the god, alert for any overt act, his body tense and ready to spring away at the first sign of hostility.

Still the punishment delayed. The god merely held near to his nose a piece of meat. And about the meat there seemed nothing wrong. Still White Fang suspected; and though the meat was proffered to him with short inviting thrusts of the hand, he refused to touch it. The gods were all-wise, and there was no telling what masterful treachery lurked behind that apparently harmless piece of meat. In past experience, especially in dealing with squaws, meat and punishment had often been disastrously related.

In the end, the god tossed the meat on the snow at White Fang's feet. He smelled the meat carefully; but he did not look at it. While he smelled it he kept his eyes on the god. Nothing happened. He took the meat into his mouth and swallowed it. Still nothing happened. The god was actually offering him another piece of meat. Again he refused to take it from the hand, and again it was tossed to him. This was repeated a number of times. But there came a time when the god refused to toss it. He kept it in his hand and steadfastly proffered it.

The meat was good meat, and White Fang was hungry. Bit by bit, infinitely cautious, he approached the hand. At last the time came that he decided to eat the meat from the hand. He never took his eyes from the god, thrusting his head forward with ears flattened back and hair involuntarily rising and cresting on his neck. Also a low growl rumbled in his throat as warning that he was not to be trifled with. He ate the meat, and nothing happened. Piece by piece, he ate all the meat, and nothing happened. Still the punishment delayed.

He licked his chops and waited. The god went on talking. In his voice was kindness — something of which White Fang had no experience whatever. And within him it aroused feelings which he had likewise never experienced before. He was aware of a certain strange satisfaction, as though some need were being gratified, as though some void in his being were being filled. Then again came the prod of his instinct and the warning of past experience. The gods were ever crafty, and they had unguessed ways of attaining their ends.

Ah, he had thought so! There it came now, the god's hand, cunning to hurt, thrusting out at him, descending upon his head. But the god went on talking. His voice was soft and soothing. In spite of the menacing hand, the voice inspired confidence. And in spite of the assuring voice, the hand inspired distrust. White Fang was torn by conflicting feelings, impulses. It seemed he would fly to pieces, so terrible was the control he was exerting, holding together by an unwonted indecision the counter-forces that struggled within him for mastery.

He compromised. He snarled and bristled and flattened his ears. But he neither snapped nor sprang away. The hand descended. Nearer and nearer it came. It touched the ends of his upstanding hair. He shrank down under it. It followed down after him, pressing more closely against him. Shrinking, almost shivering, he still managed to hold himself together. It was a torment, this hand that touched him and violated his instinct. He could not forget in a day all the evil that had been wrought him at the hands of men. But it was the will of the god, and he strove to submit.

The hand lifted and descended again in a patting, caressing movement. This continued, but every time the hand lifted, the hair lifted under it. And every time the hand descended, the ears flattened down and a cavernous growl surged in his throat. White Fang growled and growled with insistent warning. By this means he announced that he was prepared to retaliate for any hurt he might receive. There was no telling when the god's ulterior motive might be disclosed. At any moment that soft, confidence-inspiring voice might break forth in a roar of wrath, that gentle and caressing hand transform itself into a vice-like grip to hold him helpless and administer punishment.

But the god talked on softly, and ever the hand rose and fell with non-hostile pats. White Fang experienced dual feelings. It was distasteful to his instinct. It restrained him, opposed the will of him toward personal liberty. And yet it was not physically painful. On the contrary, it was even pleasant, in a physical way. The patting movement slowly and carefully changed to a rubbing of the ears about their bases, and the physical pleasure even increased a little. Yet he continued to fear, and he stood on guard, expectant of unguessed evil, alternately suffering and enjoying as one feeling or the other came uppermost and swayed him.

"Well, I'll be gosh-swoggled!"

So spoke Matt, coming out of the cabin, his sleeves rolled up, a pan of dirty dish-water in his hands, arrested in the act of emptying the pan by the sight of Weedon Scott patting White Fang.

At the instant his voice broke the silence, White Fang leaped back, snarling savagely at him.

Matt regarded his employer with grieved disapproval.

“If you don’t mind my expressin’ my feelin’s, Mr. Scott, I’ll make free to say you’re seventeen kinds of a damn fool an’ all of ’em different, an’ then some.”

Weedon Scott smiled with a superior air, gained his feet, and walked over to White Fang. He talked soothingly to him, but not for long, then slowly put out his hand, rested it on White Fang’s head, and resumed the interrupted patting. White Fang endured it, keeping his eyes fixed suspiciously, not upon the man that patted him, but upon the man that stood in the doorway.

“You may be a number one, tip-top minin’ expert, all right all right,” the dog-musher delivered himself oracularly, “but you missed the chance of your life when you was a boy an’ didn’t run off an’ join a circus.”

White Fang snarled at the sound of his voice, but this time did not leap away from under the hand that was caressing his head and the back of his neck with long, soothing strokes.

It was the beginning of the end for White Fang — the ending of the old life and the reign of hate. A new and incomprehensibly fairer life was dawning. It required much thinking and endless patience on the part of Weedon Scott to accomplish this. And on the part of White Fang it required nothing less than a revolution. He had to ignore the urges and promptings of instinct and reason, defy experience, give the lie to life itself.

Life, as he had known it, not only had had no place in it for much that he now did; but all the currents had gone counter to those to which he now abandoned himself. In short, when all things were considered, he had to achieve an orientation far vaster than the one he had achieved at the time he came voluntarily in from the Wild and accepted Grey Beaver as his lord. At that time he was a mere puppy, soft from the making, without form, ready for the thumb of circumstance to begin its work upon him. But now it was different. The thumb of circumstance had done its work only too well. By it he had been formed and hardened into the Fighting Wolf, fierce and implacable, unloving and unlovable. To accomplish the change was like a reflux of being, and this when the plasticity of youth was no longer his; when the fibre of him had become tough and knotty; when the warp and the woof of him had made of him an adamantine texture, harsh and unyielding; when the face of his spirit had become iron and all his instincts and axioms had crystallised into set rules, cautions, dislikes, and desires.

Yet again, in this new orientation, it was the thumb of circumstance that pressed and prodded him, softening that which had become hard and remoulding it into fairer form. Weedon Scott was in truth this thumb. He had gone to the roots of White Fang's nature, and with kindness touched to life potencies that had languished and well-nigh perished. One such potency was *love*. It took the place of *like*, which latter had been the highest feeling that thrilled him in his intercourse with the gods.

But this love did not come in a day. It began with *like* and out of it slowly developed. White Fang did not run away, though he was allowed to remain loose, because he liked this new god. This was certainly better than the life he had lived in the cage of Beauty Smith, and it was necessary that he should have some god. The lordship of man was a need of his nature. The seal of his dependence on man had been set upon him in that early day when he turned his back on the Wild and crawled to Grey Beaver's feet to receive the expected beating. This seal had been stamped upon him again, and ineradicably, on his second return from the Wild, when the long famine was over and there was fish once more in the village of Grey Beaver.

And so, because he needed a god and because he preferred Weedon Scott to Beauty Smith, White Fang remained. In acknowledgment of fealty, he proceeded to take upon himself the guardianship of his master's property. He prowled about the cabin while the sled-dogs slept, and the first night-visitor to the cabin fought him off with a club until Weedon Scott came to the rescue. But White Fang soon learned to differentiate between thieves and honest men, to appraise the true value of step and carriage. The man who travelled, loud-stepping, the direct line to the cabin door, he let alone — though he watched him vigilantly until the door opened and he received the endorsement of the master. But the man who went softly, by circuitous ways, peering with caution, seeking after secrecy — that was the man who received no suspension of judgment from White Fang, and who went away abruptly, hurriedly, and without dignity.

Weedon Scott had set himself the task of redeeming White Fang — or rather, of redeeming mankind from the wrong it had done White Fang. It was a matter of principle and conscience. He felt that the ill done White Fang was a debt incurred by man and that it must be paid. So he went out of his way to be especially kind to the Fighting Wolf. Each day he made it a point to caress and pet White Fang, and to do it at length.

At first suspicious and hostile, White Fang grew to like this petting. But there was one thing that he never outgrew — his growling. Growl he would, from the moment the petting began till it ended. But it was a growl with a new note in it. A stranger could not hear this note, and to such a stranger the growling of White Fang was an exhibition of primordial savagery, nerve-racking and blood-curdling. But White Fang's throat had become harsh-fibred from the making of ferocious sounds through the many years since his first little rasp of anger in the lair of his cubhood, and he could not soften the sounds of that throat now to express the gentleness he felt. Nevertheless, Weedon Scott's ear and sympathy were fine enough to catch the new note all but drowned in the fierceness — the note that was the faintest hint of a croon of content and that none but he could hear.

As the days went by, the evolution of *like* into *love* was accelerated. White Fang himself began to grow aware of it, though in his consciousness he knew not what love was. It manifested itself to him as a void in his being — a hungry, aching, yearning void that clamoured to be filled. It was a pain and an unrest; and it received easement only by the touch of the new god's presence. At such times love was joy to him, a wild, keen-thrilling satisfaction. But when away from his god, the pain and the unrest returned; the void in him sprang up and pressed against him with its emptiness, and the hunger gnawed and gnawed unceasingly.

White Fang was in the process of finding himself. In spite of the maturity of his years and of the savage rigidity of the mould that had formed him, his nature was undergoing an expansion. There was a burgeoning within him of strange feelings and unwonted impulses. His old code of conduct was changing. In the past he had liked comfort and surcease from pain, disliked discomfort and pain, and he had adjusted his actions accordingly. But now it was different. Because of this new feeling within him, he ofttimes elected discomfort and pain for the sake of his god. Thus, in the early morning, instead of roaming and foraging, or lying in a sheltered nook, he would wait for hours on the cheerless cabin-stoop for a sight of the god's face. At night, when the god returned home, White Fang would leave the warm sleeping-place he had burrowed in the snow in order to receive the friendly snap of fingers and the word of greeting. Meat, even meat itself, he would forego to be with his god, to receive a caress from him or to accompany him down into the town.

Like had been replaced by *love*. And love was the plummet dropped down into the deeps of him where like had never gone. And responsive out of his deeps had come the new thing — love. That which was given unto him did he return. This was a god indeed, a love-god, a warm and radiant god, in whose light White Fang's nature expanded as a flower expands under the sun.

But White Fang was not demonstrative. He was too old, too firmly moulded, to become adept at expressing himself in new ways. He was too self-possessed, too strongly poised in his own isolation. Too long had he cultivated reticence, aloofness, and moroseness. He had never barked in his life, and he could not now learn to bark a welcome when his god approached. He was never in the way, never extravagant nor foolish in the expression of his love. He never ran to meet his god. He waited at a distance; but he always waited, was always there. His love partook of the nature of worship, dumb, inarticulate, a silent adoration. Only by the steady regard of his eyes did he express his love, and by the unceasing following with his eyes of his god's every movement. Also, at times, when his god looked at him and spoke to him, he betrayed an awkward self-consciousness, caused by the struggle of his love to express itself and his physical inability to express it.

He learned to adjust himself in many ways to his new mode of life. It was borne in upon him that he must let his master's dogs alone. Yet his dominant nature asserted itself, and he had first to thrash them into an acknowledgment of his superiority and leadership. This accomplished, he had little trouble with them. They gave trail to him when he came and went or walked among them, and when he asserted his will they obeyed.

In the same way, he came to tolerate Matt — as a possession of his master. His master rarely fed him. Matt did that, it was his business; yet White Fang divined that it was his master's food he ate and that it was his master who thus fed him vicariously. Matt it was who tried to put him into the harness and make him haul sled with the other dogs. But Matt failed. It was not until Weedon Scott put the harness on White Fang and worked him, that he understood. He took it as his master's will that Matt should drive him and work him just as he drove and worked his master's other dogs.

Different from the Mackenzie toboggans were the Klondike sleds with runners under them. And different was the method of driving the dogs. There was no fan-formation of the team. The dogs worked in single file, one behind another, hauling on double traces. And here, in the Klondike, the leader was indeed the leader. The wisest as well as strongest dog was the leader, and the team obeyed him and feared him. That White Fang should quickly gain this post was inevitable. He could not be satisfied with less, as Matt learned after much inconvenience and trouble. White Fang picked out the post for himself, and Matt backed his judgment with strong language after the experiment had been tried. But, though he worked in the sled in the day, White Fang did not forego the guarding of his master's property in the night. Thus he was on duty all the time, ever vigilant and faithful, the most valuable of all the dogs.

"Makin' free to spit out what's in me," Matt said one day, "I beg to state that you was a wise guy all right when you paid the price you did for that dog. You clean swindled Beauty Smith on top of pushin' his face in with your fist."

A recrudescence of anger glinted in Weedon Scott's grey eyes, and he muttered savagely, "The beast!"

In the late spring a great trouble came to White Fang. Without warning, the love-master disappeared. There had been warning, but White Fang was unversed in such things and did not understand the packing of a grip. He remembered afterwards that his packing had preceded the master's disappearance; but at the time he suspected nothing. That night he waited for the master to return. At midnight the chill wind that blew drove him to shelter at the rear of the cabin. There he drowsed, only half asleep, his ears keyed for the first sound of the familiar step. But, at two in the morning, his anxiety drove him out to the cold front stoop, where he crouched, and waited.

But no master came. In the morning the door opened and Matt stepped outside. White Fang gazed at him wistfully. There was no common speech by which he might learn what he wanted to know. The days came and went, but never the master. White Fang, who had never known sickness in his life, became sick. He became very sick, so sick that Matt was finally compelled to bring him inside the cabin. Also, in writing to his employer, Matt devoted a postscript to White Fang.

Weedon Scott reading the letter down in Circle City, came upon the following:

"That dam wolf won't work. Won't eat. Aint got no spunk left. All the dogs is licking him. Wants to know what has become of you, and I don't know how to tell him. Mebbe he is going to die."

It was as Matt had said. White Fang had ceased eating, lost heart, and allowed every dog of the team to thrash him. In the cabin he lay on the floor near the stove, without interest in food, in Matt, nor in life. Matt might talk gently to him or swear at him, it was all the same; he never did more than turn his dull eyes upon the man, then drop his head back to its customary position on his fore-paws.

And then, one night, Matt, reading to himself with moving lips and mumbled sounds, was startled by a low whine from White Fang. He had got upon his feet, his ears cocked towards the door, and he was listening intently. A moment later, Matt heard a footstep. The door opened, and Weedon Scott stepped in. The two men shook hands. Then Scott looked around the room.

"Where's the wolf?" he asked.

Then he discovered him, standing where he had been lying, near to the stove. He had not rushed forward after the manner of other dogs. He stood, watching and waiting.

"Holy smoke!" Matt exclaimed. "Look at 'm wag his tail!"

Weedon Scott strode half across the room toward him, at the same time calling him. White Fang came to him, not with a great bound, yet quickly. He was awakened from self-consciousness, but as he drew near, his eyes took on a strange expression. Something, an incommunicable vastness of feeling, rose up into his eyes as a light and shone forth.

"He never looked at me that way all the time you was gone!" Matt commented.

Weedon Scott did not hear. He was squatting down on his heels, face to face with White Fang and petting him — rubbing at the roots of the ears, making long caressing strokes down the neck to the shoulders, tapping the spine gently with the balls of his fingers. And White Fang was growling responsively, the crooning note of the growl more pronounced than ever.

But that was not all. What of his joy, the great love in him, ever surging and struggling to express itself, succeeding in finding a new mode of expression. He suddenly thrust his head forward and nudged his way in between the master's arm and body. And here, confined, hidden from view all except his ears, no longer growling, he continued to nudge and snuggle.

The two men looked at each other. Scott's eyes were shining.

"Gosh!" said Matt in an awe-stricken voice.

A moment later, when he had recovered himself, he said, “I always insisted that wolf was a dog. Look at ’m!”

With the return of the love-master, White Fang’s recovery was rapid. Two nights and a day he spent in the cabin. Then he sallied forth. The sled-dogs had forgotten his prowess. They remembered only the latest, which was his weakness and sickness. At the sight of him as he came out of the cabin, they sprang upon him.

“Talk about your rough-houses,” Matt murmured gleefully, standing in the doorway and looking on.

“Give ’m hell, you wolf! Give ’m hell! — an’ then some!”

White Fang did not need the encouragement. The return of the love-master was enough. Life was flowing through him again, splendid and indomitable. He fought from sheer joy, finding in it an expression of much that he felt and that otherwise was without speech. There could be but one ending. The team dispersed in ignominious defeat, and it was not until after dark that the dogs came sneaking back, one by one, by meekness and humility signifying their fealty to White Fang.

Having learned to snuggle, White Fang was guilty of it often. It was the final word. He could not go beyond it. The one thing of which he had always been particularly jealous was his head. He had always disliked to have it touched. It was the Wild in him, the fear of hurt and of the trap, that had given rise to the panicky impulses to avoid contacts. It was the mandate of his instinct that that head must be free. And now, with the love-master, his snuggling was the deliberate act of putting himself into a position of hopeless helplessness. It was an expression of perfect confidence, of absolute self-surrender, as though he said: “I put myself into thy hands. Work thou thy will with me.”

One night, not long after the return, Scott and Matt sat at a game of cribbage preliminary to going to bed. “Fifteen-two, fifteen-four an’ a pair makes six,” Mat was pegging up, when there was an outcry and sound of snarling without. They looked at each other as they started to rise to their feet.

“The wolf’s nailed somebody,” Matt said.

A wild scream of fear and anguish hastened them.

“Bring a light!” Scott shouted, as he sprang outside.

Matt followed with the lamp, and by its light they saw a man lying on his back in the snow. His arms were folded, one above the other, across his face and throat. Thus he was trying to shield himself from White Fang's teeth. And there was need for it. White Fang was in a rage, wickedly making his attack on the most vulnerable spot. From shoulder to wrist of the crossed arms, the coat-sleeve, blue flannel shirt and undershirt were ripped in rags, while the arms themselves were terribly slashed and streaming blood.

All this the two men saw in the first instant. The next instant Weedon Scott had White Fang by the throat and was dragging him clear. White Fang struggled and snarled, but made no attempt to bite, while he quickly quieted down at a sharp word from the master.

Matt helped the man to his feet. As he arose he lowered his crossed arms, exposing the bestial face of Beauty Smith. The dog-musher let go of him precipitately, with action similar to that of a man who has picked up live fire. Beauty Smith blinked in the lamplight and looked about him. He caught sight of White Fang and terror rushed into his face.

At the same moment Matt noticed two objects lying in the snow. He held the lamp close to them, indicating them with his toe for his employer's benefit — a steel dog-chain and a stout club.

Weedon Scott saw and nodded. Not a word was spoken. The dog-musher laid his hand on Beauty Smith's shoulder and faced him to the right about. No word needed to be spoken. Beauty Smith started.

In the meantime the love-master was patting White Fang and talking to him.

"Tried to steal you, eh? And you wouldn't have it! Well, well, he made a mistake, didn't he?"

"Must 'a' thought he had hold of seventeen devils," the dog-musher sniggered.

White Fang, still wrought up and bristling, growled and growled, the hair slowly lying down, the crooning note remote and dim, but growing in his throat.

PART V

CHAPTER I — THE LONG TRAIL

It was in the air. White Fang sensed the coming calamity, even before there was tangible evidence of it. In vague ways it was borne in upon him that a change was impending. He knew not how nor why, yet he got his feel of the oncoming event from the gods themselves. In ways subtler than they knew, they betrayed their intentions to the wolf-dog that haunted the cabin-stoop, and that, though he never came inside the cabin, knew what went on inside their brains.

"Listen to that, will you!" the dug-musher exclaimed at supper one night.

Weedon Scott listened. Through the door came a low, anxious whine, like a sobbing under the breath that had just grown audible. Then came the long sniff, as White Fang reassured himself that his god was still inside and had not yet taken himself off in mysterious and solitary flight.

"I do believe that wolf's on to you," the dog-musher said.

Weedon Scott looked across at his companion with eyes that almost pleaded, though this was given the lie by his words.

"What the devil can I do with a wolf in California?" he demanded.

"That's what I say," Matt answered. "What the devil can you do with a wolf in California?"

But this did not satisfy Weedon Scott. The other seemed to be judging him in a non-committal sort of way.

"White man's dogs would have no show against him," Scott went on. "He'd kill them on sight. If he didn't bankrupt me with damaged suits, the authorities would take him away from me and electrocute him."

"He's a downright murderer, I know," was the dog-musher's comment.

Weedon Scott looked at him suspiciously.

"It would never do," he said decisively.

"It would never do!" Matt concurred. "Why you'd have to hire a man 'specially to take care of 'm."

The other suspicion was allayed. He nodded cheerfully. In the silence that followed, the low, half-sobbing whine was heard at the door and then the long, questing sniff.

"There's no denyin' he thinks a hell of a lot of you," Matt said.

The other glared at him in sudden wrath. "Damn it all, man! I know my own mind and what's best!"

"I'm agreein' with you, only . . . "

"Only what?" Scott snapped out.

"Only . . . " the dog-musher began softly, then changed his mind and betrayed a rising anger of his own. "Well, you needn't get so all-fired het up about it. Judgin' by your actions one'd think you didn't know your own mind."

Weedon Scott debated with himself for a while, and then said more gently: "You are right, Matt. I don't know my own mind, and that's what's the trouble."

"Why, it would be rank ridiculousness for me to take that dog along," he broke out after another pause.

"I'm agreein' with you," was Matt's answer, and again his employer was not quite satisfied with him.

"But how in the name of the great Sardanapolis he knows you're goin' is what gets me," the dog-musher continued innocently.

"It's beyond me, Matt," Scott answered, with a mournful shake of the head.

Then came the day when, through the open cabin door, White Fang saw the fatal grip on the floor and the love-master packing things into it. Also, there were comings and goings, and the erstwhile placid atmosphere of the cabin was vexed with strange perturbations and unrest. Here was indubitable evidence. White Fang had already scented it. He now reasoned it. His god was preparing for another flight. And since he had not taken him with him before, so, now, he could look to be left behind.

That night he lifted the long wolf-howl. As he had howled, in his puppy days, when he fled back from the Wild to the village to find it vanished and naught but a rubbish-heap to mark the site of Grey Beaver's tepee, so now he pointed his muzzle to the cold stars and told to them his woe.

Inside the cabin the two men had just gone to bed.

"He's gone off his food again," Matt remarked from his bunk.

There was a grunt from Weedon Scott's bunk, and a stir of blankets.

"From the way he cut up the other time you went away, I wouldn't wonder this time but what he died."

The blankets in the other bunk stirred irritably.

"Oh, shut up!" Scott cried out through the darkness. "You nag worse than a woman."

"I'm agreein' with you," the dog-musher answered, and Weedon Scott was not quite sure whether or not the other had snickered.

The next day White Fang's anxiety and restlessness were even more pronounced. He dogged his master's heels whenever he left the cabin, and haunted the front stoop when he remained inside. Through the open door he could catch glimpses of the luggage on the floor. The grip had been joined by two large canvas bags and a box. Matt was rolling the master's blankets and fur robe inside a small tarpaulin. White Fang whined as he watched the operation.

Later on two Indians arrived. He watched them closely as they shouldered the luggage and were led off down the hill by Matt, who carried the bedding and the grip. But White Fang did not follow them. The master was still in the cabin. After a time, Matt returned. The master came to the door and called White Fang inside.

"You poor devil," he said gently, rubbing White Fang's ears and tapping his spine. "I'm hitting the long trail, old man, where you cannot follow. Now give me a growl — the last, good, good-bye growl."

But White Fang refused to growl. Instead, and after a wistful, searching look, he snuggled in, burrowing his head out of sight between the master's arm and body.

"There she blows!" Matt cried. From the Yukon arose the hoarse bellowing of a river steamboat. "You've got to cut it short. Be sure and lock the front door. I'll go out the back. Get a move on!"

The two doors slammed at the same moment, and Weedon Scott waited for Matt to come around to the front. From inside the door came a low whining and sobbing. Then there were long, deep-drawn sniffs.

"You must take good care of him, Matt," Scott said, as they started down the hill. "Write and let me know how he gets along."

"Sure," the dog-musher answered. "But listen to that, will you!"

Both men stopped. White Fang was howling as dogs howl when their masters lie dead. He was voicing an utter woe, his cry bursting upward in great heart-breaking rushes, dying down into quavering misery, and bursting upward again with a rush upon rush of grief.

The *Aurora* was the first steamboat of the year for the Outside, and her decks were jammed with prosperous adventurers and broken gold seekers, all equally as mad to get to the Outside as they had been originally to get to the Inside. Near the gang-plank, Scott was shaking hands with Matt, who was preparing to go ashore. But Matt's hand went limp in the other's grasp as his gaze shot past and remained fixed on something behind him. Scott turned to see. Sitting on the deck several feet away and watching wistfully was White Fang.

The dog-musher swore softly, in awe-stricken accents. Scott could only look in wonder.

"Did you lock the front door?" Matt demanded. The other nodded, and asked, "How about the back?"

"You just bet I did," was the fervent reply.

White Fang flattened his ears ingratiatingly, but remained where he was, making no attempt to approach.

"I'll have to take 'm ashore with me."

Matt made a couple of steps toward White Fang, but the latter slid away from him. The dog-musher made a rush of it, and White Fang dodged between the legs of a group of men. Ducking, turning, doubling, he slid about the deck, eluding the other's efforts to capture him.

But when the love-master spoke, White Fang came to him with prompt obedience.

"Won't come to the hand that's fed 'm all these months," the dog-musher muttered resentfully. "And you — you ain't never fed 'm after them first days of gettin' acquainted. I'm blamed if I can see how he works it out that you're the boss."

Scott, who had been patting White Fang, suddenly bent closer and pointed out fresh-made cuts on his muzzle, and a gash between the eyes.

Matt bent over and passed his hand along White Fang's belly.

"We plump forgot the window. He's all cut an' gouged underneath. Must 'a' butted clean through it, b'gosh!"

But Weedon Scott was not listening. He was thinking rapidly. The *Aurora's* whistle hooted a final announcement of departure. Men were scurrying down the gang-plank to the shore. Matt loosened the bandana from his own neck and started to put it around White Fang's. Scott grasped the dog-musher's hand.

"Good-bye, Matt, old man. About the wolf — you needn't write. You see, I've . . . !"

"What!" the dog-musher exploded. "You don't mean to say . . .?"

"The very thing I mean. Here's your bandana. I'll write to you about him."

Matt paused halfway down the gang-plank.

"He'll never stand the climate!" he shouted back. "Unless you clip 'm in warm weather!"

The gang-plank was hauled in, and the *Aurora* swung out from the bank. Weedon Scott waved a last good-bye. Then he turned and bent over White Fang, standing by his side.

"Now growl, damn you, growl," he said, as he patted the responsive head and rubbed the flattening ears.

CHAPTER II — THE SOUTHLAND

White Fang landed from the steamer in San Francisco. He was appalled. Deep in him, below any reasoning process or act of consciousness, he had associated power with godhead. And never had the white men seemed such marvellous gods as now, when he trod the slimy pavement of San Francisco. The log cabins he had known were replaced by towering buildings. The streets were crowded with perils — waggons, carts, automobiles; great, straining horses pulling huge trucks; and monstrous cable and electric cars hooting and clanging through the midst, screeching their insistent menace after the manner of the lynxes he had known in the northern woods.

All this was the manifestation of power. Through it all, behind it all, was man, governing and controlling, expressing himself, as of old, by his mastery over matter. It was colossal, stunning. White Fang was awed. Fear sat upon him. As in his cubhood he had been made to feel his smallness and puniness on the day he first came in from the Wild to the village of Grey Beaver, so now, in his full-grown stature and pride of strength, he was made to feel small and puny. And there were so many gods! He was made dizzy by the swarming of them. The thunder of the streets smote upon his ears. He was bewildered by the tremendous and endless rush and movement of things. As never before, he felt his dependence on the love-master, close at whose heels he followed, no matter what happened never losing sight of him.

But White Fang was to have no more than a nightmare vision of the city — an experience that was like a bad dream, unreal and terrible, that haunted him for long after in his dreams. He was put into a baggage-car by the master, chained in a corner in the midst of heaped trunks and valises. Here a squat and brawny god held sway, with much noise, hurling trunks and boxes about, dragging them in through the door and tossing them into the piles, or flinging them out of the door, smashing and crashing, to other gods who awaited them.

And here, in this inferno of luggage, was White Fang deserted by the master. Or at least White Fang thought he was deserted, until he smelled out the master’s canvas clothes-bags alongside of him, and proceeded to mount guard over them.

“’Bout time you come,” growled the god of the car, an hour later, when Weedon Scott appeared at the door. “That dog of yourn won’t let me lay a finger on your stuff.”

White Fang emerged from the car. He was astonished. The nightmare city was gone. The car had been to him no more than a room in a house, and when he had entered it the city had been all around him. In the interval the city had disappeared. The roar of it no longer dinned upon his ears. Before him was smiling country, streaming with sunshine, lazy with quietude. But he had little time to marvel at the transformation. He accepted it as he accepted all the unaccountable doings and manifestations of the gods. It was their way.

There was a carriage waiting. A man and a woman approached the master. The woman’s arms went out and clutched the master around the neck — a hostile act! The next moment Weedon Scott had torn loose from the embrace and closed with White Fang, who had become a snarling, raging demon.

“It’s all right, mother,” Scott was saying as he kept tight hold of White Fang and placated him. “He thought you were going to injure me, and he wouldn’t stand for it. It’s all right. It’s all right. He’ll learn soon enough.”

“And in the meantime I may be permitted to love my son when his dog is not around,” she laughed, though she was pale and weak from the fright.

She looked at White Fang, who snarled and bristled and glared malevolently.

“He’ll have to learn, and he shall, without postponement,” Scott said.

He spoke softly to White Fang until he had quieted him, then his voice became firm.

“Down, sir! Down with you!”

This had been one of the things taught him by the master, and White Fang obeyed, though he lay down reluctantly and sullenly.

“Now, mother.”

Scott opened his arms to her, but kept his eyes on White Fang.

“Down!” he warned. “Down!”

White Fang, bristling silently, half-crouching as he rose, sank back and watched the hostile act repeated. But no harm came of it, nor of the embrace from the strange man-god that followed. Then the clothes-bags were taken into the carriage, the strange gods and the love-master followed, and White Fang pursued, now running vigilantly behind, now bristling up to the running horses and warning them that he was there to see that no harm befell the god they dragged so swiftly across the earth.

At the end of fifteen minutes, the carriage swung in through a stone gateway and on between a double row of arched and interlacing walnut trees. On either side stretched lawns, their broad sweep broken here and there by great sturdy-limbed oaks. In the near distance, in contrast with the young-green of the tended grass, sunburnt hay-fields showed tan and gold; while beyond were the tawny hills and upland pastures. From the head of the lawn, on the first soft swell from the valley-level, looked down the deep-porched, many-windowed house.

Little opportunity was given White Fang to see all this. Hardly had the carriage entered the grounds, when he was set upon by a sheep-dog, bright-eyed, sharp-muzzled, righteously indignant and angry. It was between him and the master, cutting him off. White Fang snarled no warning, but his hair bristled as he made his silent and deadly rush. This rush was never completed. He halted with awkward abruptness, with stiff fore-legs bracing himself against his momentum, almost sitting down on his haunches, so desirous was he of avoiding contact with the dog he was in the act of attacking. It was a female, and the law of his kind thrust a barrier between. For him to attack her would require nothing less than a violation of his instinct.

But with the sheep-dog it was otherwise. Being a female, she possessed no such instinct. On the other hand, being a sheep-dog, her instinctive fear of the Wild, and especially of the wolf, was unusually keen. White Fang was to her a wolf, the hereditary marauder who had preyed upon her flocks from the time sheep were first herded and guarded by some dim ancestor of hers. And so, as he abandoned his rush at her and braced himself to avoid the contact, she sprang upon him. He snarled involuntarily as he felt her teeth in his shoulder, but beyond this made no offer to hurt her. He backed away, stiff-legged with self-consciousness, and tried to go around her. He dodged this way and that, and curved and turned, but to no purpose. She remained always between him and the way he wanted to go.

“Here, Collie!” called the strange man in the carriage.

Weedon Scott laughed.

“Never mind, father. It is good discipline. White Fang will have to learn many things, and it’s just as well that he begins now. He’ll adjust himself all right.”

The carriage drove on, and still Collie blocked White Fang's way. He tried to outrun her by leaving the drive and circling across the lawn but she ran on the inner and smaller circle, and was always there, facing him with her two rows of gleaming teeth. Back he circled, across the drive to the other lawn, and again she headed him off.

The carriage was bearing the master away. White Fang caught glimpses of it disappearing amongst the trees. The situation was desperate. He essayed another circle. She followed, running swiftly. And then, suddenly, he turned upon her. It was his old fighting trick. Shoulder to shoulder, he struck her squarely. Not only was she overthrown. So fast had she been running that she rolled along, now on her back, now on her side, as she struggled to stop, clawing gravel with her feet and crying shrilly her hurt pride and indignation.

White Fang did not wait. The way was clear, and that was all he had wanted. She took after him, never ceasing her outcry. It was the straightaway now, and when it came to real running, White Fang could teach her things. She ran frantically, hysterically, straining to the utmost, advertising the effort she was making with every leap: and all the time White Fang slid smoothly away from her silently, without effort, gliding like a ghost over the ground.

As he rounded the house to the *porte-cochère*, he came upon the carriage. It had stopped, and the master was alighting. At this moment, still running at top speed, White Fang became suddenly aware of an attack from the side. It was a deer-hound rushing upon him. White Fang tried to face it. But he was going too fast, and the hound was too close. It struck him on the side; and such was his forward momentum and the unexpectedness of it, White Fang was hurled to the ground and rolled clear over. He came out of the tangle a spectacle of malignancy, ears flattened back, lips writhing, nose wrinkling, his teeth clipping together as the fangs barely missed the hound's soft throat.

The master was running up, but was too far away; and it was Collie that saved the hound's life. Before White Fang could spring in and deliver the fatal stroke, and just as he was in the act of springing in, Collie arrived. She had been out-manoeuvred and out-run, to say nothing of her having been unceremoniously tumbled in the gravel, and her arrival was like that of a tornado — made up of offended dignity, justifiable wrath, and instinctive hatred for this marauder from the Wild. She struck White Fang at right angles in the midst of his spring, and again he was knocked off his feet and rolled over.

The next moment the master arrived, and with one hand held White Fang, while the father called off the dogs.

“I say, this is a pretty warm reception for a poor lone wolf from the Arctic,” the master said, while White Fang calmed down under his caressing hand. “In all his life he’s only been known once to go off his feet, and here he’s been rolled twice in thirty seconds.”

The carriage had driven away, and other strange gods had appeared from out the house. Some of these stood respectfully at a distance; but two of them, women, perpetrated the hostile act of clutching the master around the neck. White Fang, however, was beginning to tolerate this act. No harm seemed to come of it, while the noises the gods made were certainly not threatening. These gods also made overtures to White Fang, but he warned them off with a snarl, and the master did likewise with word of mouth. At such times White Fang leaned in close against the master’s legs and received reassuring pats on the head.

The hound, under the command, “Dick! Lie down, sir!” had gone up the steps and lain down to one side of the porch, still growling and keeping a sullen watch on the intruder. Collie had been taken in charge by one of the woman-gods, who held arms around her neck and petted and caressed her; but Collie was very much perplexed and worried, whining and restless, outraged by the permitted presence of this wolf and confident that the gods were making a mistake.

All the gods started up the steps to enter the house. White Fang followed closely at the master’s heels. Dick, on the porch, growled, and White Fang, on the steps, bristled and growled back.

“Take Collie inside and leave the two of them to fight it out,” suggested Scott’s father. “After that they’ll be friends.”

“Then White Fang, to show his friendship, will have to be chief mourner at the funeral,” laughed the master.

The elder Scott looked incredulously, first at White Fang, then at Dick, and finally at his son.

“You mean . . .?”

Weedon nodded his head. “I mean just that. You’d have a dead Dick inside one minute — two minutes at the farthest.”

He turned to White Fang. “Come on, you wolf. It’s you that’ll have to come inside.”

White Fang walked stiff-legged up the steps and across the porch, with tail rigidly erect, keeping his eyes on Dick to guard against a flank attack, and at the same time prepared for whatever fierce manifestation of the unknown that might pounce out upon him from the interior of the house. But no thing of fear pounced out, and when he had gained the inside he scouted carefully around, looking at it and finding it not. Then he lay down with a contented grunt at the master’s feet, observing all that went on, ever ready to spring to his feet and fight for life with the terrors he felt must lurk under the trap-roof of the dwelling.

CHAPTER III — THE GOD’S DOMAIN

Not only was White Fang adaptable by nature, but he had travelled much, and knew the meaning and necessity of adjustment. Here, in Sierra Vista, which was the name of Judge Scott’s place, White Fang quickly began to make himself at home. He had no further serious trouble with the dogs. They knew more about the ways of the Southland gods than did he, and in their eyes he had qualified when he accompanied the gods inside the house. Wolf that he was, and unprecedented as it was, the gods had sanctioned his presence, and they, the dogs of the gods, could only recognise this sanction.

Dick, perforce, had to go through a few stiff formalities at first, after which he calmly accepted White Fang as an addition to the premises. Had Dick had his way, they would have been good friends. All but White Fang was averse to friendship. All he asked of other dogs was to be let alone. His whole life he had kept aloof from his kind, and he still desired to keep aloof. Dick’s overtures bothered him, so he snarled Dick away. In the north he had learned the lesson that he must let the master’s dogs alone, and he did not forget that lesson now. But he insisted on his own privacy and self-seclusion, and so thoroughly ignored Dick that that good-natured creature finally gave him up and scarcely took as much interest in him as in the hitching-post near the stable.

Not so with Collie. While she accepted him because it was the mandate of the gods, that was no reason that she should leave him in peace. Woven into her being was the memory of countless crimes he and his had perpetrated against her ancestry. Not in a day nor a generation were the ravaged sheepfolds to be forgotten. All this was a spur to her, pricking her to retaliation. She could not fly in the face of the gods who permitted him, but that did not prevent her from making life miserable for him in petty ways. A feud, ages old, was between them, and she, for one, would see to it that he was reminded.

So Collie took advantage of her sex to pick upon White Fang and maltreat him. His instinct would not permit him to attack her, while her persistence would not permit him to ignore her. When she rushed at him he turned his fur-protected shoulder to her sharp teeth and walked away stiff-legged and stately. When she forced him too hard, he was compelled to go about in a circle, his shoulder presented to her, his head turned from her, and on his face and in his eyes a patient and bored expression. Sometimes, however, a nip on his hind-quarters hastened his retreat and made it anything but stately. But as a rule he managed to maintain a dignity that was almost solemnity. He ignored her existence whenever it was possible, and made it a point to keep out of her way. When he saw or heard her coming, he got up and walked off.

There was much in other matters for White Fang to learn. Life in the Northland was simplicity itself when compared with the complicated affairs of Sierra Vista. First of all, he had to learn the family of the master. In a way he was prepared to do this. As Mit-sah and Kloo-kooch had belonged to Grey Beaver, sharing his food, his fire, and his blankets, so now, at Sierra Vista, belonged to the love-master all the denizens of the house.

But in this matter there was a difference, and many differences. Sierra Vista was a far vaster affair than the tepee of Grey Beaver. There were many persons to be considered. There was Judge Scott, and there was his wife. There were the master's two sisters, Beth and Mary. There was his wife, Alice, and then there were his children, Weedon and Maud, toddlers of four and six. There was no way for anybody to tell him about all these people, and of blood-ties and relationship he knew nothing whatever and never would be capable of knowing. Yet he quickly worked it out that all of them belonged to the master. Then, by observation, whenever opportunity offered, by study of action, speech, and the very intonations of the voice, he slowly learned the intimacy and the degree of favour they enjoyed with the master. And by this ascertained standard, White Fang treated them accordingly. What was of value to the master he valued; what was dear to the master was to be cherished by White Fang and guarded carefully.

Thus it was with the two children. All his life he had disliked children. He hated and feared their hands. The lessons were not tender that he had learned of their tyranny and cruelty in the days of the Indian villages. When Weedon and Maud had first approached him, he growled warningly and looked malignant. A cuff from the master and a sharp word had then compelled him to permit their caresses, though he growled and growled under their tiny hands, and in the growl there was no crooning note. Later, he observed that the boy and girl were of great value in the master's eyes. Then it was that no cuff nor sharp word was necessary before they could pat him.

Yet White Fang was never effusively affectionate. He yielded to the master's children with an ill but honest grace, and endured their fooling as one would endure a painful operation. When he could no longer endure, he would get up and stalk determinedly away from them. But after a time, he grew even to like the children. Still he was not demonstrative. He would not go up to them. On the other hand, instead of walking away at sight of them, he waited for them to come to him. And still later, it was noticed that a pleased light came into his eyes when he saw them approaching, and that he looked after them with an appearance of curious regret when they left him for other amusements.

All this was a matter of development, and took time. Next in his regard, after the children, was Judge Scott. There were two reasons, possibly, for this. First, he was evidently a valuable possession of the master's, and next, he was undemonstrative. White Fang liked to lie at his feet on the wide porch when he read the newspaper, from time to time favouring White Fang with a look or a word — untroublesome tokens that he recognised White Fang's presence and existence. But this was only when the master was not around. When the master appeared, all other beings ceased to exist so far as White Fang was concerned.

White Fang allowed all the members of the family to pet him and make much of him; but he never gave to them what he gave to the master. No caress of theirs could put the love-croon into his throat, and, try as they would, they could never persuade him into snuggling against them. This expression of abandon and surrender, of absolute trust, he reserved for the master alone. In fact, he never regarded the members of the family in any other light than possessions of the love-master.

Also White Fang had early come to differentiate between the family and the servants of the household. The latter were afraid of him, while he merely refrained from attacking them. This because he considered that they were likewise possessions of the master. Between White Fang and them existed a neutrality and no more. They cooked for the master and washed the dishes and did other things just as Matt had done up in the Klondike. They were, in short, appurtenances of the household.

Outside the household there was even more for White Fang to learn. The master's domain was wide and complex, yet it had its metes and bounds. The land itself ceased at the county road. Outside was the common domain of all gods — the roads and streets. Then inside other fences were the particular domains of other gods. A myriad laws governed all these things and determined conduct; yet he did not know the speech of the gods, nor was there any way for him to learn save by experience. He obeyed his natural impulses until they ran him counter to some law. When this had been done a few times, he learned the law and after that observed it.

But most potent in his education was the cuff of the master's hand, the censure of the master's voice. Because of White Fang's very great love, a cuff from the master hurt him far more than any beating Grey Beaver or Beauty Smith had ever given him. They had hurt only the flesh of him; beneath the flesh the spirit had still raged, splendid and invincible. But with the master the cuff was always too light to hurt the flesh. Yet it went deeper. It was an expression of the master's disapproval, and White Fang's spirit wilted under it.

In point of fact, the cuff was rarely administered. The master's voice was sufficient. By it White Fang knew whether he did right or not. By it he trimmed his conduct and adjusted his actions. It was the compass by which he steered and learned to chart the manners of a new land and life.

In the Northland, the only domesticated animal was the dog. All other animals lived in the Wild, and were, when not too formidable, lawful spoil for any dog. All his days White Fang had foraged among the live things for food. It did not enter his head that in the Southland it was otherwise. But this he was to learn early in his residence in Santa Clara Valley. Sauntering around the corner of the house in the early morning, he came upon a chicken that had escaped from the chicken-yard. White Fang's natural impulse was to eat it. A couple of bounds, a flash of teeth and a frightened squawk, and he had scooped in the adventurous fowl. It was farm-bred and fat and tender; and White Fang licked his chops and decided that such fare was good.

Later in the day, he chanced upon another stray chicken near the stables. One of the grooms ran to the rescue. He did not know White Fang's breed, so for weapon he took a light buggy-whip. At the first cut of the whip, White Fang left the chicken for the man. A club might have stopped White Fang, but not a whip. Silently, without flinching, he took a second cut in his forward rush, and as he leaped for the throat the groom cried out, "My God!" and staggered backward. He dropped the whip and shielded his throat with his arms. In consequence, his forearm was ripped open to the bone.

The man was badly frightened. It was not so much White Fang's ferocity as it was his silence that unnerved the groom. Still protecting his throat and face with his torn and bleeding arm, he tried to retreat to the barn. And it would have gone hard with him had not Collie appeared on the scene. As she had saved Dick's life, she now saved the groom's. She rushed upon White Fang in frenzied wrath. She had been right. She had known better than the blundering gods. All her suspicions were justified. Here was the ancient marauder up to his old tricks again.

The groom escaped into the stables, and White Fang backed away before Collie's wicked teeth, or presented his shoulder to them and circled round and round. But Collie did not give over, as was her wont, after a decent interval of chastisement. On the contrary, she grew more excited and angry every moment, until, in the end, White Fang flung dignity to the winds and frankly fled away from her across the fields.

"He'll learn to leave chickens alone," the master said. "But I can't give him the lesson until I catch him in the act."

Two nights later came the act, but on a more generous scale than the master had anticipated. White Fang had observed closely the chicken-yards and the habits of the chickens. In the night-time, after they had gone to roost, he climbed to the top of a pile of newly hauled lumber. From there he gained the roof of a chicken-house, passed over the ridgepole and dropped to the ground inside. A moment later he was inside the house, and the slaughter began.

In the morning, when the master came out on to the porch, fifty white Leghorn hens, laid out in a row by the groom, greeted his eyes. He whistled to himself, softly, first with surprise, and then, at the end, with admiration. His eyes were likewise greeted by White Fang, but about the latter there were no signs of shame nor guilt. He carried himself with pride, as though, forsooth, he had achieved a deed praiseworthy and meritorious. There was about him no consciousness of sin. The master's lips tightened as he faced the disagreeable task. Then he talked harshly to the unwitting culprit, and in his voice there was nothing but godlike wrath. Also, he held White Fang's nose down to the slain hens, and at the same time cuffed him soundly.

White Fang never raided a chicken-roost again. It was against the law, and he had learned it. Then the master took him into the chicken-yards. White Fang's natural impulse, when he saw the live food fluttering about him and under his very nose, was to spring upon it. He obeyed the impulse, but was checked by the master's voice. They continued in the yards for half an hour. Time and again the impulse surged over White Fang, and each time, as he yielded to it, he was checked by the master's voice. Thus it was he learned the law, and ere he left the domain of the chickens, he had learned to ignore their existence.

"You can never cure a chicken-killer." Judge Scott shook his head sadly at luncheon table, when his son narrated the lesson he had given White Fang. "Once they've got the habit and the taste of blood . . ." Again he shook his head sadly.

But Weedon Scott did not agree with his father. "I'll tell you what I'll do," he challenged finally. "I'll lock White Fang in with the chickens all afternoon."

"But think of the chickens," objected the judge.

"And furthermore," the son went on, "for every chicken he kills, I'll pay you one dollar gold coin of the realm."

"But you should penalise father, too," interpose Beth.

Her sister seconded her, and a chorus of approval arose from around the table. Judge Scott nodded his head in agreement.

"All right." Weedon Scott pondered for a moment. "And if, at the end of the afternoon White Fang hasn't harmed a chicken, for every ten minutes of the time he has spent in the yard, you will have to say to him, gravely and with deliberation, just as if you were sitting on the bench and solemnly passing judgment, 'White Fang, you are smarter than I thought.'"

From hidden points of vantage the family watched the performance. But it was a fizzle. Locked in the yard and there deserted by the master, White Fang lay down and went to sleep. Once he got up and walked over to the trough for a drink of water. The chickens he calmly ignored. So far as he was concerned they did not exist. At four o'clock he executed a running jump, gained the roof of the chicken-house and leaped to the ground outside, whence he sauntered gravely to the house. He had learned the law. And on the porch, before the delighted family, Judge Scott, face to face with White Fang, said slowly and solemnly, sixteen times, "White Fang, you are smarter than I thought."

But it was the multiplicity of laws that befuddled White Fang and often brought him into disgrace. He had to learn that he must not touch the chickens that belonged to other gods. Then there were cats, and rabbits, and turkeys; all these he must let alone. In fact, when he had but partly learned the law, his impression was that he must leave all live things alone. Out in the back-pasture, a quail could flutter up under his nose unharmed. All tense and trembling with eagerness and desire, he mastered his instinct and stood still. He was obeying the will of the gods.

And then, one day, again out in the back-pasture, he saw Dick start a jackrabbit and run it. The master himself was looking on and did not interfere. Nay, he encouraged White Fang to join in the chase. And thus he learned that there was no taboo on jackrabbits. In the end he worked out the complete law. Between him and all domestic animals there must be no hostilities. If not amity, at least neutrality must obtain. But the other animals — the squirrels, and quail, and cottontails, were creatures of the Wild who had never yielded allegiance to man. They were the lawful prey of any dog. It was only the tame that the gods protected, and between the tame deadly strife was not permitted. The gods held the power of life and death over their subjects, and the gods were jealous of their power.

Life was complex in the Santa Clara Valley after the simplicities of the Northland. And the chief thing demanded by these intricacies of civilisation was control, restraint — a poise of self that was as delicate as the fluttering of gossamer wings and at the same time as rigid as steel. Life had a thousand faces, and White Fang found he must meet them all — thus, when he went to town, in to San Jose, running behind the carriage or loafing about the streets when the carriage stopped. Life flowed past him, deep and wide and varied, continually impinging upon his senses, demanding of him instant and endless adjustments and correspondences, and compelling him, almost always, to suppress his natural impulses.

There were butcher-shops where meat hung within reach. This meat he must not touch. There were cats at the houses the master visited that must be let alone. And there were dogs everywhere that snarled at him and that he must not attack. And then, on the crowded sidewalks there were persons innumerable whose attention he attracted. They would stop and look at him, point him out to one another, examine him, talk of him, and, worst of all, pat him. And these perilous contacts from all these strange hands he must endure. Yet this endurance he achieved. Furthermore, he got over being awkward and self-conscious. In a lofty way he received the attentions of the multitudes of strange gods. With condescension he accepted their condescension. On the other hand, there was something about him that prevented great familiarity. They patted him on the head and passed on, contented and pleased with their own daring.

But it was not all easy for White Fang. Running behind the carriage in the outskirts of San Jose, he encountered certain small boys who made a practice of flinging stones at him. Yet he knew that it was not permitted him to pursue and drag them down. Here he was compelled to violate his instinct of self-preservation, and violate it he did, for he was becoming tame and qualifying himself for civilisation.

Nevertheless, White Fang was not quite satisfied with the arrangement. He had no abstract ideas about justice and fair play. But there is a certain sense of equity that resides in life, and it was this sense in him that resented the unfairness of his being permitted no defence against the stone-throwers. He forgot that in the covenant entered into between him and the gods they were pledged to care for him and defend him. But one day the master sprang from the carriage, whip in hand, and gave the stone-throwers a thrashing. After that they threw stones no more, and White Fang understood and was satisfied.

One other experience of similar nature was his. On the way to town, hanging around the saloon at the cross-roads, were three dogs that made a practice of rushing out upon him when he went by. Knowing his deadly method of fighting, the master had never ceased impressing upon White Fang the law that he must not fight. As a result, having learned the lesson well, White Fang was hard put whenever he passed the cross-roads saloon. After the first rush, each time, his snarl kept the three dogs at a distance but they trailed along behind, yelping and bickering and insulting him. This endured for some time. The men at the saloon even urged the dogs on to attack White Fang. One day they openly sicked the dogs on him. The master stopped the carriage.

“Go to it,” he said to White Fang.

But White Fang could not believe. He looked at the master, and he looked at the dogs. Then he looked back eagerly and questioningly at the master.

The master nodded his head. “Go to them, old fellow. Eat them up.”

White Fang no longer hesitated. He turned and leaped silently among his enemies. All three faced him. There was a great snarling and growling, a clashing of teeth and a flurry of bodies. The dust of the road arose in a cloud and screened the battle. But at the end of several minutes two dogs were struggling in the dirt and the third was in full flight. He leaped a ditch, went through a rail fence, and fled across a field. White Fang followed, sliding over the ground in wolf fashion and with wolf speed, swiftly and without noise, and in the centre of the field he dragged down and slew the dog.

With this triple killing his main troubles with dogs ceased. The word went up and down the valley, and men saw to it that their dogs did not molest the Fighting Wolf.

CHAPTER IV — THE CALL OF KIND

The months came and went. There was plenty of food and no work in the Southland, and White Fang lived fat and prosperous and happy. Not alone was he in the geographical Southland, for he was in the Southland of life. Human kindness was like a sun shining upon him, and he flourished like a flower planted in good soil.

And yet he remained somehow different from other dogs. He knew the law even better than did the dogs that had known no other life, and he observed the law more punctiliously; but still there was about him a suggestion of lurking ferocity, as though the Wild still lingered in him and the wolf in him merely slept.

He never chummed with other dogs. Lonely he had lived, so far as his kind was concerned, and lonely he would continue to live. In his puppyhood, under the persecution of Lip-lip and the puppy-pack, and in his fighting days with Beauty Smith, he had acquired a fixed aversion for dogs. The natural course of his life had been diverted, and, recoiling from his kind, he had clung to the human.

Besides, all Southland dogs looked upon him with suspicion. He aroused in them their instinctive fear of the Wild, and they greeted him always with snarl and growl and belligerent hatred. He, on the other hand, learned that it was not necessary to use his teeth upon them. His naked fangs and writhing lips were uniformly efficacious, rarely failing to send a bellowing on-rushing dog back on its haunches.

But there was one trial in White Fang's life — Collie. She never gave him a moment's peace. She was not so amenable to the law as he. She defied all efforts of the master to make her become friends with White Fang. Ever in his ears was sounding her sharp and nervous snarl. She had never forgiven him the chicken-killing episode, and persistently held to the belief that his intentions were bad. She found him guilty before the act, and treated him accordingly. She became a pest to him, like a policeman following him around the stable and the hounds, and, if he even so much as glanced curiously at a pigeon or chicken, bursting into an outcry of indignation and wrath. His favourite way of ignoring her was to lie down, with his head on his fore-paws, and pretend sleep. This always dumfounded and silenced her.

With the exception of Collie, all things went well with White Fang. He had learned control and poise, and he knew the law. He achieved a staidness, and calmness, and philosophic tolerance. He no longer lived in a hostile environment. Danger and hurt and death did not lurk everywhere about him. In time, the unknown, as a thing of terror and menace ever impending, faded away. Life was soft and easy. It flowed along smoothly, and neither fear nor foe lurked by the way.

He missed the snow without being aware of it. "An unduly long summer," would have been his thought had he thought about it; as it was, he merely missed the snow in a vague, subconscious way. In the same fashion, especially in the heat of summer when he suffered from the sun, he experienced faint longings for the Northland. Their only effect upon him, however, was to make him uneasy and restless without his knowing what was the matter.

White Fang had never been very demonstrative. Beyond his snuggling and the throwing of a crooning note into his love-growl, he had no way of expressing his love. Yet it was given him to discover a third way. He had always been susceptible to the laughter of the gods. Laughter had affected him with madness, made him frantic with rage. But he did not have it in him to be angry with the love-master, and when that god elected to laugh at him in a good-natured, bantering way, he was nonplussed. He could feel the pricking and stinging of the old anger as it strove to rise up in him, but it strove against love. He could not be angry; yet he had to do something. At first he was dignified, and the master laughed the harder. Then he tried to be more dignified, and the master laughed harder than before. In the end, the master laughed him out of his dignity. His jaws slightly parted, his lips lifted a little, and a quizzical expression that was more love than humour came into his eyes. He had learned to laugh.

Likewise he learned to romp with the master, to be tumbled down and rolled over, and be the victim of innumerable rough tricks. In return he feigned anger, bristling and growling ferociously, and clipping his teeth together in snaps that had all the seeming of deadly intention. But he never forgot himself. Those snaps were always delivered on the empty air. At the end of such a romp, when blow and cuff and snap and snarl were last and furious, they would break off suddenly and stand several feet apart, glaring at each other. And then, just as suddenly, like the sun rising on a stormy sea, they would begin to laugh. This would always culminate with the master’s arms going around White Fang’s neck and shoulders while the latter crooned and growled his love-song.

But nobody else ever romped with White Fang. He did not permit it. He stood on his dignity, and when they attempted it, his warning snarl and bristling mane were anything but playful. That he allowed the master these liberties was no reason that he should be a common dog, loving here and loving there, everybody’s property for a romp and good time. He loved with single heart and refused to cheapen himself or his love.

The master went out on horseback a great deal, and to accompany him was one of White Fang’s chief duties in life. In the Northland he had evidenced his fealty by toiling in the harness; but there were no sleds in the Southland, nor did dogs pack burdens on their backs. So he rendered fealty in the new way, by running with the master’s horse. The longest day never played White Fang out. His was the gait of the wolf, smooth, tireless and effortless, and at the end of fifty miles he would come in jauntily ahead of the horse.

It was in connection with the riding, that White Fang achieved one other mode of expression — remarkable in that he did it but twice in all his life. The first time occurred when the master was trying to teach a spirited thoroughbred the method of opening and closing gates without the rider’s dismounting. Time and again and many times he ranged the horse up to the gate in the effort to close it and each time the horse became frightened and backed and plunged away. It grew more nervous and excited every moment. When it reared, the master put the spurs to it and made it drop its fore-legs back to earth, whereupon it would begin kicking with its hind-legs. White Fang watched the performance with increasing anxiety until he could contain himself no longer, when he sprang in front of the horse and barked savagely and warningly.

Though he often tried to bark thereafter, and the master encouraged him, he succeeded only once, and then it was not in the master’s presence. A scamper across the pasture, a jackrabbit rising suddenly under the horse’s feet, a violent sheer, a stumble, a fall to earth, and a broken leg for the master, was the cause of it. White Fang sprang in a rage at the throat of the offending horse, but was checked by the master’s voice.

“Home! Go home!” the master commanded when he had ascertained his injury.

White Fang was disinclined to desert him. The master thought of writing a note, but searched his pockets vainly for pencil and paper. Again he commanded White Fang to go home.

The latter regarded him wistfully, started away, then returned and whined softly. The master talked to him gently but seriously, and he cocked his ears, and listened with painful intentness.

“That’s all right, old fellow, you just run along home,” ran the talk. “Go on home and tell them what’s happened to me. Home with you, you wolf. Get along home!”

White Fang knew the meaning of “home,” and though he did not understand the remainder of the master’s language, he knew it was his will that he should go home. He turned and trotted reluctantly away. Then he stopped, undecided, and looked back over his shoulder.

“Go home!” came the sharp command, and this time he obeyed.

The family was on the porch, taking the cool of the afternoon, when White Fang arrived. He came in among them, panting, covered with dust.

“Weedon’s back,” Weedon’s mother announced.

The children welcomed White Fang with glad cries and ran to meet him. He avoided them and passed down the porch, but they cornered him against a rocking-chair and the railing. He growled and tried to push by them. Their mother looked apprehensively in their direction.

“I confess, he makes me nervous around the children,” she said. “I have a dread that he will turn upon them unexpectedly some day.”

Growling savagely, White Fang sprang out of the corner, overturning the boy and the girl. The mother called them to her and comforted them, telling them not to bother White Fang.

“A wolf is a wolf!” commented Judge Scott. “There is no trusting one.”

“But he is not all wolf,” interposed Beth, standing for her brother in his absence.

“You have only Weedon’s opinion for that,” rejoined the judge. “He merely surmises that there is some strain of dog in White Fang; but as he will tell you himself, he knows nothing about it. As for his appearance — ”

He did not finish his sentence. White Fang stood before him, growling fiercely.

“Go away! Lie down, sir!” Judge Scott commanded.

White Fang turned to the love-master’s wife. She screamed with fright as he seized her dress in his teeth and dragged on it till the frail fabric tore away. By this time he had become the centre of interest.

He had ceased from his growling and stood, head up, looking into their faces. His throat worked spasmodically, but made no sound, while he struggled with all his body, convulsed with the effort to rid himself of the incommunicable something that strained for utterance.

“I hope he is not going mad,” said Weedon’s mother. “I told Weedon that I was afraid the warm climate would not agree with an Arctic animal.”

“He’s trying to speak, I do believe,” Beth announced.

At this moment speech came to White Fang, rushing up in a great burst of barking.

“Something has happened to Weedon,” his wife said decisively.

They were all on their feet now, and White Fang ran down the steps, looking back for them to follow. For the second and last time in his life he had barked and made himself understood.

After this event he found a warmer place in the hearts of the Sierra Vista people, and even the groom whose arm he had slashed admitted that he was a wise dog even if he was a wolf. Judge Scott still held to the same opinion, and proved it to everybody’s dissatisfaction by measurements and descriptions taken from the encyclopaedia and various works on natural history.

The days came and went, streaming their unbroken sunshine over the Santa Clara Valley. But as they grew shorter and White Fang’s second winter in the Southland came on, he made a strange discovery. Collie’s teeth were no longer sharp. There was a playfulness about her nips and a gentleness that prevented them from really hurting him. He forgot that she had made life a burden to him, and when she disported herself around him he responded solemnly, striving to be playful and becoming no more than ridiculous.

One day she led him off on a long chase through the back-pasture land into the woods. It was the afternoon that the master was to ride, and White Fang knew it. The horse stood saddled and waiting at the door. White Fang hesitated. But there was that in him deeper than all the law he had learned, than the customs that had moulded him, than his love for the master, than the very will to live of himself; and when, in the moment of his indecision, Collie nipped him and scampered off, he turned and followed after. The master rode alone that day; and in the woods, side by side, White Fang ran with Collie, as his mother, Kiche, and old One Eye had run long years before in the silent Northland forest.

CHAPTER V — THE SLEEPING WOLF

It was about this time that the newspapers were full of the daring escape of a convict from San Quentin prison. He was a ferocious man. He had been ill-made in the making. He had not been born right, and he had not been helped any by the moulding he had received at the hands of society. The hands of society are harsh, and this man was a striking sample of its handiwork. He was a beast — a human beast, it is true, but nevertheless so terrible a beast that he can best be characterised as carnivorous.

In San Quentin prison he had proved incorrigible. Punishment failed to break his spirit. He could die dumb-mad and fighting to the last, but he could not live and be beaten. The more fiercely he fought, the more harshly society handled him, and the only effect of harshness was to make him fiercer. Straight-jackets, starvation, and beatings and clubbings were the wrong treatment for Jim Hall; but it was the treatment he received. It was the treatment he had received from the time he was a little pulpy boy in a San Francisco slum — soft clay in the hands of society and ready to be formed into something.

It was during Jim Hall's third term in prison that he encountered a guard that was almost as great a beast as he. The guard treated him unfairly, lied about him to the warden, lost his credits, persecuted him. The difference between them was that the guard carried a bunch of keys and a revolver. Jim Hall had only his naked hands and his teeth. But he sprang upon the guard one day and used his teeth on the other's throat just like any jungle animal.

After this, Jim Hall went to live in the incorrigible cell. He lived there three years. The cell was of iron, the floor, the walls, the roof. He never left this cell. He never saw the sky nor the sunshine. Day was a twilight and night was a black silence. He was in an iron tomb, buried alive. He saw no human face, spoke to no human thing. When his food was shoved in to him, he growled like a wild animal. He hated all things. For days and nights he bellowed his rage at the universe. For weeks and months he never made a sound, in the black silence eating his very soul. He was a man and a monstrosity, as fearful a thing of fear as ever gibbered in the visions of a maddened brain.

And then, one night, he escaped. The warders said it was impossible, but nevertheless the cell was empty, and half in half out of it lay the body of a dead guard. Two other dead guards marked his trail through the prison to the outer walls, and he had killed with his hands to avoid noise.

He was armed with the weapons of the slain guards — a live arsenal that fled through the hills pursued by the organised might of society. A heavy price of gold was upon his head. Avaricious farmers hunted him with shot-guns. His blood might pay off a mortgage or send a son to college. Public-spirited citizens took down their rifles and went out after him. A pack of bloodhounds followed the way of his bleeding feet. And the sleuth-hounds of the law, the paid fighting animals of society, with telephone, and telegraph, and special train, clung to his trail night and day.

Sometimes they came upon him, and men faced him like heroes, or stampeded through barbed-wire fences to the delight of the commonwealth reading the account at the breakfast table. It was after such encounters that the dead and wounded were carted back to the towns, and their places filled by men eager for the man-hunt.

And then Jim Hall disappeared. The bloodhounds vainly quested on the lost trail. Inoffensive ranchers in remote valleys were held up by armed men and compelled to identify themselves. While the remains of Jim Hall were discovered on a dozen mountain-sides by greedy claimants for blood-money.

In the meantime the newspapers were read at Sierra Vista, not so much with interest as with anxiety. The women were afraid. Judge Scott pooh-poohed and laughed, but not with reason, for it was in his last days on the bench that Jim Hall had stood before him and received sentence. And in open court-room, before all men, Jim Hall had proclaimed that the day would come when he would wreak vengeance on the Judge that sentenced him.

For once, Jim Hall was right. He was innocent of the crime for which he was sentenced. It was a case, in the parlance of thieves and police, of “rail-roading.” Jim Hall was being “rail-roaded” to prison for a crime he had not committed. Because of the two prior convictions against him, Judge Scott imposed upon him a sentence of fifty years.

Judge Scott did not know all things, and he did not know that he was party to a police conspiracy, that the evidence was hatched and perjured, that Jim Hall was guiltless of the crime charged. And Jim Hall, on the other hand, did not know that Judge Scott was merely ignorant. Jim Hall believed that the judge knew all about it and was hand in glove with the police in the perpetration of the monstrous injustice. So it was, when the doom of fifty years of living death was uttered by Judge Scott, that Jim Hall, hating all things in the society that misused him, rose up and raged in the court-room until dragged down by half a dozen of his blue-coated enemies. To him, Judge Scott was the keystone in the arch of injustice, and upon Judge Scott he emptied the vials of his wrath and hurled the threats of his revenge yet to come. Then Jim Hall went to his living death . . . and escaped.

Of all this White Fang knew nothing. But between him and Alice, the master's wife, there existed a secret. Each night, after Sierra Vista had gone to bed, she rose and let in White Fang to sleep in the big hall. Now White Fang was not a house-dog, nor was he permitted to sleep in the house; so each morning, early, she slipped down and let him out before the family was awake.

On one such night, while all the house slept, White Fang awoke and lay very quietly. And very quietly he smelled the air and read the message it bore of a strange god's presence. And to his ears came sounds of the strange god's movements. White Fang burst into no furious outcry. It was not his way. The strange god walked softly, but more softly walked White Fang, for he had no clothes to rub against the flesh of his body. He followed silently. In the Wild he had hunted live meat that was infinitely timid, and he knew the advantage of surprise.

The strange god paused at the foot of the great staircase and listened, and White Fang was as dead, so without movement was he as he watched and waited. Up that staircase the way led to the love-master and to the love-master's dearest possessions. White Fang bristled, but waited. The strange god's foot lifted. He was beginning the ascent.

Then it was that White Fang struck. He gave no warning, with no snarl anticipated his own action. Into the air he lifted his body in the spring that landed him on the strange god's back. White Fang clung with his fore-paws to the man's shoulders, at the same time burying his fangs into the back of the man's neck. He clung on for a moment, long enough to drag the god over backward. Together they crashed to the floor. White Fang leaped clear, and, as the man struggled to rise, was in again with the slashing fangs.

Sierra Vista awoke in alarm. The noise from downstairs was as that of a score of battling fiends. There were revolver shots. A man's voice screamed once in horror and anguish. There was a great snarling and growling, and over all arose a smashing and crashing of furniture and glass.

But almost as quickly as it had arisen, the commotion died away. The struggle had not lasted more than three minutes. The frightened household clustered at the top of the stairway. From below, as from out an abyss of blackness, came up a gurgling sound, as of air bubbling through water. Sometimes this gurgle became sibilant, almost a whistle. But this, too, quickly died down and ceased. Then naught came up out of the blackness save a heavy panting of some creature struggling sorely for air.

Weedon Scott pressed a button, and the staircase and downstairs hall were flooded with light. Then he and Judge Scott, revolvers in hand, cautiously descended. There was no need for this caution. White Fang had done his work. In the midst of the wreckage of overthrown and smashed furniture, partly on his side, his face hidden by an arm, lay a man. Weedon Scott bent over, removed the arm and turned the man's face upward. A gaping throat explained the manner of his death.

"Jim Hall," said Judge Scott, and father and son looked significantly at each other.

Then they turned to White Fang. He, too, was lying on his side. His eyes were closed, but the lids slightly lifted in an effort to look at them as they bent over him, and the tail was perceptibly agitated in a vain effort to wag. Weedon Scott patted him, and his throat rumbled an acknowledging growl. But it was a weak growl at best, and it quickly ceased. His eyelids drooped and went shut, and his whole body seemed to relax and flatten out upon the floor.

"He's all in, poor devil," muttered the master.

"We'll see about that," asserted the Judge, as he started for the telephone.

"Frankly, he has one chance in a thousand," announced the surgeon, after he had worked an hour and a half on White Fang.

Dawn was breaking through the windows and dimming the electric lights. With the exception of the children, the whole family was gathered about the surgeon to hear his verdict.

"One broken hind-leg," he went on. "Three broken ribs, one at least of which has pierced the lungs. He has lost nearly all the blood in his body. There is a large likelihood of internal injuries. He must have been jumped upon. To say nothing of three bullet holes clear through him. One chance in a thousand is really optimistic. He hasn't a chance in ten thousand."

"But he mustn't lose any chance that might be of help to him," Judge Scott exclaimed. "Never mind expense. Put him under the X-ray — anything. Weedon, telegraph at once to San Francisco for Doctor Nichols. No reflection on you, doctor, you understand; but he must have the advantage of every chance."

The surgeon smiled indulgently. "Of course I understand. He deserves all that can be done for him. He must be nursed as you would nurse a human being, a sick child. And don't forget what I told you about temperature. I'll be back at ten o'clock again."

White Fang received the nursing. Judge Scott's suggestion of a trained nurse was indignantly clamoured down by the girls, who themselves undertook the task. And White Fang won out on the one chance in ten thousand denied him by the surgeon.

The latter was not to be censured for his misjudgment. All his life he had tended and operated on the soft humans of civilisation, who lived sheltered lives and had descended out of many sheltered generations. Compared with White Fang, they were frail and flabby, and clutched life without any strength in their grip. White Fang had come straight from the Wild, where the weak perish early and shelter is vouchsafed to none. In neither his father nor his mother was there any weakness, nor in the generations before them. A constitution of iron and the vitality of the Wild were White Fang's inheritance, and he clung to life, the whole of him and every part of him, in spirit and in flesh, with the tenacity that of old belonged to all creatures.

Bound down a prisoner, denied even movement by the plaster casts and bandages, White Fang lingered out the weeks. He slept long hours and dreamed much, and through his mind passed an unending pageant of Northland visions. All the ghosts of the past arose and were with him. Once again he lived in the lair with Kiche, crept trembling to the knees of Grey Beaver to tender his allegiance, ran for his life before Lip-lip and all the howling bedlam of the puppy-pack.

He ran again through the silence, hunting his living food through the months of famine; and again he ran at the head of the team, the gut-whips of Mit-sah and Grey Beaver snapping behind, their voices crying "Ra! Raa!" when they came to a narrow passage and the team closed together like a fan to go through. He lived again all his days with Beauty Smith and the fights he had fought. At such times he whimpered and snarled in his sleep, and they that looked on said that his dreams were bad.

But there was one particular nightmare from which he suffered — the clanking, clanging monsters of electric cars that were to him colossal screaming lynxes. He would lie in a screen of bushes, watching for a squirrel to venture far enough out on the ground from its tree-refuge. Then, when he sprang out upon it, it would transform itself into an electric car, menacing and terrible, towering over him like a mountain, screaming and clanging and spitting fire at him. It was the same when he challenged the hawk down out of the sky. Down out of the blue it would rush, as it dropped upon him changing itself into the ubiquitous electric car. Or again, he would be in the pen of Beauty Smith. Outside the pen, men would be gathering, and he knew that a fight was on. He watched the door for his antagonist to enter. The door would open, and thrust in upon him would come the awful electric car. A thousand times this occurred, and each time the terror it inspired was as vivid and great as ever.

Then came the day when the last bandage and the last plaster cast were taken off. It was a gala day. All Sierra Vista was gathered around. The master rubbed his ears, and he crooned his love-growl. The master's wife called him the "Blessed Wolf," which name was taken up with acclaim and all the women called him the Blessed Wolf.

He tried to rise to his feet, and after several attempts fell down from weakness. He had lain so long that his muscles had lost their cunning, and all the strength had gone out of them. He felt a little shame because of his weakness, as though, forsooth, he were failing the gods in the service he owed them. Because of this he made heroic efforts to arise and at last he stood on his four legs, tottering and swaying back and forth.

"The Blessed Wolf!" chorused the women.

Judge Scott surveyed them triumphantly.

"Out of your own mouths be it," he said. "Just as I contended right along. No mere dog could have done what he did. He's a wolf."

"A Blessed Wolf," amended the Judge's wife.

"Yes, Blessed Wolf," agreed the Judge. "And henceforth that shall be my name for him."

"He'll have to learn to walk again," said the surgeon; "so he might as well start in right now. It won't hurt him. Take him outside."

And outside he went, like a king, with all Sierra Vista about him and tending on him. He was very weak, and when he reached the lawn he lay down and rested for a while.

Then the procession started on, little spurts of strength coming into White Fang's muscles as he used them and the blood began to surge through them. The stables were reached, and there in the doorway, lay Collie, a half-dozen pudgy puppies playing about her in the sun.

White Fang looked on with a wondering eye. Collie snarled warningly at him, and he was careful to keep his distance. The master with his toe helped one sprawling puppy toward him. He bristled suspiciously, but the master warned him that all was well. Collie, clasped in the arms of one of the women, watched him jealously and with a snarl warned him that all was not well.

The puppy sprawled in front of him. He cocked his ears and watched it curiously. Then their noses touched, and he felt the warm little tongue of the puppy on his jowl. White Fang's tongue went out, he knew not why, and he licked the puppy's face.

Hand-clapping and pleased cries from the gods greeted the performance. He was surprised, and looked at them in a puzzled way. Then his weakness asserted itself, and he lay down, his ears cocked, his head on one side, as he watched the puppy. The other puppies came sprawling toward him, to Collie's great disgust; and he gravely permitted them to clamber and tumble over him. At first, amid the applause of the gods, he betrayed a trifle of his old self-consciousness and awkwardness. This passed away as the puppies' antics and mauling continued, and he lay with half-shut patient eyes, drowsing in the sun.

BEFORE ADAM

Serialised in 1906 and 1907 in *Everybody's Magazine*, this novel tells the story of a boy who dreams he lives the life of an early hominid Australopithecine. The narrative offers an early view of human evolution, with the majority of the story told through the eyes of the boy's hominid alter ego, one of the Cave People.

BEFORE
ADAM
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII

CHAPTER I

Pictures! Pictures! Pictures! Often, before I learned, did I wonder whence came the multitudes of pictures that thronged my dreams; for they were pictures the like of which I had never seen in real wake-a-day life. They tormented my childhood, making of my dreams a procession of nightmares and a little later convincing me that I was different from my kind, a creature unnatural and accursed.

In my days only did I attain any measure of happiness. My nights marked the reign of fear — and such fear! I make bold to state that no man of all the men who walk the earth with me ever suffer fear of like kind and degree. For my fear is the fear of long ago, the fear that was rampant in the Younger World, and in the youth of the Younger World. In short, the fear that reigned supreme in that period known as the Mid-Pleistocene.

What do I mean? I see explanation is necessary before I can tell you of the substance of my dreams. Otherwise, little could you know of the meaning of the things I know so well. As I write this, all the beings and happenings of that other world rise up before me in vast phantasmagoria, and I know that to you they would be rhymeless and reasonless.

What to you the friendship of Lop-Ear, the warm lure of the Swift One, the lust and the atavism of Red-Eye? A screaming incoherence and no more. And a screaming incoherence, likewise, the doings of the Fire People and the Tree People, and the gibbering councils of the horde. For you know not the peace of the cool caves in the cliffs, the circus of the drinking-places at the end of the day. You have never felt the bite of the morning wind in the tree-tops, nor is the taste of young bark sweet in your mouth.

It would be better, I dare say, for you to make your approach, as I made mine, through my childhood. As a boy I was very like other boys — in my waking hours. It was in my sleep that I was different. From my earliest recollection my sleep was a period of terror. Rarely were my dreams tinctured with happiness. As a rule, they were stuffed with fear — and with a fear so strange and alien that it had no ponderable quality. No fear that I experienced in my waking life resembled the fear that possessed me in my sleep. It was of a quality and kind that transcended all my experiences.

For instance, I was a city boy, a city child, rather, to whom the country was an unexplored domain. Yet I never dreamed of cities; nor did a house ever occur in any of my dreams. Nor, for that matter, did any of my human kind ever break through the wall of my sleep. I, who had seen trees only in parks and illustrated books, wandered in my sleep through interminable forests. And further, these dream trees were not a mere blur on my vision. They were sharp and distinct. I was on terms of practised intimacy with them. I saw every branch and twig; I saw and knew every different leaf.

Well do I remember the first time in my waking life that I saw an oak tree. As I looked at the leaves and branches and gnarls, it came to me with distressing vividness that I had seen that same kind of tree many and countless times in my sleep. So I was not surprised, still later on in my life, to recognize instantly, the first time I saw them, trees such as the spruce, the yew, the birch, and the laurel. I had seen them all before, and was seeing them even then, every night, in my sleep.

This, as you have already discerned, violates the first law of dreaming, namely, that in one’s dreams one sees only what he has seen in his waking life, or combinations of the things he has seen in his waking life. But all my dreams violated this law. In my dreams I never saw ANYTHING of which I had knowledge in my waking life. My dream life and my waking life were lives apart, with not one thing in common save myself. I was the connecting link that somehow lived both lives.

Early in my childhood I learned that nuts came from the grocer, berries from the fruit man; but before ever that knowledge was mine, in my dreams I picked nuts from trees, or gathered them and ate them from the ground underneath trees, and in the same way I ate berries from vines and bushes. This was beyond any experience of mine.

I shall never forget the first time I saw blueberries served on the table. I had never seen blueberries before, and yet, at the sight of them, there leaped up in my mind memories of dreams wherein I had wandered through swampy land eating my fill of them. My mother set before me a dish of the berries. I filled my spoon, but before I raised it to my mouth I knew just how they would taste. Nor was I disappointed. It was the same tang that I had tasted a thousand times in my sleep.

Snakes? Long before I had heard of the existence of snakes, I was tormented by them in my sleep. They lurked for me in the forest glades; leaped up, striking, under my feet; squirmed off through the dry grass or across naked patches of rock; or pursued me into the tree-tops, encircling the trunks with their great shining bodies, driving me higher and higher or farther and farther out on swaying and crackling branches, the ground a dizzy distance beneath me. Snakes! — with their forked tongues, their beady eyes and glittering scales, their hissing and their rattling — did I not already know them far too well on that day of my first circus when I saw the snake-charmer lift them up?

They were old friends of mine, enemies rather, that peopled my nights with fear.

Ah, those endless forests, and their horror-haunted gloom! For what eternities have I wandered through them, a timid, hunted creature, starting at the least sound, frightened of my own shadow, keyed-up, ever alert and vigilant, ready on the instant to dash away in mad flight for my life. For I was the prey of all manner of fierce life that dwelt in the forest, and it was in ecstasies of fear that I fled before the hunting monsters.

When I was five years old I went to my first circus. I came home from it sick — but not from peanuts and pink lemonade. Let me tell you. As we entered the animal tent, a hoarse roaring shook the air. I tore my hand loose from my father's and dashed wildly back through the entrance. I collided with people, fell down; and all the time I was screaming with terror. My father caught me and soothed me. He pointed to the crowd of people, all careless of the roaring, and cheered me with assurances of safety.

Nevertheless, it was in fear and trembling, and with much encouragement on his part, that I at last approached the lion's cage. Ah, I knew him on the instant. The beast! The terrible one! And on my inner vision flashed the memories of my dreams, — the midday sun shining on tall grass, the wild bull grazing quietly, the sudden parting of the grass before the swift rush of the tawny one, his leap to the bull's back, the crashing and the bellowing, and the crunch crunch of bones; or again, the cool quiet of the water-hole, the wild horse up to his knees and drinking softly, and then the tawny one — always the tawny one! — the leap, the screaming and the splashing of the horse, and the crunch crunch of bones; and yet again, the sombre twilight and the sad silence of the end of day, and then the great full-throated roar, sudden, like a trump of doom, and swift upon it the insane shrieking and chattering among the trees, and I, too, am trembling with fear and am one of the many shrieking and chattering among the trees.

At the sight of him, helpless, within the bars of his cage, I became enraged. I gritted my teeth at him, danced up and down, screaming an incoherent mockery and making antic faces. He responded, rushing against the bars and roaring back at me his impotent wrath. Ah, he knew me, too, and the sounds I made were the sounds of old time and intelligible to him.

My parents were frightened. “The child is ill,” said my mother. “He is hysterical,” said my father. I never told them, and they never knew. Already had I developed reticence concerning this quality of mine, this semi-disassociation of personality as I think I am justified in calling it.

I saw the snake-charmer, and no more of the circus did I see that night. I was taken home, nervous and overwrought, sick with the invasion of my real life by that other life of my dreams.

I have mentioned my reticence. Only once did I confide the strangeness of it all to another. He was a boy — my chum; and we were eight years old. From my dreams I reconstructed for him pictures of that vanished world in which I do believe I once lived. I told him of the terrors of that early time, of Lop-Ear and the pranks we played, of the gibbering councils, and of the Fire People and their squatting places.

He laughed at me, and jeered, and told me tales of ghosts and of the dead that walk at night. But mostly did he laugh at my feeble fancy. I told him more, and he laughed the harder. I swore in all earnestness that these things were so, and he began to look upon me queerly. Also, he gave amazing garblings of my tales to our playmates, until all began to look upon me queerly.

It was a bitter experience, but I learned my lesson. I was different from my kind. I was abnormal with something they could not understand, and the telling of which would cause only misunderstanding. When the stories of ghosts and goblins went around, I kept quiet. I smiled grimly to myself. I thought of my nights of fear, and knew that mine were the real things — real as life itself, not attenuated vapors and surmised shadows.

For me no terrors resided in the thought of bugaboos and wicked ogres. The fall through leafy branches and the dizzy heights; the snakes that struck at me as I dodged and leaped away in chattering flight; the wild dogs that hunted me across the open spaces to the timber — these were terrors concrete and actual, happenings and not imaginings, things of the living flesh and of sweat and blood. Ogres and bugaboos and I had been happy bed-fellows, compared with these terrors that made their bed with me throughout my childhood, and that still bed with me, now, as I write this, full of years.

CHAPTER II

I have said that in my dreams I never saw a human being. Of this fact I became aware very early, and felt poignantly the lack of my own kind. As a very little child, even, I had a feeling, in the midst of the horror of my dreaming, that if I could find but one man, only one human, I should be saved from my dreaming, that I should be surrounded no more by haunting terrors. This thought obsessed me every night of my life for years — if only I could find that one human and be saved!

I must iterate that I had this thought in the midst of my dreaming, and I take it as an evidence of the merging of my two personalities, as evidence of a point of contact between the two disassociated parts of me. My dream personality lived in the long ago, before ever man, as we know him, came to be; and my other and wake-a-day personality projected itself, to the extent of the knowledge of man's existence, into the substance of my dreams.

Perhaps the psychologists of the book will find fault with my way of using the phrase, "disassociation of personality." I know their use of it, yet am compelled to use it in my own way in default of a better phrase. I take shelter behind the inadequacy of the English language. And now to the explanation of my use, or misuse, of the phrase.

It was not till I was a young man, at college, that I got any clew to the significance of my dreams, and to the cause of them. Up to that time they had been meaningless and without apparent causation. But at college I discovered evolution and psychology, and learned the explanation of various strange mental states and experiences. For instance, there was the falling-through-space dream — the commonest dream experience, one practically known, by first-hand experience, to all men.

This, my professor told me, was a racial memory. It dated back to our remote ancestors who lived in trees. With them, being tree-dwellers, the liability of falling was an ever-present menace. Many lost their lives that way; all of them experienced terrible falls, saving themselves by clutching branches as they fell toward the ground.

Now a terrible fall, averted in such fashion, was productive of shock. Such shock was productive of molecular changes in the cerebral cells. These molecular changes were transmitted to the cerebral cells of progeny, became, in short, racial memories. Thus, when you and I, asleep or dozing off to sleep, fall through space and awake to sickening consciousness just before we strike, we are merely remembering what happened to our arboreal ancestors, and which has been stamped by cerebral changes into the heredity of the race.

There is nothing strange in this, any more than there is anything strange in an instinct. An instinct is merely a habit that is stamped into the stuff of our heredity, that is all. It will be noted, in passing, that in this falling dream which is so familiar to you and me and all of us, we never strike bottom. To strike bottom would be destruction. Those of our arboreal ancestors who struck bottom died forthwith. True, the shock of their fall was communicated to the cerebral cells, but they died immediately, before they could have progeny. You and I are descended from those that did not strike bottom; that is why you and I, in our dreams, never strike bottom.

And now we come to disassociation of personality. We never have this sense of falling when we are wide awake. Our wake-a-day personality has no experience of it. Then — and here the argument is irresistible — it must be another and distinct personality that falls when we are asleep, and that has had experience of such falling — that has, in short, a memory of past-day race experiences, just as our wake-a-day personality has a memory of our wake-a-day experiences.

It was at this stage in my reasoning that I began to see the light. And quickly the light burst upon me with dazzling brightness, illuminating and explaining all that had been weird and uncanny and unnaturally impossible in my dream experiences. In my sleep it was not my wake-a-day personality that took charge of me; it was another and distinct personality, possessing a new and totally different fund of experiences, and, to the point of my dreaming, possessing memories of those totally different experiences.

What was this personality? When had it itself lived a wake-a-day life on this planet in order to collect this fund of strange experiences? These were questions that my dreams themselves answered. He lived in the long ago, when the world was young, in that period that we call the Mid-Pleistocene. He fell from the trees but did not strike bottom. He gibbered with fear at the roaring of the lions. He was pursued by beasts of prey, struck at by deadly snakes. He chattered with his kind in council, and he received rough usage at the hands of the Fire People in the day that he fled before them.

But, I hear you objecting, why is it that these racial memories are not ours as well, seeing that we have a vague other-personality that falls through space while we sleep?

And I may answer with another question. Why is a two-headed calf? And my own answer to this is that it is a freak. And so I answer your question. I have this other-personality and these complete racial memories because I am a freak.

But let me be more explicit.

The commonest race memory we have is the falling-through-space dream. This other-personality is very vague. About the only memory it has is that of falling. But many of us have sharper, more distinct other-personalities. Many of us have the flying dream, the pursuing-monster dream, color dreams, suffocation dreams, and the reptile and vermin dreams. In short, while this other-personality is vestigial in all of us, in some of us it is almost obliterated, while in others of us it is more pronounced. Some of us have stronger and completer race memories than others.

It is all a question of varying degree of possession of the other-personality. In myself, the degree of possession is enormous. My other-personality is almost equal in power with my own personality. And in this matter I am, as I said, a freak — a freak of heredity.

I do believe that it is the possession of this other-personality — but not so strong a one as mine — that has in some few others given rise to belief in personal reincarnation experiences. It is very plausible to such people, a most convincing hypothesis. When they have visions of scenes they have never seen in the flesh, memories of acts and events dating back in time, the simplest explanation is that they have lived before.

But they make the mistake of ignoring their own duality. They do not recognize their other-personality. They think it is their own personality, that they have only one personality; and from such a premise they can conclude only that they have lived previous lives.

But they are wrong. It is not reincarnation. I have visions of myself roaming through the forests of the Younger World; and yet it is not myself that I see but one that is only remotely a part of me, as my father and my grandfather are parts of me less remote. This other-self of mine is an ancestor, a progenitor of my progenitors in the early line of my race, himself the progeny of a line that long before his time developed fingers and toes and climbed up into the trees.

I must again, at the risk of boring, repeat that I am, in this one thing, to be considered a freak. Not alone do I possess racial memory to an enormous extent, but I possess the memories of one particular and far-removed progenitor. And yet, while this is most unusual, there is nothing over-remarkable about it.

Follow my reasoning. An instinct is a racial memory. Very good. Then you and I and all of us receive these memories from our fathers and mothers, as they received them from their fathers and mothers. Therefore there must be a medium whereby these memories are transmitted from generation to generation. This medium is what Weismann terms the "germplasm." It carries the memories of the whole evolution of the race. These memories are dim and confused, and many of them are lost. But some strains of germplasm carry an excessive freightage of memories — are, to be scientific, more atavistic than other strains; and such a strain is mine. I am a freak of heredity, an atavistic nightmare — call me what you will; but here I am, real and alive, eating three hearty meals a day, and what are you going to do about it?

And now, before I take up my tale, I want to anticipate the doubting Thomases of psychology, who are prone to scoff, and who would otherwise surely say that the coherence of my dreams is due to overstudy and the subconscious projection of my knowledge of evolution into my dreams. In the first place, I have never been a zealous student. I graduated last of my class. I cared more for athletics, and — there is no reason I should not confess it — more for billiards.

Further, I had no knowledge of evolution until I was at college, whereas in my childhood and youth I had already lived in my dreams all the details of that other, long-ago life. I will say, however, that these details were mixed and incoherent until I came to know the science of evolution. Evolution was the key. It gave the explanation, gave sanity to the pranks of this atavistic brain of mine that, modern and normal, harked back to a past so remote as to be contemporaneous with the raw beginnings of mankind.

For in this past I know of, man, as we to-day know him, did not exist. It was in the period of his becoming that I must have lived and had my being.

CHAPTER III

The commonest dream of my early childhood was something like this: It seemed that I was very small and that I lay curled up in a sort of nest of twigs and boughs. Sometimes I was lying on my back. In this position it seemed that I spent many hours, watching the play of sunlight on the foliage and the stirring of the leaves by the wind. Often the nest itself moved back and forth when the wind was strong.

But always, while so lying in the nest, I was mastered as of tremendous space beneath me. I never saw it, I never peered over the edge of the nest to see; but I KNEW and feared that space that lurked just beneath me and that ever threatened me like a maw of some all-devouring monster.

This dream, in which I was quiescent and which was more like a condition than an experience of action, I dreamed very often in my early childhood. But suddenly, there would rush into the very midst of it strange forms and ferocious happenings, the thunder and crashing of storm, or unfamiliar landscapes such as in my wake-a-day life I had never seen. The result was confusion and nightmare. I could comprehend nothing of it. There was no logic of sequence.

You see, I did not dream consecutively. One moment I was a wee babe of the Younger World lying in my tree nest; the next moment I was a grown man of the Younger World locked in combat with the hideous Red-Eye; and the next moment I was creeping carefully down to the water-hole in the heat of the day. Events, years apart in their occurrence in the Younger World, occurred with me within the space of several minutes, or seconds.

It was all a jumble, but this jumble I shall not inflict upon you. It was not until I was a young man and had dreamed many thousand times, that everything straightened out and became clear and plain. Then it was that I got the clew of time, and was able to piece together events and actions in their proper order. Thus was I able to reconstruct the vanished Younger World as it was at the time I lived in it — or at the time my other-self lived in it. The distinction does not matter; for I, too, the modern man, have gone back and lived that early life in the company of my other-self.

For your convenience, since this is to be no sociological screed, I shall frame together the different events into a comprehensive story. For there is a certain thread of continuity and happening that runs through all the dreams. There is my friendship with Lop-Ear, for instance. Also, there is the enmity of Red-Eye, and the love of the Swift One. Taking it all in all, a fairly coherent and interesting story I am sure you will agree.

I do not remember much of my mother. Possibly the earliest recollection I have of her — and certainly the sharpest — is the following: It seemed I was lying on the ground. I was somewhat older than during the nest days, but still helpless. I rolled about in the dry leaves, playing with them and making crooning, rasping noises in my throat. The sun shone warmly and I was happy, and comfortable. I was in a little open space. Around me, on all sides, were bushes and fern-like growths, and overhead and all about were the trunks and branches of forest trees.

Suddenly I heard a sound. I sat upright and listened. I made no movement. The little noises died down in my throat, and I sat as one petrified. The sound drew closer. It was like the grunt of a pig. Then I began to hear the sounds caused by the moving of a body through the brush. Next I saw the ferns agitated by the passage of the body. Then the ferns parted, and I saw gleaming eyes, a long snout, and white tusks.

It was a wild boar. He peered at me curiously. He grunted once or twice and shifted his weight from one foreleg to the other, at the same time moving his head from side to side and swaying the ferns. Still I sat as one petrified, my eyes unblinking as I stared at him, fear eating at my heart.

It seemed that this movelessness and silence on my part was what was expected of me. I was not to cry out in the face of fear. It was a dictate of instinct. And so I sat there and waited for I knew not what. The boar thrust the ferns aside and stepped into the open. The curiosity went out of his eyes, and they gleamed cruelly. He tossed his head at me threateningly and advanced a step. This he did again, and yet again.

Then I screamed...or shrieked — I cannot describe it, but it was a shrill and terrible cry. And it seems that it, too, at this stage of the proceedings, was the thing expected of me. From not far away came an answering cry. My sounds seemed momentarily to disconcert the boar, and while he halted and shifted his weight with indecision, an apparition burst upon us.

She was like a large orangutan, my mother, or like a chimpanzee, and yet, in sharp and definite ways, quite different. She was heavier of build than they, and had less hair. Her arms were not so long, and her legs were stouter. She wore no clothes — only her natural hair. And I can tell you she was a fury when she was excited.

And like a fury she dashed upon the scene. She was gritting her teeth, making frightful grimaces, snarling, uttering sharp and continuous cries that sounded like “kh-ah! kh-ah!” So sudden and formidable was her appearance that the boar involuntarily bunched himself together on the defensive and bristled as she swerved toward him. Then she swerved toward me. She had quite taken the breath out of him. I knew just what to do in that moment of time she had gained. I leaped to meet her, catching her about the waist and holding on hand and foot — yes, by my feet; I could hold on by them as readily as by my hands. I could feel in my tense grip the pull of the hair as her skin and her muscles moved beneath with her efforts.

As I say, I leaped to meet her, and on the instant she leaped straight up into the air, catching an overhanging branch with her hands. The next instant, with clashing tusks, the boar drove past underneath. He had recovered from his surprise and sprung forward, emitting a squeal that was almost a trumpeting. At any rate it was a call, for it was followed by the rushing of bodies through the ferns and brush from all directions.

From every side wild hogs dashed into the open space — a score of them. But my mother swung over the top of a thick limb, a dozen feet from the ground, and, still holding on to her, we perched there in safety. She was very excited. She chattered and screamed, and scolded down at the bristling, tooth-gnashing circle that had gathered beneath. I, too, trembling, peered down at the angry beasts and did my best to imitate my mother’s cries.

From the distance came similar cries, only pitched deeper, into a sort of roaring bass. These grew momentarily louder, and soon I saw him approaching, my father — at least, by all the evidence of the times, I am driven to conclude that he was my father.

He was not an extremely prepossessing father, as fathers go. He seemed half man, and half ape, and yet not ape, and not yet man. I fail to describe him. There is nothing like him to-day on the earth, under the earth, nor in the earth. He was a large man in his day, and he must have weighed all of a hundred and thirty pounds. His face was broad and flat, and the eyebrows over-hung the eyes. The eyes themselves were small, deep-set, and close together. He had practically no nose at all. It was squat and broad, apparently with-out any bridge, while the nostrils were like two holes in the face, opening outward instead of down.

The forehead slanted back from the eyes, and the hair began right at the eyes and ran up over the head. The head itself was preposterously small and was supported on an equally preposterous, thick, short neck.

There was an elemental economy about his body — as was there about all our bodies. The chest was deep, it is true, cavernously deep; but there were no full-swelling muscles, no wide-spreading shoulders, no clean-limbed straightness, no generous symmetry of outline. It represented strength, that body of my father's, strength without beauty; ferocious, primordial strength, made to clutch and gripe and rend and destroy.

His hips were thin; and the legs, lean and hairy, were crooked and stringy-muscled. In fact, my father's legs were more like arms. They were twisted and gnarly, and with scarcely the semblance of the full meaty calf such as graces your leg and mine. I remember he could not walk on the flat of his foot. This was because it was a prehensile foot, more like a hand than a foot. The great toe, instead of being in line with the other toes, opposed them, like a thumb, and its opposition to the other toes was what enabled him to get a grip with his foot. This was why he could not walk on the flat of his foot.

But his appearance was no more unusual than the manner of his coming, there to my mother and me as we perched above the angry wild pigs. He came through the trees, leaping from limb to limb and from tree to tree; and he came swiftly. I can see him now, in my wake-a-day life, as I write this, swinging along through the trees, a four-handed, hairy creature, howling with rage, pausing now and again to beat his chest with his clenched fist, leaping ten-and-fifteen-foot gaps, catching a branch with one hand and swinging on across another gap to catch with his other hand and go on, never hesitating, never at a loss as to how to proceed on his arboreal way.

And as I watched him I felt in my own being, in my very muscles themselves, the surge and thrill of desire to go leaping from bough to bough; and I felt also the guarantee of the latent power in that being and in those muscles of mine. And why not? Little boys watch their fathers swing axes and fell trees, and feel in themselves that some day they, too, will swing axes and fell trees. And so with me. The life that was in me was constituted to do what my father did, and it whispered to me secretly and ambitiously of aerial paths and forest flights.

At last my father joined us. He was extremely angry. I remember the outthrust of his protruding underlip as he glared down at the wild pigs. He snarled something like a dog, and I remember that his eye-teeth were large, like fangs, and that they impressed me tremendously.

His conduct served only the more to infuriate the pigs. He broke off twigs and small branches and flung them down upon our enemies. He even hung by one hand, tantalizingly just beyond reach, and mocked them as they gnashed their tusks with impotent rage. Not content with this, he broke off a stout branch, and, holding on with one hand and foot, jabbed the infuriated beasts in the sides and whacked them across their noses. Needless to state, my mother and I enjoyed the sport.

But one tires of all good things, and in the end, my father, chuckling maliciously the while, led the way across the trees. Now it was that my ambitions ebbed away, and I became timid, holding tightly to my mother as she climbed and swung through space. I remember when the branch broke with her weight. She had made a wide leap, and with the snap of the wood I was overwhelmed with the sickening consciousness of falling through space, the pair of us. The forest and the sunshine on the rustling leaves vanished from my eyes. I had a fading glimpse of my father abruptly arresting his progress to look, and then all was blackness.

The next moment I was awake, in my sheeted bed, sweating, trembling, nauseated. The window was up, and a cool air was blowing through the room. The night-lamp was burning calmly. And because of this I take it that the wild pigs did not get us, that we never fetched bottom; else I should not be here now, a thousand centuries after, to remember the event.

And now put yourself in my place for a moment. Walk with me a bit in my tender childhood, bed with me a night and imagine yourself dreaming such incomprehensible horrors. Remember I was an inexperienced child. I had never seen a wild boar in my life. For that matter I had never seen a domesticated pig. The nearest approach to one that I had seen was breakfast bacon sizzling in its fat. And yet here, real as life, wild boars dashed through my dreams, and I, with fantastic parents, swung through the lofty tree-spaces.

Do you wonder that I was frightened and oppressed by my nightmare-ridden nights? I was accursed. And, worst of all, I was afraid to tell. I do not know why, except that I had a feeling of guilt, though I knew no better of what I was guilty. So it was, through long years, that I suffered in silence, until I came to man’s estate and learned the why and wherefore of my dreams.

CHAPTER IV

There is one puzzling thing about these prehistoric memories of mine. It is the vagueness of the time element. I lo not always know the order of events; — or can I tell, between some events, whether one, two, or four or five years have elapsed. I can only roughly tell the passage of time by judging the changes in the appearance and pursuits of my fellows.

Also, I can apply the logic of events to the various happenings. For instance, there is no doubt whatever that my mother and I were treed by the wild pigs and fled and fell in the days before I made the acquaintance of Lop-Ear, who became what I may call my boyhood chum. And it is just as conclusive that between these two periods I must have left my mother.

I have no memory of my father than the one I have given. Never, in the years that followed, did he reappear. And from my knowledge of the times, the only explanation possible lies in that he perished shortly after the adventure with the wild pigs. That it must have been an untimely end, there is no discussion. He was in full vigor, and only sudden and violent death could have taken him off. But I know not the manner of his going — whether he was drowned in the river, or was swallowed by a snake, or went into the stomach of old Saber-Tooth, the tiger, is beyond my knowledge.

For know that I remember only the things I saw myself, with my own eyes, in those prehistoric days. If my mother knew my father’s end, she never told me. For that matter I doubt if she had a vocabulary adequate to convey such information. Perhaps, all told, the Folk in that day had a vocabulary of thirty or forty sounds.

I call them SOUNDS, rather than WORDS, because sounds they were primarily. They had no fixed values, to be altered by adjectives and adverbs. These latter were tools of speech not yet invented. Instead of qualifying nouns or verbs by the use of adjectives and adverbs, we qualified sounds by intonation, by changes in quantity and pitch, by retarding and by accelerating. The length of time employed in the utterance of a particular sound shaded its meaning.

We had no conjugation. One judged the tense by the context. We talked only concrete things because we thought only concrete things. Also, we depended largely on pantomime. The simplest abstraction was practically beyond our thinking; and when one did happen to think one, he was hard put to communicate it to his fellows. There were no sounds for it. He was pressing beyond the limits of his vocabulary. If he invented sounds for it, his fellows did not understand the sounds. Then it was that he fell back on pantomime, illustrating the thought wherever possible and at the same time repeating the new sound over and over again.

Thus language grew. By the few sounds we possessed we were enabled to think a short distance beyond those sounds; then came the need for new sounds wherewith to express the new thought. Sometimes, however, we thought too long a distance in advance of our sounds, managed to achieve abstractions (dim ones I grant), which we failed utterly to make known to other folk. After all, language did not grow fast in that day.

Oh, believe me, we were amazingly simple. But we did know a lot that is not known to-day. We could twitch our ears, prick them up and flatten them down at will. And we could scratch between our shoulders with ease. We could throw stones with our feet. I have done it many a time. And for that matter, I could keep my knees straight, bend forward from the hips, and touch, not the tips of my fingers, but the points of my elbows, to the ground. And as for bird-nesting — well, I only wish the twentieth-century boy could see us. But we made no collections of eggs. We ate them.

I remember — but I out-run my story. First let me tell of Lop-Ear and our friendship. Very early in my life, I separated from my mother. Possibly this was because, after the death of my father, she took to herself a second husband. I have few recollections of him, and they are not of the best. He was a light fellow. There was no solidity to him. He was too voluble. His infernal chattering worries me even now as I think of it. His mind was too inconsequential to permit him to possess purpose. Monkeys in their cages always remind me of him. He was monkeyish. That is the best description I can give of him.

He hated me from the first. And I quickly learned to be afraid of him and his malicious pranks. Whenever he came in sight I crept close to my mother and clung to her. But I was growing older all the time, and it was inevitable that I should from time to time stray from her, and stray farther and farther. And these were the opportunities that the Chatterer waited for. (I may as well explain that we bore no names in those days; were not known by any name. For the sake of convenience I have myself given names to the various Folk I was more closely in contact with, and the “Chatterer” is the most fitting description I can find for that precious stepfather of mine. As for me, I have named myself “Big-Tooth.” My eye-teeth were pronouncedly large.)

But to return to the Chatterer. He persistently terrorized me. He was always pinching me and cuffing me, and on occasion he was not above biting me. Often my mother interfered, and the way she made his fur fly was a joy to see. But the result of all this was a beautiful and unending family quarrel, in which I was the bone of contention.

No, my home-life was not happy. I smile to myself as I write the phrase. Home-life! Home! I had no home in the modern sense of the term. My home was an association, not a habitation. I lived in my mother’s care, not in a house. And my mother lived anywhere, so long as when night came she was above the ground.

My mother was old-fashioned. She still clung to her trees. It is true, the more progressive members of our horde lived in the caves above the river. But my mother was suspicious and unprogressive. The trees were good enough for her. Of course, we had one particular tree in which we usually roosted, though we often roosted in other trees when nightfall caught us. In a convenient fork was a sort of rude platform of twigs and branches and creeping things. It was more like a huge bird-nest than anything else, though it was a thousand times cruder in the weaving than any bird-nest. But it had one feature that I have never seen attached to any bird-nest, namely, a roof.

Oh, not a roof such as modern man makes! Nor a roof such as is made by the lowest aborigines of to-day. It was infinitely more clumsy than the clumsiest handiwork of man — of man as we know him. It was put together in a casual, helter-skelter sort of way. Above the fork of the tree whereon we rested was a pile of dead branches and brush. Four or five adjacent forks held what I may term the various ridge-poles. These were merely stout sticks an inch or so in diameter. On them rested the brush and branches. These seemed to have been tossed on almost aimlessly. There was no attempt at thatching. And I must confess that the roof leaked miserably in a heavy rain.

But the Chatterer. He made home-life a burden for both my mother and me — and by home-life I mean, not the leaky nest in the tree, but the group-life of the three of us. He was most malicious in his persecution of me. That was the one purpose to which he held steadfastly for longer than five minutes. Also, as time went by, my mother was less eager in her defence of me. I think, what of the continuous rows raised by the Chatterer, that I must have become a nuisance to her. At any rate, the situation went from bad to worse so rapidly that I should soon, of my own volition, have left home. But the satisfaction of performing so independent an act was denied me. Before I was ready to go, I was thrown out. And I mean this literally.

The opportunity came to the Chatterer one day when I was alone in the nest. My mother and the Chatterer had gone away together toward the blueberry swamp. He must have planned the whole thing, for I heard him returning alone through the forest, roaring with self-induced rage as he came. Like all the men of our horde, when they were angry or were trying to make themselves angry, he stopped now and again to hammer on his chest with his fist.

I realized the helplessness of my situation, and crouched trembling in the nest. The Chatterer came directly to the tree — I remember it was an oak tree — and began to climb up. And he never ceased for a moment from his infernal row. As I have said, our language was extremely meagre, and he must have strained it by the variety of ways in which he informed me of his undying hatred of me and of his intention there and then to have it out with me.

As he climbed to the fork, I fled out the great horizontal limb. He followed me, and out I went, farther and farther. At last I was out amongst the small twigs and leaves. The Chatterer was ever a coward, and greater always than any anger he ever worked up was his caution. He was afraid to follow me out amongst the leaves and twigs. For that matter, his greater weight would have crashed him through the foliage before he could have got to me.

But it was not necessary for him to reach me, and well he knew it, the scoundrel! With a malevolent expression on his face, his beady eyes gleaming with cruel intelligence, he began teetering. Teetering! — and with me out on the very edge of the bough, clutching at the twigs that broke continually with my weight. Twenty feet beneath me was the earth.

Wildly and more — wildly he teetered, grinning at me his gloating hatred. Then came the end. All four holds broke at the same time, and I fell, back-downward, looking up at him, my hands and feet still clutching the broken twigs. Luckily, there were no wild pigs under me, and my fall was broken by the tough and springy bushes.

Usually, my falls destroy my dreams, the nervous shock being sufficient to bridge the thousand centuries in an instant and hurl me wide awake into my little bed, where, perchance, I lie sweating and trembling and hear the cuckoo clock calling the hour in the hall. But this dream of my leaving home I have had many times, and never yet have I been awakened by it. Always do I crash, shrieking, down through the brush and fetch up with a bump on the ground.

Scratched and bruised and whimpering, I lay where I had fallen. Peering up through the bushes, I could see the Chatterer. He had set up a demoniacal chant of joy and was keeping time to it with his teetering. I quickly hushed my whimpering. I was no longer in the safety of the trees, and I knew the danger I ran of bringing upon myself the hunting animals by too audible an expression of my grief.

I remember, as my sobs died down, that I became interested in watching the strange light-effects produced by partially opening and closing my tear-wet eyelids. Then I began to investigate, and found that I was not so very badly damaged by my fall. I had lost some hair and hide, here and there; the sharp and jagged end of a broken branch had thrust fully an inch into my forearm; and my right hip, which had borne the brunt of my contact with the ground, was aching intolerably. But these, after all, were only petty hurts. No bones were broken, and in those days the flesh of man had finer healing qualities than it has to-day. Yet it was a severe fall, for I limped with my injured hip for fully a week afterward.

Next, as I lay in the bushes, there came upon me a feeling of desolation, a consciousness that I was homeless. I made up my mind never to return to my mother and the Chatterer. I would go far away through the terrible forest, and find some tree for myself in which to roost. As for food, I knew where to find it. For the last year at least I had not been beholden to my mother for food. All she had furnished me was protection and guidance.

I crawled softly out through the bushes. Once I looked back and saw the Chatterer still chanting and teetering. It was not a pleasant sight. I knew pretty well how to be cautious, and I was exceedingly careful on this my first journey in the world.

I gave no thought as to where I was going. I had but one purpose, and that was to go away beyond the reach of the Chatterer. I climbed into the trees and wandered on amongst them for hours, passing from tree to tree and never touching the ground. But I did not go in any particular direction, nor did I travel steadily. It was my nature, as it was the nature of all my folk, to be inconsequential. Besides, I was a mere child, and I stopped a great deal to play by the way.

The events that befell me on my leaving home are very vague in my mind. My dreams do not cover them. Much has my other-self forgotten, and particularly at this very period. Nor have I been able to frame up the various dreams so as to bridge the gap between my leaving the home-tree and my arrival at the caves.

I remember that several times I came to open spaces. These I crossed in great trepidation, descending to the ground and running at the top of my speed. I remember that there were days of rain and days of sunshine, so that I must have wandered alone for quite a time. I especially dream of my misery in the rain, and of my sufferings from hunger and how I appeased it. One very strong impression is of hunting little lizards on the rocky top of an open knoll. They ran under the rocks, and most of them escaped; but occasionally I turned over a stone and caught one. I was frightened away from this knoll by snakes. They did not pursue me. They were merely basking on flat rocks in the sun. But such was my inherited fear of them that I fled as fast as if they had been after me.

Then I gnawed bitter bark from young trees. I remember vaguely the eating of many green nuts, with soft shells and milky kernels. And I remember most distinctly suffering from a stomach-ache. It may have been caused by the green nuts, and maybe by the lizards. I do not know. But I do know that I was fortunate in not being devoured during the several hours I was knotted up on the ground with the colic.

CHAPTER V

My vision of the scene came abruptly, as I emerged from the forest. I found myself on the edge of a large clear space. On one side of this space rose up high bluffs. On the other side was the river. The earth bank ran steeply down to the water, but here and there, in several places, where at some time slides of earth had occurred, there were run-ways. These were the drinking-places of the Folk that lived in the caves.

And this was the main abiding-place of the Folk that I had chanced upon. This was, I may say, by stretching the word, the village. My mother and the Chatterer and I, and a few other simple bodies, were what might be termed suburban residents. We were part of the horde, though we lived a distance away from it. It was only a short distance, though it had taken me, what of my wandering, all of a week to arrive. Had I come directly, I could have covered the trip in an hour.

But to return. From the edge of the forest I saw the caves in the bluff, the open space, and the run-ways to the drinking-places. And in the open space I saw many of the Folk. I had been straying, alone and a child, for a week. During that time I had seen not one of my kind. I had lived in terror and desolation. And now, at the sight of my kind, I was overcome with gladness, and I ran wildly toward them.

Then it was that a strange thing happened. Some one of the Folk saw me and uttered a warning cry. On the instant, crying out with fear and panic, the Folk fled away. Leaping and scrambling over the rocks, they plunged into the mouths of the caves and disappeared...all but one, a little baby, that had been dropped in the excitement close to the base of the bluff. He was wailing dolefully. His mother dashed out; he sprang to meet her and held on tightly as she scrambled back into the cave.

I was all alone. The populous open space had of a sudden become deserted. I sat down forlornly and whimpered. I could not understand. Why had the Folk run away from me? In later time, when I came to know their ways, I was to learn. When they saw me dashing out of the forest at top speed they concluded that I was being pursued by some hunting animal. By my unceremonious approach I had stampeded them.

As I sat and watched the cave-mouths I became aware that the Folk were watching me. Soon they were thrusting their heads out. A little later they were calling back and forth to one another. In the hurry and confusion it had happened that all had not gained their own caves. Some of the young ones had sought refuge in other caves. The mothers did not call for them by name, because that was an invention we had not yet made. All were nameless. The mothers uttered querulous, anxious cries, which were recognized by the young ones. Thus, had my mother been there calling to me, I should have recognized her voice amongst the voices of a thousand mothers, and in the same way would she have recognized mine amongst a thousand.

This calling back and forth continued for some time, but they were too cautious to come out of their caves and descend to the ground. Finally one did come. He was destined to play a large part in my life, and for that matter he already played a large part in the lives of all the members of the horde. He it was whom I shall call Red-Eye in the pages of this history — so called because of his inflamed eyes, the lids being always red, and, by the peculiar effect they produced, seeming to advertise the terrible savagery of him. The color of his soul was red.

He was a monster in all ways. Physically he was a giant. He must have weighed one hundred and seventy pounds. He was the largest one of our kind I ever saw. Nor did I ever see one of the Fire People so large as he, nor one of the Tree People. Sometimes, when in the newspapers I happen upon descriptions of our modern bruisers and prizefighters, I wonder what chance the best of them would have had against him.

I am afraid not much of a chance. With one grip of his iron fingers and a pull, he could have plucked a muscle, say a biceps, by the roots, clear out of their bodies. A back-handed, loose blow of his fist could have smashed their skulls like egg-shells. With a sweep of his wicked feet (or hind-hands) he could have disembowelled them. A twist could have broken their necks, and I know that with a single crunch of his jaws he could have pierced, at the same moment, the great vein of the throat in front and the spinal marrow at the back.

He could spring twenty feet horizontally from a sitting position. He was abominably hairy. It was a matter of pride with us to be not very hairy. But he was covered with hair all over, on the inside of the arms as well as the outside, and even the ears themselves. The only places on him where the hair did not grow were the soles of his hands and feet and beneath his eyes.

He was frightfully ugly, his ferocious grinning mouth and huge down-hanging under-lip being but in harmony with his terrible eyes.

This was Red-Eye. And right gingerly he crept out or his cave and descended to the ground. Ignoring me, he proceeded to reconnoitre. He bent forward from the hips as he walked; and so far forward did he bend, and so long were his arms, that with every step he touched the knuckles of his hands to the ground on either side of him. He was awkward in the semi-erect position of walking that he assumed, and he really touched his knuckles to the ground in order to balance himself. But oh, I tell you he could run on all-fours! Now this was something at which we were particularly awkward. Furthermore, it was a rare individual among us who balanced himself with his knuckles when walking. Such an individual was an atavism, and Red-Eye was an even greater atavism.

That is what he was — an atavism. We were in the process of changing our tree-life to life on the ground. For many generations we had been going through this change, and our bodies and carriage had likewise changed. But Red-Eye had reverted to the more primitive tree-dwelling type. Perforce, because he was born in our horde he stayed with us; but in actuality he was an atavism and his place was elsewhere.

Very circumspect and very alert, he moved here and there about the open space, peering through the vistas among the trees and trying to catch a glimpse of the hunting animal that all suspected had pursued me. And while he did this, taking no notice of me, the Folk crowded at the cave-mouths and watched.

At last he evidently decided that there was no danger lurking about. He was returning from the head of the run-way, from where he had taken a peep down at the drinking-place. His course brought him near, but still he did not notice me. He proceeded casually on his way until abreast of me, and then, without warning and with incredible swiftness, he smote me a buffet on the head. I was knocked backward fully a dozen feet before I fetched up against the ground, and I remember, half-stunned, even as the blow was struck, hearing the wild uproar of clucking and shrieking laughter that arose from the caves. It was a great joke — at least in that day; and right heartily the Folk appreciated it.

Thus was I received into the horde. Red-Eye paid no further attention to me, and I was at liberty to whimper and sob to my heart’s content. Several of the women gathered curiously about me, and I recognized them. I had encountered them the preceding year when my mother had taken me to the hazelnut canyons.

But they quickly left me alone, being replaced by a dozen curious and teasing youngsters. They formed a circle around me, pointing their fingers, making faces, and poking and pinching me. I was frightened, and for a time I endured them, then anger got the best of me and I sprang tooth and nail upon the most audacious one of them — none other than Lop-Ear himself. I have so named him because he could prick up only one of his ears. The other ear always hung limp and without movement. Some accident had injured the muscles and deprived him of the use of it.

He closed with me, and we went at it for all the world like a couple of small boys fighting. We scratched and bit, pulled hair, clinched, and threw each other down. I remember I succeeded in getting on him what in my college days I learned was called a half-Nelson. This hold gave me the decided advantage. But I did not enjoy it long. He twisted up one leg, and with the foot (or hind-hand) made so savage an onslaught upon my abdomen as to threaten to disembowel me. I had to release him in order to save myself, and then we went at it again.

Lop-Ear was a year older than I, but I was several times angrier than he, and in the end he took to his heels. I chased him across the open and down a run-way to the river. But he was better acquainted with the locality and ran along the edge of the water and up another run-way. He cut diagonally across the open space and dashed into a wide-mouthed cave.

Before I knew it, I had plunged after him into the darkness. The next moment I was badly frightened. I had never been in a cave before. I began to whimper and cry out. Lop-Ear chattered mockingly at me, and, springing upon me unseen, tumbled me over. He did not risk a second encounter, however, and took himself off. I was between him and the entrance, and he did not pass me; yet he seemed to have gone away. I listened, but could get no clew as to where he was. This puzzled me, and when I regained the outside I sat down to watch.

He never came out of the entrance, of that I was certain; yet at the end of several minutes he chuckled at my elbow. Again I ran after him, and again he ran into the cave; but this time I stopped at the mouth. I dropped back a short distance and watched. He did not come out, yet, as before, he chuckled at my elbow and was chased by me a third time into the cave.

This performance was repeated several times. Then I followed him into the cave, where I searched vainly for him. I was curious. I could not understand how he eluded me. Always he went into the cave, never did he come out of it, yet always did he arrive there at my elbow and mock me. Thus did our fight transform itself into a game of hide and seek.

All afternoon, with occasional intervals, we kept it up, and a playful, friendly spirit arose between us. In the end, he did not run away from me, and we sat together with our arms around each other. A little later he disclosed the mystery of the wide-mouthed cave. Holding me by the hand he led me inside. It connected by a narrow crevice with another cave, and it was through this that we regained the open air.

We were now good friends. When the other young ones gathered around to tease, he joined with me in attacking them; and so viciously did we behave that before long I was let alone. Lop-Ear made me acquainted with the village. There was little that he could tell me of conditions and customs — he had not the necessary vocabulary; but by observing his actions I learned much, and also he showed me places and things.

He took me up the open space, between the caves and the river, and into the forest beyond, where, in a grassy place among the trees, we made a meal of stringy-rooted carrots. After that we had a good drink at the river and started up the run-way to the caves.

It was in the run-way that we came upon Red-Eye again. The first I knew, Lop-Ear had shrunk away to one side and was crouching low against the bank. Naturally and involuntarily, I imitated him. Then it was that I looked to see the cause of his fear. It was Red-Eye, swaggering down the centre of the run-way and scowling fiercely with his inflamed eyes. I noticed that all the youngsters shrank away from him as we had done, while the grown-ups regarded him with wary eyes when he drew near, and stepped aside to give him the centre of the path.

As twilight came on, the open space was deserted. The Folk were seeking the safety of the caves. Lop-Ear led the way to bed. High up the bluff we climbed, higher than all the other caves, to a tiny crevice that could not be seen from the ground. Into this Lop-Ear squeezed. I followed with difficulty, so narrow was the entrance, and found myself in a small rock-chamber. It was very low — not more than a couple of feet in height, and possibly three feet by four in width and length. Here, cuddled together in each other's arms, we slept out the night.

CHAPTER VI

While the more courageous of the youngsters played in and out of the large-mouthed caves, I early learned that such caves were unoccupied. No one slept in them at night. Only the crevice-mouthed caves were used, the narrower the mouth the better. This was from fear of the preying animals that made life a burden to us in those days and nights.

The first morning, after my night's sleep with Lop-Ear, I learned the advantage of the narrow-mouthed caves. It was just daylight when old Saber-Tooth, the tiger, walked into the open space. Two of the Folk were already up. They made a rush for it. Whether they were panic-stricken, or whether he was too close on their heels for them to attempt to scramble up the bluff to the crevices, I do not know; but at any rate they dashed into the wide-mouthed cave wherein Lop-Ear and I had played the afternoon before.

What happened inside there was no way of telling, but it is fair to conclude that the two Folk slipped through the connecting crevice into the other cave. This crevice was too small to allow for the passage of Saber-Tooth, and he came out the way he had gone in, unsatisfied and angry. It was evident that his night's hunting had been unsuccessful and that he had expected to make a meal off of us. He caught sight of the two Folk at the other cave-mouth and sprang for them. Of course, they darted through the passageway into the first cave. He emerged angrier than ever and snarling.

Pandemonium broke loose amongst the rest of us. All up and down the great bluff, we crowded the crevices and outside ledges, and we were all chattering and shrieking in a thousand keys. And we were all making faces — snarling faces; this was an instinct with us. We were as angry as Saber-Tooth, though our anger was allied with fear. I remember that I shrieked and made faces with the best of them. Not only did they set the example, but I felt the urge from within me to do the same things they were doing. My hair was bristling, and I was convulsed with a fierce, unreasoning rage.

For some time old Saber-Tooth continued dashing in and out of first the one cave and then the other. But the two Folk merely slipped back and forth through the connecting crevice and eluded him. In the meantime the rest of us up the bluff had proceeded to action. Every time he appeared outside we pelted him with rocks. At first we merely dropped them on him, but we soon began to whiz them down with the added force of our muscles.

This bombardment drew Saber-Tooth's attention to us and made him angrier than ever. He abandoned his pursuit of the two Folk and sprang up the bluff toward the rest of us, clawing at the crumbling rock and snarling as he clawed his upward way. At this awful sight, the last one of us sought refuge inside our caves. I know this, because I peeped out and saw the whole bluff-side deserted, save for Saber-Tooth, who had lost his footing and was sliding and falling down.

I called out the cry of encouragement, and again the bluff was covered by the screaming horde and the stones were falling faster than ever. Saber-Tooth was frantic with rage. Time and again he assaulted the bluff. Once he even gained the first crevice-entrances before he fell back, but was unable to force his way inside. With each upward rush he made, waves of fear surged over us. At first, at such times, most of us dashed inside; but some remained outside to hammer him with stones, and soon all of us remained outside and kept up the fusillade.

Never was so masterly a creature so completely baffled. It hurt his pride terribly, thus to be outwitted by the small and tender Folk. He stood on the ground and looked up at us, snarling, lashing his tail, snapping at the stones that fell near to him. Once I whizzed down a stone, and just at the right moment he looked up. It caught him full on the end of his nose, and he went straight up in the air, all four feet of him, roaring and caterwauling, what of the hurt and surprise.

He was beaten and he knew it. Recovering his dignity, he stalked out solemnly from under the rain of stones. He stopped in the middle of the open space and looked wistfully and hungrily back at us. He hated to forego the meal, and we were just so much meat, cornered but inaccessible. This sight of him started us to laughing. We laughed derisively and uproariously, all of us. Now animals do not like mockery. To be laughed at makes them angry. And in such fashion our laughter affected Saber-Tooth. He turned with a roar and charged the bluff again. This was what we wanted. The fight had become a game, and we took huge delight in pelting him.

But this attack did not last long. He quickly recovered his common sense, and besides, our missiles were shrewd to hurt. Vividly do I recollect the vision of one bulging eye of his, swollen almost shut by one of the stones we had thrown. And vividly do I retain the picture of him as he stood on the edge of the forest whither he had finally retreated. He was looking back at us, his writhing lips lifted clear of the very roots of his huge fangs, his hair bristling and his tail lashing. He gave one last snarl and slid from view among the trees.

And then such a chattering as went up. We swarmed out of our holes, examining the marks his claws had made on the crumbling rock of the bluff, all of us talking at once. One of the two Folk who had been caught in the double cave was part-grown, half child and half youth. They had come out proudly from their refuge, and we surrounded them in an admiring crowd. Then the young fellow's mother broke through and fell upon him in a tremendous rage, boxing his ears, pulling his hair, and shrieking like a demon. She was a strapping big woman, very hairy, and the thrashing she gave him was a delight to the horde. We roared with laughter, holding on to one another or rolling on the ground in our glee.

In spite of the reign of fear under which we lived, the Folk were always great laughers. We had the sense of humor. Our merriment was Gargantuan. It was never restrained. There was nothing half way about it. When a thing was funny we were convulsed with appreciation of it, and the simplest, crudest things were funny to us. Oh, we were great laughers, I can tell you.

The way we had treated Saber-Tooth was the way we treated all animals that invaded the village. We kept our run-ways and drinking-places to ourselves by making life miserable for the animals that trespassed or strayed upon our immediate territory. Even the fiercest hunting animals we so bedevilled that they learned to leave our places alone. We were not fighters like them; we were cunning and cowardly, and it was because of our cunning and cowardice, and our inordinate capacity for fear, that we survived in that frightfully hostile environment of the Younger World.

Lop-Ear, I figure, was a year older than I. What his past history was he had no way of telling me, but as I never saw anything of his mother I believed him to be an orphan. After all, fathers did not count in our horde. Marriage was as yet in a rude state, and couples had a way of quarrelling and separating. Modern man, what of his divorce institution, does the same thing legally. But we had no laws. Custom was all we went by, and our custom in this particular matter was rather promiscuous.

Nevertheless, as this narrative will show later on, we betrayed glimmering adumbrations of the monogamy that was later to give power to, and make mighty, such tribes as embraced it. Furthermore, even at the time I was born, there were several faithful couples that lived in the trees in the neighborhood of my mother. Living in the thick of the horde did not conduce to monogamy. It was for this reason, undoubtedly, that the faithful couples went away and lived by themselves. Through many years these couples stayed together, though when the man or woman died or was eaten the survivor invariably found a new mate.

There was one thing that greatly puzzled me during the first days of my residence in the horde. There was a nameless and incommunicable fear that rested upon all. At first it appeared to be connected wholly with direction. The horde feared the northeast. It lived in perpetual apprehension of that quarter of the compass. And every individual gazed more frequently and with greater alarm in that direction than in any other.

When Lop-Ear and I went toward the north-east to eat the stringy-rooted carrots that at that season were at their best, he became unusually timid. He was content to eat the leavings, the big tough carrots and the little ropy ones, rather than to venture a short distance farther on to where the carrots were as yet untouched. When I so ventured, he scolded me and quarrelled with me. He gave me to understand that in that direction was some horrible danger, but just what the horrible danger was his paucity of language would not permit him to say.

Many a good meal I got in this fashion, while he scolded and chattered vainly at me. I could not understand. I kept very alert, but I could see no danger. I calculated always the distance between myself and the nearest tree, and knew that to that haven of refuge I could out-foot the Tawny One, or old Saber-Tooth, did one or the other suddenly appear.

One late afternoon, in the village, a great uproar arose. The horde was animated with a single emotion, that of fear. The bluff-side swarmed with the Folk, all gazing and pointing into the northeast. I did not know what it was, but I scrambled all the way up to the safety of my own high little cave before ever I turned around to see.

And then, across the river, away into the northeast, I saw for the first time the mystery of smoke. It was the biggest animal I had ever seen. I thought it was a monster snake, up-ended, rearing its head high above the trees and swaying back and forth. And yet, somehow, I seemed to gather from the conduct of the Folk that the smoke itself was not the danger. They appeared to fear it as the token of something else. What this something else was I was unable to guess. Nor could they tell me. Yet I was soon to know, and I was to know it as a thing more terrible than the Tawny One, than old Saber-

Tooth, than the snakes themselves, than which it seemed there could be no things more terrible.

CHAPTER VII

Broken-Tooth was another youngster who lived by himself. His mother lived in the caves, but two more children had come after him and he had been thrust out to shift for himself. We had witnessed the performance during the several preceding days, and it had given us no little glee. Broken-Tooth did not want to go, and every time his mother left the cave he sneaked back into it. When she returned and found him there her rages were delightful. Half the horde made a practice of watching for these moments. First, from within the cave, would come her scolding and shrieking. Then we could hear sounds of the thrashing and the yelling of Broken-Tooth. About this time the two younger children joined in. And finally, like the eruption of a miniature volcano, Broken-Tooth would come flying out.

At the end of several days his leaving home was accomplished. He wailed his grief, unheeded, from the centre of the open space, for at least half an hour, and then came to live with Lop-Ear and me. Our cave was small, but with squeezing there was room for three. I have no recollection of Broken-Tooth spending more than one night with us, so the accident must have happened right away.

It came in the middle of the day. In the morning we had eaten our fill of the carrots, and then, made heedless by play, we had ventured on to the big trees just beyond. I cannot understand how Lop-Ear got over his habitual caution, but it must have been the play. We were having a great time playing tree tag. And such tag! We leaped ten or fifteen-foot gaps as a matter of course. And a twenty or twenty-five foot deliberate drop clear down to the ground was nothing to us. In fact, I am almost afraid to say the great distances we dropped. As we grew older and heavier we found we had to be more cautious in dropping, but at that age our bodies were all strings and springs and we could do anything.

Broken-Tooth displayed remarkable agility in the game. He was “It” less frequently than any of us, and in the course of the game he discovered one difficult “slip” that neither Lop-Ear nor I was able to accomplish. To be truthful, we were afraid to attempt it.

When we were “It,” Broken-Tooth always ran out to the end of a lofty branch in a certain tree. From the end of the branch to the ground it must have been seventy feet, and nothing intervened to break a fall. But about twenty feet lower down, and fully fifteen feet out from the perpendicular, was the thick branch of another tree.

As we ran out the limb, Broken-Tooth, facing us, would begin teetering. This naturally impeded our progress; but there was more in the teetering than that. He teetered with his back to the jump he was to make. Just as we nearly reached him he would let go. The teetering branch was like a springboard. It threw him far out, backward, as he fell. And as he fell he turned around sidewise in the air so as to face the other branch into which he was falling. This branch bent far down under the impact, and sometimes there was an ominous crackling; but it never broke, and out of the leaves was always to be seen the face of Broken-Tooth grinning triumphantly up at us.

I was “It” the last time Broken-Tooth tried this. He had gained the end of the branch and begun his teetering, and I was creeping out after him, when suddenly there came a low warning cry from Lop-Ear. I looked down and saw him in the main fork of the tree crouching close against the trunk. Instinctively I crouched down upon the thick limb. Broken-Tooth stopped teetering, but the branch would not stop, and his body continued bobbing up and down with the rustling leaves.

I heard the crackle of a dry twig, and looking down saw my first Fire-Man. He was creeping stealthily along on the ground and peering up into the tree. At first I thought he was a wild animal, because he wore around his waist and over his shoulders a ragged piece of bearskin. And then I saw his hands and feet, and more clearly his features. He was very much like my kind, except that he was less hairy and that his feet were less like hands than ours. In fact, he and his people, as I was later to know, were far less hairy than we, though we, in turn, were equally less hairy than the Tree People.

It came to me instantly, as I looked at him. This was the terror of the northeast, of which the mystery of smoke was a token. Yet I was puzzled. Certainly he was nothing; of which to be afraid. Red-Eye or any of our strong men would have been more than a match for him. He was old, too, wizened with age, and the hair on his face was gray. Also, he limped badly with one leg. There was no doubt at all that we could out-run him and out-climb him. He could never catch us, that was certain.

But he carried something in his hand that I had never seen before. It was a bow and arrow. But at that time a bow and arrow had no meaning for me. How was I to know that death lurked in that bent piece of wood? But Lop-

Ear knew. He had evidently seen the Fire People before and knew something of their ways. The Fire-Man peered up at him and circled around the tree. And around the main trunk above the fork Lop-Ear circled too, keeping always the trunk between himself and the Fire-Man.

The latter abruptly reversed his circling. Lop-Ear, caught unawares, also hastily reversed, but did not win the protection of the trunk until after the Fire-Man had twanged the bow.

I saw the arrow leap up, miss Lop-Ear, glance against a limb, and fall back to the ground. I danced up and down on my lofty perch with delight. It was a game! The Fire-Man was throwing things at Lop-Ear as we sometimes threw things at one another.

The game continued a little longer, but Lop-Ear did not expose himself a second time. Then the Fire-Man gave it up. I leaned far out over my horizontal limb and chattered down at him. I wanted to play. I wanted to have him try to hit me with the thing. He saw me, but ignored me, turning his attention to Broken-Tooth, who was still teetering slightly and involuntarily on the end of the branch.

The first arrow leaped upward. Broken-Tooth yelled with fright and pain. It had reached its mark. This put a new complexion on the matter. I no longer cared to play, but crouched trembling close to my limb. A second arrow and a third soared up, missing Broken-Tooth, rustling the leaves as they passed through, arching in their flight and returning to earth.

The Fire-Man stretched his bow again. He shifted his position, walking away several steps, then shifted it a second time. The bow-string twanged, the arrow leaped upward, and Broken-Tooth, uttering a terrible scream, fell off the branch. I saw him as he went down, turning over and over, all arms and legs it seemed, the shaft of the arrow projecting from his chest and appearing and disappearing with each revolution of his body.

Sheer down, screaming, seventy feet he fell, smashing to the earth with an audible thud and crunch, his body rebounding slightly and settling down again. Still he lived, for he moved and squirmed, clawing with his hands and feet. I remember the Fire-Man running forward with a stone and hammering him on the head...and then I remember no more.

Always, during my childhood, at this stage of the dream, did I wake up screaming with fright — to find, often, my mother or nurse, anxious and startled, by my bedside, passing soothing hands through my hair and telling me that they were there and that there was nothing to fear.

My next dream, in the order of succession, begins always with the flight of Lop-Ear and myself through the forest. The Fire-Man and Broken-Tooth and the tree of the tragedy are gone. Lop-Ear and I, in a cautious panic, are fleeing through the trees. In my right leg is a burning pain; and from the flesh, protruding head and shaft from either side, is an arrow of the Fire-Man. Not only did the pull and strain of it pain me severely, but it bothered my movements and made it impossible for me to keep up with Lop-Ear.

At last I gave up, crouching in the secure fork of a tree. Lop-Ear went right on. I called to him — most plaintively, I remember; and he stopped and looked back. Then he returned to me, climbing into the fork and examining the arrow. He tried to pull it out, but one way the flesh resisted the barbed lead, and the other way it resisted the feathered shaft. Also, it hurt grievously, and I stopped him.

For some time we crouched there, Lop-Ear nervous and anxious to be gone, perpetually and apprehensively peering this way and that, and myself whimpering softly and sobbing. Lop-Ear was plainly in a funk, and yet his conduct in remaining by me, in spite of his fear, I take as a foreshadowing of the altruism and comradeship that have helped make man the mightiest of the animals.

Once again Lop-Ear tried to drag the arrow through the flesh, and I angrily stopped him. Then he bent down and began gnawing the shaft of the arrow with his teeth. As he did so he held the arrow firmly in both hands so that it would not play about in the wound, and at the same time I held on to him. I often meditate upon this scene — the two of us, half-grown cubs, in the childhood of the race, and the one mastering his fear, beating down his selfish impulse of flight, in order to stand by and succor the other. And there rises up before me all that was there foreshadowed, and I see visions of Damon and Pythias, of life-saving crews and Red Cross nurses, of martyrs and leaders of forlorn hopes, of Father Damien, and of the Christ himself, and of all the men of earth, mighty of stature, whose strength may trace back to the elemental loins of Lop-Ear and Big-Tooth and other dim denizens of the Younger World.

When Lop-Ear had chewed off the head of the arrow, the shaft was withdrawn easily enough. I started to go on, but this time it was he that stopped me. My leg was bleeding profusely. Some of the smaller veins had doubtless been ruptured. Running out to the end of a branch, Lop-Ear gathered a handful of green leaves. These he stuffed into the wound. They accomplished the purpose, for the bleeding soon stopped. Then we went on together, back to the safety of the caves.

CHAPTER VIII

Well do I remember that first winter after I left home. I have long dreams of sitting shivering in the cold. Lop-Ear and I sit close together, with our arms and legs about each other, blue-faced and with chattering teeth. It got particularly crisp along toward morning. In those chill early hours we slept little, huddling together in numb misery and waiting for the sunrise in order to get warm.

When we went outside there was a crackle of frost under foot. One morning we discovered ice on the surface of the quiet water in the eddy where was the drinking-place, and there was a great How-do-you-do about it. Old Marrow-Bone was the oldest member of the horde, and he had never seen anything like it before. I remember the worried, plaintive look that came into his eyes as he examined the ice. (This plaintive look always came into our eyes when we did not understand a thing, or when we felt the prod of some vague and inexpressible desire.) Red-Eye, too, when he investigated the ice, looked bleak and plaintive, and stared across the river into the northeast, as though in some way he connected the Fire People with this latest happening.

But we found ice only on that one morning, and that was the coldest winter we experienced. I have no memory of other winters when it was so cold. I have often thought that that cold winter was a fore-runner of the countless cold winters to come, as the ice-sheet from farther north crept down over the face of the land. But we never saw that ice-sheet. Many generations must have passed away before the descendants of the horde migrated south, or remained and adapted themselves to the changed conditions.

Life was hit or miss and happy-go-lucky with us. Little was ever planned, and less was executed. We ate when we were hungry, drank when we were thirsty, avoided our carnivorous enemies, took shelter in the caves at night, and for the rest just sort of played along through life.

We were very curious, easily amused, and full of tricks and pranks. There was no seriousness about us, except when we were in danger or were angry, in which cases the one was quickly forgotten and the other as quickly got over.

We were inconsecutive, illogical, and inconsequential. We had no steadfastness of purpose, and it was here that the Fire People were ahead of us. They possessed all these things of which we possessed so little. Occasionally, however, especially in the realm of the emotions, we were capable of long-cherished purpose. The faithfulness of the monogamic couples I have referred to may be explained as a matter of habit; but my long desire for the Swift One cannot be so explained, any more than can be explained the undying enmity between me and Red-Eye.

But it was our inconsequentiality and stupidity that especially distresses me when I look back upon that life in the long ago. Once I found a broken gourd which happened to lie right side up and which had been filled with the rain. The water was sweet, and I drank it. I even took the gourd down to the stream and filled it with more water, some of which I drank and some of which I poured over Lop-Ear. And then I threw the gourd away. It never entered my head to fill the gourd with water and carry it into my cave. Yet often I was thirsty at night, especially after eating wild onions and watercress, and no one ever dared leave the caves at night for a drink.

Another time I found a dry; gourd, inside of which the seeds rattled. I had fun with it for a while. But it was a play thing, nothing more. And yet, it was not long after this that the using of gourds for storing water became the general practice of the horde. But I was not the inventor. The honor was due to old Marrow-Bone, and it is fair to assume that it was the necessity of his great age that brought about the innovation.

At any rate, the first member of the horde to use gourds was Marrow-Bone. He kept a supply of drinking-water in his cave, which cave belonged to his son, the Hairless One, who permitted him to occupy a corner of it. We used to see Marrow-Bone filling his gourd at the drinking-place and carrying it carefully up to his cave. Imitation was strong in the Folk, and first one, and then another and another, procured a gourd and used it in similar fashion, until it was a general practice with all of us so to store water.

Sometimes old Marrow-Bone had sick spells and was unable to leave the cave. Then it was that the Hairless One filled the gourd for him. A little later, the Hairless One deputed the task to Long-Lip, his son. And after that, even when Marrow-Bone was well again, Long-Lip continued carrying water for him. By and by, except on unusual occasions, the men never carried any water at all, leaving the task to the women and larger children.

Lop-Ear and I were independent. We carried water only for ourselves, and we often mocked the young water-carriers when they were called away from play to fill the gourds.

Progress was slow with us. We played through life, even the adults, much in the same way that children play, and we played as none of the other animals played. What little we learned, was usually in the course of play, and was due to our curiosity and keenness of appreciation. For that matter, the one big invention of the horde, during the time I lived with it, was the use of gourds. At first we stored only water in the gourds — in imitation of old Marrow-Bone.

But one day some one of the women — I do not know which one — filled a gourd with black-berries and carried it to her cave. In no time all the women were carrying berries and nuts and roots in the gourds. The idea, once started, had to go on. Another evolution of the carrying-receptacle was due to the women. Without doubt, some woman's gourd was too small, or else she had forgotten her gourd; but be that as it may, she bent two great leaves together, pinning the seams with twigs, and carried home a bigger quantity of berries than could have been contained in the largest gourd.

So far we got, and no farther, in the transportation of supplies during the years I lived with the Folk. It never entered anybody's head to weave a basket out of willow-withes. Sometimes the men and women tied tough vines about the bundles of ferns and branches that they carried to the caves to sleep upon. Possibly in ten or twenty generations we might have worked up to the weaving of baskets. And of this, one thing is sure: if once we wove withes into baskets, the next and inevitable step would have been the weaving of cloth. Clothes would have followed, and with covering our nakedness would have come modesty.

Thus was momentum gained in the Younger World. But we were without this momentum. We were just getting started, and we could not go far in a single generation. We were without weapons, without fire, and in the raw beginnings of speech. The device of writing lay so far in the future that I am appalled when I think of it.

Even I was once on the verge of a great discovery. To show you how fortuitous was development in those days let me state that had it not been for the gluttony of Lop-Ear I might have brought about the domestication of the dog. And this was something that the Fire People who lived to the northeast had not yet achieved. They were without dogs; this I knew from observation. But let me tell you how Lop-Ear's gluttony possibly set back our social development many generations.

Well to the west of our caves was a great swamp, but to the south lay a stretch of low, rocky hills. These were little frequented for two reasons. First of all, there was no food there of the kind we ate; and next, those rocky hills were filled with the lairs of carnivorous beasts.

But Lop-Ear and I strayed over to the hills one day. We would not have strayed had we not been teasing a tiger. Please do not laugh. It was old Saber-Tooth himself. We were perfectly safe. We chanced upon him in the forest, early in the morning, and from the safety of the branches overhead we chattered down at him our dislike and hatred. And from branch to branch, and from tree to tree, we followed overhead, making an infernal row and warning all the forest-dwellers that old Saber-Tooth was coming.

We spoiled his hunting for him, anyway. And we made him good and angry. He snarled at us and lashed his tail, and sometimes he paused and stared up at us quietly for a long time, as if debating in his mind some way by which he could get hold of us. But we only laughed and pelted him with twigs and the ends of branches.

This tiger-baiting was common sport among the folk. Sometimes half the horde would follow from overhead a tiger or lion that had ventured out in the daytime. It was our revenge; for more than one member of the horde, caught unexpectedly, had gone the way of the tiger's belly or the lion's. Also, by such ordeals of helplessness and shame, we taught the hunting animals to some extent to keep out of our territory. And then it was funny. It was a great game.

And so Lop-Ear and I had chased Saber-Tooth across three miles of forest. Toward the last he put his tail between his legs and fled from our gibing like a beaten cur. We did our best to keep up with him; but when we reached the edge of the forest he was no more than a streak in the distance.

I don't know what prompted us, unless it was curiosity; but after playing around awhile, Lop-Ear and I ventured across the open ground to the edge of the rocky hills. We did not go far. Possibly at no time were we more than a hundred yards from the trees. Coming around a sharp corner of rock (we went very carefully, because we did not know what we might encounter), we came upon three puppies playing in the sun.

They did not see us, and we watched them for some time. They were wild dogs. In the rock-wall was a horizontal fissure — evidently the lair where their mother had left them, and where they should have remained had they been obedient. But the growing life, that in Lop-Ear and me had impelled us to venture away from the forest, had driven the puppies out of the cave to frolic. I know how their mother would have punished them had she caught them.

But it was Lop-Ear and I who caught them. He looked at me, and then we made a dash for it. The puppies knew no place to run except into the lair, and we headed them off. One rushed between my legs. I squatted and grabbed him. He sank his sharp little teeth into my arm, and I dropped him in the suddenness of the hurt and surprise. The next moment he had scurried inside.

Lop-Ear, struggling with the second puppy, scowled at me and intimated by a variety of sounds the different kinds of a fool and a bungler that I was. This made me ashamed and spurred me to valor. I grabbed the remaining puppy by the tail. He got his teeth into me once, and then I got him by the nape of the neck. Lop-Ear and I sat down, and held the puppies up, and looked at them, and laughed.

They were snarling and yelping and crying. Lop-Ear started suddenly. He thought he had heard something. We looked at each other in fear, realizing the danger of our position. The one thing that made animals raging demons was tampering with their young. And these puppies that made such a racket belonged to the wild dogs. Well we knew them, running in packs, the terror of the grass-eating animals. We had watched them following the herds of cattle and bison and dragging down the calves, the aged, and the sick. We had been chased by them ourselves, more than once. I had seen one of the Folk, a woman, run down by them and caught just as she reached the shelter of the woods. Had she not been tired out by the run, she might have made it into a tree. She tried, and slipped, and fell back. They made short work of her.

We did not stare at each other longer than a moment. Keeping tight hold of our prizes, we ran for the woods. Once in the security of a tall tree, we held up the puppies and laughed again. You see, we had to have our laugh out, no matter what happened.

And then began one of the hardest tasks I ever attempted. We started to carry the puppies to our cave. Instead of using our hands for climbing, most of the time they were occupied with holding our squirming captives. Once we tried to walk on the ground, but were treed by a miserable hyena, who followed along underneath. He was a wise hyena.

Lop-Ear got an idea. He remembered how we tied up bundles of leaves to carry home for beds. Breaking off some tough vines, he tied his puppy’s legs together, and then, with another piece of vine passed around his neck, slung the puppy on his back. This left him with hands and feet free to climb. He was jubilant, and did not wait for me to finish tying my puppy’s legs, but started on. There was one difficulty, however. The puppy wouldn’t stay slung on Lop-Ear’s back. It swung around to the side and then on in front. Its teeth were not tied, and the next thing it did was to sink its teeth into Lop-Ear’s soft and unprotected stomach. He let out a scream, nearly fell, and clutched a branch violently with both hands to save himself. The vine around his neck broke, and the puppy, its four legs still tied, dropped to the ground. The hyena proceeded to dine.

Lop-Ear was disgusted and angry. He abused the hyena, and then went off alone through the trees. I had no reason that I knew for wanting to carry the puppy to the cave, except that I WANTED to; and I stayed by my task. I made the work a great deal easier by elaborating on Lop-Ear’s idea. Not only did I tie the puppy’s legs, but I thrust a stick through his jaws and tied them together securely.

At last I got the puppy home. I imagine I had more pertinacity than the average Folk, or else I should not have succeeded. They laughed at me when they saw me lugging the puppy up to my high little cave, but I did not mind. Success crowned my efforts, and there was the puppy. He was a plaything such as none of the Folk possessed. He learned rapidly. When I played with him and he bit me, I boxed his ears, and then he did not try again to bite for a long time.

I was quite taken up with him. He was something new, and it was a characteristic of the Folk to like new things. When I saw that he refused fruits and vegetables, I caught birds for him and squirrels and young rabbits. (We Folk were meat-eaters, as well as vegetarians, and we were adept at catching small game.) The puppy ate the meat and thrived. As well as I can estimate, I must have had him over a week. And then, coming back to the cave one day with a nestful of young-hatched pheasants, I found Lop-Ear had killed the puppy and was just beginning to eat him. I sprang for Lop-Ear, — the cave was small, — and we went at it tooth and nail.

And thus, in a fight, ended one of the earliest attempts to domesticate the dog. We pulled hair out in handfuls, and scratched and bit and gouged. Then we sulked and made up. After that we ate the puppy. Raw? Yes. We had not yet discovered fire. Our evolution into cooking animals lay in the tight-rolled scroll of the future.

CHAPTER IX

Red-Eye was an atavism. He was the great discordant element in our horde. He was more primitive than any of us. He did not belong with us, yet we were still so primitive ourselves that we were incapable of a cooperative effort strong enough to kill him or cast him out. Rude as was our social organization, he was, nevertheless, too rude to live in it. He tended always to destroy the horde by his unsocial acts. He was really a reversion to an earlier type, and his place was with the Tree People rather than with us who were in the process of becoming men.

He was a monster of cruelty, which is saying a great deal in that day. He beat his wives — not that he ever had more than one wife at a time, but that he was married many times. It was impossible for any woman to live with him, and yet they did live with him, out of compulsion. There was no gainsaying him.

No man was strong enough to stand against him.

Often do I have visions of the quiet hour before the twilight. From drinking-place and carrot patch and berry swamp the Folk are trooping into the open space before the caves. They dare linger no later than this, for the dreadful darkness is approaching, in which the world is given over to the carnage of the hunting animals, while the fore-runners of man hide tremblingly in their holes.

There yet remain to us a few minutes before we climb to our caves. We are tired from the play of the day, and the sounds we make are subdued. Even the cubs, still greedy for fun and antics, play with restraint. The wind from the sea has died down, and the shadows are lengthening with the last of the sun's descent. And then, suddenly, from Red-Eye's cave, breaks a wild screaming and the sound of blows. He is beating his wife.

At first an awed silence comes upon us. But as the blows and screams continue we break out into an insane gibbering of helpless rage. It is plain that the men resent Red-Eye's actions, but they are too afraid of him. The blows cease, and a low groaning dies away, while we chatter among ourselves and the sad twilight creeps upon us.

We, to whom most happenings were jokes, never laughed during Red-Eye's wife-beatings. We knew too well the tragedy of them. On more than one morning, at the base of the cliff, did we find the body of his latest wife.

He had tossed her there, after she had died, from his cave-mouth. He never buried his dead. The task of carrying away the bodies, that else would have polluted our abiding-place, he left to the horde. We usually flung them into the river below the last drinking-place.

Not alone did Red-Eye murder his wives, but he also murdered for his wives, in order to get them. When he wanted a new wife and selected the wife of another man, he promptly killed that man. Two of these murders I saw myself. The whole horde knew, but could do nothing. We had not yet developed any government, to speak of, inside the horde. We had certain customs and visited our wrath upon the unlucky ones who violated those customs. Thus, for example, the individual who defiled a drinking-place would be attacked by every onlooker, while one who deliberately gave a false alarm was the recipient of much rough usage at our hands. But Red-Eye walked rough-shod over all our customs, and we so feared him that we were incapable of the collective action necessary to punish him.

It was during the sixth winter in our cave that Lop-Ear and I discovered that we were really growing up. From the first it had been a squeeze to get in through the entrance-crevice. This had had its advantages, however. It had prevented the larger Folk from taking our cave away from us. And it was a most desirable cave, the highest on the bluff, the safest, and in winter the smallest and warmest.

To show the stage of the mental development of the Folk, I may state that it would have been a simple thing for some of them to have driven us out and enlarged the crevice-opening. But they never thought of it. Lop-Ear and I did not think of it either until our increasing size compelled us to make an enlargement. This occurred when summer was well along and we were fat with better forage. We worked at the crevice in spells, when the fancy struck us.

At first we dug the crumbling rocks away with our fingers, until our nails got sore, when I accidentally stumbled upon the idea of using a piece of wood on the rock. This worked well. Also it worked woe. One morning early, we had scratched out of the wall quite a heap of fragments. I gave the heap a shove over the lip of the entrance. The next moment there came up from below a howl of rage. There was no need to look. We knew the voice only too well. The rubbish had descended upon Red-Eye.

We crouched down in the cave in consternation. A minute later he was at the entrance, peering in at us with his inflamed eyes and raging like a demon. But he was too large. He could not get in to us. Suddenly he went away. This was suspicious. By all we knew of Folk nature he should have remained and had out his rage. I crept to the entrance and peeped down. I could see him just beginning to mount the bluff again. In one hand he carried a long stick. Before I could divine his plan, he was back at the entrance and savagely jabbing the stick in at us.

His thrusts were prodigious. They could have disembowelled us. We shrank back against the side-walls, where we were almost out of range. But by industrious poking he got us now and again — cruel, scraping jabs with the end of the stick that raked off the hide and hair. When we screamed with the hurt, he roared his satisfaction and jabbed the harder.

I began to grow angry. I had a temper of my own in those days, and pretty considerable courage, too, albeit it was largely the courage of the cornered rat. I caught hold of the stick with my hands, but such was his strength that he jerked me into the crevice. He reached for me with his long arm, and his nails tore my flesh as I leaped back from the clutch and gained the comparative safety of the side-wall.

He began poking again, and caught me a painful blow on the shoulder. Beyond shivering with fright and yelling when he was hit, Lop-Ear did nothing. I looked for a stick with which to jab back, but found only the end of a branch, an inch through and a foot long. I threw this at Red-Eye. It did no damage, though he howled with a sudden increase of rage at my daring to strike back. He began jabbing furiously. I found a fragment of rock and threw it at him, striking him on the chest.

This emboldened me, and, besides, I was now as angry as he, and had lost all fear. I ripped fragment of rock from the wall. The piece must have weighed two or three pounds. With my strength I slammed it full into Red-Eye’s face. It nearly finished him. He staggered backward, dropping his stick, and almost fell off the cliff.

He was a ferocious sight. His face was covered with blood, and he was snarling and gnashing his fangs like a wild boar. He wiped the blood from his eyes, caught sight of me, and roared with fury. His stick was gone, so he began ripping out chunks of crumbling rock and throwing them in at me. This supplied me with ammunition. I gave him as good as he sent, and better; for he presented a good target, while he caught only glimpses of me as I snuggled against the side-wall.

Suddenly he disappeared again. From the lip of the cave I saw him descending. All the horde had gathered outside and in awed silence was looking on. As he descended, the more timid ones scurried for their caves. I could see old Marrow-Bone tottering along as fast as he could. Red-Eye sprang out from the wall and finished the last twenty feet through the air. He landed alongside a mother who was just beginning the ascent. She screamed with fear, and the two-year-old child that was clinging to her released its grip and rolled at Red-Eye's feet. Both he and the mother reached for it, and he got it. The next moment the frail little body had whirled through the air and shattered against the wall. The mother ran to it, caught it up in her arms, and crouched over it crying.

Red-Eye started over to pick up the stick. Old Marrow-Bone had tottered into his way. Red-Eye's great hand shot out and clutched the old man by the back of the neck. I looked to see his neck broken. His body went limp as he surrendered himself to his fate. Red-Eye hesitated a moment, and Marrow-Bone, shivering terribly, bowed his head and covered his face with his crossed arms. Then Red-Eye slammed him face-downward to the ground. Old Marrow-Bone did not struggle. He lay there crying with the fear of death. I saw the Hairless One, out in the open space, beating his chest and bristling, but afraid to come forward. And then, in obedience to some whim of his erratic spirit, Red-Eye let the old man alone and passed on and recovered the stick.

He returned to the wall and began to climb up. Lop-Ear, who was shivering and peeping alongside of me, scrambled back into the cave. It was plain that Red-Eye was bent upon murder. I was desperate and angry and fairly cool. Running back and forth along the neighboring ledges, I gathered a heap of rocks at the cave-entrance. Red-Eye was now several yards beneath me, concealed for the moment by an out-jut of the cliff. As he climbed, his head came into view, and I banged a rock down. It missed, striking the wall and shattering; but the flying dust and grit filled his eyes and he drew back out of view.

A chuckling and chattering arose from the horde, that played the part of audience. At last there was one of the Folk who dared to face Red-Eye. As their approval and acclamation arose on the air, Red-Eye snarled down at them, and on the instant they were subdued to silence. Encouraged by this evidence of his power, he thrust his head into view, and by scowling and snarling and gnashing his fangs tried to intimidate me. He scowled horribly, contracting the scalp strongly over the brows and bringing the hair down from the top of the head until each hair stood apart and pointed straight forward.

The sight chilled me, but I mastered my fear, and, with a stone poised in my hand, threatened him back. He still tried to advance. I drove the stone down at him and made a sheer miss. The next shot was a success. The stone struck him on the neck. He slipped back out of sight, but as he disappeared I could see him clutching for a grip on the wall with one hand, and with the other clutching at his throat. The stick fell clattering to the ground.

I could not see him any more, though I could hear him choking and strangling and coughing. The audience kept a death-like silence. I crouched on the lip of the entrance and waited. The strangling and coughing died down, and I could hear him now and again clearing his throat. A little later he began to climb down. He went very quietly, pausing every moment or so to stretch his neck or to feel it with his hand.

At the sight of him descending, the whole horde, with wild screams and yells, stampeded for the woods. Old Marrow-Bone, hobbling and tottering, followed behind. Red-Eye took no notice of the flight. When he reached the ground he skirted the base of the bluff and climbed up and into his own cave. He did not look around once.

I stared at Lop-Ear, and he stared back. We understood each other. Immediately, and with great caution and quietness, we began climbing up the cliff. When we reached the top we looked back. The abiding-place was deserted, Red-Eye remained in his cave, and the horde had disappeared in the depths of the forest.

We turned and ran. We dashed across the open spaces and down the slopes unmindful of possible snakes in the grass, until we reached the woods. Up into the trees we went, and on and on, swinging our arboreal flight until we had put miles between us and the caves. And then, and not till then, in the security of a great fork, we paused, looked at each other, and began to laugh. We held on to each other, arms and legs, our eyes streaming tears, our sides aching, and laughed and laughed and laughed.

CHAPTER X

After we had had out our laugh, Lop-Ear and I curved back in our flight and got breakfast in the blueberry swamp. It was the same swamp to which I had made my first journeys in the world, years before, accompanied by my mother. I had seen little of her in the intervening time. Usually, when she visited the horde at the caves, I was away in the forest. I had once or twice caught glimpses of the Chatterer in the open space, and had had the pleasure of making faces at him and angering him from the mouth of my cave. Beyond such amenities I had left my family severely alone. I was not much interested in it, and anyway I was doing very well by myself.

After eating our fill of berries, with two nestfuls of partly hatched quail-eggs for dessert, Lop-Ear and I wandered circumspectly into the woods toward the river. Here was where stood my old home-tree, out of which I had been thrown by the Chatterer. It was still occupied. There had been increase in the family. Clinging tight to my mother was a little baby. Also, there was a girl, partly grown, who cautiously regarded us from one of the lower branches. She was evidently my sister, or half-sister, rather.

My mother recognized me, but she warned me away when I started to climb into the tree. Lop-Ear, who was more cautious by far than I, beat a retreat, nor could I persuade him to return. Later in the day, however, my sister came down to the ground, and there and in neighboring trees we romped and played all afternoon. And then came trouble. She was my sister, but that did not prevent her from treating me abominably, for she had inherited all the viciousness of the Chatterer. She turned upon me suddenly, in a petty rage, and scratched me, tore my hair, and sank her sharp little teeth deep into my forearm. I lost my temper. I did not injure her, but it was undoubtedly the soundest spanking she had received up to that time.

How she yelled and squalled. The Chatterer, who had been away all day and who was only then returning, heard the noise and rushed for the spot. My mother also rushed, but he got there first. Lop-Ear and I did not wait his coming. We were off and away, and the Chatterer gave us the chase of our lives through the trees.

After the chase was over, and Lop-Ear and I had had out our laugh, we discovered that twilight was falling. Here was night with all its terrors upon us, and to return to the caves was out of the question. Red-Eye made that impossible. We took refuge in a tree that stood apart from other trees, and high up in a fork we passed the night. It was a miserable night. For the first few hours it rained heavily, then it turned cold and a chill wind blew upon us. Soaked through, with shivering bodies and chattering teeth, we huddled in each other's arms. We missed the snug, dry cave that so quickly warmed with the heat of our bodies.

Morning found us wretched and resolved. We would not spend another such night. Remembering the tree-shelters of our elders, we set to work to make one for ourselves. We built the framework of a rough nest, and on higher forks overhead even got in several ridge-poles for the roof. Then the sun came out, and under its benign influence we forgot the hardships of the night and went off in search of breakfast. After that, to show the inconsequentiality of life in those days, we fell to playing. It must have taken us all of a month, working intermittently, to make our tree-house; and then, when it was completed, we never used it again.

But I run ahead of my story. When we fell to playing, after breakfast, on the second day away from the caves, Lop-Ear led me a chase through the trees and down to the river. We came out upon it where a large slough entered from the blueberry swamp. The mouth of this slough was wide, while the slough itself was practically without a current. In the dead water, just inside its mouth, lay a tangled mass of tree trunks. Some of these, what of the wear and tear of freshets and of being stranded long summers on sand-bars, were seasoned and dry and without branches. They floated high in the water, and bobbed up and down or rolled over when we put our weight upon them.

Here and there between the trunks were water-cracks, and through them we could see schools of small fish, like minnows, darting back and forth. Lop-Ear and I became fishermen at once. Lying flat on the logs, keeping perfectly quiet, waiting till the minnows came close, we would make swift passes with our hands. Our prizes we ate on the spot, wriggling and moist. We did not notice the lack of salt.

The mouth of the slough became our favorite playground. Here we spent many hours each day, catching fish and playing on the logs, and here, one day, we learned our first lessons in navigation. The log on which Lop-Ear was lying got adrift. He was curled up on his side, asleep. A light fan of air slowly drifted the log away from the shore, and when I noticed his predicament the distance was already too great for him to leap.

At first the episode seemed merely funny to me. But when one of the vagrant impulses of fear, common in that age of perpetual insecurity, moved within me, I was struck with my own loneliness. I was made suddenly aware of Lop-Ear's remoteness out there on that alien element a few feet away. I called loudly to him a warning cry. He awoke frightened, and shifted his weight rashly on the log. It turned over, sousing him under. Three times again it soused him under as he tried to climb out upon it. Then he succeeded, crouching upon it and chattering with fear.

I could do nothing. Nor could he. Swimming was something of which we knew nothing. We were already too far removed from the lower life-forms to have the instinct for swimming, and we had not yet become sufficiently man-like to undertake it as the working out of a problem. I roamed disconsolately up and down the bank, keeping as close to him in his involuntary travels as I could, while he wailed and cried till it was a wonder that he did not bring down upon us every hunting animal within a mile.

The hours passed. The sun climbed overhead and began its descent to the west. The light wind died down and left Lop-Ear on his log floating around a hundred feet away. And then, somehow, I know not how, Lop-Ear made the great discovery. He began paddling with his hands. At first his progress was slow and erratic. Then he straightened out and began laboriously to paddle nearer and nearer. I could not understand. I sat down and watched and waited until he gained the shore.

But he had learned something, which was more than I had done. Later in the afternoon, he deliberately launched out from shore on the log. Still later he persuaded me to join him, and I, too, learned the trick of paddling. For the next several days we could not tear ourselves away from the slough. So absorbed were we in our new game that we almost neglected to eat. We even roosted in a nearby tree at night. And we forgot that Red-Eye existed.

We were always trying new logs, and we learned that the smaller the log the faster we could make it go. Also, we learned that the smaller the log the more liable it was to roll over and give us a ducking. Still another thing about small logs we learned. One day we paddled our individual logs alongside each other. And then, quite by accident, in the course of play, we discovered that when each, with one hand and foot, held on to the other's log, the logs were steadied and did not turn over. Lying side by side in this position, our outside hands and feet were left free for paddling. Our final discovery was that this arrangement enabled us to use still smaller logs and thereby gain greater speed. And there our discoveries ended. We had invented the most primitive catamaran, and we did not have sense enough to know it. It never entered our heads to lash the logs together with tough vines or stringy roots. We were content to hold the logs together with our hands and feet.

It was not until we got over our first enthusiasm for navigation and had begun to return to our tree-shelter to sleep at night, that we found the Swift One. I saw her first, gathering young acorns from the branches of a large oak near our tree. She was very timid. At first, she kept very still; but when she saw that she was discovered she dropped to the ground and dashed wildly away. We caught occasional glimpses of her from day to day, and came to look for her when we travelled back and forth between our tree and the mouth of the slough.

And then, one day, she did not run away. She waited our coming, and made soft peace-sounds. We could not get very near, however. When we seemed to approach too close, she darted suddenly away and from a safe distance uttered the soft sounds again. This continued for some days. It took a long while to get acquainted with her, but finally it was accomplished and she joined us sometimes in our play.

I liked her from the first. She was of most pleasing appearance. She was very mild. Her eyes were the mildest I had ever seen. In this she was quite unlike the rest of the girls and women of the Folk, who were born viragos. She never made harsh, angry cries, and it seemed to be her nature to flee away from trouble rather than to remain and fight.

The mildness I have mentioned seemed to emanate from her whole being. Her bodily as well as facial appearance was the cause of this. Her eyes were larger than most of her kind, and they were not so deep-set, while the lashes were longer and more regular. Nor was her nose so thick and squat. It had quite a bridge, and the nostrils opened downward. Her incisors were not large, nor was her upper lip long and down-hanging, nor her lower lip protruding. She was not very hairy, except on the outsides of arms and legs and across the shoulders; and while she was thin-hipped, her calves were not twisted and gnarly.

I have often wondered, looking back upon her from the twentieth century through the medium of my dreams, and it has always occurred to me that possibly she may have been related to the Fire People. Her father, or mother, might well have come from that higher stock. While such things were not common, still they did occur, and I have seen the proof of them with my own eyes, even to the extent of members of the horde turning renegade and going to live with the Tree People.

All of which is neither here nor there. The Swift One was radically different from any of the females of the horde, and I had a liking for her from the first. Her mildness and gentleness attracted me. She was never rough, and she never fought. She always ran away, and right here may be noted the significance of the naming of her. She was a better climber than Lop-Ear or I. When we played tag we could never catch her except by accident, while she could catch us at will. She was remarkably swift in all her movements, and she had a genius for judging distances that was equalled only by her daring. Excessively timid in all other matters, she was without fear when it came to climbing or running through the trees, and Lop-Ear and I were awkward and lumbering and cowardly in comparison.

She was an orphan. We never saw her with any one, and there was no telling how long she had lived alone in the world. She must have learned early in her helpless childhood that safety lay only in flight. She was very wise and very discreet. It became a sort of game with Lop-Ear and me to try to find where she lived. It was certain that she had a tree-shelter somewhere, and not very far away; but trail her as we would, we could never find it. She was willing enough to join with us at play in the day-time, but the secret of her abiding-place she guarded jealously.

CHAPTER XI

It must be remembered that the description I have just given of the Swift One is not the description that would have been given by Big-Tooth, my other self of my dreams, my prehistoric ancestor. It is by the medium of my dreams that I, the modern man, look through the eyes of Big-Tooth and see.

And so it is with much that I narrate of the events of that far-off time. There is a duality about my impressions that is too confusing to inflict upon my readers. I shall merely pause here in my narrative to indicate this duality, this perplexing mixing of personality. It is I, the modern, who look back across the centuries and weigh and analyze the emotions and motives of Big-Tooth, my other self. He did not bother to weigh and analyze. He was simplicity itself. He just lived events, without ever pondering why he lived them in his particular and often erratic way.

As I, my real self, grew older, I entered more and more into the substance of my dreams. One may dream, and even in the midst of the dream be aware that he is dreaming, and if the dream be bad, comfort himself with the thought that it is only a dream. This is a common experience with all of us. And so it was that I, the modern, often entered into my dreaming, and in the consequent strange dual personality was both actor and spectator. And right often have I, the modern, been perturbed and vexed by the foolishness, illogic, obtuseness, and general all-round stupendous stupidity of myself, the primitive.

And one thing more, before I end this digression. Have you ever dreamed that you dreamed? Dogs dream, horses dream, all animals dream. In Big-Tooth's day the half-men dreamed, and when the dreams were bad they howled in their sleep. Now I, the modern, have lain down with Big-Tooth and dreamed his dreams.

This is getting almost beyond the grip of the intellect, I know; but I do know that I have done this thing. And let me tell you that the flying and crawling dreams of Big-Tooth were as vivid to him as the falling-through-space dream is to you.

For Big-Tooth also had an other-self, and when he slept that other-self dreamed back into the past, back to the winged reptiles and the clash and the onset of dragons, and beyond that to the scurrying, rodent-like life of the tiny mammals, and far remoter still, to the shore-slime of the primeval sea. I cannot, I dare not, say more. It is all too vague and complicated and awful. I can only hint of those vast and terrific vistas through which I have peered hazily at the progression of life, not upward from the ape to man, but upward from the worm.

And now to return to my tale. I, Big-Tooth, knew not the Swift One as a creature of finer facial and bodily symmetry, with long-lashed eyes and a bridge to her nose and down-opening nostrils that made toward beauty. I knew her only as the mild-eyed young female who made soft sounds and did not fight. I liked to play with her, I knew not why, to seek food in her company, and to go bird-nesting with her. And I must confess she taught me things about tree-climbing. She was very wise, very strong, and no clinging skirts impeded her movements.

It was about this time that a slight defection arose on the part of Lop-Ear. He got into the habit of wandering off in the direction of the tree where my mother lived. He had taken a liking to my vicious sister, and the Chatterer had come to tolerate him. Also, there were several other young people, progeny of the monogamic couples that lived in the neighborhood, and Lop-Ear played with these young people.

I could never get the Swift One to join with them. Whenever I visited them she dropped behind and disappeared. I remember once making a strong effort to persuade her. But she cast backward, anxious glances, then retreated, calling to me from a tree. So it was that I did not make a practice of accompanying Lop-Ear when he went to visit his new friends. The Swift One and I were good comrades, but, try as I would, I could never find her tree-shelter. Undoubtedly, had nothing happened, we would have soon mated, for our liking was mutual; but the something did happen.

One morning, the Swift One not having put in an appearance, Lop-Ear and I were down at the mouth of the slough playing on the logs. We had scarcely got out on the water, when we were startled by a roar of rage. It was Red-Eye. He was crouching on the edge of the timber jam and glowering his hatred at us. We were badly frightened, for here was no narrow-mouthed cave for refuge. But the twenty feet of water that intervened gave us temporary safety, and we plucked up courage.

Red-Eye stood up erect and began beating his hairy chest with his fist. Our two logs were side by side, and we sat on them and laughed at him. At first our laughter was half-hearted, tinged with fear, but as we became convinced of his impotence we waxed uproarious. He raged and raged at us, and ground his teeth in helpless fury. And in our fancied security we mocked and mocked him. We were ever short-sighted, we Folk.

Red-Eye abruptly ceased his breast-beating and tooth-grinding, and ran across the timber-jam to the shore. And just as abruptly our merriment gave way to consternation. It was not Red-Eye’s way to forego revenge so easily. We waited in fear and trembling for whatever was to happen. It never struck us to paddle away. He came back with great leaps across the jam, one huge hand filled with round, water-washed pebbles. I am glad that he was unable to find larger missiles, say stones weighing two or three pounds, for we were no more than a score of feet away, and he surely would have killed us.

As it was, we were in no small danger. Zip! A tiny pebble whirred past with the force almost of a bullet. Lop-Ear and I began paddling frantically. Whiz-zip-bang! Lop-Ear screamed with sudden anguish. The pebble had struck him between the shoulders. Then I got one and yelled. The only thing that saved us was the exhausting of Red-Eye’s ammunition. He dashed back to the gravel-bed for more, while Lop-Ear and I paddled away.

Gradually we drew out of range, though Red-Eye continued making trips for more ammunition and the pebbles continued to whiz about us. Out in the centre of the slough there was a slight current, and in our excitement we failed to notice that it was drifting us into the river. We paddled, and Red-Eye kept as close as he could to us by following along the shore. Then he discovered larger rocks. Such ammunition increased his range. One fragment, fully five pounds in weight, crashed on the log alongside of me, and such was its impact that it drove a score of splinters, like fiery needles, into my leg. Had it struck me it would have killed me.

And then the river current caught us. So wildly were we paddling that Red-Eye was the first to notice it, and our first warning was his yell of triumph. Where the edge of the current struck the slough-water was a series of eddies or small whirlpools. These caught our clumsy logs and whirled them end for end, back and forth and around. We quit paddling and devoted our whole energy to holding the logs together alongside each other. In the meanwhile Red-Eye continued to bombard us, the rock fragments falling about us, splashing water on us, and menacing our lives. At the same time he gloated over us, wildly and vociferously.

It happened that there was a sharp turn in the river at the point where the slough entered, and the whole main current of the river was deflected to the other bank. And toward that bank, which was the north bank, we drifted rapidly, at the same time going down-stream. This quickly took us out of range of Red-Eye, and the last we saw of him was far out on a point of land, where he was jumping up and down and chanting a paean of victory.

Beyond holding the two logs together, Lop-Ear and I did nothing. We were resigned to our fate, and we remained resigned until we aroused to the fact that we were drifting along the north shore not a hundred feet away. We began to paddle for it. Here the main force of the current was flung back toward the south shore, and the result of our paddling was that we crossed the current where it was swiftest and narrowest. Before we were aware, we were out of it and in a quiet eddy.

Our logs drifted slowly and at last grounded gently on the bank. Lop-Ear and I crept ashore. The logs drifted on out of the eddy and swept away down the stream. We looked at each other, but we did not laugh. We were in a strange land, and it did not enter our minds that we could return to our own land in the same manner that we had come.

We had learned how to cross a river, though we did not know it. And this was something that no one else of the Folk had ever done. We were the first of the Folk to set foot on the north bank of the river, and, for that matter, I believe the last. That they would have done so in the time to come is undoubted; but the migration of the Fire People, and the consequent migration of the survivors of the Folk, set back our evolution for centuries.

Indeed, there is no telling how disastrous was to be the outcome of the Fire People’s migration. Personally, I am prone to believe that it brought about the destruction of the Folk; that we, a branch of lower life budding toward the human, were nipped short off and perished down by the roaring surf where the river entered the sea. Of course, in such an eventuality, I remain to be accounted for; but I outrun my story, and such accounting will be made before I am done.

CHAPTER XII

I have no idea how long Lop-Ear and I wandered in the land north of the river. We were like mariners wrecked on a desert isle, so far as concerned the likelihood of our getting home again. We turned our backs upon the river, and for weeks and months adventured in that wilderness where there were no Folk. It is very difficult for me to reconstruct our journeying, and impossible to do it from day to day. Most of it is hazy and indistinct, though here and there I have vivid recollections of things that happened.

Especially do I remember the hunger we endured on the mountains between Long Lake and Far Lake, and the calf we caught sleeping in the thicket. Also, there are the Tree People who dwelt in the forest between Long Lake and the mountains. It was they who chased us into the mountains and compelled us to travel on to Far Lake.

First, after we left the river, we worked toward the west till we came to a small stream that flowed through marshlands. Here we turned away toward the north, skirting the marshes and after several days arriving at what I have called Long Lake. We spent some time around its upper end, where we found food in plenty; and then, one day, in the forest, we ran foul of the Tree People. These creatures were ferocious apes, nothing more. And yet they were not so different from us. They were more hairy, it is true; their legs were a trifle more twisted and gnarly, their eyes a bit smaller, their necks a bit thicker and shorter, and their nostrils slightly more like orifices in a sunken surface; but they had no hair on their faces and on the palms of their hands and the soles of their feet, and they made sounds similar to ours with somewhat similar meanings. After all, the Tree People and the Folk were not so unlike.

I found him first, a little withered, dried-up old fellow, wrinkled-faced and bleary-eyed and tottery. He was legitimate prey. In our world there was no sympathy between the kinds, and he was not our kind. He was a Tree-Man, and he was very old. He was sitting at the foot of a tree — evidently his tree, for we could see the tattered nest in the branches, in which he slept at night.

I pointed him out to Lop-Ear, and we made a rush for him. He started to climb, but was too slow. I caught him by the leg and dragged him back. Then we had fun. We pinched him, pulled his hair, tweaked his ears, and poked twigs into him, and all the while we laughed with streaming eyes. His futile anger was most absurd. He was a comical sight, striving to fan into flame the cold ashes of his youth, to resurrect his strength dead and gone through the oozing of the years — making woeful faces in place of the ferocious ones he intended, grinding his worn teeth together, beating his meagre chest with feeble fists.

Also, he had a cough, and he gasped and hacked and spluttered prodigiously. Every time he tried to climb the tree we pulled him back, until at last he surrendered to his weakness and did no more than sit and weep. And Lop-Ear and I sat with him, our arms around each other, and laughed at his wretchedness.

From weeping he went to whining, and from whining to wailing, until at last he achieved a scream. This alarmed us, but the more we tried to make him cease, the louder he screamed. And then, from not far away in the forest, came a “Goek! Goek!” to our ears. To this there were answering cries, several of them, and from very far off we could hear a big, bass “Goek! Goek! Goek!” Also, the “Whoo-whoo!” call was rising in the forest all around us.

Then came the chase. It seemed it never would end. They raced us through the trees, the whole tribe of them, and nearly caught us. We were forced to take to the ground, and here we had the advantage, for they were truly the Tree People, and while they out-climbed us we out-footed them on the ground. We broke away toward the north, the tribe howling on our track. Across the open spaces we gained, and in the brush they caught up with us, and more than once it was nip and tuck. And as the chase continued, we realized that we were not their kind, either, and that the bonds between us were anything but sympathetic.

They ran us for hours. The forest seemed interminable. We kept to the glades as much as possible, but they always ended in more thick forest. Sometimes we thought we had escaped, and sat down to rest; but always, before we could recover our breath, we would hear the hateful “Whoo-whoo!” cries and the terrible “Goek! Goek! Goek!” This latter sometimes terminated in a savage “Ha ha ha ha haaaaa!!!”

And in this fashion were we hunted through the forest by the exasperated Tree People. At last, by mid-afternoon, the slopes began rising higher and higher and the trees were becoming smaller. Then we came out on the grassy flanks of the mountains. Here was where we could make time, and here the Tree People gave up and returned to their forest.

The mountains were bleak and inhospitable, and three times that afternoon we tried to regain the woods. But the Tree People were lying in wait, and they drove us back. Lop-Ear and I slept that night in a dwarf tree, no larger than a bush. Here was no security, and we would have been easy prey for any hunting animal that chanced along.

In the morning, what of our new-gained respect for the Tree People, we faced into the mountains. That we had no definite plan, or even idea, I am confident. We were merely driven on by the danger we had escaped. Of our wanderings through the mountains I have only misty memories. We were in that bleak region many days, and we suffered much, especially from fear, it was all so new and strange. Also, we suffered from the cold, and later from hunger.

It — was a desolate land of rocks and foaming streams and clattering cataracts. We climbed and descended mighty canyons and gorges; and ever, from every view point, there spread out before us, in all directions, range upon range, the unceasing mountains. We slept at night in holes and crevices, and on one cold night we perched on top a slender pinnacle of rock that was almost like a tree.

And then, at last, one hot midday, dizzy with hunger, we gained the divide. From this high backbone of earth, to the north, across the diminishing, down-falling ranges, we caught a glimpse of a far lake. The sun shone upon it, and about it were open, level grass-lands, while to the eastward we saw the dark line of a wide-stretching forest.

We were two days in gaining the lake, and we were weak with hunger; but on its shore, sleeping snugly in a thicket, we found a part-grown calf. It gave us much trouble, for we knew no other way to kill than with our hands. When we had gorged our fill, we carried the remainder of the meat to the eastward forest and hid it in a tree. We never returned to that tree, for the shore of the stream that drained Far Lake was packed thick with salmon that had come up from the sea to spawn.

Westward from the lake stretched the grass-lands, and here were multitudes of bison and wild cattle. Also were there many packs of wild dogs, and as there were no trees it was not a safe place for us. We followed north along the stream for days. Then, and for what reason I do not know, we abruptly left the stream and swung to the east, and then to the southeast, through a great forest. I shall not bore you with our journey. I but indicate it to show how we finally arrived at the Fire People's country.

We came out upon the river, but we did not know it for our river. We had been lost so long that we had come to accept the condition of being lost as habitual. As I look back I see clearly how our lives and destinies are shaped by the merest chance. We did not know it was our river — there was no way of telling; and if we had never crossed it we would most probably have never returned to the horde; and I, the modern, the thousand centuries yet to be born, would never have been born.

And yet Lop-Ear and I wanted greatly to return. We had experienced homesickness on our journey, the yearning for our own kind and land; and often had I had recollections of the Swift One, the young female who made soft sounds, whom it was good to be with, and who lived by herself nobody knew where. My recollections of her were accompanied by sensations of hunger, and these I felt when I was not hungry and when I had just eaten.

But to come back to the river. Food was plentiful, principally berries and succulent roots, and on the river bank we played and lingered for days. And then the idea came to Lop-Ear. It was a visible process, the coming of the idea. I saw it. The expression in his eyes became plaintive and querulous, and he was greatly perturbed. Then his eyes went muddy, as if he had lost his grip on the inchoate thought. This was followed by the plaintive, querulous expression as the idea persisted and he clutched it anew. He looked at me, and at the river and the far shore. He tried to speak, but had no sounds with which to express the idea. The result was a gibberish that made me laugh. This angered him, and he grabbed me suddenly and threw me on my back. Of course we fought, and in the end I chased him up a tree, where he secured a long branch and poked me every time I tried to get at him.

And the idea had gone glimmering. I did not know, and he had forgotten. But the next morning it awoke in him again. Perhaps it was the homing instinct in him asserting itself that made the idea persist. At any rate it was there, and clearer than before. He led me down to the water, where a log had grounded in an eddy. I thought he was minded to play, as we had played in the mouth of the slough. Nor did I change my mind as I watched him tow up a second log from farther down the shore.

It was not until we were on the logs, side by side and holding them together, and had paddled out into the current, that I learned his intention.

He paused to point at the far shore, and resumed his paddling, at the same time uttering loud and encouraging cries. I understood, and we paddled energetically. The swift current caught us, flung us toward the south shore, but before we could make a landing flung us back toward the north shore.

Here arose dissension. Seeing the north shore so near, I began to paddle for it. Lop-Ear tried to paddle for the south shore. The logs swung around in circles, and we got nowhere, and all the time the forest was flashing past as we drifted down the stream. We could not fight. We knew better than to let go the grips of hands and feet that held the logs together. But we chattered and abused each other with our tongues until the current flung us toward the south bank again. That was now the nearest goal, and together and amicably we paddled for it. We landed in an eddy, and climbed directly into the trees to reconnoitre.

CHAPTER XIII

It was not until the night of our first day on the south bank of the river that we discovered the Fire People. What must have been a band of wandering hunters went into camp not far from the tree in which Lop-Ear and I had elected to roost for the night. The voices of the Fire People at first alarmed us, but later, when darkness had come, we were attracted by the fire. We crept cautiously and silently from tree to tree till we got a good view of the scene.

In an open space among the trees, near to the river, the fire was burning. About it were half a dozen Fire-Men. Lop-Ear clutched me suddenly, and I could feel him tremble. I looked more closely, and saw the wizened little old hunter who had shot Broken-Tooth out of the tree years before. When he got up and walked about, throwing fresh wood upon the fire, I saw that he limped with his crippled leg. Whatever it was, it was a permanent injury. He seemed more dried up and wizened than ever, and the hair on his face was quite gray.

The other hunters were young men. I noted, lying near them on the ground, their bows and arrows, and I knew the weapons for what they were. The Fire-Men wore animal skins around their waists and across their shoulders. Their arms and legs, however, were bare, and they wore no footgear. As I have said before, they were not quite so hairy as we of the Folk. They did not have large heads, and between them and the Folk there was very little difference in the degree of the slant of the head back from the eyes.

They were less stooped than we, less springy in their movements. Their backbones and hips and knee-joints seemed more rigid. Their arms were not so long as ours either, and I did not notice that they ever balanced themselves when they walked, by touching the ground on either side with their hands. Also, their muscles were more rounded and symmetrical than ours, and their faces were more pleasing. Their nose orifices opened downward; likewise the bridges of their noses were more developed, did not look so squat nor crushed as ours. Their lips were less flabby and pendent, and their eye-teeth did not look so much like fangs. However, they were quite as thin-hipped as we, and did not weigh much more. Take it all in all, they were less different from us than were we from the Tree People. Certainly, all three kinds were related, and not so remotely related at that.

The fire around which they sat was especially attractive. Lop-Ear and I sat for hours, watching the flames and smoke. It was most fascinating when fresh fuel was thrown on and showers of sparks went flying upward. I wanted to come closer and look at the fire, but there was no way. We were crouching in the forks of a tree on the edge of the open space, and we did not dare run the risk of being discovered.

The Fire-Men squatted around the fire and slept with their heads bowed forward on their knees. They did not sleep soundly. Their ears twitched in their sleep, and they were restless. Every little while one or another got up and threw more wood upon the fire. About the circle of light in the forest, in the darkness beyond, roamed hunting animals. Lop-Ear and I could tell them by their sounds. There were wild dogs and a hyena, and for a time there was a great yelping and snarling that awakened on the instant the whole circle of sleeping Fire-Men.

Once a lion and a lioness stood beneath our tree and gazed out with bristling hair and blinking eyes. The lion licked his chops and was nervous with eagerness, as if he wanted to go forward and make a meal. But the lioness was more cautious. It was she that discovered us, and the pair stood and looked up at us, silently, with twitching, scenting nostrils. Then they growled, looked once again at the fire, and turned away into the forest.

For a much longer time Lop-Ear and I remained and watched. Now and again we could hear the crashing of heavy bodies in the thickets and underbrush, and from the darkness of the other side, across the circle, we could see eyes gleaming in the firelight. In the distance we heard a lion roar, and from far off came the scream of some stricken animal, splashing and floundering in a drinking-place. Also, from the river, came a great grunting of rhinoceroses.

In the morning, after having had our sleep, we crept back to the fire. It was still smouldering, and the Fire-Men were gone. We made a circle through the forest to make sure, and then we ran to the fire. I wanted to see what it was like, and between thumb and finger I picked up a glowing coal. My cry of pain and fear, as I dropped it, stampeded Lop-Ear into the trees, and his flight frightened me after him.

The next time we came back more cautiously, and we avoided the glowing coals. We fell to imitating the Fire-Men. We squatted down by the fire, and with heads bent forward on our knees, made believe to sleep. Then we mimicked their speech, talking to each other in their fashion and making a great gibberish. I remembered seeing the wizened old hunter poke the fire with a stick. I poked the fire with a stick, turning up masses of live coals and clouds of white ashes. This was great sport, and soon we were coated white with the ashes.

It was inevitable that we should imitate the Fire-Men in replenishing the fire. We tried it first with small pieces of wood. It was a success. The wood flamed up and crackled, and we danced and gibbered with delight. Then we began to throw on larger pieces of wood. We put on more and more, until we had a mighty fire. We dashed excitedly back and forth, dragging dead limbs and branches from out the forest. The flames soared higher and higher, and the smoke-column out-towered the trees. There was a tremendous snapping and crackling and roaring. It was the most monumental work we had ever effected with our hands, and we were proud of it. We, too, were Fire-Men, we thought, as we danced there, white gnomes in the conflagration.

The dried grass and underbrush caught fire, but we did not notice it. Suddenly a great tree on the edge of the open space burst into flames.

We looked at it with startled eyes. The heat of it drove us back. Another tree caught, and another, and then half a dozen. We were frightened. The monster had broken loose. We crouched down in fear, while the fire ate around the circle and hemmed us in. Into Lop-Ear’s eyes came the plaintive look that always accompanied incomprehension, and I know that in my eyes must have been the same look. We huddled, with our arms around each other, until the heat began to reach us and the odor of burning hair was in our nostrils. Then we made a dash of it, and fled away westward through the forest, looking back and laughing as we ran.

By the middle of the day we came to a neck of land, made, as we afterward discovered, by a great curve of the river that almost completed a circle. Right across the neck lay bunched several low and partly wooded hills. Over these we climbed, looking backward at the forest which had become a sea of flame that swept eastward before a rising wind. We continued to the west, following the river bank, and before we knew it we were in the midst of the abiding-place of the Fire People.

This abiding-place was a splendid strategic selection. It was a peninsula, protected on three sides by the curving river. On only one side was it accessible by land. This was the narrow neck of the peninsula, and here the several low hills were a natural obstacle. Practically isolated from the rest of the world, the Fire People must have here lived and prospered for a long time. In fact, I think it was their prosperity that was responsible for the subsequent migration that worked such calamity upon the Folk. The Fire People must have increased in numbers until they pressed uncomfortably against the bounds of their habitat. They were expanding, and in the course of their expanding they drove the Folk before them, and settled down themselves in the caves and occupied the territory that we had occupied.

But Lop-Ear and I little dreamed of all this when we found ourselves in the Fire People's stronghold. We had but one idea, and that was to get away, though we could not forbear humoring our curiosity by peeping out upon the village. For the first time we saw the women and children of the Fire People. The latter ran for the most part naked, though the former wore skins of wild animals.

The Fire People, like ourselves, lived in caves. The open space in front of the caves sloped down to the river, and in the open space burned many small fires. But whether or not the Fire People cooked their food, I do not know. Lop-Ear and I did not see them cook. Yet it is my opinion that they surely must have performed some sort of rude cookery. Like us, they carried water in gourds from the river. There was much coming and going, and loud cries made by the women and children. The latter played about and cut up antics quite in the same way as did the children of the Folk, and they more nearly resembled the children of the Folk than did the grown Fire People resemble the grown Folk.

Lop-Ear and I did not linger long. We saw some of the part-grown boys shooting with bow and arrow, and we sneaked back into the thicker forest and made our way to the river. And there we found a catamaran, a real catamaran, one evidently made by some Fire-Man. The two logs were small and straight, and were lashed together by means of tough roots and crosspieces of wood.

This time the idea occurred simultaneously to us. We were trying to escape out of the Fire People's territory. What better way than by crossing the river on these logs? We climbed on board and shoved off. A sudden something gripped the catamaran and flung it downstream violently against the bank. The abrupt stoppage almost whipped us off into the water. The catamaran was tied to a tree by a rope of twisted roots. This we untied before shoving off again.

By the time we had paddled well out into the current, we had drifted so far downstream that we were in full view of the Fire People's abiding-place. So occupied were we with our paddling, our eyes fixed upon the other bank, that we knew nothing until aroused by a yell from the shore. We looked around. There were the Fire People, many of them, looking at us and pointing at us, and more were crawling out of the caves. We sat up to watch, and forgot all about paddling. There was a great hullabaloo on the shore. Some of the Fire-Men discharged their bows at us, and a few of the arrows fell near us, but the range was too great.

It was a great day for Lop-Ear and me. To the east the conflagration we had started was filling half the sky with smoke. And here we were, perfectly safe in the middle of the river, encircling the Fire People's stronghold. We sat and laughed at them as we dashed by, swinging south, and southeast to east, and even to northeast, and then east again, southeast and south and on around to the west, a great double curve where the river nearly tied a knot in itself.

As we swept on to the west, the Fire People far behind, a familiar scene flashed upon our eyes.

It was the great drinking-place, where we had wandered once or twice to watch the circus of the animals when they came down to drink. Beyond it, we knew, was the carrot patch, and beyond that the caves and the abiding-place of the horde. We began to paddle for the bank that slid swiftly past, and before we knew it we were down upon the drinking-places used by the horde. There were the women and children, the water carriers, a number of them, filling their gourds. At sight of us they stampeded madly up the run-ways, leaving behind them a trail of gourds they had dropped.

We landed, and of course we neglected to tie up the catamaran, which floated off down the river. Right cautiously we crept up a run-way. The Folk had all disappeared into their holes, though here and there we could see a face peering out at us. There was no sign of Red-Eye. We were home again. And that night we slept in our own little cave high up on the cliff, though first we had to evict a couple of pugnacious youngsters who had taken possession.

CHAPTER XIV

The months came and went. The drama and tragedy of the future were yet to come upon the stage, and in the meantime we pounded nuts and lived. It — vas a good year, I remember, for nuts. We used to fill gourds with nuts and carry them to the pounding-places. We placed them in depressions in the rock, and, with a piece of rock in our hands, we cracked them and ate them as we cracked.

It was the fall of the year when Lop-Ear and I returned from our long adventure-journey, and the winter that followed was mild. I made frequent trips to the neighborhood of my old home-tree, and frequently I searched the whole territory that lay between the blueberry swamp and the mouth of the slough where Lop-Ear and I had learned navigation, but no clew could I get of the Swift One. She had disappeared. And I wanted her. I was impelled by that hunger which I have mentioned, and which was akin to physical hunger, albeit it came often upon me when my stomach was full. But all my search was vain.

Life was not monotonous at the caves, however. There was Red-Eye to be considered. Lop-Ear and I never knew a moment's peace except when we were in our own little cave. In spite of the enlargement of the entrance we had made, it was still a tight squeeze for us to get in. And though from time to time we continued to enlarge, it was still too small for Red-Eye's monstrous body. But he never stormed our cave again. He had learned the lesson well, and he carried on his neck a bulging lump to show where I had hit him with the rock. This lump never went away, and it was prominent enough to be seen at a distance. I often took great delight in watching that evidence of my handiwork; and sometimes, when I was myself assuredly safe, the sight of it caused me to laugh.

While the other Folk would not have come to our rescue had Red-Eye proceeded to tear Lop-Ear and me to pieces before their eyes, nevertheless they sympathized with us. Possibly it was not sympathy but the way they expressed their hatred for Red-Eye; at any rate they always warned us of his approach. Whether in the forest, at the drinking-places, or in the open space before the caves, they were always quick to warn us. Thus we had the advantage of many eyes in our feud with Red-Eye, the atavism.

Once he nearly got me. It was early in the morning, and the Folk were not yet up. The surprise was complete. I was cut off from the way up the cliff to my cave. Before I knew it I had dashed into the double-cave, — the cave where Lop-Ear had first eluded me long years before, and where old Saber-Tooth had come to discomfiture when he pursued the two Folk. By the time I had got through the connecting passage between the two caves, I discovered that Red-Eye was not following me. The next moment he charged into the cave from the outside. I slipped back through the passage, and he charged out and around and in upon me again. I merely repeated my performance of slipping through the passage.

He kept me there half a day before he gave up. After that, when Lop-Ear and I were reasonably sure of gaining the double-cave, we did not retreat up the cliff to our own cave when Red-Eye came upon the scene. All we did was to keep an eye on him and see that he did not cut across our line of retreat.

It was during this winter that Red-Eye killed his latest wife with abuse and repeated beatings. I have called him an atavism, but in this he was worse than an atavism, for the males of the lower animals do not maltreat and murder their mates. In this I take it that Red-Eye, in spite of his tremendous atavistic tendencies, foreshadowed the coming of man, for it is the males of the human species only that murder their mates.

As was to be expected, with the doing away of one wife Red-Eye proceeded to get another. He decided upon the Singing One. She was the granddaughter of old Marrow-Bone, and the daughter of the Hairless One. She was a young thing, greatly given to singing at the mouth of her cave in the twilight, and she had but recently mated with Crooked-Leg. He was a quiet individual, molesting no one and not given to bickering with his fellows. He was no fighter anyway. He was small and lean, and not so active on his legs as the rest of us.

Red-Eye never committed a more outrageous deed. It was in the quiet at the end of the day, when we began to congregate in the open space before climbing into our caves. Suddenly the Singing One dashed up a run-way from a drinking-place, pursued by Red-Eye. She ran to her husband. Poor little Crooked-Leg was terribly scared. But he was a hero. He knew that death was upon him, yet he did not run away. He stood up, and chattered, bristled, and showed his teeth.

Red-Eye roared with rage. It was an offence to him that any of the Folk should dare to withstand him. His hand shot out and clutched Crooked-Leg by the neck. The latter sank his teeth into Red-Eye's arm; but the next moment, with a broken neck, Crooked-Leg was floundering and squirming on the ground. The Singing One screeched and gibbered. Red-Eye seized her by the hair of her head and dragged her toward his cave. He handled her roughly when the climb began, and he dragged and hauled her up into the cave.

We were very angry, insanely, vociferously angry. Beating our chests, bristling, and gnashing our teeth, we gathered together in our rage. We felt the prod of gregarious instinct, the drawing together as though for united action, the impulse toward cooperation. In dim ways this need for united action was impressed upon us. But there was no way to achieve it because there was no way to express it. We did not turn to, all of us, and destroy Red-Eye, because we lacked a vocabulary. We were vaguely thinking thoughts for which there were no thought-symbols. These thought-symbols were yet to be slowly and painfully invented.

We tried to freight sound with the vague thoughts that flitted like shadows through our consciousness. The Hairless One began to chatter loudly. By his noises he expressed anger against Red-Eye and desire to hurt Red-Eye. Thus far he got, and thus far we understood. But when he tried to express the cooperative impulse that stirred within him, his noises became gibberish. Then Big-Face, with brow-bristling and chest-pounding, began to chatter. One after another of us joined in the orgy of rage, until even old Marrow-Bone was mumbling and spluttering with his cracked voice and withered lips. Some one seized a stick and began pounding a log. In a moment he had struck a rhythm. Unconsciously, our yells and exclamations yielded to this rhythm. It had a soothing effect upon us; and before we knew it, our rage forgotten, we were in the full swing of a hee-hee council.

These hee-hee councils splendidly illustrate the inconsecutiveness and inconsequentiality of the Folk. Here were we, drawn together by mutual rage and the impulse toward cooperation, led off into forgetfulness by the establishment of a rude rhythm. We were sociable and gregarious, and these singing and laughing councils satisfied us. In ways the hee-hee council was an adumbration of the councils of primitive man, and of the great national assemblies and international conventions of latter-day man. But we Folk of the Younger World lacked speech, and whenever we were so drawn together we precipitated babel, out of which arose a unanimity of rhythm that contained within itself the essentials of art yet to come. It was art nascent.

There was nothing long-continued about these rhythms that we struck. A rhythm was soon lost, and pandemonium reigned until we could find the rhythm again or start a new one. Sometimes half a dozen rhythms would be swinging simultaneously, each rhythm backed by a group that strove ardently to drown out the other rhythms.

In the intervals of pandemonium, each chattered, cut up, hooted, screeched, and danced, himself sufficient unto himself, filled with his own ideas and volitions to the exclusion of all others, a veritable centre of the universe, divorced for the time being from any unanimity with the other universe-centres leaping and yelling around him. Then would come the rhythm — a clapping of hands; the beating of a stick upon a log; the example of one that leaped with repetitions; or the chanting of one that uttered, explosively and regularly, with inflection that rose and fell, "A-bang, a-bang! A-bang, a-bang!" One after another of the self-centred Folk would yield to it, and soon all would be dancing or chanting in chorus. "Ha-ah, ha-ah, ha-ah-ha!" was one of our favorite choruses, and another was, "Eh-wah, eh-wah, eh-wah-hah!"

And so, with mad antics, leaping, reeling, and over-balancing, we danced and sang in the sombre twilight of the primeval world, inducing forgetfulness, achieving unanimity, and working ourselves up into sensuous frenzy. And so it was that our rage against Red-Eye was soothed away by art, and we screamed the wild choruses of the hee-hee council until the night warned us of its terrors, and we crept away to our holes in the rocks, calling softly to one another, while the stars came out and darkness settled down.

We were afraid only of the dark. We had no germs of religion, no conceptions of an unseen world. We knew only the real world, and the things we feared were the real things, the concrete dangers, the flesh-and-blood animals that preyed. It was they that made us afraid of the dark, for darkness was the time of the hunting animals. It was then that they came out of their lairs and pounced upon one from the dark wherein they lurked invisible.

Possibly it was out of this fear of the real denizens of the dark that the fear of the unreal denizens was later to develop and to culminate in a whole and mighty unseen world. As imagination grew it is likely that the fear of death increased until the Folk that were to come projected this fear into the dark and peopled it with spirits. I think the Fire People had already begun to be afraid of the dark in this fashion; but the reasons we Folk had for breaking up our hee-hee councils and fleeing to our holes were old Saber-Tooth, the lions and the jackals, the wild dogs and the wolves, and all the hungry, meat-eating breeds.

CHAPTER XV

Lop-Ear got married. It was the second winter after our adventure-journey, and it was most unexpected. He gave me no warning. The first I knew was one twilight when I climbed the cliff to our cave. I squeezed into the entrance and there I stopped. There was no room for me. Lop-Ear and his mate were in possession, and she was none other than my sister, the daughter of my step-father, the Chatterer.

I tried to force my way in. There was space only for two, and that space was already occupied. Also, they had me at a disadvantage, and, what of the scratching and hair-pulling I received, I was glad to retreat. I slept that night, and for many nights, in the connecting passage of the double-cave. From my experience it seemed reasonably safe. As the two Folk had dodged old Saber-Tooth, and as I had dodged Red-Eye, so it seemed to me that I could dodge the hunting animals by going back and forth between the two caves.

I had forgotten the wild dogs. They were small enough to go through any passage that I could squeeze through. One night they nosed me out. Had they entered both caves at the same time they would have got me. As it was, followed by some of them through the passage, I dashed out the mouth of the other cave. Outside were the rest of the wild dogs. They sprang for me as I sprang for the cliff-wall and began to climb. One of them, a lean and hungry brute, caught me in mid-leap. His teeth sank into my thigh-muscles, and he nearly dragged me back. He held on, but I made no effort to dislodge him, devoting my whole effort to climbing out of reach of the rest of the brutes.

Not until I was safe from them did I turn my attention to that live agony on my thigh. And then, a dozen feet above the snapping pack that leaped and scrambled against the wall and fell back, I got the dog by the throat and slowly throttled him. I was a long time doing it. He clawed and ripped my hair and hide with his hind-paws, and ever he jerked and lunged with his weight to drag me from the wall.

At last his teeth opened and released my torn flesh. I carried his body up the cliff with me, and perched out the night in the entrance of my old cave, wherein were Lop-Ear and my sister. But first I had to endure a storm of abuse from the aroused horde for being the cause of the disturbance. I had my revenge. From time to time, as the noise of the pack below eased down, I dropped a rock and started it up again. Whereupon, from all around, the abuse of the exasperated Folk began afresh. In the morning I shared the dog with Lop-Ear and his wife, and for several days the three of us were neither vegetarians nor fruitarians.

Lop-Ear's marriage was not a happy one, and the consolation about it is that it did not last very long. Neither he nor I was happy during that period. I was lonely. I suffered the inconvenience of being cast out of my safe little cave, and somehow I did not make it up with any other of the young males. I suppose my long-continued chumming with Lop-Ear had become a habit.

I might have married, it is true; and most likely I should have married had it not been for the dearth of females in the horde. This dearth, it is fair to assume, was caused by the exorbitance of Red-Eye, and it illustrates the menace he was to the existence of the horde. Then there was the Swift One, whom I had not forgotten.

At any rate, during the period of Lop-Ear's marriage I knocked about from pillar to post, in danger every night that I slept, and never comfortable. One of the Folk died, and his widow was taken into the cave of another one of the Folk. I took possession of the abandoned cave, but it was wide-mouthed, and after Red-Eye nearly trapped me in it one day, I returned to sleeping in the passage of the double-cave. During the summer, however, I used to stay away from the caves for weeks, sleeping in a tree-shelter I made near the mouth of the slough.

I have said that Lop-Ear was not happy. My sister was the daughter of the Chatterer, and she made Lop-Ear's life miserable for him. In no other cave was there so much squabbling and bickering. If Red-Eye was a Bluebeard, Lop-Ear was hen-pecked; and I imagine that Red-Eye was too shrewd ever to covet Lop-Ear's wife.

Fortunately for Lop-Ear, she died. An unusual thing happened that summer. Late, almost at the end of it, a second crop of the stringy-rooted carrots sprang up. These unexpected second-crop roots were young and juicy and tender, and for some time the carrot-patch was the favorite feeding-place of the horde. One morning, early, several score of us were there making our breakfast. On one side of me was the Hairless One. Beyond him were his father and son, old Marrow-Bone and Long-Lip. On the other side of me were my sister and Lop-Ear, she being next to me.

There was no warning. On the sudden, both the Hairless One and my sister sprang and screamed. At the same instant I heard the thud of the arrows that transfixed them. The next instant they were down on the ground, floundering and gasping, and the rest of us were stampeding for the trees. An arrow drove past me and entered the ground, its feathered shaft vibrating and oscillating from the impact of its arrested flight. I remember clearly how I swerved as I ran, to go past it, and that I gave it a needlessly wide berth. I must have shied at it as a horse shies at an object it fears.

Lop-Ear took a smashing fall as he ran beside me. An arrow had driven through the calf of his leg and tripped him. He tried to run, but was tripped and thrown by it a second time. He sat up, crouching, trembling with fear, and called to me pleadingly. I dashed back. He showed me the arrow. I caught hold of it to pull it out, but the consequent hurt made him seize my hand and stop me. A flying arrow passed between us. Another struck a rock, splintered, and fell to the ground. This was too much. I pulled, suddenly, with all my might. Lop-Ear screamed as the arrow came out, and struck at me angrily. But the next moment we were in full flight again.

I looked back. Old Marrow-Bone, deserted and far behind, was tottering silently along in his handicapped race with death. Sometimes he almost fell, and once he did fall; but no more arrows were coming. He scrambled weakly to his feet. Age burdened him heavily, but he did not want to die. The three Fire-Men, who were now running forward from their forest ambush, could easily have got him, but they did not try. Perhaps he was too old and tough. But they did want the Hairless One and my sister, for as I looked back from the trees I could see the Fire-Men beating in their heads with rocks. One of the Fire-Men was the wizened old hunter who limped.

We went on through the trees toward the caves — an excited and disorderly mob that drove before it to their holes all the small life of the forest, and that set the blue-jays screaming impudently. Now that there was no immediate danger, Long-Lip waited for his grand-father, Marrow-Bone; and with the gap of a generation between them, the old fellow and the youth brought up our rear.

And so it was that Lop-Ear became a bachelor once more. That night I slept with him in the old cave, and our old life of chumming began again. The loss of his mate seemed to cause him no grief. At least he showed no signs of it, nor of need for her. It was the wound in his leg that seemed to bother him, and it was all of a week before he got back again to his old spryness.

Marrow-Bone was the only old member in the horde. Sometimes, on looking back upon him, when the vision of him is most clear, I note a striking resemblance between him and the father of my father's gardener. The gardener's father was very old, very wrinkled and withered; and for all the world, when he peered through his tiny, bleary eyes and mumbled with his toothless gums, he looked and acted like old Marrow-Bone. This resemblance, as a child, used to frighten me. I always ran when I saw the old man tottering along on his two canes. Old Marrow-Bone even had a bit of sparse and straggly white beard that seemed identical with the whiskers of the old man.

As I have said, Marrow-Bone was the only old member of the horde. He was an exception. The Folk never lived to old age. Middle age was fairly rare. Death by violence was the common way of death. They died as my father had died, as Broken-Tooth had died, as my sister and the Hairless One had just died — abruptly and brutally, in the full possession of their faculties, in the full swing and rush of life. Natural death? To die violently was the natural way of dying in those days.

No one died of old age among the Folk. I never knew of a case. Even Marrow-Bone did not die that way, and he was the only one in my generation who had the chance. A bad rippling, any serious accidental or temporary impairment of the faculties, meant swift death. As a rule, these deaths were not witnessed.

Members of the horde simply dropped out of sight. They left the caves in the morning, and they never came back. They disappeared — into the ravenous maws of the hunting creatures.

This inroad of the Fire People on the carrot-patch was the beginning of the end, though we did not know it. The hunters of the Fire People began to appear more frequently as the time went by. They came in twos and threes, creeping silently through the forest, with their flying arrows able to annihilate distance and bring down prey from the top of the loftiest tree without themselves climbing into it. The bow and arrow was like an enormous extension of their leaping and striking muscles, so that, virtually, they could leap and kill at a hundred feet and more. This made them far more terrible than Saber-Tooth himself. And then they were very wise. They had speech that enabled them more effectively to reason, and in addition they understood cooperation.

We Folk came to be very circumspect when we were in the forest. We were more alert and vigilant and timid. No longer were the trees a protection to be relied upon. No longer could we perch on a branch and laugh down at our carnivorous enemies on the ground. The Fire People were carnivorous, with claws and fangs a hundred feet long, the most terrible of all the hunting animals that ranged the primeval world.

One morning, before the Folk had dispersed to the forest, there was a panic among the water-carriers and those who had gone down to the river to drink. The whole horde fled to the caves. It was our habit, at such times, to flee first and investigate afterward. We waited in the mouths of our caves and watched. After some time a Fire-Man stepped cautiously into the open space. It was the little wizened old hunter. He stood for a long time and watched us, looking our caves and the cliff-wall up and down. He descended one of the run-ways to a drinking-place, returning a few minutes later by another run-way. Again he stood and watched us carefully, for a long time. Then he turned on his heel and limped into the forest, leaving us calling querulously and plaintively to one another from the cave-mouths.

CHAPTER XVI

I found her down in the old neighborhood near the blueberry swamp, where my mother lived and where Lop-Ear and I had built our first tree-shelter. It was unexpected. As I came under the tree I heard the familiar soft sound and looked up. There she was, the Swift One, sitting on a limb and swinging her legs back and forth as she looked at me.

I stood still for some time. The sight of her had made me very happy. And then an unrest and a pain began to creep in on this happiness. I started to climb the tree after her, and she retreated slowly out the limb. Just as I reached for her, she sprang through the air and landed in the branches of the next tree. From amid the rustling leaves she peeped out at me and made soft sounds. I leaped straight for her, and after an exciting chase the situation was duplicated, for there she was, making soft sounds and peeping out from the leaves of a third tree.

It was borne in upon me that somehow it was different now from the old days before Lop-Ear and I had gone on our adventure-journey. I wanted her, and I knew that I wanted her. And she knew it, too. That was why she would not let me come near her. I forgot that she was truly the Swift One, and that in the art of climbing she had been my teacher. I pursued her from tree to tree, and ever she eluded me, peeping back at me with kindly eyes, making soft sounds, and dancing and leaping and teetering before me just out of reach. The more she eluded me, the more I wanted to catch her, and the lengthening shadows of the afternoon bore witness to the futility of my effort.

As I pursued her, or sometimes rested in an adjoining tree and watched her, I noticed the change in her. She was larger, heavier, more grown-up. Her lines were rounder, her muscles fuller, and there was about her that indefinite something of maturity that was new to her and that incited me on. Three years she had been gone — three years at the very least, and the change in her was marked. I say three years; it is as near as I can measure the time. A fourth year may have elapsed, which I have confused with the happenings of the other three years. The more I think of it, the more confident I am that it must be four years that she was away.

Where she went, why she went, and what happened to her during that time, I do not know. There was no way for her to tell me, any more than there was a way for Lop-Ear and me to tell the Folk what we had seen when we were away. Like us, the chance is she had gone off on an adventure-journey, and by herself. On the other hand, it is possible that Red-Eye may have been the cause of her going. It is quite certain that he must have come upon her from time to time, wandering in the woods; and if he had pursued her there is no question but that it would have been sufficient to drive her away. From subsequent events, I am led to believe that she must have travelled far to the south, across a range of mountains and down to the banks of a strange river, away from any of her kind. Many Tree People lived down there, and I think it must have been they who finally drove her back to the horde and to me. My reasons for this I shall explain later.

The shadows grew longer, and I pursued more ardently than ever, and still I could not catch her. She made believe that she was trying desperately to escape me, and all the time she managed to keep just beyond reach. I forgot everything — time, the oncoming of night, and my meat-eating enemies. I was insane with love of her, and with — anger, too, because she would not let me come up with her. It was strange how this anger against her seemed to be part of my desire for her.

As I have said, I forgot everything. In racing across an open space I ran full tilt upon a colony of snakes. They did not deter me. I was mad. They struck at me, but I ducked and dodged and ran on. Then there was a python that ordinarily would have sent me screeching to a tree-top. He did run me into a tree; but the Swift One was going out of sight, and I sprang back to the ground and went on. It was a close shave. Then there was my old enemy, the hyena. From my conduct he was sure something was going to happen, and he followed me for an hour. Once we exasperated a band of wild pigs, and they took after us. The Swift One dared a wide leap between trees that was too much for me. I had to take to the ground. There were the pigs. I didn't care. I struck the earth within a yard of the nearest one. They flanked me as I ran, and chased me into two different trees out of the line of my pursuit of the Swift One. I ventured the ground again, doubled back, and crossed a wide open space, with the whole band grunting, bristling, and tusk-gnashing at my heels.

If I had tripped or stumbled in that open space, there would have been no chance for me. But I didn't. And I didn't care whether I did or not. I was in such mood that I would have faced old Saber-Tooth himself, or a score of arrow-shooting Fire People. Such was the madness of love...with me. With the Swift One it was different. She was very wise. She did not take any real risks, and I remember, on looking back across the centuries to that wild love-chase, that when the pigs delayed me she did not run away very fast, but waited, rather, for me to take up the pursuit again. Also, she directed her retreat before me, going always in the direction she wanted to go.

At last came the dark. She led me around the mossy shoulder of a canyon wall that out-jutted among the trees. After that we penetrated a dense mass of underbrush that scraped and ripped me in passing. But she never ruffled a hair. She knew the way. In the midst of the thicket was a large oak. I was very close to her when she climbed it; and in the forks, in the nest-shelter I had sought so long and vainly, I caught her.

The hyena had taken our trail again, and he now sat down on the ground and made hungry noises. But we did not mind, and we laughed at him when he snarled and went away through the thicket. It was the spring-time, and the night noises were many and varied. As was the custom at that time of the year, there was much fighting among the animals. From the nest we could hear the squealing and neighing of wild horses, the trumpeting of elephants, and the roaring of lions. But the moon came out, and the air was warm, and we laughed and were unafraid.

I remember, next morning, that we came upon two ruffled cock-birds that fought so ardently that I went right up to them and caught them by their necks. Thus did the Swift One and I get our wedding breakfast. They were delicious. It was easy to catch birds in the spring of the year. There was one night that year when two elk fought in the moonlight, while the Swift One and I watched from the trees; and we saw a lion and lioness crawl up to them unheeded, and kill them as they fought.

There is no telling how long we might have lived in the Swift One's tree-shelter. But one day, while we were away, the tree was struck by lightning. Great limbs were riven, and the nest was demolished. I started to rebuild, but the Swift One would have nothing to do with it. As I was to learn, she was greatly afraid of lightning, and I could not persuade her back into the tree. So it came about, our honeymoon over, that we went to the caves to live. As Lop-Ear had evicted me from the cave when he got married, I now evicted him; and the Swift One and I settled down in it, while he slept at night in the connecting passage of the double cave.

And with our coming to live with the horde came trouble. Red-Eye had had I don't know how many wives since the Singing One. She had gone the way of the rest. At present he had a little, soft, spiritless thing that whimpered and wept all the time, whether he beat her or not; and her passing was a question of very little time. Before she passed, even, Red-Eye set his eyes on the Swift One; and when she passed, the persecution of the Swift One began.

Well for her that she was the Swift One, that she had that amazing aptitude for swift flight through the trees. She needed all her wisdom and daring in order to keep out of the clutches of Red-Eye. I could not help her. He was so powerful a monster that he could have torn me limb from limb. As it was, to my death I carried an injured shoulder that ached and went lame in rainy weather and that was a mark of his handiwork.

The Swift One was sick at the time I received this injury. It must have been a touch of the malaria from which we sometimes suffered; but whatever it was, it made her dull and heavy. She did not have the accustomed spring to her muscles, and was indeed in poor shape for flight when Red-Eye cornered her near the lair of the wild dogs, several miles south from the caves. Usually, she would have circled around him, beaten him in the straight-away, and gained the protection of our small-mouthed cave. But she could not circle him. She was too dull and slow. Each time he headed her off, until she gave over the attempt and devoted her energies wholly to keeping out of his clutches.

Had she not been sick it would have been child’s play for her to elude him; but as it was, it required all her caution and cunning. It was to her advantage that she could travel on thinner branches than he, and make wider leaps. Also, she was an unerring judge of distance, and she had an instinct for knowing the strength of twigs, branches, and rotten limbs.

It was an interminable chase. Round and round and back and forth for long stretches through the forest they dashed. There was great excitement among the other Folk. They set up a wild chattering, that was loudest when Red-Eye was at a distance, and that hushed when the chase led him near. They were impotent onlookers. The females screeched and gibbered, and the males beat their chests in helpless rage. Big Face was especially angry, and though he hushed his racket when Red-Eye drew near, he did not hush it to the extent the others did.

As for me, I played no brave part. I know I was anything but a hero. Besides, of what use would it have been for me to encounter Red-Eye? He was the mighty monster, the abysmal brute, and there was no hope for me in a conflict of strength. He would have killed me, and the situation would have remained unchanged. He would have caught the Swift One before she could have gained the cave. As it was, I could only look on in helpless fury, and dodge out of the way and cease my raging when he came too near.

The hours passed. It was late afternoon. And still the chase went on. Red-Eye was bent upon exhausting the Swift One. He deliberately ran her down. After a long time she began to tire and could no longer maintain her headlong flight. Then it was that she began going far out on the thinnest branches, where he could not follow. Thus she might have got a breathing spell, but Red-Eye was fiendish. Unable to follow her, he dislodged her by shaking her off. With all his strength and weight, he would shake the branch back and forth until he snapped her off as one would snap a fly from a whip-lash. The first time, she saved herself by falling into branches lower down. Another time, though they did not save her from the ground, they broke her fall. Still another time, so fiercely did he snap her from the branch, she was flung clear across a gap into another tree. It was remarkable, the way she gripped and saved herself. Only when driven to it did she seek the temporary safety of the thin branches. But she was so tired that she could not otherwise avoid him, and time after time she was compelled to take to the thin branches.

Still the chase went on, and still the Folk screeched, beat their chests, and gnashed their teeth. Then came the end. It was almost twilight. Trembling, panting, struggling for breath, the Swift One clung pitiably to a high thin branch. It was thirty feet to the ground, and nothing intervened. Red-Eye swung back and forth on the branch farther down. It became a pendulum, swinging wider and wider with every lunge of his weight. Then he reversed suddenly, just before the downward swing was completed. Her grips were torn loose, and, screaming, she was hurled toward the ground.

But she righted herself in mid-air and descended feet first. Ordinarily, from such a height, the spring in her legs would have eased the shock of impact with the ground. But she was exhausted. She could not exercise this spring. Her legs gave under her, having only partly met the shock, and she crashed on over on her side. This, as it turned out, did not injure her, but it did knock the breath from her lungs. She lay helpless and struggling for air.

Red-Eye rushed upon her and seized her. With his gnarly fingers twisted into the hair of her head, he stood up and roared in triumph and defiance at the awed Folk that watched from the trees. Then it was that I went mad.

Caution was thrown to the winds; forgotten was the will to live of my flesh. Even as Red-Eye roared, from behind I dashed upon him. So unexpected was my charge that I knocked him off his feet. I twined my arms and legs around him and strove to hold him down. This would have been impossible to accomplish had he not held tightly with one hand to the Swift One's hair.

Encouraged by my conduct, Big-Face became a sudden ally. He charged in, sank his teeth in Red-Eye's arm, and ripped and tore at his face. This was the time for the rest of the Folk to have joined in. It was the chance to do for Red-Eye for all time. But they remained afraid in the trees.

It was inevitable that Red-Eye should win in the struggle against the two of us. The reason he did not finish us off immediately was that the Swift One clogged his movements. She had regained her breath and was beginning to resist. He would not release his clutch on her hair, and this handicapped him. He got a grip on my arm. It was the beginning of the end for me. He began to draw me toward him into a position where he could sink his teeth into my throat. His mouth was open, and he was grinning. And yet, though he had just begun to exert his strength, in that moment he wrenched my shoulder so that I suffered from it for the remainder of my life.

And in that moment something happened. There was no warning. A great body smashed down upon the four of us locked together. We were driven violently apart and rolled over and over, and in the suddenness of surprise we released our holds on one another. At the moment of the shock, Big-Face screamed terribly. I did not know what had happened, though I smelled tiger and caught a glimpse of striped fur as I sprang for a tree.

It was old Saber-Tooth. Aroused in his lair by the noise we had made, he had crept upon us unnoticed. The Swift One gained the next tree to mine, and I immediately joined her. I put my arms around her and held her close to me while she whimpered and cried softly. From the ground came a snarling, and crunching of bones. It was Saber-Tooth making his supper off of what had been Big-Face. From beyond, with inflamed rims and eyes, Red-Eye peered down. Here was a monster mightier than he. The Swift One and I turned and went away quietly through the trees toward the cave, while the Folk gathered overhead and showered down abuse and twigs and branches upon their ancient enemy. He lashed his tail and snarled, but went on eating.

And in such fashion were we saved. It was a mere accident — the sheerest accident. Else would I have died, there in Red-Eye's clutch, and there would have been no bridging of time to the tune of a thousand centuries down to a progeny that reads newspapers and rides on electric cars — ay, and that writes narratives of bygone happenings even as this is written.

CHAPTER XVII

It was in the early fall of the following year that it happened. After his failure to get the Swift One, Red-Eye had taken another wife; and, strange to relate, she was still alive. Stranger still, they had a baby several months old — Red-Eye's first child. His previous wives had never lived long enough to bear him children. The year had gone well for all of us. The weather had been exceptionally mild and food plentiful. I remember especially the turnips of that year. The nut crop was also very heavy, and the wild plums were larger and sweeter than usual.

In short, it was a golden year. And then it happened. It was in the early morning, and we were surprised in our caves. In the chill gray light we awoke from sleep, most of us, to encounter death. The Swift One and I were aroused by a pandemonium of screeching and gibbering. Our cave was the highest of all on the cliff, and we crept to the mouth and peered down. The open space was filled with the Fire People. Their cries and yells were added to the clamor, but they had order and plan, while we Folk had none. Each one of us fought and acted for himself, and no one of us knew the extent of the calamity that was befalling us.

By the time we got to stone-throwing, the Fire People had massed thick at the base of the cliff. Our first volley must have mashed some heads, for when they swerved back from the cliff three of their number were left upon the ground. These were struggling and floundering, and one was trying to crawl away. But we fixed them. By this time we males were roaring with rage, and we rained rocks upon the three men that were down. Several of the Fire-Men returned to drag them into safety, but our rocks drove the rescuers back.

The Fire People became enraged. Also, they became cautious. In spite of their angry yells, they kept at a distance and sent flights of arrows against us. This put an end to the rock-throwing. By the time half a dozen of us had been killed and a score injured, the rest of us retreated inside our caves. I was not out of range in my lofty cave, but the distance was great enough to spoil effective shooting, and the Fire People did not waste many arrows on me. Furthermore, I was curious. I wanted to see. While the Swift One remained well inside the cave, trembling with fear and making low wailing sounds because I would not come in, I crouched at the entrance and watched.

The fighting had now become intermittent. It was a sort of deadlock. We were in the caves, and the question with the Fire People was how to get us out. They did not dare come in after us, and in general we would not expose ourselves to their arrows. Occasionally, when one of them drew in close to the base of the cliff, one or another of the Folk would smash a rock down. In return, he would be transfixed by half a dozen arrows. This ruse worked well for some time, but finally the Folk no longer were inveigled into showing themselves. The deadlock was complete.

Behind the Fire People I could see the little wizened old hunter directing it all. They obeyed him, and went here and there at his commands. Some of them went into the forest and returned with loads of dry wood, leaves, and grass. All the Fire People drew in closer. While most of them stood by with bows and arrows, ready to shoot any of the Folk that exposed themselves, several of the Fire-Men heaped the dry grass and wood at the mouths of the lower tier of caves. Out of these heaps they conjured the monster we feared — FIRE. At first, wisps of smoke arose and curled up the cliff. Then I could see the red-tongued flames darting in and out through the wood like tiny snakes. The smoke grew thicker and thicker, at times shrouding the whole face of the cliff. But I was high up and it did not bother me much, though it stung my eyes and I rubbed them with my knuckles.

Old Marrow-Bone was the first to be smoked out. A light fan of air drifted the smoke away at the time so that I saw clearly. He broke out through the smoke, stepping on a burning coal and screaming with the sudden hurt of it, and essayed to climb up the cliff. The arrows showered about him. He came to a pause on a ledge, clutching a knob of rock for support, gasping and sneezing and shaking his head. He swayed back and forth. The feathered ends of a dozen arrows were sticking out of him. He was an old man, and he did not want to die. He swayed wider and wider, his knees giving under him, and as he swayed he wailed most plaintively. His hand released its grip and he lurched outward to the fall. His old bones must have been sadly broken. He groaned and strove feebly to rise, but a Fire-Man rushed in upon him and brained him with a club.

And as it happened with Marrow-Bone, so it happened with many of the Folk. Unable to endure the smoke-suffocation, they rushed out to fall beneath the arrows. Some of the women and children remained in the caves to strangle to death, but the majority met death outside.

When the Fire-Men had in this fashion cleared the first tier of caves, they began making arrangements to duplicate the operation on the second tier of caves. It was while they were climbing up with their grass and wood, that Red-Eye, followed by his wife, with the baby holding to her tightly, made a successful flight up the cliff. The Fire-Men must have concluded that in the interval between the smoking-out operations we would remain in our caves; so that they were unprepared, and their arrows did not begin to fly till Red-Eye and his wife were well up the wall. When he reached the top, he turned about and glared down at them, roaring and beating his chest. They arched their arrows at him, and though he was untouched he fled on.

I watched a third tier smoked out, and a fourth. A few of the Folk escaped up the cliff, but most of them were shot off the face of it as they strove to climb. I remember Long-Lip. He got as far as my ledge, crying piteously, an arrow clear through his chest, the feathered shaft sticking out behind, the bone head sticking out before, shot through the back as he climbed. He sank down on my ledge bleeding profusely at the mouth.

It was about this time that the upper tiers seemed to empty themselves spontaneously. Nearly all the Folk not yet smoked out stampeded up the cliff at the same time. This was the saving of many. The Fire People could not shoot arrows fast enough. They filled the air with arrows, and scores of the stricken Folk came tumbling down; but still there were a few who reached the top and got away.

The impulse of flight was now stronger in me than curiosity. The arrows had ceased flying. The last of the Folk seemed gone, though there may have been a few still hiding in the upper caves. The Swift One and I started to make a scramble for the cliff-top. At sight of us a great cry went up from the Fire People. This was not caused by me, but by the Swift One. They were chattering excitedly and pointing her out to one another. They did not try to shoot her. Not an arrow was discharged. They began calling softly and coaxingly. I stopped and looked down. She was afraid, and whimpered and urged me on. So we went up over the top and plunged into the trees.

This event has often caused me to wonder and speculate. If she were really of their kind, she must have been lost from them at a time when she was too young to remember, else would she not have been afraid of them. On the other hand, it may well have been that while she was their kind she had never been lost from them; that she had been born in the wild forest far from their haunts, her father maybe a renegade Fire-Man, her mother maybe one of my own kind, one of the Folk. But who shall say? These things are beyond me, and the Swift One knew no more about them than did I.

We lived through a day of terror. Most of the survivors fled toward the blueberry swamp and took refuge in the forest in that neighborhood. And all day hunting parties of the Fire People ranged the forest, killing us wherever they found us. It must have been a deliberately executed plan. Increasing beyond the limits of their own territory, they had decided on making a conquest of ours. Sorry the conquest! We had no chance against them. It was slaughter, indiscriminate slaughter, for they spared none, killing old and young, effectively ridding the land of our presence.

It was like the end of the world to us. We fled to the trees as a last refuge, only to be surrounded and killed, family by family. We saw much of this during that day, and besides, I wanted to see. The Swift One and I never remained long in one tree, and so escaped being surrounded. But there seemed no place to go. The Fire-Men were everywhere, bent on their task of extermination. Every way we turned we encountered them, and because of this we saw much of their handiwork.

I did not see what became of my mother, but I did see the Chatterer shot down out of the old home-tree. And I am afraid that at the sight I did a bit of joyous teetering. Before I leave this portion of my narrative, I must tell of Red-Eye. He was caught with his wife in a tree down by the blueberry swamp. The Swift One and I stopped long enough in our flight to see. The Fire-Men were too intent upon their work to notice us, and, furthermore, we were well screened by the thicket in which we crouched.

Fully a score of the hunters were under the tree, discharging arrows into it. They always picked up their arrows when they fell back to earth. I could not see Red-Eye, but I could hear him howling from somewhere in the tree.

After a short interval his howling grew muffled. He must have crawled into a hollow in the trunk. But his wife did not win this shelter. An arrow brought her to the ground. She was severely hurt, for she made no effort to get away. She crouched in a sheltering way over her baby (which clung tightly to her), and made pleading signs and sounds to the Fire-Men. They gathered about her and laughed at her — even as Lop-Ear and I had laughed at the old Tree-Man. And even as we had poked him with twigs and sticks, so did the Fire-Men with Red-Eye’s wife. They poked her with the ends of their bows, and prodded her in the ribs. But she was poor fun. She would not fight. Nor, for that matter, would she get angry. She continued to crouch over her baby and to plead. One of the Fire-Men stepped close to her. In his hand was a club. She saw and understood, but she made only the pleading sounds until the blow fell.

Red-Eye, in the hollow of the trunk, was safe from their arrows. They stood together and debated for a while, then one of them climbed into the tree. What happened up there I could not tell, but I heard him yell and saw the excitement of those that remained beneath. After several minutes his body crashed down to the ground. He did not move. They looked at him and raised his head, but it fell back limply when they let go. Red-Eye had accounted for himself.

They were very angry. There was an opening into the trunk close to the ground. They gathered wood and grass and built a fire. The Swift One and I, our arms around each other, waited and watched in the thicket. Sometimes they threw upon the fire green branches with many leaves, whereupon the smoke became very thick.

We saw them suddenly swerve back from the tree. They were not quick enough. Red-Eye's flying body landed in the midst of them.

He was in a frightful rage, smashing about with his long arms right and left. He pulled the face off one of them, literally pulled it off with those gnarly fingers of his and those tremendous muscles. He bit another through the neck. The Fire-Men fell back with wild fierce yells, then rushed upon him. He managed to get hold of a club and began crushing heads like eggshells. He was too much for them, and they were compelled to fall back again. This was his chance, and he turned his back upon them and ran for it, still howling wrathfully. A few arrows sped after him, but he plunged into a thicket and was gone.

The Swift One and I crept quietly away, only to run foul of another party of Fire-Men. They chased us into the blueberry swamp, but we knew the tree-paths across the farther morasses where they could not follow on the ground, and so we escaped. We came out on the other side into a narrow strip of forest that separated the blueberry swamp from the great swamp that extended westward. Here we met Lop-Ear. How he had escaped I cannot imagine, unless he had not slept the preceding night at the caves.

Here, in the strip of forest, we might have built tree-shelters and settled down; but the Fire People were performing their work of extermination thoroughly. In the afternoon, Hair-Face and his wife fled out from among the trees to the east, passed us, and were gone. They fled silently and swiftly, with alarm in their faces. In the direction from which they had come we heard the cries and yells of the hunters, and the screeching of some one of the Folk. The Fire People had found their way across the swamp.

The Swift One, Lop-Ear, and I followed on the heels of Hair-Face and his wife. When we came to the edge of the great swamp, we stopped. We did not know its paths. It was outside our territory, and it had been always avoided by the Folk. None had ever gone into it — at least, to return. In our minds it represented mystery and fear, the terrible unknown. As I say, we stopped at the edge of it. We were afraid. The cries of the Fire-Men were drawing nearer. We looked at one another. Hair-Face ran out on the quaking morass and gained the firmer footing of a grass-hummock a dozen yards away. His wife did not follow. She tried to, but shrank back from the treacherous surface and cowered down.

The Swift One did not wait for me, nor did she pause till she had passed beyond Hair-Face a hundred yards and gained a much larger hummock. By the time Lop-Ear and I had caught up with her, the Fire-Men appeared among the trees. Hair-Face's wife, driven by them into panic terror, dashed after us. But she ran blindly, without caution, and broke through the crust. We turned and watched, and saw them shoot her with arrows as she sank down in the mud. The arrows began falling about us. Hair-Face had now joined us, and the four of us plunged on, we knew not whither, deeper and deeper into the swamp.

CHAPTER XVIII

Of our wanderings in the great swamp I have no clear knowledge. When I strive to remember, I have a riot of unrelated impressions and a loss of time-value. I have no idea of how long we were in that vast everglade, but it must have been for weeks. My memories of what occurred invariably take the form of nightmare. For untold ages, oppressed by protean fear, I am aware of wandering, endlessly wandering, through a dank and soggy wilderness, where poisonous snakes struck at us, and animals roared around us, and the mud quaked under us and sucked at our heels.

I know that we were turned from our course countless times by streams and lakes and slimy seas. Then there were storms and risings of the water over great areas of the low-lying lands; and there were periods of hunger and misery when we were kept prisoners in the trees for days and days by these transient floods.

Very strong upon me is one picture. Large trees are about us, and from their branches hang gray filaments of moss, while great creepers, like monstrous serpents, curl around the trunks and writhe in tangles through the air. And all about is the mud, soft mud, that bubbles forth gases, and that heaves and sighs with internal agitations. And in the midst of all this are a dozen of us. We are lean and wretched, and our bones show through our tight-stretched skins. We do not sing and chatter and laugh. We play no pranks. For once our volatile and exuberant spirits are hopelessly subdued. We make plaintive, querulous noises, look at one another, and cluster close together. It is like the meeting of the handful of survivors after the day of the end of the world.

This event is without connection with the other events in the swamp. How we ever managed to cross it, I do not know, but at last we came out where a low range of hills ran down to the bank of the river. It was our river emerging like ourselves from the great swamp. On the south bank, where the river had broken its way through the hills, we found many sand-stone caves. Beyond, toward the west, the ocean boomed on the bar that lay across the river’s mouth. And here, in the caves, we settled down in our abiding-place by the sea.

There were not many of us. From time to time, as the days went by, more of the Folk appeared. They dragged themselves from the swamp singly, and in twos and threes, more dead than alive, mere perambulating skeletons, until at last there were thirty of us. Then no more came from the swamp, and Red-Eye was not among us. It was noticeable that no children had survived the frightful journey.

I shall not tell in detail of the years we lived by the sea. It was not a happy abiding-place. The air was raw and chill, and we suffered continually from coughing and colds. We could not survive in such an environment. True, we had children; but they had little hold on life and died early, while we died faster than new ones were born. Our number steadily diminished.

Then the radical change in our diet was not good for us. We got few vegetables and fruits, and became fish-eaters. There were mussels and abalones and clams and rock-oysters, and great ocean-crabs that were thrown upon the beaches in stormy weather. Also, we found several kinds of seaweed that were good to eat. But the change in diet caused us stomach troubles, and none of us ever waxed fat. We were all lean and dyspeptic-looking. It was in getting the big abalones that Lop-Ear was lost. One of them closed upon his fingers at low-tide, and then the flood-tide came in and drowned him. We found his body the next day, and it was a lesson to us. Not another one of us was ever caught in the closing shell of an abalone.

The Swift One and I managed to bring up one child, a boy — at least we managed to bring him along for several years. But I am quite confident he could never have survived that terrible climate. And then, one day, the Fire People appeared again. They had come down the river, not on a catamaran, but in a rude dug-out. There were three of them that paddled in it, and one of them was the little wizened old hunter. They landed on our beach, and he limped across the sand and examined our caves.

They went away in a few minutes, but the Swift One was badly scared. We were all frightened, but none of us to the extent that she was. She whimpered and cried and was restless all that night. In the morning she took the child in her arms, and by sharp cries, gestures, and example, started me on our second long flight. There were eight of the Folk (all that was left of the horde) that remained behind in the caves. There was no hope for them. Without doubt, even if the Fire People did not return, they must soon have perished. It was a bad climate down there by the sea. The Folk were not constituted for the coast-dwelling life.

We travelled south, for days skirting the great swamp but never venturing into it. Once we broke back to the westward, crossing a range of mountains and coming down to the coast. But it was no place for us. There were no trees — only bleak headlands, a thundering surf, and strong winds that seemed never to cease from blowing. We turned back across the mountains, travelling east and south, until we came in touch with the great swamp again.

Soon we gained the southern extremity of the swamp, and we continued our course south and east. It was a pleasant land. The air was warm, and we were again in the forest. Later on we crossed a low-lying range of hills and found ourselves in an even better forest country. The farther we penetrated from the coast the warmer we found it, and we went on and on until we came to a large river that seemed familiar to the Swift One. It was where she must have come during the four years' absence from the horde. This river we crossed on logs, landing on side at the large bluff. High up on the bluff we found our new home most difficult of access and quite hidden from any eye beneath.

There is little more of my tale to tell. Here the Swift One and I lived and reared our family. And here my memories end. We never made another migration. I never dream beyond our high, inaccessible cave. And here must have been born the child that inherited the stuff of my dreams, that had moulded into its being all the impressions of my life — or of the life of Big-Tooth, rather, who is my other-self, and not my real self, but who is so real to me that often I am unable to tell what age I am living in.

I often wonder about this line of descent. I, the modern, am incontestably a man; yet I, Big-Tooth, the primitive, am not a man. Somewhere, and by straight line of descent, these two parties to my dual personality were connected. Were the Folk, before their destruction, in the process of becoming men? And did I and mine carry through this process? On the other hand, may not some descendant of mine have gone in to the Fire People and become one of them? I do not know. There is no way of learning. One thing only is certain, and that is that Big-Tooth did stamp into the cerebral constitution of one of his progeny all the impressions of his life, and stamped them in so indelibly that the hosts of intervening generations have failed to obliterate them.

There is one other thing of which I must speak before I close. It is a dream that I dream often, and in point of time the real event must have occurred during the period of my living in the high, inaccessible cave. I remember that I wandered far in the forest toward the east. There I came upon a tribe of Tree People. I crouched in a thicket and watched them at play. They were holding a laughing council, jumping up and down and screeching rude choruses.

Suddenly they hushed their noise and ceased their capering. They shrank down in fear, and quested anxiously about with their eyes for a way of retreat. Then Red-Eye walked in among them. They cowered away from him. All were frightened. But he made no attempt to hurt them. He was one of them. At his heels, on stringy bended legs, supporting herself with knuckles to the ground on either side, walked an old female of the Tree People, his latest wife. He sat down in the midst of the circle. I can see him now, as I write this, scowling, his eyes inflamed, as he peers about him at the circle of the Tree People. And as he peers he crooks one monstrous leg and with his gnarly toes scratches himself on the stomach. He is Red-Eye, the atavism.

THE IRON HEEL

This dystopian novel was first published in 1907 and chronicles the rise of an oligarchic tyranny in the United States, exploring London's socialist views.

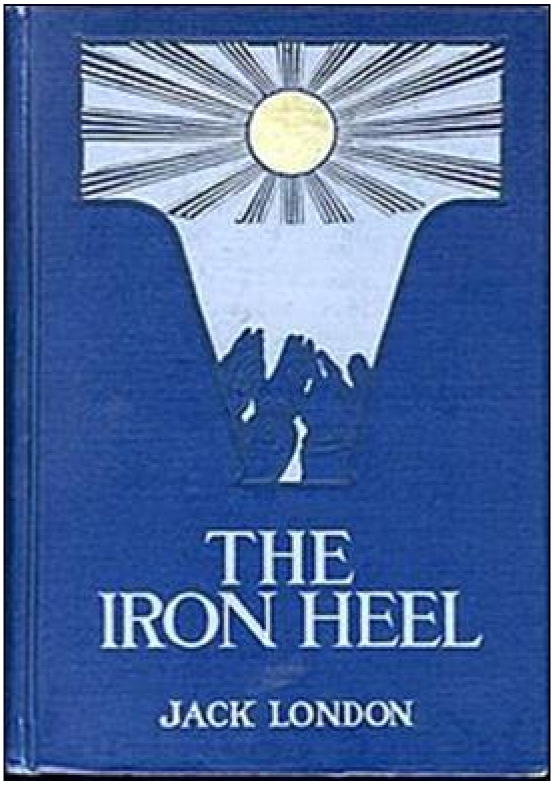
THE IRON HEEL
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

FOREWORD
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV

FOREWORD

It cannot be said that the Everhard Manuscript is an important historical document. To the historian it bristles with errors — not errors of fact, but errors of interpretation. Looking back across the seven centuries that have lapsed since Avis Everhard completed her manuscript, events, and the bearings of events, that were confused and veiled to her, are clear to us. She lacked perspective. She was too close to the events she writes about. Nay, she was merged in the events she has described.

Nevertheless, as a personal document, the Everhard Manuscript is of inestimable value. But here again enter error of perspective, and vitiation due to the bias of love. Yet we smile, indeed, and forgive Avis Everhard for the heroic lines upon which she modelled her husband. We know to-day that he was not so colossal, and that he loomed among the events of his times less largely than the Manuscript would lead us to believe.

We know that Ernest Everhard was an exceptionally strong man, but not so exceptional as his wife thought him to be. He was, after all, but one of a large number of heroes who, throughout the world, devoted their lives to the Revolution; though it must be conceded that he did unusual work, especially in his elaboration and interpretation of working-class philosophy. “Proletarian science” and “proletarian philosophy” were his phrases for it, and therein he shows the provincialism of his mind — a defect, however, that was due to the times and that none in that day could escape.

But to return to the Manuscript. Especially valuable is it in communicating to us the FEEL of those terrible times. Nowhere do we find more vividly portrayed the psychology of the persons that lived in that turbulent period embraced between the years 1912 and 1932 — their mistakes and ignorance, their doubts and fears and misapprehensions, their ethical delusions, their violent passions, their inconceivable sordidness and selfishness. These are the things that are so hard for us of this enlightened age to understand. History tells us that these things were, and biology and psychology tell us why they were; but history and biology and psychology do not make these things alive. We accept them as facts, but we are left without sympathetic comprehension of them.

This sympathy comes to us, however, as we peruse the Everhard Manuscript. We enter into the minds of the actors in that long-ago world-drama, and for the time being their mental processes are our mental processes. Not alone do we understand Avis Everhard's love for her hero-husband, but we feel, as he felt, in those first days, the vague and terrible loom of the Oligarchy. The Iron Heel (well named) we feel descending upon and crushing mankind.

And in passing we note that that historic phrase, the Iron Heel, originated in Ernest Everhard's mind. This, we may say, is the one moot question that this new-found document clears up. Previous to this, the earliest-known use of the phrase occurred in the pamphlet, "Ye Slaves," written by George Milford and published in December, 1912. This George Milford was an obscure agitator about whom nothing is known, save the one additional bit of information gained from the Manuscript, which mentions that he was shot in the Chicago Commune. Evidently he had heard Ernest Everhard make use of the phrase in some public speech, most probably when he was running for Congress in the fall of 1912. From the Manuscript we learn that Everhard used the phrase at a private dinner in the spring of 1912. This is, without discussion, the earliest-known occasion on which the Oligarchy was so designated.

The rise of the Oligarchy will always remain a cause of secret wonder to the historian and the philosopher. Other great historical events have their place in social evolution. They were inevitable. Their coming could have been predicted with the same certitude that astronomers to-day predict the outcome of the movements of stars. Without these other great historical events, social evolution could not have proceeded. Primitive communism, chattel slavery, serf slavery, and wage slavery were necessary stepping-stones in the evolution of society. But it were ridiculous to assert that the Iron Heel was a necessary stepping-stone. Rather, to-day, is it adjudged a step aside, or a step backward, to the social tyrannies that made the early world a hell, but that were as necessary as the Iron Heel was unnecessary.

Black as Feudalism was, yet the coming of it was inevitable. What else than Feudalism could have followed upon the breakdown of that great centralized governmental machine known as the Roman Empire? Not so, however, with the Iron Heel. In the orderly procedure of social evolution there was no place for it. It was not necessary, and it was not inevitable. It must always remain the great curiosity of history — a whim, a fantasy, an apparition, a thing unexpected and undreamed; and it should serve as a warning to those rash political theorists of to-day who speak with certitude of social processes.

Capitalism was adjudged by the sociologists of the time to be the culmination of bourgeois rule, the ripened fruit of the bourgeois revolution. And we of to-day can but applaud that judgment. Following upon Capitalism, it was held, even by such intellectual and antagonistic giants as Herbert Spencer, that Socialism would come. Out of the decay of self-seeking capitalism, it was held, would arise that flower of the ages, the Brotherhood of Man. Instead of which, appalling alike to us who look back and to those that lived at the time, capitalism, rotten-ripe, sent forth that monstrous offshoot, the Oligarchy.

Too late did the socialist movement of the early twentieth century divine the coming of the Oligarchy. Even as it was divined, the Oligarchy was there — a fact established in blood, a stupendous and awful reality. Nor even then, as the Everhard Manuscript well shows, was any permanence attributed to the Iron Heel. Its overthrow was a matter of a few short years, was the judgment of the revolutionists. It is true, they realized that the Peasant Revolt was unplanned, and that the First Revolt was premature; but they little realized that the Second Revolt, planned and mature, was doomed to equal futility and more terrible punishment.

It is apparent that Avis Everhard completed the Manuscript during the last days of preparation for the Second Revolt; hence the fact that there is no mention of the disastrous outcome of the Second Revolt. It is quite clear that she intended the Manuscript for immediate publication, as soon as the Iron Heel was overthrown, so that her husband, so recently dead, should receive full credit for all that he had ventured and accomplished. Then came the frightful crushing of the Second Revolt, and it is probable that in the moment of danger, ere she fled or was captured by the Mercenaries, she hid the Manuscript in the hollow oak at Wake Robin Lodge.

Of Avis Everhard there is no further record. Undoubtedly she was executed by the Mercenaries; and, as is well known, no record of such executions was kept by the Iron Heel. But little did she realize, even then, as she hid the Manuscript and prepared to flee, how terrible had been the breakdown of the Second Revolt. Little did she realize that the tortuous and distorted evolution of the next three centuries would compel a Third Revolt and a Fourth Revolt, and many Revolts, all drowned in seas of blood, ere the world-movement of labor should come into its own. And little did she dream that for seven long centuries the tribute of her love to Ernest

Everhard would repose undisturbed in the heart of the ancient oak of Wake Robin Lodge.

ANTHONY MEREDITH
Ardis,
November 27, 419 B.O.M.

CHAPTER I

MY EAGLE

The soft summer wind stirs the redwoods, and Wild-Water ripples sweet cadences over its mossy stones. There are butterflies in the sunshine, and from everywhere arises the drowsy hum of bees. It is so quiet and peaceful, and I sit here, and ponder, and am restless. It is the quiet that makes me restless. It seems unreal. All the world is quiet, but it is the quiet before the storm. I strain my ears, and all my senses, for some betrayal of that impending storm. Oh, that it may not be premature! That it may not be premature!*

* The Second Revolt was largely the work of Ernest Everhard, though he cooperated, of course, with the European leaders. The capture and secret execution of Everhard was the great event of the spring of 1932 A.D. Yet so thoroughly had he prepared for the revolt, that his fellow-conspirators were able, with little confusion or delay, to carry out his plans. It was after Everhard's execution that his wife went to Wake Robin Lodge, a small bungalow in the Sonoma Hills of California.

Small wonder that I am restless. I think, and think, and I cannot cease from thinking. I have been in the thick of life so long that I am oppressed by the peace and quiet, and I cannot forbear from dwelling upon that mad maelstrom of death and destruction so soon to burst forth. In my ears are the cries of the stricken; and I can see, as I have seen in the past,* all the marring and mangling of the sweet, beautiful flesh, and the souls torn with violence from proud bodies and hurled to God. Thus do we poor humans attain our ends, striving through carnage and destruction to bring lasting peace and happiness upon the earth.

* Without doubt she here refers to the Chicago Commune.

And then I am lonely. When I do not think of what is to come, I think of what has been and is no more — my Eagle, beating with tireless wings the void, soaring toward what was ever his sun, the flaming ideal of human freedom. I cannot sit idly by and wait the great event that is his making, though he is not here to see. He devoted all the years of his manhood to it, and for it he gave his life. It is his handiwork. He made it.*

* With all respect to Avis Everhard, it must be pointed out that Everhard was but one of many able leaders who planned the Second Revolt. And we to-day, looking back across the centuries, can safely say that even had he lived, the Second Revolt would not have been less calamitous in its outcome than it was.

And so it is, in this anxious time of waiting, that I shall write of my husband. There is much light that I alone of all persons living can throw upon his character, and so noble a character cannot be blazoned forth too brightly. His was a great soul, and, when my love grows unselfish, my chiefest regret is that he is not here to witness to-morrow's dawn. We cannot fail. He has built too stoutly and too surely for that. Woe to the Iron Heel! Soon shall it be thrust back from off prostrate humanity. When the word goes forth, the labor hosts of all the world shall rise. There has been nothing like it in the history of the world. The solidarity of labor is assured, and for the first time will there be an international revolution wide as the world is wide.*

* The Second Revolt was truly international. It was a colossal plan — too colossal to be wrought by the genius of one man alone. Labor, in all the oligarchies of the world, was prepared to rise at the signal. Germany, Italy, France, and all Australasia were labor countries — socialist states. They were ready to lend aid to the revolution. Gallantly they did; and it was for this reason, when the Second Revolt was crushed, that they, too, were crushed by the united oligarchies of the world, their socialist governments being replaced by oligarchical governments.

You see, I am full of what is impending. I have lived it day and night utterly and for so long that it is ever present in my mind. For that matter, I cannot think of my husband without thinking of it. He was the soul of it, and how can I possibly separate the two in thought?

As I have said, there is much light that I alone can throw upon his character. It is well known that he toiled hard for liberty and suffered sore. How hard he toiled and how greatly he suffered, I well know; for I have been with him during these twenty anxious years and I know his patience, his untiring effort, his infinite devotion to the Cause for which, only two months gone, he laid down his life.

I shall try to write simply and to tell here how Ernest Everhard entered my life — how I first met him, how he grew until I became a part of him, and the tremendous changes he wrought in my life. In this way may you look at him through my eyes and learn him as I learned him — in all save the things too secret and sweet for me to tell.

It was in February, 1912, that I first met him, when, as a guest of my father's* at dinner, he came to our house in Berkeley. I cannot say that my very first impression of him was favorable. He was one of many at dinner, and in the drawing-room where we gathered and waited for all to arrive, he made a rather incongruous appearance. It was "preacher's night," as my father privately called it, and Ernest was certainly out of place in the midst of the churchmen.

> * John Cunningham, Avis Everhard's father, was a professor at the State University at Berkeley, California. His chosen field was physics, and in addition he did much original research and was greatly distinguished as a scientist. His chief contribution to science was his studies of the electron and his monumental work on the "Identification of Matter and Energy," wherein he established, beyond cavil and for all time, that the ultimate unit of matter and the ultimate unit of force were identical. This idea had been earlier advanced, but not demonstrated, by Sir Oliver Lodge and other students in the new field of radio-activity.

In the first place, his clothes did not fit him. He wore a ready-made suit of dark cloth that was ill adjusted to his body. In fact, no ready-made suit of clothes ever could fit his body. And on this night, as always, the cloth bulged with his muscles, while the coat between the shoulders, what of the heavy shoulder-development, was a maze of wrinkles. His neck was the neck of a prize-fighter,* thick and strong. So this was the social philosopher and ex-horseshoer my father had discovered, was my thought. And he certainly looked it with those bulging muscles and that bull-throat. Immediately I classified him — a sort of prodigy, I thought, a Blind Tom** of the working class.

> * In that day it was the custom of men to compete for purses of money. They fought with their hands. When one was beaten into insensibility or killed, the survivor took the money.

** This obscure reference applies to a blind negro musician who took the world by storm in the latter half of the nineteenth century of the Christian Era.

And then, when he shook hands with me! His handshake was firm and strong, but he looked at me boldly with his black eyes — too boldly, I thought. You see, I was a creature of environment, and at that time had strong class instincts. Such boldness on the part of a man of my own class would have been almost unforgivable. I know that I could not avoid dropping my eyes, and I was quite relieved when I passed him on and turned to greet Bishop Morehouse — a favorite of mine, a sweet and serious man of middle age, Christ-like in appearance and goodness, and a scholar as well.

But this boldness that I took to be presumption was a vital clew to the nature of Ernest Everhard. He was simple, direct, afraid of nothing, and he refused to waste time on conventional mannerisms. “You pleased me,” he explained long afterward; “and why should I not fill my eyes with that which pleases me?” I have said that he was afraid of nothing. He was a natural aristocrat — and this in spite of the fact that he was in the camp of the non-aristocrats. He was a superman, a blond beast such as Nietzsche* has described, and in addition he was aflame with democracy.

* Friederich Nietzsche, the mad philosopher of the nineteenth century of the Christian Era, who caught wild glimpses of truth, but who, before he was done, reasoned himself around the great circle of human thought and off into madness.

In the interest of meeting the other guests, and what of my unfavorable impression, I forgot all about the working-class philosopher, though once or twice at table I noticed him — especially the twinkle in his eye as he listened to the talk first of one minister and then of another. He has humor, I thought, and I almost forgave him his clothes. But the time went by, and the dinner went by, and he never opened his mouth to speak, while the ministers talked interminably about the working class and its relation to the church, and what the church had done and was doing for it. I noticed that my father was annoyed because Ernest did not talk. Once father took advantage of a lull and asked him to say something; but Ernest shrugged his shoulders and with an “I have nothing to say” went on eating salted almonds.

But father was not to be denied. After a while he said:

“We have with us a member of the working class. I am sure that he can present things from a new point of view that will be interesting and refreshing. I refer to Mr. Everhard.”

The others betrayed a well-mannered interest, and urged Ernest for a statement of his views. Their attitude toward him was so broadly tolerant and kindly that it was really patronizing. And I saw that Ernest noted it and was amused. He looked slowly about him, and I saw the glint of laughter in his eyes.

“I am not versed in the courtesies of ecclesiastical controversy,” he began, and then hesitated with modesty and indecision.

“Go on,” they urged, and Dr. Hammerfield said: “We do not mind the truth that is in any man. If it is sincere,” he amended.

“Then you separate sincerity from truth?” Ernest laughed quickly.

Dr. Hammerfield gasped, and managed to answer, “The best of us may be mistaken, young man, the best of us.”

Ernest’s manner changed on the instant. He became another man.

“All right, then,” he answered; “and let me begin by saying that you are all mistaken. You know nothing, and worse than nothing, about the working class. Your sociology is as vicious and worthless as is your method of thinking.”

It was not so much what he said as how he said it. I roused at the first sound of his voice. It was as bold as his eyes. It was a clarion-call that thrilled me. And the whole table was aroused, shaken alive from monotony and drowsiness.

“What is so dreadfully vicious and worthless in our method of thinking, young man?” Dr. Hammerfield demanded, and already there was something unpleasant in his voice and manner of utterance.

“You are metaphysicians. You can prove anything by metaphysics; and having done so, every metaphysician can prove every other metaphysician wrong — to his own satisfaction. You are anarchists in the realm of thought. And you are mad cosmos-makers. Each of you dwells in a cosmos of his own making, created out of his own fancies and desires. You do not know the real world in which you live, and your thinking has no place in the real world except in so far as it is phenomena of mental aberration.

“Do you know what I was reminded of as I sat at table and listened to you talk and talk? You reminded me for all the world of the scholastics of the Middle Ages who gravely and learnedly debated the absorbing question of how many angels could dance on the point of a needle. Why, my dear sirs, you are as remote from the intellectual life of the twentieth century as an Indian medicine-man making incantation in the primeval forest ten thousand years ago.”

As Ernest talked he seemed in a fine passion; his face glowed, his eyes snapped and flashed, and his chin and jaw were eloquent with aggressiveness. But it was only a way he had. It always aroused people. His smashing, sledge-hammer manner of attack invariably made them forget themselves. And they were forgetting themselves now. Bishop Morehouse was leaning forward and listening intently. Exasperation and anger were flushing the face of Dr. Hammerfield. And others were exasperated, too, and some were smiling in an amused and superior way. As for myself, I found it most enjoyable. I glanced at father, and I was afraid he was going to giggle at the effect of this human bombshell he had been guilty of launching amongst us.

“Your terms are rather vague,” Dr. Hammerfield interrupted. “Just precisely what do you mean when you call us metaphysicians?”

“I call you metaphysicians because you reason metaphysically,” Ernest went on. “Your method of reasoning is the opposite to that of science. There is no validity to your conclusions. You can prove everything and nothing, and no two of you can agree upon anything. Each of you goes into his own consciousness to explain himself and the universe. As well may you lift yourselves by your own bootstraps as to explain consciousness by consciousness.”

“I do not understand,” Bishop Morehouse said. “It seems to me that all things of the mind are metaphysical. That most exact and convincing of all sciences, mathematics, is sheerly metaphysical. Each and every thought-process of the scientific reasoner is metaphysical. Surely you will agree with me?”

“As you say, you do not understand,” Ernest replied. “The metaphysician reasons deductively out of his own subjectivity. The scientist reasons inductively from the facts of experience. The metaphysician reasons from theory to facts, the scientist reasons from facts to theory. The metaphysician explains the universe by himself, the scientist explains himself by the universe."

"Thank God we are not scientists," Dr. Hammerfield murmured complacently.

"What are you then?" Ernest demanded.

"Philosophers."

"There you go," Ernest laughed. "You have left the real and solid earth and are up in the air with a word for a flying machine. Pray come down to earth and tell me precisely what you do mean by philosophy."

"Philosophy is — " (Dr. Hammerfield paused and cleared his throat) — "something that cannot be defined comprehensively except to such minds and temperaments as are philosophical. The narrow scientist with his nose in a test-tube cannot understand philosophy."

Ernest ignored the thrust. It was always his way to turn the point back upon an opponent, and he did it now, with a beaming brotherliness of face and utterance.

"Then you will undoubtedly understand the definition I shall now make of philosophy. But before I make it, I shall challenge you to point out error in it or to remain a silent metaphysician. Philosophy is merely the widest science of all. Its reasoning method is the same as that of any particular science and of all particular sciences. And by that same method of reasoning, the inductive method, philosophy fuses all particular sciences into one great science. As Spencer says, the data of any particular science are partially unified knowledge. Philosophy unifies the knowledge that is contributed by all the sciences. Philosophy is the science of science, the master science, if you please. How do you like my definition?"

"Very creditable, very creditable," Dr. Hammerfield muttered lamely.

But Ernest was merciless.

"Remember," he warned, "my definition is fatal to metaphysics. If you do not now point out a flaw in my definition, you are disqualified later on from advancing metaphysical arguments. You must go through life seeking that flaw and remaining metaphysically silent until you have found it."

Ernest waited. The silence was painful. Dr. Hammerfield was pained. He was also puzzled. Ernest's sledge-hammer attack disconcerted him. He was not used to the simple and direct method of controversy. He looked appealingly around the table, but no one answered for him. I caught father grinning into his napkin.

"There is another way of disqualifying the metaphysicians," Ernest said, when he had rendered Dr. Hammerfield's discomfiture complete. "Judge them by their works. What have they done for mankind beyond the spinning of airy fancies and the mistaking of their own shadows for gods? They have added to the gayety of mankind, I grant; but what tangible good have they wrought for mankind? They philosophized, if you will pardon my misuse of the word, about the heart as the seat of the emotions, while the scientists were formulating the circulation of the blood. They declaimed about famine and pestilence as being scourges of God, while the scientists were building granaries and draining cities. They builded gods in their own shapes and out of their own desires, while the scientists were building roads and bridges. They were describing the earth as the centre of the universe, while the scientists were discovering America and probing space for the stars and the laws of the stars. In short, the metaphysicians have done nothing, absolutely nothing, for mankind. Step by step, before the advance of science, they have been driven back. As fast as the ascertained facts of science have overthrown their subjective explanations of things, they have made new subjective explanations of things, including explanations of the latest ascertained facts. And this, I doubt not, they will go on doing to the end of time. Gentlemen, a metaphysician is a medicine man. The difference between you and the Eskimo who makes a fur-clad blubber-eating god is merely a difference of several thousand years of ascertained facts. That is all."

"Yet the thought of Aristotle ruled Europe for twelve centuries," Dr. Ballingford announced pompously. "And Aristotle was a metaphysician."

Dr. Ballingford glanced around the table and was rewarded by nods and smiles of approval.

"Your illustration is most unfortunate," Ernest replied. "You refer to a very dark period in human history. In fact, we call that period the Dark Ages. A period wherein science was raped by the metaphysicians, wherein physics became a search for the Philosopher's Stone, wherein chemistry became alchemy, and astronomy became astrology. Sorry the domination of Aristotle's thought!"

Dr. Ballingford looked pained, then he brightened up and said:

"Granted this horrible picture you have drawn, yet you must confess that metaphysics was inherently potent in so far as it drew humanity out of this dark period and on into the illumination of the succeeding centuries."

“Metaphysics had nothing to do with it,” Ernest retorted.

“What?” Dr. Hammerfield cried. “It was not the thinking and the speculation that led to the voyages of discovery?”

“Ah, my dear sir,” Ernest smiled, “I thought you were disqualified. You have not yet picked out the flaw in my definition of philosophy. You are now on an unsubstantial basis. But it is the way of the metaphysicians, and I forgive you. No, I repeat, metaphysics had nothing to do with it. Bread and butter, silks and jewels, dollars and cents, and, incidentally, the closing up of the overland trade-routes to India, were the things that caused the voyages of discovery. With the fall of Constantinople, in 1453, the Turks blocked the way of the caravans to India. The traders of Europe had to find another route. Here was the original cause for the voyages of discovery. Columbus sailed to find a new route to the Indies. It is so stated in all the history books. Incidentally, new facts were learned about the nature, size, and form of the earth, and the Ptolemaic system went glimmering.”

Dr. Hammerfield snorted.

“You do not agree with me?” Ernest queried. “Then wherein am I wrong?”

“I can only reaffirm my position,” Dr. Hammerfield retorted tartly. “It is too long a story to enter into now.”

“No story is too long for the scientist,” Ernest said sweetly. “That is why the scientist gets to places. That is why he got to America.”

I shall not describe the whole evening, though it is a joy to me to recall every moment, every detail, of those first hours of my coming to know Ernest Everhard.

Battle royal raged, and the ministers grew red-faced and excited, especially at the moments when Ernest called them romantic philosophers, shadow-projectors, and similar things. And always he checked them back to facts. “The fact, man, the irrefragable fact!” he would proclaim triumphantly, when he had brought one of them a cropper. He bristled with facts. He tripped them up with facts, ambuscaded them with facts, bombarded them with broadsides of facts.

“You seem to worship at the shrine of fact,” Dr. Hammerfield taunted him.

“There is no God but Fact, and Mr. Everhard is its prophet,” Dr. Ballingford paraphrased.

Ernest smilingly acquiesced.

"I'm like the man from Texas," he said. And, on being solicited, he explained. "You see, the man from Missouri always says, 'You've got to show me.' But the man from Texas says, 'You've got to put it in my hand.' From which it is apparent that he is no metaphysician."

Another time, when Ernest had just said that the metaphysical philosophers could never stand the test of truth, Dr. Hammerfield suddenly demanded:

"What is the test of truth, young man? Will you kindly explain what has so long puzzled wiser heads than yours?"

"Certainly," Ernest answered. His cocksureness irritated them. "The wise heads have puzzled so sorely over truth because they went up into the air after it. Had they remained on the solid earth, they would have found it easily enough — ay, they would have found that they themselves were precisely testing truth with every practical act and thought of their lives."

"The test, the test," Dr. Hammerfield repeated impatiently. "Never mind the preamble. Give us that which we have sought so long — the test of truth. Give it us, and we will be as gods."

There was an impolite and sneering scepticism in his words and manner that secretly pleased most of them at the table, though it seemed to bother Bishop Morehouse.

"Dr. Jordan* has stated it very clearly," Ernest said. "His test of truth is: 'Will it work? Will you trust your life to it?'"

* A noted educator of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of the Christian Era. He was president of the Stanford University, a private benefaction of the times.

"Pish!" Dr. Hammerfield sneered. "You have not taken Bishop Berkeley* into account. He has never been answered."

* An idealistic monist who long puzzled the philosophers of that time with his denial of the existence of matter, but whose clever argument was finally demolished when the new empiric facts of science were philosophically generalized.

"The noblest metaphysician of them all," Ernest laughed. "But your example is unfortunate. As Berkeley himself attested, his metaphysics didn't work."

Dr. Hammerfield was angry, righteously angry. It was as though he had caught Ernest in a theft or a lie.

"Young man," he trumpeted, "that statement is on a par with all you have uttered to-night. It is a base and unwarranted assumption."

"I am quite crushed," Ernest murmured meekly. "Only I don't know what hit me. You'll have to put it in my hand, Doctor."

"I will, I will," Dr. Hammerfield spluttered. "How do you know? You do not know that Bishop Berkeley attested that his metaphysics did not work. You have no proof. Young man, they have always worked."

"I take it as proof that Berkeley's metaphysics did not work, because — " Ernest paused calmly for a moment. "Because Berkeley made an invariable practice of going through doors instead of walls. Because he trusted his life to solid bread and butter and roast beef. Because he shaved himself with a razor that worked when it removed the hair from his face."

"But those are actual things!" Dr. Hammerfield cried. "Metaphysics is of the mind."

"And they work — in the mind?" Ernest queried softly.

The other nodded.

"And even a multitude of angels can dance on the point of a needle — in the mind," Ernest went on reflectively. "And a blubber-eating, fur-clad god can exist and work — in the mind; and there are no proofs to the contrary — in the mind. I suppose, Doctor, you live in the mind?"

"My mind to me a kingdom is," was the answer.

"That's another way of saying that you live up in the air. But you come back to earth at meal-time, I am sure, or when an earthquake happens along. Or, tell me, Doctor, do you have no apprehension in an earthquake that that incorporeal body of yours will be hit by an immaterial brick?"

Instantly, and quite unconsciously, Dr. Hammerfield's hand shot up to his head, where a scar disappeared under the hair. It happened that Ernest had blundered on an apposite illustration. Dr. Hammerfield had been nearly killed in the Great Earthquake* by a falling chimney. Everybody broke out into roars of laughter.

* The Great Earthquake of 1906 A.D. that destroyed San Francisco.

"Well?" Ernest asked, when the merriment had subsided. "Proofs to the contrary?"

And in the silence he asked again, "Well?" Then he added, "Still well, but not so well, that argument of yours."

But Dr. Hammerfield was temporarily crushed, and the battle raged on in new directions. On point after point, Ernest challenged the ministers. When they affirmed that they knew the working class, he told them fundamental truths about the working class that they did not know, and challenged them for disproofs. He gave them facts, always facts, checked their excursions into the air, and brought them back to the solid earth and its facts.

How the scene comes back to me! I can hear him now, with that war-note in his voice, flaying them with his facts, each fact a lash that stung and stung again. And he was merciless. He took no quarter,* and gave none. I can never forget the flaying he gave them at the end:

* This figure arises from the customs of the times. When, among men fighting to the death in their wild-animal way, a beaten man threw down his weapons, it was at the option of the victor to slay him or spare him.

"You have repeatedly confessed to-night, by direct avowal or ignorant statement, that you do not know the working class. But you are not to be blamed for this. How can you know anything about the working class? You do not live in the same locality with the working class. You herd with the capitalist class in another locality. And why not? It is the capitalist class that pays you, that feeds you, that puts the very clothes on your backs that you are wearing to-night. And in return you preach to your employers the brands of metaphysics that are especially acceptable to them; and the especially acceptable brands are acceptable because they do not menace the established order of society."

Here there was a stir of dissent around the table.

"Oh, I am not challenging your sincerity," Ernest continued. "You are sincere. You preach what you believe. There lies your strength and your value — to the capitalist class. But should you change your belief to something that menaces the established order, your preaching would be unacceptable to your employers, and you would be discharged. Every little while some one or another of you is so discharged.* Am I not right?"

* During this period there were many ministers cast out of the church for preaching unacceptable doctrine. Especially were they cast out when their preaching became tainted with socialism.

This time there was no dissent. They sat dumbly acquiescent, with the exception of Dr. Hammerfield, who said:

"It is when their thinking is wrong that they are asked to resign."

"Which is another way of saying when their thinking is unacceptable," Ernest answered, and then went on. "So I say to you, go ahead and preach and earn your pay, but for goodness' sake leave the working class alone. You belong in the enemy's camp. You have nothing in common with the working class. Your hands are soft with the work others have performed for you. Your stomachs are round with the plenitude of eating." (Here Dr. Ballingford winced, and every eye glanced at his prodigious girth. It was said he had not seen his own feet in years.) "And your minds are filled with doctrines that are buttresses of the established order. You are as much mercenaries (sincere mercenaries, I grant) as were the men of the Swiss Guard.* Be true to your salt and your hire; guard, with your preaching, the interests of your employers; but do not come down to the working class and serve as false leaders. You cannot honestly be in the two camps at once. The working class has done without you. Believe me, the working class will continue to do without you. And, furthermore, the working class can do better without you than with you."

* The hired foreign palace guards of Louis XVI, a king of France that was beheaded by his people.

CHAPTER II

CHALLENGES.

After the guests had gone, father threw himself into a chair and gave vent to roars of Gargantuan laughter. Not since the death of my mother had I known him to laugh so heartily.

"I'll wager Dr. Hammerfield was never up against anything like it in his life," he laughed. "'The courtesies of ecclesiastical controversy!' Did you notice how he began like a lamb — Everhard, I mean, and how quickly he became a roaring lion? He has a splendidly disciplined mind. He would have made a good scientist if his energies had been directed that way."

I need scarcely say that I was deeply interested in Ernest Everhard. It was not alone what he had said and how he had said it, but it was the man himself. I had never met a man like him. I suppose that was why, in spite of my twenty-four years, I had not married. I liked him; I had to confess it to myself. And my like for him was founded on things beyond intellect and argument. Regardless of his bulging muscles and prize-fighter's throat, he impressed me as an ingenuous boy. I felt that under the guise of an intellectual swashbuckler was a delicate and sensitive spirit. I sensed this, in ways I knew not, save that they were my woman's intuitions.

There was something in that clarion-call of his that went to my heart. It still rang in my ears, and I felt that I should like to hear it again — and to see again that glint of laughter in his eyes that belied the impassioned seriousness of his face. And there were further reaches of vague and indeterminate feelings that stirred in me. I almost loved him then, though I am confident, had I never seen him again, that the vague feelings would have passed away and that I should easily have forgotten him.

But I was not destined never to see him again. My father's new-born interest in sociology and the dinner parties he gave would not permit. Father was not a sociologist. His marriage with my mother had been very happy, and in the researches of his own science, physics, he had been very happy. But when mother died, his own work could not fill the emptiness. At first, in a mild way, he had dabbled in philosophy; then, becoming interested, he had drifted on into economics and sociology. He had a strong sense of justice, and he soon became fired with a passion to redress wrong. It was with gratitude that I hailed these signs of a new interest in life, though I little dreamed what the outcome would be. With the enthusiasm of a boy he plunged excitedly into these new pursuits, regardless of whither they led him.

He had been used always to the laboratory, and so it was that he turned the dining room into a sociological laboratory. Here came to dinner all sorts and conditions of men, — scientists, politicians, bankers, merchants, professors, labor leaders, socialists, and anarchists. He stirred them to discussion, and analyzed their thoughts of life and society.

He had met Ernest shortly prior to the "preacher's night." And after the guests were gone, I learned how he had met him, passing down a street at night and stopping to listen to a man on a soap-box who was addressing a crowd of workingmen. The man on the box was Ernest. Not that he was a mere soap-box orator. He stood high in the councils of the socialist party, was one of the leaders, and was the acknowledged leader in the philosophy of socialism. But he had a certain clear way of stating the abstruse in simple language, was a born expositor and teacher, and was not above the soap-box as a means of interpreting economics to the workingmen.

My father stopped to listen, became interested, effected a meeting, and, after quite an acquaintance, invited him to the ministers' dinner. It was after the dinner that father told me what little he knew about him. He had been born in the working class, though he was a descendant of the old line of Everhards that for over two hundred years had lived in America.* At ten years of age he had gone to work in the mills, and later he served his apprenticeship and became a horseshoer. He was self-educated, had taught himself German and French, and at that time was earning a meagre living by translating scientific and philosophical works for a struggling socialist publishing house in Chicago. Also, his earnings were added to by the royalties from the small sales of his own economic and philosophic works.

* The distinction between being native born and foreign born was sharp and invidious in those days.

This much I learned of him before I went to bed, and I lay long awake, listening in memory to the sound of his voice. I grew frightened at my thoughts. He was so unlike the men of my own class, so alien and so strong. His masterfulness delighted me and terrified me, for my fancies wantonly roved until I found myself considering him as a lover, as a husband. I had always heard that the strength of men was an irresistible attraction to women; but he was too strong. "No! no!" I cried out. "It is impossible, absurd!" And on the morrow I awoke to find in myself a longing to see him again. I wanted to see him mastering men in discussion, the war-note in his voice; to see him, in all his certitude and strength, shattering their complacency, shaking them out of their ruts of thinking. What if he did swashbuckle? To use his own phrase, "it worked," it produced effects. And, besides, his swashbuckling was a fine thing to see. It stirred one like the onset of battle.

Several days passed during which I read Ernest's books, borrowed from my father. His written word was as his spoken word, clear and convincing. It was its absolute simplicity that convinced even while one continued to doubt. He had the gift of lucidity. He was the perfect expositor. Yet, in spite of his style, there was much that I did not like. He laid too great stress on what he called the class struggle, the antagonism between labor and capital, the conflict of interest.

Father reported with glee Dr. Hammerfield's judgment of Ernest, which was to the effect that he was "an insolent young puppy, made bumptious by a little and very inadequate learning." Also, Dr. Hammerfield declined to meet Ernest again.

But Bishop Morehouse turned out to have become interested in Ernest, and was anxious for another meeting. "A strong young man," he said; "and very much alive, very much alive. But he is too sure, too sure."

Ernest came one afternoon with father. The Bishop had already arrived, and we were having tea on the veranda. Ernest's continued presence in Berkeley, by the way, was accounted for by the fact that he was taking special courses in biology at the university, and also that he was hard at work on a new book entitled "Philosophy and Revolution."*

* This book continued to be secretly printed throughout the three centuries of the Iron Heel. There are several copies of various editions in the National Library of Ardis.

The veranda seemed suddenly to have become small when Ernest arrived. Not that he was so very large — he stood only five feet nine inches; but that he seemed to radiate an atmosphere of largeness. As he stopped to meet me, he betrayed a certain slight awkwardness that was strangely at variance with his bold-looking eyes and his firm, sure hand that clasped for a moment in greeting. And in that moment his eyes were just as steady and sure. There seemed a question in them this time, and as before he looked at me over long.

"I have been reading your 'Working-class Philosophy,'" I said, and his eyes lighted in a pleased way.

"Of course," he answered, "you took into consideration the audience to which it was addressed."

"I did, and it is because I did that I have a quarrel with you," I challenged.

"I, too, have a quarrel with you, Mr. Everhard," Bishop Morehouse said.

Ernest shrugged his shoulders whimsically and accepted a cup of tea.

The Bishop bowed and gave me precedence.

"You foment class hatred," I said. "I consider it wrong and criminal to appeal to all that is narrow and brutal in the working class. Class hatred is anti-social, and, it seems to me, anti-socialistic."

"Not guilty," he answered. "Class hatred is neither in the text nor in the spirit of anything I have every written."

"Oh!" I cried reproachfully, and reached for his book and opened it.

He sipped his tea and smiled at me while I ran over the pages.

"Page one hundred and thirty-two," I read aloud: "'The class struggle, therefore, presents itself in the present stage of social development between the wage-paying and the wage-paid classes.'"

I looked at him triumphantly.

"No mention there of class hatred," he smiled back.

"But," I answered, "you say 'class struggle.'"

"A different thing from class hatred," he replied. "And, believe me, we foment no hatred. We say that the class struggle is a law of social development. We are not responsible for it. We do not make the class struggle. We merely explain it, as Newton explained gravitation. We explain the nature of the conflict of interest that produces the class struggle."

"But there should be no conflict of interest!" I cried.

"I agree with you heartily," he answered. "That is what we socialists are trying to bring about, — the abolition of the conflict of interest. Pardon me. Let me read an extract." He took his book and turned back several pages. "Page one hundred and twenty-six: 'The cycle of class struggles which began with the dissolution of rude, tribal communism and the rise of private property will end with the passing of private property in the means of social existence.'"

"But I disagree with you," the Bishop interposed, his pale, ascetic face betraying by a faint glow the intensity of his feelings. "Your premise is wrong. There is no such thing as a conflict of interest between labor and capital — or, rather, there ought not to be."

"Thank you," Ernest said gravely. "By that last statement you have given me back my premise."

"But why should there be a conflict?" the Bishop demanded warmly.

Ernest shrugged his shoulders. "Because we are so made, I guess."

"But we are not so made!" cried the other.

"Are you discussing the ideal man?" Ernest asked, " — unselfish and godlike, and so few in numbers as to be practically non-existent, or are you discussing the common and ordinary average man?"

"The common and ordinary man," was the answer.

"Who is weak and fallible, prone to error?"

Bishop Morehouse nodded.

"And petty and selfish?"

Again he nodded.

"Watch out!" Ernest warned. "I said 'selfish.'"

"The average man IS selfish," the Bishop affirmed valiantly.

"Wants all he can get?"

"Wants all he can get — true but deplorable."

"Then I've got you." Ernest's jaw snapped like a trap. "Let me show you. Here is a man who works on the street railways."

"He couldn't work if it weren't for capital," the Bishop interrupted.

"True, and you will grant that capital would perish if there were no labor to earn the dividends."

The Bishop was silent.

"Won't you?" Ernest insisted.

The Bishop nodded.

"Then our statements cancel each other," Ernest said in a matter-of-fact tone, "and we are where we were. Now to begin again. The workingmen on the street railway furnish the labor. The stockholders furnish the capital. By the joint effort of the workingmen and the capital, money is earned.* They divide between them this money that is earned. Capital's share is called 'dividends.' Labor's share is called 'wages.'"

* In those days, groups of predatory individuals controlled all the means of transportation, and for the use of same levied toll upon the public.

"Very good," the Bishop interposed. "And there is no reason that the division should not be amicable."

"You have already forgotten what we had agreed upon," Ernest replied. "We agreed that the average man is selfish. He is the man that is. You have gone up in the air and are arranging a division between the kind of men that ought to be but are not. But to return to the earth, the workingman, being selfish, wants all he can get in the division. The capitalist, being selfish, wants all he can get in the division. When there is only so much of the same thing, and when two men want all they can get of the same thing, there is a conflict of interest between labor and capital. And it is an irreconcilable conflict. As long as workingmen and capitalists exist, they will continue to quarrel over the division. If you were in San Francisco this afternoon, you'd have to walk. There isn't a street car running."

"Another strike?"* the Bishop queried with alarm.

> * These quarrels were very common in those irrational and anarchic times. Sometimes the laborers refused to work. Sometimes the capitalists refused to let the laborers work. In the violence and turbulence of such disagreements much property was destroyed and many lives lost. All this is inconceivable to us — as inconceivable as another custom of that time, namely, the habit the men of the lower classes had of breaking the furniture when they quarrelled with their wives.

"Yes, they're quarrelling over the division of the earnings of the street railways."

Bishop Morehouse became excited.

"It is wrong!" he cried. "It is so short-sighted on the part of the workingmen. How can they hope to keep our sympathy — "

"When we are compelled to walk," Ernest said slyly.

But Bishop Morehouse ignored him and went on:

"Their outlook is too narrow. Men should be men, not brutes. There will be violence and murder now, and sorrowing widows and orphans. Capital and labor should be friends. They should work hand in hand and to their mutual benefit."

"Ah, now you are up in the air again," Ernest remarked dryly. "Come back to earth. Remember, we agreed that the average man is selfish."

"But he ought not to be!" the Bishop cried.

"And there I agree with you," was Ernest's rejoinder. "He ought not to be selfish, but he will continue to be selfish as long as he lives in a social system that is based on pig-ethics."

The Bishop was aghast, and my father chuckled.

"Yes, pig-ethics," Ernest went on remorselessly. "That is the meaning of the capitalist system. And that is what your church is standing for, what you are preaching for every time you get up in the pulpit. Pig-ethics! There is no other name for it."

Bishop Morehouse turned appealingly to my father, but he laughed and nodded his head.

"I'm afraid Mr. Everhard is right," he said. "LAISSEZ-FAIRE, the let-alone policy of each for himself and devil take the hindmost. As Mr. Everhard said the other night, the function you churchmen perform is to maintain the established order of society, and society is established on that foundation."

"But that is not the teaching of Christ!" cried the Bishop.

"The Church is not teaching Christ these days," Ernest put in quickly. "That is why the workingmen will have nothing to do with the Church. The Church condones the frightful brutality and savagery with which the capitalist class treats the working class."

"The Church does not condone it," the Bishop objected.

"The Church does not protest against it," Ernest replied. "And in so far as the Church does not protest, it condones, for remember the Church is supported by the capitalist class."

"I had not looked at it in that light," the Bishop said naively. "You must be wrong. I know that there is much that is sad and wicked in this world. I know that the Church has lost the — what you call the proletariat."*

* Proletariat: Derived originally from the Latin PROLETARII, the name given in the census of Servius Tullius to those who were of value to the state only as the rearers of offspring (PROLES); in other words, they were of no importance either for wealth, or position, or exceptional ability.

"You never had the proletariat," Ernest cried. "The proletariat has grown up outside the Church and without the Church."

"I do not follow you," the Bishop said faintly.

"Then let me explain. With the introduction of machinery and the factory system in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the great mass of the working people was separated from the land. The old system of labor was broken down. The working people were driven from their villages and herded in factory towns. The mothers and children were put to work at the new machines. Family life ceased. The conditions were frightful. It is a tale of blood."

"I know, I know," Bishop Morehouse interrupted with an agonized expression on his face. "It was terrible. But it occurred a century and a half ago."

"And there, a century and a half ago, originated the modern proletariat," Ernest continued. "And the Church ignored it. While a slaughter-house was made of the nation by the capitalist, the Church was dumb. It did not protest, as to-day it does not protest. As Austin Lewis* says, speaking of that time, those to whom the command 'Feed my lambs' had been given, saw those lambs sold into slavery and worked to death without a protest.** The Church was dumb, then, and before I go on I want you either flatly to agree with me or flatly to disagree with me. Was the Church dumb then?"

* Candidate for Governor of California on the Socialist ticket in the fall election of 1906 Christian Era. An Englishman by birth, a writer of many books on political economy and philosophy, and one of the Socialist leaders of the times.

** There is no more horrible page in history than the treatment of the child and women slaves in the English factories in the latter half of the eighteenth century of the Christian Era. In such industrial hells arose some of the proudest fortunes of that day.

Bishop Morehouse hesitated. Like Dr. Hammerfield, he was unused to this fierce "infighting," as Ernest called it.

"The history of the eighteenth century is written," Ernest prompted. "If the Church was not dumb, it will be found not dumb in the books."

"I am afraid the Church was dumb," the Bishop confessed.

"And the Church is dumb to-day."

"There I disagree," said the Bishop.

Ernest paused, looked at him searchingly, and accepted the challenge.

"All right," he said. "Let us see. In Chicago there are women who toil all the week for ninety cents. Has the Church protested?"

"This is news to me," was the answer. "Ninety cents per week! It is horrible!"

"Has the Church protested?" Ernest insisted.

"The Church does not know." The Bishop was struggling hard.

"Yet the command to the Church was, 'Feed my lambs,'" Ernest sneered. And then, the next moment, "Pardon my sneer, Bishop. But can you wonder that we lose patience with you? When have you protested to your capitalistic congregations at the working of children in the Southern cotton mills?* Children, six and seven years of age, working every night at twelve-hour shifts? They never see the blessed sunshine. They die like flies. The dividends are paid out of their blood. And out of the dividends magnificent churches are builded in New England, wherein your kind preaches pleasant platitudes to the sleek, full-bellied recipients of those dividends."

* Everhard might have drawn a better illustration from the Southern Church's outspoken defence of chattel slavery prior to what is known as the "War of the Rebellion." Several such illustrations, culled from the documents of the times, are here appended. In 1835 A.D., the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church resolved that: "slavery is recognized in both the Old and the New Testaments, and is not condemned by the authority of God." The Charleston Baptist Association issued the following, in an address, in 1835 A.D.: "The right of masters to dispose of the time of their slaves has been distinctly recognized by the Creator of all things, who is surely at liberty to vest the right of property over any object whomsoever He pleases." The Rev. E. D. Simon, Doctor of Divinity and professor in the Randolph-Macon Methodist College of Virginia, wrote: "Extracts from Holy Writ unequivocally assert the right of property in slaves, together with the usual incidents to that right. The right to buy and sell is clearly stated. Upon the whole, then, whether we consult the Jewish policy instituted by God himself, or the uniform opinion and practice of mankind in all ages, or the injunctions of the New Testament and the moral law, we are brought to the conclusion that slavery is not immoral. Having established the point that the first African slaves were legally brought

> into bondage, the right to detain their children in bondage follows as an indispensable consequence. Thus we see that the slavery that exists in America was founded in right."
>
> It is not at all remarkable that this same note should have been struck by the Church a generation or so later in relation to the defence of capitalistic property. In the great museum at Asgard there is a book entitled "Essays in Application," written by Henry van Dyke. The book was published in 1905 of the Christian Era. From what we can make out, Van Dyke must have been a churchman. The book is a good example of what Everhard would have called bourgeois thinking. Note the similarity between the utterance of the Charleston Baptist Association quoted above, and the following utterance of Van Dyke seventy years later: "The Bible teaches that God owns the world. He distributes to every man according to His own good pleasure, conformably to general laws."

"I did not know," the Bishop murmured faintly. His face was pale, and he seemed suffering from nausea.

"Then you have not protested?"

The Bishop shook his head.

"Then the Church is dumb to-day, as it was in the eighteenth century?"

The Bishop was silent, and for once Ernest forbore to press the point.

"And do not forget, whenever a churchman does protest, that he is discharged."

"I hardly think that is fair," was the objection.

"Will you protest?" Ernest demanded.

"Show me evils, such as you mention, in our own community, and I will protest."

"I'll show you," Ernest said quietly. "I am at your disposal. I will take you on a journey through hell."

"And I shall protest." The Bishop straightened himself in his chair, and over his gentle face spread the harshness of the warrior. "The Church shall not be dumb!"

"You will be discharged," was the warning.

"I shall prove the contrary," was the retort. "I shall prove, if what you say is so, that the Church has erred through ignorance. And, furthermore, I hold that whatever is horrible in industrial society is due to the ignorance of the capitalist class. It will mend all that is wrong as soon as it receives the message. And this message it shall be the duty of the Church to deliver."

Ernest laughed. He laughed brutally, and I was driven to the Bishop's defence.

"Remember," I said, "you see but one side of the shield. There is much good in us, though you give us credit for no good at all. Bishop Morehouse is right. The industrial wrong, terrible as you say it is, is due to ignorance. The divisions of society have become too widely separated."

"The wild Indian is not so brutal and savage as the capitalist class," he answered; and in that moment I hated him.

"You do not know us," I answered. "We are not brutal and savage."

"Prove it," he challenged.

"How can I prove it . . . to you?" I was growing angry.

He shook his head. "I do not ask you to prove it to me. I ask you to prove it to yourself."

"I know," I said.

"You know nothing," was his rude reply.

"There, there, children," father said soothingly.

"I don't care — " I began indignantly, but Ernest interrupted.

"I understand you have money, or your father has, which is the same thing — money invested in the Sierra Mills."

"What has that to do with it?" I cried.

"Nothing much," he began slowly, "except that the gown you wear is stained with blood. The food you eat is a bloody stew. The blood of little children and of strong men is dripping from your very roof-beams. I can close my eyes, now, and hear it drip, drop, drip, drop, all about me."

And suiting the action to the words, he closed his eyes and leaned back in his chair. I burst into tears of mortification and hurt vanity. I had never been so brutally treated in my life. Both the Bishop and my father were embarrassed and perturbed. They tried to lead the conversation away into easier channels; but Ernest opened his eyes, looked at me, and waved them aside. His mouth was stern, and his eyes too; and in the latter there was no glint of laughter. What he was about to say, what terrible castigation he was going to give me, I never knew; for at that moment a man, passing along the sidewalk, stopped and glanced in at us. He was a large man, poorly dressed, and on his back was a great load of rattan and bamboo stands, chairs, and screens. He looked at the house as if debating whether or not he should come in and try to sell some of his wares.

"That man's name is Jackson," Ernest said.

"With that strong body of his he should be at work, and not peddling,"* I answered curtly.

> * In that day there were many thousands of these poor merchants called PEDLERS. They carried their whole stock in trade from door to door. It was a most wasteful expenditure of energy. Distribution was as confused and irrational as the whole general system of society.

"Notice the sleeve of his left arm," Ernest said gently.

I looked, and saw that the sleeve was empty.

"It was some of the blood from that arm that I heard dripping from your roof-beams," Ernest said with continued gentleness. "He lost his arm in the Sierra Mills, and like a broken-down horse you turned him out on the highway to die. When I say 'you,' I mean the superintendent and the officials that you and the other stockholders pay to manage the mills for you. It was an accident. It was caused by his trying to save the company a few dollars. The toothed drum of the picker caught his arm. He might have let the small flint that he saw in the teeth go through. It would have smashed out a double row of spikes. But he reached for the flint, and his arm was picked and clawed to shreds from the finger tips to the shoulder. It was at night. The mills were working overtime. They paid a fat dividend that quarter. Jackson had been working many hours, and his muscles had lost their resiliency and snap. They made his movements a bit slow. That was why the machine caught him. He had a wife and three children."

"And what did the company do for him?" I asked.

"Nothing. Oh, yes, they did do something. They successfully fought the damage suit he brought when he came out of hospital. The company employs very efficient lawyers, you know."

"You have not told the whole story," I said with conviction. "Or else you do not know the whole story. Maybe the man was insolent."

"Insolent! Ha! ha!" His laughter was Mephistophelian. "Great God! Insolent! And with his arm chewed off! Nevertheless he was a meek and lowly servant, and there is no record of his having been insolent."

“But the courts,” I urged. “The case would not have been decided against him had there been no more to the affair than you have mentioned.”

“Colonel Ingram is leading counsel for the company. He is a shrewd lawyer.” Ernest looked at me intently for a moment, then went on. “I’ll tell you what you do, Miss Cunningham. You investigate Jackson’s case.”

“I had already determined to,” I said coldly.

“All right,” he beamed good-naturedly, “and I’ll tell you where to find him. But I tremble for you when I think of all you are to prove by Jackson’s arm.”

And so it came about that both the Bishop and I accepted Ernest’s challenges. They went away together, leaving me smarting with a sense of injustice that had been done me and my class. The man was a beast. I hated him, then, and consoled myself with the thought that his behavior was what was to be expected from a man of the working class.

CHAPTER III

JACKSON'S ARM.

Little did I dream the fateful part Jackson's arm was to play in my life. Jackson himself did not impress me when I hunted him out. I found him in a crazy, ramshackle* house down near the bay on the edge of the marsh. Pools of stagnant water stood around the house, their surfaces covered with a green and putrid-looking scum, while the stench that arose from them was intolerable.

> * An adjective descriptive of ruined and dilapidated houses in which great numbers of the working people found shelter in those days. They invariably paid rent, and, considering the value of such houses, enormous rent, to the landlords.

I found Jackson the meek and lowly man he had been described. He was making some sort of rattan-work, and he toiled on stolidly while I talked with him. But in spite of his meekness and lowliness, I fancied I caught the first note of a nascent bitterness in him when he said:

"They might a-given me a job as watchman,* anyway."

> * In those days thievery was incredibly prevalent. Everybody stole property from everybody else. The lords of society stole legally or else legalized their stealing, while the poorer classes stole illegally. Nothing was safe unless guarded. Enormous numbers of men were employed as watchmen to protect property. The houses of the well-to-do were a combination of safe deposit vault and fortress. The appropriation of the personal belongings of others by our own children of to-day is looked upon as a rudimentary survival of the theft-characteristic that in those early times was universal.

I got little out of him. He struck me as stupid, and yet the deftness with which he worked with his one hand seemed to belie his stupidity. This suggested an idea to me.

"How did you happen to get your arm caught in the machine?" I asked.

He looked at me in a slow and pondering way, and shook his head. "I don't know. It just happened."

"Carelessness?" I prompted.

"No," he answered, "I ain't for callin' it that. I was workin' overtime, an' I guess I was tired out some. I worked seventeen years in them mills, an' I've took notice that most of the accidents happens just before whistle-blow.* I'm willin' to bet that more accidents happens in the hour before whistle-blow than in all the rest of the day. A man ain't so quick after workin' steady for hours. I've seen too many of 'em cut up an' gouged an' chawed not to know."

* The laborers were called to work and dismissed by savage, screaming, nerve-racking steam-whistles.

"Many of them?" I queried.

"Hundreds an' hundreds, an' children, too."

With the exception of the terrible details, Jackson's story of his accident was the same as that I had already heard. When I asked him if he had broken some rule of working the machinery, he shook his head.

"I chucked off the belt with my right hand," he said, "an' made a reach for the flint with my left. I didn't stop to see if the belt was off. I thought my right hand had done it — only it didn't. I reached quick, and the belt wasn't all the way off. And then my arm was chewed off."

"It must have been painful," I said sympathetically.

"The crunchin' of the bones wasn't nice," was his answer.

His mind was rather hazy concerning the damage suit. Only one thing was clear to him, and that was that he had not got any damages. He had a feeling that the testimony of the foremen and the superintendent had brought about the adverse decision of the court. Their testimony, as he put it, "wasn't what it ought to have ben." And to them I resolved to go.

One thing was plain, Jackson's situation was wretched. His wife was in ill health, and he was unable to earn, by his rattan-work and peddling, sufficient food for the family. He was back in his rent, and the oldest boy, a lad of eleven, had started to work in the mills.

"They might a-given me that watchman's job," were his last words as I went away.

By the time I had seen the lawyer who had handled Jackson's case, and the two foremen and the superintendent at the mills who had testified, I began to feel that there was something after all in Ernest's contention.

He was a weak and inefficient-looking man, the lawyer, and at sight of him I did not wonder that Jackson's case had been lost. My first thought was that it had served Jackson right for getting such a lawyer. But the next moment two of Ernest's statements came flashing into my consciousness: "The company employs very efficient lawyers" and "Colonel Ingram is a shrewd lawyer." I did some rapid thinking. It dawned upon me that of course the company could afford finer legal talent than could a workingman like Jackson. But this was merely a minor detail. There was some very good reason, I was sure, why Jackson's case had gone against him.

"Why did you lose the case?" I asked.

The lawyer was perplexed and worried for a moment, and I found it in my heart to pity the wretched little creature. Then he began to whine. I do believe his whine was congenital. He was a man beaten at birth. He whined about the testimony. The witnesses had given only the evidence that helped the other side. Not one word could he get out of them that would have helped Jackson. They knew which side their bread was buttered on. Jackson was a fool. He had been brow-beaten and confused by Colonel Ingram. Colonel Ingram was brilliant at cross-examination. He had made Jackson answer damaging questions.

"How could his answers be damaging if he had the right on his side?" I demanded.

"What's right got to do with it?" he demanded back. "You see all those books." He moved his hand over the array of volumes on the walls of his tiny office. "All my reading and studying of them has taught me that law is one thing and right is another thing. Ask any lawyer. You go to Sunday-school to learn what is right. But you go to those books to learn . . . law."

"Do you mean to tell me that Jackson had the right on his side and yet was beaten?" I queried tentatively. "Do you mean to tell me that there is no justice in Judge Caldwell's court?"

The little lawyer glared at me a moment, and then the belligerence faded out of his face.

"I hadn't a fair chance," he began whining again. "They made a fool out of Jackson and out of me, too. What chance had I? Colonel Ingram is a great lawyer. If he wasn't great, would he have charge of the law business of the Sierra Mills, of the Erston Land Syndicate, of the Berkeley Consolidated, of the Oakland, San Leandro, and Pleasanton Electric? He's a corporation lawyer, and corporation lawyers are not paid for being fools.* What do you think the Sierra Mills alone give him twenty thousand dollars a year for? Because he's worth twenty thousand dollars a year to them, that's what for. I'm not worth that much. If I was, I wouldn't be on the outside, starving and taking cases like Jackson's. What do you think I'd have got if I'd won Jackson's case?"

> * The function of the corporation lawyer was to serve, by corrupt methods, the money-grabbing propensities of the corporations. It is on record that Theodore Roosevelt, at that time President of the United States, said in 1905 A.D., in his address at Harvard Commencement: "We all know that, as things actually are, many of the most influential and most highly remunerated members of the Bar in every centre of wealth, make it their special task to work out bold and ingenious schemes by which their wealthy clients, individual or corporate, can evade the laws which were made to regulate, in the interests of the public, the uses of great wealth."

"You'd have robbed him, most probably," I answered.

"Of course I would," he cried angrily. "I've got to live, haven't I?"*

> * A typical illustration of the internecine strife that permeated all society. Men preyed upon one another like ravening wolves. The big wolves ate the little wolves, and in the social pack Jackson was one of the least of the little wolves.

"He has a wife and children," I chided.

"So have I a wife and children," he retorted. "And there's not a soul in this world except myself that cares whether they starve or not."

His face suddenly softened, and he opened his watch and showed me a small photograph of a woman and two little girls pasted inside the case.

"There they are. Look at them. We've had a hard time, a hard time. I had hoped to send them away to the country if I'd won Jackson's case. They're not healthy here, but I can't afford to send them away."

When I started to leave, he dropped back into his whine.

"I hadn't the ghost of a chance. Colonel Ingram and Judge Caldwell are pretty friendly. I'm not saying that if I'd got the right kind of testimony out of their witnesses on cross-examination, that friendship would have decided the case. And yet I must say that Judge Caldwell did a whole lot to prevent my getting that very testimony. Why, Judge Caldwell and Colonel Ingram belong to the same lodge and the same club. They live in the same neighborhood — one I can't afford. And their wives are always in and out of each other's houses. They're always having whist parties and such things back and forth."

"And yet you think Jackson had the right of it?" I asked, pausing for the moment on the threshold.

"I don't think; I know it," was his answer. "And at first I thought he had some show, too. But I didn't tell my wife. I didn't want to disappoint her. She had her heart set on a trip to the country hard enough as it was."

"Why did you not call attention to the fact that Jackson was trying to save the machinery from being injured?" I asked Peter Donnelly, one of the foremen who had testified at the trial.

He pondered a long time before replying. Then he cast an anxious look about him and said:

"Because I've a good wife an' three of the sweetest children ye ever laid eyes on, that's why."

"I do not understand," I said.

"In other words, because it wouldn't a-ben healthy," he answered.

"You mean — " I began.

But he interrupted passionately.

"I mean what I said. It's long years I've worked in the mills. I began as a little lad on the spindles. I worked up ever since. It's by hard work I got to my present exalted position. I'm a foreman, if you please. An' I doubt me if there's a man in the mills that'd put out a hand to drag me from drownin'. I used to belong to the union. But I've stayed by the company through two strikes. They called me 'scab.' There's not a man among 'em to-day to take a drink with me if I asked him. D'ye see the scars on me head where I was struck with flying bricks? There ain't a child at the spindles but what would curse me name. Me only friend is the company. It's not me duty, but me bread an' butter an' the life of me children to stand by the mills. That's why."

"Was Jackson to blame?" I asked.

"He should a-got the damages. He was a good worker an' never made trouble."

"Then you were not at liberty to tell the whole truth, as you had sworn to do?"

He shook his head.

"The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" I said solemnly.

Again his face became impassioned, and he lifted it, not to me, but to heaven.

"I'd let me soul an' body burn in everlastin' hell for them children of mine," was his answer.

Henry Dallas, the superintendent, was a vulpine-faced creature who regarded me insolently and refused to talk. Not a word could I get from him concerning the trial and his testimony. But with the other foreman I had better luck. James Smith was a hard-faced man, and my heart sank as I encountered him. He, too, gave me the impression that he was not a free agent, as we talked I began to see that he was mentally superior to the average of his kind. He agreed with Peter Donnelly that Jackson should have got damages, and he went farther and called the action heartless and cold-blooded that had turned the worker adrift after he had been made helpless by the accident. Also, he explained that there were many accidents in the mills, and that the company's policy was to fight to the bitter end all consequent damage suits.

"It means hundreds of thousands a year to the stockholders," he said; and as he spoke I remembered the last dividend that had been paid my father, and the pretty gown for me and the books for him that had been bought out of that dividend. I remembered Ernest's charge that my gown was stained with blood, and my flesh began to crawl underneath my garments.

"When you testified at the trial, you didn't point out that Jackson received his accident through trying to save the machinery from damage?" I said.

"No, I did not," was the answer, and his mouth set bitterly. "I testified to the effect that Jackson injured himself by neglect and carelessness, and that the company was not in any way to blame or liable."

"Was it carelessness?" I asked.

"Call it that, or anything you want to call it. The fact is, a man gets tired after he's been working for hours."

I was becoming interested in the man. He certainly was of a superior kind.

"You are better educated than most workingmen," I said.

"I went through high school," he replied. "I worked my way through doing janitor-work. I wanted to go through the university. But my father died, and I came to work in the mills.

"I wanted to become a naturalist," he explained shyly, as though confessing a weakness. "I love animals. But I came to work in the mills. When I was promoted to foreman I got married, then the family came, and . . . well, I wasn't my own boss any more."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"I was explaining why I testified at the trial the way I did — why I followed instructions."

"Whose instructions?"

"Colonel Ingram. He outlined the evidence I was to give."

"And it lost Jackson's case for him."

He nodded, and the blood began to rise darkly in his face.

"And Jackson had a wife and two children dependent on him."

"I know," he said quietly, though his face was growing darker.

"Tell me," I went on, "was it easy to make yourself over from what you were, say in high school, to the man you must have become to do such a thing at the trial?"

The suddenness of his outburst startled and frightened me. He ripped* out a savage oath, and clenched his fist as though about to strike me.

* It is interesting to note the virilities of language that were common speech in that day, as indicative of the life, 'red of claw and fang,' that was then lived. Reference is here made, of course, not to the oath of Smith, but to the verb ripped used by Avis Everhard.

"I beg your pardon," he said the next moment. "No, it was not easy. And now I guess you can go away. You've got all you wanted out of me. But let me tell you this before you go. It won't do you any good to repeat anything I've said. I'll deny it, and there are no witnesses. I'll deny every word of it; and if I have to, I'll do it under oath on the witness stand."

After my interview with Smith I went to my father's office in the Chemistry Building and there encountered Ernest. It was quite unexpected, but he met me with his bold eyes and firm hand-clasp, and with that curious blend of his awkwardness and ease. It was as though our last stormy meeting was forgotten; but I was not in the mood to have it forgotten.

"I have been looking up Jackson's case," I said abruptly.

He was all interested attention, and waited for me to go on, though I could see in his eyes the certitude that my convictions had been shaken.

"He seems to have been badly treated," I confessed. "I — I — think some of his blood is dripping from our roof-beams."

"Of course," he answered. "If Jackson and all his fellows were treated mercifully, the dividends would not be so large."

"I shall never be able to take pleasure in pretty gowns again," I added.

I felt humble and contrite, and was aware of a sweet feeling that Ernest was a sort of father confessor. Then, as ever after, his strength appealed to me. It seemed to radiate a promise of peace and protection.

"Nor will you be able to take pleasure in sackcloth," he said gravely. "There are the jute mills, you know, and the same thing goes on there. It goes on everywhere. Our boasted civilization is based upon blood, soaked in blood, and neither you nor I nor any of us can escape the scarlet stain. The men you talked with — who were they?"

I told him all that had taken place.

"And not one of them was a free agent," he said. "They were all tied to the merciless industrial machine. And the pathos of it and the tragedy is that they are tied by their heartstrings. Their children — always the young life that it is their instinct to protect. This instinct is stronger than any ethic they possess. My father! He lied, he stole, he did all sorts of dishonorable things to put bread into my mouth and into the mouths of my brothers and sisters. He was a slave to the industrial machine, and it stamped his life out, worked him to death."

"But you," I interjected. "You are surely a free agent."

"Not wholly," he replied. "I am not tied by my heartstrings. I am often thankful that I have no children, and I dearly love children. Yet if I married I should not dare to have any."

"That surely is bad doctrine," I cried.

"I know it is," he said sadly. "But it is expedient doctrine. I am a revolutionist, and it is a perilous vocation."

I laughed incredulously.

"If I tried to enter your father's house at night to steal his dividends from the Sierra Mills, what would he do?"

"He sleeps with a revolver on the stand by the bed," I answered. "He would most probably shoot you."

"And if I and a few others should lead a million and a half of men* into the houses of all the well-to-do, there would be a great deal of shooting, wouldn't there?"

* This reference is to the socialist vote cast in the United States in 1910. The rise of this vote clearly indicates the swift growth of the party of revolution. Its voting strength in the United States in 1888 was 2068; in 1902, 127,713; in 1904, 435,040; in 1908, 1,108,427; and in 1910, 1,688,211.

"Yes, but you are not doing that," I objected.

"It is precisely what I am doing. And we intend to take, not the mere wealth in the houses, but all the sources of that wealth, all the mines, and railroads, and factories, and banks, and stores. That is the revolution. It is truly perilous. There will be more shooting, I am afraid, than even I dream of. But as I was saying, no one to-day is a free agent. We are all caught up in the wheels and cogs of the industrial machine. You found that you were, and that the men you talked with were. Talk with more of them. Go and see Colonel Ingram. Look up the reporters that kept Jackson's case out of the papers, and the editors that run the papers. You will find them all slaves of the machine."

A little later in our conversation I asked him a simple little question about the liability of workingmen to accidents, and received a statistical lecture in return.

"It is all in the books," he said. "The figures have been gathered, and it has been proved conclusively that accidents rarely occur in the first hours of the morning work, but that they increase rapidly in the succeeding hours as the workers grow tired and slower in both their muscular and mental processes.

"Why, do you know that your father has three times as many chances for safety of life and limb than has a working-man? He has. The insurance* companies know. They will charge him four dollars and twenty cents a year on a thousand-dollar accident policy, and for the same policy they will charge a laborer fifteen dollars."

* In the terrible wolf-struggle of those centuries, no man was permanently safe, no matter how much wealth he amassed. Out of fear for the welfare of their families, men devised the scheme of insurance. To us, in this intelligent age, such a device is laughably absurd and primitive. But in that age insurance was a very serious matter. The amusing part of it is that the funds of the insurance companies were

> frequently plundered and wasted by the very officials who were intrusted with the management of them.

"And you?" I asked; and in the moment of asking I was aware of a solicitude that was something more than slight.

"Oh, as a revolutionist, I have about eight chances to the workingman's one of being injured or killed," he answered carelessly. "The insurance companies charge the highly trained chemists that handle explosives eight times what they charge the workingmen. I don't think they'd insure me at all. Why did you ask?"

My eyes fluttered, and I could feel the blood warm in my face. It was not that he had caught me in my solicitude, but that I had caught myself, and in his presence.

Just then my father came in and began making preparations to depart with me. Ernest returned some books he had borrowed, and went away first. But just as he was going, he turned and said:

"Oh, by the way, while you are ruining your own peace of mind and I am ruining the Bishop's, you'd better look up Mrs. Wickson and Mrs. Pertonwaithe. Their husbands, you know, are the two principal stockholders in the Mills. Like all the rest of humanity, those two women are tied to the machine, but they are so tied that they sit on top of it."

CHAPTER IV

SLAVES OF THE MACHINE

The more I thought of Jackson's arm, the more shaken I was. I was confronted by the concrete. For the first time I was seeing life. My university life, and study and culture, had not been real. I had learned nothing but theories of life and society that looked all very well on the printed page, but now I had seen life itself. Jackson's arm was a fact of life. "The fact, man, the irrefragable fact!" of Ernest's was ringing in my consciousness.

It seemed monstrous, impossible, that our whole society was based upon blood. And yet there was Jackson. I could not get away from him. Constantly my thought swung back to him as the compass to the Pole. He had been monstrously treated. His blood had not been paid for in order that a larger dividend might be paid. And I knew a score of happy complacent families that had received those dividends and by that much had profited by Jackson's blood. If one man could be so monstrously treated and society move on its way unheeding, might not many men be so monstrously treated? I remembered Ernest's women of Chicago who toiled for ninety cents a week, and the child slaves of the Southern cotton mills he had described. And I could see their wan white hands, from which the blood had been pressed, at work upon the cloth out of which had been made my gown. And then I thought of the Sierra Mills and the dividends that had been paid, and I saw the blood of Jackson upon my gown as well. Jackson I could not escape. Always my meditations led me back to him.

Down in the depths of me I had a feeling that I stood on the edge of a precipice. It was as though I were about to see a new and awful revelation of life. And not I alone. My whole world was turning over. There was my father. I could see the effect Ernest was beginning to have on him. And then there was the Bishop. When I had last seen him he had looked a sick man. He was at high nervous tension, and in his eyes there was unspeakable horror. From the little I learned I knew that Ernest had been keeping his promise of taking him through hell. But what scenes of hell the Bishop's eyes had seen, I knew not, for he seemed too stunned to speak about them.

Once, the feeling strong upon me that my little world and all the world was turning over, I thought of Ernest as the cause of it; and also I thought, “We were so happy and peaceful before he came!” And the next moment I was aware that the thought was a treason against truth, and Ernest rose before me transfigured, the apostle of truth, with shining brows and the fearlessness of one of Gods own angels, battling for the truth and the right, and battling for the succor of the poor and lonely and oppressed. And then there arose before me another figure, the Christ! He, too, had taken the part of the lowly and oppressed, and against all the established power of priest and pharisee. And I remembered his end upon the cross, and my heart contracted with a pang as I thought of Ernest. Was he, too, destined for a cross? — he, with his clarion call and war-noted voice, and all the fine man’s vigor of him!

And in that moment I knew that I loved him, and that I was melting with desire to comfort him. I thought of his life. A sordid, harsh, and meagre life it must have been. And I thought of his father, who had lied and stolen for him and been worked to death. And he himself had gone into the mills when he was ten! All my heart seemed bursting with desire to fold my arms around him, and to rest his head on my breast — his head that must be weary with so many thoughts; and to give him rest — just rest — and easement and forgetfulness for a tender space.

I met Colonel Ingram at a church reception. Him I knew well and had known well for many years. I trapped him behind large palms and rubber plants, though he did not know he was trapped. He met me with the conventional gayety and gallantry. He was ever a graceful man, diplomatic, tactful, and considerate. And as for appearance, he was the most distinguished-looking man in our society. Beside him even the venerable head of the university looked tawdry and small.

And yet I found Colonel Ingram situated the same as the unlettered mechanics. He was not a free agent. He, too, was bound upon the wheel. I shall never forget the change in him when I mentioned Jackson’s case. His smiling good nature vanished like a ghost. A sudden, frightful expression distorted his well-bred face. I felt the same alarm that I had felt when James Smith broke out. But Colonel Ingram did not curse. That was the slight difference that was left between the workingman and him. He was famed as a wit, but he had no wit now. And, unconsciously, this way and that he glanced for avenues of escape. But he was trapped amid the palms and rubber trees.

Oh, he was sick of the sound of Jackson's name. Why had I brought the matter up? He did not relish my joke. It was poor taste on my part, and very inconsiderate. Did I not know that in his profession personal feelings did not count? He left his personal feelings at home when he went down to the office. At the office he had only professional feelings.

"Should Jackson have received damages?" I asked.

"Certainly," he answered. "That is, personally, I have a feeling that he should. But that has nothing to do with the legal aspects of the case."

He was getting his scattered wits slightly in hand.

"Tell me, has right anything to do with the law?" I asked.

"You have used the wrong initial consonant," he smiled in answer.

"Might?" I queried; and he nodded his head. "And yet we are supposed to get justice by means of the law?"

"That is the paradox of it," he countered. "We do get justice."

"You are speaking professionally now, are you not?" I asked.

Colonel Ingram blushed, actually blushed, and again he looked anxiously about him for a way of escape. But I blocked his path and did not offer to move.

"Tell me," I said, "when one surrenders his personal feelings to his professional feelings, may not the action be defined as a sort of spiritual mayhem?"

I did not get an answer. Colonel Ingram had ingloriously bolted, overturning a palm in his flight.

Next I tried the newspapers. I wrote a quiet, restrained, dispassionate account of Jackson's case. I made no charges against the men with whom I had talked, nor, for that matter, did I even mention them. I gave the actual facts of the case, the long years Jackson had worked in the mills, his effort to save the machinery from damage and the consequent accident, and his own present wretched and starving condition. The three local newspapers rejected my communication, likewise did the two weeklies.

I got hold of Percy Layton. He was a graduate of the university, had gone in for journalism, and was then serving his apprenticeship as reporter on the most influential of the three newspapers. He smiled when I asked him the reason the newspapers suppressed all mention of Jackson or his case.

"Editorial policy," he said. "We have nothing to do with that. It's up to the editors."

"But why is it policy?" I asked.

"We're all solid with the corporations," he answered. "If you paid advertising rates, you couldn't get any such matter into the papers. A man who tried to smuggle it in would lose his job. You couldn't get it in if you paid ten times the regular advertising rates."

"How about your own policy?" I questioned. "It would seem your function is to twist truth at the command of your employers, who, in turn, obey the behests of the corporations."

"I haven't anything to do with that." He looked uncomfortable for the moment, then brightened as he saw his way out. "I, myself, do not write untruthful things. I keep square all right with my own conscience. Of course, there's lots that's repugnant in the course of the day's work. But then, you see, that's all part of the day's work," he wound up boyishly.

"Yet you expect to sit at an editor's desk some day and conduct a policy."

"I'll be case-hardened by that time," was his reply.

"Since you are not yet case-hardened, tell me what you think right now about the general editorial policy."

"I don't think," he answered quickly. "One can't kick over the ropes if he's going to succeed in journalism. I've learned that much, at any rate."

And he nodded his young head sagely.

"But the right?" I persisted.

"You don't understand the game. Of course it's all right, because it comes out all right, don't you see?"

"Delightfully vague," I murmured; but my heart was aching for the youth of him, and I felt that I must either scream or burst into tears.

I was beginning to see through the appearances of the society in which I had always lived, and to find the frightful realities that were beneath. There seemed a tacit conspiracy against Jackson, and I was aware of a thrill of sympathy for the whining lawyer who had ingloriously fought his case. But this tacit conspiracy grew large. Not alone was it aimed against Jackson. It was aimed against every workingman who was maimed in the mills. And if against every man in the mills, why not against every man in all the other mills and factories? In fact, was it not true of all the industries?

And if this was so, then society was a lie. I shrank back from my own conclusions. It was too terrible and awful to be true. But there was Jackson, and Jackson's arm, and the blood that stained my gown and dripped from my own roof-beams. And there were many Jacksons — hundreds of them in the mills alone, as Jackson himself had said. Jackson I could not escape.

I saw Mr. Wickson and Mr. Pertonwaithe, the two men who held most of the stock in the Sierra Mills. But I could not shake them as I had shaken the mechanics in their employ. I discovered that they had an ethic superior to that of the rest of society. It was what I may call the aristocratic ethic or the master ethic.* They talked in large ways of policy, and they identified policy and right. And to me they talked in fatherly ways, patronizing my youth and inexperience. They were the most hopeless of all I had encountered in my quest. They believed absolutely that their conduct was right. There was no question about it, no discussion. They were convinced that they were the saviours of society, and that it was they who made happiness for the many. And they drew pathetic pictures of what would be the sufferings of the working class were it not for the employment that they, and they alone, by their wisdom, provided for it.

* Before Avis Everhard was born, John Stuart Mill, in his essay, ON LIBERTY, wrote: “Wherever there is an ascendant class, a large portion of the morality emanates from its class interests and its class feelings of superiority.”

Fresh from these two masters, I met Ernest and related my experience. He looked at me with a pleased expression, and said:

“Really, this is fine. You are beginning to dig truth for yourself. It is your own empirical generalization, and it is correct. No man in the industrial machine is a free-will agent, except the large capitalist, and he isn’t, if you’ll pardon the Irishism.* You see, the masters are quite sure that they are right in what they are doing. That is the crowning absurdity of the whole situation. They are so tied by their human nature that they can’t do a thing unless they think it is right. They must have a sanction for their acts.

* Verbal contradictions, called BULLS, were long an amiable weakness of the ancient Irish.

“When they want to do a thing, in business of course, they must wait till there arises in their brains, somehow, a religious, or ethical, or scientific, or philosophic, concept that the thing is right. And then they go ahead and do it, unwitting that one of the weaknesses of the human mind is that the wish is parent to the thought. No matter what they want to do, the sanction always comes. They are superficial casuists. They are Jesuitical. They even see their way to doing wrong that right may come of it. One of the pleasant and axiomatic fictions they have created is that they are superior to the rest of mankind in wisdom and efficiency. Therefrom comes their sanction to manage the bread and butter of the rest of mankind. They have even resurrected the theory of the divine right of kings — commercial kings in their case.*

* The newspapers, in 1902 of that era, credited the president of the Anthracite Coal Trust, George F. Baer, with the enunciation of the following principle: "The rights and interests of the laboring man will be protected by the Christian men to whom God in His infinite wisdom has given the property interests of the country."

"The weakness in their position lies in that they are merely business men. They are not philosophers. They are not biologists nor sociologists. If they were, of course all would be well. A business man who was also a biologist and a sociologist would know, approximately, the right thing to do for humanity. But, outside the realm of business, these men are stupid. They know only business. They do not know mankind nor society, and yet they set themselves up as arbiters of the fates of the hungry millions and all the other millions thrown in. History, some day, will have an excruciating laugh at their expense."

I was not surprised when I had my talk out with Mrs. Wickson and Mrs. Pertonwaithe. They were society women.* Their homes were palaces. They had many homes scattered over the country, in the mountains, on lakes, and by the sea. They were tended by armies of servants, and their social activities were bewildering. They patronized the university and the churches, and the pastors especially bowed at their knees in meek subservience.** They were powers, these two women, what of the money that was theirs. The power of subsidization of thought was theirs to a remarkable degree, as I was soon to learn under Ernest's tuition.

* SOCIETY is here used in a restricted sense, a common usage of the times to denote the gilded drones that did no labor, but only glutted themselves at the honey-vats of the workers. Neither the business men nor the laborers had time or opportunity for SOCIETY. SOCIETY was the creation of the idle rich who toiled not and who in this way played.

** "Bring on your tainted money," was the expressed sentiment of the Church during this period.

They aped their husbands, and talked in the same large ways about policy, and the duties and responsibilities of the rich. They were swayed by the same ethic that dominated their husbands — the ethic of their class; and they uttered glib phrases that their own ears did not understand.

Also, they grew irritated when I told them of the deplorable condition of Jackson's family, and when I wondered that they had made no voluntary provision for the man. I was told that they thanked no one for instructing them in their social duties. When I asked them flatly to assist Jackson, they as flatly refused. The astounding thing about it was that they refused in almost identically the same language, and this in face of the fact that I interviewed them separately and that one did not know that I had seen or was going to see the other. Their common reply was that they were glad of the opportunity to make it perfectly plain that no premium would ever be put on carelessness by them; nor would they, by paying for accident, tempt the poor to hurt themselves in the machinery.*

And they were sincere, these two women. They were drunk with conviction of the superiority of their class and of themselves. They had a sanction, in their own class-ethic, for every act they performed. As I drove away from Mrs. Pertonwaithe's great house, I looked back at it, and I remembered Ernest's expression that they were bound to the machine, but that they were so bound that they sat on top of it.

* In the files of the OUTLOOK, a critical weekly of the period, in the number dated August 18, 1906, is related the circumstance of a workingman losing his arm, the details of which are quite similar to those of Jackson's case as related by Avis Everhard.

CHAPTER V

THE PHILOMATHS

Ernest was often at the house. Nor was it my father, merely, nor the controversial dinners, that drew him there. Even at that time I flattered myself that I played some part in causing his visits, and it was not long before I learned the correctness of my surmise. For never was there such a lover as Ernest Everhard. His gaze and his hand-clasp grew firmer and steadier, if that were possible; and the question that had grown from the first in his eyes, grew only the more imperative.

My impression of him, the first time I saw him, had been unfavorable. Then I had found myself attracted toward him. Next came my repulsion, when he so savagely attacked my class and me. After that, as I saw that he had not maligned my class, and that the harsh and bitter things he said about it were justified, I had drawn closer to him again. He became my oracle. For me he tore the sham from the face of society and gave me glimpses of reality that were as unpleasant as they were undeniably true.

As I have said, there was never such a lover as he. No girl could live in a university town till she was twenty-four and not have love experiences. I had been made love to by beardless sophomores and gray professors, and by the athletes and the football giants. But not one of them made love to me as Ernest did. His arms were around me before I knew. His lips were on mine before I could protest or resist. Before his earnestness conventional maiden dignity was ridiculous. He swept me off my feet by the splendid invincible rush of him. He did not propose. He put his arms around me and kissed me and took it for granted that we should be married. There was no discussion about it. The only discussion — and that arose afterward — was when we should be married.

It was unprecedented. It was unreal. Yet, in accordance with Ernest’s test of truth, it worked. I trusted my life to it. And fortunate was the trust. Yet during those first days of our love, fear of the future came often to me when I thought of the violence and impetuosity of his love-making. Yet such fears were groundless. No woman was ever blessed with a gentler, tenderer husband. This gentleness and violence on his part was a curious blend similar to the one in his carriage of awkwardness and ease. That slight awkwardness! He never got over it, and it was delicious. His behavior in our drawing-room reminded me of a careful bull in a china shop.*

> * In those days it was still the custom to fill the living
> rooms with bric-a-brac. They had not discovered simplicity
> of living. Such rooms were museums, entailing endless labor
> to keep clean. The dust-demon was the lord of the household.
> There were a myriad devices for catching dust, and only a
> few devices for getting rid of it.

It was at this time that vanished my last doubt of the completeness of my love for him (a subconscious doubt, at most). It was at the Philomath Club — a wonderful night of battle, wherein Ernest bearded the masters in their lair. Now the Philomath Club was the most select on the Pacific Coast. It was the creation of Miss Brentwood, an enormously wealthy old maid; and it was her husband, and family, and toy. Its members were the wealthiest in the community, and the strongest-minded of the wealthy, with, of course, a sprinkling of scholars to give it intellectual tone.

The Philomath had no club house. It was not that kind of a club. Once a month its members gathered at some one of their private houses to listen to a lecture. The lecturers were usually, though not always, hired. If a chemist in New York made a new discovery in say radium, all his expenses across the continent were paid, and as well he received a princely fee for his time. The same with a returning explorer from the polar regions, or the latest literary or artistic success. No visitors were allowed, while it was the Philomath's policy to permit none of its discussions to get into the papers. Thus great statesmen — and there had been such occasions — were able fully to speak their minds.

I spread before me a wrinkled letter, written to me by Ernest twenty years ago, and from it I copy the following:

"Your father is a member of the Philomath, so you are able to come. Therefore come next Tuesday night. I promise you that you will have the time of your life. In your recent encounters, you failed to shake the masters. If you come, I'll shake them for you. I'll make them snarl like wolves. You merely questioned their morality. When their morality is questioned, they grow only the more complacent and superior. But I shall menace their money-bags. That will shake them to the roots of their primitive natures. If you can come, you will see the cave-man, in evening dress, snarling and snapping over a bone. I promise you a great caterwauling and an illuminating insight into the nature of the beast.

"They've invited me in order to tear me to pieces. This is the idea of Miss Brentwood. She clumsily hinted as much when she invited me. She's given them that kind of fun before. They delight in getting trustful-souled gentle reformers before them. Miss Brentwood thinks I am as mild as a kitten and as good-natured and stolid as the family cow. I'll not deny that I helped to give her that impression. She was very tentative at first, until she divined my harmlessness. I am to receive a handsome fee — two hundred and fifty dollars — as befits the man who, though a radical, once ran for governor. Also, I am to wear evening dress. This is compulsory. I never was so apparelled in my life. I suppose I'll have to hire one somewhere. But I'd do more than that to get a chance at the Philomaths."

Of all places, the Club gathered that night at the Pertonwaithe house. Extra chairs had been brought into the great drawing-room, and in all there must have been two hundred Philomaths that sat down to hear Ernest. They were truly lords of society. I amused myself with running over in my mind the sum of the fortunes represented, and it ran well into the hundreds of millions. And the possessors were not of the idle rich. They were men of affairs who took most active parts in industrial and political life.

We were all seated when Miss Brentwood brought Ernest in. They moved at once to the head of the room, from where he was to speak. He was in evening dress, and, what of his broad shoulders and kingly head, he looked magnificent. And then there was that faint and unmistakable touch of awkwardness in his movements. I almost think I could have loved him for that alone. And as I looked at him I was aware of a great joy. I felt again the pulse of his palm on mine, the touch of his lips; and such pride was mine that I felt I must rise up and cry out to the assembled company: "He is mine! He has held me in his arms, and I, mere I, have filled that mind of his to the exclusion of all his multitudinous and kingly thoughts!"

At the head of the room, Miss Brentwood introduced him to Colonel Van Gilbert, and I knew that the latter was to preside. Colonel Van Gilbert was a great corporation lawyer. In addition, he was immensely wealthy. The smallest fee he would deign to notice was a hundred thousand dollars. He was a master of law. The law was a puppet with which he played. He moulded it like clay, twisted and distorted it like a Chinese puzzle into any design he chose. In appearance and rhetoric he was old-fashioned, but in imagination and knowledge and resource he was as young as the latest statute. His first prominence had come when he broke the Shardwell will.* His fee for this one act was five hundred thousand dollars. From then on he had risen like a rocket. He was often called the greatest lawyer in the country — corporation lawyer, of course; and no classification of the three greatest lawyers in the United States could have excluded him.

* This breaking of wills was a peculiar feature of the period. With the accumulation of vast fortunes, the problem of disposing of these fortunes after death was a vexing one to the accumulators. Will-making and will-breaking became complementary trades, like armor-making and gun-making. The shrewdest will-making lawyers were called in to make wills that could not be broken. But these wills were always broken, and very often by the very lawyers that had drawn them up. Nevertheless the delusion persisted in the wealthy class that an absolutely unbreakable will could be cast; and so, through the generations, clients and lawyers pursued the illusion. It was a pursuit like unto that of the Universal Solvent of the mediaeval alchemists.

He arose and began, in a few well-chosen phrases that carried an undertone of faint irony, to introduce Ernest. Colonel Van Gilbert was subtly facetious in his introduction of the social reformer and member of the working class, and the audience smiled. It made me angry, and I glanced at Ernest. The sight of him made me doubly angry. He did not seem to resent the delicate slurs. Worse than that, he did not seem to be aware of them. There he sat, gentle, and stolid, and somnolent. He really looked stupid. And for a moment the thought rose in my mind, What if he were overawed by this imposing array of power and brains? Then I smiled. He couldn’t fool me. But he fooled the others, just as he had fooled Miss Brentwood. She occupied a chair right up to the front, and several times she turned her head toward one or another of her CONFRERES and smiled her appreciation of the remarks.

Colonel Van Gilbert done, Ernest arose and began to speak. He began in a low voice, haltingly and modestly, and with an air of evident embarrassment. He spoke of his birth in the working class, and of the sordidness and wretchedness of his environment, where flesh and spirit were alike starved and tormented. He described his ambitions and ideals, and his conception of the paradise wherein lived the people of the upper classes. As he said:

"Up above me, I knew, were unselfishnesses of the spirit, clean and noble thinking, keen intellectual living. I knew all this because I read 'Seaside Library'* novels, in which, with the exception of the villains and adventuresses, all men and women thought beautiful thoughts, spoke a beautiful tongue, and performed glorious deeds. In short, as I accepted the rising of the sun, I accepted that up above me was all that was fine and noble and gracious, all that gave decency and dignity to life, all that made life worth living and that remunerated one for his travail and misery."

* A curious and amazing literature that served to make the working class utterly misapprehend the nature of the leisure class.

He went on and traced his life in the mills, the learning of the horseshoeing trade, and his meeting with the socialists. Among them, he said, he had found keen intellects and brilliant wits, ministers of the Gospel who had been broken because their Christianity was too wide for any congregation of mammon-worshippers, and professors who had been broken on the wheel of university subservience to the ruling class. The socialists were revolutionists, he said, struggling to overthrow the irrational society of the present and out of the material to build the rational society of the future. Much more he said that would take too long to write, but I shall never forget how he described the life among the revolutionists. All halting utterance vanished. His voice grew strong and confident, and it glowed as he glowed, and as the thoughts glowed that poured out from him. He said:

"Amongst the revolutionists I found, also, warm faith in the human, ardent idealism, sweetnesses of unselfishness, renunciation, and martyrdom — all the splendid, stinging things of the spirit. Here life was clean, noble, and alive. I was in touch with great souls who exalted flesh and spirit over dollars and cents, and to whom the thin wail of the starved slum child meant more than all the pomp and circumstance of commercial expansion and world empire. All about me were nobleness of purpose and heroism of effort, and my days and nights were sunshine and starshine, all fire and dew, with before my eyes, ever burning and blazing, the Holy Grail, Christ's own Grail, the warm human, long-suffering and maltreated but to be rescued and saved at the last."

As before I had seen him transfigured, so now he stood transfigured before me. His brows were bright with the divine that was in him, and brighter yet shone his eyes from the midst of the radiance that seemed to envelop him as a mantle. But the others did not see this radiance, and I assumed that it was due to the tears of joy and love that dimmed my vision. At any rate, Mr. Wickson, who sat behind me, was unaffected, for I heard him sneer aloud, “Utopian.”*

> * The people of that age were phrase slaves. The abjectness of their servitude is incomprehensible to us. There was a magic in words greater than the conjurer’s art. So befuddled and chaotic were their minds that the utterance of a single word could negative the generalizations of a lifetime of serious research and thought. Such a word was the adjective UTOPIAN. The mere utterance of it could damn any scheme, no matter how sanely conceived, of economic amelioration or regeneration. Vast populations grew frenzied over such phrases as “an honest dollar” and “a full dinner pail.” The coinage of such phrases was considered strokes of genius.

Ernest went on to his rise in society, till at last he came in touch with members of the upper classes, and rubbed shoulders with the men who sat in the high places. Then came his disillusionment, and this disillusionment he described in terms that did not flatter his audience. He was surprised at the commonness of the clay. Life proved not to be fine and gracious. He was appalled by the selfishness he encountered, and what had surprised him even more than that was the absence of intellectual life. Fresh from his revolutionists, he was shocked by the intellectual stupidity of the master class. And then, in spite of their magnificent churches and well-paid preachers, he had found the masters, men and women, grossly material. It was true that they prattled sweet little ideals and dear little moralities, but in spite of their prattle the dominant key of the life they lived was materialistic. And they were without real morality — for instance, that which Christ had preached but which was no longer preached.

“I met men,” he said, “who invoked the name of the Prince of Peace in their diatribes against war, and who put rifles in the hands of Pinkertons* with which to shoot down strikers in their own factories. I met men incoherent with indignation at the brutality of prize-fighting, and who, at the same time, were parties to the adulteration of food that killed each year more babes than even red-handed Herod had killed.

* Originally, they were private detectives; but they quickly became hired fighting men of the capitalists, and ultimately developed into the Mercenaries of the Oligarchy.

"This delicate, aristocratic-featured gentleman was a dummy director and a tool of corporations that secretly robbed widows and orphans. This gentleman, who collected fine editions and was a patron of literature, paid blackmail to a heavy-jowled, black-browed boss of a municipal machine. This editor, who published patent medicine advertisements, called me a scoundrelly demagogue because I dared him to print in his paper the truth about patent medicines.* This man, talking soberly and earnestly about the beauties of idealism and the goodness of God, had just betrayed his comrades in a business deal. This man, a pillar of the church and heavy contributor to foreign missions, worked his shop girls ten hours a day on a starvation wage and thereby directly encouraged prostitution. This man, who endowed chairs in universities and erected magnificent chapels, perjured himself in courts of law over dollars and cents. This railroad magnate broke his word as a citizen, as a gentleman, and as a Christian, when he granted a secret rebate, and he granted many secret rebates. This senator was the tool and the slave, the little puppet, of a brutal uneducated machine boss;** so was this governor and this supreme court judge; and all three rode on railroad passes; and, also, this sleek capitalist owned the machine, the machine boss, and the railroads that issued the passes.

* PATENT MEDICINES were patent lies, but, like the charms and indulgences of the Middle Ages, they deceived the people. The only difference lay in that the patent medicines were more harmful and more costly.

** Even as late as 1912, A.D., the great mass of the people still persisted in the belief that they ruled the country by virtue of their ballots. In reality, the country was ruled by what were called POLITICAL MACHINES. At first the machine bosses charged the master capitalists extortionate tolls for legislation; but in a short time the master capitalists found it cheaper to own the political machines themselves and to hire the machine bosses.

"And so it was, instead of in paradise, that I found myself in the arid desert of commercialism. I found nothing but stupidity, except for business. I found none clean, noble, and alive, though I found many who were alive — with rottenness. What I did find was monstrous selfishness and heartlessness, and a gross, gluttonous, practised, and practical materialism."

Much more Ernest told them of themselves and of his disillusionment. Intellectually they had bored him; morally and spiritually they had sickened him; so that he was glad to go back to his revolutionists, who were clean, noble, and alive, and all that the capitalists were not.

"And now," he said, "let me tell you about that revolution."

But first I must say that his terrible diatribe had not touched them. I looked about me at their faces and saw that they remained complacently superior to what he had charged. And I remembered what he had told me: that no indictment of their morality could shake them. However, I could see that the boldness of his language had affected Miss Brentwood. She was looking worried and apprehensive.

Ernest began by describing the army of revolution, and as he gave the figures of its strength (the votes cast in the various countries), the assemblage began to grow restless. Concern showed in their faces, and I noticed a tightening of lips. At last the gage of battle had been thrown down. He described the international organization of the socialists that united the million and a half in the United States with the twenty-three millions and a half in the rest of the world.

"Such an army of revolution," he said, "twenty-five millions strong, is a thing to make rulers and ruling classes pause and consider. The cry of this army is: 'No quarter! We want all that you possess. We will be content with nothing less than all that you possess. We want in our hands the reins of power and the destiny of mankind. Here are our hands. They are strong hands. We are going to take your governments, your palaces, and all your purpled ease away from you, and in that day you shall work for your bread even as the peasant in the field or the starved and runty clerk in your metropolises. Here are our hands. They are strong hands!'"

And as he spoke he extended from his splendid shoulders his two great arms, and the horseshoer's hands were clutching the air like eagle's talons. He was the spirit of regnant labor as he stood there, his hands outreaching to rend and crush his audience. I was aware of a faintly perceptible shrinking on the part of the listeners before this figure of revolution, concrete, potential, and menacing. That is, the women shrank, and fear was in their faces. Not so with the men. They were of the active rich, and not the idle, and they were fighters. A low, throaty rumble arose, lingered on the air a moment, and ceased. It was the forerunner of the snarl, and I was to hear it many times that night — the token of the brute in man, the earnest of his primitive passions. And they were unconscious that they had made this sound. It was the growl of the pack, mouthed by the pack, and mouthed in all unconsciousness. And in that moment, as I saw the harshness form in their faces and saw the fight-light flashing in their eyes, I realized that not easily would they let their lordship of the world be wrested from them.

Ernest proceeded with his attack. He accounted for the existence of the million and a half of revolutionists in the United States by charging the capitalist class with having mismanaged society. He sketched the economic condition of the cave-man and of the savage peoples of to-day, pointing out that they possessed neither tools nor machines, and possessed only a natural efficiency of one in producing power. Then he traced the development of machinery and social organization so that to-day the producing power of civilized man was a thousand times greater than that of the savage.

“Five men,” he said, “can produce bread for a thousand. One man can produce cotton cloth for two hundred and fifty people, woollens for three hundred, and boots and shoes for a thousand. One would conclude from this that under a capable management of society modern civilized man would be a great deal better off than the cave-man. But is he? Let us see. In the United States to-day there are fifteen million* people living in poverty; and by poverty is meant that condition in life in which, through lack of food and adequate shelter, the mere standard of working efficiency cannot be maintained. In the United States to-day, in spite of all your so-called labor legislation, there are three millions of child laborers.** In twelve years their numbers have been doubled. And in passing I will ask you managers of society why you did not make public the census figures of 1910? And I will answer for you, that you were afraid. The figures of misery would have precipitated the revolution that even now is gathering.

* Robert Hunter, in 1906, in a book entitled “Poverty,” pointed out that at that time there were ten millions in the United States living in poverty.

** In the United States Census of 1900 (the last census the figures of which were made public), the number of child laborers was placed at 1,752,187.

“But to return to my indictment. If modern man’s producing power is a thousand times greater than that of the cave-man, why then, in the United States to-day, are there fifteen million people who are not properly sheltered and properly fed? Why then, in the United States to-day, are there three million child laborers? It is a true indictment. The capitalist class has mismanaged. In face of the facts that modern man lives more wretchedly than the cave-man, and that his producing power is a thousand times greater than that of the cave-man, no other conclusion is possible than that the capitalist class has mismanaged, that you have mismanaged, my masters, that you have criminally and selfishly mismanaged. And on this count you cannot answer me here to-night, face to face, any more than can your whole class answer the million and a half of revolutionists in the United States. You cannot answer. I challenge you to answer. And furthermore, I dare to say to you now that when I have finished you will not answer. On that point you will be tongue-tied, though you will talk wordily enough about other things.

“You have failed in your management. You have made a shambles of civilization. You have been blind and greedy. You have risen up (as you to-day rise up), shamelessly, in our legislative halls, and declared that profits were impossible without the toil of children and babes. Don’t take my word for it. It is all in the records against you. You have lulled your conscience to sleep with prattle of sweet ideals and dear moralities. You are fat with power and possession, drunken with success; and you have no more hope against us than have the drones, clustered about the honey-vats, when the worker-bees spring upon them to end their rotund existence. You have failed in your management of society, and your management is to be taken away from you. A million and a half of the men of the working class say that they are going to get the rest of the working class to join with them and take the management away from you. This is the revolution, my masters. Stop it if you can.”

For an appreciable lapse of time Ernest’s voice continued to ring through the great room. Then arose the throaty rumble I had heard before, and a dozen men were on their feet clamoring for recognition from Colonel Van Gilbert. I noticed Miss Brentwood’s shoulders moving convulsively, and for the moment I was angry, for I thought that she was laughing at Ernest. And then I discovered that it was not laughter, but hysteria. She was appalled by what she had done in bringing this firebrand before her blessed Philomath Club.

Colonel Van Gilbert did not notice the dozen men, with passion-wrought faces, who strove to get permission from him to speak. His own face was passion-wrought. He sprang to his feet, waving his arms, and for a moment could utter only incoherent sounds. Then speech poured from him. But it was not the speech of a one-hundred-thousand-dollar lawyer, nor was the rhetoric old-fashioned.

"Fallacy upon fallacy!" he cried. "Never in all my life have I heard so many fallacies uttered in one short hour. And besides, young man, I must tell you that you have said nothing new. I learned all that at college before you were born. Jean Jacques Rousseau enunciated your socialistic theory nearly two centuries ago. A return to the soil, forsooth! Reversion! Our biology teaches the absurdity of it. It has been truly said that a little learning is a dangerous thing, and you have exemplified it to-night with your madcap theories. Fallacy upon fallacy! I was never so nauseated in my life with overplus of fallacy. That for your immature generalizations and childish reasonings!"

He snapped his fingers contemptuously and proceeded to sit down. There were lip-exclamations of approval on the part of the women, and hoarser notes of confirmation came from the men. As for the dozen men who were clamoring for the floor, half of them began speaking at once. The confusion and babel was indescribable. Never had Mrs. Pertonwaithe's spacious walls beheld such a spectacle. These, then, were the cool captains of industry and lords of society, these snarling, growling savages in evening clothes. Truly Ernest had shaken them when he stretched out his hands for their moneybags, his hands that had appeared in their eyes as the hands of the fifteen hundred thousand revolutionists.

But Ernest never lost his head in a situation. Before Colonel Van Gilbert had succeeded in sitting down, Ernest was on his feet and had sprung forward.

"One at a time!" he roared at them.

The sound arose from his great lungs and dominated the human tempest. By sheer compulsion of personality he commanded silence.

"One at a time," he repeated softly. "Let me answer Colonel Van Gilbert. After that the rest of you can come at me — but one at a time, remember.

No mass-plays here. This is not a football field.

"As for you," he went on, turning toward Colonel Van Gilbert, "you have replied to nothing I have said. You have merely made a few excited and dogmatic assertions about my mental caliber. That may serve you in your business, but you can't talk to me like that. I am not a workingman, cap in hand, asking you to increase my wages or to protect me from the machine at which I work. You cannot be dogmatic with truth when you deal with me. Save that for dealing with your wage-slaves. They will not dare reply to you because you hold their bread and butter, their lives, in your hands.

"As for this return to nature that you say you learned at college before I was born, permit me to point out that on the face of it you cannot have learned anything since. Socialism has no more to do with the state of nature than has differential calculus with a Bible class. I have called your class stupid when outside the realm of business. You, sir, have brilliantly exemplified my statement."

This terrible castigation of her hundred-thousand-dollar lawyer was too much for Miss Brentwood's nerves. Her hysteria became violent, and she was helped, weeping and laughing, out of the room. It was just as well, for there was worse to follow.

"Don't take my word for it," Ernest continued, when the interruption had been led away. "Your own authorities with one unanimous voice will prove you stupid. Your own hired purveyors of knowledge will tell you that you are wrong. Go to your meekest little assistant instructor of sociology and ask him what is the difference between Rousseau's theory of the return to nature and the theory of socialism; ask your greatest orthodox bourgeois political economists and sociologists; question through the pages of every text-book written on the subject and stored on the shelves of your subsidized libraries; and from one and all the answer will be that there is nothing congruous between the return to nature and socialism. On the other hand, the unanimous affirmative answer will be that the return to nature and socialism are diametrically opposed to each other. As I say, don't take my word for it. The record of your stupidity is there in the books, your own books that you never read. And so far as your stupidity is concerned, you are but the exemplar of your class.

"You know law and business, Colonel Van Gilbert. You know how to serve corporations and increase dividends by twisting the law. Very good. Stick to it. You are quite a figure. You are a very good lawyer, but you are a poor historian, you know nothing of sociology, and your biology is contemporaneous with Pliny."

Here Colonel Van Gilbert writhed in his chair. There was perfect quiet in the room. Everybody sat fascinated — paralyzed, I may say. Such fearful treatment of the great Colonel Van Gilbert was unheard of, undreamed of, impossible to believe — the great Colonel Van Gilbert before whom judges trembled when he arose in court. But Ernest never gave quarter to an enemy.

"This is, of course, no reflection on you," Ernest said. "Every man to his trade. Only you stick to your trade, and I'll stick to mine. You have specialized. When it comes to a knowledge of the law, of how best to evade the law or make new law for the benefit of thieving corporations, I am down in the dirt at your feet. But when it comes to sociology — my trade — you are down in the dirt at my feet. Remember that. Remember, also, that your law is the stuff of a day, and that you are not versatile in the stuff of more than a day. Therefore your dogmatic assertions and rash generalizations on things historical and sociological are not worth the breath you waste on them."

Ernest paused for a moment and regarded him thoughtfully, noting his face dark and twisted with anger, his panting chest, his writhing body, and his slim white hands nervously clenching and unclenching.

"But it seems you have breath to use, and I'll give you a chance to use it. I indicted your class. Show me that my indictment is wrong. I pointed out to you the wretchedness of modern man — three million child slaves in the United States, without whose labor profits would not be possible, and fifteen million under-fed, ill-clothed, and worse-housed people. I pointed out that modern man's producing power through social organization and the use of machinery was a thousand times greater than that of the cave-man. And I stated that from these two facts no other conclusion was possible than that the capitalist class had mismanaged. This was my indictment, and I specifically and at length challenged you to answer it. Nay, I did more. I prophesied that you would not answer. It remains for your breath to smash my prophecy. You called my speech fallacy. Show the fallacy, Colonel Van Gilbert. Answer the indictment that I and my fifteen hundred thousand comrades have brought against your class and you."

Colonel Van Gilbert quite forgot that he was presiding, and that in courtesy he should permit the other clamorers to speak. He was on his feet, flinging his arms, his rhetoric, and his control to the winds, alternately abusing Ernest for his youth and demagoguery, and savagely attacking the working class, elaborating its inefficiency and worthlessness.

"For a lawyer, you are the hardest man to keep to a point I ever saw," Ernest began his answer to the tirade. "My youth has nothing to do with what I have enunciated. Nor has the worthlessness of the working class. I charged the capitalist class with having mismanaged society. You have not answered. You have made no attempt to answer. Why? Is it because you have no answer? You are the champion of this whole audience. Every one here, except me, is hanging on your lips for that answer. They are hanging on your lips for that answer because they have no answer themselves. As for me, as I said before, I know that you not only cannot answer, but that you will not attempt an answer."

"This is intolerable!" Colonel Van Gilbert cried out. "This is insult!"

"That you should not answer is intolerable," Ernest replied gravely. "No man can be intellectually insulted. Insult, in its very nature, is emotional. Recover yourself. Give me an intellectual answer to my intellectual charge that the capitalist class has mismanaged society."

Colonel Van Gilbert remained silent, a sullen, superior expression on his face, such as will appear on the face of a man who will not bandy words with a ruffian.

"Do not be downcast," Ernest said. "Take consolation in the fact that no member of your class has ever yet answered that charge." He turned to the other men who were anxious to speak. "And now it's your chance. Fire away, and do not forget that I here challenge you to give the answer that Colonel Van Gilbert has failed to give."

It would be impossible for me to write all that was said in the discussion. I never realized before how many words could be spoken in three short hours. At any rate, it was glorious. The more his opponents grew excited, the more Ernest deliberately excited them. He had an encyclopaedic command of the field of knowledge, and by a word or a phrase, by delicate rapier thrusts, he punctured them. He named the points of their illogic. This was a false syllogism, that conclusion had no connection with the premise, while that next premise was an impostor because it had cunningly hidden in it the conclusion that was being attempted to be proved. This was an error, that was an assumption, and the next was an assertion contrary to ascertained truth as printed in all the text-books.

And so it went. Sometimes he exchanged the rapier for the club and went smashing amongst their thoughts right and left. And always he demanded facts and refused to discuss theories. And his facts made for them a Waterloo. When they attacked the working class, he always retorted, "The pot calling the kettle black; that is no answer to the charge that your own face is dirty." And to one and all he said: "Why have you not answered the charge that your class has mismanaged? You have talked about other things and things concerning other things, but you have not answered. Is it because you have no answer?"

It was at the end of the discussion that Mr. Wickson spoke. He was the only one that was cool, and Ernest treated him with a respect he had not accorded the others.

"No answer is necessary," Mr. Wickson said with slow deliberation. "I have followed the whole discussion with amazement and disgust. I am disgusted with you gentlemen, members of my class. You have behaved like foolish little schoolboys, what with intruding ethics and the thunder of the common politician into such a discussion. You have been outgeneralled and outclassed. You have been very wordy, and all you have done is buzz. You have buzzed like gnats about a bear. Gentlemen, there stands the bear" (he pointed at Ernest), "and your buzzing has only tickled his ears.

"Believe me, the situation is serious. That bear reached out his paws tonight to crush us. He has said there are a million and a half of revolutionists in the United States. That is a fact. He has said that it is their intention to take away from us our governments, our palaces, and all our purpled ease. That, also, is a fact. A change, a great change, is coming in society; but, haply, it may not be the change the bear anticipates. The bear has said that he will crush us. What if we crush the bear?"

The throat-rumble arose in the great room, and man nodded to man with indorsement and certitude. Their faces were set hard. They were fighters, that was certain.

"But not by buzzing will we crush the bear," Mr. Wickson went on coldly and dispassionately. "We will hunt the bear. We will not reply to the bear in words. Our reply shall be couched in terms of lead. We are in power. Nobody will deny it. By virtue of that power we shall remain in power."

He turned suddenly upon Ernest. The moment was dramatic.

"This, then, is our answer. We have no words to waste on you. When you reach out your vaunted strong hands for our palaces and purpled ease, we will show you what strength is. In roar of shell and shrapnel and in whine of machine-guns will our answer be couched.* We will grind you revolutionists down under our heel, and we shall walk upon your faces. The world is ours, we are its lords, and ours it shall remain. As for the host of labor, it has been in the dirt since history began, and I read history aright. And in the dirt it shall remain so long as I and mine and those that come after us have the power. There is the word. It is the king of words — Power. Not God, not Mammon, but Power. Pour it over your tongue till it tingles with it. Power."

* To show the tenor of thought, the following definition is quoted from "The Cynic's Word Book" (1906 A.D.), written by one Ambrose Bierce, an avowed and confirmed misanthrope of the period: "Grapeshot, n. An argument which the future is preparing in answer to the demands of American Socialism."

"I am answered," Ernest said quietly. "It is the only answer that could be given. Power. It is what we of the working class preach. We know, and well we know by bitter experience, that no appeal for the right, for justice, for humanity, can ever touch you. Your hearts are hard as your heels with which you tread upon the faces of the poor. So we have preached power. By the power of our ballots on election day will we take your government away from you — "

"What if you do get a majority, a sweeping majority, on election day?" Mr. Wickson broke in to demand. "Suppose we refuse to turn the government over to you after you have captured it at the ballot-box?"

"That, also, have we considered," Ernest replied. "And we shall give you an answer in terms of lead. Power you have proclaimed the king of words. Very good. Power it shall be. And in the day that we sweep to victory at the ballot-box, and you refuse to turn over to us the government we have constitutionally and peacefully captured, and you demand what we are going to do about it — in that day, I say, we shall answer you; and in roar of shell and shrapnel and in whine of machine-guns shall our answer be couched.

"You cannot escape us. It is true that you have read history aright. It is true that labor has from the beginning of history been in the dirt. And it is equally true that so long as you and yours and those that come after you have power, that labor shall remain in the dirt. I agree with you. I agree with all that you have said. Power will be the arbiter, as it always has been the arbiter. It is a struggle of classes. Just as your class dragged down the old feudal nobility, so shall it be dragged down by my class, the working class. If you will read your biology and your sociology as clearly as you do your history, you will see that this end I have described is inevitable. It does not matter whether it is in one year, ten, or a thousand — your class shall be dragged down. And it shall be done by power. We of the labor hosts have conned that word over till our minds are all a-tingle with it. Power. It is a kingly word."

And so ended the night with the Philomaths.

CHAPTER VI

ADUMBRATIONS

It was about this time that the warnings of coming events began to fall about us thick and fast. Ernest had already questioned father's policy of having socialists and labor leaders at his house, and of openly attending socialist meetings; and father had only laughed at him for his pains. As for myself, I was learning much from this contact with the working-class leaders and thinkers. I was seeing the other side of the shield. I was delighted with the unselfishness and high idealism I encountered, though I was appalled by the vast philosophic and scientific literature of socialism that was opened up to me. I was learning fast, but I learned not fast enough to realize then the peril of our position.

There were warnings, but I did not heed them. For instance, Mrs. Pertonwaithe and Mrs. Wickson exercised tremendous social power in the university town, and from them emanated the sentiment that I was a too-forward and self-assertive young woman with a mischievous penchant for officiousness and interference in other persons' affairs. This I thought no more than natural, considering the part I had played in investigating the case of Jackson's arm. But the effect of such a sentiment, enunciated by two such powerful social arbiters, I underestimated.

True, I noticed a certain aloofness on the part of my general friends, but this I ascribed to the disapproval that was prevalent in my circles of my intended marriage with Ernest. It was not till some time afterward that Ernest pointed out to me clearly that this general attitude of my class was something more than spontaneous, that behind it were the hidden springs of an organized conduct. "You have given shelter to an enemy of your class," he said. "And not alone shelter, for you have given your love, yourself. This is treason to your class. Think not that you will escape being penalized."

But it was before this that father returned one afternoon. Ernest was with me, and we could see that father was angry — philosophically angry. He was rarely really angry; but a certain measure of controlled anger he allowed himself. He called it a tonic. And we could see that he was tonic-angry when he entered the room.

"What do you think?" he demanded. "I had luncheon with Wilcox."

Wilcox was the superannuated president of the university, whose withered mind was stored with generalizations that were young in 1870, and which he had since failed to revise.

"I was invited," father announced. "I was sent for."

He paused, and we waited.

"Oh, it was done very nicely, I'll allow; but I was reprimanded. I! And by that old fossil!"

"I'll wager I know what you were reprimanded for," Ernest said.

"Not in three guesses," father laughed.

"One guess will do," Ernest retorted. "And it won't be a guess. It will be a deduction. You were reprimanded for your private life."

"The very thing!" father cried. "How did you guess?"

"I knew it was coming. I warned you before about it."

"Yes, you did," father meditated. "But I couldn't believe it. At any rate, it is only so much more clinching evidence for my book."

"It is nothing to what will come," Ernest went on, "if you persist in your policy of having these socialists and radicals of all sorts at your house, myself included."

"Just what old Wilcox said. And of all unwarranted things! He said it was in poor taste, utterly profitless, anyway, and not in harmony with university traditions and policy. He said much more of the same vague sort, and I couldn't pin him down to anything specific. I made it pretty awkward for him, and he could only go on repeating himself and telling me how much he honored me, and all the world honored me, as a scientist. It wasn't an agreeable task for him. I could see he didn't like it."

"He was not a free agent," Ernest said. "The leg-bar* is not always worn graciously."

* LEG-BAR — the African slaves were so manacled; also criminals. It was not until the coming of the Brotherhood of Man that the leg-bar passed out of use.

"Yes. I got that much out of him. He said the university needed ever so much more money this year than the state was willing to furnish; and that it must come from wealthy personages who could not but be offended by the swerving of the university from its high ideal of the passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence. When I tried to pin him down to what my home life had to do with swerving the university from its high ideal, he offered me a two years' vacation, on full pay, in Europe, for recreation and research. Of course I couldn't accept it under the circumstances."

"It would have been far better if you had," Ernest said gravely.

"It was a bribe," father protested; and Ernest nodded.

"Also, the beggar said that there was talk, tea-table gossip and so forth, about my daughter being seen in public with so notorious a character as you, and that it was not in keeping with university tone and dignity. Not that he personally objected — oh, no; but that there was talk and that I would understand."

Ernest considered this announcement for a moment, and then said, and his face was very grave, withal there was a sombre wrath in it:

"There is more behind this than a mere university ideal. Somebody has put pressure on President Wilcox."

"Do you think so?" father asked, and his face showed that he was interested rather than frightened.

"I wish I could convey to you the conception that is dimly forming in my own mind," Ernest said. "Never in the history of the world was society in so terrific flux as it is right now. The swift changes in our industrial system are causing equally swift changes in our religious, political, and social structures. An unseen and fearful revolution is taking place in the fibre and structure of society. One can only dimly feel these things. But they are in the air, now, to-day. One can feel the loom of them — things vast, vague, and terrible. My mind recoils from contemplation of what they may crystallize into. You heard Wickson talk the other night. Behind what he said were the same nameless, formless things that I feel. He spoke out of a superconscious apprehension of them."

"You mean . . . ?" father began, then paused.

"I mean that there is a shadow of something colossal and menacing that even now is beginning to fall across the land. Call it the shadow of an oligarchy, if you will; it is the nearest I dare approximate it. What its nature may be I refuse to imagine.* But what I wanted to say was this: You are in a perilous position — a peril that my own fear enhances because I am not able even to measure it. Take my advice and accept the vacation."

* Though, like Everhard, they did not dream of the nature of it, there were men, even before his time, who caught glimpses of the shadow. John C. Calhoun said: "A power has risen up in the government greater than the people

themselves, consisting of many and various and powerful interests, combined into one mass, and held together by the cohesive power of the vast surplus in the banks." And that great humanist, Abraham Lincoln, said, just before his assassination: "I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. . . . Corporations have been enthroned, an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money-power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until the wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed."

"But it would be cowardly," was the protest.

"Not at all. You are an old man. You have done your work in the world, and a great work. Leave the present battle to youth and strength. We young fellows have our work yet to do. Avis will stand by my side in what is to come. She will be your representative in the battle-front."

"But they can't hurt me," father objected. "Thank God I am independent. Oh, I assure you, I know the frightful persecution they can wage on a professor who is economically dependent on his university. But I am independent. I have not been a professor for the sake of my salary. I can get along very comfortably on my own income, and the salary is all they can take away from me."

"But you do not realize," Ernest answered. "If all that I fear be so, your private income, your principal itself, can be taken from you just as easily as your salary."

Father was silent for a few minutes. He was thinking deeply, and I could see the lines of decision forming in his face. At last he spoke.

"I shall not take the vacation." He paused again. "I shall go on with my book.* You may be wrong, but whether you are wrong or right, I shall stand by my guns."

* This book, "Economics and Education," was published in that year. Three copies of it are extant; two at Ardis, and one at Asgard. It dealt, in elaborate detail, with one factor in the persistence of the established, namely, the capitalistic bias of the universities and common schools. It was a logical and crushing indictment of the whole system

> of education that developed in the minds of the students only such ideas as were favorable to the capitalistic regime, to the exclusion of all ideas that were inimical and subversive. The book created a furor, and was promptly suppressed by the Oligarchy.

"All right," Ernest said. "You are travelling the same path that Bishop Morehouse is, and toward a similar smash-up. You'll both be proletarians before you're done with it."

The conversation turned upon the Bishop, and we got Ernest to explain what he had been doing with him.

"He is soul-sick from the journey through hell I have given him. I took him through the homes of a few of our factory workers. I showed him the human wrecks cast aside by the industrial machine, and he listened to their life stories. I took him through the slums of San Francisco, and in drunkenness, prostitution, and criminality he learned a deeper cause than innate depravity. He is very sick, and, worse than that, he has got out of hand. He is too ethical. He has been too severely touched. And, as usual, he is unpractical. He is up in the air with all kinds of ethical delusions and plans for mission work among the cultured. He feels it is his bounden duty to resurrect the ancient spirit of the Church and to deliver its message to the masters. He is overwrought. Sooner or later he is going to break out, and then there's going to be a smash-up. What form it will take I can't even guess. He is a pure, exalted soul, but he is so unpractical. He's beyond me. I can't keep his feet on the earth. And through the air he is rushing on to his Gethsemane. And after this his crucifixion. Such high souls are made for crucifixion."

"And you?" I asked; and beneath my smile was the seriousness of the anxiety of love.

"Not I," he laughed back. "I may be executed, or assassinated, but I shall never be crucified. I am planted too solidly and stolidly upon the earth."

"But why should you bring about the crucifixion of the Bishop?" I asked. "You will not deny that you are the cause of it."

"Why should I leave one comfortable soul in comfort when there are millions in travail and misery?" he demanded back.

"Then why did you advise father to accept the vacation?"

"Because I am not a pure, exalted soul," was the answer. "Because I am solid and stolid and selfish. Because I love you and, like Ruth of old, thy people are my people. As for the Bishop, he has no daughter. Besides, no matter how small the good, nevertheless his little inadequate wail will be productive of some good in the revolution, and every little bit counts."

I could not agree with Ernest. I knew well the noble nature of Bishop Morehouse, and I could not conceive that his voice raised for righteousness would be no more than a little inadequate wail. But I did not yet have the harsh facts of life at my fingers' ends as Ernest had. He saw clearly the futility of the Bishop's great soul, as coming events were soon to show as clearly to me.

It was shortly after this day that Ernest told me, as a good story, the offer he had received from the government, namely, an appointment as United States Commissioner of Labor. I was overjoyed. The salary was comparatively large, and would make safe our marriage. And then it surely was congenial work for Ernest, and, furthermore, my jealous pride in him made me hail the proffered appointment as a recognition of his abilities.

Then I noticed the twinkle in his eyes. He was laughing at me.

"You are not going to . . . to decline?" I quavered.

"It is a bribe," he said. "Behind it is the fine hand of Wickson, and behind him the hands of greater men than he. It is an old trick, old as the class struggle is old — stealing the captains from the army of labor. Poor betrayed labor! If you but knew how many of its leaders have been bought out in similar ways in the past. It is cheaper, so much cheaper, to buy a general than to fight him and his whole army. There was — but I'll not call any names. I'm bitter enough over it as it is. Dear heart, I am a captain of labor. I could not sell out. If for no other reason, the memory of my poor old father and the way he was worked to death would prevent."

The tears were in his eyes, this great, strong hero of mine. He never could forgive the way his father had been malformed — the sordid lies and the petty thefts he had been compelled to, in order to put food in his children's mouths.

"My father was a good man," Ernest once said to me. "The soul of him was good, and yet it was twisted, and maimed, and blunted by the savagery of his life. He was made into a broken-down beast by his masters, the arch-beasts. He should be alive to-day, like your father. He had a strong constitution. But he was caught in the machine and worked to death — for profit. Think of it. For profit — his life blood transmuted into a wine-supper, or a jewelled gewgaw, or some similar sense-orgy of the parasitic and idle rich, his masters, the arch-beasts."

CHAPTER VII

THE BISHOP'S VISION

"The Bishop is out of hand," Ernest wrote me. "He is clear up in the air. Tonight he is going to begin putting to rights this very miserable world of ours. He is going to deliver his message. He has told me so, and I cannot dissuade him. To-night he is chairman of the I.P.H.,* and he will embody his message in his introductory remarks.

* There is no clew to the name of the organization for which these initials stand.

"May I bring you to hear him? Of course, he is foredoomed to futility. It will break your heart — it will break his; but for you it will be an excellent object lesson. You know, dear heart, how proud I am because you love me. And because of that I want you to know my fullest value, I want to redeem, in your eyes, some small measure of my unworthiness. And so it is that my pride desires that you shall know my thinking is correct and right. My views are harsh; the futility of so noble a soul as the Bishop will show you the compulsion for such harshness. So come to-night. Sad though this night's happening will be, I feel that it will but draw you more closely to me."

The I.P.H. held its convention that night in San Francisco.* This convention had been called to consider public immorality and the remedy for it. Bishop Morehouse presided. He was very nervous as he sat on the platform, and I could see the high tension he was under. By his side were Bishop Dickinson; H. H. Jones, the head of the ethical department in the University of California; Mrs. W. W. Hurd, the great charity organizer; Philip Ward, the equally great philanthropist; and several lesser luminaries in the field of morality and charity. Bishop Morehouse arose and abruptly began:

* It took but a few minutes to cross by ferry from Berkeley to San Francisco. These, and the other bay cities, practically composed one community.

"I was in my brougham, driving through the streets. It was night-time. Now and then I looked through the carriage windows, and suddenly my eyes seemed to be opened, and I saw things as they really are. At first I covered my eyes with my hands to shut out the awful sight, and then, in the darkness, the question came to me: What is to be done? What is to be done? A little later the question came to me in another way: What would the Master do? And with the question a great light seemed to fill the place, and I saw my duty sun-clear, as Saul saw his on the way to Damascus.

"I stopped the carriage, got out, and, after a few minutes' conversation, persuaded two of the public women to get into the brougham with me. If Jesus was right, then these two unfortunates were my sisters, and the only hope of their purification was in my affection and tenderness.

"I live in one of the loveliest localities of San Francisco. The house in which I live cost a hundred thousand dollars, and its furnishings, books, and works of art cost as much more. The house is a mansion. No, it is a palace, wherein there are many servants. I never knew what palaces were good for. I had thought they were to live in. But now I know. I took the two women of the street to my palace, and they are going to stay with me. I hope to fill every room in my palace with such sisters as they."

The audience had been growing more and more restless and unsettled, and the faces of those that sat on the platform had been betraying greater and greater dismay and consternation. And at this point Bishop Dickinson arose, and with an expression of disgust on his face, fled from the platform and the hall. But Bishop Morehouse, oblivious to all, his eyes filled with his vision, continued:

"Oh, sisters and brothers, in this act of mine I find the solution of all my difficulties. I didn't know what broughams were made for, but now I know. They are made to carry the weak, the sick, and the aged; they are made to show honor to those who have lost the sense even of shame.

"I did not know what palaces were made for, but now I have found a use for them. The palaces of the Church should be hospitals and nurseries for those who have fallen by the wayside and are perishing."

He made a long pause, plainly overcome by the thought that was in him, and nervous how best to express it.

"I am not fit, dear brethren, to tell you anything about morality. I have lived in shame and hypocrisies too long to be able to help others; but my action with those women, sisters of mine, shows me that the better way is easy to find. To those who believe in Jesus and his gospel there can be no other relation between man and man than the relation of affection. Love alone is stronger than sin — stronger than death. I therefore say to the rich among you that it is their duty to do what I have done and am doing. Let each one of you who is prosperous take into his house some thief and treat him as his brother, some unfortunate and treat her as his sister, and San Francisco will need no police force and no magistrates; the prisons will be turned into hospitals, and the criminal will disappear with his crime.

"We must give ourselves and not our money alone. We must do as Christ did; that is the message of the Church today. We have wandered far from the Master's teaching. We are consumed in our own flesh-pots. We have put mammon in the place of Christ. I have here a poem that tells the whole story. I should like to read it to you. It was written by an erring soul who yet saw clearly.* It must not be mistaken for an attack upon the Catholic Church. It is an attack upon all churches, upon the pomp and splendor of all churches that have wandered from the Master's path and hedged themselves in from his lambs. Here it is:

"The silver trumpets rang across the Dome;
    The people knelt upon the ground with awe;
    And borne upon the necks of men I saw,
Like some great God, the Holy Lord of Rome.

"Priest-like, he wore a robe more white than foam,
    And, king-like, swathed himself in royal red,
    Three crowns of gold rose high upon his head;
In splendor and in light the Pope passed home.

"My heart stole back across wide wastes of years
    To One who wandered by a lonely sea;
And sought in vain for any place of rest:
'Foxes have holes, and every bird its nest,
    I, only I, must wander wearily,
And bruise my feet, and drink wine salt with tears.'"

* Oscar Wilde, one of the lords of language of the nineteenth century of the Christian Era.

The audience was agitated, but unresponsive. Yet Bishop Morehouse was not aware of it. He held steadily on his way.

"And so I say to the rich among you, and to all the rich, that bitterly you oppress the Master's lambs. You have hardened your hearts. You have closed your ears to the voices that are crying in the land — the voices of pain and sorrow that you will not hear but that some day will be heard. And so I say — ”

But at this point H. H. Jones and Philip Ward, who had already risen from their chairs, led the Bishop off the platform, while the audience sat breathless and shocked.

Ernest laughed harshly and savagely when he had gained the street. His laughter jarred upon me. My heart seemed ready to burst with suppressed tears.

“He has delivered his message,” Ernest cried. “The manhood and the deep-hidden, tender nature of their Bishop burst out, and his Christian audience, that loved him, concluded that he was crazy! Did you see them leading him so solicitously from the platform? There must have been laughter in hell at the spectacle.”

“Nevertheless, it will make a great impression, what the Bishop did and said to-night,” I said.

“Think so?” Ernest queried mockingly.

“It will make a sensation,” I asserted. “Didn’t you see the reporters scribbling like mad while he was speaking?”

“Not a line of which will appear in to-morrow’s papers.”

“I can’t believe it,” I cried.

“Just wait and see,” was the answer. “Not a line, not a thought that he uttered. The daily press? The daily suppressage!”

“But the reporters,” I objected. “I saw them.”

“Not a word that he uttered will see print. You have forgotten the editors. They draw their salaries for the policy they maintain. Their policy is to print nothing that is a vital menace to the established. The Bishop’s utterance was a violent assault upon the established morality. It was heresy. They led him from the platform to prevent him from uttering more heresy. The newspapers will purge his heresy in the oblivion of silence. The press of the United States? It is a parasitic growth that battens on the capitalist class. Its function is to serve the established by moulding public opinion, and right well it serves it.

“Let me prophesy. To-morrow’s papers will merely mention that the Bishop is in poor health, that he has been working too hard, and that he broke down last night. The next mention, some days hence, will be to the effect that he is suffering from nervous prostration and has been given a vacation by his grateful flock. After that, one of two things will happen:

either the Bishop will see the error of his way and return from his vacation a well man in whose eyes there are no more visions, or else he will persist in his madness, and then you may expect to see in the papers, couched pathetically and tenderly, the announcement of his insanity. After that he will be left to gibber his visions to padded walls."

"Now there you go too far!" I cried out.

"In the eyes of society it will truly be insanity," he replied. "What honest man, who is not insane, would take lost women and thieves into his house to dwell with him sisterly and brotherly? True, Christ died between two thieves, but that is another story. Insanity? The mental processes of the man with whom one disagrees, are always wrong. Therefore the mind of the man is wrong. Where is the line between wrong mind and insane mind? It is inconceivable that any sane man can radically disagree with one's most sane conclusions.

"There is a good example of it in this evening's paper. Mary McKenna lives south of Market Street. She is a poor but honest woman. She is also patriotic. But she has erroneous ideas concerning the American flag and the protection it is supposed to symbolize. And here's what happened to her. Her husband had an accident and was laid up in hospital three months. In spite of taking in washing, she got behind in her rent. Yesterday they evicted her. But first, she hoisted an American flag, and from under its folds she announced that by virtue of its protection they could not turn her out on to the cold street. What was done? She was arrested and arraigned for insanity. To-day she was examined by the regular insanity experts. She was found insane. She was consigned to the Napa Asylum."

"But that is far-fetched," I objected. "Suppose I should disagree with everybody about the literary style of a book. They wouldn't send me to an asylum for that."

"Very true," he replied. "But such divergence of opinion would constitute no menace to society. Therein lies the difference. The divergence of opinion on the parts of Mary McKenna and the Bishop do menace society. What if all the poor people should refuse to pay rent and shelter themselves under the American flag? Landlordism would go crumbling. The Bishop's views are just as perilous to society. Ergo, to the asylum with him."

But still I refused to believe.

"Wait and see," Ernest said, and I waited.

Next morning I sent out for all the papers. So far Ernest was right. Not a word that Bishop Morehouse had uttered was in print. Mention was made in one or two of the papers that he had been overcome by his feelings. Yet the platitudes of the speakers that followed him were reported at length.

Several days later the brief announcement was made that he had gone away on a vacation to recover from the effects of overwork. So far so good, but there had been no hint of insanity, nor even of nervous collapse. Little did I dream the terrible road the Bishop was destined to travel — the Gethsemane and crucifixion that Ernest had pondered about.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MACHINE BREAKERS

It was just before Ernest ran for Congress, on the socialist ticket, that father gave what he privately called his “Profit and Loss” dinner. Ernest called it the dinner of the Machine Breakers. In point of fact, it was merely a dinner for business men — small business men, of course. I doubt if one of them was interested in any business the total capitalization of which exceeded a couple of hundred thousand dollars. They were truly representative middle-class business men.

There was Owen, of Silverberg, Owen & Company — a large grocery firm with several branch stores. We bought our groceries from them. There were both partners of the big drug firm of Kowalt & Washburn, and Mr. Asmunsen, the owner of a large granite quarry in Contra Costa County. And there were many similar men, owners or part-owners in small factories, small businesses and small industries — small capitalists, in short.

They were shrewd-faced, interesting men, and they talked with simplicity and clearness. Their unanimous complaint was against the corporations and trusts. Their creed was, “Bust the Trusts.” All oppression originated in the trusts, and one and all told the same tale of woe. They advocated government ownership of such trusts as the railroads and telegraphs, and excessive income taxes, graduated with ferocity, to destroy large accumulations. Likewise they advocated, as a cure for local ills, municipal ownership of such public utilities as water, gas, telephones, and street railways.

Especially interesting was Mr. Asmunsen’s narrative of his tribulations as a quarry owner. He confessed that he never made any profits out of his quarry, and this, in spite of the enormous volume of business that had been caused by the destruction of San Francisco by the big earthquake. For six years the rebuilding of San Francisco had been going on, and his business had quadrupled and octupled, and yet he was no better off.

“The railroad knows my business just a little bit better than I do,” he said. “It knows my operating expenses to a cent, and it knows the terms of my contracts. How it knows these things I can only guess. It must have spies in my employ, and it must have access to the parties to all my contracts. For look you, when I place a big contract, the terms of which favor me a goodly profit, the freight rate from my quarry to market is promptly raised. No explanation is made. The railroad gets my profit. Under such circumstances I have never succeeded in getting the railroad to reconsider its raise. On the other hand, when there have been accidents, increased expenses of operating, or contracts with less profitable terms, I have always succeeded in getting the railroad to lower its rate. What is the result? Large or small, the railroad always gets my profits."

"What remains to you over and above," Ernest interrupted to ask, "would roughly be the equivalent of your salary as a manager did the railroad own the quarry."

"The very thing," Mr. Asmunsen replied. "Only a short time ago I had my books gone through for the past ten years. I discovered that for those ten years my gain was just equivalent to a manager's salary. The railroad might just as well have owned my quarry and hired me to run it."

"But with this difference," Ernest laughed; "the railroad would have had to assume all the risk which you so obligingly assumed for it."

"Very true," Mr. Asmunsen answered sadly.

Having let them have they say, Ernest began asking questions right and left. He began with Mr. Owen.

"You started a branch store here in Berkeley about six months ago?"

"Yes," Mr. Owen answered.

"And since then I've noticed that three little corner groceries have gone out of business. Was your branch store the cause of it?"

Mr. Owen affirmed with a complacent smile. "They had no chance against us."

"Why not?"

"We had greater capital. With a large business there is always less waste and greater efficiency."

"And your branch store absorbed the profits of the three small ones. I see. But tell me, what became of the owners of the three stores?"

"One is driving a delivery wagon for us. I don't know what happened to the other two."

Ernest turned abruptly on Mr. Kowalt.

"You sell a great deal at cut-rates.* What have become of the owners of the small drug stores that you forced to the wall?"

---

* A lowering of selling price to cost, and even to less than cost. Thus, a large company could sell at a loss for a

longer period than a small company, and so drive the small company out of business. A common device of competition.

“One of them, Mr. Haasfurther, has charge now of our prescription department,” was the answer.

“And you absorbed the profits they had been making?”

“Surely. That is what we are in business for.”

“And you?” Ernest said suddenly to Mr. Asmunsen. “You are disgusted because the railroad has absorbed your profits?”

Mr. Asmunsen nodded.

“What you want is to make profits yourself?”

Again Mr. Asmunsen nodded.

“Out of others?”

There was no answer.

“Out of others?” Ernest insisted.

“That is the way profits are made,” Mr. Asmunsen replied curtly.

“Then the business game is to make profits out of others, and to prevent others from making profits out of you. That’s it, isn’t it?”

Ernest had to repeat his question before Mr. Asmunsen gave an answer, and then he said:

“Yes, that’s it, except that we do not object to the others making profits so long as they are not extortionate.”

“By extortionate you mean large; yet you do not object to making large profits yourself? . . . Surely not?”

And Mr. Asmunsen amiably confessed to the weakness. There was one other man who was quizzed by Ernest at this juncture, a Mr. Calvin, who had once been a great dairy-owner.

“Some time ago you were fighting the Milk Trust,” Ernest said to him; “and now you are in Grange politics.* How did it happen?”

“Oh, I haven’t quit the fight,” Mr. Calvin answered, and he looked belligerent enough. “I’m fighting the Trust on the only field where it is possible to fight — the political field. Let me show you. A few years ago we dairymen had everything our own way.”

“But you competed among yourselves?” Ernest interrupted.

* Many efforts were made during this period to organize the perishing farmer class into a political party, the aim of which was destroy the trusts and corporations by drastic legislation. All such attempts ended in failure.

“Yes, that was what kept the profits down. We did try to organize, but independent dairymen always broke through us. Then came the Milk Trust.”

“Financed by surplus capital from Standard Oil,”* Ernest said.

* The first successful great trust — almost a generation in advance of the rest.

“Yes,” Mr. Calvin acknowledged. “But we did not know it at the time. Its agents approached us with a club. “Come in and be fat,” was their proposition, “or stay out and starve.” Most of us came in. Those that didn’t, starved. Oh, it paid us . . . at first. Milk was raised a cent a quart. One-quarter of this cent came to us. Three-quarters of it went to the Trust. Then milk was raised another cent, only we didn’t get any of that cent. Our complaints were useless. The Trust was in control. We discovered that we were pawns. Finally, the additional quarter of a cent was denied us. Then the Trust began to squeeze us out. What could we do? We were squeezed out. There were no dairymen, only a Milk Trust.”

“But with milk two cents higher, I should think you could have competed,” Ernest suggested slyly.

“So we thought. We tried it.” Mr. Calvin paused a moment. “It broke us. The Trust could put milk upon the market more cheaply than we. It could sell still at a slight profit when we were selling at actual loss. I dropped fifty thousand dollars in that venture. Most of us went bankrupt.* The dairymen were wiped out of existence.”

* Bankruptcy — a peculiar institution that enabled an individual, who had failed in competitive industry, to forego paying his debts. The effect was to ameliorate the too savage conditions of the fang-and-claw social struggle.

“So the Trust took your profits away from you,” Ernest said, “and you’ve gone into politics in order to legislate the Trust out of existence and get the profits back?”

Mr. Calvin’s face lighted up. “That is precisely what I say in my speeches to the farmers. That’s our whole idea in a nutshell.”

“And yet the Trust produces milk more cheaply than could the independent dairymen?” Ernest queried.

“Why shouldn’t it, with the splendid organization and new machinery its large capital makes possible?”

“There is no discussion,” Ernest answered. “It certainly should, and, furthermore, it does.”

Mr. Calvin here launched out into a political speech in exposition of his views. He was warmly followed by a number of the others, and the cry of all was to destroy the trusts.

"Poor simple folk," Ernest said to me in an undertone. "They see clearly as far as they see, but they see only to the ends of their noses."

A little later he got the floor again, and in his characteristic way controlled it for the rest of the evening.

"I have listened carefully to all of you," he began, "and I see plainly that you play the business game in the orthodox fashion. Life sums itself up to you in profits. You have a firm and abiding belief that you were created for the sole purpose of making profits. Only there is a hitch. In the midst of your own profit-making along comes the trust and takes your profits away from you. This is a dilemma that interferes somehow with the aim of creation, and the only way out, as it seems to you, is to destroy that which takes from you your profits.

"I have listened carefully, and there is only one name that will epitomize you. I shall call you that name. You are machine-breakers. Do you know what a machine-breaker is? Let me tell you. In the eighteenth century, in England, men and women wove cloth on hand-looms in their own cottages. It was a slow, clumsy, and costly way of weaving cloth, this cottage system of manufacture. Along came the steam-engine and labor-saving machinery. A thousand looms assembled in a large factory, and driven by a central engine wove cloth vastly more cheaply than could the cottage weavers on their hand-looms. Here in the factory was combination, and before it competition faded away. The men and women who had worked the hand-looms for themselves now went into the factories and worked the machine-looms, not for themselves, but for the capitalist owners. Furthermore, little children went to work on the machine-looms, at lower wages, and displaced the men. This made hard times for the men. Their standard of living fell. They starved. And they said it was all the fault of the machines. Therefore, they proceeded to break the machines. They did not succeed, and they were very stupid.

"Yet you have not learned their lesson. Here are you, a century and a half later, trying to break machines. By your own confession the trust machines do the work more efficiently and more cheaply than you can. That is why you cannot compete with them. And yet you would break those machines.

You are even more stupid than the stupid workmen of England. And while you maunder about restoring competition, the trusts go on destroying you.

"One and all you tell the same story, — the passing away of competition and the coming on of combination. You, Mr. Owen, destroyed competition here in Berkeley when your branch store drove the three small groceries out of business. Your combination was more effective. Yet you feel the pressure of other combinations on you, the trust combinations, and you cry out. It is because you are not a trust. If you were a grocery trust for the whole United States, you would be singing another song. And the song would be, 'Blessed are the trusts.' And yet again, not only is your small combination not a trust, but you are aware yourself of its lack of strength. You are beginning to divine your own end. You feel yourself and your branch stores a pawn in the game. You see the powerful interests rising and growing more powerful day by day; you feel their mailed hands descending upon your profits and taking a pinch here and a pinch there — the railroad trust, the oil trust, the steel trust, the coal trust; and you know that in the end they will destroy you, take away from you the last per cent of your little profits.

"You, sir, are a poor gamester. When you squeezed out the three small groceries here in Berkeley by virtue of your superior combination, you swelled out your chest, talked about efficiency and enterprise, and sent your wife to Europe on the profits you had gained by eating up the three small groceries. It is dog eat dog, and you ate them up. But, on the other hand, you are being eaten up in turn by the bigger dogs, wherefore you squeal. And what I say to you is true of all of you at this table. You are all squealing. You are all playing the losing game, and you are all squealing about it.

"But when you squeal you don't state the situation flatly, as I have stated it. You don't say that you like to squeeze profits out of others, and that you are making all the row because others are squeezing your profits out of you. No, you are too cunning for that. You say something else. You make small-capitalist political speeches such as Mr. Calvin made. What did he say? Here are a few of his phrases I caught: 'Our original principles are all right,' 'What this country requires is a return to fundamental American methods — free opportunity for all,' 'The spirit of liberty in which this nation was born,' 'Let us return to the principles of our forefathers.'

"When he says 'free opportunity for all,' he means free opportunity to squeeze profits, which freedom of opportunity is now denied him by the great trusts. And the absurd thing about it is that you have repeated these phrases so often that you believe them. You want opportunity to plunder your fellow-men in your own small way, but you hypnotize yourselves into thinking you want freedom. You are piggish and acquisitive, but the magic of your phrases leads you to believe that you are patriotic. Your desire for profits, which is sheer selfishness, you metamorphose into altruistic solicitude for suffering humanity. Come on now, right here amongst ourselves, and be honest for once. Look the matter in the face and state it in direct terms."

There were flushed and angry faces at the table, and withal a measure of awe. They were a little frightened at this smooth-faced young fellow, and the swing and smash of his words, and his dreadful trait of calling a spade a spade. Mr. Calvin promptly replied.

"And why not?" he demanded. "Why can we not return to ways of our fathers when this republic was founded? You have spoken much truth, Mr. Everhard, unpalatable though it has been. But here amongst ourselves let us speak out. Let us throw off all disguise and accept the truth as Mr. Everhard has flatly stated it. It is true that we smaller capitalists are after profits, and that the trusts are taking our profits away from us. It is true that we want to destroy the trusts in order that our profits may remain to us. And why can we not do it? Why not? I say, why not?"

"Ah, now we come to the gist of the matter," Ernest said with a pleased expression. "I'll try to tell you why not, though the telling will be rather hard. You see, you fellows have studied business, in a small way, but you have not studied social evolution at all. You are in the midst of a transition stage now in economic evolution, but you do not understand it, and that's what causes all the confusion. Why cannot you return? Because you can't. You can no more make water run up hill than can you cause the tide of economic evolution to flow back in its channel along the way it came. Joshua made the sun stand still upon Gibeon, but you would outdo Joshua. You would make the sun go backward in the sky. You would have time retrace its steps from noon to morning.

"In the face of labor-saving machinery, of organized production, of the increased efficiency of combination, you would set the economic sun back a whole generation or so to the time when there were no great capitalists, no great machinery, no railroads — a time when a host of little capitalists warred with each other in economic anarchy, and when production was primitive, wasteful, unorganized, and costly. Believe me, Joshua's task was easier, and he had Jehovah to help him. But God has forsaken you small capitalists. The sun of the small capitalists is setting. It will never rise again. Nor is it in your power even to make it stand still. You are perishing, and you are doomed to perish utterly from the face of society.

"This is the fiat of evolution. It is the word of God. Combination is stronger than competition. Primitive man was a puny creature hiding in the crevices of the rocks. He combined and made war upon his carnivorous enemies. They were competitive beasts. Primitive man was a combinative beast, and because of it he rose to primacy over all the animals. And man has been achieving greater and greater combinations ever since. It is combination versus competition, a thousand centuries long struggle, in which competition has always been worsted. Whoso enlists on the side of competition perishes."

"But the trusts themselves arose out of competition," Mr. Calvin interrupted.

"Very true," Ernest answered. "And the trusts themselves destroyed competition. That, by your own word, is why you are no longer in the dairy business."

The first laughter of the evening went around the table, and even Mr. Calvin joined in the laugh against himself.

"And now, while we are on the trusts," Ernest went on, "let us settle a few things. I shall make certain statements, and if you disagree with them, speak up. Silence will mean agreement. Is it not true that a machine-loom will weave more cloth and weave more cheaply than a hand-loom?" He paused, but nobody spoke up. "Is it not then highly irrational to break the machine-loom and go back to the clumsy and more costly hand-loom method of weaving?" Heads nodded in acquiescence. "Is it not true that that known as a trust produces more efficiently and cheaply than can a thousand competing small concerns?" Still no one objected. "Then is it not irrational to destroy that cheap and efficient combination?"

No one answered for a long time. Then Mr. Kowalt spoke.

"What are we to do, then?" he demanded. "To destroy the trusts is the only way we can see to escape their domination."

Ernest was all fire and aliveness on the instant.

"I'll show you another way!" he cried. "Let us not destroy those wonderful machines that produce efficiently and cheaply. Let us control them. Let us profit by their efficiency and cheapness. Let us run them for ourselves. Let us oust the present owners of the wonderful machines, and let us own the wonderful machines ourselves. That, gentlemen, is socialism, a greater combination than the trusts, a greater economic and social combination than any that has as yet appeared on the planet. It is in line with evolution. We meet combination with greater combination. It is the winning side. Come on over with us socialists and play on the winning side."

Here arose dissent. There was a shaking of heads, and mutterings arose.

"All right, then, you prefer to be anachronisms," Ernest laughed. "You prefer to play atavistic roles. You are doomed to perish as all atavisms perish. Have you ever asked what will happen to you when greater combinations than even the present trusts arise? Have you ever considered where you will stand when the great trusts themselves combine into the combination of combinations — into the social, economic, and political trust?"

He turned abruptly and irrelevantly upon Mr. Calvin.

"Tell me," Ernest said, "if this is not true. You are compelled to form a new political party because the old parties are in the hands of the trusts. The chief obstacle to your Grange propaganda is the trusts. Behind every obstacle you encounter, every blow that smites you, every defeat that you receive, is the hand of the trusts. Is this not so? Tell me."

Mr. Calvin sat in uncomfortable silence.

"Go ahead," Ernest encouraged.

"It is true," Mr. Calvin confessed. "We captured the state legislature of Oregon and put through splendid protective legislation, and it was vetoed by the governor, who was a creature of the trusts. We elected a governor of Colorado, and the legislature refused to permit him to take office. Twice we have passed a national income tax, and each time the supreme court smashed it as unconstitutional. The courts are in the hands of the trusts. We, the people, do not pay our judges sufficiently. But there will come a time —"

"When the combination of the trusts will control all legislation, when the combination of the trusts will itself be the government," Ernest interrupted.

"Never! never!" were the cries that arose. Everybody was excited and belligerent.

"Tell me," Ernest demanded, "what will you do when such a time comes?"

"We will rise in our strength!" Mr. Asmunsen cried, and many voices backed his decision.

"That will be civil war," Ernest warned them.

"So be it, civil war," was Mr. Asmunsen's answer, with the cries of all the men at the table behind him. "We have not forgotten the deeds of our forefathers. For our liberties we are ready to fight and die."

Ernest smiled.

"Do not forget," he said, "that we had tacitly agreed that liberty in your case, gentlemen, means liberty to squeeze profits out of others."

The table was angry, now, fighting angry; but Ernest controlled the tumult and made himself heard.

"One more question. When you rise in your strength, remember, the reason for your rising will be that the government is in the hands of the trusts. Therefore, against your strength the government will turn the regular army, the navy, the militia, the police — in short, the whole organized war machinery of the United States. Where will your strength be then?"

Dismay sat on their faces, and before they could recover, Ernest struck again.

"Do you remember, not so long ago, when our regular army was only fifty thousand? Year by year it has been increased until to-day it is three hundred thousand."

Again he struck.

"Nor is that all. While you diligently pursued that favorite phantom of yours, called profits, and moralized about that favorite fetich of yours, called competition, even greater and more direful things have been accomplished by combination. There is the militia."

"It is our strength!" cried Mr. Kowalt. "With it we would repel the invasion of the regular army."

"You would go into the militia yourself," was Ernest's retort, "and be sent to Maine, or Florida, or the Philippines, or anywhere else, to drown in blood your own comrades civil-warring for their liberties. While from Kansas, or Wisconsin, or any other state, your own comrades would go into the militia and come here to California to drown in blood your own civil-warring."

Now they were really shocked, and they sat wordless, until Mr. Owen murmured:

“We would not go into the militia. That would settle it. We would not be so foolish.”

Ernest laughed outright.

“You do not understand the combination that has been effected. You could not help yourself. You would be drafted into the militia.”

“There is such a thing as civil law,” Mr. Owen insisted.

“Not when the government suspends civil law. In that day when you speak of rising in your strength, your strength would be turned against yourself. Into the militia you would go, willy-nilly. Habeas corpus, I heard some one mutter just now. Instead of habeas corpus you would get post mortems. If you refused to go into the militia, or to obey after you were in, you would be tried by drumhead court martial and shot down like dogs. It is the law.”

“It is not the law!” Mr. Calvin asserted positively. “There is no such law. Young man, you have dreamed all this. Why, you spoke of sending the militia to the Philippines. That is unconstitutional. The Constitution especially states that the militia cannot be sent out of the country.”

“What’s the Constitution got to do with it?” Ernest demanded. “The courts interpret the Constitution, and the courts, as Mr. Asmunsen agreed, are the creatures of the trusts. Besides, it is as I have said, the law. It has been the law for years, for nine years, gentlemen.”

“That we can be drafted into the militia?” Mr. Calvin asked incredulously. “That they can shoot us by drumhead court martial if we refuse?”

“Yes,” Ernest answered, “precisely that.”

“How is it that we have never heard of this law?” my father asked, and I could see that it was likewise new to him.

“For two reasons,” Ernest said. “First, there has been no need to enforce it. If there had, you’d have heard of it soon enough. And secondly, the law was rushed through Congress and the Senate secretly, with practically no discussion. Of course, the newspapers made no mention of it. But we socialists knew about it. We published it in our papers. But you never read our papers.”

“I still insist you are dreaming,” Mr. Calvin said stubbornly. “The country would never have permitted it.”

“But the country did permit it,” Ernest replied. “And as for my dreaming — ” he put his hand in his pocket and drew out a small pamphlet — ”tell me if this looks like dream-stuff.”

He opened it and began to read:

“‘Section One, be it enacted, and so forth and so forth, that the militia shall consist of every able-bodied male citizen of the respective states, territories, and District of Columbia, who is more than eighteen and less than forty-five years of age.’

“‘Section Seven, that any officer or enlisted man’ — remember Section One, gentlemen, you are all enlisted men — ’that any enlisted man of the militia who shall refuse or neglect to present himself to such mustering officer upon being called forth as herein prescribed, shall be subject to trial by court martial, and shall be punished as such court martial shall direct.’

“‘Section Eight, that courts martial, for the trial of officers or men of the militia, shall be composed of militia officers only.’

“‘Section Nine, that the militia, when called into the actual service of the United States, shall be subject to the same rules and articles of war as the regular troops of the United States.’

“There you are gentlemen, American citizens, and fellow-militiamen. Nine years ago we socialists thought that law was aimed against labor. But it would seem that it was aimed against you, too. Congressman Wiley, in the brief discussion that was permitted, said that the bill ‘provided for a reserve force to take the mob by the throat’ — you’re the mob, gentlemen — ’and protect at all hazards life, liberty, and property.’ And in the time to come, when you rise in your strength, remember that you will be rising against the property of the trusts, and the liberty of the trusts, according to the law, to squeeze you. Your teeth are pulled, gentlemen. Your claws are trimmed. In the day you rise in your strength, toothless and clawless, you will be as harmless as any army of clams.”

“I don’t believe it!” Kowalt cried. “There is no such law. It is a canard got up by you socialists.”

“This bill was introduced in the House of Representatives on July 30, 1902,” was the reply. “It was introduced by Representative Dick of Ohio. It was rushed through. It was passed unanimously by the Senate on January 14, 1903. And just seven days afterward was approved by the President of the United States.”*

* Everhard was right in the essential particulars, though

his date of the introduction of the bill is in error. The bill was introduced on June 30, and not on July 30. The Congressional Record is here in Ardis, and a reference to it shows mention of the bill on the following dates: June 30, December 9, 15, 16, and 17, 1902, and January 7 and 14, 1903. The ignorance evidenced by the business men at the dinner was nothing unusual. Very few people knew of the existence of this law. E. Untermann, a revolutionist, in July, 1903, published a pamphlet at Girard, Kansas, on the "Militia Bill." This pamphlet had a small circulation among workingmen; but already had the segregation of classes proceeded so far, that the members of the middle class never heard of the pamphlet at all, and so remained in ignorance of the law.

CHAPTER IX

THE MATHEMATICS OF A DREAM

In the midst of the consternation his revelation had produced, Ernest began again to speak.

"You have said, a dozen of you to-night, that socialism is impossible. You have asserted the impossible, now let me demonstrate the inevitable. Not only is it inevitable that you small capitalists shall pass away, but it is inevitable that the large capitalists, and the trusts also, shall pass away. Remember, the tide of evolution never flows backward. It flows on and on, and it flows from competition to combination, and from little combination to large combination, and from large combination to colossal combination, and it flows on to socialism, which is the most colossal combination of all.

"You tell me that I dream. Very good. I'll give you the mathematics of my dream; and here, in advance, I challenge you to show that my mathematics are wrong. I shall develop the inevitability of the breakdown of the capitalist system, and I shall demonstrate mathematically why it must break down. Here goes, and bear with me if at first I seem irrelevant.

"Let us, first of all, investigate a particular industrial process, and whenever I state something with which you disagree, please interrupt me. Here is a shoe factory. This factory takes leather and makes it into shoes. Here is one hundred dollars' worth of leather. It goes through the factory and comes out in the form of shoes, worth, let us say, two hundred dollars. What has happened? One hundred dollars has been added to the value of the leather. How was it added? Let us see.

"Capital and labor added this value of one hundred dollars. Capital furnished the factory, the machines, and paid all the expenses. Labor furnished labor. By the joint effort of capital and labor one hundred dollars of value was added. Are you all agreed so far?"

Heads nodded around the table in affirmation.

"Labor and capital having produced this one hundred dollars, now proceed to divide it. The statistics of this division are fractional; so let us, for the sake of convenience, make them roughly approximate. Capital takes fifty dollars as its share, and labor gets in wages fifty dollars as its share. We will not enter into the squabbling over the division.* No matter how much squabbling takes place, in one percentage or another the division is arranged. And take notice here, that what is true of this particular industrial process is true of all industrial processes. Am I right?"

* Everhard here clearly develops the cause of all the labor troubles of that time. In the division of the joint-product, capital wanted all it could get, and labor wanted all it could get. This quarrel over the division was irreconcilable. So long as the system of capitalistic production existed, labor and capital continued to quarrel over the division of the joint-product. It is a ludicrous spectacle to us, but we must not forget that we have seven centuries' advantage over those that lived in that time.

Again the whole table agreed with Ernest.

"Now, suppose labor, having received its fifty dollars, wanted to buy back shoes. It could only buy back fifty dollars' worth. That's clear, isn't it?

"And now we shift from this particular process to the sum total of all industrial processes in the United States, which includes the leather itself, raw material, transportation, selling, everything. We will say, for the sake of round figures, that the total production of wealth in the United States is one year is four billion dollars. Then labor has received in wages, during the same period, two billion dollars. Four billion dollars has been produced. How much of this can labor buy back? Two billions. There is no discussion of this, I am sure. For that matter, my percentages are mild. Because of a thousand capitalistic devices, labor cannot buy back even half of the total product.

"But to return. We will say labor buys back two billions. Then it stands to reason that labor can consume only two billions. There are still two billions to be accounted for, which labor cannot buy back and consume."

"Labor does not consume its two billions, even," Mr. Kowalt spoke up. "If it did, it would not have any deposits in the savings banks."

"Labor's deposits in the savings banks are only a sort of reserve fund that is consumed as fast as it accumulates. These deposits are saved for old age, for sickness and accident, and for funeral expenses. The savings bank deposit is simply a piece of the loaf put back on the shelf to be eaten next day. No, labor consumes all of the total product that its wages will buy back.

"Two billions are left to capital. After it has paid its expenses, does it consume the remainder? Does capital consume all of its two billions?"

Ernest stopped and put the question point blank to a number of the men. They shook their heads.

"I don't know," one of them frankly said.

"Of course you do," Ernest went on. "Stop and think a moment. If capital consumed its share, the sum total of capital could not increase. It would remain constant. If you will look at the economic history of the United States, you will see that the sum total of capital has continually increased. Therefore capital does not consume its share. Do you remember when England owned so much of our railroad bonds? As the years went by, we bought back those bonds. What does that mean? That part of capital's unconsumed share bought back the bonds. What is the meaning of the fact that to-day the capitalists of the United States own hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of Mexican bonds, Russian bonds, Italian bonds, Grecian bonds? The meaning is that those hundreds and hundreds of millions were part of capital's share which capital did not consume. Furthermore, from the very beginning of the capitalist system, capital has never consumed all of its share.

"And now we come to the point. Four billion dollars of wealth is produced in one year in the United States. Labor buys back and consumes two billions. Capital does not consume the remaining two billions. There is a large balance left over unconsumed. What is done with this balance? What can be done with it? Labor cannot consume any of it, for labor has already spent all its wages. Capital will not consume this balance, because, already, according to its nature, it has consumed all it can. And still remains the balance. What can be done with it? What is done with it?"

"It is sold abroad," Mr. Kowalt volunteered.

"The very thing," Ernest agreed. "Because of this balance arises our need for a foreign market. This is sold abroad. It has to be sold abroad. There is no other way of getting rid of it. And that unconsumed surplus, sold abroad, becomes what we call our favorable balance of trade. Are we all agreed so far?"

"Surely it is a waste of time to elaborate these A B C's of commerce," Mr. Calvin said tartly. "We all understand them."

"And it is by these A B C's I have so carefully elaborated that I shall confound you," Ernest retorted. "There's the beauty of it. And I'm going to confound you with them right now. Here goes.

"The United States is a capitalist country that has developed its resources. According to its capitalist system of industry, it has an unconsumed surplus that must be got rid of, and that must be got rid of abroad.* What is true of the United States is true of every other capitalist country with developed resources. Every one of such countries has an unconsumed surplus. Don't forget that they have already traded with one another, and that these surpluses yet remain. Labor in all these countries has spent it wages, and cannot buy any of the surpluses. Capital in all these countries has already consumed all it is able according to its nature. And still remain the surpluses. They cannot dispose of these surpluses to one another. How are they going to get rid of them?"

* Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States a few years prior to this time, made the following public declaration: "A more liberal and extensive reciprocity in the purchase and sale of commodities is necessary, so that the overproduction of the United States can be satisfactorily disposed of to foreign countries." Of course, this overproduction he mentions was the profits of the capitalist system over and beyond the consuming power of the capitalists. It was at this time that Senator Mark Hanna said: "The production of wealth in the United States is one-third larger annually than its consumption." Also a fellow-Senator, Chauncey Depew, said: "The American people produce annually two billions more wealth than they consume."

"Sell them to countries with undeveloped resources," Mr. Kowalt suggested.

"The very thing. You see, my argument is so clear and simple that in your own minds you carry it on for me. And now for the next step. Suppose the United States disposes of its surplus to a country with undeveloped resources like, say, Brazil. Remember this surplus is over and above trade, which articles of trade have been consumed. What, then, does the United States get in return from Brazil?"

"Gold," said Mr. Kowalt.

"But there is only so much gold, and not much of it, in the world," Ernest objected.

"Gold in the form of securities and bonds and so forth," Mr. Kowalt amended.

"Now you've struck it," Ernest said. "From Brazil the United States, in return for her surplus, gets bonds and securities. And what does that mean? It means that the United States is coming to own railroads in Brazil, factories, mines, and lands in Brazil. And what is the meaning of that in turn?"

Mr. Kowalt pondered and shook his head.

"I'll tell you," Ernest continued. "It means that the resources of Brazil are being developed. And now, the next point. When Brazil, under the capitalist system, has developed her resources, she will herself have an unconsumed surplus. Can she get rid of this surplus to the United States? No, because the United States has herself a surplus. Can the United States do what she previously did — get rid of her surplus to Brazil? No, for Brazil now has a surplus, too.

"What happens? The United States and Brazil must both seek out other countries with undeveloped resources, in order to unload the surpluses on them. But by the very process of unloading the surpluses, the resources of those countries are in turn developed. Soon they have surpluses, and are seeking other countries on which to unload. Now, gentlemen, follow me. The planet is only so large. There are only so many countries in the world. What will happen when every country in the world, down to the smallest and last, with a surplus in its hands, stands confronting every other country with surpluses in their hands?"

He paused and regarded his listeners. The bepuzzlement in their faces was delicious. Also, there was awe in their faces. Out of abstractions Ernest had conjured a vision and made them see it. They were seeing it then, as they sat there, and they were frightened by it.

"We started with A B C, Mr. Calvin," Ernest said slyly. "I have now given you the rest of the alphabet. It is very simple. That is the beauty of it. You surely have the answer forthcoming. What, then, when every country in the world has an unconsumed surplus? Where will your capitalist system be then?"

But Mr. Calvin shook a troubled head. He was obviously questing back through Ernest's reasoning in search of an error.

"Let me briefly go over the ground with you again," Ernest said. "We began with a particular industrial process, the shoe factory. We found that the division of the joint product that took place there was similar to the division that took place in the sum total of all industrial processes. We found that labor could buy back with its wages only so much of the product, and that capital did not consume all of the remainder of the product. We found that when labor had consumed to the full extent of its wages, and when capital had consumed all it wanted, there was still left an unconsumed surplus. We agreed that this surplus could only be disposed of abroad. We agreed, also, that the effect of unloading this surplus on another country would be to develop the resources of that country, and that in a short time that country would have an unconsumed surplus. We extended this process to all the countries on the planet, till every country was producing every year, and every day, an unconsumed surplus, which it could dispose of to no other country. And now I ask you again, what are we going to do with those surpluses?"

Still no one answered.

"Mr. Calvin?" Ernest queried.

"It beats me," Mr. Calvin confessed.

"I never dreamed of such a thing," Mr. Asmunsen said. "And yet it does seem clear as print."

It was the first time I had ever heard Karl Marx's* doctrine of surplus value elaborated, and Ernest had done it so simply that I, too, sat puzzled and dumbfounded.

> * Karl Marx — the great intellectual hero of Socialism. A German Jew of the nineteenth century. A contemporary of John Stuart Mill. It seems incredible to us that whole generations should have elapsed after the enunciation of Marx's economic discoveries, in which time he was sneered at by the world's accepted thinkers and scholars. Because of his discoveries he was banished from his native country, and he died an exile in England.

"I'll tell you a way to get rid of the surplus," Ernest said. "Throw it into the sea. Throw every year hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of shoes and wheat and clothing and all the commodities of commerce into the sea. Won't that fix it?"

"It will certainly fix it," Mr. Calvin answered. "But it is absurd for you to talk that way."

Ernest was upon him like a flash.

"Is it a bit more absurd than what you advocate, you machine-breaker, returning to the antediluvian ways of your forefathers? What do you propose in order to get rid of the surplus? You would escape the problem of the surplus by not producing any surplus. And how do you propose to avoid producing a surplus? By returning to a primitive method of production, so confused and disorderly and irrational, so wasteful and costly, that it will be impossible to produce a surplus."

Mr. Calvin swallowed. The point had been driven home. He swallowed again and cleared his throat.

"You are right," he said. "I stand convicted. It is absurd. But we've got to do something. It is a case of life and death for us of the middle class. We refuse to perish. We elect to be absurd and to return to the truly crude and wasteful methods of our forefathers. We will put back industry to its pre-trust stage. We will break the machines. And what are you going to do about it?"

"But you can't break the machines," Ernest replied. "You cannot make the tide of evolution flow backward. Opposed to you are two great forces, each of which is more powerful than you of the middle class. The large capitalists, the trusts, in short, will not let you turn back. They don't want the machines destroyed. And greater than the trusts, and more powerful, is labor. It will not let you destroy the machines. The ownership of the world, along with the machines, lies between the trusts and labor. That is the battle alignment. Neither side wants the destruction of the machines. But each side wants to possess the machines. In this battle the middle class has no place. The middle class is a pygmy between two giants. Don't you see, you poor perishing middle class, you are caught between the upper and nether millstones, and even now has the grinding begun.

"I have demonstrated to you mathematically the inevitable breakdown of the capitalist system. When every country stands with an unconsumed and unsalable surplus on its hands, the capitalist system will break down under the terrific structure of profits that it itself has reared. And in that day there won't be any destruction of the machines. The struggle then will be for the ownership of the machines. If labor wins, your way will be easy. The United States, and the whole world for that matter, will enter upon a new and tremendous era. Instead of being crushed by the machines, life will be made fairer, and happier, and nobler by them. You of the destroyed middle class, along with labor — there will be nothing but labor then; so you, and all the rest of labor, will participate in the equitable distribution of the products of the wonderful machines. And we, all of us, will make new and more wonderful machines. And there won't be any unconsumed surplus, because there won't be any profits."

"But suppose the trusts win in this battle over the ownership of the machines and the world?" Mr. Kowalt asked.

"Then," Ernest answered, "you, and labor, and all of us, will be crushed under the iron heel of a despotism as relentless and terrible as any despotism that has blackened the pages of the history of man. That will be a good name for that despotism, the Iron Heel."*

* The earliest known use of that name to designate the Oligarchy.

There was a long pause, and every man at the table meditated in ways unwonted and profound.

"But this socialism of yours is a dream," Mr. Calvin said; and repeated, "a dream."

"I'll show you something that isn't a dream, then," Ernest answered. "And that something I shall call the Oligarchy. You call it the Plutocracy. We both mean the same thing, the large capitalists or the trusts. Let us see where the power lies today. And in order to do so, let us apportion society into its class divisions.

"There are three big classes in society. First comes the Plutocracy, which is composed of wealthy bankers, railway magnates, corporation directors, and trust magnates. Second, is the middle class, your class, gentlemen, which is composed of farmers, merchants, small manufacturers, and professional men. And third and last comes my class, the proletariat, which is composed of the wage-workers.*

* This division of society made by Everhard is in accordance with that made by Lucien Sanial, one of the statistical authorities of that time. His calculation of the membership of these divisions by occupation, from the United States Census of 1900, is as follows: Plutocratic class, 250,251; Middle class, 8,429,845; and Proletariat class, 20,393,137.

"You cannot but grant that the ownership of wealth constitutes essential power in the United States to-day. How is this wealth owned by these three classes? Here are the figures. The Plutocracy owns sixty-seven billions of wealth. Of the total number of persons engaged in occupations in the United

States, only nine-tenths of one per cent are from the Plutocracy, yet the Plutocracy owns seventy per cent of the total wealth. The middle class owns twenty-four billions. Twenty-nine per cent of those in occupations are from the middle class, and they own twenty-five per cent of the total wealth. Remains the proletariat. It owns four billions. Of all persons in occupations, seventy per cent come from the proletariat; and the proletariat owns four per cent of the total wealth. Where does the power lie, gentlemen?"

"From your own figures, we of the middle class are more powerful than labor," Mr. Asmunsen remarked.

"Calling us weak does not make you stronger in the face of the strength of the Plutocracy," Ernest retorted. "And furthermore, I'm not done with you. There is a greater strength than wealth, and it is greater because it cannot be taken away. Our strength, the strength of the proletariat, is in our muscles, in our hands to cast ballots, in our fingers to pull triggers. This strength we cannot be stripped of. It is the primitive strength, it is the strength that is to life germane, it is the strength that is stronger than wealth, and that wealth cannot take away.

"But your strength is detachable. It can be taken away from you. Even now the Plutocracy is taking it away from you. In the end it will take it all away from you. And then you will cease to be the middle class. You will descend to us. You will become proletarians. And the beauty of it is that you will then add to our strength. We will hail you brothers, and we will fight shoulder to shoulder in the cause of humanity.

"You see, labor has nothing concrete of which to be despoiled. Its share of the wealth of the country consists of clothes and household furniture, with here and there, in very rare cases, an unencumbered home. But you have the concrete wealth, twenty-four billions of it, and the Plutocracy will take it away from you. Of course, there is the large likelihood that the proletariat will take it away first. Don't you see your position, gentlemen? The middle class is a wobbly little lamb between a lion and a tiger. If one doesn't get you, the other will. And if the Plutocracy gets you first, why it's only a matter of time when the Proletariat gets the Plutocracy.

"Even your present wealth is not a true measure of your power. The strength of your wealth at this moment is only an empty shell. That is why you are crying out your feeble little battle-cry, 'Return to the ways of our fathers.' You are aware of your impotency. You know that your strength is an empty shell. And I'll show you the emptiness of it.

"What power have the farmers? Over fifty per cent are thralls by virtue of the fact that they are merely tenants or are mortgaged. And all of them are thralls by virtue of the fact that the trusts already own or control (which is the same thing only better) — own and control all the means of marketing the crops, such as cold storage, railroads, elevators, and steamship lines. And, furthermore, the trusts control the markets. In all this the farmers are without power. As regards their political and governmental power, I'll take that up later, along with the political and governmental power of the whole middle class.

"Day by day the trusts squeeze out the farmers as they squeezed out Mr. Calvin and the rest of the dairymen. And day by day are the merchants squeezed out in the same way. Do you remember how, in six months, the Tobacco Trust squeezed out over four hundred cigar stores in New York City alone? Where are the old-time owners of the coal fields? You know today, without my telling you, that the Railroad Trust owns or controls the entire anthracite and bituminous coal fields. Doesn't the Standard Oil Trust* own a score of the ocean lines? And does it not also control copper, to say nothing of running a smelter trust as a little side enterprise? There are ten thousand cities in the United States to-night lighted by the companies owned or controlled by Standard Oil, and in as many cities all the electric transportation, — urban, suburban, and interurban, — is in the hands of Standard Oil. The small capitalists who were in these thousands of enterprises are gone. You know that. It's the same way that you are going.

* Standard Oil and Rockefeller — see upcoming footnote:
"Rockefeller began as a member . . ."

"The small manufacturer is like the farmer; and small manufacturers and farmers to-day are reduced, to all intents and purposes, to feudal tenure. For that matter, the professional men and the artists are at this present moment villeins in everything but name, while the politicians are henchmen. Why do you, Mr. Calvin, work all your nights and days to organize the farmers, along with the rest of the middle class, into a new political party? Because the politicians of the old parties will have nothing to do with your atavistic ideas; and with your atavistic ideas, they will have nothing to do because they are what I said they are, henchmen, retainers of the Plutocracy.

"I spoke of the professional men and the artists as villeins. What else are they? One and all, the professors, the preachers, and the editors, hold their jobs by serving the Plutocracy, and their service consists of propagating only such ideas as are either harmless to or commendatory of the Plutocracy. Whenever they propagate ideas that menace the Plutocracy, they lose their jobs, in which case, if they have not provided for the rainy day, they descend into the proletariat and either perish or become working-class agitators. And don't forget that it is the press, the pulpit, and the university that mould public opinion, set the thought-pace of the nation. As for the artists, they merely pander to the little less than ignoble tastes of the Plutocracy.

"But after all, wealth in itself is not the real power; it is the means to power, and power is governmental. Who controls the government to-day? The proletariat with its twenty millions engaged in occupations? Even you laugh at the idea. Does the middle class, with its eight million occupied members? No more than the proletariat. Who, then, controls the government? The Plutocracy, with its paltry quarter of a million of occupied members. But this quarter of a million does not control the government, though it renders yeoman service. It is the brain of the Plutocracy that controls the government, and this brain consists of seven* small and powerful groups of men. And do not forget that these groups are working to-day practically in unison.

* Even as late as 1907, it was considered that eleven groups dominated the country, but this number was reduced by the amalgamation of the five railroad groups into a supreme combination of all the railroads. These five groups so amalgamated, along with their financial and political allies, were (1) James J. Hill with his control of the Northwest; (2) the Pennsylvania railway group, Schiff financial manager, with big banking firms of Philadelphia and New York; (3) Harriman, with Frick for counsel and Odell as political lieutenant, controlling the central continental, Southwestern and Southern Pacific Coast lines of transportation; (4) the Gould family railway interests; and (5) Moore, Reid, and Leeds, known as the "Rock Island crowd." These strong oligarchs arose out of the conflict of competition and travelled the inevitable road toward combination.

"Let me point out the power of but one of them, the railroad group. It employs forty thousand lawyers to defeat the people in the courts. It issues countless thousands of free passes to judges, bankers, editors, ministers, university men, members of state legislatures, and of Congress. It maintains luxurious lobbies* at every state capital, and at the national capital; and in all the cities and towns of the land it employs an immense army of pettifoggers and small politicians whose business is to attend primaries, pack conventions, get on juries, bribe judges, and in every way to work for its interests.**

* Lobby — a peculiar institution for bribing, bulldozing, and corrupting the legislators who were supposed to represent the people's interests.

** A decade before this speech of Everhard's, the New York Board of Trade issued a report from which the following is quoted: "The railroads control absolutely the legislatures of a majority of the states of the Union; they make and unmake United States Senators, congressmen, and governors, and are practically dictators of the governmental policy of the United States."

"Gentlemen, I have merely sketched the power of one of the seven groups that constitute the brain of the Plutocracy.* Your twenty-four billions of wealth does not give you twenty-five cents' worth of governmental power. It is an empty shell, and soon even the empty shell will be taken away from you. The Plutocracy has all power in its hands to-day. It to-day makes the laws, for it owns the Senate, Congress, the courts, and the state legislatures. And not only that. Behind law must be force to execute the law. To-day the Plutocracy makes the law, and to enforce the law it has at its beck and call the, police, the army, the navy, and, lastly, the militia, which is you, and me, and all of us."

* Rockefeller began as a member of the proletariat, and through thrift and cunning succeeded in developing the first perfect trust, namely that known as Standard Oil. We cannot forbear giving the following remarkable page from the history of the times, to show how the need for reinvestment of the Standard Oil surplus crushed out small capitalists and hastened the breakdown of the capitalist system. David Graham Phillips was a radical writer of the period, and the quotation, by him, is taken from a copy of the Saturday

Evening Post, dated October 4, 1902 A.D. This is the only copy of this publication that has come down to us, and yet, from its appearance and content, we cannot but conclude that it was one of the popular periodicals with a large circulation. The quotation here follows:

“About ten years ago Rockefeller’s income was given as thirty millions by an excellent authority. He had reached the limit of profitable investment of profits in the oil industry. Here, then, were these enormous sums in cash pouring in — more than $2,000,000 a month for John Davison Rockefeller alone. The problem of reinvestment became more serious. It became a nightmare. The oil income was swelling, swelling, and the number of sound investments limited, even more limited than it is now. It was through no special eagerness for more gains that the Rockefellers began to branch out from oil into other things. They were forced, swept on by this inrolling tide of wealth which their monopoly magnet irresistibly attracted. They developed a staff of investment seekers and investigators. It is said that the chief of this staff has a salary of $125,000 a year.

“The first conspicuous excursion and incursion of the Rockefellers was into the railway field. By 1895 they controlled one-fifth of the railway mileage of the country. What do they own or, through dominant ownership, control to-day? They are powerful in all the great railways of New York, north, east, and west, except one, where their share is only a few millions. They are in most of the great railways radiating from Chicago. They dominate in several of the systems that extend to the Pacific. It is their votes that make Mr. Morgan so potent, though, it may be added, they need his brains more than he needs their votes — at present, and the combination of the two constitutes in large measure the ‘community of interest.’

“But railways could not alone absorb rapidly enough those mighty floods of gold. Presently John D. Rockefeller’s $2,500,000 a month had increased to four, to five, to six millions a month, to $75,000,000 a year. Illuminating oil was becoming all profit. The reinvestments of income were adding their mite of many annual millions.

“The Rockefellers went into gas and electricity when those industries had developed to the safe investment stage. And now a large part of the American people must begin to enrich the Rockefellers as soon as the sun goes down, no matter what form of illuminant they use. They went into farm mortgages. It is said that when prosperity a few years ago enabled the farmers to rid themselves of their mortgages, John D. Rockefeller was moved almost to tears; eight millions which he had thought taken care of for years to come at a good interest were suddenly dumped upon his doorstep and there set up a-squawking for a new home. This unexpected addition to his worriments in finding places for the progeny of his petroleum and their progeny and their progeny’s progeny was too much for the equanimity of a man without a digestion. . . .

“The Rockefellers went into mines — iron and coal and copper and lead; into other industrial companies; into street railways, into national, state, and municipal bonds; into steamships and steamboats and telegraphy; into real estate, into skyscrapers and residences and hotels and business blocks; into life insurance, into banking. There was soon literally no field of industry where their millions were not at work. . . .

“The Rockefeller bank — the National City Bank — is by itself far and away the biggest bank in the United States. It is exceeded in the world only by the Bank of England and the Bank of France. The deposits average more than one hundred millions a day; and it dominates the call loan market on

Wall Street and the stock market. But it is not alone; it is the head of the Rockefeller chain of banks, which includes fourteen banks and trust companies in New York City, and banks of great strength and influence in every large money center in the country.

"John D. Rockefeller owns Standard Oil stock worth between four and five hundred millions at the market quotations. He has a hundred millions in the steel trust, almost as much in a single western railway system, half as much in a second, and so on and on and on until the mind wearies of the cataloguing. His income last year was about $100,000,000 — it is doubtful if the incomes of all the Rothschilds together make a greater sum. And it is going up by leaps and bounds."

Little discussion took place after this, and the dinner soon broke up. All were quiet and subdued, and leave-taking was done with low voices. It seemed almost that they were scared by the vision of the times they had seen.

"The situation is, indeed, serious," Mr. Calvin said to Ernest. "I have little quarrel with the way you have depicted it. Only I disagree with you about the doom of the middle class. We shall survive, and we shall overthrow the trusts."

"And return to the ways of your fathers," Ernest finished for him.

"Even so," Mr. Calvin answered gravely. "I know it's a sort of machine-breaking, and that it is absurd. But then life seems absurd to-day, what of the machinations of the Plutocracy. And at any rate, our sort of machine-breaking is at least practical and possible, which your dream is not. Your socialistic dream is . . . well, a dream. We cannot follow you."

"I only wish you fellows knew a little something about evolution and sociology," Ernest said wistfully, as they shook hands. "We would be saved so much trouble if you did."

CHAPTER X

THE VORTEX

Following like thunder claps upon the Business Men's dinner, occurred event after event of terrifying moment; and I, little I, who had lived so placidly all my days in the quiet university town, found myself and my personal affairs drawn into the vortex of the great world-affairs. Whether it was my love for Ernest, or the clear sight he had given me of the society in which I lived, that made me a revolutionist, I know not; but a revolutionist I became, and I was plunged into a whirl of happenings that would have been inconceivable three short months before.

The crisis in my own fortunes came simultaneously with great crises in society. First of all, father was discharged from the university. Oh, he was not technically discharged. His resignation was demanded, that was all. This, in itself, did not amount to much. Father, in fact, was delighted. He was especially delighted because his discharge had been precipitated by the publication of his book, "Economics and Education." It clinched his argument, he contended. What better evidence could be advanced to prove that education was dominated by the capitalist class?

But this proof never got anywhere. Nobody knew he had been forced to resign from the university. He was so eminent a scientist that such an announcement, coupled with the reason for his enforced resignation, would have created somewhat of a furor all over the world. The newspapers showered him with praise and honor, and commended him for having given up the drudgery of the lecture room in order to devote his whole time to scientific research.

At first father laughed. Then he became angry — tonic angry. Then came the suppression of his book. This suppression was performed secretly, so secretly that at first we could not comprehend. The publication of the book had immediately caused a bit of excitement in the country. Father had been politely abused in the capitalist press, the tone of the abuse being to the effect that it was a pity so great a scientist should leave his field and invade the realm of sociology, about which he knew nothing and wherein he had promptly become lost. This lasted for a week, while father chuckled and said the book had touched a sore spot on capitalism. And then, abruptly, the newspapers and the critical magazines ceased saying anything about the book at all. Also, and with equal suddenness, the book disappeared from the market. Not a copy was obtainable from any bookseller. Father wrote to the publishers and was informed that the plates had been accidentally injured. An unsatisfactory correspondence followed. Driven finally to an unequivocal stand, the publishers stated that they could not see their way to putting the book into type again, but that they were willing to relinquish their rights in it.

"And you won't find another publishing house in the country to touch it," Ernest said. "And if I were you, I'd hunt cover right now. You've merely got a foretaste of the Iron Heel."

But father was nothing if not a scientist. He never believed in jumping to conclusions. A laboratory experiment was no experiment if it were not carried through in all its details. So he patiently went the round of the publishing houses. They gave a multitude of excuses, but not one house would consider the book.

When father became convinced that the book had actually been suppressed, he tried to get the fact into the newspapers; but his communications were ignored. At a political meeting of the socialists, where many reporters were present, father saw his chance. He arose and related the history of the suppression of the book. He laughed next day when he read the newspapers, and then he grew angry to a degree that eliminated all tonic qualities. The papers made no mention of the book, but they misreported him beautifully. They twisted his words and phrases away from the context, and turned his subdued and controlled remarks into a howling anarchistic speech. It was done artfully. One instance, in particular, I remember. He had used the phrase "social revolution." The reporter merely dropped out "social." This was sent out all over the country in an Associated Press despatch, and from all over the country arose a cry of alarm. Father was branded as a nihilist and an anarchist, and in one cartoon that was copied widely he was portrayed waving a red flag at the head of a mob of long-haired, wild-eyed men who bore in their hands torches, knives, and dynamite bombs.

He was assailed terribly in the press, in long and abusive editorials, for his anarchy, and hints were made of mental breakdown on his part. This behavior, on the part of the capitalist press, was nothing new, Ernest told us. It was the custom, he said, to send reporters to all the socialist meetings for the express purpose of misreporting and distorting what was said, in order to frighten the middle class away from any possible affiliation with the proletariat. And repeatedly Ernest warned father to cease fighting and to take to cover.

The socialist press of the country took up the fight, however, and throughout the reading portion of the working class it was known that the book had been suppressed. But this knowledge stopped with the working class. Next, the “Appeal to Reason,” a big socialist publishing house, arranged with father to bring out the book. Father was jubilant, but Ernest was alarmed.

“I tell you we are on the verge of the unknown,” he insisted. “Big things are happening secretly all around us. We can feel them. We do not know what they are, but they are there. The whole fabric of society is a-tremble with them. Don’t ask me. I don’t know myself. But out of this flux of society something is about to crystallize. It is crystallizing now. The suppression of the book is a precipitation. How many books have been suppressed? We haven’t the least idea. We are in the dark. We have no way of learning. Watch out next for the suppression of the socialist press and socialist publishing houses. I’m afraid it’s coming. We are going to be throttled.”

Ernest had his hand on the pulse of events even more closely than the rest of the socialists, and within two days the first blow was struck. The Appeal to Reason was a weekly, and its regular circulation amongst the proletariat was seven hundred and fifty thousand. Also, it very frequently got out special editions of from two to five millions. These great editions were paid for and distributed by the small army of voluntary workers who had marshalled around the Appeal. The first blow was aimed at these special editions, and it was a crushing one. By an arbitrary ruling of the Post Office, these editions were decided to be not the regular circulation of the paper, and for that reason were denied admission to the mails.

A week later the Post Office Department ruled that the paper was seditious, and barred it entirely from the mails. This was a fearful blow to the socialist propaganda. The Appeal was desperate. It devised a plan of reaching its subscribers through the express companies, but they declined to handle it. This was the end of the Appeal. But not quite. It prepared to go on with its book publishing. Twenty thousand copies of father’s book were in the bindery, and the presses were turning off more. And then, without warning, a mob arose one night, and, under a waving American flag, singing patriotic songs, set fire to the great plant of the Appeal and totally destroyed it.

Now Girard, Kansas, was a quiet, peaceable town. There had never been any labor troubles there. The Appeal paid union wages; and, in fact, was the backbone of the town, giving employment to hundreds of men and women. It was not the citizens of Girard that composed the mob. This mob had risen up out of the earth apparently, and to all intents and purposes, its work done, it had gone back into the earth. Ernest saw in the affair the most sinister import.

“The Black Hundreds* are being organized in the United States,” he said. “This is the beginning. There will be more of it. The Iron Heel is getting bold.”

> * The Black Hundreds were reactionary mobs organized by the perishing Autocracy in the Russian Revolution. These reactionary groups attacked the revolutionary groups, and also, at needed moments, rioted and destroyed property so as to afford the Autocracy the pretext of calling out the Cossacks.

And so perished father’s book. We were to see much of the Black Hundreds as the days went by. Week by week more of the socialist papers were barred from the mails, and in a number of instances the Black Hundreds destroyed the socialist presses. Of course, the newspapers of the land lived up to the reactionary policy of the ruling class, and the destroyed socialist press was misrepresented and vilified, while the Black Hundreds were represented as true patriots and saviours of society. So convincing was all this misrepresentation that even sincere ministers in the pulpit praised the Black Hundreds while regretting the necessity of violence.

History was making fast. The fall elections were soon to occur, and Ernest was nominated by the socialist party to run for Congress. His chance for election was most favorable. The street-car strike in San Francisco had been broken. And following upon it the teamsters’ strike had been broken. These two defeats had been very disastrous to organized labor. The whole Water Front Federation, along with its allies in the structural trades, had backed up the teamsters, and all had smashed down ingloriously. It had been a bloody strike. The police had broken countless heads with their riot clubs; and the death list had been augmented by the turning loose of a machine-gun on the strikers from the barns of the Marsden Special Delivery Company.

In consequence, the men were sullen and vindictive. They wanted blood, and revenge. Beaten on their chosen field, they were ripe to seek revenge by means of political action. They still maintained their labor organization, and this gave them strength in the political struggle that was on. Ernest's chance for election grew stronger and stronger. Day by day unions and more unions voted their support to the socialists, until even Ernest laughed when the Undertakers' Assistants and the Chicken Pickers fell into line. Labor became mulish. While it packed the socialist meetings with mad enthusiasm, it was impervious to the wiles of the old-party politicians. The old-party orators were usually greeted with empty halls, though occasionally they encountered full halls where they were so roughly handled that more than once it was necessary to call out the police reserves.

History was making fast. The air was vibrant with things happening and impending. The country was on the verge of hard times,* caused by a series of prosperous years wherein the difficulty of disposing abroad of the unconsumed surplus had become increasingly difficult. Industries were working short time; many great factories were standing idle against the time when the surplus should be gone; and wages were being cut right and left.

* Under the capitalist regime these periods of hard times were as inevitable as they were absurd. Prosperity always brought calamity. This, of course, was due to the excess of unconsumed profits that was piled up.

Also, the great machinist strike had been broken. Two hundred thousand machinists, along with their five hundred thousand allies in the metalworking trades, had been defeated in as bloody a strike as had ever marred the United States. Pitched battles had been fought with the small armies of armed strike-breakers* put in the field by the employers' associations; the Black Hundreds, appearing in scores of wide-scattered places, had destroyed property; and, in consequence, a hundred thousand regular soldiers of the United States has been called out to put a frightful end to the whole affair. A number of the labor leaders had been executed; many others had been sentenced to prison, while thousands of the rank and file of the strikers had been herded into bull-pens** and abominably treated by the soldiers.

* Strike-breakers — these were, in purpose and practice and

everything except name, the private soldiers of the capitalists. They were thoroughly organized and well armed, and they were held in readiness to be hurled in special trains to any part of the country where labor went on strike or was locked out by the employers. Only those curious times could have given rise to the amazing spectacle of one, Farley, a notorious commander of strike-breakers, who, in 1906, swept across the United States in special trains from New York to San Francisco with an army of twenty-five hundred men, fully armed and equipped, to break a strike of the San Francisco street-car men. Such an act was in direct violation of the laws of the land. The fact that this act, and thousands of similar acts, went unpunished, goes to show how completely the judiciary was the creature of the Plutocracy.

** Bull-pen — in a miners' strike in Idaho, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, it happened that many of the strikers were confined in a bull-pen by the troops. The practice and the name continued in the twentieth century.

The years of prosperity were now to be paid for. All markets were glutted; all markets were falling; and amidst the general crumble of prices the price of labor crumbled fastest of all. The land was convulsed with industrial dissensions. Labor was striking here, there, and everywhere; and where it was not striking, it was being turned out by the capitalists. The papers were filled with tales of violence and blood. And through it all the Black Hundreds played their part. Riot, arson, and wanton destruction of property was their function, and well they performed it. The whole regular army was in the field, called there by the actions of the Black Hundreds.* All cities and towns were like armed camps, and laborers were shot down like dogs. Out of the vast army of the unemployed the strike-breakers were recruited; and when the strike-breakers were worsted by the labor unions, the troops always appeared and crushed the unions. Then there was the militia. As yet, it was not necessary to have recourse to the secret militia law. Only the regularly organized militia was out, and it was out everywhere. And in this time of terror, the regular army was increased an additional hundred thousand by the government.

* The name only, and not the idea, was imported from Russia. The Black Hundreds were a development out of the secret agents of the capitalists, and their use arose in the labor struggles of the nineteenth century. There is no discussion of this. No less an authority of the times than Carroll D. Wright, United States Commissioner of Labor, is responsible for the statement. From his book, entitled “The Battles of Labor,” is quoted the declaration that “in some of the great historic strikes the employers themselves have instigated acts of violence;” that manufacturers have deliberately provoked strikes in order to get rid of surplus stock; and that freight cars have been burned by employers’ agents during railroad strikes in order to increase disorder. It was out of these secret agents of the employers that the Black Hundreds arose; and it was they, in turn, that later became that terrible weapon of the Oligarchy, the agents-provocateurs.

Never had labor received such an all-around beating. The great captains of industry, the oligarchs, had for the first time thrown their full weight into the breach the struggling employers’ associations had made. These associations were practically middle-class affairs, and now, compelled by hard times and crashing markets, and aided by the great captains of industry, they gave organized labor an awful and decisive defeat. It was an all-powerful alliance, but it was an alliance of the lion and the lamb, as the middle class was soon to learn.

Labor was bloody and sullen, but crushed. Yet its defeat did not put an end to the hard times. The banks, themselves constituting one of the most important forces of the Oligarchy, continued to call in credits. The Wall Street* group turned the stock market into a maelstrom where the values of all the land crumbled away almost to nothingness. And out of all the rack and ruin rose the form of the nascent Oligarchy, imperturbable, indifferent, and sure. Its serenity and certitude was terrifying. Not only did it use its own vast power, but it used all the power of the United States Treasury to carry out its plans.

* Wall Street — so named from a street in ancient New York, where was situated the stock exchange, and where the irrational organization of society permitted underhanded

manipulation of all the industries of the country.

The captains of industry had turned upon the middle class. The employers' associations, that had helped the captains of industry to tear and rend labor, were now torn and rent by their quondam allies. Amidst the crashing of the middle men, the small business men and manufacturers, the trusts stood firm. Nay, the trusts did more than stand firm. They were active. They sowed wind, and wind, and ever more wind; for they alone knew how to reap the whirlwind and make a profit out of it. And such profits! Colossal profits! Strong enough themselves to weather the storm that was largely their own brewing, they turned loose and plundered the wrecks that floated about them. Values were pitifully and inconceivably shrunken, and the trusts added hugely to their holdings, even extending their enterprises into many new fields — and always at the expense of the middle class.

Thus the summer of 1912 witnessed the virtual death-thrust to the middle class. Even Ernest was astounded at the quickness with which it had been done. He shook his head ominously and looked forward without hope to the fall elections.

"It's no use," he said. "We are beaten. The Iron Heel is here. I had hoped for a peaceable victory at the ballot-box. I was wrong. Wickson was right. We shall be robbed of our few remaining liberties; the Iron Heel will walk upon our faces; nothing remains but a bloody revolution of the working class. Of course we will win, but I shudder to think of it."

And from then on Ernest pinned his faith in revolution. In this he was in advance of his party. His fellow-socialists could not agree with him. They still insisted that victory could be gained through the elections. It was not that they were stunned. They were too cool-headed and courageous for that. They were merely incredulous, that was all. Ernest could not get them seriously to fear the coming of the Oligarchy. They were stirred by him, but they were too sure of their own strength. There was no room in their theoretical social evolution for an oligarchy, therefore the Oligarchy could not be.

"We'll send you to Congress and it will be all right," they told him at one of our secret meetings.

"And when they take me out of Congress," Ernest replied coldly, "and put me against a wall, and blow my brains out — what then?"

"Then we'll rise in our might," a dozen voices answered at once.

“Then you’ll welter in your gore,” was his retort. “I’ve heard that song sung by the middle class, and where is it now in its might?”

CHAPTER XI

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

Mr. Wickson did not send for father. They met by chance on the ferry-boat to San Francisco, so that the warning he gave father was not premeditated. Had they not met accidentally, there would not have been any warning. Not that the outcome would have been different, however. Father came of stout old Mayflower* stock, and the blood was imperative in him.

> * One of the first ships that carried colonies to America, after the discovery of the New World. Descendants of these original colonists were for a while inordinately proud of their genealogy; but in time the blood became so widely diffused that it ran in the veins practically of all Americans.

"Ernest was right," he told me, as soon as he had returned home. "Ernest is a very remarkable young man, and I'd rather see you his wife than the wife of Rockefeller himself or the King of England."

"What's the matter?" I asked in alarm.

"The Oligarchy is about to tread upon our faces — yours and mine. Wickson as much as told me so. He was very kind — for an oligarch. He offered to reinstate me in the university. What do you think of that? He, Wickson, a sordid money-grabber, has the power to determine whether I shall or shall not teach in the university of the state. But he offered me even better than that — offered to make me president of some great college of physical sciences that is being planned — the Oligarchy must get rid of its surplus somehow, you see.

"'Do you remember what I told that socialist lover of your daughter's?' he said. 'I told him that we would walk upon the faces of the working class. And so we shall. As for you, I have for you a deep respect as a scientist; but if you throw your fortunes in with the working class — well, watch out for your face, that is all.' And then he turned and left me."

"It means we'll have to marry earlier than you planned," was Ernest's comment when we told him.

I could not follow his reasoning, but I was soon to learn it. It was at this time that the quarterly dividend of the Sierra Mills was paid — or, rather, should have been paid, for father did not receive his. After waiting several days, father wrote to the secretary. Promptly came the reply that there was no record on the books of father's owning any stock, and a polite request for more explicit information.

"I'll make it explicit enough, confound him," father declared, and departed for the bank to get the stock in question from his safe-deposit box.

"Ernest is a very remarkable man," he said when he got back and while I was helping him off with his overcoat. "I repeat, my daughter, that young man of yours is a very remarkable young man."

I had learned, whenever he praised Ernest in such fashion, to expect disaster.

"They have already walked upon my face," father explained. "There was no stock. The box was empty. You and Ernest will have to get married pretty quickly."

Father insisted on laboratory methods. He brought the Sierra Mills into court, but he could not bring the books of the Sierra Mills into court. He did not control the courts, and the Sierra Mills did. That explained it all. He was thoroughly beaten by the law, and the bare-faced robbery held good.

It is almost laughable now, when I look back on it, the way father was beaten. He met Wickson accidentally on the street in San Francisco, and he told Wickson that he was a damned scoundrel. And then father was arrested for attempted assault, fined in the police court, and bound over to keep the peace. It was all so ridiculous that when he got home he had to laugh himself. But what a furor was raised in the local papers! There was grave talk about the bacillus of violence that infected all men who embraced socialism; and father, with his long and peaceful life, was instanced as a shining example of how the bacillus of violence worked. Also, it was asserted by more than one paper that father's mind had weakened under the strain of scientific study, and confinement in a state asylum for the insane was suggested. Nor was this merely talk. It was an imminent peril. But father was wise enough to see it. He had the Bishop's experience to lesson from, and he lessoned well. He kept quiet no matter what injustice was perpetrated on him, and really, I think, surprised his enemies.

There was the matter of the house — our home. A mortgage was foreclosed on it, and we had to give up possession. Of course there wasn't any mortgage, and never had been any mortgage. The ground had been bought outright, and the house had been paid for when it was built. And house and lot had always been free and unencumbered. Nevertheless there was the mortgage, properly and legally drawn up and signed, with a record of the payments of interest through a number of years. Father made no outcry. As he had been robbed of his money, so was he now robbed of his home. And he had no recourse. The machinery of society was in the hands of those who were bent on breaking him. He was a philosopher at heart, and he was no longer even angry.

"I am doomed to be broken," he said to me; "but that is no reason that I should not try to be shattered as little as possible. These old bones of mine are fragile, and I've learned my lesson. God knows I don't want to spend my last days in an insane asylum."

Which reminds me of Bishop Morehouse, whom I have neglected for many pages. But first let me tell of my marriage. In the play of events, my marriage sinks into insignificance, I know, so I shall barely mention it.

"Now we shall become real proletarians," father said, when we were driven from our home. "I have often envied that young man of yours for his actual knowledge of the proletariat. Now I shall see and learn for myself."

Father must have had strong in him the blood of adventure. He looked upon our catastrophe in the light of an adventure. No anger nor bitterness possessed him. He was too philosophic and simple to be vindictive, and he lived too much in the world of mind to miss the creature comforts we were giving up. So it was, when we moved to San Francisco into four wretched rooms in the slum south of Market Street, that he embarked upon the adventure with the joy and enthusiasm of a child — combined with the clear sight and mental grasp of an extraordinary intellect. He really never crystallized mentally. He had no false sense of values. Conventional or habitual values meant nothing to him. The only values he recognized were mathematical and scientific facts. My father was a great man. He had the mind and the soul that only great men have. In ways he was even greater than Ernest, than whom I have known none greater.

Even I found some relief in our change of living. If nothing else, I was escaping from the organized ostracism that had been our increasing portion in the university town ever since the enmity of the nascent Oligarchy had been incurred. And the change was to me likewise adventure, and the greatest of all, for it was love-adventure. The change in our fortunes had hastened my marriage, and it was as a wife that I came to live in the four rooms on Pell Street, in the San Francisco slum.

And this out of all remains: I made Ernest happy. I came into his stormy life, not as a new perturbing force, but as one that made toward peace and repose. I gave him rest. It was the guerdon of my love for him. It was the one infallible token that I had not failed. To bring forgetfulness, or the light of gladness, into those poor tired eyes of his — what greater joy could have blessed me than that?

Those dear tired eyes. He toiled as few men ever toiled, and all his lifetime he toiled for others. That was the measure of his manhood. He was a humanist and a lover. And he, with his incarnate spirit of battle, his gladiator body and his eagle spirit — he was as gentle and tender to me as a poet. He was a poet. A singer in deeds. And all his life he sang the song of man. And he did it out of sheer love of man, and for man he gave his life and was crucified.

And all this he did with no hope of future reward. In his conception of things there was no future life. He, who fairly burnt with immortality, denied himself immortality — such was the paradox of him. He, so warm in spirit, was dominated by that cold and forbidding philosophy, materialistic monism. I used to refute him by telling him that I measured his immortality by the wings of his soul, and that I should have to live endless aeons in order to achieve the full measurement. Whereat he would laugh, and his arms would leap out to me, and he would call me his sweet metaphysician; and the tiredness would pass out of his eyes, and into them would flood the happy love-light that was in itself a new and sufficient advertisement of his immortality.

Also, he used to call me his dualist, and he would explain how Kant, by means of pure reason, had abolished reason, in order to worship God. And he drew the parallel and included me guilty of a similar act. And when I pleaded guilty, but defended the act as highly rational, he but pressed me closer and laughed as only one of God’s own lovers could laugh. I was wont to deny that heredity and environment could explain his own originality and genius, any more than could the cold groping finger of science catch and analyze and classify that elusive essence that lurked in the constitution of life itself.

I held that space was an apparition of God, and that soul was a projection of the character of God; and when he called me his sweet metaphysician, I called him my immortal materialist. And so we loved and were happy; and I forgave him his materialism because of his tremendous work in the world, performed without thought of soul-gain thereby, and because of his so exceeding modesty of spirit that prevented him from having pride and regal consciousness of himself and his soul.

But he had pride. How could he have been an eagle and not have pride? His contention was that it was finer for a finite mortal speck of life to feel Godlike, than for a god to feel godlike; and so it was that he exalted what he deemed his mortality. He was fond of quoting a fragment from a certain poem. He had never seen the whole poem, and he had tried vainly to learn its authorship. I here give the fragment, not alone because he loved it, but because it epitomized the paradox that he was in the spirit of him, and his conception of his spirit. For how can a man, with thrilling, and burning, and exaltation, recite the following and still be mere mortal earth, a bit of fugitive force, an evanescent form? Here it is:

“Joy upon joy and gain upon gain
Are the destined rights of my birth,
And I shout the praise of my endless days
To the echoing edge of the earth.
Though I suffer all deaths that a man can die
To the uttermost end of time,
I have deep-drained this, my cup of bliss,
In every age and clime —

“The froth of Pride, the tang of Power,
The sweet of Womanhood!
I drain the lees upon my knees,
For oh, the draught is good;
I drink to Life, I drink to Death,
And smack my lips with song,
For when I die, another ‘I’ shall pass the cup along.

“The man you drove from Eden’s grove
        Was I, my Lord, was I,
And I shall be there when the earth and the air
        Are rent from sea to sky;
For it is my world, my gorgeous world,
        The world of my dearest woes,
From the first faint cry of the newborn

To the rack of the woman's throes.

"Packed with the pulse of an unborn race,
Torn with a world's desire,
The surging flood of my wild young blood
Would quench the judgment fire.
I am Man, Man, Man, from the tingling flesh
To the dust of my earthly goal,
From the nestling gloom of the pregnant womb
To the sheen of my naked soul.
Bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh
The whole world leaps to my will,
And the unslaked thirst of an Eden cursed
Shall harrow the earth for its fill.
Almighty God, when I drain life's glass
Of all its rainbow gleams,
The hapless plight of eternal night
Shall be none too long for my dreams.

"The man you drove from Eden's grove
Was I, my Lord, was I,
And I shall be there when the earth and the air
Are rent from sea to sky;
For it is my world, my gorgeous world,
The world of my dear delight,
From the brightest gleam of the Arctic stream
To the dusk of my own love-night."

Ernest always overworked. His wonderful constitution kept him up; but even that constitution could not keep the tired look out of his eyes. His dear, tired eyes! He never slept more than four and one-half hours a night; yet he never found time to do all the work he wanted to do. He never ceased from his activities as a propagandist, and was always scheduled long in advance for lectures to workingmen's organizations. Then there was the campaign. He did a man's full work in that alone. With the suppression of the socialist publishing houses, his meagre royalties ceased, and he was hard-put to make a living; for he had to make a living in addition to all his other labor. He did a great deal of translating for the magazines on scientific and philosophic subjects; and, coming home late at night, worn out from the strain of the campaign, he would plunge into his translating and toil on well into the morning hours. And in addition to everything, there was his studying. To the day of his death he kept up his studies, and he studied prodigiously.

And yet he found time in which to love me and make me happy. But this was accomplished only through my merging my life completely into his. I learned shorthand and typewriting, and became his secretary. He insisted that I succeeded in cutting his work in half; and so it was that I schooled myself to understand his work. Our interests became mutual, and we worked together and played together.

And then there were our sweet stolen moments in the midst of our work — just a word, or caress, or flash of love-light; and our moments were sweeter for being stolen. For we lived on the heights, where the air was keen and sparkling, where the toil was for humanity, and where sordidness and selfishness never entered. We loved love, and our love was never smirched by anything less than the best. And this out of all remains: I did not fail. I gave him rest — he who worked so hard for others, my dear, tired-eyed mortalist.

CHAPTER XII

THE BISHOP

It was after my marriage that I chanced upon Bishop Morehouse. But I must give the events in their proper sequence. After his outbreak at the I. P. H. Convention, the Bishop, being a gentle soul, had yielded to the friendly pressure brought to bear upon him, and had gone away on a vacation. But he returned more fixed than ever in his determination to preach the message of the Church. To the consternation of his congregation, his first sermon was quite similar to the address he had given before the Convention. Again he said, and at length and with distressing detail, that the Church had wandered away from the Master's teaching, and that Mammon had been instated in the place of Christ.

And the result was, willy-nilly, that he was led away to a private sanitarium for mental disease, while in the newspapers appeared pathetic accounts of his mental breakdown and of the saintliness of his character. He was held a prisoner in the sanitarium. I called repeatedly, but was denied access to him; and I was terribly impressed by the tragedy of a sane, normal, saintly man being crushed by the brutal will of society. For the Bishop was sane, and pure, and noble. As Ernest said, all that was the matter with him was that he had incorrect notions of biology and sociology, and because of his incorrect notions he had not gone about it in the right way to rectify matters.

What terrified me was the Bishop's helplessness. If he persisted in the truth as he saw it, he was doomed to an insane ward. And he could do nothing. His money, his position, his culture, could not save him. His views were perilous to society, and society could not conceive that such perilous views could be the product of a sane mind. Or, at least, it seems to me that such was society's attitude.

But the Bishop, in spite of the gentleness and purity of his spirit, was possessed of guile. He apprehended clearly his danger. He saw himself caught in the web, and he tried to escape from it. Denied help from his friends, such as father and Ernest and I could have given, he was left to battle for himself alone. And in the enforced solitude of the sanitarium he recovered. He became again sane. His eyes ceased to see visions; his brain was purged of the fancy that it was the duty of society to feed the Master's lambs.

As I say, he became well, quite well, and the newspapers and the church people hailed his return with joy. I went once to his church. The sermon was of the same order as the ones he had preached long before his eyes had seen visions. I was disappointed, shocked. Had society then beaten him into submission? Was he a coward? Had he been bulldozed into recanting? Or had the strain been too great for him, and had he meekly surrendered to the juggernaut of the established?

I called upon him in his beautiful home. He was woefully changed. He was thinner, and there were lines on his face which I had never seen before. He was manifestly distressed by my coming. He plucked nervously at his sleeve as we talked; and his eyes were restless, fluttering here, there, and everywhere, and refusing to meet mine. His mind seemed preoccupied, and there were strange pauses in his conversation, abrupt changes of topic, and an inconsecutiveness that was bewildering. Could this, then, be the firm-poised, Christ-like man I had known, with pure, limpid eyes and a gaze steady and unfaltering as his soul? He had been man-handled; he had been cowed into subjection. His spirit was too gentle. It had not been mighty enough to face the organized wolf-pack of society.

I felt sad, unutterably sad. He talked ambiguously, and was so apprehensive of what I might say that I had not the heart to catechise him. He spoke in a far-away manner of his illness, and we talked disjointedly about the church, the alterations in the organ, and about petty charities; and he saw me depart with such evident relief that I should have laughed had not my heart been so full of tears.

The poor little hero! If I had only known! He was battling like a giant, and I did not guess it. Alone, all alone, in the midst of millions of his fellow-men, he was fighting his fight. Torn by his horror of the asylum and his fidelity to truth and the right, he clung steadfastly to truth and the right; but so alone was he that he did not dare to trust even me. He had learned his lesson well — too well.

But I was soon to know. One day the Bishop disappeared. He had told nobody that he was going away; and as the days went by and he did not reappear, there was much gossip to the effect that he had committed suicide while temporarily deranged. But this idea was dispelled when it was learned that he had sold all his possessions, — his city mansion, his country house at Menlo Park, his paintings, and collections, and even his cherished library. It was patent that he had made a clean and secret sweep of everything before he disappeared.

This happened during the time when calamity had overtaken us in our own affairs; and it was not till we were well settled in our new home that we had opportunity really to wonder and speculate about the Bishop's doings. And then, everything was suddenly made clear. Early one evening, while it was yet twilight, I had run across the street and into the butcher-shop to get some chops for Ernest's supper. We called the last meal of the day "supper" in our new environment.

Just at the moment I came out of the butcher-shop, a man emerged from the corner grocery that stood alongside. A queer sense familiarity made me look again. But the man had turned and was walking rapidly away. There was something about the slope of the shoulders and the fringe of silver hair between coat collar and slouch hat that aroused vague memories. Instead of crossing the street, I hurried after the man. I quickened my pace, trying not to think the thoughts that formed unbidden in my brain. No, it was impossible. It could not be — not in those faded overalls, too long in the legs and frayed at the bottoms.

I paused, laughed at myself, and almost abandoned the chase. But the haunting familiarity of those shoulders and that silver hair! Again I hurried on. As I passed him, I shot a keen look at his face; then I whirled around abruptly and confronted — the Bishop.

He halted with equal abruptness, and gasped. A large paper bag in his right hand fell to the sidewalk. It burst, and about his feet and mine bounced and rolled a flood of potatoes. He looked at me with surprise and alarm, then he seemed to wilt away; the shoulders drooped with dejection, and he uttered a deep sigh.

I held out my hand. He shook it, but his hand felt clammy. He cleared his throat in embarrassment, and I could see the sweat starting out on his forehead. It was evident that he was badly frightened.

"The potatoes," he murmured faintly. "They are precious."

Between us we picked them up and replaced them in the broken bag, which he now held carefully in the hollow of his arm. I tried to tell him my gladness at meeting him and that he must come right home with me.

"Father will be rejoiced to see you," I said. "We live only a stone's throw away.

"I can't," he said, "I must be going. Good-by."

He looked apprehensively about him, as though dreading discovery, and made an attempt to walk on.

"Tell me where you live, and I shall call later," he said, when he saw that I walked beside him and that it was my intention to stick to him now that he was found.

"No," I answered firmly. "You must come now."

He looked at the potatoes spilling on his arm, and at the small parcels on his other arm.

"Really, it is impossible," he said. "Forgive me for my rudeness. If you only knew."

He looked as if he were going to break down, but the next moment he had himself in control.

"Besides, this food," he went on. "It is a sad case. It is terrible. She is an old woman. I must take it to her at once. She is suffering from want of it. I must go at once. You understand. Then I will return. I promise you."

"Let me go with you," I volunteered. "Is it far?"

He sighed again, and surrendered.

"Only two blocks," he said. "Let us hasten."

Under the Bishop's guidance I learned something of my own neighborhood. I had not dreamed such wretchedness and misery existed in it. Of course, this was because I did not concern myself with charity. I had become convinced that Ernest was right when he sneered at charity as a poulticing of an ulcer. Remove the ulcer, was his remedy; give to the worker his product; pension as soldiers those who grow honorably old in their toil, and there will be no need for charity. Convinced of this, I toiled with him at the revolution, and did not exhaust my energy in alleviating the social ills that continuously arose from the injustice of the system.

I followed the Bishop into a small room, ten by twelve, in a rear tenement. And there we found a little old German woman — sixty-four years old, the Bishop said. She was surprised at seeing me, but she nodded a pleasant greeting and went on sewing on the pair of men's trousers in her lap. Beside her, on the floor, was a pile of trousers. The Bishop discovered there was neither coal nor kindling, and went out to buy some.

I took up a pair of trousers and examined her work.

"Six cents, lady," she said, nodding her head gently while she went on stitching. She stitched slowly, but never did she cease from stitching. She seemed mastered by the verb “to stitch.”

“For all that work?” I asked. “Is that what they pay? How long does it take you?”

“Yes,” she answered, “that is what they pay. Six cents for finishing. Two hours’ sewing on each pair.”

“But the boss doesn’t know that,” she added quickly, betraying a fear of getting him into trouble. “I’m slow. I’ve got the rheumatism in my hands. Girls work much faster. They finish in half that time. The boss is kind. He lets me take the work home, now that I am old and the noise of the machine bothers my head. If it wasn’t for his kindness, I’d starve.

“Yes, those who work in the shop get eight cents. But what can you do? There is not enough work for the young. The old have no chance. Often one pair is all I can get. Sometimes, like to-day, I am given eight pair to finish before night.”

I asked her the hours she worked, and she said it depended on the season.

“In the summer, when there is a rush order, I work from five in the morning to nine at night. But in the winter it is too cold. The hands do not early get over the stiffness. Then you must work later — till after midnight sometimes.

“Yes, it has been a bad summer. The hard times. God must be angry. This is the first work the boss has given me in a week. It is true, one cannot eat much when there is no work. I am used to it. I have sewed all my life, in the old country and here in San Francisco — thirty-three years.

“If you are sure of the rent, it is all right. The houseman is very kind, but he must have his rent. It is fair. He only charges three dollars for this room. That is cheap. But it is not easy for you to find all of three dollars every month.”

She ceased talking, and, nodding her head, went on stitching.

“You have to be very careful as to how you spend your earnings,” I suggested.

She nodded emphatically.

“After the rent it’s not so bad. Of course you can’t buy meat. And there is no milk for the coffee. But always there is one meal a day, and often two.”

She said this last proudly. There was a smack of success in her words. But as she stitched on in silence, I noticed the sadness in her pleasant eyes and the droop of her mouth. The look in her eyes became far away. She rubbed the dimness hastily out of them; it interfered with her stitching.

"No, it is not the hunger that makes the heart ache," she explained. "You get used to being hungry. It is for my child that I cry. It was the machine that killed her. It is true she worked hard, but I cannot understand. She was strong. And she was young — only forty; and she worked only thirty years. She began young, it is true; but my man died. The boiler exploded down at the works. And what were we to do? She was ten, but she was very strong. But the machine killed her. Yes, it did. It killed her, and she was the fastest worker in the shop. I have thought about it often, and I know. That is why I cannot work in the shop. The machine bothers my head. Always I hear it saying, 'I did it, I did it.' And it says that all day long. And then I think of my daughter, and I cannot work."

The moistness was in her old eyes again, and she had to wipe it away before she could go on stitching.

I heard the Bishop stumbling up the stairs, and I opened the door. What a spectacle he was. On his back he carried half a sack of coal, with kindling on top. Some of the coal dust had coated his face, and the sweat from his exertions was running in streaks. He dropped his burden in the corner by the stove and wiped his face on a coarse bandana handkerchief. I could scarcely accept the verdict of my senses. The Bishop, black as a coal-heaver, in a workingman's cheap cotton shirt (one button was missing from the throat), and in overalls! That was the most incongruous of all — the overalls, frayed at the bottoms, dragged down at the heels, and held up by a narrow leather belt around the hips such as laborers wear.

Though the Bishop was warm, the poor swollen hands of the old woman were already cramping with the cold; and before we left her, the Bishop had built the fire, while I had peeled the potatoes and put them on to boil. I was to learn, as time went by, that there were many cases similar to hers, and many worse, hidden away in the monstrous depths of the tenements in my neighborhood.

We got back to find Ernest alarmed by my absence. After the first surprise of greeting was over, the Bishop leaned back in his chair, stretched out his overall-covered legs, and actually sighed a comfortable sigh. We were the first of his old friends he had met since his disappearance, he told us; and during the intervening weeks he must have suffered greatly from loneliness. He told us much, though he told us more of the joy he had experienced in doing the Master's bidding.

“For truly now,” he said, “I am feeding his lambs. And I have learned a great lesson. The soul cannot be ministered to till the stomach is appeased. His lambs must be fed bread and butter and potatoes and meat; after that, and only after that, are their spirits ready for more refined nourishment.”

He ate heartily of the supper I cooked. Never had he had such an appetite at our table in the old days. We spoke of it, and he said that he had never been so healthy in his life.

“I walk always now,” he said, and a blush was on his cheek at the thought of the time when he rode in his carriage, as though it were a sin not lightly to be laid.

“My health is better for it,” he added hastily. “And I am very happy — indeed, most happy. At last I am a consecrated spirit.”

And yet there was in his face a permanent pain, the pain of the world that he was now taking to himself. He was seeing life in the raw, and it was a different life from what he had known within the printed books of his library.

“And you are responsible for all this, young man,” he said directly to Ernest.

Ernest was embarrassed and awkward.

“I — I warned you,” he faltered.

“No, you misunderstand,” the Bishop answered. “I speak not in reproach, but in gratitude. I have you to thank for showing me my path. You led me from theories about life to life itself. You pulled aside the veils from the social shams. You were light in my darkness, but now I, too, see the light. And I am very happy, only . . .” he hesitated painfully, and in his eyes fear leaped large. “Only the persecution. I harm no one. Why will they not let me alone? But it is not that. It is the nature of the persecution. I shouldn’t mind if they cut my flesh with stripes, or burned me at the stake, or crucified me head — downward. But it is the asylum that frightens me. Think of it! Of me — in an asylum for the insane! It is revolting. I saw some of the cases at the sanitarium. They were violent. My blood chills when I think of it. And to be imprisoned for the rest of my life amid scenes of screaming madness! No! no! Not that! Not that!”

It was pitiful. His hands shook, his whole body quivered and shrank away from the picture he had conjured. But the next moment he was calm.

“Forgive me,” he said simply. “It is my wretched nerves. And if the Master’s work leads there, so be it. Who am I to complain?”

I felt like crying aloud as I looked at him: “Great Bishop! O hero! God’s hero!”

As the evening wore on we learned more of his doings.

“I sold my house — my houses, rather,” he said, “all my other possessions. I knew I must do it secretly, else they would have taken everything away from me. That would have been terrible. I often marvel these days at the immense quantity of potatoes two or three hundred thousand dollars will buy, or bread, or meat, or coal and kindling.” He turned to Ernest. “You are right, young man. Labor is dreadfully underpaid. I never did a bit of work in my life, except to appeal aesthetically to Pharisees — I thought I was preaching the message — and yet I was worth half a million dollars. I never knew what half a million dollars meant until I realized how much potatoes and bread and butter and meat it could buy. And then I realized something more. I realized that all those potatoes and that bread and butter and meat were mine, and that I had not worked to make them. Then it was clear to me, some one else had worked and made them and been robbed of them. And when I came down amongst the poor I found those who had been robbed and who were hungry and wretched because they had been robbed.”

We drew him back to his narrative.

“The money? I have it deposited in many different banks under different names. It can never be taken away from me, because it can never be found. And it is so good, that money. It buys so much food. I never knew before what money was good for.”

“I wish we could get some of it for the propaganda,” Ernest said wistfully. “It would do immense good.”

“Do you think so?” the Bishop said. “I do not have much faith in politics. In fact, I am afraid I do not understand politics.”

Ernest was delicate in such matters. He did not repeat his suggestion, though he knew only too well the sore straits the Socialist Party was in through lack of money.

“I sleep in cheap lodging houses,” the Bishop went on. “But I am afraid, and never stay long in one place. Also, I rent two rooms in workingmen’s houses in different quarters of the city. It is a great extravagance, I know, but it is necessary. I make up for it in part by doing my own cooking, though sometimes I get something to eat in cheap coffee-houses. And I have made a discovery. Tamales* are very good when the air grows chilly late at night. Only they are so expensive. But I have discovered a place where I can get three for ten cents. They are not so good as the others, but they are very warming.

* A Mexican dish, referred to occasionally in the literature of the times. It is supposed that it was warmly seasoned. No recipe of it has come down to us.

"And so I have at last found my work in the world, thanks to you, young man. It is the Master's work." He looked at me, and his eyes twinkled. "You caught me feeding his lambs, you know. And of course you will all keep my secret."

He spoke carelessly enough, but there was real fear behind the speech. He promised to call upon us again. But a week later we read in the newspaper of the sad case of Bishop Morehouse, who had been committed to the Napa Asylum and for whom there were still hopes held out. In vain we tried to see him, to have his case reconsidered or investigated. Nor could we learn anything about him except the reiterated statements that slight hopes were still held for his recovery.

"Christ told the rich young man to sell all he had," Ernest said bitterly. "The Bishop obeyed Christ's injunction and got locked up in a madhouse. Times have changed since Christ's day. A rich man to-day who gives all he has to the poor is crazy. There is no discussion. Society has spoken."

CHAPTER XIII

THE GENERAL STRIKE

Of course Ernest was elected to Congress in the great socialist landslide that took place in the fall of 1912. One great factor that helped to swell the socialist vote was the destruction of Hearst.* This the Plutocracy found an easy task. It cost Hearst eighteen million dollars a year to run his various papers, and this sum, and more, he got back from the middle class in payment for advertising. The source of his financial strength lay wholly in the middle class. The trusts did not advertise.** To destroy Hearst, all that was necessary was to take away from him his advertising.

The whole middle class had not yet been exterminated. The sturdy skeleton of it remained; but it was without power. The small manufacturers and small business men who still survived were at the complete mercy of the Plutocracy. They had no economic nor political souls of their own. When the fiat of the Plutocracy went forth, they withdrew their advertisements from the Hearst papers.

Hearst made a gallant fight. He brought his papers out at a loss of a million and a half each month. He continued to publish the advertisements for which he no longer received pay. Again the fiat of the Plutocracy went forth, and the small business men and manufacturers swamped him with a flood of notices that he must discontinue running their old advertisements. Hearst persisted. Injunctions were served on him. Still he persisted. He received six months' imprisonment for contempt of court in disobeying the injunctions, while he was bankrupted by countless damage suits. He had no chance. The Plutocracy had passed sentence on him. The courts were in the hands of the Plutocracy to carry the sentence out. And with Hearst crashed also to destruction the Democratic Party that he had so recently captured.

---

* William Randolph Hearst — a young California millionaire who became the most powerful newspaper owner in the country. His newspapers were published in all the large cities, and they appealed to the perishing middle class and to the proletariat. So large was his following that he managed to take possession of the empty shell of the old Democratic Party. He occupied an anomalous position, preaching an emasculated socialism combined with a nondescript sort of petty bourgeois capitalism. It was oil and water, and there was no hope for him, though for a short period he was a source of serious apprehension to the Plutocrats.

** The cost of advertising was amazing in those helter-skelter times. Only the small capitalists competed, and therefore they did the advertising. There being no competition where there was a trust, there was no need for the trusts to advertise.

With the destruction of Hearst and the Democratic Party, there were only two paths for his following to take. One was into the Socialist Party; the other was into the Republican Party. Then it was that we socialists reaped the fruit of Hearst's pseudo-socialistic preaching; for the great Majority of his followers came over to us.

The expropriation of the farmers that took place at this time would also have swelled our vote had it not been for the brief and futile rise of the Grange Party. Ernest and the socialist leaders fought fiercely to capture the farmers; but the destruction of the socialist press and publishing houses constituted too great a handicap, while the mouth-to-mouth propaganda had not yet been perfected. So it was that politicians like Mr. Calvin, who were themselves farmers long since expropriated, captured the farmers and threw their political strength away in a vain campaign.

"The poor farmers," Ernest once laughed savagely; "the trusts have them both coming and going."

And that was really the situation. The seven great trusts, working together, had pooled their enormous surpluses and made a farm trust. The railroads, controlling rates, and the bankers and stock exchange gamesters, controlling prices, had long since bled the farmers into indebtedness. The bankers, and all the trusts for that matter, had likewise long since loaned colossal amounts of money to the farmers. The farmers were in the net. All that remained to be done was the drawing in of the net. This the farm trust proceeded to do.

The hard times of 1912 had already caused a frightful slump in the farm markets. Prices were now deliberately pressed down to bankruptcy, while the railroads, with extortionate rates, broke the back of the farmer-camel. Thus the farmers were compelled to borrow more and more, while they were prevented from paying back old loans. Then ensued the great foreclosing of mortgages and enforced collection of notes. The farmers simply surrendered the land to the farm trust. There was nothing else for them to do. And having surrendered the land, the farmers next went to work for the farm trust, becoming managers, superintendents, foremen, and common laborers. They worked for wages. They became villeins, in short — serfs bound to the soil by a living wage. They could not leave their masters, for their masters composed the Plutocracy. They could not go to the cities, for there, also, the Plutocracy was in control. They had but one alternative, — to leave the soil and become vagrants, in brief, to starve. And even there they were frustrated, for stringent vagrancy laws were passed and rigidly enforced.

Of course, here and there, farmers, and even whole communities of farmers, escaped expropriation by virtue of exceptional conditions. But they were merely strays and did not count, and they were gathered in anyway during the following year.*

Thus it was that in the fall of 1912 the socialist leaders, with the exception of Ernest, decided that the end of capitalism had come. What of the hard times and the consequent vast army of the unemployed; what of the destruction of the farmers and the middle class; and what of the decisive defeat administered all along the line to the labor unions; the socialists were really justified in believing that the end of capitalism had come and in themselves throwing down the gauntlet to the Plutocracy.

---

* The destruction of the Roman yeomanry proceeded far less rapidly than the destruction of the American farmers and small capitalists. There was momentum in the twentieth century, while there was practically none in ancient Rome.

Numbers of the farmers, impelled by an insane lust for the soil, and willing to show what beasts they could become, tried to escape expropriation by withdrawing from any and all market-dealing. They sold nothing. They bought nothing. Among themselves a primitive barter began to spring up. Their privation and hardships were terrible, but they persisted. It became quite a movement, in fact. The manner in which they were beaten was unique and logical and simple. The Plutocracy, by virtue of its possession of the government, raised their taxes. It was the weak joint in their armor. Neither buying nor selling, they had no money, and in the end their land was sold to pay the taxes.

Alas, how we underestimated the strength of the enemy! Everywhere the socialists proclaimed their coming victory at the ballot-box, while, in unmistakable terms, they stated the situation. The Plutocracy accepted the challenge. It was the Plutocracy, weighing and balancing, that defeated us by dividing our strength. It was the Plutocracy, through its secret agents, that raised the cry that socialism was sacrilegious and atheistic; it was the Plutocracy that whipped the churches, and especially the Catholic Church, into line, and robbed us of a portion of the labor vote. And it was the Plutocracy, through its secret agents of course, that encouraged the Grange Party and even spread it to the cities into the ranks of the dying middle class.

Nevertheless the socialist landslide occurred. But, instead of a sweeping victory with chief executive officers and majorities in all legislative bodies, we found ourselves in the minority. It is true, we elected fifty Congressmen; but when they took their seats in the spring of 1913, they found themselves without power of any sort. Yet they were more fortunate than the Grangers, who captured a dozen state governments, and who, in the spring, were not permitted to take possession of the captured offices. The incumbents refused to retire, and the courts were in the hands of the Oligarchy. But this is too far in advance of events. I have yet to tell of the stirring times of the winter of 1912.

The hard times at home had caused an immense decrease in consumption. Labor, out of work, had no wages with which to buy. The result was that the Plutocracy found a greater surplus than ever on its hands. This surplus it was compelled to dispose of abroad, and, what of its colossal plans, it needed money. Because of its strenuous efforts to dispose of the surplus in the world market, the Plutocracy clashed with Germany. Economic clashes were usually succeeded by wars, and this particular clash was no exception. The great German war-lord prepared, and so did the United States prepare.

The war-cloud hovered dark and ominous. The stage was set for a world-catastrophe, for in all the world were hard times, labor troubles, perishing middle classes, armies of unemployed, clashes of economic interests in the world-market, and mutterings and rumblings of the socialist revolution.*

---

* For a long time these mutterings and rumblings had been

> heard. As far back as 1906 A.D., Lord Avebury, an Englishman, uttered the following in the House of Lords: "The unrest in Europe, the spread of socialism, and the ominous rise of Anarchism, are warnings to the governments and the ruling classes that the condition of the working classes in Europe is becoming intolerable, and that if a revolution is to be avoided some steps must be taken to increase wages, reduce the hours of labor, and lower the prices of the necessaries of life." The Wall Street Journal, a stock gamesters' publication, in commenting upon Lord Avebury's speech, said: "These words were spoken by an aristocrat and a member of the most conservative body in all Europe. That gives them all the more significance. They contain more valuable political economy than is to be found in most of the books. They sound a note of warning. Take heed, gentlemen of the war and navy departments!"
>
> At the same time, Sydney Brooks, writing in America, in Harper's Weekly, said: "You will not hear the socialists mentioned in Washington. Why should you? The politicians are always the last people in this country to see what is going on under their noses. They will jeer at me when I prophesy, and prophesy with the utmost confidence, that at the next presidential election the socialists will poll over a million votes."

The Oligarchy wanted the war with Germany. And it wanted the war for a dozen reasons. In the juggling of events such a war would cause, in the reshuffling of the international cards and the making of new treaties and alliances, the Oligarchy had much to gain. And, furthermore, the war would consume many national surpluses, reduce the armies of unemployed that menaced all countries, and give the Oligarchy a breathing space in which to perfect its plans and carry them out. Such a war would virtually put the Oligarchy in possession of the world-market. Also, such a war would create a large standing army that need never be disbanded, while in the minds of the people would be substituted the issue, "America versus Germany," in place of "Socialism versus Oligarchy."

And truly the war would have done all these things had it not been for the socialists. A secret meeting of the Western leaders was held in our four tiny rooms in Pell Street. Here was first considered the stand the socialists were to take. It was not the first time we had put our foot down upon war,* but it was the first time we had done so in the United States. After our secret meeting we got in touch with the national organization, and soon our code cables were passing back and forth across the Atlantic between us and the International Bureau.

The German socialists were ready to act with us. There were over five million of them, many of them in the standing army, and, in addition, they were on friendly terms with the labor unions. In both countries the socialists came out in bold declaration against the war and threatened the general strike. And in the meantime they made preparation for the general strike. Furthermore, the revolutionary parties in all countries gave public utterance to the socialist principle of international peace that must be preserved at all hazards, even to the extent of revolt and revolution at home.

The general strike was the one great victory we American socialists won. On the 4th of December the American minister was withdrawn from the German capital. That night a German fleet made a dash on Honolulu, sinking three American cruisers and a revenue cutter, and bombarding the city. Next day both Germany and the United States declared war, and within an hour the socialists called the general strike in both countries.

---

* It was at the very beginning of the twentieth century A.D., that the international organization of the socialists finally formulated their long-maturing policy on war. Epitomized their doctrine was: “Why should the workingmen of one country fight with the workingmen of another country for the benefit of their capitalist masters?”

On May 21, 1905 A.D., when war threatened between Austria and Italy, the socialists of Italy, Austria, and Hungary held a conference at Trieste, and threatened a general strike of the workingmen of both countries in case war was declared. This was repeated the following year, when the “Morocco Affair” threatened to involve France, Germany, and England.

For the first time the German war-lord faced the men of his empire who made his empire go. Without them he could not run his empire. The novelty of the situation lay in that their revolt was passive. They did not fight. They did nothing. And by doing nothing they tied their war-lord’s hands. He would have asked for nothing better than an opportunity to loose his war-dogs on his rebellious proletariat. But this was denied him. He could not loose his war-dogs. Neither could he mobilize his army to go forth to war, nor could he punish his recalcitrant subjects. Not a wheel moved in his empire. Not a train ran, not a telegraphic message went over the wires, for the telegraphers and railroad men had ceased work along with the rest of the population.

And as it was in Germany, so it was in the United States. At last organized labor had learned its lesson. Beaten decisively on its own chosen field, it had abandoned that field and come over to the political field of the socialists; for the general strike was a political strike. Besides, organized labor had been so badly beaten that it did not care. It joined in the general strike out of sheer desperation. The workers threw down their tools and left their tasks by the millions. Especially notable were the machinists. Their heads were bloody, their organization had apparently been destroyed, yet out they came, along with their allies in the metal-working trades.

Even the common laborers and all unorganized labor ceased work. The strike had tied everything up so that nobody could work. Besides, the women proved to be the strongest promoters of the strike. They set their faces against the war. They did not want their men to go forth to die. Then, also, the idea of the general strike caught the mood of the people. It struck their sense of humor. The idea was infectious. The children struck in all the schools, and such teachers as came, went home again from deserted class rooms. The general strike took the form of a great national picnic. And the idea of the solidarity of labor, so evidenced, appealed to the imagination of all. And, finally, there was no danger to be incurred by the colossal frolic. When everybody was guilty, how was anybody to be punished?

The United States was paralyzed. No one knew what was happening. There were no newspapers, no letters, no despatches. Every community was as completely isolated as though ten thousand miles of primeval wilderness stretched between it and the rest of the world. For that matter, the world had ceased to exist. And for a week this state of affairs was maintained.

In San Francisco we did not know what was happening even across the bay in Oakland or Berkeley. The effect on one's sensibilities was weird, depressing. It seemed as though some great cosmic thing lay dead. The pulse of the land had ceased to beat. Of a truth the nation had died. There were no wagons rumbling on the streets, no factory whistles, no hum of electricity in the air, no passing of street cars, no cries of news-boys — nothing but persons who at rare intervals went by like furtive ghosts, themselves oppressed and made unreal by the silence.

And during that week of silence the Oligarchy was taught its lesson. And well it learned the lesson. The general strike was a warning. It should never occur again. The Oligarchy would see to that.

At the end of the week, as had been prearranged, the telegraphers of Germany and the United States returned to their posts. Through them the socialist leaders of both countries presented their ultimatum to the rulers. The war should be called off, or the general strike would continue. It did not take long to come to an understanding. The war was declared off, and the populations of both countries returned to their tasks.

It was this renewal of peace that brought about the alliance between Germany and the United States. In reality, this was an alliance between the Emperor and the Oligarchy, for the purpose of meeting their common foe, the revolutionary proletariat of both countries. And it was this alliance that the Oligarchy afterward so treacherously broke when the German socialists rose and drove the war-lord from his throne. It was the very thing the Oligarchy had played for — the destruction of its great rival in the world-market. With the German Emperor out of the way, Germany would have no surplus to sell abroad. By the very nature of the socialist state, the German population would consume all that it produced. Of course, it would trade abroad certain things it produced for things it did not produce; but this would be quite different from an unconsumable surplus.

"I'll wager the Oligarchy finds justification," Ernest said, when its treachery to the German Emperor became known. "As usual, the Oligarchy will believe it has done right."

And sure enough. The Oligarchy's public defence for the act was that it had done it for the sake of the American people whose interests it was looking out for. It had flung its hated rival out of the world-market and enabled us to dispose of our surplus in that market.

“And the howling folly of it is that we are so helpless that such idiots really are managing our interests,” was Ernest’s comment. “They have enabled us to sell more abroad, which means that we’ll be compelled to consume less at home.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

As early as January, 1913, Ernest saw the true trend of affairs, but he could not get his brother leaders to see the vision of the Iron Heel that had arisen in his brain. They were too confident. Events were rushing too rapidly to culmination. A crisis had come in world affairs. The American Oligarchy was practically in possession of the world-market, and scores of countries were flung out of that market with unconsumable and unsalable surpluses on their hands. For such countries nothing remained but reorganization. They could not continue their method of producing surpluses. The capitalistic system, so far as they were concerned, had hopelessly broken down.

The reorganization of these countries took the form of revolution. It was a time of confusion and violence. Everywhere institutions and governments were crashing. Everywhere, with the exception of two or three countries, the erstwhile capitalist masters fought bitterly for their possessions. But the governments were taken away from them by the militant proletariat. At last was being realized Karl Marx's classic: "The knell of private capitalist property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated." And as fast as capitalistic governments crashed, cooperative commonwealths arose in their place.

"Why does the United States lag behind?"; "Get busy, you American revolutionists!"; "What's the matter with America?" — were the messages sent to us by our successful comrades in other lands. But we could not keep up. The Oligarchy stood in the way. Its bulk, like that of some huge monster, blocked our path.

"Wait till we take office in the spring," we answered. "Then you'll see."

Behind this lay our secret. We had won over the Grangers, and in the spring a dozen states would pass into their hands by virtue of the elections of the preceding fall. At once would be instituted a dozen cooperative commonwealth states. After that, the rest would be easy.

"But what if the Grangers fail to get possession?" Ernest demanded. And his comrades called him a calamity howler.

But this failure to get possession was not the chief danger that Ernest had in mind. What he foresaw was the defection of the great labor unions and the rise of the castes.

"Ghent has taught the oligarchs how to do it," Ernest said. "I'll wager they've made a text-book out of his 'Benevolent Feudalism.'"*

* "Our Benevolent Feudalism," a book published in 1902 A.D., by W. J. Ghent. It has always been insisted that Ghent put the idea of the Oligarchy into the minds of the great capitalists. This belief persists throughout the literature of the three centuries of the Iron Heel, and even in the literature of the first century of the Brotherhood of Man. To-day we know better, but our knowledge does not overcome the fact that Ghent remains the most abused innocent man in all history.

Never shall I forget the night when, after a hot discussion with half a dozen labor leaders, Ernest turned to me and said quietly: "That settles it. The Iron Heel has won. The end is in sight."

This little conference in our home was unofficial; but Ernest, like the rest of his comrades, was working for assurances from the labor leaders that they would call out their men in the next general strike. O'Connor, the president of the Association of Machinists, had been foremost of the six leaders present in refusing to give such assurance.

"You have seen that you were beaten soundly at your old tactics of strike and boycott," Ernest urged.

O'Connor and the others nodded their heads.

"And you saw what a general strike would do," Ernest went on. "We stopped the war with Germany. Never was there so fine a display of the solidarity and the power of labor. Labor can and will rule the world. If you continue to stand with us, we'll put an end to the reign of capitalism. It is your only hope. And what is more, you know it. There is no other way out. No matter what you do under your old tactics, you are doomed to defeat, if for no other reason because the masters control the courts."*

* As a sample of the decisions of the courts adverse to labor, the following instances are given. In the coal-mining regions the employment of children was notorious. In 1905 A.D., labor succeeded in getting a law passed in Pennsylvania providing that proof of the age of the child and of certain educational qualifications must accompany the oath of the parent. This was promptly declared

> unconstitutional by the Luzerne County Court, on the ground that it violated the Fourteenth Amendment in that it discriminated between individuals of the same class — namely, children above fourteen years of age and children below. The state court sustained the decision. The New York Court of Special Sessions, in 1905 A.D., declared unconstitutional the law prohibiting minors and women from working in factories after nine o'clock at night, the ground taken being that such a law was "class legislation." Again, the bakers of that time were terribly overworked. The New York Legislature passed a law restricting work in bakeries to ten hours a day. In 1906 A.D., the Supreme Court of the United States declared this law to be unconstitutional. In part the decision read: "There is no reasonable ground for interfering with the liberty of persons or the right of free contract by determining the hours of labor in the occupation of a baker."

"You run ahead too fast," O'Connor answered. "You don't know all the ways out. There is another way out. We know what we're about. We're sick of strikes. They've got us beaten that way to a frazzle. But I don't think we'll ever need to call our men out again."

"What is your way out?" Ernest demanded bluntly.

O'Connor laughed and shook his head. "I can tell you this much: We've not been asleep. And we're not dreaming now."

"There's nothing to be afraid of, or ashamed of, I hope," Ernest challenged.

"I guess we know our business best," was the retort.

"It's a dark business, from the way you hide it," Ernest said with growing anger.

"We've paid for our experience in sweat and blood, and we've earned all that's coming to us," was the reply. "Charity begins at home."

"If you're afraid to tell me your way out, I'll tell it to you." Ernest's blood was up. "You're going in for grab-sharing. You've made terms with the enemy, that's what you've done. You've sold out the cause of labor, of all labor. You are leaving the battle-field like cowards."

"I'm not saying anything," O'Connor answered sullenly. "Only I guess we know what's best for us a little bit better than you do."

“And you don’t care a cent for what is best for the rest of labor. You kick it into the ditch.”

“I’m not saying anything,” O’Connor replied, “except that I’m president of the Machinists’ Association, and it’s my business to consider the interests of the men I represent, that’s all.”

And then, when the labor leaders had left, Ernest, with the calmness of defeat, outlined to me the course of events to come.

“The socialists used to foretell with joy,” he said, “the coming of the day when organized labor, defeated on the industrial field, would come over on to the political field. Well, the Iron Heel has defeated the labor unions on the industrial field and driven them over to the political field; and instead of this being joyful for us, it will be a source of grief. The Iron Heel learned its lesson. We showed it our power in the general strike. It has taken steps to prevent another general strike.”

“But how?” I asked.

“Simply by subsidizing the great unions. They won’t join in the next general strike. Therefore it won’t be a general strike.”

“But the Iron Heel can’t maintain so costly a programme forever,” I objected.

“Oh, it hasn’t subsidized all of the unions. That’s not necessary. Here is what is going to happen. Wages are going to be advanced and hours shortened in the railroad unions, the iron and steel workers unions, and the engineer and machinist unions. In these unions more favorable conditions will continue to prevail. Membership in these unions will become like seats in Paradise.”

“Still I don’t see,” I objected. “What is to become of the other unions? There are far more unions outside of this combination than in it.”

“The other unions will be ground out of existence — all of them. For, don’t you see, the railway men, machinists and engineers, iron and steel workers, do all of the vitally essential work in our machine civilization. Assured of their faithfulness, the Iron Heel can snap its fingers at all the rest of labor. Iron, steel, coal, machinery, and transportation constitute the backbone of the whole industrial fabric.”

“But coal?” I queried. “There are nearly a million coal miners.”

They are practically unskilled labor. They will not count. Their wages will go down and their hours will increase. They will be slaves like all the rest of us, and they will become about the most bestial of all of us. They will be compelled to work, just as the farmers are compelled to work now for the masters who robbed them of their land. And the same with all the other unions outside the combination. Watch them wobble and go to pieces, and their members become slaves driven to toil by empty stomachs and the law of the land.

"Do you know what will happen to Farley* and his strike-breakers? I'll tell you. Strike-breaking as an occupation will cease. There won't be any more strikes. In place of strikes will be slave revolts. Farley and his gang will be promoted to slave-driving. Oh, it won't be called that; it will be called enforcing the law of the land that compels the laborers to work. It simply prolongs the fight, this treachery of the big unions. Heaven only knows now where and when the Revolution will triumph."

> * James Farley — a notorious strike-breaker of the period. A man more courageous than ethical, and of undeniable ability. He rose high under the rule of the Iron Heel and finally was translated into the oligarch class. He was assassinated in 1932 by Sarah Jenkins, whose husband, thirty years before, had been killed by Farley's strike-breakers.

"But with such a powerful combination as the Oligarchy and the big unions, is there any reason to believe that the Revolution will ever triumph?" I queried. "May not the combination endure forever?"

He shook his head. "One of our generalizations is that every system founded upon class and caste contains within itself the germs of its own decay. When a system is founded upon class, how can caste be prevented? The Iron Heel will not be able to prevent it, and in the end caste will destroy the Iron Heel. The oligarchs have already developed caste among themselves; but wait until the favored unions develop caste. The Iron Heel will use all its power to prevent it, but it will fail.

"In the favored unions are the flower of the American workingmen. They are strong, efficient men. They have become members of those unions through competition for place. Every fit workman in the United States will be possessed by the ambition to become a member of the favored unions. The Oligarchy will encourage such ambition and the consequent competition. Thus will the strong men, who might else be revolutionists, be won away and their strength used to bolster the Oligarchy.

"On the other hand, the labor castes, the members of the favored unions, will strive to make their organizations into close corporations. And they will succeed. Membership in the labor castes will become hereditary. Sons will succeed fathers, and there will be no inflow of new strength from that eternal reservoir of strength, the common people. This will mean deterioration of the labor castes, and in the end they will become weaker and weaker. At the same time, as an institution, they will become temporarily all-powerful. They will be like the guards of the palace in old Rome, and there will be palace revolutions whereby the labor castes will seize the reins of power. And there will be counter-palace revolutions of the oligarchs, and sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, will be in power. And through it all the inevitable caste-weakening will go on, so that in the end the common people will come into their own."

This foreshadowing of a slow social evolution was made when Ernest was first depressed by the defection of the great unions. I never agreed with him in it, and I disagree now, as I write these lines, more heartily than ever; for even now, though Ernest is gone, we are on the verge of the revolt that will sweep all oligarchies away. Yet I have here given Ernest's prophecy because it was his prophecy. In spite of his belief in it, he worked like a giant against it, and he, more than any man, has made possible the revolt that even now waits the signal to burst forth.*

* Everhard's social foresight was remarkable. As clearly as in the light of past events, he saw the defection of the favored unions, the rise and the slow decay of the labor castes, and the struggle between the decaying oligarchs and labor castes for control of the great governmental machine.

"But if the Oligarchy persists," I asked him that evening, "what will become of the great surpluses that will fall to its share every year?"

"The surpluses will have to be expended somehow," he answered; "and trust the oligarchs to find a way. Magnificent roads will be built. There will be great achievements in science, and especially in art. When the oligarchs have completely mastered the people, they will have time to spare for other things. They will become worshippers of beauty. They will become art-lovers. And under their direction and generously rewarded, will toil the artists. The result will be great art; for no longer, as up to yesterday, will the artists pander to the bourgeois taste of the middle class. It will be great art, I tell you, and wonder cities will arise that will make tawdry and cheap the cities of old time. And in these cities will the oligarchs dwell and worship beauty.*

> * We cannot but marvel at Everhard's foresight. Before ever
> the thought of wonder cities like Ardis and Asgard entered
> the minds of the oligarchs, Everhard saw those cities and
> the inevitable necessity for their creation.

"Thus will the surplus be constantly expended while labor does the work. The building of these great works and cities will give a starvation ration to millions of common laborers, for the enormous bulk of the surplus will compel an equally enormous expenditure, and the oligarchs will build for a thousand years — ay, for ten thousand years. They will build as the Egyptians and the Babylonians never dreamed of building; and when the oligarchs have passed away, their great roads and their wonder cities will remain for the brotherhood of labor to tread upon and dwell within.*

> * And since that day of prophecy, have passed away the three
> centuries of the Iron Heel and the four centuries of the
> Brotherhood of Man, and to-day we tread the roads and dwell
> in the cities that the oligarchs built. It is true, we are
> even now building still more wonderful wonder cities, but
> the wonder cities of the oligarchs endure, and I write these
> lines in Ardis, one of the most wonderful of them all.

"These things the oligarchs will do because they cannot help doing them. These great works will be the form their expenditure of the surplus will take, and in the same way that the ruling classes of Egypt of long ago expended the surplus they robbed from the people by the building of temples and pyramids. Under the oligarchs will flourish, not a priest class, but an artist class. And in place of the merchant class of bourgeoisie will be the labor castes. And beneath will be the abyss, wherein will fester and starve and rot, and ever renew itself, the common people, the great bulk of the population. And in the end, who knows in what day, the common people will rise up out of the abyss; the labor castes and the Oligarchy will crumble away; and then, at last, after the travail of the centuries, will it be the day of the common man. I had thought to see that day; but now I know that I shall never see it."

He paused and looked at me, and added:

"Social evolution is exasperatingly slow, isn't it, sweetheart?"

My arms were about him, and his head was on my breast.

"Sing me to sleep," he murmured whimsically. "I have had a visioning, and I wish to forget."

CHAPTER XV

LAST DAYS

It was near the end of January, 1913, that the changed attitude of the Oligarchy toward the favored unions was made public. The newspapers published information of an unprecedented rise in wages and shortening of hours for the railroad employees, the iron and steel workers, and the engineers and machinists. But the whole truth was not told. The oligarchs did not dare permit the telling of the whole truth. In reality, the wages had been raised much higher, and the privileges were correspondingly greater. All this was secret, but secrets will out. Members of the favored unions told their wives, and the wives gossiped, and soon all the labor world knew what had happened.

It was merely the logical development of what in the nineteenth century had been known as grab-sharing. In the industrial warfare of that time, profit-sharing had been tried. That is, the capitalists had striven to placate the workers by interesting them financially in their work. But profit-sharing, as a system, was ridiculous and impossible. Profit-sharing could be successful only in isolated cases in the midst of a system of industrial strife; for if all labor and all capital shared profits, the same conditions would obtain as did obtain when there was no profit-sharing.

So, out of the unpractical idea of profit-sharing, arose the practical idea of grab-sharing. “Give us more pay and charge it to the public,” was the slogan of the strong unions.* And here and there this selfish policy worked successfully. In charging it to the public, it was charged to the great mass of unorganized labor and of weakly organized labor. These workers actually paid the increased wages of their stronger brothers who were members of unions that were labor monopolies. This idea, as I say, was merely carried to its logical conclusion, on a large scale, by the combination of the oligarchs and the favored unions.

* All the railroad unions entered into this combination with the oligarchs, and it is of interest to note that the first definite application of the policy of profit-grabbing was made by a railroad union in the nineteenth century A.D., namely, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. P. M. Arthur was for twenty years Grand Chief of the Brotherhood.

> After the strike on the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1877, he broached a scheme to have the Locomotive Engineers make terms with the railroads and to “go it alone” so far as the rest of the labor unions were concerned. This scheme was eminently successful. It was as successful as it was selfish, and out of it was coined the word “arthurization,” to denote grab-sharing on the part of labor unions. This word “arthurization” has long puzzled the etymologists, but its derivation, I hope, is now made clear.

As soon as the secret of the defection of the favored unions leaked out, there were rumblings and mutterings in the labor world. Next, the favored unions withdrew from the international organizations and broke off all affiliations. Then came trouble and violence. The members of the favored unions were branded as traitors, and in saloons and brothels, on the streets and at work, and, in fact, everywhere, they were assaulted by the comrades they had so treacherously deserted.

Countless heads were broken, and there were many killed. No member of the favored unions was safe. They gathered together in bands in order to go to work or to return from work. They walked always in the middle of the street. On the sidewalk they were liable to have their skulls crushed by bricks and cobblestones thrown from windows and house-tops. They were permitted to carry weapons, and the authorities aided them in every way. Their persecutors were sentenced to long terms in prison, where they were harshly treated; while no man, not a member of the favored unions, was permitted to carry weapons. Violation of this law was made a high misdemeanor and punished accordingly.

Outraged labor continued to wreak vengeance on the traitors. Caste lines formed automatically. The children of the traitors were persecuted by the children of the workers who had been betrayed, until it was impossible for the former to play on the streets or to attend the public schools. Also, the wives and families of the traitors were ostracized, while the corner groceryman who sold provisions to them was boycotted.

As a result, driven back upon themselves from every side, the traitors and their families became clannish. Finding it impossible to dwell in safety in the midst of the betrayed proletariat, they moved into new localities inhabited by themselves alone. In this they were favored by the oligarchs. Good dwellings, modern and sanitary, were built for them, surrounded by spacious yards, and separated here and there by parks and playgrounds. Their children attended schools especially built for them, and in these schools manual training and applied science were specialized upon. Thus, and unavoidably, at the very beginning, out of this segregation arose caste. The members of the favored unions became the aristocracy of labor. They were set apart from the rest of labor. They were better housed, better clothed, better fed, better treated. They were grab-sharing with a vengeance.

In the meantime, the rest of the working class was more harshly treated. Many little privileges were taken away from it, while its wages and its standard of living steadily sank down. Incidentally, its public schools deteriorated, and education slowly ceased to be compulsory. The increase in the younger generation of children who could not read nor write was perilous.

The capture of the world-market by the United States had disrupted the rest of the world. Institutions and governments were everywhere crashing or transforming. Germany, Italy, France, Australia, and New Zealand were busy forming cooperative commonwealths. The British Empire was falling apart. England's hands were full. In India revolt was in full swing. The cry in all Asia was, "Asia for the Asiatics!" And behind this cry was Japan, ever urging and aiding the yellow and brown races against the white. And while Japan dreamed of continental empire and strove to realize the dream, she suppressed her own proletarian revolution. It was a simple war of the castes, Coolie versus Samurai, and the coolie socialists were executed by tens of thousands. Forty thousand were killed in the street-fighting of Tokio and in the futile assault on the Mikado's palace. Kobe was a shambles; the slaughter of the cotton operatives by machine-guns became classic as the most terrific execution ever achieved by modern war machines. Most savage of all was the Japanese Oligarchy that arose. Japan dominated the East, and took to herself the whole Asiatic portion of the world-market, with the exception of India.

England managed to crush her own proletarian revolution and to hold on to India, though she was brought to the verge of exhaustion. Also, she was compelled to let her great colonies slip away from her. So it was that the socialists succeeded in making Australia and New Zealand into cooperative commonwealths. And it was for the same reason that Canada was lost to the mother country. But Canada crushed her own socialist revolution, being aided in this by the Iron Heel. At the same time, the Iron Heel helped

Mexico and Cuba to put down revolt. The result was that the Iron Heel was firmly established in the New World. It had welded into one compact political mass the whole of North America from the Panama Canal to the Arctic Ocean.

And England, at the sacrifice of her great colonies, had succeeded only in retaining India. But this was no more than temporary. The struggle with Japan and the rest of Asia for India was merely delayed. England was destined shortly to lose India, while behind that event loomed the struggle between a united Asia and the world.

And while all the world was torn with conflict, we of the United States were not placid and peaceful. The defection of the great unions had prevented our proletarian revolt, but violence was everywhere. In addition to the labor troubles, and the discontent of the farmers and of the remnant of the middle class, a religious revival had blazed up. An offshoot of the Seventh Day Adventists sprang into sudden prominence, proclaiming the end of the world.

"Confusion thrice confounded!" Ernest cried. "How can we hope for solidarity with all these cross purposes and conflicts?"

And truly the religious revival assumed formidable proportions. The people, what of their wretchedness, and of their disappointment in all things earthly, were ripe and eager for a heaven where industrial tyrants entered no more than camels passed through needle-eyes. Wild-eyed itinerant preachers swarmed over the land; and despite the prohibition of the civil authorities, and the persecution for disobedience, the flames of religious frenzy were fanned by countless camp-meetings.

It was the last days, they claimed, the beginning of the end of the world. The four winds had been loosed. God had stirred the nations to strife. It was a time of visions and miracles, while seers and prophetesses were legion. The people ceased work by hundreds of thousands and fled to the mountains, there to await the imminent coming of God and the rising of the hundred and forty and four thousand to heaven. But in the meantime God did not come, and they starved to death in great numbers. In their desperation they ravaged the farms for food, and the consequent tumult and anarchy in the country districts but increased the woes of the poor expropriated farmers.

Also, the farms and warehouses were the property of the Iron Heel. Armies of troops were put into the field, and the fanatics were herded back at the bayonet point to their tasks in the cities. There they broke out in ever recurring mobs and riots. Their leaders were executed for sedition or confined in madhouses. Those who were executed went to their deaths with all the gladness of martyrs. It was a time of madness. The unrest spread. In the swamps and deserts and waste places, from Florida to Alaska, the small groups of Indians that survived were dancing ghost dances and waiting the coming of a Messiah of their own.

And through it all, with a serenity and certitude that was terrifying, continued to rise the form of that monster of the ages, the Oligarchy. With iron hand and iron heel it mastered the surging millions, out of confusion brought order, out of the very chaos wrought its own foundation and structure.

“Just wait till we get in,” the Grangers said — Calvin said it to us in our Pell Street quarters. “Look at the states we’ve captured. With you socialists to back us, we’ll make them sing another song when we take office.”

“The millions of the discontented and the impoverished are ours,” the socialists said. “The Grangers have come over to us, the farmers, the middle class, and the laborers. The capitalist system will fall to pieces. In another month we send fifty men to Congress. Two years hence every office will be ours, from the President down to the local dog-catcher.”

To all of which Ernest would shake his head and say:

“How many rifles have you got? Do you know where you can get plenty of lead? When it comes to powder, chemical mixtures are better than mechanical mixtures, you take my word.”

CHAPTER XVI

THE END

When it came time for Ernest and me to go to Washington, father did not accompany us. He had become enamoured of proletarian life. He looked upon our slum neighborhood as a great sociological laboratory, and he had embarked upon an apparently endless orgy of investigation. He chummed with the laborers, and was an intimate in scores of homes. Also, he worked at odd jobs, and the work was play as well as learned investigation, for he delighted in it and was always returning home with copious notes and bubbling over with new adventures. He was the perfect scientist.

There was no need for his working at all, because Ernest managed to earn enough from his translating to take care of the three of us. But father insisted on pursuing his favorite phantom, and a protean phantom it was, judging from the jobs he worked at. I shall never forget the evening he brought home his street pedler's outfit of shoe-laces and suspenders, nor the time I went into the little corner grocery to make some purchase and had him wait on me. After that I was not surprised when he tended bar for a week in the saloon across the street. He worked as a night watchman, hawked potatoes on the street, pasted labels in a cannery warehouse, was utility man in a paper-box factory, and water-carrier for a street railway construction gang, and even joined the Dishwashers' Union just before it fell to pieces.

I think the Bishop's example, so far as wearing apparel was concerned, must have fascinated father, for he wore the cheap cotton shirt of the laborer and the overalls with the narrow strap about the hips. Yet one habit remained to him from the old life; he always dressed for dinner, or supper, rather.

I could be happy anywhere with Ernest; and father's happiness in our changed circumstances rounded out my own happiness.

"When I was a boy," father said, "I was very curious. I wanted to know why things were and how they came to pass. That was why I became a physicist. The life in me to-day is just as curious as it was in my boyhood, and it's the being curious that makes life worth living."

Sometimes he ventured north of Market Street into the shopping and theatre district, where he sold papers, ran errands, and opened cabs. There, one day, closing a cab, he encountered Mr. Wickson. In high glee father described the incident to us that evening.

"Wickson looked at me sharply when I closed the door on him, and muttered, 'Well, I'll be damned.' Just like that he said it, 'Well, I'll be damned.' His face turned red and he was so confused that he forgot to tip me. But he must have recovered himself quickly, for the cab hadn't gone fifty feet before it turned around and came back. He leaned out of the door.

"'Look here, Professor,' he said, 'this is too much. What can I do for you?'

"'I closed the cab door for you,' I answered. 'According to common custom you might give me a dime.'

"'Bother that!' he snorted. 'I mean something substantial.'

"He was certainly serious — a twinge of ossified conscience or something; and so I considered with grave deliberation for a moment.

"His face was quite expectant when I began my answer, but you should have seen it when I finished.

"'You might give me back my home,' I said, 'and my stock in the Sierra Mills.'"

Father paused.

"What did he say?" I questioned eagerly.

"What could he say? He said nothing. But I said. 'I hope you are happy.' He looked at me curiously. 'Tell me, are you happy?'" I asked.

"He ordered the cabman to drive on, and went away swearing horribly. And he didn't give me the dime, much less the home and stock; so you see, my dear, your father's street-arab career is beset with disappointments."

And so it was that father kept on at our Pell Street quarters, while Ernest and I went to Washington. Except for the final consummation, the old order had passed away, and the final consummation was nearer than I dreamed. Contrary to our expectation, no obstacles were raised to prevent the socialist Congressmen from taking their seats. Everything went smoothly, and I laughed at Ernest when he looked upon the very smoothness as something ominous.

We found our socialist comrades confident, optimistic of their strength and of the things they would accomplish. A few Grangers who had been elected to Congress increased our strength, and an elaborate programme of what was to be done was prepared by the united forces. In all of which Ernest joined loyally and energetically, though he could not forbear, now and again, from saying, apropos of nothing in particular, “When it comes to powder, chemical mixtures are better than mechanical mixtures, you take my word.”

The trouble arose first with the Grangers in the various states they had captured at the last election. There were a dozen of these states, but the Grangers who had been elected were not permitted to take office. The incumbents refused to get out. It was very simple. They merely charged illegality in the elections and wrapped up the whole situation in the interminable red tape of the law. The Grangers were powerless. The courts were in the hands of their enemies.

This was the moment of danger. If the cheated Grangers became violent, all was lost. How we socialists worked to hold them back! There were days and nights when Ernest never closed his eyes in sleep. The big leaders of the Grangers saw the peril and were with us to a man. But it was all of no avail. The Oligarchy wanted violence, and it set its agents-provocateurs to work. Without discussion, it was the agents-provocateurs who caused the Peasant Revolt.

In a dozen states the revolt flared up. The expropriated farmers took forcible possession of the state governments. Of course this was unconstitutional, and of course the United States put its soldiers into the field. Everywhere the agents-provocateurs urged the people on. These emissaries of the Iron Heel disguised themselves as artisans, farmers, and farm laborers. In Sacramento, the capital of California, the Grangers had succeeded in maintaining order. Thousands of secret agents were rushed to the devoted city. In mobs composed wholly of themselves, they fired and looted buildings and factories. They worked the people up until they joined them in the pillage. Liquor in large quantities was distributed among the slum classes further to inflame their minds. And then, when all was ready, appeared upon the scene the soldiers of the United States, who were, in reality, the soldiers of the Iron Heel. Eleven thousand men, women, and children were shot down on the streets of Sacramento or murdered in their houses. The national government took possession of the state government, and all was over for California.

And as with California, so elsewhere. Every Granger state was ravaged with violence and washed in blood. First, disorder was precipitated by the secret agents and the Black Hundreds, then the troops were called out. Rioting and mob-rule reigned throughout the rural districts. Day and night the smoke of burning farms, warehouses, villages, and cities filled the sky. Dynamite appeared. Railroad bridges and tunnels were blown up and trains were wrecked. The poor farmers were shot and hanged in great numbers. Reprisals were bitter, and many plutocrats and army officers were murdered. Blood and vengeance were in men's hearts. The regular troops fought the farmers as savagely as had they been Indians. And the regular troops had cause. Twenty-eight hundred of them had been annihilated in a tremendous series of dynamite explosions in Oregon, and in a similar manner, a number of train loads, at different times and places, had been destroyed. So it was that the regular troops fought for their lives as well as did the farmers.

As for the militia, the militia law of 1903 was put into effect, and the workers of one state were compelled, under pain of death, to shoot down their comrade-workers in other states. Of course, the militia law did not work smoothly at first. Many militia officers were murdered, and many militiamen were executed by drumhead court martial. Ernest's prophecy was strikingly fulfilled in the cases of Mr. Kowalt and Mr. Asmunsen. Both were eligible for the militia, and both were drafted to serve in the punitive expedition that was despatched from California against the farmers of Missouri. Mr. Kowalt and Mr. Asmunsen refused to serve. They were given short shrift. Drumhead court martial was their portion, and military execution their end. They were shot with their backs to the firing squad.

Many young men fled into the mountains to escape serving in the militia. There they became outlaws, and it was not until more peaceful times that they received their punishment. It was drastic. The government issued a proclamation for all law-abiding citizens to come in from the mountains for a period of three months. When the proclaimed date arrived, half a million soldiers were sent into the mountainous districts everywhere. There was no investigation, no trial. Wherever a man was encountered, he was shot down on the spot. The troops operated on the basis that no man not an outlaw remained in the mountains. Some bands, in strong positions, fought gallantly, but in the end every deserter from the militia met death.

A more immediate lesson, however, was impressed on the minds of the people by the punishment meted out to the Kansas militia. The great Kansas Mutiny occurred at the very beginning of military operations against the Grangers. Six thousand of the militia mutinied. They had been for several weeks very turbulent and sullen, and for that reason had been kept in camp.

Their open mutiny, however, was without doubt precipitated by the agents-provocateurs.

On the night of the 22d of April they arose and murdered their officers, only a small remnant of the latter escaping. This was beyond the scheme of the Iron Heel, for the agents-provocateurs had done their work too well. But everything was grist to the Iron Heel. It had prepared for the outbreak, and the killing of so many officers gave it justification for what followed. As by magic, forty thousand soldiers of the regular army surrounded the malcontents. It was a trap. The wretched militiamen found that their machine-guns had been tampered with, and that the cartridges from the captured magazines did not fit their rifles. They hoisted the white flag of surrender, but it was ignored. There were no survivors. The entire six thousand were annihilated. Common shell and shrapnel were thrown in upon them from a distance, and, when, in their desperation, they charged the encircling lines, they were mowed down by the machine-guns. I talked with an eye-witness, and he said that the nearest any militiaman approached the machine-guns was a hundred and fifty yards. The earth was carpeted with the slain, and a final charge of cavalry, with trampling of horses' hoofs, revolvers, and sabres, crushed the wounded into the ground.

Simultaneously with the destruction of the Grangers came the revolt of the coal miners. It was the expiring effort of organized labor. Three-quarters of a million of miners went out on strike. But they were too widely scattered over the country to advantage from their own strength. They were segregated in their own districts and beaten into submission. This was the first great slave-drive. Pocock* won his spurs as a slave-driver and earned the undying hatred of the proletariat. Countless attempts were made upon his life, but he seemed to bear a charmed existence. It was he who was responsible for the introduction of the Russian passport system among the miners, and the denial of their right of removal from one part of the country to another.

* Albert Pocock, another of the notorious strike-breakers of earlier years, who, to the day of his death, successfully held all the coal-miners of the country to their task. He was succeeded by his son, Lewis Pocock, and for five generations this remarkable line of slave-drivers handled the coal mines. The elder Pocock, known as Pocock I., has been described as follows: "A long, lean head, semicircled

by a fringe of brown and gray hair, with big cheek-bones and a heavy chin, . . . a pale face, lustreless gray eyes, a metallic voice, and a languid manner." He was born of humble parents, and began his career as a bartender. He next became a private detective for a street railway corporation, and by successive steps developed into a professional strikebreaker. Pocock V., the last of the line, was blown up in a pump-house by a bomb during a petty revolt of the miners in the Indian Territory. This occurred in 2073 A.D.

In the meantime, the socialists held firm. While the Grangers expired in flame and blood, and organized labor was disrupted, the socialists held their peace and perfected their secret organization. In vain the Grangers pleaded with us. We rightly contended that any revolt on our part was virtually suicide for the whole Revolution. The Iron Heel, at first dubious about dealing with the entire proletariat at one time, had found the work easier than it had expected, and would have asked nothing better than an uprising on our part. But we avoided the issue, in spite of the fact that agents-provocateurs swarmed in our midst. In those early days, the agents of the Iron Heel were clumsy in their methods. They had much to learn and in the meantime our Fighting Groups weeded them out. It was bitter, bloody work, but we were fighting for life and for the Revolution, and we had to fight the enemy with its own weapons. Yet we were fair. No agent of the Iron Heel was executed without a trial. We may have made mistakes, but if so, very rarely. The bravest, and the most combative and self-sacrificing of our comrades went into the Fighting Groups. Once, after ten years had passed, Ernest made a calculation from figures furnished by the chiefs of the Fighting Groups, and his conclusion was that the average life of a man or woman after becoming a member was five years. The comrades of the Fighting Groups were heroes all, and the peculiar thing about it was that they were opposed to the taking of life. They violated their own natures, yet they loved liberty and knew of no sacrifice too great to make for the Cause.*

* These Fighting groups were modelled somewhat after the Fighting Organization of the Russian Revolution, and, despite the unceasing efforts of the Iron Heel, these groups persisted throughout the three centuries of its existence.

Composed of men and women actuated by lofty purpose and unafraid to die, the Fighting Groups exercised tremendous influence and tempered the savage brutality of the rulers. Not alone was their work confined to unseen warfare with the secret agents of the Oligarchy. The oligarchs themselves were compelled to listen to the decrees of the Groups, and often, when they disobeyed, were punished by death — and likewise with the subordinates of the oligarchs, with the officers of the army and the leaders of the labor castes.

Stern justice was meted out by these organized avengers, but most remarkable was their passionless and judicial procedure. There were no snap judgments. When a man was captured he was given fair trial and opportunity for defence. Of necessity, many men were tried and condemned by proxy, as in the case of General Lampton. This occurred in 2138 A.D. Possibly the most bloodthirsty and malignant of all the mercenaries that ever served the Iron Heel, he was informed by the Fighting Groups that they had tried him, found him guilty, and condemned him to death — and this, after three warnings for him to cease from his ferocious treatment of the proletariat. After his condemnation he surrounded himself with a myriad protective devices. Years passed, and in vain the Fighting Groups strove to execute their decree. Comrade after comrade, men and women, failed in their attempts, and were cruelly executed by the Oligarchy. It was the case of General Lampton that revived crucifixion as a legal method of execution. But in the end the condemned man found his executioner in the form of a slender girl of seventeen, Madeline Provence, who, to accomplish her purpose, served two years in his palace as a seamstress to the household. She died in solitary confinement after horrible and prolonged torture; but to-day she stands in imperishable bronze in the Pantheon of Brotherhood in the wonder city of Serles.

We, who by personal experience know nothing of bloodshed,

> must not judge harshly the heroes of the Fighting Groups. They gave up their lives for humanity, no sacrifice was too great for them to accomplish, while inexorable necessity compelled them to bloody expression in an age of blood. The Fighting Groups constituted the one thorn in the side of the Iron Heel that the Iron Heel could never remove. Everhard was the father of this curious army, and its accomplishments and successful persistence for three hundred years bear witness to the wisdom with which he organized and the solid foundation he laid for the succeeding generations to build upon. In some respects, despite his great economic and sociological contributions, and his work as a general leader in the Revolution, his organization of the Fighting Groups must be regarded as his greatest achievement.

The task we set ourselves was threefold. First, the weeding out from our circles of the secret agents of the Oligarchy. Second, the organizing of the Fighting Groups, and outside of them, of the general secret organization of the Revolution. And third, the introduction of our own secret agents into every branch of the Oligarchy — into the labor castes and especially among the telegraphers and secretaries and clerks, into the army, the agents-provocateurs, and the slave-drivers. It was slow work, and perilous, and often were our efforts rewarded with costly failures.

The Iron Heel had triumphed in open warfare, but we held our own in the new warfare, strange and awful and subterranean, that we instituted. All was unseen, much was unguessed; the blind fought the blind; and yet through it all was order, purpose, control. We permeated the entire organization of the Iron Heel with our agents, while our own organization was permeated with the agents of the Iron Heel. It was warfare dark and devious, replete with intrigue and conspiracy, plot and counterplot. And behind all, ever menacing, was death, violent and terrible. Men and women disappeared, our nearest and dearest comrades. We saw them to-day. To-morrow they were gone; we never saw them again, and we knew that they had died.

There was no trust, no confidence anywhere. The man who plotted beside us, for all we knew, might be an agent of the Iron Heel. We mined the organization of the Iron Heel with our secret agents, and the Iron Heel countermined with its secret agents inside its own organization. And it was the same with our organization. And despite the absence of confidence and trust we were compelled to base our every effort on confidence and trust. Often were we betrayed. Men were weak. The Iron Heel could offer money, leisure, the joys and pleasures that waited in the repose of the wonder cities. We could offer nothing but the satisfaction of being faithful to a noble ideal. As for the rest, the wages of those who were loyal were unceasing peril, torture, and death.

Men were weak, I say, and because of their weakness we were compelled to make the only other reward that was within our power. It was the reward of death. Out of necessity we had to punish our traitors. For every man who betrayed us, from one to a dozen faithful avengers were loosed upon his heels. We might fail to carry out our decrees against our enemies, such as the Pococks, for instance; but the one thing we could not afford to fail in was the punishment of our own traitors. Comrades turned traitor by permission, in order to win to the wonder cities and there execute our sentences on the real traitors. In fact, so terrible did we make ourselves, that it became a greater peril to betray us than to remain loyal to us.

The Revolution took on largely the character of religion. We worshipped at the shrine of the Revolution, which was the shrine of liberty. It was the divine flashing through us. Men and women devoted their lives to the Cause, and new-born babes were sealed to it as of old they had been sealed to the service of God. We were lovers of Humanity.

CHAPTER XVII

THE SCARLET LIVERY

With the destruction of the Granger states, the Grangers in Congress disappeared. They were being tried for high treason, and their places were taken by the creatures of the Iron Heel. The socialists were in a pitiful minority, and they knew that their end was near. Congress and the Senate were empty pretences, farces. Public questions were gravely debated and passed upon according to the old forms, while in reality all that was done was to give the stamp of constitutional procedure to the mandates of the Oligarchy.

Ernest was in the thick of the fight when the end came. It was in the debate on the bill to assist the unemployed. The hard times of the preceding year had thrust great masses of the proletariat beneath the starvation line, and the continued and wide-reaching disorder had but sunk them deeper. Millions of people were starving, while the oligarchs and their supporters were surfeiting on the surplus.* We called these wretched people the people of the abyss,** and it was to alleviate their awful suffering that the socialists had introduced the unemployed bill. But this was not to the fancy of the Iron Heel. In its own way it was preparing to set these millions to work, but the way was not our way, wherefore it had issued its orders that our bill should be voted down. Ernest and his fellows knew that their effort was futile, but they were tired of the suspense. They wanted something to happen. They were accomplishing nothing, and the best they hoped for was the putting of an end to the legislative farce in which they were unwilling players. They knew not what end would come, but they never anticipated a more disastrous end than the one that did come.

* The same conditions obtained in the nineteenth century A.D. under British rule in India. The natives died of starvation by the million, while their rulers robbed them of the fruits of their toil and expended it on magnificent pageants and mumbo-jumbo fooleries. Perforce, in this enlightened age, we have much to blush for in the acts of our ancestors. Our only consolation is philosophic. We must accept the capitalistic stage in social evolution as about on a par with the earlier monkey stage. The human had

to pass through those stages in its rise from the mire and slime of low organic life. It was inevitable that much of the mire and slime should cling and be not easily shaken off.

** The people of the abyss — this phrase was struck out by the genius of H. G. Wells in the late nineteenth century A.D. Wells was a sociological seer, sane and normal as well as warm human. Many fragments of his work have come down to us, while two of his greatest achievements, "Anticipations" and "Mankind in the Making," have come down intact. Before the oligarchs, and before Everhard, Wells speculated upon the building of the wonder cities, though in his writings they are referred to as "pleasure cities."

I sat in the gallery that day. We all knew that something terrible was imminent. It was in the air, and its presence was made visible by the armed soldiers drawn up in lines in the corridors, and by the officers grouped in the entrances to the House itself. The Oligarchy was about to strike. Ernest was speaking. He was describing the sufferings of the unemployed, as if with the wild idea of in some way touching their hearts and consciences; but the Republican and Democratic members sneered and jeered at him, and there was uproar and confusion. Ernest abruptly changed front.

"I know nothing that I may say can influence you," he said. "You have no souls to be influenced. You are spineless, flaccid things. You pompously call yourselves Republicans and Democrats. There is no Republican Party. There is no Democratic Party. There are no Republicans nor Democrats in this House. You are lick-spittlers and panderers, the creatures of the Plutocracy. You talk verbosely in antiquated terminology of your love of liberty, and all the while you wear the scarlet livery of the Iron Heel."

Here the shouting and the cries of "Order! order!" drowned his voice, and he stood disdainfully till the din had somewhat subsided. He waved his hand to include all of them, turned to his own comrades, and said:

"Listen to the bellowing of the well-fed beasts."

Pandemonium broke out again. The Speaker rapped for order and glanced expectantly at the officers in the doorways. There were cries of "Sedition!" and a great, rotund New York member began shouting "Anarchist!" at Ernest. And Ernest was not pleasant to look at. Every fighting fibre of him was quivering, and his face was the face of a fighting animal, withal he was cool and collected.

"Remember," he said, in a voice that made itself heard above the din, "that as you show mercy now to the proletariat, some day will that same proletariat show mercy to you."

The cries of "Sedition!" and "Anarchist!" redoubled.

"I know that you will not vote for this bill," Ernest went on. "You have received the command from your masters to vote against it. And yet you call me anarchist. You, who have destroyed the government of the people, and who shamelessly flaunt your scarlet shame in public places, call me anarchist. I do not believe in hell-fire and brimstone; but in moments like this I regret my unbelief. Nay, in moments like this I almost do believe. Surely there must be a hell, for in no less place could it be possible for you to receive punishment adequate to your crimes. So long as you exist, there is a vital need for hell-fire in the Cosmos."

There was movement in the doorways. Ernest, the Speaker, all the members turned to see.

"Why do you not call your soldiers in, Mr. Speaker, and bid them do their work?" Ernest demanded. "They should carry out your plan with expedition."

"There are other plans afoot," was the retort. "That is why the soldiers are present."

"Our plans, I suppose," Ernest sneered. "Assassination or something kindred."

But at the word "assassination" the uproar broke out again. Ernest could not make himself heard, but he remained on his feet waiting for a lull. And then it happened. From my place in the gallery I saw nothing except the flash of the explosion. The roar of it filled my ears and I saw Ernest reeling and falling in a swirl of smoke, and the soldiers rushing up all the aisles. His comrades were on their feet, wild with anger, capable of any violence. But Ernest steadied himself for a moment, and waved his arms for silence.

"It is a plot!" his voice rang out in warning to his comrades. "Do nothing, or you will be destroyed."

Then he slowly sank down, and the soldiers reached him. The next moment soldiers were clearing the galleries and I saw no more.

Though he was my husband, I was not permitted to get to him. When I announced who I was, I was promptly placed under arrest. And at the same time were arrested all socialist Congressmen in Washington, including the unfortunate Simpson, who lay ill with typhoid fever in his hotel.

The trial was prompt and brief. The men were foredoomed. The wonder was that Ernest was not executed. This was a blunder on the part of the Oligarchy, and a costly one. But the Oligarchy was too confident in those days. It was drunk with success, and little did it dream that that small handful of heroes had within them the power to rock it to its foundations. To-morrow, when the Great Revolt breaks out and all the world resounds with the tramp, tramp of the millions, the Oligarchy, will realize, and too late, how mightily that band of heroes has grown.*

* Avis Everhard took for granted that her narrative would be read in her own day, and so omits to mention the outcome of the trial for high treason. Many other similar disconcerting omissions will be noticed in the Manuscript. Fifty-two socialist Congressmen were tried, and all were found guilty. Strange to relate, not one received the death sentence. Everhard and eleven others, among whom were Theodore Donnelson and Matthew Kent, received life imprisonment. The remaining forty received sentences varying from thirty to forty-five years; while Arthur Simpson, referred to in the Manuscript as being ill of typhoid fever at the time of the explosion, received only fifteen years. It is the tradition that he died of starvation in solitary confinement, and this harsh treatment is explained as having been caused by his uncompromising stubbornness and his fiery and tactless hatred for all men that served the despotism. He died in Cabanas in Cuba, where three of his comrades were also confined. The fifty-two socialist Congressmen were confined in military fortresses scattered all over the United States. Thus, Du Bois and Woods were held in Porto Rico, while Everhard and Merryweather were placed in Alcatraz, an island in San Francisco Bay that had already seen long service as a military prison.

As a revolutionist myself, as one on the inside who knew the hopes and fears and secret plans of the revolutionists, I am fitted to answer, as very few are, the charge that they were guilty of exploding the bomb in

Congress. And I can say flatly, without qualification or doubt of any sort, that the socialists, in Congress and out, had no hand in the affair. Who threw the bomb we do not know, but the one thing we are absolutely sure of is that we did not throw it.

On the other hand, there is evidence to show that the Iron Heel was responsible for the act. Of course, we cannot prove this. Our conclusion is merely presumptive. But here are such facts as we do know. It had been reported to the Speaker of the House, by secret-service agents of the government, that the Socialist Congressmen were about to resort to terroristic tactics, and that they had decided upon the day when their tactics would go into effect. This day was the very day of the explosion. Wherefore the Capitol had been packed with troops in anticipation. Since we knew nothing about the bomb, and since a bomb actually was exploded, and since the authorities had prepared in advance for the explosion, it is only fair to conclude that the Iron Heel did know. Furthermore, we charge that the Iron Heel was guilty of the outrage, and that the Iron Heel planned and perpetrated the outrage for the purpose of foisting the guilt on our shoulders and so bringing about our destruction.

From the Speaker the warning leaked out to all the creatures in the House that wore the scarlet livery. They knew, while Ernest was speaking, that some violent act was to be committed. And to do them justice, they honestly believed that the act was to be committed by the socialists. At the trial, and still with honest belief, several testified to having seen Ernest prepare to throw the bomb, and that it exploded prematurely. Of course they saw nothing of the sort. In the fevered imagination of fear they thought they saw, that was all.

As Ernest said at the trial: “Does it stand to reason, if I were going to throw a bomb, that I should elect to throw a feeble little squib like the one that was thrown? There wasn’t enough powder in it. It made a lot of smoke, but hurt no one except me. It exploded right at my feet, and yet it did not kill me. Believe me, when I get to throwing bombs, I’ll do damage. There’ll be more than smoke in my petards.”

In return it was argued by the prosecution that the weakness of the bomb was a blunder on the part of the socialists, just as its premature explosion, caused by Ernest’s losing his nerve and dropping it, was a blunder. And to clinch the argument, there were the several Congressmen who testified to having seen Ernest fumble and drop the bomb.

As for ourselves, not one of us knew how the bomb was thrown. Ernest told me that the fraction of an instant before it exploded he both heard and saw it strike at his feet. He testified to this at the trial, but no one believed him. Besides, the whole thing, in popular slang, was “cooked up.” The Iron Heel had made up its mind to destroy us, and there was no withstanding it.

There is a saying that truth will out. I have come to doubt that saying. Nineteen years have elapsed, and despite our untiring efforts, we have failed to find the man who really did throw the bomb. Undoubtedly he was some emissary of the Iron Heel, but he has escaped detection. We have never got the slightest clew to his identity. And now, at this late date, nothing remains but for the affair to take its place among the mysteries of history.*

---

* Avis Everhard would have had to live for many generations ere she could have seen the clearing up of this particular mystery. A little less than a hundred years ago, and a little more than six hundred years after the death, the confession of Pervaise was discovered in the secret archives of the Vatican. It is perhaps well to tell a little something about this obscure document, which, in the main, is of interest to the historian only.

Pervaise was an American, of French descent, who in 1913 A.D., was lying in the Tombs Prison, New York City, awaiting trial for murder. From his confession we learn that he was not a criminal. He was warm-blooded, passionate, emotional. In an insane fit of jealousy he killed his wife — a very common act in those times. Pervaise was mastered by the fear of death, all of which is recounted at length in his confession. To escape death he would have done anything, and the police agents prepared him by assuring him that he could not possibly escape conviction of murder in the first degree when his trial came off. In those days, murder in the first degree was a capital offense. The guilty man or woman was placed in a specially constructed death-chair, and, under the supervision of competent physicians, was destroyed by a current of electricity. This was called electrocution, and it was very popular during that period.

Anaesthesia, as a mode of compulsory death, was not introduced until later.

This man, good at heart but with a ferocious animalism close at the surface of his being, lying in jail and expectant of nothing less than death, was prevailed upon by the agents of the Iron Heel to throw the bomb in the House of Representatives. In his confession he states explicitly that he was informed that the bomb was to be a feeble thing and that no lives would be lost. This is directly in line with the fact that the bomb was lightly charged, and that its explosion at Everhard's feet was not deadly.

Pervaise was smuggled into one of the galleries ostensibly closed for repairs. He was to select the moment for the throwing of the bomb, and he naively confesses that in his interest in Everhard's tirade and the general commotion raised thereby, he nearly forgot his mission.

Not only was he released from prison in reward for his deed, but he was granted an income for life. This he did not long enjoy. In 1914 A.D., in September, he was stricken with rheumatism of the heart and lived for three days. It was then that he sent for the Catholic priest, Father Peter Durban, and to him made confession. So important did it seem to the priest, that he had the confession taken down in writing and sworn to. What happened after this we can only surmise. The document was certainly important enough to find its way to Rome. Powerful influences must have been brought to bear, hence its suppression. For centuries no hint of its existence reached the world. It was not until in the last century that Lorbia, the brilliant Italian scholar, stumbled upon it quite by chance during his researches in the Vatican.

There is to-day no doubt whatever that the Iron Heel was responsible for the bomb that exploded in the House of Representatives in 1913 A.D. Even though the Pervaise confession had never come to light, no reasonable doubt could obtain; for the act in question, that sent fifty-two Congressmen to prison, was on a par with countless other acts committed by the oligarchs, and, before them, by the capitalists.

There is the classic instance of the ferocious and wanton judicial murder of the innocent and so-called Haymarket Anarchists in Chicago in the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century A.D. In a category by itself is the deliberate burning and destruction of capitalist property by the capitalists themselves. For such destruction of property innocent men were frequently punished — ”railroaded” in the parlance of the times.

In the labor troubles of the first decade of the twentieth century A.D., between the capitalists and the Western Federation of Miners, similar but more bloody tactics were employed. The railroad station at Independence was blown up by the agents of the capitalists. Thirteen men were killed, and many more were wounded. And then the capitalists, controlling the legislative and judicial machinery of the state of Colorado, charged the miners with the crime and came very near to convicting them. Romaines, one of the tools in this affair, like Pervaise, was lying in jail in another state, Kansas, awaiting trial, when he was approached by the agents of the capitalists. But, unlike Pervaise the confession of Romaines was made public in his own time.

Then, during this same period, there was the case of Moyer and Haywood, two strong, fearless leaders of labor. One was president and the other was secretary of the Western Federation of Miners. The ex-governor of Idaho had been mysteriously murdered. The crime, at the time, was openly charged to the mine owners by the socialists and miners. Nevertheless, in violation of the national and state constitutions, and by means of conspiracy on the parts of the governors of Idaho and Colorado, Moyer and Haywood were kidnapped, thrown into jail, and charged with the murder. It was this instance that provoked from Eugene V. Debs, national leader of the American socialists at the time, the following words: “The labor leaders that cannot be bribed nor bullied, must be ambushed and murdered. The only crime of Moyer and Haywood is that they have been unswervingly true to the working class. The capitalists have stolen our country, debauched our politics, defiled our judiciary, and ridden over us rough-shod, and now they propose to murder those who will not abjectly surrender to their brutal dominion. The governors of Colorado and Idaho are but executing the mandates of their masters, the Plutocracy. The issue is the Workers versus the Plutocracy. If they strike the first violent blow, we will strike the last.”

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE SHADOW OF SONOMA

Of myself, during this period, there is not much to say. For six months I was kept in prison, though charged with no crime. I was a suspect — a word of fear that all revolutionists were soon to come to know. But our own nascent secret service was beginning to work. By the end of my second month in prison, one of the jailers made himself known as a revolutionist in touch with the organization. Several weeks later, Joseph Parkhurst, the prison doctor who had just been appointed, proved himself to be a member of one of the Fighting Groups.

Thus, throughout the organization of the Oligarchy, our own organization, weblike and spidery, was insinuating itself. And so I was kept in touch with all that was happening in the world without. And furthermore, every one of our imprisoned leaders was in contact with brave comrades who masqueraded in the livery of the Iron Heel. Though Ernest lay in prison three thousand miles away, on the Pacific Coast, I was in unbroken communication with him, and our letters passed regularly back and forth.

The leaders, in prison and out, were able to discuss and direct the campaign. It would have been possible, within a few months, to have effected the escape of some of them; but since imprisonment proved no bar to our activities, it was decided to avoid anything premature. Fifty-two Congressmen were in prison, and fully three hundred more of our leaders. It was planned that they should be delivered simultaneously. If part of them escaped, the vigilance of the oligarchs might be aroused so as to prevent the escape of the remainder. On the other hand, it was held that a simultaneous jail-delivery all over the land would have immense psychological influence on the proletariat. It would show our strength and give confidence.

So it was arranged, when I was released at the end of six months, that I was to disappear and prepare a secure hiding-place for Ernest. To disappear was in itself no easy thing. No sooner did I get my freedom than my footsteps began to be dogged by the spies of the Iron Heel. It was necessary that they should be thrown off the track, and that I should win to California. It is laughable, the way this was accomplished.

Already the passport system, modelled on the Russian, was developing. I dared not cross the continent in my own character. It was necessary that I should be completely lost if ever I was to see Ernest again, for by trailing me after he escaped, he would be caught once more. Again, I could not disguise myself as a proletarian and travel. There remained the disguise of a member of the Oligarchy. While the arch-oligarchs were no more than a handful, there were myriads of lesser ones of the type, say, of Mr. Wickson — men, worth a few millions, who were adherents of the arch-oligarchs. The wives and daughters of these lesser oligarchs were legion, and it was decided that I should assume the disguise of such a one. A few years later this would have been impossible, because the passport system was to become so perfect that no man, woman, nor child in all the land was unregistered and unaccounted for in his or her movements.

When the time was ripe, the spies were thrown off my track. An hour later Avis Everhard was no more. At that time one Felice Van Verdighan, accompanied by two maids and a lap-dog, with another maid for the lap-dog,* entered a drawing-room on a Pullman,** and a few minutes later was speeding west.

* This ridiculous picture well illustrates the heartless conduct of the masters. While people starved, lap-dogs were waited upon by maids. This was a serious masquerade on the part of Avis Everhard. Life and death and the Cause were in the issue; therefore the picture must be accepted as a true picture. It affords a striking commentary of the times.

** Pullman — the designation of the more luxurious railway cars of the period and so named from the inventor.

The three maids who accompanied me were revolutionists. Two were members of the Fighting Groups, and the third, Grace Holbrook, entered a group the following year, and six months later was executed by the Iron Heel. She it was who waited upon the dog. Of the other two, Bertha Stole disappeared twelve years later, while Anna Roylston still lives and plays an increasingly important part in the Revolution.*

* Despite continual and almost inconceivable hazards, Anna Roylston lived to the royal age of ninety-one. As the Pococks defied the executioners of the Fighting Groups, so she defied the executioners of the Iron Heel. She bore a charmed life and prospered amid dangers and alarms. She herself was an executioner for the Fighting Groups, and,

> known as the Red Virgin, she became one of the inspired figures of the Revolution. When she was an old woman of sixty-nine she shot "Bloody" Halcliffe down in the midst of his armed escort and got away unscathed. In the end she died peaceably of old age in a secret refuge of the revolutionists in the Ozark mountains.

Without adventure we crossed the United States to California. When the train stopped at Sixteenth Street Station, in Oakland, we alighted, and there Felice Van Verdighan, with her two maids, her lap-dog, and her lap-dog's maid, disappeared forever. The maids, guided by trusty comrades, were led away. Other comrades took charge of me. Within half an hour after leaving the train I was on board a small fishing boat and out on the waters of San Francisco Bay. The winds baffled, and we drifted aimlessly the greater part of the night. But I saw the lights of Alcatraz where Ernest lay, and found comfort in the thought of nearness to him. By dawn, what with the rowing of the fishermen, we made the Marin Islands. Here we lay in hiding all day, and on the following night, swept on by a flood tide and a fresh wind, we crossed San Pablo Bay in two hours and ran up Petaluma Creek.

Here horses were ready and another comrade, and without delay we were away through the starlight. To the north I could see the loom of Sonoma Mountain, toward which we rode. We left the old town of Sonoma to the right and rode up a canyon that lay between outlying buttresses of the mountain. The wagon-road became a wood-road, the wood-road became a cow-path, and the cow-path dwindled away and ceased among the upland pastures. Straight over Sonoma Mountain we rode. It was the safest route. There was no one to mark our passing.

Dawn caught us on the northern brow, and in the gray light we dropped down through chaparral into redwood canyons deep and warm with the breath of passing summer. It was old country to me that I knew and loved, and soon I became the guide. The hiding-place was mine. I had selected it. We let down the bars and crossed an upland meadow. Next, we went over a low, oak-covered ridge and descended into a smaller meadow. Again we climbed a ridge, this time riding under red-limbed madronos and manzanitas of deeper red. The first rays of the sun streamed upon our backs as we climbed. A flight of quail thrummed off through the thickets. A big jackrabbit crossed our path, leaping swiftly and silently like a deer. And then a deer, a many-pronged buck, the sun flashing red-gold from neck and shoulders, cleared the crest of the ridge before us and was gone.

We followed in his wake a space, then dropped down a zigzag trail that he disdained into a group of noble redwoods that stood about a pool of water murky with minerals from the mountain side. I knew every inch of the way. Once a writer friend of mine had owned the ranch; but he, too, had become a revolutionist, though more disastrously than I, for he was already dead and gone, and none knew where nor how. He alone, in the days he had lived, knew the secret of the hiding-place for which I was bound. He had bought the ranch for beauty, and paid a round price for it, much to the disgust of the local farmers. He used to tell with great glee how they were wont to shake their heads mournfully at the price, to accomplish ponderously a bit of mental arithmetic, and then to say, “But you can’t make six per cent on it.”

But he was dead now, nor did the ranch descend to his children. Of all men, it was now the property of Mr. Wickson, who owned the whole eastern and northern slopes of Sonoma Mountain, running from the Spreckels estate to the divide of Bennett Valley. Out of it he had made a magnificent deer-park, where, over thousands of acres of sweet slopes and glades and canyons, the deer ran almost in primitive wildness. The people who had owned the soil had been driven away. A state home for the feeble-minded had also been demolished to make room for the deer.

To cap it all, Wickson’s hunting lodge was a quarter of a mile from my hiding-place. This, instead of being a danger, was an added security. We were sheltered under the very aegis of one of the minor oligarchs. Suspicion, by the nature of the situation, was turned aside. The last place in the world the spies of the Iron Heel would dream of looking for me, and for Ernest when he joined me, was Wickson’s deer-park.

We tied our horses among the redwoods at the pool. From a cache behind a hollow rotting log my companion brought out a variety of things, — a fifty-pound sack of flour, tinned foods of all sorts, cooking utensils, blankets, a canvas tarpaulin, books and writing material, a great bundle of letters, a five-gallon can of kerosene, an oil stove, and, last and most important, a large coil of stout rope. So large was the supply of things that a number of trips would be necessary to carry them to the refuge.

But the refuge was very near. Taking the rope and leading the way, I passed through a glade of tangled vines and bushes that ran between two wooded knolls. The glade ended abruptly at the steep bank of a stream. It was a little stream, rising from springs, and the hottest summer never dried it up. On every hand were tall wooded knolls, a group of them, with all the seeming of having been flung there from some careless Titan's hand. There was no bed-rock in them. They rose from their bases hundreds of feet, and they were composed of red volcanic earth, the famous wine-soil of Sonoma. Through these the tiny stream had cut its deep and precipitous channel.

It was quite a scramble down to the stream bed, and, once on the bed, we went down stream perhaps for a hundred feet. And then we came to the great hole. There was no warning of the existence of the hole, nor was it a hole in the common sense of the word. One crawled through tight-locked briers and branches, and found oneself on the very edge, peering out and down through a green screen. A couple of hundred feet in length and width, it was half of that in depth. Possibly because of some fault that had occurred when the knolls were flung together, and certainly helped by freakish erosion, the hole had been scooped out in the course of centuries by the wash of water. Nowhere did the raw earth appear. All was garmented by vegetation, from tiny maiden-hair and gold-back ferns to mighty redwood and Douglas spruces. These great trees even sprang out from the walls of the hole. Some leaned over at angles as great as forty-five degrees, though the majority towered straight up from the soft and almost perpendicular earth walls.

It was a perfect hiding-place. No one ever came there, not even the village boys of Glen Ellen. Had this hole existed in the bed of a canyon a mile long, or several miles long, it would have been well known. But this was no canyon. From beginning to end the length of the stream was no more than five hundred yards. Three hundred yards above the hole the stream took its rise in a spring at the foot of a flat meadow. A hundred yards below the hole the stream ran out into open country, joining the main stream and flowing across rolling and grass-covered land.

My companion took a turn of the rope around a tree, and with me fast on the other end lowered away. In no time I was on the bottom. And in but a short while he had carried all the articles from the cache and lowered them down to me. He hauled the rope up and hid it, and before he went away called down to me a cheerful parting.

Before I go on I want to say a word for this comrade, John Carlson, a humble figure of the Revolution, one of the countless faithful ones in the ranks. He worked for Wickson, in the stables near the hunting lodge. In fact, it was on Wickson's horses that we had ridden over Sonoma Mountain. For nearly twenty years now John Carlson has been custodian of the refuge. No thought of disloyalty, I am sure, has ever entered his mind during all that time. To betray his trust would have been in his mind a thing undreamed. He was phlegmatic, stolid to such a degree that one could not but wonder how the Revolution had any meaning to him at all. And yet love of freedom glowed sombrely and steadily in his dim soul. In ways it was indeed good that he was not flighty and imaginative. He never lost his head. He could obey orders, and he was neither curious nor garrulous. Once I asked how it was that he was a revolutionist.

"When I was a young man I was a soldier," was his answer. "It was in Germany. There all young men must be in the army. So I was in the army. There was another soldier there, a young man, too. His father was what you call an agitator, and his father was in jail for lese majesty — what you call speaking the truth about the Emperor. And the young man, the son, talked with me much about people, and work, and the robbery of the people by the capitalists. He made me see things in new ways, and I became a socialist. His talk was very true and good, and I have never forgotten. When I came to the United States I hunted up the socialists. I became a member of a section — that was in the day of the S. L. P. Then later, when the split came, I joined the local of the S. P. I was working in a livery stable in San Francisco then. That was before the Earthquake. I have paid my dues for twenty-two years. I am yet a member, and I yet pay my dues, though it is very secret now. I will always pay my dues, and when the cooperative commonwealth comes, I will be glad."

Left to myself, I proceeded to cook breakfast on the oil stove and to prepare my home. Often, in the early morning, or in the evening after dark, Carlson would steal down to the refuge and work for a couple of hours. At first my home was the tarpaulin. Later, a small tent was put up. And still later, when we became assured of the perfect security of the place, a small house was erected. This house was completely hidden from any chance eye that might peer down from the edge of the hole. The lush vegetation of that sheltered spot make a natural shield. Also, the house was built against the perpendicular wall; and in the wall itself, shored by strong timbers, well drained and ventilated, we excavated two small rooms. Oh, believe me, we had many comforts. When Biedenbach, the German terrorist, hid with us some time later, he installed a smoke-consuming device that enabled us to sit by crackling wood fires on winter nights.

And here I must say a word for that gentle-souled terrorist, than whom there is no comrade in the Revolution more fearfully misunderstood. Comrade Biedenbach did not betray the Cause. Nor was he executed by the comrades as is commonly supposed. This canard was circulated by the creatures of the Oligarchy. Comrade Biedenbach was absent-minded, forgetful. He was shot by one of our lookouts at the cave-refuge at Carmel, through failure on his part to remember the secret signals. It was all a sad mistake. And that he betrayed his Fighting Group is an absolute lie. No truer, more loyal man ever labored for the Cause.*

* Search as we may through all the material of those times that has come down to us, we can find no clew to the Biedenbach here referred to. No mention is made of him anywhere save in the Everhard Manuscript.

*

For nineteen years now the refuge that I selected had been almost continuously occupied, and in all that time, with one exception, it has never been discovered by an outsider. And yet it was only a quarter of a mile from Wickson's hunting-lodge, and a short mile from the village of Glen Ellen. I was able, always, to hear the morning and evening trains arrive and depart, and I used to set my watch by the whistle at the brickyards.*

* If the curious traveller will turn south from Glen Ellen, he will find himself on a boulevard that is identical with the old country road seven centuries ago. A quarter of a mile from Glen Ellen, after the second bridge is passed, to the right will be noticed a barranca that runs like a scar across the rolling land toward a group of wooded knolls. The barranca is the site of the ancient right of way that in the time of private property in land ran across the holding of one Chauvet, a French pioneer of California who came from his native country in the fabled days of gold. The wooded knolls are the same knolls referred to by Avis Everhard.

The Great Earthquake of 2368 A.D. broke off the side of one of these knolls and toppled it into the hole where the Everhards made their refuge. Since the finding of the Manuscript excavations have been made, and the house, the two cave rooms, and all the accumulated rubbish of long occupancy have been brought to light. Many valuable relics have been found, among which, curious to relate, is the smoke-consuming device of Biedenbach's mentioned in the narrative. Students interested in such matters should read the brochure of Arnold Bentham soon to be published.

A mile northwest from the wooded knolls brings one to the site of Wake Robin Lodge at the junction of Wild-Water and Sonoma Creeks. It may be noticed, in passing, that Wild-Water was originally called Graham Creek and was so named on the early local maps. But the later name sticks. It was at Wake Robin Lodge that Avis Everhard later lived for short periods, when, disguised as an agent-provocateur of the Iron Heel, she was enabled to play with impunity her part among men and events. The official permission to occupy Wake Robin Lodge is still on the records, signed by no less a man than Wickson, the minor oligarch of the Manuscript.

CHAPTER XIX

TRANSFORMATION

“You must make yourself over again,” Ernest wrote to me. “You must cease to be. You must become another woman — and not merely in the clothes you wear, but inside your skin under the clothes. You must make yourself over again so that even I would not know you — your voice, your gestures, your mannerisms, your carriage, your walk, everything.”

This command I obeyed. Every day I practised for hours in burying forever the old Avis Everhard beneath the skin of another woman whom I may call my other self. It was only by long practice that such results could be obtained. In the mere detail of voice intonation I practised almost perpetually till the voice of my new self became fixed, automatic. It was this automatic assumption of a role that was considered imperative. One must become so adept as to deceive oneself. It was like learning a new language, say the French. At first speech in French is self-conscious, a matter of the will. The student thinks in English and then transmutes into French, or reads in French but transmutes into English before he can understand. Then later, becoming firmly grounded, automatic, the student reads, writes, and THINKS in French, without any recourse to English at all.

And so with our disguises. It was necessary for us to practise until our assumed roles became real; until to be our original selves would require a watchful and strong exercise of will. Of course, at first, much was mere blundering experiment. We were creating a new art, and we had much to discover. But the work was going on everywhere; masters in the art were developing, and a fund of tricks and expedients was being accumulated. This fund became a sort of text-book that was passed on, a part of the curriculum, as it were, of the school of Revolution.*

* Disguise did become a veritable art during that period. The revolutionists maintained schools of acting in all their refuges. They scorned accessories, such as wigs and beards, false eyebrows, and such aids of the theatrical actors. The game of revolution was a game of life and death, and mere accessories were traps. Disguise had to be fundamental, intrinsic, part and parcel of one’s being, second nature.

The Red Virgin is reported to have been one of the most adept in the art, to which must be ascribed her long and successful career.

It was at this time that my father disappeared. His letters, which had come to me regularly, ceased. He no longer appeared at our Pell Street quarters. Our comrades sought him everywhere. Through our secret service we ransacked every prison in the land. But he was lost as completely as if the earth had swallowed him up, and to this day no clew to his end has been discovered.*

* Disappearance was one of the horrors of the time. As a motif, in song and story, it constantly crops up. It was an inevitable concomitant of the subterranean warfare that raged through those three centuries. This phenomenon was almost as common in the oligarch class and the labor castes, as it was in the ranks of the revolutionists. Without warning, without trace, men and women, and even children, disappeared and were seen no more, their end shrouded in mystery.

Six lonely months I spent in the refuge, but they were not idle months. Our organization went on apace, and there were mountains of work always waiting to be done. Ernest and his fellow-leaders, from their prisons, decided what should be done; and it remained for us on the outside to do it. There was the organization of the mouth-to-mouth propaganda; the organization, with all its ramifications, of our spy system; the establishment of our secret printing-presses; and the establishment of our underground railways, which meant the knitting together of all our myriads of places of refuge, and the formation of new refuges where links were missing in the chains we ran over all the land.

So I say, the work was never done. At the end of six months my loneliness was broken by the arrival of two comrades. They were young girls, brave souls and passionate lovers of liberty: Lora Peterson, who disappeared in 1922, and Kate Bierce, who later married Du Bois,* and who is still with us with eyes lifted to to-morrow’s sun, that heralds in the new age.

* Du Bois, the present librarian of Ardis, is a lineal descendant of this revolutionary pair.

The two girls arrived in a flurry of excitement, danger, and sudden death. In the crew of the fishing boat that conveyed them across San Pablo Bay was a spy. A creature of the Iron Heel, he had successfully masqueraded as a revolutionist and penetrated deep into the secrets of our organization. Without doubt he was on my trail, for we had long since learned that my disappearance had been cause of deep concern to the secret service of the Oligarchy. Luckily, as the outcome proved, he had not divulged his discoveries to any one. He had evidently delayed reporting, preferring to wait until he had brought things to a successful conclusion by discovering my hiding-place and capturing me. His information died with him. Under some pretext, after the girls had landed at Petaluma Creek and taken to the horses, he managed to get away from the boat.

Part way up Sonoma Mountain, John Carlson let the girls go on, leading his horse, while he went back on foot. His suspicions had been aroused. He captured the spy, and as to what then happened, Carlson gave us a fair idea.

“I fixed him,” was Carlson’s unimaginative way of describing the affair. “I fixed him,” he repeated, while a sombre light burnt in his eyes, and his huge, toil-distorted hands opened and closed eloquently. “He made no noise. I hid him, and tonight I will go back and bury him deep.”

During that period I used to marvel at my own metamorphosis. At times it seemed impossible, either that I had ever lived a placid, peaceful life in a college town, or else that I had become a revolutionist inured to scenes of violence and death. One or the other could not be. One was real, the other was a dream, but which was which? Was this present life of a revolutionist, hiding in a hole, a nightmare? or was I a revolutionist who had somewhere, somehow, dreamed that in some former existence I have lived in Berkeley and never known of life more violent than teas and dances, debating societies, and lectures rooms? But then I suppose this was a common experience of all of us who had rallied under the red banner of the brotherhood of man.

I often remembered figures from that other life, and, curiously enough, they appeared and disappeared, now and again, in my new life. There was Bishop Morehouse. In vain we searched for him after our organization had developed. He had been transferred from asylum to asylum. We traced him from the state hospital for the insane at Napa to the one in Stockton, and from there to the one in the Santa Clara Valley called Agnews, and there the trail ceased. There was no record of his death. In some way he must have escaped. Little did I dream of the awful manner in which I was to see him once again — the fleeting glimpse of him in the whirlwind carnage of the Chicago Commune.

Jackson, who had lost his arm in the Sierra Mills and who had been the cause of my own conversion into a revolutionist, I never saw again; but we all knew what he did before he died. He never joined the revolutionists. Embittered by his fate, brooding over his wrongs, he became an anarchist — not a philosophic anarchist, but a mere animal, mad with hate and lust for revenge. And well he revenged himself. Evading the guards, in the nighttime while all were asleep, he blew the Pertonwaithe palace into atoms. Not a soul escaped, not even the guards. And in prison, while awaiting trial, he suffocated himself under his blankets.

Dr. Hammerfield and Dr. Ballingford achieved quite different fates from that of Jackson. They have been faithful to their salt, and they have been correspondingly rewarded with ecclesiastical palaces wherein they dwell at peace with the world. Both are apologists for the Oligarchy. Both have grown very fat. “Dr. Hammerfield,” as Ernest once said, “has succeeded in modifying his metaphysics so as to give God’s sanction to the Iron Heel, and also to include much worship of beauty and to reduce to an invisible wraith the gaseous vertebrate described by Haeckel — the difference between Dr. Hammerfield and Dr. Ballingford being that the latter has made the God of the oligarchs a little more gaseous and a little less vertebrate.”

Peter Donnelly, the scab foreman at the Sierra Mills whom I encountered while investigating the case of Jackson, was a surprise to all of us. In 1918 I was present at a meeting of the ‘Frisco Reds. Of all our Fighting Groups this one was the most formidable, ferocious, and merciless. It was really not a part of our organization. Its members were fanatics, madmen. We dared not encourage such a spirit. On the other hand, though they did not belong to us, we remained on friendly terms with them. It was a matter of vital importance that brought me there that night. I, alone in the midst of a score of men, was the only person unmasked. After the business that brought me there was transacted, I was led away by one of them. In a dark passage this guide struck a match, and, holding it close to his face, slipped back his mask. For a moment I gazed upon the passion-wrought features of Peter Donnelly. Then the match went out.

“I just wanted you to know it was me,” he said in the darkness. “D’you remember Dallas, the superintendent?”

I nodded at recollection of the vulpine-face superintendent of the Sierra Mills.

"Well, I got him first," Donnelly said with pride. "'Twas after that I joined the Reds."

"But how comes it that you are here?" I queried. "Your wife and children?"

"Dead," he answered. "That's why. No," he went on hastily, "'tis not revenge for them. They died easily in their beds — sickness, you see, one time and another. They tied my arms while they lived. And now that they're gone, 'tis revenge for my blasted manhood I'm after. I was once Peter Donnelly, the scab foreman. But to-night I'm Number 27 of the 'Frisco Reds. Come on now, and I'll get you out of this."

More I heard of him afterward. In his own way he had told the truth when he said all were dead. But one lived, Timothy, and him his father considered dead because he had taken service with the Iron Heel in the Mercenaries.* A member of the 'Frisco Reds pledged himself to twelve annual executions. The penalty for failure was death. A member who failed to complete his number committed suicide. These executions were not haphazard. This group of madmen met frequently and passed wholesale judgments upon offending members and servitors of the Oligarchy. The executions were afterward apportioned by lot.

> * In addition to the labor castes, there arose another caste, the military. A standing army of professional soldiers was created, officered by members of the Oligarchy and known as the Mercenaries. This institution took the place of the militia, which had proved impracticable under the new regime. Outside the regular secret service of the Iron Heel, there was further established a secret service of the Mercenaries, this latter forming a connecting link between the police and the military.

In fact, the business that brought me there the night of my visit was such a trial. One of our own comrades, who for years had successfully maintained himself in a clerical position in the local bureau of the secret service of the Iron Heel, had fallen under the ban of the 'Frisco Reds and was being tried. Of course he was not present, and of course his judges did not know that he was one of our men. My mission had been to testify to his identity and loyalty. It may be wondered how we came to know of the affair at all. The explanation is simple. One of our secret agents was a member of the ‘Frisco Reds. It was necessary for us to keep an eye on friend as well as foe, and this group of madmen was not too unimportant to escape our surveillance.

But to return to Peter Donnelly and his son. All went well with Donnelly until, in the following year, he found among the sheaf of executions that fell to him the name of Timothy Donnelly. Then it was that that clannishness, which was his to so extraordinary a degree, asserted itself. To save his son, he betrayed his comrades. In this he was partially blocked, but a dozen of the ‘Frisco Reds were executed, and the group was well-nigh destroyed. In retaliation, the survivors meted out to Donnelly the death he had earned by his treason.

Nor did Timothy Donnelly long survive. The ‘Frisco Reds pledged themselves to his execution. Every effort was made by the Oligarchy to save him. He was transferred from one part of the country to another. Three of the Reds lost their lives in vain efforts to get him. The Group was composed only of men. In the end they fell back on a woman, one of our comrades, and none other than Anna Roylston. Our Inner Circle forbade her, but she had ever a will of her own and disdained discipline. Furthermore, she was a genius and lovable, and we could never discipline her anyway. She is in a class by herself and not amenable to the ordinary standards of the revolutionists.

Despite our refusal to grant permission to do the deed, she went on with it. Now Anna Roylston was a fascinating woman. All she had to do was to beckon a man to her. She broke the hearts of scores of our young comrades, and scores of others she captured, and by their heart-strings led into our organization. Yet she steadfastly refused to marry. She dearly loved children, but she held that a child of her own would claim her from the Cause, and that it was the Cause to which her life was devoted.

It was an easy task for Anna Roylston to win Timothy Donnelly. Her conscience did not trouble her, for at that very time occurred the Nashville Massacre, when the Mercenaries, Donnelly in command, literally murdered eight hundred weavers of that city. But she did not kill Donnelly. She turned him over, a prisoner, to the ‘Frisco Reds. This happened only last year, and now she had been renamed. The revolutionists everywhere are calling her the “Red Virgin.”*

* It was not until the Second Revolt was crushed, that the

‘Frisco Reds flourished again. And for two generations the Group flourished. Then an agent of the Iron Heel managed to become a member, penetrated all its secrets, and brought about its total annihilation. This occurred in 2002 A.D. The members were executed one at a time, at intervals of three weeks, and their bodies exposed in the labor-ghetto of San Francisco.

Colonel Ingram and Colonel Van Gilbert are two more familiar figures that I was later to encounter. Colonel Ingram rose high in the Oligarchy and became Minister to Germany. He was cordially detested by the proletariat of both countries. It was in Berlin that I met him, where, as an accredited international spy of the Iron Heel, I was received by him and afforded much assistance. Incidentally, I may state that in my dual role I managed a few important things for the Revolution.

Colonel Van Gilbert became known as “Snarling” Van Gilbert. His important part was played in drafting the new code after the Chicago Commune. But before that, as trial judge, he had earned sentence of death by his fiendish malignancy. I was one of those that tried him and passed sentence upon him. Anna Roylston carried out the execution.

Still another figure arises out of the old life — Jackson’s lawyer. Least of all would I have expected again to meet this man, Joseph Hurd. It was a strange meeting. Late at night, two years after the Chicago Commune, Ernest and I arrived together at the Benton Harbor refuge. This was in Michigan, across the lake from Chicago. We arrived just at the conclusion of the trial of a spy. Sentence of death had been passed, and he was being led away. Such was the scene as we came upon it. The next moment the wretched man had wrenched free from his captors and flung himself at my feet, his arms clutching me about the knees in a vicelike grip as he prayed in a frenzy for mercy. As he turned his agonized face up to me, I recognized him as Joseph Hurd. Of all the terrible things I have witnessed, never have I been so unnerved as by this frantic creature’s pleading for life. He was mad for life. It was pitiable. He refused to let go of me, despite the hands of a dozen comrades. And when at last he was dragged shrieking away, I sank down fainting upon the floor. It is far easier to see brave men die than to hear a coward beg for life.*

* The Benton Harbor refuge was a catacomb, the entrance of which was cunningly contrived by way of a well. It has been

maintained in a fair state of preservation, and the curious visitor may to-day tread its labyrinths to the assembly hall, where, without doubt, occurred the scene described by Avis Everhard. Farther on are the cells where the prisoners were confined, and the death chamber where the executions took place. Beyond is the cemetery — long, winding galleries hewn out of the solid rock, with recesses on either hand, wherein, tier above tier, lie the revolutionists just as they were laid away by their comrades long years agone.

CHAPTER XX

A LOST OLIGARCH

But in remembering the old life I have run ahead of my story into the new life. The wholesale jail delivery did not occur until well along into 1915. Complicated as it was, it was carried through without a hitch, and as a very creditable achievement it cheered us on in our work. From Cuba to California, out of scores of jails, military prisons, and fortresses, in a single night, we delivered fifty-one of our fifty-two Congressmen, and in addition over three hundred other leaders. There was not a single instance of miscarriage. Not only did they escape, but every one of them won to the refuges as planned. The one comrade Congressman we did not get was Arthur Simpson, and he had already died in Cabanas after cruel tortures.

The eighteen months that followed was perhaps the happiest of my life with Ernest. During that time we were never apart. Later, when we went back into the world, we were separated much. Not more impatiently do I await the flame of to-morrow's revolt than did I that night await the coming of Ernest. I had not seen him for so long, and the thought of a possible hitch or error in our plans that would keep him still in his island prison almost drove me mad. The hours passed like ages. I was all alone. Biedenbach, and three young men who had been living in the refuge, were out and over the mountain, heavily armed and prepared for anything. The refuges all over the land were quite empty, I imagine, of comrades that night.

Just as the sky paled with the first warning of dawn, I heard the signal from above and gave the answer. In the darkness I almost embraced Biedenbach, who came down first; but the next moment I was in Ernest's arms. And in that moment, so complete had been my transformation, I discovered it was only by an effort of will that I could be the old Avis Everhard, with the old mannerisms and smiles, phrases and intonations of voice. It was by strong effort only that I was able to maintain my old identity; I could not allow myself to forget for an instant, so automatically imperative had become the new personality I had created.

Once inside the little cabin, I saw Ernest's face in the light. With the exception of the prison pallor, there was no change in him — at least, not much. He was my same lover-husband and hero. And yet there was a certain ascetic lengthening of the lines of his face. But he could well stand it, for it seemed to add a certain nobility of refinement to the riotous excess of life that had always marked his features. He might have been a trifle graver than of yore, but the glint of laughter still was in his eyes. He was twenty pounds lighter, but in splendid physical condition. He had kept up exercise during the whole period of confinement, and his muscles were like iron. In truth, he was in better condition than when he had entered prison. Hours passed before his head touched pillow and I had soothed him off to sleep. But there was no sleep for me. I was too happy, and the fatigue of jail-breaking and riding horseback had not been mine.

While Ernest slept, I changed my dress, arranged my hair differently, and came back to my new automatic self. Then, when Biedenbach and the other comrades awoke, with their aid I concocted a little conspiracy. All was ready, and we were in the cave-room that served for kitchen and dining room when Ernest opened the door and entered. At that moment Biedenbach addressed me as Mary, and I turned and answered him. Then I glanced at Ernest with curious interest, such as any young comrade might betray on seeing for the first time so noted a hero of the Revolution. But Ernest's glance took me in and questioned impatiently past and around the room. The next moment I was being introduced to him as Mary Holmes.

To complete the deception, an extra plate was laid, and when we sat down to table one chair was not occupied. I could have cried with joy as I noted Ernest's increasing uneasiness and impatience. Finally he could stand it no longer.

"Where's my wife?" he demanded bluntly.

"She is still asleep," I answered.

It was the crucial moment. But my voice was a strange voice, and in it he recognized nothing familiar. The meal went on. I talked a great deal, and enthusiastically, as a hero-worshipper might talk, and it was obvious that he was my hero. I rose to a climax of enthusiasm and worship, and, before he could guess my intention, threw my arms around his neck and kissed him on the lips. He held me from him at arm's length and stared about in annoyance and perplexity. The four men greeted him with roars of laughter, and explanations were made. At first he was sceptical. He scrutinized me keenly and was half convinced, then shook his head and would not believe. It was not until I became the old Avis Everhard and whispered secrets in his ear that none knew but he and Avis Everhard, that he accepted me as his really, truly wife.

It was later in the day that he took me in his arms, manifesting great embarrassment and claiming polygamous emotions.

"You are my Avis," he said, "and you are also some one else. You are two women, and therefore you are my harem. At any rate, we are safe now. If the United States becomes too hot for us, why I have qualified for citizenship in Turkey."*

* At that time polygamy was still practised in Turkey.

Life became for me very happy in the refuge. It is true, we worked hard and for long hours; but we worked together. We had each other for eighteen precious months, and we were not lonely, for there was always a coming and going of leaders and comrades — strange voices from the under-world of intrigue and revolution, bringing stranger tales of strife and war from all our battle-line. And there was much fun and delight. We were not mere gloomy conspirators. We toiled hard and suffered greatly, filled the gaps in our ranks and went on, and through all the labour and the play and interplay of life and death we found time to laugh and love. There were artists, scientists, scholars, musicians, and poets among us; and in that hole in the ground culture was higher and finer than in the palaces of wonder-cities of the oligarchs. In truth, many of our comrades toiled at making beautiful those same palaces and wonder-cities.*

* This is not braggadocio on the part of Avis Everhard. The flower of the artistic and intellectual world were revolutionists. With the exception of a few of the musicians and singers, and of a few of the oligarchs, all the great creators of the period whose names have come down to us, were revolutionists.

Nor were we confined to the refuge itself. Often at night we rode over the mountains for exercise, and we rode on Wickson's horses. If only he knew how many revolutionists his horses have carried! We even went on picnics to isolated spots we knew, where we remained all day, going before daylight and returning after dark. Also, we used Wickson's cream and butter,* and Ernest was not above shooting Wickson's quail and rabbits, and, on occasion, his young bucks.

* Even as late as that period, cream and butter were still crudely extracted from cow's milk. The laboratory preparation of foods had not yet begun.

Indeed, it was a safe refuge. I have said that it was discovered only once, and this brings me to the clearing up of the mystery of the disappearance of young Wickson. Now that he is dead, I am free to speak. There was a nook on the bottom of the great hole where the sun shone for several hours and which was hidden from above. Here we had carried many loads of gravel from the creek-bed, so that it was dry and warm, a pleasant basking place; and here, one afternoon, I was drowsing, half asleep, over a volume of Mendenhall.* I was so comfortable and secure that even his flaming lyrics failed to stir me.

I was aroused by a clod of earth striking at my feet. Then from above, I heard a sound of scrambling. The next moment a young man, with a final slide down the crumbling wall, alighted at my feet. It was Philip Wickson, though I did not know him at the time. He looked at me coolly and uttered a low whistle of surprise.

“Well,” he said; and the next moment, cap in hand, he was saying, “I beg your pardon. I did not expect to find any one here.”

I was not so cool. I was still a tyro so far as concerned knowing how to behave in desperate circumstances. Later on, when I was an international spy, I should have been less clumsy, I am sure. As it was, I scrambled to my feet and cried out the danger call.

“Why did you do that?” he asked, looking at me searchingly.

It was evident that he had no suspicion of our presence when making the descent. I recognized this with relief.

“For what purpose do you think I did it?” I countered. I was indeed clumsy in those days.

“I don’t know,” he answered, shaking his head. “Unless you’ve got friends about. Anyway, you’ve got some explanations to make. I don’t like the look of it. You are trespassing. This is my father’s land, and — ”

But at that moment, Biedenbach, every polite and gentle, said from behind him in a low voice, “Hands up, my young sir.”

---

* In all the extant literature and documents of that period, continual reference is made to the poems of Rudolph Mendenhall. By his comrades he was called “The Flame.” He was undoubtedly a great genius; yet, beyond weird and haunting fragments of his verse, quoted in the writings of others, nothing of his has come down to us. He was executed by the Iron Heel in 1928 A.D.

Young Wickson put his hands up first, then turned to confront Biedenbach, who held a thirty-thirty automatic rifle on him. Wickson was imperturbable.

"Oh, ho," he said, "a nest of revolutionists — and quite a hornet's nest it would seem. Well, you won't abide here long, I can tell you."

"Maybe you'll abide here long enough to reconsider that statement," Biedenbach said quietly. "And in the meanwhile I must ask you to come inside with me."

"Inside?" The young man was genuinely astonished. "Have you a catacomb here? I have heard of such things."

"Come and see," Biedenbach answered with his adorable accent.

"But it is unlawful," was the protest.

"Yes, by your law," the terrorist replied significantly. "But by our law, believe me, it is quite lawful. You must accustom yourself to the fact that you are in another world than the one of oppression and brutality in which you have lived."

"There is room for argument there," Wickson muttered.

"Then stay with us and discuss it."

The young fellow laughed and followed his captor into the house. He was led into the inner cave-room, and one of the young comrades left to guard him, while we discussed the situation in the kitchen.

Biedenbach, with tears in his eyes, held that Wickson must die, and was quite relieved when we outvoted him and his horrible proposition. On the other hand, we could not dream of allowing the young oligarch to depart.

"I'll tell you what to do," Ernest said. "We'll keep him and give him an education."

"I bespeak the privilege, then, of enlightening him in jurisprudence," Biedenbach cried.

And so a decision was laughingly reached. We would keep Philip Wickson a prisoner and educate him in our ethics and sociology. But in the meantime there was work to be done. All trace of the young oligarch must be obliterated. There were the marks he had left when descending the crumbling wall of the hole. This task fell to Biedenbach, and, slung on a rope from above, he toiled cunningly for the rest of the day till no sign remained. Back up the canyon from the lip of the hole all marks were likewise removed. Then, at twilight, came John Carlson, who demanded Wickson's shoes.

The young man did not want to give up his shoes, and even offered to fight for them, till he felt the horseshoer's strength in Ernest's hands. Carlson afterward reported several blisters and much grievous loss of skin due to the smallness of the shoes, but he succeeded in doing gallant work with them. Back from the lip of the hole, where ended the young man's obliterated trial, Carlson put on the shoes and walked away to the left. He walked for miles, around knolls, over ridges and through canyons, and finally covered the trail in the running water of a creek-bed. Here he removed the shoes, and, still hiding trail for a distance, at last put on his own shoes. A week later Wickson got back his shoes.

That night the hounds were out, and there was little sleep in the refuge. Next day, time and again, the baying hounds came down the canyon, plunged off to the left on the trail Carlson had made for them, and were lost to ear in the farther canyons high up the mountain. And all the time our men waited in the refuge, weapons in hand — automatic revolvers and rifles, to say nothing of half a dozen infernal machines of Biedenbach's manufacture. A more surprised party of rescuers could not be imagined, had they ventured down into our hiding-place.

I have now given the true disappearance of Philip Wickson, one-time oligarch, and, later, comrade in the Revolution. For we converted him in the end. His mind was fresh and plastic, and by nature he was very ethical. Several months later we rode him, on one of his father's horses, over Sonoma Mountains to Petaluma Creek and embarked him in a small fishing-launch. By easy stages we smuggled him along our underground railway to the Carmel refuge.

There he remained eight months, at the end of which time, for two reasons, he was loath to leave us. One reason was that he had fallen in love with Anna Roylston, and the other was that he had become one of us. It was not until he became convinced of the hopelessness of his love affair that he acceded to our wishes and went back to his father. Ostensibly an oligarch until his death, he was in reality one of the most valuable of our agents. Often and often has the Iron Heel been dumbfounded by the miscarriage of its plans and operations against us. If it but knew the number of its own members who are our agents, it would understand. Young Wickson never wavered in his loyalty to the Cause. In truth, his very death was incurred by his devotion to duty. In the great storm of 1927, while attending a meeting of our leaders, he contracted the pneumonia of which he died.*

* The case of this young man was not unusual. Many young men of the Oligarchy, impelled by sense of right conduct, or their imaginations captured by the glory of the Revolution, ethically or romantically devoted their lives to it. In similar way, many sons of the Russian nobility played their parts in the earlier and protracted revolution in that country.

CHAPTER XXI

THE ROARING ABYSMAL BEAST

During the long period of our stay in the refuge, we were kept closely in touch with what was happening in the world without, and we were learning thoroughly the strength of the Oligarchy with which we were at war. Out of the flux of transition the new institutions were forming more definitely and taking on the appearance and attributes of permanence. The oligarchs had succeeded in devising a governmental machine, as intricate as it was vast, that worked — and this despite all our efforts to clog and hamper.

This was a surprise to many of the revolutionists. They had not conceived it possible. Nevertheless the work of the country went on. The men toiled in the mines and fields — perforce they were no more than slaves. As for the vital industries, everything prospered. The members of the great labor castes were contented and worked on merrily. For the first time in their lives they knew industrial peace. No more were they worried by slack times, strike and lockout, and the union label. They lived in more comfortable homes and in delightful cities of their own — delightful compared with the slums and ghettos in which they had formerly dwelt. They had better food to eat, less hours of labor, more holidays, and a greater amount and variety of interests and pleasures. And for their less fortunate brothers and sisters, the unfavored laborers, the driven people of the abyss, they cared nothing. An age of selfishness was dawning upon mankind. And yet this is not altogether true. The labor castes were honeycombed by our agents — men whose eyes saw, beyond the belly-need, the radiant figure of liberty and brotherhood.

Another great institution that had taken form and was working smoothly was the Mercenaries. This body of soldiers had been evolved out of the old regular army and was now a million strong, to say nothing of the colonial forces. The Mercenaries constituted a race apart. They dwelt in cities of their own which were practically self-governed, and they were granted many privileges. By them a large portion of the perplexing surplus was consumed. They were losing all touch and sympathy with the rest of the people, and, in fact, were developing their own class morality and consciousness. And yet we had thousands of our agents among them.*

* The Mercenaries, in the last days of the Iron Heel, played

an important role. They constituted the balance of power in the struggles between the labor castes and the oligarchs, and now to one side and now to the other, threw their strength according to the play of intrigue and conspiracy.

The oligarchs themselves were going through a remarkable and, it must be confessed, unexpected development. As a class, they disciplined themselves. Every member had his work to do in the world, and this work he was compelled to do. There were no more idle-rich young men. Their strength was used to give united strength to the Oligarchy. They served as leaders of troops and as lieutenants and captains of industry. They found careers in applied science, and many of them became great engineers. They went into the multitudinous divisions of the government, took service in the colonial possessions, and by tens of thousands went into the various secret services. They were, I may say, apprenticed to education, to art, to the church, to science, to literature; and in those fields they served the important function of moulding the thought-processes of the nation in the direction of the perpetuity of the Oligarchy.

They were taught, and later they in turn taught, that what they were doing was right. They assimilated the aristocratic idea from the moment they began, as children, to receive impressions of the world. The aristocratic idea was woven into the making of them until it became bone of them and flesh of them. They looked upon themselves as wild-animal trainers, rulers of beasts. From beneath their feet rose always the subterranean rumbles of revolt. Violent death ever stalked in their midst; bomb and knife and bullet were looked upon as so many fangs of the roaring abysmal beast they must dominate if humanity were to persist. They were the saviours of humanity, and they regarded themselves as heroic and sacrificing laborers for the highest good.

They, as a class, believed that they alone maintained civilization. It was their belief that if ever they weakened, the great beast would ingulf them and everything of beauty and wonder and joy and good in its cavernous and slime-dripping maw. Without them, anarchy would reign and humanity would drop backward into the primitive night out of which it had so painfully emerged. The horrid picture of anarchy was held always before their child’s eyes until they, in turn, obsessed by this cultivated fear, held the picture of anarchy before the eyes of the children that followed them. This was the beast to be stamped upon, and the highest duty of the aristocrat was to stamp upon it. In short, they alone, by their unremitting toil and sacrifice, stood between weak humanity and the all-devouring beast; and they believed it, firmly believed it.

I cannot lay too great stress upon this high ethical righteousness of the whole oligarch class. This has been the strength of the Iron Heel, and too many of the comrades have been slow or loath to realize it. Many of them have ascribed the strength of the Iron Heel to its system of reward and punishment. This is a mistake. Heaven and hell may be the prime factors of zeal in the religion of a fanatic; but for the great majority of the religious, heaven and hell are incidental to right and wrong. Love of the right, desire for the right, unhappiness with anything less than the right — in short, right conduct, is the prime factor of religion. And so with the Oligarchy. Prisons, banishment and degradation, honors and palaces and wonder-cities, are all incidental. The great driving force of the oligarchs is the belief that they are doing right. Never mind the exceptions, and never mind the oppression and injustice in which the Iron Heel was conceived. All is granted. The point is that the strength of the Oligarchy today lies in its satisfied conception of its own righteousness.*

> * Out of the ethical incoherency and inconsistency of capitalism, the oligarchs emerged with a new ethics, coherent and definite, sharp and severe as steel, the most absurd and unscientific and at the same time the most potent ever possessed by any tyrant class. The oligarchs believed their ethics, in spite of the fact that biology and evolution gave them the lie; and, because of their faith, for three centuries they were able to hold back the mighty tide of human progress — a spectacle, profound, tremendous, puzzling to the metaphysical moralist, and one that to the materialist is the cause of many doubts and reconsiderations.

For that matter, the strength of the Revolution, during these frightful twenty years, has resided in nothing else than the sense of righteousness. In no other way can be explained our sacrifices and martyrdoms. For no other reason did Rudolph Mendenhall flame out his soul for the Cause and sing his wild swan-song that last night of life. For no other reason did Hurlbert die under torture, refusing to the last to betray his comrades. For no other reason has Anna Roylston refused blessed motherhood. For no other reason has John Carlson been the faithful and unrewarded custodian of the Glen Ellen Refuge. It does not matter, young or old, man or woman, high or low, genius or clod, go where one will among the comrades of the Revolution, the motor-force will be found to be a great and abiding desire for the right.

But I have run away from my narrative. Ernest and I well understood, before we left the refuge, how the strength of the Iron Heel was developing. The labor castes, the Mercenaries, and the great hordes of secret agents and police of various sorts were all pledged to the Oligarchy. In the main, and ignoring the loss of liberty, they were better off than they had been. On the other hand, the great helpless mass of the population, the people of the abyss, was sinking into a brutish apathy of content with misery. Whenever strong proletarians asserted their strength in the midst of the mass, they were drawn away from the mass by the oligarchs and given better conditions by being made members of the labor castes or of the Mercenaries. Thus discontent was lulled and the proletariat robbed of its natural leaders.

The condition of the people of the abyss was pitiable. Common school education, so far as they were concerned, had ceased. They lived like beasts in great squalid labor-ghettos, festering in misery and degradation. All their old liberties were gone. They were labor-slaves. Choice of work was denied them. Likewise was denied them the right to move from place to place, or the right to bear or possess arms. They were not land serfs like the farmers. They were machine-serfs and labor-serfs. When unusual needs arose for them, such as the building of the great highways and air-lines, of canals, tunnels, subways, and fortifications, levies were made on the labor-ghettos, and tens of thousands of serfs, willy-nilly, were transported to the scene of operations. Great armies of them are toiling now at the building of Ardis, housed in wretched barracks where family life cannot exist, and where decency is displaced by dull bestiality. In all truth, there in the labor-ghettos is the roaring abysmal beast the oligarchs fear so dreadfully — but it is the beast of their own making. In it they will not let the ape and tiger die.

And just now the word has gone forth that new levies are being imposed for the building of Asgard, the projected wonder-city that will far exceed Ardis when the latter is completed.* We of the Revolution will go on with that great work, but it will not be done by the miserable serfs. The walls and towers and shafts of that fair city will arise to the sound of singing, and into its beauty and wonder will be woven, not sighs and groans, but music and laughter.

> * Ardis was completed in 1942 A.D., Asgard was not completed until 1984 A.D. It was fifty-two years in the building, during which time a permanent army of half a million serfs was employed. At times these numbers swelled to over a million — without any account being taken of the hundreds of thousands of the labor castes and the artists.

Ernest was madly impatient to be out in the world and doing, for our ill-fated First Revolt, that had miscarried in the Chicago Commune, was ripening fast. Yet he possessed his soul with patience, and during this time of his torment, when Hadly, who had been brought for the purpose from Illinois, made him over into another man* he revolved great plans in his head for the organization of the learned proletariat, and for the maintenance of at least the rudiments of education amongst the people of the abyss — all this of course in the event of the First Revolt being a failure.

> * Among the Revolutionists were many surgeons, and in vivisection they attained marvellous proficiency. In Avis Everhard's words, they could literally make a man over. To them the elimination of scars and disfigurements was a trivial detail. They changed the features with such microscopic care that no traces were left of their handiwork. The nose was a favorite organ to work upon. Skin-grafting and hair-transplanting were among their commonest devices. The changes in expression they accomplished were wizard-like. Eyes and eyebrows, lips, mouths, and ears, were radically altered. By cunning operations on tongue, throat, larynx, and nasal cavities a man's whole enunciation and manner of speech could be changed. Desperate times give need for desperate remedies, and the surgeons of the Revolution rose to the need. Among other things, they could increase an adult's stature by as much as four or five inches and decrease it by one or two inches. What they did is to-day a lost art. We have no need for it.

It was not until January, 1917, that we left the refuge. All had been arranged. We took our place at once as agents-provocateurs in the scheme of the Iron Heel. I was supposed to be Ernest’s sister. By oligarchs and comrades on the inside who were high in authority, place had been made for us, we were in possession of all necessary documents, and our pasts were accounted for. With help on the inside, this was not difficult, for in that shadow-world of secret service identity was nebulous. Like ghosts the agents came and went, obeying commands, fulfilling duties, following clews, making their reports often to officers they never saw or cooperating with other agents they had never seen before and would never see again.

CHAPTER XXII

THE CHICAGO COMMUNE

As agents-provocateurs, not alone were we able to travel a great deal, but our very work threw us in contact with the proletariat and with our comrades, the revolutionists. Thus we were in both camps at the same time, ostensibly serving the Iron Heel and secretly working with all our might for the Cause. There were many of us in the various secret services of the Oligarchy, and despite the shakings-up and reorganizations the secret services have undergone, they have never been able to weed all of us out.

Ernest had largely planned the First Revolt, and the date set had been somewhere early in the spring of 1918. In the fall of 1917 we were not ready; much remained to be done, and when the Revolt was precipitated, of course it was doomed to failure. The plot of necessity was frightfully intricate, and anything premature was sure to destroy it. This the Iron Heel foresaw and laid its schemes accordingly.

We had planned to strike our first blow at the nervous system of the Oligarchy. The latter had remembered the general strike, and had guarded against the defection of the telegraphers by installing wireless stations, in the control of the Mercenaries. We, in turn, had countered this move. When the signal was given, from every refuge, all over the land, and from the cities, and towns, and barracks, devoted comrades were to go forth and blow up the wireless stations. Thus at the first shock would the Iron Heel be brought to earth and lie practically dismembered.

At the same moment, other comrades were to blow up the bridges and tunnels and disrupt the whole network of railroads. Still further, other groups of comrades, at the signal, were to seize the officers of the Mercenaries and the police, as well as all Oligarchs of unusual ability or who held executive positions. Thus would the leaders of the enemy be removed from the field of the local battles that would inevitably be fought all over the land.

Many things were to occur simultaneously when the signal went forth. The Canadian and Mexican patriots, who were far stronger than the Iron Heel dreamed, were to duplicate our tactics. Then there were comrades (these were the women, for the men would be busy elsewhere) who were to post the proclamations from our secret presses. Those of us in the higher employ of the Iron Heel were to proceed immediately to make confusion and anarchy in all our departments. Inside the Mercenaries were thousands of our comrades. Their work was to blow up the magazines and to destroy the delicate mechanism of all the war machinery. In the cities of the Mercenaries and of the labor castes similar programmes of disruption were to be carried out.

In short, a sudden, colossal, stunning blow was to be struck. Before the paralyzed Oligarchy could recover itself, its end would have come. It would have meant terrible times and great loss of life, but no revolutionist hesitates at such things. Why, we even depended much, in our plan, on the unorganized people of the abyss. They were to be loosed on the palaces and cities of the masters. Never mind the destruction of life and property. Let the abysmal brute roar and the police and Mercenaries slay. The abysmal brute would roar anyway, and the police and Mercenaries would slay anyway. It would merely mean that various dangers to us were harmlessly destroying one another. In the meantime we would be doing our own work, largely unhampered, and gaining control of all the machinery of society.

Such was our plan, every detail of which had to be worked out in secret, and, as the day drew near, communicated to more and more comrades. This was the danger point, the stretching of the conspiracy. But that danger-point was never reached. Through its spy-system the Iron Heel got wind of the Revolt and prepared to teach us another of its bloody lessons. Chicago was the devoted city selected for the instruction, and well were we instructed.

Chicago* was the ripest of all — Chicago which of old time was the city of blood and which was to earn anew its name. There the revolutionary spirit was strong. Too many bitter strikes had been curbed there in the days of capitalism for the workers to forget and forgive. Even the labor castes of the city were alive with revolt. Too many heads had been broken in the early strikes. Despite their changed and favorable conditions, their hatred for the master class had not died. This spirit had infected the Mercenaries, of which three regiments in particular were ready to come over to us en masse.

* Chicago was the industrial inferno of the nineteenth century A.D. A curious anecdote has come down to us of John Burns, a great English labor leader and one time member of the British Cabinet. In Chicago, while on a visit to the United States, he was asked by a newspaper reporter for his

> opinion of that city. “Chicago,” he answered, “is a pocket
> edition of hell.” Some time later, as he was going aboard
> his steamer to sail to England, he was approached by another
> reporter, who wanted to know if he had changed his opinion
> of Chicago. “Yes, I have,” was his reply. “My present
> opinion is that hell is a pocket edition of Chicago.”

Chicago had always been the storm-centre of the conflict between labor and capital, a city of street-battles and violent death, with a class-conscious capitalist organization and a class-conscious workman organization, where, in the old days, the very school-teachers were formed into labor unions and affiliated with the hod-carriers and brick-layers in the American Federation of Labor. And Chicago became the storm-centre of the premature First Revolt.

The trouble was precipitated by the Iron Heel. It was cleverly done. The whole population, including the favored labor castes, was given a course of outrageous treatment. Promises and agreements were broken, and most drastic punishments visited upon even petty offenders. The people of the abyss were tormented out of their apathy. In fact, the Iron Heel was preparing to make the abysmal beast roar. And hand in hand with this, in all precautionary measures in Chicago, the Iron Heel was inconceivably careless. Discipline was relaxed among the Mercenaries that remained, while many regiments had been withdrawn and sent to various parts of the country.

It did not take long to carry out this programme — only several weeks. We of the Revolution caught vague rumors of the state of affairs, but had nothing definite enough for an understanding. In fact, we thought it was a spontaneous spirit of revolt that would require careful curbing on our part, and never dreamed that it was deliberately manufactured — and it had been manufactured so secretly, from the very innermost circle of the Iron Heel, that we had got no inkling. The counter-plot was an able achievement, and ably carried out.

I was in New York when I received the order to proceed immediately to Chicago. The man who gave me the order was one of the oligarchs, I could tell that by his speech, though I did not know his name nor see his face. His instructions were too clear for me to make a mistake. Plainly I read between the lines that our plot had been discovered, that we had been countermined. The explosion was ready for the flash of powder, and countless agents of the Iron Heel, including me, either on the ground or being sent there, were to supply that flash. I flatter myself that I maintained my composure under the keen eye of the oligarch, but my heart was beating madly. I could almost have shrieked and flown at his throat with my naked hands before his final, cold-blooded instructions were given.

Once out of his presence, I calculated the time. I had just the moments to spare, if I were lucky, to get in touch with some local leader before catching my train. Guarding against being trailed, I made a rush of it for the Emergency Hospital. Luck was with me, and I gained access at once to comrade Galvin, the surgeon-in-chief. I started to gasp out my information, but he stopped me.

"I already know," he said quietly, though his Irish eyes were flashing. "I knew what you had come for. I got the word fifteen minutes ago, and I have already passed it along. Everything shall be done here to keep the comrades quiet. Chicago is to be sacrificed, but it shall be Chicago alone."

"Have you tried to get word to Chicago?" I asked.

He shook his head. "No telegraphic communication. Chicago is shut off. It's going to be hell there."

He paused a moment, and I saw his white hands clinch. Then he burst out:

"By God! I wish I were going to be there!"

"There is yet a chance to stop it," I said, "if nothing happens to the train and I can get there in time. Or if some of the other secret-service comrades who have learned the truth can get there in time."

"You on the inside were caught napping this time," he said.

I nodded my head humbly.

"It was very secret," I answered. "Only the inner chiefs could have known up to to-day. We haven't yet penetrated that far, so we couldn't escape being kept in the dark. If only Ernest were here. Maybe he is in Chicago now, and all is well."

Dr. Galvin shook his head. "The last news I heard of him was that he had been sent to Boston or New Haven. This secret service for the enemy must hamper him a lot, but it's better than lying in a refuge."

I started to go, and Galvin wrung my hand.

"Keep a stout heart," were his parting words. "What if the First Revolt is lost? There will be a second, and we will be wiser then. Good-by and good luck. I don't know whether I'll ever see you again. It's going to be hell there, but I'd give ten years of my life for your chance to be in it."

The Twentieth Century* left New York at six in the evening, and was supposed to arrive at Chicago at seven next morning. But it lost time that night. We were running behind another train. Among the travellers in my Pullman was comrade Hartman, like myself in the secret service of the Iron Heel. He it was who told me of the train that immediately preceded us. It was an exact duplicate of our train, though it contained no passengers. The idea was that the empty train should receive the disaster were an attempt made to blow up the Twentieth Century. For that matter there were very few people on the train — only a baker's dozen in our car.

* This was reputed to be the fastest train in the world then. It was quite a famous train.

"There must be some big men on board," Hartman concluded. "I noticed a private car on the rear."

Night had fallen when we made our first change of engine, and I walked down the platform for a breath of fresh air and to see what I could see. Through the windows of the private car I caught a glimpse of three men whom I recognized. Hartman was right. One of the men was General Altendorff; and the other two were Mason and Vanderbold, the brains of the inner circle of the Oligarchy's secret service.

It was a quiet moonlight night, but I tossed restlessly and could not sleep. At five in the morning I dressed and abandoned my bed.

I asked the maid in the dressing-room how late the train was, and she told me two hours. She was a mulatto woman, and I noticed that her face was haggard, with great circles under the eyes, while the eyes themselves were wide with some haunting fear.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Nothing, miss; I didn't sleep well, I guess," was her reply.

I looked at her closely, and tried her with one of our signals. She responded, and I made sure of her.

"Something terrible is going to happen in Chicago," she said. "There's that fake* train in front of us. That and the troop-trains have made us late."

* False.

"Troop-trains?" I queried.

She nodded her head. "The line is thick with them. We've been passing them all night. And they're all heading for Chicago. And bringing them over the air-line — that means business.

“I’ve a lover in Chicago,” she added apologetically. “He’s one of us, and he’s in the Mercenaries, and I’m afraid for him.”

Poor girl. Her lover was in one of the three disloyal regiments.

Hartman and I had breakfast together in the dining car, and I forced myself to eat. The sky had clouded, and the train rushed on like a sullen thunderbolt through the gray pall of advancing day. The very negroes that waited on us knew that something terrible was impending. Oppression sat heavily upon them; the lightness of their natures had ebbed out of them; they were slack and absent-minded in their service, and they whispered gloomily to one another in the far end of the car next to the kitchen. Hartman was hopeless over the situation.

“What can we do?” he demanded for the twentieth time, with a helpless shrug of the shoulders.

He pointed out of the window. “See, all is ready. You can depend upon it that they’re holding them like this, thirty or forty miles outside the city, on every road.”

He had reference to troop-trains on the side-track. The soldiers were cooking their breakfasts over fires built on the ground beside the track, and they looked up curiously at us as we thundered past without slackening our terrific speed.

All was quiet as we entered Chicago. It was evident nothing had happened yet. In the suburbs the morning papers came on board the train. There was nothing in them, and yet there was much in them for those skilled in reading between the lines that it was intended the ordinary reader should read into the text. The fine hand of the Iron Heel was apparent in every column. Glimmerings of weakness in the armor of the Oligarchy were given. Of course, there was nothing definite. It was intended that the reader should feel his way to these glimmerings. It was cleverly done. As fiction, those morning papers of October 27th were masterpieces.

The local news was missing. This in itself was a masterstroke. It shrouded Chicago in mystery, and it suggested to the average Chicago reader that the Oligarchy did not dare give the local news. Hints that were untrue, of course, were given of insubordination all over the land, crudely disguised with complacent references to punitive measures to be taken. There were reports of numerous wireless stations that had been blown up, with heavy rewards offered for the detection of the perpetrators. Of course no wireless stations had been blown up. Many similar outrages, that dovetailed with the plot of the revolutionists, were given. The impression to be made on the minds of the Chicago comrades was that the general Revolt was beginning, albeit with a confusing miscarriage in many details. It was impossible for one uninformed to escape the vague yet certain feeling that all the land was ripe for the revolt that had already begun to break out.

It was reported that the defection of the Mercenaries in California had become so serious that half a dozen regiments had been disbanded and broken, and that their members with their families had been driven from their own city and on into the labor-ghettos. And the California Mercenaries were in reality the most faithful of all to their salt! But how was Chicago, shut off from the rest of the world, to know? Then there was a ragged telegram describing an outbreak of the populace in New York City, in which the labor castes were joining, concluding with the statement (intended to be accepted as a bluff*) that the troops had the situation in hand.

* A lie.

And as the oligarchs had done with the morning papers, so had they done in a thousand other ways. These we learned afterward, as, for example, the secret messages of the oligarchs, sent with the express purpose of leaking to the ears of the revolutionists, that had come over the wires, now and again, during the first part of the night.

“I guess the Iron Heel won’t need our services,” Hartman remarked, putting down the paper he had been reading, when the train pulled into the central depot. “They wasted their time sending us here. Their plans have evidently prospered better than they expected. Hell will break loose any second now.”

He turned and looked down the train as we alighted.

“I thought so,” he muttered. “They dropped that private car when the papers came aboard.”

Hartman was hopelessly depressed. I tried to cheer him up, but he ignored my effort and suddenly began talking very hurriedly, in a low voice, as we passed through the station. At first I could not understand.

“I have not been sure,” he was saying, “and I have told no one. I have been working on it for weeks, and I cannot make sure. Watch out for Knowlton. I suspect him. He knows the secrets of a score of our refuges. He carries the lives of hundreds of us in his hands, and I think he is a traitor. It’s more a feeling on my part than anything else. But I thought I marked a change in him a short while back. There is the danger that he has sold us out, or is going to sell us out. I am almost sure of it. I wouldn't whisper my suspicions to a soul, but, somehow, I don't think I'll leave Chicago alive. Keep your eye on Knowlton. Trap him. Find out. I don't know anything more. It is only an intuition, and so far I have failed to find the slightest clew." We were just stepping out upon the sidewalk. "Remember," Hartman concluded earnestly. "Keep your eyes upon Knowlton."

And Hartman was right. Before a month went by Knowlton paid for his treason with his life. He was formally executed by the comrades in Milwaukee.

All was quiet on the streets — too quiet. Chicago lay dead. There was no roar and rumble of traffic. There were not even cabs on the streets. The surface cars and the elevated were not running. Only occasionally, on the sidewalks, were there stray pedestrians, and these pedestrians did not loiter. They went their ways with great haste and definiteness, withal there was a curious indecision in their movements, as though they expected the buildings to topple over on them or the sidewalks to sink under their feet or fly up in the air. A few gamins, however, were around, in their eyes a suppressed eagerness in anticipation of wonderful and exciting things to happen.

From somewhere, far to the south, the dull sound of an explosion came to our ears. That was all. Then quiet again, though the gamins had startled and listened, like young deer, at the sound. The doorways to all the buildings were closed; the shutters to the shops were up. But there were many police and watchmen in evidence, and now and again automobile patrols of the Mercenaries slipped swiftly past.

Hartman and I agreed that it was useless to report ourselves to the local chiefs of the secret service. Our failure so to report would be excused, we knew, in the light of subsequent events. So we headed for the great labor-ghetto on the South Side in the hope of getting in contact with some of the comrades. Too late! We knew it. But we could not stand still and do nothing in those ghastly, silent streets. Where was Ernest? I was wondering. What was happening in the cities of the labor castes and Mercenaries? In the fortresses?

As if in answer, a great screaming roar went up, dim with distance, punctuated with detonation after detonation.

"It's the fortresses," Hartman said. "God pity those three regiments!"

At a crossing we noticed, in the direction of the stockyards, a gigantic pillar of smoke. At the next crossing several similar smoke pillars were rising skyward in the direction of the West Side. Over the city of the Mercenaries we saw a great captive war-balloon that burst even as we looked at it, and fell in flaming wreckage toward the earth. There was no clew to that tragedy of the air. We could not determine whether the balloon had been manned by comrades or enemies. A vague sound came to our ears, like the bubbling of a gigantic caldron a long way off, and Hartman said it was machine-guns and automatic rifles.

And still we walked in immediate quietude. Nothing was happening where we were. The police and the automobile patrols went by, and once half a dozen fire-engines, returning evidently from some conflagration. A question was called to the fireman by an officer in an automobile, and we heard one shout in reply: “No water! They’ve blown up the mains!”

“We’ve smashed the water supply,” Hartman cried excitedly to me. “If we can do all this in a premature, isolated, abortive attempt, what can’t we do in a concerted, ripened effort all over the land?”

The automobile containing the officer who had asked the question darted on. Suddenly there was a deafening roar. The machine, with its human freight, lifted in an upburst of smoke, and sank down a mass of wreckage and death.

Hartman was jubilant. “Well done! well done!” he was repeating, over and over, in a whisper. “The proletariat gets its lesson to-day, but it gives one, too.”

Police were running for the spot. Also, another patrol machine had halted. As for myself, I was in a daze. The suddenness of it was stunning. How had it happened? I knew not how, and yet I had been looking directly at it. So dazed was I for the moment that I was scarcely aware of the fact that we were being held up by the police. I abruptly saw that a policeman was in the act of shooting Hartman. But Hartman was cool and was giving the proper passwords. I saw the levelled revolver hesitate, then sink down, and heard the disgusted grunt of the policeman. He was very angry, and was cursing the whole secret service. It was always in the way, he was averring, while Hartman was talking back to him and with fitting secret-service pride explaining to him the clumsiness of the police.

The next moment I knew how it had happened. There was quite a group about the wreck, and two men were just lifting up the wounded officer to carry him to the other machine. A panic seized all of them, and they scattered in every direction, running in blind terror, the wounded officer, roughly dropped, being left behind. The cursing policeman alongside of me also ran, and Hartman and I ran, too, we knew not why, obsessed with the same blind terror to get away from that particular spot.

Nothing really happened then, but everything was explained. The flying men were sheepishly coming back, but all the while their eyes were raised apprehensively to the many-windowed, lofty buildings that towered like the sheer walls of a canyon on each side of the street. From one of those countless windows the bomb had been thrown, but which window? There had been no second bomb, only a fear of one.

Thereafter we looked with speculative comprehension at the windows. Any of them contained possible death. Each building was a possible ambuscade. This was warfare in that modern jungle, a great city. Every street was a canyon, every building a mountain. We had not changed much from primitive man, despite the war automobiles that were sliding by.

Turning a corner, we came upon a woman. She was lying on the pavement, in a pool of blood. Hartman bent over and examined her. As for myself, I turned deathly sick. I was to see many dead that day, but the total carnage was not to affect me as did this first forlorn body lying there at my feet abandoned on the pavement. “Shot in the breast,” was Hartman’s report. Clasped in the hollow of her arm, as a child might be clasped, was a bundle of printed matter. Even in death she seemed loath to part with that which had caused her death; for when Hartman had succeeded in withdrawing the bundle, we found that it consisted of large printed sheets, the proclamations of the revolutionists.

“A comrade,” I said.

But Hartman only cursed the Iron Heel, and we passed on. Often we were halted by the police and patrols, but our passwords enabled us to proceed. No more bombs fell from the windows, the last pedestrians seemed to have vanished from the streets, and our immediate quietude grew more profound; though the gigantic caldron continued to bubble in the distance, dull roars of explosions came to us from all directions, and the smoke-pillars were towering more ominously in the heavens.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS

Suddenly a change came over the face of things. A tingle of excitement ran along the air. Automobiles fled past, two, three, a dozen, and from them warnings were shouted to us. One of the machines swerved wildly at high speed half a block down, and the next moment, already left well behind it, the pavement was torn into a great hole by a bursting bomb. We saw the police disappearing down the cross-streets on the run, and knew that something terrible was coming. We could hear the rising roar of it.

“Our brave comrades are coming,” Hartman said.

We could see the front of their column filling the street from gutter to gutter, as the last war-automobile fled past. The machine stopped for a moment just abreast of us. A soldier leaped from it, carrying something carefully in his hands. This, with the same care, he deposited in the gutter. Then he leaped back to his seat and the machine dashed on, took the turn at the corner, and was gone from sight. Hartman ran to the gutter and stooped over the object.

“Keep back,” he warned me.

I could see he was working rapidly with his hands. When he returned to me the sweat was heavy on his forehead.

“I disconnected it,” he said, “and just in the nick of time. The soldier was clumsy. He intended it for our comrades, but he didn’t give it enough time. It would have exploded prematurely. Now it won’t explode at all.”

Everything was happening rapidly now. Across the street and half a block down, high up in a building, I could see heads peering out. I had just pointed them out to Hartman, when a sheet of flame and smoke ran along that portion of the face of the building where the heads had appeared, and the air was shaken by the explosion. In places the stone facing of the building was torn away, exposing the iron construction beneath. The next moment similar sheets of flame and smoke smote the front of the building across the street opposite it. Between the explosions we could hear the rattle of the automatic pistols and rifles. For several minutes this mid-air battle continued, then died out. It was patent that our comrades were in one building, that Mercenaries were in the other, and that they were fighting across the street. But we could not tell which was which — which building contained our comrades and which the Mercenaries.

By this time the column on the street was almost on us. As the front of it passed under the warring buildings, both went into action again — one building dropping bombs into the street, being attacked from across the street, and in return replying to that attack. Thus we learned which building was held by our comrades, and they did good work, saving those in the street from the bombs of the enemy.

Hartman gripped my arm and dragged me into a wide entrance.

“They’re not our comrades,” he shouted in my ear.

The inner doors to the entrance were locked and bolted. We could not escape. The next moment the front of the column went by. It was not a column, but a mob, an awful river that filled the street, the people of the abyss, mad with drink and wrong, up at last and roaring for the blood of their masters. I had seen the people of the abyss before, gone through its ghettos, and thought I knew it; but I found that I was now looking on it for the first time. Dumb apathy had vanished. It was now dynamic — a fascinating spectacle of dread. It surged past my vision in concrete waves of wrath, snarling and growling, carnivorous, drunk with whiskey from pillaged warehouses, drunk with hatred, drunk with lust for blood — men, women, and children, in rags and tatters, dim ferocious intelligences with all the godlike blotted from their features and all the fiendlike stamped in, apes and tigers, anaemic consumptives and great hairy beasts of burden, wan faces from which vampire society had sucked the juice of life, bloated forms swollen with physical grossness and corruption, withered hags and death’s-heads bearded like patriarchs, festering youth and festering age, faces of fiends, crooked, twisted, misshapen monsters blasted with the ravages of disease and all the horrors of chronic innutrition — the refuse and the scum of life, a raging, screaming, screeching, demoniacal horde.

And why not? The people of the abyss had nothing to lose but the misery and pain of living. And to gain? — nothing, save one final, awful glut of vengeance. And as I looked the thought came to me that in that rushing stream of human lava were men, comrades and heroes, whose mission had been to rouse the abysmal beast and to keep the enemy occupied in coping with it.

And now a strange thing happened to me. A transformation came over me. The fear of death, for myself and for others, left me. I was strangely exalted, another being in another life. Nothing mattered. The Cause for this one time was lost, but the Cause would be here to-morrow, the same Cause, ever fresh and ever burning. And thereafter, in the orgy of horror that raged through the succeeding hours, I was able to take a calm interest. Death meant nothing, life meant nothing. I was an interested spectator of events, and, sometimes swept on by the rush, was myself a curious participant. For my mind had leaped to a star-cool altitude and grasped a passionless transvaluation of values. Had it not done this, I know that I should have died.

Half a mile of the mob had swept by when we were discovered. A woman in fantastic rags, with cheeks cavernously hollow and with narrow black eyes like burning gimlets, caught a glimpse of Hartman and me. She let out a shrill shriek and bore in upon us. A section of the mob tore itself loose and surged in after her. I can see her now, as I write these lines, a leap in advance, her gray hair flying in thin tangled strings, the blood dripping down her forehead from some wound in the scalp, in her right hand a hatchet, her left hand, lean and wrinkled, a yellow talon, gripping the air convulsively. Hartman sprang in front of me. This was no time for explanations. We were well dressed, and that was enough. His fist shot out, striking the woman between her burning eyes. The impact of the blow drove her backward, but she struck the wall of her on-coming fellows and bounced forward again, dazed and helpless, the brandished hatchet falling feebly on Hartman's shoulder.

The next moment I knew not what was happening. I was overborne by the crowd. The confined space was filled with shrieks and yells and curses. Blows were falling on me. Hands were ripping and tearing at my flesh and garments. I felt that I was being torn to pieces. I was being borne down, suffocated. Some strong hand gripped my shoulder in the thick of the press and was dragging fiercely at me. Between pain and pressure I fainted. Hartman never came out of that entrance. He had shielded me and received the first brunt of the attack. This had saved me, for the jam had quickly become too dense for anything more than the mad gripping and tearing of hands.

I came to in the midst of wild movement. All about me was the same movement. I had been caught up in a monstrous flood that was sweeping me I knew not whither. Fresh air was on my cheek and biting sweetly in my lungs. Faint and dizzy, I was vaguely aware of a strong arm around my body under the arms, and half-lifting me and dragging me along. Feebly my own limbs were helping me. In front of me I could see the moving back of a man's coat. It had been slit from top to bottom along the centre seam, and it pulsed rhythmically, the slit opening and closing regularly with every leap of the wearer. This phenomenon fascinated me for a time, while my senses were coming back to me. Next I became aware of stinging cheeks and nose, and could feel blood dripping on my face. My hat was gone. My hair was down and flying, and from the stinging of the scalp I managed to recollect a hand in the press of the entrance that had torn at my hair. My chest and arms were bruised and aching in a score of places.

My brain grew clearer, and I turned as I ran and looked at the man who was holding me up. He it was who had dragged me out and saved me. He noticed my movement.

"It's all right!" he shouted hoarsely. "I knew you on the instant."

I failed to recognize him, but before I could speak I trod upon something that was alive and that squirmed under my foot. I was swept on by those behind and could not look down and see, and yet I knew that it was a woman who had fallen and who was being trampled into the pavement by thousands of successive feet.

"It's all right," he repeated. "I'm Garthwaite."

He was bearded and gaunt and dirty, but I succeeded in remembering him as the stalwart youth that had spent several months in our Glen Ellen refuge three years before. He passed me the signals of the Iron Heel's secret service, in token that he, too, was in its employ.

"I'll get you out of this as soon as I can get a chance," he assured me. "But watch your footing. On your life don't stumble and go down."

All things happened abruptly on that day, and with an abruptness that was sickening the mob checked itself. I came in violent collision with a large woman in front of me (the man with the split coat had vanished), while those behind collided against me. A devilish pandemonium reigned, — shrieks, curses, and cries of death, while above all rose the churning rattle of machine-guns and the put-a-put, put-a-put of rifles. At first I could make out nothing. People were falling about me right and left. The woman in front doubled up and went down, her hands on her abdomen in a frenzied clutch. A man was quivering against my legs in a death-struggle.

It came to me that we were at the head of the column. Half a mile of it had disappeared — where or how I never learned. To this day I do not know what became of that half-mile of humanity — whether it was blotted out by some frightful bolt of war, whether it was scattered and destroyed piecemeal, or whether it escaped. But there we were, at the head of the column instead of in its middle, and we were being swept out of life by a torrent of shrieking lead.

As soon as death had thinned the jam, Garthwaite, still grasping my arm, led a rush of survivors into the wide entrance of an office building. Here, at the rear, against the doors, we were pressed by a panting, gasping mass of creatures. For some time we remained in this position without a change in the situation.

"I did it beautifully," Garthwaite was lamenting to me. "Ran you right into a trap. We had a gambler's chance in the street, but in here there is no chance at all. It's all over but the shouting. Vive la Revolution!"

Then, what he expected, began. The Mercenaries were killing without quarter. At first, the surge back upon us was crushing, but as the killing continued the pressure was eased. The dead and dying went down and made room. Garthwaite put his mouth to my ear and shouted, but in the frightful din I could not catch what he said. He did not wait. He seized me and threw me down. Next he dragged a dying woman over on top of me, and, with much squeezing and shoving, crawled in beside me and partly over me. A mound of dead and dying began to pile up over us, and over this mound, pawing and moaning, crept those that still survived. But these, too, soon ceased, and a semi-silence settled down, broken by groans and sobs and sounds of strangulation.

I should have been crushed had it not been for Garthwaite. As it was, it seemed inconceivable that I could bear the weight I did and live. And yet, outside of pain, the only feeling I possessed was one of curiosity. How was it going to end? What would death be like? Thus did I receive my red baptism in that Chicago shambles. Prior to that, death to me had been a theory; but ever afterward death has been a simple fact that does not matter, it is so easy.

But the Mercenaries were not content with what they had done. They invaded the entrance, killing the wounded and searching out the unhurt that, like ourselves, were playing dead. I remember one man they dragged out of a heap, who pleaded abjectly until a revolver shot cut him short. Then there was a woman who charged from a heap, snarling and shooting. She fired six shots before they got her, though what damage she did we could not know.

We could follow these tragedies only by the sound. Every little while flurries like this occurred, each flurry culminating in the revolver shot that put an end to it. In the intervals we could hear the soldiers talking and swearing as they rummaged among the carcasses, urged on by their officers to hurry up.

At last they went to work on our heap, and we could feel the pressure diminish as they dragged away the dead and wounded. Garthwaite began uttering aloud the signals. At first he was not heard. Then he raised his voice.

"Listen to that," we heard a soldier say. And next the sharp voice of an officer. "Hold on there! Careful as you go!"

Oh, that first breath of air as we were dragged out! Garthwaite did the talking at first, but I was compelled to undergo a brief examination to prove service with the Iron Heel.

"Agents-provocateurs all right," was the officer's conclusion. He was a beardless young fellow, a cadet, evidently, of some great oligarch family.

"It's a hell of a job," Garthwaite grumbled. "I'm going to try and resign and get into the army. You fellows have a snap."

"You've earned it," was the young officer's answer. "I've got some pull, and I'll see if it can be managed. I can tell them how I found you."

He took Garthwaite's name and number, then turned to me.

"And you?"

"Oh, I'm going to be married," I answered lightly, "and then I'll be out of it all."

And so we talked, while the killing of the wounded went on. It is all a dream, now, as I look back on it; but at the time it was the most natural thing in the world. Garthwaite and the young officer fell into an animated conversation over the difference between so-called modern warfare and the present street-fighting and sky-scraper fighting that was taking place all over the city. I followed them intently, fixing up my hair at the same time and pinning together my torn skirts. And all the time the killing of the wounded went on. Sometimes the revolver shots drowned the voices of Garthwaite and the officer, and they were compelled to repeat what they had been saying.

I lived through three days of the Chicago Commune, and the vastness of it and of the slaughter may be imagined when I say that in all that time I saw practically nothing outside the killing of the people of the abyss and the mid-air fighting between sky-scrapers. I really saw nothing of the heroic work done by the comrades. I could hear the explosions of their mines and bombs, and see the smoke of their conflagrations, and that was all. The mid-air part of one great deed I saw, however, and that was the balloon attacks made by our comrades on the fortresses. That was on the second day. The three disloyal regiments had been destroyed in the fortresses to the last man. The fortresses were crowded with Mercenaries, the wind blew in the right direction, and up went our balloons from one of the office buildings in the city.

Now Biedenbach, after he left Glen Ellen, had invented a most powerful explosive — ”expedite” he called it. This was the weapon the balloons used. They were only hot-air balloons, clumsily and hastily made, but they did the work. I saw it all from the top of an office building. The first balloon missed the fortresses completely and disappeared into the country; but we learned about it afterward. Burton and O’Sullivan were in it. As they were descending they swept across a railroad directly over a troop-train that was heading at full speed for Chicago. They dropped their whole supply of expedite upon the locomotive. The resulting wreck tied the line up for days. And the best of it was that, released from the weight of expedite, the balloon shot up into the air and did not come down for half a dozen miles, both heroes escaping unharmed.

The second balloon was a failure. Its flight was lame. It floated too low and was shot full of holes before it could reach the fortresses. Herford and Guinness were in it, and they were blown to pieces along with the field into which they fell. Biedenbach was in despair — we heard all about it afterward — and he went up alone in the third balloon. He, too, made a low flight, but he was in luck, for they failed seriously to puncture his balloon. I can see it now as I did then, from the lofty top of the building — that inflated bag drifting along the air, and that tiny speck of a man clinging on beneath. I could not see the fortress, but those on the roof with me said he was directly over it. I did not see the expedite fall when he cut it loose. But I did see the balloon suddenly leap up into the sky. An appreciable time after that the great column of the explosion towered in the air, and after that, in turn, I heard the roar of it. Biedenbach the gentle had destroyed a fortress. Two other balloons followed at the same time. One was blown to pieces in the air, the expedite exploding, and the shock of it disrupted the second balloon, which fell prettily into the remaining fortress. It couldn’t have been better planned, though the two comrades in it sacrificed their lives.

But to return to the people of the abyss. My experiences were confined to them. They raged and slaughtered and destroyed all over the city proper, and were in turn destroyed; but never once did they succeed in reaching the city of the oligarchs over on the west side. The oligarchs had protected themselves well. No matter what destruction was wreaked in the heart of the city, they, and their womenkind and children, were to escape hurt. I am told that their children played in the parks during those terrible days and that their favorite game was an imitation of their elders stamping upon the proletariat.

But the Mercenaries found it no easy task to cope with the people of the abyss and at the same time fight with the comrades. Chicago was true to her traditions, and though a generation of revolutionists was wiped out, it took along with it pretty close to a generation of its enemies. Of course, the Iron Heel kept the figures secret, but, at a very conservative estimate, at least one hundred and thirty thousand Mercenaries were slain. But the comrades had no chance. Instead of the whole country being hand in hand in revolt, they were all alone, and the total strength of the Oligarchy could have been directed against them if necessary. As it was, hour after hour, day after day, in endless train-loads, by hundreds of thousands, the Mercenaries were hurled into Chicago.

And there were so many of the people of the abyss! Tiring of the slaughter, a great herding movement was begun by the soldiers, the intent of which was to drive the street mobs, like cattle, into Lake Michigan. It was at the beginning of this movement that Garthwaite and I had encountered the young officer. This herding movement was practically a failure, thanks to the splendid work of the comrades. Instead of the great host the Mercenaries had hoped to gather together, they succeeded in driving no more than forty thousand of the wretches into the lake. Time and again, when a mob of them was well in hand and being driven along the streets to the water, the comrades would create a diversion, and the mob would escape through the consequent hole torn in the encircling net.

Garthwaite and I saw an example of this shortly after meeting with the young officer. The mob of which we had been a part, and which had been put in retreat, was prevented from escaping to the south and east by strong bodies of troops. The troops we had fallen in with had held it back on the west. The only outlet was north, and north it went toward the lake, driven on from east and west and south by machine-gun fire and automatics. Whether it divined that it was being driven toward the lake, or whether it was merely a blind squirm of the monster, I do not know; but at any rate the mob took a cross street to the west, turned down the next street, and came back upon its track, heading south toward the great ghetto.

Garthwaite and I at that time were trying to make our way westward to get out of the territory of street-fighting, and we were caught right in the thick of it again. As we came to the corner we saw the howling mob bearing down upon us. Garthwaite seized my arm and we were just starting to run, when he dragged me back from in front of the wheels of half a dozen war automobiles, equipped with machine-guns, that were rushing for the spot. Behind them came the soldiers with their automatic rifles. By the time they took position, the mob was upon them, and it looked as though they would be overwhelmed before they could get into action.

Here and there a soldier was discharging his rifle, but this scattered fire had no effect in checking the mob. On it came, bellowing with brute rage. It seemed the machine-guns could not get started. The automobiles on which they were mounted blocked the street, compelling the soldiers to find positions in, between, and on the sidewalks. More and more soldiers were arriving, and in the jam we were unable to get away. Garthwaite held me by the arm, and we pressed close against the front of a building.

The mob was no more than twenty-five feet away when the machine-guns opened up; but before that flaming sheet of death nothing could live. The mob came on, but it could not advance. It piled up in a heap, a mound, a huge and growing wave of dead and dying. Those behind urged on, and the column, from gutter to gutter, telescoped upon itself. Wounded creatures, men and women, were vomited over the top of that awful wave and fell squirming down the face of it till they threshed about under the automobiles and against the legs of the soldiers. The latter bayoneted the struggling wretches, though one I saw who gained his feet and flew at a soldier’s throat with his teeth. Together they went down, soldier and slave, into the welter.

The firing ceased. The work was done. The mob had been stopped in its wild attempt to break through. Orders were being given to clear the wheels of the war-machines. They could not advance over that wave of dead, and the idea was to run them down the cross street. The soldiers were dragging the bodies away from the wheels when it happened. We learned afterward how it happened. A block distant a hundred of our comrades had been holding a building. Across roofs and through buildings they made their way, till they found themselves looking down upon the close-packed soldiers. Then it was counter-massacre.

Without warning, a shower of bombs fell from the top of the building. The automobiles were blown to fragments, along with many soldiers. We, with the survivors, swept back in mad retreat. Half a block down another building opened fire on us. As the soldiers had carpeted the street with dead slaves, so, in turn, did they themselves become carpet. Garthwaite and I bore charmed lives. As we had done before, so again we sought shelter in an entrance. But he was not to be caught napping this time. As the roar of the bombs died away, he began peering out.

“The mob’s coming back!” he called to me. “We’ve got to get out of this!”

We fled, hand in hand, down the bloody pavement, slipping and sliding, and making for the corner. Down the cross street we could see a few soldiers still running. Nothing was happening to them. The way was clear. So we paused a moment and looked back. The mob came on slowly. It was busy arming itself with the rifles of the slain and killing the wounded. We saw the end of the young officer who had rescued us. He painfully lifted himself on his elbow and turned loose with his automatic pistol.

“There goes my chance of promotion,” Garthwaite laughed, as a woman bore down on the wounded man, brandishing a butcher’s cleaver. “Come on. It’s the wrong direction, but we’ll get out somehow.”

And we fled eastward through the quiet streets, prepared at every cross street for anything to happen. To the south a monster conflagration was filling the sky, and we knew that the great ghetto was burning. At last I sank down on the sidewalk. I was exhausted and could go no farther. I was bruised and sore and aching in every limb; yet I could not escape smiling at Garthwaite, who was rolling a cigarette and saying:

“I know I’m making a mess of rescuing you, but I can’t get head nor tail of the situation. It’s all a mess. Every time we try to break out, something happens and we’re turned back. We’re only a couple of blocks now from where I got you out of that entrance. Friend and foe are all mixed up. It’s chaos. You can’t tell who is in those darned buildings. Try to find out, and you get a bomb on your head. Try to go peaceably on your way, and you run into a mob and are killed by machine-guns, or you run into the Mercenaries and are killed by your own comrades from a roof. And on the top of it all the mob comes along and kills you, too.”

He shook his head dolefully, lighted his cigarette, and sat down beside me.

“And I’m that hungry,” he added, “I could eat cobblestones.”

The next moment he was on his feet again and out in the street prying up a cobblestone. He came back with it and assaulted the window of a store behind us.

“It’s ground floor and no good,” he explained as he helped me through the hole he had made; “but it’s the best we can do. You get a nap and I’ll reconnoitre. I’ll finish this rescue all right, but I want time, time, lots of it — and something to eat.”

It was a harness store we found ourselves in, and he fixed me up a couch of horse blankets in the private office well to the rear. To add to my wretchedness a splitting headache was coming on, and I was only too glad to close my eyes and try to sleep.

“I’ll be back,” were his parting words. “I don’t hope to get an auto, but I’ll surely bring some grub,* anyway.”

* Food.

And that was the last I saw of Garthwaite for three years. Instead of coming back, he was carried away to a hospital with a bullet through his lungs and another through the fleshy part of his neck.

CHAPTER XXIV

NIGHTMARE

I had not closed my eyes the night before on the Twentieth Century, and what of that and of my exhaustion I slept soundly. When I first awoke, it was night. Garthwaite had not returned. I had lost my watch and had no idea of the time. As I lay with my eyes closed, I heard the same dull sound of distant explosions. The inferno was still raging. I crept through the store to the front. The reflection from the sky of vast conflagrations made the street almost as light as day. One could have read the finest print with ease. From several blocks away came the crackle of small hand-bombs and the churning of machine-guns, and from a long way off came a long series of heavy explosions. I crept back to my horse blankets and slept again.

When next I awoke, a sickly yellow light was filtering in on me. It was dawn of the second day. I crept to the front of the store. A smoke pall, shot through with lurid gleams, filled the sky. Down the opposite side of the street tottered a wretched slave. One hand he held tightly against his side, and behind him he left a bloody trail. His eyes roved everywhere, and they were filled with apprehension and dread. Once he looked straight across at me, and in his face was all the dumb pathos of the wounded and hunted animal. He saw me, but there was no kinship between us, and with him, at least, no sympathy of understanding; for he cowered perceptibly and dragged himself on. He could expect no aid in all God’s world. He was a helot in the great hunt of helots that the masters were making. All he could hope for, all he sought, was some hole to crawl away in and hide like any animal. The sharp clang of a passing ambulance at the corner gave him a start. Ambulances were not for such as he. With a groan of pain he threw himself into a doorway. A minute later he was out again and desperately hobbling on.

I went back to my horse blankets and waited an hour for Garthwaite. My headache had not gone away. On the contrary, it was increasing. It was by an effort of will only that I was able to open my eyes and look at objects. And with the opening of my eyes and the looking came intolerable torment. Also, a great pulse was beating in my brain. Weak and reeling, I went out through the broken window and down the street, seeking to escape, instinctively and gropingly, from the awful shambles. And thereafter I lived nightmare. My memory of what happened in the succeeding hours is the memory one would have of nightmare. Many events are focussed sharply on my brain, but between these indelible pictures I retain are intervals of unconsciousness. What occurred in those intervals I know not, and never shall know.

I remember stumbling at the corner over the legs of a man. It was the poor hunted wretch that had dragged himself past my hiding-place. How distinctly do I remember his poor, pitiful, gnarled hands as he lay there on the pavement — hands that were more hoof and claw than hands, all twisted and distorted by the toil of all his days, with on the palms a horny growth of callous a half inch thick. And as I picked myself up and started on, I looked into the face of the thing and saw that it still lived; for the eyes, dimly intelligent, were looking at me and seeing me.

After that came a kindly blank. I knew nothing, saw nothing, merely tottered on in my quest for safety. My next nightmare vision was a quiet street of the dead. I came upon it abruptly, as a wanderer in the country would come upon a flowing stream. Only this stream I gazed upon did not flow. It was congealed in death. From pavement to pavement, and covering the sidewalks, it lay there, spread out quite evenly, with only here and there a lump or mound of bodies to break the surface. Poor driven people of the abyss, hunted helots — they lay there as the rabbits in California after a drive.* Up the street and down I looked. There was no movement, no sound. The quiet buildings looked down upon the scene from their many windows. And once, and once only, I saw an arm that moved in that dead stream. I swear I saw it move, with a strange writhing gesture of agony, and with it lifted a head, gory with nameless horror, that gibbered at me and then lay down again and moved no more.

* In those days, so sparsely populated was the land that wild animals often became pests. In California the custom of rabbit-driving obtained. On a given day all the farmers in a locality would assemble and sweep across the country in converging lines, driving the rabbits by scores of thousands into a prepared enclosure, where they were clubbed to death by men and boys.

I remember another street, with quiet buildings on either side, and the panic that smote me into consciousness as again I saw the people of the abyss, but this time in a stream that flowed and came on. And then I saw there was nothing to fear. The stream moved slowly, while from it arose groans and lamentations, cursings, babblings of senility, hysteria, and insanity; for these were the very young and the very old, the feeble and the sick, the helpless and the hopeless, all the wreckage of the ghetto. The burning of the great ghetto on the South Side had driven them forth into the inferno of the street-fighting, and whither they wended and whatever became of them I did not know and never learned.*

I have faint memories of breaking a window and hiding in some shop to escape a street mob that was pursued by soldiers. Also, a bomb burst near me, once, in some still street, where, look as I would, up and down, I could see no human being. But my next sharp recollection begins with the crack of a rifle and an abrupt becoming aware that I am being fired at by a soldier in an automobile. The shot missed, and the next moment I was screaming and motioning the signals. My memory of riding in the automobile is very hazy, though this ride, in turn, is broken by one vivid picture. The crack of the rifle of the soldier sitting beside me made me open my eyes, and I saw George Milford, whom I had known in the Pell Street days, sinking slowly down to the sidewalk. Even as he sank the soldier fired again, and Milford doubled in, then flung his body out, and fell sprawling. The soldier chuckled, and the automobile sped on.

The next I knew after that I was awakened out of a sound sleep by a man who walked up and down close beside me. His face was drawn and strained, and the sweat rolled down his nose from his forehead. One hand was clutched tightly against his chest by the other hand, and blood dripped down upon the floor as he walked. He wore the uniform of the Mercenaries. From without, as through thick walls, came the muffled roar of bursting bombs. I was in some building that was locked in combat with some other building.

A surgeon came in to dress the wounded soldier, and I learned that it was two in the afternoon. My headache was no better, and the surgeon paused from his work long enough to give me a powerful drug that would depress the heart and bring relief. I slept again, and the next I knew I was on top of the building. The immediate fighting had ceased, and I was watching the balloon attack on the fortresses. Some one had an arm around me and I was leaning close against him. It came to me quite as a matter of course that this was Ernest, and I found myself wondering how he had got his hair and eyebrows so badly singed.

---

* It was long a question of debate, whether the burning of the South Side ghetto was accidental, or whether it was done by the Mercenaries; but it is definitely settled now that the ghetto was fired by the Mercenaries under orders from their chiefs.

It was by the merest chance that we had found each other in that terrible city. He had had no idea that I had left New York, and, coming through the room where I lay asleep, could not at first believe that it was I. Little more I saw of the Chicago Commune. After watching the balloon attack, Ernest took me down into the heart of the building, where I slept the afternoon out and the night. The third day we spent in the building, and on the fourth, Ernest having got permission and an automobile from the authorities, we left Chicago.

My headache was gone, but, body and soul, I was very tired. I lay back against Ernest in the automobile, and with apathetic eyes watched the soldiers trying to get the machine out of the city. Fighting was still going on, but only in isolated localities. Here and there whole districts were still in possession of the comrades, but such districts were surrounded and guarded by heavy bodies of troops. In a hundred segregated traps were the comrades thus held while the work of subjugating them went on. Subjugation meant death, for no quarter was given, and they fought heroically to the last man.*

Whenever we approached such localities, the guards turned us back and sent us around. Once, the only way past two strong positions of the comrades was through a burnt section that lay between. From either side we could hear the rattle and roar of war, while the automobile picked its way through smoking ruins and tottering walls. Often the streets were blocked by mountains of debris that compelled us to go around. We were in a labyrinth of ruin, and our progress was slow.

---

* Numbers of the buildings held out over a week, while one held out eleven days. Each building had to be stormed like a fort, and the Mercenaries fought their way upward floor by floor. It was deadly fighting. Quarter was neither given nor taken, and in the fighting the revolutionists had the advantage of being above. While the revolutionists were wiped out, the loss was not one-sided. The proud Chicago proletariat lived up to its ancient boast. For as many of itself as were killed, it killed that many of the enemy.

The stockyards (ghetto, plant, and everything) were smouldering ruins. Far off to the right a wide smoke haze dimmed the sky, — the town of Pullman, the soldier chauffeur told us, or what had been the town of Pullman, for it was utterly destroyed. He had driven the machine out there, with despatches, on the afternoon of the third day. Some of the heaviest fighting had occurred there, he said, many of the streets being rendered impassable by the heaps of the dead.

Swinging around the shattered walls of a building, in the stockyards district, the automobile was stopped by a wave of dead. It was for all the world like a wave tossed up by the sea. It was patent to us what had happened. As the mob charged past the corner, it had been swept, at right angles and point-blank range, by the machine-guns drawn up on the cross street. But disaster had come to the soldiers. A chance bomb must have exploded among them, for the mob, checked until its dead and dying formed the wave, had white-capped and flung forward its foam of living, fighting slaves. Soldiers and slaves lay together, torn and mangled, around and over the wreckage of the automobiles and guns.

Ernest sprang out. A familiar pair of shoulders in a cotton shirt and a familiar fringe of white hair had caught his eye. I did not watch him, and it was not until he was back beside me and we were speeding on that he said:

“It was Bishop Morehouse.”

Soon we were in the green country, and I took one last glance back at the smoke-filled sky. Faint and far came the low thud of an explosion. Then I turned my face against Ernest’s breast and wept softly for the Cause that was lost. Ernest’s arm about me was eloquent with love.

“For this time lost, dear heart,” he said, “but not forever. We have learned. To-morrow the Cause will rise again, strong with wisdom and discipline.”

The automobile drew up at a railroad station. Here we would catch a train to New York. As we waited on the platform, three trains thundered past, bound west to Chicago. They were crowded with ragged, unskilled laborers, people of the abyss.

“Slave-levies for the rebuilding of Chicago,” Ernest said. “You see, the Chicago slaves are all killed.”

CHAPTER XXV

THE TERRORISTS

It was not until Ernest and I were back in New York, and after weeks had elapsed, that we were able to comprehend thoroughly the full sweep of the disaster that had befallen the Cause. The situation was bitter and bloody. In many places, scattered over the country, slave revolts and massacres had occurred. The roll of the martyrs increased mightily. Countless executions took place everywhere. The mountains and waste regions were filled with outlaws and refugees who were being hunted down mercilessly. Our own refuges were packed with comrades who had prices on their heads. Through information furnished by its spies, scores of our refuges were raided by the soldiers of the Iron Heel.

Many of the comrades were disheartened, and they retaliated with terroristic tactics. The set-back to their hopes made them despairing and desperate. Many terrorist organizations unaffiliated with us sprang into existence and caused us much trouble.* These misguided people sacrificed their own lives wantonly, very often made our own plans go astray, and retarded our organization.

* The annals of this short-lived era of despair make bloody reading. Revenge was the ruling motive, and the members of the terroristic organizations were careless of their own lives and hopeless about the future. The Danites, taking their name from the avenging angels of the Mormon mythology, sprang up in the mountains of the Great West and spread over the Pacific Coast from Panama to Alaska. The Valkyries were women. They were the most terrible of all. No woman was eligible for membership who had not lost near relatives at the hands of the Oligarchy. They were guilty of torturing their prisoners to death. Another famous organization of women was The Widows of War. A companion organization to the Valkyries was the Berserkers. These men placed no value whatever upon their own lives, and it was they who totally destroyed the great Mercenary city of Bellona along with its population of over a hundred thousand souls. The Bedlamites and the Helldamites were twin slave organizations, while a

new religious sect that did not flourish long was called The Wrath of God. Among others, to show the whimsicality of their deadly seriousness, may be mentioned the following: The Bleeding Hearts, Sons of the Morning, the Morning Stars, The Flamingoes, The Triple Triangles, The Three Bars, The Rubonics, The Vindicators, The Comanches, and the Erebusites.

And through it all moved the Iron Heel, impassive and deliberate, shaking up the whole fabric of the social structure in its search for the comrades, combing out the Mercenaries, the labor castes, and all its secret services, punishing without mercy and without malice, suffering in silence all retaliations that were made upon it, and filling the gaps in its fighting line as fast as they appeared. And hand in hand with this, Ernest and the other leaders were hard at work reorganizing the forces of the Revolution. The magnitude of the task may be understood when it is taken into.*

* This is the end of the Everhard Manuscript. It breaks off abruptly in the middle of a sentence. She must have received warning of the coming of the Mercenaries, for she had time safely to hide the Manuscript before she fled or was captured. It is to be regretted that she did not live to complete her narrative, for then, undoubtedly, would have been cleared away the mystery that has shrouded for seven centuries the execution of Ernest Everhard.

MARTIN EDEN

Published in 1909, this novel concerns a proletarian young man struggling to become a writer. It was first serialised in the *Pacific Monthly* magazine. This book is popular among writers, who relate to Martin Eden's speculation that when he mailed off a manuscript, 'there was no human editor at the other end, but a mere cunning arrangement of cogs that changed the manuscript from one envelope to another and stuck on the stamps,' returning it automatically with a rejection slip.

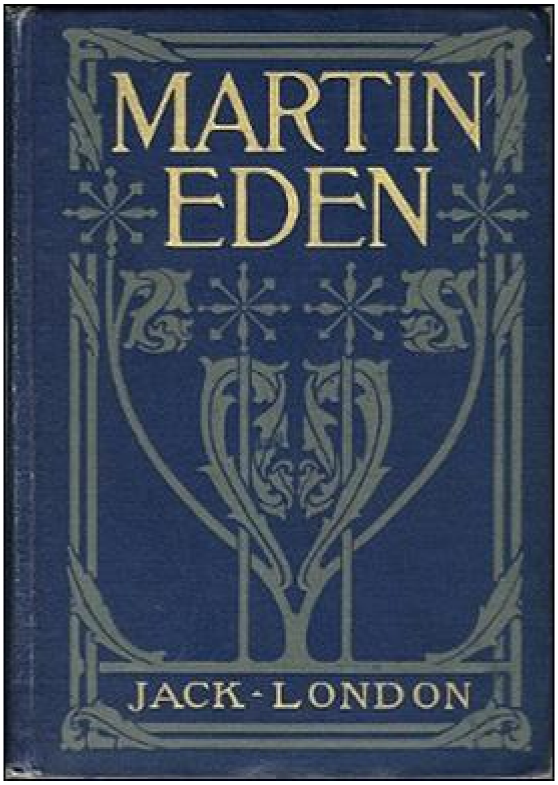

MARTIN
EDEN
JACK-LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII
CHAPTER XXVIII
CHAPTER XXIX
CHAPTER XXX
CHAPTER XXXI
CHAPTER XXXII
CHAPTER XXXIII
CHAPTER XXXIV
CHAPTER XXXV
CHAPTER XXXVI

CHAPTER XXXVII
CHAPTER XXXVIII
CHAPTER XXXIX
CHAPTER XL
CHAPTER XLI
CHAPTER XLII
CHAPTER XLIII
CHAPTER XLIV
CHAPTER XLV
CHAPTER XLVI

CHAPTER I

The one opened the door with a latch-key and went in, followed by a young fellow who awkwardly removed his cap. He wore rough clothes that smacked of the sea, and he was manifestly out of place in the spacious hall in which he found himself. He did not know what to do with his cap, and was stuffing it into his coat pocket when the other took it from him. The act was done quietly and naturally, and the awkward young fellow appreciated it. “He understands,” was his thought. “He’ll see me through all right.”

He walked at the other’s heels with a swing to his shoulders, and his legs spread unwittingly, as if the level floors were tilting up and sinking down to the heave and lunge of the sea. The wide rooms seemed too narrow for his rolling gait, and to himself he was in terror lest his broad shoulders should collide with the doorways or sweep the bric-a-brac from the low mantel. He recoiled from side to side between the various objects and multiplied the hazards that in reality lodged only in his mind. Between a grand piano and a centre-table piled high with books was space for a half a dozen to walk abreast, yet he essayed it with trepidation. His heavy arms hung loosely at his sides. He did not know what to do with those arms and hands, and when, to his excited vision, one arm seemed liable to brush against the books on the table, he lurched away like a frightened horse, barely missing the piano stool. He watched the easy walk of the other in front of him, and for the first time realized that his walk was different from that of other men. He experienced a momentary pang of shame that he should walk so uncouthly. The sweat burst through the skin of his forehead in tiny beads, and he paused and mopped his bronzed face with his handkerchief.

“Hold on, Arthur, my boy,” he said, attempting to mask his anxiety with facetious utterance. “This is too much all at once for yours truly. Give me a chance to get my nerve. You know I didn’t want to come, an’ I guess your fam’ly ain’t hankerin’ to see me neither.”

“That’s all right,” was the reassuring answer. “You mustn’t be frightened at us. We’re just homely people — Hello, there’s a letter for me.”

He stepped back to the table, tore open the envelope, and began to read, giving the stranger an opportunity to recover himself. And the stranger understood and appreciated. His was the gift of sympathy, understanding; and beneath his alarmed exterior that sympathetic process went on. He mopped his forehead dry and glanced about him with a controlled face, though in the eyes there was an expression such as wild animals betray when they fear the trap. He was surrounded by the unknown, apprehensive of what might happen, ignorant of what he should do, aware that he walked and bore himself awkwardly, fearful that every attribute and power of him was similarly afflicted. He was keenly sensitive, hopelessly self-conscious, and the amused glance that the other stole privily at him over the top of the letter burned into him like a dagger-thrust. He saw the glance, but he gave no sign, for among the things he had learned was discipline. Also, that dagger-thrust went to his pride. He cursed himself for having come, and at the same time resolved that, happen what would, having come, he would carry it through. The lines of his face hardened, and into his eyes came a fighting light. He looked about more unconcernedly, sharply observant, every detail of the pretty interior registering itself on his brain. His eyes were wide apart; nothing in their field of vision escaped; and as they drank in the beauty before them the fighting light died out and a warm glow took its place. He was responsive to beauty, and here was cause to respond.

An oil painting caught and held him. A heavy surf thundered and burst over an outjutting rock; lowering storm-clouds covered the sky; and, outside the line of surf, a pilot-schooner, close-hauled, heeled over till every detail of her deck was visible, was surging along against a stormy sunset sky. There was beauty, and it drew him irresistibly. He forgot his awkward walk and came closer to the painting, very close. The beauty faded out of the canvas. His face expressed his bepuzzlement. He stared at what seemed a careless daub of paint, then stepped away. Immediately all the beauty flashed back into the canvas. “A trick picture,” was his thought, as he dismissed it, though in the midst of the multitudinous impressions he was receiving he found time to feel a prod of indignation that so much beauty should be sacrificed to make a trick. He did not know painting. He had been brought up on chromos and lithographs that were always definite and sharp, near or far. He had seen oil paintings, it was true, in the show windows of shops, but the glass of the windows had prevented his eager eyes from approaching too near.

He glanced around at his friend reading the letter and saw the books on the table. Into his eyes leaped a wistfulness and a yearning as promptly as the yearning leaps into the eyes of a starving man at sight of food. An impulsive stride, with one lurch to right and left of the shoulders, brought him to the table, where he began affectionately handling the books. He glanced at the titles and the authors' names, read fragments of text, caressing the volumes with his eyes and hands, and, once, recognized a book he had read. For the rest, they were strange books and strange authors. He chanced upon a volume of Swinburne and began reading steadily, forgetful of where he was, his face glowing. Twice he closed the book on his forefinger to look at the name of the author. Swinburne! he would remember that name. That fellow had eyes, and he had certainly seen color and flashing light. But who was Swinburne? Was he dead a hundred years or so, like most of the poets? Or was he alive still, and writing? He turned to the title-page . . . yes, he had written other books; well, he would go to the free library the first thing in the morning and try to get hold of some of Swinburne's stuff. He went back to the text and lost himself. He did not notice that a young woman had entered the room. The first he knew was when he heard Arthur's voice saying:-

"Ruth, this is Mr. Eden."

The book was closed on his forefinger, and before he turned he was thrilling to the first new impression, which was not of the girl, but of her brother's words. Under that muscled body of his he was a mass of quivering sensibilities. At the slightest impact of the outside world upon his consciousness, his thoughts, sympathies, and emotions leapt and played like lambent flame. He was extraordinarily receptive and responsive, while his imagination, pitched high, was ever at work establishing relations of likeness and difference. "Mr. Eden," was what he had thrilled to — he who had been called "Eden," or "Martin Eden," or just "Martin," all his life. And "*Mister*!" It was certainly going some, was his internal comment. His mind seemed to turn, on the instant, into a vast camera obscura, and he saw arrayed around his consciousness endless pictures from his life, of stoke-holes and forecastles, camps and beaches, jails and boozing-kens, fever-hospitals and slum streets, wherein the thread of association was the fashion in which he had been addressed in those various situations.

And then he turned and saw the girl. The phantasmagoria of his brain vanished at sight of her. She was a pale, ethereal creature, with wide, spiritual blue eyes and a wealth of golden hair. He did not know how she was dressed, except that the dress was as wonderful as she. He likened her to a pale gold flower upon a slender stem. No, she was a spirit, a divinity, a goddess; such sublimated beauty was not of the earth. Or perhaps the books were right, and there were many such as she in the upper walks of life. She might well be sung by that chap, Swinburne. Perhaps he had had somebody like her in mind when he painted that girl, Iseult, in the book there on the table. All this plethora of sight, and feeling, and thought occurred on the instant. There was no pause of the realities wherein he moved. He saw her hand coming out to his, and she looked him straight in the eyes as she shook hands, frankly, like a man. The women he had known did not shake hands that way. For that matter, most of them did not shake hands at all. A flood of associations, visions of various ways he had made the acquaintance of women, rushed into his mind and threatened to swamp it. But he shook them aside and looked at her. Never had he seen such a woman. The women he had known! Immediately, beside her, on either hand, ranged the women he had known. For an eternal second he stood in the midst of a portrait gallery, wherein she occupied the central place, while about her were limned many women, all to be weighed and measured by a fleeting glance, herself the unit of weight and measure. He saw the weak and sickly faces of the girls of the factories, and the simpering, boisterous girls from the south of Market. There were women of the cattle camps, and swarthy cigarette-smoking women of Old Mexico. These, in turn, were crowded out by Japanese women, doll-like, stepping mincingly on wooden clogs; by Eurasians, delicate featured, stamped with degeneracy; by full-bodied South-Sea-Island women, flower-crowned and brown-skinned. All these were blotted out by a grotesque and terrible nightmare brood — frowsy, shuffling creatures from the pavements of Whitechapel, gin-bloated hags of the stews, and all the vast hell's following of harpies, vile-mouthed and filthy, that under the guise of monstrous female form prey upon sailors, the scrapings of the ports, the scum and slime of the human pit.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Eden?" the girl was saying. "I have been looking forward to meeting you ever since Arthur told us. It was brave of you — "

He waved his hand deprecatingly and muttered that it was nothing at all, what he had done, and that any fellow would have done it. She noticed that the hand he waved was covered with fresh abrasions, in the process of healing, and a glance at the other loose-hanging hand showed it to be in the same condition. Also, with quick, critical eye, she noted a scar on his cheek, another that peeped out from under the hair of the forehead, and a third that ran down and disappeared under the starched collar. She repressed a smile at sight of the red line that marked the chafe of the collar against the bronzed neck. He was evidently unused to stiff collars. Likewise her feminine eye took in the clothes he wore, the cheap and unaesthetic cut, the wrinkling of the coat across the shoulders, and the series of wrinkles in the sleeves that advertised bulging biceps muscles.

While he waved his hand and muttered that he had done nothing at all, he was obeying her behest by trying to get into a chair. He found time to admire the ease with which she sat down, then lurched toward a chair facing her, overwhelmed with consciousness of the awkward figure he was cutting. This was a new experience for him. All his life, up to then, he had been unaware of being either graceful or awkward. Such thoughts of self had never entered his mind. He sat down gingerly on the edge of the chair, greatly worried by his hands. They were in the way wherever he put them. Arthur was leaving the room, and Martin Eden followed his exit with longing eyes. He felt lost, alone there in the room with that pale spirit of a woman. There was no bar-keeper upon whom to call for drinks, no small boy to send around the corner for a can of beer and by means of that social fluid start the amenities of friendship flowing.

“You have such a scar on your neck, Mr. Eden,” the girl was saying. “How did it happen? I am sure it must have been some adventure.”

“A Mexican with a knife, miss,” he answered, moistening his parched lips and clearing hip throat. “It was just a fight. After I got the knife away, he tried to bite off my nose.”

Baldly as he had stated it, in his eyes was a rich vision of that hot, starry night at Salina Cruz, the white strip of beach, the lights of the sugar steamers in the harbor, the voices of the drunken sailors in the distance, the jostling stevedores, the flaming passion in the Mexican’s face, the glint of the beast-eyes in the starlight, the sting of the steel in his neck, and the rush of blood, the crowd and the cries, the two bodies, his and the Mexican’s, locked together, rolling over and over and tearing up the sand, and from away off somewhere the mellow tinkling of a guitar. Such was the picture, and he thrilled to the memory of it, wondering if the man could paint it who had painted the pilot-schooner on the wall. The white beach, the stars, and the lights of the sugar steamers would look great, he thought, and midway on the sand the dark group of figures that surrounded the fighters. The knife occupied a place in the picture, he decided, and would show well, with a sort of gleam, in the light of the stars. But of all this no hint had crept into his speech. "He tried to bite off my nose," he concluded.

"Oh," the girl said, in a faint, far voice, and he noticed the shock in her sensitive face.

He felt a shock himself, and a blush of embarrassment shone faintly on his sunburned cheeks, though to him it burned as hotly as when his cheeks had been exposed to the open furnace-door in the fire-room. Such sordid things as stabbing affrays were evidently not fit subjects for conversation with a lady. People in the books, in her walk of life, did not talk about such things — perhaps they did not know about them, either.

There was a brief pause in the conversation they were trying to get started. Then she asked tentatively about the scar on his cheek. Even as she asked, he realized that she was making an effort to talk his talk, and he resolved to get away from it and talk hers.

"It was just an accident," he said, putting his hand to his cheek. "One night, in a calm, with a heavy sea running, the main-boom-lift carried away, an' next the tackle. The lift was wire, an' it was threshin' around like a snake. The whole watch was tryin' to grab it, an' I rushed in an' got swatted."

"Oh," she said, this time with an accent of comprehension, though secretly his speech had been so much Greek to her and she was wondering what a *lift* was and what *swatted* meant.

"This man Swineburne," he began, attempting to put his plan into execution and pronouncing the *i* long.

"Who?"

"Swineburne," he repeated, with the same mispronunciation. "The poet."

"Swinburne," she corrected.

"Yes, that's the chap," he stammered, his cheeks hot again. "How long since he died?"

"Why, I haven't heard that he was dead." She looked at him curiously. "Where did you make his acquaintance?"

"I never clapped eyes on him," was the reply. "But I read some of his poetry out of that book there on the table just before you come in. How do you like his poetry?"

And thereat she began to talk quickly and easily upon the subject he had suggested. He felt better, and settled back slightly from the edge of the chair, holding tightly to its arms with his hands, as if it might get away from him and buck him to the floor. He had succeeded in making her talk her talk, and while she rattled on, he strove to follow her, marvelling at all the knowledge that was stowed away in that pretty head of hers, and drinking in the pale beauty of her face. Follow her he did, though bothered by unfamiliar words that fell glibly from her lips and by critical phrases and thought-processes that were foreign to his mind, but that nevertheless stimulated his mind and set it tingling. Here was intellectual life, he thought, and here was beauty, warm and wonderful as he had never dreamed it could be. He forgot himself and stared at her with hungry eyes. Here was something to live for, to win to, to fight for — ay, and die for. The books were true. There were such women in the world. She was one of them. She lent wings to his imagination, and great, luminous canvases spread themselves before him whereon loomed vague, gigantic figures of love and romance, and of heroic deeds for woman's sake — for a pale woman, a flower of gold. And through the swaying, palpitant vision, as through a fairy mirage, he stared at the real woman, sitting there and talking of literature and art. He listened as well, but he stared, unconscious of the fixity of his gaze or of the fact that all that was essentially masculine in his nature was shining in his eyes. But she, who knew little of the world of men, being a woman, was keenly aware of his burning eyes. She had never had men look at her in such fashion, and it embarrassed her. She stumbled and halted in her utterance. The thread of argument slipped from her. He frightened her, and at the same time it was strangely pleasant to be so looked upon. Her training warned her of peril and of wrong, subtle, mysterious, luring; while her instincts rang clarion-voiced through her being, impelling her to hurdle caste and place and gain to this traveller from another world, to this uncouth young fellow with lacerated hands and a line of raw red caused by the unaccustomed linen at his throat, who, all too evidently, was soiled and tainted by ungracious existence. She was clean, and her cleanness revolted; but she was woman, and she was just beginning to learn the paradox of woman.

"As I was saying — what was I saying?" She broke off abruptly and laughed merrily at her predicament.

"You was saying that this man Swinburne failed bein' a great poet because — an' that was as far as you got, miss," he prompted, while to himself he seemed suddenly hungry, and delicious little thrills crawled up and down his spine at the sound of her laughter. Like silver, he thought to himself, like tinkling silver bells; and on the instant, and for an instant, he was transported to a far land, where under pink cherry blossoms, he smoked a cigarette and listened to the bells of the peaked pagoda calling straw-sandalled devotees to worship.

"Yes, thank you," she said. "Swinburne fails, when all is said, because he is, well, indelicate. There are many of his poems that should never be read. Every line of the really great poets is filled with beautiful truth, and calls to all that is high and noble in the human. Not a line of the great poets can be spared without impoverishing the world by that much."

"I thought it was great," he said hesitatingly, "the little I read. I had no idea he was such a — a scoundrel. I guess that crops out in his other books."

"There are many lines that could be spared from the book you were reading," she said, her voice primly firm and dogmatic.

"I must 'a' missed 'em," he announced. "What I read was the real goods. It was all lighted up an' shining, an' it shun right into me an' lighted me up inside, like the sun or a searchlight. That's the way it landed on me, but I guess I ain't up much on poetry, miss."

He broke off lamely. He was confused, painfully conscious of his inarticulateness. He had felt the bigness and glow of life in what he had read, but his speech was inadequate. He could not express what he felt, and to himself he likened himself to a sailor, in a strange ship, on a dark night, groping about in the unfamiliar running rigging. Well, he decided, it was up to him to get acquainted in this new world. He had never seen anything that he couldn't get the hang of when he wanted to and it was about time for him to want to learn to talk the things that were inside of him so that she could understand. *She* was bulking large on his horizon.

"Now Longfellow — " she was saying.

"Yes, I've read 'm," he broke in impulsively, spurred on to exhibit and make the most of his little store of book knowledge, desirous of showing her that he was not wholly a stupid clod. "'The Psalm of Life,' 'Excelsior,' an' . . . I guess that's all."

She nodded her head and smiled, and he felt, somehow, that her smile was tolerant, pitifully tolerant. He was a fool to attempt to make a pretence that way. That Longfellow chap most likely had written countless books of poetry.

"Excuse me, miss, for buttin' in that way. I guess the real facts is that I don't know nothin' much about such things. It ain't in my class. But I'm goin' to make it in my class."

It sounded like a threat. His voice was determined, his eyes were flashing, the lines of his face had grown harsh. And to her it seemed that the angle of his jaw had changed; its pitch had become unpleasantly aggressive. At the same time a wave of intense virility seemed to surge out from him and impinge upon her.

"I think you could make it in — in your class," she finished with a laugh. "You are very strong."

Her gaze rested for a moment on the muscular neck, heavy corded, almost bull-like, bronzed by the sun, spilling over with rugged health and strength. And though he sat there, blushing and humble, again she felt drawn to him. She was surprised by a wanton thought that rushed into her mind. It seemed to her that if she could lay her two hands upon that neck that all its strength and vigor would flow out to her. She was shocked by this thought. It seemed to reveal to her an undreamed depravity in her nature. Besides, strength to her was a gross and brutish thing. Her ideal of masculine beauty had always been slender gracefulness. Yet the thought still persisted. It bewildered her that she should desire to place her hands on that sunburned neck. In truth, she was far from robust, and the need of her body and mind was for strength. But she did not know it. She knew only that no man had ever affected her before as this one had, who shocked her from moment to moment with his awful grammar.

"Yes, I ain't no invalid," he said. "When it comes down to hard-pan, I can digest scrap-iron. But just now I've got dyspepsia. Most of what you was sayin' I can't digest. Never trained that way, you see. I like books and poetry, and what time I've had I've read 'em, but I've never thought about 'em the way you have. That's why I can't talk about 'em. I'm like a navigator adrift on a strange sea without chart or compass. Now I want to get my bearin's. Mebbe you can put me right. How did you learn all this you've ben talkin'?"

"By going to school, I fancy, and by studying," she answered.

"I went to school when I was a kid," he began to object.

"Yes; but I mean high school, and lectures, and the university."

"You've gone to the university?" he demanded in frank amazement. He felt that she had become remoter from him by at least a million miles.

"I'm going there now. I'm taking special courses in English."

He did not know what "English" meant, but he made a mental note of that item of ignorance and passed on.

"How long would I have to study before I could go to the university?" he asked.

She beamed encouragement upon his desire for knowledge, and said: "That depends upon how much studying you have already done. You have never attended high school? Of course not. But did you finish grammar school?"

"I had two years to run, when I left," he answered. "But I was always honorably promoted at school."

The next moment, angry with himself for the boast, he had gripped the arms of the chair so savagely that every finger-end was stinging. At the same moment he became aware that a woman was entering the room. He saw the girl leave her chair and trip swiftly across the floor to the newcomer. They kissed each other, and, with arms around each other's waists, they advanced toward him. That must be her mother, he thought. She was a tall, blond woman, slender, and stately, and beautiful. Her gown was what he might expect in such a house. His eyes delighted in the graceful lines of it. She and her dress together reminded him of women on the stage. Then he remembered seeing similar grand ladies and gowns entering the London theatres while he stood and watched and the policemen shoved him back into the drizzle beyond the awning. Next his mind leaped to the Grand Hotel at Yokohama, where, too, from the sidewalk, he had seen grand ladies. Then the city and the harbor of Yokohama, in a thousand pictures, began flashing before his eyes. But he swiftly dismissed the kaleidoscope of memory, oppressed by the urgent need of the present. He knew that he must stand up to be introduced, and he struggled painfully to his feet, where he stood with trousers bagging at the knees, his arms loose-hanging and ludicrous, his face set hard for the impending ordeal.

CHAPTER II

The process of getting into the dining room was a nightmare to him. Between halts and stumbles, jerks and lurches, locomotion had at times seemed impossible. But at last he had made it, and was seated alongside of Her. The array of knives and forks frightened him. They bristled with unknown perils, and he gazed at them, fascinated, till their dazzle became a background across which moved a succession of forecastle pictures, wherein he and his mates sat eating salt beef with sheath-knives and fingers, or scooping thick pea-soup out of pannikins by means of battered iron spoons. The stench of bad beef was in his nostrils, while in his ears, to the accompaniment of creaking timbers and groaning bulkheads, echoed the loud mouth-noises of the eaters. He watched them eating, and decided that they ate like pigs. Well, he would be careful here. He would make no noise. He would keep his mind upon it all the time.

He glanced around the table. Opposite him was Arthur, and Arthur's brother, Norman. They were her brothers, he reminded himself, and his heart warmed toward them. How they loved each other, the members of this family! There flashed into his mind the picture of her mother, of the kiss of greeting, and of the pair of them walking toward him with arms entwined. Not in his world were such displays of affection between parents and children made. It was a revelation of the heights of existence that were attained in the world above. It was the finest thing yet that he had seen in this small glimpse of that world. He was moved deeply by appreciation of it, and his heart was melting with sympathetic tenderness. He had starved for love all his life. His nature craved love. It was an organic demand of his being. Yet he had gone without, and hardened himself in the process. He had not known that he needed love. Nor did he know it now. He merely saw it in operation, and thrilled to it, and thought it fine, and high, and splendid.

He was glad that Mr. Morse was not there. It was difficult enough getting acquainted with her, and her mother, and her brother, Norman. Arthur he already knew somewhat. The father would have been too much for him, he felt sure. It seemed to him that he had never worked so hard in his life. The severest toil was child's play compared with this. Tiny nodules of moisture stood out on his forehead, and his shirt was wet with sweat from the exertion of doing so many unaccustomed things at once. He had to eat as he had never eaten before, to handle strange tools, to glance surreptitiously about and learn how to accomplish each new thing, to receive the flood of impressions that was pouring in upon him and being mentally annotated and classified; to be conscious of a yearning for her that perturbed him in the form of a dull, aching restlessness; to feel the prod of desire to win to the walk in life whereon she trod, and to have his mind ever and again straying off in speculation and vague plans of how to reach to her. Also, when his secret glance went across to Norman opposite him, or to any one else, to ascertain just what knife or fork was to be used in any particular occasion, that person's features were seized upon by his mind, which automatically strove to appraise them and to divine what they were — all in relation to her. Then he had to talk, to hear what was said to him and what was said back and forth, and to answer, when it was necessary, with a tongue prone to looseness of speech that required a constant curb. And to add confusion to confusion, there was the servant, an unceasing menace, that appeared noiselessly at his shoulder, a dire Sphinx that propounded puzzles and conundrums demanding instantaneous solution. He was oppressed throughout the meal by the thought of finger-bowls. Irrelevantly, insistently, scores of times, he wondered when they would come on and what they looked like. He had heard of such things, and now, sooner or later, somewhere in the next few minutes, he would see them, sit at table with exalted beings who used them — ay, and he would use them himself. And most important of all, far down and yet always at the surface of his thought, was the problem of how he should comport himself toward these persons. What should his attitude be? He wrestled continually and anxiously with the problem. There were cowardly suggestions that he should make believe, assume a part; and there were still more cowardly suggestions that warned him he would fail in such course, that his nature was not fitted to live up to it, and that he would make a fool of himself.

It was during the first part of the dinner, struggling to decide upon his attitude, that he was very quiet. He did not know that his quietness was giving the lie to Arthur's words of the day before, when that brother of hers had announced that he was going to bring a wild man home to dinner and for them not to be alarmed, because they would find him an interesting wild man. Martin Eden could not have found it in him, just then, to believe that her brother could be guilty of such treachery — especially when he had been the means of getting this particular brother out of an unpleasant row. So he sat at table, perturbed by his own unfitness and at the same time charmed by all that went on about him. For the first time he realized that eating was something more than a utilitarian function. He was unaware of what he ate. It was merely food. He was feasting his love of beauty at this table where eating was an aesthetic function. It was an intellectual function, too. His mind was stirred. He heard words spoken that were meaningless to him, and other words that he had seen only in books and that no man or woman he had known was of large enough mental caliber to pronounce. When he heard such words dropping carelessly from the lips of the members of this marvellous family, her family, he thrilled with delight. The romance, and beauty, and high vigor of the books were coming true. He was in that rare and blissful state wherein a man sees his dreams stalk out from the crannies of fantasy and become fact.

Never had he been at such an altitude of living, and he kept himself in the background, listening, observing, and pleasuring, replying in reticent monosyllables, saying, “Yes, miss,” and “No, miss,” to her, and “Yes, ma’am,” and “No, ma’am,” to her mother. He curbed the impulse, arising out of his sea-training, to say “Yes, sir,” and “No, sir,” to her brothers. He felt that it would be inappropriate and a confession of inferiority on his part — which would never do if he was to win to her. Also, it was a dictate of his pride. “By God!” he cried to himself, once; “I’m just as good as them, and if they do know lots that I don’t, I could learn ’m a few myself, all the same!” And the next moment, when she or her mother addressed him as “Mr. Eden,” his aggressive pride was forgotten, and he was glowing and warm with delight. He was a civilized man, that was what he was, shoulder to shoulder, at dinner, with people he had read about in books. He was in the books himself, adventuring through the printed pages of bound volumes.

But while he belied Arthur’s description, and appeared a gentle lamb rather than a wild man, he was racking his brains for a course of action. He was no gentle lamb, and the part of second fiddle would never do for the high-pitched dominance of his nature. He talked only when he had to, and then his speech was like his walk to the table, filled with jerks and halts as he groped in his polyglot vocabulary for words, debating over words he knew were fit but which he feared he could not pronounce, rejecting other words he knew would not be understood or would be raw and harsh. But all the time he was oppressed by the consciousness that this carefulness of diction was making a booby of him, preventing him from expressing what he had in him. Also, his love of freedom chafed against the restriction in much the same way his neck chafed against the starched fetter of a collar. Besides, he was confident that he could not keep it up. He was by nature powerful of thought and sensibility, and the creative spirit was restive and urgent. He was swiftly mastered by the concept or sensation in him that struggled in birth-throes to receive expression and form, and then he forgot himself and where he was, and the old words — the tools of speech he knew — slipped out.

Once, he declined something from the servant who interrupted and pestered at his shoulder, and he said, shortly and emphatically, “Pew!”

On the instant those at the table were keyed up and expectant, the servant was smugly pleased, and he was wallowing in mortification. But he recovered himself quickly.

“It’s the Kanaka for ‘finish,’” he explained, “and it just come out naturally. It’s spelt p-a-u.”

He caught her curious and speculative eyes fixed on his hands, and, being in explanatory mood, he said:-

“I just come down the Coast on one of the Pacific mail steamers. She was behind time, an’ around the Puget Sound ports we worked like niggers, storing cargo-mixed freight, if you know what that means. That’s how the skin got knocked off.”

“Oh, it wasn’t that,” she hastened to explain, in turn. “Your hands seemed too small for your body.”

His cheeks were hot. He took it as an exposure of another of his deficiencies.

“Yes,” he said depreciatingly. “They ain’t big enough to stand the strain. I can hit like a mule with my arms and shoulders. They are too strong, an’ when I smash a man on the jaw the hands get smashed, too.”

He was not happy at what he had said. He was filled with disgust at himself. He had loosed the guard upon his tongue and talked about things that were not nice.

“It was brave of you to help Arthur the way you did — and you a stranger,” she said tactfully, aware of his discomfiture though not of the reason for it.

He, in turn, realized what she had done, and in the consequent warm surge of gratefulness that overwhelmed him forgot his loose-worded tongue.

"It wasn't nothin' at all," he said. "Any guy 'ud do it for another. That bunch of hoodlums was lookin' for trouble, an' Arthur wasn't botherin' 'em none. They butted in on 'm, an' then I butted in on them an' poked a few. That's where some of the skin off my hands went, along with some of the teeth of the gang. I wouldn't 'a' missed it for anything. When I seen — "

He paused, open-mouthed, on the verge of the pit of his own depravity and utter worthlessness to breathe the same air she did. And while Arthur took up the tale, for the twentieth time, of his adventure with the drunken hoodlums on the ferry-boat and of how Martin Eden had rushed in and rescued him, that individual, with frowning brows, meditated upon the fool he had made of himself, and wrestled more determinedly with the problem of how he should conduct himself toward these people. He certainly had not succeeded so far. He wasn't of their tribe, and he couldn't talk their lingo, was the way he put it to himself. He couldn't fake being their kind. The masquerade would fail, and besides, masquerade was foreign to his nature. There was no room in him for sham or artifice. Whatever happened, he must be real. He couldn't talk their talk just yet, though in time he would. Upon that he was resolved. But in the meantime, talk he must, and it must be his own talk, toned down, of course, so as to be comprehensible to them and so as not to shook them too much. And furthermore, he wouldn't claim, not even by tacit acceptance, to be familiar with anything that was unfamiliar. In pursuance of this decision, when the two brothers, talking university shop, had used "trig" several times, Martin Eden demanded:-

"What is *trig*?"

"Trignometry," Norman said; "a higher form of math."

"And what is math?" was the next question, which, somehow, brought the laugh on Norman.

"Mathematics, arithmetic," was the answer.

Martin Eden nodded. He had caught a glimpse of the apparently illimitable vistas of knowledge. What he saw took on tangibility. His abnormal power of vision made abstractions take on concrete form. In the alchemy of his brain, trigonometry and mathematics and the whole field of knowledge which they betokened were transmuted into so much landscape.

The vistas he saw were vistas of green foliage and forest glades, all softly luminous or shot through with flashing lights. In the distance, detail was veiled and blurred by a purple haze, but behind this purple haze, he knew, was the glamour of the unknown, the lure of romance. It was like wine to him. Here was adventure, something to do with head and hand, a world to conquer — and straightway from the back of his consciousness rushed the thought, *conquering, to win to her, that lily-pale spirit sitting beside him*.

The glimmering vision was rent asunder and dissipated by Arthur, who, all evening, had been trying to draw his wild man out. Martin Eden remembered his decision. For the first time he became himself, consciously and deliberately at first, but soon lost in the joy of creating in making life as he knew it appear before his listeners' eyes. He had been a member of the crew of the smuggling schooner *Halcyon* when she was captured by a revenue cutter. He saw with wide eyes, and he could tell what he saw. He brought the pulsing sea before them, and the men and the ships upon the sea. He communicated his power of vision, till they saw with his eyes what he had seen. He selected from the vast mass of detail with an artist's touch, drawing pictures of life that glowed and burned with light and color, injecting movement so that his listeners surged along with him on the flood of rough eloquence, enthusiasm, and power. At times he shocked them with the vividness of the narrative and his terms of speech, but beauty always followed fast upon the heels of violence, and tragedy was relieved by humor, by interpretations of the strange twists and quirks of sailors' minds.

And while he talked, the girl looked at him with startled eyes. His fire warmed her. She wondered if she had been cold all her days. She wanted to lean toward this burning, blazing man that was like a volcano spouting forth strength, robustness, and health. She felt that she must lean toward him, and resisted by an effort. Then, too, there was the counter impulse to shrink away from him. She was repelled by those lacerated hands, grimed by toil so that the very dirt of life was ingrained in the flesh itself, by that red chafe of the collar and those bulging muscles. His roughness frightened her; each roughness of speech was an insult to her ear, each rough phase of his life an insult to her soul. And ever and again would come the draw of him, till she thought he must be evil to have such power over her. All that was most firmly established in her mind was rocking. His romance and adventure were battering at the conventions. Before his facile perils and ready laugh, life was no longer an affair of serious effort and restraint, but a toy, to be played with and turned topsy-turvy, carelessly to be lived and pleasured in, and carelessly to be flung aside. “Therefore, play!” was the cry that rang through her. “Lean toward him, if so you will, and place your two hands upon his neck!” She wanted to cry out at the recklessness of the thought, and in vain she appraised her own cleanness and culture and balanced all that she was against what he was not. She glanced about her and saw the others gazing at him with rapt attention; and she would have despaired had not she seen horror in her mother’s eyes — fascinated horror, it was true, but none the less horror. This man from outer darkness was evil. Her mother saw it, and her mother was right. She would trust her mother’s judgment in this as she had always trusted it in all things. The fire of him was no longer warm, and the fear of him was no longer poignant.

Later, at the piano, she played for him, and at him, aggressively, with the vague intent of emphasizing the impassableness of the gulf that separated them. Her music was a club that she swung brutally upon his head; and though it stunned him and crushed him down, it incited him. He gazed upon her in awe. In his mind, as in her own, the gulf widened; but faster than it widened, towered his ambition to win across it. But he was too complicated a plexus of sensibilities to sit staring at a gulf a whole evening, especially when there was music. He was remarkably susceptible to music. It was like strong drink, firing him to audacities of feeling, — a drug that laid hold of his imagination and went cloud-soaring through the sky. It banished sordid fact, flooded his mind with beauty, loosed romance and to its heels added wings. He did not understand the music she played. It was different from the dance-hall piano-banging and blatant brass bands he had heard. But he had caught hints of such music from the books, and he accepted her playing largely on faith, patiently waiting, at first, for the lifting measures of pronounced and simple rhythm, puzzled because those measures were not long continued. Just as he caught the swing of them and started, his imagination attuned in flight, always they vanished away in a chaotic scramble of sounds that was meaningless to him, and that dropped his imagination, an inert weight, back to earth.

Once, it entered his mind that there was a deliberate rebuff in all this. He caught her spirit of antagonism and strove to divine the message that her hands pronounced upon the keys. Then he dismissed the thought as unworthy and impossible, and yielded himself more freely to the music. The old delightful condition began to be induced. His feet were no longer clay, and his flesh became spirit; before his eyes and behind his eyes shone a great glory; and then the scene before him vanished and he was away, rocking over the world that was to him a very dear world. The known and the unknown were commingled in the dream-pageant that thronged his vision. He entered strange ports of sun-washed lands, and trod market-places among barbaric peoples that no man had ever seen. The scent of the spice islands was in his nostrils as he had known it on warm, breathless nights at sea, or he beat up against the southeast trades through long tropic days, sinking palm-tufted coral islets in the turquoise sea behind and lifting palm-tufted coral islets in the turquoise sea ahead. Swift as thought the pictures came and went. One instant he was astride a broncho and flying through the fairy-colored Painted Desert country; the next instant he was gazing down through shimmering heat into the whited sepulchre of Death Valley, or pulling an oar on a freezing ocean where great ice islands towered and glistened in the sun. He lay on a coral beach where the cocoanuts grew down to the mellow-sounding surf. The hulk of an ancient wreck burned with blue fires, in the light of which danced the *hula* dancers to the barbaric love-calls of the singers, who chanted to tinkling *ukuleles* and rumbling tom-toms. It was a sensuous, tropic night. In the background a volcano crater was silhouetted against the stars. Overhead drifted a pale crescent moon, and the Southern Cross burned low in the sky.

He was a harp; all life that he had known and that was his consciousness was the strings; and the flood of music was a wind that poured against those strings and set them vibrating with memories and dreams. He did not merely feel. Sensation invested itself in form and color and radiance, and what his imagination dared, it objectified in some sublimated and magic way. Past, present, and future mingled; and he went on oscillating across the broad, warm world, through high adventure and noble deeds to Her — ay, and with her, winning her, his arm about her, and carrying her on in flight through the empery of his mind.

And she, glancing at him across her shoulder, saw something of all this in his face. It was a transfigured face, with great shining eyes that gazed beyond the veil of sound and saw behind it the leap and pulse of life and the gigantic phantoms of the spirit. She was startled. The raw, stumbling lout was gone. The ill-fitting clothes, battered hands, and sunburned face remained; but these seemed the prison-bars through which she saw a great soul looking forth, inarticulate and dumb because of those feeble lips that would not give it speech. Only for a flashing moment did she see this, then she saw the lout returned, and she laughed at the whim of her fancy. But the impression of that fleeting glimpse lingered, and when the time came for him to beat a stumbling retreat and go, she lent him the volume of Swinburne, and another of Browning — she was studying Browning in one of her English courses. He seemed such a boy, as he stood blushing and stammering his thanks, that a wave of pity, maternal in its prompting, welled up in her. She did not remember the lout, nor the imprisoned soul, nor the man who had stared at her in all masculineness and delighted and frightened her. She saw before her only a boy, who was shaking her hand with a hand so calloused that it felt like a nutmeg-grater and rasped her skin, and who was saying jerkily:-

"The greatest time of my life. You see, I ain't used to things. . . " He looked about him helplessly. "To people and houses like this. It's all new to me, and I like it."

"I hope you'll call again," she said, as he was saying good night to her brothers.

He pulled on his cap, lurched desperately through the doorway, and was gone.

"Well, what do you think of him?" Arthur demanded.

"He is most interesting, a whiff of ozone," she answered. "How old is he?"

"Twenty — almost twenty-one. I asked him this afternoon. I didn't think he was that young."

And I am three years older, was the thought in her mind as she kissed her brothers goodnight.

CHAPTER III

As Martin Eden went down the steps, his hand dropped into his coat pocket. It came out with a brown rice paper and a pinch of Mexican tobacco, which were deftly rolled together into a cigarette. He drew the first whiff of smoke deep into his lungs and expelled it in a long and lingering exhalation. "By God!" he said aloud, in a voice of awe and wonder. "By God!" he repeated. And yet again he murmured, "By God!" Then his hand went to his collar, which he ripped out of the shirt and stuffed into his pocket. A cold drizzle was falling, but he bared his head to it and unbuttoned his vest, swinging along in splendid unconcern. He was only dimly aware that it was raining. He was in an ecstasy, dreaming dreams and reconstructing the scenes just past.

He had met the woman at last — the woman that he had thought little about, not being given to thinking about women, but whom he had expected, in a remote way, he would sometime meet. He had sat next to her at table. He had felt her hand in his, he had looked into her eyes and caught a vision of a beautiful spirit; — but no more beautiful than the eyes through which it shone, nor than the flesh that gave it expression and form. He did not think of her flesh as flesh, — which was new to him; for of the women he had known that was the only way he thought. Her flesh was somehow different. He did not conceive of her body as a body, subject to the ills and frailties of bodies. Her body was more than the garb of her spirit. It was an emanation of her spirit, a pure and gracious crystallization of her divine essence. This feeling of the divine startled him. It shocked him from his dreams to sober thought. No word, no clew, no hint, of the divine had ever reached him before. He had never believed in the divine. He had always been irreligious, scoffing good-naturedly at the sky-pilots and their immortality of the soul. There was no life beyond, he had contended; it was here and now, then darkness everlasting. But what he had seen in her eyes was soul — immortal soul that could never die. No man he had known, nor any woman, had given him the message of immortality. But she had. She had whispered it to him the first moment she looked at him. Her face shimmered before his eyes as he walked along, — pale and serious, sweet and sensitive, smiling with pity and tenderness as only a spirit could smile, and pure as he had never dreamed purity could be. Her purity smote him like a blow. It startled him. He had known good and bad; but purity, as an attribute of existence, had never entered his mind. And now, in her, he conceived purity to be the superlative of goodness and of cleanness, the sum of which constituted eternal life.

And promptly urged his ambition to grasp at eternal life. He was not fit to carry water for her — he knew that; it was a miracle of luck and a fantastic stroke that had enabled him to see her and be with her and talk with her that night. It was accidental. There was no merit in it. He did not deserve such fortune. His mood was essentially religious. He was humble and meek, filled with self-disparagement and abasement. In such frame of mind sinners come to the penitent form. He was convicted of sin. But as the meek and lowly at the penitent form catch splendid glimpses of their future lordly existence, so did he catch similar glimpses of the state he would gain to by possessing her. But this possession of her was dim and nebulous and totally different from possession as he had known it. Ambition soared on mad wings, and he saw himself climbing the heights with her, sharing thoughts with her, pleasuring in beautiful and noble things with her. It was a soul-possession he dreamed, refined beyond any grossness, a free comradeship of spirit that he could not put into definite thought. He did not think it. For that matter, he did not think at all. Sensation usurped reason, and he was quivering and palpitant with emotions he had never known, drifting deliciously on a sea of sensibility where feeling itself was exalted and spiritualized and carried beyond the summits of life.

He staggered along like a drunken man, murmuring fervently aloud: “By God! By God!”

A policeman on a street corner eyed him suspiciously, then noted his sailor roll.

“Where did you get it?” the policeman demanded.

Martin Eden came back to earth. His was a fluid organism, swiftly adjustable, capable of flowing into and filling all sorts of nooks and crannies. With the policeman’s hail he was immediately his ordinary self, grasping the situation clearly.

“It’s a beaut, ain’t it?” he laughed back. “I didn’t know I was talkin’ out loud.”

“You’ll be singing next,” was the policeman’s diagnosis.

“No, I won’t. Gimme a match an’ I’ll catch the next car home.”

He lighted his cigarette, said good night, and went on. “Now wouldn’t that rattle you?” he ejaculated under his breath. “That copper thought I was drunk.” He smiled to himself and meditated. “I guess I was,” he added; “but I didn’t think a woman’s face’d do it.”

He caught a Telegraph Avenue car that was going to Berkeley. It was crowded with youths and young men who were singing songs and ever and again barking out college yells. He studied them curiously. They were university boys. They went to the same university that she did, were in her class socially, could know her, could see her every day if they wanted to. He wondered that they did not want to, that they had been out having a good time instead of being with her that evening, talking with her, sitting around her in a worshipful and adoring circle. His thoughts wandered on. He noticed one with narrow-slitted eyes and a loose-lipped mouth. That fellow was vicious, he decided. On shipboard he would be a sneak, a whiner, a tattler. He, Martin Eden, was a better man than that fellow. The thought cheered him. It seemed to draw him nearer to Her. He began comparing himself with the students. He grew conscious of the muscled mechanism of his body and felt confident that he was physically their master. But their heads were filled with knowledge that enabled them to talk her talk, — the thought depressed him. But what was a brain for? he demanded passionately. What they had done, he could do. They had been studying about life from the books while he had been busy living life. His brain was just as full of knowledge as theirs, though it was a different kind of knowledge. How many of them could tie a lanyard knot, or take a wheel or a lookout? His life spread out before him in a series of pictures of danger and daring, hardship and toil. He remembered his failures and scrapes in the process of learning. He was that much to the good, anyway. Later on they would have to begin living life and going through the mill as he had gone. Very well. While they were busy with that, he could be learning the other side of life from the books.

As the car crossed the zone of scattered dwellings that separated Oakland from Berkeley, he kept a lookout for a familiar, two-story building along the front of which ran the proud sign, HIGGINBOTHAM’S CASH STORE. Martin Eden got off at this corner. He stared up for a moment at the sign. It carried a message to him beyond its mere wording. A personality of smallness and egotism and petty underhandedness seemed to emanate from the letters themselves. Bernard Higginbotham had married his sister, and he knew him well. He let himself in with a latch-key and climbed the stairs to the second floor. Here lived his brother-in-law. The grocery was below. There was a smell of stale vegetables in the air. As he groped his way across the hall he stumbled over a toy-cart, left there by one of his numerous nephews and nieces, and brought up against a door with a resounding bang. "The pincher," was his thought; "too miserly to burn two cents' worth of gas and save his boarders' necks."

He fumbled for the knob and entered a lighted room, where sat his sister and Bernard Higginbotham. She was patching a pair of his trousers, while his lean body was distributed over two chairs, his feet dangling in dilapidated carpet-slippers over the edge of the second chair. He glanced across the top of the paper he was reading, showing a pair of dark, insincere, sharp-staring eyes. Martin Eden never looked at him without experiencing a sense of repulsion. What his sister had seen in the man was beyond him. The other affected him as so much vermin, and always aroused in him an impulse to crush him under his foot. "Some day I'll beat the face off of him," was the way he often consoled himself for enduring the man's existence. The eyes, weasel-like and cruel, were looking at him complainingly.

"Well," Martin demanded. "Out with it."

"I had that door painted only last week," Mr. Higginbotham half whined, half bullied; "and you know what union wages are. You should be more careful."

Martin had intended to reply, but he was struck by the hopelessness of it. He gazed across the monstrous sordidness of soul to a chromo on the wall. It surprised him. He had always liked it, but it seemed that now he was seeing it for the first time. It was cheap, that was what it was, like everything else in this house. His mind went back to the house he had just left, and he saw, first, the paintings, and next, Her, looking at him with melting sweetness as she shook his hand at leaving. He forgot where he was and Bernard Higginbotham's existence, till that gentleman demanded:-

"Seen a ghost?"

Martin came back and looked at the beady eyes, sneering, truculent, cowardly, and there leaped into his vision, as on a screen, the same eyes when their owner was making a sale in the store below — subservient eyes, smug, and oily, and flattering.

“Yes,” Martin answered. “I seen a ghost. Good night. Good night, Gertrude.”

He started to leave the room, tripping over a loose seam in the slatternly carpet.

“Don’t bang the door,” Mr. Higginbotham cautioned him.

He felt the blood crawl in his veins, but controlled himself and closed the door softly behind him.

Mr. Higginbotham looked at his wife exultantly.

“He’s ben drinkin’,” he proclaimed in a hoarse whisper. “I told you he would.”

She nodded her head resignedly.

“His eyes was pretty shiny,” she confessed; “and he didn’t have no collar, though he went away with one. But mebbe he didn’t have more’n a couple of glasses.”

“He couldn’t stand up straight,” asserted her husband. “I watched him. He couldn’t walk across the floor without stumblin’. You heard ’m yourself almost fall down in the hall.”

“I think it was over Alice’s cart,” she said. “He couldn’t see it in the dark.”

Mr. Higginbotham’s voice and wrath began to rise. All day he effaced himself in the store, reserving for the evening, with his family, the privilege of being himself.

“I tell you that precious brother of yours was drunk.”

His voice was cold, sharp, and final, his lips stamping the enunciation of each word like the die of a machine. His wife sighed and remained silent. She was a large, stout woman, always dressed slatternly and always tired from the burdens of her flesh, her work, and her husband.

“He’s got it in him, I tell you, from his father,” Mr. Higginbotham went on accusingly. “An’ he’ll croak in the gutter the same way. You know that.”

She nodded, sighed, and went on stitching. They were agreed that Martin had come home drunk. They did not have it in their souls to know beauty, or they would have known that those shining eyes and that glowing face betokened youth’s first vision of love.

“Settin’ a fine example to the children,” Mr. Higginbotham snorted, suddenly, in the silence for which his wife was responsible and which he resented. Sometimes he almost wished she would oppose him more. “If he does it again, he's got to get out. Understand! I won't put up with his shinanigan — debotchin' innocent children with his boozing." Mr. Higginbotham liked the word, which was a new one in his vocabulary, recently gleaned from a newspaper column. "That's what it is, debotchin' — there ain't no other name for it."

Still his wife sighed, shook her head sorrowfully, and stitched on. Mr. Higginbotham resumed the newspaper.

"Has he paid last week's board?" he shot across the top of the newspaper.

She nodded, then added, "He still has some money."

"When is he goin' to sea again?"

"When his pay-day's spent, I guess," she answered. "He was over to San Francisco yesterday looking for a ship. But he's got money, yet, an' he's particular about the kind of ship he signs for."

"It's not for a deck-swab like him to put on airs," Mr. Higginbotham snorted. "Particular! Him!"

"He said something about a schooner that's gettin' ready to go off to some outlandish place to look for buried treasure, that he'd sail on her if his money held out."

"If he only wanted to steady down, I'd give him a job drivin' the wagon," her husband said, but with no trace of benevolence in his voice. "Tom's quit."

His wife looked alarm and interrogation.

"Quit to-night. Is goin' to work for Carruthers. They paid 'm more'n I could afford."

"I told you you'd lose 'm," she cried out. "He was worth more'n you was giving him."

"Now look here, old woman," Higginbotham bullied, "for the thousandth time I've told you to keep your nose out of the business. I won't tell you again."

"I don't care," she sniffled. "Tom was a good boy." Her husband glared at her. This was unqualified defiance.

"If that brother of yours was worth his salt, he could take the wagon," he snorted.

"He pays his board, just the same," was the retort. "An' he's my brother, an' so long as he don't owe you money you've got no right to be jumping on him all the time. I've got some feelings, if I have been married to you for seven years."

"Did you tell 'm you'd charge him for gas if he goes on readin' in bed?" he demanded.

Mrs. Higginbotham made no reply. Her revolt faded away, her spirit wilting down into her tired flesh. Her husband was triumphant. He had her. His eyes snapped vindictively, while his ears joyed in the sniffles she emitted. He extracted great happiness from squelching her, and she squelched easily these days, though it had been different in the first years of their married life, before the brood of children and his incessant nagging had sapped her energy.

"Well, you tell 'm to-morrow, that's all," he said. "An' I just want to tell you, before I forget it, that you'd better send for Marian to-morrow to take care of the children. With Tom quit, I'll have to be out on the wagon, an' you can make up your mind to it to be down below waitin' on the counter."

"But to-morrow's wash day," she objected weakly.

"Get up early, then, an' do it first. I won't start out till ten o'clock."

He crinkled the paper viciously and resumed his reading.

CHAPTER IV

Martin Eden, with blood still crawling from contact with his brother-in-law, felt his way along the unlighted back hall and entered his room, a tiny cubbyhole with space for a bed, a wash-stand, and one chair. Mr. Higginbotham was too thrifty to keep a servant when his wife could do the work. Besides, the servant's room enabled them to take in two boarders instead of one. Martin placed the Swinburne and Browning on the chair, took off his coat, and sat down on the bed. A screeching of asthmatic springs greeted the weight of his body, but he did not notice them. He started to take off his shoes, but fell to staring at the white plaster wall opposite him, broken by long streaks of dirty brown where rain had leaked through the roof. On this befouled background visions began to flow and burn. He forgot his shoes and stared long, till his lips began to move and he murmured, "Ruth."

"Ruth." He had not thought a simple sound could be so beautiful. It delighted his ear, and he grew intoxicated with the repetition of it. "Ruth." It was a talisman, a magic word to conjure with. Each time he murmured it, her face shimmered before him, suffusing the foul wall with a golden radiance. This radiance did not stop at the wall. It extended on into infinity, and through its golden depths his soul went questing after hers. The best that was in him was out in splendid flood. The very thought of her ennobled and purified him, made him better, and made him want to be better. This was new to him. He had never known women who had made him better. They had always had the counter effect of making him beastly. He did not know that many of them had done their best, bad as it was. Never having been conscious of himself, he did not know that he had that in his being that drew love from women and which had been the cause of their reaching out for his youth. Though they had often bothered him, he had never bothered about them; and he would never have dreamed that there were women who had been better because of him. Always in sublime carelessness had he lived, till now, and now it seemed to him that they had always reached out and dragged at him with vile hands. This was not just to them, nor to himself. But he, who for the first time was becoming conscious of himself, was in no condition to judge, and he burned with shame as he stared at the vision of his infamy.

He got up abruptly and tried to see himself in the dirty looking-glass over the wash-stand. He passed a towel over it and looked again, long and carefully. It was the first time he had ever really seen himself. His eyes were made for seeing, but up to that moment they had been filled with the ever changing panorama of the world, at which he had been too busy gazing, ever to gaze at himself. He saw the head and face of a young fellow of twenty, but, being unused to such appraisement, he did not know how to value it. Above a square-domed forehead he saw a mop of brown hair, nut-brown, with a wave to it and hints of curls that were a delight to any woman, making hands tingle to stroke it and fingers tingle to pass caresses through it. But he passed it by as without merit, in Her eyes, and dwelt long and thoughtfully on the high, square forehead, — striving to penetrate it and learn the quality of its content. What kind of a brain lay behind there? was his insistent interrogation. What was it capable of? How far would it take him? Would it take him to her?

He wondered if there was soul in those steel-gray eyes that were often quite blue of color and that were strong with the briny airs of the sun-washed deep. He wondered, also, how his eyes looked to her. He tried to imagine himself she, gazing into those eyes of his, but failed in the jugglery. He could successfully put himself inside other men's minds, but they had to be men whose ways of life he knew. He did not know her way of life. She was wonder and mystery, and how could he guess one thought of hers? Well, they were honest eyes, he concluded, and in them was neither smallness nor meanness. The brown sunburn of his face surprised him. He had not dreamed he was so black. He rolled up his shirt-sleeve and compared the white underside if the arm with his face. Yes, he was a white man, after all. But the arms were sunburned, too. He twisted his arm, rolled the biceps over with his other hand, and gazed underneath where he was least touched by the sun. It was very white. He laughed at his bronzed face in the glass at the thought that it was once as white as the underside of his arm; nor did he dream that in the world there were few pale spirits of women who could boast fairer or smoother skins than he — fairer than where he had escaped the ravages of the sun.

His might have been a cherub's mouth, had not the full, sensuous lips a trick, under stress, of drawing firmly across the teeth. At times, so tightly did they draw, the mouth became stern and harsh, even ascetic. They were the lips of a fighter and of a lover. They could taste the sweetness of life with relish, and they could put the sweetness aside and command life. The chin and jaw, strong and just hinting of square aggressiveness, helped the lips to command life. Strength balanced sensuousness and had upon it a tonic effect, compelling him to love beauty that was healthy and making him vibrate to sensations that were wholesome. And between the lips were teeth that had never known nor needed the dentist's care. They were white and strong and regular, he decided, as he looked at them. But as he looked, he began to be troubled. Somewhere, stored away in the recesses of his mind and vaguely remembered, was the impression that there were people who washed their teeth every day. They were the people from up above — people in her class. She must wash her teeth every day, too. What would she think if she learned that he had never washed his teeth in all the days of his life? He resolved to get a tooth-brush and form the habit. He would begin at once, to-morrow. It was not by mere achievement that he could hope to win to her. He must make a personal reform in all things, even to tooth-washing and neck-gear, though a starched collar affected him as a renunciation of freedom.

He held up his hand, rubbing the ball of the thumb over the calloused palm and gazing at the dirt that was ingrained in the flesh itself and which no brush could scrub away. How different was her palm! He thrilled deliciously at the remembrance. Like a rose-petal, he thought; cool and soft as a snowflake. He had never thought that a mere woman's hand could be so sweetly soft. He caught himself imagining the wonder of a caress from such a hand, and flushed guiltily. It was too gross a thought for her. In ways it seemed to impugn her high spirituality. She was a pale, slender spirit, exalted far beyond the flesh; but nevertheless the softness of her palm persisted in his thoughts. He was used to the harsh callousness of factory girls and working women. Well he knew why their hands were rough; but this hand of hers . . . It was soft because she had never used it to work with. The gulf yawned between her and him at the awesome thought of a person who did not have to work for a living. He suddenly saw the aristocracy of the people who did not labor. It towered before him on the wall, a figure in brass, arrogant and powerful. He had worked himself; his first memories seemed connected with work, and all his family had worked. There was Gertrude. When her hands were not hard from the endless housework, they were swollen and red like boiled beef, what of the washing. And there was his sister Marian. She had worked in the cannery the preceding summer, and her slim, pretty hands were all scarred with the tomato-knives. Besides, the tips of two of her fingers had been left in the cutting machine at the paper-box factory the preceding winter. He remembered the hard palms of his mother as she lay in her coffin. And his father had worked to the last fading gasp; the horned growth on his hands must have been half an inch thick when he died. But Her hands were soft, and her mother's hands, and her brothers'. This last came to him as a surprise; it was tremendously indicative of the highness of their caste, of the enormous distance that stretched between her and him.

He sat back on the bed with a bitter laugh, and finished taking off his shoes. He was a fool; he had been made drunken by a woman's face and by a woman's soft, white hands. And then, suddenly, before his eyes, on the foul plaster-wall appeared a vision. He stood in front of a gloomy tenement house. It was night-time, in the East End of London, and before him stood Margey, a little factory girl of fifteen. He had seen her home after the bean-feast. She lived in that gloomy tenement, a place not fit for swine. His hand was going out to hers as he said good night. She had put her lips up to be kissed, but he wasn't going to kiss her. Somehow he was afraid of her. And then her hand closed on his and pressed feverishly. He felt her callouses grind and grate on his, and a great wave of pity welled over him. He saw her yearning, hungry eyes, and her ill-fed female form which had been rushed from childhood into a frightened and ferocious maturity; then he put his arms about her in large tolerance and stooped and kissed her on the lips. Her glad little cry rang in his ears, and he felt her clinging to him like a cat. Poor little starveling! He continued to stare at the vision of what had happened in the long ago. His flesh was crawling as it had crawled that night when she clung to him, and his heart was warm with pity. It was a gray scene, greasy gray, and the rain drizzled greasily on the pavement stones. And then a radiant glory shone on the wall, and up through the other vision, displacing it, glimmered Her pale face under its crown of golden hair, remote and inaccessible as a star.

He took the Browning and the Swinburne from the chair and kissed them. Just the same, she told me to call again, he thought. He took another look at himself in the glass, and said aloud, with great solemnity:-

"Martin Eden, the first thing to-morrow you go to the free library an' read up on etiquette. Understand!"

He turned off the gas, and the springs shrieked under his body.

“But you’ve got to quit cussin’, Martin, old boy; you’ve got to quit cussin’,” he said aloud.

Then he dozed off to sleep and to dream dreams that for madness and audacity rivalled those of poppy-eaters.

CHAPTER V

He awoke next morning from rosy scenes of dream to a steamy atmosphere that smelled of soapsuds and dirty clothes, and that was vibrant with the jar and jangle of tormented life. As he came out of his room he heard the slosh of water, a sharp exclamation, and a resounding smack as his sister visited her irritation upon one of her numerous progeny. The squall of the child went through him like a knife. He was aware that the whole thing, the very air he breathed, was repulsive and mean. How different, he thought, from the atmosphere of beauty and repose of the house wherein Ruth dwelt. There it was all spiritual. Here it was all material, and meanly material.

"Come here, Alfred," he called to the crying child, at the same time thrusting his hand into his trousers pocket, where he carried his money loose in the same large way that he lived life in general. He put a quarter in the youngster's hand and held him in his arms a moment, soothing his sobs. "Now run along and get some candy, and don't forget to give some to your brothers and sisters. Be sure and get the kind that lasts longest."

His sister lifted a flushed face from the wash-tub and looked at him.

"A nickel'd ha' ben enough," she said. "It's just like you, no idea of the value of money. The child'll eat himself sick."

"That's all right, sis," he answered jovially. "My money'll take care of itself. If you weren't so busy, I'd kiss you good morning."

He wanted to be affectionate to this sister, who was good, and who, in her way, he knew, loved him. But, somehow, she grew less herself as the years went by, and more and more baffling. It was the hard work, the many children, and the nagging of her husband, he decided, that had changed her. It came to him, in a flash of fancy, that her nature seemed taking on the attributes of stale vegetables, smelly soapsuds, and of the greasy dimes, nickels, and quarters she took in over the counter of the store.

"Go along an' get your breakfast," she said roughly, though secretly pleased. Of all her wandering brood of brothers he had always been her favorite. "I declare I *will* kiss you," she said, with a sudden stir at her heart.

With thumb and forefinger she swept the dripping suds first from one arm and then from the other. He put his arms round her massive waist and kissed her wet steamy lips. The tears welled into her eyes — not so much from strength of feeling as from the weakness of chronic overwork. She shoved him away from her, but not before he caught a glimpse of her moist eyes.

"You'll find breakfast in the oven," she said hurriedly. "Jim ought to be up now. I had to get up early for the washing. Now get along with you and get out of the house early. It won't be nice to-day, what of Tom quittin' an' nobody but Bernard to drive the wagon."

Martin went into the kitchen with a sinking heart, the image of her red face and slatternly form eating its way like acid into his brain. She might love him if she only had some time, he concluded. But she was worked to death. Bernard Higginbotham was a brute to work her so hard. But he could not help but feel, on the other hand, that there had not been anything beautiful in that kiss. It was true, it was an unusual kiss. For years she had kissed him only when he returned from voyages or departed on voyages. But this kiss had tasted soapsuds, and the lips, he had noticed, were flabby. There had been no quick, vigorous lip-pressure such as should accompany any kiss. Hers was the kiss of a tired woman who had been tired so long that she had forgotten how to kiss. He remembered her as a girl, before her marriage, when she would dance with the best, all night, after a hard day's work at the laundry, and think nothing of leaving the dance to go to another day's hard work. And then he thought of Ruth and the cool sweetness that must reside in her lips as it resided in all about her. Her kiss would be like her hand-shake or the way she looked at one, firm and frank. In imagination he dared to think of her lips on his, and so vividly did he imagine that he went dizzy at the thought and seemed to rift through clouds of rose-petals, filling his brain with their perfume.

In the kitchen he found Jim, the other boarder, eating mush very languidly, with a sick, far-away look in his eyes. Jim was a plumber's apprentice whose weak chin and hedonistic temperament, coupled with a certain nervous stupidity, promised to take him nowhere in the race for bread and butter.

"Why don't you eat?" he demanded, as Martin dipped dolefully into the cold, half-cooked oatmeal mush. "Was you drunk again last night?"

Martin shook his head. He was oppressed by the utter squalidness of it all. Ruth Morse seemed farther removed than ever.

"I was," Jim went on with a boastful, nervous giggle. "I was loaded right to the neck. Oh, she was a daisy. Billy brought me home."

Martin nodded that he heard, — it was a habit of nature with him to pay heed to whoever talked to him, — and poured a cup of lukewarm coffee.

"Goin' to the Lotus Club dance to-night?" Jim demanded. "They're goin' to have beer, an' if that Temescal bunch comes, there'll be a rough-house. I don't care, though. I'm takin' my lady friend just the same. Cripes, but I've got a taste in my mouth!"

He made a wry face and attempted to wash the taste away with coffee.

"D'ye know Julia?"

Martin shook his head.

"She's my lady friend," Jim explained, "and she's a peach. I'd introduce you to her, only you'd win her. I don't see what the girls see in you, honest I don't; but the way you win them away from the fellers is sickenin'."

"I never got any away from you," Martin answered uninterestedly. The breakfast had to be got through somehow.

"Yes, you did, too," the other asserted warmly. "There was Maggie."

"Never had anything to do with her. Never danced with her except that one night."

"Yes, an' that's just what did it," Jim cried out. "You just danced with her an' looked at her, an' it was all off. Of course you didn't mean nothin' by it, but it settled me for keeps. Wouldn't look at me again. Always askin' about you. She'd have made fast dates enough with you if you'd wanted to."

"But I didn't want to."

"Wasn't necessary. I was left at the pole." Jim looked at him admiringly. "How d'ye do it, anyway, Mart?"

"By not carin' about 'em," was the answer.

"You mean makin' b'lieve you don't care about them?" Jim queried eagerly.

Martin considered for a moment, then answered, "Perhaps that will do, but with me I guess it's different. I never have cared — much. If you can put it on, it's all right, most likely."

"You should 'a' ben up at Riley's barn last night," Jim announced inconsequently. "A lot of the fellers put on the gloves. There was a peach from West Oakland. They called 'm 'The Rat.' Slick as silk. No one could touch 'm. We was all wishin' you was there. Where was you anyway?"

"Down in Oakland," Martin replied.

"To the show?"

Martin shoved his plate away and got up.

“Comin’ to the dance to-night?” the other called after him.

“No, I think not,” he answered.

He went downstairs and out into the street, breathing great breaths of air. He had been suffocating in that atmosphere, while the apprentice’s chatter had driven him frantic. There had been times when it was all he could do to refrain from reaching over and mopping Jim’s face in the mush-plate. The more he had chattered, the more remote had Ruth seemed to him. How could he, herding with such cattle, ever become worthy of her? He was appalled at the problem confronting him, weighted down by the incubus of his working-class station. Everything reached out to hold him down — his sister, his sister’s house and family, Jim the apprentice, everybody he knew, every tie of life. Existence did not taste good in his mouth. Up to then he had accepted existence, as he had lived it with all about him, as a good thing. He had never questioned it, except when he read books; but then, they were only books, fairy stories of a fairer and impossible world. But now he had seen that world, possible and real, with a flower of a woman called Ruth in the midmost centre of it; and thenceforth he must know bitter tastes, and longings sharp as pain, and hopelessness that tantalized because it fed on hope.

He had debated between the Berkeley Free Library and the Oakland Free Library, and decided upon the latter because Ruth lived in Oakland. Who could tell? — a library was a most likely place for her, and he might see her there. He did not know the way of libraries, and he wandered through endless rows of fiction, till the delicate-featured French-looking girl who seemed in charge, told him that the reference department was upstairs. He did not know enough to ask the man at the desk, and began his adventures in the philosophy alcove. He had heard of book philosophy, but had not imagined there had been so much written about it. The high, bulging shelves of heavy tomes humbled him and at the same time stimulated him. Here was work for the vigor of his brain. He found books on trigonometry in the mathematics section, and ran the pages, and stared at the meaningless formulas and figures. He could read English, but he saw there an alien speech. Norman and Arthur knew that speech. He had heard them talking it. And they were her brothers. He left the alcove in despair. From every side the books seemed to press upon him and crush him.

He had never dreamed that the fund of human knowledge bulked so big. He was frightened. How could his brain ever master it all? Later, he remembered that there were other men, many men, who had mastered it; and he breathed a great oath, passionately, under his breath, swearing that his brain could do what theirs had done.

And so he wandered on, alternating between depression and elation as he stared at the shelves packed with wisdom. In one miscellaneous section he came upon a "Norrie's Epitome." He turned the pages reverently. In a way, it spoke a kindred speech. Both he and it were of the sea. Then he found a "Bowditch" and books by Lecky and Marshall. There it was; he would teach himself navigation. He would quit drinking, work up, and become a captain. Ruth seemed very near to him in that moment. As a captain, he could marry her (if she would have him). And if she wouldn't, well — he would live a good life among men, because of Her, and he would quit drinking anyway. Then he remembered the underwriters and the owners, the two masters a captain must serve, either of which could and would break him and whose interests were diametrically opposed. He cast his eyes about the room and closed the lids down on a vision of ten thousand books. No; no more of the sea for him. There was power in all that wealth of books, and if he would do great things, he must do them on the land. Besides, captains were not allowed to take their wives to sea with them.

Noon came, and afternoon. He forgot to eat, and sought on for the books on etiquette; for, in addition to career, his mind was vexed by a simple and very concrete problem: *When you meet a young lady and she asks you to call, how soon can you call*? was the way he worded it to himself. But when he found the right shelf, he sought vainly for the answer. He was appalled at the vast edifice of etiquette, and lost himself in the mazes of visiting-card conduct between persons in polite society. He abandoned his search. He had not found what he wanted, though he had found that it would take all of a man's time to be polite, and that he would have to live a preliminary life in which to learn how to be polite.

"Did you find what you wanted?" the man at the desk asked him as he was leaving.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "You have a fine library here."

The man nodded. "We should be glad to see you here often. Are you a sailor?"

"Yes, sir," he answered. "And I'll come again."

Now, how did he know that? he asked himself as he went down the stairs.

And for the first block along the street he walked very stiff and straight and awkwardly, until he forgot himself in his thoughts, whereupon his rolling gait gracefully returned to him.

CHAPTER VI

A terrible restlessness that was akin to hunger afflicted Martin Eden. He was famished for a sight of the girl whose slender hands had gripped his life with a giant's grasp. He could not steel himself to call upon her. He was afraid that he might call too soon, and so be guilty of an awful breach of that awful thing called etiquette. He spent long hours in the Oakland and Berkeley libraries, and made out application blanks for membership for himself, his sisters Gertrude and Marian, and Jim, the latter's consent being obtained at the expense of several glasses of beer. With four cards permitting him to draw books, he burned the gas late in the servant's room, and was charged fifty cents a week for it by Mr. Higginbotham.

The many books he read but served to whet his unrest. Every page of every book was a peep-hole into the realm of knowledge. His hunger fed upon what he read, and increased. Also, he did not know where to begin, and continually suffered from lack of preparation. The commonest references, that he could see plainly every reader was expected to know, he did not know. And the same was true of the poetry he read which maddened him with delight. He read more of Swinburne than was contained in the volume Ruth had lent him; and "Dolores" he understood thoroughly. But surely Ruth did not understand it, he concluded. How could she, living the refined life she did? Then he chanced upon Kipling's poems, and was swept away by the lilt and swing and glamour with which familiar things had been invested. He was amazed at the man's sympathy with life and at his incisive psychology. *Psychology* was a new word in Martin's vocabulary. He had bought a dictionary, which deed had decreased his supply of money and brought nearer the day on which he must sail in search of more. Also, it incensed Mr. Higginbotham, who would have preferred the money taking the form of board.

He dared not go near Ruth's neighborhood in the daytime, but night found him lurking like a thief around the Morse home, stealing glimpses at the windows and loving the very walls that sheltered her. Several times he barely escaped being caught by her brothers, and once he trailed Mr. Morse down town and studied his face in the lighted streets, longing all the while for some quick danger of death to threaten so that he might spring in and save her father. On another night, his vigil was rewarded by a glimpse of

Ruth through a second-story window. He saw only her head and shoulders, and her arms raised as she fixed her hair before a mirror. It was only for a moment, but it was a long moment to him, during which his blood turned to wine and sang through his veins. Then she pulled down the shade. But it was her room — he had learned that; and thereafter he strayed there often, hiding under a dark tree on the opposite side of the street and smoking countless cigarettes. One afternoon he saw her mother coming out of a bank, and received another proof of the enormous distance that separated Ruth from him. She was of the class that dealt with banks. He had never been inside a bank in his life, and he had an idea that such institutions were frequented only by the very rich and the very powerful.

In one way, he had undergone a moral revolution. Her cleanness and purity had reacted upon him, and he felt in his being a crying need to be clean. He must be that if he were ever to be worthy of breathing the same air with her. He washed his teeth, and scrubbed his hands with a kitchen scrub-brush till he saw a nail-brush in a drug-store window and divined its use. While purchasing it, the clerk glanced at his nails, suggested a nail-file, and so he became possessed of an additional toilet-tool. He ran across a book in the library on the care of the body, and promptly developed a penchant for a cold-water bath every morning, much to the amazement of Jim, and to the bewilderment of Mr. Higginbotham, who was not in sympathy with such high-fangled notions and who seriously debated whether or not he should charge Martin extra for the water. Another stride was in the direction of creased trousers. Now that Martin was aroused in such matters, he swiftly noted the difference between the baggy knees of the trousers worn by the working class and the straight line from knee to foot of those worn by the men above the working class. Also, he learned the reason why, and invaded his sister's kitchen in search of irons and ironing-board. He had misadventures at first, hopelessly burning one pair and buying another, which expenditure again brought nearer the day on which he must put to sea.

But the reform went deeper than mere outward appearance. He still smoked, but he drank no more. Up to that time, drinking had seemed to him the proper thing for men to do, and he had prided himself on his strong head which enabled him to drink most men under the table. Whenever he encountered a chance shipmate, and there were many in San Francisco, he treated them and was treated in turn, as of old, but he ordered for himself root beer or ginger ale and good-naturedly endured their chaffing. And as they waxed maudlin he studied them, watching the beast rise and master them and thanking God that he was no longer as they. They had their limitations to forget, and when they were drunk, their dim, stupid spirits were even as gods, and each ruled in his heaven of intoxicated desire. With Martin the need for strong drink had vanished. He was drunken in new and more profound ways — with Ruth, who had fired him with love and with a glimpse of higher and eternal life; with books, that had set a myriad maggots of desire gnawing in his brain; and with the sense of personal cleanliness he was achieving, that gave him even more superb health than what he had enjoyed and that made his whole body sing with physical well-being.

One night he went to the theatre, on the blind chance that he might see her there, and from the second balcony he did see her. He saw her come down the aisle, with Arthur and a strange young man with a football mop of hair and eyeglasses, the sight of whom spurred him to instant apprehension and jealousy. He saw her take her seat in the orchestra circle, and little else than her did he see that night — a pair of slender white shoulders and a mass of pale gold hair, dim with distance. But there were others who saw, and now and again, glancing at those about him, he noted two young girls who looked back from the row in front, a dozen seats along, and who smiled at him with bold eyes. He had always been easy-going. It was not in his nature to give rebuff. In the old days he would have smiled back, and gone further and encouraged smiling. But now it was different. He did smile back, then looked away, and looked no more deliberately. But several times, forgetting the existence of the two girls, his eyes caught their smiles. He could not re-thumb himself in a day, nor could he violate the intrinsic kindliness of his nature; so, at such moments, he smiled at the girls in warm human friendliness. It was nothing new to him. He knew they were reaching out their woman's hands to him. But it was different now. Far down there in the orchestra circle was the one woman in all the world, so different, so terrifically different, from these two girls of his class, that he could feel for them only pity and sorrow. He had it in his heart to wish that they could possess, in some small measure, her goodness and glory. And not for the world could he hurt them because of their outreaching. He was not flattered by it; he even felt a slight shame at his lowliness that permitted it. He knew, did he belong in Ruth's class, that there would be no overtures from these girls; and with each glance of theirs he felt the fingers of his own class clutching at him to hold him down.

He left his seat before the curtain went down on the last act, intent on seeing Her as she passed out. There were always numbers of men who stood on the sidewalk outside, and he could pull his cap down over his eyes and screen himself behind some one's shoulder so that she should not see him. He emerged from the theatre with the first of the crowd; but scarcely had he taken his position on the edge of the sidewalk when the two girls appeared. They were looking for him, he knew; and for the moment he could have cursed that in him which drew women. Their casual edging across the sidewalk to the curb, as they drew near, apprised him of discovery. They slowed down, and were in the thick of the crown as they came up with him. One of them brushed against him and apparently for the first time noticed him. She was a slender, dark girl, with black, defiant eyes. But they smiled at him, and he smiled back.

"Hello," he said.

It was automatic; he had said it so often before under similar circumstances of first meetings. Besides, he could do no less. There was that large tolerance and sympathy in his nature that would permit him to do no less. The black-eyed girl smiled gratification and greeting, and showed signs of stopping, while her companion, arm linked in arm, giggled and likewise showed signs of halting. He thought quickly. It would never do for Her to come out and see him talking there with them. Quite naturally, as a matter of course, he swung in along-side the dark-eyed one and walked with her. There was no awkwardness on his part, no numb tongue. He was at home here, and he held his own royally in the badinage, bristling with slang and sharpness, that was always the preliminary to getting acquainted in these swift-moving affairs. At the corner where the main stream of people flowed onward, he started to edge out into the cross street. But the girl with the black eyes caught his arm, following him and dragging her companion after her, as she cried:

"Hold on, Bill! What's yer rush? You're not goin' to shake us so sudden as all that?"

He halted with a laugh, and turned, facing them. Across their shoulders he could see the moving throng passing under the street lamps. Where he stood it was not so light, and, unseen, he would be able to see Her as she passed by. She would certainly pass by, for that way led home.

“What’s her name?” he asked of the giggling girl, nodding at the dark-eyed one.

“You ask her,” was the convulsed response.

“Well, what is it?” he demanded, turning squarely on the girl in question.

“You ain’t told me yours, yet,” she retorted.

“You never asked it,” he smiled. “Besides, you guessed the first rattle. It’s Bill, all right, all right.”

“Aw, go ’long with you.” She looked him in the eyes, her own sharply passionate and inviting. “What is it, honest?”

Again she looked. All the centuries of woman since sex began were eloquent in her eyes. And he measured her in a careless way, and knew, bold now, that she would begin to retreat, coyly and delicately, as he pursued, ever ready to reverse the game should he turn fainthearted. And, too, he was human, and could feel the draw of her, while his ego could not but appreciate the flattery of her kindness. Oh, he knew it all, and knew them well, from A to Z. Good, as goodness might be measured in their particular class, hard-working for meagre wages and scorning the sale of self for easier ways, nervously desirous for some small pinch of happiness in the desert of existence, and facing a future that was a gamble between the ugliness of unending toil and the black pit of more terrible wretchedness, the way whereto being briefer though better paid.

“Bill,” he answered, nodding his head. “Sure, Pete, Bill an’ no other.”

“No joshin’?” she queried.

“It ain’t Bill at all,” the other broke in.

“How do you know?” he demanded. “You never laid eyes on me before.”

“No need to, to know you’re lyin’,” was the retort.

“Straight, Bill, what is it?” the first girl asked.

“Bill’ll do,” he confessed.

She reached out to his arm and shook him playfully. “I knew you was lyin’, but you look good to me just the same.”

He captured the hand that invited, and felt on the palm familiar markings and distortions.

“When’d you chuck the cannery?” he asked.

“How’d yeh know?” and, “My, ain’t cheh a mind-reader!” the girls chorussed.

And while he exchanged the stupidities of stupid minds with them, before his inner sight towered the book-shelves of the library, filled with the wisdom of the ages. He smiled bitterly at the incongruity of it, and was assailed by doubts. But between inner vision and outward pleasantry he found time to watch the theatre crowd streaming by. And then he saw Her, under the lights, between her brother and the strange young man with glasses, and his heart seemed to stand still. He had waited long for this moment. He had time to note the light, fluffy something that hid her queenly head, the tasteful lines of her wrapped figure, the gracefulness of her carriage and of the hand that caught up her skirts; and then she was gone and he was left staring at the two girls of the cannery, at their tawdry attempts at prettiness of dress, their tragic efforts to be clean and trim, the cheap cloth, the cheap ribbons, and the cheap rings on the fingers. He felt a tug at his arm, and heard a voice saying:-

"Wake up, Bill! What's the matter with you?"

"What was you sayin'?" he asked.

"Oh, nothin'," the dark girl answered, with a toss of her head. "I was only remarkin' — "

"What?"

"Well, I was whisperin' it'd be a good idea if you could dig up a gentleman friend — for her" (indicating her companion), "and then, we could go off an' have ice-cream soda somewhere, or coffee, or anything."

He was afflicted by a sudden spiritual nausea. The transition from Ruth to this had been too abrupt. Ranged side by side with the bold, defiant eyes of the girl before him, he saw Ruth's clear, luminous eyes, like a saint's, gazing at him out of unplumbed depths of purity. And, somehow, he felt within him a stir of power. He was better than this. Life meant more to him than it meant to these two girls whose thoughts did not go beyond ice-cream and a gentleman friend. He remembered that he had led always a secret life in his thoughts. These thoughts he had tried to share, but never had he found a woman capable of understanding — nor a man. He had tried, at times, but had only puzzled his listeners. And as his thoughts had been beyond them, so, he argued now, he must be beyond them. He felt power move in him, and clenched his fists. If life meant more to him, then it was for him to demand more from life, but he could not demand it from such companionship as this. Those bold black eyes had nothing to offer. He knew the thoughts behind them — of ice-cream and of something else. But those saint’s eyes alongside — they offered all he knew and more than he could guess. They offered books and painting, beauty and repose, and all the fine elegance of higher existence. Behind those black eyes he knew every thought process. It was like clockwork. He could watch every wheel go around. Their bid was low pleasure, narrow as the grave, that palled, and the grave was at the end of it. But the bid of the saint’s eyes was mystery, and wonder unthinkable, and eternal life. He had caught glimpses of the soul in them, and glimpses of his own soul, too.

“There’s only one thing wrong with the programme,” he said aloud. “I’ve got a date already.”

The girl’s eyes blazed her disappointment.

“To sit up with a sick friend, I suppose?” she sneered.

“No, a real, honest date with — ” he faltered, “with a girl.”

“You’re not stringin’ me?” she asked earnestly.

He looked her in the eyes and answered: “It’s straight, all right. But why can’t we meet some other time? You ain’t told me your name yet. An’ where d’ye live?”

“Lizzie,” she replied, softening toward him, her hand pressing his arm, while her body leaned against his. “Lizzie Connolly. And I live at Fifth an’ Market.”

He talked on a few minutes before saying good night. He did not go home immediately; and under the tree where he kept his vigils he looked up at a window and murmured: “That date was with you, Ruth. I kept it for you.”

CHAPTER VII

A week of heavy reading had passed since the evening he first met Ruth Morse, and still he dared not call. Time and again he nerved himself up to call, but under the doubts that assailed him his determination died away. He did not know the proper time to call, nor was there any one to tell him, and he was afraid of committing himself to an irretrievable blunder. Having shaken himself free from his old companions and old ways of life, and having no new companions, nothing remained for him but to read, and the long hours he devoted to it would have ruined a dozen pairs of ordinary eyes. But his eyes were strong, and they were backed by a body superbly strong. Furthermore, his mind was fallow. It had lain fallow all his life so far as the abstract thought of the books was concerned, and it was ripe for the sowing. It had never been jaded by study, and it bit hold of the knowledge in the books with sharp teeth that would not let go.

It seemed to him, by the end of the week, that he had lived centuries, so far behind were the old life and outlook. But he was baffled by lack of preparation. He attempted to read books that required years of preliminary specialization. One day he would read a book of antiquated philosophy, and the next day one that was ultra-modern, so that his head would be whirling with the conflict and contradiction of ideas. It was the same with the economists. On the one shelf at the library he found Karl Marx, Ricardo, Adam Smith, and Mill, and the abstruse formulas of the one gave no clew that the ideas of another were obsolete. He was bewildered, and yet he wanted to know. He had become interested, in a day, in economics, industry, and politics. Passing through the City Hall Park, he had noticed a group of men, in the centre of which were half a dozen, with flushed faces and raised voices, earnestly carrying on a discussion. He joined the listeners, and heard a new, alien tongue in the mouths of the philosophers of the people. One was a tramp, another was a labor agitator, a third was a law-school student, and the remainder was composed of wordy workingmen. For the first time he heard of socialism, anarchism, and single tax, and learned that there were warring social philosophies. He heard hundreds of technical words that were new to him, belonging to fields of thought that his meagre reading had never touched upon. Because of this he could not follow the arguments closely, and he could only guess at and surmise the ideas wrapped up in such strange expressions. Then there was a black-eyed restaurant waiter who was a theosophist, a union baker who was an agnostic, an old man who baffled all of them with the strange philosophy that *what is is right*, and another old man who discoursed interminably about the cosmos and the father-atom and the mother-atom.

Martin Eden's head was in a state of addlement when he went away after several hours, and he hurried to the library to look up the definitions of a dozen unusual words. And when he left the library, he carried under his arm four volumes: Madam Blavatsky's "Secret Doctrine," "Progress and Poverty," "The Quintessence of Socialism," and, "Warfare of Religion and Science." Unfortunately, he began on the "Secret Doctrine." Every line bristled with many-syllabled words he did not understand. He sat up in bed, and the dictionary was in front of him more often than the book. He looked up so many new words that when they recurred, he had forgotten their meaning and had to look them up again. He devised the plan of writing the definitions in a note-book, and filled page after page with them. And still he could not understand. He read until three in the morning, and his brain was in a turmoil, but not one essential thought in the text had he grasped. He looked up, and it seemed that the room was lifting, heeling, and plunging like a ship upon the sea. Then he hurled the "Secret Doctrine" and many curses across the room, turned off the gas, and composed himself to sleep. Nor did he have much better luck with the other three books. It was not that his brain was weak or incapable; it could think these thoughts were it not for lack of training in thinking and lack of the thought-tools with which to think. He guessed this, and for a while entertained the idea of reading nothing but the dictionary until he had mastered every word in it.

Poetry, however, was his solace, and he read much of it, finding his greatest joy in the simpler poets, who were more understandable. He loved beauty, and there he found beauty. Poetry, like music, stirred him profoundly, and, though he did not know it, he was preparing his mind for the heavier work that was to come. The pages of his mind were blank, and, without effort, much he read and liked, stanza by stanza, was impressed upon those pages, so that he was soon able to extract great joy from chanting aloud or under his breath the music and the beauty of the printed words he had read. Then he stumbled upon Gayley's "Classic Myths" and Bulfinch's "Age of Fable," side by side on a library shelf. It was illumination, a great light in the darkness of his ignorance, and he read poetry more avidly than ever.

The man at the desk in the library had seen Martin there so often that he had become quite cordial, always greeting him with a smile and a nod when he entered. It was because of this that Martin did a daring thing. Drawing out some books at the desk, and while the man was stamping the cards, Martin blurted out:-

“Say, there’s something I’d like to ask you.”

The man smiled and paid attention.

“When you meet a young lady an’ she asks you to call, how soon can you call?”

Martin felt his shirt press and cling to his shoulders, what of the sweat of the effort.

“Why I’d say any time,” the man answered.

“Yes, but this is different,” Martin objected. “She — I — well, you see, it’s this way: maybe she won’t be there. She goes to the university.”

“Then call again.”

“What I said ain’t what I meant,” Martin confessed falteringly, while he made up his mind to throw himself wholly upon the other’s mercy. “I’m just a rough sort of a fellow, an’ I ain’t never seen anything of society. This girl is all that I ain’t, an’ I ain’t anything that she is. You don’t think I’m playin’ the fool, do you?” he demanded abruptly.

“No, no; not at all, I assure you,” the other protested. “Your request is not exactly in the scope of the reference department, but I shall be only too pleased to assist you.”

Martin looked at him admiringly.

“If I could tear it off that way, I’d be all right,” he said.

“I beg pardon?”

“I mean if I could talk easy that way, an’ polite, an’ all the rest.”

“Oh,” said the other, with comprehension.

“What is the best time to call? The afternoon? — not too close to meal-time? Or the evening? Or Sunday?”

“I’ll tell you,” the librarian said with a brightening face. “You call her up on the telephone and find out.”

“I’ll do it,” he said, picking up his books and starting away.

He turned back and asked:-

“When you’re speakin’ to a young lady — say, for instance, Miss Lizzie Smith — do you say ‘Miss Lizzie’? or ‘Miss Smith’?”

“Say ‘Miss Smith,’” the librarian stated authoritatively. “Say ‘Miss Smith’ always — until you come to know her better.”

So it was that Martin Eden solved the problem.

“Come down any time; I’ll be at home all afternoon,” was Ruth’s reply over the telephone to his stammered request as to when he could return the borrowed books.

She met him at the door herself, and her woman’s eyes took in immediately the creased trousers and the certain slight but indefinable change in him for the better. Also, she was struck by his face. It was almost violent, this health of his, and it seemed to rush out of him and at her in waves of force. She felt the urge again of the desire to lean toward him for warmth, and marvelled again at the effect his presence produced upon her. And he, in turn, knew again the swimming sensation of bliss when he felt the contact of her hand in greeting. The difference between them lay in that she was cool and self-possessed while his face flushed to the roots of the hair. He stumbled with his old awkwardness after her, and his shoulders swung and lurched perilously.

Once they were seated in the living-room, he began to get on easily — more easily by far than he had expected. She made it easy for him; and the gracious spirit with which she did it made him love her more madly than ever. They talked first of the borrowed books, of the Swinburne he was devoted to, and of the Browning he did not understand; and she led the conversation on from subject to subject, while she pondered the problem of how she could be of help to him. She had thought of this often since their first meeting. She wanted to help him. He made a call upon her pity and tenderness that no one had ever made before, and the pity was not so much derogatory of him as maternal in her. Her pity could not be of the common sort, when the man who drew it was so much man as to shock her with maidenly fears and set her mind and pulse thrilling with strange thoughts and feelings. The old fascination of his neck was there, and there was sweetness in the thought of laying her hands upon it. It seemed still a wanton impulse, but she had grown more used to it. She did not dream that in such guise new-born love would epitomize itself. Nor did she dream that the feeling he excited in her was love. She thought she was merely interested in him as an unusual type possessing various potential excellencies, and she even felt philanthropic about it.

She did not know she desired him; but with him it was different. He knew that he loved her, and he desired her as he had never before desired anything in his life. He had loved poetry for beauty's sake; but since he met her the gates to the vast field of love-poetry had been opened wide. She had given him understanding even more than Bulfinch and Gayley. There was a line that a week before he would not have favored with a second thought — "God's own mad lover dying on a kiss"; but now it was ever insistent in his mind. He marvelled at the wonder of it and the truth; and as he gazed upon her he knew that he could die gladly upon a kiss. He felt himself God's own mad lover, and no accolade of knighthood could have given him greater pride. And at last he knew the meaning of life and why he had been born.

As he gazed at her and listened, his thoughts grew daring. He reviewed all the wild delight of the pressure of her hand in his at the door, and longed for it again. His gaze wandered often toward her lips, and he yearned for them hungrily. But there was nothing gross or earthly about this yearning. It gave him exquisite delight to watch every movement and play of those lips as they enunciated the words she spoke; yet they were not ordinary lips such as all men and women had. Their substance was not mere human clay. They were lips of pure spirit, and his desire for them seemed absolutely different from the desire that had led him to other women's lips. He could kiss her lips, rest his own physical lips upon them, but it would be with the lofty and awful fervor with which one would kiss the robe of God. He was not conscious of this transvaluation of values that had taken place in him, and was unaware that the light that shone in his eyes when he looked at her was quite the same light that shines in all men's eyes when the desire of love is upon them. He did not dream how ardent and masculine his gaze was, nor that the warm flame of it was affecting the alchemy of her spirit. Her penetrative virginity exalted and disguised his own emotions, elevating his thoughts to a star-cool chastity, and he would have been startled to learn that there was that shining out of his eyes, like warm waves, that flowed through her and kindled a kindred warmth. She was subtly perturbed by it, and more than once, though she knew not why, it disrupted her train of thought with its delicious intrusion and compelled her to grope for the remainder of ideas partly uttered. Speech was always easy with her, and these interruptions would have puzzled her had she not decided that it was because he was a remarkable type. She was very sensitive to impressions, and it was not strange, after all, that this aura of a traveller from another world should so affect her.

The problem in the background of her consciousness was how to help him, and she turned the conversation in that direction; but it was Martin who came to the point first.

"I wonder if I can get some advice from you," he began, and received an acquiescence of willingness that made his heart bound. "You remember the other time I was here I said I couldn't talk about books an' things because I didn't know how? Well, I've ben doin' a lot of thinkin' ever since. I've ben to the library a whole lot, but most of the books I've tackled have ben over my head. Mebbe I'd better begin at the beginnin'. I ain't never had no advantages. I've worked pretty hard ever since I was a kid, an' since I've ben to the library, lookin' with new eyes at books — an' lookin' at new books, too — I've just about concluded that I ain't ben reading the right kind. You know the books you find in cattle-camps an' fo'c's'ls ain't the same you've got in this house, for instance. Well, that's the sort of readin' matter I've ben accustomed to. And yet — an' I ain't just makin' a brag of it — I've ben different from the people I've herded with. Not that I'm any better than the sailors an' cow-punchers I travelled with, — I was cow-punchin' for a short time, you know, — but I always liked books, read everything I could lay hands on, an' — well, I guess I think differently from most of 'em.

"Now, to come to what I'm drivin' at. I was never inside a house like this. When I come a week ago, an' saw all this, an' you, an' your mother, an' brothers, an' everything — well, I liked it. I'd heard about such things an' read about such things in some of the books, an' when I looked around at your house, why, the books come true. But the thing I'm after is I liked it. I wanted it. I want it now. I want to breathe air like you get in this house — air that is filled with books, and pictures, and beautiful things, where people talk in low voices an' are clean, an' their thoughts are clean. The air I always breathed was mixed up with grub an' house-rent an' scrappin' an booze an' that's all they talked about, too. Why, when you was crossin' the room to kiss your mother, I thought it was the most beautiful thing I ever seen. I've seen a whole lot of life, an' somehow I've seen a whole lot more of it than most of them that was with me. I like to see, an' I want to see more, an' I want to see it different.

"But I ain't got to the point yet. Here it is. I want to make my way to the kind of life you have in this house. There's more in life than booze, an' hard work, an' knockin' about. Now, how am I goin' to get it? Where do I take hold an' begin? I'm willin' to work my passage, you know, an' I can make most men sick when it comes to hard work. Once I get started, I'll work night an' day. Mebbe you think it's funny, me askin' you about all this. I know you're the last person in the world I ought to ask, but I don't know anybody else I could ask — unless it's Arthur. Mebbe I ought to ask him. If I was — "

His voice died away. His firmly planned intention had come to a halt on the verge of the horrible probability that he should have asked Arthur and that he had made a fool of himself. Ruth did not speak immediately. She was too absorbed in striving to reconcile the stumbling, uncouth speech and its simplicity of thought with what she saw in his face. She had never looked in eyes that expressed greater power. Here was a man who could do anything, was the message she read there, and it accorded ill with the weakness of his spoken thought. And for that matter so complex and quick was her own mind that she did not have a just appreciation of simplicity. And yet she had caught an impression of power in the very groping of this mind. It had seemed to her like a giant writhing and straining at the bonds that held him down. Her face was all sympathy when she did speak.

"What you need, you realize yourself, and it is education. You should go back and finish grammar school, and then go through to high school and university."

"But that takes money," he interrupted.

"Oh!" she cried. "I had not thought of that. But then you have relatives, somebody who could assist you?"

He shook his head.

"My father and mother are dead. I've two sisters, one married, an' the other'll get married soon, I suppose. Then I've a string of brothers, — I'm the youngest, — but they never helped nobody. They've just knocked around over the world, lookin' out for number one. The oldest died in India. Two are in South Africa now, an' another's on a whaling voyage, an' one's travellin' with a circus — he does trapeze work. An' I guess I'm just like them. I've taken care of myself since I was eleven — that's when my mother died. I've got to study by myself, I guess, an' what I want to know is where to begin."

"I should say the first thing of all would be to get a grammar. Your grammar is — " She had intended saying "awful," but she amended it to "is not particularly good."

He flushed and sweated.

"I know I must talk a lot of slang an' words you don't understand. But then they're the only words I know — how to speak. I've got other words in my mind, picked 'em up from books, but I can't pronounce 'em, so I don't use 'em."

"It isn't what you say, so much as how you say it. You don't mind my being frank, do you? I don't want to hurt you."

"No, no," he cried, while he secretly blessed her for her kindness. "Fire away. I've got to know, an' I'd sooner know from you than anybody else."

"Well, then, you say, 'You was'; it should be, 'You were.' You say 'I seen' for 'I saw.' You use the double negative — "

"What's the double negative?" he demanded; then added humbly, "You see, I don't even understand your explanations."

"I'm afraid I didn't explain that," she smiled. "A double negative is — let me see — well, you say, 'never helped nobody.' 'Never' is a negative. 'Nobody' is another negative. It is a rule that two negatives make a positive. 'Never helped nobody' means that, not helping nobody, they must have helped somebody."

"That's pretty clear," he said. "I never thought of it before. But it don't mean they *must* have helped somebody, does it? Seems to me that 'never helped nobody' just naturally fails to say whether or not they helped somebody. I never thought of it before, and I'll never say it again."

She was pleased and surprised with the quickness and surety of his mind. As soon as he had got the clew he not only understood but corrected her error.

"You'll find it all in the grammar," she went on. "There's something else I noticed in your speech. You say 'don't' when you shouldn't. 'Don't' is a contraction and stands for two words. Do you know them?"

He thought a moment, then answered, "'Do not.'"

She nodded her head, and said, "And you use 'don't' when you mean 'does not.'"

He was puzzled over this, and did not get it so quickly.

“Give me an illustration,” he asked.

“Well — ” She puckered her brows and pursed up her mouth as she thought, while he looked on and decided that her expression was most adorable. “‘It don’t do to be hasty.’ Change ‘don’t’ to ‘do not,’ and it reads, ‘It do not do to be hasty,’ which is perfectly absurd.”

He turned it over in his mind and considered.

“Doesn’t it jar on your ear?” she suggested.

“Can’t say that it does,” he replied judicially.

“Why didn’t you say, ‘Can’t say that it do’?” she queried.

“That sounds wrong,” he said slowly. “As for the other I can’t make up my mind. I guess my ear ain’t had the trainin’ yours has.”

“There is no such word as ‘ain’t,’” she said, prettily emphatic.

Martin flushed again.

“And you say ‘ben’ for ‘been,’” she continued; “‘come’ for ‘came’; and the way you chop your endings is something dreadful.”

“How do you mean?” He leaned forward, feeling that he ought to get down on his knees before so marvellous a mind. “How do I chop?”

“You don’t complete the endings. ‘A-n-d’ spells ‘and.’ You pronounce it ‘an’.’ ‘I-n-g’ spells ‘ing.’ Sometimes you pronounce it ‘ing’ and sometimes you leave off the ‘g.’ And then you slur by dropping initial letters and diphthongs. ‘T-h-e-m’ spells ‘them.’ You pronounce it — oh, well, it is not necessary to go over all of them. What you need is the grammar. I’ll get one and show you how to begin.”

As she arose, there shot through his mind something that he had read in the etiquette books, and he stood up awkwardly, worrying as to whether he was doing the right thing, and fearing that she might take it as a sign that he was about to go.

“By the way, Mr. Eden,” she called back, as she was leaving the room. “What is *booze*? You used it several times, you know.”

“Oh, booze,” he laughed. “It’s slang. It means whiskey an’ beer — anything that will make you drunk.”

“And another thing,” she laughed back. “Don’t use ‘you’ when you are impersonal. ‘You’ is very personal, and your use of it just now was not precisely what you meant.”

“I don’t just see that.”

“Why, you said just now, to me, ‘whiskey and beer — anything that will make you drunk’ — make me drunk, don’t you see?”

“Well, it would, wouldn’t it?”

“Yes, of course,” she smiled. “But it would be nicer not to bring me into it. Substitute ‘one’ for ‘you’ and see how much better it sounds.”

When she returned with the grammar, she drew a chair near his — he wondered if he should have helped her with the chair — and sat down beside him. She turned the pages of the grammar, and their heads were inclined toward each other. He could hardly follow her outlining of the work he must do, so amazed was he by her delightful propinquity. But when she began to lay down the importance of conjugation, he forgot all about her. He had never heard of conjugation, and was fascinated by the glimpse he was catching into the tie-ribs of language. He leaned closer to the page, and her hair touched his cheek. He had fainted but once in his life, and he thought he was going to faint again. He could scarcely breathe, and his heart was pounding the blood up into his throat and suffocating him. Never had she seemed so accessible as now. For the moment the great gulf that separated them was bridged. But there was no diminution in the loftiness of his feeling for her. She had not descended to him. It was he who had been caught up into the clouds and carried to her. His reverence for her, in that moment, was of the same order as religious awe and fervor. It seemed to him that he had intruded upon the holy of holies, and slowly and carefully he moved his head aside from the contact which thrilled him like an electric shock and of which she had not been aware.

CHAPTER VIII

Several weeks went by, during which Martin Eden studied his grammar, reviewed the books on etiquette, and read voraciously the books that caught his fancy. Of his own class he saw nothing. The girls of the Lotus Club wondered what had become of him and worried Jim with questions, and some of the fellows who put on the glove at Riley's were glad that Martin came no more. He made another discovery of treasure-trove in the library. As the grammar had shown him the tie-ribs of language, so that book showed him the tie-ribs of poetry, and he began to learn metre and construction and form, beneath the beauty he loved finding the why and wherefore of that beauty. Another modern book he found treated poetry as a representative art, treated it exhaustively, with copious illustrations from the best in literature. Never had he read fiction with so keen zest as he studied these books. And his fresh mind, untaxed for twenty years and impelled by maturity of desire, gripped hold of what he read with a virility unusual to the student mind.

When he looked back now from his vantage-ground, the old world he had known, the world of land and sea and ships, of sailor-men and harpy-women, seemed a very small world; and yet it blended in with this new world and expanded. His mind made for unity, and he was surprised when at first he began to see points of contact between the two worlds. And he was ennobled, as well, by the loftiness of thought and beauty he found in the books. This led him to believe more firmly than ever that up above him, in society like Ruth and her family, all men and women thought these thoughts and lived them. Down below where he lived was the ignoble, and he wanted to purge himself of the ignoble that had soiled all his days, and to rise to that sublimated realm where dwelt the upper classes. All his childhood and youth had been troubled by a vague unrest; he had never known what he wanted, but he had wanted something that he had hunted vainly for until he met Ruth. And now his unrest had become sharp and painful, and he knew at last, clearly and definitely, that it was beauty, and intellect, and love that he must have.

During those several weeks he saw Ruth half a dozen times, and each time was an added inspiration. She helped him with his English, corrected his pronunciation, and started him on arithmetic. But their intercourse was not all devoted to elementary study. He had seen too much of life, and his mind was too matured, to be wholly content with fractions, cube root, parsing, and analysis; and there were times when their conversation turned on other themes — the last poetry he had read, the latest poet she had studied. And when she read aloud to him her favorite passages, he ascended to the topmost heaven of delight. Never, in all the women he had heard speak, had he heard a voice like hers. The least sound of it was a stimulus to his love, and he thrilled and throbbed with every word she uttered. It was the quality of it, the repose, and the musical modulation — the soft, rich, indefinable product of culture and a gentle soul. As he listened to her, there rang in the ears of his memory the harsh cries of barbarian women and of hags, and, in lesser degrees of harshness, the strident voices of working women and of the girls of his own class. Then the chemistry of vision would begin to work, and they would troop in review across his mind, each, by contrast, multiplying Ruth's glories. Then, too, his bliss was heightened by the knowledge that her mind was comprehending what she read and was quivering with appreciation of the beauty of the written thought. She read to him much from "The Princess," and often he saw her eyes swimming with tears, so finely was her aesthetic nature strung. At such moments her own emotions elevated him till he was as a god, and, as he gazed at her and listened, he seemed gazing on the face of life and reading its deepest secrets. And then, becoming aware of the heights of exquisite sensibility he attained, he decided that this was love and that love was the greatest thing in the world. And in review would pass along the corridors of memory all previous thrills and burnings he had known, — the drunkenness of wine, the caresses of women, the rough play and give and take of physical contests, — and they seemed trivial and mean compared with this sublime ardor he now enjoyed.

The situation was obscured to Ruth. She had never had any experiences of the heart. Her only experiences in such matters were of the books, where the facts of ordinary day were translated by fancy into a fairy realm of unreality; and she little knew that this rough sailor was creeping into her heart and storing there pent forces that would some day burst forth and surge through her in waves of fire. She did not know the actual fire of love. Her knowledge of love was purely theoretical, and she conceived of it as lambent flame, gentle as the fall of dew or the ripple of quiet water, and cool as the velvet-dark of summer nights. Her idea of love was more that of placid affection, serving the loved one softly in an atmosphere, flower-scented and dim-lighted, of ethereal calm. She did not dream of the volcanic convulsions of love, its scorching heat and sterile wastes of parched ashes. She knew neither her own potencies, nor the potencies of the world; and the deeps of life were to her seas of illusion. The conjugal affection of her father and mother constituted her ideal of love-affinity, and she looked forward some day to emerging, without shock or friction, into that same quiet sweetness of existence with a loved one.

So it was that she looked upon Martin Eden as a novelty, a strange individual, and she identified with novelty and strangeness the effects he produced upon her. It was only natural. In similar ways she had experienced unusual feelings when she looked at wild animals in the menagerie, or when she witnessed a storm of wind, or shuddered at the bright-ribbed lightning. There was something cosmic in such things, and there was something cosmic in him. He came to her breathing of large airs and great spaces. The blaze of tropic suns was in his face, and in his swelling, resilient muscles was the primordial vigor of life. He was marred and scarred by that mysterious world of rough men and rougher deeds, the outposts of which began beyond her horizon. He was untamed, wild, and in secret ways her vanity was touched by the fact that he came so mildly to her hand. Likewise she was stirred by the common impulse to tame the wild thing. It was an unconscious impulse, and farthest from her thoughts that her desire was to re-thumb the clay of him into a likeness of her father's image, which image she believed to be the finest in the world. Nor was there any way, out of her inexperience, for her to know that the cosmic feel she caught of him was that most cosmic of things, love, which with equal power drew men and women together across the world, compelled stags to kill each other in the rutting season, and drove even the elements irresistibly to unite.

His swift development was a source of surprise and interest. She detected unguessed finenesses in him that seemed to bud, day by day, like flowers in congenial soil. She read Browning aloud to him, and was often puzzled by the strange interpretations he gave to mooted passages. It was beyond her to realize that, out of his experience of men and women and life, his interpretations were far more frequently correct than hers. His conceptions seemed naive to her, though she was often fired by his daring flights of comprehension, whose orbit-path was so wide among the stars that she could not follow and could only sit and thrill to the impact of unguessed power. Then she played to him — no longer at him — and probed him with music that sank to depths beyond her plumb-line. His nature opened to music as a flower to the sun, and the transition was quick from his working-class rag-time and jingles to her classical display pieces that she knew nearly by heart. Yet he betrayed a democratic fondness for Wagner, and the "Tannhäuser" overture, when she had given him the clew to it, claimed him as nothing else she played. In an immediate way it personified his life. All his past was the *Venusburg* motif, while her he identified somehow with the *Pilgrim's Chorus* motif; and from the exalted state this elevated him to, he swept onward and upward into that vast shadow-realm of spirit-groping, where good and evil war eternally.

Sometimes he questioned, and induced in her mind temporary doubts as to the correctness of her own definitions and conceptions of music. But her singing he did not question. It was too wholly her, and he sat always amazed at the divine melody of her pure soprano voice. And he could not help but contrast it with the weak pipings and shrill quaverings of factory girls, ill-nourished and untrained, and with the raucous shriekings from gin-cracked throats of the women of the seaport towns. She enjoyed singing and playing to him. In truth, it was the first time she had ever had a human soul to play with, and the plastic clay of him was a delight to mould; for she thought she was moulding it, and her intentions were good. Besides, it was pleasant to be with him. He did not repel her. That first repulsion had been really a fear of her undiscovered self, and the fear had gone to sleep. Though she did not know it, she had a feeling in him of proprietary right. Also, he had a tonic effect upon her. She was studying hard at the university, and it seemed to strengthen her to emerge from the dusty books and have the fresh sea-breeze of his personality blow upon her. Strength! Strength was what she needed, and he gave it to her in generous measure. To come into the same room with him, or to meet him at the door, was to take heart of life. And when he had gone, she would return to her books with a keener zest and fresh store of energy.

She knew her Browning, but it had never sunk into her that it was an awkward thing to play with souls. As her interest in Martin increased, the remodelling of his life became a passion with her.

"There is Mr. Butler," she said one afternoon, when grammar and arithmetic and poetry had been put aside.

"He had comparatively no advantages at first. His father had been a bank cashier, but he lingered for years, dying of consumption in Arizona, so that when he was dead, Mr. Butler, Charles Butler he was called, found himself alone in the world. His father had come from Australia, you know, and so he had no relatives in California. He went to work in a printing-office, — I have heard him tell of it many times, — and he got three dollars a week, at first. His income to-day is at least thirty thousand a year. How did he do it? He was honest, and faithful, and industrious, and economical. He denied himself the enjoyments that most boys indulge in. He made it a point to save so much every week, no matter what he had to do without in order to save it. Of course, he was soon earning more than three dollars a week, and as his wages increased he saved more and more.

"He worked in the daytime, and at night he went to night school. He had his eyes fixed always on the future. Later on he went to night high school. When he was only seventeen, he was earning excellent wages at setting type, but he was ambitious. He wanted a career, not a livelihood, and he was content to make immediate sacrifices for his ultimate again. He decided upon the law, and he entered father's office as an office boy — think of that! — and got only four dollars a week. But he had learned how to be economical, and out of that four dollars he went on saving money."

She paused for breath, and to note how Martin was receiving it. His face was lighted up with interest in the youthful struggles of Mr. Butler; but there was a frown upon his face as well.

"I'd say they was pretty hard lines for a young fellow," he remarked. "Four dollars a week! How could he live on it? You can bet he didn't have any frills. Why, I pay five dollars a week for board now, an' there's nothin' excitin' about it, you can lay to that. He must have lived like a dog. The food he ate — "

"He cooked for himself," she interrupted, "on a little kerosene stove."

"The food he ate must have been worse than what a sailor gets on the worst-feedin' deep-water ships, than which there ain't much that can be possibly worse."

"But think of him now!" she cried enthusiastically. "Think of what his income affords him. His early denials are paid for a thousand-fold."

Martin looked at her sharply.

"There's one thing I'll bet you," he said, "and it is that Mr. Butler is nothin' gay-hearted now in his fat days. He fed himself like that for years an’ years, on a boy’s stomach, an’ I bet his stomach’s none too good now for it.”

Her eyes dropped before his searching gaze.

“I’ll bet he’s got dyspepsia right now!” Martin challenged.

“Yes, he has,” she confessed; “but — ”

“An’ I bet,” Martin dashed on, “that he’s solemn an’ serious as an old owl, an’ doesn’t care a rap for a good time, for all his thirty thousand a year. An’ I’ll bet he’s not particularly joyful at seein’ others have a good time. Ain’t I right?”

She nodded her head in agreement, and hastened to explain:-

“But he is not that type of man. By nature he is sober and serious. He always was that.”

“You can bet he was,” Martin proclaimed. “Three dollars a week, an’ four dollars a week, an’ a young boy cookin’ for himself on an oil-burner an’ layin’ up money, workin’ all day an’ studyin’ all night, just workin’ an’ never playin’, never havin’ a good time, an’ never learnin’ how to have a good time — of course his thirty thousand came along too late.”

His sympathetic imagination was flashing upon his inner sight all the thousands of details of the boy’s existence and of his narrow spiritual development into a thirty-thousand-dollar-a-year man. With the swiftness and wide-reaching of multitudinous thought Charles Butler’s whole life was telescoped upon his vision.

“Do you know,” he added, “I feel sorry for Mr. Butler. He was too young to know better, but he robbed himself of life for the sake of thirty thousand a year that’s clean wasted upon him. Why, thirty thousand, lump sum, wouldn’t buy for him right now what ten cents he was layin’ up would have bought him, when he was a kid, in the way of candy an’ peanuts or a seat in nigger heaven.”

It was just such uniqueness of points of view that startled Ruth. Not only were they new to her, and contrary to her own beliefs, but she always felt in them germs of truth that threatened to unseat or modify her own convictions. Had she been fourteen instead of twenty-four, she might have been changed by them; but she was twenty-four, conservative by nature and upbringing, and already crystallized into the cranny of life where she had been born and formed. It was true, his bizarre judgments troubled her in the moments they were uttered, but she ascribed them to his novelty of type and strangeness of living, and they were soon forgotten. Nevertheless, while she disapproved of them, the strength of their utterance, and the flashing of eyes and earnestness of face that accompanied them, always thrilled her and drew her toward him. She would never have guessed that this man who had come from beyond her horizon, was, in such moments, flashing on beyond her horizon with wider and deeper concepts. Her own limits were the limits of her horizon; but limited minds can recognize limitations only in others. And so she felt that her outlook was very wide indeed, and that where his conflicted with hers marked his limitations; and she dreamed of helping him to see as she saw, of widening his horizon until it was identified with hers.

"But I have not finished my story," she said. "He worked, so father says, as no other office boy he ever had. Mr. Butler was always eager to work. He never was late, and he was usually at the office a few minutes before his regular time. And yet he saved his time. Every spare moment was devoted to study. He studied book-keeping and type-writing, and he paid for lessons in shorthand by dictating at night to a court reporter who needed practice. He quickly became a clerk, and he made himself invaluable. Father appreciated him and saw that he was bound to rise. It was on father's suggestion that he went to law college. He became a lawyer, and hardly was he back in the office when father took him in as junior partner. He is a great man. He refused the United States Senate several times, and father says he could become a justice of the Supreme Court any time a vacancy occurs, if he wants to. Such a life is an inspiration to all of us. It shows us that a man with will may rise superior to his environment."

"He is a great man," Martin said sincerely.

But it seemed to him there was something in the recital that jarred upon his sense of beauty and life. He could not find an adequate motive in Mr. Butler's life of pinching and privation. Had he done it for love of a woman, or for attainment of beauty, Martin would have understood. God's own mad lover should do anything for the kiss, but not for thirty thousand dollars a year. He was dissatisfied with Mr. Butler's career. There was something paltry about it, after all. Thirty thousand a year was all right, but dyspepsia and inability to be humanly happy robbed such princely income of all its value.

Much of this he strove to express to Ruth, and shocked her and made it clear that more remodelling was necessary. Hers was that common insularity of mind that makes human creatures believe that their color, creed, and politics are best and right and that other human creatures scattered over the world are less fortunately placed than they. It was the same insularity of mind that made the ancient Jew thank God he was not born a woman, and sent the modern missionary god-substituting to the ends of the earth; and it made Ruth desire to shape this man from other crannies of life into the likeness of the men who lived in her particular cranny of life.

CHAPTER IX

Back from sea Martin Eden came, homing for California with a lover's desire. His store of money exhausted, he had shipped before the mast on the treasure-hunting schooner; and the Solomon Islands, after eight months of failure to find treasure, had witnessed the breaking up of the expedition. The men had been paid off in Australia, and Martin had immediately shipped on a deep-water vessel for San Francisco. Not alone had those eight months earned him enough money to stay on land for many weeks, but they had enabled him to do a great deal of studying and reading.

His was the student's mind, and behind his ability to learn was the indomitability of his nature and his love for Ruth. The grammar he had taken along he went through again and again until his unjaded brain had mastered it. He noticed the bad grammar used by his shipmates, and made a point of mentally correcting and reconstructing their crudities of speech. To his great joy he discovered that his ear was becoming sensitive and that he was developing grammatical nerves. A double negative jarred him like a discord, and often, from lack of practice, it was from his own lips that the jar came. His tongue refused to learn new tricks in a day.

After he had been through the grammar repeatedly, he took up the dictionary and added twenty words a day to his vocabulary. He found that this was no light task, and at wheel or lookout he steadily went over and over his lengthening list of pronunciations and definitions, while he invariably memorized himself to sleep. "Never did anything," "if I were," and "those things," were phrases, with many variations, that he repeated under his breath in order to accustom his tongue to the language spoken by Ruth. "And" and "ing," with the "d" and "g" pronounced emphatically, he went over thousands of times; and to his surprise he noticed that he was beginning to speak cleaner and more correct English than the officers themselves and the gentleman-adventurers in the cabin who had financed the expedition.

The captain was a fishy-eyed Norwegian who somehow had fallen into possession of a complete Shakespeare, which he never read, and Martin had washed his clothes for him and in return been permitted access to the precious volumes. For a time, so steeped was he in the plays and in the many favorite passages that impressed themselves almost without effort on his brain, that all the world seemed to shape itself into forms of Elizabethan tragedy or comedy and his very thoughts were in blank verse. It trained his ear and gave him a fine appreciation for noble English; withal it introduced into his mind much that was archaic and obsolete.

The eight months had been well spent, and, in addition to what he had learned of right speaking and high thinking, he had learned much of himself. Along with his humbleness because he knew so little, there arose a conviction of power. He felt a sharp gradation between himself and his shipmates, and was wise enough to realize that the difference lay in potentiality rather than achievement. What he could do, — they could do; but within him he felt a confused ferment working that told him there was more in him than he had done. He was tortured by the exquisite beauty of the world, and wished that Ruth were there to share it with him. He decided that he would describe to her many of the bits of South Sea beauty. The creative spirit in him flamed up at the thought and urged that he recreate this beauty for a wider audience than Ruth. And then, in splendor and glory, came the great idea. He would write. He would be one of the eyes through which the world saw, one of the ears through which it heard, one of the hearts through which it felt. He would write — everything — poetry and prose, fiction and description, and plays like Shakespeare. There was career and the way to win to Ruth. The men of literature were the world's giants, and he conceived them to be far finer than the Mr. Butlers who earned thirty thousand a year and could be Supreme Court justices if they wanted to.

Once the idea had germinated, it mastered him, and the return voyage to San Francisco was like a dream. He was drunken with unguessed power and felt that he could do anything. In the midst of the great and lonely sea he gained perspective. Clearly, and for the first lime, he saw Ruth and her world. It was all visualized in his mind as a concrete thing which he could take up in his two hands and turn around and about and examine. There was much that was dim and nebulous in that world, but he saw it as a whole and not in detail, and he saw, also, the way to master it. To write! The thought was fire in him. He would begin as soon as he got back. The first thing he would do would be to describe the voyage of the treasure-hunters. He would sell it to some San Francisco newspaper. He would not tell Ruth anything about it, and she would be surprised and pleased when she saw his name in print. While he wrote, he could go on studying. There were twenty-four hours in each day. He was invincible. He knew how to work, and the citadels would go down before him. He would not have to go to sea again — as a sailor; and for the instant he caught a vision of a steam yacht. There were other writers who possessed steam yachts. Of course, he cautioned himself, it would be slow succeeding at first, and for a time he would be content to earn enough money by his writing to enable him to go on studying. And then, after some time, — a very indeterminate time, — when he had learned and prepared himself, he would write the great things and his name would be on all men's lips. But greater than that, infinitely greater and greatest of all, he would have proved himself worthy of Ruth. Fame was all very well, but it was for Ruth that his splendid dream arose. He was not a fame-monger, but merely one of God's mad lovers.

Arrived in Oakland, with his snug pay-day in his pocket, he took up his old room at Bernard Higginbotham's and set to work. He did not even let Ruth know he was back. He would go and see her when he finished the article on the treasure-hunters. It was not so difficult to abstain from seeing her, because of the violent heat of creative fever that burned in him. Besides, the very article he was writing would bring her nearer to him. He did not know how long an article he should write, but he counted the words in a double-page article in the Sunday supplement of the *San Francisco Examiner*, and guided himself by that. Three days, at white heat, completed his narrative; but when he had copied it carefully, in a large scrawl that was easy to read, he learned from a rhetoric he picked up in the library that there were such things as paragraphs and quotation marks. He had never thought of such things before; and he promptly set to work writing the article over, referring continually to the pages of the rhetoric and learning more in a day about composition than the average schoolboy in a year. When he had copied the article a second time and rolled it up carefully, he read in a newspaper an item on hints to beginners, and discovered the iron law that manuscripts should never be rolled and that they should be written on one side of the paper. He had violated the law on both counts. Also, he learned from the item that first-class papers paid a minimum of ten dollars a column. So, while he copied the manuscript a third time, he consoled himself by multiplying ten columns by ten dollars. The product was always the same, one hundred dollars, and he decided that that was better than seafaring. If it hadn't been for his blunders, he would have finished the article in three days. One hundred dollars in three days! It would have taken him three months and longer on the sea to earn a similar amount. A man was a fool to go to sea when he could write, he concluded, though the money in itself meant nothing to him. Its value was in the liberty it would get him, the presentable garments it would buy him, all of which would bring him nearer, swiftly nearer, to the slender, pale girl who had turned his life back upon itself and given him inspiration.

He mailed the manuscript in a flat envelope, and addressed it to the editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*. He had an idea that anything accepted by a paper was published immediately, and as he had sent the manuscript in on Friday he expected it to come out on the following Sunday. He conceived that it would be fine to let that event apprise Ruth of his return. Then, Sunday afternoon, he would call and see her. In the meantime he was occupied by another idea, which he prided himself upon as being a particularly sane, careful, and modest idea. He would write an adventure story for boys and sell it to *The Youth's Companion*. He went to the free reading-room and looked through the files of *The Youth's Companion*. Serial stories, he found, were usually published in that weekly in five instalments of about three thousand words each. He discovered several serials that ran to seven instalments, and decided to write one of that length.

He had been on a whaling voyage in the Arctic, once — a voyage that was to have been for three years and which had terminated in shipwreck at the end of six months. While his imagination was fanciful, even fantastic at times, he had a basic love of reality that compelled him to write about the things he knew. He knew whaling, and out of the real materials of his knowledge he proceeded to manufacture the fictitious adventures of the two boys he intended to use as joint heroes. It was easy work, he decided on Saturday evening. He had completed on that day the first instalment of three thousand words — much to the amusement of Jim, and to the open derision of Mr. Higginbotham, who sneered throughout meal-time at the "litery" person they had discovered in the family.

Martin contented himself by picturing his brother-in-law's surprise on Sunday morning when he opened his *Examiner* and saw the article on the treasure-hunters. Early that morning he was out himself to the front door, nervously racing through the many-sheeted newspaper. He went through it a second time, very carefully, then folded it up and left it where he had found it. He was glad he had not told any one about his article. On second thought he concluded that he had been wrong about the speed with which things found their way into newspaper columns. Besides, there had not been any news value in his article, and most likely the editor would write to him about it first.

After breakfast he went on with his serial. The words flowed from his pen, though he broke off from the writing frequently to look up definitions in the dictionary or to refer to the rhetoric. He often read or re-read a chapter at a time, during such pauses; and he consoled himself that while he was not writing the great things he felt to be in him, he was learning composition, at any rate, and training himself to shape up and express his thoughts. He toiled on till dark, when he went out to the reading-room and explored magazines and weeklies until the place closed at ten o'clock. This was his programme for a week. Each day he did three thousand words, and each evening he puzzled his way through the magazines, taking note of the stories, articles, and poems that editors saw fit to publish. One thing was certain: What these multitudinous writers did he could do, and only give him time and he would do what they could not do. He was cheered to read in *Book News*, in a paragraph on the payment of magazine writers, not that Rudyard Kipling received a dollar per word, but that the minimum rate paid by first-class magazines was two cents a word. *The Youth's Companion* was certainly first class, and at that rate the three thousand words he had written that day would bring him sixty dollars — two months' wages on the sea!

On Friday night he finished the serial, twenty-one thousand words long. At two cents a word, he calculated, that would bring him four hundred and twenty dollars. Not a bad week's work. It was more money than he had ever possessed at one time. He did not know how he could spend it all. He had tapped a gold mine. Where this came from he could always get more. He planned to buy some more clothes, to subscribe to many magazines, and to buy dozens of reference books that at present he was compelled to go to the library to consult. And still there was a large portion of the four hundred and twenty dollars unspent. This worried him until the thought came to him of hiring a servant for Gertrude and of buying a bicycle for Marion.

He mailed the bulky manuscript to *The Youth's Companion*, and on Saturday afternoon, after having planned an article on pearl-diving, he went to see Ruth. He had telephoned, and she went herself to greet him at the door. The old familiar blaze of health rushed out from him and struck her like a blow. It seemed to enter into her body and course through her veins in a liquid glow, and to set her quivering with its imparted strength. He flushed warmly as he took her hand and looked into her blue eyes, but the fresh bronze of eight months of sun hid the flush, though it did not protect the neck from the gnawing chafe of the stiff collar. She noted the red line of it with amusement which quickly vanished as she glanced at his clothes. They really fitted him, — it was his first made-to-order suit, — and he seemed slimmer and better modelled. In addition, his cloth cap had been replaced by a soft hat, which she commanded him to put on and then complimented him on his appearance. She did not remember when she had felt so happy. This change in him was her handiwork, and she was proud of it and fired with ambition further to help him.

But the most radical change of all, and the one that pleased her most, was the change in his speech. Not only did he speak more correctly, but he spoke more easily, and there were many new words in his vocabulary. When he grew excited or enthusiastic, however, he dropped back into the old slurring and the dropping of final consonants. Also, there was an awkward hesitancy, at times, as he essayed the new words he had learned. On the other hand, along with his ease of expression, he displayed a lightness and facetiousness of thought that delighted her. It was his old spirit of humor and badinage that had made him a favorite in his own class, but which he had hitherto been unable to use in her presence through lack of words and training. He was just beginning to orientate himself and to feel that he was not wholly an intruder. But he was very tentative, fastidiously so, letting Ruth set the pace of sprightliness and fancy, keeping up with her but never daring to go beyond her.

He told her of what he had been doing, and of his plan to write for a livelihood and of going on with his studies. But he was disappointed at her lack of approval. She did not think much of his plan.

“You see,” she said frankly, “writing must be a trade, like anything else. Not that I know anything about it, of course. I only bring common judgment to bear. You couldn’t hope to be a blacksmith without spending three years at learning the trade — or is it five years! Now writers are so much better paid than blacksmiths that there must be ever so many more men who would like to write, who — try to write.”

“But then, may not I be peculiarly constituted to write?” he queried, secretly exulting at the language he had used, his swift imagination throwing the whole scene and atmosphere upon a vast screen along with a thousand other scenes from his life — scenes that were rough and raw, gross and bestial.

The whole composite vision was achieved with the speed of light, producing no pause in the conversation, nor interrupting his calm train of thought. On the screen of his imagination he saw himself and this sweet and beautiful girl, facing each other and conversing in good English, in a room of books and paintings and tone and culture, and all illuminated by a bright light of steadfast brilliance; while ranged about and fading away to the remote edges of the screen were antithetical scenes, each scene a picture, and he the onlooker, free to look at will upon what he wished. He saw these other scenes through drifting vapors and swirls of sullen fog dissolving before shafts of red and garish light. He saw cowboys at the bar, drinking fierce whiskey, the air filled with obscenity and ribald language, and he saw himself with them drinking and cursing with the wildest, or sitting at table with them, under smoking kerosene lamps, while the chips clicked and clattered and the cards were dealt around. He saw himself, stripped to the waist, with naked fists, fighting his great fight with Liverpool Red in the forecastle of the *Susquehanna*; and he saw the bloody deck of the *John Rogers*, that gray morning of attempted mutiny, the mate kicking in death-throes on the main-hatch, the revolver in the old man's hand spitting fire and smoke, the men with passion-wrenched faces, of brutes screaming vile blasphemies and falling about him — and then he returned to the central scene, calm and clean in the steadfast light, where Ruth sat and talked with him amid books and paintings; and he saw the grand piano upon which she would later play to him; and he heard the echoes of his own selected and correct words, "But then, may I not be peculiarly constituted to write?"

"But no matter how peculiarly constituted a man may be for blacksmithing," she was laughing, "I never heard of one becoming a blacksmith without first serving his apprenticeship."

"What would you advise?" he asked. "And don't forget that I feel in me this capacity to write — I can't explain it; I just know that it is in me."

"You must get a thorough education," was the answer, "whether or not you ultimately become a writer. This education is indispensable for whatever career you select, and it must not be slipshod or sketchy. You should go to high school."

"Yes — " he began; but she interrupted with an afterthought:-

“Of course, you could go on with your writing, too.”

“I would have to,” he said grimly.

“Why?” She looked at him, prettily puzzled, for she did not quite like the persistence with which he clung to his notion.

“Because, without writing there wouldn’t be any high school. I must live and buy books and clothes, you know.”

“I’d forgotten that,” she laughed. “Why weren’t you born with an income?”

“I’d rather have good health and imagination,” he answered. “I can make good on the income, but the other things have to be made good for — ” He almost said “you,” then amended his sentence to, “have to be made good for one.”

“Don’t say ‘make good,’” she cried, sweetly petulant. “It’s slang, and it’s horrid.”

He flushed, and stammered, “That’s right, and I only wish you’d correct me every time.”

“I — I’d like to,” she said haltingly. “You have so much in you that is good that I want to see you perfect.”

He was clay in her hands immediately, as passionately desirous of being moulded by her as she was desirous of shaping him into the image of her ideal of man. And when she pointed out the opportuneness of the time, that the entrance examinations to high school began on the following Monday, he promptly volunteered that he would take them.

Then she played and sang to him, while he gazed with hungry yearning at her, drinking in her loveliness and marvelling that there should not be a hundred suitors listening there and longing for her as he listened and longed.

CHAPTER X

He stopped to dinner that evening, and, much to Ruth's satisfaction, made a favorable impression on her father. They talked about the sea as a career, a subject which Martin had at his finger-ends, and Mr. Morse remarked afterward that he seemed a very clear-headed young man. In his avoidance of slang and his search after right words, Martin was compelled to talk slowly, which enabled him to find the best thoughts that were in him. He was more at ease than that first night at dinner, nearly a year before, and his shyness and modesty even commended him to Mrs. Morse, who was pleased at his manifest improvement.

"He is the first man that ever drew passing notice from Ruth," she told her husband. "She has been so singularly backward where men are concerned that I have been worried greatly."

Mr. Morse looked at his wife curiously.

"You mean to use this young sailor to wake her up?" he questioned.

"I mean that she is not to die an old maid if I can help it," was the answer. "If this young Eden can arouse her interest in mankind in general, it will be a good thing."

"A very good thing," he commented. "But suppose, — and we must suppose, sometimes, my dear, — suppose he arouses her interest too particularly in him?"

"Impossible," Mrs. Morse laughed. "She is three years older than he, and, besides, it is impossible. Nothing will ever come of it. Trust that to me."

And so Martin's rôle was arranged for him, while he, led on by Arthur and Norman, was meditating an extravagance. They were going out for a ride into the hills Sunday morning on their wheels, which did not interest Martin until he learned that Ruth, too, rode a wheel and was going along. He did not ride, nor own a wheel, but if Ruth rode, it was up to him to begin, was his decision; and when he said good night, he stopped in at a cyclery on his way home and spent forty dollars for a wheel. It was more than a month's hard-earned wages, and it reduced his stock of money amazingly; but when he added the hundred dollars he was to receive from the *Examiner* to the four hundred and twenty dollars that was the least *The Youth's Companion* could pay him, he felt that he had reduced the perplexity the unwonted amount of money had caused him. Nor did he mind, in the course of learning to ride the wheel home, the fact that he ruined his suit of clothes. He caught the tailor by telephone that night from Mr. Higginbotham's store and ordered another suit. Then he carried the wheel up the narrow stairway that clung like a fire-escape to the rear wall of the building, and when he had moved his bed out from the wall, found there was just space enough in the small room for himself and the wheel.

Sunday he had intended to devote to studying for the high school examination, but the pearl-diving article lured him away, and he spent the day in the white-hot fever of re-creating the beauty and romance that burned in him. The fact that the *Examiner* of that morning had failed to publish his treasure-hunting article did not dash his spirits. He was at too great a height for that, and having been deaf to a twice-repeated summons, he went without the heavy Sunday dinner with which Mr. Higginbotham invariably graced his table. To Mr. Higginbotham such a dinner was advertisement of his worldly achievement and prosperity, and he honored it by delivering platitudinous sermonettes upon American institutions and the opportunity said institutions gave to any hard-working man to rise — the rise, in his case, which he pointed out unfailingly, being from a grocer's clerk to the ownership of Higginbotham's Cash Store.

Martin Eden looked with a sigh at his unfinished "Pearl-diving" on Monday morning, and took the car down to Oakland to the high school. And when, days later, he applied for the results of his examinations, he learned that he had failed in everything save grammar.

"Your grammar is excellent," Professor Hilton informed him, staring at him through heavy spectacles; "but you know nothing, positively nothing, in the other branches, and your United States history is abominable — there is no other word for it, abominable. I should advise you — "

Professor Hilton paused and glared at him, unsympathetic and unimaginative as one of his own test-tubes. He was professor of physics in the high school, possessor of a large family, a meagre salary, and a select fund of parrot-learned knowledge.

"Yes, sir," Martin said humbly, wishing somehow that the man at the desk in the library was in Professor Hilton's place just then.

"And I should advise you to go back to the grammar school for at least two years. Good day."

Martin was not deeply affected by his failure, though he was surprised at Ruth's shocked expression when he told her Professor Hilton's advice. Her disappointment was so evident that he was sorry he had failed, but chiefly so for her sake.

"You see I was right," she said. "You know far more than any of the students entering high school, and yet you can't pass the examinations. It is because what education you have is fragmentary, sketchy. You need the discipline of study, such as only skilled teachers can give you. You must be thoroughly grounded. Professor Hilton is right, and if I were you, I'd go to night school. A year and a half of it might enable you to catch up that additional six months. Besides, that would leave you your days in which to write, or, if you could not make your living by your pen, you would have your days in which to work in some position."

But if my days are taken up with work and my nights with school, when am I going to see you? — was Martin's first thought, though he refrained from uttering it. Instead, he said:-

"It seems so babyish for me to be going to night school. But I wouldn't mind that if I thought it would pay. But I don't think it will pay. I can do the work quicker than they can teach me. It would be a loss of time — " he thought of her and his desire to have her — "and I can't afford the time. I haven't the time to spare, in fact."

"There is so much that is necessary." She looked at him gently, and he was a brute to oppose her. "Physics and chemistry — you can't do them without laboratory study; and you'll find algebra and geometry almost hopeless with instruction. You need the skilled teachers, the specialists in the art of imparting knowledge."

He was silent for a minute, casting about for the least vainglorious way in which to express himself.

"Please don't think I'm bragging," he began. "I don't intend it that way at all. But I have a feeling that I am what I may call a natural student. I can study by myself. I take to it kindly, like a duck to water. You see yourself what I did with grammar. And I've learned much of other things — you would never dream how much. And I'm only getting started. Wait till I get — " He hesitated and assured himself of the pronunciation before he said "momentum. I'm getting my first real feel of things now. I'm beginning to size up the situation — "

"Please don't say 'size up,'" she interrupted.

“To get a line on things,” he hastily amended.

“That doesn’t mean anything in correct English,” she objected.

He floundered for a fresh start.

“What I’m driving at is that I’m beginning to get the lay of the land.”

Out of pity she forebore, and he went on.

“Knowledge seems to me like a chart-room. Whenever I go into the library, I am impressed that way. The part played by teachers is to teach the student the contents of the chart-room in a systematic way. The teachers are guides to the chart-room, that’s all. It’s not something that they have in their own heads. They don’t make it up, don’t create it. It’s all in the chart-room and they know their way about in it, and it’s their business to show the place to strangers who might else get lost. Now I don’t get lost easily. I have the bump of location. I usually know where I’m at — What’s wrong now?”

“Don’t say ‘where I’m at.’”

“That’s right,” he said gratefully, “where I am. But where am I at — I mean, where am I? Oh, yes, in the chart-room. Well, some people — ”

“Persons,” she corrected.

“Some persons need guides, most persons do; but I think I can get along without them. I’ve spent a lot of time in the chart-room now, and I’m on the edge of knowing my way about, what charts I want to refer to, what coasts I want to explore. And from the way I line it up, I’ll explore a whole lot more quickly by myself. The speed of a fleet, you know, is the speed of the slowest ship, and the speed of the teachers is affected the same way. They can’t go any faster than the ruck of their scholars, and I can set a faster pace for myself than they set for a whole schoolroom.”

“‘He travels the fastest who travels alone,’” she quoted at him.

But I’d travel faster with you just the same, was what he wanted to blurt out, as he caught a vision of a world without end of sunlit spaces and starry voids through which he drifted with her, his arm around her, her pale gold hair blowing about his face. In the same instant he was aware of the pitiful inadequacy of speech. God! If he could so frame words that she could see what he then saw! And he felt the stir in him, like a throe of yearning pain, of the desire to paint these visions that flashed unsummoned on the mirror of his mind. Ah, that was it! He caught at the hem of the secret. It was the very thing that the great writers and master-poets did. That was why they were giants. They knew how to express what they thought, and felt, and saw. Dogs asleep in the sun often whined and barked, but they were unable to tell what they saw that made them whine and bark. He had often wondered what it was. And that was all he was, a dog asleep in the sun. He saw noble and beautiful visions, but he could only whine and bark at Ruth. But he would cease sleeping in the sun. He would stand up, with open eyes, and he would struggle and toil and learn until, with eyes unblinded and tongue untied, he could share with her his visioned wealth. Other men had discovered the trick of expression, of making words obedient servitors, and of making combinations of words mean more than the sum of their separate meanings. He was stirred profoundly by the passing glimpse at the secret, and he was again caught up in the vision of sunlit spaces and starry voids — until it came to him that it was very quiet, and he saw Ruth regarding him with an amused expression and a smile in her eyes.

"I have had a great visioning," he said, and at the sound of his words in his own ears his heart gave a leap. Where had those words come from? They had adequately expressed the pause his vision had put in the conversation. It was a miracle. Never had he so loftily framed a lofty thought. But never had he attempted to frame lofty thoughts in words. That was it. That explained it. He had never tried. But Swinburne had, and Tennyson, and Kipling, and all the other poets. His mind flashed on to his "Pearl-diving." He had never dared the big things, the spirit of the beauty that was a fire in him. That article would be a different thing when he was done with it. He was appalled by the vastness of the beauty that rightfully belonged in it, and again his mind flashed and dared, and he demanded of himself why he could not chant that beauty in noble verse as the great poets did. And there was all the mysterious delight and spiritual wonder of his love for Ruth. Why could he not chant that, too, as the poets did? They had sung of love. So would he. By God! —

And in his frightened ears he heard his exclamation echoing. Carried away, he had breathed it aloud. The blood surged into his face, wave upon wave, mastering the bronze of it till the blush of shame flaunted itself from collar-rim to the roots of his hair.

"I — I — beg your pardon," he stammered. "I was thinking."

"It sounded as if you were praying," she said bravely, but she felt herself inside to be withering and shrinking. It was the first time she had heard an oath from the lips of a man she knew, and she was shocked, not merely as a matter of principle and training, but shocked in spirit by this rough blast of life in the garden of her sheltered maidenhood.

But she forgave, and with surprise at the ease of her forgiveness. Somehow it was not so difficult to forgive him anything. He had not had a chance to be as other men, and he was trying so hard, and succeeding, too. It never entered her head that there could be any other reason for her being kindly disposed toward him. She was tenderly disposed toward him, but she did not know it. She had no way of knowing it. The placid poise of twenty-four years without a single love affair did not fit her with a keen perception of her own feelings, and she who had never warmed to actual love was unaware that she was warming now.

CHAPTER XI

Martin went back to his pearl-diving article, which would have been finished sooner if it had not been broken in upon so frequently by his attempts to write poetry. His poems were love poems, inspired by Ruth, but they were never completed. Not in a day could he learn to chant in noble verse. Rhyme and metre and structure were serious enough in themselves, but there was, over and beyond them, an intangible and evasive something that he caught in all great poetry, but which he could not catch and imprison in his own. It was the elusive spirit of poetry itself that he sensed and sought after but could not capture. It seemed a glow to him, a warm and trailing vapor, ever beyond his reaching, though sometimes he was rewarded by catching at shreds of it and weaving them into phrases that echoed in his brain with haunting notes or drifted across his vision in misty wafture of unseen beauty. It was baffling. He ached with desire to express and could but gibber prosaically as everybody gibbered. He read his fragments aloud. The metre marched along on perfect feet, and the rhyme pounded a longer and equally faultless rhythm, but the glow and high exaltation that he felt within were lacking. He could not understand, and time and again, in despair, defeated and depressed, he returned to his article. Prose was certainly an easier medium.

Following the "Pearl-diving," he wrote an article on the sea as a career, another on turtle-catching, and a third on the northeast trades. Then he tried, as an experiment, a short story, and before he broke his stride he had finished six short stories and despatched them to various magazines. He wrote prolifically, intensely, from morning till night, and late at night, except when he broke off to go to the reading-room, draw books from the library, or to call on Ruth. He was profoundly happy. Life was pitched high. He was in a fever that never broke. The joy of creation that is supposed to belong to the gods was his. All the life about him — the odors of stale vegetables and soapsuds, the slatternly form of his sister, and the jeering face of Mr. Higginbotham — was a dream. The real world was in his mind, and the stories he wrote were so many pieces of reality out of his mind.

The days were too short. There was so much he wanted to study. He cut his sleep down to five hours and found that he could get along upon it. He tried four hours and a half, and regretfully came back to five. He could joyfully have spent all his waking hours upon any one of his pursuits. It was with regret that he ceased from writing to study, that he ceased from study to go to the library, that he tore himself away from that chart-room of knowledge or from the magazines in the reading-room that were filled with the secrets of writers who succeeded in selling their wares. It was like severing heart strings, when he was with Ruth, to stand up and go; and he scorched through the dark streets so as to get home to his books at the least possible expense of time. And hardest of all was it to shut up the algebra or physics, put note-book and pencil aside, and close his tired eyes in sleep. He hated the thought of ceasing to live, even for so short a time, and his sole consolation was that the alarm clock was set five hours ahead. He would lose only five hours anyway, and then the jangling bell would jerk him out of unconsciousness and he would have before him another glorious day of nineteen hours.

In the meantime the weeks were passing, his money was ebbing low, and there was no money coming in. A month after he had mailed it, the adventure serial for boys was returned to him by *The Youth's Companion*. The rejection slip was so tactfully worded that he felt kindly toward the editor. But he did not feel so kindly toward the editor of the *San Francisco Examiner*. After waiting two whole weeks, Martin had written to him. A week later he wrote again. At the end of the month, he went over to San Francisco and personally called upon the editor. But he did not meet that exalted personage, thanks to a Cerberus of an office boy, of tender years and red hair, who guarded the portals. At the end of the fifth week the manuscript came back to him, by mail, without comment. There was no rejection slip, no explanation, nothing. In the same way his other articles were tied up with the other leading San Francisco papers. When he recovered them, he sent them to the magazines in the East, from which they were returned more promptly, accompanied always by the printed rejection slips.

The short stories were returned in similar fashion. He read them over and over, and liked them so much that he could not puzzle out the cause of their rejection, until, one day, he read in a newspaper that manuscripts should always be typewritten. That explained it. Of course editors were so busy that they could not afford the time and strain of reading handwriting. Martin rented a typewriter and spent a day mastering the machine. Each day he typed what he composed, and he typed his earlier manuscripts as fast as they were returned him. He was surprised when the typed ones began to come back. His jaw seemed to become squarer, his chin more aggressive, and he bundled the manuscripts off to new editors.

The thought came to him that he was not a good judge of his own work. He tried it out on Gertrude. He read his stories aloud to her. Her eyes glistened, and she looked at him proudly as she said:-

"Ain't it grand, you writin' those sort of things."

"Yes, yes," he demanded impatiently. "But the story — how did you like it?"

"Just grand," was the reply. "Just grand, an' thrilling, too. I was all worked up."

He could see that her mind was not clear. The perplexity was strong in her good-natured face. So he waited.

"But, say, Mart," after a long pause, "how did it end? Did that young man who spoke so highfalutin' get her?"

And, after he had explained the end, which he thought he had made artistically obvious, she would say:-

"That's what I wanted to know. Why didn't you write that way in the story?"

One thing he learned, after he had read her a number of stories, namely, that she liked happy endings.

"That story was perfectly grand," she announced, straightening up from the wash-tub with a tired sigh and wiping the sweat from her forehead with a red, steamy hand; "but it makes me sad. I want to cry. There is too many sad things in the world anyway. It makes me happy to think about happy things. Now if he'd married her, and — You don't mind, Mart?" she queried apprehensively. "I just happen to feel that way, because I'm tired, I guess. But the story was grand just the same, perfectly grand. Where are you goin' to sell it?"

"That's a horse of another color," he laughed.

"But if you *did* sell it, what do you think you'd get for it?"

"Oh, a hundred dollars. That would be the least, the way prices go."

"My! I do hope you'll sell it!"

"Easy money, eh?" Then he added proudly: "I wrote it in two days. That's fifty dollars a day."

He longed to read his stories to Ruth, but did not dare. He would wait till some were published, he decided, then she would understand what he had been working for. In the meantime he toiled on. Never had the spirit of adventure lured him more strongly than on this amazing exploration of the realm of mind. He bought the text-books on physics and chemistry, and, along with his algebra, worked out problems and demonstrations. He took the laboratory proofs on faith, and his intense power of vision enabled him to see the reactions of chemicals more understandingly than the average student saw them in the laboratory. Martin wandered on through the heavy pages, overwhelmed by the clews he was getting to the nature of things. He had accepted the world as the world, but now he was comprehending the organization of it, the play and interplay of force and matter. Spontaneous explanations of old matters were continually arising in his mind. Levers and purchases fascinated him, and his mind roved backward to hand-spikes and blocks and tackles at sea. The theory of navigation, which enabled the ships to travel unerringly their courses over the pathless ocean, was made clear to him. The mysteries of storm, and rain, and tide were revealed, and the reason for the existence of trade-winds made him wonder whether he had written his article on the northeast trade too soon. At any rate he knew he could write it better now. One afternoon he went out with Arthur to the University of California, and, with bated breath and a feeling of religious awe, went through the laboratories, saw demonstrations, and listened to a physics professor lecturing to his classes.

But he did not neglect his writing. A stream of short stories flowed from his pen, and he branched out into the easier forms of verse — the kind he saw printed in the magazines — though he lost his head and wasted two weeks on a tragedy in blank verse, the swift rejection of which, by half a dozen magazines, dumfounded him. Then he discovered Henley and wrote a series of sea-poems on the model of “Hospital Sketches.” They were simple poems, of light and color, and romance and adventure. “Sea Lyrics,” he called them, and he judged them to be the best work he had yet done. There were thirty, and he completed them in a month, doing one a day after having done his regular day’s work on fiction, which day’s work was the equivalent to a week’s work of the average successful writer. The toil meant nothing to him. It was not toil. He was finding speech, and all the beauty and wonder that had been pent for years behind his inarticulate lips was now pouring forth in a wild and virile flood.

He showed the “Sea Lyrics” to no one, not even to the editors. He had become distrustful of editors. But it was not distrust that prevented him from submitting the “Lyrics.” They were so beautiful to him that he was impelled to save them to share with Ruth in some glorious, far-off time when he would dare to read to her what he had written. Against that time he kept them with him, reading them aloud, going over them until he knew them by heart.

He lived every moment of his waking hours, and he lived in his sleep, his subjective mind rioting through his five hours of surcease and combining the thoughts and events of the day into grotesque and impossible marvels. In reality, he never rested, and a weaker body or a less firmly poised brain would have been prostrated in a general break-down. His late afternoon calls on Ruth were rarer now, for June was approaching, when she would take her degree and finish with the university. Bachelor of Arts! — when he thought of her degree, it seemed she fled beyond him faster than he could pursue.

One afternoon a week she gave to him, and arriving late, he usually stayed for dinner and for music afterward. Those were his red-letter days. The atmosphere of the house, in such contrast with that in which he lived, and the mere nearness to her, sent him forth each time with a firmer grip on his resolve to climb the heights. In spite of the beauty in him, and the aching desire to create, it was for her that he struggled. He was a lover first and always. All other things he subordinated to love.

Greater than his adventure in the world of thought was his love-adventure. The world itself was not so amazing because of the atoms and molecules that composed it according to the propulsions of irresistible force; what made it amazing was the fact that Ruth lived in it. She was the most amazing thing he had ever known, or dreamed, or guessed.

But he was oppressed always by her remoteness. She was so far from him, and he did not know how to approach her. He had been a success with girls and women in his own class; but he had never loved any of them, while he did love her, and besides, she was not merely of another class. His very love elevated her above all classes. She was a being apart, so far apart that he did not know how to draw near to her as a lover should draw near. It was true, as he acquired knowledge and language, that he was drawing nearer, talking her speech, discovering ideas and delights in common; but this did not satisfy his lover’s yearning. His lover’s imagination had made her holy, too holy, too spiritualized, to have any kinship with him in the flesh. It was his own love that thrust her from him and made her seem impossible for him. Love itself denied him the one thing that it desired.

And then, one day, without warning, the gulf between them was bridged for a moment, and thereafter, though the gulf remained, it was ever narrower. They had been eating cherries — great, luscious, black cherries with a juice of the color of dark wine. And later, as she read aloud to him from "The Princess," he chanced to notice the stain of the cherries on her lips. For the moment her divinity was shattered. She was clay, after all, mere clay, subject to the common law of clay as his clay was subject, or anybody's clay. Her lips were flesh like his, and cherries dyed them as cherries dyed his. And if so with her lips, then was it so with all of her. She was woman, all woman, just like any woman. It came upon him abruptly. It was a revelation that stunned him. It was as if he had seen the sun fall out of the sky, or had seen worshipped purity polluted.

Then he realized the significance of it, and his heart began pounding and challenging him to play the lover with this woman who was not a spirit from other worlds but a mere woman with lips a cherry could stain. He trembled at the audacity of his thought; but all his soul was singing, and reason, in a triumphant paean, assured him he was right. Something of this change in him must have reached her, for she paused from her reading, looked up at him, and smiled. His eyes dropped from her blue eyes to her lips, and the sight of the stain maddened him. His arms all but flashed out to her and around her, in the way of his old careless life. She seemed to lean toward him, to wait, and all his will fought to hold him back.

"You were not following a word," she pouted.

Then she laughed at him, delighting in his confusion, and as he looked into her frank eyes and knew that she had divined nothing of what he felt, he became abashed. He had indeed in thought dared too far. Of all the women he had known there was no woman who would not have guessed — save her. And she had not guessed. There was the difference. She was different. He was appalled by his own grossness, awed by her clear innocence, and he gazed again at her across the gulf. The bridge had broken down.

But still the incident had brought him nearer. The memory of it persisted, and in the moments when he was most cast down, he dwelt upon it eagerly. The gulf was never again so wide. He had accomplished a distance vastly greater than a bachelorship of arts, or a dozen bachelorships. She was pure, it was true, as he had never dreamed of purity; but cherries stained her lips. She was subject to the laws of the universe just as inexorably as he was. She had to eat to live, and when she got her feet wet, she caught cold. But that was not the point. If she could feel hunger and thirst, and heat and cold, then could she feel love — and love for a man. Well, he was a man. And why could he not be the man? "It's up to me to make good," he would murmur fervently. "I will be *the* man. I will make myself *the* man. I will make good."

CHAPTER XII

Early one evening, struggling with a sonnet that twisted all awry the beauty and thought that trailed in glow and vapor through his brain, Martin was called to the telephone.

"It's a lady's voice, a fine lady's," Mr. Higginbotham, who had called him, jeered.

Martin went to the telephone in the corner of the room, and felt a wave of warmth rush through him as he heard Ruth's voice. In his battle with the sonnet he had forgotten her existence, and at the sound of her voice his love for her smote him like a sudden blow. And such a voice! — delicate and sweet, like a strain of music heard far off and faint, or, better, like a bell of silver, a perfect tone, crystal-pure. No mere woman had a voice like that. There was something celestial about it, and it came from other worlds. He could scarcely hear what it said, so ravished was he, though he controlled his face, for he knew that Mr. Higginbotham's ferret eyes were fixed upon him.

It was not much that Ruth wanted to say — merely that Norman had been going to take her to a lecture that night, but that he had a headache, and she was so disappointed, and she had the tickets, and that if he had no other engagement, would he be good enough to take her?

Would he! He fought to suppress the eagerness in his voice. It was amazing. He had always seen her in her own house. And he had never dared to ask her to go anywhere with him. Quite irrelevantly, still at the telephone and talking with her, he felt an overpowering desire to die for her, and visions of heroic sacrifice shaped and dissolved in his whirling brain. He loved her so much, so terribly, so hopelessly. In that moment of mad happiness that she should go out with him, go to a lecture with him — with him, Martin Eden — she soared so far above him that there seemed nothing else for him to do than die for her. It was the only fit way in which he could express the tremendous and lofty emotion he felt for her. It was the sublime abnegation of true love that comes to all lovers, and it came to him there, at the telephone, in a whirlwind of fire and glory; and to die for her, he felt, was to have lived and loved well. And he was only twenty-one, and he had never been in love before.

His hand trembled as he hung up the receiver, and he was weak from the organ which had stirred him. His eyes were shining like an angel's, and his face was transfigured, purged of all earthly dross, and pure and holy.

"Makin' dates outside, eh?" his brother-in-law sneered. "You know what that means. You'll be in the police court yet."

But Martin could not come down from the height. Not even the bestiality of the allusion could bring him back to earth. Anger and hurt were beneath him. He had seen a great vision and was as a god, and he could feel only profound and awful pity for this maggot of a man. He did not look at him, and though his eyes passed over him, he did not see him; and as in a dream he passed out of the room to dress. It was not until he had reached his own room and was tying his necktie that he became aware of a sound that lingered unpleasantly in his ears. On investigating this sound he identified it as the final snort of Bernard Higginbotham, which somehow had not penetrated to his brain before.

As Ruth's front door closed behind them and he came down the steps with her, he found himself greatly perturbed. It was not unalloyed bliss, taking her to the lecture. He did not know what he ought to do. He had seen, on the streets, with persons of her class, that the women took the men's arms. But then, again, he had seen them when they didn't; and he wondered if it was only in the evening that arms were taken, or only between husbands and wives and relatives.

Just before he reached the sidewalk, he remembered Minnie. Minnie had always been a stickler. She had called him down the second time she walked out with him, because he had gone along on the inside, and she had laid the law down to him that a gentleman always walked on the outside — when he was with a lady. And Minnie had made a practice of kicking his heels, whenever they crossed from one side of the street to the other, to remind him to get over on the outside. He wondered where she had got that item of etiquette, and whether it had filtered down from above and was all right.

It wouldn't do any harm to try it, he decided, by the time they had reached the sidewalk; and he swung behind Ruth and took up his station on the outside. Then the other problem presented itself. Should he offer her his arm? He had never offered anybody his arm in his life. The girls he had known never took the fellows' arms. For the first several times they walked freely, side by side, and after that it was arms around the waists, and heads against the fellows' shoulders where the streets were unlighted. But this was different. She wasn't that kind of a girl. He must do something.

He crooked the arm next to her — crooked it very slightly and with secret tentativeness, not invitingly, but just casually, as though he was accustomed to walk that way. And then the wonderful thing happened. He felt her hand upon his arm. Delicious thrills ran through him at the contact, and for a few sweet moments it seemed that he had left the solid earth and was flying with her through the air. But he was soon back again, perturbed by a new complication. They were crossing the street. This would put him on the inside. He should be on the outside. Should he therefore drop her arm and change over? And if he did so, would he have to repeat the manoeuvre the next time? And the next? There was something wrong about it, and he resolved not to caper about and play the fool. Yet he was not satisfied with his conclusion, and when he found himself on the inside, he talked quickly and earnestly, making a show of being carried away by what he was saying, so that, in case he was wrong in not changing sides, his enthusiasm would seem the cause for his carelessness.

As they crossed Broadway, he came face to face with a new problem. In the blaze of the electric lights, he saw Lizzie Connolly and her giggly friend. Only for an instant he hesitated, then his hand went up and his hat came off. He could not be disloyal to his kind, and it was to more than Lizzie Connolly that his hat was lifted. She nodded and looked at him boldly, not with soft and gentle eyes like Ruth's, but with eyes that were handsome and hard, and that swept on past him to Ruth and itemized her face and dress and station. And he was aware that Ruth looked, too, with quick eyes that were timid and mild as a dove's, but which saw, in a look that was a flutter on and past, the working-class girl in her cheap finery and under the strange hat that all working-class girls were wearing just then.

"What a pretty girl!" Ruth said a moment later.

Martin could have blessed her, though he said:-

"I don't know. I guess it's all a matter of personal taste, but she doesn't strike me as being particularly pretty."

"Why, there isn't one woman in ten thousand with features as regular as hers. They are splendid. Her face is as clear-cut as a cameo. And her eyes are beautiful."

"Do you think so?" Martin queried absently, for to him there was only one beautiful woman in the world, and she was beside him, her hand upon his arm.

"Do I think so? If that girl had proper opportunity to dress, Mr. Eden, and if she were taught how to carry herself, you would be fairly dazzled by her, and so would all men."

"She would have to be taught how to speak," he commented, "or else most of the men wouldn't understand her. I'm sure you couldn't understand a quarter of what she said if she just spoke naturally."

"Nonsense! You are as bad as Arthur when you try to make your point."

"You forget how I talked when you first met me. I have learned a new language since then. Before that time I talked as that girl talks. Now I can manage to make myself understood sufficiently in your language to explain that you do not know that other girl's language. And do you know why she carries herself the way she does? I think about such things now, though I never used to think about them, and I am beginning to understand — much."

"But why does she?"

"She has worked long hours for years at machines. When one's body is young, it is very pliable, and hard work will mould it like putty according to the nature of the work. I can tell at a glance the trades of many workingmen I meet on the street. Look at me. Why am I rolling all about the shop? Because of the years I put in on the sea. If I'd put in the same years cow-punching, with my body young and pliable, I wouldn't be rolling now, but I'd be bow-legged. And so with that girl. You noticed that her eyes were what I might call hard. She has never been sheltered. She has had to take care of herself, and a young girl can't take care of herself and keep her eyes soft and gentle like — like yours, for example."

"I think you are right," Ruth said in a low voice. "And it is too bad. She is such a pretty girl."

He looked at her and saw her eyes luminous with pity. And then he remembered that he loved her and was lost in amazement at his fortune that permitted him to love her and to take her on his arm to a lecture.

Who are you, Martin Eden? he demanded of himself in the looking-glass, that night when he got back to his room. He gazed at himself long and curiously. Who are you? What are you? Where do you belong? You belong by rights to girls like Lizzie Connolly. You belong with the legions of toil, with all that is low, and vulgar, and unbeautiful. You belong with the oxen and the drudges, in dirty surroundings among smells and stenches.

There are the stale vegetables now. Those potatoes are rotting. Smell them, damn you, smell them. And yet you dare to open the books, to listen to beautiful music, to learn to love beautiful paintings, to speak good English, to think thoughts that none of your own kind thinks, to tear yourself away from the oxen and the Lizzie Connollys and to love a pale spirit of a woman who is a million miles beyond you and who lives in the stars! Who are you? and what are you? damn you! And are you going to make good?

He shook his fist at himself in the glass, and sat down on the edge of the bed to dream for a space with wide eyes. Then he got out note-book and algebra and lost himself in quadratic equations, while the hours slipped by, and the stars dimmed, and the gray of dawn flooded against his window.

CHAPTER XIII

It was the knot of wordy socialists and working-class philosophers that held forth in the City Hall Park on warm afternoons that was responsible for the great discovery. Once or twice in the month, while riding through the park on his way to the library, Martin dismounted from his wheel and listened to the arguments, and each time he tore himself away reluctantly. The tone of discussion was much lower than at Mr. Morse's table. The men were not grave and dignified. They lost their tempers easily and called one another names, while oaths and obscene allusions were frequent on their lips. Once or twice he had seen them come to blows. And yet, he knew not why, there seemed something vital about the stuff of these men's thoughts. Their logomachy was far more stimulating to his intellect than the reserved and quiet dogmatism of Mr. Morse. These men, who slaughtered English, gesticulated like lunatics, and fought one another's ideas with primitive anger, seemed somehow to be more alive than Mr. Morse and his crony, Mr. Butler.

Martin had heard Herbert Spencer quoted several times in the park, but one afternoon a disciple of Spencer's appeared, a seedy tramp with a dirty coat buttoned tightly at the throat to conceal the absence of a shirt. Battle royal was waged, amid the smoking of many cigarettes and the expectoration of much tobacco-juice, wherein the tramp successfully held his own, even when a socialist workman sneered, "There is no god but the Unknowable, and Herbert Spencer is his prophet." Martin was puzzled as to what the discussion was about, but when he rode on to the library he carried with him a new-born interest in Herbert Spencer, and because of the frequency with which the tramp had mentioned "First Principles," Martin drew out that volume.

So the great discovery began. Once before he had tried Spencer, and choosing the "Principles of Psychology" to begin with, he had failed as abjectly as he had failed with Madam Blavatsky. There had been no understanding the book, and he had returned it unread. But this night, after algebra and physics, and an attempt at a sonnet, he got into bed and opened "First Principles." Morning found him still reading. It was impossible for him to sleep. Nor did he write that day. He lay on the bed till his body grew tired, when he tried the hard floor, reading on his back, the book held in the air above him, or changing from side to side. He slept that night, and did his writing next morning, and then the book tempted him and he fell, reading all afternoon, oblivious to everything and oblivious to the fact that that was the afternoon Ruth gave to him. His first consciousness of the immediate world about him was when Bernard Higginbotham jerked open the door and demanded to know if he thought they were running a restaurant.

Martin Eden had been mastered by curiosity all his days. He wanted to know, and it was this desire that had sent him adventuring over the world. But he was now learning from Spencer that he never had known, and that he never could have known had he continued his sailing and wandering forever. He had merely skimmed over the surface of things, observing detached phenomena, accumulating fragments of facts, making superficial little generalizations — and all and everything quite unrelated in a capricious and disorderly world of whim and chance. The mechanism of the flight of birds he had watched and reasoned about with understanding; but it had never entered his head to try to explain the process whereby birds, as organic flying mechanisms, had been developed. He had never dreamed there was such a process. That birds should have come to be, was unguessed. They always had been. They just happened.

And as it was with birds, so had it been with everything. His ignorant and unprepared attempts at philosophy had been fruitless. The medieval metaphysics of Kant had given him the key to nothing, and had served the sole purpose of making him doubt his own intellectual powers. In similar manner his attempt to study evolution had been confined to a hopelessly technical volume by Romanes. He had understood nothing, and the only idea he had gathered was that evolution was a dry-as-dust theory, of a lot of little men possessed of huge and unintelligible vocabularies. And now he learned that evolution was no mere theory but an accepted process of development; that scientists no longer disagreed about it, their only differences being over the method of evolution.

And here was the man Spencer, organizing all knowledge for him, reducing everything to unity, elaborating ultimate realities, and presenting to his startled gaze a universe so concrete of realization that it was like the model of a ship such as sailors make and put into glass bottles. There was no caprice, no chance. All was law. It was in obedience to law that the bird flew, and it was in obedience to the same law that fermenting slime had writhed and squirmed and put out legs and wings and become a bird.

Martin had ascended from pitch to pitch of intellectual living, and here he was at a higher pitch than ever. All the hidden things were laying their secrets bare. He was drunken with comprehension. At night, asleep, he lived with the gods in colossal nightmare; and awake, in the day, he went around like a somnambulist, with absent stare, gazing upon the world he had just discovered. At table he failed to hear the conversation about petty and ignoble things, his eager mind seeking out and following cause and effect in everything before him. In the meat on the platter he saw the shining sun and traced its energy back through all its transformations to its source a hundred million miles away, or traced its energy ahead to the moving muscles in his arms that enabled him to cut the meat, and to the brain wherewith he willed the muscles to move to cut the meat, until, with inward gaze, he saw the same sun shining in his brain. He was entranced by illumination, and did not hear the "Bughouse," whispered by Jim, nor see the anxiety on his sister's face, nor notice the rotary motion of Bernard Higginbotham's finger, whereby he imparted the suggestion of wheels revolving in his brother-in-law's head.

What, in a way, most profoundly impressed Martin, was the correlation of knowledge — of all knowledge. He had been curious to know things, and whatever he acquired he had filed away in separate memory compartments in his brain. Thus, on the subject of sailing he had an immense store. On the subject of woman he had a fairly large store. But these two subjects had been unrelated. Between the two memory compartments there had been no connection. That, in the fabric of knowledge, there should be any connection whatever between a woman with hysterics and a schooner carrying a weather-helm or heaving to in a gale, would have struck him as ridiculous and impossible. But Herbert Spencer had shown him not only that it was not ridiculous, but that it was impossible for there to be no connection. All things were related to all other things from the farthermost star in the wastes of space to the myriads of atoms in the grain of sand under one's foot. This new concept was a perpetual amazement to Martin, and he found himself engaged continually in tracing the relationship between all things under the sun and on the other side of the sun. He drew up lists of the most incongruous things and was unhappy until he succeeded in establishing kinship between them all —

kinship between love, poetry, earthquake, fire, rattlesnakes, rainbows, precious gems, monstrosities, sunsets, the roaring of lions, illuminating gas, cannibalism, beauty, murder, lovers, fulcrums, and tobacco. Thus, he unified the universe and held it up and looked at it, or wandered through its byways and alleys and jungles, not as a terrified traveller in the thick of mysteries seeking an unknown goal, but observing and charting and becoming familiar with all there was to know. And the more he knew, the more passionately he admired the universe, and life, and his own life in the midst of it all.

"You fool!" he cried at his image in the looking-glass. "You wanted to write, and you tried to write, and you had nothing in you to write about. What did you have in you? — some childish notions, a few half-baked sentiments, a lot of undigested beauty, a great black mass of ignorance, a heart filled to bursting with love, and an ambition as big as your love and as futile as your ignorance. And you wanted to write! Why, you're just on the edge of beginning to get something in you to write about. You wanted to create beauty, but how could you when you knew nothing about the nature of beauty? You wanted to write about life when you knew nothing of the essential characteristics of life. You wanted to write about the world and the scheme of existence when the world was a Chinese puzzle to you and all that you could have written would have been about what you did not know of the scheme of existence. But cheer up, Martin, my boy. You'll write yet. You know a little, a very little, and you're on the right road now to know more. Some day, if you're lucky, you may come pretty close to knowing all that may be known. Then you will write."

He brought his great discovery to Ruth, sharing with her all his joy and wonder in it. But she did not seem to be so enthusiastic over it. She tacitly accepted it and, in a way, seemed aware of it from her own studies. It did not stir her deeply, as it did him, and he would have been surprised had he not reasoned it out that it was not new and fresh to her as it was to him. Arthur and Norman, he found, believed in evolution and had read Spencer, though it did not seem to have made any vital impression upon them, while the young fellow with the glasses and the mop of hair, Will Olney, sneered disagreeably at Spencer and repeated the epigram, "There is no god but the Unknowable, and Herbert Spencer is his prophet."

But Martin forgave him the sneer, for he had begun to discover that Olney was not in love with Ruth. Later, he was dumfounded to learn from various little happenings not only that Olney did not care for Ruth, but that he had a positive dislike for her. Martin could not understand this. It was a bit of phenomena that he could not correlate with all the rest of the phenomena in the universe. But nevertheless he felt sorry for the young fellow because of the great lack in his nature that prevented him from a proper appreciation of Ruth's fineness and beauty. They rode out into the hills several Sundays on their wheels, and Martin had ample opportunity to observe the armed truce that existed between Ruth and Olney. The latter chummed with Norman, throwing Arthur and Martin into company with Ruth, for which Martin was duly grateful.

Those Sundays were great days for Martin, greatest because he was with Ruth, and great, also, because they were putting him more on a par with the young men of her class. In spite of their long years of disciplined education, he was finding himself their intellectual equal, and the hours spent with them in conversation was so much practice for him in the use of the grammar he had studied so hard. He had abandoned the etiquette books, falling back upon observation to show him the right things to do. Except when carried away by his enthusiasm, he was always on guard, keenly watchful of their actions and learning their little courtesies and refinements of conduct.

The fact that Spencer was very little read was for some time a source of surprise to Martin. "Herbert Spencer," said the man at the desk in the library, "oh, yes, a great mind." But the man did not seem to know anything of the content of that great mind. One evening, at dinner, when Mr. Butler was there, Martin turned the conversation upon Spencer. Mr. Morse bitterly arraigned the English philosopher's agnosticism, but confessed that he had not read "First Principles"; while Mr. Butler stated that he had no patience with Spencer, had never read a line of him, and had managed to get along quite well without him. Doubts arose in Martin's mind, and had he been less strongly individual he would have accepted the general opinion and given Herbert Spencer up. As it was, he found Spencer's explanation of things convincing; and, as he phrased it to himself, to give up Spencer would be equivalent to a navigator throwing the compass and chronometer overboard. So Martin went on into a thorough study of evolution, mastering more and more the subject himself, and being convinced by the corroborative testimony of a thousand independent writers. The more he studied, the more vistas he caught of fields of knowledge yet unexplored, and the regret that days were only twenty-four hours long became a chronic complaint with him.

One day, because the days were so short, he decided to give up algebra and geometry. Trigonometry he had not even attempted. Then he cut chemistry from his study-list, retaining only physics.

"I am not a specialist," he said, in defence, to Ruth. "Nor am I going to try to be a specialist. There are too many special fields for any one man, in a whole lifetime, to master a tithe of them. I must pursue general knowledge. When I need the work of specialists, I shall refer to their books."

"But that is not like having the knowledge yourself," she protested.

"But it is unnecessary to have it. We profit from the work of the specialists. That's what they are for. When I came in, I noticed the chimney-sweeps at work. They're specialists, and when they get done, you will enjoy clean chimneys without knowing anything about the construction of chimneys."

"That's far-fetched, I am afraid."

She looked at him curiously, and he felt a reproach in her gaze and manner. But he was convinced of the rightness of his position.

"All thinkers on general subjects, the greatest minds in the world, in fact, rely on the specialists. Herbert Spencer did that. He generalized upon the findings of thousands of investigators. He would have had to live a thousand lives in order to do it all himself. And so with Darwin. He took advantage of all that had been learned by the florists and cattle-breeders."

"You're right, Martin," Olney said. "You know what you're after, and Ruth doesn't. She doesn't know what she is after for herself even."

" — Oh, yes," Olney rushed on, heading off her objection, "I know you call it general culture. But it doesn't matter what you study if you want general culture. You can study French, or you can study German, or cut them both out and study Esperanto, you'll get the culture tone just the same. You can study Greek or Latin, too, for the same purpose, though it will never be any use to you. It will be culture, though. Why, Ruth studied Saxon, became clever in it, — that was two years ago, — and all that she remembers of it now is 'Whan that sweet Aprile with his schowers soote' — isn't that the way it goes?"

"But it's given you the culture tone just the same," he laughed, again heading her off. "I know. We were in the same classes."

"But you speak of culture as if it should be a means to something," Ruth cried out. Her eyes were flashing, and in her cheeks were two spots of color. "Culture is the end in itself."

"But that is not what Martin wants."

"How do you know?"

"What do you want, Martin?" Olney demanded, turning squarely upon him.

Martin felt very uncomfortable, and looked entreaty at Ruth.

"Yes, what do you want?" Ruth asked. "That will settle it."

"Yes, of course, I want culture," Martin faltered. "I love beauty, and culture will give me a finer and keener appreciation of beauty."

She nodded her head and looked triumph.

"Rot, and you know it," was Olney's comment. "Martin's after career, not culture. It just happens that culture, in his case, is incidental to career. If he wanted to be a chemist, culture would be unnecessary. Martin wants to write, but he's afraid to say so because it will put you in the wrong."

"And why does Martin want to write?" he went on. "Because he isn't rolling in wealth. Why do you fill your head with Saxon and general culture? Because you don't have to make your way in the world. Your father sees to that. He buys your clothes for you, and all the rest. What rotten good is our education, yours and mine and Arthur's and Norman's? We're soaked in general culture, and if our daddies went broke to-day, we'd be falling down to-morrow on teachers' examinations. The best job you could get, Ruth, would be a country school or music teacher in a girls' boarding-school."

"And pray what would you do?" she asked.

"Not a blessed thing. I could earn a dollar and a half a day, common labor, and I might get in as instructor in Hanley's cramming joint — I say might, mind you, and I might be chucked out at the end of the week for sheer inability."

Martin followed the discussion closely, and while he was convinced that Olney was right, he resented the rather cavalier treatment he accorded Ruth. A new conception of love formed in his mind as he listened. Reason had nothing to do with love. It mattered not whether the woman he loved reasoned correctly or incorrectly. Love was above reason. If it just happened that she did not fully appreciate his necessity for a career, that did not make her a bit less lovable. She was all lovable, and what she thought had nothing to do with her lovableness.

"What's that?" he replied to a question from Olney that broke in upon his train of thought.

"I was saying that I hoped you wouldn't be fool enough to tackle Latin."

"But Latin is more than culture," Ruth broke in. "It is equipment."

"Well, are you going to tackle it?" Olney persisted.

Martin was sore beset. He could see that Ruth was hanging eagerly upon his answer.

"I am afraid I won't have time," he said finally. "I'd like to, but I won't have time."

"You see, Martin's not seeking culture," Olney exulted. "He's trying to get somewhere, to do something."

"Oh, but it's mental training. It's mind discipline. It's what makes disciplined minds." Ruth looked expectantly at Martin, as if waiting for him to change his judgment. "You know, the foot-ball players have to train before the big game. And that is what Latin does for the thinker. It trains."

"Rot and bosh! That's what they told us when we were kids. But there is one thing they didn't tell us then. They let us find it out for ourselves afterwards." Olney paused for effect, then added, "And what they didn't tell us was that every gentleman should have studied Latin, but that no gentleman should know Latin."

"Now that's unfair," Ruth cried. "I knew you were turning the conversation just in order to get off something."

"It's clever all right," was the retort, "but it's fair, too. The only men who know their Latin are the apothecaries, the lawyers, and the Latin professors. And if Martin wants to be one of them, I miss my guess. But what's all that got to do with Herbert Spencer anyway? Martin's just discovered Spencer, and he's wild over him. Why? Because Spencer is taking him somewhere. Spencer couldn't take me anywhere, nor you. We haven't got anywhere to go. You'll get married some day, and I'll have nothing to do but keep track of the lawyers and business agents who will take care of the money my father's going to leave me."

Onley got up to go, but turned at the door and delivered a parting shot.

"You leave Martin alone, Ruth. He knows what's best for himself. Look at what he's done already. He makes me sick sometimes, sick and ashamed of myself. He knows more now about the world, and life, and man's place, and all the rest, than Arthur, or Norman, or I, or you, too, for that matter, and in spite of all our Latin, and French, and Saxon, and culture."

"But Ruth is my teacher," Martin answered chivalrously. "She is responsible for what little I have learned."

"Rats!" Olney looked at Ruth, and his expression was malicious. "I suppose you'll be telling me next that you read Spencer on her recommendation — only you didn't. And she doesn't know anything more about Darwin and evolution than I do about King Solomon's mines. What's that jawbreaker definition about something or other, of Spencer's, that you sprang on us the other day — that indefinite, incoherent homogeneity thing? Spring it on her, and see if she understands a word of it. That isn't culture, you see. Well, tra la, and if you tackle Latin, Martin, I won't have any respect for you."

And all the while, interested in the discussion, Martin had been aware of an irk in it as well. It was about studies and lessons, dealing with the rudiments of knowledge, and the schoolboyish tone of it conflicted with the big things that were stirring in him — with the grip upon life that was even then crooking his fingers like eagle's talons, with the cosmic thrills that made him ache, and with the inchoate consciousness of mastery of it all. He likened himself to a poet, wrecked on the shores of a strange land, filled with power of beauty, stumbling and stammering and vainly trying to sing in the rough, barbaric tongue of his brethren in the new land. And so with him. He was alive, painfully alive, to the great universal things, and yet he was compelled to potter and grope among schoolboy topics and debate whether or not he should study Latin.

"What in hell has Latin to do with it?" he demanded before his mirror that night. "I wish dead people would stay dead. Why should I and the beauty in me be ruled by the dead? Beauty is alive and everlasting. Languages come and go. They are the dust of the dead."

And his next thought was that he had been phrasing his ideas very well, and he went to bed wondering why he could not talk in similar fashion when he was with Ruth. He was only a schoolboy, with a schoolboy's tongue, when he was in her presence.

"Give me time," he said aloud. "Only give me time."

Time! Time! Time! was his unending plaint.

CHAPTER XIV

It was not because of Olney, but in spite of Ruth, and his love for Ruth, that he finally decided not to take up Latin. His money meant time. There was so much that was more important than Latin, so many studies that clamored with imperious voices. And he must write. He must earn money. He had had no acceptances. Twoscore of manuscripts were travelling the endless round of the magazines. How did the others do it? He spent long hours in the free reading-room, going over what others had written, studying their work eagerly and critically, comparing it with his own, and wondering, wondering, about the secret trick they had discovered which enabled them to sell their work.

He was amazed at the immense amount of printed stuff that was dead. No light, no life, no color, was shot through it. There was no breath of life in it, and yet it sold, at two cents a word, twenty dollars a thousand — the newspaper clipping had said so. He was puzzled by countless short stories, written lightly and cleverly he confessed, but without vitality or reality. Life was so strange and wonderful, filled with an immensity of problems, of dreams, and of heroic toils, and yet these stories dealt only with the commonplaces of life. He felt the stress and strain of life, its fevers and sweats and wild insurgences — surely this was the stuff to write about! He wanted to glorify the leaders of forlorn hopes, the mad lovers, the giants that fought under stress and strain, amid terror and tragedy, making life crackle with the strength of their endeavor. And yet the magazine short stories seemed intent on glorifying the Mr. Butlers, the sordid dollar-chasers, and the commonplace little love affairs of commonplace little men and women. Was it because the editors of the magazines were commonplace? he demanded. Or were they afraid of life, these writers and editors and readers?

But his chief trouble was that he did not know any editors or writers. And not merely did he not know any writers, but he did not know anybody who had ever attempted to write. There was nobody to tell him, to hint to him, to give him the least word of advice. He began to doubt that editors were real men. They seemed cogs in a machine. That was what it was, a machine. He poured his soul into stories, articles, and poems, and intrusted them to the machine. He folded them just so, put the proper stamps inside the long envelope along with the manuscript, sealed the envelope, put more stamps outside, and dropped it into the mail-box. It travelled across the continent, and after a certain lapse of time the postman returned him the manuscript in another long envelope, on the outside of which were the stamps he had enclosed. There was no human editor at the other end, but a mere cunning arrangement of cogs that changed the manuscript from one envelope to another and stuck on the stamps. It was like the slot machines wherein one dropped pennies, and, with a metallic whirl of machinery had delivered to him a stick of chewing-gum or a tablet of chocolate. It depended upon which slot one dropped the penny in, whether he got chocolate or gum. And so with the editorial machine. One slot brought checks and the other brought rejection slips. So far he had found only the latter slot.

It was the rejection slips that completed the horrible machinelikeness of the process. These slips were printed in stereotyped forms and he had received hundreds of them — as many as a dozen or more on each of his earlier manuscripts. If he had received one line, one personal line, along with one rejection of all his rejections, he would have been cheered. But not one editor had given that proof of existence. And he could conclude only that there were no warm human men at the other end, only mere cogs, well oiled and running beautifully in the machine.

He was a good fighter, whole-souled and stubborn, and he would have been content to continue feeding the machine for years; but he was bleeding to death, and not years but weeks would determine the fight. Each week his board bill brought him nearer destruction, while the postage on forty manuscripts bled him almost as severely. He no longer bought books, and he economized in petty ways and sought to delay the inevitable end; though he did not know how to economize, and brought the end nearer by a week when he gave his sister Marian five dollars for a dress.

He struggled in the dark, without advice, without encouragement, and in the teeth of discouragement. Even Gertrude was beginning to look askance. At first she had tolerated with sisterly fondness what she conceived to be his foolishness; but now, out of sisterly solicitude, she grew anxious. To her it seemed that his foolishness was becoming a madness. Martin knew this and suffered more keenly from it than from the open and nagging contempt of Bernard Higginbotham. Martin had faith in himself, but he was alone in this faith. Not even Ruth had faith. She had wanted him to devote himself to study, and, though she had not openly disapproved of his writing, she had never approved.

He had never offered to show her his work. A fastidious delicacy had prevented him. Besides, she had been studying heavily at the university, and he felt averse to robbing her of her time. But when she had taken her degree, she asked him herself to let her see something of what he had been doing. Martin was elated and diffident. Here was a judge. She was a bachelor of arts. She had studied literature under skilled instructors. Perhaps the editors were capable judges, too. But she would be different from them. She would not hand him a stereotyped rejection slip, nor would she inform him that lack of preference for his work did not necessarily imply lack of merit in his work. She would talk, a warm human being, in her quick, bright way, and, most important of all, she would catch glimpses of the real Martin Eden. In his work she would discern what his heart and soul were like, and she would come to understand something, a little something, of the stuff of his dreams and the strength of his power.

Martin gathered together a number of carbon copies of his short stories, hesitated a moment, then added his "Sea Lyrics." They mounted their wheels on a late June afternoon and rode for the hills. It was the second time he had been out with her alone, and as they rode along through the balmy warmth, just chilled by she sea-breeze to refreshing coolness, he was profoundly impressed by the fact that it was a very beautiful and well-ordered world and that it was good to be alive and to love. They left their wheels by the roadside and climbed to the brown top of an open knoll where the sunburnt grass breathed a harvest breath of dry sweetness and content.

"Its work is done," Martin said, as they seated themselves, she upon his coat, and he sprawling close to the warm earth. He sniffed the sweetness of the tawny grass, which entered his brain and set his thoughts whirling on from the particular to the universal. "It has achieved its reason for existence," he went on, patting the dry grass affectionately. "It quickened with ambition under the dreary downpour of last winter, fought the violent early spring, flowered, and lured the insects and the bees, scattered its seeds, squared itself with its duty and the world, and — "

"Why do you always look at things with such dreadfully practical eyes?" she interrupted.

"Because I've been studying evolution, I guess. It's only recently that I got my eyesight, if the truth were told."

"But it seems to me you lose sight of beauty by being so practical, that you destroy beauty like the boys who catch butterflies and rub the down off their beautiful wings."

He shook his head.

"Beauty has significance, but I never knew its significance before. I just accepted beauty as something meaningless, as something that was just beautiful without rhyme or reason. I did not know anything about beauty. But now I know, or, rather, am just beginning to know. This grass is more beautiful to me now that I know why it is grass, and all the hidden chemistry of sun and rain and earth that makes it become grass. Why, there is romance in the life-history of any grass, yes, and adventure, too. The very thought of it stirs me. When I think of the play of force and matter, and all the tremendous struggle of it, I feel as if I could write an epic on the grass.

"How well you talk," she said absently, and he noted that she was looking at him in a searching way.

He was all confusion and embarrassment on the instant, the blood flushing red on his neck and brow.

"I hope I am learning to talk," he stammered. "There seems to be so much in me I want to say. But it is all so big. I can't find ways to say what is really in me. Sometimes it seems to me that all the world, all life, everything, had taken up residence inside of me and was clamoring for me to be the spokesman. I feel — oh, I can't describe it — I feel the bigness of it, but when I speak, I babble like a little child. It is a great task to transmute feeling and sensation into speech, written or spoken, that will, in turn, in him who reads or listens, transmute itself back into the selfsame feeling and sensation. It is a lordly task. See, I bury my face in the grass, and the breath I draw in through my nostrils sets me quivering with a thousand thoughts and fancies. It is a breath of the universe I have breathed. I know song and laughter, and success and pain, and struggle and death; and I see visions that arise in my brain somehow out of the scent of the grass, and I would like to tell them to you, to the world. But how can I? My tongue is tied. I have tried, by the spoken word, just now, to describe to you the effect on me of the scent of the grass. But I have not succeeded. I have no more than hinted in awkward speech. My words seem gibberish to me. And yet I am stifled with desire to tell. Oh! — " he threw up his hands with a despairing gesture — "it is impossible! It is not understandable! It is incommunicable!"

"But you do talk well," she insisted. "Just think how you have improved in the short time I have known you. Mr. Butler is a noted public speaker. He is always asked by the State Committee to go out on stump during campaign. Yet you talked just as well as he the other night at dinner. Only he was more controlled. You get too excited; but you will get over that with practice. Why, you would make a good public speaker. You can go far — if you want to. You are masterly. You can lead men, I am sure, and there is no reason why you should not succeed at anything you set your hand to, just as you have succeeded with grammar. You would make a good lawyer. You should shine in politics. There is nothing to prevent you from making as great a success as Mr. Butler has made. And minus the dyspepsia," she added with a smile.

They talked on; she, in her gently persistent way, returning always to the need of thorough grounding in education and to the advantages of Latin as part of the foundation for any career. She drew her ideal of the successful man, and it was largely in her father's image, with a few unmistakable lines and touches of color from the image of Mr. Butler. He listened eagerly, with receptive ears, lying on his back and looking up and joying in each movement of her lips as she talked. But his brain was not receptive. There was nothing alluring in the pictures she drew, and he was aware of a dull pain of disappointment and of a sharper ache of love for her. In all she said there was no mention of his writing, and the manuscripts he had brought to read lay neglected on the ground.

At last, in a pause, he glanced at the sun, measured its height above the horizon, and suggested his manuscripts by picking them up.

"I had forgotten," she said quickly. "And I am so anxious to hear."

He read to her a story, one that he flattered himself was among his very best. He called it "The Wine of Life," and the wine of it, that had stolen into his brain when he wrote it, stole into his brain now as he read it. There was a certain magic in the original conception, and he had adorned it with more magic of phrase and touch. All the old fire and passion with which he had written it were reborn in him, and he was swayed and swept away so that he was blind and deaf to the faults of it. But it was not so with Ruth. Her trained ear detected the weaknesses and exaggerations, the overemphasis of the tyro, and she was instantly aware each time the sentence-rhythm tripped and faltered. She scarcely noted the rhythm otherwise, except when it became too pompous, at which moments she was disagreeably impressed with its amateurishness. That was her final judgment on the story as a whole — amateurish, though she did not tell him so. Instead, when he had done, she pointed out the minor flaws and said that she liked the story.

But he was disappointed. Her criticism was just. He acknowledged that, but he had a feeling that he was not sharing his work with her for the purpose of schoolroom correction. The details did not matter. They could take care of themselves. He could mend them, he could learn to mend them. Out of life he had captured something big and attempted to imprison it in the story. It was the big thing out of life he had read to her, not sentence-structure and semicolons. He wanted her to feel with him this big thing that was his, that he had seen with his own eyes, grappled with his own brain, and placed there on the page with his own hands in printed words. Well, he had failed, was his secret decision. Perhaps the editors were right. He had felt the big thing, but he had failed to transmute it. He concealed his disappointment, and joined so easily with her in her criticism that she did not realize that deep down in him was running a strong undercurrent of disagreement.

"This next thing I've called 'The Pot'," he said, unfolding the manuscript. "It has been refused by four or five magazines now, but still I think it is good. In fact, I don't know what to think of it, except that I've caught something there. Maybe it won't affect you as it does me. It's a short thing — only two thousand words."

"How dreadful!" she cried, when he had finished. "It is horrible, unutterably horrible!"

He noted her pale face, her eyes wide and tense, and her clenched hands, with secret satisfaction. He had succeeded. He had communicated the stuff of fancy and feeling from out of his brain. It had struck home. No matter whether she liked it or not, it had gripped her and mastered her, made her sit there and listen and forget details.

"It is life," he said, "and life is not always beautiful. And yet, perhaps because I am strangely made, I find something beautiful there. It seems to me that the beauty is tenfold enhanced because it is there — "

"But why couldn't the poor woman — " she broke in disconnectedly. Then she left the revolt of her thought unexpressed to cry out: "Oh! It is degrading! It is not nice! It is nasty!"

For the moment it seemed to him that his heart stood still. *Nasty*! He had never dreamed it. He had not meant it. The whole sketch stood before him in letters of fire, and in such blaze of illumination he sought vainly for nastiness. Then his heart began to beat again. He was not guilty.

"Why didn't you select a nice subject?" she was saying. "We know there are nasty things in the world, but that is no reason — "

She talked on in her indignant strain, but he was not following her. He was smiling to himself as he looked up into her virginal face, so innocent, so penetratingly innocent, that its purity seemed always to enter into him, driving out of him all dross and bathing him in some ethereal effulgence that was as cool and soft and velvety as starshine. *We know there are nasty things in the world*! He cuddled to him the notion of her knowing, and chuckled over it as a love joke. The next moment, in a flashing vision of multitudinous detail, he sighted the whole sea of life's nastiness that he had known and voyaged over and through, and he forgave her for not understanding the story. It was through no fault of hers that she could not understand. He thanked God that she had been born and sheltered to such innocence. But he knew life, its foulness as well as its fairness, its greatness in spite of the slime that infested it, and by God he was going to have his say on it to the world. Saints in heaven — how could they be anything but fair and pure? No praise to them. But saints in slime — ah, that was the everlasting wonder! That was what made life worth while. To see moral grandeur rising out of cesspools of iniquity; to rise himself and first glimpse beauty, faint and far, through mud-dripping eyes; to see out of weakness, and frailty, and viciousness, and all abysmal brutishness, arising strength, and truth, and high spiritual endowment —

He caught a stray sequence of sentences she was uttering.

"The tone of it all is low. And there is so much that is high. Take 'In Memoriam.'"

He was impelled to suggest "Locksley Hall," and would have done so, had not his vision gripped him again and left him staring at her, the female of his kind, who, out of the primordial ferment, creeping and crawling up the vast ladder of life for a thousand thousand centuries, had emerged on the topmost rung, having become one Ruth, pure, and fair, and divine, and with power to make him know love, and to aspire toward purity, and to desire to taste divinity — him, Martin Eden, who, too, had come up in some amazing fashion from out of the ruck and the mire and the countless mistakes and abortions of unending creation. There was the romance, and the wonder, and the glory. There was the stuff to write, if he could only find speech. Saints in heaven! — They were only saints and could not help themselves. But he was a man.

"You have strength," he could hear her saying, "but it is untutored strength."

"Like a bull in a china shop," he suggested, and won a smile.

"And you must develop discrimination. You must consult taste, and fineness, and tone."

"I dare too much," he muttered.

She smiled approbation, and settled herself to listen to another story.

"I don't know what you'll make of this," he said apologetically. "It's a funny thing. I'm afraid I got beyond my depth in it, but my intentions were good. Don't bother about the little features of it. Just see if you catch the feel of the big thing in it. It is big, and it is true, though the chance is large that I have failed to make it intelligible."

He read, and as he read he watched her. At last he had reached her, he thought. She sat without movement, her eyes steadfast upon him, scarcely breathing, caught up and out of herself, he thought, by the witchery of the thing he had created. He had entitled the story "Adventure," and it was the apotheosis of adventure — not of the adventure of the storybooks, but of real adventure, the savage taskmaster, awful of punishment and awful of reward, faithless and whimsical, demanding terrible patience and heartbreaking days and nights of toil, offering the blazing sunlight glory or dark death at the end of thirst and famine or of the long drag and monstrous delirium of rotting fever, through blood and sweat and stinging insects leading up by long chains of petty and ignoble contacts to royal culminations and lordly achievements.

It was this, all of it, and more, that he had put into his story, and it was this, he believed, that warmed her as she sat and listened. Her eyes were wide, color was in her pale cheeks, and before he finished it seemed to him that she was almost panting. Truly, she was warmed; but she was warmed, not by the story, but by him. She did not think much of the story; it was Martin's intensity of power, the old excess of strength that seemed to pour from his body and on and over her. The paradox of it was that it was the story itself that was freighted with his power, that was the channel, for the time being, through which his strength poured out to her. She was aware only of the strength, and not of the medium, and when she seemed most carried away by what he had written, in reality she had been carried away by something quite foreign to it — by a thought, terrible and perilous, that had formed itself unsummoned in her brain. She had caught herself wondering what marriage was like, and the becoming conscious of the waywardness and ardor of the thought had terrified her. It was unmaidenly. It was not like her. She had never been tormented by womanhood, and she had lived in a dreamland of Tennysonian poesy, dense even to the full significance of that delicate master's delicate allusions to the grossnesses that intrude upon the relations of queens and knights. She had been asleep, always, and now life was thundering imperatively at all her doors. Mentally she was in a panic to shoot the bolts and drop the bars into place, while wanton instincts urged her to throw wide her portals and bid the deliciously strange visitor to enter in.

Martin waited with satisfaction for her verdict. He had no doubt of what it would be, and he was astounded when he heard her say:

"It is beautiful."

"It is beautiful," she repeated, with emphasis, after a pause.

Of course it was beautiful; but there was something more than mere beauty in it, something more stingingly splendid which had made beauty its handmaiden. He sprawled silently on the ground, watching the grisly form of a great doubt rising before him. He had failed. He was inarticulate. He had seen one of the greatest things in the world, and he had not expressed it.

"What did you think of the — " He hesitated, abashed at his first attempt to use a strange word. "Of the *motif*?" he asked.

"It was confused," she answered. "That is my only criticism in the large way. I followed the story, but there seemed so much else. It is too wordy. You clog the action by introducing so much extraneous material."

"That was the major *motif*," he hurriedly explained, "the big underrunning *motif*, the cosmic and universal thing. I tried to make it keep time with the story itself, which was only superficial after all. I was on the right scent, but I guess I did it badly. I did not succeed in suggesting what I was driving at. But I'll learn in time."

She did not follow him. She was a bachelor of arts, but he had gone beyond her limitations. This she did not comprehend, attributing her incomprehension to his incoherence.

"You were too voluble," she said. "But it was beautiful, in places."

He heard her voice as from far off, for he was debating whether he would read her the "Sea Lyrics." He lay in dull despair, while she watched him searchingly, pondering again upon unsummoned and wayward thoughts of marriage.

"You want to be famous?" she asked abruptly.

"Yes, a little bit," he confessed. "That is part of the adventure. It is not the being famous, but the process of becoming so, that counts. And after all, to be famous would be, for me, only a means to something else. I want to be famous very much, for that matter, and for that reason."

"For your sake," he wanted to add, and might have added had she proved enthusiastic over what he had read to her.

But she was too busy in her mind, carving out a career for him that would at least be possible, to ask what the ultimate something was which he had hinted at. There was no career for him in literature. Of that she was convinced. He had proved it to-day, with his amateurish and sophomoric productions. He could talk well, but he was incapable of expressing himself in a literary way. She compared Tennyson, and Browning, and her favorite prose masters with him, and to his hopeless discredit. Yet she did not tell him her whole mind. Her strange interest in him led her to temporize. His desire to write was, after all, a little weakness which he would grow out of in time. Then he would devote himself to the more serious affairs of life. And he would succeed, too. She knew that. He was so strong that he could not fail — if only he would drop writing.

"I wish you would show me all you write, Mr. Eden," she said.

He flushed with pleasure. She was interested, that much was sure. And at least she had not given him a rejection slip. She had called certain portions of his work beautiful, and that was the first encouragement he had ever received from any one.

"I will," he said passionately. "And I promise you, Miss Morse, that I will make good. I have come far, I know that; and I have far to go, and I will cover it if I have to do it on my hands and knees." He held up a bunch of manuscript. "Here are the 'Sea Lyrics.' When you get home, I'll turn them over to you to read at your leisure. And you must be sure to tell me just what you think of them. What I need, you know, above all things, is criticism. And do, please, be frank with me."

"I will be perfectly frank," she promised, with an uneasy conviction that she had not been frank with him and with a doubt if she could be quite frank with him the next time.

CHAPTER XV

“The first battle, fought and finished,” Martin said to the looking-glass ten days later. “But there will be a second battle, and a third battle, and battles to the end of time, unless — ”

He had not finished the sentence, but looked about the mean little room and let his eyes dwell sadly upon a heap of returned manuscripts, still in their long envelopes, which lay in a corner on the floor. He had no stamps with which to continue them on their travels, and for a week they had been piling up. More of them would come in on the morrow, and on the next day, and the next, till they were all in. And he would be unable to start them out again. He was a month’s rent behind on the typewriter, which he could not pay, having barely enough for the week’s board which was due and for the employment office fees.

He sat down and regarded the table thoughtfully. There were ink stains upon it, and he suddenly discovered that he was fond of it.

“Dear old table,” he said, “I’ve spent some happy hours with you, and you’ve been a pretty good friend when all is said and done. You never turned me down, never passed me out a reward-of-unmerit rejection slip, never complained about working overtime.”

He dropped his arms upon the table and buried his face in them. His throat was aching, and he wanted to cry. It reminded him of his first fight, when he was six years old, when he punched away with the tears running down his cheeks while the other boy, two years his elder, had beaten and pounded him into exhaustion. He saw the ring of boys, howling like barbarians as he went down at last, writhing in the throes of nausea, the blood streaming from his nose and the tears from his bruised eyes.

“Poor little shaver,” he murmured. “And you’re just as badly licked now. You’re beaten to a pulp. You’re down and out.”

But the vision of that first fight still lingered under his eyelids, and as he watched he saw it dissolve and reshape into the series of fights which had followed. Six months later Cheese-Face (that was the boy) had whipped him again. But he had blacked Cheese-Face’s eye that time. That was going some. He saw them all, fight after fight, himself always whipped and Cheese-Face exulting over him. But he had never run away. He felt strengthened by the memory of that. He had always stayed and taken his medicine. Cheese-Face had been a little fiend at fighting, and had never once shown mercy to him. But he had stayed! He had stayed with it!

Next, he saw a narrow alley, between ramshackle frame buildings. The end of the alley was blocked by a one-story brick building, out of which issued the rhythmic thunder of the presses, running off the first edition of the *Enquirer*. He was eleven, and Cheese-Face was thirteen, and they both carried the *Enquirer*. That was why they were there, waiting for their papers. And, of course, Cheese-Face had picked on him again, and there was another fight that was indeterminate, because at quarter to four the door of the press-room was thrown open and the gang of boys crowded in to fold their papers.

"I'll lick you to-morrow," he heard Cheese-Face promise; and he heard his own voice, piping and trembling with unshed tears, agreeing to be there on the morrow.

And he had come there the next day, hurrying from school to be there first, and beating Cheese-Face by two minutes. The other boys said he was all right, and gave him advice, pointing out his faults as a scrapper and promising him victory if he carried out their instructions. The same boys gave Cheese-Face advice, too. How they had enjoyed the fight! He paused in his recollections long enough to envy them the spectacle he and Cheese-Face had put up. Then the fight was on, and it went on, without rounds, for thirty minutes, until the press-room door was opened.

He watched the youthful apparition of himself, day after day, hurrying from school to the *Enquirer* alley. He could not walk very fast. He was stiff and lame from the incessant fighting. His forearms were black and blue from wrist to elbow, what of the countless blows he had warded off, and here and there the tortured flesh was beginning to fester. His head and arms and shoulders ached, the small of his back ached, — he ached all over, and his brain was heavy and dazed. He did not play at school. Nor did he study. Even to sit still all day at his desk, as he did, was a torment. It seemed centuries since he had begun the round of daily fights, and time stretched away into a nightmare and infinite future of daily fights. Why couldn't Cheese-Face be licked? he often thought; that would put him, Martin, out of his misery. It never entered his head to cease fighting, to allow Cheese-Face to whip him.

And so he dragged himself to the *Enquirer* alley, sick in body and soul, but learning the long patience, to confront his eternal enemy, Cheese-Face, who was just as sick as he, and just a bit willing to quit if it were not for the gang of newsboys that looked on and made pride painful and necessary. One afternoon, after twenty minutes of desperate efforts to annihilate each other according to set rules that did not permit kicking, striking below the belt, nor hitting when one was down, Cheese-Face, panting for breath and reeling, offered to call it quits. And Martin, head on arms, thrilled at the picture he caught of himself, at that moment in the afternoon of long ago, when he reeled and panted and choked with the blood that ran into his mouth and down his throat from his cut lips; when he tottered toward Cheese-Face, spitting out a mouthful of blood so that he could speak, crying out that he would never quit, though Cheese-Face could give in if he wanted to. And Cheese-Face did not give in, and the fight went on.

The next day and the next, days without end, witnessed the afternoon fight. When he put up his arms, each day, to begin, they pained exquisitely, and the first few blows, struck and received, racked his soul; after that things grew numb, and he fought on blindly, seeing as in a dream, dancing and wavering, the large features and burning, animal-like eyes of Cheese-Face. He concentrated upon that face; all else about him was a whirling void. There was nothing else in the world but that face, and he would never know rest, blessed rest, until he had beaten that face into a pulp with his bleeding knuckles, or until the bleeding knuckles that somehow belonged to that face had beaten him into a pulp. And then, one way or the other, he would have rest. But to quit, — for him, Martin, to quit, — that was impossible!

Came the day when he dragged himself into the *Enquirer* alley, and there was no Cheese-Face. Nor did Cheese-Face come. The boys congratulated him, and told him that he had licked Cheese-Face. But Martin was not satisfied. He had not licked Cheese-Face, nor had Cheese-Face licked him. The problem had not been solved. It was not until afterward that they learned that Cheese-Face's father had died suddenly that very day.

Martin skipped on through the years to the night in the nigger heaven at the Auditorium. He was seventeen and just back from sea. A row started. Somebody was bullying somebody, and Martin interfered, to be confronted by Cheese-Face's blazing eyes.

"I'll fix you after de show," his ancient enemy hissed.

Martin nodded. The nigger-heaven bouncer was making his way toward the disturbance.

"I'll meet you outside, after the last act," Martin whispered, the while his face showed undivided interest in the buck-and-wing dancing on the stage.

The bouncer glared and went away.

"Got a gang?" he asked Cheese-Face, at the end of the act.

"Sure."

"Then I got to get one," Martin announced.

Between the acts he mustered his following — three fellows he knew from the nail works, a railroad fireman, and half a dozen of the Boo Gang, along with as many more from the dread Eighteen-and-Market Gang.

When the theatre let out, the two gangs strung along inconspicuously on opposite sides of the street. When they came to a quiet corner, they united and held a council of war.

"Eighth Street Bridge is the place," said a red-headed fellow belonging to Cheese-Face's Gang. "You kin fight in the middle, under the electric light, an' whichever way the bulls come in we kin sneak the other way."

"That's agreeable to me," Martin said, after consulting with the leaders of his own gang.

The Eighth Street Bridge, crossing an arm of San Antonio Estuary, was the length of three city blocks. In the middle of the bridge, and at each end, were electric lights. No policeman could pass those end-lights unseen. It was the safe place for the battle that revived itself under Martin's eyelids. He saw the two gangs, aggressive and sullen, rigidly keeping apart from each other and backing their respective champions; and he saw himself and Cheese-Face stripping. A short distance away lookouts were set, their task being to watch the lighted ends of the bridge. A member of the Boo Gang held Martin's coat, and shirt, and cap, ready to race with them into safety in case the police interfered. Martin watched himself go into the centre, facing Cheese-Face, and he heard himself say, as he held up his hand warningly:-

"They ain't no hand-shakin' in this. Understand? They ain't nothin' but scrap. No throwin' up the sponge. This is a grudge-fight an' it's to a finish. Understand? Somebody's goin' to get licked."

Cheese-Face wanted to demur, — Martin could see that, — but Cheese-Face's old perilous pride was touched before the two gangs.

"Aw, come on," he replied. "Wot's the good of chewin' de rag about it? I'm wit' cheh to de finish."

Then they fell upon each other, like young bulls, in all the glory of youth, with naked fists, with hatred, with desire to hurt, to maim, to destroy. All the painful, thousand years' gains of man in his upward climb through creation were lost. Only the electric light remained, a milestone on the path of the great human adventure. Martin and Cheese-Face were two savages, of the stone age, of the squatting place and the tree refuge. They sank lower and lower into the muddy abyss, back into the dregs of the raw beginnings of life, striving blindly and chemically, as atoms strive, as the star-dust if the heavens strives, colliding, recoiling, and colliding again and eternally again.

"God! We are animals! Brute-beasts!" Martin muttered aloud, as he watched the progress of the fight. It was to him, with his splendid power of vision, like gazing into a kinetoscope. He was both onlooker and participant. His long months of culture and refinement shuddered at the sight; then the present was blotted out of his consciousness and the ghosts of the past possessed him, and he was Martin Eden, just returned from sea and fighting Cheese-Face on the Eighth Street Bridge. He suffered and toiled and sweated and bled, and exulted when his naked knuckles smashed home.

They were twin whirlwinds of hatred, revolving about each other monstrously. The time passed, and the two hostile gangs became very quiet. They had never witnessed such intensity of ferocity, and they were awed by it. The two fighters were greater brutes than they. The first splendid velvet edge of youth and condition wore off, and they fought more cautiously and deliberately. There had been no advantage gained either way. "It's anybody's fight," Martin heard some one saying. Then he followed up a feint, right and left, was fiercely countered, and felt his cheek laid open to the bone. No bare knuckle had done that. He heard mutters of amazement at the ghastly damage wrought, and was drenched with his own blood. But he gave no sign. He became immensely wary, for he was wise with knowledge of the low cunning and foul vileness of his kind. He watched and waited, until he feigned a wild rush, which he stopped midway, for he had seen the glint of metal.

"Hold up yer hand!" he screamed. "Them's brass knuckles, an' you hit me with 'em!"

Both gangs surged forward, growling and snarling. In a second there would be a free-for-all fight, and he would be robbed of his vengeance. He was beside himself.

“You guys keep out!” he screamed hoarsely. “Understand? Say, d’ye understand?”

They shrank away from him. They were brutes, but he was the arch-brute, a thing of terror that towered over them and dominated them.

“This is my scrap, an’ they ain’t goin’ to be no buttin’ in. Gimme them knuckles.”

Cheese-Face, sobered and a bit frightened, surrendered the foul weapon.

“You passed ’em to him, you red-head sneakin’ in behind the push there,” Martin went on, as he tossed the knuckles into the water. “I seen you, an’ I was wonderin’ what you was up to. If you try anything like that again, I’ll beat cheh to death. Understand?”

They fought on, through exhaustion and beyond, to exhaustion immeasurable and inconceivable, until the crowd of brutes, its blood-lust sated, terrified by what it saw, begged them impartially to cease. And Cheese-Face, ready to drop and die, or to stay on his legs and die, a grisly monster out of whose features all likeness to Cheese-Face had been beaten, wavered and hesitated; but Martin sprang in and smashed him again and again.

Next, after a seeming century or so, with Cheese-Face weakening fast, in a mix-up of blows there was a loud snap, and Martin’s right arm dropped to his side. It was a broken bone. Everybody heard it and knew; and Cheese-Face knew, rushing like a tiger in the other’s extremity and raining blow on blow. Martin’s gang surged forward to interfere. Dazed by the rapid succession of blows, Martin warned them back with vile and earnest curses sobbed out and groaned in ultimate desolation and despair.

He punched on, with his left hand only, and as he punched, doggedly, only half-conscious, as from a remote distance he heard murmurs of fear in the gangs, and one who said with shaking voice: “This ain’t a scrap, fellows. It’s murder, an’ we ought to stop it.”

But no one stopped it, and he was glad, punching on wearily and endlessly with his one arm, battering away at a bloody something before him that was not a face but a horror, an oscillating, hideous, gibbering, nameless thing that persisted before his wavering vision and would not go away. And he punched on and on, slower and slower, as the last shreds of vitality oozed from him, through centuries and aeons and enormous lapses of time, until, in a dim way, he became aware that the nameless thing was sinking, slowly sinking down to the rough board-planking of the bridge. And the next moment he was standing over it, staggering and swaying on shaky legs, clutching at the air for support, and saying in a voice he did not recognize:-

"D'ye want any more? Say, d'ye want any more?"

He was still saying it, over and over, — demanding, entreating, threatening, to know if it wanted any more, — when he felt the fellows of his gang laying hands on him, patting him on the back and trying to put his coat on him. And then came a sudden rush of blackness and oblivion.

The tin alarm-clock on the table ticked on, but Martin Eden, his face buried on his arms, did not hear it. He heard nothing. He did not think. So absolutely had he relived life that he had fainted just as he fainted years before on the Eighth Street Bridge. For a full minute the blackness and the blankness endured. Then, like one from the dead, he sprang upright, eyes flaming, sweat pouring down his face, shouting:-

"I licked you, Cheese-Face! It took me eleven years, but I licked you!"

His knees were trembling under him, he felt faint, and he staggered back to the bed, sinking down and sitting on the edge of it. He was still in the clutch of the past. He looked about the room, perplexed, alarmed, wondering where he was, until he caught sight of the pile of manuscripts in the corner. Then the wheels of memory slipped ahead through four years of time, and he was aware of the present, of the books he had opened and the universe he had won from their pages, of his dreams and ambitions, and of his love for a pale wraith of a girl, sensitive and sheltered and ethereal, who would die of horror did she witness but one moment of what he had just lived through — one moment of all the muck of life through which he had waded.

He arose to his feet and confronted himself in the looking-glass.

"And so you arise from the mud, Martin Eden," he said solemnly. "And you cleanse your eyes in a great brightness, and thrust your shoulders among the stars, doing what all life has done, letting the 'ape and tiger die' and wresting highest heritage from all powers that be."

He looked more closely at himself and laughed.

"A bit of hysteria and melodrama, eh?" he queried. "Well, never mind. You licked Cheese-Face, and you'll lick the editors if it takes twice eleven years to do it in. You can't stop here. You've got to go on. It's to a finish, you know."

CHAPTER XVI

The alarm-clock went off, jerking Martin out of sleep with a suddenness that would have given headache to one with less splendid constitution. Though he slept soundly, he awoke instantly, like a cat, and he awoke eagerly, glad that the five hours of unconsciousness were gone. He hated the oblivion of sleep. There was too much to do, too much of life to live. He grudged every moment of life sleep robbed him of, and before the clock had ceased its clattering he was head and ears in the washbasin and thrilling to the cold bite of the water.

But he did not follow his regular programme. There was no unfinished story waiting his hand, no new story demanding articulation. He had studied late, and it was nearly time for breakfast. He tried to read a chapter in Fiske, but his brain was restless and he closed the book. To-day witnessed the beginning of the new battle, wherein for some time there would be no writing. He was aware of a sadness akin to that with which one leaves home and family. He looked at the manuscripts in the corner. That was it. He was going away from them, his pitiful, dishonored children that were welcome nowhere. He went over and began to rummage among them, reading snatches here and there, his favorite portions. "The Pot" he honored with reading aloud, as he did "Adventure." "Joy," his latest-born, completed the day before and tossed into the corner for lack of stamps, won his keenest approbation.

"I can't understand," he murmured. "Or maybe it's the editors who can't understand. There's nothing wrong with that. They publish worse every month. Everything they publish is worse — nearly everything, anyway."

After breakfast he put the type-writer in its case and carried it down into Oakland.

"I owe a month on it," he told the clerk in the store. "But you tell the manager I'm going to work and that I'll be in in a month or so and straighten up."

He crossed on the ferry to San Francisco and made his way to an employment office. "Any kind of work, no trade," he told the agent; and was interrupted by a new-comer, dressed rather foppishly, as some workingmen dress who have instincts for finer things. The agent shook his head despondently.

"Nothin' doin' eh?" said the other. "Well, I got to get somebody to-day."

He turned and stared at Martin, and Martin, staring back, noted the puffed and discolored face, handsome and weak, and knew that he had been making a night of it.

"Lookin' for a job?" the other queried. "What can you do?"

"Hard labor, sailorizing, run a type-writer, no shorthand, can sit on a horse, willing to do anything and tackle anything," was the answer.

The other nodded.

"Sounds good to me. My name's Dawson, Joe Dawson, an' I'm tryin' to scare up a laundryman."

"Too much for me." Martin caught an amusing glimpse of himself ironing fluffy white things that women wear. But he had taken a liking to the other, and he added: "I might do the plain washing. I learned that much at sea." Joe Dawson thought visibly for a moment.

"Look here, let's get together an' frame it up. Willin' to listen?"

Martin nodded.

"This is a small laundry, up country, belongs to Shelly Hot Springs, — hotel, you know. Two men do the work, boss and assistant. I'm the boss. You don't work for me, but you work under me. Think you'd be willin' to learn?"

Martin paused to think. The prospect was alluring. A few months of it, and he would have time to himself for study. He could work hard and study hard.

"Good grub an' a room to yourself," Joe said.

That settled it. A room to himself where he could burn the midnight oil unmolested.

"But work like hell," the other added.

Martin caressed his swelling shoulder-muscles significantly. "That came from hard work."

"Then let's get to it." Joe held his hand to his head for a moment. "Gee, but it's a stem-winder. Can hardly see. I went down the line last night — everything — everything. Here's the frame-up. The wages for two is a hundred and board. I've ben drawin' down sixty, the second man forty. But he knew the biz. You're green. If I break you in, I'll be doing plenty of your work at first. Suppose you begin at thirty, an' work up to the forty. I'll play fair. Just as soon as you can do your share you get the forty."

"I'll go you," Martin announced, stretching out his hand, which the other shook. "Any advance? — for rail-road ticket and extras?"

"I blew it in," was Joe's sad answer, with another reach at his aching head. "All I got is a return ticket."

"And I'm broke — when I pay my board."

"Jump it," Joe advised.

"Can't. Owe it to my sister."

Joe whistled a long, perplexed whistle, and racked his brains to little purpose.

"I've got the price of the drinks," he said desperately. "Come on, an' mebbe we'll cook up something."

Martin declined.

"Water-wagon?"

This time Martin nodded, and Joe lamented, "Wish I was."

"But I somehow just can't," he said in extenuation. "After I've ben workin' like hell all week I just got to booze up. If I didn't, I'd cut my throat or burn up the premises. But I'm glad you're on the wagon. Stay with it."

Martin knew of the enormous gulf between him and this man — the gulf the books had made; but he found no difficulty in crossing back over that gulf. He had lived all his life in the working-class world, and the *camaraderie* of labor was second nature with him. He solved the difficulty of transportation that was too much for the other's aching head. He would send his trunk up to Shelly Hot Springs on Joe's ticket. As for himself, there was his wheel. It was seventy miles, and he could ride it on Sunday and be ready for work Monday morning. In the meantime he would go home and pack up. There was no one to say good-by to. Ruth and her whole family were spending the long summer in the Sierras, at Lake Tahoe.

He arrived at Shelly Hot Springs, tired and dusty, on Sunday night. Joe greeted him exuberantly. With a wet towel bound about his aching brow, he had been at work all day.

"Part of last week's washin' mounted up, me bein' away to get you," he explained. "Your box arrived all right. It's in your room. But it's a hell of a thing to call a trunk. An' what's in it? Gold bricks?"

Joe sat on the bed while Martin unpacked. The box was a packing-case for breakfast food, and Mr. Higginbotham had charged him half a dollar for it. Two rope handles, nailed on by Martin, had technically transformed it into a trunk eligible for the baggage-car. Joe watched, with bulging eyes, a few shirts and several changes of underclothes come out of the box, followed by books, and more books.

"Books clean to the bottom?" he asked.

Martin nodded, and went on arranging the books on a kitchen table which served in the room in place of a wash-stand.

"Gee!" Joe exploded, then waited in silence for the deduction to arise in his brain. At last it came.

"Say, you don't care for the girls — much?" he queried.

"No," was the answer. "I used to chase a lot before I tackled the books. But since then there's no time."

"And there won't be any time here. All you can do is work an' sleep."

Martin thought of his five hours' sleep a night, and smiled. The room was situated over the laundry and was in the same building with the engine that pumped water, made electricity, and ran the laundry machinery. The engineer, who occupied the adjoining room, dropped in to meet the new hand and helped Martin rig up an electric bulb, on an extension wire, so that it travelled along a stretched cord from over the table to the bed.

The next morning, at quarter-past six, Martin was routed out for a quarter-to-seven breakfast. There happened to be a bath-tub for the servants in the laundry building, and he electrified Joe by taking a cold bath.

"Gee, but you're a hummer!" Joe announced, as they sat down to breakfast in a corner of the hotel kitchen.

With them was the engineer, the gardener, and the assistant gardener, and two or three men from the stable. They ate hurriedly and gloomily, with but little conversation, and as Martin ate and listened he realized how far he had travelled from their status. Their small mental caliber was depressing to him, and he was anxious to get away from them. So he bolted his breakfast, a sickly, sloppy affair, as rapidly as they, and heaved a sigh of relief when he passed out through the kitchen door.

It was a perfectly appointed, small steam laundry, wherein the most modern machinery did everything that was possible for machinery to do. Martin, after a few instructions, sorted the great heaps of soiled clothes, while Joe started the masher and made up fresh supplies of soft-soap, compounded of biting chemicals that compelled him to swathe his mouth and nostrils and eyes in bath-towels till he resembled a mummy. Finished the sorting, Martin lent a hand in wringing the clothes. This was done by dumping them into a spinning receptacle that went at a rate of a few thousand revolutions a minute, tearing the matter from the clothes by centrifugal force. Then Martin began to alternate between the dryer and the wringer, between times "shaking out" socks and stockings. By the afternoon, one feeding and one, stacking up, they were running socks and stockings through the mangle while the irons were heating. Then it was hot irons and underclothes till six o'clock, at which time Joe shook his head dubiously.

"Way behind," he said. "Got to work after supper." And after supper they worked until ten o'clock, under the blazing electric lights, until the last piece of under-clothing was ironed and folded away in the distributing room. It was a hot California night, and though the windows were thrown wide, the room, with its red-hot ironing-stove, was a furnace. Martin and Joe, down to undershirts, bare armed, sweated and panted for air.

"Like trimming cargo in the tropics," Martin said, when they went upstairs.

"You'll do," Joe answered. "You take hold like a good fellow. If you keep up the pace, you'll be on thirty dollars only one month. The second month you'll be gettin' your forty. But don't tell me you never ironed before. I know better."

"Never ironed a rag in my life, honestly, until to-day," Martin protested.

He was surprised at his weariness when he act into his room, forgetful of the fact that he had been on his feet and working without let up for fourteen hours. He set the alarm clock at six, and measured back five hours to one o'clock. He could read until then. Slipping off his shoes, to ease his swollen feet, he sat down at the table with his books. He opened Fiske, where he had left off to read. But he found trouble began to read it through a second time. Then he awoke, in pain from his stiffened muscles and chilled by the mountain wind that had begun to blow in through the window. He looked at the clock. It marked two. He had been asleep four hours. He pulled off his clothes and crawled into bed, where he was asleep the moment after his head touched the pillow.

Tuesday was a day of similar unremitting toil. The speed with which Joe worked won Martin's admiration. Joe was a dozen of demons for work. He was keyed up to concert pitch, and there was never a moment in the long day when he was not fighting for moments. He concentrated himself upon his work and upon how to save time, pointing out to Martin where he did in five motions what could be done in three, or in three motions what could be done in two. "Elimination of waste motion," Martin phrased it as he watched and patterned after. He was a good workman himself, quick and deft, and it had always been a point of pride with him that no man should do any of his work for him or outwork him. As a result, he concentrated with a similar singleness of purpose, greedily snapping up the hints and suggestions thrown out by his working mate. He "rubbed out" collars and cuffs, rubbing the starch out from between the double thicknesses of linen so that there would be no blisters when it came to the ironing, and doing it at a pace that elicited Joe's praise.

There was never an interval when something was not at hand to be done. Joe waited for nothing, waited on nothing, and went on the jump from task to task. They starched two hundred white shirts, with a single gathering movement seizing a shirt so that the wristbands, neckband, yoke, and bosom protruded beyond the circling right hand. At the same moment the left hand held up the body of the shirt so that it would not enter the starch, and at the moment the right hand dipped into the starch — starch so hot that, in order to wring it out, their hands had to thrust, and thrust continually, into a bucket of cold water. And that night they worked till half-past ten, dipping "fancy starch" — all the frilled and airy, delicate wear of ladies.

"Me for the tropics and no clothes," Martin laughed.

"And me out of a job," Joe answered seriously. "I don't know nothin' but laundrying."

"And you know it well."

"I ought to. Began in the Contra Costa in Oakland when I was eleven, shakin' out for the mangle. That was eighteen years ago, an' I've never done a tap of anything else. But this job is the fiercest I ever had. Ought to be one more man on it at least. We work to-morrow night. Always run the mangle Wednesday nights — collars an' cuffs."

Martin set his alarm, drew up to the table, and opened Fiske. He did not finish the first paragraph. The lines blurred and ran together and his head nodded. He walked up and down, batting his head savagely with his fists, but he could not conquer the numbness of sleep. He propped the book before him, and propped his eyelids with his fingers, and fell asleep with his eyes wide open. Then he surrendered, and, scarcely conscious of what he did, got off his clothes and into bed. He slept seven hours of heavy, animal-like sleep, and awoke by the alarm, feeling that he had not had enough.

"Doin' much readin'?" Joe asked.

Martin shook his head.

"Never mind. We got to run the mangle to-night, but Thursday we'll knock off at six. That'll give you a chance."

Martin washed woollens that day, by hand, in a large barrel, with strong soft-soap, by means of a hub from a wagon wheel, mounted on a plunger-pole that was attached to a spring-pole overhead.

"My invention," Joe said proudly. "Beats a washboard an' your knuckles, and, besides, it saves at least fifteen minutes in the week, an' fifteen minutes ain't to be sneezed at in this shebang."

Running the collars and cuffs through the mangle was also Joe's idea. That night, while they toiled on under the electric lights, he explained it.

"Something no laundry ever does, except this one. An' I got to do it if I'm goin' to get done Saturday afternoon at three o'clock. But I know how, an' that's the difference. Got to have right heat, right pressure, and run 'em through three times. Look at that!" He held a cuff aloft. "Couldn't do it better by hand or on a tiler."

Thursday, Joe was in a rage. A bundle of extra "fancy starch" had come in.

"I'm goin' to quit," he announced. "I won't stand for it. I'm goin' to quit it cold. What's the good of me workin' like a slave all week, a-savin' minutes, an' them a-comin' an' ringin' in fancy-starch extras on me? This is a free country, an' I'm to tell that fat Dutchman what I think of him. An' I won't tell 'm in French. Plain United States is good enough for me. Him a-ringin' in fancy starch extras!"

"We got to work to-night," he said the next moment, reversing his judgment and surrendering to fate.

And Martin did no reading that night. He had seen no daily paper all week, and, strangely to him, felt no desire to see one. He was not interested in the news. He was too tired and jaded to be interested in anything, though he planned to leave Saturday afternoon, if they finished at three, and ride on his wheel to Oakland. It was seventy miles, and the same distance back on Sunday afternoon would leave him anything but rested for the second week's work. It would have been easier to go on the train, but the round trip was two dollars and a half, and he was intent on saving money.

CHAPTER XVII

Martin learned to do many things. In the course of the first week, in one afternoon, he and Joe accounted for the two hundred white shirts. Joe ran the tiler, a machine wherein a hot iron was hooked on a steel string which furnished the pressure. By this means he ironed the yoke, wristbands, and neckband, setting the latter at right angles to the shirt, and put the glossy finish on the bosom. As fast as he finished them, he flung the shirts on a rack between him and Martin, who caught them up and "backed" them. This task consisted of ironing all the unstarched portions of the shirts.

It was exhausting work, carried on, hour after hour, at top speed. Out on the broad verandas of the hotel, men and women, in cool white, sipped iced drinks and kept their circulation down. But in the laundry the air was sizzling. The huge stove roared red hot and white hot, while the irons, moving over the damp cloth, sent up clouds of steam. The heat of these irons was different from that used by housewives. An iron that stood the ordinary test of a wet finger was too cold for Joe and Martin, and such test was useless. They went wholly by holding the irons close to their cheeks, gauging the heat by some secret mental process that Martin admired but could not understand. When the fresh irons proved too hot, they hooked them on iron rods and dipped them into cold water. This again required a precise and subtle judgment. A fraction of a second too long in the water and the fine and silken edge of the proper heat was lost, and Martin found time to marvel at the accuracy he developed — an automatic accuracy, founded upon criteria that were machine-like and unerring.

But there was little time in which to marvel. All Martin's consciousness was concentrated in the work. Ceaselessly active, head and hand, an intelligent machine, all that constituted him a man was devoted to furnishing that intelligence. There was no room in his brain for the universe and its mighty problems. All the broad and spacious corridors of his mind were closed and hermetically sealed. The echoing chamber of his soul was a narrow room, a conning tower, whence were directed his arm and shoulder muscles, his ten nimble fingers, and the swift-moving iron along its steaming path in broad, sweeping strokes, just so many strokes and no more, just so far with each stroke and not a fraction of an inch farther, rushing along interminable sleeves, sides, backs, and tails, and tossing the finished shirts, without rumpling, upon the receiving frame. And even as his hurrying soul tossed, it was reaching for another shirt. This went on, hour after hour, while outside all the world swooned under the overhead California sun. But there was no swooning in that superheated room. The cool guests on the verandas needed clean linen.

The sweat poured from Martin. He drank enormous quantities of water, but so great was the heat of the day and of his exertions, that the water sluiced through the interstices of his flesh and out at all his pores. Always, at sea, except at rare intervals, the work he performed had given him ample opportunity to commune with himself. The master of the ship had been lord of Martin's time; but here the manager of the hotel was lord of Martin's thoughts as well. He had no thoughts save for the nerve-racking, body-destroying toil. Outside of that it was impossible to think. He did not know that he loved Ruth. She did not even exist, for his driven soul had no time to remember her. It was only when he crawled to bed at night, or to breakfast in the morning, that she asserted herself to him in fleeting memories.

"This is hell, ain't it?" Joe remarked once.

Martin nodded, but felt a rasp of irritation. The statement had been obvious and unnecessary. They did not talk while they worked. Conversation threw them out of their stride, as it did this time, compelling Martin to miss a stroke of his iron and to make two extra motions before he caught his stride again.

On Friday morning the washer ran. Twice a week they had to put through hotel linen, — the sheets, pillow-slips, spreads, table-cloths, and napkins. This finished, they buckled down to "fancy starch." It was slow work, fastidious and delicate, and Martin did not learn it so readily. Besides, he could not take chances. Mistakes were disastrous.

"See that," Joe said, holding up a filmy corset-cover that he could have crumpled from view in one hand. "Scorch that an' it's twenty dollars out of your wages."

So Martin did not scorch that, and eased down on his muscular tension, though nervous tension rose higher than ever, and he listened sympathetically to the other's blasphemies as he toiled and suffered over the beautiful things that women wear when they do not have to do their own laundrying. "Fancy starch" was Martin's nightmare, and it was Joe's, too. It was "fancy starch" that robbed them of their hard-won minutes. They toiled at it all day. At seven in the evening they broke off to run the hotel linen through the mangle. At ten o'clock, while the hotel guests slept, the two laundrymen sweated on at "fancy starch" till midnight, till one, till two. At half-past two they knocked off.

Saturday morning it was "fancy starch," and odds and ends, and at three in the afternoon the week's work was done.

"You ain't a-goin' to ride them seventy miles into Oakland on top of this?" Joe demanded, as they sat on the stairs and took a triumphant smoke.

"Got to," was the answer.

"What are you goin' for? — a girl?"

"No; to save two and a half on the railroad ticket. I want to renew some books at the library."

"Why don't you send 'em down an' up by express? That'll cost only a quarter each way."

Martin considered it.

"An' take a rest to-morrow," the other urged. "You need it. I know I do. I'm plumb tuckered out."

He looked it. Indomitable, never resting, fighting for seconds and minutes all week, circumventing delays and crushing down obstacles, a fount of resistless energy, a high-driven human motor, a demon for work, now that he had accomplished the week's task he was in a state of collapse. He was worn and haggard, and his handsome face drooped in lean exhaustion. He pulled his cigarette spiritlessly, and his voice was peculiarly dead and monotonous. All the snap and fire had gone out of him. His triumph seemed a sorry one.

"An' next week we got to do it all over again," he said sadly. "An' what's the good of it all, hey? Sometimes I wish I was a hobo. They don't work, an' they get their livin'. Gee! I wish I had a glass of beer; but I can't get up the gumption to go down to the village an' get it. You'll stay over, an' send your books dawn by express, or else you're a damn fool."

"But what can I do here all day Sunday?" Martin asked.

"Rest. You don't know how tired you are. Why, I'm that tired Sunday I can't even read the papers. I was sick once — typhoid. In the hospital two months an' a half. Didn't do a tap of work all that time. It was beautiful."

"It was beautiful," he repeated dreamily, a minute later.

Martin took a bath, after which he found that the head laundryman had disappeared. Most likely he had gone for a glass of beer Martin decided, but the half-mile walk down to the village to find out seemed a long journey to him. He lay on his bed with his shoes off, trying to make up his mind. He did not reach out for a book. He was too tired to feel sleepy, and he lay, scarcely thinking, in a semi-stupor of weariness, until it was time for supper. Joe did not appear for that function, and when Martin heard the gardener remark that most likely he was ripping the slats off the bar, Martin understood. He went to bed immediately afterward, and in the morning decided that he was greatly rested. Joe being still absent, Martin procured a Sunday paper and lay down in a shady nook under the trees. The morning passed, he knew not how. He did not sleep, nobody disturbed him, and he did not finish the paper. He came back to it in the afternoon, after dinner, and fell asleep over it.

So passed Sunday, and Monday morning he was hard at work, sorting clothes, while Joe, a towel bound tightly around his head, with groans and blasphemies, was running the washer and mixing soft-soap.

“I simply can’t help it,” he explained. “I got to drink when Saturday night comes around.”

Another week passed, a great battle that continued under the electric lights each night and that culminated on Saturday afternoon at three o’clock, when Joe tasted his moment of wilted triumph and then drifted down to the village to forget. Martin’s Sunday was the same as before. He slept in the shade of the trees, toiled aimlessly through the newspaper, and spent long hours lying on his back, doing nothing, thinking nothing. He was too dazed to think, though he was aware that he did not like himself. He was self-repelled, as though he had undergone some degradation or was intrinsically foul. All that was god-like in him was blotted out. The spur of ambition was blunted; he had no vitality with which to feel the prod of it. He was dead. His soul seemed dead. He was a beast, a work-beast. He saw no beauty in the sunshine sifting down through the green leaves, nor did the azure vault of the sky whisper as of old and hint of cosmic vastness and secrets trembling to disclosure. Life was intolerably dull and stupid, and its taste was bad in his mouth. A black screen was drawn across his mirror of inner vision, and fancy lay in a darkened sick-room where entered no ray of light. He envied Joe, down in the village, rampant, tearing the slats off the bar, his brain gnawing with maggots, exulting in maudlin ways over maudlin things, fantastically and gloriously drunk and forgetful of Monday morning and the week of deadening toil to come.

A third week went by, and Martin loathed himself, and loathed life. He was oppressed by a sense of failure. There was reason for the editors refusing his stuff. He could see that clearly now, and laugh at himself and the dreams he had dreamed. Ruth returned his “Sea Lyrics” by mail. He read her letter apathetically. She did her best to say how much she liked them and that they were beautiful. But she could not lie, and she could not disguise the truth from herself. She knew they were failures, and he read her disapproval in every perfunctory and unenthusiastic line of her letter. And she was right. He was firmly convinced of it as he read the poems over. Beauty and wonder had departed from him, and as he read the poems he caught himself puzzling as to what he had had in mind when he wrote them. His audacities of phrase struck him as grotesque, his felicities of expression were monstrosities, and everything was absurd, unreal, and impossible. He would have burned the “Sea Lyrics” on the spot, had his will been strong enough to set them aflame. There was the engine-room, but the exertion of carrying them to the furnace was not worth while. All his exertion was used in washing other persons’ clothes. He did not have any left for private affairs.

He resolved that when Sunday came he would pull himself together and answer Ruth’s letter. But Saturday afternoon, after work was finished and he had taken a bath, the desire to forget overpowered him. “I guess I’ll go down and see how Joe’s getting on,” was the way he put it to himself; and in the same moment he knew that he lied. But he did not have the energy to consider the lie. If he had had the energy, he would have refused to consider the lie, because he wanted to forget. He started for the village slowly and casually, increasing his pace in spite of himself as he neared the saloon.

“I thought you was on the water-wagon,” was Joe’s greeting.

Martin did not deign to offer excuses, but called for whiskey, filling his own glass brimming before he passed the bottle.

“Don’t take all night about it,” he said roughly.

The other was dawdling with the bottle, and Martin refused to wait for him, tossing the glass off in a gulp and refilling it.

“Now, I can wait for you,” he said grimly; “but hurry up.”

Joe hurried, and they drank together.

“The work did it, eh?” Joe queried.

Martin refused to discuss the matter.

“It’s fair hell, I know,” the other went on, “but I kind of hate to see you come off the wagon, Mart. Well, here’s how!”

Martin drank on silently, biting out his orders and invitations and awing the barkeeper, an effeminate country youngster with watery blue eyes and hair parted in the middle.

“It’s something scandalous the way they work us poor devils,” Joe was remarking. “If I didn’t bowl up, I’d break loose an’ burn down the shebang. My bowlin’ up is all that saves ’em, I can tell you that.”

But Martin made no answer. A few more drinks, and in his brain he felt the maggots of intoxication beginning to crawl. Ah, it was living, the first breath of life he had breathed in three weeks. His dreams came back to him. Fancy came out of the darkened room and lured him on, a thing of flaming brightness. His mirror of vision was silver-clear, a flashing, dazzling palimpsest of imagery. Wonder and beauty walked with him, hand in hand, and all power was his. He tried to tell it to Joe, but Joe had visions of his own, infallible schemes whereby he would escape the slavery of laundry-work and become himself the owner of a great steam laundry.

“I tell yeh, Mart, they won’t be no kids workin’ in my laundry — not on yer life. An’ they won’t be no workin’ a livin’ soul after six P.M. You hear me talk! They’ll be machinery enough an’ hands enough to do it all in decent workin’ hours, an’ Mart, s’help me, I’ll make yeh superintendent of the shebang — the whole of it, all of it. Now here’s the scheme. I get on the water-wagon an’ save my money for two years — save an’ then — ”

But Martin turned away, leaving him to tell it to the barkeeper, until that worthy was called away to furnish drinks to two farmers who, coming in, accepted Martin’s invitation. Martin dispensed royal largess, inviting everybody up, farm-hands, a stableman, and the gardener’s assistant from the hotel, the barkeeper, and the furtive hobo who slid in like a shadow and like a shadow hovered at the end of the bar.

CHAPTER XVIII

Monday morning, Joe groaned over the first truck load of clothes to the washer.

“I say,” he began.

“Don’t talk to me,” Martin snarled.

“I’m sorry, Joe,” he said at noon, when they knocked off for dinner.

Tears came into the other’s eyes.

“That’s all right, old man,” he said. “We’re in hell, an’ we can’t help ourselves. An’, you know, I kind of like you a whole lot. That’s what made it — hurt. I cottoned to you from the first.”

Martin shook his hand.

“Let’s quit,” Joe suggested. “Let’s chuck it, an’ go hoboin’. I ain’t never tried it, but it must be dead easy. An’ nothin’ to do. Just think of it, nothin’ to do. I was sick once, typhoid, in the hospital, an’ it was beautiful. I wish I’d get sick again.”

The week dragged on. The hotel was full, and extra “fancy starch” poured in upon them. They performed prodigies of valor. They fought late each night under the electric lights, bolted their meals, and even got in a half hour’s work before breakfast. Martin no longer took his cold baths. Every moment was drive, drive, drive, and Joe was the masterful shepherd of moments, herding them carefully, never losing one, counting them over like a miser counting gold, working on in a frenzy, toil-mad, a feverish machine, aided ably by that other machine that thought of itself as once having been one Martin Eden, a man.

But it was only at rare moments that Martin was able to think. The house of thought was closed, its windows boarded up, and he was its shadowy caretaker. He was a shadow. Joe was right. They were both shadows, and this was the unending limbo of toil. Or was it a dream? Sometimes, in the steaming, sizzling heat, as he swung the heavy irons back and forth over the white garments, it came to him that it was a dream. In a short while, or maybe after a thousand years or so, he would awake, in his little room with the ink-stained table, and take up his writing where he had left off the day before. Or maybe that was a dream, too, and the awakening would be the changing of the watches, when he would drop down out of his bunk in the lurching forecastle and go up on deck, under the tropic stars, and take the wheel and feel the cool tradewind blowing through his flesh.

Came Saturday and its hollow victory at three o'clock.

"Guess I'll go down an' get a glass of beer," Joe said, in the queer, monotonous tones that marked his week-end collapse.

Martin seemed suddenly to wake up. He opened the kit bag and oiled his wheel, putting graphite on the chain and adjusting the bearings. Joe was halfway down to the saloon when Martin passed by, bending low over the handle-bars, his legs driving the ninety-six gear with rhythmic strength, his face set for seventy miles of road and grade and dust. He slept in Oakland that night, and on Sunday covered the seventy miles back. And on Monday morning, weary, he began the new week's work, but he had kept sober.

A fifth week passed, and a sixth, during which he lived and toiled as a machine, with just a spark of something more in him, just a glimmering bit of soul, that compelled him, at each week-end, to scorch off the hundred and forty miles. But this was not rest. It was super-machinelike, and it helped to crush out the glimmering bit of soul that was all that was left him from former life. At the end of the seventh week, without intending it, too weak to resist, he drifted down to the village with Joe and drowned life and found life until Monday morning.

Again, at the week-ends, he ground out the one hundred and forty miles, obliterating the numbness of too great exertion by the numbness of still greater exertion. At the end of three months he went down a third time to the village with Joe. He forgot, and lived again, and, living, he saw, in clear illumination, the beast he was making of himself — not by the drink, but by the work. The drink was an effect, not a cause. It followed inevitably upon the work, as the night follows upon the day. Not by becoming a toil-beast could he win to the heights, was the message the whiskey whispered to him, and he nodded approbation. The whiskey was wise. It told secrets on itself.

He called for paper and pencil, and for drinks all around, and while they drank his very good health, he clung to the bar and scribbled.

"A telegram, Joe," he said. "Read it."

Joe read it with a drunken, quizzical leer. But what he read seemed to sober him. He looked at the other reproachfully, tears oozing into his eyes and down his cheeks.

"You ain't goin' back on me, Mart?" he queried hopelessly.

Martin nodded, and called one of the loungers to him to take the message to the telegraph office.

"Hold on," Joe muttered thickly. "Lemme think."

He held on to the bar, his legs wobbling under him, Martin's arm around him and supporting him, while he thought.

"Make that two laundrymen," he said abruptly. "Here, lemme fix it."

"What are you quitting for?" Martin demanded.

"Same reason as you."

"But I'm going to sea. You can't do that."

"Nope," was the answer, "but I can hobo all right, all right."

Martin looked at him searchingly for a moment, then cried:-

"By God, I think you're right! Better a hobo than a beast of toil. Why, man, you'll live. And that's more than you ever did before."

"I was in hospital, once," Joe corrected. "It was beautiful. Typhoid — did I tell you?"

While Martin changed the telegram to "two laundrymen," Joe went on:-

"I never wanted to drink when I was in hospital. Funny, ain't it? But when I've ben workin' like a slave all week, I just got to bowl up. Ever noticed that cooks drink like hell? — an' bakers, too? It's the work. They've sure got to. Here, lemme pay half of that telegram."

"I'll shake you for it," Martin offered.

"Come on, everybody drink," Joe called, as they rattled the dice and rolled them out on the damp bar.

Monday morning Joe was wild with anticipation. He did not mind his aching head, nor did he take interest in his work. Whole herds of moments stole away and were lost while their careless shepherd gazed out of the window at the sunshine and the trees.

"Just look at it!" he cried. "An' it's all mine! It's free. I can lie down under them trees an' sleep for a thousan' years if I want to. Aw, come on, Mart, let's chuck it. What's the good of waitin' another moment. That's the land of nothin' to do out there, an' I got a ticket for it — an' it ain't no return ticket, b'gosh!"

A few minutes later, filling the truck with soiled clothes for the washer, Joe spied the hotel manager's shirt. He knew its mark, and with a sudden glorious consciousness of freedom he threw it on the floor and stamped on it.

"I wish you was in it, you pig-headed Dutchman!" he shouted. "In it, an' right there where I've got you! Take that! an' that! an' that! damn you! Hold me back, somebody! Hold me back!"

Martin laughed and held him to his work. On Tuesday night the new laundrymen arrived, and the rest of the week was spent breaking them into the routine. Joe sat around and explained his system, but he did no more work.

"Not a tap," he announced. "Not a tap. They can fire me if they want to, but if they do, I'll quit. No more work in mine, thank you kindly. Me for the freight cars an' the shade under the trees. Go to it, you slaves! That's right. Slave an' sweat! Slave an' sweat! An' when you're dead, you'll rot the same as me, an' what's it matter how you live? — eh? Tell me that — what's it matter in the long run?"

On Saturday they drew their pay and came to the parting of the ways.

"They ain't no use in me askin' you to change your mind an' hit the road with me?" Joe asked hopelessly:

Martin shook his head. He was standing by his wheel, ready to start. They shook hands, and Joe held on to his for a moment, as he said:-

"I'm goin' to see you again, Mart, before you an' me die. That's straight dope. I feel it in my bones. Good-by, Mart, an' be good. I like you like hell, you know."

He stood, a forlorn figure, in the middle of the road, watching until Martin turned a bend and was gone from sight.

"He's a good Indian, that boy," he muttered. "A good Indian."

Then he plodded down the road himself, to the water tank, where half a dozen empties lay on a side-track waiting for the up freight.

CHAPTER XIX

Ruth and her family were home again, and Martin, returned to Oakland, saw much of her. Having gained her degree, she was doing no more studying; and he, having worked all vitality out of his mind and body, was doing no writing. This gave them time for each other that they had never had before, and their intimacy ripened fast.

At first, Martin had done nothing but rest. He had slept a great deal, and spent long hours musing and thinking and doing nothing. He was like one recovering from some terrible bout if hardship. The first signs of reawakening came when he discovered more than languid interest in the daily paper. Then he began to read again — light novels, and poetry; and after several days more he was head over heels in his long-neglected Fiske. His splendid body and health made new vitality, and he possessed all the resiliency and rebound of youth.

Ruth showed her disappointment plainly when he announced that he was going to sea for another voyage as soon as he was well rested.

"Why do you want to do that?" she asked.

"Money," was the answer. "I'll have to lay in a supply for my next attack on the editors. Money is the sinews of war, in my case — money and patience."

"But if all you wanted was money, why didn't you stay in the laundry?"

"Because the laundry was making a beast of me. Too much work of that sort drives to drink."

She stared at him with horror in her eyes.

"Do you mean — ?" she quavered.

It would have been easy for him to get out of it; but his natural impulse was for frankness, and he remembered his old resolve to be frank, no matter what happened.

"Yes," he answered. "Just that. Several times."

She shivered and drew away from him.

"No man that I have ever known did that — ever did that."

"Then they never worked in the laundry at Shelly Hot Springs," he laughed bitterly. "Toil is a good thing. It is necessary for human health, so all the preachers say, and Heaven knows I've never been afraid of it. But there is such a thing as too much of a good thing, and the laundry up there is one of them. And that's why I'm going to sea one more voyage. It will be my last, I think, for when I come back, I shall break into the magazines. I am certain of it."

She was silent, unsympathetic, and he watched her moodily, realizing how impossible it was for her to understand what he had been through.

"Some day I shall write it up — 'The Degradation of Toil' or the 'Psychology of Drink in the Working-class,' or something like that for a title."

Never, since the first meeting, had they seemed so far apart as that day. His confession, told in frankness, with the spirit of revolt behind, had repelled her. But she was more shocked by the repulsion itself than by the cause of it. It pointed out to her how near she had drawn to him, and once accepted, it paved the way for greater intimacy. Pity, too, was aroused, and innocent, idealistic thoughts of reform. She would save this raw young man who had come so far. She would save him from the curse of his early environment, and she would save him from himself in spite of himself. And all this affected her as a very noble state of consciousness; nor did she dream that behind it and underlying it were the jealousy and desire of love.

They rode on their wheels much in the delightful fall weather, and out in the hills they read poetry aloud, now one and now the other, noble, uplifting poetry that turned one's thoughts to higher things. Renunciation, sacrifice, patience, industry, and high endeavor were the principles she thus indirectly preached — such abstractions being objectified in her mind by her father, and Mr. Butler, and by Andrew Carnegie, who, from a poor immigrant boy had arisen to be the book-giver of the world. All of which was appreciated and enjoyed by Martin. He followed her mental processes more clearly now, and her soul was no longer the sealed wonder it had been. He was on terms of intellectual equality with her. But the points of disagreement did not affect his love. His love was more ardent than ever, for he loved her for what she was, and even her physical frailty was an added charm in his eyes. He read of sickly Elizabeth Barrett, who for years had not placed her feet upon the ground, until that day of flame when she eloped with Browning and stood upright, upon the earth, under the open sky; and what Browning had done for her, Martin decided he could do for Ruth. But first, she must love him. The rest would be easy. He would give her strength and health. And he caught glimpses of their life, in the years to come, wherein, against a background of work and comfort and general well-being, he saw himself and Ruth reading and discussing poetry, she propped amid a multitude of cushions on the ground while she read aloud to him. This was the key to the life they would live. And always he saw that particular picture. Sometimes it was she who leaned against him while he read, one arm about her, her head upon his shoulder. Sometimes they pored together over the printed pages of beauty. Then, too, she loved nature, and with generous imagination he changed the scene of their reading — sometimes they read in closed-in valleys with precipitous walls, or in high mountain meadows, and, again, down by the gray sand-dunes with a wreath of billows at their feet, or afar on some volcanic tropic isle where waterfalls descended and became mist, reaching the sea in vapor veils that swayed and shivered to every vagrant wisp of wind. But always, in the foreground, lords of beauty and eternally reading and sharing, lay he and Ruth, and always in the background that was beyond the background of nature, dim and hazy, were work and success and money earned that made them free of the world and all its treasures.

"I should recommend my little girl to be careful," her mother warned her one day.

"I know what you mean. But it is impossible. He if; not — "

Ruth was blushing, but it was the blush of maidenhood called upon for the first time to discuss the sacred things of life with a mother held equally sacred.

"Your kind." Her mother finished the sentence for her.

Ruth nodded.

"I did not want to say it, but he is not. He is rough, brutal, strong — too strong. He has not — "

She hesitated and could not go on. It was a new experience, talking over such matters with her mother. And again her mother completed her thought for her.

"He has not lived a clean life, is what you wanted to say."

Again Ruth nodded, and again a blush mantled her face.

"It is just that," she said. "It has not been his fault, but he has played much with — "

"With pitch?"

"Yes, with pitch. And he frightens me. Sometimes I am positively in terror of him, when he talks in that free and easy way of the things he has done — as if they did not matter. They do matter, don't they?"

They sat with their arms twined around each other, and in the pause her mother patted her hand and waited for her to go on.

"But I am interested in him dreadfully," she continued. "In a way he is my protégé. Then, too, he is my first boy friend — but not exactly friend; rather protégé and friend combined. Sometimes, too, when he frightens me, it seems that he is a bulldog I have taken for a plaything, like some of the 'frat' girls, and he is tugging hard, and showing his teeth, and threatening to break loose."

Again her mother waited.

"He interests me, I suppose, like the bulldog. And there is much good in him, too; but there is much in him that I would not like in — in the other way. You see, I have been thinking. He swears, he smokes, he drinks, he has fought with his fists (he has told me so, and he likes it; he says so). He is all that a man should not be — a man I would want for my — " her voice sank very low — "husband. Then he is too strong. My prince must be tall, and slender, and dark — a graceful, bewitching prince. No, there is no danger of my failing in love with Martin Eden. It would be the worst fate that could befall me."

"But it is not that that I spoke about," her mother equivocated. "Have you thought about him? He is so ineligible in every way, you know, and suppose he should come to love you?"

"But he does — already," she cried.

"It was to be expected," Mrs. Morse said gently. "How could it be otherwise with any one who knew you?"

"Olney hates me!" she exclaimed passionately. "And I hate Olney. I feel always like a cat when he is around. I feel that I must be nasty to him, and even when I don't happen to feel that way, why, he's nasty to me, anyway. But I am happy with Martin Eden. No one ever loved me before — no man, I mean, in that way. And it is sweet to be loved — that way. You know what I mean, mother dear. It is sweet to feel that you are really and truly a woman." She buried her face in her mother's lap, sobbing. "You think I am dreadful, I know, but I am honest, and I tell you just how I feel."

Mrs. Morse was strangely sad and happy. Her child-daughter, who was a bachelor of arts, was gone; but in her place was a woman-daughter. The experiment had succeeded. The strange void in Ruth's nature had been filled, and filled without danger or penalty. This rough sailor-fellow had been the instrument, and, though Ruth did not love him, he had made her conscious of her womanhood.

"His hand trembles," Ruth was confessing, her face, for shame's sake, still buried. "It is most amusing and ridiculous, but I feel sorry for him, too. And when his hands are too trembly, and his eyes too shiny, why, I lecture him about his life and the wrong way he is going about it to mend it. But he worships me, I know. His eyes and his hands do not lie. And it makes me feel grown-up, the thought of it, the very thought of it; and I feel that I am possessed of something that is by rights my own — that makes me like the other girls — and — and young women. And, then, too, I knew that I was not like them before, and I knew that it worried you. You thought you did not let me know that dear worry of yours, but I did, and I wanted to — 'to make good,' as Martin Eden says."

It was a holy hour for mother and daughter, and their eyes were wet as they talked on in the twilight, Ruth all white innocence and frankness, her mother sympathetic, receptive, yet calmly explaining and guiding.

"He is four years younger than you," she said. "He has no place in the world. He has neither position nor salary. He is impractical. Loving you, he should, in the name of common sense, be doing something that would give him the right to marry, instead of paltering around with those stories of his and with childish dreams. Martin Eden, I am afraid, will never grow up. He does not take to responsibility and a man's work in the world like your father did, or like all our friends, Mr. Butler for one. Martin Eden, I am afraid, will never be a money-earner. And this world is so ordered that money is necessary to happiness — oh, no, not these swollen fortunes, but enough of money to permit of common comfort and decency. He — he has never spoken?"

"He has not breathed a word. He has not attempted to; but if he did, I would not let him, because, you see, I do not love him."

"I am glad of that. I should not care to see my daughter, my one daughter, who is so clean and pure, love a man like him. There are noble men in the world who are clean and true and manly. Wait for them. You will find one some day, and you will love him and be loved by him, and you will be happy with him as your father and I have been happy with each other. And there is one thing you must always carry in mind — "

"Yes, mother."

Mrs. Morse's voice was low and sweet as she said, "And that is the children."

"I — have thought about them," Ruth confessed, remembering the wanton thoughts that had vexed her in the past, her face again red with maiden shame that she should be telling such things.

"And it is that, the children, that makes Mr. Eden impossible," Mrs. Morse went on incisively. "Their heritage must be clean, and he is, I am afraid, not clean. Your father has told me of sailors' lives, and — and you understand."

Ruth pressed her mother's hand in assent, feeling that she really did understand, though her conception was of something vague, remote, and terrible that was beyond the scope of imagination.

"You know I do nothing without telling you," she began. " — Only, sometimes you must ask me, like this time. I wanted to tell you, but I did not know how. It is false modesty, I know it is that, but you can make it easy for me. Sometimes, like this time, you must ask me, you must give me a chance."

"Why, mother, you are a woman, too!" she cried exultantly, as they stood up, catching her mother's hands and standing erect, facing her in the twilight, conscious of a strangely sweet equality between them. "I should never have thought of you in that way if we had not had this talk. I had to learn that I was a woman to know that you were one, too."

"We are women together," her mother said, drawing her to her and kissing her. "We are women together," she repeated, as they went out of the room, their arms around each other's waists, their hearts swelling with a new sense of companionship.

"Our little girl has become a woman," Mrs. Morse said proudly to her husband an hour later.

"That means," he said, after a long look at his wife, "that means she is in love."

"No, but that she is loved," was the smiling rejoinder. "The experiment has succeeded. She is awakened at last."

"Then we'll have to get rid of him." Mr. Morse spoke briskly, in matter-of-fact, businesslike tones.

But his wife shook her head. "It will not be necessary. Ruth says he is going to sea in a few days. When he comes back, she will not be here. We will send her to Aunt Clara's. And, besides, a year in the East, with the change in climate, people, ideas, and everything, is just the thing she needs.”

CHAPTER XX

The desire to write was stirring in Martin once more. Stories and poems were springing into spontaneous creation in his brain, and he made notes of them against the future time when he would give them expression. But he did not write. This was his little vacation; he had resolved to devote it to rest and love, and in both matters he prospered. He was soon spilling over with vitality, and each day he saw Ruth, at the moment of meeting, she experienced the old shock of his strength and health.

"Be careful," her mother warned her once again. "I am afraid you are seeing too much of Martin Eden."

But Ruth laughed from security. She was sure of herself, and in a few days he would be off to sea. Then, by the time he returned, she would be away on her visit East. There was a magic, however, in the strength and health of Martin. He, too, had been told of her contemplated Eastern trip, and he felt the need for haste. Yet he did not know how to make love to a girl like Ruth. Then, too, he was handicapped by the possession of a great fund of experience with girls and women who had been absolutely different from her. They had known about love and life and flirtation, while she knew nothing about such things. Her prodigious innocence appalled him, freezing on his lips all ardors of speech, and convincing him, in spite of himself, of his own unworthiness. Also he was handicapped in another way. He had himself never been in love before. He had liked women in that turgid past of his, and been fascinated by some of them, but he had not known what it was to love them. He had whistled in a masterful, careless way, and they had come to him. They had been diversions, incidents, part of the game men play, but a small part at most. And now, and for the first time, he was a suppliant, tender and timid and doubting. He did not know the way of love, nor its speech, while he was frightened at his loved one's clear innocence.

In the course of getting acquainted with a varied world, whirling on through the ever changing phases of it, he had learned a rule of conduct which was to the effect that when one played a strange game, he should let the other fellow play first. This had stood him in good stead a thousand times and trained him as an observer as well. He knew how to watch the thing that was strange, and to wait for a weakness, for a place of entrance, to divulge itself. It was like sparring for an opening in fist-fighting. And when such an opening came, he knew by long experience to play for it and to play hard.

So he waited with Ruth and watched, desiring to speak his love but not daring. He was afraid of shocking her, and he was not sure of himself. Had he but known it, he was following the right course with her. Love came into the world before articulate speech, and in its own early youth it had learned ways and means that it had never forgotten. It was in this old, primitive way that Martin wooed Ruth. He did not know he was doing it at first, though later he divined it. The touch of his hand on hers was vastly more potent than any word he could utter, the impact of his strength on her imagination was more alluring than the printed poems and spoken passions of a thousand generations of lovers. Whatever his tongue could express would have appealed, in part, to her judgment; but the touch of hand, the fleeting contact, made its way directly to her instinct. Her judgment was as young as she, but her instincts were as old as the race and older. They had been young when love was young, and they were wiser than convention and opinion and all the new-born things. So her judgment did not act. There was no call upon it, and she did not realize the strength of the appeal Martin made from moment to moment to her love-nature. That he loved her, on the other hand, was as clear as day, and she consciously delighted in beholding his love-manifestations — the glowing eyes with their tender lights, the trembling hands, and the never failing swarthy flush that flooded darkly under his sunburn. She even went farther, in a timid way inciting him, but doing it so delicately that he never suspected, and doing it half-consciously, so that she scarcely suspected herself. She thrilled with these proofs of her power that proclaimed her a woman, and she took an Eve-like delight in tormenting him and playing upon him.

Tongue-tied by inexperience and by excess of ardor, wooing unwittingly and awkwardly, Martin continued his approach by contact. The touch of his hand was pleasant to her, and something deliciously more than pleasant. Martin did not know it, but he did know that it was not distasteful to her. Not that they touched hands often, save at meeting and parting; but that in handling the bicycles, in strapping on the books of verse they carried into the hills, and in conning the pages of books side by side, there were opportunities for hand to stray against hand. And there were opportunities, too, for her hair to brush his cheek, and for shoulder to touch shoulder, as they leaned together over the beauty of the books. She smiled to herself at vagrant impulses which arose from nowhere and suggested that she rumple his hair; while he desired greatly, when they tired of reading, to rest his head in her lap and dream with closed eyes about the future that was to be theirs. On Sunday picnics at Shellmound Park and Schuetzen Park, in the past, he had rested his head on many laps, and, usually, he had slept soundly and selfishly while the girls shaded his face from the sun and looked down and loved him and wondered at his lordly carelessness of their love. To rest his head in a girl's lap had been the easiest thing in the world until now, and now he found Ruth's lap inaccessible and impossible. Yet it was right here, in his reticence, that the strength of his wooing lay. It was because of this reticence that he never alarmed her. Herself fastidious and timid, she never awakened to the perilous trend of their intercourse. Subtly and unaware she grew toward him and closer to him, while he, sensing the growing closeness, longed to dare but was afraid.

Once he dared, one afternoon, when he found her in the darkened living room with a blinding headache.

"Nothing can do it any good," she had answered his inquiries. "And besides, I don't take headache powders. Doctor Hall won't permit me."

"I can cure it, I think, and without drugs," was Martin's answer. "I am not sure, of course, but I'd like to try. It's simply massage. I learned the trick first from the Japanese. They are a race of masseurs, you know. Then I learned it all over again with variations from the Hawaiians. They call it *lomi-lomi*. It can accomplish most of the things drugs accomplish and a few things that drugs can't."

Scarcely had his hands touched her head when she sighed deeply.

"That is so good," she said.

She spoke once again, half an hour later, when she asked, "Aren't you tired?"

The question was perfunctory, and she knew what the answer would be. Then she lost herself in drowsy contemplation of the soothing balm of his strength: Life poured from the ends of his fingers, driving the pain before it, or so it seemed to her, until with the easement of pain, she fell asleep and he stole away.

She called him up by telephone that evening to thank him.

"I slept until dinner," she said. "You cured me completely, Mr. Eden, and I don't know how to thank you."

He was warm, and bungling of speech, and very happy, as he replied to her, and there was dancing in his mind, throughout the telephone conversation, the memory of Browning and of sickly Elizabeth Barrett. What had been done could be done again, and he, Martin Eden, could do it and would do it for Ruth Morse. He went back to his room and to the volume of Spencer's "Sociology" lying open on the bed. But he could not read. Love tormented him and overrode his will, so that, despite all determination, he found himself at the little ink-stained table. The sonnet he composed that night was the first of a love-cycle of fifty sonnets which was completed within two months. He had the "Love-sonnets from the Portuguese" in mind as he wrote, and he wrote under the best conditions for great work, at a climacteric of living, in the throes of his own sweet love-madness.

The many hours he was not with Ruth he devoted to the "Love-cycle," to reading at home, or to the public reading-rooms, where he got more closely in touch with the magazines of the day and the nature of their policy and content. The hours he spent with Ruth were maddening alike in promise and in inconclusiveness. It was a week after he cured her headache that a moonlight sail on Lake Merritt was proposed by Norman and seconded by Arthur and Olney. Martin was the only one capable of handling a boat, and he was pressed into service. Ruth sat near him in the stern, while the three young fellows lounged amidships, deep in a wordy wrangle over "frat" affairs.

The moon had not yet risen, and Ruth, gazing into the starry vault of the sky and exchanging no speech with Martin, experienced a sudden feeling of loneliness. She glanced at him. A puff of wind was heeling the boat over till the deck was awash, and he, one hand on tiller and the other on main-sheet, was luffing slightly, at the same time peering ahead to make out the near-lying north shore. He was unaware of her gaze, and she watched him intently, speculating fancifully about the strange warp of soul that led him, a young man with signal powers, to fritter away his time on the writing of stories and poems foredoomed to mediocrity and failure.

Her eyes wandered along the strong throat, dimly seen in the starlight, and over the firm-poised head, and the old desire to lay her hands upon his neck came back to her. The strength she abhorred attracted her. Her feeling of loneliness became more pronounced, and she felt tired. Her position on the heeling boat irked her, and she remembered the headache he had cured and the soothing rest that resided in him. He was sitting beside her, quite beside her, and the boat seemed to tilt her toward him. Then arose in her the impulse to lean against him, to rest herself against his strength — a vague, half-formed impulse, which, even as she considered it, mastered her and made her lean toward him. Or was it the heeling of the boat? She did not know. She never knew. She knew only that she was leaning against him and that the easement and soothing rest were very good. Perhaps it had been the boat's fault, but she made no effort to retrieve it. She leaned lightly against his shoulder, but she leaned, and she continued to lean when he shifted his position to make it more comfortable for her.

It was a madness, but she refused to consider the madness. She was no longer herself but a woman, with a woman's clinging need; and though she leaned ever so lightly, the need seemed satisfied. She was no longer tired. Martin did not speak. Had he, the spell would have been broken. But his reticence of love prolonged it. He was dazed and dizzy. He could not understand what was happening. It was too wonderful to be anything but a delirium. He conquered a mad desire to let go sheet and tiller and to clasp her in his arms. His intuition told him it was the wrong thing to do, and he was glad that sheet and tiller kept his hands occupied and fended off temptation. But he luffed the boat less delicately, spilling the wind shamelessly from the sail so as to prolong the tack to the north shore. The shore would compel him to go about, and the contact would be broken. He sailed with skill, stopping way on the boat without exciting the notice of the wranglers, and mentally forgiving his hardest voyages in that they had made this marvellous night possible, giving him mastery over sea and boat and wind so that he could sail with her beside him, her dear weight against him on his shoulder.

When the first light of the rising moon touched the sail, illuminating the boat with pearly radiance, Ruth moved away from him. And, even as she moved, she felt him move away. The impulse to avoid detection was mutual. The episode was tacitly and secretly intimate. She sat apart from him with burning cheeks, while the full force of it came home to her. She had been guilty of something she would not have her brothers see, nor Olney see. Why had she done it? She had never done anything like it in her life, and yet she had been moonlight-sailing with young men before. She had never desired to do anything like it. She was overcome with shame and with the mystery of her own burgeoning womanhood. She stole a glance at Martin, who was busy putting the boat about on the other tack, and she could have hated him for having made her do an immodest and shameful thing. And he, of all men! Perhaps her mother was right, and she was seeing too much of him. It would never happen again, she resolved, and she would see less of him in the future. She entertained a wild idea of explaining to him the first time they were alone together, of lying to him, of mentioning casually the attack of faintness that had overpowered her just before the moon came up. Then she remembered how they had drawn mutually away before the revealing moon, and she knew he would know it for a lie.

In the days that swiftly followed she was no longer herself but a strange, puzzling creature, wilful over judgment and scornful of self-analysis, refusing to peer into the future or to think about herself and whither she was drifting. She was in a fever of tingling mystery, alternately frightened and charmed, and in constant bewilderment. She had one idea firmly fixed, however, which insured her security. She would not let Martin speak his love. As long as she did this, all would be well. In a few days he would be off to sea. And even if he did speak, all would be well. It could not be otherwise, for she did not love him. Of course, it would be a painful half hour for him, and an embarrassing half hour for her, because it would be her first proposal. She thrilled deliciously at the thought. She was really a woman, with a man ripe to ask for her in marriage. It was a lure to all that was fundamental in her sex. The fabric of her life, of all that constituted her, quivered and grew tremulous. The thought fluttered in her mind like a flame-attracted moth. She went so far as to imagine Martin proposing, herself putting the words into his mouth; and she rehearsed her refusal, tempering it with kindness and exhorting him to true and noble manhood. And especially he must stop smoking cigarettes. She would make a point of that. But no, she must not let him speak at all. She could stop him, and she had told her mother that she would. All flushed and burning, she regretfully dismissed the conjured situation. Her first proposal would have to be deferred to a more propitious time and a more eligible suitor.

CHAPTER XXI

Came a beautiful fall day, warm and languid, palpitant with the hush of the changing season, a California Indian summer day, with hazy sun and wandering wisps of breeze that did not stir the slumber of the air. Filmy purple mists, that were not vapors but fabrics woven of color, hid in the recesses of the hills. San Francisco lay like a blur of smoke upon her heights. The intervening bay was a dull sheen of molten metal, whereon sailing craft lay motionless or drifted with the lazy tide. Far Tamalpais, barely seen in the silver haze, bulked hugely by the Golden Gate, the latter a pale gold pathway under the westering sun. Beyond, the Pacific, dim and vast, was raising on its sky-line tumbled cloud-masses that swept landward, giving warning of the first blustering breath of winter.

The erasure of summer was at hand. Yet summer lingered, fading and fainting among her hills, deepening the purple of her valleys, spinning a shroud of haze from waning powers and sated raptures, dying with the calm content of having lived and lived well. And among the hills, on their favorite knoll, Martin and Ruth sat side by side, their heads bent over the same pages, he reading aloud from the love-sonnets of the woman who had loved Browning as it is given to few men to be loved.

But the reading languished. The spell of passing beauty all about them was too strong. The golden year was dying as it had lived, a beautiful and unrepentant voluptuary, and reminiscent rapture and content freighted heavily the air. It entered into them, dreamy and languorous, weakening the fibres of resolution, suffusing the face of morality, or of judgment, with haze and purple mist. Martin felt tender and melting, and from time to time warm glows passed over him. His head was very near to hers, and when wandering phantoms of breeze stirred her hair so that it touched his face, the printed pages swam before his eyes.

“I don’t believe you know a word of what you are reading,” she said once when he had lost his place.

He looked at her with burning eyes, and was on the verge of becoming awkward, when a retort came to his lips.

“I don’t believe you know either. What was the last sonnet about?”

“I don’t know,” she laughed frankly. “I’ve already forgotten. Don’t let us read any more. The day is too beautiful.”

“It will be our last in the hills for some time,” he announced gravely. “There’s a storm gathering out there on the sea-rim.”

The book slipped from his hands to the ground, and they sat idly and silently, gazing out over the dreamy bay with eyes that dreamed and did not see. Ruth glanced sidewise at his neck. She did not lean toward him. She was drawn by some force outside of herself and stronger than gravitation, strong as destiny. It was only an inch to lean, and it was accomplished without volition on her part. Her shoulder touched his as lightly as a butterfly touches a flower, and just as lightly was the counter-pressure. She felt his shoulder press hers, and a tremor run through him. Then was the time for her to draw back. But she had become an automaton. Her actions had passed beyond the control of her will — she never thought of control or will in the delicious madness that was upon her. His arm began to steal behind her and around her. She waited its slow progress in a torment of delight. She waited, she knew not for what, panting, with dry, burning lips, a leaping pulse, and a fever of expectancy in all her blood. The girdling arm lifted higher and drew her toward him, drew her slowly and caressingly. She could wait no longer. With a tired sigh, and with an impulsive movement all her own, unpremeditated, spasmodic, she rested her head upon his breast. His head bent over swiftly, and, as his lips approached, hers flew to meet them.

This must be love, she thought, in the one rational moment that was vouchsafed her. If it was not love, it was too shameful. It could be nothing else than love. She loved the man whose arms were around her and whose lips were pressed to hers. She pressed more, tightly to him, with a snuggling movement of her body. And a moment later, tearing herself half out of his embrace, suddenly and exultantly she reached up and placed both hands upon Martin Eden’s sunburnt neck. So exquisite was the pang of love and desire fulfilled that she uttered a low moan, relaxed her hands, and lay half-swooning in his arms.

Not a word had been spoken, and not a word was spoken for a long time. Twice he bent and kissed her, and each time her lips met his shyly and her body made its happy, nestling movement. She clung to him, unable to release herself, and he sat, half supporting her in his arms, as he gazed with unseeing eyes at the blur of the great city across the bay. For once there were no visions in his brain. Only colors and lights and glows pulsed there, warm as the day and warm as his love. He bent over her. She was speaking.

"When did you love me?" she whispered.

"From the first, the very first, the first moment I laid eye on you. I was mad for love of you then, and in all the time that has passed since then I have only grown the madder. I am maddest, now, dear. I am almost a lunatic, my head is so turned with joy."

"I am glad I am a woman, Martin — dear," she said, after a long sigh.

He crushed her in his arms again and again, and then asked:-

"And you? When did you first know?"

"Oh, I knew it all the time, almost, from the first."

"And I have been as blind as a bat!" he cried, a ring of vexation in his voice. "I never dreamed it until just how, when I — when I kissed you."

"I didn't mean that." She drew herself partly away and looked at him. "I meant I knew you loved almost from the first."

"And you?" he demanded.

"It came to me suddenly." She was speaking very slowly, her eyes warm and fluttery and melting, a soft flush on her cheeks that did not go away. "I never knew until just now when — you put your arms around me. And I never expected to marry you, Martin, not until just now. How did you make me love you?"

"I don't know," he laughed, "unless just by loving you, for I loved you hard enough to melt the heart of a stone, much less the heart of the living, breathing woman you are."

"This is so different from what I thought love would be," she announced irrelevantly.

"What did you think it would be like?"

"I didn't think it would be like this." She was looking into his eyes at the moment, but her own dropped as she continued, "You see, I didn't know what this was like."

He offered to draw her toward him again, but it was no more than a tentative muscular movement of the girdling arm, for he feared that he might be greedy. Then he felt her body yielding, and once again she was close in his arms and lips were pressed on lips.

"What will my people say?" she queried, with sudden apprehension, in one of the pauses.

"I don't know. We can find out very easily any time we are so minded."

"But if mamma objects? I am sure I am afraid to tell her."

"Let me tell her," he volunteered valiantly. "I think your mother does not like me, but I can win her around. A fellow who can win you can win anything. And if we don't — "

"Yes?"

"Why, we'll have each other. But there's no danger not winning your mother to our marriage. She loves you too well."

"I should not like to break her heart," Ruth said pensively.

He felt like assuring her that mothers' hearts were not so easily broken, but instead he said, "And love is the greatest thing in the world."

"Do you know, Martin, you sometimes frighten me. I am frightened now, when I think of you and of what you have been. You must be very, very good to me. Remember, after all, that I am only a child. I never loved before."

"Nor I. We are both children together. And we are fortunate above most, for we have found our first love in each other."

"But that is impossible!" she cried, withdrawing herself from his arms with a swift, passionate movement. "Impossible for you. You have been a sailor, and sailors, I have heard, are — are — "

Her voice faltered and died away.

"Are addicted to having a wife in every port?" he suggested. "Is that what you mean?"

"Yes," she answered in a low voice.

"But that is not love." He spoke authoritatively. "I have been in many ports, but I never knew a passing touch of love until I saw you that first night. Do you know, when I said good night and went away, I was almost arrested."

"Arrested?"

"Yes. The policeman thought I was drunk; and I was, too — with love for you."

"But you said we were children, and I said it was impossible, for you, and we have strayed away from the point."

"I said that I never loved anybody but you," he replied. "You are my first, my very first."

"And yet you have been a sailor," she objected.

"But that doesn't prevent me from loving you the first."

"And there have been women — other women — oh!"

And to Martin Eden's supreme surprise, she burst into a storm of tears that took more kisses than one and many caresses to drive away. And all the while there was running through his head Kipling's line: "*And the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under their skins*." It was true, he decided; though the novels he had read had led him to believe otherwise. His idea, for which the novels were responsible, had been that only formal proposals obtained in the upper classes. It was all right enough, down whence he had come, for youths and maidens to win each other by contact; but for the exalted personages up above on the heights to make love in similar fashion had seemed unthinkable. Yet the novels were wrong. Here was a proof of it. The same pressures and caresses, unaccompanied by speech, that were efficacious with the girls of the working-class, were equally efficacious with the girls above the working-class. They were all of the same flesh, after all, sisters under their skins; and he might have known as much himself had he remembered his Spencer. As he held Ruth in his arms and soothed her, he took great consolation in the thought that the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady were pretty much alike under their skins. It brought Ruth closer to him, made her possible. Her dear flesh was as anybody's flesh, as his flesh. There was no bar to their marriage. Class difference was the only difference, and class was extrinsic. It could be shaken off. A slave, he had read, had risen to the Roman purple. That being so, then he could rise to Ruth. Under her purity, and saintliness, and culture, and ethereal beauty of soul, she was, in things fundamentally human, just like Lizzie Connolly and all Lizzie Connollys. All that was possible of them was possible of her. She could love, and hate, maybe have hysterics; and she could certainly be jealous, as she was jealous now, uttering her last sobs in his arms.

"Besides, I am older than you," she remarked suddenly, opening her eyes and looking up at him, "three years older."

"Hush, you are only a child, and I am forty years older than you, in experience," was his answer.

In truth, they were children together, so far as love was concerned, and they were as naive and immature in the expression of their love as a pair of children, and this despite the fact that she was crammed with a university education and that his head was full of scientific philosophy and the hard facts of life.

They sat on through the passing glory of the day, talking as lovers are prone to talk, marvelling at the wonder of love and at destiny that had flung them so strangely together, and dogmatically believing that they loved to a degree never attained by lovers before. And they returned insistently, again and again, to a rehearsal of their first impressions of each other and to hopeless attempts to analyze just precisely what they felt for each other and how much there was of it.

The cloud-masses on the western horizon received the descending sun, and the circle of the sky turned to rose, while the zenith glowed with the same warm color. The rosy light was all about them, flooding over them, as she sang, “Good-by, Sweet Day.” She sang softly, leaning in the cradle of his arm, her hands in his, their hearts in each other’s hands.

CHAPTER XXII

Mrs. Morse did not require a mother's intuition to read the advertisement in Ruth's face when she returned home. The flush that would not leave the cheeks told the simple story, and more eloquently did the eyes, large and bright, reflecting an unmistakable inward glory.

"What has happened?" Mrs. Morse asked, having bided her time till Ruth had gone to bed.

"You know?" Ruth queried, with trembling lips.

For reply, her mother's arm went around her, and a hand was softly caressing her hair.

"He did not speak," she blurted out. "I did not intend that it should happen, and I would never have let him speak — only he didn't speak."

"But if he did not speak, then nothing could have happened, could it?"

"But it did, just the same."

"In the name of goodness, child, what are you babbling about?" Mrs. Morse was bewildered. "I don't think I know what happened, after all. What did happen?"

Ruth looked at her mother in surprise.

"I thought you knew. Why, we're engaged, Martin and I."

Mrs. Morse laughed with incredulous vexation.

"No, he didn't speak," Ruth explained. "He just loved me, that was all. I was as surprised as you are. He didn't say a word. He just put his arm around me. And — and I was not myself. And he kissed me, and I kissed him. I couldn't help it. I just had to. And then I knew I loved him."

She paused, waiting with expectancy the benediction of her mother's kiss, but Mrs. Morse was coldly silent.

"It is a dreadful accident, I know," Ruth recommenced with a sinking voice. "And I don't know how you will ever forgive me. But I couldn't help it. I did not dream that I loved him until that moment. And you must tell father for me."

"Would it not be better not to tell your father? Let me see Martin Eden, and talk with him, and explain. He will understand and release you."

"No! no!" Ruth cried, starting up. "I do not want to be released. I love him, and love is very sweet. I am going to marry him — of course, if you will let me."

“We have other plans for you, Ruth, dear, your father and I — oh, no, no; no man picked out for you, or anything like that. Our plans go no farther than your marrying some man in your own station in life, a good and honorable gentleman, whom you will select yourself, when you love him.”

“But I love Martin already,” was the plaintive protest.

“We would not influence your choice in any way; but you are our daughter, and we could not bear to see you make a marriage such as this. He has nothing but roughness and coarseness to offer you in exchange for all that is refined and delicate in you. He is no match for you in any way. He could not support you. We have no foolish ideas about wealth, but comfort is another matter, and our daughter should at least marry a man who can give her that — and not a penniless adventurer, a sailor, a cowboy, a smuggler, and Heaven knows what else, who, in addition to everything, is hare-brained and irresponsible.”

Ruth was silent. Every word she recognized as true.

“He wastes his time over his writing, trying to accomplish what geniuses and rare men with college educations sometimes accomplish. A man thinking of marriage should be preparing for marriage. But not he. As I have said, and I know you agree with me, he is irresponsible. And why should he not be? It is the way of sailors. He has never learned to be economical or temperate. The spendthrift years have marked him. It is not his fault, of course, but that does not alter his nature. And have you thought of the years of licentiousness he inevitably has lived? Have you thought of that, daughter? You know what marriage means.”

Ruth shuddered and clung close to her mother.

“I have thought.” Ruth waited a long time for the thought to frame itself. “And it is terrible. It sickens me to think of it. I told you it was a dreadful accident, my loving him; but I can’t help myself. Could you help loving father? Then it is the same with me. There is something in me, in him — I never knew it was there until to-day — but it is there, and it makes me love him. I never thought to love him, but, you see, I do,” she concluded, a certain faint triumph in her voice.

They talked long, and to little purpose, in conclusion agreeing to wait an indeterminate time without doing anything.

The same conclusion was reached, a little later that night, between Mrs. Morse and her husband, after she had made due confession of the miscarriage of her plans.

"It could hardly have come otherwise," was Mr. Morse's judgment. "This sailor-fellow has been the only man she was in touch with. Sooner or later she was going to awaken anyway; and she did awaken, and lo! here was this sailor-fellow, the only accessible man at the moment, and of course she promptly loved him, or thought she did, which amounts to the same thing."

Mrs. Morse took it upon herself to work slowly and indirectly upon Ruth, rather than to combat her. There would be plenty of time for this, for Martin was not in position to marry.

"Let her see all she wants of him," was Mr. Morse's advice. "The more she knows him, the less she'll love him, I wager. And give her plenty of contrast. Make a point of having young people at the house. Young women and young men, all sorts of young men, clever men, men who have done something or who are doing things, men of her own class, gentlemen. She can gauge him by them. They will show him up for what he is. And after all, he is a mere boy of twenty-one. Ruth is no more than a child. It is calf love with the pair of them, and they will grow out of it."

So the matter rested. Within the family it was accepted that Ruth and Martin were engaged, but no announcement was made. The family did not think it would ever be necessary. Also, it was tacitly understood that it was to be a long engagement. They did not ask Martin to go to work, nor to cease writing. They did not intend to encourage him to mend himself. And he aided and abetted them in their unfriendly designs, for going to work was farthest from his thoughts.

"I wonder if you'll like what I have done!" he said to Ruth several days later. "I've decided that boarding with my sister is too expensive, and I am going to board myself. I've rented a little room out in North Oakland, retired neighborhood and all the rest, you know, and I've bought an oil-burner on which to cook."

Ruth was overjoyed. The oil-burner especially pleased her.

"That was the way Mr. Butler began his start," she said.

Martin frowned inwardly at the citation of that worthy gentleman, and went on: "I put stamps on all my manuscripts and started them off to the editors again. Then to-day I moved in, and to-morrow I start to work."

"A position!" she cried, betraying the gladness of her surprise in all her body, nestling closer to him, pressing his hand, smiling. "And you never told me! What is it?"

He shook his head.

"I meant that I was going to work at my writing." Her face fell, and he went on hastily. "Don't misjudge me. I am not going in this time with any iridescent ideas. It is to be a cold, prosaic, matter-of-fact business proposition. It is better than going to sea again, and I shall earn more money than any position in Oakland can bring an unskilled man."

"You see, this vacation I have taken has given me perspective. I haven't been working the life out of my body, and I haven't been writing, at least not for publication. All I've done has been to love you and to think. I've read some, too, but it has been part of my thinking, and I have read principally magazines. I have generalized about myself, and the world, my place in it, and my chance to win to a place that will be fit for you. Also, I've been reading Spencer's 'Philosophy of Style,' and found out a lot of what was the matter with me — or my writing, rather; and for that matter with most of the writing that is published every month in the magazines."

"But the upshot of it all — of my thinking and reading and loving — is that I am going to move to Grub Street. I shall leave masterpieces alone and do hack-work — jokes, paragraphs, feature articles, humorous verse, and society verse — all the rot for which there seems so much demand. Then there are the newspaper syndicates, and the newspaper short-story syndicates, and the syndicates for the Sunday supplements. I can go ahead and hammer out the stuff they want, and earn the equivalent of a good salary by it. There are free-lances, you know, who earn as much as four or five hundred a month. I don't care to become as they; but I'll earn a good living, and have plenty of time to myself, which I wouldn't have in any position."

"Then, I'll have my spare time for study and for real work. In between the grind I'll try my hand at masterpieces, and I'll study and prepare myself for the writing of masterpieces. Why, I am amazed at the distance I have come already. When I first tried to write, I had nothing to write about except a few paltry experiences which I neither understood nor appreciated. But I had no thoughts. I really didn't. I didn't even have the words with which to think. My experiences were so many meaningless pictures. But as I began to add to my knowledge, and to my vocabulary, I saw something more in my experiences than mere pictures. I retained the pictures and I found their interpretation. That was when I began to do good work, when I wrote 'Adventure,' 'Joy,' 'The Pot,' 'The Wine of Life,' 'The

Jostling Street,' the 'Love-cycle,' and the 'Sea Lyrics.' I shall write more like them, and better; but I shall do it in my spare time. My feet are on the solid earth, now. Hack-work and income first, masterpieces afterward. Just to show you, I wrote half a dozen jokes last night for the comic weeklies; and just as I was going to bed, the thought struck me to try my hand at a triolet — a humorous one; and inside an hour I had written four. They ought to be worth a dollar apiece. Four dollars right there for a few afterthoughts on the way to bed."

"Of course it's all valueless, just so much dull and sordid plodding; but it is no more dull and sordid than keeping books at sixty dollars a month, adding up endless columns of meaningless figures until one dies. And furthermore, the hack-work keeps me in touch with things literary and gives me time to try bigger things."

"But what good are these bigger-things, these masterpieces?" Ruth demanded. "You can't sell them."

"Oh, yes, I can," he began; but she interrupted.

"All those you named, and which you say yourself are good — you have not sold any of them. We can't get married on masterpieces that won't sell."

"Then we'll get married on triolets that will sell," he asserted stoutly, putting his arm around her and drawing a very unresponsive sweetheart toward him.

"Listen to this," he went on in attempted gayety. "It's not art, but it's a dollar.

"He came in
When I was out,
To borrow some tin
Was why he came in,
And he went without;
So I was in
And he was out."

The merry lilt with which he had invested the jingle was at variance with the dejection that came into his face as he finished. He had drawn no smile from Ruth. She was looking at him in an earnest and troubled way.

"It may be a dollar," she said, "but it is a jester's dollar, the fee of a clown. Don't you see, Martin, the whole thing is lowering. I want the man

I love and honor to be something finer and higher than a perpetrator of jokes and doggerel."

"You want him to be like — say Mr. Butler?" he suggested.

"I know you don't like Mr. Butler," she began.

"Mr. Butler's all right," he interrupted. "It's only his indigestion I find fault with. But to save me I can't see any difference between writing jokes or comic verse and running a type-writer, taking dictation, or keeping sets of books. It is all a means to an end. Your theory is for me to begin with keeping books in order to become a successful lawyer or man of business. Mine is to begin with hack-work and develop into an able author."

"There is a difference," she insisted.

"What is it?"

"Why, your good work, what you yourself call good, you can't sell. You have tried, you know that, — but the editors won't buy it."

"Give me time, dear," he pleaded. "The hack-work is only makeshift, and I don't take it seriously. Give me two years. I shall succeed in that time, and the editors will be glad to buy my good work. I know what I am saying; I have faith in myself. I know what I have in me; I know what literature is, now; I know the average rot that is poured out by a lot of little men; and I know that at the end of two years I shall be on the highroad to success. As for business, I shall never succeed at it. I am not in sympathy with it. It strikes me as dull, and stupid, and mercenary, and tricky. Anyway I am not adapted for it. I'd never get beyond a clerkship, and how could you and I be happy on the paltry earnings of a clerk? I want the best of everything in the world for you, and the only time when I won't want it will be when there is something better. And I'm going to get it, going to get all of it. The income of a successful author makes Mr. Butler look cheap. A 'best-seller' will earn anywhere between fifty and a hundred thousand dollars — sometimes more and sometimes less; but, as a rule, pretty close to those figures."

She remained silent; her disappointment was apparent.

"Well?" he asked.

"I had hoped and planned otherwise. I had thought, and I still think, that the best thing for you would be to study shorthand — you already know type-writing — and go into father's office. You have a good mind, and I am confident you would succeed as a lawyer."

CHAPTER XXIII

That Ruth had little faith in his power as a writer, did not alter her nor diminish her in Martin's eyes. In the breathing spell of the vacation he had taken, he had spent many hours in self-analysis, and thereby learned much of himself. He had discovered that he loved beauty more than fame, and that what desire he had for fame was largely for Ruth's sake. It was for this reason that his desire for fame was strong. He wanted to be great in the world's eyes; "to make good," as he expressed it, in order that the woman he loved should be proud of him and deem him worthy.

As for himself, he loved beauty passionately, and the joy of serving her was to him sufficient wage. And more than beauty he loved Ruth. He considered love the finest thing in the world. It was love that had worked the revolution in him, changing him from an uncouth sailor to a student and an artist; therefore, to him, the finest and greatest of the three, greater than learning and artistry, was love. Already he had discovered that his brain went beyond Ruth's, just as it went beyond the brains of her brothers, or the brain of her father. In spite of every advantage of university training, and in the face of her bachelorship of arts, his power of intellect overshadowed hers, and his year or so of self-study and equipment gave him a mastery of the affairs of the world and art and life that she could never hope to possess.

All this he realized, but it did not affect his love for her, nor her love for him. Love was too fine and noble, and he was too loyal a lover for him to besmirch love with criticism. What did love have to do with Ruth's divergent views on art, right conduct, the French Revolution, or equal suffrage? They were mental processes, but love was beyond reason; it was superrational. He could not belittle love. He worshipped it. Love lay on the mountain-tops beyond the valley-land of reason. It was a sublimates condition of existence, the topmost peak of living, and it came rarely. Thanks to the school of scientific philosophers he favored, he knew the biological significance of love; but by a refined process of the same scientific reasoning he reached the conclusion that the human organism achieved its highest purpose in love, that love must not be questioned, but must be accepted as the highest guerdon of life. Thus, he considered the lover blessed over all creatures, and it was a delight to him to think of "God's own mad lover," rising above the things of earth, above wealth and judgment, public opinion and applause, rising above life itself and "dying on a kiss."

Much of this Martin had already reasoned out, and some of it he reasoned out later. In the meantime he worked, taking no recreation except when he went to see Ruth, and living like a Spartan. He paid two dollars and a half a month rent for the small room he got from his Portuguese landlady, Maria Silva, a virago and a widow, hard working and harsher tempered, rearing her large brood of children somehow, and drowning her sorrow and fatigue at irregular intervals in a gallon of the thin, sour wine that she bought from the corner grocery and saloon for fifteen cents. From detesting her and her foul tongue at first, Martin grew to admire her as he observed the brave fight she made. There were but four rooms in the little house — three, when Martin's was subtracted. One of these, the parlor, gay with an ingrain carpet and dolorous with a funeral card and a death-picture of one of her numerous departed babes, was kept strictly for company. The blinds were always down, and her barefooted tribe was never permitted to enter the sacred precinct save on state occasions. She cooked, and all ate, in the kitchen, where she likewise washed, starched, and ironed clothes on all days of the week except Sunday; for her income came largely from taking in washing from her more prosperous neighbors. Remained the bedroom, small as the one occupied by Martin, into which she and her seven little ones crowded and slept. It was an everlasting miracle to Martin how it was accomplished, and from her side of the thin partition he heard nightly every detail of the going to bed, the squalls and squabbles, the soft chattering, and the sleepy, twittering noises as of birds. Another source of income to Maria were her cows, two of them, which she milked night and morning and which gained a surreptitious livelihood from vacant lots and the grass that grew on either side the public side walks, attended always by one or more of her ragged boys, whose watchful guardianship consisted chiefly in keeping their eyes out for the poundmen.

In his own small room Martin lived, slept, studied, wrote, and kept house. Before the one window, looking out on the tiny front porch, was the kitchen table that served as desk, library, and type-writing stand. The bed, against the rear wall, occupied two-thirds of the total space of the room. The table was flanked on one side by a gaudy bureau, manufactured for profit and not for service, the thin veneer of which was shed day by day. This bureau stood in the corner, and in the opposite corner, on the table's other flank, was the kitchen — the oil-stove on a dry-goods box, inside of which were dishes and cooking utensils, a shelf on the wall for provisions, and a bucket of water on the floor. Martin had to carry his water from the kitchen sink, there being no tap in his room. On days when there was much steam to his cooking, the harvest of veneer from the bureau was unusually generous. Over the bed, hoisted by a tackle to the ceiling, was his bicycle. At first he had tried to keep it in the basement; but the tribe of Silva, loosening the bearings and puncturing the tires, had driven him out. Next he attempted the tiny front porch, until a howling southeaster drenched the wheel a night-long. Then he had retreated with it to his room and slung it aloft.

A small closet contained his clothes and the books he had accumulated and for which there was no room on the table or under the table. Hand in hand with reading, he had developed the habit of making notes, and so copiously did he make them that there would have been no existence for him in the confined quarters had he not rigged several clothes-lines across the room on which the notes were hung. Even so, he was crowded until navigating the room was a difficult task. He could not open the door without first closing the closet door, and *vice versa*. It was impossible for him anywhere to traverse the room in a straight line. To go from the door to the head of the bed was a zigzag course that he was never quite able to accomplish in the dark without collisions. Having settled the difficulty of the conflicting doors, he had to steer sharply to the right to avoid the kitchen. Next, he sheered to the left, to escape the foot of the bed; but this sheer, if too generous, brought him against the corner of the table. With a sudden twitch and lurch, he terminated the sheer and bore off to the right along a sort of canal, one bank of which was the bed, the other the table. When the one chair in the room was at its usual place before the table, the canal was unnavigable. When the chair was not in use, it reposed on top of the bed, though sometimes he sat on the chair when cooking, reading a book while the water boiled, and even becoming skilful enough to manage a paragraph or two while steak was frying. Also, so small was the little corner that constituted the kitchen, he was able, sitting down, to reach anything he needed. In fact, it was expedient to cook sitting down; standing up, he was too often in his own way.

In conjunction with a perfect stomach that could digest anything, he possessed knowledge of the various foods that were at the same time nutritious and cheap. Pea-soup was a common article in his diet, as well as potatoes and beans, the latter large and brown and cooked in Mexican style. Rice, cooked as American housewives never cook it and can never learn to cook it, appeared on Martin's table at least once a day. Dried fruits were less expensive than fresh, and he had usually a pot of them, cooked and ready at hand, for they took the place of butter on his bread. Occasionally he graced his table with a piece of round-steak, or with a soup-bone. Coffee, without cream or milk, he had twice a day, in the evening substituting tea; but both coffee and tea were excellently cooked.

There was need for him to be economical. His vacation had consumed nearly all he had earned in the laundry, and he was so far from his market that weeks must elapse before he could hope for the first returns from his hack-work. Except at such times as he saw Ruth, or dropped in to see his sister Gertude, he lived a recluse, in each day accomplishing at least three days' labor of ordinary men. He slept a scant five hours, and only one with a constitution of iron could have held himself down, as Martin did, day after day, to nineteen consecutive hours of toil. He never lost a moment. On the looking-glass were lists of definitions and pronunciations; when shaving, or dressing, or combing his hair, he conned these lists over. Similar lists were on the wall over the oil-stove, and they were similarly conned while he was engaged in cooking or in washing the dishes. New lists continually displaced the old ones. Every strange or partly familiar word encountered in his reading was immediately jotted down, and later, when a sufficient number had been accumulated, were typed and pinned to the wall or looking-glass. He even carried them in his pockets, and reviewed them at odd moments on the street, or while waiting in butcher shop or grocery to be served.

He went farther in the matter. Reading the works of men who had arrived, he noted every result achieved by them, and worked out the tricks by which they had been achieved — the tricks of narrative, of exposition, of style, the points of view, the contrasts, the epigrams; and of all these he made lists for study. He did not ape. He sought principles. He drew up lists of effective and fetching mannerisms, till out of many such, culled from many writers, he was able to induce the general principle of mannerism, and, thus equipped, to cast about for new and original ones of his own, and to weigh and measure and appraise them properly. In similar manner he collected lists of strong phrases, the phrases of living language, phrases that bit like acid and scorched like flame, or that glowed and were mellow and luscious in the midst of the arid desert of common speech. He sought always for the principle that lay behind and beneath. He wanted to know how the thing was done; after that he could do it for himself. He was not content with the fair face of beauty. He dissected beauty in his crowded little bedroom laboratory, where cooking smells alternated with the outer bedlam of the Silva tribe; and, having dissected and learned the anatomy of beauty, he was nearer being able to create beauty itself.

He was so made that he could work only with understanding. He could not work blindly, in the dark, ignorant of what he was producing and trusting to chance and the star of his genius that the effect produced should be right and fine. He had no patience with chance effects. He wanted to know why and how. His was deliberate creative genius, and, before he began a story or poem, the thing itself was already alive in his brain, with the end in sight and the means of realizing that end in his conscious possession. Otherwise the effort was doomed to failure. On the other hand, he appreciated the chance effects in words and phrases that came lightly and easily into his brain, and that later stood all tests of beauty and power and developed tremendous and incommunicable connotations. Before such he bowed down and marvelled, knowing that they were beyond the deliberate creation of any man. And no matter how much he dissected beauty in search of the principles that underlie beauty and make beauty possible, he was aware, always, of the innermost mystery of beauty to which he did not penetrate and to which no man had ever penetrated. He knew full well, from his Spencer, that man can never attain ultimate knowledge of anything, and that the mystery of beauty was no less than that of life — nay, more that the fibres of beauty and life were intertwisted, and that he himself was but a bit of the same nonunderstandable fabric, twisted of sunshine and star-dust and wonder.

In fact, it was when filled with these thoughts that he wrote his essay entitled “Star-dust,” in which he had his fling, not at the principles of criticism, but at the principal critics. It was brilliant, deep, philosophical, and deliciously touched with laughter. Also it was promptly rejected by the magazines as often as it was submitted. But having cleared his mind of it, he went serenely on his way. It was a habit he developed, of incubating and maturing his thought upon a subject, and of then rushing into the typewriter with it. That it did not see print was a matter a small moment with him. The writing of it was the culminating act of a long mental process, the drawing together of scattered threads of thought and the final generalizing upon all the data with which his mind was burdened. To write such an article was the conscious effort by which he freed his mind and made it ready for fresh material and problems. It was in a way akin to that common habit of men and women troubled by real or fancied grievances, who periodically and volubly break their long-suffering silence and "have their say" till the last word is said.

CHAPTER XXIV

The weeks passed. Martin ran out of money, and publishers' checks were far away as ever. All his important manuscripts had come back and been started out again, and his hack-work fared no better. His little kitchen was no longer graced with a variety of foods. Caught in the pinch with a part sack of rice and a few pounds of dried apricots, rice and apricots was his menu three times a day for five days hand-running. Then he startled to realize on his credit. The Portuguese grocer, to whom he had hitherto paid cash, called a halt when Martin's bill reached the magnificent total of three dollars and eighty-five cents.

"For you see," said the grocer, "you no catcha da work, I losa da mon'."

And Martin could reply nothing. There was no way of explaining. It was not true business principle to allow credit to a strong-bodied young fellow of the working-class who was too lazy to work.

"You catcha da job, I let you have mora da grub," the grocer assured Martin. "No job, no grub. Thata da business." And then, to show that it was purely business foresight and not prejudice, "Hava da drink on da house — good friends justa da same."

So Martin drank, in his easy way, to show that he was good friends with the house, and then went supperless to bed.

The fruit store, where Martin had bought his vegetables, was run by an American whose business principles were so weak that he let Martin run a bill of five dollars before stopping his credit. The baker stopped at two dollars, and the butcher at four dollars. Martin added his debts and found that he was possessed of a total credit in all the world of fourteen dollars and eighty-five cents. He was up with his type-writer rent, but he estimated that he could get two months' credit on that, which would be eight dollars. When that occurred, he would have exhausted all possible credit.

The last purchase from the fruit store had been a sack of potatoes, and for a week he had potatoes, and nothing but potatoes, three times a day. An occasional dinner at Ruth's helped to keep strength in his body, though he found it tantalizing enough to refuse further helping when his appetite was raging at sight of so much food spread before it. Now and again, though afflicted with secret shame, he dropped in at his sister's at meal-time and ate as much as he dared — more than he dared at the Morse table.

Day by day he worked on, and day by day the postman delivered to him rejected manuscripts. He had no money for stamps, so the manuscripts accumulated in a heap under the table. Came a day when for forty hours he had not tasted food. He could not hope for a meal at Ruth's, for she was away to San Rafael on a two weeks' visit; and for very shame's sake he could not go to his sister's. To cap misfortune, the postman, in his afternoon round, brought him five returned manuscripts. Then it was that Martin wore his overcoat down into Oakland, and came back without it, but with five dollars tinkling in his pocket. He paid a dollar each on account to the four tradesmen, and in his kitchen fried steak and onions, made coffee, and stewed a large pot of prunes. And having dined, he sat down at his table-desk and completed before midnight an essay which he entitled "The Dignity of Usury." Having typed it out, he flung it under the table, for there had been nothing left from the five dollars with which to buy stamps.

Later on he pawned his watch, and still later his wheel, reducing the amount available for food by putting stamps on all his manuscripts and sending them out. He was disappointed with his hack-work. Nobody cared to buy. He compared it with what he found in the newspapers, weeklies, and cheap magazines, and decided that his was better, far better, than the average; yet it would not sell. Then he discovered that most of the newspapers printed a great deal of what was called "plate" stuff, and he got the address of the association that furnished it. His own work that he sent in was returned, along with a stereotyped slip informing him that the staff supplied all the copy that was needed.

In one of the great juvenile periodicals he noted whole columns of incident and anecdote. Here was a chance. His paragraphs were returned, and though he tried repeatedly he never succeeded in placing one. Later on, when it no longer mattered, he learned that the associate editors and sub-editors augmented their salaries by supplying those paragraphs themselves. The comic weeklies returned his jokes and humorous verse, and the light society verse he wrote for the large magazines found no abiding-place. Then there was the newspaper storiette. He knew that he could write better ones than were published. Managing to obtain the addresses of two newspaper syndicates, he deluged them with storiettes. When he had written twenty and failed to place one of them, he ceased. And yet, from day to day, he read storiettes in the dailies and weeklies, scores and scores of storiettes, not one of which would compare with his. In his despondency, he concluded that he had no judgment whatever, that he was hypnotized by what he wrote, and that he was a self-deluded pretender.

The inhuman editorial machine ran smoothly as ever. He folded the stamps in with his manuscript, dropped it into the letter-box, and from three weeks to a month afterward the postman came up the steps and handed him the manuscript. Surely there were no live, warm editors at the other end. It was all wheels and cogs and oil-cups — a clever mechanism operated by automatons. He reached stages of despair wherein he doubted if editors existed at all. He had never received a sign of the existence of one, and from absence of judgment in rejecting all he wrote it seemed plausible that editors were myths, manufactured and maintained by office boys, typesetters, and pressmen.

The hours he spent with Ruth were the only happy ones he had, and they were not all happy. He was afflicted always with a gnawing restlessness, more tantalizing than in the old days before he possessed her love; for now that he did possess her love, the possession of her was far away as ever. He had asked for two years; time was flying, and he was achieving nothing. Again, he was always conscious of the fact that she did not approve what he was doing. She did not say so directly. Yet indirectly she let him understand it as clearly and definitely as she could have spoken it. It was not resentment with her, but disapproval; though less sweet-natured women might have resented where she was no more than disappointed. Her disappointment lay in that this man she had taken to mould, refused to be moulded. To a certain extent she had found his clay plastic, then it had developed stubbornness, declining to be shaped in the image of her father or of Mr. Butler.

What was great and strong in him, she missed, or, worse yet, misunderstood. This man, whose clay was so plastic that he could live in any number of pigeonholes of human existence, she thought wilful and most obstinate because she could not shape him to live in her pigeonhole, which was the only one she knew. She could not follow the flights of his mind, and when his brain got beyond her, she deemed him erratic. Nobody else's brain ever got beyond her. She could always follow her father and mother, her brothers and Olney; wherefore, when she could not follow Martin, she believed the fault lay with him. It was the old tragedy of insularity trying to serve as mentor to the universal.

“You worship at the shrine of the established,” he told her once, in a discussion they had over Praps and Vanderwater. “I grant that as authorities to quote they are most excellent — the two foremost literary critics in the United States. Every school teacher in the land looks up to Vanderwater as the Dean of American criticism. Yet I read his stuff, and it seems to me the perfection of the felicitous expression of the inane. Why, he is no more than a ponderous bromide, thanks to Gelett Burgess. And Praps is no better. His ‘Hemlock Mosses,’ for instance is beautifully written. Not a comma is out of place; and the tone — ah! — is lofty, so lofty. He is the best-paid critic in the United States. Though, Heaven forbid! he’s not a critic at all. They do criticism better in England.

“But the point is, they sound the popular note, and they sound it so beautifully and morally and contentedly. Their reviews remind me of a British Sunday. They are the popular mouthpieces. They back up your professors of English, and your professors of English back them up. And there isn’t an original idea in any of their skulls. They know only the established, — in fact, they are the established. They are weak minded, and the established impresses itself upon them as easily as the name of the brewery is impressed on a beer bottle. And their function is to catch all the young fellows attending the university, to drive out of their minds any glimmering originality that may chance to be there, and to put upon them the stamp of the established.”

“I think I am nearer the truth,” she replied, “when I stand by the established, than you are, raging around like an iconoclastic South Sea Islander.”

“It was the missionary who did the image breaking,” he laughed. “And unfortunately, all the missionaries are off among the heathen, so there are none left at home to break those old images, Mr. Vanderwater and Mr. Praps.”

“And the college professors, as well,” she added.

He shook his head emphatically. “No; the science professors should live. They’re really great. But it would be a good deed to break the heads of nine-tenths of the English professors — little, microscopic-minded parrots!”

Which was rather severe on the professors, but which to Ruth was blasphemy. She could not help but measure the professors, neat, scholarly, in fitting clothes, speaking in well-modulated voices, breathing of culture and refinement, with this almost indescribable young fellow whom somehow she loved, whose clothes never would fit him, whose heavy muscles told of damning toil, who grew excited when he talked, substituting abuse for calm statement and passionate utterance for cool self-possession. They at least earned good salaries and were — yes, she compelled herself to face it — were gentlemen; while he could not earn a penny, and he was not as they.

She did not weigh Martin's words nor judge his argument by them. Her conclusion that his argument was wrong was reached — unconsciously, it is true — by a comparison of externals. They, the professors, were right in their literary judgments because they were successes. Martin's literary judgments were wrong because he could not sell his wares. To use his own phrase, they made good, and he did not make good. And besides, it did not seem reasonable that he should be right — he who had stood, so short a time before, in that same living room, blushing and awkward, acknowledging his introduction, looking fearfully about him at the bric-a-brac his swinging shoulders threatened to break, asking how long since Swinburne died, and boastfully announcing that he had read "Excelsior" and the "Psalm of Life."

Unwittingly, Ruth herself proved his point that she worshipped the established. Martin followed the processes of her thoughts, but forbore to go farther. He did not love her for what she thought of Praps and Vanderwater and English professors, and he was coming to realize, with increasing conviction, that he possessed brain-areas and stretches of knowledge which she could never comprehend nor know existed.

In music she thought him unreasonable, and in the matter of opera not only unreasonable but wilfully perverse.

"How did you like it?" she asked him one night, on the way home from the opera.

It was a night when he had taken her at the expense of a month's rigid economizing on food. After vainly waiting for him to speak about it, herself still tremulous and stirred by what she had just seen and heard, she had asked the question.

"I liked the overture," was his answer. "It was splendid."

"Yes, but the opera itself?"

"That was splendid too; that is, the orchestra was, though I'd have enjoyed it more if those jumping-jacks had kept quiet or gone off the stage."

Ruth was aghast.

"You don't mean Tetralani or Barillo?" she queried.

"All of them — the whole kit and crew."

"But they are great artists," she protested.

"They spoiled the music just the same, with their antics and unrealities."

"But don't you like Barillo's voice?" Ruth asked. "He is next to Caruso, they say."

"Of course I liked him, and I liked Tetralani even better. Her voice is exquisite — or at least I think so."

"But, but — " Ruth stammered. "I don't know what you mean, then. You admire their voices, yet say they spoiled the music."

"Precisely that. I'd give anything to hear them in concert, and I'd give even a bit more not to hear them when the orchestra is playing. I'm afraid I am a hopeless realist. Great singers are not great actors. To hear Barillo sing a love passage with the voice of an angel, and to hear Tetralani reply like another angel, and to hear it all accompanied by a perfect orgy of glowing and colorful music — is ravishing, most ravishing. I do not admit it. I assert it. But the whole effect is spoiled when I look at them — at Tetralani, five feet ten in her stocking feet and weighing a hundred and ninety pounds, and at Barillo, a scant five feet four, greasy-featured, with the chest of a squat, undersized blacksmith, and at the pair of them, attitudinizing, clasping their breasts, flinging their arms in the air like demented creatures in an asylum; and when I am expected to accept all this as the faithful illusion of a love-scene between a slender and beautiful princess and a handsome, romantic, young prince — why, I can't accept it, that's all. It's rot; it's absurd; it's unreal. That's what's the matter with it. It's not real. Don't tell me that anybody in this world ever made love that way. Why, if I'd made love to you in such fashion, you'd have boxed my ears."

"But you misunderstand," Ruth protested. "Every form of art has its limitations." (She was busy recalling a lecture she had heard at the university on the conventions of the arts.) "In painting there are only two dimensions to the canvas, yet you accept the illusion of three dimensions which the art of a painter enables him to throw into the canvas. In writing, again, the author must be omnipotent. You accept as perfectly legitimate the author's account of the secret thoughts of the heroine, and yet all the time you know that the heroine was alone when thinking these thoughts, and that neither the author nor any one else was capable of hearing them. And so with the stage, with sculpture, with opera, with every art form. Certain irreconcilable things must be accepted."

"Yes, I understood that," Martin answered. "All the arts have their conventions." (Ruth was surprised at his use of the word. It was as if he had studied at the university himself, instead of being ill-equipped from browsing at haphazard through the books in the library.) "But even the conventions must be real. Trees, painted on flat cardboard and stuck up on each side of the stage, we accept as a forest. It is a real enough convention. But, on the other hand, we would not accept a sea scene as a forest. We can't do it. It violates our senses. Nor would you, or, rather, should you, accept the ravings and writhings and agonized contortions of those two lunatics to-night as a convincing portrayal of love."

"But you don't hold yourself superior to all the judges of music?" she protested.

"No, no, not for a moment. I merely maintain my right as an individual. I have just been telling you what I think, in order to explain why the elephantine gambols of Madame Tetralani spoil the orchestra for me. The world's judges of music may all be right. But I am I, and I won't subordinate my taste to the unanimous judgment of mankind. If I don't like a thing, I don't like it, that's all; and there is no reason under the sun why I should ape a liking for it just because the majority of my fellow-creatures like it, or make believe they like it. I can't follow the fashions in the things I like or dislike."

"But music, you know, is a matter of training," Ruth argued; "and opera is even more a matter of training. May it not be — "

"That I am not trained in opera?" he dashed in.

She nodded.

"The very thing," he agreed. "And I consider I am fortunate in not having been caught when I was young. If I had, I could have wept sentimental tears to-night, and the clownish antics of that precious pair would have but enhanced the beauty of their voices and the beauty of the accompanying orchestra. You are right. It's mostly a matter of training. And I am too old, now. I must have the real or nothing. An illusion that won't convince is a palpable lie, and that's what grand opera is to me when little Barillo throws a fit, clutches mighty Tetralani in his arms (also in a fit), and tells her how passionately he adores her."

Again Ruth measured his thoughts by comparison of externals and in accordance with her belief in the established. Who was he that he should be right and all the cultured world wrong? His words and thoughts made no impression upon her. She was too firmly intrenched in the established to have any sympathy with revolutionary ideas. She had always been used to music, and she had enjoyed opera ever since she was a child, and all her world had enjoyed it, too. Then by what right did Martin Eden emerge, as he had so recently emerged, from his rag-time and working-class songs, and pass judgment on the world's music? She was vexed with him, and as she walked beside him she had a vague feeling of outrage. At the best, in her most charitable frame of mind, she considered the statement of his views to be a caprice, an erratic and uncalled-for prank. But when he took her in his arms at the door and kissed her good night in tender lover-fashion, she forgot everything in the outrush of her own love to him. And later, on a sleepless pillow, she puzzled, as she had often puzzled of late, as to how it was that she loved so strange a man, and loved him despite the disapproval of her people.

And next day Martin Eden cast hack-work aside, and at white heat hammered out an essay to which he gave the title, "The Philosophy of Illusion." A stamp started it on its travels, but it was destined to receive many stamps and to be started on many travels in the months that followed.

CHAPTER XXV

Maria Silva was poor, and all the ways of poverty were clear to her. Poverty, to Ruth, was a word signifying a not-nice condition of existence. That was her total knowledge on the subject. She knew Martin was poor, and his condition she associated in her mind with the boyhood of Abraham Lincoln, of Mr. Butler, and of other men who had become successes. Also, while aware that poverty was anything but delectable, she had a comfortable middle-class feeling that poverty was salutary, that it was a sharp spur that urged on to success all men who were not degraded and hopeless drudges. So that her knowledge that Martin was so poor that he had pawned his watch and overcoat did not disturb her. She even considered it the hopeful side of the situation, believing that sooner or later it would arouse him and compel him to abandon his writing.

Ruth never read hunger in Martin's face, which had grown lean and had enlarged the slight hollows in the cheeks. In fact, she marked the change in his face with satisfaction. It seemed to refine him, to remove from him much of the dross of flesh and the too animal-like vigor that lured her while she detested it. Sometimes, when with her, she noted an unusual brightness in his eyes, and she admired it, for it made him appear more the poet and the scholar — the things he would have liked to be and which she would have liked him to be. But Maria Silva read a different tale in the hollow cheeks and the burning eyes, and she noted the changes in them from day to day, by them following the ebb and flow of his fortunes. She saw him leave the house with his overcoat and return without it, though the day was chill and raw, and promptly she saw his cheeks fill out slightly and the fire of hunger leave his eyes. In the same way she had seen his wheel and watch go, and after each event she had seen his vigor bloom again.

Likewise she watched his toils, and knew the measure of the midnight oil he burned. Work! She knew that he outdid her, though his work was of a different order. And she was surprised to behold that the less food he had, the harder he worked. On occasion, in a casual sort of way, when she thought hunger pinched hardest, she would send him in a loaf of new baking, awkwardly covering the act with banter to the effect that it was better than he could bake. And again, she would send one of her toddlers in to him with a great pitcher of hot soup, debating inwardly the while whether she was justified in taking it from the mouths of her own flesh and blood. Nor was Martin ungrateful, knowing as he did the lives of the poor, and that if ever in the world there was charity, this was it.

On a day when she had filled her brood with what was left in the house, Maria invested her last fifteen cents in a gallon of cheap wine. Martin, coming into her kitchen to fetch water, was invited to sit down and drink. He drank her very-good health, and in return she drank his. Then she drank to prosperity in his undertakings, and he drank to the hope that James Grant would show up and pay her for his washing. James Grant was a journeymen carpenter who did not always pay his bills and who owed Maria three dollars.

Both Maria and Martin drank the sour new wine on empty stomachs, and it went swiftly to their heads. Utterly differentiated creatures that they were, they were lonely in their misery, and though the misery was tacitly ignored, it was the bond that drew them together. Maria was amazed to learn that he had been in the Azores, where she had lived until she was eleven. She was doubly amazed that he had been in the Hawaiian Islands, whither she had migrated from the Azores with her people. But her amazement passed all bounds when he told her he had been on Maui, the particular island whereon she had attained womanhood and married. Kahului, where she had first met her husband, — he, Martin, had been there twice! Yes, she remembered the sugar steamers, and he had been on them — well, well, it was a small world. And Wailuku! That place, too! Did he know the head-luna of the plantation? Yes, and had had a couple of drinks with him.

And so they reminiscenced and drowned their hunger in the raw, sour wine. To Martin the future did not seem so dim. Success trembled just before him. He was on the verge of clasping it. Then he studied the deep-lined face of the toil-worn woman before him, remembered her soups and loaves of new baking, and felt spring up in him the warmest gratitude and philanthropy.

“Maria,” he exclaimed suddenly. “What would you like to have?”

She looked at him, bepuzzled.

“What would you like to have now, right now, if you could get it?”

“Shoe alla da roun’ for da childs — seven pairs da shoe.”

“You shall have them,” he announced, while she nodded her head gravely. “But I mean a big wish, something big that you want.”

Her eyes sparkled good-naturedly. He was choosing to make fun with her, Maria, with whom few made fun these days.

"Think hard," he cautioned, just as she was opening her mouth to speak.

"Alla right," she answered. "I thinka da hard. I lika da house, dis house — all mine, no paya da rent, seven dollar da month."

"You shall have it," he granted, "and in a short time. Now wish the great wish. Make believe I am God, and I say to you anything you want you can have. Then you wish that thing, and I listen."

Maria considered solemnly for a space.

"You no 'fraid?" she asked warningly.

"No, no," he laughed, "I'm not afraid. Go ahead."

"Most verra big," she warned again.

"All right. Fire away."

"Well, den — " She drew a big breath like a child, as she voiced to the uttermost all she cared to demand of life. "I lika da have one milka ranch — good milka ranch. Plenty cow, plenty land, plenty grass. I lika da have near San Le-an; my sister liva dere. I sella da milk in Oakland. I maka da plentee mon. Joe an' Nick no runna da cow. Dey go-a to school. Bimeby maka da good engineer, worka da railroad. Yes, I lika da milka ranch."

She paused and regarded Martin with twinkling eyes.

"You shall have it," he answered promptly.

She nodded her head and touched her lips courteously to the wine-glass and to the giver of the gift she knew would never be given. His heart was right, and in her own heart she appreciated his intention as much as if the gift had gone with it.

"No, Maria," he went on; "Nick and Joe won't have to peddle milk, and all the kids can go to school and wear shoes the whole year round. It will be a first-class milk ranch — everything complete. There will be a house to live in and a stable for the horses, and cow-barns, of course. There will be chickens, pigs, vegetables, fruit trees, and everything like that; and there will be enough cows to pay for a hired man or two. Then you won't have anything to do but take care of the children. For that matter, if you find a good man, you can marry and take it easy while he runs the ranch."

And from such largess, dispensed from his future, Martin turned and took his one good suit of clothes to the pawnshop. His plight was desperate for him to do this, for it cut him off from Ruth. He had no second-best suit that was presentable, and though he could go to the butcher and the baker, and even on occasion to his sister's, it was beyond all daring to dream of entering the Morse home so disreputably apparelled.

He toiled on, miserable and well-nigh hopeless. It began to appear to him that the second battle was lost and that he would have to go to work. In doing this he would satisfy everybody — the grocer, his sister, Ruth, and even Maria, to whom he owed a month's room rent. He was two months behind with his type-writer, and the agency was clamoring for payment or for the return of the machine. In desperation, all but ready to surrender, to make a truce with fate until he could get a fresh start, he took the civil service examinations for the Railway Mail. To his surprise, he passed first. The job was assured, though when the call would come to enter upon his duties nobody knew.

It was at this time, at the lowest ebb, that the smooth-running editorial machine broke down. A cog must have slipped or an oil-cup run dry, for the postman brought him one morning a short, thin envelope. Martin glanced at the upper left-hand corner and read the name and address of the *Transcontinental Monthly*. His heart gave a great leap, and he suddenly felt faint, the sinking feeling accompanied by a strange trembling of the knees. He staggered into his room and sat down on the bed, the envelope still unopened, and in that moment came understanding to him how people suddenly fall dead upon receipt of extraordinarily good news.

Of course this was good news. There was no manuscript in that thin envelope, therefore it was an acceptance. He knew the story in the hands of the *Transcontinental*. It was "The Ring of Bells," one of his horror stories, and it was an even five thousand words. And, since first-class magazines always paid on acceptance, there was a check inside. Two cents a word — twenty dollars a thousand; the check must be a hundred dollars. One hundred dollars! As he tore the envelope open, every item of all his debts surged in his brain — $3.85 to the grocer; butcher $4.00 flat; baker, $2.00; fruit store, $5.00; total, $14.85. Then there was room rent, $2.50; another month in advance, $2.50; two months' type-writer, $8.00; a month in advance, $4.00; total, $31.85. And finally to be added, his pledges, plus interest, with the pawnbroker — watch, $5.50; overcoat, $5.50; wheel, $7.75; suit of clothes, $5.50 (60 % interest, but what did it matter?) — grand total, $56.10. He saw, as if visible in the air before him, in illuminated figures, the whole sum, and the subtraction that followed and that gave a remainder of $43.90. When he had squared every debt, redeemed every pledge, he would still have jingling in his pockets a princely $43.90. And on top of that he would have a month's rent paid in advance on the type-writer and on the room.

By this time he had drawn the single sheet of type-written letter out and spread it open. There was no check. He peered into the envelope, held it to the light, but could not trust his eyes, and in trembling haste tore the envelope apart. There was no check. He read the letter, skimming it line by line, dashing through the editor's praise of his story to the meat of the letter, the statement why the check had not been sent. He found no such statement, but he did find that which made him suddenly wilt. The letter slid from his hand. His eyes went lack-lustre, and he lay back on the pillow, pulling the blanket about him and up to his chin.

Five dollars for "The Ring of Bells" — five dollars for five thousand words! Instead of two cents a word, ten words for a cent! And the editor had praised it, too. And he would receive the check when the story was published. Then it was all poppycock, two cents a word for minimum rate and payment upon acceptance. It was a lie, and it had led him astray. He would never have attempted to write had he known that. He would have gone to work — to work for Ruth. He went back to the day he first attempted to write, and was appalled at the enormous waste of time — and all for ten words for a cent. And the other high rewards of writers, that he had read about, must be lies, too. His second-hand ideas of authorship were wrong, for here was the proof of it.

The *Transcontinental* sold for twenty-five cents, and its dignified and artistic cover proclaimed it as among the first-class magazines. It was a staid, respectable magazine, and it had been published continuously since long before he was born. Why, on the outside cover were printed every month the words of one of the world's great writers, words proclaiming the inspired mission of the *Transcontinental* by a star of literature whose first coruscations had appeared inside those self-same covers. And the high and lofty, heaven-inspired *Transcontinental* paid five dollars for five thousand words! The great writer had recently died in a foreign land — in dire poverty, Martin remembered, which was not to be wondered at, considering the magnificent pay authors receive.

Well, he had taken the bait, the newspaper lies about writers and their pay, and he had wasted two years over it. But he would disgorge the bait now. Not another line would he ever write. He would do what Ruth wanted him to do, what everybody wanted him to do — get a job. The thought of going to work reminded him of Joe — Joe, tramping through the land of nothing-to-do. Martin heaved a great sigh of envy. The reaction of nineteen hours a day for many days was strong upon him. But then, Joe was not in love, had none of the responsibilities of love, and he could afford to loaf through the land of nothing-to-do. He, Martin, had something to work for, and go to work he would. He would start out early next morning to hunt a job. And he would let Ruth know, too, that he had mended his ways and was willing to go into her father's office.

Five dollars for five thousand words, ten words for a cent, the market price for art. The disappointment of it, the lie of it, the infamy of it, were uppermost in his thoughts; and under his closed eyelids, in fiery figures, burned the "$3.85" he owed the grocer. He shivered, and was aware of an aching in his bones. The small of his back ached especially. His head ached, the top of it ached, the back of it ached, the brains inside of it ached and seemed to be swelling, while the ache over his brows was intolerable. And beneath the brows, planted under his lids, was the merciless "$3.85." He opened his eyes to escape it, but the white light of the room seemed to sear the balls and forced him to close his eyes, when the "$3.85" confronted him again.

Five dollars for five thousand words, ten words for a cent — that particular thought took up its residence in his brain, and he could no more escape it than he could the "$3.85" under his eyelids. A change seemed to come over the latter, and he watched curiously, till "$2.00" burned in its stead. Ah, he thought, that was the baker. The next sum that appeared was "$2.50." It puzzled him, and he pondered it as if life and death hung on the solution. He owed somebody two dollars and a half, that was certain, but who was it? To find it was the task set him by an imperious and malignant universe, and he wandered through the endless corridors of his mind, opening all manner of lumber rooms and chambers stored with odds and ends of memories and knowledge as he vainly sought the answer. After several centuries it came to him, easily, without effort, that it was Maria. With a great relief he turned his soul to the screen of torment under his lids. He had solved the problem; now he could rest. But no, the "$2.50" faded away, and in its place burned "$8.00." Who was that? He must go the dreary round of his mind again and find out.

How long he was gone on this quest he did not know, but after what seemed an enormous lapse of time, he was called back to himself by a knock at the door, and by Maria's asking if he was sick. He replied in a muffled voice he did not recognize, saying that he was merely taking a nap. He was surprised when he noted the darkness of night in the room. He had received the letter at two in the afternoon, and he realized that he was sick.

Then the "$8.00" began to smoulder under his lids again, and he returned himself to servitude. But he grew cunning. There was no need for him to wander through his mind. He had been a fool. He pulled a lever and made his mind revolve about him, a monstrous wheel of fortune, a merry-go-round of memory, a revolving sphere of wisdom. Faster and faster it revolved, until its vortex sucked him in and he was flung whirling through black chaos.

Quite naturally he found himself at a mangle, feeding starched cuffs. But as he fed he noticed figures printed in the cuffs. It was a new way of marking linen, he thought, until, looking closer, he saw "$3.85" on one of the cuffs. Then it came to him that it was the grocer's bill, and that these were his bills flying around on the drum of the mangle. A crafty idea came to him. He would throw the bills on the floor and so escape paying them. No sooner thought than done, and he crumpled the cuffs spitefully as he flung them upon an unusually dirty floor. Ever the heap grew, and though each bill was duplicated a thousand times, he found only one for two dollars and a half, which was what he owed Maria. That meant that Maria would not press for payment, and he resolved generously that it would be the only one he would pay; so he began searching through the cast-out heap for hers. He sought it desperately, for ages, and was still searching when the manager of the hotel entered, the fat Dutchman. His face blazed with wrath, and he shouted in stentorian tones that echoed down the universe, "I shall deduct the cost of those cuffs from your wages!" The pile of cuffs grew into a mountain, and Martin knew that he was doomed to toil for a thousand years to pay for them. Well, there was nothing left to do but kill the manager and burn down the laundry. But the big Dutchman frustrated him, seizing him by the nape of the neck and dancing him up and down. He danced him over the ironing tables, the stove, and the mangles, and out into the wash-room and over the wringer and washer. Martin was danced until his teeth rattled and his head ached, and he marvelled that the Dutchman was so strong.

And then he found himself before the mangle, this time receiving the cuffs an editor of a magazine was feeding from the other side. Each cuff was a check, and Martin went over them anxiously, in a fever of expectation, but they were all blanks. He stood there and received the blanks for a million years or so, never letting one go by for fear it might be filled out. At last he found it. With trembling fingers he held it to the light. It was for five dollars. "Ha! Ha!" laughed the editor across the mangle. "Well, then, I shall kill you," Martin said. He went out into the wash-room to get the axe, and found Joe starching manuscripts. He tried to make him desist, then swung the axe for him. But the weapon remained poised in mid-air, for Martin found himself back in the ironing room in the midst of a snow-storm. No, it was not snow that was falling, but checks of large denomination, the smallest not less than a thousand dollars. He began to collect them and sort them out, in packages of a hundred, tying each package securely with twine.

He looked up from his task and saw Joe standing before him juggling flat-irons, starched shirts, and manuscripts. Now and again he reached out and added a bundle of checks to the flying miscellany that soared through the roof and out of sight in a tremendous circle. Martin struck at him, but he seized the axe and added it to the flying circle. Then he plucked Martin and added him. Martin went up through the roof, clutching at manuscripts, so that by the time he came down he had a large armful. But no sooner down than up again, and a second and a third time and countless times he flew around the circle. From far off he could hear a childish treble singing: "Waltz me around again, Willie, around, around, around."

He recovered the axe in the midst of the Milky Way of checks, starched shirts, and manuscripts, and prepared, when he came down, to kill Joe. But he did not come down. Instead, at two in the morning, Maria, having heard his groans through the thin partition, came into his room, to put hot flat-irons against his body and damp cloths upon his aching eyes.

CHAPTER XXVI

Martin Eden did not go out to hunt for a job in the morning. It was late afternoon before he came out of his delirium and gazed with aching eyes about the room. Mary, one of the tribe of Silva, eight years old, keeping watch, raised a screech at sight of his returning consciousness. Maria hurried into the room from the kitchen. She put her work-calloused hand upon his hot forehead and felt his pulse.

"You lika da eat?" she asked.

He shook his head. Eating was farthest from his desire, and he wondered that he should ever have been hungry in his life.

"I'm sick, Maria," he said weakly. "What is it? Do you know?"

"Grip," she answered. "Two or three days you alla da right. Better you no eat now. Bimeby plenty can eat, to-morrow can eat maybe."

Martin was not used to sickness, and when Maria and her little girl left him, he essayed to get up and dress. By a supreme exertion of will, with rearing brain and eyes that ached so that he could not keep them open, he managed to get out of bed, only to be left stranded by his senses upon the table. Half an hour later he managed to regain the bed, where he was content to lie with closed eyes and analyze his various pains and weaknesses. Maria came in several times to change the cold cloths on his forehead. Otherwise she left him in peace, too wise to vex him with chatter. This moved him to gratitude, and he murmured to himself, "Maria, you getta da milka ranch, all righta, all right."

Then he remembered his long-buried past of yesterday.

It seemed a life-time since he had received that letter from the *Transcontinental*, a life-time since it was all over and done with and a new page turned. He had shot his bolt, and shot it hard, and now he was down on his back. If he hadn't starved himself, he wouldn't have been caught by La Grippe. He had been run down, and he had not had the strength to throw off the germ of disease which had invaded his system. This was what resulted.

"What does it profit a man to write a whole library and lose his own life?" he demanded aloud. "This is no place for me. No more literature in mine. Me for the counting-house and ledger, the monthly salary, and the little home with Ruth."

Two days later, having eaten an egg and two slices of toast and drunk a cup of tea, he asked for his mail, but found his eyes still hurt too much to permit him to read.

"You read for me, Maria," he said. "Never mind the big, long letters. Throw them under the table. Read me the small letters."

"No can," was the answer. "Teresa, she go to school, she can."

So Teresa Silva, aged nine, opened his letters and read them to him. He listened absently to a long dun from the type-writer people, his mind busy with ways and means of finding a job. Suddenly he was shocked back to himself.

"'We offer you forty dollars for all serial rights in your story,'" Teresa slowly spelled out, "'provided you allow us to make the alterations suggested.'"

"What magazine is that?" Martin shouted. "Here, give it to me!"

He could see to read, now, and he was unaware of the pain of the action. It was the *White Mouse* that was offering him forty dollars, and the story was "The Whirlpool," another of his early horror stories. He read the letter through again and again. The editor told him plainly that he had not handled the idea properly, but that it was the idea they were buying because it was original. If they could cut the story down one-third, they would take it and send him forty dollars on receipt of his answer.

He called for pen and ink, and told the editor he could cut the story down three-thirds if he wanted to, and to send the forty dollars right along.

The letter despatched to the letter-box by Teresa, Martin lay back and thought. It wasn't a lie, after all. The *White Mouse* paid on acceptance. There were three thousand words in "The Whirlpool." Cut down a third, there would be two thousand. At forty dollars that would be two cents a word. Pay on acceptance and two cents a word — the newspapers had told the truth. And he had thought the *White Mouse* a third-rater! It was evident that he did not know the magazines. He had deemed the *Transcontinental* a first-rater, and it paid a cent for ten words. He had classed the *White Mouse* as of no account, and it paid twenty times as much as the *Transcontinental* and also had paid on acceptance.

Well, there was one thing certain: when he got well, he would not go out looking for a job. There were more stories in his head as good as "The Whirlpool," and at forty dollars apiece he could earn far more than in any job or position. Just when he thought the battle lost, it was won. He had proved for his career. The way was clear. Beginning with the *White Mouse* he would add magazine after magazine to his growing list of patrons. Hack-work could be put aside. For that matter, it had been wasted time, for it had not brought him a dollar. He would devote himself to work, good work, and he would pour out the best that was in him. He wished Ruth was there to share in his joy, and when he went over the letters left lying on his bed, he found one from her. It was sweetly reproachful, wondering what had kept him away for so dreadful a length of time. He reread the letter adoringly, dwelling over her handwriting, loving each stroke of her pen, and in the end kissing her signature.

And when he answered, he told her recklessly that he had not been to see her because his best clothes were in pawn. He told her that he had been sick, but was once more nearly well, and that inside ten days or two weeks (as soon as a letter could travel to New York City and return) he would redeem his clothes and be with her.

But Ruth did not care to wait ten days or two weeks. Besides, her lover was sick. The next afternoon, accompanied by Arthur, she arrived in the Morse carriage, to the unqualified delight of the Silva tribe and of all the urchins on the street, and to the consternation of Maria. She boxed the ears of the Silvas who crowded about the visitors on the tiny front porch, and in more than usual atrocious English tried to apologize for her appearance. Sleeves rolled up from soap-flecked arms and a wet gunny-sack around her waist told of the task at which she had been caught. So flustered was she by two such grand young people asking for her lodger, that she forgot to invite them to sit down in the little parlor. To enter Martin's room, they passed through the kitchen, warm and moist and steamy from the big washing in progress. Maria, in her excitement, jammed the bedroom and bedroom-closet doors together, and for five minutes, through the partly open door, clouds of steam, smelling of soap-suds and dirt, poured into the sick chamber.

Ruth succeeded in veering right and left and right again, and in running the narrow passage between table and bed to Martin's side; but Arthur veered too wide and fetched up with clatter and bang of pots and pans in the corner where Martin did his cooking. Arthur did not linger long. Ruth occupied the only chair, and having done his duty, he went outside and stood by the gate, the centre of seven marvelling Silvas, who watched him as they would have watched a curiosity in a side-show. All about the carriage were gathered the children from a dozen blocks, waiting and eager for some tragic and terrible dénouement. Carriages were seen on their street only for weddings and funerals. Here was neither marriage nor death: therefore, it was something transcending experience and well worth waiting for.

Martin had been wild to see Ruth. His was essentially a love-nature, and he possessed more than the average man's need for sympathy. He was starving for sympathy, which, with him, meant intelligent understanding; and he had yet to learn that Ruth's sympathy was largely sentimental and tactful, and that it proceeded from gentleness of nature rather than from understanding of the objects of her sympathy. So it was while Martin held her hand and gladly talked, that her love for him prompted her to press his hand in return, and that her eyes were moist and luminous at sight of his helplessness and of the marks suffering had stamped upon his face.

But while he told her of his two acceptances, of his despair when he received the one from the *Transcontinental*, and of the corresponding delight with which he received the one from the *White Mouse*, she did not follow him. She heard the words he uttered and understood their literal import, but she was not with him in his despair and his delight. She could not get out of herself. She was not interested in selling stories to magazines. What was important to her was matrimony. She was not aware of it, however, any more than she was aware that her desire that Martin take a position was the instinctive and preparative impulse of motherhood. She would have blushed had she been told as much in plain, set terms, and next, she might have grown indignant and asserted that her sole interest lay in the man she loved and her desire for him to make the best of himself. So, while Martin poured out his heart to her, elated with the first success his chosen work in the world had received, she paid heed to his bare words only, gazing now and again about the room, shocked by what she saw.

For the first time Ruth gazed upon the sordid face of poverty. Starving lovers had always seemed romantic to her, — but she had had no idea how starving lovers lived. She had never dreamed it could be like this. Ever her gaze shifted from the room to him and back again. The steamy smell of dirty clothes, which had entered with her from the kitchen, was sickening. Martin must be soaked with it, Ruth concluded, if that awful woman washed frequently. Such was the contagiousness of degradation. When she looked at Martin, she seemed to see the smirch left upon him by his surroundings. She had never seen him unshaven, and the three days' growth of beard on his face was repulsive to her. Not alone did it give him the same dark and murky aspect of the Silva house, inside and out, but it seemed to emphasize that animal-like strength of his which she detested. And here he was, being confirmed in his madness by the two acceptances he took such pride in telling her about. A little longer and he would have surrendered and gone to work. Now he would continue on in this horrible house, writing and starving for a few more months.

"What is that smell?" she asked suddenly.

"Some of Maria's washing smells, I imagine," was the answer. "I am growing quite accustomed to them."

"No, no; not that. It is something else. A stale, sickish smell."

Martin sampled the air before replying.

"I can't smell anything else, except stale tobacco smoke," he announced.

"That's it. It is terrible. Why do you smoke so much, Martin?"

"I don't know, except that I smoke more than usual when I am lonely. And then, too, it's such a long-standing habit. I learned when I was only a youngster."

"It is not a nice habit, you know," she reproved. "It smells to heaven."

"That's the fault of the tobacco. I can afford only the cheapest. But wait until I get that forty-dollar check. I'll use a brand that is not offensive even to the angels. But that wasn't so bad, was it, two acceptances in three days? That forty-five dollars will pay about all my debts."

"For two years' work?" she queried.

"No, for less than a week's work. Please pass me that book over on the far corner of the table, the account book with the gray cover." He opened it and began turning over the pages rapidly. "Yes, I was right. Four days for 'The Ring of Bells,' two days for 'The Whirlpool.' That's forty-five dollars for a week's work, one hundred and eighty dollars a month. That beats any salary I can command. And, besides, I'm just beginning. A thousand dollars a month is not too much to buy for you all I want you to have. A salary of five hundred a month would be too small. That forty-five dollars is just a starter. Wait till I get my stride. Then watch my smoke."

Ruth misunderstood his slang, and reverted to cigarettes.

"You smoke more than enough as it is, and the brand of tobacco will make no difference. It is the smoking itself that is not nice, no matter what the brand may be. You are a chimney, a living volcano, a perambulating smoke-stack, and you are a perfect disgrace, Martin dear, you know you are."

She leaned toward him, entreaty in her eyes, and as he looked at her delicate face and into her pure, limpid eyes, as of old he was struck with his own unworthiness.

"I wish you wouldn't smoke any more," she whispered. "Please, for — my sake."

"All right, I won't," he cried. "I'll do anything you ask, dear love, anything; you know that."

A great temptation assailed her. In an insistent way she had caught glimpses of the large, easy-going side of his nature, and she felt sure, if she asked him to cease attempting to write, that he would grant her wish. In the swift instant that elapsed, the words trembled on her lips. But she did not utter them. She was not quite brave enough; she did not quite dare. Instead, she leaned toward him to meet him, and in his arms murmured:-

"You know, it is really not for my sake, Martin, but for your own. I am sure smoking hurts you; and besides, it is not good to be a slave to anything, to a drug least of all."

"I shall always be your slave," he smiled.

"In which case, I shall begin issuing my commands."

She looked at him mischievously, though deep down she was already regretting that she had not preferred her largest request.

"I live but to obey, your majesty."

"Well, then, my first commandment is, Thou shalt not omit to shave every day. Look how you have scratched my cheek."

And so it ended in caresses and love-laughter. But she had made one point, and she could not expect to make more than one at a time. She felt a woman's pride in that she had made him stop smoking. Another time she would persuade him to take a position, for had he not said he would do anything she asked?

She left his side to explore the room, examining the clothes-lines of notes overhead, learning the mystery of the tackle used for suspending his wheel under the ceiling, and being saddened by the heap of manuscripts under the table which represented to her just so much wasted time. The oil-stove won her admiration, but on investigating the food shelves she found them empty.

"Why, you haven't anything to eat, you poor dear," she said with tender compassion. "You must be starving."

"I store my food in Maria's safe and in her pantry," he lied. "It keeps better there. No danger of my starving. Look at that."

She had come back to his side, and she saw him double his arm at the elbow, the biceps crawling under his shirt-sleeve and swelling into a knot of muscle, heavy and hard. The sight repelled her. Sentimentally, she disliked it. But her pulse, her blood, every fibre of her, loved it and yearned for it, and, in the old, inexplicable way, she leaned toward him, not away from him. And in the moment that followed, when he crushed her in his arms, the brain of her, concerned with the superficial aspects of life, was in revolt; while the heart of her, the woman of her, concerned with life itself, exulted triumphantly. It was in moments like this that she felt to the uttermost the greatness of her love for Martin, for it was almost a swoon of delight to her to feel his strong arms about her, holding her tightly, hurting her with the grip of their fervor. At such moments she found justification for her treason to her standards, for her violation of her own high ideals, and, most of all, for her tacit disobedience to her mother and father. They did not want her to marry this man. It shocked them that she should love him. It shocked her, too, sometimes, when she was apart from him, a cool and reasoning creature. With him, she loved him — in truth, at times a vexed and worried love; but love it was, a love that was stronger than she.

"This La Grippe is nothing," he was saying. "It hurts a bit, and gives one a nasty headache, but it doesn't compare with break-bone fever."

"Have you had that, too?" she queried absently, intent on the heaven-sent justification she was finding in his arms.

And so, with absent queries, she led him on, till suddenly his words startled her.

He had had the fever in a secret colony of thirty lepers on one of the Hawaiian Islands.

"But why did you go there?" she demanded.

Such royal carelessness of body seemed criminal.

"Because I didn't know," he answered. "I never dreamed of lepers. When I deserted the schooner and landed on the beach, I headed inland for some place of hiding. For three days I lived off guavas, *ohia*-apples, and bananas, all of which grew wild in the jungle. On the fourth day I found the trail — a mere foot-trail. It led inland, and it led up. It was the way I wanted to go, and it showed signs of recent travel. At one place it ran along the crest of a ridge that was no more than a knife-edge. The trail wasn't three feet wide on the crest, and on either side the ridge fell away in precipices hundreds of feet deep. One man, with plenty of ammunition, could have held it against a hundred thousand.

"It was the only way in to the hiding-place. Three hours after I found the trail I was there, in a little mountain valley, a pocket in the midst of lava peaks. The whole place was terraced for taro-patches, fruit trees grew there, and there were eight or ten grass huts. But as soon as I saw the inhabitants I knew what I'd struck. One sight of them was enough."

"What did you do?" Ruth demanded breathlessly, listening, like any Desdemona, appalled and fascinated.

"Nothing for me to do. Their leader was a kind old fellow, pretty far gone, but he ruled like a king. He had discovered the little valley and founded the settlement — all of which was against the law. But he had guns, plenty of ammunition, and those Kanakas, trained to the shooting of wild cattle and wild pig, were dead shots. No, there wasn't any running away for Martin Eden. He stayed — for three months."

"But how did you escape?"

"I'd have been there yet, if it hadn't been for a girl there, a half-Chinese, quarter-white, and quarter-Hawaiian. She was a beauty, poor thing, and well educated. Her mother, in Honolulu, was worth a million or so. Well, this girl got me away at last. Her mother financed the settlement, you see, so the girl wasn't afraid of being punished for letting me go. But she made me swear, first, never to reveal the hiding-place; and I never have. This is the first time I have even mentioned it. The girl had just the first signs of leprosy. The fingers of her right hand were slightly twisted, and there was a small spot on her arm. That was all. I guess she is dead, now."

"But weren't you frightened? And weren't you glad to get away without catching that dreadful disease?"

"Well," he confessed, "I was a bit shivery at first; but I got used to it. I used to feel sorry for that poor girl, though. That made me forget to be afraid. She was such a beauty, in spirit as well as in appearance, and she was only slightly touched; yet she was doomed to lie there, living the life of a primitive savage and rotting slowly away. Leprosy is far more terrible than you can imagine it."

"Poor thing," Ruth murmured softly. "It's a wonder she let you get away."

"How do you mean?" Martin asked unwittingly.

"Because she must have loved you," Ruth said, still softly. "Candidly, now, didn't she?"

Martin's sunburn had been bleached by his work in the laundry and by the indoor life he was living, while the hunger and the sickness had made his face even pale; and across this pallor flowed the slow wave of a blush. He was opening his mouth to speak, but Ruth shut him off.

"Never mind, don't answer; it's not necessary," she laughed.

But it seemed to him there was something metallic in her laughter, and that the light in her eyes was cold. On the spur of the moment it reminded him of a gale he had once experienced in the North Pacific. And for the moment the apparition of the gale rose before his eyes — a gale at night, with a clear sky and under a full moon, the huge seas glinting coldly in the moonlight. Next, he saw the girl in the leper refuge and remembered it was for love of him that she had let him go.

"She was noble," he said simply. "She gave me life."

That was all of the incident, but he heard Ruth muffle a dry sob in her throat, and noticed that she turned her face away to gaze out of the window. When she turned it back to him, it was composed, and there was no hint of the gale in her eyes.

"I'm such a silly," she said plaintively. "But I can't help it. I do so love you, Martin, I do, I do. I shall grow more catholic in time, but at present I can't help being jealous of those ghosts of the past, and you know your past is full of ghosts."

"It must be," she silenced his protest. "It could not be otherwise. And there's poor Arthur motioning me to come. He's tired waiting. And now good-by, dear."

"There's some kind of a mixture, put up by the druggists, that helps men to stop the use of tobacco," she called back from the door, "and I am going to send you some."

The door closed, but opened again.

"I do, I do," she whispered to him; and this time she was really gone.

Maria, with worshipful eyes that none the less were keen to note the texture of Ruth's garments and the cut of them (a cut unknown that produced an effect mysteriously beautiful), saw her to the carriage. The crowd of disappointed urchins stared till the carriage disappeared from view, then transferred their stare to Maria, who had abruptly become the most important person on the street. But it was one of her progeny who blasted Maria’s reputation by announcing that the grand visitors had been for her lodger. After that Maria dropped back into her old obscurity and Martin began to notice the respectful manner in which he was regarded by the small fry of the neighborhood. As for Maria, Martin rose in her estimation a full hundred per cent, and had the Portuguese grocer witnessed that afternoon carriage-call he would have allowed Martin an additional three-dollars-and-eighty-five-cents’ worth of credit.

CHAPTER XXVII

The sun of Martin's good fortune rose. The day after Ruth's visit, he received a check for three dollars from a New York scandal weekly in payment for three of his triolets. Two days later a newspaper published in Chicago accepted his "Treasure Hunters," promising to pay ten dollars for it on publication. The price was small, but it was the first article he had written, his very first attempt to express his thought on the printed page. To cap everything, the adventure serial for boys, his second attempt, was accepted before the end of the week by a juvenile monthly calling itself *Youth and Age*. It was true the serial was twenty-one thousand words, and they offered to pay him sixteen dollars on publication, which was something like seventy-five cents a thousand words; but it was equally true that it was the second thing he had attempted to write and that he was himself thoroughly aware of its clumsy worthlessness.

But even his earliest efforts were not marked with the clumsiness of mediocrity. What characterized them was the clumsiness of too great strength — the clumsiness which the tyro betrays when he crushes butterflies with battering rams and hammers out vignettes with a war-club. So it was that Martin was glad to sell his early efforts for songs. He knew them for what they were, and it had not taken him long to acquire this knowledge. What he pinned his faith to was his later work. He had striven to be something more than a mere writer of magazine fiction. He had sought to equip himself with the tools of artistry. On the other hand, he had not sacrificed strength. His conscious aim had been to increase his strength by avoiding excess of strength. Nor had he departed from his love of reality. His work was realism, though he had endeavored to fuse with it the fancies and beauties of imagination. What he sought was an impassioned realism, shot through with human aspiration and faith. What he wanted was life as it was, with all its spirit-groping and soul-reaching left in.

He had discovered, in the course of his reading, two schools of fiction. One treated of man as a god, ignoring his earthly origin; the other treated of man as a clod, ignoring his heaven-sent dreams and divine possibilities. Both the god and the clod schools erred, in Martin's estimation, and erred through too great singleness of sight and purpose. There was a compromise that approximated the truth, though it flattered not the school of god, while it challenged the brute-savageness of the school of clod. It was his story, “Adventure,” which had dragged with Ruth, that Martin believed had achieved his ideal of the true in fiction; and it was in an essay, “God and Clod,” that he had expressed his views on the whole general subject.

But “Adventure,” and all that he deemed his best work, still went begging among the editors. His early work counted for nothing in his eyes except for the money it brought, and his horror stories, two of which he had sold, he did not consider high work nor his best work. To him they were frankly imaginative and fantastic, though invested with all the glamour of the real, wherein lay their power. This investiture of the grotesque and impossible with reality, he looked upon as a trick — a skilful trick at best. Great literature could not reside in such a field. Their artistry was high, but he denied the worthwhileness of artistry when divorced from humanness. The trick had been to fling over the face of his artistry a mask of humanness, and this he had done in the half-dozen or so stories of the horror brand he had written before he emerged upon the high peaks of “Adventure,” “Joy,” “The Pot,” and “The Wine of Life.”

The three dollars he received for the triolets he used to eke out a precarious existence against the arrival of the *White Mouse* check. He cashed the first check with the suspicious Portuguese grocer, paying a dollar on account and dividing the remaining two dollars between the baker and the fruit store. Martin was not yet rich enough to afford meat, and he was on slim allowance when the *White Mouse* check arrived. He was divided on the cashing of it. He had never been in a bank in his life, much less been in one on business, and he had a naive and childlike desire to walk into one of the big banks down in Oakland and fling down his indorsed check for forty dollars. On the other hand, practical common sense ruled that he should cash it with his grocer and thereby make an impression that would later result in an increase of credit. Reluctantly Martin yielded to the claims of the grocer, paying his bill with him in full, and receiving in change a pocketful of jingling coin. Also, he paid the other tradesmen in full, redeemed his suit and his bicycle, paid one month’s rent on the type-writer, and paid Maria the overdue month for his room and a month in advance. This left him in his pocket, for emergencies, a balance of nearly three dollars.

In itself, this small sum seemed a fortune. Immediately on recovering his clothes he had gone to see Ruth, and on the way he could not refrain from jingling the little handful of silver in his pocket. He had been so long without money that, like a rescued starving man who cannot let the unconsumed food out of his sight, Martin could not keep his hand off the silver. He was not mean, nor avaricious, but the money meant more than so many dollars and cents. It stood for success, and the eagles stamped upon the coins were to him so many winged victories.

It came to him insensibly that it was a very good world. It certainly appeared more beautiful to him. For weeks it had been a very dull and sombre world; but now, with nearly all debts paid, three dollars jingling in his pocket, and in his mind the consciousness of success, the sun shone bright and warm, and even a rain-squall that soaked unprepared pedestrians seemed a merry happening to him. When he starved, his thoughts had dwelt often upon the thousands he knew were starving the world over; but now that he was feasted full, the fact of the thousands starving was no longer pregnant in his brain. He forgot about them, and, being in love, remembered the countless lovers in the world. Without deliberately thinking about it, *motifs* for love-lyrics began to agitate his brain. Swept away by the creative impulse, he got off the electric car, without vexation, two blocks beyond his crossing.

He found a number of persons in the Morse home. Ruth's two girl-cousins were visiting her from San Rafael, and Mrs. Morse, under pretext of entertaining them, was pursuing her plan of surrounding Ruth with young people. The campaign had begun during Martin's enforced absence, and was already in full swing. She was making a point of having at the house men who were doing things. Thus, in addition to the cousins Dorothy and Florence, Martin encountered two university professors, one of Latin, the other of English; a young army officer just back from the Philippines, one-time school-mate of Ruth's; a young fellow named Melville, private secretary to Joseph Perkins, head of the San Francisco Trust Company; and finally of the men, a live bank cashier, Charles Hapgood, a youngish man of thirty-five, graduate of Stanford University, member of the Nile Club and the Unity Club, and a conservative speaker for the Republican Party during campaigns — in short, a rising young man in every way. Among the women was one who painted portraits, another who was a professional musician, and still another who possessed the degree of Doctor of Sociology and who was locally famous for her social settlement work in the slums of San Francisco. But the women did not count for much in Mrs.

Morse's plan. At the best, they were necessary accessories. The men who did things must be drawn to the house somehow.

"Don't get excited when you talk," Ruth admonished Martin, before the ordeal of introduction began.

He bore himself a bit stiffly at first, oppressed by a sense of his own awkwardness, especially of his shoulders, which were up to their old trick of threatening destruction to furniture and ornaments. Also, he was rendered self-conscious by the company. He had never before been in contact with such exalted beings nor with so many of them. Melville, the bank cashier, fascinated him, and he resolved to investigate him at the first opportunity. For underneath Martin's awe lurked his assertive ego, and he felt the urge to measure himself with these men and women and to find out what they had learned from the books and life which he had not learned.

Ruth's eyes roved to him frequently to see how he was getting on, and she was surprised and gladdened by the ease with which he got acquainted with her cousins. He certainly did not grow excited, while being seated removed from him the worry of his shoulders. Ruth knew them for clever girls, superficially brilliant, and she could scarcely understand their praise of Martin later that night at going to bed. But he, on the other hand, a wit in his own class, a gay quizzer and laughter-maker at dances and Sunday picnics, had found the making of fun and the breaking of good-natured lances simple enough in this environment. And on this evening success stood at his back, patting him on the shoulder and telling him that he was making good, so that he could afford to laugh and make laughter and remain unabashed.

Later, Ruth's anxiety found justification. Martin and Professor Caldwell had got together in a conspicuous corner, and though Martin no longer wove the air with his hands, to Ruth's critical eye he permitted his own eyes to flash and glitter too frequently, talked too rapidly and warmly, grew too intense, and allowed his aroused blood to redden his cheeks too much. He lacked decorum and control, and was in decided contrast to the young professor of English with whom he talked.

But Martin was not concerned with appearances! He had been swift to note the other's trained mind and to appreciate his command of knowledge. Furthermore, Professor Caldwell did not realize Martin's concept of the average English professor. Martin wanted him to talk shop, and, though he seemed averse at first, succeeded in making him do it. For Martin did not see why a man should not talk shop.

"It's absurd and unfair," he had told Ruth weeks before, "this objection to talking shop. For what reason under the sun do men and women come together if not for the exchange of the best that is in them? And the best that is in them is what they are interested in, the thing by which they make their living, the thing they've specialized on and sat up days and nights over, and even dreamed about. Imagine Mr. Butler living up to social etiquette and enunciating his views on Paul Verlaine or the German drama or the novels of D'Annunzio. We'd be bored to death. I, for one, if I must listen to Mr. Butler, prefer to hear him talk about his law. It's the best that is in him, and life is so short that I want the best of every man and woman I meet."

"But," Ruth had objected, "there are the topics of general interest to all."

"There, you mistake," he had rushed on. "All persons in society, all cliques in society — or, rather, nearly all persons and cliques — ape their betters. Now, who are the best betters? The idlers, the wealthy idlers. They do not know, as a rule, the things known by the persons who are doing something in the world. To listen to conversation about such things would mean to be bored, wherefore the idlers decree that such things are shop and must not be talked about. Likewise they decree the things that are not shop and which may be talked about, and those things are the latest operas, latest novels, cards, billiards, cocktails, automobiles, horse shows, trout fishing, tuna-fishing, big-game shooting, yacht sailing, and so forth — and mark you, these are the things the idlers know. In all truth, they constitute the shop-talk of the idlers. And the funniest part of it is that many of the clever people, and all the would-be clever people, allow the idlers so to impose upon them. As for me, I want the best a man's got in him, call it shop vulgarity or anything you please."

And Ruth had not understood. This attack of his on the established had seemed to her just so much wilfulness of opinion.

So Martin contaminated Professor Caldwell with his own earnestness, challenging him to speak his mind. As Ruth paused beside them she heard Martin saying:-

"You surely don't pronounce such heresies in the University of California?"

Professor Caldwell shrugged his shoulders. “The honest taxpayer and the politician, you know. Sacramento gives us our appropriations and therefore we kowtow to Sacramento, and to the Board of Regents, and to the party press, or to the press of both parties.”

“Yes, that’s clear; but how about you?” Martin urged. “You must be a fish out of the water.”

“Few like me, I imagine, in the university pond. Sometimes I am fairly sure I am out of water, and that I should belong in Paris, in Grub Street, in a hermit’s cave, or in some sadly wild Bohemian crowd, drinking claret, — dago-red they call it in San Francisco, — dining in cheap restaurants in the Latin Quarter, and expressing vociferously radical views upon all creation. Really, I am frequently almost sure that I was cut out to be a radical. But then, there are so many questions on which I am not sure. I grow timid when I am face to face with my human frailty, which ever prevents me from grasping all the factors in any problem — human, vital problems, you know.”

And as he talked on, Martin became aware that to his own lips had come the “Song of the Trade Wind”:-

“I am strongest at noon,
But under the moon
I stiffen the bunt of the sail.”

He was almost humming the words, and it dawned upon him that the other reminded him of the trade wind, of the Northeast Trade, steady, and cool, and strong. He was equable, he was to be relied upon, and withal there was a certain bafflement about him. Martin had the feeling that he never spoke his full mind, just as he had often had the feeling that the trades never blew their strongest but always held reserves of strength that were never used. Martin’s trick of visioning was active as ever. His brain was a most accessible storehouse of remembered fact and fancy, and its contents seemed ever ordered and spread for his inspection. Whatever occurred in the instant present, Martin’s mind immediately presented associated antithesis or similitude which ordinarily expressed themselves to him in vision. It was sheerly automatic, and his visioning was an unfailing accompaniment to the living present. Just as Ruth’s face, in a momentary jealousy had called before his eyes a forgotten moonlight gale, and as Professor Caldwell made him see again the Northeast Trade herding the white billows across the purple sea, so, from moment to moment, not disconcerting but rather identifying and classifying, new memory-visions rose before him, or spread under his eyelids, or were thrown upon the screen of his consciousness. These visions came out of the actions and sensations of the past, out of things and events and books of yesterday and last week — a countless host of apparitions that, waking or sleeping, forever thronged his mind.

So it was, as he listened to Professor Caldwell's easy flow of speech — the conversation of a clever, cultured man — that Martin kept seeing himself down all his past. He saw himself when he had been quite the hoodlum, wearing a "stiff-rim" Stetson hat and a square-cut, double-breasted coat, with a certain swagger to the shoulders and possessing the ideal of being as tough as the police permitted. He did not disguise it to himself, nor attempt to palliate it. At one time in his life he had been just a common hoodlum, the leader of a gang that worried the police and terrorized honest, working-class householders. But his ideals had changed. He glanced about him at the well-bred, well-dressed men and women, and breathed into his lungs the atmosphere of culture and refinement, and at the same moment the ghost of his early youth, in stiff-rim and square-cut, with swagger and toughness, stalked across the room. This figure, of the corner hoodlum, he saw merge into himself, sitting and talking with an actual university professor.

For, after all, he had never found his permanent abiding place. He had fitted in wherever he found himself, been a favorite always and everywhere by virtue of holding his own at work and at play and by his willingness and ability to fight for his rights and command respect. But he had never taken root. He had fitted in sufficiently to satisfy his fellows but not to satisfy himself. He had been perturbed always by a feeling of unrest, had heard always the call of something from beyond, and had wandered on through life seeking it until he found books and art and love. And here he was, in the midst of all this, the only one of all the comrades he had adventured with who could have made themselves eligible for the inside of the Morse home.

But such thoughts and visions did not prevent him from following Professor Caldwell closely. And as he followed, comprehendingly and critically, he noted the unbroken field of the other's knowledge. As for himself, from moment to moment the conversation showed him gaps and open stretches, whole subjects with which he was unfamiliar. Nevertheless, thanks to his Spencer, he saw that he possessed the outlines of the field of knowledge. It was a matter only of time, when he would fill in the outline. Then watch out, he thought — ’ware shoal, everybody! He felt like sitting at the feet of the professor, worshipful and absorbent; but, as he listened, he began to discern a weakness in the other’s judgments — a weakness so stray and elusive that he might not have caught it had it not been ever present. And when he did catch it, he leapt to equality at once.

Ruth came up to them a second time, just as Martin began to speak.

“I’ll tell you where you are wrong, or, rather, what weakens your judgments,” he said. “You lack biology. It has no place in your scheme of things. — Oh, I mean the real interpretative biology, from the ground up, from the laboratory and the test-tube and the vitalized inorganic right on up to the widest aesthetic and sociological generalizations.”

Ruth was appalled. She had sat two lecture courses under Professor Caldwell and looked up to him as the living repository of all knowledge.

“I scarcely follow you,” he said dubiously.

Martin was not so sure but what he had followed him.

“Then I’ll try to explain,” he said. “I remember reading in Egyptian history something to the effect that understanding could not be had of Egyptian art without first studying the land question.”

“Quite right,” the professor nodded.

“And it seems to me,” Martin continued, “that knowledge of the land question, in turn, of all questions, for that matter, cannot be had without previous knowledge of the stuff and the constitution of life. How can we understand laws and institutions, religions and customs, without understanding, not merely the nature of the creatures that made them, but the nature of the stuff out of which the creatures are made? Is literature less human than the architecture and sculpture of Egypt? Is there one thing in the known universe that is not subject to the law of evolution? — Oh, I know there is an elaborate evolution of the various arts laid down, but it seems to me to be too mechanical. The human himself is left out. The evolution of the tool, of the harp, of music and song and dance, are all beautifully elaborated; but how about the evolution of the human himself, the development of the basic and intrinsic parts that were in him before he made his first tool or gibbered his first chant? It is that which you do not consider, and which I call biology. It is biology in its largest aspects.

"I know I express myself incoherently, but I've tried to hammer out the idea. It came to me as you were talking, so I was not primed and ready to deliver it. You spoke yourself of the human frailty that prevented one from taking all the factors into consideration. And you, in turn, — or so it seems to me, — leave out the biological factor, the very stuff out of which has been spun the fabric of all the arts, the warp and the woof of all human actions and achievements."

To Ruth's amazement, Martin was not immediately crushed, and that the professor replied in the way he did struck her as forbearance for Martin's youth. Professor Caldwell sat for a full minute, silent and fingering his watch chain.

"Do you know," he said at last, "I've had that same criticism passed on me once before — by a very great man, a scientist and evolutionist, Joseph Le Conte. But he is dead, and I thought to remain undetected; and now you come along and expose me. Seriously, though — and this is confession — I think there is something in your contention — a great deal, in fact. I am too classical, not enough up-to-date in the interpretative branches of science, and I can only plead the disadvantages of my education and a temperamental slothfulness that prevents me from doing the work. I wonder if you'll believe that I've never been inside a physics or chemistry laboratory? It is true, nevertheless. Le Conte was right, and so are you, Mr. Eden, at least to an extent — how much I do not know."

Ruth drew Martin away with her on a pretext; when she had got him aside, whispering:-

"You shouldn't have monopolized Professor Caldwell that way. There may be others who want to talk with him."

"My mistake," Martin admitted contritely. "But I'd got him stirred up, and he was so interesting that I did not think. Do you know, he is the brightest, the most intellectual, man I have ever talked with. And I'll tell you something else. I once thought that everybody who went to universities, or who sat in the high places in society, was just as brilliant and intelligent as he."

"He's an exception," she answered.

"I should say so. Whom do you want me to talk to now? — Oh, say, bring me up against that cashier-fellow."

Martin talked for fifteen minutes with him, nor could Ruth have wished better behavior on her lover's part. Not once did his eyes flash nor his cheeks flush, while the calmness and poise with which he talked surprised her. But in Martin's estimation the whole tribe of bank cashiers fell a few hundred per cent, and for the rest of the evening he labored under the impression that bank cashiers and talkers of platitudes were synonymous phrases. The army officer he found good-natured and simple, a healthy, wholesome young fellow, content to occupy the place in life into which birth and luck had flung him. On learning that he had completed two years in the university, Martin was puzzled to know where he had stored it away. Nevertheless Martin liked him better than the platitudinous bank cashier.

"I really don't object to platitudes," he told Ruth later; "but what worries me into nervousness is the pompous, smugly complacent, superior certitude with which they are uttered and the time taken to do it. Why, I could give that man the whole history of the Reformation in the time he took to tell me that the Union-Labor Party had fused with the Democrats. Do you know, he skins his words as a professional poker-player skins the cards that are dealt out to him. Some day I'll show you what I mean."

"I'm sorry you don't like him," was her reply. "He's a favorite of Mr. Butler's. Mr. Butler says he is safe and honest — calls him the Rock, Peter, and says that upon him any banking institution can well be built."

"I don't doubt it — from the little I saw of him and the less I heard from him; but I don't think so much of banks as I did. You don't mind my speaking my mind this way, dear?"

"No, no; it is most interesting."

"Yes," Martin went on heartily, "I'm no more than a barbarian getting my first impressions of civilization. Such impressions must be entertainingly novel to the civilized person."

"What did you think of my cousins?" Ruth queried.

"I liked them better than the other women. There's plenty of fun in them along with paucity of pretence."

"Then you did like the other women?"

He shook his head.

"That social-settlement woman is no more than a sociological poll-parrot. I swear, if you winnowed her out between the stars, like Tomlinson, there would be found in her not one original thought. As for the portrait-painter, she was a positive bore. She'd make a good wife for the cashier. And the musician woman! I don't care how nimble her fingers are, how perfect her technique, how wonderful her expression — the fact is, she knows nothing about music."

"She plays beautifully," Ruth protested.

"Yes, she's undoubtedly gymnastic in the externals of music, but the intrinsic spirit of music is unguessed by her. I asked her what music meant to her — you know I'm always curious to know that particular thing; and she did not know what it meant to her, except that she adored it, that it was the greatest of the arts, and that it meant more than life to her."

"You were making them talk shop," Ruth charged him.

"I confess it. And if they were failures on shop, imagine my sufferings if they had discoursed on other subjects. Why, I used to think that up here, where all the advantages of culture were enjoyed — " He paused for a moment, and watched the youthful shade of himself, in stiff-rim and square-cut, enter the door and swagger across the room. "As I was saying, up here I thought all men and women were brilliant and radiant. But now, from what little I've seen of them, they strike me as a pack of ninnies, most of them, and ninety percent of the remainder as bores. Now there's Professor Caldwell — he's different. He's a man, every inch of him and every atom of his gray matter."

Ruth's face brightened.

"Tell me about him," she urged. "Not what is large and brilliant — I know those qualities; but whatever you feel is adverse. I am most curious to know."

"Perhaps I'll get myself in a pickle." Martin debated humorously for a moment. "Suppose you tell me first. Or maybe you find in him nothing less than the best."

"I attended two lecture courses under him, and I have known him for two years; that is why I am anxious for your first impression."

"Bad impression, you mean? Well, here goes. He is all the fine things you think about him, I guess. At least, he is the finest specimen of intellectual man I have met; but he is a man with a secret shame."

"Oh, no, no!" he hastened to cry. "Nothing paltry nor vulgar. What I mean is that he strikes me as a man who has gone to the bottom of things, and is so afraid of what he saw that he makes believe to himself that he never saw it. Perhaps that's not the clearest way to express it. Here's another way. A man who has found the path to the hidden temple but has not followed it; who has, perhaps, caught glimpses of the temple and striven afterward to convince himself that it was only a mirage of foliage. Yet another way. A man who could have done things but who placed no value on the doing, and who, all the time, in his innermost heart, is regretting that he has not done them; who has secretly laughed at the rewards for doing, and yet, still more secretly, has yearned for the rewards and for the joy of doing."

"I don't read him that way," she said. "And for that matter, I don't see just what you mean."

"It is only a vague feeling on my part," Martin temporized. "I have no reason for it. It is only a feeling, and most likely it is wrong. You certainly should know him better than I."

From the evening at Ruth's Martin brought away with him strange confusions and conflicting feelings. He was disappointed in his goal, in the persons he had climbed to be with. On the other hand, he was encouraged with his success. The climb had been easier than he expected. He was superior to the climb, and (he did not, with false modesty, hide it from himself) he was superior to the beings among whom he had climbed — with the exception, of course, of Professor Caldwell. About life and the books he knew more than they, and he wondered into what nooks and crannies they had cast aside their educations. He did not know that he was himself possessed of unusual brain vigor; nor did he know that the persons who were given to probing the depths and to thinking ultimate thoughts were not to be found in the drawing rooms of the world's Morses; nor did he dream that such persons were as lonely eagles sailing solitary in the azure sky far above the earth and its swarming freight of gregarious life.

CHAPTER XXVIII

But success had lost Martin's address, and her messengers no longer came to his door. For twenty-five days, working Sundays and holidays, he toiled on "The Shame of the Sun," a long essay of some thirty thousand words. It was a deliberate attack on the mysticism of the Maeterlinck school — an attack from the citadel of positive science upon the wonder-dreamers, but an attack nevertheless that retained much of beauty and wonder of the sort compatible with ascertained fact. It was a little later that he followed up the attack with two short essays, "The Wonder-Dreamers" and "The Yardstick of the Ego." And on essays, long and short, he began to pay the travelling expenses from magazine to magazine.

During the twenty-five days spent on "The Shame of the Sun," he sold hack-work to the extent of six dollars and fifty cents. A joke had brought in fifty cents, and a second one, sold to a high-grade comic weekly, had fetched a dollar. Then two humorous poems had earned two dollars and three dollars respectively. As a result, having exhausted his credit with the tradesmen (though he had increased his credit with the grocer to five dollars), his wheel and suit of clothes went back to the pawnbroker. The type-writer people were again clamoring for money, insistently pointing out that according to the agreement rent was to be paid strictly in advance.

Encouraged by his several small sales, Martin went back to hack-work. Perhaps there was a living in it, after all. Stored away under his table were the twenty storiettes which had been rejected by the newspaper short-story syndicate. He read them over in order to find out how not to write newspaper storiettes, and so doing, reasoned out the perfect formula. He found that the newspaper storiette should never be tragic, should never end unhappily, and should never contain beauty of language, subtlety of thought, nor real delicacy of sentiment. Sentiment it must contain, plenty of it, pure and noble, of the sort that in his own early youth had brought his applause from "nigger heaven" — the "For-God-my-country-and-the-Czar" and "I-may-be-poor-but-I-am-honest" brand of sentiment.

Having learned such precautions, Martin consulted "The Duchess" for tone, and proceeded to mix according to formula. The formula consists of three parts: (1) a pair of lovers are jarred apart; (2) by some deed or event they are reunited; (3) marriage bells. The third part was an unvarying quantity, but the first and second parts could be varied an infinite number of times. Thus, the pair of lovers could be jarred apart by misunderstood motives, by accident of fate, by jealous rivals, by irate parents, by crafty guardians, by scheming relatives, and so forth and so forth; they could be reunited by a brave deed of the man lover, by a similar deed of the woman lover, by change of heart in one lover or the other, by forced confession of crafty guardian, scheming relative, or jealous rival, by voluntary confession of same, by discovery of some unguessed secret, by lover storming girl's heart, by lover making long and noble self-sacrifice, and so on, endlessly. It was very fetching to make the girl propose in the course of being reunited, and Martin discovered, bit by bit, other decidedly piquant and fetching ruses. But marriage bells at the end was the one thing he could take no liberties with; though the heavens rolled up as a scroll and the stars fell, the wedding bells must go on ringing just the same. In quantity, the formula prescribed twelve hundred words minimum dose, fifteen hundred words maximum dose.

Before he got very far along in the art of the storiette, Martin worked out half a dozen stock forms, which he always consulted when constructing storiettes. These forms were like the cunning tables used by mathematicians, which may be entered from top, bottom, right, and left, which entrances consist of scores of lines and dozens of columns, and from which may be drawn, without reasoning or thinking, thousands of different conclusions, all unchallengably precise and true. Thus, in the course of half an hour with his forms, Martin could frame up a dozen or so storiettes, which he put aside and filled in at his convenience. He found that he could fill one in, after a day of serious work, in the hour before going to bed. As he later confessed to Ruth, he could almost do it in his sleep. The real work was in constructing the frames, and that was merely mechanical.

He had no doubt whatever of the efficacy of his formula, and for once he knew the editorial mind when he said positively to himself that the first two he sent off would bring checks. And checks they brought, for four dollars each, at the end of twelve days.

In the meantime he was making fresh and alarming discoveries concerning the magazines. Though the *Transcontinental* had published "The Ring of Bells," no check was forthcoming. Martin needed it, and he wrote for it. An evasive answer and a request for more of his work was all he received. He had gone hungry two days waiting for the reply, and it was then that he put his wheel back in pawn. He wrote regularly, twice a week, to the *Transcontinental* for his five dollars, though it was only semi-occasionally that he elicited a reply. He did not know that the *Transcontinental* had been staggering along precariously for years, that it was a fourth-rater, or tenth-rater, without standing, with a crazy circulation that partly rested on petty bullying and partly on patriotic appealing, and with advertisements that were scarcely more than charitable donations. Nor did he know that the *Transcontinental* was the sole livelihood of the editor and the business manager, and that they could wring their livelihood out of it only by moving to escape paying rent and by never paying any bill they could evade. Nor could he have guessed that the particular five dollars that belonged to him had been appropriated by the business manager for the painting of his house in Alameda, which painting he performed himself, on week-day afternoons, because he could not afford to pay union wages and because the first scab he had employed had had a ladder jerked out from under him and been sent to the hospital with a broken collar-bone.

The ten dollars for which Martin had sold "Treasure Hunters" to the Chicago newspaper did not come to hand. The article had been published, as he had ascertained at the file in the Central Reading-room, but no word could he get from the editor. His letters were ignored. To satisfy himself that they had been received, he registered several of them. It was nothing less than robbery, he concluded — a cold-blooded steal; while he starved, he was pilfered of his merchandise, of his goods, the sale of which was the sole way of getting bread to eat.

Youth and Age was a weekly, and it had published two-thirds of his twenty-one-thousand-word serial when it went out of business. With it went all hopes of getting his sixteen dollars.

To cap the situation, "The Pot," which he looked upon as one of the best things he had written, was lost to him. In despair, casting about frantically among the magazines, he had sent it to *The Billow*, a society weekly in San Francisco. His chief reason for submitting it to that publication was that, having only to travel across the bay from Oakland, a quick decision could be reached. Two weeks later he was overjoyed to see, in the latest number on the news-stand, his story printed in full, illustrated, and in the place of honor. He went home with leaping pulse, wondering how much they would pay him for one of the best things he had done. Also, the celerity with which it had been accepted and published was a pleasant thought to him.

That the editor had not informed him of the acceptance made the surprise more complete. After waiting a week, two weeks, and half a week longer, desperation conquered diffidence, and he wrote to the editor of *The Billow*, suggesting that possibly through some negligence of the business manager his little account had been overlooked.

Even if it isn't more than five dollars, Martin thought to himself, it will buy enough beans and pea-soup to enable me to write half a dozen like it, and possibly as good.

Back came a cool letter from the editor that at least elicited Martin's admiration.

"We thank you," it ran, "for your excellent contribution. All of us in the office enjoyed it immensely, and, as you see, it was given the place of honor and immediate publication. We earnestly hope that you liked the illustrations.

"On rereading your letter it seems to us that you are laboring under the misapprehension that we pay for unsolicited manuscripts. This is not our custom, and of course yours was unsolicited. We assumed, naturally, when we received your story, that you understood the situation. We can only deeply regret this unfortunate misunderstanding, and assure you of our unfailing regard. Again, thanking you for your kind contribution, and hoping to receive more from you in the near future, we remain, etc."

There was also a postscript to the effect that though *The Billow* carried no free-list, it took great pleasure in sending him a complimentary subscription for the ensuing year.

After that experience, Martin typed at the top of the first sheet of all his manuscripts: "Submitted at your usual rate."

Some day, he consoled himself, they will be submitted at *my* usual rate.

He discovered in himself, at this period, a passion for perfection, under the sway of which he rewrote and polished "The Jostling Street," "The Wine of Life," "Joy," the "Sea Lyrics," and others of his earlier work. As of old, nineteen hours of labor a day was all too little to suit him. He wrote prodigiously, and he read prodigiously, forgetting in his toil the pangs caused by giving up his tobacco. Ruth's promised cure for the habit, flamboyantly labelled, he stowed away in the most inaccessible corner of his bureau. Especially during his stretches of famine he suffered from lack of the weed; but no matter how often he mastered the craving, it remained with him as strong as ever. He regarded it as the biggest thing he had ever achieved. Ruth's point of view was that he was doing no more than was right. She brought him the anti-tobacco remedy, purchased out of her glove money, and in a few days forgot all about it.

His machine-made storiettes, though he hated them and derided them, were successful. By means of them he redeemed all his pledges, paid most of his bills, and bought a new set of tires for his wheel. The storiettes at least kept the pot a-boiling and gave him time for ambitious work; while the one thing that upheld him was the forty dollars he had received from *The White Mouse*. He anchored his faith to that, and was confident that the really first-class magazines would pay an unknown writer at least an equal rate, if not a better one. But the thing was, how to get into the first-class magazines. His best stories, essays, and poems went begging among them, and yet, each month, he read reams of dull, prosy, inartistic stuff between all their various covers. If only one editor, he sometimes thought, would descend from his high seat of pride to write me one cheering line! No matter if my work is unusual, no matter if it is unfit, for prudential reasons, for their pages, surely there must be some sparks in it, somewhere, a few, to warm them to some sort of appreciation. And thereupon he would get out one or another of his manuscripts, such as "Adventure," and read it over and over in a vain attempt to vindicate the editorial silence.

As the sweet California spring came on, his period of plenty came to an end. For several weeks he had been worried by a strange silence on the part of the newspaper storiette syndicate. Then, one day, came back to him through the mail ten of his immaculate machine-made storiettes. They were accompanied by a brief letter to the effect that the syndicate was overstocked, and that some months would elapse before it would be in the market again for manuscripts. Martin had even been extravagant on the strength of those ten storiettes. Toward the last the syndicate had been paying him five dollars each for them and accepting every one he sent. So he had looked upon the ten as good as sold, and he had lived accordingly, on a basis of fifty dollars in the bank. So it was that he entered abruptly upon a lean period, wherein he continued selling his earlier efforts to publications that would not pay and submitting his later work to magazines that would not buy. Also, he resumed his trips to the pawn-broker down in Oakland. A few jokes and snatches of humorous verse, sold to the New York weeklies, made existence barely possible for him. It was at this time that he wrote letters of inquiry to the several great monthly and quarterly reviews, and learned in reply that they rarely considered unsolicited articles, and that most of their contents were written upon order by well-known specialists who were authorities in their various fields.

CHAPTER XXIX

It was a hard summer for Martin. Manuscript readers and editors were away on vacation, and publications that ordinarily returned a decision in three weeks now retained his manuscript for three months or more. The consolation he drew from it was that a saving in postage was effected by the deadlock. Only the robber-publications seemed to remain actively in business, and to them Martin disposed of all his early efforts, such as "Pearl-diving," "The Sea as a Career," "Turtle-catching," and "The Northeast Trades." For these manuscripts he never received a penny. It is true, after six months' correspondence, he effected a compromise, whereby he received a safety razor for "Turtle-catching," and that *The Acropolis*, having agreed to give him five dollars cash and five yearly subscriptions: for "The Northeast Trades," fulfilled the second part of the agreement.

For a sonnet on Stevenson he managed to wring two dollars out of a Boston editor who was running a magazine with a Matthew Arnold taste and a penny-dreadful purse. "The Peri and the Pearl," a clever skit of a poem of two hundred lines, just finished, white hot from his brain, won the heart of the editor of a San Francisco magazine published in the interest of a great railroad. When the editor wrote, offering him payment in transportation, Martin wrote back to inquire if the transportation was transferable. It was not, and so, being prevented from peddling it, he asked for the return of the poem. Back it came, with the editor's regrets, and Martin sent it to San Francisco again, this time to *The Hornet*, a pretentious monthly that had been fanned into a constellation of the first magnitude by the brilliant journalist who founded it. But *The Hornet's* light had begun to dim long before Martin was born. The editor promised Martin fifteen dollars for the poem, but, when it was published, seemed to forget about it. Several of his letters being ignored, Martin indicted an angry one which drew a reply. It was written by a new editor, who coolly informed Martin that he declined to be held responsible for the old editor's mistakes, and that he did not think much of "The Peri and the Pearl" anyway.

But *The Globe*, a Chicago magazine, gave Martin the most cruel treatment of all. He had refrained from offering his "Sea Lyrics" for publication, until driven to it by starvation. After having been rejected by a dozen magazines, they had come to rest in *The Globe* office. There were thirty poems in the collection, and he was to receive a dollar apiece for them. The first month four were published, and he promptly received a cheek for four dollars; but when he looked over the magazine, he was appalled at the slaughter. In some cases the titles had been altered: “Finis,” for instance, being changed to “The Finish,” and “The Song of the Outer Reef” to “The Song of the Coral Reef.” In one case, an absolutely different title, a misappropriate title, was substituted. In place of his own, “Medusa Lights,” the editor had printed, “The Backward Track.” But the slaughter in the body of the poems was terrifying. Martin groaned and sweated and thrust his hands through his hair. Phrases, lines, and stanzas were cut out, interchanged, or juggled about in the most incomprehensible manner. Sometimes lines and stanzas not his own were substituted for his. He could not believe that a sane editor could be guilty of such maltreatment, and his favorite hypothesis was that his poems must have been doctored by the office boy or the stenographer. Martin wrote immediately, begging the editor to cease publishing the lyrics and to return them to him.

He wrote again and again, begging, entreating, threatening, but his letters were ignored. Month by month the slaughter went on till the thirty poems were published, and month by month he received a check for those which had appeared in the current number.

Despite these various misadventures, the memory of the *White Mouse* forty-dollar check sustained him, though he was driven more and more to hack-work. He discovered a bread-and-butter field in the agricultural weeklies and trade journals, though among the religious weeklies he found he could easily starve. At his lowest ebb, when his black suit was in pawn, he made a ten-strike — or so it seemed to him — in a prize contest arranged by the County Committee of the Republican Party. There were three branches of the contest, and he entered them all, laughing at himself bitterly the while in that he was driven to such straits to live. His poem won the first prize of ten dollars, his campaign song the second prize of five dollars, his essay on the principles of the Republican Party the first prize of twenty-five dollars. Which was very gratifying to him until he tried to collect. Something had gone wrong in the County Committee, and, though a rich banker and a state senator were members of it, the money was not forthcoming. While this affair was hanging fire, he proved that he understood the principles of the Democratic Party by winning the first prize for his essay in a similar contest. And, moreover, he received the money, twenty-five dollars. But the forty dollars won in the first contest he never received.

Driven to shifts in order to see Ruth, and deciding that the long walk from north Oakland to her house and back again consumed too much time, he kept his black suit in pawn in place of his bicycle. The latter gave him exercise, saved him hours of time for work, and enabled him to see Ruth just the same. A pair of knee duck trousers and an old sweater made him a presentable wheel costume, so that he could go with Ruth on afternoon rides. Besides, he no longer had opportunity to see much of her in her own home, where Mrs. Morse was thoroughly prosecuting her campaign of entertainment. The exalted beings he met there, and to whom he had looked up but a short time before, now bored him. They were no longer exalted. He was nervous and irritable, what of his hard times, disappointments, and close application to work, and the conversation of such people was maddening. He was not unduly egotistic. He measured the narrowness of their minds by the minds of the thinkers in the books he read. At Ruth's home he never met a large mind, with the exception of Professor Caldwell, and Caldwell he had met there only once. As for the rest, they were numskulls, ninnies, superficial, dogmatic, and ignorant. It was their ignorance that astounded him. What was the matter with them? What had they done with their educations? They had had access to the same books he had. How did it happen that they had drawn nothing from them?

He knew that the great minds, the deep and rational thinkers, existed. He had his proofs from the books, the books that had educated him beyond the Morse standard. And he knew that higher intellects than those of the Morse circle were to be found in the world. He read English society novels, wherein he caught glimpses of men and women talking politics and philosophy. And he read of salons in great cities, even in the United States, where art and intellect congregated. Foolishly, in the past, he had conceived that all well-groomed persons above the working class were persons with power of intellect and vigor of beauty. Culture and collars had gone together, to him, and he had been deceived into believing that college educations and mastery were the same things.

Well, he would fight his way on and up higher. And he would take Ruth with him. Her he dearly loved, and he was confident that she would shine anywhere. As it was clear to him that he had been handicapped by his early environment, so now he perceived that she was similarly handicapped. She had not had a chance to expand. The books on her father's shelves, the paintings on the walls, the music on the piano — all was just so much meretricious display. To real literature, real painting, real music, the Morses and their kind, were dead. And bigger than such things was life, of which they were densely, hopelessly ignorant. In spite of their Unitarian proclivities and their masks of conservative broadmindedness, they were two generations behind interpretative science: their mental processes were mediaeval, while their thinking on the ultimate data of existence and of the universe struck him as the same metaphysical method that was as young as the youngest race, as old as the cave-man, and older — the same that moved the first Pleistocene ape-man to fear the dark; that moved the first hasty Hebrew savage to incarnate Eve from Adam's rib; that moved Descartes to build an idealistic system of the universe out of the projections of his own puny ego; and that moved the famous British ecclesiastic to denounce evolution in satire so scathing as to win immediate applause and leave his name a notorious scrawl on the page of history.

So Martin thought, and he thought further, till it dawned upon him that the difference between these lawyers, officers, business men, and bank cashiers he had met and the members of the working class he had known was on a par with the difference in the food they ate, clothes they wore, neighborhoods in which they lived. Certainly, in all of them was lacking the something more which he found in himself and in the books. The Morses had shown him the best their social position could produce, and he was not impressed by it. A pauper himself, a slave to the money-lender, he knew himself the superior of those he met at the Morses'; and, when his one decent suit of clothes was out of pawn, he moved among them a lord of life, quivering with a sense of outrage akin to what a prince would suffer if condemned to live with goat-herds.

"You hate and fear the socialists," he remarked to Mr. Morse, one evening at dinner; "but why? You know neither them nor their doctrines."

The conversation had been swung in that direction by Mrs. Morse, who had been invidiously singing the praises of Mr. Hapgood. The cashier was Martin's black beast, and his temper was a trifle short where the talker of platitudes was concerned.

"Yes," he had said, "Charley Hapgood is what they call a rising young man — somebody told me as much. And it is true. He'll make the

Governor's Chair before he dies, and, who knows? maybe the United States Senate."

"What makes you think so?" Mrs. Morse had inquired.

"I've heard him make a campaign speech. It was so cleverly stupid and unoriginal, and also so convincing, that the leaders cannot help but regard him as safe and sure, while his platitudes are so much like the platitudes of the average voter that — oh, well, you know you flatter any man by dressing up his own thoughts for him and presenting them to him."

"I actually think you are jealous of Mr. Hapgood," Ruth had chimed in.

"Heaven forbid!"

The look of horror on Martin's face stirred Mrs. Morse to belligerence.

"You surely don't mean to say that Mr. Hapgood is stupid?" she demanded icily.

"No more than the average Republican," was the retort, "or average Democrat, either. They are all stupid when they are not crafty, and very few of them are crafty. The only wise Republicans are the millionnaires and their conscious henchmen. They know which side their bread is buttered on, and they know why."

"I am a Republican," Mr. Morse put in lightly. "Pray, how do you classify me?"

"Oh, you are an unconscious henchman."

"Henchman?"

"Why, yes. You do corporation work. You have no working-class nor criminal practice. You don't depend upon wife-beaters and pickpockets for your income. You get your livelihood from the masters of society, and whoever feeds a man is that man's master. Yes, you are a henchman. You are interested in advancing the interests of the aggregations of capital you serve."

Mr. Morse's face was a trifle red.

"I confess, sir," he said, "that you talk like a scoundrelly socialist."

Then it was that Martin made his remark:

"You hate and fear the socialists; but why? You know neither them nor their doctrines."

"Your doctrine certainly sounds like socialism," Mr. Morse replied, while Ruth gazed anxiously from one to the other, and Mrs. Morse beamed happily at the opportunity afforded of rousing her liege lord's antagonism.

"Because I say Republicans are stupid, and hold that liberty, equality, and fraternity are exploded bubbles, does not make me a socialist," Martin said with a smile. "Because I question Jefferson and the unscientific Frenchmen who informed his mind, does not make me a socialist. Believe me, Mr. Morse, you are far nearer socialism than I who am its avowed enemy."

"Now you please to be facetious," was all the other could say.

"Not at all. I speak in all seriousness. You still believe in equality, and yet you do the work of the corporations, and the corporations, from day to day, are busily engaged in burying equality. And you call me a socialist because I deny equality, because I affirm just what you live up to. The Republicans are foes to equality, though most of them fight the battle against equality with the very word itself the slogan on their lips. In the name of equality they destroy equality. That was why I called them stupid. As for myself, I am an individualist. I believe the race is to the swift, the battle to the strong. Such is the lesson I have learned from biology, or at least think I have learned. As I said, I am an individualist, and individualism is the hereditary and eternal foe of socialism."

"But you frequent socialist meetings," Mr. Morse challenged.

"Certainly, just as spies frequent hostile camps. How else are you to learn about the enemy? Besides, I enjoy myself at their meetings. They are good fighters, and, right or wrong, they have read the books. Any one of them knows far more about sociology and all the other ologies than the average captain of industry. Yes, I have been to half a dozen of their meetings, but that doesn't make me a socialist any more than hearing Charley Hapgood orate made me a Republican."

"I can't help it," Mr. Morse said feebly, "but I still believe you incline that way."

Bless me, Martin thought to himself, he doesn't know what I was talking about. He hasn't understood a word of it. What did he do with his education, anyway?

Thus, in his development, Martin found himself face to face with economic morality, or the morality of class; and soon it became to him a grisly monster. Personally, he was an intellectual moralist, and more offending to him than platitudinous pomposity was the morality of those about him, which was a curious hotchpotch of the economic, the metaphysical, the sentimental, and the imitative.

A sample of this curious messy mixture he encountered nearer home. His sister Marian had been keeping company with an industrious young mechanic, of German extraction, who, after thoroughly learning the trade, had set up for himself in a bicycle-repair shop. Also, having got the agency for a low-grade make of wheel, he was prosperous. Marian had called on Martin in his room a short time before to announce her engagement, during which visit she had playfully inspected Martin's palm and told his fortune. On her next visit she brought Hermann von Schmidt along with her. Martin did the honors and congratulated both of them in language so easy and graceful as to affect disagreeably the peasant-mind of his sister's lover. This bad impression was further heightened by Martin's reading aloud the half-dozen stanzas of verse with which he had commemorated Marian's previous visit. It was a bit of society verse, airy and delicate, which he had named "The Palmist." He was surprised, when he finished reading it, to note no enjoyment in his sister's face. Instead, her eyes were fixed anxiously upon her betrothed, and Martin, following her gaze, saw spread on that worthy's asymmetrical features nothing but black and sullen disapproval. The incident passed over, they made an early departure, and Martin forgot all about it, though for the moment he had been puzzled that any woman, even of the working class, should not have been flattered and delighted by having poetry written about her.

Several evenings later Marian again visited him, this time alone. Nor did she waste time in coming to the point, upbraiding him sorrowfully for what he had done.

"Why, Marian," he chided, "you talk as though you were ashamed of your relatives, or of your brother at any rate."

"And I am, too," she blurted out.

Martin was bewildered by the tears of mortification he saw in her eyes. The mood, whatever it was, was genuine.

"But, Marian, why should your Hermann be jealous of my writing poetry about my own sister?"

"He ain't jealous," she sobbed. "He says it was indecent, ob — obscene."

Martin emitted a long, low whistle of incredulity, then proceeded to resurrect and read a carbon copy of "The Palmist."

"I can't see it," he said finally, proffering the manuscript to her. "Read it yourself and show me whatever strikes you as obscene — that was the word, wasn't it?"

"He says so, and he ought to know," was the answer, with a wave aside of the manuscript, accompanied by a look of loathing. "And he says you've got to tear it up. He says he won't have no wife of his with such things written about her which anybody can read. He says it's a disgrace, an' he won't stand for it."

"Now, look here, Marian, this is nothing but nonsense," Martin began; then abruptly changed his mind.

He saw before him an unhappy girl, knew the futility of attempting to convince her husband or her, and, though the whole situation was absurd and preposterous, he resolved to surrender.

"All right," he announced, tearing the manuscript into half a dozen pieces and throwing it into the waste-basket.

He contented himself with the knowledge that even then the original type-written manuscript was reposing in the office of a New York magazine. Marian and her husband would never know, and neither himself nor they nor the world would lose if the pretty, harmless poem ever were published.

Marian, starting to reach into the waste-basket, refrained.

"Can I?" she pleaded.

He nodded his head, regarding her thoughtfully as she gathered the torn pieces of manuscript and tucked them into the pocket of her jacket — ocular evidence of the success of her mission. She reminded him of Lizzie Connolly, though there was less of fire and gorgeous flaunting life in her than in that other girl of the working class whom he had seen twice. But they were on a par, the pair of them, in dress and carriage, and he smiled with inward amusement at the caprice of his fancy which suggested the appearance of either of them in Mrs. Morse's drawing-room. The amusement faded, and he was aware of a great loneliness. This sister of his and the Morse drawing-room were milestones of the road he had travelled. And he had left them behind. He glanced affectionately about him at his few books. They were all the comrades left to him.

"Hello, what's that?" he demanded in startled surprise.

Marian repeated her question.

"Why don't I go to work?" He broke into a laugh that was only half-hearted. "That Hermann of yours has been talking to you."

She shook her head.

“Don’t lie,” he commanded, and the nod of her head affirmed his charge.

“Well, you tell that Hermann of yours to mind his own business; that when I write poetry about the girl he’s keeping company with it’s his business, but that outside of that he’s got no say so. Understand?

“So you don’t think I’ll succeed as a writer, eh?” he went on. “You think I’m no good? — that I’ve fallen down and am a disgrace to the family?”

“I think it would be much better if you got a job,” she said firmly, and he saw she was sincere. “Hermann says — ”

“Damn Hermann!” he broke out good-naturedly. “What I want to know is when you’re going to get married. Also, you find out from your Hermann if he will deign to permit you to accept a wedding present from me.”

He mused over the incident after she had gone, and once or twice broke out into laughter that was bitter as he saw his sister and her betrothed, all the members of his own class and the members of Ruth’s class, directing their narrow little lives by narrow little formulas — herd-creatures, flocking together and patterning their lives by one another’s opinions, failing of being individuals and of really living life because of the childlike formulas by which they were enslaved. He summoned them before him in apparitional procession: Bernard Higginbotham arm in arm with Mr. Butler, Hermann von Schmidt cheek by jowl with Charley Hapgood, and one by one and in pairs he judged them and dismissed them — judged them by the standards of intellect and morality he had learned from the books. Vainly he asked: Where are the great souls, the great men and women? He found them not among the careless, gross, and stupid intelligences that answered the call of vision to his narrow room. He felt a loathing for them such as Circe must have felt for her swine. When he had dismissed the last one and thought himself alone, a late-comer entered, unexpected and unsummoned. Martin watched him and saw the stiff-rim, the square-cut, double-breasted coat and the swaggering shoulders, of the youthful hoodlum who had once been he.

“You were like all the rest, young fellow,” Martin sneered. “Your morality and your knowledge were just the same as theirs. You did not think and act for yourself. Your opinions, like your clothes, were ready made; your acts were shaped by popular approval. You were cock of your gang because others acclaimed you the real thing. You fought and ruled the gang, not because you liked to, — you know you really despised it, — but because the other fellows patted you on the shoulder. You licked Cheese-Face because you wouldn't give in, and you wouldn't give in partly because you were an abysmal brute and for the rest because you believed what every one about you believed, that the measure of manhood was the carnivorous ferocity displayed in injuring and marring fellow-creatures' anatomies. Why, you whelp, you even won other fellows' girls away from them, not because you wanted the girls, but because in the marrow of those about you, those who set your moral pace, was the instinct of the wild stallion and the bull-seal. Well, the years have passed, and what do you think about it now?"

As if in reply, the vision underwent a swift metamorphosis. The stiff-rim and the square-cut vanished, being replaced by milder garments; the toughness went out of the face, the hardness out of the eyes; and, the face, chastened and refined, was irradiated from an inner life of communion with beauty and knowledge. The apparition was very like his present self, and, as he regarded it, he noted the student-lamp by which it was illuminated, and the book over which it pored. He glanced at the title and read, "The Science of AEsthetics." Next, he entered into the apparition, trimmed the student-lamp, and himself went on reading "The Science of AEsthetics."

CHAPTER XXX

On a beautiful fall day, a day of similar Indian summer to that which had seen their love declared the year before, Martin read his “Love-cycle” to Ruth. It was in the afternoon, and, as before, they had ridden out to their favorite knoll in the hills. Now and again she had interrupted his reading with exclamations of pleasure, and now, as he laid the last sheet of manuscript with its fellows, he waited her judgment.

She delayed to speak, and at last she spoke haltingly, hesitating to frame in words the harshness of her thought.

“I think they are beautiful, very beautiful,” she said; “but you can’t sell them, can you? You see what I mean,” she said, almost pleaded. “This writing of yours is not practical. Something is the matter — maybe it is with the market — that prevents you from earning a living by it. And please, dear, don’t misunderstand me. I am flattered, and made proud, and all that — I could not be a true woman were it otherwise — that you should write these poems to me. But they do not make our marriage possible. Don’t you see, Martin? Don’t think me mercenary. It is love, the thought of our future, with which I am burdened. A whole year has gone by since we learned we loved each other, and our wedding day is no nearer. Don’t think me immodest in thus talking about our wedding, for really I have my heart, all that I am, at stake. Why don’t you try to get work on a newspaper, if you are so bound up in your writing? Why not become a reporter? — for a while, at least?”

“It would spoil my style,” was his answer, in a low, monotonous voice. “You have no idea how I’ve worked for style.”

“But those storiettes,” she argued. “You called them hack-work. You wrote many of them. Didn’t they spoil your style?”

“No, the cases are different. The storiettes were ground out, jaded, at the end of a long day of application to style. But a reporter’s work is all hack from morning till night, is the one paramount thing of life. And it is a whirlwind life, the life of the moment, with neither past nor future, and certainly without thought of any style but reportorial style, and that certainly is not literature. To become a reporter now, just as my style is taking form, crystallizing, would be to commit literary suicide. As it is, every storiette, every word of every storiette, was a violation of myself, of my self-respect, of my respect for beauty. I tell you it was sickening. I was guilty of sin. And I was secretly glad when the markets failed, even if my clothes did go into pawn. But the joy of writing the ‘Love-cycle’! The creative joy in its noblest form! That was compensation for everything.”

Martin did not know that Ruth was unsympathetic concerning the creative joy. She used the phrase — it was on her lips he had first heard it. She had read about it, studied about it, in the university in the course of earning her Bachelorship of Arts; but she was not original, not creative, and all manifestations of culture on her part were but harpings of the harpings of others.

“May not the editor have been right in his revision of your ‘Sea Lyrics’?” she questioned. “Remember, an editor must have proved qualifications or else he would not be an editor.”

“That’s in line with the persistence of the established,” he rejoined, his heat against the editor-folk getting the better of him. “What is, is not only right, but is the best possible. The existence of anything is sufficient vindication of its fitness to exist — to exist, mark you, as the average person unconsciously believes, not merely in present conditions, but in all conditions. It is their ignorance, of course, that makes them believe such rot — their ignorance, which is nothing more nor less than the henidical mental process described by Weininger. They think they think, and such thinkless creatures are the arbiters of the lives of the few who really think.”

He paused, overcome by the consciousness that he had been talking over Ruth’s head.

“I’m sure I don’t know who this Weininger is,” she retorted. “And you are so dreadfully general that I fail to follow you. What I was speaking of was the qualification of editors — ”

“And I’ll tell you,” he interrupted. “The chief qualification of ninety-nine per cent of all editors is failure. They have failed as writers. Don’t think they prefer the drudgery of the desk and the slavery to their circulation and to the business manager to the joy of writing. They have tried to write, and they have failed. And right there is the cursed paradox of it. Every portal to success in literature is guarded by those watch-dogs, the failures in literature. The editors, sub-editors, associate editors, most of them, and the manuscript-readers for the magazines and book-publishers, most of them, nearly all of them, are men who wanted to write and who have failed. And yet they, of all creatures under the sun the most unfit, are the very creatures who decide what shall and what shall not find its way into print — they, who have proved themselves not original, who have demonstrated that they lack the divine fire, sit in judgment upon originality and genius. And after them come the reviewers, just so many more failures. Don't tell me that they have not dreamed the dream and attempted to write poetry or fiction; for they have, and they have failed. Why, the average review is more nauseating than cod-liver oil. But you know my opinion on the reviewers and the alleged critics. There are great critics, but they are as rare as comets. If I fail as a writer, I shall have proved for the career of editorship. There's bread and butter and jam, at any rate."

Ruth's mind was quick, and her disapproval of her lover's views was buttressed by the contradiction she found in his contention.

"But, Martin, if that be so, if all the doors are closed as you have shown so conclusively, how is it possible that any of the great writers ever arrived?"

"They arrived by achieving the impossible," he answered. "They did such blazing, glorious work as to burn to ashes those that opposed them. They arrived by course of miracle, by winning a thousand-to-one wager against them. They arrived because they were Carlyle's battle-scarred giants who will not be kept down. And that is what I must do; I must achieve the impossible."

"But if you fail? You must consider me as well, Martin."

"If I fail?" He regarded her for a moment as though the thought she had uttered was unthinkable. Then intelligence illumined his eyes. "If I fail, I shall become an editor, and you will be an editor's wife."

She frowned at his facetiousness — a pretty, adorable frown that made him put his arm around her and kiss it away.

"There, that's enough," she urged, by an effort of will withdrawing herself from the fascination of his strength. "I have talked with father and mother. I never before asserted myself so against them. I demanded to be heard. I was very undutiful. They are against you, you know; but I assured them over and over of my abiding love for you, and at last father agreed that if you wanted to, you could begin right away in his office. And then, of his own accord, he said he would pay you enough at the start so that we could get married and have a little cottage somewhere. Which I think was very fine of him — don't you?"

Martin, with the dull pain of despair at his heart, mechanically reaching for the tobacco and paper (which he no longer carried) to roll a cigarette, muttered something inarticulate, and Ruth went on.

"Frankly, though, and don't let it hurt you — I tell you, to show you precisely how you stand with him — he doesn't like your radical views, and he thinks you are lazy. Of course I know you are not. I know you work hard."

How hard, even she did not know, was the thought in Martin's mind.

"Well, then," he said, "how about my views? Do you think they are so radical?"

He held her eyes and waited the answer.

"I think them, well, very disconcerting," she replied.

The question was answered for him, and so oppressed was he by the grayness of life that he forgot the tentative proposition she had made for him to go to work. And she, having gone as far as she dared, was willing to wait the answer till she should bring the question up again.

She had not long to wait. Martin had a question of his own to propound to her. He wanted to ascertain the measure of her faith in him, and within the week each was answered. Martin precipitated it by reading to her his "The Shame of the Sun."

"Why don't you become a reporter?" she asked when he had finished. "You love writing so, and I am sure you would succeed. You could rise in journalism and make a name for yourself. There are a number of great special correspondents. Their salaries are large, and their field is the world. They are sent everywhere, to the heart of Africa, like Stanley, or to interview the Pope, or to explore unknown Thibet."

"Then you don't like my essay?" he rejoined. "You believe that I have some show in journalism but none in literature?"

"No, no; I do like it. It reads well. But I am afraid it's over the heads of your readers. At least it is over mine. It sounds beautiful, but I don't understand it. Your scientific slang is beyond me. You are an extremist, you know, dear, and what may be intelligible to you may not be intelligible to the rest of us."

"I imagine it's the philosophic slang that bothers you," was all he could say.

He was flaming from the fresh reading of the ripest thought he had expressed, and her verdict stunned him.

"No matter how poorly it is done," he persisted, "don't you see anything in it? — in the thought of it, I mean?"

She shook her head.

"No, it is so different from anything I have read. I read Maeterlinck and understand him — "

"His mysticism, you understand that?" Martin flashed out.

"Yes, but this of yours, which is supposed to be an attack upon him, I don't understand. Of course, if originality counts — "

He stopped her with an impatient gesture that was not followed by speech. He became suddenly aware that she was speaking and that she had been speaking for some time.

"After all, your writing has been a toy to you," she was saying. "Surely you have played with it long enough. It is time to take up life seriously — *our* life, Martin. Hitherto you have lived solely your own."

"You want me to go to work?" he asked.

"Yes. Father has offered — "

"I understand all that," he broke in; "but what I want to know is whether or not you have lost faith in me?"

She pressed his hand mutely, her eyes dim.

"In your writing, dear," she admitted in a half-whisper.

"You've read lots of my stuff," he went on brutally. "What do you think of it? Is it utterly hopeless? How does it compare with other men's work?"

"But they sell theirs, and you — don't."

"That doesn't answer my question. Do you think that literature is not at all my vocation?"

"Then I will answer." She steeled herself to do it. "I don't think you were made to write. Forgive me, dear. You compel me to say it; and you know I know more about literature than you do."

"Yes, you are a Bachelor of Arts," he said meditatively; "and you ought to know."

"But there is more to be said," he continued, after a pause painful to both. "I know what I have in me. No one knows that so well as I. I know I shall succeed. I will not be kept down. I am afire with what I have to say in verse, and fiction, and essay. I do not ask you to have faith in that, though. I do not ask you to have faith in me, nor in my writing. What I do ask of you is to love me and have faith in love."

"A year ago I believed for two years. One of those years is yet to run. And I do believe, upon my honor and my soul, that before that year is run I shall have succeeded. You remember what you told me long ago, that I must serve my apprenticeship to writing. Well, I have served it. I have crammed it and telescoped it. With you at the end awaiting me, I have never shirked. Do you know, I have forgotten what it is to fall peacefully asleep. A few million years ago I knew what it was to sleep my fill and to awake naturally from very glut of sleep. I am awakened always now by an alarm clock. If I fall asleep early or late, I set the alarm accordingly; and this, and the putting out of the lamp, are my last conscious actions."

"When I begin to feel drowsy, I change the heavy book I am reading for a lighter one. And when I doze over that, I beat my head with my knuckles in order to drive sleep away. Somewhere I read of a man who was afraid to sleep. Kipling wrote the story. This man arranged a spur so that when unconsciousness came, his naked body pressed against the iron teeth. Well, I've done the same. I look at the time, and I resolve that not until midnight, or not until one o'clock, or two o'clock, or three o'clock, shall the spur be removed. And so it rowels me awake until the appointed time. That spur has been my bed-mate for months. I have grown so desperate that five and a half hours of sleep is an extravagance. I sleep four hours now. I am starved for sleep. There are times when I am light-headed from want of sleep, times when death, with its rest and sleep, is a positive lure to me, times when I am haunted by Longfellow's lines:

"'The sea is still and deep;
All things within its bosom sleep;
A single step and all is o'er,
A plunge, a bubble, and no more.'

"Of course, this is sheer nonsense. It comes from nervousness, from an overwrought mind. But the point is: Why have I done this? For you. To shorten my apprenticeship. To compel Success to hasten. And my apprenticeship is now served. I know my equipment. I swear that I learn more each month than the average college man learns in a year. I know it, I tell you. But were my need for you to understand not so desperate I should not tell you. It is not boasting. I measure the results by the books. Your brothers, to-day, are ignorant barbarians compared with me and the knowledge I have wrung from the books in the hours they were sleeping. Long ago I wanted to be famous. I care very little for fame now. What I want is you; I am more hungry for you than for food, or clothing, or recognition. I have a dream of laying my head on your breast and sleeping an aeon or so, and the dream will come true ere another year is gone."

His power beat against her, wave upon wave; and in the moment his will opposed hers most she felt herself most strongly drawn toward him. The strength that had always poured out from him to her was now flowering in his impassioned voice, his flashing eyes, and the vigor of life and intellect surging in him. And in that moment, and for the moment, she was aware of a rift that showed in her certitude — a rift through which she caught sight of the real Martin Eden, splendid and invincible; and as animal-trainers have their moments of doubt, so she, for the instant, seemed to doubt her power to tame this wild spirit of a man.

"And another thing," he swept on. "You love me. But why do you love me? The thing in me that compels me to write is the very thing that draws your love. You love me because I am somehow different from the men you have known and might have loved. I was not made for the desk and counting-house, for petty business squabbling, and legal jangling. Make me do such things, make me like those other men, doing the work they do, breathing the air they breathe, developing the point of view they have developed, and you have destroyed the difference, destroyed me, destroyed the thing you love. My desire to write is the most vital thing in me. Had I been a mere clod, neither would I have desired to write, nor would you have desired me for a husband."

"But you forget," she interrupted, the quick surface of her mind glimpsing a parallel. "There have been eccentric inventors, starving their families while they sought such chimeras as perpetual motion. Doubtless their wives loved them, and suffered with them and for them, not because of but in spite of their infatuation for perpetual motion."

"True," was the reply. "But there have been inventors who were not eccentric and who starved while they sought to invent practical things; and sometimes, it is recorded, they succeeded. Certainly I do not seek any impossibilities — "

"You have called it 'achieving the impossible,'" she interpolated.

"I spoke figuratively. I seek to do what men have done before me — to write and to live by my writing."

Her silence spurred him on.

“To you, then, my goal is as much a chimera as perpetual motion?” he demanded.

He read her answer in the pressure of her hand on his — the pitying mother-hand for the hurt child. And to her, just then, he was the hurt child, the infatuated man striving to achieve the impossible.

Toward the close of their talk she warned him again of the antagonism of her father and mother.

“But you love me?” he asked.

“I do! I do!” she cried.

“And I love you, not them, and nothing they do can hurt me.” Triumph sounded in his voice. “For I have faith in your love, not fear of their enmity. All things may go astray in this world, but not love. Love cannot go wrong unless it be a weakling that faints and stumbles by the way.”

CHAPTER XXXI

Martin had encountered his sister Gertrude by chance on Broadway — as it proved, a most propitious yet disconcerting chance. Waiting on the corner for a car, she had seen him first, and noted the eager, hungry lines of his face and the desperate, worried look of his eyes. In truth, he was desperate and worried. He had just come from a fruitless interview with the pawnbroker, from whom he had tried to wring an additional loan on his wheel. The muddy fall weather having come on, Martin had pledged his wheel some time since and retained his black suit.

"There's the black suit," the pawnbroker, who knew his every asset, had answered. "You needn't tell me you've gone and pledged it with that Jew, Lipka. Because if you have — "

The man had looked the threat, and Martin hastened to cry:-

"No, no; I've got it. But I want to wear it on a matter of business."

"All right," the mollified usurer had replied. "And I want it on a matter of business before I can let you have any more money. You don't think I'm in it for my health?"

"But it's a forty-dollar wheel, in good condition," Martin had argued. "And you've only let me have seven dollars on it. No, not even seven. Six and a quarter; you took the interest in advance."

"If you want some more, bring the suit," had been the reply that sent Martin out of the stuffy little den, so desperate at heart as to reflect it in his face and touch his sister to pity.

Scarcely had they met when the Telegraph Avenue car came along and stopped to take on a crowd of afternoon shoppers. Mrs. Higginbotham divined from the grip on her arm as he helped her on, that he was not going to follow her. She turned on the step and looked down upon him. His haggard face smote her to the heart again.

"Ain't you comin'?" she asked

The next moment she had descended to his side.

"I'm walking — exercise, you know," he explained.

"Then I'll go along for a few blocks," she announced. "Mebbe it'll do me good. I ain't ben feelin' any too spry these last few days."

Martin glanced at her and verified her statement in her general slovenly appearance, in the unhealthy fat, in the drooping shoulders, the tired face with the sagging lines, and in the heavy fall of her feet, without elasticity — a very caricature of the walk that belongs to a free and happy body.

“You’d better stop here,” he said, though she had already come to a halt at the first corner, “and take the next car.”

“My goodness! — if I ain’t all tired a’ready!” she panted. “But I’m just as able to walk as you in them soles. They’re that thin they’ll bu’st long before you git out to North Oakland.”

“I’ve a better pair at home,” was the answer.

“Come out to dinner to-morrow,” she invited irrelevantly. “Mr. Higginbotham won’t be there. He’s goin’ to San Leandro on business.”

Martin shook his head, but he had failed to keep back the wolfish, hungry look that leapt into his eyes at the suggestion of dinner.

“You haven’t a penny, Mart, and that’s why you’re walkin’. Exercise!” She tried to sniff contemptuously, but succeeded in producing only a sniffle. “Here, lemme see.”

And, fumbling in her satchel, she pressed a five-dollar piece into his hand. “I guess I forgot your last birthday, Mart,” she mumbled lamely.

Martin’s hand instinctively closed on the piece of gold. In the same instant he knew he ought not to accept, and found himself struggling in the throes of indecision. That bit of gold meant food, life, and light in his body and brain, power to go on writing, and — who was to say? — maybe to write something that would bring in many pieces of gold. Clear on his vision burned the manuscripts of two essays he had just completed. He saw them under the table on top of the heap of returned manuscripts for which he had no stamps, and he saw their titles, just as he had typed them — “The High Priests of Mystery,” and “The Cradle of Beauty.” He had never submitted them anywhere. They were as good as anything he had done in that line. If only he had stamps for them! Then the certitude of his ultimate success rose up in him, an able ally of hunger, and with a quick movement he slipped the coin into his pocket.

“I’ll pay you back, Gertrude, a hundred times over,” he gulped out, his throat painfully contracted and in his eyes a swift hint of moisture.

“Mark my words!” he cried with abrupt positiveness. “Before the year is out I’ll put an even hundred of those little yellow-boys into your hand. I don’t ask you to believe me. All you have to do is wait and see.”

Nor did she believe. Her incredulity made her uncomfortable, and failing of other expedient, she said:-

"I know you're hungry, Mart. It's sticking out all over you. Come in to meals any time. I'll send one of the children to tell you when Mr. Higginbotham ain't to be there. An' Mart — "

He waited, though he knew in his secret heart what she was about to say, so visible was her thought process to him.

"Don't you think it's about time you got a job?"

"You don't think I'll win out?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"Nobody has faith in me, Gertrude, except myself." His voice was passionately rebellious. "I've done good work already, plenty of it, and sooner or later it will sell."

"How do you know it is good?"

"Because — " He faltered as the whole vast field of literature and the history of literature stirred in his brain and pointed the futility of his attempting to convey to her the reasons for his faith. "Well, because it's better than ninety-nine per cent of what is published in the magazines."

"I wish't you'd listen to reason," she answered feebly, but with unwavering belief in the correctness of her diagnosis of what was ailing him. "I wish't you'd listen to reason," she repeated, "an' come to dinner to-morrow."

After Martin had helped her on the car, he hurried to the post-office and invested three of the five dollars in stamps; and when, later in the day, on the way to the Morse home, he stopped in at the post-office to weigh a large number of long, bulky envelopes, he affixed to them all the stamps save three of the two-cent denomination.

It proved a momentous night for Martin, for after dinner he met Russ Brissenden. How he chanced to come there, whose friend he was or what acquaintance brought him, Martin did not know. Nor had he the curiosity to inquire about him of Ruth. In short, Brissenden struck Martin as anaemic and feather-brained, and was promptly dismissed from his mind. An hour later he decided that Brissenden was a boor as well, what of the way he prowled about from one room to another, staring at the pictures or poking his nose into books and magazines he picked up from the table or drew from the shelves. Though a stranger in the house he finally isolated himself in the midst of the company, huddling into a capacious Morris chair and reading steadily from a thin volume he had drawn from his pocket. As he read, he abstractedly ran his fingers, with a caressing movement, through his hair. Martin noticed him no more that evening, except once when he observed him chaffing with great apparent success with several of the young women.

It chanced that when Martin was leaving, he overtook Brissenden already half down the walk to the street.

“Hello, is that you?” Martin said.

The other replied with an ungracious grunt, but swung alongside. Martin made no further attempt at conversation, and for several blocks unbroken silence lay upon them.

“Pompous old ass!”

The suddenness and the virulence of the exclamation startled Martin. He felt amused, and at the same time was aware of a growing dislike for the other.

“What do you go to such a place for?” was abruptly flung at him after another block of silence.

“Why do you?” Martin countered.

“Bless me, I don’t know,” came back. “At least this is my first indiscretion. There are twenty-four hours in each day, and I must spend them somehow. Come and have a drink.”

“All right,” Martin answered.

The next moment he was nonplussed by the readiness of his acceptance. At home was several hours’ hack-work waiting for him before he went to bed, and after he went to bed there was a volume of Weismann waiting for him, to say nothing of Herbert Spencer’s Autobiography, which was as replete for him with romance as any thrilling novel. Why should he waste any time with this man he did not like? was his thought. And yet, it was not so much the man nor the drink as was it what was associated with the drink — the bright lights, the mirrors and dazzling array of glasses, the warm and glowing faces and the resonant hum of the voices of men. That was it, it was the voices of men, optimistic men, men who breathed success and spent their money for drinks like men. He was lonely, that was what was the matter with him; that was why he had snapped at the invitation as a bonita strikes at a white rag on a hook. Not since with Joe, at Shelly Hot Springs, with the one exception of the wine he took with the Portuguese grocer, had Martin had a drink at a public bar. Mental exhaustion did not produce a craving for liquor such as physical exhaustion did, and he had felt no need for it. But just now he felt desire for the drink, or, rather, for the atmosphere wherein drinks were dispensed and disposed of. Such a place was the Grotto, where Brissenden and he lounged in capacious leather chairs and drank Scotch and soda.

They talked. They talked about many things, and now Brissenden and now Martin took turn in ordering Scotch and soda. Martin, who was extremely strong-headed, marvelled at the other's capacity for liquor, and ever and anon broke off to marvel at the other's conversation. He was not long in assuming that Brissenden knew everything, and in deciding that here was the second intellectual man he had met. But he noted that Brissenden had what Professor Caldwell lacked — namely, fire, the flashing insight and perception, the flaming uncontrol of genius. Living language flowed from him. His thin lips, like the dies of a machine, stamped out phrases that cut and stung; or again, pursing caressingly about the inchoate sound they articulated, the thin lips shaped soft and velvety things, mellow phrases of glow and glory, of haunting beauty, reverberant of the mystery and inscrutableness of life; and yet again the thin lips were like a bugle, from which rang the crash and tumult of cosmic strife, phrases that sounded clear as silver, that were luminous as starry spaces, that epitomized the final word of science and yet said something more — the poet's word, the transcendental truth, elusive and without words which could express, and which none the less found expression in the subtle and all but ungraspable connotations of common words. He, by some wonder of vision, saw beyond the farthest outpost of empiricism, where was no language for narration, and yet, by some golden miracle of speech, investing known words with unknown significances, he conveyed to Martin's consciousness messages that were incommunicable to ordinary souls.

Martin forgot his first impression of dislike. Here was the best the books had to offer coming true. Here was an intelligence, a living man for him to look up to. "I am down in the dirt at your feet," Martin repeated to himself again and again.

"You've studied biology," he said aloud, in significant allusion.

To his surprise Brissenden shook his head.

"But you are stating truths that are substantiated only by biology," Martin insisted, and was rewarded by a blank stare. "Your conclusions are in line with the books which you must have read."

“I am glad to hear it,” was the answer. “That my smattering of knowledge should enable me to short-cut my way to truth is most reassuring. As for myself, I never bother to find out if I am right or not. It is all valueless anyway. Man can never know the ultimate verities.”

“You are a disciple of Spencer!” Martin cried triumphantly.

“I haven’t read him since adolescence, and all I read then was his ‘Education.’”

“I wish I could gather knowledge as carelessly,” Martin broke out half an hour later. He had been closely analyzing Brissenden’s mental equipment. “You are a sheer dogmatist, and that’s what makes it so marvellous. You state dogmatically the latest facts which science has been able to establish only by *à posteriori* reasoning. You jump at correct conclusions. You certainly short-cut with a vengeance. You feel your way with the speed of light, by some hyperrational process, to truth.”

“Yes, that was what used to bother Father Joseph, and Brother Dutton,” Brissenden replied. “Oh, no,” he added; “I am not anything. It was a lucky trick of fate that sent me to a Catholic college for my education. Where did you pick up what you know?”

And while Martin told him, he was busy studying Brissenden, ranging from a long, lean, aristocratic face and drooping shoulders to the overcoat on a neighboring chair, its pockets sagged and bulged by the freightage of many books. Brissenden’s face and long, slender hands were browned by the sun — excessively browned, Martin thought. This sunburn bothered Martin. It was patent that Brissenden was no outdoor man. Then how had he been ravaged by the sun? Something morbid and significant attached to that sunburn, was Martin’s thought as he returned to a study of the face, narrow, with high cheek-bones and cavernous hollows, and graced with as delicate and fine an aquiline nose as Martin had ever seen. There was nothing remarkable about the size of the eyes. They were neither large nor small, while their color was a nondescript brown; but in them smouldered a fire, or, rather, lurked an expression dual and strangely contradictory. Defiant, indomitable, even harsh to excess, they at the same time aroused pity. Martin found himself pitying him he knew not why, though he was soon to learn.

“Oh, I’m a lunger,” Brissenden announced, offhand, a little later, having already stated that he came from Arizona. “I’ve been down there a couple of years living on the climate.”

"Aren't you afraid to venture it up in this climate?"

"Afraid?"

There was no special emphasis of his repetition of Martin's word. But Martin saw in that ascetic face the advertisement that there was nothing of which it was afraid. The eyes had narrowed till they were eagle-like, and Martin almost caught his breath as he noted the eagle beak with its dilated nostrils, defiant, assertive, aggressive. Magnificent, was what he commented to himself, his blood thrilling at the sight. Aloud, he quoted:-

"'Under the bludgeoning of Chance
My head is bloody but unbowed.'"

"You like Henley," Brissenden said, his expression changing swiftly to large graciousness and tenderness. "Of course, I couldn't have expected anything else of you. Ah, Henley! A brave soul. He stands out among contemporary rhymesters — magazine rhymesters — as a gladiator stands out in the midst of a band of eunuchs."

"You don't like the magazines," Martin softly impeached.

"Do you?" was snarled back at him so savagely as to startle him.

"I — I write, or, rather, try to write, for the magazines," Martin faltered.

"That's better," was the mollified rejoinder. "You try to write, but you don't succeed. I respect and admire your failure. I know what you write. I can see it with half an eye, and there's one ingredient in it that shuts it out of the magazines. It's guts, and magazines have no use for that particular commodity. What they want is wish-wash and slush, and God knows they get it, but not from you."

"I'm not above hack-work," Martin contended.

"On the contrary — " Brissenden paused and ran an insolent eye over Martin's objective poverty, passing from the well-worn tie and the saw-edged collar to the shiny sleeves of the coat and on to the slight fray of one cuff, winding up and dwelling upon Martin's sunken cheeks. "On the contrary, hack-work is above you, so far above you that you can never hope to rise to it. Why, man, I could insult you by asking you to have something to eat."

Martin felt the heat in his face of the involuntary blood, and Brissenden laughed triumphantly.

"A full man is not insulted by such an invitation," he concluded.

"You are a devil," Martin cried irritably.

"Anyway, I didn't ask you."

"You didn't dare."

"Oh, I don't know about that. I invite you now."

Brissenden half rose from his chair as he spoke, as if with the intention of departing to the restaurant forthwith.

Martin's fists were tight-clenched, and his blood was drumming in his temples.

"Bosco! He eats 'em alive! Eats 'em alive!" Brissenden exclaimed, imitating the *spieler* of a locally famous snake-eater.

"I could certainly eat you alive," Martin said, in turn running insolent eyes over the other's disease-ravaged frame.

"Only I'm not worthy of it?"

"On the contrary," Martin considered, "because the incident is not worthy." He broke into a laugh, hearty and wholesome. "I confess you made a fool of me, Brissenden. That I am hungry and you are aware of it are only ordinary phenomena, and there's no disgrace. You see, I laugh at the conventional little moralities of the herd; then you drift by, say a sharp, true word, and immediately I am the slave of the same little moralities."

"You were insulted," Brissenden affirmed.

"I certainly was, a moment ago. The prejudice of early youth, you know. I learned such things then, and they cheapen what I have since learned. They are the skeletons in my particular closet."

"But you've got the door shut on them now?"

"I certainly have."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"Then let's go and get something to eat."

"I'll go you," Martin answered, attempting to pay for the current Scotch and soda with the last change from his two dollars and seeing the waiter bullied by Brissenden into putting that change back on the table.

Martin pocketed it with a grimace, and felt for a moment the kindly weight of Brissenden's hand upon his shoulder.

CHAPTER XXXII

Promptly, the next afternoon, Maria was excited by Martin's second visitor. But she did not lose her head this time, for she seated Brissenden in her parlor's grandeur of respectability.

"Hope you don't mind my coming?" Brissenden began.

"No, no, not at all," Martin answered, shaking hands and waving him to the solitary chair, himself taking to the bed. "But how did you know where I lived?"

"Called up the Morses. Miss Morse answered the 'phone. And here I am." He tugged at his coat pocket and flung a thin volume on the table. "There's a book, by a poet. Read it and keep it." And then, in reply to Martin's protest: "What have I to do with books? I had another hemorrhage this morning. Got any whiskey? No, of course not. Wait a minute."

He was off and away. Martin watched his long figure go down the outside steps, and, on turning to close the gate, noted with a pang the shoulders, which had once been broad, drawn in now over, the collapsed ruin of the chest. Martin got two tumblers, and fell to reading the book of verse, Henry Vaughn Marlow's latest collection.

"No Scotch," Brissenden announced on his return. "The beggar sells nothing but American whiskey. But here's a quart of it."

"I'll send one of the youngsters for lemons, and we'll make a toddy," Martin offered.

"I wonder what a book like that will earn Marlow?" he went on, holding up the volume in question.

"Possibly fifty dollars," came the answer. "Though he's lucky if he pulls even on it, or if he can inveigle a publisher to risk bringing it out."

"Then one can't make a living out of poetry?"

Martin's tone and face alike showed his dejection.

"Certainly not. What fool expects to? Out of rhyming, yes. There's Bruce, and Virginia Spring, and Sedgwick. They do very nicely. But poetry — do you know how Vaughn Marlow makes his living? — teaching in a boys' cramming-joint down in Pennsylvania, and of all private little hells such a billet is the limit. I wouldn't trade places with him if he had fifty years of life before him. And yet his work stands out from the ruck of the contemporary versifiers as a balas ruby among carrots. And the reviews he gets! Damn them, all of them, the crass manikins!"

"Too much is written by the men who can't write about the men who do write," Martin concurred. "Why, I was appalled at the quantities of rubbish written about Stevenson and his work."

"Ghouls and harpies!" Brissenden snapped out with clicking teeth. "Yes, I know the spawn — complacently pecking at him for his Father Damien letter, analyzing him, weighing him — "

"Measuring him by the yardstick of their own miserable egos," Martin broke in.

"Yes, that's it, a good phrase, — mouthing and besliming the True, and Beautiful, and Good, and finally patting him on the back and saying, 'Good dog, Fido.' Faugh! 'The little chattering daws of men,' Richard Realf called them the night he died."

"Pecking at star-dust," Martin took up the strain warmly; "at the meteoric flight of the master-men. I once wrote a squib on them — the critics, or the reviewers, rather."

"Let's see it," Brissenden begged eagerly.

So Martin unearthed a carbon copy of "Star-dust," and during the reading of it Brissenden chuckled, rubbed his hands, and forgot to sip his toddy.

"Strikes me you're a bit of star-dust yourself, flung into a world of cowled gnomes who cannot see," was his comment at the end of it. "Of course it was snapped up by the first magazine?"

Martin ran over the pages of his manuscript book. "It has been refused by twenty-seven of them."

Brissenden essayed a long and hearty laugh, but broke down in a fit of coughing.

"Say, you needn't tell me you haven't tackled poetry," he gasped. "Let me see some of it."

"Don't read it now," Martin pleaded. "I want to talk with you. I'll make up a bundle and you can take it home."

Brissenden departed with the "Love-cycle," and "The Peri and the Pearl," returning next day to greet Martin with:-

"I want more."

Not only did he assure Martin that he was a poet, but Martin learned that Brissenden also was one. He was swept off his feet by the other's work, and astounded that no attempt had been made to publish it.

"A plague on all their houses!" was Brissenden's answer to Martin's volunteering to market his work for him. "Love Beauty for its own sake," was his counsel, "and leave the magazines alone. Back to your ships and your sea — that's my advice to you, Martin Eden. What do you want in these sick and rotten cities of men? You are cutting your throat every day you waste in them trying to prostitute beauty to the needs of magazinedom. What was it you quoted me the other day? — Oh, yes, 'Man, the latest of the ephemera.' Well, what do you, the latest of the ephemera, want with fame? If you got it, it would be poison to you. You are too simple, too elemental, and too rational, by my faith, to prosper on such pap. I hope you never do sell a line to the magazines. Beauty is the only master to serve. Serve her and damn the multitude! Success! What in hell's success if it isn't right there in your Stevenson sonnet, which outranks Henley's 'Apparition,' in that 'Love-cycle,' in those sea-poems?

"It is not in what you succeed in doing that you get your joy, but in the doing of it. You can't tell me. I know it. You know it. Beauty hurts you. It is an everlasting pain in you, a wound that does not heal, a knife of flame. Why should you palter with magazines? Let beauty be your end. Why should you mint beauty into gold? Anyway, you can't; so there's no use in my getting excited over it. You can read the magazines for a thousand years and you won't find the value of one line of Keats. Leave fame and coin alone, sign away on a ship to-morrow, and go back to your sea."

"Not for fame, but for love," Martin laughed. "Love seems to have no place in your Cosmos; in mine, Beauty is the handmaiden of Love."

Brissenden looked at him pityingly and admiringly. "You are so young, Martin boy, so young. You will flutter high, but your wings are of the finest gauze, dusted with the fairest pigments. Do not scorch them. But of course you have scorched them already. It required some glorified petticoat to account for that 'Love-cycle,' and that's the shame of it."

"It glorifies love as well as the petticoat," Martin laughed.

"The philosophy of madness," was the retort. "So have I assured myself when wandering in hasheesh dreams. But beware. These bourgeois cities will kill you. Look at that den of traitors where I met you. Dry rot is no name for it. One can't keep his sanity in such an atmosphere. It's degrading. There's not one of them who is not degrading, man and woman, all of them animated stomachs guided by the high intellectual and artistic impulses of clams — ”

He broke off suddenly and regarded Martin. Then, with a flash of divination, he saw the situation. The expression on his face turned to wondering horror.

“And you wrote that tremendous ‘Love-cycle’ to her — that pale, shrivelled, female thing!”

The next instant Martin’s right hand had shot to a throttling clutch on his throat, and he was being shaken till his teeth rattled. But Martin, looking into his eyes, saw no fear there, — naught but a curious and mocking devil. Martin remembered himself, and flung Brissenden, by the neck, sidelong upon the bed, at the same moment releasing his hold.

Brissenden panted and gasped painfully for a moment, then began to chuckle.

“You had made me eternally your debtor had you shaken out the flame,” he said.

“My nerves are on a hair-trigger these days,” Martin apologized. “Hope I didn’t hurt you. Here, let me mix a fresh toddy.”

“Ah, you young Greek!” Brissenden went on. “I wonder if you take just pride in that body of yours. You are devilish strong. You are a young panther, a lion cub. Well, well, it is you who must pay for that strength.”

“What do you mean?” Martin asked curiously, passing aim a glass. “Here, down this and be good.”

“Because — ” Brissenden sipped his toddy and smiled appreciation of it. “Because of the women. They will worry you until you die, as they have already worried you, or else I was born yesterday. Now there’s no use in your choking me; I’m going to have my say. This is undoubtedly your calf love; but for Beauty’s sake show better taste next time. What under heaven do you want with a daughter of the bourgeoisie? Leave them alone. Pick out some great, wanton flame of a woman, who laughs at life and jeers at death and loves one while she may. There are such women, and they will love you just as readily as any pusillanimous product of bourgeois sheltered life.”

“Pusillanimous?” Martin protested.

“Just so, pusillanimous; prattling out little moralities that have been prattled into them, and afraid to live life. They will love you, Martin, but they will love their little moralities more. What you want is the magnificent abandon of life, the great free souls, the blazing butterflies and not the little gray moths. Oh, you will grow tired of them, too, of all the female things, if you are unlucky enough to live. But you won't live. You won't go back to your ships and sea; therefore, you'll hang around these pest-holes of cities until your bones are rotten, and then you'll die."

"You can lecture me, but you can't make me talk back," Martin said. "After all, you have but the wisdom of your temperament, and the wisdom of my temperament is just as unimpeachable as yours."

They disagreed about love, and the magazines, and many things, but they liked each other, and on Martin's part it was no less than a profound liking. Day after day they were together, if for no more than the hour Brissenden spent in Martin's stuffy room. Brissenden never arrived without his quart of whiskey, and when they dined together down-town, he drank Scotch and soda throughout the meal. He invariably paid the way for both, and it was through him that Martin learned the refinements of food, drank his first champagne, and made acquaintance with Rhenish wines.

But Brissenden was always an enigma. With the face of an ascetic, he was, in all the failing blood of him, a frank voluptuary. He was unafraid to die, bitter and cynical of all the ways of living; and yet, dying, he loved life, to the last atom of it. He was possessed by a madness to live, to thrill, "to squirm my little space in the cosmic dust whence I came," as he phrased it once himself. He had tampered with drugs and done many strange things in quest of new thrills, new sensations. As he told Martin, he had once gone three days without water, had done so voluntarily, in order to experience the exquisite delight of such a thirst assuaged. Who or what he was, Martin never learned. He was a man without a past, whose future was the imminent grave and whose present was a bitter fever of living.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Martin was steadily losing his battle. Economize as he would, the earnings from hack-work did not balance expenses. Thanksgiving found him with his black suit in pawn and unable to accept the Morses' invitation to dinner. Ruth was not made happy by his reason for not coming, and the corresponding effect on him was one of desperation. He told her that he would come, after all; that he would go over to San Francisco, to the *Transcontinental* office, collect the five dollars due him, and with it redeem his suit of clothes.

In the morning he borrowed ten cents from Maria. He would have borrowed it, by preference, from Brissenden, but that erratic individual had disappeared. Two weeks had passed since Martin had seen him, and he vainly cudgelled his brains for some cause of offence. The ten cents carried Martin across the ferry to San Francisco, and as he walked up Market Street he speculated upon his predicament in case he failed to collect the money. There would then be no way for him to return to Oakland, and he knew no one in San Francisco from whom to borrow another ten cents.

The door to the *Transcontinental* office was ajar, and Martin, in the act of opening it, was brought to a sudden pause by a loud voice from within, which exclaimed:-"But that is not the question, Mr. Ford." (Ford, Martin knew, from his correspondence, to be the editor's name.) "The question is, are you prepared to pay? — cash, and cash down, I mean? I am not interested in the prospects of the *Transcontinental* and what you expect to make it next year. What I want is to be paid for what I do. And I tell you, right now, the Christmas *Transcontinental* don't go to press till I have the money in my hand. Good day. When you get the money, come and see me."

The door jerked open, and the man flung past Martin, with an angry countenance and went down the corridor, muttering curses and clenching his fists. Martin decided not to enter immediately, and lingered in the hallways for a quarter of an hour. Then he shoved the door open and walked in. It was a new experience, the first time he had been inside an editorial office. Cards evidently were not necessary in that office, for the boy carried word to an inner room that there was a man who wanted to see Mr. Ford. Returning, the boy beckoned him from halfway across the room and led him to the private office, the editorial sanctum. Martin's first impression was of the disorder and cluttered confusion of the room. Next he noticed a bewhiskered, youthful-looking man, sitting at a roll-top desk, who regarded him curiously. Martin marvelled at the calm repose of his face. It was evident that the squabble with the printer had not affected his equanimity.

"I — I am Martin Eden," Martin began the conversation. ("And I want my five dollars," was what he would have liked to say.)

But this was his first editor, and under the circumstances he did not desire to scare him too abruptly. To his surprise, Mr. Ford leaped into the air with a "You don't say so!" and the next moment, with both hands, was shaking Martin's hand effusively.

"Can't say how glad I am to see you, Mr. Eden. Often wondered what you were like."

Here he held Martin off at arm's length and ran his beaming eyes over Martin's second-best suit, which was also his worst suit, and which was ragged and past repair, though the trousers showed the careful crease he had put in with Maria's flat-irons.

"I confess, though, I conceived you to be a much older man than you are. Your story, you know, showed such breadth, and vigor, such maturity and depth of thought. A masterpiece, that story — I knew it when I had read the first half-dozen lines. Let me tell you how I first read it. But no; first let me introduce you to the staff."

Still talking, Mr. Ford led him into the general office, where he introduced him to the associate editor, Mr. White, a slender, frail little man whose hand seemed strangely cold, as if he were suffering from a chill, and whose whiskers were sparse and silky.

"And Mr. Ends, Mr. Eden. Mr. Ends is our business manager, you know."

Martin found himself shaking hands with a cranky-eyed, bald-headed man, whose face looked youthful enough from what little could be seen of it, for most of it was covered by a snow-white beard, carefully trimmed — by his wife, who did it on Sundays, at which times she also shaved the back of his neck.

The three men surrounded Martin, all talking admiringly and at once, until it seemed to him that they were talking against time for a wager.

"We often wondered why you didn't call," Mr. White was saying.

“I didn’t have the carfare, and I live across the Bay,” Martin answered bluntly, with the idea of showing them his imperative need for the money.

Surely, he thought to himself, my glad rags in themselves are eloquent advertisement of my need. Time and again, whenever opportunity offered, he hinted about the purpose of his business. But his admirers’ ears were deaf. They sang his praises, told him what they had thought of his story at first sight, what they subsequently thought, what their wives and families thought; but not one hint did they breathe of intention to pay him for it.

“Did I tell you how I first read your story?” Mr. Ford said. “Of course I didn’t. I was coming west from New York, and when the train stopped at Ogden, the train-boy on the new run brought aboard the current number of the *Transcontinental*.”

My God! Martin thought; you can travel in a Pullman while I starve for the paltry five dollars you owe me. A wave of anger rushed over him. The wrong done him by the *Transcontinental* loomed colossal, for strong upon him were all the dreary months of vain yearning, of hunger and privation, and his present hunger awoke and gnawed at him, reminding him that he had eaten nothing since the day before, and little enough then. For the moment he saw red. These creatures were not even robbers. They were sneak-thieves. By lies and broken promises they had tricked him out of his story. Well, he would show them. And a great resolve surged into his will to the effect that he would not leave the office until he got his money. He remembered, if he did not get it, that there was no way for him to go back to Oakland. He controlled himself with an effort, but not before the wolfish expression of his face had awed and perturbed them.

They became more voluble than ever. Mr. Ford started anew to tell how he had first read “The Ring of Bells,” and Mr. Ends at the same time was striving to repeat his niece’s appreciation of “The Ring of Bells,” said niece being a school-teacher in Alameda.

“I’ll tell you what I came for,” Martin said finally. “To be paid for that story all of you like so well. Five dollars, I believe, is what you promised me would be paid on publication.”

Mr. Ford, with an expression on his mobile features of mediate and happy acquiescence, started to reach for his pocket, then turned suddenly to Mr. Ends, and said that he had left his money home. That Mr. Ends resented this, was patent; and Martin saw the twitch of his arm as if to protect his trousers pocket. Martin knew that the money was there.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Ends, "but I paid the printer not an hour ago, and he took my ready change. It was careless of me to be so short; but the bill was not yet due, and the printer's request, as a favor, to make an immediate advance, was quite unexpected."

Both men looked expectantly at Mr. White, but that gentleman laughed and shrugged his shoulders. His conscience was clean at any rate. He had come into the *Transcontinental* to learn magazine-literature, instead of which he had principally learned finance. The *Transcontinental* owed him four months' salary, and he knew that the printer must be appeased before the associate editor.

"It's rather absurd, Mr. Eden, to have caught us in this shape," Mr. Ford preambled airily. "All carelessness, I assure you. But I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll mail you a check the first thing in the morning. You have Mr. Eden's address, haven't you, Mr. Ends?"

Yes, Mr. Ends had the address, and the check would be mailed the first thing in the morning. Martin's knowledge of banks and checks was hazy, but he could see no reason why they should not give him the check on this day just as well as on the next.

"Then it is understood, Mr. Eden, that we'll mail you the check to-morrow?" Mr. Ford said.

"I need the money to-day," Martin answered stolidly.

"The unfortunate circumstances — if you had chanced here any other day," Mr. Ford began suavely, only to be interrupted by Mr. Ends, whose cranky eyes justified themselves in his shortness of temper.

"Mr. Ford has already explained the situation," he said with asperity. "And so have I. The check will be mailed — "

"I also have explained," Martin broke in, "and I have explained that I want the money to-day."

He had felt his pulse quicken a trifle at the business manager's brusqueness, and upon him he kept an alert eye, for it was in that gentleman's trousers pocket that he divined the *Transcontinental's* ready cash was reposing.

"It is too bad — " Mr. Ford began.

But at that moment, with an impatient movement, Mr. Ends turned as if about to leave the room. At the same instant Martin sprang for him, clutching him by the throat with one hand in such fashion that Mr. Ends' snow-white beard, still maintaining its immaculate trimness, pointed ceilingward at an angle of forty-five degrees. To the horror of Mr. White and Mr. Ford, they saw their business manager shaken like an Astrakhan rug.

"Dig up, you venerable discourager of rising young talent!" Martin exhorted. "Dig up, or I'll shake it out of you, even if it's all in nickels." Then, to the two affrighted onlookers: "Keep away! If you interfere, somebody's liable to get hurt."

Mr. Ends was choking, and it was not until the grip on his throat was eased that he was able to signify his acquiescence in the digging-up programme. All together, after repeated digs, its trousers pocket yielded four dollars and fifteen cents.

"Inside out with it," Martin commanded.

An additional ten cents fell out. Martin counted the result of his raid a second time to make sure.

"You next!" he shouted at Mr. Ford. "I want seventy-five cents more."

Mr. Ford did not wait, but ransacked his pockets, with the result of sixty cents.

"Sure that is all?" Martin demanded menacingly, possessing himself of it. "What have you got in your vest pockets?"

In token of his good faith, Mr. Ford turned two of his pockets inside out. A strip of cardboard fell to the floor from one of them. He recovered it and was in the act of returning it, when Martin cried:-

"What's that? — A ferry ticket? Here, give it to me. It's worth ten cents. I'll credit you with it. I've now got four dollars and ninety-five cents, including the ticket. Five cents is still due me."

He looked fiercely at Mr. White, and found that fragile creature in the act of handing him a nickel.

"Thank you," Martin said, addressing them collectively. "I wish you a good day."

"Robber!" Mr. Ends snarled after him.

"Sneak-thief!" Martin retorted, slamming the door as he passed out.

Martin was elated — so elated that when he recollected that *The Hornet* owed him fifteen dollars for "The Peri and the Pearl," he decided forthwith to go and collect it. But *The Hornet* was run by a set of clean-shaven, strapping young men, frank buccaneers who robbed everything and everybody, not excepting one another. After some breakage of the office furniture, the editor (an ex-college athlete), ably assisted by the business manager, an advertising agent, and the porter, succeeded in removing Martin from the office and in accelerating, by initial impulse, his descent of the first flight of stairs.

"Come again, Mr. Eden; glad to see you any time," they laughed down at him from the landing above.

Martin grinned as he picked himself up.

"Phew!" he murmured back. "The *Transcontinental* crowd were nanny-goats, but you fellows are a lot of prize-fighters."

More laughter greeted this.

"I must say, Mr. Eden," the editor of *The Hornet* called down, "that for a poet you can go some yourself. Where did you learn that right cross — if I may ask?"

"Where you learned that half-Nelson," Martin answered. "Anyway, you're going to have a black eye."

"I hope your neck doesn't stiffen up," the editor wished solicitously: "What do you say we all go out and have a drink on it — not the neck, of course, but the little rough-house?"

"I'll go you if I lose," Martin accepted.

And robbers and robbed drank together, amicably agreeing that the battle was to the strong, and that the fifteen dollars for "The Peri and the Pearl" belonged by right to *The Hornet's* editorial staff.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Arthur remained at the gate while Ruth climbed Maria's front steps. She heard the rapid click of the type-writer, and when Martin let her in, found him on the last page of a manuscript. She had come to make certain whether or not he would be at their table for Thanksgiving dinner; but before she could broach the subject Martin plunged into the one with which he was full.

"Here, let me read you this," he cried, separating the carbon copies and running the pages of manuscript into shape. "It's my latest, and different from anything I've done. It is so altogether different that I am almost afraid of it, and yet I've a sneaking idea it is good. You be judge. It's an Hawaiian story. I've called it 'Wiki-wiki.'"

His face was bright with the creative glow, though she shivered in the cold room and had been struck by the coldness of his hands at greeting. She listened closely while he read, and though he from time to time had seen only disapprobation in her face, at the close he asked:-

"Frankly, what do you think of it?"

"I — I don't know," she, answered. "Will it — do you think it will sell?"

"I'm afraid not," was the confession. "It's too strong for the magazines. But it's true, on my word it's true."

"But why do you persist in writing such things when you know they won't sell?" she went on inexorably. "The reason for your writing is to make a living, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's right; but the miserable story got away with me. I couldn't help writing it. It demanded to be written."

"But that character, that Wiki-Wiki, why do you make him talk so roughly? Surely it will offend your readers, and surely that is why the editors are justified in refusing your work."

"Because the real Wiki-Wiki would have talked that way."

"But it is not good taste."

"It is life," he replied bluntly. "It is real. It is true. And I must write life as I see it."

She made no answer, and for an awkward moment they sat silent. It was because he loved her that he did not quite understand her, and she could not understand him because he was so large that he bulked beyond her horizon.

“Well, I’ve collected from the *Transcontinental*,” he said in an effort to shift the conversation to a more comfortable subject. The picture of the bewhiskered trio, as he had last seen them, mulcted of four dollars and ninety cents and a ferry ticket, made him chuckle.

“Then you’ll come!” she cried joyously. “That was what I came to find out.”

“Come?” he muttered absently. “Where?”

“Why, to dinner to-morrow. You know you said you’d recover your suit if you got that money.”

“I forgot all about it,” he said humbly. “You see, this morning the poundman got Maria’s two cows and the baby calf, and — well, it happened that Maria didn’t have any money, and so I had to recover her cows for her. That’s where the *Transcontinental* fiver went — ‘The Ring of Bells’ went into the poundman’s pocket.”

“Then you won’t come?”

He looked down at his clothing.

“I can’t.”

Tears of disappointment and reproach glistened in her blue eyes, but she said nothing.

“Next Thanksgiving you’ll have dinner with me in Delmonico’s,” he said cheerily; “or in London, or Paris, or anywhere you wish. I know it.”

“I saw in the paper a few days ago,” she announced abruptly, “that there had been several local appointments to the Railway Mail. You passed first, didn’t you?”

He was compelled to admit that the call had come for him, but that he had declined it. “I was so sure — I am so sure — of myself,” he concluded. “A year from now I’ll be earning more than a dozen men in the Railway Mail. You wait and see.”

“Oh,” was all she said, when he finished. She stood up, pulling at her gloves. “I must go, Martin. Arthur is waiting for me.”

He took her in his arms and kissed her, but she proved a passive sweetheart. There was no tenseness in her body, her arms did not go around him, and her lips met his without their wonted pressure.

She was angry with him, he concluded, as he returned from the gate. But why? It was unfortunate that the poundman had gobbled Maria’s cows. But it was only a stroke of fate. Nobody could be blamed for it. Nor did it enter his head that he could have done aught otherwise than what he had done. Well, yes, he was to blame a little, was his next thought, for having refused the call to the Railway Mail. And she had not liked "Wiki-Wiki."

He turned at the head of the steps to meet the letter-carrier on his afternoon round. The ever recurrent fever of expectancy assailed Martin as he took the bundle of long envelopes. One was not long. It was short and thin, and outside was printed the address of *The New York Outview*. He paused in the act of tearing the envelope open. It could not be an acceptance. He had no manuscripts with that publication. Perhaps — his heart almost stood still at the — wild thought — perhaps they were ordering an article from him; but the next instant he dismissed the surmise as hopelessly impossible.

It was a short, formal letter, signed by the office editor, merely informing him that an anonymous letter which they had received was enclosed, and that he could rest assured the *Outview's* staff never under any circumstances gave consideration to anonymous correspondence.

The enclosed letter Martin found to be crudely printed by hand. It was a hotchpotch of illiterate abuse of Martin, and of assertion that the "so-called Martin Eden" who was selling stories to magazines was no writer at all, and that in reality he was stealing stories from old magazines, typing them, and sending them out as his own. The envelope was postmarked "San Leandro." Martin did not require a second thought to discover the author. Higginbotham's grammar, Higginbotham's colloquialisms, Higginbotham's mental quirks and processes, were apparent throughout. Martin saw in every line, not the fine Italian hand, but the coarse grocer's fist, of his brother-in-law.

But why? he vainly questioned. What injury had he done Bernard Higginbotham? The thing was so unreasonable, so wanton. There was no explaining it. In the course of the week a dozen similar letters were forwarded to Martin by the editors of various Eastern magazines. The editors were behaving handsomely, Martin concluded. He was wholly unknown to them, yet some of them had even been sympathetic. It was evident that they detested anonymity. He saw that the malicious attempt to hurt him had failed. In fact, if anything came of it, it was bound to be good, for at least his name had been called to the attention of a number of editors. Sometime, perhaps, reading a submitted manuscript of his, they might remember him as the fellow about whom they had received an anonymous letter. And who was to say that such a remembrance might not sway the balance of their judgment just a trifle in his favor?

It was about this time that Martin took a great slump in Maria's estimation. He found her in the kitchen one morning groaning with pain, tears of weakness running down her cheeks, vainly endeavoring to put through a large ironing. He promptly diagnosed her affliction as La Grippe, dosed her with hot whiskey (the remnants in the bottles for which Brissenden was responsible), and ordered her to bed. But Maria was refractory. The ironing had to be done, she protested, and delivered that night, or else there would be no food on the morrow for the seven small and hungry Silvas.

To her astonishment (and it was something that she never ceased from relating to her dying day), she saw Martin Eden seize an iron from the stove and throw a fancy shirt-waist on the ironing-board. It was Kate Flanagan's best Sunday waist, than whom there was no more exacting and fastidiously dressed woman in Maria's world. Also, Miss Flanagan had sent special instruction that said waist must be delivered by that night. As every one knew, she was keeping company with John Collins, the blacksmith, and, as Maria knew privily, Miss Flanagan and Mr. Collins were going next day to Golden Gate Park. Vain was Maria's attempt to rescue the garment. Martin guided her tottering footsteps to a chair, from where she watched him with bulging eyes. In a quarter of the time it would have taken her she saw the shirt-waist safely ironed, and ironed as well as she could have done it, as Martin made her grant.

"I could work faster," he explained, "if your irons were only hotter."

To her, the irons he swung were much hotter than she ever dared to use.

"Your sprinkling is all wrong," he complained next. "Here, let me teach you how to sprinkle. Pressure is what's wanted. Sprinkle under pressure if you want to iron fast."

He procured a packing-case from the woodpile in the cellar, fitted a cover to it, and raided the scrap-iron the Silva tribe was collecting for the junkman. With fresh-sprinkled garments in the box, covered with the board and pressed by the iron, the device was complete and in operation.

"Now you watch me, Maria," he said, stripping off to his undershirt and gripping an iron that was what he called "really hot."

"An' when he feenish da iron' he washa da wools," as she described it afterward. "He say, 'Maria, you are da greata fool. I showa you how to washa da wools,' an' he shows me, too. Ten minutes he maka da machine — one barrel, one wheel-hub, two poles, justa like dat."

Martin had learned the contrivance from Joe at the Shelly Hot Springs. The old wheel-hub, fixed on the end of the upright pole, constituted the plunger. Making this, in turn, fast to the spring-pole attached to the kitchen rafters, so that the hub played upon the woollens in the barrel, he was able, with one hand, thoroughly to pound them.

"No more Maria washa da wools," her story always ended. "I maka da kids worka da pole an' da hub an' da barrel. Him da smarta man, Mister Eden."

Nevertheless, by his masterly operation and improvement of her kitchen-laundry he fell an immense distance in her regard. The glamour of romance with which her imagination had invested him faded away in the cold light of fact that he was an ex-laundryman. All his books, and his grand friends who visited him in carriages or with countless bottles of whiskey, went for naught. He was, after all, a mere workingman, a member of her own class and caste. He was more human and approachable, but, he was no longer mystery.

Martin's alienation from his family continued. Following upon Mr. Higginbotham's unprovoked attack, Mr. Hermann von Schmidt showed his hand. The fortunate sale of several storiettes, some humorous verse, and a few jokes gave Martin a temporary splurge of prosperity. Not only did he partially pay up his bills, but he had sufficient balance left to redeem his black suit and wheel. The latter, by virtue of a twisted crank-hanger, required repairing, and, as a matter of friendliness with his future brother-in-law, he sent it to Von Schmidt's shop.

The afternoon of the same day Martin was pleased by the wheel being delivered by a small boy. Von Schmidt was also inclined to be friendly, was Martin's conclusion from this unusual favor. Repaired wheels usually had to be called for. But when he examined the wheel, he discovered no repairs had been made. A little later in the day he telephoned his sister's betrothed, and learned that that person didn't want anything to do with him in "any shape, manner, or form."

"Hermann von Schmidt," Martin answered cheerfully, "I've a good mind to come over and punch that Dutch nose of yours."

"You come to my shop," came the reply, "an' I'll send for the police. An' I'll put you through, too. Oh, I know you, but you can't make no rough-house with me. I don’t want nothin’ to do with the likes of you. You’re a loafer, that’s what, an’ I ain’t asleep. You ain’t goin’ to do no spongin’ off me just because I’m marryin’ your sister. Why don’t you go to work an’ earn an honest livin’, eh? Answer me that.”

Martin’s philosophy asserted itself, dissipating his anger, and he hung up the receiver with a long whistle of incredulous amusement. But after the amusement came the reaction, and he was oppressed by his loneliness. Nobody understood him, nobody seemed to have any use for him, except Brissenden, and Brissenden had disappeared, God alone knew where.

Twilight was falling as Martin left the fruit store and turned homeward, his marketing on his arm. At the corner an electric car had stopped, and at sight of a lean, familiar figure alighting, his heart leapt with joy. It was Brissenden, and in the fleeting glimpse, ere the car started up, Martin noted the overcoat pockets, one bulging with books, the other bulging with a quart bottle of whiskey.

CHAPTER XXXV

Brissenden gave no explanation of his long absence, nor did Martin pry into it. He was content to see his friend's cadaverous face opposite him through the steam rising from a tumbler of toddy.

"I, too, have not been idle," Brissenden proclaimed, after hearing Martin's account of the work he had accomplished.

He pulled a manuscript from his inside coat pocket and passed it to Martin, who looked at the title and glanced up curiously.

"Yes, that's it," Brissenden laughed. "Pretty good title, eh? 'Ephemera' — it is the one word. And you're responsible for it, what of your *man*, who is always the erected, the vitalized inorganic, the latest of the ephemera, the creature of temperature strutting his little space on the thermometer. It got into my head and I had to write it to get rid of it. Tell me what you think of it."

Martin's face, flushed at first, paled as he read on. It was perfect art. Form triumphed over substance, if triumph it could be called where the last conceivable atom of substance had found expression in so perfect construction as to make Martin's head swim with delight, to put passionate tears into his eyes, and to send chills creeping up and down his back. It was a long poem of six or seven hundred lines, and it was a fantastic, amazing, unearthly thing. It was terrific, impossible; and yet there it was, scrawled in black ink across the sheets of paper. It dealt with man and his soul-gropings in their ultimate terms, plumbing the abysses of space for the testimony of remotest suns and rainbow spectrums. It was a mad orgy of imagination, wassailing in the skull of a dying man who half sobbed under his breath and was quick with the wild flutter of fading heart-beats. The poem swung in majestic rhythm to the cool tumult of interstellar conflict, to the onset of starry hosts, to the impact of cold suns and the flaming up of nebular in the darkened void; and through it all, unceasing and faint, like a silver shuttle, ran the frail, piping voice of man, a querulous chirp amid the screaming of planets and the crash of systems.

"There is nothing like it in literature," Martin said, when at last he was able to speak. "It's wonderful! — wonderful! It has gone to my head. I am drunken with it. That great, infinitesimal question — I can't shake it out of my thoughts. That questing, eternal, ever recurring, thin little wailing voice of man is still ringing in my ears. It is like the dead-march of a gnat amid the trumpeting of elephants and the roaring of lions. It is insatiable with microscopic desire. I now I'm making a fool of myself, but the thing has obsessed me. You are — I don't know what you are — you are wonderful, that's all. But how do you do it? How do you do it?"

Martin paused from his rhapsody, only to break out afresh.

"I shall never write again. I am a dauber in clay. You have shown me the work of the real artificer-artisan. Genius! This is something more than genius. It transcends genius. It is truth gone mad. It is true, man, every line of it. I wonder if you realize that, you dogmatist. Science cannot give you the lie. It is the truth of the sneer, stamped out from the black iron of the Cosmos and interwoven with mighty rhythms of sound into a fabric of splendor and beauty. And now I won't say another word. I am overwhelmed, crushed. Yes, I will, too. Let me market it for you."

Brissenden grinned. "There's not a magazine in Christendom that would dare to publish it — you know that."

"I know nothing of the sort. I know there's not a magazine in Christendom that wouldn't jump at it. They don't get things like that every day. That's no mere poem of the year. It's the poem of the century."

"I'd like to take you up on the proposition."

"Now don't get cynical," Martin exhorted. "The magazine editors are not wholly fatuous. I know that. And I'll close with you on the bet. I'll wager anything you want that 'Ephemera' is accepted either on the first or second offering."

"There's just one thing that prevents me from taking you." Brissenden waited a moment. "The thing is big — the biggest I've ever done. I know that. It's my swan song. I am almighty proud of it. I worship it. It's better than whiskey. It is what I dreamed of — the great and perfect thing — when I was a simple young man, with sweet illusions and clean ideals. And I've got it, now, in my last grasp, and I'll not have it pawed over and soiled by a lot of swine. No, I won't take the bet. It's mine. I made it, and I've shared it with you."

"But think of the rest of the world," Martin protested. "The function of beauty is joy-making."

"It's my beauty."

"Don't be selfish."

"I'm not selfish." Brissenden grinned soberly in the way he had when pleased by the thing his thin lips were about to shape. "I'm as unselfish as a famished hog."

In vain Martin strove to shake him from his decision. Martin told him that his hatred of the magazines was rabid, fanatical, and that his conduct was a thousand times more despicable than that of the youth who burned the temple of Diana at Ephesus. Under the storm of denunciation Brissenden complacently sipped his toddy and affirmed that everything the other said was quite true, with the exception of the magazine editors. His hatred of them knew no bounds, and he excelled Martin in denunciation when he turned upon them.

"I wish you'd type it for me," he said. "You know how a thousand times better than any stenographer. And now I want to give you some advice." He drew a bulky manuscript from his outside coat pocket. "Here's your 'Shame of the Sun.' I've read it not once, but twice and three times — the highest compliment I can pay you. After what you've said about 'Ephemera' I must be silent. But this I will say: when 'The Shame of the Sun' is published, it will make a hit. It will start a controversy that will be worth thousands to you just in advertising."

Martin laughed. "I suppose your next advice will be to submit it to the magazines."

"By all means no — that is, if you want to see it in print. Offer it to the first-class houses. Some publisher's reader may be mad enough or drunk enough to report favorably on it. You've read the books. The meat of them has been transmuted in the alembic of Martin Eden's mind and poured into 'The Shame of the Sun,' and one day Martin Eden will be famous, and not the least of his fame will rest upon that work. So you must get a publisher for it — the sooner the better."

Brissenden went home late that night; and just as he mounted the first step of the car, he swung suddenly back on Martin and thrust into his hand a small, tightly crumpled wad of paper.

"Here, take this," he said. "I was out to the races to-day, and I had the right dope."

The bell clanged and the car pulled out, leaving Martin wondering as to the nature of the crinkly, greasy wad he clutched in his hand. Back in his room he unrolled it and found a hundred-dollar bill.

He did not scruple to use it. He knew his friend had always plenty of money, and he knew also, with profound certitude, that his success would enable him to repay it. In the morning he paid every bill, gave Maria three months' advance on the room, and redeemed every pledge at the pawnshop. Next he bought Marian's wedding present, and simpler presents, suitable to Christmas, for Ruth and Gertrude. And finally, on the balance remaining to him, he herded the whole Silva tribe down into Oakland. He was a winter late in redeeming his promise, but redeemed it was, for the last, least Silva got a pair of shoes, as well as Maria herself. Also, there were horns, and dolls, and toys of various sorts, and parcels and bundles of candies and nuts that filled the arms of all the Silvas to overflowing.

It was with this extraordinary procession trooping at his and Maria's heels into a confectioner's in quest if the biggest candy-cane ever made, that he encountered Ruth and her mother. Mrs. Morse was shocked. Even Ruth was hurt, for she had some regard for appearances, and her lover, cheek by jowl with Maria, at the head of that army of Portuguese ragamuffins, was not a pretty sight. But it was not that which hurt so much as what she took to be his lack of pride and self-respect. Further, and keenest of all, she read into the incident the impossibility of his living down his working-class origin. There was stigma enough in the fact of it, but shamelessly to flaunt it in the face of the world — her world — was going too far. Though her engagement to Martin had been kept secret, their long intimacy had not been unproductive of gossip; and in the shop, glancing covertly at her lover and his following, had been several of her acquaintances. She lacked the easy largeness of Martin and could not rise superior to her environment. She had been hurt to the quick, and her sensitive nature was quivering with the shame of it. So it was, when Martin arrived later in the day, that he kept her present in his breast-pocket, deferring the giving of it to a more propitious occasion. Ruth in tears — passionate, angry tears — was a revelation to him. The spectacle of her suffering convinced him that he had been a brute, yet in the soul of him he could not see how nor why. It never entered his head to be ashamed of those he knew, and to take the Silvas out to a Christmas treat could in no way, so it seemed to him, show lack of consideration for Ruth. On the other hand, he did see Ruth's point of view, after she had explained it; and he looked upon it as a feminine weakness, such as afflicted all women and the best of women.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"Come on, — I'll show you the real dirt," Brissenden said to him, one evening in January.

They had dined together in San Francisco, and were at the Ferry Building, returning to Oakland, when the whim came to him to show Martin the "real dirt." He turned and fled across the water-front, a meagre shadow in a flapping overcoat, with Martin straining to keep up with him. At a wholesale liquor store he bought two gallon-demijohns of old port, and with one in each hand boarded a Mission Street car, Martin at his heels burdened with several quart-bottles of whiskey.

If Ruth could see me now, was his thought, while he wondered as to what constituted the real dirt.

"Maybe nobody will be there," Brissenden said, when they dismounted and plunged off to the right into the heart of the working-class ghetto, south of Market Street. "In which case you'll miss what you've been looking for so long."

"And what the deuce is that?" Martin asked.

"Men, intelligent men, and not the gibbering nonentities I found you consorting with in that trader's den. You read the books and you found yourself all alone. Well, I'm going to show you to-night some other men who've read the books, so that you won't be lonely any more."

"Not that I bother my head about their everlasting discussions," he said at the end of a block. "I'm not interested in book philosophy. But you'll find these fellows intelligences and not bourgeois swine. But watch out, they'll talk an arm off of you on any subject under the sun."

"Hope Norton's there," he panted a little later, resisting Martin's effort to relieve him of the two demijohns. "Norton's an idealist — a Harvard man. Prodigious memory. Idealism led him to philosophic anarchy, and his family threw him off. Father's a railroad president and many times millionnaire, but the son's starving in 'Frisco, editing an anarchist sheet for twenty-five a month."

Martin was little acquainted in San Francisco, and not at all south of Market; so he had no idea of where he was being led.

"Go ahead," he said; "tell me about them beforehand. What do they do for a living? How do they happen to be here?"

"Hope Hamilton's there." Brissenden paused and rested his hands. "Strawn-Hamilton's his name — hyphenated, you know — comes of old Southern stock. He's a tramp — laziest man I ever knew, though he's clerking, or trying to, in a socialist coöperative store for six dollars a week. But he's a confirmed hobo. Tramped into town. I've seen him sit all day on a bench and never a bite pass his lips, and in the evening, when I invited him to dinner — restaurant two blocks away — have him say, 'Too much trouble, old man. Buy me a package of cigarettes instead.' He was a Spencerian like you till Kreis turned him to materialistic monism. I'll start him on monism if I can. Norton's another monist — only he affirms naught but spirit. He can give Kreis and Hamilton all they want, too."

"Who is Kreis?" Martin asked.

"His rooms we're going to. One time professor — fired from university — usual story. A mind like a steel trap. Makes his living any old way. I know he's been a street fakir when he was down. Unscrupulous. Rob a corpse of a shroud — anything. Difference between him — and the bourgeoisie is that he robs without illusion. He'll talk Nietzsche, or Schopenhauer, or Kant, or anything, but the only thing in this world, not excepting Mary, that he really cares for, is his monism. Haeckel is his little tin god. The only way to insult him is to take a slap at Haeckel."

"Here's the hang-out." Brissenden rested his demijohn at the upstairs entrance, preliminary to the climb. It was the usual two-story corner building, with a saloon and grocery underneath. "The gang lives here — got the whole upstairs to themselves. But Kreis is the only one who has two rooms. Come on."

No lights burned in the upper hall, but Brissenden threaded the utter blackness like a familiar ghost. He stopped to speak to Martin.

"There's one fellow — Stevens — a theosophist. Makes a pretty tangle when he gets going. Just now he's dish-washer in a restaurant. Likes a good cigar. I've seen him eat in a ten-cent hash-house and pay fifty cents for the cigar he smoked afterward. I've got a couple in my pocket for him, if he shows up."

"And there's another fellow — Parry — an Australian, a statistician and a sporting encyclopaedia. Ask him the grain output of Paraguay for 1903, or the English importation of sheetings into China for 1890, or at what weight Jimmy Britt fought Battling Nelson, or who was welter-weight champion of the United States in '68, and you'll get the correct answer with the automatic celerity of a slot-machine. And there's Andy, a stone-mason, has ideas on everything, a good chess-player; and another fellow, Harry, a baker, red hot socialist and strong union man. By the way, you remember Cooks' and Waiters' strike — Hamilton was the chap who organized that union and precipitated the strike — planned it all out in advance, right here in Kreis's rooms. Did it just for the fun of it, but was too lazy to stay by the union. Yet he could have risen high if he wanted to. There's no end to the possibilities in that man — if he weren't so insuperably lazy."

Brissenden advanced through the darkness till a thread of light marked the threshold of a door. A knock and an answer opened it, and Martin found himself shaking hands with Kreis, a handsome brunette man, with dazzling white teeth, a drooping black mustache, and large, flashing black eyes. Mary, a matronly young blonde, was washing dishes in the little back room that served for kitchen and dining room. The front room served as bedchamber and living room. Overhead was the week's washing, hanging in festoons so low that Martin did not see at first the two men talking in a corner. They hailed Brissenden and his demijohns with acclamation, and, on being introduced, Martin learned they were Andy and Parry. He joined them and listened attentively to the description of a prize-fight Parry had seen the night before; while Brissenden, in his glory, plunged into the manufacture of a toddy and the serving of wine and whiskey-and-sodas. At his command, "Bring in the clan," Andy departed to go the round of the rooms for the lodgers.

"We're lucky that most of them are here," Brissenden whispered to Martin. "There's Norton and Hamilton; come on and meet them. Stevens isn't around, I hear. I'm going to get them started on monism if I can. Wait till they get a few jolts in them and they'll warm up."

At first the conversation was desultory. Nevertheless Martin could not fail to appreciate the keen play of their minds. They were men with opinions, though the opinions often clashed, and, though they were witty and clever, they were not superficial. He swiftly saw, no matter upon what they talked, that each man applied the correlation of knowledge and had also a deep-seated and unified conception of society and the Cosmos. Nobody manufactured their opinions for them; they were all rebels of one variety or another, and their lips were strangers to platitudes. Never had Martin, at the Morses', heard so amazing a range of topics discussed. There seemed no limit save time to the things they were alive to. The talk wandered from Mrs. Humphry Ward's new book to Shaw's latest play, through the future of the drama to reminiscences of Mansfield. They appreciated or sneered at the morning editorials, jumped from labor conditions in New Zealand to Henry James and Brander Matthews, passed on to the German designs in the Far East and the economic aspect of the Yellow Peril, wrangled over the German elections and Bebel's last speech, and settled down to local politics, the latest plans and scandals in the union labor party administration, and the wires that were pulled to bring about the Coast Seamen's strike. Martin was struck by the inside knowledge they possessed. They knew what was never printed in the newspapers — the wires and strings and the hidden hands that made the puppets dance. To Martin's surprise, the girl, Mary, joined in the conversation, displaying an intelligence he had never encountered in the few women he had met. They talked together on Swinburne and Rossetti, after which she led him beyond his depth into the by-paths of French literature. His revenge came when she defended Maeterlinck and he brought into action the carefully-thought-out thesis of "The Shame of the Sun."

Several other men had dropped in, and the air was thick with tobacco smoke, when Brissenden waved the red flag.

"Here's fresh meat for your axe, Kreis," he said; "a rose-white youth with the ardor of a lover for Herbert Spencer. Make a Haeckelite of him — if you can."

Kreis seemed to wake up and flash like some metallic, magnetic thing, while Norton looked at Martin sympathetically, with a sweet, girlish smile, as much as to say that he would be amply protected.

Kreis began directly on Martin, but step by step Norton interfered, until he and Kreis were off and away in a personal battle. Martin listened and fain would have rubbed his eyes. It was impossible that this should be, much less in the labor ghetto south of Market. The books were alive in these men. They talked with fire and enthusiasm, the intellectual stimulant stirring them as he had seen drink and anger stir other men. What he heard was no longer the philosophy of the dry, printed word, written by half-mythical demigods like Kant and Spencer. It was living philosophy, with warm, red blood, incarnated in these two men till its very features worked with excitement. Now and again other men joined in, and all followed the discussion with cigarettes going out in their hands and with alert, intent faces.

Idealism had never attracted Martin, but the exposition it now received at the hands of Norton was a revelation. The logical plausibility of it, that made an appeal to his intellect, seemed missed by Kreis and Hamilton, who sneered at Norton as a metaphysician, and who, in turn, sneered back at them as metaphysicians. *Phenomenon* and *noumenon* were bandied back and forth. They charged him with attempting to explain consciousness by itself. He charged them with word-jugglery, with reasoning from words to theory instead of from facts to theory. At this they were aghast. It was the cardinal tenet of their mode of reasoning to start with facts and to give names to the facts.

When Norton wandered into the intricacies of Kant, Kreis reminded him that all good little German philosophies when they died went to Oxford. A little later Norton reminded them of Hamilton's Law of Parsimony, the application of which they immediately claimed for every reasoning process of theirs. And Martin hugged his knees and exulted in it all. But Norton was no Spencerian, and he, too, strove for Martin's philosophic soul, talking as much at him as to his two opponents.

"You know Berkeley has never been answered," he said, looking directly at Martin. "Herbert Spencer came the nearest, which was not very near. Even the stanchest of Spencer's followers will not go farther. I was reading an essay of Saleeby's the other day, and the best Saleeby could say was that Herbert Spencer *nearly* succeeded in answering Berkeley."

"You know what Hume said?" Hamilton asked. Norton nodded, but Hamilton gave it for the benefit of the rest. "He said that Berkeley's arguments admit of no answer and produce no conviction."

"In his, Hume's, mind," was the reply. "And Hume's mind was the same as yours, with this difference: he was wise enough to admit there was no answering Berkeley."

Norton was sensitive and excitable, though he never lost his head, while Kreis and Hamilton were like a pair of cold-blooded savages, seeking out tender places to prod and poke. As the evening grew late, Norton, smarting under the repeated charges of being a metaphysician, clutching his chair to keep from jumping to his feet, his gray eyes snapping and his girlish face grown harsh and sure, made a grand attack upon their position.

"All right, you Haeckelites, I may reason like a medicine man, but, pray, how do you reason? You have nothing to stand on, you unscientific dogmatists with your positive science which you are always lugging about into places it has no right to be. Long before the school of materialistic monism arose, the ground was removed so that there could be no foundation. Locke was the man, John Locke. Two hundred years ago — more than that, even in his ‘Essay concerning the Human Understanding,’ he proved the non-existence of innate ideas. The best of it is that that is precisely what you claim. To-night, again and again, you have asserted the non-existence of innate ideas.

“And what does that mean? It means that you can never know ultimate reality. Your brains are empty when you are born. Appearances, or phenomena, are all the content your minds can receive from your five senses. Then noumena, which are not in your minds when you are born, have no way of getting in — ”

“I deny — ” Kreis started to interrupt.

“You wait till I’m done,” Norton shouted. “You can know only that much of the play and interplay of force and matter as impinges in one way or another on our senses. You see, I am willing to admit, for the sake of the argument, that matter exists; and what I am about to do is to efface you by your own argument. I can’t do it any other way, for you are both congenitally unable to understand a philosophic abstraction.”

“And now, what do you know of matter, according to your own positive science? You know it only by its phenomena, its appearances. You are aware only of its changes, or of such changes in it as cause changes in your consciousness. Positive science deals only with phenomena, yet you are foolish enough to strive to be ontologists and to deal with noumena. Yet, by the very definition of positive science, science is concerned only with appearances. As somebody has said, phenomenal knowledge cannot transcend phenomena.”

“You cannot answer Berkeley, even if you have annihilated Kant, and yet, perforce, you assume that Berkeley is wrong when you affirm that science proves the non-existence of God, or, as much to the point, the existence of matter. — You know I granted the reality of matter only in order to make myself intelligible to your understanding. Be positive scientists, if you please; but ontology has no place in positive science, so leave it alone. Spencer is right in his agnosticism, but if Spencer — ”

But it was time to catch the last ferry-boat for Oakland, and Brissenden and Martin slipped out, leaving Norton still talking and Kreis and Hamilton waiting to pounce on him like a pair of hounds as soon as he finished.

"You have given me a glimpse of fairyland," Martin said on the ferry-boat. "It makes life worth while to meet people like that. My mind is all worked up. I never appreciated idealism before. Yet I can't accept it. I know that I shall always be a realist. I am so made, I guess. But I'd like to have made a reply to Kreis and Hamilton, and I think I'd have had a word or two for Norton. I didn't see that Spencer was damaged any. I'm as excited as a child on its first visit to the circus. I see I must read up some more. I'm going to get hold of Saleeby. I still think Spencer is unassailable, and next time I'm going to take a hand myself."

But Brissenden, breathing painfully, had dropped off to sleep, his chin buried in a scarf and resting on his sunken chest, his body wrapped in the long overcoat and shaking to the vibration of the propellers.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The first thing Martin did next morning was to go counter both to Brissenden's advice and command. "The Shame of the Sun" he wrapped and mailed to *The Acropolis*. He believed he could find magazine publication for it, and he felt that recognition by the magazines would commend him to the book-publishing houses. "Ephemera" he likewise wrapped and mailed to a magazine. Despite Brissenden's prejudice against the magazines, which was a pronounced mania with him, Martin decided that the great poem should see print. He did not intend, however, to publish it without the other's permission. His plan was to get it accepted by one of the high magazines, and, thus armed, again to wrestle with Brissenden for consent.

Martin began, that morning, a story which he had sketched out a number of weeks before and which ever since had been worrying him with its insistent clamor to be created. Apparently it was to be a rattling sea story, a tale of twentieth-century adventure and romance, handling real characters, in a real world, under real conditions. But beneath the swing and go of the story was to be something else — something that the superficial reader would never discern and which, on the other hand, would not diminish in any way the interest and enjoyment for such a reader. It was this, and not the mere story, that impelled Martin to write it. For that matter, it was always the great, universal motif that suggested plots to him. After having found such a motif, he cast about for the particular persons and particular location in time and space wherewith and wherein to utter the universal thing. "Overdue" was the title he had decided for it, and its length he believed would not be more than sixty thousand words — a bagatelle for him with his splendid vigor of production. On this first day he took hold of it with conscious delight in the mastery of his tools. He no longer worried for fear that the sharp, cutting edges should slip and mar his work. The long months of intense application and study had brought their reward. He could now devote himself with sure hand to the larger phases of the thing he shaped; and as he worked, hour after hour, he felt, as never before, the sure and cosmic grasp with which he held life and the affairs of life. "Overdue" would tell a story that would be true of its particular characters and its particular events; but it would tell, too, he was confident, great vital things that would be true of all time, and all sea, and all life — thanks to Herbert Spencer, he thought, leaning back for a moment from the table. Ay, thanks to Herbert Spencer and to the master-key of life, evolution, which Spencer had placed in his hands.

He was conscious that it was great stuff he was writing. “It will go! It will go!” was the refrain that kept, sounding in his ears. Of course it would go. At last he was turning out the thing at which the magazines would jump. The whole story worked out before him in lightning flashes. He broke off from it long enough to write a paragraph in his note-book. This would be the last paragraph in “Overdue”; but so thoroughly was the whole book already composed in his brain that he could write, weeks before he had arrived at the end, the end itself. He compared the tale, as yet unwritten, with the tales of the sea-writers, and he felt it to be immeasurably superior. “There’s only one man who could touch it,” he murmured aloud, “and that’s Conrad. And it ought to make even him sit up and shake hands with me, and say, ‘Well done, Martin, my boy.’”

He toiled on all day, recollecting, at the last moment, that he was to have dinner at the Morses’. Thanks to Brissenden, his black suit was out of pawn and he was again eligible for dinner parties. Down town he stopped off long enough to run into the library and search for Saleeby’s books. He drew out “The Cycle of Life,” and on the car turned to the essay Norton had mentioned on Spencer. As Martin read, he grew angry. His face flushed, his jaw set, and unconsciously his hand clenched, unclenched, and clenched again as if he were taking fresh grips upon some hateful thing out of which he was squeezing the life. When he left the car, he strode along the sidewalk as a wrathful man will stride, and he rang the Morse bell with such viciousness that it roused him to consciousness of his condition, so that he entered in good nature, smiling with amusement at himself. No sooner, however, was he inside than a great depression descended upon him. He fell from the height where he had been up-borne all day on the wings of inspiration. “Bourgeois,” “trader’s den” — Brissenden’s epithets repeated themselves in his mind. But what of that? he demanded angrily. He was marrying Ruth, not her family.

It seemed to him that he had never seen Ruth more beautiful, more spiritual and ethereal and at the same time more healthy. There was color in her cheeks, and her eyes drew him again and again — the eyes in which he had first read immortality. He had forgotten immortality of late, and the trend of his scientific reading had been away from it; but here, in Ruth's eyes, he read an argument without words that transcended all worded arguments. He saw that in her eyes before which all discussion fled away, for he saw love there. And in his own eyes was love; and love was unanswerable. Such was his passionate doctrine.

The half hour he had with her, before they went in to dinner, left him supremely happy and supremely satisfied with life. Nevertheless, at table, the inevitable reaction and exhaustion consequent upon the hard day seized hold of him. He was aware that his eyes were tired and that he was irritable. He remembered it was at this table, at which he now sneered and was so often bored, that he had first eaten with civilized beings in what he had imagined was an atmosphere of high culture and refinement. He caught a glimpse of that pathetic figure of him, so long ago, a self-conscious savage, sprouting sweat at every pore in an agony of apprehension, puzzled by the bewildering minutiae of eating-implements, tortured by the ogre of a servant, striving at a leap to live at such dizzy social altitude, and deciding in the end to be frankly himself, pretending no knowledge and no polish he did not possess.

He glanced at Ruth for reassurance, much in the same manner that a passenger, with sudden panic thought of possible shipwreck, will strive to locate the life preservers. Well, that much had come out of it — love and Ruth. All the rest had failed to stand the test of the books. But Ruth and love had stood the test; for them he found a biological sanction. Love was the most exalted expression of life. Nature had been busy designing him, as she had been busy with all normal men, for the purpose of loving. She had spent ten thousand centuries — ay, a hundred thousand and a million centuries — upon the task, and he was the best she could do. She had made love the strongest thing in him, increased its power a myriad per cent with her gift of imagination, and sent him forth into the ephemera to thrill and melt and mate. His hand sought Ruth's hand beside him hidden by the table, and a warm pressure was given and received. She looked at him a swift instant, and her eyes were radiant and melting. So were his in the thrill that pervaded him; nor did he realize how much that was radiant and melting in her eyes had been aroused by what she had seen in his.

Across the table from him, cater-cornered, at Mr. Morse's right, sat Judge Blount, a local superior court judge. Martin had met him a number of times and had failed to like him. He and Ruth's father were discussing labor union politics, the local situation, and socialism, and Mr. Morse was endeavoring to twit Martin on the latter topic. At last Judge Blount looked across the table with benignant and fatherly pity. Martin smiled to himself.

"You'll grow out of it, young man," he said soothingly. "Time is the best cure for such youthful distempers." He turned to Mr. Morse. "I do not believe discussion is good in such cases. It makes the patient obstinate."

"That is true," the other assented gravely. "But it is well to warn the patient occasionally of his condition."

Martin laughed merrily, but it was with an effort. The day had been too long, the day's effort too intense, and he was deep in the throes of the reaction.

"Undoubtedly you are both excellent doctors," he said; "but if you care a whit for the opinion of the patient, let him tell you that you are poor diagnosticians. In fact, you are both suffering from the disease you think you find in me. As for me, I am immune. The socialist philosophy that riots half-baked in your veins has passed me by."

"Clever, clever," murmured the judge. "An excellent ruse in controversy, to reverse positions."

"Out of your mouth." Martin's eyes were sparkling, but he kept control of himself. "You see, Judge, I've heard your campaign speeches. By some henidical process — henidical, by the way is a favorite word of mine which nobody understands — by some henidical process you persuade yourself that you believe in the competitive system and the survival of the strong, and at the same time you indorse with might and main all sorts of measures to shear the strength from the strong."

"My young man — "

"Remember, I've heard your campaign speeches," Martin warned. "It's on record, your position on interstate commerce regulation, on regulation of the railway trust and Standard Oil, on the conservation of the forests, on a thousand and one restrictive measures that are nothing else than socialistic."

"Do you mean to tell me that you do not believe in regulating these various outrageous exercises of power?"

"That's not the point. I mean to tell you that you are a poor diagnostician. I mean to tell you that I am not suffering from the microbe of socialism. I mean to tell you that it is you who are suffering from the emasculating ravages of that same microbe. As for me, I am an inveterate opponent of socialism just as I am an inveterate opponent of your own mongrel democracy that is nothing else than pseudo-socialism masquerading under a garb of words that will not stand the test of the dictionary."

"I am a reactionary — so complete a reactionary that my position is incomprehensible to you who live in a veiled lie of social organization and whose sight is not keen enough to pierce the veil. You make believe that you believe in the survival of the strong and the rule of the strong. I believe. That is the difference. When I was a trifle younger, — a few months younger, — I believed the same thing. You see, the ideas of you and yours had impressed me. But merchants and traders are cowardly rulers at best; they grunt and grub all their days in the trough of money-getting, and I have swung back to aristocracy, if you please. I am the only individualist in this room. I look to the state for nothing. I look only to the strong man, the man on horseback, to save the state from its own rotten futility."

"Nietzsche was right. I won't take the time to tell you who Nietzsche was, but he was right. The world belongs to the strong — to the strong who are noble as well and who do not wallow in the swine-trough of trade and exchange. The world belongs to the true nobleman, to the great blond beasts, to the noncompromisers, to the 'yes-sayers.' And they will eat you up, you socialists — who are afraid of socialism and who think yourselves individualists. Your slave-morality of the meek and lowly will never save you. — Oh, it's all Greek, I know, and I won't bother you any more with it. But remember one thing. There aren't half a dozen individualists in Oakland, but Martin Eden is one of them."

He signified that he was done with the discussion, and turned to Ruth.

"I'm wrought up to-day," he said in an undertone. "All I want to do is to love, not talk."

He ignored Mr. Morse, who said:-

"I am unconvinced. All socialists are Jesuits. That is the way to tell them."

"We'll make a good Republican out of you yet," said Judge Blount.

"The man on horseback will arrive before that time," Martin retorted with good humor, and returned to Ruth.

But Mr. Morse was not content. He did not like the laziness and the disinclination for sober, legitimate work of this prospective son-in-law of his, for whose ideas he had no respect and of whose nature he had no understanding. So he turned the conversation to Herbert Spencer. Judge Blount ably seconded him, and Martin, whose ears had pricked at the first mention of the philosopher's name, listened to the judge enunciate a grave and complacent diatribe against Spencer. From time to time Mr. Morse glanced at Martin, as much as to say, "There, my boy, you see."

"Chattering daws," Martin muttered under his breath, and went on talking with Ruth and Arthur.

But the long day and the "real dirt" of the night before were telling upon him; and, besides, still in his burnt mind was what had made him angry when he read it on the car.

"What is the matter?" Ruth asked suddenly alarmed by the effort he was making to contain himself.

"There is no god but the Unknowable, and Herbert Spencer is its prophet," Judge Blount was saying at that moment.

Martin turned upon him.

"A cheap judgment," he remarked quietly. "I heard it first in the City Hall Park, on the lips of a workingman who ought to have known better. I have heard it often since, and each time the clap-trap of it nauseates me. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. To hear that great and noble man's name upon your lips is like finding a dew-drop in a cesspool. You are disgusting."

It was like a thunderbolt. Judge Blount glared at him with apoplectic countenance, and silence reigned. Mr. Morse was secretly pleased. He could see that his daughter was shocked. It was what he wanted to do — to bring out the innate ruffianism of this man he did not like.

Ruth's hand sought Martin's beseechingly under the table, but his blood was up. He was inflamed by the intellectual pretence and fraud of those who sat in the high places. A Superior Court Judge! It was only several years before that he had looked up from the mire at such glorious entities and deemed them gods.

Judge Blount recovered himself and attempted to go on, addressing himself to Martin with an assumption of politeness that the latter understood was for the benefit of the ladies. Even this added to his anger. Was there no honesty in the world?

"You can't discuss Spencer with me," he cried. "You do not know any more about Spencer than do his own countrymen. But it is no fault of yours, I grant. It is just a phase of the contemptible ignorance of the times.

I ran across a sample of it on my way here this evening. I was reading an essay by Saleeby on Spencer. You should read it. It is accessible to all men. You can buy it in any book-store or draw it from the public library. You would feel ashamed of your paucity of abuse and ignorance of that noble man compared with what Saleeby has collected on the subject. It is a record of shame that would shame your shame."

"'The philosopher of the half-educated,' he was called by an academic Philosopher who was not worthy to pollute the atmosphere he breathed. I don't think you have read ten pages of Spencer, but there have been critics, assumably more intelligent than you, who have read no more than you of Spencer, who publicly challenged his followers to adduce one single idea from all his writings — from Herbert Spencer's writings, the man who has impressed the stamp of his genius over the whole field of scientific research and modern thought; the father of psychology; the man who revolutionized pedagogy, so that to-day the child of the French peasant is taught the three R's according to principles laid down by him. And the little gnats of men sting his memory when they get their very bread and butter from the technical application of his ideas. What little of worth resides in their brains is largely due to him. It is certain that had he never lived, most of what is correct in their parrot-learned knowledge would be absent."

"And yet a man like Principal Fairbanks of Oxford — a man who sits in an even higher place than you, Judge Blount — has said that Spencer will be dismissed by posterity as a poet and dreamer rather than a thinker. Yappers and blatherskites, the whole brood of them! '"First Principles" is not wholly destitute of a certain literary power,' said one of them. And others of them have said that he was an industrious plodder rather than an original thinker. Yappers and blatherskites! Yappers and blatherskites!"

Martin ceased abruptly, in a dead silence. Everybody in Ruth's family looked up to Judge Blount as a man of power and achievement, and they were horrified at Martin's outbreak. The remainder of the dinner passed like a funeral, the judge and Mr. Morse confining their talk to each other, and the rest of the conversation being extremely desultory. Then afterward, when Ruth and Martin were alone, there was a scene.

"You are unbearable," she wept.

But his anger still smouldered, and he kept muttering, "The beasts! The beasts!"

When she averred he had insulted the judge, he retorted:-

"By telling the truth about him?"

"I don't care whether it was true or not," she insisted. "There are certain bounds of decency, and you had no license to insult anybody."

"Then where did Judge Blount get the license to assault truth?" Martin demanded. "Surely to assault truth is a more serious misdemeanor than to insult a pygmy personality such as the judge's. He did worse than that. He blackened the name of a great, noble man who is dead. Oh, the beasts! The beasts!"

His complex anger flamed afresh, and Ruth was in terror of him. Never had she seen him so angry, and it was all mystified and unreasonable to her comprehension. And yet, through her very terror ran the fibres of fascination that had drawn and that still drew her to him — that had compelled her to lean towards him, and, in that mad, culminating moment, lay her hands upon his neck. She was hurt and outraged by what had taken place, and yet she lay in his arms and quivered while he went on muttering, "The beasts! The beasts!" And she still lay there when he said: "I'll not bother your table again, dear. They do not like me, and it is wrong of me to thrust my objectionable presence upon them. Besides, they are just as objectionable to me. Faugh! They are sickening. And to think of it, I dreamed in my innocence that the persons who sat in the high places, who lived in fine houses and had educations and bank accounts, were worth while!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"Come on, let's go down to the local."

So spoke Brissenden, faint from a hemorrhage of half an hour before — the second hemorrhage in three days. The perennial whiskey glass was in his hands, and he drained it with shaking fingers.

"What do I want with socialism?" Martin demanded.

"Outsiders are allowed five-minute speeches," the sick man urged. "Get up and spout. Tell them why you don't want socialism. Tell them what you think about them and their ghetto ethics. Slam Nietzsche into them and get walloped for your pains. Make a scrap of it. It will do them good. Discussion is what they want, and what you want, too. You see, I'd like to see you a socialist before I'm gone. It will give you a sanction for your existence. It is the one thing that will save you in the time of disappointment that is coming to you."

"I never can puzzle out why you, of all men, are a socialist," Martin pondered. "You detest the crowd so. Surely there is nothing in the canaille to recommend it to your aesthetic soul." He pointed an accusing finger at the whiskey glass which the other was refilling. "Socialism doesn't seem to save you."

"I'm very sick," was the answer. "With you it is different. You have health and much to live for, and you must be handcuffed to life somehow. As for me, you wonder why I am a socialist. I'll tell you. It is because Socialism is inevitable; because the present rotten and irrational system cannot endure; because the day is past for your man on horseback. The slaves won't stand for it. They are too many, and willy-nilly they'll drag down the would-be equestrian before ever he gets astride. You can't get away from them, and you'll have to swallow the whole slave-morality. It's not a nice mess, I'll allow. But it's been a-brewing and swallow it you must. You are antediluvian anyway, with your Nietzsche ideas. The past is past, and the man who says history repeats itself is a liar. Of course I don't like the crowd, but what's a poor chap to do? We can't have the man on horseback, and anything is preferable to the timid swine that now rule. But come on, anyway. I'm loaded to the guards now, and if I sit here any longer, I'll get drunk. And you know the doctor says — damn the doctor! I'll fool him yet."

It was Sunday night, and they found the small hall packed by the Oakland socialists, chiefly members of the working class. The speaker, a clever Jew, won Martin's admiration at the same time that he aroused his antagonism. The man's stooped and narrow shoulders and weazened chest proclaimed him the true child of the crowded ghetto, and strong on Martin was the age-long struggle of the feeble, wretched slaves against the lordly handful of men who had ruled over them and would rule over them to the end of time. To Martin this withered wisp of a creature was a symbol. He was the figure that stood forth representative of the whole miserable mass of weaklings and inefficients who perished according to biological law on the ragged confines of life. They were the unfit. In spite of their cunning philosophy and of their antlike proclivities for coöperation, Nature rejected them for the exceptional man. Out of the plentiful spawn of life she flung from her prolific hand she selected only the best. It was by the same method that men, aping her, bred race-horses and cucumbers. Doubtless, a creator of a Cosmos could have devised a better method; but creatures of this particular Cosmos must put up with this particular method. Of course, they could squirm as they perished, as the socialists squirmed, as the speaker on the platform and the perspiring crowd were squirming even now as they counselled together for some new device with which to minimize the penalties of living and outwit the Cosmos.

So Martin thought, and so he spoke when Brissenden urged him to give them hell. He obeyed the mandate, walking up to the platform, as was the custom, and addressing the chairman. He began in a low voice, haltingly, forming into order the ideas which had surged in his brain while the Jew was speaking. In such meetings five minutes was the time allotted to each speaker; but when Martin's five minutes were up, he was in full stride, his attack upon their doctrines but half completed. He had caught their interest, and the audience urged the chairman by acclamation to extend Martin's time. They appreciated him as a foeman worthy of their intellect, and they listened intently, following every word. He spoke with fire and conviction, mincing no words in his attack upon the slaves and their morality and tactics and frankly alluding to his hearers as the slaves in question. He quoted Spencer and Malthus, and enunciated the biological law of development.

"And so," he concluded, in a swift résumé, "no state composed of the slave-types can endure. The old law of development still holds. In the struggle for existence, as I have shown, the strong and the progeny of the strong tend to survive, while the weak and the progeny of the weak are crushed and tend to perish. The result is that the strong and the progeny of the strong survive, and, so long as the struggle obtains, the strength of each generation increases. That is development. But you slaves — it is too bad to be slaves, I grant — but you slaves dream of a society where the law of development will be annulled, where no weaklings and inefficients will perish, where every inefficient will have as much as he wants to eat as many times a day as he desires, and where all will marry and have progeny — the weak as well as the strong. What will be the result? No longer will the strength and life-value of each generation increase. On the contrary, it will diminish. There is the Nemesis of your slave philosophy. Your society of slaves — of, by, and for, slaves — must inevitably weaken and go to pieces as the life which composes it weakens and goes to pieces.

"Remember, I am enunciating biology and not sentimental ethics. No state of slaves can stand — "

"How about the United States?" a man yelled from the audience.

"And how about it?" Martin retorted. "The thirteen colonies threw off their rulers and formed the Republic so-called. The slaves were their own masters. There were no more masters of the sword. But you couldn't get along without masters of some sort, and there arose a new set of masters — not the great, virile, noble men, but the shrewd and spidery traders and money-lenders. And they enslaved you over again — but not frankly, as the true, noble men would do with weight of their own right arms, but secretly, by spidery machinations and by wheedling and cajolery and lies. They have purchased your slave judges, they have debauched your slave legislatures, and they have forced to worse horrors than chattel slavery your slave boys and girls. Two million of your children are toiling to-day in this trader-oligarchy of the United States. Ten millions of you slaves are not properly sheltered nor properly fed."

"But to return. I have shown that no society of slaves can endure, because, in its very nature, such society must annul the law of development. No sooner can a slave society be organized than deterioration sets in. It is easy for you to talk of annulling the law of development, but where is the new law of development that will maintain your strength? Formulate it. Is it already formulated? Then state it."

Martin took his seat amidst an uproar of voices. A score of men were on their feet clamoring for recognition from the chair. And one by one, encouraged by vociferous applause, speaking with fire and enthusiasm and excited gestures, they replied to the attack. It was a wild night — but it was wild intellectually, a battle of ideas. Some strayed from the point, but most of the speakers replied directly to Martin. They shook him with lines of thought that were new to him; and gave him insights, not into new biological laws, but into new applications of the old laws. They were too earnest to be always polite, and more than once the chairman rapped and pounded for order.

It chanced that a cub reporter sat in the audience, detailed there on a day dull of news and impressed by the urgent need of journalism for sensation. He was not a bright cub reporter. He was merely facile and glib. He was too dense to follow the discussion. In fact, he had a comfortable feeling that he was vastly superior to these wordy maniacs of the working class. Also, he had a great respect for those who sat in the high places and dictated the policies of nations and newspapers. Further, he had an ideal, namely, of achieving that excellence of the perfect reporter who is able to make something — even a great deal — out of nothing.

He did not know what all the talk was about. It was not necessary. Words like *revolution* gave him his cue. Like a paleontologist, able to reconstruct an entire skeleton from one fossil bone, he was able to reconstruct a whole speech from the one word *revolution*. He did it that night, and he did it well; and since Martin had made the biggest stir, he put it all into his mouth and made him the arch-anarch of the show, transforming his reactionary individualism into the most lurid, red-shirt socialist utterance. The cub reporter was an artist, and it was a large brush with which he laid on the local color — wild-eyed long-haired men, neurasthenia and degenerate types of men, voices shaken with passion, clenched fists raised on high, and all projected against a background of oaths, yells, and the throaty rumbling of angry men.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Over the coffee, in his little room, Martin read next morning's paper. It was a novel experience to find himself head-lined, on the first page at that; and he was surprised to learn that he was the most notorious leader of the Oakland socialists. He ran over the violent speech the cub reporter had constructed for him, and, though at first he was angered by the fabrication, in the end he tossed the paper aside with a laugh.

"Either the man was drunk or criminally malicious," he said that afternoon, from his perch on the bed, when Brissenden had arrived and dropped limply into the one chair.

"But what do you care?" Brissenden asked. "Surely you don't desire the approval of the bourgeois swine that read the newspapers?"

Martin thought for a while, then said:-

"No, I really don't care for their approval, not a whit. On the other hand, it's very likely to make my relations with Ruth's family a trifle awkward. Her father always contended I was a socialist, and this miserable stuff will clinch his belief. Not that I care for his opinion — but what's the odds? I want to read you what I've been doing to-day. It's 'Overdue,' of course, and I'm just about halfway through."

He was reading aloud when Maria thrust open the door and ushered in a young man in a natty suit who glanced briskly about him, noting the oil-burner and the kitchen in the corner before his gaze wandered on to Martin.

"Sit down," Brissenden said.

Martin made room for the young man on the bed and waited for him to broach his business.

"I heard you speak last night, Mr. Eden, and I've come to interview you," he began.

Brissenden burst out in a hearty laugh.

"A brother socialist?" the reporter asked, with a quick glance at Brissenden that appraised the color-value of that cadaverous and dying man.

"And he wrote that report," Martin said softly. "Why, he is only a boy!"

"Why don't you poke him?" Brissenden asked. "I'd give a thousand dollars to have my lungs back for five minutes."

The cub reporter was a trifle perplexed by this talking over him and around him and at him. But he had been commended for his brilliant description of the socialist meeting and had further been detailed to get a personal interview with Martin Eden, the leader of the organized menace to society.

"You do not object to having your picture taken, Mr. Eden?" he said. "I've a staff photographer outside, you see, and he says it will be better to take you right away before the sun gets lower. Then we can have the interview afterward."

"A photographer," Brissenden said meditatively. "Poke him, Martin! Poke him!"

"I guess I'm getting old," was the answer. "I know I ought, but I really haven't the heart. It doesn't seem to matter."

"For his mother's sake," Brissenden urged.

"It's worth considering," Martin replied; "but it doesn't seem worth while enough to rouse sufficient energy in me. You see, it does take energy to give a fellow a poking. Besides, what does it matter?"

"That's right — that's the way to take it," the cub announced airily, though he had already begun to glance anxiously at the door.

"But it wasn't true, not a word of what he wrote," Martin went on, confining his attention to Brissenden.

"It was just in a general way a description, you understand," the cub ventured, "and besides, it's good advertising. That's what counts. It was a favor to you."

"It's good advertising, Martin, old boy," Brissenden repeated solemnly.

"And it was a favor to me — think of that!" was Martin's contribution.

"Let me see — where were you born, Mr. Eden?" the cub asked, assuming an air of expectant attention.

"He doesn't take notes," said Brissenden. "He remembers it all."

"That is sufficient for me." The cub was trying not to look worried. "No decent reporter needs to bother with notes."

"That was sufficient — for last night." But Brissenden was not a disciple of quietism, and he changed his attitude abruptly. "Martin, if you don't poke him, I'll do it myself, if I fall dead on the floor the next moment."

"How will a spanking do?" Martin asked.

Brissenden considered judicially, and nodded his head.

The next instant Martin was seated on the edge of the bed with the cub face downward across his knees.

“Now don’t bite,” Martin warned, “or else I’ll have to punch your face. It would be a pity, for it is such a pretty face.”

His uplifted hand descended, and thereafter rose and fell in a swift and steady rhythm. The cub struggled and cursed and squirmed, but did not offer to bite. Brissenden looked on gravely, though once he grew excited and gripped the whiskey bottle, pleading, “Here, just let me swat him once.”

“Sorry my hand played out,” Martin said, when at last he desisted. “It is quite numb.”

He uprighted the cub and perched him on the bed.

“I’ll have you arrested for this,” he snarled, tears of boyish indignation running down his flushed cheeks. “I’ll make you sweat for this. You’ll see.”

“The pretty thing,” Martin remarked. “He doesn’t realize that he has entered upon the downward path. It is not honest, it is not square, it is not manly, to tell lies about one’s fellow-creatures the way he has done, and he doesn’t know it.”

“He has to come to us to be told,” Brissenden filled in a pause.

“Yes, to me whom he has maligned and injured. My grocery will undoubtedly refuse me credit now. The worst of it is that the poor boy will keep on this way until he deteriorates into a first-class newspaper man and also a first-class scoundrel.”

“But there is yet time,” quoth Brissenden. “Who knows but what you may prove the humble instrument to save him. Why didn’t you let me swat him just once? I’d like to have had a hand in it.”

“I’ll have you arrested, the pair of you, you b-b-big brutes,” sobbed the erring soul.

“No, his mouth is too pretty and too weak.” Martin shook his head lugubriously. “I’m afraid I’ve numbed my hand in vain. The young man cannot reform. He will become eventually a very great and successful newspaper man. He has no conscience. That alone will make him great.”

With that the cub passed out the door in trepidation to the last for fear that Brissenden would hit him in the back with the bottle he still clutched.

In the next morning’s paper Martin learned a great deal more about himself that was new to him. “We are the sworn enemies of society,” he found himself quoted as saying in a column interview. “No, we are not anarchists but socialists.” When the reporter pointed out to him that there seemed little difference between the two schools, Martin had shrugged his shoulders in silent affirmation. His face was described as bilaterally asymmetrical, and various other signs of degeneration were described. Especially notable were his thuglike hands and the fiery gleams in his blood-shot eyes.

He learned, also, that he spoke nightly to the workmen in the City Hall Park, and that among the anarchists and agitators that there inflamed the minds of the people he drew the largest audiences and made the most revolutionary speeches. The cub painted a high-light picture of his poor little room, its oil-stove and the one chair, and of the death’s-head tramp who kept him company and who looked as if he had just emerged from twenty years of solitary confinement in some fortress dungeon.

The cub had been industrious. He had scurried around and nosed out Martin’s family history, and procured a photograph of Higginbotham’s Cash Store with Bernard Higginbotham himself standing out in front. That gentleman was depicted as an intelligent, dignified businessman who had no patience with his brother-in-law’s socialistic views, and no patience with the brother-in-law, either, whom he was quoted as characterizing as a lazy good-for-nothing who wouldn’t take a job when it was offered to him and who would go to jail yet. Hermann Von Schmidt, Marian’s husband, had likewise been interviewed. He had called Martin the black sheep of the family and repudiated him. “He tried to sponge off of me, but I put a stop to that good and quick,” Von Schmidt had said to the reporter. “He knows better than to come bumming around here. A man who won’t work is no good, take that from me.”

This time Martin was genuinely angry. Brissenden looked upon the affair as a good joke, but he could not console Martin, who knew that it would be no easy task to explain to Ruth. As for her father, he knew that he must be overjoyed with what had happened and that he would make the most of it to break off the engagement. How much he would make of it he was soon to realize. The afternoon mail brought a letter from Ruth. Martin opened it with a premonition of disaster, and read it standing at the open door when he had received it from the postman. As he read, mechanically his hand sought his pocket for the tobacco and brown paper of his old cigarette days.

He was not aware that the pocket was empty or that he had even reached for the materials with which to roll a cigarette.

It was not a passionate letter. There were no touches of anger in it. But all the way through, from the first sentence to the last, was sounded the note of hurt and disappointment. She had expected better of him. She had thought he had got over his youthful wildness, that her love for him had been sufficiently worth while to enable him to live seriously and decently. And now her father and mother had taken a firm stand and commanded that the engagement be broken. That they were justified in this she could not but admit. Their relation could never be a happy one. It had been unfortunate from the first. But one regret she voiced in the whole letter, and it was a bitter one to Martin. “If only you had settled down to some position and attempted to make something of yourself,” she wrote. “But it was not to be. Your past life had been too wild and irregular. I can understand that you are not to be blamed. You could act only according to your nature and your early training. So I do not blame you, Martin. Please remember that. It was simply a mistake. As father and mother have contended, we were not made for each other, and we should both be happy because it was discovered not too late.” . . “There is no use trying to see me,” she said toward the last. “It would be an unhappy meeting for both of us, as well as for my mother. I feel, as it is, that I have caused her great pain and worry. I shall have to do much living to atone for it.”

He read it through to the end, carefully, a second time, then sat down and replied. He outlined the remarks he had uttered at the socialist meeting, pointing out that they were in all ways the converse of what the newspaper had put in his mouth. Toward the end of the letter he was God’s own lover pleading passionately for love. “Please answer,” he said, “and in your answer you have to tell me but one thing. Do you love me? That is all — the answer to that one question.”

But no answer came the next day, nor the next. “Overdue” lay untouched upon the table, and each day the heap of returned manuscripts under the table grew larger. For the first time Martin’s glorious sleep was interrupted by insomnia, and he tossed through long, restless nights. Three times he called at the Morse home, but was turned away by the servant who answered the bell. Brissenden lay sick in his hotel, too feeble to stir out, and, though Martin was with him often, he did not worry him with his troubles.

For Martin's troubles were many. The aftermath of the cub reporter's deed was even wider than Martin had anticipated. The Portuguese grocer refused him further credit, while the greengrocer, who was an American and proud of it, had called him a traitor to his country and refused further dealings with him — carrying his patriotism to such a degree that he cancelled Martin's account and forbade him ever to attempt to pay it. The talk in the neighborhood reflected the same feeling, and indignation against Martin ran high. No one would have anything to do with a socialist traitor. Poor Maria was dubious and frightened, but she remained loyal. The children of the neighborhood recovered from the awe of the grand carriage which once had visited Martin, and from safe distances they called him "hobo" and "bum." The Silva tribe, however, stanchly defended him, fighting more than one pitched battle for his honor, and black eyes and bloody noses became quite the order of the day and added to Maria's perplexities and troubles.

Once, Martin met Gertrude on the street, down in Oakland, and learned what he knew could not be otherwise — that Bernard Higginbotham was furious with him for having dragged the family into public disgrace, and that he had forbidden him the house.

"Why don't you go away, Martin?" Gertrude had begged. "Go away and get a job somewhere and steady down. Afterwards, when this all blows over, you can come back."

Martin shook his head, but gave no explanations. How could he explain? He was appalled at the awful intellectual chasm that yawned between him and his people. He could never cross it and explain to them his position, — the Nietzschean position, in regard to socialism. There were not words enough in the English language, nor in any language, to make his attitude and conduct intelligible to them. Their highest concept of right conduct, in his case, was to get a job. That was their first word and their last. It constituted their whole lexicon of ideas. Get a job! Go to work! Poor, stupid slaves, he thought, while his sister talked. Small wonder the world belonged to the strong. The slaves were obsessed by their own slavery. A job was to them a golden fetich before which they fell down and worshipped.

He shook his head again, when Gertrude offered him money, though he knew that within the day he would have to make a trip to the pawnbroker.

“Don’t come near Bernard now,” she admonished him. “After a few months, when he is cooled down, if you want to, you can get the job of drivin’ delivery-wagon for him. Any time you want me, just send for me an’ I’ll come. Don’t forget.”

She went away weeping audibly, and he felt a pang of sorrow shoot through him at sight of her heavy body and uncouth gait. As he watched her go, the Nietzschean edifice seemed to shake and totter. The slave-class in the abstract was all very well, but it was not wholly satisfactory when it was brought home to his own family. And yet, if there was ever a slave trampled by the strong, that slave was his sister Gertrude. He grinned savagely at the paradox. A fine Nietzsche-man he was, to allow his intellectual concepts to be shaken by the first sentiment or emotion that strayed along — ay, to be shaken by the slave-morality itself, for that was what his pity for his sister really was. The true noble men were above pity and compassion. Pity and compassion had been generated in the subterranean barracoons of the slaves and were no more than the agony and sweat of the crowded miserables and weaklings.

CHAPTER XL

"Overdue" still continued to lie forgotten on the table. Every manuscript that he had had out now lay under the table. Only one manuscript he kept going, and that was Brissenden's "Ephemera." His bicycle and black suit were again in pawn, and the type-writer people were once more worrying about the rent. But such things no longer bothered him. He was seeking a new orientation, and until that was found his life must stand still.

After several weeks, what he had been waiting for happened. He met Ruth on the street. It was true, she was accompanied by her brother, Norman, and it was true that they tried to ignore him and that Norman attempted to wave him aside.

"If you interfere with my sister, I'll call an officer," Norman threatened. "She does not wish to speak with you, and your insistence is insult."

"If you persist, you'll have to call that officer, and then you'll get your name in the papers," Martin answered grimly. "And now, get out of my way and get the officer if you want to. I'm going to talk with Ruth."

"I want to have it from your own lips," he said to her.

She was pale and trembling, but she held up and looked inquiringly.

"The question I asked in my letter," he prompted.

Norman made an impatient movement, but Martin checked him with a swift look.

She shook her head.

"Is all this of your own free will?" he demanded.

"It is." She spoke in a low, firm voice and with deliberation. "It is of my own free will. You have disgraced me so that I am ashamed to meet my friends. They are all talking about me, I know. That is all I can tell you. You have made me very unhappy, and I never wish to see you again."

"Friends! Gossip! Newspaper misreports! Surely such things are not stronger than love! I can only believe that you never loved me."

A blush drove the pallor from her face.

"After what has passed?" she said faintly. "Martin, you do not know what you are saying. I am not common."

"You see, she doesn't want to have anything to do with you," Norman blurted out, starting on with her.

Martin stood aside and let them pass, fumbling unconsciously in his coat pocket for the tobacco and brown papers that were not there.

It was a long walk to North Oakland, but it was not until he went up the steps and entered his room that he knew he had walked it. He found himself sitting on the edge of the bed and staring about him like an awakened somnambulist. He noticed "Overdue" lying on the table and drew up his chair and reached for his pen. There was in his nature a logical compulsion toward completeness. Here was something undone. It had been deferred against the completion of something else. Now that something else had been finished, and he would apply himself to this task until it was finished. What he would do next he did not know. All that he did know was that a climacteric in his life had been attained. A period had been reached, and he was rounding it off in workman-like fashion. He was not curious about the future. He would soon enough find out what it held in store for him. Whatever it was, it did not matter. Nothing seemed to matter.

For five days he toiled on at "Overdue," going nowhere, seeing nobody, and eating meagrely. On the morning of the sixth day the postman brought him a thin letter from the editor of *The Parthenon*. A glance told him that "Ephemera" was accepted. "We have submitted the poem to Mr. Cartwright Bruce," the editor went on to say, "and he has reported so favorably upon it that we cannot let it go. As an earnest of our pleasure in publishing the poem, let me tell you that we have set it for the August number, our July number being already made up. Kindly extend our pleasure and our thanks to Mr. Brissenden. Please send by return mail his photograph and biographical data. If our honorarium is unsatisfactory, kindly telegraph us at once and state what you consider a fair price."

Since the honorarium they had offered was three hundred and fifty dollars, Martin thought it not worth while to telegraph. Then, too, there was Brissenden's consent to be gained. Well, he had been right, after all. Here was one magazine editor who knew real poetry when he saw it. And the price was splendid, even though it was for the poem of a century. As for Cartwright Bruce, Martin knew that he was the one critic for whose opinions Brissenden had any respect.

Martin rode down town on an electric car, and as he watched the houses and cross-streets slipping by he was aware of a regret that he was not more elated over his friend's success and over his own signal victory. The one critic in the United States had pronounced favorably on the poem, while his own contention that good stuff could find its way into the magazines had proved correct. But enthusiasm had lost its spring in him, and he found that he was more anxious to see Brissenden than he was to carry the good news. The acceptance of *The Parthenon* had recalled to him that during his five days' devotion to "Overdue" he had not heard from Brissenden nor even thought about him. For the first time Martin realized the daze he had been in, and he felt shame for having forgotten his friend. But even the shame did not burn very sharply. He was numb to emotions of any sort save the artistic ones concerned in the writing of "Overdue." So far as other affairs were concerned, he had been in a trance. For that matter, he was still in a trance. All this life through which the electric car whirred seemed remote and unreal, and he would have experienced little interest and less shook if the great stone steeple of the church he passed had suddenly crumbled to mortar-dust upon his head.

At the hotel he hurried up to Brissenden's room, and hurried down again. The room was empty. All luggage was gone.

"Did Mr. Brissenden leave any address?" he asked the clerk, who looked at him curiously for a moment.

"Haven't you heard?" he asked.

Martin shook his head.

"Why, the papers were full of it. He was found dead in bed. Suicide. Shot himself through the head."

"Is he buried yet?" Martin seemed to hear his voice, like some one else's voice, from a long way off, asking the question.

"No. The body was shipped East after the inquest. Lawyers engaged by his people saw to the arrangements."

"They were quick about it, I must say," Martin commented.

"Oh, I don't know. It happened five days ago."

"Five days ago?"

"Yes, five days ago."

"Oh," Martin said as he turned and went out.

At the corner he stepped into the Western Union and sent a telegram to *The Parthenon*, advising them to proceed with the publication of the poem. He had in his pocket but five cents with which to pay his carfare home, so he sent the message collect.

Once in his room, he resumed his writing. The days and nights came and went, and he sat at his table and wrote on. He went nowhere, save to the pawnbroker, took no exercise, and ate methodically when he was hungry and had something to cook, and just as methodically went without when he had nothing to cook. Composed as the story was, in advance, chapter by chapter, he nevertheless saw and developed an opening that increased the power of it, though it necessitated twenty thousand additional words. It was not that there was any vital need that the thing should be well done, but that his artistic canons compelled him to do it well. He worked on in the daze, strangely detached from the world around him, feeling like a familiar ghost among these literary trappings of his former life. He remembered that some one had said that a ghost was the spirit of a man who was dead and who did not have sense enough to know it; and he paused for the moment to wonder if he were really dead did unaware of it.

Came the day when "Overdue" was finished. The agent of the type-writer firm had come for the machine, and he sat on the bed while Martin, on the one chair, typed the last pages of the final chapter. "Finis," he wrote, in capitals, at the end, and to him it was indeed finis. He watched the type-writer carried out the door with a feeling of relief, then went over and lay down on the bed. He was faint from hunger. Food had not passed his lips in thirty-six hours, but he did not think about it. He lay on his back, with closed eyes, and did not think at all, while the daze or stupor slowly welled up, saturating his consciousness. Half in delirium, he began muttering aloud the lines of an anonymous poem Brissenden had been fond of quoting to him. Maria, listening anxiously outside his door, was perturbed by his monotonous utterance. The words in themselves were not significant to her, but the fact that he was saying them was. "I have done," was the burden of the poem.

"'I have done —
Put by the lute.
Song and singing soon are over
As the airy shades that hover
In among the purple clover.
I have done —
Put by the lute.
Once I sang as early thrushes
Sing among the dewy bushes;

Now I'm mute.
I am like a weary linnet,
For my throat has no song in it;
I have had my singing minute.
I have done.
Put by the lute.'"

Maria could stand it no longer, and hurried away to the stove, where she filled a quart-bowl with soup, putting into it the lion's share of chopped meat and vegetables which her ladle scraped from the bottom of the pot. Martin roused himself and sat up and began to eat, between spoonfuls reassuring Maria that he had not been talking in his sleep and that he did not have any fever.

After she left him he sat drearily, with drooping shoulders, on the edge of the bed, gazing about him with lack-lustre eyes that saw nothing until the torn wrapper of a magazine, which had come in the morning's mail and which lay unopened, shot a gleam of light into his darkened brain. It is *The Parthenon*, he thought, the August *Parthenon*, and it must contain "Ephemera." If only Brissenden were here to see!

He was turning the pages of the magazine, when suddenly he stopped. "Ephemera" had been featured, with gorgeous head-piece and Beardsley-like margin decorations. On one side of the head-piece was Brissenden's photograph, on the other side was the photograph of Sir John Value, the British Ambassador. A preliminary editorial note quoted Sir John Value as saying that there were no poets in America, and the publication of "Ephemera" was *The Parthenon's*. "There, take that, Sir John Value!" Cartwright Bruce was described as the greatest critic in America, and he was quoted as saying that "Ephemera" was the greatest poem ever written in America. And finally, the editor's foreword ended with: "We have not yet made up our minds entirely as to the merits of "Ephemera"; perhaps we shall never be able to do so. But we have read it often, wondering at the words and their arrangement, wondering where Mr. Brissenden got them, and how he could fasten them together." Then followed the poem.

"Pretty good thing you died, Briss, old man," Martin murmured, letting the magazine slip between his knees to the floor.

The cheapness and vulgarity of it was nauseating, and Martin noted apathetically that he was not nauseated very much. He wished he could get angry, but did not have energy enough to try. He was too numb. His blood was too congealed to accelerate to the swift tidal flow of indignation. After all, what did it matter? It was on a par with all the rest that Brissenden had condemned in bourgeois society.

"Poor Briss," Martin communed; "he would never have forgiven me."

Rousing himself with an effort, he possessed himself of a box which had once contained type-writer paper. Going through its contents, he drew forth eleven poems which his friend had written. These he tore lengthwise and crosswise and dropped into the waste basket. He did it languidly, and, when he had finished, sat on the edge of the bed staring blankly before him.

How long he sat there he did not know, until, suddenly, across his sightless vision he saw form a long horizontal line of white. It was curious. But as he watched it grow in definiteness he saw that it was a coral reef smoking in the white Pacific surges. Next, in the line of breakers he made out a small canoe, an outrigger canoe. In the stern he saw a young bronzed god in scarlet hip-cloth dipping a flashing paddle. He recognized him. He was Moti, the youngest son of Tati, the chief, and this was Tahiti, and beyond that smoking reef lay the sweet land of Papara and the chief's grass house by the river's mouth. It was the end of the day, and Moti was coming home from the fishing. He was waiting for the rush of a big breaker whereon to jump the reef. Then he saw himself, sitting forward in the canoe as he had often sat in the past, dipping a paddle that waited Moti's word to dig in like mad when the turquoise wall of the great breaker rose behind them. Next, he was no longer an onlooker but was himself in the canoe, Moti was crying out, they were both thrusting hard with their paddles, racing on the steep face of the flying turquoise. Under the bow the water was hissing as from a steam jet, the air was filled with driven spray, there was a rush and rumble and long-echoing roar, and the canoe floated on the placid water of the lagoon. Moti laughed and shook the salt water from his eyes, and together they paddled in to the pounded-coral beach where Tati's grass walls through the cocoanut-palms showed golden in the setting sun.

The picture faded, and before his eyes stretched the disorder of his squalid room. He strove in vain to see Tahiti again. He knew there was singing among the trees and that the maidens were dancing in the moonlight, but he could not see them. He could see only the littered writing-table, the empty space where the type-writer had stood, and the unwashed window-pane. He closed his eyes with a groan, and slept.

CHAPTER XLI

He slept heavily all night, and did not stir until aroused by the postman on his morning round. Martin felt tired and passive, and went through his letters aimlessly. One thin envelope, from a robber magazine, contained for twenty-two dollars. He had been dunning for it for a year and a half. He noted its amount apathetically. The old-time thrill at receiving a publisher's check was gone. Unlike his earlier checks, this one was not pregnant with promise of great things to come. To him it was a check for twenty-two dollars, that was all, and it would buy him something to eat.

Another check was in the same mail, sent from a New York weekly in payment for some humorous verse which had been accepted months before. It was for ten dollars. An idea came to him, which he calmly considered. He did not know what he was going to do, and he felt in no hurry to do anything. In the meantime he must live. Also he owed numerous debts. Would it not be a paying investment to put stamps on the huge pile of manuscripts under the table and start them on their travels again? One or two of them might be accepted. That would help him to live. He decided on the investment, and, after he had cashed the checks at the bank down in Oakland, he bought ten dollars' worth of postage stamps. The thought of going home to cook breakfast in his stuffy little room was repulsive to him. For the first time he refused to consider his debts. He knew that in his room he could manufacture a substantial breakfast at a cost of from fifteen to twenty cents. But, instead, he went into the Forum Café and ordered a breakfast that cost two dollars. He tipped the waiter a quarter, and spent fifty cents for a package of Egyptian cigarettes. It was the first time he had smoked since Ruth had asked him to stop. But he could see now no reason why he should not, and besides, he wanted to smoke. And what did the money matter? For five cents he could have bought a package of Durham and brown papers and rolled forty cigarettes — but what of it? Money had no meaning to him now except what it would immediately buy. He was chartless and rudderless, and he had no port to make, while drifting involved the least living, and it was living that hurt.

The days slipped along, and he slept eight hours regularly every night. Though now, while waiting for more checks, he ate in the Japanese restaurants where meals were served for ten cents, his wasted body filled out, as did the hollows in his cheeks. He no longer abused himself with short sleep, overwork, and overstudy. He wrote nothing, and the books were closed. He walked much, out in the hills, and loafed long hours in the quiet parks. He had no friends nor acquaintances, nor did he make any. He had no inclination. He was waiting for some impulse, from he knew not where, to put his stopped life into motion again. In the meantime his life remained run down, planless, and empty and idle.

Once he made a trip to San Francisco to look up the "real dirt." But at the last moment, as he stepped into the upstairs entrance, he recoiled and turned and fled through the swarming ghetto. He was frightened at the thought of hearing philosophy discussed, and he fled furtively, for fear that some one of the "real dirt" might chance along and recognize him.

Sometimes he glanced over the magazines and newspapers to see how "Ephemera" was being maltreated. It had made a hit. But what a hit! Everybody had read it, and everybody was discussing whether or not it was really poetry. The local papers had taken it up, and daily there appeared columns of learned criticisms, facetious editorials, and serious letters from subscribers. Helen Della Delmar (proclaimed with a flourish of trumpets and rolling of tomtoms to be the greatest woman poet in the United States) denied Brissenden a seat beside her on Pegasus and wrote voluminous letters to the public, proving that he was no poet.

The Parthenon came out in its next number patting itself on the back for the stir it had made, sneering at Sir John Value, and exploiting Brissenden's death with ruthless commercialism. A newspaper with a sworn circulation of half a million published an original and spontaneous poem by Helen Della Delmar, in which she gibed and sneered at Brissenden. Also, she was guilty of a second poem, in which she parodied him.

Martin had many times to be glad that Brissenden was dead. He had hated the crowd so, and here all that was finest and most sacred of him had been thrown to the crowd. Daily the vivisection of Beauty went on. Every nincompoop in the land rushed into free print, floating their wizened little egos into the public eye on the surge of Brissenden's greatness. Quoth one paper: "We have received a letter from a gentleman who wrote a poem just like it, only better, some time ago." Another paper, in deadly seriousness, reproving Helen Della Delmar for her parody, said: "But unquestionably Miss Delmar wrote it in a moment of badinage and not quite with the respect that one great poet should show to another and perhaps to the greatest. However, whether Miss Delmar be jealous or not of the man who invented ‘Ephemera,’ it is certain that she, like thousands of others, is fascinated by his work, and that the day may come when she will try to write lines like his.”

Ministers began to preach sermons against “Ephemera,” and one, who too stoutly stood for much of its content, was expelled for heresy. The great poem contributed to the gayety of the world. The comic verse-writers and the cartoonists took hold of it with screaming laughter, and in the personal columns of society weeklies jokes were perpetrated on it to the effect that Charley Frensham told Archie Jennings, in confidence, that five lines of “Ephemera” would drive a man to beat a cripple, and that ten lines would send him to the bottom of the river.

Martin did not laugh; nor did he grit his teeth in anger. The effect produced upon him was one of great sadness. In the crash of his whole world, with love on the pinnacle, the crash of magazinedom and the dear public was a small crash indeed. Brissenden had been wholly right in his judgment of the magazines, and he, Martin, had spent arduous and futile years in order to find it out for himself. The magazines were all Brissenden had said they were and more. Well, he was done, he solaced himself. He had hitched his wagon to a star and been landed in a pestiferous marsh. The visions of Tahiti — clean, sweet Tahiti — were coming to him more frequently. And there were the low Paumotus, and the high Marquesas; he saw himself often, now, on board trading schooners or frail little cutters, slipping out at dawn through the reef at Papeete and beginning the long beat through the pearl-atolls to Nukahiva and the Bay of Taiohae, where Tamari, he knew, would kill a pig in honor of his coming, and where Tamari’s flower-garlanded daughters would seize his hands and with song and laughter garland him with flowers. The South Seas were calling, and he knew that sooner or later he would answer the call.

In the meantime he drifted, resting and recuperating after the long traverse he had made through the realm of knowledge. When *The Parthenon* check of three hundred and fifty dollars was forwarded to him, he turned it over to the local lawyer who had attended to Brissenden’s affairs for his family. Martin took a receipt for the check, and at the same time gave a note for the hundred dollars Brissenden had let him have.

The time was not long when Martin ceased patronizing the Japanese restaurants. At the very moment when he had abandoned the fight, the tide turned. But it had turned too late. Without a thrill he opened a thick envelope from *The Millennium*, scanned the face of a check that represented three hundred dollars, and noted that it was the payment on acceptance for "Adventure." Every debt he owed in the world, including the pawnshop, with its usurious interest, amounted to less than a hundred dollars. And when he had paid everything, and lifted the hundred-dollar note with Brissenden's lawyer, he still had over a hundred dollars in pocket. He ordered a suit of clothes from the tailor and ate his meals in the best cafés in town. He still slept in his little room at Maria's, but the sight of his new clothes caused the neighborhood children to cease from calling him "hobo" and "tramp" from the roofs of woodsheds and over back fences.

"Wiki-Wiki," his Hawaiian short story, was bought by *Warren's Monthly* for two hundred and fifty dollars. *The Northern Review* took his essay, "The Cradle of Beauty," and *Mackintosh's Magazine* took "The Palmist" — the poem he had written to Marian. The editors and readers were back from their summer vacations, and manuscripts were being handled quickly. But Martin could not puzzle out what strange whim animated them to this general acceptance of the things they had persistently rejected for two years. Nothing of his had been published. He was not known anywhere outside of Oakland, and in Oakland, with the few who thought they knew him, he was notorious as a red-shirt and a socialist. So there was no explaining this sudden acceptability of his wares. It was sheer jugglery of fate.

After it had been refused by a number of magazines, he had taken Brissenden's rejected advice and started, "The Shame of the Sun" on the round of publishers. After several refusals, Singletree, Darnley & Co. accepted it, promising fall publication. When Martin asked for an advance on royalties, they wrote that such was not their custom, that books of that nature rarely paid for themselves, and that they doubted if his book would sell a thousand copies. Martin figured what the book would earn him on such a sale. Retailed at a dollar, on a royalty of fifteen per cent, it would bring him one hundred and fifty dollars. He decided that if he had it to do over again he would confine himself to fiction. "Adventure," one-fourth as long, had brought him twice as much from *The Millennium*. That newspaper paragraph he had read so long ago had been true, after all. The first-class magazines did not pay on acceptance, and they paid well. Not two cents a word, but four cents a word, had *The Millennium* paid him.

And, furthermore, they bought good stuff, too, for were they not buying his? This last thought he accompanied with a grin.

He wrote to Singletree, Darnley & Co., offering to sell out his rights in "The Shame of the Sun" for a hundred dollars, but they did not care to take the risk. In the meantime he was not in need of money, for several of his later stories had been accepted and paid for. He actually opened a bank account, where, without a debt in the world, he had several hundred dollars to his credit. "Overdue," after having been declined by a number of magazines, came to rest at the Meredith-Lowell Company. Martin remembered the five dollars Gertrude had given him, and his resolve to return it to her a hundred times over; so he wrote for an advance on royalties of five hundred dollars. To his surprise a check for that amount, accompanied by a contract, came by return mail. He cashed the check into five-dollar gold pieces and telephoned Gertrude that he wanted to see her.

She arrived at the house panting and short of breath from the haste she had made. Apprehensive of trouble, she had stuffed the few dollars she possessed into her hand-satchel; and so sure was she that disaster had overtaken her brother, that she stumbled forward, sobbing, into his arms, at the same time thrusting the satchel mutely at him.

"I'd have come myself," he said. "But I didn't want a row with Mr. Higginbotham, and that is what would have surely happened."

"He'll be all right after a time," she assured him, while she wondered what the trouble was that Martin was in. "But you'd best get a job first an' steady down. Bernard does like to see a man at honest work. That stuff in the newspapers broke 'm all up. I never saw 'm so mad before."

"I'm not going to get a job," Martin said with a smile. "And you can tell him so from me. I don't need a job, and there's the proof of it."

He emptied the hundred gold pieces into her lap in a glinting, tinkling stream.

"You remember that fiver you gave me the time I didn't have carfare? Well, there it is, with ninety-nine brothers of different ages but all of the same size."

If Gertrude had been frightened when she arrived, she was now in a panic of fear. Her fear was such that it was certitude. She was not suspicious. She was convinced. She looked at Martin in horror, and her heavy limbs shrank under the golden stream as though it were burning her.

"It's yours," he laughed.

She burst into tears, and began to moan, “My poor boy, my poor boy!”

He was puzzled for a moment. Then he divined the cause of her agitation and handed her the Meredith-Lowell letter which had accompanied the check. She stumbled through it, pausing now and again to wipe her eyes, and when she had finished, said:-

“An’ does it mean that you come by the money honestly?”

“More honestly than if I’d won it in a lottery. I earned it.”

Slowly faith came back to her, and she reread the letter carefully. It took him long to explain to her the nature of the transaction which had put the money into his possession, and longer still to get her to understand that the money was really hers and that he did not need it.

“I’ll put it in the bank for you,” she said finally.

“You’ll do nothing of the sort. It’s yours, to do with as you please, and if you won’t take it, I’ll give it to Maria. She’ll know what to do with it. I’d suggest, though, that you hire a servant and take a good long rest.”

“I’m goin’ to tell Bernard all about it,” she announced, when she was leaving.

Martin winced, then grinned.

“Yes, do,” he said. “And then, maybe, he’ll invite me to dinner again.”

“Yes, he will — I’m sure he will!” she exclaimed fervently, as she drew him to her and kissed and hugged him.

CHAPTER XLII

One day Martin became aware that he was lonely. He was healthy and strong, and had nothing to do. The cessation from writing and studying, the death of Brissenden, and the estrangement from Ruth had made a big hole in his life; and his life refused to be pinned down to good living in cafés and the smoking of Egyptian cigarettes. It was true the South Seas were calling to him, but he had a feeling that the game was not yet played out in the United States. Two books were soon to be published, and he had more books that might find publication. Money could be made out of them, and he would wait and take a sackful of it into the South Seas. He knew a valley and a bay in the Marquesas that he could buy for a thousand Chili dollars. The valley ran from the horseshoe, land-locked bay to the tops of the dizzy, cloud-capped peaks and contained perhaps ten thousand acres. It was filled with tropical fruits, wild chickens, and wild pigs, with an occasional herd of wild cattle, while high up among the peaks were herds of wild goats harried by packs of wild dogs. The whole place was wild. Not a human lived in it. And he could buy it and the bay for a thousand Chili dollars.

The bay, as he remembered it, was magnificent, with water deep enough to accommodate the largest vessel afloat, and so safe that the South Pacific Directory recommended it to the best careening place for ships for hundreds of miles around. He would buy a schooner — one of those yacht-like, coppered crafts that sailed like witches — and go trading copra and pearling among the islands. He would make the valley and the bay his headquarters. He would build a patriarchal grass house like Tati's, and have it and the valley and the schooner filled with dark-skinned servitors. He would entertain there the factor of Taiohae, captains of wandering traders, and all the best of the South Pacific riffraff. He would keep open house and entertain like a prince. And he would forget the books he had opened and the world that had proved an illusion.

To do all this he must wait in California to fill the sack with money. Already it was beginning to flow in. If one of the books made a strike, it might enable him to sell the whole heap of manuscripts. Also he could collect the stories and the poems into books, and make sure of the valley and the bay and the schooner. He would never write again. Upon that he was resolved. But in the meantime, awaiting the publication of the books, he must do something more than live dazed and stupid in the sort of uncaring trance into which he had fallen.

He noted, one Sunday morning, that the Bricklayers' Picnic took place that day at Shell Mound Park, and to Shell Mound Park he went. He had been to the working-class picnics too often in his earlier life not to know what they were like, and as he entered the park he experienced a recrudescence of all the old sensations. After all, they were his kind, these working people. He had been born among them, he had lived among them, and though he had strayed for a time, it was well to come back among them.

"If it ain't Mart!" he heard some one say, and the next moment a hearty hand was on his shoulder. "Where you ben all the time? Off to sea? Come on an' have a drink."

It was the old crowd in which he found himself — the old crowd, with here and there a gap, and here and there a new face. The fellows were not bricklayers, but, as in the old days, they attended all Sunday picnics for the dancing, and the fighting, and the fun. Martin drank with them, and began to feel really human once more. He was a fool to have ever left them, he thought; and he was very certain that his sum of happiness would have been greater had he remained with them and let alone the books and the people who sat in the high places. Yet the beer seemed not so good as of yore. It didn't taste as it used to taste. Brissenden had spoiled him for steam beer, he concluded, and wondered if, after all, the books had spoiled him for companionship with these friends of his youth. He resolved that he would not be so spoiled, and he went on to the dancing pavilion. Jimmy, the plumber, he met there, in the company of a tall, blond girl who promptly forsook him for Martin.

"Gee, it's like old times," Jimmy explained to the gang that gave him the laugh as Martin and the blonde whirled away in a waltz. "An' I don't give a rap. I'm too damned glad to see 'm back. Watch 'm waltz, eh? It's like silk. Who'd blame any girl?"

But Martin restored the blonde to Jimmy, and the three of them, with half a dozen friends, watched the revolving couples and laughed and joked with one another. Everybody was glad to see Martin back. No book of his been published; he carried no fictitious value in their eyes. They liked him for himself. He felt like a prince returned from excile, and his lonely heart burgeoned in the geniality in which it bathed. He made a mad day of it, and was at his best. Also, he had money in his pockets, and, as in the old days when he returned from sea with a pay-day, he made the money fly.

Once, on the dancing-floor, he saw Lizzie Connolly go by in the arms of a young workingman; and, later, when he made the round of the pavilion, he came upon her sitting by a refreshment table. Surprise and greetings over, he led her away into the grounds, where they could talk without shouting down the music. From the instant he spoke to her, she was his. He knew it. She showed it in the proud humility of her eyes, in every caressing movement of her proudly carried body, and in the way she hung upon his speech. She was not the young girl as he had known her. She was a woman, now, and Martin noted that her wild, defiant beauty had improved, losing none of its wildness, while the defiance and the fire seemed more in control. "A beauty, a perfect beauty," he murmured admiringly under his breath. And he knew she was his, that all he had to do was to say "Come," and she would go with him over the world wherever he led.

Even as the thought flashed through his brain he received a heavy blow on the side of his head that nearly knocked him down. It was a man's fist, directed by a man so angry and in such haste that the fist had missed the jaw for which it was aimed. Martin turned as he staggered, and saw the fist coming at him in a wild swing. Quite as a matter of course he ducked, and the fist flew harmlessly past, pivoting the man who had driven it. Martin hooked with his left, landing on the pivoting man with the weight of his body behind the blow. The man went to the ground sidewise, leaped to his feet, and made a mad rush. Martin saw his passion-distorted face and wondered what could be the cause of the fellow's anger. But while he wondered, he shot in a straight left, the weight of his body behind the blow. The man went over backward and fell in a crumpled heap. Jimmy and others of the gang were running toward them.

Martin was thrilling all over. This was the old days with a vengeance, with their dancing, and their fighting, and their fun. While he kept a wary eye on his antagonist, he glanced at Lizzie. Usually the girls screamed when the fellows got to scrapping, but she had not screamed. She was looking on with bated breath, leaning slightly forward, so keen was her interest, one hand pressed to her breast, her cheek flushed, and in her eyes a great and amazed admiration.

The man had gained his feet and was struggling to escape the restraining arms that were laid on him.

“She was waitin’ for me to come back!” he was proclaiming to all and sundry. “She was waitin’ for me to come back, an’ then that fresh guy comes buttin’ in. Let go o’ me, I tell yeh. I’m goin’ to fix ’m.”

“What’s eatin’ yer?” Jimmy was demanding, as he helped hold the young fellow back. “That guy’s Mart Eden. He’s nifty with his mits, lemme tell you that, an’ he’ll eat you alive if you monkey with ’m.”

“He can’t steal her on me that way,” the other interjected.

“He licked the Flyin’ Dutchman, an’ you know *him*,” Jimmy went on expostulating. “An’ he did it in five rounds. You couldn’t last a minute against him. See?”

This information seemed to have a mollifying effect, and the irate young man favored Martin with a measuring stare.

“He don’t look it,” he sneered; but the sneer was without passion.

“That’s what the Flyin’ Dutchman thought,” Jimmy assured him. “Come on, now, let’s get outa this. There’s lots of other girls. Come on.”

The young fellow allowed himself to be led away toward the pavilion, and the gang followed after him.

“Who is he?” Martin asked Lizzie. “And what’s it all about, anyway?”

Already the zest of combat, which of old had been so keen and lasting, had died down, and he discovered that he was self-analytical, too much so to live, single heart and single hand, so primitive an existence.

Lizzie tossed her head.

“Oh, he’s nobody,” she said. “He’s just ben keepin’ company with me.”

“I had to, you see,” she explained after a pause. “I was gettin’ pretty lonesome. But I never forgot.” Her voice sank lower, and she looked straight before her. “I’d throw ’m down for you any time.”

Martin looking at her averted face, knowing that all he had to do was to reach out his hand and pluck her, fell to pondering whether, after all, there was any real worth in refined, grammatical English, and, so, forgot to reply to her.

“You put it all over him,” she said tentatively, with a laugh.

“He’s a husky young fellow, though,” he admitted generously. “If they hadn’t taken him away, he might have given me my hands full.”

“Who was that lady friend I seen you with that night?” she asked abruptly.

“Oh, just a lady friend,” was his answer.

“It was a long time ago,” she murmured contemplatively. “It seems like a thousand years.”

But Martin went no further into the matter. He led the conversation off into other channels. They had lunch in the restaurant, where he ordered wine and expensive delicacies and afterward he danced with her and with no one but her, till she was tired. He was a good dancer, and she whirled around and around with him in a heaven of delight, her head against his shoulder, wishing that it could last forever. Later in the afternoon they strayed off among the trees, where, in the good old fashion, she sat down while he sprawled on his back, his head in her lap. He lay and dozed, while she fondled his hair, looked down on his closed eyes, and loved him without reserve. Looking up suddenly, he read the tender advertisement in her face. Her eyes fluttered down, then they opened and looked into his with soft defiance.

“I’ve kept straight all these years,” she said, her voice so low that it was almost a whisper.

In his heart Martin knew that it was the miraculous truth. And at his heart pleaded a great temptation. It was in his power to make her happy. Denied happiness himself, why should he deny happiness to her? He could marry her and take her down with him to dwell in the grass-walled castle in the Marquesas. The desire to do it was strong, but stronger still was the imperative command of his nature not to do it. In spite of himself he was still faithful to Love. The old days of license and easy living were gone. He could not bring them back, nor could he go back to them. He was changed — how changed he had not realized until now.

“I am not a marrying man, Lizzie,” he said lightly.

The hand caressing his hair paused perceptibly, then went on with the same gentle stroke. He noticed her face harden, but it was with the hardness of resolution, for still the soft color was in her cheeks and she was all glowing and melting.

“I did not mean that — ” she began, then faltered. “Or anyway I don’t care.”

“I don’t care,” she repeated. “I’m proud to be your friend. I’d do anything for you. I’m made that way, I guess.”

Martin sat up. He took her hand in his. He did it deliberately, with warmth but without passion; and such warmth chilled her.

“Don’t let’s talk about it,” she said.

“You are a great and noble woman,” he said. “And it is I who should be proud to know you. And I am, I am. You are a ray of light to me in a very dark world, and I’ve got to be straight with you, just as straight as you have been.”

“I don’t care whether you’re straight with me or not. You could do anything with me. You could throw me in the dirt an’ walk on me. An’ you’re the only man in the world that can,” she added with a defiant flash. “I ain’t taken care of myself ever since I was a kid for nothin’.”

“And it’s just because of that that I’m not going to,” he said gently. “You are so big and generous that you challenge me to equal generousness. I’m not marrying, and I’m not — well, loving without marrying, though I’ve done my share of that in the past. I’m sorry I came here to-day and met you. But it can’t be helped now, and I never expected it would turn out this way.”

“But look here, Lizzie. I can’t begin to tell you how much I like you. I do more than like you. I admire and respect you. You are magnificent, and you are magnificently good. But what’s the use of words? Yet there’s something I’d like to do. You’ve had a hard life; let me make it easy for you.” (A joyous light welled into her eyes, then faded out again.) “I’m pretty sure of getting hold of some money soon — lots of it.”

In that moment he abandoned the idea of the valley and the bay, the grass-walled castle and the trim, white schooner. After all, what did it matter? He could go away, as he had done so often, before the mast, on any ship bound anywhere.

“I’d like to turn it over to you. There must be something you want — to go to school or business college. You might like to study and be a stenographer. I could fix it for you. Or maybe your father and mother are living — I could set them up in a grocery store or something. Anything you want, just name it, and I can fix it for you.”

She made no reply, but sat, gazing straight before her, dry-eyed and motionless, but with an ache in the throat which Martin divined so strongly that it made his own throat ache. He regretted that he had spoken. It seemed so tawdry what he had offered her — mere money — compared with what she offered him. He offered her an extraneous thing with which he could part without a pang, while she offered him herself, along with disgrace and shame, and sin, and all her hopes of heaven.

“Don’t let’s talk about it,” she said with a catch in her voice that she changed to a cough. She stood up. “Come on, let’s go home. I’m all tired out.”

The day was done, and the merrymakers had nearly all departed. But as Martin and Lizzie emerged from the trees they found the gang waiting for them. Martin knew immediately the meaning of it. Trouble was brewing. The gang was his body-guard. They passed out through the gates of the park with, straggling in the rear, a second gang, the friends that Lizzie’s young man had collected to avenge the loss of his lady. Several constables and special police officers, anticipating trouble, trailed along to prevent it, and herded the two gangs separately aboard the train for San Francisco. Martin told Jimmy that he would get off at Sixteenth Street Station and catch the electric car into Oakland. Lizzie was very quiet and without interest in what was impending. The train pulled in to Sixteenth Street Station, and the waiting electric car could be seen, the conductor of which was impatiently clanging the gong.

“There she is,” Jimmy counselled. “Make a run for it, an’ we’ll hold ’em back. Now you go! Hit her up!”

The hostile gang was temporarily disconcerted by the manoeuvre, then it dashed from the train in pursuit. The staid and sober Oakland folk who sat upon the car scarcely noted the young fellow and the girl who ran for it and found a seat in front on the outside. They did not connect the couple with Jimmy, who sprang on the steps, crying to the motorman:-

“Slam on the juice, old man, and beat it outa here!”

The next moment Jimmy whirled about, and the passengers saw him land his fist on the face of a running man who was trying to board the car. But fists were landing on faces the whole length of the car. Thus, Jimmy and his gang, strung out on the long, lower steps, met the attacking gang. The car started with a great clanging of its gong, and, as Jimmy’s gang drove off the last assailants, they, too, jumped off to finish the job. The car dashed on, leaving the flurry of combat far behind, and its dumfounded passengers never dreamed that the quiet young man and the pretty working-girl sitting in the corner on the outside seat had been the cause of the row.

Martin had enjoyed the fight, with a recrudescence of the old fighting thrills. But they quickly died away, and he was oppressed by a great sadness. He felt very old — centuries older than those careless, care-free young companions of his others days. He had travelled far, too far to go back. Their mode of life, which had once been his, was now distasteful to him. He was disappointed in it all. He had developed into an alien. As the steam beer had tasted raw, so their companionship seemed raw to him. He was too far removed. Too many thousands of opened books yawned between them and him. He had exiled himself. He had travelled in the vast realm of intellect until he could no longer return home. On the other hand, he was human, and his gregarious need for companionship remained unsatisfied. He had found no new home. As the gang could not understand him, as his own family could not understand him, as the bourgeoisie could not understand him, so this girl beside him, whom he honored high, could not understand him nor the honor he paid her. His sadness was not untouched with bitterness as he thought it over.

"Make it up with him," he advised Lizzie, at parting, as they stood in front of the workingman's shack in which she lived, near Sixth and Market. He referred to the young fellow whose place he had usurped that day.

"I can't — now," she said.

"Oh, go on," he said jovially. "All you have to do is whistle and he'll come running."

"I didn't mean that," she said simply.

And he knew what she had meant.

She leaned toward him as he was about to say good night. But she leaned not imperatively, not seductively, but wistfully and humbly. He was touched to the heart. His large tolerance rose up in him. He put his arms around her, and kissed her, and knew that upon his own lips rested as true a kiss as man ever received.

"My God!" she sobbed. "I could die for you. I could die for you."

She tore herself from him suddenly and ran up the steps. He felt a quick moisture in his eyes.

"Martin Eden," he communed. "You're not a brute, and you're a damn poor Nietzscheman. You'd marry her if you could and fill her quivering heart full with happiness. But you can't, you can't. And it's a damn shame."

"'A poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers,'" he muttered, remembering his Henly. "'Life is, I think, a blunder and a shame.' It is — a blunder and a shame."

CHAPTER XLIII

"The Shame of the Sun" was published in October. As Martin cut the cords of the express package and the half-dozen complimentary copies from the publishers spilled out on the table, a heavy sadness fell upon him. He thought of the wild delight that would have been his had this happened a few short months before, and he contrasted that delight that should have been with his present uncaring coldness. His book, his first book, and his pulse had not gone up a fraction of a beat, and he was only sad. It meant little to him now. The most it meant was that it might bring some money, and little enough did he care for money.

He carried a copy out into the kitchen and presented it to Maria.

"I did it," he explained, in order to clear up her bewilderment. "I wrote it in the room there, and I guess some few quarts of your vegetable soup went into the making of it. Keep it. It's yours. Just to remember me by, you know."

He was not bragging, not showing off. His sole motive was to make her happy, to make her proud of him, to justify her long faith in him. She put the book in the front room on top of the family Bible. A sacred thing was this book her lodger had made, a fetich of friendship. It softened the blow of his having been a laundryman, and though she could not understand a line of it, she knew that every line of it was great. She was a simple, practical, hard-working woman, but she possessed faith in large endowment.

Just as emotionlessly as he had received "The Shame of the Sun" did he read the reviews of it that came in weekly from the clipping bureau. The book was making a hit, that was evident. It meant more gold in the money sack. He could fix up Lizzie, redeem all his promises, and still have enough left to build his grass-walled castle.

Singletree, Darnley & Co. had cautiously brought out an edition of fifteen hundred copies, but the first reviews had started a second edition of twice the size through the presses; and ere this was delivered a third edition of five thousand had been ordered. A London firm made arrangements by cable for an English edition, and hot-footed upon this came the news of French, German, and Scandinavian translations in progress. The attack upon the Maeterlinck school could not have been made at a more opportune moment. A fierce controversy was precipitated. Saleeby and Haeckel indorsed and defended "The Shame of the Sun," for once finding themselves on the same side of a question. Crookes and Wallace ranged up on the opposing side, while Sir Oliver Lodge attempted to formulate a compromise that would jibe with his particular cosmic theories. Maeterlinck's followers rallied around the standard of mysticism. Chesterton set the whole world laughing with a series of alleged non-partisan essays on the subject, and the whole affair, controversy and controversialists, was well-nigh swept into the pit by a thundering broadside from George Bernard Shaw. Needless to say the arena was crowded with hosts of lesser lights, and the dust and sweat and din became terrific.

"It is a most marvellous happening," Singletree, Darnley & Co. wrote Martin, "a critical philosophic essay selling like a novel. You could not have chosen your subject better, and all contributory factors have been unwarrantedly propitious. We need scarcely to assure you that we are making hay while the sun shines. Over forty thousand copies have already been sold in the United States and Canada, and a new edition of twenty thousand is on the presses. We are overworked, trying to supply the demand. Nevertheless we have helped to create that demand. We have already spent five thousand dollars in advertising. The book is bound to be a record-breaker."

"Please find herewith a contract in duplicate for your next book which we have taken the liberty of forwarding to you. You will please note that we have increased your royalties to twenty per cent, which is about as high as a conservative publishing house dares go. If our offer is agreeable to you, please fill in the proper blank space with the title of your book. We make no stipulations concerning its nature. Any book on any subject. If you have one already written, so much the better. Now is the time to strike. The iron could not be hotter."

"On receipt of signed contract we shall be pleased to make you an advance on royalties of five thousand dollars. You see, we have faith in you, and we are going in on this thing big. We should like, also, to discuss with you the drawing up of a contract for a term of years, say ten, during which we shall have the exclusive right of publishing in book-form all that you produce. But more of this anon."

Martin laid down the letter and worked a problem in mental arithmetic, finding the product of fifteen cents times sixty thousand to be nine thousand dollars. He signed the new contract, inserting "The Smoke of Joy" in the blank space, and mailed it back to the publishers along with the twenty storiettes he had written in the days before he discovered the formula for the newspaper storiette. And promptly as the United States mail could deliver and return, came Singletree, Darnley & Co.'s check for five thousand dollars.

"I want you to come down town with me, Maria, this afternoon about two o'clock," Martin said, the morning the check arrived. "Or, better, meet me at Fourteenth and Broadway at two o'clock. I'll be looking out for you."

At the appointed time she was there; but *shoes* was the only clew to the mystery her mind had been capable of evolving, and she suffered a distinct shock of disappointment when Martin walked her right by a shoe-store and dived into a real estate office. What happened thereupon resided forever after in her memory as a dream. Fine gentlemen smiled at her benevolently as they talked with Martin and one another; a type-writer clicked; signatures were affixed to an imposing document; her own landlord was there, too, and affixed his signature; and when all was over and she was outside on the sidewalk, her landlord spoke to her, saying, "Well, Maria, you won't have to pay me no seven dollars and a half this month."

Maria was too stunned for speech.

"Or next month, or the next, or the next," her landlord said.

She thanked him incoherently, as if for a favor. And it was not until she had returned home to North Oakland and conferred with her own kind, and had the Portuguese grocer investigate, that she really knew that she was the owner of the little house in which she had lived and for which she had paid rent so long.

"Why don't you trade with me no more?" the Portuguese grocer asked Martin that evening, stepping out to hail him when he got off the car; and Martin explained that he wasn't doing his own cooking any more, and then went in and had a drink of wine on the house. He noted it was the best wine the grocer had in stock.

"Maria," Martin announced that night, "I'm going to leave you. And you're going to leave here yourself soon. Then you can rent the house and be a landlord yourself. You've a brother in San Leandro or Haywards, and he's in the milk business. I want you to send all your washing back unwashed — understand? — unwashed, and to go out to San Leandro to-morrow, or Haywards, or wherever it is, and see that brother of yours. Tell him to come to see me. I’ll be stopping at the Metropole down in Oakland. He’ll know a good milk-ranch when he sees one.”

And so it was that Maria became a landlord and the sole owner of a dairy, with two hired men to do the work for her and a bank account that steadily increased despite the fact that her whole brood wore shoes and went to school. Few persons ever meet the fairy princes they dream about; but Maria, who worked hard and whose head was hard, never dreaming about fairy princes, entertained hers in the guise of an ex-laundryman.

In the meantime the world had begun to ask: “Who is this Martin Eden?” He had declined to give any biographical data to his publishers, but the newspapers were not to be denied. Oakland was his own town, and the reporters nosed out scores of individuals who could supply information. All that he was and was not, all that he had done and most of what he had not done, was spread out for the delectation of the public, accompanied by snapshots and photographs — the latter procured from the local photographer who had once taken Martin’s picture and who promptly copyrighted it and put it on the market. At first, so great was his disgust with the magazines and all bourgeois society, Martin fought against publicity; but in the end, because it was easier than not to, he surrendered. He found that he could not refuse himself to the special writers who travelled long distances to see him. Then again, each day was so many hours long, and, since he no longer was occupied with writing and studying, those hours had to be occupied somehow; so he yielded to what was to him a whim, permitted interviews, gave his opinions on literature and philosophy, and even accepted invitations of the bourgeoisie. He had settled down into a strange and comfortable state of mind. He no longer cared. He forgave everybody, even the cub reporter who had painted him red and to whom he now granted a full page with specially posed photographs.

He saw Lizzie occasionally, and it was patent that she regretted the greatness that had come to him. It widened the space between them. Perhaps it was with the hope of narrowing it that she yielded to his persuasions to go to night school and business college and to have herself gowned by a wonderful dressmaker who charged outrageous prices. She improved visibly from day to day, until Martin wondered if he was doing right, for he knew that all her compliance and endeavor was for his sake. She was trying to make herself of worth in his eyes — of the sort of worth he seemed to value. Yet he gave her no hope, treating her in brotherly fashion and rarely seeing her.

"Overdue" was rushed upon the market by the Meredith-Lowell Company in the height of his popularity, and being fiction, in point of sales it made even a bigger strike than "The Shame of the Sun." Week after week his was the credit of the unprecedented performance of having two books at the head of the list of best-sellers. Not only did the story take with the fiction-readers, but those who read "The Shame of the Sun" with avidity were likewise attracted to the sea-story by the cosmic grasp of mastery with which he had handled it. First he had attacked the literature of mysticism, and had done it exceeding well; and, next, he had successfully supplied the very literature he had exposited, thus proving himself to be that rare genius, a critic and a creator in one.

Money poured in on him, fame poured in on him; he flashed, comet-like, through the world of literature, and he was more amused than interested by the stir he was making. One thing was puzzling him, a little thing that would have puzzled the world had it known. But the world would have puzzled over his bepuzzlement rather than over the little thing that to him loomed gigantic. Judge Blount invited him to dinner. That was the little thing, or the beginning of the little thing, that was soon to become the big thing. He had insulted Judge Blount, treated him abominably, and Judge Blount, meeting him on the street, invited him to dinner. Martin bethought himself of the numerous occasions on which he had met Judge Blount at the Morses' and when Judge Blount had not invited him to dinner. Why had he not invited him to dinner then? he asked himself. He had not changed. He was the same Martin Eden. What made the difference? The fact that the stuff he had written had appeared inside the covers of books? But it was work performed. It was not something he had done since. It was achievement accomplished at the very time Judge Blount was sharing this general view and sneering at his Spencer and his intellect. Therefore it was not for any real value, but for a purely fictitious value that Judge Blount invited him to dinner.

Martin grinned and accepted the invitation, marvelling the while at his complacence. And at the dinner, where, with their womankind, were half a dozen of those that sat in high places, and where Martin found himself quite the lion, Judge Blount, warmly seconded by Judge Hanwell, urged privately that Martin should permit his name to be put up for the Styx — the ultraselect club to which belonged, not the mere men of wealth, but the men of attainment. And Martin declined, and was more puzzled than ever.

He was kept busy disposing of his heap of manuscripts. He was overwhelmed by requests from editors. It had been discovered that he was a stylist, with meat under his style. *The Northern Review*, after publishing "The Cradle of Beauty," had written him for half a dozen similar essays, which would have been supplied out of the heap, had not *Burton's Magazine*, in a speculative mood, offered him five hundred dollars each for five essays. He wrote back that he would supply the demand, but at a thousand dollars an essay. He remembered that all these manuscripts had been refused by the very magazines that were now clamoring for them. And their refusals had been cold-blooded, automatic, stereotyped. They had made him sweat, and now he intended to make them sweat. *Burton's Magazine* paid his price for five essays, and the remaining four, at the same rate, were snapped up by *Mackintosh's Monthly, The Northern Review* being too poor to stand the pace. Thus went out to the world "The High Priests of Mystery," "The Wonder-Dreamers," "The Yardstick of the Ego," "Philosophy of Illusion," "God and Clod," "Art and Biology," "Critics and Test-tubes," "Star-dust," and "The Dignity of Usury," — to raise storms and rumblings and mutterings that were many a day in dying down.

Editors wrote to him telling him to name his own terms, which he did, but it was always for work performed. He refused resolutely to pledge himself to any new thing. The thought of again setting pen to paper maddened him. He had seen Brissenden torn to pieces by the crowd, and despite the fact that him the crowd acclaimed, he could not get over the shock nor gather any respect for the crowd. His very popularity seemed a disgrace and a treason to Brissenden. It made him wince, but he made up his mind to go on and fill the money-bag.

He received letters from editors like the following: "About a year ago we were unfortunate enough to refuse your collection of love-poems. We were greatly impressed by them at the time, but certain arrangements already entered into prevented our taking them. If you still have them, and if you will be kind enough to forward them, we shall be glad to publish the entire collection on your own terms. We are also prepared to make a most advantageous offer for bringing them out in book-form."

Martin recollected his blank-verse tragedy, and sent it instead. He read it over before mailing, and was particularly impressed by its sophomoric amateurishness and general worthlessness. But he sent it; and it was published, to the everlasting regret of the editor. The public was indignant and incredulous. It was too far a cry from Martin Eden's high standard to that serious bosh. It was asserted that he had never written it, that the magazine had faked it very clumsily, or that Martin Eden was emulating the elder Dumas and at the height of success was hiring his writing done for him. But when he explained that the tragedy was an early effort of his literary childhood, and that the magazine had refused to be happy unless it got it, a great laugh went up at the magazine's expense and a change in the editorship followed. The tragedy was never brought out in book-form, though Martin pocketed the advance royalties that had been paid.

Coleman's Weekly sent Martin a lengthy telegram, costing nearly three hundred dollars, offering him a thousand dollars an article for twenty articles. He was to travel over the United States, with all expenses paid, and select whatever topics interested him. The body of the telegram was devoted to hypothetical topics in order to show him the freedom of range that was to be his. The only restriction placed upon him was that he must confine himself to the United States. Martin sent his inability to accept and his regrets by wire "collect."

"Wiki-Wiki," published in *Warren's Monthly*, was an instantaneous success. It was brought out forward in a wide-margined, beautifully decorated volume that struck the holiday trade and sold like wildfire. The critics were unanimous in the belief that it would take its place with those two classics by two great writers, "The Bottle Imp" and "The Magic Skin."

The public, however, received the "Smoke of Joy" collection rather dubiously and coldly. The audacity and unconventionality of the storiettes was a shock to bourgeois morality and prejudice; but when Paris went mad over the immediate translation that was made, the American and English reading public followed suit and bought so many copies that Martin compelled the conservative house of Singletree, Darnley & Co. to pay a flat royalty of twenty-five per cent for a third book, and thirty per cent flat for a fourth. These two volumes comprised all the short stories he had written and which had received, or were receiving, serial publication. "The Ring of Bells" and his horror stories constituted one collection; the other collection was composed of "Adventure," "The Pot," "The Wine of Life," "The Whirlpool," "The Jostling Street," and four other stories. The Lowell-Meredith Company captured the collection of all his essays, and the

Maxmillian Company got his “Sea Lyrics” and the “Love-cycle,” the latter receiving serial publication in the *Ladies’ Home Companion* after the payment of an extortionate price.

Martin heaved a sigh of relief when he had disposed of the last manuscript. The grass-walled castle and the white, coppered schooner were very near to him. Well, at any rate he had discovered Brissenden’s contention that nothing of merit found its way into the magazines. His own success demonstrated that Brissenden had been wrong.

And yet, somehow, he had a feeling that Brissenden had been right, after all. “The Shame of the Sun” had been the cause of his success more than the stuff he had written. That stuff had been merely incidental. It had been rejected right and left by the magazines. The publication of “The Shame of the Sun” had started a controversy and precipitated the landslide in his favor. Had there been no “Shame of the Sun” there would have been no landslide, and had there been no miracle in the go of “The Shame of the Sun” there would have been no landslide. Singletree, Darnley & Co. attested that miracle. They had brought out a first edition of fifteen hundred copies and been dubious of selling it. They were experienced publishers and no one had been more astounded than they at the success which had followed. To them it had been in truth a miracle. They never got over it, and every letter they wrote him reflected their reverent awe of that first mysterious happening. They did not attempt to explain it. There was no explaining it. It had happened. In the face of all experience to the contrary, it had happened.

So it was, reasoning thus, that Martin questioned the validity of his popularity. It was the bourgeoisie that bought his books and poured its gold into his money-sack, and from what little he knew of the bourgeoisie it was not clear to him how it could possibly appreciate or comprehend what he had written. His intrinsic beauty and power meant nothing to the hundreds of thousands who were acclaiming him and buying his books. He was the fad of the hour, the adventurer who had stormed Parnassus while the gods nodded. The hundreds of thousands read him and acclaimed him with the same brute non-understanding with which they had flung themselves on Brissenden’s “Ephemera” and torn it to pieces — a wolf-rabble that fawned on him instead of fanging him. Fawn or fang, it was all a matter of chance. One thing he knew with absolute certitude: “Ephemera” was infinitely greater than anything he had done. It was infinitely greater than anything he had in him. It was a poem of centuries. Then the tribute the mob paid him was a sorry tribute indeed, for that same mob had wallowed “Ephemera” into the mire. He sighed heavily and with satisfaction. He was glad the last manuscript was sold and that he would soon be done with it all.

CHAPTER XLIV

Mr. Morse met Martin in the office of the Hotel Metropole. Whether he had happened there just casually, intent on other affairs, or whether he had come there for the direct purpose of inviting him to dinner, Martin never could quite make up his mind, though he inclined toward the second hypothesis. At any rate, invited to dinner he was by Mr. Morse — Ruth's father, who had forbidden him the house and broken off the engagement.

Martin was not angry. He was not even on his dignity. He tolerated Mr. Morse, wondering the while how it felt to eat such humble pie. He did not decline the invitation. Instead, he put it off with vagueness and indefiniteness and inquired after the family, particularly after Mrs. Morse and Ruth. He spoke her name without hesitancy, naturally, though secretly surprised that he had had no inward quiver, no old, familiar increase of pulse and warm surge of blood.

He had many invitations to dinner, some of which he accepted. Persons got themselves introduced to him in order to invite him to dinner. And he went on puzzling over the little thing that was becoming a great thing. Bernard Higginbotham invited him to dinner. He puzzled the harder. He remembered the days of his desperate starvation when no one invited him to dinner. That was the time he needed dinners, and went weak and faint for lack of them and lost weight from sheer famine. That was the paradox of it. When he wanted dinners, no one gave them to him, and now that he could buy a hundred thousand dinners and was losing his appetite, dinners were thrust upon him right and left. But why? There was no justice in it, no merit on his part. He was no different. All the work he had done was even at that time work performed. Mr. and Mrs. Morse had condemned him for an idler and a shirk and through Ruth had urged that he take a clerk's position in an office. Furthermore, they had been aware of his work performed. Manuscript after manuscript of his had been turned over to them by Ruth. They had read them. It was the very same work that had put his name in all the papers, and, it was his name being in all the papers that led them to invite him.

One thing was certain: the Morses had not cared to have him for himself or for his work. Therefore they could not want him now for himself or for his work, but for the fame that was his, because he was somebody amongst men, and — why not? — because he had a hundred thousand dollars or so. That was the way bourgeois society valued a man, and who was he to expect it otherwise? But he was proud. He disdained such valuation. He desired to be valued for himself, or for his work, which, after all, was an expression of himself. That was the way Lizzie valued him. The work, with her, did not even count. She valued him, himself. That was the way Jimmy, the plumber, and all the old gang valued him. That had been proved often enough in the days when he ran with them; it had been proved that Sunday at Shell Mound Park. His work could go hang. What they liked, and were willing to scrap for, was just Mart Eden, one of the bunch and a pretty good guy.

Then there was Ruth. She had liked him for himself, that was indisputable. And yet, much as she had liked him she had liked the bourgeois standard of valuation more. She had opposed his writing, and principally, it seemed to him, because it did not earn money. That had been her criticism of his "Love-cycle." She, too, had urged him to get a job. It was true, she refined it to "position," but it meant the same thing, and in his own mind the old nomenclature stuck. He had read her all that he wrote — poems, stories, essays — "Wiki-Wiki," "The Shame of the Sun," everything. And she had always and consistently urged him to get a job, to go to work — good God! — as if he hadn't been working, robbing sleep, exhausting life, in order to be worthy of her.

So the little thing grew bigger. He was healthy and normal, ate regularly, slept long hours, and yet the growing little thing was becoming an obsession. *Work performed*. The phrase haunted his brain. He sat opposite Bernard Higginbotham at a heavy Sunday dinner over Higginbotham's Cash Store, and it was all he could do to restrain himself from shouting out:-

"It was work performed! And now you feed me, when then you let me starve, forbade me your house, and damned me because I wouldn't get a job. And the work was already done, all done. And now, when I speak, you check the thought unuttered on your lips and hang on my lips and pay respectful attention to whatever I choose to say. I tell you your party is rotten and filled with grafters, and instead of flying into a rage you hum and haw and admit there is a great deal in what I say. And why? Because I'm famous; because I've a lot of money. Not because I'm Martin Eden, a pretty good fellow and not particularly a fool. I could tell you the moon is made of green cheese and you would subscribe to the notion, at least you would not repudiate it, because I've got dollars, mountains of them. And it was all done long ago; it was work performed, I tell you, when you spat upon me as the dirt under your feet."

But Martin did not shout out. The thought gnawed in his brain, an unceasing torment, while he smiled and succeeded in being tolerant. As he grew silent, Bernard Higginbotham got the reins and did the talking. He was a success himself, and proud of it. He was self-made. No one had helped him. He owed no man. He was fulfilling his duty as a citizen and bringing up a large family. And there was Higginbotham's Cash Store, that monument of his own industry and ability. He loved Higginbotham's Cash Store as some men loved their wives. He opened up his heart to Martin, showed with what keenness and with what enormous planning he had made the store. And he had plans for it, ambitious plans. The neighborhood was growing up fast. The store was really too small. If he had more room, he would be able to put in a score of labor-saving and money-saving improvements. And he would do it yet. He was straining every effort for the day when he could buy the adjoining lot and put up another two-story frame building. The upstairs he could rent, and the whole ground-floor of both buildings would be Higginbotham's Cash Store. His eyes glistened when he spoke of the new sign that would stretch clear across both buildings.

Martin forgot to listen. The refrain of "Work performed," in his own brain, was drowning the other's clatter. The refrain maddened him, and he tried to escape from it.

"How much did you say it would cost?" he asked suddenly.

His brother-in-law paused in the middle of an expatiation on the business opportunities of the neighborhood. He hadn't said how much it would cost. But he knew. He had figured it out a score of times.

"At the way lumber is now," he said, "four thousand could do it."

"Including the sign?"

"I didn't count on that. It'd just have to come, onc't the buildin' was there."

"And the ground?"

"Three thousand more."

He leaned forward, licking his lips, nervously spreading and closing his fingers, while he watched Martin write a check. When it was passed over to him, he glanced at the amount-seven thousand dollars.

"I — I can't afford to pay more than six per cent," he said huskily.

Martin wanted to laugh, but, instead, demanded:-

"How much would that be?"

"Lemme see. Six per cent — six times seven — four hundred an' twenty."

"That would be thirty-five dollars a month, wouldn't it?"

Higginbotham nodded.

"Then, if you've no objection, well arrange it this way." Martin glanced at Gertrude. "You can have the principal to keep for yourself, if you'll use the thirty-five dollars a month for cooking and washing and scrubbing. The seven thousand is yours if you'll guarantee that Gertrude does no more drudgery. Is it a go?"

Mr. Higginbotham swallowed hard. That his wife should do no more housework was an affront to his thrifty soul. The magnificent present was the coating of a pill, a bitter pill. That his wife should not work! It gagged him.

"All right, then," Martin said. "I'll pay the thirty-five a month, and — "

He reached across the table for the check. But Bernard Higginbotham got his hand on it first, crying:

"I accept! I accept!"

When Martin got on the electric car, he was very sick and tired. He looked up at the assertive sign.

"The swine," he groaned. "The swine, the swine."

When *Mackintosh's Magazine* published "The Palmist," featuring it with decorations by Berthier and with two pictures by Wenn, Hermann von Schmidt forgot that he had called the verses obscene. He announced that his wife had inspired the poem, saw to it that the news reached the ears of a reporter, and submitted to an interview by a staff writer who was accompanied by a staff photographer and a staff artist. The result was a full page in a Sunday supplement, filled with photographs and idealized drawings of Marian, with many intimate details of Martin Eden and his family, and with the full text of "The Palmist" in large type, and republished by special permission of *Mackintosh's Magazine*. It caused quite a stir in the neighborhood, and good housewives were proud to have the acquaintances of the great writer's sister, while those who had not made haste to cultivate it. Hermann von Schmidt chuckled in his little repair shop and decided to order a new lathe. “Better than advertising,” he told Marian, “and it costs nothing.”

“We’d better have him to dinner,” she suggested.

And to dinner Martin came, making himself agreeable with the fat wholesale butcher and his fatter wife — important folk, they, likely to be of use to a rising young man like Hermann Von Schmidt. No less a bait, however, had been required to draw them to his house than his great brother-in-law. Another man at table who had swallowed the same bait was the superintendent of the Pacific Coast agencies for the Asa Bicycle Company. Him Von Schmidt desired to please and propitiate because from him could be obtained the Oakland agency for the bicycle. So Hermann von Schmidt found it a goodly asset to have Martin for a brother-in-law, but in his heart of hearts he couldn’t understand where it all came in. In the silent watches of the night, while his wife slept, he had floundered through Martin’s books and poems, and decided that the world was a fool to buy them.

And in his heart of hearts Martin understood the situation only too well, as he leaned back and gloated at Von Schmidt’s head, in fancy punching it well-nigh off of him, sending blow after blow home just right — the chuckle-headed Dutchman! One thing he did like about him, however. Poor as he was, and determined to rise as he was, he nevertheless hired one servant to take the heavy work off of Marian’s hands. Martin talked with the superintendent of the Asa agencies, and after dinner he drew him aside with Hermann, whom he backed financially for the best bicycle store with fittings in Oakland. He went further, and in a private talk with Hermann told him to keep his eyes open for an automobile agency and garage, for there was no reason that he should not be able to run both establishments successfully.

With tears in her eyes and her arms around his neck, Marian, at parting, told Martin how much she loved him and always had loved him. It was true, there was a perceptible halt midway in her assertion, which she glossed over with more tears and kisses and incoherent stammerings, and which Martin inferred to be her appeal for forgiveness for the time she had lacked faith in him and insisted on his getting a job.

“He can’t never keep his money, that’s sure,” Hermann von Schmidt confided to his wife. “He got mad when I spoke of interest, an’ he said damn the principal and if I mentioned it again, he’d punch my Dutch head off. That's what he said — my Dutch head. But he's all right, even if he ain't no business man. He's given me my chance, an' he's all right."

Invitations to dinner poured in on Martin; and the more they poured, the more he puzzled. He sat, the guest of honor, at an Arden Club banquet, with men of note whom he had heard about and read about all his life; and they told him how, when they had read "The Ring of Bells" in the *Transcontinental*, and "The Peri and the Pearl" in *The Hornet*, they had immediately picked him for a winner. My God! and I was hungry and in rags, he thought to himself. Why didn't you give me a dinner then? Then was the time. It was work performed. If you are feeding me now for work performed, why did you not feed me then when I needed it? Not one word in "The Ring of Bells," nor in "The Peri and the Pearl" has been changed. No; you're not feeding me now for work performed. You are feeding me because everybody else is feeding me and because it is an honor to feed me. You are feeding me now because you are herd animals; because you are part of the mob; because the one blind, automatic thought in the mob-mind just now is to feed me. And where does Martin Eden and the work Martin Eden performed come in in all this? he asked himself plaintively, then arose to respond cleverly and wittily to a clever and witty toast.

So it went. Wherever he happened to be — at the Press Club, at the Redwood Club, at pink teas and literary gatherings — always were remembered "The Ring of Bells" and "The Peri and the Pearl" when they were first published. And always was Martin's maddening and unuttered demand: Why didn't you feed me then? It was work performed. "The Ring of Bells" and "The Peri and the Pearl" are not changed one iota. They were just as artistic, just as worth while, then as now. But you are not feeding me for their sake, nor for the sake of anything else I have written. You're feeding me because it is the style of feeding just now, because the whole mob is crazy with the idea of feeding Martin Eden.

And often, at such times, he would abruptly see slouch in among the company a young hoodlum in square-cut coat and under a stiff-rim Stetson hat. It happened to him at the Gallina Society in Oakland one afternoon. As he rose from his chair and stepped forward across the platform, he saw stalk through the wide door at the rear of the great room the young hoodlum with the square-cut coat and stiff-rim hat. Five hundred fashionably gowned women turned their heads, so intent and steadfast was Martin's gaze, to see what he was seeing. But they saw only the empty centre aisle.

He saw the young tough lurching down that aisle and wondered if he would remove the stiff-rim which never yet had he seen him without. Straight down the aisle he came, and up the platform. Martin could have wept over that youthful shade of himself, when he thought of all that lay before him. Across the platform he swaggered, right up to Martin, and into the foreground of Martin's consciousness disappeared. The five hundred women applauded softly with gloved hands, seeking to encourage the bashful great man who was their guest. And Martin shook the vision from his brain, smiled, and began to speak.

The Superintendent of Schools, good old man, stopped Martin on the street and remembered him, recalling seances in his office when Martin was expelled from school for fighting.

"I read your 'Ring of Bells' in one of the magazines quite a time ago," he said. "It was as good as Poe. Splendid, I said at the time, splendid!"

Yes, and twice in the months that followed you passed me on the street and did not know me, Martin almost said aloud. Each time I was hungry and heading for the pawnbroker. Yet it was work performed. You did not know me then. Why do you know me now?

"I was remarking to my wife only the other day," the other was saying, "wouldn't it be a good idea to have you out to dinner some time? And she quite agreed with me. Yes, she quite agreed with me."

"Dinner?" Martin said so sharply that it was almost a snarl.

"Why, yes, yes, dinner, you know — just pot luck with us, with your old superintendent, you rascal," he uttered nervously, poking Martin in an attempt at jocular fellowship.

Martin went down the street in a daze. He stopped at the corner and looked about him vacantly.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he murmured at last. "The old fellow was afraid of me."

CHAPTER XLV

Kreis came to Martin one day — Kreis, of the “real dirt”; and Martin turned to him with relief, to receive the glowing details of a scheme sufficiently wild-catty to interest him as a fictionist rather than an investor. Kreis paused long enough in the midst of his exposition to tell him that in most of his “Shame of the Sun” he had been a chump.

“But I didn’t come here to spout philosophy,” Kreis went on. “What I want to know is whether or not you will put a thousand dollars in on this deal?”

“No, I’m not chump enough for that, at any rate,” Martin answered. “But I’ll tell you what I will do. You gave me the greatest night of my life. You gave me what money cannot buy. Now I’ve got money, and it means nothing to me. I’d like to turn over to you a thousand dollars of what I don’t value for what you gave me that night and which was beyond price. You need the money. I’ve got more than I need. You want it. You came for it. There’s no use scheming it out of me. Take it.”

Kreis betrayed no surprise. He folded the check away in his pocket.

“At that rate I’d like the contract of providing you with many such nights,” he said.

“Too late.” Martin shook his head. “That night was the one night for me. I was in paradise. It’s commonplace with you, I know. But it wasn’t to me. I shall never live at such a pitch again. I’m done with philosophy. I want never to hear another word of it.”

“The first dollar I ever made in my life out of my philosophy,” Kreis remarked, as he paused in the doorway. “And then the market broke.”

Mrs. Morse drove by Martin on the street one day, and smiled and nodded. He smiled back and lifted his hat. The episode did not affect him. A month before it might have disgusted him, or made him curious and set him to speculating about her state of consciousness at that moment. But now it was not provocative of a second thought. He forgot about it the next moment. He forgot about it as he would have forgotten the Central Bank Building or the City Hall after having walked past them. Yet his mind was preternaturally active. His thoughts went ever around and around in a circle. The centre of that circle was “work performed”; it ate at his brain like a deathless maggot. He awoke to it in the morning. It tormented his dreams at night. Every affair of life around him that penetrated through his senses immediately related itself to "work performed." He drove along the path of relentless logic to the conclusion that he was nobody, nothing. Mart Eden, the hoodlum, and Mart Eden, the sailor, had been real, had been he; but Martin Eden! the famous writer, did not exist. Martin Eden, the famous writer, was a vapor that had arisen in the mob-mind and by the mob-mind had been thrust into the corporeal being of Mart Eden, the hoodlum and sailor. But it couldn't fool him. He was not that sun-myth that the mob was worshipping and sacrificing dinners to. He knew better.

He read the magazines about himself, and pored over portraits of himself published therein until he was unable to associate his identity with those portraits. He was the fellow who had lived and thrilled and loved; who had been easy-going and tolerant of the frailties of life; who had served in the forecastle, wandered in strange lands, and led his gang in the old fighting days. He was the fellow who had been stunned at first by the thousands of books in the free library, and who had afterward learned his way among them and mastered them; he was the fellow who had burned the midnight oil and bedded with a spur and written books himself. But the one thing he was not was that colossal appetite that all the mob was bent upon feeding.

There were things, however, in the magazines that amused him. All the magazines were claiming him. *Warren's Monthly* advertised to its subscribers that it was always on the quest after new writers, and that, among others, it had introduced Martin Eden to the reading public. *The White Mouse* claimed him; so did *The Northern Review* and *Mackintosh's Magazine*, until silenced by *The Globe*, which pointed triumphantly to its files where the mangled "Sea Lyrics" lay buried. *Youth and Age*, which had come to life again after having escaped paying its bills, put in a prior claim, which nobody but farmers' children ever read. The *Transcontinental* made a dignified and convincing statement of how it first discovered Martin Eden, which was warmly disputed by *The Hornet*, with the exhibit of "The Peri and the Pearl." The modest claim of Singletree, Darnley & Co. was lost in the din. Besides, that publishing firm did not own a magazine wherewith to make its claim less modest.

The newspapers calculated Martin's royalties. In some way the magnificent offers certain magazines had made him leaked out, and Oakland ministers called upon him in a friendly way, while professional begging letters began to clutter his mail. But worse than all this were the women. His photographs were published broadcast, and special writers exploited his strong, bronzed face, his scars, his heavy shoulders, his clear, quiet eyes, and the slight hollows in his cheeks like an ascetic's. At this last he remembered his wild youth and smiled. Often, among the women he met, he would see now one, now another, looking at him, appraising him, selecting him. He laughed to himself. He remembered Brissenden's warning and laughed again. The women would never destroy him, that much was certain. He had gone past that stage.

Once, walking with Lizzie toward night school, she caught a glance directed toward him by a well-gowned, handsome woman of the bourgeoisie. The glance was a trifle too long, a shade too considerative. Lizzie knew it for what it was, and her body tensed angrily. Martin noticed, noticed the cause of it, told her how used he was becoming to it and that he did not care anyway.

"You ought to care," she answered with blazing eyes. "You're sick. That's what's the matter."

"Never healthier in my life. I weigh five pounds more than I ever did."

"It ain't your body. It's your head. Something's wrong with your think-machine. Even I can see that, an' I ain't nobody."

He walked on beside her, reflecting.

"I'd give anything to see you get over it," she broke out impulsively. "You ought to care when women look at you that way, a man like you. It's not natural. It's all right enough for sissy-boys. But you ain't made that way. So help me, I'd be willing an' glad if the right woman came along an' made you care."

When he left Lizzie at night school, he returned to the Metropole.

Once in his rooms, he dropped into a Morris chair and sat staring straight before him. He did not doze. Nor did he think. His mind was a blank, save for the intervals when unsummoned memory pictures took form and color and radiance just under his eyelids. He saw these pictures, but he was scarcely conscious of them — no more so than if they had been dreams. Yet he was not asleep. Once, he roused himself and glanced at his watch. It was just eight o'clock. He had nothing to do, and it was too early for bed. Then his mind went blank again, and the pictures began to form and vanish under his eyelids. There was nothing distinctive about the pictures. They were always masses of leaves and shrub-like branches shot through with hot sunshine.

A knock at the door aroused him. He was not asleep, and his mind immediately connected the knock with a telegram, or letter, or perhaps one of the servants bringing back clean clothes from the laundry. He was thinking about Joe and wondering where he was, as he said, “Come in.”

He was still thinking about Joe, and did not turn toward the door. He heard it close softly. There was a long silence. He forgot that there had been a knock at the door, and was still staring blankly before him when he heard a woman’s sob. It was involuntary, spasmodic, checked, and stifled — he noted that as he turned about. The next instant he was on his feet.

“Ruth!” he said, amazed and bewildered.

Her face was white and strained. She stood just inside the door, one hand against it for support, the other pressed to her side. She extended both hands toward him piteously, and started forward to meet him. As he caught her hands and led her to the Morris chair he noticed how cold they were. He drew up another chair and sat down on the broad arm of it. He was too confused to speak. In his own mind his affair with Ruth was closed and sealed. He felt much in the same way that he would have felt had the Shelly Hot Springs Laundry suddenly invaded the Hotel Metropole with a whole week’s washing ready for him to pitch into. Several times he was about to speak, and each time he hesitated.

“No one knows I am here,” Ruth said in a faint voice, with an appealing smile.

“What did you say?”

He was surprised at the sound of his own voice.

She repeated her words.

“Oh,” he said, then wondered what more he could possibly say.

“I saw you come in, and I waited a few minutes.”

“Oh,” he said again.

He had never been so tongue-tied in his life. Positively he did not have an idea in his head. He felt stupid and awkward, but for the life of him he could think of nothing to say. It would have been easier had the intrusion been the Shelly Hot Springs laundry. He could have rolled up his sleeves and gone to work.

“And then you came in,” he said finally.

She nodded, with a slightly arch expression, and loosened the scarf at her throat.

“I saw you first from across the street when you were with that girl.”

“Oh, yes,” he said simply. “I took her down to night school.”

“Well, aren’t you glad to see me?” she said at the end of another silence.

“Yes, yes.” He spoke hastily. “But wasn’t it rash of you to come here?”

“I slipped in. Nobody knows I am here. I wanted to see you. I came to tell you I have been very foolish. I came because I could no longer stay away, because my heart compelled me to come, because — because I wanted to come.”

She came forward, out of her chair and over to him. She rested her hand on his shoulder a moment, breathing quickly, and then slipped into his arms. And in his large, easy way, desirous of not inflicting hurt, knowing that to repulse this proffer of herself was to inflict the most grievous hurt a woman could receive, he folded his arms around her and held her close. But there was no warmth in the embrace, no caress in the contact. She had come into his arms, and he held her, that was all. She nestled against him, and then, with a change of position, her hands crept up and rested upon his neck. But his flesh was not fire beneath those hands, and he felt awkward and uncomfortable.

“What makes you tremble so?” he asked. “Is it a chill? Shall I light the grate?”

He made a movement to disengage himself, but she clung more closely to him, shivering violently.

“It is merely nervousness,” she said with chattering teeth. “I’ll control myself in a minute. There, I am better already.”

Slowly her shivering died away. He continued to hold her, but he was no longer puzzled. He knew now for what she had come.

“My mother wanted me to marry Charley Hapgood,” she announced.

“Charley Hapgood, that fellow who speaks always in platitudes?” Martin groaned. Then he added, “And now, I suppose, your mother wants you to marry me.”

He did not put it in the form of a question. He stated it as a certitude, and before his eyes began to dance the rows of figures of his royalties.

“She will not object, I know that much,” Ruth said.

“She considers me quite eligible?”

Ruth nodded.

“And yet I am not a bit more eligible now than I was when she broke our engagement,” he meditated. “I haven’t changed any. I’m the same Martin

Eden, though for that matter I'm a bit worse — I smoke now. Don't you smell my breath?"

In reply she pressed her open fingers against his lips, placed them graciously and playfully, and in expectancy of the kiss that of old had always been a consequence. But there was no caressing answer of Martin's lips. He waited until the fingers were removed and then went on.

"I am not changed. I haven't got a job. I'm not looking for a job. Furthermore, I am not going to look for a job. And I still believe that Herbert Spencer is a great and noble man and that Judge Blount is an unmitigated ass. I had dinner with him the other night, so I ought to know."

"But you didn't accept father's invitation," she chided.

"So you know about that? Who sent him? Your mother?"

She remained silent.

"Then she did send him. I thought so. And now I suppose she has sent you."

"No one knows that I am here," she protested. "Do you think my mother would permit this?"

"She'd permit you to marry me, that's certain."

She gave a sharp cry. "Oh, Martin, don't be cruel. You have not kissed me once. You are as unresponsive as a stone. And think what I have dared to do." She looked about her with a shiver, though half the look was curiosity. "Just think of where I am."

"*I could die for you! I could die for you*!" — Lizzie's words were ringing in his ears.

"Why didn't you dare it before?" he asked harshly. "When I hadn't a job? When I was starving? When I was just as I am now, as a man, as an artist, the same Martin Eden? That's the question I've been propounding to myself for many a day — not concerning you merely, but concerning everybody. You see I have not changed, though my sudden apparent appreciation in value compels me constantly to reassure myself on that point. I've got the same flesh on my bones, the same ten fingers and toes. I am the same. I have not developed any new strength nor virtue. My brain is the same old brain. I haven't made even one new generalization on literature or philosophy. I am personally of the same value that I was when nobody wanted me. And what is puzzling me is why they want me now. Surely they don't want me for myself, for myself is the same old self they did not want. Then they must want me for something else, for something that is outside of me, for something that is not I! Shall I tell you what that something is? It is for the recognition I have received. That recognition is not I. It resides in the minds of others. Then again for the money I have earned and am earning. But that money is not I. It resides in banks and in the pockets of Tom, Dick, and Harry. And is it for that, for the recognition and the money, that you now want me?"

"You are breaking my heart," she sobbed. "You know I love you, that I am here because I love you."

"I am afraid you don't see my point," he said gently. "What I mean is: if you love me, how does it happen that you love me now so much more than you did when your love was weak enough to deny me?"

"Forget and forgive," she cried passionately. "I loved you all the time, remember that, and I am here, now, in your arms."

"I'm afraid I am a shrewd merchant, peering into the scales, trying to weigh your love and find out what manner of thing it is."

She withdrew herself from his arms, sat upright, and looked at him long and searchingly. She was about to speak, then faltered and changed her mind.

"You see, it appears this way to me," he went on. "When I was all that I am now, nobody out of my own class seemed to care for me. When my books were all written, no one who had read the manuscripts seemed to care for them. In point of fact, because of the stuff I had written they seemed to care even less for me. In writing the stuff it seemed that I had committed acts that were, to say the least, derogatory. 'Get a job,' everybody said."

She made a movement of dissent.

"Yes, yes," he said; "except in your case you told me to get a position. The homely word *job*, like much that I have written, offends you. It is brutal. But I assure you it was no less brutal to me when everybody I knew recommended it to me as they would recommend right conduct to an immoral creature. But to return. The publication of what I had written, and the public notice I received, wrought a change in the fibre of your love. Martin Eden, with his work all performed, you would not marry. Your love for him was not strong enough to enable you to marry him. But your love is now strong enough, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that its strength arises from the publication and the public notice. In your case I do not mention royalties, though I am certain that they apply to the change wrought in your mother and father. Of course, all this is not flattering to me. But worst of all, it makes me question love, sacred love. Is love so gross a thing that it must feed upon publication and public notice? It would seem so. I have sat and thought upon it till my head went around."

"Poor, dear head." She reached up a hand and passed the fingers soothingly through his hair. "Let it go around no more. Let us begin anew, now. I loved you all the time. I know that I was weak in yielding to my mother's will. I should not have done so. Yet I have heard you speak so often with broad charity of the fallibility and frailty of humankind. Extend that charity to me. I acted mistakenly. Forgive me."

"Oh, I do forgive," he said impatiently. "It is easy to forgive where there is really nothing to forgive. Nothing that you have done requires forgiveness. One acts according to one's lights, and more than that one cannot do. As well might I ask you to forgive me for my not getting a job."

"I meant well," she protested. "You know that I could not have loved you and not meant well."

"True; but you would have destroyed me out of your well-meaning."

"Yes, yes," he shut off her attempted objection. "You would have destroyed my writing and my career. Realism is imperative to my nature, and the bourgeois spirit hates realism. The bourgeoisie is cowardly. It is afraid of life. And all your effort was to make me afraid of life. You would have formalized me. You would have compressed me into a two-by-four pigeonhole of life, where all life's values are unreal, and false, and vulgar." He felt her stir protestingly. "Vulgarity — a hearty vulgarity, I'll admit — is the basis of bourgeois refinement and culture. As I say, you wanted to formalize me, to make me over into one of your own class, with your class-ideals, class-values, and class-prejudices." He shook his head sadly. "And you do not understand, even now, what I am saying. My words do not mean to you what I endeavor to make them mean. What I say is so much fantasy to you. Yet to me it is vital reality. At the best you are a trifle puzzled and amused that this raw boy, crawling up out of the mire of the abyss, should pass judgment upon your class and call it vulgar."

She leaned her head wearily against his shoulder, and her body shivered with recurrent nervousness. He waited for a time for her to speak, and then went on.

"And now you want to renew our love. You want us to be married. You want me. And yet, listen — if my books had not been noticed, I'd nevertheless have been just what I am now. And you would have stayed away. It is all those damned books — ”

“Don’t swear,” she interrupted.

Her reproof startled him. He broke into a harsh laugh.

“That’s it,” he said, “at a high moment, when what seems your life’s happiness is at stake, you are afraid of life in the same old way — afraid of life and a healthy oath.”

She was stung by his words into realization of the puerility of her act, and yet she felt that he had magnified it unduly and was consequently resentful. They sat in silence for a long time, she thinking desperately and he pondering upon his love which had departed. He knew, now, that he had not really loved her. It was an idealized Ruth he had loved, an ethereal creature of his own creating, the bright and luminous spirit of his love-poems. The real bourgeois Ruth, with all the bourgeois failings and with the hopeless cramp of the bourgeois psychology in her mind, he had never loved.

She suddenly began to speak.

“I know that much you have said is so. I have been afraid of life. I did not love you well enough. I have learned to love better. I love you for what you are, for what you were, for the ways even by which you have become. I love you for the ways wherein you differ from what you call my class, for your beliefs which I do not understand but which I know I can come to understand. I shall devote myself to understanding them. And even your smoking and your swearing — they are part of you and I will love you for them, too. I can still learn. In the last ten minutes I have learned much. That I have dared to come here is a token of what I have already learned. Oh, Martin! — ”

She was sobbing and nestling close against him.

For the first time his arms folded her gently and with sympathy, and she acknowledged it with a happy movement and a brightening face.

“It is too late,” he said. He remembered Lizzie’s words. “I am a sick man — oh, not my body. It is my soul, my brain. I seem to have lost all values. I care for nothing. If you had been this way a few months ago, it would have been different. It is too late, now.”

“It is not too late,” she cried. “I will show you. I will prove to you that my love has grown, that it is greater to me than my class and all that is dearest to me. All that is dearest to the bourgeoisie I will flout. I am no longer afraid of life. I will leave my father and mother, and let my name become a by-word with my friends. I will come to you here and now, in free love if you will, and I will be proud and glad to be with you. If I have been a traitor to love, I will now, for love's sake, be a traitor to all that made that earlier treason."

She stood before him, with shining eyes.

"I am waiting, Martin," she whispered, "waiting for you to accept me. Look at me."

It was splendid, he thought, looking at her. She had redeemed herself for all that she had lacked, rising up at last, true woman, superior to the iron rule of bourgeois convention. It was splendid, magnificent, desperate. And yet, what was the matter with him? He was not thrilled nor stirred by what she had done. It was splendid and magnificent only intellectually. In what should have been a moment of fire, he coldly appraised her. His heart was untouched. He was unaware of any desire for her. Again he remembered Lizzie's words.

"I am sick, very sick," he said with a despairing gesture. "How sick I did not know till now. Something has gone out of me. I have always been unafraid of life, but I never dreamed of being sated with life. Life has so filled me that I am empty of any desire for anything. If there were room, I should want you, now. You see how sick I am."

He leaned his head back and closed his eyes; and like a child, crying, that forgets its grief in watching the sunlight percolate through the tear-dimmed films over the pupils, so Martin forgot his sickness, the presence of Ruth, everything, in watching the masses of vegetation, shot through hotly with sunshine that took form and blazed against this background of his eyelids. It was not restful, that green foliage. The sunlight was too raw and glaring. It hurt him to look at it, and yet he looked, he knew not why.

He was brought back to himself by the rattle of the door-knob. Ruth was at the door.

"How shall I get out?" she questioned tearfully. "I am afraid."

"Oh, forgive me," he cried, springing to his feet. "I'm not myself, you know. I forgot you were here." He put his hand to his head. "You see, I'm not just right. I'll take you home. We can go out by the servants' entrance. No one will see us. Pull down that veil and everything will be all right."

She clung to his arm through the dim-lighted passages and down the narrow stairs.

"I am safe now," she said, when they emerged on the sidewalk, at the same time starting to take her hand from his arm.

"No, no, I'll see you home," he answered.

"No, please don't," she objected. "It is unnecessary."

Again she started to remove her hand. He felt a momentary curiosity. Now that she was out of danger she was afraid. She was in almost a panic to be quit of him. He could see no reason for it and attributed it to her nervousness. So he restrained her withdrawing hand and started to walk on with her. Halfway down the block, he saw a man in a long overcoat shrink back into a doorway. He shot a glance in as he passed by, and, despite the high turned-up collar, he was certain that he recognized Ruth's brother, Norman.

During the walk Ruth and Martin held little conversation. She was stunned. He was apathetic. Once, he mentioned that he was going away, back to the South Seas, and, once, she asked him to forgive her having come to him. And that was all. The parting at her door was conventional. They shook hands, said good night, and he lifted his hat. The door swung shut, and he lighted a cigarette and turned back for his hotel. When he came to the doorway into which he had seen Norman shrink, he stopped and looked in in a speculative humor.

"She lied," he said aloud. "She made believe to me that she had dared greatly, and all the while she knew the brother that brought her was waiting to take her back." He burst into laughter. "Oh, these bourgeois! When I was broke, I was not fit to be seen with his sister. When I have a bank account, he brings her to me."

As he swung on his heel to go on, a tramp, going in the same direction, begged him over his shoulder.

"Say, mister, can you give me a quarter to get a bed?" were the words.

But it was the voice that made Martin turn around. The next instant he had Joe by the hand.

"D'ye remember that time we parted at the Hot Springs?" the other was saying. "I said then we'd meet again. I felt it in my bones. An' here we are."

"You're looking good," Martin said admiringly, "and you've put on weight."

"I sure have." Joe's face was beaming. "I never knew what it was to live till I hit hoboin'. I'm thirty pounds heavier an' feel tiptop all the time.

Why, I was worked to skin an' bone in them old days. Hoboin' sure agrees with me."

"But you're looking for a bed just the same," Martin chided, "and it's a cold night."

"Huh? Lookin' for a bed?" Joe shot a hand into his hip pocket and brought it out filled with small change. "That beats hard graft," he exulted. "You just looked good; that's why I battered you."

Martin laughed and gave in.

"You've several full-sized drunks right there," he insinuated.

Joe slid the money back into his pocket.

"Not in mine," he announced. "No gettin' oryide for me, though there ain't nothin' to stop me except I don't want to. I've ben drunk once since I seen you last, an' then it was unexpected, bein' on an empty stomach. When I work like a beast, I drink like a beast. When I live like a man, I drink like a man — a jolt now an' again when I feel like it, an' that's all."

Martin arranged to meet him next day, and went on to the hotel. He paused in the office to look up steamer sailings. The *Mariposa* sailed for Tahiti in five days.

"Telephone over to-morrow and reserve a stateroom for me," he told the clerk. "No deck-stateroom, but down below, on the weather-side, — the port-side, remember that, the port-side. You'd better write it down."

Once in his room he got into bed and slipped off to sleep as gently as a child. The occurrences of the evening had made no impression on him. His mind was dead to impressions. The glow of warmth with which he met Joe had been most fleeting. The succeeding minute he had been bothered by the ex-laundryman's presence and by the compulsion of conversation. That in five more days he sailed for his loved South Seas meant nothing to him. So he closed his eyes and slept normally and comfortably for eight uninterrupted hours. He was not restless. He did not change his position, nor did he dream. Sleep had become to him oblivion, and each day that he awoke, he awoke with regret. Life worried and bored him, and time was a vexation.

CHAPTER XLVI

"Say, Joe," was his greeting to his old-time working-mate next morning, "there's a Frenchman out on Twenty-eighth Street. He's made a pot of money, and he's going back to France. It's a dandy, well-appointed, small steam laundry. There's a start for you if you want to settle down. Here, take this; buy some clothes with it and be at this man's office by ten o'clock. He looked up the laundry for me, and he'll take you out and show you around. If you like it, and think it is worth the price — twelve thousand — let me know and it is yours. Now run along. I'm busy. I'll see you later."

"Now look here, Mart," the other said slowly, with kindling anger, "I come here this mornin' to see you. Savve? I didn't come here to get no laundry. I come a here for a talk for old friends' sake, and you shove a laundry at me. I tell you, what you can do. You can take that laundry an' go to hell."

He was out of the room when Martin caught him and whirled him around.

"Now look here, Joe," he said; "if you act that way, I'll punch your head. An for old friends' sake I'll punch it hard. Savve? — you will, will you?"

Joe had clinched and attempted to throw him, and he was twisting and writhing out of the advantage of the other's hold. They reeled about the room, locked in each other's arms, and came down with a crash across the splintered wreckage of a wicker chair. Joe was underneath, with arms spread out and held and with Martin's knee on his chest. He was panting and gasping for breath when Martin released him.

"Now we'll talk a moment," Martin said. "You can't get fresh with me. I want that laundry business finished first of all. Then you can come back and we'll talk for old sake's sake. I told you I was busy. Look at that."

A servant had just come in with the morning mail, a great mass of letters and magazines.

"How can I wade through that and talk with you? You go and fix up that laundry, and then we'll get together."

"All right," Joe admitted reluctantly. "I thought you was turnin' me down, but I guess I was mistaken. But you can't lick me, Mart, in a stand-up fight. I've got the reach on you."

“We’ll put on the gloves sometime and see,” Martin said with a smile.

“Sure; as soon as I get that laundry going.” Joe extended his arm. “You see that reach? It’ll make you go a few.”

Martin heaved a sigh of relief when the door closed behind the laundryman. He was becoming anti-social. Daily he found it a severer strain to be decent with people. Their presence perturbed him, and the effort of conversation irritated him. They made him restless, and no sooner was he in contact with them than he was casting about for excuses to get rid of them.

He did not proceed to attack his mail, and for a half hour he lolled in his chair, doing nothing, while no more than vague, half-formed thoughts occasionally filtered through his intelligence, or rather, at wide intervals, themselves constituted the flickering of his intelligence.

He roused himself and began glancing through his mail. There were a dozen requests for autographs — he knew them at sight; there were professional begging letters; and there were letters from cranks, ranging from the man with a working model of perpetual motion, and the man who demonstrated that the surface of the earth was the inside of a hollow sphere, to the man seeking financial aid to purchase the Peninsula of Lower California for the purpose of communist colonization. There were letters from women seeking to know him, and over one such he smiled, for enclosed was her receipt for pew-rent, sent as evidence of her good faith and as proof of her respectability.

Editors and publishers contributed to the daily heap of letters, the former on their knees for his manuscripts, the latter on their knees for his books — his poor disdained manuscripts that had kept all he possessed in pawn for so many dreary months in order to find them in postage. There were unexpected checks for English serial rights and for advance payments on foreign translations. His English agent announced the sale of German translation rights in three of his books, and informed him that Swedish editions, from which he could expect nothing because Sweden was not a party to the Berne Convention, were already on the market. Then there was a nominal request for his permission for a Russian translation, that country being likewise outside the Berne Convention.

He turned to the huge bundle of clippings which had come in from his press bureau, and read about himself and his vogue, which had become a furore. All his creative output had been flung to the public in one magnificent sweep. That seemed to account for it. He had taken the public off its feet, the way Kipling had, that time when he lay near to death and all the mob, animated by a mob-mind thought, began suddenly to read him. Martin remembered how that same world-mob, having read him and acclaimed him and not understood him in the least, had, abruptly, a few months later, flung itself upon him and torn him to pieces. Martin grinned at the thought. Who was he that he should not be similarly treated in a few more months? Well, he would fool the mob. He would be away, in the South Seas, building his grass house, trading for pearls and copra, jumping reefs in frail outriggers, catching sharks and bonitas, hunting wild goats among the cliffs of the valley that lay next to the valley of Taiohae.

In the moment of that thought the desperateness of his situation dawned upon him. He saw, cleared eyed, that he was in the Valley of the Shadow. All the life that was in him was fading, fainting, making toward death.

He realized how much he slept, and how much he desired to sleep. Of old, he had hated sleep. It had robbed him of precious moments of living. Four hours of sleep in the twenty-four had meant being robbed of four hours of life. How he had grudged sleep! Now it was life he grudged. Life was not good; its taste in his mouth was without tang, and bitter. This was his peril. Life that did not yearn toward life was in fair way toward ceasing. Some remote instinct for preservation stirred in him, and he knew he must get away. He glanced about the room, and the thought of packing was burdensome. Perhaps it would be better to leave that to the last. In the meantime he might be getting an outfit.

He put on his hat and went out, stopping in at a gun-store, where he spent the remainder of the morning buying automatic rifles, ammunition, and fishing tackle. Fashions changed in trading, and he knew he would have to wait till he reached Tahiti before ordering his trade-goods. They could come up from Australia, anyway. This solution was a source of pleasure. He had avoided doing something, and the doing of anything just now was unpleasant. He went back to the hotel gladly, with a feeling of satisfaction in that the comfortable Morris chair was waiting for him; and he groaned inwardly, on entering his room, at sight of Joe in the Morris chair.

Joe was delighted with the laundry. Everything was settled, and he would enter into possession next day. Martin lay on the bed, with closed eyes, while the other talked on. Martin’s thoughts were far away — so far away that he was rarely aware that he was thinking. It was only by an effort that he occasionally responded. And yet this was Joe, whom he had always liked. But Joe was too keen with life. The boisterous impact of it on Martin's jaded mind was a hurt. It was an aching probe to his tired sensitiveness. When Joe reminded him that sometime in the future they were going to put on the gloves together, he could almost have screamed.

"Remember, Joe, you're to run the laundry according to those old rules you used to lay down at Shelly Hot Springs," he said. "No overworking. No working at night. And no children at the mangles. No children anywhere. And a fair wage."

Joe nodded and pulled out a note-book.

"Look at here. I was workin' out them rules before breakfast this A.M. What d'ye think of them?"

He read them aloud, and Martin approved, worrying at the same time as to when Joe would take himself off.

It was late afternoon when he awoke. Slowly the fact of life came back to him. He glanced about the room. Joe had evidently stolen away after he had dozed off. That was considerate of Joe, he thought. Then he closed his eyes and slept again.

In the days that followed Joe was too busy organizing and taking hold of the laundry to bother him much; and it was not until the day before sailing that the newspapers made the announcement that he had taken passage on the *Mariposa*. Once, when the instinct of preservation fluttered, he went to a doctor and underwent a searching physical examination. Nothing could be found the matter with him. His heart and lungs were pronounced magnificent. Every organ, so far as the doctor could know, was normal and was working normally.

"There is nothing the matter with you, Mr. Eden," he said, "positively nothing the matter with you. You are in the pink of condition. Candidly, I envy you your health. It is superb. Look at that chest. There, and in your stomach, lies the secret of your remarkable constitution. Physically, you are a man in a thousand — in ten thousand. Barring accidents, you should live to be a hundred."

And Martin knew that Lizzie's diagnosis had been correct. Physically he was all right. It was his "think-machine" that had gone wrong, and there was no cure for that except to get away to the South Seas. The trouble was that now, on the verge of departure, he had no desire to go. The South Seas charmed him no more than did bourgeois civilization. There was no zest in the thought of departure, while the act of departure appalled him as a weariness of the flesh. He would have felt better if he were already on board and gone.

The last day was a sore trial. Having read of his sailing in the morning papers, Bernard Higginbotham, Gertrude, and all the family came to say good-by, as did Hermann von Schmidt and Marian. Then there was business to be transacted, bills to be paid, and everlasting reporters to be endured. He said good-by to Lizzie Connolly, abruptly, at the entrance to night school, and hurried away. At the hotel he found Joe, too busy all day with the laundry to have come to him earlier. It was the last straw, but Martin gripped the arms of his chair and talked and listened for half an hour.

"You know, Joe," he said, "that you are not tied down to that laundry. There are no strings on it. You can sell it any time and blow the money. Any time you get sick of it and want to hit the road, just pull out. Do what will make you the happiest."

Joe shook his head.

"No more road in mine, thank you kindly. Hoboin's all right, exceptin' for one thing — the girls. I can't help it, but I'm a ladies' man. I can't get along without 'em, and you've got to get along without 'em when you're hoboin'. The times I've passed by houses where dances an' parties was goin' on, an' heard the women laugh, an' saw their white dresses and smiling faces through the windows — Gee! I tell you them moments was plain hell. I like dancin' an' picnics, an' walking in the moonlight, an' all the rest too well. Me for the laundry, and a good front, with big iron dollars clinkin' in my jeans. I seen a girl already, just yesterday, and, d'ye know, I'm feelin' already I'd just as soon marry her as not. I've ben whistlin' all day at the thought of it. She's a beaut, with the kindest eyes and softest voice you ever heard. Me for her, you can stack on that. Say, why don't you get married with all this money to burn? You could get the finest girl in the land."

Martin shook his head with a smile, but in his secret heart he was wondering why any man wanted to marry. It seemed an amazing and incomprehensible thing.

From the deck of the *Mariposa*, at the sailing hour, he saw Lizzie Connolly hiding in the skirts of the crowd on the wharf. Take her with you, came the thought. It is easy to be kind. She will be supremely happy. It was almost a temptation one moment, and the succeeding moment it became a terror. He was in a panic at the thought of it. His tired soul cried out in protest. He turned away from the rail with a groan, muttering, “Man, you are too sick, you are too sick.”

He fled to his stateroom, where he lurked until the steamer was clear of the dock. In the dining saloon, at luncheon, he found himself in the place of honor, at the captain’s right; and he was not long in discovering that he was the great man on board. But no more unsatisfactory great man ever sailed on a ship. He spent the afternoon in a deck-chair, with closed eyes, dozing brokenly most of the time, and in the evening went early to bed.

After the second day, recovered from seasickness, the full passenger list was in evidence, and the more he saw of the passengers the more he disliked them. Yet he knew that he did them injustice. They were good and kindly people, he forced himself to acknowledge, and in the moment of acknowledgment he qualified — good and kindly like all the bourgeoisie, with all the psychological cramp and intellectual futility of their kind, they bored him when they talked with him, their little superficial minds were so filled with emptiness; while the boisterous high spirits and the excessive energy of the younger people shocked him. They were never quiet, ceaselessly playing deck-quoits, tossing rings, promenading, or rushing to the rail with loud cries to watch the leaping porpoises and the first schools of flying fish.

He slept much. After breakfast he sought his deck-chair with a magazine he never finished. The printed pages tired him. He puzzled that men found so much to write about, and, puzzling, dozed in his chair. When the gong awoke him for luncheon, he was irritated that he must awaken. There was no satisfaction in being awake.

Once, he tried to arouse himself from his lethargy, and went forward into the forecastle with the sailors. But the breed of sailors seemed to have changed since the days he had lived in the forecastle. He could find no kinship with these stolid-faced, ox-minded bestial creatures. He was in despair. Up above nobody had wanted Martin Eden for his own sake, and he could not go back to those of his own class who had wanted him in the past. He did not want them. He could not stand them any more than he could stand the stupid first-cabin passengers and the riotous young people.

Life was to him like strong, white light that hurts the tired eyes of a sick person. During every conscious moment life blazed in a raw glare around him and upon him. It hurt. It hurt intolerably. It was the first time in his life that Martin had travelled first class. On ships at sea he had always been in the forecastle, the steerage, or in the black depths of the coal-hold, passing coal. In those days, climbing up the iron ladders out the pit of stifling heat, he had often caught glimpses of the passengers, in cool white, doing nothing but enjoy themselves, under awnings spread to keep the sun and wind away from them, with subservient stewards taking care of their every want and whim, and it had seemed to him that the realm in which they moved and had their being was nothing else than paradise. Well, here he was, the great man on board, in the midmost centre of it, sitting at the captain's right hand, and yet vainly harking back to forecastle and stoke-hole in quest of the Paradise he had lost. He had found no new one, and now he could not find the old one.

He strove to stir himself and find something to interest him. He ventured the petty officers' mess, and was glad to get away. He talked with a quartermaster off duty, an intelligent man who promptly prodded him with the socialist propaganda and forced into his hands a bunch of leaflets and pamphlets. He listened to the man expounding the slave-morality, and as he listened, he thought languidly of his own Nietzsche philosophy. But what was it worth, after all? He remembered one of Nietzsche's mad utterances wherein that madman had doubted truth. And who was to say? Perhaps Nietzsche had been right. Perhaps there was no truth in anything, no truth in truth — no such thing as truth. But his mind wearied quickly, and he was content to go back to his chair and doze.

Miserable as he was on the steamer, a new misery came upon him. What when the steamer reached Tahiti? He would have to go ashore. He would have to order his trade-goods, to find a passage on a schooner to the Marquesas, to do a thousand and one things that were awful to contemplate. Whenever he steeled himself deliberately to think, he could see the desperate peril in which he stood. In all truth, he was in the Valley of the Shadow, and his danger lay in that he was not afraid. If he were only afraid, he would make toward life. Being unafraid, he was drifting deeper into the shadow. He found no delight in the old familiar things of life. The *Mariposa* was now in the northeast trades, and this wine of wind, surging against him, irritated him. He had his chair moved to escape the embrace of this lusty comrade of old days and nights.

The day the *Mariposa* entered the doldrums, Martin was more miserable than ever. He could no longer sleep. He was soaked with sleep, and perforce he must now stay awake and endure the white glare of life. He moved about restlessly. The air was sticky and humid, and the rain-squalls were unrefreshing. He ached with life. He walked around the deck until that hurt too much, then sat in his chair until he was compelled to walk again. He forced himself at last to finish the magazine, and from the steamer library he culled several volumes of poetry. But they could not hold him, and once more he took to walking.

He stayed late on deck, after dinner, but that did not help him, for when he went below, he could not sleep. This surcease from life had failed him. It was too much. He turned on the electric light and tried to read. One of the volumes was a Swinburne. He lay in bed, glancing through its pages, until suddenly he became aware that he was reading with interest. He finished the stanza, attempted to read on, then came back to it. He rested the book face downward on his breast and fell to thinking. That was it. The very thing. Strange that it had never come to him before. That was the meaning of it all; he had been drifting that way all the time, and now Swinburne showed him that it was the happy way out. He wanted rest, and here was rest awaiting him. He glanced at the open port-hole. Yes, it was large enough. For the first time in weeks he felt happy. At last he had discovered the cure of his ill. He picked up the book and read the stanza slowly aloud:-

"'From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives forever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.'"

He looked again at the open port. Swinburne had furnished the key. Life was ill, or, rather, it had become ill — an unbearable thing. "That dead men rise up never!" That line stirred him with a profound feeling of gratitude. It was the one beneficent thing in the universe. When life became an aching weariness, death was ready to soothe away to everlasting sleep. But what was he waiting for? It was time to go.

He arose and thrust his head out the port-hole, looking down into the milky wash. The *Mariposa* was deeply loaded, and, hanging by his hands, his feet would be in the water. He could slip in noiselessly. No one would hear. A smother of spray dashed up, wetting his face. It tasted salt on his lips, and the taste was good. He wondered if he ought to write a swan-song, but laughed the thought away. There was no time. He was too impatient to be gone.

Turning off the light in his room so that it might not betray him, he went out the port-hole feet first. His shoulders stuck, and he forced himself back so as to try it with one arm down by his side. A roll of the steamer aided him, and he was through, hanging by his hands. When his feet touched the sea, he let go. He was in a milky froth of water. The side of the *Mariposa* rushed past him like a dark wall, broken here and there by lighted ports. She was certainly making time. Almost before he knew it, he was astern, swimming gently on the foam-crackling surface.

A bonita struck at his white body, and he laughed aloud. It had taken a piece out, and the sting of it reminded him of why he was there. In the work to do he had forgotten the purpose of it. The lights of the *Mariposa* were growing dim in the distance, and there he was, swimming confidently, as though it were his intention to make for the nearest land a thousand miles or so away.

It was the automatic instinct to live. He ceased swimming, but the moment he felt the water rising above his mouth the hands struck out sharply with a lifting movement. The will to live, was his thought, and the thought was accompanied by a sneer. Well, he had will, — ay, will strong enough that with one last exertion it could destroy itself and cease to be.

He changed his position to a vertical one. He glanced up at the quiet stars, at the same time emptying his lungs of air. With swift, vigorous propulsion of hands and feet, he lifted his shoulders and half his chest out of water. This was to gain impetus for the descent. Then he let himself go and sank without movement, a white statue, into the sea. He breathed in the water deeply, deliberately, after the manner of a man taking an anaesthetic. When he strangled, quite involuntarily his arms and legs clawed the water and drove him up to the surface and into the clear sight of the stars.

The will to live, he thought disdainfully, vainly endeavoring not to breathe the air into his bursting lungs. Well, he would have to try a new way. He filled his lungs with air, filled them full. This supply would take him far down. He turned over and went down head first, swimming with all his strength and all his will. Deeper and deeper he went. His eyes were open, and he watched the ghostly, phosphorescent trails of the darting bonita. As he swam, he hoped that they would not strike at him, for it might snap the tension of his will. But they did not strike, and he found time to be grateful for this last kindness of life.

Down, down, he swam till his arms and leg grew tired and hardly moved. He knew that he was deep. The pressure on his ear-drums was a pain, and there was a buzzing in his head. His endurance was faltering, but he compelled his arms and legs to drive him deeper until his will snapped and the air drove from his lungs in a great explosive rush. The bubbles rubbed and bounded like tiny balloons against his cheeks and eyes as they took their upward flight. Then came pain and strangulation. This hurt was not death, was the thought that oscillated through his reeling consciousness. Death did not hurt. It was life, the pangs of life, this awful, suffocating feeling; it was the last blow life could deal him.

His wilful hands and feet began to beat and churn about, spasmodically and feebly. But he had fooled them and the will to live that made them beat and churn. He was too deep down. They could never bring him to the surface. He seemed floating languidly in a sea of dreamy vision. Colors and radiances surrounded him and bathed him and pervaded him. What was that? It seemed a lighthouse; but it was inside his brain — a flashing, bright white light. It flashed swifter and swifter. There was a long rumble of sound, and it seemed to him that he was falling down a vast and interminable stairway. And somewhere at the bottom he fell into darkness. That much he knew. He had fallen into darkness. And at the instant he knew, he ceased to know.

BURNING DAYLIGHT

This novel was published in 1910, seralised in *The New York Herald*, and explores themes of corruption, investments and love.

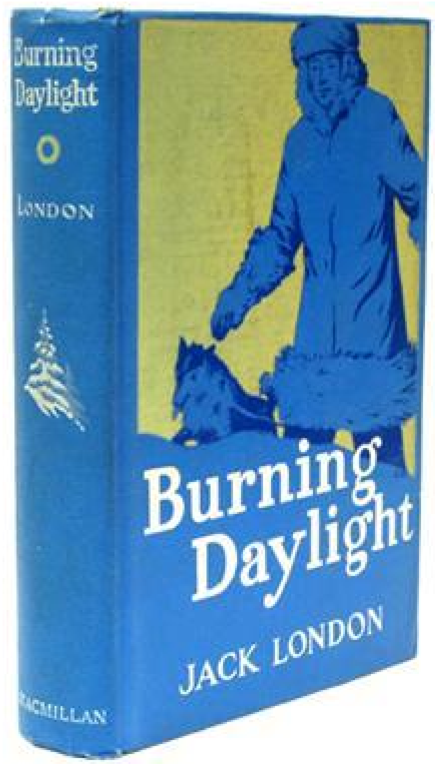
Burning Daylight
LONDON
MACMILLAN
Burning Daylight
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

PART I
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
PART II
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI

CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII

PART I

CHAPTER I

It was a quiet night in the Shovel. At the bar, which ranged along one side of the large chinked-log room, leaned half a dozen men, two of whom were discussing the relative merits of spruce-tea and lime-juice as remedies for scurvy. They argued with an air of depression and with intervals of morose silence. The other men scarcely heeded them. In a row, against the opposite wall, were the gambling games. The crap-table was deserted. One lone man was playing at the faro-table. The roulette-ball was not even spinning, and the gamekeeper stood by the roaring, red-hot stove, talking with the young, dark-eyed woman, comely of face and figure, who was known from Juneau to Fort Yukon as the Virgin. Three men sat in at stud-poker, but they played with small chips and without enthusiasm, while there were no onlookers. On the floor of the dancing-room, which opened out at the rear, three couples were waltzing drearily to the strains of a violin and a piano.

Circle City was not deserted, nor was money tight. The miners were in from Moseyed Creek and the other diggings to the west, the summer washing had been good, and the men's pouches were heavy with dust and nuggets. The Klondike had not yet been discovered, nor had the miners of the Yukon learned the possibilities of deep digging and wood-firing. No work was done in the winter, and they made a practice of hibernating in the large camps like Circle City during the long Arctic night. Time was heavy on their hands, their pouches were well filled, and the only social diversion to be found was in the saloons. Yet the Shovel was practically deserted, and the Virgin, standing by the stove, yawned with uncovered mouth and said to Charley Bates: —

"If something don't happen soon, I'm gin' to bed. What's the matter with the camp, anyway? Everybody dead?"

Bates did not even trouble to reply, but went on moodily rolling a cigarette. Dan MacDonald, pioneer saloonman and gambler on the upper Yukon, owner and proprietor of the Tivoli and all its games, wandered forlornly across the great vacant space of floor and joined the two at the stove.

"Anybody dead?" the Virgin asked him.

"Looks like it," was the answer.

"Then it must be the whole camp," she said with an air of finality and with another yawn.

MacDonald grinned and nodded, and opened his mouth to speak, when the front door swung wide and a man appeared in the light. A rush of frost, turned to vapor by the heat of the room, swirled about him to his knees and poured on across the floor, growing thinner and thinner, and perishing a dozen feet from the stove. Taking the wisp broom from its nail inside the door, the newcomer brushed the snow from his moccasins and high German socks. He would have appeared a large man had not a huge French-Canadian stepped up to him from the bar and gripped his hand.

"Hello, Daylight!" was his greeting. "By Gar, you good for sore eyes!"

"Hello, Louis, when did you-all blow in?" returned the newcomer. "Come up and have a drink and tell us all about Bone Creek. Why, dog-gone you-all, shake again. Where's that pardner of yours? I'm looking for him."

Another huge man detached himself from the bar to shake hands. Olaf Henderson and French Louis, partners together on Bone Creek, were the two largest men in the country, and though they were but half a head taller than the newcomer, between them he was dwarfed completely.

"Hello, Olaf, you're my meat, savvee that," said the one called Daylight. "To-morrow's my birthday, and I'm going to put you-all on your back — savvee? And you, too, Louis. I can put you-all on your back on my birthday — savvee? Come up and drink, Olaf, and I'll tell you-all about it."

The arrival of the newcomer seemed to send a flood of warmth through the place. "It's Burning Daylight," the Virgin cried, the first to recognize him as he came into the light. Charley Bates' tight features relaxed at the sight, and MacDonald went over and joined the three at the bar. With the advent of Burning Daylight the whole place became suddenly brighter and cheerier. The barkeepers were active. Voices were raised. Somebody laughed. And when the fiddler, peering into the front room, remarked to the pianist, "It's Burning Daylight," the waltz-time perceptibly quickened, and the dancers, catching the contagion, began to whirl about as if they really enjoyed it. It was known to them of old time that nothing languished when Burning Daylight was around.

He turned from the bar and saw the woman by the stove and the eager look of welcome she extended him.

"Hello, Virgin, old girl," he called. "Hello, Charley. What's the matter with you-all? Why wear faces like that when coffins cost only three ounces? Come up, you-all, and drink. Come up, you unburied dead, and name your poison. Come up, everybody. This is my night, and I'm going to ride it. To-morrow I'm thirty, and then I'll be an old man. It's the last fling of youth. Are you-all with me? Surge along, then. Surge along.

"Hold on there, Davis," he called to the faro-dealer, who had shoved his chair back from the table. "I'm going you one flutter to see whether you-all drink with me or we-all drink with you."

Pulling a heavy sack of gold-dust from his coat pocket, he dropped it on the HIGH CARD.

"Fifty," he said.

The faro-dealer slipped two cards. The high card won. He scribbled the amount on a pad, and the weigher at the bar balanced fifty dollars' worth of dust in the gold-scales and poured it into Burning Daylight's sack. The waltz in the back room being finished, the three couples, followed by the fiddler and the pianist and heading for the bar, caught Daylight's eye.

"Surge along, you-all" he cried. "Surge along and name it. This is my night, and it ain't a night that comes frequent. Surge up, you Siwashes and Salmon-eaters. It's my night, I tell you-all — "

"A blame mangy night," Charley Bates interpolated.

"You're right, my son," Burning Daylight went on gaily.

"A mangy night, but it's MY night, you see. I'm the mangy old he-wolf. Listen to me howl."

And howl he did, like a lone gray timber wolf, till the Virgin thrust her pretty fingers in her ears and shivered. A minute later she was whirled away in his arms to the dancing-floor, where, along with the other three women and their partners, a rollicking Virginia reel was soon in progress. Men and women danced in moccasins, and the place was soon a-roar, Burning Daylight the centre of it and the animating spark, with quip and jest and rough merriment rousing them out of the slough of despond in which he had found them.

The atmosphere of the place changed with his coming. He seemed to fill it with his tremendous vitality. Men who entered from the street felt it immediately, and in response to their queries the barkeepers nodded at the back room, and said comprehensively, “Burning Daylight’s on the tear.” And the men who entered remained, and kept the barkeepers busy. The gamblers took heart of life, and soon the tables were filled, the click of chips and whir of the roulette-ball rising monotonously and imperiously above the hoarse rumble of men’s voices and their oaths and heavy laughs.

Few men knew Elam Harnish by any other name than Burning Daylight, the name which had been given him in the early days in the land because of his habit of routing his comrades out of their blankets with the complaint that daylight was burning. Of the pioneers in that far Arctic wilderness, where all men were pioneers, he was reckoned among the oldest. Men like Al Mayo and Jack McQuestion antedated him; but they had entered the land by crossing the Rockies from the Hudson Bay country to the east. He, however, had been the pioneer over the Chilcoot and Chilcat passes. In the spring of 1883, twelve years before, a stripling of eighteen, he had crossed over the Chilcoot with five comrades.

In the fall he had crossed back with one. Four had perished by mischance in the bleak, uncharted vastness. And for twelve years Elam Harnish had continued to grope for gold among the shadows of the Circle.

And no man had groped so obstinately nor so enduringly. He had grown up with the land. He knew no other land. Civilization was a dream of some previous life. Camps like Forty Mile and Circle City were to him metropolises. And not alone had he grown up with the land, for, raw as it was, he had helped to make it. He had made history and geography, and those that followed wrote of his traverses and charted the trails his feet had broken.

Heroes are seldom given to hero-worship, but among those of that young land, young as he was, he was accounted an elder hero. In point of time he was before them. In point of deed he was beyond them. In point of endurance it was acknowledged that he could kill the hardiest of them. Furthermore, he was accounted a nervy man, a square man, and a white man.

In all lands where life is a hazard lightly played with and lightly flung aside, men turn, almost automatically, to gambling for diversion and relaxation. In the Yukon men gambled their lives for gold, and those that won gold from the ground gambled for it with one another. Nor was Elam Harnish an exception. He was a man's man primarily, and the instinct in him to play the game of life was strong. Environment had determined what form that game should take. He was born on an Iowa farm, and his father had emigrated to eastern Oregon, in which mining country Elam's boyhood was lived. He had known nothing but hard knocks for big stakes. Pluck and endurance counted in the game, but the great god Chance dealt the cards. Honest work for sure but meagre returns did not count. A man played big. He risked everything for everything, and anything less than everything meant that he was a loser. So for twelve Yukon years, Elam Harnish had been a loser. True, on Moosehide Creek the past summer he had taken out twenty thousand dollars, and what was left in the ground was twenty thousand more. But, as he himself proclaimed, that was no more than getting his ante back. He had ante'd his life for a dozen years, and forty thousand was a small pot for such a stake — the price of a drink and a dance at the Tivoli, of a winter's flutter at Circle City, and a grubstake for the year to come.

The men of the Yukon reversed the old maxim till it read: hard come, easy go. At the end of the reel, Elam Harnish called the house up to drink again. Drinks were a dollar apiece, gold rated at sixteen dollars an ounce; there were thirty in the house that accepted his invitation, and between every dance the house was Elam's guest. This was his night, and nobody was to be allowed to pay for anything.

Not that Elam Harnish was a drinking man. Whiskey meant little to him. He was too vital and robust, too untroubled in mind and body, to incline to the slavery of alcohol. He spent months at a time on trail and river when he drank nothing stronger than coffee, while he had gone a year at a time without even coffee. But he was gregarious, and since the sole social expression of the Yukon was the saloon, he expressed himself that way. When he was a lad in the mining camps of the West, men had always done that. To him it was the proper way for a man to express himself socially. He knew no other way.

He was a striking figure of a man, despite his garb being similar to that of all the men in the Tivoli. Soft-tanned moccasins of moose-hide, beaded in Indian designs, covered his feet. His trousers were ordinary overalls, his coat was made from a blanket. Long-gauntleted leather mittens, lined with wool, hung by his side. They were connected in the Yukon fashion, by a leather thong passed around the neck and across the shoulders. On his head was a fur cap, the ear-flaps raised and the tying-cords dangling. His face, lean and slightly long, with the suggestion of hollows under the cheek-bones, seemed almost Indian. The burnt skin and keen dark eyes contributed to this effect, though the bronze of the skin and the eyes themselves were essentially those of a white man. He looked older than thirty, and yet, smooth-shaven and without wrinkles, he was almost boyish. This impression of age was based on no tangible evidence. It came from the abstracter facts of the man, from what he had endured and survived, which was far beyond that of ordinary men. He had lived life naked and tensely, and something of all this smouldered in his eyes, vibrated in his voice, and seemed forever a-whisper on his lips.

The lips themselves were thin, and prone to close tightly over the even, white teeth. But their harshness was retrieved by the upward curl at the corners of his mouth. This curl gave to him sweetness, as the minute puckers at the corners of the eyes gave him laughter. These necessary graces saved him from a nature that was essentially savage and that otherwise would have been cruel and bitter. The nose was lean, full-nostrilled, and delicate, and of a size to fit the face; while the high forehead, as if to atone for its narrowness, was splendidly domed and symmetrical. In line with the Indian effect was his hair, very straight and very black, with a gloss to it that only health could give.

“Burning Daylight’s burning candlelight,” laughed Dan MacDonald, as an outburst of exclamations and merriment came from the dancers.

“An’ he is der boy to do it, eh, Louis?” said Olaf Henderson.

“Yes, by Gar! you bet on dat,” said French Louis. “Dat boy is all gold — ”

“And when God Almighty washes Daylight’s soul out on the last big slucin’ day,” MacDonald interrupted, “why, God Almighty’ll have to shovel gravel along with him into the sluice-boxes.”

“Dot iss goot,” Olaf Henderson muttered, regarding the gambler with profound admiration.

“Ver’ good,” affirmed French Louis. “I t’ink we take a drink on dat one time, eh?”

CHAPTER II

It was two in the morning when the dancers, bent on getting something to eat, adjourned the dancing for half an hour. And it was at this moment that Jack Kearns suggested poker. Jack Kearns was a big, bluff-featured man, who, along with Bettles, had made the disastrous attempt to found a post on the head-reaches of the Koyokuk, far inside the Arctic Circle. After that, Kearns had fallen back on his posts at Forty Mile and Sixty Mile and changed the direction of his ventures by sending out to the States for a small sawmill and a river steamer. The former was even then being sledded across Chilcoot Pass by Indians and dogs, and would come down the Yukon in the early summer after the ice-run. Later in the summer, when Bering Sea and the mouth of the Yukon cleared of ice, the steamer, put together at St. Michaels, was to be expected up the river loaded to the guards with supplies.

Jack Kearns suggested poker. French Louis, Dan MacDonald, and Hal Campbell (who had make a strike on Moosehide), all three of whom were not dancing because there were not girls enough to go around, inclined to the suggestion. They were looking for a fifth man when Burning Daylight emerged from the rear room, the Virgin on his arm, the train of dancers in his wake. In response to the hail of the poker-players, he came over to their table in the corner.

“Want you to sit in,” said Campbell. “How’s your luck?”

“I sure got it to-night,” Burning Daylight answered with enthusiasm, and at the same time felt the Virgin press his arm warningly. She wanted him for the dancing. “I sure got my luck with me, but I’d sooner dance. I ain’t hankerin’ to take the money away from you-all.”

Nobody urged. They took his refusal as final, and the Virgin was pressing his arm to turn him away in pursuit of the supper-seekers, when he experienced a change of heart. It was not that he did not want to dance, nor that he wanted to hurt her; but that insistent pressure on his arm put his free man-nature in revolt. The thought in his mind was that he did not want any woman running him. Himself a favorite with women, nevertheless they did not bulk big with him. They were toys, playthings, part of the relaxation from the bigger game of life. He met women along with the whiskey and gambling, and from observation he had found that it was far easier to break away from the drink and the cards than from a woman once the man was properly entangled.

He was a slave to himself, which was natural in one with a healthy ego, but he rebelled in ways either murderous or panicky at being a slave to anybody else. Love’s sweet servitude was a thing of which he had no comprehension. Men he had seen in love impressed him as lunatics, and lunacy was a thing he had never considered worth analyzing. But comradeship with men was different from love with women. There was no servitude in comradeship. It was a business proposition, a square deal between men who did not pursue each other, but who shared the risks of trail and river and mountain in the pursuit of life and treasure. Men and women pursued each other, and one must needs bend the other to his will or hers. Comradeship was different. There was no slavery about it; and though he, a strong man beyond strength’s seeming, gave far more than he received, he gave not something due but in royal largess, his gifts of toil or heroic effort falling generously from his hands. To pack for days over the gale-swept passes or across the mosquito-ridden marshes, and to pack double the weight his comrade packed, did not involve unfairness or compulsion. Each did his best. That was the business essence of it. Some men were stronger than others — true; but so long as each man did his best it was fair exchange, the business spirit was observed, and the square deal obtained.

But with women — no. Women gave little and wanted all. Women had apron-strings and were prone to tie them about any man who looked twice in their direction. There was the Virgin, yawning her head off when he came in and mightily pleased that he asked her to dance. One dance was all very well, but because he danced twice and thrice with her and several times more, she squeezed his arm when they asked him to sit in at poker. It was the obnoxious apron-string, the first of the many compulsions she would exert upon him if he gave in. Not that she was not a nice bit of a woman, healthy and strapping and good to look upon, also a very excellent dancer, but that she was a woman with all a woman’s desire to rope him with her apron-strings and tie him hand and foot for the branding. Better poker. Besides, he liked poker as well as he did dancing.

He resisted the pull on his arm by the mere negative mass of him, and said: —

“I sort of feel a hankering to give you-all a flutter.”

Again came the pull on his arm. She was trying to pass the apron-string around him. For the fraction of an instant he was a savage, dominated by the wave of fear and murder that rose up in him. For that infinitesimal space of time he was to all purposes a frightened tiger filled with rage and terror at the apprehension of the trap. Had he been no more than a savage, he would have leapt wildly from the place or else sprung upon her and destroyed her. But in that same instant there stirred in him the generations of discipline by which man had become an inadequate social animal. Tact and sympathy strove with him, and he smiled with his eyes into the Virgin's eyes as he said: —

"You-all go and get some grub. I ain't hungry. And we'll dance some more by and by. The night's young yet. Go to it, old girl."

He released his arm and thrust her playfully on the shoulder, at the same time turning to the poker-players.

"Take off the limit and I'll go you-all."

"Limit's the roof," said Jack Kearns.

"Take off the roof."

The players glanced at one another, and Kearns announced, "The roof's off."

Elam Harnish dropped into the waiting chair, started to pull out his gold-sack, and changed his mind. The Virgin pouted a moment, then followed in the wake of the other dancers.

"I'll bring you a sandwich, Daylight," she called back over her shoulder.

He nodded. She was smiling her forgiveness. He had escaped the apron-string, and without hurting her feelings too severely.

"Let's play markers," he suggested. "Chips do everlastingly clutter up the table....If it's agreeable to you-all?"

"I'm willing," answered Hal Campbell. "Let mine run at five hundred."

"Mine, too," answered Harnish, while the others stated the values they put on their own markers, French Louis, the most modest, issuing his at a hundred dollars each.

In Alaska, at that time, there were no rascals and no tin-horn gamblers. Games were conducted honestly, and men trusted one another. A man's word was as good as his gold in the blower. A marker was a flat, oblong composition chip worth, perhaps, a cent. But when a man betted a marker in a game and said it was worth five hundred dollars, it was accepted as worth five hundred dollars. Whoever won it knew that the man who issued it would redeem it with five hundred dollars' worth of dust weighed out on the scales. The markers being of different colors, there was no difficulty in identifying the owners. Also, in that early Yukon day, no one dreamed of playing table-stakes. A man was good in a game for all that he possessed, no matter where his possessions were or what was their nature.

Harnish cut and got the deal. At this good augury, and while shuffling the deck, he called to the barkeepers to set up the drinks for the house. As he dealt the first card to Dan MacDonald, on his left, he called out:

"Get down to the ground, you-all, Malemutes, huskies, and Siwash purps! Get down and dig in! Tighten up them traces! Put your weight into the harness and bust the breast-bands! Whoop-la! Yow! We're off and bound for Helen Breakfast! And I tell you-all clear and plain there's goin' to be stiff grades and fast goin' to-night before we win to that same lady. And somebody's goin' to bump...hard."

Once started, it was a quiet game, with little or no conversation, though all about the players the place was a-roar. Elam Harnish had ignited the spark. More and more miners dropped in to the Tivoli and remained. When Burning Daylight went on the tear, no man cared to miss it. The dancing-floor was full. Owing to the shortage of women, many of the men tied bandanna handkerchiefs around their arms in token of femininity and danced with other men. All the games were crowded, and the voices of the men talking at the long bar and grouped about the stove were accompanied by the steady click of chips and the sharp whir, rising and falling, of the roulette-ball. All the materials of a proper Yukon night were at hand and mixing.

The luck at the table varied monotonously, no big hands being out. As a result, high play went on with small hands though no play lasted long. A filled straight belonging to French Louis gave him a pot of five thousand against two sets of threes held by Campbell and Kearns. One pot of eight hundred dollars was won by a pair of treys on a showdown. And once Harnish called Kearns for two thousand dollars on a cold steal. When Kearns laid down his hand it showed a bobtail flush, while Harnish's hand proved that he had had the nerve to call on a pair of tens.

But at three in the morning the big combination of hands arrived.

It was the moment of moments that men wait weeks for in a poker game. The news of it tingled over the Tivoli. The onlookers became quiet. The men farther away ceased talking and moved over to the table. The players deserted the other games, and the dancing-floor was forsaken, so that all stood at last, fivescore and more, in a compact and silent group, around the poker-table. The high betting had begun before the draw, and still the high betting went on, with the draw not in sight. Kearns had dealt, and French Louis had opened the pot with one marker — in his case one hundred dollars. Campbell had merely "seen" it, but Elam Harnish, corning next, had tossed in five hundred dollars, with the remark to MacDonald that he was letting him in easy.

MacDonald, glancing again at his hand, put in a thousand in markers. Kearns, debating a long time over his hand, finally "saw." It then cost French Louis nine hundred to remain in the game, which he contributed after a similar debate. It cost Campbell likewise nine hundred to remain and draw cards, but to the surprise of all he saw the nine hundred and raised another thousand.

"You-all are on the grade at last," Harnish remarked, as he saw the fifteen hundred and raised a thousand in turn. "Helen Breakfast's sure on top this divide, and you-all had best look out for bustin' harness."

"Me for that same lady," accompanied MacDonald's markers for two thousand and for an additional thousand-dollar raise.

It was at this stage that the players sat up and knew beyond peradventure that big hands were out. Though their features showed nothing, each man was beginning unconsciously to tense. Each man strove to appear his natural self, and each natural self was different. Hal Campbell affected his customary cautiousness.

French Louis betrayed interest. MacDonald retained his whole-souled benevolence, though it seemed to take on a slightly exaggerated tone. Kearns was coolly dispassionate and noncommittal, while Elam Harnish appeared as quizzical and jocular as ever. Eleven thousand dollars were already in the pot, and the markers were heaped in a confused pile in the centre of the table.

"I ain't go no more markers," Kearns remarked plaintively. "We'd best begin I.O.U.'s."

"Glad you're going to stay," was MacDonald's cordial response.

"I ain't stayed yet. I've got a thousand in already. How's it stand now?"

"It'll cost you three thousand for a look in, but nobody will stop you from raising."

“Raise — hell. You must think I got a pat like yourself.” Kearns looked at his hand. “But I’ll tell you what I’ll do, Mac.

“I’ve got a hunch, and I’ll just see that three thousand.”

He wrote the sum on a slip of paper, signed his name, and consigned it to the centre of the table.

French Louis became the focus of all eyes. He fingered his cards nervously for a space. Then, with a “By Gar! Ah got not one leetle beet hunch,” he regretfully tossed his hand into the discards.

The next moment the hundred and odd pairs of eyes shifted to Campbell.

“I won’t hump you, Jack,” he said, contenting himself with calling the requisite two thousand.

The eyes shifted to Harnish, who scribbled on a piece of paper and shoved it forward.

“I’ll just let you-all know this ain’t no Sunday-school society of philanthropy,” he said. “I see you, Jack, and I raise you a thousand. Here’s where you-all get action on your pat, Mac.”

“Action’s what I fatten on, and I lift another thousand,” was MacDonald’s rejoinder. “Still got that hunch, Jack?”

“I still got the hunch.” Kearns fingered his cards a long time. “And I’ll play it, but you’ve got to know how I stand. There’s my steamer, the Bella — worth twenty thousand if she’s worth an ounce. There’s Sixty Mile with five thousand in stock on the shelves. And you know I got a sawmill coming in. It’s at Linderman now, and the scow is building. Am I good?”

“Dig in; you’re sure good,” was Daylight’s answer. “And while we’re about it, I may mention casual that I got twenty thousand in Mac’s safe, there, and there’s twenty thousand more in the ground on Moosehide. You know the ground, Campbell. Is they that-all in the dirt?”

“There sure is, Daylight.”

“How much does it cost now?” Kearns asked.

“Two thousand to see.”

“We’ll sure hump you if you-all come in,” Daylight warned him.

“It’s an almighty good hunch,” Kearns said, adding his slip for two thousand to the growing heap. “I can feel her crawlin’ up and down my back.”

“I ain’t got a hunch, but I got a tolerable likeable hand,” Campbell announced, as he slid in his slip; “but it’s not a raising hand.”

“Mine is,” Daylight paused and wrote. “I see that thousand and raise her the same old thousand.”

The Virgin, standing behind him, then did what a man’s best friend was not privileged to do. Reaching over Daylight’s shoulder, she picked up his hand and read it, at the same time shielding the faces of the five cards close to his chest. What she saw were three queens and a pair of eights, but nobody guessed what she saw. Every player’s eyes were on her face as she scanned the cards, but no sign did she give. Her features might have been carved from ice, for her expression was precisely the same before, during, and after. Not a muscle quivered; nor was there the slightest dilation of a nostril, nor the slightest increase of light in the eyes. She laid the hand face down again on the table, and slowly the lingering eyes withdrew from her, having learned nothing.

MacDonald smiled benevolently. “I see you, Daylight, and I hump this time for two thousand. How’s that hunch, Jack?”

“Still a-crawling, Mac. You got me now, but that hunch is a rip-snorter persuadin’ sort of a critter, and it’s my plain duty to ride it. I call for three thousand. And I got another hunch: Daylight’s going to call, too.”

“He sure is,” Daylight agreed, after Campbell had thrown up his hand. “He knows when he’s up against it, and he plays accordin’. I see that two thousand, and then I’ll see the draw.”

In a dead silence, save for the low voices of the three players, the draw was made. Thirty-four thousand dollars were already in the pot, and the play possibly not half over. To the Virgin’s amazement, Daylight held up his three queens, discarding his eights and calling for two cards. And this time not even she dared look at what he had drawn. She knew her limit of control. Nor did he look. The two new cards lay face down on the table where they had been dealt to him.

“Cards?” Kearns asked of MacDonald.

“Got enough,” was the reply.

“You can draw if you want to, you know,” Kearns warned him.

“Nope; this’ll do me.”

Kearns himself drew two cards, but did not look at them.

Still Harnish let his cards lie.

“I never bet in the teeth of a pat hand,” he said slowly, looking at the saloon-keeper. “You-all start her rolling, Mac.”

MacDonald counted his cards carefully, to make double sure it was not a foul hand, wrote a sum on a paper slip, and slid it into the pot, with the simple utterance: —

"Five thousand."

Kearns, with every eye upon him, looked at his two-card draw, counted the other three to dispel any doubt of holding more than five cards, and wrote on a betting slip.

"I see you, Mac," he said, "and I raise her a little thousand just so as not to keep Daylight out."

The concentrated gaze shifted to Daylight. He likewise examined his draw and counted his five cards.

"I see that six thousand, and I raise her five thousand...just to try and keep you out, Jack."

"And I raise you five thousand just to lend a hand at keeping Jack out," MacDonald said, in turn.

His voice was slightly husky and strained, and a nervous twitch in the corner of his mouth followed speech.

Kearns was pale, and those who looked on noted that his hand trembled as he wrote his slip. But his voice was unchanged.

"I lift her along for five thousand," he said.

Daylight was now the centre. The kerosene lamps above flung high lights from the rash of sweat on his forehead. The bronze of his cheeks was darkened by the accession of blood. His black eyes glittered, and his nostrils were distended and eager. They were large nostrils, tokening his descent from savage ancestors who had survived by virtue of deep lungs and generous air-passages. Yet, unlike MacDonald, his voice was firm and customary, and, unlike Kearns, his hand did not tremble when he wrote.

"I call, for ten thousand," he said. "Not that I'm afraid of you-all, Mac. It's that hunch of Jack's."

"I hump his hunch for five thousand just the same," said MacDonald. "I had the best hand before the draw, and I still guess I got it."

"Mebbe this is a case where a hunch after the draw is better'n the hunch before," Kearns remarked; "wherefore duty says, 'Lift her, Jack, lift her,' and so I lift her another five thousand."

Daylight leaned back in his chair and gazed up at the kerosene lamps while he computed aloud.

"I was in nine thousand before the draw, and I saw and raised eleven thousand — that makes thirty. I'm only good for ten more."

He leaned forward and looked at Kearns. "So I call that ten thousand."

"You can raise if you want," Kearns answered. "Your dogs are good for five thousand in this game."

"Nary dawg. You-all can win my dust and dirt, but nary one of my dawgs. I just call."

MacDonald considered for a long time. No one moved or whispered.

Not a muscle was relaxed on the part of the onlookers. Not the weight of a body shifted from one leg to the other. It was a sacred silence. Only could be heard the roaring draft of the huge stove, and from without, muffled by the log-walls, the howling of dogs. It was not every night that high stakes were played on the Yukon, and for that matter, this was the highest in the history of the country. The saloon-keeper finally spoke.

"If anybody else wins, they'll have to take a mortgage on the Tivoli."

The two other players nodded.

"So I call, too." MacDonald added his slip for five thousand.

Not one of them claimed the pot, and not one of them called the size of his hand. Simultaneously and in silence they faced their cards on the table, while a general tiptoeing and craning of necks took place among the onlookers. Daylight showed four queens and an ace; MacDonald four jacks and an ace; and Kearns four kings and a trey. Kearns reached forward with an encircling movement of his arm and drew the pot in to him, his arm shaking as he did so.

Daylight picked the ace from his hand and tossed it over alongside MacDonald's ace, saying: —

"That's what cheered me along, Mac. I knowed it was only kings that could beat me, and he had them.

"What did you-all have?" he asked, all interest, turning to Campbell.

"Straight flush of four, open at both ends — a good drawing hand."

"You bet! You could a' made a straight, a straight flush, or a flush out of it."

"That's what I thought," Campbell said sadly. "It cost me six thousand before I quit."

"I wisht you-all'd drawn," Daylight laughed. "Then I wouldn't a' caught that fourth queen. Now I've got to take Billy Rawlins' mail contract and mush for Dyea. What's the size of the killing, Jack?"

Kearns attempted to count the pot, but was too excited. Daylight drew it across to him, with firm fingers separating and stacking the markers and I.O.U.'s and with clear brain adding the sum.

"One hundred and twenty-seven thousand," he announced. "You-all can sell out now, Jack, and head for home."

The winner smiled and nodded, but seemed incapable of speech.

"I'd shout the drinks," MacDonald said, "only the house don't belong to me any more."

"Yes, it does," Kearns replied, first wetting his lips with his tongue. "Your note's good for any length of time. But the drinks are on me."

"Name your snake-juice, you-all — the winner pays!" Daylight called out loudly to all about him, at the same time rising from his chair and catching the Virgin by the arm. "Come on for a reel, you-all dancers. The night's young yet, and it's Helen Breakfast and the mail contract for me in the morning. Here, you-all Rawlins, you — I hereby do take over that same contract, and I start for salt water at nine A.M. — savvee? Come on, you-all! Where's that fiddler?"

CHAPTER III

It was Daylight's night. He was the centre and the head of the revel, unquenchably joyous, a contagion of fun. He multiplied himself, and in so doing multiplied the excitement. No prank he suggested was too wild for his followers, and all followed save those that developed into singing imbeciles and fell warbling by the wayside. Yet never did trouble intrude. It was known on the Yukon that when Burning Daylight made a night of it, wrath and evil were forbidden. On his nights men dared not quarrel. In the younger days such things had happened, and then men had known what real wrath was, and been man-handled as only Burning Daylight could man-handle. On his nights men must laugh and be happy or go home. Daylight was inexhaustible. In between dances he paid over to Kearns the twenty thousand in dust and transferred to him his Moosehide claim. Likewise he arranged the taking over of Billy Rawlins' mail contract, and made his preparations for the start. He despatched a messenger to rout out Kama, his dog-driver — a Tananaw Indian, far-wandered from his tribal home in the service of the invading whites. Kama entered the Tivoli, tall, lean, muscular, and fur-clad, the pick of his barbaric race and barbaric still, unshaken and unabashed by the revellers that rioted about him while Daylight gave his orders. "Um," said Kama, tabling his instructions on his fingers. "Get um letters from Rawlins. Load um on sled. Grub for Selkirk — you think um plenty dog-grub stop Selkirk?"

"Plenty dog-grub, Kama."

"Um, bring sled this place nine um clock. Bring um snowshoes. No bring um tent. Mebbe bring um fly? um little fly?"

"No fly," Daylight answered decisively.

"Um much cold."

"We travel light — savvee? We carry plenty letters out, plenty letters back. You are strong man. Plenty cold, plenty travel, all right."

"Sure all right," Kama muttered, with resignation.

"Much cold, no care a damn. Um ready nine um clock."

He turned on his moccasined heel and walked out, imperturbable, sphinx-like, neither giving nor receiving greetings nor looking to right or left. The Virgin led Daylight away into a corner.

"Look here, Daylight," she said, in a low voice, "you're busted."

"Higher'n a kite."

"I've eight thousand in Mac's safe — " she began.

But Daylight interrupted. The apron-string loomed near and he shied like an unbroken colt.

"It don't matter," he said. "Busted I came into the world, busted I go out, and I've been busted most of the time since I arrived. Come on; let's waltz."

"But listen," she urged. "My money's doing nothing. I could lend it to you — a grub-stake," she added hurriedly, at sight of the alarm in his face.

"Nobody grub-stakes me," was the answer. "I stake myself, and when I make a killing it's sure all mine. No thank you, old girl. Much obliged. I'll get my stake by running the mail out and in."

"Daylight," she murmured, in tender protest.

But with a sudden well-assumed ebullition of spirits he drew her toward the dancing-floor, and as they swung around and around in a waltz she pondered on the iron heart of the man who held her in his arms and resisted all her wiles.

At six the next morning, scorching with whiskey, yet ever himself, he stood at the bar putting every man's hand down. The way of it was that two men faced each other across a corner, their right elbows resting on the bar, their right hands gripped together, while each strove to press the other's hand down. Man after man came against him, but no man put his hand down, even Olaf Henderson and French Louis failing despite their hugeness. When they contended it was a trick, a trained muscular knack, he challenged them to another test.

"Look here, you-all" he cried. "I'm going to do two things: first, weigh my sack; and second, bet it that after you-all have lifted clean from the floor all the sacks of flour you-all are able, I'll put on two more sacks and lift the whole caboodle clean."

"By Gar! Ah take dat!" French Louis rumbled above the cheers.

"Hold on!" Olaf Henderson cried. "I ban yust as good as you, Louis. I yump half that bet."

Put on the scales, Daylight's sack was found to balance an even four hundred dollars, and Louis and Olaf divided the bet between them. Fifty-pound sacks of flour were brought in from MacDonald's cache. Other men tested their strength first. They straddled on two chairs, the flour sacks beneath them on the floor and held together by rope-lashings. Many of the men were able, in this manner, to lift four or five hundred pounds, while some succeeded with as high as six hundred. Then the two giants took a hand, tying at seven hundred. French Louis then added another sack, and swung seven hundred and fifty clear. Olaf duplicated the performance, whereupon both failed to clear eight hundred. Again and again they strove, their foreheads beaded with sweat, their frames crackling with the effort. Both were able to shift the weight and to bump it, but clear the floor with it they could not.

"By Gar! Daylight, dis tam you mek one beeg meestake," French Louis said, straightening up and stepping down from the chairs. "Only one damn iron man can do dat. One hundred pun' more — my frien', not ten poun' more." The sacks were unlashed, but when two sacks were added, Kearns interfered. "Only one sack more."

"Two!" some one cried. "Two was the bet."

"They didn't lift that last sack," Kearns protested.

"They only lifted seven hundred and fifty."

But Daylight grandly brushed aside the confusion.

"What's the good of you-all botherin' around that way? What's one more sack? If I can't lift three more, I sure can't lift two. Put 'em in."

He stood upon the chairs, squatted, and bent his shoulders down till his hands closed on the rope. He shifted his feet slightly, tautened his muscles with a tentative pull, then relaxed again, questing for a perfect adjustment of all the levers of his body.

French Louis, looking on sceptically, cried out,

"Pool lak hell, Daylight! Pool lak hell!"

Daylight's muscles tautened a second time, and this time in earnest, until steadily all the energy of his splendid body was applied, and quite imperceptibly, without jerk or strain, the bulky nine hundred pounds rose from the door and swung back and forth, pendulum like, between his legs.

Olaf Henderson sighed a vast audible sigh. The Virgin, who had tensed unconsciously till her muscles hurt her, relaxed. While French Louis murmured reverently: —

"M'sieu Daylight, salut! Ay am one beeg baby. You are one beeg man."

Daylight dropped his burden, leaped to the floor, and headed for the bar.

"Weigh in!" he cried, tossing his sack to the weigher, who transferred to it four hundred dollars from the sacks of the two losers.

"Surge up, everybody!" Daylight went on. "Name your snake-juice! The winner pays!"

“This is my night!” he was shouting, ten minutes later. “I’m the lone he-wolf, and I’ve seen thirty winters. This is my birthday, my one day in the year, and I can put any man on his back. Come on, you-all! I’m going to put you-all in the snow. Come on, you chechaquos and sourdoughs, and get your baptism!”

The rout streamed out of doors, all save the barkeepers and the singing Bacchuses. Some fleeting thought of saving his own dignity entered MacDonald’s head, for he approached Daylight with outstretched hand.

“What? You first?” Daylight laughed, clasping the other’s hand as if in greeting.

“No, no,” the other hurriedly disclaimed. “Just congratulations on your birthday. Of course you can put me in the snow. What chance have I against a man that lifts nine hundred pounds?”

MacDonald weighed one hundred and eighty pounds, and Daylight had him gripped solely by his hand; yet, by a sheer abrupt jerk, he took the saloon-keeper off his feet and flung him face downward in the snow. In quick succession, seizing the men nearest him, he threw half a dozen more. Resistance was useless. They flew helter-skelter out of his grips, landing in all manner of attitudes, grotesquely and harmlessly, in the soft snow. It soon became difficult, in the dim starlight, to distinguish between those thrown and those waiting their turn, and he began feeling their backs and shoulders, determining their status by whether or not he found them powdered with snow.

“Baptized yet?” became his stereotyped question, as he reached out his terrible hands.

Several score lay down in the snow in a long row, while many others knelt in mock humility, scooping snow upon their heads and claiming the rite accomplished. But a group of five stood upright, backwoodsmen and frontiersmen, they, eager to contest any man’s birthday.

Graduates of the hardest of man-handling schools, veterans of multitudes of rough-and-tumble battles, men of blood and sweat and endurance, they nevertheless lacked one thing that Daylight possessed in high degree — namely, an almost perfect brain and muscular coordination. It was simple, in its way, and no virtue of his. He had been born with this endowment. His nerves carried messages more quickly than theirs; his mental processes, culminating in acts of will, were quicker than theirs; his muscles themselves, by some immediacy of chemistry, obeyed the messages of his will quicker than theirs. He was so made, his muscles were high-power explosives. The levers of his body snapped into play like the jaws of steel traps. And in addition to all this, his was that super-strength that is the dower of but one human in millions — a strength depending not on size but on degree, a supreme organic excellence residing in the stuff of the muscles themselves. Thus, so swiftly could he apply a stress, that, before an opponent could become aware and resist, the aim of the stress had been accomplished. In turn, so swiftly did he become aware of a stress applied to him, that he saved himself by resistance or by delivering a lightning counter-stress.

“It ain’t no use you-all standing there,” Daylight addressed the waiting group. “You-all might as well get right down and take your baptizing. You-all might down me any other day in the year, but on my birthday I want you-all to know I’m the best man. Is that Pat Hanrahan’s mug looking hungry and willing? Come on, Pat.” Pat Hanrahan, ex-bare-knuckle-prize fighter and roughhouse-expert, stepped forth. The two men came against each other in grips, and almost before he had exerted himself the Irishman found himself in the merciless vise of a half-Nelson that buried him head and shoulders in the snow. Joe Hines, ex-lumber-jack, came down with an impact equal to a fall from a two-story building — his overthrow accomplished by a cross-buttock, delivered, he claimed, before he was ready.

There was nothing exhausting in all this to Daylight. He did not heave and strain through long minutes. No time, practically, was occupied. His body exploded abruptly and terrifically in one instant, and on the next instant was relaxed. Thus, Doc Watson, the gray-bearded, iron bodied man without a past, a fighting terror himself, was overthrown in the fraction of a second preceding his own onslaught. As he was in the act of gathering himself for a spring, Daylight was upon him, and with such fearful suddenness as to crush him backward and down. Olaf Henderson, receiving his cue from this, attempted to take Daylight unaware, rushing upon him from one side as he stooped with extended hand to help Doc Watson up. Daylight dropped on his hands and knees, receiving in his side Olaf’s knees. Olaf’s momentum carried him clear over the obstruction in a long, flying fall. Before he could rise, Daylight had whirled him over on his back and was rubbing his face and ears with snow and shoving handfuls down his neck. “Ay ban yust as good a man as you ban, Daylight,” Olaf spluttered, as he pulled himself to his feet; “but by Yupiter, I ban navver see a grip like that.” French Louis was the last of the five, and he had seen enough to make him cautious. He circled and baffled for a full minute before coming to grips; and for another full minute they strained and reeled without either winning the advantage. And then, just as the contest was becoming interesting, Daylight effected one of his lightning shifts, changing all stresses and leverages and at the same time delivering one of his muscular explosions. French Louis resisted till his huge frame crackled, and then, slowly, was forced over and under and downward.

“The winner pays!” Daylight cried; as he sprang to his feet and led the way back into the Tivoli. “Surge along you-all! This way to the snake-room!”

They lined up against the long bar, in places two or three deep, stamping the frost from their moccasined feet, for outside the temperature was sixty below. Bettles, himself one of the gamest of the old-timers in deeds and daring ceased from his drunken lay of the “Sassafras Root,” and titubated over to congratulate Daylight. But in the midst of it he felt impelled to make a speech, and raised his voice oratorically.

“I tell you fellers I’m plum proud to call Daylight my friend. We’ve hit the trail together afore now, and he’s eighteen carat from his moccasins up, damn his mangy old hide, anyway. He was a shaver when he first hit this country. When you fellers was his age, you wa’n’t dry behind the ears yet. He never was no kid. He was born a full-grown man. An’ I tell you a man had to be a man in them days. This wa’n’t no effete civilization like it’s come to be now.” Bettles paused long enough to put his arm in a proper bear-hug around Daylight’s neck. “When you an’ me mushed into the Yukon in the good ole days, it didn’t rain soup and they wa’n’t no free-lunch joints. Our camp fires was lit where we killed our game, and most of the time we lived on salmon-tracks and rabbit-bellies — ain’t I right?”

But at the roar of laughter that greeted his inversion, Bettles released the bear-hug and turned fiercely on them. “Laugh, you mangy short-horns, laugh! But I tell you plain and simple, the best of you ain’t knee-high fit to tie Daylight’s moccasin strings.

“Ain’t I right, Campbell? Ain’t I right, Mac? Daylight’s one of the old guard, one of the real sour-doughs. And in them days they wa’n’t ary a steamboat or ary a trading-post, and we cusses had to live offen salmon-bellies and rabbit-tracks.”

He gazed triumphantly around, and in the applause that followed arose cries for a speech from Daylight. He signified his consent. A chair was brought, and he was helped to stand upon it. He was no more sober than the crowd above which he now towered — a wild crowd, uncouthly garmented, every foot moccasined or muc-lucked, with mittens dangling from necks and with furry ear-flaps raised so that they took on the seeming of the winged helmets of the Norsemen. Daylight's black eyes were flashing, and the flush of strong drink flooded darkly under the bronze of his cheeks. He was greeted with round on round of affectionate cheers, which brought a suspicious moisture to his eyes, albeit many of the voices were inarticulate and inebriate. And yet, men have so behaved since the world began, feasting, fighting, and carousing, whether in the dark cave-mouth or by the fire of the squatting-place, in the palaces of imperial Rome and the rock strongholds of robber barons, or in the sky-aspiring hotels of modern times and in the boozing-kens of sailor-town. Just so were these men, empire-builders in the Arctic Light, boastful and drunken and clamorous, winning surcease for a few wild moments from the grim reality of their heroic toil. Modern heroes they, and in nowise different from the heroes of old time. "Well, fellows, I don't know what to say to you-all," Daylight began lamely, striving still to control his whirling brain. "I think I'll tell you-all a story. I had a pardner wunst, down in Juneau. He come from North Caroliney, and he used to tell this same story to me. It was down in the mountains in his country, and it was a wedding. There they was, the family and all the friends. The parson was just puttin' on the last touches, and he says, 'They as the Lord have joined let no man put asunder.'

"'Parson,' says the bridegroom, 'I rises to question your grammar in that there sentence. I want this weddin' done right.'

"When the smoke clears away, the bride she looks around and sees a dead parson, a dead bridegroom, a dead brother, two dead uncles, and five dead wedding-guests.

"So she heaves a mighty strong sigh and says, 'Them new-fangled, self-cocking revolvers sure has played hell with my prospects.'

"And so I say to you-all," Daylight added, as the roar of laughter died down, "that them four kings of Jack Kearns sure has played hell with my prospects. I'm busted higher'n a kite, and I'm hittin' the trail for Dyea — "

"Goin' out?" some one called. A spasm of anger wrought on his face for a flashing instant, but in the next his good-humor was back again.

"I know you-all are only pokin' fun asking such a question," he said, with a smile. "Of course I ain't going out."

"Take the oath again, Daylight," the same voice cried.

"I sure will. I first come over Chilcoot in '83. I went out over the Pass in a fall blizzard, with a rag of a shirt and a cup of raw flour. I got my grub-stake in Juneau that winter, and in the spring I went over the Pass once more. And once more the famine drew me out. Next spring I went in again, and I swore then that I'd never come out till I made my stake. Well, I ain't made it, and here I am. And I ain't going out now. I get the mail and I come right back. I won't stop the night at Dyea. I'll hit up Chilcoot soon as I change the dogs and get the mail and grub. And so I swear once more, by the mill-tails of hell and the head of John the Baptist, I'll never hit for the Outside till I make my pile. And I tell you-all, here and now, it's got to be an almighty big pile."

"How much might you call a pile?" Bettles demanded from beneath, his arms clutched lovingly around Daylight's legs.

"Yes, how much? What do you call a pile?" others cried.

Daylight steadied himself for a moment and debated. "Four or five millions," he said slowly, and held up his hand for silence as his statement was received with derisive yells. "I'll be real conservative, and put the bottom notch at a million. And for not an ounce less'n that will I go out of the country."

Again his statement was received with an outburst of derision. Not only had the total gold output of the Yukon up to date been below five millions, but no man had ever made a strike of a hundred thousand, much less of a million.

"You-all listen to me. You seen Jack Kearns get a hunch to-night. We had him sure beat before the draw. His ornery three kings was no good. But he just knew there was another king coming — that was his hunch — and he got it. And I tell you-all I got a hunch. There's a big strike coming on the Yukon, and it's just about due. I don't mean no ornery Moosehide, Birch-Creek kind of a strike. I mean a real rip-snorter hair-raiser. I tell you-all she's in the air and hell-bent for election. Nothing can stop her, and she'll come up river. There's where you-all track my moccasins in the near future if you-all want to find me — somewhere in the country around Stewart River, Indian River, and Klondike River. When I get back with the mail, I'll head that way so fast you-all won't see my trail for smoke. She's a-coming, fellows, gold from the grass roots down, a hundred dollars to the pan, and a stampede in from the Outside fifty thousand strong. You-all'll think all hell's busted loose when that strike is made."

He raised his glass to his lips. "Here's kindness, and hoping you-all will be in on it."

He drank and stepped down from the chair, falling into another one of Bettles' bear-hugs.

"If I was you, Daylight, I wouldn't mush to-day," Joe Hines counselled, coming in from consulting the spirit thermometer outside the door. "We're in for a good cold snap. It's sixty-two below now, and still goin' down. Better wait till she breaks."

Daylight laughed, and the old sour-doughs around him laughed.

"Just like you short-horns," Bettles cried, "afeard of a little frost. And blamed little you know Daylight, if you think frost kin stop 'm."

"Freeze his lungs if he travels in it," was the reply.

"Freeze pap and lollypop! Look here, Hines, you only ben in this here country three years. You ain't seasoned yet. I've seen Daylight do fifty miles up on the Koyokuk on a day when the thermometer busted at seventy-two."

Hines shook his head dolefully.

"Them's the kind that does freeze their lungs," he lamented. "If Daylight pulls out before this snap breaks, he'll never get through — an' him travelin' without tent or fly."

"It's a thousand miles to Dyea," Bettles announced, climbing on the chair and supporting his swaying body by an arm passed around Daylight's neck. "It's a thousand miles, I'm sayin' an' most of the trail unbroke, but I bet any chechaquo — anything he wants — that Daylight makes Dyea in thirty days."

"That's an average of over thirty-three miles a day," Doc Watson warned, "and I've travelled some myself. A blizzard on Chilcoot would tie him up for a week."

"Yep," Bettles retorted, "an' Daylight'll do the second thousand back again on end in thirty days more, and I got five hundred dollars that says so, and damn the blizzards."

To emphasize his remarks, he pulled out a gold-sack the size of a bologna sausage and thumped it down on the bar. Doc Watson thumped his own sack alongside.

“Hold on!” Daylight cried. “Bettles’s right, and I want in on this. I bet five hundred that sixty days from now I pull up at the Tivoli door with the Dyea mail.”

A sceptical roar went up, and a dozen men pulled out their sacks.

Jack Kearns crowded in close and caught Daylight’s attention.

“I take you, Daylight,” he cried. “Two to one you don’t — not in seventy-five days.”

“No charity, Jack,” was the reply. “The bettin’s even, and the time is sixty days.”

“Seventy-five days, and two to one you don’t,” Kearns insisted. “Fifty Mile’ll be wide open and the rim-ice rotten.”

“What you win from me is yours,” Daylight went on. “And, by thunder, Jack, you can’t give it back that way. I won’t bet with you. You’re trying to give me money. But I tell you-all one thing, Jack, I got another hunch. I’m goin’ to win it back some one of these days. You-all just wait till the big strike up river. Then you and me’ll take the roof off and sit in a game that’ll be full man’s size. Is it a go?”

They shook hands.

“Of course he’ll make it,” Kearns whispered in Bettles’ ear. “And there’s five hundred Daylight’s back in sixty days,” he added aloud.

Billy Rawlins closed with the wager, and Bettles hugged Kearns ecstatically.

“By Yupiter, I ban take that bet,” Olaf Henderson said, dragging Daylight away from Bettles and Kearns.

“Winner pays!” Daylight shouted, closing the wager.

“And I’m sure going to win, and sixty days is a long time between drinks, so I pay now. Name your brand, you hoochinoos! Name your brand!”

Bettles, a glass of whiskey in hand, climbed back on his chair, and swaying back and forth, sang the one song he knew: —

“O, it’s Henry Ward Beecher
And Sunday-school teachers
All sing of the sassafras-root;
But you bet all the same,
If it had its right name
It’s the juice of the forbidden fruit.”

The crowd roared out the chorus: —

“But you bet all the same
If it had its right name
It’s the juice of the forbidden fruit.”

Somebody opened the outer door. A vague gray light filtered in.

“Burning daylight, burning daylight,” some one called warningly.

Daylight paused for nothing, heading for the door and pulling down his ear-flaps. Kama stood outside by the sled, a long, narrow affair, sixteen inches wide and seven and a half feet in length, its slatted bottom raised six inches above the steel-shod runners. On it, lashed with thongs of moose-hide, were the light canvas bags that contained the mail, and the food and gear for dogs and men. In front of it, in a single line, lay curled five frost-rimed dogs. They were huskies, matched in size and color, all unusually large and all gray. From their cruel jaws to their bushy tails they were as like as peas in their likeness to timber-wolves. Wolves they were, domesticated, it was true, but wolves in appearance and in all their characteristics. On top the sled load, thrust under the lashings and ready for immediate use, were two pairs of snowshoes.

Bettles pointed to a robe of Arctic hare skins, the end of which showed in the mouth of a bag.

“That’s his bed,” he said. “Six pounds of rabbit skins. Warmest thing he ever slept under, but I’m damned if it could keep me warm, and I can go some myself. Daylight’s a hell-fire furnace, that’s what he is.”

“I’d hate to be that Indian,” Doc Watson remarked.

“He’ll kill’m, he’ll kill’m sure,” Bettles chanted exultantly. “I know. I’ve ben with Daylight on trail. That man ain’t never ben tired in his life. Don’t know what it means. I seen him travel all day with wet socks at forty-five below. There ain’t another man living can do that.”

While this talk went on, Daylight was saying good-by to those that clustered around him. The Virgin wanted to kiss him, and, fuddled slightly though he was with the whiskey, he saw his way out without compromising with the apron-string. He kissed the Virgin, but he kissed the other three women with equal partiality. He pulled on his long mittens, roused the dogs to their feet, and took his Place at the gee-pole.

“Mush, you beauties!” he cried.

The animals threw their weights against their breastbands on the instant, crouching low to the snow, and digging in their claws. They whined eagerly, and before the sled had gone half a dozen lengths both Daylight and Kama (in the rear) were running to keep up. And so, running, man and dogs dipped over the bank and down to the frozen bed of the Yukon, and in the gray light were gone.

Tenderfeet.

Old-timers.

Muc-luc: a water-tight, Eskimo boot, made from walrus-hide and trimmed with fur.

A gee-pole: stout pole projecting forward from one side of the front end of the sled, by which the sled is steered.

CHAPTER IV

On the river, where was a packed trail and where snowshoes were unnecessary, the dogs averaged six miles an hour. To keep up with them, the two men were compelled to run. Daylight and Kama relieved each other regularly at the gee-pole, for here was the hard work of steering the flying sled and of keeping in advance of it. The man relieved dropped behind the sled, occasionally leaping upon it and resting.

It was severe work, but of the sort that was exhilarating.

They were flying, getting over the ground, making the most of the packed trail. Later on they would come to the unbroken trail, where three miles an hour would constitute good going. Then there would be no riding and resting, and no running. Then the gee-pole would be the easier task, and a man would come back to it to rest after having completed his spell to the fore, breaking trail with the snowshoes for the dogs. Such work was far from exhilarating also, they must expect places where for miles at a time they must toil over chaotic ice-jams, where they would be fortunate if they made two miles an hour. And there would be the inevitable bad jams, short ones, it was true, but so bad that a mile an hour would require terrific effort. Kama and Daylight did not talk. In the nature of the work they could not, nor in their own natures were they given to talking while they worked. At rare intervals, when necessary, they addressed each other in monosyllables, Kama, for the most part, contenting himself with grunts. Occasionally a dog whined or snarled, but in the main the team kept silent. Only could be heard the sharp, jarring grate of the steel runners over the hard surface and the creak of the straining sled.

As if through a wall, Daylight had passed from the hum and roar of the Tivoli into another world — a world of silence and immobility. Nothing stirred. The Yukon slept under a coat of ice three feet thick. No breath of wind blew. Nor did the sap move in the hearts of the spruce trees that forested the river banks on either hand. The trees, burdened with the last infinitesimal pennyweight of snow their branches could hold, stood in absolute petrifaction. The slightest tremor would have dislodged the snow, and no snow was dislodged. The sled was the one point of life and motion in the midst of the solemn quietude, and the harsh churn of its runners but emphasized the silence through which it moved.

It was a dead world, and furthermore, a gray world. The weather was sharp and clear; there was no moisture in the atmosphere, no fog nor haze; yet the sky was a gray pall. The reason for this was that, though there was no cloud in the sky to dim the brightness of day, there was no sun to give brightness. Far to the south the sun climbed steadily to meridian, but between it and the frozen Yukon intervened the bulge of the earth. The Yukon lay in a night shadow, and the day itself was in reality a long twilight-light. At a quarter before twelve, where a wide bend of the river gave a long vista south, the sun showed its upper rim above the sky-line. But it did not rise perpendicularly. Instead, it rose on a slant, so that by high noon it had barely lifted its lower rim clear of the horizon. It was a dim, wan sun. There was no heat to its rays, and a man could gaze squarely into the full orb of it without hurt to his eyes. No sooner had it reached meridian than it began its slant back beneath the horizon, and at quarter past twelve the earth threw its shadow again over the land.

The men and dogs raced on. Daylight and Kama were both savages so far as their stomachs were concerned. They could eat irregularly in time and quantity, gorging hugely on occasion, and on occasion going long stretches without eating at all. As for the dogs, they ate but once a day, and then rarely did they receive more than a pound each of dried fish. They were ravenously hungry and at the same time splendidly in condition. Like the wolves, their forebears, their nutritive processes were rigidly economical and perfect. There was no waste. The last least particle of what they consumed was transformed into energy.

And Kama and Daylight were like them. Descended themselves from the generations that had endured, they, too, endured. Theirs was the simple, elemental economy. A little food equipped them with prodigious energy. Nothing was lost. A man of soft civilization, sitting at a desk, would have grown lean and woe-begone on the fare that kept Kama and Daylight at the top-notch of physical efficiency. They knew, as the man at the desk never knows, what it is to be normally hungry all the time, so that they could eat any time. Their appetites were always with them and on edge, so that they bit voraciously into whatever offered and with an entire innocence of indigestion.

By three in the afternoon the long twilight faded into night. The stars came out, very near and sharp and bright, and by their light dogs and men still kept the trail. They were indefatigable. And this was no record run of a single day, but the first day of sixty such days. Though Daylight had passed a night without sleep, a night of dancing and carouse, it seemed to have left no effect. For this there were two explanations first, his remarkable vitality; and next, the fact that such nights were rare in his experience. Again enters the man at the desk, whose physical efficiency would be more hurt by a cup of coffee at bedtime than could Daylight's by a whole night long of strong drink and excitement.

Daylight travelled without a watch, feeling the passage of time and largely estimating it by subconscious processes. By what he considered must be six o'clock, he began looking for a camping-place. The trail, at a bend, plunged out across the river. Not having found a likely spot, they held on for the opposite bank a mile away. But midway they encountered an ice-jam which took an hour of heavy work to cross. At last Daylight glimpsed what he was looking for, a dead tree close by the bank. The sled was run in and up. Kama grunted with satisfaction, and the work of making camp was begun.

The division of labor was excellent. Each knew what he must do. With one ax Daylight chopped down the dead pine. Kama, with a snowshoe and the other ax, cleared away the two feet of snow above the Yukon ice and chopped a supply of ice for cooking purposes. A piece of dry birch bark started the fire, and Daylight went ahead with the cooking while the Indian unloaded the sled and fed the dogs their ration of dried fish. The food sacks he slung high in the trees beyond leaping-reach of the huskies. Next, he chopped down a young spruce tree and trimmed off the boughs. Close to the fire he trampled down the soft snow and covered the packed space with the boughs. On this flooring he tossed his own and Daylight's gear-bags, containing dry socks and underwear and their sleeping-robes. Kama, however, had two robes of rabbit skin to Daylight's one.

They worked on steadily, without speaking, losing no time. Each did whatever was needed, without thought of leaving to the other the least task that presented itself to hand. Thus, Kama saw when more ice was needed and went and got it, while a snowshoe, pushed over by the lunge of a dog, was stuck on end again by Daylight. While coffee was boiling, bacon frying, and flapjacks were being mixed, Daylight found time to put on a big pot of beans. Kama came back, sat down on the edge of the spruce boughs, and in the interval of waiting, mended harness.

“I t’ink dat Skookum and Booga make um plenty fight maybe,” Kama remarked, as they sat down to eat.

“Keep an eye on them,” was Daylight’s answer.

And this was their sole conversation throughout the meal. Once, with a muttered imprecation, Kama leaped away, a stick of firewood in hand, and clubbed apart a tangle of fighting dogs. Daylight, between mouthfuls, fed chunks of ice into the tin pot, where it thawed into water. The meal finished, Kama replenished the fire, cut more wood for the morning, and returned to the spruce bough bed and his harness-mending. Daylight cut up generous chunks of bacon and dropped them in the pot of bubbling beans. The moccasins of both men were wet, and this in spite of the intense cold; so when there was no further need for them to leave the oasis of spruce boughs, they took off their moccasins and hung them on short sticks to dry before the fire, turning them about from time to time. When the beans were finally cooked, Daylight ran part of them into a bag of flour-sacking a foot and a half long and three inches in diameter. This he then laid on the snow to freeze. The remainder of the beans were left in the pot for breakfast.

It was past nine o’clock, and they were ready for bed. The squabbling and bickering among the dogs had long since died down, and the weary animals were curled in the snow, each with his feet and nose bunched together and covered by his wolf’s brush of a tail. Kama spread his sleeping-furs and lighted his pipe. Daylight rolled a brown-paper cigarette, and the second conversation of the evening took place.

“I think we come near sixty miles,” said Daylight.

“Um, I t’ink so,” said Kama.

They rolled into their robes, all-standing, each with a woolen Mackinaw jacket on in place of the parkas they had worn all day. Swiftly, almost on the instant they closed their eyes, they were asleep. The stars leaped and danced in the frosty air, and overhead the colored bars of the aurora borealis were shooting like great searchlights.

In the darkness Daylight awoke and roused Kama. Though the aurora still flamed, another day had begun. Warmed-over flapjacks, warmed-over beans, fried bacon, and coffee composed the breakfast. The dogs got nothing, though they watched with wistful mien from a distance, sitting up in the snow, their tails curled around their paws. Occasionally they lifted one fore paw or the other, with a restless movement, as if the frost tingled in their feet. It was bitter cold, at least sixty-five below zero, and when Kama harnessed the dogs with naked hands he was compelled several times to go over to the fire and warm the numbing finger-tips. Together the two men loaded and lashed the sled. They warmed their hands for the last time, pulled on their mittens, and mushed the dogs over the bank and down to the river-trail. According to Daylight's estimate, it was around seven o'clock; but the stars danced just as brilliantly, and faint, luminous streaks of greenish aurora still pulsed overhead.

Two hours later it became suddenly dark — so dark that they kept to the trail largely by instinct; and Daylight knew that his time-estimate had been right. It was the darkness before dawn, never anywhere more conspicuous than on the Alaskan winter-trail.

Slowly the gray light came stealing through the gloom, imperceptibly at first, so that it was almost with surprise that they noticed the vague loom of the trail underfoot. Next, they were able to see the wheel-dog, and then the whole string of running dogs and snow-stretches on either side. Then the near bank loomed for a moment and was gone, loomed a second time and remained. In a few minutes the far bank, a mile away, unobtrusively came into view, and ahead and behind, the whole frozen river could be seen, with off to the left a wide-extending range of sharp-cut, snow-covered mountains. And that was all. No sun arose. The gray light remained gray.

Once, during the day, a lynx leaped lightly across the trail, under the very nose of the lead-dog, and vanished in the white woods. The dogs' wild impulses roused. They raised the hunting-cry of the pack, surged against their collars, and swerved aside in pursuit. Daylight, yelling "Whoa!" struggled with the gee-pole and managed to overturn the sled into the soft snow. The dogs gave up, the sled was righted, and five minutes later they were flying along the hard-packed trail again. The lynx was the only sign of life they had seen in two days, and it, leaping velvet-footed and vanishing, had been more like an apparition.

At twelve o'clock, when the sun peeped over the earth-bulge, they stopped and built a small fire on the ice. Daylight, with the ax, chopped chunks off the frozen sausage of beans. These, thawed and warmed in the frying-pan, constituted their meal. They had no coffee. He did not believe in the burning of daylight for such a luxury. The dogs stopped wrangling with one another, and looked on wistfully. Only at night did they get their pound of fish. In the meantime they worked.

The cold snap continued. Only men of iron kept the trail at such low temperatures, and Kama and Daylight were picked men of their races. But Kama knew the other was the better man, and thus, at the start, he was himself foredoomed to defeat. Not that he slackened his effort or willingness by the slightest conscious degree, but that he was beaten by the burden he carried in his mind. His attitude toward Daylight was worshipful. Stoical, taciturn, proud of his physical prowess, he found all these qualities incarnated in his white companion. Here was one that excelled in the things worth excelling in, a man-god ready to hand, and Kama could not but worship — withal he gave no signs of it. No wonder the race of white men conquered, was his thought, when it bred men like this man. What chance had the Indian against such a dogged, enduring breed? Even the Indians did not travel at such low temperatures, and theirs was the wisdom of thousands of generations; yet here was this Daylight, from the soft Southland, harder than they, laughing at their fears, and swinging along the trail ten and twelve hours a day. And this Daylight thought that he could keep up a day's pace of thirty-three miles for sixty days! Wait till a fresh fall of snow came down, or they struck the unbroken trail or the rotten rim-ice that fringed open water.

In the meantime Kama kept the pace, never grumbling, never shirking. Sixty-five degrees below zero is very cold. Since water freezes at thirty-two above, sixty-five below meant ninety-seven degrees below freezing-point. Some idea of the significance of this may be gained by conceiving of an equal difference of temperature in the opposite direction. One hundred and twenty-nine on the thermometer constitutes a very hot day, yet such a temperature is but ninety-seven degrees above freezing. Double this difference, and possibly some slight conception may be gained of the cold through which Kama and Daylight travelled between dark and dark and through the dark.

Kama froze the skin on his cheek-bones, despite frequent rubbings, and the flesh turned black and sore. Also he slightly froze the edges of his lung-tissues — a dangerous thing, and the basic reason why a man should not unduly exert himself in the open at sixty-five below. But Kama never complained, and Daylight was a furnace of heat, sleeping as warmly under his six pounds of rabbit skins as the other did under twelve pounds.

On the second night, fifty more miles to the good, they camped in the vicinity of the boundary between Alaska and the Northwest Territory. The rest of the journey, save the last short stretch to Dyea, would be travelled on Canadian territory. With the hard trail, and in the absence of fresh snow, Daylight planned to make the camp of Forty Mile on the fourth night. He told Kama as much, but on the third day the temperature began to rise, and they knew snow was not far off; for on the Yukon it must get warm in order to snow. Also, on this day, they encountered ten miles of chaotic ice-jams, where, a thousand times, they lifted the loaded sled over the huge cakes by the strength of their arms and lowered it down again. Here the dogs were well-nigh useless, and both they and the men were tried excessively by the roughness of the way. An hour's extra running that night caught up only part of the lost time.

In the morning they awoke to find ten inches of snow on their robes. The dogs were buried under it and were loath to leave their comfortable nests. This new snow meant hard going. The sled runners would not slide over it so well, while one of the men must go in advance of the dogs and pack it down with snowshoes so that they should not wallow. Quite different was it from the ordinary snow known to those of the Southland. It was hard, and fine, and dry. It was more like sugar. Kick it, and it flew with a hissing noise like sand. There was no cohesion among the particles, and it could not be moulded into snowballs. It was not composed of flakes, but of crystals — tiny, geometrical frost-crystals. In truth, it was not snow, but frost.

The weather was warm, as well, barely twenty below zero, and the two men, with raised ear-flaps and dangling mittens, sweated as they toiled. They failed to make Forty Mile that night, and when they passed that camp next day Daylight paused only long enough to get the mail and additional grub. On the afternoon of the following day they camped at the mouth of the Klondike River. Not a soul had they encountered since Forty Mile, and they had made their own trail. As yet, that winter, no one had travelled the river south of Forty Mile, and, for that matter, the whole winter through they might be the only ones to travel it. In that day the Yukon was a lonely land. Between the Klondike River and Salt Water at Dyea intervened six hundred miles of snow-covered wilderness, and in all that distance there were but two places where Daylight might look forward to meeting men. Both were isolated trading-posts, Sixty Mile and Fort Selkirk. In the summer-time Indians might be met with at the mouths of the Stewart and White rivers, at the Big and Little Salmons, and on Lake Le Barge; but in the winter, as he well knew, they would be on the trail of the moose-herds, following them back into the mountains.

That night, camped at the mouth of the Klondike, Daylight did not turn in when the evening's work was done. Had a white man been present, Daylight would have remarked that he felt his "hunch" working. As it was, he tied on his snowshoes, left the dogs curled in the snow and Kama breathing heavily under his rabbit skins, and climbed up to the big flat above the high earth-bank. But the spruce trees were too thick for an outlook, and he threaded his way across the flat and up the first steep slopes of the mountain at the back. Here, flowing in from the east at right angles, he could see the Klondike, and, bending grandly from the south, the Yukon. To the left, and downstream, toward Moosehide Mountain, the huge splash of white, from which it took its name, showing clearly in the starlight. Lieutenant Schwatka had given it its name, but he, Daylight, had first seen it long before that intrepid explorer had crossed the Chilcoot and rafted down the Yukon.

But the mountain received only passing notice. Daylight's interest was centered in the big flat itself, with deep water all along its edge for steamboat landings.

"A sure enough likely town site," he muttered. "Room for a camp of forty thousand men. All that's needed is the gold-strike." He meditated for a space. "Ten dollars to the pan'll do it, and it'd be the all-firedest stampede Alaska ever seen. And if it don't come here, it'll come somewhere hereabouts. It's a sure good idea to keep an eye out for town sites all the way up."

He stood a while longer, gazing out over the lonely flat and visioning with constructive imagination the scene if the stampede did come. In fancy, he placed the sawmills, the big trading stores, the saloons, and dance-halls, and the long streets of miners' cabins. And along those streets he saw thousands of men passing up and down, while before the stores were the heavy freighting-sleds, with long strings of dogs attached. Also he saw the heavy freighters pulling down the main street and heading up the frozen Klondike toward the imagined somewhere where the diggings must be located.

He laughed and shook the vision from his eyes, descended to the level, and crossed the flat to camp. Five minutes after he had rolled up in his robe, he opened his eyes and sat up, amazed that he was not already asleep. He glanced at the Indian sleeping beside him, at the embers of the dying fire, at the five dogs beyond, with their wolf's brushes curled over their noses, and at the four snowshoes standing upright in the snow.

"It's sure hell the way that hunch works on me" he murmured. His mind reverted to the poker game. "Four kings!" He grinned reminiscently. "That WAS a hunch!"

He lay down again, pulled the edge of the robe around his neck and over his ear-flaps, closed his eyes, and this time fell asleep.

Parka: a light, hooded, smock-like garment made of cotton drill.

CHAPTER V

At Sixty Mile they restocked provisions, added a few pounds of letters to their load, and held steadily on. From Forty Mile they had had unbroken trail, and they could look forward only to unbroken trail clear to Dyea. Daylight stood it magnificently, but the killing pace was beginning to tell on Kama. His pride kept his mouth shut, but the result of the chilling of his lungs in the cold snap could not be concealed. Microscopically small had been the edges of the lung-tissue touched by the frost, but they now began to slough off, giving rise to a dry, hacking cough. Any unusually severe exertion precipitated spells of coughing, during which he was almost like a man in a fit. The blood congested in his eyes till they bulged, while the tears ran down his cheeks. A whiff of the smoke from frying bacon would start him off for a half-hour's paroxysm, and he kept carefully to windward when Daylight was cooking.

They plodded days upon days and without end over the soft, unpacked snow. It was hard, monotonous work, with none of the joy and blood-stir that went with flying over hard surface. Now one man to the fore in the snowshoes, and now the other, it was a case of stubborn, unmitigated plod. A yard of powdery snow had to be pressed down, and the wide-webbed shoe, under a man's weight, sank a full dozen inches into the soft surface. Snowshoe work, under such conditions, called for the use of muscles other than those used in ordinary walking. From step to step the rising foot could not come up and forward on a slant. It had to be raised perpendicularly. When the snowshoe was pressed into the snow, its nose was confronted by a vertical wall of snow twelve inches high. If the foot, in rising, slanted forward the slightest bit, the nose of the shoe penetrated the obstructing wall and tipped downward till the heel of the shoe struck the man's leg behind. Thus up, straight up, twelve inches, each foot must be raised every time and all the time, ere the forward swing from the knee could begin.

On this partially packed surface followed the dogs, the man at the gee-pole, and the sled. At the best, toiling as only picked men could toil, they made no more than three miles an hour. This meant longer hours of travel, and Daylight, for good measure and for a margin against accidents, hit the trail for twelve hours a day. Since three hours were consumed by making camp at night and cooking beans, by getting breakfast in the morning and breaking camp, and by thawing beans at the midday halt, nine hours were left for sleep and recuperation, and neither men nor dogs wasted many minutes of those nine hours.

At Selkirk, the trading post near Pelly River, Daylight suggested that Kama lay over, rejoining him on the back trip from Dyea. A strayed Indian from Lake Le Barge was willing to take his place; but Kama was obdurate. He grunted with a slight intonation of resentment, and that was all. The dogs, however, Daylight changed, leaving his own exhausted team to rest up against his return, while he went on with six fresh dogs.

They travelled till ten o'clock the night they reached Selkirk, and at six next morning they plunged ahead into the next stretch of wilderness of nearly five hundred miles that lay between Selkirk and Dyea. A second cold snap came on, but cold or warm it was all the same, an unbroken trail. When the thermometer went down to fifty below, it was even harder to travel, for at that low temperature the hard frost-crystals were more like sand-grains in the resistance they offered to the sled runners. The dogs had to pull harder than over the same snow at twenty or thirty below zero. Daylight increased the day's travel to thirteen hours. He jealously guarded the margin he had gained, for he knew there were difficult stretches to come.

It was not yet quite midwinter, and the turbulent Fifty Mile River vindicated his judgment. In many places it ran wide open, with precarious rim-ice fringing it on either side. In numerous places, where the water dashed against the steep-sided bluffs, rim-ice was unable to form. They turned and twisted, now crossing the river, now coming back again, sometimes making half a dozen attempts before they found a way over a particularly bad stretch. It was slow work. The ice-bridges had to be tested, and either Daylight or Kama went in advance, snowshoes on their feet, and long poles carried crosswise in their hands. Thus, if they broke through, they could cling to the pole that bridged the hole made by their bodies. Several such accidents were the share of each. At fifty below zero, a man wet to the waist cannot travel without freezing; so each ducking meant delay. As soon as rescued, the wet man ran up and down to keep up his circulation, while his dry companion built a fire. Thus protected, a change of garments could be made and the wet ones dried against the next misadventure.

To make matters worse, this dangerous river travel could not be done in the dark, and their working day was reduced to the six hours of twilight. Every moment was precious, and they strove never to lose one. Thus, before the first hint of the coming of gray day, camp was broken, sled loaded, dogs harnessed, and the two men crouched waiting over the fire. Nor did they make the midday halt to eat. As it was, they were running far behind their schedule, each day eating into the margin they had run up. There were days when they made fifteen miles, and days when they made a dozen. And there was one bad stretch where in two days they covered nine miles, being compelled to turn their backs three times on the river and to portage sled and outfit over the mountains.

At last they cleared the dread Fifty Mile River and came out on Lake Le Barge. Here was no open water nor jammed ice. For thirty miles or more the snow lay level as a table; withal it lay three feet deep and was soft as flour. Three miles an hour was the best they could make, but Daylight celebrated the passing of the Fifty Mile by traveling late. At eleven in the morning they emerged at the foot of the lake. At three in the afternoon, as the Arctic night closed down, he caught his first sight of the head of the lake, and with the first stars took his bearings. At eight in the evening they left the lake behind and entered the mouth of the Lewes River. Here a halt of half an hour was made, while chunks of frozen boiled beans were thawed and the dogs were given an extra ration of fish. Then they pulled on up the river till one in the morning, when they made their regular camp.

They had hit the trail sixteen hours on end that day, the dogs had come in too tired to fight among themselves or even snarl, and Kama had perceptibly limped the last several miles; yet Daylight was on trail next morning at six o’clock. By eleven he was at the foot of White Horse, and that night saw him camped beyond the Box Canon, the last bad river-stretch behind him, the string of lakes before him.

There was no let up in his pace. Twelve hours a day, six in the twilight, and six in the dark, they toiled on the trail. Three hours were consumed in cooking, repairing harnesses, and making and breaking camp, and the remaining nine hours dogs and men slept as if dead. The iron strength of Kama broke. Day by day the terrific toil sapped him. Day by day he consumed more of his reserves of strength. He became slower of movement, the resiliency went out of his muscles, and his limp became permanent. Yet he labored stoically on, never shirking, never grunting a hint of complaint. Daylight was thin-faced and tired.

He looked tired; yet somehow, with that marvelous mechanism of a body that was his, he drove on, ever on, remorselessly on. Never was he more a god in Kama's mind than in the last days of the south-bound traverse, as the failing Indian watched him, ever to the fore, pressing onward with urgency of endurance such as Kama had never seen nor dreamed could thrive in human form.

The time came when Kama was unable to go in the lead and break trail, and it was a proof that he was far gone when he permitted Daylight to toil all day at the heavy snowshoe work. Lake by lake they crossed the string of lakes from Marsh to Linderman, and began the ascent of Chilcoot. By all rights, Daylight should have camped below the last pitch of the pass at the dim end of day; but he kept on and over and down to Sheep Camp, while behind him raged a snow-storm that would have delayed him twenty-four hours.

This last excessive strain broke Kama completely. In the morning he could not travel. At five, when called, he sat up after a struggle, groaned, and sank back again. Daylight did the camp work of both, harnessed the dogs, and, when ready for the start, rolled the helpless Indian in all three sleeping robes and lashed him on top of the sled. The going was good; they were on the last lap; and he raced the dogs down through Dyea Canon and along the hard-packed trail that led to Dyea Post. And running still, Kama groaning on top the load, and Daylight leaping at the gee-pole to avoid going under the runners of the flying sled, they arrived at Dyea by the sea.

True to his promise, Daylight did not stop. An hour's time saw the sled loaded with the ingoing mail and grub, fresh dogs harnessed, and a fresh Indian engaged. Kama never spoke from the time of his arrival till the moment Daylight, ready to depart, stood beside him to say good-by. They shook hands.

“You kill um dat damn Indian,” Kama said. “Sawee, Daylight? You kill um.”

“He'll sure last as far as Pelly,” Daylight grinned.

Kama shook his head doubtfully, and rolled over on his side, turning his back in token of farewell.

Daylight won across Chilcoot that same day, dropping down five hundred feet in the darkness and the flurrying snow to Crater Lake, where he camped. It was a ‘cold’ camp, far above the timber-line, and he had not burdened his sled with firewood. That night three feet of snow covered them, and in the black morning, when they dug themselves out, the Indian tried to desert. He had had enough of traveling with what he considered a madman. But Daylight persuaded him in grim ways to stay by the outfit, and they pulled on across Deep Lake and Long Lake and dropped down to the level-going of Lake Linderman. It was the same killing pace going in as coming out, and the Indian did not stand it as well as Kama. He, too, never complained. Nor did he try again to desert. He toiled on and did his best, while he renewed his resolve to steer clear of Daylight in the future. The days slipped into days, nights and twilight’s alternating, cold snaps gave way to snow-falls, and cold snaps came on again, and all the while, through the long hours, the miles piled up behind them.

But on the Fifty Mile accident befell them. Crossing an ice-bridge, the dogs broke through and were swept under the down-stream ice. The traces that connected the team with the wheel-dog parted, and the team was never seen again. Only the one wheel-dog remained, and Daylight harnessed the Indian and himself to the sled. But a man cannot take the place of a dog at such work, and the two men were attempting to do the work of five dogs. At the end of the first hour, Daylight lightened up. Dog-food, extra gear, and the spare ax were thrown away. Under the extraordinary exertion the dog snapped a tendon the following day, and was hopelessly disabled. Daylight shot it, and abandoned the sled. On his back he took one hundred and sixty pounds of mail and grub, and on the Indian’s put one hundred and twenty-five pounds. The stripping of gear was remorseless. The Indian was appalled when he saw every pound of worthless mail matter retained, while beans, cups, pails, plates, and extra clothing were thrown by the board. One robe each was kept, one ax, one tin pail, and a scant supply of bacon and flour. Bacon could be eaten raw on a pinch, and flour, stirred in hot water, could keep men going. Even the rifle and the score of rounds of ammunition were left behind.

And in this fashion they covered the two hundred miles to Selkirk. Daylight travelled late and early, the hours formerly used by camp-making and dog-tending being now devoted to the trail. At night they crouched over a small fire, wrapped in their robes, drinking flour broth and thawing bacon on the ends of sticks; and in the morning darkness, without a word, they arose, slipped on their packs, adjusted head-straps, and hit the trail. The last miles into Selkirk, Daylight drove the Indian before him, a hollow-cheeked, gaunt-eyed wraith of a man who else would have lain down and slept or abandoned his burden of mail.

At Selkirk, the old team of dogs, fresh and in condition, were harnessed, and the same day saw Daylight plodding on, alternating places at the gee-pole, as a matter of course, with the Le Barge Indian who had volunteered on the way out. Daylight was two days behind his schedule, and falling snow and unpacked trail kept him two days behind all the way to Forty Mile. And here the weather favored. It was time for a big cold snap, and he gambled on it, cutting down the weight of grub for dogs and men. The men of Forty Mile shook their heads ominously, and demanded to know what he would do if the snow still fell.

“That cold snap’s sure got to come,” he laughed, and mushed out on the trail.

A number of sleds had passed back and forth already that winter between Forty Mile and Circle City, and the trail was well packed. And the cold snap came and remained, and Circle City was only two hundred miles away. The Le Barge Indian was a young man, unlearned yet in his own limitations, and filled with pride.

He took Daylight’s pace with joy, and even dreamed, at first, that he would play the white man out. The first hundred miles he looked for signs of weakening, and marveled that he saw them not.

Throughout the second hundred miles he observed signs in himself, and gritted his teeth and kept up. And ever Daylight flew on and on, running at the gee-pole or resting his spell on top the flying sled. The last day, clearer and colder than ever, gave perfect going, and they covered seventy miles. It was ten at night when they pulled up the earth-bank and flew along the main street of Circle City; and the young Indian, though it was his spell to ride, leaped off and ran behind the sled. It was honorable braggadocio, and despite the fact that he had found his limitations and was pressing desperately against them, he ran gamely on.

CHAPTER VI

A crowd filled the Tivoli — the old crowd that had seen Daylight depart two months before; for this was the night of the sixtieth day, and opinion was divided as ever as to whether or not he would compass the achievement. At ten o'clock bets were still being made, though the odds rose, bet by bet, against his success. Down in her heart the Virgin believed he had failed, yet she made a bet of twenty ounces with Charley Bates, against forty ounces, that Daylight would arrive before midnight.

She it was who heard the first yelps of the dogs.

"Listen!" she cried. "It's Daylight!"

There was a general stampede for the door; but where the double storm-doors were thrown wide open, the crowd fell back. They heard the eager whining of dogs, the snap of a dog-whip, and the voice of Daylight crying encouragement as the weary animals capped all they had done by dragging the sled in over the wooden floor. They came in with a rush, and with them rushed in the frost, a visible vapor of smoking white, through which their heads and backs showed, as they strained in the harness, till they had all the seeming of swimming in a river. Behind them, at the gee-pole, came Daylight, hidden to the knees by the swirling frost through which he appeared to wade.

He was the same old Daylight, withal lean and tired-looking, and his black eyes were sparkling and flashing brighter than ever. His parka of cotton drill hooded him like a monk, and fell in straight lines to his knees. Grimed and scorched by camp-smoke and fire, the garment in itself told the story of his trip. A two-months' beard covered his face; and the beard, in turn, was matted with the ice of his breathing through the long seventy-mile run.

His entry was spectacular, melodramatic; and he knew it. It was his life, and he was living it at the top of his bent. Among his fellows he was a great man, an Arctic hero. He was proud of the fact, and it was a high moment for him, fresh from two thousand miles of trail, to come surging into that bar-room, dogs, sled, mail, Indian, paraphernalia, and all. He had performed one more exploit that would make the Yukon ring with his name — he, Burning Daylight, the king of travelers and dog-mushers.

He experienced a thrill of surprise as the roar of welcome went up and as every familiar detail of the Tivoli greeted his vision — the long bar and the array of bottles, the gambling games, the big stove, the weigher at the gold-scales, the musicians, the men and women, the Virgin, Celia, and Nellie, Dan MacDonald, Bettles, Billy Rawlins, Olaf Henderson, Doc Watson, — all of them.

It was just as he had left it, and in all seeming it might well be the very day he had left. The sixty days of incessant travel through the white wilderness suddenly telescoped, and had no existence in time. They were a moment, an incident. He had plunged out and into them through the wall of silence, and back through the wall of silence he had plunged, apparently the next instant, and into the roar and turmoil of the Tivoli.

A glance down at the sled with its canvas mail-bags was necessary to reassure him of the reality of those sixty days and the two thousand miles over the ice. As in a dream, he shook the hands that were thrust out to him. He felt a vast exaltation. Life was magnificent. He loved it all. A great sense of humanness and comradeship swept over him. These were all his, his own kind. It was immense, tremendous. He felt melting in the heart of him, and he would have liked to shake hands with them all at once, to gather them to his breast in one mighty embrace.

He drew a deep breath and cried: “The winner pays, and I’m the winner, ain’t I? Surge up, you-all Malemutes and Siwashes, and name your poison! There’s your Dyea mail, straight from Salt Water, and no hornswogglin about it! Cast the lashings adrift, you-all, and wade into it!”

A dozen pairs of hands were at the sled-lashings, when the young Le Barge Indian, bending at the same task, suddenly and limply straightened up. In his eyes was a great surprise. He stared about him wildly, for the thing he was undergoing was new to him.

He was profoundly struck by an unguessed limitation. He shook as with a palsy, and he gave at the knees, slowly sinking down to fall suddenly across the sled and to know the smashing blow of darkness across his consciousness.

“Exhaustion,” said Daylight. “Take him off and put him to bed, some of you-all. He’s sure a good Indian.”

“Daylight’s right,” was Doc Watson’s verdict, a moment later. “The man’s plumb tuckered out.”

The mail was taken charge of, the dogs driven away to quarters and fed, and Bettles struck up the paean of the sassafras root as they lined up against the long bar to drink and talk and collect their debts.

A few minutes later, Daylight was whirling around the dance-floor, waltzing with the Virgin. He had replaced his parka with his fur cap and blanket-cloth coat, kicked off his frozen moccasins, and was dancing in his stocking feet. After wetting himself to the knees late that afternoon, he had run on without changing his foot-gear, and to the knees his long German socks were matted with ice. In the warmth of the room it began to thaw and to break apart in clinging chunks. These chunks rattled together as his legs flew around, and every little while they fell clattering to the floor and were slipped upon by the other dancers. But everybody forgave Daylight. He, who was one of the few that made the Law in that far land, who set the ethical pace, and by conduct gave the standard of right and wrong, was nevertheless above the Law. He was one of those rare and favored mortals who can do no wrong. What he did had to be right, whether others were permitted or not to do the same things. Of course, such mortals are so favored by virtue of the fact that they almost always do the right and do it in finer and higher ways than other men. So Daylight, an elder hero in that young land and at the same time younger than most of them, moved as a creature apart, as a man above men, as a man who was greatly man and all man. And small wonder it was that the Virgin yielded herself to his arms, as they danced dance after dance, and was sick at heart at the knowledge that he found nothing in her more than a good friend and an excellent dancer. Small consolation it was to know that he had never loved any woman. She was sick with love of him, and he danced with her as he would dance with any woman, as he would dance with a man who was a good dancer and upon whose arm was tied a handkerchief to conventionalize him into a woman.

One such man Daylight danced with that night. Among frontiersmen it has always been a test of endurance for one man to whirl another down; and when Ben Davis, the faro-dealer, a gaudy bandanna on his arm, got Daylight in a Virginia reel, the fun began. The reel broke up and all fell back to watch. Around and around the two men whirled, always in the one direction. Word was passed on into the big bar-room, and bar and gambling tables were deserted. Everybody wanted to see, and they packed and jammed the dance-room. The musicians played on and on, and on and on the two men whirled. Davis was skilled at the trick, and on the Yukon he had put many a strong man on his back. But after a few minutes it was clear that he, and not Daylight, was going.

For a while longer they spun around, and then Daylight suddenly stood still, released his partner, and stepped back, reeling himself, and fluttering his hands aimlessly, as if to support himself against the air. But Davis, a giddy smile of consternation on his face, gave sideways, turned in an attempt to recover balance, and pitched headlong to the floor. Still reeling and staggering and clutching at the air with his hands, Daylight caught the nearest girl and started on in a waltz. Again he had done the big thing. Weary from two thousand miles over the ice and a run that day of seventy miles, he had whirled a fresh man down, and that man Ben Davis.

Daylight loved the high places, and though few high places there were in his narrow experience, he had made a point of sitting in the highest he had ever glimpsed. The great world had never heard his name, but it was known far and wide in the vast silent North, by whites and Indians and Eskimos, from Bering Sea to the Passes, from the head reaches of remotest rivers to the tundra shore of Point Barrow. Desire for mastery was strong in him, and it was all one whether wrestling with the elements themselves, with men, or with luck in a gambling game. It was all a game, life and its affairs. And he was a gambler to the core. Risk and chance were meat and drink. True, it was not altogether blind, for he applied wit and skill and strength; but behind it all was the everlasting Luck, the thing that at times turned on its votaries and crushed the wise while it blessed the fools — Luck, the thing all men sought and dreamed to conquer. And so he. Deep in his life-processes Life itself sang the siren song of its own majesty, ever a-whisper and urgent, counseling him that he could achieve more than other men, win out where they failed, ride to success where they perished. It was the urge of Life healthy and strong, unaware of frailty and decay, drunken with sublime complacence, ego-mad, enchanted by its own mighty optimism.

And ever in vaguest whisperings and clearest trumpet-calls came the message that sometime, somewhere, somehow, he would run Luck down, make himself the master of Luck, and tie it and brand it as his own. When he played poker, the whisper was of four aces and royal flushes. When he prospected, it was of gold in the grass-roots, gold on bed-rock, and gold all the way down. At the sharpest hazards of trail and river and famine, the message was that other men might die, but that he would pull through triumphant. It was the old, old lie of Life fooling itself, believing itself — immortal and indestructible, bound to achieve over other lives and win to its heart's desire.

And so, reversing at times, Daylight waltzed off his dizziness and led the way to the bar. But a united protest went up. His theory that the winner paid was no longer to be tolerated. It was contrary to custom and common sense, and while it emphasized good-fellowship, nevertheless, in the name of good-fellowship it must cease. The drinks were rightfully on Ben Davis, and Ben Davis must buy them. Furthermore, all drinks and general treats that Daylight was guilty of ought to be paid by the house, for Daylight brought much custom to it whenever he made a night. Bettles was the spokesman, and his argument, tersely and offensively vernacular, was unanimously applauded.

Daylight grinned, stepped aside to the roulette-table, and bought a stack of yellow chips. At the end of ten minutes he weighed in at the scales, and two thousand dollars in gold-dust was poured into his own and an extra sack. Luck, a mere flutter of luck, but it was his. Elation was added to elation. He was living, and the night was his. He turned upon his well-wishing critics.

"Now the winner sure does pay," he said.

And they surrendered. There was no withstanding Daylight when he vaulted on the back of life, and rode it bitted and spurred.

At one in the morning he saw Elijah Davis herding Henry Finn and Joe Hines, the lumber-jack, toward the door. Daylight interfered.

"Where are you-all going?" he demanded, attempting to draw them to the bar.

"Bed," Elijah Davis answered.

He was a lean tobacco-chewing New Englander, the one daring spirit in his family that had heard and answered the call of the West shouting through the Mount Desert back odd-lots. "Got to," Joe Hines added apologetically. "We're mushing out in the mornin'."

Daylight still detained them. "Where to? What's the excitement?"

"No excitement," Elijah explained. "We're just a-goin' to play your hunch, an' tackle the Upper Country. Don't you want to come along?"

"I sure do," Daylight affirmed.

But the question had been put in fun, and Elijah ignored the acceptance.

“We’re tacklin’ the Stewart,” he went on. “Al Mayo told me he seen some likely lookin’ bars first time he come down the Stewart, and we’re goin’ to sample ‘em while the river’s froze. You listen, Daylight, an’ mark my words, the time’s comin’ when winter diggin’s’ll be all the go. There’ll be men in them days that’ll laugh at our summer stratchin’ an’ ground-wallerin’.”

At that time, winter mining was undreamed of on the Yukon. From the moss and grass the land was frozen to bed-rock, and frozen gravel, hard as granite, defied pick and shovel. In the summer the men stripped the earth down as fast as the sun thawed it. Then was the time they did their mining. During the winter they freighted their provisions, went moose-hunting, got all ready for the summer’s work, and then loafed the bleak, dark months through in the big central camps such as Circle City and Forty Mile.

“Winter diggin’s sure comin’,” Daylight agreed. “Wait till that big strike is made up river. Then you-all’ll see a new kind of mining. What’s to prevent wood-burning and sinking shafts and drifting along bed-rock? Won’t need to timber. That frozen muck and gravel’ll stand till hell is froze and its mill-tails is turned to ice-cream. Why, they’ll be working pay-streaks a hundred feet deep in them days that’s comin’. I’m sure going along with you-all, Elijah.”

Elijah laughed, gathered his two partners up, and was making a second attempt to reach the door.

“Hold on,” Daylight called. “I sure mean it.”

The three men turned back suddenly upon him, in their faces surprise, delight, and incredulity.

“G’wan, you’re foolin’,” said Finn, the other lumberjack, a quiet, steady, Wisconsin man.

“There’s my dawgs and sled,” Daylight answered. “That’ll make two teams and halve the loads — though we-all’ll have to travel easy for a spell, for them dawgs is sure tired.”

The three men were overjoyed, but still a trifle incredulous.

“Now look here,” Joe Hines blurted out, “none of your foolin, Daylight. We mean business. Will you come?”

Daylight extended his hand and shook.

“Then you’d best be gettin’ to bed,” Elijah advised. “We’re mushin’ out at six, and four hours’ sleep is none so long.”

“Mebbe we ought to lay over a day and let him rest up,” Finn suggested.

Daylight's pride was touched.

"No you don't," he cried. "We all start at six. What time do you-all want to be called? Five? All right, I'll rouse you-all out."

"You oughter have some sleep," Elijah counselled gravely. "You can't go on forever."

Daylight was tired, profoundly tired. Even his iron body acknowledged weariness. Every muscle was clamoring for bed and rest, was appalled at continuance of exertion and at thought of the trail again. All this physical protest welled up into his brain in a wave of revolt. But deeper down, scornful and defiant, was Life itself, the essential fire of it, whispering that all Daylight's fellows were looking on, that now was the time to pile deed upon deed, to flaunt his strength in the face of strength. It was merely Life, whispering its ancient lies. And in league with it was whiskey, with all its consummate effrontery and vain-glory.

"Mebbe you-all think I ain't weaned yet?" Daylight demanded. "Why, I ain't had a drink, or a dance, or seen a soul in two months. You-all get to bed. I'll call you-all at five."

And for the rest of the night he danced on in his stocking feet, and at five in the morning, rapping thunderously on the door of his new partners' cabin, he could be heard singing the song that had given him his name: —

"Burning daylight, you-all Stewart River hunchers! Burning daylight! Burning daylight! Burning daylight!"

CHAPTER VII

This time the trail was easier. It was better packed, and they were not carrying mail against time. The day's run was shorter, and likewise the hours on trail. On his mail run Daylight had played out three Indians; but his present partners knew that they must not be played out when they arrived at the Stewart bars, so they set the slower pace. And under this milder toil, where his companions nevertheless grew weary, Daylight recuperated and rested up. At Forty Mile they laid over two days for the sake of the dogs, and at Sixty Mile Daylight's team was left with the trader. Unlike Daylight, after the terrible run from Selkirk to Circle City, they had been unable to recuperate on the back trail. So the four men pulled on from Sixty Mile with a fresh team of dogs on Daylight's sled.

The following night they camped in the cluster of islands at the mouth of the Stewart. Daylight talked town sites, and, though the others laughed at him, he staked the whole maze of high, wooded islands.

"Just supposing the big strike does come on the Stewart," he argued. "Mebbe you-all'll be in on it, and then again mebbe you-all won't. But I sure will. You-all'd better reconsider and go in with me on it."

But they were stubborn.

"You're as bad as Harper and Joe Ladue," said Joe Hines. "They're always at that game. You know that big flat jest below the Klondike and under Moosehide Mountain? Well, the recorder at Forty Mile was tellin' me they staked that not a month ago — The Harper & Ladue Town Site. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Elijah and Finn joined him in his laughter; but Daylight was gravely in earnest.

"There she is!" he cried. "The hunch is working! It's in the air, I tell you-all! What'd they-all stake the big flat for if they-all didn't get the hunch? Wish I'd staked it."

The regret in his voice was provocative of a second burst of laughter.

"Laugh, you-all, laugh! That's what's the trouble with you-all. You-all think gold-hunting is the only way to make a stake. But let me tell you-all that when the big strike sure does come, you-all'll do a little surface-scratchin' and muck-raking, but danged little you-all'll have to show for it. You-all laugh at quicksilver in the riffles and think flour gold was manufactured by God Almighty for the express purpose of fooling suckers and chechaquos. Nothing but coarse gold for you-all, that's your way, not getting half of it out of the ground and losing into the tailings half of what you-all do get.

"But the men that land big will be them that stake the town sites, organize the tradin' companies, start the banks — "

Here the explosion of mirth drowned him out. Banks in Alaska! The idea of it was excruciating.

"Yep, and start the stock exchanges — "

Again they were convulsed. Joe Hines rolled over on his sleeping-robe, holding his sides.

"And after them will come the big mining sharks that buy whole creeks where you-all have been scratching like a lot of picayune hens, and they-all will go to hydraulicking in summer and steam-thawing in winter — "

Steam-thawing! That was the limit. Daylight was certainly exceeding himself in his consummate fun-making. Steam-thawing — when even wood-burning was an untried experiment, a dream in the air!

"Laugh, dang you, laugh! Why your eyes ain't open yet. You-all are a bunch of little mewing kittens. I tell you-all if that strike comes on Klondike, Harper and Ladue will be millionaires. And if it comes on Stewart, you-all watch the Elam Harnish town site boom. In them days, when you-all come around makin' poor mouths..." He heaved a sigh of resignation. "Well, I suppose I'll have to give you-all a grub-stake or soup, or something or other."

Daylight had vision. His scope had been rigidly limited, yet whatever he saw, he saw big. His mind was orderly, his imagination practical, and he never dreamed idly. When he superimposed a feverish metropolis on a waste of timbered, snow-covered flat, he predicated first the gold-strike that made the city possible, and next he had an eye for steamboat landings, sawmill and warehouse locations, and all the needs of a far-northern mining city. But this, in turn, was the mere setting for something bigger, namely, the play of temperament. Opportunities swarmed in the streets and buildings and human and economic relations of the city of his dream. It was a larger table for gambling. The limit was the sky, with the Southland on one side and the aurora borealis on the other. The play would be big, bigger than any Yukoner had ever imagined, and he, Burning Daylight, would see that he got in on that play.

In the meantime there was naught to show for it but the hunch. But it was coming. As he would stake his last ounce on a good poker hand, so he staked his life and effort on the hunch that the future held in store a big strike on the Upper River. So he and his three companions, with dogs, and sleds, and snowshoes, toiled up the frozen breast of the Stewart, toiled on and on through the white wilderness where the unending stillness was never broken by the voices of men, the stroke of an ax, or the distant crack of a rifle. They alone moved through the vast and frozen quiet, little mites of earth-men, crawling their score of miles a day, melting the ice that they might have water to drink, camping in the snow at night, their wolf-dogs curled in frost-rimed, hairy bunches, their eight snowshoes stuck on end in the snow beside the sleds.

No signs of other men did they see, though once they passed a rude poling-boat, cached on a platform by the river bank. Whoever had cached it had never come back for it; and they wondered and mushed on. Another time they chanced upon the site of an Indian village, but the Indians had disappeared; undoubtedly they were on the higher reaches of the Stewart in pursuit of the moose-herds. Two hundred miles up from the Yukon, they came upon what Elijah decided were the bars mentioned by Al Mayo. A permanent camp was made, their outfit of food cached on a high platform to keep it from the dogs, and they started work on the bars, cutting their way down to gravel through the rim of ice.

It was a hard and simple life. Breakfast over, and they were at work by the first gray light; and when night descended, they did their cooking and camp-chores, smoked and yarned for a while, then rolled up in their sleeping-robes, and slept while the aurora borealis flamed overhead and the stars leaped and danced in the great cold. Their fare was monotonous: sour-dough bread, bacon, beans, and an occasional dish of rice cooked along with a handful of prunes. Fresh meat they failed to obtain. There was an unwonted absence of animal life. At rare intervals they chanced upon the trail of a snowshoe rabbit or an ermine; but in the main it seemed that all life had fled the land. It was a condition not unknown to them, for in all their experience, at one time or another, they had travelled one year through a region teeming with game, where, a year or two or three years later, no game at all would be found.

Gold they found on the bars, but not in paying quantities. Elijah, while on a hunt for moose fifty miles away, had panned the surface gravel of a large creek and found good colors. They harnessed their dogs, and with light outfits sledded to the place. Here, and possibly for the first time in the history of the Yukon, wood-burning, in sinking a shaft, was tried. It was Daylight's initiative. After clearing away the moss and grass, a fire of dry spruce was built. Six hours of burning thawed eight inches of muck. Their picks drove full depth into it, and, when they had shoveled out, another fire was started. They worked early and late, excited over the success of the experiment. Six feet of frozen muck brought them to gravel, likewise frozen. Here progress was slower. But they learned to handle their fires better, and were soon able to thaw five and six inches at a burning. Flour gold was in this gravel, and after two feet it gave away again to muck. At seventeen feet they struck a thin streak of gravel, and in it coarse gold, testpans running as high as six and eight dollars. Unfortunately, this streak of gravel was not more than an inch thick. Beneath it was more muck, tangled with the trunks of ancient trees and containing fossil bones of forgotten monsters. But gold they had found — coarse gold; and what more likely than that the big deposit would be found on bed-rock? Down to bed-rock they would go, if it were forty feet away. They divided into two shifts, working day and night, on two shafts, and the smoke of their burning rose continually.

It was at this time that they ran short of beans and that Elijah was despatched to the main camp to bring up more grub. Elijah was one of the hard-bitten old-time travelers himself. The round trip was a hundred miles, but he promised to be back on the third day, one day going light, two days returning heavy. Instead, he arrived on the night of the second day. They had just gone to bed when they heard him coming.

"What in hell's the matter now?" Henry Finn demanded, as the empty sled came into the circle of firelight and as he noted that Elijah's long, serious face was longer and even more serious.

Joe Hines threw wood on the fire, and the three men, wrapped in their robes, huddled up close to the warmth. Elijah's whiskered face was matted with ice, as were his eyebrows, so that, what of his fur garb, he looked like a New England caricature of Father Christmas.

"You recollect that big spruce that held up the corner of the cache next to the river?" Elijah began.

The disaster was quickly told. The big tree, with all the seeming of hardihood, promising to stand for centuries to come, had suffered from a hidden decay. In some way its rooted grip on the earth had weakened. The added burden of the cache and the winter snow had been too much for it; the balance it had so long maintained with the forces of its environment had been overthrown; it had toppled and crashed to the ground, wrecking the cache and, in turn, overthrowing the balance with environment that the four men and eleven dogs had been maintaining. Their supply of grub was gone. The wolverines had got into the wrecked cache, and what they had not eaten they had destroyed.

"They plumb e't all the bacon and prunes and sugar and dog-food," Elijah reported, "and gosh darn my buttons, if they didn't gnaw open the sacks and scatter the flour and beans and rice from Dan to Beersheba. I found empty sacks where they'd dragged them a quarter of a mile away."

Nobody spoke for a long minute. It was nothing less than a catastrophe, in the dead of an Arctic winter and in a game-abandoned land, to lose their grub. They were not panic-stricken, but they were busy looking the situation squarely in the face and considering. Joe Hines was the first to speak.

"We can pan the snow for the beans and rice... though there wa'n't more'n eight or ten pounds of rice left."

"And somebody will have to take a team and pull for Sixty Mile," Daylight said next.

"I'll go," said Finn.

They considered a while longer.

"But how are we going to feed the other team and three men till he gets back?" Hines demanded.

"Only one thing to it," was Elijah's contribution. "You'll have to take the other team, Joe, and pull up the Stewart till you find them Indians. Then you come back with a load of meat. You'll get here long before Henry can make it from Sixty Mile, and while you're gone there'll only be Daylight and me to feed, and we'll feed good and small."

"And in the morning we-all'll pull for the cache and pan snow to find what grub we've got." Daylight lay back, as he spoke, and rolled in his robe to sleep, then added: "Better turn in for an early start. Two of you can take the dogs down. Elijah and me'll skin out on both sides and see if we-all can scare up a moose on the way down."

CHAPTER VIII

No time was lost. Hines and Finn, with the dogs, already on short rations, were two days in pulling down. At noon of the third day Elijah arrived, reporting no moose sign. That night Daylight came in with a similar report. As fast as they arrived, the men had started careful panning of the snow all around the cache. It was a large task, for they found stray beans fully a hundred yards from the cache. One more day all the men toiled. The result was pitiful, and the four showed their caliber in the division of the few pounds of food that had been recovered. Little as it was, the lion's share was left with Daylight and Elijah. The men who pulled on with the dogs, one up the Stewart and one down, would come more quickly to grub. The two who remained would have to last out till the others returned. Furthermore, while the dogs, on several ounces each of beans a day, would travel slowly, nevertheless, the men who travelled with them, on a pinch, would have the dogs themselves to eat. But the men who remained, when the pinch came, would have no dogs. It was for this reason that Daylight and Elijah took the more desperate chance. They could not do less, nor did they care to do less. The days passed, and the winter began merging imperceptibly into the Northland spring that comes like a thunderbolt of suddenness. It was the spring of 1896 that was preparing. Each day the sun rose farther east of south, remained longer in the sky, and set farther to the west. March ended and April began, and Daylight and Elijah, lean and hungry, wondered what had become of their two comrades. Granting every delay, and throwing in generous margins for good measure, the time was long since passed when they should have returned. Without doubt they had met with disaster. The party had considered the possibility of disaster for one man, and that had been the principal reason for despatching the two in different directions. But that disaster should have come to both of them was the final blow.

In the meantime, hoping against hope, Daylight and Elija eked out a meagre existence. The thaw had not yet begun, so they were able to gather the snow about the ruined cache and melt it in pots and pails and gold pans. Allowed to stand for a while, when poured off, a thin deposit of slime was found on the bottoms of the vessels. This was the flour, the infinitesimal trace of it scattered through thousands of cubic yards of snow. Also, in this slime occurred at intervals a water-soaked tea-leaf or coffee-ground, and there were in it fragments of earth and litter. But the farther they worked away from the site of the cache, the thinner became the trace of flour, the smaller the deposit of slime.

Elijah was the older man, and he weakened first, so that he came to lie up most of the time in his furs. An occasional tree-squirrel kept them alive. The hunting fell upon Daylight, and it was hard work. With but thirty rounds of ammunition, he dared not risk a miss; and, since his rifle was a 45-90, he was compelled to shoot the small creatures through the head. There were very few of them, and days went by without seeing one. When he did see one, he took infinite precautions. He would stalk it for hours. A score of times, with arms that shook from weakness, he would draw a sight on the animal and refrain from pulling the trigger. His inhibition was a thing of iron. He was the master. Not til absolute certitude was his did he shoot. No matter how sharp the pangs of hunger and desire for that palpitating morsel of chattering life, he refused to take the slightest risk of a miss. He, born gambler, was gambling in the bigger way. His life was the stake, his cards were the cartridges, and he played as only a big gambler could play, with infinite precaution, with infinite consideration. Each shot meant a squirrel, and though days elapsed between shots, it never changed his method of play.

Of the squirrels, nothing was lost. Even the skins were boiled to make broth, the bones pounded into fragments that could be chewed and swallowed. Daylight prospected through the snow, and found occasional patches of mossberries. At the best, mossberries were composed practically of seeds and water, with a tough rind of skin about them; but the berries he found were of the preceding year, dry and shrivelled, and the nourishment they contained verged on the minus quality. Scarcely better was the bark of young saplings, stewed for an hour and swallowed after prodigious chewing.

April drew toward its close, and spring smote the land. The days stretched out their length. Under the heat of the sun, the snow began to melt, while from down under the snow arose the trickling of tiny streams. For twenty-four hours the Chinook wind blew, and in that twenty-four hours the snow was diminished fully a foot in depth. In the late afternoons the melting snow froze again, so that its surface became ice capable of supporting a man’s weight. Tiny white snow-birds appeared from the south, lingered a day, and resumed their journey into the north. Once, high in the air, looking for open water and ahead of the season, a wedged squadron of wild geese honked northwards. And down by the river bank a clump of dwarf willows burst into bud. These young buds, stewed, seemed to posess an encouraging nutrition. Elijah took heart of hope, though he was cast down again when Daylight failed to find another clump of willows.

The sap was rising in the trees, and daily the trickle of unseen streamlets became louder as the frozen land came back to life. But the river held in its bonds of frost. Winter had been long months in riveting them, and not in a day were they to be broken, not even by the thunderbolt of spring. May came, and stray last-year's mosquitoes, full-grown but harmless, crawled out of rock crevices and rotten logs. Crickets began to chirp, and more geese and ducks flew overhead. And still the river held. By May tenth, the ice of the Stewart, with a great rending and snapping, tore loose from the banks and rose three feet. But it did not go down-stream. The lower Yukon, up to where the Stewart flowed into it, must first break and move on. Until then the ice of the Stewart could only rise higher and higher on the increasing flood beneath. When the Yukon would break was problematical. Two thousand miles away it flowed into Bering Sea, and it was the ice conditions of Bering Sea that would determine when the Yukon could rid itself of the millions of tons of ice that cluttered its breast.

On the twelfth of May, carrying their sleeping-robes, a pail, an ax, and the precious rifle, the two men started down the river on the ice. Their plan was to gain to the cached poling-boat they had seen, so that at the first open water they could launch it and drift with the stream to Sixty Mile. In their weak condition, without food, the going was slow and difficult. Elijah developed a habit of falling down and being unable to rise. Daylight gave of his own strength to lift him to his feet, whereupon the older man would stagger automatically on until he stumbled and fell again.

On the day they should have reached the boat, Elijah collapsed utterly. When Daylight raised him, he fell again. Daylight essayed to walk with him, supporting him, but such was Daylight's own weakness that they fell together.

Dragging Elijah to the bank, a rude camp was made, and Daylight started out in search of squirrels. It was at this time that he likewise developed the falling habit. In the evening he found his first squirrel, but darkness came on without his getting a certain shot. With primitive patience he waited till next day, and then, within the hour, the squirrel was his.

The major portion he fed to Elijah, reserving for himself the tougher parts and the bones. But such is the chemistry of life, that this small creature, this trifle of meat that moved, by being eaten, transmuted to the meat of the men the same power to move. No longer did the squirrel run up spruce trees, leap from branch to branch, or cling chattering to giddy perches. Instead, the same energy that had done these things flowed into the wasted muscles and reeling wills of the men, making them move — nay, moving them — till they tottered the several intervening miles to the cached boat, underneath which they fell together and lay motionless a long time.

Light as the task would have been for a strong man to lower the small boat to the ground, it took Daylight hours. And many hours more, day by day, he dragged himself around it, lying on his side to calk the gaping seams with moss. Yet, when this was done, the river still held. Its ice had risen many feet, but would not start down-stream. And one more task waited, the launching of the boat when the river ran water to receive it. Vainly Daylight staggered and stumbled and fell and crept through the snow that was wet with thaw, or across it when the night's frost still crusted it beyond the weight of a man, searching for one more squirrel, striving to achieve one more transmutation of furry leap and scolding chatter into the lifts and tugs of a man's body that would hoist the boat over the rim of shore-ice and slide it down into the stream.

Not till the twentieth of May did the river break. The down-stream movement began at five in the morning, and already were the days so long that Daylight sat up and watched the ice-run. Elijah was too far gone to be interested in the spectacle. Though vaguely conscious, he lay without movement while the ice tore by, great cakes of it caroming against the bank, uprooting trees, and gouging out earth by hundreds of tons.

All about them the land shook and reeled from the shock of these tremendous collisions. At the end of an hour the run stopped. Somewhere below it was blocked by a jam. Then the river began to rise, lifting the ice on its breast till it was higher than the bank. From behind ever more water bore down, and ever more millions of tons of ice added their weight to the congestion. The pressures and stresses became terrific. Huge cakes of ice were squeezed out till they popped into the air like melon seeds squeezed from between the thumb and forefinger of a child, while all along the banks a wall of ice was forced up. When the jam broke, the noise of grinding and smashing redoubled. For another hour the run continued. The river fell rapidly. But the wall of ice on top the bank, and extending down into the falling water, remained.

The tail of the ice-run passed, and for the first time in six months Daylight saw open water. He knew that the ice had not yet passed out from the upper reaches of the Stewart, that it lay in packs and jams in those upper reaches, and that it might break loose and come down in a second run any time; but the need was too desperate for him to linger. Elijah was so far gone that he might pass at any moment. As for himself, he was not sure that enough strength remained in his wasted muscles to launch the boat. It was all a gamble. If he waited for the second ice-run, Elijah would surely die, and most probably himself. If he succeeded in launching the boat, if he kept ahead of the second ice-run, if he did not get caught by some of the runs from the upper Yukon; if luck favored in all these essential particulars, as well as in a score of minor ones, they would reach Sixty Mile and be saved, if — and again the if — he had strength enough to land the boat at Sixty Mile and not go by.

He set to work. The wall of ice was five feet above the ground on which the boat rested. First prospecting for the best launching-place, he found where a huge cake of ice shelved upward from the river that ran fifteen feet below to the top of the wall. This was a score of feet away, and at the end of an hour he had managed to get the boat that far. He was sick with nausea from his exertions, and at times it seemed that blindness smote him, for he could not see, his eyes vexed with spots and points of light that were as excruciating as diamond-dust, his heart pounding up in his throat and suffocating him. Elijah betrayed no interest, did not move nor open his eyes; and Daylight fought out his battle alone. At last, falling on his knees from the shock of exertion, he got the boat poised on a secure balance on top the wall. Crawling on hands and knees, he placed in the boat his rabbit-skin robe, the rifle, and the pail. He did not bother with the ax. It meant an additional crawl of twenty feet and back, and if the need for it should arise he well knew he would be past all need.

Elijah proved a bigger task than he had anticipated. A few inches at a time, resting in between, he dragged him over the ground and up a broken rubble of ice to the side of the boat. But into the boat he could not get him. Elijah's limp body was far more difficult to lift and handle than an equal weight of like dimensions but rigid. Daylight failed to hoist him, for the body collapsed at the middle like a part-empty sack of corn. Getting into the boat, Daylight tried vainly to drag his comrade in after him. The best he could do was to get Elijah's head and shoulders on top the gunwale. When he released his hold, to heave from farther down the body, Elijah promptly gave at the middle and came down on the ice.

In despair, Daylight changed his tactics. He struck the other in the face.

"God Almighty, ain't you-all a man?" he cried. "There! damn you-all! there!"

At each curse he struck him on the cheeks, the nose, the mouth, striving, by the shock of the hurt, to bring back the sinking soul and far-wandering will of the man. The eyes fluttered open.

"Now listen!" he shouted hoarsely. "When I get your head to the gunwale, hang on! Hear me? Hang on! Bite into it with your teeth, but HANG ON!"

The eyes fluttered down, but Daylight knew the message had been received. Again he got the helpless man's head and shoulders on the gunwale.

"Hang on, damn you! Bite in!" he shouted, as he shifted his grip lower down.

One weak hand slipped off the gunwale, the fingers of the other hand relaxed, but Elijah obeyed, and his teeth held on. When the lift came, his face ground forward, and the splintery wood tore and crushed the skin from nose, lips, and chin; and, face downward, he slipped on and down to the bottom of the boat till his limp middle collapsed across the gunwale and his legs hung down outside. But they were only his legs, and Daylight shoved them in; after him. Breathing heavily, he turned Elijah over on his back, and covered him with his robes.

The final task remained — the launching of the boat. This, of necessity, was the severest of all, for he had been compelled to load his comrade in aft of the balance. It meant a supreme effort at lifting. Daylight steeled himself and began. Something must have snapped, for, though he was unaware of it, the next he knew he was lying doubled on his stomach across the sharp stern of the boat. Evidently, and for the first time in his life, he had fainted. Furthermore, it seemed to him that he was finished, that he had not one more movement left in him, and that, strangest of all, he did not care. Visions came to him, clear-cut and real, and concepts sharp as steel cutting-edges. He, who all his days had looked on naked Life, had never seen so much of Life's nakedness before. For the first time he experienced a doubt of his own glorious personality. For the moment Life faltered and forgot to lie. After all, he was a little earth-maggot, just like all the other earth-maggots, like the squirrel he had eaten, like the other men he had seen fail and die, like Joe Hines and Henry Finn, who had already failed and were surely dead, like Elijah lying there uncaring, with his skinned face, in the bottom of the boat. Daylight's position was such that from where he lay he could look up river to the bend, around which, sooner or later, the next ice-run would come. And as he looked he seemed to see back through the past to a time when neither white man nor Indian was in the land, and ever he saw the same Stewart River, winter upon winter, breasted with ice, and spring upon spring bursting that ice asunder and running free. And he saw also into an illimitable future, when the last generations of men were gone from off the face of Alaska, when he, too, would be gone, and he saw, ever remaining, that river, freezing and fresheting, and running on and on.

Life was a liar and a cheat. It fooled all creatures. It had fooled him, Burning Daylight, one of its chiefest and most joyous exponents. He was nothing — a mere bunch of flesh and nerves and sensitiveness that crawled in the muck for gold, that dreamed and aspired and gambled, and that passed and was gone. Only the dead things remained, the things that were not flesh and nerves and sensitiveness, the sand and muck and gravel, the stretching flats, the mountains, the river itself, freezing and breaking, year by year, down all the years. When all was said and done, it was a scurvy game. The dice were loaded. Those that died did not win, and all died. Who won? Not even Life, the stool-pigeon, the arch-capper for the game — Life, the ever flourishing graveyard, the everlasting funeral procession.

He drifted back to the immediate present for a moment and noted that the river still ran wide open, and that a moose-bird, perched on the bow of the boat, was surveying him impudently. Then he drifted dreamily back to his meditations.

There was no escaping the end of the game. He was doomed surely to be out of it all. And what of it? He pondered that question again and again.

Conventional religion had passed Daylight by. He had lived a sort of religion in his square dealing and right playing with other men, and he had not indulged in vain metaphysics about future life. Death ended all. He had always believed that, and been unafraid. And at this moment, the boat fifteen feet above the water and immovable, himself fainting with weakness and without a particle of strength left in him, he still believed that death ended all, and he was still unafraid. His views were too simply and solidly based to be overthrown by the first squirm, or the last, of death-fearing life.

He had seen men and animals die, and into the field of his vision, by scores, came such deaths. He saw them over again, just as he had seen them at the time, and they did not shake him.

What of it? They were dead, and dead long since. They weren't bothering about it. They weren't lying on their bellies across a boat and waiting to die. Death was easy — easier than he had ever imagined; and, now that it was near, the thought of it made him glad.

A new vision came to him. He saw the feverish city of his dream — the gold metropolis of the North, perched above the Yukon on a high earth-bank and far-spreading across the flat. He saw the river steamers tied to the bank and lined against it three deep; he saw the sawmills working and the long dog-teams, with double sleds behind, freighting supplies to the diggings. And he saw, further, the gambling-houses, banks, stock-exchanges, and all the gear and chips and markers, the chances and opportunities, of a vastly bigger gambling game than any he had ever seen. It was sure hell, he thought, with the hunch a-working and that big strike coming, to be out of it all. Life thrilled and stirred at the thought and once more began uttering his ancient lies.

Daylight rolled over and off the boat, leaning against it as he sat on the ice. He wanted to be in on that strike. And why shouldn't he? Somewhere in all those wasted muscles of his was enough strength, if he could gather it all at once, to up-end the boat and launch it. Quite irrelevantly the idea suggested itself of buying a share in the Klondike town site from Harper and Joe Ladue. They would surely sell a third interest cheap. Then, if the strike came on the Stewart, he would be well in on it with the Elam Harnish town site; if on the Klondike, he would not be quite out of it.

In the meantime, he would gather strength. He stretched out on the ice full length, face downward, and for half an hour he lay and rested. Then he arose, shook the flashing blindness from his eyes, and took hold of the boat. He knew his condition accurately. If the first effort failed, the following efforts were doomed to fail. He must pull all his rallied strength into the one effort, and so thoroughly must he put all of it in that there would be none left for other attempts.

He lifted, and he lifted with the soul of him as well as with the body, consuming himself, body and spirit, in the effort. The boat rose. He thought he was going to faint, but he continued to lift. He felt the boat give, as it started on its downward slide. With the last shred of his strength he precipitated himself into it, landing in a sick heap on Elijah's legs. He was beyond attempting to rise, and as he lay he heard and felt the boat take the water. By watching the tree-tops he knew it was whirling. A smashing shock and flying fragments of ice told him that it had struck the bank. A dozen times it whirled and struck, and then it floated easily and free.

Daylight came to, and decided he had been asleep. The sun denoted that several hours had passed. It was early afternoon. He dragged himself into the stern and sat up. The boat was in the middle of the stream. The wooded banks, with their base-lines of flashing ice, were slipping by. Near him floated a huge, uprooted pine. A freak of the current brought the boat against it. Crawling forward, he fastened the painter to a root.

The tree, deeper in the water, was travelling faster, and the painter tautened as the boat took the tow. Then, with a last giddy look around, wherein he saw the banks tilting and swaying and the sun swinging in pendulum-sweep across the sky, Daylight wrapped himself in his rabbit-skin robe, lay down in the bottom, and fell asleep.

When he awoke, it was dark night. He was lying on his back, and he could see the stars shining. A subdued murmur of swollen waters could be heard. A sharp jerk informed him that the boat, swerving slack into the painter, had been straightened out by the swifter-moving pine tree. A piece of stray drift-ice thumped against the boat and grated along its side. Well, the following jam hadn't caught him yet, was his thought, as he closed his eyes and slept again.

It was bright day when next he opened his eyes. The sun showed it to be midday. A glance around at the far-away banks, and he knew that he was on the mighty Yukon. Sixty Mile could not be far away. He was abominably weak. His movements were slow, fumbling, and inaccurate, accompanied by panting and head-swimming, as he dragged himself into a sitting-up position in the stern, his rifle beside him. He looked a long time at Elijah, but could not see whether he breathed or not, and he was too immeasurably far away to make an investigation.

He fell to dreaming and meditating again, dreams and thoughts being often broken by sketches of blankness, wherein he neither slept, nor was unconscious, nor was aware of anything. It seemed to him more like cogs slipping in his brain. And in this intermittent way he reviewed the situation. He was still alive, and most likely would be saved, but how came it that he was not lying dead across the boat on top the ice-rim? Then he recollected the great final effort he had made. But why had he made it? he asked himself. It had not been fear of death. He had not been afraid, that was sure. Then he remembered the hunch and the big strike he believed was coming, and he knew that the spur had been his desire to sit in for a hand at that big game. And again why? What if he made his million? He would die, just the same as those that never won more than grub-stakes. Then again why? But the blank stretches in his thinking process began to come more frequently, and he surrendered to the delightful lassitude that was creeping over him.

He roused with a start. Something had whispered in him that he must awake. Abruptly he saw Sixty Mile, not a hundred feet away.

The current had brought him to the very door. But the same current was now sweeping him past and on into the down-river wilderness. No one was in sight. The place might have been deserted, save for the smoke he saw rising from the kitchen chimney. He tried to call, but found he had no voice left. An unearthly guttural hiss alternately rattled and wheezed in his throat. He fumbled for the rifle, got it to his shoulder, and pulled the trigger. The recoil of the discharge tore through his frame, racking it with a thousand agonies. The rifle had fallen across his knees, and an attempt to lift it to his shoulder failed. He knew he must be quick, and felt that he was fainting, so he pulled the trigger of the gun where it lay. This time it kicked off and overboard. But just before darkness rushed over him, he saw the kitchen door open, and a woman look out of the big log house that was dancing a monstrous jig among the trees.

CHAPTER IX

Ten days later, Harper and Joe Ladue arrived at Sixty Mile, and Daylight, still a trifle weak, but strong enough to obey the hunch that had come to him, traded a third interest in his Stewart town site for a third interest in theirs on the Klondike.

They had faith in the Upper Country, and Harper left down-stream, with a raft-load of supplies, to start a small post at the mouth of the Klondike.

"Why don't you tackle Indian River, Daylight?" Harper advised, at parting. "There's whole slathers of creeks and draws draining in up there, and somewhere gold just crying to be found. That's my hunch. There's a big strike coming, and Indian River ain't going to be a million miles away."

"And the place is swarming with moose," Joe Ladue added. "Bob Henderson's up there somewhere, been there three years now, swearing something big is going to happen, living off'n straight moose and prospecting around like a crazy man."

Daylight decided to go Indian River a flutter, as he expressed it; but Elijah could not be persuaded into accompanying him. Elijah's soul had been seared by famine, and he was obsessed by fear of repeating the experience.

"I jest can't bear to separate from grub," he explained. "I know it's downright foolishness, but I jest can't help it. It's all I can do to tear myself away from the table when I know I'm full to bustin' and ain't got storage for another bite. I'm going back to Circle to camp by a cache until I get cured."

Daylight lingered a few days longer, gathering strength and arranging his meagre outfit. He planned to go in light, carrying a pack of seventy-five pounds and making his five dogs pack as well, Indian fashion, loading them with thirty pounds each. Depending on the report of Ladue, he intended to follow Bob Henderson's example and live practically on straight meat. When Jack Kearns' scow, laden with the sawmill from Lake Linderman, tied up at Sixty Mile, Daylight bundled his outfit and dogs on board, turned his town-site application over to Elijah to be filed, and the same day was landed at the mouth of Indian River.

Forty miles up the river, at what had been described to him as Quartz Creek, he came upon signs of Bob Henderson's work, and also at Australia

Creek, thirty miles farther on. The weeks came and went, but Daylight never encountered the other man. However, he found moose plentiful, and he and his dogs prospered on the meat diet. He found “pay” that was no more than “wages” on a dozen surface bars, and from the generous spread of flour gold in the muck and gravel of a score of creeks, he was more confident than ever that coarse gold in quantity was waiting to be unearthed. Often he turned his eyes to the northward ridge of hills, and pondered if the gold came from them. In the end, he ascended Dominion Creek to its head, crossed the divide, and came down on the tributary to the Klondike that was later to be called Hunker Creek. While on the divide, had he kept the big dome on his right, he would have come down on the Gold Bottom, so named by Bob Henderson, whom he would have found at work on it, taking out the first pay-gold ever panned on the Klondike. Instead, Daylight continued down Hunker to the Klondike, and on to the summer fishing camp of the Indians on the Yukon.

Here for a day he camped with Carmack, a squaw-man, and his Indian brother-in-law, Skookum Jim, bought a boat, and, with his dogs on board, drifted down the Yukon to Forty Mile. August was drawing to a close, the days were growing shorter, and winter was coming on. Still with unbounded faith in his hunch that a strike was coming in the Upper Country, his plan was to get together a party of four or five, and, if that was impossible, at least a partner, and to pole back up the river before the freeze-up to do winter prospecting. But the men of Forty Mile were without faith. The diggings to the westward were good enough for them.

Then it was that Carmack, his brother-in-law, Skookum Jim, and Cultus Charlie, another Indian, arrived in a canoe at Forty Mile, went straight to the gold commissioner, and recorded three claims and a discovery claim on Bonanza Creek. After that, in the Sourdough Saloon, that night, they exhibited coarse gold to the sceptical crowd. Men grinned and shook their heads. They had seen the motions of a gold strike gone through before. This was too patently a scheme of Harper’s and Joe Ladue’s, trying to entice prospecting in the vicinity of their town site and trading post. And who was Carmack? A squaw-man. And who ever heard of a squaw-man striking anything? And what was Bonanza Creek? Merely a moose pasture, entering the Klondike just above its mouth, and known to old-timers as Rabbit Creek. Now if Daylight or Bob Henderson had recorded claims and shown coarse gold, they’d known there was something in it. But Carmack, the squaw-man! And Skookum Jim! And Cultus Charlie! No, no; that was asking too much.

Daylight, too, was sceptical, and this despite his faith in the Upper Country. Had he not, only a few days before, seen Carmack loafing with his Indians and with never a thought of prospecting?

But at eleven that night, sitting on the edge of his bunk and unlacing his moccasins, a thought came to him. He put on his coat and hat and went back to the Sourdough. Carmack was still there, flashing his coarse gold in the eyes of an unbelieving generation. Daylight ranged alongside of him and emptied Carmack's sack into a blower. This he studied for a long time. Then, from his own sack, into another blower, he emptied several ounces of Circle City and Forty Mile gold. Again, for a long time, he studied and compared. Finally, he pocketed his own gold, returned Carmack's, and held up his hand for silence.

"Boys, I want to tell you-all something," he said. "She's sure come — the up-river strike. And I tell you-all, clear and forcible, this is it. There ain't never been gold like that in a blower in this country before. It's new gold. It's got more silver in it. You-all can see it by the color. Carmack's sure made a strike. Who-all's got faith to come along with me?"

There were no volunteers. Instead, laughter and jeers went up.

"Mebbe you got a town site up there," some one suggested.

"I sure have," was the retort, "and a third interest in Harper and Ladue's. And I can see my corner lots selling out for more than your hen-scratching ever turned up on Birch Creek."

"That's all right, Daylight," one Curly Parson interposed soothingly. "You've got a reputation, and we know you're dead sure on the square. But you're as likely as any to be mistook on a flimflam game, such as these loafers is putting up. I ask you straight: When did Carmack do this here prospecting? You said yourself he was lying in camp, fishing salmon along with his Siwash relations, and that was only the other day."

"And Daylight told the truth," Carmack interrupted excitedly. "And I'm telling the truth, the gospel truth. I wasn't prospecting. Hadn't no idea of it. But when Daylight pulls out, the very same day, who drifts in, down river, on a raft-load of supplies, but Bob Henderson. He'd come out to Sixty Mile, planning to go back up Indian River and portage the grub across the divide between Quartz Creek and Gold Bottom — "

"Where in hell's Gold Bottom?" Curly Parsons demanded.

“Over beyond Bonanza that was Rabbit Creek,” the squaw-man went on. “It’s a draw of a big creek that runs into the Klondike. That’s the way I went up, but I come back by crossing the divide, keeping along the crest several miles, and dropping down into Bonanza. ‘Come along with me, Carmack, and get staked,’ says Bob Henderson to me. ‘I’ve hit it this time, on Gold Bottom. I’ve took out forty-five ounces already.’ And I went along, Skookum Jim and Cultus Charlie, too. And we all staked on Gold Bottom. I come back by Bonanza on the chance of finding a moose. Along down Bonanza we stopped and cooked grub. I went to sleep, and what does Skookum Jim do but try his hand at prospecting. He’d been watching Henderson, you see. He goes right slap up to the foot of a birch tree, first pan, fills it with dirt, and washes out more’n a dollar coarse gold. Then he wakes me up, and I goes at it. I got two and a half the first lick. Then I named the creek ‘Bonanza,’ staked Discovery, and we come here and recorded.”

He looked about him anxiously for signs of belief, but found himself in a circle of incredulous faces — all save Daylight, who had studied his countenance while he told his story.

“How much is Harper and Ladue givin’ you for manufacturing a stampede?” some one asked.

“They don’t know nothing about it,” Carmack answered. “I tell you it’s the God Almighty’s truth. I washed out three ounces in an hour.”

“And there’s the gold,” Daylight said. “I tell you-all boys they ain’t never been gold like that in the blower before. Look at the color of it.”

“A trifle darker,” Curly Parson said. “Most likely Carmack’s been carrying a couple of silver dollars along in the same sack. And what’s more, if there’s anything in it, why ain’t Bob Henderson smoking along to record?”

“He’s up on Gold Bottom,” Carmack explained. “We made the strike coming back.”

A burst of laughter was his reward.

“Who-all’ll go pardners with me and pull out in a poling-boat to-morrow for this here Bonanza?” Daylight asked.

No one volunteered.

“Then who-all’ll take a job from me, cash wages in advance, to pole up a thousand pounds of grub?”

Curly Parsons and another, Pat Monahan, accepted, and, with his customary speed, Daylight paid them their wages in advance and arranged the purchase of the supplies, though he emptied his sack in doing so. He was leaving the Sourdough, when he suddenly turned back to the bar from the door.

"Got another hunch?" was the query.

"I sure have," he answered. "Flour's sure going to be worth what a man will pay for it this winter up on the Klondike. Who'll lend me some money?"

On the instant a score of the men who had declined to accompany him on the wild-goose chase were crowding about him with proffered gold-sacks.

"How much flour do you want?" asked the Alaska Commercial Company's storekeeper.

"About two ton."

The proffered gold-sacks were not withdrawn, though their owners were guilty of an outrageous burst of merriment.

"What are you going to do with two tons?" the store-keeper demanded.

"Son," Daylight made reply, "you-all ain't been in this country long enough to know all its curves. I'm going to start a sauerkraut factory and combined dandruff remedy."

He borrowed money right and left, engaging and paying six other men to bring up the flour in half as many more poling-boats. Again his sack was empty, and he was heavily in debt.

Curly Parsons bowed his head on the bar with a gesture of despair.

"What gets me," he moaned, "is what you're going to do with it all."

"I'll tell you-all in simple A, B, C and one, two, three." Daylight held up one finger and began checking off. "Hunch number one: a big strike coming in Upper Country. Hunch number two: Carmack's made it. Hunch number three: ain't no hunch at all. It's a cinch. If one and two is right, then flour just has to go sky-high. If I'm riding hunches one and two, I just got to ride this cinch, which is number three. If I'm right, flour'll balance gold on the scales this winter. I tell you-all boys, when you-all got a hunch, play it for all it's worth. What's luck good for, if you-all ain't to ride it? And when you-all ride it, ride like hell. I've been years in this country, just waiting for the right hunch to come along. And here she is. Well, I'm going to play her, that's all. Good night, you-all; good night."

CHAPTER X

Still men were without faith in the strike. When Daylight, with his heavy outfit of flour, arrived at the mouth of the Klondike, he found the big flat as desolate and tenantless as ever. Down close by the river, Chief Isaac and his Indians were camped beside the frames on which they were drying salmon. Several old-timers were also in camp there. Having finished their summer work on Ten Mile Creek, they had come down the Yukon, bound for Circle City. But at Sixty Mile they had learned of the strike, and stopped off to look over the ground. They had just returned to their boat when Daylight landed his flour, and their report was pessimistic.

"Damned moose-pasture," quoth one, Long Jim Harney, pausing to blow into his tin mug of tea. "Don't you have nothin' to do with it, Daylight. It's a blamed rotten sell. They're just going through the motions of a strike. Harper and Ladue's behind it, and Carmack's the stool-pigeon. Whoever heard of mining a moose-pasture half a mile between rim-rock and God alone knows how far to bed-rock!"

Daylight nodded sympathetically, and considered for a space.

"Did you-all pan any?" he asked finally.

"Pan hell!" was the indignant answer. "Think I was born yesterday! Only a chechaquo'd fool around that pasture long enough to fill a pan of dirt. You don't catch me at any such foolishness. One look was enough for me. We're pulling on in the morning for Circle City. I ain't never had faith in this Upper Country. Head-reaches of the Tanana is good enough for me from now on, and mark my words, when the big strike comes, she'll come down river. Johnny, here, staked a couple of miles below Discovery, but he don't know no better." Johnny looked shamefaced.

"I just did it for fun," he explained. "I'd give my chance in the creek for a pound of Star plug."

"I'll go you," Daylight said promptly. "But don't you-all come squealing if I take twenty or thirty thousand out of it."

Johnny grinned cheerfully.

"Gimme the tobacco," he said.

"Wish I'd staked alongside," Long Jim murmured plaintively.

"It ain't too late," Daylight replied.

"But it's a twenty-mile walk there and back."

“I’ll stake it for you to-morrow when I go up,” Daylight offered.

“Then you do the same as Johnny. Get the fees from Tim Logan. He’s tending bar in the Sourdough, and he’ll lend it to me. Then fill in your own name, transfer to me, and turn the papers over to Tim.”

“Me, too,” chimed in the third old-timer.

And for three pounds of Star plug chewing tobacco, Daylight bought outright three five-hundred-foot claims on Bonanza. He could still stake another claim in his own name, the others being merely transfers.

“Must say you’re almighty brash with your chewin’ tobacco,” Long Jim grinned. “Got a factory somewheres?”

“Nope, but I got a hunch,” was the retort, “and I tell you-all it’s cheaper than dirt to ride her at the rate of three plugs for three claims.”

But an hour later, at his own camp, Joe Ladue strode in, fresh from Bonanza Creek. At first, non-committal over Carmack’s strike, then, later, dubious, he finally offered Daylight a hundred dollars for his share in the town site.

“Cash?” Daylight queried.

“Sure. There she is.”

So saying, Ladue pulled out his gold-sack. Daylight hefted it absent-mindedly, and, still absent-mindedly, untied the strings and ran some of the gold-dust out on his palm. It showed darker than any dust he had ever seen, with the exception of Carmack’s. He ran the gold back tied the mouth of the sack, and returned it to Ladue.

“I guess you-all need it more’n I do,” was Daylight’s comment.

“Nope; got plenty more,” the other assured him.

“Where that come from?”

Daylight was all innocence as he asked the question, and Ladue received the question as stolidly as an Indian. Yet for a swift instant they looked into each other’s eyes, and in that instant an intangible something seemed to flash out from all the body and spirit of Joe Ladue. And it seemed to Daylight that he had caught this flash, sensed a secret something in the knowledge and plans behind the other’s eyes.

“You-all know the creek better’n me,” Daylight went on. “And if my share in the town site’s worth a hundred to you-all with what you-all know, it’s worth a hundred to me whether I know it or not.”

“I’ll give you three hundred,” Ladue offered desperately.

"Still the same reasoning. No matter what I don't know, it's worth to me whatever you-all are willing to pay for it."

Then it was that Joe Ladue shamelessly gave over. He led Daylight away from the camp and men and told him things in confidence.

"She's sure there," he said in conclusion. "I didn't sluice it, or cradle it. I panned it, all in that sack, yesterday, on the rim-rock. I tell you, you can shake it out of the grassroots. And what's on bed-rock down in the bottom of the creek they ain't no way of tellin'. But she's big, I tell you, big. Keep it quiet, and locate all you can. It's in spots, but I wouldn't be none surprised if some of them claims yielded as high as fifty thousand. The only trouble is that it's spotted."

A month passed by, and Bonanza Creek remained quiet. A sprinkling of men had staked; but most of them, after staking, had gone on down to Forty Mile and Circle City. The few that possessed sufficient faith to remain were busy building log cabins against the coming of winter. Carmack and his Indian relatives were occupied in building a sluice box and getting a head of water. The work was slow, for they had to saw their lumber by hand from the standing forest. But farther down Bonanza were four men who had drifted in from up river, Dan McGilvary, Dave McKay, Dave Edwards, and Harry Waugh. They were a quiet party, neither asking nor giving confidences, and they herded by themselves. But Daylight, who had panned the spotted rim of Carmack's claim and shaken coarse gold from the grass-roots, and who had panned the rim at a hundred other places up and down the length of the creek and found nothing, was curious to know what lay on bed-rock. He had noted the four quiet men sinking a shaft close by the stream, and he had heard their whip-saw going as they made lumber for the sluice boxes. He did not wait for an invitation, but he was present the first day they sluiced. And at the end of five hours' shovelling for one man, he saw them take out thirteen ounces and a half of gold.

It was coarse gold, running from pinheads to a twelve-dollar nugget, and it had come from off bed-rock. The first fall snow was flying that day, and the Arctic winter was closing down; but Daylight had no eyes for the bleak-gray sadness of the dying, short-lived summer. He saw his vision coming true, and on the big flat was upreared anew his golden city of the snows. Gold had been found on bed-rock. That was the big thing. Carmack's strike was assured. Daylight staked a claim in his own name adjoining the three he had purchased with his plug tobacco. This gave him a block of property two thousand feet long and extending in width from rim-rock to rim-rock.

Returning that night to his camp at the mouth of Klondike, he found in it Kama, the Indian he had left at Dyea. Kama was travelling by canoe, bringing in the last mail of the year. In his possession was some two hundred dollars in gold-dust, which Daylight immediately borrowed. In return, he arranged to stake a claim for him, which he was to record when he passed through Forty Mile. When Kama departed next morning, he carried a number of letters for Daylight, addressed to all the old-timers down river, in which they were urged to come up immediately and stake.

Also Kama carried letters of similar import, given him by the other men on Bonanza.

"It will sure be the gosh-dangdest stampede that ever was," Daylight chuckled, as he tried to vision the excited populations of Forty Mile and Circle City tumbling into poling-boats and racing the hundreds of miles up the Yukon; for he knew that his word would be unquestioningly accepted.

With the arrival of the first stampeders, Bonanza Creek woke up, and thereupon began a long-distance race between unveracity and truth, wherein, lie no matter how fast, men were continually overtaken and passed by truth. When men who doubted Carmack's report of two and a half to the pan, themselves panned two and a half, they lied and said that they were getting an ounce. And long ere the lie was fairly on its way, they were getting not one ounce but five ounces. This they claimed was ten ounces; but when they filled a pan of dirt to prove the lie, they washed out twelve ounces. And so it went. They continued valiantly to lie, but the truth continued to outrun them.

One day in December Daylight filled a pan from bed rock on his own claim and carried it into his cabin. Here a fire burned and enabled him to keep water unfrozen in a canvas tank. He squatted over the tank and began to wash. Earth and gravel seemed to fill the pan. As he imparted to it a circular movement, the lighter, coarser particles washed out over the edge. At times he combed the surface with his fingers, raking out handfuls of gravel. The contents of the pan diminished. As it drew near to the bottom, for the purpose of fleeting and tentative examination, he gave the pan a sudden sloshing movement, emptying it of water. And the whole bottom showed as if covered with butter. Thus the yellow gold flashed up as the muddy water was flirted away. It was gold — gold-dust, coarse gold, nuggets, large nuggets. He was all alone. He set the pan down for a moment and thought long thoughts. Then he finished the washing, and weighed the result in his scales. At the rate of sixteen dollars to the ounce, the pan had contained seven hundred and odd dollars. It was beyond anything that even he had dreamed. His fondest anticipation's had gone no farther than twenty or thirty thousand dollars to a claim; but here were claims worth half a million each at the least, even if they were spotted.

He did not go back to work in the shaft that day, nor the next, nor the next. Instead, capped and mittened, a light stampeding outfit, including his rabbit skin robe, strapped on his back, he was out and away on a many-days' tramp over creeks and divides, inspecting the whole neighboring territory. On each creek he was entitled to locate one claim, but he was chary in thus surrendering up his chances. On Hunker Creek only did he stake a claim. Bonanza Creek he found staked from mouth to source, while every little draw and pup and gulch that drained into it was like-wise staked. Little faith was had in these side-streams. They had been staked by the hundreds of men who had failed to get in on Bonanza. The most popular of these creeks was Adams. The one least fancied was Eldorado, which flowed into Bonanza, just above Karmack's Discovery claim. Even Daylight disliked the looks of Eldorado; but, still riding his hunch, he bought a half share in one claim on it for half a sack of flour. A month later he paid eight hundred dollars for the adjoining claim. Three months later, enlarging this block of property, he paid forty thousand for a third claim; and, though it was concealed in the future, he was destined, not long after, to pay one hundred and fifty thousand for a fourth claim on the creek that had been the least liked of all the creeks.

In the meantime, and from the day he washed seven hundred dollars from a single pan and squatted over it and thought a long thought, he never again touched hand to pick and shovel. As he said to Joe Ladue the night of that wonderful washing: —

"Joe, I ain't never going to work hard again. Here's where I begin to use my brains. I'm going to farm gold. Gold will grow gold if you-all have the savvee and can get hold of some for seed. When I seen them seven hundred dollars in the bottom of the pan, I knew I had the seed at last."

"Where are you going to plant it?" Joe Ladue had asked.

And Daylight, with a wave of his hand, definitely indicated the whole landscape and the creeks that lay beyond the divides.

“There she is,” he said, “and you-all just watch my smoke. There’s millions here for the man who can see them. And I seen all them millions this afternoon when them seven hundred dollars peeped up at me from the bottom of the pan and chirruped, ‘Well, if here ain’t Burning Daylight come at last.’“

CHAPTER XI

The hero of the Yukon in the younger days before the Carmack strike, Burning Daylight now became the hero of the strike. The story of his hunch and how he rode it was told up and down the land. Certainly he had ridden it far and away beyond the boldest, for no five of the luckiest held the value in claims that he held. And, furthermore, he was still riding the hunch, and with no diminution of daring. The wise ones shook their heads and prophesied that he would lose every ounce he had won. He was speculating, they contended, as if the whole country was made of gold, and no man could win who played a placer strike in that fashion.

On the other hand, his holdings were reckoned as worth millions, and there were men so sanguine that they held the man a fool who coppered any bet Daylight laid. Behind his magnificent free-handedness and careless disregard for money were hard, practical judgment, imagination and vision, and the daring of the big gambler. He foresaw what with his own eyes he had never seen, and he played to win much or lose all.

“There’s too much gold here in Bonanza to be just a pocket,” he argued. “It’s sure come from a mother-lode somewhere, and other creeks will show up. You-all keep your eyes on Indian River. The creeks that drain that side the Klondike watershed are just as likely to have gold as the creeks that drain this side.”

And he backed this opinion to the extent of grub-staking half a dozen parties of prospectors across the big divide into the Indian River region. Other men, themselves failing to stake on lucky creeks, he put to work on his Bonanza claims. And he paid them well — sixteen dollars a day for an eight-hour shift, and he ran three shifts. He had grub to start them on, and when, on the last water, the Bella arrived loaded with provisions, he traded a warehouse site to Jack Kearns for a supply of grub that lasted all his men through the winter of 1896. And that winter, when famine pinched, and flour sold for two dollars a pound, he kept three shifts of men at work on all four of the Bonanza claims. Other mine-owners paid fifteen dollars a day to their men; but he had been the first to put men to work, and from the first he paid them a full ounce a day. One result was that his were picked men, and they more than earned their higher pay.

One of his wildest plays took place in the early winter after the freeze-up. Hundreds of stampeders, after staking on other creeks than Bonanza, had gone on disgruntled down river to Forty Mile and Circle City. Daylight mortgaged one of his Bonanza dumps with the Alaska Commercial Company, and tucked a letter of credit into his pouch. Then he harnessed his dogs and went down on the ice at a pace that only he could travel. One Indian down, another Indian back, and four teams of dogs was his record. And at Forty Mile and Circle City he bought claims by the score. Many of these were to prove utterly worthless, but some few of them were to show up more astoundingly than any on Bonanza. He bought right and left, paying as low as fifty dollars and as high as five thousand. This highest one he bought in the Tivoli Saloon. It was an upper claim on Eldorado, and when he agreed to the price, Jacob Wilkins, an old-timer just returned from a look at the moose-pasture, got up and left the room, saying: —

"Daylight, I've known you seven year, and you've always seemed sensible till now. And now you're just letting them rob you right and left. That's what it is — robbery. Five thousand for a claim on that damned moose-pasture is bunco. I just can't stay in the room and see you buncoed that way."

"I tell you-all," Daylight answered, "Wilkins, Carmack's strike's so big that we-all can't see it all. It's a lottery. Every claim I buy is a ticket. And there's sure going to be some capital prizes."

Jacob Wilkins, standing in the open door, sniffed incredulously.

"Now supposing, Wilkins," Daylight went on, "supposing you-all knew it was going to rain soup. What'd you-all do? Buy spoons, of course. Well, I'm sure buying spoons. She's going to rain soup up there on the Klondike, and them that has forks won't be catching none of it."

But Wilkins here slammed the door behind him, and Daylight broke off to finish the purchase of the claim.

Back in Dawson, though he remained true to his word and never touched hand to pick and shovel, he worked as hard as ever in his life. He had a thousand irons in the fire, and they kept him busy. Representation work was expensive, and he was compelled to travel often over the various creeks in order to decide which claims should lapse and which should be retained. A quartz miner himself in his early youth, before coming to Alaska, he dreamed of finding the mother-lode. A placer camp he knew was ephemeral, while a quartz camp abided, and he kept a score of men in the quest for months. The mother-lode was never found, and, years afterward, he estimated that the search for it had cost him fifty thousand dollars.

But he was playing big. Heavy as were his expenses, he won more heavily. He took lays, bought half shares, shared with the men he grub-staked, and made personal locations. Day and night his dogs were ready, and he owned the fastest teams; so that when a stampede to a new discovery was on, it was Burning Daylight to the fore through the longest, coldest nights till he blazed his stakes next to Discovery. In one way or another (to say nothing of the many worthless creeks) he came into possession of properties on the good creeks, such as Sulphur, Dominion, Excelsis, Siwash, Cristo, Alhambra, and Doolittle. The thousands he poured out flowed back in tens of thousands. Forty Mile men told the story of his two tons of flour, and made calculations of what it had returned him that ranged from half a million to a million. One thing was known beyond all doubt, namely, that the half share in the first Eldorado claim, bought by him for a half sack of flour, was worth five hundred thousand. On the other hand, it was told that when Freda, the dancer, arrived from over the passes in a Peterborough canoe in the midst of a drive of mush-ice on the Yukon, and when she offered a thousand dollars for ten sacks and could find no sellers, he sent the flour to her as a present without ever seeing her. In the same way ten sacks were sent to the lone Catholic priest who was starting the first hospital.

His generosity was lavish. Others called it insane. At a time when, riding his hunch, he was getting half a million for half a sack of flour, it was nothing less than insanity to give twenty whole sacks to a dancing-girl and a priest. But it was his way. Money was only a marker. It was the game that counted with him. The possession of millions made little change in him, except that he played the game more passionately. Temperate as he had always been, save on rare occasions, now that he had the wherewithal for unlimited drinks and had daily access to them, he drank even less. The most radical change lay in that, except when on trail, he no longer did his own cooking. A broken-down miner lived in his log cabin with him and now cooked for him. But it was the same food: bacon, beans, flour, prunes, dried fruits, and rice. He still dressed as formerly: overalls, German socks, moccasins, flannel shirt, fur cap, and blanket coat. He did not take up with cigars, which cost, the cheapest, from half a dollar to a dollar each. The same Bull Durham and brown-paper cigarette, hand-rolled, contented him.

It was true that he kept more dogs, and paid enormous prices for them. They were not a luxury, but a matter of business. He needed speed in his travelling and stampeding. And by the same token, he hired a cook. He was too busy to cook for himself, that was all. It was poor business, playing for millions, to spend time building fires and boiling water.

Dawson grew rapidly that winter of 1896. Money poured in on Daylight from the sale of town lots. He promptly invested it where it would gather more. In fact, he played the dangerous game of pyramiding, and no more perilous pyramiding than in a placer camp could be imagined. But he played with his eyes wide open.

"You-all just wait till the news of this strike reaches the Outside," he told his old-timer cronies in the Moosehorn Saloon. "The news won't get out till next spring. Then there's going to be three rushes. A summer rush of men coming in light; a fall rush of men with outfits; and a spring rush, the next year after that, of fifty thousand. You-all won't be able to see the landscape for chechaquos. Well, there's the summer and fall rush of 1897 to commence with. What are you-all going to do about it?"

"What are you going to do about it?" a friend demanded.

"Nothing," he answered. "I've sure already done it. I've got a dozen gangs strung out up the Yukon getting out logs. You-all'll see their rafts coming down after the river breaks. Cabins! They sure will be worth what a man can pay for them next fall. Lumber! It will sure go to top-notch. I've got two sawmills freighting in over the passes. They'll come down as soon as the lakes open up. And if you-all are thinking of needing lumber, I'll make you-all contracts right now — three hundred dollars a thousand, undressed."

Corner lots in desirable locations sold that winter for from ten to thirty thousand dollars. Daylight sent word out over the trails and passes for the newcomers to bring down log-rafts, and, as a result, the summer of 1897 saw his sawmills working day and night, on three shifts, and still he had logs left over with which to build cabins. These cabins, land included, sold at from one to several thousand dollars. Two-story log buildings, in the business part of town, brought him from forty to fifty thousand dollars apiece. These fresh accretions of capital were immediately invested in other ventures. He turned gold over and over, until everything that he touched seemed to turn to gold.

But that first wild winter of Carmack's strike taught Daylight many things. Despite the prodigality of his nature, he had poise. He watched the lavish waste of the mushroom millionaires, and failed quite to understand it. According to his nature and outlook, it was all very well to toss an ante away in a night's frolic. That was what he had done the night of the poker-game in Circle City when he lost fifty thousand — all that he possessed. But he had looked on that fifty thousand as a mere ante. When it came to millions, it was different. Such a fortune was a stake, and was not to be sown on bar-room floors, literally sown, flung broadcast out of the moosehide sacks by drunken millionaires who had lost all sense of proportion. There was McMann, who ran up a single bar-room bill of thirty-eight thousand dollars; and Jimmie the Rough, who spent one hundred thousand a month for four months in riotous living, and then fell down drunk in the snow one March night and was frozen to death; and Swiftwater Bill, who, after spending three valuable claims in an extravagance of debauchery, borrowed three thousand dollars with which to leave the country, and who, out of this sum, because the lady-love that had jilted him liked eggs, cornered the one hundred and ten dozen eggs on the Dawson market, paying twenty-four dollars a dozen for them and promptly feeding them to the wolf-dogs.

Champagne sold at from forty to fifty dollars a quart, and canned oyster stew at fifteen dollars. Daylight indulged in no such luxuries. He did not mind treating a bar-room of men to whiskey at fifty cents a drink, but there was somewhere in his own extravagant nature a sense of fitness and arithmetic that revolted against paying fifteen dollars for the contents of an oyster can. On the other hand, he possibly spent more money in relieving hard-luck cases than did the wildest of the new millionaires on insane debauchery. Father Judge, of the hospital, could have told of far more important donations than that first ten sacks of flour. And old-timers who came to Daylight invariably went away relieved according to their need. But fifty dollars for a quart of fizzy champagne! That was appalling.

And yet he still, on occasion, made one of his old-time hell-roaring nights. But he did so for different reasons. First, it was expected of him because it had been his way in the old days. And second, he could afford it. But he no longer cared quite so much for that form of diversion. He had developed, in a new way, the taste for power. It had become a lust with him. By far the wealthiest miner in Alaska, he wanted to be still wealthier. It was a big game he was playing in, and he liked it better than any other game. In a way, the part he played was creative. He was doing something. And at no time, striking another chord of his nature, could he take the joy in a million-dollar Eldorado dump that was at all equivalent to the joy he took in watching his two sawmills working and the big down river log-rafts swinging into the bank in the big eddy just above Moosehide Mountain. Gold, even on the scales, was, after all, an abstraction. It represented things and the power to do. But the sawmills were the things themselves, concrete and tangible, and they were things that were a means to the doing of more things. They were dreams come true, hard and indubitable realizations of fairy gossamers.

With the summer rush from the Outside came special correspondents for the big newspapers and magazines, and one and all, using unlimited space, they wrote Daylight up; so that, so far as the world was concerned, Daylight loomed the largest figure in Alaska. Of course, after several months, the world became interested in the Spanish War, and forgot all about him; but in the Klondike itself Daylight still remained the most prominent figure. Passing along the streets of Dawson, all heads turned to follow him, and in the saloons chechaquos watched him awesomely, scarcely taking their eyes from him as long as he remained in their range of vision. Not alone was he the richest man in the country, but he was Burning Daylight, the pioneer, the man who, almost in the midst of antiquity of that young land, had crossed the Chilcoot and drifted down the Yukon to meet those elder giants, Al Mayo and Jack McQuestion. He was the Burning Daylight of scores of wild adventures, the man who carried word to the ice-bound whaling fleet across the tundra wilderness to the Arctic Sea, who raced the mail from Circle to Salt Water and back again in sixty days, who saved the whole Tanana tribe from perishing in the winter of ‘91 — in short, the man who smote the chechaquos’ imaginations more violently than any other dozen men rolled into one.

He had the fatal facility for self-advertisement. Things he did, no matter how adventitious or spontaneous, struck the popular imagination as remarkable. And the latest thing he had done was always on men’s lips, whether it was being first in the heartbreaking stampede to Danish Creek, in killing the record baldface grizzly over on Sulphur Creek, or in winning the single-paddle canoe race on the Queen’s Birthday, after being forced to participate at the last moment by the failure of the sourdough representative to appear. Thus, one night in the Moosehorn, he locked horns with Jack Kearns in the long-promised return game of poker. The sky and eight o'clock in the morning were made the limits, and at the close of the game Daylight's winnings were two hundred and thirty thousand dollars. To Jack Kearns, already a several-times millionaire, this loss was not vital. But the whole community was thrilled by the size of the stakes, and each one of the dozen correspondents in the field sent out a sensational article.

To copper: a term in faro, meaning to play a card to lose.

CHAPTER XII

Despite his many sources of revenue, Daylight's pyramiding kept him pinched for cash throughout the first winter. The pay-gravel, thawed on bed-rock and hoisted to the surface, immediately froze again. Thus his dumps, containing several millions of gold, were inaccessible. Not until the returning sun thawed the dumps and melted the water to wash them was he able to handle the gold they contained. And then he found himself with a surplus of gold, deposited in the two newly organized banks; and he was promptly besieged by men and groups of men to enlist his capital in their enterprises.

But he elected to play his own game, and he entered combinations only when they were generally defensive or offensive. Thus, though he had paid the highest wages, he joined the Mine-owners' Association, engineered the fight, and effectually curbed the growing insubordination of the wage-earners. Times had changed. The old days were gone forever. This was a new era, and Daylight, the wealthy mine-owner, was loyal to his class affiliations. It was true, the old-timers who worked for him, in order to be saved from the club of the organized owners, were made foremen over the gang of chechaquos; but this, with Daylight, was a matter of heart, not head. In his heart he could not forget the old days, while with his head he played the economic game according to the latest and most practical methods.

But outside of such group-combinations of exploiters, he refused to bind himself to any man's game. He was playing a great lone hand, and he needed all his money for his own backing. The newly founded stock-exchange interested him keenly. He had never before seen such an institution, but he was quick to see its virtues and to utilize it. Most of all, it was gambling, and on many an occasion not necessary for the advancement of his own schemes, he, as he called it, went the stock-exchange a flutter, out of sheer wantonness and fun.

"It sure beats faro," was his comment one day, when, after keeping the Dawson speculators in a fever for a week by alternate bulling and bearing, he showed his hand and cleaned up what would have been a fortune to any other man.

Other men, having made their strike, had headed south for the States, taking a furlough from the grim Arctic battle. But, asked when he was going

Outside, Daylight always laughed and said when he had finished playing his hand. He also added that a man was a fool to quit a game just when a winning hand had been dealt him.

It was held by the thousands of hero-worshipping chechaquos that Daylight was a man absolutely without fear. But Bettles and Dan MacDonald and other sourdoughs shook their heads and laughed as they mentioned women. And they were right. He had always been afraid of them from the time, himself a lad of seventeen, when Queen Anne, of Juneau, made open and ridiculous love to him. For that matter, he never had known women. Born in a mining-camp where they were rare and mysterious, having no sisters, his mother dying while he was an infant, he had never been in contact with them. True, running away from Queen Anne, he had later encountered them on the Yukon and cultivated an acquaintance with them — the pioneer ones who crossed the passes on the trail of the men who had opened up the first diggings. But no lamb had ever walked with a wolf in greater fear and trembling than had he walked with them. It was a matter of masculine pride that he should walk with them, and he had done so in fair seeming; but women had remained to him a closed book, and he preferred a game of solo or seven-up any time.

And now, known as the King of the Klondike, carrying several other royal titles, such as Eldorado King, Bonanza King, the Lumber Baron, and the Prince of the Stampeders, not to omit the proudest appellation of all, namely, the Father of the Sourdoughs, he was more afraid of women than ever. As never before they held out their arms to him, and more women were flocking into the country day by day. It mattered not whether he sat at dinner in the gold commissioner’s house, called for the drinks in a dancehall, or submitted to an interview from the woman representative of the New York Sun, one and all of them held out their arms.

There was one exception, and that was Freda, the girl that danced, and to whom he had given the flour. She was the only woman in whose company he felt at ease, for she alone never reached out her arms. And yet it was from her that he was destined to receive next to his severest fright. It came about in the fall of 1897. He was returning from one of his dashes, this time to inspect Henderson, a creek that entered the Yukon just below the Stewart. Winter had come on with a rush, and he fought his way down the Yukon seventy miles in a frail Peterborough canoe in the midst of a run of mush-ice. Hugging the rim-ice that had already solidly formed, he shot across the ice-spewing mouth of the Klondike just in time to see a lone man dancing excitedly on the rim and pointing into the water. Next, he saw the fur-clad body of a woman, face under, sinking in the midst of the driving mush-ice. A lane opening in the swirl of the current, it was a matter of seconds to drive the canoe to the spot, reach to the shoulder in the water, and draw the woman gingerly to the canoe's side. It was Freda. And all might yet have been well with him, had she not, later, when brought back to consciousness, blazed at him with angry blue eyes and demanded: "Why did you? Oh, why did you?"

This worried him. In the nights that followed, instead of sinking immediately to sleep as was his wont, he lay awake, visioning her face and that blue blaze of wrath, and conning her words over and over. They rang with sincerity. The reproach was genuine. She had meant just what she said. And still he pondered.

The next time he encountered her she had turned away from him angrily and contemptuously. And yet again, she came to him to beg his pardon, and she dropped a hint of a man somewhere, sometime, — she said not how, — who had left her with no desire to live. Her speech was frank, but incoherent, and all he gleaned from it was that the event, whatever it was, had happened years before. Also, he gleaned that she had loved the man.

That was the thing — love. It caused the trouble. It was more terrible than frost or famine. Women were all very well, in themselves good to look upon and likable; but along came this thing called love, and they were seared to the bone by it, made so irrational that one could never guess what they would do next.

This Freda-woman was a splendid creature, full-bodied, beautiful, and nobody's fool; but love had come along and soured her on the world, driving her to the Klondike and to suicide so compellingly that she was made to hate the man that saved her life.

Well, he had escaped love so far, just as he had escaped smallpox; yet there it was, as contagious as smallpox, and a whole lot worse in running its course. It made men and women do such fearful and unreasonable things. It was like delirium tremens, only worse. And if he, Daylight, caught it, he might have it as badly as any of them. It was lunacy, stark lunacy, and contagious on top of it all. A half dozen young fellows were crazy over Freda. They all wanted to marry her. Yet she, in turn, was crazy over that some other fellow on the other side of the world, and would have nothing to do with them.

But it was left to the Virgin to give him his final fright. She was found one morning dead in her cabin. A shot through the head had done it, and she had left no message, no explanation. Then came the talk. Some wit, voicing public opinion, called it a case of too much Daylight. She had killed herself because of him. Everybody knew this, and said so. The correspondents wrote it up, and once more Burning Daylight, King of the Klondike, was sensationally featured in the Sunday supplements of the United States. The Virgin had straightened up, so the feature-stories ran, and correctly so. Never had she entered a Dawson City dance-hall. When she first arrived from Circle City, she had earned her living by washing clothes. Next, she had bought a sewing-machine and made men's drill parkas, fur caps, and moosehide mittens. Then she had gone as a clerk into the First Yukon Bank. All this, and more, was known and told, though one and all were agreed that Daylight, while the cause, had been the innocent cause of her untimely end.

And the worst of it was that Daylight knew it was true. Always would he remember that last night he had seen her. He had thought nothing of it at the time; but, looking back, he was haunted by every little thing that had happened. In the light of the tragic event, he could understand everything — her quietness, that calm certitude as if all vexing questions of living had been smoothed out and were gone, and that certain ethereal sweetness about all that she had said and done that had been almost maternal. He remembered the way she had looked at him, how she had laughed when he narrated Mickey Dolan's mistake in staking the fraction on Skookum Gulch. Her laughter had been lightly joyous, while at the same time it had lacked its oldtime robustness. Not that she had been grave or subdued. On the contrary, she had been so patently content, so filled with peace.

She had fooled him, fool that he was. He had even thought that night that her feeling for him had passed, and he had taken delight in the thought, and caught visions of the satisfying future friendship that would be theirs with this perturbing love out of the way.

And then, when he stood at the door, cap in hand, and said good night. It had struck him at the time as a funny and embarrassing thing, her bending over his hand and kissing it. He had felt like a fool, but he shivered now when he looked back on it and felt again the touch of her lips on his hand. She was saying good-by, an eternal good-by, and he had never guessed. At that very moment, and for all the moments of the evening, coolly and deliberately, as he well knew her way, she had been resolved to die. If he had only known it! Untouched by the contagious malady himself, nevertheless he would have married her if he had had the slightest inkling of what she contemplated. And yet he knew, furthermore, that hers was a certain stiff-kneed pride that would not have permitted her to accept marriage as an act of philanthropy. There had really been no saving her, after all. The love-disease had fastened upon her, and she had been doomed from the first to perish of it.

Her one possible chance had been that he, too, should have caught it. And he had failed to catch it. Most likely, if he had, it would have been from Freda or some other woman. There was Dartworthy, the college man who had staked the rich fraction on Bonanza above Discovery. Everybody knew that old Doolittle's daughter, Bertha, was madly in love with him. Yet, when he contracted the disease, of all women, it had been with the wife of Colonel Walthstone, the great Guggenhammer mining expert. Result, three lunacy cases: Dartworthy selling out his mine for one-tenth its value; the poor woman sacrificing her respectability and sheltered nook in society to flee with him in an open boat down the Yukon; and Colonel Walthstone, breathing murder and destruction, taking out after them in another open boat. The whole impending tragedy had moved on down the muddy Yukon, passing Forty Mile and Circle and losing itself in the wilderness beyond. But there it was, love, disorganizing men's and women's lives, driving toward destruction and death, turning topsy-turvy everything that was sensible and considerate, making bawds or suicides out of virtuous women, and scoundrels and murderers out of men who had always been clean and square.

For the first time in his life Daylight lost his nerve. He was badly and avowedly frightened. Women were terrible creatures, and the love-germ was especially plentiful in their neighborhood.

And they were so reckless, so devoid of fear. THEY were not frightened by what had happened to the Virgin. They held out their arms to him more seductively than ever. Even without his fortune, reckoned as a mere man, just past thirty, magnificently strong and equally good-looking and good-natured, he was a prize for most normal women. But when to his natural excellences were added the romance that linked with his name and the enormous wealth that was his, practically every free woman he encountered measured him with an appraising and delighted eye, to say nothing of more than one woman who was not free. Other men might have been spoiled by this and led to lose their heads; but the only effect on him was to increase his fright. As a result he refused most invitations to houses where women might be met, and frequented bachelor boards and the Moosehorn Saloon, which had no dance-hall attached.

CHAPTER XIII

Six thousand spent the winter of 1897 in Dawson, work on the creeks went on apace, while beyond the passes it was reported that one hundred thousand more were waiting for the spring. Late one brief afternoon, Daylight, on the benches between French Hill and Skookum Hill, caught a wider vision of things. Beneath him lay the richest part of Eldorado Creek, while up and down Bonanza he could see for miles. It was a scene of a vast devastation. The hills, to their tops, had been shorn of trees, and their naked sides showed signs of goring and perforating that even the mantle of snow could not hide. Beneath him, in every direction were the cabins of men. But not many men were visible. A blanket of smoke filled the valleys and turned the gray day to melancholy twilight. Smoke arose from a thousand holes in the snow, where, deep down on bed-rock, in the frozen muck and gravel, men crept and scratched and dug, and ever built more fires to break the grip of the frost. Here and there, where new shafts were starting, these fires flamed redly. Figures of men crawled out of the holes, or disappeared into them, or, on raised platforms of hand-hewn timber, windlassed the thawed gravel to the surface, where it immediately froze. The wreckage of the spring washing appeared everywhere — piles of sluice-boxes, sections of elevated flumes, huge water-wheels, — all the debris of an army of gold-mad men.

“It-all’s plain gophering,” Daylight muttered aloud.

He looked at the naked hills and realized the enormous wastage of wood that had taken place. From this bird’s-eye view he realized the monstrous confusion of their excited workings. It was a gigantic inadequacy. Each worked for himself, and the result was chaos. In this richest of diggings it cost out by their feverish, unthinking methods another dollar was left hopelessly in the earth. Given another year, and most of the claims would be worked out, and the sum of the gold taken out would no more than equal what was left behind.

Organization was what was needed, he decided; and his quick imagination sketched Eldorado Creek, from mouth to source, and from mountain top to mountain top, in the hands of one capable management. Even steam-thawing, as yet untried, but bound to come, he saw would be a makeshift. What should be done was to hydraulic the valley sides and benches, and then, on the creek bottom, to use gold-dredges such as he had heard described as operating in California.

There was the very chance for another big killing. He had wondered just what was precisely the reason for the Guggenhammers and the big English concerns sending in their high-salaried experts. That was their scheme. That was why they had approached him for the sale of worked-out claims and tailings. They were content to let the small mine-owners gopher out what they could, for there would be millions in the leavings.

And, gazing down on the smoky inferno of crude effort, Daylight outlined the new game he would play, a game in which the Guggenhammers and the rest would have to reckon with him. Cut along with the delight in the new conception came a weariness. He was tired of the long Arctic years, and he was curious about the Outside — the great world of which he had heard other men talk and of which he was as ignorant as a child. There were games out there to play. It was a larger table, and there was no reason why he with his millions should not sit in and take a hand. So it was, that afternoon on Skookum Hill, that he resolved to play this last best Klondike hand and pull for the Outside.

It took time, however. He put trusted agents to work on the heels of great experts, and on the creeks where they began to buy he likewise bought. Wherever they tried to corner a worked-out creek, they found him standing in the way, owning blocks of claims or artfully scattered claims that put all their plans to naught.

“I play you-all wide open to win — am I right” he told them once, in a heated conference.

Followed wars, truces, compromises, victories, and defeats. By 1898, sixty thousand men were on the Klondike and all their fortunes and affairs rocked back and forth and were affected by the battles Daylight fought. And more and more the taste for the larger game urged in Daylight’s mouth. Here he was already locked in grapples with the great Guggenhammers, and winning, fiercely winning. Possibly the severest struggle was waged on Ophir, the veriest of moose-pastures, whose low-grade dirt was valuable only because of its vastness. The ownership of a block of seven claims in the heart of it gave Daylight his grip and they could not come to terms. The Guggenhammer experts concluded that it was too big for him to handle, and when they gave him an ultimatum to that effect he accepted and bought them out.

The plan was his own, but he sent down to the States for competent engineers to carry it out. In the Rinkabilly watershed, eighty miles away, he built his reservoir, and for eighty miles the huge wooden conduit carried the water across country to Ophir. Estimated at three millions, the reservoir and conduit cost nearer four. Nor did he stop with this. Electric power plants were installed, and his workings were lighted as well as run by electricity. Other sourdoughs, who had struck it rich in excess of all their dreams, shook their heads gloomily, warned him that he would go broke, and declined to invest in so extravagant a venture.

But Daylight smiled, and sold out the remainder of his town-site holdings. He sold at the right time, at the height of the placer boom. When he prophesied to his old cronies, in the Moosehorn Saloon, that within five years town lots in Dawson could not be given away, while the cabins would be chopped up for firewood, he was laughed at roundly, and assured that the mother-lode would be found ere that time. But he went ahead, when his need for lumber was finished, selling out his sawmills as well. Likewise, he began to get rid of his scattered holdings on the various creeks, and without thanks to any one he finished his conduit, built his dredges, imported his machinery, and made the gold of Ophir immediately accessible. And he, who five years before had crossed over the divide from Indian River and threaded the silent wilderness, his dogs packing Indian fashion, himself living Indian fashion on straight moose meat, now heard the hoarse whistles calling his hundreds of laborers to work, and watched them toil under the white glare of the arc-lamps.

But having done the thing, he was ready to depart. And when he let the word go out, the Guggenhammers vied with the English concerns and with a new French company in bidding for Ophir and all its plant. The Guggenhammers bid highest, and the price they paid netted Daylight a clean million. It was current rumor that he was worth anywhere from twenty to thirty millions. But he alone knew just how he stood, and that, with his last claim sold and the table swept clean of his winnings, he had ridden his hunch to the tune of just a trifle over eleven millions.

His departure was a thing that passed into the history of the Yukon along with his other deeds. All the Yukon was his guest, Dawson the seat of the festivity. On that one last night no man’s dust save his own was good. Drinks were not to be purchased. Every saloon ran open, with extra relays of exhausted bartenders, and the drinks were given away. A man who refused this hospitality, and persisted in paying, found a dozen fights on his hands. The veriest chechaquos rose up to defend the name of Daylight from such insult. And through it all, on moccasined feet, moved Daylight, hell-roaring Burning Daylight, over-spilling with good nature and camaraderie, howling his he-wolf howl and claiming the night as his, bending men's arms down on the bars, performing feats of strength, his bronzed face flushed with drink, his black eyes flashing, clad in overalls and blanket coat, his ear-flaps dangling and his gauntleted mittens swinging from the cord across the shoulders. But this time it was neither an ante nor a stake that he threw away, but a mere marker in the game that he who held so many markers would not miss.

As a night, it eclipsed anything that Dawson had ever seen. It was Daylight's desire to make it memorable, and his attempt was a success. A goodly portion of Dawson got drunk that night. The fall weather was on, and, though the freeze-up of the Yukon still delayed, the thermometer was down to twenty-five below zero and falling. Wherefore, it was necessary to organize gangs of life-savers, who patrolled the streets to pick up drunken men from where they fell in the snow and where an hour's sleep would be fatal. Daylight, whose whim it was to make them drunk by hundreds and by thousands, was the one who initiated this life saving. He wanted Dawson to have its night, but, in his deeper processes never careless nor wanton, he saw to it that it was a night without accident. And, like his olden nights, his ukase went forth that there should be no quarrelling nor fighting, offenders to be dealt with by him personally. Nor did he have to deal with any. Hundreds of devoted followers saw to it that the evilly disposed were rolled in the snow and hustled off to bed. In the great world, where great captains of industry die, all wheels under their erstwhile management are stopped for a minute.

But in the Klondike, such was its hilarious sorrow at the departure of its captain, that for twenty-four hours no wheels revolved. Even great Ophir, with its thousand men on the pay-roll, closed down. On the day after the night there were no men present or fit to go to work.

Next morning, at break of day, Dawson said good-by. The thousands that lined the bank wore mittens and their ear-flaps pulled down and tied. It was thirty below zero, the rim-ice was thickening, and the Yukon carried a run of mush-ice. From the deck of the Seattle, Daylight waved and called his farewells. As the lines were cast off and the steamer swung out into the current, those near him saw the moisture well up in Daylight's eyes. In a way, it was to him departure from his native land, this grim Arctic region which was practically the only land he had known. He tore off his cap and waved it.

"Good-by, you-all!" he called. "Good-by, you-all!"

PART II

CHAPTER I

In no blaze of glory did Burning Daylight descend upon San Francisco. Not only had he been forgotten, but the Klondike along with him. The world was interested in other things, and the Alaskan adventure, like the Spanish War, was an old story. Many things had happened since then. Exciting things were happening every day, and the sensation-space of newspapers was limited. The effect of being ignored, however, was an exhilaration. Big man as he had been in the Arctic game, it merely showed how much bigger was this new game, when a man worth eleven millions, and with a history such as his, passed unnoticed.

He settled down in St. Francis Hotel, was interviewed by the cub-reporters on the hotel-run, and received brief paragraphs of notice for twenty-four hours. He grinned to himself, and began to look around and get acquainted with the new order of beings and things. He was very awkward and very self-possessed. In addition to the stiffening afforded his backbone by the conscious ownership of eleven millions, he possessed an enormous certitude.

Nothing abashed him, nor was he appalled by the display and culture and power around him. It was another kind of wilderness, that was all; and it was for him to learn the ways of it, the signs and trails and water-holes where good hunting lay, and the bad stretches of field and flood to be avoided. As usual, he fought shy of the women. He was still too badly scared to come to close quarters with the dazzling and resplendent creatures his own millions made accessible.

They looked and longed, but he so concealed his timidity that he had all the seeming of moving boldly among them. Nor was it his wealth alone that attracted them. He was too much a man, and too much an unusual type of man. Young yet, barely thirty-six, eminently handsome, magnificently strong, almost bursting with a splendid virility, his free trail-stride, never learned on pavements, and his black eyes, hinting of great spaces and unwearied with the close perspective of the city dwellers, drew many a curious and wayward feminine glance. He saw, grinned knowingly to himself, and faced them as so many dangers, with a cool demeanor that was a far greater personal achievement than had they been famine, frost, or flood.

He had come down to the States to play the man's game, not the woman's game; and the men he had not yet learned. They struck him as soft — soft physically; yet he divined them hard in their dealings, but hard under an exterior of supple softness. It struck him that there was something cat-like about them. He met them in the clubs, and wondered how real was the good-fellowship they displayed and how quickly they would unsheathe their claws and gouge and rend. “That's the proposition,” he repeated to himself; “what will they-all do when the play is close and down to brass tacks?” He felt unwarrantably suspicious of them. “They're sure slick,” was his secret judgment; and from bits of gossip dropped now and again he felt his judgment well buttressed. On the other hand, they radiated an atmosphere of manliness and the fair play that goes with manliness. They might gouge and rend in a fight — which was no more than natural; but he felt, somehow, that they would gouge and rend according to rule. This was the impression he got of them — a generalization tempered by knowledge that there was bound to be a certain percentage of scoundrels among them.

Several months passed in San Francisco during which time he studied the game and its rules, and prepared himself to take a hand. He even took private instruction in English, and succeeded in eliminating his worst faults, though in moments of excitement he was prone to lapse into “you-all,” “knowed,” “sure,” and similar solecisms. He learned to eat and dress and generally comport himself after the manner of civilized man; but through it all he remained himself, not unduly reverential nor considerative, and never hesitating to stride rough-shod over any soft-faced convention if it got in his way and the provocation were great enough. Also, and unlike the average run of weaker men coming from back countries and far places, he failed to reverence the particular tin gods worshipped variously by the civilized tribes of men. He had seen totems before, and knew them for what they were.

Tiring of being merely an onlooker, he ran up to Nevada, where the new gold-mining boom was fairly started — ”just to try a flutter,” as he phrased it to himself. The flutter on the Tonopah Stock Exchange lasted just ten days, during which time his smashing, wild-bull game played ducks and drakes with the more stereotyped gamblers, and at the end of which time, having gambled Floridel into his fist, he let go for a net profit of half a million. Whereupon, smacking his lips, he departed for San Francisco and the St. Francis Hotel. It tasted good, and his hunger for the game became more acute.

And once more the papers sensationalized him. BURNING DAYLIGHT was a big-letter headline again. Interviewers flocked about him.

Old files of magazines and newspapers were searched through, and the romantic and historic Elam Harnish, Adventurer of the Frost, King of the Klondike, and father of the Sourdoughs, strode upon the breakfast table of a million homes along with the toast and breakfast foods. Even before his elected time, he was forcibly launched into the game. Financiers and promoters, and all the flotsam and jetsam of the sea of speculation surged upon the shores of his eleven millions. In self-defence he was compelled to open offices. He had made them sit up and take notice, and now, willy-nilly, they were dealing him hands and clamoring for him to play. Well, play he would; he'd show 'em; even despite the elated prophesies made of how swiftly he would be trimmed — prophesies coupled with descriptions of the bucolic game he would play and of his wild and woolly appearance.

He dabbled in little things at first — "stalling for time," as he explained it to Holdsworthy, a friend he had made at the Alta-Pacific Club. Daylight himself was a member of the club, and Holdsworthy had proposed him. And it was well that Daylight played closely at first, for he was astounded by the multitudes of sharks — "ground-sharks," he called them — that flocked about him.

He saw through their schemes readily enough, and even marveled that such numbers of them could find sufficient prey to keep them going. Their rascality and general dubiousness was so transparent that he could not understand how any one could be taken in by them.

And then he found that there were sharks and sharks. Holdsworthy treated him more like a brother than a mere fellow-clubman, watching over him, advising him, and introducing him to the magnates of the local financial world. Holdsworthy's family lived in a delightful bungalow near Menlo Park, and here Daylight spent a number of weekends, seeing a fineness and kindness of home life of which he had never dreamed. Holdsworthy was an enthusiast over flowers, and a half lunatic over raising prize poultry; and these engrossing madnesses were a source of perpetual joy to Daylight, who looked on in tolerant good humor. Such amiable weaknesses tokened the healthfulness of the man, and drew Daylight closer to him. A prosperous, successful business man without great ambition, was

Daylight's estimate of him — a man too easily satisfied with the small stakes of the game ever to launch out in big play.

On one such week-end visit, Holdsworthy let him in on a good thing, a good little thing, a brickyard at Glen Ellen. Daylight listened closely to the other's description of the situation. It was a most reasonable venture, and Daylight's one objection was that it was so small a matter and so far out of his line; and he went into it only as a matter of friendship, Holdsworthy explaining that he was himself already in a bit, and that while it was a good thing, he would be compelled to make sacrifices in other directions in order to develop it. Daylight advanced the capital, fifty thousand dollars, and, as he laughingly explained afterward, "I was stung, all right, but it wasn't Holdsworthy that did it half as much as those blamed chickens and fruit-trees of his."

It was a good lesson, however, for he learned that there were few faiths in the business world, and that even the simple, homely faith of breaking bread and eating salt counted for little in the face of a worthless brickyard and fifty thousand dollars in cash.

But the sharks and sharks of various orders and degrees, he concluded, were on the surface. Deep down, he divined, were the integrities and the stabilities. These big captains of industry and masters of finance, he decided, were the men to work with. By the very nature of their huge deals and enterprises they had to play fair. No room there for little sharpers' tricks and bunco games. It was to be expected that little men should salt gold-mines with a shotgun and work off worthless brick-yards on their friends, but in high finance such methods were not worth while. There the men were engaged in developing the country, organizing its railroads, opening up its mines, making accessible its vast natural resources. Their play was bound to be big and stable. "They sure can't afford tin-horn tactics," was his summing up.

So it was that he resolved to leave the little men, the Holdsworthys, alone; and, while he met them in good-fellowship, he chummed with none, and formed no deep friendships. He did not dislike the little men, the men of the Alta-Pacific, for instance. He merely did not elect to choose them for partners in the big game in which he intended to play. What that big game was, even he did not know. He was waiting to find it. And in the meantime he played small hands, investing in several arid-lands reclamation projects and keeping his eyes open for the big chance when it should come along.

And then he met John Dowsett, the great John Dowsett. The whole thing was fortuitous. This cannot be doubted, as Daylight himself knew, it was by the merest chance, when in Los Angeles, that he heard the tuna were running strong at Santa Catalina, and went over to the island instead of returning directly to San Francisco as he had planned. There he met John Dowsett, resting off for several days in the middle of a flying western trip. Dowsett had of course heard of the spectacular Klondike King and his rumored thirty millions, and he certainly found himself interested by the man in the acquaintance that was formed. Somewhere along in this acquaintanceship the idea must have popped into his brain. But he did not broach it, preferring to mature it carefully. So he talked in large general ways, and did his best to be agreeable and win Daylight's friendship.

It was the first big magnate Daylight had met face to face, and he was pleased and charmed. There was such a kindly humanness about the man, such a genial democraticness, that Daylight found it hard to realize that this was THE John Dowsett, president of a string of banks, insurance manipulator, reputed ally of the lieutenants of Standard Oil, and known ally of the Guggenhammers.

Nor did his looks belie his reputation and his manner.

Physically, he guaranteed all that Daylight knew of him. Despite his sixty years and snow-white hair, his hand-shake was firmly hearty, and he showed no signs of decrepitude, walking with a quick, snappy step, making all movements definitely and decisively. His skin was a healthy pink, and his thin, clean lips knew the way to writhe heartily over a joke. He had honest blue eyes of palest blue; they looked out at one keenly and frankly from under shaggy gray brows. His mind showed itself disciplined and orderly, and its workings struck Daylight as having all the certitude of a steel trap. He was a man who KNEW and who never decorated his knowledge with foolish frills of sentiment or emotion. That he was accustomed to command was patent, and every word and gesture tingled with power. Combined with this was his sympathy and tact, and Daylight could note easily enough all the earmarks that distinguished him from a little man of the Holdsworthy caliber. Daylight knew also his history, the prime old American stock from which he had descended, his own war record, the John Dowsett before him who had been one of the banking buttresses of the Cause of the Union, the Commodore Dowsett of the War of 1812 the General Dowsett of Revolutionary fame, and that first far Dowsett, owner of lands and slaves in early New England.

"He's sure the real thing," he told one of his fellow-clubmen afterwards, in the smoking-room of the Alta-Pacific. "I tell you, Gallon, he was a genuine surprise to me. I knew the big ones had to be like that, but I had to see him to really know it. He's one of the fellows that does things. You can see it sticking out all over him. He's one in a thousand, that's straight, a man to tie to. There's no limit to any game he plays, and you can stack on it that he plays right up to the handle. I bet he can lose or win half a dozen million without batting an eye."

Gallon puffed at his cigar, and at the conclusion of the panegyric regarded the other curiously; but Daylight, ordering cocktails, failed to note this curious stare.

"Going in with him on some deal, I suppose," Gallon remarked.

"Nope, not the slightest idea. Here's kindness. I was just explaining that I'd come to understand how these big fellows do big things. Why, d'ye know, he gave me such a feeling that he knew everything, that I was plumb ashamed of myself."

"I guess I could give him cards and spades when it comes to driving a dog-team, though," Daylight observed, after a meditative pause. "And I really believe I could put him on to a few wrinkles in poker and placer mining, and maybe in paddling a birch canoe. And maybe I stand a better chance to learn the game he's been playing all his life than he would stand of learning the game I played up North."

CHAPTER II

It was not long afterward that Daylight came on to New York. A letter from John Dowsett had been the cause — a simple little typewritten letter of several lines. But Daylight had thrilled as he read it. He remembered the thrill that was his, a callow youth of fifteen, when, in Tempas Butte, through lack of a fourth man, Tom Galsworthy, the gambler, had said, “Get in, Kid; take a hand.” That thrill was his now. The bald, typewritten sentences seemed gorged with mystery. “Our Mr. Howison will call upon you at your hotel. He is to be trusted. We must not be seen together. You will understand after we have had our talk.” Daylight conned the words over and over. That was it. The big game had arrived, and it looked as if he were being invited to sit in and take a hand. Surely, for no other reason would one man so peremptorily invite another man to make a journey across the continent.

They met — thanks to “our” Mr. Howison, — up the Hudson, in a magnificent country home. Daylight, according to instructions, arrived in a private motor-car which had been furnished him. Whose car it was he did not know any more than did he know the owner of the house, with its generous, rolling, tree-studded lawns. Dowsett was already there, and another man whom Daylight recognized before the introduction was begun. It was Nathaniel Letton, and none other. Daylight had seen his face a score of times in the magazines and newspapers, and read about his standing in the financial world and about his endowed University of Daratona. He, likewise, struck Daylight as a man of power, though he was puzzled in that he could find no likeness to Dowsett. Except in the matter of cleanness, — a cleanness that seemed to go down to the deepest fibers of him, — Nathaniel Letton was unlike the other in every particular. Thin to emaciation, he seemed a cold flame of a man, a man of a mysterious, chemic sort of flame, who, under a glacier-like exterior, conveyed, somehow, the impression of the ardent heat of a thousand suns. His large gray eyes were mainly responsible for this feeling, and they blazed out feverishly from what was almost a death’s-head, so thin was the face, the skin of which was a ghastly, dull, dead white. Not more than fifty, thatched with a sparse growth of iron-gray hair, he looked several times the age of Dowsett. Yet Nathaniel Letton possessed control — Daylight could see that plainly. He was a thin-faced ascetic, living in a state of high, attenuated calm — a molten planet under a transcontinental ice sheet. And yet, above all most of all, Daylight was impressed by the terrific and almost awful cleanness of the man. There was no dross in him. He had all the seeming of having been purged by fire. Daylight had the feeling that a healthy man-oath would be a deadly offence to his ears, a sacrilege and a blasphemy.

They drank — that is, Nathaniel Letton took mineral water served by the smoothly operating machine of a lackey who inhabited the place, while Dowsett took Scotch and soda and Daylight a cocktail. Nobody seemed to notice the unusualness of a Martini at midnight, though Daylight looked sharply for that very thing; for he had long since learned that Martinis had their strictly appointed times and places. But he liked Martinis, and, being a natural man, he chose deliberately to drink when and how he pleased. Others had noticed this peculiar habit of his, but not so Dowsett and Letton; and Daylight's secret thought was: "They sure wouldn't bat an eye if I called for a glass of corrosive sublimate."

Leon Guggenhammer arrived in the midst of the drink, and ordered Scotch. Daylight studied him curiously. This was one of the great Guggenhammer family; a younger one, but nevertheless one of the crowd with which he had locked grapples in the North. Nor did Leon Guggenhammer fail to mention cognizance of that old affair. He complimented Daylight on his prowess — "The echoes of Ophir came down to us, you know. And I must say, Mr. Daylight — er, Mr. Harnish, that you whipped us roundly in that affair."

Echoes! Daylight could not escape the shock of the phrase — echoes had come down to them of the fight into which he had flung all his strength and the strength of his Klondike millions. The Guggenhammers sure must go some when a fight of that dimension was no more than a skirmish of which they deigned to hear echoes.

"They sure play an almighty big game down here," was his conclusion, accompanied by a corresponding elation that it was just precisely that almighty big game in which he was about to be invited to play a hand. For the moment he poignantly regretted that rumor was not true, and that his eleven millions were not in reality thirty millions. Well, that much he would be frank about; he would let them know exactly how many stacks of chips he could buy.

Leon Guggenhammer was young and fat. Not a day more than thirty, his face, save for the adumbrated puff sacks under the eyes, was as smooth and lineless as a boy's. He, too, gave the impression of cleanness. He showed in the pink of health; his unblemished, smooth-shaven skin shouted advertisement of his splendid physical condition. In the face of that perfect skin, his very fatness and mature, rotund paunch could be nothing other than normal. He was constituted to be prone to fatness, that was all.

The talk soon centred down to business, though Guggenhammer had first to say his say about the forthcoming international yacht race and about his own palatial steam yacht, the Electra, whose recent engines were already antiquated. Dowsett broached the plan, aided by an occasional remark from the other two, while Daylight asked questions. Whatever the proposition was, he was going into it with his eyes open. And they filled his eyes with the practical vision of what they had in mind.

"They will never dream you are with us," Guggenhammer interjected, as the outlining of the matter drew to a close, his handsome Jewish eyes flashing enthusiastically. "They'll think you are raiding on your own in proper buccaneer style."

"Of course, you understand, Mr. Harnish, the absolute need for keeping our alliance in the dark," Nathaniel Letton warned gravely.

Daylight nodded his head. "And you also understand," Letton went on, "that the result can only be productive of good. The thing is legitimate and right, and the only ones who may be hurt are the stock gamblers themselves. It is not an attempt to smash the market. As you see yourself, you are to bull the market. The honest investor will be the gainer."

"Yes, that's the very thing," Dowsett said. "The commercial need for copper is continually increasing. Ward Valley Copper, and all that it stands for, — practically one-quarter of the world's supply, as I have shown you, — is a big thing, how big, even we can scarcely estimate. Our arrangements are made. We have plenty of capital ourselves, and yet we want more. Also, there is too much Ward Valley out to suit our present plans. Thus we kill both birds with one stone — "

"And I am the stone," Daylight broke in with a smile.

"Yes, just that. Not only will you bull Ward Valley, but you will at the same time gather Ward Valley in. This will be of inestimable advantage to us, while you and all of us will profit by it as well. And as Mr. Letton has pointed out, the thing is legitimate and square. On the eighteenth the directors meet, and, instead of the customary dividend, a double dividend will be declared."

"And where will the shorts be then?" Leon Guggenhammer cried excitedly.

"The shorts will be the speculators," Nathaniel Letton explained, "the gamblers, the froth of Wall Street — you understand. The genuine investors will not be hurt. Furthermore, they will have learned for the thousandth time to have confidence in Ward Valley. And with their confidence we can carry through the large developments we have outlined to you."

"There will be all sorts of rumors on the street," Dowsett warned Daylight, "but do not let them frighten you. These rumors may even originate with us. You can see how and why clearly. But rumors are to be no concern of yours. You are on the inside. All you have to do is buy, buy, buy, and keep on buying to the last stroke, when the directors declare the double dividend. Ward Valley will jump so that it won't be feasible to buy after that."

"What we want," Letton took up the strain, pausing significantly to sip his mineral water, "what we want is to take large blocks of Ward Valley off the hands of the public. We could do this easily enough by depressing the market and frightening the holders. And we could do it more cheaply in such fashion. But we are absolute masters of the situation, and we are fair enough to buy Ward Valley on a rising market. Not that we are philanthropists, but that we need the investors in our big development scheme. Nor do we lose directly by the transaction. The instant the action of the directors becomes known, Ward Valley will rush heavenward. In addition, and outside the legitimate field of the transaction, we will pinch the shorts for a very large sum. But that is only incidental, you understand, and in a way, unavoidable. On the other hand, we shall not turn up our noses at that phase of it. The shorts shall be the veriest gamblers, of course, and they will get no more than they deserve."

"And one other thing, Mr. Harnish," Guggenhammer said, "if you exceed your available cash, or the amount you care to invest in the venture, don't fail immediately to call on us. Remember, we are behind you."

"Yes, we are behind you," Dowsett repeated.

Nathaniel Letton nodded his head in affirmation.

"Now about that double dividend on the eighteenth — " John Dowsett drew a slip of paper from his note-book and adjusted his glasses.

“Let me show you the figures. Here, you see...”

And thereupon he entered into a long technical and historical explanation of the earnings and dividends of Ward Valley from the day of its organization.

The whole conference lasted not more than an hour, during which time Daylight lived at the topmost of the highest peak of life that he had ever scaled. These men were big players. They were powers. True, as he knew himself, they were not the real inner circle. They did not rank with the Morgans and Harrimans. And yet they were in touch with those giants and were themselves lesser giants. He was pleased, too, with their attitude toward him. They met him deferentially, but not patronizingly. It was the deference of equality, and Daylight could not escape the subtle flattery of it; for he was fully aware that in experience as well as wealth they were far and away beyond him.

“We’ll shake up the speculating crowd,” Leon Guggenhammer proclaimed jubilantly, as they rose to go. “And you are the man to do it, Mr. Harnish. They are bound to think you are on your own, and their shears are all sharpened for the trimming of newcomers like you.”

“They will certainly be misled,” Letton agreed, his eerie gray eyes blazing out from the voluminous folds of the huge Mueller with which he was swathing his neck to the ears. “Their minds run in ruts. It is the unexpected that upsets their stereotyped calculations — any new combination, any strange factor, any fresh variant. And you will be all that to them, Mr. Harnish. And I repeat, they are gamblers, and they will deserve all that befalls them. They clog and cumber all legitimate enterprise. You have no idea of the trouble they cause men like us — sometimes, by their gambling tactics, upsetting the soundest plans, even overturning the stablest institutions.”

Dowsett and young Guggenhammer went away in one motor-car, and Letton by himself in another. Daylight, with still in the forefront of his consciousness all that had occurred in the preceding hour, was deeply impressed by the scene at the moment of departure. The three machines stood like weird night monsters at the gravelled foot of the wide stairway under the unlighted porte-cochere. It was a dark night, and the lights of the motor-cars cut as sharply through the blackness as knives would cut through solid substance. The obsequious lackey — the automatic genie of the house which belonged to none of the three men, — stood like a graven statue after having helped them in. The fur-coated chauffeurs bulked dimly in their seats. One after the other, like spurred steeds, the cars leaped into the blackness, took the curve of the driveway, and were gone.

Daylight's car was the last, and, peering out, he caught a glimpse of the unlighted house that loomed hugely through the darkness like a mountain. Whose was it? he wondered. How came they to use it for their secret conference? Would the lackey talk? How about the chauffeurs? Were they trusted men like "our" Mr. Howison? Mystery? The affair was alive with it. And hand in hand with mystery walked Power. He leaned back and inhaled his cigarette. Big things were afoot. The cards were shuffled even the for a mighty deal, and he was in on it. He remembered back to his poker games with Jack Kearns, and laughed aloud. He had played for thousands in those days on the turn of a card; but now he was playing for millions. And on the eighteenth, when that dividend was declared, he chuckled at the confusion that would inevitably descend upon the men with the sharpened shears waiting to trim him — him, Burning Daylight.

CHAPTER III

Back at his hotel, though nearly two in the morning, he found the reporters waiting to interview him. Next morning there were more. And thus, with blare of paper trumpet, was he received by New York. Once more, with beating of toms-toms and wild hullaballoo, his picturesque figure strode across the printed sheet. The King of the Klondike, the hero of the Arctic, the thirty-million-dollar millionaire of the North, had come to New York. What had he come for? To trim the New Yorkers as he had trimmed the Tonopah crowd in Nevada? Wall Street had best watch out, for the wild man of Klondike had just come to town. Or, perchance, would Wall Street trim him? Wall Street had trimmed many wild men; would this be Burning Daylight's fate? Daylight grinned to himself, and gave out ambiguous interviews. It helped the game, and he grinned again, as he meditated that Wall Street would sure have to go some before it trimmed him.

They were prepared for him to play, and, when heavy buying of Ward Valley began, it was quickly decided that he was the operator. Financial gossip buzzed and hummed. He was after the Guggenhammers once more. The story of Ophir was told over again and sensationalized until even Daylight scarcely recognized it. Still, it was all grist to his mill. The stock gamblers were clearly befooled. Each day he increased his buying, and so eager were the sellers that Ward Valley rose but slowly. "It sure beats poker," Daylight whispered gleefully to himself, as he noted the perturbation he was causing. The newspapers hazarded countless guesses and surmises, and Daylight was constantly dogged by a small battalion of reporters. His own interviews were gems. Discovering the delight the newspapers took in his vernacular, in his "you-alls," and "sures," and "surge-ups," he even exaggerated these particularities of speech, exploiting the phrases he had heard other frontiersmen use, and inventing occasionally a new one of his own.

A wildly exciting time was his during the week preceding Thursday the eighteenth. Not only was he gambling as he had never gambled before, but he was gambling at the biggest table in the world and for stakes so large that even the case-hardened habitues of that table were compelled to sit up. In spite of the unlimited selling, his persistent buying compelled Ward Valley steadily to rise, and as Thursday approached, the situation became acute. Something had to smash. How much Ward Valley was this Klondike gambler going to buy? How much could he buy? What was the Ward Valley crowd doing all this time? Daylight appreciated the interviews with them that appeared — interviews delightfully placid and non-committal. Leon Guggenhammer even hazarded the opinion that this Northland Croesus might possibly be making a mistake. But not that they cared, John Dowsett explained. Nor did they object. While in the dark regarding his intentions, of one thing they were certain; namely, that he was bulling Ward Valley. And they did not mind that. No matter what happened to him and his spectacular operations, Ward Valley was all right, and would remain all right, as firm as the Rock of Gibraltar. No; they had no Ward Valley to sell, thank you. This purely fictitious state of the market was bound shortly to pass, and Ward Valley was not to be induced to change the even tenor of its way by any insane stock exchange flurry. "It is purely gambling from beginning to end," were Nathaniel Letton's words; "and we refuse to have anything to do with it or to take notice of it in any way."

During this time Daylight had several secret meetings with his partners — one with Leon Guggenhammer, one with John Dowsett, and two with Mr. Howison. Beyond congratulations, they really amounted to nothing; for, as he was informed, everything was going satisfactorily.

But on Tuesday morning a rumor that was disconcerting came to Daylight's ears. It was also published in the Wall Street Journal, and it was to the effect, on apparently straight inside information, that on Thursday, when the directors of Ward Valley met, instead of the customary dividend being declared, an assessment would be levied. It was the first check Daylight had received. It came to him with a shock that if the thing were so he was a broken man. And it also came to him that all this colossal operating of his was being done on his own money. Dowsett, Guggenhammer, and Letton were risking nothing. It was a panic, short-lived, it was true, but sharp enough while it lasted to make him remember Holdsworthy and the brick-yard, and to impel him to cancel all buying orders while he rushed to a telephone.

"Nothing in it — only a rumor," came Leon Guggenhammer's throaty voice in the receiver. "As you know," said Nathaniel Letton, "I am one of the directors, and I should certainly be aware of it were such action contemplated." And John Dowsett: "I warned you against just such rumors.

There is not an iota of truth in it — certainly not. I tell you on my honor as a gentleman.”

Heartily ashamed of himself for his temporary loss of nerve, Daylight returned to his task. The cessation of buying had turned the Stock Exchange into a bedlam, and down all the line of stocks the bears were smashing. Ward Valley, as the ape, received the brunt of the shock, and was already beginning to tumble. Daylight calmly doubled his buying orders. And all through Tuesday and Wednesday, and Thursday morning, he went on buying, while Ward Valley rose triumphantly higher. Still they sold, and still he bought, exceeding his power to buy many times over, when delivery was taken into account. What of that? On this day the double dividend would be declared, he assured himself. The pinch of delivery would be on the shorts. They would be making terms with him.

And then the thunderbolt struck. True to the rumor, Ward Valley levied the assessment. Daylight threw up his arms. He verified the report and quit. Not alone Ward Valley, but all securities were being hammered down by the triumphant bears. As for Ward Valley, Daylight did not even trouble to learn if it had fetched bottom or was still tumbling. Not stunned, not even bewildered, while Wall Street went mad, Daylight withdrew from the field to think it over. After a short conference with his brokers, he proceeded to his hotel, on the way picking up the evening papers and glancing at the head-lines. BURNING DAYLIGHT CLEANED OUT, he read; DAYLIGHT GETS HIS; ANOTHER WESTERNER FAILS TO FIND EASY MONEY. As he entered his hotel, a later edition announced the suicide of a young man, a lamb, who had followed Daylight’s play.

What in hell did he want to kill himself for? was Daylight’s muttered comment.

He passed up to his rooms, ordered a Martini cocktail, took off his shoes, and sat down to think. After half an hour he roused himself to take the drink, and as he felt the liquor pass warmingly through his body, his features relaxed into a slow, deliberate, yet genuine grin. He was laughing at himself.

“Buncoed, by gosh!” he muttered.

Then the grin died away, and his face grew bleak and serious. Leaving out his interests in the several Western reclamation projects (which were still assessing heavily), he was a ruined man. But harder hit than this was his pride. He had been so easy. They had gold-bricked him, and he had nothing to show for it. The simplest farmer would have had documents, while he had nothing but a gentleman's agreement, and a verbal one at that. Gentleman's agreement. He snorted over it. John Dowsett's voice, just as he had heard it in the telephone receiver, sounded in his ears the words, "On my honor as a gentleman." They were sneak-thieves and swindlers, that was what they were, and they had given him the double-cross. The newspapers were right. He had come to New York to be trimmed, and Messrs. Dowsett, Letton, and Guggenhammer had done it. He was a little fish, and they had played with him ten days — ample time in which to swallow him, along with his eleven millions. Of course, they had been unloading on him all the time, and now they were buying Ward Valley back for a song ere the market righted itself. Most probably, out of his share of the swag, Nathaniel Letton would erect a couple of new buildings for that university of his. Leon Guggenhammer would buy new engines for that yacht, or a whole fleet of yachts. But what the devil Dowsett would do with his whack, was beyond him — most likely start another string of banks.

And Daylight sat and consumed cocktails and saw back in his life to Alaska, and lived over the grim years in which he had battled for his eleven millions. For a while murder ate at his heart, and wild ideas and sketchy plans of killing his betrayers flashed through his mind. That was what that young man should have done instead of killing himself. He should have gone gunning. Daylight unlocked his grip and took out his automatic pistol — a big Colt's .44. He released the safety catch with his thumb, and operating the sliding outer barrel, ran the contents of the clip through the mechanism. The eight cartridges slid out in a stream. He refilled the clip, threw a cartridge into the chamber, and, with the trigger at full cock, thrust up the safety ratchet. He shoved the weapon into the side pocket of his coat, ordered another Martini, and resumed his seat.

He thought steadily for an hour, but he grinned no more. Lines formed in his face, and in those lines were the travail of the North, the bite of the frost, all that he had achieved and suffered — the long, unending weeks of trail, the bleak tundra shore of Point Barrow, the smashing ice-jam of the Yukon, the battles with animals and men, the lean-dragged days of famine, the long months of stinging hell among the mosquitoes of the Koyokuk, the toil of pick and shovel, the scars and mars of pack-strap and tump-line, the straight meat diet with the dogs, and all the long procession of twenty full years of toil and sweat and endeavor.

At ten o’clock he arose and pored over the city directory. Then he put on his shoes, took a cab, and departed into the night. Twice he changed cabs, and finally fetched up at the night office of a detective agency. He superintended the thing himself, laid down money in advance in profuse quantities, selected the six men he needed, and gave them their instructions. Never, for so simple a task, had they been so well paid; for, to each, in addition to office charges, he gave a five-hundred-dollar bill, with the promise of another if he succeeded. Some time next day, he was convinced, if not sooner, his three silent partners would come together. To each one two of his detectives were to be attached. Time and place was all he wanted to learn.

“Stop at nothing, boys,” were his final instructions. “I must have this information. Whatever you do, whatever happens, I’ll sure see you through.”

Returning to his hotel, he changed cabs as before, went up to his room, and with one more cocktail for a nightcap, went to bed and to sleep. In the morning he dressed and shaved, ordered breakfast and the newspapers sent up, and waited. But he did not drink. By nine o’clock his telephone began to ring and the reports to come in. Nathaniel Letton was taking the train at Tarrytown. John Dowsett was coming down by the subway. Leon Guggenhammer had not stirred out yet, though he was assuredly within. And in this fashion, with a map of the city spread out before him, Daylight followed the movements of his three men as they drew together. Nathaniel Letton was at his offices in the Mutual-Solander Building. Next arrived Guggenhammer. Dowsett was still in his own offices. But at eleven came the word that he also had arrived, and several minutes later Daylight was in a hired motor-car and speeding for the Mutual-Solander Building.

CHAPTER IV

Nathaniel Letton was talking when the door opened; he ceased, and with his two companions gazed with controlled perturbation at Burning Daylight striding into the room. The free, swinging movements of the trail-traveler were unconsciously exaggerated in that stride of his. In truth, it seemed to him that he felt the trail beneath his feet.

"Howdy, gentlemen, howdy," he remarked, ignoring the unnatural calm with which they greeted his entrance. He shook hands with them in turn, striding from one to another and gripping their hands so heartily that Nathaniel Letton could not forbear to wince. Daylight flung himself into a massive chair and sprawled lazily, with an appearance of fatigue. The leather grip he had brought into the room he dropped carelessly beside him on the floor.

"Goddle mighty, but I've sure been going some," he sighed. "We sure trimmed them beautiful. It was real slick. And the beauty of the play never dawned on me till the very end. It was pure and simple knock down and drag out. And the way they fell for it was amazin'."

The geniality in his lazy Western drawl reassured them. He was not so formidable, after all. Despite the act that he had effected an entrance in the face of Letton's instructions to the outer office, he showed no indication of making a scene or playing rough.

"Well," Daylight demanded good-humoredly, "ain't you-all got a good word for your pardner? Or has his sure enough brilliance plumb dazzled you-all?"

Letton made a dry sound in his throat. Dowsett sat quietly and waited, while Leon Guggenhammer struggled into articulation.

"You have certainly raised Cain," he said.

Daylight's black eyes flashed in a pleased way.

"Didn't I, though!" he proclaimed jubilantly. "And didn't we fool'em! I was totally surprised. I never dreamed they would be that easy.

"And now," he went on, not permitting the pause to grow awkward, "we-all might as well have an accounting. I'm pullin' West this afternoon on that blamed Twentieth Century." He tugged at his grip, got it open, and dipped into it with both his hands. "But don't forget, boys, when you-all want me to hornswoggle Wall Street another flutter, all you-all have to do is whisper the word. I'll sure be right there with the goods."

His hands emerged, clutching a great mass of stubs, check-books, and broker's receipts. These he deposited in a heap on the big table, and dipping again, he fished out the stragglers and added them to the pile. He consulted a slip of paper, drawn from his coat pocket, and read aloud: —

"Ten million twenty-seven thousand and forty-two dollars and sixty-eight cents is my figurin' on my expenses. Of course that-all's taken from the winnings before we-all get to figurin' on the whack-up. Where's your figures? It must a' been a Goddle mighty big clean-up."

The three men looked their bepuzzlement at one another. The man was a bigger fool than they had imagined, or else he was playing a game which they could not divine.

Nathaniel Letton moistened his lips and spoke up.

"It will take some hours yet, Mr. Harnish, before the full accounting can be made. Mr. Howison is at work upon it now. We — ah — as you say, it has been a gratifying clean-up. Suppose we have lunch together and talk it over. I'll have the clerks work through the noon hour, so that you will have ample time to catch your train."

Dowsett and Guggenhammer manifested a relief that was almost obvious. The situation was clearing. It was disconcerting, under the circumstances, to be pent in the same room with this heavy-muscled, Indian-like man whom they had robbed. They remembered unpleasantly the many stories of his strength and recklessness. If Letton could only put him off long enough for them to escape into the policed world outside the office door, all would be well; and Daylight showed all the signs of being put off.

"I'm real glad to hear that," he said. "I don't want to miss that train, and you-all have done me proud, gentlemen, letting me in on this deal. I just do appreciate it without being able to express my feelings. But I am sure almighty curious, and I'd like terrible to know, Mr. Letton, what your figures of our winning is. Can you-all give me a rough estimate?"

Nathaniel Letton did not look appealingly at his two friends, but in the brief pause they felt that appeal pass out from him. Dowsett, of sterner mould than the others, began to divine that the Klondiker was playing. But the other two were still older the blandishment of his child-like innocence.

"It is extremely — er — difficult," Leon Guggenhammer began. "You see, Ward Valley has fluctuated so, er — "

“That no estimate can possibly be made in advance,” Letton supplemented.

“Approximate it, approximate it,” Daylight counselled cheerfully.

“It don’t hurt if you-all are a million or so out one side or the other. The figures’ll straighten that up. But I’m that curious I’m just itching all over. What d’ye say?”

“Why continue to play at cross purposes?” Dowsett demanded abruptly and coldly. “Let us have the explanation here and now. Mr. Harnish is laboring under a false impression, and he should be set straight. In this deal — ”

But Daylight interrupted. He had played too much poker to be unaware or unappreciative of the psychological factor, and he headed Dowsett off in order to play the denouncement of the present game in his own way.

“Speaking of deals,” he said, “reminds me of a poker game I once seen in Reno, Nevada. It wa’n’t what you-all would call a square game. They-all was tin-horns that sat in. But they was a tenderfoot — short-horns they-all are called out there. He stands behind the dealer and sees that same dealer give hisself four aces offen the bottom of the deck. The tenderfoot is sure shocked. He slides around to the player facin’ the dealer across the table.

“‘Say,’ he whispers, ‘I seen the dealer deal hisself four aces.’

“‘Well, an’ what of it?” says the player.

“‘I’m tryin’ to tell you-all because I thought you-all ought to know,’ says the tenderfoot. ‘I tell you-all I seen him deal hisself four aces.’

“‘Say, mister,’ says the player, ‘you-all’d better get outa here. You-all don’t understand the game. It’s his deal, ain’t it?’“

The laughter that greeted his story was hollow and perfunctory, but Daylight appeared not to notice it.

“Your story has some meaning, I suppose,” Dowsett said pointedly.

Daylight looked at him innocently and did not reply. He turned jovially to Nathaniel Letton.

“Fire away,” he said. “Give us an approximation of our winning. As I said before, a million out one way or the other won’t matter, it’s bound to be such an almighty big winning.” By this time Letton was stiffened by the attitude Dowsett had taken, and his answer was prompt and definite.

“I fear you are under a misapprehension, Mr. Harnish. There are no winnings to be divided with you. Now don’t get excited, I beg of you. I have but to press this button...”

Far from excited, Daylight had all the seeming of being stunned. He felt absently in his vest pocket for a match, lighted it, and discovered that he had no cigarette. The three men watched him with the tense closeness of cats. Now that it had come, they knew that they had a nasty few minutes before them.

"Do you-all mind saying that over again?" Daylight said. "Seems to me I ain't got it just exactly right. You-all said...?"

He hung with painful expectancy on Nathaniel Letton's utterance.

"I said you were under a misapprehension, Mr. Harnish, that was all. You have been stock gambling, and you have been hard hit. But neither Ward Valley, nor I, nor my associates, feel that we owe you anything."

Daylight pointed at the heap of receipts and stubs on the table.

"That-all represents ten million twenty-seven thousand and forty-two dollars and sixty-eight cents, hard cash. Ain't it good for anything here?"

Letton smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

Daylight looked at Dowsett and murmured: —

"I guess that story of mine had some meaning, after all." He laughed in a sickly fashion. "It was your deal all right, and you-all dole them right, too. Well, I ain't kicking. I'm like the player in that poker game. It was your deal, and you-all had a right to do your best. And you done it — cleaned me out slicker'n a whistle."

He gazed at the heap on the table with an air of stupefaction.

"And that-all ain't worth the paper it's written on. Gol dast it, you-all can sure deal 'em 'round when you get a chance. Oh, no, I ain't a-kicking. It was your deal, and you-all certainly done me, and a man ain't half a man that squeals on another man's deal. And now the hand is played out, and the cards are on the table, and the deal's over, but..."

His hand, dipping swiftly into his inside breast pocket, appeared with the big Colt's automatic.

"As I was saying, the old deal's finished. Now it's MY deal, and I'm a-going to see if I can hold them four aces —

"Take your hand away, you whited sepulchre!" he cried sharply.

Nathaniel Letton's hand, creeping toward the push-button on the desk, was abruptly arrested.

"Change chairs," Daylight commanded. "Take that chair over there, you gangrene-livered skunk. Jump! By God! or I'll make you leak till folks'll think your father was a water hydrant and your mother a sprinkling-cart.

You-all move your chair alongside, Guggenhammer; and you-all Dowsett, sit right there, while I just irrelevantly explain the virtues of this here automatic. She's loaded for big game and she goes off eight times. She's a sure hummer when she gets started.

"Preliminary remarks being over, I now proceed to deal. Remember, I ain't making no remarks about your deal. You done your darndest, and it was all right. But this is my deal, and it's up to me to do my darndest. In the first place, you-all know me. I'm Burning Daylight — savvee? Ain't afraid of God, devil, death, nor destruction. Them's my four aces, and they sure copper your bets. Look at that there living skeleton. Letton, you're sure afraid to die. Your bones is all rattling together you're that scared. And look at that fat Jew there. This little weapon's sure put the fear of God in his heart. He's yellow as a sick persimmon. Dowsett, you're a cool one. You-all ain't batted an eye nor turned a hair. That's because you're great on arithmetic. And that makes you-all dead easy in this deal of mine. You're sitting there and adding two and two together, and you-all know I sure got you skinned. You know me, and that I ain't afraid of nothing. And you-all adds up all your money and knows you ain't a-going to die if you can help it."

"I'll see you hanged," was Dowsett's retort.

"Not by a damned sight. When the fun starts, you're the first I plug. I'll hang all right, but you-all won't live to see it. You-all die here and now while I'll die subject to the law's delay — savvee? Being dead, with grass growing out of your carcasses, you won't know when I hang, but I'll sure have the pleasure a long time of knowing you-all beat me to it."

Daylight paused.

"You surely wouldn't kill us?" Letton asked in a queer, thin voice.

Daylight shook his head.

"It's sure too expensive. You-all ain't worth it. I'd sooner have my chips back. And I guess you-all'd sooner give my chips back than go to the dead-house."

A long silence followed.

"Well, I've done dealt. It's up to you-all to play. But while you're deliberating, I want to give you-all a warning: if that door opens and any one of you cusses lets on there's anything unusual, right here and then I sure start plugging. They ain't a soul'll get out the room except feet first."

A long session of three hours followed. The deciding factor was not the big automatic pistol, but the certitude that Daylight would use it. Not alone were the three men convinced of this, but Daylight himself was convinced. He was firmly resolved to kill the men if his money was not forthcoming. It was not an easy matter, on the spur of the moment, to raise ten millions in paper currency, and there were vexatious delays. A dozen times Mr. Howison and the head clerk were summoned into the room. On these occasions the pistol lay on Daylight's lap, covered carelessly by a newspaper, while he was usually engaged in rolling or lighting his brown-paper cigarettes. But in the end, the thing was accomplished. A suit-case was brought up by one of the clerks from the waiting motor-car, and Daylight snapped it shut on the last package of bills. He paused at the door to make his final remarks.

"There's three several things I sure want to tell you-all. When I get outside this door, you-all'll be set free to act, and I just want to warn you-all about what to do. In the first place, no warrants for my arrest — savvee? This money's mine, and I ain't robbed you of it. If it gets out how you gave me the double-cross and how I done you back again, the laugh'll be on you, and it'll sure be an almighty big laugh. You-all can't afford that laugh. Besides, having got back my stake that you-all robbed me of, if you arrest me and try to rob me a second time, I'll go gunning for you-all, and I'll sure get you. No little fraid-cat shrimps like you-all can skin Burning Daylight. If you win you lose, and there'll sure be some several unexpected funerals around this burg.

"Just look me in the eye, and you-all'll savvee I mean business. Them stubs and receipts on the table is all yourn. Good day."

As the door shut behind him, Nathaniel Letton sprang for the telephone, and Dowsett intercepted him.

"What are you going to do?" Dowsett demanded.

"The police. It's downright robbery. I won't stand it. I tell you I won't stand it."

Dowsett smiled grimly, but at the same time bore the slender financier back and down into his chair.

"We'll talk it over," he said; and in Leon Guggenhammer he found an anxious ally.

And nothing ever came of it. The thing remained a secret with the three men. Nor did Daylight ever give the secret away, though that afternoon, leaning back in his stateroom on the Twentieth Century, his shoes off, and feet on a chair, he chuckled long and heartily. New York remained forever puzzled over the affair; nor could it hit upon a rational explanation. By all rights, Burning Daylight should have gone broke, yet it was known that he immediately reappeared in San Francisco possessing an apparently unimpaired capital. This was evidenced by the magnitude of the enterprises he engaged in, such as, for instance, Panama Mail, by sheer weight of money and fighting power wresting the control away from Shiftily and selling out in two months to the Harriman interests at a rumored enormous advance.

CHAPTER V

Back in San Francisco, Daylight quickly added to his reputation In ways it was not an enviable reputation. Men were afraid of him. He became known as a fighter, a fiend, a tiger. His play was a ripping and smashing one, and no one knew where or how his next blow would fall. The element of surprise was large. He balked on the unexpected, and, fresh from the wild North, his mind not operating in stereotyped channels, he was able in unusual degree to devise new tricks and stratagems. And once he won the advantage, he pressed it remorselessly. “As relentless as a Red Indian,” was said of him, and it was said truly.

On the other hand, he was known as “square.” His word was as good as his bond, and this despite the fact that he accepted nobody’s word. He always shied at propositions based on gentlemen’s agreements, and a man who ventured his honor as a gentleman, in dealing with Daylight, inevitably was treated to an unpleasant time. Daylight never gave his own word unless he held the whip-hand. It was a case with the other fellow taking it or nothing.

Legitimate investment had no place in Daylight’s play. It tied up his money, and reduced the element of risk. It was the gambling side of business that fascinated him, and to play in his slashing manner required that his money must be ready to hand. It was never tied up save for short intervals, for he was principally engaged in turning it over and over, raiding here, there, and everywhere, a veritable pirate of the financial main. A five-per cent safe investment had no attraction for him; but to risk millions in sharp, harsh skirmish, standing to lose everything or to win fifty or a hundred per cent, was the savor of life to him. He played according to the rules of the game, but he played mercilessly. When he got a man or a corporation down and they squealed, he gouged no less hard. Appeals for financial mercy fell on deaf ears. He was a free lance, and had no friendly business associations. Such alliances as were formed from time to time were purely affairs of expediency, and he regarded his allies as men who would give him the double-cross or ruin him if a profitable chance presented. In spite of this point of view, he was faithful to his allies. But he was faithful just as long as they were and no longer. The treason had to come from them, and then it was ‘Ware Daylight.

The business men and financiers of the Pacific coast never forgot the lesson of Charles Klinkner and the California & Altamont Trust Company. Klinkner was the president. In partnership with Daylight, the pair raided the San Jose Interurban. The powerful Lake Power & Electric Lighting corporation came to the rescue, and Klinkner, seeing what he thought was the opportunity, went over to the enemy in the thick of the pitched battle. Daylight lost three millions before he was done with it, and before he was done with it he saw the California & Altamont Trust Company hopelessly wrecked, and Charles Klinkner a suicide in a felon's cell. Not only did Daylight lose his grip on San Jose Interurban, but in the crash of his battle front he lost heavily all along the line. It was conceded by those competent to judge that he could have compromised and saved much. But, instead, he deliberately threw up the battle with San Jose Interurban and Lake Power, and, apparently defeated, with Napoleonic suddenness struck at Klinkner. It was the last unexpected thing Klinkner would have dreamed of, and Daylight knew it. He knew, further, that the California & Altamont Trust Company has an intrinsically sound institution, but that just then it was in a precarious condition due to Klinkner's speculations with its money. He knew, also, that in a few months the Trust Company would be more firmly on its feet than ever, thanks to those same speculations, and that if he were to strike he must strike immediately. "It's just that much money in pocket and a whole lot more," he was reported to have said in connection with his heavy losses. "It's just so much insurance against the future. Henceforth, men who go in with me on deals will think twice before they try to double-cross me, and then some."

The reason for his savageness was that he despised the men with whom he played. He had a conviction that not one in a hundred of them was intrinsically square; and as for the square ones, he prophesied that, playing in a crooked game, they were sure to lose and in the long run go broke. His New York experience had opened his eyes. He tore the veils of illusion from the business game, and saw its nakedness. He generalized upon industry and society somewhat as follows: —

Society, as organized, was a vast bunco game. There were many hereditary inefficients — men and women who were not weak enough to be confined in feeble-minded homes, but who were not strong enough to be ought else than hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Then there were the fools who took the organized bunco game seriously, honoring and respecting it. They were easy game for the others, who saw clearly and knew the bunco game for what it was.

Work, legitimate work, was the source of all wealth. That was to say, whether it was a sack of potatoes, a grand piano, or a seven-passenger touring car, it came into being only by the performance of work. Where the bunco came in was in the distribution of these things after labor had created them. He failed to see the horny-handed sons of toil enjoying grand pianos or riding in automobiles. How this came about was explained by the bunco. By tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands men sat up nights and schemed how they could get between the workers and the things the workers produced. These schemers were the business men. When they got between the worker and his product, they took a whack out of it for themselves The size of the whack was determined by no rule of equity; but by their own strength and swinishness. It was always a case of “all the traffic can bear.” He saw all men in the business game doing this.

One day, in a mellow mood (induced by a string of cocktails and a hearty lunch), he started a conversation with Jones, the elevator boy. Jones was a slender, mop-headed, man-grown, truculent flame of an individual who seemed to go out of his way to insult his passengers. It was this that attracted Daylight’s interest, and he was not long in finding out what was the matter with Jones. He was a proletarian, according to his own aggressive classification, and he had wanted to write for a living. Failing to win with the magazines, and compelled to find himself in food and shelter, he had gone to the little valley of Petacha, not a hundred miles from Los Angeles. Here, toiling in the day-time, he planned to write and study at night. But the railroad charged all the traffic would bear. Petacha was a desert valley, and produced only three things: cattle, fire-wood, and charcoal. For freight to Los Angeles on a carload of cattle the railroad charged eight dollars. This, Jones explained, was due to the fact that the cattle had legs and could be driven to Los Angeles at a cost equivalent to the charge per car load. But firewood had no legs, and the railroad charged just precisely twenty-four dollars a carload.

This was a fine adjustment, for by working hammer-and-tongs through a twelve-hour day, after freight had been deducted from the selling price of the wood in Los Angeles, the wood-chopper received one dollar and sixty cents. Jones had thought to get ahead of the game by turning his wood into charcoal. His estimates were satisfactory. But the railroad also made estimates. It issued a rate of forty-two dollars a car on charcoal. At the end of three months, Jones went over his figures, and found that he was still making one dollar and sixty cents a day.

"So I quit," Jones concluded. "I went hobbling for a year, and I got back at the railroads. Leaving out the little things, I came across the Sierras in the summer and touched a match to the snow-sheds. They only had a little thirty-thousand-dollar fire. I guess that squared up all balances due on Petacha."

"Son, ain't you afraid to be turning loose such information?" Daylight gravely demanded.

"Not on your life," quoth Jones. "They can't prove it. You could say I said so, and I could say I didn't say so, and a hell of a lot that evidence would amount to with a jury."

Daylight went into his office and meditated awhile. That was it: all the traffic would bear. From top to bottom, that was the rule of the game; and what kept the game going was the fact that a sucker was born every minute. If a Jones were born every minute, the game wouldn't last very long. Lucky for the players that the workers weren't Joneses.

But there were other and larger phases of the game. Little business men, shopkeepers, and such ilk took what whack they could out of the product of the worker; but, after all, it was the large business men who formed the workers through the little business men. When all was said and done, the latter, like Jones in Petacha Valley, got no more than wages out of their whack. In truth, they were hired men for the large business men. Still again, higher up, were the big fellows. They used vast and complicated paraphernalia for the purpose, on a large scale of getting between hundreds of thousands of workers and their products. These men were not so much mere robbers as gamblers. And, not content with their direct winnings, being essentially gamblers, they raided one another. They called this feature of the game HIGH FINANCE. They were all engaged primarily in robbing the worker, but every little while they formed combinations and robbed one another of the accumulated loot. This explained the fifty-thousand-dollar raid on him by Holdsworthy and the ten-million-dollar raid on him by Dowsett, Letton, and Guggenhammer. And when he raided Panama Mail he had done exactly the same thing. Well, he concluded, it was finer sport robbing the robbers than robbing the poor stupid workers.

Thus, all unread in philosophy, Daylight preempted for himself the position and vocation of a twentieth-century superman. He found, with rare and mythical exceptions, that there was no noblesse oblige among the business and financial supermen. As a clever traveler had announced in an after-dinner speech at the Alta-Pacific, “There was honor amongst thieves, and this was what distinguished thieves from honest men.” That was it. It hit the nail on the head. These modern supermen were a lot of sordid banditti who had the successful effrontery to preach a code of right and wrong to their victims which they themselves did not practise. With them, a man’s word was good just as long as he was compelled to keep it. THOU SHALT NOT STEAL was only applicable to the honest worker. They, the supermen, were above such commandments. They certainly stole and were honored by their fellows according to the magnitude of their stealings.

The more Daylight played the game, the clearer the situation grew. Despite the fact that every robber was keen to rob every other robber, the band was well organized. It practically controlled the political machinery of society, from the ward politician up to the Senate of the United States. It passed laws that gave it privilege to rob. It enforced these laws by means of the police, the marshals, the militia and regular army, and the courts. And it was a snap. A superman’s chiefest danger was his fellow-superman. The great stupid mass of the people did not count. They were constituted of such inferior clay that the veriest chicanery fooled them. The superman manipulated the strings, and when robbery of the workers became too slow or monotonous, they turned loose and robbed one another.

Daylight was philosophical, but not a philosopher. He had never read the books. He was a hard-headed, practical man, and farthest from him was any intention of ever reading the books. He had lived life in the simple, where books were not necessary for an understanding of life, and now life in the complex appeared just as simple. He saw through its frauds and fictions, and found it as elemental as on the Yukon. Men were made of the same stuff. They had the same passions and desires. Finance was poker on a larger scale. The men who played were the men who had stakes. The workers were the fellows toiling for grubstakes. He saw the game played out according to the everlasting rules, and he played a hand himself. The gigantic futility of humanity organized and befuddled by the bandits did not shock him. It was the natural order. Practically all human endeavors were futile. He had seen so much of it. His partners had starved and died on the

Stewart. Hundreds of old-timers had failed to locate on Bonanza and Eldorado, while Swedes and chechaquos had come in on the moose-pasture and blindly staked millions. It was life, and life was a savage proposition at best. Men in civilization robbed because they were so made. They robbed just as cats scratched, famine pinched, and frost bit.

So it was that Daylight became a successful financier. He did not go in for swindling the workers. Not only did he not have the heart for it, but it did not strike him as a sporting proposition. The workers were so easy, so stupid. It was more like slaughtering fat hand-reared pheasants on the English preserves he had heard about. The sport to him, was in waylaying the successful robbers and taking their spoils from them. There was fun and excitement in that, and sometimes they put up the very devil of a fight. Like Robin Hood of old, Daylight proceeded to rob the rich; and, in a small way, to distribute to the needy.

But he was charitable after his own fashion. The great mass of human misery meant nothing to him. That was part of the everlasting order. He had no patience with the organized charities and the professional charity mongers. Nor, on the other hand, was what he gave a conscience dole. He owed no man, and restitution was unthinkable. What he gave was a largess, a free, spontaneous gift; and it was for those about him. He never contributed to an earthquake fund in Japan nor to an open-air fund in New York City. Instead, he financed Jones, the elevator boy, for a year that he might write a book. When he learned that the wife of his waiter at the St. Francis was suffering from tuberculosis, he sent her to Arizona, and later, when her case was declared hopeless, he sent the husband, too, to be with her to the end. Likewise, he bought a string of horse-hair bridles from a convict in a Western penitentiary, who spread the good news until it seemed to Daylight that half the convicts in that institution were making bridles for him. He bought them all, paying from twenty to fifty dollars each for them. They were beautiful and honest things, and he decorated all the available wall-space of his bedroom with them.

The grim Yukon life had failed to make Daylight hard. It required civilization to produce this result. In the fierce, savage game he now played, his habitual geniality imperceptibly slipped away from him, as did his lazy Western drawl. As his speech became sharp and nervous, so did his mental processes. In the swift rush of the game he found less and less time to spend on being merely good-natured. The change marked his face itself.

The lines grew sterner. Less often appeared the playful curl of his lips, the smile in the wrinkling corners of his eyes. The eyes themselves, black and flashing, like an Indian's, betrayed glints of cruelty and brutal consciousness of power. His tremendous vitality remained, and radiated from all his being, but it was vitality under the new aspect of the man-trampling man-conqueror. His battles with elemental nature had been, in a way, impersonal; his present battles were wholly with the males of his species, and the hardships of the trail, the river, and the frost marred him far less than the bitter keenness of the struggle with his fellows.

He still had recrudescence of geniality, but they were largely periodical and forced, and they were usually due to the cocktails he took prior to meal-time. In the North, he had drunk deeply and at irregular intervals; but now his drinking became systematic and disciplined. It was an unconscious development, but it was based upon physical and mental condition. The cocktails served as an inhibition. Without reasoning or thinking about it, the strain of the office, which was essentially due to the daring and audacity of his ventures, required check or cessation; and he found, through the weeks and months, that the cocktails supplied this very thing. They constituted a stone wall. He never drank during the morning, nor in office hours; but the instant he left the office he proceeded to rear this wall of alcoholic inhibition athwart his consciousness. The office became immediately a closed affair. It ceased to exist. In the afternoon, after lunch, it lived again for one or two hours, when, leaving it, he rebuilt the wall of inhibition. Of course, there were exceptions to this; and, such was the rigor of his discipline, that if he had a dinner or a conference before him in which, in a business way, he encountered enemies or allies and planned or prosecuted campaigns, he abstained from drinking. But the instant the business was settled, his everlasting call went out for a Martini, and for a double-Martini at that, served in a long glass so as not to excite comment.

CHAPTER VI

Into Daylight's life came Dede Mason. She came rather imperceptibly. He had accepted her impersonally along with the office furnishing, the office boy, Morrison, the chief, confidential, and only clerk, and all the rest of the accessories of a superman's gambling place of business. Had he been asked any time during the first months she was in his employ, he would have been unable to tell the color of her eyes. From the fact that she was a demiblonde, there resided dimly in his subconsciousness a conception that she was a brunette. Likewise he had an idea that she was not thin, while there was an absence in his mind of any idea that she was fat. As to how she dressed, he had no ideas at all. He had no trained eye in such matters, nor was he interested. He took it for granted, in the lack of any impression to the contrary, that she was dressed some how. He knew her as "Miss Mason," and that was all, though he was aware that as a stenographer she seemed quick and accurate. This impression, however, was quite vague, for he had had no experience with other stenographers, and naturally believed that they were all quick and accurate.

One morning, signing up letters, he came upon an I shall. Glancing quickly over the page for similar constructions, he found a number of I wills. The I shall was alone. It stood out conspicuously. He pressed the call-bell twice, and a moment later Dede Mason entered. "Did I say that, Miss Mason?" he asked, extending the letter to her and pointing out the criminal phrase. A shade of annoyance crossed her face. She stood convicted.

"My mistake," she said. "I am sorry. But it's not a mistake, you know," she added quickly.

"How do you make that out?" challenged Daylight. "It sure don't sound right, in my way of thinking."

She had reached the door by this time, and now turned the offending letter in her hand. "It's right just the same."

"But that would make all those I wills wrong, then," he argued.

"It does," was her audacious answer. "Shall I change them?"

"I shall be over to look that affair up on Monday." Daylight repeated the sentence from the letter aloud. He did it with a grave, serious air, listening intently to the sound of his own voice. He shook his head. "It don't sound right, Miss Mason. It just don’t sound right. Why, nobody writes to me that way. They all say I will — educated men, too, some of them. Ain’t that so?”

“Yes,” she acknowledged, and passed out to her machine to make the correction.

It chanced that day that among the several men with whom he sat at luncheon was a young Englishman, a mining engineer. Had it happened any other time it would have passed unnoticed, but, fresh from the tilt with his stenographer, Daylight was struck immediately by the Englishman’s I shall. Several times, in the course of the meal, the phrase was repeated, and Daylight was certain there was no mistake about it.

After luncheon he cornered Macintosh, one of the members whom he knew to have been a college man, because of his football reputation.

“Look here, Bunny,” Daylight demanded, “which is right, I shall be over to look that affair up on Monday, or I will be over to look that affair up on Monday?”

The ex-football captain debated painfully for a minute. “Blessed if I know,” he confessed. “Which way do I say it?”

“Oh, I will, of course.”

“Then the other is right, depend upon it. I always was rotten on grammar.”

On the way back to the office, Daylight dropped into a bookstore and bought a grammar; and for a solid hour, his feet up on the desk, he toiled through its pages. “Knock off my head with little apples if the girl ain’t right,” he communed aloud at the end of the session. For the first time it struck him that there was something about his stenographer. He had accepted her up to then, as a female creature and a bit of office furnishing. But now, having demonstrated that she knew more grammar than did business men and college graduates, she became an individual. She seemed to stand out in his consciousness as conspicuously as the I shall had stood out on the typed page, and he began to take notice.

He managed to watch her leaving that afternoon, and he was aware for the first time that she was well-formed, and that her manner of dress was satisfying. He knew none of the details of women’s dress, and he saw none of the details of her neat shirt-waist and well-cut tailor suit. He saw only the effect in a general, sketchy way. She looked right. This was in the absence of anything wrong or out of the way.

"She's a trim little good-looker," was his verdict, when the outer office door closed on her.

The next morning, dictating, he concluded that he liked the way she did her hair, though for the life of him he could have given no description of it. The impression was pleasing, that was all.

She sat between him and the window, and he noted that her hair was light brown, with hints of golden bronze. A pale sun, shining in, touched the golden bronze into smouldering fires that were very pleasing to behold. Funny, he thought, that he had never observed this phenomenon before.

In the midst of the letter he came to the construction which had caused the trouble the day before. He remembered his wrestle with the grammar, and dictated.

"I shall meet you halfway this proposition — "

Miss Mason gave a quick look up at him. The action was purely involuntary, and, in fact, had been half a startle of surprise. The next instant her eyes had dropped again, and she sat waiting to go on with the dictation. But in that moment of her glance Daylight had noted that her eyes were gray. He was later to learn that at times there were golden lights in those same gray eyes; but he had seen enough, as it was, to surprise him, for he became suddenly aware that he had always taken her for a brunette with brown eyes, as a matter of course.

"You were right, after all," he confessed, with a sheepish grin that sat incongruously on his stern, Indian-like features.

Again he was rewarded by an upward glance and an acknowledging smile, and this time he verified the fact that her eyes were gray.

"But it don't sound right, just the same," he complained. At this she laughed outright.

"I beg your pardon," she hastened to make amends, and then spoiled it by adding, "but you are so funny."

Daylight began to feel a slight awkwardness, and the sun would persist in setting her hair a-smouldering.

"I didn't mean to be funny," he said.

"That was why I laughed. But it is right, and perfectly good grammar."

"All right," he sighed — "I shall meet you halfway in this proposition — got that?" And the dictation went on. He discovered that in the intervals, when she had nothing to do, she read books and magazines, or worked on some sort of feminine fancy work.

Passing her desk, once, he picked up a volume of Kipling's poems and glanced bepuzzled through the pages. "You like reading, Miss Mason?" he said, laying the book down.

"Oh, yes," was her answer; "very much."

Another time it was a book of Wells', The Wheels of Change. "What's it all about?" Daylight asked.

"Oh, it's just a novel, a love-story." She stopped, but he still stood waiting, and she felt it incumbent to go on.

"It's about a little Cockney draper's assistant, who takes a vacation on his bicycle, and falls in with a young girl very much above him. Her mother is a popular writer and all that. And the situation is very curious, and sad, too, and tragic. Would you care to read it?"

"Does he get her?" Daylight demanded.

"No; that's the point of it. He wasn't — "

"And he doesn't get her, and you've read all them pages, hundreds of them, to find that out?" Daylight muttered in amazement.

Miss Mason was nettled as well as amused.

"But you read the mining and financial news by the hour," she retorted.

"But I sure get something out of that. It's business, and it's different. I get money out of it. What do you get out of books?"

"Points of view, new ideas, life."

"Not worth a cent cash."

"But life's worth more than cash," she argued.

"Oh, well," he said, with easy masculine tolerance, "so long as you enjoy it. That's what counts, I suppose; and there's no accounting for taste."

Despite his own superior point of view, he had an idea that she knew a lot, and he experienced a fleeting feeling like that of a barbarian face to face with the evidence of some tremendous culture. To Daylight culture was a worthless thing, and yet, somehow, he was vaguely troubled by a sense that there was more in culture than he imagined.

Again, on her desk, in passing, he noticed a book with which he was familiar. This time he did not stop, for he had recognized the cover. It was a magazine correspondent's book on the Klondike, and he knew that he and his photograph figured in it and he knew, also, of a certain sensational chapter concerned with a woman's suicide, and with one "Too much Daylight."

After that he did not talk with her again about books. He imagined what erroneous conclusions she had drawn from that particular chapter, and it stung him the more in that they were undeserved. Of all unlikely things, to have the reputation of being a lady-killer, — he, Burning Daylight, — and to have a woman kill herself out of love for him. He felt that he was a most unfortunate man and wondered by what luck that one book of all the thousands of books should have fallen into his stenographer's hands. For some days afterward he had an uncomfortable sensation of guiltiness whenever he was in Miss Mason's presence; and once he was positive that he caught her looking at him with a curious, intent gaze, as if studying what manner of man he was.

He pumped Morrison, the clerk, who had first to vent his personal grievance against Miss Mason before he could tell what little he knew of her.

"She comes from Siskiyou County. She's very nice to work with in the office, of course, but she's rather stuck on herself — exclusive, you know."

"How do you make that out?" Daylight queried.

"Well, she thinks too much of herself to associate with those she works with, in the office here, for instance. She won't have anything to do with a fellow, you see. I've asked her out repeatedly, to the theatre and the chutes and such things. But nothing doing. Says she likes plenty of sleep, and can't stay up late, and has to go all the way to Berkeley — that's where she lives."

This phase of the report gave Daylight a distinct satisfaction. She was a bit above the ordinary, and no doubt about it. But Morrison's next words carried a hurt.

"But that's all hot air. She's running with the University boys, that's what she's doing. She needs lots of sleep and can't go to the theatre with me, but she can dance all hours with them. I've heard it pretty straight that she goes to all their hops and such things. Rather stylish and high-toned for a stenographer, I'd say. And she keeps a horse, too. She rides astride all over those hills out there. I saw her one Sunday myself. Oh, she's a high-flyer, and I wonder how she does it. Sixty-five a month don't go far. Then she has a sick brother, too."

"Live with her people?" Daylight asked.

"No; hasn't got any. They were well to do, I've heard. They must have been, or that brother of hers couldn't have gone to the University of

California. Her father had a big cattle-ranch, but he got to fooling with mines or something, and went broke before he died. Her mother died long before that. Her brother must cost a lot of money. He was a husky once, played football, was great on hunting and being out in the mountains and such things. He got his accident breaking horses, and then rheumatism or something got into him. One leg is shorter than the other and withered up some. He has to walk on crutches. I saw her out with him once — crossing the ferry. The doctors have been experimenting on him for years, and he's in the French Hospital now, I think."

All of which side-lights on Miss Mason went to increase Daylight's interest in her. Yet, much as he desired, he failed to get acquainted with her. He had thoughts of asking her to luncheon, but his was the innate chivalry of the frontiersman, and the thoughts never came to anything. He knew a self-respecting, square-dealing man was not supposed to take his stenographer to luncheon. Such things did happen, he knew, for he heard the chaffing gossip of the club; but he did not think much of such men and felt sorry for the girls. He had a strange notion that a man had less rights over those he employed than over mere acquaintances or strangers. Thus, had Miss Mason not been his employee, he was confident that he would have had her to luncheon or the theatre in no time. But he felt that it was an imposition for an employer, because he bought the time of an employee in working hours, to presume in any way upon any of the rest of that employee's time. To do so was to act like a bully. The situation was unfair. It was taking advantage of the fact that the employee was dependent on one for a livelihood. The employee might permit the imposition through fear of angering the employer and not through any personal inclination at all.

In his own case he felt that such an imposition would be peculiarly obnoxious, for had she not read that cursed Klondike correspondent's book? A pretty idea she must have of him, a girl that was too high-toned to have anything to do with a good-looking, gentlemanly fellow like Morrison. Also, and down under all his other reasons, Daylight was timid. The only thing he had ever been afraid of in his life was woman, and he had been afraid all his life. Nor was that timidity to be put easily to flight now that he felt the first glimmering need and desire for woman. The specter of the apron-string still haunted him, and helped him to find excuses for getting on no forwarder with Dede Mason.

CHAPTER VII

Not being favored by chance in getting acquainted with Dede Mason, Daylight's interest in her slowly waned. This was but natural, for he was plunged deep in hazardous operations, and the fascinations of the game and the magnitude of it accounted for all the energy that even his magnificent organism could generate.

Such was his absorption that the pretty stenographer slowly and imperceptibly faded from the forefront of his consciousness. Thus, the first faint spur, in the best sense, of his need for woman ceased to prod. So far as Dede Mason was concerned, he possessed no more than a complacent feeling of satisfaction in that he had a very nice stenographer. And, completely to put the quietus on any last lingering hopes he might have had of her, he was in the thick of his spectacular and intensely bitter fight with the Coastwise Steam Navigation Company, and the Hawaiian, Nicaraguan, and Pacific-Mexican Steamship-Company. He stirred up a bigger muss than he had anticipated, and even he was astounded at the wide ramifications of the struggle and at the unexpected and incongruous interests that were drawn into it. Every newspaper in San Francisco turned upon him. It was true, one or two of them had first intimated that they were open to subsidization, but Daylight's judgment was that the situation did not warrant such expenditure. Up to this time the press had been amusingly tolerant and good-naturedly sensational about him, but now he was to learn what virulent scrupulousness an antagonized press was capable of. Every episode of his life was resurrected to serve as foundations for malicious fabrications. Daylight was frankly amazed at the new interpretation put upon all he had accomplished and the deeds he had done. From an Alaskan hero he was metamorphosed into an Alaskan bully, liar, desperado, and all around "bad Man." Not content with this, lies upon lies, out of whole cloth, were manufactured about him. He never replied, though once he went to the extent of disburdening his mind to half a dozen reporters. "Do your damnedest," he told them. "Burning Daylight's bucked bigger things than your dirty, lying sheets. And I don't blame you, boys... that is, not much. You can't help it. You've got to live. There's a mighty lot of women in this world that make their living in similar fashion to yours, because they're not able to do anything better. Somebody's got to do the dirty work, and it might as well be you. You're paid for it, and you ain't got the backbone to rustle cleaner jobs."

The socialist press of the city jubilantly exploited this utterance, scattering it broadcast over San Francisco in tens of thousands of paper dodgers. And the journalists, stung to the quick, retaliated with the only means in their power-printer's ink abuse. The attack became bitterer than ever. The whole affair sank to the deeper deeps of rancor and savageness. The poor woman who had killed herself was dragged out of her grave and paraded on thousands of reams of paper as a martyr and a victim to Daylight's ferocious brutality. Staid, statistical articles were published, proving that he had made his start by robbing poor miners of their claims, and that the capstone to his fortune had been put in place by his treacherous violation of faith with the Guggenhammers in the deal on Ophir. And there were editorials written in which he was called an enemy of society, possessed of the manners and culture of a caveman, a fomenter of wasteful business troubles, the destroyer of the city's prosperity in commerce and trade, an anarchist of dire menace; and one editorial gravely recommended that hanging would be a lesson to him and his ilk, and concluded with the fervent hope that some day his big motor-car would smash up and smash him with it.

He was like a big bear raiding a bee-hive and, regardless of the stings, he obstinately persisted in pawing for the honey. He gritted his teeth and struck back. Beginning with a raid on two steamship companies, it developed into a pitched battle with a city, a state, and a continental coastline. Very well; they wanted fight, and they would get it. It was what he wanted, and he felt justified in having come down from the Klondike, for here he was gambling at a bigger table than ever the Yukon had supplied. Allied with him, on a splendid salary, with princely pickings thrown in, was a lawyer, Larry Hegan, a young Irishman with a reputation to make, and whose peculiar genius had been unrecognized until Daylight picked up with him. Hegan had Celtic imagination and daring, and to such degree that Daylight's cooler head was necessary as a check on his wilder visions. Hegan's was a Napoleonic legal mind, without balance, and it was just this balance that Daylight supplied. Alone, the Irishman was doomed to failure, but directed by Daylight, he was on the highroad to fortune and recognition. Also, he was possessed of no more personal or civic conscience than Napoleon.

It was Hegan who guided Daylight through the intricacies of modern politics, labor organization, and commercial and corporation law. It was Hegan, prolific of resource and suggestion, who opened Daylight's eyes to undreamed possibilities in twentieth-century warfare; and it was Daylight, rejecting, accepting, and elaborating, who planned the campaigns and prosecuted them. With the Pacific coast from Peugeot Sound to Panama, buzzing and humming, and with San Francisco furiously about his ears, the two big steamship companies had all the appearance of winning. It looked as if Burning Daylight was being beaten slowly to his knees. And then he struck — at the steamship companies, at San Francisco, at the whole Pacific coast.

It was not much of a blow at first. A Christian Endeavor convention being held in San Francisco, a row was started by Express Drivers' Union No. 927 over the handling of a small heap of baggage at the Ferry Building. A few heads were broken, a score of arrests made, and the baggage was delivered. No one would have guessed that behind this petty wrangle was the fine Irish hand of Hegan, made potent by the Klondike gold of Burning Daylight. It was an insignificant affair at best — or so it seemed. But the Teamsters' Union took up the quarrel, backed by the whole Water Front Federation. Step by step, the strike became involved. A refusal of cooks and waiters to serve scab teamsters or teamsters' employers brought out the cooks and waiters. The butchers and meat-cutters refused to handle meat destined for unfair restaurants. The combined Employers' Associations put up a solid front, and found facing them the 40,000 organized laborers of San Francisco. The restaurant bakers and the bakery wagon drivers struck, followed by the milkers, milk drivers, and chicken pickers. The building trades asserted its position in unambiguous terms, and all San Francisco was in turmoil.

But still, it was only San Francisco. Hegan's intrigues were masterly, and Daylight's campaign steadily developed. The powerful fighting organization known as the Pacific Slope Seaman's Union refused to work vessels the cargoes of which were to be handled by scab longshoremen and freight-handlers. The union presented its ultimatum, and then called a strike. This had been Daylight's objective all the time. Every incoming coastwise vessel was boarded by the union officials and its crew sent ashore. And with the Seamen went the firemen, the engineers, and the sea cooks and waiters. Daily the number of idle steamers increased. It was impossible to get scab crews, for the men of the Seaman's Union were fighters trained in the hard school of the sea, and when they went out it meant blood and death to scabs. This phase of the strike spread up and down the entire Pacific coast, until all the ports were filled with idle ships, and sea transportation was at a standstill. The days and weeks dragged out, and the strike held. The Coastwise Steam Navigation Company, and the Hawaiian, Nicaraguan, and Pacific-Mexican Steamship Company were tied up completely. The expenses of combating the strike were tremendous, and they were earning nothing, while daily the situation went from bad to worse, until "peace at any price" became the cry. And still there was no peace, until Daylight and his allies played out their hand, raked in the winnings, and allowed a goodly portion of a continent to resume business.

It was noted, in following years, that several leaders of workmen built themselves houses and blocks of renting flats and took trips to the old countries, while, more immediately, other leaders and "dark horses" came to political preferment and the control of the municipal government and the municipal moneys. In fact, San Francisco's boss-ridden condition was due in greater degree to Daylight's widespreading battle than even San Francisco ever dreamed. For the part he had played, the details of which were practically all rumor and guesswork, quickly leaked out, and in consequence he became a much-execrated and well-hated man. Nor had Daylight himself dreamed that his raid on the steamship companies would have grown to such colossal proportions.

But he had got what he was after. He had played an exciting hand and won, beating the steamship companies down into the dust and mercilessly robbing the stockholders by perfectly legal methods before he let go. Of course, in addition to the large sums of money he had paid over, his allies had rewarded themselves by gobbling the advantages which later enabled them to loot the city. His alliance with a gang of cutthroats had brought about a lot of cutthroating. But his conscience suffered no twinges. He remembered what he had once heard an old preacher utter, namely, that they who rose by the sword perished by the sword. One took his chances when he played with cutting throats, and his, Daylight's, throat was still intact. That was it! And he had won. It was all gamble and war between the strong men. The fools did not count. They were always getting hurt; and that they always had been getting hurt was the conclusion he drew from what little he knew of history. San Francisco had wanted war, and he had given it war. It was the game. All the big fellows did the same, and they did much worse, too.

"Don't talk to me about morality and civic duty," he replied to a persistent interviewer. "If you quit your job tomorrow and went to work on another paper, you would write just what you were told to write. It's morality and civic duty now with you; on the new job it would be backing up a thieving railroad with... morality and civic duty, I suppose. Your price, my son, is just about thirty per week. That's what you sell for. But your paper would sell for a bit more. Pay its price to-day, and it would shift its present rotten policy to some other rotten policy; but it would never let up on morality and civic duty.

"And all because a sucker is born every minute. So long as the people stand for it, they'll get it good and plenty, my son. And the shareholders and business interests might as well shut up squawking about how much they've been hurt. You never hear ary squeal out of them when they've got the other fellow down and are gouging him. This is the time THEY got gouged, and that's all there is to it. Talk about mollycoddles! Son, those same fellows would steal crusts from starving men and pull gold fillings from the mouths of corpses, yep, and squawk like Sam Scratch if some blamed corpse hit back. They're all tarred with the same brush, little and big. Look at your Sugar Trust — with all its millions stealing water like a common thief from New York City, and short-weighing the government on its phoney scales. Morality and civic duty! Son, forget it."

CHAPTER VIII

Daylight's coming to civilization had not improved him. True, he wore better clothes, had learned slightly better manners, and spoke better English. As a gambler and a man-trampler he had developed remarkable efficiency. Also, he had become used to a higher standard of living, and he had whetted his wits to razor sharpness in the fierce, complicated struggle of fighting males. But he had hardened, and at the expense of his old-time, whole-souled geniality. Of the essential refinements of civilization he knew nothing. He did not know they existed. He had become cynical, bitter, and brutal. Power had its effect on him that it had on all men. Suspicious of the big exploiters, despising the fools of the exploited herd, he had faith only in himself. This led to an undue and erroneous exaltation of his ego, while kindly consideration of others — nay, even simple respect — was destroyed, until naught was left for him but to worship at the shrine of self. Physically, he was not the man of iron muscles who had come down out of the Arctic. He did not exercise sufficiently, ate more than was good for him, and drank altogether too much. His muscles were getting flabby, and his tailor called attention to his increasing waistband. In fact, Daylight was developing a definite paunch. This physical deterioration was manifest likewise in his face. The lean Indian visage was suffering a city change. The slight hollows in the cheeks under the high cheek-bones had filled out. The beginning of puff-sacks under the eyes was faintly visible. The girth of the neck had increased, and the first crease and fold of a double chin were becoming plainly discernible. The old effect of asceticism, bred of terrific hardships and toil, had vanished; the features had become broader and heavier, betraying all the stigmata of the life he lived, advertising the man's self-indulgence, harshness, and brutality.

Even his human affiliations were descending. Playing a lone hand, contemptuous of most of the men with whom he played, lacking in sympathy or understanding of them, and certainly independent of them, he found little in common with those to be encountered, say at the Alta-Pacific. In point of fact, when the battle with the steamship companies was at its height and his raid was inflicting incalculable damage on all business interests, he had been asked to resign from the Alta-Pacific. The idea had been rather to his liking, and he had found new quarters in clubs like the

Riverside, organized and practically maintained by the city bosses. He found that he really liked such men better. They were more primitive and simple, and they did not put on airs. They were honest buccaneers, frankly in the game for what they could get out of it, on the surface more raw and savage, but at least not glossed over with oily or graceful hypocrisy. The Alta-Pacific had suggested that his resignation be kept a private matter, and then had privily informed the newspapers. The latter had made great capital out of the forced resignation, but Daylight had grinned and silently gone his way, though registering a black mark against more than one club member who was destined to feel, in the days to come, the crushing weight of the Klondiker's financial paw.

The storm-centre of a combined newspaper attack lasting for months, Daylight's character had been torn to shreds. There was no fact in his history that had not been distorted into a criminality or a vice. This public making of him over into an iniquitous monster had pretty well crushed any lingering hope he had of getting acquainted with Dede Mason. He felt that there was no chance for her ever to look kindly on a man of his caliber, and, beyond increasing her salary to seventy-five dollars a month, he proceeded gradually to forget about her. The increase was made known to her through Morrison, and later she thanked Daylight, and that was the end of it.

One week-end, feeling heavy and depressed and tired of the city and its ways, he obeyed the impulse of a whim that was later to play an important part in his life. The desire to get out of the city for a whiff of country air and for a change of scene was the cause. Yet, to himself, he made the excuse of going to Glen Ellen for the purpose of inspecting the brickyard with which Holdsworthy had goldbricked him.

He spent the night in the little country hotel, and on Sunday morning, astride a saddle-horse rented from the Glen Ellen butcher, rode out of the village. The brickyard was close at hand on the flat beside the Sonoma Creek. The kilns were visible among the trees, when he glanced to the left and caught sight of a cluster of wooded knolls half a mile away, perched on the rolling slopes of Sonoma Mountain. The mountain, itself wooded, towered behind. The trees on the knolls seemed to beckon to him.

The dry, early-summer air, shot through with sunshine, was wine to him. Unconsciously he drank it in deep breaths. The prospect of the brickyard was uninviting. He was jaded with all things business, and the wooded knolls were calling to him. A horse was between his legs — a good horse, he decided; one that sent him back to the cayuses he had ridden during his eastern Oregon boyhood. He had been somewhat of a rider in those early days, and the champ of bit and creak of saddle-leather sounded good to him now.

Resolving to have his fun first, and to look over the brickyard afterward, he rode on up the hill, prospecting for a way across country to get to the knolls. He left the country road at the first gate he came to and cantered through a hayfield. The grain was waist-high on either side the wagon road, and he sniffed the warm aroma of it with delighted nostrils. Larks flew up before him, and from everywhere came mellow notes. From the appearance of the road it was patent that it had been used for hauling clay to the now idle brickyard. Salving his conscience with the idea that this was part of the inspection, he rode on to the clay-pit — a huge scar in a hillside. But he did not linger long, swinging off again to the left and leaving the road. Not a farm-house was in sight, and the change from the city crowding was essentially satisfying. He rode now through open woods, across little flower-scattered glades, till he came upon a spring. Flat on the ground, he drank deeply of the clear water, and, looking about him, felt with a shock the beauty of the world. It came to him like a discovery; he had never realized it before, he concluded, and also, he had forgotten much. One could not sit in at high finance and keep track of such things. As he drank in the air, the scene, and the distant song of larks, he felt like a poker-player rising from a night-long table and coming forth from the pent atmosphere to taste the freshness of the morn.

At the base of the knolls he encountered a tumble-down stake-and-rider fence. From the look of it he judged it must be forty years old at least — the work of some first pioneer who had taken up the land when the days of gold had ended. The woods were very thick here, yet fairly clear of underbrush, so that, while the blue sky was screened by the arched branches, he was able to ride beneath. He now found himself in a nook of several acres, where the oak and manzanita and madrono gave way to clusters of stately redwoods. Against the foot of a steep-sloped knoll he came upon a magnificent group of redwoods that seemed to have gathered about a tiny gurgling spring.

He halted his horse, for beside the spring uprose a wild California lily. It was a wonderful flower, growing there in the cathedral nave of lofty trees. At least eight feet in height, its stem rose straight and slender, green and bare for two-thirds its length, and then burst into a shower of snow-white waxen bells. There were hundreds of these blossoms, all from the one stem, delicately poised and ethereally frail. Daylight had never seen anything like it. Slowly his gaze wandered from it to all that was about him. He took off his hat, with almost a vague religious feeling. This was different. No room for contempt and evil here. This was clean and fresh and beautiful-something he could respect. It was like a church. The atmosphere was one of holy calm. Here man felt the prompting of nobler things. Much of this and more was in Daylight's heart as he looked about him. But it was not a concept of his mind. He merely felt it without thinking about it at all.

On the steep incline above the spring grew tiny maidenhair ferns, while higher up were larger ferns and brakes. Great, moss-covered trunks of fallen trees lay here and there, slowly sinking back and merging into the level of the forest mould. Beyond, in a slightly clearer space, wild grape and honeysuckle swung in green riot from gnarled old oak trees. A gray Douglas squirrel crept out on a branch and watched him. From somewhere came the distant knocking of a woodpecker. This sound did not disturb the hush and awe of the place. Quiet woods, noises belonged there and made the solitude complete. The tiny bubbling ripple of the spring and the gray flash of tree-squirrel were as yardsticks with which to measure the silence and motionless repose.

“Might be a million miles from anywhere,” Daylight whispered to himself.

But ever his gaze returned to the wonderful lily beside the bubbling spring.

He tethered the horse and wandered on foot among the knolls. Their tops were crowned with century-old spruce trees, and their sides clothed with oaks and madronos and native holly. But to the perfect redwoods belonged the small but deep canon that threaded its way among the knolls. Here he found no passage out for his horse, and he returned to the lily beside the spring. On foot, tripping, stumbling, leading the animal, he forced his way up the hillside. And ever the ferns carpeted the way of his feet, ever the forest climbed with him and arched overhead, and ever the clean joy and sweetness stole in upon his senses.

On the crest he came through an amazing thicket of velvet-trunked young madronos, and emerged on an open hillside that led down into a tiny valley. The sunshine was at first dazzling in its brightness, and he paused and rested, for he was panting from the exertion. Not of old had he known shortness of breath such as this, and muscles that so easily tired at a stiff climb. A tiny stream ran down the tiny valley through a tiny meadow that was carpeted knee-high with grass and blue and white nemophila. The hillside was covered with Mariposa lilies and wild hyacinth, down through which his horse dropped slowly, with circumspect feet and reluctant gait.

Crossing the stream, Daylight followed a faint cattle trail over a low, rocky hill and through a wine-wooded forest of manzanita, and emerged upon another tiny valley, down which filtered another spring-fed, meadow-bordered streamlet. A jack-rabbit bounded from a bush under his horse's nose, leaped the stream, and vanished up the opposite hillside of scrub-oak. Daylight watched it admiringly as he rode on to the head of the meadow. Here he startled up a many-pronged buck, that seemed to soar across the meadow, and to soar over the stake-and-rider fence, and, still soaring, disappeared in a friendly copse beyond.

Daylight's delight was unbounded. It seemed to him that he had never been so happy. His old woods' training was aroused, and he was keenly interested in everything in the moss on the trees and branches; in the bunches of mistletoe hanging in the oaks; in the nest of a wood-rat; in the water-cress growing in the sheltered eddies of the little stream; in the butterflies drifting through the rifted sunshine and shadow; in the blue jays that flashed in splashes of gorgeous color across the forest aisles; in the tiny birds, like wrens, that hopped among the bushes and imitated certain minor quail-calls; and in the crimson-crested woodpecker that ceased its knocking and cocked its head on one side to survey him. Crossing the stream, he struck faint vestiges of a wood-road, used, evidently, a generation back, when the meadow had been cleared of its oaks. He found a hawk's nest on the lightning-shattered tipmost top of a six-foot redwood. And to complete it all his horse stumbled upon several large broods of half-grown quail, and the air was filled with the thrum of their flight. He halted and watched the young ones "petrifying" and disappearing on the ground before his eyes, and listening to the anxious calls of the old ones hidden in the thickets.

"It sure beats country places and bungalows at Menlo Park," he communed aloud; "and if ever I get the hankering for country life, it's me for this every time."

The old wood-road led him to a clearing, where a dozen acres of grapes grew on wine-red soil. A cow-path, more trees and thickets, and he dropped down a hillside to the southeast exposure. Here, poised above a big forested canon, and looking out upon Sonoma Valley, was a small farm-house. With its barn and outhouses it snuggled into a nook in the hillside, which protected it from west and north. It was the erosion from this hillside, he judged, that had formed the little level stretch of vegetable garden. The soil was fat and black, and there was water in plenty, for he saw several faucets running wide open.

Forgotten was the brickyard. Nobody was at home, but Daylight dismounted and ranged the vegetable garden, eating strawberries and green peas, inspecting the old adobe barn and the rusty plough and harrow, and rolling and smoking cigarettes while he watched the antics of several broods of young chickens and the mother hens. A foottrail that led down the wall of the big canyon invited him, and he proceeded to follow it. A water-pipe, usually above ground, paralleled the trail, which he concluded led upstream to the bed of the creek. The wall of the canon was several hundred feet from top to bottom, and magnificent were the untouched trees that the place was plunged in perpetual shade. He measured with his eye spruces five and six feet in diameter and redwoods even larger. One such he passed, a twister that was at least ten or eleven feet through. The trail led straight to a small dam where was the intake for the pipe that watered the vegetable garden. Here, beside the stream, were alders and laurel trees, and he walked through fern-brakes higher than his head. Velvety moss was everywhere, out of which grew maiden-hair and gold-back ferns.

Save for the dam, it was a virgin wild. No ax had invaded, and the trees died only of old age and stress of winter storm. The huge trunks of those that had fallen lay moss-covered, slowly resolving back into the soil from which they sprang. Some had lain so long that they were quite gone, though their faint outlines, level with the mould, could still be seen. Others bridged the stream, and from beneath the bulk of one monster half a dozen younger trees, overthrown and crushed by the fall, growing out along the ground, still lived and prospered, their roots bathed by the stream, their upshooting branches catching the sunlight through the gap that had been made in the forest roof.

Back at the farm-house, Daylight mounted and rode on away from the ranch and into the wilder canons and steeper steeps beyond. Nothing could satisfy his holiday spirit now but the ascent of Sonoma Mountain. And here on the crest, three hours afterward, he emerged, tired and sweaty, garments torn and face and hands scratched, but with sparkling eyes and an unwonted zestfulness of expression. He felt the illicit pleasure of a schoolboy playing truant. The big gambling table of San Francisco seemed very far away. But there was more than illicit pleasure in his mood. It was as though he were going through a sort of cleansing bath. No room here for all the sordidness, meanness, and viciousness that filled the dirty pool of city existence. Without pondering in detail upon the matter at all, his sensations were of purification and uplift. Had he been asked to state how he felt, he would merely have said that he was having a good time; for he was unaware in his self-consciousness of the potent charm of nature that was percolating through his city-rotted body and brain — potent, in that he came of an abysmal past of wilderness dwellers, while he was himself coated with but the thinnest rind of crowded civilization.

There were no houses in the summit of Sonoma Mountain, and, all alone under the azure California sky, he reined in on the southern edge of the peak. He saw open pasture country, intersected with wooded canons, descending to the south and west from his feet, crease on crease and roll on roll, from lower level to lower level, to the floor of Petaluma Valley, flat as a billiard-table, a cardboard affair, all patches and squares of geometrical regularity where the fat freeholds were farmed. Beyond, to the west, rose range on range of mountains cuddling purple mists of atmosphere in their valleys; and still beyond, over the last range of all, he saw the silver sheen of the Pacific. Swinging his horse, he surveyed the west and north, from Santa Rosa to St. Helena, and on to the east, across Sonoma to the chaparral-covered range that shut off the view of Napa Valley. Here, part way up the eastern wall of Sonoma Valley, in range of a line intersecting the little village of Glen Ellen, he made out a scar upon a hillside. His first thought was that it was the dump of a mine tunnel, but remembering that he was not in gold-bearing country, he dismissed the scar from his mind and continued the circle of his survey to the southeast, where, across the waters of San Pablo Bay, he could see, sharp and distant, the twin peaks of Mount Diablo. To the south was Mount Tamalpais, and, yes, he was right, fifty miles away, where the draughty winds of the Pacific blew in the Golden Gate, the smoke of San Francisco made a low-lying haze against the sky.

“I ain’t seen so much country all at once in many a day,” he thought aloud.

He was loath to depart, and it was not for an hour that he was able to tear himself away and take the descent of the mountain. Working out a new route just for the fun of it, late afternoon was upon him when he arrived back at the wooded knolls. Here, on the top of one of them, his keen eyes caught a glimpse of a shade of green sharply differentiated from any he had seen all day. Studying it for a minute, he concluded that it was composed of three cypress trees, and he knew that nothing else than the hand of man could have planted them there. Impelled by curiosity purely boyish, he made up his mind to investigate. So densely wooded was the knoll, and so steep, that he had to dismount and go up on foot, at times even on hands and knees struggling hard to force a way through the thicker underbrush. He came out abruptly upon the cypresses. They were enclosed in a small square of ancient fence; the pickets he could plainly see had been hewn and sharpened by hand. Inside were the mounds of two children's graves. Two wooden headboards, likewise hand-hewn, told the state Little David, born 1855, died 1859; and Little Roy, born 1853, died 1860.

"The poor little kids," Daylight muttered. The graves showed signs of recent care. Withered bouquets of wild flowers were on the mounds, and the lettering on the headboards was freshly painted. Guided by these clews, Daylight cast about for a trail, and found one leading down the side opposite to his ascent. Circling the base of the knoll, he picked up with his horse and rode on to the farm-house. Smoke was rising from the chimney and he was quickly in conversation with a nervous, slender young man, who, he learned, was only a tenant on the ranch. How large was it? A matter of one hundred and eighty acres, though it seemed much larger. This was because it was so irregularly shaped. Yes, it included the clay-pit and all the knolls, and its boundary that ran along the big canon was over a mile long.

"You see," the young man said, "it was so rough and broken that when they began to farm this country the farmers bought in the good land to the edge of it. That's why its boundaries are all gouged and jagged.

"Oh, yes, he and his wife managed to scratch a living without working too hard. They didn't have to pay much rent. Hillard, the owner, depended on the income from the clay-pit. Hillard was well off, and had big ranches and vineyards down on the flat of the valley. The brickyard paid ten cents a cubic yard for the clay. As for the rest of the ranch, the land was good in patches, where it was cleared, like the vegetable garden and the vineyard, but the rest of it was too much up-and-down."

“You’re not a farmer,” Daylight said. The young man laughed and shook his head. “No; I’m a telegraph operator. But the wife and I decided to take a two years’ vacation, and ... here we are. But the time’s about up. I’m going back into the office this fall after I get the grapes off.”

Yes, there were about eleven acres in the vineyard — wine grapes. The price was usually good. He grew most of what they ate. If he owned the place, he’d clear a patch of land on the side-hill above the vineyard and plant a small home orchard. The soil was good. There was plenty of pasturage all over the ranch, and there were several cleared patches, amounting to about fifteen acres in all, where he grew as much mountain hay as could be found. It sold for three to five dollars more a ton than the rank-stalked valley hay.

Daylight listened, there came to him a sudden envy of this young fellow living right in the midst of all this which Daylight had travelled through the last few hours.

“What in thunder are you going back to the telegraph office for?” he demanded.

The young man smiled with a certain wistfulness. “Because we can’t get ahead here...” (he hesitated an instant), “and because there are added expenses coming. The rent, small as it is, counts; and besides, I’m not strong enough to effectually farm the place. If I owned it, or if I were a real husky like you, I’d ask nothing better. Nor would the wife.” Again the wistful smile hovered on his face. “You see, we’re country born, and after bucking with cities for a few years, we kind of feel we like the country best. We’ve planned to get ahead, though, and then some day we’ll buy a patch of land and stay with it.”

The graves of the children? Yes, he had relettered them and hoed the weeds out. It had become the custom. Whoever lived on the ranch did that. For years, the story ran, the father and mother had returned each summer to the graves. But there had come a time when they came no more, and then old Hillard started the custom. The scar across the valley? An old mine. It had never paid. The men had worked on it, off and on, for years, for the indications had been good. But that was years and years ago. No paying mine had ever been struck in the valley, though there had been no end of prospect-holes put down and there had been a sort of rush there thirty years back.

A frail-looking young woman came to the door to call the young man to supper. Daylight's first thought was that city living had not agreed with her. And then he noted the slight tan and healthy glow that seemed added to her face, and he decided that the country was the place for her. Declining an invitation to supper, he rode on for Glen Ellen sitting slack-kneed in the saddle and softly humming forgotten songs. He dropped down the rough, winding road through covered pasture, with here and there thickets of manzanita and vistas of open glades. He listened greedily to the quail calling, and laughed outright, once, in sheer joy, at a tiny chipmunk that fled scolding up a bank, slipping on the crumbly surface and falling down, then dashing across the road under his horse's nose and, still scolding, scrabbling up a protecting oak.

Daylight could not persuade himself to keep to the travelled roads that day, and another cut across country to Glen Ellen brought him upon a canon that so blocked his way that he was glad to follow a friendly cow-path. This led him to a small frame cabin. The doors and windows were open, and a cat was nursing a litter of kittens in the doorway, but no one seemed at home. He descended the trail that evidently crossed the canon. Part way down, he met an old man coming up through the sunset. In his hand he carried a pail of foamy milk. He wore no hat, and in his face, framed with snow-white hair and beard, was the ruddy glow and content of the passing summer day. Daylight thought that he had never seen so contented-looking a being.

"How old are you, daddy?" he queried.

"Eighty-four," was the reply. "Yes, sirree, eighty-four, and spryer than most."

"You must a' taken good care of yourself," Daylight suggested.

"I don't know about that. I ain't loafed none. I walked across the Plains with an ox-team and fit Injuns in '51, and I was a family man then with seven youngsters. I reckon I was as old then as you are now, or pretty nigh on to it."

"Don't you find it lonely here?"

The old man shifted the pail of milk and reflected. "That all depends," he said oracularly. "I ain't never been lonely except when the old wife died. Some fellers are lonely in a crowd, and I'm one of them. That's the only time I'm lonely, is when I go to 'Frisco. But I don't go no more, thank you ‘most to death. This is good enough for me. I’ve ben right here in this valley since ‘54 — one of the first settlers after the Spaniards.”

Daylight started his horse, saying: —

“Well, good night, daddy. Stick with it. You got all the young bloods skinned, and I guess you’ve sure buried a mighty sight of them.”

The old man chuckled, and Daylight rode on, singularly at peace with himself and all the world. It seemed that the old contentment of trail and camp he had known on the Yukon had come back to him. He could not shake from his eyes the picture of the old pioneer coming up the trail through the sunset light. He was certainly going some for eighty-four. The thought of following his example entered Daylight’s mind, but the big game of San Francisco vetoed the idea.

“Well, anyway,” he decided, “when I get old and quit the game, I’ll settle down in a place something like this, and the city can go to hell.”

CHAPTER IX

Instead of returning to the city on Monday, Daylight rented the butcher's horse for another day and crossed the bed of the valley to its eastern hills to look at the mine. It was dryer and rockier here than where he had been the day before, and the ascending slopes supported mainly chaparral, scrubby and dense and impossible to penetrate on horseback. But in the canyons water was plentiful and also a luxuriant forest growth. The mine was an abandoned affair, but he enjoyed the half-hour's scramble around. He had had experience in quartz-mining before he went to Alaska, and he enjoyed the recrudescence of his old wisdom in such matters. The story was simple to him: good prospects that warranted the starting of the tunnel into the sidehill; the three months' work and the getting short of money; the lay-off while the men went away and got jobs; then the return and a new stretch of work, with the "pay" ever luring and ever receding into the mountain, until, after years of hope, the men had given up and vanished. Most likely they were dead by now, Daylight thought, as he turned in the saddle and looked back across the canyon at the ancient dump and dark mouth of the tunnel.

As on the previous day, just for the joy of it, he followed cattle-trails at haphazard and worked his way up toward the summits. Coming out on a wagon road that led upward, he followed it for several miles, emerging in a small, mountain-encircled valley, where half a dozen poor ranchers farmed the wine-grapes on the steep slopes. Beyond, the road pitched upward. Dense chaparral covered the exposed hillsides but in the creases of the canons huge spruce trees grew, and wild oats and flowers.

Half an hour later, sheltering under the summits themselves, he came out on a clearing. Here and there, in irregular patches where the steep and the soil favored, wine grapes were growing. Daylight could see that it had been a stiff struggle, and that wild nature showed fresh signs of winning — chaparral that had invaded the clearings; patches and parts of patches of vineyard, unpruned, grassgrown, and abandoned; and everywhere old stake-and-rider fences vainly striving to remain intact. Here, at a small farm-house surrounded by large outbuildings, the road ended. Beyond, the chaparral blocked the way.

He came upon an old woman forking manure in the barnyard, and reined in by the fence.

“Hello, mother,” was his greeting; “ain’t you got any men-folk around to do that for you?”

She leaned on her pitchfork, hitched her skirt in at the waist, and regarded him cheerfully. He saw that her toil-worn, weather-exposed hands were like a man’s, callused, large-knuckled, and gnarled, and that her stockingless feet were thrust into heavy man’s brogans.

“Nary a man,” she answered. “And where be you from, and all the way up here? Won’t you stop and hitch and have a glass of wine?”

Striding clumsily but efficiently, like a laboring-man, she led him into the largest building, where Daylight saw a hand-press and all the paraphernalia on a small scale for the making of wine. It was too far and too bad a road to haul the grapes to the valley wineries, she explained, and so they were compelled to do it themselves. “They,” he learned, were she and her daughter, the latter a widow of forty-odd. It had been easier before the grandson died and before he went away to fight savages in the Philippines. He had died out there in battle.

Daylight drank a full tumbler of excellent Riesling, talked a few minutes, and accounted for a second tumbler. Yes, they just managed not to starve. Her husband and she had taken up this government land in ‘57 and cleared it and farmed it ever since, until he died, when she had carried it on. It actually didn’t pay for the toil, but what were they to do? There was the wine trust, and wine was down. That Riesling? She delivered it to the railroad down in the valley for twenty-two cents a gallon. And it was a long haul. It took a day for the round trip. Her daughter was gone now with a load.

Daylight knew that in the hotels, Riesling, not quite so good even, was charged for at from a dollar and a half to two dollars a quart. And she got twenty-two cents a gallon. That was the game. She was one of the stupid lowly, she and her people before her — the ones that did the work, drove their oxen across the Plains, cleared and broke the virgin land, toiled all days and all hours, paid their taxes, and sent their sons and grandsons out to fight and die for the flag that gave them such ample protection that they were able to sell their wine for twenty-two cents. The same wine was served to him at the St. Francis for two dollars a quart, or eight dollars a short gallon. That was it.

Between her and her hand-press on the mountain clearing and him ordering his wine in the hotel was a difference of seven dollars and seventy-eight cents. A clique of sleek men in the city got between her and him to just about that amount. And, besides them, there was a horde of others that took their whack. They called it railroading, high finance, banking, wholesaling, real estate, and such things, but the point was that they got it, while she got what was left, — twenty-two cents. Oh, well, a sucker was born every minute, he sighed to himself, and nobody was to blame; it was all a game, and only a few could win, but it was damned hard on the suckers.

"How old are you, mother?" he asked.

"Seventy-nine come next January."

"Worked pretty hard, I suppose?"

"Sense I was seven. I was bound out in Michigan state until I was woman-grown. Then I married, and I reckon the work got harder and harder."

"When are you going to take a rest?"

She looked at him, as though she chose to think his question facetious, and did not reply.

"Do you believe in God?"

She nodded her head.

"Then you get it all back," he assured her; but in his heart he was wondering about God, that allowed so many suckers to be born and that did not break up the gambling game by which they were robbed from the cradle to the grave.

"How much of that Riesling you got?"

She ran her eyes over the casks and calculated. "Just short of eight hundred gallons."

He wondered what he could do with all of it, and speculated as to whom he could give it away.

"What would you do if you got a dollar a gallon for it?" he asked.

"Drop dead, I suppose."

"No; speaking seriously."

"Get me some false teeth, shingle the house, and buy a new wagon. The road's mighty hard on wagons."

"And after that?"

"Buy me a coffin."

"Well, they're yours, mother, coffin and all."

She looked her incredulity.

"No; I mean it. And there's fifty to bind the bargain. Never mind the receipt. It's the rich ones that need watching, their memories being so infernal short, you know. Here's my address. You've got to deliver it to the railroad. And now, show me the way out of here. I want to get up to the top."

On through the chaparral he went, following faint cattle trails and working slowly upward till he came out on the divide and gazed down into Napa Valley and back across to Sonoma Mountain... "A sweet land," he muttered, "an almighty sweet land."

Circling around to the right and dropping down along the cattle-trails, he quested for another way back to Sonoma Valley; but the cattle-trails seemed to fade out, and the chaparral to grow thicker with a deliberate viciousness and even when he won through in places, the canon and small feeders were too precipitous for his horse, and turned him back. But there was no irritation about it. He enjoyed it all, for he was back at his old game of bucking nature. Late in the afternoon he broke through, and followed a well-defined trail down a dry canon. Here he got a fresh thrill. He had heard the baying of the hound some minutes before, and suddenly, across the bare face of the hill above him, he saw a large buck in flight. And not far behind came the deer-hound, a magnificent animal. Daylight sat tense in his saddle and watched until they disappeared, his breath just a trifle shorter, as if he, too, were in the chase, his nostrils distended, and in his bones the old hunting ache and memories of the days before he came to live in cities.

The dry canon gave place to one with a slender ribbon of running water. The trail ran into a wood-road, and the wood-road emerged across a small flat upon a slightly travelled county road. There were no farms in this immediate section, and no houses. The soil was meagre, the bed-rock either close to the surface or constituting the surface itself. Manzanita and scrub-oak, however, flourished and walled the road on either side with a jungle growth. And out a runway through this growth a man suddenly scuttled in a way that reminded Daylight of a rabbit.

He was a little man, in patched overalls; bareheaded, with a cotton shirt open at the throat and down the chest. The sun was ruddy-brown in his face, and by it his sandy hair was bleached on the ends to peroxide blond. He signed to Daylight to halt, and held up a letter. "If you're going to town, I'd be obliged if you mail this."

"I sure will." Daylight put it into his coat pocket.

"Do you live hereabouts, stranger?"

But the little man did not answer. He was gazing at Daylight in a surprised and steadfast fashion.

"I know you," the little man announced. "You're Elam Harnish — Burning Daylight, the papers call you. Am I right?"

Daylight nodded.

"But what under the sun are you doing here in the chaparral?"

Daylight grinned as he answered, "Drumming up trade for a free rural delivery route."

"Well, I'm glad I wrote that letter this afternoon," the little man went on, "or else I'd have missed seeing you. I've seen your photo in the papers many a time, and I've a good memory for faces. I recognized you at once. My name's Ferguson."

"Do you live hereabouts?" Daylight repeated his query.

"Oh, yes. I've got a little shack back here in the bush a hundred yards, and a pretty spring, and a few fruit trees and berry bushes. Come in and take a look. And that spring is a dandy. You never tasted water like it. Come in and try it."

Walking and leading his horse, Daylight followed the quick-stepping eager little man through the green tunnel and emerged abruptly upon the clearing, if clearing it might be called, where wild nature and man's earth-scratching were inextricably blended. It was a tiny nook in the hills, protected by the steep walls of a canon mouth. Here were several large oaks, evidencing a richer soil. The erosion of ages from the hillside had slowly formed this deposit of fat earth. Under the oaks, almost buried in them, stood a rough, unpainted cabin, the wide verandah of which, with chairs and hammocks, advertised an out-of doors bedchamber. Daylight's keen eyes took in every thing. The clearing was irregular, following the patches of the best soil, and every fruit tree and berry bush, and even each vegetable plant, had the water personally conducted to it. The tiny irrigation channels were every where, and along some of them the water was running.

Ferguson looked eagerly into his visitor's face for signs of approbation.

"What do you think of it, eh?"

"Hand-reared and manicured, every blessed tree," Daylight laughed, but the joy and satisfaction that shone in his eyes contented the little man.

"Why, d'ye know, I know every one of those trees as if they were sons of mine. I planted them, nursed them, fed them, and brought them up. Come on and peep at the spring."

"It's sure a hummer," was Daylight's verdict, after due inspection and sampling, as they turned back for the house.

The interior was a surprise. The cooking being done in the small, lean-to kitchen, the whole cabin formed a large living room. A great table in the middle was comfortably littered with books and magazines. All the available wall space, from floor to ceiling, was occupied by filled bookshelves. It seemed to Daylight that he had never seen so many books assembled in one place. Skins of wildcat, 'coon, and deer lay about on the pine-board floor.

"Shot them myself, and tanned them, too," Ferguson proudly asserted.

The crowning feature of the room was a huge fireplace of rough stones and boulders.

"Built it myself," Ferguson proclaimed, "and, by God, she drew! Never a wisp of smoke anywhere save in the pointed channel, and that during the big southeasters."

Daylight found himself charmed and made curious by the little man. Why was he hiding away here in the chaparral, he and his books? He was nobody's fool, anybody could see that. Then why? The whole affair had a tinge of adventure, and Daylight accepted an invitation to supper, half prepared to find his host a raw-fruit-and-nut-eater or some similar sort of health faddest. At table, while eating rice and jack-rabbit curry (the latter shot by Ferguson), they talked it over, and Daylight found the little man had no food "views." He ate whatever he liked, and all he wanted, avoiding only such combinations that experience had taught him disagreed with his digestion.

Next, Daylight surmised that he might be touched with religion; but, quest about as he would, in a conversation covering the most divergent topics, he could find no hint of queerness or unusualness. So it was, when between them they had washed and wiped the dishes and put them away, and had settled down to a comfortable smoke, that Daylight put his question.

"Look here, Ferguson. Ever since we got together, I've been casting about to find out what's wrong with you, to locate a screw loose somewhere, but I'll be danged if I've succeeded. What are you doing here, anyway? What made you come here? What were you doing for a living before you came here? Go ahead and elucidate yourself."

Ferguson frankly showed his pleasure at the questions.

"First of all," he began, "the doctors wound up by losing all hope for me. Gave me a few months at best, and that, after a course in sanatoriums and a trip to Europe and another to Hawaii. They tried electricity, and forced feeding, and fasting. I was a graduate of about everything in the curriculum. They kept me poor with their bills while I went from bad to worse. The trouble with me was two fold: first, I was a born weakling; and next, I was living unnaturally — too much work, and responsibility, and strain. I was managing editor of the Times-Tribune — "

Daylight gasped mentally, for the Times-Tribune was the biggest and most influential paper in San Francisco, and always had been so.

" — and I wasn't strong enough for the strain. Of course my body went back on me, and my mind, too, for that matter. It had to be bolstered up with whiskey, which wasn't good for it any more than was the living in clubs and hotels good for my stomach and the rest of me. That was what ailed me; I was living all wrong."

He shrugged his shoulders and drew at his pipe.

"When the doctors gave me up, I wound up my affairs and gave the doctors up. That was fifteen years ago. I'd been hunting through here when I was a boy, on vacations from college, and when I was all down and out it seemed a yearning came to me to go back to the country. So I quit, quit everything, absolutely, and came to live in the Valley of the Moon — that's the Indian name, you know, for Sonoma Valley. I lived in the lean-to the first year; then I built the cabin and sent for my books. I never knew what happiness was before, nor health. Look at me now and dare to tell me that I look forty-seven."

"I wouldn't give a day over forty," Daylight confessed.

"Yet the day I came here I looked nearer sixty, and that was fifteen years ago."

They talked along, and Daylight looked at the world from new angles. Here was a man, neither bitter nor cynical, who laughed at the city-dwellers and called them lunatics; a man who did not care for money, and in whom the lust for power had long since died. As for the friendship of the city-dwellers, his host spoke in no uncertain terms.

"What did they do, all the chaps I knew, the chaps in the clubs with whom I'd been cheek by jowl for heaven knows how long? I was not beholden to them for anything, and when I slipped out there was not one of them to drop me a line and say, ‘How are you, old man? Anything I can do for you?’ For several weeks it was: ‘What’s become of Ferguson?’ After that I became a reminiscence and a memory. Yet every last one of them knew I had nothing but my salary and that I’d always lived a lap ahead of it.”

“But what do you do now?” was Daylight’s query. “You must need cash to buy clothes and magazines?”

“A week’s work or a month’s work, now and again, ploughing in the winter, or picking grapes in the fall, and there’s always odd jobs with the farmers through the summer. I don’t need much, so I don’t have to work much. Most of my time I spend fooling around the place. I could do hack work for the magazines and newspapers; but I prefer the ploughing and the grape picking. Just look at me and you can see why. I’m hard as rocks. And I like the work. But I tell you a chap’s got to break in to it. It’s a great thing when he’s learned to pick grapes a whole long day and come home at the end of it with that tired happy feeling, instead of being in a state of physical collapse. That fireplace — those big stones — I was soft, then, a little, anemic, alcoholic degenerate, with the spunk of a rabbit and about one per cent as much stamina, and some of those big stones nearly broke my back and my heart. But I persevered, and used my body in the way Nature intended it should be used — not bending over a desk and swilling whiskey... and, well, here I am, a better man for it, and there’s the fireplace, fine and dandy, eh?

“And now tell me about the Klondike, and how you turned San Francisco upside down with that last raid of yours. You’re a bonny fighter, you know, and you touch my imagination, though my cooler reason tells me that you are a lunatic like the rest. The lust for power! It’s a dreadful affliction. Why didn’t you stay in your Klondike? Or why don’t you clear out and live a natural life, for instance, like mine? You see, I can ask questions, too. Now you talk and let me listen for a while.”

It was not until ten o’clock that Daylight parted from Ferguson. As he rode along through the starlight, the idea came to him of buying the ranch on the other side of the valley. There was no thought in his mind of ever intending to live on it. His game was in San Francisco. But he liked the ranch, and as soon as he got back to the office he would open up negotiations with Hillard. Besides, the ranch included the clay-pit, and it would give him the whip-hand over Holdsworthy if he ever tried to cut up any didoes.

CHAPTER X

The time passed, and Daylight played on at the game. But the game had entered upon a new phase. The lust for power in the mere gambling and winning was metamorphosing into the lust for power in order to revenge. There were many men in San Francisco against whom he had registered black marks, and now and again, with one of his lightning strokes, he erased such a mark. He asked no quarter; he gave no quarter. Men feared and hated him, and no one loved him, except Larry Hegan, his lawyer, who would have laid down his life for him. But he was the only man with whom Daylight was really intimate, though he was on terms of friendliest camaraderie with the rough and unprincipled following of the bosses who ruled the Riverside Club.

On the other hand, San Francisco's attitude toward Daylight had undergone a change. While he, with his slashing buccaneer methods, was a distinct menace to the more orthodox financial gamblers, he was nevertheless so grave a menace that they were glad enough to leave him alone. He had already taught them the excellence of letting a sleeping dog lie. Many of the men, who knew that they were in danger of his big bear-paw when it reached out for the honey vats, even made efforts to placate him, to get on the friendly side of him. The Alta-Pacific approached him confidentially with an offer of reinstatement, which he promptly declined. He was after a number of men in that club, and, whenever opportunity offered, he reached out for them and mangled them. Even the newspapers, with one or two blackmailing exceptions, ceased abusing him and became respectful. In short, he was looked upon as a bald-faced grizzly from the Arctic wilds to whom it was considered expedient to give the trail. At the time he raided the steamship companies, they had yapped at him and worried him, the whole pack of them, only to have him whirl around and whip them in the fiercest pitched battle San Francisco had ever known. Not easily forgotten was the Pacific Slope Seaman's strike and the giving over of the municipal government to the labor bosses and grafters. The destruction of Charles Klinkner and the California and Altamont Trust Company had been a warning. But it was an isolated case; they had been confident in strength in numbers — until he taught them better.

Daylight still engaged in daring speculations, as, for instance, at the impending outbreak of the Japanese-Russian War, when, in the face of the experience and power of the shipping gamblers, he reached out and clutched practically a monopoly of available steamer-charters. There was scarcely a battered tramp on the Seven Seas that was not his on time charter. As usual, his position was, "You've got to come and see me"; which they did, and, to use another of his phrases, they "paid through the nose" for the privilege. And all his venturing and fighting had now but one motive. Some day, as he confided to Hegan, when he'd made a sufficient stake, he was going back to New York and knock the spots out of Messrs. Dowsett, Letton, and Guggenhammer. He'd show them what an all-around general buzz-saw he was and what a mistake they'd made ever to monkey with him. But he never lost his head, and he knew that he was not yet strong enough to go into death-grapples with those three early enemies. In the meantime the black marks against them remained for a future easement day.

Dede Mason was still in the office. He had made no more overtures, discussed no more books and no more grammar. He had no active interest in her, and she was to him a pleasant memory of what had never happened, a joy, which, by his essential nature, he was barred from ever knowing. Yet, while his interest had gone to sleep and his energy was consumed in the endless battles he waged, he knew every trick of the light on her hair, every quick denote mannerism of movement, every line of her figure as expounded by her tailor-made gowns. Several times, six months or so apart, he had increased her salary, until now she was receiving ninety dollars a month. Beyond this he dared not go, though he had got around it by making the work easier. This he had accomplished after her return from a vacation, by retaining her substitute as an assistant. Also, he had changed his office suite, so that now the two girls had a room by themselves.

His eye had become quite critical wherever Dede Mason was concerned. He had long since noted her pride of carriage. It was unobtrusive, yet it was there. He decided, from the way she carried it, that she deemed her body a thing to be proud of, to be cared for as a beautiful and valued possession. In this, and in the way she carried her clothes, he compared her with her assistant, with the stenographers he encountered in other offices, with the women he saw on the sidewalks. "She's sure well put up," he communed with himself; "and she sure knows how to dress and carry it off without being stuck on herself and without laying it on thick."

The more he saw of her, and the more he thought he knew of her, the more unapproachable did she seem to him. But since he had no intention of approaching her, this was anything but an unsatisfactory fact. He was glad he had her in his office, and hoped she'd stay, and that was about all.

Daylight did not improve with the passing years. The life was not good for him. He was growing stout and soft, and there was unwonted flabbiness in his muscles. The more he drank cocktails, the more he was compelled to drink in order to get the desired result, the inhibitions that eased him down from the concert pitch of his operations. And with this went wine, too, at meals, and the long drinks after dinner of Scotch and soda at the Riverside. Then, too, his body suffered from lack of exercise; and, from lack of decent human associations, his moral fibres were weakening. Never a man to hide anything, some of his escapades became public, such as speeding, and of joy-rides in his big red motor-car down to San Jose with companions distinctly sporty — incidents that were narrated as good fun and comically in the newspapers.

Nor was there anything to save him. Religion had passed him by. "A long time dead" was his epitome of that phase of speculation. He was not interested in humanity. According to his rough-hewn sociology, it was all a gamble. God was a whimsical, abstract, mad thing called Luck. As to how one happened to be born — whether a sucker or a robber — was a gamble to begin with; Luck dealt out the cards, and the little babies picked up the hands allotted them. Protest was vain. Those were their cards and they had to play them, willy-nilly, hunchbacked or straight backed, crippled or clean-limbed, addle-pated or clear-headed. There was no fairness in it. The cards most picked up put them into the sucker class; the cards of a few enabled them to become robbers. The playing of the cards was life — the crowd of players, society.

The table was the earth, and the earth, in lumps and chunks, from loaves of bread to big red motor-cars, was the stake. And in the end, lucky and unlucky, they were all a long time dead.

It was hard on the stupid lowly, for they were coppered to lose from the start; but the more he saw of the others, the apparent winners, the less it seemed to him that they had anything to brag about. They, too, were a long time dead, and their living did not amount to much. It was a wild animal fight; the strong trampled the weak, and the strong, he had already discovered, — men like Dowsett, and Letton, and Guggenhammer, — were not necessarily the best. He remembered his miner comrades of the Arctic. They were the stupid lowly, they did the hard work and were robbed of the fruit of their toil just as was the old woman making wine in the Sonoma hills; and yet they had finer qualities of truth, and loyalty, and square-dealing than did the men who robbed them. The winners seemed to be the crooked ones, the unfaithful ones, the wicked ones. And even they had no say in the matter. They played the cards that were given them; and Luck, the monstrous, mad-god thing, the owner of the whole shebang, looked on and grinned. It was he who stacked the universal card-deck of existence.

There was no justice in the deal. The little men that came, the little pulpy babies, were not even asked if they wanted to try a flutter at the game. They had no choice. Luck jerked them into life, slammed them up against the jostling table, and told them: “Now play, damn you, play!” And they did their best, poor little devils. The play of some led to steam yachts and mansions; of others, to the asylum or the pauper’s ward. Some played the one same card, over and over, and made wine all their days in the chaparral, hoping, at the end, to pull down a set of false teeth and a coffin. Others quit the game early, having drawn cards that called for violent death, or famine in the Barrens, or loathsome and lingering disease. The hands of some called for kingship and irresponsible and numerated power; other hands called for ambition, for wealth in untold sums, for disgrace and shame, or for women and wine.

As for himself, he had drawn a lucky hand, though he could not see all the cards. Somebody or something might get him yet. The mad god, Luck, might be tricking him along to some such end. An unfortunate set of circumstances, and in a month’s time the robber gang might be war-dancing around his financial carcass. This very day a street-car might run him down, or a sign fall from a building and smash in his skull. Or there was disease, ever rampant, one of Luck’s grimmest whims. Who could say? To-morrow, or some other day, a ptomaine bug, or some other of a thousand bugs, might jump out upon him and drag him down. There was Doctor Bascom, Lee Bascom who had stood beside him a week ago and talked and argued, a picture of magnificent youth, and strength, and health. And in three days he was dead — pneumonia, rheumatism of the heart, and heaven knew what else — at the end screaming in agony that could be heard a block away. That had been terrible. It was a fresh, raw stroke in Daylight’s consciousness. And when would his own turn come? Who could say?

In the meantime there was nothing to do but play the cards he could see in his hand, and they were BATTLE, REVENGE, AND COCKTAILS. And Luck sat over all and grinned.

CHAPTER XI

One Sunday, late in the afternoon, found Daylight across the bay in the Piedmont hills back of Oakland. As usual, he was in a big motor-car, though not his own, the guest of Swiftwater Bill, Luck's own darling, who had come down to spend the clean-up of the seventh fortune wrung from the frozen Arctic gravel. A notorious spender, his latest pile was already on the fair road to follow the previous six. He it was, in the first year of Dawson, who had cracked an ocean of champagne at fifty dollars a quart; who, with the bottom of his gold-sack in sight, had cornered the egg-market, at twenty-four dollars per dozen, to the tune of one hundred and ten dozen, in order to pique the lady-love who had jilted him; and he it was, paying like a prince for speed, who had chartered special trains and broken all records between San Francisco and New York. And here he was once more, the "luck-pup of hell," as Daylight called him, throwing his latest fortune away with the same old-time facility.

It was a merry party, and they had made a merry day of it, circling the bay from San Francisco around by San Jose and up to Oakland, having been thrice arrested for speeding, the third time, however, on the Haywards stretch, running away with their captor. Fearing that a telephone message to arrest them had been flashed ahead, they had turned into the back-road through the hills, and now, rushing in upon Oakland by a new route, were boisterously discussing what disposition they should make of the constable.

"We'll come out at Blair Park in ten minutes," one of the men announced. "Look here, Swiftwater, there's a crossroads right ahead, with lots of gates, but it'll take us backcountry clear into Berkeley. Then we can come back into Oakland from the other side, sneak across on the ferry, and send the machine back around to-night with the chauffeur."

But Swiftwater Bill failed to see why he should not go into Oakland by way of Blair Park, and so decided.

The next moment, flying around a bend, the back-road they were not going to take appeared. Inside the gate leaning out from her saddle and just closing it, was a young woman on a chestnut sorrel. With his first glimpse, Daylight felt there was something strangely familiar about her. The next moment, straightening up in the saddle with a movement he could not fail to identify, she put the horse into a gallop, riding away with her back toward them. It was Dede Mason — he remembered what Morrison had told him about her keeping a riding horse, and he was glad she had not seen him in this riotous company. Swiftwater Bill stood up, clinging with one hand to the back of the front seat and waving the other to attract her attention. His lips were pursed for the piercing whistle for which he was famous and which Daylight knew of old, when Daylight, with a hook of his leg and a yank on the shoulder, slammed the startled Bill down into his seat.

"You m-m-must know the lady," Swiftwater Bill spluttered.

"I sure do," Daylight answered, "so shut up."

"Well, I congratulate your good taste, Daylight. She's a peach, and she rides like one, too."

Intervening trees at that moment shut her from view, and Swiftwater Bill plunged into the problem of disposing of their constable, while Daylight, leaning back with closed eyes, was still seeing Dede Mason gallop off down the country road. Swiftwater Bill was right. She certainly could ride. And, sitting astride, her seat was perfect. Good for Dede! That was an added point, her having the courage to ride in the only natural and logical manner. Her head as screwed on right, that was one thing sure.

On Monday morning, coming in for dictation, he looked at her with new interest, though he gave no sign of it; and the stereotyped business passed off in the stereotyped way. But the following Sunday found him on a horse himself, across the bay and riding through the Piedmont hills. He made a long day of it, but no glimpse did he catch of Dede Mason, though he even took the back-road of many gates and rode on into Berkeley. Here, along the lines of multitudinous houses, up one street and down another, he wondered which of them might be occupied by her. Morrison had said long ago that she lived in Berkeley, and she had been headed that way in the late afternoon of the previous Sunday — evidently returning home.

It had been a fruitless day, so far as she was concerned; and yet not entirely fruitless, for he had enjoyed the open air and the horse under him to such purpose that, on Monday, his instructions were out to the dealers to look for the best chestnut sorrel that money could buy. At odd times during the week he examined numbers of chestnut sorrels, tried several, and was unsatisfied. It was not till Saturday that he came upon Bob. Daylight knew him for what he wanted the moment he laid eyes on him. A large horse for a riding animal, he was none too large for a big man like Daylight. In splendid condition, Bob’s coat in the sunlight was a flame of fire, his arched neck a jeweled conflagration.

“He’s a sure winner,” was Daylight’s comment; but the dealer was not so sanguine. He was selling the horse on commission, and its owner had insisted on Bob’s true character being given. The dealer gave it.

“Not what you’d call a real vicious horse, but a dangerous one. Full of vinegar and all-round cussedness, but without malice. Just as soon kill you as not, but in a playful sort of way, you understand, without meaning to at all. Personally, I wouldn’t think of riding him. But he’s a stayer. Look at them lungs. And look at them legs. Not a blemish. He’s never been hurt or worked. Nobody ever succeeded in taking it out of him. Mountain horse, too, trail-broke and all that, being raised in rough country. Sure-footed as a goat, so long as he don’t get it into his head to cut up. Don’t shy. Ain’t really afraid, but makes believe. Don’t buck, but rears. Got to ride him with a martingale. Has a bad trick of whirling around without cause It’s his idea of a joke on his rider. It’s all just how he feels One day he’ll ride along peaceable and pleasant for twenty miles. Next day, before you get started, he’s well-nigh unmanageable. Knows automobiles so he can lay down alongside of one and sleep or eat hay out of it. He’ll let nineteen go by without batting an eye, and mebbe the twentieth, just because he’s feeling frisky, he’ll cut up over like a range cayuse. Generally speaking, too lively for a gentleman, and too unexpected. Present owner nicknamed him Judas Iscariot, and refuses to sell without the buyer knowing all about him first. There, that’s about all I know, except look at that mane and tail. Ever see anything like it? Hair as fine as a baby’s.”

The dealer was right. Daylight examined the mane and found it finer than any horse’s hair he had ever seen. Also, its color was unusual in that it was almost auburn. While he ran his fingers through it, Bob turned his head and playfully nuzzled Daylight’s shoulder.

“Saddle him up, and I’ll try him,” he told the dealer. “I wonder if he’s used to spurs. No English saddle, mind. Give me a good Mexican and a curb bit — not too severe, seeing as he likes to rear.”

Daylight superintended the preparations, adjusting the curb strap and the stirrup length, and doing the cinching. He shook his head at the martingale, but yielded to the dealer’s advice and allowed it to go on. And Bob, beyond spirited restlessness and a few playful attempts, gave no trouble. Nor in the hour’s ride that followed, save for some permissible curveting and prancing, did he misbehave. Daylight was delighted; the purchase was immediately made; and Bob, with riding gear and personal equipment, was despatched across the bay forthwith to take up his quarters in the stables of the Oakland Riding Academy.

The next day being Sunday, Daylight was away early, crossing on the ferry and taking with him Wolf, the leader of his sled team, the one dog which he had selected to bring with him when he left Alaska. Quest as he would through the Piedmont hills and along the many-gated back-road to Berkeley, Daylight saw nothing of Dede Mason and her chestnut sorrel. But he had little time for disappointment, for his own chestnut sorrel kept him busy. Bob proved a handful of impishness and contrariety, and he tried out his rider as much as his rider tried him out. All of Daylight's horse knowledge and horse sense was called into play, while Bob, in turn, worked every trick in his lexicon. Discovering that his martingale had more slack in it than usual, he proceeded to give an exhibition of rearing and hind-leg walking. After ten hopeless minutes of it, Daylight slipped off and tightened the martingale, whereupon Bob gave an exhibition of angelic goodness.

He fooled Daylight completely. At the end of half an hour of goodness, Daylight, lured into confidence, was riding along at a walk and rolling a cigarette, with slack knees and relaxed seat, the reins lying on the animal's neck. Bob whirled abruptly and with lightning swiftness, pivoting on his hind legs, his fore legs just lifted clear of the ground. Daylight found himself with his right foot out of the stirrup and his arms around the animal's neck; and Bob took advantage of the situation to bolt down the road. With a hope that he should not encounter Dede Mason at that moment, Daylight regained his seat and checked in the horse.

Arrived back at the same spot, Bob whirled again. This time Daylight kept his seat, but, beyond a futile rein across the neck, did nothing to prevent the evolution. He noted that Bob whirled to the right, and resolved to keep him straightened out by a spur on the left. But so abrupt and swift was the whirl that warning and accomplishment were practically simultaneous.

"Well, Bob," he addressed the animal, at the same time wiping the sweat from his own eyes, "I'm free to confess that you're sure the blamedest all-fired quickest creature I ever saw. I guess the way to fix you is to keep the spur just a-touching — ah! you brute!"

For, the moment the spur touched him, his left hind leg had reached forward in a kick that struck the stirrup a smart blow. Several times, out of curiosity, Daylight attempted the spur, and each time Bob's hoof landed the stirrup. Then Daylight, following the horse's example of the unexpected, suddenly drove both spurs into him and reached him underneath with the quirt.

"You ain't never had a real licking before," he muttered as Bob, thus rudely jerked out of the circle of his own impish mental processes, shot ahead.

Half a dozen times spurs and quirt bit into him, and then Daylight settled down to enjoy the mad magnificent gallop. No longer punished, at the end of a half mile Bob eased down into a fast canter. Wolf, toiling in the rear, was catching up, and everything was going nicely.

"I'll give you a few pointers on this whirling game, my boy," Daylight was saying to him, when Bob whirled.

He did it on a gallop, breaking the gallop off short by fore legs stiffly planted. Daylight fetched up against his steed's neck with clasped arms, and at the same instant, with fore feet clear of the ground, Bob whirled around. Only an excellent rider could have escaped being unhorsed, and as it was, Daylight was nastily near to it. By the time he recovered his seat, Bob was in full career, bolting the way he had come, and making Wolf side-jump to the bushes.

"All right, darn you!" Daylight grunted, driving in spurs and quirt again and again. "Back-track you want to go, and back-track you sure will go till you're dead sick of it."

When, after a time, Bob attempted to ease down the mad pace, spurs and quirt went into him again with undiminished vim and put him to renewed effort. And when, at last, Daylight decided that the horse had had enough, he turned him around abruptly and put him into a gentle canter on the forward track. After a time he reined him in to a stop to see if he were breathing painfully.

Standing for a minute, Bob turned his head and nuzzled his rider's stirrup in a roguish, impatient way, as much as to intimate that it was time they were going on.

"Well, I'll be plumb gosh darned!" was Daylight's comment. "No ill-will, no grudge, no nothing-and after that lambasting! You're sure a hummer, Bob."

Once again Daylight was lulled into fancied security. For an hour Bob was all that could be desired of a spirited mount, when, and as usual without warning, he took to whirling and bolting. Daylight put a stop to this with spurs and quirt, running him several punishing miles in the direction of his bolt. But when he turned him around and started forward, Bob proceeded to feign fright at trees, cows, bushes, Wolf, his own shadow — in short, at every ridiculously conceivable object. At such times, Wolf lay down in the shade and looked on, while Daylight wrestled it out.

So the day passed. Among other things, Bob developed a trick of making believe to whirl and not whirling. This was as exasperating as the real thing, for each time Daylight was fooled into tightening his leg grip and into a general muscular tensing of all his body. And then, after a few make-believe attempts, Bob actually did whirl and caught Daylight napping again and landed him in the old position with clasped arms around the neck.

And to the end of the day, Bob continued to be up to one trick or another; after passing a dozen automobiles on the way into Oakland, suddenly electing to go mad with fright at a most ordinary little runabout. And just before he arrived back at the stable he capped the day with a combined whirling and rearing that broke the martingale and enabled him to gain a perpendicular position on his hind legs. At this juncture a rotten stirrup leather parted, and Daylight was all but unhorsed.

But he had taken a liking to the animal, and repented not of his bargain. He realized that Bob was not vicious nor mean, the trouble being that he was bursting with high spirits and was endowed with more than the average horse's intelligence. It was the spirits and the intelligence, combined with inordinate roguishness, that made him what he was. What was required to control him was a strong hand, with tempered sternness and yet with the requisite touch of brutal dominance.

"It's you or me, Bob," Daylight told him more than once that day.

And to the stableman, that night: —

"My, but ain't he a looker! Ever see anything like him? Best piece of horseflesh I ever straddled, and I've seen a few in my time."

And to Bob, who had turned his head and was up to his playful nuzzling: —

"Good-by, you little bit of all right. See you again next Sunday A.M., and just you bring along your whole basket of tricks, you old son-of-a-gun."

CHAPTER XII

Throughout the week Daylight found himself almost as much interested in Bob as in Dede; and, not being in the thick of any big deals, he was probably more interested in both of them than in the business game. Bob's trick of whirling was of especial moment to him. How to overcome it, — that was the thing. Suppose he did meet with Dede out in the hills; and suppose, by some lucky stroke of fate, he should manage to be riding alongside of her; then that whirl of Bob's would be most disconcerting and embarrassing. He was not particularly anxious for her to see him thrown forward on Bob's neck. On the other hand, suddenly to leave her and go dashing down the back-track, plying quirt and spurs, wouldn't do, either.

What was wanted was a method wherewith to prevent that lightning whirl. He must stop the animal before it got around. The reins would not do this. Neither would the spurs. Remained the quirt.

But how to accomplish it? Absent-minded moments were many that week, when, sitting in his office chair, in fancy he was astride the wonderful chestnut sorrel and trying to prevent an anticipated whirl. One such moment, toward the end of the week, occurred in the middle of a conference with Hegan. Hegan, elaborating a new and dazzling legal vision, became aware that Daylight was not listening. His eyes had gone lack-lustre, and he, too, was seeing with inner vision.

"Got it" he cried suddenly. "Hegan, congratulate me. It's as simple as rolling off a log. All I've got to do is hit him on the nose, and hit him hard."

Then he explained to the startled Hegan, and became a good listener again, though he could not refrain now and again from making audible chuckles of satisfaction and delight. That was the scheme. Bob always whirled to the right. Very well. He would double the quirt in his hand and, the instant of the whirl, that doubled quirt would rap Bob on the nose. The horse didn't live, after it had once learned the lesson, that would whirl in the face of the doubled quirt.

More keenly than ever, during that week in the office did Daylight realize that he had no social, nor even human contacts with Dede. The situation was such that he could not ask her the simple question whether or not she was going riding next Sunday. It was a hardship of a new sort, this being the employer of a pretty girl. He looked at her often, when the routine work of the day was going on, the question he could not ask her tickling at the founts of speech — Was she going riding next Sunday? And as he looked, he wondered how old she was, and what love passages she had had, must have had, with those college whippersnappers with whom, according to Morrison, she herded and danced. His mind was very full of her, those six days between the Sundays, and one thing he came to know thoroughly well; he wanted her. And so much did he want her that his old timidity of the apron-string was put to rout. He, who had run away from women most of his life, had now grown so courageous as to pursue. Some Sunday, sooner or later, he would meet her outside the office, somewhere in the hills, and then, if they did not get acquainted, it would be because she did not care to get acquainted.

Thus he found another card in the hand the mad god had dealt him.

How important that card was to become he did not dream, yet he decided that it was a pretty good card. In turn, he doubted. Maybe it was a trick of Luck to bring calamity and disaster upon him. Suppose Dede wouldn't have him, and suppose he went on loving her more and more, harder and harder? All his old generalized terrors of love revived. He remembered the disastrous love affairs of men and women he had known in the past. There was Bertha Doolittle, old Doolittle's daughter, who had been madly in love with Dartworthy, the rich Bonanza fraction owner; and Dartworthy, in turn, not loving Bertha at all, but madly loving Colonel Walthstone's wife and eloping down the Yukon with her; and Colonel Walthstone himself, madly loving his own wife and lighting out in pursuit of the fleeing couple. And what had been the outcome? Certainly Bertha's love had been unfortunate and tragic, and so had the love of the other three. Down below Minook, Colonel Walthstone and Dartworthy had fought it out. Dartworthy had been killed. A bullet through the Colonel's lungs had so weakened him that he died of pneumonia the following spring. And the Colonel's wife had no one left alive on earth to love.

And then there was Freda, drowning herself in the running mush-ice because of some man on the other side of the world, and hating him, Daylight, because he had happened along and pulled her out of the mush-ice and back to life. And the Virgin.... The old memories frightened him. If this love-germ gripped him good and hard, and if Dede wouldn't have him, it might be almost as bad as being gouged out of all he had by Dowsett, Letton, and Guggenhammer. Had his nascent desire for Dede been less, he might well have been frightened out of all thought of her. As it was, he found consolation in the thought that some love affairs did come out right. And for all he knew, maybe Luck had stacked the cards for him to win. Some men were born lucky, lived lucky all their days, and died lucky. Perhaps, too, he was such a man, a born luck-pup who could not lose.

Sunday came, and Bob, out in the Piedmont hills, behaved like an angel. His goodness, at times, was of the spirited prancing order, but otherwise he was a lamb. Daylight, with doubled quirt ready in his right hand, ached for a whirl, just one whirl, which Bob, with an excellence of conduct that was tantalizing, refused to perform. But no Dede did Daylight encounter. He vainly circled about among the hill roads and in the afternoon took the steep grade over the divide of the second range and dropped into Maraga Valley. Just after passing the foot of the descent, he heard the hoof beats of a cantering horse. It was from ahead and coming toward him. What if it were Dede? He turned Bob around and started to return at a walk. If it were Dede, he was born to luck, he decided; for the meeting couldn't have occurred under better circumstances. Here they were, both going in the same direction, and the canter would bring her up to him just where the stiff grade would compel a walk. There would be nothing else for her to do than ride with him to the top of the divide; and, once there, the equally stiff descent on the other side would compel more walking.

The canter came nearer, but he faced straight ahead until he heard the horse behind check to a walk. Then he glanced over his shoulder. It was Dede. The recognition was quick, and, with her, accompanied by surprise. What more natural thing than that, partly turning his horse, he should wait till she caught up with him; and that, when abreast they should continue abreast on up the grade? He could have sighed with relief. The thing was accomplished, and so easily. Greetings had been exchanged; here they were side by side and going in the same direction with miles and miles ahead of them.

He noted that her eye was first for the horse and next for him.

“Oh, what a beauty” she had cried at sight of Bob. From the shining light in her eyes, and the face filled with delight, he would scarcely have believed that it belonged to a young woman he had known in the office, the young woman with the controlled, subdued office face.

“I didn’t know you rode,” was one of her first remarks. “I imagined you were wedded to get-there-quick machines.”

"I've just taken it up lately," was his answer. "Beginning to get stout; you know, and had to take it off somehow."

She gave a quick sidewise glance that embraced him from head to heel, including seat and saddle, and said: —

"But you've ridden before."

She certainly had an eye for horses and things connected with horses was his thought, as he replied: —

"Not for many years. But I used to think I was a regular rip-snorter when I was a youngster up in Eastern Oregon, sneaking away from camp to ride with the cattle and break cayuses and that sort of thing."

Thus, and to his great relief, were they launched on a topic of mutual interest. He told her about Bob's tricks, and of the whirl and his scheme to overcome it; and she agreed that horses had to be handled with a certain rational severity, no matter how much one loved them. There was her Mab, which she had for eight years and which she had had break of stall-kicking. The process had been painful for Mab, but it had cured her.

"You've ridden a lot," Daylight said.

"I really can't remember the first time I was on a horse," she told him. "I was born on a ranch, you know, and they couldn't keep me away from the horses. I must have been born with the love for them. I had my first pony, all my own, when I was six. When I was eight I knew what it was to be all day in the saddle along with Daddy. By the time I was eleven he was taking me on my first deer hunts. I'd be lost without a horse. I hate indoors, and without Mab here I suppose I'd have been sick and dead long ago."

"You like the country?" he queried, at the same moment catching his first glimpse of a light in her eyes other than gray. "As much as I detest the city," she answered. "But a woman can't earn a living in the country. So I make the best of it — along with Mab."

And thereat she told him more of her ranch life in the days before her father died. And Daylight was hugely pleased with himself. They were getting acquainted. The conversation had not lagged in the full half hour they had been together.

"We come pretty close from the same part of the country," he said. "I was raised in Eastern Oregon, and that's none so far from Siskiyou."

The next moment he could have bitten out his tongue for her quick question was: —

"How did you know I came from Siskiyou? I'm sure I never mentioned it."

"I don't know," he floundered temporarily. "I heard somewhere that you were from thereabouts."

Wolf, sliding up at that moment, sleek-footed and like a shadow, caused her horse to shy and passed the awkwardness off, for they talked Alaskan dogs until the conversation drifted back to horses. And horses it was, all up the grade and down the other side.

When she talked, he listened and followed her, and yet all the while he was following his own thoughts and impressions as well. It was a nervy thing for her to do, this riding astride, and he didn't know, after all, whether he liked it or not. His ideas of women were prone to be old-fashioned; they were the ones he had imbibed in the early-day, frontier life of his youth, when no woman was seen on anything but a side-saddle. He had grown up to the tacit fiction that women on horseback were not bipeds. It came to him with a shock, this sight of her so manlike in her saddle. But he had to confess that the sight looked good to him just then.

Two other immediate things about her struck him. First, there were the golden spots in her eyes. Queer that he had never noticed them before. Perhaps the light in the office had not been right, and perhaps they came and went. No; they were glows of color — a sort of diffused, golden light. Nor was it golden, either, but it was nearer that than any color he knew. It certainly was not any shade of yellow. A lover's thoughts are ever colored, and it is to be doubted if any one else in the world would have called Dede's eyes golden. But Daylight's mood verged on the tender and melting, and he preferred to think of them as golden, and therefore they were golden.

And then she was so natural. He had been prepared to find her a most difficult young woman to get acquainted with. Yet here it was proving so simple. There was nothing highfalutin about her company manners — it was by this homely phrase that he differentiated this Dede on horseback from the Dede with the office manners whom he had always known. And yet, while he was delighted with the smoothness with which everything was going, and with the fact that they had found plenty to talk about, he was aware of an irk under it all. After all, this talk was empty and idle. He was a man of action, and he wanted her, Dede Mason, the woman; he wanted her to love him and to be loved by him; and he wanted all this glorious consummation then and there. Used to forcing issues used to gripping men and things and bending them to his will, he felt, now, the same compulsive prod of mastery. He wanted to tell her that he loved her and that there was nothing else for her to do but marry him. And yet he did not obey the prod. Women were fluttery creatures, and here mere mastery would prove a bungle. He remembered all his hunting guile, the long patience of shooting meat in famine when a hit or a miss meant life or death. Truly, though this girl did not yet mean quite that, nevertheless she meant much to him — more, now, than ever, as he rode beside her, glancing at her as often as he dared, she in her corduroy riding-habit, so bravely manlike, yet so essentially and revealingly woman, smiling, laughing, talking, her eyes sparkling, the flush of a day of sun and summer breeze warm in her cheeks.

CHAPTER XIII

Another Sunday man and horse and dog roved the Piedmont hills. And again Daylight and Dede rode together. But this time her surprise at meeting him was tinctured with suspicion; or rather, her surprise was of another order. The previous Sunday had been quite accidental, but his appearing a second time among her favorite haunts hinted of more than the fortuitous. Daylight was made to feel that she suspected him, and he, remembering that he had seen a big rock quarry near Blair Park, stated offhand that he was thinking of buying it. His one-time investment in a brickyard had put the idea into his head — an idea that he decided was a good one, for it enabled him to suggest that she ride along with him to inspect the quarry.

So several hours he spent in her company, in which she was much the same girl as before, natural, unaffected, lighthearted, smiling and laughing, a good fellow, talking horses with unflagging enthusiasm, making friends with the crusty-tempered Wolf, and expressing the desire to ride Bob, whom she declared she was more in love with than ever. At this last Daylight demurred. Bob was full of dangerous tricks, and he wouldn't trust any one on him except his worst enemy.

"You think, because I'm a girl, that I don't know anything about horses," she flashed back. "But I've been thrown off and bucked off enough not to be over-confident. And I'm not a fool. I wouldn't get on a bucking horse. I've learned better. And I'm not afraid of any other kind. And you say yourself that Bob doesn't buck."

"But you've never seen him cutting up didoes," Daylight said.

"But you must remember I've seen a few others, and I've been on several of them myself. I brought Mab here to electric cars, locomotives, and automobiles. She was a raw range colt when she came to me. Broken to saddle that was all. Besides, I won't hurt your horse."

Against his better judgment, Daylight gave in, and, on an unfrequented stretch of road, changed saddles and bridles.

"Remember, he's greased lightning," he warned, as he helped her to mount.

She nodded, while Bob pricked up his ears to the knowledge that he had a strange rider on his back. The fun came quickly enough — too quickly for Dede, who found herself against Bob's neck as he pivoted around and bolted the other way. Daylight followed on her horse and watched. He saw her check the animal quickly to a standstill, and immediately, with rein across neck and a decisive prod of the left spur, whirl him back the way he had come and almost as swiftly.

"Get ready to give him the quirt on the nose," Daylight called.

But, too quickly for her, Bob whirled again, though this time, by a severe effort, she saved herself from the undignified position against his neck. His bolt was more determined, but she pulled him into a prancing walk, and turned him roughly back with her spurred heel. There was nothing feminine in the way she handled him; her method was imperative and masculine. Had this not been so, Daylight would have expected her to say she had had enough. But that little preliminary exhibition had taught him something of Dede's quality. And if it had not, a glance at her gray eyes, just perceptibly angry with herself, and at her firm-set mouth, would have told him the same thing. Daylight did not suggest anything, while he hung almost gleefully upon her actions in anticipation of what the fractious Bob was going to get. And Bob got it, on his next whirl, or attempt, rather, for he was no more than halfway around when the quirt met him smack on his tender nose. There and then, in his bewilderment, surprise, and pain, his fore feet, just skimming above the road, dropped down.

"Great!" Daylight applauded. "A couple more will fix him. He's too smart not to know when he's beaten."

Again Bob tried. But this time he was barely quarter around when the doubled quirt on his nose compelled him to drop his fore feet to the road. Then, with neither rein nor spur, but by the mere threat of the quirt, she straightened him out.

Dede looked triumphantly at Daylight.

"Let me give him a run?" she asked.

Daylight nodded, and she shot down the road. He watched her out of sight around the bend, and watched till she came into sight returning. She certainly could sit her horse, was his thought, and she was a sure enough hummer. God, she was the wife for a man! Made most of them look pretty slim. And to think of her hammering all week at a typewriter. That was no place for her. She should be a man's wife, taking it easy, with silks and satins and diamonds (his frontier notion of what befitted a wife beloved), and dogs, and horses, and such things — "And we'll see, Mr. Burning

Daylight, what you and me can do about it," he murmured to himself! and aloud to her: —

"You'll do, Miss Mason; you'll do. There's nothing too good in horseflesh you don't deserve, a woman who can ride like that. No; stay with him, and we'll jog along to the quarry." He chuckled. "Say, he actually gave just the least mite of a groan that last time you fetched him. Did you hear it? And did you see the way he dropped his feet to the road — just like he'd struck a stone wall. And he's got savvee enough to know from now on that that same stone wall will be always there ready for him to lam into."

When he parted from her that afternoon, at the gate of the road that led to Berkeley, he drew off to the edge of the intervening clump of trees, where, unobserved, he watched her out of sight. Then, turning to ride back into Oakland, a thought came to him that made him grin ruefully as he muttered: "And now it's up to me to make good and buy that blamed quarry. Nothing less than that can give me an excuse for snooping around these hills."

But the quarry was doomed to pass out of his plans for a time, for on the following Sunday he rode alone. No Dede on a chestnut sorrel came across the back-road from Berkeley that day, nor the day a week later. Daylight was beside himself with impatience and apprehension, though in the office he contained himself. He noted no change in her, and strove to let none show in himself. The same old monotonous routine went on, though now it was irritating and maddening. Daylight found a big quarrel on his hands with a world that wouldn't let a man behave toward his stenographer after the way of all men and women. What was the good of owning millions anyway? he demanded one day of the desk-calendar, as she passed out after receiving his dictation.

As the third week drew to a close and another desolate Sunday confronted him, Daylight resolved to speak, office or no office. And as was his nature, he went simply and directly to the point She had finished her work with him, and was gathering her note pad and pencils together to depart, when he said: —

"Oh, one thing more, Miss Mason, and I hope you won't mind my being frank and straight out. You've struck me right along as a sensible-minded girl, and I don't think you'll take offence at what I'm going to say. You know how long you've been in the office — it's years, now, several of them, anyway; and you know I've always been straight and aboveboard with you. I've never what you call — presumed. Because you were in my office I've tried to be more careful than if — if you wasn't in my office — you understand. But just the same, it don't make me any the less human. I'm a lonely sort of a fellow — don't take that as a bid for kindness. What I mean by it is to try and tell you just how much those two rides with you have meant. And now I hope you won't mind my just asking why you haven't been out riding the last two Sundays?"

He came to a stop and waited, feeling very warm and awkward, the perspiration starting in tiny beads on his forehead. She did not speak immediately, and he stepped across the room and raised the window higher.

"I have been riding," she answered; "in other directions."

"But why...?" He failed somehow to complete the question. "Go ahead and be frank with me," he urged. "Just as frank as I am with you. Why didn't you ride in the Piedmont hills? I hunted for you everywhere.

"And that is just why." She smiled, and looked him straight in the eyes for a moment, then dropped her own. "Surely, you understand, Mr. Harnish."

He shook his head glumly.

"I do, and I don't. I ain't used to city ways by a long shot. There's things one mustn't do, which I don't mind as long as I don't want to do them."

"But when you do?" she asked quickly.

"Then I do them." His lips had drawn firmly with this affirmation of will, but the next instant he was amending the statement "That is, I mostly do. But what gets me is the things you mustn't do when they're not wrong and they won't hurt anybody — this riding, for instance."

She played nervously with a pencil for a time, as if debating her reply, while he waited patiently.

"This riding," she began; "it's not what they call the right thing. I leave it to you. You know the world. You are Mr. Harnish, the millionaire — "

"Gambler," he broke in harshly

She nodded acceptance of his term and went on.

"And I'm a stenographer in your office — "

"You're a thousand times better than me — " he attempted to interpolate, but was in turn interrupted.

"It isn't a question of such things. It's a simple and fairly common situation that must be considered. I work for you. And it isn't what you or I might think, but what other persons will think. And you don't need to be told any more about that. You know yourself."

Her cool, matter-of-fact speech belied her — or so Daylight thought, looking at her perturbed feminineness, at the rounded lines of her figure, the breast that deeply rose and fell, and at the color that was now excited in her cheeks.

"I'm sorry I frightened you out of your favorite stamping ground," he said rather aimlessly.

"You didn't frighten me," she retorted, with a touch of fire. "I'm not a silly seminary girl. I've taken care of myself for a long time now, and I've done it without being frightened. We were together two Sundays, and I'm sure I wasn't frightened of Bob, or you. It isn't that. I have no fears of taking care of myself, but the world insists on taking care of one as well. That's the trouble. It's what the world would have to say about me and my employer meeting regularly and riding in the hills on Sundays. It's funny, but it's so. I could ride with one of the clerks without remark, but with you — no."

"But the world don't know and don't need to know," he cried.

"Which makes it worse, in a way, feeling guilty of nothing and yet sneaking around back-roads with all the feeling of doing something wrong. It would be finer and braver for me publicly..."

"To go to lunch with me on a week-day," Daylight said, divining the drift of her uncompleted argument.

She nodded.

"I didn't have that quite in mind, but it will do. I'd prefer doing the brazen thing and having everybody know it, to doing the furtive thing and being found out. Not that I'm asking to be invited to lunch," she added, with a smile; "but I'm sure you understand my position."

"Then why not ride open and aboveboard with me in the hills?" he urged.

She shook her head with what he imagined was just the faintest hint of regret, and he went suddenly and almost maddeningly hungry for her.

"Look here, Miss Mason, I know you don't like this talking over of things in the office. Neither do I. It's part of the whole thing, I guess; a man ain't supposed to talk anything but business with his stenographer. Will you ride with me next Sunday, and we can talk it over thoroughly then and reach some sort of a conclusion. Out in the hills is the place where you can talk something besides business. I guess you've seen enough of me to know I'm pretty square. I — I do honor and respect you, and ... and all that, and I..." He was beginning to flounder, and the hand that rested on the desk blotter was visibly trembling. He strove to pull himself together. “I just want to harder than anything ever in my life before. I — I — I can’t explain myself, but I do, that’s all. Will you? — Just next Sunday? To-morrow?”

Nor did he dream that her low acquiescence was due, as much as anything else, to the beads of sweat on his forehead, his trembling hand, and his all too-evident general distress.

CHAPTER XIV

“Of course, there’s no way of telling what anybody wants from what they say.” Daylight rubbed Bob’s rebellious ear with his quirt and pondered with dissatisfaction the words he had just uttered. They did not say what he had meant them to say. “What I’m driving at is that you say flatfooted that you won’t meet me again, and you give your reasons, but how am I to know they are your real reasons? Mebbe you just don’t want to get acquainted with me, and won’t say so for fear of hurting my feelings. Don’t you see? I’m the last man in the world to shove in where I’m not wanted. And if I thought you didn’t care a whoop to see anything more of me, why, I’d clear out so blamed quick you couldn’t see me for smoke.”

Dede smiled at him in acknowledgment of his words, but rode on silently. And that smile, he thought, was the most sweetly wonderful smile he had ever seen. There was a difference in it, he assured himself, from any smile she had ever given him before.

It was the smile of one who knew him just a little bit, of one who was just the least mite acquainted with him. Of course, he checked himself up the next moment, it was unconscious on her part. It was sure to come in the intercourse of any two persons.

Any stranger, a business man, a clerk, anybody after a few casual meetings would show similar signs of friendliness. It was bound to happen, but in her case it made more impression on him; and, besides, it was such a sweet and wonderful smile. Other women he had known had never smiled like that; he was sure of it.

It had been a happy day. Daylight had met her on the back-road from Berkeley, and they had had hours together. It was only now, with the day drawing to a close and with them approaching the gate of the road to Berkeley, that he had broached the important subject.

She began her answer to his last contention, and he listened gratefully.

“But suppose, just suppose, that the reasons I have given are the only ones? — that there is no question of my not wanting to know you?”

“Then I’d go on urging like Sam Scratch,” he said quickly. “Because, you see, I’ve always noticed that folks that incline to anything are much more open to hearing the case stated. But if you did have that other reason up your sleeve, if you didn’t want to know me, if — if, well, if you thought my feelings oughtn't to be hurt just because you had a good job with me..." Here, his calm consideration of a possibility was swamped by the fear that it was an actuality, and he lost the thread of his reasoning. "Well, anyway, all you have to do is to say the word and I'll clear out.

"And with no hard feelings; it would be just a case of bad luck for me. So be honest, Miss Mason, please, and tell me if that's the reason — I almost got a hunch that it is."

She glanced up at him, her eyes abruptly and slightly moist, half with hurt, half with anger.

"Oh, but that isn't fair," she cried. "You give me the choice of lying to you and hurting you in order to protect myself by getting rid of you, or of throwing away my protection by telling you the truth, for then you, as you said yourself, would stay and urge."

Her cheeks were flushed, her lips tremulous, but she continued to look him frankly in the eyes.

Daylight smiled grimly with satisfaction.

"I'm real glad, Miss Mason, real glad for those words."

"But they won't serve you," she went on hastily. "They can't serve you. I refuse to let them. This is our last ride, and... here is the gate."

Ranging her mare alongside, she bent, slid the catch, and followed the opening gate.

"No; please, no," she said, as Daylight started to follow.

Humbly acquiescent, he pulled Bob back, and the gate swung shut between them. But there was more to say, and she did not ride on.

"Listen, Miss Mason," he said, in a low voice that shook with sincerity; "I want to assure you of one thing. I'm not just trying to fool around with you. I like you, I want you, and I was never more in earnest in my life. There's nothing wrong in my intentions or anything like that. What I mean is strictly honorable — "

But the expression of her face made him stop. She was angry, and she was laughing at the same time.

"The last thing you should have said," she cried. "It's like a — a matrimonial bureau: intentions strictly honorable; object, matrimony. But it's no more than I deserved. This is what I suppose you call urging like Sam Scratch."

The tan had bleached out of Daylight's skin since the time he came to live under city roofs, so that the flush of blood showed readily as it crept up his neck past the collar and overspread his face. Nor in his exceeding discomfort did he dream that she was looking upon him at that moment with more kindness than at any time that day. It was not in her experience to behold big grown-up men who blushed like boys, and already she repented the sharpness into which she had been surprised.

"Now, look here, Miss Mason," he began, slowly and stumblingly at first, but accelerating into a rapidity of utterance that was almost incoherent; "I'm a rough sort of a man, I know that, and I know I don't know much of anything. I've never had any training in nice things. I've never made love before, and I've never been in love before either — and I don't know how to go about it any more than a thundering idiot. What you want to do is get behind my tomfool words and get a feel of the man that's behind them. That's me, and I mean all right, if I don't know how to go about it."

Dede Mason had quick, birdlike ways, almost flitting from mood to mood; and she was all contrition on the instant.

"Forgive me for laughing," she said across the gate. "It wasn't really laughter. I was surprised off my guard, and hurt, too. You see, Mr. Harnish, I've not been..."

She paused, in sudden fear of completing the thought into which her birdlike precipitancy had betrayed her.

"What you mean is that you've not been used to such sort of proposing," Daylight said; "a sort of on-the-run, 'Howdy, glad-to-make-your-acquaintance, won't-you-be-mine' proposition."

She nodded and broke into laughter, in which he joined, and which served to pass the awkwardness away. He gathered heart at this, and went on in greater confidence, with cooler head and tongue.

"There, you see, you prove my case. You've had experience in such matters. I don't doubt you've had slathers of proposals. Well, I haven't, and I'm like a fish out of water. Besides, this ain't a proposal. It's a peculiar situation, that's all, and I'm in a corner. I've got enough plain horse-sense to know a man ain't supposed to argue marriage with a girl as a reason for getting acquainted with her. And right there was where I was in the hole. Number one, I can't get acquainted with you in the office. Number two, you say you won't see me out of the office to give me a chance. Number three, your reason is that folks will talk because you work for me. Number four, I just got to get acquainted with you, and I just got to get you to see that I mean fair and all right. Number five, there you are on one side the gate getting ready to go, and me here on the other side the gate pretty desperate and bound to say something to make you reconsider. Number six, I said it. And now and finally, I just do want you to reconsider."

And, listening to him, pleasuring in the sight of his earnest, perturbed face and in the simple, homely phrases that but emphasized his earnestness and marked the difference between him and the average run of men she had known, she forgot to listen and lost herself in her own thoughts. The love of a strong man is ever a lure to a normal woman, and never more strongly did Dede feel the lure than now, looking across the closed gate at Burning Daylight. Not that she would ever dream of marrying him — she had a score of reasons against it; but why not at least see more of him? He was certainly not repulsive to her. On the contrary, she liked him, had always liked him from the day she had first seen him and looked upon his lean Indian face and into his flashing Indian eyes. He was a figure of a man in more ways than his mere magnificent muscles. Besides, Romance had gilded him, this doughty, rough-hewn adventurer of the North, this man of many deeds and many millions, who had come down out of the Arctic to wrestle and fight so masterfully with the men of the South.

Savage as a Red Indian, gambler and profligate, a man without morals, whose vengeance was never glutted and who stamped on the faces of all who opposed him — oh, yes, she knew all the hard names he had been called. Yet she was not afraid of him. There was more than that in the connotation of his name. Burning Daylight called up other things as well. They were there in the newspapers, the magazines, and the books on the Klondike. When all was said, Burning Daylight had a mighty connotation — one to touch any woman's imagination, as it touched hers, the gate between them, listening to the wistful and impassioned simplicity of his speech. Dede was after all a woman, with a woman's sex-vanity, and it was this vanity that was pleased by the fact that such a man turned in his need to her.

And there was more that passed through her mind — sensations of tiredness and loneliness; trampling squadrons and shadowy armies of vague feelings and vaguer prompting; and deeper and dimmer whisperings and echoings, the flutterings of forgotten generations crystallized into being and fluttering anew and always, undreamed and unguessed, subtle and potent, the spirit and essence of life that under a thousand deceits and masks forever makes for life. It was a strong temptation, just to ride with this man in the hills. It would be that only and nothing more, for she was firmly convinced that his way of life could never be her way. On the other hand, she was vexed by none of the ordinary feminine fears and timidities. That she could take care of herself under any and all circumstances she never doubted. Then why not? It was such a little thing, after all.

She led an ordinary, humdrum life at best. She ate and slept and worked, and that was about all. As if in review, her anchorite existence passed before her: six days of the week spent in the office and in journeying back and forth on the ferry; the hours stolen before bedtime for snatches of song at the piano, for doing her own special laundering, for sewing and mending and casting up of meagre accounts; the two evenings a week of social diversion she permitted herself; the other stolen hours and Saturday afternoons spent with her brother at the hospital; and the seventh day, Sunday, her day of solace, on Mab's back, out among the blessed hills. But it was lonely, this solitary riding. Nobody of her acquaintance rode. Several girls at the University had been persuaded into trying it, but after a Sunday or two on hired livery hacks they had lost interest. There was Madeline, who bought her own horse and rode enthusiastically for several months, only to get married and go away to live in Southern California. After years of it, one did get tired of this eternal riding alone.

He was such a boy, this big giant of a millionaire who had half the rich men of San Francisco afraid of him. Such a boy! She had never imagined this side of his nature.

“How do folks get married?” he was saying. “Why, number one, they meet; number two, like each other’s looks; number three, get acquainted; and number four, get married or not, according to how they like each other after getting acquainted. But how in thunder we’re to have a chance to find out whether we like each other enough is beyond my savvee, unless we make that chance ourselves. I’d come to see you, call on you, only I know you’re just rooming or boarding, and that won’t do.”

Suddenly, with a change of mood, the situation appeared to Dede ridiculously absurd. She felt a desire to laugh — not angrily, not hysterically, but just jolly. It was so funny. Herself, the stenographer, he, the notorious and powerful gambling millionaire, and the gate between them across which poured his argument of people getting acquainted and married. Also, it was an impossible situation. On the face of it, she could not go on with it. This program of furtive meetings in the hills would have to discontinue. There would never be another meeting. And if, denied this, he tried to woo her in the office, she would be compelled to lose a very good position, and that would be an end of the episode. It was not nice to contemplate; but the world of men, especially in the cities, she had not found particularly nice. She had not worked for her living for years without losing a great many of her illusions.

"We won't do any sneaking or hiding around about it," Daylight was explaining. "We'll ride around as bold if you please, and if anybody sees us, why, let them. If they talk — well, so long as our consciences are straight we needn't worry. Say the word, and Bob will have on his back the happiest man alive."

She shook her head, pulled in the mare, who was impatient to be off for home, and glanced significantly at the lengthening shadows.

"It's getting late now, anyway," Daylight hurried on, "and we've settled nothing after all. Just one more Sunday, anyway — that's not asking much — to settle it in."

"We've had all day," she said.

"But we started to talk it over too late. We'll tackle it earlier next time. This is a big serious proposition with me, I can tell you. Say next Sunday?"

"Are men ever fair?" she asked. "You know thoroughly well that by 'next Sunday' you mean many Sundays."

"Then let it be many Sundays," he cried recklessly, while she thought that she had never seen him looking handsomer. "Say the word. Only say the word. Next Sunday at the quarry..."

She gathered the reins into her hand preliminary to starting.

"Good night," she said, "and — "

"Yes," he whispered, with just the faintest touch of impressiveness.

"Yes," she said, her voice low but distinct.

At the same moment she put the mare into a canter and went down the road without a backward glance, intent on an analysis of her own feelings. With her mind made up to say no — and to the last instant she had been so resolved — her lips nevertheless had said yes. Or at least it seemed the lips. She had not intended to consent. Then why had she? Her first surprise and bewilderment at so wholly unpremeditated an act gave way to consternation as she considered its consequences. She knew that Burning Daylight was not a man to be trifled with, that under his simplicity and boyishness he was essentially a dominant male creature, and that she had pledged herself to a future of inevitable stress and storm. And again she demanded of herself why she had said yes at the very moment when it had been farthest from her intention.

CHAPTER XV

Life at the office went on much the way it had always gone. Never, by word or look, did they acknowledge that the situation was in any wise different from what it had always been. Each Sunday saw the arrangement made for the following Sunday's ride; nor was this ever referred to in the office. Daylight was fastidiously chivalrous on this point. He did not want to lose her from the office. The sight of her at her work was to him an undiminishing joy. Nor did he abuse this by lingering over dictation or by devising extra work that would detain her longer before his eyes. But over and beyond such sheer selfishness of conduct was his love of fair play. He scorned to utilize the accidental advantages of the situation. Somewhere within him was a higher appeasement of love than mere possession. He wanted to be loved for himself, with a fair field for both sides.

On the other hand, had he been the most artful of schemers he could not have pursued a wiser policy. Bird-like in her love of individual freedom, the last woman in the world to be bullied in her affections, she keenly appreciated the niceness of his attitude. She did this consciously, but deeper than all consciousness, and intangible as gossamer, were the effects of this. All unrealizable, save for some supreme moment, did the web of Daylight's personality creep out and around her. Filament by filament, these secret and undreamable bonds were being established. They it was that could have given the cue to her saying yes when she had meant to say no. And in some such fashion, in some future crisis of greater moment, might she not, in violation of all dictates of sober judgment, give another unintentional consent?

Among other good things resulting from his growing intimacy with Dede, was Daylight's not caring to drink so much as formerly. There was a lessening in desire for alcohol of which even he at last became aware. In a way she herself was the needed inhibition. The thought of her was like a cocktail. Or, at any rate, she substituted for a certain percentage of cocktails. From the strain of his unnatural city existence and of his intense gambling operations, he had drifted on to the cocktail route. A wall must forever be built to give him easement from the high pitch, and Dede became a part of this wall. Her personality, her laughter, the intonations of her voice, the impossible golden glow of her eyes, the light on her hair, her form, her dress, her actions on horseback, her merest physical mannerisms — all, pictured over and over in his mind and dwelt upon, served to take the place of many a cocktail or long Scotch and soda.

In spite of their high resolve, there was a very measurable degree of the furtive in their meetings. In essence, these meetings were stolen. They did not ride out brazenly together in the face of the world. On the contrary, they met always unobserved, she riding across the many-gated backroad from Berkeley to meet him halfway. Nor did they ride on any save unfrequented roads, preferring to cross the second range of hills and travel among a church-going farmer folk who would scarcely have recognized even Daylight from his newspaper photographs.

He found Dede a good horsewoman — good not merely in riding but in endurance. There were days when they covered sixty, seventy, and even eighty miles; nor did Dede ever claim any day too long, nor — another strong recommendation to Daylight — did the hardest day ever the slightest chafe of the chestnut sorrel's back. "A sure enough hummer," was Daylight's stereotyped but ever enthusiastic verdict to himself.

They learned much of each other on these long, uninterrupted rides. They had nothing much to talk about but themselves, and, while she received a liberal education concerning Arctic travel and gold-mining, he, in turn, touch by touch, painted an ever clearer portrait of her. She amplified the ranch life of her girlhood, prattling on about horses and dogs and persons and things until it was as if he saw the whole process of her growth and her becoming. All this he was able to trace on through the period of her father's failure and death, when she had been compelled to leave the university and go into office work. The brother, too, she spoke of, and of her long struggle to have him cured and of her now fading hopes. Daylight decided that it was easier to come to an understanding of her than he had anticipated, though he was always aware that behind and under all he knew of her was the mysterious and baffling woman and sex. There, he was humble enough to confess to himself, was a chartless, shoreless sea, about which he knew nothing and which he must nevertheless somehow navigate.

His lifelong fear of woman had originated out of non-understanding and had also prevented him from reaching any understanding. Dede on horseback, Dede gathering poppies on a summer hillside, Dede taking down dictation in her swift shorthand strokes — all this was comprehensible to him. But he did not know the Dede who so quickly changed from mood to mood, the Dede who refused steadfastly to ride with him and then suddenly consented, the Dede in whose eyes the golden glow forever waxed and waned and whispered hints and messages that were not for his ears. In all such things he saw the glimmering profundities of sex, acknowledged their lure, and accepted them as incomprehensible.

There was another side of her, too, of which he was consciously ignorant. She knew the books, was possessed of that mysterious and awful thing called "culture." And yet, what continually surprised him was that this culture was never obtruded on their intercourse. She did not talk books, nor art, nor similar folderols. Homely minded as he was himself, he found her almost equally homely minded. She liked the simple and the out-of-doors, the horses and the hills, the sunlight and the flowers. He found himself in a partly new flora, to which she was the guide, pointing out to him all the varieties of the oaks, making him acquainted with the madrono and the manzanita, teaching him the names, habits, and habitats of unending series of wild flowers, shrubs, and ferns. Her keen woods eye was another delight to him. It had been trained in the open, and little escaped it. One day, as a test, they strove to see which could discover the greater number of birds' nests. And he, who had always prided himself on his own acutely trained observation, found himself hard put to keep his score ahead. At the end of the day he was but three nests in the lead, one of which she challenged stoutly and of which even he confessed serious doubt. He complimented her and told her that her success must be due to the fact that she was a bird herself, with all a bird's keen vision and quick-flashing ways.

The more he knew her the more he became convinced of this birdlike quality in her. That was why she liked to ride, he argued. It was the nearest approach to flying. A field of poppies, a glen of ferns, a row of poplars on a country lane, the tawny brown of a hillside, the shaft of sunlight on a distant peak — all such were provocative of quick joys which seemed to him like so many outbursts of song. Her joys were in little things, and she seemed always singing. Even in sterner things it was the same. When she rode Bob and fought with that magnificent brute for mastery, the qualities of an eagle were uppermost in her.

These quick little joys of hers were sources of joy to him. He joyed in her joy, his eyes as excitedly fixed on her as bears were fixed on the object of her attention. Also through her he came to a closer discernment and keener appreciation of nature. She showed him colors in the landscape that he would never have dreamed were there. He had known only the primary colors. All colors of red were red. Black was black, and brown was just plain brown until it became yellow, when it was no longer brown. Purple he had always imagined was red, something like blood, until she taught him better. Once they rode out on a high hill brow where wind-blown poppies blazed about their horses' knees, and she was in an ecstasy over the lines of the many distances. Seven, she counted, and he, who had gazed on landscapes all his life, for the first time learned what a "distance" was. After that, and always, he looked upon the face of nature with a more seeing eye, learning a delight of his own in surveying the serried ranks of the upstanding ranges, and in slow contemplation of the purple summer mists that haunted the languid creases of the distant hills.

But through it all ran the golden thread of love. At first he had been content just to ride with Dede and to be on comradely terms with her; but the desire and the need for her increased. The more he knew of her, the higher was his appraisal. Had she been reserved and haughty with him, or been merely a giggling, simpering creature of a woman, it would have been different. Instead, she amazed him with her simplicity and wholesomeness, with her great store of comradeliness. This latter was the unexpected. He had never looked upon woman in that way. Woman, the toy; woman, the harpy; woman, the necessary wife and mother of the race's offspring, — all this had been his expectation and understanding of woman. But woman, the comrade and playfellow and joyfellow — this was what Dede had surprised him in. And the more she became worth while, the more ardently his love burned, unconsciously shading his voice with caresses, and with equal unconsciousness flaring up signal fires in his eyes. Nor was she blind to it yet, like many women before her, she thought to play with the pretty fire and escape the consequent conflagration.

"Winter will soon be coming on," she said regretfully, and with provocation, one day, "and then there won't be any more riding."

"But I must see you in the winter just the same," he cried hastily.

She shook her head.

"We have been very happy and all that," she said, looking at him with steady frankness. "I remember your foolish argument for getting acquainted, too; but it won't lead to anything; it can't. I know myself too well to be mistaken."

Her face was serious, even solicitous with desire not to hurt, and her eyes were unwavering, but in them was the light, golden and glowing — the abyss of sex into which he was now unafraid to gaze.

“I’ve been pretty good,” he declared. “I leave it to you if I haven’t. It’s been pretty hard, too, I can tell you. You just think it over. Not once have I said a word about love to you, and me loving you all the time. That’s going some for a man that’s used to having his own way. I’m somewhat of a rusher when it comes to travelling. I reckon I’d rush God Almighty if it came to a race over the ice. And yet I didn’t rush you. I guess this fact is an indication of how much I do love you. Of course I want you to marry me. Have I said a word about it, though? Nary a chirp, nary a flutter. I’ve been quiet and good, though it’s almost made me sick at times, this keeping quiet. I haven’t asked you to marry me. I’m not asking you now. Oh, not but what you satisfy me. I sure know you’re the wife for me. But how about myself? Do you know me well enough know your own mind?” He shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know, and I ain’t going to take chances on it now. You’ve got to know for sure whether you think you could get along with me or not, and I’m playing a slow conservative game. I ain’t a-going to lose for overlooking my hand.”

This was love-making of a sort beyond Dede’s experience. Nor had she ever heard of anything like it. Furthermore, its lack of ardor carried with it a shock which she could overcome only by remembering the way his hand had trembled in the past, and by remembering the passion she had seen that very day and every day in his eyes, or heard in his voice. Then, too, she recollected what he had said to her weeks before: “Maybe you don’t know what patience is,” he had said, and thereat told her of shooting squirrels with a big rifle the time he and Elijah Davis had starved on the Stewart River.

“So you see,” he urged, “just for a square deal we’ve got to see some more of each other this winter. Most likely your mind ain’t made up yet —”

“But it is,” she interrupted. “I wouldn’t dare permit myself to care for you. Happiness, for me, would not lie that way. I like you, Mr. Harnish, and all that, but it can never be more than that.”

“It’s because you don’t like my way of living,” he charged, thinking in his own mind of the sensational joyrides and general profligacy with which the newspapers had credited him — thinking this, and wondering whether or not, in maiden modesty, she would disclaim knowledge of it.

To his surprise, her answer was flat and uncompromising.

“No; I don’t.”

“I know I’ve been brash on some of those rides that got into the papers,” he began his defense, “and that I’ve been travelling with a lively crowd.”

“I don’t mean that,” she said, “though I know about it too, and can’t say that I like it. But it is your life in general, your business. There are women in the world who could marry a man like you and be happy, but I couldn’t. And the more I cared for such a man, the more unhappy I should be. You see, my unhappiness, in turn, would tend to make him unhappy. I should make a mistake, and he would make an equal mistake, though his would not be so hard on him because he would still have his business.”

“Business!” Daylight gasped. “What’s wrong with my business? I play fair and square. There’s nothing under hand about it, which can’t be said of most businesses, whether of the big corporations or of the cheating, lying, little corner-grocerymen. I play the straight rules of the game, and I don’t have to lie or cheat or break my word.”

Dede hailed with relief the change in the conversation and at the same time the opportunity to speak her mind.

“In ancient Greece,” she began pedantically, “a man was judged a good citizen who built houses, planted trees — ” She did not complete the quotation, but drew the conclusion hurriedly. “How many houses have you built? How many trees have you planted?”

He shook his head noncommittally, for he had not grasped the drift of the argument.

“Well,” she went on, “two winters ago you cornered coal — ”

“Just locally,” he grinned reminiscently, “just locally. And I took advantage of the car shortage and the strike in British Columbia.”

“But you didn’t dig any of that coal yourself. Yet you forced it up four dollars a ton and made a lot of money. That was your business. You made the poor people pay more for their coal. You played fair, as you said, but you put your hands down into all their pockets and took their money away from them. I know. I burn a grate fire in my sitting-room at Berkeley. And instead of eleven dollars a ton for Rock Wells, I paid fifteen dollars that winter. You robbed me of four dollars. I could stand it. But there were thousands of the very poor who could not stand it. You might call it legal gambling, but to me it was downright robbery."

Daylight was not abashed. This was no revelation to him. He remembered the old woman who made wine in the Sonoma hills and the millions like her who were made to be robbed.

"Now look here, Miss Mason, you've got me there slightly, I grant. But you've seen me in business a long time now, and you know I don't make a practice of raiding the poor people. I go after the big fellows. They're my meat. They rob the poor, and I rob them. That coal deal was an accident. I wasn't after the poor people in that, but after the big fellows, and I got them, too. The poor people happened to get in the way and got hurt, that was all.

"Don't you see," he went on, "the whole game is a gamble. Everybody gambles in one way or another. The farmer gambles against the weather and the market on his crops. So does the United States Steel Corporation. The business of lots of men is straight robbery of the poor people. But I've never made that my business. You know that. I've always gone after the robbers."

"I missed my point," she admitted. "Wait a minute."

And for a space they rode in silence.

"I see it more clearly than I can state it, but it's something like this. There is legitimate work, and there's work that — well, that isn't legitimate. The farmer works the soil and produces grain. He's making something that is good for humanity. He actually, in a way, creates something, the grain that will fill the mouths of the hungry."

"And then the railroads and market-riggers and the rest proceed to rob him of that same grain," — Daylight broke in Dede smiled and held up her hand.

"Wait a minute. You'll make me lose my point. It doesn't hurt if they rob him of all of it so that he starves to death. The point is that the wheat he grew is still in the world. It exists. Don't you see? The farmer created something, say ten tons of wheat, and those ten tons exist. The railroads haul the wheat to market, to the mouths that will eat it. This also is legitimate. It's like some one bringing you a glass of water, or taking a cinder out of your eye. Something has been done, in a way been created, just like the wheat."

"But the railroads rob like Sam Scratch," Daylight objected.

"Then the work they do is partly legitimate and partly not. Now we come to you. You don't create anything. Nothing new exists when you're done with your business. Just like the coal. You didn't dig it. You didn't haul it to market. You didn't deliver it. Don't you see? that's what I meant by planting the trees and building the houses. You haven't planted one tree nor built a single house."

"I never guessed there was a woman in the world who could talk business like that," he murmured admiringly. "And you've got me on that point. But there's a lot to be said on my side just the same. Now you listen to me. I'm going to talk under three heads. Number one: We live a short time, the best of us, and we're a long time dead. Life is a big gambling game. Some are born lucky and some are born unlucky. Everybody sits in at the table, and everybody tries to rob everybody else. Most of them get robbed. They're born suckers.

"Fellow like me comes along and sizes up the proposition. I've got two choices. I can herd with the suckers, or I can herd with the robbers. As a sucker, I win nothing. Even the crusts of bread are snatched out of my mouth by the robbers. I work hard all my days, and die working. And I ain't never had a flutter. I've had nothing but work, work, work. They talk about the dignity of labor. I tell you there ain't no dignity in that sort of labor. My other choice is to herd with the robbers, and I herd with them. I play that choice wide open to win. I get the automobiles, and the porterhouse steaks, and the soft beds.

"Number two: There ain't much difference between playing halfway robber like the railroad hauling that farmer's wheat to market, and playing all robber and robbing the robbers like I do. And, besides, halfway robbery is too slow a game for me to sit in. You don't win quick enough for me."

"But what do you want to win for?" Dede demanded. "You have millions and millions, already. You can't ride in more than one automobile at a time, sleep in more than one bed at a time."

"Number three answers that," he said, "and here it is: Men and things are so made that they have different likes. A rabbit likes a vegetarian diet. A lynx likes meat. Ducks swim; chickens are scairt of water. One man collects postage stamps, another man collects butterflies. This man goes in for paintings, that man goes in for yachts, and some other fellow for hunting big game. One man thinks horse-racing is It, with a big I, and another man finds the biggest satisfaction in actresses. They can't help these likes. They have them, and what are they going to do about it? Now I like gambling. I like to play the game. I want to play it big and play it quick. I'm just made that way. And I play it."

"But why can't you do good with all your money?"

Daylight laughed.

"Doing good with your money! It's like slapping God in the face, as much as to tell him that he don't know how to run his world and that you'll be much obliged if he'll stand out of the way and give you a chance. Thinking about God doesn't keep me sitting up nights, so I've got another way of looking at it. Ain't it funny, to go around with brass knuckles and a big club breaking folks' heads and taking their money away from them until I've got a pile, and then, repenting of my ways, going around and bandaging up the heads the other robbers are breaking? I leave it to you. That's what doing good with money amounts to. Every once in a while some robber turns soft-hearted and takes to driving an ambulance. That's what Carnegie did. He smashed heads in pitched battles at Homestead, regular wholesale head-breaker he was, held up the suckers for a few hundred million, and now he goes around dribbling it back to them. Funny? I leave it to you."

He rolled a cigarette and watched her half curiously, half amusedly. His replies and harsh generalizations of a harsh school were disconcerting, and she came back to her earlier position.

"I can't argue with you, and you know that. No matter how right a woman is, men have such a way about them well, what they say sounds most convincing, and yet the woman is still certain they are wrong. But there is one thing — the creative joy. Call it gambling if you will, but just the same it seems to me more satisfying to create something, make something, than just to roll dice out of a dice-box all day long. Why, sometimes, for exercise, or when I've got to pay fifteen dollars for coal, I curry Mab and give her a whole half hour's brushing. And when I see her coat clean and shining and satiny, I feel a satisfaction in what I've done. So it must be with the man who builds a house or plants a tree. He can look at it. He made it. It's his handiwork. Even if somebody like you comes along and takes his tree away from him, still it is there, and still did he make it. You can't rob him of that, Mr. Harnish, with all your millions. It's the creative joy, and it's a higher joy than mere gambling. Haven't you ever made things yourself — a log cabin up in the Yukon, or a canoe, or raft, or something? And don't you remember how satisfied you were, how good you felt, while you were doing it and after you had it done?"

While she spoke his memory was busy with the associations she recalled. He saw the deserted flat on the river bank by the Klondike, and he saw the log cabins and warehouses spring up, and all the log structures he had built, and his sawmills working night and day on three shifts.

"Why, dog-gone it, Miss Mason, you're right — in a way. I've built hundreds of houses up there, and I remember I was proud and glad to see them go up. I'm proud now, when I remember them. And there was Ophir — the most God-forsaken moose-pasture of a creek you ever laid eyes on. I made that into the big Ophir. Why, I ran the water in there from the Rinkabilly, eighty miles away. They all said I couldn't, but I did it, and I did it by myself. The dam and the flume cost me four million. But you should have seen that Ophir — power plants, electric lights, and hundreds of men on the pay-roll, working night and day. I guess I do get an inkling of what you mean by making a thing. I made Ophir, and by God, she was a sure hummer — I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to cuss. But that Ophir! — I sure am proud of her now, just as the last time I laid eyes on her."

"And you won something there that was more than mere money," Dede encouraged. "Now do you know what I would do if I had lots of money and simply had to go on playing at business? Take all the southerly and westerly slopes of these bare hills. I'd buy them in and plant eucalyptus on them. I'd do it for the joy of doing it anyway; but suppose I had that gambling twist in me which you talk about, why, I'd do it just the same and make money out of the trees. And there's my other point again. Instead of raising the price of coal without adding an ounce of coal to the market supply, I'd be making thousands and thousands of cords of firewood — making something where nothing was before. And everybody who ever crossed on the ferries would look up at these forested hills and be made glad. Who was made glad by your adding four dollars a ton to Rock Wells?"

It was Daylight's turn to be silent for a time while she waited an answer.

"Would you rather I did things like that?" he asked at last.

"It would be better for the world, and better for you," she answered noncommittally.

CHAPTER XVI

All week every one in the office knew that something new and big was afoot in Daylight's mind. Beyond some deals of no importance, he had not been interested in anything for several months. But now he went about in an almost unbroken brown study, made unexpected and lengthy trips across the bay to Oakland, or sat at his desk silent and motionless for hours. He seemed particularly happy with what occupied his mind. At times men came in and conferred with him — and with new faces and differing in type from those that usually came to see him.

On Sunday Dede learned all about it. "I've been thinking a lot of our talk," he began, "and I've got an idea I'd like to give it a flutter. And I've got a proposition to make your hair stand up. It's what you call legitimate, and at the same time it's the gosh-dangdest gamble a man ever went into. How about planting minutes wholesale, and making two minutes grow where one minute grew before? Oh, yes, and planting a few trees, too — say several million of them. You remember the quarry I made believe I was looking at? Well, I'm going to buy it. I'm going to buy these hills, too, clear from here around to Berkeley and down the other way to San Leandro. I own a lot of them already, for that matter. But mum is the word. I'll be buying a long time to come before anything much is guessed about it, and I don't want the market to jump up out of sight. You see that hill over there. It's my hill running clear down its slopes through Piedmont and halfway along those rolling hills into Oakland. And it's nothing to all the things I'm going to buy."

He paused triumphantly. "And all to make two minutes grow where one grew before?" Dede queried, at the same time laughing heartily at his affectation of mystery.

He stared at her fascinated. She had such a frank, boyish way of throwing her head back when she laughed. And her teeth were an unending delight to him. Not small, yet regular and firm, without a blemish, he considered then the healthiest, whitest, prettiest teeth he had ever seen. And for months he had been comparing them with the teeth of every woman he met.

It was not until her laughter was over that he was able to continue.

"The ferry system between Oakland and San Francisco is the worst one-horse concern in the United States. You cross on it every day, six days in the week. That’s say, twenty-five days a month, or three hundred a year. Now long does it take you one way? Forty minutes, if you’re lucky. I’m going to put you across in twenty minutes. If that ain’t making two minutes grow where one grew before, knock off my head with little apples. I’ll save you twenty minutes each way. That’s forty minutes a day, times three hundred, equals twelve thousand minutes a year, just for you, just for one person. Let’s see: that’s two hundred whole hours. Suppose I save two hundred hours a year for thousands of other folks, — that’s farming some, ain’t it?”

Dede could only nod breathlessly. She had caught the contagion of his enthusiasm, though she had no clew as to how this great time-saving was to be accomplished.

“Come on,” he said. “Let’s ride up that hill, and when I get you out on top where you can see something, I’ll talk sense.”

A small footpath dropped down to the dry bed of the canon, which they crossed before they began the climb. The slope was steep and covered with matted brush and bushes, through which the horses slipped and lunged. Bob, growing disgusted, turned back suddenly and attempted to pass Mab. The mare was thrust sidewise into the denser bush, where she nearly fell. Recovering, she flung her weight against Bob. Both riders’ legs were caught in the consequent squeeze, and, as Bob plunged ahead down hill, Dede was nearly scraped off. Daylight threw his horse on to its haunches and at the same time dragged Dede back into the saddle. Showers of twigs and leaves fell upon them, and predicament followed predicament, until they emerged on the hilltop the worse for wear but happy and excited. Here no trees obstructed the view. The particular hill on which they were, out-jutted from the regular line of the range, so that the sweep of their vision extended over three-quarters of the circle. Below, on the flat land bordering the bay, lay Oakland, and across the bay was San Francisco. Between the two cities they could see the white ferry-boats on the water. Around to their right was Berkeley, and to their left the scattered villages between Oakland and San Leandro. Directly in the foreground was Piedmont, with its desultory dwellings and patches of farming land, and from Piedmont the land rolled down in successive waves upon Oakland.

“Look at it,” said Daylight, extending his arm in a sweeping gesture. “A hundred thousand people there, and no reason there shouldn’t be half a million. There’s the chance to make five people grow where one grows now. Here’s the scheme in a nutshell. Why don’t more people live in

Oakland? No good service with San Francisco, and, besides, Oakland is asleep. It's a whole lot better place to live in than San Francisco. Now, suppose I buy in all the street railways of Oakland, Berkeley, Alameda, San Leandro, and the rest, — bring them under one head with a competent management? Suppose I cut the time to San Francisco one-half by building a big pier out there almost to Goat Island and establishing a ferry system with modern up-to-date boats? Why, folks will want to live over on this side. Very good. They'll need land on which to build. So, first I buy up the land. But the land's cheap now. Why? Because it's in the country, no electric roads, no quick communication, nobody guessing that the electric roads are coming. I'll build the roads. That will make the land jump up. Then I'll sell the land as fast as the folks will want to buy because of the improved ferry system and transportation facilities.

"You see, I give the value to the land by building the roads. Then I sell the land and get that value back, and after that, there's the roads, all carrying folks back and forth and earning big money. Can't lose. And there's all sorts of millions in it.

"I'm going to get my hands on some of that water front and the tide-lands. Take between where I'm going to build my pier and the old pier. It's shallow water. I can fill and dredge and put in a system of docks that will handle hundreds of ships. San Francisco's water front is congested. No more room for ships. With hundreds of ships loading and unloading on this side right into the freight cars of three big railroads, factories will start up over here instead of crossing to San Francisco. That means factory sites. That means me buying in the factory sites before anybody guesses the cat is going to jump, much less, which way. Factories mean tens of thousands of workingmen and their families. That means more houses and more land, and that means me, for I'll be there to sell them the land. And tens of thousands of families means tens of thousands of nickels every day for my electric cars. The growing population will mean more stores, more banks, more everything. And that'll mean me, for I'll be right there with business property as well as home property. What do you think of it?"

Therefore she could answer, he was off again, his mind's eye filled with this new city of his dream which he builded on the Alameda hills by the gateway to the Orient.

"Do you know — I've been looking it up — the Firth Of Clyde, where all the steel ships are built, isn't half as wide as Oakland Creek down there, where all those old hulks lie? Why ain't it a Firth of Clyde? Because the Oakland City Council spends its time debating about prunes and raisins. What is needed is somebody to see things, and, after that, organization. That's me. I didn't make Ophir for nothing. And once things begin to hum, outside capital will pour in. All I do is start it going. 'Gentlemen,' I say, 'here's all the natural advantages for a great metropolis. God Almighty put them advantages here, and he put me here to see them. Do you want to land your tea and silk from Asia and ship it straight East? Here's the docks for your steamers, and here's the railroads. Do you want factories from which you can ship direct by land or water? Here's the site, and here's the modern, up-to-date city, with the latest improvements for yourselves and your workmen, to live in.'"

"Then there's the water. I'll come pretty close to owning the watershed. Why not the waterworks too? There's two water companies in Oakland now, fighting like cats and dogs and both about broke. What a metropolis needs is a good water system. They can't give it. They're stick-in-the-muds. I'll gobble them up and deliver the right article to the city. There's money there, too — money everywhere. Everything works in with everything else. Each improvement makes the value of everything else pump up. It's people that are behind the value. The bigger the crowd that herds in one place, the more valuable is the real estate. And this is the very place for a crowd to herd. Look at it. Just look at it! You could never find a finer site for a great city. All it needs is the herd, and I'll stampede a couple of hundred thousand people in here inside two years. And what's more it won't be one of these wild cat land booms. It will be legitimate. Twenty years for now there'll be a million people on this side the bay. Another thing is hotels. There isn't a decent one in the town. I'll build a couple of up-to-date ones that'll make them sit up and take notice. I won't care if they don't pay for years. Their effect will more than give me my money back out of the other holdings. And, oh, yes, I'm going to plant eucalyptus, millions of them, on these hills."

"But how are you going to do it?" Dede asked. "You haven't enough money for all that you've planned."

"I've thirty million, and if I need more I can borrow on the land and other things. Interest on mortgages won't anywhere near eat up the increase in land values, and I'll be selling land right along."

In the weeks that followed, Daylight was a busy man. He spent most of his time in Oakland, rarely coming to the office. He planned to move the office to Oakland, but, as he told Dede, the secret preliminary campaign of buying had to be put through first. Sunday by Sunday, now from this hilltop and now from that, they looked down upon the city and its farming suburbs, and he pointed out to her his latest acquisitions. At first it was patches and sections of land here and there; but as the weeks passed it was the unowned portions that became rare, until at last they stood as islands surrounded by Daylight's land.

It meant quick work on a colossal scale, for Oakland and the adjacent country was not slow to feel the tremendous buying. But Daylight had the ready cash, and it had always been his policy to strike quickly. Before the others could get the warning of the boom, he quietly accomplished many things. At the same time that his agents were purchasing corner lots and entire blocks in the heart of the business section and the waste lands for factory sites, Day was rushing franchises through the city council, capturing the two exhausted water companies and the eight or nine independent street railways, and getting his grip on the Oakland Creek and the bay tide-lands for his dock system. The tide-lands had been in litigation for years, and he took the bull by the horns — buying out the private owners and at the same time leasing from the city fathers.

By the time that Oakland was aroused by this unprecedented activity in every direction and was questioning excitedly the meaning of it, Daylight secretly bought the chief Republican newspaper and the chief Democratic organ, and moved boldly into his new offices. Of necessity, they were on a large scale, occupying four floors of the only modern office building in the town — the only building that wouldn't have to be torn down later on, as Daylight put it. There was department after department, a score of them, and hundreds of clerks and stenographers. As he told Dede: "I've got more companies than you can shake a stick at. There's the Alameda & Contra Costa Land Syndicate, the Consolidated Street Railways, the Yerba Buena Ferry Company, the United Water Company, the Piedmont Realty Company, the Fairview and Portola Hotel Company, and half a dozen more that I've got to refer to a notebook to remember. There's the Piedmont Laundry Farm, and Redwood Consolidated Quarries. Starting in with our quarry, I just kept a-going till I got them all. And there's the ship-building company I ain't got a name for yet. Seeing as I had to have ferry-boats, I decided to build them myself. They'll be done by the time the pier is ready for them. Phew! It all sure beats poker. And I've had the fun of gouging the robber gangs as well. The water company bunches are squealing yet. I sure got them where the hair was short. They were just about all in when I came along and finished them off."

"But why do you hate them so?" Dede asked.

"Because they're such cowardly skunks."

"But you play the same game they do."

"Yes; but not in the same way." Daylight regarded her thoughtfully. "When I say cowardly skunks, I mean just that, — cowardly skunks. They set up for a lot of gamblers, and there ain't one in a thousand of them that's got the nerve to be a gambler. They're four-flushers, if you know what that means. They're a lot of little cottontail rabbits making believe they're big rip-snorting timber wolves. They set out to everlastingly eat up some proposition but at the first sign of trouble they turn tail and stampede for the brush. Look how it works. When the big fellows wanted to unload Little Copper, they sent Jakey Fallow into the New York Stock Exchange to yell out: 'I'll buy all or any part of Little Copper at fifty five,' Little Copper being at fifty-four. And in thirty minutes them cottontails — financiers, some folks call them — bid up Little Copper to sixty. And an hour after that, stampeding for the brush, they were throwing Little Copper overboard at forty-five and even forty.

"They're catspaws for the big fellows. Almost as fast as they rob the suckers, the big fellows come along and hold them up. Or else the big fellows use them in order to rob each other. That's the way the Chattanooga Coal and Iron Company was swallowed up by the trust in the last panic. The trust made that panic. It had to break a couple of big banking companies and squeeze half a dozen big fellows, too, and it did it by stampeding the cottontails. The cottontails did the rest all right, and the trust gathered in Chattanooga Coal and Iron. Why, any man, with nerve and savvee, can start them cottontails jumping for the brush. I don't exactly hate them myself, but I haven't any regard for chicken-hearted four-flushers."

CHAPTER XVII

For months Daylight was buried in work. The outlay was terrific, and there was nothing coming in. Beyond a general rise in land values, Oakland had not acknowledged his irruption on the financial scene. The city was waiting for him to show what he was going to do, and he lost no time about it. The best skilled brains on the market were hired by him for the different branches of the work. Initial mistakes he had no patience with, and he was determined to start right, as when he engaged Wilkinson, almost doubling his big salary, and brought him out from Chicago to take charge of the street railway organization. Night and day the road gangs toiled on the streets. And night and day the pile-drivers hammered the big piles down into the mud of San Francisco Bay. The pier was to be three miles long, and the Berkeley hills were denuded of whole groves of mature eucalyptus for the piling.

At the same time that his electric roads were building out through the hills, the hay-fields were being surveyed and broken up into city squares, with here and there, according to best modern methods, winding boulevards and strips of park. Broad streets, well graded, were made, with sewers and water-pipes ready laid, and macadamized from his own quarries. Cement sidewalks were also laid, so that all the purchaser had to do was to select his lot and architect and start building. The quick service of Daylight's new electric roads into Oakland made this big district immediately accessible, and long before the ferry system was in operation hundreds of residences were going up.

The profit on this land was enormous. In a day, his onslaught of wealth had turned open farming country into one of the best residential districts of the city.

But this money that flowed in upon him was immediately poured back into his other investments. The need for electric cars was so great that he installed his own shops for building them. And even on the rising land market, he continued to buy choice factory sites and building properties. On the advice of Wilkinson, practically every electric road already in operation was rebuilt. The light, old fashioned rails were torn out and replaced by the heaviest that were manufactured. Corner lots, on the sharp turns of narrow streets, were bought and ruthlessly presented to the city in order to make wide curves for his tracks and high speed for his cars. Then, too, there were the main-line feeders for his ferry system, tapping every portion of Oakland, Alameda, and Berkeley, and running fast expresses to the pier end. The same large-scale methods were employed in the water system. Service of the best was needed, if his huge land investment was to succeed. Oakland had to be made into a worth-while city, and that was what he intended to do. In addition to his big hotels, he built amusement parks for the common people, and art galleries and club-house country inns for the more finicky classes. Even before there was any increase in population, a marked increase in street-railway traffic took place. There was nothing fanciful about his schemes. They were sound investments.

“What Oakland wants is a first class theatre,” he said, and, after vainly trying to interest local capital, he started the building of the theatre himself; for he alone had vision for the two hundred thousand new people that were coming to the town.

But no matter what pressure was on Daylight, his Sundays he reserved for his riding in the hills. It was not the winter weather, however, that brought these rides with Dede to an end. One Saturday afternoon in the office she told him not to expect to meet her next day, and, when he pressed for an explanation:

“I’ve sold Mab.”

Daylight was speechless for the moment. Her act meant one of so many serious things that he couldn’t classify it. It smacked almost of treachery. She might have met with financial disaster.

It might be her way of letting him know she had seen enough of him. Or...

“What’s the matter?” he managed to ask.

“I couldn’t afford to keep her with hay forty-five dollars a ton,” Dede answered.

“Was that your only reason?” he demanded, looking at her steadily; for he remembered her once telling him how she had brought the mare through one winter, five years before, when hay had gone as high as sixty dollars a ton.

“No. My brother’s expenses have been higher, as well, and I was driven to the conclusion that since I could not afford both, I’d better let the mare go and keep the brother.”

Daylight felt inexpressibly saddened. He was suddenly aware of a great emptiness. What would a Sunday be without Dede? And Sundays without end without her? He drummed perplexedly on the desk with his fingers.

“Who bought her?” he asked. Dede’s eyes flashed in the way long since familiar to him when she was angry.

“Don’t you dare buy her back for me,” she cried. “And don’t deny that that was what you had in mind.”

“I won’t deny it. It was my idea to a tee. But I wouldn’t have done it without asking you first, and seeing how you feel about it, I won’t even ask you. But you thought a heap of that mare, and it’s pretty hard on you to lose her. I’m sure sorry. And I’m sorry, too, that you won’t be riding with me tomorrow. I’ll be plumb lost. I won’t know what to do with myself.”

“Neither shall I,” Dede confessed mournfully, “except that I shall be able to catch up with my sewing.”

“But I haven’t any sewing.”

Daylight’s tone was whimsically plaintive, but secretly he was delighted with her confession of loneliness. It was almost worth the loss of the mare to get that out of her. At any rate, he meant something to her. He was not utterly unliked.

“I wish you would reconsider, Miss Mason,” he said softly. “Not alone for the mare’s sake, but for my sake. Money don’t cut any ice in this. For me to buy that mare wouldn’t mean as it does to most men to send a bouquet of flowers or a box of candy to a young lady. And I’ve never sent you flowers or candy.” He observed the warning flash of her eyes, and hurried on to escape refusal. “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. Suppose I buy the mare and own her myself, and lend her to you when you want to ride. There’s nothing wrong in that. Anybody borrows a horse from anybody, you know.”

Agin he saw refusal, and headed her off.

“Lots of men take women buggy-riding. There’s nothing wrong in that. And the man always furnishes the horse and buggy. Well, now, what’s the difference between my taking you buggy-riding and furnishing the horse and buggy, and taking you horse-back-riding and furnishing the horses?”

She shook her head, and declined to answer, at the same time looking at the door as if to intimate that it was time for this unbusinesslike conversation to end. He made one more effort.

“Do you know, Miss Mason, I haven’t a friend in the world outside you? I mean a real friend, man or woman, the kind you chum with, you know, and that you’re glad to be with and sorry to be away from. Hegan is the nearest man I get to, and he’s a million miles away from me. Outside business, we don’t hitch. He’s got a big library of books, and some crazy kind of culture, and he spends all his off times reading things in French and German and other outlandish lingoes — when he ain’t writing plays and poetry. There’s nobody I feel chummy with except you, and you know how little we’ve chummed — once a week, if it didn’t rain, on Sunday. I’ve grown kind of to depend on you. You’re a sort of — of — of — ”

“A sort of habit,” she said with a smile.

“That’s about it. And that mare, and you astride of her, coming along the road under the trees or through the sunshine — why, with both you and the mare missing, there won’t be anything worth waiting through the week for. If you’d just let me buy her back — ”

“No, no; I tell you no.” Dede rose impatiently, but her eyes were moist with the memory of her pet. “Please don’t mention her to me again. If you think it was easy to part with her, you are mistaken. But I’ve seen the last of her, and I want to forget her.”

Daylight made no answer, and the door closed behind him.

Half an hour later he was conferring with Jones, the erstwhile elevator boy and rabid proletarian whom Daylight long before had grubstaked to literature for a year. The resulting novel had been a failure. Editors and publishers would not look at it, and now Daylight was using the disgruntled author in a little private secret service system he had been compelled to establish for himself. Jones, who affected to be surprised at nothing after his crushing experience with railroad freight rates on firewood and charcoal, betrayed no surprise now when the task was given to him to locate the purchaser of a certain sorrel mare.

“How high shall I pay for her?” he asked.

“Any price. You’ve got to get her, that’s the point. Drive a sharp bargain so as not to excite suspicion, but buy her. Then you deliver her to that address up in Sonoma County. The man’s the caretaker on a little ranch I have there. Tell him he’s to take whacking good care of her. And after that forget all about it. Don’t tell me the name of the man you buy her from. Don’t tell me anything about it except that you’ve got her and delivered her. Savvee?”

But the week had not passed, when Daylight noted the flash in Dede's eyes that boded trouble.

"Something's gone wrong — what is it?" he asked boldly.

"Mab," she said. "The man who bought her has sold her already. If I thought you had anything to do with it — "

"I don't even know who you sold her to," was Daylight's answer. "And what's more, I'm not bothering my head about her. She was your mare, and it's none of my business what you did with her. You haven't got her, that's sure and worse luck. And now, while we're on touchy subjects, I'm going to open another one with you. And you needn't get touchy about it, for it's not really your business at all."

She waited in the pause that followed, eyeing him almost suspiciously.

"It's about that brother of yours. He needs more than you can do for him. Selling that mare of yours won't send him to Germany. And that's what his own doctors say he needs — that crack German specialist who rips a man's bones and muscles into pulp and then molds them all over again. Well, I want to send him to Germany and give that crack a flutter, that's all."

"If it were only possible" she said, half breathlessly, and wholly without anger. "Only it isn't, and you know it isn't. I can't accept money from you — "

"Hold on, now," he interrupted. "Wouldn't you accept a drink of water from one of the Twelve Apostles if you was dying of thirst? Or would you be afraid of his evil intentions" — she made a gesture of dissent " — or of what folks might say about it?"

"But that's different," she began.

"Now look here, Miss Mason. You've got to get some foolish notions out of your head. This money notion is one of the funniest things I've seen. Suppose you was falling over a cliff, wouldn't it be all right for me to reach out and hold you by the arm? Sure it would. But suppose you ended another sort of help — instead of the strength of arm, the strength of my pocket? That would be all and that's what they all say. But why do they say it. Because the robber gangs want all the suckers to be honest and respect money. If the suckers weren't honest and didn't respect money, where would the robbers be? Don't you see? The robbers don't deal in arm-holds; they deal in dollars. Therefore arm-holds are just common and ordinary, while dollars are sacred — so sacred that you didn't let me lend you a hand with a few.

"Or here's another way," he continued, spurred on by her mute protest. "It's all right for me to give the strength of my arm when you're falling over a cliff. But if I take that same strength of arm and use it at pick-and-shovel work for a day and earn two dollars, you won't have anything to do with the two dollars. Yet it's the same old strength of arm in a new form, that's all. Besides, in this proposition it won't be a claim on you. It ain't even a loan to you. It's an arm-hold I'm giving your brother — just the same sort of arm-hold as if he was falling over a cliff. And a nice one you are, to come running out and yell 'Stop!' at me, and let your brother go on over the cliff. What he needs to save his legs is that crack in Germany, and that's the arm-hold I'm offering.

"Wish you could see my rooms. Walls all decorated with horsehair bridles — scores of them — hundreds of them. They're no use to me, and they cost like Sam Scratch. But there's a lot of convicts making them, and I go on buying. Why, I've spent more money in a single night on whiskey than would get the best specialists and pay all the expenses of a dozen cases like your brother's. And remember, you've got nothing to do with this. If your brother wants to look on it as a loan, all right. It's up to him, and you've got to stand out of the way while I pull him back from that cliff."

Still Dede refused, and Daylight's argument took a more painful turn.

"I can only guess that you're standing in your brother's way on account of some mistaken idea in your head that this is my idea of courting. Well, it ain't. You might as well think I'm courting all those convicts I buy bridles from. I haven't asked you to marry me, and if I do I won't come trying to buy you into consenting. And there won't be anything underhand when I come a-asking."

Dede's face was flushed and angry. "If you knew how ridiculous you are, you'd stop," she blurted out. "You can make me more uncomfortable than any man I ever knew. Every little while you give me to understand that you haven't asked me to marry you yet. I'm not waiting to be asked, and I warned you from the first that you had no chance. And yet you hold it over my head that some time, some day, you're going to ask me to marry you. Go ahead and ask me now, and get your answer and get it over and done with."

He looked at her in honest and pondering admiration. "I want you so bad, Miss Mason, that I don't dast to ask you now," he said, with such whimsicality and earnestness as to make her throw her head back in a frank boyish laugh. “Besides, as I told you, I’m green at it. I never went a-courting before, and I don’t want to make any mistakes.”

“But you’re making them all the time,” she cried impulsively. “No man ever courted a woman by holding a threatened proposal over her head like a club.”

“I won’t do it any more,” he said humbly. “And anyway, we’re off the argument. My straight talk a minute ago still holds. You’re standing in your brother’s way. No matter what notions you’ve got in your head, you’ve got to get out of the way and give him a chance. Will you let me go and see him and talk it over with him? I’ll make it a hard and fast business proposition. I’ll stake him to get well, that’s all, and charge him interest.”

She visibly hesitated.

“And just remember one thing, Miss Mason: it’s HIS leg, not yours.”

Still she refrained from giving her answer, and Daylight went on strengthening his position.

“And remember, I go over to see him alone. He’s a man, and I can deal with him better without womenfolks around. I’ll go over to-morrow afternoon.”

CHAPTER XVIII

Daylight had been wholly truthful when he told Dede that he had no real friends. On speaking terms with thousands, on fellowship and drinking terms with hundreds, he was a lonely man. He failed to find the one man, or group of several men, with whom he could be really intimate. Cities did not make for comradeship as did the Alaskan trail. Besides, the types of men were different. Scornful and contemptuous of business men on the one hand, on the other his relations with the San Francisco bosses had been more an alliance of expediency than anything else. He had felt more of kinship for the franker brutality of the bosses and their captains, but they had failed to claim any deep respect. They were too prone to crookedness. Bonds were better than men's word in this modern world, and one had to look carefully to the bonds.

In the old Yukon days it had been different. Bonds didn't go. A man said he had so much, and even in a poker game his appeasement was accepted.

Larry Hegan, who rose ably to the largest demands of Daylight's operations and who had few illusions and less hypocrisy, might have proved a chum had it not been for his temperamental twist. Strange genius that he was, a Napoleon of the law, with a power of visioning that far exceeded Daylight's, he had nothing in common with Daylight outside the office. He spent his time with books, a thing Daylight could not abide. Also, he devoted himself to the endless writing of plays which never got beyond manuscript form, and, though Daylight only sensed the secret taint of it, was a confirmed but temperate eater of hasheesh. Hegan lived all his life cloistered with books in a world of agitation. With the out-of-door world he had no understanding nor tolerance. In food and drink he was abstemious as a monk, while exercise was a thing abhorrent. Daylight's friendships, in lieu of anything closer, were drinking friendships and roistering friendships. And with the passing of the Sunday rides with Dede, he fell back more and more upon these for diversion. The cocktail wall of inhibition he reared more assiduously than ever.

The big red motor-car was out more frequently now, while a stable hand was hired to give Bob exercise. In his early San Francisco days, there had been intervals of easement between his deals, but in this present biggest deal of all the strain was unremitting. Not in a month, or two, or three, could his huge land investment be carried to a successful consummation. And so complete and wide-reaching was it that complications and knotty situations constantly arose. Every day brought its problems, and when he had solved them in his masterful way, he left the office in his big car, almost sighing with relief at anticipation of the approaching double Martini. Rarely was he made tipsy. His constitution was too strong for that. Instead, he was that direst of all drinkers, the steady drinker, deliberate and controlled, who averaged a far higher quantity of alcohol than the irregular and violent drinker. For six weeks hard-running he had seen nothing of Dede except in the office, and there he resolutely refrained from making approaches. But by the seventh Sunday his hunger for her overmastered him. It was a stormy day.

A heavy southeast gale was blowing, and squall after squall of rain and wind swept over the city. He could not take his mind off of her, and a persistent picture came to him of her sitting by a window and sewing feminine fripperies of some sort. When the time came for his first pre-luncheon cocktail to be served to him in his rooms, he did not take it.

Filled with a daring determination, he glanced at his note book for Dede's telephone number, and called for the switch.

At first it was her landlady's daughter who was raised, but in a minute he heard the voice he had been hungry to hear.

"I just wanted to tell you that I'm coming out to see you," he said. "I didn't want to break in on you without warning, that was all."

"Has something happened?" came her voice.

"I'll tell you when I get there," he evaded.

He left the red car two blocks away and arrived on foot at the pretty, three-storied, shingled Berkeley house. For an instant only, he was aware of an inward hesitancy, but the next moment he rang the bell. He knew that what he was doing was in direct violation of her wishes, and that he was setting her a difficult task to receive as a Sunday caller the multimillionaire and notorious Elam Harnish of newspaper fame. On the other hand, the one thing he did not expect of her was what he would have termed "silly female capers."

And in this he was not disappointed.

She came herself to the door to receive him and shake hands with him. He hung his mackintosh and hat on the rack in the comfortable square hall and turned to her for direction.

“They are busy in there,” she said, indicating the parlor from which came the boisterous voices of young people, and through the open door of which he could see several college youths. “So you will have to come into my rooms.”

She led the way through the door opening out of the hall to the right, and, once inside, he stood awkwardly rooted to the floor, gazing about him and at her and all the time trying not to gaze. In his perturbation he failed to hear and see her invitation to a seat. So these were her quarters. The intimacy of it and her making no fuss about it was startling, but it was no more than he would have expected of her. It was almost two rooms in one, the one he was in evidently the sitting-room, and the one he could see into, the bedroom. Beyond an oaken dressing-table, with an orderly litter of combs and brushes and dainty feminine knickknacks, there was no sign of its being used as a bedroom. The broad couch, with a cover of old rose and banked high with cushions, he decided must be the bed, but it was farthest from any experience of a civilized bed he had ever had.

Not that he saw much of detail in that awkward moment of standing. His general impression was one of warmth and comfort and beauty. There were no carpets, and on the hardwood floor he caught a glimpse of several wolf and coyote skins. What captured and perceptibly held his eye for a moment was a Crouched Venus that stood on a Steinway upright against a background of mountain-lion skin on the wall.

But it was Dede herself that smote most sharply upon sense and perception. He had always cherished the idea that she was very much a woman — the lines of her figure, her hair, her eyes, her voice, and birdlike laughing ways had all contributed to this; but here, in her own rooms, clad in some flowing, clinging gown, the emphasis of sex was startling. He had been accustomed to her only in trim tailor suits and shirtwaists, or in riding costume of velvet corduroy, and he was not prepared for this new revelation. She seemed so much softer, so much more pliant, and tender, and lissome. She was a part of this atmosphere of quietude and beauty. She fitted into it just as she had fitted in with the sober office furnishings.

“Won’t you sit down?” she repeated.

He felt like an animal long denied food. His hunger for her welled up in him, and he proceeded to “wolf” the dainty morsel before him. Here was no patience, no diplomacy. The straightest, direct way was none too quick for him and, had he known it, the least unsuccessful way he could have chosen.

“Look here,” he said, in a voice that shook with passion, “there’s one thing I won’t do, and that’s propose to you in the office. That’s why I’m here. Dede Mason, I want you. I just want you.”

While he spoke he advanced upon her, his black eyes burning with bright fire, his aroused blood swarthy in his cheek.

So precipitate was he, that she had barely time to cry out her involuntary alarm and to step back, at the same time catching one of his hands as he attempted to gather her into his arms.

In contrast to him, the blood had suddenly left her cheeks. The hand that had warded his off and that still held it, was trembling. She relaxed her fingers, and his arm dropped to his side. She wanted to say something, do something, to pass on from the awkwardness of the situation, but no intelligent thought nor action came into her mind. She was aware only of a desire to laugh. This impulse was party hysterical and partly spontaneous humor — the latter growing from instant to instant. Amazing as the affair was, the ridiculous side of it was not veiled to her. She felt like one who had suffered the terror of the onslaught of a murderous footpad only to find out that it was an innocent pedestrian asking the time.

Daylight was the quicker to achieve action. “Oh, I know I’m a sure enough fool,” he said. “I — I guess I’ll sit down. Don’t be scairt, Miss Mason. I’m not real dangerous.”

“I’m not afraid,” she answered, with a smile, slipping down herself into a chair, beside which, on the floor, stood a sewing-basket from which, Daylight noted, some white fluffy thing of lace and muslin overflowed. Again she smiled. “Though I confess you did startle me for the moment.”

“It’s funny,” Daylight sighed, almost with regret; “here I am, strong enough to bend you around and tie knots in you. Here I am, used to having my will with man and beast and anything. And here I am sitting in this chair, as weak and helpless as a little lamb. You sure take the starch out of me.”

Dede vainly cudgeled her brains in quest of a reply to these remarks. Instead, her thought dwelt insistently upon the significance of his stepping aside, in the middle of a violent proposal, in order to make irrelevant remarks. What struck her was the man’s certitude. So little did he doubt that he would have her, that he could afford to pause and generalize upon love and the effects of love.

She noted his hand unconsciously slipping in the familiar way into the side coat pocket where she knew he carried his tobacco and brown papers.

"You may smoke, if you want to," she said. He withdrew his hand with a jerk, as if something in the pocket had stung him.

"No, I wasn't thinking of smoking. I was thinking of you. What's a man to do when he wants a woman but ask her to marry him? That's all that I'm doing. I can't do it in style. I know that. But I can use straight English, and that's good enough for me. I sure want you mighty bad, Miss Mason. You're in my mind 'most all the time, now. And what I want to know is — well, do you want me? That's all."

"I — I wish you hadn't asked," she said softly.

"Mebbe it's best you should know a few things before you give me an answer," he went on, ignoring the fact that the answer had already been given. "I never went after a woman before in my life, all reports to the contrary not withstanding. The stuff you read about me in the papers and books, about me being a lady-killer, is all wrong. There's not an iota of truth in it. I guess I've done more than my share of card-playing and whiskey-drinking, but women I've let alone. There was a woman that killed herself, but I didn't know she wanted me that bad or else I'd have married her — not for love, but to keep her from killing herself. She was the best of the boiling, but I never gave her any encouragement. I'm telling you all this because you've read about it, and I want you to get it straight from me.

"Lady-killer!" he snorted. "Why, Miss Mason, I don't mind telling you that I've sure been scairt of women all my life. You're the first one I've not been afraid of. That's the strange thing about it. I just plumb worship you, and yet I'm not afraid of you. Mebbe it's because you're different from the women I know. You've never chased me. Lady-killer! Why, I've been running away from ladies ever since I can remember, and I guess all that saved me was that I was strong in the wind and that I never fell down and broke a leg or anything.

"I didn't ever want to get married until after I met you, and until a long time after I met you. I cottoned to you from the start; but I never thought it would get as bad as marriage. Why, I can't get to sleep nights, thinking of you and wanting you."

He came to a stop and waited. She had taken the lace and muslin from the basket, possibly to settle her nerves and wits, and was sewing upon it. As she was not looking at him, he devoured her with his eyes. He noted the firm, efficient hands — hands that could control a horse like Bob, that could run a typewriter almost as fast as a man could talk, that could sew on dainty garments, and that, doubtlessly, could play on the piano over there in the corner. Another ultra-feminine detail he noticed — her slippers. They were small and bronze. He had never imagined she had such a small foot. Street shoes and riding boots were all that he had ever seen on her feet, and they had given no advertisement of this. The bronze slippers fascinated him, and to them his eyes repeatedly turned.

A knock came at the door, which she answered. Daylight could not help hearing the conversation. She was wanted at the telephone.

"Tell him to call up again in ten minutes," he heard her say, and the masculine pronoun caused in him a flashing twinge of jealousy. Well, he decided, whoever it was, Burning Daylight would give him a run for his money. The marvel to him was that a girl like Dede hadn't been married long since.

She came back, smiling to him, and resumed her sewing. His eyes wandered from the efficient hands to the bronze slippers and back again, and he swore to himself that there were mighty few stenographers like her in existence. That was because she must have come of pretty good stock, and had a pretty good raising. Nothing else could explain these rooms of hers and the clothes she wore and the way she wore them.

"Those ten minutes are flying," he suggested.

"I can't marry you," she said.

"You don't love me?"

She shook her head.

"Do you like me — the littlest bit?"

This time she nodded, at the same time allowing the smile of amusement to play on her lips. But it was amusement without contempt. The humorous side of a situation rarely appealed in vain to her.

"Well, that's something to go on," he announced. "You've got to make a start to get started. I just liked you at first, and look what it's grown into. You recollect, you said you didn't like my way of life. Well, I've changed it a heap. I ain't gambling like I used to. I've gone into what you called the legitimate, making two minutes grow where one grew before, three hundred thousand folks where only a hundred thousand grew before. And this time next year there'll be two million eucalyptus growing on the hills. Say do you like me more than the littlest bit?"

She raised her eyes from her work and looked at him as she answered:

“I like you a great deal, but — ”

He waited a moment for her to complete the sentence, failing which, he went on himself.

“I haven’t an exaggerated opinion of myself, so I know I ain’t bragging when I say I’ll make a pretty good husband. You’d find I was no hand at nagging and fault-finding. I can guess what it must be for a woman like you to be independent. Well, you’d be independent as my wife. No strings on you. You could follow your own sweet will, and nothing would be too good for you. I’d give you everything your heart desired — ”

“Except yourself,” she interrupted suddenly, almost sharply.

Daylight’s astonishment was momentary.

“I don’t know about that. I’d be straight and square, and live true. I don’t hanker after divided affections.”

“I don’t mean that,” she said. “Instead of giving yourself to your wife, you would give yourself to the three hundred thousand people of Oakland, to your street railways and ferry-routes, to the two million trees on the hills to everything business — and — and to all that that means.”

“I’d see that I didn’t,” he declared stoutly. “I’d be yours to command.”

“You think so, but it would turn out differently.” She suddenly became nervous. “We must stop this talk. It is too much like attempting to drive a bargain. ‘How much will you give?’ ‘I’ll give so much.’ ‘I want more,’ and all that. I like you, but not enough to marry you, and I’ll never like you enough to marry you.”

“How do you know that?” he demanded.

“Because I like you less and less.”

Daylight sat dumfounded. The hurt showed itself plainly in his face.

“Oh, you don’t understand,” she cried wildly, beginning to lose self-control — ”It’s not that way I mean. I do like you; the more I’ve known you the more I’ve liked you. And at the same time the more I’ve known you the less would I care to marry you.”

This enigmatic utterance completed Daylight’s perplexity.

“Don’t you see?” she hurried on. “I could have far easier married the Elam Harnish fresh from Klondike, when I first laid eyes on him long ago, than marry you sitting before me now.”

He shook his head slowly. “That’s one too many for me. The more you know and like a man the less you want to marry him. Familiarity breeds contempt — I guess that's what you mean."

"No, no," she cried, but before she could continue, a knock came on the door.

"The ten minutes is up," Daylight said.

His eyes, quick with observation like an Indian's, darted about the room while she was out. The impression of warmth and comfort and beauty predominated, though he was unable to analyze it; while the simplicity delighted him — expensive simplicity, he decided, and most of it leftovers from the time her father went broke and died. He had never before appreciated a plain hardwood floor with a couple of wolfskins; it sure beat all the carpets in creation. He stared solemnly at a bookcase containing a couple of hundred books. There was mystery. He could not understand what people found so much to write about.

Writing things and reading things were not the same as doing things, and himself primarily a man of action, doing things was alone comprehensible.

His gaze passed on from the Crouched Venus to a little tea-table with all its fragile and exquisite accessories, and to a shining copper kettle and copper chafing-dish. Chafing dishes were not unknown to him, and he wondered if she concocted suppers on this one for some of those University young men he had heard whispers about. One or two water-colors on the wall made him conjecture that she had painted them herself. There were photographs of horses and of old masters, and the trailing purple of a Burial of Christ held him for a time. But ever his gaze returned to that Crouched Venus on the piano. To his homely, frontier-trained mind, it seemed curious that a nice young woman should have such a bold, if not sinful, object on display in her own room. But he reconciled himself to it by an act of faith. Since it was Dede, it must be eminently all right. Evidently such things went along with culture. Larry Hegan had similar casts and photographs in his book-cluttered quarters. But then, Larry Hegan was different. There was that hint of unhealth about him that Daylight invariably sensed in his presence, while Dede, on the contrary, seemed always so robustly wholesome, radiating an atmosphere compounded of the sun and wind and dust of the open road. And yet, if such a clean, healthy woman as she went in for naked women crouching on her piano, it must be all right. Dede made it all right. She could come pretty close to making anything all right. Besides, he didn't understand culture anyway.

She reentered the room, and as she crossed it to her chair, he admired the way she walked, while the bronze slippers were maddening.

"I'd like to ask you several questions," he began immediately "Are you thinking of marrying somebody?"

She laughed merrily and shook her head.

"Do you like anybody else more than you like me? — that man at the 'phone just now, for instance?"

"There isn't anybody else. I don't know anybody I like well enough to marry. For that matter, I don't think I am a marrying woman. Office work seems to spoil one for that."

Daylight ran his eyes over her, from her face to the tip of a bronze slipper, in a way that made the color mantle in her cheeks. At the same time he shook his head sceptically.

"It strikes me that you're the most marryingest woman that ever made a man sit up and take notice. And now another question. You see, I've just got to locate the lay of the land. Is there anybody you like as much as you like me?"

But Dede had herself well in hand.

"That's unfair," she said. "And if you stop and consider, you will find that you are doing the very thing you disclaimed — namely, nagging. I refuse to answer any more of your questions. Let us talk about other things. How is Bob?"

Half an hour later, whirling along through the rain on Telegraph Avenue toward Oakland, Daylight smoked one of his brown-paper cigarettes and reviewed what had taken place. It was not at all bad, was his summing up, though there was much about it that was baffling. There was that liking him the more she knew him and at the same time wanting to marry him less. That was a puzzler.

But the fact that she had refused him carried with it a certain elation. In refusing him she had refused his thirty million dollars. That was going some for a ninety dollar-a-month stenographer who had known better ties. She wasn't after money, that was patent. Every woman he had encountered had seemed willing to swallow him down for the sake of his money. Why, he had doubled his fortune, made fifteen millions, since the day she first came to work for him, and behold, any willingness to marry him she might have possessed had diminished as his money had increased.

“Gosh!” he muttered. “If I clean up a hundred million on this land deal she won’t even be on speaking terms with me.”

But he could not smile the thing away. It remained to baffle him, that enigmatic statement of hers that she could more easily have married the Elam Harnish fresh from the Klondike than the present Elam Harnish. Well, he concluded, the thing to do was for him to become more like that old-time Daylight who had come down out of the North to try his luck at the bigger game. But that was impossible. He could not set back the flight of time. Wishing wouldn’t do it, and there was no other way. He might as well wish himself a boy again.

Another satisfaction he cuddled to himself from their interview. He had heard of stenographers before, who refused their employers, and who invariably quit their positions immediately afterward. But Dede had not even hinted at such a thing. No matter how baffling she was, there was no nonsensical silliness about her. She was level headed. But, also, he had been level-headed and was partly responsible for this. He hadn’t taken advantage of her in the office. True, he had twice overstepped the bounds, but he had not followed it up and made a practice of it. She knew she could trust him. But in spite of all this he was confident that most young women would have been silly enough to resign a position with a man they had turned down. And besides, after he had put it to her in the right light, she had not been silly over his sending her brother to Germany.

“Gee!” he concluded, as the car drew up before his hotel. “If I’d only known it as I do now, I’d have popped the question the first day she came to work. According to her say-so, that would have been the proper moment. She likes me more and more, and the more she likes me the less she’d care to marry me! Now what do you think of that? She sure must be fooling.”

CHAPTER XIX

Once again, on a rainy Sunday, weeks afterward, Daylight proposed to Dede. As on the first time, he restrained himself until his hunger for her overwhelmed him and swept him away in his red automobile to Berkeley. He left the machine several blocks away and proceeded to the house on foot. But Dede was out, the landlady's daughter told him, and added, on second thought, that she was out walking in the hills. Furthermore, the young lady directed him where Dede's walk was most likely to extend.

Daylight obeyed the girl's instructions, and soon the street he followed passed the last house and itself ceased where began the first steep slopes of the open hills. The air was damp with the on-coming of rain, for the storm had not yet burst, though the rising wind proclaimed its imminence. As far as he could see, there was no sign of Dede on the smooth, grassy hills. To the right, dipping down into a hollow and rising again, was a large, full-grown eucalyptus grove. Here all was noise and movement, the lofty, slender trunked trees swaying back and forth in the wind and clashing their branches together. In the squalls, above all the minor noises of creaking and groaning, arose a deep thrumming note as of a mighty harp. Knowing Dede as he did, Daylight was confident that he would find her somewhere in this grove where the storm effects were so pronounced. And find her he did, across the hollow and on the exposed crest of the opposing slope where the gale smote its fiercest blows.

There was something monotonous, though not tiresome, about the way Daylight proposed. Guiltless of diplomacy subterfuge, he was as direct and gusty as the gale itself. He had time neither for greeting nor apology.

"It's the same old thing," he said. "I want you and I've come for you. You've just got to have me, Dede, for the more I think about it the more certain I am that you've got a Sneaking liking for me that's something more than just Ordinary liking. And you don't dast say that it isn't; now dast you?"

He had shaken hands with her at the moment he began speaking, and he had continued to hold her hand. Now, when she did not answer, she felt a light but firmly insistent pressure as of his drawing her to him. Involuntarily, she half-yielded to him, her desire for the moment stronger than her will. Then suddenly she drew herself away, though permitting her hand still to remain in his.

"You sure ain't afraid of me?" he asked, with quick compunction.

"No." She smiled woefully. "Not of you, but of myself."

"You haven't taken my dare," he urged under this encouragement.

"Please, please," she begged. "We can never marry, so don't let us discuss it."

"Then I copper your bet to lose." He was almost gay, now, for success was coming faster than his fondest imagining. She liked him, without a doubt; and without a doubt she liked him well enough to let him hold her hand, well enough to be not repelled by the nearness of him.

She shook her head. "No, it is impossible. You would lose your bet."

For the first time a dark suspicion crossed Daylight's mind — a clew that explained everything.

"Say, you ain't been let in for some one of these secret marriages have you?"

The consternation in his voice and on his face was too much for her, and her laugh rang out, merry and spontaneous as a burst of joy from the throat of a bird.

Daylight knew his answer, and, vexed with himself decided that action was more efficient than speech. So he stepped between her and the wind and drew her so that she stood close in the shelter of him. An unusually stiff squall blew about them and thrummed overhead in the tree-tops and both paused to listen. A shower of flying leaves enveloped them, and hard on the heel of the wind came driving drops of rain. He looked down on her and on her hair wind-blown about her face; and because of her closeness to him and of a fresher and more poignant realization of what she meant to him, he trembled so that she was aware of it in the hand that held hers.

She suddenly leaned against him, bowing her head until it rested lightly upon his breast. And so they stood while another squall, with flying leaves and scattered drops of rain, rattled past. With equal suddenness she lifted her head and looked at him.

"Do you know," she said, "I prayed last night about you. I prayed that you would fail, that you would lose everything everything."

Daylight stared his amazement at this cryptic utterance. "That sure beats me. I always said I got out of my depth with women, and you've got me out of my depth now. Why you want me to lose everything, seeing as you like me — ”

“I never said so.”

“You didn’t dast say you didn’t. So, as I was saying: liking me, why you’d want me to go broke is clean beyond my simple understanding. It’s right in line with that other puzzler of yours, the more-you-like-me-the-less-you-want-to-marry-me one. Well, you’ve just got to explain, that’s all.”

His arms went around her and held her closely, and this time she did not resist. Her head was bowed, and he had not see her face, yet he had a premonition that she was crying. He had learned the virtue of silence, and he waited her will in the matter. Things had come to such a pass that she was bound to tell him something now. Of that he was confident.

“I am not romantic,” she began, again looking at him as he spoke.

“It might be better for me if I were. Then I could make a fool of myself and be unhappy for the rest of my life. But my abominable common sense prevents. And that doesn’t make me a bit happier, either.”

“I’m still out of my depth and swimming feeble,” Daylight said, after waiting vainly for her to go on. “You’ve got to show me, and you ain’t shown me yet. Your common sense and praying that I’d go broke is all up in the air to me. Little woman, I just love you mighty hard, and I want you to marry me. That’s straight and simple and right off the bat. Will you marry me?”

She shook her head slowly, and then, as she talked, seemed to grow angry, sadly angry; and Daylight knew that this anger was against him.

“Then let me explain, and just as straight and simply as you have asked.” She paused, as if casting about for a beginning. “You are honest and straightforward. Do you want me to be honest and straightforward as a woman is not supposed to be? — to tell you things that will hurt you? — to make confessions that ought to shame me? to behave in what many men would think was an unwomanly manner?”

The arm around her shoulder pressed encouragement, but he did not speak.

“I would dearly like to marry you, but I am afraid. I am proud and humble at the same time that a man like you should care for me. But you have too much money. There’s where my abominable common sense steps in. Even if we did marry, you could never be my man — my lover and my husband. You would be your money’s man. I know I am a foolish woman, but I want my man for myself. You would not be free for me. Your money possesses you, taking your time, your thoughts, your energy, everything, bidding you go here and go there, do this and do that. Don't you see? Perhaps it's pure silliness, but I feel that I can love much, give much — give all, and in return, though I don't want all, I want much — and I want much more than your money would permit you to give me.

"And your money destroys you; it makes you less and less nice. I am not ashamed to say that I love you, because I shall never marry you. And I loved you much when I did not know you at all, when you first came down from Alaska and I first went into the office. You were my hero. You were the Burning Daylight of the gold-diggings, the daring traveler and miner. And you looked it. I don't see how any woman could have looked at you without loving you — then. But you don't look it now.

"Please, please, forgive me for hurting you. You wanted straight talk, and I am giving it to you. All these last years you have been living unnaturally. You, a man of the open, have been cooping yourself up in the cities with all that that means. You are not the same man at all, and your money is destroying you. You are becoming something different, something not so healthy, not so clean, not so nice. Your money and your way of life are doing it. You know it. You haven't the same body now that you had then. You are putting on flesh, and it is not healthy flesh. You are kind and genial with me, I know, but you are not kind and genial to all the world as you were then. You have become harsh and cruel. And I know. Remember, I have studied you six days a week, month after month, year after year; and I know more about the most insignificant parts of you than you know of all of me. The cruelty is not only in your heart and thoughts, but it is there in face. It has put its lines there. I have watched them come and grow. Your money, and the life it compels you to lead have done all this. You are being brutalized and degraded. And this process can only go on and on until you are hopelessly destroyed — "

He attempted to interrupt, but she stopped him, herself breathless and her voice trembling.

"No, no; let me finish utterly. I have done nothing but think, think, think, all these months, ever since you came riding with me, and now that I have begun to speak I am going to speak all that I have in me. I do love you, but I cannot marry you and destroy love. You are growing into a thing that I must in the end despise. You can't help it. More than you can possibly love me, do you love this business game. This business — and it's all perfectly useless, so far as you are concerned — claims all of you. I sometimes think it would be easier to share you equitably with another woman than to share you with this business. I might have half of you, at any rate. But this business would claim, not half of you, but nine-tenths of you, or ninety-nine hundredths.

"Remember, the meaning of marriage to me is not to get a man's money to spend. I want the man. You say you want ME. And suppose I consented, but gave you only one-hundredth part of me. Suppose there was something else in my life that took the other ninety-nine parts, and, furthermore, that ruined my figure, that put pouches under my eyes and crows-feet in the corners, that made me unbeautiful to look upon and that made my spirit unbeautiful. Would you be satisfied with that one-hundredth part of me? Yet that is all you are offering me of yourself. Do you wonder that I won't marry you? — that I can't?"

Daylight waited to see if she were quite done, and she went on again.

"It isn't that I am selfish. After all, love is giving, not receiving. But I see so clearly that all my giving could not do you any good. You are like a sick man. You don't play business like other men. You play it heart and and all of you. No matter what you believed and intended a wife would be only a brief diversion. There is that magnificent Bob, eating his head off in the stable. You would buy me a beautiful mansion and leave me in it to yawn my head off, or cry my eyes out because of my helplessness and inability to save you. This disease of business would be corroding you and marring you all the time. You play it as you have played everything else, as in Alaska you played the life of the trail. Nobody could be permitted to travel as fast and as far as you, to work as hard or endure as much. You hold back nothing; you put all you've got into whatever you are doing."

"Limit is the sky," he grunted grim affirmation.

"But if you would only play the lover-husband that way — "

Her voice faltered and stopped, and a blush showed in her wet cheeks as her eyes fell before his.

"And now I won't say another word," she added. "I've delivered a whole sermon."

She rested now, frankly and fairly, in the shelter of his arms, and both were oblivious to the gale that rushed past them in quicker and stronger blasts. The big downpour of rain had not yet come, but the mist-like squalls were more frequent. Daylight was openly perplexed, and he was still perplexed when he began to speak.

"I'm stumped. I'm up a tree. I'm clean flabbergasted, Miss Mason — or Dede, because I love to call you that name. I'm free to confess there's a mighty big heap in what you say. As I understand it, your conclusion is that you'd marry me if I hadn't a cent and if I wasn't getting fat. No, no; I'm not joking. I acknowledge the corn, and that's just my way of boiling the matter down and summing it up. If I hadn't a cent, and if I was living a healthy life with all the time in the world to love you and be your husband instead of being awash to my back teeth in business and all the rest — why, you'd marry me.

"That's all as clear as print, and you're correcter than I ever guessed before. You've sure opened my eyes a few. But I'm stuck. What can I do? My business has sure roped, thrown, and branded me. I'm tied hand and foot, and I can't get up and meander over green pastures. I'm like the man that got the bear by the tail. I can't let go; and I want you, and I've got to let go to get you.

"I don't know what to do, but something's sure got to happen — I can't lose you. I just can't. And I'm not going to. Why, you're running business a close second right now. Business never kept me awake nights.

"You've left me no argument. I know I'm not the same man that came from Alaska. I couldn't hit the trail with the dogs as I did in them days. I'm soft in my muscles, and my mind's gone hard. I used to respect men. I despise them now. You see, I spent all my life in the open, and I reckon I'm an open-air man. Why, I've got the prettiest little ranch you ever laid eyes on, up in Glen Ellen. That's where I got stuck for that brick-yard. You recollect handling the correspondence. I only laid eyes on the ranch that one time, and I so fell in love with it that I bought it there and then. I just rode around the hills, and was happy as a kid out of school. I'd be a better man living in the country. The city doesn't make me better. You're plumb right there. I know it. But suppose your prayer should be answered and I'd go clean broke and have to work for day's wages?"

She did not answer, though all the body of her seemed to urge consent.

"Suppose I had nothing left but that little ranch, and was satisfied to grow a few chickens and scratch a living somehow — would you marry me then, Dede?"

"Why, we'd be together all the time!" she cried.

“But I’d have to be out ploughing once in a while,” he warned, “or driving to town to get the grub.”

“But there wouldn’t be the office, at any rate, and no man to see, and men to see without end. But it is all foolish and impossible, and we’ll have to be starting back now if we’re to escape the rain.”

Then was the moment, among the trees, where they began the descent of the hill, that Daylight might have drawn her closely to him and kissed her once. But he was too perplexed with the new thoughts she had put into his head to take advantage of the situation. He merely caught her by the arm and helped her over the rougher footing.

“It’s darn pretty country up there at Glen Ellen,” he said meditatively. “I wish you could see it.”

At the edge of the grove he suggested that it might be better for them to part there.

“It’s your neighborhood, and folks is liable to talk.”

But she insisted that he accompany her as far as the house.

“I can’t ask you in,” she said, extending her hand at the foot of the steps.

The wind was humming wildly in sharply recurrent gusts, but still the rain held off.

“Do you know,” he said, “taking it by and large, it’s the happiest day of my life.” He took off his hat, and the wind rippled and twisted his black hair as he went on solemnly, “And I’m sure grateful to God, or whoever or whatever is responsible for your being on this earth. For you do like me heaps. It’s been my joy to hear you say so to-day. It’s — ” He left the thought arrested, and his face assumed the familiar whimsical expression as he murmured: “Dede, Dede, we’ve just got to get married. It’s the only way, and trust to luck for it’s coming out all right — ”.

But the tears were threatening to rise in her eyes again, as she shook her head and turned and went up the steps.

CHAPTER XX

When the ferry system began to run, and the time between Oakland and San Francisco was demonstrated to be cut in half, the tide of Daylight's terrific expenditure started to turn. Not that it really did turn, for he promptly went into further investments. Thousands of lots in his residence tracts were sold, and thousands of homes were being built. Factory sites also were selling, and business properties in the heart of Oakland. All this tended to a steady appreciation in value of Daylight's huge holdings. But, as of old, he had his hunch and was riding it. Already he had begun borrowing from the banks. The magnificent profits he made on the land he sold were turned into more land, into more development; and instead of paying off old loans, he contracted new ones. As he had pyramided in Dawson City, he now pyramided in Oakland; but he did it with the knowledge that it was a stable enterprise rather than a risky placer-mining boom.

In a small way, other men were following his lead, buying and selling land and profiting by the improvement work he was doing. But this was to be expected, and the small fortunes they were making at his expense did not irritate him. There was an exception, however. One Simon Dolliver, with money to go in with, and with cunning and courage to back it up, bade fair to become a several times millionaire at Daylight's expense. Dolliver, too, pyramided, playing quickly and accurately, and keeping his money turning over and over. More than once Daylight found him in the way, as he himself had got in the way of the Guggenhammers when they first set their eyes on Ophir Creek.

Work on Daylight's dock system went on apace, yet was one of those enterprises that consumed money dreadfully and that could not be accomplished as quickly as a ferry system. The engineering difficulties were great, the dredging and filling a cyclopean task. The mere item of piling was anything but small. A good average pile, by the time it was delivered on the ground, cost a twenty-dollar gold piece, and these piles were used in unending thousands. All accessible groves of mature eucalyptus were used, and as well, great rafts of pine piles were towed down the coast from Peugeot Sound.

Not content with manufacturing the electricity for his street railways in the old-fashioned way, in power-houses, Daylight organized the Sierra and

Salvador Power Company. This immediately assumed large proportions. Crossing the San Joaquin Valley on the way from the mountains, and plunging through the Contra Costa hills, there were many towns, and even a robust city, that could be supplied with power, also with light; and it became a street-and house-lighting project as well. As soon as the purchase of power sites in the Sierras was rushed through, the survey parties were out and building operations begun.

And so it went. There were a thousand maws into which he poured unceasing streams of money. But it was all so sound and legitimate, that Daylight, born gambler that he was, and with his clear, wide vision, could not play softly and safely. It was a big opportunity, and to him there was only one way to play it, and that was the big way. Nor did his one confidential adviser, Larry Hegan, aid him to caution. On the contrary, it was Daylight who was compelled to veto the wilder visions of that able hasheesh dreamer. Not only did Daylight borrow heavily from the banks and trust companies, but on several of his corporations he was compelled to issue stock. He did this grudgingly however, and retained most of his big enterprises of his own. Among the companies in which he reluctantly allowed the investing public to join were the Golden Gate Dock Company, and Recreation Parks Company, the United Water Company, the Uncial Shipbuilding Company, and the Sierra and Salvador Power Company. Nevertheless, between himself and Hegan, he retained the controlling share in each of these enterprises.

His affair with Dede Mason only seemed to languish. While delaying to grapple with the strange problem it presented, his desire for her continued to grow. In his gambling simile, his conclusion was that Luck had dealt him the most remarkable card in the deck, and that for years he had overlooked it. Love was the card, and it beat them all. Love was the king card of trumps, the fifth ace, the joker in a game of tenderfoot poker. It was the card of cards, and play it he would, to the limit, when the opening came. He could not see that opening yet. The present game would have to play to some sort of a conclusion first.

Yet he could not shake from his brain and vision the warm recollection of those bronze slippers, that clinging gown, and all the feminine softness and pliancy of Dede in her pretty Berkeley rooms. Once again, on a rainy Sunday, he telephoned that he was coming. And, as has happened ever since man first looked upon woman and called her good, again he played the blind force of male compulsion against the woman’s secret weakness to yield. Not that it was Daylight’s way abjectly to beg and entreat. On the contrary, he was masterful in whatever he did, but he had a trick of whimsical wheedling that Dede found harder to resist than the pleas of a suppliant lover. It was not a happy scene in its outcome, for Dede, in the throes of her own desire, desperate with weakness and at the same time with her better judgment hating her weakness cried out: —

“You urge me to try a chance, to marry you now and trust to luck for it to come out right. And life is a gamble say. Very well, let us gamble. Take a coin and toss it in the air. If it comes heads, I’ll marry you. If it doesn’t, you are forever to leave me alone and never mention marriage again.”

A fire of mingled love and the passion of gambling came into Daylight’s eyes. Involuntarily his hand started for his pocket for the coin. Then it stopped, and the light in his eyes was troubled.

“Go on,” she ordered sharply. “Don’t delay, or I may change my mind, and you will lose the chance.”

“Little woman.” His similes were humorous, but there was no humor in their meaning. His thought was as solemn as his voice. “Little woman, I’d gamble all the way from Creation to the Day of Judgment; I’d gamble a golden harp against another man’s halo; I’d toss for pennies on the front steps of the New Jerusalem or set up a faro layout just outside the Pearly Gates; but I’ll be everlastingly damned if I’ll gamble on love. Love’s too big to me to take a chance on. Love’s got to be a sure thing, and between you and me it is a sure thing. If the odds was a hundred to one on my winning this flip, just the same, nary a flip.”

In the spring of the year the Great Panic came on. The first warning was when the banks began calling in their unprotected loans. Daylight promptly paid the first several of his personal notes that were presented; then he divined that these demands but indicated the way the wind was going to blow, and that one of those terrific financial storms he had heard about was soon to sweep over the United States. How terrific this particular storm was to be he did not anticipate. Nevertheless, he took every precaution in his power, and had no anxiety about his weathering it out.

Money grew tighter. Beginning with the crash of several of the greatest Eastern banking houses, the tightness spread, until every bank in the country was calling in its credits. Daylight was caught, and caught because of the fact that for the first time he had been playing the legitimate business game. In the old days, such a panic, with the accompanying extreme shrinkage of values, would have been a golden harvest time for him. As it was, he watched the gamblers, who had ridden the wave of prosperity and made preparation for the slump, getting out from under and safely scurrying to cover or proceeding to reap a double harvest. Nothing remained for him but to stand fast and hold up.

He saw the situation clearly. When the banks demanded that he pay his loans, he knew that the banks were in sore need of the money. But he was in sorer need. And he knew that the banks did not want his collateral which they held. It would do them no good. In such a tumbling of values was no time to sell. His collateral was good, all of it, eminently sound and worth while; yet it was worthless at such a moment, when the one unceasing cry was money, money, money. Finding him obdurate, the banks demanded more collateral, and as the money pinch tightened they asked for two and even three times as much as had been originally accepted. Sometimes Daylight yielded to these demands, but more often not, and always battling fiercely.

He fought as with clay behind a crumbling wall. All portions of the wall were menaced, and he went around constantly strengthening the weakest parts with clay. This clay was money, and was applied, a sop here and a sop there, as fast as it was needed, but only when it was directly needed. The strength of his position lay in the Yerba Buena Ferry Company, the Consolidated Street Railways, and the United Water Company. Though people were no longer buying residence lots and factory and business sites, they were compelled to ride on his cars and ferry-boats and to consume his water. When all the financial world was clamoring for money and perishing through lack of it, the first of each month many thousands of dollars poured into his coffers from the water-rates, and each day ten thousand dollars, in dime and nickels, came in from his street railways and ferries.

Cash was what was wanted, and had he had the use of all this steady river of cash, all would have been well with him. As it was, he had to fight continually for a portion of it. Improvement work ceased, and only absolutely essential repairs were made. His fiercest fight was with the operating expenses, and this was a fight that never ended. There was never any let-up in his turning the thumb-screws of extended credit and economy. From the big wholesale suppliers down through the salary list to office stationery and postage stamps, he kept the thumb-screws turning. When his superintendents and heads of departments performed prodigies of cutting down, he patted them on the back and demanded more. When they threw down their hands in despair, he showed them how more could be accomplished.

"You are getting eight thousand dollars a year," he told Matthewson. "It's better pay than you ever got in your life before. Your fortune is in the same sack with mine. You've got to stand for some of the strain and risk. You've got personal credit in this town. Use it. Stand off butcher and baker and all the rest. Savvee? You're drawing down something like six hundred and sixty dollars a month. I want that cash. From now on, stand everybody off and draw down a hundred. I'll pay you interest on the rest till this blows over."

Two weeks later, with the pay-roll before them, it was: —

"Matthewson, who's this bookkeeper, Rogers? Your nephew? I thought so. He's pulling down eighty-five a month. After — this let him draw thirty-five. The forty can ride with me at interest."

"Impossible!" Matthewson cried. "He can't make ends meet on his salary as it is, and he has a wife and two kids — "

Daylight was upon him with a mighty oath.

"Can't! Impossible! What in hell do you think I'm running? A home for feeble-minded? Feeding and dressing and wiping the little noses of a lot of idiots that can't take care of themselves? Not on your life. I'm hustling, and now's the time that everybody that works for me has got to hustle. I want no fair-weather birds holding down my office chairs or anything else. This is nasty weather, damn nasty weather, and they've got to buck into it just like me. There are ten thousand men out of work in Oakland right now, and sixty thousand more in San Francisco. Your nephew, and everybody else on your pay-roll, can do as I say right now or quit. Savvee? If any of them get stuck, you go around yourself and guarantee their credit with the butchers and grocers. And you trim down that pay-roll accordingly. I've been carrying a few thousand folks that'll have to carry themselves for a while now, that's all."

"You say this filter's got to be replaced," he told his chief of the water-works. "We'll see about it. Let the people of Oakland drink mud for a change. It'll teach them to appreciate good water. Stop work at once. Get those men off the pay-roll. Cancel all orders for material. The contractors will sue? Let ‘em sue and be damned. We’ll be busted higher’n a kite or on easy street before they can get judgment.”

And to Wilkinson:

“Take off that owl boat. Let the public roar and come home early to its wife. And there’s that last car that connects with the 12:45 boat at Twenty-second and Hastings. Cut it out. I can’t run it for two or three passengers. Let them take an earlier boat home or walk. This is no time for philanthropy. And you might as well take off a few more cars in the rush hours. Let the strap-hangers pay. It’s the strap-hangers that’ll keep us from going under.”

And to another chief, who broke down under the excessive strain of retrenchment: —

“You say I can’t do that and can’t do this. I’ll just show you a few of the latest patterns in the can-and-can’t line. You’ll be compelled to resign? All right, if you think so I never saw the man yet that I was hard up for. And when any man thinks I can’t get along without him, I just show him the latest pattern in that line of goods and give him his walking-papers.”

And so he fought and drove and bullied and even wheedled his way along. It was fight, fight, fight, and no let-up, from the first thing in the morning till nightfall. His private office saw throngs every day. All men came to see him, or were ordered to come. Now it was an optimistic opinion on the panic, a funny story, a serious business talk, or a straight take-it-or-leave-it blow from the shoulder. And there was nobody to relieve him. It was a case of drive, drive, drive, and he alone could do the driving. And this went on day after day, while the whole business world rocked around him and house after house crashed to the ground.

“It’s all right, old man,” he told Hegan every morning; and it was the same cheerful word that he passed out all day long, except at such times when he was in the thick of fighting to have his will with persons and things.

Eight o’clock saw him at his desk each morning. By ten o’clock, it was into the machine and away for a round of the banks. And usually in the machine with him was the ten thousand and more dollars that had been earned by his ferries and railways the day before. This was for the weakest spot in the financial dike. And with one bank president after another similar scenes were enacted. They were paralyzed with fear, and first of all he played his role of the big vital optimist. Times were improving.

Of course they were. The signs were already in the air. All that anybody had to do was to sit tight a little longer and hold on. That was all. Money was already more active in the East. Look at the trading on Wall Street of the last twenty-four hours.

That was the straw that showed the wind. Hadn't Ryan said so and so? and wasn't it reported that Morgan was preparing to do this and that?

As for himself, weren't the street-railway earnings increasing steadily? In spite of the panic, more and more people were coming to Oakland right along. Movements were already beginning in real estate. He was dickering even then to sell over a thousand of his suburban acres. Of course it was at a sacrifice, but it would ease the strain on all of them and bolster up the faint-hearted. That was the trouble — the faint-hearts. Had there been no faint-hearts there would have been no panic. There was that Eastern syndicate, negotiating with him now to take the majority of the stock in the Sierra and Salvador Power Company off his hands. That showed confidence that better times were at hand.

And if it was not cheery discourse, but prayer and entreaty or show down and fight on the part of the banks, Daylight had to counter in kind. If they could bully, he could bully. If the favor he asked were refused, it became the thing he demanded. And when it came down to raw and naked fighting, with the last veil of sentiment or illusion torn off, he could take their breaths away.

But he knew, also, how and when to give in. When he saw the wall shaking and crumbling irretrievably at a particular place, he patched it up with sops of cash from his three cash-earning companies. If the banks went, he went too. It was a case of their having to hold out. If they smashed and all the collateral they held of his was thrown on the chaotic market, it would be the end. And so it was, as the time passed, that on occasion his red motor-car carried, in addition to the daily cash, the most gilt-edged securities he possessed; namely, the Ferry Company, United Water and Consolidated Railways. But he did this reluctantly, fighting inch by inch.

As he told the president of the Merchants San Antonio who made the plea of carrying so many others: —

"They're small fry. Let them smash. I'm the king pin here. You've got more money to make out of me than them. Of course, you're carrying too much, and you've got to choose, that's all. It's root hog or die for you or them. I'm too strong to smash. You could only embarrass me and get yourself tangled up. Your way out is to let the small fry go, and I'll lend you a hand to do it."

And it was Daylight, also, in this time of financial anarchy, who sized up Simon Dolliver's affairs and lent the hand that sent that rival down in utter failure. The Golden Gate National was the keystone of Dolliver's strength, and to the president of that institution Daylight said: —

"Here I've been lending you a hand, and you now in the last ditch, with Dolliver riding on you and me all the time. It don't go. You hear me, it don't go. Dolliver couldn't cough up eleven dollars to save you. Let him get off and walk, and I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you the railway nickels for four days — that's forty thousand cash. And on the sixth of the month you can count on twenty thousand more from the Water Company." He shrugged his shoulders. "Take it or leave it. Them's my terms."

"It's dog eat dog, and I ain't overlooking any meat that's floating around," Daylight proclaimed that afternoon to Hegan; and Simon Dolliver went the way of the unfortunate in the Great Panic who were caught with plenty of paper and no money.

Daylight's shifts and devices were amazing. Nothing however large or small, passed his keen sight unobserved. The strain he was under was terrific. He no longer ate lunch. The days were too short, and his noon hours and his office were as crowded as at any other time. By the end of the day he was exhausted, and, as never before, he sought relief behind his wall of alcoholic inhibition. Straight to his hotel he was driven, and straight to his rooms he went, where immediately was mixed for him the first of a series of double Martinis. By dinner, his brain was well clouded and the panic forgotten. By bedtime, with the assistance of Scotch whiskey, he was full — not violently nor uproariously full, nor stupefied, but merely well under the influence of a pleasant and mild anesthetic.

Next morning he awoke with parched lips and mouth, and with sensations of heaviness in his head which quickly passed away. By eight o'clock he was at his desk, buckled down to the fight, by ten o'clock on his personal round of the banks, and after that, without a moment's cessation, till nightfall, he was handling the knotty tangles of industry, finance, and human nature that crowded upon him. And with nightfall it was back to the hotel, the double Martinis and the Scotch; and this was his program day after day until the days ran into weeks.

CHAPTER XXI

Though Daylight appeared among his fellows hearty voiced, inexhaustible, spilling over with energy and vitality, deep down he was a very weary man. And sometime under the liquor drug, snatches of wisdom came to him far more lucidity than in his sober moments, as, for instance, one night, when he sat on the edge of the bed with one shoe in his hand and meditated on Dede's aphorism to the effect that he could not sleep in more than one bed at a time. Still holding the shoe, he looked at the array of horsehair bridles on the walls. Then, carrying the shoe, he got up and solemnly counted them, journeying into the two adjoining rooms to complete the tale. Then he came back to the bed and gravely addressed his shoe: —

"The little woman's right. Only one bed at a time. One hundred and forty hair bridles, and nothing doing with ary one of them. One bridle at a time! I can't ride one horse at a time. Poor old Bob. I'd better be sending you out to pasture. Thirty million dollars, and a hundred million or nothing in sight, and what have I got to show for it? There's lots of things money can't buy. It can't buy the little woman. It can't buy capacity. What's the good of thirty millions when I ain't got room for more than a quart of cocktails a day? If I had a hundred-quart-cocktail thirst, it'd be different. But one quart — one measly little quart! Here I am, a thirty times over millionaire, slaving harder every day than any dozen men that work for me, and all I get is two meals that don't taste good, one bed, a quart of Martini, and a hundred and forty hair bridles to look at on the wall."

He stared around at the array disconsolately. "Mr. Shoe, I'm sizzled. Good night."

Far worse than the controlled, steady drinker is the solitary drinker, and it was this that Daylight was developing into. He rarely drank sociably any more, but in his own room, by himself. Returning weary from each day's unremitting effort, he drugged himself to sleep, knowing that on the morrow he would rise up with a dry and burning mouth and repeat the program.

But the country did not recover with its wonted elasticity. Money did not become freer, though the casual reader of Daylight's newspapers, as well as of all the other owned and subsidised newspapers in the country, could only have concluded that the money tightness was over and that the panic was past history. All public utterances were cheery and optimistic, but privately many of the utters were in desperate straits. The scenes enacted in the privacy of Daylight's office, and of the meetings of his boards of directors, would have given the lie to the editorials in his newspapers; as, for instance, when he addressed the big stockholders in the Sierra and Salvador Power Company, the United Water Company, and the several other stock companies: —

"You've got to dig. You've got a good thing, but you'll have to sacrifice in order to hold on. There ain't no use spouting hard times explanations. Don't I know the hard times is on? Ain't that what you're here for? As I said before, you've got to dig. I run the majority stock, and it's come to a case of assess. It's that or smash. If ever I start going you won't know what struck you, I'll smash that hard. The small fry can let go, but you big ones can't. This ship won't sink as long as you stay with her. But if you start to leave her, down you'll sure go before you can get to shore. This assessment has got to be met that's all."

The big wholesale supply houses, the caterers for his hotels, and all the crowd that incessantly demanded to be paid, had their hot half-hours with him. He summoned them to his office and displayed his latest patterns of can and can't and will and won't.

"By God, you've got to carry me!" he told them. "If you think this is a pleasant little game of parlor whist and that you can quit and go home whenever you want, you're plumb wrong. Look here, Watkins, you remarked five minutes ago that you wouldn't stand for it. Now let me tell you a few. You're going to stand for it and keep on standin's for it. You're going to continue supplying me and taking my paper until the pinch is over. How you're going to do it is your trouble, not mine. You remember what I did to Klinkner and the Altamont Trust Company? I know the inside of your business better than you do yourself, and if you try to drop me I'll smash you. Even if I'd be going to smash myself, I'd find a minute to turn on you and bring you down with me. It's sink or swim for all of us, and I reckon you'll find it to your interest to keep me on top the puddle."

Perhaps his bitterest fight was with the stockholders of the United Water Company, for it was practically the whole of the gross earnings of this company that he voted to lend to himself and used to bolster up his wide battle front. Yet he never pushed his arbitrary rule too far. Compelling sacrifice from the men whose fortunes were tied up with his, nevertheless when any one of them was driven to the wall and was in dire need, Daylight was there to help him back into the line. Only a strong man could have saved so complicated a situation in such time of stress, and Daylight was that man. He turned and twisted, schemed and devised, bludgeoned and bullied the weaker ones, kept the faint-hearted in the fight, and had no mercy on the deserter.

And in the end, when early summer was on, everything began to mend. Came a day when Daylight did the unprecedented. He left the office an hour earlier than usual, and for the reason that for the first time since the panic there was not an item of work waiting to be done. He dropped into Hegan's private office, before leaving, for a chat, and as he stood up to go, he said:—

"Hegan, we're all hunkadory. We're pulling out of the financial pawnshop in fine shape, and we'll get out without leaving one unredeemed pledge behind. The worst is over, and the end is in sight. Just a tight rein for a couple more weeks, just a bit of a pinch or a flurry or so now and then, and we can let go and spit on our hands."

For once he varied his program. Instead of going directly to his hotel, he started on a round of the bars and cafes, drinking a cocktail here and a cocktail there, and two or three when he encountered men he knew. It was after an hour or so of this that he dropped into the bar of the Parthenon for one last drink before going to dinner. By this time all his being was pleasantly warmed by the alcohol, and he was in the most genial and best of spirits. At the corner of the bar several young men were up to the old trick of resting their elbows and attempting to force each other's hands down. One broad-shouldered young giant never removed his elbow, but put down every hand that came against him. Daylight was interested.

"It's Slosson," the barkeeper told him, in answer to his query. "He's the heavy-hammer thrower at the U.C. Broke all records this year, and the world's record on top of it. He's a husky all right all right."

Daylight nodded and went over to him, placing his own arm in opposition.

"I'd like to go you a flutter, son, on that proposition," he said.

The young man laughed and locked hands with him; and to Daylight's astonishment it was his own hand that was forced down on the bar.

“Hold on,” he muttered. “Just one more flutter. I reckon I wasn’t just ready that time.”

Again the hands locked. It happened quickly. The offensive attack of Daylight’s muscles slipped instantly into defense, and, resisting vainly, his hand was forced over and down. Daylight was dazed. It had been no trick. The skill was equal, or, if anything, the superior skill had been his. Strength, sheer strength, had done it. He called for the drinks, and, still dazed and pondering, held up his own arm, and looked at it as at some new strange thing. He did not know this arm. It certainly was not the arm he had carried around with him all the years. The old arm? Why, it would have been play to turn down that young husky’s. But this arm — he continued to look at it with such dubious perplexity as to bring a roar of laughter from the young men.

This laughter aroused him. He joined in it at first, and then his face slowly grew grave. He leaned toward the hammer-thrower.

“Son,” he said, “let me whisper a secret. Get out of here and quit drinking before you begin.”

The young fellow flushed angrily, but Daylight held steadily on.

“You listen to your dad, and let him say a few. I’m a young man myself, only I ain’t. Let me tell you, several years ago for me to turn your hand down would have been like committing assault and battery on a kindergarten.”

Slosson looked his incredulity, while the others grinned and clustered around Daylight encouragingly.

“Son, I ain’t given to preaching. This is the first time I ever come to the penitent form, and you put me there yourself — hard. I’ve seen a few in my time, and I ain’t fastidious so as you can notice it. But let me tell you right not that I’m worth the devil alone knows how many millions, and that I’d sure give it all, right here on the bar, to turn down your hand. Which means I’d give the whole shooting match just to be back where I was before I quit sleeping under the stars and come into the hen-coops of cities to drink cocktails and lift up my feet and ride. Son, that’s that’s the matter with me, and that’s the way I feel about it. The game ain’t worth the candle. You just take care of yourself, and roll my advice over once in a while. Good night.”

He turned and lurched out of the place, the moral effect of his utterance largely spoiled by the fact that he was so patently full while he uttered it.

Still in a daze, Daylight made to his hotel, accomplished his dinner, and prepared for bed.

"The damned young whippersnapper!" he muttered. "Put my hand down easy as you please. My hand!"

He held up the offending member and regarded it with stupid wonder. The hand that had never been beaten! The hand that had made the Circle City giants wince! And a kid from college, with a laugh on his face, had put it down — twice! Dede was right. He was not the same man. The situation would bear more serious looking into than he had ever given it. But this was not the time. In the morning, after a good sleep, he would give it consideration.

CHAPTER XXII

Daylight awoke with the familiar parched mouth and lips and throat, took a long drink of water from the pitcher beside his bed, and gathered up the train of thought where he had left it the night before. He reviewed the easement of the financial strain. Things were mending at last. While the going was still rough, the greatest dangers were already past. As he had told Hegan, a tight rein and careful playing were all that was needed now. Flurries and dangers were bound to come, but not so grave as the ones they had already weathered. He had been hit hard, but he was coming through without broken bones, which was more than Simon Dolliver and many another could say. And not one of his business friends had been ruined. He had compelled them to stay in line to save himself, and they had been saved as well.

His mind moved on to the incident at the corner of the bar of the Parthenon, when the young athlete had turned his hand down. He was no longer stunned by the event, but he was shocked and grieved, as only a strong man can be, at this passing of his strength. And the issue was too clear for him to dodge, even with himself. He knew why his hand had gone down. Not because he was an old man. He was just in the first flush of his prime, and, by rights, it was the hand of the hammer-thrower which should have gone down. Daylight knew that he had taken liberties with himself. He had always looked upon this strength of his as permanent, and here, for years, it had been steadily oozing from him. As he had diagnosed it, he had come in from under the stars to roost in the coops of cities. He had almost forgotten how to walk. He had lifted up his feet and been ridden around in automobiles, cabs and carriages, and electric cars. He had not exercised, and he had dry-rotted his muscles with alcohol.

And was it worth it? What did all his money mean after all? Dede was right. It could buy him no more than one bed at a time, and at the same time it made him the abjectest of slaves. It tied him fast. He was tied by it right now. Even if he so desired, he could not lie abed this very day. His money called him. The office whistle would soon blow, and he must answer it. The early sunshine was streaming through his window — a fine day for a ride in the hills on Bob, with Dede beside him on her Mab. Yet all his millions could not buy him this one day. One of those flurries might come along, and he had to be on the spot to meet it. Thirty millions! And they were powerless to persuade Dede to ride on Mab — Mab, whom he had bought, and who was unused and growing fat on pasture. What were thirty millions when they could not buy a man a ride with the girl he loved? Thirty millions! — that made him come here and go there, that rode upon him like so many millstones, that destroyed him while they grew, that put their foot down and prevented him from winning this girl who worked for ninety dollars a month.

Which was better? he asked himself. All this was Dede's own thought. It was what she had meant when she prayed he would go broke. He held up his offending right arm. It wasn't the same old arm. Of course she could not love that arm and that body as she had loved the strong, clean arm and body of years before. He didn't like that arm and body himself. A young whippersnapper had been able to take liberties with it. It had gone back on him. He sat up suddenly. No, by God, he had gone back on it! He had gone back on himself. He had gone back on Dede. She was right, a thousand times right, and she had sense enough to know it, sense enough to refuse to marry a money slave with a whiskey-rotted carcass.

He got out of bed and looked at himself in the long mirror on the wardrobe door. He wasn't pretty. The old-time lean cheeks were gone. These were heavy, seeming to hang down by their own weight. He looked for the lines of cruelty Dede had spoken of, and he found them, and he found the harshness in the eyes as well, the eyes that were muddy now after all the cocktails of the night before, and of the months and years before. He looked at the clearly defined pouches that showed under his eyes, and they've shocked him. He rolled up the sleeve of his pajamas. No wonder the hammer-thrower had put his hand down. Those weren't muscles. A rising tide of fat had submerged them. He stripped off the pajama coat. Again he was shocked, this time but the bulk of his body. It wasn't pretty. The lean stomach had become a paunch. The ridged muscles of chest and shoulders and abdomen had broken down into rolls of flesh.

He sat down on the bed, and through his mind drifted pictures of his youthful excellence, of the hardships he had endured over other men, of the Indians and dogs he had run off their legs in the heart-breaking days and nights on the Alaskan trail, of the feats of strength that had made him king over a husky race of frontiersmen.

And this was age. Then there drifted across the field of vision of his mind's eye the old man he had encountered at Glen Ellen, corning up the hillside through the fires of sunset, white-headed and white-bearded, eighty-four, in his hand the pail of foaming milk and in his face all the warm glow and content of the passing summer day. That had been age. "Yes siree, eighty-four, and spryer than most," he could hear the old man say. "And I ain't loafed none. I walked across the Plains with an ox-team and fit Injuns in '51, and I was a family man then with seven youngsters."

Next he remembered the old woman of the chaparral, pressing grapes in her mountain clearing; and Ferguson, the little man who had scuttled into the road like a rabbit, the one-time managing editor of a great newspaper, who was content to live in the chaparral along with his spring of mountain water and his hand-reared and manicured fruit trees. Ferguson had solved a problem. A weakling and an alcoholic, he had run away from the doctors and the chicken-coop of a city, and soaked up health like a thirsty sponge. Well, Daylight pondered, if a sick man whom the doctors had given up could develop into a healthy farm laborer, what couldn't a merely stout man like himself do under similar circumstances? He caught a vision of his body with all its youthful excellence returned, and thought of Dede, and sat down suddenly on the bed, startled by the greatness of the idea that had come to him.

He did not sit long. His mind, working in its customary way, like a steel trap, canvassed the idea in all its bearings. It was big — bigger than anything he had faced before. And he faced it squarely, picked it up in his two hands and turned it over and around and looked at it. The simplicity of it delighted him. He chuckled over it, reached his decision, and began to dress. Midway in the dressing he stopped in order to use the telephone.

Dede was the first he called up.

"Don't come to the office this morning," he said. "I'm coming out to see you for a moment." He called up others. He ordered his motor-car. To Jones he gave instructions for the forwarding of Bob and Wolf to Glen Ellen. Hegan he surprised by asking him to look up the deed of the Glen Ellen ranch and make out a new one in Dede Mason's name. "Who?" Hegan demanded. "Dede Mason," Daylight replied imperturbably the 'phone must be indistinct this morning. "D-e-d-e M-a-s o-n. Got it?"

Half an hour later he was flying out to Berkeley. And for the first time the big red car halted directly before the house. Dede offered to receive him in the parlor, but he shook his head and nodded toward her rooms.

“In there,” he said. “No other place would suit.”

As the door closed, his arms went out and around her. Then he stood with his hands on her shoulders and looking down into her face.

“Dede, if I tell you, flat and straight, that I’m going up to live on that ranch at Glen Ellen, that I ain’t taking a cent with me, that I’m going to scratch for every bite I eat, and that I ain’t going to play ary a card at the business game again, will you come along with me?”

She gave a glad little cry, and he nestled her in closely. But the next moment she had thrust herself out from him to the old position at arm’s length.

“I — I don’t understand,” she said breathlessly.

“And you ain’t answered my proposition, though I guess no answer is necessary. We’re just going to get married right away and start. I’ve sent Bob and Wolf along already. When will you be ready?”

Dede could not forbear to smile. “My, what a hurricane of a man it is. I’m quite blown away. And you haven’t explained a word to me.”

Daylight smiled responsively.

“Look here, Dede, this is what card-sharps call a show-down. No more philandering and frills and long-distance sparring between you and me. We’re just going to talk straight out in meeting — the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Now you answer some questions for me, and then I’ll answer yours.”

He paused. “Well, I’ve got only one question after all: Do you love me enough to marry me?”

“But — ” she began.

“No buts,” he broke in sharply. “This is a show-down. When I say marry, I mean what I told you at first, that we’d go up and live on the ranch. Do you love me enough for that?”

She looked at him for a moment, then her lids dropped, and all of her seemed to advertise consent.

“Come on, then, let’s start.” The muscles of his legs tensed involuntarily as if he were about to lead her to the door. “My auto’s waiting outside. There’s nothing to delay excepting getting on your hat.”

He bent over her. “I reckon it’s allowable,” he said, as he kissed her.

It was a long embrace, and she was the first to speak.

“You haven’t answered my questions. How is this possible? How can you leave your business? Has anything happened?”

“No, nothing’s happened yet, but it’s going to, blame quick. I’ve taken your preaching to heart, and I’ve come to the penitent form. You are my Lord God, and I’m sure going to serve you. The rest can go to thunder. You were sure right. I’ve been the slave to my money, and since I can’t serve two masters I’m letting the money slide. I’d sooner have you than all the money in the world, that’s all.” Again he held her closely in his arms. “And I’ve sure got you, Dede. I’ve sure got you.

“And I want to tell you a few more. I’ve taken my last drink. You’re marrying a whiskey-soak, but your husband won’t be that. He’s going to grow into another man so quick you won’t know him. A couple of months from now, up there in Glen Ellen, you’ll wake up some morning and find you’ve got a perfect stranger in the house with you, and you’ll have to get introduced to him all over again. You’ll say, ‘I’m Mrs. Harnish, who are you?’ And I’ll say, ‘I’m Elam Harnish’s younger brother. I’ve just arrived from Alaska to attend the funeral.’ ‘What funeral?’ you’ll say. And I’ll say, ‘Why, the funeral of that good-for-nothing, gambling, whiskey-drinking Burning Daylight — the man that died of fatty degeneration of the heart from sitting in night and day at the business game ‘Yes ma’am,’ I’ll say, ‘he’s sure a gone ‘coon, but I’ve come to take his place and make you happy. And now, ma’am, if you’ll allow me, I’ll just meander down to the pasture and milk the cow while you’re getting breakfast.’“

Again he caught her hand and made as if to start with her for the door. When she resisted, he bent and kissed her again and again.

“I’m sure hungry for you, little woman,” he murmured “You make thirty millions look like thirty cents.”

“Do sit down and be sensible,” she urged, her cheeks flushed, the golden light in her eyes burning more golden than he had ever seen it before.

But Daylight was bent on having his way, and when he sat down it was with her beside him and his arm around her.

“‘Yes, ma’am,’ I’ll say, ‘Burning Daylight was a pretty good cuss, but it’s better that he’s gone. He quit rolling up in his rabbit-skins and sleeping in the snow, and went to living in a chicken-coop. He lifted up his legs and quit walking and working, and took to existing on Martini cocktails and Scotch whiskey. He thought he loved you, ma’am, and he did his best, but he loved his cocktails more, and he loved his money more, and himself more, and ‘most everything else more than he did you.’ And then I’ll say, ‘Ma’am, you just run your eyes over me and see how different I am. I ain’t got a cocktail thirst, and all the money I got is a dollar and forty cents and I’ve got to buy a new ax, the last one being plumb wore out, and I can love you just about eleven times as much as your first husband did. You see, ma’am, he went all to fat. And there ain’t ary ounce of fat on me.’ And I’ll roll up my sleeve and show you, and say, ‘Mrs. Harnish, after having experience with being married to that old fat money-bags, do you-all mind marrying a slim young fellow like me?’ And you’ll just wipe a tear away for poor old Daylight, and kind of lean toward me with a willing expression in your eye, and then I’ll blush maybe some, being a young fellow, and put my arm around you, like that, and then — why, then I’ll up and marry my brother’s widow, and go out and do the chores while she’s cooking a bite to eat.”

“But you haven’t answered my questions,” she reproached him, as she emerged, rosy and radiant, from the embrace that had accompanied the culmination of his narrative.

“Now just what do you want to know?” he asked.

“I want to know how all this is possible? How you are able to leave your business at a time like this? What you meant by saying that something was going to happen quickly? I — ” She hesitated and blushed. “I answered your question, you know.”

“Let’s go and get married,” he urged, all the whimsicality of his utterance duplicated in his eyes. “You know I’ve got to make way for that husky young brother of mine, and I ain’t got long to live.” She made an impatient moue, and he continued seriously.

“You see, it’s like this, Dede. I’ve been working like forty horses ever since this blamed panic set in, and all the time some of those ideas you’d given me were getting ready to sprout. Well, they sprouted this morning, that’s all. I started to get up, expecting to go to the office as usual. But I didn’t go to the office. All that sprouting took place there and then. The sun was shining in the window, and I knew it was a fine day in the hills. And I knew I wanted to ride in the hills with you just about thirty million times more than I wanted to go to the office. And I knew all the time it was impossible. And why? Because of the office. The office wouldn’t let me. All my money reared right up on its hind legs and got in the way and wouldn’t let me. It's a way that blamed money has of getting in the way. You know that yourself.

"And then I made up my mind that I was to the dividing of the ways. One way led to the office. The other way led to Berkeley. And I took the Berkeley road. I'm never going to set foot in the office again. That's all gone, finished, over and done with, and I'm letting it slide clean to smash and then some. My mind's set on this. You see, I've got religion, and it's sure the old-time religion; it's love and you, and it's older than the oldest religion in the world. It's IT, that's what it is — IT, with a capital I-T."

She looked at him with a sudden, startled expression.

"You mean — ?" she began.

"I mean just that. I'm wiping the slate clean. I'm letting it all go to smash. When them thirty million dollars stood up to my face and said I couldn't go out with you in the hills to-day, I knew the time had come for me to put my foot down. And I'm putting it down. I've got you, and my strength to work for you, and that little ranch in Sonoma. That's all I want, and that's all I'm going to save out, along with Bob and Wolf, a suit case and a hundred and forty hair bridles. All the rest goes, and good riddance. It's that much junk."

But Dede was insistent.

"Then this — this tremendous loss is all unnecessary?" she asked.

"Just what I haven't been telling you. It IS necessary. If that money thinks it can stand up right to my face and say I can't go riding with you — "

"No, no; be serious," Dede broke in. "I don't mean that, and you know it. What I want to know is, from a standpoint of business, is this failure necessary?"

He shook his head.

"You bet it isn't necessary. That's the point of it. I'm not letting go of it because I'm licked to a standstill by the panic and have got to let go. I'm firing it out when I've licked the panic and am winning, hands down. That just shows how little I think of it. It's you that counts, little woman, and I make my play accordingly."

But she drew away from his sheltering arms.

"You are mad, Elam."

"Call me that again," he murmured ecstatically. "It's sure sweeter than the chink of millions."

All this she ignored.

“It’s madness. You don’t know what you are doing — ”

“Oh, yes, I do,” he assured her. “I’m winning the dearest wish of my heart. Why, your little finger is worth more — ”

“Do be sensible for a moment.”

“I was never more sensible in my lie. I know what I want, and I’m going to get it. I want you and the open air. I want to get my foot off the paving-stones and my ear away from the telephone. I want a little ranch-house in one of the prettiest bits of country God ever made, and I want to do the chores around that ranch-house — milk cows, and chop wood, and curry horses, and plough the ground, and all the rest of it; and I want you there in the ranch-house with me. I’m plumb tired of everything else, and clean wore out. And I’m sure the luckiest man alive, for I’ve got what money can’t buy. I’ve got you, and thirty millions couldn’t buy you, nor three thousand millions, nor thirty cents — ”

A knock at the door interrupted him, and he was left to stare delightedly at the Crouched Venus and on around the room at Dede’s dainty possessions, while she answered the telephone.

“It is Mr. Hegan,” she said, on returning. “He is holding the line. He says it is important.”

Daylight shook his head and smiled.

“Please tell Mr. Hegan to hang up. I’m done with the office and I don’t want to hear anything about anything.”

A minute later she was back again.

“He refuses to hang up. He told me to tell you that Unwin is in the office now, waiting to see you, and Harrison, too. Mr. Hegan said that Grimshaw and Hodgkins are in trouble. That it looks as if they are going to break. And he said something about protection.”

It was startling information. Both Unwin and Harrison represented big banking corporations, and Daylight knew that if the house of Grimshaw and Hodgkins went it would precipitate a number of failures and start a flurry of serious dimensions. But Daylight smiled, and shook his head, and mimicked the stereotyped office tone of voice as he said: —

“Miss Mason, you will kindly tell Mr. Hegan that there is nothing doing and to hang up.”

“But you can’t do this,” she pleaded.

“Watch me,” he grimly answered.

“Elam!”

“Say it again,” he cried. “Say it again, and a dozen Grimshaws and Hodgkins can smash!”

He caught her by the hand and drew her to him.

“You let Hegan hang on to that line till he’s tired. We can’t be wasting a second on him on a day like this. He’s only in love with books and things, but I’ve got a real live woman in my arms that’s loving me all the time she’s kicking over the traces.”

CHAPTER XXIII

"But I know something of the fight you have been making," Dede contended. "If you stop now, all the work you have done, everything, will be destroyed. You have no right to do it. You can't do it."

Daylight was obdurate. He shook his head and smiled tantalizingly.

"Nothing will be destroyed, Dede, nothing. You don't understand this business game. It's done on paper. Don't you see? Where's the gold I dug out of Klondike? Why, it's in twenty-dollar gold pieces, in gold watches, in wedding rings. No matter what happens to me, the twenty-dollar pieces, the watches, and the wedding rings remain. Suppose I died right now. It wouldn't affect the gold one iota. It's sure the same with this present situation. All I stand for is paper. I've got the paper for thousands of acres of land. All right. Burn up the paper, and burn me along with it. The land remains, don't it? The rain falls on it, the seeds sprout in it, the trees grow out of it, the houses stand on it, the electric cars run over it. It's paper that business is run on. I lose my paper, or I lose my life, it's all the same; it won't alter one grain of sand in all that land, or twist one blade of grass around sideways.

"Nothing is going to be lost — not one pile out of the docks, not one railroad spike, not one ounce of steam out of the gauge of a ferry-boat. The cars will go on running, whether I hold the paper or somebody else holds it. The tide has set toward Oakland. People are beginning to pour in. We're selling building lots again. There is no stopping that tide. No matter what happens to me or the paper, them three hundred thousand folks are coming in the same. And there'll be cars to carry them around, and houses to hold them, and good water for them to drink and electricity to give them light, and all the rest."

By this time Hegan had arrived in an automobile. The honk of it came in through the open window, and they saw, it stop alongside the big red machine. In the car were Unwin and Harrison, while Jones sat with the chauffeur.

"I'll see Hegan," Daylight told Dede. "There's no need for the rest. They can wait in the machine."

"Is he drunk?" Hegan whispered to Dede at the door.

She shook her head and showed him in.

“Good morning, Larry,” was Daylight’s greeting. “Sit down and rest your feet. You sure seem to be in a flutter.”

“I am,” the little Irishman snapped back. “Grimshaw and Hodgkins are going to smash if something isn’t done quick. Why didn’t you come to the office? What are you going to do about it?”

“Nothing,” Daylight drawled lazily. “Except let them smash, I guess — ”

“But — ”

“I’ve had no dealings with Grimshaw and Hodgkins. I don’t owe them anything. Besides, I’m going to smash myself. Look here, Larry, you know me. You know when I make up my mind I mean it. Well, I’ve sure made up my mind. I’m tired of the whole game. I’m letting go of it as fast as I can, and a smash is the quickest way to let go.”

Hegan stared at his chief, then passed his horror-stricken gaze on to Dede, who nodded in sympathy.

“So let her smash, Larry,” Daylight went on. “All you’ve got to do is to protect yourself and all our friends. Now you listen to me while I tell you what to do. Everything is in good shape to do it. Nobody must get hurt. Everybody that stood by me must come through without damage. All the back wages and salaries must be paid pronto. All the money I’ve switched away from the water company, the street cars, and the ferries must be switched back. And you won’t get hurt yourself none. Every company you got stock in will come through — ”

“You are crazy, Daylight!” the little lawyer cried out. “This is all babbling lunacy. What is the matter with you? You haven’t been eating a drug or something?”

“I sure have!” Daylight smiled reply. “And I’m now coughing it up. I’m sick of living in a city and playing business — I’m going off to the sunshine, and the country, and the green grass. And Dede, here, is going with me. So you’ve got the chance to be the first to congratulate me.”

“Congratulate the — the devil!” Hegan spluttered. “I’m not going to stand for this sort of foolishness.”

“Oh, yes, you are; because if you don’t there’ll be a bigger smash and some folks will most likely get hurt. You’re worth a million or more yourself, now, and if you listen to me you come through with a whole skin. I want to get hurt, and get hurt to the limit. That’s what I’m looking for, and there’s no man or bunch of men can get between me and what I’m looking for. Savvee, Hegan? Savvee?”

“What have you done to him?” Hegan snarled at Dede.

“Hold on there, Larry.” For the first time Daylight’s voice was sharp, while all the old lines of cruelty in his face stood forth. “Miss Mason is going to be my wife, and while I don’t mind your talking to her all you want, you’ve got to use a different tone of voice or you’ll be heading for a hospital, which will sure be an unexpected sort of smash. And let me tell you one other thing. This-all is my doing. She says I’m crazy, too.”

Hegan shook his head in speechless sadness and continued to stare.

“There’ll be temporary receiverships, of course,” Daylight advised; “but they won’t bother none or last long. What you must do immediately is to save everybody — the men that have been letting their wages ride with me, all the creditors, and all the concerns that have stood by. There’s the wad of land that New Jersey crowd has been dickering for. They’ll take all of a couple of thousand acres and will close now if you give them half a chance. That Fairmount section is the cream of it, and they’ll dig up as high as a thousand dollars an acre for a part of it. That’ll help out some. That five-hundred acre tract beyond, you’ll be lucky if they pay two hundred an acre.”

Dede, who had been scarcely listening, seemed abruptly to make up her mind, and stepped forward where she confronted the two men. Her face was pale, but set with determination, so that Daylight, looking at it, was reminded of the day when she first rode Bob.

“Wait,” she said. “I want to say something. Elam, if you do this insane thing, I won’t marry you. I refuse to marry you.”

Hegan, in spite of his misery, gave her a quick, grateful look.

“I’ll take my chance on that,” Daylight began.

“Wait!” she again interrupted. “And if you don’t do this thing, I will marry you.”

“Let me get this proposition clear.” Daylight spoke with exasperating slowness and deliberation. “As I understand it, if I keep right on at the business game, you’ll sure marry me? You’ll marry me if I keep on working my head off and drinking Martinis?”

After each question he paused, while she nodded an affirmation.

“And you’ll marry me right away?”

“Yes.”

“To-day? Now?”

“Yes.”

He pondered for a moment.

"No, little woman, I won't do it. It won't work, and you know it yourself. I want you — all of you; and to get it I'll have to give you all of myself, and there'll be darn little of myself left over to give if I stay with the business game. Why, Dede, with you on the ranch with me, I'm sure of you — and of myself. I'm sure of you, anyway. You can talk will or won't all you want, but you're sure going to marry me just the same. And now, Larry, you'd better be going. I'll be at the hotel in a little while, and since I'm not going a step into the office again, bring all papers to sign and the rest over to my rooms. And you can get me on the 'phone there any time. This smash is going through. Savvee? I'm quit and done."

He stood up as a sign for Hegan to go. The latter was plainly stunned. He also rose to his feet, but stood looking helplessly around.

"Sheer, downright, absolute insanity," he muttered.

Daylight put his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Buck up, Larry. You're always talking about the wonders of human nature, and here I am giving you another sample of it and you ain't appreciating it. I'm a bigger dreamer than you are, that's all, and I'm sure dreaming what's coming true. It's the biggest, best dream I ever had, and I'm going after it to get it — "

"By losing all you've got," Hegan exploded at him.

"Sure — by losing all I've got that I don't want. But I'm hanging on to them hundred and forty hair bridles just the same. Now you'd better hustle out to Unwin and Harrison and get on down town. I'll be at the hotel, and you can call me up any time."

He turned to Dede as soon as Hegan was gone, and took her by the hand.

"And now, little woman, you needn't come to the office any more. Consider yourself discharged. And remember I was your employer, so you've got to come to me for recommendation, and if you're not real good, I won't give you one. In the meantime, you just rest up and think about what things you want to pack, because we'll just about have to set up housekeeping on your stuff — leastways, the front part of the house."

"But, Elam, I won't, I won't! If you do this mad thing I never will marry you."

She attempted to take her hand away, but he closed on it with a protecting, fatherly clasp.

"Will you be straight and honest? All right, here goes. Which would you sooner have — me and the money, or me and the ranch?"

"But — " she began.

"No buts. Me and the money?"

She did not answer.

"Me and the ranch?"

Still she did not answer, and still he was undisturbed.

"You see, I know your answer, Dede, and there's nothing more to say. Here's where you and I quit and hit the high places for Sonoma. You make up your mind what you want to pack, and I'll have some men out here in a couple of days to do it for you. It will be about the last work anybody else ever does for us. You and I will do the unpacking and the arranging ourselves."

She made a last attempt.

"Elam, won't you be reasonable? There is time to reconsider. I can telephone down and catch Mr. Hegan as soon as he reaches the office — "

"Why, I'm the only reasonable man in the bunch right now," he rejoined. "Look at me — as calm as you please, and as happy as a king, while they're fluttering around like a lot of cranky hens whose heads are liable to be cut off."

"I'd cry, if I thought it would do any good," she threatened.

"In which case I reckon I'd have to hold you in my arms some more and sort of soothe you down," he threatened back. "And now I'm going to go. It's too bad you got rid of Mab. You could have sent her up to the ranch. But see you've got a mare to ride of some sort or other."

As he stood at the top of the steps, leaving, she said: —

"You needn't send those men. There will be no packing, because I am not going to marry you."

"I'm not a bit scared," he answered, and went down the steps.

CHAPTER XXIV

Three days later, Daylight rode to Berkeley in his red car. It was for the last time, for on the morrow the big machine passed into another's possession. It had been a strenuous three days, for his smash had been the biggest the panic had precipitated in California. The papers had been filled with it, and a great cry of indignation had gone up from the very men who later found that Daylight had fully protected their interests. It was these facts, coming slowly to light, that gave rise to the widely repeated charge that Daylight had gone insane. It was the unanimous conviction among business men that no sane man could possibly behave in such fashion. On the other hand, neither his prolonged steady drinking nor his affair with Dede became public, so the only conclusion attainable was that the wild financier from Alaska had gone lunatic. And Daylight had grinned and confirmed the suspicion by refusing to see the reporters.

He halted the automobile before Dede's door, and met her with his same rushing tactics, enclosing her in his arms before a word could be uttered. Not until afterward, when she had recovered herself from him and got him seated, did he begin to speak.

"I've done it," he announced. "You've seen the newspapers, of course. I'm plumb cleaned out, and I've just called around to find out what day you feel like starting for Glen Ellen. It'll have to be soon, for it's real expensive living in Oakland these days. My board at the hotel is only paid to the end of the week, and I can't afford to stay after that. And beginning with to-morrow I've got to use the street cars, and they sure eat up the nickels."

He paused, and waited, and looked at her. Indecision and trouble showed on her face. Then the smile he knew so well began to grow on her lips and in her eyes, until she threw back her head and laughed in the old forthright boyish way.

"When are those men coming to pack for me?" she asked.

And again she laughed and simulated a vain attempt to escape his bearlike arms.

"Dear Elam," she whispered; "dear Elam." And of herself, for the first time, she kissed him.

She ran her hand caressingly through his hair.

"Your eyes are all gold right now," he said. "I can look in them and tell just how much you love me."

"They have been all gold for you, Elam, for a long time. I think, on our little ranch, they will always be all gold."

"Your hair has gold in it, too, a sort of fiery gold." He turned her face suddenly and held it between his hands and looked long into her eyes. "And your eyes were full of gold only the other day, when you said you wouldn't marry me."

She nodded and laughed.

"You would have your will," she confessed. "But I couldn't be a party to such madness. All that money was yours, not mine. But I was loving you all the time, Elam, for the great big boy you are, breaking the thirty-million toy with which you had grown tired of playing. And when I said no, I knew all the time it was yes. And I am sure that my eyes were golden all the time. I had only one fear, and that was that you would fail to lose everything. Because, dear, I knew I should marry you anyway, and I did so want just you and the ranch and Bob and Wolf and those horse-hair bridles. Shall I tell you a secret? As soon as you left, I telephoned the man to whom I sold Mab."

She hid her face against his breast for an instant, and then looked at him again, gladly radiant.

"You see, Elam, in spite of what my lips said, my mind was made up then. I — I simply had to marry you. But I was praying you would succeed in losing everything. And so I tried to find what had become of Mab. But the man had sold her and did not know what had become of her. You see, I wanted to ride with you over the Glen Ellen hills, on Mab and you on Bob, just as I had ridden with you through the Piedmont hills."

The disclosure of Mab's whereabouts trembled on Daylight's lips, but he forbore.

"I'll promise you a mare that you'll like just as much as Mab," he said.

But Dede shook her head, and on that one point refused to be comforted.

"Now, I've got an idea," Daylight said, hastening to get the conversation on less perilous ground. "We're running away from cities, and you have no kith nor kin, so it don't seem exactly right that we should start off by getting married in a city. So here's the idea: I'll run up to the ranch and get things in shape around the house and give the caretaker his walking-papers. You follow me in a couple of days, coming on the morning train. I'll have the preacher fixed and waiting. And here's another idea. You bring your riding togs in a suit case. And as soon as the ceremony's over, you can go to the hotel and change. Then out you come, and you find me waiting with a couple of horses, and we'll ride over the landscape so as you can see the prettiest parts of the ranch the first thing. And she's sure pretty, that ranch. And now that it's settled, I'll be waiting for you at the morning train day after to-morrow."

Dede blushed as she spoke.

"You are such a hurricane."

"Well, ma'am," he drawled, "I sure hate to burn daylight. And you and I have burned a heap of daylight. We've been scandalously extravagant. We might have been married years ago."

Two days later, Daylight stood waiting outside the little Glen Ellen hotel. The ceremony was over, and he had left Dede to go inside and change into her riding-habit while he brought the horses. He held them now, Bob and Mab, and in the shadow of the watering-trough Wolf lay and looked on. Already two days of ardent California sun had touched with new fires the ancient bronze in Daylight's face. But warmer still was the glow that came into his cheeks and burned in his eyes as he saw Dede coming out the door, riding-whip in hand, clad in the familiar corduroy skirt and leggings of the old Piedmont days. There was warmth and glow in her own face as she answered his gaze and glanced on past him to the horses. Then she saw Mab. But her gaze leaped back to the man.

"Oh, Elam!" she breathed.

It was almost a prayer, but a prayer that included a thousand meanings Daylight strove to feign sheepishness, but his heart was singing too wild a song for mere playfulness. All things had been in the naming of his name — reproach, refined away by gratitude, and all compounded of joy and love.

She stepped forward and caressed the mare, and again turned and looked at the man, and breathed: —

"Oh, Elam!"

And all that was in her voice was in her eyes, and in them Daylight glimpsed a profundity deeper and wider than any speech or thought — the whole vast inarticulate mystery and wonder of sex and love.

Again he strove for playfulness of speech, but it was too great a moment for even love fractiousness to enter in. Neither spoke. She gathered the reins, and, bending, Daylight received her foot in his hand. She sprang, as he lifted and gained the saddle. The next moment he was mounted and beside her, and, with Wolf sliding along ahead in his typical wolf-trot, they went up the hill that led out of town — two lovers on two chestnut sorrel steeds, riding out and away to honeymoon through the warm summer day. Daylight felt himself drunken as with wine. He was at the topmost pinnacle of life. Higher than this no man could climb nor had ever climbed. It was his day of days, his love-time and his mating-time, and all crowned by this virginal possession of a mate who had said "Oh, Elam," as she had said it, and looked at him out of her soul as she had looked.

They cleared the crest of the hill, and he watched the joy mount in her face as she gazed on the sweet, fresh land. He pointed out the group of heavily wooded knolls across the rolling stretches of ripe grain.

"They're ours," he said. "And they're only a sample of the ranch. Wait till you see the big canon. There are 'coons down there, and back here on the Sonoma there are mink. And deer! — why, that mountain's sure thick with them, and I reckon we can scare up a mountain-lion if we want to real hard. And, say, there's a little meadow — well, I ain't going to tell you another word. You wait and see for yourself."

They turned in at the gate, where the road to the clay-pit crossed the fields, and both sniffed with delight as the warm aroma of the ripe hay rose in their nostrils. As on his first visit, the larks were uttering their rich notes and fluttering up before the horses until the woods and the flower-scattered glades were reached, when the larks gave way to blue jays and woodpeckers.

"We're on our land now," he said, as they left the hayfield behind. "It runs right across country over the roughest parts. Just you wait and see."

As on the first day, he turned aside from the clay-pit and worked through the woods to the left, passing the first spring and jumping the horses over the ruined remnants of the stake-and-rider fence. From here on, Dede was in an unending ecstasy. By the spring that gurgled among the redwoods grew another great wild lily, bearing on its slender stalk the prodigious outburst of white waxen bells. This time he did not dismount, but led the way to the deep canon where the stream had cut a passage among the knolls. He had been at work here, and a steep and slippery horse trail now crossed the creek, so they rode up beyond, through the somber redwood twilight, and, farther on, through a tangled wood of oak and madrono. They came to a small clearing of several acres, where the grain stood waist high.

“Ours,” Daylight said.

She bent in her saddle, plucked a stalk of the ripe grain, and nibbled it between her teeth.

“Sweet mountain hay,” she cried. “The kind Mab likes.”

And throughout the ride she continued to utter cries and ejaculations of surprise and delight.

“And you never told me all this!” she reproached him, as they looked across the little clearing and over the descending slopes of woods to the great curving sweep of Sonoma Valley.

“Come,” he said; and they turned and went back through the forest shade, crossed the stream and came to the lily by the spring.

Here, also, where the way led up the tangle of the steep hill, he had cut a rough horse trail. As they forced their way up the zigzags, they caught glimpses out and down through the sea of foliage. Yet always were their farthest glimpses stopped by the closing vistas of green, and, yet always, as they climbed, did the forest roof arch overhead, with only here and there rifts that permitted shattered shafts of sunlight to penetrate. And all about them were ferns, a score of varieties, from the tiny gold-backs and maidenhair to huge brakes six and eight feet tall.

Below them, as they mounted, they glimpsed great gnarled trunks and branches of ancient trees, and above them were similar great gnarled branches.

Dede stopped her horse and sighed with the beauty of it all.

“It is as if we are swimmers,” she said, “rising out of a deep pool of green tranquillity. Up above is the sky and the sun, but this is a pool, and we are fathoms deep.”

They started their horses, but a dog-tooth violet, shouldering amongst the maidenhair, caught her eye and made her rein in again.

They cleared the crest and emerged from the pool as if into another world, for now they were in the thicket of velvet-trunked young madronos and looking down the open, sun-washed hillside, across the nodding grasses, to the drifts of blue and white nemophilae that carpeted the tiny meadow on either side the tiny stream. Dede clapped her hands.

“It’s sure prettier than office furniture,” Daylight remarked.

“It sure is,” she answered.

And Daylight, who knew his weakness in the use of the particular word sure, knew that she had repeated it deliberately and with love.

They crossed the stream and took the cattle track over the low rocky hill and through the scrub forest of manzanita, till they emerged on the next tiny valley with its meadow-bordered streamlet.

"If we don't run into some quail pretty soon, I'll be surprised some," Daylight said.

And as the words left his lips there was a wild series of explosive thrumming as the old quail arose from all about Wolf, while the young ones scuttled for safety and disappeared miraculously before the spectators' very eyes.

He showed her the hawk's nest he had found in the lightning-shattered top of the redwood, and she discovered a wood-rat's nest which he had not seen before. Next they took the old wood-road and came out on the dozen acres of clearing where the wine grapes grew in the wine-colored volcanic soil. Then they followed the cow-path through more woods and thickets and scattered glades, and dropped down the hillside to where the farm-house, poised on the lip of the big canon, came into view only when they were right upon it.

Dede stood on the wide porch that ran the length of the house while Daylight tied the horses. To Dede it was very quiet. It was the dry, warm, breathless calm of California midday. All the world seemed dozing. From somewhere pigeons were cooing lazily. With a deep sigh of satisfaction, Wolf, who had drunk his fill at all the streams along the way, dropped down in the cool shadow of the porch. She heard the footsteps of Daylight returning, and caught her breath with a quick intake. He took her hand in his, and, as he turned the door-knob, felt her hesitate. Then he put his arm around her; the door swung open, and together they passed in.

CHAPTER XXV

Many persons, themselves city-bred and city-reared, have fled to the soil and succeeded in winning great happiness. In such cases they have succeeded only by going through a process of savage disillusionment. But with Dede and Daylight it was different. They had both been born on the soil, and they knew its naked simplicities and rawer ways. They were like two persons, after far wandering, who had merely come home again. There was less of the unexpected in their dealings with nature, while theirs was all the delight of reminiscence. What might appear sordid and squalid to the fastidiously reared, was to them eminently wholesome and natural. The commerce of nature was to them no unknown and untried trade. They made fewer mistakes. They already knew, and it was a joy to remember what they had forgotten.

And another thing they learned was that it was easier for one who has gorged at the flesh-pots to content himself with the meagerness of a crust, than for one who has known only the crust.

Not that their life was meagre. It was that they found keener delights and deeper satisfactions in little things. Daylight, who had played the game in its biggest and most fantastic aspects, found that here, on the slopes of Sonoma Mountain, it was still the same old game. Man had still work to perform, forces to combat, obstacles to overcome. When he experimented in a small way at raising a few pigeons for market, he found no less zest in calculating in squabs than formerly when he had calculated in millions. Achievement was no less achievement, while the process of it seemed more rational and received the sanction of his reason.

The domestic cat that had gone wild and that preyed on his pigeons, he found, by the comparative standard, to be of no less paramount menace than a Charles Klinkner in the field of finance, trying to raid him for several millions. The hawks and weasels and ‘coons were so many Dowsetts, Lettons, and Guggenhammers that struck at him secretly. The sea of wild vegetation that tossed its surf against the boundaries of all his clearings and that sometimes crept in and flooded in a single week was no mean enemy to contend with and subdue. His fat-soiled vegetable-garden in the nook of hills that failed of its best was a problem of engrossing importance, and when he had solved it by putting in drain-tile, the joy of the achievement was ever with him. He never worked in it and found the soil unpacked and tractable without experiencing the thrill of accomplishment.

There was the matter of the plumbing. He was enabled to purchase the materials through a lucky sale of a number of his hair bridles. The work he did himself, though more than once he was forced to call in Dede to hold tight with a pipe-wrench. And in the end, when the bath-tub and the stationary tubs were installed and in working order, he could scarcely tear himself away from the contemplation of what his hands had wrought. The first evening, missing him, Dede sought and found him, lamp in hand, staring with silent glee at the tubs. He rubbed his hand over their smooth wooden lips and laughed aloud, and was as shamefaced as any boy when she caught him thus secretly exulting in his own prowess.

It was this adventure in wood-working and plumbing that brought about the building of the little workshop, where he slowly gathered a collection of loved tools. And he, who in the old days, out of his millions, could purchase immediately whatever he might desire, learned the new joy of the possession that follows upon rigid economy and desire long delayed. He waited three months before daring the extravagance of a Yankee screw-driver, and his glee in the marvelous little mechanism was so keen that Dede conceived forthright a great idea. For six months she saved her egg-money, which was hers by right of allotment, and on his birthday presented him with a turning-lathe of wonderful simplicity and multifarious efficiencies. And their mutual delight in the tool, which was his, was only equalled by their delight in Mab’s first foal, which was Dede’s special private property.

It was not until the second summer that Daylight built the huge fireplace that outrivalled Ferguson’s across the valley. For all these things took time, and Dede and Daylight were not in a hurry. Theirs was not the mistake of the average city-dweller who flees in ultra-modern innocence to the soil. They did not essay too much. Neither did they have a mortgage to clear, nor did they desire wealth. They wanted little in the way of food, and they had no rent to pay. So they planned unambiguously, reserving their lives for each other and for the compensations of country-dwelling from which the average country-dweller is barred. From Ferguson’s example, too, they profited much. Here was a man who asked for but the plainest fare; who ministered to his own simple needs with his own hands; who worked out as a laborer only when he needed money to buy books and magazines; and who saw to it that the major portion of his waking time was for enjoyment. He loved to loaf long afternoons in the shade with his books or to be up with the dawn and away over the hills.

On occasion he accompanied Dede and Daylight on deer hunts through the wild canons and over the rugged steeps of Hood Mountain, though more often Dede and Daylight were out alone. This riding was one of their chief joys. Every wrinkle and crease in the hills they explored, and they came to know every secret spring and hidden dell in the whole surrounding wall of the valley. They learned all the trails and cow-paths; but nothing delighted them more than to essay the roughest and most impossible rides, where they were glad to crouch and crawl along the narrowest deer-runs, Bob and Mab struggling and forcing their way along behind. Back from their rides they brought the seeds and bulbs of wild flowers to plant in favoring nooks on the ranch. Along the foot trail which led down the side of the big canon to the intake of the water-pipe, they established their fernery. It was not a formal affair, and the ferns were left to themselves. Dede and Daylight merely introduced new ones from time to time, changing them from one wild habitat to another. It was the same with the wild lilac, which Daylight had sent to him from Mendocino County. It became part of the wildness of the ranch, and, after being helped for a season, was left to its own devices they used to gather the seeds of the California poppy and scatter them over their own acres, so that the orange-colored blossoms spangled the fields of mountain hay and prospered in flaming drifts in the fence corners and along the edges of the clearings.

Dede, who had a fondness for cattails, established a fringe of them along the meadow stream, where they were left to fight it out with the water-cress. And when the latter was threatened with extinction, Daylight developed one of the shaded springs into his water-cress garden and declared war upon any invading cattail. On her wedding day Dede had discovered a long dog-tooth violet by the zigzag trail above the redwood spring, and here she continued to plant more and more. The open hillside above the tiny meadow became a colony of Mariposa lilies. This was due mainly to her efforts, while Daylight, who rode with a short-handled ax on his saddle-bow, cleared the little manzanita wood on the rocky hill of all its dead and dying and overcrowded weaklings.

They did not labor at these tasks. Nor were they tasks. Merely in passing, they paused, from time to time, and lent a hand to nature. These flowers and shrubs grew of themselves, and their presence was no violation of the natural environment. The man and the woman made no effort to introduce a flower or shrub that did not of its own right belong. Nor did they protect them from their enemies. The horses and the colts and the cows and the calves ran at pasture among them or over them, and flower or shrub had to take its chance. But the beasts were not noticeably destructive, for they were few in number and the ranch was large.

On the other hand, Daylight could have taken in fully a dozen horses to pasture, which would have earned him a dollar and a half per head per month. But this he refused to do, because of the devastation such close pasturing would produce.

Ferguson came over to celebrate the housewarming that followed the achievement of the great stone fireplace. Daylight had ridden across the valley more than once to confer with him about the undertaking, and he was the only other present at the sacred function of lighting the first fire. By removing a partition, Daylight had thrown two rooms into one, and this was the big living-room where Dede's treasures were placed — her books, and paintings and photographs, her piano, the Crouched Venus, the chafing-dish and all its glittering accessories. Already, in addition to her own wild-animal skins, were those of deer and coyote and one mountain-lion which Daylight had killed. The tanning he had done himself, slowly and laboriously, in frontier fashion.

He handed the match to Dede, who struck it and lighted the fire. The crisp manzanita wood crackled as the flames leaped up and assailed the dry bark of the larger logs. Then she leaned in the shelter of her husband's arm, and the three stood and looked in breathless suspense. When Ferguson gave judgment, it was with beaming face and extended hand.

"She draws! By crickey, she draws!" he cried.

He shook Daylight's hand ecstatically, and Daylight shook his with equal fervor, and, bending, kissed Dede on the lips. They were as exultant over the success of their simple handiwork as any great captain at astonishing victory. In Ferguson's eyes was actually a suspicious moisture while the woman pressed even more closely against the man whose achievement it was. He caught her up suddenly in his arms and whirled her away to the piano, crying out: "Come on, Dede! The Gloria! The Gloria!"

And while the flames in the fireplace that worked, the triumphant strains of the Twelfth Mass rolled forth.

CHAPTER XXVI

Daylight had made no assertion of total abstinence though he had not taken a drink for months after the day he resolved to let his business go to smash. Soon he proved himself strong enough to dare to take a drink without taking a second. On the other hand, with his coming to live in the country, had passed all desire and need for drink. He felt no yearning for it, and even forgot that it existed. Yet he refused to be afraid of it, and in town, on occasion, when invited by the storekeeper, would reply: “All right, son. If my taking a drink will make you happy here goes. Whiskey for mine.”

But such a drink began no desire for a second. It made no impression. He was too profoundly strong to be affected by a thimbleful. As he had prophesied to Dede, Burning Daylight, the city financier, had died a quick death on the ranch, and his younger brother, the Daylight from Alaska, had taken his place. The threatened inundation of fat had subsided, and all his old-time Indian leanness and of muscle had returned. So, likewise, did the old slight hollows in his cheeks come back. For him they indicated the pink of physical condition. He became the acknowledged strong man of Sonoma Valley, the heaviest lifter and hardest winded among a husky race of farmer folk. And once a year he celebrated his birthday in the old-fashioned frontier way, challenging all the valley to come up the hill to the ranch and be put on its back. And a fair portion of the valley responded, brought the women-folk and children along, and picnicked for the day.

At first, when in need of ready cash, he had followed Ferguson’s example of working at day’s labor; but he was not long in gravitating to a form of work that was more stimulating and more satisfying, and that allowed him even more time for Dede and the ranch and the perpetual riding through the hills. Having been challenged by the blacksmith, in a spirit of banter, to attempt the breaking of a certain incorrigible colt, he succeeded so signally as to earn quite a reputation as a horse-breaker. And soon he was able to earn whatever money he desired at this, to him, agreeable work.

A sugar king, whose breeding farm and training stables were at Caliente, three miles away, sent for him in time of need, and, before the year was out, offered him the management of the stables. But Daylight smiled and shook his head. Furthermore, he refused to undertake the breaking of as many animals as were offered. “I’m sure not going to die from overwork,” he assured Dede; and he accepted such work only when he had to have money. Later, he fenced off a small run in the pasture, where, from time to time, he took in a limited number of incorrigibles.

"We've got the ranch and each other," he told his wife, "and I'd sooner ride with you to Hood Mountain any day than earn forty dollars. You can't buy sunsets, and loving wives, and cool spring water, and such folderols, with forty dollars; and forty million dollars can't buy back for me one day that I didn't ride with you to Hood Mountain."

His life was eminently wholesome and natural. Early to bed, he slept like an infant and was up with the dawn. Always with something to do, and with a thousand little things that enticed but did not clamor, he was himself never overdone. Nevertheless, there were times when both he and Dede were not above confessing tiredness at bedtime after seventy or eighty miles in the saddle.

Sometimes, when he had accumulated a little money, and when the season favored, they would mount their horses, with saddle-bags behind, and ride away over the wall of the valley and down into the other valleys. When night fell, they put up at the first convenient farm or village, and on the morrow they would ride on, without definite plan, merely continuing to ride on, day after day, until their money gave out and they were compelled to return. On such trips they would be gone anywhere from a week to ten days or two weeks, and once they managed a three weeks' trip.

They even planned ambitiously some day when they were disgracefully prosperous, to ride all the way up to Daylight's boyhood home in Eastern Oregon, stopping on the way at Dede's girlhood home in Siskiyou. And all the joys of anticipation were theirs a thousand times as they contemplated the detailed delights of this grand adventure.

One day, stopping to mail a letter at the Glen Ellen post office, they were hailed by the blacksmith.

"Say, Daylight," he said, "a young fellow named Slosson sends you his regards. He came through in an auto, on the way to Santa Rosa. He wanted to know if you didn't live hereabouts, but the crowd with him was in a hurry. So he sent you his regards and said to tell you he'd taken your advice and was still going on breaking his own record."

Daylight had long since told Dede of the incident.

"Slosson?" he meditated, "Slosson? That must be the hammer-thrower. He put my hand down twice, the young scamp." He turned suddenly to

Dede. “Say, it’s only twelve miles to Santa Rosa, and the horses are fresh.”

She divined what was in his mind, of which his twinkling eyes and sheepish, boyish grin gave sufficient advertisement, and she smiled and nodded acquiescence.

“We’ll cut across by Bennett Valley,” he said. “It’s nearer that way.”

There was little difficulty, once in Santa Rosa, of finding Slosson. He and his party had registered at the Oberlin Hotel, and Daylight encountered the young hammer-thrower himself in the office.

“Look here, son,” Daylight announced, as soon as he had introduced Dede, “I’ve come to go you another flutter at that hand game. Here’s a likely place.”

Slosson smiled and accepted. The two men faced each other, the elbows of their right arms on the counter, the hands clasped. Slosson’s hand quickly forced backward and down.

“You’re the first man that ever succeeded in doing it,” he said. “Let’s try it again.”

“Sure,” Daylight answered. “And don’t forget, son, that you’re the first man that put mine down. That’s why I lit out after you to-day.”

Again they clasped hands, and again Slosson’s hand went down. He was a broad-shouldered, heavy-muscled young giant, at least half a head taller than Daylight, and he frankly expressed his chagrin and asked for a third trial. This time he steeled himself to the effort, and for a moment the issue was in doubt. With flushed face and set teeth he met the other’s strength till his crackling muscles failed him. The air exploded sharply from his tensed lungs, as he relaxed in surrender, and the hand dropped limply down.

“You’re too many for me,” he confessed. “I only hope you’ll keep out of the hammer-throwing game.”

Daylight laughed and shook his head.

“We might compromise, and each stay in his own class. You stick to hammer-throwing, and I’ll go on turning down hands.”

But Slosson refused to accept defeat.

“Say,” he called out, as Daylight and Dede, astride their horses, were preparing to depart. “Say — do you mind if I look you up next year? I’d like to tackle you again.”

“Sure, son. You’re welcome to a flutter any time. Though I give you fair warning that you’ll have to go some. You’ll have to train up, for I’m ploughing and chopping wood and breaking colts these days.”

Now and again, on the way home, Dede could hear her big boy-husband chuckling gleefully. As they halted their horses on the top of the divide out of Bennett Valley, in order to watch the sunset, he ranged alongside and slipped his arm around her waist.

"Little woman," he said, "you're sure responsible for it all. And I leave it to you, if all the money in creation is worth as much as one arm like that when it's got a sweet little woman like this to go around."

For of all his delights in the new life, Dede was his greatest. As he explained to her more than once, he had been afraid of love all his life only in the end to come to find it the greatest thing in the world. Not alone were the two well mated, but in coming to live on the ranch they had selected the best soil in which their love would prosper. In spite of her books and music, there was in her a wholesome simplicity and love of the open and natural, while Daylight, in every fiber of him, was essentially an open-air man.

Of one thing in Dede, Daylight never got over marveling about, and that was her efficient hands — the hands that he had first seen taking down flying shorthand notes and ticking away at the typewriter; the hands that were firm to hold a magnificent brute like Bob, that wonderfully flashed over the keys of the piano, that were unhesitant in household tasks, and that were twin miracles to caress and to run rippling fingers through his hair. But Daylight was not unduly uxorious. He lived his man's life just as she lived her woman's life. There was proper division of labor in the work they individually performed. But the whole was entwined and woven into a fabric of mutual interest and consideration. He was as deeply interested in her cooking and her music as she was in his agricultural adventures in the vegetable garden. And he, who resolutely declined to die of overwork, saw to it that she should likewise escape so dire a risk.

In this connection, using his man's judgment and putting his man's foot down, he refused to allow her to be burdened with the entertaining of guests. For guests they had, especially in the warm, long summers, and usually they were her friends from the city, who were put to camp in tents which they cared for themselves, and where, like true campers, they had also to cook for themselves. Perhaps only in California, where everybody knows camp life, would such a program have been possible. But Daylight's steadfast contention was that his wife should not become cook, waitress, and chambermaid because she did not happen to possess a household of servants. On the other hand, chafing-dish suppers in the big living-room for their camping guests were a common happening, at which times Daylight allotted them their chores and saw that they were performed. For one who stopped only for the night it was different. Likewise it was different with her brother, back from Germany, and again able to sit a horse. On his vacations he became the third in the family, and to him was given the building of the fires, the sweeping, and the washing of the dishes.

Daylight devoted himself to the lightening of Dede's labors, and it was her brother who incited him to utilize the splendid water-power of the ranch that was running to waste. It required Daylight's breaking of extra horses to pay for the materials, and the brother devoted a three weeks' vacation to assisting, and together they installed a Pelting wheel. Besides sawing wood and turning his lathe and grindstone, Daylight connected the power with the churn; but his great triumph was when he put his arm around Dede's waist and led her out to inspect a washing-machine, run by the Pelton wheel, which really worked and really washed clothes.

Dede and Ferguson, between them, after a patient struggle, taught Daylight poetry, so that in the end he might have been often seen, sitting slack in the saddle and dropping down the mountain trails through the sun-flecked woods, chanting aloud Kipling's "Tomlinson," or, when sharpening his ax, singing into the whirling grindstone Henley's "Song of the Sword." Not that he ever became consummately literary in the way his two teachers were. Beyond "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Caliban and Setebos," he found nothing in Browning, while George Meredith was ever his despair. It was of his own initiative, however, that he invested in a violin, and practised so assiduously that in time he and Dede beguiled many a happy hour playing together after night had fallen.

So all went well with this well-mated pair. Time never dragged. There were always new wonderful mornings and still cool twilights at the end of day; and ever a thousand interests claimed him, and his interests were shared by her. More thoroughly than he knew, had he come to a comprehension of the relativity of things. In this new game he played he found in little things all the intensities of gratification and desire that he had found in the frenzied big things when he was a power and rocked half a continent with the fury of the blows he struck. With head and hand, at risk of life and limb, to bit and break a wild colt and win it to the service of man, was to him no less great an achievement. And this new table on which he played the game was clean. Neither lying, nor cheating, nor hypocrisy was here. The other game had made for decay and death, while this new one made for clean strength and life. And so he was content, with Dede at his side, to watch the procession of the days and seasons from the farm-house perched on the canon-lip; to ride through crisp frosty mornings or under burning summer suns; and to shelter in the big room where blazed the logs in the fireplace he had built, while outside the world shuddered and struggled in the storm-clasp of a southeaster.

Once only Dede asked him if he ever regretted, and his answer was to crush her in his arms and smother her lips with his. His answer, a minute later, took speech.

“Little woman, even if you did cost thirty millions, you are sure the cheapest necessity of life I ever indulged in.” And then he added, “Yes, I do have one regret, and a monstrous big one, too. I’d sure like to have the winning of you all over again. I’d like to go sneaking around the Piedmont hills looking for you. I’d like to meander into those rooms of yours at Berkeley for the first time. And there’s no use talking, I’m plumb soaking with regret that I can’t put my arms around you again that time you leaned your head on my breast and cried in the wind and rain.”

CHAPTER XXVII

But there came the day, one year, in early April, when Dede sat in an easy chair on the porch, sewing on certain small garments, while Daylight read aloud to her. It was in the afternoon, and a bright sun was shining down on a world of new green. Along the irrigation channels of the vegetable garden streams of water were flowing, and now and again Daylight broke off from his reading to run out and change the flow of water. Also, he was teasingly interested in the certain small garments on which Dede worked, while she was radiantly happy over them, though at times, when his tender fun was too insistent, she was rosily confused or affectionately resentful.

From where they sat they could look out over the world. Like the curve of a skirting blade, the Valley of the Moon stretched before them, dotted with farm-houses and varied by pasture-lands, hay-fields, and vineyards. Beyond rose the wall of the valley, every crease and wrinkle of which Dede and Daylight knew, and at one place, where the sun struck squarely, the white dump of the abandoned mine burned like a jewel. In the foreground, in the paddock by the barn, was Mab, full of pretty anxieties for the early spring foal that staggered about her on tottery legs. The air shimmered with heat, and altogether it was a lazy, basking day. Quail whistled to their young from the thicketed hillside behind the house. There was a gentle cooing of pigeons, and from the green depths of the big canon arose the sobbing wood note of a mourning dove. Once, there was a warning chorus from the foraging hens and a wild rush for cover, as a hawk, high in the blue, cast its drifting shadow along the ground.

It was this, perhaps, that aroused old hunting memories in Wolf. At any rate, Dede and Daylight became aware of excitement in the paddock, and saw harmlessly reenacted a grim old tragedy of the Younger World. Curiously eager, velvet-footed and silent as a ghost, sliding and gliding and crouching, the dog that was mere domesticated wolf stalked the enticing bit of young life that Mab had brought so recently into the world. And the mare, her own ancient instincts aroused and quivering, circled ever between the foal and this menace of the wild young days when all her ancestry had known fear of him and his hunting brethren. Once, she whirled and tried to kick him, but usually she strove to strike him with her fore-hoofs, or rushed upon him with open mouth and ears laid back in an effort to crunch his backbone between her teeth. And the wolf-dog, with ears flattened down and crouching, would slide silkily away, only to circle up to the foal from the other side and give cause to the mare for new alarm. Then Daylight, urged on by Dede's solicitude, uttered a low threatening cry; and Wolf, drooping and sagging in all the body of him in token of his instant return to man's allegiance, slunk off behind the barn.

It was a few minutes later that Daylight, breaking off from his reading to change the streams of irrigation, found that the water had ceased flowing. He shouldered a pick and shovel, took a hammer and a pipe-wrench from the tool-house, and returned to Dede on the porch.

"I reckon I'll have to go down and dig the pipe out," he told her. "It's that slide that's threatened all winter. I guess she's come down at last."

"Don't you read ahead, now," he warned, as he passed around the house and took the trail that led down the wall of the canon.

Halfway down the trail, he came upon the slide. It was a small affair, only a few tons of earth and crumbling rock; but, starting from fifty feet above, it had struck the water pipe with force sufficient to break it at a connection. Before proceeding to work, he glanced up the path of the slide, and he glanced with the eye of the earth-trained miner. And he saw what made his eyes startle and cease for the moment from questing farther.

"Hello," he communed aloud, "look who's here."

His glance moved on up the steep broken surface, and across it from side to side. Here and there, in places, small twisted manzanitas were rooted precariously, but in the main, save for weeds and grass, that portion of the canon was bare. There were signs of a surface that had shifted often as the rains poured a flow of rich eroded soil from above over the lip of the canon.

"A true fissure vein, or I never saw one," he proclaimed softly.

And as the old hunting instincts had aroused that day in the wolf-dog, so in him recrudesced all the old hot desire of gold-hunting. Dropping the hammer and pipe-wrench, but retaining pick and shovel, he climbed up the slide to where a vague line of outputting but mostly soil-covered rock could be seen. It was all but indiscernible, but his practised eye had sketched the hidden formation which it signified. Here and there, along this wall of the vein, he attacked the crumbling rock with the pick and shoveled the encumbering soil away. Several times he examined this rock. So soft was some of it that he could break it in his fingers. Shifting a dozen feet higher up, he again attacked with pick and shovel. And this time, when he rubbed the soil from a chunk of rock and looked, he straightened up suddenly, gasping with delight. And then, like a deer at a drinking pool in fear of its enemies, he flung a quick glance around to see if any eye were gazing upon him. He grinned at his own foolishness and returned to his examination of the chunk. A slant of sunlight fell on it, and it was all aglitter with tiny specks of unmistakable free gold.

"From the grass roots down," he muttered in an awestricken voice, as he swung his pick into the yielding surface.

He seemed to undergo a transformation. No quart of cocktails had ever put such a flame in his cheeks nor such a fire in his eyes. As he worked, he was caught up in the old passion that had ruled most of his life. A frenzy seized him that markedly increased from moment to moment. He worked like a madman, till he panted from his exertions and the sweat dripped from his face to the ground. He quested across the face of the slide to the opposite wall of the vein and back again. And, midway, he dug down through the red volcanic earth that had washed from the disintegrating hill above, until he uncovered quartz, rotten quartz, that broke and crumbled in his hands and showed to be alive with free gold.

Sometimes he started small slides of earth that covered up his work and compelled him to dig again. Once, he was swept fifty feet down the canon-side; but he floundered and scrambled up again without pausing for breath. He hit upon quartz that was so rotten that it was almost like clay, and here the gold was richer than ever. It was a veritable treasure chamber. For a hundred feet up and down he traced the walls of the vein. He even climbed over the canon-lip to look along the brow of the hill for signs of the outcrop. But that could wait, and he hurried back to his find.

He toiled on in the same mad haste, until exhaustion and an intolerable ache in his back compelled him to pause. He straightened up with even a richer piece of gold-laden quartz. Stooping, the sweat from his forehead had fallen to the ground. It now ran into his eyes, blinding him. He wiped it from him with the back of his hand and returned to a scrutiny of the gold.

It would run thirty thousand to the ton, fifty thousand, anything — he knew that. And as he gazed upon the yellow lure, and panted for air, and wiped the sweat away, his quick vision leaped and set to work. He saw the spur-track that must run up from the valley and across the upland pastures, and he ran the grades and built the bridge that would span the canon, until it was real before his eyes. Across the canon was the place for the mill, and there he erected it; and he erected, also, the endless chain of buckets, suspended from a cable and operated by gravity, that would carry the ore across the canon to the quartz-crusher. Likewise, the whole mine grew before him and beneath him-tunnels, shafts, and galleries, and hoisting plants. The blasts of the miners were in his ears, and from across the canon he could hear the roar of the stamps. The hand that held the lump of quartz was trembling, and there was a tired, nervous palpitation apparently in the pit of his stomach. It came to him abruptly that what he wanted was a drink — whiskey, cocktails, anything, a drink. And even then, with this new hot yearning for the alcohol upon him, he heard, faint and far, drifting down the green abyss of the canon, Dede's voice, crying: —

"Here, chick, chick, chick, chick, chick! Here, chick, chick, chick!"

He was astounded at the lapse of time. She had left her sewing on the porch and was feeding the chickens preparatory to getting supper. The afternoon was gone. He could not conceive that he had been away that long.

Again came the call: "Here, chick, chick, chick, chick, chick! Here, chick, chick, chick!"

It was the way she always called — first five, and then three. He had long since noticed it. And from these thoughts of her arose other thoughts that caused a great fear slowly to grow in his face. For it seemed to him that he had almost lost her. Not once had he thought of her in those frenzied hours, and for that much, at least, had she truly been lost to him.

He dropped the piece of quartz, slid down the slide, and started up the trail, running heavily. At the edge of the clearing he eased down and almost crept to a point of vantage whence he could peer out, himself unseen. She was feeding the chickens, tossing to them handfuls of grain and laughing at their antics.

The sight of her seemed to relieve the panic fear into which he had been flung, and he turned and ran back down the trail. Again he climbed the slide, but this time he climbed higher, carrying the pick and shovel with him. And again he toiled frenziedly, but this time with a different purpose. He worked artfully, loosing slide after slide of the red soil and sending it streaming down and covering up all he had uncovered, hiding from the light of day the treasure he had discovered. He even went into the woods and scooped armfuls of last year's fallen leaves which he scattered over the slide. But this he gave up as a vain task; and he sent more slides of soil down upon the scene of his labor, until no sign remained of the out-jutting walls of the vein.

Next he repaired the broken pipe, gathered his tools together, and started up the trail. He walked slowly, feeling a great weariness, as of a man who had passed through a frightful crisis.

He put the tools away, took a great drink of the water that again flowed through the pipes, and sat down on the bench by the open kitchen door. Dede was inside, preparing supper, and the sound of her footsteps gave him a vast content.

He breathed the balmy mountain air in great gulps, like a diver fresh-risen from the sea. And, as he drank in the air, he gazed with all his eyes at the clouds and sky and valley, as if he were drinking in that, too, along with the air.

Dede did not know he had come back, and at times he turned his head and stole glances in at her — at her efficient hands, at the bronze of her brown hair that smouldered with fire when she crossed the path of sunshine that streamed through the window, at the promise of her figure that shot through him a pang most strangely sweet and sweetly dear. He heard her approaching the door, and kept his head turned resolutely toward the valley. And next, he thrilled, as he had always thrilled, when he felt the caressing gentleness of her fingers through his hair.

“I didn’t know you were back,” she said. “Was it serious?”

“Pretty bad, that slide,” he answered, still gazing away and thrilling to her touch. “More serious than I reckoned. But I’ve got the plan. Do you know what I’m going to do? — I’m going to plant eucalyptus all over it. They’ll hold it. I’ll plant them thick as grass, so that even a hungry rabbit can’t squeeze between them; and when they get their roots agoing, nothing in creation will ever move that dirt again.”

“Why, is it as bad as that?”

He shook his head.

“Nothing exciting. But I’d sure like to see any blamed old slide get the best of me, that’s all. I’m going to seal that slide down so that it’ll stay there for a million years. And when the last trump sounds, and Sonoma Mountain and all the other mountains pass into nothingness, that old slide will be still a-standing there, held up by the roots.”

He passed his arm around her and pulled her down on his knees.

"Say, little woman, you sure miss a lot by living here on the ranch — music, and theatres, and such things. Don't you ever have a hankering to drop it all and go back?"

So great was his anxiety that he dared not look at her, and when she laughed and shook her head he was aware of a great relief. Also, he noted the undiminished youth that rang through that same old-time boyish laugh of hers.

"Say," he said, with sudden fierceness, "don't you go fooling around that slide until after I get the trees in and rooted. It's mighty dangerous, and I sure can't afford to lose you now."

He drew her lips to his and kissed her hungrily and passionately.

"What a lover!" she said; and pride in him and in her own womanhood was in her voice.

"Look at that, Dede." He removed one encircling arm and swept it in a wide gesture over the valley and the mountains beyond. "The Valley of the Moon — a good name, a good name. Do you know, when I look out over it all, and think of you and of all it means, it kind of makes me ache in the throat, and I have things in my heart I can't find the words to say, and I have a feeling that I can almost understand Browning and those other high-flying poet-fellows. Look at Hood Mountain there, just where the sun's striking. It was down in that crease that we found the spring."

"And that was the night you didn't milk the cows till ten o'clock," she laughed. "And if you keep me here much longer, supper won't be any earlier than it was that night."

Both arose from the bench, and Daylight caught up the milk-pail from the nail by the door. He paused a moment longer to look out over the valley.

"It's sure grand," he said.

"It's sure grand," she echoed, laughing joyously at him and with him and herself and all the world, as she passed in through the door.

And Daylight, like the old man he once had met, himself went down the hill through the fires of sunset with a milk pail on his arm.

ADVENTURE

This lesser known novel was first published in 1911.

London, near the time of this novel's publication

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I — SOMETHING TO BE DONE
CHAPTER II — SOMETHING IS DONE
CHAPTER III — THE JESSIE
CHAPTER IV — JOAN LACKLAND
CHAPTER V — SHE WOULD A PLANTER BE
CHAPTER VI — TEMPEST
CHAPTER VII — A HARD-BITTEN GANG
CHAPTER VIII — LOCAL COLOUR
CHAPTER IX — AS BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN
CHAPTER X — A MESSAGE FROM BOUCHER
CHAPTER XI — THE PORT ADAMS CROWD
CHAPTER XII — MR. MORGAN AND MR. RAFF
CHAPTER XIII — THE LOGIC OF YOUTH
CHAPTER XIV — THE MARTHA
CHAPTER XV — A DISCOURSE ON MANNERS
CHAPTER XVI — THE GIRL WHO HAD NOT GROWN UP
CHAPTER XVII — “YOUR” MISS LACKLAND
CHAPTER XVIII — MAKING THE BOOKS COME TRUE
CHAPTER XIX — THE LOST TOY
CHAPTER XX — A MAN-TALK
CHAPTER XXI — CONTRABAND
CHAPTER XXII — GOGOOMY FINISHES ALONG KWAQUE ALTOGETHER
CHAPTER XXIII — A MESSAGE FROM THE BUSH
CHAPTER XXIV — IN THE BUSH
CHAPTER XXV — THE HEAD-HUNTERS
CHAPTER XXVI — BURNING DAYLIGHT
CHAPTER XXVII — MODERN DUELLING
CHAPTER XXVIII — CAPITULATION

ADVENTURE

“We are those fools who could not rest
In the dull earth we left behind,
But burned with passion for the West,
And drank strange frenzy from its wind.
The world where wise men live at ease
Fades from our unregretful eyes,
And blind across uncharted seas
We stagger on our enterprise.”
“THE SHIP OF FOOLS.”

CHAPTER I — SOMETHING TO BE DONE

He was a very sick white man. He rode pick-a-back on a woolly-headed, black-skinned savage, the lobes of whose ears had been pierced and stretched until one had torn out, while the other carried a circular block of carved wood three inches in diameter. The torn ear had been pierced again, but this time not so ambitiously, for the hole accommodated no more than a short clay pipe. The man-horse was greasy and dirty, and naked save for an exceedingly narrow and dirty loin-cloth; but the white man clung to him closely and desperately. At times, from weakness, his head drooped and rested on the woolly pate. At other times he lifted his head and stared with swimming eyes at the cocoanut palms that reeled and swung in the shimmering heat. He was clad in a thin undershirt and a strip of cotton cloth, that wrapped about his waist and descended to his knees. On his head was a battered Stetson, known to the trade as a Baden-Powell. About his middle was strapped a belt, which carried a large-calibred automatic pistol and several spare clips, loaded and ready for quick work.

The rear was brought up by a black boy of fourteen or fifteen, who carried medicine bottles, a pail of hot water, and various other hospital appurtenances. They passed out of the compound through a small wicker gate, and went on under the blazing sun, winding about among new-planted cocoanuts that threw no shade. There was not a breath of wind, and the superheated, stagnant air was heavy with pestilence. From the direction they were going arose a wild clamour, as of lost souls wailing and of men in torment. A long, low shed showed ahead, grass-walled and grass-thatched, and it was from here that the noise proceeded. There were shrieks and screams, some unmistakably of grief, others unmistakably of unendurable pain. As the white man drew closer he could hear a low and continuous moaning and groaning. He shuddered at the thought of entering, and for a moment was quite certain that he was going to faint. For that most dreaded of Solomon Island scourges, dysentery, had struck Berande plantation, and he was all alone to cope with it. Also, he was afflicted himself.

By stooping close, still on man-back, he managed to pass through the low doorway. He took a small bottle from his follower, and sniffed strong ammonia to clear his senses for the ordeal. Then he shouted, “Shut up!” and the clamour stilled. A raised platform of forest slabs, six feet wide, with a slight pitch, extended the full length of the shed. Alongside of it was a yard-wide run-way. Stretched on the platform, side by side and crowded close, lay a score of blacks. That they were low in the order of human life was apparent at a glance. They were man-eaters. Their faces were asymmetrical, bestial; their bodies were ugly and ape-like. They wore nose-rings of clam-shell and turtle-shell, and from the ends of their noses which were also pierced, projected horns of beads strung on stiff wire. Their ears were pierced and distended to accommodate wooden plugs and sticks, pipes, and all manner of barbaric ornaments. Their faces and bodies were tattooed or scarred in hideous designs. In their sickness they wore no clothing, not even loin-cloths, though they retained their shell armlets, their bead necklaces, and their leather belts, between which and the skin were thrust naked knives. The bodies of many were covered with horrible sores. Swarms of flies rose and settled, or flew back and forth in clouds.

The white man went down the line, dosing each man with medicine. To some he gave chlorodyne. He was forced to concentrate with all his will in order to remember which of them could stand ipecacuanha, and which of them were constitutionally unable to retain that powerful drug. One who lay dead he ordered to be carried out. He spoke in the sharp, peremptory manner of a man who would take no nonsense, and the well men who obeyed his orders scowled malignantly. One muttered deep in his chest as he took the corpse by the feet. The white man exploded in speech and action. It cost him a painful effort, but his arm shot out, landing a back-hand blow on the black’s mouth.

“What name you, Angara?” he shouted. “What for talk ’long you, eh? I knock seven bells out of you, too much, quick!”

With the automatic swiftness of a wild animal the black gathered himself to spring. The anger of a wild animal was in his eyes; but he saw the white man’s hand dropping to the pistol in his belt. The spring was never made. The tensed body relaxed, and the black, stooping over the corpse, helped carry it out. This time there was no muttering.

“Swine!” the white man gritted out through his teeth at the whole breed of Solomon Islanders.

He was very sick, this white man, as sick as the black men who lay helpless about him, and whom he attended. He never knew, each time he entered the festering shambles, whether or not he would be able to complete the round. But he did know in large degree of certainty that, if he ever fainted there in the midst of the blacks, those who were able would be at his throat like ravening wolves.

Part way down the line a man was dying. He gave orders for his removal as soon as he had breathed his last. A black stuck his head inside the shed door, saying, —

“Four fella sick too much.”

Fresh cases, still able to walk, they clustered about the spokesman. The white man singled out the weakest, and put him in the place just vacated by the corpse. Also, he indicated the next weakest, telling him to wait for a place until the next man died. Then, ordering one of the well men to take a squad from the field-force and build a lean-to addition to the hospital, he continued along the run-way, administering medicine and cracking jokes in *bêche-de-mer* English to cheer the sufferers. Now and again, from the far end, a weird wail was raised. When he arrived there he found the noise was emitted by a boy who was not sick. The white man’s wrath was immediate.

“What name you sing out alla time?” he demanded.

“Him fella my brother belong me,” was the answer. “Him fella die too much.”

“You sing out, him fella brother belong you die too much,” the white man went on in threatening tones. “I cross too much along you. What name you sing out, eh? You fat-head make um brother belong you die dose up too much. You fella finish sing out, savvee? You fella no finish sing out I make finish damn quick.”

He threatened the wailer with his fist, and the black cowered down, glaring at him with sullen eyes.

“Sing out no good little bit,” the white man went on, more gently. “You no sing out. You chase um fella fly. Too much strong fella fly. You catch water, washee brother belong you; washee plenty too much, bime bye brother belong you all right. Jump!” he shouted fiercely at the end, his will penetrating the low intelligence of the black with dynamic force that made him jump to the task of brushing the loathsome swarms of flies away.

Again he rode out into the reeking heat. He clutched the black’s neck tightly, and drew a long breath; but the dead air seemed to shrivel his lungs, and he dropped his head and dozed till the house was reached. Every effort of will was torture, yet he was called upon continually to make efforts of will. He gave the black he had ridden a nip of trade-gin. Viaburi, the house-boy, brought him corrosive sublimate and water, and he took a thorough antiseptic wash. He dosed himself with chlorodyne, took his own pulse, smoked a thermometer, and lay back on the couch with a suppressed groan. It was mid-afternoon, and he had completed his third round that day. He called the house-boy.

"Take um big fella look along *Jessie*," he commanded.

The boy carried the long telescope out on the veranda, and searched the sea.

"One fella schooner long way little bit," he announced. "One fella *Jessie*."

The white man gave a little gasp of delight.

"You make um *Jessie*, five sticks tobacco along you," he said.

There was silence for a time, during which he waited with eager impatience.

"Maybe *Jessie*, maybe other fella schooner," came the faltering admission.

The man wormed to the edge of the couch, and slipped off to the floor on his knees. By means of a chair he drew himself to his feet. Still clinging to the chair, supporting most of his weight on it, he shoved it to the door and out upon the veranda. The sweat from the exertion streamed down his face and showed through the undershirt across his shoulders. He managed to get into the chair, where he panted in a state of collapse. In a few minutes he roused himself. The boy held the end of the telescope against one of the veranda scantlings, while the man gazed through it at the sea. At last he picked up the white sails of the schooner and studied them.

"No *Jessie*," he said very quietly. "That's the *Malakula*."

He changed his seat for a steamer reclining-chair. Three hundred feet away the sea broke in a small surf upon the beach. To the left he could see the white line of breakers that marked the bar of the Balesuna River, and, beyond, the rugged outline of Savo Island. Directly before him, across the twelve-mile channel, lay Florida Island; and, farther to the right, dim in the distance, he could make out portions of Malaita — the savage island, the abode of murder, and robbery, and man-eating — the place from which his own two hundred plantation hands had been recruited. Between him and the beach was the cane-grass fence of the compound. The gate was ajar, and he sent the house-boy to close it. Within the fence grew a number of lofty cocoanut palms. On either side the path that led to the gate stood two tall flagstaffs. They were reared on artificial mounds of earth that were ten feet high. The base of each staff was surrounded by short posts, painted white and connected by heavy chains. The staffs themselves were like ships' masts, with topmasts spliced on in true nautical fashion, with shrouds, ratlines, gaffs, and flag-halyards. From the gaff of one, two gay flags hung limply, one a checkerboard of blue and white squares, the other a white pennant centred with a red disc. It was the international code signal of distress.

On the far corner of the compound fence a hawk brooded. The man watched it, and knew that it was sick. He wondered idly if it felt as bad as he felt, and was feebly amused at the thought of kinship that somehow penetrated his fancy. He roused himself to order the great bell to be rung as a signal for the plantation hands to cease work and go to their barracks. Then he mounted his man-horse and made the last round of the day.

In the hospital were two new cases. To these he gave castor-oil. He congratulated himself. It had been an easy day. Only three had died. He inspected the copra-drying that had been going on, and went through the barracks to see if there were any sick lying hidden and defying his rule of segregation. Returned to the house, he received the reports of the boss-boys and gave instructions for next day's work. The boat's crew boss also he had in, to give assurance, as was the custom nightly, that the whale-boats were hauled up and padlocked. This was a most necessary precaution, for the blacks were in a funk, and a whale-boat left lying on the beach in the evening meant a loss of twenty blacks by morning. Since the blacks were worth thirty dollars apiece, or less, according to how much of their time had been worked out, Berande plantation could ill afford the loss. Besides, whale-boats were not cheap in the Solomons; and, also, the deaths were daily reducing the working capital. Seven blacks had fled into the bush the week before, and four had dragged themselves back, helpless from fever, with the report that two more had been killed and *kai-kai'd* {1}. by the hospitable bushmen. The seventh man was still at large, and was said to be working along the coast on the lookout to steal a canoe and get away to his own island.

Viaburi brought two lighted lanterns to the white man for inspection. He glanced at them and saw that they were burning brightly with clear, broad flames, and nodded his head. One was hoisted up to the gaff of the flagstaff, and the other was placed on the wide veranda. They were the leading lights to the Berande anchorage, and every night in the year they were so inspected and hung out.

He rolled back on his couch with a sigh of relief. The day's work was done. A rifle lay on the couch beside him. His revolver was within reach of his hand. An hour passed, during which he did not move. He lay in a state of half-slumber, half-coma. He became suddenly alert. A creak on the back veranda was the cause. The room was L-shaped; the corner in which stood his couch was dim, but the hanging lamp in the main part of the room, over the billiard table and just around the corner, so that it did not shine on him, was burning brightly. Likewise the verandas were well lighted. He waited without movement. The creaks were repeated, and he knew several men lurked outside.

"What name?" he cried sharply.

The house, raised a dozen feet above the ground, shook on its pile foundations to the rush of retreating footsteps.

"They're getting bold," he muttered. "Something will have to be done."

The full moon rose over Malaita and shone down on Berande. Nothing stirred in the windless air. From the hospital still proceeded the moaning of the sick. In the grass-thatched barracks nearly two hundred woolly-headed man-eaters slept off the weariness of the day's toil, though several lifted their heads to listen to the curses of one who cursed the white man who never slept. On the four verandas of the house the lanterns burned. Inside, between rifle and revolver, the man himself moaned and tossed in intervals of troubled sleep.

CHAPTER II — SOMETHING IS DONE

In the morning David Sheldon decided that he was worse. That he was appreciably weaker there was no doubt, and there were other symptoms that were unfavourable. He began his rounds looking for trouble. He wanted trouble. In full health, the strained situation would have been serious enough; but as it was, himself growing helpless, something had to be done. The blacks were getting more sullen and defiant, and the appearance of the men the previous night on his veranda — one of the gravest of offences on Berande — was ominous. Sooner or later they would get him, if he did not get them first, if he did not once again sear on their dark souls the flaming mastery of the white man.

He returned to the house disappointed. No opportunity had presented itself of making an example of insolence or insubordination — such as had occurred on every other day since the sickness smote Berande. The fact that none had offended was in itself suspicious. They were growing crafty. He regretted that he had not waited the night before until the prowlers had entered. Then he might have shot one or two and given the rest a new lesson, writ in red, for them to con. It was one man against two hundred, and he was horribly afraid of his sickness overpowering him and leaving him at their mercy. He saw visions of the blacks taking charge of the plantation, looting the store, burning the buildings, and escaping to Malaita. Also, one gruesome vision he caught of his own head, sun-dried and smoke-cured, ornamenting the canoe house of a cannibal village. Either the *Jessie* would have to arrive, or he would have to do something.

The bell had hardly rung, sending the labourers into the fields, when Sheldon had a visitor. He had had the couch taken out on the veranda, and he was lying on it when the canoes paddled in and hauled out on the beach. Forty men, armed with spears, bows and arrows, and war-clubs, gathered outside the gate of the compound, but only one entered. They knew the law of Berande, as every native knew the law of every white man’s compound in all the thousand miles of the far-flung Solomons. The one man who came up the path, Sheldon recognized as Seelee, the chief of Balesuna village. The savage did not mount the steps, but stood beneath and talked to the white lord above.

Seelee was more intelligent than the average of his kind, but his intelligence only emphasized the lowness of that kind. His eyes, close together and small, advertised cruelty and craftiness. A gee-string and a cartridge-belt were all the clothes he wore. The carved pearl-shell ornament that hung from nose to chin and impeded speech was purely ornamental, as were the holes in his ears mere utilities for carrying pipe and tobacco. His broken-fanged teeth were stained black by betel-nut, the juice of which he spat upon the ground.

As he talked or listened, he made grimaces like a monkey. He said yes by dropping his eyelids and thrusting his chin forward. He spoke with childish arrogance strangely at variance with the subservient position he occupied beneath the veranda. He, with his many followers, was lord and master of Balesuna village. But the white man, without followers, was lord and master of Berande — ay, and on occasion, single-handed, had made himself lord and master of Balesuna village as well. Seelee did not like to remember that episode. It had occurred in the course of learning the nature of white men and of learning to abominate them. He had once been guilty of sheltering three runaways from Berande. They had given him all they possessed in return for the shelter and for promised aid in getting away to Malaita. This had given him a glimpse of a profitable future, in which his village would serve as the one depot on the underground railway between Berande and Malaita.

Unfortunately, he was ignorant of the ways of white men. This particular white man educated him by arriving at his grass house in the gray of dawn. In the first moment he had felt amused. He was so perfectly safe in the midst of his village. But the next moment, and before he could cry out, a pair of handcuffs on the white man's knuckles had landed on his mouth, knocking the cry of alarm back down his throat. Also, the white man's other fist had caught him under the ear and left him without further interest in what was happening. When he came to, he found himself in the white man's whale-boat on the way to Berande. At Berande he had been treated as one of no consequence, with handcuffs on hands and feet, to say nothing of chains. When his tribe had returned the three runaways, he was given his freedom. And finally, the terrible white man had fined him and Balesuna village ten thousand cocoanuts. After that he had sheltered no more runaway Malaita men. Instead, he had gone into the business of catching them. It was safer. Besides, he was paid one case of tobacco per head. But if he ever got a chance at that white man, if he ever caught him sick or stood at his back when he stumbled and fell on a bush-trail — well, there would be a head that would fetch a price in Malaita.

Sheldon was pleased with what Seelee told him. The seventh man of the last batch of runaways had been caught and was even then at the gate. He was brought in, heavy-featured and defiant, his arms bound with cocoanut sennit, the dry blood still on his body from the struggle with his captors.

"Me savvee you good fella, Seelee," Sheldon said, as the chief gulped down a quarter-tumbler of raw trade-gin. "Fella boy belong me you catch short time little bit. This fella boy strong fella too much. I give you fella one case tobacco — my word, one case tobacco. Then, you good fella along me, I give you three fathom calico, one fella knife big fella too much."

The tobacco and trade goods were brought from the storeroom by two house-boys and turned over to the chief of Balesuna village, who accepted the additional reward with a non-committal grunt and went away down the path to his canoes. Under Sheldon's directions the house-boys handcuffed the prisoner, by hands and feet, around one of the pile supports of the house. At eleven o'clock, when the labourers came in from the field, Sheldon had them assembled in the compound before the veranda. Every able man was there, including those who were helping about the hospital. Even the women and the several pickaninnies of the plantation were lined up with the rest, two deep — a horde of naked savages a trifle under two hundred strong. In addition to their ornaments of bead and shell and bone, their pierced ears and nostrils were burdened with safety-pins, wire nails, metal hair-pins, rusty iron handles of cooking utensils, and the patent keys for opening corned beef tins. Some wore penknives clasped on their kinky locks for safety. On the chest of one a china door-knob was suspended, on the chest of another the brass wheel of an alarm clock.

Facing them, clinging to the railing of the veranda for support, stood the sick white man. Any one of them could have knocked him over with the blow of a little finger. Despite his firearms, the gang could have rushed him and delivered that blow, when his head and the plantation would have been theirs. Hatred and murder and lust for revenge they possessed to overflowing. But one thing they lacked, the thing that he possessed, the flame of mastery that would not quench, that burned fiercely as ever in the disease-wasted body, and that was ever ready to flare forth and scorch and singe them with its ire.

"Narada! Billy!" Sheldon called sharply.

Two men slunk unwillingly forward and waited.

Sheldon gave the keys of the handcuffs to a house-boy, who went under the house and loosed the prisoner.

"You fella Narada, you fella Billy, take um this fella boy along tree and make fast, hands high up," was Sheldon's command.

While this was being done, slowly, amidst mutterings and restlessness on the part of the onlookers, one of the house-boys fetched a heavy-handled, heavy-lashed whip. Sheldon began a speech.

"This fella Arunga, me cross along him too much. I no steal this fella Arunga. I no gammon. I say, 'All right, you come along me Berande, work three fella year.' He say, 'All right, me come along you work three fella year.' He come. He catch plenty good fella *kai-kai*, {2} plenty good fella money. What name he run away? Me too much cross along him. I knock what name outa him fella. I pay Seelee, big fella master along Balesuna, one case tobacco catch that fella Arunga. All right. Arunga pay that fella case tobacco. Six pounds that fella Arunga pay. Alle same one year more that fella Arunga work Berande. All right. Now he catch ten fella whip three times. You fella Billy catch whip, give that fella Arunga ten fella three times. All fella boys look see, all fella Marys {3} look see; bime bye, they like run away they think strong fella too much, no run away. Billy, strong fella too much ten fella three times."

The house-boy extended the whip to him, but Billy did not take it. Sheldon waited quietly. The eyes of all the cannibals were fixed upon him in doubt and fear and eagerness. It was the moment of test, whereby the lone white man was to live or be lost.

"Ten fella three times, Billy," Sheldon said encouragingly, though there was a certain metallic rasp in his voice.

Billy scowled, looked up and looked down, but did not move.

"Billy!"

Sheldon's voice exploded like a pistol shot. The savage started physically. Grins overspread the grotesque features of the audience, and there was a sound of tittering.

"S'pose you like too much lash that fella Arunga, you take him fella Tulagi," Billy said. "One fella government agent make plenty lash. That um fella law. Me savvee um fella law."

It was the law, and Sheldon knew it. But he wanted to live this day and the next day and not to die waiting for the law to operate the next week or the week after.

"Too much talk along you!" he cried angrily. "What name eh? What name?"

"Me savvee law," the savage repeated stubbornly.

"Astoa!"

Another man stepped forward in almost a sprightly way and glanced insolently up. Sheldon was selecting the worst characters for the lesson.

"You fella Astoa, you fella Narada, tie up that fella Billy alongside other fella same fella way."

"Strong fella tie," he cautioned them.

"You fella Astoa take that fella whip. Plenty strong big fella too much ten fella three times. Savvee!"

"No," Astoa grunted.

Sheldon picked up the rifle that had leaned against the rail, and cocked it.

"I know you, Astoa," he said calmly. "You work along Queensland six years."

"Me fella missionary," the black interrupted with deliberate insolence.

"Queensland you stop jail one fella year. White fella master damn fool no hang you. You too much bad fella. Queensland you stop jail six months two fella time. Two fella time you steal. All right, you missionary. You savvee one fella prayer?"

"Yes, me savvee prayer," was the reply.

"All right, then you pray now, short time little bit. You say one fella prayer damn quick, then me kill you."

Sheldon held the rifle on him and waited. The black glanced around at his fellows, but none moved to aid him. They were intent upon the coming spectacle, staring fascinated at the white man with death in his hands who stood alone on the great veranda. Sheldon has won, and he knew it. Astoa changed his weight irresolutely from one foot to the other. He looked at the white man, and saw his eyes gleaming level along the sights.

"Astoa," Sheldon said, seizing the psychological moment, "I count three fella time. Then I shoot you fella dead, good-bye, all finish you."

And Sheldon knew that when he had counted three he would drop him in his tracks. The black knew it, too. That was why Sheldon did not have to do it, for when he had counted one, Astoa reached out his hand and took the whip. And right well Astoa laid on the whip, angered at his fellows for not supporting him and venting his anger with every stroke. From the veranda Sheldon egged him on to strike with strength, till the two triced savages screamed and howled while the blood oozed down their backs. The lesson was being well written in red.

When the last of the gang, including the two howling culprits, had passed out through the compound gate, Sheldon sank down half-fainting on his couch.

"You're a sick man," he groaned. "A sick man."

"But you can sleep at ease to-night," he added, half an hour later.

CHAPTER III — THE JESSIE

Two days passed, and Sheldon felt that he could not grow any weaker and live, much less make his four daily rounds of the hospital. The deaths were averaging four a day, and there were more new cases than recoveries. The blacks were in a funk. Each one, when taken sick, seemed to make every effort to die. Once down on their backs they lacked the grit to make a struggle. They believed they were going to die, and they did their best to vindicate that belief. Even those that were well were sure that it was only a mater of days when the sickness would catch them and carry them off. And yet, believing this with absolute conviction, they somehow lacked the nerve to rush the frail wraith of a man with the white skin and escape from the charnel house by the whale-boats. They chose the lingering death they were sure awaited them, rather than the immediate death they were very sure would pounce upon them if they went up against the master. That he never slept, they knew. That he could not be conjured to death, they were equally sure — they had tried it. And even the sickness that was sweeping them off could not kill him.

With the whipping in the compound, discipline had improved. They cringed under the iron hand of the white man. They gave their scowls or malignant looks with averted faces or when his back was turned. They saved their mutterings for the barracks at night, where he could not hear. And there were no more runaways and no more night-prowlers on the veranda.

Dawn of the third day after the whipping brought the *Jessie's* white sails in sight. Eight miles away, it was not till two in the afternoon that the light air-fans enabled her to drop anchor a quarter of a mile off the shore. The sight of her gave Sheldon fresh courage, and the tedious hours of waiting did not irk him. He gave his orders to the boss-boys and made his regular trips to the hospital. Nothing mattered now. His troubles were at an end. He could lie down and take care of himself and proceed to get well. The *Jessie* had arrived. His partner was on board, vigorous and hearty from six weeks' recruiting on Malaita. He could take charge now, and all would be well with Berande.

Sheldon lay in the steamer-chair and watched the *Jessie's* whale-boat pull in for the beach. He wondered why only three sweeps were pulling, and he wondered still more when, beached, there was so much delay in getting out of the boat. Then he understood. The three blacks who had been pulling started up the beach with a stretcher on their shoulders. A white man, whom he recognized as the *Jessie's* captain, walked in front and opened the gate, then dropped behind to close it. Sheldon knew that it was Hughie Drummond who lay in the stretcher, and a mist came before his eyes. He felt an overwhelming desire to die. The disappointment was too great. In his own state of terrible weakness he felt that it was impossible to go on with his task of holding Berande plantation tight-gripped in his fist. Then the will of him flamed up again, and he directed the blacks to lay the stretcher beside him on the floor. Hughie Drummond, whom he had last seen in health, was an emaciated skeleton. His closed eyes were deep-sunken. The shrivelled lips had fallen away from the teeth, and the cheek-bones seemed bursting through the skin. Sheldon sent a house-boy for his thermometer and glanced questioningly at the captain.

"Black-water fever," the captain said. "He's been like this for six days, unconscious. And we've got dysentery on board. What's the matter with you?"

"I'm burying four a day," Sheldon answered, as he bent over from the steamer-chair and inserted the thermometer under his partner's tongue.

Captain Oleson swore blasphemously, and sent a house-boy to bring whisky and soda. Sheldon glanced at the thermometer.

"One hundred and seven," he said. "Poor Hughie."

Captain Oleson offered him some whisky.

"Couldn't think of it — perforation, you know," Sheldon said.

He sent for a boss-boy and ordered a grave to be dug, also some of the packing-cases to be knocked together into a coffin. The blacks did not get coffins. They were buried as they died, being carted on a sheet of galvanized iron, in their nakedness, from the hospital to the hole in the ground. Having given the orders, Sheldon lay back in his chair with closed eyes.

"It's ben fair hell, sir," Captain Oleson began, then broke off to help himself to more whisky. "It's ben fair hell, Mr. Sheldon, I tell you. Contrary winds and calms. We've ben driftin' all about the shop for ten days. There's ten thousand sharks following us for the tucker we've ben throwin' over to them. They was snappin' at the oars when we started to come ashore. I wisht to God a nor'wester'd come along an' blow the Solomons clean to hell."

"We got it from the water — water from Owga creek. Filled my casks with it. How was we to know? I've filled there before an' it was all right. We had sixty recruits-full up; and my crew of fifteen. We've ben buryin' them day an' night. The beggars won't live, damn them! They die out of spite. Only three of my crew left on its legs. Five more down. Seven dead. Oh, hell! What's the good of talkin'?"

"How many recruits left?" Sheldon asked.

"Lost half. Thirty left. Twenty down, and ten tottering around."

Sheldon sighed.

"That means another addition to the hospital. We've got to get them ashore somehow. — Viaburi! Hey, you, Viaburi, ring big fella bell strong fella too much."

The hands, called in from the fields at that unwonted hour, were split into detachments. Some were sent into the woods to cut timber for house-beams, others to cutting cane-grass for thatching, and forty of them lifted a whale-boat above their heads and carried it down to the sea. Sheldon had gritted his teeth, pulled his collapsing soul together, and taken Berande plantation into his fist once more.

"Have you seen the barometer?" Captain Oleson asked, pausing at the bottom of the steps on his way to oversee the disembarkation of the sick.

"No," Sheldon answered. "Is it down?"

"It's going down."

"Then you'd better sleep aboard to-night," was Sheldon's judgment. "Never mind the funeral. I'll see to poor Hughie."

"A nigger was kicking the bucket when I dropped anchor."

The captain made the statement as a simple fact, but obviously waited for a suggestion. The other felt a sudden wave of irritation rush through him.

"Dump him over," he cried. "Great God, man! don't you think I've got enough graves ashore?"

"I just wanted to know, that was all," the captain answered, in no wise offended.

Sheldon regretted his childishness.

"Oh, Captain Oleson," he called. "If you can see your way to it, come ashore to-morrow and lend me a hand. If you can't, send the mate."

“Right O. I’ll come myself. Mr. Johnson’s dead, sir. I forgot to tell you — three days ago.”

Sheldon watched the *Jessie’s* captain go down the path, with waving arms and loud curses calling upon God to sink the Solomons. Next, Sheldon noted the *Jessie* rolling lazily on the glassy swell, and beyond, in the north-west, high over Florida Island, an alpine chain of dark-massed clouds. Then he turned to his partner, calling for boys to carry him into the house. But Hughie Drummond had reached the end. His breathing was imperceptible. By mere touch, Sheldon could ascertain that the dying man’s temperature was going down. It must have been going down when the thermometer registered one hundred and seven. He had burned out. Sheldon knelt beside him, the house-boys grouped around, their white singlets and loin-cloths peculiarly at variance with their dark skins and savage countenances, their huge ear-plugs and carved and glistening nose-rings. Sheldon tottered to his feet at last, and half-fell into the steamer-chair. Oppressive as the heat had been, it was now even more oppressive. It was difficult to breathe. He panted for air. The faces and naked arms of the house-boys were beaded with sweat.

“Marster,” one of them ventured, “big fella wind he come, strong fella too much.”

Sheldon nodded his head but did not look. Much as he had loved Hughie Drummond, his death, and the funeral it entailed, seemed an intolerable burden to add to what he was already sinking under. He had a feeling — nay, it was a certitude — that all he had to do was to shut his eyes and let go, and that he would die, sink into immensity of rest. He knew it; it was very simple. All he had to do was close his eyes and let go; for he had reached the stage where he lived by will alone. His weary body seemed torn by the oncoming pangs of dissolution. He was a fool to hang on. He had died a score of deaths already, and what was the use of prolonging it to two-score deaths before he really died. Not only was he not afraid to die, but he desired to die. His weary flesh and weary spirit desired it, and why should the flame of him not go utterly out?

But his mind that could will life or death, still pulsed on. He saw the two whale-boats land on the beach, and the sick, on stretchers or pick-a-back, groaning and wailing, go by in lugubrious procession. He saw the wind making on the clouded horizon, and thought of the sick in the hospital.

Here was something waiting his hand to be done, and it was not in his nature to lie down and sleep, or die, when any task remained undone.

The boss-boys were called and given their orders to rope down the hospital with its two additions. He remembered the spare anchor-chain, new and black-painted, that hung under the house suspended from the floor-beams, and ordered it to be used on the hospital as well. Other boys brought the coffin, a grotesque patchwork of packing-cases, and under his directions they laid Hughie Drummond in it. Half a dozen boys carried it down the beach, while he rode on the back of another, his arms around the black's neck, one hand clutching a prayer-book.

While he read the service, the blacks gazed apprehensively at the dark line on the water, above which rolled and tumbled the racing clouds. The first breath of the wind, faint and silken, tonic with life, fanned through his dry-baked body as he finished reading. Then came the second breath of the wind, an angry gust, as the shovels worked rapidly, filling in the sand. So heavy was the gust that Sheldon, still on his feet, seized hold of his man-horse to escape being blown away. The *Jessie* was blotted out, and a strange ominous sound arose as multitudinous wavelets struck foaming on the beach. It was like the bubbling of some colossal cauldron. From all about could be heard the dull thudding of falling cocoanuts. The tall, delicate-trunked trees twisted and snapped about like whip-lashes. The air seemed filled with their flying leaves, any one of which, stem-on could brain a man. Then came the rain, a deluge, a straight, horizontal sheet that poured along like a river, defying gravitation. The black, with Sheldon mounted on him, plunged ahead into the thick of it, stooping far forward and low to the ground to avoid being toppled over backward.

"'He's sleeping out and far to-night,'" Sheldon quoted, as he thought of the dead man in the sand and the rainwater trickling down upon the cold clay.

So they fought their way back up the beach. The other blacks caught hold of the man-horse and pulled and tugged. There were among them those whose fondest desire was to drag the rider in the sand and spring upon him and mash him into repulsive nothingness. But the automatic pistol in his belt with its rattling, quick-dealing death, and the automatic, death-defying spirit in the man himself, made them refrain and buckle down to the task of hauling him to safety through the storm.

Wet through and exhausted, he was nevertheless surprised at the ease with which he got into a change of clothing. Though he was fearfully weak, he found himself actually feeling better. The disease had spent itself, and the mend had begun.

"Now if I don't get the fever," he said aloud, and at the same moment resolved to go to taking quinine as soon as he was strong enough to dare.

He crawled out on the veranda. The rain had ceased, but the wind, which had dwindled to a half-gale, was increasing. A big sea had sprung up, and the mile-long breakers, curling up to the over-fall two hundred yards from shore, were crashing on the beach. The *Jessie* was plunging madly to two anchors, and every second or third sea broke clear over her bow. Two flags were stiffly undulating from the halyards like squares of flexible sheet-iron. One was blue, the other red. He knew their meaning in the Berande private code — "What are your instructions? Shall I attempt to land boat?" Tacked on the wall, between the signal locker and the billiard rules, was the code itself, by which he verified the signal before making answer. On the flagstaff gaff a boy hoisted a white flag over a red, which stood for — "Run to Neal Island for shelter."

That Captain Oleson had been expecting this signal was apparent by the celerity with which the shackles were knocked out of both anchor-chains. He slipped his anchors, leaving them buoyed to be picked up in better weather. The *Jessie* swung off under her full staysail, then the foresail, double-reefed, was run up. She was away like a racehorse, clearing Balesuna Shoal with half a cable-length to spare. Just before she rounded the point she was swallowed up in a terrific squall that far out-blew the first.

All that night, while squall after squall smote Berande, uprooting trees, overthrowing copra-sheds, and rocking the house on its tall piles, Sheldon slept. He was unaware of the commotion. He never wakened. Nor did he change his position or dream. He awoke, a new man. Furthermore, he was hungry. It was over a week since food had passed his lips. He drank a glass of condensed cream, thinned with water, and by ten o'clock he dared to take a cup of beef-tea. He was cheered, also, by the situation in the hospital. Despite the storm there had been but one death, and there was only one fresh case, while half a dozen boys crawled weakly away to the barracks. He wondered if it was the wind that was blowing the disease away and cleansing the pestilential land.

By eleven a messenger arrived from Balesuna village, dispatched by Seelee. The *Jessie* had gone ashore half-way between the village and Neal Island. It was not till nightfall that two of the crew arrived, reporting the drowning of Captain Oleson and of the one remaining boy. As for the *Jessie*, from what they told him Sheldon could not but conclude that she was a total loss. Further to hearten him, he was taken by a shivering fit. In half an hour he was burning up. And he knew that at least another day must pass before he could undertake even the smallest dose of quinine. He crawled under a heap of blankets, and a little later found himself laughing aloud. He had surely reached the limit of disaster. Barring earthquake or tidal-wave, the worst had already befallen him. The *Flibberty-Gibbet* was certainly safe in Mboli Pass. Since nothing worse could happen, things simply had to mend. So it was, shivering under his blankets, that he laughed, until the house-boys, with heads together, marvelled at the devils that were in him.

CHAPTER IV — JOAN LACKLAND

By the second day of the northwester, Sheldon was in collapse from his fever. It had taken an unfair advantage of his weak state, and though it was only ordinary malarial fever, in forty-eight hours it had run him as low as ten days of fever would have done when he was in condition. But the dysentery had been swept away from Berande. A score of convalescents lingered in the hospital, but they were improving hourly. There had been but one more death — that of the man whose brother had wailed over him instead of brushing the flies away.

On the morning of the fourth day of his fever, Sheldon lay on the veranda, gazing dimly out over the raging ocean. The wind was falling, but a mighty sea was still thundering in on Berande beach, the flying spray reaching in as far as the flagstaff mounds, the foaming wash creaming against the gate-posts. He had taken thirty grains of quinine, and the drug was buzzing in his ears like a nest of hornets, making his hands and knees tremble, and causing a sickening palpitation of the stomach. Once, opening his eyes, he saw what he took to be an hallucination. Not far out, and coming in across the *Jessie's* anchorage, he saw a whale-boat's nose thrust skyward on a smoky crest and disappear naturally, as an actual whale-boat's nose should disappear, as it slid down the back of the sea. He knew that no whale-boat should be out there, and he was quite certain no men in the Solomons were mad enough to be abroad in such a storm.

But the hallucination persisted. A minute later, chancing to open his eyes, he saw the whale-boat, full length, and saw right into it as it rose on the face of a wave. He saw six sweeps at work, and in the stern, clearly outlined against the overhanging wall of white, a man who stood erect, gigantic, swaying with his weight on the steering-sweep. This he saw, and an eighth man who crouched in the bow and gazed shoreward. But what startled Sheldon was the sight of a woman in the stern-sheets, between the stroke-oar and the steersman. A woman she was, for a braid of her hair was flying, and she was just in the act of recapturing it and stowing it away beneath a hat that for all the world was like his own "Baden-Powell."

The boat disappeared behind the wave, and rose into view on the face of the following one. Again he looked into it. The men were dark-skinned, and larger than Solomon Islanders, but the woman, he could plainly see, was white. Who she was, and what she was doing there, were thoughts that drifted vaguely through his consciousness. He was too sick to be vitally interested, and, besides, he had a half feeling that it was all a dream; but he noted that the men were resting on their sweeps, while the woman and the steersman were intently watching the run of seas behind them.

"Good boatmen," was Sheldon's verdict, as he saw the boat leap forward on the face of a huge breaker, the sweeps plying swiftly to keep her on that front of the moving mountain of water that raced madly for the shore. It was well done. Part full of water, the boat was flung upon the beach, the men springing out and dragging its nose to the gate-posts. Sheldon had called vainly to the house-boys, who, at the moment, were dosing the remaining patients in the hospital. He knew he was unable to rise up and go down the path to meet the newcomers, so he lay back in the steamer-chair, and watched for ages while they cared for the boat. The woman stood to one side, her hand resting on the gate. Occasionally surges of sea water washed over her feet, which he could see were encased in rubber sea-boots. She scrutinized the house sharply, and for some time she gazed at him steadily. At last, speaking to two of the men, who turned and followed her, she started up the path.

Sheldon attempted to rise, got half up out of his chair, and fell back helplessly. He was surprised at the size of the men, who loomed like giants behind her. Both were six-footers, and they were heavy in proportion. He had never seen islanders like them. They were not black like the Solomon Islanders, but light brown; and their features were larger, more regular, and even handsome.

The woman — or girl, rather, he decided — walked along the veranda toward him. The two men waited at the head of the steps, watching curiously. The girl was angry; he could see that. Her gray eyes were flashing, and her lips were quivering. That she had a temper, was his thought. But the eyes were striking. He decided that they were not gray after all, or, at least, not all gray. They were large and wide apart, and they looked at him from under level brows. Her face was cameo-like, so clear cut was it. There were other striking things about her — the cowboy Stetson hat, the heavy braids of brown hair, and the long-barrelled 38 Colt's revolver that hung in its holster on her hip.

"Pretty hospitality, I must say," was her greeting, "letting strangers sink or swim in your front yard."

"I — I beg your pardon," he stammered, by a supreme effort dragging himself to his feet.

His legs wobbled under him, and with a suffocating sensation he began sinking to the floor. He was aware of a feeble gratification as he saw solicitude leap into her eyes; then blackness smote him, and at the moment of smiting him his thought was that at last, and for the first time in his life, he had fainted.

The ringing of the big bell aroused him. He opened his eyes and found that he was on the couch indoors. A glance at the clock told him that it was six, and from the direction the sun's rays streamed into the room he knew that it was morning. At first he puzzled over something untoward he was sure had happened. Then on the wall he saw a Stetson hat hanging, and beneath it a full cartridge-belt and a long-barrelled 38 Colt's revolver. The slender girth of the belt told its feminine story, and he remembered the whale-boat of the day before and the gray eyes that flashed beneath the level brows. She it must have been who had just rung the bell. The cares of the plantation rushed upon him, and he sat up in bed, clutching at the wall for support as the mosquito screen lurched dizzily around him. He was still sitting there, holding on, with eyes closed, striving to master his giddiness, when he heard her voice.

"You'll lie right down again, sir," she said.

It was sharply imperative, a voice used to command. At the same time one hand pressed him back toward the pillow while the other caught him from behind and eased him down.

"You've been unconscious for twenty-four hours now," she went on, "and I have taken charge. When I say the word you'll get up, and not until then. Now, what medicine do you take? — quinine? Here are ten grains. That's right. You'll make a good patient."

"My dear madame," he began.

"You musn't speak," she interrupted, "that is, in protest. Otherwise, you can talk."

"But the plantation — "

"A dead man is of no use on a plantation. Don't you want to know about *me*? My vanity is hurt. Here am I, just through my first shipwreck; and here are you, not the least bit curious, talking about your miserable plantation. Can't you see that I am just bursting to tell somebody, anybody, about my shipwreck?"

He smiled; it was the first time in weeks. And he smiled, not so much at what she said, as at the way she said it — the whimsical expression of her face, the laughter in her eyes, and the several tiny lines of humour that drew in at the corners. He was curiously wondering as to what her age was, as he said aloud:

"Yes, tell me, please."

"That I will not — not now," she retorted, with a toss of the head. "I'll find somebody to tell my story to who does not have to be asked. Also, I want information. I managed to find out what time to ring the bell to turn the hands to, and that is about all. I don't understand the ridiculous speech of your people. What time do they knock off?"

"At eleven — go on again at one."

"That will do, thank you. And now, where do you keep the key to the provisions? I want to feed my men."

"Your men!" he gasped. "On tinned goods! No, no. Let them go out and eat with my boys."

Her eyes flashed as on the day before, and he saw again the imperative expression on her face.

"That I won't; my men are *men*. I've been out to your miserable barracks and watched them eat. Faugh! Potatoes! Nothing but potatoes! No salt! Nothing! Only potatoes! I may have been mistaken, but I thought I understood them to say that that was all they ever got to eat. Two meals a day and every day in the week?"

He nodded.

"Well, my men wouldn't stand that for a single day, much less a whole week. Where is the key?"

"Hanging on that clothes-hook under the clock."

He gave it easily enough, but as she was reaching down the key she heard him say:

"Fancy niggers and tinned provisions."

This time she really was angry. The blood was in her cheeks as she turned on him.

"My men are not niggers. The sooner you understand that the better for our acquaintance. As for the tinned goods, I'll pay for all they eat. Please don't worry about that. Worry is not good for you in your condition. And I won't stay any longer than I have to — just long enough to get you on your feet, and not go away with the feeling of having deserted a white man."

“You’re American, aren’t you?” he asked quietly.

The question disconcerted her for the moment.

“Yes,” she vouchsafed, with a defiant look. “Why?”

“Nothing. I merely thought so.”

“Anything further?”

He shook his head.

“Why?” he asked.

“Oh, nothing. I thought you might have something pleasant to say.”

“My name is Sheldon, David Sheldon,” he said, with direct relevance, holding out a thin hand.

Her hand started out impulsively, then checked. “My name is Lackland, Joan Lackland.” The hand went out. “And let us be friends.”

“It could not be otherwise — ” he began lamely.

“And I can feed my men all the tinned goods I want?” she rushed on.

“Till the cows come home,” he answered, attempting her own lightness, then adding, “that is, to Berande. You see we don’t have any cows at Berande.”

She fixed him coldly with her eyes.

“Is that a joke?” she demanded.

“I really don’t know — I — I thought it was, but then, you see, I’m sick.”

“You’re English, aren’t you?” was her next query.

“Now that’s too much, even for a sick man,” he cried. “You know well enough that I am.”

“Oh,” she said absently, “then you are?”

He frowned, tightened his lips, then burst into laughter, in which she joined.

“It’s my own fault,” he confessed. “I shouldn’t have baited you. I’ll be careful in the future.”

“In the meantime go on laughing, and I’ll see about breakfast. Is there anything you would fancy?”

He shook his head.

“It will do you good to eat something. Your fever has burned out, and you are merely weak. Wait a moment.”

She hurried out of the room in the direction of the kitchen, tripped at the door in a pair of sandals several sizes too large for her feet, and disappeared in rosy confusion.

"By Jove, those are my sandals," he thought to himself. "The girl hasn't a thing to wear except what she landed on the beach in, and she certainly landed in sea-boots."

CHAPTER V — SHE WOULD A PLANTER BE

Sheldon mended rapidly. The fever had burned out, and there was nothing for him to do but gather strength. Joan had taken the cook in hand, and for the first time, as Sheldon remarked, the chop at Berande was white man's chop. With her own hands Joan prepared the sick man's food, and between that and the cheer she brought him, he was able, after two days, to totter feebly out upon the veranda. The situation struck him as strange, and stranger still was the fact that it did not seem strange to the girl at all. She had settled down and taken charge of the household as a matter of course, as if he were her father, or brother, or as if she were a man like himself.

"It is just too delightful for anything," she assured him. "It is like a page out of some romance. Here I come along out of the sea and find a sick man all alone with two hundred slaves — "

"Recruits," he corrected. "Contract labourers. They serve only three years, and they are free agents when they enter upon their contracts."

"Yes, yes," she hurried on. " — A sick man alone with two hundred recruits on a cannibal island — they are cannibals, aren't they? Or is it all talk?"

"Talk!" he said, with a smile. "It's a trifle more than that. Most of my boys are from the bush, and every bushman is a cannibal."

"But not after they become recruits? Surely, the boys you have here wouldn't be guilty."

"They'd eat you if the chance afforded."

"Are you just saying so, on theory, or do you really know?" she asked.

"I know."

"Why? What makes you think so? Your own men here?"

"Yes, my own men here, the very house-boys, the cook that at the present moment is making such delicious rolls, thanks to you. Not more than three months ago eleven of them sneaked a whale-boat and ran for Malaita. Nine of them belonged to Malaita. Two were bushmen from San Cristoval. They were fools — the two from San Cristoval, I mean; so would any two Malaita men be who trusted themselves in a boat with nine from San Cristoval."

"Yes?" she asked eagerly. "Then what happened?"

"The nine Malaita men ate the two from San Cristoval, all except the heads, which are too valuable for mere eating. They stowed them away in the stern-locker till they landed. And those two heads are now in some bush village back of Langa Langa."

She clapped her hands and her eyes sparkled. "They are really and truly cannibals! And just think, this is the twentieth century! And I thought romance and adventure were fossilized!"

He looked at her with mild amusement.

"What is the matter now?" she queried.

"Oh, nothing, only I don't fancy being eaten by a lot of filthy niggers is the least bit romantic."

"No, of course not," she admitted. "But to be among them, controlling them, directing them, two hundred of them, and to escape being eaten by them — that, at least, if it isn't romantic, is certainly the quintessence of adventure. And adventure and romance are allied, you know."

"By the same token, to go into a nigger's stomach should be the quintessence of adventure," he retorted.

"I don't think you have any romance in you," she exclaimed. "You're just dull and sombre and sordid like the business men at home. I don't know why you're here at all. You should be at home placidly vegetating as a banker's clerk or — or — "

"A shopkeeper's assistant, thank you."

"Yes, that — anything. What under the sun are you doing here on the edge of things?"

"Earning my bread and butter, trying to get on in the world."

"'By the bitter road the younger son must tread, Ere he win to hearth and saddle of his own,'" she quoted. "Why, if that isn't romantic, then nothing is romantic. Think of all the younger sons out over the world, on a myriad of adventures winning to those same hearths and saddles. And here you are in the thick of it, doing it, and here am I in the thick of it, doing it."

"I — I beg pardon," he drawled.

"Well, I'm a younger daughter, then," she amended; "and I have no hearth nor saddle — I haven't anybody or anything — and I'm just as far on the edge of things as you are."

"In your case, then, I'll admit there is a bit of romance," he confessed.

He could not help but think of the preceding nights, and of her sleeping in the hammock on the veranda, under mosquito curtains, her bodyguard of

Tahitian sailors stretched out at the far corner of the veranda within call. He had been too helpless to resist, but now he resolved she should have his couch inside while he would take the hammock.

"You see, I had read and dreamed about romance all my life," she was saying, "but I never, in my wildest fancies, thought that I should live it. It was all so unexpected. Two years ago I thought there was nothing left to me but. . . ." She faltered, and made a *moue* of distaste. "Well, the only thing that remained, it seemed to me, was marriage."

"And you preferred a cannibal isle and a cartridge-belt?" he suggested.

"I didn't think of the cannibal isle, but the cartridge-belt was blissful."

"You wouldn't dare use the revolver if you were compelled to. Or," noting the glint in her eyes, "if you did use it, to — well, to hit anything."

She started up suddenly to enter the house. He knew she was going for her revolver.

"Never mind," he said, "here's mine. What can you do with it?"

"Shoot the block off your flag-halyards."

He smiled his unbelief.

"I don't know the gun," she said dubiously.

"It's a light trigger and you don't have to hold down. Draw fine."

"Yes, yes," she spoke impatiently. "I know automatics — they jam when they get hot — only I don't know yours." She looked at it a moment. "It's cocked. Is there a cartridge in the chamber?"

She fired, and the block remained intact.

"It's a long shot," he said, with the intention of easing her chagrin.

But she bit her lip and fired again. The bullet emitted a sharp shriek as it ricochetted into space. The metal block rattled back and forth. Again and again she fired, till the clip was emptied of its eight cartridges. Six of them were hits. The block still swayed at the gaff-end, but it was battered out of all usefulness. Sheldon was astonished. It was better than he or even Hughie Drummond could have done. The women he had known, when they sporadically fired a rifle or revolver, usually shrieked, shut their eyes, and blazed away into space.

"That's really good shooting . . . for a woman," he said. "You only missed it twice, and it was a strange weapon."

"But I can't make out the two misses," she complained. "The gun worked beautifully, too. Give me another clip and I'll hit it eight times for anything you wish."

"I don't doubt it. Now I'll have to get a new block. Viaburi! Here you fella, catch one fella block along storeroom."

"I'll wager you can't do it eight out of eight . . . anything you wish," she challenged.

"No fear of my taking it on," was his answer. "Who taught you to shoot?"

"Oh, my father, at first, and then Von, and his cowboys. He was a shot — Dad, I mean, though Von was splendid, too."

Sheldon wondered secretly who Von was, and he speculated as to whether it was Von who two years previously had led her to believe that nothing remained for her but matrimony.

"What part of the United States is your home?" he asked. "Chicago or Wyoming? or somewhere out there? You know you haven't told me a thing about yourself. All that I know is that you are Miss Joan Lackland from anywhere."

"You'd have to go farther west to find my stamping grounds."

"Ah, let me see — Nevada?"

She shook her head.

"California?"

"Still farther west."

"It can't be, or else I've forgotten my geography."

"It's your politics," she laughed. "Don't you remember 'Annexation'?"

"The Philippines!" he cried triumphantly.

"No, Hawaii. I was born there. It is a beautiful land. My, I'm almost homesick for it already. Not that I haven't been away. I was in New York when the crash came. But I do think it is the sweetest spot on earth — Hawaii, I mean."

"Then what under the sun are you doing down here in this God-forsaken place?" he asked. "Only fools come here," he added bitterly.

"Nielsen wasn't a fool, was he?" she queried. "As I understand, he made three millions here."

"Only too true, and that fact is responsible for my being here."

"And for me, too," she said. "Dad heard about him in the Marquesas, and so we started. Only poor Dad didn't get here."

"He — your father — died?" he faltered.

She nodded, and her eyes grew soft and moist.

"I might as well begin at the beginning." She lifted her head with a proud air of dismissing sadness, after, the manner of a woman qualified to wear a Baden-Powell and a long-barrelled Colt's. "I was born at Hilo. That's on the island of Hawaii — the biggest and best in the whole group. I was brought up the way most girls in Hawaii are brought up. They live in the open, and they know how to ride and swim before they know what six-times-six is. As for me, I can't remember when I first got on a horse nor when I learned to swim. That came before my A B C's. Dad owned cattle ranches on Hawaii and Maui — big ones, for the islands. Hokuna had two hundred thousand acres alone. It extended in between Mauna Koa and Mauna Loa, and it was there I learned to shoot goats and wild cattle. On Molokai they have big spotted deer. Von was the manager of Hokuna. He had two daughters about my own age, and I always spent the hot season there, and, once, a whole year. The three of us were like Indians. Not that we ran wild, exactly, but that we were wild to run wild. There were always the governesses, you know, and lessons, and sewing, and housekeeping; but I'm afraid we were too often bribed to our tasks with promises of horses or of cattle drives.

"Von had been in the army, and Dad was an old sea-dog, and they were both stern disciplinarians; only the two girls had no mother, and neither had I, and they were two men after all. They spoiled us terribly. You see, they didn't have any wives, and they made chums out of us — when our tasks were done. We had to learn to do everything about the house twice as well as the native servants did it — that was so that we should know how to manage some day. And we always made the cocktails, which was too holy a rite for any servant. Then, too, we were never allowed anything we could not take care of ourselves. Of course the cowboys always roped and saddled our horses, but we had to be able ourselves to go out in the paddock and rope our horses — "

"What do you mean by *rope*?" Sheldon asked.

"To lariat them, to lasso them. And Dad and Von timed us in the saddling and made a most rigid examination of the result. It was the same way with our revolvers and rifles. The house-boys always cleaned them and greased them; but we had to learn how in order to see that they did it properly. More than once, at first, one or the other of us had our rifles taken away for a week just because of a tiny speck of rust. We had to know how to build fires in the driving rain, too, out of wet wood, when we camped out, which was the hardest thing of all — except grammar, I do believe. We learned more from Dad and Von than from the governesses; Dad taught us French and Von German. We learned both languages passably well, and we learned them wholly in the saddle or in camp.

"In the cool season the girls used to come down and visit me in Hilo, where Dad had two houses, one at the beach, or the three of us used to go down to our place in Puna, and that meant canoes and boats and fishing and swimming. Then, too, Dad belonged to the Royal Hawaiian Yacht Club, and took us racing and cruising. Dad could never get away from the sea, you know. When I was fourteen I was Dad's actual housekeeper, with entire power over the servants, and I am very proud of that period of my life. And when I was sixteen we three girls were all sent up to California to Mills Seminary, which was quite fashionable and stifling. How we used to long for home! We didn't chum with the other girls, who called us little cannibals, just because we came from the Sandwich Islands, and who made invidious remarks about our ancestors banqueting on Captain Cook — which was historically untrue, and, besides, our ancestors hadn't lived in Hawaii.

"I was three years at Mills Seminary, with trips home, of course, and two years in New York; and then Dad went smash in a sugar plantation on Maui. The report of the engineers had not been right. Then Dad had built a railroad that was called 'Lackland's Folly,' — it will pay ultimately, though. But it contributed to the smash. The Pelaulau Ditch was the finishing blow. And nothing would have happened anyway, if it hadn't been for that big money panic in Wall Street. Dear good Dad! He never let me know. But I read about the crash in a newspaper, and hurried home. It was before that, though, that people had been dinging into my ears that marriage was all any woman could get out of life, and good-bye to romance. Instead of which, with Dad's failure, I fell right into romance."

"How long ago was that?" Sheldon asked.

"Last year — the year of the panic."

"Let me see," Sheldon pondered with an air of gravity. "Sixteen plus five, plus one, equals twenty-two. You were born in 1887?"

"Yes; but it is not nice of you."

"I am really sorry," he said, "but the problem was so obvious."

"Can't you ever say nice things? Or is it the way you English have?" There was a snap in her gray eyes, and her lips quivered suspiciously for a moment. “I should recommend, Mr. Sheldon, that you read Gertrude Atherton’s ‘American Wives and English Husbands.’”

“Thank you, I have. It’s over there.” He pointed at the generously filled bookshelves. “But I am afraid it is rather partisan.”

“Anything un-English is bound to be,” she retorted. “I never have liked the English anyway. The last one I knew was an overseer. Dad was compelled to discharge him.”

“One swallow doesn’t make a summer.”

“But that Englishman made lots of trouble — there! And now please don’t make me any more absurd than I already am.”

“I’m trying not to.”

“Oh, for that matter — ” She tossed her head, opened her mouth to complete the retort, then changed her mind. “I shall go on with my history. Dad had practically nothing left, and he decided to return to the sea. He’d always loved it, and I half believe that he was glad things had happened as they did. He was like a boy again, busy with plans and preparations from morning till night. He used to sit up half the night talking things over with me. That was after I had shown him that I was really resolved to go along.

“He had made his start, you know, in the South Seas — pearls and pearl shell — and he was sure that more fortunes, in trove of one sort and another, were to be picked up. Cocoanut-planting was his particular idea, with trading, and maybe pearling, along with other things, until the plantation should come into bearing. He traded off his yacht for a schooner, the *Miélé*, and away we went. I took care of him and studied navigation. He was his own skipper. We had a Danish mate, Mr. Ericson, and a mixed crew of Japanese and Hawaiians. We went up and down the Line Islands, first, until Dad was heartsick. Everything was changed. They had been annexed and divided by one power or another, while big companies had stepped in and gobbled land, trading rights, fishing rights, everything.

“Next we sailed for the Marquesas. They were beautiful, but the natives were nearly extinct. Dad was cut up when he learned that the French charged an export duty on copra — he called it medieval — but he liked the land. There was a valley of fifteen thousand acres on Nuka-hiva, half inclosing a perfect anchorage, which he fell in love with and bought for twelve hundred Chili dollars. But the French taxation was outrageous (that was why the land was so cheap), and, worst of all, we could obtain no labour. What kanakas there were wouldn't work, and the officials seemed to sit up nights thinking out new obstacles to put in our way.

"Six months was enough for Dad. The situation was hopeless. 'We'll go to the Solomons,' he said, 'and get a whiff of English rule. And if there are no openings there we'll go on to the Bismarck Archipelago. I'll wager the Admiraltys are not yet civilized.' All preparations were made, things packed on board, and a new crew of Marquesans and Tahitians shipped. We were just ready to start to Tahiti, where a lot of repairs and refitting for the *Miélé* were necessary, when poor Dad came down sick and died."

"And you were left all alone?"

Joan nodded.

"Very much alone. I had no brothers nor sisters, and all Dad's people were drowned in a Kansas cloud-burst. That happened when he was a little boy. Of course, I could go back to Von. There's always a home there waiting for me. But why should I go? Besides, there were Dad's plans, and I felt that it devolved upon me to carry them out. It seemed a fine thing to do. Also, I wanted to carry them out. And . . . here I am.

"Take my advice and never go to Tahiti. It is a lovely place, and so are the natives. But the white people! Now Barabbas lived in Tahiti. Thieves, robbers, and lairs — that is what they are. The honest men wouldn't require the fingers of one hand to count. The fact that I was a woman only simplified matters with them. They robbed me on every pretext, and they lied without pretext or need. Poor Mr. Ericson was corrupted. He joined the robbers, and O.K.'d all their demands even up to a thousand per cent. If they robbed me of ten francs, his share was three. One bill of fifteen hundred francs I paid, netted him five hundred francs. All this, of course, I learned afterward. But the *Miélé* was old, the repairs had to be made, and I was charged, not three prices, but seven prices.

"I never shall know how much Ericson got out of it. He lived ashore in a nicely furnished house. The shipwrights were giving it to him rent-free. Fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, and ice came to this house every day, and he paid for none of it. It was part of his graft from the various merchants. And all the while, with tears in his eyes, he bemoaned the vile treatment I was receiving from the gang. No, I did not fall among thieves. I went to Tahiti.

"But when the robbers fell to cheating one another, I got my first clues to the state of affairs. One of the robbed robbers came to me after dark, with facts, figures, and assertions. I knew I was ruined if I went to law. The judges were corrupt like everything else. But I did do one thing. In the dead of night I went to Ericson's house. I had the same revolver I've got now, and I made him stay in bed while I overhauled things. Nineteen hundred and odd francs was what I carried away with me. He never complained to the police, and he never came back on board. As for the rest of the gang, they laughed and snapped their fingers at me. There were two Americans in the place, and they warned me to leave the law alone unless I wanted to leave the *Miélé* behind as well.

"Then I sent to New Zealand and got a German mate. He had a master's certificate, and was on the ship's papers as captain, but I was a better navigator than he, and I was really captain myself. I lost her, too, but it's no reflection on my seamanship. We were drifting four days outside there in dead calms. Then the nor'wester caught us and drove us on the lee shore. We made sail and tried to clew off, when the rotten work of the Tahiti shipwrights became manifest. Our jib-boom and all our head-stays carried away. Our only chance was to turn and run through the passage between Florida and Ysabel. And when we were safely through, in the twilight, where the chart shows fourteen fathoms as the shoalest water, we smashed on a coral patch. The poor old *Miélé* struck only once, and then went clear; but it was too much for her, and we just had time to clear away in the boat when she went down. The German mate was drowned. We lay all night to a sea-drag, and next morning sighted your place here."

"I suppose you will go back to Von, now?" Sheldon queried.

"Nothing of the sort. Dad planned to go to the Solomons. I shall look about for some land and start a small plantation. Do you know any good land around here? Cheap?"

"By George, you Yankees are remarkable, really remarkable," said Sheldon. "I should never have dreamed of such a venture."

"Adventure," Joan corrected him.

"That's right — adventure it is. And if you'd gone ashore on Malaita instead of Guadalcanar you'd have been *kai-kai'd* long ago, along with your noble Tahitian sailors."

Joan shuddered.

"To tell the truth," she confessed, "we were very much afraid to land on Guadalcanar. I read in the 'Sailing Directions' that the natives were treacherous and hostile. Some day I should like to go to Malaita. Are there any plantations there?"

“Not one. Not a white trader even.”

“Then I shall go over on a recruiting vessel some time.”

“Impossible!” Sheldon cried. “It is no place for a woman.”

“I shall go just the same,” she repeated.

“But no self-respecting woman — ”

“Be careful,” she warned him. “I shall go some day, and then you may be sorry for the names you have called me.”

CHAPTER VI — TEMPEST

It was the first time Sheldon had been at close quarters with an American girl, and he would have wondered if all American girls were like Joan Lackland had he not had wit enough to realize that she was not at all typical. Her quick mind and changing moods bewildered him, while her outlook on life was so different from what he conceived a woman's outlook should be, that he was more often than not at sixes and sevens with her. He could never anticipate what she would say or do next. Of only one thing was he sure, and that was that whatever she said or did was bound to be unexpected and unsuspected. There seemed, too, something almost hysterical in her make-up. Her temper was quick and stormy, and she relied too much on herself and too little on him, which did not approximate at all to his ideal of woman's conduct when a man was around. Her assumption of equality with him was disconcerting, and at times he half-consciously resented the impudence and bizarreness of her intrusion upon him — rising out of the sea in a howling nor'wester, fresh from poking her revolver under Ericson's nose, protected by her gang of huge Polynesian sailors, and settling down in Berande like any shipwrecked sailor. It was all on a par with her Baden-Powell and the long 38 Colt's.

At any rate, she did not look the part. And that was what he could not forgive. Had she been short-haired, heavy-jawed, large-muscled, hard-bitten, and utterly unlovely in every way, all would have been well. Instead of which she was hopelessly and deliciously feminine. Her hair worried him, it was so generously beautiful. And she was so slenderly and prettily the woman — the girl, rather — that it cut him like a knife to see her, with quick, comprehensive eyes and sharply imperative voice, superintend the launching of the whale-boat through the surf. In imagination he could see her roping a horse, and it always made him shudder. Then, too, she was so many-sided. Her knowledge of literature and art surprised him, while deep down was the feeling that a girl who knew such things had no right to know how to rig tackles, heave up anchors, and sail schooners around the South Seas. Such things in her brain were like so many oaths on her lips. While for such a girl to insist that she was going on a recruiting cruise around Malaita was positive self-sacrilege.

He always perturbedly harked back to her feminineness. She could play the piano far better than his sisters at home, and with far finer appreciation — the piano that poor Hughie had so heroically laboured over to keep in condition. And when she strummed the guitar and sang liquid, velvety Hawaiian *hulas*, he sat entranced. Then she was all woman, and the magic of sex kidnapped the irritations of the day and made him forget the big revolver, the Baden-Powell, and all the rest. But what right, the next thought in his brain would whisper, had such a girl to swagger around like a man and exult that adventure was not dead? Woman that adventured were adventuresses, and the connotation was not nice. Besides, he was not enamoured of adventure. Not since he was a boy had it appealed to him — though it would have driven him hard to explain what had brought him from England to the Solomons if it had not been adventure.

Sheldon certainly was not happy. The unconventional state of affairs was too much for his conservative disposition and training. Berande, inhabited by one lone white man, was no place for Joan Lackland. Yet he racked his brain for a way out, and even talked it over with her. In the first place, the steamer from Australia was not due for three weeks.

“One thing is evident: you don’t want me here,” she said. “I’ll man the whale-boat to-morrow and go over to Tulagi.”

“But as I told you before, that is impossible,” he cried. “There is no one there. The Resident Commissioner is away in Australia. Them is only one white man, a third assistant understrapper and ex-sailor — a common sailor. He is in charge of the government of the Solomons, to say nothing of a hundred or so niggers — prisoners. Besides, he is such a fool that he would fine you five pounds for not having entered at Tulagi, which is the port of entry, you know. He is not a nice man, and, I repeat, it is impossible.”

“There is Guvutu,” she suggested.

He shook his head.

“There’s nothing there but fever and five white men who are drinking themselves to death. I couldn’t permit it.”

“Oh thank you,” she said quietly. “I guess I’ll start to-day. — Viaburi! You go along Noa Noah, speak ’m come along me.”

Noa Noah was her head sailor, who had been boatswain of the *Miélé*.

“Where are you going?” Sheldon asked in surprise. — “Vlaburi! You stop.”

"To Guvutu — immediately," was her reply.

"But I won't permit it."

"That is why I am going. You said it once before, and it is something I cannot brook."

"What?" He was bewildered by her sudden anger. "If I have offended in any way — "

"Viaburi, you fetch 'm one fella Noa Noah along me," she commanded.

The black boy started to obey.

"Viaburi! You no stop I break 'm head belong you. And now, Miss Lackland, I insist — you must explain. What have I said or done to merit this?"

"You have presumed, you have dared — "

She choked and swallowed, and could not go on.

Sheldon looked the picture of despair.

"I confess my head is going around with it all," he said. "If you could only be explicit."

"As explicit as you were when you told me that you would not permit me to go to Guvutu?"

"But what's wrong with that?"

"But you have no right — no man has the right — to tell me what he will permit or not permit. I'm too old to have a guardian, nor did I sail all the way to the Solomons to find one."

"A gentleman is every woman's guardian."

"Well, I'm not every woman — that's all. Will you kindly allow me to send your boy for Noa Noah? I wish him to launch the whale-boat. Or shall I go myself for him?"

Both were now on their feet, she with flushed cheeks and angry eyes, he, puzzled, vexed, and alarmed. The black boy stood like a statue — a plum-black statue — taking no interest in the transactions of these incomprehensible whites, but dreaming with calm eyes of a certain bush village high on the jungle slopes of Malaita, with blue smoke curling up from the grass houses against the gray background of an oncoming mountain-squall.

"But you won't do anything so foolish — " he began.

"There you go again," she cried.

"I didn't mean it that way, and you know I didn't." He was speaking slowly and gravely. "And that other thing, that not permitting — it is only a manner of speaking. Of course I am not your guardian. You know you can go to Guvutu if you want to" — "or to the devil," he was almost tempted to add. "Only, I should deeply regret it, that is all. And I am very sorry that I should have said anything that hurt you. Remember, I am an Englishman."

Joan smiled and sat down again.

"Perhaps I have been hasty," she admitted. "You see, I am intolerant of restraint. If you only knew how I have been compelled to fight for my freedom. It is a sore point with me, this being told what I am to do or not do by you self-constituted lords of creation.-Viaburi I You stop along kitchen. No bring 'm Noa Noah. — And now, Mr. Sheldon, what am I to do? You don't want me here, and there doesn't seem to be any place for me to go."

"That is unfair. Your being wrecked here has been a godsend to me. I was very lonely and very sick. I really am not certain whether or not I should have pulled through had you not happened along. But that is not the point. Personally, purely selfishly personally, I should be sorry to see you go. But I am not considering myself. I am considering you. It — it is hardly the proper thing, you know. If I were married — if there were some woman of your own race here — but as it is — "

She threw up her hands in mock despair.

"I cannot follow you," she said. "In one breath you tell me I must go, and in the next breath you tell me there is no place to go and that you will not permit me to go. What is a poor girl to do?"

"That's the trouble," he said helplessly.

"And the situation annoys you."

"Only for your sake."

"Then let me save your feelings by telling you that it does not annoy me at all — except for the row you are making about it. I never allow what can't be changed to annoy me. There is no use in fighting the inevitable. Here is the situation. You are here. I am here. I can't go elsewhere, by your own account. You certainly can't go elsewhere and leave me here alone with a whole plantation and two hundred woolly cannibals on my hands. Therefore you stay, and I stay. It is very simple. Also, it is adventure. And furthermore, you needn't worry for yourself. I am not matrimonially inclined. I came to the Solomons for a plantation, not a husband."

Sheldon flushed, but remained silent.

"I know what you are thinking," she laughed gaily. "That if I were a man you'd wring my neck for me. And I deserve it, too. I'm so sorry. I ought not to keep on hurting your feelings."

"I'm afraid I rather invite it," he said, relieved by the signs of the tempest subsiding.

"I have it," she announced. "Lend me a gang of your boys for to-day. I'll build a grass house for myself over in the far corner of the compound — on piles, of course. I can move in to-night. I'll be comfortable and safe. The Tahitians can keep an anchor watch just as aboard ship. And then I'll study cocoanut planting. In return, I'll run the kitchen end of your household and give you some decent food to eat. And finally, I won't listen to any of your protests. I know all that you are going to say and offer — your giving the bungalow up to me and building a grass house for yourself. And I won't have it. You may as well consider everything settled. On the other hand, if you don't agree, I will go across the river, beyond your jurisdiction, and build a village for myself and my sailors, whom I shall send in the whale-boat to Guvutu for provisions. And now I want you to teach me billiards."

CHAPTER VII — A HARD-BITTEN GANG

Joan took hold of the household with no uncertain grip, revolutionizing things till Sheldon hardly recognized the place. For the first time the bungalow was clean and orderly. No longer the house-boys loafed and did as little as they could; while the cook complained that “head belong him walk about too much,” from the strenuous course in cookery which she put him through. Nor did Sheldon escape being roundly lectured for his laziness in eating nothing but tinned provisions. She called him a muddler and a slouch, and other invidious names, for his slackness and his disregard of healthful food.

She sent her whale-boat down the coast twenty miles for limes and oranges, and wanted to know scathingly why said fruits had not long since been planted at Berande, while he was beneath contempt because there was no kitchen garden. Mummy apples, which he had regarded as weeds, under her guidance appeared as appetizing breakfast fruit, and, at dinner, were metamorphosed into puddings that elicited his unqualified admiration. Bananas, foraged from the bush, were served, cooked and raw, a dozen different ways, each one of which he declared was better than any other. She or her sailors dynamited fish daily, while the Balesuna natives were paid tobacco for bringing in oysters from the mangrove swamps. Her achievements with cocoanuts were a revelation. She taught the cook how to make yeast from the milk, that, in turn, raised light and airy bread. From the tip-top heart of the tree she concocted a delicious salad. From the milk and the meat of the nut she made various sauces and dressings, sweet and sour, that were served, according to preparation, with dishes that ranged from fish to pudding. She taught Sheldon the superiority of cocoanut cream over condensed cream, for use in coffee. From the old and sprouting nuts she took the solid, spongy centres and turned them into salads. Her forte seemed to be salads, and she astonished him with the deliciousness of a salad made from young bamboo shoots. Wild tomatoes, which had gone to seed or been remorselessly hoed out from the beginning of Berande, were foraged for salads, soups, and sauces. The chickens, which had always gone into the bush and hidden their eggs, were given laying-bins, and Joan went out herself to shoot wild duck and wild pigeons for the table.

“Not that I like to do this sort of work,” she explained, in reference to the cookery; “but because I can’t get away from Dad’s training.”

Among other things, she burned the pestilential hospital, quarrelled with Sheldon over the dead, and, in anger, set her own men to work building a new, and what she called a decent, hospital. She robbed the windows of their lawn and muslin curtains, replacing them with gaudy calico from the trade-store, and made herself several gowns. When she wrote out a list of goods and clothing for herself, to be sent down to Sydney by the first steamer, Sheldon wondered how long she had made up her mind to stay.

She was certainly unlike any woman he had ever known or dreamed of. So far as he was concerned she was not a woman at all. She neither languished nor blandished. No feminine lures were wasted on him. He might have been her brother, or she his brother, for all sex had to do with the strange situation. Any mere polite gallantry on his part was ignored or snubbed, and he had very early given up offering his hand to her in getting into a boat or climbing over a log, and he had to acknowledge to himself that she was eminently fitted to take care of herself. Despite his warnings about crocodiles and sharks, she persisted in swimming in deep water off the beach; nor could he persuade her, when she was in the boat, to let one of the sailors throw the dynamite when shooting fish. She argued that she was at least a little bit more intelligent than they, and that, therefore, there was less liability of an accident if she did the shooting. She was to him the most masculine and at the same time the most feminine woman he had ever met.

A source of continual trouble between them was the disagreement over methods of handling the black boys. She ruled by stern kindness, rarely rewarding, never punishing, and he had to confess that her own sailors worshipped her, while the house-boys were her slaves, and did three times as much work for her as he had ever got out of them. She quickly saw the unrest of the contract labourers, and was not blind to the danger, always imminent, that both she and Sheldon ran. Neither of them ever ventured out without a revolver, and the sailors who stood the night watches by Joan’s grass house were armed with rifles. But Joan insisted that this reign of terror had been caused by the reign of fear practised by the white men. She had been brought up with the gentle Hawaiians, who never were ill-treated nor roughly handled, and she generalized that the Solomon Islanders, under kind treatment, would grow gentle.

One evening a terrific uproar arose in the barracks, and Sheldon, aided by Joan's sailors, succeeded in rescuing two women whom the blacks were beating to death. To save them from the vengeance of the blacks, they were guarded in the cook-house for the night. They were the two women who did the cooking for the labourers, and their offence had consisted of one of them taking a bath in the big cauldron in which the potatoes were boiled. The blacks were not outraged from the standpoint of cleanliness; they often took baths in the cauldrons themselves. The trouble lay in that the bather had been a low, degraded, wretched female; for to the Solomon Islander all females are low, degraded, and wretched.

Next morning, Joan and Sheldon, at breakfast, were aroused by a swelling murmur of angry voices. The first rule of Berande had been broken. The compound had been entered without permission or command, and all the two hundred labourers, with the exception of the boss-boys, were guilty of the offence. They crowded up, threatening and shouting, close under the front veranda. Sheldon leaned over the veranda railing, looking down upon them, while Joan stood slightly back. When the uproar was stilled, two brothers stood forth. They were large men, splendidly muscled, and with faces unusually ferocious, even for Solomon Islanders. One was Carin-Jama, otherwise The Silent; and the other was Bellin-Jama, The Boaster. Both had served on the Queensland plantations in the old days, and they were known as evil characters wherever white men met and gammed.

"We fella boy we want 'm them dam two black fella Mary," said Bellin-Jama.

"What you do along black fella Mary?" Sheldon asked.

"Kill 'm," said Bellin-Jama.

"What name you fella boy talk along me?" Sheldon demanded, with a show of rising anger. "Big bell he ring. You no belong along here. You belong along field. Bime by, big fella bell he ring, you stop along *kai-kai*, you come talk along me about two fella Mary. Now all you boy get along out of here."

The gang waited to see what Bellin-Jama would do, and Bellin-Jama stood still.

"Me no go," he said.

"You watch out, Bellin-Jama," Sheldon said sharply, "or I send you along Tulagi one big fella lashing. My word, you catch 'm strong fella."

Bellin-Jama glared up belligerently.

“You want ’m fight,” he said, putting up his fists in approved, returned-Queenslander style.

Now, in the Solomons, where whites are few and blacks are many, and where the whites do the ruling, such an offer to fight is the deadliest insult. Blacks are not supposed to dare so highly as to offer to fight a white man. At the best, all they can look for is to be beaten by the white man.

A murmur of admiration at Bellin-Jama’s bravery went up from the listening blacks. But Bellin-Jama’s voice was still ringing in the air, and the murmuring was just beginning, when Sheldon cleared the rail, leaping straight downward. From the top of the railing to the ground it was fifteen feet, and Bellin-Jama was directly beneath. Sheldon’s flying body struck him and crushed him to earth. No blows were needed to be struck. The black had been knocked helpless. Joan, startled by the unexpected leap, saw Carin-Jama, The Silent, reach out and seize Sheldon by the throat as he was half-way to his feet, while the five-score blacks surged forward for the killing. Her revolver was out, and Carin-Jama let go his grip, reeling backward with a bullet in his shoulder. In that fleeting instant of action she had thought to shoot him in the arm, which, at that short distance, might reasonably have been achieved. But the wave of savages leaping forward had changed her shot to the shoulder. It was a moment when not the slightest chance could be taken.

The instant his throat was released, Sheldon struck out with his fist, and Carin-Jama joined his brother on the ground. The mutiny was quelled, and five minutes more saw the brothers being carried to the hospital, and the mutineers, marshalled by the gang-bosses, on the way to the fields.

When Sheldon came up on the veranda, he found Joan collapsed on the steamer-chair and in tears. The sight unnerved him as the row just over could not possibly have done. A woman in tears was to him an embarrassing situation; and when that woman was Joan Lackland, from whom he had grown to expect anything unexpected, he was really frightened. He glanced down at her helplessly, and moistened his lips.

“I want to thank you,” he began. “There isn’t a doubt but what you saved my life, and I must say — ”

She abruptly removed her hands, showing a wrathful and tear-stained face.

“You brute! You coward!” she cried. “You have made me shoot a man, and I never shot a man in my life before.”

“It’s only a flesh-wound, and he isn’t going to die,” Sheldon managed to interpolate.

“What of that? I shot him just the same. There was no need for you to jump down there that way. It was brutal and cowardly.”

“Oh, now I say — ” he began soothingly.

“Go away. Don’t you see I hate you! hate you! Oh, won’t you go away!”

Sheldon was white with anger.

“Then why in the name of common sense did you shoot?” he demanded.

“Be-be-because you were a white man,” she sobbed. “And Dad would never have left any white man in the lurch. But it was your fault. You had no right to get yourself in such a position. Besides, it wasn’t necessary.”

“I am afraid I don’t understand,” he said shortly, turning away. “We will talk it over later on.”

“Look how I get on with the boys,” she said, while he paused in the doorway, stiffly polite, to listen. “There’s those two sick boys I am nursing. They will do anything for me when they get well, and I won’t have to keep them in fear of their life all the time. It is not necessary, I tell you, all this harshness and brutality. What if they are cannibals? They are human beings, just like you and me, and they are amenable to reason. That is what distinguishes all of us from the lower animals.”

He nodded and went out.

“I suppose I’ve been unforgivably foolish,” was her greeting, when he returned several hours later from a round of the plantation. “I’ve been to the hospital, and the man is getting along all right. It is not a serious hurt.”

Sheldon felt unaccountably pleased and happy at the changed aspect of her mood.

“You see, you don’t understand the situation,” he began. “In the first place, the blacks have to be ruled sternly. Kindness is all very well, but you can’t rule them by kindness only. I accept all that you say about the Hawaiians and the Tahitians. You say that they can be handled that way, and I believe you. I have had no experience with them. But you have had no experience with the blacks, and I ask you to believe me. They are different from your natives. You are used to Polynesians. These boys are Melanesians. They’re blacks. They’re niggers — look at their kinky hair.

And they're a whole lot lower than the African niggers. Really, you know, there is a vast difference."

"They possess no gratitude, no sympathy, no kindliness. If you are kind to them, they think you are a fool. If you are gentle with them they think you are afraid. And when they think you are afraid, watch out, for they will get you. Just to show you, let me state the one invariable process in a black man's brain when, on his native heath, he encounters a stranger. His first thought is one of fear. Will the stranger kill him? His next thought, seeing that he is not killed, is: Can he kill the stranger? There was Packard, a Colonial trader, some twelve miles down the coast. He boasted that he ruled by kindness and never struck a blow. The result was that he did not rule at all. He used to come down in his whale-boat to visit Hughie and me. When his boat's crew decided to go home, he had to cut his visit short to accompany them. I remember one Sunday afternoon when Packard had accepted our invitation to stop to dinner. The soup was just served, when Hughie saw a nigger peering in through the door. He went out to him, for it was a violation of Berande custom. Any nigger has to send in word by the house-boys, and to keep outside the compound. This man, who was one of Packard's boat's-crew, was on the veranda. And he knew better, too. 'What name?' said Hughie. 'You tell 'm white man close up we fella boat's-crew go along. He no come now, we fella boy no wait. We go.' And just then Hughie fetched him a clout that knocked him clean down the stairs and off the veranda."

"But it was needlessly cruel," Joan objected. "You wouldn't treat a white man that way."

"And that's just the point. He wasn't a white man. He was a low black nigger, and he was deliberately insulting, not alone his own white master, but every white master in the Solomons. He insulted me. He insulted Hughie. He insulted Berande."

"Of course, according to your lights, to your formula of the rule of the strong — "

"Yes," Sheldon interrupted, "but it was according to the formula of the rule of the weak that Packard ruled. And what was the result? I am still alive. Packard is dead. He was unswervingly kind and gentle to his boys, and his boys waited till one day he was down with fever. His head is over on Malaita now. They carried away two whale-boats as well, filled with the loot of the store. Then there was Captain Mackenzie of the ketch *Minota*.

He believed in kindness. He also contended that better confidence was established by carrying no weapons. On his second trip to Malaita, recruiting, he ran into Bina, which is near Langa Langa. The rifles with which the boat's-crew should have been armed, were locked up in his cabin. When the whale-boat went ashore after recruits, he paraded around the deck without even a revolver on him. He was tomahawked. His head remains in Malaita. It was suicide. So was Packard's finish suicide."

"I grant that precaution is necessary in dealing with them," Joan agreed; "but I believe that more satisfactory results can be obtained by treating them with discreet kindness and gentleness."

"And there I agree with *you*, but you must understand one thing. Berande, bar none, is by far the worst plantation in the Solomons so far as the labour is concerned. And how it came to be so proves your point. The previous owners of Berande were not discreetly kind. They were a pair of unadulterated brutes. One was a down-east Yankee, as I believe they are called, and the other was a guzzling German. They were slave-drivers. To begin with, they bought their labour from Johnny Be-blowed, the most notorious recruiter in the Solomons. He is working out a ten years' sentence in Fiji now, for the wanton killing of a black boy. During his last days here he had made himself so obnoxious that the natives on Malaita would have nothing to do with him. The only way he could get recruits was by hurrying to the spot whenever a murder or series of murders occurred. The murderers were usually only too willing to sign on and get away to escape vengeance. Down here they call such escapes, 'pier-head jumps.' There is suddenly a roar from the beach, and a nigger runs down to the water pursued by clouds of spears and arrows. Of course, Johnny Be-blowed's whale-boat is lying ready to pick him up. In his last days Johnny got nothing but pier-head jumps.

"And the first owners of Berande bought his recruits — a hard-bitten gang of murderers. They were all five-year boys. You see, the recruiter has the advantage over a boy when he makes a pier-head jump. He could sign him on for ten years did the law permit. Well, that's the gang of murderers we've got on our hands now. Of course some are dead, some have been killed, and there are others serving sentences at Tulagi. Very little clearing did those first owners do, and less planting. It was war all the time. They had one manager killed. One of the partners had his shoulder slashed nearly off by a cane-knife. The other was speared on two different occasions. Both were bullies, wherefore there was a streak of cowardice in them, and in the end they had to give up. They were chased away — literally chased away — by their own niggers. And along came poor Hughie and me, two new chums, to take hold of that hard-bitten gang. We did not know the situation, and we had bought Berande, and there was nothing to do but hang on and muddle through somehow.

"At first we made the mistake of indiscreet kindness. We tried to rule by persuasion and fair treatment. The niggers concluded that we were afraid. I blush to think of what fools we were in those first days. We were imposed on, and threatened and insulted; and we put up with it, hoping our square-dealing would soon mend things. Instead of which everything went from bad to worse. Then came the day when Hughie reprimanded one of the boys and was nearly killed by the gang. The only thing that saved him was the number on top of him, which enabled me to reach the spot in time.

"Then began the rule of the strong hand. It was either that or quit, and we had sunk about all our money into the venture, and we could not quit. And besides, our pride was involved. We had started out to do something, and we were so made that we just had to go on with it. It has been a hard fight, for we were, and are to this day, considered the worst plantation in the Solomons from the standpoint of labour. Do you know, we have been unable to get white men in. We've offered the managership to half a dozen. I won't say they were afraid, for they were not. But they did not consider it healthy — at least that is the way it was put by the last one who declined our offer. So Hughie and I did the managing ourselves."

"And when he died you were prepared to go on all alone!" Joan cried, with shining eyes.

"I thought I'd muddle through. And now, Miss Lackland, please be charitable when I seem harsh, and remember that the situation is unparalleled down here. We've got a bad crowd, and we're making them work. You've been over the plantation and you ought to know. And I assure you that there are no better three-and-four-years-old trees on any other plantation in the Solomons. We have worked steadily to change matters for the better. We've been slowly getting in new labour. That is why we bought the *Jessie*. We wanted to select our own labour. In another year the time will be up for most of the original gang. You see, they were recruited during the first year of Berande, and their contracts expire on different months. Naturally, they have contaminated the new boys to a certain extent; but that can soon be remedied, and then Berande will be a respectable plantation."

Joan nodded but remained silent. She was too occupied in glimpsing the vision of the one lone white man as she had first seen him, helpless from fever, a collapsed wraith in a steamer-chair, who, up to the last heart-beat, by some strange alchemy of race, was pledged to mastery.

"It is a pity," she said. "But the white man has to rule, I suppose."

"I don't like it," Sheldon assured her. "To save my life I can't imagine how I ever came here. But here I am, and I can't run away."

"Blind destiny of race," she said, faintly smiling. "We whites have been land robbers and sea robbers from remotest time. It is in our blood, I guess, and we can't get away from it."

"I never thought about it so abstractly," he confessed. "I've been too busy puzzling over why I came here."

CHAPTER VIII — LOCAL COLOUR

At sunset a small ketch fanned in to anchorage, and a little later the skipper came ashore. He was a soft-spoken, gentle-voiced young fellow of twenty, but he won Joan's admiration in advance when Sheldon told her that he ran the ketch all alone with a black crew from Malaita. And Romance lured and beckoned before Joan's eyes when she learned he was Christian Young, a Norfolk Islander, but a direct descendant of John Young, one of the original *Bounty* mutineers. The blended Tahitian and English blood showed in his soft eyes and tawny skin; but the English hardness seemed to have disappeared. Yet the hardness was there, and it was what enabled him to run his ketch single-handed and to wring a livelihood out of the fighting Solomons.

Joan's unexpected presence embarrassed him, until she herself put him at his ease by a frank, comradely manner that offended Sheldon's sense of the fitness of things feminine. News from the world Young had not, but he was filled with news of the Solomons. Fifteen boys had stolen rifles and run away into the bush from Lunga plantation, which was farther east on the Guadalcanar coast. And from the bush they had sent word that they were coming back to wipe out the three white men in charge, while two of the three white men, in turn, were hunting them through the bush. There was a strong possibility, Young volunteered, that if they were not caught they might circle around and tap the coast at Berande in order to steal or capture a whale-boat.

"I forgot to tell you that your trader at Ugi has been murdered," he said to Sheldon. "Five big canoes came down from Port Adams. They landed in the night-time, and caught Oscar asleep. What they didn't steal they burned. The *Flibberty-Gibbet* got the news at Mboli Pass, and ran down to Ugi. I was at Mboli when the news came."

"I think I'll have to abandon Ugi," Sheldon remarked.

"It's the second trader you've lost there in a year," Young concurred. "To make it safe there ought to be two white men at least. Those Malaita canoes are always raiding down that way, and you know what that Port Adams lot is. I've got a dog for you. Tommy Jones sent it up from Neal Island. He said he'd promised it to you. It's a first-class nigger-chaser. Hadn't been on board two minutes when he had my whole boat's-crew in the rigging. Tommy calls him Satan."

"I've wondered several times why you had no dogs here," Joan said.

"The trouble is to keep them. They're always eaten by the crocodiles."

"Jack Hanley was killed at Marovo Lagoon two months ago," Young announced in his mild voice. "The news just came down on the *Apostle*."

"Where is Marovo Lagoon?" Joan asked.

"New Georgia, a couple of hundred miles to the westward," Sheldon answered. "Bougainville lies just beyond."

"His own house-boys did it," Young went on; "but they were put up to it by the Marovo natives. His Santa Cruz boat's-crew escaped in the whale-boat to Choiseul, and Mather, in the *Lily*, sailed over to Marovo. He burned a village, and got Hanley's head back. He found it in one of the houses, where the niggers had it drying. And that's all the news I've got, except that there's a lot of new Lee-Enfields loose on the eastern end of Ysabel. Nobody knows how the natives got them. The government ought to investigate. And — oh yes, a war vessel's in the group, the *Cambrian*. She burned three villages at Bina — on account of the *Minota*, you know — and shelled the bush. Then she went to Sio to straighten out things there."

The conversation became general, and just before Young left to go on board Joan asked, —

"How can you manage all alone, Mr. Young?"

His large, almost girlish eyes rested on her for a moment before he replied, and then it was in the softest and gentlest of voices.

"Oh, I get along pretty well with them. Of course, there is a bit of trouble once in a while, but that must be expected. You must never let them think you are afraid. I've been afraid plenty of times, but they never knew it."

"You would think he wouldn't strike a mosquito that was biting him," Sheldon said when Young had gone on board. "All the Norfolk Islanders that have descended from the *Bounty* crowd are that way. But look at Young. Only three years ago, when he first got the *Minerva*, he was lying in Suu, on Malaita. There are a lot of returned Queenslanders there — a rough crowd. They planned to get his head. The son of their chief, old One-Eyed Billy, had recruited on Lunga and died of dysentery. That meant that a white man's head was owing to Suu — any white man, it didn't matter who so long as they got the head. And Young was only a lad, and they made sure to get his easily. They decoyed his whale-boat ashore with a promise of recruits, and killed all hands. At the same instant, the Suu gang that was on board the *Minerva* jumped Young. He was just preparing a dynamite stick for fish, and he lighted it and tossed it in amongst them. One can't get him to talk about it, but the fuse was short, the survivors leaped overboard, while he slipped his anchor and got away. They've got one hundred fathoms of shell money on his head now, which is worth one hundred pounds sterling. Yet he goes into Suu regularly. He was there a short time ago, returning thirty boys from Cape Marsh — that's the Fulcrum Brothers' plantation."

"At any rate, his news to-night has given me a better insight into the life down here," Joan said. "And it is colourful life, to say the least. The Solomons ought to be printed red on the charts — and yellow, too, for the diseases."

"The Solomons are not always like this," Sheldon answered. "Of course, Berande is the worst plantation, and everything it gets is the worst. I doubt if ever there was a worse run of sickness than we were just getting over when you arrived. Just as luck would have it, the *Jessie* caught the contagion as well. Berande has been very unfortunate. All the old-timers shake their heads at it. They say it has what you Americans call a *hoodoo* on it."

"Berande will succeed," Joan said stoutly. "I like to laugh at superstition. You'll pull through and come out the big end of the horn. The ill luck can't last for ever. I am afraid, though, the Solomons is not a white man's climate."

"It will be, though. Give us fifty years, and when all the bush is cleared off back to the mountains, fever will be stamped out; everything will be far healthier. There will be cities and towns here, for there's an immense amount of good land going to waste."

"But it will never become a white man's climate, in spite of all that," Joan reiterated. "The white man will always be unable to perform the manual labour."

"That is true."

"It will mean slavery," she dashed on.

"Yes, like all the tropics. The black, the brown, and the yellow will have to do the work, managed by the white men. The black labour is too wasteful, however, and in time Chinese or Indian coolies will be imported.

The planters are already considering the matter. I, for one, am heartily sick of black labour."

"Then the blacks will die off?"

Sheldon shrugged his shoulders, and retorted, —

"Yes, like the North American Indian, who was a far nobler type than the Melanesian. The world is only so large, you know, and it is filling up — "

"And the unfit must perish?"

"Precisely so. The unfit must perish."

In the morning Joan was roused by a great row and hullabaloo. Her first act was to reach for her revolver, but when she heard Noa Noah, who was on guard, laughing outside, she knew there was no danger, and went out to see the fun. Captain Young had landed Satan at the moment when the bridge-building gang had started along the beach. Satan was big and black, short-haired and muscular, and weighed fully seventy pounds. He did not love the blacks. Tommy Jones had trained him well, tying him up daily for several hours and telling off one or two black boys at a time to tease him. So Satan had it in for the whole black race, and the second after he landed on the beach the bridge-building gang was stampeding over the compound fence and swarming up the cocoanut palms.

"Good morning," Sheldon called from the veranda. "And what do you think of the nigger-chaser?"

"I'm thinking we have a task before us to train him in to the house-boys," she called back.

"And to your Tahitians, too. Look out, Noah! Run for it!"

Satan, having satisfied himself that the tree-perches were unassailable, was charging straight for the big Tahitian.

But Noah stood his ground, though somewhat irresolutely, and Satan, to every one's surprise, danced and frisked about him with laughing eyes and wagging tail.

"Now, that is what I might call a proper dog," was Joan's comment. "He is at least wiser than you, Mr. Sheldon. He didn't require any teaching to recognize the difference between a Tahitian and a black boy. What do you think, Noah? Why don't he bite you? He savvee you Tahitian eh?"

Noa Noah shook his head and grinned.

"He no savvee me Tahitian," he explained. "He savvee me wear pants all the same white man."

“You’ll have to give him a course in ‘Sartor Resartus,’” Sheldon laughed, as he came down and began to make friends with Satan.

It chanced just then that Adamu Adam and Matauare, two of Joan’s sailors, entered the compound from the far side-gate. They had been down to the Balesuna making an alligator trap, and, instead of trousers, were clad in lava-lavas that flapped gracefully about their stalwart limbs. Satan saw them, and advertised his find by breaking away from Sheldon’s hands and charging.

“No got pants,” Noah announced with a grin that broadened as Adamu Adam took to flight.

He climbed up the platform that supported the galvanized iron tanks which held the water collected from the roof. Foiled here, Satan turned and charged back on Matauare.

“Run, Matauare! Run!” Joan called.

But he held his ground and waited the dog.

“He is the Fearless One — that is what his name means,” Joan explained to Sheldon.

The Tahitian watched Satan coolly, and when that sanguine-mouthed creature lifted into the air in the final leap, the man’s hand shot out. It was a fair grip on the lower jaw, and Satan described a half circle and was flung to the rear, turning over in the air and falling heavily on his back. Three times he leaped, and three times that grip on his jaw flung him to defeat. Then he contented himself with trotting at Matauare’s heels, eyeing him and sniffing him suspiciously.

“It’s all right, Satan; it’s all right,” Sheldon assured him. “That good fella belong along me.”

But Satan dogged the Tahitian’s movements for a full hour before he made up his mind that the man was an appurtenance of the place. Then he turned his attention to the three house-boys, cornering Ornfiri in the kitchen and rushing him against the hot stove, stripping the lava-lava from Lalaperu when that excited youth climbed a veranda-post, and following Viaburi on top the billiard-table, where the battle raged until Joan managed a rescue.

CHAPTER IX — AS BETWEEN A MAN AND A WOMAN

It was Satan’s inexhaustible energy and good spirits that most impressed them. His teeth seemed perpetually to ache with desire, and in lieu of black legs he husked the cocoanuts that fell from the trees in the compound, kept the enclosure clear of intruding hens, and made a hostile acquaintance with every boss-boy who came to report. He was unable to forget the torment of his puppyhood, wherein everlasting hatred of the black had been woven into the fibres of consciousness; and such a terror did he make himself that Sheldon was forced to shut him up in the living room when, for any reason, strange natives were permitted in the compound. This always hurt Satan’s feelings and fanned his wrath, so that even the house-boys had to watch out for him when he was first released.

Christian Young sailed away in the *Minerva*, carrying an invitation (that would be delivered nobody knew when) to Tommy Jones to drop in at Berande the next time he was passing.

“What are your plans when you get to Sydney?” Sheldon asked, that night, at dinner.

“First I’ve heard that I’m going to Sydney,” Joan retorted. “I suppose you’ve received information, by bush-telegraph, that that third assistant understrapper and ex-sailorman at Tulagi is going to deport me as an undesirable immigrant.”

“Oh, no, nothing of the sort, I assure you,” Sheldon began with awkward haste, fearful of having offended, though he knew not how. “I was just wondering, that was all. You see, with the loss of the schooner and . . and all the rest . . . you understand . . I was thinking that if — a — if — hang it all, until you could communicate with your friends, my agents at Sydney could advance you a loan, temporary you see, why I’d be only too glad and all the rest, you know. The proper — ”

But his jaw dropped and he regarded her irritably and with apprehension.

“What *is* the matter?” he demanded, with a show of heat. “What *have* I done now?”

Joan’s eyes were bright with battle, the curve of her lips sharp with mockery.

“Certainly not the unexpected,” she said quietly. “Merely ignored me in your ordinary, every-day, man-god, superior fashion. Naturally it counted for nothing, my telling you that I had no idea of going to Sydney. Go to Sydney I must, because you, in your superior wisdom, have so decreed.”

She paused and looked at him curiously, as though he were some strange breed of animal.

“Of course I am grateful for your offer of assistance; but even that is no salve to wounded pride. For that matter, it is no more than one white man should expect from another. Shipwrecked mariners are always helped along their way. Only this particular mariner doesn’t need any help. Furthermore, this mariner is not going to Sydney, thank you.”

“But what do you intend to do?”

“Find some spot where I shall escape the indignity of being patronized and bossed by the superior sex.”

“Come now, that is putting it a bit too strongly.” Sheldon laughed, but the strain in his voice destroyed the effect of spontaneity. “You know yourself how impossible the situation is.”

“I know nothing of the sort, sir. And if it is impossible, well, haven’t I achieved it?”

“But it cannot continue. Really — ”

“Oh, yes, it can. Having achieved it, I can go on achieving it. I intend to remain in the Solomons, but not on Berande. To-morrow I am going to take the whale-boat over to Pari-Sulay. I was talking with Captain Young about it. He says there are at least four hundred acres, and every foot of it good for planting. Being an island, he says I won’t have to bother about wild pigs destroying the young trees. All I’ll have to do is to keep the weeds hoed until the trees come into bearing. First, I’ll buy the island; next, get forty or fifty recruits and start clearing and planting; and at the same time I’ll run up a bungalow; and then you’ll be relieved of my embarrassing presence — now don’t say that it isn’t.”

“It is embarrassing,” he said bluntly. “But you refuse to see my point of view, so there is no use in discussing it. Now please forget all about it, and consider me at your service concerning this . . . this project of yours. I know more about cocoanut-planting than you do. You speak like a capitalist. I don’t know how much money you have, but I don’t fancy you are rolling in wealth, as you Americans say. But I do know what it costs to clear land. Suppose the government sells you Pari-Sulay at a pound an acre; clearing will cost you at least four pounds more; that is, five pounds for four hundred acres, or, say, ten thousand dollars. Have you that much?"

She was keenly interested, and he could see that the previous clash between them was already forgotten. Her disappointment was plain as she confessed:

"No; I haven't quite eight thousand dollars."

"Then here's another way of looking at it. You'll need, as you said, at least fifty boys. Not counting premiums, their wages are thirty dollars a year."

"I pay my Tahitians fifteen a month," she interpolated.

"They won't do on straight plantation work. But to return. The wages of fifty boys each year will come to three hundred pounds — that is, fifteen hundred dollars. Very well. It will be seven years before your trees begin to bear. Seven times fifteen hundred is ten thousand five hundred dollars — more than you possess, and all eaten up by the boys' wages, with nothing to pay for bungalow, building, tools, quinine, trips to Sydney, and so forth."

Sheldon shook his head gravely. "You'll have to abandon the idea."

"But I won't go to Sydney," she cried. "I simply won't. I'll buy in to the extent of my money as a small partner in some other plantation. Let me buy in in Berande!"

"Heaven forbid!" he cried in such genuine dismay that she broke into hearty laughter.

"There, I won't tease you. Really, you know, I'm not accustomed to forcing my presence where it is not desired. Yes, yes; I know you're just aching to point out that I've forced myself upon you ever since I landed, only you are too polite to say so. Yet as you said yourself, it was impossible for me to go away, so I had to stay. You wouldn't let me go to Tulagi. You compelled me to force myself upon you. But I won't buy in as partner with any one. I'll buy Pari-Sulay, but I'll put only ten boys on it and clear slowly. Also, I'll invest in some old ketch and take out a trading license. For that matter, I'll go recruiting on Malaita."

She looked for protest, and found it in Sheldon's clenched hand and in every line of his clean-cut face.

"Go ahead and say it," she challenged. "Please don't mind me. I'm — I'm getting used to it, you know. Really I am."

"I wish I were a woman so as to tell you how preposterously insane and impossible it is," he blurted out.

She surveyed him with deliberation, and said:

"Better than that, you are a man. So there is nothing to prevent your telling me, for I demand to be considered as a man. I didn't come down here to trail my woman's skirts over the Solomons. Please forget that I am accidentally anything else than a man with a man's living to make."

Inwardly Sheldon fumed and fretted. Was she making game of him? Or did there lurk in her the insidious unhealthfulness of unwomanliness? Or was it merely a case of blank, staring, sentimental, idiotic innocence?

"I have told you," he began stiffly, "that recruiting on Malaita is impossible for a woman, and that is all I care to say — or dare."

"And I tell you, in turn, that it is nothing of the sort. I've sailed the *Miélé* here, master, if you please, all the way from Tahiti — even if I did lose her, which was the fault of your Admiralty charts. I am a navigator, and that is more than your Solomons captains are. Captain Young told me all about it. And I am a seaman — a better seaman than you, when it comes right down to it, and you know it. I can shoot. I am not a fool. I can take care of myself. And I shall most certainly buy a ketch, run her myself, and go recruiting on Malaita."

Sheldon made a hopeless gesture.

"That's right," she rattled on. "Wash your hands of me. But as Von used to say, 'You just watch my smoke!'"

"There's no use in discussing it. Let us have some music."

He arose and went over to the big phonograph; but before the disc started, and while he was winding the machine, he heard her saying:

"I suppose you've been accustomed to Jane Eyres all your life. That's why you don't understand me. Come on, Satan; let's leave him to his old music."

He watched her morosely and without intention of speaking, till he saw her take a rifle from the stand, examine the magazine, and start for the door.

"Where are you going?" he asked peremptorily.

"As between man and woman," she answered, "it would be too terribly — er — indecent for you to tell me why I shouldn't go alligatoring. Good-night. Sleep well."

He shut off the phonograph with a snap, started toward the door after her, then abruptly flung himself into a chair.

"You're hoping a 'gator catches me, aren't you?" she called from the veranda, and as she went down the steps her rippling laughter drifted tantalizingly back through the wide doorway.

CHAPTER X — A MESSAGE FROM BOUCHER

The next day Sheldon was left all alone. Joan had gone exploring Pari-Sulay, and was not to be expected back until the late afternoon. Sheldon was vaguely oppressed by his loneliness, and several heavy squalls during the afternoon brought him frequently on to the veranda, telescope in hand, to scan the sea anxiously for the whale-boat. Betweenwhiles he scowled over the plantation account-books, made rough estimates, added and balanced, and scowled the harder. The loss of the *Jessie* had hit Berande severely. Not alone was his capital depleted by the amount of her value, but her earnings were no longer to be reckoned on, and it was her earnings that largely paid the running expenses of the plantation.

"Poor old Hughie," he muttered aloud, once. "I'm glad you didn't live to see it, old man. What a cropper, what a cropper!"

Between squalls the *Flibberty-Gibbet* ran in to anchorage, and her skipper, Pete Oleson (brother to the Oleson of the *Jessie*), ancient, grizzled, wild-eyed, emaciated by fever, dragged his weary frame up the veranda steps and collapsed in a steamer-chair. Whisky and soda kept him going while he made report and turned in his accounts.

"You're rotten with fever," Sheldon said. "Why don't you run down to Sydney for a blow of decent climate?"

The old skipper shook his head.

"I can't. I've ben in the islands too long. I'd die. The fever comes out worse down there."

"Kill or cure," Sheldon counselled.

"It's straight kill for me. I tried it three years ago. The cool weather put me on my back before I landed. They carried me ashore and into hospital. I was unconscious one stretch for two weeks. After that the doctors sent me back to the islands — said it was the only thing that would save me. Well, I'm still alive; but I'm too soaked with fever. A month in Australia would finish me."

"But what are you going to do?" Sheldon queried. "You can't stay here until you die."

"That's all that's left to me. I'd like to go back to the old country, but I couldn't stand it. I'll last longer here, and here I'll stay until I peg out; but I wish to God I'd never seen the Solomons, that's all."

He declined to sleep ashore, took his orders, and went back on board the cutter. A lurid sunset was blotted out by the heaviest squall of the day, and Sheldon watched the whale-boat arrive in the thick of it. As the spritsail was taken in and the boat headed on to the beach, he was aware of a distinct hurt at sight of Joan at the steering-oar, standing erect and swaying her strength to it as she resisted the pressures that tended to throw the craft broadside in the surf. Her Tahitians leaped out and rushed the boat high up the beach, and she led her bizarre following through the gate of the compound.

The first drops of rain were driving like hail-stones, the tall cocoanut palms were bending and writhing in the grip of the wind, while the thick cloud-mass of the squall turned the brief tropic twilight abruptly to night.

Quite unconsciously the brooding anxiety of the afternoon slipped from Sheldon, and he felt strangely cheered at the sight of her running up the steps laughing, face flushed, hair flying, her breast heaving from the violence of her late exertions.

"Lovely, perfectly lovely — Pari-Sulay," she panted. "I shall buy it. I'll write to the Commissioner to-night. And the site for the bungalow — I've selected it already — is wonderful. You must come over some day and advise me. You won't mind my staying here until I can get settled? Wasn't that squall beautiful? And I suppose I'm late for dinner. I'll run and get clean, and be with you in a minute."

And in the brief interval of her absence he found himself walking about the big living-room and impatiently and with anticipation awaiting her coming.

"Do you know, I'm never going to squabble with you again," he announced when they were seated.

"Squabble!" was the retort. "It's such a sordid word. It sounds cheap and nasty. I think it's much nicer to quarrel."

"Call it what you please, but we won't do it any more, will we?" He cleared his throat nervously, for her eyes advertised the immediate beginning of hostilities. "I beg your pardon," he hurried on. "I should have spoken for myself. What I mean is that I refuse to quarrel. You have the most horrible way, without uttering a word, of making me play the fool. Why, I began with the kindest intentions, and here I am now — "

"Making nasty remarks," she completed for him.

"It's the way you have of catching me up," he complained.

"Why, I never said a word. I was merely sitting here, being sweetly lured on by promises of peace on earth and all the rest of it, when suddenly you began to call me names."

"Hardly that, I am sure."

"Well, you said I was horrible, or that I had a horrible way about me, which is the same thing. I wish my bungalow were up. I'd move to-morrow."

But her twitching lips belied her words, and the next moment the man was more uncomfortable than ever, being made so by her laughter.

"I was only teasing you. Honest Injun. And if you don't laugh I'll suspect you of being in a temper with me. That's right, laugh. But don't — " she added in alarm, "don't if it hurts you. You look as though you had a toothache. There, there — don't say it. You know you promised not to quarrel, while I have the privilege of going on being as hateful as I please. And to begin with, there's the *Flibberty-Gibbet*. I didn't know she was so large a cutter; but she's in disgraceful condition. Her rigging is something queer, and the next sharp squall will bring her head-gear all about the shop. I watched Noa Noah's face as we sailed past. He didn't say anything. He just sneered. And I don't blame him."

"Her skipper's rotten bad with fever," Sheldon explained. "And he had to drop his mate off to take hold of things at Ugi — that's where I lost Oscar, my trader. And you know what sort of sailors the niggers are."

She nodded her head judicially, and while she seemed to debate a weighty judgment he asked for a second helping of tinned beef — not because he was hungry, but because he wanted to watch her slim, firm fingers, naked of jewels and banded metals, while his eyes pleasured in the swell of the forearm, appearing from under the sleeve and losing identity in the smooth, round wrist undisfigured by the netted veins that come to youth when youth is gone. The fingers were brown with tan and looked exceedingly boyish. Then, and without effort, the concept came to him. Yes, that was it. He had stumbled upon the clue to her tantalizing personality. Her fingers, sunburned and boyish, told the story. No wonder she had exasperated him so frequently. He had tried to treat with her as a woman, when she was not a woman. She was a mere girl — and a boyish girl at that — with sunburned fingers that delighted in doing what boys' fingers did; with a body and muscles that liked swimming and violent endeavour of all sorts; with a mind that was daring, but that dared no farther than boys' adventures, and that delighted in rifles and revolvers, Stetson hats, and a sexless *camaraderie* with men.

Somehow, as he pondered and watched her, it seemed as if he sat in church at home listening to the choir-boys chanting. She reminded him of those boys, or their voices, rather. The same sexless quality was there. In the body of her she was woman; in the mind of her she had not grown up. She had not been exposed to ripening influences of that sort. She had had no mother. Von, her father, native servants, and rough island life had constituted her training. Horses and rifles had been her toys, camp and trail her nursery. From what she had told him, her seminary days had been an exile, devoted to study and to ceaseless longing for the wild riding and swimming of Hawaii. A boy's training, and a boy's point of view! That explained her chafe at petticoats, her revolt at what was only decently conventional. Some day she would grow up, but as yet she was only in the process.

Well, there was only one thing for him to do. He must meet her on her own basis of boyhood, and not make the mistake of treating her as a woman. He wondered if he could love the woman she would be when her nature awoke; and he wondered if he could love her just as she was and himself wake her up. After all, whatever it was, she had come to fill quite a large place in his life, as he had discovered that afternoon while scanning the sea between the squalls. Then he remembered the accounts of Berande, and the cropper that was coming, and scowled.

He became aware that she was speaking.

"I beg pardon," he said. "What's that you were saying?"

"You weren't listening to a word — I knew it," she chided. "I was saying that the condition of the *Flibberty-Gibbet* was disgraceful, and that to-morrow, when you've told the skipper and not hurt his feelings, I am going to take my men out and give her an overhauling. We'll scrub her bottom, too. Why, there's whiskers on her copper four inches long. I saw it when she rolled. Don't forget, I'm going cruising on the *Flibberty* some day, even if I have to run away with her."

While at their coffee on the veranda, Satan raised a commotion in the compound near the beach gate, and Sheldon finally rescued a mauled and frightened black and dragged him on the porch for interrogation.

"What fella marster you belong?" he demanded. "What name you come along this fella place sun he go down?"

"Me b'long Boucher. Too many boy belong along Port Adams stop along my fella marster. Too much walk about."

The black drew a scrap of notepaper from under his belt and passed it over. Sheldon scanned it hurriedly.

"It's from Boucher," he explained, "the fellow who took Packard's place. Packard was the one I told you about who was killed by his boat's-crew. He says the Port Adams crowd is out — fifty of them, in big canoes — and camping on his beach. They've killed half a dozen of his pigs already, and seem to be looking for trouble. And he's afraid they may connect with the fifteen runaways from Lunga."

"In which case?" she queried.

"In which case Billy Pape will be compelled to send Boucher's successor. It's Pape's station, you know. I wish I knew what to do. I don't like to leave you here alone."

"Take me along then."

He smiled and shook his head.

"Then you'd better take my men along," she advised. "They're good shots, and they're not afraid of anything — except Utami, and he's afraid of ghosts."

The big bell was rung, and fifty black boys carried the whale-boat down to the water. The regular boat's-crew manned her, and Matauare and three other Tahitians, belted with cartridges and armed with rifles, sat in the stern-sheets where Sheldon stood at the steering-oar.

"My, I wish I could go with you," Joan said wistfully, as the boat shoved off.

Sheldon shook his head.

"I'm as good as a man," she urged.

"You really are needed here," he replied.

"There's that Lunga crowd; they might reach the coast right here, and with both of us absent rush the plantation. Good-bye. We'll get back in the morning some time. It's only twelve miles."

When Joan started to return to the house, she was compelled to pass among the boat-carriers, who lingered on the beach to chatter in queer, ape-like fashion about the events of the night. They made way for her, but there came to her, as she was in the midst of them, a feeling of her own helplessness. There were so many of them. What was to prevent them from dragging her down if they so willed? Then she remembered that one cry of hers would fetch Noa Noah and her remaining sailors, each one of whom was worth a dozen blacks in a struggle. As she opened the gate, one of the boys stepped up to her. In the darkness she could not make him out.

"What name?" she asked sharply. "What name belong you?"

"Me Aroa," he said.

She remembered him as one of the two sick boys she had nursed at the hospital. The other one had died.

"Me take 'm plenty fella medicine too much," Aroa was saying.

"Well, and you all right now," she answered.

"Me want 'm tobacco, plenty fella tobacco; me want 'm calico; me want 'm porpoise teeth; me want 'm one fella belt."

She looked at him humorously, expecting to see a smile, or at least a grin, on his face. Instead, his face was expressionless. Save for a narrow breech-clout, a pair of ear-plugs, and about his kinky hair a chaplet of white cowrie-shells, he was naked. His body was fresh-oiled and shiny, and his eyes glistened in the starlight like some wild animal's. The rest of the boys had crowded up at his back in a solid wall. Some one of them giggled, but the remainder regarded her in morose and intense silence.

"Well?" she said. "What for you want plenty fella things?"

"Me take 'm medicine," quoth Aroa. "You pay me."

And this was a sample of their gratitude, she thought. It looked as if Sheldon had been right after all. Aroa waited stolidly. A leaping fish splashed far out on the water. A tiny wavelet murmured sleepily on the beach. The shadow of a flying-fox drifted by in velvet silence overhead. A light air fanned coolly on her cheek; it was the land-breeze beginning to blow.

"You go along quarters," she said, starting to turn on her heel to enter the gate.

"You pay me," said the boy.

"Aroa, you all the same one big fool. I no pay you. Now you go."

But the black was unmoved. She felt that he was regarding her almost insolently as he repeated:

"I take 'm medicine. You pay me. You pay me now."

Then it was that she lost her temper and cuffed his ears so soundly as to drive him back among his fellows. But they did not break up. Another boy stepped forward.

"You pay me," he said.

His eyes had the querulous, troubled look such as she had noticed in monkeys; but while he was patently uncomfortable under her scrutiny, his thick lips were drawn firmly in an effort at sullen determination.

"What for?" she asked.

"Me Gogoomy," he said. "Bawo brother belong me."

Bawo, she remembered, was the sick boy who had died.

"Go on," she commanded.

"Bawo take 'm medicine. Bawo finish. Bawo my brother. You pay me. Father belong me one big fella chief along Port Adams. You pay me."

Joan laughed.

"Gogoomy, you just the same as Aroa, one big fool. My word, who pay me for medicine?"

She dismissed the matter by passing through the gate and closing it. But Gogoomy pressed up against it and said impudently:

"Father belong me one big fella chief. You no bang 'm head belong me. My word, you fright too much."

"Me fright?" she demanded, while anger tingled all through her.

"Too much fright bang 'm head belong me," Gogoomy said proudly.

And then she reached for him across the gate and got him. It was a sweeping, broad-handed slap, so heavy that he staggered sideways and nearly fell. He sprang for the gate as if to force it open, while the crowd surged forward against the fence. Joan thought rapidly. Her revolver was hanging on the wall of her grass house. Yet one cry would bring her sailors, and she knew she was safe. So she did not cry for help. Instead, she whistled for Satan, at the same time calling him by name. She knew he was shut up in the living room, but the blacks did not wait to see. They fled with wild yells through the darkness, followed reluctantly by Gogoomy; while she entered the bungalow, laughing at first, but finally vexed to the verge of tears by what had taken place. She had sat up a whole night with the boy who had died, and yet his brother demanded to be paid for his life.

"Ugh! the ungrateful beast!" she muttered, while she debated whether or not she would confess the incident to Sheldon.

CHAPTER XI — THE PORT ADAMS CROWD

"And so it was all settled easily enough," Sheldon was saying. He was on the veranda, drinking coffee. The whale-boat was being carried into its shed. "Boucher was a bit timid at first to carry off the situation with a strong hand, but he did very well once we got started. We made a play at holding a court, and Telepasse, the old scoundrel, accepted the findings. He's a Port Adams chief, a filthy beggar. We fined him ten times the value of the pigs, and made him move on with his mob. Oh, they're a sweet lot, I must say, at least sixty of them, in five big canoes, and out for trouble. They've got a dozen Sniders that ought to be confiscated."

"Why didn't you?" Joan asked.

"And have a row on my hands with the Commissioner? He's terribly touchy about his black wards, as he calls them. Well, we started them along their way, though they went in on the beach to *kai-kai* several miles back. They ought to pass here some time to-day."

Two hours later the canoes arrived. No one saw them come. The house-boys were busy in the kitchen at their own breakfast. The plantation hands were similarly occupied in their quarters. Satan lay sound asleep on his back under the billiard table, in his sleep brushing at the flies that pestered him. Joan was rummaging in the storeroom, and Sheldon was taking his siesta in a hammock on the veranda. He awoke gently. In some occult, subtle way a warning that all was not well had penetrated his sleep and aroused him. Without moving, he glanced down and saw the ground beneath covered with armed savages. They were the same ones he had parted with that morning, though he noted an accession in numbers. There were men he had not seen before.

He slipped from the hammock and with deliberate slowness sauntered to the railing, where he yawned sleepily and looked down on them. It came to him curiously that it was his destiny ever to stand on this high place, looking down on unending hordes of black trouble that required control, bullying, and cajolery. But while he glanced carelessly over them, he was keenly taking stock. The new men were all armed with modern rifles. Ah, he had thought so. There were fifteen of them, undoubtedly the Lunga runaways. In addition, a dozen old Sniders were in the hands of the original crowd. The rest were armed with spears, clubs, bows and arrows, and long-handled tomahawks. Beyond, drawn up on the beach, he could see the big war-canoes, with high and fantastically carved bows and sterns, ornamented with scrolls and bands of white cowrie shells. These were the men who had killed his trader, Oscar, at Ugi.

"What name you walk about this place?" he demanded.

At the same time he stole a glance seaward to where the *Flibberty-Gibbet* reflected herself in the glassy calm of the sea. Not a soul was visible under her awnings, and he saw the whale-boat was missing from alongside. The Tahitians had evidently gone shooting fish up the Balesuna. He was all alone in his high place above this trouble, while his world slumbered peacefully under the breathless tropic noon.

Nobody replied, and he repeated his demand, more of mastery in his voice this time, and a hint of growing anger. The blacks moved uneasily, like a herd of cattle, at the sound of his voice. But not one spoke. All eyes, however, were staring at him in certitude of expectancy. Something was about to happen, and they were waiting for it, waiting with the unanimous, unstable mob-mind for the one of them who would make the first action that would precipitate all of them into a common action. Sheldon looked for this one, for such was the one to fear. Directly beneath him he caught sight of the muzzle of a rifle, barely projecting between two black bodies, that was slowly elevating toward him. It was held at the hip by a man in the second row.

"What name you?" Sheldon suddenly shouted, pointing directly at the man who held the gun, who startled and lowered the muzzle.

Sheldon still held the whip hand, and he intended to keep it.

"Clear out, all you fella boys," he ordered. "Clear out and walk along salt water. Savvee!"

"Me talk," spoke up a fat and filthy savage whose hairy chest was caked with the unwashed dirt of years.

"Oh, is that you, Telepasse?" the white man queried genially. "You tell 'm boys clear out, and you stop and talk along me."

"Him good fella boy," was the reply. "Him stop along."

"Well, what do you want?" Sheldon asked, striving to hide under assumed carelessness the weakness of concession.

"That fella boy belong along me." The old chief pointed out Gogoomy, whom Sheldon recognized.

"White Mary belong you too much no good," Telepasse went on. "Bang 'm head belong Gogoomy. Gogoomy all the same chief. Bimeby me finish, Gogoomy big fella chief. White Mary bang 'm head. No good. You pay me plenty tobacco, plenty powder, plenty calico."

"You old scoundrel," was Sheldon's comment. An hour before, he had been chuckling over Joan's recital of the episode, and here, an hour later, was Telepasse himself come to collect damages.

"Gogoomy," Sheldon ordered, "what name you walk about here? You get along quarters plenty quick."

"Me stop," was the defiant answer.

"White Mary b'long you bang 'm head," old Telepasse began again. "My word, plenty big fella trouble you no pay."

"You talk along boys," Sheldon said, with increasing irritation. "You tell 'm get to hell along beach. Then I talk with you."

Sheldon felt a slight vibration of the veranda, and knew that Joan had come out and was standing by his side. But he did not dare glance at her. There were too many rifles down below there, and rifles had a way of going off from the hip.

Again the veranda vibrated with her moving weight, and he knew that Joan had gone into the house. A minute later she was back beside him. He had never seen her smoke, and it struck him as peculiar that she should be smoking now. Then he guessed the reason. With a quick glance, he noted the hand at her side, and in it the familiar, paper-wrapped dynamite. He noted, also, the end of fuse, split properly, into which had been inserted the head of a wax match.

"Telepasse, you old reprobate, tell 'm boys clear out along beach. My word, I no gammon along you."

"Me no gammon," said the chief. "Me want 'm pay white Mary bang 'm head b'long Gogoomy."

"I'll come down there and bang 'm head b'long you," Sheldon replied, leaning toward the railing as if about to leap over.

An angry murmur arose, and the blacks surged restlessly. The muzzles of many guns were rising from the hips. Joan was pressing the lighted end of the cigarette to the fuse. A Snider went off with the roar of a bomb-gun, and Sheldon heard a pane of window-glass crash behind him. At the same moment Joan flung the dynamite, the fuse hissing and spluttering, into the thick of the blacks. They scattered back in too great haste to do any more shooting. Satan, aroused by the one shot, was snarling and panting to be let out. Joan heard, and ran to let him out; and thereat the tragedy was averted, and the comedy began.

Rifles and spears were dropped or flung aside in a wild scramble for the protection of the cocoanut palms. Satan multiplied himself. Never had he been free to tear and rend such a quantity of black flesh before, and he bit and snapped and rushed the flying legs till the last pair were above his head. All were treed except Telepasse, who was too old and fat, and he lay prone and without movement where he had fallen; while Satan, with too great a heart to worry an enemy that did not move, dashed frantically from tree to tree, barking and springing at those who clung on lowest down.

"I fancy you need a lesson or two in inserting fuses," Sheldon remarked dryly.

Joan's eyes were scornful.

"There was no detonator on it," she said. "Besides, the detonator is not yet manufactured that will explode that charge. It's only a bottle of chlorodyne."

She put her fingers into her mouth, and Sheldon winced as he saw her blow, like a boy, a sharp, imperious whistle — the call she always used for her sailors, and that always made him wince.

"They're gone up the Balesuna, shooting fish," he explained. "But there comes Oleson with his boat's-crew. He's an old war-horse when he gets started. See him banging the boys. They don't pull fast enough for him."

"And now what's to be done?" she asked. "You've treed your game, but you can't keep it treed."

"No; but I can teach them a lesson."

Sheldon walked over to the big bell.

"It is all right," he replied to her gesture of protest. "My boys are practically all bushmen, while these chaps are salt-water men, and there's no love lost between them. You watch the fun."

He rang a general call, and by the time the two hundred labourers trooped into the compound Satan was once more penned in the living-room, complaining to high heaven at his abominable treatment. The plantation hands were dancing war-dances around the base of every tree and filling the air with abuse and vituperation of their hereditary enemies. The skipper of the *Flibberty-Gibbet* arrived in the thick of it, in the first throes of oncoming fever, staggering as he walked, and shivering so severely that he could scarcely hold the rifle he carried. His face was ghastly blue, his teeth clicked and chattered, and the violent sunshine through which he walked could not warm him.

"I'll s-s-sit down, and k-k-keep a guard on 'em," he chattered. "D-d-dash it all, I always g-get f-fever when there's any excitement. W-w-wh-what are you going to do?"

"Gather up the guns first of all."

Under Sheldon's direction the house-boys and gang-bosses collected the scattered arms and piled them in a heap on the veranda. The modern rifles, stolen from Lunga, Sheldon set aside; the Sniders he smashed into fragments; the pile of spears, clubs, and tomahawks he presented to Joan.

"A really unique addition to your collection," he smiled; "picked up right on the battlefield."

Down on the beach he built a bonfire out of the contents of the canoes, his blacks smashing, breaking, and looting everything they laid hands on. The canoes themselves, splintered and broken, filled with sand and coral-boulders, were towed out to ten fathoms of water and sunk.

"Ten fathoms will be deep enough for them to work in," Sheldon said, as they walked back to the compound.

Here a Saturnalia had broken loose. The war-songs and dances were more unrestrained, and, from abuse, the plantation blacks had turned to pelting their helpless foes with pieces of wood, handfuls of pebbles, and chunks of coral-rock. And the seventy-five lusty cannibals clung stoically to their tree-perches, enduring the rain of missiles and snarling down promises of vengeance.

"There'll be wars for forty years on Malaita on account of this," Sheldon laughed. "But I always fancy old Telepasse will never again attempt to rush a plantation."

"Eh, you old scoundrel," he added, turning to the old chief, who sat gibbering in impotent rage at the foot of the steps. "Now head belong you bang 'm too. Come on, Miss Lackland, bang 'm just once. It will be the crowning indignity."

"Ugh, he's too dirty. I'd rather give him a bath. Here, you, Adamu Adam, give this devil-devil a wash. Soap and water! Fill that wash-tub. Ornfiri, run and fetch 'm scrub-brush."

The Tahitians, back from their fishing and grinning at the bedlam of the compound, entered into the joke.

"*Tambo*! *Tambo*!" shrieked the cannibals from the trees, appalled at so awful a desecration, as they saw their chief tumbled into the tub and the sacred dirt rubbed and soused from his body.

Joan, who had gone into the bungalow, tossed down a strip of white calico, in which old Telepasse was promptly wrapped, and he stood forth, resplendent and purified, withal he still spat and strangled from the soapsuds with which Noa Noah had gargled his throat.

The house-boys were directed to fetch handcuffs, and, one by one, the Lunga runaways were haled down out of their trees and made fast. Sheldon ironed them in pairs, and ran a steel chain through the links of the irons. Gogoomy was given a lecture for his mutinous conduct and locked up for the afternoon. Then Sheldon rewarded the plantation hands with an afternoon's holiday, and, when they had withdrawn from the compound, permitted the Port Adams men to descend from the trees. And all afternoon he and Joan loafed in the cool of the veranda and watched them diving down and emptying their sunken canoes of the sand and rocks. It was twilight when they embarked and paddled away with a few broken paddles. A breeze had sprung up, and the *Flibberty-Gibbet* had already sailed for Lunga to return the runaways.

CHAPTER XII — MR. MORGAN AND MR. RAFF

Sheldon was back in the plantation superintending the building of a bridge, when the schooner *Malakula* ran in close and dropped anchor. Joan watched the taking in of sail and the swinging out of the boat with a sailor's interest, and herself met the two men who came ashore. While one of the house-boys ran to fetch Sheldon, she had the visitors served with whisky and soda, and sat and talked with them.

They seemed awkward and constrained in her presence, and she caught first one and then the other looking at her with secret curiosity. She felt that they were weighing her, appraising her, and for the first time the anomalous position she occupied on Berande sank sharply home to her. On the other hand, they puzzled her. They were neither traders nor sailors of any type she had known. Nor did they talk like gentlemen, despite the fact that there was nothing offensive in their bearing and that the veneer of ordinary social nicety was theirs. Undoubtedly, they were men of affairs — business men of a sort; but what affairs should they have in the Solomons, and what business on Berande? The elder one, Morgan, was a huge man, bronzed and moustached, with a deep bass voice and an almost guttural speech, and the other, Raff, was slight and effeminate, with nervous hands and watery, washed-out gray eyes, who spoke with a faint indefinable accent that was hauntingly reminiscent of the Cockney, and that was yet not Cockney of any brand she had ever encountered. Whatever they were, they were self-made men, she concluded; and she felt the impulse to shudder at thought of falling into their hands in a business way. There, they would be merciless.

She watched Sheldon closely when he arrived, and divined that he was not particularly delighted to see them. But see them he must, and so pressing was the need that, after a little perfunctory general conversation, he led the two men into the stuffy office. Later in the afternoon, she asked Lalaperu where they had gone.

"My word," quoth Lalaperu; "plenty walk about, plenty look 'm. Look 'm tree; look 'm ground belong tree; look 'm all fella bridge; look 'm copra-house; look 'm grass-land; look 'm river; look 'm whale-boat — my word, plenty big fella look 'm too much."

"What fella man them two fella?" she queried.

“Big fella marster along white man,” was the extent of his description.

But Joan decided that they were men of importance in the Solomons, and that their examination of the plantation and of its accounts was of sinister significance.

At dinner no word was dropped that gave a hint of their errand. The conversation was on general topics; but Joan could not help noticing the troubled, absent expression that occasionally came into Sheldon’s eyes. After coffee, she left them; and at midnight, from across the compound, she could hear the low murmur of their voices and see glowing the fiery ends of their cigars. Up early herself, she found they had already departed on another tramp over the plantation.

“What you think?” she asked Viaburi.

“Sheldon marster he go along finish short time little bit,” was the answer.

“What you think?” she asked Ornfiri.

“Sheldon marster big fella walk about along Sydney. Yes, me t’ink so. He finish along Berande.”

All day the examination of the plantation and the discussion went on; and all day the skipper of the *Malakula* sent urgent messages ashore for the two men to hasten. It was not until sunset that they went down to the boat, and even then a final talk of nearly an hour took place on the beach. Sheldon was combating something — that she could plainly see; and that his two visitors were not giving in she could also plainly see.

“What name?” she asked lightly, when Sheldon sat down to dinner.

He looked at her and smiled, but it was a very wan and wistful smile.

“My word,” she went on. “One big fella talk. Sun he go down — talk-talk; sun he come up — talk-talk; all the time talk-talk. What name that fella talk-talk?

“Oh, nothing much.” He shrugged his shoulders. “They were trying to buy Berande, that was all.”

She looked at him challengingly.

“It must have been more than that. It was you who wanted to sell.”

“Indeed, no, Miss Lackland; I assure you that I am far from desiring to sell.”

“Don’t let us fence about it,” she urged. “Let it be straight talk between us. You’re in trouble. I’m not a fool. Tell me. Besides, I may be able to help, to — to suggest something.”

In the pause that followed, he seemed to debate, not so much whether he would tell her, as how to begin to tell her.

"I'm American, you see," she persisted, "and our American heritage is a large parcel of business sense. I don't like it myself, but I know I've got it — at least more than you have. Let us talk it over and find a way out. How much do you owe?"

"A thousand pounds, and a few trifles over — small bills, you know. Then, too, thirty of the boys finish their time next week, and their balances will average ten pounds each. But what is the need of bothering your head with it? Really, you know — "

"What is Berande worth? — right now?"

"Whatever Morgan and Raff are willing to pay for it." A glance at her hurt expression decided him. "Hughie and I have sunk eight thousand pounds in it, and our time. It is a good property, and worth more than that. But it has three years to run before its returns begin to come in. That is why Hughie and I engaged in trading and recruiting. The *Jessie* and our stations came very near to paying the running expenses of Berande."

"And Morgan and Raff offered you what?"

"A thousand pounds clear, after paying all bills."

"The thieves!" she cried.

"No, they're good business men, that is all. As they told me, a thing is worth no more than one is willing to pay or to receive."

"And how much do you need to carry on Berande for three years?" Joan hurried on.

"Two hundred boys at six pounds a year means thirty-six hundred pounds — that's the main item."

"My, how cheap labour does mount up! Thirty-six hundred pounds, eighteen thousand dollars, just for a lot of cannibals! Yet the place is good security. You could go down to Sydney and raise the money."

He shook his head.

"You can't get them to look at plantations down there. They've been taken in too often. But I do hate to give the place up — more for Hughie's sake, I swear, than my own. He was bound up in it. You see, he was a persistent chap, and hated to acknowledge defeat. It — it makes me uncomfortable to think of it myself. We were running slowly behind, but with the *Jessie* we hoped to muddle through in some fashion."

"You were muddlers, the pair of you, without doubt. But you needn't sell to Morgan and Raff. I shall go down to Sydney on the next steamer, and I'll come back in a second-hand schooner. I should be able to buy one for five or six thousand dollars — "

He held up his hand in protest, but she waved it aside.

"I may manage to freight a cargo back as well. At any rate, the schooner will take over the *Jessie's* business. You can make your arrangements accordingly, and have plenty of work for her when I get back. I'm going to become a partner in Berande to the extent of my bag of sovereigns — I've got over fifteen hundred of them, you know. We'll draw up an agreement right now — that is, with your permission, and I know you won't refuse it."

He looked at her with good-natured amusement.

"You know I sailed here all the way from Tahiti in order to become a planter," she insisted. "You know what my plans were. Now I've changed them, that's all. I'd rather be a part owner of Berande and get my returns in three years, than break ground on Pari-Sulay and wait seven years."

"And this — er — this schooner. . . . " Sheldon changed his mind and stopped.

"Yes, go on."

"You won't be angry?" he queried.

"No, no; this is business. Go on."

"You — er — you would run her yourself? — be the captain, in short? — and go recruiting on Malaita?"

"Certainly. We would save the cost of a skipper. Under an agreement you would be credited with a manager's salary, and I with a captain's. It's quite simple. Besides, if you won't let me be your partner, I shall buy Pari-Sulay, get a much smaller vessel, and run her myself. So what is the difference?"

"The difference? — why, all the difference in the world. In the case of Pari-Sulay you would be on an independent venture. You could turn cannibal for all I could interfere in the matter. But on Berande, you would be my partner, and then I would be responsible. And of course I couldn't permit you, as my partner, to be skipper of a recruiter. I tell you, the thing is what I would not permit any sister or wife of mine — "

"But I'm not going to be your wife, thank goodness — only your partner."

"Besides, it's all ridiculous," he held on steadily. "Think of the situation. A man and a woman, both young, partners on an isolated plantation. Why, the only practical way out would be that I'd have to marry you — "

"Mine was a business proposition, not a marriage proposal," she interrupted, coldly angry. "I wonder if somewhere in this world there is one man who could accept me for a comrade."

"But you are a woman just the same," he began, "and there are certain conventions, certain decencies — "

She sprang up and stamped her foot.

"Do you know what I'd like to say?" she demanded.

"Yes," he smiled, "you'd like to say, 'Damn petticoats!'"

She nodded her head ruefully.

"That's what I wanted to say, but it sounds different on your lips. It sounds as though you meant it yourself, and that you meant it because of me."

"Well, I am going to bed. But do, please, think over my proposition, and let me know in the morning. There's no use in my discussing it now. You make me so angry. You are cowardly, you know, and very egotistic. You are afraid of what other fools will say. No matter how honest your motives, if others criticized your actions your feelings would be hurt. And you think more about your own wretched feelings than you do about mine. And then, being a coward — all men are at heart cowards — you disguise your cowardice by calling it chivalry. I thank heaven that I was not born a man. Good-night. Do think it over. And don't be foolish. What Berande needs is good American hustle. You don't know what that is. You are a muddler. Besides, you are enervated. I'm fresh to the climate. Let me be your partner, and you'll see me rattle the dry bones of the Solomons. Confess, I've rattled yours already."

"I should say so," he answered. "Really, you know, you have. I never received such a dressing-down in my life. If any one had ever told me that I'd be a party even to the present situation. . . . Yes, I confess, you have rattled my dry bones pretty considerably."

"But that is nothing to the rattling they are going to get," she assured him, as he rose and took her hand. "Good-night. And do, do give me a rational decision in the morning."

CHAPTER XIII — THE LOGIC OF YOUTH

“I wish I knew whether you are merely headstrong, or whether you really intend to be a Solomon planter,” Sheldon said in the morning, at breakfast.

“I wish you were more adaptable,” Joan retorted. “You have more preconceived notions than any man I ever met. Why in the name of common sense, in the name of . . . fair play, can’t you get it into your head that I am different from the women you have known, and treat me accordingly? You surely ought to know I am different. I sailed my own schooner here — skipper, if you please. I came here to make my living. You know that; I’ve told you often enough. It was Dad’s plan, and I’m carrying it out, just as you are trying to carry out your Hughie’s plan. Dad started to sail and sail until he could find the proper islands for planting. He died, and I sailed and sailed until I arrived here. Well,” — she shrugged her shoulders — “the schooner is at the bottom of the sea. I can’t sail any farther, therefore I remain here. And a planter I shall certainly be.”

“You see — ” he began.

“I haven’t got to the point,” she interrupted. “Looking back on my conduct from the moment I first set foot on your beach, I can see no false pretence that I have made about myself or my intentions. I was my natural self to you from the first. I told you my plans; and yet you sit there and calmly tell me that you don’t know whether I really intend to become a planter, or whether it is all obstinacy and pretence. Now let me assure you, for the last time, that I really and truly shall become a planter, thanks to you, or in spite of you. Do you want me for a partner?”

“But do you realize that I would be looked upon as the most foolish jackanapes in the South Seas if I took a young girl like you in with me here on Berande?” he asked.

“No; decidedly not. But there you are again, worrying about what idiots and the generally evil-minded will think of you. I should have thought you had learned self-reliance on Berande, instead of needing to lean upon the moral support of every whisky-guzzling worthless South Sea vagabond.”

He smiled, and said, —

“Yes, that is the worst of it. You are unanswerable. Yours is the logic of youth, and no man can answer that. The facts of life can, but they have no place in the logic of youth. Youth must try to live according to its logic. That is the only way to learn better."

"There is no harm in trying?" she interjected.

"But there is. That is the very point. The facts always smash youth's logic, and they usually smash youth's heart, too. It's like platonic friendships and . . . and all such things; they are all right in theory, but they won't work in practice. I used to believe in such things once. That is why I am here in the Solomons at present."

Joan was impatient. He saw that she could not understand. Life was too clearly simple to her. It was only the youth who was arguing with him, the youth with youth's pure-minded and invincible reasoning. Hers was only the boy's soul in a woman's body. He looked at her flushed, eager face, at the great ropes of hair coiled on the small head, at the rounded lines of the figure showing plainly through the home-made gown, and at the eyes — boy's eyes, under cool, level brows — and he wondered why a being that was so much beautiful woman should be no woman at all. Why in the deuce was she not carroty-haired, or cross-eyed, or hare-lipped?

"Suppose we do become partners on Berande," he said, at the same time experiencing a feeling of fright at the prospect that was tangled with a contradictory feeling of charm, "either I'll fall in love with you, or you with me. Propinquity is dangerous, you know. In fact, it is propinquity that usually gives the facer to the logic of youth."

"If you think I came to the Solomons to get married — " she began wrathfully. "Well, there are better men in Hawaii, that's all. Really, you know, the way you harp on that one string would lead an unprejudiced listener to conclude that you are prurient-minded — "

She stopped, appalled. His face had gone red and white with such abruptness as to startle her. He was patently very angry. She sipped the last of her coffee, and arose, saying, —

"I'll wait until you are in a better temper before taking up the discussion again. That is what's the matter with you. You get angry too easily. Will you come swimming? The tide is just right."

"If she were a man I'd bundle her off the plantation root and crop, whale-boat, Tahitian sailors, sovereigns, and all," he muttered to himself after she had left the room.

But that was the trouble. She was not a man, and where would she go, and what would happen to her?

He got to his feet, lighted a cigarette, and her Stetson hat, hanging on the wall over her revolver-belt, caught his eye. That was the devil of it, too. He did not want her to go. After all, she had not grown up yet. That was why her logic hurt. It was only the logic of youth, but it could hurt damnably at times. At any rate, he would resolve upon one thing: never again would he lose his temper with her. She was a child; he must remember that. He sighed heavily. But why in reasonableness had such a child been incorporated in such a woman's form?

And as he continued to stare at her hat and think, the hurt he had received passed away, and he found himself cudgelling his brains for some way out of the muddle — for some method by which she could remain on Berande. A chaperone! Why not? He could send to Sydney on the first steamer for one. He could —

Her trilling laughter smote upon his reverie, and he stepped to the screen-door, through which he could see her running down the path to the beach. At her heels ran two of her sailors, Papehara and Mahameme, in scarlet lava-lavas, with naked sheath-knives gleaming in their belts. It was another sample of her wilfulness. Despite entreaties and commands, and warnings of the danger from sharks, she persisted in swimming at any and all times, and by special preference, it seemed to him, immediately after eating.

He watched her take the water, diving cleanly, like a boy, from the end of the little pier; and he watched her strike out with single overhand stroke, her henchmen swimming a dozen feet on either side. He did not have much faith in their ability to beat off a hungry man-eater, though he did believe, implicitly, that their lives would go bravely before hers in case of an attack.

Straight out they swam, their heads growing smaller and smaller. There was a slight, restless heave to the sea, and soon the three heads were disappearing behind it with greater frequency. He strained his eyes to keep them in sight, and finally fetched the telescope on to the veranda. A squall was making over from the direction of Florida; but then, she and her men laughed at squalls and the white choppy sea at such times. She certainly could swim, he had long since concluded. That came of her training in Hawaii. But sharks were sharks, and he had known of more than one good swimmer drowned in a tide-rip.

The squall blackened the sky, beat the ocean white where he had last seen the three heads, and then blotted out sea and sky and everything with its deluge of rain. It passed on, and Berande emerged in the bright sunshine as the three swimmers emerged from the sea. Sheldon slipped inside with the telescope, and through the screen-door watched her run up the path, shaking down her hair as she ran, to the fresh-water shower under the house.

On the veranda that afternoon he broached the proposition of a chaperone as delicately as he could, explaining the necessity at Berande for such a body, a housekeeper to run the boys and the storeroom, and perform divers other useful functions. When he had finished, he waited anxiously for what Joan would say.

“Then you don’t like the way I’ve been managing the house?” was her first objection. And next, brushing his attempted explanations aside, “One of two things would happen. Either I should cancel our partnership agreement and go away, leaving you to get another chaperone to chaperone your chaperone; or else I’d take the old hen out in the whale-boat and drown her. Do you imagine for one moment that I sailed my schooner down here to this raw edge of the earth in order to put myself under a chaperone?”

“But really . . . er . . . you know a chaperone is a necessary evil,” he objected.

“We’ve got along very nicely so far without one. Did I have one on the *Miélé*? And yet I was the only woman on board. There are only three things I am afraid of — bumble-bees, scarlet fever, and chaperones. Ugh! the clucking, evil-minded monsters, finding wrong in everything, seeing sin in the most innocent actions, and suggesting sin — yes, causing sin — by their diseased imaginings.”

“Phew!” Sheldon leaned back from the table in mock fear.

“You needn’t worry about your bread and butter,” he ventured. “If you fail at planting, you would be sure to succeed as a writer — novels with a purpose, you know.”

“I didn’t think there were persons in the Solomons who needed such books,” she retaliated. “But you are certainly one — you and your custodians of virtue.”

He winced, but Joan rattled on with the platitudinous originality of youth.

“As if anything good were worth while when it has to be guarded and put in leg-irons and handcuffs in order to keep it good. Your desire for a chaperone as much as implies that I am that sort of creature. I prefer to be good because it is good to be good, rather than because I can’t be bad because some argus-eyed old frump won’t let me have a chance to be bad.”

"But it — it is not that," he put in. "It is what others will think."

"Let them think, the nasty-minded wretches! It is because men like you are afraid of the nasty-minded that you allow their opinions to rule you."

"I am afraid you are a female Shelley," he replied; "and as such, you really drive me to become your partner in order to protect you."

"If you take me as a partner in order to protect me . . . I . . . I shan't be your partner, that's all. You'll drive me into buying Pari-Sulay yet."

"All the more reason — " he attempted.

"Do you know what I'll do?" she demanded. "I'll find some man in the Solomons who won't want to protect me."

Sheldon could not conceal the shock her words gave him.

"You don't mean that, you know," he pleaded.

"I do; I really do. I am sick and tired of this protection dodge. Don't forget for a moment that I am perfectly able to take care of myself. Besides, I have eight of the best protectors in the world — my sailors."

"You should have lived a thousand years ago," he laughed, "or a thousand years hence. You are very primitive, and equally super-modern. The twentieth century is no place for you."

"But the Solomon Islands are. You were living like a savage when I came along and found you — eating nothing but tinned meat and scones that would have ruined the digestion of a camel. Anyway, I've remedied that; and since we are to be partners, it will stay remedied. You won't die of malnutrition, be sure of that."

"If we enter into partnership," he announced, "it must be thoroughly understood that you are not allowed to run the schooner. You can go down to Sydney and buy her, but a skipper we must have — "

"At so much additional expense, and most likely a whisky-drinking, irresponsible, and incapable man to boot. Besides, I'd have the business more at heart than any man we could hire. As for capability, I tell you I can sail all around the average broken captain or promoted able seaman you find in the South Seas. And you know I am a navigator."

"But being my partner," he said coolly, "makes you none the less a lady."

"Thank you for telling me that my contemplated conduct is unladylike."

She arose, tears of anger and mortification in her eyes, and went over to the phonograph.

"I wonder if all men are as ridiculous as you?" she said.

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. Discussion was useless — he had learned that; and he was resolved to keep his temper. And before the day was out she capitulated. She was to go to Sydney on the first steamer, purchase the schooner, and sail back with an island skipper on board. And then she inveigled Sheldon into agreeing that she could take occasional cruises in the islands, though he was adamant when it came to a recruiting trip on Malaita. That was the one thing barred.

And after it was all over, and a terse and business-like agreement (by her urging) drawn up and signed, Sheldon paced up and down for a full hour, meditating upon how many different kinds of a fool he had made of himself. It was an impossible situation, and yet no more impossible than the previous one, and no more impossible than the one that would have obtained had she gone off on her own and bought Pari-Sulay. He had never seen a more independent woman who stood more in need of a protector than this boy-minded girl who had landed on his beach with eight picturesque savages, a long-barrelled revolver, a bag of gold, and a gaudy merchandise of imagined romance and adventure.

He had never read of anything to compare with it. The fictionists, as usual, were exceeded by fact. The whole thing was too preposterous to be true. He gnawed his moustache and smoked cigarette after cigarette. Satan, back from a prowl around the compound, ran up to him and touched his hand with a cold, damp nose. Sheldon caressed the animal's ears, then threw himself into a chair and laughed heartily. What would the Commissioner of the Solomons think? What would his people at home think? And in the one breath he was glad that the partnership had been effected and sorry that Joan Lackland had ever come to the Solomons. Then he went inside and looked at himself in a hand-mirror. He studied the reflection long and thoughtfully and wonderingly.

CHAPTER XIV — THE MARTHA

They were deep in a game of billiards the next morning, after the eleven o'clock breakfast, when Viaburi entered and announced, —

"Big fella schooner close up."

Even as he spoke, they heard the rumble of chain through hawse-pipe, and from the veranda saw a big black-painted schooner, swinging to her just-caught anchor.

"It's a Yankee," Joan cried. "See that bow! Look at that elliptical stern! Ah, I thought so — " as the Stars and Stripes fluttered to the mast-head.

Noa Noah, at Sheldon's direction, ran the Union Jack up the flagstaff.

"Now what is an American vessel doing down here?" Joan asked. "It's not a yacht, though I'll wager she can sail. Look! Her name! What is it?"

"*Martha*, San Francisco," Sheldon read, looking through the telescope. "It's the first Yankee I ever heard of in the Solomons. They are coming ashore, whoever they are. And, by Jove, look at those men at the oars. It's an all-white crew. Now what reason brings them here?"

"They're not proper sailors," Joan commented. "I'd be ashamed of a crew of black-boys that pulled in such fashion. Look at that fellow in the bow — the one just jumping out; he'd be more at home on a cow-pony."

The boat's-crew scattered up and down the beach, ranging about with eager curiosity, while the two men who had sat in the stern-sheets opened the gate and came up the path to the bungalow. One of them, a tall and slender man, was clad in white ducks that fitted him like a semi-military uniform. The other man, in nondescript garments that were both of the sea and shore, and that must have been uncomfortably hot, slouched and shambled like an overgrown ape. To complete the illusion, his face seemed to sprout in all directions with a dense, bushy mass of red whiskers, while his eyes were small and sharp and restless.

Sheldon, who had gone to the head of the steps, introduced them to Joan. The bewhiskered individual, who looked like a Scotsman, had the Teutonic name of Von Blix, and spoke with a strong American accent. The tall man in the well-fitting ducks, who gave the English name of Tudor — John Tudor — talked purely-enunciated English such as any cultured American would talk, save for the fact that it was most delicately and subtly touched by a faint German accent. Joan decided that she had been helped to identify the accent by the short German-looking moustache that did not conceal the mouth and its full red lips, which would have formed a Cupid's bow but for some harshness or severity of spirit that had moulded them masculinely.

Von Blix was rough and boorish, but Tudor was gracefully easy in everything he did, or looked, or said. His blue eyes sparkled and flashed, his clean-cut mobile features were an index to his slightest shades of feeling and expression. He bubbled with enthusiasms, and his faintest smile or lightest laugh seemed spontaneous and genuine. But it was only occasionally at first that he spoke, for Von Blix told their story and stated their errand.

They were on a gold-hunting expedition. He was the leader, and Tudor was his lieutenant. All hands — and there were twenty-eight — were shareholders, in varying proportions, in the adventure. Several were sailors, but the large majority were miners, culled from all the camps from Mexico to the Arctic Ocean. It was the old and ever-untiring pursuit of gold, and they had come to the Solomons to get it. Part of them, under the leadership of Tudor, were to go up the Balesuna and penetrate the mountainous heart of Guadalcanar, while the *Martha*, under Von Blix, sailed away for Malaita to put through similar exploration.

"And so," said Von Blix, "for Mr. Tudor's expedition we must have some black-boys. Can we get them from you?"

"Of course we will pay," Tudor broke in. "You have only to charge what you consider them worth. You pay them six pounds a year, don't you?"

"In the first place we can't spare them," Sheldon answered. "We are short of them on the plantation as it is."

"*We*?" Tudor asked quickly. "Then you are a firm or a partnership? I understood at Guvutu that you were alone, that you had lost your partner."

Sheldon inclined his head toward Joan, and as he spoke she felt that he had become a trifle stiff.

"Miss Lackland has become interested in the plantation since then. But to return to the boys. We can't spare them, and besides, they would be of little use. You couldn't get them to accompany you beyond Binu, which is a short day's work with the boats from here. They are Malaita-men, and they are afraid of being eaten. They would desert you at the first opportunity. You could get the Binu men to accompany you another day's journey, through the grass-lands, but at the first roll of the foothills look for them to turn back. They likewise are disinclined to being eaten."

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Von Blix.

"The interior of Guadalcanar has never been explored," Sheldon explained. "The bushmen are as wild men as are to be found anywhere in the world to-day. I have never seen one. I have never seen a man who has seen one. They never come down to the coast, though their scouting parties occasionally eat a coast native who has wandered too far inland. Nobody knows anything about them. They don't even use tobacco — have never learned its use. The Austrian expedition — scientists, you know — got part way in before it was cut to pieces. The monument is up the beach there several miles. Only one man got back to the coast to tell the tale. And now you have all I or any other man knows of the inside of Guadalcanar."

"But gold — have you heard of gold?" Tudor asked impatiently. "Do you know anything about gold?"

Sheldon smiled, while the two visitors hung eagerly upon his words.

"You can go two miles up the Balesuna and wash colours from the gravel. I've done it often. There is gold undoubtedly back in the mountains."

Tudor and Von Blix looked triumphantly at each other.

"Old Wheatsheaf's yarn was true, then," Tudor said, and Von Blix nodded. "And if Malaita turns out as well — "

Tudor broke off and looked at Joan.

"It was the tale of this old beachcomber that brought us here," he explained. "Von Blix befriended him and was told the secret." He turned and addressed Sheldon. "I think we shall prove that white men have been through the heart of Guadalcanar long before the time of the Austrian expedition."

Sheldon shrugged his shoulders.

"We have never heard of it down here," he said simply. Then he addressed Von Blix. "As to the boys, you couldn't use them farther than Binu, and I'll lend you as many as you want as far as that. How many of your party are going, and how soon will you start?"

"Ten," said Tudor; "nine men and myself."

"And you should be able to start day after to-morrow," Von Blix said to him. "The boats should practically be knocked together this afternoon. To-morrow should see the outfit portioned and packed. As for the *Martha*, Mr. Sheldon, we'll rush the stuff ashore this afternoon and sail by sundown."

As the two men returned down the path to their boat, Sheldon regarded Joan quizzically.

“There’s romance for you,” he said, “and adventure — gold-hunting among the cannibals.”

“A title for a book,” she cried. “Or, better yet, ‘Gold-Hunting Among the Head-Hunters.’ My! wouldn’t it sell!”

“And now aren’t you sorry you became a cocoanut planter?” he teased. “Think of investing in such an adventure.”

“If I did,” she retorted, “Von Blix wouldn’t be finicky about my joining in the cruise to Malaita.”

“I don’t doubt but what he would jump at it.”

“What do you think of them?” she asked.

“Oh, old Von Blix is all right, a solid sort of chap in his fashion; but Tudor is fly-away — too much on the surface, you know. If it came to being wrecked on a desert island, I’d prefer Von Blix.”

“I don’t quite understand,” Joan objected. “What have you against Tudor?”

“You remember Browning’s ‘Last Duchess’?”

She nodded.

“Well, Tudor reminds me of her — ”

“But she was delightful.”

“So she was. But she was a woman. One expects something different from a man — more control, you know, more restraint, more deliberation. A man must be more solid, more solid and steady-going and less effervescent. A man of Tudor’s type gets on my nerves. One demands more repose from a man.”

Joan felt that she did not quite agree with his judgment; and, somehow, Sheldon caught her feeling and was disturbed. He remembered noting how her eyes had brightened as she talked with the newcomer — confound it all, was he getting jealous? he asked himself. Why shouldn’t her eyes brighten? What concern was it of his?

A second boat had been lowered, and the outfit of the shore party was landed rapidly. A dozen of the crew put the knocked-down boats together on the beach. There were five of these craft — lean and narrow, with flaring sides, and remarkably long. Each was equipped with three paddles and several iron-shod poles.

"You chaps certainly seem to know river-work," Sheldon told one of the carpenters.

The man spat a mouthful of tobacco-juice into the white sand, and answered, —

"We use 'em in Alaska. They're modelled after the Yukon poling-boats, and you can bet your life they're crackerjacks. This creek'll be a snap alongside some of them Northern streams. Five hundred pounds in one of them boats, an' two men can snake it along in a way that'd surprise you."

At sunset the *Martha* broke out her anchor and got under way, dipping her flag and saluting with a bomb gun. The Union Jack ran up and down the staff, and Sheldon replied with his brass signal-cannon. The miners pitched their tents in the compound, and cooked on the beach, while Tudor dined with Joan and Sheldon.

Their guest seemed to have been everywhere and seen everything and met everybody, and, encouraged by Joan, his talk was largely upon his own adventures. He was an adventurer of adventurers, and by his own account had been born into adventure. Descended from old New England stock, his father a consul-general, he had been born in Germany, in which country he had received his early education and his accent. Then, still a boy, he had rejoined his father in Turkey, and accompanied him later to Persia, his father having been appointed Minister to that country.

Tudor had always been a wanderer, and with facile wit and quick vivid description he leaped from episode and place to episode and place, relating his experiences seemingly not because they were his, but for the sake of their bizarreness and uniqueness, for the unusual incident or the laughable situation. He had gone through South American revolutions, been a Rough Rider in Cuba, a scout in South Africa, a war correspondent in the Russo-Japanese war. He had *mushed* dogs in the Klondike, washed gold from the sands of Nome, and edited a newspaper in San Francisco. The President of the United States was his friend. He was equally at home in the clubs of London and the Continent, the Grand Hotel at Yokohama, and the selector's shanties in the Never-Never country. He had shot big game in Siam, pearled in the Paumotus, visited Tolstoy, seen the Passion Play, and crossed the Andes on mule-back; while he was a living directory of the fever holes of West Africa.

Sheldon leaned back in his chair on the veranda, sipping his coffee and listening. In spite of himself he felt touched by the charm of the man who had led so varied a life. And yet Sheldon was not comfortable. It seemed to him that the man addressed himself particularly to Joan. His words and smiles were directed impartially toward both of them, yet Sheldon was certain, had the two men of them been alone, that the conversation would have been along different lines. Tudor had seen the effect on Joan and deliberately continued the flow of reminiscence, netting her in the glamour of romance. Sheldon watched her rapt attention, listened to her spontaneous laughter, quick questions, and passing judgments, and felt grow within him the dawning consciousness that he loved her.

So he was very quiet and almost sad, though at times he was aware of a distinct irritation against his guest, and he even speculated as to what percentage of Tudor's tale was true and how any of it could be proved or disproved. In this connection, as if the scene had been prepared by a clever playwright, Utami came upon the veranda to report to Joan the capture of a crocodile in the trap they had made for her.

Tudor's face, illuminated by the match with which he was lighting his cigarette, caught Utami's eye, and Utami forgot to report to his mistress.

"Hello, Tudor," he said, with a familiarity that startled Sheldon.

The Polynesian's hand went out, and Tudor, shaking it, was staring into his face.

"Who is it?" he asked. "I can't see you."

"Utami."

"And who the dickens is Utami? Where did I ever meet you, my man?"

"You no forget the *Huahine*?" Utami chided. "Last time *Huahine* sail?"

Tudor gripped the Tahitian's hand a second time and shook it with genuine heartiness.

"There was only one kanaka who came out of the *Huahine* that last voyage, and that kanaka was Joe. The deuce take it, man, I'm glad to see you, though I never heard your new name before."

"Yes, everybody speak me Joe along the *Huahine*. Utami my name all the time, just the same."

"But what are you doing here?" Tudor asked, releasing the sailor's hand and leaning eagerly forward.

"Me sail along Missie Lackalanna her schooner *Miélé*. We go Tahiti, Raiatea, Tahaa, Bora-Bora, Manua, Tutuila, Apia, Savaii, and Fiji Islands — plenty Fiji Islands. Me stop along Missie Lackalanna in Solomons. Very soon she catch other schooner."

"He and I were the two survivors of the wreck of the *Huahine*," Tudor explained to the others. "Fifty-seven all told on board when we sailed from Huapa, and Joe and I were the only two that ever set foot on land again. Hurricane, you know, in the Paumotus. That was when I was after pearls."

"And you never told me, Utami, that you'd been wrecked in a hurricane," Joan said reproachfully.

The big Tahitian shifted his weight and flashed his teeth in a conciliating smile.

"Me no t'ink nothing 't all," he said.

He half-turned, as if to depart, by his manner indicating that he considered it time to go while yet he desired to remain.

"All right, Utami," Tudor said. "I'll see you in the morning and have a yarn."

"He saved my life, the beggar," Tudor explained, as the Tahitian strode away and with heavy softness of foot went down the steps. "Swim! I never met a better swimmer."

And thereat, solicited by Joan, Tudor narrated the wreck of the *Huahine*; while Sheldon smoked and pondered, and decided that whatever the man's shortcomings were, he was at least not a liar.

CHAPTER XV — A DISCOURSE ON MANNERS

The days passed, and Tudor seemed loath to leave the hospitality of Berande. Everything was ready for the start, but he lingered on, spending much time in Joan's company and thereby increasing the dislike Sheldon had taken to him. He went swimming with her, in point of rashness exceeding her; and dynamited fish with her, diving among the hungry ground-sharks and contesting with them for possession of the stunned prey, until he earned the approval of the whole Tahitian crew. Arahu challenged him to tear a fish from a shark's jaws, leaving half to the shark and bringing the other half himself to the surface; and Tudor performed the feat, a flip from the sandpaper hide of the astonished shark scraping several inches of skin from his shoulder. And Joan was delighted, while Sheldon, looking on, realized that here was the hero of her adventure-dreams coming true. She did not care for love, but he felt that if ever she did love it would be that sort of a man — "a man who exhibited," was his way of putting it.

He felt himself handicapped in the presence of Tudor, who had the gift of making a show of all his qualities. Sheldon knew himself for a brave man, wherefore he made no advertisement of the fact. He knew that just as readily as the other would he dive among ground-sharks to save a life, but in that fact he could find no sanction for the foolhardy act of diving among sharks for the half of a fish. The difference between them was that he kept the curtain of his shop window down. Life pulsed steadily and deep in him, and it was not his nature needlessly to agitate the surface so that the world could see the splash he was making. And the effect of the other's amazing exhibitions was to make him retreat more deeply within himself and wrap himself more thickly than ever in the nerveless, stoical calm of his race.

"You are so stupid the last few days," Joan complained to him. "One would think you were sick, or bilious, or something. You don't seem to have an idea in your head above black labour and cocoanuts. What is the matter?"

Sheldon smiled and beat a further retreat within himself, listening the while to Joan and Tudor propounding the theory of the strong arm by which the white man ordered life among the lesser breeds. As he listened Sheldon realized, as by revelation, that that was precisely what he was doing. While they philosophized about it he was living it, placing the strong hand of his race firmly on the shoulders of the lesser breeds that laboured on Berande or menaced it from afar. But why talk about it? he asked himself. It was sufficient to do it and be done with it.

He said as much, dryly and quietly, and found himself involved in a discussion, with Joan and Tudor siding against him, in which a more astounding charge than ever he had dreamed of was made against the very English control and reserve of which he was secretly proud.

"The Yankees talk a lot about what they do and have done," Tudor said, "and are looked down upon by the English as braggarts. But the Yankee is only a child. He does not know effectually how to brag. He talks about it, you see. But the Englishman goes him one better by not talking about it. The Englishman's proverbial lack of bragging is a subtler form of brag after all. It is really clever, as you will agree."

"I never thought of it before," Joan cried. "Of course. An Englishman performs some terrifically heroic exploit, and is very modest and reserved — refuses to talk about it at all — and the effect is that by his silence he as much as says, 'I do things like this every day. It is as easy as rolling off a log. You ought to see the really heroic things I could do if they ever came my way. But this little thing, this little episode — really, don't you know, I fail to see anything in it remarkable or unusual.' As for me, if I went up in a powder explosion, or saved a hundred lives, I'd want all my friends to hear about it, and their friends as well. I'd be prouder than Lucifer over the affair. Confess, Mr. Sheldon, don't you feel proud down inside when you've done something daring or courageous?"

Sheldon nodded.

"Then," she pressed home the point, "isn't disguising that pride under a mask of careless indifference equivalent to telling a lie?"

"Yes, it is," he admitted. "But we tell similar lies every day. It is a matter of training, and the English are better trained, that is all. Your countrymen will be trained as well in time. As Mr. Tudor said, the Yankees are young."

"Thank goodness we haven't begun to tell such lies yet!" was Joan's ejaculation.

"Oh, but you have," Sheldon said quickly. "You were telling me a lie of that order only the other day. You remember when you were going up the lantern-halyards hand over hand? Your face was the personification of duplicity."

"It was no such thing."

"Pardon me a moment," he went on. "Your face was as calm and peaceful as though you were reclining in a steamer-chair. To look at your face one would have inferred that carrying the weight of your body up a rope hand over hand was a very commonplace accomplishment — as easy as rolling off a log. And you needn't tell me, Miss Lackland, that you didn't make faces the first time you tried to climb a rope. But, like any circus athlete, you trained yourself out of the face-making period. You trained your face to hide your feelings, to hide the exhausting effort your muscles were making. It was, to quote Mr. Tudor, a subtler exhibition of physical prowess. And that is all our English reserve is — a mere matter of training. Certainly we are proud inside of the things we do and have done, proud as Lucifer — yes, and prouder. But we have grown up, and no longer talk about such things."

"I surrender," Joan cried. "You are not so stupid after all."

"Yes, you have us there," Tudor admitted. "But you wouldn't have had us if you hadn't broken your training rules."

"How do you mean?"

"By talking about it."

Joan clapped her hands in approval. Tudor lighted a fresh cigarette, while Sheldon sat on, imperturbably silent.

"He got you there," Joan challenged. "Why don't you crush him?"

"Really, I can't think of anything to say," Sheldon said. "I know my position is sound, and that is satisfactory enough."

"You might retort," she suggested, "that when an adult is with kindergarten children he must descend to kindergarten idioms in order to make himself intelligible. That was why you broke training rules. It was the only way to make us children understand."

"You've deserted in the heat of the battle, Miss Lackland, and gone over to the enemy," Tudor said plaintively.

But she was not listening. Instead, she was looking intently across the compound and out to sea. They followed her gaze, and saw a green light and the loom of a vessel's sails.

"I wonder if it's the *Martha* come back," Tudor hazarded.

“No, the sidelight is too low,” Joan answered. “Besides, they’ve got the sweeps out. Don’t you hear them? They wouldn’t be sweeping a big vessel like the *Martha*.”

“Besides, the *Martha* has a gasoline engine — twenty-five horse-power,” Tudor added.

“Just the sort of a craft for us,” Joan said wistfully to Sheldon. “I really must see if I can’t get a schooner with an engine. I might get a second-hand engine put in.”

“That would mean the additional expense of an engineer’s wages,” he objected.

“But it would pay for itself by quicker passages,” she argued; “and it would be as good as insurance. I know. I’ve knocked about amongst reefs myself. Besides, if you weren’t so mediaeval, I could be skipper and save more than the engineer’s wages.”

He did not reply to her thrust, and she glanced at him. He was looking out over the water, and in the lantern light she noted the lines of his face — strong, stern, dogged, the mouth almost chaste but firmer and thinner-lipped than Tudor’s. For the first time she realized the quality of his strength, the calm and quiet of it, its simple integrity and reposeful determination. She glanced quickly at Tudor on the other side of her. It was a handsomer face, one that was more immediately pleasing. But she did not like the mouth. It was made for kissing, and she abhorred kisses. This was not a deliberately achieved concept; it came to her in the form of a faint and vaguely intangible repulsion. For the moment she knew a fleeting doubt of the man. Perhaps Sheldon was right in his judgment of the other. She did not know, and it concerned her little; for boats, and the sea, and the things and happenings of the sea were of far more vital interest to her than men, and the next moment she was staring through the warm tropic darkness at the loom of the sails and the steady green of the moving sidelight, and listening eagerly to the click of the sweeps in the rowlocks. In her mind’s eye she could see the straining naked forms of black men bending rhythmically to the work, and somewhere on that strange deck she knew was the inevitable master-man, conning the vessel in to its anchorage, peering at the dim tree-line of the shore, judging the deceitful night-distances, feeling on his cheek the first fans of the land breeze that was even then beginning to blow, weighing, thinking, measuring, gauging the score or more of ever-shifting forces, through which, by which, and in spite of which he directed the steady equilibrium of his course. She knew it because she loved it, and she was alive to it as only a sailor could be.

Twice she heard the splash of the lead, and listened intently for the cry that followed. Once a man's voice spoke, low, imperative, issuing an order, and she thrilled with the delight of it. It was only a direction to the man at the wheel to port his helm. She watched the slight altering of the course, and knew that it was for the purpose of enabling the flat-hauled sails to catch those first fans of the land breeze, and she waited for the same low voice to utter the one word "Steady!" And again she thrilled when it did utter it. Once more the lead splashed, and "Eleven fadom" was the resulting cry. "Let go!" the low voice came to her through the darkness, followed by the surging rumble of the anchor-chain. The clicking of the sheaves in the blocks as the sails ran down, head-sails first, was music to her; and she detected on the instant the jamming of a jib-downhaul, and almost saw the impatient jerk with which the sailor must have cleared it. Nor did she take interest in the two men beside her till both lights, red and green, came into view as the anchor checked the onward way.

Sheldon was wondering as to the identity of the craft, while Tudor persisted in believing it might be the *Martha*.

"It's the *Minerva*," Joan said decidedly.

"How do you know?" Sheldon asked, sceptical of her certitude.

"It's a ketch to begin with. And besides, I could tell anywhere the rattle of her main peak-blocks — they're too large for the halyard."

A dark figure crossed the compound diagonally from the beach gate, where whoever it was had been watching the vessel.

"Is that you, Utami?" Joan called.

"No, Missie; me Matapuu," was the answer.

"What vessel is it?"

"Me t'ink *Minerva*."

Joan looked triumphantly at Sheldon, who bowed.

"If Matapuu says so it must be so," he murmured.

"But when Joan Lackland says so, you doubt," she cried, "just as you doubt her ability as a skipper. But never mind, you'll be sorry some day for all your unkindness. There's the boat lowering now, and in five minutes we'll be shaking hands with Christian Young."

Lalaperu brought out the glasses and cigarettes and the eternal whisky and soda, and before the five minutes were past the gate clicked and

Christian Young, tawny and golden, gentle of voice and look and hand, came up the bungalow steps and joined them.

CHAPTER XVI — THE GIRL WHO HAD NOT GROWN UP

News, as usual, Christian Young brought — news of the drinking at Guvutu, where the men boasted that they drank between drinks; news of the new rifles adrift on Ysabel, of the latest murders on Malaita, of Tom Butler's sickness on Santa Ana; and last and most important, news that the *Matambo* had gone on a reef in the Shortlands and would be laid off one run for repairs.

"That means five weeks more before you can sail for Sydney," Sheldon said to Joan.

"And that we are losing precious time," she added ruefully.

"If you want to go to Sydney, the *Upolu* sails from Tulagi to-morrow afternoon," Young said.

"But I thought she was running recruits for the Germans in Samoa," she objected. "At any rate, I could catch her to Samoa, and change at Apia to one of the Weir Line freighters. It's a long way around, but still it would save time."

"This time the *Upolu* is going straight to Sydney," Young explained. "She's going to dry-dock, you see; and you can catch her as late as five to-morrow afternoon — at least, so her first officer told me."

"But I've got to go to Guvutu first." Joan looked at the men with a whimsical expression. "I've some shopping to do. I can't wear these Berande curtains into Sydney. I must buy cloth at Guvutu and make myself a dress during the voyage down. I'll start immediately — in an hour. Lalaperu, you bring 'm one fella Adamu Adam along me. Tell 'm that fella Ornfiri make 'm *kai-kai* take along whale-boat." She rose to her feet, looking at Sheldon. "And you, please, have the boys carry down the whale-boat — my boat, you know. I'll be off in an hour."

Both Sheldon and Tudor looked at their watches.

"It's an all-night row," Sheldon said. "You might wait till morning — "

"And miss my shopping? No, thank you. Besides, the *Upolu* is not a regular passenger steamer, and she is just as liable to sail ahead of time as on time. And from what I hear about those Guvutu sybarites, the best time to shop will be in the morning. And now you'll have to excuse me, for I've got to pack."

“I’ll go over with you,” Sheldon announced.

“Let me run you over in the *Minerva*,” said Young.

She shook her head laughingly.

“I’m going in the whale-boat. One would think, from all your solicitude, that I’d never been away from home before. You, Mr. Sheldon, as my partner, I cannot permit to desert Berande and your work out of a mistaken notion of courtesy. If you won’t permit me to be skipper, I won’t permit your galivanting over the sea as protector of young women who don’t need protection. And as for you, Captain Young, you know very well that you just left Guvutu this morning, that you are bound for Marau, and that you said yourself that in two hours you are getting under way again.”

“But may I not see you safely across?” Tudor asked, a pleading note in his voice that rasped on Sheldon’s nerves.

“No, no, and again no,” she cried. “You’ve all got your work to do, and so have I. I came to the Solomons to work, not to be escorted about like a doll. For that matter, here’s my escort, and there are seven more like him.”

Adamu Adam stood beside her, towering above her, as he towered above the three white men. The clinging cotton undershirt he wore could not hide the bulge of his tremendous muscles.

“Look at his fist,” said Tudor. “I’d hate to receive a punch from it.”

“I don’t blame you.” Joan laughed reminiscently. “I saw him hit the captain of a Swedish bark on the beach at Levuka, in the Fijis. It was the captain’s fault. I saw it all myself, and it was splendid. Adamu only hit him once, and he broke the man’s arm. You remember, Adamu?”

The big Tahitian smiled and nodded, his black eyes, soft and deer-like, seeming to give the lie to so belligerent a nature.

“We start in an hour in the whale-boat for Guvutu, big brother,” Joan said to him. “Tell your brothers, all of them, so that they can get ready. We catch the *Upolu* for Sydney. You will all come along, and sail back to the Solomons in the new schooner. Take your extra shirts and dungarees along. Plenty cold weather down there. Now run along, and tell them to hurry. Leave the guns behind. Turn them over to Mr. Sheldon. We won’t need them.”

“If you are really bent upon going — ” Sheldon began.

“That’s settled long ago,” she answered shortly. “I’m going to pack now. But I’ll tell you what you can do for me — issue some tobacco and other stuff they want to my men.”

An hour later the three men had shaken hands with Joan down on the beach. She gave the signal, and the boat shoved off, six men at the oars, the seventh man for'ard, and Adamu Adam at the steering-sweep. Joan was standing up in the stern-sheets, reiterating her good-byes — a slim figure of a woman in the tight-fitting jacket she had worn ashore from the wreck, the long-barrelled Colt's revolver hanging from the loose belt around her waist, her clear-cut face like a boy's under the Stetson hat that failed to conceal the heavy masses of hair beneath.

"You'd better get into shelter," she called to them. "There's a big squall coming. And I hope you've got plenty of chain out, Captain Young. Good-bye! Good-bye, everybody!"

Her last words came out of the darkness, which wrapped itself solidly about the boat. Yet they continued to stare into the blackness in the direction in which the boat had disappeared, listening to the steady click of the oars in the rowlocks until it faded away and ceased.

"She is only a girl," Christian Young said with slow solemnity. The discovery seemed to have been made on the spur of the moment. "She is only a girl," he repeated with greater solemnity.

"A dashed pretty one, and a good traveller," Tudor laughed. "She certainly has spunk, eh, Sheldon?"

"Yes, she is brave," was the reluctant answer for Sheldon did not feel disposed to talk about her.

"That's the American of it," Tudor went on. "Push, and go, and energy, and independence. What do you think, skipper?"

"I think she is young, very young, only a girl," replied the captain of the *Minerva*, continuing to stare into the blackness that hid the sea.

The blackness seemed suddenly to increase in density, and they stumbled up the beach, feeling their way to the gate.

"Watch out for nuts," Sheldon warned, as the first blast of the squall shrieked through the palms. They joined hands and staggered up the path, with the ripe cocoanuts thudding in a monstrous rain all around them. They gained the veranda, where they sat in silence over their whisky, each man staring straight out to sea, where the wildly swinging riding-light of the *Minerva* could be seen in the lulls of the driving rain.

Somewhere out there, Sheldon reflected, was Joan Lackland, the girl who had not grown up, the woman good to look upon, with only a boy's mind and a boy's desires, leaving Berande amid storm and conflict in much the same manner that she had first arrived, in the stern-sheets of her whale-boat, Adamu Adam steering, her savage crew bending to the oars. And she was taking her Stetson hat with her, along with the cartridge-belt and the long-barrelled revolver. He suddenly discovered an immense affection for those fripperies of hers at which he had secretly laughed when first he saw them. He became aware of the sentimental direction in which his fancy was leading him, and felt inclined to laugh. But he did not laugh. The next moment he was busy visioning the hat, and belt, and revolver. Undoubtedly this was love, he thought, and he felt a tiny glow of pride in him in that the Solomons had not succeeded in killing all his sentiment.

An hour later, Christian Young stood up, knocked out his pipe, and prepared to go aboard and get under way.

“She’s all right,” he said, apropos of nothing spoken, and yet distinctly relevant to what was in each of their minds. “She’s got a good boat’s-crew, and she’s a sailor herself. Good-night, Mr. Sheldon. Anything I can do for you down Marau-way?” He turned and pointed to a widening space of starry sky. “It’s going to be a fine night after all. With this favouring bit of breeze she has sail on already, and she’ll make Guvutu by daylight. Good-night.”

“I guess I’ll turn in, old man,” Tudor said, rising and placing his glass on the table. “I’ll start the first thing in the morning. It’s been disgraceful the way I’ve been hanging on here. Good-night.”

Sheldon, sitting on alone, wondered if the other man would have decided to pull out in the morning had Joan not sailed away. Well, there was one bit of consolation in it: Joan had certainly lingered at Berande for no man, not even Tudor. “I start in an hour” — her words rang in his brain, and under his eyelids he could see her as she stood up and uttered them. He smiled. The instant she heard the news she had made up her mind to go. It was not very flattering to man, but what could any man count in her eyes when a schooner waiting to be bought in Sydney was in the wind? What a creature! What a creature!

* * * * *

Berande was a lonely place to Sheldon in the days that followed. In the morning after Joan’s departure, he had seen Tudor’s expedition off on its way up the Balesuna; in the late afternoon, through his telescope, he had seen the smoke of the *Upolu* that was bearing Joan away to Sydney; and in the evening he sat down to dinner in solitary state, devoting more of his time to looking at her empty chair than to his food. He never came out on the veranda without glancing first of all at her grass house in the corner of the compound; and one evening, idly knocking the balls about on the billiard table, he came to himself to find himself standing staring at the nail upon which from the first she had hung her Stetson hat and her revolver-belt.

Why should he care for her? he demanded of himself angrily. She was certainly the last woman in the world he would have thought of choosing for himself. Never had he encountered one who had so thoroughly irritated him, rasped his feelings, smashed his conventions, and violated nearly every attribute of what had been his ideal of woman. Had he been too long away from the world? Had he forgotten what the race of women was like? Was it merely a case of propinquity? And she wasn't really a woman. She was a masquerader. Under all her seeming of woman, she was a boy, playing a boy's pranks, diving for fish amongst sharks, sporting a revolver, longing for adventure, and, what was more, going out in search of it in her whale-boat, along with her savage islanders and her bag of sovereigns. But he loved her — that was the point of it all, and he did not try to evade it. He was not sorry that it was so. He loved her — that was the overwhelming, astounding fact.

Once again he discovered a big enthusiasm for Berande. All the bubble-illusions concerning the life of the tropical planter had been pricked by the stern facts of the Solomons. Following the death of Hughie, he had resolved to muddle along somehow with the plantation; but this resolve had not been based upon desire. Instead, it was based upon the inherent stubbornness of his nature and his dislike to give over an attempted task.

But now it was different. Berande meant everything. It must succeed — not merely because Joan was a partner in it, but because he wanted to make that partnership permanently binding. Three more years and the plantation would be a splendid-paying investment. They could then take yearly trips to Australia, and oftener; and an occasional run home to England — or Hawaii, would come as a matter of course.

He spent his evenings poring over accounts, or making endless calculations based on cheaper freights for copra and on the possible maximum and minimum market prices for that staple of commerce. His days were spent out on the plantation. He undertook more clearing of bush; and clearing and planting went on, under his personal supervision, at a faster pace than ever before. He experimented with premiums for extra work performed by the black boys, and yearned continually for more of them to put to work. Not until Joan could return on the schooner would this be possible, for the professional recruiters were all under long contracts to the Fulcrum Brothers, Morgan and Raff, and the Fires, Philp Company; while the *Flibberty-Gibbet* was wholly occupied in running about among his widely scattered trading stations, which extended from the coast of New Georgia in one direction to Ulava and Sikiana in the other. Blacks he must have, and, if Joan were fortunate in getting a schooner, three months at least must elapse before the first recruits could be landed on Berande.

A week after the *Upolu's* departure, the *Malakula* dropped anchor and her skipper came ashore for a game of billiards and to gossip until the land breeze sprang up. Besides, as he told his super-cargo, he simply had to come ashore, not merely to deliver the large package of seeds with full instructions for planting from Joan, but to shock Sheldon with the little surprise born of information he was bringing with him.

Captain Auckland played the billiards first, and it was not until he was comfortably seated in a steamer-chair, his second whisky securely in his hand, that he let off his bomb.

"A great piece, that Miss Lackland of yours," he chuckled. "Claims to be a part-owner of Berande. Says she's your partner. Is that straight?"

Sheldon nodded coldly.

"You don't say? That is a surprise! Well, she hasn't convinced Guvutu or Tulagi of it. They're pretty used to irregular things over there, but — ha! ha! — " he stopped to have his laugh out and to mop his bald head with a trade handkerchief. "But that partnership yarn of hers was too big to swallow, though it gave them the excuse for a few more drinks."

"There is nothing irregular about it. It is an ordinary business transaction." Sheldon strove to act as though such transactions were quite the commonplace thing on plantations in the Solomons. "She invested something like fifteen hundred pounds in Berande — "

"So she said."

"And she has gone to Sydney on business for the plantation."

"Oh, no, she hasn't."

"I beg pardon?" Sheldon queried.

"I said she hasn't, that's all."

"But didn't the *Upolu* sail? I could have sworn I saw her smoke last Tuesday afternoon, late, as she passed Savo."

"The *Upolu* sailed all right." Captain Auckland sipped his whisky with provoking slowness. "Only Miss Lackland wasn't a passenger."

"Then where is she?"

"At Guvutu, last I saw of her. She was going to Sydney to buy a schooner, wasn't she?"

"Yes, yes."

"That's what she said. Well, she's bought one, though I wouldn't give her ten shillings for it if a nor'wester blows up, and it's about time we had one. This has been too long a spell of good weather to last."

"If you came here to excite my curiosity, old man," Sheldon said, "you've certainly succeeded. Now go ahead and tell me in a straightforward way what has happened. What schooner? Where is it? How did she happen to buy it?"

"First, the schooner *Martha*," the skipper answered, checking his replies off on his fingers. "Second, the *Martha* is on the outside reef at Poonga-Poonga, looted clean of everything portable, and ready to go to pieces with the first bit of lively sea. And third, Miss Lackland bought her at auction. She was knocked down to her for fifty-five quid by the third-assistant-resident-commissioner. I ought to know. I bid fifty myself, for Morgan and Raff. My word, weren't they hot! I told them to go to the devil, and that it was their fault for limiting me to fifty quid when they thought the chance to salve the *Martha* was worth more. You see, they weren't expecting competition. Fulcrum Brothers had no representative present, neither had Fires, Philp Company, and the only man to be afraid of was Nielsen's agent, Squires, and him they got drunk and sound asleep over in Guvutu.

"'Twenty,' says I, for my bid. 'Twenty-five,' says the little girl. 'Thirty,' says I. 'Forty,' says she. 'Fifty,' says I. 'Fifty-five,' says she. And there I was stuck. 'Hold on,' says I; 'wait till I see my owners.' 'No, you don't,' says she. 'It's customary,' says I. 'Not anywhere in the world,' says she. 'Then it's courtesy in the Solomons,' says I.

"And d'ye know, on my faith I think Burnett'd have done it, only she pipes up, sweet and pert as you please: 'Mr. Auctioneer, will you kindly proceed with the sale in the customary manner? I've other business to attend to, and I can't afford to wait all night on men who don't know their own minds.' And then she smiles at Burnett, as well — you know, one of those fetching smiles, and damme if Burnett doesn't begin singing out: 'Goin', goin', goin' — last bid — goin', goin' for fifty-five sovereigns — goin', goin', gone — to you, Miss — er — what name, please?'

"'Joan Lackland,' says she, with a smile to me; and that's how she bought the *Martha*."

Sheldon experienced a sudden thrill. The *Martha*! — a finer schooner than the *Malakula*, and, for that matter, the finest in the Solomons. She was just the thing for recruits, and she was right on the spot. Then he realized that for such a craft to sell at auction for fifty-five pounds meant that there was small chance for saving her.

"But how did it happen?" he asked. "Weren't they rather quick in selling the *Martha*?"

"Had to. You know the reef at Poonga-Poonga. She's not worth tuppence on it if any kind of a sea kicks up, and it's ripe for a nor'wester any moment now. The crowd abandoned her completely. Didn't even dream of auctioning her. Morgan and Raff persuaded them to put her up. They're a co-operative crowd, you know, an organized business corporation, fore and aft, all hands and the cook. They held a meeting and voted to sell."

"But why didn't they stand by and try to save her?"

"Stand by! You know Malaita. And you know Poonga-Poonga. That's where they cut off the *Scottish Chiefs* and killed all hands. There was nothing to do but take to the boats. The *Martha* missed stays going in, and inside five minutes she was on the reef and in possession. The niggers swarmed over her, and they just threw the crew into the boats. I talked with some of the men. They swear there were two hundred war canoes around her inside half an hour, and five thousand bushmen on the beach. Said you couldn't see Malaita for the smoke of the signal fires. Anyway, they cleared out for Tulagi."

"But why didn't they fight?" Sheldon asked.

"It was funny they didn't, but they got separated. You see, two-thirds of them were in the boats, without weapons, running anchors and never dreaming the natives would attack. They found out their mistake too late. The natives had charge. That's the trouble of new chums on the coast. It would never have happened with you or me or any old-timer."

"But what is Miss Lackland intending to do?" Captain Auckland grinned.

“She’s going to try to get the *Martha* off, I should say. Or else why did she pay fifty-five quid for her? And if she fails, she’ll try to get her money back by saving the gear — spars, you know, and patent steering-gear, and winches, and such things. At least that’s what I’d do if I was in her place. When I sailed, the little girl had chartered the *Emily* — ‘I’m going recruiting,’ says Munster — he’s the skipper and owner now. ‘And how much will you net on the cruise?’ asks she. ‘Oh, fifty quid,’ says he. ‘Good,’ says she; ‘you bring your *Emily* along with me and you’ll get seventy-five.’ You know that big ship’s anchor and chain piled up behind the coal-sheds? She was just buying that when I left. She’s certainly a hustler, that little girl of yours.”

“She is my partner,” Sheldon corrected.

“Well, she’s a good one, that’s all, and a cool one. My word! a white woman on Malaita, and at Poonga-Poonga of all places! Oh, I forgot to tell you — she palavered Burnett into lending her eight rifles for her men, and three cases of dynamite. You’d laugh to see the way she makes that Guvutu gang stand around. And to see them being polite and trying to give advice! Lord, Lord, man, that little girl’s a wonder, a marvel, a — a — a catastrophe. That’s what she is, a catastrophe. She’s gone through Guvutu and Tulagi like a hurricane; every last swine of them in love with her — except Raff. He’s sore over the auction, and he sprang his recruiting contract with Munster on her. And what does she do but thank him, and read it over, and point out that while Munster was pledged to deliver all recruits to Morgan and Raff, there was no clause in the document forbidding him from chartering the *Emily*.

“‘There’s your contract,’ says she, passing it back. ‘And a very good contract it is. The next time you draw one up, insert a clause that will fit emergencies like the present one.’ And, Lord, Lord, she had him, too.

“But there’s the breeze, and I’m off. Good-bye, old man. Hope the little girl succeeds. The *Martha’s* a whacking fine boat, and she’d take the place of the *Jessie*.”

CHAPTER XVII — “YOUR” MISS LACKLAND

The next morning Sheldon came in from the plantation to breakfast, to find the mission ketch, *Apostle*, at anchor, her crew swimming two mares and a filly ashore. Sheldon recognized the animals as belonging to the Resident Commissioner, and he immediately wondered if Joan had bought them. She was certainly living up to her threat of rattling the dry bones of the Solomons, and he was prepared for anything.

“Miss Lackland sent them,” said Welshmere, the missionary doctor, stepping ashore and shaking hands with him. “There’s also a box of saddles on board. And this letter from her. And the skipper of the *Flibberty-Gibbet*.”

The next moment, and before he could greet him, Oleson stepped from the boat and began.

“She’s stolen the *Flibberty*, Mr. Sheldon. Run clean away with her. She’s a wild one. She gave me the fever. Brought it on by shock. And got me drunk, as well — rotten drunk.”

Dr. Welshmere laughed heartily.

“Nevertheless, she is not an unmitigated evil, your Miss Lackland. She’s sworn three men off their drink, or, to the same purpose, shut off their whisky. You know them — Brahms, Curtis, and Fowler. She shipped them on the *Flibberty-Gibbet* along with her.”

“She’s the skipper of the *Flibberty* now,” Oleson broke in. “And she’ll wreck her as sure as God didn’t make the Solomons.”

Dr. Welshmere tried to look shocked, but laughed again.

“She has quite a way with her,” he said. “I tried to back out of bringing the horses over. Said I couldn’t charge freight, that the *Apostle* was under a yacht license, that I was going around by Savo and the upper end of Guadalcanar. But it was no use. ‘Bother the charge,’ said she. ‘You take the horses like a good man, and when I float the *Martha* I’ll return the service some day.’”

“And ‘bother your orders,’ said she to me,” Oleson cried. “‘I’m your boss now,’ said she, ‘and you take your orders from me.’ ‘Look at that load of ivory nuts,’ I said. ‘Bother them,’ said she; ‘I’m playin’ for something bigger than ivory nuts. We’ll dump them overside as soon as we get under way.’”

Sheldon put his hands to his ears.

"I don't know what has happened, and you are trying to tell me the tale backwards. Come up to the house and get in the shade and begin at the beginning."

"What I want to know," Oleson began, when they were seated, "is *is* she your partner or ain't she? That's what I want to know."

"She is," Sheldon assured him.

"Well, who'd have believed it!" Oleson glanced appealingly at Dr. Welshmere, and back again at Sheldon. "I've seen a few unlikely things in these Solomons — rats two feet long, butterflies the Commissioner hunts with a shot-gun, ear-ornaments that would shame the devil, and head-hunting devils that make the devil look like an angel. I've seen them and got used to them, but this young woman of yours — "

"Miss Lackland is my partner and part-owner of Berande," Sheldon interrupted.

"So she said," the irate skipper dashed on. "But she had no papers to show for it. How was I to know? And then there was that load of ivory nuts-eight tons of them."

"For heaven's sake begin at the — " Sheldon tried to interrupt.

"And then she's hired them drunken loafers, three of the worst scoundrels that ever disgraced the Solomons — fifteen quid a month each — what d'ye think of that? And sailed away with them, too! Phew! — You might give me a drink. The missionary won't mind. I've been on his teetotal hooker four days now, and I'm perishing."

Dr. Welshmere nodded in reply to Sheldon's look of inquiry, and Viaburi was dispatched for the whisky and siphons.

"It is evident, Captain Oleson," Sheldon remarked to that refreshed mariner, "that Miss Lackland has run away with your boat. Now please give a plain statement of what occurred."

"Right O; here goes. I'd just come in on the *Flibberty*. She was on board before I dropped the hook — in that whale-boat of hers with her gang of Tahiti heathens — that big Adamu Adam and the rest. 'Don't drop the anchor, Captain Oleson,' she sang out. 'I want you to get under way for Poonga-Poonga.' I looked to see if she'd been drinking. What was I to think? I was rounding up at the time, alongside the shoal — a ticklish place — head-sails running down and losing way, so I says, 'Excuse me, Miss Lackland,' and yells for'ard, 'Let go!'

"'You might have listened to me and saved yourself trouble,' says she, climbing over the rail and squinting along for'ard and seeing the first shackle flip out and stop. 'There's fifteen fathom,' says she; 'you may as well turn your men to and heave up.'

"And then we had it out. I didn't believe her. I didn't think you'd take her on as a partner, and I told her as much and wanted proof. She got high and mighty, and I told her I was old enough to be her grandfather and that I wouldn't take gammon from a chit like her. And then I ordered her off the *Flibberty*. 'Captain Oleson,' she says, sweet as you please, 'I've a few minutes to spare on you, and I've got some good whisky over on the *Emily*. Come on along. Besides, I want your advice about this wrecking business. Everybody says you're a crackerjack sailor-man' — that's what she said, 'crackerjack.' And I went, in her whale-boat, Adamu Adam steering and looking as solemn as a funeral.

"On the way she told me about the *Martha*, and how she'd bought her, and was going to float her. She said she'd chartered the *Emily*, and was sailing as soon as I could get the *Flibberty* underway. It struck me that her gammon was reasonable enough, and I agreed to pull out for Berande right O, and get your orders to go along to Poonga-Poonga. But she said there wasn't a second to be lost by any such foolishness, and that I was to sail direct for Poonga-Poonga, and that if I couldn't take her word that she was your partner, she'd get along without me and the *Flibberty*. And right there's where she fooled me.

"Down in the *Emily's* cabin was them three soaks — you know them — Fowler and Curtis and that Brahms chap. 'Have a drink,' says she. I thought they looked surprised when she unlocked the whisky locker and sent a nigger for the glasses and water-monkey. But she must have tipped them off unbeknownst to me, and they knew just what to do. 'Excuse me,' she says, 'I'm going on deck a minute.' Now that minute was half an hour. I hadn't had a drink in ten days. I'm an old man and the fever has weakened me. Then I took it on an empty stomach, too, and there was them three soaks setting me an example, they arguing for me to take the *Flibberty* to Poonga-Poonga, an' me pointing out my duty to the contrary. The trouble was, all the arguments were pointed with drinks, and me not being a drinking man, so to say, and weak from fever . . .

"Well, anyway, at the end of the half-hour down she came again and took a good squint at me. 'That'll do nicely,' I remember her saying; and with that she took the whisky bottles and hove them overside through the companionway. ‘That’s the last, she said to the three soaks, ‘till the *Martha* floats and you’re back in Guvutu. It’ll be a long time between drinks.’ And then she laughed.

“She looked at me and said — not to me, mind you, but to the soaks: ‘It’s time this worthy man went ashore’ — me! worthy man! ‘Fowler,’ she said — you know, just like a straight order, and she didn’t *mister* him — it was plain Fowler — ‘Fowler,’ she said, ‘just tell Adamu Adam to man the whale-boat, and while he’s taking Captain Oleson ashore have your boat put me on the *Flibberty*. The three of you sail with me, so pack your dunnage. And the one of you that shows up best will take the mate’s billet. Captain Oleson doesn’t carry a mate, you know.’

“I don’t remember much after that. All hands got me over the side, and it seems to me I went to sleep, sitting in the stern-sheets and watching that Adamu steer. Then I saw the *Flibberty’s* mainsail hoisting, and heard the clank of her chain coming in, and I woke up. ‘Here, put me on the *Flibberty*,’ I said to Adamu. ‘I put you on the beach,’ said he. ‘Missie Lackalanna say beach plenty good for you.’ Well, I let out a yell and reached for the steering-sweep. I was doing my best by my owners, you see. Only that Adamu gives me a shove down on the bottom-boards, puts one foot on me to hold me down, and goes on steering. And that’s all. The shock of the whole thing brought on fever. And now I’ve come to find out whether I’m skipper of the *Flibberty*, or that chit of yours with her pirating, heathen boat’s-crew.”

“Never mind, skipper. You can take a vacation on pay.” Sheldon spoke with more assurance than he felt. “If Miss Lackland, who is my partner, has seen fit to take charge of the *Flibberty-Gibbet*, why, it is all right. As you will agree, there was no time to be lost if the *Martha* was to be got off. It is a bad reef, and any considerable sea would knock her bottom out. You settle down here, skipper, and rest up and get the fever out of your bones. When the *Flibberty-Gibbet* comes back, you’ll take charge again, of course.”

After Dr. Welshmere and the *Apostle* departed and Captain Oleson had turned in for a sleep in a veranda hammock, Sheldon opened Joan’s letter.

DEAR MR. SHELDON, — Please forgive me for stealing the *Flibberty-Gibbet*. I simply had to. The *Martha* means everything to us. Think of it, only fifty-five pounds for her, two hundred and seventy-five dollars. If I don't save her, I know I shall be able to pay all expenses out of her gear, which the natives will not have carried off. And if I do save her, it is the haul of a life-time. And if I don't save her, I'll fill the *Emily* and the *Flibberty-Gibbet* with recruits. Recruits are needed right now on Berande more than anything else.

And please, please don't be angry with me. You said I shouldn't go recruiting on the *Flibberty*, and I won't. I'll go on the *Emily*.

I bought two cows this afternoon. That trader at Nogi died of fever, and I bought them from his partner, Sam Willis his name is, who agrees to deliver them — most likely by the *Minerva* next time she is down that way. Berande has been long enough on tinned milk.

And Dr. Welshmere has agreed to get me some orange and lime trees from the mission station at Ulava. He will deliver them the next trip of the *Apostle*. If the Sydney steamer arrives before I get back, plant the sweet corn she will bring between the young trees on the high bank of the Balesuna. The current is eating in against that bank, and you should do something to save it.

I have ordered some fig-trees and loquats, too, from Sydney. Dr. Welshmere will bring some mango-seeds. They are big trees and require plenty of room.

The *Martha* is registered 110 tons. She is the biggest schooner in the Solomons, and the best. I saw a little of her lines and guess the rest. She will sail like a witch. If she hasn't filled with water, her engine will be all right. The reason she went ashore was because it was not working. The engineer had disconnected the feed-pipes to clean out the rust. Poor business, unless at anchor or with plenty of sea room.

Plant all the trees in the compound, even if you have to clean out the palms later on.

And don't plant the sweet corn all at once. Let a few days elapse between plantings.

JOAN LACKLAND.

He fingered the letter, lingering over it and scrutinizing the writing in a way that was not his wont. How characteristic, was his thought, as he studied the boyish scrawl — clear to read, painfully, clear, but none the less boyish. The clearness of it reminded him of her face, of her cleanly stencilled brows, her straightly chiselled nose, the very clearness of the gaze of her eyes, the firmly yet delicately moulded lips, and the throat, neither fragile nor robust, but — but just right, he concluded, an adequate and beautiful pillar for so shapely a burden.

He looked long at the name. Joan Lackland — just an assemblage of letters, of commonplace letters, but an assemblage that generated a subtle and heady magic. It crept into his brain and twined and twisted his mental processes until all that constituted him at that moment went out in love to that scrawled signature. A few commonplace letters — yet they caused him to know in himself a lack that sweetly hurt and that expressed itself in vague spiritual outpourings and delicious yearnings. Joan Lackland! Each time he looked at it there arose visions of her in a myriad moods and guises — coming in out of the flying smother of the gale that had wrecked her schooner; launching a whale-boat to go a-fishing; running dripping from the sea, with streaming hair and clinging garments, to the fresh-water shower; frightening four-score cannibals with an empty chlorodyne bottle; teaching Ornfiri how to make bread; hanging her Stetson hat and revolver-belt on the hook in the living-room; talking gravely about winning to hearth and saddle of her own, or juvenilely rattling on about romance and adventure, bright-eyed, her face flushed and eager with enthusiasm. Joan Lackland! He mused over the cryptic wonder of it till the secrets of love were made clear and he felt a keen sympathy for lovers who carved their names on trees or wrote them on the beach-sands of the sea.

Then he came back to reality, and his face hardened. Even then she was on the wild coast of Malaita, and at Poonga-Poonga, of all villainous and dangerous portions the worst, peopled with a teeming population of head-hunters, robbers, and murderers. For the instant he entertained the rash thought of calling his boat's-crew and starting immediately in a whale-boat for Poonga-Poonga. But the next instant the idea was dismissed. What could he do if he did go? First, she would resent it. Next, she would laugh at him and call him a silly; and after all he would count for only one rifle more, and she had many rifles with her. Three things only could he do if he went. He could command her to return; he could take the *Flibberty-Gibbet* away from her; he could dissolve their partnership; — any and all of which he knew would be foolish and futile, and he could hear her explain in terse set terms that she was legally of age and that nobody could say come or go to her. No, his pride would never permit him to start for Poonga-Poonga, though his heart whispered that nothing could be more welcome than a message from her asking him to come and lend a hand. Her very words — “lend a hand”; and in his fancy, he could see and hear her saying them.

There was much in her wilful conduct that caused him to wince in the heart of him. He was appalled by the thought of her shoulder to shoulder with the drunken rabble of traders and beachcombers at Guvutu. It was bad enough for a clean, fastidious man; but for a young woman, a girl at that, it was awful. The theft of the *Flibberty-Gibbet* was merely amusing, though the means by which the theft had been effected gave him hurt. Yet he found consolation in the fact that the task of making Oleson drunk had been turned over to the three scoundrels. And next, and swiftly, came the vision of her, alone with those same three scoundrels, on the *Emily*, sailing out to sea from Guvutu in the twilight with darkness coming on. Then came visions of Adamu Adam and Noa Noah and all her brawny Tahitian following, and his anxiety faded away, being replaced by irritation that she should have been capable of such wildness of conduct.

And the irritation was still on him as he got up and went inside to stare at the hook on the wall and to wish that her Stetson hat and revolver-belt were hanging from it.

CHAPTER XVIII — MAKING THE BOOKS COME TRUE

Several quiet weeks slipped by. Berande, after such an unusual run of visiting vessels, drifted back into her old solitude. Sheldon went on with the daily round, clearing bush, planting cocoanuts, smoking copra, building bridges, and riding about his work on the horses Joan had bought. News of her he had none. Recruiting vessels on Malaita left the Poonga-Poonga coast severely alone; and the *Clansman*, a Samoan recruiter, dropping anchor one sunset for billiards and gossip, reported rumours amongst the Sio natives that there had been fighting at Poonga-Poonga. As this news would have had to travel right across the big island, little dependence was to be placed on it.

The steamer from Sydney, the *Kammambo*, broke the quietude of Berande for an hour, while landing mail, supplies, and the trees and seeds Joan had ordered. The *Minerva*, bound for Cape Marsh, brought the two cows from Nogi. And the *Apostle*, hurrying back to Tulagi to connect with the Sydney steamer, sent a boat ashore with the orange and lime trees from Ulava. And these several weeks marked a period of perfect weather. There were days on end when sleek calms ruled the breathless sea, and days when vagrant wisps of air fanned for several hours from one direction or another. The land-breezes at night alone proved regular, and it was at night that the occasional cutters and ketches slipped by, too eager to take advantage of the light winds to drop anchor for an hour.

Then came the long-expected nor'wester. For eight days it raged, lulling at times to short durations of calm, then shifting a point or two and raging with renewed violence. Sheldon kept a precautionary eye on the buildings, while the Balesuna, in flood, so savagely attacked the high bank Joan had warned him about, that he told off all the gangs to battle with the river.

It was in the good weather that followed, that he left the blacks at work, one morning, and with a shot-gun across his pommel rode off after pigeons. Two hours later, one of the house-boys, breathless and scratched ran him down with the news that the *Martha*, the *Flibberty-Gibbet*, and the *Emily* were heading in for the anchorage.

Coming into the compound from the rear, Sheldon could see nothing until he rode around the corner of the bungalow. Then he saw everything at once — first, a glimpse at the sea, where the *Martha* floated huge alongside the cutter and the ketch which had rescued her; and, next, the ground in front of the veranda steps, where a great crowd of fresh-caught cannibals stood at attention. From the fact that each was attired in a new, snow-white lava-lava, Sheldon knew that they were recruits. Part way up the steps, one of them was just backing down into the crowd, while another, called out by name, was coming up. It was Joan's voice that had called him, and Sheldon reined in his horse and watched. She sat at the head of the steps, behind a table, between Munster and his white mate, the three of them checking long lists, Joan asking the questions and writing the answers in the big, red-covered, Berande labour-journal.

"What name?" she demanded of the black man on the steps.

"Tagari," came the answer, accompanied by a grin and a rolling of curious eyes; for it was the first white-man's house the black had ever seen.

"What place b'long you?"

"Bangoora."

No one had noticed Sheldon, and he continued to sit his horse and watch. There was a discrepancy between the answer and the record in the recruiting books, and a consequent discussion, until Munster solved the difficulty.

"Bangoora?" he said. "That's the little beach at the head of the bay out of Latta. He's down as a Latta-man — see, there it is, 'Tagari, Latta.'"

"What place you go you finish along white marster?" Joan asked.

"Bangoora," the man replied; and Joan wrote it down.

"Ogu!" Joan called.

The black stepped down, and another mounted to take his place. But Tagari, just before he reached the bottom step, caught sight of Sheldon. It was the first horse the fellow had ever seen, and he let out a frightened screech and dashed madly up the steps. At the same moment the great mass of blacks surged away panic-stricken from Sheldon's vicinity. The grinning house-boys shouted encouragement and explanation, and the stampede was checked, the new-caught head-hunters huddling closely together and staring dubiously at the fearful monster.

"Hello!" Joan called out. "What do you mean by frightening all my boys? Come on up."

"What do you think of them?" she asked, when they had shaken hands. "And what do you think of her?" — with a wave of the hand toward the

Martha. "I thought you'd deserted the plantation, and that I might as well go ahead and get the men into barracks. Aren't they beauties? Do you see that one with the split nose? He's the only man who doesn't hail from the Poonga-Poonga coast; and they said the Poonga-Poonga natives wouldn't recruit. Just look at them and congratulate me. There are no kiddies and half-grown youths among them. They're men, every last one of them. I have such a long story I don't know where to begin, and I won't begin anyway till we're through with this and until you have told me that you are not angry with me."

"Ogu — what place b'long you?" she went on with her catechism.

But Ogu was a bushman, lacking knowledge of the almost universal bêche-de-mer English, and half a dozen of his fellows wrangled to explain.

"There are only two or three more," Joan said to Sheldon, "and then we're done. But you haven't told me that you are not angry."

Sheldon looked into her clear eyes as she favoured him with a direct, untroubled gaze that threatened, he knew from experience, to turn teasingly defiant on an instant's notice. And as he looked at her it came to him that he had never half-anticipated the gladness her return would bring to him.

"I was angry," he said deliberately. "I am still angry, very angry — " he noted the glint of defiance in her eyes and thrilled — "but I forgave, and I now forgive all over again. Though I still insist — "

"That I should have a guardian," she interrupted. "But that day will never come. Thank goodness I'm of legal age and able to transact business in my own right. And speaking of business, how do you like my forceful American methods?"

"Mr. Raff, from what I hear, doesn't take kindly to them," he temporized, "and you've certainly set the dry bones rattling for many a day. But what I want to know is if other American women are as successful in business ventures?"

"Luck, 'most all luck," she disclaimed modestly, though her eyes lighted with sudden pleasure; and he knew her boy's vanity had been touched by his trifle of tempered praise.

"Luck be blowed!" broke out the long mate, Sparrowhawk, his face shining with admiration. "It was hard work, that's what it was. We earned our pay. She worked us till we dropped. And we were down with fever half the time. So was she, for that matter, only she wouldn't stay down, and she wouldn't let us stay down. My word, she's a slave-driver — 'Just one more heave, Mr. Sparrowhawk, and then you can go to bed for a week', — she to me, and me staggerin' 'round like a dead man, with bilious-green lights flashing inside my head, an' my head just bustin'. I was all in, but I gave that heave right O — and then it was, 'Another heave now, Mr. Sparrowhawk, just another heave.' An' the Lord lumme, the way she made love to old Kina-Kina!"

He shook his head reproachfully, while the laughter died down in his throat to long-drawn chuckles.

"He was older than Telepasse and dirtier," she assured Sheldon, "and I am sure much wickeder. But this isn't work. Let us get through with these lists."

She turned to the waiting black on the steps, —

"Ogu, you finish along big marster belong white man, you go Not-Not. — Here you, Tangari, you speak 'm along that fella Ogu. He finish he walk about Not-Not. Have you got that, Mr. Munster?"

"But you've broken the recruiting laws," Sheldon said, when the new recruits had marched away to the barracks. "The licenses for the *Flibberty* and the *Emily* don't allow for one hundred and fifty. What did Burnett say?"

"He passed them, all of them," she answered. "Captain Munster will tell you what he said — something about being blowed, or words to that effect. Now I must run and wash up. Did the Sydney orders arrive?"

"Yours are in your quarters," Sheldon said. "Hurry, for breakfast is waiting. Let me have your hat and belt. Do, please, allow me. There's only one hook for them, and I know where it is."

She gave him a quick scrutiny that was almost woman-like, then sighed with relief as she unbuckled the heavy belt and passed it to him.

"I doubt if I ever want to see another revolver," she complained. "That one has worn a hole in me, I'm sure. I never dreamed I could get so weary of one."

Sheldon watched her to the foot of the steps, where she turned and called back, —

"My! I can't tell you how good it is to be home again."

And as his gaze continued to follow her across the compound to the tiny grass house, the realization came to him crushingly that Berande and that little grass house was the only place in the world she could call "home."

* * * * *

"And Burnett said, 'Well, I'll be damned — I beg your pardon, Miss Lackland, but you have wantonly broken the recruiting laws and you know it,'" Captain Munster narrated, as they sat over their whisky, waiting for Joan to come back. "And says she to him, 'Mr. Burnett, can you show me any law against taking the passengers off a vessel that's on a reef?' 'That is not the point,' says he. 'It's the very, precise, particular point,' says she and you bear it in mind and go ahead and pass my recruits. You can report me to the Lord High Commissioner if you want, but I have three vessels here waiting on your convenience, and if you delay them much longer there'll be another report go in to the Lord High Commissioner.'

"'I'll hold you responsible, Captain Munster,' says he to me, mad enough to eat scrap-iron. 'No, you won't,' says she; 'I'm the charterer of the *Emily*, and Captain Munster has acted under my orders.'

"What could Burnett do? He passed the whole hundred and fifty, though the *Emily* was only licensed for forty, and the *Flibberty-Gibbet* for thirty-five."

"But I don't understand," Sheldon said.

"This is the way she worked it. When the *Martha* was floated, we had to beach her right away at the head of the bay, and whilst repairs were going on, a new rudder being made, sails bent, gear recovered from the niggers, and so forth, Miss Lackland borrows Sparrowhawk to run the *Flibberty* along with Curtis, lends me Brahms to take Sparrowhawk's place, and starts both craft off recruiting. My word, the niggers came easy. It was virgin ground. Since the *Scottish Chiefs*, no recruiter had ever even tried to work the coast; and we'd already put the fear of God into the niggers' hearts till the whole coast was quiet as lambs. When we filled up, we came back to see how the *Martha* was progressing."

"And thinking we was going home with our recruits," Sparrowhawk slipped in. "Lord lumme, that Miss Lackland ain't never satisfied. 'I'll take 'em on the *Martha*,' says she, 'and you can go back and fill up again.'"

"But I told her it couldn't be done," Munster went on. "I told her the *Martha* hadn't a license for recruiting. 'Oh,' she said, 'it can't be done, eh?' and she stood and thought a few minutes."

"And I'd seen her think before," cried Sparrowhawk, "and I knew at wunst that the thing was as good as done."

Munster lighted his cigarette and resumed.

"'You see that spit,' she says to me, 'with the little ripple breaking around it? There's a current sets right across it and on it. And you see them bafflin' little cat's-paws? It's good weather and a falling tide. You just start to beat out, the two of you, and all you have to do is miss stays in the same baffling puff and the current will set you nicely aground.'"

"'That little wash of sea won't more than start a sheet or two of copper,' says she, when Munster kicked," Sparrowhawk explained. "Oh, she's no green un, that girl."

"'Then I'll rescue your recruits and sail away — simple, ain't it?' says she," Munster continued. "'You hang up one tide,' says she; 'the next is the big high water. Then you kedge off and go after more recruits. There's no law against recruiting when you're empty.' 'But there is against starving 'em,' I said; 'you know yourself there ain't any *kai-kai* to speak of aboard of us, and there ain't a crumb on the *Martha*.'"

"We'd all been pretty well on native *kai-kai*, as it was," said Sparrowhawk.

"'Don't let the *kai-kai* worry you, Captain Munster,' says she; 'if I can find grub for eighty-four mouths on the *Martha*, the two of you can do as much by your two vessels. Now go ahead and get aground before a steady breeze comes up and spoils the manoeuvre. I'll send my boats the moment you strike. And now, good-day, gentlemen.'"

"And we went and did it," Sparrowhawk said solemnly, and then emitted a series of chuckling noises. "We laid over, starboard tack, and I pinched the *Emily* against the spit. 'Go about,' Captain Munster yells at me; 'go about, or you'll have me aground!' He yelled other things, much worse. But I didn't mind. I missed stays, pretty as you please, and the *Flibberty* drifted down on him and fouled him, and we went ashore together in as nice a mess as you ever want to see. Miss Lackland transferred the recruits, and the trick was done."

"But where was she during the nor'wester?" Sheldon asked.

"At Langa-Langa. Ran up there as it was coming on, and laid there the whole week and traded for grub with the niggers. When we got to Tulagi, there she was waiting for us and scrapping with Burnett. I tell you, Mr. Sheldon, she's a wonder, that girl, a perfect wonder."

Munster refilled his glass, and while Sheldon glanced across at Joan's house, anxious for her coming, Sparrowhawk took up the tale.

"Gritty! She's the grittiest thing, man or woman, that ever blew into the Solomons. You should have seen Poonga-Poonga the morning we arrived — Sniders popping on the beach and in the mangroves, war-drums booming in the bush, and signal-smokes raising everywhere. 'It's all up,' says Captain Munster."

"Yes, that's what I said," declared that mariner.

"Of course it was all up. You could see it with half an eye and hear it with one ear."

"'Up your granny,' she says to him," Sparrowhawk went on. "'Why, we haven't arrived yet, much less got started. Wait till the anchor's down before you get afraid.'"

"That's what she said to me," Munster proclaimed. "And of course it made me mad so that I didn't care what happened. We tried to send a boat ashore for a pow-wow, but it was fired upon. And every once and a while some nigger'd take a long shot at us out of the mangroves."

"They was only a quarter of a mile off," Sparrowhawk explained, "and it was damned nasty. 'Don't shoot unless they try to board,' was Miss Lackland's orders; but the dirty niggers wouldn't board. They just lay off in the bush and plugged away. That night we held a council of war in the *Flibberty's* cabin. 'What we want,' says Miss Lackland, 'is a hostage.'"

"'That's what they do in books,' I said, thinking to laugh her away from her folly," Munster interrupted. "'True,' says she, 'and have you never seen the books come true?' I shook my head. 'Then you're not too old to learn,' says she. 'I'll tell you one thing right now,' says I, 'and that is I'll be blowed if you catch me ashore in the night-time stealing niggers in a place like this.'"

"You didn't say blowed," Sparrowhawk corrected. "You said you'd be damned."

"That's what I did, and I meant it, too."

"'Nobody asked you to go ashore,' says she, quick as lightning," Sparrowhawk grinned. "And she said more. She said, 'And if I catch you going ashore without orders there'll be trouble — understand, Captain Munster?'"

"Who in hell's telling this, you or me?" the skipper demanded wrathfully.

"Well, she did, didn't she?" insisted the mate.

"Yes, she did, if you want to make so sure of it. And while you're about it, you might as well repeat what she said to you when you said you wouldn’t recruit on the Poonga-Poonga coast for twice your screw.”

Sparrowhawk’s sun-reddened face flamed redder, though he tried to pass the situation off by divers laughings and chucklings and face-twistings.

“Go on, go on,” Sheldon urged; and Munster resumed the narrative.

“‘What we need,’ says she, ‘is the strong hand. It’s the only way to handle them; and we’ve got to take hold firm right at the beginning. I’m going ashore to-night to fetch Kina-Kina himself on board, and I’m not asking who’s game to go for I’ve got every man’s work arranged with me for him. I’m taking my sailors with me, and one white man.’ ‘Of course, I’m that white man,’ I said; for by that time I was mad enough to go to hell and back again. ‘Of course you’re not,’ says she. ‘You’ll have charge of the covering boat. Curtis stands by the landing boat. Fowler goes with me. Brahms takes charge of the *Flibberty*, and Sparrowhawk of the *Emily*. And we start at one o’clock.’

“My word, it was a tough job lying there in the covering boat. I never thought doing nothing could be such hard work. We stopped about fifty fathoms off, and watched the other boat go in. It was so dark under the mangroves we couldn’t see a thing of it. D’ye know that little, monkey-looking nigger, Sheldon, on the *Flibberty* — the cook, I mean? Well, he was cabin-boy twenty years ago on the *Scottish Chiefs*, and after she was cut off he was a slave there at Poonga-Poonga. And Miss Lackland had discovered the fact. So he was the guide. She gave him half a case of tobacco for that night’s work — ”

“And scared him fit to die before she could get him to come along,” Sparrowhawk observed.

“Well, I never saw anything so black as the mangroves. I stared at them till my eyes were ready to burst. And then I’d look at the stars, and listen to the surf sighing along the reef. And there was a dog that barked. Remember that dog, Sparrowhawk? The brute nearly gave me heart-failure when he first began. After a while he stopped — wasn’t barking at the landing party at all; and then the silence was harder than ever, and the mangroves grew blacker, and it was all I could do to keep from calling out to Curtis in there in the landing boat, just to make sure that I wasn’t the only white man left alive.

“Of course there was a row. It had to come, and I knew it; but it startled me just the same. I never heard such screeching and yelling in my life. The niggers must have just dived for the bush without looking to see what was up, while her Tahitians let loose, shooting in the air and yelling to hurry ’em on. And then, just as sudden, came the silence again — all except for some small kiddie that had got dropped in the stampede and that kept crying in the bush for its mother.

“And then I heard them coming through the mangroves, and an oar strike on a gunwale, and Miss Lackland laugh, and I knew everything was all right. We pulled on board without a shot being fired. And, by God! she had made the books come true, for there was old Kina-Kina himself being hoisted over the rail, shivering and chattering like an ape. The rest was easy. Kina-Kina’s word was law, and he was scared to death. And we kept him on board issuing proclamations all the time we were in Poonga-Poonga.

“It was a good move, too, in other ways. She made Kina-Kina order his people to return all the gear they’d stripped from the *Martha*. And back it came, day after day, steering compasses, blocks and tackles, sails, coils of rope, medicine chests, ensigns, signal flags — everything, in fact, except the trade goods and supplies which had already been *kai-kai’d*. Of course, she gave them a few sticks of tobacco to keep them in good humour.”

“Sure she did,” Sparrowhawk broke forth. “She gave the beggars five fathoms of calico for the big mainsail, two sticks of tobacco for the chronometer, and a sheath-knife worth elevenpence ha’penny for a hundred fathoms of brand new five-inch manila. She got old Kina-Kina with that strong hand on the go off, and she kept him going all the time. She — here she comes now.”

It was with a shock of surprise that Sheldon greeted her appearance. All the time, while the tale of happening at Poonga-Poonga had been going on, he had pictured her as the woman he had always known, clad roughly, skirt made out of window-curtain stuff, an undersized man’s shirt for a blouse, straw sandals for foot covering, with the Stetson hat and the eternal revolver completing her costume. The ready-made clothes from Sydney had transformed her. A simple skirt and shirt-waist of some sort of wash-goods set off her trim figure with a hint of elegant womanhood that was new to him. Brown slippers peeped out as she crossed the compound, and he once caught a glimpse to the ankle of brown open-work stockings. Somehow, she had been made many times the woman by these mere extraneous trappings; and in his mind these wild Arabian Nights adventures of hers seemed thrice as wonderful.

As they went in to breakfast he became aware that Munster and Sparrowhawk had received a similar shock. All their air of *camaraderie* was dissipated, and they had become abruptly and immensely respectful.

"I've opened up a new field," she said, as she began pouring the coffee. "Old Kina-Kina will never forget me, I'm sure, and I can recruit there whenever I want. I saw Morgan at Guvutu. He's willing to contract for a thousand boys at forty shillings per head. Did I tell you that I'd taken out a recruiting license for the *Martha*? I did, and the *Martha* can sign eighty boys every trip."

Sheldon smiled a trifle bitterly to himself. The wonderful woman who had tripped across the compound in her Sydney clothes was gone, and he was listening to the boy come back again.

CHAPTER XIX — THE LOST TOY

"Well," Joan said with a sigh, "I've shown you hustling American methods that succeed and get somewhere, and here you are beginning your muddling again."

Five days had passed, and she and Sheldon were standing on the veranda watching the *Martha*, close-hauled on the wind, laying a tack off shore. During those five days Joan had never once broached the desire of her heart, though Sheldon, in this particular instance reading her like a book, had watched her lead up to the question a score of times in the hope that he would himself suggest her taking charge of the *Martha*. She had wanted him to say the word, and she had steeled herself not to say it herself. The matter of finding a skipper had been a hard one. She was jealous of the *Martha*, and no suggested man had satisfied her.

"Oleson?" she had demanded. "He does very well on the *Flibberty*, with me and my men to overhaul her whenever she's ready to fall to pieces through his slackness. But skipper of the *Martha*? Impossible!"

"Munster? Yes, he's the only man I know in the Solomons I'd care to see in charge. And yet, there's his record. He lost the *Umbawa* — one hundred and forty drowned. He was first officer on the bridge. Deliberate disobedience to instructions. No wonder they broke him.

"Christian Young has never had any experience with large boats. Besides, we can't afford to pay him what he's clearing on the *Minerva*. Sparrowhawk is a good man — to take orders. He has no initiative. He's an able sailor, but he can't command. I tell you I was nervous all the time he had charge of the *Flibberty* at Poonga-Poonga when I had to stay by the *Martha*."

And so it had gone. No name proposed was satisfactory, and, moreover, Sheldon had been surprised by the accuracy of her judgments. A dozen times she almost drove him to the statement that from the showing she made of Solomon Islands sailors, she was the only person fitted to command the *Martha*. But each time he restrained himself, while her pride prevented her from making the suggestion.

"Good whale-boat sailors do not necessarily make good schooner-handlers," she replied to one of his arguments. "Besides, the captain of a boat like the *Martha* must have a large mind, see things in a large way; he must have capacity and enterprise."

"But with your Tahitians on board — " Sheldon had begun another argument.

"There won't be any Tahitians on board," she had returned promptly. "My men stay with me. I never know when I may need them. When I sail, they sail; when I remain ashore, they remain ashore. I'll find plenty for them to do right here on the plantation. You've seen them clearing bush, each of them worth half a dozen of your cannibals."

So it was that Joan stood beside Sheldon and sighed as she watched the *Martha* beating out to sea, old Kinross, brought over from Savo, in command.

"Kinross is an old fossil," she said, with a touch of bitterness in her voice. "Oh, he'll never wreck her through rashness, rest assured of that; but he's timid to childishness, and timid skippers lose just as many vessels as rash ones. Some day, Kinross will lose the *Martha* because there'll be only one chance and he'll be afraid to take it. I know his sort. Afraid to take advantage of a proper breeze of wind that will fetch him in in twenty hours, he'll get caught out in the calm that follows and spend a whole week in getting in. The *Martha* will make money with him, there's no doubt of it; but she won't make near the money that she would under a competent master."

She paused, and with heightened colour and sparkling eyes gazed seaward at the schooner.

"My! but she is a witch! Look at her eating up the water, and there's no wind to speak of. She's not got ordinary white metal either. It's man-of-war copper, every inch of it. I had them polish it with cocoanut husks when she was careened at Poonga-Poonga. She was a seal-hunter before this gold expedition got her. And seal-hunters had to sail. They've run away from second class Russian cruisers more than once up there off Siberia.

"Honestly, if I'd dreamed of the chance waiting for me at Guvutu when I bought her for less than three hundred dollars, I'd never have gone partners with you. And in that case I'd be sailing her right now."

The justice of her contention came abruptly home to Sheldon. What she had done she would have done just the same if she had not been his partner. And in the saving of the *Martha* he had played no part. Single-handed, unadvised, in the teeth of the laughter of Guvutu and of the competition of men like Morgan and Raff, she had gone into the adventure and brought it through to success.

"You make me feel like a big man who has robbed a small child of a lolly," he said with sudden contrition.

"And the small child is crying for it." She looked at him, and he noted that her lip was slightly trembling and that her eyes were moist. It was the boy all over, he thought; the boy crying for the wee bit boat with which to play. And yet it was a woman, too. What a maze of contradiction she was! And he wondered, had she been all woman and no boy, if he would have loved her in just the same way. Then it rushed in upon his consciousness that he really loved her for what she was, for all the boy in her and all the rest of her — for the total of her that would have been a different total in direct proportion to any differing of the parts of her.

"But the small child won't cry any more for it," she was saying. "This is the last sob. Some day, if Kinross doesn't lose her, you'll turn her over to your partner, I know. And I won't nag you any more. Only I do hope you know how I feel. It isn't as if I'd merely bought the *Martha*, or merely built her. I saved her. I took her off the reef. I saved her from the grave of the sea when fifty-five pounds was considered a big risk. She is mine, peculiarly mine. Without me she wouldn't exist. That big nor'wester would have finished her the first three hours it blew. And then I've sailed her, too; and she is a witch, a perfect witch. Why, do you know, she'll steer by the wind with half a spoke, give and take. And going about! Well, you don't have to baby her, starting head-sheets, flattening mainsail, and gentling her with the wheel. Put your wheel down, and around she comes, like a colt with the bit in its teeth. And you can back her like a steamer. I did it at Langa-Langa, between that shoal patch and the shore-reef. It was wonderful.

"But you don't love boats like I do, and I know you think I'm making a fool of myself. But some day I'm going to sail the *Martha* again. I know it. I know it."

In reply, and quite without premeditation, his hand went out to hers, covering it as it lay on the railing. But he knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it was the boy that returned the pressure he gave, the boy sorrowing over the lost toy. The thought chilled him. Never had he been actually nearer to her, and never had she been more convincingly remote. She was certainly not acutely aware that his hand was touching hers. In her grief at the departure of the *Martha* it was, to her, anybody's hand — at the best, a friend's hand.

He withdrew his hand and walked perturbedly away.

"Why hasn't he got that big fisherman's staysail on her?" she demanded irritably. "It would make the old girl just walk along in this breeze. I know the sort old Kinross is. He's the skipper that lies three days under double-reefed topsails waiting for a gale that doesn't come. Safe? Oh, yes, he's safe — dangerously safe."

Sheldon retraced his steps.

"Never mind," he said. "You can go sailing on the *Martha* any time you please — recruiting on Malaita if you want to."

It was a great concession he was making, and he felt that he did it against his better judgment. Her reception of it was a surprise to him.

"With old Kinross in command?" she queried. "No, thank you. He'd drive me to suicide. I couldn't stand his handling of her. It would give me nervous prostration. I'll never step on the *Martha* again, unless it is to take charge of her. I'm a sailor, like my father, and he could never bear to see a vessel mishandled. Did you see the way Kinross got under way? It was disgraceful. And the noise he made about it! Old Noah did better with the Ark."

"But we manage to get somewhere just the same," he smiled.

"So did Noah."

"That was the main thing."

"For an antediluvian."

She took another lingering look at the *Martha*, then turned to Sheldon.

"You are a slovenly lot down here when it comes to boats — most of you are, any way. Christian Young is all right though, Munster has a slap-dash style about him, and they do say old Nielsen was a crackerjack. But with the rest I've seen, there's no dash, no go, no cleverness, no real sailor's pride. It's all humdrum, and podgy, and slow-going, any going so long as you get there heaven knows when. But some day I'll show you how the *Martha* should be handled. I'll break out anchor and get under way in a speed and style that will make your head hum; and I'll bring her alongside the wharf at Guvutu without dropping anchor and running a line."

She came to a breathless pause, and then broke into laughter, directed, he could see, against herself.

"Old Kinross is setting that fisherman's staysail," he remarked quietly.

"No!" she cried incredulously, swiftly looking, then running for the telescope.

She regarded the manoeuvre steadily through the glass, and Sheldon, watching her face, could see that the skipper was not making a success of it.

She finally lowered the glass with a groan.

"He's made a mess of it," she said, "and now he's trying it over again. And a man like that is put in charge of a fairy like the *Martha*! Well, it's a good argument against marriage, that's all. No, I won't look any more. Come on in and play a steady, conservative game of billiards with me. And after that I'm going to saddle up and go after pigeons. Will you come along?"

An hour later, just as they were riding out of the compound, Joan turned in the saddle for a last look at the *Martha*, a distant speck well over toward the Florida coast.

"Won't Tudor be surprised when he finds we own the *Martha*?" she laughed. "Think of it! If he doesn't strike pay-dirt he'll have to buy a steamer-passage to get away from the Solomons."

Still laughing gaily, she rode through the gate. But suddenly her laughter broke flatly and she reined in the mare. Sheldon glanced at her sharply, and noted her face mottling, even as he looked, and turning orange and green.

"It's the fever," she said. "I'll have to turn back."

By the time they were in the compound she was shivering and shaking, and he had to help her from her horse.

"Funny, isn't it?" she said with chattering teeth. "Like seasickness — not serious, but horribly miserable while it lasts. I'm going to bed. Send Noa Noah and Viaburi to me. Tell Ornfiri to make hot water. I'll be out of my head in fifteen minutes. But I'll be all right by evening. Short and sharp is the way it takes me. Too bad to lose the shooting. Thank you, I'm all right."

Sheldon obeyed her instructions, rushed hot-water bottles along to her, and then sat on the veranda vainly trying to interest himself in a two-months-old file of Sydney newspapers. He kept glancing up and across the compound to the grass house. Yes, he decided, the contention of every white man in the islands was right; the Solomons was no place for a woman.

He clapped his hands, and Lalaperu came running.

"Here, you!" he ordered; "go along barracks, bring 'm black fella Mary, plenty too much, altogether."

A few minutes later the dozen black women of Berande were ranged before him. He looked them over critically, finally selecting one that was young, comely as such creatures went, and whose body bore no signs of skin-disease.

"What name, you?" he demanded. "Sangui?"

"Me Mahua," was the answer.

"All right, you fella Mahua. You finish cook along boys. You stop along white Mary. All the time you stop along. You savvee?"

"Me savvee," she grunted, and obeyed his gesture to go to the grass house immediately.

"What name?" he asked Viaburi, who had just come out of the grass house.

"Big fella sick," was the answer. "White fella Mary talk 'm too much allee time. Allee time talk 'm big fella schooner."

Sheldon nodded. He understood. It was the loss of the *Martha* that had brought on the fever. The fever would have come sooner or later, he knew; but her disappointment had precipitated it. He lighted a cigarette, and in the curling smoke of it caught visions of his English mother, and wondered if she would understand how her son could love a woman who cried because she could not be skipper of a schooner in the cannibal isles.

CHAPTER XX — A MAN-TALK

The most patient man in the world is prone to impatience in love — and Sheldon was in love. He called himself an ass a score of times a day, and strove to contain himself by directing his mind in other channels, but more than a score of times each day his thoughts roved back and dwelt on Joan. It was a pretty problem she presented, and he was continually debating with himself as to what was the best way to approach her.

He was not an adept at love-making. He had had but one experience in the gentle art (in which he had been more wooed than wooing), and the affair had profited him little. This was another affair, and he assured himself continually that it was a uniquely different and difficult affair. Not only was here a woman who was not bent on finding a husband, but it was a woman who wasn’t a woman at all; who was genuinely appalled by the thought of a husband; who joyed in boys’ games, and sentimentalized over such things as adventure; who was healthy and normal and wholesome, and who was so immature that a husband stood for nothing more than an encumbrance in her cherished scheme of existence.

But how to approach her? He divined the fanatical love of freedom in her, the deep-seated antipathy for restraint of any sort. No man could ever put his arm around her and win her. She would flutter away like a frightened bird. Approach by contact — that, he realized, was the one thing he must never do. His hand-clasp must be what it had always been, the hand-clasp of hearty friendship and nothing more. Never by action must he advertise his feeling for her. Remained speech. But what speech? Appeal to her love? But she did not love him. Appeal to her brain? But it was apparently a boy’s brain. All the deliciousness and fineness of a finely bred woman was hers; but, for all he could discern, her mental processes were sexless and boyish. And yet speech it must be, for a beginning had to be made somewhere, some time; her mind must be made accustomed to the idea, her thoughts turned upon the matter of marriage.

And so he rode overseeing about the plantation, with tightly drawn and puckered brows, puzzling over the problem, and steeling himself to the first attempt. A dozen ways he planned an intricate leading up to the first breaking of the ice, and each time some link in the chain snapped and the talk went off on unexpected and irrelevant lines. And then one morning, quite fortuitously, the opportunity came.

"My dearest wish is the success of Berande," Joan had just said, apropos of a discussion about the cheapening of freights on copra to market.

"Do you mind if I tell you the dearest wish of my heart?" he promptly returned. "I long for it. I dream about it. It is my dearest desire."

He paused and looked at her with intent significance; but it was plain to him that she thought there was nothing more at issue than mutual confidences about things in general.

"Yes, go ahead," she said, a trifle impatient at his delay.

"I love to think of the success of Berande," he said; "but that is secondary. It is subordinate to the dearest wish, which is that some day you will share Berande with me in a completer way than that of mere business partnership. It is for you, some day, when you are ready, to be my wife."

She started back from him as if she had been stung. Her face went white on the instant, not from maidenly embarrassment, but from the anger which he could see flaming in her eyes.

"This taking for granted! — this when I am ready!" she cried passionately. Then her voice swiftly became cold and steady, and she talked in the way he imagined she must have talked business with Morgan and Raff at Guvutu. "Listen to me, Mr. Sheldon. I like you very well, though you are slow and a muddler; but I want you to understand, once and for all, that I did not come to the Solomons to get married. That is an affliction I could have accumulated at home, without sailing ten thousand miles after it. I have my own way to make in the world, and I came to the Solomons to do it. Getting married is not making *my* way in the world. It may do for some women, but not for me, thank you. When I sit down to talk over the freight on copra, I don't care to have proposals of marriage sandwiched in. Besides — besides — "

Her voice broke for the moment, and when she went on there was a note of appeal in it that well-nigh convicted him to himself of being a brute.

"Don't you see? — it spoils everything; it makes the whole situation impossible . . . and . . . and I so loved our partnership, and was proud of it. Don't you see? — I can't go on being your partner if you make love to me. And I was so happy."

Tears of disappointment were in her eyes, and she caught a swift sob in her throat.

"I warned you," he said gravely. "Such unusual situations between men and women cannot endure. I told you so at the beginning."

"Oh, yes; it is quite clear to me what you did." She was angry again, and the feminine appeal had disappeared. "You were very discreet in your warning. You took good care to warn me against every other man in the Solomons except yourself."

It was a blow in the face to Sheldon. He smarted with the truth of it, and at the same time he smarted with what he was convinced was the injustice of it. A gleam of triumph that flickered in her eye because of the hit she had made decided him.

"It is not so one-sided as you seem to think it is," he began. "I was doing very nicely on Berande before you came. At least I was not suffering indignities, such as being accused of cowardly conduct, as you have just accused me. Remember — please remember, I did not invite you to Berande. Nor did I invite you to stay on at Berande. It was by staying that you brought about this — to you — unpleasant situation. By staying you made yourself a temptation, and now you would blame me for it. I did not want you to stay. I wasn't in love with you then. I wanted you to go to Sydney; to go back to Hawaii. But you insisted on staying. You virtually — "

He paused for a softer word than the one that had risen to his lips, and she took it away from him.

"Forced myself on you — that's what you meant to say," she cried, the flags of battle painting her cheeks. "Go ahead. Don't mind my feelings."

"All right; I won't," he said decisively, realizing that the discussion was in danger of becoming a vituperative, schoolboy argument. "You have insisted on being considered as a man. Consistency would demand that you talk like a man, and like a man listen to man-talk. And listen you shall. It is not your fault that this unpleasantness has arisen. I do not blame you for anything; remember that. And for the same reason you should not blame me for anything."

He noticed her bosom heaving as she sat with clenched hands, and it was all he could do to conquer the desire to flash his arms out and around her instead of going on with his coolly planned campaign. As it was, he nearly told her that she was a most adorable boy. But he checked all such wayward fancies, and held himself rigidly down to his disquisition.

"You can't help being yourself. You can't help being a very desirable creature so far as I am concerned. You have made me want you. You didn't intend to; you didn't try to. You were so made, that is all. And I was so made that I was ripe to want you. But I can't help being myself. I can't by an effort of will cease from wanting you, any more than you by an effort of will can make yourself undesirable to me."

"Oh, this desire! this want! want! want!" she broke in rebelliously. "I am not quite a fool. I understand some things. And the whole thing is so foolish and absurd — and uncomfortable. I wish I could get away from it. I really think it would be a good idea for me to marry Noa Noah, or Adamu Adam, or Lalaperu there, or any black boy. Then I could give him orders, and keep him penned away from me; and men like you would leave me alone, and not talk marriage and 'I want, I want.'"

Sheldon laughed in spite of himself, and far from any genuine impulse to laugh.

"You are positively soulless," he said savagely.

"Because I've a soul that doesn't yearn for a man for master?" she took up the gage. "Very well, then. I am soulless, and what are you going to do about it?"

"I am going to ask you why you look like a woman? Why have you the form of a woman? the lips of a woman? the wonderful hair of a woman? And I am going to answer: because you are a woman — though the woman in you is asleep — and that some day the woman will wake up."

"Heaven forbid!" she cried, in such sudden and genuine dismay as to make him laugh, and to bring a smile to her own lips against herself.

"I've got some more to say to you," Sheldon pursued. "I did try to protect you from every other man in the Solomons, and from yourself as well. As for me, I didn't dream that danger lay in that quarter. So I failed to protect you from myself. I failed to protect you at all. You went your own wilful way, just as though I didn't exist — wrecking schooners, recruiting on Malaita, and sailing schooners; one lone, unprotected girl in the company of some of the worst scoundrels in the Solomons. Fowler! and Brahms! and Curtis! And such is the perverseness of human nature — I am frank, you see — I love you for that too. I love you for all of you, just as you are."

She made a *moue* of distaste and raised a hand protestingly.

"Don't," he said. "You have no right to recoil from the mention of my love for you. Remember this is a man-talk. From the point of view of the talk, you are a man. The woman in you is only incidental, accidental, and irrelevant. You've got to listen to the bald statement of fact, strange though it is, that I love you."

"And now I won't bother you any more about love. We'll go on the same as before. You are better off and safer on Berande, in spite of the fact that I love you, than anywhere else in the Solomons. But I want you, as a final item of man-talk, to remember, from time to time, that I love you, and that it will be the dearest day of my life when you consent to marry me. I want you to think of it sometimes. You can't help but think of it sometimes. And now we won't talk about it any more. As between men, there's my hand."

He held out his hand. She hesitated, then gripped it heartily, and smiled through her tears.

"I wish — " she faltered, "I wish, instead of that black Mary, you'd given me somebody to swear for me."

And with this enigmatic utterance she turned away.

CHAPTER XXI — CONTRABAND

Sheldon did not mention the subject again, nor did his conduct change from what it had always been. There was nothing of the pining lover, nor of the lover at all, in his demeanour. Nor was there any awkwardness between them. They were as frank and friendly in their relations as ever. He had wondered if his belligerent love declaration might have aroused some womanly self-consciousness in Joan, but he looked in vain for any sign of it. She appeared as unchanged as he; and while he knew that he hid his real feelings, he was firm in his belief that she hid nothing. And yet the germ he had implanted must be at work; he was confident of that, though he was without confidence as to the result. There was no forecasting this strange girl's processes. She might awaken, it was true; and on the other hand, and with equal chance, he might be the wrong man for her, and his declaration of love might only more firmly set her in her views on single blessedness.

While he devoted more and more of his time to the plantation itself, she took over the house and its multitudinous affairs; and she took hold firmly, in sailor fashion, revolutionizing the system and discipline. The labour situation on Berande was improving. The *Martha* had carried away fifty of the blacks whose time was up, and they had been among the worst on the plantation — five-year men recruited by Billy Be-blowed, men who had gone through the old days of terrorism when the original owners of Berande had been driven away. The new recruits, being broken in under the new regime, gave better promise. Joan had joined with Sheldon from the start in the programme that they must be gripped with the strong hand, and at the same time be treated with absolute justice, if they were to escape being contaminated by the older boys that still remained.

"I think it would be a good idea to put all the gangs at work close to the house this afternoon," she announced one day at breakfast. "I've cleaned up the house, and you ought to clean up the barracks. There is too much stealing going on."

"A good idea," Sheldon agreed. "Their boxes should be searched. I've just missed a couple of shirts, and my best toothbrush is gone."

"And two boxes of my cartridges," she added, "to say nothing of handkerchiefs, towels, sheets, and my best pair of slippers. But what they want with your toothbrush is more than I can imagine. They'll be stealing the billiard balls next."

"One did disappear a few weeks before you came," Sheldon laughed. "We'll search the boxes this afternoon."

And a busy afternoon it was. Joan and Sheldon, both armed, went through the barracks, house by house, the boss-boys assisting, and half a dozen messengers, in relay, shouting along the line the names of the boys wanted. Each boy brought the key to his particular box, and was permitted to look on while the contents were overhauled by the boss-boys.

A wealth of loot was recovered. There were fully a dozen cane-knives — big hacking weapons with razor-edges, capable of decapitating a man at a stroke. Towels, sheets, shirts, and slippers, along with toothbrushes, wisp-brooms, soap, the missing billiard ball, and all the lost and forgotten trifles of many months, came to light. But most astonishing was the quantity of ammunition-cartridges for Lee-Metfords, for Winchesters and Marlins, for revolvers from thirty-two calibre to forty-five, shot-gun cartridges, Joan's two boxes of thirty-eight, cartridges of prodigious bore for the ancient Sniders of Malaita, flasks of black powder, sticks of dynamite, yards of fuse, and boxes of detonators. But the great find was in the house occupied by Gogoomy and five Port Adams recruits. The fact that the boxes yielded nothing excited Sheldon's suspicions, and he gave orders to dig up the earthen floor. Wrapped in matting, well oiled, free from rust, and brand new, two Winchesters were first unearthed. Sheldon did not recognize them. They had not come from Berande; neither had the forty flasks of black powder found under the corner-post of the house; and while he could not be sure, he could remember no loss of eight boxes of detonators. A big Colt's revolver he recognized as Hughie Drummond's; while Joan identified a thirty-two Ivor and Johnson as a loss reported by Matapuu the first week he landed at Berande. The absence of any cartridges made Sheldon persist in the digging up of the floor, and a fifty-pound flour tin was his reward. With glowering eyes Gogoomy looked on while Sheldon took from the tin a hundred rounds each for the two Winchesters and fully as many rounds more of nondescript cartridges of all sorts and makes and calibres.

The contraband and stolen property was piled in assorted heaps on the back veranda of the bungalow. A few paces from the bottom of the steps were grouped the forty-odd culprits, with behind them, in solid array, the several hundred blacks of the plantation. At the head of the steps Joan and

Sheldon were seated, while on the steps stood the gang-bosses. One by one the culprits were called up and examined. Nothing definite could be extracted from them. They lied transparently, but persistently, and when caught in one lie explained it away with half a dozen others. One boy complacently announced that he had found eleven sticks of dynamite on the beach. Matapuu's revolver, found in the box of one Kapu, was explained away by that boy as having been given to him by Lervumie. Lervumie, called forth to testify, said he had got it from Noni; Noni had got it from Sulefatoi; Sulefatoi from Choka; Choka from Ngava; and Ngava completed the circle by stating that it had been given to him by Kapu. Kapu, thus doubly damned, calmly gave full details of how it had been given to him by Lervumie; and Lervumie, with equal wealth of detail, told how he had received it from Noni; and from Noni to Sulefatoi it went on around the circle again.

Divers articles were traced indubitably to the house-boys, each of whom steadfastly proclaimed his own innocence and cast doubts on his fellows. The boy with the billiard ball said that he had never seen it in his life before, and hazarded the suggestion that it had got into his box through some mysterious and occultly evil agency. So far as he was concerned it might have dropped down from heaven for all he knew how it got there. To the cooks and boats'-crews of every vessel that had dropped anchor off Berande in the past several years were ascribed the arrival of scores of the stolen articles and of the major portion of the ammunition. There was no tracing the truth in any of it, though it was without doubt that the unidentified weapons and unfamiliar cartridges had come ashore off visiting craft.

"Look at it," Sheldon said to Joan. "We've been sleeping over a volcano. They ought to be whipped — "

"No whip me," Gogoomy cried out from below. "Father belong me big fella chief. Me whip, too much trouble along you, close up, my word."

"What name you fella Gogoomy!" Sheldon shouted. "I knock seven bells out of you. Here, you Kwaque, put 'm irons along that fella Gogoomy."

Kwaque, a strapping gang-boss, plucked Gogoomy from out of his following, and, helped by the other gang-bosses; twisted his arms behind him and snapped on the heavy handcuffs.

“Me finish along you, close up, you die altogether,” Gogoomy, with wrath-distorted face, threatened the boss-boy.

“Please, no whipping,” Joan said in a low voice. “If whipping *is* necessary, send them to Tulagi and let the Government do it. Give them their choice between a fine or an official whipping.”

Sheldon nodded and stood up, facing the blacks.

“Manonmie!” he called.

Manonmie stood forth and waited.

“You fella boy bad fella too much,” Sheldon charged. “You steal ’m plenty. You steal ’m one fella towel, one fella cane-knife, two-ten fella cartridge. My word, plenty bad fella steal ’m you. Me cross along you too much. S’pose you like ’m, me take ’m one fella pound along you in big book. S’pose you no like ’m me take ’m one fella pound, then me send you fella along Tulagi catch ’m one strong fella government whipping. Plenty New Georgia boys, plenty Ysabel boys stop along jail along Tulagi. Them fella no like Malaita boys little bit. My word, they give ’m you strong fella whipping. What you say?”

“You take ’m one fella pound along me,” was the answer.

And Manonmie, patently relieved, stepped back, while Sheldon entered the fine in the plantation labour journal.

Boy after boy, he called the offenders out and gave them their choice; and, boy by boy, each one elected to pay the fine imposed. Some fines were as low as several shillings; while in the more serious cases, such as thefts of guns and ammunition, the fines were correspondingly heavy.

Gogoomy and his five tribesmen were fined three pounds each, and at Gogoomy’s guttural command they refused to pay.

“S’pose you go along Tulagi,” Sheldon warned him, “you catch ’m strong fella whipping and you stop along jail three fella year. Mr. Burnett, he look ’m along Winchester, look ’m along cartridge, look ’m along revolver, look ’m along black powder, look ’m along dynamite — my word, he cross too much, he give you three fella year along jail. S’pose you no like ’m pay three fella pound you stop along jail. Savvee?”

Gogoomy wavered.

“It’s true — that’s what Burnett would give them,” Sheldon said in an aside to Joan.

“You take ’m three fella pound along me,” Gogoomy muttered, at the same time scowling his hatred at Sheldon, and transferring half the scowl to

Joan and Kwaque. “Me finish along you, you catch ’m big fella trouble, my word. Father belong me big fella chief along Port Adams.”

“That will do,” Sheldon warned him. “You shut mouth belong you.”

“Me no fright,” the son of a chief retorted, by his insolence increasing his stature in the eyes of his fellows.

“Lock him up for to-night,” Sheldon said to Kwaque. “Sun he come up put ’m that fella and five fella belong him along grass-cutting. Savvee?”

Kwaque grinned.

“Me savvee,” he said. “Cut ’m grass, *ngari-ngari* {4}. stop ’m along grass. My word!”

“There will be trouble with Gogoomy yet,” Sheldon said to Joan, as the boss-boys marshalled their gangs and led them away to their work. “Keep an eye on him. Be careful when you are riding alone on the plantation. The loss of those Winchesters and all that ammunition has hit him harder than your cuffing did. He is dead-ripe for mischief.”

CHAPTER XXII — GOGOOMY FINISHES ALONG KWAQUE ALTOGETHER

"I wonder what has become of Tudor. It's two months since he disappeared into the bush, and not a word of him after he left Binu."

Joan Lackland was sitting astride her horse by the bank of the Balesuna where the sweet corn had been planted, and Sheldon, who had come across from the house on foot, was leaning against her horse's shoulder.

"Yes, it is along time for no news to have trickled down," he answered, watching her keenly from under his hat-brim and wondering as to the measure of her anxiety for the adventurous gold-hunter; "but Tudor will come out all right. He did a thing at the start that I wouldn't have given him or any other man credit for — persuaded Binu Charley to go along with him. I'll wager no other Binu nigger has ever gone so far into the bush unless to be *kai-kai'd*. As for Tudor — "

"Look! look!" Joan cried in a low voice, pointing across the narrow stream to a slack eddy where a huge crocodile drifted like a log awash. "My! I wish I had my rifle."

The crocodile, leaving scarcely a ripple behind, sank down and disappeared.

"A Binu man was in early this morning — for medicine," Sheldon remarked. "It may have been that very brute that was responsible. A dozen of the Binu women were out, and the foremost one stepped right on a big crocodile. It was by the edge of the water, and he tumbled her over and got her by the leg. All the other women got hold of her and pulled. And in the tug of war she lost her leg, below the knee, he said. I gave him a stock of antiseptics. She'll pull through, I fancy."

"Ugh — the filthy beasts," Joan gulped shudderingly. "I hate them! I hate them!"

"And yet you go diving among sharks," Sheldon chided.

"They're only fish-sharks. And as long as there are plenty of fish there is no danger. It is only when they're famished that they're liable to take a bite."

Sheldon shuddered inwardly at the swift vision that arose of the dainty flesh of her in a shark's many-toothed maw.

"I wish you wouldn't, just the same," he said slowly. "You acknowledge there is a risk."

"But that's half the fun of it," she cried.

A trite platitude about his not caring to lose her was on his lips, but he refrained from uttering it. Another conclusion he had arrived at was that she was not to be nagged. Continual, or even occasional, reminders of his feeling for her would constitute a tactical error of no mean dimensions.

"Some for the book of verse, some for the simple life, and some for the shark's belly," he laughed grimly, then added: "Just the same, I wish I could swim as well as you. Maybe it would beget confidence such as you have."

"Do you know, I think it would be nice to be married to a man such as you seem to be becoming," she remarked, with one of her abrupt changes that always astounded him. "I should think you could be trained into a very good husband — you know, not one of the domineering kind, but one who considered his wife was just as much an individual as himself and just as much a free agent. Really, you know, I think you are improving."

She laughed and rode away, leaving him greatly cast down. If he had thought there had been one bit of coyness in her words, one feminine flutter, one womanly attempt at deliberate lure and encouragement, he would have been elated. But he knew absolutely that it was the boy, and not the woman, who had so daringly spoken.

Joan rode on among the avenues of young cocoanut-palms, saw a hornbill, followed it in its erratic flights to the high forest on the edge of the plantation, heard the cooing of wild pigeons and located them in the deeper woods, followed the fresh trail of a wild pig for a distance, circled back, and took the narrow path for the bungalow that ran through twenty acres of uncleared cane. The grass was waist-high and higher, and as she rode along she remembered that Gogoomy was one of a gang of boys that had been detailed to the grass-cutting. She came to where they had been at work, but saw no signs of them. Her unshod horse made no sound on the soft, sandy footing, and a little further on she heard voices proceeding from out of the grass. She reined in and listened. It was Gogoomy talking, and as she listened she gripped her bridle-rein tightly and a wave of anger passed over her.

"Dog he stop 'm along house, night-time he walk about," Gogoomy was saying, perforce in *bêche-de-mer* English, because he was talking to others beside his own tribesmen. "You fella boy catch 'm one fella pig, put 'm *kai-kai* belong him along big fella fish-hook. S’pose dog he walk about catch ’m *kai-kai*, you fella boy catch ’m dog allee same one shark. Dog he finish close up. Big fella marster sleep along big fella house. White Mary sleep along pickaninny house. One fella Adamu he stop along outside pickaninny house. You fella boy finish ’m dog, finish ‘m Adamu, finish ’m big fella marster, finish ’m White Mary, finish ’em altogether. Plenty musket he stop, plenty powder, plenty tomahawk, plenty knife-fee, plenty porpoise teeth, plenty tobacco, plenty calico — my word, too much plenty everything we take ’m along whale-boat, washee {5} like hell, sun he come up we long way too much.”

“Me catch ’m pig sun he go down,” spoke up one whose thin falsetto voice Joan recognized as belonging to Cosse, one of Gogoomy’s tribesmen.

“Me catch ’m dog,” said another.

“And me catch ’m white fella Mary,” Gogoomy cried triumphantly. “Me catch ’m Kwaque he die along him damn quick.”

This much Joan heard of the plan to murder, and then her rising wrath proved too much for her discretion. She spurred her horse into the grass, crying, —

“What name you fella boy, eh? What name?”

They arose, scrambling and scattering, and to her surprise she saw there were a dozen of them. As she looked in their glowering faces and noted the heavy, two-foot, hacking cane-knives in their hands, she became suddenly aware of the rashness of her act. If only she had had her revolver or a rifle, all would have been well. But she had carelessly ventured out unarmed, and she followed the glance of Gogoomy to her waist and saw the pleased flash in his eyes as he perceived the absence of the dreadful man-killing revolver.

The first article in the Solomon Islands code for white men was never to show fear before a native, and Joan tried to carry off the situation in cavalier fashion.

“Too much talk along you fella boy,” she said severely. “Too much talk, too little work. Savvee?”

Gogoomy made no reply, but, apparently shifting weight, he slid one foot forward. The other boys, spread fan-wise about her, were also sliding forward, the cruel cane-knives in their hands advertising their intention.

“You cut ’m grass!” she commanded imperatively.

But Gogoomy slid his other foot forward. She measured the distance with her eye. It would be impossible to whirl her horse around and get away. She would be chopped down from behind.

And in that tense moment the faces of all of them were imprinted on her mind in an unforgettable picture — one of them, an old man, with torn and distended ear-lobes that fell to his chest; another, with the broad flattened nose of Africa, and with withered eyes so buried under frowning brows that nothing but the sickly, yellowish-looking whites could be seen; a third, thick-lipped and bearded with kinky whiskers; and Gogoomy — she had never realized before how handsome Gogoomy was in his mutinous and obstinate wild-animal way. There was a primitive aristocraticness about him that his fellows lacked. The lines of his figure were more rounded than theirs, the skin smooth, well oiled, and free from disease. On his chest, suspended from a single string of porpoise-teeth around his throat, hung a big crescent carved out of opalescent pearl-shell. A row of pure white cowrie shells banded his brow. From his hair drooped a long, lone feather. Above the swelling calf of one leg he wore, as a garter, a single string of white beads. The effect was dandyish in the extreme. A narrow gee-string completed his costume. Another man she saw, old and shrivelled, with puckered forehead and a puckered face that trembled and worked with animal passion as in the past she had noticed the faces of monkeys tremble and work.

“Gogoomy,” she said sharply, “you no cut ’m grass, my word, I bang ’m head belong you.”

His expression became a trifle more disdainful, but he did not answer. Instead, he stole a glance to right and left to mark how his fellows were closing about her. At the same moment he casually slipped his foot forward through the grass for a matter of several inches.

Joan was keenly aware of the desperateness of the situation. The only way out was through. She lifted her riding-whip threateningly, and at the same moment drove in both spurs with her heels, rushing the startled horse straight at Gogoomy. It all happened in an instant. Every cane-knife was lifted, and every boy save Gogoomy leaped for her. He swerved aside to avoid the horse, at the same time swinging his cane-knife in a slicing blow that would have cut her in twain. She leaned forward under the flying steel, which cut through her riding-skirt, through the edge of the saddle, through the saddle cloth, and even slightly into the horse itself. Her right hand, still raised, came down, the thin whip whishing through the air. She saw the white, cooked mark of the weal clear across the sullen, handsome face, and still what was practically in the same instant she saw the man with the puckered face, overridden, go down before her, and she heard his snarling and grimacing chatter-for all the world like an angry monkey. Then she was free and away, heading the horse at top speed for the house.

Out of her sea-training she was able to appreciate Sheldon's executiveness when she burst in on him with her news. Springing from the steamer-chair in which he had been lounging while waiting for breakfast, he clapped his hands for the house-boys; and, while listening to her, he was buckling on his cartridge-belt and running the mechanism of his automatic pistol.

"Ornfiri," he snapped out his orders, "you fella ring big fella bell strong fella plenty. You finish 'm bell, you put 'm saddle on horse. Viaburi, you go quick house belong Seelee he stop, tell 'm plenty black fella run away — ten fella two fella black fella boy." He scribbled a note and handed it to Lalaperu. "Lalaperu, you go quick house belong white fella Marster Boucher."

"That will head them back from the coast on both sides," he explained to Joan. "And old Seelee will turn his whole village loose on their track as well."

In response to the summons of the big bell, Joan's Tahitians were the first to arrive, by their glistening bodies and panting chests showing that they had run all the way. Some of the farthest-placed gangs would be nearly an hour in arriving.

Sheldon proceeded to arm Joan's sailors and deal out ammunition and handcuffs. Adamu Adam, with loaded rifle, he placed on guard over the whale-boats. Noa Noah, aided by Matapuu, were instructed to take charge of the working-gangs as fast as they came in, to keep them amused, and to guard against their being stampeded into making a break themselves. The five other Tahitians were to follow Joan and Sheldon on foot.

"I'm glad we unearthed that arsenal the other day," Sheldon remarked as they rode out of the compound gate.

A hundred yards away they encountered one of the clearing gangs coming in. It was Kwaque's gang, but Sheldon looked in vain for him.

"What name that fella Kwaque he no stop along you?" he demanded.

A babel of excited voices attempted an answer.

“Shut ’m mouth belong you altogether,” Sheldon commanded.

He spoke roughly, living up to the rôle of the white man who must always be strong and dominant.

“Here, you fella Babatani, you talk ’m mouth belong you.”

Babatani stepped forward in all the pride of one singled out from among his fellows.

“Gogoomy he finish along Kwaque altogether,” was Babatani’s explanation. “He take ’m head b’long him run like hell.”

In brief words, and with paucity of imagination, he described the murder, and Sheldon and Joan rode on. In the grass, where Joan had been attacked, they found the little shrivelled man, still chattering and grimacing, whom Joan had ridden down. The mare had plunged on his ankle, completely crushing it, and a hundred yards’ crawl had convinced him of the futility of escape. To the last clearing-gang, from the farthest edge of the plantation, was given the task of carrying him in to the house.

A mile farther on, where the runaways’ trail led straight toward the bush, they encountered the body of Kwaque. The head had been hacked off and was missing, and Sheldon took it on faith that the body was Kwaque’s. He had evidently put up a fight, for a bloody trail led away from the body.

Once they were well into the thick bush the horses had to be abandoned. Papehara was left in charge of them, while Joan and Sheldon and the remaining Tahitians pushed ahead on foot. The way led down through a swampy hollow, which was overflowed by the Berande River on occasion, and where the red trail of the murderers was crossed by a crocodile’s trail. They had apparently caught the creature asleep in the sun and desisted long enough from their flight to hack him to pieces. Here the wounded man had sat down and waited until they were ready to go on.

An hour later, following along a wild-pig trail, Sheldon suddenly halted. The bloody tracks had ceased. The Tahitians cast out in the bush on either side, and a cry from Utami apprised them of a find. Joan waited till Sheldon came back.

“It’s Mauko,” he said. “Kwaque did for him, and he crawled in there and died. That’s two accounted for. There are ten more. Don’t you think you’ve got enough of it?”

She nodded.

“It isn’t nice,” she said. “I’ll go back and wait for you with the horses.”

“But you can’t go alone. Take two of the men.”

“Then I’ll go on,” she said. “It would be foolish to weaken the pursuit, and I am certainly not tired.”

The trail bent to the right as though the runaways had changed their mind and headed for the Balesuna. But the trail still continued to bend to the right till it promised to make a loop, and the point of intersection seemed to be the edge of the plantation where the horses had been left. Crossing one of the quiet jungle spaces, where naught moved but a velvety, twelve-inch butterfly, they heard the sound of shots.

“Eight,” Joan counted. “It was only one gun. It must be Papehara.”

They hurried on, but when they reached the spot they were in doubt. The two horses stood quietly tethered, and Papehara, squatted on his hams, was having a peaceful smoke. Advancing toward him, Sheldon tripped on a body that lay in the grass, and as he saved himself from falling his eyes lighted on a second. Joan recognized this one. It was Cosse, one of Gogoomy’s tribesmen, the one who had promised to catch at sunset the pig that was to have baited the hook for Satan.

“No luck, Missie,” was Papehara’s greeting, accompanied by a disconsolate shake of the head. “Catch only two boy. I have good shot at Gogoomy, only I miss.”

“But you killed them,” Joan chided. “You must catch them alive.”

The Tahitian smiled.

“How?” he queried. “I am have a smoke. I think about Tahiti, and breadfruit, and jolly good time at Bora Bora. Quick, just like that, ten boy he run out of bush for me. Each boy have long knife. Gogoomy have long knife one hand, and Kwaque’s head in other hand. I no stop to catch ’m alive. I shoot like hell. How you catch ’m alive, ten boy, ten long knife, and Kwaque’s head?”

The scattered paths of the different boys, where they broke back after the disastrous attempt to rush the Tahitian, soon led together. They traced it to the Berande, which the runaways had crossed with the clear intention of burying themselves in the huge mangrove swamp that lay beyond.

“There is no use our going any farther,” Sheldon said. “Seelee will turn out his village and hunt them out of that. They’ll never get past him. All we can do is to guard the coast and keep them from breaking back on the plantation and running amuck. Ah, I thought so.”

Against the jungle gloom of the farther shore, coming from down stream, a small canoe glided. So silently did it move that it was more like an apparition. Three naked blacks dipped with noiseless paddles. Long-hafted, slender, bone-barbed throwing-spears lay along the gunwale of the canoe, while a quiverful of arrows hung on each man's back. The eyes of the man-hunters missed nothing. They had seen Sheldon and Joan first, but they gave no sign. Where Gogoomy and his followers had emerged from the river, the canoe abruptly stopped, then turned and disappeared into the deeper mangrove gloom. A second and a third canoe came around the bend from below, glided ghostlike to the crossing of the runaways, and vanished in the mangroves.

"I hope there won't be any more killing," Joan said, as they turned their horses homeward.

"I don't think so," Sheldon assured her. "My understanding with old Seelee is that he is paid only for live boys; so he is very careful."

CHAPTER XXIII — A MESSAGE FROM THE BUSH

Never had runaways from Berande been more zealously hunted. The deeds of Gogoomy and his fellows had been a bad example for the one hundred and fifty new recruits. Murder had been planned, a gang-boss had been killed, and the murderers had broken their contracts by fleeing to the bush. Sheldon saw how imperative it was to teach his new-caught cannibals that bad examples were disastrous things to pattern after, and he urged Seelee on night and day, while with the Tahitians he practically lived in the bush, leaving Joan in charge of the plantation. To the north Boucher did good work, twice turning the fugitives back when they attempted to gain the coast.

One by one the boys were captured. In the first man-drive through the mangrove swamp Seelee caught two. Circling around to the north, a third was wounded in the thigh by Boucher, and this one, dragging behind in the chase, was later gathered in by Seelee's hunters. The three captives, heavily ironed, were exposed each day in the compound, as good examples of what happened to bad examples, all for the edification of the seven score and ten half-wild Poonga-Poonga men. Then the *Minerva*, running past for Tulagi, was signalled to send a boat, and the three prisoners were carried away to prison to await trial.

Five were still at large, but escape was impossible. They could not get down to the coast, nor dared they venture too far inland for fear of the wild bushmen. Then one of the five came in voluntarily and gave himself up, and Sheldon learned that Gogoomy and two others were all that were at large. There should have been a fourth, but according to the man who had given himself up, the fourth man had been killed and eaten. It had been fear of a similar fate that had driven him in. He was a Malu man, from north-western Malaita, as likewise had been the one that was eaten. Gogoomy's two other companions were from Port Adams. As for himself, the black declared his preference for government trial and punishment to being eaten by his companions in the bush.

"Close up Gogoomy *kai-kai* me," he said. "My word, me no like boy *kai-kai* me."

Three days later Sheldon caught one of the boys, helpless from swamp fever, and unable to fight or run away. On the same day Seelee caught the second boy in similar condition. Gogoomy alone remained at large; and, as the pursuit closed in on him, he conquered his fear of the bushmen and headed straight in for the mountainous backbone of the island. Sheldon with four Tahitians, and Seelee with thirty of his hunters, followed Gogoomy's trail a dozen miles into the open grass-lands, and then Seelee and his people lost heart. He confessed that neither he nor any of his tribe had ever ventured so far inland before, and he narrated, for Sheldon's benefit, most horrible tales of the horrible bushmen. In the old days, he said, they had crossed the grass-lands and attacked the salt-water natives; but since the coming of the white men to the coast they had remained in their interior fastnesses, and no salt-water native had ever seen them again.

"Gogoomy he finish along them fella bushmen," he assured Sheldon. "My word, he finish close up, *kai-kai* altogether."

So the expedition turned back. Nothing could persuade the coast natives to venture farther, and Sheldon, with his four Tahitians, knew that it was madness to go on alone. So he stood waist-deep in the grass and looked regretfully across the rolling savannah and the soft-swelling foothills to the Lion's Head, a massive peak of rock that upreared into the azure from the midmost centre of Guadalcanar, a landmark used for bearings by every coasting mariner, a mountain as yet untrod by the foot of a white man.

That night, after dinner, Sheldon and Joan were playing billiards, when Satan barked in the compound, and Lalaperu, sent to see, brought back a tired and travel-stained native, who wanted to talk with the "big fella white marster." It was only the man's insistence that procured him admittance at such an hour. Sheldon went out on the veranda to see him, and at first glance at the gaunt features and wasted body of the man knew that his errand was likely to prove important. Nevertheless, Sheldon demanded roughly, —

"What name you come along house belong me sun he go down?"

"Me Charley," the man muttered apologetically and wearily. "Me stop along Binu."

"Ah, Binu Charley, eh? Well, what name you talk along me? What place big fella marster along white man he stop?"

Joan and Sheldon together listened to the tale Binu Charley had brought. He described Tudor's expedition up the Balesuna; the dragging of the boats up the rapids; the passage up the river where it threaded the grass-lands; the innumerable washings of gravel by the white men in search of gold; the first rolling foothills; the man-traps of spear-staked pits in the jungle trails; the first meeting with the bushmen, who had never seen tobacco, and knew not the virtues of smoking; their friendliness; the deeper penetration of the interior around the flanks of the Lion's Head; the bush-sores and the fevers of the white men, and their madness in trusting the bushmen.

"Allee time I talk along white fella marster," he said. "Me talk, 'That fella bushman he look 'm eye belong him. He savvee too much. S'pose musket he stop along you, that fella bushman he too much good friend along you. Allee time he look sharp eye belong him. S'pose musket he no stop along you, my word, that fella bushman he chop 'm off head belong you. He *kai-kai* you altogether.'"

But the patience of the bushmen had exceeded that of the white men. The weeks had gone by, and no overt acts had been attempted. The bushmen swarmed in the camp in increasing numbers, and they were always making presents of yams and taro, of pig and fowl, and of wild fruits and vegetables. Whenever the gold-hunters moved their camp, the bushmen volunteered to carry the luggage. And the white men waxed ever more careless. They grew weary prospecting, and at the same time carrying their rifles and the heavy cartridge-belts, and the practice began of leaving their weapons behind them in camp.

"I tell 'm plenty fella white marster look sharp eye belong him. And plenty fella white marster make 'm big laugh along me, say Binu Charley allee same pickaninny — my word, they speak along me allee same pickaninny."

Came the morning when Binu Charley noticed that the women and children had disappeared. Tudor, at the time, was lying in a stupor with fever in a late camp five miles away, the main camp having moved on those five miles in order to prospect an outcrop of likely quartz. Binu Charley was midway between the two camps when the absence of the women and children struck him as suspicious.

"My word," he said, "me t'ink like hell. Him black Mary, him pickaninny, walk about long way big bit. What name? Me savvee too much trouble close up. Me fright like hell. Me run. My word, me run."

Tudor, quite unconscious, was slung across his shoulder, and carried a mile down the trail. Here, hiding new trail, Binu Charley had carried him for a quarter of a mile into the heart of the deepest jungle, and hidden him in a big banyan tree. Returning to try to save the rifles and personal outfit, Binu Charley had seen a party of bushmen trotting down the trail, and had hidden in the bush. Here, and from the direction of the main camp, he had heard two rifle shots. And that was all. He had never seen the white men again, nor had he ventured near their old camp. He had gone back to Tudor, and hidden with him for a week, living on wild fruits and the few pigeons and cockatoos he had been able to shoot with bow and arrow. Then he had journeyed down to Berande to bring the news. Tudor, he said, was very sick, lying unconscious for days at a time, and, when in his right mind, too weak to help himself.

"What name you no kill 'm that big fella marster?" Joan demanded. "He have 'm good fella musket, plenty calico, plenty tobacco, plenty knife-fee, and two fella pickaninny musket shoot quick, bang-bang-bang — just like that."

The black smiled cunningly.

"Me savvee too much. S'pose me kill 'm big fella marster, bimeby plenty white fella marster walk about Binu cross like hell. 'What name this fellow musket?' those plenty fella white marster talk 'm along me. My word, Binu Charley finish altogether. S'pose me kill 'm him, no good along me. Plenty white fella marster cross along me. S'pose me no kill 'm him, bimeby he give me plenty tobacco, plenty calico, plenty everything too much."

"There is only the one thing to do," Sheldon said to Joan.

She drummed with her hand and waited, while Binu Charley gazed wearily at her with unblinking eyes.

"I'll start the first thing in the morning," Sheldon said.

"We'll start," she corrected. "I can get twice as much out of my Tahitians as you can, and, besides, one white should never be alone under such circumstances."

He shrugged his shoulders in token, not of consent, but of surrender, knowing the uselessness of attempting to argue the question with her, and consoling himself with the reflection that heaven alone knew what adventures she was liable to engage in if left alone on Berande for a week. He clapped his hands, and for the next quarter of an hour the house-boys were kept busy carrying messages to the barracks. A man was sent to Balesuna village to command old Seelee's immediate presence. A boat'screw was started in a whale-boat with word for Boucher to come down. Ammunition was issued to the Tahitians, and the storeroom overhauled for a few days' tinned provisions. Viaburi turned yellow when told that he was to accompany the expedition, and, to everybody's surprise, Lalaperu volunteered to take his place.

Seelee arrived, proud in his importance that the great master of Berande should summon him in the night-time for council, and firm in his refusal to step one inch within the dread domain of the bushmen. As he said, if his opinion had been asked when the gold-hunters started, he would have foretold their disastrous end. There was only one thing that happened to any one who ventured into the bushmen's territory, and that was that he was eaten. And he would further say, without being asked, that if Sheldon went up into the bush he would be eaten too.

Sheldon sent for a gang-boss and told him to bring ten of the biggest, best, and strongest Poonga-Poonga men.

"Not salt-water boys," Sheldon cautioned, "but bush boys — leg belong him strong fella leg. Boy no savvee musket, no good. You bring 'm boy shoot musket strong fella."

They were ten picked men that filed up on the veranda and stood in the glare of the lanterns. Their heavy, muscular legs advertised that they were bushmen. Each claimed long experience in bush-fighting, most of them showed scars of bullet or spear-thrust in proof, and all were wild for a chance to break the humdrum monotony of plantation labour by going on a killing expedition. Killing was their natural vocation, not wood-cutting; and while they would not have ventured the Guadalcanar bush alone, with a white man like Sheldon behind them, and a white Mary such as they knew Joan to be, they could expect a safe and delightful time. Besides, the great master had told them that the eight gigantic Tahitians were going along.

The Poonga-Poonga volunteers stood with glistening eyes and grinning faces, naked save for their loin-cloths, and barbarously ornamented. Each wore a flat, turtle-shell ring suspended through his nose, and each carried a clay pipe in an ear-hole or thrust inside a beaded biceps armlet. A pair of magnificent boar tusks graced the chest of one. On the chest of another hung a huge disc of polished fossil clam-shell.

"Plenty strong fella fight," Sheldon warned them in conclusion.

They grinned and shifted delightedly.

"S'pose bushmen *kai-kai* along you?" he queried.

“No fear,” answered their spokesman, one Koogoo, a strapping, thick-lipped Ethiopian-looking man. “S’pose Poonga-Poonga boy *kai-kai* bush-boy?”

Sheldon shook his head, laughing, and dismissed them, and went to overhaul the dunnage-room for a small shelter tent for Joan’s use.

CHAPTER XXIV — IN THE BUSH

It was quite a formidable expedition that departed from Berande at break of day next morning in a fleet of canoes and dinghies. There were Joan and Sheldon, with Binu Charley and Lalaperu, the eight Tahitians, and the ten Poonga-Poonga men, each proud in the possession of a bright and shining modern rifle. In addition, there were two of the plantation boat's-crews of six men each. These, however, were to go no farther than Carli, where water transportation ceased and where they were to wait with the boats. Boucher remained behind in charge of Berande.

By eleven in the morning the expedition arrived at Binu, a cluster of twenty houses on the river bank. And from here thirty odd Binu men accompanied them, armed with spears and arrows, chattering and grimacing with delight at the warlike array. The long quiet stretches of river gave way to swifter water, and progress was slower and more dogged. The Balesuna grew shallow as well, and oftener were the loaded boats bumped along and half-lifted over the bottom. In places timber-falls blocked the passage of the narrow stream, and the boats and canoes were portaged around. Night brought them to Carli, and they had the satisfaction of knowing that they had accomplished in one day what had required two days for Tudor's expedition.

Here at Carli, next morning, half-way through the grass-lands, the boat's-crews were left, and with them the horde of Binu men, the boldest of which held on for a bare mile and then ran scampering back. Binu Charley, however, was at the fore, and led the way onward into the rolling foothills, following the trail made by Tudor and his men weeks before. That night they camped well into the hills and deep in the tropic jungle. The third day found them on the run-ways of the bushmen — narrow paths that compelled single file and that turned and twisted with endless convolutions through the dense undergrowth. For the most part it was a silent forest, lush and dank, where only occasionally a wood-pigeon cooed or snow-white cockatoos laughed harshly in laborious flight.

Here, in the mid-morning, the first casualty occurred. Binu Charley had dropped behind for a time, and Koogoo, the Poonga-Poonga man who had boasted that he would eat the bushmen, was in the lead. Joan and Sheldon heard the twanging thrum and saw Koogoo throw out his arms, at the same time dropping his rifle, stumble forward, and sink down on his hands and knees. Between his naked shoulders, low down and to the left, appeared the bone-barbed head of an arrow. He had been shot through and through. Cocked rifles swept the bush with nervous apprehension. But there was no rustle, no movement; nothing but the humid oppressive silence.

"Bushmen he no stop," Binu Charley called out, the sound of his voice startling more than one of them. "Allee same damn funny business. That fella Koogoo no look 'm eye belong him. He no savvee little bit."

Koogoo's arms had crumpled under him, and he lay quivering where he had fallen. Even as Binu Charley came to the front the stricken black's breath passed from him, and with a final convulsive stir he lay still.

"Right through the heart," Sheldon said, straightening up from the stooping examination. "It must have been a trap of some sort."

He noticed Joan's white, tense face, and the wide eyes with which she stared at the wreck of what had been a man the minute before.

"I recruited that boy myself," she said in a whisper. "He came down out of the bush at Poonga-Poonga and right on board the *Martha* and offered himself. And I was proud. He was my very first recruit — "

"My word! Look 'm that fella," Binu Charley interrupted, brushing aside the leafy wall of the run-way and exposing a bow so massive that no one bushman could have bent it.

The Binu man traced out the mechanics of the trap, and exposed the hidden fibre in the tangled undergrowth that at contact with Koogoo's foot had released the taut bow.

They were deep in the primeval forest. A dim twilight prevailed, for no random shaft of sunlight broke through the thick roof of leaves and creepers overhead. The Tahitians were plainly awed by the silence and gloom and mystery of the place and happening, but they showed themselves doggedly unafraid, and were for pushing on. The Poonga-Poonga men, on the contrary, were not awed. They were bushmen themselves, and they were used to this silent warfare, though the devices were different from those employed by them in their own bush. Most awed of all were Joan and Sheldon, but, being whites, they were not supposed to be subject to such commonplace emotions, and their task was to carry the situation off with careless bravado as befitted "big fella marsters" of the dominant breed.

Binu Charley took the lead as they pushed on, and trap after trap yielded its secret lurking-place to his keen scrutiny. The way was beset with a thousand annoyances, chiefest among which were thorns, cunningly concealed, that penetrated the bare feet of the invaders. Once, during the afternoon, Binu Charley barely missed being impaled in a staked pit that undermined the trail. There were times when all stood still and waited for half an hour or more while Binu Charley prospected suspicious parts of the trail. Sometimes he was compelled to leave the trail and creep and climb through the jungle so as to approach the man-traps from behind; and on one occasion, in spite of his precaution, a spring-bow was discharged, the flying arrow barely clipping the shoulder of one of the waiting Poonga-Poonga boys.

Where a slight run-way entered the main one, Sheldon paused and asked Binu Charley if he knew where it led.

"Plenty bush fella garden he stop along there short way little bit," was the answer. "All right you like 'm go look 'm along."

"'Walk 'm easy," he cautioned, a few minutes later. "Close up, that fella garden. S'pose some bush fella he stop, we catch 'm."

Creeping ahead and peering into the clearing for a moment, Binu Charley beckoned Sheldon to come on cautiously. Joan crouched beside him, and together they peeped out. The cleared space was fully half an acre in extent and carefully fenced against the wild pigs. Paw-paw and banana-trees were just ripening their fruit, while beneath grew sweet potatoes and yams. On one edge of the clearing was a small grass house, open-sided, a mere rain-shelter. In front of it, crouched on his hams before a fire, was a gaunt and bearded bushman. The fire seemed to smoke excessively, and in the thick of the smoke a round dark object hung suspended. The bushman seemed absorbed in contemplation of this object.

Warning them not to shoot unless the man was successfully escaping, Sheldon beckoned the Poonga-Poonga men forward. Joan smiled appreciatively to Sheldon. It was head-hunters against head-hunters. The blacks trod noiselessly to their stations, which were arranged so that they could spring simultaneously into the open. Their faces were keen and serious, their eyes eloquent with the ecstasy of living that was upon them — for this was living, this game of life and death, and to them it was the only game a man should play, withal they played it in low and cowardly ways, killing from behind in the dim forest gloom and rarely coming out into the open.

Sheldon whispered the word, and the ten runners leaped forward — for Binu Charley ran with them. The bushman's keen ears warned him, and he sprang to his feet, bow and arrow in hand, the arrow fixed in the notch and the bow bending as he sprang. The man he let drive at dodged the arrow, and before he could shoot another his enemies were upon him. He was rolled over and over and dragged to his feet, disarmed and helpless.

"Why, he's an ancient Babylonian!" Joan cried, regarding him. "He's an Assyrian, a Phoenician! Look at that straight nose, that narrow face, those high cheek-bones — and that slanting, oval forehead, and the beard, and the eyes, too."

"And the snaky locks," Sheldon laughed.

The bushman was in mortal fear, led by all his training to expect nothing less than death; yet he did not cower away from them. Instead, he returned their looks with lean self-sufficiency, and finally centred his gaze upon Joan, the first white woman he had ever seen.

"My word, bush fella *kai-kai* along that fella boy," Binu Charley remarked.

So stolid was his manner of utterance that Joan turned carelessly to see what had attracted his attention, and found herself face to face with Gogoomy. At least, it was the head of Gogoomy — the dark object they had seen hanging in the smoke. It was fresh — the smoke-curing had just begun — and, save for the closed eyes, all the sullen handsomeness and animal virility of the boy, as Joan had known it, was still to be seen in the monstrous thing that twisted and dangled in the eddying smoke.

Nor was Joan's horror lessened by the conduct of the Poonga-Poonga boys. On the instant they recognized the head, and on the instant rose their wild hearty laughter as they explained to one another in shrill falsetto voices. Gogoomy's end was a joke. He had been foiled in his attempt to escape. He had played the game and lost. And what greater joke could there be than that the bushmen should have eaten him? It was the funniest incident that had come under their notice in many a day. And to them there was certainly nothing unusual nor bizarre in the event. Gogoomy had completed the life-cycle of the bushman. He had taken heads, and now his own head had been taken. He had eaten men, and now he had been eaten by men.

The Poonga-Poonga men's laughter died down, and they regarded the spectacle with glittering eyes and gluttonous expressions. The Tahitians, on the other hand, were shocked, and Adamu Adam was shaking his head slowly and grunting forth his disgust. Joan was angry. Her face was white, but in each cheek was a vivid spray of red. Disgust had been displaced by wrath, and her mood was clearly vengeful.

Sheldon laughed.

"It's nothing to be angry over," he said. "You mustn't forget that he hacked off Kwaque's head, and that he ate one of his own comrades that ran away with him. Besides, he was born to it. He has but been eaten out of the same trough from which he himself has eaten."

Joan looked at him with lips that trembled on the verge of speech.

"And don't forget," Sheldon added, "that he is the son of a chief, and that as sure as fate his Port Adams tribesmen will take a white man's head in payment."

"It is all so ghastly ridiculous," Joan finally said.

"And — er — romantic," he suggested slyly.

She did not answer, and turned away; but Sheldon knew that the shaft had gone home.

"That fella boy he sick, belly belong him walk about," Binu Charley said, pointing to the Poonga-Poonga man whose shoulder had been scratched by the arrow an hour before.

The boy was sitting down and groaning, his arms clasping his bent knees, his head drooped forward and rolling painfully back and forth. For fear of poison, Sheldon had immediately scarified the wound and injected permanganate of potash; but in spite of the precaution the shoulder was swelling rapidly.

"We'll take him on to where Tudor is lying," Joan said. "The walking will help to keep up his circulation and scatter the poison. Adamu Adam, you take hold that boy. Maybe he will want to sleep. Shake him up. If he sleep he die."

The advance was more rapid now, for Binu Charley placed the captive bushman in front of him and made him clear the run-way of traps. Once, at a sharp turn where a man's shoulder would unavoidably brush against a screen of leaves, the bushman displayed great caution as he spread the leaves aside and exposed the head of a sharp-pointed spear, so set that the casual passer-by would receive at the least a nasty scratch.

"My word," said Binu Charley, "that fella spear allee same devil-devil."

He took the spear and was examining it when suddenly he made as if to stick it into the bushman. It was a bit of simulated playfulness, but the bushman sprang back in evident fright. Poisoned the weapon was beyond any doubt, and thereafter Binu Charley carried it threateningly at the prisoner's back.

The sun, sinking behind a lofty western peak, brought on an early but lingering twilight, and the expedition plodded on through the evil forest — the place of mystery and fear, of death swift and silent and horrible, of brutish appetite and degraded instinct, of human life that still wallowed in the primeval slime, of savagery degenerate and abysmal. No slightest breezes blew in the gloomy silence, and the air was stale and humid and suffocating. The sweat poured unceasingly from their bodies, and in their nostrils was the heavy smell of rotting vegetation and of black earth that was a-crawl with fecund life.

They turned aside from the run-way at a place indicated by Binu Charley, and, sometimes crawling on hands and knees through the damp black muck, at other times creeping and climbing through the tangled undergrowth a dozen feet from the ground, they came to an immense banyan tree, half an acre in extent, that made in the innermost heart of the jungle a denser jungle of its own. From out of its black depths came the voice of a man singing in a cracked, eerie voice.

"My word, that big fella marster he no die!"

The singing stopped, and the voice, faint and weak, called out a hello. Joan answered, and then the voice explained.

"I'm not wandering. I was just singing to keep my spirits up. Have you got anything to eat?"

A few minutes saw the rescued man lying among blankets, while fires were building, water was being carried, Joan's tent was going up, and Lalaperu was overhauling the packs and opening tins of provisions. Tudor, having pulled through the fever and started to mend, was still frightfully weak and very much starved. So badly swollen was he from mosquito-bites that his face was unrecognizable, and the acceptance of his identity was largely a matter of faith. Joan had her own ointments along, and she prefaced their application by fomenting his swollen features with hot cloths. Sheldon, with an eye to the camp and the preparations for the night, looked on and felt the pangs of jealousy at every contact of her hands with Tudor's face and body. Somehow, engaged in their healing ministrations, they no longer seemed to him boy’s hands, the hands of Joan who had gazed at Gogoomy’s head with pale cheeks sprayed with angry flame. The hands were now a woman’s hands, and Sheldon grinned to himself as his fancy suggested that some night he must lie outside the mosquito-netting in order to have Joan apply soothing fomentations in the morning.

CHAPTER XXV — THE HEAD-HUNTERS

The morning's action had been settled the night before. Tudor was to stay behind in his banyan refuge and gather strength while the expedition proceeded. On the far chance that they might rescue even one solitary survivor of Tudor's party, Joan was fixed in her determination to push on; and neither Sheldon nor Tudor could persuade her to remain quietly at the banyan tree while Sheldon went on and searched. With Tudor, Adamu Adam and Arahu were to stop as guards, the latter Tahitian being selected to remain because of a bad foot which had been brought about by stepping on one of the thorns concealed by the bushmen. It was evidently a slow poison, and not too strong, that the bushmen used, for the wounded Poonga-Poonga man was still alive, and though his swollen shoulder was enormous, the inflammation had already begun to go down. He, too, remained with Tudor.

Binu Charley led the way, by proxy, however, for, by means of the poisoned spear, he drove the captive bushman ahead. The run-way still ran through the dank and rotten jungle, and they knew no villages would be encountered till rising ground was gained. They plodded on, panting and sweating in the humid, stagnant air. They were immersed in a sea of wanton, prodigal vegetation. All about them the huge-rooted trees blocked their footing, while coiled and knotted climbers, of the girth of a man's arm, were thrown from lofty branch to lofty branch, or hung in tangled masses like so many monstrous snakes. Lush-stalked plants, larger-leaved than the body of a man, exuded a sweaty moisture from all their surfaces. Here and there, banyan trees, like rocky islands, shouldered aside the streaming riot of vegetation between their crowded columns, showing portals and passages wherein all daylight was lost and only midnight gloom remained. Tree-ferns and mosses and a myriad other parasitic forms jostled with gay-coloured fungoid growths for room to live, and the very atmosphere itself seemed to afford clinging space to airy fairy creepers, light and delicate as gem-dust, tremulous with microscopic blooms. Pale-golden and vermilion orchids flaunted their unhealthy blossoms in the golden, dripping sunshine that filtered through the matted roof. It was the mysterious, evil forest, a charnel house of silence, wherein naught moved save strange tiny birds — the strangeness of them making the mystery more profound, for they flitted on noiseless wings, emitting neither song nor chirp, and they were mottled with morbid colours, having all the seeming of orchids, flying blossoms of sickness and decay.

He was caught by surprise, fifteen feet in the air above the path, in the forks of a many-branched tree. All saw him as he dropped like a shadow, naked as on his natal morn, landing springily on his bent knees, and like a shadow leaping along the run-way. It was hard for them to realize that it was a man, for he seemed a weird jungle spirit, a goblin of the forest. Only Binu Charley was not perturbed. He flung his poisoned spear over the head of the captive at the flitting form. It was a mighty cast, well intended, but the shadow, leaping, received the spear harmlessly between the legs, and, tripping upon it, was flung sprawling. Before he could get away, Binu Charley was upon him, clutching him by his snow-white hair. He was only a young man, and a dandy at that, his face blackened with charcoal, his hair whitened with wood-ashes, with the freshly severed tail of a wild pig thrust through his perforated nose, and two more thrust through his ears. His only other ornament was a necklace of human finger-bones. At sight of their other prisoner he chattered in a high querulous falsetto, with puckered brows and troubled, wild-animal eyes. He was disposed of along the middle of the line, one of the Poonga-Poonga men leading him at the end of a length of bark-rope.

The trail began to rise out of the jungle, dipping at times into festering hollows of unwholesome vegetation, but rising more and more over swelling, unseen hill-slopes or climbing steep hog-backs and rocky hummocks where the forest thinned and blue patches of sky appeared overhead.

“Close up he stop,” Binu Charley warned them in a whisper.

Even as he spoke, from high overhead came the deep resonant boom of a village drum. But the beat was slow, there was no panic in the sound. They were directly beneath the village, and they could hear the crowing of roosters, two women’s voices raised in brief dispute, and, once, the crying of a child. The run-way now became a deeply worn path, rising so steeply that several times the party paused for breath. The path never widened, and in places the feet and the rains of generations had scoured it till it was sunken twenty feet beneath the surface.

“One man with a rifle could hold it against a thousand,” Sheldon whispered to Joan. “And twenty men could hold it with spears and arrows.”

They came out on the village, situated on a small, upland plateau, grass-covered, and with only occasional trees. There was a wild chorus of warning cries from the women, who scurried out of the grass houses, and like frightened quail dived over the opposite edge of the clearing, gathering up their babies and children as they ran. At the same time spears and arrows began to fall among the invaders. At Sheldon's command, the Tahitians and Poonga-Poonga men got into action with their rifles. The spears and arrows ceased, the last bushman disappeared, and the fight was over almost as soon as it had begun. On their own side no one had been hurt, while half a dozen bushmen had been killed. These alone remained, the wounded having been carried off. The Tahitians and Poonga-Poonga men had warmed up and were for pursuit, but this Sheldon would not permit. To his pleased surprise, Joan backed him up in the decision; for, glancing at her once during the firing, he had seen her white face, like a glittering sword in its fighting intensity, the nostrils dilated, the eyes bright and steady and shining.

"Poor brutes," she said. "They act only according to their natures. To eat their kind and take heads is good morality for them."

"But they should be taught not to take white men's heads," Sheldon argued.

She nodded approval, and said, "If we find one head we'll burn the village. Hey, you, Charley! What fella place head he stop?"

"S'pose he stop along devil-devil house," was the answer. "That big fella house, he devil-devil."

It was the largest house in the village, ambitiously ornamented with fancy-plaited mats and king-posts carved into obscene and monstrous forms half-human and half-animal. Into it they went, in the obscure light stumbling across the sleeping-logs of the village bachelors and knocking their heads against strings of weird votive-offerings, dried and shrivelled, that hung from the roof-beams. On either side were rude gods, some grotesquely carved, others no more than shapeless logs swathed in rotten and indescribably filthy matting. The air was mouldy and heavy with decay, while strings of fish-tails and of half-cleaned dog and crocodile skulls did not add to the wholesomeness of the place.

In the centre, crouched before a slow-smoking fire, in the littered ashes of a thousand fires, was an old man who blinked apathetically at the invaders. He was extremely old — so old that his withered skin hung about him in loose folds and did not look like skin. His hands were bony claws, his emaciated face a sheer death's-head. His task, it seemed, was to tend the fire, and while he blinked at them he added to it a handful of dead and mouldy wood. And hung in the smoke they found the object of their search. Joan turned and stumbled out hastily, deathly sick, reeling into the sunshine and clutching at the air for support.

"See if all are there," she called back faintly, and tottered aimlessly on for a few steps, breathing the air in great draughts and trying to forget the sight she had seen.

Upon Sheldon fell the unpleasant task of tallying the heads. They were all there, nine of them, white men's heads, the faces of which he had been familiar with when their owners had camped in Berande compound and set up the poling-boats. Binu Charley, hugely interested, lent a hand, turning the heads around for identification, noting the hatchet-strokes, and remarking the distorted expressions. The Poonga-Poonga men gloated as usual, and as usual the Tahitians were shocked and angry, several of them cursing and muttering in undertones. So angry was Matapuu, that he strode suddenly over to the fire-tender and kicked him in the ribs, whereupon the old savage emitted an appalling squeal, pig-like in its wild-animal fear, and fell face downward in the ashes and lay quivering in momentary expectation of death.

Other heads, thoroughly sun-dried and smoke-cured, were found in abundance, but, with two exceptions, they were the heads of blacks. So this was the manner of hunting that went on in the dark and evil forest, Sheldon thought, as he regarded them. The atmosphere of the place was sickening, yet he could not forbear to pause before one of Binu Charley's finds.

"Me savvee black Mary, me savvee white Mary," quoth Binu Charley. "Me no savvee that fella Mary. What name belong him?"

Sheldon looked. Ancient and withered, blackened by many years of the smoke of the devil-devil house, nevertheless the shrunken, mummy-like face was unmistakably Chinese. How it had come there was the mystery. It was a woman's head, and he had never heard of a Chinese woman in the history of the Solomons. From the ears hung two-inch-long ear-rings, and at Sheldon's direction the Binu man rubbed away the accretions of smoke and dirt, and from under his fingers appeared the polished green of jade, the sheen of pearl, and the warm red of Oriental gold. The other head, equally ancient, was a white man's, as the heavy blond moustache, twisted and askew on the shrivelled upper lip, gave sufficient advertisement; and Sheldon wondered what forgotten bêche-de-mer fisherman or sandalwood trader had gone to furnish that ghastly trophy.

Telling Binu Charley to remove the ear-rings, and directing the Poonga-Poonga men to carry out the old fire-tender, Sheldon cleared the devil-devil house and set fire to it. Soon every house was blazing merrily, while the ancient fire-tender sat upright in the sunshine blinking at the destruction of his village. From the heights above, where were evidently other villages, came the booming of drums and a wild blowing of war-conchs; but Sheldon had dared all he cared to with his small following. Besides, his mission was accomplished. Every member of Tudor's expedition was accounted for; and it was a long, dark way out of the head-hunters' country. Releasing their two prisoners, who leaped away like startled deer, they plunged down the steep path into the steaming jungle.

Joan, still shocked by what she had seen, walked on in front of Sheldon, subdued and silent. At the end of half an hour she turned to him with a wan smile and said, —

"I don't think I care to visit the head-hunters any more. It's adventure, I know; but there is such a thing as having too much of a good thing. Riding around the plantation will henceforth be good enough for me, or perhaps salving another *Martha*; but the bushmen of Guadalcanar need never worry for fear that I shall visit them again. I shall have nightmares for months to come, I know I shall. Ugh! — the horrid beasts!"

That night found them back in camp with Tudor, who, while improved, would still have to be carried down on a stretcher. The swelling of the Poonga-Poonga man's shoulder was going down slowly, but Arahu still limped on his thorn-poisoned foot.

Two days later they rejoined the boats at Carli; and at high noon of the third day, travelling with the current and shooting the rapids, the expedition arrived at Berande. Joan, with a sigh, unbuckled her revolver-belt and hung it on the nail in the living-room, while Sheldon, who had been lurking about for the sheer joy of seeing her perform that particular home-coming act, sighed, too, with satisfaction. But the home-coming was not all joy to him, for Joan set about nursing Tudor, and spent much time on the veranda where he lay in the hammock under the mosquito-netting.

CHAPTER XXVI — BURNING DAYLIGHT

The ten days of Tudor's convalescence that followed were peaceful days on Berande. The work of the plantation went on like clock-work. With the crushing of the premature outbreak of Gogoomy and his following, all insubordination seemed to have vanished. Twenty more of the old-time boys, their term of service up, were carried away by the *Martha*, and the fresh stock of labour, treated fairly, was proving of excellent quality. As Sheldon rode about the plantation, acknowledging to himself the comfort and convenience of a horse and wondering why he had not thought of getting one himself, he pondered the various improvements for which Joan was responsible — the splendid Poonga-Poonga recruits; the fruits and vegetables; the *Martha* herself, snatched from the sea for a song and earning money hand over fist despite old Kinross's slow and safe method of running her; and Berande, once more financially secure, approaching each day nearer the dividend-paying time, and growing each day as the black toilers cleared the bush, cut the cane-grass, and planted more cocoanut palms.

In these and a thousand ways Sheldon was made aware of how much he was indebted for material prosperity to Joan — to the slender, level-browed girl with romance shining out of her gray eyes and adventure shouting from the long-barrelled Colt's on her hip, who had landed on the beach that piping gale, along with her stalwart Tahitian crew, and who had entered his bungalow to hang with boy's hands her revolver-belt and Baden-Powell hat on the nail by the billiard table. He forgot all the early exasperations, remembering only her charms and sweetnesses and glorying much in the traits he at first had disliked most — her boyishness and adventurousness, her delight to swim and risk the sharks, her desire to go recruiting, her love of the sea and ships, her sharp authoritative words when she launched the whale-boat and, with firestick in one hand and dynamite-stick in the other, departed with her picturesque crew to shoot fish in the Balesuna; her super-innocent disdain for the commonest conventions, her juvenile joy in argument, her fluttering, wild-bird love of freedom and mad passion for independence. All this he now loved, and he no longer desired to tame and hold her, though the paradox was the winning of her without the taming and the holding.

There were times when he was dizzy with thought of her and love of her, when he would stop his horse and with closed eyes picture her as he had seen her that first day, in the stern-sheets of the whale-boat, dashing madly in to shore and marching belligerently along his veranda to remark that it was pretty hospitality this letting strangers sink or swim in his front yard. And as he opened his eyes and urged his horse onward, he would ponder for the ten thousandth time how possibly he was ever to hold her when she was so wild and bird-like that she was bound to flutter out and away from under his hand.

It was patent to Sheldon that Tudor had become interested in Joan. That convalescent visitor practically lived on the veranda, though, while preposterously weak and shaky in the legs, he had for some time insisted on coming in to join them at the table at meals. The first warning Sheldon had of the other's growing interest in the girl was when Tudor eased down and finally ceased pricking him with his habitual sharpness of quip and speech. This cessation of verbal sparring was like the breaking off of diplomatic relations between countries at the beginning of war, and, once Sheldon's suspicions were aroused, he was not long in finding other confirmations. Tudor too obviously joyed in Joan's presence, too obviously laid himself out to amuse and fascinate her with his own glorious and adventurous personality. Often, after his morning ride over the plantation, or coming in from the store or from inspection of the copra-drying, Sheldon found the pair of them together on the veranda, Joan listening, intent and excited, and Tudor deep in some recital of personal adventure at the ends of the earth.

Sheldon noticed, too, the way Tudor looked at her and followed her about with his eyes, and in those eyes he noted a certain hungry look, and on the face a certain wistful expression; and he wondered if on his own face he carried a similar involuntary advertisement. He was sure of several things: first, that Tudor was not the right man for Joan and could not possibly make her permanently happy; next, that Joan was too sensible a girl really to fall in love with a man of such superficial stamp; and, finally, that Tudor would blunder his love-making somehow. And at the same time, with true lover's anxiety, Sheldon feared that the other might somehow fail to blunder, and win the girl with purely fortuitous and successful meretricious show. But of the one thing Sheldon was sure: Tudor had no intimate knowledge of her and was unaware of how vital in her was her wildness and love of independence. That was where he would blunder — in the catching and the holding of her. And then, in spite of all his certitude, Sheldon could not forbear wondering if his theories of Joan might not be wrong, and if Tudor was not going the right way about after all.

The situation was very unsatisfactory and perplexing. Sheldon played the difficult part of waiting and looking on, while his rival devoted himself energetically to reaching out and grasping at the fluttering prize. Then, again, Tudor had such an irritating way about him. It had become quite elusive and intangible, now that he had tacitly severed diplomatic relations; but Sheldon sensed what he deemed a growing antagonism and promptly magnified it through the jealous lenses of his own lover's eyes. The other was an interloper. He did not belong to Berande, and now that he was well and strong again it was time for him to go. Instead of which, and despite the calling in of the mail steamer bound for Sydney, Tudor had settled himself down comfortably, resumed swimming, went dynamiting fish with Joan, spent hours with her hunting pigeons, trapping crocodiles, and at target practice with rifle and revolver.

But there were certain traditions of hospitality that prevented Sheldon from breathing a hint that it was time for his guest to take himself off. And in similar fashion, feeling that it was not playing the game, he fought down the temptation to warn Joan. Had he known anything, not too serious, to Tudor's detriment, he would have been unable to utter it; but the worst of it was that he knew nothing at all against the man. That was the confounded part of it, and sometimes he was so baffled and overwrought by his feelings that he assumed a super-judicial calm and assured himself that his dislike of Tudor was a matter of unsubstantial prejudice and jealousy.

Outwardly, he maintained a calm and smiling aspect. The work of the plantation went on. The *Martha* and the *Flibberty-Gibbet* came and went, as did all the miscellany of coasting craft that dropped in to wait for a breeze and have a gossip, a drink or two, and a game of billiards. Satan kept the compound free of niggers. Boucher came down regularly in his whale-boat to pass Sunday. Twice a day, at breakfast and dinner, Joan and Sheldon and Tudor met amicably at table, and the evenings were as amicably spent on the veranda.

And then it happened. Tudor made his blunder. Never divining Joan's fluttering wildness, her blind hatred of restraint and compulsion, her abhorrence of mastery by another, and mistaking the warmth and enthusiasm in her eyes (aroused by his latest tale) for something tender and acquiescent, he drew her to him, laid a forcible detaining arm about her waist, and misapprehended her frantic revolt for an exhibition of maidenly reluctance. It occurred on the veranda, after breakfast, and Sheldon, within, pondering a Sydney wholesaler's catalogue and making up his orders for next steamer-day, heard the sharp exclamation of Joan, followed by the equally sharp impact of an open hand against a cheek. Jerking free from the arm that was all distasteful compulsion, Joan had slapped Tudor's face resoundingly and with far more vim and weight than when she had cuffed Gogoomy.

Sheldon had half-started up, then controlled himself and sunk back in his chair, so that by the time Joan entered the door his composure was recovered. Her right forearm was clutched tightly in her left hand, while the white cheeks, centred with the spots of flaming red, reminded him of the time he had first seen her angry.

"He hurt my arm," she blurted out, in reply to his look of inquiry.

He smiled involuntarily. It was so like her, so like the boy she was, to come running to complain of the physical hurt which had been done her. She was certainly not a woman versed in the ways of man and in the ways of handling man. The resounding slap she had given Tudor seemed still echoing in Sheldon's ears, and as he looked at the girl before him crying out that her arm was hurt, his smile grew broader.

It was the smile that did it, convicting Joan in her own eyes of the silliness of her cry and sending over her face the most amazing blush he had ever seen. Throat, cheeks, and forehead flamed with the rush of the shamed blood.

"He — he — " she attempted to vindicate her deeper indignation, then whirled abruptly away and passed out the rear door and down the steps.

Sheldon sat and mused. He was a trifle angry, and the more he dwelt upon the happening the angrier he grew. If it had been any woman except Joan it would have been amusing. But Joan was the last woman in the world to attempt to kiss forcibly. The thing smacked of the back stairs anyway — a sordid little comedy perhaps, but to have tried it on Joan was nothing less than sacrilege. The man should have had better sense. Then, too, Sheldon was personally aggrieved. He had been filched of something that he felt was almost his, and his lover's jealousy was rampant at thought of this forced familiarity.

It was while in this mood that the screen door banged loudly behind the heels of Tudor, who strode into the room and paused before him. Sheldon was unprepared, though it was very apparent that the other was furious.

"Well?" Tudor demanded defiantly.

And on the instant speech rushed to Sheldon's lips.

"I hope you won't attempt anything like it again, that's all — except that I shall be only too happy any time to extend to you the courtesy of my whale-boat. It will land you in Tulagi in a few hours."

"As if that would settle it," was the retort.

"I don't understand," Sheldon said simply.

"Then it is because you don't wish to understand."

"Still I don't understand," Sheldon said in steady, level tones. "All that is clear to me is that you are exaggerating your own blunder into something serious."

Tudor grinned maliciously and replied, —

"It would seem that you are doing the exaggerating, inviting me to leave in your whale-boat. It is telling me that Berande is not big enough for the pair of us. Now let me tell you that the Solomon Islands is not big enough for the pair of us. This thing's got to be settled between us, and it may as well be settled right here and now."

"I can understand your fire-eating manners as being natural to you," Sheldon went on wearily, "but why you should try them on me is what I can't comprehend. You surely don't want to quarrel with me."

"I certainly do."

"But what in heaven's name for?"

Tudor surveyed him with withering disgust.

"You haven't the soul of a louse. I suppose any man could make love to your wife — "

"But I have no wife," Sheldon interrupted.

"Then you ought to have. The situation is outrageous. You might at least marry her, as I am honourably willing to do."

For the first time Sheldon's rising anger boiled over.

"You — " he began violently, then abruptly caught control of himself and went on soothingly, "you'd better take a drink and think it over. That's my advice to you. Of course, when you do get cool, after talking to me in this fashion you won't want to stay on any longer, so while you're getting that drink I'll call the boat's-crew and launch a boat. You'll be in Tulagi by eight this evening."

He turned toward the door, as if to put his words into execution, but the other caught him by the shoulder and twirled him around.

"Look here, Sheldon, I told you the Solomons were too small for the pair of us, and I meant it."

"Is that an offer to buy Berande, lock, stock, and barrel?" Sheldon queried.

"No, it isn't. It's an invitation to fight."

"But what the devil do you want to fight with me for?" Sheldon's irritation was growing at the other's persistence. "I've no quarrel with you. And what quarrel can you have with me? I have never interfered with you. You were my guest. Miss Lackland is my partner. If you saw fit to make love to her, and somehow failed to succeed, why should you want to fight with me? This is the twentieth century, my dear fellow, and duelling went out of fashion before you and I were born."

"You began the row," Tudor doggedly asserted. "You gave me to understand that it was time for me to go. You fired me out of your house, in short. And then you have the cheek to want to know why I am starting the row. It won't do, I tell you. You started it, and I am going to see it through."

Sheldon smiled tolerantly and proceeded to light a cigarette. But Tudor was not to be turned aside.

"You started this row," he urged.

"There isn't any row. It takes two to make a row, and I, for one, refuse to have anything to do with such tomfoolery."

"You started it, I say, and I'll tell you why you started it."

"I fancy you've been drinking," Sheldon interposed. "It's the only explanation I can find for your unreasonableness."

"And I'll tell you why you started it. It wasn't silliness on your part to exaggerate this little trifle of love-making into something serious. I was poaching on your preserves, and you wanted to get rid of me. It was all very nice and snug here, you and the girl, until I came along. And now you're jealous — that's it, jealousy — and want me out of it. But I won't go."

"Then stay on by all means. I won't quarrel with you about it. Make yourself comfortable. Stay for a year, if you wish."

"She's not your wife," Tudor continued, as though the other had not spoken. "A fellow has the right to make love to her unless she's your — well, perhaps it was an error after all, due to ignorance, perfectly excusable, on my part. I might have seen it with half an eye if I'd listened to the gossip on the beach. All Guvutu and Tulagi were laughing about it. I was a fool, and I certainly made the mistake of taking the situation on its assumed innocent face-value."

So angry was Sheldon becoming that the face and form of the other seemed to vibrate and oscillate before his eyes. Yet outwardly Sheldon was calm and apparently weary of the discussion.

"Please keep her out of the conversation," he said.

"But why should I?" was the demand. "The pair of you trapped me into making a fool of myself. How was I to know that everything was not all right? You and she acted as if everything were on the square. But my eyes are open now. Why, she played the outraged wife to perfection, slapped the transgressor and fled to you. Pretty good proof of what all the beach has been saying. Partners, eh? — a business partnership? Gammon my eye, that's what it is."

Then it was that Sheldon struck out, coolly and deliberately, with all the strength of his arm, and Tudor, caught on the jaw, fell sideways, crumpling as he did so and crushing a chair to kindling wood beneath the weight of his falling body. He pulled himself slowly to his feet, but did not offer to rush.

"Now will you fight?" Tudor said grimly.

Sheldon laughed, and for the first time with true spontaneity. The intrinsic ridiculousness of the situation was too much for his sense of humour. He made as if to repeat the blow, but Tudor, white of face, with arms hanging resistlessly at his sides, offered no defence.

"I don't mean a fight with fists," he said slowly. "I mean to a finish, to the death. You're a good shot with revolver and rifle. So am I. That's the way we'll settle it."

"You have gone clean mad. You are a lunatic."

"No, I'm not," Tudor retorted. "I'm a man in love. And once again I ask you to go outside and settle it, with any weapons you choose."

Sheldon regarded him for the first time with genuine seriousness, wondering what strange maggots could be gnawing in his brain to drive him to such unusual conduct.

"But men don't act this way in real life," Sheldon remarked.

"You'll find I'm pretty real before you're done with me. I'm going to kill you to-day."

"Bosh and nonsense, man." This time Sheldon had lost his temper over the superficial aspects of the situation. "Bosh and nonsense, that's all it is. Men don't fight duels in the twentieth century. It's — it's antediluvian, I tell you."

"Speaking of Joan — "

"Please keep her name out of it," Sheldon warned him.

"I will, if you'll fight."

Sheldon threw up his arms despairingly.

"Speaking of Joan — "

"Look out," Sheldon warned again.

"Oh, go ahead, knock me down. But that won't close my mouth. You can knock me down all day, but as fast as I get to my feet I'll speak of Joan again. Now will you fight?"

"Listen to me, Tudor," Sheldon began, with an effort at decisiveness. "I am not used to taking from men a tithe of what I've already taken from you."

"You'll take a lot more before the day's out," was the answer. "I tell you, you simply must fight. I'll give you a fair chance to kill me, but I'll kill you before the day's out. This isn't civilization. It's the Solomon Islands, and a pretty primitive proposition for all that. King Edward and law and order are represented by the Commissioner at Tulagi and an occasional visiting gunboat. And two men and one woman is an equally primitive proposition. We'll settle it in the good old primitive way."

As Sheldon looked at him the thought came to his mind that after all there might be something in the other's wild adventures over the earth. It required a man of that calibre, a man capable of obtruding a duel into orderly twentieth century life, to find such wild adventures.

"There's only one way to stop me," Tudor went on. "I can't insult you directly, I know. You are too easy-going, or cowardly, or both, for that. But I can narrate for you the talk of the beach — ah, that grinds you, doesn't it? I can tell you what the beach has to say about you and this young girl running a plantation under a business partnership."

"Stop!" Sheldon cried, for the other was beginning to vibrate and oscillate before his eyes. "You want a duel. I'll give it to you." Then his common-sense and dislike for the ridiculous asserted themselves, and he added, “But it’s absurd, impossible.”

“Joan and David — partners, eh? Joan and David — partners,” Tudor began to iterate and reiterate in a malicious and scornful chant.

“For heaven’s sake keep quiet, and I’ll let you have your way,” Sheldon cried. “I never saw a fool so bent on his folly. What kind of a duel shall it be? There are no seconds. What weapons shall we use?”

Immediately Tudor’s monkey-like impishness left him, and he was once more the cool, self-possessed man of the world.

“I’ve often thought that the ideal duel should be somewhat different from the conventional one,” he said. “I’ve fought several of that sort, you know — ”

“French ones,” Sheldon interrupted.

“Call them that. But speaking of this ideal duel, here it is. No seconds, of course, and no onlookers. The two principals alone are necessary. They may use any weapons they please, from revolvers and rifles to machine guns and pompoms. They start a mile apart, and advance on each other, taking advantage of cover, retreating, circling, feinting — anything and everything permissible. In short, the principals shall hunt each other — ”

“Like a couple of wild Indians?”

“Precisely,” cried Tudor, delighted. “You’ve got the idea. And Berande is just the place, and this is just the right time. Miss Lackland will be taking her siesta, and she’ll think we are. We’ve got two hours for it before she wakes. So hurry up and come on. You start out from the Balesuna and I start from the Berande. Those two rivers are the boundaries of the plantation, aren’t they? Very well. The field of the duel will be the plantation. Neither principal must go outside its boundaries. Are you satisfied?”

“Quite. But have you any objections if I leave some orders?”

“Not at all,” Tudor acquiesced, the pink of courtesy now that his wish had been granted.

Sheldon clapped his hands, and the running house-boy hurried away to bring back Adamu Adam and Noa Noah.

“Listen,” Sheldon said to them. “This man and me, we have one big fight to-day. Maybe he die. Maybe I die. If he die, all right. If I die, you two look after Missie Lackalanna. You take rifles, and you look after her daytime and night-time. If she want to talk with Mr. Tudor, all right. If she not want to talk, you make him keep away. Savvee?”

They grunted and nodded. They had had much to do with white men, and had learned never to question the strange ways of the strange breed. If these two saw fit to go out and kill each other, that was their business and not the business of the islanders, who took orders from them. They stepped to the gun-rack, and each picked a rifle.

“Better all Tahitian men have rifles,” suggested Adamu Adam. “Maybe big trouble come.”

“All right, you take them,” Sheldon answered, busy with issuing the ammunition.

They went to the door and down the steps, carrying the eight rifles to their quarters. Tudor, with cartridge-belts for rifle and pistol strapped around him, rifle in hand, stood impatiently waiting.

“Come on, hurry up; we’re burning daylight,” he urged, as Sheldon searched after extra clips for his automatic pistol.

Together they passed down the steps and out of the compound to the beach, where they turned their backs to each other, and each proceeded toward his destination, their rifles in the hollows of their arms, Tudor walking toward the Berande and Sheldon toward the Balesuna.

CHAPTER XXVII — MODERN DUELLING

Barely had Sheldon reached the Balesuna, when he heard the faint report of a distant rifle and knew it was the signal of Tudor, giving notice that he had reached the Berande, turned about, and was coming back. Sheldon fired his rifle into the air in answer, and in turn proceeded to advance. He moved as in a dream, absent-mindedly keeping to the open beach. The thing was so preposterous that he had to struggle to realize it, and he reviewed in his mind the conversation with Tudor, trying to find some clue to the common-sense of what he was doing. He did not want to kill Tudor. Because that man had blundered in his love-making was no reason that he, Sheldon, should take his life. Then what was it all about? True, the fellow had insulted Joan by his subsequent remarks and been knocked down for it, but because he had knocked him down was no reason that he should now try to kill him.

In this fashion he covered a quarter of the distance between the two rivers, when it dawned upon him that Tudor was not on the beach at all. Of course not. He was advancing, according to the terms of the agreement, in the shelter of the cocoanut trees. Sheldon promptly swerved to the left to seek similar shelter, when the faint crack of a rifle came to his ears, and almost immediately the bullet, striking the hard sand a hundred feet beyond him, ricochetted and whined onward on a second flight, convincing him that, preposterous and unreal as it was, it was nevertheless sober fact. It had been intended for him. Yet even then it was hard to believe. He glanced over the familiar landscape and at the sea dimpling in the light but steady breeze. From the direction of Tulagi he could see the white sails of a schooner laying a tack across toward Berande. Down the beach a horse was grazing, and he idly wondered where the others were. The smoke rising from the copra-drying caught his eyes, which roved on over the barracks, the tool-houses, the boat-sheds, and the bungalow, and came to rest on Joan's little grass house in the corner of the compound.

Keeping now to the shelter of the trees, he went forward another quarter of a mile. If Tudor had advanced with equal speed they should have come together at that point, and Sheldon concluded that the other was circling. The difficulty was to locate him. The rows of trees, running at right angles, enabled him to see along only one narrow avenue at a time. His enemy might be coming along the next avenue, or the next, to right or left. He might be a hundred feet away or half a mile. Sheldon plodded on, and decided that the old stereotyped duel was far simpler and easier than this protracted hide-and-seek affair. He, too, tried circling, in the hope of cutting the other's circle; but, without catching a glimpse of him, he finally emerged upon a fresh clearing where the young trees, waist-high, afforded little shelter and less hiding. Just as he emerged, stepping out a pace, a rifle cracked to his right, and though he did not hear the bullet in passing, the thud of it came to his ears when it struck a palm-trunk farther on.

He sprang back into the protection of the larger trees. Twice he had exposed himself and been fired at, while he had failed to catch a single glimpse of his antagonist. A slow anger began to burn in him. It was deucedly unpleasant, he decided, this being peppered at; and nonsensical as it really was, it was none the less deadly serious. There was no avoiding the issue, no firing in the air and getting over with it as in the old-fashioned duel. This mutual man-hunt must keep up until one got the other. And if one neglected a chance to get the other, that increased the other's chance to get him. There could be no false sentiment about it. Tudor had been a cunning devil when he proposed this sort of duel, Sheldon concluded, as he began to work along cautiously in the direction of the last shot.

When he arrived at the spot, Tudor was gone, and only his foot-prints remained, pointing out the course he had taken into the depths of the plantation. Once, ten minutes later, he caught a glimpse of Tudor, a hundred yards away, crossing the same avenue as himself but going in the opposite direction. His rifle half-leaped to his shoulder, but the other was gone. More in whim than in hope of result, grinning to himself as he did so, Sheldon raised his automatic pistol and in two seconds sent eight shots scattering through the trees in the direction in which Tudor had disappeared. Wishing he had a shot-gun, Sheldon dropped to the ground behind a tree, slipped a fresh clip up the hollow butt of the pistol, threw a cartridge into the chamber, shoved the safety catch into place, and reloaded the empty clip.

It was but a short time after that that Tudor tried the same trick on him, the bullets pattering about him like spiteful rain, thudding into the palm trunks, or glancing off in whining ricochets. The last bullet of all, making a double ricochet from two different trees and losing most of its momentum, struck Sheldon a sharp blow on the forehead and dropped at his feet. He was partly stunned for the moment, but on investigation found no greater harm than a nasty lump that soon rose to the size of a pigeon's egg.

The hunt went on. Once, coming to the edge of the grove near the bungalow, he saw the house-boys and the cook, clustered on the back veranda and peering curiously among the trees, talking and laughing with one another in their queer falsetto voices. Another time he came upon a working-gang busy at hoeing weeds. They scarcely noticed him when he came up, though they knew thoroughly well what was going on. It was no affair of theirs that the enigmatical white men should be out trying to kill each other, and whatever interest in the proceedings might be theirs they were careful to conceal it from Sheldon. He ordered them to continue hoeing weeds in a distant and out-of-the-way corner, and went on with the pursuit of Tudor.

Tiring of the endless circling, Sheldon tried once more to advance directly on his foe, but the latter was too crafty, taking advantage of his boldness to fire a couple of shots at him, and slipping away on some changed and continually changing course. For an hour they dodged and turned and twisted back and forth and around, and hunted each other among the orderly palms. They caught fleeting glimpses of each other and chanced flying shots which were without result. On a grassy shelter behind a tree, Sheldon came upon where Tudor had rested and smoked a cigarette. The pressed grass showed where he had sat. To one side lay the cigarette stump and the charred match which had lighted it. In front lay a scattering of bright metallic fragments. Sheldon recognized their significance. Tudor was notching his steel-jacketed bullets, or cutting them blunt, so that they would spread on striking — in short, he was making them into the vicious dum-dum prohibited in modern warfare. Sheldon knew now what would happen to him if a bullet struck his body. It would leave a tiny hole where it entered, but the hole where it emerged would be the size of a saucer.

He decided to give up the pursuit, and lay down in the grass, protected right and left by the row of palms, with on either hand the long avenue extending. This he could watch. Tudor would have to come to him or else there would be no termination of the affair. He wiped the sweat from his face and tied the handkerchief around his neck to keep off the stinging gnats that lurked in the grass. Never had he felt so great a disgust for the thing called "adventure." Joan had been bad enough, with her Baden-Powell and long-barrelled Colt's; but here was this newcomer also looking for adventure, and finding it in no other way than by lugging a peace-loving planter into an absurd and preposterous bush-whacking duel. If ever adventure was well damned, it was by Sheldon, sweating in the windless grass and fighting gnats, the while he kept close watch up and down the avenue.

Then Tudor came. Sheldon happened to be looking in his direction at the moment he came into view, peering quickly up and down the avenue before he stepped into the open. Midway he stopped, as if debating what course to pursue. He made a splendid mark, facing his concealed enemy at two hundred yards' distance. Sheldon aimed at the centre of his chest, then deliberately shifted the aim to his right shoulder, and, with the thought, "That will put him out of business," pulled the trigger. The bullet, driving with momentum sufficient to perforate a man's body a mile distant, struck Tudor with such force as to pivot him, whirling him half around by the shock of its impact and knocking him down.

"'Hope I haven't killed the beggar," Sheldon muttered aloud, springing to his feet and running forward.

A hundred feet away all anxiety on that score was relieved by Tudor, who made shift with his left hand, and from his automatic pistol hurled a rain of bullets all around Sheldon. The latter dodged behind a palm trunk, counting the shots, and when the eighth had been fired he rushed in on the wounded man. He kicked the pistol out of the other's hand, and then sat down on him in order to keep him down.

"Be quiet," he said. "I've got you, so there's no use struggling."

Tudor still attempted to struggle and to throw him off.

"Keep quiet, I tell you," Sheldon commanded. "I'm satisfied with the outcome, and you've got to be. So you might as well give in and call this affair closed."

Tudor reluctantly relaxed.

"Rather funny, isn't it, these modern duels?" Sheldon grinned down at him as he removed his weight. "Not a bit dignified. If you'd struggled a moment longer I'd have rubbed your face in the earth. I've a good mind to do it anyway, just to teach you that duelling has gone out of fashion. Now let us see to your injuries."

"You only got me that last," Tudor grunted sullenly, "lying in ambush like — "

“Like a wild Indian. Precisely. You’ve caught the idea, old man.” Sheldon ceased his mocking and stood up. “You lie there quietly until I send back some of the boys to carry you in. You’re not seriously hurt, and it’s lucky for you I didn’t follow your example. If you had been struck with one of your own bullets, a carriage and pair would have been none too large to drive through the hole it would have made. As it is, you’re drilled clean — a nice little perforation. All you need is antiseptic washing and dressing, and you’ll be around in a month. Now take it easy, and I’ll send a stretcher for you.”

CHAPTER XXVIII — CAPITULATION

When Sheldon emerged from among the trees he found Joan waiting at the compound gate, and he could not fail to see that she was visibly gladdened at the sight of him.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to see you," was her greeting. "What's become of Tudor? That last flutter of the automatic wasn't nice to listen to. Was it you or Tudor?"

"So you know all about it," he answered coolly. "Well, it was Tudor, but he was doing it left-handed. He's down with a hole in his shoulder." He looked at her keenly. "Disappointing, isn't it?" he drawled.

"How do you mean?"

"Why, that I didn't kill him."

"But I didn't want him killed just because he kissed me," she cried.

"Oh, he did kiss you!" Sheldon retorted, in evident surprise. "I thought you said he hurt your arm."

"One could call it a kiss, though it was only on the end of the nose." She laughed at the recollection. "But I paid him back for that myself. I boxed his face for him. And he did hurt my arm. It's black and blue. Look at it."

She pulled up the loose sleeve of her blouse, and he saw the bruised imprints of two fingers.

Just then a gang of blacks came out from among the trees carrying the wounded man on a rough stretcher.

"Romantic, isn't it?" Sheldon sneered, following Joan's startled gaze. "And now I'll have to play surgeon and doctor him up. Funny, this twentieth-century duelling. First you drill a hole in a man, and next you set about plugging the hole up."

They had stepped aside to let the stretcher pass, and Tudor, who had heard the remark, lifted himself up on the elbow of his sound arm and said with a defiant grin, —

"If you'd got one of mine you'd have had to plug with a dinner-plate."

"Oh, you wretch!" Joan cried. "You've been cutting your bullets."

"It was according to agreement," Tudor answered. "Everything went. We could have used dynamite if we wanted to."

"He's right," Sheldon assured her, as they swung in behind. "Any weapon was permissible. I lay in the grass where he couldn't see me, and bushwhacked him in truly noble fashion. That's what comes of having women on the plantation. And now it's antiseptics and drainage tubes, I suppose. It's a nasty mess, and I'll have to read up on it before I tackle the job."

"I don't see that it's my fault," she began. "I couldn't help it because he kissed me. I never dreamed he would attempt it."

"We didn't fight for that reason. But there isn't time to explain. If you'll get dressings and bandages ready I'll look up 'gun-shot wounds' and see what's to be done."

"Is he bleeding seriously?" she asked.

"No; the bullet seems to have missed the important arteries. But that would have been a pickle."

"Then there's no need to bother about reading up," Joan said. "And I'm just dying to hear what it was all about. The *Apostle* is lying becalmed inside the point, and her boats are out to wing. She'll be at anchor in five minutes, and Doctor Welshmere is sure to be on board. So all we've got to do is to make Tudor comfortable. We'd better put him in your room under the mosquito-netting, and send a boat off to tell Dr. Welshmere to bring his instruments."

An hour afterward, Dr. Welshmere left the patient comfortable and attended to, and went down to the beach to go on board, promising to come back to dinner. Joan and Sheldon, standing on the veranda, watched him depart.

"I'll never have it in for the missionaries again since seeing them here in the Solomons," she said, seating herself in a steamer-chair.

She looked at Sheldon and began to laugh.

"That's right," he said. "It's the way I feel, playing the fool and trying to murder a guest."

"But you haven't told me what it was all about."

"You," he answered shortly.

"Me? But you just said it wasn't."

"Oh, it wasn't the kiss." He walked over to the railing and leaned against it, facing her. "But it was about you all the same, and I may as well tell you. You remember, I warned you long ago what would happen when you wanted to become a partner in Berande. Well, all the beach is gossiping about it; and Tudor persisted in repeating the gossip to me. So you see it won't do for you to stay on here under present conditions. It would be better if you went away."

"But I don't want to go away," she objected with rueful countenance.

"A chaperone, then — "

"No, nor a chaperone."

"But you surely don't expect me to go around shooting every slanderer in the Solomons that opens his mouth?" he demanded gloomily.

"No, nor that either," she answered with quick impulsiveness. "I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll get married and put a stop to it all. There!"

He looked at her in amazement, and would have believed that she was making fun of him had it not been for the warm blood that suddenly suffused her cheeks.

"Do you mean that?" he asked unsteadily. "Why?"

"To put a stop to all the nasty gossip of the beach. That's a pretty good reason, isn't it?"

The temptation was strong enough and sudden enough to make him waver, but all the disgust came back to him that was his when he lay in the grass fighting gnats and cursing adventure, and he answered, —

"No; it is worse than no reason at all. I don't care to marry you as a matter of expedience — "

"You are the most ridiculous creature!" she broke in, with a flash of her old-time anger. "You talk love and marriage to me, very much against my wish, and go mooning around over the plantation week after week because you can't have me, and look at me when you think I'm not noticing and when all the time I'm wondering when you had your last square meal because of the hungry look in your eyes, and make eyes at my revolver-belt hanging on a nail, and fight duels about me, and all the rest — and — and now, when I say I'll marry you, you do yourself the honour of refusing me."

"You can't make me any more ridiculous than I feel," he answered, rubbing the lump on his forehead reflectively. "And if this is the accepted romantic programme — a duel over a girl, and the girl rushing into the arms of the winner — why, I shall not make a bigger ass of myself by going in for it."

"I thought you'd jump at it," she confessed, with a naïveté he could not but question, for he thought he saw a roguish gleam in her eyes.

"My conception of love must differ from yours then," he said. "I should want a woman to marry me for love of me, and not out of romantic admiration because I was lucky enough to drill a hole in a man's shoulder with smokeless powder. I tell you I am disgusted with this adventure tomfoolery and rot. I don't like it. Tudor is a sample of the adventure-kind — picking a quarrel with me and behaving like a monkey, insisting on fighting with me — 'to the death,' he said. It was like a penny dreadful."

She was biting her lip, and though her eyes were cool and level-looking as ever, the tell-tale angry red was in her cheeks.

"Of course, if you don't want to marry me — "

"But I do," he hastily interposed.

"Oh, you do — "

"But don't you see, little girl, I want you to love me," he hurried on. "Otherwise, it would be only half a marriage. I don't want you to marry me simply because by so doing a stop is put to the beach gossip, nor do I want you to marry me out of some foolish romantic notion. I shouldn't want you . . . that way."

"Oh, in that case," she said with assumed deliberateness, and he could have sworn to the roguish gleam, "in that case, since you are willing to consider my offer, let me make a few remarks. In the first place, you needn't sneer at adventure when you are living it yourself; and you were certainly living it when I found you first, down with fever on a lonely plantation with a couple of hundred wild cannibals thirsting for your life. Then I came along — "

"And what with your arriving in a gale," he broke in, "fresh from the wreck of the schooner, landing on the beach in a whale-boat full of picturesque Tahitian sailors, and coming into the bungalow with a Baden-Powell on your head, sea-boots on your feet, and a whacking big Colt's dangling on your hip — why, I am only too ready to admit that you were the quintessence of adventure."

"Very good," she cried exultantly. "It's mere simple arithmetic — the adding of your adventure and my adventure together. So that's settled, and you needn't jeer at adventure any more. Next, I don't think there was anything romantic in Tudor's attempting to kiss me, nor anything like adventure in this absurd duel. But I do think, now, that it was romantic for you to fall in love with me. And finally, and it is adding romance to romance, I think . . . I think I do love you, Dave — oh, Dave!"

The last was a sighing dove-cry as he caught her up in his arms and pressed her to him.

"But I don't love you because you played the fool to-day," she whispered on his shoulder. "White men shouldn't go around killing each other."

"Then why do you love me?" he questioned, enthralled after the manner of all lovers in the everlasting query that for ever has remained unanswered.

"I don't know — just because I do, I guess. And that's all the satisfaction you gave me when we had that man-talk. But I have been loving you for weeks — during all the time you have been so deliciously and unobtrusively jealous of Tudor."

"Yes, yes, go on," he urged breathlessly, when she paused.

"I wondered when you'd break out, and because you didn't I loved you all the more. You were like Dad, and Von. You could hold yourself in check. You didn't make a fool of yourself."

"Not until to-day," he suggested.

"Yes, and I loved you for that, too. It was about time. I began to think you were never going to bring up the subject again. And now that I have offered myself you haven't even accepted."

With both hands on her shoulders he held her at arm's-length from him and looked long into her eyes, no longer cool but seemingly pervaded with a golden flush. The lids drooped and yet bravely did not droop as she returned his gaze. Then he fondly and solemnly drew her to him.

"And how about that hearth and saddle of your own?" he asked, a moment later.

"I well-nigh won to them. The grass house is my hearth, and the *Martha* my saddle, and — and look at all the trees I've planted, to say nothing of the sweet corn. And it's all your fault anyway. I might never have loved you if you hadn't put the idea into my head."

"There's the *Nongassla* coming in around the point with her boats out," Sheldon remarked irrelevantly. "And the Commissioner is on board. He's going down to San Cristoval to investigate that missionary killing. We're in luck, I must say."

"I don't see where the luck comes in," she said dolefully. "We ought to have this evening all to ourselves just to talk things over. I've a thousand questions to ask you."

"And it wouldn't have been a man-talk either," she added.

"But my plan is better than that." He debated with himself a moment. "You see, the Commissioner is the one official in the islands who can give us a license. And — there's the luck of it — Doctor Welshmere is here to perform the ceremony. We'll get married this evening."

Joan recoiled from him in panic, tearing herself from his arms and going backward several steps. He could see that she was really frightened.

"I . . . I thought . . ." she stammered.

Then, slowly, the change came over her, and the blood flooded into her face in the same amazing blush he had seen once before that day. Her cool, level-looking eyes were no longer level-looking nor cool, but warmly drooping and just unable to meet his, as she came toward him and nestled in the circle of his arms, saying softly, almost in a whisper, —

"I am ready, Dave."

SMOKE BELLEW

First published in 1912, *Smoke Bellew* is a collection of stories connected in a novel-like form by their reappearing protagonists Kit Bellew and John Barleycorn, forming a synoptic series of short episodes.

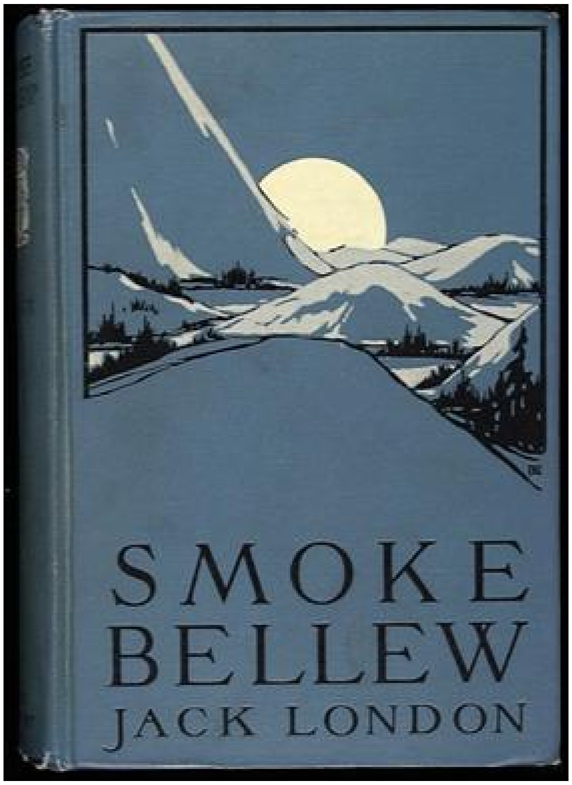
SMOKE
BELLEW
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

I. THE TASTE OF THE MEAT
II. THE MEAT
III. THE STAMPEDE TO SQUAW CREEK.
IV. SHORTY DREAMS.
V. THE MAN ON THE OTHER BANK.
VI. THE RACE FOR NUMBER THREE.
VII. THE LITTLE MAN
VIII. THE HANGING OF CULTUS GEORGE
IX. THE MISTAKE OF CREATION
X. A FLUTTER IN EGGS
XI. THE TOWN-SITE OF TRA-LEE
XII. WONDER OF WOMAN

I. THE TASTE OF THE MEAT

In the beginning he was Christopher Bellew. By the time he was at college he had become Chris Bellew. Later, in the Bohemian crowd of San Francisco, he was called Kit Bellew. And in the end he was known by no other name than Smoke Bellew. And this history of the evolution of his name is the history of his evolution. Nor would it have happened had he not had a fond mother and an iron uncle, and had he not received a letter from Gillet Bellamy.

"I have just seen a copy of The Billow," Gillet wrote from Paris. "Of course O'Hara will succeed with it. But he's missing some tricks." Here followed details in the improvement of the budding society weekly. "Go down and see him. Let him think they're your own suggestions. Don't let him know they're from me. If you do, he'll make me Paris correspondent, which I can't afford, because I'm getting real money for my stuff from the big magazines. Above all, don't forget to make him fire that dub who's doing the musical and art criticism. Another thing. San Francisco has always had a literature of her own. But she hasn't any now. Tell him to kick around and get some gink to turn out a live serial, and to put into it the real romance and glamour and colour of San Francisco."

And down to the office of The Billow went Kit Bellew faithfully to instruct. O'Hara listened. O'Hara debated. O'Hara agreed. O'Hara fired the dub who wrote criticisms. Further, O'Hara had a way with him — the very way that was feared by Gillet in distant Paris. When O'Hara wanted anything, no friend could deny him. He was sweetly and compellingly irresistible. Before Kit Bellew could escape from the office, he had become an associate editor, had agreed to write weekly columns of criticism till some decent pen was found, and had pledged himself to write a weekly instalment of ten thousand words on the San Francisco serial — and all this without pay. The Billow wasn't paying yet, O'Hara explained; and just as convincingly had he exposited that there was only one man in San Francisco capable of writing the serial and that man Kit Bellew.

"Oh, Lord, I'm the gink!" Kit had groaned to himself afterward on the narrow stairway.

And thereat had begun his servitude to O'Hara and the insatiable columns of The Billow. Week after week he held down an office chair, stood off creditors, wrangled with printers, and turned out twenty-five thousand words of all sorts. Nor did his labours lighten. The Billow was ambitious. It went in for illustration. The processes were expensive. It never had any money to pay Kit Bellew, and by the same token it was unable to pay for any additions to the office staff.

“This is what comes of being a good fellow,” Kit grumbled one day.

“Thank God for good fellows then,” O’Hara cried, with tears in his eyes as he gripped Kit’s hand. “You’re all that’s saved me, Kit. But for you I’d have gone bust. Just a little longer, old man, and things will be easier.”

“Never,” was Kit’s plaint. “I see my fate clearly. I shall be here always.”

A little later he thought he saw his way out. Watching his chance, in O’Hara’s presence, he fell over a chair. A few minutes afterwards he bumped into the corner of the desk, and, with fumbling fingers, capsized a paste pot.

“Out late?” O’Hara queried.

Kit brushed his eyes with his hands and peered about him anxiously before replying.

“No, it’s not that. It’s my eyes. They seem to be going back on me, that’s all.”

For several days he continued to fall over and bump into the office furniture. But O’Hara’s heart was not softened.

“I tell you what, Kit,” he said one day, “you’ve got to see an oculist. There’s Doctor Hassdapple. He’s a crackerjack. And it won’t cost you anything. We can get it for advertizing. I’ll see him myself.”

And, true to his word, he dispatched Kit to the oculist.

“There’s nothing the matter with your eyes,” was the doctor’s verdict, after a lengthy examination. “In fact, your eyes are magnificent — a pair in a million.”

“Don’t tell O’Hara,” Kit pleaded. “And give me a pair of black glasses.”

The result of this was that O’Hara sympathized and talked glowingly of the time when The Billow would be on its feet.

Luckily for Kit Bellew, he had his own income. Small it was, compared with some, yet it was large enough to enable him to belong to several clubs and maintain a studio in the Latin Quarter. In point of fact, since his associate-editorship, his expenses had decreased prodigiously. He had no time to spend money. He never saw the studio any more, nor entertained the local Bohemians with his famous chafing-dish suppers. Yet he was always broke, for The Billow, in perennial distress, absorbed his cash as well as his brains. There were the illustrators, who periodically refused to illustrate, the printers, who periodically refused to print, and the office-boy, who frequently refused to officiate. At such times O'Hara looked at Kit, and Kit did the rest.

When the steamship Excelsior arrived from Alaska, bringing the news of the Klondike strike that set the country mad, Kit made a purely frivolous proposition.

"Look here, O'Hara," he said. "This gold rush is going to be big — the days of '49 over again. Suppose I cover it for The Billow? I'll pay my own expenses."

O'Hara shook his head.

"Can't spare you from the office, Kit. Then there's that serial. Besides, I saw Jackson not an hour ago. He's starting for the Klondike to-morrow, and he's agreed to send a weekly letter and photos. I wouldn't let him get away till he promised. And the beauty of it is, that it doesn't cost us anything."

The next Kit heard of the Klondike was when he dropped into the club that afternoon, and, in an alcove off the library, encountered his uncle.

"Hello, avuncular relative," Kit greeted, sliding into a leather chair and spreading out his legs. "Won't you join me?"

He ordered a cocktail, but the uncle contented himself with the thin native claret he invariably drank. He glanced with irritated disapproval at the cocktail, and on to his nephew's face. Kit saw a lecture gathering.

"I've only a minute," he announced hastily. "I've got to run and take in that Keith exhibition at Ellery's and do half a column on it."

"What's the matter with you?" the other demanded. "You're pale. You're a wreck."

Kit's only answer was a groan.

"I'll have the pleasure of burying you, I can see that."

Kit shook his head sadly.

"No destroying worm, thank you. Cremation for mine."

John Bellew came of the old hard and hardy stock that had crossed the plains by ox-team in the fifties, and in him was this same hardness and the hardness of a childhood spent in the conquering of a new land.

"You're not living right, Christopher. I'm ashamed of you."

"Primrose path, eh?" Kit chuckled.

The older man shrugged his shoulders.

“Shake not your gory locks at me, avuncular. I wish it were the primrose path. But that’s all cut out. I have no time.”

“Then what in — ?”

“Overwork.”

John Bellew laughed harshly and incredulously.

“Honest.”

Again came the laughter.

“Men are the products of their environment,” Kit proclaimed, pointing at the other’s glass. “Your mirth is thin and bitter as your drink.”

“Overwork!” was the sneer. “You never earned a cent in your life.”

“You bet I have — only I never got it. I’m earning five hundred a week right now, and doing four men’s work.”

“Pictures that won’t sell? Or — er — fancy work of some sort? Can you swim?”

“I used to.”

“Sit a horse?”

“I have essayed that adventure.”

John Bellew snorted his disgust. “I’m glad your father didn’t live to see you in all the glory of your gracelessness,” he said. “Your father was a man, every inch of him. Do you get it? A man. I think he’d have whaled all this musical and artistic tom foolery out of you.”

“Alas! these degenerate days,” Kit sighed.

“I could understand it, and tolerate it,” the other went on savagely, “if you succeeded at it. You’ve never earned a cent in your life, nor done a tap of man’s work.”

“Etchings, and pictures, and fans,” Kit contributed unsoothingly.

“You’re a dabbler and a failure. What pictures have you painted? Dinky water-colours and nightmare posters. You’ve never had one exhibited, even here in San Francisco — ”

“Ah, you forget. There is one in the jinks room of this very club.”

“A gross cartoon. Music? Your dear fool of a mother spent hundreds on lessons. You’ve dabbled and failed. You’ve never even earned a five-dollar piece by accompanying some one at a concert. Your songs? — rag-time rot that’s never printed and that’s sung only by a pack of fake Bohemians.”

“I had a book published once — those sonnets, you remember,” Kit interposed meekly.

“What did it cost you?”

"Only a couple of hundred."

"Any other achievements?"

"I had a forest play acted at the summer jinks."

"What did you get for it?"

"Glory."

"And you used to swim, and you have essayed to sit a horse!" John Bellew set his glass down with unnecessary violence. "What earthly good are you anyway? You were well put up, yet even at university you didn't play football. You didn't row. You didn't — "

"I boxed and fenced — some."

"When did you box last?"

"Not since, but I was considered an excellent judge of time and distance, only I was — er — "

"Go on."

"Considered desultory."

"Lazy, you mean."

"I always imagined it was an euphemism."

"My father, sir, your grandfather, old Isaac Bellew, killed a man with a blow of his fist when he was sixty-nine years old."

"The man?"

"No, your — you graceless scamp! But you'll never kill a mosquito at sixty-nine."

"The times have changed, oh, my avuncular! They send men to prison for homicide now."

"Your father rode one hundred and eighty-five miles, without sleeping, and killed three horses."

"Had he lived to-day, he'd have snored over the course in a Pullman."

The older man was on the verge of choking with wrath, but swallowed it down and managed to articulate:

"How old are you?"

"I have reason to believe — "

"I know. Twenty-seven. You finished college at twenty-two. You've dabbled and played and frilled for five years. Before God and man, of what use are you? When I was your age I had one suit of underclothes. I was riding with the cattle in Coluso. I was hard as rocks, and I could sleep on a rock. I lived on jerked beef and bear-meat. I am a better man physically right now than you are. You weigh about one hundred and sixty-five. I can throw you right now, or thrash you with my fists."

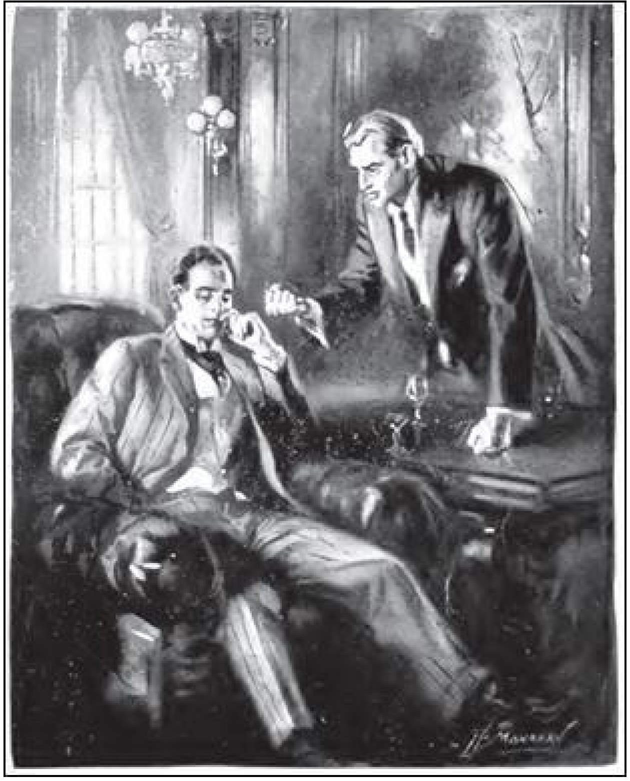

"It doesn't take a physical prodigy to mop up cocktails or pink tea," Kit murmured deprecatingly. "Don't you see, my avuncular, the times have changed. Besides, I wasn't brought up right. My dear fool of a mother — "

John Bellew started angrily.

" — As you described her, was too good to me; kept me in cotton wool and all the rest. Now, if when I was a youngster I had taken some of those intensely masculine vacations you go in for — I wonder why you didn't invite me sometimes? You took Hal and Robbie all over the Sierras and on that Mexico trip."

"I guess you were too Lord-Fauntleroyish."

"Your fault, avuncular, and my dear — er — mother's. How was I to know the hard? I was only a chee-ild. What was there left but etchings and pictures and fans? Was it my fault that I never had to sweat?"

The older man looked at his nephew with unconcealed disgust. He had no patience with levity from the lips of softness.

"Well, I'm going to take another one of those what-you-call masculine vacations. Suppose I asked you to come along?"

"Rather belated, I must say. Where is it?"

“Hal and Robert are going in to Klondike, and I’m going to see them across the Pass and down to the Lakes, then return — ”

He got no further, for the young man had sprung forward and gripped his hand.

“My preserver!”

John Bellew was immediately suspicious. He had not dreamed the invitation would be accepted.

“You don’t mean it?” he said.

“When do we start?”

“It will be a hard trip. You’ll be in the way.”

“No, I won’t. I’ll work. I’ve learned to work since I went on The Billow.”

“Each man has to take a year’s supplies in with him. There’ll be such a jam the Indian packers won’t be able to handle it. Hal and Robert will have to pack their outfits across themselves. That’s what I’m going along for — to help them pack. If you come you’ll have to do the same.”

“Watch me.”

“You can’t pack,” was the objection.

“When do we start?”

“To-morrow.”

“You needn’t take it to yourself that your lecture on the hard has done it,” Kit said, at parting. “I just had to get away, somewhere, anywhere, from O’Hara.”

“Who is O’Hara? A Jap?”

“No; he’s an Irishman, and a slave-driver, and my best friend. He’s the editor and proprietor and all-round big squeeze of The Billow. What he says goes. He can make ghosts walk.”

That night Kit Bellew wrote a note to O’Hara. “It’s only a several weeks’ vacation,” he explained. “You’ll have to get some gink to dope out instalments for that serial. Sorry, old man, but my health demands it. I’ll kick in twice as hard when I get back.”

Kit Bellew landed through the madness of the Dyea beach, congested with thousand-pound outfits of thousands of men. This immense mass of luggage and food, flung ashore in mountains by the steamers, was beginning slowly to dribble up the Dyea Valley and across Chilkoot. It was a portage of twenty-eight miles, and could be accomplished only on the backs of men. Despite the fact that the Indian packers had jumped the freight from eight cents a pound to forty, they were swamped with the work, and it was plain that winter would catch the major portion of the outfits on the wrong side of the divide.

Tenderest of the tenderfeet was Kit. Like many hundreds of others he carried a big revolver swung on a cartridge-belt. Of this, his uncle, filled with memories of old lawless days, was likewise guilty. But Kit Bellew was romantic. He was fascinated by the froth and sparkle of the gold rush, and viewed its life and movement with an artist's eye. He did not take it seriously. As he said on the steamer, it was not his funeral. He was merely on a vacation, and intended to peep over the top of the pass for a "look see" and then to return.

Leaving his party on the sand to wait for the putting ashore of the freight, he strolled up the beach toward the old trading-post. He did not swagger, though he noticed that many of the be-revolvered individuals did. A strapping, six-foot Indian passed him, carrying an unusually large pack. Kit swung in behind, admiring the splendid calves of the man, and the grace and ease with which he moved along under his burden. The Indian dropped his pack on the scales in front of the post, and Kit joined the group of admiring gold-rushers who surrounded him. The pack weighed one hundred and twenty-five pounds, which fact was uttered back and forth in tones of awe. It was going some, Kit decided, and he wondered if he could lift such a weight, much less walk off with it.

"Going to Lake Linderman with it, old man?" he asked.

The Indian, swelling with pride, grunted an affirmative.

"How much you make that one pack?"

"Fifty dollar."

Here Kit slid out of the conversation. A young woman, standing in the doorway, had caught his eye. Unlike other women landing from the steamers, she was neither short-skirted nor bloomer-clad. She was dressed as any woman travelling anywhere would be dressed. What struck him was the justness of her being there, a feeling that somehow she belonged. Moreover, she was young and pretty. The bright beauty and colour of her oval face held him, and he looked over-long — looked till she resented, and her own eyes, long-lashed and dark, met his in cool survey.

From his face they travelled in evident amusement down to the big revolver at his thigh. Then her eyes came back to his, and in them was amused contempt. It struck him like a blow. She turned to the man beside her and indicated Kit. The man glanced him over with the same amused contempt.

“Chechako,” the girl said.

The man, who looked like a tramp in his cheap overalls and dilapidated woollen jacket, grinned dryly, and Kit felt withered, though he knew not why. But anyway she was an unusually pretty girl, he decided, as the two moved off. He noted the way of her walk, and recorded the judgment that he would recognize it over the lapse of a thousand years.

“Did you see that man with the girl?” Kit’s neighbor asked him excitedly. “Know who he is?”

Kit shook his head.

“Cariboo Charley. He was just pointed out to me. He struck it big on Klondike. Old-timer. Been on the Yukon a dozen years. He’s just come out.”

“What’s ‘chechako’ mean?” Kit asked.

“You’re one; I’m one,” was the answer.

“Maybe I am, but you’ve got to search me. What does it mean?”

“Tenderfoot.”

On his way back to the beach, Kit turned the phrase over and over. It rankled to be called tenderfoot by a slender chit of a woman.

Going into a corner among the heaps of freight, his mind still filled with the vision of the Indian with the redoubtable pack, Kit essayed to learn his own strength. He picked out a sack of flour which he knew weighed an even hundred pounds. He stepped astride it, reached down, and strove to get it on his shoulder. His first conclusion was that one hundred pounds were real heavy. His next was that his back was weak. His third was an oath, and it occurred at the end of five futile minutes, when he collapsed on top of the burden with which he was wrestling. He mopped his forehead, and across a heap of grub-sacks saw John Bellew gazing at him, wintry amusement in his eyes.

“God!” proclaimed that apostle of the hard. “Out of our loins has come a race of weaklings. When I was sixteen I toyed with things like that.”

“You forget, avuncular,” Kit retorted, “that I wasn’t raised on bear-meat.”

“And I’ll toy with it when I’m sixty.”

“You’ve got to show me.”

John Bellew did. He was forty-eight, but he bent over the sack, applied a tentative, shifting grip that balanced it, and, with a quick heave, stood erect, the somersaulted sack of flour on his shoulder.

"Knack, my boy, knack — and a spine."

Kit took off his hat reverently.

"You're a wonder, avuncular, a shining wonder. D'ye think I can learn the knack?"

John Bellew shrugged his shoulders. "You'll be hitting the back trail before we get started."

"Never you fear," Kit groaned. "There's O'Hara, the roaring lion, down there. I'm not going back till I have to."

Kit's first pack was a success. Up to Finnegan's Crossing they had managed to get Indians to carry the twenty-five-hundred-pound outfit. From that point their own backs must do the work. They planned to move forward at the rate of a mile a day. It looked easy — on paper. Since John Bellew was to stay in camp and do the cooking, he would be unable to make more than an occasional pack; so to each of the three young men fell the task of carrying eight hundred pounds one mile each day. If they made fifty-pound packs, it meant a daily walk of sixteen miles loaded and of fifteen miles light — "Because we don't back-trip the last time," Kit explained the pleasant discovery. Eighty-pound packs meant nineteen miles travel each day; and hundred-pound packs meant only fifteen miles.

"I don't like walking," said Kit. "Therefore I shall carry one hundred pounds." He caught the grin of incredulity on his uncle's face, and added hastily: "Of course I shall work up to it. A fellow's got to learn the ropes and tricks. I'll start with fifty."

He did, and ambled gaily along the trail. He dropped the sack at the next camp-site and ambled back. It was easier than he had thought. But two miles had rubbed off the velvet of his strength and exposed the underlying softness. His second pack was sixty-five pounds. It was more difficult, and he no longer ambled. Several times, following the custom of all packers, he sat down on the ground, resting the pack behind him on a rock or stump. With the third pack he became bold. He fastened the straps to a ninety-five-pound sack of beans and started. At the end of a hundred yards he felt that he must collapse. He sat down and mopped his face.

"Short hauls and short rests," he muttered. "That's the trick."

Sometimes he did not make a hundred yards, and each time he struggled to his feet for another short haul the pack became undeniably heavier. He panted for breath, and the sweat streamed from him. Before he had covered a quarter of a mile he stripped off his woollen shirt and hung it on a tree. A little later he discarded his hat. At the end of half a mile he decided he was finished. He had never exerted himself so in his life, and he knew that he was finished. As he sat and panted, his gaze fell upon the big revolver and the heavy cartridge-belt.

"Ten pounds of junk!" he sneered, as he unbuckled it.

He did not bother to hang it on a tree, but flung it into the underbush. And as the steady tide of packers flowed by him, up trail and down, he noted that the other tenderfeet were beginning to shed their shooting-irons.

His short hauls decreased. At times a hundred feet was all he could stagger, and then the ominous pounding of his heart against his eardrums and the sickening totteriness of his knees compelled him to rest. And his rests grew longer. But his mind was busy. It was a twenty-eight-mile portage, which represented as many days, and this, by all accounts, was the easiest part of it. "Wait till you get to Chilkoot," others told him as they rested and talked, "where you climb with hands and feet."

"They ain't going to be no Chilkoot," was his answer. "Not for me. Long before that I'll be at peace in my little couch beneath the moss."

A slip and a violent, wrenching effort at recovery frightened him. He felt that everything inside him had been torn asunder.

"If ever I fall down with this on my back, I'm a goner," he told another packer.

"That's nothing," came the answer. "Wait till you hit the Canyon. You'll have to cross a raging torrent on a sixty-foot pine-tree. No guide-ropes, nothing, and the water boiling at the sag of the log to your knees. If you fall with a pack on your back, there's no getting out of the straps. You just stay there and drown."

"Sounds good to me," he retorted; and out of the depths of his exhaustion he almost meant it.

"They drown three or four a day there," the man assured him. "I helped fish a German out of there. He had four thousand in greenbacks on him."

"Cheerful, I must say," said Kit, battling his way to his feet and tottering on.

He and the sack of beans became a perambulating tragedy. It reminded him of the old man of the sea who sat on Sinbad's neck. And this was one of those intensely masculine vacations, he meditated. Compared with it, the servitude to O'Hara was sweet. Again and again he was nearly seduced by the thought of abandoning the sack of beans in the brush and of sneaking around the camp to the beach and catching a steamer for civilization.

But he didn't. Somewhere in him was the strain of the hard, and he repeated over and over to himself that what other men could do, he could. It became a nightmare chant, and he gibbered it to those that passed him on the trail. At other times, resting, he watched and envied the stolid, mule-footed Indians that plodded by under heavier packs. They never seemed to rest, but went on and on with a steadiness and certitude that were to him appalling.

He sat and cursed — he had no breath for it when under way — and fought the temptation to sneak back to San Francisco. Before the mile pack was ended he ceased cursing and took to crying. The tears were tears of exhaustion and of disgust with self. If ever a man was a wreck, he was. As the end of the pack came in sight, he strained himself in desperation, gained the camp-site, and pitched forward on his face, the beans on his back. It did not kill him, but he lay for fifteen minutes before he could summon sufficient shreds of strength to release himself from the straps. Then he became deathly sick, and was so found by Robbie, who had similar troubles of his own. It was this sickness of Robbie that braced Kit up.

"What other men can do, we can do," Kit told Robbie, though down in his heart he wondered whether or not he was bluffing.

"And I am twenty-seven years old and a man," he privately assured himself many times in the days that followed. There was need for it. At the end of a week, though he had succeeded in moving his eight hundred pounds forward a mile a day, he had lost fifteen pounds of his own weight. His face was lean and haggard. All resilience had gone out of his body and mind. He no longer walked, but plodded. And on the back-trips, travelling light, his feet dragged almost as much as when he was loaded.

He had become a work animal. He fell asleep over his food, and his sleep was heavy and beastly, save when he was aroused, screaming with agony, by the cramps in his legs. Every part of him ached. He tramped on raw blisters; yet even this was easier than the fearful bruising his feet received on the water-rounded rocks of the Dyea Flats, across which the trail led for two miles. These two miles represented thirty-eight miles of travelling. He washed his face once a day. His nails, torn and broken and afflicted with hangnails, were never cleaned. His shoulders and chest, galled by the pack-straps, made him think, and for the first time with understanding, of the horses he had seen on city streets.

One ordeal that nearly destroyed him at first had been the food. The extraordinary amount of work demanded extraordinary stoking, and his stomach was unaccustomed to great quantities of bacon and of the coarse, highly poisonous brown beans. As a result, his stomach went back on him, and for several days the pain and irritation of it and of starvation nearly broke him down. And then came the day of joy when he could eat like a ravenous animal, and, wolf-eyed, ask for more.

When they had moved the outfit across the foot-logs at the mouth of the Canyon, they made a change in their plans. Word had come across the Pass that at Lake Linderman the last available trees for building boats were being cut. The two cousins, with tools, whipsaw, blankets, and grub on their backs, went on, leaving Kit and his uncle to hustle along the outfit. John Bellew now shared the cooking with Kit, and both packed shoulder to shoulder. Time was flying, and on the peaks the first snow was falling. To be caught on the wrong side of the Pass meant a delay of nearly a year. The older man put his iron back under a hundred pounds. Kit was shocked, but he gritted his teeth and fastened his own straps to a hundred pounds. It hurt, but he had learned the knack, and his body, purged of all softness and fat, was beginning to harden up with lean and bitter muscle. Also, he observed and devised. He took note of the head-straps worn by the Indians and manufactured one for himself, which he used in addition to the shoulder-straps. It made things easier, so that he began the practice of piling any light, cumbersome piece of luggage on top. Thus, he was soon able to bend along with a hundred pounds in the straps, fifteen or twenty more lying loosely on top of the pack and against his neck, an axe or a pair of oars in one hand, and in the other the nested cooking-pails of the camp.

But work as they would, the toil increased. The trail grew more rugged; their packs grew heavier; and each day saw the snow-line dropping down the mountains, while freight jumped to sixty cents. No word came from the cousins beyond, so they knew they must be at work chopping down the standing trees and whipsawing them into boat-planks. John Bellew grew anxious. Capturing a bunch of Indians back-tripping from Lake Linderman, he persuaded them to put their straps on the outfit. They charged thirty cents a pound to carry it to the summit of Chilkoot, and it nearly broke him. As it was, some four hundred pounds of clothes-bags and camp outfit were not handled. He remained behind to move it along, dispatching Kit with the Indians. At the summit Kit was to remain, slowly moving his ton until overtaken by the four hundred pounds with which his uncle guaranteed to catch him.

Kit plodded along the trail with his Indian packers. In recognition of the fact that it was to be a long pack, straight to the top of Chilkoot, his own load was only eighty pounds. The Indians plodded under their loads, but it was a quicker gait than he had practised. Yet he felt no apprehension, and by now had come to deem himself almost the equal of an Indian.

At the end of a quarter of a mile he desired to rest. But the Indians kept on. He stayed with them, and kept his place in the line. At the half-mile he was convinced that he was incapable of another step, yet he gritted his teeth, kept his place, and at the end of the mile was amazed that he was still alive. Then, in some strange way, came the thing called second wind, and the next mile was almost easier than the first. The third mile nearly killed him, but, though half delirious with pain and fatigue, he never whimpered. And then, when he felt he must surely faint, came the rest. Instead of sitting in the straps, as was the custom of the white packers, the Indians slipped out of the shoulder- and head-straps and lay at ease, talking and smoking. A full half-hour passed before they made another start. To Kit's surprise he found himself a fresh man, and "long hauls and long rests" became his newest motto.

The pitch of Chilkoot was all he had heard of it, and many were the occasions when he climbed with hands as well as feet. But when he reached the crest of the divide in the thick of a driving snow-squall, it was in the company of his Indians, and his secret pride was that he had come through with them and never squealed and never lagged. To be almost as good as an Indian was a new ambition to cherish.

When he had paid off the Indians and seen them depart, a stormy darkness was falling, and he was left alone, a thousand feet above timber-line, on the backbone of a mountain. Wet to the waist, famished and exhausted, he would have given a year's income for a fire and a cup of coffee. Instead, he ate half a dozen cold flapjacks and crawled into the folds of the partly unrolled tent. As he dozed off he had time for only one fleeting thought, and he grinned with vicious pleasure at the picture of John Bellew in the days to follow, masculinely back-tripping his four hundred pounds up

Chilcoot. As for himself, even though burdened with two thousand pounds, he was bound down the hill.

In the morning, stiff from his labours and numb with the frost, he rolled out of the canvas, ate a couple of pounds of uncooked bacon, buckled the straps on a hundred pounds, and went down the rocky way. Several hundred yards beneath, the trail led across a small glacier and down to Crater Lake. Other men packed across the glacier. All that day he dropped his packs at the glacier's upper edge, and, by virtue of the shortness of the pack, he put his straps on one hundred and fifty pounds each load. His astonishment at being able to do it never abated. For two dollars he bought from an Indian three leathery sea-biscuits, and out of these, and a huge quantity of raw bacon, made several meals. Unwashed, unwarmed, his clothing wet with sweat, he slept another night in the canvas.

In the early morning he spread a tarpaulin on the ice, loaded it with three-quarters of a ton, and started to pull. Where the pitch of the glacier accelerated, his load likewise accelerated, overran him, scooped him in on top, and ran away with him.

A hundred packers, bending under their loads, stopped to watch him. He yelled frantic warnings, and those in his path stumbled and staggered clear. Below, on the lower edge of the glacier, was pitched a small tent, which seemed leaping toward him, so rapidly did it grow larger. He left the beaten track where the packers' trail swerved to the left, and struck a patch of fresh snow. This arose about him in frosty smoke, while it reduced his speed. He saw the tent the instant he struck it, carrying away the corner guys, bursting in the front flaps, and fetching up inside, still on top of the tarpaulin and in the midst of his grub-sacks. The tent rocked drunkenly, and in the frosty vapour he found himself face to face with a startled young woman who was sitting up in her blankets — the very one who had called him a tenderfoot at Dyea.

"Did you see my smoke?" he queried cheerfully.

She regarded him with disapproval.

"Talk about your magic carpets!" he went on.

"Do you mind removing that sack from my foot?" she said coldly.

He looked, and lifted his weight quickly.

"It wasn't a sack. It was my elbow. Pardon me."

The information did not perturb her, and her coolness was a challenge.

"It was a mercy you did not overturn the stove," she said.

He followed her glance and saw a sheet-iron stove and a coffee-pot, attended by a young squaw. He sniffed the coffee and looked back to the girl.

"I'm a chechako," he said.

Her bored expression told him that he was stating the obvious. But he was unabashed.

"I've shed my shooting-irons," he added.

Then she recognized him, and her eyes lighted. "I never thought you'd get this far," she informed him.

Again, and greedily, he sniffed the air. "As I live, coffee!" He turned and directly addressed her: "I'll give you my little finger — cut it right off now; I'll do anything; I'll be your slave for a year and a day or any other old time, if you'll give me a cup out of that pot."

And over the coffee he gave his name and learned hers — Joy Gastell. Also, he learned that she was an old-timer in the country. She had been born in a trading-post on the Great Slave, and as a child had crossed the Rockies with her father and come down to the Yukon. She was going in, she said, with her father, who had been delayed by business in Seattle, and who had then been wrecked on the ill-fated Chanter and carried back to Puget Sound by the rescuing steamer.

In view of the fact that she was still in her blankets, he did not make it a long conversation, and, heroically declining a second cup of coffee, he removed himself and his heaped and shifted baggage from her tent. Further, he took several conclusions away with him: she had a fetching name and fetching eyes; could not be more than twenty, or twenty-one or -two; her father must be French; she had a will of her own and temperament to burn; and she had been educated elsewhere than on the frontier.

Over the ice-scoured rocks and above the timber-line, the trail ran around Crater Lake and gained the rocky defile that led toward Happy Camp and the first scrub-pines. To pack his heavy outfit around would take days of heart-breaking toil. On the lake was a canvas boat employed in freighting. Two trips with it, in two hours, would see him and his ton across. But he was broke, and the ferryman charged forty dollars a ton.

"You've got a gold-mine, my friend, in that dinky boat," Kit said to the ferryman. "Do you want another gold-mine?"

"Show me," was the answer.

"I'll sell it to you for the price of ferrying my outfit. It's an idea, not patented, and you can jump the deal as soon as I tell you it. Are you game?"

The ferryman said he was, and Kit liked his looks.

"Very well. You see that glacier. Take a pick-axe and wade into it. In a day you can have a decent groove from top to bottom. See the point? The Chilkoot and Crater Lake Consolidated Chute Corporation, Limited. You can charge fifty cents a hundred, get a hundred tons a day, and have no work to do but collect the coin."

Two hours later, Kit's ton was across the lake, and he had gained three days on himself. And when John Bellew overtook him, he was well along toward Deep Lake, another volcanic pit filled with glacial water.

The last pack, from Long Lake to Linderman, was three miles, and the trail, if trail it could be called, rose up over a thousand-foot hogback, dropped down a scramble of slippery rocks, and crossed a wide stretch of swamp. John Bellew remonstrated when he saw Kit arise with a hundred pounds in the straps and pick up a fifty-pound sack of flour and place it on top of the pack against the back of his neck.

"Come on, you chunk of the hard," Kit retorted. "Kick in on your bear-meat fodder and your one suit of underclothes."

But John Bellew shook his head. "I'm afraid I'm getting old, Christopher."

"You're only forty-eight. Do you realize that my grandfather, sir, your father, old Isaac Bellew, killed a man with his fist when he was sixty-nine years old?"

John Bellew grinned and swallowed his medicine.

"Avuncular, I want to tell you something important. I was raised a Lord Fauntleroy, but I can outpack you, outwalk you, put you on your back, or lick you with my fists right now."

John Bellew thrust out his hand and spoke solemnly. "Christopher, my boy, I believe you can do it. I believe you can do it with that pack on your back at the same time. You've made good, boy, though it's too unthinkable to believe."

Kit made the round trip of the last pack four times a day, which is to say that he daily covered twenty-four miles of mountain climbing, twelve miles of it under one hundred and fifty pounds. He was proud, hard, and tired, but in splendid physical condition. He ate and slept as he had never eaten and slept in his life, and as the end of the work came in sight, he was almost half sorry.

One problem bothered him. He had learned that he could fall with a hundred-weight on his back and survive; but he was confident, if he fell with that additional fifty pounds across the back of his neck, that it would break it clean. Each trail through the swamp was quickly churned bottomless by the thousands of packers, who were compelled continually to make new trails. It was while pioneering such a new trail, that he solved the problem of the extra fifty.

The soft, lush surface gave way under him; he floundered, and pitched forward on his face. The fifty pounds crushed his face in the mud and went clear without snapping his neck. With the remaining hundred pounds on his back, he arose on hands and knees. But he got no farther. One arm sank to the shoulder, pillowing his cheek in the slush. As he drew this arm clear, the other sank to the shoulder. In this position it was impossible to slip the straps, and the hundred-weight on his back would not let him rise. On hands and knees, sinking first one arm and then the other, he made an effort to crawl to where the small sack of flour had fallen. But he exhausted himself without advancing, and so churned and broke the grass surface, that a tiny pool of water began to form in perilous proximity to his mouth and nose.

He tried to throw himself on his back with the pack underneath, but this resulted in sinking both arms to the shoulders and gave him a foretaste of drowning. With exquisite patience, he slowly withdrew one sucking arm and then the other and rested them flat on the surface for the support of his chin. Then he began to call for help. After a time he heard the sound of feet sucking through the mud as some one advanced from behind.

“Lend a hand, friend,” he said. “Throw out a life-line or something.”

It was a woman’s voice that answered, and he recognized it.

“If you’ll unbuckle the straps I can get up.”

The hundred pounds rolled into the mud with a soggy noise, and he slowly gained his feet.

“A pretty predicament,” Miss Gastell laughed, at sight of his mud-covered face.

“Not at all,” he replied airily. “My favourite physical-exercise stunt. Try it some time. It’s great for the pectoral muscles and the spine.”

He wiped his face, flinging the slush from his hand with a snappy jerk.

“Oh!” she cried in recognition. “It’s Mr. — ah — Mr. Smoke Bellew.”

"I thank you gravely for your timely rescue and for that name," he answered. "I have been doubly baptized. Henceforth I shall insist always on being called Smoke Bellew. It is a strong name, and not without significance."

He paused, and then voice and expression became suddenly fierce.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" he demanded. "I'm going back to the States. I am going to get married. I am going to raise a large family of children. And then, as the evening shadows fall, I shall gather those children about me and relate the sufferings and hardships I endured on the Chilkoot Trail. And if they don't cry — I repeat, if they don't cry, I'll lambaste the stuffing out of them."

The arctic winter came down apace. Snow that had come to stay lay six inches on the ground, and the ice was forming in quiet ponds, despite the fierce gales that blew. It was in the late afternoon, during a lull in such a gale, that Kit and John Bellew helped the cousins load the boat and watched it disappear down the lake in a snow-squall.

"And now a night's sleep and an early start in the morning," said John Bellew. "If we aren't storm-bound at the summit we'll make Dyea to-morrow night, and if we have luck in catching a steamer we'll be in San Francisco in a week."

"Enjoyed your vacation?" Kit asked absently.

Their camp for that last night at Linderman was a melancholy remnant. Everything of use, including the tent, had been taken by the cousins. A tattered tarpaulin, stretched as a wind-break, partially sheltered them from the driving snow. Supper they cooked on an open fire in a couple of battered and discarded camp utensils. All that was left them were their blankets, and food for several meals.

From the moment of the departure of the boat, Kit had become absent and restless. His uncle noticed his condition, and attributed it to the fact that the end of the hard toil had come. Only once during supper did Kit speak.

"Avuncular," he said, relevant of nothing, "after this, I wish you'd call me Smoke. I've made some smoke on this trail, haven't I?"

A few minutes later he wandered away in the direction of the village of tents that sheltered the gold-rushers who were still packing or building their boats. He was gone several hours, and when he returned and slipped into his blankets John Bellew was asleep.

In the darkness of a gale-driven morning, Kit crawled out, built a fire in his stocking feet, by which he thawed out his frozen shoes, then boiled coffee and fried bacon. It was a chilly, miserable meal. As soon as it was finished, they strapped their blankets. As John Bellew turned to lead the way toward the Chilcoot Trail, Kit held out his hand.

"Good-bye, avuncular," he said.

John Bellew looked at him and swore in his surprise.

"Don't forget, my name's Smoke," Kit chided.

"But what are you going to do?"

Kit waved his hand in a general direction northward over the storm-lashed lake.

"What's the good of turning back after getting this far?" he asked. "Besides, I've got my taste of meat, and I like it. I'm going on."

"You're broke," protested John Bellew. "You have no outfit."

"I've got a job. Behold your nephew, Christopher Smoke Bellew! He's got a job! He's a gentleman's man! He's got a job at a hundred and fifty per month and grub. He's going down to Dawson with a couple of dudes and another gentleman's man — camp-cook, boatman, and general all-around hustler. And O'Hara and The Billow can go to the devil. Good-bye."

But John Bellew was dazed, and could only mutter: "I don't understand."

"They say the baldface grizzlies are thick in the Yukon Basin," Kit explained. "Well, I've got only one suit of underclothes, and I'm going after the bear-meat, that's all."

II. THE MEAT

Half the time the wind blew a gale, and Smoke Bellew staggered against it along the beach. In the gray of dawn a dozen boats were being loaded with the precious outfits packed across Chilkoot. They were clumsy, home-made boats, put together by men who were not boat-builders, out of planks they had sawed by hand from green spruce-trees. One boat, already loaded, was just starting, and Kit paused to watch.

The wind, which was fair down the lake, here blew in squarely on the beach, kicking up a nasty sea in the shallows. The men of the departing boat waded in high rubber boots as they shoved it out toward deeper water. Twice they did this. Clambering aboard and failing to row clear, the boat was swept back and grounded. Kit noticed that the spray on the sides of the boat quickly turned to ice. The third attempt was a partial success. The last two men to climb in were wet to their waists, but the boat was afloat. They struggled awkwardly at the heavy oars, and slowly worked off shore. Then they hoisted a sail made of blankets, had it carry away in a gust, and were swept a third time back on the freezing beach.

Kit grinned to himself and went on. This was what he must expect to encounter, for he, too, in his new role of gentleman's man, was to start from the beach in a similar boat that very day.

Everywhere men were at work, and at work desperately, for the closing down of winter was so imminent that it was a gamble whether or not they would get across the great chain of lakes before the freeze-up. Yet, when Kit arrived at the tent of Messrs. Sprague and Stine, he did not find them stirring.

By a fire, under the shelter of a tarpaulin, squatted a short, thick man smoking a brown-paper cigarette.

"Hello," he said. "Are you Mister Sprague's new man?"

As Kit nodded, he thought he had noted a shade of emphasis on the MISTER and the MAN, and he was sure of a hint of a twinkle in the corner of the eye.

"Well, I'm Doc Stine's man," the other went on. "I'm five feet two inches long, and my name's Shorty, Jack Short for short, and sometimes known as Johnny-on-the-Spot."

Kit put out his hand and shook. “Were you raised on bear-meat?” he queried.

“Sure,” was the answer; “though my first feedin’ was buffalo-milk as near as I can remember. Sit down an’ have some grub. The bosses ain’t turned out yet.”

And despite the one breakfast, Kit sat down under the tarpaulin and ate a second breakfast thrice as hearty. The heavy, purging toil of weeks had given him the stomach and appetite of a wolf. He could eat anything, in any quantity, and be unaware that he possessed a digestion. Shorty he found voluble and pessimistic, and from him he received surprising tips concerning their bosses and ominous forecasts of the expedition. Thomas Stanley Sprague was a budding mining engineer and the son of a millionaire. Doctor Adolph Stine was also the son of a wealthy father. And, through their fathers, both had been backed by an investing syndicate in the Klondike adventure.

“Oh, they’re sure made of money,” Shorty expounded. “When they hit the beach at Dyea, freight was seventy cents, but no Indians. There was a party from Eastern Oregon, real miners, that’d managed to get a team of Indians together at seventy cents. Indians had the straps on the outfit, three thousand pounds of it, when along comes Sprague and Stine. They offered eighty cents and ninety, and at a dollar a pound the Indians jumped the contract and took off their straps. Sprague and Stine came through, though it cost them three thousand, and the Oregon bunch is still on the beach. They won’t get through till next year.

“Oh, they are real hummers, your boss and mine, when it comes to sheddin’ the mazuma an’ never mindin’ other folks’ feelin’s. What did they do when they hit Linderman? The carpenters was just putting in the last licks on a boat they’d contracted to a ‘Frisco bunch for six hundred. Sprague and Stine slipped ‘em an even thousand, and they jumped their contract. It’s a good-lookin’ boat, but it’s jiggered the other bunch. They’ve got their outfit right here, but no boat. And they’re stuck for next year.

“Have another cup of coffee, and take it from me that I wouldn’t travel with no such outfit if I didn’t want to get to Klondike so blamed bad. They ain’t hearted right. They’d take the crape off the door of a house in mourning if they needed it in their business. Did you sign a contract?”

Kit shook his head.

"Then I'm sorry for you, pardner. They ain't no grub in the country, and they'll drop you cold as soon as they hit Dawson. Men are going to starve there this winter."

"They agreed — " Kit began.

"Verbal," Shorty snapped him short. "It's your say-so against theirs, that's all. Well, anyway, what's your name, pardner?"

"Call me Smoke," said Kit.

"Well, Smoke, you'll have a run for your verbal contract just the same. This is a plain sample of what to expect. They can sure shed mazuma, but they can't work, or turn out of bed in the morning. We should have been loaded and started an hour ago. It's you an' me for the big work. Pretty soon you'll hear 'em shoutin' for their coffee — in bed, mind you, and them grown men. What d'ye know about boatin' on the water? I'm a cowman and a prospector, but I'm sure tenderfooted on water, an' they don't know punkins. What d'ye know?"

"Search me," Kit answered, snuggling in closer under the tarpaulin as the snow whirled before a fiercer gust. "I haven't been on a small boat since a boy. But I guess we can learn."

A corner of the tarpaulin tore loose, and Shorty received a jet of driven snow down the back of his neck.

"Oh, we can learn all right," he muttered wrathfully. "Sure we can. A child can learn. But it's dollars to doughnuts we don't even get started today."

It was eight o'clock when the call for coffee came from the tent, and nearly nine before the two employers emerged.

"Hello," said Sprague, a rosy-cheeked, well-fed young man of twenty-five. "Time we made a start, Shorty. You and — " Here he glanced interrogatively at Kit. "I didn't quite catch your name last evening."

"Smoke."

"Well, Shorty, you and Mr. Smoke had better begin loading the boat."

"Plain Smoke — cut out the Mister," Kit suggested.

Sprague nodded curtly and strolled away among the tents, to be followed by Doctor Stine, a slender, pallid young man.

Shorty looked significantly at his companion. "Over a ton and a half of outfit, and they won't lend a hand. You'll see."

"I guess it's because we're paid to do the work," Kit answered cheerfully, "and we might as well buck in."

To move three thousand pounds on the shoulders a hundred yards was no slight task, and to do it in half a gale, slushing through the snow in heavy rubber boots, was exhausting. In addition, there was the taking down of the tent and the packing of small camp equipage. Then came the loading. As the boat settled, it had to be shoved farther and farther out, increasing the distance they had to wade. By two o'clock it had all been accomplished, and Kit, despite his two breakfasts, was weak with the faintness of hunger. His knees were shaking under him. Shorty, in similar predicament, foraged through the pots and pans, and drew forth a big pot of cold boiled beans in which were imbedded large chunks of bacon. There was only one spoon, a long-handled one, and they dipped, turn and turn about, into the pot. Kit was filled with an immense certitude that in all his life he had never tasted anything so good.

"Lord, man," he mumbled between chews, "I never knew what appetite was till I hit the trail."

Sprague and Stine arrived in the midst of this pleasant occupation.

"What's the delay?" Sprague complained. "Aren't we ever going to get started?"

Shorty dipped in turn, and passed the spoon to Kit. Nor did either speak till the pot was empty and the bottom scraped.

"Of course we ain't been doin' nothing," Shorty said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "We ain't been doin' nothing at all. And of course you ain't had nothing to eat. It was sure careless of me."

"Yes, yes," Stine said quickly. "We ate at one of the tents — friends of ours."

"Thought so," Shorty grunted.

"But now that you're finished, let us get started," Sprague urged.

"There's the boat," said Shorty. "She's sure loaded. Now, just how might you be goin' about to get started?"

"By climbing aboard and shoving off. Come on."

They waded out, and the employers got on board, while Kit and Shorty shoved clear. When the waves lapped the tops of their boots they clambered in. The other two men were not prepared with the oars, and the boat swept back and grounded. Half a dozen times, with a great expenditure of energy, this was repeated.

Shorty sat down disconsolately on the gunwale, took a chew of tobacco, and questioned the universe, while Kit baled the boat and the other two exchanged unkind remarks.

"If you'll take my orders, I'll get her off," Sprague finally said.

The attempt was well intended, but before he could clamber on board he was wet to the waist.

"We've got to camp and build a fire," he said, as the boat grounded again. "I'm freezing."

"Don't be afraid of a wetting," Stine sneered. "Other men have gone off to-day wetter than you. Now I'm going to take her out."

This time it was he who got the wetting and who announced with chattering teeth the need of a fire.

"A little splash like that!" Sprague chattered spitefully. "We'll go on."

"Shorty, dig out my clothes-bag and make a fire," the other commanded.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," Sprague cried.

Shorty looked from one to the other, expectorated, but did not move.

"He's working for me, and I guess he obeys my orders," Stine retorted. "Shorty, take that bag ashore."

Shorty obeyed, and Sprague shivered in the boat. Kit, having received no orders, remained inactive, glad of the rest.

"A boat divided against itself won't float," he soliloquized.

"What's that?" Sprague snarled at him.

"Talking to myself — habit of mine," he answered.

His employer favoured him with a hard look, and sulked several minutes longer. Then he surrendered.

"Get out my bag, Smoke," he ordered, "and lend a hand with that fire. We won't get off till morning now."

Next day the gale still blew. Lake Linderman was no more than a narrow mountain gorge filled with water. Sweeping down from the mountains through this funnel, the wind was irregular, blowing great guns at times and at other times dwindling to a strong breeze.

"If you give me a shot at it, I think I can get her off," Kit said, when all was ready for the start.

"What do you know about it?" Stine snapped at him.

"Search me," Kit answered, and subsided.

It was the first time he had worked for wages in his life, but he was learning the discipline of it fast. Obediently and cheerfully he joined in various vain efforts to get clear of the beach.

“How would you go about it?” Sprague finally half panted, half whined at him.

“Sit down and get a good rest till a lull comes in the wind, and then buck in for all we’re worth.”

Simple as the idea was, he had been the first to evolve it; the first time it was applied it worked, and they hoisted a blanket to the mast and sped down the lake. Stine and Sprague immediately became cheerful. Shorty, despite his chronic pessimism, was always cheerful, and Kit was too interested to be otherwise. Sprague struggled with the steering-sweep for a quarter of an hour, and then looked appealingly at Kit, who relieved him.

“My arms are fairly broken with the strain of it,” Sprague muttered apologetically.

“You never ate bear-meat, did you?” Kit asked sympathetically.

“What the devil do you mean?”

“Oh, nothing; I was just wondering.”

But behind his employer’s back Kit caught the approving grin of Shorty, who had already caught the whim of his metaphor.

Kit steered the length of Linderman, displaying an aptitude that caused both young men of money and disinclination for work to name him boat-steerer. Shorty was no less pleased, and volunteered to continue cooking and leave the boat work to the other.

Between Linderman and Lake Bennett was a portage. The boat, lightly loaded, was lined down the small but violent connecting stream, and here Kit learned a vast deal more about boats and water. But when it came to packing the outfit, Stine and Sprague disappeared, and their men spent two days of back-breaking toil in getting the outfit across. And this was the history of many miserable days of the trip — Kit and Shorty working to exhaustion, while their masters toiled not and demanded to be waited upon.

But the iron-bound arctic winter continued to close down, and they were held back by numerous and unavoidable delays. At Windy Arm, Stine arbitrarily dispossessed Kit of the steering-sweep and within the hour wrecked the boat on a wave-beaten lee shore. Two days were lost here in making repairs, and the morning of the fresh start, as they came down to embark, on stern and bow, in large letters, was charcoaled “The Chechako.”

Kit grinned at the appropriateness of the invidious word.

“Huh!” said Shorty, when accused by Stine. “I can sure read and spell, an’ I know that chechako means tenderfoot, but my education never went high enough to learn me to spell a jaw-breaker like that."

Both employers looked daggers at Kit, for the insult rankled; nor did he mention that the night before, Shorty had besought him for the spelling of that particular word.

"That's 'most as bad as your bear-meat slam at 'em," Shorty confided later.

Kit chuckled. Along with the continuous discovery of his own powers had come an ever-increasing disapproval of the two masters. It was not so much irritation, which was always present, as disgust. He had got his taste of the meat, and liked it; but they were teaching him how not to eat it. Privily, he thanked God that he was not made as they. He came to dislike them to a degree that bordered on hatred. Their malingering bothered him less than their helpless inefficiency. Somewhere in him, old Isaac Bellew and all the rest of the hardy Bellews were making good.

"Shorty," he said one day, in the usual delay of getting started, "I could almost fetch them a rap over the head with an oar and bury them in the river."

"Same here," Shorty agreed. "They're not meat-eaters. They're fish-eaters, and they sure stink."

They came to the rapids; first, the Box Canyon, and, several miles below, the White Horse. The Box Canyon was adequately named. It was a box, a trap. Once in it, the only way out was through. On either side arose perpendicular walls of rock. The river narrowed to a fraction of its width and roared through this gloomy passage in a madness of motion that heaped the water in the center into a ridge fully eight feet higher than at the rocky sides. This ridge, in turn, was crested with stiff, upstanding waves that curled over yet remained each in its unvarying place. The Canyon was well feared, for it had collected its toll of dead from the passing goldrushers.

Tying to the bank above, where lay a score of other anxious boats, Kit and his companions went ahead on foot to investigate. They crept to the brink and gazed down at the swirl of water. Sprague drew back, shuddering.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "A swimmer hasn't a chance in that."

Shorty touched Kit significantly with his elbow and said in an undertone:

"Cold feet. Dollars to doughnuts they don't go through."

Kit scarcely heard. From the beginning of the boat trip he had been learning the stubbornness and inconceivable viciousness of the elements, and this glimpse of what was below him acted as a challenge. “We’ve got to ride that ridge,” he said. “If we get off it we’ll hit the walls.”

“And never know what hit us,” was Shorty’s verdict. “Can you swim, Smoke?”

“I’d wish I couldn’t if anything went wrong in there.”

“That’s what I say,” a stranger, standing alongside and peering down into the Canyon, said mournfully. “And I wish I were through it.”

“I wouldn’t sell my chance to go through,” Kit answered.

He spoke honestly, but it was with the idea of heartening the man. He turned to go back to the boat.

“Are you going to tackle it?” the man asked.

Kit nodded.

“I wish I could get the courage to,” the other confessed. “I’ve been here for hours. The longer I look, the more afraid I am. I am not a boatman, and I have with me only my nephew, who is a young boy, and my wife. If you get through safely, will you run my boat through?”

Kit looked at Shorty, who delayed to answer.

“He’s got his wife with him,” Kit suggested. Nor had he mistaken his man.

“Sure,” Shorty affirmed. “It was just what I was stopping to think about. I knew there was some reason I ought to do it.”

Again they turned to go, but Sprague and Stine made no movement.

“Good luck, Smoke,” Sprague called to him. “I’ll — er — ” He hesitated. “I’ll just stay here and watch you.”

“We need three men in the boat, two at the oars and one at the steering-sweep,” Kit said quietly.

Sprague looked at Stine.

“I’m damned if I do,” said that gentleman. “If you’re not afraid to stand here and look on, I’m not.”

“Who’s afraid?” Sprague demanded hotly.

Stine retorted in kind, and their two men left them in the thick of a squabble.

“We can do without them,” Kit said to Shorty. “You take the bow with a paddle, and I’ll handle the steering-sweep. All you’ll have to do is just to help keep her straight. Once we’re started, you won’t be able to hear me, so just keep on keeping her straight.”

They cast off the boat and worked out to middle in the quickening current. From the Canyon came an ever-growing roar. The river sucked in to the entrance with the smoothness of molten glass, and here, as the darkening walls received them, Shorty took a chew of tobacco and dipped his paddle. The boat leaped on the first crests of the ridge, and they were deafened by the uproar of wild water that reverberated from the narrow walls and multiplied itself. They were half-smothered with flying spray. At times Kit could not see his comrade at the bow. It was only a matter of two minutes, in which time they rode the ridge three-quarters of a mile and emerged in safety and tied to the bank in the eddy below.

Shorty emptied his mouth of tobacco juice — he had forgotten to spit — and spoke.

“That was bear-meat,” he exulted, “the real bear-meat. Say, we want a few, didn’t we? Smoke, I don’t mind tellin’ you in confidence that before we started I was the gosh-dangdest scaredest man this side of the Rocky Mountains. Now I’m a bear-eater. Come on an’ we’ll run that other boat through.”

Midway back, on foot, they encountered their employers, who had watched the passage from above.

“There comes the fish-eaters,” said Shorty. “Keep to win’ward.”

After running the stranger’s boat through, whose name proved to be Breck, Kit and Shorty met his wife, a slender, girlish woman whose blue eyes were moist with gratitude. Breck himself tried to hand Kit fifty dollars, and then attempted it on Shorty.

“Stranger,” was the latter’s rejection, “I come into this country to make money outa the ground an’ not outa my fellow critters.”

Breck rummaged in his boat and produced a demijohn of whiskey. Shorty’s hand half went out to it and stopped abruptly. He shook his head.

“There’s that blamed White Horse right below, an’ they say it’s worse than the Box. I reckon I don’t dast tackle any lightning.”

Several miles below they ran in to the bank, and all four walked down to look at the bad water. The river, which was a succession of rapids, was here deflected toward the right bank by a rocky reef. The whole body of water, rushing crookedly into the narrow passage, accelerated its speed frightfully and was up-flung into huge waves, white and wrathful. This was the dread Mane of the White Horse, and here an even heavier toll of dead had been exacted. On one side of the Mane was a corkscrew curl-over and suck-under, and on the opposite side was the big whirlpool. To go through, the Mane itself must be ridden.

“This plum rips the strings outa the Box,” Shorty concluded.

As they watched, a boat took the head of the rapids above. It was a large boat, fully thirty feet long, laden with several tons of outfit, and handled by six men. Before it reached the Mane it was plunging and leaping, at times almost hidden by the foam and spray.

Shorty shot a slow, sidelong glance at Kit and said: “She’s fair smoking, and she hasn’t hit the worst. They’ve hauled the oars in. There she takes it now. God! She’s gone! No; there she is!”

Big as the boat was, it had been buried from sight in the flying smother between crests. The next moment, in the thick of the Mane, the boat leaped up a crest and into view. To Kit’s amazement he saw the whole long bottom clearly outlined. The boat, for the fraction of an instant, was in the air, the men sitting idly in their places, all save one in the stern, who stood at the steering-sweep. Then came the downward plunge into the trough and a second disappearance. Three times the boat leaped and buried itself, then those on the bank saw its nose take the whirlpool as it slipped off the Mane. The steersman, vainly opposing with his full weight on the steering-gear, surrendered to the whirlpool and helped the boat to take the circle.

Three times it went around, each time so close to the rocks on which Kit and Shorty stood that either could have leaped on board. The steersman, a man with a reddish beard of recent growth, waved his hand to them. The only way out of the whirlpool was by the Mane, and on the third round the boat entered the Mane obliquely at its upper end. Possibly out of fear of the draw of the whirlpool, the steersman did not attempt to straighten out quickly enough. When he did, it was too late. Alternately in the air and buried, the boat angled the Mane and was sucked into and down through the stiff wall of the corkscrew on the opposite side of the river. A hundred feet below, boxes and bales began to float up. Then appeared the bottom of the boat and the scattered heads of six men. Two managed to make the bank in the eddy below. The others were drawn under, and the general flotsam was lost to view, borne on by the swift current around the bend.

There was a long minute of silence. Shorty was the first to speak.

“Come on,” he said. “We might as well tackle it. My feet’ll get cold if I stay here any longer.”

“We’ll smoke some,” Kit grinned at him.

“And you’ll sure earn your name,” was the rejoinder. Shorty turned to their employers. “Comin’?” he queried.

Perhaps the roar of the water prevented them from hearing the invitation.

Shorty and Kit tramped back through a foot of snow to the head of the rapids and cast off the boat. Kit was divided between two impressions: one, of the caliber of his comrade, which served as a spur to him; the other, likewise a spur, was the knowledge that old Isaac Bellew, and all the other Bellews, had done things like this in their westward march of empire. What they had done, he could do. It was the meat, the strong meat, and he knew, as never before, that it required strong men to eat such meat.

“You’ve sure got to keep the top of the ridge,” Shorty shouted at him, the plug of tobacco lifting to his mouth, as the boat quickened in the quickening current and took the head of the rapids.

Kit nodded, swayed his strength and weight tentatively on the steering-gear, and headed the boat for the plunge.

Several minutes later, half-swamped and lying against the bank in the eddy below the White Horse, Shorty spat out a mouthful of tobacco juice and shook Kit’s hand.

“Meat! Meat!” Shorty chanted. “We eat it raw! We eat it alive!”

At the top of the bank they met Breck. His wife stood at a little distance. Kit shook his hand.

“I’m afraid your boat can’t make it,” he said. “It is smaller than ours and a bit cranky.”

The man pulled out a row of bills.

“I’ll give you each a hundred if you run it through.”

Kit looked out and up the tossing Mane of the White Horse. A long, gray twilight was falling, it was turning colder, and the landscape seemed taking on a savage bleakness.

“It ain’t that,” Shorty was saying. “We don’t want your money. Wouldn’t touch it nohow. But my pardner is the real meat with boats, and when he says yourn ain’t safe I reckon he knows what he’s talkin’ about.”

Kit nodded affirmation, and chanced to glance at Mrs Breck. Her eyes were fixed upon him, and he knew that if ever he had seen prayer in a woman’s eyes he was seeing it then. Shorty followed his gaze and saw what he saw. They looked at each other in confusion and did not speak. Moved by the common impulse, they nodded to each other and turned to the trail that led to the head of the rapids. They had not gone a hundred yards when they met Stine and Sprague coming down.

"Where are you going?" the latter demanded.

"To fetch that other boat through," Shorty answered.

"No, you're not. It's getting dark. You two are going to pitch camp."

So huge was Kit's disgust that he forebore to speak.

"He's got his wife with him," Shorty said.

"That's his lookout," Stine contributed.

"And Smoke's and mine," was Shorty's retort.

"I forbid you," Sprague said harshly. "Smoke, if you go another step I'll discharge you."

"And you, too, Shorty," Stine added.

"And a hell of a pickle you'll be in with us fired," Shorty replied. "How'll you get your blamed boat to Dawson? Who'll serve you coffee in your blankets and manicure your finger-nails? Come on, Smoke. They don't dast fire us. Besides, we've got agreements. If they fire us they've got to divvy up grub to last us through the winter."

Barely had they shoved Breck's boat out from the bank and caught the first rough water, when the waves began to lap aboard. They were small waves, but it was an earnest of what was to come. Shorty cast back a quizzical glance as he gnawed at his inevitable plug, and Kit felt a strange rush of warmth at his heart for this man who couldn't swim and who couldn't back out.

The rapids grew stiffer, and the spray began to fly. In the gathering darkness, Kit glimpsed the Mane and the crooked fling of the current into it. He worked into this crooked current, and felt a glow of satisfaction as the boat hit the head of the Mane squarely in the middle. After that, in the smother, leaping and burying and swamping, he had no clear impression of anything save that he swung his weight on the steering-oar and wished his uncle were there to see. They emerged, breathless, wet through, the boat filled with water almost to the gunwale. Lighter pieces of baggage and outfit were floating inside the boat. A few careful strokes on Shorty's part worked the boat into the draw of the eddy, and the eddy did the rest till the boat softly touched the bank. Looking down from above was Mrs. Breck. Her prayer had been answered, and the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

“You boys have simply got to take the money,” Breck called down to them.

Shorty stood up, slipped, and sat down in the water, while the boat dipped one gunwale under and righted again.

“Damn the money,” said Shorty. “Fetch out that whiskey. Now that it’s over I’m getting cold feet, an’ I’m sure likely to have a chill.”

In the morning, as usual, they were among the last of the boats to start. Breck, despite his boating inefficiency, and with only his wife and nephew for crew, had broken camp, loaded his boat, and pulled out at the first streak of day. But there was no hurrying Stine and Sprague, who seemed incapable of realizing that the freeze-up might come at any time. They malingered, got in the way, delayed, and doubled the work of Kit and Shorty.

“I’m sure losing my respect for God, seein’ as he must ‘a’ made them two mistakes in human form,” was the latter’s blasphemous way of expressing his disgust.

“Well, you’re the real goods, at any rate,” Kit grinned back at him. “It makes me respect God the more just to look at you.”

“He was sure goin’ some, eh?” was Shorty’s fashion of overcoming the embarrassment of the compliment.

The trail by water crossed Lake Labarge. Here was no fast current, but a tideless stretch of forty miles which must be rowed unless a fair wind blew. But the time for fair wind was past, and an icy gale blew in their teeth out of the north. This made a rough sea, against which it was almost impossible to pull the boat. Added to their troubles was driving snow; also, the freezing of the water on their oar-blades kept one man occupied in chopping it off with a hatchet. Compelled to take their turn at the oars, Sprague and Stine patently loafed. Kit had learned how to throw his weight on an oar, but he noted that his employers made a seeming of throwing their weights and that they dipped their oars at a cheating angle.

At the end of three hours, Sprague pulled his oar in and said they would run back into the mouth of the river for shelter. Stine seconded him, and the several hard-won miles were lost. A second day, and a third, the same fruitless attempt was made. In the river mouth, the continually arriving boats from White Horse made a flotilla of over two hundred. Each day forty or fifty arrived, and only two or three won to the northwest shore of the lake and did not come back. Ice was now forming in the eddies, and connecting from eddy to eddy in thin lines around the points. The freeze-up was very imminent.

“We could make it if they had the souls of clams,” Kit told Shorty, as they dried their moccasins by the fire on the evening of the third day. “We could have made it to-day if they hadn’t turned back. Another hour’s work would have fetched that west shore. They’re — they’re babes in the woods.”

“Sure,” Shorty agreed. He turned his moccasin to the flame and debated a moment. “Look here, Smoke. It’s hundreds of miles to Dawson. If we don’t want to freeze in here, we’ve got to do something. What d’ye say?”

Kit looked at him, and waited.

“We’ve got the immortal cinch on them two babes,” Shorty expounded. “They can give orders an’ shed mazuma, but as you say, they’re plum babes. If we’re goin’ to Dawson, we got to take charge of this here outfit.”

They looked at each other.

“It’s a go,” said Kit, as his hand went out in ratification.

In the morning, long before daylight, Shorty issued his call. “Come on!” he roared. “Tumble out, you sleepers! Here’s your coffee! Kick into it! We’re goin’ to make a start!”

Grumbling and complaining, Stine and Sprague were forced to get under way two hours earlier than ever before. If anything, the gale was stiffer, and in a short time every man’s face was iced up, while the oars were heavy with ice. Three hours they struggled, and four, one man steering, one chopping ice, two toiling at the oars, and each taking his various turns. The northwest shore loomed nearer and nearer. The gale blew ever harder, and at last Sprague pulled in his oar in token of surrender. Shorty sprang to it, though his relief had only begun.

“Chop ice,” he said, handing Sprague the hatchet.

“But what’s the use?” the other whined. “We can’t make it. We’re going to turn back.”

“We’re going on,” said Shorty. “Chop ice. An’ when you feel better you can spell me.”

It was heart-breaking toil, but they gained the shore, only to find it composed of surge-beaten rocks and cliffs, with no place to land.

“I told you so,” Sprague whimpered.

“You never peeped,” Shorty answered.

“We’re going back.”

Nobody spoke, and Kit held the boat into the seas as they skirted the forbidding shore. Sometimes they gained no more than a foot to the stroke, and there were times when two or three strokes no more than enabled them to hold their own. He did his best to hearten the two weaklings. He pointed out that the boats which had won to this shore had never come back. Perforce, he argued, they had found a shelter somewhere ahead. Another hour they labored, and a second.

“If you fellows’d put into your oars some of that coffee you swig in your blankets, we’d make it,” was Shorty’s encouragement. “You’re just goin’ through the motions an’ not pullin’ a pound.”

A few minutes later, Sprague drew in his oar.

“I’m finished,” he said, and there were tears in his voice.

“So are the rest of us,” Kit answered, himself ready to cry or to commit murder, so great was his exhaustion. “But we’re going on just the same.”

“We’re going back. Turn the boat around.”

“Shorty, if he won’t pull, take that oar yourself,” Kit commanded.

“Sure,” was the answer. “He can chop ice.”

But Sprague refused to give over the oar; Stine had ceased rowing, and the boat was drifting backward.

“Turn around, Smoke,” Sprague ordered.

And Kit, who never in his life had cursed any man, astonished himself.

“I’ll see you in hell, first,” he replied. “Take hold of that oar and pull.”

It is in moments of exhaustion that men lose all their reserves of civilization, and such a moment had come. Each man had reached the breaking-point. Sprague jerked off a mitten, drew his revolver, and turned it on his steersman. This was a new experience to Kit. He had never had a gun presented at him in his life. And now, to his surprise, it seemed to mean nothing at all. It was the most natural thing in the world.

“If you don’t put that gun up,” he said, “I’ll take it away and rap you over the knuckles with it.”

“If you don’t turn the boat around, I’ll shoot you,” Sprague threatened.

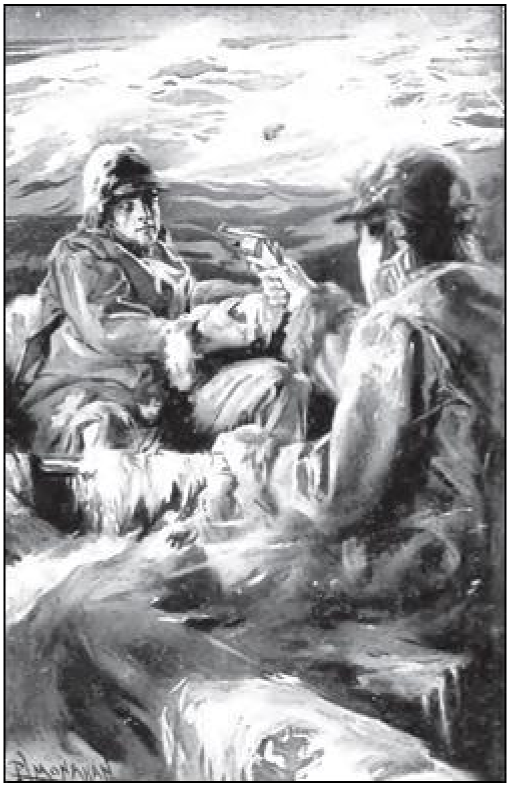

Then Shorty took a hand. He ceased chopping ice and stood up behind Sprague.

"Go on an' shoot," said Shorty, wiggling the hatchet. "I'm just aching for a chance to brain you. Go on an' start the festivities."

"This is mutiny," Stine broke in. "You were engaged to obey orders."

Shorty turned on him. "Oh, you'll get yours as soon as I finish with your pardner, you little hog-wallopin' snooper, you."

"Sprague," Kit said, "I'll give you just thirty seconds to put away that gun and get that oar out."

Sprague hesitated, gave a short hysterical laugh, put the revolver away, and bent his back to the work.

For two hours more, inch by inch, they fought their way along the edge of the foaming rocks, until Kit feared he had made a mistake. And then, when on the verge of himself turning back, they came abreast of a narrow opening, not twenty feet wide, which led into a land-locked enclosure where the fiercest gusts scarcely flawed the surface. It was the haven gained by the boats of previous days. They landed on a shelving beach, and the two employers lay in collapse in the boat, while Kit and Shorty pitched the tent, built a fire, and started the cooking.

"What's a hog-walloping snooper, Shorty?" Kit asked.

“Blamed if I know,” was the answer; “but he’s one just the same.”

The gale, which had been dying quickly, ceased at nightfall, and it came on clear and cold. A cup of coffee, set aside to cool and forgotten, a few minutes later was found coated with half an inch of ice. At eight o’clock, when Sprague and Stine, already rolled in their blankets, were sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, Kit came back from a look at the boat.

“It’s the freeze-up, Shorty,” he announced. “There’s a skin of ice over the whole pond already.”

“What are you going to do?”

“There’s only one thing. The lake of course freezes first. The rapid current of the river may keep it open for days. This time to-morrow any boat caught in Lake Labarge remains there until next year.”

“You mean we got to get out to-night? Now?”

Kit nodded.

“Tumble out, you sleepers!” was Shorty’s answer, couched in a roar, as he began casting off the guy-ropes of the tent.

The other two awoke, groaning with the pain of stiffened muscles and the pain of rousing from the sleep of exhaustion.

“What time is it?” Stine asked.

“Half-past eight.”

“It’s dark yet,” was the objection.

Shorty jerked out a couple of guy-ropes, and the tent began to sag.

“It’s not morning,” he said. “It’s evening. Come on. The lake’s freezin’. We got to get acrost.”

Stine sat up, his face bitter and wrathful. “Let it freeze. We’re not going to stir.”

“All right,” said Shorty. “We’re goin’ on with the boat.”

“You were engaged — ”

“To take your outfit to Dawson,” Shorty caught him up. “Well, we’re takin’ it, ain’t we?” He punctuated his query by bringing half the tent down on top of them.

They broke their way through the thin ice in the little harbor, and came out on the lake, where the water, heavy and glassy, froze on their oars with every stroke. The water soon became like mush, clogging the stroke of the oars and freezing in the air even as it dripped. Later the surface began to form a skin, and the boat proceeded slower and slower.

Often afterwards, when Kit tried to remember that night and failed to bring up aught but nightmare recollections, he wondered what must have been the sufferings of Stine and Sprague. His one impression of himself was that he struggled through biting frost and intolerable exertion for a thousand years, more or less.

Morning found them stationary. Stine complained of frosted fingers, and Sprague of his nose, while the pain in Kit's cheeks and nose told him that he, too, had been touched. With each accretion of daylight they could see farther, and as far as they could see was icy surface. The water of the lake was gone. A hundred yards away was the shore of the north end. Shorty insisted that it was the opening of the river and that he could see water. He and Kit alone were able to work, and with their oars they broke the ice and forced the boat along. And at the last gasp of their strength they made the suck of the rapid river. One look back showed them several boats which had fought through the night and were hopelessly frozen in; then they whirled around a bend in a current running six miles an hour.

Day by day they floated down the swift river, and day by day the shore-ice extended farther out. When they made camp at nightfall, they chopped a space in the ice in which to lay the boat and carried the camp outfit hundreds of feet to shore. In the morning, they chopped the boat out through the new ice and caught the current. Shorty set up the sheet-iron stove in the boat, and over this Stine and Sprague hung through the long, drifting hours. They had surrendered, no longer gave orders, and their one desire was to gain Dawson. Shorty, pessimistic, indefatigable, and joyous, at frequent intervals roared out the three lines of the first four-line stanza of a song he had forgotten. The colder it got the oftener he sang:

"Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this Modern Greece;
Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum-tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece."

As they passed the mouths of the Hootalinqua and the Big and Little Salmon, they found these streams throwing mush-ice into the main Yukon. This gathered about the boat and attached itself, and at night they found themselves compelled to chop the boat out of the current. In the morning they chopped the boat back into the current.

The last night ashore was spent between the mouths of the White River and the Stewart. At daylight they found the Yukon, half a mile wide, running white from ice-rimmed bank to ice-rimmed bank. Shorty cursed the universe with less geniality than usual, and looked at Kit.

“We’ll be the last boat this year to make Dawson,” Kit said.

“But they ain’t no water, Smoke.”

“Then we’ll ride the ice down. Come on.”

Futilely protesting, Sprague and Stine were bundled on board. For half an hour, with axes, Kit and Shorty struggled to cut a way into the swift but solid stream. When they did succeed in clearing the shore-ice, the floating ice forced the boat along the edge for a hundred yards, tearing away half of one gunwale and making a partial wreck of it. Then, at the lower end of the bend, they caught the current that flung off-shore. They proceeded to work farther toward the middle. The stream was no longer composed of mush-ice but of hard cakes. In between the cakes only was mush-ice, that froze solidly as they looked at it. Shoving with the oars against the cakes, sometimes climbing out on the cakes in order to force the boat along, after an hour they gained the middle. Five minutes after they ceased their exertions, the boat was frozen in. The whole river was coagulating as it ran. Cake froze to cake, until at last the boat was the center of a cake seventy-five feet in diameter. Sometimes they floated sideways, sometimes stern-first, while gravity tore asunder the forming fetters in the moving mass, only to be manacled by faster-forming ones. While the hours passed, Shorty stoked the stove, cooked meals, and chanted his war-song.

Night came, and after many efforts, they gave up the attempt to force the boat to shore, and through the darkness they swept helplessly onward.

“What if we pass Dawson?” Shorty queried.

“We’ll walk back,” Kit answered, “if we’re not crushed in a jam.”

The sky was clear, and in the light of the cold, leaping stars they caught occasional glimpses of the loom of mountains on either hand. At eleven o’clock, from below, came a dull, grinding roar. Their speed began to diminish, and cakes of ice to up-end and crash and smash about them. The river was jamming. One cake, forced upward, slid across their cake and carried one side of the boat away. It did not sink, for its own cake still upbore it, but in a whirl they saw dark water show for an instant within a foot of them. Then all movement ceased. At the end of half an hour the whole river picked itself up and began to move. This continued for an hour, when again it was brought to rest by a jam. Once again it started, running swiftly and savagely, with a great grinding. Then they saw lights ashore, and, when abreast, gravity and the Yukon surrendered, and the river ceased for six months.

On the shore at Dawson, curious ones, gathered to watch the river freeze, heard from out of the darkness the war-song of Shorty:

"Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this Modern Greece;
Tum-tum, tum-tum; tum-tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece."

For three days Kit and Shorty labored, carrying the ton and a half of outfit from the middle of the river to the log-cabin Stine and Sprague had bought on the hill overlooking Dawson. This work finished, in the warm cabin, as twilight was falling, Sprague motioned Kit to him. Outside the thermometer registered sixty-five below zero.

"Your full month isn't up, Smoke," Sprague said. "But here it is in full. I wish you luck."

"How about the agreement?" Kit asked. "You know there's a famine here. A man can't get work in the mines even, unless he has his own grub. You agreed — "

"I know of no agreement," Sprague interrupted. "Do you, Stine? We engaged you by the month. There's your pay. Will you sign the receipt?"

Kit's hands clenched, and for the moment he saw red. Both men shrank away from him. He had never struck a man in anger in his life, and he felt so certain of his ability to thrash Sprague that he could not bring himself to do it.

Shorty saw his trouble and interposed.

"Look here, Smoke, I ain't travelin' no more with a ornery outfit like this. Right here's where I sure jump it. You an' me stick together. Savvy? Now, you take your blankets an' hike down to the Elkhorn. Wait for me. I'll settle up, collect what's comin', an' give them what's comin'. I ain't no good on the water, but my feet's on terry-fermy now an' I'm sure goin' to make smoke."

Half an hour afterwards Shorty appeared at the Elkhorn. From his bleeding knuckles and the skin off one cheek, it was evident that he had given Stine and Sprague what was coming.

"You ought to see that cabin," he chuckled, as they stood at the bar. "Rough-house ain't no name for it. Dollars to doughnuts nary one of 'em shows up on the street for a week. An’ now it’s all figgered out for you an’ me. Grub’s a dollar an’ a half a pound. They ain’t no work for wages without you have your own grub. Moose-meat’s sellin’ for two dollars a pound an’ they ain’t none. We got enough money for a month’s grub an’ ammunition, an’ we hike up the Klondike to the back country. If they ain’t no moose, we go an’ live with the Indians. But if we ain’t got five thousand pounds of meat six weeks from now, I’ll — I’ll sure go back an’ apologize to our bosses. Is it a go?”

Kit’s hand went out, and they shook. Then he faltered. “I don’t know anything about hunting,” he said.

Shorty lifted his glass.

“But you’re a sure meat-eater, an’ I’ll learn you.”

III. THE STAMPEDE TO SQUAW CREEK.

Two months after Smoke Bellew and Shorty went after moose for a grub-stake, they were back in the Elkhorn saloon at Dawson. The hunting was done, the meat hauled in and sold for two dollars and a half a pound, and between them they possessed three thousand dollars in gold dust and a good team of dogs. They had played in luck. Despite the fact that the gold-rush had driven the game a hundred miles or more into the mountains, they had, within half that distance, bagged four moose in a narrow canyon.

The mystery of the strayed animals was no greater than the luck of their killers, for within the day four famished Indian families, reporting no game in three days' journey back, camped beside them. Meat was traded for starving dogs, and after a week of feeding, Smoke and Shorty harnessed the animals and began freighting the meat to the eager Dawson market.

The problem of the two men now was to turn their gold-dust into food. The current price for flour and beans was a dollar and a half a pound, but the difficulty was to find a seller. Dawson was in the throes of famine. Hundreds of men, with money but no food, had been compelled to leave the country. Many had gone down the river on the last water, and many more, with barely enough food to last, had walked the six hundred miles over the ice to Dyea.

Smoke met Shorty in the warm saloon, and found the latter jubilant.

"Life ain't no punkins without whiskey an' sweetenin'," was Shorty's greeting, as he pulled lumps of ice from his thawing moustache and flung them rattling on the floor. "An' I sure just got eighteen pounds of that same sweetenin'. The geezer only charged three dollars a pound for it. What luck did you have?"

"I, too, have not been idle," Smoke answered with pride. "I bought fifty pounds of flour. And there's a man up on Adam Creek who says he'll let me have fifty pounds more to-morrow."

"Great! We'll sure live till the river opens. Say, Smoke, them dogs of ourn is the goods. A dog-buyer offered me two hundred apiece for the five of them. I told him nothin' doin'. They sure took on class when they got meat to get outside of; but it goes against the grain, feedin' dog-critters on grub that's worth two an' a half a pound. Come on an' have a drink. I just got to celebrate them eighteen pounds of sweetenin'."

Several minutes later, as he weighed in on the gold-scales for the drinks, he gave a start of recollection.

"I plum forgot that man I was to meet in the Tivoli. He's got some spoiled bacon he'll sell for a dollar an' a half a pound. We can feed it to the dogs an' save a dollar a day on each's board-bill. So long."

"So long," said Smoke. "I'm goin' to the cabin an' turn in."

Hardly had Shorty left the place, when a fur-clad man entered through the double storm-doors. His face lighted at sight of Smoke, who recognized him as Breck, the man whose boat they had run through the Box Canyon and White Horse Rapids.

"I heard you were in town," Breck said hurriedly, as they shook hands. "Been looking for you for half an hour. Come outside, I want to talk with you."

Smoke looked regretfully at the roaring, red-hot stove.

"Won't this do?"

"No; it's important. Come outside."

As they emerged, Smoke drew off one mitten, lighted a match, and glanced at the thermometer that hung beside the door. He remittened his naked hand hastily as if the frost had burned him. Overhead arched the flaming aurora borealis, while from all Dawson arose the mournful howling of thousands of wolf-dogs.

"What did it say?" Breck asked.

"Sixty below." Kit spat experimentally, and the spittle crackled in the air. "And the thermometer is certainly working. It's falling all the time. An hour ago it was only fifty-two. Don't tell me it's a stampede."

"It is," Breck whispered back cautiously, casting anxious eyes about in fear of some other listener. "You know Squaw Creek? — empties in on the other side of the Yukon thirty miles up?"

"Nothing doing there," was Smoke's judgment. "It was prospected years ago."

"So were all the other rich creeks. Listen! It's big. Only eight to twenty feet to bedrock. There won't be a claim that don't run to half a million. It's a dead secret. Two or three of my close friends let me in on it. I told my wife right away that I was going to find you before I started. Now, so long. My pack's hidden down the bank. In fact, when they told me, they made me promise not to pull out until Dawson was asleep. You know what it means if you're seen with a stampeding outfit. Get your partner and follow. You ought to stake fourth or fifth claim from Discovery. Don't forget — Squaw Creek. It's the third after you pass Swede Creek."

When Smoke entered the little cabin on the hillside back of Dawson, he heard a heavy familiar breathing.

"Aw, go to bed," Shorty mumbled, as Smoke shook his shoulder. "I'm not on the night shift," was his next remark, as the rousing hand became more vigorous. "Tell your troubles to the barkeeper."

"Kick into your clothes," Smoke said. "We've got to stake a couple of claims."

Shorty sat up and started to explode, but Smoke's hand covered his mouth.

"Ssh!" Smoke warned. "It's a big strike. Don't wake the neighborhood. Dawson's asleep."

"Huh! You got to show me. Nobody tells anybody about a strike, of course not. But ain't it plum amazin' the way everybody hits the trail just the same?"

"Squaw Creek," Smoke whispered. "It's right. Breck gave me the tip. Shallow bedrock. Gold from the grass-roots down. Come on. We'll sling a couple of light packs together and pull out."

Shorty's eyes closed as he lapsed back into sleep. The next moment his blankets were swept off him.

"If you don't want them, I do," Smoke explained.

Shorty followed the blankets and began to dress.

"Goin' to take the dogs?" he asked.

"No. The trail up the creek is sure to be unbroken, and we can make better time without them."

"Then I'll throw 'em a meal, which'll have to last 'em till we get back. Be sure you take some birch-bark and a candle."

Shorty opened the door, felt the bite of the cold, and shrank back to pull down his ear-flaps and mitten his hands.

Five minutes later he returned, sharply rubbing his nose.

"Smoke, I'm sure opposed to makin' this stampede. It's colder than the hinges of hell a thousand years before the first fire was lighted. Besides, it's Friday the thirteenth, an' we're goin' to trouble as the sparks fly upward."

With small stampeding-packs on their backs, they closed the door behind them and started down the hill. The display of the aurora borealis had ceased, and only the stars leaped in the great cold and by their uncertain light made traps for the feet. Shorty floundered off a turn of the trail into deep snow, and raised his voice in blessing of the date of the week and month and year.

"Can't you keep still?" Smoke chided. "Leave the almanac alone. You'll have all Dawson awake and after us."

"Huh! See the light in that cabin? An' in that one over there? An' hear that door slam? Oh, sure Dawson's asleep. Them lights? Just buryin' their dead. They ain't stampedin', betcher life they ain't."

By the time they reached the foot of the hill and were fairly in Dawson, lights were springing up in the cabins, doors were slamming, and from behind came the sound of many moccasins on the hard-packed snow. Again Shorty delivered himself.

"But it beats hell the amount of mourners there is."

They passed a man who stood by the path and was calling anxiously in a low voice: "Oh, Charley; get a move on."

"See that pack on his back, Smoke? The graveyard's sure a long ways off when the mourners got to pack their blankets."

By the time they reached the main street a hundred men were in line behind them, and while they sought in the deceptive starlight for the trail that dipped down the bank to the river, more men could be heard arriving. Shorty slipped and shot down the thirty-foot chute into the soft snow. Smoke followed, knocking him over as he was rising to his feet.

"I found it first," he gurgled, taking off his mittens to shake the snow out of the gauntlets.

The next moment they were scrambling wildly out of the way of the hurtling bodies of those that followed. At the time of the freeze-up, a jam had occurred at this point, and cakes of ice were up-ended in snow-covered confusion. After several hard falls, Smoke drew out his candle and lighted it. Those in the rear hailed it with acclaim. In the windless air it burned easily, and he led the way more quickly.

"It's a sure stampede," Shorty decided. "Or might all them be sleep-walkers?"

"We're at the head of the procession at any rate," was Smoke's answer.

"Oh, I don't know. Mebbe that's a firefly ahead there. Mebbe they're all fireflies — that one, an' that one. Look at 'em! Believe me, they is a whole string of processions ahead."

It was a mile across the jams to the west bank of the Yukon, and candles flickered the full length of the twisting trail. Behind them, clear to the top of the bank they had descended, were more candles.

"Say, Smoke, this ain't no stampede. It's a exode-us. They must be a thousand men ahead of us an' ten thousand behind. Now, you listen to your uncle. My medicine's good. When I get a hunch it's sure right. An' we're in wrong on this stampede. Let's turn back an' hit the sleep."

"You'd better save your breath if you intend to keep up," Smoke retorted gruffly.

"Huh! My legs is short, but I slog along slack at the knees an' don't worry my muscles none, an' I can sure walk every piker here off the ice."

And Smoke knew he was right, for he had long since learned his comrade's phenomenal walking powers.

"I've been holding back to give you a chance," Smoke jeered.

"An' I'm plum troddin' on your heels. If you can't do better, let me go ahead and set pace."

Smoke quickened, and was soon at the rear of the nearest bunch of stampeders.

"Hike along, you, Smoke," the other urged. "Walk over them unburied dead. This ain't no funeral. Hit the frost like you was goin' somewheres."

Smoke counted eight men and two women in this party, and before the way across the jam-ice was won, he and Shorty had passed another party twenty strong. Within a few feet of the west bank, the trail swerved to the south, emerging from the jam upon smooth ice. The ice, however, was buried under several feet of fine snow. Through this the sled-trail ran, a narrow ribbon of packed footing barely two feet in width. On either side one sank to his knees and deeper in the snow. The stampeders they overtook were reluctant to give way, and often Smoke and Shorty had to plunge into the deep snow and by supreme efforts flounder past.

Shorty was irrepressible and pessimistic. When the stampeders resented being passed, he retorted in kind.

"What's your hurry?" one of them asked.

"What's yours?" he answered. "A stampede come down from Indian River yesterday afternoon an' beat you to it. They ain't no claims left."

"That being so, I repeat, what's your hurry?"

"WHO? Me? I ain't no stampeder. I'm workin' for the government. I'm on official business. I'm just traipsin' along to take the census of Squaw

Creek."

To another, who hailed him with: "Where away, little one? Do you really expect to stake a claim?" Shorty answered:

"Me? I'm the discoverer of Squaw Creek. I'm just comin' back from recordin' so as to see no blamed chechako jumps my claim."

The average pace of the stampeders on the smooth going was three miles and a half an hour. Smoke and Shorty were doing four and a half, though sometimes they broke into short runs and went faster.

"I'm going to travel your feet clean off, Shorty," Smoke challenged.

"Huh! I can hike along on the stumps an' wear the heels off your moccasins. Though it ain't no use. I've been figgerin'. Creek claims is five hundred feet. Call 'em ten to the mile. They's a thousand stampeders ahead of us, an' that creek ain't no hundred miles long. Somebody's goin' to get left, an' it makes a noise like you an' me."

Before replying, Smoke let out an unexpected link that threw Shorty half a dozen feet in the rear. "If you saved your breath and kept up, we'd cut down a few of that thousand," he chided.

"Who? Me? If you'd get outa the way I'd show you a pace what is."

Smoke laughed, and let out another link. The whole aspect of the adventure had changed. Through his brain was running a phrase of the mad philosopher — "the transvaluation of values." In truth, he was less interested in staking a fortune than in beating Shorty. After all, he concluded, it wasn't the reward of the game but the playing of it that counted. Mind, and muscle, and stamina, and soul, were challenged in a contest with this Shorty, a man who had never opened the books, and who did not know grand opera from rag-time, nor an epic from a chilblain.

"Shorty, I've got you skinned to death. I've reconstructed every cell in my body since I hit the beach at Dyea. My flesh is as stringy as whipcords, and as bitter and mean as the bite of a rattlesnake. A few months ago I'd have patted myself on the back to write such words, but I couldn't have written them. I had to live them first, and now that I'm living them there's no need to write them. I'm the real, bitter, stinging goods, and no scrub of a mountaineer can put anything over on me without getting it back compound. Now, you go ahead and set pace for half an hour. Do your worst, and when you're all in I'll go ahead and give you half an hour of the real worst."

“Huh!” Shorty sneered genially. “An’ him not dry behind the ears yet. Get outa the way an’ let your father show you some goin’.”

Half-hour by half-hour they alternated in setting pace. Nor did they talk much. Their exertions kept them warm, though their breath froze on their faces from lips to chin. So intense was the cold that they almost continually rubbed their noses and cheeks with their mittens. A few minutes’ cessation from this allowed the flesh to grow numb, and then most vigorous rubbing was required to produce the burning prickle of returning circulation.

Often they thought they had reached the lead, but always they overtook more stampeders who had started before them. Occasionally, groups of men attempted to swing in behind to their pace, but invariably they were discouraged after a mile or two and disappeared in the darkness to the rear.

“We’ve been out on trail all winter,” was Shorty’s comment. “An’ them geezers, soft from layin’ around their cabins, has the nerve to think they can keep our stride. Now, if they was real sour-doughs it’d be different. If there’s one thing a sour-dough can do it’s sure walk.”

Once, Smoke lighted a match and glanced at his watch. He never repeated it, for so quick was the bite of the frost on his bared hands that half an hour passed before they were again comfortable.

“Four o’clock,” he said, as he pulled on his mittens, “and we’ve already passed three hundred.”

“Three hundred and thirty-eight,” Shorty corrected. “I been keepin’ count. Get outa the way, stranger. Let somebody stampede that knows how to stampede.”

The latter was addressed to a man, evidently exhausted, who could no more than stumble along and who blocked the trail. This, and one other, were the only played-out men they encountered, for they were very near to the head of the stampede. Nor did they learn till afterwards the horrors of that night. Exhausted men sat down to rest by the way and failed to get up again. Seven were frozen to death, while scores of amputations of toes, feet, and fingers were performed in the Dawson hospitals on the survivors. For the stampede to Squaw Creek occurred on the coldest night of the year. Before morning, the spirit thermometers at Dawson registered seventy degrees below zero. The men composing the stampede, with few exceptions, were new-comers in the country who did not know the way of the cold.

The other played-out man they found a few minutes later, revealed by a streamer of aurora borealis that shot like a searchlight from horizon to zenith. He was sitting on a piece of ice beside the trail.

“Hop along, sister Mary,” Shorty gaily greeted him. “Keep movin’. If you sit there you’ll freeze stiff.”

The man made no response, and they stopped to investigate.

“Stiff as a poker,” was Shorty’s verdict. “If you tumbled him over he’d break.”

“See if he’s breathing,” Smoke said, as, with bared hand, he sought through furs and woollens for the man’s heart.

Shorty lifted one ear-flap and bent to the iced lips. “Nary breathe,” he reported.

“Nor heart-beat,” said Smoke.

He mittened his hand and beat it violently for a minute before exposing it to the frost to strike a match. It was an old man, incontestably dead. In the moment of illumination, they saw a long grey beard, massed with ice to the nose, cheeks that were white with frost, and closed eyes with frost-rimmed lashes frozen together. Then the match went out.

“Come on,” Shorty said, rubbing his ear. “We can’t do nothin’ for the old geezer. An’ I’ve sure frosted my ear. Now all the blamed skin’ll peel off, and it’ll be sore for a week.”

A few minutes later, when a flaming ribbon spilled pulsating fire over the heavens, they saw on the ice a quarter of a mile ahead two forms. Beyond, for a mile, nothing moved.

“They’re leading the procession,” Smoke said, as darkness fell again. “Come on, let’s get them.”

At the end of half an hour, not yet having overtaken the two in front, Shorty broke into a run.

“If we catch ‘em we’ll never pass ‘em,” he panted. “Lord, what a pace they’re hittin’. Dollars to doughnuts they’re no chechakos. They’re the real sour-dough variety, you can stack on that.”

Smoke was leading when they finally caught up, and he was glad to ease to a walk at their heels. Almost immediately he got the impression that the one nearer him was a woman. How this impression came, he could not tell. Hooded and furred, the dark form was as any form; yet there was a haunting sense of familiarity about it. He waited for the next flame of the aurora, and by its light saw the smallness of the moccasined feet. But he saw more —

the walk, and knew it for the unmistakable walk he had once resolved never to forget.

"She's a sure goer," Shorty confided hoarsely. "I'll bet it's an Indian."

"How do you do, Miss Gastell?" Smoke addressed her.

"How do you do," she answered, with a turn of the head and a quick glance. "It's too dark to see. Who are you?"

"Smoke."

She laughed in the frost, and he was certain it was the prettiest laughter he had ever heard. "And have you married and raised all those children you were telling me about?" Before he could retort, she went on. "How many chechakos are there behind?"

"Several thousand, I imagine. We passed over three hundred. And they weren't wasting any time."

"It's the old story," she said bitterly. "The new-comers get in on the rich creeks, and the old-timers, who dared and suffered and made this country, get nothing. Old-timers made this discovery on Squaw Creek — how it leaked out is the mystery — and they sent word up to all the old-timers on Sea Lion. But it's ten miles farther than Dawson, and when they arrive they'll find the creek staked to the skyline by the Dawson chechakos. It isn't right, it isn't fair, such perversity of luck."

"It is too bad," Smoke sympathized. "But I'm hanged if I know what you're going to do about it. First come, first served, you know."

"I wish I could do something," she flashed back at him. "I'd like to see them all freeze on the trail, or have everything terrible happen to them, so long as the Sea Lion stampede arrived first."

"You've certainly got it in for us hard," he laughed.

"It isn't that," she said quickly. "Man by man, I know the crowd from Sea Lion, and they are men. They starved in this country in the old days, and they worked like giants to develop it. I went through the hard times on the Koyukuk with them when I was a little girl. And I was with them in the Birch Creek famine, and in the Forty Mile famine. They are heroes, and they deserve some reward, and yet here are thousands of green softlings who haven't earned the right to stake anything, miles and miles ahead of them. And now, if you'll forgive my tirade, I'll save my breath, for I don't know when you and all the rest may try to pass dad and me."

No further talk passed between Joy and Smoke for an hour or so, though he noticed that for a time she and her father talked in low tones.

“I know ‘em now,” Shorty told Smoke. “He’s old Louis Gastell, an’ the real goods. That must be his kid. He come into this country so long ago they ain’t nobody can recollect, an’ he brought the girl with him, she only a baby. Him an’ Beetles was tradin’ partners an’ they ran the first dinkey little steamboat up the Koyukuk.”

“I don’t think we’ll try to pass them,” Smoke said. “We’re at the head of the stampede, and there are only four of us.”

Shorty agreed, and another hour of silence followed, during which they swung steadily along. At seven o’clock, the blackness was broken by a last display of the aurora borealis, which showed to the west a broad opening between snow-clad mountains.

“Squaw Creek!” Joy exclaimed.

“Goin’ some,” Shorty exulted. “We oughtn’t to been there for another half hour to the least, accordin’ to my reckonin’. I must ‘a’ been spreadin’ my legs.”

It was at this point that the Dyea trail, baffled by ice-jams, swerved abruptly across the Yukon to the east bank. And here they must leave the hard-packed, main-travelled trail, mount the jams, and follow a dim trail, but slightly packed, that hovered the west bank.

Louis Gastell, leading, slipped in the darkness on the rough ice, and sat up, holding his ankle in both his hands. He struggled to his feet and went on, but at a slower pace and with a perceptible limp. After a few minutes he abruptly halted.

“It’s no use,” he said to his daughter. “I’ve sprained a tendon. You go ahead and stake for me as well as yourself.”

“Can’t we do something?” Smoke asked solicitously.

Louis Gastell shook his head. “She can stake two claims as well as one. I’ll crawl over to the bank, start a fire, and bandage my ankle. I’ll be all right. Go on, Joy. Stake ours above the Discovery claim; it’s richer higher up.”

“Here’s some birch bark,” Smoke said, dividing his supply equally. “We’ll take care of your daughter.”

Louis Gastell laughed harshly. “Thank you just the same,” he said. “But she can take care of herself. Follow her and watch her.”

“Do you mind if I lead?” she asked Smoke, as she headed on. “I know this country better than you.”

"Lead on," Smoke answered gallantly, "though I agree with you it's a darned shame all us chechakos are going to beat that Sea Lion bunch to it. Isn't there some way to shake them?"

She shook her head. "We can't hide our trail, and they'll follow it like sheep."

After a quarter of a mile, she turned sharply to the west. Smoke noticed that they were going through unpacked snow, but neither he nor Shorty observed that the dim trail they had been on still led south. Had they witnessed the subsequent procedure of Louis Gastell, the history of the Klondike would have been written differently; for they would have seen that old-timer, no longer limping, running with his nose to the trail like a hound, following them. Also, they would have seen him trample and widen the turn to the fresh trail they had made to the west. And, finally, they would have seen him keep on the old dim trail that still led south.

A trail did run up the creek, but so slight was it that they continually lost it in the darkness. After a quarter of an hour, Joy Gastell was willing to drop into the rear and let the two men take turns in breaking a way through the snow. This slowness of the leaders enabled the whole stampede to catch up, and when daylight came, at nine o'clock, as far back as they could see was an unbroken line of men. Joy's dark eyes sparkled at the sight.

"How long since we started up the creek?" she asked.

"Fully two hours," Smoke answered.

"And two hours back make four," she laughed. "The stampede from Sea Lion is saved."

A faint suspicion crossed Smoke's mind, and he stopped and confronted her.

"I don't understand," he said.

"You don't? Then I'll tell you. This is Norway Creek. Squaw Creek is the next to the south."

Smoke was for the moment, speechless.

"You did it on purpose?" Shorty demanded.

"I did it to give the old-timers a chance." She laughed mockingly. The men grinned at each other and finally joined her. "I'd lay you across my knee an' give you a wallopin', if women folk wasn't so scarce in this country," Shorty assured her.

"Your father didn't sprain a tendon, but waited till we were out of sight and then went on?" Smoke asked.

She nodded.

“And you were the decoy?”

Again she nodded, and this time Smoke’s laughter rang out clear and true. It was the spontaneous laughter of a frankly beaten man.

“Why don’t you get angry with me?” she queried ruefully. “Or — or wallop me?”

“Well, we might as well be starting back,” Shorty urged. “My feet’s gettin’ cold standin’ here.”

Smoke shook his head. “That would mean four hours lost. We must be eight miles up this creek now, and from the look ahead Norway is making a long swing south. We’ll follow it, then cross over the divide somehow, and tap Squaw Creek somewhere above Discovery.” He looked at Joy. “Won’t you come along with us? I told your father we’d look after you.”

“I — ” She hesitated. “I think I shall, if you don’t mind.” She was looking straight at him, and her face was no longer defiant and mocking. “Really, Mr. Smoke, you make me almost sorry for what I have done. But somebody had to save the old-timers.”

“It strikes me that stampeding is at best a sporting proposition.”

“And it strikes me you two are very game about it,” she went on, then added with the shadow of a sigh: “What a pity you are not old-timers!”

For two hours more they kept to the frozen creek-bed of Norway, then turned into a narrow and rugged tributary that flowed from the south. At midday they began the ascent of the divide itself. Behind them, looking down and back, they could see the long line of stampeders breaking up. Here and there, in scores of places, thin smoke-columns advertised the making of camps.

As for themselves, the going was hard. They wallowed through snow to their waists, and were compelled to stop every few yards to breathe. Shorty was the first to call a halt.

“We been hittin’ the trail for over twelve hours,” he said. “Smoke, I’m plum willin’ to say I’m good an’ tired. An’ so are you. An’ I’m free to shout that I can sure hang on to this here pasear like a starvin’ Indian to a hunk of bear-meat. But this poor girl here can’t keep her legs no time if she don’t get something in her stomach. Here’s where we build a fire. What d’ye say?”

So quickly, so deftly and methodically, did they go about making a temporary camp, that Joy, watching with jealous eyes, admitted to herself that the old-timers could not do it better. Spruce boughs, with a spread blanket on top, gave a foundation for rest and cooking operations. But they kept away from the heat of the fire until noses and cheeks had been rubbed cruelly.

Smoke spat in the air, and the resultant crackle was so immediate and loud that he shook his head. “I give it up,” he said. “I’ve never seen cold like this.”

“One winter on the Koyukuk it went to eighty-six below,” Joy answered. “It’s at least seventy or seventy-five right now, and I know I’ve frosted my cheeks. They’re burning like fire.”

On the steep slope of the divide there was no ice, so snow, as fine and hard and crystalline as granulated sugar, was poured into the gold-pan by the bushel until enough water was melted for the coffee. Smoke fried bacon and thawed biscuits. Shorty kept the fuel supplied and tended the fire, and Joy set the simple table composed of two plates, two cups, two spoons, a tin of mixed salt and pepper, and a tin of sugar. When it came to eating, she and Smoke shared one set between them. They ate out of the same plate and drank from the same cup.

It was nearly two in the afternoon when they cleared the crest of the divide and began dropping down a feeder of Squaw Creek. Earlier in the winter some moose-hunter had made a trail up the canyon — that is, in going up and down he had stepped always in his previous tracks. As a result, in the midst of soft snow, and veiled under later snow falls, was a line of irregular hummocks. If one’s foot missed a hummock, he plunged down through unpacked snow and usually to a fall. Also, the moose-hunter had been an exceptionally long-legged individual. Joy, who was eager now that the two men should stake, and fearing that they were slackening their pace on account of her evident weariness, insisted on taking her turn in the lead. The speed and manner in which she negotiated the precarious footing called out Shorty’s unqualified approval.

“Look at her!” he cried. “She’s the real goods an’ the red meat. Look at them moccasins swing along. No high-heels there. She uses the legs God gave her. She’s the right squaw for any bear-hunter.”

She flashed back a smile of acknowledgment that included Smoke. He caught a feeling of chumminess, though at the same time he was bitingly aware that it was very much of a woman who embraced him in that comradely smile.

Looking back, as they came to the bank of Squaw Creek, they could see the stampede, strung out irregularly, struggling along the descent of the divide.

They slipped down the bank to the creek bed. The stream, frozen solidly to bottom, was from twenty to thirty feet wide and ran between six- and eight-foot earth banks of alluvial wash. No recent feet had disturbed the snow that lay upon its ice, and they knew they were above the Discovery claim and the last stakes of the Sea Lion stampeders.

"Look out for springs," Joy warned, as Smoke led the way down the creek. "At seventy below you'll lose your feet if you break through."

These springs, common to most Klondike streams, never cease at the lowest temperatures. The water flows out from the banks and lies in pools which are cuddled from the cold by later surface-freezings and snow falls. Thus, a man, stepping on dry snow, might break through half an inch of ice-skin and find himself up to the knees in water. In five minutes, unless able to remove the wet gear, the loss of one's foot was the penalty.

Though only three in the afternoon, the long grey twilight of the Arctic had settled down. They watched for a blazed tree on either bank, which would show the center-stake of the last claim located. Joy, impulsively eager, was the first to find it. She darted ahead of Smoke, crying: "Somebody's been here! See the snow! Look for the blaze! There it is! See that spruce!"

She sank suddenly to her waist in the snow.

"Now I've done it," she said woefully. Then she cried: "Don't come near me! I'll wade out."

Step by step, each time breaking through the thin skin of ice concealed under the dry snow, she forced her way to solid footing. Smoke did not wait, but sprang to the bank, where dry and seasoned twigs and sticks, lodged amongst the brush by spring freshets, waited the match. By the time she reached his side, the first flames and flickers of an assured fire were rising.

"Sit down!" he commanded.

She obediently sat down in the snow. He slipped his pack from his back, and spread a blanket for her feet.

From above came the voices of the stampeders who followed them.

"Let Shorty stake," she urged.

"Go on, Shorty," Smoke said, as he attacked her moccasins, already stiff with ice. "Pace off a thousand feet and place the two center-stakes. We can fix the corner-stakes afterwards."

With his knife Smoke cut away the lacings and leather of the moccasins. So stiff were they with ice that they snapped and crackled under the hacking and sawing. The Siwash socks and heavy woollen stockings were sheaths of ice. It was as if her feet and calves were encased in corrugated iron.

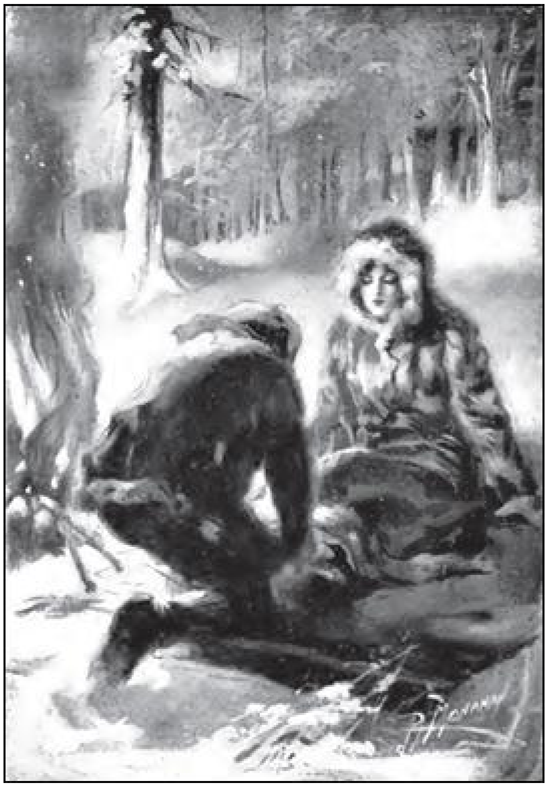

"How are your feet?" he asked, as he worked.

"Pretty numb. I can't move nor feel my toes. But it will be all right. The fire is burning beautifully. Watch out you don't freeze your own hands. They must be numb now from the way you're fumbling."

He slipped his mittens on, and for nearly a minute smashed the open hands savagely against his sides. When he felt the blood-prickles, he pulled off the mittens and ripped and tore and sawed and hacked at the frozen garments. The white skin of one foot appeared, then that of the other, to be exposed to the bite of seventy below zero, which is the equivalent of one hundred and two below freezing.

Then came the rubbing with snow, carried on with an intensity of cruel fierceness, till she squirmed and shrank and moved her toes, and joyously complained of the hurt.

He half-dragged her, and she half-lifted herself, nearer to the fire. He placed her feet on the blanket close to the flesh-saving flames.

"You'll have to take care of them for a while," he said.

She could now safely remove her mittens and manipulate her own feet, with the wisdom of the initiated, being watchful that the heat of the fire was absorbed slowly. While she did this, he attacked his hands. The snow did not melt nor moisten. Its light crystals were like so much sand. Slowly the stings and pangs of circulation came back into the chilled flesh. Then he tended the fire, unstrapped the light pack from her back, and got out a complete change of foot-gear.

Shorty returned along the creek bed and climbed the bank to them. "I sure staked a full thousan' feet," he proclaimed. "Number twenty-seven an' number twenty-eight, though I'd only got the upper stake of twenty-seven, when I met the first geezer of the bunch behind. He just straight declared I wasn't goin' to stake twenty-eight. An' I told him — "

"Yes, yes," Joy cried. "What did you tell him?"

"Well, I told him straight that if he didn't back up plum five hundred feet I'd sure punch his frozen nose into ice-cream an' chocolate eclaires. He backed up, an' I've got in the center-stakes of two full an' honest five-hundred-foot creek claims. He staked next, and I guess by now the bunch has Squaw Creek located to head-waters an' down the other side. Ourn is safe. It's too dark to see now, but we can put out the corner-stakes in the mornin'."

When they awoke, they found a change had taken place during the night. So warm was it, that Shorty and Smoke, still in their mutual blankets, estimated the temperature at no more than twenty below. The cold snap had broken. On top of their blankets lay six inches of frost crystals.

"Good morning! how are your feet?" was Smoke's greeting across the ashes of the fire to where Joy Gastell, carefully shaking aside the snow, was sitting up in her sleeping-furs.

Shorty built the fire and quarried ice from the creek, while Smoke cooked breakfast. Daylight came on as they finished the meal.

"You go an' fix them corner-stakes, Smoke," Shorty said. "There's gravel under where I chopped ice for the coffee, an' I'm goin' to melt water and wash a pan of that same gravel for luck."

Smoke departed, axe in hand, to blaze the stakes. Starting from the down-stream center-stake of 'twenty-seven,' he headed at right angles across the narrow valley towards its rim. He proceeded methodically, almost automatically, for his mind was alive with recollections of the night before. He felt, somehow, that he had won to empery over the delicate lines and firm muscles of those feet and ankles he had rubbed with snow, and this empery seemed to extend to the rest and all of this woman of his kind. In dim and fiery ways a feeling of possession mastered him. It seemed that all that was necessary was for him to walk up to this Joy Gastell, take her hand in his, and say "Come."

It was in this mood that he discovered something that made him forget empery over the white feet of woman. At the valley rim he blazed no corner-stake. He did not reach the valley rim, but, instead, he found himself confronted by another stream. He lined up with his eye a blasted willow tree and a big and recognizable spruce. He returned to the stream where were the center-stakes. He followed the bed of the creek around a wide horseshoe bend through the flat and found that the two creeks were the same creek. Next, he floundered twice through the snow from valley rim to valley rim, running the first line from the lower stake of 'twenty-seven,' the second from the upper stake of 'twenty-eight,' and he found that THE UPPER STAKE OF THE LATTER WAS LOWER THAN THE LOWER STAKE OF THE FORMER. In the gray twilight and half-darkness Shorty had located their two claims on the horseshoe.

Smoke plodded back to the little camp. Shorty, at the end of washing a pan of gravel, exploded at sight of him.

"We got it!" Shorty cried, holding out the pan. "Look at it! A nasty mess of gold. Two hundred right there if it's a cent. She runs rich from the top of the wash-gravel. I've churned around placers some, but I never got butter like what's in this pan."

Smoke cast an incurious glance at the coarse gold, poured himself a cup of coffee at the fire, and sat down. Joy sensed something wrong and looked at him with eagerly solicitous eyes. Shorty, however, was disgruntled by his partner's lack of delight in the discovery.

"Why don't you kick in an' get excited?" he demanded. "We got our pile right here, unless you're stickin' up your nose at two-hundred-dollar pans."

Smoke took a swallow of coffee before replying. "Shorty, why are our two claims here like the Panama Canal?"

"What's the answer?"

“Well, the eastern entrance of the Panama Canal is west of the western entrance, that’s all.”

“Go on,” Shorty said. “I ain’t seen the joke yet.”

“In short, Shorty, you staked our two claims on a big horseshoe bend.”

Shorty set the gold pan down in the snow and stood up. “Go on,” he repeated.

“The upper stake of ‘twenty-eight’ is ten feet below the lower stake of ‘twenty-seven.’“

“You mean we ain’t got nothin’, Smoke?”

“Worse than that; we’ve got ten feet less than nothing.”

Shorty departed down the bank on the run. Five minutes later he returned. In response to Joy’s look, he nodded. Without speech, he went over to a log and sat down to gaze steadily at the snow in front of his moccasins.

“We might as well break camp and start back for Dawson,” Smoke said, beginning to fold the blankets.

“I am sorry, Smoke,” Joy said. “It’s all my fault.”

“It’s all right,” he answered. “All in the day’s work, you know.”

“But it’s my fault, wholly mine,” she persisted. “Dad’s staked for me down near Discovery, I know. I’ll give you my claim.”

He shook his head.

“Shorty,” she pleaded.

Shorty shook his head and began to laugh. It was a colossal laugh. Chuckles and muffled explosions yielded to hearty roars.

“It ain’t hysterics,” he explained. “I sure get powerful amused at times, an’ this is one of them.”

His gaze chanced to fall on the gold-pan. He walked over and gravely kicked it, scattering the gold over the landscape.

“It ain’t ourn,” he said. “It belongs to the geezer I backed up five hundred feet last night. An’ what gets me is four hundred an’ ninety of them feet was to the good — his good. Come on, Smoke. Let’s start the hike to Dawson. Though if you’re hankerin’ to kill me I won’t lift a finger to prevent.”

IV. SHORTY DREAMS.

"Funny you don't gamble none," Shorty said to Smoke one night in the Elkhorn. "Ain't it in your blood?"

"It is," Smoke answered. "But the statistics are in my head. I like an even break for my money."

All about them, in the huge bar-room, arose the click and rattle and rumble of a dozen games, at which fur-clad, moccasined men tried their luck. Smoke waved his hand to include them all.

"Look at them," he said. "It's cold mathematics that they will lose more than they win to-night, that the big proportion are losing right now."

"You're sure strong on figgers," Shorty murmured admiringly. "An' in the main you're right. But they's such a thing as facts. An' one fact is streaks of luck. They's times when every geezer playin' wins, as I know, for I've sat in such games an' saw more'n one bank busted. The only way to win at gamblin' is wait for a hunch that you've got a lucky streak comin' and then play it to the roof."

"It sounds simple," Smoke criticized. "So simple I can't see how men can lose."

"The trouble is," Shorty admitted, "that most men gets fooled on their hunches. On occasion I sure get fooled on mine. The thing is to try an' find out."

Smoke shook his head. "That's a statistic, too, Shorty. Most men prove wrong on their hunches."

"But don't you ever get one of them streaky feelin's that all you got to do is put your money down an' pick a winner?"

Smoke laughed. "I'm too scared of the percentage against me. But I'll tell you what, Shorty. I'll throw a dollar on the 'high card' right now and see if it will buy us a drink."

Smoke was edging his way in to the faro table, when Shorty caught his arm.

"Hold on. I'm gettin' one of them hunches now. You put that dollar on roulette."

They went over to a roulette table near the bar.

"Wait till I give the word," Shorty counselled.

"What number?" Smoke asked.

“Pick it yourself. But wait till I say let her go.”

“You don’t mean to say I’ve got an even chance on that table?” Smoke argued.

“As good as the next geezer’s.”

“But not as good as the bank’s.”

“Wait an’ see,” Shorty urged. “Now! Let her go!”

The game-keeper had just sent the little ivory ball whirling around the smooth rim above the revolving, many-slotted wheel. Smoke, at the lower end of the table, reached over a player, and blindly tossed the dollar. It slid along the smooth, green cloth and stopped fairly in the center of “34.”

The ball came to rest, and the game-keeper announced, “Thirty-four wins!” He swept the table, and alongside of Smoke’s dollar, stacked thirty-five dollars. Smoke drew the money in, and Shorty slapped him on the shoulder.

“Now, that was the real goods of a hunch, Smoke! How’d I know it? There’s no tellin’. I just knew you’d win. Why, if that dollar of yourn’d fell on any other number it’d won just the same. When the hunch is right, you just can’t help winnin’.”

“Suppose it had come ‘double naught’?” Smoke queried, as they made their way to the bar.

“Then your dollar’d been on ‘double naught,’“ was Shorty’s answer. “They’s no gettin’ away from it. A hunch is a hunch. Here’s how. Come on back to the table. I got a hunch, after pickin’ you for a winner, that I can pick some few numbers myself.”

“Are you playing a system?” Smoke asked, at the end of ten minutes, when his partner had dropped a hundred dollars.

Shorty shook his head indignantly, as he spread his chips out in the vicinities of “3,” “11,” and “17,” and tossed a spare chip on the green.

“Hell is sure cluttered with geezers that played systems,” he exposited, as the keeper raked the table.

From idly watching, Smoke became fascinated, following closely every detail of the game from the whirling of the ball to the making and the paying of the bets. He made no plays, however, merely contenting himself with looking on. Yet so interested was he, that Shorty, announcing that he had had enough, with difficulty drew Smoke away from the table.

The game-keeper returned Shorty the gold-sack he had deposited as a credential for playing, and with it went a slip of paper on which was scribbled, “Out — $350.00.” Shorty carried the sack and the paper across the room and handed them to the weigher, who sat behind a large pair of gold-scales. Out of Shorty’s sack he weighed three hundred and fifty dollars, which he poured into the coffer of the house.

“That hunch of yours was another one of those statistics,” Smoke jeered.

“I had to play it, didn’t I, in order to find out?” Shorty retorted. “I reckon I was crowdin’ some just on account of tryin’ to convince you they’s such a thing as hunches.”

“Never mind, Shorty,” Smoke laughed. “I’ve got a hunch right now — ”

Shorty’s eyes sparkled as he cried eagerly: “What is it? Kick in an’ play it pronto.”

“It’s not that kind, Shorty. Now, what I’ve got is a hunch that some day I’ll work out a system that will beat the spots off that table.”

“System!” Shorty groaned, then surveyed his partner with a vast pity. “Smoke, listen to your side-kicker an’ leave system alone. Systems is sure losers. They ain’t no hunches in systems.”

“That’s why I like them,” Smoke answered. “A system is statistical. When you get the right system you can’t lose, and that’s the difference between it and a hunch. You never know when the right hunch is going wrong.”

“But I know a lot of systems that went wrong, an’ I never seen a system win.” Shorty paused and sighed. “Look here, Smoke, if you’re gettin’ cracked on systems this ain’t no place for you, an’ it’s about time we hit the trail again.”

During the several following weeks, the two partners played at cross purposes. Smoke was bent on spending his time watching the roulette game in the Elkhorn, while Shorty was equally bent on travelling trail. At last Smoke put his foot down when a stampede was proposed for two hundred miles down the Yukon.

“Look here, Shorty,” he said, “I’m not going. That trip will take ten days, and before that time I hope to have my system in proper working order. I could almost win with it now. What are you dragging me around the country this way for, anyway?”

“Smoke, I got to take care of you,” was Shorty’s reply. “You’re gettin’ nutty. I’d drag you stampedin’ to Jericho or the North Pole if I could keep you away from that table.”

“It’s all right, Shorty. But just remember I’ve reached full man-grown, meat-eating size. The only dragging you’ll do, will be dragging home the dust I’m going to win with that system of mine, and you’ll most likely have to do it with a dog-team.”

Shorty’s response was a groan.

“And I don’t want you to be bucking any games on your own,” Smoke went on. “We’re going to divide the winnings, and I’ll need all our money to get started. That system’s young yet, and it’s liable to trip me for a few falls before I get it lined up.”

At last, after long hours and days spent at watching the table, the night came when Smoke proclaimed he was ready, and Shorty, glum and pessimistic, with all the seeming of one attending a funeral, accompanied his partner to the Elkhorn. Smoke bought a stack of chips and stationed himself at the game-keeper’s end of the table. Again and again the ball was whirled, and the other players won or lost, but Smoke did not venture a chip. Shorty waxed impatient.

“Buck in, buck in,” he urged. “Let’s get this funeral over. What’s the matter? Got cold feet?”

Smoke shook his head and waited. A dozen plays went by, and then, suddenly, he placed ten one-dollar chips on “26.” The number won, and the keeper paid Smoke three hundred and fifty dollars. A dozen plays went by, twenty plays, and thirty, when Smoke placed ten dollars on “32.” Again he received three hundred and fifty dollars.

“It’s a hunch!” Shorty whispered vociferously in his ear. “Ride it! Ride it!”

Half an hour went by, during which Smoke was inactive, then he placed ten dollars on “34” and won.

“A hunch!” Shorty whispered.

“Nothing of the sort,” Smoke whispered back. “It’s the system. Isn’t she a dandy?”

“You can’t tell me,” Shorty contended. “Hunches comes in mighty funny ways. You might think it’s a system, but it ain’t. Systems is impossible. They can’t happen. It’s a sure hunch you’re playin’.”

Smoke now altered his play. He bet more frequently, with single chips, scattered here and there, and he lost more often than he won.

“Quit it,” Shorty advised. “Cash in. You’ve rung the bull’s-eye three times, an’ you’re ahead a thousand. You can’t keep it up.”

At this moment the ball started whirling, and Smoke dropped ten chips on “26.” The ball fell into the slot of “26,” and the keeper again paid him three hundred and fifty dollars.

“If you’re plum crazy an’ got the immortal cinch, bet ‘em the limit,” Shorty said. “Put down twenty-five next time.”

A quarter of an hour passed, during which Smoke won and lost on small scattering bets. Then, with the abruptness that characterized his big betting, he placed twenty-five dollars on the “double naught,” and the keeper paid him eight hundred and seventy-five dollars.

“Wake me up, Smoke, I’m dreamin’,” Shorty moaned.

Smoke smiled, consulted his notebook, and became absorbed in calculation. He continually drew the notebook from his pocket, and from time to time jotted down figures.

A crowd had packed densely around the table, while the players themselves were attempting to cover the same numbers he covered. It was then that a change came over his play. Ten times in succession he placed ten dollars on “18” and lost. At this stage he was deserted by the hardiest. He changed his number and won another three hundred and fifty dollars. Immediately the players were back with him, deserting again after a series of losing bets.

“Quit it, Smoke, quit it,” Shorty advised. “The longest string of hunches is only so long, an’ your string’s finished. No more bull’s-eyes for you.”

“I’m going to ring her once again before I cash in,” Smoke answered.

For a few minutes, with varying luck, he played scattering chips over the table, and then dropped twenty-five dollars on the “double naught.”

“I’ll take my slip now,” he said to the dealer, as he won.

“Oh, you don’t need to show it to me,” Shorty said, as they walked to the weigher. “I been keepin’ track. You’re something like thirty-six hundred to the good. How near am I?”

“Thirty-six-sixty,” Smoke replied. “And now you’ve got to pack the dust home. That was the agreement.”

“Don’t crowd your luck,” Shorty pleaded with Smoke, the next night, in the cabin, as he evidenced preparations to return to the Elkhorn. “You played a mighty long string of hunches, but you played it out. If you go back you’ll sure drop all your winnings.”

“But I tell you it isn’t hunches, Shorty. It’s statistics. It’s a system. It can’t lose.”

"System be damned. They ain't no such a thing as system. I made seventeen straight passes at a crap table once. Was it system? Nope. It was fool luck, only I had cold feet an' didn't dast let it ride. If it'd rid, instead of me drawin' down after the third pass, I'd 'a' won over thirty thousan' on the original two-bit piece."

"Just the same, Shorty, this is a real system."

"Huh! You got to show me."

"I did show you. Come on with me now, and I'll show you again."

When they entered the Elkhorn, all eyes centered on Smoke, and those about the table made way for him as he took up his old place at the keeper's end. His play was quite unlike that of the previous night. In the course of an hour and a half he made only four bets, but each bet was for twenty-five dollars, and each bet won. He cashed in thirty-five hundred dollars, and Shorty carried the dust home to the cabin.

"Now's the time to jump the game," Shorty advised, as he sat on the edge of his bunk and took off his moccasins. "You're seven thousan' ahead. A man's a fool that'd crowd his luck harder."

"Shorty, a man would be a blithering lunatic if he didn't keep on backing a winning system like mine."

"Smoke, you're a sure bright boy. You're college-learnt. You know more'n a minute than I could know in forty thousan' years. But just the same you're dead wrong when you call your luck a system. I've been around some, an' seen a few, an' I tell you straight an' confidential an' all-assurin', a system to beat a bankin' game ain't possible."

"But I'm showing you this one. It's a pipe."

"No, you're not, Smoke. It's a pipe-dream. I'm asleep. Bimeby I'll wake up, an' build the fire, an' start breakfast."

"Well, my unbelieving friend, there's the dust. Heft it."

So saying, Smoke tossed the bulging gold-sack upon his partner's knees. It weighed thirty-five pounds, and Shorty was fully aware of the crush of its impact on his flesh.

"It's real," Smoke hammered his point home.

"Huh! I've saw some mighty real dreams in my time. In a dream all things is possible. In real life a system ain't possible. Now, I ain't never been to college, but I'm plum justified in sizin' up this gamblin' orgy of ourn as a sure-enough dream."

"Hamilton's 'Law of Parsimony,'" Smoke laughed.

"I ain't never heard of the geezer, but his dope's sure right. I'm dreamin', Smoke, an' you're just snoopin' around in my dream an' tormentin' me with system. If you love me, if you sure do love me, you'll just yell, 'Shorty! Wake up!' An' I'll wake up an' start breakfast."

The third night of play, as Smoke laid his first bet, the game-keeper shoved fifteen dollars back to him.

"Ten's all you can play," he said. "The limit's come down."

"Gettin' picayune," Shorty sneered.

"No one has to play at this table that don't want to," the keeper retorted. "And I'm willing to say straight out in meeting that we'd sooner your pardner didn't play at our table."

"Scared of his system, eh?" Shorty challenged, as the keeper paid over three hundred and fifty dollars.

"I ain't saying I believe in system, because I don't. There never was a system that'd beat roulette or any percentage game. But just the same I've seen some queer strings of luck, and I ain't going to let this bank go bust if I can help it."

"Cold feet."

"Gambling is just as much business, my friend, as any other business. We ain't philanthropists."

Night by night, Smoke continued to win. His method of play varied. Expert after expert, in the jam about the table, scribbled down his bets and numbers in vain attempts to work out his system. They complained of their inability to get a clew to start with, and swore that it was pure luck, though the most colossal streak of it they had ever seen.

It was Smoke's varied play that obfuscated them. Sometimes, consulting his note-book or engaging in long calculations, an hour elapsed without his staking a chip. At other times he would win three limit-bets and clean up a thousand dollars and odd in five or ten minutes. At still other times, his tactics would be to scatter single chips prodigally and amazingly over the table. This would continue for from ten to thirty minutes of play, when, abruptly, as the ball whirled through the last few of its circles, he would play the limit on column, colour, and number, and win all three. Once, to complete confusion in the minds of those that strove to divine his secret, he lost forty straight bets, each at the limit. But each night, play no matter how diversely, Shorty carried home thirty-five hundred dollars for him.

"It ain't no system," Shorty expounded at one of their bed-going discussions. "I follow you, an' follow you, but they ain't no figgerin' it out. You never play twice the same. All you do is pick winners when you want to, an' when you don't want to, you just on purpose don't."

"Maybe you're nearer right than you think, Shorty. I've just got to pick losers sometimes. It's part of the system."

"System — hell! I've talked with every gambler in town, an' the last one is agreed they ain't no such thing as system."

"Yet I'm showing them one all the time."

"Look here, Smoke." Shorty paused over the candle, in the act of blowing it out. "I'm real irritated. Maybe you think this is a candle. It ain't. No, sir! An' this ain't me neither. I'm out on trail somewheres, in my blankets, lyin' flat on my back with my mouth open, an' dreamin' all this. That ain't you talkin', any more than this candle is a candle."

"It's funny, how I happen to be dreaming along with you then," Smoke persisted.

"No, it ain't. You're part of my dream, that's all. I've hearn many a man talk in my dreams. I want to tell you one thing, Smoke. I'm gettin' mangy an' mad. If this here dream keeps up much more I'm goin' to bite my veins an' howl."

On the sixth night of play at the Elkhorn, the limit was reduced to five dollars.

"It's all right," Smoke assured the game-keeper. "I want thirty-five hundred to-night, as usual, and you only compel me to play longer. I've got to pick twice as many winners, that's all."

"Why don't you buck somebody else's table?" the keeper demanded wrathfully.

"Because I like this one." Smoke glanced over to the roaring stove only a few feet away. "Besides, there are no draughts here, and it is warm and comfortable."

On the ninth night, when Shorty had carried the dust home, he had a fit. "I quit, Smoke, I quit," he began. "I know when I got enough. I ain't dreamin'. I'm wide awake. A system can't be, but you got one just the same. There's nothin' in the rule o' three. The almanac's clean out. The world's gone smash. There's nothin' regular an' uniform no more. The multiplication table's gone loco. Two is eight, nine is eleven, and two-times-six is eight hundred an' forty-six — an' — an' a half. Anything is everything, an’ nothing’s all, an’ twice all is cold-cream, milk-shakes, an’ calico horses. You’ve got a system. Figgers beat the figgerin’. What ain’t is, an’ what isn’t has to be. The sun rises in the west, the moon’s a pay-streak, the stars is canned corn-beef, scurvy’s the blessin’ of God, him that dies kicks again, rocks floats, water’s gas, I ain’t me, you’re somebody else, an’ mebbe we’re twins if we ain’t hashed-brown potatoes fried in verdigris. Wake me up! Somebody! Oh! Wake me up!”

The next morning a visitor came to the cabin. Smoke knew him, Harvey Moran, the owner of all the games in the Tivoli. There was a note of appeal in his deep gruff voice as he plunged into his business.

“It’s like this, Smoke,” he began. “You’ve got us all guessing. I’m representing nine other game-owners and myself from all the saloons in town. We don’t understand. We know that no system ever worked against roulette. All the mathematic sharps in the colleges have told us gamblers the same thing. They say that roulette itself is the system, the one and only system, and, therefore, that no system can beat it, for that would mean arithmetic has gone bug-house.”

Shorty nodded his head violently.

“If a system can beat a system, then there’s no such thing as system,” the gambler went on. “In such a case anything could be possible — a thing could be in two different places at once, or two things could be in the same place that’s only large enough for one at the same time.”

“Well, you’ve seen me play,” Smoke answered defiantly; “and if you think it’s only a string of luck on my part, why worry?”

“That’s the trouble. We can’t help worrying. It’s a system you’ve got, and all the time we know it can’t be. I’ve watched you five nights now, and all I can make out is that you favour certain numbers and keep on winning. Now the ten of us game-owners have got together, and we want to make a friendly proposition. We’ll put a roulette-table in a back room of the Elkhorn, pool the bank against you, and have you buck us. It will be all quiet and private. Just you and Shorty and us. What do you say?”

“I think it’s the other way around,” Smoke answered. “It’s up to you to come and see me. I’ll be playing in the barroom of the Elkhorn to-night. You can watch me there just as well.”

That night, when Smoke took up his customary place at the table, the keeper shut down the game. “The game’s closed,” he said. “Boss’s orders.”

But the assembled game-owners were not to be balked. In a few minutes they arranged a pool, each putting in a thousand, and took over the table.

“Come on and buck us,” Harvey Moran challenged, as the keeper sent the ball on its first whirl around.

“Give me the twenty-five limit,” Smoke suggested.

“Sure; go to it.”

Smoke immediately placed twenty-five chips on the “double naught,” and won.

Moran wiped the sweat from his forehead. “Go on,” he said. “We got ten thousand in this bank.”

At the end of an hour and a half, the ten thousand was Smoke’s.

“The bank’s bust,” the keeper announced.

“Got enough?” Smoke asked.

The game-owners looked at one another. They were awed. They, the fatted proteges of the laws of chance, were undone. They were up against one who had more intimate access to those laws, or who had invoked higher and undreamed laws.

“We quit,” Moran said. “Ain’t that right, Burke?”

Big Burke, who owned the games in the M. and G. Saloon, nodded. “The impossible has happened,” he said. “This Smoke here has got a system all right. If we let him go on we’ll all bust. All I can see, if we’re goin’ to keep our tables running, is to cut down the limit to a dollar, or to ten cents, or a cent. He won’t win much in a night with such stakes.”

All looked at Smoke.

He shrugged his shoulders. “In that case, gentlemen, I’ll have to hire a gang of men to play at all your tables. I can pay them ten dollars for a four-hour shift and make money.”

“Then we’ll shut down our tables,” Big Burke replied. “Unless — ” He hesitated and ran his eye over his fellows to see that they were with him. “Unless you’re willing to talk business. What will you sell the system for?”

“Thirty thousand dollars,” Smoke answered. “That’s a tax of three thousand apiece.”

They debated and nodded.

“And you’ll tell us your system?”

“Surely.”

“And you’ll promise not to play roulette in Dawson ever again?”

"No, sir," Smoke said positively. "I'll promise not to play this system again."

"My God!" Moran exploded. "You haven't got other systems, have you?"

"Hold on!" Shorty cried. "I want to talk to my pardner. Come over here, Smoke, on the side."

Smoke followed into a quiet corner of the room, while hundreds of curious eyes centered on him and Shorty.

"Look here, Smoke," Shorty whispered hoarsely. "Mebbe it ain't a dream. In which case you're sellin' out almighty cheap. You've sure got the world by the slack of its pants. They's millions in it. Shake it! Shake it hard!"

"But if it's a dream?" Smoke queried softly.

"Then, for the sake of the dream an' the love of Mike, stick them gamblers up good and plenty. What's the good of dreamin' if you can't dream to the real right, dead sure, eternal finish?"

"Fortunately, this isn't a dream, Shorty."

"Then if you sell out for thirty thousan', I'll never forgive you."

"When I sell out for thirty thousand, you'll fall on my neck an' wake up to find out that you haven't been dreaming at all. This is no dream, Shorty. In about two minutes you'll see you have been wide awake all the time. Let me tell you that when I sell out it's because I've got to sell out."

Back at the table, Smoke informed the game-owners that his offer still held. They proffered him their paper to the extent of three thousand each.

"Hold out for the dust," Shorty cautioned.

"I was about to intimate that I'd take the money weighed out," Smoke said.

The owner of the Elkhorn cashed their paper, and Shorty took possession of the gold-dust.

"Now, I don't want to wake up," he chortled, as he hefted the various sacks. "Toted up, it's a seventy thousan' dream. It'd be too blamed expensive to open my eyes, roll out of the blankets, an' start breakfast."

"What's your system?" Big Burke demanded. "We've paid for it, and we want it."

Smoke led the way to the table. "Now, gentlemen, bear with me a moment. This isn't an ordinary system. It can scarcely be called legitimate, but its one great virtue is that it works. I've got my suspicious, but I'm not saying anything. You watch. Mr. Keeper, be ready with the ball. Wait. I am going to pick '26.' Consider I've bet on it. Be ready, Mr. Keeper — Now!"

The ball whirled around.

"You observe," Smoke went on, "that '9' was directly opposite."

The ball finished in "26."

Big Burke swore deep in his chest, and all waited.

"For 'double naught' to win, '11' must be opposite. Try it yourself and see."

"But the system?" Moran demanded impatiently. "We know you can pick winning numbers, and we know what those numbers are; but how do you do it?"

"By observed sequences. By accident I chanced twice to notice the ball whirled when '9' was opposite. Both times '26' won. After that I saw it happen again. Then I looked for other sequences, and found them. 'Double naught' opposite fetches '32,' and '11' fetches 'double naught.' It doesn't always happen, but it USUALLY happens. You notice, I say 'usually.' As I said before, I have my suspicions, but I'm not saying anything."

Big Burke, with a sudden flash of comprehension reached over, stopped the wheel, and examined it carefully. The heads of the nine other game-owners bent over and joined in the examination. Big Burke straightened up and cast a glance at the near-by stove.

"Hell," he said. "It wasn't any system at all. The table stood close to the fire, and the blamed wheel's warped. And we've been worked to a frazzle. No wonder he liked this table. He couldn't have bucked for sour apples at any other table."

Harvey Moran gave a great sigh of relief and wiped his forehead. "Well, anyway," he said, "it's cheap at the price just to find out that it wasn't a system." His face began to work, and then he broke into laughter and slapped Smoke on the shoulder. "Smoke, you had us going for a while, and we patting ourselves on the back because you were letting our tables alone! Say, I've got some real fizz I'll open if you'll all come over to the Tivoli with me."

Later, back in the cabin, Shorty silently overhauled and hefted the various bulging gold-sacks. He finally piled them on the table, sat down on the edge of his bunk, and began taking off his moccasins.

"Seventy thousan'," he calculated. "It weighs three hundred and fifty pounds. And all out of a warped wheel an' a quick eye. Smoke, you eat'm raw, you eat'm alive, you work under water, you've given me the jim-jams; but just the same I know it's a dream. It's only in dreams that the good things comes true. I'm almighty unanxious to wake up. I hope I never wake up."

"Cheer up," Smoke answered. "You won't. There are a lot of philosophy sharps that think men are sleep-walkers. You're in good company."

Shorty got up, went to the table, selected the heaviest sack, and cuddled it in his arms as if it were a baby. "I may be sleep-walkin'," he said, "but as you say, I'm sure in mighty good company."

V. THE MAN ON THE OTHER BANK.

It was before Smoke Bellew staked the farcical town-site of Tra-Lee, made the historic corner of eggs that nearly broke Swiftwater Bill's bank account, or won the dog-team race down the Yukon for an even million dollars, that he and Shorty parted company on the Upper Klondike. Shorty's task was to return down the Klondike to Dawson to record some claims they had staked.

Smoke, with the dog-team, turned south. His quest was Surprise Lake and the mythical Two Cabins. His traverse was to cut the headwaters of the Indian River and cross the unknown region over the mountains to the Stewart River. Here, somewhere, rumour persisted, was Surprise Lake, surrounded by jagged mountains and glaciers, its bottom paved with raw gold. Old-timers, it was said, whose very names were forgotten in the frosts of earlier years, had dived into the icy waters of Surprise Lake and fetched lump-gold to the surface in both hands. At different times, parties of old-timers had penetrated the forbidding fastness and sampled the lake's golden bottom. But the water was too cold. Some died in the water, being pulled up dead. Others died later of consumption. And one who had gone down never did come up. All survivors had planned to return and drain the lake, yet none had ever gone back. Disaster always smote them. One man fell into an air-hole below Forty Mile; another was killed and eaten by his dogs; a third was crushed by a falling tree. And so the tale ran. Surprise Lake was a hoodoo; its location was unremembered; and the gold still paved its undrained bottom.

Two Cabins, no less mythical, was more definitely located. "Five sleeps," up the McQuestion River from the Stewart, stood two ancient cabins. So ancient were they that they must have been built before ever the first known gold-hunter had entered the Yukon Basin. Wandering moose-hunters, whom even Smoke had met and talked with, claimed to have found the two cabins in the old days, but to have sought vainly for the mine which those early adventurers must have worked.

"I wish you was goin' with me," Shorty said wistfully, at parting. "Just because you got the Indian bug ain't no reason for to go pokin' into trouble. They's no gettin' away from it, that's loco country you're bound for. The hoodoo’s sure on it, from the first flip to the last call, judgin’ from all you an’ me has hearn tell about it.”

“It’s all right, Shorty,” replied Smoke. “I’ll make the round trip and be back in Dawson in six weeks. The Yukon trail is packed, and the first hundred miles or so of the Stewart ought to be packed. Old-timers from Henderson have told me a number of outfits went up last fall after the freeze-up. When I strike their trail I ought to hit her up forty or fifty miles a day. I’m likely to be back inside a month, once I get across.”

“Yep, once you get acrost. But it’s the gettin’ acrost that worries me. Well, so long, Smoke. Keep your eyes open for that hoodoo, that’s all. An’ don’t be ashamed to turn back if you don’t kill any meat.”

A week later, Smoke found himself among the jumbled ranges south of Indian River. On the divide from the Klondike he had abandoned the sled and packed his wolf-dogs. The six big huskies each carried fifty pounds, and on his own back was an equal burden. Through the soft snow he led the way, packing it down under his snow-shoes, and behind, in single file, toiled the dogs.

He loved the life, the deep arctic winter, the silent wilderness, the unending snow-surface unpressed by the foot of any man. About him towered icy peaks unnamed and uncharted. No hunter’s camp-smoke, rising in the still air of the valleys, ever caught his eye. He, alone, moved through the brooding quiet of the untravelled wastes; nor was he oppressed by the solitude. He loved it all, the day’s toil, the bickering wolf-dogs, the making of the camp in the long twilight, the leaping stars overhead, and the flaming pageant of the aurora borealis.

Especially he loved his camp at the end of the day, and in it he saw a picture which he ever yearned to paint and which he knew he would never forget — a beaten place in the snow, where burned his fire; his bed, a couple of rabbit-skin robes spread on fresh-chopped spruce-boughs; his shelter, a stretched strip of canvas that caught and threw back the heat of the fire; the blackened coffee-pot and pail resting on a length of log, the moccasins propped on sticks to dry, the snow-shoes up-ended in the snow; and across the fire the wolf-dogs snuggling to it for the warmth, wistful and eager, furry and frost-rimed, with bushy tails curled protectingly over their feet; and all about, pressed backward but a space, the wall of encircling darkness.

At such times San Francisco, The Billow, and O'Hara seemed very far away, lost in a remote past, shadows of dreams that had never happened. He found it hard to believe that he had known any other life than this of the wild, and harder still was it for him to reconcile himself to the fact that he had once dabbled and dawdled in the Bohemian drift of city life. Alone, with no one to talk to, he thought much, and deeply, and simply. He was appalled by the wastage of his city years, by the cheapness, now, of the philosophies of the schools and books, of the clever cynicism of the studio and editorial room, of the cant of the business men in their clubs. They knew neither food, nor sleep, nor health; nor could they ever possibly know the sting of real appetite, the goodly ache of fatigue, nor the rush of mad strong blood that bit like wine through all one's body as work was done.

And all the time this fine, wise, Spartan Northland had been here, and he had never known. What puzzled him was, that, with such intrinsic fitness, he had never heard the slightest calling whisper, had not himself gone forth to seek. But this, too, he solved in time.

"Look here, Yellow Face, I've got it clear!"

The dog addressed lifted first one forefoot and then the other with quick, appeasing movements, curled his bush of a tail about them again, and laughed across the fire.

"Herbert Spencer was nearly forty before he caught the vision of his greatest efficiency and desire. I'm none so slow. I didn't have to wait till I was thirty to catch mine. Right here is my efficiency and desire. Almost, Yellow Face, do I wish I had been born a wolf-boy and been brother all my days to you and yours."

For days he wandered through a chaos of canyons and divides which did not yield themselves to any rational topographical plan. It was as if they had been flung there by some cosmic joker. In vain he sought for a creek or feeder that flowed truly south toward the McQuestion and the Stewart. Then came a mountain storm that blew a blizzard across the riff-raff of high and shallow divides. Above timber-line, fireless, for two days, he struggled blindly to find lower levels. On the second day he came out upon the rim of an enormous palisade. So thickly drove the snow that he could not see the base of the wall, nor dared he attempt the descent. He rolled himself in his robes and huddled the dogs about him in the depths of a snow-drift, but did not permit himself to sleep.

In the morning, the storm spent, he crawled out to investigate. A quarter of a mile beneath him, beyond all mistake, lay a frozen, snow-covered lake. About it, on every side, rose jagged peaks. It answered the description. Blindly, he had found Surprise Lake.

"Well named," he muttered, an hour later, as he came out upon its margin. A clump of aged spruce was the only woods. On his way to it, he stumbled upon three graves, snow-buried, but marked by hand-hewn head-posts and undecipherable writing. On the edge of the woods was a small ramshackle cabin. He pulled the latch and entered. In a corner, on what had once been a bed of spruce-boughs, still wrapped in mangy furs that had rotted to fragments, lay a skeleton. The last visitor to Surprise Lake, was Smoke's conclusion, as he picked up a lump of gold as large as his doubled fist. Beside the lump was a pepper-can filled with nuggets of the size of walnuts, rough-surfaced, showing no signs of wash.

So true had the tale run that Smoke accepted without question that the source of the gold was the lake's bottom. Under many feet of ice and inaccessible, there was nothing to be done, and at midday, from the rim of the palisade, he took a farewell look back and down at his find.

"It's all right, Mr. Lake," he said. "You just keep right on staying there. I'm coming back to drain you — if that hoodoo doesn't catch me. I don't know how I got here, but I'll know by the way I go out."

In a little valley, beside a frozen stream and under beneficent spruce trees, he built a fire four days later. Somewhere in that white anarchy he had left behind him was Surprise Lake — somewhere, he knew not where; for a hundred hours of driftage and struggle through blinding, driving snow had concealed his course from him, and he knew not in what direction lay BEHIND. It was as if he had just emerged from a nightmare. He was not sure whether four days or a week had passed. He had slept with the dogs, fought across a forgotten number of shallow divides, followed the windings of weird canyons that ended in pockets, and twice had managed to make a fire and thaw out frozen moose-meat. And here he was, well-fed and well-camped. The storm had passed, and it had turned clear and cold. The lay of the land had again become rational. The creek he was on was natural in appearance, and tended as it should toward the southwest. But Surprise Lake was as lost to him as it had been to all its seekers in the past.

Half a day's journey down the creek brought him to the valley of a larger stream which he decided was the McQuestion. Here he shot a moose, and once again each wolf-dog carried a full fifty-pound pack of meat. As he turned down the McQuestion, he came upon a sled-trail. The late snows had drifted over, but underneath, it was well packed by travel. His conclusion was that two camps had been established on the McQuestion, and that this was the connecting trail. Evidently, Two Cabins had been found, and it was the lower camp, so he headed down the stream.

It was forty below zero when he camped that night, and he fell asleep wondering who were the men who had rediscovered the Two Cabins, and if he would fetch it next day. At the first hint of dawn he was under way, easily following the half-obliterated trail and packing the recent snow with his webbed shoes so that the dogs should not wallow.

And then it came, the unexpected, leaping out upon him on a bend of the river. It seemed to him that he heard and felt simultaneously. The crack of the rifle came from the right, and the bullet, tearing through and across the shoulders of his drill parka and woollen coat, pivoted him half around with the shock of its impact. He staggered on his twisted snow-shoes to recover balance, and heard a second crack of the rifle. This time it was a clean miss. He did not wait for more, but plunged across the snow for the sheltering trees of the bank a hundred feet away. Again and again the rifle cracked, and he was unpleasantly aware of a trickle of warm moisture down his back.

He climbed the bank, the dogs floundering behind, and dodged in among the trees and brush. Slipping out of his snow-shoes, he wallowed forward at full length and peered cautiously out. Nothing was to be seen. Whoever had shot at him was lying quiet among the trees of the opposite bank.

“If something doesn’t happen pretty soon,” he muttered at the end of half an hour, “I’ll have to sneak away and build a fire or freeze my feet. Yellow Face, what’d you do, lying in the frost with circulation getting slack and a man trying to plug you?”

He crawled back a few yards, packed down the snow, danced a jig that sent the blood back into his feet, and managed to endure another half hour. Then, from down the river, he heard the unmistakable jingle of dog-bells. Peering out, he saw a sled round the bend. Only one man was with it, straining at the gee-pole and urging the dogs along. The effect on Smoke was one of shock, for it was the first human he had seen since he parted from Shorty three weeks before. His next thought was of the potential murderer concealed on the opposite bank.

Without exposing himself, Smoke whistled warningly. The man did not hear, and came on rapidly. Again, and more sharply, Smoke whistled. The man whoa'd his dogs, stopped, and had turned and faced Smoke when the rifle cracked. The instant afterwards, Smoke fired into the wood in the direction of the sound. The man on the river had been struck by the first shot. The shock of the high velocity bullet staggered him. He stumbled awkwardly to the sled, half-falling, and pulled a rifle out from under the lashings. As he strove to raise it to his shoulder, he crumpled at the waist and sank down slowly to a sitting posture on the sled. Then, abruptly, as the gun went off aimlessly, he pitched backward and across a corner of the sled-load, so that Smoke could see only his legs and stomach.

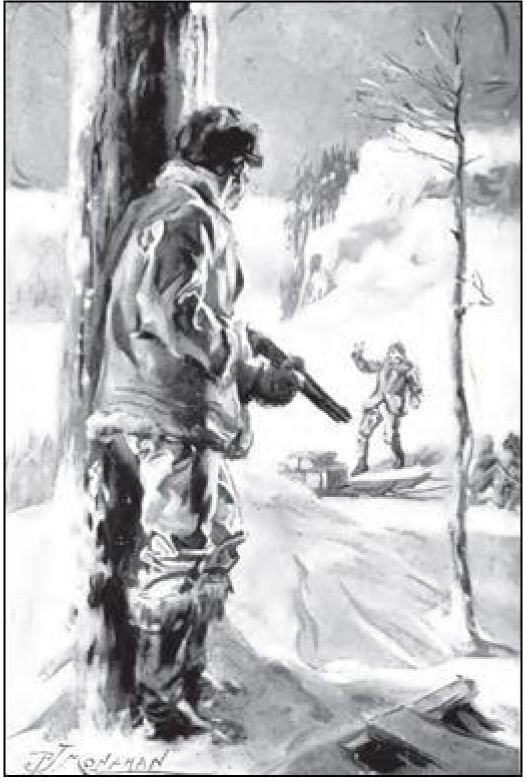

From below came more jingling bells. The man did not move. Around the bend swung three sleds, accompanied by half a dozen men. Smoke cried warningly, but they had seen the condition of the first sled, and they dashed on to it. No shots came from the other bank, and Smoke, calling his dogs to follow, emerged into the open. There were exclamations from the men, and two of them, flinging off the mittens of their right hands, levelled their rifles at him.

"Come on, you red-handed murderer, you," one of them, a black-bearded man, commanded. "An' jest pitch that gun of yourn in the snow."

Smoke hesitated, then dropped his rifle and came up to them.

"Go through him, Louis, an' take his weapons," the black-bearded man ordered.

Louis was a French-Canadian voyageur, Smoke decided, as were four of the others. His search revealed only Smoke's hunting knife, which was appropriated.

"Now, what have you got to say for yourself, stranger, before I shoot you dead?" the black-bearded man demanded.

"That you're making a mistake if you think I killed that man," Smoke answered.

A cry came from one of the voyageurs. He had quested along the trail and found Smoke's tracks where he had left it to take refuge on the bank. The man explained the nature of his find.

"What'd you kill Joe Kinade for?" he of the black beard asked.

"I tell you I didn't — " Smoke began.

"Aw, what's the good of talkin'? We got you red-handed. Right up there's where you left the trail when you heard him comin'. You laid among the trees an' bushwhacked him. A short shot. You couldn't 'a' missed. Pierre, go an' get that gun he dropped."

"You might let me tell what happened," Smoke objected.

"You shut up," the man snarled at him. "I reckon your gun'll tell the story."

All the men examined Smoke's rifle, ejecting and counting the cartridges, and examining the barrel at muzzle and breech.

"One shot," Blackbeard concluded.

Pierre, with nostrils that quivered and distended like a deer's, sniffed at the breech.

"Him one fresh shot," he said.

"The bullet entered his back," Smoke said. "He was facing me when he was shot. You see, it came from the other bank."

Blackbeard considered this proposition for a scant second, and shook his head. "Nope. It won't do. Turn him around to face the other bank — that's how you whopped him in the back. Some of you boys run up an' down the trail, and see if you can see any tracks making for the other bank."

Their report was that on that side the snow was unbroken. Not even a snow-shoe rabbit had crossed it. Blackbeard, bending over the dead man, straightened up, with a woolly, furry wad in his hand. Shredding this, he found imbedded in the center the bullet which had perforated the body. Its nose was spread to the size of a half dollar, its butt-end, steel-jacketed, was undamaged. He compared it with a cartridge from Smoke's belt.

"That's plain enough evidence, stranger, to satisfy a blind man. It's soft-nosed an' steel-jacketed; yourn is soft-nosed and steel-jacketed. It's thirty-thirty; yourn is thirty-thirty. It's manufactured by the J. and T. Arms Company; yourn is manufactured by the J. and T. Arms Company. Now you come along, an' we'll go over to the bank an' see jest how you done it."

"I was bushwhacked myself," Smoke said. "Look at the hole in my parka."

While Blackbeard examined it, one of the voyageurs threw open the breech of the dead man's gun. It was patent to all that it had been fired once. The empty cartridge was still in the chamber.

"A damn shame poor Joe didn't get you," Blackbeard said bitterly. "But he did pretty well with a hole like that in him. Come on, you."

"Search the other bank first," Smoke urged.

"You shut up an' come on, an' let the facts do the talkin'."

They left the trail at the same spot he had, and followed it on up the bank and then in among the trees.

"Him dance that place keep him feet warm," Louis pointed out. "That place him crawl on belly. That place him put one elbow w'en him shoot."

"And by God there's the empty cartridge he done it with!" was Blackbeard's discovery. "Boys, there's only one thing to do — "

"You might ask me how I came to fire that shot," Smoke interrupted.

"An' I might knock your teeth into your gullet if you butt in again. You can answer them questions later on. Now, boys, we're decent an' law-abidin', an' we got to handle this right an' regular. How far do you reckon we've come, Pierre?"

"Twenty mile, I t'ink for sure."

"All right. We'll cache the outfit an' run him an' poor Joe back to Two Cabins. I reckon we've seen an' can testify to what'll stretch his neck."

It was three hours after dark when the dead man, Smoke, and his captors arrived at Two Cabins. By the starlight, Smoke could make out a dozen or more recently built cabins snuggling about a larger and older cabin on a flat by the river bank. Thrust inside this older cabin, he found it tenanted by a young giant of a man, his wife, and an old blind man. The woman, whom her husband called "Lucy," was herself a strapping creature of the frontier type. The old man, as Smoke learned afterwards, had been a trapper on the Stewart for years, and had gone finally blind the winter before. The camp of Two Cabins, he was also to learn, had been made the previous fall by a dozen men who arrived in half as many poling-boats loaded with provisions. Here they had found the blind trapper, on the site of Two Cabins, and about his cabin they had built their own. Later arrivals, mushing up the ice with dog teams, had tripled the population. There was plenty of meat in camp, and good low-pay dirt had been discovered and was being worked.

In five minutes, all the men of Two Cabins were jammed into the room. Smoke, shoved off into a corner, ignored and scowled at, his hands and feet tied with thongs of moose-hide, looked on. Thirty-eight men he counted, a wild and husky crew, all frontiersmen of the States or voyageurs from Upper Canada. His captors told the tale over and over, each the center of an excited and wrathful group. There were mutterings of: "Lynch him now! Why wait?" And, once, a big Irishman was restrained only by force from rushing upon the helpless prisoner and giving him a beating.

It was while counting the men that Smoke caught sight of a familiar face. It was Breck, the man whose boat Smoke had run through the rapids. He wondered why the other did not come and speak to him, but himself gave no sign of recognition. Later, when with shielded face Breck passed him a significant wink, Smoke understood.

Blackbeard, whom Smoke heard called Eli Harding, ended the discussion as to whether or not the prisoner should be immediately lynched.

"Hold on," Harding roared. "Keep your shirts on. That man belongs to me. I caught him an' I brought him here. D'ye think I brought him all the way here to be lynched? Not on your life. I could 'a' done that myself when I found him. I brought him here for a fair an' impartial trial, an' by God, a fair an' impartial trial he's goin' to get. He's tied up safe an' sound. Chuck him in a bunk till morning, an' we'll hold the trial right here."

Smoke woke up. A draught that possessed all the rigidity of an icicle was boring into the front of his shoulders as he lay on his side facing the wall. When he had been tied into the bunk there had been no such draught, and now the outside air, driving into the heated atmosphere of the cabin with the pressure of fifty below zero, was sufficient advertizement that some one from without had pulled away the moss-chinking between the logs. He squirmed as far as his bonds would permit, then craned his neck forward until his lips just managed to reach the crack.

"Who is it?" he whispered.

"Breck," came the almost inaudible answer. "Be careful you don't make a noise. I'm going to pass a knife in to you."

"No good," Smoke said. "I couldn't use it. My hands are tied behind me and made fast to the leg of the bunk. Besides, you couldn't get a knife through that crack. But something must be done. Those fellows are of a temper to hang me, and, of course, you know I didn't kill that man."

"It wasn't necessary to mention it, Smoke. And if you did you had your reasons. Which isn't the point at all. I want to get you out of this. It's a tough bunch of men here. You've seen them. They're shut off from the world, and they make and enforce their own law — by miner's meeting, you know. They handled two men already — both grub-thieves. One they hiked from camp without an ounce of grub and no matches. He made about forty miles and lasted a couple of days before he froze stiff. Two weeks ago they hiked the second man. They gave him his choice: no grub, or ten lashes for each day's ration. He stood for forty lashes before he fainted. And now they've got you, and every last one is convinced you killed Kinade."

"The man who killed Kinade shot at me, too. His bullet broke the skin on my shoulder. Get them to delay the trial till some one goes up and searches the bank where the murderer hid."

"No use. They take the evidence of Harding and the five Frenchmen with him. Besides, they haven't had a hanging yet, and they're keen for it. You see, things have been pretty monotonous. They haven't located anything big, and they got tired of hunting for Surprise Lake. They did some stampeding the first part of the winter, but they've got over that now. Scurvy is beginning to show up amongst them, too, and they're just ripe for excitement."

"And it looks like I'll furnish it," was Smoke's comment. "Say, Breck, how did you ever fall in with such a God-forsaken bunch?"

"After I got the claims at Squaw Creek opened up and some men to working, I came up here by way of the Stewart, hunting for Two Cabins. They'd beaten me to it, so I've been higher up the Stewart. Just got back yesterday out of grub."

"Find anything?"

"Nothing much. But I think I've got a hydraulic proposition that'll work big when the country's opened up. It's that, or a gold-dredger."

"Hold on," Smoke interrupted. "Wait a minute. Let me think."

He was very much aware of the snores of the sleepers as he pursued the idea that had flashed into his mind.

"Say, Breck, have they opened up the meat-packs my dogs carried?" he asked.

"A couple. I was watching. They put them in Harding's cache."

"Did they find anything?"

"Meat."

"Good. You've got to get into the brown-canvas pack that's patched with moose-hide. You'll find a few pounds of lumpy gold. You've never seen gold like it in the country, nor has anybody else. Here's what you've got to do. Listen."

A quarter of an hour later, fully instructed and complaining that his toes were freezing, Breck went away. Smoke, his own nose and one cheek frosted by proximity to the chink, rubbed them against the blankets for half an hour before the blaze and bite of the returning blood assured him of the safety of his flesh.

"My mind's made up right now. There ain't no doubt but what he killed Kinade. We heard the whole thing last night. What's the good of goin' over it again? I vote guilty."

In such fashion, Smoke's trial began. The speaker, a loose-jointed, hard-rock man from Colorado, manifested irritation and disgust when Harding set his suggestion aside, demanded the proceedings should be regular, and nominated one Shunk Wilson for judge and chairman of the meeting. The population of Two Cabins constituted the jury, though, after some discussion, the woman, Lucy, was denied the right to vote on Smoke's guilt or innocence.

While this was going on, Smoke, jammed into a corner on a bunk, overheard a whispered conversation between Breck and a miner.

"You haven't fifty pounds of flour you'll sell?" Breck queried.

"You ain't got the dust to pay the price I'm askin'," was the reply.

"I'll give you two hundred."

The man shook his head.

"Three hundred. Three-fifty."

At four hundred, the man nodded, and said, “Come on over to my cabin an’ weigh out the dust.”

The two squeezed their way to the door, and slipped out. After a few minutes Breck returned alone.

Harding was testifying, when Smoke saw the door shoved open slightly, and in the crack appear the face of the man who had sold the flour. He was grimacing and beckoning emphatically to some one inside, who arose from near the stove and started to work toward the door.

“Where are you goin’, Sam?” Shunk Wilson demanded.

“I’ll be back in a jiffy,” Sam explained. “I jes’ got to go.”

Smoke was permitted to question the witnesses, and he was in the middle of the cross-examination of Harding when from without came the whining of dogs in harness, and the grind and churn of sled-runners. Somebody near the door peeped out.

“It’s Sam an’ his pardner an’ a dog-team hell-bent down the trail for Stewart River,” the man reported.

Nobody spoke for a long half-minute, but men glanced significantly at one another, and a general restlessness pervaded the packed room. Out of the corner of his eye, Smoke caught a glimpse of Breck, Lucy, and her husband whispering together.

“Come on, you,” Shunk Wilson said gruffly to Smoke. “Cut this questionin’ short. We know what you’re tryin’ to prove — that the other bank wa’n’t searched. The witness admits it. We admit it. It wa’n’t necessary. No tracks led to that bank. The snow wa’n’t broke.”

“There was a man on the other bank just the same,” Smoke insisted.

“That’s too thin for skatin’, young man. There ain’t many of us on the McQuestion, an’ we got every man accounted for.”

“Who was the man you hiked out of camp two weeks ago?” Smoke asked.

“Alonzo Miramar. He was a Mexican. What’s that grub-thief got to do with it?”

“Nothing, except that you haven’t accounted for HIM, Mr. Judge.”

“He went down the river, not up.”

“How do you know where he went?”

“Saw him start.”

“And that’s all you know of what became of him?”

“No, it ain’t, young man. I know, we all know, he had four days’ grub an’ no gun to shoot meat with. If he didn’t make the settlement on the Yukon he’d croaked long before this.”

“I suppose you’ve got all the guns in this part of the country accounted for, too,” Smoke observed pointedly.

Shunk Wilson was angry. “You’d think I was the prisoner the way you slam questions into me. Now then, come on with the next witness. Where’s French Louis?”

While French Louis was shoving forward, Lucy opened the door.

“Where you goin’?” Shunk Wilson shouted.

“I reckon I don’t have to stay,” she answered defiantly. “I ain’t got no vote, an’ besides, my cabin’s so jammed up I can’t breathe.”

In a few minutes her husband followed. The closing of the door was the first warning the judge received of it.

“Who was that?” he interrupted Pierre’s narrative to ask.

“Bill Peabody,” somebody spoke up. “Said he wanted to ask his wife something and was coming right back.”

Instead of Bill, it was Lucy who re-entered, took off her furs, and resumed her place by the stove.

“I reckon we don’t need to hear the rest of the witnesses,” was Shunk Wilson’s decision, when Pierre had finished. “We already know they only can testify to the same facts we’ve already heard. Say, Sorensen, you go an’ bring Bill Peabody back. We’ll be votin’ a verdict pretty short. Now, stranger, you can get up an’ say your say concernin’ what happened. In the meantime, we’ll just be savin’ delay by passin’ around the two rifles, the ammunition, an’ the bullet that done the killin’.”

Midway in his story of how he had arrived in that part of the country, and at the point in his narrative where he described his own ambush and how he had fled to the bank, Smoke was interrupted by the indignant Shunk Wilson.

“Young man, what sense is there in you testifyin’ that way? You’re just takin’ up valuable time. Of course you got the right to lie to save your neck, but we ain’t goin’ to stand for such foolishness. The rifle, the ammunition, an’ the bullet that killed Joe Kinade is against you. What’s that? Open the door, somebody!”

The frost rushed in, taking form and substance in the heat of the room, while through the open door came the whining of dogs that decreased rapidly with distance.

"It's Sorensen an' Peabody," some one cried, "a-throwin' the whip into the dawgs an' headin' down river!"

"Now, what the hell — !" Shunk Wilson paused, with dropped jaw, and glared at Lucy. "I reckon you can explain, Mrs. Peabody."

She tossed her head and compressed her lips, and Shunk Wilson's wrathful and suspicious gaze passed on and rested on Breck.

"An' I reckon that newcomer you've been chinning with could explain if HE had a mind to."

Breck, now very uncomfortable, found all eyes centered on him.

"Sam was chewing the rag with him, too, before he hit out," some one said.

"Look here, Mr. Breck," Shunk Wilson continued. "You've been interruptin' proceedings, and you got to explain the meanin' of it. What was you chinnin' about?"

Breck cleared his throat timidly and replied. "I was just trying to buy some grub."

"What with?"

"Dust, of course."

"Where'd you get it?"

Breck did not answer.

"He's been snoopin' around up the Stewart," a man volunteered. "I run across his camp a week ago when I was huntin'. An' I want to tell you he was almighty secretious about it."

"The dust didn't come from there," Breck said. "That's only a low-grade hydraulic proposition."

"Bring your poke here an' let's see your dust," Wilson commanded.

"I tell you it didn't come from there."

"Let's see it, just the same."

Breck made as if to refuse, but all about him were menacing faces. Reluctantly, he fumbled in his coat pocket. In the act of drawing forth a pepper-can, it rattled against what was evidently a hard object.

"Fetch it all out!" Shunk Wilson thundered.

And out came the big nugget, fist-size, yellow as no gold any onlooker had ever seen. Shunk Wilson gasped. Half a dozen, catching one glimpse, made a break for the door. They reached it at the same moment, and, with cursing and scuffling, jammed and pivoted through. The judge emptied the contents of the pepper-can on the table, and the sight of the rough lump-gold sent half a dozen more toward the door.

“Where are you goin’?” Eli Harding asked, as Shunk started to follow.

“For my dogs, of course.”

“Ain’t you goin’ to hang him?”

“It’d take too much time right now. He’ll keep till we get back, so I reckon this court is adjourned. This ain’t no place for lingerin’.”

Harding hesitated. He glanced savagely at Smoke, saw Pierre beckoning to Louis from the doorway, took one last look at the lump-gold on the table, and decided.

“No use you tryin’ to get away,” he flung back over his shoulder. “Besides, I’m goin’ to borrow your dogs.”

“What is it? — another one of them blamed stampedes?” the old blind trapper asked in a queer and petulant falsetto, as the cries of men and dogs and the grind of the sleds swept the silence of the room.

“It sure is,” Lucy answered. “An’ I never seen gold like it. Feel that, old man.”

She put the big nugget in his hand. He was but slightly interested.

“It was a good fur-country,” he complained, “before them danged miners come in an’ scared back the game.”

The door opened, and Breck entered. “Well,” he said, “we four are all that are left in camp. It’s forty miles to the Stewart by the cut-off I broke, and the fastest of them can’t make the round trip in less than five or six days. But it’s time you pulled out, Smoke, just the same.”

Breck drew his hunting-knife across the other’s bonds, and glanced at the woman. “I hope you don’t object?” he said, with significant politeness.

“If there’s goin’ to be any shootin’,” the blind man broke out, “I wish somebody’d take me to another cabin first.”

“Go on, an’ don’t mind me,” Lucy answered. “If I ain’t good enough to hang a man, I ain’t good enough to hold him.”

Smoke stood up, rubbing his wrists where the thongs had impeded the circulation.

“I’ve got a pack all ready for you,” Breck said. “Ten days’ grub, blankets, matches, tobacco, an axe, and a rifle.”

“Go to it,” Lucy encouraged. “Hit the high places, stranger. Beat it as fast as God’ll let you.”

"I'm going to have a square meal before I start," Smoke said. "And when I start it will be up the McQuestion, not down. I want you to go along with me, Breck. We're going to search that other bank for the man that really did the killing."

"If you'll listen to me, you'll head down for the Stewart and the Yukon," Breck objected. "When this gang gets back from my low-grade hydraulic proposition, it will be seeing red."

Smoke laughed and shook his head.

"I can't jump this country, Breck. I've got interests here. I've got to stay and make good. I don't care whether you believe me or not, but I've found Surprise Lake. That's where that gold came from. Besides, they took my dogs, and I've got to wait to get them back. Also, I know what I'm about. There was a man hidden on that bank. He came pretty close to emptying his magazine at me."

Half an hour afterward, with a big plate of moose-steak before him and a big mug of coffee at his lips, Smoke half-started up from his seat. He had heard the sounds first. Lucy threw open the door.

"Hello, Spike; hello, Methody," she greeted the two frost-rimed men who were bending over the burden on their sled.

"We just come down from Upper Camp," one said, as the pair staggered into the room with a fur-wrapped object which they handled with exceeding gentleness. "An' this is what we found by the way. He's all in, I guess."

"Put him in the near bunk there," Lucy said. She bent over and pulled back the furs, disclosing a face composed principally of large, staring, black eyes, and of skin, dark and scabbed by repeated frost-bite, tightly stretched across the bones.

"If it ain't Alonzo!" she cried. "You pore, starved devil!"

"That's the man on the other bank," Smoke said in an undertone to Breck.

"We found it raidin' a cache that Harding must 'a' made," one of the men was explaining. "He was eatin' raw flour an' frozen bacon, an' when we got 'm he was cryin' an' squealin' like a hawg. Look at him! He's all starved, an' most of him frozen. He'll kick at any moment."

Half an hour later, when the furs had been drawn over the face of the still form in the bunk, Smoke turned to Lucy. "If you don't mind, Mrs. Peabody, I'll have another whack at that steak. Make it thick and not so well done. I'm a meat-eater, I am."

VI. THE RACE FOR NUMBER THREE.

“Huh! Get on to the glad rags!”

Shorty surveyed his partner with simulated disapproval, and Smoke, vainly attempting to rub the wrinkles out of the pair of trousers he had just put on, was irritated.

“They sure fit you close for a second-hand buy,” Shorty went on. “What was the tax?”

“One hundred and fifty for the suit,” Smoke answered. “The man was nearly my own size. I thought it was remarkably reasonable. What are you kicking about?”

“Who? Me? Oh, nothin’. I was just thinkin’ it was goin’ some for a meat-eater that hit Dawson in an ice-jam, with no grub, one suit of underclothes, a pair of mangy moccasins, an’ overalls that looked like they’d been through the wreck of the Hesperus. Pretty gay front, pardner. Pretty gay front. Say — ?”

“What do you want now?” Smoke demanded testily.

“What’s her name?”

“There isn’t any her, my friend. I’m to have dinner at Colonel Bowie’s, if you want to know. The trouble with you, Shorty, is you’re envious because I’m going into high society and you’re not invited.”

“Ain’t you some late?” Shorty queried with concern.

“What do you mean?”

“For dinner. They’ll be eatin’ supper when you get there.”

Smoke was about to explain with crudely elaborate sarcasm when he caught the twinkle in the other’s eye. He went on dressing, with fingers that had lost their deftness, tying a Windsor tie in a bow-knot at the throat of his soft cotton shirt.

“Wisht I hadn’t sent all my starched shirts to the laundry,” Shorty murmured sympathetically. “I might ‘a’ fitted you out.”

By this time Smoke was straining at a pair of shoes. The woollen socks were too thick to go into them. He looked appealingly at Shorty, who shook his head.

“Nope. If I had thin ones I wouldn’t lend ‘em to you. Back to the moccasins, pardner. You’d sure freeze your toes in skimpy-fangled gear like that.”

“I paid fifteen dollars for them, second hand,” Smoke lamented.

“I reckon they won’t be a man not in moccasins.”

“But there are to be women, Shorty. I’m going to sit down and eat with real live women — Mrs. Bowie, and several others, so the Colonel told me.”

“Well, moccasins won’t spoil their appetite none,” was Shorty’s comment. “Wonder what the Colonel wants with you?”

“I don’t know, unless he’s heard about my finding Surprise Lake. It will take a fortune to drain it, and the Guggenheims are out for investment.”

“Reckon that’s it. That’s right, stick to the moccasins. Gee! That coat is sure wrinkled, an’ it fits you a mite too swift. Just peck around at your vittles. If you eat hearty you’ll bust through. An’ if them women folks gets to droppin’ handkerchiefs, just let ‘em lay. Don’t do any pickin’ up. Whatever you do, don’t.”

As became a high-salaried expert and the representative of the great house of Guggenheim, Colonel Bowie lived in one of the most magnificent cabins in Dawson. Of squared logs, hand-hewn, it was two stories high, and of such extravagant proportions that it boasted a big living room that was used for a living room and for nothing else.

Here were big bear-skins on the rough board floor, and on the walls horns of moose and caribou. Here roared an open fireplace and a big wood-burning stove. And here Smoke met the social elect of Dawson — not the mere pick-handle millionaires, but the ultra-cream of a mining city whose population had been recruited from all the world — men like Warburton Jones, the explorer and writer; Captain Consadine of the Mounted Police; Haskell, Gold Commissioner of the Northwest Territory; and Baron Von Schroeder, an emperor’s favourite with an international duelling reputation.

And here, dazzling in evening gown, he met Joy Gastell, whom hitherto he had encountered only on trail, befurred and moccasined. At dinner he found himself beside her.

“I feel like a fish out of water,” he confessed. “All you folks are so real grand you know. Besides, I never dreamed such Oriental luxury existed in the Klondike. Look at Von Schroeder there. He’s actually got a dinner jacket, and Consadine’s got a starched shirt. I noticed he wore moccasins just the same. How do you like MY outfit?”

He moved his shoulders about as if preening himself for Joy’s approval.

“It looks as if you’d grown stout since you came over the Pass,” she laughed.

“Wrong. Guess again.”

“It’s somebody else’s.”

“You win. I bought it for a price from one of the clerks at the A. C. Company.”

“It’s a shame clerks are so narrow-shouldered,” she sympathized. “And you haven’t told me what you think of MY outfit.”

“I can’t,” he said. “I’m out of breath. I’ve been living on trail too long. This sort of thing comes to me with a shock, you know. I’d quite forgotten that women have arms and shoulders. To-morrow morning, like my friend Shorty, I’ll wake up and know it’s all a dream. Now, the last time I saw you on Squaw Creek — ”

“I was just a squaw,” she broke in.

“I hadn’t intended to say that. I was remembering that it was on Squaw Creek that I discovered you had feet.”

“And I can never forget that you saved them for me,” she said. “I’ve been wanting to see you ever since to thank you — ” (He shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly). “And that’s why you are here to-night.”

“You asked the Colonel to invite me?”

“No! Mrs. Bowie. And I asked her to let me have you at table. And here’s my chance. Everybody’s talking. Listen, and don’t interrupt. You know Mono Creek?”

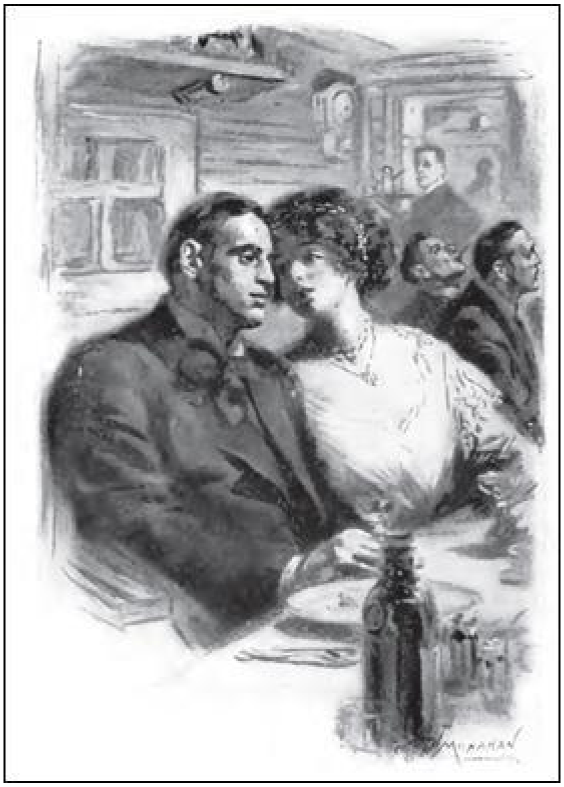

“Yes.”

“It has turned out rich — dreadfully rich. They estimate the claims as worth a million and more apiece. It was only located the other day.”

“I remember the stampede.”

“Well, the whole creek was staked to the sky-line, and all the feeders, too. And yet, right now, on the main creek, Number Three below Discovery is unrecorded. The creek was so far away from Dawson that the Commissioner allowed sixty days for recording after location. Every claim was recorded except Number Three below. It was staked by Cyrus Johnson. And that was all. Cyrus Johnson has disappeared. Whether he died, whether he went down river or up, nobody knows. Anyway, in six days, the time for recording will be up. Then the man who stakes it, and reaches Dawson first and records it, gets it.”

“A million dollars,” Smoke murmured.

“Gilchrist, who has the next claim below, has got six hundred dollars in a single pan off bedrock. He’s burned one hole down. And the claim on the other side is even richer. I know.”

“But why doesn’t everybody know?” Smoke queried skeptically.

“They’re beginning to know. They kept it secret for a long time, and it is only now that it’s coming out. Good dog-teams will be at a premium in another twenty-four hours. Now, you've got to get away as decently as you can as soon as dinner is over. I've arranged it. An Indian will come with a message for you. You read it, let on that you're very much put out, make your excuses, and get away."

"I — er — I fail to follow."

"Ninny!" she exclaimed in a half-whisper. "What you must do is to get out to-night and hustle dog-teams. I know of two. There's Hanson's team, seven big Hudson Bay dogs — he's holding them at four hundred each. That's top price to-night, but it won't be to-morrow. And Sitka Charley has eight Malemutes he's asking thirty-five hundred for. To-morrow he'll laugh at an offer of five thousand. Then you've got your own team of dogs. And you'll have to buy several more teams. That's your work to-night. Get the best. It's dogs as well as men that will win this race. It's a hundred and ten miles, and you'll have to relay as frequently as you can."

"Oh, I see, you want me to go in for it," Smoke drawled.

"If you haven't the money for the dogs, I'll — " She faltered, but before she could continue, Smoke was speaking.

"I can buy the dogs. But — er — aren't you afraid this is gambling?"

"After your exploits at roulette in the Elkhorn," she retorted, "I'm not afraid that you're afraid. It's a sporting proposition, if that's what you mean. A race for a million, and with some of the stiffest dog-mushers and travellers in the country entered against you. They haven't entered yet, but by this time to-morrow they will, and dogs will be worth what the richest man can afford to pay. Big Olaf is in town. He came up from Circle City last month. He is one of the most terrible dog-mushers in the country, and if he enters he will be your most dangerous man. Arizona Bill is another. He's been a professional freighter and mail-carrier for years. If he goes in, interest will be centered on him and Big Olaf."

"And you intend me to come along as a sort of dark horse."

"Exactly. And it will have its advantages. You will not be supposed to stand a show. After all, you know, you are still classed as a chechako. You haven't seen the four seasons go around. Nobody will take notice of you until you come into the home stretch in the lead."

"It's on the home stretch the dark horse is to show up its classy form, eh?"

She nodded, and continued earnestly: "Remember, I shall never forgive myself for the trick I played on the Squaw Creek stampede unless you win this Mono claim. And if any man can win this race against the old-timers, it's you."

It was the way she said it. He felt warm all over, and in his heart and head. He gave her a quick, searching look, involuntary and serious, and for the moment that her eyes met his steadily, ere they fell, it seemed to him that he read something of vaster import than the claim Cyrus Johnson had failed to record.

"I'll do it," he said. "I'll win it."

The glad light in her eyes seemed to promise a greater meed than all the gold in the Mono claim. He was aware of a movement of her hand in her lap next to his. Under the screen of the tablecloth he thrust his own hand across and met a firm grip of woman's fingers that sent another wave of warmth through him.

"What will Shorty say?" was the thought that flashed whimsically through his mind as he withdrew his hand. He glanced almost jealously at the faces of Von Schroeder and Jones, and wondered if they had not divined the remarkableness and deliciousness of this woman who sat beside him.

He was aroused by her voice, and realized that she had been speaking some moments.

"So you see, Arizona Bill is a white Indian," she was saying. "And Big Olaf is a bear wrestler, a king of the snows, a mighty savage. He can out-travel and out-endure an Indian, and he's never known any other life but that of the wild and the frost."

"Who's that?" Captain Consadine broke in from across the table.

"Big Olaf," she answered. "I was just telling Mr. Bellew what a traveller he is."

"You're right," the Captain's voice boomed. "Big Olaf is the greatest traveller in the Yukon. I'd back him against Old Nick himself for snow-bucking and ice-travel. He brought in the government dispatches in 1895, and he did it after two couriers were frozen on Chilkoot and the third drowned in the open water of Thirty Mile."

Smoke had travelled in a leisurely fashion up to Mono Creek, fearing to tire his dogs before the big race. Also, he had familiarized himself with every mile of the trail and located his relay camps. So many men had entered the race that the hundred and ten miles of its course was almost a continuous village. Relay camps were everywhere along the trail. Von Schroeder, who had gone in purely for the sport, had no less than eleven dog-teams — a fresh one for every ten miles. Arizona Bill had been forced to content himself with eight teams. Big Olaf had seven, which was the complement of Smoke. In addition, over two score of other men were in the running. Not every day, even in the golden north, was a million dollars the prize for a dog race. The country had been swept of dogs. No animal of speed and endurance escaped the fine-tooth comb that had raked the creeks and camps, and the prices of dogs had doubled and quadrupled in the course of the frantic speculation.

Number Three below Discovery was ten miles up Mono Creek from its mouth. The remaining hundred miles was to be run on the frozen breast of the Yukon. On Number Three itself were fifty tents and over three hundred dogs. The old stakes, blazed and scrawled sixty days before by Cyrus Johnson, still stood, and every man had gone over the boundaries of the claim again and again, for the race with the dogs was to be preceded by a foot and obstacle race. Each man had to relocate the claim for himself, and this meant that he must place two center-stakes and four corner-stakes and cross the creek twice, before he could start for Dawson with his dogs.

Furthermore, there were to be no "sooners." Not until the stroke of midnight of Friday night was the claim open for relocation, and not until the stroke of midnight could a man plant a stake. This was the ruling of the Gold Commissioner at Dawson, and Captain Consadine had sent up a squad of mounted police to enforce it. Discussion had arisen about the difference between sun-time and police-time, but Consadine had sent forth his fiat that police-time went, and, further, that it was the watch of Lieutenant Pollock that went.

The Mono trail ran along the level creek-bed, and, less than two feet in width, was like a groove, walled on either side by the snowfall of months. The problem of how forty-odd sleds and three hundred dogs were to start in so narrow a course was in everybody's mind.

"Huh!" said Shorty. "It's goin' to be the gosh-dangdest mix-up that ever was. I can't see no way out, Smoke, except main strength an' sweat an' to plow through. If the whole creek was glare-ice they ain't room for a dozen teams abreast. I got a hunch right now they's goin' to be a heap of scrappin' before they get strung out. An' if any of it comes our way, you got to let me do the punchin'."

Smoke squared his shoulders and laughed non-committally.

"No, you don't!" his partner cried in alarm. "No matter what happens, you don't dast hit. You can't handle dogs a hundred miles with a busted knuckle, an' that's what'll happen if you land on somebody's jaw."

Smoke nodded his head. "You're right, Shorty. I couldn't risk the chance."

"An' just remember," Shorty went on, "that I got to do all the shovin' for them first ten miles, an' you got to take it easy as you can. I'll sure jerk you through to the Yukon. After that it's up to you an' the dogs. Say — what d'ye think Schroeder's scheme is? He's got his first team a quarter of a mile down the creek, an' he'll know it by a green lantern. But we got him skinned. Me for the red flare every time."

The day had been clear and cold, but a blanket of cloud formed across the face of the sky, and the night came on warm and dark, with the hint of snow impending. The thermometer registered fifteen below zero, and in the Klondike winter fifteen below is esteemed very warm.

At a few minutes before midnight, leaving Shorty with the dogs five hundred yards down the creek, Smoke joined the racers on Number Three. There were forty-five of them waiting the start for the thousand thousand dollars Cyrus Johnson had left lying in the frozen gravel. Each man carried six stakes and a heavy wooden mallet, and was clad in a smock-like parka of heavy cotton drill.

Lieutenant Pollock, in a big bearskin coat, looked at his watch by the light of a fire. It lacked a minute of midnight. "Make ready," he said, as he raised a revolver in his right hand and watched the second hand tick around.

Forty-five hoods were thrown back from the parkas. Forty-five pairs of hands unmittened, and forty-five pairs of moccasins pressed tensely into the packed snow. Also, forty-five stakes were thrust into the snow, and the same number of mallets lifted in the air.

The shot rang out, and the mallets fell. Cyrus Johnson's right to the million had expired. To prevent confusion, Lieutenant Pollock had insisted that the lower center-stake be driven first, next the south-eastern; and so on around the four sides, including the upper center-stake on the way.

Smoke drove in his stake and was away with the leading dozen. Fires had been lighted at the corners, and by each fire stood a policeman, list in hand, checking off the names of the runners. A man was supposed to call out his name and show his face. There was to be no staking by proxy while the real racer was off and away down the creek.

At the first corner, beside Smoke's stake, Von Schroeder placed his. The mallets struck at the same instant. As they hammered, more arrived from behind and with such impetuosity as to get in one another's way and cause jostling and shoving. Squirming through the press and calling his name to the policeman, Smoke saw the Baron, struck in collision by one of the rushers, hurled clean off his feet into the snow. But Smoke did not wait. Others were still ahead of him. By the light of the vanishing fire, he was certain that he saw the back, hugely looming, of Big Olaf, and at the southwestern corner Big Olaf and he drove their stakes side by side.

It was no light work, this preliminary obstacle race. The boundaries of the claim totalled nearly a mile, and most of it was over the uneven surface of a snow-covered, niggerhead flat. All about Smoke men tripped and fell, and several times he pitched forward himself, jarringly, on hands and knees. Once, Big Olaf fell so immediately in front of him as to bring him down on top.

The upper center-stake was driven by the edge of the bank, and down the bank the racers plunged, across the frozen creek-bed, and up the other side. Here, as Smoke clambered, a hand gripped his ankle and jerked him back. In the flickering light of a distant fire, it was impossible to see who had played the trick. But Arizona Bill, who had been treated similarly, rose to his feet and drove his fist with a crunch into the offender's face. Smoke saw and heard as he was scrambling to his feet, but before he could make another lunge for the bank a fist dropped him half-stunned into the snow. He staggered up, located the man, half-swung a hook for his jaw, then remembered Shorty's warning and refrained. The next moment, struck below the knees by a hurtling body, he went down again.

It was a foretaste of what would happen when the men reached their sleds. Men were pouring over the other bank and piling into the jam. They swarmed up the bank in bunches, and in bunches were dragged back by their impatient fellows. More blows were struck, curses rose from the panting chests of those who still had wind to spare, and Smoke, curiously visioning the face of Joy Gastell, hoped that the mallets would not be brought into play. Overthrown, trod upon, groping in the snow for his lost stakes, he at last crawled out of the crush and attacked the bank farther along. Others were doing this, and it was his luck to have many men in advance of him in the race for the northwestern corner.

Reaching the fourth corner, he tripped headlong and in the long sprawling fall lost his remaining stake. For five minutes he groped in the darkness before he found it, and all the time the panting runners were passing him. From the last corner to the creek he began overtaking men for whom the mile run had been too much. In the creek itself Bedlam had broken loose. A dozen sleds were piled up and overturned, and nearly a hundred dogs were locked in combat. Among them men struggled, tearing the tangled animals apart, or beating them apart with clubs. In the fleeting glimpse he caught of it, Smoke wondered if he had ever seen a Dore grotesquery to compare.

Leaping down the bank beyond the glutted passage, he gained the hard-footing of the sled-trail and made better time. Here, in packed harbors beside the narrow trail, sleds and men waited for runners that were still behind. From the rear came the whine and rush of dogs, and Smoke had barely time to leap aside into the deep snow. A sled tore past, and he made out the man kneeling and shouting madly. Scarcely was it by when it stopped with a crash of battle. The excited dogs of a harbored sled, resenting the passing animals, had got out of hand and sprung upon them.

Smoke plunged around and by. He could see the green lantern of Von Schroeder and, just below it, the red flare that marked his own team. Two men were guarding Schroeder's dogs, with short clubs interposed between them and the trail.

"Come on, you Smoke! Come on, you Smoke!" he could hear Shorty calling anxiously.

"Coming!" he gasped.

By the red flare, he could see the snow torn up and trampled, and from the way his partner breathed he knew a battle had been fought. He staggered to the sled, and, in a moment he was falling on it, Shorty's whip snapped as he yelled: "Mush! you devils! Mush!"

The dogs sprang into the breast-bands, and the sled jerked abruptly ahead. They were big animals — Hanson's prize team of Hudson Bays — and Smoke had selected them for the first stage, which included the ten miles of Mono, the heavy going of the cut-off across the flat at the mouth, and the first ten miles of the Yukon stretch.

"How many are ahead?" he asked.

"You shut up an' save your wind," Shorty answered. "Hi! you brutes! Hit her up! Hit her up!"

He was running behind the sled, towing on a short rope. Smoke could not see him; nor could he see the sled on which he lay at full length. The fires had been left in the rear, and they were tearing through a wall of blackness as fast as the dogs could spring into it. This blackness was almost sticky, so nearly did it take on the seeming of substance.

Smoke felt the sled heel up on one runner as it rounded an invisible curve, and from ahead came the snarls of beasts and the oaths of men. This was known afterward as the Barnes-Slocum Jam. It was the teams of these two men which first collided, and into it, at full career, piled Smoke's seven big fighters. Scarcely more than semi-domesticated wolves, the excitement of that night on Mono Creek had sent every dog fighting mad. The Klondike dogs, driven without reins, cannot be stopped except by voice, so that there was no stopping this glut of struggle that heaped itself between the narrow rims of the creek. From behind, sled after sled hurled into the turmoil. Men who had their teams nearly extricated were overwhelmed by fresh avalanches of dogs — each animal well fed, well rested, and ripe for battle.

"It's knock down an' drag out an' plow through!" Shorty yelled in his partner's ear. "An' watch out for your knuckles! You drag dogs out an' let me do the punchin'!"

What happened in the next half hour Smoke never distinctly remembered. At the end he emerged exhausted, sobbing for breath, his jaw sore from a fist-blow, his shoulder aching from the bruise of a club, the blood running warmly down one leg from the rip of a dog's fangs, and both sleeves of his parka torn to shreds. As in a dream, while the battle still raged behind, he helped Shorty reharness the dogs. One, dying, they cut from the traces, and in the darkness they felt their way to the repair of the disrupted harness.

"Now you lie down an' get your wind back," Shorty commanded.

And through the darkness the dogs sped, with unabated strength, down Mono Creek, across the long cut-off, and to the Yukon. Here, at the junction with the main river-trail, somebody had lighted a fire, and here Shorty said good-bye. By the light of the fire, as the sled leaped behind the flying dogs, Smoke caught another of the unforgettable pictures of the Northland. It was of Shorty, swaying and sinking down limply in the snow, yelling his parting encouragement, one eye blackened and closed, knuckles bruised and broken, and one arm, ripped and fang-torn, gushing forth a steady stream of blood.

"How many ahead?" Smoke asked, as he dropped his tired Hudson Bays and sprang on the waiting sled at the first relay station.

"I counted eleven," the man called after him, for he was already away, behind the leaping dogs.

Fifteen miles they were to carry him on the next stage, which would fetch him to the mouth of White River. There were nine of them, but they composed his weakest team. The twenty-five miles between White River and Sixty Mile he had broken into two stages because of ice-jams, and here two of his heaviest, toughest teams were stationed.

He lay on the sled at full length, face-down, holding on with both hands. Whenever the dogs slacked from topmost speed he rose to his knees, and, yelling and urging, clinging precariously with one hand, threw his whip into them. Poor team that it was, he passed two sleds before White River was reached. Here, at the freeze-up, a jam had piled a barrier, allowing the open water, that formed for half a mile below, to freeze smoothly. This smooth stretch enabled the racers to make flying exchanges of sleds, and down all the course they had placed their relays below the jams.

Over the jam and out on to the smooth, Smoke tore along, calling loudly, "Billy! Billy!"

Billy heard and answered, and by the light of the many fires on the ice, Smoke saw a sled swing in from the side and come abreast. Its dogs were fresh and overhauled his. As the sleds swerved toward each other he leaped across, and Billy promptly rolled off.

"Where's Big Olaf?" Smoke cried.

"Leading!" Billy's voice answered; and the fires were left behind, and Smoke was again flying through the wall of blackness.

In the jams of that relay, where the way led across a chaos of up-ended ice-cakes, and where Smoke slipped off the forward end of the sled and with a haul-rope toiled behind the wheel-dog, he passed three sleds. Accidents had happened, and he could hear the men cutting out dogs and mending harnesses.

Among the jams of the next short relay into Sixty Mile, he passed two more teams. And that he might know adequately what had happened to them, one of his own dogs wrenched a shoulder, was unable to keep up, and was dragged in the harness. Its teammates, angered, fell upon it with their fangs, and Smoke was forced to club them off with the heavy butt of his whip. As he cut the injured animal out, he heard the whining cries of dogs behind him and the voice of a man that was familiar. It was Von Schroeder. Smoke called a warning to prevent a rear-end collision, and the Baron, hawing his animals and swinging on the gee-pole, went by a dozen feet to the side. Yet so impenetrable was the blackness that Smoke heard him pass but never saw him.

On the smooth stretch of ice beside the trading-post at Sixty Mile, Smoke overtook two more sleds. All had just changed teams, and for five minutes they ran abreast, each man on his knees and pouring whip and voice into the maddened dogs. But Smoke had studied out that portion of the trail, and now marked the tall pine on the bank that showed faintly in the light of the many fires. Below that pine was not merely darkness, but an abrupt cessation of the smooth stretch. There the trail, he knew, narrowed to a single sled-width. Leaning out ahead, he caught the haul-rope and drew his leaping sled up to the wheel-dog. He caught the animal by the hind legs and threw it. With a snarl of rage it tried to slash him with its fangs, but was dragged on by the rest of the team. Its body proved an efficient brake, and the two other teams, still abreast, dashed ahead into the darkness for the narrow way.

Smoke heard the crash and uproar of their collision, released his wheeler, sprang to the gee-pole, and urged his team to the right into the soft snow where the straining animals wallowed to their necks. It was exhausting work, but he won by the tangled teams and gained the hard-packed trail beyond.

On the relay out of Sixty Mile, Smoke had next to his poorest team, and though the going was good, he had set it a short fifteen miles. Two more teams would bring him into Dawson and to the gold-recorder’s office, and Smoke had selected his best animals for the last two stretches. Sitka Charley himself waited with the eight Malemutes that would jerk Smoke along for twenty miles, and for the finish, with a fifteen-mile run, was his own team — the team he had had all winter and which had been with him in the search for Surprise Lake.

The two men he had left entangled at Sixty Mile failed to overtake him, and, on the other hand, his team failed to overtake any of the three that still led. His animals were willing, though they lacked stamina and speed, and little urging was needed to keep them jumping into it at their best. There was nothing for Smoke to do but to lie face downward and hold on. Now and again he would plunge out of the darkness into the circle of light about a blazing fire, catch a glimpse of furred men standing by harnessed and waiting dogs, and plunge into the darkness again. Mile after mile, with only the grind and jar of the runners in his ears, he sped on. Almost automatically he kept his place as the sled bumped ahead or half lifted and heeled on the swings and swerves of the bends. First one, and then another, without apparent rhyme or reason, three faces limned themselves on his consciousness: Joy Gastell's, laughing and audacious; Shorty's, battered and exhausted by the struggle down Mono Creek; and John Bellew's, seamed and rigid, as if cast in iron, so unrelenting was its severity. And sometimes Smoke wanted to shout aloud, to chant a paean of savage exultation, as he remembered the office of The Billow and the serial story of San Francisco which he had left unfinished, along with the other fripperies of those empty days.

The grey twilight of morning was breaking as he exchanged his weary dogs for the eight fresh Malemutes. Lighter animals than Hudson Bays, they were capable of greater speed, and they ran with the supple tirelessness of true wolves. Sitka Charley called out the order of the teams ahead. Big Olaf led, Arizona Bill was second, and Von Schroeder third. These were the three best men in the country. In fact, ere Smoke had left Dawson, the popular betting had placed them in that order. While they were racing for a million, at least half a million had been staked by others on the outcome of the race. No one had bet on Smoke, who, despite his several known exploits, was still accounted a chechako with much to learn.

As daylight strengthened, Smoke caught sight of a sled ahead, and, in half an hour, his own lead-dog was leaping at its tail. Not until the man turned his head to exchange greetings, did Smoke recognize him as Arizona Bill. Von Schroeder had evidently passed him. The trail, hard-packed, ran too narrowly through the soft snow, and for another half-hour Smoke was forced to stay in the rear. Then they topped an ice-jam and struck a smooth stretch below, where were a number of relay camps and where the snow was packed widely. On his knees, swinging his whip and yelling, Smoke drew abreast. He noted that Arizona Bill's right arm hung dead at his side, and that he was compelled to pour leather with his left hand. Awkward as it was, he had no hand left with which to hold on, and frequently he had to cease from the whip and clutch to save himself from falling off. Smoke remembered the scrimmage in the creek bed at Three Below Discovery, and understood. Shorty's advice had been sound.

"What's happened?" Smoke asked, as he began to pull ahead.

"I don't know," Arizona Bill answered. "I think I threw my shoulder out in the scrapping."

He dropped behind very slowly, though when the last relay station was in sight he was fully half a mile in the rear. Ahead, bunched together, Smoke could see Big Olaf and Von Schroeder. Again Smoke arose to his knees, and he lifted his jaded dogs into a burst of speed such as a man only can who has the proper instinct for dog-driving. He drew up close to the tail of Von Schroeder's sled, and in this order the three sleds dashed out on the smooth going below a jam, where many men and many dogs waited. Dawson was fifteen miles away.

Von Schroeder, with his ten-mile relays, had changed five miles back and would change five miles ahead. So he held on, keeping his dogs at full leap. Big Olaf and Smoke made flying changes, and their fresh teams immediately regained what had been lost to the Baron. Big Olaf led past, and Smoke followed into the narrow trail beyond.

"Still good, but not so good," Smoke paraphrased Spencer to himself.

Of Von Schroeder, now behind, he had no fear; but ahead was the greatest dog-driver in the country. To pass him seemed impossible. Again and again, many times, Smoke forced his leader to the other's sled-tail, and each time Big Olaf let out another link and drew away. Smoke contented himself with taking the pace, and hung on grimly. The race was not lost until one or the other won, and in fifteen miles many things could happen.

Three miles from Dawson something did happen. To Smoke's surprise, Big Olaf rose up and with oaths and leather proceeded to fetch out the last ounce of effort in his animals. It was a spurt that should have been reserved for the last hundred yards instead of being begun three miles from the finish. Sheer dog-killing that it was, Smoke followed. His own team was superb. No dogs on the Yukon had had harder work or were in better condition. Besides, Smoke had toiled with them, and eaten and bedded with them, and he knew each dog as an individual and how best to win in to the animal's intelligence and extract its last least shred of willingness.

They topped a small jam and struck the smooth going below. Big Olaf was barely fifty feet ahead. A sled shot out from the side and drew in toward him, and Smoke understood Big Olaf's terrific spurt. He had tried to gain a lead for the change. This fresh team that waited to jerk him down the home stretch had been a private surprise of his. Even the men who had backed him to win had had no knowledge of it.

Smoke strove desperately to pass during the exchange of sleds. Lifting his dogs to the effort, he ate up the intervening fifty feet. With urging and pouring of leather, he went to the side and on until his lead-dog was jumping abreast of Big Olaf's wheeler. On the other side, abreast, was the relay sled. At the speed they were going, Big Olaf did not dare try the flying leap. If he missed and fell off, Smoke would be in the lead and the race would be lost.

Big Olaf tried to spurt ahead, and he lifted his dogs magnificently, but Smoke's leader still continued to jump beside Big Olaf's wheeler. For half a mile the three sleds tore and bounced along side by side. The smooth stretch was nearing its end when Big Olaf took the chance. As the flying sleds swerved toward each other, he leaped, and the instant he struck he was on his knees, with whip and voice spurting the fresh team. The smooth stretch pinched out into the narrow trail, and he jumped his dogs ahead and into it with a lead of barely a yard.

A man was not beaten until he was beaten, was Smoke's conclusion, and drive no matter how, Big Olaf failed to shake him off. No team Smoke had driven that night could have stood such a killing pace and kept up with fresh dogs — no team save this one. Nevertheless, the pace WAS killing it, and as they began to round the bluff at Klondike City, he could feel the pitch of strength going out of his animals. Almost imperceptibly they lagged behind, and foot by foot Big Olaf drew away until he led by a score of yards.

A great cheer went up from the population of Klondike City assembled on the ice. Here the Klondike entered the Yukon, and half a mile away, across the Klondike, on the north bank, stood Dawson. An outburst of madder cheering arose, and Smoke caught a glimpse of a sled shooting out to him. He recognized the splendid animals that drew it. They were Joy Gastell's. And Joy Gastell drove them. The hood of her squirrel-skin parka was tossed back, revealing the cameo-like oval of her face outlined against her heavily-massed hair. Mittens had been discarded, and with bare hands she clung to whip and sled.

"Jump!" she cried, as her leader snarled at Smoke's.

Smoke struck the sled behind her. It rocked violently from the impact of his body, but she was full up on her knees and swinging the whip.

"Hi! You! Mush on! Chook! Chook!" she was crying, and the dogs whined and yelped in eagerness of desire and effort to overtake Big Olaf.

And then, as the lead-dog caught the tail of Big Olaf's sled, and yard by yard drew up abreast, the great crowd on the Dawson bank went mad. It WAS a great crowd, for the men had dropped their tools on all the creeks and come down to see the outcome of the race, and a dead heat at the end of a hundred and ten miles justified any madness.

"When you're in the lead I'm going to drop off!" Joy cried out over her shoulder.

Smoke tried to protest.

"And watch out for the dip curve half way up the bank," she warned.

Dog by dog, separated by half a dozen feet, the two teams were running abreast. Big Olaf, with whip and voice, held his own for a minute. Then, slowly, an inch at a time, Joy's leader began to forge past.

"Get ready!" she cried to Smoke. "I'm going to leave you in a minute. Get the whip."

And as he shifted his hand to clutch the whip, they heard Big Olaf roar a warning, but too late. His lead-dog, incensed at being passed, swerved in to the attack. His fangs struck Joy's leader on the flank. The rival teams flew at one another's throats. The sleds overran the fighting brutes and capsized. Smoke struggled to his feet and tried to lift Joy up. But she thrust him from her, crying: "Go!"

On foot, already fifty feet in advance, was Big Olaf, still intent on finishing the race. Smoke obeyed, and when the two men reached the foot of the Dawson bank, he was at the other's heels. But up the bank Big Olaf lifted his body hugely, regaining a dozen feet.

Five blocks down the main street was the gold-recorder's office. The street was packed as for the witnessing of a parade. Not so easily this time did Smoke gain to his giant rival, and when he did he was unable to pass. Side by side they ran along the narrow aisle between the solid walls of fur-clad, cheering men. Now one, now the other, with great convulsive jerks, gained an inch or so, only to lose it immediately after.

If the pace had been a killing one for their dogs, the one they now set themselves was no less so. But they were racing for a million dollars and greatest honour in Yukon Country. The only outside impression that came to

Smoke on that last mad stretch was one of astonishment that there should be so many people in the Klondike. He had never seen them all at once before.

He felt himself involuntarily lag, and Big Olaf sprang a full stride in the lead. To Smoke it seemed that his heart would burst, while he had lost all consciousness of his legs. He knew they were flying under him, but he did not know how he continued to make them fly, nor how he put even greater pressure of will upon them and compelled them again to carry him to his giant competitor's side.

The open door of the Recorder's office appeared ahead of them. Both men made a final, futile spurt. Neither could draw away from the other, and side by side they hit the doorway, collided violently, and fell headlong on the office floor.

They sat up, but were too exhausted to rise. Big Olaf, the sweat pouring from him, breathing with tremendous, painful gasps, pawed the air and vainly tried to speak. Then he reached out his hand with unmistakable meaning; Smoke extended his, and they shook.

"It's a dead heat," Smoke could hear the Recorder saying, but it was as if in a dream, and the voice was very thin and very far away. "And all I can say is that you both win. You'll have to divide the claim between you. You're partners."

Their two arms pumped up and down as they ratified the decision. Big Olaf nodded his head with great emphasis, and spluttered. At last he got it out.

"You damn chechako," was what he said, but in the saying of it was admiration. "I don't know how you done it, but you did."

Outside, the great crowd was noisily massed, while the office was packing and jamming. Smoke and Big Olaf essayed to rise, and each helped the other to his feet. Smoke found his legs weak under him, and staggered drunkenly. Big Olaf tottered toward him.

"I'm sorry my dogs jumped yours."

"It couldn't be helped," Smoke panted back. "I heard you yell."

"Say," Big Olaf went on with shining eyes. "That girl — one damn fine girl, eh?"

"One damn fine girl," Smoke agreed.

VII. THE LITTLE MAN

"I wisht you wasn't so set in your ways," Shorty demurred. "I'm sure scairt of that glacier. No man ought to tackle it by his lonely."

Smoke laughed cheerfully, and ran his eye up the glistening face of the tiny glacier that filled the head of the valley. "Here it is August already, and the days have been getting shorter for two months," he epitomized the situation. "You know quartz, and I don't. But I can bring up the grub, while you keep after that mother lode. So-long. I'll be back by to-morrow evening."

He turned and started.

"I got a hunch something's goin' to happen," Shorty pleaded after him.

But Smoke's reply was a bantering laugh. He held on down the little valley, occasionally wiping the sweat from his forehead, the while his feet crushed through ripe mountain raspberries and delicate ferns that grew beside patches of sun-sheltered ice.

In the early spring he and Shorty had come up the Stewart River and launched out into the amazing chaos of the region where Surprise Lake lay. And all of the spring and half of the summer had been consumed in futile wanderings, when, on the verge of turning back, they caught their first glimpse of the baffling, gold-bottomed sheet of water which had lured and fooled a generation of miners. Making their camp in the old cabin which Smoke had discovered on his previous visit, they had learned three things: first, heavy nugget gold was carpeted thickly on the lake bottom; next, the gold could be dived for in the shallower portions, but the temperature of the water was man-killing; and, finally, the draining of the lake was too stupendous a task for two men in the shorter half of a short summer. Undeterred, reasoning from the coarseness of the gold that it had not traveled far, they had set out in search of the mother lode. They had crossed the big glacier that frowned on the southern rim and devoted themselves to the puzzling maze of small valleys and canyons beyond, which, by most unmountainlike methods, drained, or had at one time drained, into the lake.

The valley Smoke was descending gradually widened after the fashion of any normal valley; but, at the lower end, it pinched narrowly between high precipitous walls and abruptly stopped in a cross wall. At the base of this, in a welter of broken rock, the streamlet disappeared, evidently finding its way out underground. Climbing the cross wall, from the top Smoke saw the lake beneath him. Unlike any mountain lake he had ever seen, it was not blue. Instead, its intense peacock-green tokened its shallowness. It was this shallowness that made its draining feasible. All about arose jumbled mountains, with ice-scarred peaks and crags, grotesquely shaped and grouped. All was topsyturvy and unsystematic — a Dore nightmare. So fantastic and impossible was it that it affected Smoke as more like a cosmic landscape-joke than a rational portion of earth's surface. There were many glaciers in the canyons, most of them tiny, and, as he looked, one of the larger ones, on the north shore, calved amid thunders and splashings. Across the lake, seemingly not more than half a mile, but, as he well knew, five miles away, he could see the bunch of spruce-trees and the cabin. He looked again to make sure, and saw smoke clearly rising from the chimney. Somebody else had surprised themselves into finding Surprise Lake, was his conclusion, as he turned to climb the southern wall.

From the top of this he came down into a little valley, flower-floored and lazy with the hum of bees, that behaved quite as a reasonable valley should, in so far as it made legitimate entry on the lake. What was wrong with it was its length — scarcely a hundred yards; its head a straight up-and-down cliff of a thousand feet, over which a stream pitched itself in descending veils of mist.

And here he encountered more smoke, floating lazily upward in the warm sunshine beyond an outjut of rock. As he came around the corner he heard a light, metallic tap-tapping and a merry whistling that kept the beat. Then he saw the man, an upturned shoe between his knees, into the sole of which he was driving hob-spikes.

"Hello!" was the stranger's greeting, and Smoke's heart went out to the man in ready liking. "Just in time for a snack. There's coffee in the pot, a couple of cold flapjacks, and some jerky."

"I'll go you if I lose," was Smoke's acceptance, as he sat down. "I've been rather skimped on the last several meals, but there's oodles of grub over in the cabin."

"Across the lake? That's what I was heading for."

"Seems Surprise Lake is becoming populous," Smoke complained, emptying the coffee-pot.

"Go on, you're joking, aren't you?" the man said, astonishment painted on his face.

Smoke laughed. “That’s the way it takes everybody. You see those high ledges across there to the northwest? There’s where I first saw it. No warning. Just suddenly caught the view of the whole lake from there. I’d given up looking for it, too.

“Same here,” the other agreed. “I’d headed back and was expecting to fetch the Stewart last night, when out I popped in sight of the lake. If that’s it, where’s the Stewart? And where have I been all the time? And how did you come here? And what’s your name?”

“Bellew. Kit Bellew.”

“Oh! I know you.” The man’s eyes and face were bright with a joyous smile, and his hand flashed eagerly out to Smoke’s. “I’ve heard all about you.”

“Been reading police-court news, I see,” Smoke sparred modestly.

“Nope.” The man laughed and shook his head. “Merely recent Klondike history. I might have recognized you if you’d been shaved. I watched you putting it all over the gambling crowd when you were bucking roulette in the Elkhorn. My name’s Carson — Andy Carson; and I can’t begin to tell you how glad I am to meet up with you.”

He was a slender man, wiry with health, with quick black eyes and a magnetism of camaraderie.

“And this is Surprise Lake?” he murmured incredulously.

“It certainly is.”

“And its bottom’s buttered with gold?”

“Sure. There’s some of the churning.” Smoke dipped in his overalls pocket and brought forth half a dozen nuggets. “That’s the stuff. All you have to do is go down to bottom, blind if you want to, and pick up a handful. Then you’ve got to run half a mile to get up your circulation.”

“Well, gosh-dash my dingbats, if you haven’t beaten me to it,” Carson swore whimsically, but his disappointment was patent. “An’ I thought I’d scooped the whole caboodle. Anyway, I’ve had the fun of getting here.”

“Fun!” Smoke cried. “Why, if we can ever get our hands on all that bottom, we’ll make Rockefeller look like thirty cents.”

“But it’s yours,” was Carson’s objection.

“Nothing to it, my friend. You’ve got to realize that no gold deposit like it has been discovered in all the history of mining. It will take you and me and my partner and all the friends we’ve got to lay our hands on it. All Bonanza and Eldorado, dumped together, wouldn’t be richer than half an acre down here. The problem is to drain the lake. It will take millions. And there's only one thing I'm afraid of. There's so much of it that if we fail to control the output it will bring about the demonetization of gold."

"And you tell me — " Carson broke off, speechless and amazed.

"And glad to have you. It will take a year or two, with all the money we can raise, to drain the lake. It can be done. I've looked over the ground. But it will take every man in the country that's willing to work for wages. We'll need an army, and we need right now decent men in on the ground floor. Are you in?"

"Am I in? Don't I look it? I feel so much like a millionaire that I'm real timid about crossing that big glacier. Couldn't afford to break my neck now. Wish I had some more of those hob-spikes. I was just hammering the last in when you came along. How's yours? Let's see."

Smoke held up his foot.

"Worn smooth as a skating-rink!" Carson cried. "You've certainly been hiking some. Wait a minute, and I'll pull some of mine out for you."

But Smoke refused to listen. "Besides," he said, "I've got about forty feet of rope cached where we take the ice. My partner and I used it coming over. It will be a cinch."

It was a hard, hot climb. The sun blazed dazzlingly on the ice-surface, and with streaming pores they panted from the exertion. There were places, criss-crossed by countless fissures and crevasses, where an hour of dangerous toil advanced them no more than a hundred yards. At two in the afternoon, beside a pool of water bedded in the ice, Smoke called a halt.

"Let's tackle some of that jerky," he said. "I've been on short allowance, and my knees are shaking. Besides, we're across the worst. Three hundred yards will fetch us to the rocks, and it's easy going, except for a couple of nasty fissures and one bad one that heads us down toward the bulge. There's a weak ice-bridge there, but Shorty and I managed it."

Over the jerky, the two men got acquainted, and Andy Carson unbosomed himself of the story of his life. "I just knew I'd find Surprise Lake," he mumbled in the midst of mouthfuls. "I had to. I missed the French Hill Benches, the Big Skookum, and Monte Cristo, and then it was Surprise Lake or bust. And here I am. My wife knew I'd strike it. I've got faith enough, but hers knocks mine galleywest. She's a corker, a crackerjack — dead game, grit to her finger-ends, never-say-die, a fighter from the drop of the hat, the one woman for me, true blue and all the rest. Take a look at that."

He sprung open his watch, and on the inside cover Smoke saw the small, pasted photograph of a bright-haired woman, framed on either side by the laughing face of a child.

"Boys?" he queried.

"Boy and girl," Carson answered proudly. "He's a year and a half older." He sighed. "They might have been some grown, but we had to wait. You see, she was sick. Lungs. But she put up a fight. What'd we know about such stuff? I was clerking, railroad clerk, Chicago, when we got married. Her folks were tuberculous. Doctors didn't know much in those days. They said it was hereditary. All her family had it. Caught it from each other, only they never guessed it. Thought they were born with it. Fate. She and I lived with them the first couple of years. I wasn't afraid. No tuberculosis in my family. And I got it. That set me thinking. It was contagious. I caught it from breathing their air.

"We talked it over, she and I. Then I jumped the family doctor and consulted an up-to-date expert. He told me what I'd figured out for myself, and said Arizona was the place for us. We pulled up stakes and went down — no money, nothing. I got a job sheep-herding, and left her in town — a lung town. It was filled to spilling with lungers.

"Of course, living and sleeping in the clean open, I started right in to mend. I was away months at a time. Every time I came back, she was worse. She just couldn't pick up. But we were learning. I jerked her out of that town, and she went to sheep-herding with me. In four years, winter and summer, cold and heat, rain, snow, and frost, and all the rest, we never slept under a roof, and we were moving camp all the time. You ought to have seen the change — brown as berries, lean as Indians, tough as rawhide. When we figured we were cured, we pulled out for San Francisco. But we were too previous. By the second month we both had slight hemorrhages. We flew the coop back to Arizona and the sheep. Two years more of it. That fixed us. Perfect cure. All her family's dead. Wouldn't listen to us.

"Then we jumped cities for keeps. Knocked around on the Pacific coast and southern Oregon looked good to us. We settled in the Rogue River Valley — apples. There's a big future there, only nobody knows it. I got my land — on time, of course — for forty an acre. Ten years from now it'll be worth five hundred.

"We've done some almighty hustling. Takes money, and we hadn't a cent to start with, you know — had to build a house and barn, get horses and plows, and all the rest. She taught school two years. Then the boy came. But we've got it. You ought to see those trees we planted — a hundred acres of them, almost mature now. But it's all been outgo, and the mortgage working overtime. That's why I'm here. She'd 'a' come along only for the kids and the trees. She's handlin' that end, and here I am, a gosh-danged expensive millionaire — in prospect."

He looked happily across the sun-dazzle on the ice to the green water of the lake along the farther shore, took a final look at the photograph, and murmured:

"She's some woman, that. She's hung on. She just wouldn't die, though she was pretty close to skin and bone all wrapped around a bit of fire when she went out with the sheep. Oh, she's thin now. Never will be fat. But it's the prettiest thinness I ever saw, and when I get back, and the trees begin to bear, and the kids get going to school, she and I are going to do Paris. I don't think much of that burg, but she's just hankered for it all her life."

"Well, here's the gold that will take you to Paris," Smoke assured him. "All we've got to do is to get our hands on it."

Carson nodded with glistening eyes. "Say — that farm of ours is the prettiest piece of orchard land on all the Pacific coast. Good climate, too. Our lungs will never get touched again there. Ex-lungers have to be almighty careful, you know. If you're thinking of settling, well, just take a peep in at our valley before you settle, that's all. And fishing! Say! — did you ever get a thirty-five-pound salmon on a six-ounce rod? Some fight, bo', some fight!"

"I'm lighter than you by forty pounds," Carson said. "Let me go first."

They stood on the edge of the crevasse. It was enormous and ancient, fully a hundred feet across, with sloping, age-eaten sides instead of sharp-angled rims. At this one place it was bridged by a huge mass of pressure-hardened snow that was itself half ice. Even the bottom of this mass they could not see, much less the bottom of the crevasse. Crumbling and melting, the bridge threatened imminent collapse. There were signs where recent portions had broken away, and even as they studied it a mass of half a ton dislodged and fell.

"Looks pretty bad," Carson admitted with an ominous head-shake. "And it looks much worse than if I wasn't a millionaire."

"But we've got to tackle it," Smoke said. "We're almost across. We can't go back. We can't camp here on the ice all night. And there's no other way. Shorty and I explored for a mile up. It was in better shape, though, when we crossed."

"It's one at a time, and me first." Carson took the part coil of rope from Smoke's hand. "You'll have to cast off. I'll take the rope and the pick. Gimme your hand so I can slip down easy."

Slowly and carefully he lowered himself the several feet to the bridge, where he stood, making final adjustments for the perilous traverse. On his back was his pack outfit. Around his neck, resting on his shoulders, he coiled the rope, one end of which was still fast to his waist.

"I'd give a mighty good part of my millions right now for a bridge-construction gang," he said, but his cheery, whimsical smile belied the words. Also, he added, "It's all right; I'm a cat."

The pick, and the long stick he used as an alpenstock, he balanced horizontally after the manner of a rope-walker. He thrust one foot forward tentatively, drew it back, and steeled himself with a visible, physical effort.

"I wish I was flat broke," he smiled up. "If ever I get out of being a millionaire this time, I'll never be one again. It's too uncomfortable."

"It's all right," Smoke encouraged. "I've been over it before. Better let me try it first."

"And you forty pounds to the worse," the little man flashed back. "I'll be all right in a minute. I'm all right now." And this time the nerving-up process was instantaneous. "Well, here goes for Rogue River and the apples," he said, as his foot went out, this time to rest carefully and lightly while the other foot was brought up and past. Very gently and circumspectly he continued on his way until two-thirds of the distance was covered. Here he stopped to examine a depression he must cross, at the bottom of which was a fresh crack. Smoke, watching, saw him glance to the side and down into the crevasse itself, and then begin a slight swaying.

"Keep your eyes up!" Smoke commanded sharply. "Now! Go on!"

The little man obeyed, nor faltered on the rest of the journey. The sun-eroded slope of the farther edge of the crevasse was slippery, but not steep, and he worked his way up to a narrow ledge, faced about, and sat down.

"Your turn," he called across. "But just keep a-coming and don't look down. That's what got my goat. Just keep a-coming, that's all. And get a move on. It's almighty rotten."

Balancing his own stick horizontally, Smoke essayed the passage. That the bridge was on its last legs was patent. He felt a jar under foot, a slight movement of the mass, and a heavier jar. This was followed by a single sharp crackle. Behind him he knew something was happening. If for no other reason, he knew it by the strained, tense face of Carson. From beneath, thin and faint, came the murmur of running water, and Smoke's eyes involuntarily wavered to a glimpse of the shimmering depths. He jerked them back to the way before him. Two-thirds over, he came to the depression. The sharp edges of the crack, but slightly touched by the sun, showed how recent it was. His foot was lifted to make the step across, when the crack began slowly widening, at the same time emitting numerous sharp snaps. He made the step quickly, increasing the stride of it, but the worn nails of his shoe skated on the farther slope of the depression. He fell on his face, and without pause slipped down and into the crack, his legs hanging clear, his chest supported by the stick which he had managed to twist crosswise as he fell.

His first sensation was the nausea caused by the sickening up-leap of his pulse; his first idea was of surprise that he had fallen no farther. Behind him was crackling and jar and movement to which the stick vibrated. From beneath, in the heart of the glacier, came the soft and hollow thunder of the dislodged masses striking bottom. And still the bridge, broken from its farthest support and ruptured in the middle, held, though the portion he had crossed tilted downward at a pitch of twenty degrees. He could see Carson, perched on his ledge, his feet braced against the melting surface, swiftly recoiling the rope from his shoulders to his hand.

"Wait!" he cried. "Don't move, or the whole shooting-match will come down."

He calculated the distance with a quick glance, took the bandana from his neck and tied it to the rope, and increased the length by a second bandana from his pocket. The rope, manufactured from sled-lashings and short lengths of plaited rawhide knotted together, was both light and strong. The first cast was lucky as well as deft, and Smoke's fingers clutched it. He evidenced a hand-over-hand intention of crawling out of the crack. But Carson, who had refastened the rope around his own waist, stopped him.

"Make it fast around yourself as well," he ordered.

"If I go I'll take you with me," Smoke objected.

The little man became very peremptory.

“You shut up,” he ordered. “The sound of your voice is enough to start the whole thing going.”

“If I ever start going — ” Smoke began.

“Shut up! You ain’t going to ever start going. Now do what I say. That’s right — under the shoulders. Make it fast. Now! Start! Get a move on, but easy as you go. I’ll take in the slack. You just keep a-coming. That’s it. Easy. Easy.”

Smoke was still a dozen feet away when the final collapse of the bridge began. Without noise, but in a jerky way, it crumbled to an increasing tilt.

“Quick!” Carson called, coiling in hand-over-hand on the slack of the rope which Smoke’s rush gave him.

When the crash came, Smoke’s fingers were clawing into the hard face of the wall of the crevasse, while his body dragged back with the falling bridge. Carson, sitting up, feet wide apart and braced, was heaving on the rope. This effort swung Smoke in to the side wall, but it jerked Carson out of his niche. Like a cat, he faced about, clawing wildly for a hold on the ice and slipping down. Beneath him, with forty feet of taut rope between them, Smoke was clawing just as wildly; and ere the thunder from below announced the arrival of the bridge, both men had come to rest. Carson had achieved this first, and the several pounds of pull he was able to put on the rope had helped bring Smoke to a stop.

Each lay in a shallow niche, but Smoke’s was so shallow that, tense with the strain of flattening and sticking, nevertheless he would have slid on had it not been for the slight assistance he took from the rope. He was on the verge of a bulge and could not see beneath him. Several minutes passed, in which they took stock of the situation and made rapid strides in learning the art of sticking to wet and slippery ice. The little man was the first to speak.

“Gee!” he said; and, a minute later, “If you can dig in for a moment and slack on the rope, I can turn over. Try it.”

Smoke made the effort, then rested on the rope again. “I can do it,” he said. “Tell me when you’re ready. And be quick.”

“About three feet down is holding for my heels,” Carson said. “It won’t take a moment. Are you ready?”

“Go on.”

It was hard work to slide down a yard, turn over and sit up; but it was even harder for Smoke to remain flattened and maintain a position that from instant to instant made a greater call upon his muscles. As it was, he could feel the almost perceptible beginning of the slip when the rope tightened and he looked up into his companion's face. Smoke noted the yellow pallor of sun-tan forsaken by the blood, and wondered what his own complexion was like. But when he saw Carson, with shaking fingers, fumble for his sheath-knife, he decided the end had come. The man was in a funk and was going to cut the rope.

"Don't m-mind m-m-me," the little man chattered. "I ain't scared. It's only my nerves, gosh-dang them. I'll b-b-be all right in a minute."

And Smoke watched him, doubled over, his shoulders between his knees, shivering and awkward, holding a slight tension on the rope with one hand while with the other he hacked and gouged holes for his heels in the ice.

"Carson," he breathed up to him, "you're some bear, some bear."

The answering grin was ghastly and pathetic. "I never could stand height," Carson confessed. "It always did get me. Do you mind if I stop a minute and clear my head? Then I'll make those heel-holds deeper so I can heave you up."

Smoke's heart warmed. "Look here, Carson. The thing for you to do is to cut the rope. You can never get me up, and there's no use both of us being lost. You can make it out with your knife."

"You shut up!" was the hurt retort. "Who's running this?"

And Smoke could not help but see that anger was a good restorative for the other's nerves. As for himself, it was the more nerve-racking strain, lying plastered against the ice with nothing to do but strive to stick on.

A groan and a quick cry of "Hold on!" warned him. With face pressed against the ice, he made a supreme sticking effort, felt the rope slacken, and knew Carson was slipping toward him. He did not dare look up until he felt the rope tighten and knew the other had again come to rest.

"Gee, that was a near go," Carson chattered. "I came down over a yard. Now you wait. I've got to dig new holds. If this danged ice wasn't so melty we'd be hunky-dory."

Holding the few pounds of strain necessary for Smoke with his left hand, the little man jabbed and chopped at the ice with his right. Ten minutes of this passed.

"Now, I'll tell you what I've done," Carson called down. "I've made heel-holds and hand-holes for you alongside of me. I'm going to heave the rope in slow and easy, and you just come along sticking an' not too fast. I'll tell you what, first of all. I'll take you on the rope and you worry out of that pack. Get me?"

Smoke nodded, and with infinite care unbuckled his pack-straps. With a wriggle of the shoulders he dislodged the pack, and Carson saw it slide over the bulge and out of sight.

"Now, I'm going to ditch mine," he called down. "You just take it easy and wait."

Five minutes later the upward struggle began. Smoke, after drying his hands on the insides of his arm-sleeves, clawed into the climb — bellied, and clung, and stuck, and plastered — sustained and helped by the pull of the rope. Alone, he could not have advanced. Despite his muscles, because of his forty pounds' handicap, he could not cling as did Carson. A third of the way up, where the pitch was steeper and the ice less eroded, he felt the strain on the rope decreasing. He moved slower and slower. Here was no place to stop and remain. His most desperate effort could not prevent the stop, and he could feel the down-slip beginning.

"I'm going," he called up.

"So am I," was the reply, gritted through Carson's teeth.

"Then cast loose."

Smoke felt the rope tauten in a futile effort, then the pace quickened, and as he went past his previous lodgment and over the bulge the last glimpse he caught of Carson he was turned over, with madly moving hands and feet striving to overcome the downward draw. To Smoke's surprise, as he went over the bulge, there was no sheer fall. The rope restrained him as he slid down a steeper pitch, which quickly eased until he came to a halt in another niche on the verge of another bulge. Carson was now out of sight, ensconced in the place previously occupied by Smoke.

"Gee!" he could hear Carson shiver. "Gee!"

An interval of quiet followed, and then Smoke could feel the rope agitated.

"What are you doing?" he called up.

"Making more hand- and foot-holds," came the trembling answer. "You just wait. I'll have you up here in a jiffy. Don't mind the way I talk. I'm just excited. But I'm all right. You wait and see."

"You're holding me by main strength," Smoke argued. "Soon or late, with the ice melting, you'll slip down after me. The thing for you to do is to cut loose. Hear me! There's no use both of us going. Get that? You're the biggest little man in creation, but you've done your best. You cut loose."

"You shut up. I'm going to make holes this time deep enough to haul up a span of horses."

"You've held me up long enough," Smoke urged. "Let me go."

"How many times have I held you up?" came the truculent query.

"Some several, and all of them too many. You've been coming down all the time."

"And I've been learning the game all the time. I'm going on holding you up until we get out of here. Savvy? When God made me a light-weight I guess he knew what he was about. Now, shut up. I'm busy."

Several silent minutes passed. Smoke could hear the metallic strike and hack of the knife and occasional driblets of ice slid over the bulge and came down to him. Thirsty, clinging on hand and foot, he caught the fragments in his mouth and melted them to water, which he swallowed.

He heard a gasp that slid into a groan of despair, and felt a slackening of the rope that made him claw. Immediately the rope tightened again. Straining his eyes in an upward look along the steep slope, he stared a moment, then saw the knife, point first, slide over the verge of the bulge and down upon him. He tucked his cheek to it, shrank from the pang of cut flesh, tucked more tightly, and felt the knife come to rest.

"I'm a slob," came the wail down the crevasse.

"Cheer up, I've got it," Smoke answered.

"Say! Wait! I've a lot of string in my pocket. I'll drop it down to you, and you send the knife up."

Smoke made no reply. He was battling with a sudden rush of thought.

"Hey! You! Here comes the string. Tell me when you've got it."

A small pocket-knife, weighted on the end of the string, slid down the ice. Smoke got it, opened the larger blade by a quick effort of his teeth and one hand, and made sure that the blade was sharp. Then he tied the sheath-knife to the end of the string.

"Haul away!" he called.

With strained eyes he saw the upward progress of the knife. But he saw more — a little man, afraid and indomitable, who shivered and chattered, whose head swam with giddiness, and who mastered his qualms and distresses and played a hero's part. Not since his meeting with Shorty had Smoke so quickly liked a man. Here was a proper meat-eater, eager with friendliness, generous to destruction, with a grit that shaking fear could not shake. Then, too, he considered the situation cold-bloodedly. There was no chance for two. Steadily, they were sliding into the heart of the glacier, and it was his greater weight that was dragging the little man down. The little man could stick like a fly. Alone, he could save himself.

“Bully for us!” came the voice from above, down and across the bulge of ice. “Now we’ll get out of here in two shakes.”

The awful struggle for good cheer and hope in Carson’s voice decided Smoke.

“Listen to me,” he said steadily, vainly striving to shake the vision of Joy Gastell’s face from his brain. “I sent that knife up for you to get out with. Get that? I’m going to chop loose with the jack-knife. It’s one or both of us. Get that?”

“Two or nothing,” came the grim but shaky response. “If you’ll hold on a minute — ”

“I’ve held on for too long now. I’m not married. I have no adorable thin woman nor kids nor apple-trees waiting for me. Get me? Now, you hike up and out of that!”

“Wait! For God’s sake, wait!” Carson screamed down. “You can’t do that! Give me a chance to get you out. Be calm, old horse. We’ll make the turn. You’ll see. I’m going to dig holds that’ll lift a house and barn.”

Smoke made no reply. Slowly and gently, fascinated by the sight, he cut with the knife until one of the three strands popped and parted.

“What are you doing?” Carson cried desperately. “If you cut, I’ll never forgive you — never. I tell you it’s two or nothing. We’re going to get out. Wait! For God’s sake!”

And Smoke, staring at the parted strand, five inches before his eyes, knew fear in all its weakness. He did not want to die; he recoiled from the shimmering abyss beneath him, and his panic brain urged all the preposterous optimism of delay. It was fear that prompted him to compromise.

“All right,” he called up. “I’ll wait. Do your best. But I tell you, Carson, if we both start slipping again I’m going to cut.”

“Huh! Forget it. When we start, old horse, we start up. I’m a porous plaster. I could stick here if it was twice as steep. I’m getting a sizable hole for one heel already. Now, you hush, and let me work.”

The slow minutes passed. Smoke centered his soul on the dull hurt of a hang-nail on one of his fingers. He should have clipped it away that morning — it was hurting then — he decided; and he resolved, once clear of the crevasse, that it should immediately be clipped. Then, with short focus, he stared at the hang-nail and the finger with a new comprehension. In a minute, or a few minutes at best, that hang-nail, that finger, cunningly jointed and efficient, might be part of a mangled carcass at the bottom of the crevasse. Conscious of his fear, he hated himself. Bear-eaters were made of sterner stuff. In the anger of self-revolt he all but hacked at the rope with his knife. But fear made him draw back the hand and to stick himself again, trembling and sweating, to the slippery slope. To the fact that he was soaking wet by contact with the thawing ice he tried to attribute the cause of his shivering; but he knew, in the heart of him, that it was untrue.

A gasp and a groan and an abrupt slackening of the rope, warned him. He began to slip. The movement was very slow. The rope tightened loyally, but he continued to slip. Carson could not hold him, and was slipping with him. The digging toe of his farther-extended foot encountered vacancy, and he knew that it was over the straight-away fall. And he knew, too, that in another moment his falling body would jerk Carson's after it.

Blindly, desperately, all the vitality and life-love of him beaten down in a flashing instant by a shuddering perception of right and wrong, he brought the knife-edge across the rope, saw the strands part, felt himself slide more rapidly, and then fall.

What happened then, he did not know. He was not unconscious, but it happened too quickly, and it was unexpected. Instead of falling to his death, his feet almost immediately struck in water, and he sat violently down in water that splashed coolingly on his face. His first impression was that the crevasse was shallower than he had imagined and that he had safely fetched bottom. But of this he was quickly disabused. The opposite wall was a dozen feet away. He lay in a basin formed in an out-jut of the ice-wall by melting water that dribbled and trickled over the bulge above and fell sheer down a distance of a dozen feet. This had hollowed out the basin. Where he sat the water was two feet deep, and it was flush with the rim. He peered over the rim and looked down the narrow chasm hundreds of feet to the torrent that foamed along the bottom.

"Oh, why did you?" he heard a wail from above.

“Listen,” he called up. “I’m perfectly safe, sitting in a pool of water up to my neck. And here’s both our packs. I’m going to sit on them. There’s room for a half-dozen here. If you slip, stick close and you’ll land. In the meantime you hike up and get out. Go to the cabin. Somebody’s there. I saw the smoke. Get a rope, or anything that will make rope, and come back and fish for me.”

“Honest!” came Carson’s incredulous voice.

“Cross my heart and hope to die. Now, get a hustle on, or I’ll catch my death of cold.”

Smoke kept himself warm by kicking a channel through the rim with the heel of his shoe. By the time he had drained off the last of the water, a faint call from Carson announced that he had reached the top.

After that Smoke occupied himself with drying his clothes. The late afternoon sun beat warmly in upon him, and he wrung out his garments and spread them about him. His match-case was water-proof, and he manipulated and dried sufficient tobacco and rice-paper to make cigarettes.

Two hours later, perched naked on the two packs and smoking, he heard a voice above that he could not fail to identify.

“Oh, Smoke! Smoke!”

“Hello, Joy Gastell!” he called back. “Where’d you drop from?”

“Are you hurt?”

“Not even any skin off!”

“Father’s paying the rope down now. Do you see it?”

“Yes, and I’ve got it,” he answered. “Now, wait a couple of minutes, please.”

“What’s the matter?” came her anxious query, after several minutes. “Oh, I know, you’re hurt.”

“No, I’m not. I’m dressing.”

“Dressing?”

“Yes. I’ve been in swimming. Now! Ready? Hoist away!”

He sent up the two packs on the first trip, was consequently rebuked by Joy Gastell, and on the second trip came up himself.

Joy Gastell looked at him with glowing eyes, while her father and Carson were busy coiling the rope. “How could you cut loose in that splendid way?” she cried. “It was — it was glorious, that’s all.”

Smoke waved the compliment away with a deprecatory hand.

“I know all about it,” she persisted. “Carson told me. You sacrificed yourself to save him.”

“Nothing of the sort,” Smoke lied. “I could see that swimming-pool right under me all the time.”

VIII. THE HANGING OF CULTUS GEORGE

The way led steeply up through deep, powdery snow that was unmarred by sled-track or moccasin impression. Smoke, in the lead, pressed the fragile crystals down under his fat, short snow-shoes. The task required lungs and muscle, and he flung himself into it with all his strength. Behind, on the surface he packed, strained the string of six dogs, the steam-jets of their breathing attesting their labor and the lowness of the temperature. Between the wheel-dog and the sled toiled Shorty, his weight divided between the guiding gee-pole and the haul, for he was pulling with the dogs. Every half-hour he and Smoke exchanged places, for the snow-shoe work was even more arduous than that of the gee-pole.

The whole outfit was fresh and strong. It was merely hard work being efficiently done — the breaking of a midwinter trail across a divide. On this severe stretch, ten miles a day they called a decent stint. They kept in condition, but each night crawled well tired into their sleeping-furs. This was their sixth day out from the lively camp of Mucluc on the Yukon. In two days, with the loaded sled, they had covered the fifty miles of packed trail up Moose Creek. Then had come the struggle with the four feet of untouched snow that was really not snow, but frost-crystals, so lacking in cohesion that when kicked it flew with the thin hissing of granulated sugar. In three days they had wallowed thirty miles up Minnow Creek and across the series of low divides that separate the several creeks flowing south into Siwash River; and now they were breasting the big divide, past the Bald Buttes, where the way would lead them down Porcupine Creek to the middle reaches of Milk River. Higher up Milk River, it was fairly rumored, were deposits of copper. And this was their goal — a hill of pure copper, half a mile to the right and up the first creek after Milk River issued from a deep gorge to flow across a heavily timbered stretch of bottom. They would know it when they saw it. One-Eyed McCarthy had described it with sharp definiteness. It was impossible to miss it — unless McCarthy had lied.

Smoke was in the lead, and the small scattered spruce-trees were becoming scarcer and smaller, when he saw one, dead and bone-dry, that stood in their path. There was no need for speech. His glance to Shorty was acknowledged by a stentorian “Whoa!” The dogs stood in the traces till they saw Shorty begin to undo the sled-lashings and Smoke attack the dead spruce with an ax; whereupon the animals dropped in the snow and curled into balls, the bush of each tail curved to cover four padded feet and an ice-rimmed muzzle.

The men worked with the quickness of long practice. Gold-pan, coffee-pot, and cooking-pail were soon thawing the heaped frost-crystals into water. Smoke extracted a stick of beans from the sled. Already cooked, with a generous admixture of cubes of fat pork and bacon, the beans had been frozen into this portable immediacy. He chopped off chunks with an ax, as if it were so much firewood, and put them into the frying-pan to thaw. Solidly frozen sourdough biscuits were likewise placed to thaw. In twenty minutes from the time they halted, the meal was ready to eat.

"About forty below," Shorty mumbled through a mouthful of beans. "Say — I hope it don't get colder — or warmer, neither. It's just right for trail breaking."

Smoke did not answer. His own mouth full of beans, his jaws working, he had chanced to glance at the lead-dog, lying half a dozen feet away. That gray and frosty wolf was gazing at him with the infinite wistfulness and yearning that glimmers and hazes so often in the eyes of Northland dogs. Smoke knew it well, but never got over the unfathomable wonder of it. As if to shake off the hypnotism, he set down his plate and coffee-cup, went to the sled, and began opening the dried-fish sack.

"Hey!" Shorty expostulated. "What 'r' you doin'?"

"Breaking all law, custom, precedent, and trail usage," Smoke replied. "I'm going to feed the dogs in the middle of the day — just this once. They've worked hard, and that last pull to the top of the divide is before them. Besides, Bright there has been talking to me, telling me all untellable things with those eyes of his."

Shorty laughed skeptically. "Go on an' spoil 'em. Pretty soon you'll be manicurin' their nails. I'd recommend cold cream and electric massage — it's great for sled-dogs. And sometimes a Turkish bath does 'em fine."

"I've never done it before," Smoke defended. "And I won't again. But this once I'm going to. It's just a whim, I guess."

"Oh, if it's a hunch, go to it." Shorty's tones showed how immediately he had been mollified. "A man's always got to follow his hunches."

"It isn't a hunch, Shorty. Bright just sort of got on my imagination for a couple of twists. He told me more in one minute with those eyes of his than I could read in the books in a thousand years. His eyes were acrawl with the secrets of life. They were just squirming and wriggling there. The trouble is I almost got them, and then I didn't. I'm no wiser than I was before, but I was near them." He paused and then added, "I can't tell you, but that dog's eyes were just spilling over with cues to what life is, and evolution, and star-dust, and cosmic sap, and all the rest — everything."

"Boiled down into simple American, you got a hunch," Shorty insisted.

Smoke finished tossing the dried salmon, one to each dog, and shook his head.

"I tell you yes," Shorty argued. "Smoke, it's a sure hunch. Something's goin' to happen before the day is out. You'll see. And them dried fish'll have a bearin'."

"You've got to show me," said Smoke.

"No, I ain't. The day'll take care of itself an' show you. Now listen to what I'm tellin' you. I got a hunch myself out of your hunch. I'll bet eleven ounces against three ornery toothpicks I'm right. When I get a hunch I ain't a-scared to ride it."

"You bet the toothpicks, and I'll bet the ounces," Smoke returned.

"Nope. That'd be plain robbery. I win. I know a hunch when it tickles me. Before the day's out somethin' 'll happen, an' them fish'll have a meanin'."

"Hell," said Smoke, dismissing the discussion contemptuously.

"An' it'll be hell," Shorty came back. "An' I'll take three more toothpicks with you on them same odds that it'll be sure-enough hell."

"Done," said Smoke.

"I win," Shorty exulted. "Chicken-feather toothpicks for mine."

An hour later they cleared the divide, dipped down past the Bald Buttes through a sharp elbow-canyon, and took the steep open slope that dropped into Porcupine Creek. Shorty, in the lead, stopped abruptly, and Smoke whoaed the dogs. Beneath them, coming up, was a procession of humans, scattered and draggled, a quarter of a mile long.

"They move like it was a funeral," Shorty noted.

"They've no dogs," said Smoke.

"Yep; there's a couple of men pullin' on a sled."

"See that fellow fall down? There's something the matter, Shorty, and there must be two hundred of them."

"Look at 'em stagger as if they was soused. There goes another."

"It's a whole tribe. There are children there."

“Smoke, I win,” Shorty proclaimed. “A hunch is a hunch, an’ you can’t beat it. There she comes. Look at her! — surgin’ up like a lot of corpses.”

The mass of Indians, at sight of the two men, had raised a weird cry of joy and accelerated its pace.

“They’re sure tolerable woozy,” commented Shorty. “See ‘em fallin’ down in lumps and bunches.”

“Look at the face of that first one,” Smoke said. “It’s starvation — that’s what’s the matter with them. They’ve eaten their dogs.”

“What’ll we do? Run for it?”

“And leave the sled and dogs?” Smoke demanded reproachfully.

“They’ll sure eat us if we don’t. They look hungry enough for it. Hello, old skeeziks. What’s wrong with you? Don’t look at that dog that way. No cookin’-pot for him — savvy?”

The forerunners were arriving and crowding about them, moaning and plainting in an unfamiliar jargon. To Smoke the picture was grotesque and horrible. It was famine unmistakable. Their faces, hollow-cheeked and skin-stretched, were so many death’s-heads. More and more arrived and crowded about, until Smoke and Shorty were hemmed in by the wild crew. Their ragged garments of skin and fur were cut and slashed away, and Smoke knew the reason for it when he saw a wizened child on a squaw’s back that sucked and chewed a strip of filthy fur. Another child he observed steadily masticating a leather thong.

“Keep off there! — keep back!” Shorty yelled, falling back on English after futile attempts with the little Indian he did know.

Bucks and squaws and children tottered and swayed on shaking legs and continued to surge in, their mad eyes swimming with weakness and burning with ravenous desire. A woman, moaning, staggered past Shorty and fell with spread and grasping arms on the sled. An old man followed her, panting and gasping, with trembling hands striving to cast off the sled lashings, and get at the grub-sacks beneath. A young man, with a naked knife, tried to rush in, but was flung back by Smoke. The whole mass pressed in upon them, and the fight was on.

At first Smoke and Shorty shoved and thrust and threw back. Then they used the butt of the dog-whip and their fists on the food-mad crowd. And all this against a background of moaning and wailing women and children. Here and there, in a dozen places, the sled-lashings were cut. Men crawled in on their bellies, regardless of a rain of kicks and blows, and tried to drag out the grub. These had to be picked up bodily and flung back. And such was their weakness that they fell continually, under the slightest pressures or shoves. Yet they made no attempt to injure the two men who defended the sled.

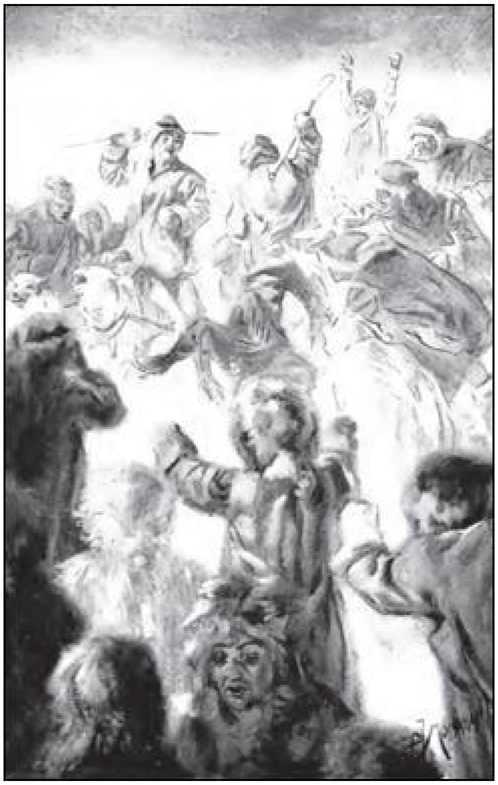

It was the utter weakness of the Indians that saved Smoke and Shorty from being overborne. In five minutes the wall of up-standing, on-struggling Indians had been changed to heaps of fallen ones that moaned and gibbered in the snow, and cried and sniveled as their staring, swimming eyes focused on the grub that meant life to them and that brought the slaver to their lips. And behind it all arose the wailing of the women and children.

"Shut up! Oh, shut up!" Shorty yelled, thrusting his fingers into his ears and breathing heavily from his exertions. "Ah, you would, would you!" was his cry as he lunged forward and kicked a knife from the hand of a man who, bellying through the snow, was trying to stab the lead-dog in the throat.

"This is terrible," Smoke muttered.

"I'm all het up," Shorty replied, returning from the rescue of Bright. "I'm real sweaty. An' now what 'r' we goin' to do with this ambulance outfit?"

Smoke shook his head, and then the problem was solved for him. An Indian crawled forward, his one eye fixed on Smoke instead of on the sled, and in it Smoke could see the struggle of sanity to assert itself. Shorty remembered having punched the other eye, which was already swollen shut. The Indian raised himself on his elbow and spoke.

“Me Carluk. Me good Siwash. Me savvy Boston man plenty. Me plenty hungry. All people plenty hungry. All people no savvy Boston man. Me savvy. Me eat grub now. All people eat grub now. We buy ‘m grub. Got ‘m plenty gold. No got ‘m grub. Summer, salmon no come Milk River. Winter, caribou no come. No grub. Me make ‘m talk all people. Me tell ‘em plenty Boston man come Yukon. Boston man have plenty grub. Boston man like ‘m gold. We take ‘m gold, go Yukon, Boston man give ‘m grub. Plenty gold. Me savvy Boston man like ‘m gold.”

He began fumbling with wasted fingers at the draw-string of a pouch he took from his belt.

“Too much make ‘m noise,” Shorty broke in distractedly. “You tell ‘m squaw, you tell ‘m papoose, shut ‘m up mouth.”

Carluk turned and addressed the wailing women. Other bucks, listening, raised their voices authoritatively, and slowly the squaws stilled, and quieted the children near to them. Carluk paused from fumbling the draw-string and held up his fingers many times.

“Him people make ‘m die,” he said.

And Smoke, following the count, knew that seventy-five of the tribe had starved to death.

“Me buy ‘m grub,” Carluk said, as he got the pouch open and drew out a large chunk of heavy metal. Others were following his example, and on every side appeared similar chunks. Shorty stared.

“Great Jeminey!” he cried. “Copper! Raw, red copper! An’ they think it’s gold!”

“Him gold,” Carluk assured them confidently, his quick comprehension having caught the gist of Shorty’s exclamation.

“And the poor devils banked everything on it,” Smoke muttered. “Look at it. That chunk there weighs forty pounds. They’ve got hundreds of pounds of it, and they’ve carried it when they didn’t have strength enough to drag themselves. Look here, Shorty. We’ve got to feed them.”

“Huh! Sounds easy. But how about statistics? You an’ me has a month’s grub, which is six meals times thirty, which is one hundred an’ eighty meals. Here’s two hundred Indians, with real, full-grown appetites. How the blazes can we give ‘m one meal even?”

"There's the dog-grub," Smoke answered. "A couple of hundred pounds of dried salmon ought to help out. We've got to do it. They've pinned their faith on the white man, you know."

"Sure, an' we can't throw 'm down," Shorty agreed. "An' we got two nasty jobs cut out for us, each just about twicet as nasty as the other. One of us has got to make a run of it to Mucluc an' raise a relief. The other has to stay here an' run the hospital an' most likely be eaten. Don't let it slip your noodle that we've been six days gettin' here; an' travelin' light, an' all played out, it can't be made back in less 'n three days."

For a minute Smoke pondered the miles of the way they had come, visioning the miles in terms of time measured by his capacity for exertion. "I can get there to-morrow night," he announced.

"All right," Shorty acquiesced cheerfully. "An' I'll stay an' be eaten."

"But I'm going to take one fish each for the dogs," Smoke explained, "and one meal for myself."

"An' you'll sure need it if you make Mucluc to-morrow night."

Smoke, through the medium of Carluk, stated the program. "Make fires, long fires, plenty fires," he concluded. "Plenty Boston man stop Mucluc. Boston man much good. Boston man plenty grub. Five sleeps I come back plenty grub. This man, his name Shorty, very good friend of mine. He stop here. He big boss — savvy?"

Carluk nodded and interpreted.

"All grub stop here. Shorty, he give 'm grub. He boss — savvy?"

Carluk interpreted, and nods and guttural cries of agreement proceeded from the men.

Smoke remained and managed until the full swing of the arrangement was under way. Those who were able, crawled or staggered in the collecting of firewood. Long, Indian fires were built that accommodated all. Shorty, aided by a dozen assistants, with a short club handy for the rapping of hungry knuckles, plunged into the cooking. The women devoted themselves to thawing snow in every utensil that could be mustered. First, a tiny piece of bacon was distributed all around, and, next, a spoonful of sugar to cloy the edge of their razor appetites. Soon, on a circle of fires drawn about Shorty, many pots of beans were boiling, and he, with a wrathful eye for what he called renigers, was frying and apportioning the thinnest of flapjacks.

"Me for the big cookin'," was his farewell to Smoke. "You just keep a-hikin'. Trot all the way there an' run all the way back. It'll take you to-day an' to-morrow to get there, and you can't be back inside of three days more. To-morrow they'll eat the last of the dog-fish, an' then there'll be nary a scrap for three days. You gotta keep a-comin', Smoke. You gotta keep a-comin'."

Though the sled was light, loaded only with six dried salmon, a couple of pounds of frozen beans and bacon, and a sleeping-robe, Smoke could not make speed. Instead of riding the sled and running the dogs, he was compelled to plod at the gee-pole. Also, a day of work had already been done, and the freshness and spring had gone out of the dogs and himself. The long arctic twilight was on when he cleared the divide and left the Bald Buttes behind.

Down the slope better time was accomplished, and often he was able to spring on the sled for short intervals and get an exhausting six-mile clip out of the animals. Darkness caught him and fooled him in a wide-valleyed, nameless creek. Here the creek wandered in broad horseshoe curves through the flats, and here, to save time, he began short-cutting the flats instead of keeping to the creek-bed. And black dark found him back on the creek-bed feeling for the trail. After an hour of futile searching, too wise to go farther astray, he built a fire, fed each dog half a fish, and divided his own ration in half. Rolled in his robe, ere quick sleep came he had solved the problem. The last big flat he had short-cut was the one that occurred at the forks of the creek. He had missed the trail by a mile. He was now on the main stream and below where his and Shorty's trail crossed the valley and climbed through a small feeder to the low divide on the other side.

At the first hint of daylight he got under way, breakfastless, and wallowed a mile upstream to pick up the trail. And breakfastless, man and dogs, without a halt, for eight hours held back transversely across the series of small creeks and low divides and down Minnow Creek. By four in the afternoon, with darkness fast-set about him, he emerged on the hard-packed, running trail of Moose Creek. Fifty miles of it would end the journey. He called a rest, built a fire, threw each dog its half-salmon, and thawed and ate his pound of beans. Then he sprang on the sled, yelled, "Mush!" and the dogs went out strongly against their breast-bands.

"Hit her up, you huskies!" he cried. "Mush on! Hit her up for grub! And no grub short of Mucluc! Dig in, you wolves! Dig in!"

Midnight had gone a quarter of an hour in the Annie Mine. The main room was comfortably crowded, while roaring stoves, combined with lack of ventilation, kept the big room unsanitarily warm. The click of chips and the boisterous play at the craps-table furnished a monotonous background of sound to the equally monotonous rumble of men's voices where they sat and stood about and talked in groups and twos and threes. The gold-weighers were busy at their scales, for dust was the circulating medium, and even a dollar drink of whiskey at the bar had to be paid for to the weighers.

The walls of the room were of tiered logs, the bark still on, and the chinking between the logs, plainly visible, was arctic moss. Through the open door that led to the dance-room came the rollicking strains of a Virginia reel, played by a piano and a fiddle. The drawing of Chinese lottery had just taken place, and the luckiest player, having cashed at the scales, was drinking up his winnings with half a dozen cronies. The faro- and roulette-tables were busy and quiet. The draw-poker and stud-poker tables, each with its circle of onlookers, were equally quiet. At another table, a serious, concentrated game of Black Jack was on. Only from the craps-table came noise, as the man who played rolled the dice, full sweep, down the green amphitheater of a table in pursuit of his elusive and long-delayed point. Ever he cried: “Oh! you Joe Cotton! Come a four! Come a Joe! Little Joe! Bring home the bacon, Joe! Joe, you Joe, you!”

Cultus George, a big strapping Circle City Indian, leaned distantly and dourly against the log wall. He was a civilized Indian, if living like a white man connotes civilization; and he was sorely offended, though the offense was of long standing. For years he had done a white man's work, had done it alongside of white men, and often had done it better than they did. He wore the same pants they wore, the same hearty woolens and heavy shirts. He sported as good a watch as they, parted his short hair on the side, and ate the same food — bacon, beans, and flour; and yet he was denied their greatest diversion and reward; namely, whiskey. Cultus George was a money-earner. He had staked claims, and bought and sold claims. He had been grub-staked, and he had accorded grub-stakes. Just now he was a dog-musher and freighter, charging twenty-eight cents a pound for the winter haul from Sixty Mile to Mucluc — and for bacon thirty-three cents, as was the custom. His poke was fat with dust. He had the price of many drinks. Yet no barkeeper would serve him. Whiskey, the hottest, swiftest, completest gratifier of civilization, was not for him. Only by subterranean and cowardly and expensive ways could he get a drink. And he resented this invidious distinction, as he had resented it for years, deeply. And he was especially thirsty and resentful this night, while the white men he had so sedulously emulated he hated more bitterly than ever before. The white men would graciously permit him to lose his gold across their gaming-tables, but for neither love nor money could he obtain a drink across their bars. Wherefore he was very sober, and very logical, and logically sullen.

The Virginia reel in the dance-room wound to a wild close that interfered not with the three camp drunkards who snored under the piano. "All couples promenade to the bar!" was the caller's last cry as the music stopped. And the couples were so promenading through the wide doorway into the main room — the men in furs and moccasins, the women in soft fluffy dresses, silk stockings, and dancing-slippers — when the double storm-doors were thrust open, and Smoke Bellew staggered wearily in.

Eyes centered on him, and silence began to fall. He tried to speak, pulled off his mittens (which fell dangling from their cords), and clawed at the frozen moisture of his breath which had formed in fifty miles of running. He halted irresolutely, then went over and leaned his elbow on the end of the bar.

Only the man at the craps-table, without turning his head, continued to roll the dice and to cry: "Oh! you Joe! Come on, you Joe!" The gamekeeper's gaze, fixed on Smoke, caught the player's attention, and he, too, with suspended dice, turned and looked.

"What's up, Smoke?" Matson, the owner of the Annie Mine, demanded.

With a last effort, Smoke clawed his mouth free. "I got some dogs out there — dead beat," he said huskily. "Somebody go and take care of them, and I'll tell you what's the matter."

In a dozen brief sentences, he outlined the situation. The craps-player, his money still lying on the table and his slippery Joe Cotton still uncaptured, had come over to Smoke, and was now the first to speak.

"We gotta do something. That's straight. But what? You've had time to think. What's your plan? Spit it out."

"Sure," Smoke assented. "Here's what I've been thinking. We've got to hustle light sleds on the jump. Say a hundred pounds of grub on each sled. The driver's outfit and dog-grub will fetch it up fifty more. But they can make time. Say we start five of these sleds pronto — best running teams, best mushers and trail-eaters. On the soft trail the sleds can take the lead turn about. They’ve got to start at once. At the best, by the time they can get there, all those Indians won’t have had a scrap to eat for three days. And then, as soon as we’ve got those sleds off we’ll have to follow up with heavy sleds. Figure it out yourself. Two pounds a day is the very least we can decently keep those Indians traveling on. That’s four hundred pounds a day, and, with the old people and the children, five days is the quickest time we can bring them into Mucluc. Now what are you going to do?”

“Take up a collection to buy all the grub,” said the craps-player.

“I’ll stand for the grub,” Smoke began impatiently.

“Nope,” the other interrupted. “This ain’t your treat. We’re all in. Fetch a wash-basin somebody. It won’t take a minute. An’ here’s a starter.”

He pulled a heavy gold-sack from his pocket, untied the mouth, and poured a stream of coarse dust and nuggets into the basin. A man beside him caught his hand up with a jerk and an oath, elevating the mouth of the sack so as to stop the run of the dust. To a casual eye, six or eight ounces had already run into the basin.

“Don’t be a hawg,” cried the second man. “You ain’t the only one with a poke. Gimme a chance at it.”

“Huh!” sneered the craps-player. “You’d think it was a stampede, you’re so goshdanged eager about it.”

Men crowded and jostled for the opportunity to contribute, and when they were satisfied, Smoke hefted the heavy basin with both hands and grinned.

“It will keep the whole tribe in grub for the rest of the winter,” he said. “Now for the dogs. Five light teams that have some run in them.”

A dozen teams were volunteered, and the camp, as a committee of the whole, bickered and debated, accepted and rejected.

“Huh! Your dray-horses!” Long Bill Haskell was told.

“They can pull,” he bristled with hurt pride.

“They sure can,” he was assured. “But they can’t make time for sour apples. They’ve got theirs cut out for them bringing up the heavy loads.”

As fast as a team was selected, its owner, with half a dozen aids, departed to harness up and get ready.

One team was rejected because it had come in tired that afternoon. One owner contributed his team, but apologetically exposed a bandaged ankle that prevented him from driving it. This team Smoke took, overriding the objection of the crowd that he was played out.

Long Bill Haskell pointed out that while Fat Olsen's team was a crackerjack, Fat Olsen himself was an elephant. Fat Olsen's two hundred and forty pounds of heartiness was indignant. Tears of anger came into his eyes, and his Scandinavian explosions could not be stopped until he was given a place in the heavy division, the craps-player jumping at the chance to take out Olsen's light team.

Five teams were accepted and were being harnessed and loaded, but only four drivers had satisfied the committee of the whole.

"There's Cultus George," some one cried. "He's a trail-eater, and he's fresh and rested."

All eyes turned upon the Indian, but his face was expressionless, and he said nothing.

"You'll take a team," Smoke said to him.

Still the big Indian made no answer. As with an electric thrill, it ran through all of them that something untoward was impending. A restless shifting of the group took place, forming a circle in which Smoke and Cultus George faced each other. And Smoke realized that by common consent he had been made the representative of his fellows in what was taking place, in what was to take place. Also, he was angered. It was beyond him that any human creature, a witness to the scramble of volunteers, should hang back. For another thing, in what followed, Smoke did not have Cultus George's point of view — did not dream that the Indian held back for any reason save the selfish, mercenary one.

"Of course you will take a team," Smoke said.

"How much?" Cultus George asked.

A snarl, spontaneous and general, grated in the throats and twisted the mouths of the miners. At the same moment, with clenched fists or fingers crooked to grip, they pressed in on the offender.

"Wait a bit, boys," Smoke cried. "Maybe he doesn't understand. Let me explain it to him. Look here, George. Don't you see, nobody is charging anything. They're giving everything to save two hundred Indians from starving to death." He paused, to let it sink home.

"How much?" said Cultus George.

"Wait, you fellows! Now listen, George. We don't want you to make any mistake. These starving people are your kind of people. They're another tribe, but they're Indians just the same. Now you've seen what the white men are doing — coughing up their dust, giving their dogs and sleds, falling over one another to hit the trail. Only the best men can go with the first sleds. Look at Fat Olsen there. He was ready to fight because they wouldn't let him go. You ought to be mighty proud because all men think you are a number-one musher. It isn't a case of how much, but how quick."

"How much?" said Cultus George.

"Kill him!" "Bust his head!" "Tar and feathers!" were several of the cries in the wild medley that went up, the spirit of philanthropy and good fellowship changed to brute savagery on the instant.

In the storm-center Cultus George stood imperturbable, while Smoke thrust back the fiercest and shouted:

"Wait! Who's running this?" The clamor died away. "Fetch a rope," he added quietly.

Cultus George shrugged his shoulders, his face twisting tensely in a sullen and incredulous grin. He knew this white-man breed. He had toiled on trail with it and eaten its flour and bacon and beans too long not to know it. It was a law-abiding breed. He knew that thoroughly. It always punished the man who broke the law. But he had broken no law. He knew its law. He had lived up to it. He had neither murdered, stolen, nor lied. There was nothing in the white man's law against charging a price and driving a bargain. They all charged a price and drove bargains. He was doing nothing more than that, and it was the thing they had taught him. Besides, if he wasn't good enough to drink with them, then he was not good enough to be charitable with them, nor to join them in any other of their foolish diversions.

Neither Smoke nor any man there glimpsed what lay in Cultus George's brain, behind his attitude and prompting his attitude. Though they did not know it, they were as beclouded as he in the matter of mutual understanding. To them, he was a selfish brute; to him, they were selfish brutes.

When the rope was brought, Long Bill Haskell, Fat Olsen, and the craps-player, with much awkwardness and angry haste, got the slip-noose around the Indian's neck and rove the rope over a rafter. At the other end of the dangling thing a dozen men tailed on, ready to hoist away.

Nor had Cultus George resisted. He knew it for what it was — bluff. The whites were strong on bluff. Was not draw-poker their favorite game? Did they not buy and sell and make all bargains with bluff? Yes; he had seen a white man do business with a look on his face of four aces and in his hand a busted straight.

“Wait,” Smoke commanded. “Tie his hands. We don’t want him climbing.”

More bluff, Cultus George decided, and passively permitted his hands to be tied behind his back.

“Now it’s your last chance, George,” said Smoke. “Will you take out the team?”

“How much?” said Cultus George.

Astounded at himself that he should be able to do such a thing, and at the same time angered by the colossal selfishness of the Indian, Smoke gave the signal. Nor was Cultus George any less astounded when he felt the noose tighten with a jerk and swing him off the floor. His stolidity broke on the instant. On his face, in quick succession, appeared surprise, dismay, and pain.

Smoke watched anxiously. Having never been hanged himself, he felt a tyro at the business. The body struggled convulsively, the tied hands strove to burst the bonds, and from the throat came unpleasant noises of strangulation. Suddenly Smoke held up his hand.

“Slack away” he ordered.

Grumbling at the shortness of the punishment, the men on the rope lowered Cultus George to the floor. His eyes were bulging, and he was tottery on his feet, swaying from side to side and still making a fight with his hands. Smoke divined what was the matter, thrust violent fingers between the rope and the neck, and brought the noose slack with a jerk. With a great heave of the chest, Cultus George got his first breath.

“Will you take that team out?” Smoke demanded.

Cultus George did not answer. He was too busy breathing.

“Oh, we white men are hogs,” Smoke filled in the interval, resentful himself at the part he was compelled to play. “We’d sell our souls for gold, and all that; but once in a while we forget about it and turn loose and do something without a thought of how much there is in it. And when we do that, Cultus George, watch out. What we want to know now is: Are you going to take out that team?”

Cultus George debated with himself. He was no coward. Perhaps this was the extent of their bluff, and if he gave in now he was a fool. And while he debated, Smoke suffered from secret worry lest this stubborn aborigine would persist in being hanged.

“How much?” said Cultus George.

Smoke started to raise his hand for the signal.

“Me go,” Cultus George said very quickly, before the rope could tighten.

“An’ when that rescue expedition found me,” Shorty told it in the Annie Mine, “that ornery Cultus George was the first in, beatin’ Smoke’s sled by three hours, an’ don’t you forget it, Smoke comes in second at that. Just the same, it was about time, when I heard Cultus George a-yellin’ at his dogs from the top of the divide, for those blamed Siwashes had ate my moccasins, my mitts, the leather lacin’s, my knife-sheath, an’ some of ‘em was beginnin’ to look mighty hungry at me — me bein’ better nourished, you see.

“An’ Smoke? He was near dead. He hustled around a while, helpin’ to start a meal for them two hundred sufferin’ Siwashes; an’ then he fell asleep, settin’ on his haunches, thinkin’ he was feedin’ snow into a thawin’-pail. I fixed him my bed, an’ dang me if I didn’t have to help him into it, he was that give out. Sure I win the toothpicks. Didn’t them dogs just naturally need the six salmon Smoke fed ‘em at the noonin’?”

IX. THE MISTAKE OF CREATION

"Whoa!" Smoke yelled at the dogs, throwing his weight back on the gee-pole to bring the sled to a halt.

"What's eatin' you now?" Shorty complained. "They ain't no water under that footing."

"No; but look at that trail cutting out to the right," Smoke answered. "I thought nobody was wintering in this section."

The dogs, on the moment they stopped, dropped in the snow and began biting out the particles of ice from between their toes. This ice had been water five minutes before. The animals had broken through a skein of ice, snow-powdered, which had hidden the spring water that oozed out of the bank and pooled on top of the three-foot winter crust of Nordbeska River.

"First I heard of anybody up the Nordbeska," Shorty said, staring at the all but obliterated track covered by two feet of snow, that left the bed of the river at right angles and entered the mouth of a small stream flowing from the left. "Mebbe they're hunters and pulled their freight long ago."

Smoke, scooping the light snow away with mittened hands, paused to consider, scooped again, and again paused. "No," he decided. "There's been travel both ways, but the last travel was up that creek. Whoever they are, they're there now — certain. There's been no travel for weeks. Now what's been keeping them there all the time? That's what I want to know."

"And what I want to know is where we're going to camp to-night," Shorty said, staring disconsolately at the sky-line in the southwest, where the mid-afternoon twilight was darkening into night.

"Let's follow the track up the creek," was Smoke's suggestion. "There's plenty of dead timber. We can camp any time."

"Sure we can camp any time, but we got to travel most of the time if we ain't goin' to starve, an' we got to travel in the right direction."

"We're going to find something up that creek," Smoke went on.

"But look at the grub! Look at them dogs!" Shorty cried. "Look at — oh, hell, all right. You will have your will."

"It won't make the trip a day longer," Smoke urged. "Possibly no more than a mile longer."

"Men has died for as little as a mile," Shorty retorted, shaking his head with lugubrious resignation. "Come on for trouble. Get up, you poor sore-foots, you — get up! Haw! You Bright! Haw!"

The lead-dog obeyed, and the whole team strained weakly into the soft snow.

"Whoa!" Shorty yelled. "It's pack trail."

Smoke pulled his snow-shoes from under the sled-lashings, bound them to his moccasined feet, and went to the fore to press and pack the light surface for the dogs.

It was heavy work. Dogs and men had been for days on short rations, and few and limited were the reserves of energy they could call upon. Though they followed the creek bed, so pronounced was its fall that they toiled on a stiff and unrelenting up-grade. The high rocky walls quickly drew near together, so that their way led up the bottom of a narrow gorge. The long lingering twilight, blocked by the high mountains, was no more than semi-darkness.

"It's a trap," Shorty said. "The whole look of it is rotten. It's a hole in the ground. It's the stampin'-ground of trouble."

Smoke made no reply, and for half an hour they toiled on in silence — a silence that was again broken by Shorty.

"She's a-workin'," he grumbled. "She's sure a-workin', an' I'll tell you if you're minded to hear an' listen."

"Go on," Smoke answered.

"Well, she tells me, plain an' simple, that we ain't never goin' to get out of this hole in the ground in days an' days. We're goin' to find trouble an' be stuck in here a long time an' then some."

"Does she say anything about grub?" Smoke queried unsympathetically. "For we haven't grub for days and days and days and then some."

"Nope. Nary whisper about grub. I guess we'll manage to make out. But I tell you one thing, Smoke, straight an' flat. I'll eat any dog in the team exceptin' Bright. I got to draw the line on Bright. I just couldn't scoff him."

"Cheer up," Smoke girded. "My hunch is working overtime. She tells me there'll be no dogs eaten, and, whether it's moose or caribou or quail on toast, we'll all fatten up."

Shorty snorted his unutterable disgust, and silence obtained for another quarter of an hour.

"There's the beginning of your trouble," Smoke said, halting on his snow-shoes and staring at an object that lay on one side of the old trail.

Shorty left the gee-pole and joined him, and together they gazed down on the body of a man beside the trail.

"Well fed," said Smoke.

"Look at them lips," said Shorty.

"Stiff as a poker," said Smoke, lifting an arm, that, without moving, moved the whole body.

"Pick 'm up an' drop 'm and he'd break to pieces," was Shorty's comment.

The man lay on his side, solidly frozen. From the fact that no snow powdered him, it was patent that he had lain there but a short time.

"There was a general fall of snow three days back," said Shorty.

Smoke nodded, bending over the corpse, twisting it half up to face them, and pointing to a bullet wound in the temple. He glanced to the side and tilted his head at a revolver that lay on top of the snow.

A hundred yards farther on they came upon a second body that lay face downward in the trail. "Two things are pretty clear," Smoke said. "They're fat. That means no famine. They've not struck it rich, else they wouldn't have committed suicide."

"If they did," Shorty objected.

"They certainly did. There are no tracks besides their own, and each is powder-burned." Smoke dragged the corpse to one side and with the toe of his moccasin nosed a revolver out of the snow into which it had been pressed by the body. "That's what did the work. I told you we'd find something."

"From the looks of it we ain't started yet. Now what'd two fat geezers want to kill theirselves for?"

"When we find that out we'll have found the rest of your trouble," Smoke answered. "Come on. It's blowing dark."

Quite dark it was when Smoke's snow-shoe tripped him over a body. He fell across a sled, on which lay another body. And when he had dug the snow out of his neck and struck a match, he and Shorty glimpsed a third body, wrapped in blankets, lying beside a partially dug grave. Also, ere the match flickered out, they caught sight of half a dozen additional graves.

"B-r-r-r," Shorty shivered. "Suicide Camp. All fed up. I reckon they're all dead."

"No — peep at that." Smoke was looking farther along at a dim glimmer of light. "And there's another light — and a third one there. Come on. Let's hike.”

No more corpses delayed them, and in several minutes, over a hard-packed trail, they were in the camp.

“It’s a city,” Shorty whispered. “There must be twenty cabins. An’ not a dog. Ain’t that funny!”

“And that explains it,” Smoke whispered back excitedly. “It’s the Laura Sibley outfit. Don’t you remember? Came up the Yukon last fall on the Port Townsend Number Six. Went right by Dawson without stopping. The steamer must have landed them at the mouth of the creek.”

“Sure. I remember. They was Mormons.”

“No — vegetarians.” Smoke grinned in the darkness. “They won’t eat meat and they won’t work dogs.”

“It’s all the same. I knowed they was something funny about ‘em. Had the allwise steer to the yellow. That Laura Sibley was goin’ to take ‘em right to the spot where they’d all be millionaires.”

“Yes; she was their seeress — had visions and that sort of stuff. I thought they went up the Nordensjold.”

“Huh! Listen to that!”

Shorty’s hand in the darkness went out warningly to Smoke’s chest, and together they listened to a groan, deep and long drawn, that came from one of the cabins. Ere it could die away it was taken up by another cabin, and another — a vast suspiration of human misery. The effect was monstrous and nightmarish.

“B-r-r-r,” Shorty shivered. “It’s gettin’ me goin’. Let’s break in an’ find what’s eatin’ ‘em.”

Smoke knocked at a lighted cabin, and was followed in by Shorty in answer to the “Come in” of the voice they heard groaning. It was a simple log cabin, the walls moss-chinked, the earth floor covered with sawdust and shavings. The light was a kerosene-lamp, and they could make out four bunks, three of which were occupied by men who ceased from groaning in order to stare.

“What’s the matter?” Smoke demanded of one whose blankets could not hide his broad shoulders and massively muscled body, whose eyes were pain-racked and whose cheeks were hollow. “Smallpox? What is it?”

In reply, the man pointed at his mouth, spreading black and swollen lips in the effort; and Smoke recoiled at the sight.

“Scurvy,” he muttered to Shorty; and the man confirmed the diagnosis with a nod of the head.

“Plenty of grub?” Shorty asked.

“Yep,” was the answer from a man in another bunk. “Help yourself. There’s slathers of it. The cabin next on the other side is empty. Cache is right alongside. Wade into it.”

In every cabin they visited that night they found a similar situation. Scurvy had smitten the whole camp. A dozen women were in the party, though the two men did not see all of them. Originally there had been ninety-three men and women. But ten had died, and two had recently disappeared. Smoke told of finding the two, and expressed surprise that none had gone that short distance down the trail to find out for themselves. What particularly struck him and Shorty was the helplessness of these people. Their cabins were littered and dirty. The dishes stood unwashed on the rough plank tables. There was no mutual aid. A cabin’s troubles were its own troubles, and already they had ceased from the exertion of burying their dead.

“It’s almost weird,” Smoke confided to Shorty. “I’ve met shirkers and loafers, but I never met so many all at one time. You heard what they said. They’ve never done a tap. I’ll bet they haven’t washed their own faces. No wonder they got scurvy.”

“But vegetarians hadn’t ought to get scurvy,” Shorty contended. “It’s the salt-meat-eaters that’s supposed to fall for it. And they don’t eat meat, salt or fresh, raw or cooked, or any other way.”

Smoke shook his head. “I know. And it’s vegetable diet that cures scurvy. No drugs will do it. Vegetables, especially potatoes, are the only dope. But don’t forget one thing, Shorty: we are not up against a theory but a condition. The fact is these grass-eaters have all got scurvy.”

“Must be contagious.”

“No; that the doctors do know. Scurvy is not a germ disease. It can’t be caught. It’s generated. As near as I can get it, it’s due to an impoverished condition of the blood. Its cause is not something they’ve got, but something they haven’t got. A man gets scurvy for lack of certain chemicals in his blood, and those chemicals don’t come out of powders and bottles, but do come out of vegetables.”

“An’ these people eats nothin’ but grass,” Shorty groaned. “And they’ve got it up to their ears. That proves you’re all wrong, Smoke. You’re spielin’ a theory, but this condition sure knocks the spots outa your theory. Scurvy's catchin', an' that's why they've all got it, an' rotten bad at that. You an' me'll get it too, if we hang around this diggin'. B-r-r-r! — I can feel the bugs crawlin' into my system right now."

Smoke laughed skeptically, and knocked on a cabin door. "I suppose we'll find the same old thing," he said. "Come on. We've got to get a line on the situation."

"What do you want?" came a woman's sharp voice.

"We want to see you," Smoke answered.

"Who are you?"

"Two doctors from Dawson," Shorty blurted in, with a levity that brought a punch in the short ribs from Smoke's elbow.

"Don't want to see any doctors," the woman said, in tones crisp and staccato with pain and irritation. "Go away. Good night. We don't believe in doctors."

Smoke pulled the latch, shoved the door open, and entered, turning up the low-flamed kerosene-lamp so that he could see. In four bunks four women ceased from groaning and sighing to stare at the intruders. Two were young, thin-faced creatures, the third was an elderly and very stout woman, and the fourth, the one whom Smoke identified by her voice, was the thinnest, frailest specimen of the human race he had ever seen. As he quickly learned, she was Laura Sibley, the seeress and professional clairvoyant who had organized the expedition in Los Angeles and led it to this death-camp on the Nordbeska. The conversation that ensued was acrimonious. Laura Sibley did not believe in doctors. Also, to add to her purgatory, she had wellnigh ceased to believe in herself.

"Why didn't you send out for help?" Smoke asked, when she paused, breathless and exhausted, from her initial tirade. "There's a camp at Stewart River, and eighteen days' travel would fetch Dawson from here."

"Why didn't Amos Wentworth go?" she demanded, with a wrath that bordered on hysteria.

"Don't know the gentleman," Smoke countered. "What's he been doing?"

"Nothing. Except that he's the only one that hasn't caught the scurvy. And why hasn't he caught the scurvy? I'll tell you. No, I won't." The thin lips compressed so tightly that through the emaciated transparency of them Smoke was almost convinced he could see the teeth and the roots of the teeth. “And what would have been the use? Don’t I know? I’m not a fool. Our caches are filled with every kind of fruit juice and preserved vegetables. We are better situated than any other camp in Alaska to fight scurvy. There is no prepared vegetable, fruit, and nut food we haven’t, and in plenty.”

“She’s got you there, Smoke,” Shorty exulted. “And it’s a condition, not a theory. You say vegetables cures. Here’s the vegetables, and where’s the cure?”

“There’s no explanation I can see,” Smoke acknowledged. “Yet there is no camp in Alaska like this. I’ve seen scurvy — a sprinkling of cases here and there; but I never saw a whole camp with it, nor did I ever see such terrible cases. Which is neither here nor there, Shorty. We’ve got to do what we can for these people, but first we’ve got to make camp and take care of the dogs. We’ll see you in the morning, er — Mrs. Sibley.”

“MISS Sibley,” she bridled. “And now, young man, if you come fooling around this cabin with any doctor stuff I’ll fill you full of birdshot.”

“This divine seeress is a sweet one,” Smoke chuckled, as he and Shorty felt their way back through the darkness to the empty cabin next to the one they had first entered.

It was evident that two men had lived until recently in the cabin, and the partners wondered if they weren’t the two suicides down the trail. Together they overhauled the cache and found it filled with an undreamed-of variety of canned, powdered, dried, evaporated, condensed, and desiccated foods.

“What in the name of reason do they want to go and get scurvy for?” Shorty demanded, brandishing to the light packages of egg-powder and Italian mushrooms. “And look at that! And that!” He tossed out cans of tomatoes and corn and bottles of stuffed olives. “And the divine steeress got the scurvy, too. What d’ye make of it?”

“Seeress,” Smoke corrected.

“Steeress,” Shorty reiterated. “Didn’t she steer ‘em here to this hole in the ground?”

Next morning, after daylight, Smoke encountered a man carrying a heavy sled-load of firewood. He was a little man, clean-looking and spry, who walked briskly despite the load. Smoke experienced an immediate dislike.

“What’s the matter with you?” he asked.

“Nothing,” the little man answered.

“I know that,” Smoke said. “That’s why I asked you. You’re Amos Wentworth. Now why under the sun haven’t you the scurvy like all the rest?”

“Because I’ve exercised,” came the quick reply. “There wasn’t any need for any of them to get it if they’d only got out and done something. What did they do? Growled and kicked and grouched at the cold, the long nights, the hardships, the aches and pains and everything else. They loafed in their beds until they swelled up and couldn’t leave them, that’s all. Look at me. I’ve worked. Come into my cabin.”

Smoke followed him in.

“Squint around. Clean as a whistle, eh? You bet. Everything shipshape. I wouldn’t keep those chips and shavings on the floor except for the warmth, but they’re clean chips and shavings. You ought to see the floor in some of the shacks. Pig-pens. As for me, I haven’t eaten a meal off an unwashed dish. No, sir. It meant work, and I’ve worked, and I haven’t the scurvy. You can put that in your pipe and smoke it.”

“You’ve hit the nail on the head,” Smoke admitted. “But I see you’ve only one bunk. Why so unsociable?”

“Because I like to be. It’s easier to clean up for one than two, that’s why. The lazy blanket-loafers! Do you think that I could have stood one around? No wonder they got scurvy.”

It was very convincing, but Smoke could not rid himself of his dislike of the man.

“What’s Laura Sibley got it in for you for?” he asked abruptly.

Amos Wentworth shot a quick look at him. “She’s a crank,” was the reply. “So are we all cranks, for that matter. But Heaven save me from the crank that won’t wash the dishes that he eats off of, and that’s what this crowd of cranks are like.”

A few minutes later, Smoke was talking with Laura Sibley. Supported by a stick in either hand, she had paused in hobbling by his cabin.

“What have you got it in for Wentworth for?” he asked, apropos of nothing in the conversation and with a suddenness that caught her off her guard.

Her green eyes flashed bitterly, her emaciated face for the second was convulsed with rage, and her sore lips writhed on the verge of unconsidered speech. But only a splutter of gasping, unintelligible sounds issued forth, and then, by a terrible effort, she controlled herself.

"Because he's healthy," she panted. "Because he hasn't the scurvy. Because he is supremely selfish. Because he won't lift a hand to help anybody else. Because he'd let us rot and die, as he is letting us rot and die, without lifting a finger to fetch us a pail of water or a load of firewood. That's the kind of a brute he is. But let him beware! That's all. Let him beware!"

Still panting and gasping, she hobbled on her way, and five minutes afterward, coming out of the cabin to feed the dogs, Smoke saw her entering Amos Wentworth's cabin.

"Something rotten here, Shorty, something rotten," he said, shaking his head ominously, as his partner came to the door to empty a pan of dish-water.

"Sure," was the cheerful rejoinder. "An' you an' me'll be catchin' it yet. You'll see."

"I don't mean the scurvy."

"Oh, sure, if you mean the divine steeress. She'd rob a corpse. She's the hungriest-lookin' female I ever seen."

"Exercise has kept you and me in condition, Shorty. It's kept Wentworth in condition. You see what lack of exercise has done for the rest. Now it's up to us to prescribe exercise for these hospital wrecks. It will be your job to see that they get it. I appoint you chief nurse."

"What? Me?" Shorty shouted. "I resign."

"No, you don't. I'll be able assistant, because it isn't going to be any soft snap. We've got to make them hustle. First thing, they'll have to bury their dead. The strongest for the burial squad; then the next strongest on the firewood squad (they've been lying in their blankets to save wood); and so on down the line. And spruce-tea. Mustn't forget that. All the sour-doughs swear by it. These people have never even heard of it."

"We sure got ourn cut out for us," Shorty grinned. "First thing we know we'll be full of lead."

"And that's our first job," Smoke said. "Come on."

In the next hour, each of the twenty-odd cabins was raided. All ammunition and every rifle, shotgun, and revolver was confiscated.

"Come on, you invalids," was Shorty's method. "Shootin'-irons — fork 'em over. We need 'em."

"Who says so?" was the query at the first cabin.

“Two doctors from Dawson,” was Shorty’s answer. “An’ what they say goes. Come on. Shell out the ammunition, too.”

“What do you want them for?”

“To stand off a war-party of canned beef comin’ down the canyon. And I’m givin’ you fair warnin’ of a spruce-tea invasion. Come across.”

And this was only the beginning of the day. Men were persuaded, coaxed, bullied or dragged by main strength from their bunks and forced to dress. Smoke selected the mildest cases for the burial squad. Another squad was told off to supply the wood by which the graves were burned down into the frozen muck and gravel. Still another squad had to chop firewood and impartially supply every cabin. Those who were too weak for outdoor work were put to cleaning and scrubbing the cabins and washing clothes. One squad brought in many loads of spruce-boughs, and every stove was used for the brewing of spruce-tea.

But no matter what face Smoke and Shorty put on it, the situation was grim and serious. At least thirty fearful and impossible cases could not be taken from the beds, as the two men, with nausea and horror, learned; while one, a woman, died in Laura Sibley’s cabin. Yet strong measures were necessary.

“I don’t like to wallop a sick man,” Shorty explained, his fist doubled menacingly. “But I’d wallop his block off if it’d make him well. And what all you lazy bums needs is a wallopin’. Come on! Out of that an’ into them duds of yourn, double quick, or I’ll sure muss up the front of your face.”

All the gangs groaned, and sighed, and wept, the tears streaming and freezing down their cheeks as they toiled; and it was patent that their agony was real. The situation was desperate, and Smoke’s prescription was heroic.

When the work-gangs came in at noon, they found decently cooked dinners awaiting them, prepared by the weaker members of their cabins under the tutelage and drive of Smoke and Shorty.

“That’ll do,” Smoke said at three in the afternoon. “Knock off. Go to your bunks. You may be feeling rotten now, but you’ll be the better for it to-morrow. Of course it hurts to get well, but I’m going to get you well.”

“Too late,” Amos Wentworth sneered pallidly at Smoke’s efforts. “They ought to have started in that way last fall.”

“Come along with me,” Smoke answered. “Pick up those two pails. You’re not ailing.”

From cabin to cabin the three men went, dosing every man and woman with a full pint of spruce-tea. Nor was it easy.

"You might as well learn at the start that we mean business," Smoke stated to the first obdurate, who lay on his back, groaning through set teeth. "Stand by, Shorty." Smoke caught the patient by the nose and tapped the solar-plexus section so as to make the mouth gasp open. "Now, Shorty! Down she goes!"

And down it went, accompanied with unavoidable splutterings and stranglings.

"Next time you'll take it easier," Smoke assured the victim, reaching for the nose of the man in the adjoining bunk.

"I'd sooner take castor oil," was Shorty's private confidence, ere he downed his own portion. "Great jumpin' Methuselem!" was his entirely public proclamation the moment after he had swallowed the bitter dose. "It's a pint long, but hogshead strong."

"We're covering this spruce-tea route four times a day, and there are eighty of you to be dosed each time," Smoke informed Laura Sibley. "So we've no time to fool. Will you take it or must I hold your nose?" His thumb and forefinger hovered eloquently above her. "It's vegetable, so you needn't have any qualms."

"Qualms!" Shorty snorted. "No, sure, certainly not. It's the deliciousest dope!"

Laura Sibley hesitated. She gulped her apprehension.

"Well?" Smoke demanded peremptorily.

"I'll — I'll take it," she quavered. "Hurry up!"

That night, exhausted as by no hard day of trail, Smoke and Shorty crawled into their blankets.

"I'm fairly sick with it," Smoke confessed. "The way they suffer is awful. But exercise is the only remedy I can think of, and it must be given a thorough trial. I wish we had a sack of raw potatoes."

"Sparkins he can't wash no more dishes," Shorty said. "It hurts him so he sweats his pain. I seen him sweat it. I had to put him back in the bunk, he was that helpless."

"If only we had raw potatoes," Smoke went on. "The vital, essential something is missing from that prepared stuff. The life has been evaporated out of it."

"An' if that young fellow Jones in the Brownlow cabin don't croak before morning I miss my guess."

"For Heaven's sake be cheerful," Smoke chided.

"We got to bury him, ain't we?" came the indignant snort. "I tell you that boy's something awful — "

"Shut up," Smoke said.

And after several more indignant snorts, the heavy breathing of sleep arose from Shorty's bunk.

In the morning, not only was Jones dead, but one of the stronger men who had worked on the firewood squad was found to have hanged himself. A nightmare procession of days set in. For a week, steeling himself to the task, Smoke enforced the exercise and the spruce-tea. And one by one, and in twos and threes, he was compelled to knock off the workers. As he was learning, exercise was the last thing in the world for scurvy patients. The diminishing burial squad was kept steadily at work, and a surplus half-dozen graves were always burned down and waiting.

"You couldn't have selected a worse place for a camp," Smoke told Laura Sibley. "Look at it — at the bottom of a narrow gorge, running east and west. The noon sun doesn't rise above the top of the wall. You can't have had sunlight for several months."

"But how was I to know?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't see why not, if you could lead a hundred fools to a gold-mine."

She glared malevolently at him and hobbled on. Several minutes afterward, coming back from a trip to where a squad of groaning patients was gathering spruce-boughs, Smoke saw the seeress entering Amos Wentworth's cabin and followed after her. At the door he could hear her voice, whimpering and pleading.

"Just for me," she was begging, as Smoke entered. "I won't tell a soul."

Both glanced guiltily at the intruder, and Smoke was certain that he was on the edge of something, he knew not what, and he cursed himself for not having eavesdropped.

"Out with it," he commanded harshly. "What is it?"

"What is what?" Amos Wentworth asked sullenly. And Smoke could not name what was what.

Grimmer and grimmer grew the situation. In that dark hole of a canyon, where sunlight never penetrated, the horrible death list mounted up. Each day, in apprehension, Smoke and Shorty examined each other's mouths for the whitening of the gums and mucous membranes — the invariable first symptom of the disease.

"I've quit," Shorty announced one evening. "I've been thinkin' it over, an' I quit. I can make a go at slave-drivin', but cripple-drivin's too much for my stomach. They go from bad to worse. They ain't twenty men I can drive to work. I told Jackson this afternoon he could take to his bunk. He was gettin' ready to suicide. I could see it stickin' out all over him. Exercise ain't no good."

"I've made up my mind to the same thing," Smoke answered. "We'll knock off all but about a dozen. They'll have to lend a hand. We can relay them. And we'll keep up the spruce-tea."

"It ain't no good."

"I'm about ready to agree with that, too, but at any rate it doesn't hurt them."

"Another suicide," was Shorty's news the following morning. "That Phillips is the one. I seen it comin' for days."

"We're up against the real thing," Smoke groaned. "What would you suggest, Shorty?"

"Who? Me? I ain't got no suggestions. The thing's got to run its course."

"But that means they'll all die," Smoke protested.

"Except Wentworth," Shorty snarled; for he had quickly come to share his partner's dislike for that individual.

The everlasting miracle of Wentworth's immunity perplexed Smoke. Why should he alone not have developed scurvy? Why did Laura Sibley hate him, and at the same time whine and snivel and beg from him? What was it she begged from him and that he would not give?

On several occasions Smoke made it a point to drop into Wentworth's cabin at meal-time. But one thing did he note that was suspicious, and that was Wentworth's suspicion of him. Next he tried sounding out Laura Sibley.

"Raw potatoes would cure everybody here," he remarked to the seeress. "I know it. I've seen it work before."

The flare of conviction in her eyes, followed by bitterness and hatred, told him the scent was warm.

"Why didn't you bring in a supply of fresh potatoes on the steamer?" he asked.

“We did. But coming up the river we sold them all out at a bargain at Fort Yukon. We had plenty of the evaporated kinds, and we knew they’d keep better. They wouldn’t even freeze.”

Smoke groaned. “And you sold them all?” he asked.

“Yes. How were we to know?”

“Now mightn’t there have been a couple of odd sacks left? — accidentally, you know, mislaid on the steamer?”

She shook her head, as he thought, a trifle belatedly, then added, “We never found any.”

“But mightn’t there?” he persisted.

“How do I know?” she rasped angrily. “I didn’t have charge of the commissary.”

“And Amos Wentworth did,” he jumped to the conclusion. “Very good. Now what is your private opinion — just between us two. Do you think Wentworth has any raw potatoes stored away somewhere?”

“No; certainly not. Why should he?”

“Why shouldn’t he?”

She shrugged her shoulders.

Struggle as he would with her, Smoke could not bring her to admit the possibility.

“Wentworth’s a swine,” was Shorty’s verdict, when Smoke told his suspicions.

“And so is Laura Sibley,” Smoke added. “She believes he has the potatoes, and is keeping it quiet, and trying to get him to share with her.”

“An’ he won’t come across, eh?” Shorty cursed frail human nature with one of his best flights, and caught his breath. “They both got their feet in the trough. May God rot them dead with scurvy for their reward, that’s all I got to say, except I’m goin’ right up now an’ knock Wentworth’s block off.”

But Smoke stood out for diplomacy. That night, when the camp groaned and slept, or groaned and did not sleep, he went to Wentworth’s unlighted cabin.

“Listen to me, Wentworth,” he said. “I’ve got a thousand dollars in dust right here in this sack. I’m a rich man in this country, and I can afford it. I think I’m getting touched. Put a raw potato in my hand and the dust is yours. Here, heft it.”

And Smoke thrilled when Amos Wentworth put out his hand in the darkness and hefted the gold. Smoke heard him fumble in the blankets, and then felt pressed into his hand, not the heavy gold-sack, but the unmistakable potato, the size of a hen's egg, warm from contact with the other's body.

Smoke did not wait till morning. He and Shorty were expecting at any time the deaths of their worst two cases, and to this cabin the partners went. Grated and mashed up in a cup, skin, and clinging specks of the earth, and all, was the thousand-dollar potato — a thick fluid, that they fed, several drops at a time, into the frightful orifices that had once been mouths. Shift by shift, through the long night, Smoke and Shorty relieved each other at administering the potato juice, rubbing it into the poor swollen gums where loose teeth rattled together and compelling the swallowing of every drop of the precious elixir.

By evening of the next day the change for the better in the two patients was miraculous and almost unbelievable. They were no longer the worst cases. In forty-eight hours, with the exhaustion of the potato, they were temporarily out of danger, though far from being cured.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Smoke said to Wentworth. "I've got holdings in this country, and my paper is good anywhere. I'll give you five hundred dollars a potato up to fifty thousand dollars' worth. That's one hundred potatoes."

"Was that all the dust you had?" Wentworth queried.

"Shorty and I scraped up all we had. But, straight, he and I are worth several millions between us."

"I haven't any potatoes," Wentworth said finally. "Wish I had. That potato I gave you was the only one. I'd been saving it all the winter for fear I'd get the scurvy. I only sold it so as to be able to buy a passage out of the country when the river opens."

Despite the cessation of potato-juice, the two treated cases continued to improve through the third day. The untreated cases went from bad to worse. On the fourth morning, three horrible corpses were buried. Shorty went through the ordeal, then turned to Smoke.

"You've tried your way. Now it's me for mine."

He headed straight for Wentworth's cabin. What occurred there, Shorty never told. He emerged with knuckles skinned and bruised, and not only did Wentworth's face bear all the marks of a bad beating, but for a long time he carried his head, twisted and sidling, on a stiff neck. This phenomenon was accounted for by a row of four finger-marks, black and blue, on one side of the windpipe and by a single black-and-blue mark on the other side.

Next, Smoke and Shorty together invaded Wentworth's cabin, throwing him out in the snow while they turned the interior upside down. Laura Sibley hobbled in and frantically joined them in the search.

"You don't get none, old girl, not if we find a ton," Shorty assured her.

But she was no more disappointed than they. Though the very floor was dug up, they discovered nothing.

"I'm for roastin' him over a slow fire an' make 'm cough up," Shorty proposed earnestly.

Smoke shook his head reluctantly.

"It's murder," Shorty held on. "He's murderin' all them poor geezers just as much as if he knocked their brains out with an ax, only worse."

Another day passed, during which they kept a steady watch on Wentworth's movements. Several times, when he started out, water-bucket in hand, for the creek, they casually approached the cabin, and each time he hurried back without the water.

"They're cached right there in his cabin," Shorty said. "As sure as God made little apples, they are. But where? We sure overhauled it plenty." He stood up and pulled on his mittens. "I'm goin' to find 'em, if I have to pull the blame shack down a log at a time."

He glanced at Smoke, who, with an intent, absent face, had not heard him.

"What's eatin' you?" Shorty demanded wrathfully. "Don't tell me you've gone an' got the scurvy!"

"Just trying to remember something, Shorty."

"What?"

"I don't know. That's the trouble. But it has a bearing, if only I could remember it."

"Now you look here, Smoke; don't you go an' get bug-house," Shorty pleaded. "Think of me! Let your think-slats rip. Come on an' help me pull that shack down. I'd set her afire, if it wa'n't for roastin' them spuds."

"That's it!" Smoke exploded, as he sprang to his feet. "Just what I was trying to remember. Where's that kerosene-can? I'm with you, Shorty. The potatoes are ours."

"What's the game?"

“Watch me, that’s all,” Smoke baffled. “I always told you, Shorty, that a deficient acquaintance with literature was a handicap, even in the Klondike. Now what we’re going to do came out of a book. I read it when I was a kid, and it will work. Come on.”

Several minutes later, under a pale-gleaming, greenish aurora borealis, the two men crept up to Amos Wentworth’s cabin. Carefully and noiselessly they poured kerosene over the logs, extra-drenching the door-frame and window-sash. Then the match was applied, and they watched the flaming oil gather headway. They drew back beyond the growing light and waited.

They saw Wentworth rush out, stare wildly at the conflagration, and plunge back into the cabin. Scarcely a minute elapsed when he emerged, this time slowly, half doubled over, his shoulders burdened by a sack heavy and unmistakable. Smoke and Shorty sprang at him like a pair of famished wolves. They hit him right and left, at the same instant. He crumpled down under the weight of the sack, which Smoke pressed over with his hands to make sure. Then he felt his knees clasped by Wentworth’s arms as the man turned a ghastly face upward.

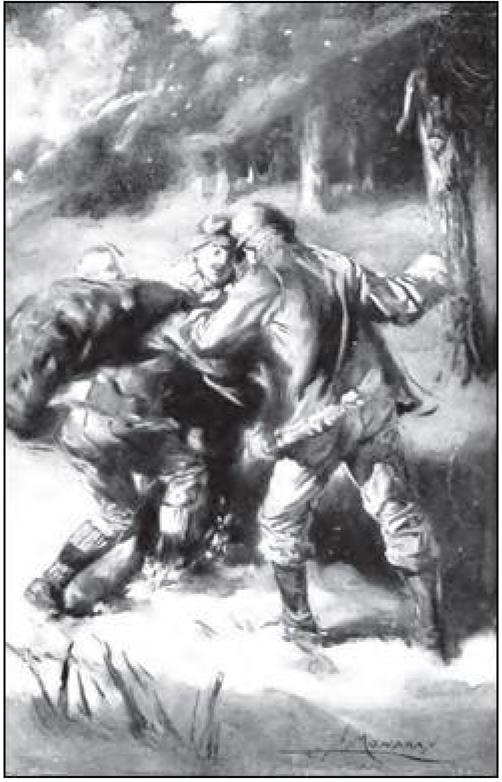

“Give me a dozen, only a dozen — half a dozen — and you can have the rest,” he squalled. He bared his teeth and, with mad rage, half inclined his head to bite Smoke’s leg, then he changed his mind and fell to pleading.

"Just half a dozen," he wailed. "Just half a dozen. I was going to turn them over to you — to-morrow. Yes, to-morrow. That was my idea. They're life! They're life! Just half a dozen!"

"Where's the other sack?" Smoke bluffed.

"I ate it up," was the reply, unimpeachably honest. "That sack's all that's left. Give me a few. You can have the rest."

"Ate 'em up!" Shorty screamed. "A whole sack! An' them geezers dyin' for want of 'em! This for you! An' this! An' this! An' this! You swine! You hog!"

The first kick tore Wentworth away from his embrace of Smoke's knees. The second kick turned him over in the snow. But Shorty went on kicking.

"Watch out for your toes," was Smoke's only interference.

"Sure; I'm usin' the heel," Shorty answered. "Watch me. I'll cave his ribs in. I'll kick his jaw off. Take that! An' that! Wisht I could give you the boot instead of the moccasin. You swine!"

There was no sleep in camp that night. Hour after hour Smoke and Shorty went the rounds, doling the life-renewing potato-juice, a quarter of a spoonful at a dose, into the poor ruined mouths of the population. And through the following day, while one slept the other kept up the work.

There were no more deaths. The most awful cases began to mend with an immediacy that was startling. By the third day, men who had not been off their backs for weeks crawled out of their bunks and tottered around on crutches. And on that day, the sun, two months then on its journey into northern declination, peeped cheerfully over the crest of the canyon for the first time.

"Nary a potato," Shorty told the whining, begging Wentworth. "You ain't even touched with scurvy. You got outside a whole sack, an' you're loaded against scurvy for twenty years. Knowin' you, I've come to understand God. I always wondered why he let Satan live. Now I know. He let him live just as I let you live. But it's a cryin' shame, just the same."

"A word of advice," Smoke told Wentworth. "These men are getting well fast; Shorty and I are leaving in a week, and there will be nobody to protect you when these men go after you. There's the trail. Dawson's eighteen days' travel."

"Pull your freight, Amos," Shorty supplemented, "or what I done to you won't be a circumstance to what them convalescents'll do to you."

"Gentlemen, I beg of you, listen to me," Wentworth whined. "I'm a stranger in this country. I don't know its ways. I don't know the trail. Let me travel with you. I'll give you a thousand dollars if you'll let me travel with you."

"Sure," Smoke grinned maliciously. "If Shorty agrees."

"WHO? ME?" Shorty stiffened for a supreme effort. "I ain't nobody. Woodticks ain't got nothin' on me when it comes to humility. I'm a worm, a maggot, brother to the pollywog an' child of the blow-fly. I ain't afraid or ashamed of nothin' that creeps or crawls or stinks. But travel with that mistake of creation! Go 'way, man. I ain't proud, but you turn my stomach."

And Amos Wentworth went away, alone, dragging a sled loaded with provisions sufficient to last him to Dawson. A mile down the trail Shorty overhauled him.

"Come here to me," was Shorty's greeting. "Come across. Fork over. Cough up."

"I don't understand," Wentworth quavered, shivering from recollection of the two beatings, hand and foot, he had already received from Shorty.

"That thousand dollars, d' ye understand that? That thousand dollars gold Smoke bought that measly potato with. Come through."

And Amos Wentworth passed the gold-sack over.

"Hope a skunk bites you an' you get howlin' hydrophoby," were the terms of Shorty's farewell.

X. A FLUTTER IN EGGS

It was in the A. C. Company's big store at Dawson, on a morning of crisp frost, that Lucille Arral beckoned Smoke Bellew over to the dry-goods counter. The clerk had gone on an expedition into the storerooms, and, despite the huge, red-hot stoves, Lucille had drawn on her mittens again.

Smoke obeyed her call with alacrity. The man did not exist in Dawson who would not have been flattered by the notice of Lucille Arral, the singing soubrette of the tiny stock company that performed nightly at the Palace Opera House.

"Things are dead," she complained, with pretty petulance, as soon as they had shaken hands. "There hasn't been a stampede for a week. That masked ball Skiff Mitchell was going to give us has been postponed. There's no dust in circulation. There's always standing-room now at the Opera House. And there hasn't been a mail from the Outside for two whole weeks. In short, this burg has crawled into its cave and gone to sleep. We've got to do something. It needs livening — and you and I can do it. We can give it excitement if anybody can. I've broken with Wild Water, you know."

Smoke caught two almost simultaneous visions. One was of Joy Gastell; the other was of himself, in the midst of a bleak snow-stretch, under a cold arctic moon, being pot-shotted with accurateness and dispatch by the aforesaid Wild Water. Smoke's reluctance at raising excitement with the aid of Lucille Arral was too patent for her to miss.

"I'm not thinking what you are thinking at all, thank you," she chided, with a laugh and a pout. "When I throw myself at your head you'll have to have more eyes and better ones than you have now to see me."

"Men have died of heart disease at the sudden announcement of good fortune," he murmured in the unveracious gladness of relief.

"Liar," she retorted graciously. "You were more scared to death than anything else. Now take it from me, Mr. Smoke Bellew, I'm not going to make love to you, and if you dare to make love to me, Wild Water will take care of your case. You know HIM. Besides, I — I haven't really broken with him."

"Go on with your puzzles," he jeered. "Maybe I can start guessing what you're driving at after a while."

“There’s no guessing, Smoke. I’ll give it to you straight. Wild Water thinks I’ve broken with him, don’t you see.”

“Well, have you, or haven’t you?”

“I haven’t — there! But it’s between you and me in confidence. He thinks I have. I made a noise like breaking with him, and he deserved it, too.”

“Where do I come in, stalking-horse or fall-guy?”

“Neither. You make a pot of money, we put across the laugh on Wild Water and cheer Dawson up, and, best of all, and the reason for it all, he gets disciplined. He needs it. He’s — well, the best way to put it is, he’s too turbulent. Just because he’s a big husky, because he owns more rich claims than he can keep count of — ”

“And because he’s engaged to the prettiest little woman in Alaska,” Smoke interpolated.

“Yes, and because of that, too, thank you, is no reason for him to get riotous. He broke out last night again. Sowed the floor of the M. & M. with gold-dust. All of a thousand dollars. Just opened his poke and scattered it under the feet of the dancers. You’ve heard of it, of course.”

“Yes; this morning. I’d like to be the sweeper in that establishment. But still I don’t get you. Where do I come in?”

“Listen. He was too turbulent. I broke our engagement, and he’s going around making a noise like a broken heart. Now we come to it. I like eggs.”

“They’re off!” Smoke cried in despair. “Which way? Which way?”

“Wait.”

“But what have eggs and appetite got to do with it?” he demanded.

“Everything, if you’ll only listen.”

“Listening, listening,” he chanted.

“Then for Heaven’s sake listen. I like eggs. There’s only a limited supply of eggs in Dawson.”

“Sure. I know that, too. Slavovitch’s restaurant has most of them. Ham and one egg, three dollars. Ham and two eggs, five dollars. That means two dollars an egg, retail. And only the swells and the Arrals and the Wild Waters can afford them.”

“He likes eggs, too,” she continued. “But that’s not the point. I like them. I have breakfast every morning at eleven o’clock at Slavovitch’s. I invariably eat two eggs.” She paused impressively. “Suppose, just suppose, somebody corners eggs.”

She waited, and Smoke regarded her with admiring eyes, while in his heart he backed with approval Wild Water's choice of her.

"You're not following," she said.

"Go on," he replied. "I give up. What's the answer?"

"Stupid! You know Wild Water. When he sees I'm languishing for eggs, and I know his mind like a book, and I know how to languish, what will he do?"

"You answer it. Go on."

"Why, he'll just start stampeding for the man that's got the corner in eggs. He'll buy the corner, no matter what it costs. Picture: I come into Slavovitch's at eleven o'clock. Wild Water will be at the next table. He'll make it his business to be there. 'Two eggs, shirred,' I'll say to the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Arral,' the waiter will say; 'they ain't no more eggs.' Then up speaks Wild Water, in that big bear voice of his, 'Waiter, six eggs, soft boiled.' And the waiter says, 'Yes, sir,' and the eggs are brought. Picture: Wild Water looks sideways at me, and I look like a particularly indignant icicle and summon the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Arral,' he says, 'but them eggs is Mr. Wild Water's. You see, Miss, he owns 'em.' Picture: Wild Water, triumphant, doing his best to look unconscious while he eats his six eggs.

"Another picture: Slavovitch himself bringing two shirred eggs to me and saying, 'Compliments of Mr. Wild Water, Miss.' What can I do? What can I possibly do but smile at Wild Water, and then we make up, of course, and he'll consider it cheap if he has been compelled to pay ten dollars for each and every egg in the corner."

"Go on, go on," Smoke urged. "At what station do I climb onto the choo-choo cars, or at what water-tank do I get thrown off?"

"Ninny! You don't get thrown off. You ride the egg-train straight into the Union Depot. You make that corner in eggs. You start in immediately, to-day. You can buy every egg in Dawson for three dollars and sell out to Wild Water at almost any advance. And then, afterward, we'll let the inside history come out. The laugh will be on Wild Water. His turbulence will be some subdued. You and I share the glory of it. You make a pile of money. And Dawson wakes up with a grand ha! ha! Of course — if — if you think the speculation too risky, I'll put up the dust for the corner."

This last was too much for Smoke. Being only a mere mortal Western man, with queer obsessions about money and women, he declined with scorn the proffer of her dust.

“Hey! Shorty!” Smoke called across the main street to his partner, who was trudging along in his swift, slack-jointed way, a naked bottle with frozen contents conspicuously tucked under his arm. Smoke crossed over.

“Where have you been all morning? Been looking for you everywhere.”

“Up to Doc’s,” Shorty answered, holding out the bottle. “Something’s wrong with Sally. I seen last night, at feedin’-time, the hair on her tail an’ flanks was fallin’ out. The Doc says — ”

“Never mind that,” Smoke broke in impatiently. “What I want — ”

“What’s eatin’ you?” Shorty demanded in indignant astonishment. “An’ Sally gettin’ naked bald in this crimpy weather! I tell you that dog’s sick. Doc says — ”

“Let Sally wait. Listen to me — ”

“I tell you she can’t wait. It’s cruelty to animals. She’ll be frost-bit. What are you in such a fever about anyway? Has that Monte Cristo strike proved up?”

“I don’t know, Shorty. But I want you to do me a favor.”

“Sure,” Shorty said gallantly, immediately appeased and acquiescent. “What is it? Let her rip. Me for you.”

“I want you to buy eggs for me — ”

“Sure, an’ Floridy water an’ talcum powder, if you say the word. An’ poor Sally sheddin’ something scand’lous! Look here, Smoke, if you want to go in for high livin’ you go an’ buy your own eggs. Beans an’ bacon’s good enough for me.”

“I am going to buy, but I want you to help me to buy. Now, shut up, Shorty. I’ve got the floor. You go right straight to Slavovitch’s. Pay as high as three dollars, but buy all he’s got.”

“Three dollars!” Shorty groaned. “An’ I heard tell only yesterday that he’s got all of seven hundred in stock! Twenty-one hundred dollars for hen-fruit! Say, Smoke, I tell you what. You run right up and see the Doc. He’ll tend to your case. An’ he’ll only charge you an ounce for the first prescription. So-long, I gotta to be pullin’ my freight.”

He started off, but Smoke caught his partner by the shoulder, arresting his progress and whirling him around.

“Smoke, I’d sure do anything for you,” Shorty protested earnestly. “If you had a cold in the head an’ was layin’ with both arms broke, I’d set by your bedside, day an’ night, an’ wipe your nose for you. But I’ll be everlastin'ly damned if I'll squander twenty-one hundred good iron dollars on hen-fruit for you or any other two-legged man."

"They're not your dollars, but mine, Shorty. It's a deal I have on. What I'm after is to corner every blessed egg in Dawson, in the Klondike, on the Yukon. You've got to help me out. I haven't the time to tell you of the inwardness of the deal. I will afterward, and let you go half on it if you want to. But the thing right now is to get the eggs. Now you hustle up to Slavovitch's and buy all he's got."

"But what'll I tell 'm? He'll sure know I ain't goin' to eat 'em."

"Tell him nothing. Money talks. He sells them cooked for two dollars. Offer him up to three for them uncooked. If he gets curious, tell him you're starting a chicken ranch. What I want is the eggs. And then keep on; nose out every egg in Dawson and buy it. Understand? Buy it! That little joint across the street from Slavovitch's has a few. Buy them. I'm going over to Klondike City. There's an old man there, with a bad leg, who's broke and who has six dozen. He's held them all winter for the rise, intending to get enough out of them to pay his passage back to Seattle. I'll see he gets his passage, and I'll get the eggs. Now hustle. And they say that little woman down beyond the sawmill who makes moccasins has a couple of dozen."

"All right, if you say so, Smoke. But Slavovitch seems the main squeeze. I'll just get an iron-bound option, black an' white, an' gather in the scatterin' first."

"All right. Hustle. And I'll tell you the scheme tonight."

But Shorty flourished the bottle. "I'm goin' to doctor up Sally first. The eggs can wait that long. If they ain't all eaten, they won't be eaten while I'm takin' care of a poor sick dog that's saved your life an' mine more 'n once."

Never was a market cornered more quickly. In three days every known egg in Dawson, with the exception of several dozen, was in the hands of Smoke and Shorty. Smoke had been more liberal in purchasing. He unblushingly pleaded guilty to having given the old man in Klondike City five dollars apiece for his seventy-two eggs. Shorty had bought most of the eggs, and he had driven bargains. He had given only two dollars an egg to the woman who made moccasins, and he prided himself that he had come off fairly well with Slavovitch, whose seven hundred and fifteen eggs he had bought at a flat rate of two dollars and a half. On the other hand, he grumbled because the little restaurant across the street had held him up for two dollars and seventy-five cents for a paltry hundred and thirty-four eggs.

The several dozen not yet gathered in were in the hands of two persons. One, with whom Shorty was dealing, was an Indian woman who lived in a cabin on the hill back of the hospital.

"I'll get her to-day," Shorty announced next morning. "You wash the dishes, Smoke. I'll be back in a jiffy, if I don't bust myself a-shovin' dust at her. Gimme a man to deal with every time. These blamed women — it's something sad the way they can hold out on a buyer. The only way to get 'em is sellin'. Why, you'd think them eggs of hern was solid nuggets."

In the afternoon, when Smoke returned to the cabin, he found Shorty squatted on the floor, rubbing ointment into Sally's tail, his countenance so expressionless that it was suspicious.

"What luck?" Shorty asked carelessly, after several minutes had passed.

"Nothing doing," Smoke answered. "How did you get on with the squaw?"

Shorty cocked his head triumphantly toward a tin pail of eggs on the table. "Seven dollars a clatter, though," he confessed, after another minute of silent rubbing.

"I offered ten dollars finally," Smoke said, "and then the fellow told me he'd already sold his eggs. Now that looks bad, Shorty. Somebody else is in the market. Those twenty-eight eggs are liable to cause us trouble. You see, the success of the corner consists in holding every last — "

He broke off to stare at his partner. A pronounced change was coming over Shorty — one of agitation masked by extreme deliberation. He closed the salve-box, wiped his hands slowly and thoroughly on Sally's furry coat, stood up, went over to the corner and looked at the thermometer, and came back again. He spoke in a low, toneless, and super-polite voice.

"Do you mind kindly just repeating over how many eggs you said the man didn't sell to you?" he asked.

"Twenty-eight."

"Hum," Shorty communed to himself, with a slight duck of the head of careless acknowledgment. Then he glanced with slumbering anger at the stove. "Smoke, we'll have to dig up a new stove. That fire-box is burned plumb into the oven so it blacks the biscuits."

"Let the fire-box alone," Smoke commanded, "and tell me what's the matter."

“Matter? An’ you want to know what’s the matter? Well, kindly please direct them handsome eyes of yourn at that there pail settin’ on the table. See it?”

Smoke nodded.

“Well, I want to tell you one thing, just one thing. They’s just exactly, preecisely, nor nothin’ more or anythin’ less’n twenty-eight eggs in the pail, an’ they cost, every danged last one of ‘em, just exactly seven great big round iron dollars a throw. If you stand in cryin’ need of any further items of information, I’m willin’ and free to impart.”

“Go on,” Smoke requested.

“Well, that geezer you was dickerin’ with is a big buck Indian. Am I right?”

Smoke nodded, and continued to nod to each question.

“He’s got one cheek half gone where a bald-face grizzly swatted him. Am I right? He’s a dog-trader — right, eh? His name is Scar-Face Jim. That’s so, ain’t it? D’ye get my drift?”

“You mean we’ve been bidding — ?”

“Against each other. Sure thing. That squaw’s his wife, an’ they keep house on the hill back of the hospital. I could ‘a’ got them eggs for two a throw if you hadn’t butted in.”

“And so could I,” Smoke laughed, “if you’d kept out, blame you! But it doesn’t amount to anything. We know that we’ve got the corner. That’s the big thing.”

Shorty spent the next hour wrestling with a stub of a pencil on the margin of a three-year-old newspaper, and the more interminable and hieroglyphic grew his figures the more cheerful he became.

“There she stands,” he said at last. “Pretty? I guess yes. Lemme give you the totals. You an’ me has right now in our possession exactly nine hundred an’ seventy-three eggs. They cost us exactly two thousand, seven hundred an’ sixty dollars, reckonin’ dust at sixteen an ounce an’ not countin’ time. An’ now listen to me. If we stick up Wild Water for ten dollars a egg we stand to win, clean net an’ all to the good, just exactly six thousand nine hundred and seventy dollars. Now that’s a book-makin’ what is, if anybody should ride up on a dog-sled an’ ask you. An’ I’m in half on it! Put her there, Smoke. I’m that thankful I’m sure droolin’ gratitude. Book-makin’! Say, I’d sooner run with the chicks than the ponies any day.”

At eleven that night Smoke was routed from sound sleep by Shorty, whose fur parka exhaled an atmosphere of keen frost and whose hand was extremely cold in its contact with Smoke's cheek.

"What is it now?" Smoke grumbled. "Rest of Sally's hair fallen out?"

"Nope. But I just had to tell you the good news. I seen Slavovitch. Or Slavovitch seen me, I guess, because he started the seance. He says to me: 'Shorty, I want to speak to you about them eggs. I've kept it quiet. Nobody knows I sold 'em to you. But if you're speculatin', I can put you wise to a good thing.' An' he did, too, Smoke. Now what'd you guess that good thing is?"

"Go on. Name it."

"Well, maybe it sounds incredible, but that good thing was Wild Water Charley. He's lookin' to buy eggs. He goes around to Slavovitch an' offers him five dollars an egg, an' before he quits he's offerin' eight. An' Slavovitch ain't got no eggs. Last thing Wild Water says to Slavovitch is that he'll beat the head offen him if he ever finds out Slavovitch has eggs cached away somewheres. Slavovitch had to tell 'm he'd sold the eggs, but that the buyer was secret.

"Slavovitch says to let him say the word to Wild Water who's got the eggs. 'Shorty,' he says to me, 'Wild Water'll come a-runnin'. You can hold him up for eight dollars.' 'Eight dollars, your grandmother,' I says. 'He'll fall for ten before I'm done with him.' Anyway, I told Slavovitch I'd think it over and let him know in the mornin'. Of course we'll let 'm pass the word on to Wild Water. Am I right?"

"You certainly are, Shorty. First thing in the morning tip off Slavovitch. Have him tell Wild Water that you and I are partners in the deal."

Five minutes later Smoke was again aroused by Shorty.

"Say! Smoke! Oh, Smoke!"

"Yes?"

"Not a cent less than ten a throw. Do you get that?"

"Sure thing — all right," Smoke returned sleepily.

In the morning Smoke chanced upon Lucille Arral again at the dry-goods counter of the A. C. Store.

"It's working," he jubilated. "It's working. Wild Water's been around to Slavovitch, trying to buy or bully eggs out of him. And by this time Slavovitch has told him that Shorty and I own the corner."

Lucille Arral's eyes sparkled with delight. "I'm going to breakfast right now," she cried. "And I'll ask the waiter for eggs, and be so plaintive when there aren't any as to melt a heart of stone. And you know Wild Water's been around to Slavovitch, trying to buy the corner if it costs him one of his mines. I know him. And hold out for a stiff figure. Nothing less than ten dollars will satisfy me, and if you sell for anything less, Smoke, I'll never forgive you."

That noon, up in their cabin, Shorty placed on the table a pot of beans, a pot of coffee, a pan of sourdough biscuits, a tin of butter and a tin of condensed cream, a smoking platter of moose-meat and bacon, a plate of stewed dried peaches, and called: "Grub's ready. Take a slant at Sally first."

Smoke put aside the harness on which he was sewing, opened the door, and saw Sally and Bright spiritedly driving away a bunch of foraging sled-dogs that belonged to the next cabin. Also he saw something else that made him close the door hurriedly and dash to the stove. The frying-pan, still hot from the moose-meat and bacon, he put back on the front lid. Into the frying-pan he put a generous dab of butter, then reached for an egg, which he broke and dropped spluttering into the pan. As he reached for a second egg, Shorty gained his side and clutched his arm in an excited grip.

"Hey! What you doin'?" he demanded.

"Frying eggs," Smoke informed him, breaking the second one and throwing off Shorty's detaining hand. "What's the matter with your eyesight? Did you think I was combing my hair?"

"Don't you feel well?" Shorty queried anxiously, as Smoke broke a third egg and dexterously thrust him back with a stiff-arm jolt on the breast. "Or are you just plain loco? That's thirty dollars' worth of eggs already."

"And I'm going to make it sixty dollars' worth," was the answer, as Smoke broke the fourth. "Get out of the way, Shorty. Wild Water's coming up the hill, and he'll be here in five minutes."

Shorty sighed vastly with commingled comprehension and relief, and sat down at the table. By the time the expected knock came at the door, Smoke was facing him across the table, and, before each, was a plate containing three hot, fried eggs.

"Come in!" Smoke called.

Wild Water Charley, a strapping young giant just a fraction of an inch under six feet in height and carrying a clean weight of one hundred and ninety pounds, entered and shook hands.

“Set down an’ have a bite, Wild Water,” Shorty invited. “Smoke, fry him some eggs. I’ll bet he ain’t scoffed an egg in a coon’s age.”

Smoke broke three more eggs into the hot pan, and in several minutes placed them before his guest, who looked at them with so strange and strained an expression that Shorty confessed afterward his fear that Wild Water would slip them into his pocket and carry them away.

“Say, them swells down in the States ain’t got nothin’ over us in the matter of eats,” Shorty gloated. “Here’s you an’ me an’ Smoke gettin’ outside ninety dollars’ worth of eggs an’ not battin’ an eye.”

Wild Water stared at the rapidly disappearing eggs and seemed petrified.

“Pitch in an’ eat,” Smoke encouraged.

“They — they ain’t worth no ten dollars,” Wild Water said slowly.

Shorty accepted the challenge. “A thing’s worth what you can get for it, ain’t it?” he demanded.

“Yes, but — ”

“But nothin’. I’m tellin’ you what we can get for ‘em. Ten a throw, just like that. We’re the egg trust, Smoke an’ me, an’ don’t you forget it. When we say ten a throw, ten a throw goes.” He mopped his plate with a biscuit. “I could almost eat a couple more,” he sighed, then helped himself to the beans.

“You can’t eat eggs like that,” Wild Water objected. “It — it ain’t right.”

“We just dote on eggs, Smoke an’ me,” was Shorty’s excuse.

Wild Water finished his own plate in a half-hearted way and gazed dubiously at the two comrades. “Say, you fellows can do me a great favor,” he began tentatively. “Sell me, or lend me, or give me, about a dozen of them eggs.”

“Sure,” Smoke answered. “I know what a yearning for eggs is myself. But we’re not so poor that we have to sell our hospitality. They’ll cost you nothing — ” Here a sharp kick under the table admonished him that Shorty was getting nervous. “A dozen, did you say, Wild Water?”

Wild Water nodded.

“Go ahead, Shorty,” Smoke went on. “Cook them up for him. I can sympathize. I’ve seen the time myself when I could eat a dozen, straight off the bat.”

But Wild Water laid a restraining hand on the eager Shorty as he explained. “I don’t mean cooked. I want them with the shells on.”

“So that you can carry ‘em away?”

"That's the idea."

"But that ain't hospitality," Shorty objected. "It's — it's tradin'."

Smoke nodded concurrence. "That's different, Wild Water. I thought you just wanted to eat them. You see, we went into this for a speculation."

The dangerous blue of Wild Water's eyes began to grow more dangerous. "I'll pay you for them," he said sharply. "How much?"

"Oh, not a dozen," Smoke replied. "We couldn't sell a dozen. We're not retailers; we're speculators. We can't break our own market. We've got a hard and fast corner, and when we sell out it's the whole corner or nothing."

"How many have you got, and how much do you want for them?"

"How many have we, Shorty?" Smoke inquired.

Shorty cleared his throat and performed mental arithmetic aloud. "Lemme see. Nine hundred an' seventy-three minus nine, that leaves nine hundred an' sixty-two. An' the whole shootin'-match, at ten a throw, will tote up just about nine thousand six hundred an' twenty iron dollars. Of course, Wild Water, we're playin' fair, an' it's money back for bad ones, though they ain't none. That's one thing I never seen in the Klondike — a bad egg. No man's fool enough to bring in a bad egg."

"That's fair," Smoke added. "Money back for the bad ones, Wild Water. And there's our proposition — nine thousand six hundred and twenty dollars for every egg in the Klondike."

"You might play them up to twenty a throw an' double your money," Shorty suggested.

Wild Water shook his head sadly and helped himself to the beans. "That would be too expensive, Shorty. I only want a few. I'll give you ten dollars for a couple of dozen. I'll give you twenty — but I can't buy 'em all."

"All or none," was Smoke's ultimatum.

"Look here, you two," Wild Water said in a burst of confidence. "I'll be perfectly honest with you, an' don't let it go any further. You know Miss Arral an' I was engaged. Well, she's broken everything off. You know it. Everybody knows it. It's for her I want them eggs."

"Huh!" Shorty jeered. "It's clear an' plain why you want 'em with the shells on. But I never thought it of you."

"Thought what?"

"It's low-down mean, that's what it is," Shorty rushed on, virtuously indignant. "I wouldn't wonder somebody filled you full of lead for it, an' you'd deserve it, too."

Wild Water began to flame toward the verge of one of his notorious Berserker rages. His hands clenched until the cheap fork in one of them began to bend, while his blue eyes flashed warning sparks. “Now look here, Shorty, just what do you mean? If you think anything underhanded — ”

“I mean what I mean,” Shorty retorted doggedly, “an’ you bet your sweet life I don’t mean anything underhanded. Overhand’s the only way to do it. You can’t throw ‘em any other way.”

“Throw what?”

“Eggs, prunes, baseballs, anything. But Wild Water, you’re makin’ a mistake. They ain’t no crowd ever sat at the Opery House that’ll stand for it. Just because she’s a actress is no reason you can publicly lambaste her with hen-fruit.”

For the moment it seemed that Wild Water was going to burst or have apoplexy. He gulped down a mouthful of scalding coffee and slowly recovered himself.

“You’re in wrong, Shorty,” he said with cold deliberation. “I’m not going to throw eggs at her. Why, man,” he cried, with growing excitement, “I want to give them eggs to her, on a platter, shirred — that’s the way she likes ‘em.”

“I knowed I was wrong,” Shorty cried generously, “I knowed you couldn’t do a low-down trick like that.”

“That’s all right, Shorty,” Wild Water forgave him. “But let’s get down to business. You see why I want them eggs. I want ‘em bad.”

“Do you want ‘em ninety-six hundred an’ twenty dollars’ worth?” Shorty queried.

“It’s a hold-up, that’s what it is,” Wild Water declared irately.

“It’s business,” Smoke retorted. “You don’t think we’re peddling eggs for our health, do you?”

“Aw, listen to reason,” Wild Water pleaded. “I only want a couple of dozen. I’ll give you twenty apiece for ‘em. What do I want with all the rest of them eggs? I’ve went years in this country without eggs, an’ I guess I can keep on managin’ without ‘em somehow.”

“Don’t get het up about it,” Shorty counseled. “If you don’t want ‘em, that settles it. We ain’t a-forcin’ ‘em on you.”

“But I do want ‘em,” Wild Water complained.

“Then you know what they’ll cost you — ninety-six hundred an’ twenty dollars, an’ if my figurin’s wrong, I’ll treat.”

“But maybe they won’t turn the trick,” Wild Water objected. “Maybe Miss Arral’s lost her taste for eggs by this time.”

“I should say Miss Arral’s worth the price of the eggs,” Smoke put in quietly.

“Worth it!” Wild Water stood up in the heat of his eloquence. “She’s worth a million dollars. She’s worth all I’ve got. She’s worth all the dust in the Klondike.” He sat down, and went on in a calmer voice. “But that ain’t no call for me to gamble ten thousand dollars on a breakfast for her. Now I’ve got a proposition. Lend me a couple of dozen of them eggs. I’ll turn ‘em over to Slavovitch. He’ll feed ‘em to her with my compliments. She ain’t smiled to me for a hundred years. If them eggs gets a smile for me, I’ll take the whole boiling off your hands.”

“Will you sign a contract to that effect?” Smoke said quickly; for he knew that Lucille Arral had agreed to smile.

Wild Water gasped. “You’re almighty swift with business up here on the hill,” he said, with a hint of a snarl.

“We’re only accepting your own proposition,” Smoke answered.

“All right — bring on the paper — make it out, hard and fast,” Wild Water cried in the anger of surrender.

Smoke immediately wrote out the document, wherein Wild Water agreed to take every egg delivered to him at ten dollars per egg, provided that the two dozen advanced to him brought about a reconciliation with Lucille Arral.

Wild Water paused, with uplifted pen, as he was about to sign. “Hold on,” he said. “When I buy eggs I buy good eggs.”

“They ain’t a bad egg in the Klondike,” Shorty snorted.

“Just the same, if I find one bad egg you’ve got to come back with the ten I paid for it.”

“That’s all right,” Smoke placated. “It’s only fair.”

“An’ every bad egg you come back with I’ll eat,” Shorty declared.

Smoke inserted the word “good” in the contract, and Wild Water sullenly signed, received the trial two dozen in a tin pail, pulled on his mittens, and opened the door.

“Good-by, you robbers,” he growled back at them, and slammed the door.

Smoke was a witness to the play next morning in Slavovitch’s. He sat, as Wild Water’s guest, at the table adjoining Lucille Arral’s. Almost to the letter, as she had forecast it, did the scene come off.

“Haven’t you found any eggs yet?” she murmured plaintively to the waiter.

“No, ma’am,” came the answer. “They say somebody’s cornered every egg in Dawson. Mr. Slavovitch is trying to buy a few just especially for you. But the fellow that’s got the corner won’t let loose.”

It was at this juncture that Wild Water beckoned the proprietor to him, and, with one hand on his shoulder, drew his head down. “Look here, Slavovitch,” Wild Water whispered hoarsely, “I turned over a couple of dozen eggs to you last night. Where are they?”

“In the safe, all but that six I have all thawed and ready for you any time you sing out.”

“I don’t want ‘em for myself,” Wild Water breathed in a still lower voice. “Shir ‘em up and present ‘em to Miss Arral there.”

“I’ll attend to it personally myself,” Slavovitch assured him.

“An’ don’t forget — compliments of me,” Wild Water concluded, relaxing his detaining clutch on the proprietor’s shoulder.

Pretty Lucille Arral was gazing forlornly at the strip of breakfast bacon and the tinned mashed potatoes on her plate when Slavovitch placed before her two shirred eggs.

“Compliments of Mr. Wild Water,” they at the next table heard him say.

Smoke acknowledged to himself that it was a fine bit of acting — the quick, joyous flash in the face of her, the impulsive turn of the head, the spontaneous forerunner of a smile that was only checked by a superb self-control which resolutely drew her face back so that she could say something to the restaurant proprietor.

Smoke felt the kick of Wild Water’s moccasined foot under the table.

“Will she eat ‘em? — that’s the question — will she eat ‘em?” the latter whispered agonizingly.

And with sidelong glances they saw Lucille Arral hesitate, almost push the dish from her, then surrender to its lure.

“I’ll take them eggs,” Wild Water said to Smoke. “The contract holds. Did you see her? Did you see her! She almost smiled. I know her. It’s all fixed. Two more eggs to-morrow an’ she’ll forgive an’ make up. If she wasn’t here I’d shake hands, Smoke, I’m that grateful. You ain’t a robber; you’re a philanthropist.”

Smoke returned jubilantly up the hill to the cabin, only to find Shorty playing solitaire in black despair. Smoke had long since learned that whenever his partner got out the cards for solitaire it was a warning signal that the bottom had dropped out of the world.

"Go 'way, don't talk to me," was the first rebuff Smoke received.

But Shorty soon thawed into a freshet of speech.

"It's all off with the big Swede," he groaned. "The corner's busted. They'll be sellin' sherry an' egg in all the saloons to-morrow at a dollar a flip. They ain't no starvin' orphan child in Dawson that won't be wrappin' its tummy around eggs. What d'ye think I run into? — a geezer with three thousan' eggs — d'ye get me? Three thousan', an' just freighted in from Forty Mile."

"Fairy stories," Smoke doubted.

"Fairy hell! I seen them eggs. Gautereaux's his name — a whackin' big, blue-eyed French-Canadian husky. He asked for you first, then took me to the side and jabbed me straight to the heart. It was our cornerin' eggs that got him started. He knowed about them three thousan' at Forty Mile an' just went an' got 'em. 'Show 'em to me,' I says. An' he did. There was his dog-teams, an' a couple of Indian drivers, restin' down the bank where they'd just pulled in from Forty Mile. An' on the sleds was soap-boxes — teeny wooden soap-boxes.

"We took one out behind a ice-jam in the middle of the river an' busted it open. Eggs! — full of 'em, all packed in sawdust. Smoke, you an' me lose. We've been gamblin'. D'ye know what he had the gall to say to me? — that they was all ourn at ten dollars a egg. D'ye know what he was doin' when I left his cabin? — drawin' a sign of eggs for sale. Said he'd give us first choice, at ten a throw, till 2 P. M., an' after that, if we didn't come across, he'd bust the market higher'n a kite. Said he wasn't no business man, but that he knowed a good thing when he seen it — meanin' you an' me, as I took it."

"It's all right," Smoke said cheerfully. "Keep your shirt on an' let me think a moment. Quick action and team play is all that's needed. I'll get Wild Water here at two o'clock to take delivery of eggs. You buy that Gautereaux's eggs. Try and make a bargain. Even if you pay ten dollars apiece for them, Wild Water will take them off our hands at the same price. If you can get them cheaper, why, we make a profit as well. Now go to it. Have them here by not later than two o'clock. Borrow Colonel Bowie's dogs and take our team. Have them here by two sharp."

"Say, Smoke," Shorty called, as his partner started down the hill. "Better take an umbrella. I wouldn't be none surprised to see the weather rainin' eggs before you get back."

Smoke found Wild Water at the M. & M., and a stormy half-hour ensued.

"I warn you we've picked up some more eggs," Smoke said, after Wild Water had agreed to bring his dust to the cabin at two o'clock and pay on delivery.

"You're luckier at finding eggs than me," Wild Water admitted. "Now, how many eggs have you got now? — an' how much dust do I tote up the hill?"

Smoke consulted his notebook. "As it stands now, according to Shorty's figures, we've three thousand nine hundred and sixty-two eggs. Multiply by ten — "

"Forty thousand dollars!" Wild Water bellowed. "You said there was only something like nine hundred eggs. It's a stickup! I won't stand for it!"

Smoke drew the contract from his pocket and pointed to the PAY ON DELIVERY. "No mention is made of the number of eggs to be delivered. You agreed to pay ten dollars for every egg we delivered to you. Well, we've got the eggs, and a signed contract is a signed contract. Honestly, though, Wild Water, we didn't know about those other eggs until afterward. Then we had to buy them in order to make our corner good."

For five long minutes, in choking silence, Wild Water fought a battle with himself, then reluctantly gave in.

"I'm in bad," he said brokenly. "The landscape's fair sproutin' eggs. An' the quicker I get out the better. There might come a landslide of 'em. I'll be there at two o'clock. But forty thousand dollars!"

"It's only thirty-nine thousand six hundred an' twenty," Smoke corrected.

"It'll weigh two hundred pounds," Wild Water raved on. "I'll have to freight it up with a dog-team."

"We'll lend you our teams to carry the eggs away," Smoke volunteered.

"But where'll I cache 'em? Never mind. I'll be there. But as long as I live I'll never eat another egg. I'm full sick of 'em."

At half-past one, doubling the dog-teams for the steep pitch of the hill, Shorty arrived with Gautereaux's eggs. "We dang near double our winnings," Shorty told Smoke, as they piled the soap-boxes inside the cabin. "I holds 'm down to eight dollars, an' after he cussed loco in French he falls for it. Now that's two dollars clear profit to us for each egg, an' they're three thousan' of 'em. I paid 'm in full. Here's the receipt."

While Smoke got out the gold-scales and prepared for business, Shorty devoted himself to calculation.

"There's the figgers," he announced triumphantly. "We win twelve thousan' nine hundred an' seventy dollars. An' we don't do Wild Water no harm. He wins Miss Arral. Besides, he gets all them eggs. It's sure a bargain-counter all around. Nobody loses."

"Even Gautereaux's twenty-four thousand to the good," Smoke laughed, "minus, of course, what the eggs and the freighting cost him. And if Wild Water plays the corner, he may make a profit out of the eggs himself."

Promptly at two o'clock, Shorty, peeping, saw Wild Water coming up the hill. When he entered he was brisk and businesslike. He took off his big bearskin coat, hung it on a nail, and sat down at the table.

"Bring on them eggs, you pirates," he commenced. "An' after this day, if you know what's good for you, never mention eggs to me again."

They began on the miscellaneous assortment of the original corner, all three men counting. When two hundred had been reached, Wild Water suddenly cracked an egg on the edge of the table and opened it deftly with his thumbs.

"Hey! Hold on!" Shorty objected.

"It's my egg, ain't it?" Wild Water snarled. "I'm paying ten dollars for it, ain't I? But I ain't buying no pig in a poke. When I cough up ten bucks an egg I want to know what I'm gettin'."

"If you don't like it, I'll eat it," Shorty volunteered maliciously.

Wild Water looked and smelled and shook his head. "No, you don't, Shorty. That's a good egg. Gimme a pail. I'm goin' to eat it myself for supper."

Thrice again Wild Water cracked good eggs experimentally and put them in the pail beside him.

"Two more than you figgered, Shorty," he said at the end of the count. "Nine hundred an' sixty-four, not sixty-two."

"My mistake," Shorty acknowledged handsomely. "We'll throw 'em in for good measure."

"Guess you can afford to," Wild Water accepted grimly. "Pass the batch. Nine thousan' six hundred an' twenty dollars. I'll pay for it now. Write a receipt, Smoke."

“Why not count the rest,” Smoke suggested, “and pay all at once?”

Wild Water shook his head. “I’m no good at figgers. One batch at a time an’ no mistakes.”

Going to his fur coat, from each of the side pockets he drew forth two sacks of dust, so rotund and long that they resembled bologna sausages. When the first batch had been paid for, there remained in the gold-sacks not more than several hundred dollars.

A soap-box was carried to the table, and the count of the three thousand began. At the end of one hundred, Wild Water struck an egg sharply against the edge of the table. There was no crack. The resultant sound was like that of the striking of a sphere of solid marble.

“Frozen solid,” he remarked, striking more sharply.

He held the egg up, and they could see the shell powdered to minute fragments along the line of impact.

“Huh!” said Shorty. “It ought to be solid, seein’ it has just been freighted up from Forty Mile. It’ll take an ax to bust it.”

“Me for the ax,” said Wild Water.

Smoke brought the ax, and Wild Water, with the clever hand and eye of the woodsman, split the egg cleanly in half. The appearance of the egg’s interior was anything but satisfactory. Smoke felt a premonitory chill. Shorty was more valiant. He held one of the halves to his nose.

“Smells all right,” he said.

“But it looks all wrong,” Wild Water contended. “An’ how can it smell when the smell’s frozen along with the rest of it? Wait a minute.”

He put the two halves into a frying-pan and placed the latter on the front lid of the hot stove. Then the three men, with distended, questing nostrils, waited in silence. Slowly an unmistakable odor began to drift through the room. Wild Water forbore to speak, and Shorty remained dumb despite conviction.

“Throw it out,” Smoke cried, gasping.

“What’s the good?” asked Wild Water. “We’ve got to sample the rest.”

“Not in this cabin.” Smoke coughed and conquered a qualm. “Chop them open, and we can test by looking at them. Throw it out, Shorty — Throw it out! Phew! And leave the door open!”

Box after box was opened; egg after egg, chosen at random, was chopped in two; and every egg carried the same message of hopeless, irremediable decay.

"I won't ask you to eat 'em, Shorty," Wild Water jeered, "an' if you don't mind, I can't get outa here too quick. My contract called for GOOD eggs. If you'll loan me a sled an' team I'll haul them good ones away before they get contaminated."

Smoke helped in loading the sled. Shorty sat at the table, the cards laid before him for solitaire.

"Say, how long you been holdin' that corner?" was Wild Water's parting gibe.

Smoke made no reply, and, with one glance at his absorbed partner, proceeded to fling the soap boxes out into the snow.

"Say, Shorty, how much did you say you paid for that three thousand?" Smoke queried gently.

"Eight dollars. Go 'way. Don't talk to me. I can figger as well as you. We lose seventeen thousan' on the flutter, if anybody should ride up on a dog-sled an' ask you. I figgered that out while waitin' for the first egg to smell."

Smoke pondered a few minutes, then again broke silence. "Say, Shorty. Forty thousand dollars gold weighs two hundred pounds. Wild Water borrowed our sled and team to haul away his eggs. He came up the hill without a sled. Those two sacks of dust in his coat pockets weighed about twenty pounds each. The understanding was cash on delivery. He brought enough dust to pay for the good eggs. He never expected to pay for those three thousand. He knew they were bad. Now how did he know they were bad? What do you make of it, anyway?"

Shorty gathered the cards, started to shuffle a new deal, then paused. "Huh! That ain't nothin'. A child could answer it. We lose seventeen thousan'. Wild Water wins seventeen thousan'. Them eggs of Gautereaux's was Wild Water's all the time. Anything else you're curious to know?"

"Yes. Why in the name of common sense didn't you find out whether those eggs were good before you paid for them?"

"Just as easy as the first question. Wild Water swung the bunco game timed to seconds. I hadn't no time to examine them eggs. I had to hustle to get 'em here for delivery. An' now, Smoke, lemme ask you one civil question. What did you say was the party's name that put this egg corner idea into your head?"

Shorty had lost the sixteenth consecutive game of solitaire, and Smoke was casting about to begin the preparation of supper, when Colonel Bowie knocked at the door, handed Smoke a letter, and went on to his own cabin.

“Did you see his face?” Shorty raved. “He was almost bustin’ to keep it straight. It’s the big ha! ha! for you an’ me, Smoke. We won’t never dast show our faces again in Dawson.”

The letter was from Wild Water, and Smoke read it aloud:

Dear Smoke and Shorty: I write to ask, with compliments of the season, your presence at a supper to-night at Slavovitch’s joint. Miss Arral will be there and so will Gautereaux. Him and me was pardners down at Circle five years ago. He is all right and is going to be best man. About them eggs. They come into the country four years back. They was bad when they come in. They was bad when they left California. They always was bad. They stopped at Carluk one winter, and one winter at Nutlik, and last winter at Forty Mile, where they was sold for storage. And this winter I guess they stop at Dawson. Don’t keep them in a hot room. Lucille says to say you and her and me has sure made some excitement for Dawson. And I say the drinks is on you, and that goes.

Respectfully your friend,
W. W.

“Well? What have you got to say?” Smoke queried. “We accept the invitation, of course?”

“I got one thing to say,” Shorty answered. “An’ that is Wild Water won’t never suffer if he goes broke. He’s a good actor — a gosh-blamed good actor. An’ I got another thing to say: my figgers is all wrong. Wild Water wins seventeen thousan’ all right, but he wins more ‘n that. You an’ me has made him a present of every good egg in the Klondike — nine hundred an’ sixty-four of ‘em, two thrown in for good measure. An’ he was that ornery, mean cussed that he packed off the three opened ones in the pail. An’ I got a last thing to say. You an’ me is legitimate prospectors an’ practical gold-miners. But when it comes to fi-nance we’re sure the fattest suckers that ever fell for the get-rich-quick bunco. After this it’s you an’ me for the high rocks an’ tall timber, an’ if you ever mention eggs to me we dissolve pardnership there an’ then. Get me?”

XI. THE TOWN-SITE OF TRA-LEE

Smoke and Shorty encountered each other, going in opposite directions, at the corner where stood the Elkhorn saloon. The former's face wore a pleased expression, and he was walking briskly. Shorty, on the other hand, was slouching along in a depressed and indeterminate fashion.

"Whither away?" Smoke challenged gaily.

"Danged if I know," came the disconsolate answer. "Wisht I did. They ain't nothin' to take me anywheres. I've set two hours in the deadest game of draw — nothing excitin', no hands, an' broke even. Played a rubber of cribbage with Skiff Mitchell for the drinks, an' now I'm that languid for somethin' doin' that I'm perambulatin' the streets on the chance of seein' a dogfight, or a argument, or somethin'."

"I've got something better on hand," Smoke answered. "That's why I was looking for you. Come on along."

"Now?"

"Sure."

"Where to?"

"Across the river to make a call on old Dwight Sanderson."

"Never heard of him," Shorty said dejectedly. "An' never heard of no one living across the river anyway. What's he want to live there for? Ain't he got no sense?"

"He's got something to sell," Smoke laughed.

"Dogs? A gold-mine? Tobacco? Rubber boots?"

Smoke shook his head to each question. "Come along on and find out, because I'm going to buy it from him on a spec, and if you want you can come in half."

"Don't tell me it's eggs!" Shorty cried, his face twisted into an expression of facetious and sarcastic alarm.

"Come on along," Smoke told him. "And I'll give you ten guesses while we're crossing the ice."

They dipped down the high bank at the foot of the street and came out upon the ice-covered Yukon. Three-quarters of a mile away, directly opposite, the other bank of the stream uprose in precipitous bluffs hundreds of feet in height. Toward these bluffs, winding and twisting in and out among broken and upthrown blocks of ice, ran a slightly traveled trail.

Shorty trudged at Smoke’s heels, beguiling the time with guesses at what Dwight Sanderson had to sell.

“Reindeer? Copper-mine or brick-yard? That’s one guess. Bear-skins, or any kind of skins? Lottery tickets? A potato-ranch?”

“Getting near it,” Smoke encouraged. “And better than that.”

“Two potato-ranches? A cheese-factory? A moss-farm?”

“That’s not so bad, Shorty. It’s not a thousand miles away.”

“A quarry?”

“That’s as near as the moss-farm and the potato-ranch.”

“Hold on. Let me think. I got one guess comin’.” Ten silent minutes passed. “Say, Smoke, I ain’t goin’ to use that last guess. When this thing you’re buyin’ sounds like a potato-ranch, a moss-farm, and a stone-quarry, I quit. An’ I don’t go in on the deal till I see it an’ size it up. What is it?”

“Well, you’ll see the cards on the table soon enough. Kindly cast your eyes up there. Do you see the smoke from that cabin? That’s where Dwight Sanderson lives. He’s holding down a town-site location.”

“What else is he holdin’ down?”

“That’s all,” Smoke laughed. “Except rheumatism. I hear he’s been suffering from it.”

“Say!” Shorty’s hand flashed out and with an abrupt shoulder grip brought his comrade to a halt. “You ain’t telling me you’re buyin’ a town-site at this fallin’-off place?”

“That’s your tenth guess, and you win. Come on.”

“But wait a moment,” Shorty pleaded. “Look at it — nothin’ but bluffs an’ slides, all up-and-down. Where could the town stand?”

“Search me.”

“Then you ain’t buyin’ it for a town?”

“But Dwight Sanderson’s selling it for a town,” Smoke baffled. “Come on. We’ve got to climb this slide.”

The slide was steep, and a narrow trail zigzagged up it on a formidable Jacob’s ladder. Shorty moaned and groaned over the sharp corners and the steep pitches.

“Think of a town-site here. They ain’t a flat space big enough for a postage-stamp. An’ it’s the wrong side of the river. All the freightin’ goes the other way. Look at Dawson there. Room to spread for forty thousand more people. Say, Smoke. You’re a meat-eater. I know that. An’ I know you ain’t buyin’ it for a town. Then what in Heaven’s name are you buyin’ it for?”

“To sell, of course.”

“But other folks ain’t as crazy as old man Sanderson an’ you.”

“Maybe not in the same way, Shorty. Now I’m going to take this town-site, break it up in parcels, and sell it to a lot of sane people who live over in Dawson.”

“Huh! All Dawson’s still laughing at you an’ me an’ them eggs. You want to make ‘em laugh some more, hey?”

“I certainly do.”

“But it’s too danged expensive, Smoke. I helped you make ‘em laugh on the eggs, an’ my share of the laugh cost me nearly nine thousan’ dollars.”

“All right. You don’t have to come in on this. The profits will be all mine, but you’ve got to help me just the same.”

“Oh, I’ll help all right. An’ they can laugh at me some more. But nary a ounce do I drop this time.

“What’s old Sanderson holdin’ it at? A couple of hundred?”

“Ten thousand. I ought to get it for five.”

“Wisht I was a minister,” Shorty breathed fervently.

“What for?”

“So I could preach the gosh-dangdest, eloquentest sermon on a text you may have hearn — to wit: a fool an’ his money.”

“Come in,” they heard Dwight Sanderson yell irritably, when they knocked at his door, and they entered to find him squatted by a stone fireplace and pounding coffee wrapped in a piece of flour-sacking.

“What d’ye want?” he demanded harshly, emptying the pounded coffee into the coffee-pot that stood on the coals near the front of the fireplace.

“To talk business,” Smoke answered. “You’ve a town-site located here, I understand. What do you want for it?”

“Ten thousand dollars,” came the answer. “And now that I’ve told you, you can laugh, and get out. There’s the door. Good-by.”

“But I don’t want to laugh. I know plenty of funnier things to do than to climb up this cliff of yours. I want to buy your town-site.”

“You do, eh? Well, I’m glad to hear sense.” Sanderson came over and sat down facing his visitors, his hands resting on the table and his eyes cocking apprehensively toward the coffee-pot. “I’ve told you my price, and I ain’t ashamed to tell you again — ten thousand. And you can laugh or buy, it's all one to me."

To show his indifference he drummed with his knobby knuckles on the table and stared at the coffee-pot. A minute later he began to hum a monotonous "Tra-la-loo, tra-la-lee, tra-la-lee, tra-la-loo."

"Now look here, Mr. Sanderson," said Smoke. "This town-site isn't worth ten thousand. If it was worth that much it would be worth a hundred thousand just as easily. If it isn't worth a hundred thousand — and you know it isn't — then it isn't worth ten cents."

Sanderson drummed with his knuckles and hummed, "Tra-la-loo, tra-la-lee," until the coffee-pot boiled over. Settling it with a part cup of cold water, and placing it to one side of the warm hearth, he resumed his seat. "How much will you offer?" he asked of Smoke.

"Five thousand."

Shorty groaned.

Again came an interval of drumming and of tra-loo-ing and tra-lee-ing.

"You ain't no fool," Sanderson announced to Smoke. "You said if it wasn't worth a hundred thousand it wasn't worth ten cents. Yet you offer five thousand for it. Then it IS worth a hundred thousand."

"You can't make twenty cents out of it," Smoke replied heatedly. "Not if you stayed here till you rot."

"I'll make it out of you."

"No, you won't."

"Then I reckon I'll stay an' rot," Sanderson answered with an air of finality.

He took no further notice of his guests, and went about his culinary tasks as if he were alone. When he had warmed over a pot of beans and a slab of sour-dough bread, he set the table for one and proceeded to eat.

"No, thank you," Shorty murmured. "We ain't a bit hungry. We et just before we come."

"Let's see your papers," Smoke said at last. Sanderson fumbled under the head of his bunk and tossed out a package of documents. "It's all tight and right," he said. "That long one there, with the big seals, come all the way from Ottawa. Nothing territorial about that. The national Canadian government cinches me in the possession of this town-site."

"How many lots you sold in the two years you've had it?" Shorty queried.

"None of your business," Sanderson answered sourly. "There ain't no law against a man living alone on his town-site if he wants to."

"I'll give you five thousand," Smoke said. Sanderson shook his head.

"I don't know which is the craziest," Shorty lamented. "Come outside a minute, Smoke. I want to whisper to you."

Reluctantly Smoke yielded to his partner's persuasions.

"Ain't it never entered your head," Shorty said, as they stood in the snow outside the door, "that they's miles an' miles of cliffs on both sides of this fool town-site that don't belong to nobody an' that you can have for the locatin' and stakin'?"

"They won't do," Smoke answered.

"Why won't they?"

"It makes you wonder, with all those miles and miles, why I'm buying this particular spot, doesn't it?"

"It sure does," Shorty agreed.

"And that's the very point," Smoke went on triumphantly. "If it makes you wonder, it will make others wonder. And when they wonder they'll come a-running. By your own wondering you prove it's sound psychology. Now, Shorty, listen to me; I'm going to hand Dawson a package that will knock the spots out of the egg-laugh. Come on inside."

"Hello," said Sanderson, as they re-entered. "I thought I'd seen the last of you."

"Now what is your lowest figure?" Smoke asked.

"Twenty thousand."

"I'll give you ten thousand."

"All right, I'll sell at that figure. It's all I wanted in the first place. But when will you pay the dust over?"

"To-morrow, at the Northwest Bank. But there are two other things I want for that ten thousand. In the first place, when you receive your money you pull down the river to Forty Mile and stay there the rest of the winter."

"That's easy. What else?"

"I'm going to pay you twenty-five thousand, and you rebate me fifteen of it."

"I'm agreeable." Sanderson turned to Shorty. "Folks said I was a fool when I come over here an' town-sited," he jeered. "Well, I'm a ten thousand dollar fool, ain't I?"

“The Klondike’s sure full of fools,” was all Shorty could retort, “an’ when they’s so many of ‘em some has to be lucky, don’t they?”

Next morning the legal transfer of Dwight Sanderson’s town-site was made — ”henceforth to be known as the town-site of Tra-Lee,” Smoke incorporated in the deed. Also, at the Northwest Bank, twenty-five thousand of Smoke’s gold was weighed out by the cashier, while half a dozen casual onlookers noted the weighing, the amount, and the recipient.

In a mining-camp all men are suspicious. Any untoward act of any man is likely to be the cue to a secret gold strike, whether the untoward act be no more than a hunting trip for moose or a stroll after dark to observe the aurora borealis. And when it became known that so prominent a figure as Smoke Bellew had paid twenty-five thousand dollars to old Dwight Sanderson, Dawson wanted to know what he had paid it for. What had Dwight Sanderson, starving on his abandoned town-site, ever owned that was worth twenty-five thousand? In lieu of an answer, Dawson was justified in keeping Smoke in feverish contemplation.

By mid-afternoon it was common knowledge that several score of men had made up light stampeding-packs and cached them in the convenient saloons along Main Street. Wherever Smoke moved, he was the observed of many eyes. And as proof that he was taken seriously, not one man of the many of his acquaintance had the effrontery to ask him about his deal with Dwight Sanderson. On the other hand, no one mentioned eggs to Smoke. Shorty was under similar surveillance and delicacy of friendliness.

“Makes me feel like I’d killed somebody, or had smallpox, the way they watch me an’ seem afraid to speak,” Shorty confessed, when he chanced to meet Smoke in front of the Elkhorn. “Look at Bill Saltman there acrost the way — just dyin’ to look, an’ keepin’ his eyes down the street all the time. Wouldn’t think he’d knowed you an’ me existed, to look at him. But I bet you the drinks, Smoke, if you an’ me flop around the corner quick, like we was goin’ somewheres, an’ then turn back from around the next corner, that we run into him a-hikin’ hell-bent.”

They tried the trick, and, doubling back around the second corner, encountered Saltman swinging a long trail-stride in pursuit.

“Hello, Bill,” Smoke greeted. “Which way?”

“Hello. Just a-strollin’,” Saltman answered, “just a-strollin’. Weather’s fine, ain’t it?”

"Huh!" Shorty jeered. "If you call that strollin', what might you walk real fast at?"

When Shorty fed the dogs that evening, he was keenly conscious that from the encircling darkness a dozen pairs of eyes were boring in upon him. And when he stick-tied the dogs, instead of letting them forage free through the night, he knew that he had administered another jolt to the nervousness of Dawson.

According to program, Smoke ate supper downtown and then proceeded to enjoy himself. Wherever he appeared, he was the center of interest, and he purposely made the rounds. Saloons filled up after his entrance and emptied following upon his departure. If he bought a stack of chips at a sleepy roulette-table, inside five minutes a dozen players were around him. He avenged himself, in a small way, on Lucille Arral, by getting up and sauntering out of the Opera House just as she came on to sing her most popular song. In three minutes two-thirds of her audience had vanished after him.

At one in the morning he walked along an unusually populous Main Street and took the turning that led up the hill to his cabin. And when he paused on the ascent, he could hear behind him the crunch of moccasins in the snow.

For an hour the cabin was in darkness, then he lighted a candle, and, after a delay sufficient for a man to dress in, he and Shorty opened the door and began harnessing the dogs. As the light from the cabin flared out upon them and their work, a soft whistle went up from not far away. This whistle was repeated down the hill.

"Listen to it," Smoke chuckled. "They've relayed on us and are passing the word down to town. I'll bet you there are forty men right now rolling out of their blankets and climbing into their pants."

"Ain't folks fools," Shorty giggled back. "Say, Smoke, they ain't nothin' in hard graft. A geezer that'd work his hands these days is a — well, a geezer. The world's sure bustin' full an' dribblin' over the edges with fools a-honin' to be separated from their dust. An' before we start down the hill I want to announce, if you're still agreeable, that I come in half on this deal."

The sled was lightly loaded with a sleeping- and a grub-outfit. A small coil of steel cable protruded inconspicuously from underneath a grub-sack, while a crowbar lay half hidden along the bottom of the sled next to the lashings.

Shorty fondled the cable with a swift-passing mitten, and gave a last affectionate touch to the crowbar. “Huh!” he whispered. “I’d sure do some tall thinking myself if I seen them objects on a sled on a dark night.”

They drove the dogs down the hill with cautious silence, and when, emerged on the flat, they turned the team north along Main Street toward the sawmill and directly away from the business part of town, they observed even greater caution. They had seen no one, yet when this change of direction was initiated, out of the dim starlit darkness behind arose a whistle. Past the sawmill and the hospital, at lively speed, they went for a quarter of a mile. Then they turned about and headed back over the ground they had just covered. At the end of the first hundred yards they barely missed colliding with five men racing along at a quick dog-trot. All were slightly stooped to the weight of stampeding-packs. One of them stopped Smoke’s lead-dog, and the rest clustered around.

“Seen a sled goin’ the other way?” was asked.

“Nope,” Smoke answered. “Is that you, Bill?”

“Well, I’ll be danged!” Bill Saltman ejaculated in honest surprise. “If it ain’t Smoke!”

“What are you doing out this time of night?” Smoke inquired. “Strolling?”

Before Bill Saltman could make reply, two running men joined the group. These were followed by several more, while the crunch of feet on the snow heralded the imminent arrival of many others.

“Who are your friends?” Smoke asked. “Where’s the stampede?”

Saltman, lighting his pipe, which was impossible for him to enjoy with lungs panting from the run, did not reply. The ruse of the match was too obviously for the purpose of seeing the sled to be misunderstood, and Smoke noted every pair of eyes focus on the coil of cable and the crowbar. Then the match went out.

“Just heard a rumor, that’s all, just a rumor,” Saltman mumbled with ponderous secretiveness.

“You might let Shorty and me in on it,” Smoke urged.

Somebody snickered sarcastically in the background.

“Where are YOU bound?” Saltman demanded.

“And who are you?” Smoke countered. “Committee of safety?”

“Just interested, just interested,” Saltman said.

“You bet your sweet life we’re interested,” another voice spoke up out of the darkness.

“Say,” Shorty put in, “I wonder who’s feelin’ the foolishest?”

Everybody laughed nervously.

“Come on, Shorty; we’ll be getting along,” Smoke said, mushing the dogs.

The crowd formed in behind and followed.

“Say, ain’t you-all made a mistake?” Shorty gibed. “When we met you you was goin’, an’ now you’re comin’ without bein’ anywheres. Have you lost your tag?”

“You go to the devil,” was Saltman’s courtesy. “We go and come just as we danged feel like. We don’t travel with tags.”

And the sled, with Smoke in the lead and Shorty at the pole, went on down Main Street escorted by three score men, each of whom, on his back, bore a stampeding-pack. It was three in the morning, and only the all-night rounders saw the procession and were able to tell Dawson about it next day.

Half an hour later, the hill was climbed and the dogs unharnessed at the cabin door, the sixty stampeders grimly attendant.

“Good-night, fellows,” Smoke called, as he closed the door.

In five minutes the candle was put out, but before half an hour had passed Smoke and Shorty emerged softly, and without lights began harnessing the dogs.

“Hello, Smoke!” Saltman said, stepping near enough for them to see the loom of his form.

“Can’t shake you, Bill, I see,” Smoke replied cheerfully. “Where’re your friends?”

“Gone to have a drink. They left me to keep an eye on you, and keep it I will. What’s in the wind anyway, Smoke? You can’t shake us, so you might as well let us in. We’re all your friends. You know that.”

“There are times when you can let your friends in,” Smoke evaded, “and times when you can’t. And, Bill, this is one of the times when we can’t. You’d better go to bed. Good-night.”

“Ain’t goin’ to be no good-night, Smoke. You don’t know us. We’re woodticks.”

Smoke sighed. “Well, Bill, if you WILL have your will, I guess you’ll have to have it. Come on, Shorty, we can’t fool around any longer.”

Saltman emitted a shrill whistle as the sled started, and swung in behind. From down the hill and across the flat came the answering whistles of the relays. Shorty was at the gee-pole, and Smoke and Saltman walked side by side.

“Look here, Bill,” Smoke said. “I’ll make you a proposition. Do you want to come in alone on this?”

Saltman did not hesitate. “An’ throw the gang down? No, sir. We’ll all come in.”

“You first, then,” Smoke exclaimed, lurching into a clinch and tipping the other into deep snow beside the trail.

Shorty hawed the dogs and swung the team to the south on the trail that led among the scattered cabins on the rolling slopes to the rear of Dawson. Smoke and Saltman, locked together, rolled in the snow. Smoke considered himself in gilt-edged condition, but Saltman outweighed him by fifty pounds of clean, trail-hardened muscle and repeatedly mastered him. Time and time again he got Smoke on his back, and Smoke lay complacently and rested. But each time Saltman attempted to get off him and get away, Smoke reached out a detaining, tripping hand that brought about a new clinch and wrestle.

“You can go some,” Saltman acknowledged, panting at the end of ten minutes, as he sat astride Smoke’s chest. “But I down you every time.”

“And I hold you every time,” Smoke panted back. “That’s what I’m here for, just to hold you. Where do you think Shorty’s getting to all this time?”

Saltman made a wild effort to go clear, and all but succeeded. Smoke gripped his ankle and threw him in a headlong tumble. From down the hill came anxious questioning whistles. Saltman sat up and whistled a shrill answer, and was grappled by Smoke, who rolled him face upward and sat astride his chest, his knees resting on Saltman’s biceps, his hands on Saltman’s shoulders and holding him down. And in this position the stampeders found them. Smoke laughed and got up.

“Well, good-night, fellows,” he said, and started down the hill, with sixty exasperated and grimly determined stampeders at his heels.

He turned north past the sawmill and the hospital and took the river trail along the precipitous bluffs at the base of Moosehide Mountain. Circling the Indian village, he held on to the mouth of Moose Creek, then turned and faced his pursuers.

“You make me tired,” he said, with a good imitation of a snarl.

“Hope we ain’t a-forcin’ you,” Saltman murmured politely.

“Oh, no, not at all,” Smoke snarled with an even better imitation, as he passed among them on the back-trail to Dawson. Twice he attempted to cross the trailless icejams of the river, still resolutely followed, and both times he gave up and returned to the Dawson shore. Straight down Main Street he trudged, crossing the ice of Klondike River to Klondike City and again retracing to Dawson. At eight o’clock, as gray dawn began to show, he led his weary gang to Slavovitch’s restaurant, where tables were at a premium for breakfast.

“Good-night fellows,” he said, as he paid his reckoning.

And again he said good-night, as he took the climb of the hill. In the clear light of day they did not follow him, contenting themselves with watching him up the hill to his cabin.

For two days Smoke lingered about town, continually under vigilant espionage. Shorty, with the sled and dogs, had disappeared. Neither travelers up and down the Yukon, nor from Bonanza, Eldorado, nor the Klondike, had seen him. Remained only Smoke, who, soon or late, was certain to try to connect with his missing partner; and upon Smoke everybody’s attention was centered. On the second night he did not leave his cabin, putting out the lamp at nine in the evening and setting the alarm for two next morning. The watch outside heard the alarm go off, so that when, half an hour later, he emerged from the cabin, he found waiting for him a band, not of sixty men, but of at least three hundred. A flaming aurora borealis lighted the scene, and, thus hugely escorted, he walked down to town and entered the Elkhorn. The place was immediately packed and jammed by an anxious and irritated multitude that bought drinks, and for four weary hours watched Smoke play cribbage with his old friend Breck. Shortly after six in the morning, with an expression on his face of commingled hatred and gloom, seeing no one, recognizing no one, Smoke left the Elkhorn and went up Main Street, behind him the three hundred, formed in disorderly ranks, chanting: “Hay-foot! Straw-foot! Hep! Hep! Hep!”

“Good-night, fellows,” he said bitterly, at the edge of the Yukon bank where the winter trail dipped down. “I’m going to get breakfast and then go to bed.”

The three hundred shouted that they were with him, and followed him out upon the frozen river on the direct path he took for Tra-Lee. At seven in the morning he led his stampeding cohort up the zigzag trail, across the face of the slide, that led to Dwight Sanderson's cabin. The light of a candle showed through the parchment-paper window, and smoke curled from the chimney. Shorty threw open the door.

"Come on in, Smoke," he greeted. "Breakfast's ready. Who-all are your friends?"

Smoke turned about on the threshold. "Well, good-night, you fellows. Hope you enjoyed your pasear!"

"Hold on a moment, Smoke," Bill Saltman cried, his voice keen with disappointment. "Want to talk with you a moment."

"Fire away," Smoke answered genially.

"What'd you pay old Sanderson twenty-five thousan' for? Will you answer that?"

"Bill, you give me a pain," was Smoke's reply. "I came over here for a country residence, so to say, and here are you and a gang trying to cross-examine me when I'm looking for peace an' quietness an' breakfast. What's a country residence good for, except for peace and quietness?"

"You ain't answered the question," Bill Saltman came back with rigid logic.

"And I'm not going to, Bill. That affair is peculiarly a personal affair between Dwight Sanderson and me. Any other question?"

"How about that crowbar an' steel cable then, what you had on your sled the other night?"

"It's none of your blessed and ruddy business, Bill. Though if Shorty here wants to tell you about it, he can."

"Sure!" Shorty cried, springing eagerly into the breach. His mouth opened, then he faltered and turned to his partner. "Smoke, confidentially, just between you an' me, I don't think it IS any of their darn business. Come on in. The life's gettin' boiled outa that coffee."

The door closed and the three hundred sagged into forlorn and grumbling groups.

"Say, Saltman," one man said, "I thought you was goin' to lead us to it."

"Not on your life," Saltman answered crustily. "I said Smoke would lead us to it."

"An' this is it?"

"You know as much about it as me, an' we all know Smoke's got something salted down somewheres. Or else for what did he pay Sanderson the twenty-five thousand? Not for this mangy town-site, that's sure an' certain."

A chorus of cries affirmed Saltman's judgment.

"Well, what are we goin' to do now?" someone queried dolefully.

"Me for one for breakfast," Wild Water Charley said cheerfully. "You led us up a blind alley this time, Bill."

"I tell you I didn't," Saltman objected. "Smoke led us. An' just the same, what about them twenty-five thousand?"

At half-past eight, when daylight had grown strong, Shorty carefully opened the door and peered out. "Shucks," he exclaimed. "They-all's hiked back to Dawson. I thought they was goin' to camp here."

"Don't worry; they'll come sneaking back," Smoke reassured him. "If I don't miss my guess you'll see half Dawson over here before we're done with it. Now jump in and lend me a hand. We've got work to do."

"Aw, for Heaven's sake put me on," Shorty complained, when, at the end of an hour, he surveyed the result of their toil — a windlass in the corner of the cabin, with an endless rope that ran around double logrollers.

Smoke turned it with a minimum of effort, and the rope slipped and creaked. "Now, Shorty, you go outside and tell me what it sounds like."

Shorty, listening at the closed door, heard all the sounds of a windlass hoisting a load, and caught himself unconsciously attempting to estimate the depth of shaft out of which this load was being hoisted. Next came a pause, and in his mind's eye he saw the bucket swinging short to the windlass. Then he heard the quick lower-away and the dull sound as of the bucket coming to abrupt rest on the edge of the shaft. He threw open the door, beaming.

"I got you," he cried. "I almost fell for it myself. What next?"

The next was the dragging into the cabin of a dozen sled-loads of rock. And through an exceedingly busy day there were many other nexts.

"Now you run the dogs over to Dawson this evening," Smoke instructed, when supper was finished. "Leave them with Breck. He'll take care of them. They'll be watching what you do, so get Breck to go to the A. C. Company and buy up all the blasting-powder — there's only several hundred pounds in stock. And have Breck order half a dozen hard-rock drills from the blacksmith. Breck's a quartz-man, and he'll give the blacksmith a rough idea of what he wants made. And give Breck these location descriptions, so that he can record them at the gold commissioner's to-morrow. And finally, at ten o'clock, you be on Main Street listening. Mind you, I don't want them to be too loud. Dawson must just hear them and no more than hear them. I'll let off three, of different quantities, and you note which is more nearly the right thing."

At ten that night Shorty, strolling down Main Street, aware of many curious eyes, his ears keyed tensely, heard a faint and distant explosion. Thirty seconds later there was a second, sufficiently loud to attract the attention of others on the street. Then came a third, so violent that it rattled the windows and brought the inhabitants into the street.

"Shook 'em up beautiful," Shorty proclaimed breathlessly, an hour afterward, when he arrived at the cabin on Tra-Lee. He gripped Smoke's hand. "You should a-saw 'em. Ever kick over a ant-hole? Dawson's just like that. Main Street was crawlin' an' hummin' when I pulled my freight. You won't see Tra-Lee to-morrow for folks. An' if they ain't some a-sneakin' acrost right now I don't know minin' nature, that's all."

Smoke grinned, stepped to the fake windlass, and gave it a couple of creaking turns. Shorty pulled out the moss-chinking from between the logs so as to make peep-holes on every side of the cabin. Then he blew out the candle.

"Now," he whispered at the end of half an hour.

Smoke turned the windlass slowly, paused after several minutes, caught up a galvanized bucket filled with earth and struck it with slide and scrape and grind against the heap of rocks they had hauled in. Then he lighted a cigarette, shielding the flame of the match in his hands.

"They's three of 'em," Shorty whispered. "You oughta saw 'em. Say, when you made that bucket-dump noise they was fair quiverin'. They's one at the window now tryin' to peek in."

Smoke glowed his cigarette, and glanced at his watch.

"We've got to do this thing regularly," he breathed. "We'll haul up a bucket every fifteen minutes. And in the meantime — "

Through triple thicknesses of sacking, he struck a cold-chisel on the face of a rock.

"Beautiful, beautiful," Shorty moaned with delight. He crept over noiselessly from the peep-hole. "They've got their heads together, an' I can almost see 'em talkin'."

And from then until four in the morning, at fifteen-minute intervals, the seeming of a bucket was hoisted on the windlass that creaked and ran around on itself and hoisted nothing. Then their visitors departed, and Smoke and Shorty went to bed.

After daylight, Shorty examined the moccasin-marks. “Big Bill Saltman was one of them,” he concluded. “Look at the size of it.”

Smoke looked out over the river. “Get ready for visitors. There are two crossing the ice now.”

“Huh! Wait till Breck files that string of claims at nine o’clock. There’ll be two thousand crossing over.”

“And every mother’s son of them yammering ‘mother-lode,’“ Smoke laughed. “‘The source of the Klondike placers found at last.’“

Shorty, who had clambered to the top of a steep shoulder of rock, gazed with the eye of a connoisseur at the strip they had staked.

“It sure looks like a true fissure vein,” he said. “A expert could almost trace the lines of it under the snow. It’d fool anybody. The slide fills the front of it an’ see them outcrops? Look like the real thing, only they ain’t.”

When the two men, crossing the river, climbed the zigzag trail up the slide, they found a closed cabin. Bill Saltman, who led the way, went softly to the door, listened, then beckoned Wild Water Charley up to him. From inside came the creak and whine of a windlass bearing a heavy load. They waited at the final pause, then heard the lower-away and the impact of a bucket on rock. Four times, in the next hour, they heard the thing repeated. Then Wild Water knocked on the door. From inside came low furtive noises, then silences, and more furtive noises, and at the end of five minutes Smoke, breathing heavily, opened the door an inch and peered out. They saw on his face and shirt powdered rock-fragments. His greeting was suspiciously genial.

“Wait a minute,” he added, “and I’ll be with you.”

Pulling on his mittens, he slipped through the door and confronted the visitors outside in the snow. Their quick eyes noted his shirt, across the shoulders, discolored and powdery, and the knees of his overalls that showed signs of dirt brushed hastily but not quite thoroughly away.

“Rather early for a call,” he observed. “What brings you across the river? Going hunting?”

“We’re on, Smoke,” Wild Water said confidentially. “An’ you’d just as well come through. You’ve got something here.”

“If you’re looking for eggs — ” Smoke began.

“Aw, forget it. We mean business.”

"You mean you want to buy lots, eh?" Smoke rattled on swiftly. "There's some dandy building sites here. But, you see, we can't sell yet. We haven't had the town surveyed. Come around next week, Wild Water, and for peace and quietness, I'll show you something swell, if you're anxious to live over here. Next week, sure, it will be surveyed. Good-by. Sorry I can't ask you inside, but Shorty — well, you know him. He's peculiar. He says he came over for peace and quietness, and he's asleep now. I wouldn't wake him for the world."

As Smoke talked he shook their hands warmly in farewell. Still talking and shaking their hands, he stepped inside and closed the door.

They looked at each other and nodded significantly.

"See the knees of his pants?" Saltman whispered hoarsely.

"Sure. An' his shoulders. He's been bumpin' an' crawlin' around in a shaft." As Wild Water talked, his eyes wandered up the snow-covered ravine until they were halted by something that brought a whistle to his lips. "Just cast your eyes up there, Bill. See where I'm pointing? If that ain't a prospect-hole! An' follow it out to both sides — you can see where they tramped in the snow. If it ain't rim-rock on both sides I don't know what rim-rock is. It's a fissure vein, all right."

"An' look at the size of it!" Saltman cried. "They've got something here, you bet."

"An' run your eyes down the slide there — see them bluffs standin' out an' slopin' in. The whole slide's in the mouth of the vein as well."

"And just keep a-lookin' on, out on the ice there, on the trail," Saltman directed. "Looks like most of Dawson, don't it?"

Wild Water took one glance and saw the trail black with men clear to the far Dawson bank, down which the same unbroken string of men was pouring.

"Well, I'm goin' to get a look-in at that prospect-hole before they get here," he said, turning and starting swiftly up the ravine.

But the cabin door opened, and the two occupants stepped out.

"Hey!" Smoke called. "Where are you going?"

"To pick out a lot," Wild Water called back. "Look at the river. All Dawson's stampeding to buy lots, an' we're going to beat 'em to it for the choice. That's right, ain't it, Bill?"

"Sure thing," Saltman corroborated. "This has the makin's of a Jim-dandy suburb, an' it sure looks like it'll be some popular."

“Well, we’re not selling lots over in that section where you’re heading,” Smoke answered. “Over to the right there, and back on top of the bluffs are the lots. This section, running from the river and over the tops, is reserved. So come on back.”

“That’s the spot we’ve gone and selected,” Saltman argued.

“But there’s nothing doing, I tell you,” Smoke said sharply.

“Any objections to our strolling, then?” Saltman persisted.

“Decidedly. Your strolling is getting monotonous. Come on back out of that.”

“I just reckon we’ll stroll anyways,” Saltman replied stubbornly. “Come on, Wild Water.”

“I warn you, you are trespassing,” was Smoke’s final word.

“Nope, just strollin’,” Saltman gaily retorted, turning his back and starting on.

“Hey! Stop in your tracks, Bill, or I’ll sure bore you!” Shorty thundered, drawing and leveling two Colt’s forty-fours. “Step another step in your steps an’ I let eleven holes through your danged ornery carcass. Get that?”

Saltman stopped, perplexed.

“He sure got me,” Shorty mumbled to Smoke. “But if he goes on I’m up against it hard. I can’t shoot. What’ll I do?”

“Look here, Shorty, listen to reason,” Saltman begged.

“Come here to me an’ we’ll talk reason,” was Shorty’s retort.

And they were still talking reason when the head of the stampede emerged from the zigzag trail and came upon them.

“You can’t call a man a trespasser when he’s on a town-site lookin’ to buy lots,” Wild Water was arguing, and Shorty was objecting: “But they’s private property in town-sites, an’ that there strip is private property, that’s all. I tell you again, it ain’t for sale.”

“Now we’ve got to swing this thing on the jump,” Smoke muttered to Shorty. “If they ever get out of hand — ”

“You’ve sure got your nerve, if you think you can hold them,” Shorty muttered back. “They’s two thousan’ of ‘em an’ more a-comin’. They’ll break this line any minute.”

The line ran along the near rim of the ravine, and Shorty had formed it by halting the first arrivals when they got that far in their invasion. In the crowd were half a dozen Northwest policemen and a lieutenant. With the latter Smoke conferred in undertones.

"They're still piling out of Dawson," he said, "and before long there will be five thousand here. The danger is if they start jumping claims. When you figure there are only five claims, it means a thousand men to a claim, and four thousand out of the five will try to jump the nearest claim. It can't be done, and if it ever starts, there'll be more dead men here than in the whole history of Alaska. Besides, those five claims were recorded this morning and can't be jumped. In short, claim-jumping mustn't start."

"Right-o," said the lieutenant. "I'll get my men together and station them. We can't have any trouble here, and we won't have. But you'd better get up and talk to them."

"There must be some mistake, fellows," Smoke began in a loud voice. "We're not ready to sell lots. The streets are not surveyed yet. But next week we shall have the grand opening sale."

He was interrupted by an outburst of impatience and indignation.

"We don't want lots," a young miner cried out. "We don't want what's on top of the ground. We've come for what's under the ground."

"We don't know what we've got under the ground," Smoke answered. "But we do know we've got a fine town-site on top of it."

"Sure," Shorty added. "Grand for scenery an' solitude. Folks lovin' solitude come a-flockin' here by thousands. Most popular solitude on the Yukon."

Again the impatient cries arose, and Saltman, who had been talking with the later comers, came to the front.

"We're here to stake claims," he opened. "We know what you've did — filed a string of five quartz claims on end, and there they are over there running across the town-site on the line of the slide and the canyon. Only you misplayed. Two of them entries is fake. Who is Seth Bierce? No one ever heard of him. You filed a claim this mornin' in his name. An' you filed a claim in the name of Harry Maxwell. Now Harry Maxwell ain't in the country. He's down in Seattle. Went out last fall. Them two claims is open to relocation."

"Suppose I have his power of attorney?" Smoke queried.

"You ain't," Saltman answered. "An' if you have you got to show it. Anyway, here's where we relocate. Come on, fellows."

Saltman, stepping across the dead-line, had turned to encourage a following, when the police lieutenant's voice rang out and stopped the forward surge of the great mass.

“Hold on there! You can’t do that, you know!”

“Can’t, eh?” said Bill Saltman. “The law says a fake location can be relocated, don’t it?”

“Thet’s right, Bill! Stay with it!” the crowd cheered from the safe side of the line.

“It’s the law, ain’t it?” Saltman demanded truculently of the lieutenant.

“It may be the law,” came the steady answer. “But I can’t and won’t allow a mob of five thousand men to attempt to jump two claims. It would be a dangerous riot, and we’re here to see there is no riot. Here, now, on this spot, the Northwest police constitute the law. The next man who crosses that line will be shot. You, Bill Saltman, step back across it.”

Saltman obeyed reluctantly. But an ominous restlessness became apparent in the mass of men, irregularly packed and scattered as it was over a landscape that was mostly up-and-down.

“Heavens,” the lieutenant whispered to Smoke. “Look at them like flies on the edge of the cliff there. Any disorder in that mass would force hundreds of them over.”

Smoke shuddered and got up. “I’m willing to play fair, fellows. If you insist on town lots, I’ll sell them to you, one hundred apiece, and you can raffle locations when the survey is made.” With raised hand he stilled the movement of disgust. “Don’t move, anybody. If you do, there’ll be hundreds of you shoved over the bluff. The situation is dangerous.”

“Just the same, you can’t hog it,” a voice went up. “We don’t want lots. We want to relocate.”

“But there are only two disputed claims,” Smoke argued. “When they’re relocated where will the rest of you be?”

He mopped his forehead with his shirt-sleeve, and another voice cried out:

“Let us all in, share and share alike!”

Nor did those who roared their approbation dream that the suggestion had been made by a man primed to make it when he saw Smoke mop his forehead.

“Take your feet out of the trough an’ pool the town-site,” the man went on. “Pool the mineral rights with the town-site, too.”

“But there isn’t anything in the mineral rights, I tell you,” Smoke objected.

“Then pool them with the rest. We’ll take our chances on it.”

“Fellows, you’re forcing me,” Smoke said. “I wish you’d stayed on your side of the river.”

But wavering indecision was so manifest that with a mighty roar the crowd swept him on to agreement. Saltman and others in the front rank demurred.

“Bill Saltman, here, and Wild Water don’t want you all in,” Smoke informed the crowd. “Who’s hogging it now?”

And thereat Saltman and Wild Water became profoundly unpopular.

“Now how are we going to do it?” Smoke asked. “Shorty and I ought to keep control. We discovered this town-site.”

“That’s right!” many cried. “A square deal!” “It’s only fair!”

“Three-fifths to us,” Smoke suggested, “and you fellows come in for two-fifths. And you’ve got to pay for your shares.”

“Ten cents on the dollar!” was a cry. “And non-assessable!”

“And the president of the company to come around personally and pay you your dividends on a silver platter,” Smoke sneered. “No, sir. You fellows have got to be reasonable. Ten cents on the dollar will help start things. You buy two-fifths of the stock, hundred dollars par, at ten dollars. That’s the best I can do. And if you don’t like it, just start jumping the claims. I can’t stand more than a two-fifths gouge.”

“No big capitalization!” a voice called, and it was this voice that crystallized the collective mind of the crowd into consent.

“There’s about five thousand of you, which will make five thousand shares,” Smoke worked the problem aloud. “And five thousand is two-fifths of twelve thousand, five hundred. Therefore The Tra-Lee Town-Site Company is capitalized for one million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, there being twelve thousand, five hundred shares, hundred par, you fellows buying five thousand of them at ten dollars apiece. And I don’t care a whoop whether you accept it or not. And I call you all to witness that you’re forcing me against my will.”

With the assurance of the crowd that they had caught him with the goods on him, in the shape of the two fake locations, a committee was formed and the rough organization of the Tra-Lee Town-Site Company effected. Scorning the proposal of delivering the shares next day in Dawson, and scorning it because of the objection that the portion of Dawson that had not engaged in the stampede would ring in for shares, the committee, by a fire on the ice at the foot of the slide, issued a receipt to each stampeder in return for ten dollars in dust duly weighed on two dozen gold-scales which were obtained from Dawson.

By twilight the work was accomplished and Tra-Lee was deserted, save for Smoke and Shorty, who ate supper in the cabin and chuckled at the list of shareholders, four thousand eight hundred and seventy-four strong, and at the gold-sacks, which they knew contained approximately forty-eight thousand seven hundred and forty dollars.

“But you ain’t swung it yet,” Shorty objected.

“He’ll be here,” Smoke asserted with conviction. “He’s a born gambler, and when Breck whispers the tip to him not even heart disease would stop him.”

Within the hour came a knock at the door, and Wild Water entered, followed by Bill Saltman. Their eyes swept the cabin eagerly, coming to rest on the windlass elaborately concealed by blankets.

“But suppose I did want to vote twelve hundred shares,” Wild Water was arguing half an hour later. “With the other five thousand sold to-day it’d make only sixty-two hundred shares. That’d leave you and Shorty with sixty-three hundred. You’d still control.”

“But what d’ you want with all that of a town-site?” Shorty queried.

“You can answer that better ‘n me,” Wild Water replied. “An’ between you an’ me,” his gaze drifted over the blanket-draped windlass, “it’s a pretty good-looking town-site.”

“But Bill wants some,” Smoke said grudgingly, “and we simply won’t part with more than five hundred shares.”

“How much you got to invest?” Wild Water asked Saltman.

“Oh, say five thousand. It was all I could scare up.”

“Wild Water,” Smoke went on, in the same grudging, complaining voice, “if I didn’t know you so well, I wouldn’t sell you a single besotted share. And, anyway, Shorty and I won’t part with more than five hundred, and they’ll cost you fifty dollars apiece. That’s the last word, and if you don’t like it, good-night. Bill can take a hundred and you can have the other four hundred.”

Next day Dawson began its laugh. It started early in the morning, just after daylight, when Smoke went to the bulletin-board outside the A. C. Company store and tacked up a notice. Men gathered and were reading and snickering over his shoulder ere he had driven the last tack. Soon the bulletin-board was crowded by hundreds who could not get near enough to read. Then a reader was appointed by acclamation, and thereafter, throughout the day, many men were acclaimed to read in loud voice the notice Smoke Bellew had nailed up. And there were numbers of men who stood in the snow and heard it read several times in order to memorize the succulent items that appeared in the following order:

The Tra-Lee Town-Site Company keeps its accounts on the wall. This is its first account and its last.

Any shareholder who objects to donating ten dollars to the Dawson General Hospital may obtain his ten dollars on personal application to Wild Water Charley, or, failing that, will absolutely obtain it on application to Smoke Bellew.

MONEYS RECEIVED AND DISBURSED

From 4874 shares at $10.00	$48,740.00
To Dwight Sanderson for Town-Site of Tra-Lee	10,000.00
To incidental expenses, to wit: powder, drills, windlass, gold commissioner's office, etc	1,000.00
To Dawson General Hospital	37,740.00
Total	$48,740.00

From Bill Saltman, for 100 shares privately purchased at $50.00	$ 5,000.00
From Wild Water Charley, for 400 shares privately purchased at $50.00	20,000.00
To Bill Saltman, in recognition of services as volunteer stampede promoter	5,000.00
To Dawson General Hospital	3,000.00
To Smoke Bellew and Jack Short, balance in full on egg deal and morally owing	17,000.00
Total	$25,000.00

Shares remaining to account for 7126. These shares, held by Smoke Bellew and Jack Short, value nil, may be obtained gratis, for the asking, by any and all residents of Dawson desiring change of domicile to the peace and solitude of the town of Tra-Lee.

(Note: Peace and solitude always and perpetually guaranteed in town of Tra-Lee)

(Signed) SMOKE BELLEW, President.
(Signed) JACK SHORT, Secretary.

XII. WONDER OF WOMAN

“Just the same, I notice you ain’t tumbled over yourself to get married,” Shorty remarked, continuing a conversation that had lapsed some few minutes before.

Smoke, sitting on the edge of the sleeping-robe and examining the feet of a dog he had rolled snarling on its back in the snow, did not answer. And Shorty, turning a steaming moccasin propped on a stick before the fire, studied his partner’s face keenly.

“Cock your eye up at that there aurora borealis,” Shorty went on. “Some frivolous, eh? Just like any shilly-shallyin’, shirt-dancing woman. The best of them is frivolous, when they ain’t foolish. And they’s cats, all of ‘em, the littlest an’ the biggest, the nicest and the otherwise. They’re sure devourin’ lions an’ roarin’ hyenas when they get on the trail of a man they’ve cottoned to.”

Again the monologue languished. Smoke cuffed the dog when it attempted to snap his hand, and went on examining its bruised and bleeding pads.

“Huh!” pursued Shorty. “Mebbe I couldn’t ‘a’ married if I’d a mind to! An’ mebbe I wouldn’t ‘a’ been married without a mind to, if I hadn’t hiked for tall timber. Smoke, d’you want to know what saved me? I’ll tell you. My wind. I just kept a-runnin’. I’d like to see any skirt run me outa breath.”

Smoke released the animal and turned his own steaming, stick-propped moccasins. “We’ve got to rest over to-morrow and make moccasins,” he vouchsafed. “That little crust is playing the devil with their feet.”

“We oughta keep goin’ somehow,” Shorty objected. “We ain’t got grub enough to turn back with, and we gotta strike that run of caribou or them white Indians almighty soon or we’ll be eatin’ the dogs, sore feet an’ all. Now who ever seen them white Indians anyway? Nothin’ but hearsay. An’ how can a Indian be white? A black white man’d be as natural. Smoke, we just oughta travel to-morrow. The country’s plumb dead of game. We ain’t seen even a rabbit-track in a week, you know that. An’ we gotta get out of this dead streak into somewhere that meat’s runnin’.”

“They’ll travel all the better with a day’s rest for their feet and moccasins all around,” Smoke counseled. “If you get a chance at any low divide, take a peep over at the country beyond. We’re likely to strike open rolling country any time now. That’s what La Perle told us to look for.”

“Huh! By his own story, it was ten years ago that La Perle come through this section, an’ he was that loco from hunger he couldn’t know what he did see. Remember what he said of whoppin’ big flags floatin’ from the tops of the mountains? That shows how loco HE was. An’ he said himself he never seen any white Indians — that was Anton’s yarn. An’, besides, Anton kicked the bucket two years before you an’ me come to Alaska. But I’ll take a look to-morrow. An’ mebbe I might pick up a moose. What d’ you say we turn in?”

Smoke spent the morning in camp, sewing dog-moccasins and repairing harnesses. At noon he cooked a meal for two, ate his share, and began to look for Shorty’s return. An hour later he strapped on his snow-shoes and went out on his partner’s trail. The way led up the bed of the stream, through a narrow gorge that widened suddenly into a moose-pasture. But no moose had been there since the first snow of the preceding fall. The tracks of Shorty’s snow-shoes crossed the pasture and went up the easy slope of a low divide. At the crest Smoke halted. The tracks continued down the other slope. The first spruce-trees, in the creek bed, were a mile away, and it was evident that Shorty had passed through them and gone on. Smoke looked at his watch, remembered the oncoming darkness, the dogs, and the camp, and reluctantly decided against going farther. But before he retraced his steps he paused for a long look. All the eastern sky-line was saw-toothed by the snowy backbone of the Rockies. The whole mountain system, range upon range, seemed to trend to the northwest, cutting athwart the course to the open country reported by La Perle. The effect was as if the mountains conspired to thrust back the traveler toward the west and the Yukon. Smoke wondered how many men in the past, approaching as he had approached, had been turned aside by that forbidding aspect. La Perle had not been turned aside, but, then, La Perle had crossed over from the eastern slope of the Rockies.

Until midnight Smoke maintained a huge fire for the guidance of Shorty. And in the morning, waiting with camp broken and dogs harnessed for the first break of light, Smoke took up the pursuit. In the narrow pass of the canyon, his lead-dog pricked up its ears and whined. Then Smoke came upon the Indians, six of them, coming toward him. They were traveling light, without dogs, and on each man’s back was the smallest of pack outfits. Surrounding Smoke, they immediately gave him several matters for surprise. That they were looking for him was clear. That they talked no Indian tongue of which he knew a word was also quickly made clear. They were not white Indians, though they were taller and heavier than the Indians of the Yukon basin. Five of them carried the old-fashioned, long-barreled Hudson Bay Company musket, and in the hands of the sixth was a Winchester rifle which Smoke knew to be Shorty's.

Nor did they waste time in making him a prisoner. Unarmed himself, Smoke could only submit. The contents of the sled were distributed among their own packs, and he was given a pack composed of his and Shorty's sleeping-furs. The dogs were unharnessed, and when Smoke protested, one of the Indians, by signs, indicated a trail too rough for sled-travel. Smoke bowed to the inevitable, cached the sled end-on in the snow on the bank above the stream, and trudged on with his captors. Over the divide to the north they went, down to the spruce-trees which Smoke had glimpsed the preceding afternoon. They followed the stream for a dozen miles, abandoning it when it trended to the west and heading directly eastward up a narrow tributary.

The first night was spent in a camp which had been occupied for several days. Here was cached a quantity of dried salmon and a sort of pemmican, which the Indians added to their packs. From this camp a trail of many snow-shoes led off — Shorty's captors, was Smoke's conclusion; and before darkness fell he succeeded in making out the tracks Shorty's narrower snow-shoes had left. On questioning the Indians by signs, they nodded affirmation and pointed to the north.

Always, in the days that followed, they pointed north; and always the trail, turning and twisting through a jumble of upstanding peaks, trended north. Everywhere, in this bleak snow-solitude, the way seemed barred, yet ever the trail curved and coiled, finding low divides and avoiding the higher and untraversable chains. The snow-fall was deeper than in the lower valleys, and every step of the way was snow-shoe work. Furthermore, Smoke's captors, all young men, traveled light and fast; and he could not forbear the prick of pride in the knowledge that he easily kept up with them. They were travel-hardened and trained to snow-shoes from infancy; yet such was his condition that the traverse bore no more of ordinary hardship to him than to them.

In six days they gained and crossed the central pass, low in comparison with the mountains it threaded, yet formidable in itself and not possible for loaded sleds. Five days more of tortuous winding, from lower altitude to lower altitude, brought them to the open, rolling, and merely hilly country La Perle had found ten years before. Smoke knew it with the first glimpse, on a sharp cold day, the thermometer forty below zero, the atmosphere so clear that he could see a hundred miles. Far as he could see rolled the open country. High in the east the Rockies still thrust their snowy ramparts heavenward. To the south and west extended the broken ranges of the projecting spur-system they had crossed. And in this vast pocket lay the country La Perle had traversed — snow-blanketed, but assuredly fat with game at some time in the year, and in the summer a smiling, forested, and flowered land.

Before midday, traveling down a broad stream, past snow-buried willows and naked aspens, and across heavily timbered flats of spruce, they came upon the site of a large camp, recently abandoned. Glancing as he went by, Smoke estimated four or five hundred fires, and guessed the population to be in the thousands. So fresh was the trail, and so well packed by the multitude, that Smoke and his captors took off their snow-shoes and in their moccasins struck a swifter pace. Signs of game appeared and grew plentiful — tracks of wolves and lynxes that without meat could not be. Once, one of the Indians cried out with satisfaction and pointed to a large area of open snow, littered with fang-polished skulls of caribou, trampled and disrupted as if an army had fought upon it. And Smoke knew that a big killing had been made by the hunters since the last snow-flurry.

In the long twilight no sign was manifested of making camp. They held steadily on through a deepening gloom that vanished under a sky of light — great, glittering stars half veiled by a greenish vapor of pulsing aurora borealis. His dogs first caught the noises of the camp, pricking their ears and whining in low eagerness. Then it came to the ears of the humans, a murmur, dim with distance, but not invested with the soothing grace that is common to distant murmurs. Instead, it was in a high, wild key, a beat of shrill sound broken by shriller sounds — the long wolf-howling of many wolf-dogs, a screaming of unrest and pain, mournful with hopelessness and rebellion. Smoke swung back the crystal of his watch and by the feel of finger-tips on the naked hands made out eleven o’clock. The men about him quickened. The legs that had lifted through a dozen strenuous hours lifted in a still swifter pace that was half a run and mostly a running jog. Through a dark spruce-flat they burst upon an abrupt glare of light from many fires and upon an abrupt increase of sound. The great camp lay before them.

And as they entered and threaded the irregular runways of the hunting-camp, a vast tumult, as in a wave, rose to meet them and rolled on with them — cries, greetings, questions and answers, jests and jests thrust back again, the snapping snarl of wolf-dogs rushing in furry projectiles of wrath upon Smoke's stranger dogs, the scolding of squaws, laughter, the whimpering of children and wailing of infants, the moans of the sick aroused afresh to pain, all the pandemonium of a camp of nerveless, primitive wilderness folk.

Striking with clubs and the butts of guns, Smoke's party drove back the attacking dogs, while his own dogs, snapping and snarling, awed by so many enemies, shrank in among the legs of their human protectors, and bristled along stiff-legged in menacing prance.

They halted in the trampled snow by an open fire, where Shorty and two young Indians, squatted on their hams, were broiling strips of caribou meat. Three other young Indians, lying in furs on a mat of spruce-boughs, sat up. Shorty looked across the fire at his partner, but with a sternly impassive face, like those of his companions, made no sign and went on broiling the meat.

"What's the matter?" Smoke demanded, half in irritation. "Lost your speech?"

The old familiar grin twisted on Shorty's face. "Nope," he answered. "I'm a Indian. I'm learnin' not to show surprise. When did they catch you?"

"Next day after you left."

"Hum," Shorty said, the light of whimsy dancing in his eyes. "Well, I'm doin' fine, thank you most to death. This is the bachelors' camp." He waved his hand to embrace its magnificence, which consisted of a fire, beds of spruce-boughs laid on top of the snow, flies of caribou skin, and wind-shields of twisted spruce and willow withes. "An' these are the bachelors." This time his hand indicated the young men, and he spat a few spoken gutturals in their own language that brought the white flash of acknowledgment from eyes and teeth. "They're glad to meet you, Smoke. Set down an' dry your moccasins, an' I'll cook up some grub. I'm gettin' the hang of the lingo pretty well, ain't I? You'll have to come to it, for it looks as if we'll be with these folks a long time. They's another white man here. Got caught six years ago. He's a Irishman they picked up over Great Slave Lake way. Danny McCan is what he goes by. He's settled down with a squaw. Got two kids already, but he'll skin out if ever the chance opens up. See that low fire over there to the right? That's his camp."

Apparently this was Smoke's appointed domicile, for his captors left him and his dogs, and went on deeper into the big camp. While he attended to his foot-gear and devoured strips of hot meat, Shorty cooked and talked.

"This is a sure peach of a pickle, Smoke — you listen to me. An' we got to go some to get out. These is the real, blowed-in-the-glass, wild Indians. They ain't white, but their chief is. He talks like a mouthful of hot mush, an' if he ain't full-blood Scotch they ain't no such thing as Scotch in the world. He's the hi-yu, skookum top-chief of the whole caboodle. What he says goes. You want to get that from the start-off. Danny McCan's been tryin' to get away from him for six years. Danny's all right, but he ain't got go in him. He knows a way out — learned it on huntin' trips — to the west of the way you an' me came. He ain't had the nerve to tackle it by his lonely. But we can pull it off, the three of us. Whiskers is the real goods, but he's mostly loco just the same."

"Who's Whiskers?" Smoke queried, pausing in the wolfing-down of a hot strip of meat.

"Why, he's the top geezer. He's the Scotcher. He's gettin' old, an' he's sure asleep now, but he'll see you to-morrow an' show you clear as print what a measly shrimp you are on his stompin'-grounds. These grounds belong to him. You got to get that into your noodle. They ain't never been explored, nor nothin', an' they're hisn. An' he won't let you forget it. He's got about twenty thousand square miles of huntin' country here all his own. He's the white Indian, him an' the skirt. Huh! Don't look at me that way. Wait till you see her. Some looker, an' all white, like her dad — he's Whiskers. An' say, caribou! I've saw 'em. A hundred thousan' of good running meat in the herd, an' ten thousan' wolves an' cats a-followin' an' livin' off the stragglers an' the leavin's. We leave the leavin's. The herd's movin' to the east, an' we'll be followin' 'em any day now. We eat our dogs, an' what we don't eat we smoke 'n cure for the spring before the salmon-run gets its sting in. Say, what Whiskers don't know about salmon an' caribou nobody knows, take it from me."

"Here comes Whiskers lookin' like he's goin' somewheres," Shorty whispered, reaching over and wiping greasy hands on the coat of one of the sled-dogs.

It was morning, and the bachelors were squatting over a breakfast of caribou-meat, which they ate as they broiled. Smoke glanced up and saw a small and slender man, skin-clad like any savage, but unmistakably white, striding in advance of a sled team and a following of a dozen Indians. Smoke cracked a hot bone, and while he sucked out the steaming marrow gazed at his approaching host. Bushy whiskers and yellowish gray hair, stained by camp smoke, concealed most of the face, but failed wholly to hide the gaunt, almost cadaverous, cheeks. It was a healthy leanness, Smoke decided, as he noted the wide flare of the nostrils and the breadth and depth of chest that gave spaciousness to the guaranty of oxygen and life.

"How do you do," the man said, slipping a mitten and holding out his bare hand. "My name is Snass," he added, as they shook hands.

"Mine's Bellew," Smoke returned, feeling peculiarly disconcerted as he gazed into the keen-searching black eyes.

"Getting plenty to eat, I see."

Smoke nodded and resumed his marrow-bone, the purr of Scottish speech strangely pleasant in his ears.

"Rough rations. But we don't starve often. And it's more natural than the hand-reared meat of the cities."

"I see you don't like cities," Smoke laughed, in order to be saying something; and was immediately startled by the transformation Snass underwent.

Quite like a sensitive plant, the man's entire form seemed to wilt and quiver. Then the recoil, tense and savage, concentered in the eyes, in which appeared a hatred that screamed of immeasurable pain. He turned abruptly away, and, recollecting himself, remarked casually over his shoulder:

"I'll see you later, Mr. Bellew. The caribou are moving east, and I'm going ahead to pick out a location. You'll all come on to-morrow."

"Some Whiskers, that, eh?" Shorty muttered, as Snass pulled on at the head of his outfit.

Again Shorty wiped his hands on the wolf-dog, which seemed to like it as it licked off the delectable grease.

Later on in the morning Smoke went for a stroll through the camp, busy with its primitive pursuits. A big body of hunters had just returned, and the men were scattering to their various fires. Women and children were departing with dogs harnessed to empty toboggan-sleds, and women and children and dogs were hauling sleds heavy with meat fresh from the killing and already frozen. An early spring cold-snap was on, and the wildness of the scene was painted in a temperature of thirty below zero. Woven cloth was not in evidence. Furs and soft-tanned leather clad all alike. Boys passed with bows in their hands, and quivers of bone-barbed arrows; and many a skinning-knife of bone or stone Smoke saw in belts or neck-hung sheaths. Women toiled over the fires, smoke-curing the meat, on their backs infants that stared round-eyed and sucked at lumps of tallow. Dogs, full-kin to wolves, bristled up to Smoke to endure the menace of the short club he carried and to whiff the odor of this newcomer whom they must accept by virtue of the club.

Segregated in the heart of the camp, Smoke came upon what was evidently Snass's fire. Though temporary in every detail, it was solidly constructed and was on a large scale. A great heap of bales of skins and outfit was piled on a scaffold out of reach of the dogs. A large canvas fly, almost half-tent, sheltered the sleeping- and living-quarters. To one side was a silk tent — the sort favored by explorers and wealthy big-game hunters. Smoke had never seen such a tent, and stepped closer. As he stood looking, the flaps parted and a young woman came out. So quickly did she move, so abruptly did she appear, that the effect on Smoke was as that of an apparition. He seemed to have the same effect on her, and for a long moment they gazed at each other.

She was dressed entirely in skins, but such skins and such magnificently beautiful fur-work Smoke had never dreamed of. Her parka, the hood thrown back, was of some strange fur of palest silver. The mukluks, with walrus-hide soles, were composed of the silver-padded feet of many lynxes. The long-gauntleted mittens, the tassels at the knees, all the varied furs of the costume, were pale silver that shimmered in the frosty light; and out of this shimmering silver, poised on slender, delicate neck, lifted her head, the rosy face blonde as the eyes were blue, the ears like two pink shells, the light chestnut hair touched with frost-dust and coruscating frost-glints.

All this and more, as in a dream, Smoke saw; then, recollecting himself, his hand fumbled for his cap. At the same moment the wonder-stare in the girl's eyes passed into a smile, and, with movements quick and vital, she slipped a mitten and extended her hand.

"How do you do," she murmured gravely, with a queer, delightful accent, her voice, silvery as the furs she wore, coming with a shock to Smoke's ears, attuned as they were to the harsh voices of the camp squaws.

Smoke could only mumble phrases that were awkwardly reminiscent of his best society manner.

"I am glad to see you," she went on slowly and gropingly, her face a ripple of smiles. "My English you will please excuse. It is not good. I am English like you," she gravely assured him. "My father he is Scotch. My mother she is dead. She is French, and English, and a little Indian, too. Her father was a great man in the Hudson Bay Company. Brrr! It is cold." She slipped on her mitten and rubbed her ears, the pink of which had already turned to white. "Let us go to the fire and talk. My name is Labiskwee. What is your name?"

And so Smoke came to know Labiskwee, the daughter of Snass, whom Snass called Margaret.

"Snass is not my father's name," she informed Smoke. "Snass is only an Indian name."

Much Smoke learned that day, and in the days that followed, as the hunting-camp moved on in the trail of the caribou. These were real wild Indians — the ones Anton had encountered and escaped from long years before. This was nearly the western limit of their territory, and in the summer they ranged north to the tundra shores of the Arctic, and eastward as far as the Luskwa. What river the Luskwa was Smoke could not make out, nor could Labiskwee tell him, nor could McCan. On occasion Snass, with parties of strong hunters, pushed east across the Rockies, on past the lakes and the Mackenzie and into the Barrens. It was on the last traverse in that direction that the silk tent occupied by Labiskwee had been found.

"It belonged to the Millicent-Adbury expedition," Snass told Smoke.

"Oh! I remember. They went after musk-oxen. The rescue expedition never found a trace of them."

"I found them," Snass said. "But both were dead."

"The world still doesn't know. The word never got out."

"The word never gets out," Snass assured him pleasantly.

"You mean if they had been alive when you found them — ?"

Snass nodded. "They would have lived on with me and my people."

"Anton got out," Smoke challenged.

"I do not remember the name. How long ago?"

"Fourteen or fifteen years," Smoke answered.

“So he pulled through, after all. Do you know, I’ve wondered about him. We called him Long Tooth. He was a strong man, a strong man.”

“La Perle came through here ten years ago.”

Snass shook his head.

“He found traces of your camps. It was summer time.”

“That explains it,” Snass answered. “We are hundreds of miles to the north in the summer.”

But, strive as he would, Smoke could get no clew to Snass’s history in the days before he came to live in the northern wilds. Educated he was, yet in all the intervening years he had read no books, no newspapers. What had happened in the world he knew not, nor did he show desire to know. He had heard of the miners on the Yukon, and of the Klondike strike. Gold-miners had never invaded his territory, for which he was glad. But the outside world to him did not exist. He tolerated no mention of it.

Nor could Labiskwee help Smoke with earlier information. She had been born on the hunting-grounds. Her mother had lived for six years after. Her mother had been very beautiful — the only white woman Labiskwee had ever seen. She said this wistfully, and wistfully, in a thousand ways, she showed that she knew of the great outside world on which her father had closed the door. But this knowledge was secret. She had early learned that mention of it threw her father into a rage.

Anton had told a squaw of her mother, and that her mother had been a daughter of a high official in the Hudson Bay Company. Later, the squaw had told Labiskwee. But her mother’s name she had never learned.

As a source of information, Danny McCan was impossible. He did not like adventure. Wild life was a horror, and he had had nine years of it. Shanghaied in San Francisco, he had deserted the whaleship at Point Barrow with three companions. Two had died, and the third had abandoned him on the terrible traverse south. Two years he had lived with the Eskimos before raising the courage to attempt the south traverse, and then, within several days of a Hudson Bay Company post, he had been gathered in by a party of Snass’s young men. He was a small, stupid man, afflicted with sore eyes, and all he dreamed or could talk about was getting back to his beloved San Francisco and his blissful trade of bricklaying.

“You’re the first intelligent man we’ve had,” Snass complimented Smoke one night by the fire. “Except old Four Eyes. The Indians named him so. He wore glasses and was short-sighted. He was a professor of zoology.”

(Smoke noted the correctness of the pronunciation of the word.) “He died a year ago. My young men picked him up strayed from an expedition on the upper Porcupine. He was intelligent, yes; but he was also a fool. That was his weakness — straying. He knew geology, though, and working in metals. Over on the Luskwa, where there’s coal, we have several creditable hand-forges he made. He repaired our guns and taught the young men how. He died last year, and we really missed him. Strayed — that’s how it happened — froze to death within a mile of camp.”

It was on the same night that Snass said to Smoke:

“You’d better pick out a wife and have a fire of your own. You will be more comfortable than with those young bucks. The maidens’ fires — a sort of feast of the virgins, you know — are not lighted until full summer and the salmon, but I can give orders earlier if you say the word.”

Smoke laughed and shook his head.

“Remember,” Snass concluded quietly, “Anton is the only one that ever got away. He was lucky, unusually lucky.”

Her father had a will of iron, Labiskwee told Smoke.

“Four Eyes used to call him the Frozen Pirate — whatever that means — the Tyrant of the Frost, the Cave Bear, the Beast Primitive, the King of the Caribou, the Bearded Pard, and lots of such things. Four Eyes loved words like these. He taught me most of my English. He was always making fun. You could never tell. He called me his cheetah-chum after times when I was angry. What is cheetah? He always teased me with it.”

She chattered on with all the eager naivete of a child, which Smoke found hard to reconcile with the full womanhood of her form and face.

Yes, her father was very firm. Everybody feared him. He was terrible when angry. There were the Porcupines. It was through them, and through the Luskwas, that Snass traded his skins at the posts and got his supplies of ammunition and tobacco. He was always fair, but the chief of the Porcupines began to cheat. And after Snass had warned him twice, he burned his log village, and over a dozen of the Porcupines were killed in the fight. But there was no more cheating. Once, when she was a little girl, there was one white man killed while trying to escape. No, her father did not do it, but he gave the order to the young men. No Indian ever disobeyed her father.

And the more Smoke learned from her, the more the mystery of Snass deepened.

“And tell me if it is true,” the girl was saying, “that there was a man and a woman whose names were Paolo and Francesca and who greatly loved each other?”

Smoke nodded.

“Four Eyes told me all about it,” she beamed happily. “And so he did not make it up, after all. You see, I was not sure. I asked father, but, oh, he was angry. The Indians told me he gave poor Four Eyes an awful talking to. Then there were Tristan and Iseult — two Iseults. It was very sad. But I should like to love that way. Do all the young men and women in the world do that? They do not here. They just get married. They do not seem to have time. I am English, and I will never marry an Indian — would you? That is why I have not lighted my maiden’s fire. Some of the young men are bothering father to make me do it. Libash is one of them. He is a great hunter. And Mahkook comes around singing songs. He is funny. To-night, if you come by my tent after dark, you will hear him singing out in the cold. But father says I can do as I please, and so I shall not light my fire. You see, when a girl makes up her mind to get married, that is the way she lets young men know. Four Eyes always said it was a fine custom. But I noticed he never took a wife. Maybe he was too old. He did not have much hair, but I do not think he was really very old. And how do you know when you are in love? — like Paolo and Francesca, I mean.”

Smoke was disconcerted by the clear gaze of her blue eyes. “Why, they say,” he stammered, “those who are in love say it, that love is dearer than life. When one finds out that he or she likes somebody better than everybody else in the world — why, then, they know they are in love. That’s the way it goes, but it’s awfully hard to explain. You just know it, that’s all.”

She looked off across the camp-smoke, sighed, and resumed work on the fur mitten she was sewing. “Well,” she announced with finality, “I shall never get married anyway.”

“Once we hit out we’ll sure have some tall runnin’,” Shorty said dismally.

“The place is a big trap,” Smoke agreed.

From the crest of a bald knob they gazed out over Snass’s snowy domain. East, west, and south they were hemmed in by the high peaks and jumbled ranges. Northward, the rolling country seemed interminable; yet they knew, even in that direction, that half a dozen transverse chains blocked the way.

“At this time of the year I could give you three days’ start,” Snass told Smoke that evening. “You can’t hide your trail, you see. Anton got away when the snow was gone. My young men can travel as fast as the best white man; and, besides, you would be breaking trail for them. And when the snow is off the ground, I’ll see to it that you don’t get the chance Anton had. It’s a good life. And soon the world fades. I have never quite got over the surprise of finding how easy it is to get along without the world.”

“What’s eatin’ me is Danny McCan,” Shorty confided to Smoke. “He’s a weak brother on any trail. But he swears he knows the way out to the westward, an’ so we got to put up with him, Smoke, or you sure get yours.”

“We’re all in the same boat,” Smoke answered.

“Not on your life. It’s a-comin’ to you straight down the pike.”

“What is?”

“You ain’t heard the news?”

Smoke shook his head.

“The bachelors told me. They just got the word. To-night it comes off, though it’s months ahead of the calendar.”

Smoke shrugged his shoulders.

“Ain’t interested in hearin’?” Shorty teased.

“I’m waiting to hear.”

“Well, Danny’s wife just told the bachelors,” Shorty paused impressively. “An’ the bachelors told me, of course, that the maidens’ fires is due to be lighted to-night. That’s all. Now how do you like it?”

“I don’t get your drift, Shorty.”

“Don’t, eh? Why, it’s plain open and shut. They’s a skirt after you, an’ that skirt is goin’ to light a fire, an’ that skirt’s name is Labiskwee. Oh, I’ve been watchin’ her watch you when you ain’t lookin’. She ain’t never lighted her fire. Said she wouldn’t marry a Indian. An’ now, when she lights her fire, it’s a cinch it’s my poor old friend Smoke.”

“It sounds like a syllogism,” Smoke said, with a sinking heart reviewing Labiskwee’s actions of the past several days.

“Cinch is shorter to pronounce,” Shorty returned. “An’ that’s always the way — just as we’re workin’ up our get-away, along comes a skirt to complicate everything. We ain’t got no luck. Hey! Listen to that, Smoke!”

Three ancient squaws had halted midway between the bachelors’ camp and the camp of McCan, and the oldest was declaiming in shrill falsetto.

Smoke recognized the names, but not all the words, and Shorty translated with melancholy glee.

"Labiskwee, the daughter of Snass, the Rainmaker, the Great Chief, lights her first maiden's fire to-night. Maka, the daughter of Owits, the Wolf-Runner — "

The recital ran through the names of a dozen maidens, and then the three heralds tottered on their way to make announcement at the next fires.

The bachelors, who had sworn youthful oaths to speak to no maidens, were uninterested in the approaching ceremony, and to show their disdain they made preparations for immediate departure on a mission set them by Snass and upon which they had planned to start the following morning. Not satisfied with the old hunters' estimates of the caribou, Snass had decided that the run was split. The task set the bachelors was to scout to the north and west in quest of the second division of the great herd.

Smoke, troubled by Labiskwee's fire-lighting, announced that he would accompany the bachelors. But first he talked with Shorty and with McCan.

"You be there on the third day, Smoke," Shorty said. "We'll have the outfit an' the dogs."

"But remember," Smoke cautioned, "if there is any slip-up in meeting me, you keep on going and get out to the Yukon. That's flat. If you make it, you can come back for me in the summer. If I get the chance, I'll make it, and come back for you."

McCan, standing by his fire, indicated with his eyes a rugged mountain where the high western range out-jutted on the open country.

"That's the one," he said. "A small stream on the south side. We go up it. On the third day you meet us. We'll pass by on the third day. Anywhere you tap that stream you'll meet us or our trail."

But the chance did not come to Smoke on the third day. The bachelors had changed the direction of their scout, and while Shorty and McCan plodded up the stream with their dogs, Smoke and the bachelors were sixty miles to the northeast picking up the trail of the second caribou herd. Several days later, through a dim twilight of falling snow, they came back to the big camp. A squaw ceased from wailing by a fire and darted up to Smoke. Harsh tongued, with bitter, venomous eyes, she cursed him, waving her arms toward a silent, fur-wrapped form that still lay on the sled which had hauled it in.

What had happened, Smoke could only guess, and as he came to McCan's fire he was prepared for a second cursing. Instead, he saw McCan himself industriously chewing a strip of caribou meat.

"I'm not a fightin' man," he whiningly explained. "But Shorty got away, though they're still after him. He put up a hell of a fight. They'll get him, too. He ain't got a chance. He plugged two bucks that'll get around all right. An' he croaked one square through the chest."

"Yes, I know," Smoke answered. "I just met the widow."

"Old Snass'll be wantin' to see you," McCan added. "Them's his orders. Soon as you come in you was to go to his fire. I ain't squealed. You don't know nothing. Keep that in mind. Shorty went off on his own along with me."

At Snass's fire Smoke found Labiskwee. She met him with eyes that shone with such softness and tenderness as to frighten him.

"I'm glad you did not try to run away," she said. "You see, I — " She hesitated, but her eyes didn't drop. They swam with a light unmistakable. "I lighted my fire, and of course it was for you. It has happened. I like you better than everybody else in the world. Better than my father. Better than a thousand Libashes and Mahkooks. I love. It is very strange. I love as Francesca loved, as Iseult loved. Old Four Eyes spoke true. Indians do not love this way. But my eyes are blue, and I am white. We are white, you and I."

Smoke had never been proposed to in his life, and he was unable to meet the situation. Worse, it was not even a proposal. His acceptance was taken for granted. So thoroughly was it all arranged in Labiskwee's mind, so warm was the light in her eyes, that he was amazed that she did not throw her arms around him and rest her head on his shoulder. Then he realized, despite her candor of love, that she did not know the pretty ways of love. Among the primitive savages such ways did not obtain. She had had no chance to learn.

She prattled on, chanting the happy burden of her love, while he strove to grip himself in the effort, somehow, to wound her with the truth. This, at the very first, was the golden opportunity.

"But, Labiskwee, listen," he began. "Are you sure you learned from Four Eyes all the story of the love of Paolo and Francesca?"

She clasped her hands and laughed with an immense certitude of gladness. "Oh! There is more! I knew there must be more and more of love!

I have thought much since I lighted my fire. I have — ”

And then Snass strode in to the fire through the falling snowflakes, and Smoke’s opportunity was lost.

“Good evening,” Snass burred gruffly. “Your partner has made a mess of it. I am glad you had better sense.”

“You might tell me what’s happened,” Smoke urged.

The flash of white teeth through the stained beard was not pleasant. “Certainly, I’ll tell you. Your partner has killed one of my people. That sniveling shrimp, McCan, deserted at the first shot. He’ll never run away again. But my hunters have got your partner in the mountains, and they’ll get him. He’ll never make the Yukon basin. As for you, from now on you sleep at my fire. And there’ll be no more scouting with the young men. I shall have my eye on you.”

Smoke’s new situation at Snass’s fire was embarrassing. He saw more of Labiskwee than ever. In its sweetness and innocence, the frankness of her love was terrible. Her glances were love glances; every look was a caress. A score of times he nerved himself to tell her of Joy Gastell, and a score of times he discovered that he was a coward. The damnable part of it was that Labiskwee was so delightful. She was good to look upon. Despite the hurt to his self-esteem of every moment spent with her, he pleasured in every such moment. For the first time in his life he was really learning woman, and so clear was Labiskwee’s soul, so appalling in its innocence and ignorance, that he could not misread a line of it. All the pristine goodness of her sex was in her, uncultured by the conventionality of knowledge or the deceit of self-protection. In memory he reread his Schopenhauer and knew beyond all cavil that the sad philosopher was wrong. To know woman, as Smoke came to know Labiskwee, was to know that all woman-haters were sick men.

Labiskwee was wonderful, and yet, beside her face in the flesh burned the vision of the face of Joy Gastell. Joy had control, restraint, all the feminine inhibitions of civilization, yet, by the trick of his fancy and the living preachment of the woman before him, Joy Gastell was stripped to a goodness at par with Labiskwee’s. The one but appreciated the other, and all women of all the world appreciated by what Smoke saw in the soul of Labiskwee at Snass’s fire in the snow-land.

And Smoke learned about himself. He remembered back to all he knew of Joy Gastell, and he knew that he loved her. Yet he delighted in

Labiskwee. And what was this feeling of delight but love? He could demean it by no less a name. Love it was. Love it must be. And he was shocked to the roots of his soul by the discovery of this polygamous strain in his nature. He had heard it argued, in the San Francisco studios, that it was possible for a man to love two women, or even three women, at a time. But he had not believed it. How could he believe it when he had not had the experience? Now it was different. He did truly love two women, and though most of the time he was quite convinced that he loved Joy Gastell more, there were other moments when he felt with equal certainty that he loved Labiskwee more.

"There must be many women in the world," she said one day. "And women like men. Many women must have liked you. Tell me."

He did not reply.

"Tell me," she insisted.

"I have never married," he evaded.

"And there is no one else? No other Iseult out there beyond the mountains?"

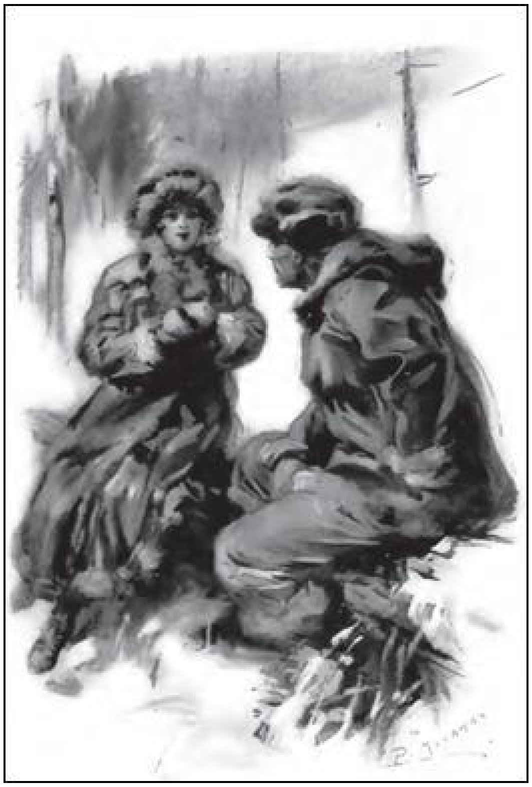

Then it was that Smoke knew himself a coward. He lied. Reluctantly he did it, but he lied. He shook his head with a slow indulgent smile, and in his face was more of fondness than he dreamed as he noted Labiskwee's swift joy-transfiguration.

He excused himself to himself. His reasoning was jesuitical beyond dispute, and yet he was not Spartan enough to strike this child-woman a quivering heart-stroke.

Snass, too, was a perturbing factor in the problem. Little escaped his black eyes, and he spoke significantly.

"No man cares to see his daughter married," he said to Smoke. "At least, no man of imagination. It hurts. The thought of it hurts, I tell you. Just the same, in the natural order of life, Margaret must marry some time."

A pause fell; Smoke caught himself wondering for the thousandth time what Snass's history must be.

"I am a harsh, cruel man," Snass went on. "Yet the law is the law, and I am just. Nay, here with this primitive people, I am the law and the justice. Beyond my will no man goes. Also, I am a father, and all my days I have been cursed with imagination."

Whither his monologue tended, Smoke did not learn, for it was interrupted by a burst of chiding and silvery laughter from Labiskwee's tent, where she played with a new-caught wolf-cub. A spasm of pain twitched Snass's face.

"I can stand it," he muttered grimly. "Margaret must be married, and it is my fortune, and hers, that you are here. I had little hopes of Four Eyes. McCan was so hopeless I turned him over to a squaw who had lighted her fire twenty seasons. If it hadn't been you, it would have been an Indian. Libash might have become the father of my grandchildren."

And then Labiskwee came from her tent to the fire, the wolf-cub in her arms, drawn as by a magnet, to gaze upon the man, in her eyes the love that art had never taught to hide.

* * * * * *

"Listen to me," said McCan. "The spring thaw is here, an' the crust is comin' on the snow. It's the time to travel, exceptin' for the spring blizzards in the mountains. I know them. I would run with no less a man than you."

"But you can't run," Smoke contradicted. "You can keep up with no man. Your backbone is limber as thawed marrow. If I run, I run alone. The world fades, and perhaps I shall never run. Caribou meat is very good, and soon will come summer and the salmon."

Said Snass: “Your partner is dead. My hunters did not kill him. They found the body, frozen in the first of the spring storms in the mountains. No man can escape. When shall we celebrate your marriage?”

And Labiskwee: “I watch you. There is trouble in your eyes, in your face. Oh, I do know all your face. There is a little scar on your neck, just under the ear. When you are happy, the corners of your mouth turn up. When you think sad thoughts they turn down. When you smile there are three and four wrinkles at the corners of your eyes. When you laugh there are six. Sometimes I have almost counted seven. But I cannot count them now. I have never read books. I do not know how to read. But Four Eyes taught me much. My grammar is good. He taught me. And in his own eyes I have seen the trouble of the hunger for the world. He was often hungry for the world. Yet here was good meat, and fish in plenty, and the berries and the roots, and often flour came back for the furs through the Porcupines and the Luskwas. Yet was he hungry for the world. Is the world so good that you, too, are hungry for it? Four Eyes had nothing. But you have me.” She sighed and shook her head. “Four Eyes died still hungry for the world. And if you lived here always would you, too, die hungry for the world? I am afraid I do not know the world. Do you want to run away to the world?”

Smoke could not speak, but by his mouth-corner lines was she convinced.

Minutes of silence passed, in which she visibly struggled, while Smoke cursed himself for the unguessed weakness that enabled him to speak the truth about his hunger for the world while it kept his lips tight on the truth of the existence of the other woman.

Again Labiskwee sighed.

“Very well. I love you more than I fear my father’s anger, and he is more terrible in anger than a mountain storm. You told me what love is. This is the test of love. I shall help you to run away back to the world.”

Smoke awakened softly and without movement. Warm small fingers touched his cheek and slid gently to a pressure on his lips. Fur, with the chill of frost clinging in it, next tingled his skin, and the one word, “Come,” was breathed in his ear. He sat up carefully and listened. The hundreds of wolf-dogs in the camp had lifted their nocturnal song, but under the volume of it, close at hand, he could distinguish the light, regular breathing of Snass.

Labiskwee tugged gently at Smoke's sleeve, and he knew she wished him to follow. He took his moccasins and German socks in his hand and crept out into the snow in his sleeping moccasins. Beyond the glow from the dying embers of the fire, she indicated to him to put on his outer foot-gear, and while he obeyed, she went back under the fly where Snass slept.

Feeling the hands of his watch Smoke found it was one in the morning. Quite warm it was, he decided, not more than ten below zero. Labiskwee rejoined him and led him on through the dark runways of the sleeping camp. Walk lightly as they could, the frost crunched crisply under their moccasins, but the sound was drowned by the clamor of the dogs, too deep in their howling to snarl at the man and woman who passed.

"Now we can talk," she said, when the last fire had been left half a mile behind.

And now, in the starlight, facing him, Smoke noted for the first time that her arms were burdened, and, on feeling, discovered she carried his snowshoes, a rifle, two belts of ammunition, and his sleeping-robes.

"I have everything fixed," she said, with a happy little laugh. "I have been two days making the cache. There is meat, even flour, matches, and skees, which go best on the hard crust and, when they break through, the webs will hold up longer. Oh, I do know snow-travel, and we shall go fast, my lover."

Smoke checked his speech. That she had been arranging his escape was surprise enough, but that she had planned to go with him was more than he was prepared for. Unable to think immediate action, he gently, one by one, took her burdens from her. He put his arm around her and pressed her close, and still he could not think what to do.

"God is good," she whispered. "He sent me a lover."

Yet Smoke was brave enough not to suggest his going alone. And before he spoke again he saw all his memory of the bright world and the sun-lands reel and fade.

"We will go back, Labiskwee," he said. "You will be my wife, and we shall live always with the Caribou People."

"No! no!" She shook her head; and her body, in the circle of his arm, resented his proposal. "I know. I have thought much. The hunger for the world would come upon you, and in the long nights it would devour your heart. Four Eyes died of hunger for the world. So would you die. All men from the world hunger for it. And I will not have you die. We will go on across the snow mountains on the south traverse."

"Dear, listen," he urged. "We must go back."

She pressed her mitten against his lips to prevent further speech. "You love me. Say that you love me."

"I do love you, Labiskwee. You are my wonderful sweetheart."

Again the mitten was a caressing obstacle to utterance.

"We shall go on to the cache," she said with decision. "It is three miles from here. Come."

He held back, and her pull on his arm could not move him. Almost was he tempted to tell her of the other woman beyond the south traverse.

"It would be a great wrong to you to go back," she said. "I — I am only a wild girl, and I am afraid of the world; but I am more afraid for you. You see, it is as you told me. I love you more than anybody else in the world. I love you more than myself. The Indian language is not a good language. The English language is not a good language. The thoughts in my heart for you, as bright and as many as the stars — there is no language for them. How can I tell you them? They are there — see?"

As she spoke she slipped the mitten from his hand and thrust the hand inside the warmth of her parka until it rested against her heart. Tightly and steadily she pressed his hand in its position. And in the long silence he felt the beat, beat of her heart, and knew that every beat of it was love. And then, slowly, almost imperceptibly, still holding his hand, her body began to incline away from his and toward the direction of the cache. Nor could he resist. It was as if he were drawn by her heart itself that so nearly lay in the hollow of his hand.

So firm was the crust, frozen during the night after the previous day's surface-thaw, that they slid along rapidly on their skees.

"Just here, in the trees, is the cache," Labiskwee told Smoke.

The next moment she caught his arm with a startle of surprise. The flames of a small fire were dancing merrily, and crouched by the fire was McCan. Labiskwee muttered something in Indian, and so lashlike was the sound that Smoke remembered she had been called "cheetah" by Four Eyes.

"I was minded you'd run without me," McCan explained when they came up, his small peering eyes glimmering with cunning. "So I kept an eye on the girl, an' when I seen her caching skees an' grub, I was on. I've brought my own skees an' webs an' grub. The fire? Sure, an' it was no danger. The camp’s asleep an’ snorin’, an’ the waitin’ was cold. Will we be startin’ now?”

Labiskwee looked swift consternation at Smoke, as swiftly achieved a judgement on the matter, and spoke. And in the speaking she showed, child-woman though she was in love, the quick decisiveness of one who in other affairs of life would be no clinging vine.

“McCan, you are a dog,” she hissed, and her eyes were savage with anger. “I know it is in your heart to raise the camp if we do not take you. Very well. We must take you. But you know my father. I am like my father. You will do your share of the work. You will obey. And if you play one dirty trick, it would be better for you if you had never run.”

McCan looked up at her, his small pig-eyes hating and cringing, while in her eyes, turned to Smoke, the anger melted into luminous softness.

“Is it right, what I have said?” she queried.

Daylight found them in the belt of foothills that lay between the rolling country and the mountains. McCan suggested breakfast, but they held on. Not until the afternoon thaw softened the crust and prevented travel would they eat.

The foothills quickly grew rugged, and the stream, up whose frozen bed they journeyed, began to thread deeper and deeper canyons. The signs of spring were less frequent, though in one canyon they found foaming bits of open water, and twice they came upon clumps of dwarf willow upon which were the first hints of swelling buds.

Labiskwee explained to Smoke her knowledge of the country and the way she planned to baffle pursuit. There were but two ways out, one west, the other south. Snass would immediately dispatch parties of young men to guard the two trails. But there was another way south. True, it did no more than penetrate half-way into the high mountains, then, twisting to the west and crossing three divides, it joined the regular trail. When the young men found no traces on the regular trail they would turn back in the belief that the escape had been made by the west traverse, never dreaming that the runaways had ventured the harder and longer way around.

Glancing back at McCan, in the rear, Labiskwee spoke in an undertone to Smoke. “He is eating,” she said. “It is not good.”

Smoke looked. The Irishman was secretly munching caribou suet from the pocketful he carried.

“No eating between meals, McCan,” he commanded. “There’s no game in the country ahead, and the grub will have to be whacked in equal rations from the start. The only way you can travel with us is by playing fair.”

By one o’clock the crust had thawed so that the skees broke through, and before two o’clock the web-shoes were breaking through. Camp was made and the first meal eaten. Smoke took stock of the food. McCan’s supply was a disappointment. So many silver fox-skins had he stuffed in the bottom of the meat bag that there was little space left for meat.

“Sure an’ I didn’t know there was so many,” he explained. “I done it in the dark. But they’re worth good money. An’ with all this ammunition we’ll be gettin’ game a-plenty.”

“The wolves will eat you a-plenty,” was Smoke’s hopeless comment, while Labiskwee’s eyes flashed their anger.

Enough food for a month, with careful husbanding and appetites that never blunted their edge, was Smoke’s and Labiskwee’s judgment. Smoke apportioned the weight and bulk of the packs, yielding in the end to Labiskwee’s insistence that she, too, should carry a pack.

Next day the stream shallowed out in a wide mountain valley, and they were already breaking through the crust on the flats when they gained the harder surface of the slope of the divide.

“Ten minutes later and we wouldn’t have got across the flats,” Smoke said, when they paused for breath on the bald crest of the summit. “We must be a thousand feet higher here.”

But Labiskwee, without speaking, pointed down to an open flat among the trees. In the midst of it, scattered abreast, were five dark specks that scarcely moved.

“The young men,” said Labiskwee.

“They are wallowing to their hips,” Smoke said. “They will never gain the hard footing this day. We have hours the start of them. Come on, McCan. Buck up. We don’t eat till we can’t travel.”

McCan groaned, but there was no caribou suet in his pocket, and he doggedly brought up the rear.

In the higher valley in which they now found themselves, the crust did not break till three in the afternoon, at which time they managed to gain the shadow of a mountain where the crust was already freezing again. Once only they paused to get out McCan’s confiscated suet, which they ate as they walked. The meat was frozen solid, and could be eaten only after thawing over a fire. But the suet crumbled in their mouths and eased the palpitating faintness in their stomachs.

Black darkness, with an overcast sky, came on after a long twilight at nine o'clock, when they made camp in a clump of dwarf spruce. McCan was whining and helpless. The day's march had been exhausting, but in addition, despite his nine years' experience in the arctic, he had been eating snow and was in agony with his parched and burning mouth. He crouched by the fire and groaned, while they made the camp.

Labiskwee was tireless, and Smoke could not but marvel at the life in her body, at the endurance of mind and muscle. Nor was her cheerfulness forced. She had ever a laugh or a smile for him, and her hand lingered in caress whenever it chanced to touch his. Yet, always, when she looked at McCan, her face went hard and pitiless and her eyes flashed frostily.

In the night came wind and snow, and through a day of blizzard they fought their way blindly, missing the turn of the way that led up a small stream and crossed a divide to the west. For two more days they wandered, crossing other and wrong divides, and in those two days they dropped spring behind and climbed up into the abode of winter.

"The young men have lost our trail, an' what's to stop us restin' a day?" McCan begged.

But no rest was accorded. Smoke and Labiskwee knew their danger. They were lost in the high mountains, and they had seen no game nor signs of game. Day after day they struggled on through an iron configuration of landscape that compelled them to labyrinthine canyons and valleys that led rarely to the west. Once in such a canyon, they could only follow it, no matter where it led, for the cold peaks and higher ranges on either side were unscalable and unendurable. The terrible toil and the cold ate up energy, yet they cut down the size of the ration they permitted themselves.

One night Smoke was awakened by a sound of struggling. Distinctly he heard a gasping and strangling from where McCan slept. Kicking the fire into flame, by its light he saw Labiskwee, her hands at the Irishman's throat and forcing from his mouth a chunk of partly chewed meat. Even as Smoke saw this, her hand went to her hip and flashed with the sheath-knife in it.

"Labiskwee!" Smoke cried, and his voice was peremptory.

The hand hesitated.

"Don't," he said, coming to her side.

She was shaking with anger, but the hand, after hesitating a moment longer, descended reluctantly to the sheath. As if fearing she could not restrain herself, she crossed to the fire and threw on more wood. McCan sat up, whimpering and snarling, between fright and rage spluttering an inarticulate explanation.

“Where did you get it?” Smoke demanded.

“Feel around his body,” Labiskwee said.

It was the first word she had spoken, and her voice quivered with the anger she could not suppress.

McCan strove to struggle, but Smoke gripped him cruelly and searched him, drawing forth from under his armpit, where it had been thawed by the heat of his body, a strip of caribou meat. A quick exclamation from Labiskwee drew Smoke’s attention. She had sprung to McCan’s pack and was opening it. Instead of meat, out poured moss, spruce-needles, chips — all the light refuse that had taken the place of the meat and given the pack its due proportion minus its weight.

Again Labiskwee’s hand went to her hip, and she flew at the culprit only to be caught in Smoke’s arms, where she surrendered herself, sobbing with the futility of her rage.

“Oh, lover, it is not the food,” she panted. “It is you, your life. The dog! He is eating you, he is eating you!”

“We will yet live,” Smoke comforted her. “Hereafter he shall carry the flour. He can’t eat that raw, and if he does I’ll kill him myself, for he will be eating your life as well as mine.” He held her closer. “Sweetheart, killing is men’s work. Women do not kill.”

“You would not love me if I killed the dog?” she questioned in surprise.

“Not so much,” Smoke temporized.

She sighed with resignation. “Very well,” she said. “I shall not kill him.”

The pursuit by the young men was relentless. By miracles of luck, as well as by deduction from the topography of the way the runaways must take, the young men picked up the blizzard-blinded trail and clung to it. When the snow flew, Smoke and Labiskwee took the most improbable courses, turning east when the better way opened south or west, rejecting a low divide to climb a higher. Being lost, it did not matter. Yet they could not throw the young men off. Sometimes they gained days, but always the young men appeared again. After a storm, when all trace was lost, they would cast out like a pack of hounds, and he who caught the later trace made smoke signals to call his comrades on.

Smoke lost count of time, of days and nights and storms and camps. Through a vast mad phantasmagoria of suffering and toil he and Labiskwee struggled on, with McCan somehow stumbling along in the rear, babbling of San Francisco, his everlasting dream. Great peaks, pitiless and serene in the chill blue, towered about them. They fled down black canyons with walls so precipitous that the rock frowned naked, or wallowed across glacial valleys where frozen lakes lay far beneath their feet. And one night, between two storms, a distant volcano glared the sky. They never saw it again, and wondered whether it had been a dream.

Crusts were covered with yards of new snow, that crusted and were snow-covered again. There were places, in canyon- and pocket-drifts, where they crossed snow hundreds of feet deep, and they crossed tiny glaciers, in drafty rifts, wind-scurried and bare of any snow. They crept like silent wraiths across the faces of impending avalanches, or roused from exhausted sleep to the thunder of them. They made fireless camps above timber-line, thawing their meat-rations with the heat of their bodies ere they could eat. And through it all Labiskwee remained Labiskwee. Her cheer never vanished, save when she looked at McCan, and the greatest stupor of fatigue and cold never stilled the eloquence of her love for Smoke.

Like a cat she watched the apportionment of the meager ration, and Smoke could see that she grudged McCan every munch of his jaws. Once, she distributed the ration. The first Smoke knew was a wild harangue of protest from McCan. Not to him alone, but to herself, had she given a smaller portion than to Smoke. After that, Smoke divided the meat himself. Caught in a small avalanche one morning after a night of snow, and swept a hundred yards down the mountain, they emerged half-stifled and unhurt, but McCan emerged without his pack in which was all the flour. A second and larger snow-slide buried it beyond hope of recovery. After that, though the disaster had been through no fault of his, Labiskwee never looked at McCan, and Smoke knew it was because she dared not.

It was a morning, stark still, clear blue above, with white sun-dazzle on the snow. The way led up a long, wide slope of crust. They moved like weary ghosts in a dead world. No wind stirred in the stagnant, frigid calm. Far peaks, a hundred miles away, studding the backbone of the Rockies up and down, were as distinct as if no more than five miles away.

“Something is going to happen,” Labiskwee whispered. “Don’t you feel it? — here, there, everywhere? Everything is strange.”

“I feel a chill that is not of cold,” Smoke answered. “Nor is it of hunger.”

“It is in your head, your heart,” she agreed excitedly. “That is the way I feel it.”

“It is not of my senses,” Smoke diagnosed. “I sense something, from without, that is tingling me with ice; it is a chill of my nerves.”

A quarter of an hour later they paused for breath.

“I can no longer see the far peaks,” Smoke said.

“The air is getting thick and heavy,” said Labiskwee. “It is hard to breathe.”

“There be three suns,” McCan muttered hoarsely, reeling as he clung to his staff for support.

There was a mock sun on either side of the real sun.

“There are five,” said Labiskwee; and as they looked, new suns formed and flashed before their eyes.

“By Heaven, the sky is filled with suns beyant all countin’,” McCan cried in fear.

Which was true, for look where they would, half the circle of the sky dazzled and blazed with new suns forming.

McCan yelped sharply with surprise and pain. “I’m stung!” he cried out, then yelped again.

Then Labiskwee cried out, and Smoke felt a prickling stab on his cheek so cold that it burned like acid. It reminded him of swimming in the salt sea and being stung by the poisonous filaments of Portuguese men-of-war. The sensations were so similar that he automatically brushed his cheek to rid it of the stinging substance that was not there.

And then a shot rang out, strangely muffled. Down the slope were the young men, standing on their skees, and one after another opened fire.

“Spread out!” Smoke commanded. “And climb for it! We’re almost to the top. They’re a quarter of a mile below, and that means a couple of miles the start of them on the down-going of the other side.”

With faces prickling and stinging from invisible atmospheric stabs, the three scattered widely on the snow surface and toiled upward. The muffled reports of the rifles were weird to their ears.

“Thank the Lord,” Smoke panted to Labiskwee, “that four of them are muskets, and only one a Winchester. Besides, all these suns spoil their aim.

They are fooled. They haven’t come within a hundred feet of us.”

“It shows my father’s temper,” she said. “They have orders to kill.”

“How strange you talk,” Smoke said. “Your voice sounds far away.”

“Cover your mouth,” Labiskwee cried suddenly. “And do not talk. I know what it is. Cover your mouth with your sleeve, thus, and do not talk.”

McCan fell first, and struggled wearily to his feet. And after that all fell repeatedly ere they reached the summit. Their wills exceeded their muscles, they knew not why, save that their bodies were oppressed by a numbness and heaviness of movement. From the crest, looking back, they saw the young men stumbling and falling on the upward climb.

“They will never get here,” Labiskwee said. “It is the white death. I know it, though I have never seen it. I have heard the old men talk. Soon will come a mist — unlike any mist or fog or frost-smoke you ever saw. Few have seen it and lived.”

McCan gasped and strangled.

“Keep your mouth covered,” Smoke commanded.

A pervasive flashing of light from all about them drew Smoke’s eyes upward to the many suns. They were shimmering and veiling. The air was filled with microscopic fire-glints. The near peaks were being blotted out by the weird mist; the young men, resolutely struggling nearer, were being engulfed in it. McCan had sunk down, squatting, on his skees, his mouth and eyes covered by his arms.

“Come on, make a start,” Smoke ordered.

“I can’t move,” McCan moaned.

His doubled body set up a swaying motion. Smoke went toward him slowly, scarcely able to will movement through the lethargy that weighed his flesh. He noted that his brain was clear. It was only the body that was afflicted.

“Let him be,” Labiskwee muttered harshly.

But Smoke persisted, dragging the Irishman to his feet and facing him down the long slope they must go. Then he started him with a shove, and McCan, braking and steering with his staff, shot into the sheen of diamond-dust and disappeared.

Smoke looked at Labiskwee, who smiled, though it was all she could do to keep from sinking down. He nodded for her to push off, but she came near to him, and side by side, a dozen feet apart, they flew down through the stinging thickness of cold fire.

Brake as he would, Smoke's heavier body carried him past her, and he dashed on alone, a long way, at tremendous speed that did not slacken till he came out on a level, crusted plateau. Here he braked till Labiskwee overtook him, and they went on, again side by side, with diminishing speed which finally ceased. The lethargy had grown more pronounced. The wildest effort of will could move them no more than at a snail's pace. They passed McCan, again crouched down on his skees, and Smoke roused him with his staff in passing.

"Now we must stop," Labiskwee whispered painfully, "or we will die. We must cover up — so the old men said."

She did not delay to untie knots, but began cutting her pack-lashings. Smoke cut his, and, with a last look at the fiery death-mist and the mockery of suns, they covered themselves over with the sleeping-furs and crouched in each other's arms. They felt a body stumble over them and fall, then heard feeble whimpering and blaspheming drowned in a violent coughing fit, and knew it was McCan who huddled against them as he wrapped his robe about him.

Their own lung-strangling began, and they were racked and torn by a dry cough, spasmodic and uncontrollable. Smoke noted his temperature rising in a fever, and Labiskwee suffered similarly. Hour after hour the coughing spells increased in frequency and violence, and not till late afternoon was the worst reached. After that the mend came slowly, and between spells they dozed in exhaustion.

McCan, however, steadily coughed worse, and from his groans and howls they knew he was in delirium. Once, Smoke made as if to throw the robes back, but Labiskwee clung to him tightly.

"No," she begged. "It is death to uncover now. Bury your face here, against my parka, and breathe gently and do no talking — see, the way I am doing."

They dozed on through the darkness, though the decreasing fits of coughing of one invariably aroused the other. It was after midnight, Smoke judged, when McCan coughed his last. After that he emitted low and bestial moanings that never ceased.

Smoke awoke with lips touching his lips. He lay partly in Labiskwee's arms, his head pillowed on her breast. Her voice was cheerful and usual. The muffled sound of it had vanished.

"It is day," she said, lifting the edge of the robes a trifle. "See, O my lover. It is day; we have lived through; and we no longer cough. Let us look at the world, though I could stay here thus forever and always. This last hour has been sweet. I have been awake, and I have been loving you."

"I do not hear McCan," Smoke said. "And what has become of the young men that they have not found us?"

He threw back the robes and saw a normal and solitary sun in the sky. A gentle breeze was blowing, crisp with frost and hinting of warmer days to come. All the world was natural again. McCan lay on his back, his unwashed face, swarthy from camp-smoke, frozen hard as marble. The sight did not affect Labiskwee.

"Look!" she cried. "A snow bird! It is a good sign."

There was no evidence of the young men. Either they had died on the other side of the divide or they had turned back.

There was so little food that they dared not eat a tithe of what they needed, nor a hundredth part of what they desired, and in the days that followed, wandering through the lone mountain-land, the sharp sting of life grew blunted and the wandering merged half into a dream. Smoke would become abruptly conscious, to find himself staring at the never-ending hated snow-peaks, his senseless babble still ringing in his ears. And the next he would know, after seeming centuries, was that again he was roused to the sound of his own maunderings. Labiskwee, too, was light-headed most of the time. In the main their efforts were unreasoned, automatic. And ever they worked toward the west, and ever they were baffled and thrust north or south by snow-peaks and impassable ranges.

"There is no way south," Labiskwee said. "The old men know. West, only west, is the way."

The young men no longer pursued, but famine crowded on the trail.

Came a day when it turned cold, and a thick snow, that was not snow but frost crystals of the size of grains of sand, began to fall. All day and night it fell, and for three days and nights it continued to fall. It was impossible to travel until it crusted under the spring sun, so they lay in their furs and rested, and ate less because they rested. So small was the ration they permitted that it gave no appeasement to the hunger pang that was much of the stomach, but more of the brain. And Labiskwee, delirious, maddened by the taste of her tiny portion, sobbing and mumbling, yelping sharp little animal cries of joy, fell upon the next day's portion and crammed it into her mouth.

Then it was given to Smoke to see a wonderful thing. The food between her teeth roused her to consciousness. She spat it out, and with a great anger struck herself with her clenched fist on the offending mouth.

It was given to Smoke to see many wonderful things in the days yet to come. After the long snow-fall came on a great wind that drove the dry and tiny frost-particles as sand is driven in a sand-storm. All through the night the sand-frost drove by, and in the full light of a clear and wind-blown day, Smoke looked with swimming eyes and reeling brain upon what he took to be the vision of a dream. All about towered great peaks and small, lone sentinels and groups and councils of mighty Titans. And from the tip of every peak, swaying, undulating, flaring out broadly against the azure sky, streamed gigantic snow-banners, miles in length, milky and nebulous, ever waving lights and shadows and flashing silver from the sun.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," Smoke chanted, as he gazed upon these dusts of snow wind-driven into sky-scarves of shimmering silken light.

And still he gazed, and still the bannered peaks did not vanish, and still he considered that he dreamed, until Labiskwee sat up among the furs.

"I dream, Labiskwee," he said. "Look. Do you, too, dream within my dream?"

"It is no dream," she replied. "This have the old men told me. And after this will blow the warm winds, and we shall live and win west."

Smoke shot a snow-bird, and they divided it. Once, in a valley where willows budded standing in the snow, he shot a snowshoe rabbit. Another time he got a lean, white weasel. This much of meat they encountered, and no more, though, once, half-mile high and veering toward the west and the Yukon, they saw a wild-duck wedge drive by.

"It is summer in the lower valleys," said Labiskwee. "Soon it will be summer here."

Labiskwee's face had grown thin, but the bright, large eyes were brighter and larger, and when she looked at him she was transfigured by a wild, unearthly beauty.

The days lengthened, and the snow began to sink. Each day the crust thawed, each night it froze again; and they were afoot early and late, being compelled to camp and rest during the midday hours of thaw when the crust could not bear their weight. When Smoke grew snow-blind, Labiskwee towed him on a thong tied to her waist. And when she was so blinded, she towed behind a thong to his waist. And starving, in a deeper dream, they struggled on through an awakening land bare of any life save their own.

Exhausted as he was, Smoke grew almost to fear sleep, so fearful and bitter were the visions of that mad, twilight land. Always were they of food, and always was the food, at his lips, snatched away by the malign deviser of dreams. He gave dinners to his comrades of the old San Francisco days, himself, with whetting appetite and jealous eye, directing the arrangements, decorating the table with crimson-leafed runners of the autumn grape. The guests were dilatory, and while he greeted them and all sparkled with their latest cleverness, he was frantic with desire for the table. He stole to it, unobserved, and clutched a handful of black ripe olives, and turned to meet still another guest. And others surrounded him, and the laugh and play of wit went on, while all the time, hidden in his closed hand, was this madness of ripe olives.

He gave many such dinners, all with the same empty ending. He attended Gargantuan feasts, where multitudes fed on innumerable bullocks roasted whole, prying them out of smoldering pits and with sharp knives slicing great strips of meat from the steaming carcasses. He stood, with mouth agape, beneath long rows of turkeys which white-aproned shopmen sold. And everybody bought save Smoke, mouth still agape, chained by a leadenness of movement to the pavement. A boy again, he sat with spoon poised high above great bowls of bread and milk. He pursued shy heifers through upland pastures and centuries of torment in vain effort to steal from them their milk, and in noisome dungeons he fought with rats for scraps and refuse. There was no food that was not a madness to him, and he wandered through vast stables, where fat horses stood in mile-long rows of stalls, and sought but never found the bran-bins from which they fed.

Once, only, he dreamed to advantage. Famishing, shipwrecked or marooned, he fought with the big Pacific surf for rock-clinging mussels, and carried them up the sands to the dry flotsam of the spring tides. Of this he built a fire, and among the coals he laid his precious trove. He watched the steam jet forth and the locked shells pop apart, exposing the salmon-colored meat. Cooked to a turn — he knew it; and this time there was no intruding presence to whisk the meal away. At last — so he dreamed within the dream — the dream would come true. This time he would eat. Yet in his certitude he doubted, and he was steeled for the inevitable shift of vision until the salmon-colored meat, hot and savory, was in his mouth. His teeth closed upon it. He ate! The miracle had happened! The shock aroused him. He awoke in the dark, lying on his back, and heard himself mumbling little piggish squeals and grunts of joy. His jaws were moving, and between his teeth meat was crunching. He did not move, and soon small fingers felt about his lips, and between them was inserted a tiny sliver of meat. And in that he would eat no more, rather than that he was angry, Labiskwee cried and in his arms sobbed herself to sleep. But he lay on awake, marveling at the love and the wonder of woman.

The time came when the last food was gone. The high peaks receded, the divides became lower, and the way opened promisingly to the west. But their reserves of strength were gone, and, without food, the time quickly followed when they lay down at night and in the morning did not arise. Smoke weakly gained his feet, collapsed, and on hands and knees crawled about the building of a fire. But try as she would Labiskwee sank back each time in an extremity of weakness. And Smoke sank down beside her, a wan sneer on his face for the automatism that had made him struggle for an unneeded fire. There was nothing to cook, and the day was warm. A gentle breeze sighed in the spruce-trees, and from everywhere, under the disappearing snow, came the trickling music of unseen streamlets.

Labiskwee lay in a stupor, her breathing so imperceptible that often Smoke thought her dead. In the afternoon the chattering of a squirrel aroused him. Dragging the heavy rifle, he wallowed through the crust that had become slush. He crept on hands and knees, or stood upright and fell forward in the direction of the squirrel that chattered its wrath and fled slowly and tantalizingly before him. He had not the strength for a quick shot, and the squirrel was never still. At times Smoke sprawled in the wet snow-melt and cried out of weakness. Other times the flame of his life flickered, and blackness smote him. How long he lay in the last faint he did not know, but he came to, shivering in the chill of evening, his wet clothing frozen to the re-forming crust. The squirrel was gone, and after a weary struggle he won back to the side of Labiskwee. So profound was his weakness that he lay like a dead man through the night, nor did dreams disturb him.

The sun was in the sky, the same squirrel chattering through the trees, when Labiskwee's hand on Smoke's cheek awakened him.

"Put your hand on my heart, lover," she said, her voice clear but faint and very far away. "My heart is my love, and you hold it in your hand."

A long time seemed to go by, ere she spoke again.

"Remember always, there is no way south. That is well known to the Caribou People. West — that is the way — and you are almost there — and you will make it."

And Smoke drowsed in the numbness that is near to death, until once more she aroused him.

"Put your lips on mine," she said. "I will die so."

"We will die together, sweetheart," was his answer.

"No." A feeble flutter of her hand checked him, and so thin was her voice that scarcely did he hear it, yet did he hear all of it. Her hand fumbled and groped in the hood of her parka, and she drew forth a pouch that she placed in his hand. "And now your lips, my lover. Your lips on my lips, and your hand on my heart."

And in that long kiss darkness came upon him again, and when again he was conscious he knew that he was alone and he knew that he was to die. He was wearily glad that he was to die.

He found his hand resting on the pouch. With an inward smile at the curiosity that made him pull the draw-string, he opened it. Out poured a tiny flood of food. There was no particle of it that he did not recognize, all stolen by Labiskwee from Labiskwee — bread-fragments saved far back in the days ere McCan lost the flour; strips and strings of caribou-meat, partly gnawed; crumbles of suet; the hind-leg of the snowshoe rabbit, untouched; the hind-leg and part of the fore-leg of the white weasel; the wing dented still by her reluctant teeth, and the leg of the snow-bird — pitiful remnants, tragic renunciations, crucifixions of life, morsels stolen from her terrible hunger by her incredible love.

With maniacal laughter Smoke flung it all out on the hardening snow-crust and went back into the blackness.

He dreamed. The Yukon ran dry. In its bed, among muddy pools of water and ice-scoured rocks, he wandered, picking up fat nugget-gold. The weight of it grew to be a burden to him, till he discovered that it was good to eat. And greedily he ate. After all, of what worth was gold that men should prize it so, save that it was good to eat?

He awoke to another sun. His brain was strangely clear. No longer did his eyesight blur. The familiar palpitation that had vexed him through all his frame was gone. The juices of his body seemed to sing, as if the spring had entered in. Blessed well-being had come to him. He turned to awaken Labiskwee, and saw, and remembered. He looked for the food flung out on the snow. It was gone. And he knew that in delirium and dream it had been the Yukon nugget-gold. In delirium and dream he had taken heart of life from the life sacrifice of Labiskwee, who had put her heart in his hand and opened his eyes to woman and wonder.

He was surprised at the ease of his movements, astounded that he was able to drag her fur-wrapped body to the exposed thawed gravel-bank, which he undermined with the ax and caved upon her.

Three days, with no further food, he fought west. In the mid third day he fell beneath a lone spruce beside a wide stream that ran open and which he knew must be the Klondike. Ere blackness conquered him, he unlashed his pack, said good-by to the bright world, and rolled himself in the robes.

Chirping, sleepy noises awoke him. The long twilight was on. Above him, among the spruce boughs, were ptarmigan. Hunger bit him into instant action, though the action was infinitely slow. Five minutes passed before he was able to get his rifle to his shoulder, and a second five minutes passed ere he dared, lying on his back and aiming straight upward, to pull the trigger. It was a clean miss. No bird fell, but no bird flew. They ruffled and rustled stupidly and drowsily. His shoulder pained him. A second shot was spoiled by the involuntary wince he made as he pulled trigger. Somewhere, in the last three days, though he had no recollection how, he must have fallen and injured it.

The ptarmigan had not flown. He doubled and redoubled the robe that had covered him, and humped it in the hollow between his right arm and his side. Resting the butt of the rifle on the fur, he fired again, and a bird fell. He clutched it greedily and found that he had shot most of the meat out of it. The large-caliber bullet had left little else than a mess of mangled feathers. Still the ptarmigan did not fly, and he decided that it was heads or nothing. He fired only at heads. He reloaded and reloaded the magazine. He missed; he hit; and the stupid ptarmigan, that were loath to fly, fell upon him in a rain of food — lives disrupted that his life might feed and live. There had been nine of them, and in the end he clipped the head of the ninth, and lay and laughed and wept he knew not why.

The first he ate raw. Then he rested and slept, while his life assimilated the life of it. In the darkness he awoke, hungry, with strength to build a fire.

And until early dawn he cooked and ate, crunching the bones to powder between his long-idle teeth. He slept, awoke in the darkness of another night, and slept again to another sun.

He noted with surprise that the fire crackled with fresh fuel and that a blackened coffee-pot steamed on the edge of the coals. Beside the fire, within arm’s length, sat Shorty, smoking a brown-paper cigarette and intently watching him. Smoke’s lips moved, but a throat paralysis seemed to come upon him, while his chest was suffused with the menace of tears. He reached out his hand for the cigarette and drew the smoke deep into his lungs again and again.

“I have not smoked for a long time,” he said at last, in a low calm voice. “For a very long time.”

“Nor eaten, from your looks,” Shorty added gruffly.

Smoke nodded and waved his hand at the ptarmigan feathers that lay all about.

“Not until recently,” he returned. “Do you know, I’d like a cup of coffee. It will taste strange. Also flapjacks and a strip of bacon.”

“And beans?” Shorty tempted.

“They would taste heavenly. I find I am quite hungry again.”

While the one cooked and the other ate, they told briefly what had happened to them in the days since their separation.

“The Klondike was breakin’ up,” Shorty concluded his recital, “an’ we just had to wait for open water. Two polin’ boats, six other men — you know ‘em all, an’ crackerjacks — an’ all kinds of outfit. An’ we’ve sure been a-comin’ — polin’, linin’ up, and portagin’. But the falls’ll stick ‘em a solid week. That’s where I left ‘em a-cuttin’ a trail over the tops of the bluffs for the boats. I just had a sure natural hunch to keep a-comin’. So I fills a pack with grub an’ starts. I knew I’d find you a-driftin’ an’ all in.”

Smoke nodded, and put forth his hand in a silent grip. “Well, let’s get started,” he said.

“Started hell!” Shorty exploded. “We stay right here an’ rest you up an’ feed you up for a couple of days.”

Smoke shook his head.

“If you could just see yourself,” Shorty protested.

And what he saw was not nice. Smoke’s face, wherever the skin showed, was black and purple and scabbed from repeated frost-bite. The cheeks were fallen in, so that, despite the covering of beard, the upper rows of teeth ridged the shrunken flesh. Across the forehead and about the deep-sunk eyes, the skin was stretched drum-tight, while the scraggly beard, that should have been golden, was singed by fire and filthy with camp-smoke.

"Better pack up," Smoke said. "I'm going on."

"But you're feeble as a kid baby. You can't hike. What's the rush?"

"Shorty, I am going after the biggest thing in the Klondike, and I can't wait. That's all. Start packing. It's the biggest thing in the world. It's bigger than lakes of gold and mountains of gold, bigger than adventure, and meat-eating, and bear-killing."

Shorty sat with bulging eyes. "In the name of the Lord, what is it?" he queried huskily. "Or are you just simple loco?"

"No, I'm all right. Perhaps a fellow has to stop eating in order to see things. At any rate, I have seen things I never dreamed were in the world. I know what a woman is, — now."

Shorty's mouth opened, and about the lips and in the light of the eyes was the whimsical advertisement of the sneer forthcoming.

"Don't, please," Smoke said gently. "You don't know. I do."

Shorty gulped and changed his thought. "Huh! I don't need no hunch to guess HER name. The rest of 'em has gone up to the drainin' of Surprise Lake, but Joy Gastell allowed she wouldn't go. She's stickin' around Dawson, waitin' to see if I come back with you. An' she sure swears, if I don't, she'll sell her holdin's an' hire a army of gun-fighters, an' go into the Caribou Country an' knock the everlastin' stuffin' outa old Snass an' his whole gang. An' if you'll hold your horses a couple of shakes, I reckon I'll get packed up an' ready to hike along with you."

THE SCARLET PLAGUE

This a post-apocalyptic novel was first published in *London Magazine* in 1912. The story takes place in 2073, sixty years after an uncontrollable epidemic known as the Red Death, which has depopulated the planet. James Howard Smith is one of the few survivors of the pre-plague era left alive in the San Francisco area, who seeks to impart the value of knowledge and wisdom to his grandsons.

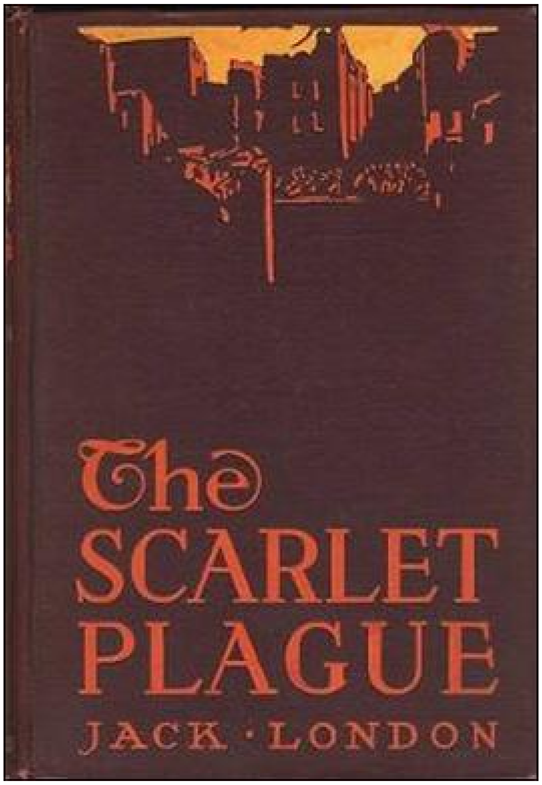
The
SCARLET
PLAGUE
JACK · LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

I
II
III
IV
V
VI

THE way led along upon what had once been the embankment of a railroad. But no train had run upon it for many years. The forest on either side swelled up the slopes of the embankment and crested across it in a green wave of trees and bushes. The trail was as narrow as a man's body, and was no more than a wild-animal runway. Occasionally, a piece of rusty iron, showing through the forest-mould, advertised that the rail and the ties still remained. In one place, a ten-inch tree, bursting through at a connection, had lifted the end of a rail clearly into view. The tie had evidently followed the rail, held to it by the spike long enough for its bed to be filled with gravel and rotten leaves, so that now the crumbling, rotten timber thrust itself up at a curious slant. Old as the road was, it was manifest that it had been of the mono-rail type.

An old man and a boy travelled along this runway. They moved slowly, for the old man was very old, a touch of palsy made his movements tremulous, and he leaned heavily upon his staff. A rude skull-cap of goat-skin protected his head from the sun. From beneath this fell a scant fringe of stained and dirty-white hair. A visor, ingeniously made from a large leaf, shielded his eyes, and from under this he peered at the way of his feet on the trail. His beard, which should have been snow-white but which showed the same weather-wear and camp-stain as his hair, fell nearly to his waist in a great tangled mass. About his chest and shoulders hung a single, mangy garment of goat-skin. His arms and legs, withered and skinny, betokened extreme age, as well as did their sunburn and scars and scratches betoken long years of exposure to the elements.

The boy, who led the way, checking the eagerness of his muscles to the slow progress of the elder, likewise wore a single garment — a ragged-edged piece of bear-skin, with a hole in the middle through which he had thrust his head. He could not have been more than twelve years old. Tucked coquettishly over one ear was the freshly severed tail of a pig. In one hand he carried a medium-sized bow and an arrow.

On his back was a quiverful of arrows. From a sheath hanging about his neck on a thong, projected the battered handle of a hunting knife. He was as brown as a berry, and walked softly, with almost a catlike tread. In marked contrast with his sunburned skin were his eyes — blue, deep blue, but keen and sharp as a pair of gimlets. They seemed to bore into aft about him in a way that was habitual. As he went along he smelled things, as well, his distended, quivering nostrils carrying to his brain an endless series of messages from the outside world. Also, his hearing was acute, and had been so trained that it operated automatically. Without conscious effort, he heard all the slight sounds in the apparent quiet — heard, and differentiated, and classified these sounds — whether they were of the wind rustling the leaves, of the humming of bees and gnats, of the distant rumble of the sea that drifted to him only in lulls, or of the gopher, just under his foot, shoving a pouchful of earth into the entrance of his hole.

Suddenly he became alertly tense. Sound, sight, and odor had given him a simultaneous warning. His hand went back to the old man, touching him, and the pair stood still. Ahead, at one side of the top of the embankment, arose a crackling sound, and the boy’s gaze was fixed on the tops of the agitated bushes. Then a large bear, a grizzly, crashed into view, and likewise stopped abruptly, at sight of the humans. He did not like them, and growled querulously. Slowly the boy fitted the arrow to the bow, and slowly he pulled the bowstring taut. But he never removed his eyes from the bear.

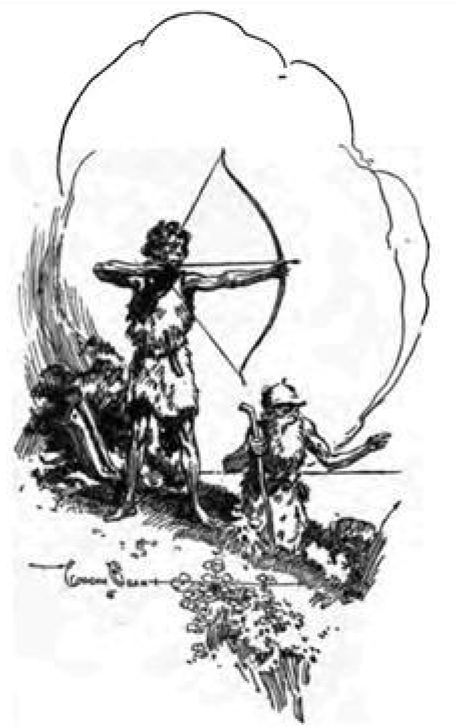

Slowly he Pulled the Bowstring Taut

The old man peered from under his green leaf at the danger, and stood as quietly as the boy. For a few seconds this mutual scrutinizing went on; then, the bear betraying a growing irritability, the boy, with a movement of his head, indicated that the old man must step aside from the trail and go down the embankment. The boy followed, going backward, still holding the bow taut and ready. They waited till a crashing among the bushes from the opposite side of the embankment told them the bear had gone on. The boy grinned as he led back to the trail.

"A big un, Granser," he chuckled.

The old man shook his head.

"They get thicker every day," he complained in a thin, undependable falsetto. "Who'd have thought I'd live to see the time when a man would be afraid of his life on the way to the Cliff House. When I was a boy, Edwin, men and women and little babies used to come out here from San Francisco by tens of thousands on a nice day. And there weren't any bears then. No, sir. They used to pay money to look at them in cages, they were that rare."

"What is money, Granser?"

Before the old man could answer, the boy recollected and triumphantly shoved his hand into a pouch under his bear-skin and pulled forth a battered and tarnished silver dollar. The old man's eyes glistened, as he held the coin close to them.

"I can't see," he muttered. "You look and see if you can make out the date, Edwin."

The boy laughed.

"You're a great Granser," he cried delightedly, "always making believe them little marks mean something."

The old man manifested an accustomed chagrin as he brought the coin back again close to his own eyes.

"2012," he shrilled, and then fell to cackling grotesquely. "That was the year Morgan the Fifth was appointed President of the United States by the Board of Magnates. It must have been one of the last coins minted, for the Scarlet Death came in 2013. Lord! Lord! — think of it! Sixty years ago, and I am the only person alive to-day that lived in those times. Where did you find it, Edwin?"

The boy, who had been regarding him with the tolerant curiousness one accords to the prattlings of the feeble-minded, answered promptly.

“I got it off of Hoo-Hoo. He found it when we was herdin’ goats down near San José last spring. Hoo-Hoo said it was *money*. Ain’t you hungry, Granser?”

The ancient caught his staff in a tighter grip and urged along the trail, his old eyes shining greedily.

“I hope Har-Lip ‘s found a crab... or two,” he mumbled. “They’re good eating, crabs, mighty good eating when you’ve no more teeth and you’ve got grandsons that love their old grandsire and make a point of catching crabs for him. When I was a boy — ”

But Edwin, suddenly stopped by what he saw, was drawing the bowstring on a fitted arrow. He had paused on the brink of a crevasse in the embankment. An ancient culvert had here washed out, and the stream, no longer confined, had cut a passage through the fill. On the opposite side, the end of a rail projected and overhung. It showed rustily through the creeping vines which overran it. Beyond, crouching by a bush, a rabbit looked across at him in trembling hesitancy. Fully fifty feet was the distance, but the arrow flashed true; and the transfixed rabbit, crying out in sudden fright and hurt, struggled painfully away into the brush. The boy himself was a flash of brown skin and flying fur as he bounded down the steep wall of the gap and up the other side. His lean muscles were springs of steel that released into graceful and efficient action. A hundred feet beyond, in a tangle of bushes, he overtook the wounded creature, knocked its head on a convenient tree-trunk, and turned it over to Granser to carry.

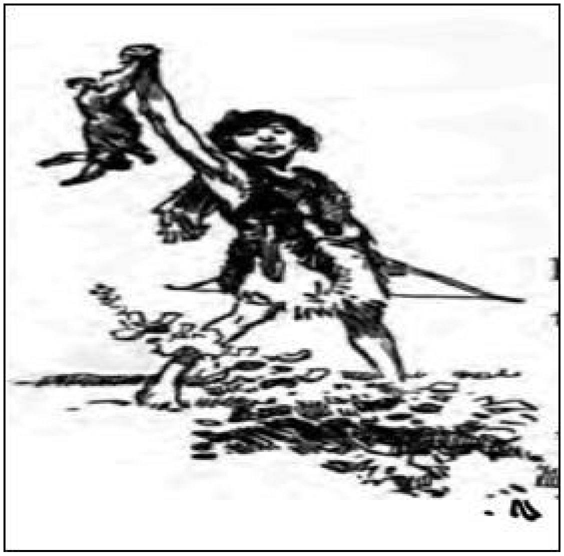

“Rabbit is good, very good,” the ancient quavered, “but when it comes to a toothsome delicacy I prefer crab. When I was a boy — ”

“Why do you say so much that ain’t got no sense?” Edwin impatiently interrupted the other’s threatened garrulousness.

The boy did not exactly utter these words, but something that remotely resembled them and that was more guttural and explosive and economical of qualifying phrases. His speech showed distant kinship with that of the old man, and the latter’s speech was approximately an English that had gone through a bath of corrupt usage.

“What I want to know,” Edwin continued, “is why you call crab ‘toothsome delicacy’? Crab is crab, ain’t it? No one I never heard calls it such funny things.”

The old man sighed but did not answer, and they moved on in silence. The surf grew suddenly louder, as they emerged from the forest upon a stretch of sand dunes bordering the sea. A few goats were browsing among the sandy hillocks, and a skin-clad boy, aided by a wolfish-looking dog that was only faintly reminiscent of a collie, was watching them. Mingled with the roar of the surf was a continuous, deep-throated barking or bellowing, which came from a cluster of jagged rocks a hundred yards out from shore. Here huge sea-lions hauled themselves up to lie in the sun or battle with one another. In the immediate foreground arose the smoke of a fire, tended by a third savage-looking boy. Crouched near him were several wolfish dogs similar to the one that guarded the goats.

The old man accelerated his pace, sniffing eagerly as he neared the fire.

“Mussels!” he muttered ecstatically. “Mussels! And ain’t that a crab, Hoo-Hoo? Ain’t that a crab? My, my, you boys are good to your old grandsire.”

Hoo-Hoo, who was apparently of the same age as Edwin, grinned.

“All you want, Granser. I got four.”

The old man’s palsied eagerness was pitiful. Sitting down in the sand as quickly as his stiff limbs would let him, he poked a large rock-mussel from out of the coals. The heat had forced its shells apart, and the meat, salmon-colored, was thoroughly cooked. Between thumb and forefinger, in trembling haste, he caught the morsel and carried it to his mouth. But it was too hot, and the next moment was violently ejected. The old man spluttered with the pain, and tears ran out of his eyes and down his cheeks.

The boys were true savages, possessing only the cruel humor of the savage. To them the incident was excruciatingly funny, and they burst into loud laughter. Hoo-Hoo danced up and down, while Edwin rolled gleefully on the ground. The boy with the goats came running to join in the fun.

"Set 'em to cool, Edwin, set 'em to cool," the old man besought, in the midst of his grief, making no attempt to wipe away the tears that still flowed from his eyes. "And cool a crab, Edwin, too. You know your grandsire likes crabs."

From the coals arose a great sizzling, which proceeded from the many mussels bursting open their shells and exuding their moisture. They were large shellfish, running from three to six inches in length. The boys raked them out with sticks and placed them on a large piece of driftwood to cool.

"When I was a boy, we did not laugh at our elders; we respected them."

The boys took no notice, and Granser continued to babble an incoherent flow of complaint and censure. But this time he was more careful, and did not burn his mouth. All began to eat, using nothing but their hands and making loud mouth-noises and lip-smackings. The third boy, who was called Hare-Lip, slyly deposited a pinch of sand on a mussel the ancient was carrying to his mouth; and when the grit of it bit into the old fellow's mucous membrane and gums, the laughter was again uproarious. He was unaware that a joke had been played on him, and spluttered and spat until Edwin, relenting, gave him a gourd of fresh water with which to wash out his mouth.

"Where's them crabs, Hoo-Hoo?" Edwin demanded. "Granser's set upon having a snack."

Again Granser's eyes burned with greediness as a large crab was handed to him. It was a shell with legs and all complete, but the meat had long since departed. With shaky fingers and babblings of anticipation, the old man broke off a leg and found it filled with emptiness.

"The crabs, Hoo-Hoo?" he wailed. "The crabs?"

"I was fooling Granser. They ain't no crabs! I never found one."

The boys were overwhelmed with delight at sight of the tears of senile disappointment that dribbled down the old man's cheeks. Then, unnoticed, Hoo-Hoo replaced the empty shell with a fresh-cooked crab. Already dismembered, from the cracked legs the white meat sent forth a small cloud of savory steam. This attracted the old man's nostrils, and he looked down in amazement.

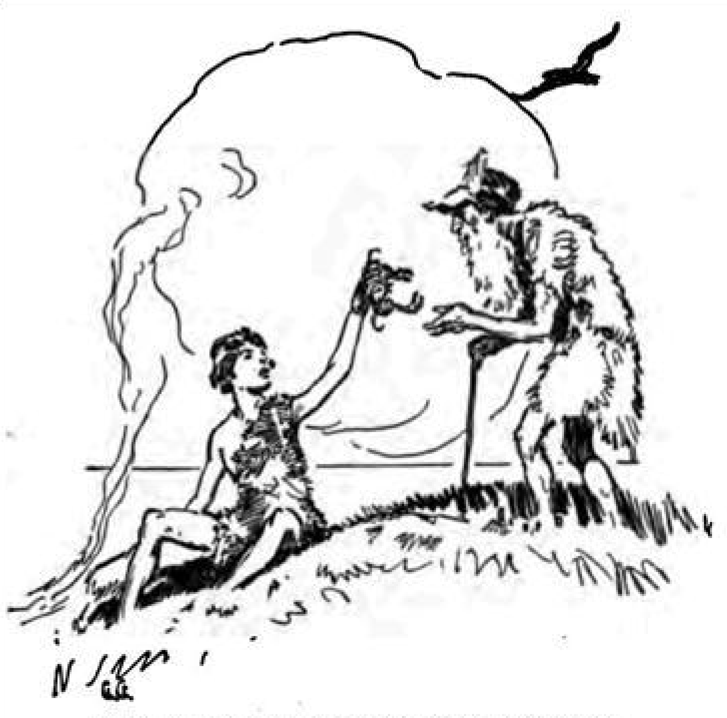

THIS ATTRACTED THE OLD MAN'S NOSTRILS

The change of his mood to one of joy was immediate. He snuffled and muttered and mumbled, making almost a croon of delight, as he began to eat. Of this the boys took little notice, for it was an accustomed spectacle. Nor did they notice his occasional exclamations and utterances of phrases which meant nothing to them, as, for instance, when he smacked his lips and champed his gums while muttering: “Mayonnaise! Just think — mayonnaise! And it’s sixty years since the last was ever made! Two generations and never a smell of it! Why, in those days it was served in every restaurant with crab.”

When he could eat no more, the old man sighed, wiped his hands on his naked legs, and gazed out over the sea. With the content of a full stomach, he waxed reminiscent.

“To think of it! I’ve seen this beach alive with men, women, and children on a pleasant Sunday. And there weren’t any bears to eat them up, either. And right up there on the cliff was a big restaurant where you could get anything you wanted to eat. Four million people lived in San Francisco then. And now, in the whole city and county there aren’t forty all told. And out there on the sea were ships and ships always to be seen, going in for the Golden Gate or coming out. And airships in the air — dirigibles and flying machines. They could travel two hundred miles an hour. The mail contracts with the New York and San Francisco Limited demanded that for the minimum. There was a chap, a Frenchman, I forget his name, who succeeded in making three hundred; but the thing was risky, too risky for conservative persons. But he was on the right clew, and he would have managed it if it hadn't been for the Great Plague. When I was a boy, there were men alive who remembered the coming of the first aeroplanes, and now I have lived to see the last of them, and that sixty years ago."

The old man babbled on, unheeded by the boys, who were long accustomed to his garrulousness, and whose vocabularies, besides, lacked the greater portion of the words he used. It was noticeable that in these rambling soliloquies his English seemed to recrudesce into better construction and phraseology. But when he talked directly with the boys it lapsed, largely, into their own uncouth and simpler forms.

"But there weren't many crabs in those days," the old man wandered on. "They were fished out, and they were great delicacies. The open season was only a month long, too. And now crabs are accessible the whole year around. Think of it — catching all the crabs you want, any time you want, in the surf of the Cliff House beach!"

A sudden commotion among the goats brought the boys to their feet. The dogs about the fire rushed to join their snarling fellow who guarded the goats, while the goats themselves stampeded in the direction of their human protectors. A half dozen forms, lean and gray, glided about on the sand hillocks and faced the bristling dogs. Edwin arched an arrow that fell short. But Hare-Lip, with a sling such as David carried into battle against Goliath, hurled a stone through the air that whistled from the speed of its flight. It fell squarely among the wolves and caused them to slink away toward the dark depths of the eucalyptus forest.

The boys laughed and lay down again in the sand, while Granser sighed ponderously. He had eaten too much, and, with hands clasped on his paunch, the fingers interlaced, he resumed his maunderings.

"'The fleeting systems lapse like foam,'" he mumbled what was evidently a quotation. "That's it — foam, and fleeting. All man's toil upon the planet was just so much foam. He domesticated the serviceable animals, destroyed the hostile ones, and cleared the land of its wild vegetation. And then he passed, and the flood of primordial life rolled back again, sweeping his handiwork away — the weeds and the forest inundated his fields, the beasts of prey swept over his flocks, and now there are wolves on the Cliff House beach." He was appalled by the thought. "Where four million people disported themselves, the wild wolves roam to-day, and the savage progeny of our loins, with prehistoric weapons, defend themselves against the fanged despoilers. Think of it! And all because of the Scarlet Death — "

The adjective had caught Hare-Lip's ear.

"He's always saying that," he said to Edwin. "What is *scarlet?*"

"'The scarlet of the maples can shake me like the cry of bugles going by,'" the old man quoted.

"It's red," Edwin answered the question. "And you don't know it because you come from the Chauffeur Tribe. They never did know nothing, none of them. Scarlet is red — I know that."

"Red is red, ain't it?" Hare-Lip grumbled. "Then what's the good of gettin' cocky and calling it scarlet?"

"Granser, what for do you always say so much what nobody knows?" he asked. "Scarlet ain't anything, but red is red. Why don't you say red, then?"

"Red is not the right word," was the reply. "The plague was scarlet. The whole face and body turned scarlet in an hour's time. Don't I know? Didn't I see enough of it? And I am telling you it was scarlet because — well, because it *was* scarlet. There is no other word for it."

"Red is good enough for me," Hare-Lip muttered obstinately. "My dad calls red red, and he ought to know. He says everybody died of the Red Death."

"Your dad is a common fellow, descended from a common fellow," Granser retorted heatedly. "Don't I know the beginnings of the Chauffeurs? Your grandsire was a chauffeur, a servant, and without education. He worked for other persons. But your grandmother was of good stock, only the children did not take after her. Don't I remember when I first met them, catching fish at Lake Temescal?"

"What is *education?*" Edwin asked.

"Calling red scarlet," Hare-Lip sneered, then returned to the attack on Granser. "My dad told me, an' he got it from his dad afore he croaked, that your wife was a Santa Rosan, an' that she was sure no account. He said she was a *hash-slinger* before the Red Death, though I don't know what a *hash-slinger* is. You can tell me, Edwin."

But Edwin shook his head in token of ignorance.

"It is true, she was a waitress," Granser acknowledged. "But she was a good woman, and your mother was her daughter. Women were very scarce in the days after the Plague. She was the only wife I could find, even if she was a *hash-slinger*, as your father calls it. But it is not nice to talk about our progenitors that way."

"Dad says that the wife of the first Chauffeur was a *lady* — "

"What's a *lady?*" Hoo-Hoo demanded.

"A *lady* 's a Chauffeur squaw," was the quick reply of Hare-Lip.

"The first Chauffeur was Bill, a common fellow, as I said before," the old man expounded; "but his wife was a lady, a great lady. Before the Scarlet Death she was the wife of Van Worden. He was President of the Board of Industrial Magnates, and was one of the dozen men who ruled America. He was worth one billion, eight hundred millions of dollars — coins like you have there in your pouch, Edwin. And then came the Scarlet Death, and his wife became the wife of Bill, the first Chauffeur. He used to beat her, too. I have seen it myself."

Hoo-Hoo, lying on his stomach and idly digging his toes in the sand, cried out and investigated, first, his toe-nail, and next, the small hole he had dug. The other two boys joined him, excavating the sand rapidly with their hands till there lay three skeletons exposed. Two were of adults, the third being that of a part-grown child. The old man hudged along on the ground and peered at the find.

"Plague victims," he announced. "That's the way they died everywhere in the last days. This must have been a family, running away from the contagion and perishing here on the Cliff House beach. They — what are you doing, Edwin?"

This question was asked in sudden dismay, as Edwin, using the back of his hunting knife, began to knock out the teeth from the jaws of one of the skulls.

"Going to string 'em," was the response.

The three boys were now hard at it; and quite a knocking and hammering arose, in which Granser babbled on unnoticed.

"You are true savages. Already has begun the custom of wearing human teeth. In another generation you will be perforating your noses and ears and wearing ornaments of bone and shell. I know. The human race is doomed to sink back farther and farther into the primitive night ere again it begins its bloody climb upward to civilization. When we increase and feel the lack of room, we will proceed to kill one another. And then I suppose you will wear human scalp-locks at your waist, as well — as you, Edwin, who are the gentlest of my grandsons, have already begun with that vile pigtail. Throw it away, Edwin, boy; throw it away."

"What a gabble the old geezer makes," Hare-Lip remarked, when, the teeth all extracted, they began an attempt at equal division.

They were very quick and abrupt in their actions, and their speech, in moments of hot discussion over the allotment of the choicer teeth, was truly a gabble. They spoke in monosyllables and short jerky sentences that was more a gibberish than a language. And yet, through it ran hints of grammatical construction, and appeared vestiges of the conjugation of some superior culture. Even the speech of Granser was so corrupt that were it put down literally it would be almost so much nonsense to the reader. This, however, was when he talked with the boys.

When he got into the full swing of babbling to himself, it slowly purged itself into pure English. The sentences grew longer and were enunciated with a rhythm and ease that was reminiscent of the lecture platform.

“Tell us about the Red Death, Granser,” Hare-Lip demanded, when the teeth affair had been satisfactorily concluded.

“The Scarlet Death,” Edwin corrected.

“An’ don’t work all that funny lingo on us,” Hare-Lip went on. “Talk sensible, Granser, like a Santa Rosan ought to talk. Other Santa Rosans don’t talk like you.”

II

THE old man showed pleasure in being thus called upon. He cleared his throat and began.

“Twenty or thirty years ago my story was in great demand. But in these days nobody seems interested — ”

“There you go!” Hare-Lip cried hotly. “Cut out the funny stuff and talk sensible. What’s *interested?* You talk like a baby that don’t know how.”

“Let him alone,” Edwin urged, “or he’ll get mad and won’t talk at all. Skip the funny places. We’ll catch on to some of what he tells us.”

“Let her go, Granser,” Hoo-Hoo encouraged; for the old man was already maundering about the disrespect for elders and the reversion to cruelty of all humans that fell from high culture to primitive conditions.

The tale began.

“There were very many people in the world in those days. San Francisco alone held four millions — ”

“What is millions?” Edwin interrupted.

Granser looked at him kindly.

“I know you cannot count beyond ten, so I will tell you. Hold up your two hands. On both of them you have altogether ten fingers and thumbs. Very well. I now take this grain of sand — you hold it, Hoo-Hoo.” He dropped the grain of sand into the lad’s palm and went on. “Now that grain of sand stands for the ten fingers of Edwin. I add another grain. That’s ten more fingers. And I add another, and another, and another, until I have added as many grains as Edwin has fingers and thumbs. That makes what I call one hundred. Remember that word — one hundred. Now I put this pebble in Hare-Lip’s hand. It stands for ten grains of sand, or ten tens of fingers, or one hundred fingers. I put in ten pebbles. They stand for a thousand fingers. I take a mussel-shell, and it stands for ten pebbles, or one hundred grains of sand, or one thousand fingers....” And so on, laboriously, and with much reiteration, he strove to build up in their minds a crude conception of numbers. As the quantities increased, he had the boys holding different magnitudes in each of their hands. For still higher sums, he laid the symbols on the log of driftwood; and for symbols he was hard put, being compelled to use the teeth from the skulls for millions, and the crab-shells for billions. It was here that he stopped, for the boys were showing signs of becoming tired.

"There were four million people in San Francisco — four teeth."

The boys' eyes ranged along from the teeth and from hand to hand, down through the pebbles and sand-grains to Edwin's fingers. And back again they ranged along the ascending series in the effort to grasp such inconceivable numbers.

"That was a lot of folks, Granser," Edwin at last hazarded.

"Like sand on the beach here, like sand on the beach, each grain of sand a man, or woman, or child. Yes, my boy, all those people lived right here in San Francisco. And at one time or another all those people came out on this very beach — more people than there are grains of sand. More — more — more. And San Francisco was a noble city. And across the bay — where we camped last year, even more people lived, clear from Point Richmond, on the level ground and on the hills, all the way around to San Leandro — one great city of seven million people. — Seven teeth... there, that's it, seven millions."

Again the boys' eyes ranged up and down from Edwin's fingers to the teeth on the log.

"The world was full of people. The census of 2010 gave eight billions for the whole world — eight crab-shells, yes, eight billions. It was not like to-day. Mankind knew a great deal more about getting food. And the more food there was, the more people there were. In the year 1800, there were one hundred and seventy millions in Europe alone. One hundred years later — a grain of sand, Hoo-Hoo — one hundred years later, at 1900, there were five hundred millions in Europe — five grains of sand, Hoo-Hoo, and this one tooth. This shows how easy was the getting of food, and how men increased. And in the year 2000 there were fifteen hundred millions in Europe. And it was the same all over the rest of the world. Eight crab-shells there, yes, eight billion people were alive on the earth when the Scarlet Death began.

"I was a young man when the Plague came — twenty-seven years old; and I lived on the other side of San Francisco Bay, in Berkeley. You remember those great stone houses, Edwin, when we came down the hills from Contra Costa? That was where I lived, in those stone houses. I was a professor of English literature."

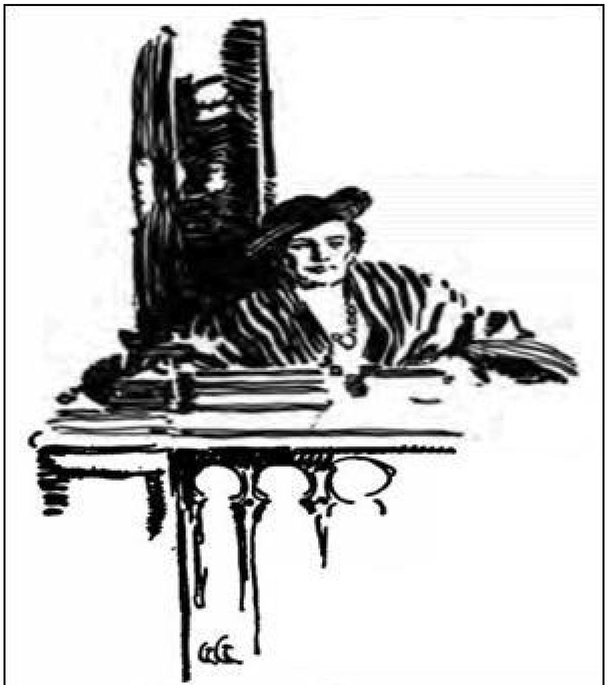

"I WAS A PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE."

Much of this was over the heads of the boys, but they strove to comprehend dimly this tale of the past.

"What was them stone houses for?" Hare-Lip queried.

"You remember when your dad taught you to swim?" The boy nodded. "Well, in the University of California — that is the name we had for the houses — we taught young men and women how to think, just as I have taught you now, by sand and pebbles and shells, to know how many people lived in those days. There was very much to teach. The young men and women we taught were called students. We had large rooms in which we taught. I talked to them, forty or fifty at a time, just as I am talking to you now. I told them about the books other men had written before their time, and even, sometimes, in their time — "

"Was that all you did? — just talk, talk, talk?" Hoo-Hoo demanded. "Who hunted your meat for you? and milked the goats? and caught the fish?"

"A sensible question, Hoo-Hoo, a sensible question. As I have told you, in those days food-getting was easy. We were very wise. A few men got the food for many men. The other men did other things. As you say, I talked. I talked all the time, and for this food was given me — much food, fine food, beautiful food, food that I have not tasted in sixty years and shall never taste again. I sometimes think the most wonderful achievement of our tremendous civilization was food — its inconceivable abundance, its infinite variety, its marvellous delicacy. O my grandsons, life was life in those days, when we had such wonderful things to eat."

This was beyond the boys, and they let it slip by, words and thoughts, as a mere senile wandering in the narrative.

"Our food-getters were called *freemen*. This was a joke. We of the ruling classes owned all the land, all the machines, everything. These food-getters were our slaves. We took almost all the food they got, and left them a little so that they might eat, and work, and get us more food — "

"I'd have gone into the forest and got food for myself," Hare-Lip announced; "and if any man tried to take it away from me, I'd have killed him."

The old man laughed.

"Did I not tell you that we of the ruling class owned all the land, all the forest, everything? Any food-getter who would not get food for us, him we punished or compelled to starve to death. And very few did that. They preferred to get food for us, and make clothes for us, and prepare and administer to us a thousand — a mussel-shell, Hoo-Hoo — a thousand satisfactions and delights. And I was Professor Smith in those days — Professor James Howard Smith. And my lecture courses were very popular — that is, very many of the young men and women liked to hear me talk about the books other men had written.

"And I was very happy, and I had beautiful things to eat. And my hands were soft, because I did no work with them, and my body was clean all over and dressed in the softest garments —

"He surveyed his mangy goat-skin with disgust.

"We did not wear such things in those days. Even the slaves had better garments. And we were most clean. We washed our faces and hands often every day. You boys never wash unless you fall into the water or go swimming."

"Neither do you Granzer," Hoo-Hoo retorted.

"I know, I know, I am a filthy old man, but times have changed. Nobody washes these days, there are no conveniences. It is sixty years since I have seen a piece of soap.

“You do not know what soap is, and I shall not tell you, for I am telling the story of the Scarlet Death. You know what sickness is. We called it a disease. Very many of the diseases came from what we called germs. Remember that word — germs. A germ is a very small thing. It is like a woodtick, such as you find on the dogs in the spring of the year when they run in the forest. Only the germ is very small. It is so small that you cannot see it — ”

Hoo-Hoo began to laugh.

“You’re a queer un, Granser, talking about things you can’t see. If you can’t see ‘em, how do you know they are? That’s what I want to know. How do you know anything you can’t see?”

“A good question, a very good question, Hoo-Hoo. But we did see — some of them. We had what we called microscopes and ultramicroscopes, and we put them to our eyes and looked through them, so that we saw things larger than they really were, and many things we could not see without the microscopes at all. Our best ultramicroscopes could make a germ look forty thousand times larger. A mussel-shell is a thousand fingers like Edwin’s. Take forty mussel-shells, and by as many times larger was the germ when we looked at it through a microscope. And after that, we had other ways, by using what we called moving pictures, of making the forty-thousand-times germ many, many thousand times larger still. And thus we saw all these things which our eyes of themselves could not see. Take a grain of sand. Break it into ten pieces. Take one piece and break it into ten. Break one of those pieces into ten, and one of those into ten, and one of those into ten, and one of those into ten, and do it all day, and maybe, by sunset, you will have a piece as small as one of the germs." The boys were openly incredulous. Hare-Lip sniffed and sneered and Hoo-Hoo snickered, until Edwin nudged them to be silent.

"The woodtick sucks the blood of the dog, but the germ, being so very small, goes right into the blood of the body, and there it has many children. In those days there would be as many as a billion — a crab-shell, please — as many as that crab-shell in one man's body. We called germs micro-organisms. When a few million, or a billion, of them were in a man, in all the blood of a man, he was sick. These germs were a disease. There were many different kinds of them — more different kinds than there are grains of sand on this beach. We knew only a few of the kinds. The micro-organic world was an invisible world, a world we could not see, and we knew very little about it. Yet we did know something. There was the *bacillus anthracis*; there was the *micrococcus*; there was the *Bacterium termo*, and the *Bacterium lactis* — that's what turns the goat milk sour even to this day, Hare-Lip; and there were *Schizomycetes* without end. And there were many others...."

Here the old man launched into a disquisition on germs and their natures, using words and phrases of such extraordinary length and meaninglessness, that the boys grinned at one another and looked out over the deserted ocean till they forgot the old man was babbling on.

"But the Scarlet Death, Granser," Edwin at last suggested.

Granser recollected himself, and with a start tore himself away from the rostrum of the lecture-hall, where, to another world audience, he had been expounding the latest theory, sixty years gone, of germs and germ-diseases.

"Yes, yes, Edwin; I had forgotten. Sometimes the memory of the past is very strong upon me, and I forget that I am a dirty old man, clad in goat-skin, wandering with my savage grandsons who are goatherds in the primeval wilderness. 'The fleeting systems lapse like foam,' and so lapsed our glorious, colossal civilization. I am Granser, a tired old man. I belong to the tribe of Santa Rosans. I married into that tribe. My sons and daughters married into the Chauffeurs, the Sacramen-tos, and the Palo-Altos. You, Hare-Lip, are of the Chauffeurs. You, Edwin, are of the Sacramentos. And you, Hoo-Hoo, are of the Palo-Altos. Your tribe takes its name from a town that was near the seat of another great institution of learning. It was called Stanford University. Yes, I remember now. It is perfectly clear. I was telling you of the Scarlet Death. Where was I in my story?"

“You was telling about germs, the things you can’t see but which make men sick,” Edwin prompted.

“Yes, that’s where I was. A man did not notice at first when only a few of these germs got into his body. But each germ broke in half and became two germs, and they kept doing this very rapidly so that in a short time there were many millions of them in the body. Then the man was sick. He had a disease, and the disease was named after the kind of a germ that was in him. It might be measles, it might be influenza, it might be yellow fever; it might be any of thousands and thousands of kinds of diseases.

“Now this is the strange thing about these germs. There were always new ones coming to live in men’s bodies. Long and long and long ago, when there were only a few men in the world, there were few diseases. But as men increased and lived closely together in great cities and civilizations, new diseases arose, new kinds of germs entered their bodies. Thus were countless millions and billions of human beings killed. And the more thickly men packed together, the more terrible were the new diseases that came to be. Long before my time, in the middle ages, there was the Black Plague that swept across Europe. It swept across Europe many times. There was tuberculosis, that entered into men wherever they were thickly packed. A hundred years before my time there was the bubonic plague. And in Africa was the sleeping sickness. The bacteriologists fought all these sicknesses and destroyed them, just as you boys fight the wolves away from your goats, or squash the mosquitoes that light on you. The bacteriologists — ”

“But, Granser, what is a what-you-call-it?” Edwin interrupted.

“You, Edwin, are a goatherd. Your task is to watch the goats. You know a great deal about goats. A bacteriologist watches germs. That’s his task, and he knows a great deal about them. So, as I was saying, the bacteriologists fought with the germs and destroyed them — sometimes. There was leprosy, a horrible disease. A hundred years before I was born, the bacteriologists discovered the germ of leprosy. They knew all about it. They made pictures of it. I have seen those pictures. But they never found a way to kill it. But in 1984, there was the Pantoblast Plague, a disease that broke out in a country called Brazil and that killed millions of people. But the bacteriologists found it out, and found the way to kill it, so that the Pantoblast Plague went no farther. They made what they called a serum, which they put into a man’s body and which killed the pantoblast germs without killing the man. And in 1910, there was Pellagra, and also the hookworm. These were easily killed by the bacteriologists. But in 1947 there arose a new disease that had never been seen before. It got into the bodies of babies of only ten months old or less, and it made them unable to move their hands and feet, or to eat, or anything; and the bacteriologists were eleven years in discovering how to kill that particular germ and save the babies.

"In spite of all these diseases, and of all the new ones that continued to arise, there were more and more men in the world. This was because it was easy to get food. The easier it was to get food, the more men there were; the more men there were, the more thickly were they packed together on the earth; and the more thickly they were packed, the more new kinds of germs became diseases. There were warnings. Soldervetzsky, as early as 1929, told the bacteriologists that they had no guaranty against some new disease, a thousand times more deadly than any they knew, arising and killing by the hundreds of millions and even by the billion. You see, the micro-organic world remained a mystery to the end. They knew there was such a world, and that from time to time armies of new germs emerged from it to kill men.

"And that was all they knew about it. For all they knew, in that invisible micro-organic world there might be as many different kinds of germs as there are grains of sand on this beach. And also, in that same invisible world it might well be that new kinds of germs came to be. It might be there that life originated — the 'abysmal fecundity,' Soldervetzsky called it, applying the words of other men who had written before him...."

It was at this point that Hare-Lip rose to his feet, an expression of huge contempt on his face.

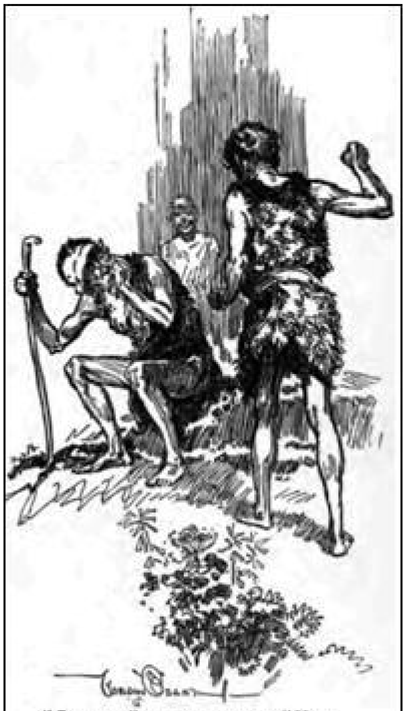

“Granser,” he announced, “You make me Sick with your Gabble.”

“Granser,” he announced, “you make me sick with your gabble. Why don’t you tell about the Red Death? If you ain’t going to, say so, an’ we’ll start back for camp.”

The old man looked at him and silently began to cry. The weak tears of age rolled down his cheeks and all the feebleness of his eighty-seven years showed in his grief-stricken countenance.

“Sit down,” Edwin counselled soothingly. “Granser’s all right. He’s just gettin’ to the Scarlet Death, ain’t you, Granser? He’s just goin’ to tell us about it right now. Sit down, Hare-Lip. Go ahead, Granser.”

III

THE old man wiped the tears away on his grimy knuckles and took up the tale in a tremulous, piping voice that soon strengthened as he got the swing of the narrative.

“It was in the summer of 2013 that the Plague came. I was twenty-seven years old, and well do I remember it. Wireless despatches — ”

Hare-Lip spat loudly his disgust, and Granser hastened to make amends.

“We talked through the air in those days, thousands and thousands of miles. And the word came of a strange disease that had broken out in New York. There were seventeen millions of people living then in that noblest city of America. Nobody thought anything about the news. It was only a small thing. There had been only a few deaths. It seemed, though, that they had died very quickly, and that one of the first signs of the disease was the turning red of the face and all the body. Within twenty-four hours came the report of the first case in Chicago. And on the same day, it was made public that London, the greatest city in the world, next to Chicago, had been secretly fighting the plague for two weeks and censoring the news despatches — that is, not permitting the word to go forth to the rest of the world that London had the plague.

“It looked serious, but we in California, like everywhere else, were not alarmed. We were sure that the bacteriologists would find a way to overcome this new germ, just as they had overcome other germs in the past. But the trouble was the astonishing quickness with which this germ destroyed human beings, and the fact that it inevitably killed any human body it entered. No one ever recovered. There was the old Asiatic cholera, when you might eat dinner with a well man in the evening, and the next morning, if you got up early enough, you would see him being hauled by your window in the death-cart. But this new plague was quicker than that — much quicker.

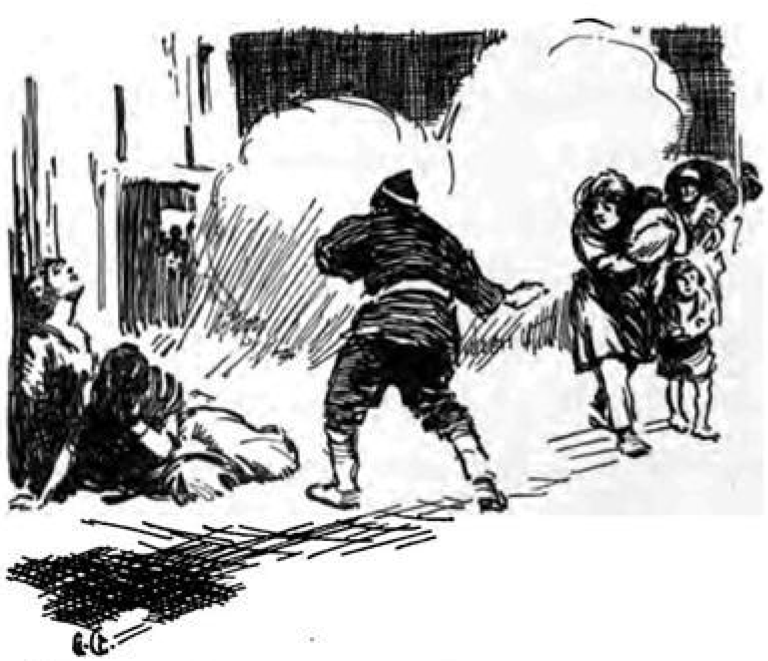

"BUT THIS NEW PLAGUE WAS QUICKER THAN THAT—MUCH QUICKER."

"From the moment of the first signs of it, a man would be dead in an hour. Some lasted for several hours. Many died within ten or fifteen minutes of the appearance of the first signs.

"The heart began to beat faster and the heat of the body to increase. Then came the scarlet rash, spreading like wildfire over the face and body. Most persons never noticed the increase in heat and heart-beat, and the first they knew was when the scarlet rash came out. Usually, they had convulsions at the time of the appearance of the rash. But these convulsions did not last long and were not very severe. If one lived through them, he became perfectly quiet, and only did he feel a numbness swiftly creeping up his body from the feet. The heels became numb first, then the legs, and hips, and when the numbness reached as high as his heart he died. They did not rave or sleep. Their minds always remained cool and calm up to the moment their heart numbed and stopped. And another strange thing was the rapidity of decomposition. No sooner was a person dead than the body seemed to fall to pieces, to fly apart, to melt away even as you looked at it. That was one of the reasons the plague spread so rapidly. All the billions of germs in a corpse were so immediately released.

"And it was because of all this that the bacteriologists had so little chance in fighting the germs. They were killed in their laboratories even as they studied the germ of the Scarlet Death. They were heroes. As fast as they perished, others stepped forth and took their places. It was in London that they first isolated it. The news was telegraphed everywhere. Trask was the name of the man who succeeded in this, but within thirty hours he was dead. Then came the struggle in all the laboratories to find something that would kill the plague germs. All drugs failed. You see, the problem was to get a drug, or serum, that would kill the germs in the body and not kill the body. They tried to fight it with other germs, to put into the body of a sick man germs that were the enemies of the plague germs — ”

“And you can’t see these germ-things, Granser,” Hare-Lip objected, “and here you gabble, gabble, gabble about them as if they was anything, when they’re nothing at all. Anything you can’t see, ain’t, that’s what. Fighting things that ain’t with things that ain’t! They must have been all fools in them days. That’s why they croaked. I ain’t goin’ to believe in such rot, I tell you that.”

Granser promptly began to weep, while Edwin hotly took up his defence.

“Look here, Hare-Lip, you believe in lots of things you can’t see.”

Hare-Lip shook his head.

“You believe in dead men walking about. You never seen one dead man walk about.”

“I tell you I seen ‘em, last winter, when I was wolf-hunting with dad.”

“Well, you always spit when you cross running water,” Edwin challenged.

“That’s to keep off bad luck,” was Hare-Lip’s defence.

“You believe in bad luck?”

“Sure.”

“An’ you ain’t never seen bad luck,” Edwin concluded triumphantly. “You’re just as bad as Granser and his germs. You believe in what you don’t see. Go on, Granser.”

Hare-Lip, crushed by this metaphysical defeat, remained silent, and the old man went on. Often and often, though this narrative must not be clogged by the details, was Granser’s tale interrupted while the boys squabbled among themselves. Also, among themselves they kept up a constant, low-voiced exchange of explanation and conjecture, as they strove to follow the old man into his unknown and vanished world.

“The Scarlet Death broke out in San Francisco. The first death came on a Monday morning. By Thursday they were dying like flies in Oakland and

San Francisco. They died everywhere — in their beds, at their work, walking along the street. It was on Tuesday that I saw my first death — Miss Collbran, one of my students, sitting right there before my eyes, in my lecture-room. I noticed her face while I was talking. It had suddenly turned scarlet. I ceased speaking and could only look at her, for the first fear of the plague was already on all of us and we knew that it had come. The young women screamed and ran out of the room. So did the young men run out, all but two. Miss Collbran's convulsions were very mild and lasted less than a minute. One of the young men fetched her a glass of water. She drank only a little of it, and cried out:

"'My feet! All sensation has left them.'

"After a minute she said, 'I have no feet. I am unaware that I have any feet. And my knees are cold. I can scarcely feel that I have knees.'

"She lay on the floor, a bundle of notebooks under her head. And we could do nothing. The coldness and the numbness crept up past her hips to her heart, and when it reached her heart she was dead. In fifteen minutes, by the clock — I timed it — she was dead, there, in my own classroom, dead. And she was a very beautiful, strong, healthy young woman. And from the first sign of the plague to her death only fifteen minutes elapsed. That will show you how swift was the Scarlet Death.

"Yet in those few minutes I remained with the dying woman in my classroom, the alarm had spread over the university; and the students, by thousands, all of them, had deserted the lecture-room and laboratories. When I emerged, on my way to make report to the President of the Faculty, I found the university deserted. Across the campus were several stragglers hurrying for their homes. Two of them were running.

"President Hoag, I found in his office, all alone, looking very old and very gray, with a multitude of wrinkles in his face that I had never seen before. At the sight of me, he pulled himself to his feet and tottered away to the inner office, banging the door after him and locking it. You see, he knew I had been exposed, and he was afraid. He shouted to me through the door to go away. I shall never forget my feelings as I walked down the silent corridors and out across that deserted campus. I was not afraid. I had been exposed, and I looked upon myself as already dead. It was not that, but a feeling of awful depression that impressed me. Everything had stopped. It was like the end of the world to me — my world. I had been born within sight and sound of the university. It had been my predestined career. My father had been a professor there before me, and his father before him. For a century and a half had this university, like a splendid machine, been running steadily on. And now, in an instant, it had stopped. It was like seeing the sacred flame die down on some thrice-sacred altar. I was shocked, unutterably shocked.

"When I arrived home, my housekeeper screamed as I entered, and fled away. And when I rang, I found the housemaid had likewise fled. I investigated. In the kitchen I found the cook on the point of departure. But she screamed, too, and in her haste dropped a suitcase of her personal belongings and ran out of the house and across the grounds, still screaming. I can hear her scream to this day. You see, we did not act in this way when ordinary diseases smote us. We were always calm over such things, and sent for the doctors and nurses who knew just what to do. But this was different. It struck so suddenly, and killed so swiftly, and never missed a stroke. When the scarlet rash appeared on a person's face, that person was marked by death. There was never a known case of a recovery.

"I was alone in my big house. As I have told you often before, in those days we could talk with one another over wires or through the air. The telephone bell rang, and I found my brother talking to me. He told me that he was not coming home for fear of catching the plague from me, and that he had taken our two sisters to stop at Professor Bacon's home. He advised me to remain where I was, and wait to find out whether or not I had caught the plague.

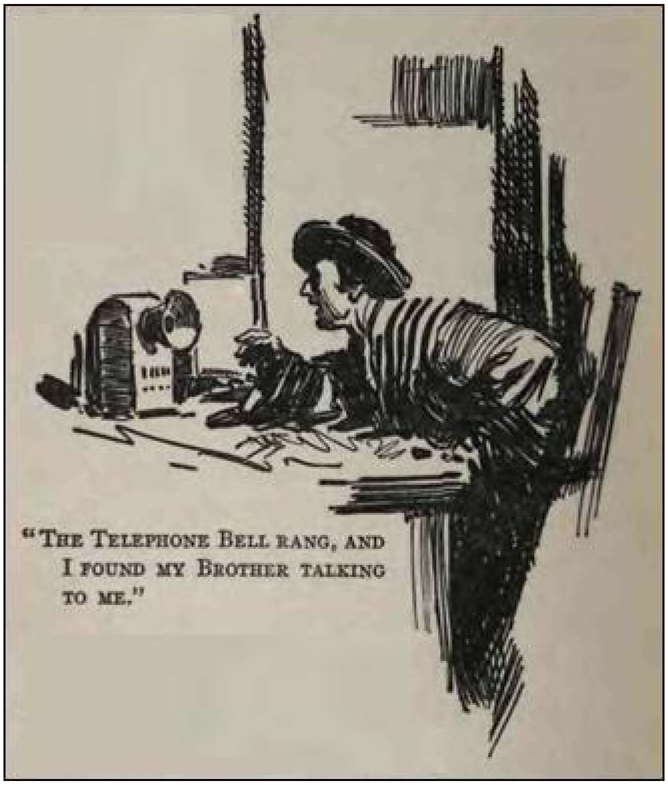

"The Telephone Bell rang, and I found my Brother talking to me."

"To all of this I agreed, staying in my house and for the first time in my life attempting to cook. And the plague did not come out on me. By means of the telephone I could talk with whomsoever I pleased and get the news. Also, there were the newspapers, and I ordered all of them to be thrown up to my door so that I could know what was happening with the rest of the world.

"New York City and Chicago were in chaos. And what happened with them was happening in all the large cities. A third of the New York police were dead. Their chief was also dead, likewise the mayor. All law and order had ceased. The bodies were lying in the streets un-buried. All railroads and vessels carrying food and such things into the great city had ceased runnings and mobs of the hungry poor were pillaging the stores and warehouses. Murder and robbery and drunkenness were everywhere. Already the people had fled from the city by millions — at first the rich, in their private motor-cars and dirigibles, and then the great mass of the population, on foot, carrying the plague with them, themselves starving and pillaging the farmers and all the towns and villages on the way.

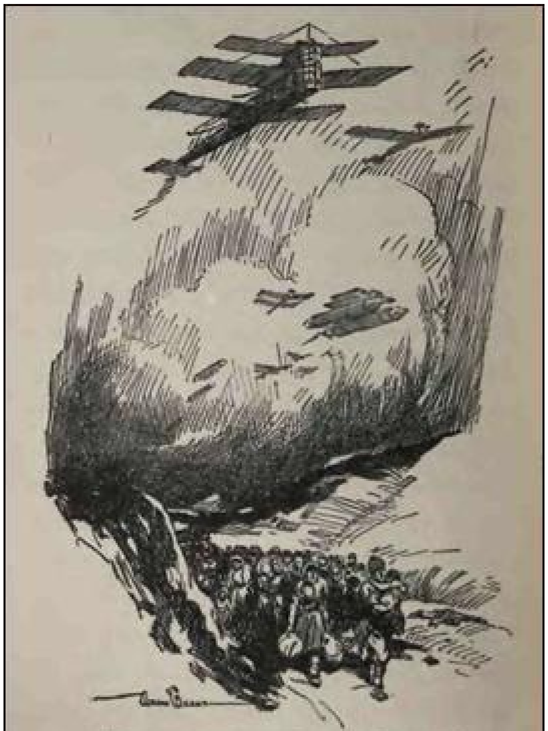

"Pouring out of the City by Millions"

"The man who sent this news, the wireless operator, was alone with his instrument on the top of a lofty building. The people remaining in the city — he estimated them at several hundred thousand — had gone mad from fear and drink, and on all sides of him great fires were raging. He was a hero, that man who staid by his post — an obscure newspaperman, most likely.

"For twenty-four hours, he said, no transatlantic airships had arrived, and no more messages were coming from England. He did state, though, that a message from Berlin — that's in Germany — announced that Hoffmeyer, a bacteriologist of the Metchnikoff School, had discovered the serum for the plague. That was the last word, to this day, that we of America ever received from Europe. If Hoffmeyer discovered the serum, it was too late, or otherwise, long ere this, explorers from Europe would have come looking for us. We can only conclude that what happened in America happened in Europe, and that, at the best, some several score may have survived the Scarlet Death on that whole continent.

"For one day longer the despatches continued to come from New York. Then they, too, ceased. The man who had sent them, perched in his lofty building, had either died of the plague or been consumed in the great conflagrations he had described as raging around him. And what had occurred in New York had been duplicated in all the other cities. It was the same in San Francisco, and Oakland, and Berkeley. By Thursday the people were dying so rapidly that their corpses could not be handled, and dead bodies lay everywhere. Thursday night the panic outrush for the country began. Imagine, my grandsons, people, thicker than the salmon-run you have seen on the Sacramento river, pouring out of the cities by millions, madly over the country, in vain attempt to escape the ubiquitous death. You see, they carried the germs with them. Even the airships of the rich, fleeing for mountain and desert fastnesses, carried the germs.

"Hundreds of these airships escaped to Hawaii, and not only did they bring the plague with them, but they found the plague already there before them. This we learned, by the despatches, until all order in San Francisco vanished, and there were no operators left at their posts to receive or send. It was amazing, astounding, this loss of communication with the world. It was exactly as if the world had ceased, been blotted out. For sixty years that world has no longer existed for me. I know there must be such places as New York, Europe, Asia, and Africa; but not one word has been heard of them — not in sixty years. With the coming of the Scarlet Death the world fell apart, absolutely, irretrievably. Ten thousand years of culture and civilization passed in the twinkling of an eye, 'lapsed like foam.'

"I was telling about the airships of the rich. They carried the plague with them and no matter where they fled, they died. I never encountered but one survivor of any of them — Mungerson. He was afterwards a Santa Rosan, and he married my eldest daughter. He came into the tribe eight years after the plague. He was then nineteen years old, and he was compelled to wait twelve years more before he could marry. You see, there were no unmarried women, and some of the older daughters of the Santa Rosans were already bespoken. So he was forced to wait until my Mary had grown to sixteen years. It was his son, Gimp-Leg, who was killed last year by the mountain lion.

"Mungerson was eleven years old at the time of the plague. His father was one of the Industrial Magnates, a very wealthy, powerful man. It was on his airship, the Condor, that they were fleeing, with all the family, for the wilds of British Columbia, which is far to the north of here. But there was some accident, and they were wrecked near Mount Shasta. You have heard of that mountain. It is far to the north. The plague broke out amongst them, and this boy of eleven was the only survivor. For eight years he was alone, wandering over a deserted land and looking vainly for his own kind. And at last, travelling south, he picked up with us, the Santa Rosans.

"But I am ahead of my story. When the great exodus from the cities around San Francisco Bay began, and while the telephones were still working, I talked with my brother. I told him this flight from the cities was insanity, that there were no symptoms of the plague in me, and that the thing for us to do was to isolate ourselves and our relatives in some safe place. We decided on the Chemistry Building, at the university, and we planned to lay in a supply of provisions, and by force of arms to prevent any other persons from forcing their presence upon us after we had retired to our refuge.

"All this being arranged, my brother begged me to stay in my own house for at least twenty-four hours more, on the chance of the plague developing in me. To this I agreed, and he promised to come for me next day. We talked on over the details of the provisioning and the defending of the Chemistry Building until the telephone died. It died in the midst of our conversation. That evening there were no electric lights, and I was alone in my house in the darkness. No more newspapers were being printed, so I had no knowledge of what was taking place outside.

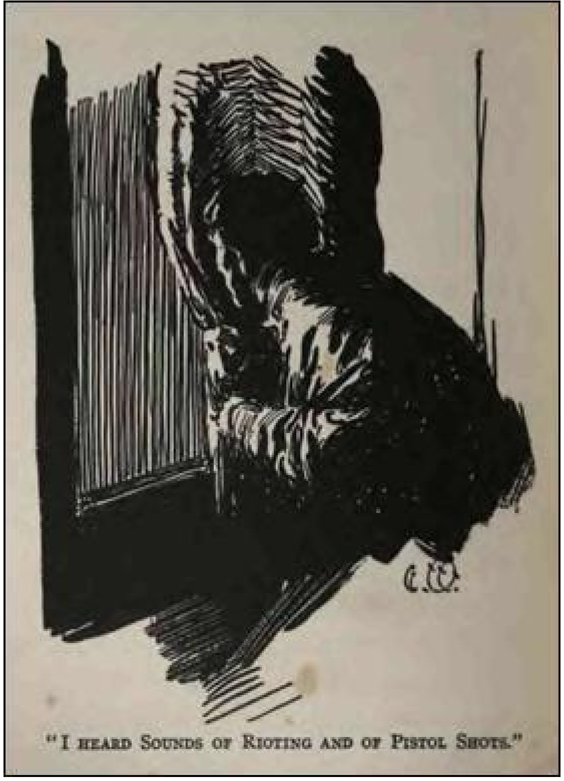

"I heard Sounds of Rioting and of Pistol Shots."

"I heard sounds of rioting and of pistol shots, and from my windows I could see the glare of the sky of some conflagration in the direction of Oakland. It was a night of terror. I did not sleep a wink. A man — why and how I do not know — was killed on the sidewalk in front of the house. I heard the rapid reports of an automatic pistol, and a few minutes later the wounded wretch crawled up to my door, moaning and crying out for help. Arming myself with two automatics, I went to him. By the light of a match I ascertained that while he was dying of the bullet wounds, at the same time the plague was on him. I fled indoors, whence I heard him moan and cry out for half an hour longer.

"In the morning, my brother came to me. I had gathered into a handbag what things of value I purposed taking, but when I saw his face I knew that he would never accompany me to the Chemistry Building. The plague was on him. He intended shaking my hand, but I went back hurriedly before him.

"'Look at yourself in the mirror,' I commanded.

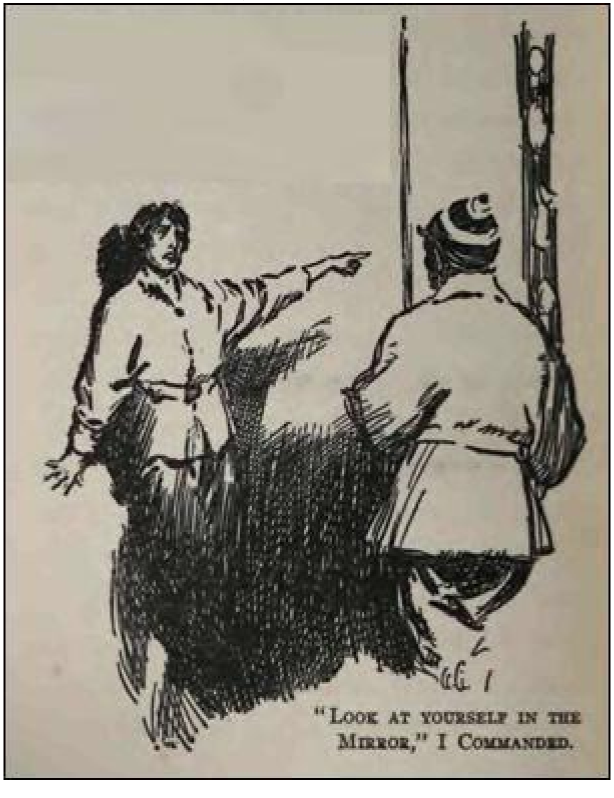

"Look at yourself in the Mirror," I Commanded.

"He did so, and at sight of his scarlet face, the color deepening as he looked at it, he sank down nervelessly in a chair.

"'My God!' he said. 'I've got it. Don't come near me. I am a dead man.'

“Then the convulsions seized him. He was two hours in dying, and he was conscious to the last, complaining about the coldness and loss of sensation in his feet, his calves, his thighs, until at last it was his heart and he was dead.

“That was the way the Scarlet Death slew. I caught up my handbag and fled. The sights in the streets were terrible. One stumbled on bodies everywhere. Some were not yet dead. And even as you looked, you saw men sink down with the death fastened upon them. There were numerous fires burning in Berkeley, while Oakland and San Francisco were apparently being swept by vast conflagrations. The smoke of the burning filled the heavens, so that the midday was as a gloomy twilight, and, in the shifts of wind, sometimes the sun shone through dimly, a dull red orb. Truly, my grandsons, it was like the last days of the end of the world.

“There were numerous stalled motor cars, showing that the gasoline and the engine supplies of the garages had given out. I remember one such car. A man and a woman lay back dead in the seats, and on the pavement near it were two more women and a child. Strange and terrible sights there were on every hand. People slipped by silently, furtively, like ghosts — white-faced women carrying infants in their arms; fathers leading children by the hand; singly, and in couples, and in families — all fleeing out of the city of death. Some carried supplies of food, others blankets and valuables, and there were many who carried nothing.

“There was a grocery store — a place where food was sold. The man to whom it belonged — I knew him well — a quiet, sober, but stupid and obstinate fellow, was defending it. The windows and doors had been broken in, but he, inside, hiding behind a counter, was discharging his pistol at a number of men on the sidewalk who were breaking in. In the entrance were several bodies — of men, I decided, whom he had killed earlier in the day. Even as I looked on from a distance, I saw one of the robbers break the windows of the adjoining store, a place where shoes were sold, and deliberately set fire to it. I did not go to the groceryman’s assistance. The time for such acts had already passed. Civilization was crumbling, and it was each for himself.”

IV

I WENT away hastily, down a cross-street, and at the first corner I saw another tragedy. Two men of the working class had caught a man and a woman with two children, and were robbing them. I knew the man by sight, though I had never been introduced to him. He was a poet whose verses I had long admired. Yet I did not go to his help, for at the moment I came upon the scene there was a pistol shot, and I saw him sinking to the ground. The woman screamed, and she was felled with a fist-blow by one of the brutes. I cried out threateningly, whereupon they discharged their pistols at me and I ran away around the corner. Here I was blocked by an advancing conflagration. The buildings on both sides were burning, and the street was filled with smoke and flame. From somewhere in that murk came a woman's voice calling shrilly for help. But I did not go to her. A man's heart turned to iron amid such scenes, and one heard all too many appeals for help.

"Returning to the corner, I found the two robbers were gone. The poet and his wife lay dead on the pavement. It was a shocking sight. The two children had vanished — whither I could not tell. And I knew, now, why it was that the fleeing persons I encountered slipped along so furtively and with such white faces. In the midst of our civilization, down in our slums and labor-ghettos, we had bred a race of barbarians, of savages; and now, in the time of our calamity, they turned upon us like the wild beasts they were and destroyed us. And they destroyed themselves as well.

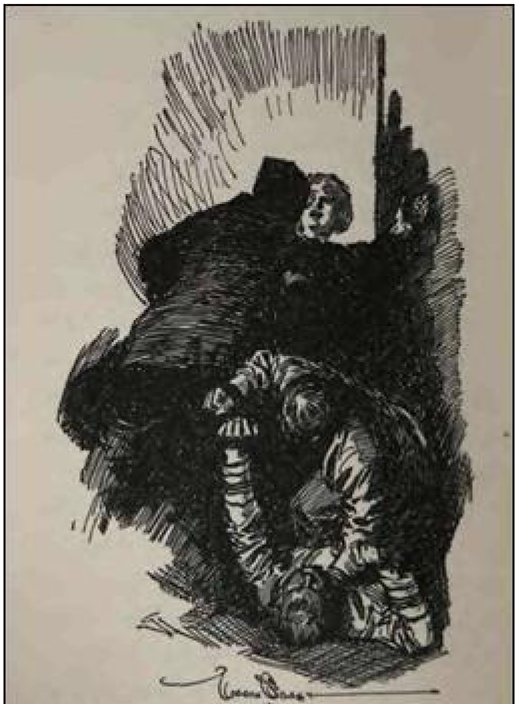

“Now, in the Time of our Calamity, they turned upon us”

“They inflamed themselves with strong drink and committed a thousand atrocities, quarreling and killing one another in the general madness. One group of workingmen I saw, of the better sort, who had banded together, and, with their women and children in their midst, the sick and aged in litters and being carried, and with a number of horses pulling a truck-load of provisions, they were fighting their way out of the city. They made a fine spectacle as they came down the street through the drifting smoke, though they nearly shot me when I first appeared in their path. As they went by, one of their leaders shouted out to me in apologetic explanation. He said they were killing the robbers and looters on sight, and that they had thus banded together as the only-means by which to escape the prowlers.

“It was here that I saw for the first time what I was soon to see so often. One of the marching men had suddenly shown the unmistakable mark of the plague. Immediately those about him drew away, and he, without a remonstrance, stepped out of his place to let them pass on. A woman, most probably his wife, attempted to follow him. She was leading a little boy by the hand. But the husband commanded her sternly to go on, while others laid hands on her and restrained her from following him. This I saw, and I saw the man also, with his scarlet blaze of face, step into a doorway on the opposite side of the street. I heard the report of his pistol, and saw him sink lifeless to the ground.

"After being turned aside twice again by advancing fires, I succeeded in getting through to the university. On the edge of the campus I came upon a party of university folk who were going in the direction of the Chemistry Building. They were all family men, and their families were with them, including the nurses and the servants. Professor Badminton greeted me, I had difficulty in recognizing him. Somewhere he had gone through flames, and his beard was singed off. About his head was a bloody bandage, and his clothes were filthy.

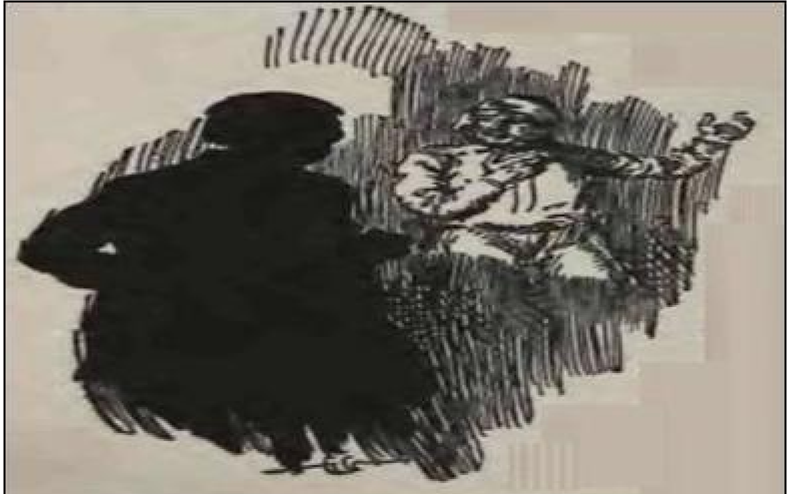

"He told me he had been cruelly beaten by Prowlers"

"He told me he had prowlers, and that his brother had been killed the previous night, in the defence of their dwelling.

"Midway across the campus, he pointed suddenly to Mrs. Swinton's face. The unmistakable scarlet was there. Immediately all the other women set up a screaming and began to run away from her. Her two children were with a nurse, and these also ran with the women. But her husband, Doctor Swinton, remained with her.

"'Go on, Smith,' he told me. 'Keep an eye on the children. As for me, I shall stay with my wife. I know she is as already dead, but I can't leave her. Afterwards, if I escape, I shall come to the Chemistry Building, and do you watch for me and let me in.'

"I left him bending over his wife and soothing her last moments, while I ran to overtake the party. We were the last to be admitted to the Chemistry Building. After that, with our automatic rifles we maintained our isolation.

By our plans, we had arranged for a company of sixty to be in this refuge. Instead, every one of the number originally planned had added relatives and friends and whole families until there were over four hundred souls. But the Chemistry Building was large, and, standing by itself, was in no danger of being burned by the great fires that raged everywhere in the city.

"A large quantity of provisions had been gathered, and a food committee took charge of it, issuing rations daily to the various families and groups that arranged themselves into messes. A number of committees were appointed, and we developed a very efficient organization. I was on the committee of defence, though for the first day no prowlers came near. We could see them in the distance, however, and by the smoke of their fires knew that several camps of them were occupying the far edge of the campus. Drunkenness was rife, and often we heard them singing ribald songs or insanely shouting. While the world crashed to ruin about them and all the air was filled with the smoke of its burning, these low creatures gave rein to their bestiality and fought and drank and died. And after all, what did it matter? Everybody died anyway, the good and the bad, the efficients and the weaklings, those that loved to live and those that scorned to live. They passed. Everything passed.

"When twenty-four hours had gone by and no signs of the plague were apparent, we congratulated ourselves and set about digging a well. You have seen the great iron pipes which in those days carried water to all the city-dwellers. We feared that the fires in the city would burst the pipes and empty the reservoirs. So we tore up the cement floor of the central court of the Chemistry Building and dug a well. There were many young men, undergraduates, with us, and we worked night and day on the well. And our fears were confirmed. Three hours before we reached water, the pipes went dry.

"A second twenty-four hours passed, and still the plague did not appear among us. We thought we were saved. But we did not know what I afterwards decided to be true, namely, that the period of the incubation of the plague germs in a human's body was a matter of a number of days. It slew so swiftly when once it manifested itself, that we were led to believe that the period of incubation was equally swift. So, when two days had left us unscathed, we were elated with the idea that we were free of the contagion.

“But the third day disillusioned us. I can never forget the night preceding it. I had charge of the night guards from eight to twelve, and from the roof of the building I watched the passing of all man’s glorious works. So terrible were the local conflagrations that all the sky was lighted up. One could read the finest print in the red glare. All the world seemed wrapped in flames. San Francisco spouted smoke and fire from a score of vast conflagrations that were like so many active volcanoes. Oakland, San Leandro, Haywards — all were burning; and to the northward, clear to Point Richmond, other fires were at work. It was an awe-inspiring spectacle. Civilization, my grandsons, civilization was passing in a sheet of flame and a breath of death. At ten o’clock that night, the great powder magazines at Point Pinole exploded in rapid succession. So terrific were the concussions that the strong building rocked as in an earthquake, while every pane of glass was broken. It was then that I left the roof and went down the long corridors, from room to room, quieting the alarmed women and telling them what had happened.

“An hour later, at a window on the ground floor, I heard pandemonium break out in the camps of the prowlers. There were cries and screams, and shots from many pistols. As we afterward conjectured, this fight had been precipitated by an attempt on the part of those that were well to drive out those that were sick. At any rate, a number of the plague-stricken prowlers escaped across the campus and drifted against our doors. We warned them back, but they cursed us and discharged a fusillade from their pistols. Professor Merryweather, at one of the windows, was instantly killed, the bullet striking him squarely between the eyes. We opened fire in turn, and all the prowlers fled away with the exception of three. One was a woman. The plague was on them and they were reckless. Like foul fiends, there in the red glare from the skies, with faces blazing, they continued to curse us and fire at us. One of the men I shot with my own hand. After that the other man and the woman, still cursing us, lay down under our windows, where we were compelled to watch them die of the plague.

“The situation was critical. The explosions of the powder magazines had broken all the windows of the Chemistry Building, so that we were exposed to the germs from the corpses. The sanitary committee was called upon to act, and it responded nobly. Two men were required to go out and remove the corpses, and this meant the probable sacrifice of their own lives, for, having performed the task, they were not to be permitted to reenter the building. One of the professors, who was a bachelor, and one of the undergraduates volunteered. They bade good-bye to us and went forth. They were heroes. They gave up their lives that four hundred others might live. After they had performed their work, they stood for a moment, at a distance, looking at us wistfully. Then they waved their hands in farewell and went away slowly across the campus toward the burning city.

"And yet it was all useless. The next morning the first one of us was smitten with the plague — a little nurse-girl in the family of Professor Stout. It was no time for weak-kneed, sentimental policies. On the chance that she might be the only one, we thrust her forth from the building and commanded her to be gone.

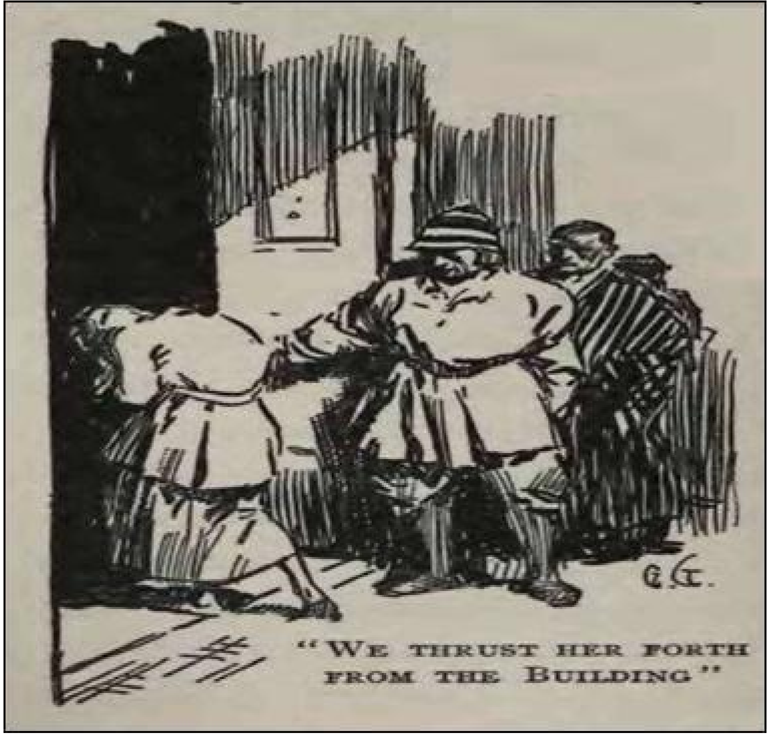

"WE THRUST HER FORTH FROM THE BUILDING"

"She went away slowly across the campus, wringing her hands and crying pitifully. We felt like brutes, but what were we to do? There were four hundred of us, and individuals had to be sacrificed.

"In one of the laboratories three families had domiciled themselves, and that afternoon we found among them no less than four corpses and seven cases of the plague in all its different stages.

"Then it was that the horror began. Leaving the dead lie, we forced the living ones to segregate themselves in another room. The plague began to break out among the rest of us, and as fast as the symptoms appeared, we sent the stricken ones to these segregated rooms. We compelled them to walk there by themselves, so as to avoid laying hands on them. It was heartrending. But still the plague raged among us, and room after room was filled with the dead and dying. And so we who were yet clean retreated to the next floor and to the next, before this sea of the dead, that, room by room and floor by floor, inundated the building.

"The place became a charnel house, and in the middle of the night the survivors fled forth, taking nothing with them except arms and ammunition and a heavy store of tinned foods. We camped on the opposite side of the campus from the prowlers, and, while some stood guard, others of us volunteered to scout into the city in quest of horses, motor cars, carts, and wagons, or anything that would carry our provisions and enable us to emulate the banded workingmen I had seen fighting their way out to the open country.

"I was one of these scouts; and Doctor Hoyle, remembering that his motor car had been left behind in his home garage, told me to look for it. We scouted in pairs, and Dombey, a young undergraduate, accompanied me. We had to cross half a mile of the residence portion of the city to get to Doctor Hoyle's home. Here the buildings stood apart, in the midst of trees and grassy lawns, and here the fires had played freaks, burning whole blocks, skipping blocks and often skipping a single house in a block. And here, too, the prowlers were still at their work. We carried our automatic pistols openly in our hands, and looked desperate enough, forsooth, to keep them from attacking us. But at Doctor Hoyle's house the thing happened. Untouched by fire, even as we came to it the smoke of flames burst forth.

"The miscreant who had set fire to it staggered down the steps and out along the driveway. Sticking out of his coat pockets were bottles of whiskey, and he was very drunk. My first impulse was to shoot him, and I have never ceased regretting that I did not. Staggering and maundering to himself, with bloodshot eyes, and a raw and bleeding slash down one side of his bewhiskered face, he was altogether the most nauseating specimen of degradation and filth I had ever encountered. I did not shoot him, and he leaned against a tree on the lawn to let us go by. It was the most absolute, wanton act. Just as we were opposite him, he suddenly drew a pistol and shot Dombey through the head. The next instant I shot him. But it was too late. Dombey expired without a groan, immediately. I doubt if he even knew what had happened to him.

“Leaving the two corpses, I hurried on past the burning house to the garage, and there found Doctor Hoyle’s motor car. The tanks were filled with gasoline, and it was ready for use. And it was in this car that I threaded the streets of the ruined city and came back to the survivors on the campus. The other scouts returned, but none had been so fortunate. Professor Fairmead had found a Shetland pony, but the poor creature, tied in a stable and abandoned for days, was so weak from want of food and water that it could carry no burden at all. Some of the men were for turning it loose, but I insisted that we should lead it along with us, so that, if we got out of food, we would have it to eat.

“There were forty-seven of us when we started, many being women and children. The President of the Faculty, an old man to begin with, and now hopelessly broken by the awful happenings of the past week, rode in the motor car with several young children and the aged mother of Professor Fairmead. Wathope, a young professor of English, who had a grievous bullet-wound in his leg, drove the car. The rest of us walked, Professor Fairmead leading the pony.

“It was what should have been a bright summer day, but the smoke from the burning world filled the sky, through which the sun shone murkily, a dull and lifeless orb, blood-red and ominous. But we had grown accustomed to that blood-red sun. With the smoke it was different. It bit into our nostrils and eyes, and there was not one of us whose eyes were not bloodshot. We directed our course to the southeast through the endless miles of suburban residences, travelling along where the first swells of low hills rose from the flat of the central city. It was by this way, only, that we could expect to gain the country.

“Our progress was painfully slow. The women and children could not walk fast. They did not dream of walking, my grandsons, in the way all people walk to-day. In truth, none of us knew how to walk. It was not until after the plague that I learned really to walk. So it was that the pace of the slowest was the pace of all, for we dared not separate on account of the prowlers. There were not so many now of these human beasts of prey. The plague had already well diminished their numbers, but enough still lived to be a constant menace to us. Many of the beautiful residences were untouched by fire, yet smoking ruins were everywhere. The prowlers, too, seemed to have got over their insensate desire to burn, and it was more rarely that we saw houses freshly on fire.

“Several of us scouted among the private garages in search of motor cars and gasoline. But in this we were unsuccessful. The first great flights from the cities had swept all such utilities away. Calgan, a fine young man, was lost in this work. He was shot by prowlers while crossing a lawn. Yet this was our only casualty, though, once, a drunken brute deliberately opened fire on all of us. Luckily, he fired wildly, and we shot him before he had done any hurt.

“At Fruitvale, still in the heart of the magnificent residence section of the city, the plague again smote us. Professor Fair-mead was the victim. Making signs to us that his mother was not to know, he turned aside into the grounds of a beautiful mansion. He sat down forlornly on the steps of the front veranda, and I, having lingered, waved him a last farewell. That night, several miles beyond Fruitvale and still in the city, we made camp. And that night we shifted camp twice to get away from our dead. In the morning there were thirty of us. I shall never forget the President of the Faculty. During the morning’s march his wife, who was walking, betrayed the fatal symptoms, and when she drew aside to let us go on, he insisted on leaving the motor car and remaining with her. There was quite a discussion about this, but in the end we gave in. It was just as well, for we knew not which ones of us, if any, might ultimately escape.

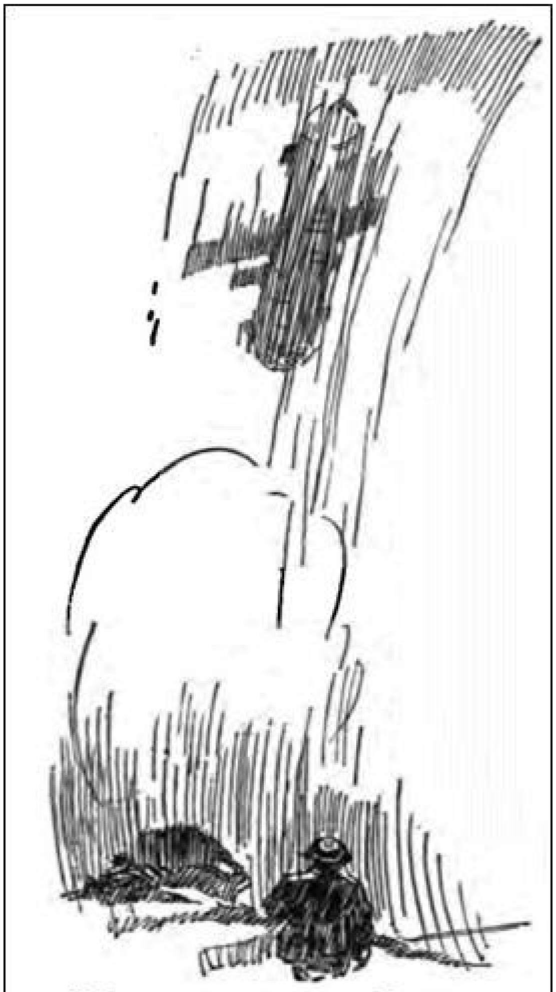

"She fell like a Plummet to the Earth"

"That night, the second of our march, we camped beyond Haywards in the first stretches of country. And in the morning there were eleven of us that lived. Also, during the night, Wathope, the professor with the wounded leg, deserted us in the motor car. He took with him his sister and his mother and most of our tinned provisions. It was that day, in the afternoon, while resting by the wayside, that I saw the last airship I shall ever see. The smoke was much thinner here in the country, and I first sighted the ship drifting and veering helplessly at an elevation of two thousand feet. What had happened I could not conjecture, but even as we looked we saw her bow dip down lower and lower. Then the bulkheads of the various gas-chambers must have burst, for, quite perpendicular, she fell like a plummet to the earth.

"And from that day to this I have not seen another airship. Often and often, during the next few years, I scanned the sky for them, hoping against hope that somewhere in the world civilization had survived. But it was not to be. What happened with us in California must have happened with everybody everywhere.

"Another day, and at Niles there were three of us. Beyond Niles, in the middle of the highway, we found Wathope. The motor car had broken down, and there, on the rugs which they had spread on the ground, lay the bodies of his sister, his mother, and himself.

"Wearied by the unusual exercise of continual walking, that night I slept heavily. In the morning I was alone in the world. Canfield and Parsons, my last companions, were dead of the plague. Of the four hundred that sought shelter in the Chemistry Building, and of the forty-seven that began the march, I alone remained — I and the Shetland pony. Why this should be so there is no explaining. I did not catch the plague, that is all. I was immune. I was merely the one lucky man in a million — just as every survivor was one in a million, or, rather, in several millions, for the proportion was at least that."

V

“FOR two days I sheltered in a pleasant grove where there had been no deaths. In those two days, while badly depressed and believing that my turn would come at any moment, nevertheless I rested and recuperated. So did the pony. And on the third day, putting what small store of tinned provisions I possessed on the pony’s back, I started on across a very lonely land. Not a live man, woman, or child, did I encounter, though the dead were everywhere. Food, however, was abundant. The land then was not as it is now. It was all cleared of trees and brush, and it was cultivated. The food for millions of mouths was growing, ripening, and going to waste. From the fields and orchards I gathered vegetables, fruits, and berries. Around the deserted farmhouses I got eggs and caught chickens. And frequently I found supplies of tinned provisions in the store-rooms.

“A strange thing was what was taking place with all the domestic animals. Everywhere they were going wild and preying on one another. The chickens and ducks were the first to be destroyed, while the pigs were the first to go wild, followed by the cats. Nor were the dogs long in adapting themselves to the changed conditions. There was a veritable plague of dogs. They devoured the corpses, barked and howled during the nights, and in the daytime slunk about in the distance. As the time went by, I noticed a change in their behavior. At first they were apart from one another, very suspicious and very prone to fight. But after a not very long while they began to come together and run in packs. The dog, you see, always was a social animal, and this was true before ever he came to be domesticated by man. In the last days of the world before the plague, there were many many very different kinds of dogs — dogs without hair and dogs with warm fur, dogs so small that they would make scarcely a mouthful for other dogs that were as large as mountain lions. Well, all the small dogs, and the weak types, were killed by their fellows. Also, the very large ones were not adapted for the wild life and bred out. As a result, the many different kinds of dogs disappeared, and there remained, running in packs, the medium-sized wolfish dogs that you know to-day.”

“But the cats don’t run in packs, Granser,” Hoo-Hoo objected.

“The cat was never a social animal. As one writer in the nineteenth century said, the cat walks by himself. He always walked by himself, from before the time he was tamed by man, down through the long ages of domestication, to to-day when once more he is wild.

“The horses also went wild, and all the fine breeds we had degenerated into the small mustang horse you know to-day. The cows likewise went wild, as did the pigeons and the sheep. And that a few of the chickens survived you know yourself. But the wild chicken of to-day is quite a different thing from the chickens we had in those days.

“But I must go on with my story. I travelled through a deserted land. As the time went by I began to yearn more and more for human beings. But I never found one, and I grew lonelier and lonelier. I crossed Livermore Valley and the mountains between it and the great valley of the San Joaquin. You have never seen that valley, but it is very large and it is the home of the wild horse. There are great droves there, thousands and tens of thousands. I revisited it thirty years after, so I know. You think there are lots of wild horses down here in the coast valleys, but they are as nothing compared with those of the San Joaquin. Strange to say, the cows, when they went wild, went back into the lower mountains. Evidently they were better able to protect themselves there.

“In the country districts the ghouls and prowlers had been less in evidence, for I found many villages and towns untouched by fire. But they were filled by the pestilential dead, and I passed by without exploring them. It was near Lathrop that, out of my loneliness, I picked up a pair of collie dogs that were so newly free that they were urgently willing to return to their allegiance to man. These collies accompanied me for many years, and the strains of them are in those very dogs there that you boys have to-day. But in sixty years the collie strain has worked out. These brutes are more like domesticated wolves than anything else.”

Hare-Lip rose to his feet, glanced to see that the goats were safe, and looked at the sun’s position in the afternoon sky, advertising impatience at the prolixity of the old man’s tale. Urged to hurry by Edwin, Granser went on.

“There is little more to tell. With my two dogs and my pony, and riding a horse I had managed to capture, I crossed the San Joaquin and went on to a wonderful valley in the Sierras called Yosemite. In the great hotel there I found a prodigious supply of tinned provisions. The pasture was abundant, as was the game, and the river that ran through the valley was full of trout. I remained there three years in an utter loneliness that none but a man who has once been highly civilized can understand. Then I could stand it no more. I felt that I was going crazy. Like the dog, I was a social animal and I needed my kind. I reasoned that since I had survived the plague, there was a possibility that others had survived. Also, I reasoned that after three years the plague germs must all be gone and the land be clean again.

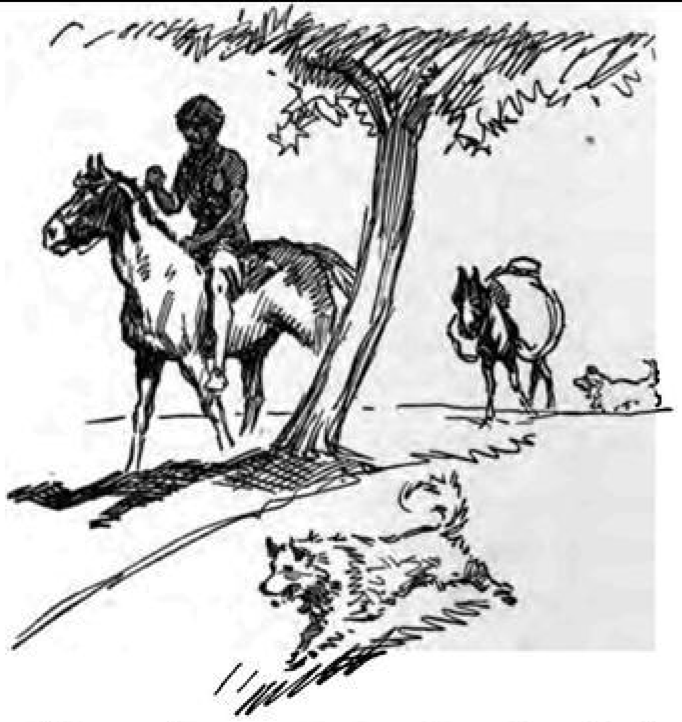

"With my Horse and Dogs and Pony, I set Out."

"With my horse and dogs and pony, I set out. Again I crossed the San Joaquin Valley, the mountains beyond, and came down into Livermore Valley. The change in those three years was amazing. All the land had been splendidly tilled, and now I could scarcely recognize it, 'such was the sea of rank vegetation that had overrun the agricultural handiwork of man. You see, the wheat, the vegetables, and orchard trees had always been cared for and nursed by man, so that they were soft and tender. The weeds and wild bushes and such things, on the contrary, had always been fought by man, so that they were tough and resistant. As a result, when the hand of man was removed, the wild vegetation smothered and destroyed practically all the domesticated vegetation. The coyotes were greatly increased, and it was at this time that I first encountered wolves, straying in twos and threes and small packs down from the regions where they had always persisted.

"It was at Lake Temescal, not far from the one-time city of Oakland, that I came upon the first live human beings. Oh, my grandsons, how can I describe to you my emotion, when, astride my horse and dropping down the hillside to the lake, I saw the smoke of a campfire rising through the trees. Almost did my heart stop beating. I felt that I was going crazy. Then I heard the cry of a babe — a human babe. And dogs barked, and my dogs answered. I did not know but what I was the one human alive in the whole world. It could not be true that here were others — smoke, and the cry of a babe.

“Emerging on the lake, there, before my eyes, not a hundred yards away, I saw a man, a large man. He was standing on an outjutting rock and fishing. I was overcome. I stopped my horse. I tried to call out but could not. I waved my hand. It seemed to me that the man looked at me, but he did not appear to wave. Then I laid my head on my arms there in the saddle. I was afraid to look again, for I knew it was an hallucination, and I knew that if I looked the man would be gone. And so precious was the hallucination, that I wanted it to persist yet a little while. I knew, too, that as long as I did not look it would persist.

“Thus I remained, until I heard my dogs snarling, and a man’s voice. What do you think the voice said? I will tell you. It said: ‘*Where in hell did you come from??*’

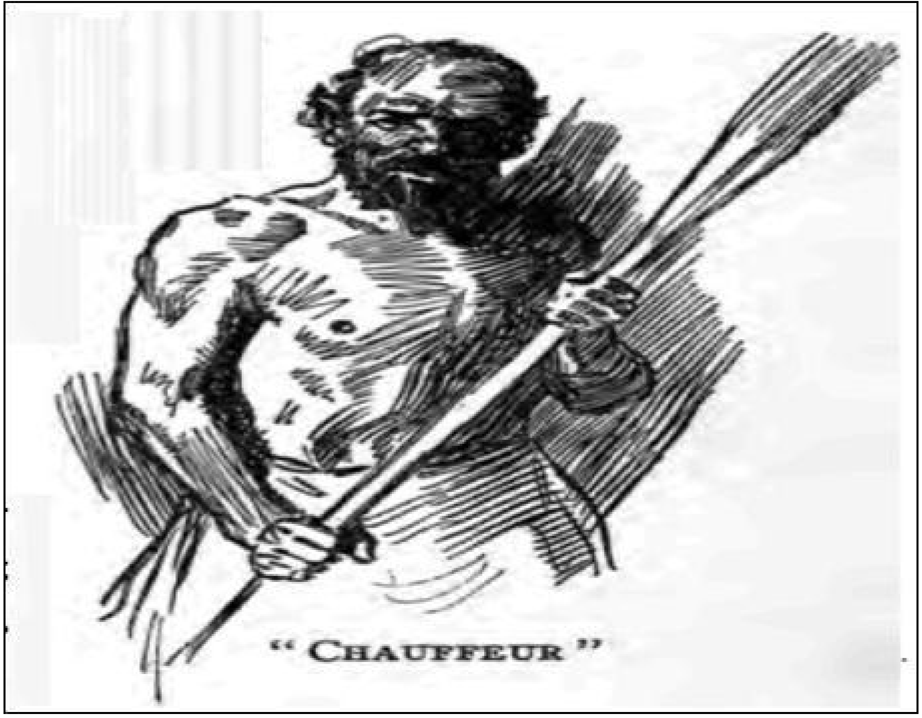

“ CHAUFFEUR ”

“Those were the words, the exact words. That was what your other grandfather said to me, Hare-Lip, when he greeted me there on the shore of

Lake Temescal fifty-seven years ago. And they were the most ineffable words I have ever heard. I opened my eyes, and there he stood before me, a large, dark, hairy man, heavy-jawed, slant-browed, fierce-eyed. How I got off my horse I do not know. But it seemed that the next I knew I was clasping his hand with both of mine and crying. I would have embraced him, but he was ever a narrow-minded, suspicious man, and he drew away from me. Yet did I cling to his hand and cry."

Granser's voice faltered and broke at the recollection, and the weak tears streamed down his cheeks while the boys looked on and giggled.

"Yet did I cry," he continued, "and desire to embrace him, though the Chauffeur was a brute, a perfect brute — the most abhorrent man I have ever known. His name was... strange, how I have forgotten his name. Everybody called him Chauffeur — it was the name of his occupation, and it stuck. That is how, to this day, the tribe he founded is called the Chauffeur Tribe.

"He was a violent, unjust man. Why the plague germs spared him I can never understand. It would seem, in spite of our old metaphysical notions about absolute justice, that there is no justice in the universe. Why did he live? — an iniquitous, moral monster, a blot on the face of nature, a cruel, relentless, bestial cheat as well. All he could talk about was motor cars, machinery, gasoline, and garages — and especially, and with huge delight, of his mean pilferings and sordid swindlings of the persons who had employed him in the days before the coming of the plague. And yet he was spared, while hundreds of millions, yea, billions, of better men were destroyed.

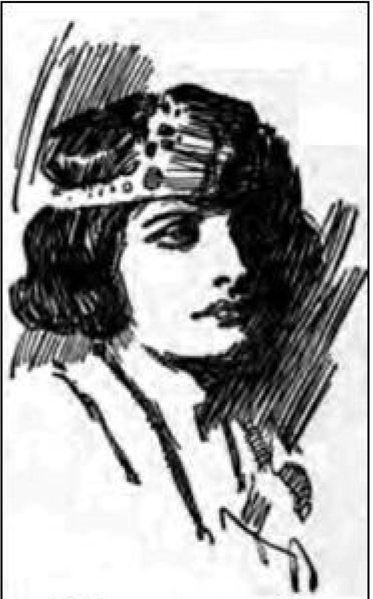

“VESTA, THE ONE WOMAN”

“I went on with him to his camp, and there I saw her, Vesta, the one woman. It was glorious and... pitiful. There she was, Vesta Van Warden, the young wife of John Van Warden, clad in rags, with marred and scarred and toil-calloused hands, bending over the campfire and doing scullion work — she, Vesta, who had been born to the purple of the greatest baronage of wealth the world had ever known. John Van Warden, her husband, worth one billion, eight hundred millions and President of the Board of Industrial Magnates, had been the ruler of America. Also, sitting on the International Board of Control, he had been one of the seven men who ruled the world. And she herself had come of equally noble stock. Her father, Philip Saxon, had been President of the Board of Industrial Magnates up to the time of his death. This office was in process of becoming hereditary, and had Philip Saxon had a son that son would have succeeded him. But his only child was Vesta, the perfect flower of generations of the highest culture this planet has ever produced. It was not until the engagement between Vesta and Van Warden took place, that Saxon indicated the latter as his successor. It was, I am sure, a political marriage. I have reason to believe that Vesta never really loved her husband in the mad passionate way of which the poets used to sing. It was more like the marriages that obtained among crowned heads in the days before they were displaced by the Magnates.

“And there she was, boiling fish-chowder in a soot-covered pot, her glorious eyes inflamed by the acrid smoke of the open fire. Hers was a sad story. She was the one survivor in a million, as I had been, as the Chauffeur had been. On a crowning eminence of the Alameda Hills, overlooking San Francisco Bay, Van Warden had built a vast summer palace. It was surrounded by a park of a thousand acres. When the plague broke out, Van Warden sent her there. Armed guards patrolled the boundaries of the park, and nothing entered in the way of provisions or even mail matter that was not first fumigated. And yet did the plague enter, killing the guards at their posts, the servants at their tasks, sweeping away the whole army of retainers — or, at least, all of them who did not flee to die elsewhere. So it was that Vesta found herself the sole living person in the palace that had become a charnel house.

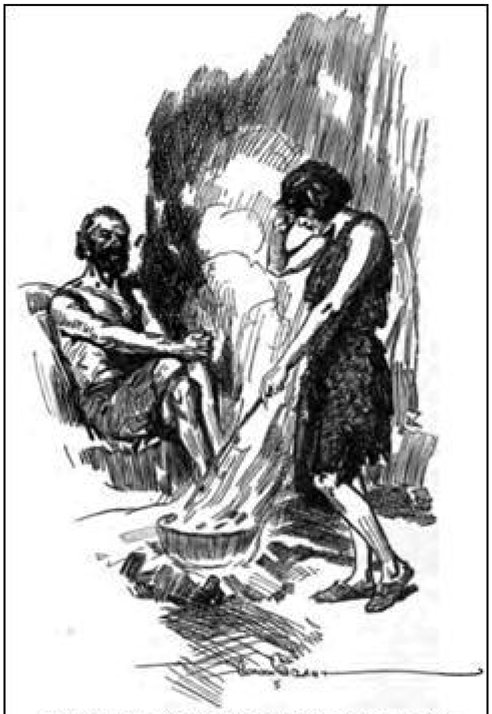

"There she was boiling Fish-chowder in a Soot-covered Pot"

"Now the Chauffeur had been one of the servants that ran away. Returning, two months afterward, he discovered Vesta in a little summer pavilion where there had been no deaths and where she had established herself. He was a brute. She was afraid, and she ran away and hid among the trees. That night, on foot, she fled into the mountains — she, whose tender feet and delicate body had never known the bruise of stones nor the scratch of briars. He followed, and that night he caught her. He struck her. Do you understand? He beat her with those terrible fists of his and made her his slave. It was she who had to gather the firewood, build the fires, cook, and do all the degrading camp-labor — she, who had never performed a menial act in her life. These things he compelled her to do, while he, a proper savage, elected to lie around camp and look on. He did nothing, absolutely nothing, except on occasion to hunt meat or catch fish."

"Good for Chauffeur," Hare-Lip commented in an undertone to the other boys. "I remember him before he died. He was a corker. But he did things, and he made things go. You know, Dad married his daughter, an' you ought to see the way he knocked the spots outa Dad. The Chauffeur was a son-of-a-gun. He made us kids stand around. Even when he was croaking he reached out for me, once, an' laid my head open with that long stick he kept always beside him."

Hare-Lip rubbed his bullet head reminiscently, and the boys returned to the old man, who was maundering ecstatically about Vesta, the squaw of the founder of the Chauffeur Tribe.

"And so I say to you that you cannot understand the awfulness of the situation. The Chauffeur was a servant, understand, a servant. And he cringed, with bowed head, to such as she. She was a lord of life, both by birth and by marriage. The destinies of millions, such as he, she carried in the hollow of her pink-white hand. And, in the days before the plague, the slightest contact with such as he would have been pollution. Oh, I have seen it. Once, I remember, there was Mrs. Goldwin, wife of one of the great magnates. It was on a landing stage, just as she was embarking in her private dirigible, that she dropped her parasol. A servant picked it up and made the mistake of handing it to her — to her, one of the greatest royal ladies of the land! She shrank back, as though he were a leper, and indicated her secretary to receive it. Also, she ordered her secretary to ascertain the creature's name and to see that he was immediately discharged from service. And such a woman was Vesta Van Warden. And her the Chauffeur beat and made his slave.

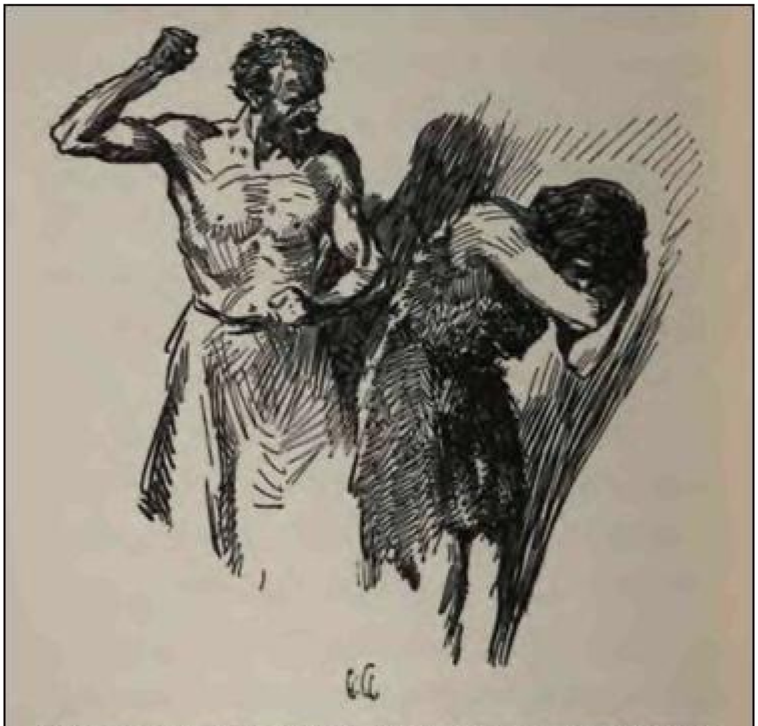

"And her the Chauffeur beat and made his Slave."

" — Bill — that was it; Bill, the Chauffeur. That was his name. He was a wretched, primitive man, wholly devoid of the finer instincts and chivalrous promptings of a cultured soul. No, there is no absolute justice, for to him fell that wonder of womanhood, Vesta Van Warden. The grievous-ness of this you will never understand, my grandsons; for you are yourselves primitive little savages, unaware of aught else but savagery. Why should Vesta not have been mine? I was a man of culture and refinement, a professor in a great university. Even so, in the time before the plague, such was her exalted position, she would not have deigned to know that I existed. Mark, then, the abysmal degradation to which she fell at the hands of the Chauffeur. Nothing less than the destruction of all mankind had made it possible that I should know her, look in her eyes, converse with her, touch her hand — ay, and love her and know that her feelings toward me were very kindly. I have reason to believe that she, even she, would have loved me, there being no other man in the world except the Chauffeur. Why, when it destroyed eight billions of souls, did not the plague destroy just one more man, and that man the Chauffeur?

"Once, when the Chauffeur was away fishing, she begged me to kill him. With tears in her eyes she begged me to kill him. But he was a strong and violent man, and I was afraid. Afterwards, I talked with him. I offered him my horse, my pony, my dogs, all that I possessed, if he would give Vesta to me. And he grinned in my face and shook his head. He was very insulting. He said that in the old days he had been a servant, had been dirt under the feet of men like me and of women like Vesta, and that now he had the greatest lady in the land to be servant to him and cook his food and nurse his brats. 'You had your day before the plague,' he said; 'but this is my day, and a damned good day it is. I wouldn't trade back to the old times for anything.' Such words he spoke, but they are not his words. He was a vulgar, low-minded man, and vile oaths fell continually from his lips.

"Also, he told me that if he caught me making eyes at his woman he'd wring my neck and give her a beating as well. What was I to do? I was afraid. He was a brute. That first night, when I discovered the camp, Vesta and I had great talk about the things of our vanished world. We talked of art, and books, and poetry; and the Chauffeur listened and grinned and sneered. He was bored and angered by our way of speech which he did not comprehend, and finally he spoke up and said: 'And this is Vesta Van Warden, one-time wife of Van Warden the Magnate — a high and stuck-up beauty, who is now my squaw. Eh, Professor Smith, times is changed, times is changed. Here, you, woman, take off my moccasins, and lively about it. I want Professor Smith to see how well I have you trained.'

"I saw her clench her teeth, and the flame of revolt rise in her face. He drew back his gnarled fist to strike, and I was afraid, and sick at heart. I could do nothing to prevail against him. So I got up to go, and not be witness to such indignity. But the Chauffeur laughed and threatened me with a beating if I did not stay and behold. And I sat there, perforce, by the campfire on the shore of Lake Temescal, and saw Vesta, Vesta Van Warden, kneel and remove the moccasins of that grinning, hairy, apelike human brute.

" — Oh, you do not understand, my grandsons. You have never known anything else, and you do not understand.

"'Halter-broke and bridle-wise,' the Chauffeur gloated, while she performed that dreadful, menial task. 'A trifle balky at times, Professor, a trifle balky; but a clout alongside the jaw makes her as meek and gentle as a lamb.'

"And another time he said: 'We've got to start all over and replenish the earth and multiply. You're handicapped, Professor. You ain't got no wife, and we're up against a regular Garden-of-Eden proposition. But I ain't proud. I’ll tell you what, Professor.’ He pointed at their little infant, barely a year old. ‘There’s your wife, though you’ll have to wait till she grows up. It’s rich, ain’t it? We’re all equals here, and I’m the biggest toad in the splash. But I ain’t stuck up — not I. I do you the honor, Professor Smith, the very great honor of betrothing to you my and Vesta Van Warden’s daughter. Ain’t it cussed bad that Van Warden ain’t here to see?’“

VI

"I LIVED three weeks of infinite torment there in the Chauffeur's camp. And then, one day, tiring of me, or of what to him was my bad effect on Vesta, he told me that the year before, wandering through the Contra Costa Hills to the Straits of Carquinez, across the Straits he had seen a smoke. This meant that there were still other human beings, and that for three weeks he had kept this inestimably precious information from me. I departed at once, with my dogs and horses, and journeyed across the Contra Costa Hills to the Straits. I saw no smoke on the other side, but at Port Costa discovered a small steel barge on which I was able to embark my animals. Old canvas which I found served me for a sail, and a southerly breeze fanned me across the Straits and up to the ruins of Vallejo. Here, on the outskirts of the city, I found evidences of a recently occupied camp.

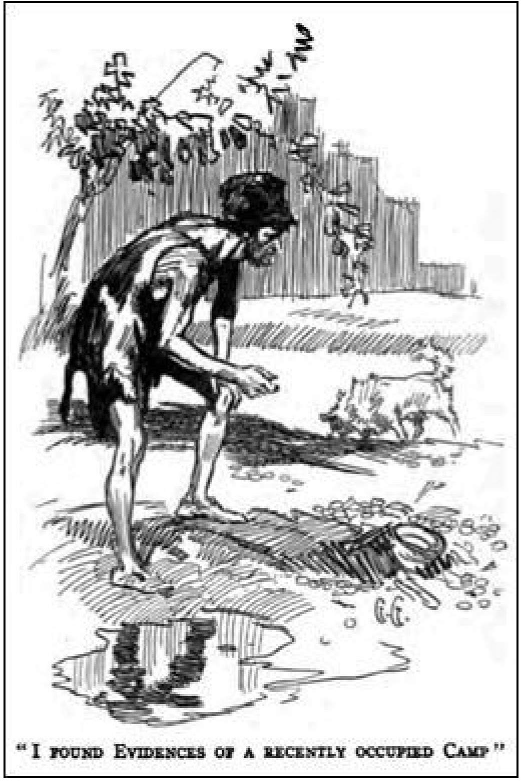
"I found Evidences of a recently occupied Camp"

"Many clam-shells showed me why these humans had come to the shores of the Bay. This was the Santa Rosa Tribe, and I followed its track along the old railroad right of way across the salt marshes to Sonoma Valley. Here, at the old brickyard at Glen Ellen, I came upon the camp. There were eighteen souls all told. Two were old men, one of whom was Jones, a banker. The other was Harrison, a retired pawnbroker, who had taken for wife the matron of the State Hospital for the Insane at Napa. Of all the persons of the city of Napa, and of all the other towns and villages in that rich and populous valley, she had been the only-survivor. Next, there were the three young men — Cardiff and Hale, who had been farmers, and Wainwright, a common day-laborer. All three had found wives. To Hale, a crude, illiterate farmer, had fallen Isadore, the greatest prize, next to Vesta, of the women who came through the plague. She was one of the world's most noted singers, and the plague had caught her at San Francisco. She has talked with me for hours at a time, telling me of her adventures, until, at last, rescued by Hale in the Mendocino Forest Reserve, there had remained nothing for her to do but become his wife. But Hale was a good fellow, in spite of his illiteracy. He had a keen sense of justice and right-dealing, and she was far happier with him than was Vesta with the Chauffeur.

"The wives of Cardiff and Wainwright were ordinary women, accustomed to toil with strong constitutions — just the type for the wild new life which they were compelled to live. In addition were two adult idiots from the feeble-minded home at El-dredge, and five or six young children and infants born after the formation of the Santa Rosa Tribe. Also, there was Bertha. She was a good woman, Hare-Lip, in spite of the sneers of your father. Her I took for wife. She was the mother of your father, Edwin, and of yours, Hoo-Hoo. And it was our daughter, Vera, who married your father, Hare-Lip — your father, Sandow, who was the oldest son of Vesta Van Warden and the Chauffeur.

"And so it was that I became the nineteenth member of the Santa Rosa Tribe. There were only two outsiders added after me. One was Mungerson, descended from the Magnates, who wandered alone in the wilds of Northern California for eight years before he came south and joined us. He it was who waited twelve years more before he married my daughter, Mary. The other was Johnson, the man who founded the Utah Tribe. That was where he came from, Utah, a country that lies very far away from here, across the great deserts, to the east. It was not until twenty-seven years after the plague that Johnson reached California. In all that Utah region he reported but three survivors, himself one, and all men. For many years these three men lived and hunted together, until, at last, desperate, fearing that with them the human race would perish utterly from the planet, they headed westward on the possibility of finding women survivors in California.

Johnson alone came through the great desert, where his two companions died. He was forty-six years old when he joined us, and he married the fourth daughter of Isadore and Hale, and his eldest son married your aunt, Hare-Lip, who was the third daughter of Vesta and the Chauffeur. Johnson was a strong man, with a will of his own. And it was because of this that he seceded from the Santa Rosans and formed the Utah Tribe at San José. It is a small tribe — there are only nine in it; but, though he is dead, such was his influence and the strength of his breed, that it will grow into a strong tribe and play a leading part in the recivilization of the planet.

"There are only two other tribes that we know of — the Los Angelitos and the Carmelitos. The latter started from one man and woman. He was called Lopez, and he was descended from the ancient Mexicans and was very black. He was a cowherd in the ranges beyond Carmel, and his wife was a maidservant in the great Del Monte Hotel. It was seven years before we first got in touch with the Los Ange-litos. They have a good country down there, but it is too warm. I estimate the present population of the world at between three hundred and fifty and four hundred — provided, of course, that there are no scattered little tribes elsewhere in the world. If there be such, we have not heard from them. Since Johnson crossed the desert from Utah, no word nor sign has come from the East or anywhere else. The great world which I knew in my boyhood and early manhood is gone. It has ceased to be. I am the last man who was alive in the days of the plague and who knows the wonders of that far-off time. We, who mastered the planet — its earth, and sea, and sky — and who were as very gods, now live in primitive savagery along the water courses of this California country.

"But we are increasing rapidly — your sister, Hare-Lip, already has four children. We are increasing rapidly and making ready for a new climb toward civilization. In time, pressure of population will compel us to spread out, and a hundred generations from now we may expect our descendants to start across the Sierras, oozing slowly along, generation by generation, over the great continent to the colonization of the East — a new Aryan drift around the world.

"But it will be slow, very slow; we have so far to climb. We fell so hopelessly far. If only one physicist or one chemist had survived! But it was not to be, and we have forgotten everything. The Chauffeur started working in iron. He made the forge which we use to this day. But he was a lazy man, and when he died he took with him all he knew of metals and machinery.

What was I to know of such things? I was a classical scholar, not a chemist.. The other men who survived were not educated. Only two things did the Chauffeur accomplish — the brewing of strong drink and the growing of tobacco. It was while he was drunk, once, that he killed Vesta. I firmly believe that he killed Vesta in a fit of drunken cruelty though he always maintained that she fell into the lake and was drowned.

“And, my grandsons, let me warn you against the medicine-men. They call themselves *doctors*, travestying what was once a noble profession, but in reality they are medicine-men, devil-devil men, and they make for superstition and darkness. They are cheats and liars. But so debased and degraded are we, that we believe their lies. They, too, will increase in numbers as we increase, and they will strive to rule us. Yet are they liars and charlatans. Look at young Cross-Eyes, posing as a doctor, selling charms against sickness, giving good hunting, exchanging promises of fair weather for good meat and skins, sending the death-stick, performing a thousand abominations. Yet I say to you, that when he says he can do these things, he lies. I, Professor Smith, Professor James Howard Smith, say that he lies. I have told him so to his teeth. Why has he not sent me the death-stick? Because he knows that with me it is without avail. But you, Hare-Lip, so deeply are you sunk in black superstition that did you awake this night and find the death-stick beside you, you would surely die. And you would die, not because of any virtues in the stick, but because you are a savage with the dark and clouded mind of a savage.

“The doctors must be destroyed, and all that was lost must be discovered over again. Wherefore, earnestly, I repeat unto you certain things which you must remember and tell to your children after you. You must tell them that when water is made hot by fire, there resides in it a wonderful thing called steam, which is stronger than ten thousand men and which can do all man’s work for him. There are other very useful things. In the lightning flash resides a similarly strong servant of man, which was of old his slave and which some day will be his slave again.

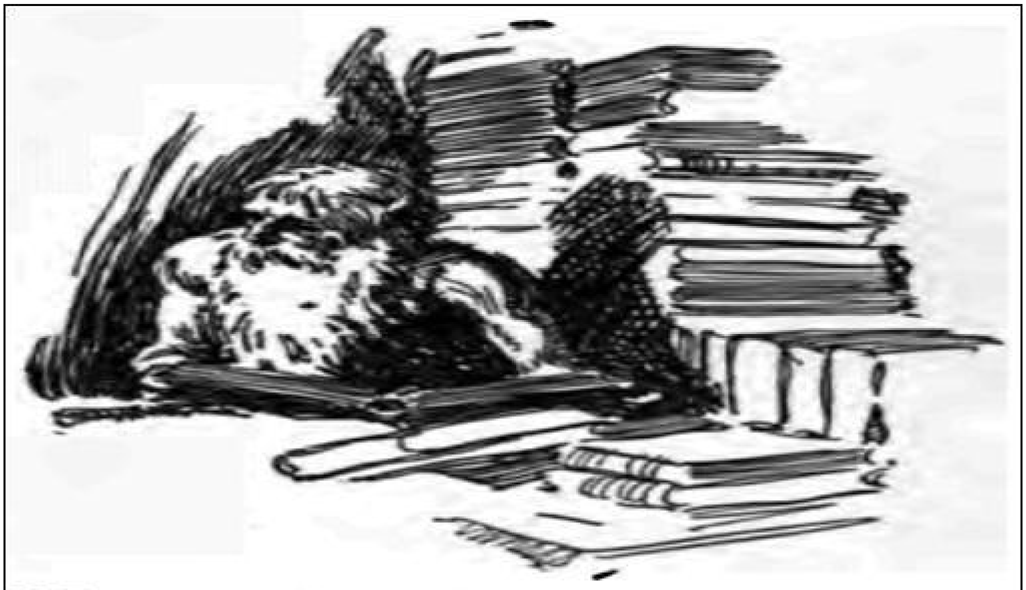

"IN THE CAVE I HAVE STORED MANY BOOKS"

"Quite a different thing is the alphabet. It is what enables me to know the meaning of fine markings, whereas you boys know only rude picture-writing. In that dry cave on Telegraph Hill, where you see me often go when the tribe is down by the sea, I have stored many books. In them is great wisdom. Also, with them, I have placed a key to the alphabet, so that one who knows picture-writing may also know print. Some day men will read again; and then, if no accident has befallen my cave, they will know that Professor James Howard Smith once lived and saved for them the knowledge of the ancients.

"There is another little device that men inevitably will rediscover. It is called gunpowder. It was what enabled us to kill surely and at long distances. Certain things which are found in the ground, when combined in the right proportions, will make this gunpowder. What these things are, I have forgotten, or else I never knew. But I wish I did know. Then would I make powder, and then would I certainly kill Cross-Eyes and rid the land of superstition — "

"After I am man-grown I am going to give Cross-Eyes all the goats, and meat, and skins I can get, so that he'll teach me to be a doctor," Hoo-Hoo asserted. "And when I know, I'll make everybody else sit up and take notice. They'll get down in the dirt to me, you bet."

The old man nodded his head solemnly, and murmured:

"Strange it is to hear the vestiges and remnants of the complicated Aryan speech falling from the lips of a filthy little skin-clad savage. All the world is topsy-turvy. And it has been topsy-turvy ever since the plague."

"You won't make me sit up," Hare-Lip boasted to the would-be medicine-man. "If I paid you for a sending of the death-stick and it didn't work, I'd bust in your head — understand, you Hoo-Hoo, you?"

"I'm going to get Granser to remember this here gunpowder stuff," Edwin said softly, "and then I'll have you all on the run. You, Hare-Lip, will do my fighting for me and get my meat for me, and you, Hoo-Hoo, will send the death-stick for me and make everybody afraid. And if I catch Hare-Lip trying to bust your head, Hoo-Hoo, I'll fix him with that same gunpowder. Granser ain't such a fool as you think, and I'm going to listen to him and some day I'll be boss over the whole bunch of you."

The old man shook his head sadly, and said:

"The gunpowder will come. Nothing can stop it — the same old story over and over. Man will increase, and men will fight. The gunpowder will enable men to kill millions of men, and in this way only, by fire and blood, will a new civilization, in some remote day, be evolved. And of what profit will it be? Just as the old civilization passed, so will the new. It may take fifty thousand years to build, but it will pass. All things pass. Only remain cosmic force and matter, ever in flux, ever acting and reacting and realizing the eternal types — the priest, the soldier, and the king. Out of the mouths of babes comes the wisdom of all the ages. Some will fight, some will rule, some will pray; and all the rest will toil and suffer sore while on their bleeding carcasses is reared again, and yet again, without end, the amazing beauty and surpassing wonder of the civilized state. It were just as well that I destroyed those cave-stored books — whether they remain or perish, all their old truths will be discovered, their old lies lived and handed down. What is the profit — "

Hare-Lip leaped to his feet, giving a quick glance at the pasturing goats and the afternoon sun.

"Gee!" he muttered to Edwin, "The old geezer gets more long-winded every day. Let's pull for camp."

While the other two, aided by the dogs, assembled the goats and started them for the trail through the forest, Edwin stayed by the old man and guided him in the same direction. When they reached the old right of way, Edwin stopped suddenly and looked back. Hare-Lip and Hoo-Hoo and the dogs and the goats passed on. Edwin was looking at a small herd of wild horses which had come down on the hard sand. There were at least twenty of them, young colts and yearlings and mares, led by a beautiful stallion which stood in the foam at the edge of the surf, with arched neck and bright wild eyes, sniffing the salt air from off the sea.

"What is it?" Granser queried.

"Horses," was the answer. "First time I ever seen 'em on the beach. It's the mountain lions getting thicker and thicker and driving 'em down."

The low sun shot red shafts of light, fan-shaped, up from a cloud-tumbled horizon. And close at hand, in the white waste of shore-lashed waters, the sea-lions, bellowing their old primeval chant, hauled up out of the sea on the black rocks and fought and loved.

"Come on, Granser," Edwin prompted. And old man and boy, skin-clad and barbaric, turned and went along the right of way into the forest in the wake of the goats.

THE END

A SON OF THE SUN

First published in 1912, this novel is set in the South Pacific at the beginning of the 20th century and consists of eight separate stories. David Grief is a forty year old English adventurer who came to the South seas years ago and became rich. As a businessman he owns offices in Sydney, but he is rarely there. Since his wealth spreads over a lot of islands, Grief has some adventures while going among these islands. London depicts the striking panorma of the South seas with adventurers, scoundrels, swindlers, pirates, and cannibals.

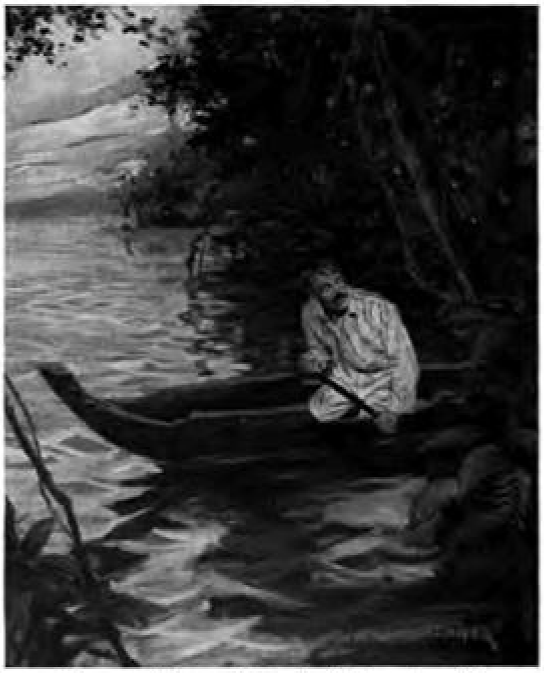

"It was a leaky and abandoned dugout, and he paddled slowly"

CONTENTS

Chapter One — A SON OF THE SUN
Chapter Two — THE PROUD GOAT OF ALOYSIUS PANKBURN
Chapter Three — THE DEVILS OF FUATINO
Chapter Four — THE JOKERS OF NEW GIBBON
Chapter Five — A LITTLE ACCOUNT WITH SWITHIN HALL
Chapter Six — A GOBOTO NIGHT
Chapter Seven — THE FEATHERS OF THE SUN
Chapter Eight — THE PEARLS OF PARLAY

Chapter One — A SON OF THE SUN

I

The *Willi-Waw* lay in the passage between the shore-reef and the outer-reef. From the latter came the low murmur of a lazy surf, but the sheltered stretch of water, not more than a hundred yards across to the white beach of pounded coral sand, was of glass-like smoothness. Narrow as was the passage, and anchored as she was in the shoalest place that gave room to swing, the *Willi-Waw's* chain rode up-and-down a clean hundred feet. Its course could be traced over the bottom of living coral. Like some monstrous snake, the rusty chain's slack wandered over the ocean floor, crossing and recrossing itself several times and fetching up finally at the idle anchor. Big rock-cod, dun and mottled, played warily in and out of the coral. Other fish, grotesque of form and colour, were brazenly indifferent, even when a big fish-shark drifted sluggishly along and sent the rock-cod scuttling for their favourite crevices.

On deck, for'ard, a dozen blacks pottered clumsily at scraping the teak rail. They were as inexpert at their work as so many monkeys. In fact they looked very much like monkeys of some enlarged and prehistoric type. Their eyes had in them the querulous plaintiveness of the monkey, their faces were even less symmetrical than the monkey's, and, hairless of body, they were far more ungarmented than any monkey, for clothes they had none. Decorated they were as no monkey ever was. In holes in their ears they carried short clay pipes, rings of turtle shell, huge plugs of wood, rusty wire nails, and empty rifle cartridges. The calibre of a Winchester rifle was the smallest hole an ear bore; some of the largest holes were inches in diameter, and any single ear averaged from three to half a dozen holes. Spikes and bodkins of polished bone or petrified shell were thrust through their noses. On the chest of one hung a white doorknob, on the chest of another the handle of a china cup, on the chest of a third the brass cogwheel of an alarm clock. They chattered in queer, falsetto voices, and, combined, did no more work than a single white sailor.

Aft, under an awning, were two white men. Each was clad in a six-penny undershirt and wrapped about the loins with a strip of cloth. Belted about the middle of each was a revolver and tobacco pouch. The sweat stood out on their skin in myriads of globules. Here and there the globules coalesced in tiny streams that dripped to the heated deck and almost immediately evaporated. The lean, dark-eyed man wiped his fingers wet with a stinging stream from his forehead and flung it from him with a weary curse. Wearily, and without hope, he gazed seaward across the outer-reef, and at the tops of the palms along the beach.

"Eight o'clock, an' hell don't get hot till noon," he complained. "Wisht to God for a breeze. Ain't we never goin' to get away?"

The other man, a slender German of five and twenty, with the massive forehead of a scholar and the tumble-home chin of a degenerate, did not trouble to reply. He was busy emptying powdered quinine into a cigarette paper. Rolling what was approximately fifty grains of the drug into a tight wad, he tossed it into his mouth and gulped it down without the aid of water.

"Wisht I had some whiskey," the first man panted, after a fifteen-minute interval of silence.

Another equal period elapsed ere the German enounced, relevant of nothing:

"I'm rotten with fever. I'm going to quit you, Griffiths, when we get to Sydney. No more tropics for me. I ought to known better when I signed on with you."

"You ain't been much of a mate," Griffiths replied, too hot himself to speak heatedly. "When the beach at Guvutu heard I'd shipped you, they all laughed. 'What? Jacobsen?' they said. 'You can't hide a square face of trade gin or sulphuric acid that he won't smell out!' You've certainly lived up to your reputation. I ain't had a drink for a fortnight, what of your snoopin' my supply."

"If the fever was as rotten in you as me, you'd understand," the mate whimpered.

"I ain't kickin'," Griffiths answered. "I only wisht God'd send me a drink, or a breeze of wind, or something. I'm ripe for my next chill to-morrow."

The mate proffered him the quinine. Rolling a fifty-grain dose, he popped the wad into his mouth and swallowed it dry.

"God! God!" he moaned. "I dream of a land somewheres where they ain't no quinine. Damned stuff of hell! I've scoffed tons of it in my time."

Again he quested seaward for signs of wind. The usual trade-wind clouds were absent, and the sun, still low in its climb to meridian, turned all the sky to heated brass. One seemed to see as well as feel this heat, and Griffiths sought vain relief by gazing shoreward. The white beach was a searing ache to his eyeballs. The palm trees, absolutely still, outlined flatly against the unrefreshing green of the packed jungle, seemed so much cardboard scenery. The little black boys, playing naked in the dazzle of sand and sun, were an affront and a hurt to the sun-sick man. He felt a sort of relief when one, running, tripped and fell on all-fours in the tepid sea-water.

An exclamation from the blacks for'ard sent both men glancing seaward. Around the near point of land, a quarter of a mile away and skirting the reef, a long black canoe paddled into sight.

"Gooma boys from the next bight," was the mate's verdict.

One of the blacks came aft, treading the hot deck with the unconcern of one whose bare feet felt no heat. This, too, was a hurt to Griffiths, and he closed his eyes. But the next moment they were open wide.

"White fella marster stop along Gooma boy," the black said.

Both men were on their feet and gazing at the canoe. Aft could be seen the unmistakable sombrero of a white man. Quick alarm showed itself on the face of the mate.

"It's Grief," he said.

Griffiths satisfied himself by a long look, then ripped out a wrathful oath.

"What's he doing up here?" he demanded of the mate, of the aching sea and sky, of the merciless blaze of sun, and of the whole superheated and implacable universe with which his fate was entangled.

The mate began to chuckle.

"I told you you couldn't get away with it," he said.

But Griffiths was not listening.

"With all his money, coming around like a rent collector," he chanted his outrage, almost in an ecstasy of anger. "He's loaded with money, he's stuffed with money, he's busting with money. I know for a fact he sold his Yringa plantations for three hundred thousand pounds. Bell told me so himself last time we were drunk at Guvutu. Worth millions and millions, and Shylocking me for what he wouldn't light his pipe with." He whirled on the mate. "Of course you told me so. Go on and say it, and keep on saying it. Now just what was it you did tell me so?"

"I told you you didn't know him, if you thought you could clear the Solomons without paying him. That man Grief is a devil, but he's straight. I know. I told you he'd throw a thousand quid away for the fun of it, and for sixpence fight like a shark for a rusty tin, I tell you I know. Didn't he give his *Balakula* to the Queensland Mission when they lost their *Evening Star* on San Cristobal? — and the *Balakula* worth three thousand pounds if she was worth a penny? And didn't he beat up Strothers till he lay abed a fortnight, all because of a difference of two pound ten in the account, and because Strothers got fresh and tried to make the gouge go through?"

"God strike me blind!" Griffiths cried in im-potency of rage.

The mate went on with his exposition.

"I tell you only a straight man can buck a straight man like him, and the man's never hit the Solomons that could do it. Men like you and me can't buck him. We're too rotten, too rotten all the way through. You've got plenty more than twelve hundred quid below. Pay him, and get it over with."

But Griffiths gritted his teeth and drew his thin lips tightly across them.

"I'll buck him," he muttered — more to himself and the brazen ball of sun than to the mate. He turned and half started to go below, then turned back again. "Look here, Jacob-sen. He won't be here for quarter of an hour. Are you with me? Will you stand by me?"

"Of course I'll stand by you. I've drunk all your whiskey, haven't I? What are you going to do?"

"I'm not going to kill him if I can help it. But I'm not going to pay. Take that flat."

Jacobsen shrugged his shoulders in calm acquiescence to fate, and Griffiths stepped to the companionway and went below.

II

Jacobsen watched the canoe across the low reef as it came abreast and passed on to the entrance of the passage. Griffiths, with ink-marks on right thumb and forefinger, returned on deck Fifteen minutes later the canoe came alongside. The man with the sombrero stood up.

"Hello, Griffiths!" he said. "Hello, Jacobsen!" With his hand on the rail he turned to his dusky crew. "You fella boy stop along canoe altogether."

As he swung over the rail and stepped on deck a hint of catlike litheness showed in the apparently heavy body. Like the other two, he was scantily clad. The cheap undershirt and white loin-cloth did not serve to hide the well put up body. Heavy muscled he was, but he was not lumped and hummocked by muscles. They were softly rounded, and, when they did move, slid softly and silkily under the smooth, tanned skin. Ardent suns had likewise tanned his face till it was swarthy as a Spaniard's. The yellow mustache appeared incongruous in the midst of such swarthiness, while the clear blue of the eyes produced a feeling of shock on the beholder. It was difficult to realize that the skin of this man had once been fair.

"Where did you blow in from?" Griffiths asked, as they shook hands. "I thought you were over in the Santa Cruz."

"I was," the newcomer answered. "But we made a quick passage. The *Wonder's* just around in the bight at Gooma, waiting for wind. Some of the bushmen reported a ketch here, and I just dropped around to see. Well, how goes it?"

"Nothing much. Copra sheds mostly empty, and not half a dozen tons of ivory nuts. The women all got rotten with fever and quit, and the men can't chase them back into the swamps. They're a sick crowd. I'd ask you to have a drink, but the mate finished off my last bottle. I wisht to God for a breeze of wind."

Grief, glancing with keen carelessness from one to the other, laughed.

"I'm glad the calm held," he said. "It enabled me to get around to see you. My supercargo dug up that little note of yours, and I brought it along."

The mate edged politely away, leaving his skipper to face his trouble.

"I'm sorry, Grief, damned sorry," Griffiths said, "but I ain't got it. You'll have to give me a little more time."

Grief leaned up against the companionway, surprise and pain depicted on his face.

"It does beat hell," he communed, "how men learn to lie in the Solomons. The truth's not in them. Now take Captain Jensen. I'd sworn by his truthfulness. Why, he told me only five days ago — do you want to know what he told me?"

Griffiths licked his lips.

"Go on."

"Why, he told me that you'd sold out — sold out everything, cleaned up, and was pulling out for the New Hebrides."

"He's a damned liar!" Griffiths cried hotly.

Grief nodded.

"I should say so. He even had the nerve to tell me that he'd bought two of your stations from you — Mauri and Kahula. Said he paid you seventeen hundred gold sovereigns, lock, stock and barrel, good will, trade-goods, credit, and copra."

Griffiths's eyes narrowed and glinted. The action was involuntary, and Grief noted it with a lazy sweep of his eyes.

"And Parsons, your trader at Hickimavi, told me that the Fulcrum Company had bought that station from you. Now what did he want to lie for?"

Griffiths, overwrought by sun and sickness, exploded. All his bitterness of spirit rose up in his face and twisted his mouth into a snarl.

"Look here, Grief, what's the good of playing with me that way? You know, and I know you know. Let it go at that. I *have* sold out, and I *am* getting away. And what are you going to do about it?"

Grief shrugged his shoulders, and no hint of resolve shadowed itself in his own face. His expression was as of one in a quandary.

"There's no law here," Griffiths pressed home his advantage. "Tulagi is a hundred and fifty miles away. I've got my clearance papers, and I'm on my own boat. There's nothing to stop me from sailing. You've got no right to stop me just because I owe you a little money. And by God! you can't stop me. Put that in your pipe."

The look of pained surprise on Grief's face deepened.

"You mean you're going to cheat me out of that twelve hundred, Griffiths?"

"That's just about the size of it, old man. And calling hard names won't help any. There's the wind coming. You'd better get overside before I pull out, or I'll tow your canoe under."

"Really, Griffiths, you sound almost right. I can't stop you." Grief fumbled in the pouch that hung on his revolver-belt and pulled out a crumpled official-looking paper. "But maybe this will stop you. And it's something for *your* pipe. Smoke up."

"What is it?"

"An admiralty warrant. Running to the New Hebrides won't save you. It can be served anywhere."

Griffiths hesitated and swallowed, when he had finished glancing at the document. With knit brows he pondered this new phase of the situation. Then, abruptly, as he looked up, his face relaxed into all frankness.

"You were cleverer than I thought, old man," he said. "You've got me hip and thigh. I ought to have known better than to try and beat you. Jacobsen told me I couldn't, and I wouldn't listen to him. But he was right, and so are you. I've got the money below. Come on down and we'll settle."

He started to go down, then stepped aside to let his visitor precede him, at the same time glancing seaward to where the dark flaw of wind was quickening the water.

"Heave short," he told the mate. "Get up sail and stand ready to break out."

As Grief sat down on the edge of the mate's bunk, close against and facing the tiny table, he noticed the butt of a revolver just projecting from under the pillow. On the table, which hung on hinges from the for'ard bulkhead, were pen and ink, also a battered log-book.

"Oh, I don't mind being caught in a dirty trick," Griffiths was saying defiantly. "I've been in the tropics too long. I'm a sick man, a damn sick man. And the whiskey, and the sun, and the fever have made me sick in morals, too. Nothing's too mean and low for me now, and I can understand why the niggers eat each other, and take heads, and such things. I could do it myself. So I call trying to do you out of that small account a pretty mild trick. Wisht I could offer you a drink."

Grief made no reply, and the other busied himself in attempting to unlock a large and much-dented cash-box. From on deck came falsetto cries and the creak and rattle of blocks as the black crew swung up mainsail and driver. Grief watched a large cockroach crawling over the greasy paintwork. Griffiths, with an oath of irritation, carried the cash-box to the companion-steps for better light. Here, on his feet, and bending over the box, his back to his visitor, his hands shot out to the rifle that stood beside the steps, and at the same moment he whirled about.

"Now don't you move a muscle," he commanded.

Grief smiled, elevated his eyebrows quizzically, and obeyed. His left hand rested on the bunk beside him; his right hand lay on the table.

His revolver hung on his right hip in plain sight. But in his mind was recollection of the other revolver under the pillow.

"Huh!" Griffiths sneered. "You've got everybody in the Solomons hypnotized, but let me tell you you ain't got me. Now I'm going to throw you off my vessel, along with your admiralty warrant, but first you've got to do something. Lift up that log-book."

The other glanced curiously at the log-book, but did not move.

"I tell you I'm a sick man, Grief; and I'd as soon shoot you as smash a cockroach. Lift up that log-book, I say."

Sick he did look, his lean face working nervously with the rage that possessed him. Grief lifted the book and set it aside. Beneath lay a written sheet of tablet paper.

"Read it," Griffiths commanded. "Read it aloud."

Grief obeyed; but while he read, the fingers of his left hand began an infinitely slow and patient crawl toward the butt of the weapon under the pillow.

"On board the ketch Willi-Waw, Bombi Bight, Island of Anna, Solomon Islands," he read. "Know all men by these presents that I do hereby sign off and release in full, for due value received, all debts whatsoever owing to me by Harrison J. Griffiths, who has this day paid to me twelve hundred pounds sterling."

"With that receipt in my hands," Griffiths grinned, "your admiralty warrant's not worth the paper it's written on. Sign it."

"It won't do any good, Griffiths," Grief said. "A document signed under compulsion won't hold before the law."

"In that case, what objection have you to signing it then?"

"Oh, none at all, only that I might save you heaps of trouble by not signing it."

Grief's fingers had gained the revolver, and, while he talked, with his right hand he played with the pen and with his left began slowly and imperceptibly drawing the weapon to his side. As his hand finally closed upon it, second finger on trigger and forefinger laid past the cylinder and along the barrel, he wondered what luck he would have at left-handed snap-shooting.

"Don't consider me," Griffiths gibed. "And just remember Jacobsen will testify that he saw me pay the money over. Now sign, sign in full, at the bottom, David Grief, and date it."

From on deck came the jar of sheet-blocks and the rat-tat-tat of the reef-points against the canvas. In the cabin they could feel the *Willi-Waw* heel, swing into the wind, and right. David Grief still hesitated. From for'ard came the jerking rattle of headsail halyards through the sheaves. The little vessel heeled, and through the cabin walls came the gurgle and wash of water.

"Get a move on!" Griffiths cried. "The anchor's out."

The muzzle of the rifle, four feet away, was bearing directly on him, when Grief resolved to act. The rifle wavered as Griffiths kept his balance in the uncertain puffs of the first of the wind. Grief took advantage of the wavering, made as if to sign the paper, and at the same instant, like a cat, exploded into swift and intricate action. As he ducked low and leaped forward with his body, his left hand flashed from under the screen of the table, and so accurately-timed was the single stiff pull on the self-cocking trigger that the cartridge discharged as the muzzle came forward. Not a whit behind was Griffiths. The muzzle of his weapon dropped to meet the ducking body, and, shot at snap direction, rifle and revolver went off simultaneously.

Grief felt the sting and sear of a bullet across the skin of his shoulder, and knew that his own shot had missed. His forward rush carried him to Griffiths before another shot could be fired, both of whose arms, still holding the rifle, he locked with a low tackle about the body. He shoved the revolver muzzle, still in his left hand, deep into the other's abdomen. Under the press of his anger and the sting of his abraded skin, Grief's finger was lifting the hammer, when the wave of anger passed and he recollected himself. Down the companion-way came indignant cries from the Gooma boys in his canoe.

Everything was happening in seconds. There was apparently no pause in his actions as he gathered Griffiths in his arms and carried him up the steep steps in a sweeping rush. Out into the blinding glare of sunshine he came. A black stood grinning at the wheel, and the *Willi-Waw*, heeled over from the wind, was foaming along. Rapidly dropping astern was his Gooma canoe. Grief turned his head. From amidships, revolver in hand, the mate was springing toward him. With two jumps, still holding the helpless Griffiths, Grief leaped to the rail and overboard.

Both men were grappled together as they went down; but Grief, with a quick updraw of his knees to the other's chest, broke the grip and forced him down. With both feet on Griffiths's shoulder, he forced him still deeper, at the same time driving himself to the surface. Scarcely had his head broken into the sunshine when two splashes of water, in quick succession and within a foot of his face, advertised that Jacobsen knew how to handle a revolver. There was a chance for no third shot, for Grief, filling his lungs with air, sank down. Under water he struck out, nor did he come up till he saw the canoe and the bubbling paddles overhead. As he climbed aboard, the *Wlli-Waw* went into the wind to come about.

“Washee-washee!” Grief cried to his boys. “You fella make-um beach quick fella time!”

In all shamelessness, he turned his back on the battle and ran for cover. The *Willi-Waw*, compelled to deaden way in order to pick up its captain, gave Grief his chance for a lead. The canoe struck the beach full-tilt, with every paddle driving, and they leaped out and ran across the sand for the trees. But before they gained the shelter, three times the sand kicked into puffs ahead of them. Then they dove into the green safety of the jungle.

Grief watched the *Willi-Waw* haul up close, go out the passage, then slack its sheets as it headed south with the wind abeam. As it went out of sight past the point he could see the topsail being broken out. One of the Gooma boys, a black, nearly fifty years of age, hideously marred and scarred by skin diseases and old wounds, looked up into his face and grinned.

“My word,” the boy commented, “that fella skipper too much cross along you.”

Grief laughed, and led the way back across the sand to the canoe.

III

How many millions David Grief was worth no man in the Solomons knew, for his holdings and ventures were everywhere in the great South Pacific. From Samoa to New Guinea and even to the north of the Line his plantations were scattered. He possessed pearling concessions in the Paumotus. Though his name did not appear, he was in truth the German company that traded in the French Marquesas. His trading stations were in strings in all the groups, and his vessels that operated them were many. He owned atolls so remote and tiny that his smallest schooners and ketches visited the solitary agents but once a year.

In Sydney, on Castlereagh Street, his offices occupied three floors. But he was rarely in those offices. He preferred always to be on the go amongst the islands, nosing out new investments, inspecting and shaking up old ones, and rubbing shoulders with fun and adventure in a thousand strange guises. He bought the wreck of the great steamship *Gavonne* for a song, and in salving it achieved the impossible and cleaned up a quarter of a million. In the Louisiades he planted the first commercial rubber, and in Bora-Bora he ripped out the South Sea cotton and put the jolly islanders at the work of planting cacao. It was he who took the deserted island of Lallu-Ka, colonized it with Polynesians from the Ontong-Java Atoll, and planted four thousand acres to cocoanuts. And it was he who reconciled the warring chief-stocks of Tahiti and swung the great deal of the phosphate island of Hikihu.

His own vessels recruited his contract labour. They brought Santa Cruz boys to the New Hebrides, New Hebrides boys to the Banks, and the head-hunting cannibals of Malaita to the plantations of New Georgia. From Tonga to the Gilberts and on to the far Louisiades his recruiters combed the islands for labour. His keels plowed all ocean stretches. He owned three steamers on regular island runs, though he rarely elected to travel in them, preferring the wilder and more primitive way of wind and sail.

At least forty years of age, he looked no more than thirty. Yet beachcombers remembered his advent among the islands a score of years before, at which time the yellow mustache was already budding silkily on his lip. Unlike other white men in the tropics, he was there because he liked it. His protective skin pigmentation was excellent. He had been born to the sun. One he was in ten thousand in the matter of sun-resistance. The invisible and high-velocity light waves failed to bore into him. Other white men were pervious. The sun drove through their skins, ripping and smashing tissues and nerves, till they became sick in mind and body, tossed most of the Decalogue overboard, descended to beastliness, drank themselves into quick graves, or survived so savagely that war vessels were sometimes sent to curb their license.

But David Grief was a true son of the sun, and he flourished in all its ways. He merely became browner with the passing of the years, though in the brown was the hint of golden tint that glows in the skin of the Polynesian. Yet his blue eyes retained their blue, his mustache its yellow, and the lines of his face were those which had persisted through the centuries in his English race. English he was in blood, yet those that thought they knew contended he was at least American born. Unlike them, he had not come out to the South Seas seeking hearth and saddle of his own. In fact, he had brought hearth and saddle with him. His advent had been in the Paumotus. He arrived on board a tiny schooner yacht, master and owner, a youth questing romance and adventure along the sun-washed path of the tropics. He also arrived in a hurricane, the giant waves of which deposited him and yacht and all in the thick of a cocoanut grove three hundred yards beyond the surf. Six months later he was rescued by a pearling cutter. But the sun had got into his blood. At Tahiti, instead of taking a steamer home, he bought a schooner, outfitted her with trade-goods and divers, and went for a cruise through the Dangerous Archipelago.

As the golden tint burned into his face it poured molten out of the ends of his fingers. His was the golden touch, but he played the game, not for the gold, but for the game's sake. It was a man's game, the rough contacts and fierce give and take of the adventurers of his own blood and of half the bloods of Europe and the rest of the world, and it was a good game; but over and beyond was his love of all the other things that go to make up a South Seas rover's life — the smell of the reef; the infinite exquisiteness of the shoals of living coral in the mirror-surfaced lagoons; the crashing sunrises of raw colours spread with lawless cunning; the palm-tufted islets set in turquoise deeps; the tonic wine of the trade-winds; the heave and send of the orderly, crested seas; the moving deck beneath his feet, the straining canvas overhead; the flower-garlanded, golden-glowing men and maids of Polynesia, half-children and half-gods; and even the howling savages of Melanesia, head-hunters and man-eaters, half-devil and all beast.

And so, favoured child of the sun, out of munificence of energy and sheer joy of living, he, the man of many millions, forbore on his far way to play the game with Harrison J. Griffiths for a paltry sum. It was his whim, his desire, his expression of self and of the sun-warmth that poured through him. It was fun, a joke, a problem, a bit of play on which life was lightly hazarded for the joy of the playing.

IV

The early morning found the *Wonder* laying close-hauled along the coast of Guadalcanal She moved lazily through the water under the dying breath of the land breeze. To the east, heavy masses of clouds promised a renewal of the southeast trades, accompanied by sharp puffs and rain squalls. Ahead, laying along the coast on the same course as the *Wonder*, and being slowly overtaken, was a small ketch. It was not the *Willi-Waw*, however, and Captain Ward, on the *Wonder*, putting down his glasses, named it the *Kauri*.

Grief, just on deck from below, sighed regretfully.

"If it had only been the *Willi-Waw*" he said.

"You do hate to be beaten," Denby, the supercargo, remarked sympathetically.

"I certainly do." Grief paused and laughed with genuine mirth. "It's my firm conviction that Griffiths is a rogue, and that he treated me quite scurvily yesterday. 'Sign,' he says, 'sign in full, at the bottom, and date it,' And Jacobsen, the little rat, stood in with him. It was rank piracy, the days of Bully Hayes all over again."

"If you weren't my employer, Mr. Grief, I'd like to give you a piece of my mind," Captain Ward broke in.

"Go on and spit it out," Grief encouraged.

"Well, then — " The captain hesitated and cleared his throat. "With all the money you've got, only a fool would take the risk you did with those two curs. What do you do it for?"

"Honestly, I don't know, Captain. I just want to, I suppose. And can you give any better reason for anything you do?"

"You'll get your bally head shot off some fine day," Captain Ward growled in answer, as he stepped to the binnacle and took the bearing of a peak which had just thrust its head through the clouds that covered Guadalcanar.

The land breeze strengthened in a last effort, and the *Wonder*, slipping swiftly through the water, ranged alongside the *Kauri* and began to go by. Greetings flew back and forth, then David Grief called out:

"Seen anything of the *Willi-Waw*?"

The captain, slouch-hatted and barelegged, with a rolling twist hitched the faded blue *lava-lava* tighter around his waist and spat tobacco juice overside.

"Sure," he answered. "Griffiths lay at Savo last night, taking on pigs and yams and filling his water-tanks. Looked like he was going for a long cruise, but he said no. Why? Did you want to see him?"

"Yes; but if you see him first don't tell him you've seen me."

The captain nodded and considered, and walked for'ard on his own deck to keep abreast of the faster vessel.

“Say!” he called. “Jacobsen told me they were coming down this afternoon to Gabera. Said they were going to lay there to-night and take on sweet potatoes.”

“Gabera has the only leading lights in the Solomons,” Grief said, when his schooner had drawn well ahead. “Is that right, Captain Ward?”

The captain nodded.

“And the little bight just around the point on this side, it’s a rotten anchorage, isn’t it?”

“No anchorage. All coral patches and shoals, and a bad surf. That’s where the *Molly* went to pieces three years ago.”

Grief stared straight before him with lustreless eyes for a full minute, as if summoning some vision to his inner sight. Then the corners of his eyes wrinkled and the ends of his yellow mustache lifted in a smile.

“We’ll anchor at Gabera,” he said. “And run in close to the little bight this side. I want you to drop me in a whaleboat as you go by. Also, give me six boys, and serve out rifles. I’ll be back on board before morning.”

The captain’s face took on an expression of suspicion, which swiftly slid into one of reproach.

“Oh, just a little fun, skipper,” Grief protested with the apologetic air of a schoolboy caught in mischief by an elder.

Captain Ward grunted, but Denby was all alertness.

“I’d like to go along, Mr. Grief,” he said.

Grief nodded consent.

“Bring some axes and bush-knives,” he said. “And, oh, by the way, a couple of bright lanterns. See they’ve got oil in them.”

V

An hour before sunset the *Wonder* tore by the little bight. The wind had freshened, and a lively sea was beginning to make. The shoals toward the beach were already white with the churn of water, while those farther out as yet showed no more sign than of discoloured water. As the schooner went into the wind and backed her jib and staysail the whaleboat was swung out. Into it leaped six breech-clouted Santa Cruz boys, each armed with a rifle. Denby, carrying the lanterns, dropped into the stern-sheets. Grief, following, paused on the rail.

“Pray for a dark night, skipper,” he pleaded.

“You’ll get it,” Captain Ward answered. “There’s no moon anyway, and there won’t be any sky. She’ll be a bit squally, too.”

The forecast sent a radiance into Grief’s face, making more pronounced the golden tint of his sunburn. He leaped down beside the supercargo.

“Cast off!” Captain Ward ordered. “Draw the headsails! Put your wheel over! There! Steady! Take that course!”

The *Wonder* filled away and ran on around the point for Gabera, while the whaleboat, pulling six oars and steered by Grief, headed for the beach. With superb boatmanship he threaded the narrow, tortuous channel which no craft larger than a whaleboat could negotiate, until the shoals and patches showed seaward and they grounded on the quiet, rippling beach.

The next hour was filled with work. Moving about among the wild cocoanuts and jungle brush, Grief selected the trees.

“Chop this fella tree; chop that fella tree,” he told his blacks. “No chop that other fella,” he said, with a shake of head.

In the end, a wedge-shaped segment of jungle was cleared. Near to the beach remained one long palm. At the apex of the wedge stood another. Darkness was falling as the lanterns were lighted, carried up the two trees, and made fast.

“That outer lantern is too high.” David Grief studied it critically. “Put it down about ten feet, Denby.”

VI

The *Willi-Waw* was tearing through the water with a bone in her teeth, for the breath of the passing squall was still strong. The blacks were swinging up the big mainsail, which had been lowered on the run when the puff was at its height. Jacobsen, superintending the operation, ordered them to throw the halyards down on deck and stand by, then went for’ard on the lee-bow and joined Griffiths. Both men stared with wide-strained eyes at the blank wall of darkness through which they were flying, their ears tense for the sound of surf on the invisible shore. It was by this sound that they were for the moment steering.

The wind fell lighter, the scud of clouds thinned and broke, and in the dim glimmer of starlight loomed the jungle-clad coast. Ahead, and well on the lee-bow, appeared a jagged rock-point. Both men strained to it.

“Amboy Point,” Griffiths announced. “Plenty of water close up. Take the wheel, Jacobsen, till we set a course. Get a move on!”

Running aft, barefooted and barelegged, the rainwater dripping from his scant clothing, the mate displaced the black at the wheel.

“How’s she heading?” Griffiths called.

“South-a-half-west!”

“Let her come up south-by-west! Got it?”

“Right on it!”

Griffiths considered the changed relation of Amboy Point to the *Willi-Waw*’s course.

“And a-half-west!” he cried.

“And a-half-west!” came the answer. “Right on it!”

“Steady! That’ll do!”

“Steady she is!” Jacobsen turned the wheel over to the savage. “You steer good fella, savve?” he warned. “No good fella, I knock your damn black head off.”

Again he went for’ard and joined the other, and again the cloud-scud thickened, the star-glimmer vanished, and the wind rose and screamed in another squall.

“Watch that mainsail!” Griffiths yelled in the mate’s ear, at the same time studying the ketch’s behaviour.

Over she pressed, and lee-rail under, while he measured the weight of the wind and quested its easement. The tepid sea-water, with here and there tiny globules of phosphorescence, washed about his ankles and knees. The wind screamed a higher note, and every shroud and stay sharply chorused an answer as the *Willi-Waw* pressed farther over and down.

“Down mainsail!” Griffiths yelled, springing to the peak-halyards, thrusting away the black who held on, and casting off the turn.

Jacobsen, at the throat-halyards, was performing the like office. The big sail rattled down, and the blacks, with shouts and yells, threw themselves on the battling canvas. The mate, finding one skulking in the darkness, flung his bunched knuckles into the creature’s face and drove him to his work.

The squall held at its high pitch, and under her small canvas the *Willi-Waw* still foamed along. Again the two men stood for’ard and vainly watched in the horizontal drive of rain.

“We’re all right,” Griffiths said. “This rain won’t last. We can hold this course till we pick up the lights. Anchor in thirteen fathoms. You’d better overhaul forty-five on a night like this. After that get the gaskets on the mainsail. We won't need it."

Half an hour afterward his weary eyes were rewarded by a glimpse of two lights.

"There they are, Jacobsen. I'll take the wheel. Run down the fore-staysail and stand by to let go. Make the niggers jump."

Aft, the spokes of the wheel in his hands, Griffiths held the course till the two lights came in line, when he abruptly altered and headed directly in for them. He heard the tumble and roar of the surf, but decided it was farther away — as it should be, at Gabera.

He heard the frightened cry of the mate, and was grinding the wheel down with all his might, when the *Willi-Waw* struck. At the same instant her mainmast crashed over the bow. Five wild minutes followed. All hands held on while the hull upheaved and smashed down on the brittle coral and the warm seas swept over them. Grinding and crunching, the *Willi-Waw* worked itself clear over the shoal patch and came solidly to rest in the comparatively smooth and shallow channel beyond.

Griffiths sat down on the edge of the cabin, head bowed on chest, in silent wrath and bitterness. Once he lifted his face to glare at the two white lights, one above the other and perfectly in line.

"There they are," he said. "And this isn't Gabera. Then what the hell is it?"

Though the surf still roared and across the shoal flung its spray and upper wash over them, the wind died down and the stars came out. Shoreward came the sound of oars.

"What have you had? — an earthquake?" Griffiths called out. "The bottom's all changed. I've anchored here a hundred times in thirteen fathoms. Is that you, Wilson?"

A whaleboat came alongside, and a man climbed over the rail. In the faint light Griffiths found an automatic Colt's thrust into his face, and, looking up, saw David Grief.

"No, you never anchored here before," Grief laughed. "Gabera's just around the point, where I'll be as soon as I've collected that little sum of twelve hundred pounds. We won't bother for the receipt. I've your note here, and I'll just return it."

"You did this!" Griffiths cried, springing to his feet in a sudden gust of rage. "You faked those leading lights! You've wrecked me, and by — "

“Steady! Steady!” Grief’s voice was cool and menacing. “I’ll trouble you for that twelve hundred, please.”

To Griffiths, a vast impotence seemed to descend upon him. He was overwhelmed by a profound disgust — disgust for the sunlands and the sun-sickness, for the futility of all his endeavour, for this blue-eyed, golden-tinted, superior man who defeated him on all his ways.

“Jacobsen,” he said, “will you open the cash-box and pay this — this bloodsucker — twelve hundred pounds?”

Chapter Two — THE PROUD GOAT OF ALOYSIUS PANKBURN

I

Quick eye that he had for the promise of adventure, prepared always for the unexpected to leap out at him from behind the nearest cocoanut tree, nevertheless David Grief received no warning when he laid eyes on Aloysius Pankburn. It was on the little steamer *Berthe*. Leaving his schooner to follow, Grief had taken passage for the short run across from Raiatea to Papeete. When he first saw Aloysius Pankburn, that somewhat fuddled gentleman was drinking a lonely cocktail at the tiny bar between decks next to the barber shop. And when Grief left the barber's hands half an hour later Aloysius Pankburn was still hanging over the bar still drinking by himself.

Now it is not good for man to drink alone, and Grief threw sharp scrutiny into his pass-ing glance. He saw a well-built young man of thirty, well-featured, well-dressed, and evidently, in the world's catalogue, a gentleman. But in the faint hint of slovenliness, in the shaking, eager hand that spilled the liquor, and in the nervous, vacillating eyes, Grief read the unmistakable marks of the chronic alcoholic.

After dinner he chanced upon Pankburn again. This time it was on deck, and the young man, clinging to the rail and peering into the distance at the dim forms of a man and woman in two steamer chairs drawn closely together, was crying, drunkenly. Grief noted that the man's arm was around the woman's waist. Aloysius Pankburn looked on and cried.

"Nothing to weep about," Grief said genially.

Pankburn looked at him, and gushed tears of profound self-pity.

"It's hard," he sobbed. "Hard. Hard. That man's my business manager. I employ him. I pay him a good screw. And that's how he earns it."

"In that case, why don't you put a stop to it?" Grief advised.

"I can't. She'd shut off my whiskey. She's my trained nurse."

"Fire *her*, then, and drink your head off."

"I can't. He's got all my money. If I did, he wouldn't give me sixpence to buy a drink with."

This woful possibility brought a fresh wash of tears. Grief was interested. Of all unique situations he could never have imagined such a one as this.

“They were engaged to take care of me,” Pankburn was blubbering, “to keep me away from the drink. And that’s the way they do it, lollygagging all about the ship and letting me drink myself to death. It isn’t right, I tell you. It isn’t right. They were sent along with me for the express purpose of not letting me drink, and they let me drink to swinishness as long as I leave them alone. If I complain they threaten not to let me have another drop. What can a poor devil do? My death will be on their heads, that’s all. Come on down and join me.”

He released his clutch on the rail, and would have fallen had Grief not caught his arm. He seemed to undergo a transformation, to stiffen physically, to thrust his chin forward aggressively, and to glint harshly in his eyes.

“I won’t let them kill me. And they’ll be sorry. I’ve offered them fifty thousand — later on, of course. They laughed. They don’t know. But I know.” He fumbled in his coat pocket and drew forth an object that flashed in the faint light. “They don’t know the meaning of that. But I do.” He looked at Grief with abrupt suspicion. “What do you make out of it, eh? What do you make out of it?”

David Grief caught a swift vision of an alcoholic degenerate putting a very loving young couple to death with a copper spike, for a copper spike was what he held in his hand, an evident old-fashioned ship-fastening.

“My mother thinks I’m up here to get cured of the booze habit. She doesn’t know. I bribed the doctor to prescribe a voyage. When we get to Papeete my manager is going to charter a schooner and away we’ll sail. But they don’t dream. They think it’s the booze. I know. I only know. Good night, sir. I’m going to bed — unless — er — you’ll join me in a night cap. One last drink, you know.”

II

In the week that followed at Papeete Grief caught numerous and bizarre glimpses of Aloysius Pankburn. So did everybody else in the little island capital; for neither the beach nor Lavina’s boarding house had been so scandalized in years. In midday, bareheaded, clad only in swimming trunks, Aloysius Pankburn ran down the main street from Lavina’s to the water front. He put on the gloves with a fireman from the *Berthe* in a scheduled four-round bout at the *Folies Bergères*, and was knocked out in the second round. He tried insanely to drown himself in a two-foot pool of water, dived drunkenly and splendidly from fifty feet up in the rigging of the *Mariposa* lying at the wharf, and chartered the cutter *Toerau* at more than her purchase price and was only saved by his manager's refusal financially to ratify the agreement. He bought out the old blind leper at the market, and sold breadfruit, plantains, and sweet potatoes at such cut-rates that the gendarmes were called out to break the rush of bargain-hunting natives. For that matter, three times the gendarmes arrested him for riotous behaviour, and three times his manager ceased from love-making long enough to pay the fines imposed by a needy colonial administration.

Then the *Mariposa* sailed for San Francisco, and in the bridal suite were the manager and the trained nurse, fresh-married. Before departing, the manager had thoughtfully bestowed eight five-pound banknotes on Aloysius, with the foreseen result that Aloysius awoke several days later to find himself broke and perilously near to delirium tremens. Lavina, famed for her good heart even among the driftage of South Pacific rogues and scamps, nursed him around and never let it filter into his returning intelligence that there was neither manager nor money to pay his board.

It was several evenings after this that David Grief, lounging under the after deck awning of the *Kittiwake* and idly scanning the meagre columns of the Papeete *Avant-Coureur*, sat suddenly up and almost rubbed his eyes. It was unbelievable, but there it was. The old South Seas Romance was not dead. He read:

> WANTED — To exchange a half interest in buried treasure,
> worth five million francs, for transportation for one to an
> unknown island in the Pacific and facilities for carrying
> away the loot. Ask for FOLLY, at Lavina's.

Grief looked at his watch. It was early yet, only eight o'clock.

"Mr. Carlsen," he called in the direction of a glowing pipe. "Get the crew for the whale-boat. I'm going ashore."

The husky voice of the Norwegian mate was raised for'ard, and half a dozen strapping Rapa Islanders ceased their singing and manned the boat.

"I came to see Folly, Mr. Folly, I imagine," David Grief told Lavina.

He noted the quick interest in her eyes as she turned her head and flung a command in native across two open rooms to the outstanding kitchen. A few minutes later a barefooted native girl padded in and shook her head.

Lavina's disappointment was evident.

"You're stopping aboard the *Kittiwake*, aren't you?" she said. "I'll tell him you called."

"Then it is a *he?*" Grief queried.

Lavina nodded.

"I hope you can do something for him, Captain Grief. I'm only a good-natured woman. I don't know. But he's a likable man, and he may be telling the truth; I don't know. You'll know. You're not a soft-hearted fool like me. Can't I mix you a cocktail?"

III

Back on board his schooner and dozing in a deck chair under a three-months-old magazine, David Grief was aroused by a sobbing, slubbering noise from overside. He opened his eyes. From the Chilian cruiser, a quarter of a mile away, came the stroke of eight bells. It was midnight. From overside came a splash and another slubbering noise. To him it seemed half amphibian, half the sounds of a man crying to himself and querulously chanting his sorrows to the general universe.

A jump took David Grief to the low rail. Beneath, centred about the slubbering noise, was an area of agitated phosphorescence. Leaning over, he locked his hand under the armpit of a man, and, with pull and heave and quick-changing grips, he drew on deck the naked form of Aloysius Pankburn.

"I didn't have a sou-markee," he complained. "I had to swim it, and I couldn't find your gangway. It was very miserable. Pardon me. If you have a towel to put about my middle, and a good stiff drink, I'll be more myself. I'm Mr. Folly, and you're the Captain Grief, I presume, who called on me when I was out. No, I'm not drunk. Nor am I cold. This isn't shivering. Lavina allowed me only two drinks to-day. I'm on the edge of the horrors, that's all, and I was beginning to see things when I couldn't find the gangway. If you'll take me below I'll be very grateful. You are the only one that answered my advertisement."

He was shaking pitiably in the warm night, and down in the cabin, before he got his towel, Grief saw to it that a half-tumbler of whiskey was in his hand.

"Now fire ahead," Grief said, when he had got his guest into a shirt and a pair of duck trousers. "What's this advertisement of yours? I'm listening."

Pankburn looked at the whiskey bottle, but Grief shook his head.

"All right, Captain, though I tell you on whatever is left of my honour that I am not drunk — not in the least. Also, what I shall tell you is true, and I shall tell it briefly, for it is clear to me that you are a man of affairs and action. Likewise, your chemistry is good. To you alcohol has never been a million maggots gnawing at every cell of you. You've never been to hell. I am there now. I am scorching. Now listen.

"My mother is alive. She is English. I was born in Australia. I was educated at York and Yale. I am a master of arts, a doctor of philosophy, and I am no good. Furthermore, I am an alcoholic. I have been an athlete. I used to swan-dive a hundred and ten feet in the clear. I hold several amateur records. I am a fish. I learned the crawl-stroke from the first of the Cavilles. I have done thirty miles in a rough sea. I have another record. I have punished more whiskey than any man of my years. I will steal sixpence from you for the price of a drink. Finally, I will tell you the truth.

"My father was an American — an Annapolis man. He was a midshipman in the War of the Rebellion. In '66 he was a lieutenant on the *Suwanee*. Her captain was Paul Shirley. In '66 the Suwanee coaled at an island in the Pacific which I do not care to mention, under a protectorate which did not exist then and which shall be nameless. Ashore, behind the bar of a public house, my father saw three copper spikes — ship's spikes."

David Grief smiled quietly.

"And now I can tell you the name of the coaling station and of the protectorate that came afterward," he said.

"And of the three spikes?" Pankburn asked with equal quietness. "Go ahead, for they are in my possession now."

"Certainly. They were behind German Oscar's bar at Peenoo-Peenee. Johnny Black brought them there from off his schooner the night he died. He was just back from a long cruise to the westward, fishing beche-de-mer and sandalwood trading. All the beach knows the tale."

Pankburn shook his head.

"Go on," he urged.

"It was before my time, of course," Grief explained. "I only tell what I've heard. Next came the Ecuadoran cruiser, of all directions, in from the westward, and bound home. Her officers recognized the spikes. Johnny

Black was dead. They got hold of his mate and logbook. Away to the westward went she. Six months after, again bound home, she dropped in at Peenoo-Peenee. She had failed, and the tale leaked out."

"When the revolutionists were marching on Guayaquil," Pankburn took it up, "the federal officers, believing a defence of the city hopeless, salted down the government treasure chest, something like a million dollars gold, but all in English coinage, and put it on board the American schooner *Flirt*. They were going to run at daylight. The American captain skinned out in the middle of the night. Go on."

"It's an old story," Grief resumed. "There was no other vessel in the harbour. The federal leaders couldn't run. They put their backs to the wall and held the city. Rohjas Salced, making a forced march from Quito, raised the siege. The revolution was broken, and the one ancient steamer that constituted the Ecuadoran navy was sent in pursuit of the *Flirt*. They caught her, between the Banks Group and the New Hebrides, hove to and flying distress signals. The captain had died the day before — blackwater fever."

"And the mate?" Pankburn challenged.

"The mate had been killed a week earlier by the natives on one of the Banks, when they sent a boat in for water. There were no navigators left. The men were put to the torture. It was beyond international law. They wanted to confess, but couldn't. They told of the three spikes in the trees on the beach, but where the island was they did not know. To the westward, far to the westward, was all they knew. The tale now goes two ways. One is that they all died under the torture. The other is that the survivors were swung at the yardarm. At any rate, the Ecuadoran cruiser went home without the treasure. Johnny Black brought the three spikes to Peenoo-Peenee, and left them at German Oscar's, but how and where he found them he never told."

Pankburn looked hard at the whiskey bottle.

"Just two fingers," he whimpered.

Grief considered, and poured a meagre drink. Pankburn's eyes sparkled, and he took new lease of life.

"And this is where I come in with the missing details," he said. "Johnny Black did tell. He told my father. Wrote him from Levuka, before he came on to die at Peenoo-Peenee. My father had saved his life one rough-house night in Valparaiso. A Chink pearler, out of Thursday Island, prospecting for new grounds to the north of New Guinea, traded for the three spikes with a nigger. Johnny Black bought them for copper weight. He didn't dream any more than the Chink, but coming back he stopped for hawksbill turtle at the very beach where you say the mate of the *Flirt* was killed. Only he wasn't killed. The Banks Islanders held him prisoner, and he was dying of necrosis of the jawbone, caused by an arrow wound in the fight on the beach. Before he died he told the yarn to Johnny Black. Johnny Black wrote my father from Levuka. He was at the end of his rope — cancer. My father, ten years afterward, when captain of the *Perry*, got the spikes from German Oscar. And from my father, last will and testament, you know, came the spikes and the data. I have the island, the latitude and longitude of the beach where the three spikes were nailed in the trees. The spikes are up at Lavina's now. The latitude and longitude are in my head. Now what do you think?"

"Fishy," was Grief's instant judgment. "Why didn't your father go and get it himself?"

"Didn't need it. An uncle died and left him a fortune. He retired from the navy, ran foul of an epidemic of trained nurses in Boston, and my mother got a divorce. Also, she fell heir to an income of something like thirty thousand dollars, and went to live in New Zealand. I was divided between them, half-time New Zealand, half-time United States, until my father's death last year. Now my mother has me altogether. He left me his money — oh, a couple of millions — but my mother has had guardians appointed on account of the drink. I'm worth all kinds of money, but I can't touch a penny save what is doled out to me. But the old man, who had got the tip on my drinking, left me the three spikes and the data thereunto pertaining. Did it through his lawyers, unknown to my mother; said it beat life insurance, and that if I had the backbone to go and get it I could drink my back teeth awash until I died. Millions in the hands of my guardians, slathers of shekels of my mother's that'll be mine if she beats me to the crematory, another million waiting to be dug up, and in the meantime I'm cadging on Lavina for two drinks a day. It's hell, isn't it? — when you consider my thirst."

"Where's the island?"

"It's a long way from here."

"Name it."

"Not on your life, Captain Grief. You're making an easy half-million out of this. You will sail under my directions, and when we're well to sea and on our way I'll tell you and not before."

Grief shrugged his shoulders, dismissing the subject.

"When I've given you another drink I'll send the boat ashore with you," he said.

Pankburn was taken aback. For at least five minutes he debated with himself, then licked his lips and surrendered.

"If you promise to go, I'll tell you now."

"Of course I'm willing to go. That's why I asked you. Name the island."

Pankburn looked at the bottle.

"I'll take that drink now, Captain."

"No you won't. That drink was for you if you went ashore. If you are going to tell me the island, you must do it in your sober senses."

"Francis Island, if you will have it. Bougainville named it Barbour Island."

"Off there all by its lonely in the Little Coral Sea," Grief said. "I know it. Lies between New Ireland and New Guinea. A rotten hole now, though it was all right when the *Flirt* drove in the spikes and the Chink pearler traded for them. The steamship *Castor*, recruiting labour for the Upolu plantations, was cut off there with all hands two years ago. I knew her captain well. The Germans sent a cruiser, shelled the bush, burned half a dozen villages, killed a couple of niggers and a lot of pigs, and — and that was all. The niggers always were bad there, but they turned really bad forty years ago. That was when they cut off a whaler. Let me see? What was her name?"

He stepped to the bookshelf, drew out the bulky "South Pacific Directory," and ran through its pages.

"Yes. Here it is. Francis, or Barbour," he skimmed. "Natives warlike and treacherous — Melanesian — cannibals. Whaleship *Western* cut off — that was her name. Shoals — points — anchorages — ah, Redscar, Owen Bay, Likikili Bay, that's more like it; deep indentation, mangrove swamps, good holding in nine fathoms when white scar in bluff bears west-southwest." Grief looked up. "That's your beach, Pankburn, I'll swear."

"Will you go?" the other demanded eagerly.

Grief nodded.

"It sounds good to me. Now if the story had been of a hundred millions, or some such crazy sum, I wouldn't look at it for a moment. We'll sail to-morrow, but under one consideration. You are to be absolutely under my orders."

His visitor nodded emphatically and joyously.

“And that means no drink.”

“That’s pretty hard,” Pankburn whined.

“It’s my terms. I’m enough of a doctor to see you don’t come to harm. And you are to work — hard work, sailor’s work. You’ll stand regular watches and everything, though you eat and sleep aft with us.”

“It’s a go.” Pankburn put out his hand to ratify the agreement. “If it doesn’t kill me,” he added.

David Grief poured a generous three-fingers into the tumbler and extended it.

“Then here’s your last drink. Take it.”

Pankburn’s hand went halfway out. With a sudden spasm of resolution, he hesitated, threw back his shoulders, and straightened up his head.

“I guess I won’t,” he began, then, feebly surrendering to the gnaw of desire, he reached hastily for the glass, as if in fear that it would be withdrawn.

IV

It is a long traverse from Papeete in the Societies to the Little Coral Sea — from 100 west longitude to 150 east longitude — as the crow flies the equivalent to a voyage across the Atlantic. But the *Kittiwake* did not go as the crow flies. David Grief’s numerous interests diverted her course many times. He stopped to take a look-in at uninhabited Rose Island with an eye to colonizing and planting cocoa-nuts. Next, he paid his respects to Tui Manua, of Eastern Samoa, and opened an intrigue for a share of the trade monopoly of that dying king’s three islands. From Apia he carried several relief agents and a load of trade goods to the Gilberts. He peeped in at Ontong-Java Atoll, inspected his plantations on Ysabel, and purchased lands from the salt-water chiefs of northwestern Malaita. And all along this devious way he made a man of Aloysius Pankburn.

That thirster, though he lived aft, was compelled to do the work of a common sailor. And not only did he take his wheel and lookout, and heave on sheets and tackles, but the dirtiest and most arduous tasks were appointed him. Swung aloft in a bosun’s chair, he scraped the masts and slushed down. Holystoning the deck or scrubbing it with fresh limes made his back ache and developed the wasted, flabby muscles. When the *Kittiwake* lay at anchor and her copper bottom was scrubbed with cocoa-nut husks by the native crew, who dived and did it under water, Pankburn was sent down on his shift and as many times as any on the shift.

"Look at yourself," Grief said. "You are twice the man you were when you came on board. You haven't had one drink, you didn't die, and the poison is pretty well worked out of you. It's the work. It beats trained nurses and business managers. Here, if you're thirsty. Clap your lips to this."

With several deft strokes of his heavy-backed sheath-knife, Grief clipped a triangular piece of shell from the end of a husked drinking-cocoa-nut. The thin, cool liquid, slightly milky and effervescent, bubbled to the brim. With a bow, Pankburn took the natural cup, threw his head back, and held it back till the shell was empty. He drank many of these nuts each day. The black steward, a New Hebrides boy sixty years of age, and his assistant, a Lark Islander of eleven, saw to it that he was continually supplied.

Pankburn did not object to the hard work. He devoured work, never shirking and always beating the native sailors in jumping to obey a command. But his sufferings during the period of driving the alcohol out of his system were truly heroic. Even when the last shred of the poison was exuded, the desire, as an obsession, remained in his head. So it was, when, on his honour, he went ashore at Apia, that he attempted to put the public houses out of business by drinking up their stocks in trade. And so it was, at two in the morning, that David Grief found him in front of the Tivoli, out of which he had been disorderly thrown by Charley Roberts. Aloysius, as of old, was chanting his sorrows to the stars. Also, and more concretely, he was punctuating the rhythm with cobbles of coral stone, which he flung with amazing accuracy through Charley Roberts's windows.

David Grief took him away, but not till next morning did he take him in hand. It was on the deck of the *Kittiwake*, and there was nothing kindergarten about it. Grief struck him, with bare knuckles, punched him and punished him — gave him the worst thrashing he had ever received.

"For the good of your soul, Pankburn," was the way he emphasized his blows. "For the good of your mother. For the progeny that will come after. For the good of the world, and the universe, and the whole race of man yet to be. And now, to hammer the lesson home, we'll do it all over again. That, for the good of your soul; and that, for your mother's sake; and that, for the little children, undreamed of and unborn, whose mother you'll love for their sakes, and for love's sake, in the lease of manhood that will be yours when I am done with you. Come on and take your medicine. I'm not done with you yet. I've only begun. There are many other reasons which I shall now proceed to expound." The brown sailors and the black stewards and cook looked on and grinned. Far from them was the questioning of any of the mysterious and incomprehensible ways of white men. As for Carlsen, the mate, he was grimly in accord with the treatment his employer was administering; while Albright, the supercargo, merely played with his mustache and smiled. They were men of the sea. They lived life in the rough. And alcohol, in themselves as well as in other men, was a problem they had learned to handle in ways not taught in doctors' schools.

"Boy! A bucket of fresh water and a towel," Grief ordered, when he had finished. "Two buckets and two towels," he added, as he surveyed his own hands.

"You're a pretty one," he said to Pankburn. "You've spoiled everything. I had the poison completely out of you. And now you are fairly reeking with it. We've got to begin all over again. Mr. Albright! You know that pile of old chain on the beach at the boat-landing. Find the owner, buy it, and fetch it on board. There must be a hundred and fifty fathoms of it. Pankburn! To-morrow morning you start in pounding the rust off of it. When you've done that, you'll sandpaper it. Then you'll paint it. And nothing else will you do till that chain is as smooth as new."

Aloysius Pankburn shook his head.

"I quit. Francis Island can go to hell for all of me. I'm done with your slave-driving. Kindly put me ashore at once. I'm a white man. You can't treat me this way."

"Mr. Carlsen, you will see that Mr. Pankburn remains on board."

"I'll have you broken for this!" Aloysius screamed. "You can't stop me."

"I can give you another licking," Grief answered. "And let me tell you one thing, you besotted whelp, I'll keep on licking you as long as my knuckles hold out or until you yearn to hammer chain rust. I've taken you in hand, and I'm going to make a man out of you if I have to kill you to do it. Now go below and change your clothes. Be ready to turn to with a hammer this afternoon. Mr. Albright, get that chain aboard pronto. Mr. Carlsen, send the boats ashore after it. Also, keep your eye on Pankburn. If he shows signs of keeling over or going into the shakes, give him a nip — a small one. He may need it after last night."

V

For the rest of the time the *Kittiwake* lay in Apia Aloysius Pankburn pounded chain rust. Ten hours a day he pounded. And on the long stretch across to the Gilberts he still pounded.

Then came the sandpapering. One hundred and fifty fathoms is nine hundred feet, and every link of all that length was smoothed and polished as no link ever was before. And when the last link had received its second coat of black paint, he declared himself.

“Come on with more dirty work,” he told Grief. “I’ll overhaul the other chains if you say so. And you needn’t worry about me any more. I’m not going to take another drop. I’m going to train up. You got my proud goat when you beat me, but let me tell you, you only got it temporarily. Train! I’m going to train till I’m as hard all the way through, and clean all the way through, as that chain is. And some day, Mister David Grief, somewhere, somehow, I’m going to be in such shape that I’ll lick you as you licked me. I’m going to pulp your face till your own niggers won’t know you.”

Grief was jubilant.

“Now you’re talking like a man,” he cried. “The only way you’ll ever lick me is to become a man. And then, maybe — ”

He paused in the hope that the other would catch the suggestion. Aloysius groped for it, and, abruptly, something akin to illumination shone in his eyes.

“And then I won’t want to, you mean?”

Grief nodded.

“And that’s the curse of it,” Aloysius lamented. “I really believe I won’t want to. I see the point. But I’m going to go right on and shape myself up just the same.”

The warm, sunburn glow in Grief’s face seemed to grow warmer. His hand went out.

“Pankburn, I love you right now for that.”

Aloysius grasped the hand, and shook his head in sad sincerity.

“Grief,” he mourned, “you’ve got my goat, you’ve got my proud goat, and you’ve got it permanently, I’m afraid.”

VI

On a sultry tropic day, when the last flicker of the far southeast trade was fading out and the seasonal change for the northwest monsoon was coming on, the *Kittiwake* lifted above the sea-rim the jungle-clad coast of Francis Island.

Grief, with compass bearings and binoculars, identified the volcano that marked Redscar, ran past Owen Bay, and lost the last of the breeze at the entrance to Likikili Bay. With the two whaleboats out and towing, and with Carl-sen heaving the lead, the *Kittiwake* sluggishly entered a deep and narrow indentation. There were no beaches. The mangroves began at the water's edge, and behind them rose steep jungle, broken here and there by jagged peaks of rock. At the end of a mile, when the white scar on the bluff bore west-southwest, the lead vindicated the "Directory," and the anchor rumbled down in nine fathoms.

For the rest of that day and until the afternoon of the day following they remained on the *Kittiwake* and waited. No canoes appeared. There were no signs of human life. Save for the occasional splash of a fish or the screaming of cockatoos, there seemed no other life. Once, however, a huge butterfly, twelve inches from tip to tip, fluttered high over their mastheads and drifted across to the opposing jungle.

"There's no use in sending a boat in to be cut up," Grief said.

Pankburn was incredulous, and volunteered to go in alone, to swim it if he couldn't borrow the dingey.

"They haven't forgotten the German cruiser," Grief explained. "And I'll wager that bush is alive with men right now. What do you think, Mr. Carlsen?"

That veteran adventurer of the islands was emphatic in his agreement.

In the late afternoon of the second day Grief ordered a whaleboat into the water. He took his place in the bow, a live cigarette in his mouth and a short-fused stick of dynamite in his hand, for he was bent on shooting a mess of fish. Along the thwarts half a dozen Winchesters were placed. Albright, who took the steering-sweep, had a Mauser within reach of hand. They pulled in and along the green wall of vegetation. At times they rested on the oars in the midst of a profound silence.

"Two to one the bush is swarming with them — in quids," Albright whispered.

Pankburn listened a moment longer and took the bet. Five minutes later they sighted a school of mullet. The brown rowers held their oars. Grief touched the short fuse to his cigarette and threw the stick. So short was the fuse that the stick exploded in the instant after it struck the water. And in that same instant the bush exploded into life. There were wild yells of defiance, and black and naked bodies leaped forward like apes through the mangroves.

In the whaleboat every rifle was lifted. Then came the wait. A hundred blacks, some few armed with ancient Sniders, but the greater portion armed with tomahawks, fire-hardened spears, and bone-tipped arrows, clustered on the roots that rose out of the bay. No word was spoken. Each party watched the other across twenty feet of water. An old, one-eyed black, with a bristly face, rested a Snider on his hip, the muzzle directed at Albright, who, in turn, covered him back with the Mauser. A couple of minutes of this tableau endured. The stricken fish rose to the surface or struggled half-stunned in the clear depths.

“It’s all right, boys,” Grief said quietly. “Put down your guns and over the side with you. Mr. Albright, toss the tobacco to that one-eyed brute.”

While the Rapa men dived for the fish, Albright threw a bundle of trade tobacco ashore. The one-eyed man nodded his head and writhed his features in an attempt at amiability. Weapons were lowered, bows unbent, and arrows put back in their quivers.

“They know tobacco,” Grief announced, as they rowed back aboard. “We’ll have visitors. You’ll break out a case of tobacco, Mr. Albright, and a few trade-knives. There’s a canoe now.”

Old One-Eye, as befitted a chief and leader, paddled out alone, facing peril for the rest of the tribe. As Carlsen leaned over the rail to help the visitor up, he turned his head and remarked casually:

“They’ve dug up the money, Mr. Grief. The old beggar’s loaded with it.”

One-Eye floundered down on deck, grinning appeasingly and failing to hide the fear he had overcome but which still possessed him. He was lame of one leg, and this was accounted for by a terrible scar, inches deep, which ran down the thigh from hip to knee. No clothes he wore whatever, not even a string, but his nose, perforated in a dozen places and each perforation the setting for a carved spine of bone, bristled like a porcupine. Around his neck and hanging down on his dirty chest was a string of gold sovereigns. His ears were hung with silver half-crowns, and from the cartilage separating his nostrils depended a big English penny, tarnished and green, but unmistakable.

“Hold on, Grief,” Pankburn said, with perfectly assumed carelessness. “You say they know only beads and tobacco. Very well. You follow my lead. They’ve found the treasure, and we’ve got to trade them out of it. Get the whole crew aside and lecture them that they are to be interested only in the pennies. Savve? Gold coins must be beneath contempt, and silver coins merely tolerated. Pennies are to be the only desirable things.”

Pankburn took charge of the trading. For the penny in One-Eye’s nose he gave ten sticks of tobacco. Since each stick cost David Grief a cent, the bargain was manifestly unfair. But for the half-crowns Pankburn gave only one stick each. The string of sovereigns he refused to consider. The more he refused, the more One-Eye insisted on a trade. At last, with an appearance of irritation and anger, and as a palpable concession, Pankburn gave two sticks for the string, which was composed of ten sovereigns.

“I take my hat off to you,” Grief said to Pankburn that night at dinner. “The situation is patent. You’ve reversed the scale of value. They’ll figure the pennies as priceless possessions and the sovereigns as beneath price. Result: they’ll hang on to the pennies and force us to trade for sovereigns. Pankburn, I drink your health! Boy! — another cup of tea for Mr. Pankburn.”

VII

Followed a golden week. From dawn till dark a row of canoes rested on their paddles two hundred feet away. This was the deadline. Rapa sailors, armed with rifles, maintained it. But one canoe at a time was permitted alongside, and but one black at a time was permitted to come over the rail. Here, under the awning, relieving one another in hourly shifts, the four white men carried on the trade. The rate of exchange was that established by Pankburn with One-Eye. Five sovereigns fetched a stick of tobacco; a hundred sovereigns, twenty sticks. Thus, a crafty-eyed cannibal would deposit on the table a thousand dollars in gold, and go back over the rail, hugely-satisfied, with forty cents’ worth of tobacco in his hand.

“Hope we’ve got enough tobacco to hold out,” Carlsen muttered dubiously, as another case was sawed in half.

Albright laughed.

“We’ve got fifty cases below,” he said, “and as I figure it, three cases buy a hundred thousand dollars. There was only a million dollars buried, so thirty cases ought to get it. Though, of course, we've got to allow a margin for the silver and the pennies. That Ecuadoran bunch must have salted down all the coin in sight."

Very few pennies and shillings appeared, though Pankburn continually and anxiously inquired for them. Pennies were the one thing he seemed to desire, and he made his eyes flash covetously whenever one was produced. True to his theory, the savages concluded that the gold, being of slight value, must be disposed of first. A penny, worth fifty times as much as a sovereign, was something to retain and treasure. Doubtless, in their jungle-lairs, the wise old gray-beards put their heads together and agreed to raise the price on pennies when the worthless gold was all worked off. Who could tell? Mayhap the strange white men could be made to give even twenty sticks for a priceless copper.

By the end of the week the trade went slack. There was only the slightest dribble of gold. An occasional penny was reluctantly disposed of for ten sticks, while several thousand dollars in silver came in.

On the morning of the eighth day no trading was done. The gray-beards had matured their plan and were demanding twenty sticks for a penny, One-Eye delivered the new rate of exchange. The white men appeared to take it with great seriousness, for they stood together debating in low voices. Had One-Eye understood English he would have been enlightened.

"We've got just a little over eight hundred thousand, not counting the silver," Grief said. "And that's about all there is. The bush tribes behind have most probably got the other two hundred thousand. Return in three months, and the salt-water crowd will have traded back for it; also they will be out of tobacco by that time."

"It would be a sin to buy pennies," Albright grinned. "It goes against the thrifty grain of my trader's soul."

"There's a whiff of land-breeze stirring," Grief said, looking at Pankburn. "What do you say?"

Pankburn nodded.

"Very well." Grief measured the faintness and irregularity of the wind against his cheek.

"Mr. Carlsen, heave short, and get off the gaskets. And stand by with the whaleboats to tow. This breeze is not dependable."

He picked up a part case of tobacco, containing six or seven hundred sticks, put it in One-Eye's hands, and helped that bewildered savage over the rail. As the foresail went up the mast, a wail of consternation arose from the canoes lying along the dead-line. And as the anchor broke out and the *Kittiwake's* head paid off in the light breeze, old One-Eye, daring the rifles levelled on him, paddled alongside and made frantic signs of his tribe's willingness to trade pennies for ten sticks.

"Boy! — a drinking nut," Pankburn called.

"It's Sydney Heads for you," Grief said. "And then what?"

"I'm coming back with you for that two hundred thousand," Pankburn answered. "In the meantime I'm going to build an island schooner. Also, I'm going to call those guardians of mine before the court to show cause why my father's money should not be turned over to me. Show cause? I'll show them cause why it should."

He swelled his biceps proudly under the thin sleeve, reached for the two black stewards, and put them above his head like a pair of dumbbells.

"Come on! Swing out on that fore-boom-tackle!" Carlsen shouted from aft, where the mainsail was being winged out.

Pankburn dropped the stewards and raced for it, beating a Rapa sailor by two jumps to the hauling part.

Chapter Three — THE DEVILS OF FUATINO

I

Of his many schooners, ketches and cutters that nosed about among the coral isles of the South Seas, David Grief loved most the *Rattler* — a yacht-like schooner of ninety tons with so swift a pair of heels that she had made herself famous, in the old days, opium-smuggling from San Diego to Puget Sound, raiding the seal-rookeries of Bering Sea, and running arms in the Far East. A stench and an abomination to government officials, she had been the joy of all sailormen, and the pride of the shipwrights who built her. Even now, after forty years of driving, she was still the same old *Rattler*, fore-reaching in the same marvellous manner that compelled sailors to see in order to believe and that punctuated many an angry discussion with words and blows on the beaches of all the ports from Valparaiso to Manila Bay.

On this night, close-hauled, her big mainsail preposterously flattened down, her luffs pulsing emptily on the lift of each smooth swell, she was sliding an easy four knots through the water on the veriest whisper of a breeze. For an hour David Grief had been leaning on the rail at the lee fore-rigging, gazing overside at the steady phosphorescence of her gait. The faint back-draught from the headsails fanned his cheek and chest with a wine of coolness, and he was in an ecstasy of appreciation of the schooner's qualities.

"Eh! — She's a beauty, Taute, a beauty," he said to the Kanaka lookout, at the same time stroking the teak of the rail with an affectionate hand.

"Ay, skipper," the Kanaka answered in the rich, big-chested tones of Polynesia. "Thirty years I know ships, but never like 'this. On Raiatea we call her *Fanauao*."

"The Dayborn," Grief translated the love-phrase. "Who named her so?"

About to answer, Taute peered ahead with sudden intensity. Grief joined him in the gaze.

"Land," said Taute.

"Yes; Fuatino," Grief agreed, his eyes still fixed on the spot where the star-luminous horizon was gouged by a blot of blackness. "It's all right. I'll tell the captain."

The *Rattler* slid along until the loom of the island could be seen as well as sensed, until the sleepy roar of breakers and the blatting of goats could be heard, until the wind, off the land, was flower-drenched with perfume.

"If it wasn't a crevice, she could run the passage a night like this," Captain Glass remarked regretfully, as he watched the wheel lashed hard down by the steersman.

The *Rattler*, run off shore a mile, had been hove to to wait until daylight ere she attempted the perilous entrance to Fuatino. It was a perfect tropic night, with no hint of rain or squall. For'ard, wherever their tasks left them, the Raiatea sailors sank down to sleep on deck. Aft, the captain and mate and Grief spread their beds with similar languid unconcern. They lay on their blankets, smoking and murmuring sleepy conjectures about Mataara, the Queen of Fuatino, and about the love affair between her daughter, Naumoo, and Motuaro.

"They're certainly a romantic lot," Brown, the mate, said. "As romantic as we whites."

"As romantic as Pilsach," Grief laughed, "and that is going some. How long ago was it, Captain, that he jumped you?"

"Eleven years," Captain Glass grunted resentfully.

"Tell me about it," Brown pleaded. "They say he's never left Fuatino since. Is that right?"

"Right O," the captain rumbled. "He's in love with his wife — the little hussy! Stole him from me, and as good a sailorman as the trade has ever seen — if he is a Dutchman."

"German," Grief corrected.

"It's all the same," was the retort. "The sea was robbed of a good man that night he went ashore and Notutu took one look at him. I reckon they looked good to each other. Before you could say skat, she'd put a wreath of some kind of white flowers on his head, and in five minutes they were off down the beach, like a couple of kids, holding hands and laughing. I hope he's blown that big coral patch out of the channel. I always start a sheet or two of copper warping past."

"Go on with the story," Brown urged.

"That's all. He was finished right there. Got married that night. Never came on board again. I looked him up next day. Found him in a straw house in the bush, barelegged, a white savage, all mixed up with flowers and things and playing a guitar. Looked like a bally ass. Told me to send his things ashore. I told him I'd see him damned first. And that's all. You'll see her to-morrow. They've got three kiddies now — wonderful little rascals. I've a phonograph down below for him, and about a million records."

"And then you made him trader?" the mate inquired of Grief.

"What else could I do? Fuatino is a love island, and Filsach is a lover. He knows the native, too — one of the best traders I've got, or ever had. He's responsible. You'll see him to-morrow."

"Look here, young man," Captain Glass rumbled threateningly at his mate. "Are you romantic? Because if you are, on board you stay. Fuatino's the island of romantic insanity. Everybody's in love with somebody. They live on love. It's in the milk of the cocoa-nuts, or the air, or the sea. The history of the island for the last ten thousand years is nothing but love affairs. I know. I've talked with the old men. And if I catch you starting down the beach hand in hand — "

His sudden cessation caused both the other men to look at him. They followed his gaze, which passed across them to the main rigging, and saw what he saw, a brown hand and arm, muscular and wet, being joined from overside by a second brown hand and arm. A head followed, thatched with long elfin locks, and then a face, with roguish black eyes, lined with the marks of wildwood's laughter.

"My God!" Brown breathed. "It's a faun — a sea-faun."

"It's the Goat Man," said Glass.

"It is Mauriri," said Grief. "He is my own blood brother by sacred plight of native custom. His name is mine, and mine is his."

Broad brown shoulders and a magnificent chest rose above the rail, and, with what seemed effortless ease, the whole grand body followed over the rail and noiselessly trod the deck. Brown, who might have been other things than the mate of an island schooner, was enchanted. All that he had ever gleaned from the books proclaimed indubitably the faun-likeness of this visitant of the deep. "But a sad faun," was the young man's judgment, as the golden-brown woods god strode forward to where David Grief sat up with outstretched hand.

"David," said David Grief.

"Mauriri, Big Brother," said Mauriri.

And thereafter, in the custom of men who have pledged blood brotherhood, each called the other, not by the other's name, but by his own.

Also, they talked in the Polynesian tongue of Fuatino, and Brown could only sit and guess.

“A long swim to say *talofa*,” Grief said, as the other sat and streamed water on the deck.

“Many days and nights have I watched for your coming, Big Brother,” Mauriri replied. “I have sat on the Big Rock, where the dynamite is kept, of which I have been made keeper. I saw you come up to the entrance and run back into darkness. I knew you waited till morning, and I followed. Great trouble has come upon us. Mataara has cried these many days for your coming. She is an old woman, and Motauri is dead, and she is sad.”

“Did he marry Naumoo?” Grief asked, after he had shaken his head and sighed by the custom.

“Yes. In the end they ran to live with the goats, till Mataara forgave, when they returned to live with her in the Big House. But he is now dead, and Naumoo soon will die. Great is our trouble, Big Brother. Tori is dead, and Tati-Tori, and Petoo, and Nari, and Pilsach, and others.”

“Pilsach, too!” Grief exclaimed. “Has there been a sickness?”

“There has been much killing. Listen, Big Brother, Three weeks ago a strange schooner came. From the Big Rock I saw her topsails above the sea. She towed in with her boats, but they did not warp by the big patch, and she pounded many times. She is now on the beach, where they are strengthening the broken timbers. There are eight white men on board. They have women from some island far to the east. The women talk a language in many ways like ours, only different. But we can understand. They say they were stolen by the men on the schooner. We do not know, but they sing and dance and are happy.”

“And the men?” Grief interrupted.

“They talk French. I know, for there was a mate on your schooner who talked French long ago. There are two chief men, and they do not look like the others. They have blue eyes like you, and they are devils. One is a bigger devil than the other. The other six are also devils. They do not pay us for our yams, and taro, and breadfruit. They take everything from us, and if we complain they kill us. Thus was killed Tori, and Tati-Tori, and Petoo, and others. We cannot fight, for we have no guns — only two or three old guns.

“They ill-treat our women. Thus was killed Motuaro, who made defence of Naumoo, whom they have now taken on board their schooner. It was because of this that Pilsach was killed. Him the chief of the two chief men, the Big Devil, shot once in his whaleboat, and twice when he tried to crawl up the sand of the beach. Pilsach was a brave man, and Notutu now sits in the house and cries without end. Many of the people are afraid, and have run to live with the goats. But there is not food for all in the high mountains. And the men will not go out and fish, and they work no more in the gardens because of the devils who take all they have. And we are ready to fight.

"Big Brother, we need guns, and much ammunition. I sent word before I swam out to you, and the men are waiting. The strange white men do not know you are come. Give me a boat, and the guns, and I will go back before the sun. And when you come to-morrow we will be ready for the word from you to kill the strange white men. They must be killed. Big Brother, you have ever been of the blood with us, and the men and women have prayed to many gods for your coming. And you are come."

"I will go in the boat with you," Grief said.

"No, Big Brother," was Mauriri's reply. "You must be with the schooner. The strange white men will fear the schooner, not us. We will have the guns, and they will not know. It is only when they see your schooner come that they will be alarmed. Send the young man there with the boat."

So it was that Brown, thrilling with all the romance and adventure he had read and guessed and never lived, took his place in the sternsheets of a whaleboat, loaded with rifles and cartridges, rowed by four Baiatea sailors, steered by a golden-brown, sea-swimming faun, and directed through the warm tropic darkness toward the half-mythical love island of Fuatino, which had been invaded by twentieth century pirates.

II

If a line be drawn between Jaluit, in the Marshall Group, and Bougainville, in the Solomons, and if this line be bisected at two degrees south of the equator by a line drawn from Ukuor, in the Carolines, the high island of Fuatino will be raised in that sun-washed stretch of lonely sea. Inhabited by a stock kindred to the Hawaiian, the Samoan, the Tahitian, and the Maori, Fuatino becomes the apex of the wedge driven by Polynesia far to the west and in between Melanesia and Micronesia. And it was Fuatino that David Grief raised next morning, two miles to the east and in direct line with the rising sun. The same whisper of a breeze held, and the *Rattler* slid through the smooth sea at a rate that would have been eminently proper for an island schooner had the breeze been thrice as strong.

Fuatino was nothing else than an ancient crater, thrust upward from the sea-bottom by some primordial cataclysm. The western portion, broken and crumbled to sea level, was the entrance to the crater itself, which constituted the harbour. Thus, Fuatino was like a rugged horseshoe, the heel pointing to the west. And into the opening at the heel the Rattler steered. Captain Glass, binoculars in hand and peering at the chart made by himself, which was spread on top the cabin, straightened up with an expression on his face that was half alarm, half resignation.

"It's coming," he said. "Fever. It wasn't due till to-morrow. It always hits me hard, Mr. Grief. In five minutes I'll be off my head. You'll have to con the schooner in. Boy! Get my bunk ready! Plenty of blankets! Fill that hot-water bottle! It's so calm, Mr. Grief, that I think you can pass the big patch without warping. Take the leading wind and shoot her. She's the only craft in the South Pacific that can do it, and I know you know the trick. You can scrape the Big Rock by just watching out for the main boom."

He had talked rapidly, almost like a drunken man, as his reeling brain battled with the rising shock of the malarial stroke. When he stumbled toward the companionway, his face was purpling and mottling as if attacked by some monstrous inflammation or decay. His eyes were setting in a glassy bulge, his hands shaking, his teeth clicking in the spasms of chill.

"Two hours to get the sweat," he chattered with a ghastly grin. "And a couple more and I'll be all right. I know the damned thing to the last minute it runs its course. Y-y-you t-t-take ch-ch-ch-ch — — "

His voice faded away in a weak stutter as he collapsed down into the cabin and his employer took charge. The *Rattler* was just entering the passage. The heels of the horseshoe island were two huge mountains of rock a thousand feet high, each almost broken off from the mainland and connected with it by a low and narrow peninsula. Between the heels was a half-mile stretch, all but blocked by a reef of coral extending across from the south heel. The passage, which Captain Glass had called a crevice, twisted into this reef, curved directly to the north heel, and ran along the base of the perpendicular rock. At this point, with the main-boom almost grazing the rock on the port side, Grief, peering down on the starboard side, could see bottom less than two fathoms beneath and shoaling steeply. With a whaleboat towing for steerage and as a precaution against back-draughts from the cliff, and taking advantage of a fan of breeze, he shook the Rattler full into it and glided by the big coral patch without warping. As it was, he just scraped, but so softly as not to start the copper.

The harbour of Fuatino opened before him. It was a circular sheet of water, five miles in diameter, rimmed with white coral beaches, from which the verdure-clad slopes rose swiftly to the frowning crater walls. The crests of the walls were saw-toothed, volcanic peaks, capped and halo'd with captive trade-wind clouds. Every nook and crevice of the disintegrating lava gave foothold to creeping, climbing vines and trees — a green foam of vegetation. Thin streams of water, that were mere films of mist, swayed and undulated downward in sheer descents of hundreds of feet. And to complete the magic of the place, the warm, moist air was heavy with the perfume of the yellow-blossomed *cassi*.

Fanning along against light, vagrant airs, the *Rattler* worked in. Calling the whale-boat on board, Grief searched out the shore with his binoculars. There was no life. In the hot blaze of tropic sun the place slept. There was no sign of welcome. Up the beach, on the north shore, where the fringe of cocoanut palms concealed the village, he could see the black bows of the canoes in the canoe-houses. On the beach, on even keel, rested the strange schooner. Nothing moved on board of her or around her. Not until the beach lay fifty yards away did Grief let go the anchor in forty fathoms. Out in the middle, long years before, he had sounded three hundred fathoms without reaching bottom, which was to be expected of a healthy crater-pit like Fuatino. As the chain roared and surged through the hawse-pipe he noticed a number of native women, lusciously large as only those of Polynesia are, in flowing *ahu's*, flower-crowned, stream out on the deck of the schooner on the beach. Also, and what they did not see, he saw from the galley the squat figure of a man steal for'ard, drop to the sand, and dive into the green screen of bush.

While the sails were furled and gasketed, awnings stretched, and sheets and tackles coiled harbour fashion, David Grief paced the deck and looked vainly for a flutter of life elsewhere than on the strange schooner. Once, beyond any doubt, he heard the distant crack of a rifle in the direction of the Big Rock. There were no further shots, and he thought of it as some hunter shooting a wild goat.

At the end of another hour Captain Glass, under a mountain of blankets, had ceased shivering and was in the inferno of a profound sweat.

"I'll be all right in half an hour," he said weakly.

"Very well," Grief answered. "The place is dead, and I'm going ashore to see Mataara and find out the situation."

"It's a tough bunch; keep your eyes open," the captain warned him. "If you're not back in an hour, send word off."

Grief took the steering-sweep, and four of his Raiatea men bent to the oars. As they landed on the beach he looked curiously at the women under the schooner's awning. He waved his hand tentatively, and they, after giggling, waved back.

"*Talofa!*" he called.

They understood the greeting, but replied, "*Iorana*," and he knew they came from the Society Group.

"Huahine," one of his sailors unhesitatingly named their island. Grief asked them whence they came, and with giggles and laughter they replied, "Huahine."

"It looks like old Dupuy's schooner," Grief said, in Tahitian, speaking in a low voice. "Don't look too hard. What do you think, eh? Isn't it the *Valetta?*"

As the men climbed out and lifted the whale-boat slightly up the beach they stole careless glances at the vessel.

"It is the *Valetta*," Taute said. "She carried her topmast away seven years ago. At Papeete they rigged a new one. It was ten feet shorter. That is the one."

"Go over and talk with the women, you boys. You can almost see Huahine from Raiatea, and you'll be sure to know some of them. Find out all you can. And if any of the white men show up, don't start a row."

An army of hermit crabs scuttled and rustled away before him as he advanced up the beach, but under the palms no pigs rooted and grunted. The cocoanuts lay where they had fallen, and at the copra-sheds there were no signs of curing. Industry and tidiness had vanished. Grass house after grass house he found deserted. Once he came upon an old man, blind, toothless, prodigiously wrinkled, who sat in the shade and babbled with fear when he spoke to him. It was as if the place had been struck with the plague, was Grief's thought, as he finally approached the Big House. All was desolation and disarray. There were no flower-crowned men and maidens, no brown babies rolling in the shade of the avocado trees. In the doorway, crouched and rocking back and forth, sat Mataara, the old queen. She wept afresh at sight of him, divided between the tale of her woe and regret that no follower was left to dispense to him her hospitality.

"And so they have taken Naumoo," she finished. "Motauri is dead. My people have fled and are starving with the goats. And there is no one to open for you even a drinking cocoa-nut. O Brother, your white brothers be devils."

"They are no brothers of mine, Mataara," Grief consoled. "They are robbers and pigs, and I shall clean the island of them — — "

He broke off to whirl half around, his hand flashing to his waist and back again, the big Colt's levelled at the figure of a man, bent double, that rushed at him from out of the trees. He did not pull the trigger, nor did the man pause till he had flung himself headlong at Grief's feet and begun to pour forth a stream of uncouth and awful noises. He recognized the creature as the one he had seen steal from the *Valetta* and dive into the bush; but not until he raised him up and watched the contortions of the hare-lipped mouth could he understand what he uttered.

"Save me, master, save me!" the man yammered, in English, though he was unmistakably a South Sea native. "I know you! Save me!"

And thereat he broke into a wild outpour of incoherence that did not cease until Grief seized him by the shoulders and shook him into silence.

"I know you," Grief said. "You were cook in the French Hotel at Papeete two years ago. Everybody called you 'Hare-Lip.'"

The man nodded violently.

"I am now cook of the *Valetta*," he spat and spluttered, his mouth writhing in a fearful struggle with its defect. "I know you. I saw you at the hotel. I saw you at Lavina's. I saw you on the *Kittiwake*. I saw you at the *Mariposa* wharf. You are Captain Grief, and you will save me. Those men are devils. They killed Captain Dupuy. Me they made kill half the crew. Two they shot from the cross-trees. The rest they shot in the water. I knew them all. They stole the girls from Huahine. They added to their strength with jail-men from Noumea. They robbed the traders in the New Hebrides. They killed the trader at Vanikori, and stole two women there. They — — "

But Grief no longer heard. Through the trees, from the direction of the harbour, came a rattle of rifles, and he started on the run for the beach.

Pirates from Tahiti and convicts from New Caledonia! A pretty bunch of desperadoes that even now was attacking his schooner. Hare-Lip followed, still spluttering and spitting his tale of the white devils' doings.

The rifle-firing ceased as abruptly as it had begun, but Grief ran on, perplexed by ominous conjectures, until, in a turn of the path, he encountered Mauriri running toward him from the beach.

"Big Brother," the Goat Man panted, "I was too late. They have taken your schooner. Come! For now they will seek for you."

He started back up the path away from the beach.

"Where is Brown?" Grief demanded.

"On the Big Rock. I will tell you afterward. Come now!"

"But my men in the whaleboat?"

Mauriri was in an agony of apprehension.

"They are with the women on the strange schooner. They will not be killed. I tell you true. The devils want sailors. But you they will kill. Listen!" From the water, in a cracked tenor voice, came a French hunting song. "They are landing on the beach. They have taken your schooner — that I saw. Come!"

III

Careless of his own life and skin, nevertheless David Grief was possessed of no false hardihood. He knew when to fight and when to run, and that this was the time for running he had no doubt. Up the path, past the old men sitting in the shade, past Mataara crouched in the doorway of the Big House, he followed at the heels of Mauriri. At his own heels, doglike, plodded Hare-Lip. From behind came the cries of the hunters, but the pace Mauriri led them was heartbreaking. The broad path narrowed, swung to the right, and pitched upward. The last grass house was left, and through high thickets of *cassi* and swarms of great golden wasps the way rose steeply until it became a goat-track. Pointing upward to a bare shoulder of volcanic rock, Mauriri indicated the trail across its face.

"Past that we are safe, Big Brother," he said. "The white devils never dare it, for there are rocks we roll down on their heads, and there is no other path. Always do they stop here and shoot when we cross the rock. Come!"

A quarter of an hour later they paused where the trail went naked on the face of the rock.

“Wait, and when you come, come quickly,” Mauriri cautioned.

He sprang into the blaze of sunlight, and from below several rifles pumped rapidly. Bullets smacked about him, and puffs of stone-dust flew out, but he won safely across. Grief followed, and so near did one bullet come that the dust of its impact stung his cheek. Nor was Hare-Lip struck, though he essayed the passage more slowly.

For the rest of the day, on the greater heights, they lay in a lava glen where terraced taro and *papaia* grew. And here Grief made his plans and learned the fulness of the situation.

“It was ill luck,” Mauriri said. “Of all nights this one night was selected by the white devils to go fishing. It was dark as we came through the passage. They were in boats and canoes. Always do they have their rifles with them. One Raiatea man they shot. Brown was very brave. We tried to get by to the top of the bay, but they headed us off, and we were driven in between the Big Rock and the village. We saved the guns and all the ammunition, but they got the boat. Thus they learned of your coming. Brown is now on this side of the Big Rock with the guns and the ammunition.”

“But why didn’t he go over the top of the Big Rock and give me warning as I came in from the sea?” Grief criticised.

“They knew not the way. Only the goats and I know the way. And this I forgot, for I crept through the bush to gain the water and swim to you. But the devils were in the bush shooting at Brown and the Raiatea men; and me they hunted till daylight, and through the morning they hunted me there in the low-lying land. Then you came in your schooner, and they watched till you went ashore, and I got away through the bush, but you were already ashore.”

“You fired that shot?”

“Yes; to warn you. But they were wise and would not shoot back, and it was my last cartridge.”

“Now you, Hare-Lip?” Grief said to the *Valetta’s* cook.

His tale was long and painfully detailed. For a year he had been sailing out of Tahiti and through the Paumotus on the *Valetta*. Old Dupuy was owner and captain. On his last cruise he had shipped two strangers in Tahiti as mate and supercargo. Also, another stranger he carried to be his agent on Fanriki. Raoul Van Asveld and Carl Lepsius were the names of the mate and supercargo.

"They are brothers, I know, for I have heard them talk in the dark, on deck, when they thought no one listened," Hare-Lip explained.

The *Valetta* cruised through the Low Islands, picking up shell and pearls at Dupuy's stations. Frans Amundson, the third stranger, relieved Pierre Gollard at Fanriki. Pierre Gollard came on board to go back to Tahiti. The natives of Fanriki said he had a quart of pearls to turn over to Dupuy. The first night out from Fanriki there was shooting in the cabin. Then the bodies of Dupuy and Pierre Gollard were thrown overboard. The Tahitian sailors fled to the forecastle. For two days, with nothing to eat and the *Valetta* hove to, they remained below. Then Raoul Van Asveld put poison in the meal he made Hare-Lip cook and carry for'ard. Half the sailors died.

"He had a rifle pointed at me, master; what could I do?" Hare-Lip whimpered. "Of the rest, two went up the rigging and were shot. Fanriki was ten miles away. The others went overboard to swim. They were shot as they swam. I, only, lived, and the two devils; for me they wanted to cook for them. That day, with the breeze, they went back to Fanrika and took on Frans Amundson, for he was one of them."

Then followed Hare-Lip's nightmare experiences as the schooner wandered on the long reaches to the westward. He was the one living witness and knew they would have killed him had he not been the cook. At Noumea five convicts had joined them. Hare-Lip was never permitted ashore at any of the islands, and Grief was the first outsider to whom he had spoken.

"And now they will kill me," Hare-Lip spluttered, "for they will know I have told you. Yet am I not all a coward, and I will stay with you, master, and die with you."

The Goat Man shook his head and stood up.

"Lie here and rest," he said to Grief. "It will be a long swim to-night. As for this cook-man, I will take him now to the higher places where my brothers live with the goats."

IV

"It is well that you swim as a man should, Big Brother," Mauriri whispered.

From the lava glen they had descended to the head of the bay and taken to the water. They swam softly, without splash, Mauriri in the lead. The black walls of the crater rose about them till it seemed they swam on the bottom of a great bowl. Above was the sky of faintly luminous star-dust. Ahead they could see the light which marked the Rattler, and from her deck, softened by distance, came a gospel hymn played on the phonograph intended for Pilsach.

The two swimmers bore to the left, away from the captured schooner. Laughter and song followed on board after the hymn, then the phonograph started again. Grief grinned to himself at the appositeness of it as “Lead, Kindly Light,” floated out over the dark water.

“We must take the passage and land on the Big Rock,” Mauriri whispered. “The devils are holding the low land. Listen!”

Half a dozen rifle shots, at irregular intervals, attested that Brown still held the Rock and that the pirates had invested the narrow peninsula.

At the end of another hour they swam under the frowning loom of the Big Rock. Mauriri, feeling his way, led the landing in a crevice, up which for a hundred feet they climbed to a narrow ledge.

“Stay here,” said Mauriri. “I go to Brown. In the morning I shall return.”

“I will go with you, Brother,” Grief said.

Mauriri laughed in the darkness.

“Even you, Big Brother, cannot do this thing. I am the Goat Man, and I only, of all Fuatino, can go over the Big Rock in the night. Furthermore, it will be the first time that even I have done it. Put out your hand. You feel it? That is where Pilsach’s dynamite is kept. Lie close beside the wall and you may sleep without falling. I go now.”

And high above the sounding surf, on a narrow shelf beside a ton of dynamite, David Grief planned his campaign, then rested his cheek on his arm and slept.

In the morning, when Mauriri led him over the summit of the Big Rock, David Grief understood why he could not have done it in the night. Despite the accustomed nerve of a sailor for height and precarious clinging, he marvelled that he was able to do it in the broad light of day. There were places, always under minute direction of Mauriri, that he leaned forward, falling, across hundred-foot-deep crevices, until his outstretched hands struck a grip on the opposing wall and his legs could then be drawn across after. Once, there was a ten-foot leap, above half a thousand feet of yawning emptiness and down a fathom’s length to a meagre foothold. And he, despite his cool head, lost it another time on a shelf, a scant twelve inches wide, where all hand-holds seemed to fail him. And Mauriri, seeing him sway, swung his own body far out and over the gulf and passed him, at the same time striking him sharply on the back to brace his reeling brain. Then it was, and forever after, that he fully knew why Mauriri had been named the Goat Man.

V

The defence of the Big Rock had its good points and its defects. Impregnable to assault, two men could hold it against ten thousand. Also, it guarded the passage to open sea. The two schooners, Raoul Van Asveld, and his cutthroat following were bottled up. Grief, with the ton of dynamite, which he had removed higher up the rock, was master. This he demonstrated, one morning, when the schooners attempted to put to sea. The *Valetta* led, the whaleboat towing her manned by captured Fuatino men. Grief and the Goat Man peered straight down from a safe rock-shelter, three hundred feet above. Their rifles were beside them, also a glowing fire-stick and a big bundle of dynamite sticks with fuses and decanators attached. As the whaleboat came beneath, Mauriri shook his head.

"They are our brothers. We cannot shoot."

For'ard, on the *Valetta*, were several of Grief's own Raiatea sailors. Aft stood another at the wheel. The pirates were below, or on the other schooner, with the exception of one who stood, rifle in hand, amidships. For protection he held Naumoo, the Queen's daughter, close to him.

"That is the chief devil," Mauriri whispered, "and his eyes are blue like yours. He is a terrible man. See! He holds Naumoo that we may not shoot him."

A light air and a slight tide were making into the passage, and the schooner's progress was slow.

"Do you speak English?" Grief called down.

The man startled, half lifted his rifle to the perpendicular, and looked up. There was something quick and catlike in his movements, and in his burned blond face a fighting eagerness. It was the face of a killer.

"Yes," he answered. "What do you want?"

"Turn back, or I'll blow your schooner up," Grief warned. He blew on the fire-stick and whispered, "Tell Naumoo to break away from him and run aft."

From the *Rattler*, close astern, rifles cracked, and bullets spatted against the rock. Van Asveld laughed defiantly, and Mauriri called down in the native tongue to the woman. When directly beneath, Grief, watching, saw her jerk away from the man. On the instant Grief touched the fire-stick to the match-head in the split end of the short fuse, sprang into view on the face of the rock, and dropped the dynamite. Van Asveld had managed to catch the girl and was struggling with her. The Goat Man held a rifle on him and waited a chance. The dynamite struck the deck in a compact package, bounded, and rolled into the port scupper. Van Asveld saw it and hesitated, then he and the girl ran aft for their lives. The Goat Man fired, but splintered the corner of the galley. The spattering of bullets from the *Rattler* increased, and the two on the rock crouched low for shelter and waited. Mauriri tried to see what was happening below, but Grief held him back.

"The fuse was too long," he said. "I'll know better next time."

It was half a minute before the explosion came. What happened afterward, for some little time, they could not tell, for the Rattler's marksmen had got the range and were maintaining a steady fire. Once, fanned by a couple of bullets, Grief risked a peep. The *Valetta*, her port deck and rail torn away, was listing and sinking as she drifted back into the harbour. Climbing on board the *Rattler* were the men and the Huahine women who had been hidden in the *Valetta's* cabin and who had swum for it under the protecting fire. The Fuatino men who had been towing in the whaleboat had cast off the line, dashed back through the passage, and were rowing wildly for the south shore.

From the shore of the peninsula the discharges of four rifles announced that Brown and his men had worked through the jungle to the beach and were taking a hand. The bullets ceased coming, and Grief and Mauriri joined in with their rifles. But they could do no damage, for the men of the *Rattler* were firing from the shelter of the deck-houses, while the wind and tide carried the schooner farther in.

There was no sign of the *Valetta*, which had sunk in the deep water of the crater.

Two things Raoul Van Asveld did that showed his keenness and coolness and that elicited Grief's admiration. Under the *Rattler's* rifle fire Raoul compelled the fleeing Fuatino men to come in and surrender. And at the same time, dispatching half his cutthroats in the *Rattler's* boat, he threw them ashore and across the peninsula, preventing Brown from getting away to the main part of the island. And for the rest of the morning the intermittent shooting told to Grief how Brown was being driven in to the other side of the Big Rock. The situation was unchanged, with the exception of the loss of the *Valetta*.

VI

The defects of the position on the Big Rock were vital. There was neither food nor water. For several nights, accompanied by one of the Raiatea men, Mauriri swam to the head of the bay for supplies. Then came the night when lights flared on the water and shots were fired. After that the water-side of the Big Rock was invested as well.

“It’s a funny situation,” Brown remarked, who was getting all the adventure he had been led to believe resided in the South Seas. “We’ve got hold and can’t let go, and Raoul has hold and can’t let go. He can’t get away, and we’re liable to starve to death holding him.”

“If the rain came, the rock-basins would fill,” said Mauriri. It was their first twenty-four hours without water. “Big Brother, to-night you and I will get water. It is the work of strong men.”

That night, with cocoanut calabashes, each of quart capacity and tightly stoppered, he led Grief down to the water from the peninsula side of the Big Rock. They swam out not more than a hundred feet. Beyond, they could hear the occasional click of an oar or the knock of a paddle against a canoe, and sometimes they saw the flare of matches as the men in the guarding boats lighted cigarettes or pipes.

“Wait here,” whispered Mauriri, “and hold the calabashes.”

Turning over, he swam down. Grief, face downward, watched his phosphorescent track glimmer, and dim, and vanish. A long minute afterward Mauriri broke surface noiselessly at Grief’s side.

“Here! Drink!”

The calabash was full, and Grief drank sweet fresh water which had come up from the depths of the salt.

“It flows out from the land,” said Mauriri.

“On the bottom?”

“No. The bottom is as far below as the mountains are above. Fifty feet down it flows. Swim down until you feel its coolness.”

Several times filling and emptying his lungs in diver fashion, Grief turned over and went down through the water. Salt it was to his lips, and warm to his flesh; but at last, deep down, it perceptibly chilled and tasted brackish. Then, suddenly, his body entered the cold, subterranean stream. He removed the small stopper from the calabash, and, as the sweet water gurgled into it, he saw the phosphorescent glimmer of a big fish, like a sea ghost, drift sluggishly by.

Thereafter, holding the growing weight of the calabashes, he remained on the surface, while Mauriri took them down, one by one, and filled them.

“There are sharks,” Grief said, as they swam back to shore.

“Pooh!” was the answer. “They are fish sharks. We of Fuatino are brothers to the fish sharks.”

“But the tiger sharks? I have seen them here.”

“When they come, Big Brother, we will have no more water to drink — unless it rains.”

VII

A week later Mauriri and a Raiatea man swam back with empty calabashes. The tiger sharks had arrived in the harbour. The next day they thirsted on the Big Rock.

“We must take our chance,” said Grief. “Tonight I shall go after water with Mautau. Tomorrow night, Brother, you will go with Tehaa.”

Three quarts only did Grief get, when the tiger sharks appeared and drove them in. There were six of them on the Rock, and a pint a day, in the sweltering heat of the mid-tropics, is not sufficient moisture for a man’s body. The next night Mauriri and Tehaa returned with no water. And the day following Brown learned the full connotation of thirst, when the lips crack to bleeding, the mouth is coated with granular slime, and the swollen tongue finds the mouth too small for residence.

Grief swam out in the darkness with Mautau. Turn by turn, they went down through the salt, to the cool sweet stream, drinking their fill while the calabashes were filling. It was Mau-tau’s turn to descend with the last calabash, and Grief, peering down from the surface, saw the glimmer of sea-ghosts and all the phosphorescent display of the struggle. He swam back alone, but without relinquishing the precious burden of full calabashes.

Of food they had little. Nothing grew on the Rock, and its sides, covered with shellfish at sea level where the surf thundered in, were too precipitous for access. Here and there, where crevices permitted, a few rank shellfish and sea urchins were gleaned. Sometimes frigate birds and other sea birds were snared. Once, with a piece of frigate bird, they succeeded in hooking a shark. After that, with jealously guarded shark-meat for bait, they managed on occasion to catch more sharks.

But water remained their direst need. Mauriri prayed to the Goat God for rain. Taute prayed to the Missionary God, and his two fellow islanders, backsliding, invoked the deities of their old heathen days. Grief grinned and considered. But Brown, wild-eyed, with protruding blackened tongue, cursed. Especially he cursed the phonograph that in the cool twilights ground out gospel hymns from the deck of the *Rattler*. One hymn in particular, "Beyond the Smiling and the Weeping," drove him to madness. It seemed a favourite on board the schooner, for it was played most of all. Brown, hungry and thirsty, half out of his head from weakness and suffering, could lie among the rocks with equanimity and listen to the tinkling of ukuleles and guitars, and the hulas and himines of the Huahine women. But when the voices of the Trinity Choir floated over the water he was beside himself. One evening the cracked tenor took up the song with the machine:

"Beyond the smiling and the weeping,
  I shall be soon.
Beyond the waking and the sleeping,
Beyond the sowing and the reaping,
  I shall be soon,
  I shall be soon."

Then it was that Brown rose up. Again and again, blindly, he emptied his rifle at the schooner. Laughter floated up from the men and women, and from the peninsula came a splattering of return bullets; but the cracked tenor sang on, and Brown continued to fire, until the hymn was played out.

It was that night that Grief and Mauriri came back with but one calabash of water. A patch of skin six inches long was missing from Grief's shoulder in token of the scrape of the sandpaper hide of a shark whose dash he had eluded.

VIII

In the early morning of another day, before the sun-blaze had gained its full strength, came an offer of a parley from Raoul Van Asveld.

Brown brought the word in from the outpost among the rocks a hundred yards away. Grief was squatted over a small fire, broiling a strip of shark-flesh. The last twenty-four hours had been lucky. Seaweed and sea urchins had been gathered. Tehaa had caught a shark, and Mauriri had captured a fair-sized octopus at the base of the crevice where the dynamite was stored. Then, too, in the darkness they had made two successful swims for water before the tiger sharks had nosed them out.

“Said he’d like to come in and talk with you,” Brown said. “But I know what the brute is after. Wants to see how near starved to death we are.”

“Bring him in,” Grief said.

“And then we will kill him,” the Goat Man cried joyously.

Grief shook his head.

“But he is a killer of men, Big Brother, a beast and a devil,” the Goat Man protested.

“He must not be killed, Brother. It is our way not to break our word.”

“It is a foolish way.”

“Still it is our way,” Grief answered gravely, turning the strip of shark-meat over on the coals and noting the hungry sniff and look of Tehaa. “Don’t do that, Tehaa, when the Big Devil comes. Look as if you and hunger were strangers. Here, cook those sea urchins, you, and you, Big Brother, cook the squid. We will have the Big Devil to feast with us. Spare nothing. Cook all.”

And, still broiling meat, Grief arose as Raoul Van Asveld, followed by a large Irish terrier, strode into camp. Raoul did not make the mistake of holding out his hand.

“Hello!” he said. “I’ve heard of you.”

“I wish I’d never heard of you,” Grief answered.

“Same here,” was the response. “At first, before I knew who it was, I thought I had to deal with an ordinary trading captain. That’s why you’ve got me bottled up.”

“And I am ashamed to say that I underrated you,” Grief smiled. “I took you for a thieving beachcomber, and not for a really intelligent pirate and murderer. Hence, the loss of my schooner. Honours are even, I fancy, on that score.”

Raoul flushed angrily under his sunburn, but he contained himself. His eyes roved over the supply of food and the full water-calabashes, though he concealed the incredulous surprise he felt. His was a tall, slender, well-knit figure, and Grief, studying him, estimated his character from his face. The eyes were keen and strong, but a bit too close together — not pinched, however, but just a trifle near to balance the broad forehead, the strong chin and jaw, and the cheekbones wide apart. Strength! His face was filled with it, and yet Grief sensed in it the intangible something the man lacked.

"We are both strong men," Raoul said, with a bow. "We might have been fighting for empires a hundred years ago."

It was Grief's turn to bow.

"As it is, we are squalidly scrapping over the enforcement of the colonial laws of those empires whose destinies we might possibly have determined a hundred years ago."

"It all comes to dust," Raoul remarked sen-tentiously, sitting down. "Go ahead with your meal. Don't let me interrupt."

"Won't you join us?" was Grief's invitation.

The other looked at him with sharp steadiness, then accepted.

"I'm sticky with sweat," he said. "Can I wash?"

Grief nodded and ordered Mauriri to bring a calabash. Raoul looked into the Goat Man's eyes, but saw nothing save languid uninterest as the precious quart of water was wasted on the ground.

"The dog is thirsty," Raoul said.

Grief nodded, and another calabash was presented to the animal.

Again Raoul searched the eyes of the natives and learned nothing.

"Sorry we have no coffee," Grief apologized. "You'll have to drink plain water. A calabash, Tehaa. Try some of this shark. There is squid to follow, and sea urchins and a seaweed salad. I'm sorry we haven't any frigate bird. The boys were lazy yesterday, and did not try to catch any."

With an appetite that would not have stopped at wire nails dipped in lard, Grief ate perfunctorily, and tossed the scraps to the dog.

"I'm afraid I haven't got down to the primitive diet yet," he sighed, as he sat back. "The tinned goods on the *Rattler*, now I could make a hearty meal off of them, but this muck — — " He took a half-pound strip of broiled shark and flung it to the dog. "I suppose I'll come to it if you don't surrender pretty soon."

Raoul laughed unpleasantly.

"I came to offer terms," he said pointedly.

Grief shook his head.

"There aren't any terms. I've got you where the hair is short, and I'm not going to let go."

"You think you can hold me in this hole!" Raoul cried.

"You'll never leave it alive, except in double irons." Grief surveyed his guest with an air of consideration. "I've handled your kind before. We've pretty well cleaned it out of the South Seas. But you are a — how shall I say? — a sort of an anachronism. You're a throwback, and we've got to get rid of you. Personally, I would advise you to go back to the schooner and blow your brains out. It is the only way to escape what you've got coming to you."

The parley, so far as Raoul was concerned, proved fruitless, and he went back into his own lines convinced that the men on the Big Rock could hold out for years, though he would have been swiftly unconvinced could he have observed Tehaa and the Raiateans, the moment his back was turned and he was out of sight, crawling over the rocks and sucking and crunching the scraps his dog had left uneaten.

IX

"We hunger now, Brother," Grief said, "but it is better than to hunger for many days to come. The Big Devil, after feasting and drinking good water with us in plenty, will not stay long in Fuatino. Even to-morrow may he try to leave. To-night you and I sleep over the top of the Rock, and Tehaa, who shoots well, will sleep with us if he can dare the Rock."

Tehaa, alone among the Raiateans, was cragsman enough to venture the perilous way, and dawn found him in a rock-barricaded nook, a hundred yards to the right of Grief and Mauriri.

The first warning was the firing of rifles from the peninsula, where Brown and his two Raiateans signalled the retreat and followed the besiegers through the jungle to the beach. From the eyrie on the face of the rock Grief could see nothing for another hour, when the *Rattler* appeared, making for the passage. As before, the captive Fuatino men towed in the whaleboat. Mauriri, under direction of Grief, called down instructions to them as they passed slowly beneath. By Grief's side lay several bundles of dynamite sticks, well-lashed together and with extremely short fuses.

The deck of the *Rattler* was populous. For'ard, rifle in hand, among the Raiatean sailors, stood a desperado whom Mauriri announced was Raoul's brother. Aft, by the helmsman, stood another. Attached to him, tied waist to waist, with slack, was Mataara, the old Queen. On the other side of the helmsman, his arm in a sling, was Captain Glass. Amidships, as before, was Raoul, and with him, lashed waist to waist, was Naumoo.

"Good morning, Mister David Grief," Raoul called up.

"And yet I warned you that only in double irons would you leave the island," Grief murmured down with a sad inflection.

"You can't kill all your people I have on board," was the answer.

The schooner, moving slowly, jerk by jerk, as the men pulled in the whaleboat, was almost directly beneath. The rowers, without ceasing, slacked on their oars, and were immediately threatened with the rifle of the man who stood for'ard.

"Throw, Big Brother!" Naumoo called up in the Fuatino tongue. "I am filled with sorrow and am willed to die. His knife is ready with which to cut the rope, but I shall hold him tight. Be not afraid, Big Brother. Throw, and throw straight, and good-bye."

Grief hesitated, then lowered the fire-stick which he had been blowing bright.

"Throw!" the Goat Man urged.

Still Grief hesitated.

"If they get to sea, Big Brother, Naumoo dies just the same. And there are all the others. What is her life against the many?"

"If you drop any dynamite, or fire a single shot, we'll kill all on board," Raoul cried up to them. "I've got you, David Grief. You can't kill these people, and I can. Shut up, you!"

This last was addressed to Naumoo, who was calling up in her native tongue and whom Raoul seized by the neck with one hand to choke to silence. In turn, she locked both arms about him and looked up beseechingly to Grief.

"Throw it, Mr. Grief, and be damned to them," Captain Glass rumbled in his deep voice. "They're bloody murderers, and the cabin's full of them."

The desperado who was fastened to the old Queen swung half about to menace Captain Glass with his rifle, when Tehaa, from his position farther along the Rock, pulled trigger on him. The rifle dropped from the man's hand, and on his face was an expression of intense surprise as his legs crumpled under him and he sank down on deck, dragging the Queen with him.

“Port! Hard a port!” Grief cried.

Captain Glass and the Kanaka whirled the wheel over, and the bow of the *Rattler* headed in for the Rock. Amidships Raoul still struggled with Naumoo. His brother ran from for’ard to his aid, being missed by the fusillade of quick shots from Tehaa and the Goat Man. As Raoul’s brother placed the muzzle of his rifle to Naumoo’s side Grief touched the fire-stick to the match-head in the split end of the fuse. Even as with both hands he tossed the big bundle of dynamite, the rifle went off, and Naumoo’s fall to the deck was simultaneous with the fall of the dynamite. This time the fuse was short enough. The explosion occurred at the instant the deck was reached, and that portion of the *Rattler*, along with Raoul, his brother, and Naumoo, forever disappeared.

The schooner’s side was shattered, and she began immediately to settle. For’ard, every Raiatean sailor dived overboard. Captain Glass met the first man springing up the com-panionway from the cabin, with a kick full in the face, but was overborne and trampled on by the rush. Following the desperadoes came the Huahine women, and as they went overboard, the *Rattler* sank on an even keel close to the base of the Rock. Her cross-trees still stuck out when she reached bottom.

Looking down, Grief could see all that occurred beneath the surface. He saw Mataara, a fathom deep, unfasten herself from the dead pirate and swim upward. As her head emerged she saw Captain Glass, who could not swim, sinking several yards away. The Queen, old woman that she was, but an islander, turned over, swam down to him, and held him up as she struck out for the unsubmerged cross-trees.

Five heads, blond and brown, were mingled with the dark heads of Polynesia that dotted the surface. Grief, rifle in hand, watched for a chance to shoot. The Goat Man, after a minute, was successful, and they saw the body of one man sink sluggishly. But to the Raiatean sailors, big and brawny, half fish, was the vengeance given. Swimming swiftly, they singled out the blond heads and the brown. Those from above watched the four surviving desperadoes, clutched and locked, dragged far down beneath and drowned like curs.

In ten minutes everything was over. The Huahine women, laughing and giggling, were holding on to the sides of the whaleboat which had done the towing. The Raiatean sailors, waiting for orders, were about the cross-tree to which Captain Glass and Mataara clung.

"The poor old *Rattler*," Captain Glass lamented.

"Nothing of the sort," Grief answered. "In a week we'll have her raised, new timbers amidships, and we'll be on our way." And to the Queen, "How is it with you, Sister?"

"Naumoo is gone, and Motauri, Brother, but Fuatino is ours again. The day is young. Word shall be sent to all my people in the high places with the goats. And to-night, once again, and as never before, we shall feast and rejoice in the Big House."

"She's been needing new timbers abaft the beam there for years," quoth Captain Glass. "But the chronometers will be out of commission for the rest of the cruise."

Chapter Four — THE JOKERS OF NEW GIBBON

I

"I'm almost afraid to take you in to New Gibbon," David Grief said. "It wasn't until you and the British gave me a free hand and let the place alone that any results were accomplished."

Wallenstein, the German Resident Commissioner from Bougainville, poured himself a long Scotch and soda and smiled.

"We take off our hats to you, Mr. Grief," he said in perfectly good English. "What you have done on the devil island is a miracle. And we shall continue not to interfere. It *is* a devil island, and old Koho is the big chief devil of them all. We never could bring him to terms. He is a liar, and he is no fool. He is a black Napoleon, a head-hunting, man-eating Talleyrand. I remember six years ago, when I landed there in the British cruiser. The niggers cleared out for the bush, of course, but we found several who couldn't get away. One was his latest wife. She had been hung up by one arm in the sun for two days and nights. We cut her down, but she died just the same. And staked out in the fresh running water, up to their necks, were three more women. All their bones were broken and their joints crushed. The process is supposed to make them tender for the eating. They were still alive. Their vitality was remarkable. One woman, the oldest, lingered nearly ten days. Well, that was a sample of Koho's diet. No wonder he's a wild beast. How you ever pacified him is our everlasting puzzlement."

"I wouldn't call him exactly pacified," Grief answered. "Though he comes in once in a while and eats out of the hand."

"That's more than we accomplished with our cruisers. Neither the German nor the English ever laid eyes on him. You were the first."

"No; McTavish was the first," Grief disclaimed.

"Ah, yes, I remember him — the little, dried-up Scotchman." Wallenstein sipped his whiskey. "He's called the Trouble-mender, isn't he?"

Grief nodded.

"And they say the screw you pay him is bigger than mine or the British Resident's?"

“I’m afraid it is,” Grief admitted. “You see, and no offence, he’s really worth it. He spends his time wherever the trouble is. He is a wizard. He’s the one who got me my lodgment on New Gibbon. He’s down on Malaita now, starting a plantation for me.”

“The first?”

“There’s not even a trading station on all Malaita. The recruiters still use covering boats and carry the old barbed wire above their rails. There’s the plantation now. We’ll be in in half an hour.” He handed the binoculars to his guest. “Those are the boat-sheds to the left of the bungalow. Beyond are the barracks. And to the right are the copra-sheds. We dry quite a bit already. Old Koho’s getting civilized enough to make his people bring in the nuts. There’s the mouth of the stream where you found the three women softening.”

The *Wonder*, wing-and-wing, was headed directly in for the anchorage. She rose and fell lazily over a glassy swell flawed here and there by catspaws from astern. It was the tail-end of the monsoon season, and the air was heavy and sticky with tropic moisture, the sky a florid, leaden muss of formless clouds. The rugged land was swathed with cloud-banks and squall wreaths, through which headlands and interior peaks thrust darkly. On one promontory a slant of sunshine blazed torridly, on another, scarcely a mile away, a squall was bursting in furious downpour of driving rain.

This was the dank, fat, savage island of New Gibbon, lying fifty miles to leeward of Choiseul. Geographically, it belonged to the Solomon Group. Politically, the dividing line of German and British influence cut it in half, hence the joint control by the two Resident Commissioners. In the case of New Gibbon, this control existed only on paper in the colonial offices of the two countries. There was no real control at all, and never had been. The bêche de mer fishermen of the old days had passed it by. The sandalwood traders, after stern experiences, had given it up. The blackbirders had never succeeded in recruiting one labourer on the island, and, after the schooner *Dorset* had been cut off with all hands, they left the place severely alone. Later, a German company had attempted a cocoanut plantation, which was abandoned after several managers and a number of contract labourers had lost their heads. German cruisers and British cruisers had failed to get the savage blacks to listen to reason. Four times the missionary societies had essayed the peaceful conquest of the island, and four times, between sickness and massacre, they had been driven away, More cruisers, more pacifications, had followed, and followed fruitlessly. The cannibals had always retreated into the bush and laughed at the screaming shells. When the warships left it was an easy matter to rebuild the burned grass houses and set up the ovens in the old-fashioned way.

New Gibbon was a large island, fully one hundred and fifty miles long and half as broad.

Its windward coast was iron-bound, without anchorages or inlets, and it was inhabited by scores of warring tribes — at least it had been, until Koho had arisen, like a Kamehameha, and, by force of arms and considerable statecraft, firmly welded the greater portion of the tribes into a confederation. His policy of permitting no intercourse with white men had been eminently right, so far as survival of his own people was concerned; and after the visit of the last cruiser he had had his own way until David Grief and McTavish the Trouble-mender landed on the deserted beach where once had stood the German bungalow and barracks and the various English mission-houses.

Followed wars, false peaces, and more wars. The weazened little Scotchman could make trouble as well as mend it, and, not content with holding the beach, he imported bushmen from Malaita and invaded the wild-pig runs of the interior jungle. He burned villages until Koho wearied of rebuilding them, and when he captured Koho’s eldest son he compelled a conference with the old chief. It was then that McTavish laid down the rate of head-exchange. For each head of his own people he promised to take ten of Koho’s. After Koho had learned that the Scotchman was a man of his word, the first true peace was made. In the meantime McTavish had built the bungalow and barracks, cleared the jungle-land along the beach, and laid out the plantation. After that he had gone on his way to mend trouble on the atoll of Tasman, where a plague of black measles had broken out and been ascribed to Grief’s plantation by the devil-devil doctors. Once, a year later, he had been called back again to straighten up New Gibbon; and Koho, after paying a forced fine of two hundred thousand cocoanuts, decided it was cheaper to keep the peace and sell the nuts. Also, the fires of his youth had burned down. He was getting old and limped of one leg where a Lee-Enfield bullet had perforated the calf.

II

“I knew a chap in Hawaii,” Grief said, “superintendent of a sugar plantation, who used a hammer and a ten-penny nail.”

They were sitting on the broad bungalow veranda, and watching Worth, the manager of New Gibbon, doctoring the sick squad. They were New Georgia boys, a dozen of them, and the one with the aching tooth had been put back to the last. Worth had just failed in his first attempt. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with one hand and waved the forceps with the other.

“And broke more than one jaw,” he asserted grimly.

Grief shook his head. Wallenstein smiled and elevated his brows.

“He said not, at any rate,” Grief qualified. “He assured me, furthermore, that he always succeeded on the first trial.”

“I saw it done when I was second mate on a lime-juicer,” Captain Ward spoke up. “The old man used a caulking mallet and a steel marlin-spike. He took the tooth out with the first stroke, too, clean as a whistle.”

“Me for the forceps,” Worth muttered grimly, inserting his own pair in the mouth of the black. As he pulled, the man groaned and rose in the air. “Lend a hand, somebody, and hold him down,” the manager appealed.

Grief and Wallenstein, on either side, gripped the black and held him. And he, in turn, struggled against them and clenched his teeth on the forceps. The group swayed back and forth. Such exertion, in the stagnant heat, brought the sweat out on all of them. The black sweated, too, but his was the sweat of excruciating pain. The chair on which he sat was overturned. Captain Ward paused in the act of pouring himself a drink, and called encouragement. Worth pleaded with his assistants to hang on, and hung on himself, twisting the tooth till it crackled and then attempting a straightaway pull.

Nor did any of them notice the little black man who limped up the steps and stood looking on. Koho was a conservative. His fathers before him had worn no clothes, and neither did he, not even a gee-string. The many empty perforations in nose and lips and ears told of decorative passions long since dead. The holes on both ear-lobes had been torn out, but their size was attested by the strips of withered flesh that hung down and swept his shoulders. He cared now only for utility, and in one of the half dozen minor holes in his right ear he carried a short clay pipe. Around his waist was buckled a cheap trade-belt, and between the imitation leather and the naked skin was thrust the naked blade of a long knife. Suspended from the belt was his bamboo betel-nut and lime box. In his hand was a short-barrelled, large-bore Snider rifle. He was indescribably filthy, and here and there marred by scars, the worst being the one left by the Lee-Enfield bullet, which had withered the calf to half the size of its mate. His shrunken mouth showed that few teeth were left to serve him. Face and body were shrunken and withered, but his black, bead-like eyes, small and close together, were very bright, withal they were restless and querulous, and more like a monkey's than a man's.

He looked on, grinning like a shrewd little ape. His joy in the torment of the patient was natural, for the world he lived in was a world of pain. He had endured his share of it, and inflicted far more than his share on others. When the tooth parted from its locked hold in the jaw and the forceps raked across the other teeth and out of the mouth with a nerve-rasping sound, old Koho's eyes fairly sparkled, and he looked with glee at the poor black, collapsed on the veranda floor and groaning terribly as he held his head in both his hands.

"I think he's going to faint," Grief said, bending over the victim. "Captain Ward, give him a drink, please. You'd better take one yourself, Worth; you're shaking like a leaf."

"And I think I'll take one," said Wallenstein, wiping the sweat from his face. His eye caught the shadow of Koho on the floor and followed it up to the old chief himself. "Hello! who's this?"

"Hello, Koho!" Grief said genially, though he knew better than to offer to shake hands.

It was one of Koho's *tambos*, given him by the devil-devil doctors when he was born, that never was his flesh to come in contact with the flesh of a white man. Worth and Captain Ward, of the *Wonder*, greeted Koho, but Worth frowned at sight of the Snider, for it was one of his *tambos* that no visiting bushman should carry a weapon on the plantation. Rifles had a nasty way of going off at the hip under such circumstances. The manager clapped his hands, and a black house-boy, recruited from San Cristobal, came running. At a sign from Worth, he took the rifle from the visitor's hand and carried it inside the bungalow.

"Koho," Grief said, introducing the German Resident, "this big fella marster belong Bougainville — my word, big fella marster too much."

Koho, remembering the visits of the various German cruisers, smiled with a light of unpleasant reminiscence in his eyes.

"Don't shake hands with him, Wallenstein," Grief warned. "*Tambo*, you know." Then to Koho, "My word, you get 'm too much fat stop along you. Bime by you marry along new fella Mary, eh?"

"Too old fella me," Koho answered, with a weary shake of the head. "Me no like 'm Mary. Me no like 'm *kai-kai* (food). Close up me die along altogether." He stole a significant glance at Worth, whose head was tilted back to a long glass. "Me like 'm rum."

Grief shook his head.

"*Tambo* along black fella."

"He black fella no tambo," Koho retorted, nodding toward the groaning labourer.

"He fella sick," Grief explained.

"Me fella sick."

"You fella big liar," Grief laughed. "Rum tambo, all the time tambo. Now, Koho, we have big fella talk along this big fella mar-ster."

And he and Wallenstein and the old chief sat down on the veranda to confer about affairs of state. Koho was complimented on the peace he had kept, and he, with many protestations of his aged decrepitude, swore peace again and everlasting. Then was discussed the matter of starting a German plantation twenty miles down the coast. The land, of course, was to be bought from Koho, and the price was arranged in terms of tobacco, knives, beads, pipes, hatchets, porpoise teeth and shell-money — in terms of everything except rum. While the talk went on, Koho, glancing through the window, could see Worth mixing medicines and placing bottles back in the medicine cupboard. Also, he saw the manager complete his labours by taking a drink of Scotch. Koho noted the bottle carefully. And, though he hung about for an hour after the conference was over, there was never a moment when some one or another was not in the room. When Grief and Worth sat down to a business talk, Koho gave it up.

"Me go along schooner," he announced, then turned and limped out.

"How are the mighty fallen," Grief laughed. "To think that used to be Koho, the fiercest red-handed murderer in the Solomons, who defied all his life two of the greatest world powers. And now he's going aboard to try and cadge Denby for a drink."

III

For the last time in his life the supercargo of the *Wonder* perpetrated a practical joke on a native. He was in the main cabin, checking off the list of goods being landed in the whaleboats, when Koho limped down the companionway and took a seat opposite him at the table.

"Close up me die along altogether," was the burden of the old chief's plaint. All the delights of the flesh had forsaken him. "Me no like 'm Mary. Me no like 'm *kai-kai*. Me too much sick fella. Me close up finish." A long, sad pause, in which his face expressed unutterable concern for his stomach, which he patted gingerly and with an assumption of pain. "Belly belong me too much sick." Another pause, which was an invitation to Denby to make suggestions. Then followed a long, weary, final sigh, and a "Me like 'm rum."

Denby laughed heartlessly. He had been cadged for drinks before by the old cannibal, and the sternest *tambo* Grief and McTavish had laid down was the one forbidding alcohol to the natives of New Gibbon.

The trouble was that Koho had acquired the taste. In his younger days he had learned the delights of drunkenness when he cut off the schooner *Dorset*, but unfortunately he had learned it along with all his tribesmen, and the supply had not held out long. Later, when he led his naked warriors down to the destruction of the German plantation, he was wiser, and he appropriated all the liquors for his sole use. The result had been a gorgeous mixed drunk, on a dozen different sorts of drink, ranging from beer doctored with quinine to absinthe and apricot brandy. The drunk had lasted for months, and it had left him with a thirst that would remain with him until he died. Predisposed toward alcohol, after the way of savages, all the chemistry of his flesh clamoured for it. This craving was to him expressed in terms of tingling and sensation, of maggots crawling warmly and deliciously in his brain, of good feeling, and well being, and high exultation. And in his barren old age, when women and feasting were a weariness, and when old hates had smouldered down, he desired more and more the revivifying fire that came liquid out of bottles — out of all sorts of bottles — for he remembered them well. He would sit in the sun for hours, occasionally drooling, in mournful contemplation of the great orgy which had been his when the German plantation was cleaned out.

Denby was sympathetic. He sought out the old chief's symptoms and offered him dyspeptic tablets from the medicine chest, pills, and a varied assortment of harmless tabloids and capsules. But Koho steadfastly declined. Once, when he cut the *Dorset* off, he had bitten through a capsule of quinine; in addition, two of his warriors had partaken of a white powder and laid down and died very violently in a very short time. No; he did not believe in drugs. But the liquids from bottles, the cool-flaming youth-givers and warm-glowing dream-makers. No wonder the white men valued them so highly and refused to dispense them.

"Rum he good fella," he repeated over and over, plaintively and with the weary patience of age.

And then Denby made his mistake and played his joke. Stepping around behind Koho, he unlocked the medicine closet and took out a four-ounce bottle labelled *essence of mustard*. As he made believe to draw the cork and drink of the contents, in the mirror on the for'ard bulkhead he glimpsed Koho, twisted half around, intently watching him. Denby smacked his lips and cleared his throat appreciatively as he replaced the bottle. Neglecting to relock the medicine closet, he returned to his chair, and, after a decent interval, went on deck. He stood beside the companionway and listened. After several moments the silence below was broken by a fearful, wheezing, propulsive, strangling cough. He smiled to himself and returned leisurely down the companionway. The bottle was back on the shelf where it belonged, and the old man sat in the same position. Denby marvelled at his iron control. Mouth and lips and tongue, and all sensitive membranes, were a blaze of fire. He gasped and nearly coughed several times, while involuntary tears brimmed in his eyes and ran down his cheeks. An ordinary man would have coughed and strangled for half an hour. But old Koho's face was grimly composed. It dawned on him that a trick had been played, and into his eyes came an expression of hatred and malignancy so primitive, so abysmal, that it sent the chills up and down Denby's spine. Koho arose proudly.

"Me go along," he said. "You sing out one fella boat stop along me."

IV

Having seen Grief and Worth start for a ride over the plantation, Wallenstein sat down in the big living-room and with gun-oil and old rags proceeded to take apart and clean his automatic pistol. On the table beside him stood the inevitable bottle of Scotch and numerous soda bottles. Another bottle, part full, chanced to stand there. It was also labelled Scotch, but its content was liniment which Worth had mixed for the horses and neglected to put away.

As Wallenstein worked, he glanced through the window and saw Koho coming up the compound path. He was limping very rapidly, but when he came along the veranda and entered the room his gait was slow and dignified. He sat down and watched the gun-cleaning, Though mouth and lips and tongue were afire, he gave no sign. At the end of five minutes he spoke.

"Rum he good fella. Me like 'm rum." Wallenstein smiled and shook his head, and then it was that his perverse imp suggested what was to be his last joke on a native. The similarity of the two bottles was the real suggestion. He laid his pistol parts on the table and mixed himself a long drink. Standing as he did between Koho and the table, he interchanged the two bottles, drained his glass, made as if to search for something, and left the room. From outside he heard the surprised splutter and cough; but when he returned the old chief sat as before. The liniment in the bottle, however, was lower, and it still oscillated.

Koho stood up, clapped his hands, and, when the house-boy answered, signed that he desired his rifle. The boy fetched the weapon, and according to custom preceded the visitor down the pathway. Not until outside the gate did the boy turn the rifle over to its owner. Wallenstein, chuckling to himself, watched the old chief limp along the beach in the direction of the river.

A few minutes later, as he put his pistol together, Wallenstein heard the distant report of a gun. For the instant he thought of Koho, then dismissed the conjecture from his mind. Worth and Grief had taken shotguns with them, and it was probably one of their shots at a pigeon. Wallenstein lounged back in his chair, chuckled, twisted his yellow mustache, and dozed. He was aroused by the excited voice of Worth, crying out:

"Ring the big fella bell! Ring plenty too much! Ring like hell!"

Wallenstein gained the veranda in time to see the manager jump his horse over the low fence of the compound and dash down the beach after Grief, who was riding madly ahead. A loud crackling and smoke rising through the cocoanut trees told the story. The boat-houses and the barracks were on fire. The big plantation bell was ringing wildly as the German Resident ran down the beach, and he could see whaleboats hastily putting off from the schooner.

Barracks and boat-houses, grass-thatched and like tinder, were wrapped in flames. Grief emerged from the kitchen, carrying a naked black child by the leg. Its head was missing.

"The cook's in there," he told Worth. "Her head's gone, too. She was too heavy, and I had to clear out."

"It was my fault," Wallenstein said. "Old Koho did it. But I let him take a drink of Worth's horse liniment."

"I guess he's headed for the bush," Worth said, springing astride his horse and starting. "Oliver is down there by the river. Hope he didn't get *him*."

The manager galloped away through the trees. A few minutes later, as the charred wreck of the barracks crashed in, they heard him calling and followed. On the edge of the river bank they came upon him. He still sat on his horse, very white-faced, and gazed at something on the ground. It was the body of Oliver, the young assistant manager, though it was hard to realize it, for the head was gone. The black labourers, breathless from their run in from the fields, were now crowding around, and under conches to-night, and the war-drums, "all merry hell will break loose. They won't rush us, but keep all the boys close up to the house, Mr. Worth. Come on!"

As they returned along the path they came upon a black who whimpered and cried vociferously.

"Shut up mouth belong you!" Worth shouted. "What name you make 'm noise?"

"Him fella Koho finish along two fella bulla-macow," the black answered, drawing a forefinger significantly across his throat.

"He's knifed the cows," Grief said. "That means no more milk for some time for you, Worth. I'll see about sending a couple up from Ugi."

Wallenstein proved inconsolable, until Denby, coming ashore, confessed to the dose of essence of mustard. Thereat the German Resident became even cheerful, though he twisted his yellow mustache up more fiercely and continued to curse the Solomons with oaths culled from four languages.

Next morning, visible from the masthead of the *Wonder*, the bush was alive with signal-smokes. From promontory to promontory, and back through the solid jungle, the smoke-pillars curled and puffed and talked. Remote villages on the higher peaks, beyond the farthest raids McTavish had ever driven, joined in the troubled conversation. From across the river persisted a bedlam of conches; while from everywhere, drifting for miles along the quiet air, came the deep, booming reverberations of the great war-drums — huge tree trunks, hollowed by fire and carved with tools of stone and shell. “You’re all right as long as you stay close,” Grief told his manager. “I’ve got to get along to Guvutu. They won’t come out in the open and attack you. Keep the work-gangs close. Stop the clearing till this blows over. They’ll get any detached gangs you send out. And, whatever you do, don’t be fooled into going into the bush after Koho. If you do, he’ll get you. All you’ve got to do is wait for McTavish. I’ll send him up with a bunch of his Malaita bush-men. He’s the only man who can go inside. Also, until he comes, I’ll leave Denby with you. You don’t mind, do you, Mr. Denby? I’ll send McTavish up with the *Wanda*, and you can go back on her and rejoin the *Wonder*. Captain Ward can manage without you for a trip.”

“It was just what I was going to volunteer,” Denby answered. “I never dreamed all this muss would be kicked up over a joke. You see, in a way I consider myself responsible for it.”

“So am I responsible,” Wallenstein broke in.

“But I started it,” the supercargo urged.

“Maybe you did, but I carried it along.”

“And Koho finished it,” Grief said.

“At any rate, I, too, shall remain,” said the German.

“I thought you were coming to Guvutu with me,” Grief protested.

“I was. But this is my jurisdiction, partly, and I have made a fool of myself in it completely. I shall remain and help get things straight again.”

At Guvutu, Grief sent full instructions to McTavish by a recruiting ketch which was just starting for Malaita. Captain Ward sailed in the *Wonder* for the Santa Cruz Islands; and Grief, borrowing a whaleboat and a crew of black prisoners from the British Resident, crossed the channel to Guadalcanar, to examine the grass lands back of Penduffryn.

Three weeks later, with a free sheet and a lusty breeze, he threaded the coral patches and surged up the smooth water to Guvutu anchorage. The harbour was deserted, save for a small ketch which lay close in to the shore reef. Grief recognized it as the *Wanda*. She had evidently just got in by the Tulagi Passage, for her black crew was still at work furling the sails. As he rounded alongside, McTavish himself extended a hand to help him over the rail.

“What’s the matter?” Grief asked. “Haven’t you started yet?”

McTavish nodded. “And got back. Everything’s all right on board.”

“How’s New Gibbon?”

"All there, the last I saw of it, barrin' a few inconsequential frills that a good eye could make out lacking from the landscape."

He was a cold flame of a man, small as Koho, and as dried up, with a mahogany complexion and small, expressionless blue eyes that were more like gimlet-points than the eyes of a Scotchman. Without fear, without enthusiasm, impervious to disease and climate and sentiment, he was lean and bitter and deadly as a snake. That his present sour look boded ill news, Grief was well aware.

"Spit it out!" he said. "What's happened?"

"'Tis a thing severely to be condemned, a damned shame, this joking with heathen niggers," was the reply. "Also, 'tis very expensive. Come below, Mr. Grief. You'll be better for the information with a long glass in your hand. After you."

"How did you settle things?" his employer demanded as soon as they were seated in the cabin.

The little Scotchman shook his head. "There was nothing to settle. It all depends how you look at it. The other way would be to say it was settled, entirely settled, mind you, before I got there."

"But the plantation, man? The plantation?"

"No plantation. All the years of our work have gone for naught. 'Tis back where we started, where the missionaries started, where the Germans started — and where they finished. Not a stone stands on another at the landing pier. The houses are black ashes. Every tree is hacked down, and the wild pigs are rooting out the yams and sweet potatoes. Those boys from New Georgia, a fine bunch they were, five score of them, and they cost you a pretty penny. Not one is left to tell the tale."

He paused and began fumbling in a large locker under the companion-steps.

"But Worth? And Denby? And Wallenstein?"

"That's what I'm telling you. Take a look."

McTavish dragged out a sack made of rice matting and emptied its contents on the floor. David Grief pulled himself together with a jerk, for he found himself gazing fascinated at the heads of the three men he had left at New Gibbon. The yellow mustache of Wallenstein had lost its fierce curl and drooped and wilted on the upper lip.

"I don't know how it happened," the Scotchman's voice went on drearily. "But I surmise they went into the bush after the old devil."

“And where is Koho?” Grief asked.

“Back in the bush and drunk as a lord. That’s how I was able to recover the heads. He was too drunk to stand. They lugged him on their backs out of the village when I rushed it. And if you’ll relieve me of the heads, I’ll be well obliged.” He paused and sighed. “I suppose they’ll have regular funerals over them and put them in the ground. But in my way of thinking they’d make excellent curios. Any respectable museum would pay a hundred quid apiece. Better have another drink. You’re looking a bit pale — — There, put that down you, and if you’ll take my advice, Mr. Grief, I would say, set your face sternly against any joking with the niggers. It always makes trouble, and it is a very expensive divertisement.”

Chapter Five — A LITTLE ACCOUNT WITH SWITHIN HALL

I

With a last long scrutiny at the unbroken circle of the sea, David Grief swung out of the cross-trees and slowly and dejectedly descended the ratlines to the deck.

“Leu-Leu Atoll is sunk, Mr. Snow,” he said to the anxious-faced young mate. “If there is anything in navigation, the atoll is surely under the sea, for we’ve sailed clear over it twice — or the spot where it ought to be. It’s either that or the chronometer’s gone wrong, or I’ve forgotten my navigation.”

“It must be the chronometer, sir,” the mate reassured his owner. “You know I made separate sights and worked them up, and that they agreed with yours.”

“Yes,” Grief muttered, nodding glumly, “and where your Summer lines crossed, and mine, too, was the dead centre of Leu-Leu Atoll. It must be the chronometer — slipped a cog or something.”

He made a short pace to the rail and back, and cast a troubled eye at the *Uncle Toby’s* wake. The schooner, with a fairly strong breeze on her quarter, was logging nine or ten knots.

“Better bring her up on the wind, Mr. Snow. Put her under easy sail and let her work to windward on two-hour legs. It’s thickening up, and I don’t imagine we can get a star observation to-night; so we’ll just hold our weather position, get a latitude sight to-morrow, and run Leu-Leu down on her own latitude. That’s the way all the old navigators did.”

Broad of beam, heavily sparred, with high freeboard and bluff, Dutchy bow, the *Uncle Toby* was the slowest, tubbiest, safest, and most fool-proof schooner David Grief possessed. Her run was in the Banks and Santa Cruz groups and to the northwest among the several isolated atolls where his native traders collected copra, hawksbill turtle, and an occasional ton of pearl shell. Finding the skipper down with a particularly bad stroke of fever, Grief had relieved him and taken the *Uncle Toby* on her semiannual run to the atolls. He had elected to make his first call at Leu-Leu, which lay farthest, and now found himself lost at sea with a chronometer that played tricks.

II

No stars showed that night, nor was the sun visible next day. A stuffy, sticky calm obtained, broken by big wind-squalls and heavy downpours. From fear of working too far to windward, the Uncle Toby was hove to, and four days and nights of cloud-hidden sky followed. Never did the sun appear, and on the several occasions that stars broke through they were too dim and fleeting for identification. By this time it was patent to the veriest tyro that the elements were preparing to break loose. Grief, coming on deck from consulting the barometer, which steadfastly remained at 29.90, encountered Jackie-Jackie, whose face was as brooding and troublous as the sky and air. Jackie-Jackie, a Tongan sailor of experience, served as a sort of bosun and semi-second mate over the mixed Kanaka crew.

“Big weather he come, I think,” he said. “I see him just the same before maybe five, six times.”

Grief nodded. “Hurricane weather, all right, Jackie-Jackie. Pretty soon barometer go down — bottom fall out.”

“Sure,” the Tongan concurred. “He goin’ to blow like hell.”

Ten minutes later Snow came on deck.

“She’s started,” he said; “29.85, going down and pumping at the same time. It’s stinking hot — don’t you notice it?” He brushed his forehead with his hands. “It’s sickening. I could lose my breakfast without trying.”

Jackie-Jackie grinned. “Just the same me. Everything inside walk about. Always this way before big blow. But *Uncle Toby* all right. He go through anything.”

“Better rig that storm-trysail on the main, and a storm-jib,” Grief said to the mate. “And put all the reefs into the working canvas before you furl down. No telling what we may need. Put on double gaskets while you’re about it.”

In another hour, the sultry oppressiveness steadily increasing and the stark calm still continuing, the barometer had fallen to 29.70. The mate, being young, lacked the patience of waiting for the portentous. He ceased his restless pacing, and waved his arms.

"If she's going to come let her come!" he cried. "There's no use shilly-shallying this way! Whatever the worst is, let us know it and have it! A pretty pickle — lost with a crazy chronometer and a hurricane that won't blow!"

The cloud-mussed sky turned to a vague copper colour, and seemed to glow as the inside of a huge heated caldron. Nobody remained below. The native sailors formed in anxious groups amidships and for'ard, where they talked in low voices and gazed apprehensively at the ominous sky and the equally ominous sea that breathed in long, low, oily undulations.

"Looks like petroleum mixed with castor oil," the mate grumbled, as he spat his disgust overside. "My mother used to dose me with messes like that when I was a kid. Lord, she's getting black!"

The lurid coppery glow had vanished, and the sky thickened and lowered until the darkness was as that of a late twilight. David Grief, who well knew the hurricane rules, nevertheless reread the "Laws of Storms," screwing his eyes in the faint light in order to see the print. There was nothing to be done save wait for the wind, so that he might know how he lay in relation to the fast-flying and deadly centre that from somewhere was approaching out of the gloom.

It was three in the afternoon, and the glass had sunk to 29:45, when the wind came. They could see it on the water, darkening the face of the sea, crisping tiny whitecaps as it rushed along. It was merely a stiff breeze, and the *Uncle Toby*, filling away under her storm canvas till the wind was abeam, sloshed along at a four-knot gait.

"No weight to that," Snow sneered. "And after such grand preparation!"

"Pickaninny wind," Jackie-Jackie agreed. "He grow big man pretty quick, you see."

Grief ordered the foresail put on, retaining the reefs, and the *Uncle Toby* mended her pace in the rising breeze. The wind quickly grew to man's size, but did not stop there. It merely blew hard, and harder, and kept on blowing harder, advertising each increase by lulls followed by fierce, freshening gusts. Ever it grew, until the *Uncle Toby's* rail was more often pressed under than not, while her waist boiled with foaming water which the scuppers could not carry off. Grief studied the barometer, still steadily falling.

"The centre is to the southward," he told Snow, "and we're running across its path and into it. Now we'll turn about and run the other way. That ought to bring the glass up. Take in the foresail — it's more than she can carry already — and stand by to wear her around."

The maneuver was accomplished, and through the gloom that was almost that of the first darkness of evening the *Uncle Toby* turned and raced madly north across the face of the storm.

"It's nip and tuck," Grief confided to the mate a couple of hours later. "The storm's swinging a big curve — there's no calculating that curve — and we may win across or the centre may catch us. Thank the Lord, the glass is holding its own. It all depends on how big the curve is. The sea's too big for us to keep on. Heave her to! She'll keep working along out anyway."

"I thought I knew what wind was," Snow shouted in his owner's ear next morning. "This isn't wind. It's something unthinkable. It's impossible. It must reach ninety or a hundred miles an hour in the gusts. That don't mean anything. How could I ever tell it to anybody? I couldn't. And look at that sea! I've run my Easting down, but I never saw anything like that."

Day had come, and the sun should have been up an hour, yet the best it could produce was a sombre semi-twilight. The ocean was a stately procession of moving mountains. A third of a mile across yawned the valleys between the great waves. Their long slopes, shielded somewhat from the full fury of the wind, were broken by systems of smaller whitecapping waves, but from the high crests of the big waves themselves the wind tore the whitecaps in the forming. This spume drove masthead high, and higher, horizontally, above the surface of the sea.

"We're through the worst," was Grief's judgment. "The glass is coming along all the time. The sea will get bigger as the wind eases down. I'm going to turn in. Watch for shifts in the wind. They'll be sure to come. Call me at eight bells."

By mid-afternoon, in a huge sea, with the wind after its last shift no more than a stiff breeze, the Tongan bosun sighted a schooner bottom up. The *Uncle Toby's* drift took them across the bow and they could not make out the name; but before night they picked up with a small, round-bottom, double-ender boat, swamped but with white lettering visible on its bow. Through the binoculars, Gray made out: *Emily L No. 3*.

"A sealing schooner," Grief said. "But what a sealer's doing in these waters is beyond me."

“Treasure-hunters, maybe?” Snow speculated. “The *Sophie Sutherland* and the *Herman* were sealers, you remember, chartered out of San Francisco by the chaps with the maps who can always go right to the spot until they get there and don’t.”

III

After a giddy night of grand and lofty tumbling, in which, over a big and dying sea, without a breath of wind to steady her, the Uncle Toby rolled every person on board sick of soul, a light breeze sprang up and the reefs were shaken out. By midday, on a smooth ocean floor, the clouds thinned and cleared and sights of the sun were obtained. Two degrees and fifteen minutes south, the observation gave them. With a broken chronometer longitude was out of the question.

“We’re anywhere within five hundred and a thousand miles along that latitude line,” Grief remarked, as he and the mate bent over the chart.

“Leu-Leu is to the south’ard somewhere, and this section of ocean is all blank. There is neither an island nor a reef by which we can regulate the chronometer. The only thing to do — ”

“Land ho, skipper!” the Tongan called down the companionway.

Grief took a quick glance at the empty blank of the chart, whistled his surprise, and sank back feebly in a chair.

“It gets me,” he said. “There can’t be land around here. We never drifted or ran like that. The whole voyage has been crazy. Will you kindly go up, Mr. Snow, and see what’s ailing Jackie.”

“It’s land all right,” the mate called down a minute afterward. “You can see it from the deck — tops of cocoanuts — an atoll of some sort. Maybe it’s Leu-Leu after all.”

Grief shook his head positively as he gazed at the fringe of palms, only the tops visible, apparently rising out of the sea.

“Haul up on the wind, Mr. Snow, close-and-by, and we’ll take a look. We can just reach past to the south, and if it spreads off in that direction we’ll hit the southwest corner.”

Very near must palms be to be seen from the low deck of a schooner, and, slowly as the *Uncle Toby* sailed, she quickly raised the low land above the sea, while more palms increased the definition of the atoll circle.

"She's a beauty," the mate remarked. "A perfect circle.... Looks as if it might be eight or nine miles across.... Wonder if there's an entrance to the lagoon.... Who knows? Maybe it's a brand new find."

They coasted up the west side of the atoll, making short tacks in to the surf-pounded coral rock and out again. From the masthead, across the palm-fringe, a Kanaka announced the lagoon and a small island in the middle.

"I know what you're thinking," Grief said to his mate.

Snow, who had been muttering and shaking his head, looked up with quick and challenging incredulity.

"You're thinking the entrance will be on the northwest." Grief went on, as if reciting.

"Two cable lengths wide, marked on the north by three separated cocoanuts, and on the south by pandanus trees. Eight miles in diameter, a perfect circle, with an island in the dead centre."

"I *was* thinking that," Snow acknowledged.

"And there's the entrance opening up just where it ought to be — — "

"And the three palms," Snow almost whispered, "and the pandanus trees. If there's a windmill on the island, it's it — Swithin Hall's island. But it can't be. Everybody's been looking for it for the last ten years."

"Hall played you a dirty trick once, didn't he?" Grief queried.

Snow nodded. "That's why I'm working for you. He broke me flat. It was downright robbery. I bought the wreck of the *Cascade*, down in Sydney, out of a first instalment of a legacy from home."

"She went on Christmas Island, didn't she?"

"Yes, full tilt, high and dry, in the night. They saved the passengers and mails. Then I bought a little island schooner, which took the rest of my money, and I had to wait the final payment by the executors to fit her out. What did Swithin Hall do — he was at Honolulu at the time — but make a straightaway run for Christmas Island. Neither right nor title did he have. When I got there, the hull and engines were all that was left of the *Cascade*. She had had a fair shipment of silk on board, too. And it wasn't even damaged. I got it afterward pretty straight from his supercargo. He cleared something like sixty thousand dollars."

Snow shrugged his shoulders and gazed bleakly at the smooth surface of the lagoon, where tiny wavelets danced in the afternoon sun.

"The wreck was mine. I bought her at public auction. I'd gambled big, and I'd lost. When I got back to Sydney, the crew, and some of the tradesmen who'd extended me credit, libelled the schooner. I pawned my watch and sextant, and shovelled coal one spell, and finally got a billet in the New Hebrides on a screw of eight pounds a month. Then I tried my luck as independent trader, went broke, took a mate's billet on a recruiter down to Tanna and over to Fiji, got a job as overseer on a German plantation back of Apia, and finally settled down on the *Uncle Toby*."

"Have you ever met Swithin Hall?"

Snow shook his head.

"Well, you're likely to meet him now. There's the windmill."

In the centre of the lagoon, as they emerged from the passage, they opened a small, densely wooded island, among the trees of which a large Dutch windmill showed plainly.

"Nobody at home from the looks of it," Grief said, "or you might have a chance to collect."

The mate's face set vindictively, and his fists clenched.

"Can't touch him legally. He's got too much money now. But I can take sixty thousand dollars' worth out of his hide. I hope he is at home."

"Then I hope he is, too," Grief said, with an appreciative smile. "You got the description of his island from Bau-Oti, I suppose?"

"Yes, as pretty well everybody else has. The trouble is that Bau-Oti can't give latitude or longitude. Says they sailed a long way from the Gilberts — that's all he knows. I wonder what became of him."

"I saw him a year ago on the beach at Tahiti. Said he was thinking about shipping for a cruise through the Paumotus. Well, here we are, getting close in. Heave the lead, Jackie-Jackie. Stand by to let go, Mr. Snow. According to Bau-Oti, anchorage three hundred yards off the west shore in nine fathoms, coral patches to the southeast. There are the patches. What do you get, Jackie?"

"Nine fadom."

"Let go, Mr. Snow."

The *Uncle Toby* swung to her chain, head-sails ran down, and the Kanaka crew sprang to fore and main-halyards and sheets.

IV

The whaleboat laid alongside the small, coral-stone landing-pier, and David Grief and his mate stepped ashore.

“You’d think the place deserted,” Grief said, as they walked up a sanded path to the bungalow. “But I smell a smell that I’ve often smelled. Something doing, or my nose is a liar. The lagoon is carpeted with shell. They’re rotting the meat out not a thousand miles away. Get that whiff?”

Like no bungalow in the tropics was this bungalow of Swithin Hall. Of mission architecture, when they had entered through the unlatched screen door they found decoration and furniture of the same mission style. The floor of the big living-room was covered with the finest Samoan mats. There were couches, window seats, cozy corners, and a billiard table. A sewing table, and a sewing-basket, spilling over with sheer linen in the French embroidery of which stuck a needle, tokened a woman’s presence. By screen and veranda the blinding sunshine was subdued to a cool, dim radiance. The sheen of pearl push-buttons caught Grief’s eye.

“Storage batteries, by George, run by the windmill!” he exclaimed as he pressed the buttons. “And concealed lighting!”

Hidden bowls glowed, and the room was filled with diffused golden light. Many shelves of books lined the walls. Grief fell to running over their titles. A fairly well-read man himself, for a sea-adventurer, he glimpsed a wide-ness of range and catholicity of taste that were beyond him. Old friends he met, and others that he had heard of but never read. There were complete sets of Tolstoy, Turgenieff, and Gorky; of Cooper and Mark Twain; of Hugo, and Zola, and Sue; and of Flaubert, De Maupassant, and Paul de Koch. He glanced curiously at the pages of Metchnikoff, Weininger, and Schopenhauer, and wonderingly at those of Ellis, Lydston, Krafft-Ebbing, and Forel. Woodruff’s “Expansion of Races” was in his hands when Snow returned from further exploration of the house.

“Enamelled bath-tub, separate room for a shower, and a sitz-bath!” he exclaimed. “Fitted up for a king! And I reckon some of my money went to pay for it. The place must be occupied. I found fresh-opened butter and milk tins in the pantry, and fresh turtle-meat hanging up. I’m going to see what else I can find.”

Grief, too, departed, through a door that led out of the opposite end of the living-room. He found himself in a self-evident woman’s bedroom. Across it, he peered through a wire-mesh door into a screened and darkened sleeping porch. On a couch lay a woman asleep. In the soft light she seemed remarkably beautiful in a dark Spanish way. By her side, opened and face downward, a novel lay on a chair. From the colour in her cheeks, Grief concluded that she had not been long in the tropics. After the one glimpse he stole softly back, in time to see Snow entering the living-room through the other door. By the naked arm he was clutching an age-wrinkled black who grinned in fear and made signs of dumbness.

“I found him snoozing in a little kennel out back,” the mate said. “He’s the cook, I suppose. Can’t get a word out of him. What did you find?”

“A sleeping princess. S-sh! There’s somebody now.”

“If it’s Hall,” Snow muttered, clenching his fist.

Grief shook his head. “No rough-house. There’s a woman here. And if it is Hall, before we go I’ll maneuver a chance for you to get action.”

The door opened, and a large, heavily built man entered. In his belt was a heavy, long-barrelled Colt’s. One quick, anxious look he gave them, then his face wreathed in a genial smile and his hand was extended.

“Welcome, strangers. But if you don’t mind my asking, how, by all that’s sacred, did you ever manage to find my island?”

“Because we were out of our course,” Grief answered, shaking hands.

“My name’s Hall, Swithin Hall,” the other said, turning to shake Snow’s hand. “And I don’t mind telling you that you’re the first visitors I’ve ever had.”

“And this is your secret island that’s had all the beaches talking for years?” Grief answered. “Well, I know the formula now for finding it.”

“How’s that?” Hall asked quickly.

“Smash your chronometer, get mixed up with a hurricane, and then keep your eyes open for cocoanuts rising out of the sea.”

“And what is your name?” Hall asked, after he had laughed perfunctorily.

“Anstey — Phil Anstey,” Grief answered promptly. “Bound on the *Uncle Toby* from the Gilberts to New Guinea, and trying to find my longitude. This is my mate, Mr. Gray, a better navigator than I, but who has lost his goat just the same to the chronometer.”

Grief did not know his reason for lying, but he had felt the prompting and succumbed to it. He vaguely divined that something was wrong, but could not place his finger on it. Swithin Hall was a fat, round-faced man, with a laughing lip and laughter-wrinkles in the corners of his eyes. But Grief, in his early youth, had learned how deceptive this type could prove, as well as the deceptiveness of blue eyes that screened the surface with fun and hid what went on behind.

“What are you doing with my cook? — lost yours and trying to shanghai him?” Hall was saying. “You’d better let him go, if you’re going to have any supper. My wife’s here, and she’ll be glad to meet you — dinner, she calls it, and calls me down for misnaming it, but I’m old fashioned. My folks always ate dinner in the middle of the day. Can’t get over early training. Don’t you want to wash up? I do. Look at me. I’ve been working like a dog — out with the diving crew — shell, you know. But of course you smelt it.”

V

Snow pleaded charge of the schooner, and went on board. In addition to his repugnance at breaking salt with the man who had robbed him, it was necessary for him to impress the in-violableness of Grief’s lies on the Kanaka crew. By eleven o’clock Grief came on board, to find his mate waiting up for him.

“There’s something doing on Swithin Hall’s island,” Grief said, shaking his head. “I can’t make out what it is, but I get the feel of it. What does Swithin Hall look like?”

Snow shook his head.

“That man ashore there never bought the books on the shelves,” Grief declared with conviction. “Nor did he ever go in for concealed lighting. He’s got a surface flow of suavity, but he’s rough as a hoof-rasp underneath. He’s an oily bluff. And the bunch he’s got with him — Watson and Gorman their names are; they came in after you left — real sea-dogs, middle-aged, marred and battered, tough as rusty wrought-iron nails and twice as dangerous; real ugly customers, with guns in their belts, who don’t strike me as just the right sort to be on such comradely terms with Swithin Hall. And the woman! She’s a lady. I mean it. She knows a whole lot of South America, and of China, too. I’m sure she’s Spanish, though her English is natural. She’s travelled. We talked bull-fights. She’s seen them in Guayaquil, in Mexico, in Seville. She knows a lot about sealskins.

“Now here’s what bothers me. She knows music. I asked her if she played. And he’s fixed that place up like a palace. That being so, why hasn’t he a piano for her? Another thing: she’s quick and lively and he watches her whenever she talks. He’s on pins and needles, and continually breaking in and leading the conversation. Say, did you ever hear that Swithin Hall was married?”

“Bless me, I don’t know,” the mate replied. “Never entered my head to think about it.”

“He introduced her as Mrs. Hall. And Watson and Gorman call him Hall. They’re a precious pair, those two men. I don’t understand it at all.”

“What are you going to do about it?” Snow asked.

“Oh, hang around a while. There are some books ashore there I want to read. Suppose you send that topmast down in the morning and generally overhaul. We’ve been through a hurricane, you know. Set up the rigging while you’re about it. Get things pretty well adrift, and take your time.”

VI

The next day Grief’s suspicions found further food. Ashore early, he strolled across the little island to the barracks occupied by the divers.

They were just boarding the boats when he arrived, and it struck him that for Kanakas they behaved more like chain-gang prisoners. The three white men were there, and Grief noted that each carried a rifle. Hall greeted him jovially enough, but Gorman and Watson scowled as they grunted curt good mornings.

A moment afterward one of the Kanakas, as he bent to place his oar, favoured Grief with a slow, deliberate wink. The man’s face was familiar, one of the thousands of native sailors and divers he had encountered drifting about in the island trade.

“Don’t tell them who I am,” Grief said, in Tahitian. “Did you ever sail for me?”

The man’s head nodded and his mouth opened, but before he could speak he was suppressed by a savage “Shut up!” from Watson, who was already in the sternsheets.

“I beg pardon,” Grief said. “I ought to have known better.”

“That’s all right,” Hall interposed. “The trouble is they’re too much talk and not enough work. Have to be severe with them, or they wouldn’t get enough shell to pay their grub.”

Grief nodded sympathetically. “I know them. Got a crew of them myself — the lazy swine. Got to drive them like niggers to get a half-day’s work out of them.”

“What was you sayin’ to him?” Gorman blurted in bluntly.

“I was asking how the shell was, and how deep they were diving.”

“Thick,” Hall took over the answering. “We’re working now in about ten fathom. It’s right out there, not a hundred yards off. Want to come along?”

Half the day Grief spent with the boats, and had lunch in the bungalow. In the afternoon he loafed, taking a siesta in the big living-room, reading some, and talking for half an hour with Mrs. Hall. After dinner, he played billiards with her husband. It chanced that Grief had never before encountered Swithin Hall, yet the latter’s fame as an expert at billiards was the talk of the beaches from Levuka to Honolulu. But the man Grief played with this night proved most indifferent at the game. His wife showed herself far cleverer with the cue.

When he went on board the *Uncle Toby* Grief routed Jackie-Jackie out of bed. He described the location of the barracks, and told the Tongan to swim softly around and have talk with the Kanakas. In two hours Jackie-Jackie was back. He shook his head as he stood dripping before Grief.

“Very funny t’ing,” he reported. “One white man stop all the time. He has big rifle. He lay in water and watch. Maybe twelve o’clock, other white man come and take rifle. First white man go to bed. Other man stop now with rifle. No good. Me cannot talk with Kanakas. Me come back.”

“By George!” Grief said to Snow, after the Tongan had gone back to his bunk. “I smell something more than shell. Those three men are standing watches over their Kanakas. That man’s no more Swithin Hall than I am.”

Snow whistled from the impact of a new idea.

“I’ve got it!” he cried.

“And I’ll name it,” Grief retorted, “It’s in your mind that the *Emily L.* was their schooner?”

“Just that. They’re raising and rotting the shell, while she’s gone for more divers, or provisions, or both.”

“And I agree with you.” Grief glanced at the cabin clock and evinced signs of bed-going. “He’s a sailor. The three of them are. But they’re not island men. They’re new in these waters.”

Again Snow whistled.

“And the *Emily L.* is lost with all hands,” he said. “We know that. They’re marooned here till Swithin Hall comes. Then he’ll catch them with all the shell.”

“Or they’ll take possession of his schooner.”

"Hope they do!" Snow muttered vindictively. "Somebody ought to rob him. Wish I was in their boots. I'd balance off that sixty thousand."

VII

A week passed, during which time the *Uncle Toby* was ready for sea, while Grief managed to allay any suspicion of him by the shore crowd.

Even Gorman and Watson accepted him at his self-description. Throughout the week Grief begged and badgered them for the longitude of the island.

"You wouldn't have me leave here lost," he finally urged. "I can't get a line on my chronometer without your longitude."

Hall laughingly refused.

"You're too good a navigator, Mr. Anstey, not to fetch New Guinea or some other high land."

"And you're too good a navigator, Mr. Hall," Grief replied, "not to know that I can fetch your island any time by running down its latitude."

On the last evening, ashore, as usual, to dinner, Grief got his first view of the pearls they had collected. Mrs. Hall, waxing enthusiastic, had asked her husband to bring forth the "pretties," and had spent half an hour showing them to Grief. His delight in them was genuine, as well as was his surprise that they had made so rich a haul.

"The lagoon is virgin," Hall explained. "You saw yourself that most of the shell is large and old. But it's funny that we got most of the valuable pearls in one small patch in the course of a week. It was a little treasure house. Every oyster seemed filled — seed pearls by the quart, of course, but the perfect ones, most of that bunch there, came out of the small patch."

Grief ran his eye over them and knew their value ranged from one hundred to a thousand dollars each, while the several selected large ones went far beyond.

"Oh, the pretties! the pretties!" Mrs. Hall cried, bending forward suddenly and kissing them.

A few minutes later she arose to say good-night.

"It's good-bye," Grief said, as he took her hand. "We sail at daylight."

"So suddenly!" she cried, while Grief could not help seeing the quick light of satisfaction in her husband's eyes.

“Yes,” Grief continued. “All the repairs are finished. I can’t get the longitude of your island out of your husband, though I’m still in hopes he’ll relent.”

Hall laughed and shook his head, and, as his wife left the room, proposed a last farewell nightcap. They sat over it, smoking and talking.

“What do you estimate they’re worth?” Grief asked, indicating the spread of pearls on the table. “I mean what the pearl-buyers would give you in open market?”

“Oh, seventy-five or eighty thousand,” Hall said carelessly.

“I’m afraid you’re underestimating. I know pearls a bit. Take that biggest one. It’s perfect. Not a cent less than five thousand dollars. Some multimillionaire will pay double that some day, when the dealers have taken their whack. And never minding the seed pearls, you’ve got quarts of baroques there. And baroques are coming into fashion. They’re picking up and doubling on themselves every year.”

Hall gave the trove of pearls a closer and longer scrutiny, estimating the different parcels and adding the sum aloud.

“You’re right,” he admitted. “They’re worth a hundred thousand right now.”

“And at what do you figure your working expenses?” Grief went on. “Your time, and your two men’s, and the divers’?”

“Five thousand would cover it.”

“Then they stand to net you ninety-five thousand?”

“Something like that. But why so curious?”

“Why, I was just trying — — ” Grief paused and drained his glass. “Just trying to reach some sort of an equitable arrangement. Suppose I should give you and your people a passage to Sydney and the five thousand dollars — or, better, seven thousand five hundred. You’ve worked hard.”

Without commotion or muscular movement the other man became alert and tense. His round-faced geniality went out like the flame of a snuffed candle. No laughter clouded the surface of the eyes, and in their depths showed the hard, dangerous soul of the man. He spoke in a low, deliberate voice.

“Now just what in hell do you mean by that?”

Grief casually relighted his cigar.

“I don’t know just how to begin,” he said. “The situation is — er — is embarrassing for you. You see, I’m trying to be fair. As I say, you’ve worked hard. I don't want to confiscate the pearls. I want to pay you for your time and trouble, and expense."

Conviction, instantaneous and absolute, froze on the other's face.

"And I thought you were in Europe," he muttered. Hope flickered for a moment. "Look here, you're joking me. How do I know you're Swithin Hall?"

Grief shrugged his shoulders. "Such a joke would be in poor taste, after your hospitality. And it is equally in poor taste to have two Swithin Halls on the island."

"Since you're Swithin Hall, then who the deuce am I? Do you know that, too?"

"No," Grief answered airily. "But I'd like to know."

"Well, it's none of your business."

"I grant it. Your identity is beside the point. Besides, I know your schooner, and I can find out who you are from that."

"What's her name?"

"The *Emily L.*

"Correct. I'm Captain Raffy, owner and master."

"The seal-poacher? I've heard of you. What under the sun brought you down here on my preserves?"

"Needed the money. The seal herds are about finished."

"And the out-of-the-way places of the world are better policed, eh?"

"Pretty close to it. And now about this present scrape, Mr. Hall. I can put up a nasty fight. What are you going to do about it?"

"What I said. Even better. What's the *Emily L.* worth?"

"She's seen her day. Not above ten thousand, which would be robbery. Every time she's in a rough sea I'm afraid she'll jump her ballast through her planking."

"She has jumped it, Captain Raffy. I sighted her bottom-up after the blow. Suppose we say she was worth seven thousand five hundred. I'll pay over to you fifteen thousand and give you a passage. Don't move your hands from your lap." Grief stood up, went over to him, and took his revolver. "Just a necessary precaution, Captain. Now you'll go on board with me. I'll break the news to Mrs. Raffy afterward, and fetch her out to join you."

"You're behaving handsomely, Mr. Hall, I must say," Captain Raffy volunteered, as the whaleboat came alongside the *Uncle Toby*. "But watch out for Gorman and Watson. They’re ugly customers. And, by the way, I don’t like to mention it, but you’ve seen my wife. I’ve given her four or five pearls. Watson and Gorman were willing.”

“Say no more, Captain. Say no more. They shall remain hers. Is that you, Mr. Snow? Here’s a friend I want you to take charge of — Captain Raffy. I’m going ashore for his wife.”

VIII

David Grief sat writing at the library table in the bungalow living-room. Outside, the first pale of dawn was showing. He had had a busy night. Mrs. Raffy had taken two hysterical hours to pack her and Captain Raffy’s possessions. Gorman had been caught asleep, but Watson, standing guard over the divers, had shown fight. Matters did not reach the shooting stage, but it was only after it had been demonstrated to him that the game was up that he consented to join his companions on board. For temporary convenience, he and Gorman were shackled in the mate’s room, Mrs. Raffy was confined in Grief’s, and Captain Raffy made fast to the cabin table.

Grief finished the document and read over what he had written:

To Swithin Hall, for pearls taken from his lagoon (estimated)		$100,000
To Herbert Snow, paid in full for salvage from steamship Cascade in pearls (estimated)	$60,000	
To Captain Raffy, salary and expenses for collecting pearls	7,500	
To Captain Raffy, reimbursement for schooner Emily L., lost in hurricane	7,500	
To Mrs. Raffy, for good will, five fair pearls (estimated)	1,100	
To passage to Syndey, four persons, at $120.	480	
To white lead for painting Swithin Hall’s two whaleboats	9	
To Swithin Hall, balance in pearls (estimated) which are to be found in drawer of library table	23,411	
	$100,000 —	$100,000

Grief signed and dated, paused, and added at the bottom:

> *P. S. — Still owing to Swithin Hall three books, borrowed from library: Hudson's "Law of Psychic Phenomena," Zola's "Paris," and Mahan's "Problem of Asia." These books, or full value, can be collected of said David Griefs Sydney office*.

He shut off the electric light, picked up the bundle of books, carefully latched the front door, and went down to the waiting whaleboat.

Chapter Six — A GOBOTO NIGHT

I

At Goboto the traders come off their schooners and the planters drift in from far, wild coasts, and one and all they assume shoes, white duck trousers, and various other appearances of civilization. At Goboto mail is received, bills are paid, and newspapers, rarely more than five weeks old, are accessible; for the little island, belted with its coral reefs, affords safe anchorage, is the steamer port of call, and serves as the distributing point for the whole wide-scattered group.

Life at Goboto is heated, unhealthy, and lurid, and for its size it asserts the distinction of more cases of acute alcoholism than any other spot in the world. Guvutu, over in the Solomons, claims that it drinks between drinks. Goboto does not deny this. It merely states, in passing, that in the Goboton chronology no such interval of time is known. It also points out its import statistics, which show a far larger per capita consumption of spiritous liquors. Guvutu explains this on the basis that Goboto does a larger business and has more visitors. Goboto retorts that its resident population is smaller and that its visitors are thirstier. And the discussion goes on interminably, principally because of the fact that the disputants do not live long enough to settle it.

Goboto is not large. The island is only a quarter of a mile in diameter, and on it are situated an admiralty coal-shed (where a few tons of coal have lain untouched for twenty years), the barracks for a handful of black labourers, a big store and warehouse with sheet-iron roofs, and a bungalow inhabited by the manager and his two clerks. They are the white population. An average of one man out of the three is always to be found down with fever. The job at Goboto is a hard one. It is the policy of the company to treat its patrons well, as invading companies have found out, and it is the task of the manager and clerks to do the treating. Throughout the year traders and recruiters arrive from far, dry cruises, and planters from equally distant and dry shores, bringing with them magnificent thirsts. Goboto is the mecca of sprees, and when they have spread they go back to their schooners and plantations to recuperate.

Some of the less hardy require as much as six months between visits. But for the manager and his assistants there are no such intervals. They are on the spot, and week by week, blown in by monsoon or southeast trade, the schooners come to anchor, cargo'd with copra, ivory nuts, pearl-shell, hawksbill turtle, and thirst.

It is a very hard job at Goboto. That is why the pay is twice that on other stations, and that is why the company selects only courageous and intrepid men for this particular station. They last no more than a year or so, when the wreckage of them is shipped back to Australia, or the remains of them are buried in the sand across on the windward side of the islet. Johnny Bassett, almost the legendary hero of Goboto, broke all records. He was a remittance man with a remarkable constitution, and he lasted seven years. His dying request was duly observed by his clerks, who pickled him in a cask of trade-rum (paid for out of their own salaries) and shipped him back to his people in England. Nevertheless, at Goboto, they tried to be gentlemen. For that matter, though something was wrong with them, they were gentlemen, and had been gentlemen. That was why the great unwritten rule of Goboto was that visitors should put on pants and shoes. Breech-clouts, lava-lavas, and bare legs were not tolerated. When Captain Jensen, the wildest of the Blackbirders though descended from old New York Knickerbocker stock, surged in, clad in loin-cloth, undershirt, two belted revolvers and a sheath-knife, he was stopped at the beach. This was in the days of Johnny Bassett, ever a stickler in matters of etiquette. Captain Jensen stood up in the sternsheets of his whaleboat and denied the existence of pants on his schooner. Also, he affirmed his intention of coming ashore. They of Goboto nursed him back to health from a bullet-hole through his shoulder, and in addition handsomely begged his pardon, for no pants had they found on his schooner. And finally, on the first day he sat up, Johnny Bassett kindly but firmly assisted his guest into a pair of pants of his own. This was the great precedent. In all the succeeding years it had never been violated. White men and pants were undivorce-able. Only niggers ran naked. Pants constituted caste.

II

On this night things were, with one exception, in nowise different from any other night. Seven of them, with glimmering eyes and steady legs, had capped a day of Scotch with swivel-sticked cocktails and sat down to dinner. Jacketed, trousered, and shod, they were: Jerry McMurtrey, the manager; Eddy Little and Jack Andrews, clerks; Captain Stapler, of the recruiting ketch *Merry*; Darby Shryleton, planter from Tito-Ito; Peter Gee, a half-caste Chinese pearl-buyer who ranged from Ceylon to the Paumotus, and Alfred Deacon, a visitor who had stopped off from the last steamer. At first wine was served by the black servants to those that drank it, though all quickly shifted back to Scotch and soda, pickling their food as they ate it, ere it went into their calcined, pickled stomachs.

Over their coffee, they heard the rumble of an anchor-chain through a hawse-pipe, tokening the arrival of a vessel.

“It’s David Grief,” Peter Gee remarked.

“How do you know?” Deacon demanded truculently, and then went on to deny the half-caste’s knowledge. “You chaps put on a lot of side over a new chum. I’ve done some sailing myself, and this naming a craft when its sail is only a blur, or naming a man by the sound of his anchor — it’s — it’s unadulterated poppycock.”

Peter Gee was engaged in lighting a cigarette, and did not answer.

“Some of the niggers do amazing things that way,” McMurtrey interposed tactfully.

As with the others, this conduct of their visitor jarred on the manager. From the moment of Peter Gee’s arrival that afternoon Deacon had manifested a tendency to pick on him. He had disputed his statements and been generally rude.

“Maybe it’s because Peter’s got Chink blood in him,” had been Andrews’ hypothesis. “Deacon’s Australian, you know, and they’re daffy down there on colour.”

“I fancy that’s it,” McMurtrey had agreed. “But we can’t permit any bullying, especially of a man like Peter Gee, who’s whiter than most white men.”

In this the manager had been in nowise wrong. Peter Gee was that rare creature, a good as well as clever Eurasian. In fact, it was the stolid integrity of the Chinese blood that toned the recklessness and licentiousness of the English blood which had run in his father’s veins. Also, he was better educated than any man there, spoke better English as well as several other tongues, and knew and lived more of their own ideals of gentlemanness than they did themselves. And, finally, he was a gentle soul. Violence he deprecated, though he had killed men in his time. Turbulence he abhorred.

He always avoided it as he would the plague.

Captain Stapler stepped in to help McMurtrey:

"I remember, when I changed schooners and came into Altman, the niggers knew right off the bat it was me. I wasn't expected, either, much less to be in another craft. They told the trader it was me. He used the glasses, and wouldn't believe them. But they did know. Told me afterward they could see it sticking out all over the schooner that I was running her."

Deacon ignored him, and returned to the attack on the pearl-buyer.

"How do you know from the sound of the anchor that it was this whatever-you-called-him man?" he challenged.

"There are so many things that go to make up such a judgment," Peter Gee answered. "It's very hard to explain. It would require almost a text book."

"I thought so," Deacon sneered. "Explanation that doesn't explain is easy."

"Who's for bridge?" Eddy Little, the second clerk, interrupted, looking up expectantly and starting to shuffle. "You'll play, won't you, Peter?"

"If he does, he's a bluffer," Deacon cut back. "I'm getting tired of all this poppycock. Mr. Gee, you will favour me and put yourself in a better light if you tell how you know who that man was that just dropped anchor. After that I'll play you piquet."

"I'd prefer bridge," Peter answered. "As for the other thing, it's something like this: By the sound it was a small craft — no square-rigger. No whistle, no siren, was blown — again a small craft. It anchored close in — still again a small craft, for steamers and big ships must drop hook outside the middle shoal. Now the entrance is tortuous. There is no recruiting nor trading captain in the group who dares to run the passage after dark. Certainly no stranger would. There *were* two exceptions. The first was Margonville. But he was executed by the High Court at Fiji. Remains the other exception, David Grief. Night or day, in any weather, he runs the passage. This is well known to all. A possible factor, in case Grief were somewhere else, would be some young dare-devil of a skipper. In this connection, in the first place, I don't know of any, nor does anybody else. In the second place, David Grief is in these waters, cruising on the *Gunga*, which is shortly scheduled to leave here for Karo-Karo. I spoke to Grief, on the *Gunga*, in Sandfly Passage, day before yesterday. He was putting a trader ashore on a new station. He said he was going to call in at Babo, and then come on to Goboto. He has had ample time to get here. I have heard an anchor drop. Who else than David Grief can it be? Captain Donovan is skipper of the *Gunga*, and him I know too well to believe that he'd run in to Goboto after dark unless his owner were in charge. In a few minutes David Grief will enter through that door and say, 'In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks.' I'll wager fifty pounds he's the man that enters and that his words will be, 'In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks. '" Deacon was for the moment crushed. The sullen blood rose darkly in his face.

"Well, he's answered you," McMurtrey laughed genially. "And I'll back his bet myself for a couple of sovereigns."

"Bridge! Who's going to take a hand?" Eddy Little cried impatiently. "Come on, Peter!"

"The rest of you play," Deacon said. "He and I are going to play piquet."

"I'd prefer bridge," Peter Gee said mildly.

"Don't you play piquet?"

The pearl-buyer nodded.

"Then come on. Maybe I can show I know more about that than I do about anchors."

"Oh, I say — — " McMurtrey began.

"You can play bridge," Deacon shut him off. "We prefer piquet."

Reluctantly, Peter Gee was bullied into a game that he knew would be unhappy.

"Only a rubber," he said, as he cut for deal.

"For how much?" Deacon asked.

Peter Gee shrugged his shoulders. "As you please."

"Hundred up — five pounds a game?"

Peter Gee agreed.

"With the lurch double, of course, ten pounds?"

"All right," said Peter Gee.

At another table four of the others sat in at bridge. Captain Stapler, who was no card-player, looked on and replenished the long glasses of Scotch that stood at each man's right hand. McMurtrey, with poorly concealed apprehension, followed as well as he could what went on at the piquet table. His fellow Englishmen as well were shocked by the behaviour of the Australian, and all were troubled by fear of some untoward act on his part.

That he was working up his animosity against the half-caste, and that the explosion might come any time, was apparent to all.

"I hope Peter loses," McMurtrey said in an undertone.

"Not if he has any luck," Andrews answered. "He's a wizard at piquet. I know by experience."

That Peter Gee was lucky was patent from the continual badgering of Deacon, who filled his glass frequently. He had lost the first game, and, from his remarks, was losing the second, when the door opened and David Grief entered.

"In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks," he remarked casually to the assembled company, ere he gripped the manager's hand. "Hello, Mac! Say, my skipper's down in the whaleboat. He's got a silk shirt, a tie, and tennis shoes, all complete, but he wants you to send a pair of pants down. Mine are too small, but yours will fit him. Hello, Eddy! How's that *ngari-ngari?* You up, Jock? The miracle has happened. No one down with fever, and no one remarkably drunk." He sighed, "I suppose the night is young yet. Hello, Peter! Did you catch that big squall an hour after you left us? We had to let go the second anchor."

While he was being introduced to Deacon, McMurtrey dispatched a house-boy with the pants, and when Captain Donovan came in it was as a white man should — at least in Goboto.

Deacon lost the second game, and an outburst heralded the fact. Peter Gee devoted himself to lighting a cigarette and keeping quiet.

"What? — are you quitting because you're ahead?" Deacon demanded.

Grief raised his eyebrows questioningly to McMurtrey, who frowned back his own disgust.

"It's the rubber," Peter Gee answered.

"It takes three games to make a rubber. It's my deal. Come on!"

Peter Gee acquiesced, and the third game was on.

"Young whelp — he needs a lacing," McMurtrey muttered to Grief. "Come on, let us quit, you chaps. I want to keep an eye on him. If he goes too far I'll throw him out on the beach, company instructions or no."

"Who is he?" Grief queried.

"A left-over from last steamer. Company's orders to treat him nice. He's looking to invest in a plantation. Has a ten-thousand-pound letter of credit with the company. He's got 'all-white Australia' on the brain. Thinks because his skin is white and because his father was once Attorney-General of the Commonwealth that he can be a cur. That's why he's picking on Peter, and you know Peter's the last man in the world to make trouble or incur trouble. Damn the company. I didn't engage to wet-nurse its infants with bank accounts. Come on, fill your glass, Grief. The man's a blighter, a blithering blighter."

"Maybe he's only young," Grief suggested.

"He can't contain his drink — that's clear." The manager glared his disgust and wrath. "If he raises a hand to Peter, so help me, I'll give him a licking myself, the little overgrown cad!"

The pearl-buyer pulled the pegs out of the cribbage board on which he was scoring and sat back. He had won the third game. He glanced across to Eddy Little, saying:

"I'm ready for the bridge, now."

"I wouldn't be a quitter," Deacon snarled.

"Oh, really, I'm tired of the game," Peter Gee assured him with his habitual quietness.

"Come on and be game," Deacon bullied. "One more. You can't take my money that way. I'm out fifteen pounds. Double or quits."

McMurtrey was about to interpose, but Grief restrained him with his eyes.

"If it positively is the last, all right," said Peter Gee, gathering up the cards. "It's my deal, I believe. As I understand it, this final is for fifteen pounds. Either you owe me thirty or we quit even?"

"That's it, chappie. Either we break even or I pay you thirty."

"Getting blooded, eh?" Grief remarked, drawing up a chair.

The other men stood or sat around the table, and Deacon played again in bad luck. That he was a good player was clear. The cards were merely running against him. That he could not take his ill luck with equanimity was equally clear. He was guilty of sharp, ugly curses, and he snapped and growled at the imperturbable half-caste. In the end Peter Gee counted out, while Deacon had not even made his fifty points. He glowered speechlessly at his opponent.

"Looks like a lurch," said Grief.

"Which is double," said Peter Gee.

"There's no need your telling me," Deacon snarled. "I've studied arithmetic. I owe you forty-five pounds. There, take it!"

The way in which he flung the nine five-pound notes on the table was an insult in itself. Peter Gee was even quieter, and flew no signals of resentment.

"You've got fool's luck, but you can't play cards, I can tell you that much," Deacon went on. "I could teach you cards."

The half-caste smiled and nodded acquiescence as he folded up the money.

"There's a little game called casino — I wonder if you ever heard of it? — a child's game."

"I've seen it played," the half-caste murmured gently.

"What's that?" snapped Deacon. "Maybe you think you can play it?"

"Oh, no, not for a moment. I'm afraid I haven't head enough for it."

"It's a bully game, casino," Grief broke in pleasantly. "I like it very much."

Deacon ignored him.

"I'll play you ten quid a game — thirty-one points out," was the challenge to Peter Gee. "And I'll show you how little you know about cards. Come on! Where's a full deck?"

"No, thanks," the half-caste answered. "They are waiting for me in order to make up a bridge set."

"Yes, come on," Eddy Little begged eagerly. "Come on, Peter, let's get started."

"Afraid of a little game like casino," Deacon girded. "Maybe the stakes are too high. I'll play you for pennies — or farthings, if you say so."

The man's conduct was a hurt and an affront to all of them. McMurtrey could stand it no longer.

"Now hold on, Deacon. He says he doesn't want to play. Let him alone."

Deacon turned raging upon his host; but before he could blurt out his abuse, Grief had stepped into the breach.

"I'd like to play casino with you," he said.

"What do you know about it?"

"Not much, but I'm willing to learn."

"Well, I'm not teaching for pennies to-night."

"Oh, that's all right," Grief answered. "I'll play for almost any sum — within reason, of course."

Deacon proceeded to dispose of this intruder with one stroke.

"I'll play you a hundred pounds a game, if that will do you any good."

Grief beamed his delight. “That will be all right, very right. Let us begin. Do you count sweeps?”

Deacon was taken aback. He had not expected a Goboton trader to be anything but crushed by such a proposition.

“Do you count sweeps?” Grief repeated.

Andrews had brought him a new deck, and he was throwing out the joker.

“Certainly not,” Deacon answered. “That’s a sissy game.”

“I’m glad,” Grief coincided. “I don’t like sissy games either.”

“You don’t, eh? Well, then, I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll play for five hundred pounds a game.”

Again Deacon was taken aback.

“I’m agreeable,” Grief said, beginning to shuffle. “Cards and spades go out first, of course, and then big and little casino, and the aces in the bridge order of value. Is that right?”

“You’re a lot of jokers down here,” Deacon laughed, but his laughter was strained. “How do I know you’ve got the money?”

“By the same token I know you’ve got it. Mac, how’s my credit with the company?”

“For all you want,” the manager answered.

“You personally guarantee that?” Deacon demanded.

“I certainly do,” McMurtrey said. “Depend upon it, the company will honour his paper up and past your letter of credit.”

“Low deals,” Grief said, placing the deck before Deacon on the table.

The latter hesitated in the midst of the cut and looked around with querulous misgiving at the faces of the others. The clerks and captains nodded.

“You’re all strangers to me,” Deacon complained. “How am I to know? Money on paper isn’t always the real thing.”

Then it was that Peter Gee, drawing a wallet from his pocket and borrowing a fountain pen from McMurtrey, went into action.

“I haven’t gone to buying yet,” the half-caste explained, “so the account is intact. I’ll just indorse it over to you, Grief. It’s for fifteen thousand. There, look at it.”

Deacon intercepted the letter of credit as it was being passed across the table. He read it slowly, then glanced up at McMurtrey.

“Is that right?”

“Yes. It’s just the same as your own, and just as good. The company’s paper is always good.”

Deacon cut the cards, won the deal, and gave them a thorough shuffle. But his luck was still against him, and he lost the game.

“Another game,” he said. “We didn’t say how many, and you can’t quit with me a loser. I want action.”

Grief shuffled and passed the cards for the cut.

“Let’s play for a thousand,” Deacon said, when he had lost the second game. And when the thousand had gone the way of the two five hundred bets he proposed to play for two thousand.

“That’s progression,” McMurtrey warned, and was rewarded by a glare from Deacon. But the manager was insistent. “You don’t have to play progression, Grief, unless you’re foolish.”

“Who’s playing this game?” Deacon flamed at his host; and then, to Grief: “I’ve lost two thousand to you. Will you play for two thousand?”

Grief nodded, the fourth game began, and Deacon won. The manifest unfairness of such betting was known to all of them. Though he had lost three games out of four, Deacon had lost no money. By the child’s device of doubling his wager with each loss, he was bound, with the first game he won, no matter how long delayed, to be even again.

He now evinced an unspoken desire to stop, but Grief passed the deck to be cut.

“What?” Deacon cried. “You want more?”

“Haven’t got anything yet,” Grief murmured whimsically, as he began the deal. “For the usual five hundred, I suppose?”

The shame of what he had done must have tingled in Deacon, for he answered, “No, we’ll play for a thousand. And say! Thirty-one points is too long. Why not twenty-one points out — if it isn’t too rapid for you?”

“That will make it a nice, quick, little game,” Grief agreed.

The former method of play was repeated. Deacon lost two games, doubled the stake, and was again even. But Grief was patient, though the thing occurred several times in the next hour’s play. Then happened what he was waiting for — a lengthening in the series of losing games for Deacon. The latter doubled to four thousand and lost, doubled to eight thousand and lost, and then proposed to double to sixteen thousand.

Grief shook his head. “You can’t do that, you know. You’re only ten thousand credit with the company.”

“You mean you won’t give me action?” Deacon asked hoarsely. “You mean that with eight thousand of my money you’re going to quit?”

Grief smiled and shook his head.

“It’s robbery, plain robbery,” Deacon went on. “You take my money and won’t give me action.”

“No, you’re wrong. I’m perfectly willing to give you what action you’ve got coming to you. You’ve got two thousand pounds of action yet.”

“Well, we’ll play it,” Deacon took him up. “You cut.”

The game was played in silence, save for irritable remarks and curses from Deacon. Silently the onlookers filled and sipped their long Scotch glasses. Grief took no notice of his opponent’s outbursts, but concentrated on the game. He was really playing cards, and there were fifty-two in the deck to be kept track of, and of which he did keep track. Two thirds of the way through the last deal he threw down his hand.

“Cards put me out,” he said. “I have twenty-seven.”

“If you’ve made a mistake,” Deacon threatened, his face white and drawn.

“Then I shall have lost. Count them.”

Grief passed over his stack of takings, and Deacon, with trembling fingers, verified the count. He half shoved his chair back from the table and emptied his glass. He looked about him at unsympathetic faces.

“I fancy I’ll be catching the next steamer for Sydney,” he said, and for the first time his speech was quiet and without bluster.

As Grief told them afterward: “Had he whined or raised a roar I wouldn’t have given him that last chance. As it was, he took his medicine like a man, and I had to do it.”

Deacon glanced at his watch, simulated a weary yawn, and started to rise.

“Wait,” Grief said. “Do you want further action?”

The other sank down in his chair, strove to speak, but could not, licked his dry lips, and nodded his head.

“Captain Donovan here sails at daylight in the *Gunga* for Karo-Karo,” Grief began with seeming irrelevance. “Karo-Karo is a ring of sand in the sea, with a few thousand cocoa-nut trees. Pandanus grows there, but they can’t grow sweet potatoes nor taro. There aremabout eight hundred natives, a king and two prime ministers, and the last three named are the only ones who wear any clothes. It’s a sort of God-forsaken little hole, and once a year I send a schooner up from Goboto. The drinking water is brackish, but old Tom Butler has survived on it for a dozen years. He's the only white man there, and he has a boat's crew of five Santa Cruz boys who would run away or kill him if they could. That is why they were sent there. They can't run away. He is always supplied with the hard cases from the plantations. There are no missionaries. Two native Samoan teachers were clubbed to death on the beach when they landed several years ago.

"Naturally, you are wondering what it is all about. But have patience. As I have said, Captain Donovan sails on the annual trip to Karo-Karo at daylight to-morrow. Tom Butler is old, and getting quite helpless. I've tried to retire him to Australia, but he says he wants to remain and die on Karo-Karo, and he will in the next year or so. He's a queer old codger. Now the time is due for me to send some white man up to take the work off his hands. I wonder how you'd like the job. You'd have to stay two years.

"Hold on! I've not finished. You've talked frequently of action this evening. There's no action in betting away what you've never sweated for. The money you've lost to me was left you by your father or some other relative who did the sweating. But two years of work as trader on Karo-Karo would mean something. I'll bet the ten thousand I've won from you against two years of your time. If you win, the money's yours. If you lose, you take the job at Karo-Karo and sail at daylight. Now that's what might be called real action. Will you play?"

Deacon could not speak. His throat lumped and he nodded his head as he reached for the cards.

"One thing more," Grief said. "I can do even better. If you lose, two years of your time are mine — naturally without wages. Nevertheless, I'll pay you wages. If your work is satisfactory, if you observe all instructions and rules, I'll pay you five thousand pounds a year for two years. The money will be deposited with the company, to be paid to you, with interest, when the time expires. Is that all right?"

"Too much so," Deacon stammered. "You are unfair to yourself. A trader only gets ten or fifteen pounds a month."

"Put it down to action, then," Grief said, with an air of dismissal. "And before we begin, I'll jot down several of the rules. These you will repeat aloud every morning during the two years — if you lose. They are for the good of your soul. When you have repeated them aloud seven hundred and thirty Karo-Karo mornings I am confident they will be in your memory to stay. Lend me your pen, Mac. Now, let's see — — "

He wrote steadily and rapidly for some minutes, then proceeded to read the matter aloud:

"*I must always remember that one man is as good as another, save and except when he thinks he is better.*

"*No matter how drunk I am I must not fail to be a gentleman. A gentleman is a man who is gentle. Note: It would be better not to get drunk.*

"*When I play a man's game with men, I must play like a man.*

"*A good curse, rightly used and rarely, is an efficient thing. Too many curses spoil the cursing. Note: A curse cannot change a card seguence nor cause the wind to blow.*

"*There is no license for a man to be less than a man. Ten thousand pounds cannot purchase such a license.*"

At the beginning of the reading Deacon's face had gone white with anger. Then had arisen, from neck to forehead, a slow and terrible flush that deepened to the end of the reading.

"There, that will be all," Grief said, as he folded the paper and tossed it to the centre of the table. "Are you still ready to play the game?"

"I deserve it," Deacon muttered brokenly. "I've been an ass. Mr. Gee, before I know whether I win or lose, I want to apologize. Maybe it was the whiskey, I don't know, but I'm an ass, a cad, a bounder — everything that's rotten."

He held out his hand, and the half-caste took it beamingly.

"I say, Grief," he blurted out, "the boy's all right. Call the whole thing off, and let's forget it in a final nightcap."

Grief showed signs of debating, but Deacon cried:

"No; I won't permit it. I'm not a quitter. If it's Karo-Karo, it's Karo-Karo. There's nothing more to it."

"Right," said Grief, as he began the shuffle. "If he's the right stuff to go to Karo-Karo, Karo-Karo won't do him any harm."

The game was close and hard. Three times they divided the deck between them and "cards" was not scored. At the beginning of the fifth and last deal, Deacon needed three points to go out, and Grief needed four. "Cards" alone would put Deacon out, and he played for "cards". He no longer muttered or cursed, and played his best game of the evening. Incidentally he gathered in the two black aces and the ace of hearts.

"I suppose you can name the four cards I hold," he challenged, as the last of the deal was exhausted and he picked up his hand.

Grief nodded.

"Then name them."

"The knave of spades, the deuce of spades, the tray of hearts, and the ace of diamonds," Grief answered.

Those behind Deacon and looking at his hand made no sign. Yet the naming had been correct.

"I fancy you play casino better than I," Deacon acknowledged. "I can name only three of yours, a knave, an ace, and big casino."

"Wrong. There aren't five aces in the deck. You've taken in three and you hold the fourth in your hand now."

"By Jove, you're right," Deacon admitted. "I did scoop in three. Anyway, I'll make 'cards' on you. That's all I need."

"I'll let you save little casino — — " Grief paused to calculate. "Yes, and the ace as well, and still I'll make 'cards' and go out with big casino. Play."

"No 'cards' and I win!" Deacon exulted as the last of the hand was played. "I go out on little casino and the four aces. 'Big casino' and 'spades' only bring you to twenty."

Grief shook his head. "Some mistake, I'm afraid."

"No," Deacon declared positively. "I counted every card I took in. That's the one thing I was correct on. I've twenty-six, and you've twenty-six."

"Count again," Grief said.

Carefully and slowly, with trembling fingers, Deacon counted the cards he had taken. There were twenty-five. He reached over to the corner of the table, took up the rules Grief had written, folded them, and put them in his pocket. Then he emptied his glass, and stood up. Captain Donovan looked at his watch, yawned, and also arose.

"Going aboard, Captain?" Deacon asked.

"Yes," was the answer. "What time shall I send the whaleboat for you?"

"I'll go with you now. We'll pick up my luggage from the *Billy* as we go by, I was sailing on her for Babo in the morning."

Deacon shook hands all around, after receiving a final pledge of good luck on Karo-Karo.

"Does Tom Butler play cards?" he asked Grief.

"Solitaire," was the answer.

"Then I'll teach him double solitaire." Deacon turned toward the door, where Captain Donovan waited, and added with a sigh, "And I fancy he'll skin me, too, if he plays like the rest of you island men.”

Chapter Seven — THE FEATHERS OF THE SUN

I

It was the island of Fitu-Iva — the last independent Polynesian stronghold in the South Seas. Three factors conduced to Fitu-Iva's independence. The first and second were its isolation and the warlikeness of its population. But these would not have saved it in the end had it not been for the fact that Japan, France, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States discovered its desirableness simultaneously. It was like gamins scrambling for a penny. They got in one another's way. The war vessels of the five Powers cluttered Fitu-Iva's one small harbour. There were rumours of war and threats of war. Over its morning toast all the world read columns about Fitu-Iva. As a Yankee blue jacket epitomized it at the time, they all got their feet in the trough at once.

So it was that Fitu-Iva escaped even a joint protectorate, and King Tulifau, otherwise Tui Tulifau, continued to dispense the high justice and the low in the frame-house palace built for him by a Sydney trader out of California redwood. Not only was Tui Tulifau every inch a king, but he was every second a king. When he had ruled fifty-eight years and five months, he was only fifty-eight years and three months old. That is to say, he had ruled over five million seconds more than he had breathed, having been crowned two months before he was born.

He was a kingly king, a royal figure of a man, standing six feet and a half, and, without being excessively fat, weighing three hundred and twenty pounds. But this was not unusual for Polynesian "chief stock." Sepeli, his queen, was six feet three inches and weighed two hundred and sixty, while her brother, Uiliami, who commanded the army in the intervals of resignation from the premiership, topped her by an inch and notched her an even half-hundredweight. Tui Tulifau was a merry soul, a great feaster and drinker. So were all his people merry souls, save in anger, when, on occasion, they could be guilty even of throwing dead pigs at those who made them wroth. Nevertheless, on occasion, they could fight like Maoris, as piratical sandalwood traders and Blackbirders in the old days learned to their cost.

II

Grief's schooner, the *Cantani*, had passed the Pillar Rocks at the entrance two hours before and crept up the harbour to the whispering flutters of a breeze that could not make up its mind to blow. It was a cool, starlight evening, and they lolled about the poop waiting till their snail's pace would bring them to the anchorage. Willie Smee, the supercargo, emerged from the cabin, conspicuous in his shore clothes. The mate glanced at his shirt, of the finest and whitest silk, and giggled significantly.

"Dance, to-night, I suppose?" Grief observed.

"No," said the mate. "It's Taitua. Willie's stuck on her."

"Catch me," the supercargo disclaimed.

"Then she's stuck on you, and it's all the same," the mate went on. "You won't be ashore half an hour before you'll have a flower behind your ear, a wreath on your head, and your arm around Taitua."

"Simple jealousy," Willie Smee sniffed. "You'd like to have her yourself, only you can't."

"I can't find shirts like that, that's why. I'll bet you half a crown you won't sail from Fitu-Iva with that shirt."

"And if Taitua doesn't get it, it's an even break Tui Tulifau does," Grief warned. "Better not let him spot that shirt, or it's all day with it."

"That's right," Captain Boig agreed, turning his head from watching the house lights on the shore. "Last voyage he fined one of my Kanakas out of a fancy belt and sheath-knife." He turned to the mate. "You can let go any time, Mr. Marsh. Don't give too much slack. There's no sign of wind, and in the morning we may shift opposite the copra-sheds."

A minute later the anchor rumbled down. The whaleboat, already hoisted out, lay alongside, and the shore-going party dropped into it. Save for the Kanakas, who were all bent for shore, only Grief and the supercargo were in the boat. At the head of the little coral-stone pier Willie Smee, with an apologetic gurgle, separated from his employer and disappeared down an avenue of palms. Grief turned in the opposite direction past the front of the old mission church. Here, among the graves on the beach, lightly clad in *ahu's* and *lava-lavas*, flower-crowned and garlanded, with great phosphorescent hibiscus blossoms in their hair, youths and maidens were dancing. Farther on, Grief passed the long, grass-built *himine* house, where a few score of the elders sat in long rows chanting the old hymns taught them by forgotten missionaries. He passed also the palace of Tui Tulifau, where, by the lights and sounds, he knew the customary revelry was going on. For of the happy South Sea isles, Fitu-Iva was the happiest. They feasted and frolicked at births and deaths, and the dead and the unborn were likewise feasted.

Grief held steadily along the Broom Road, which curved and twisted through a lush growth of flowers and fern-like algarobas. The warm air was rich with perfume, and overhead, outlined against the stars, were fruit-burdened mangoes, stately avocado trees, and slender-tufted palms. Every here and there were grass houses. Voices and laughter rippled through the darkness. Out on the water flickering lights and soft-voiced choruses marked the fishers returning from the reef.

At last Grief stepped aside from the road, stumbling over a pig that grunted indignantly. Looking through an open door, he saw a stout and elderly native sitting on a heap of mats a dozen deep. From time to time, automatically, he brushed his naked legs with a cocoa-nut-fibre fly-flicker. He wore glasses, and was reading methodically in what Grief knew to be an English Bible. For this was Ieremia, his trader, so named from the prophet Jeremiah.

Ieremia was lighter-skinned than the Fitu-Ivans, as was natural in a full-blooded Samoan. Educated by the missionaries, as lay teacher he had served their cause well over in the cannibal atolls to the westward. As a reward, he had been sent to the paradise of Fitu-Iva, where all were or had been good converts, to gather in the backsliders. Unfortunately, Ieremia had become too well educated. A stray volume of Darwin, a nagging wife, and a pretty Fitu-Ivan widow had driven him into the ranks of the backsliders. It was not a case of apostasy. The effect of Darwin had been one of intellectual fatigue. What was the use of trying to understand this vastly complicated and enigmatical world, especially when one was married to a nagging woman? As Ieremia slackened in his labours, the mission board threatened louder and louder to send him back to the atolls, while his wife's tongue grew correspondingly sharper. Tui Tulifau was a sympathetic monarch, whose queen, on occasions when he was particularly drunk, was known to beat him. For political reasons — the queen belonging to as royal stock as himself and her brother commanding the army — Tui Tulifau could not divorce her, but he could and did divorce Ieremia, who promptly took up with commercial life and the lady of his choice. As an independent trader he had failed, chiefly because of the disastrous patronage of Tui Tulifau. To refuse credit to that merry monarch was to invite confiscation; to grant him credit was certain bankruptcy. After a year's idleness on the beach, Ieremia had become David Grief's trader, and for a dozen years his service had been honourable and efficient, for Grief had proven the first man who successfully refused credit to the king or who collected when it had been accorded.

Ieremia looked gravely over the rims of his glasses when his employer entered, gravely marked the place in the Bible and set it aside, and gravely shook hands.

"I am glad you came in person," he said.

"How else could I come?" Grief laughed.

But Ieremia had no sense of humour, and he ignored the remark.

"The commercial situation on the island is damn bad," he said with great solemnity and an unctuous mouthing of the many-syllabled words. "My ledger account is shocking."

"Trade bad?"

"On the contrary. It has been excellent. The shelves are empty, exceedingly empty. But — — " His eyes glistened proudly. "But there are many goods remaining in the storehouse; I have kept it carefully locked."

"Been allowing Tui Tulifau too much credit?"

"On the contrary. There has been no credit at all. And every old account has been settled up."

"I don't follow you, Ieremia," Grief confessed. "What's the joke? — shelves empty, no credit, old accounts all square, storehouse carefully locked — what's the answer?"

Ieremia did not reply immediately. Reaching under the rear corner of the mats, he drew forth a large cash-box. Grief noted and wondered that it was not locked. The Samoan had always been fastidiously cautious in guarding cash. The box seemed filled with paper money. He skinned off the top note and passed it over.

"There is the answer."

Grief glanced at a fairly well executed banknote. "*The First Royal Bank of Fitu-Iva will pay to bearer on demand one pound sterling*," he read. In the centre was the smudged likeness of a native face. At the bottom was the signature of Tui Tulifau, and the signature of Fulualea, with the printed information appended, “*Chancellor of the Exchequer.*”

“Who the deuce is Fulualea?” Grief demanded. “It’s Fijian, isn’t it? — meaning the feathers of the sun?”

“Just so. It means the feathers of the sun. Thus does this base interloper caption himself. He has come up from Fiji to turn Fitu-Iva upside down — that is, commercially.”

“Some one of those smart Levuka boys, I suppose?”

Ieremia shook his head sadly. “No, this low fellow is a white man and a scoundrel. He has taken a noble and high-sounding Fijian name and dragged it in the dirt to suit his nefarious purposes. He has made Tui Tulifau drunk. He has made him very drunk. He has kept him very drunk all the time. In return, he has been made Chancellor of the Exchequer and other things. He has issued this false paper and compelled the people to receive it. He has levied a store tax, a copra tax, and a tobacco tax. There are harbour dues and regulations, and other taxes. But the people are not taxed — only the traders. When the copra tax was levied, I lowered the purchasing price accordingly. Then the people began to grumble, and Feathers of the Sun passed a new law, setting the old price back and forbidding any man to lower it. Me he fined two pounds and five pigs, it being well known that I possessed five pigs. You will find them entered in the ledger. Hawkins, who is trader for the Fulcrum Company, was fined first pigs, then gin, and, because he continued to make loud conversation, the army came and burned his store. When I declined to sell, this Feathers of the Sun fined me once more and promised to burn the store if again I offended. So I sold all that was on the shelves, and there is the box full of worthless paper. I shall be chagrined if you pay me my salary in paper, but it would be just, no more than just. Now, what is to be done?”

Grief shrugged his shoulders. “I must first see this Feathers of the Sun and size up the situation.”

“Then you must see him soon,” Ieremia advised. “Else he will have an accumulation of many fines against you. Thus does he absorb all the coin of the realm. He has it all now, save what has been buried in the ground.”

III

On his way back along the Broom Road, under the lighted lamps that marked the entrance to the palace grounds, Grief encountered a short, rotund gentleman, in unstarched ducks, smooth-shaven and of florid complexion, who was just emerging. Something about his tentative, saturated gait was familiar. Grief knew it on the instant. On the beaches of a dozen South Sea ports had he seen it before.

"Of all men, Cornelius Deasy!" he cried.

"If it ain't Grief himself, the old devil," was the return greeting, as they shook hands.

"If you'll come on board I've some choice smoky Irish," Grief invited.

Cornelius threw back his shoulders and stiffened.

"Nothing doin', Mr. Grief. 'Tis Fulualea I am now. No blarneyin' of old times for me. Also, and by the leave of his gracious Majesty King Tulifau, 'tis Chancellor of the Exchequer I am, an' Chief Justice I am, save in moments of royal sport when the king himself chooses to toy with the wheels of justice."

Grief whistled his amazement. "So you're Feathers of the Sun!"

"I prefer the native idiom," was the correction. "Fulualea, an' it please you. Not forgettin' old times, Mr. Grief, it sorrows the heart of me to break you the news. You'll have to pay your legitimate import duties same as any other trader with mind intent on robbin' the gentle Polynesian savage on coral isles implanted. — — Where was I? Ah! I remember. You've violated the regulations. With malice intent have you entered the port of Fitu-Iva after sunset without sidelights burnin'. Don't interrupt. With my own eyes did I see you. For which offence are you fined the sum of five pounds. Have you any gin? 'Tis a serious offence. Not lightly are the lives of the mariners of our commodious port to be risked for the savin' of a penny'orth of oil. Did I ask: have you any gin? Tis the harbour master that asks."

"You've taken a lot on your shoulders," Grief grinned.

"'Tis the white man's burden. These rapscallion traders have been puttin' it all over poor Tui Tulif, the best-hearted old monarch that ever sat a South Sea throne an' mopped grog-root from the imperial calabash. 'Tis I, Cornelius — Fulualea, rather — that am here to see justice done. Much as I dislike the doin' of it, as harbour master 'tis my duty to find you guilty of breach of quarantine."

"Quarantine?"

"'Tis the rulin' of the port doctor. No intercourse with the shore till the ship is passed. What dire calamity to the confidin' native if chicken pox or whoopin' cough was aboard of you! Who is there to protect the gentle, confidin' Polynesian? I, Fulualea, the Feathers of the Sun, on my high mission."

"Who in hell is the port doctor?" Grief queried.

"'Tis me, Fulualea. Your offence is serious. Consider yourself fined five cases of first-quality Holland gin."

Grief laughed heartily. "We'll compromise, Cornelius. Come aboard and have a drink."

The Feathers of the Sun waved the proffer aside grandly. "'Tis bribery. I'll have none of it — me faithful to my salt. And wherefore did you not present your ship's papers? As chief of the custom house you are fined five pounds and two more cases of gin."

"Look here, Cornelius. A joke's a joke, but this one has gone far enough. This is not Levuka. I've half a mind to pull your nose for you. You can't buck me."

The Feathers of the Sun retreated unsteadily and in alarm.

"Lay no violence on me," he threatened. "You're right. This is not Levuka. And by the same token, with Tui Tulifau and the royal army behind me, buck you is just the thing I can and will. You'll pay them fines promptly, or I'll confiscate your vessel. You're not the first. What does that Chink pearl-buyer, Peter Gee, do but slip into harbour, violatin' all regulations an' makin' rough house for the matter of a few paltry fines. No; he wouldn't pay 'em, and he's on the beach now thinkin' it over."

"You don't mean to say — — "

"Sure an' I do. In the high exercise of office I seized his schooner. A fifth of the loyal army is now in charge on board of her. She'll be sold this day week. Some ten tons of shell in the hold, and I'm wonderin' if I can trade it to you for gin. I can promise you a rare bargain. How much gin did you say you had?"

"Still more gin, eh?"

"An' why not? 'Tis a royal souse is Tui Tulifau. Sure it keeps my wits workin' overtime to supply him, he's that amazin' liberal with it. The whole gang of hanger-on chiefs is perpetually loaded to the guards. It's disgraceful. Are you goin' to pay them fines, Mr. Grief, or is it to harsher measures I'll be forced?"

Grief turned impatiently on his heel.

"Cornelius, you're drunk. Think it over and come to your senses. The old rollicking South Sea days are gone. You can't play tricks like that now."

"If you think you're goin' on board, Mr. Grief, I'll save you the trouble. I know your kind, I foresaw your stiff-necked stubbornness. An' it's forestalled you are. 'Tis on the beach you'll find your crew. The vessel's seized."

Grief turned back on him in the half-belief still that he was joking. Fulualea again retreated in alarm. The form of a large man loomed beside him in the darkness.

"Is it you, Uiliami?" Fulualea crooned. "Here is another sea pirate. Stand by me with the strength of thy arm, O Herculean brother."

"Greeting, Uiliami," Grief said. "Since when has Fitu-Iva come to be run by a Levuka beachcomber? He says my schooner has been seized. Is it true?"

"It is true," Uiliami boomed from his deep chest. "Have you any more silk shirts like Willie Smee's? Tui Tulifau would like such a shirt. He has heard of it."

"'Tis all the same," Fulualea interrupted. "Shirts or schooners, the king shall have them."

"Rather high-handed, Cornelius," Grief murmured. "It's rank piracy. You seized my vessel without giving me a chance."

"A chance is it? As we stood here, not five minutes gone, didn't you refuse to pay your fines?"

"But she was already seized."

"Sure, an' why not? Didn't I know you'd refuse? 'Tis all fair, an' no injustice done — Justice, the bright, particular star at whose shining altar Cornelius Deasy — or Fulualea, 'tis the same thing — ever worships. Get thee gone, Mr. Trader, or I'll set the palace guards on you. Uiliami, 'tis a desperate character, this trader man. Call the guards."

Uiliami blew the whistle suspended on his broad bare chest by a cord of cocoanut sennit. Grief reached out an angry hand for Cornelius, who titubated into safety behind Uiliami's massive bulk. A dozen strapping Polynesians, not one under six feet, ran down the palace walk and ranged behind their commander.

"Get thee gone, Mr. Trader," Cornelius ordered. "The interview is terminated. We'll try your several cases in the mornin'. Appear promptly at the palace at ten o’clock to answer to the followin’ charges, to wit: breach of the peace; seditious and treasonable utterance; violent assault on the chief magistrate with intent to cut, wound, maim, an’ bruise; breach of quarantine; violation of harbour regulations; and gross breakage of custom house rules. In the mornin’, fellow, in the mornin’, justice shall be done while the breadfruit falls. And the Lord have mercy on your soul.”

III

Before the hour set for the trial Grief, accompanied by Peter Gee, won access to Tui Tulifau. The king, surrounded by half a dozen chiefs, lay on mats under the shade of the avocados in the palace compound. Early as was the hour, palace maids were industriously serving squarefaces of gin. The king was glad to see his old friend Davida, and regretful that he had run foul of the new regulations. Beyond that he steadfastly avoided discussion of the matter in hand. All protests of the expropriated traders were washed away in proffers of gin. “Have a drink,” was his invariable reply, though once he unbosomed himself enough to say that Feathers of the Sun was a wonderful man. Never had palace affairs been so prosperous. Never had there been so much money in the treasury, nor so much gin in circulation. “Well pleased am I with Fulualea,” he concluded. “Have a drink.”

“We’ve got to get out of this *pronto*,” Grief whispered to Peter Gee a few minutes later, “or we’ll be a pair of boiled owls. Also, I am to be tried for arson, or heresy, or leprosy, or something, in a few minutes, and I must control my wits.”

As they withdrew from the royal presence, Grief caught a glimpse of Sepeli, the queen. She was peering out at her royal spouse and his fellow tipplers, and the frown on her face gave Grief his cue. Whatever was to be accomplished must be through her.

In another shady corner of the big compound Cornelius was holding court. He had been at it early, for when Grief arrived the case of Willie Smee was being settled. The entire royal army, save that portion in charge of the seized vessels, was in attendance.

“Let the defendant stand up,” said Cornelius, “and receive the just and merciful sentence of the Court for licentious and disgraceful conduct unbecomin’ a supercargo. The defendant says he has no money. Very well. The Court regrets it has no calaboose. In lieu thereof, and in view of the impoverished condition of the defendant, the Court fines said defendant one white silk shirt of the same kind, make and quality at present worn by defendant."

Cornelius nodded to several of the soldiers, who led the supercargo away behind an avocado tree. A minute later he emerged, minus the garment in question, and sat down beside Grief.

"What have you been up to?" Grief asked.

"Blessed if I know. What crimes have you committed?"

"Next case," said Cornelius in his most extra-legal tones. "David Grief, defendant, stand up. The Court has considered the evidence in the case, or cases, and renders the following judgment, to wit: — Shut up!" he thundered at Grief, who had attempted to interrupt. "I tell you the evidence has been considered, deeply considered. It is no wish of the Court to lay additional hardship on the defendant, and the Court takes this opportunity to warn the defendant that he is liable for contempt. For open and wanton violation of harbour rules and regulations, breach of quarantine, and disregard of shipping laws, his schooner, the *Cantani*, is hereby declared confiscated to the Government of Fitu-Iva, to be sold at public auction, ten days from date, with all appurtenances, fittings, and cargo thereunto pertaining. For the personal crimes of the defendant, consisting of violent and turbulent conduct and notorious disregard of the laws of the realm, he is fined in the sum of one hundred pounds sterling and fifteen cases of gin. I will not ask you if you have anything to say. But will you pay? That is the question."

Grief shook his head.

"In the meantime," Cornelius went on, "consider yourself a prisoner at large. There is no calaboose in which to confine you. And finally, it has come to the knowledge of the Court, that at an early hour of this morning, the defendant did wilfully and deliberately send Kanakas in his employ out on the reef to catch fish for breakfast. This is distinctly an infringement of the rights of the fisherfolk of Fitu-Iva. Home industries must be protected. This conduct of the defendant is severely reprehended by the Court, and on any repetition of the offence the offender and offenders, all and sundry, shall be immediately put to hard labour on the improvement of the Broom Road. The court is dismissed."

As they left the compound, Peter Gee nudged Grief to look where Tui Tulifau reclined on the mats. The supercargo's shirt, stretched and bulged, already encased the royal fat.

IV

“The thing is clear,” said Peter Gee, at a conference in Ieremia’s house. “Deasy has about gathered in all the coin. In the meantime he keeps the king going on the gin he’s captured, on our vessels. As soon as he can maneuver it he’ll take the cash and skin out on your craft or mine.”

“He is a low fellow,” Ieremia declared, pausing in the polishing of his spectacles. “He is a scoundrel and a blackguard. He should be struck by a dead pig, by a particularly dead pig.”

“The very thing,” said Grief. “He shall be struck by a dead pig. Ieremia, I should not be surprised if you were the man to strike him with the dead pig. Be sure and select a particularly dead one. Tui Tulifau is down at the boat house broaching a case of my Scotch. I’m going up to the palace to work kitchen politics with the queen. In the meantime you get a few things on your shelves from the store-room. I’ll lend you some, Hawkins. And you, Peter, see the German store. Start in all of you, selling for paper. Remember, I’ll back the losses. If I’m not mistaken, in three days we’ll have a national council or a revolution. You, Ieremia, start messengers around the island to the fishers and farmers, everywhere, even to the mountain goat-hunters. Tell them to assemble at the palace three days from now.”

“But the soldiers,” Ieremia objected.

“I’ll take care of them. They haven’t been paid for two months. Besides, Uiliami is the queen’s brother. Don’t have too much on your shelves at a time. As soon as the soldiers show up with paper, stop selling.”

“Then will they burn the stores,” said Ieremia.

“Let them. King Tulifau will pay for it if they do.”

“Will he pay for my shirt?” Willie Smee demanded.

“That is purely a personal and private matter between you and Tui Tulifau,” Grief answered.

“It’s beginning to split up the back,” the supercargo lamented. “I noticed that much this morning when he hadn’t had it on ten minutes. It cost me thirty shillings and I only wore it once.”

“Where shall I get a dead pig?” Ieremia asked.

“Kill one, of course,” said Grief. “Kill a small one.”

“A small one is worth ten shillings.”

"Then enter it in your ledger under operating expenses." Grief paused a moment. "If you want it particularly dead, it would be well to kill it at once."

V

"You have spoken well, Davida," said Queen Sepeli. "This Fulualea has brought a madness with him, and Tui Tulifau is drowned in gin. If he does not grant the big council, I shall give him a beating. He is easy to beat when he is in drink."

She doubled up her fist, and such were her Amazonian proportions and the determination in her face that Grief knew the council would be called. So akin was the Fitu-Ivan tongue to the Samoan that he spoke it like a native.

"And you, Uiliami," he said, "have pointed out that the soldiers have demanded coin and refused the paper Fulualea has offered them. Tell them to take the paper and see that they be paid to-morrow."

"Why trouble?" Uiliami objected. "The king remains happily drunk. There is much money in the treasury. And I am content. In my house are two cases of gin and much goods from Hawkins's store."

"Excellent pig, O my brother!" Sepeli erupted. "Has not Davida spoken? Have you no ears? When the gin and the goods in your house are gone, and no more traders come with gin and goods, and Feathers of the Sun has run away to Levuka with all the cash money of Fitu-Iva, what then will you do? Cash money is silver and gold, but paper is only paper. I tell you the people are grumbling. There is no fish in the palace. Yams and sweet potatoes seem to have fled from the soil, for they come not. The mountain dwellers have sent no wild goat in a week. Though Feathers of the Sun compels the traders to buy copra at the old price, the people sell not, for they will have none of the paper money. Only to-day have I sent messengers to twenty houses. There are no eggs. Has Feathers of the Sun put a blight upon the hens? I do not know. All I know is that there are no eggs. Well it is that those who drink much eat little, else would there be a palace famine. Tell your soldiers to receive their pay. Let it be in his paper money."

"And remember," Grief warned, "though there be selling in the stores, when the soldiers come with their paper it will be refused. And in three days will be the council, and Feathers of the Sun will be as dead as a dead pig."

VI

The day of the council found the population of the island crowded into the capital. By canoe and whaleboat, on foot and donkey-back, the five thousand inhabitants of Fitu-Iva had trooped in. The three intervening days had had their share of excitement. At first there had been much selling from the sparse shelves of the traders. But when the soldiers appeared, their patronage was declined and they were told to go to Fulualea for coin. "Says it not so on the face of the paper," the traders demanded, "that for the asking the coin will be given in exchange?"

Only the strong authority of Uiliami had prevented the burning of the traders' houses. As it was, one of Grief's copra-sheds went up in smoke and was duly charged by Ieremia to the king's account. Ieremia himself had been abused and mocked, and his spectacles broken. The skin was off Willie Smee's knuckles. This had been caused by three boisterous soldiers who violently struck their jaws thereon in quick succession. Captain Boig was similarly injured. Peter Gee had come off undamaged, because it chanced that it was bread-baskets and not jaws that struck him on the fists.

Tui Tulifau, with Sepeli at his side and surrounded by his convivial chiefs, sat at the head of the council in the big compound. His right eye and jaw were swollen as if he too had engaged in assaulting somebody's fist. It was palace gossip that morning that Sepeli had administered a conjugal beating. At any rate, her spouse was sober, and his fat bulged spiritlessly through the rips in Willie Smee's silk shirt. His thirst was prodigious, and he was continually served with young drinking nuts. Outside the compound, held back by the army, was the mass of the common people. Only the lesser chiefs, village maids, village beaux, and talking men with their staffs of office were permitted inside. Cornelius Deasy, as befitted a high and favoured official, sat near to the right hand of the king. On the left of the queen, opposite Cornelius and surrounded by the white traders he was to represent, sat Ieremia. Bereft of his spectacles, he peered short-sightedly across at the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In turn, the talking man of the windward coast, the talking man of the leeward coast, and the talking man of the mountain villages, each backed by his group of lesser talking men and chiefs, arose and made oration. What they said was much the same. They grumbled about the paper money.

Affairs were not prosperous. No more copra was being smoked. The people were suspicious. To such a pass had things come that all people wanted to pay their debts and no one wanted to be paid. Creditors made a practice of running away from debtors. The money was cheap. Prices were going up and commodities were getting scarce. It cost three times the ordinary price to buy a fowl, and then it was tough and like to die of old age if not immediately sold. The outlook was gloomy. There were signs and omens. There was a plague of rats in some districts. The crops were bad. The custard apples were small. The best-bearing avocado on the windward coast had mysteriously shed all its leaves. The taste had gone from the mangoes. The plantains were eaten by a worm. The fish had forsaken the ocean and vast numbers of tiger-sharks appeared. The wild goats had fled to inaccessible summits. The poi in the poi-pits had turned bitter. There were rumblings in the mountains, night-walking of spirits; a woman of Punta-Puna had been struck speechless, and a five-legged she-goat had been born in the village of Eiho. And that all was due to the strange money of Fulualea was the firm conviction of the elders in the village councils assembled.

Uiliami spoke for the army. His men were discontented and mutinous. Though by royal decree the traders were bidden accept the money, yet did they refuse it. He would not say, but it looked as if the strange money of Fulualea had something to do with it.

Ieremia, as talking man of the traders, next spoke. When he arose, it was noticeable that he stood with legs spraddled over a large grass basket. He dwelt upon the cloth of the traders, its variety and beauty and durability, which so exceeded the Fitu-Ivan wet-pounded tapa, fragile and coarse. No one wore tapa any more. Yet all had worn tapa, and nothing but tapa, before the traders came. There was the mosquito-netting, sold for a song, that the cleverest Fitu-Ivan net-weaver could not duplicate in a thousand years. He enlarged on the incomparable virtues of rifles, axes, and steel fishhooks, down through needles, thread and cotton fish-lines to white flour and kerosene oil.

He expounded at length, with firstlies and secondlies and all minor subdivisions of argument, on organization, and order, and civilization. He contended that the trader was the bearer of civilization, and that the trader must be protected in his trade else he would not come. Over to the westward were islands which would not protect the traders. What was the result? The traders would not come, and the people were like wild animals.

They wore no clothes, no silk shirts (here he peered and blinked significantly at the king), and they ate one another.

The queer paper of the Feathers of the Sun was not money. The traders knew what money was, and they would not receive it. If Fitu-Iva persisted in trying to make them receive it they would go away and never come back. And then the Fitu-Ivans, who had forgotten how to make tapa, would run around naked and eat one another.

Much more he said, talking a solid hour, and always coming back to what their dire condition would be when the traders came no more. “And in that day,” he perorated, “how will the Fitu-Ivan be known in the great world? *Kai-kanak** will men call him. ‘*Kiakanak! Kai-kanak!*”

* Man-eater.

Tui Tulifau spoke briefly. The case had been presented, he said, for the people, the army, and the traders. It was now time for Feathers of the Sun to present his side. It could not be denied that he had wrought wonders with his financial system. “Many times has he explained to me the working of his system,” Tui Tulif au concluded. “It is very simple. And now he will explain it to you.”

It was a conspiracy of the white traders, Cornelius contended. Ieremia was right so far as concerned the manifold blessings of white flour and kerosene oil. Fitu-Iva did not want to become *kai-kanak*. Fitu-Iva wanted civilization; it wanted more and more civilization. Now that was the very point, and they must follow him closely. Paper money was an earmark of higher civilization. That was why he, the Feathers of the Sun, had introduced it. And that was why the traders opposed it. They did not want to see Fitu-Iva civilized. Why did they come across the far ocean stretches with their goods to Fitu-Iva? He, the Feathers of the Sun, would tell them why, to their faces, in grand council assembled. In their own countries men were too civilized to let the traders make the immense profits that they made out of the Fitu-Ivans. If the Fitu-Ivans became properly civilized, the trade of the traders would be gone. In that day every Fitu-Ivan could become a trader if he pleased.

That was why the white traders fought the system of paper money, that he, the Feathers of the Sun, had brought. Why was he called the Feathers of the Sun? Because he was the Light-Bringer from the World Beyond the Sky. The paper money was the light. The robbing white traders could not flourish in the light. Therefore they fought the light.

He would prove it to the good people of Fitu-Iva, and he would prove it out of the mouths of his enemies. It was a well-known fact that all highly civilized countries had paper-money systems. He would ask Ieremia if this was not so.

Ieremia did not answer.

“You see,” Cornelius went on, “he makes no answer. He cannot deny what is true. England, France, Germany, America, all the great *Papalangi* countries, have the paper-money system. It works. From century to century it works. I challenge you, Ieremia, as an honest man, as one who was once a zealous worker in the Lord’s vineyard, I challenge you to deny that in the great *Papalangi* countries the system works.”

Ieremia could not deny, and his fingers played nervously with the fastening of the basket on his knees.

“You see, it is as I have said,” Cornelius continued. “Ieremia agrees that it is so. Therefore, I ask you, all good people of Fitu-Iva, if a system is good for the *Papalangi* countries, why is it not good for Fitu-Iva?”

“It is not the same!” Ieremia cried. “The paper of the Feathers of the Sun is different from the paper of the great countries.”

That Cornelius had been prepared for this was evident. He held up a Fitu-Ivan note that was recognized by all.

“What is that?” he demanded.

“Paper, mere paper,” was Ieremia’s reply.

“And that?”

This time Cornelius held up a Bank of England note.

“It is the paper money of the English,” he explained to the Council, at the same time extending it for Ieremia to examine. “Is it not true, Ieremia, that it is paper money of the English?”

Ieremia nodded reluctantly.

“You have said that the paper money of Fitu-Iva was paper, now how about this of the English? What is it?.... You must answer like a true man... All wait for your answer, Ieremia.”

“It is — it is — — ” the puzzled Ieremia began, then spluttered helplessly, the fallacy beyond his penetration.

“Paper, mere paper,” Cornelius concluded for him, imitating his halting utterance.

Conviction sat on the faces of all. The king clapped his hands admiringly and murmured, “It is most clear, very clear.”

“You see, he himself acknowledges it.” Assured triumph was in Deasy’s voice and bearing. “He knows of no difference. There is no difference. ‘Tis the very image of money. ‘Tis money itself.”

In the meantime Grief was whispering in Ieremia’s ear, who nodded and began to speak.

“But it is well known to all the *Papalangi* that the English Government will pay coin money for the paper.”

Deasy’s victory was now absolute. He held aloft a Fitu-Ivan note.

“Is it not so written on this paper as well?”

Again Grief whispered.

“That Fitu-Iva will pay coin money?” asked Ieremia

“It is so written.”

A third time Grief prompted.

“On demand?” asked Ieremia.

“On demand,” Cornelius assured him.

“Then I demand coin money now,” said Ieremia, drawing a small package of notes from the pouch at his girdle.

Cornelius scanned the package with a quick, estimating eye.

“Very well,” he agreed. “I shall give you the coin money now. How much?”

“And we will see the system work,” the king proclaimed, partaking in his Chancellor’s triumph.

“You have heard! — He will give coin money now!” Ieremia cried in a loud voice to the assemblage.

At the same time he plunged both hands in the basket and drew forth many packages of Fitu-Ivan notes. It was noticed that a peculiar odour was adrift about the council.

“I have here,” Ieremia announced, “one thousand and twenty-eight pounds twelve shillings and sixpence. Here is a sack to put the coin money in.”

Cornelius recoiled. He had not expected such a sum, and everywhere about the council his uneasy eyes showed him chiefs and talking men drawing out bundles of notes. The army, its two months’ pay in its hands, pressed forward to the edge of the council, while behind it the populace, with more money, invaded the compound.

“‘Tis a run on the bank you’ve precipitated,” he said reproachfully to Grief.

“Here is the sack to put the coin money in,” Ieremia urged.

“It must be postponed,” Cornelius said desperately, “‘Tis not in banking hours.”

Ieremia flourished a package of money. “Nothing of banking hours is written here. It says on demand, and I now demand.”

“Let them come to-morrow, O Tui Tulifau,” Cornelius appealed to the king. “They shall be paid to-morrow.”

Tui Tulifau hesitated, but his spouse glared at him, her brawny arm tensing as the fist doubled into a redoubtable knot, Tui Tulifau tried to look away, but failed. He cleared his throat nervously.

“We will see the system work,” he decreed. “The people have come far.”

“‘Tis good money you’re asking me to pay out,” Deasy muttered in a low voice to the king.

Sepeli caught what he said, and grunted so savagely as to startle the king, who involuntarily shrank away from her.

“Forget not the pig,” Grief whispered to Ieremia, who immediately stood up.

With a sweeping gesture he stilled the babel of voices that was beginning to rise.

“It was an ancient and honourable custom of Fitu-Iva,” he said, “that when a man was proved a notorious evildoer his joints were broken with a club and he was staked out at low water to be fed upon alive by the sharks. Unfortunately, that day is past. Nevertheless another ancient and honourable custom remains with us. You all know what it is. When a man is a proven thief and liar he shall be struck with a dead pig.”

His right hand went into the basket, and, despite the lack of his spectacles, the dead pig that came into view landed accurately on Deasy’s neck. With such force was it thrown that the Chancellor, in his sitting position, toppled over sidewise. Before he could recover, Sepeli, with an agility unexpected of a woman who weighed two hundred and sixty pounds, had sprung across to him. One hand clutched his shirt collar, the other hand brandished the pig, and amid the vast uproar of a delighted kingdom she royally swatted him.

There remained nothing for Tui Tulifau but to put a good face on his favourite’s disgrace, and his mountainous fat lay back on the mats and shook in a gale of Gargantuan laughter.

When Sepeli dropped both pig and Chancellor, a talking man from the windward coast picked up the carcass. Cornelius was on his feet and running, when the pig caught him on the legs and tripped him. The people and the army, with shouts and laughter, joined in the sport.

Twist and dodge as he would, everywhere the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer was met or overtaken by the flying pig. He scuttled like a frightened rabbit in and out among the avocados and the palms. No hand was laid upon him, and his tormentors made way before him, but ever they pursued, and ever the pig flew as fast as hands could pick it up.

As the chase died away down the Broom Road, Grief led the traders to the royal treasury, and the day was well over ere the last Fitu-Ivan bank note had been redeemed with coin.

VII

Through the mellow cool of twilight a man paddled out from a clump of jungle to the *Cantani*. It was a leaky and abandoned dugout, and he paddled slowly, desisting from time to time in order to bale. The Kanaka sailors giggled gleefully as he came alongside and painfully drew himself over the rail. He was bedraggled and filthy, and seemed half-dazed.

“Could I speak a word with you, Mr. Grief?” he asked sadly and humbly.

“Sit to leeward and farther away,” Grief answered. “A little farther away. That’s better.”

Cornelius sat down on the rail and held his head in both his hands.

“’Tis right,” he said. “I’m as fragrant as a recent battlefield. My head aches to burstin’. My neck is fair broken. The teeth are loose in my jaws. There’s nests of hornets buzzin’ in my ears. My medulla oblongata is dislocated. I’ve been through earthquake and pestilence, and the heavens have rained pigs.” He paused with a sigh that ended in a groan. “’Tis a vision of terrible death. One that the poets never dreamed. To be eaten by rats, or boiled in oil, or pulled apart by wild horses — that would be unpleasant. But to be beaten to death with a dead pig!” He shuddered at the awfulness of it. “Sure it transcends the human imagination.”

Captain Boig sniffed audibly, moved his canvas chair farther to windward, and sat down again.

“I hear you’re runnin’ over to Yap, Mr. Grief,” Cornelius went on. “An’ two things I’m wantin’ to beg of you: a passage an’ the nip of the old smoky

I refused the night you landed.”

Grief clapped his hands for the black steward and ordered soap and towels.

“Go for’ard, Cornelius, and take a scrub first,” he said. “The boy will bring you a pair of dungarees and a shirt. And by the way, before you go, how was it we found more coin in the treasury than paper you had issued?”

“’Twas the stake of my own I’d brought with me for the adventure.”

“We’ve decided to charge the demurrage and other expenses and loss to Tui Tulifau,” Grief said. “So the balance we found will be turned over to you. But ten shillings must be deducted.”

“For what?”

“Do you think dead pigs grow on trees? The sum of ten shillings for that pig is entered in the accounts.”

Cornelius bowed his assent with a shudder.

“Sure it’s grateful I am it wasn’t a fifteen-shilling pig or a twenty-shilling one.”

Chapter Eight — THE PEARLS OF PARLAY

I

The Kanaka helmsman put the wheel down, and the *Malahini* slipped into the eye of the wind and righted to an even keel. Her head-sails emptied, there was a rat-tat of reef-points and quick shifting of boom-tackles, and she was heeled over and filled away on the other tack. Though it was early morning and the wind brisk, the five white men who lounged on the poop-deck were scantily clad. David Grief, and his guest, Gregory Mulhall, an Englishman, were still in pajamas, their naked feet thrust into Chinese slippers. The captain and mate were in thin undershirts and unstarched duck pants, while the supercargo still held in his hands the undershirt he was reluctant to put on. The sweat stood out on his forehead, and he seemed to thrust his bare chest thirstily into the wind that did not cool.

"Pretty muggy, for a breeze like this," he complained.

"And what's it doing around in the west? That's what I want to know," was Grief's contribution to the general plaint.

"It won't last, and it ain't been there long," said Hermann, the Holland mate. "She is been chop around all night — five minutes here, ten minutes there, one hour somewhere other quarter."

"Something makin ', something makin '," Captain Warfield croaked, spreading his bushy beard with the fingers of both hands and shoving the thatch of his chin into the breeze in a vain search for coolness. "Weather's been crazy for a fortnight. Haven't had the proper trades in three weeks. Everything's mixed up. Barometer was pumping at sunset last night, and it's pumping now, though the weather sharps say it don't mean anything. All the same, I've got a prejudice against seeing it pump. Gets on my nerves, sort of, you know. She was pumping that way the time we lost the *Lancaster*. I was only an apprentice, but I can remember that well enough. Brand new, four-masted steel ship; first voyage; broke the old man's heart. He'd been forty years in the company. Just faded way and died the next year."

Despite the wind and the early hour, the heat was suffocating. The wind whispered coolness, but did not deliver coolness. It might have blown off the Sahara, save for the extreme humidity with which it was laden. There was no fog nor mist, nor hint of fog or mist, yet the dimness of distance produced the impression. There were no defined clouds, yet so thickly were the heavens covered by a messy cloud-pall that the sun failed to shine through.

"Ready about!" Captain Warfield ordered with slow sharpness.

The brown, breech-clouted Kanaka sailors moved languidly but quickly to head-sheets and boom-tackles.

"Hard a-lee!"

The helmsman ran the spokes over with no hint of gentling, and the *Malahini* darted prettily into the wind and about.

"Jove! she's a witch!" was Mulhall's appreciation. "I didn't know you South Sea traders sailed yachts."

"She was a Gloucester fisherman originally," Grief explained, "and the Gloucester boats are all yachts when it comes to build, rig, and sailing."

"But you're heading right in — why don't you make it?" came the Englishman's criticism.

"Try it, Captain Warfield," Grief suggested. "Show him what a lagoon entrance is on a strong ebb."

"Close-and-by!" the captain ordered.

"Close-and-by," the Kanaka repeated, easing half a spoke.

The *Malahini* laid squarely into the narrow passage which was the lagoon entrance *of* a large, long, and narrow oval of an atoll. The atoll was shaped as if three atolls, in the course of building, had collided and coalesced and failed to rear the partition walls. Cocoanut palms grew in spots on the circle of sand, and there were many gaps where the sand was too low to the sea for cocoanuts, and through which could be seen the protected lagoon where the water lay flat like the ruffled surface of a mirror. Many square miles of water were in the irregular lagoon, all of which surged out on the ebb through the one narrow channel. So narrow was the channel, so large the outflow of water, that the passage was more like the rapids of a river than the mere tidal entrance to an atoll. The water boiled and whirled and swirled and drove outward in a white foam of stiff, serrated waves. Each heave and blow on her bows of the upstanding waves of the current swung the Malahini off the straight lead and wedged her as with wedges of steel toward the side of the passage. Part way in she was, when her closeness to the coral edge compelled her to go about. On the opposite tack, broadside to the current, she swept seaward with the current's speed.

“Now’s the time for that new and expensive engine of yours,” Grief jeered good-naturedly.

That the engine was a sore point with Captain Warfield was patent. He had begged and badgered for it, until in the end Grief had given his consent.

“It will pay for itself yet,” the captain retorted, “You wait and see. It beats insurance and you know the underwriters won’t stand for insurance in the Paumotus.”

Grief pointed to a small cutter beating up astern of them on the same course.

“I’ll wager a five-franc piece the little Nuhiva beats us in.”

“Sure,” Captain Warfield agreed. “She’s overpowered. We’re like a liner alongside of her, and we’ve only got forty horsepower. She’s got ten horse, and she’s a little skimming dish. She could skate across the froth of hell, but just the same she can’t buck this current. It’s running ten knots right now.”

And at the rate of ten knots, buffeted and jerkily rolled, the *Malahini* went out to sea with the tide.

“She’ll slacken in half an hour — then we’ll make headway,” Captain Warfield said, with an irritation explained by his next words. “He has no right to call it Parlay. It’s down on the admiralty charts, and the French charts, too, as Hikihoho. Bougainville discovered it and named it from the natives.”

“What’s the name matter?” the supercargo demanded, taking advantage of speech to pause with arms shoved into the sleeves of the undershirt. “There it is, right under our nose, and old Parlay is there with the pearls.”

“Who see them pearl?” Hermann queried, looking from one to another.

“It’s well known,” was the supercargo’s reply. He turned to the steersman: “Tai-Hotauri, what about old Parlay’s pearls?”

The Kanaka, pleased and self-conscious, took and gave a spoke.

“My brother dive for Parlay three, four month, and he make much talk about pearl. Hikihoho very good place for pearl.”

“And the pearl-buyers have never got him to part with a pearl,” the captain broke in.

“And they say he had a hatful for Armande when he sailed for Tahiti,” the supercargo carried on the tale. “That’s fifteen years ago, and he’s been adding to it ever since — stored the shell as well. Everybody’s seen that — hundreds of tons of it. They say the lagoon’s fished clean now. Maybe that’s why he’s announced the auction.”

“If he really sells, this will be the biggest year’s output of pearls in the Paumotus,” Grief said.

“I say, now, look here!” Mulhall burst forth, harried by the humid heat as much as the rest of them. “What’s it all about? Who’s the old beachcomber anyway? What are all these pearls? Why so secretious about it?”

“Hikihoho belongs to old Parlay,” the supercargo answered. “He’s got a fortune in pearls, saved up for years and years, and he sent the word out weeks ago that he’d auction them off to the buyers to-morrow. See those schooners’ masts sticking up inside the lagoon?”

“Eight, so I see,” said Hermann.

“What are they doing in a dinky atoll like this?” the supercargo went on. “There isn’t a schooner-load of copra a year in the place. They’ve come for the auction. That’s why we’re here. That’s why the little *Nuhiva’s* bumping along astern there, though what she can buy is beyond me. Narii Herring — he’s an English Jew half-caste — owns and runs her, and his only assets are his nerve, his debts, and his whiskey bills. He’s a genius in such things. He owes so much that there isn’t a merchant in Papeete who isn’t interested in his welfare. They go out of their way to throw work in his way. They’ve got to, and a dandy stunt it is for Narii. Now I owe nobody. What’s the result? If I fell down in a fit on the beach they’d let me lie there and die. They wouldn’t lose anything. But Narii Herring? — what wouldn’t they do if he fell in a fit? Their best wouldn’t be too good for him. They’ve got too much money tied up in him to let him lie. They’d take him into their homes and hand-nurse him like a brother. Let me tell you, honesty in paying bills ain’t what it’s cracked up to be.”

“What’s this Narii chap got to do with it?” was the Englishman’s short-tempered demand. And, turning to Grief, he said, “What’s all this pearl nonsense? Begin at the beginning.”

“You’ll have to help me out,” Grief warned the others, as he began. “Old Parlay is a character. From what I’ve seen of him I believe he’s partly and mildly insane. Anyway, here’s the story: Parlay’s a full-blooded Frenchman. He told me once that he came from Paris. His accent is the true Parisian. He arrived down here in the old days. Went to trading and all the rest. That’s how he got in on Hikihoho. Came in trading when trading was the real thing. About a hundred miserable Paumotans lived on the island. He married the queen — native fashion. When she died, everything was his. Measles came through, and there weren’t more than a dozen survivors. He fed them, and worked them, and was king. Now before the queen died she gave birth to a girl. That's Armande. When she was three he sent her to the convent at Papeete. When she was seven or eight he sent her to France. You begin to glimpse the situation. The best and most aristocratic convent in France was none too good for the only daughter of a Paumotan island king and capitalist, and you know the old country French draw no colour line. She was educated like a princess, and she accepted herself in much the same way. Also, she thought she was all-white, and never dreamed of a bar sinister.

"Now comes the tragedy. The old man had always been cranky and erratic, and he'd played the despot on Hikihoho so long that he'd got the idea in his head that there was nothing wrong with the king — or the princess either. When Armande was eighteen he sent for her. He had slews and slathers of money, as Yankee Bill would say. He'd built the big house on Hikihoho, and a whacking fine bungalow in Papeete. She was to arrive on the mail boat from New Zealand, and he sailed in his schooner to meet her at Papeete. And he might have carried the situation off, despite the hens and bull-beasts of Papeete, if it hadn't been for the hurricane. That was the year, wasn't it, when Manu-Huhi was swept and eleven hundred drowned?"

The others nodded, and Captain Warfield said: "I was in the *Magpie* that blow, and we went ashore, all hands and the cook, *Magpie* and all, a quarter of a mile into the cocoanuts at the head of Taiohae Bay — and it a supposedly hurricane-proof harbour."

"Well," Grief continued, "old Parlay got caught in the same blow, and arrived in Papeete with his hatful of pearls three weeks too late. He'd had to jack up his schooner and build half a mile of ways before he could get her back into the sea.

"And in the meantime there was Armande at Papeete. Nobody called on her. She did, French fashion, make the initial calls on the Governor and the port doctor. They saw her, but neither of their hen-wives was at home to her nor returned the call. She was out of caste, without caste, though she had never dreamed it, and that was the gentle way they broke the information to her. There was a gay young lieutenant on the French cruiser. He lost his heart to her, but not his head. You can imagine the shock to this young woman, refined, beautiful, raised like an aristocrat, pampered with the best of old France that money could buy. And you can guess the end." He shrugged his shoulders. "There was a Japanese servant in the bungalow. He saw it. Said she did it with the proper spirit of the Samurai. Took a stiletto — no thrust, no drive, no wild rush for annihilation — took the stiletto, placed the point carefully against her heart, and with both hands, slowly and steadily, pressed home.

“Old Parlay arrived after that with his pearls. There was one single one of them, they say, worth sixty thousand francs. Peter Gee saw it, and has told me he offered that much for it. The old man went clean off for a while. They had him strait-jacketed in the Colonial Club two days — — ”

“His wife’s uncle, an old Paumotan, cut him out of the jacket and turned him loose,” the supercargo corroborated.

“And then old Parlay proceeded to eat things up,” Grief went on. “Pumped three bullets into the scalawag of a lieutenant — — ”

“Who lay in sick bay for three months,” Captain Warfield contributed.

“Flung a glass of wine in the Governor’s face; fought a duel with the port doctor; beat up his native servants; wrecked the hospital; broke two ribs and the collarbone of a man nurse, and escaped; and went down to his schooner, a gun in each hand, daring the chief of police and all the gendarmes to arrest him, and sailed for Hikihoho. And they say he’s never left the island since.”

The supercargo nodded. “That was fifteen years ago, and he’s never budged.”

“And added to his pearls,” said the captain. “He’s a blithering old lunatic. Makes my flesh creep. He’s a regular Finn.”

“What’s that?” Mulhall inquired.

“Bosses the weather — that’s what the natives believe, at any rate. Ask Tai-Hotauri there. Hey, Tai-Hotauri! what you think old Parlay do along weather?”

“Just the same one big weather devil,” came the Kanaka’s answer. “I know. He want big blow, he make big blow. He want no wind, no wind come.”

“A regular old Warlock,” said Mulhall.

“No good luck them pearl,” Tai-Hotauri blurted out, rolling his head ominously. “He say he sell. Plenty schooner come. Then he make big hurricane, everybody finish, you see. All native men say so.”

“It’s hurricane season now,” Captain War-field laughed morosely. “They’re not far wrong. It’s making for something right now, and I’d feel better if the *Malahini* was a thousand miles away from here.”

“He is a bit mad,” Grief concluded. “I’ve tried to get his point of view. It’s — well, it’s mixed. For eighteen years he’d centred everything on Armande. Half the time he believes she’s still alive, not yet come back from France. That’s one of the reasons he held on to the pearls. And all the time he hates white men. He never forgets they killed her, though a great deal of the time he forgets she’s dead. Hello! Where’s your wind?”

The sails bellied emptily overhead, and Captain Warfield grunted his disgust. Intolerable as the heat had been, in the absence of wind it was almost overpowering. The sweat oozed out on all their faces, and now one, and again another, drew deep breaths, involuntarily questing for more air.

“Here she comes again — an eight point haul! Boom-tackles across! Jump!”

The Kanakas sprang to the captain’s orders, and for five minutes the schooner laid directly into the passage and even gained on the current. Again the breeze fell flat, then puffed from the old quarter, compelling a shift back of sheets and tackles.

“Here comes the *Nuhiva*” Grief said. “She’s got her engine on. Look at her skim.”

“All ready?” the captain asked the engineer, a Portuguese half-caste, whose head and shoulders protruded from the small hatch just for’ard of the cabin, and who wiped the sweat from his face with a bunch of greasy waste.

“Sure,” he replied.

“Then let her go.”

The engineer disappeared into his den, and a moment later the exhaust muffler coughed and spluttered overside. But the schooner could not hold her lead. The little cutter made three feet to her two and was quickly alongside and forging ahead. Only natives were on her deck, and the man steering waved his hand in derisive greeting and farewell.

“That’s Narii Herring,” Grief told Mulhall. “The big fellow at the wheel — the nerviest and most conscienceless scoundrel in the Paumotus.”

Five minutes later a cry of joy from their own Kanakas centred all eyes on the *Nuhiva*. Her engine had broken down and they were overtaking her. The *Malahini’s* sailors sprang into the rigging and jeered as they went by; the little cutter heeled over by the wind with a bone in her teeth, going backward on the tide.

“Some engine that of ours,” Grief approved, as the lagoon opened before them and the course was changed across it to the anchorage.

Captain Warfield was visibly cheered, though he merely grunted, “It’ll pay for itself, never fear.”

The *Malahini* ran well into the centre of the little fleet ere she found swinging room to anchor.

“There’s Isaacs on the *Dolly*,” Grief observed, with a hand wave of greeting. “And Peter Gee’s on the *Roberta*. Couldn’t keep him away from a pearl sale like this. And there’s Francini on the *Cactus*. They’re all here, all the buyers. Old Parlay will surely get a price.”

“They haven’t repaired the engine yet,” Captain Warfield grumbled gleefully.

He was looking across the lagoon to where the *Nuhiva’s* sails showed through the sparse cocoa-nuts.

II

The house of Parlay was a big two-story frame affair, built of California lumber, with a galvanized iron roof. So disproportionate was it to the slender ring of the atoll that it showed out upon the sand-strip and above it like some monstrous excrescence. They of the *Malahini* paid the courtesy visit ashore immediately after anchoring. Other captains and buyers were in the big room examining the pearls that were to be auctioned next day. Paumotan servants, natives of Hikihoho, and relatives of the owner, moved about dispensing whiskey and absinthe. And through the curious company moved Parlay himself, cackling and sneering, the withered wreck of what had once been a tall and powerful man. His eyes were deep sunken and feverish, his cheeks fallen in and cavernous. The hair of his head seemed to have come out in patches, and his mustache and imperial had shed in the same lopsided way.

“Jove!” Mulhall muttered under his breath. “A long-legged Napoleon the Third, but burnt out, baked, and fire-crackled. And mangy! No wonder he crooks his head to one side. He’s got to keep the balance.”

“Goin’ to have a blow,” was the old man’s greeting to Grief. “You must think a lot of pearls to come a day like this.”

“They’re worth going to inferno for,” Grief laughed genially back, running his eyes over the surface of the table covered by the display.

“Other men have already made that journey for them,” old Parlay cackled. “See this one!” He pointed to a large, perfect pearl the size of a small walnut that lay apart on a piece of chamois. “They offered me sixty thousand francs for it in Tahiti. They’ll bid as much and more for it to-morrow, if they aren’t blown away. Well, that pearl, it was found by my cousin, my cousin by marriage. He was a native, you see. Also, he was a thief. He hid it. It was mine. His cousin, who was also my cousin — we’re all related here — killed him for it and fled away in a cutter to Noo-Nau. I pursued, but the chief of Noo-Nau had killed him for it before I got there. Oh, yes, there are many dead men represented on the table there. Have a drink, Captain. Your face is not familiar. You are new in the islands?”

“It’s Captain Robinson of the *Roberta*,” Grief said, introducing them.

In the meantime Mulhall had shaken hands with Peter Gee.

“I never fancied there were so many pearls in the world,” Mulhall said.

“Nor have I ever seen so many together at one time,” Peter Gee admitted.

“What ought they to be worth?”

“Fifty or sixty thousand pounds — and that’s to us buyers. In Paris — —” He shrugged his shoulders and lifted his eyebrows at the incommunicableness of the sum.

Mulhall wiped the sweat from his eyes. All were sweating profusely and breathing hard. There was no ice in the drink that was served, and whiskey and absinthe went down lukewarm.

“Yes, yes,” Parlay was cackling. “Many dead men lie on the table there. I know those pearls, all of them. You see those three! Perfectly matched, aren’t they? A diver from Easter Island got them for me inside a week. Next week a shark got him; took his arm off and blood poison did the business. And that big baroque there — nothing much — if I’m offered twenty francs for it to-morrow I’ll be in luck; it came out of twenty-two fathoms of water. The man was from Raratonga. He broke all diving records. He got it out of twenty-two fathoms. I saw him. And he burst his lungs at the same time, or got the ‘bends,’ for he died in two hours. He died screaming. They could hear him for miles. He was the most powerful native I ever saw. Half a dozen of my divers have died of the bends. And more men will die, more men will die.”

“Oh, hush your croaking, Parlay,” chided one of the captains. “It ain’t going to blow.”

“If I was a strong man, I couldn’t get up hook and get out fast enough,” the old man retorted in the falsetto of age. “Not if I was a strong man with the taste for wine yet in my mouth. But not you. You’ll all stay, I wouldn’t advise you if I thought you'd go, You can't drive buzzards away from the carrion. Have another drink, my brave sailor-men. Well, well, what men will dare for a few little oyster drops! There they are, the beauties! Auction to-morrow, at ten sharp. Old Parlay's selling out, and the buzzards are gathering — old Parlay who was a stronger man in his day than any of them and who will see most of them dead yet."

"If he isn't a vile old beast!" the supercargo of the *Malahini* whispered to Peter Gee.

"What if she does blow?" said the captain of the *Dolly*. "Hikihoho's never been swept."

"The more reason she will be, then," Captain Warfield answered back. "I wouldn't trust her."

"Who's croaking now?" Grief reproved.

"I'd hate to lose that new engine before it paid for itself," Captain Warfield replied gloomily.

Parlay skipped with astonishing nimbleness across the crowded room to the barometer on the wall.

"Take a look, my brave sailormen!" he cried exultantly.

The man nearest read the glass. The sobering effect showed plainly on his face.

"It's dropped ten," was all he said, yet every face went anxious, and there was a look as if every man desired immediately to start for the door.

"Listen!" Parlay commanded.

In the silence the outer surf seemed to have become unusually loud. There was a great rumbling roar.

"A big sea is beginning to set," some one said; and there was a movement to the windows, where all gathered.

Through the sparse cocoanuts they gazed seaward. An orderly succession of huge smooth seas was rolling down upon the coral shore. For some minutes they gazed on the strange sight and talked in low voices, and in those few minutes it was manifest to all that the waves were increasing in size. It was uncanny, this rising sea in a dead calm, and their voices unconsciously sank lower. Old Parlay shocked them with his abrupt cackle.

"There is yet time to get away to sea, brave gentlemen. You can tow across the lagoon with your whaleboats."

"It's all right, old man," said Darling, the mate of the *Cactus*, a stalwart youngster of twenty-five. "The blow's to the southward and passing on.

We’ll not get a whiff of it.”

An air of relief went through the room. Conversations were started, and the voices became louder. Several of the buyers even went back to the table to continue the examination of the pearls.

Parlay’s shrill cackle rose higher.

“That’s right,” he encouraged. “If the world was coming to an end you’d go on buying.”

“We’ll buy these to-morrow just the same,” Isaacs assured him.

“Then you’ll be doing your buying in hell.”

The chorus of incredulous laughter incensed the old man. He turned fiercely on Darling.

“Since when have children like you come to the knowledge of storms? And who is the man who has plotted the hurricane-courses of the Paumotus? What books will you find it in? I sailed the Paumotus before the oldest of you drew breath. I know. To the eastward the paths of the hurricanes are on so wide a circle they make a straight line. To the westward here they make a sharp curve. Remember your chart. How did it happen the hurricane of ‘91 swept Auri and Hiolau? The curve, my brave boy, the curve! In an hour, or two or three at most, will come the wind. Listen to that!”

A vast rumbling crash shook the coral foundations of the atoll. The house quivered to it. The native servants, with bottles of whiskey and absinthe in their hands, shrank together as if for protection and stared with fear through the windows at the mighty wash of the wave lapping far up the beach to the corner of a copra-shed.

Parlay looked at the barometer, giggled, and leered around at his guests. Captain War-field strode across to see.

“29:75,” he read. “She’s gone down five more. By God! the old devil’s right. She’s a-coming, and it’s me, for one, for aboard.”

“It’s growing dark,” Isaacs half whispered.

“Jove! it’s like a stage,” Mulhall said to Grief, looking at his watch. “Ten o’clock in the morning, and it’s like twilight. Down go the lights for the tragedy. Where’s the slow music!”

In answer, another rumbling crash shook the atoll and the house. Almost in a panic the company started for the door. In the dim light their sweaty faces appeared ghastly. Isaacs panted asthmatically in the suffocating heat.

"What's your haste?" Parlay chuckled and girded at his departing guests. "A last drink, brave gentlemen." No one noticed him. As they took the shell-bordered path to the beach he stuck his head out the door and called, "Don't forget, gentlemen, at ten to-morrow old Parlay sells his pearls."

III

On the beach a curious scene took place. Whaleboat after whaleboat was being hurriedly manned and shoved off. It had grown still darker. The stagnant calm continued, and the sand shook under their feet with each buffet of the sea on the outer shore. Narii Herring walked leisurely along the sand. He grinned at the very evident haste of the captains and buyers. With him were three of his Kanakas, and also Tai-Hotauri.

"Get into the boat and take an oar," Captain Warfield ordered the latter.

Tai-Hotauri came over jauntily, while Narii Herring and his three Kanakas paused and looked on from forty feet away.

"I work no more for you, skipper," Tai-Hotauri said insolently and loudly. But his face belied his words, for he was guilty of a prodigious wink. "Fire me, skipper," he huskily whispered, with a second significant wink.

Captain Warfield took the cue and proceeded to do some acting himself. He raised his fist and his voice.

"Get into that boat," he thundered, "or I'll knock seven bells out of you!"

The Kanaka drew back truculently, and Grief stepped between to placate his captain.

"I go to work on the *Nuhiva*," Tai-Hotauri said, rejoining the other group.

"Come back here!" the captain threatened.

"He's a free man, skipper," Narii Herring spoke up. "He's sailed with me in the past, and he's sailing again, that's all."

"Come on, we must get on board," Grief urged. "Look how dark it's getting."

Captain Warfield gave in, but as the boat shoved off he stood up in the sternsheets and shook his fist ashore.

"I'll settle with you yet, Narii," he cried. "You're the only skipper in the group that steals other men's sailors," He sat down, and in lowered voice queried: "Now what's Tai-Hotauri up to? He's on to something, but what is it?"

IV

As the boat came alongside the *Malahini*, Hermann's anxious face greeted them over the rail.

"Bottom out fall from barometer," he announced. "She's goin' to blow. I got starboard anchor overhaul."

"Overhaul the big one, too," Captain Warfield ordered, taking charge. "And here, some of you, hoist in this boat. Lower her down to the deck and lash her bottom up."

Men were busy at work on the decks of all the schooners. There was a great clanking of chains being overhauled, and now one craft, and now another, hove in, veered, and dropped a second anchor. Like the *Malahini*, those that had third anchors were preparing to drop them when the wind showed what quarter it was to blow from.

The roar of the big surf continually grew though the lagoon lay in the mirror-like calm.

There was no sign of life where Parlay's big house perched on the sand. Boat and copra-sheds and the sheds where the shell was stored were deserted.

"For two cents I'd up anchors and get out," Grief said. "I'd do it anyway if it were open sea. But those chains of atolls to the north and east have us pocketed. We've a better chance right here. What do you think, Captain Warfield?"

"I agree with you, though a lagoon is no mill-pond for riding it out. I wonder where she's going to start from? Hello! There goes one of Parlay's copra-sheds."

They could see the grass-thatched shed lift and collapse, while a froth of foam cleared the crest of the sand and ran down to the lagoon.

"Breached across!" Mulhall exclaimed. "That's something for a starter. There she comes again!"

The wreck of the shed was now flung up and left on the sand-crest, A third wave buffeted it into fragments which washed down the slope toward the lagoon.

"If she blow I would as be cooler yet," Hermann grunted. "No longer can I breathe. It is damn hot. I am dry like a stove."

He chopped open a drinking cocoanut with his heavy sheath-knife and drained the contents. The rest of them followed his example, pausing once to watch one of Parlay's shell sheds go down in ruin. The barometer now registered 29:50.

"Must be pretty close to the centre of the area of low pressure," Grief remarked cheerfully. "I was never through the eye of a hurricane before. It will be an experience for you, too, Mulhall. From the speed the barometer's dropped, it's going to be a big one."

Captain Warfield groaned, and all eyes drew to him. He was looking through the glasses down the length of the lagoon to the southeast.

"There she comes," he said quietly.

They did not need glasses to see. A flying film, strangely marked, seemed drawing over the surface of the lagoon. Abreast of it, along the atoll, travelling with equal speed, was a stiff bending of the cocoanut palms and a blur of flying leaves. The front of the wind on the water was a solid, sharply defined strip of dark-coloured, wind-vexed water. In advance of this strip, like skirmishers, were flashes of windflaws. Behind this strip, a quarter of a mile in width, was a strip of what seemed glassy calm. Next came another dark strip of wind, and behind that the lagoon was all crisping, boiling whiteness.

"What is that calm streak?" Mulhall asked.

"Calm," Warfield answered.

"But it travels as fast as the wind," was the other's objection.

"It has to, or it would be overtaken and it wouldn't be any calm. It's a double-header, I saw a big squall like that off Savaii once. A regular double-header. Smash! it hit us, then it lulled to nothing, and smashed us a second time. Stand by and hold on! Here she is on top of us. Look at the *Roberta!*"

The Roberta, lying nearest to the wind at slack chains, was swept off broadside like a straw. Then her chains brought her up, bow on to the wind, with an astonishing jerk. Schooner after schooner, the *Malahini* with them, was now sweeping away with the first gust and fetching up on taut chains. Mulhall and several of the Kanakas were taken off their feet when the *Malahini* jerked to her anchors.

And then there was no wind. The flying calm streak had reached them. Grief lighted a match, and the unshielded flame burned without flickering in the still air. A very dim twilight prevailed. The cloud-sky, lowering as it had been for hours, seemed now to have descended quite down upon the sea.

The Roberta tightened to her chains when the second head of the hurricane hit, as did schooner after schooner in swift succession. The sea, white with fury, boiled in tiny, spitting wavelets. The deck of the *Malahini* vibrated under the men's feet. The taut-stretched halyards beat a tattoo against the masts, and all the rigging, as if smote by some mighty hand, set up a wild thrumming. It was impossible to face the wind and breathe. Mulhall, crouching with the others behind the shelter of the cabin, discovered this, and his lungs were filled in an instant with so great a volume of driven air which he could not expel that he nearly strangled ere he could turn his head away.

"It's incredible," he gasped, but no one heard him.

Hermann and several Kanakas were crawling for'ard on hands and knees to let go the third anchor. Grief touched Captain Warfield and pointed to the *Roberta*. She was dragging down upon them. Warfield put his mouth to Grief's ear and shouted:

"We're dragging, too!"

Grief sprang to the wheel and put it hard over, veering the *Mahhini* to port. The third anchor took hold, and the *Roberta* went by, stern-first, a dozen yards away. They waved their hands to Peter Gee and Captain Robinson, who, with a number of sailors, were at work on the bow.

"He's knocking out the shackles!" Grief shouted. "Going to chance the passage! Got to! Anchors skating!"

"We're holding now!" came the answering shout. "There goes the *Cactus* down on the *Misi*. That settles them!"

The *Misi* had been holding, but the added windage of the *Cactus* was too much, and the entangled schooners slid away across the boiling white. Their men could be seen chopping and fighting to get them apart. The *Roberta*, cleared of her anchors, with a patch of tarpaulin set for'ard, was heading for the passage at the northwestern end of the lagoon. They saw her make it and drive out to sea. But the *Misi* and *Cactus*, unable to get clear of each other, went ashore on the atoll half a mile from the passage. The wind merely increased on itself and continued to increase. To face the full blast of it required all one's strength, and several minutes of crawling on deck against it tired a man to exhaustion. Hermann, with his Kanakas, plodded steadily, lashing and making secure, putting ever more gaskets on the sails. The wind ripped and tore their thin undershirts from their backs. They moved slowly, as if their bodies weighed tons, never releasing a hand-hold until another had been secured. Loose ends of rope stood out stiffly horizontal, and, when a whipping gave, the loose end frazzled and blew away.

Mulhall touched one and then another and pointed to the shore. The grass-sheds had disappeared, and Parlay's house rocked drunkenly, Because the wind blew lengthwise along the atoll, the house had been sheltered by the miles of cocoanut trees. But the big seas, breaking across from outside, were undermining it and hammering it to pieces. Already tilted down the slope of sand, its end was imminent. Here and there in the cocoanut trees people had lashed themselves. The trees did not sway or thresh about. Bent over rigidly from the wind, they remained in that position and vibrated monstrously. Underneath, across the sand, surged the white spume of the breakers. A big sea was likewise making down the length of the lagoon. It had plenty of room to kick up in the ten-mile stretch from the windward rim of the atoll, and all the schooners were bucking and plunging into it. The *Malahini* had begun shoving her bow and fo'c'sle head under the bigger ones, and at times her waist was filled rail-high with water.

"Now's the time for your engine!" Grief bellowed; and Captain Warfield, crawling over to where the engineer lay, shouted emphatic commands.

Under the engine, going full speed ahead, the *Malahini* behaved better. While she continued to ship seas over her bow, she was not jerked down so fiercely by her anchors. On the other hand, she was unable to get any slack in the chains. The best her forty horsepower could do was to ease the strain.

Still the wind increased. The little *Nuhiva*, lying abreast of the *Malahini* and closer in to the beach, her engine still unrepaired and her captain ashore, was having a bad time of it. She buried herself so frequently and so deeply that they wondered each time if she could clear herself of the water. At three in the afternoon buried by a second sea before she could free herself of the preceding one, she did not come up.

Mulhall looked at Grief.

"Burst in her hatches," was the bellowed answer.

Captain Warfield pointed to the *Winifred*, a little schooner plunging and burying outside of them, and shouted in Grief's ear. His voice came in patches of dim words, with intervals of silence when whisked away by the roaring wind.

"Rotten little tub... Anchors hold... But how she holds together... Old as the ark — — "

An hour later Hermann pointed to her. Her for'ard bitts, foremast, and most of her bow were gone, having been jerked out of her by her anchors. She swung broadside, rolling in the trough and settling by the head, and in this plight was swept away to leeward.

Five vessels now remained, and of them the *Malahini* was the only one with an engine. Fearing either the *Nuhiva's* or the *Winifdred's* fate, two of them followed the *Roberta's* example, knocking out the chain-shackles and running for the passage. The *Dolly* was the first, but her tarpaulin was carried away, and she went to destruction on the lee-rim of the atoll near the *Misi* and the *Cactus*. Undeterred by this, the *Moana* let go and followed with the same result.

"Pretty good engine that, eh?" Captain Warfield yelled to his owner.

Grief put out his hand and shook. "She's paying for herself!" he yelled back. "The wind's shifting around to the southward, and we ought to lie easier!"

Slowly and steadily, but with ever-increasing velocity, the wind veered around to the south and the southwest, till the three schooners that were left pointed directly in toward the beach. The wreck of Parlay's house was picked up, hurled into the lagoon, and blown out upon them. Passing the *Malahini*, it crashed into the *Papara*, lying a quarter of a mile astern. There was wild work for'ard on her, and in a quarter of an hour the house went clear, but it had taken the *Papara's* foremast and bowsprit with it.

Inshore, on their port bow, lay the *Tahaa*, slim and yacht-like, but excessively oversparred. Her anchors still held, but her captain, finding no abatement in the wind, proceeded to reduce windage by chopping down his masts.

"Pretty good engine that," Grief congratulated his skipper, "It will save our sticks for us yet."

Captain Warfield shook his head dubiously.

The sea on the lagoon went swiftly down with the change of wind, but they were beginning to feel the heave and lift of the outer sea breaking across the atoll. There were not so many trees remaining. Some had been broken short off, others uprooted. One tree they saw snap off halfway up, three persons clinging to it, and whirl away by the wind into the lagoon. Two detached themselves from it and swam to the Tahaa. Not long after, just before darkness, they saw one jump overboard from that schooner's stern and strike out strongly for the Malahini through the white, spitting wavelets.

“It’s Tai-Hotauri,” was Grief’s judgment. “Now we’ll have the news.”

The Kanaka caught the bobstay, climbed over the bow, and crawled aft. Time was given him to breathe, and then, behind the part shelter of the cabin, in broken snatches and largely by signs, he told his story.

“Narii... damn robber... He want steal... pearls... Kill Parlay... One man kill Parlay... No man know what man... Three Kanakas, Narii, me... Five beans... hat... Narii say one bean black... Nobody know... Kill Parlay... Narii damn liar... All beans black... Five black... Copra-shed dark... Every man get black bean... Big wind come... No chance... Everybody get up tree... No good luck them pearls... I tell you before... No good luck.”

“Where’s Parlay?” Grief shouted.

“Up tree... Three of his Kanakas same tree. Narii and one Kanaka’nother tree... My tree blow to hell, then I come on board.”

“Where’s the pearls?”

“Up tree along Parlay. Mebbe Narii get them pearl yet.”

In the ear of one after another Grief passed on Tai-Hotauri’s story. Captain Warfield was particularly incensed, and they could see him grinding his teeth.

Hermann went below and returned with a riding light, but the moment it was lifted above the level of the cabin wall the wind blew it out. He had better success with the binnacle lamp, which was lighted only after many collective attempts.

“A fine night of wind!” Grief yelled in Mulhall’s ear. “And blowing harder all the time.”

“How hard?”

“A hundred miles an hour... two hundred... I don’t know... Harder than I’ve ever seen it.”

The lagoon grew more and more troubled by the sea that swept across the atoll. Hundreds of leagues of ocean was being backed up by the hurricane, which more than overcame the lowering effect of the ebb tide. Immediately the tide began to rise the increase in the size of the seas was noticeable. Moon and wind were heaping the South Pacific on Hikihoho atoll.

Captain Warfield returned from one of his periodical trips to the engine room with the word that the engineer lay in a faint.

“Can’t let that engine stop!” he concluded helplessly.

“All right!” Grief said, “Bring him on deck. I’ll spell him.”

The hatch to the engine room was battened down, access being gained through a narrow passage from the cabin. The heat and gas fumes were stifling. Grief took one hasty, comprehensive examination of the engine and the fittings of the tiny room, then blew out the oil-lamp. After that he worked in darkness, save for the glow from endless cigars which he went into the cabin to light. Even-tempered as he was, he soon began to give evidences of the strain of being pent in with a mechanical monster that toiled, and sobbed, and slubbered in the shouting dark. Naked to the waist, covered with grease and oil, bruised and skinned from being knocked about by the plunging, jumping vessel, his head swimming from the mixture of gas and air he was compelled to breathe, he laboured on hour after hour, in turns petting, blessing, nursing, and cursing the engine and all its parts. The ignition began to go bad. The feed grew worse. And worst of all, the cylinders began to heat. In a consultation held in the cabin the half-caste engineer begged and pleaded to stop the engine for half an hour in order to cool it and to attend to the water circulation. Captain Warfield was against any stopping. The half-caste swore that the engine would ruin itself and stop anyway and for good. Grief, with glaring eyes, greasy and battered, yelled and cursed them both down and issued commands. Mulhall, the supercargo, and Hermann were set to work in the cabin at double-straining and triple-straining the gasoline. A hole was chopped through the engine room floor, and a Kanaka heaved bilge-water over the cylinders, while Grief continued to souse running parts in oil.

“Didn’t know you were a gasoline expert,” Captain Warfield admired when Grief came into the cabin to catch a breath of little less impure air.

“I bathe in gasoline,” he grated savagely through his teeth. “I eat it.”

What other uses he might have found for it were never given, for at that moment all the men in the cabin, as well as the gasoline being strained, were smashed forward against the bulkhead as the *Malahini* took an abrupt, deep dive. For the space of several minutes, unable to gain their feet, they rolled back and forth and pounded and hammered from wall to wall. The schooner, swept by three big seas, creaked and groaned and quivered, and from the weight of water on her decks behaved logily. Grief crept to the engine, while Captain Warfield waited his chance to get through the companion-way and out on deck.

It was half an hour before he came back.

“Whaleboat’s gone!” he reported. “Galley’s gone! Everything gone except the deck and hatches! And if that engine hadn’t been going we’d be gone! Keep up the good work!”

By midnight the engineer’s lungs and head had been sufficiently cleared of gas fumes to let him relieve Grief, who went on deck to get his own head and lungs clear. He joined the others, who crouched behind the cabin, holding on with their hands and made doubly secure by rope-lashings. It was a complicated huddle, for it was the only place of refuge for the Kanakas. Some of them had accepted the skipper’s invitation into the cabin but had been driven out by the fumes. The *Malahini* was being plunged down and swept frequently, and what they breathed was air and spray and water commingled.

“Making heavy weather of it, Mulhall!” Grief shouted to his guest between immersions.

Mulhall, strangling and choking, could only nod. The scuppers could not carry off the burden of water on the schooner’s deck. She rolled it out and took it in over one rail and the other; and at times, nose thrown skyward, sitting down on her heel, she avalanched it aft. It surged along the poop gangways, poured over the top of the cabin, submerging and bruising those that clung on, and went out over the stern-rail.

Mulhall saw him first, and drew Grief’s attention. It was Narii Herring, crouching and holding on where the dim binnacle light shone upon him. He was quite naked, save for a belt and a bare-bladed knife thrust between it and the skin.

Captain Warfield untied his lashings and made his way over the bodies of the others. When his face became visible in the light from the binnacle it was working with anger. They could see him speak, but the wind tore the sound away. He would not put his lips to Narii’s ear. Instead, he pointed over the side. Narii Herring understood. His white teeth showed in an amused and sneering smile, and he stood up, a magnificent figure of a man.

“It’s murder!” Mulhall yelled to Grief.

“He’d have murdered Old Parlay!” Grief yelled back.

For the moment the poop was clear of water and the *Malahini* on an even keel. Narii made a bravado attempt to walk to the rail, but was flung down by the wind. Thereafter he crawled, disappearing in the darkness, though there was certitude in all of them that he had gone over the side. The

Malahini dived deep, and when they emerged from the flood that swept aft, Grief got Mulhall's ear.

"Can't lose him! He's the Fish Man of Tahiti! He'll cross the lagoon and land on the other rim of the atoll if there's any atoll left!"

Five minutes afterward, in another submergence, a mess of bodies poured down on them over the top of the cabin. These they seized and held till the water cleared, when they carried them below and learned their identity. Old Parlay lay oh his back on the floor, with closed eyes and without movement. The other two were his Kanaka cousins. All three were naked and bloody. The arm of one Kanaka hung helpless and broken at his side. The other man bled freely from a hideous scalp wound.

"Narii did that?" Mulhall demanded.

Grief shook his head. "No; it's from being smashed along the deck and over the house!"

Something suddenly ceased, leaving them in dizzying uncertainty. For the moment it was hard to realize there was no wind. With the absolute abruptness of a sword slash, the wind had been chopped off. The schooner rolled and plunged, fetching up on her anchors with a crash which for the first time they could hear. Also, for the first time they could hear the water washing about on deck. The engineer threw off the propeller and eased the engine down.

"We're in the dead centre," Grief said. "Now for the shift. It will come as hard as ever." He looked at the barometer. "29:32," he read.

Not in a moment could he tone down the voice which for hours had battled against the wind, and so loudly did he speak that in the quiet it hurt the others' ears.

"All his ribs are smashed," the supercargo said, feeling along Parlay's side. "He's still breathing, but he's a goner."

Old Parlay groaned, moved one arm impotently, and opened his eyes. In them was the light of recognition.

"My brave gentlemen," he whispered haltingly. "Don't forget... the auction... at ten o'clock... in hell."

His eyes dropped shut and the lower jaw threatened to drop, but he mastered the qualms of dissolution long enough to omit one final, loud, derisive cackle.

Above and below pandemonium broke out.

The old familiar roar of the wind was with them. The *Malahini*, caught broadside, was pressed down almost on her beam ends as she swung the arc compelled by her anchors. They rounded her into the wind, where she jerked to an even keel. The propeller was thrown on, and the engine took up its work again.

"Northwest!" Captain Warfield shouted to Grief when he came on deck. "Hauled eight points like a shot!"

"Narii'll never get across the lagoon now!" Grief observed.

"Then he'll blow back to our side, worse luck!"

V

After the passing of the centre the barometer began to rise. Equally rapid was the fall of the wind. When it was no more than a howling gale, the engine lifted up in the air, parted its bed-plates with a last convulsive effort of its forty horsepower, and lay down on its side. A wash of water from the bilge sizzled over it and the steam arose in clouds. The engineer wailed his dismay, but Grief glanced over the wreck affectionately and went into the cabin to swab the grease off his chest and arms with bunches of cotton waste.

The sun was up and the gentlest of summer breezes blowing when he came on deck, after sewing up the scalp of one Kanaka and setting the other's arm. The *Malahini* lay close in to the beach. For'ard, Hermann and the crew were heaving in and straightening out the tangle of anchors. The *Papara* and the *Tahaa* were gone, and Captain Warfield, through the glasses, was searching the opposite rim of the atoll.

"Not a stick left of them," he said. "That's what comes of not having engines. They must have dragged across before the big shift came."

Ashore, where Parlay's house had been, was no vestige of any house. For the space of three hundred yards, where the sea had breached, no tree or even stump was left. Here and there, farther along, stood an occasional palm, and there were numbers which had been snapped off above the ground. In the crown of one surviving palm Tai-Hotauri asserted he saw something move. There were no boats left to the *Malahini*, and they watched him swim ashore and climb the tree.

When he came back, they helped over the rail a young native girl of Parley's household. But first she passed up to them a battered basket. In it was a litter of blind kittens — all dead save one, that feebly mewed and staggered on awkward legs.

“Hello!” said Mulhall. “Who’s that?”

Along the beach they saw a man walking. He moved casually, as if out for a morning stroll. Captain Warfield gritted his teeth. It was Narii Herring.

“Hello, skipper!” Narii called, when he was abreast of them. “Can I come aboard and get some breakfast?”

Captain Warfield’s face and neck began to swell and turn purple. He tried to speak, but choked.

“For two cents — for two cents — — ” was all he could manage to articulate.

THE END

THE ABYSMAL BRUTE

This lesser known work was first published in 1913 and features the theme of prize-fighting.

CONTENTS

Chapter I
Chapter II
Chapter III
Chapter IV
Chapter V
Chapter VI
Chapter VII
Chapter VIII
Chapter IX
Chapter X

Chapter I

SAM STUBENER ran through his mail carelessly and rapidly. As became a manager of prize-fighters, he was accustomed to a various and bizarre correspondence. Every crank, sport, near sport, and reformer seemed to have ideas to impart to him. From dire threats, such as pushing in the front of his face, from rabbit-foot fetishes to lucky horseshoes, from dinky jerkwater bids to the quarter-of-a-million-dollar offers of irresponsible nobodies, he knew the whole run of the surprise portion of his mail.

In his time having received a razor-strop made from the skin of a lynched Negro, and a finger, withered and sun-dried, cut from the body of a white man found in Death Valley, he was of the opinion that never again would the postman bring him anything that could startle him. But this morning he opened a letter that he read a second time, put away in his pocket, and took out for a third reading. It was postmarked from some unheard-of post office in Siskiyou County, and it ran:

Dear Sam:

You don't know me, except my reputation. You come after my time, and I've been out of the game a long time. But take it from me I ain't been asleep. I've followed you, from the time Kal Aufman knocked you out to your last handling of Nat Belson, and I take it you're the niftiest thing in the line of managers that ever came down the pike.

I got a proposition for you. I got the greatest unknown that ever happened. This ain't con. It's the straight goods. What do you think of a husky that tips the scales at two hundred and twenty pounds fighting weight, is twenty-two years old, and can hit a kick twice as hard as my best ever? That's him, my boy, Young Pat Glendon, that's the name he'll fight under. I've planned it all out. Now the best thing you can do is hit the first train and come up here.

I bred him and trained him. All that I ever had in my head I've hammered into his. And maybe you won't believe it, but he's added to it. He's a born fighter. He's a wonder at time and distance. He just knows to the second and the inch, and he don't need to think about it at all. His six-inch jolt is more the real sleep medicine than the full-arm swing of most geezers.

Talk about the hope of the white race. This is him. Come and take a peep. When you was managing Jeffries you was crazy about hunting. Come along and I'll give you some real hunting and fishing that will make your movie picture winnings look like thirty cents. I'll send Young Pat out with you. I ain't able to get around. That's why I'm sending for you. I was going to manage him myself. But it ain't no use. I'm all in and likely to pass out any time. So get a move on. I want you to manage him. There's a fortune in it for both of you, but I want to draw up the contract.

Yours truly,
PAT GLENDON

Stubener was puzzled. It seemed, on the face of it, a joke — the men in the fighting game were notorious jokers — and he tried to discern the fine hand of Corbett or the big friendly paw of Fitzsimmons in the screed before him. But if it were genuine, he knew it was worth looking into. Pat Glendon was before his time, though, as a cub, he had once seen Old Pat spar at the benefit for Jack Dempsey. Even then he was called "Old" Pat, and had been out of the ring for years. He had antedated Sullivan, in the old London Prize Ring Rules, though his last fading battles had been put up under the incoming Marquis of Queensbury Rules.

What ring-follower did not know of Pat Glendon? — though few were alive who had seen him in his prime, and there were not many more who had seen him at all. Yet his name had come down in the history of the ring, and no sporting writer's lexicon was complete without it. His fame was paradoxical. No man was honored higher, and yet he had never attained championship honors. He had been unfortunate, and had been known as the unlucky fighter.

Four times he all but won the heavyweight championship, and each time he had deserved to win it. There was the time on the barge, in San Francisco Bay, when at the moment he had the champion going, he snapped his own forearm; and on the island in the Thames, sloshing about in six inches of rising tide, he broke a leg at a similar stage in a winning fight; in Texas, too, there was the never-to-be-forgotten day when the police broke in just as he had his man going in all certainty. And finally, there was the fight in the Mechanics' Pavilion in San Francisco, when he was secretly jobbed from the first by a gun-fighting bad man of a referee backed by a small syndicate of bettors. Pat Glendon had had no accidents in that fight, but when he had knocked his man cold with a right to the jaw and a left to the solar plexus, the referee calmly disqualified him for fouling. Every ringside witness, every sporting expert, and the whole sporting world, knew there had been no foul. Yet, like all fighters, Pat Glendon had agreed to abide by the decision of the referee. Pat abided, and accepted it as in keeping with the rest of his bad luck.

This was Pat Glendon. What bothered Stubener was whether or not Pat had written the letter. He carried it down town with him. What's become of Pat Glendon? Such was his greeting to all the sports that morning. Nobody seemed to know. Some thought he must be dead, but none knew positively. The fight editor of a morning daily looked up the records and was able to state that his death had not been noted. It was from Tim Donovan, that he got a clue.

"Sure an' he ain't dead," said Donovan. "How could that be? — a man of his make that never boozed or blew himself? He made money, and what's more, he saved it and invested it. Didn't he have three saloons at the time? An' wasn't he makin' slathers of money with them when he sold out? Now that I'm thinkin', that was the last time I laid eyes on him — when he sold them out. 'T was all of twenty years and more ago. His wife had just died. I met him headin' for the Ferry. 'Where away, old sport?' says I. 'It's me for the woods,' says he. 'I've quit. Good-by, Tim, me boy.' And I've never seen him from that day to this. Of course he ain't dead."

"You say when his wife died — did he have any children?" Stubener queried.

"One, a little baby. He eas luggin' it in his arms that very day."

"Was it a boy?"

"How should I be knowin'?"

It was then that Sam Stubener reached a decision, and that night found him in a Pullman speeding toward the wilds of Northern California.

Chapter II

Stubener was dropped off the overland at Deer Lick in the early morning, and he kicked his heels for an hour before the one saloon opened its doors. No, the saloonkeeper didn't know anything about Pat Glendon, had never heard of him, and if he was in that part of the country he must be out beyond somewhere. Neither had the one hanger-on ever heard of Pat Glendon. At the hotel the same ignorance obtained, and it was not until the storekeeper and postmaster opened up that Stubener struck the trail. Oh, yes, Pat Glendon lived out beyond. You took the stage at Alpine, which was forty miles and which was a logging camp. From Alpine, on horseback, you rode up Antelope Valley and crossed the divide to Bear Creek. Pat Glendon lived somewhere beyond that. The people of Alpine would know. Yes, there was a young Pat. The storekeeper had seen him. He had been in to Deer Lick two years back. Old Pat had not put in an appearance for five years. He bought his supplies at the store, and always paid by check, and he was a white-haired, strange old man. That was all the storekeeper knew, but the folks at Alpine could give him final directions.

It looked good to Stubener. Beyond doubt there was a young Pat Glendon, as well as an old, living out beyond. That night the manager spent at the logging camp of Alpine, and early the following morning he rode a mountain cayuse up Antelope Valley. He rode over the divide and down Bear Creek. He rode all day, through the wildest, roughest country he had ever seen, and at sunset turned up Pinto Valley on a trail so stiff and narrow that more than once he elected to get off and walk.

It was eleven o'clock when he dismounted before a log cabin and was greeted by the baying of two huge deerhounds. Then Pat Glendon opened the door, fell on his neck, and took him in.

"I knew ye'd come, Sam, me boy," said Pat, the while he limped about, building a fire, boiling coffee, and frying a big bear-steak. "The young un ain't home the night. We was gettin' short of meat, and he went out about sundown to pick up a deer. But I'll say no more. Wait till ye see him. He'll be home in the morn, and then you can try him out. There's the gloves. But wait till ye see him.

"As for me, I'm finished. Eighty-one come next January, an' pretty good for an ex-bruiser. But I never wasted meself, Sam, nor kept late hours an' burned the candle at all ends. I had a damned good candle, an' made the most of it, as you'll grant at lookin' at me. And I've taught the same to the young un. What do you think of a lad of twenty-two that's never had a drink in his life nor tasted tobacco? That's him. He's a giant, and he's lived natural all his days. Wait till he takes you out after deer. He'll break your travelin' light, him a carryin' the outfit and a big buck deer belike. He's a child of the open air, an' winter nor summer has he slept under a roof. The open for him, as I taught him. The one thing that worries me is how he'll take to sleepin' in houses, an' how he'll stand the tobacco smoke in the ring. 'Tis a terrible thing, that smoke, when you're fighting hard an' gaspin' for air. But no more, Sam, me boy. You 're tired an' sure should be sleepin'. Wait till you see him, that's all. Wait till you see him.

But the garrulousness of age was on old Pat, and it was long before he permitted Stubener's eyes to close.

"He can run a deer down with his own legs, that young un," he broke out again. "'Tis the dandy trainin' for the lungs, the hunter's life. He don't know much of else, though he's read a few books at times an' poetry stuff. He's just plain pure natural, as you'll see when you clap eyes on him. He's got the old Irish strong in him. Sometimes, the way he moons about, it's thinkin' strong I am that he believes in the fairies and such-like. He's a nature lover if ever there was one, an' he's afeard of cities. He's read about them, but the biggest he was ever in was Deer Lick. He misliked the many people, and his report was that they'd stand weedin' out. That was two years agone — the first and the last time he's seen a locomotive and a train of cars.

'Sometimes it's wrong I'm thinkin' I am, bringin' him up a natural. It's given him wind and stamina and the strength o' wild bulls. No city-grown man can have a look-in against him. I'm willin' to grant that Jeffries at his best could 'a' worried the young un a bit, but only a bit. The young un could 'a' broke him like a straw. An' he don't look it. That's the everlasting wonder of it. He's only a fine-seeming young husky; but it's the quality of his muscle that's different. But wait till ye see him, that's all.

"A strange liking the boy has for posies, an' little meadows, a bit of pine with the moon beyond, windy sunsets, or the sun o' morns from the top of old Baldy. An' he has a hankerin' for the drawin' o' pitchers of things, an' of spouting about 'Lucifer or night' from the poetry books he got from the red-headed school teacher. But 'tis only his youngness. He'll settle down to the game once we get him started, but watch out for grouches when it first comes to livin' in a city for him.

"A good thing; he's woman-shy. They'll not bother him for years. He can't bring himself to understand the creatures, an' damn few of them has he seen at that. 'Twas the school teacher over at Samson's Flat that put the poetry stuff in his head. She was clean daffy over the young un, an' he never a-knowin'. A warm-haired girl she was — not a mountain girl, but from down in the flatlands — an' as time went by she was fair desperate, an' the way she went after him was shameless. An' what d'ye think the boy did when he tumbled to it? He was scared as a jackrabbit. He took blankets an' ammunition an' hiked for tall timber. Not for a month did I lay eyes on him, an' then he sneaked in after dark and was gone in the morn. Nor would he as much as peep at her letters. 'Burn 'em,' he said. An' burn 'em I did. Twice she rode over on a cayuse all the way from Samson's Flat, an' I was sorry for the young creature. She was fair hungry for the boy, and she looked it in her face. An' at the end of three months she gave up school an' went back to her own country, an' then it was that the boy came home to the shack to live again.

"Women ha' ben the ruination of many a good fighter, but they won't be of him. He blushes like a girl if anything young in skirts looks at him a second time or too long the first one. An' they all look at him. But when he fights, when he fights! — God! it's the old savage Irish that flares in him, an' drives the fists of him. Not that he goes off his base. Don't walk away with that. At my best I was never as cool as he. I misdoubt 'twas the wrath of me that brought the accidents. But he's an iceberg. He's hot an' cold at the one time, a live wire in an ice-chest."

Stubener was dozing, when the old man's mumble aroused him. He listened drowsily.

"I made a man o' him, by God! I made a man o' him, with the two fists of him, an' the upstanding legs of him, an' the straight-seein' eyes. And I know the game in my head, an' I've kept up with the times and the modern changes. The crouch? Sure, he knows all the styles an' economies. He never moves two inches when an inch and a half will do the turn. And when he wants he can spring like a buck kangaroo. In-fightin'? Wait till you see. Better than his out-fightin', and he could sure 'a' sparred with Peter Jackson an' outfooted Corbett in his best, I tell you, I've taught 'm it all, to the last trick, and he's improved on the teachin'. He's a fair genius at the game. An' he’s had plenty of husky mountain men to try out on. I gave him the fancy work and they gave him the sloggin’. Nothing shy or delicate about them. Roarin’ bulls an’ big grizzly bears, that’s what they are, when it comes to huggin’ in a clinch or swingin’ rough-like in the rushes. An’ he plays with ‘em. Man, d’ye hear me? — he plays with them, like you an’ me would play with little puppy-dogs.”

Another time Stubener awoke, to hear the old man mumbling:

“‘Tis the funny think he don’t take fightin’ seriously. It’s that easy to him he thinks it play. But wait till he’s tapped a swift one. That’s all, wait. An’ you’ll see’m throw on the juice in that cold storage plant of his an’ turn loose the prettiest scientific wallopin’ that ever you laid eyes on.”

In the shivery gray of mountain dawn, Stubener was routed from his blankets by old Pat.

“He’s comin’ up the trail now,” was the hoarse whisper. “Out with ye an’ take your first peep at the biggest fightin’ man the ring has ever seen, or will ever see in a thousand years again.”

The manager peered through the open door, rubbing the sleep from his heavy eyes, and saw a young giant walk into the clearing. In one hand was a rifle, across his shoulders a heavy deer under which he moved as if it were weightless. He was dressed roughly in blue overalls and woolen shirt open at the throat. Coat he had none, and on his feet, instead of brogans, were moccasins. Stubener noted that his walk was smooth and catlike, without suggestion of his two hundred and twenty pounds of weight to which that of the deer was added. The fight manager was impressed from the first glimpse. Formidable the young fellow certainly was, but the manager sensed the strangeness and unusualness of him. He was a new type, something different from the run fighters. He seemed a creature of the wild, more a night-roaming figure from some old fairy story or folk tale than a twentieth-century youth.

A thing Stubener quickly discovered was that young Pat was not much of a talker. He acknowledged old Pat’s introduction with a grip of the hand but without speech, and silently set to work at building the fire and getting breakfast. To his father’s direct questions he answered in monosyllables, as, for instance, when asked where he had picked up the deer.

“South Fork,” was all he vouchsafed.

“Eleven miles across the mountains,” the old man exposited pridefully to Stubener, “an’ a trail that’d break your heart.”

Breakfast consisted of black coffee, sourdough bread, and an immense quantity of bear-meat broiled over the coals. Of this the young fellow ate ravenously, and Stubener divined that both the Glendons were accustomed to an almost straight meat diet. Old Pat did all the talking, though it was not till the meal was ended that he broached the subject he had at heart.

"Pat, boy," he began, "you know who the gentleman is?"

Young Pat nodded, and cast a quick, comprehensive glance at the manager.

"Well, he'll be takin' you away with him and down to San Francisco."

"I'd sooner stay here, dad," was the answer.

Stubener felt a prick of disappointment. It was a wild goose chase after all. This was no fighter, eager and fretting to be at it. His huge brawn counted for nothing. It was nothing new. It was the big fellows that usually had the streak of fat.

But old Pat's Celtic wrath flared up, and his voice was harsh with command.

"You'll go down to the cities an' fight, me boy. That's what I've trained you for, an' you'll do it."

"All right," was the unexpected response, rumbled apathetically from the deep chest.

"And fight like hell," the old man added.

Again Stubener felt disappointment at the absence of flash and fire in the young man's eyes as he answered:

"All right. When do we start?"

"Oh, Sam, here, he'll be wantin' a little huntin' and to fish a bit, as well as to try you out with the gloves." He looked at Sam, who nodded. "Suppose you strip and give'm a taste of your quality."

An hour later, Sam Stubener had his eyes opened. An ex-fighter himself, a heavyweight at that, he was even a better judge of fighters, and never had he seen one strip to like advantage.

"See the softness of him," old Pat chanted. "'Tis the true stuff. Look at the slope of the shoulders, an' the lungs of him. Clean, all clean, to the last drop an' ounce of him. You're lookin' at a man, Sam, the like of which was never seen before. Not a muscle of him bound. No weight-lifter or Sandow exercise artist there. See the fat snakes of muscle a-crawlin' soft an' lazy-like. Wait till you see them flashin' like a strikin' rattler. He's good for forty rounds this blessed instant, or a hundred. Go to it! Time!

They went to it, for three-minute rounds with a minute rests, and Sam Stubener was immediately undeceived. Here was no streak of fat, no apathy, only a lazy, good-natured play of gloves and tricks, with a brusk stiffness and harsh sharpness in the contacts that he knew belonged only to the trained and instinctive fighting man.

"Easy, now, easy," old Pat warned. "Sam's not the man he used to be."

This nettled Sam, as it was intended to do, and he played his most famous trick and favorite punch — a feint for a clinch and a right rip to the stomach. But, quickly as it was delivered, Young Pat saw it, and, though it landed, his body was going away. The next time, his body did not go away. As the rip started, he moved forward and twisted his left hip to meet it. It was only a matter of several inches, yet it blocked the blow. And thereafter, try as he would, Stubener's glove got no farther than that hip.

Stubener had roughed it with big men in his time, and, in exhibition bouts, had creditably held his own. But there was no holding his own here. Young Pat played with him, and in the clinches made him feel as powerful as a baby, landing on him seemingly at will, locking and blocking masterful accuracy, and scarcely noticing or acknowledging his existence. Half the time young Pat seemed to spend in gazing off and out at the landscape in a dreamy sort of way. And right here Stubener made another mistake. He took it for a trick of old Pat's training, tried to sneak in a short-arm jolt, found his arm in a lightning lock, and had both his ears cuffed for his pains.

"The instinct for a blow," the old man chortled. "'Tis not put on, I'm tellin' you. He is a wiz. He knows a blow without the lookin', when it starts an' where, the speed, an' space, an' niceness of it. An' 'tis nothing I ever showed him. 'Tis inspiration. He was so born."

Once, in a clinch, the fight manager heeled his glove on young Pat's mouth, and there was just a hint of viciousness in the manner of doing it. A moment later, in the next clinch, Sam received the heel of the other's glove on his own mouth. There was nothing snappy about it, but the pressure, stolidly lazy as it was, put his head back till the joints cracked and for a moment he thought his neck was broken. He slacked his body and dropped his arms in token that the bout was over, felt the instant release, and staggered clear.

"He'll — he'll do," he gasped, looking the admiration he lacked the breath to utter.

Old Pat's eyes were brightly moist with pride and triumph.

"An' what will you be thinkin' to happen when some of the gay an' ugly ones tries to rough it on him?" he asked.

"He'll kill them, sure," was Stubener's verdict.

"No; he's too cool for that. But he'll just hurt them some for their dirtiness."

"Let's draw up the contract," said the manager.

"Wait till you know the whole worth of him!" Old Pat answered. "'Tis strong terms I'll be makin' you come to. Go for a deer-hunt with the boy over the hills an' learn the lungs and the legs of him. Then we'll sign up iron-clad and regular.

Stubener was gone two days on that hunt, and he learned all and more than old Pat had promised, and came back a weary and very humble man. The young fellow's innicence of the world had been startling to the case-hardened manager, but he had found him nobody's fool/ Virgin though his mind was, untouched by all save a narrow mountain experience, nevertheless he had proved possession of a natural keeness and shrewdness far beyond the average. In a way he was a mystery to Sam, who could not understand terrible equanimity of temper. Nothing ruffled him or worried him, and his patience was of an enduring primitiveness. He never swore, not even the futile and emasculated cussing words of sissy-boys.

"I'd swear all right if I wanted to," he had explained, when challenged by his companion. "But I guess I've never come to needing it. When I do, I'll swear I suppose."

Old Pat, resolutely adhering to his decision, said good-by at the cabin.

"It won't be long, Pat, boy, when I'll be readin' about you in the papers. I'd like to go along, but I'm afeard it's me for the mountains till the end."

And then, drawing the manager aside, the old man turned loose on him almost savagely.

"Remember what I've ben tellin' ye over an' over. The boy's clean an' he's honest. He knows nothing of the rottenness of the game. I kept it all away from him, I tell you. He don't know the meanin' of fake. He knows only the bravery, an' romance an' glory of fightin', and I've filled him up with tales of the old ring heroes, though little enough, God knows, it's set him afire. Man, man, I'm tellin' you that I clipped the fight columns from the newspapers to keep it 'way from him — him a-thinkin' I was wantin' them for me scrap book. He don't know a man ever lay down or threw a fight. So don't turn the boy's stomach. That's why I put in the null and void clause. The first rottenness and the contract's broke of itself. No snide division of stake-money; no secret arrangements with the movin' pitcher men for guaranteed distance. There's slathers o' money for the both of you. But play it square or you lose. Understand?

"And whatever you'll be doin' watch out for the women," was old Pat's parting admonishment, young Pat astride his horse and reining in dutifully to hear. "Women is death an' damnation, remember that. But when you do find the one, the only one, hang on to her. She'll be worth more than glory an' money. But first be sure, an' when you're sure, don't let her slip through your fingers. Grab her with the two hands of you and hang on. Hang on if all the world goes to smash an' smithereens. Pat, boy, a good woman is . . . a good woman. 'Tis the first word and last."

Chapter III

Once in San Francisco, Sam Stubener's troubles began. Not that young Pat had a nasty temper, or was grouchy as his father had feared. On the contrary, he was phenomenally sweet and mild. But he was homesick for his beloved mountains. Also, he was secretly appalled by the city, though he trod its roaring streets imperturbable as a red Indian.

"I came down here to fight," he announced, at the end of the first week.

"Where's Jim Hanford?"

Stubener whistled.

"A big champion like him wouldn't look at you," was his answer. "'Go and get a reputation,' is what he'd say."

"I can lick him."

"But the public doesn't know that.

If you licked him you'd be champion of the world, and no champion ever became so with his first fight."

"I can."

"But the public doesn't know it, Pat. It wouldn't come to see you fight. And it's the crowd that brings the money and the big purses. That's why Jim Hanford wouldn't consider you for a second. There'd be nothing in it for him. Besides, he's getting three thousand a week right now in vaudeville, with a contract for twenty-five weeks. Do you think he'd chuck that for a go with a man no one ever heard of? You've got to do something first, make a record. You've got to begin on the little local dubs that nobody ever heard of — guys like Chub Collins, Rough-House Kelly, and the Flying Dutchman. When you've put them away, you're only started on the first round of the ladder. But after that you'll go up like a balloon."

"I'll meet those three named in the same ring one after the other," was Pat's decision. "Make the arrangements accordingly."

Stubener laughed.

"What's wrong? Don't you think I can put them away?"

"I know you can," Stubener assured him. "But it can't be arranged that way. You've got to take them one at a time. Besides, remember, I know the game and I'm managing you. This proposition has to be worked up, and I'm the boy that knows how. "If we're lucky, you may get to the top in a couple of years and be the champion with a mint of money."

Pat sighed at the prospect, then brightened up.

“And after that I can retire and go back home to the old man,” he said.

Stubener was about to reply, but checked himself. Strange as was this championship material, he felt confident that when the top was reached it would prove very similar to that of all the others who had gone before. Besides, two years was a long way off, and there was much to be done in the meantime.

When Pat fell to moping around his quarters, reading endless poetry books and novels drawn from the public library, Stubener sent him off to live on a Contra Costa ranch across the Bay, under the watchful eye of Spider Walsh. At the end of a week Spider whispered that the job was a cinch. His charge was away and over the hills from dawn till dark, whipping the streams for trout, shooting quail and rabbits, and pursuing the one lone and crafty buck famous for having survived a decade of hunters. It was the Spider who waxed lazy and fat, while his charge kept himself in condition.

As Stubener expected, his unknown was laughed at by the fight club managers. Were not the woods full of unknowns who were always breaking out with championship rashes? A preliminary, say of four rounds — yes, they would grant him that. But the main event — never. Stubener was resolved that young Pat should make his début in nothing less than a main event, and, by the prestige of his own name he at last managed it. With much misgiving, the Mission Club agreed that Pat Glendon could go fifteen rounds with Rough-House Kelly for a purse of one hundred dollars. It was the custom of young fighters to assume the names of old ring heroes, so no one suspected that he was the son of the great Pat Glendon, while Stubener held his peace. It was a good press surprise package to spring later.

Came the night of the fight, after a month of waiting. Stubener’s anxiety was keen. His professional reputation was staked that his man would make a showing, and he was astounded to see Pat, seated in his corner a bare five minutes, lose the healthy color from his cheeks, which turned a sickly yellow.

“Cheer up, boy,” Stubener said, slapping him on the shoulder. “The first time in the ring is always strange, and Kelly has a way of letting his opponent wait for him on the chance of getting stage-fright.”

“It isn’t that,” Pat answered. “It’s the tobacco smoke. I’m not used to it, and it’s making me fair sick.”

His manager experienced the quick shock of relief. A man who turned sick from mental causes, even if he were a Samson, could never win to place in the prize ring. As for tobacco smoke, the youngster would have to get used to it, that was all.

Young Pat's entrance into the ring had been met with silence, but when Rough-House Kelly crawled through the ropes his greeting was uproarious. He did not belie his name. he was a ferocious-looking man, black and hairy, with huge, knotty muscles, weighing a full two hundred pounds. Pat looked across at him curiously, and received a savage scowl. After both had been introduced to the audience, they shook hands. And even as their gloves gripped, Kelly ground his teeth, convulsed his face with an expression of rage, and muttered:

"You've got yer nerve wid yeh." He flung Pat's hand roughly from his, and hissed, "I'll eat yeh up, ye pup!"

The audience laughed at the action, and it guessed hilariously at what Kelly must have said.

Back in his corner, and waiting the gong, Pat turned to Stubener.

"Why is he angry with me?" he asked.

He ain't," Stubener answered. That's his way, trying to scare you. It's just mouth-fighting."

"It isn't boxing," was Pat's comment; and Stubener, with a quick glance, noted that his eyes were as mildly blue as ever.

"Be careful," the manager warned, as the gong for the first round sounded and Pat stood up. "He's liable to come at you like a man-eater."

And like a man-eater Kelly did come at him, rushing across the ring in wild fury. Pat, who in his easy way had advanced only a couple of paces, gauged the other's momentum, side-stepped, and brought his stiff-arched right across to the jaw. Then he stood and looked on with a great curiosity. The fight was over. Kelly had fallen like a stricken bullock to the floor, and there he lay without movement while the referee, bending over him, shouted the ten seconds in his unheeding ear. When Kelly's seconds came to lift him, Pat was before them. Gathering the huge, inert bulk of the man in his arms, he carried him to his corner and deposited him on the stool and in the arms of his seconds.

Half a minute later, Kelly's head lifted and his eyes wavered open. He looked about him stupidly and then to one of his seconds.

"What happened?" he queried hoarsely. "Did the roof fall on me?"

Chapter IV

As a result of his fight with Kelly, though the general opinion was that he had won by a fluke, Pat was matched with Rufe Mason. This took place three weeks later, and the Sierra Club audience at Dreamland Rink failed to see what happened. Rufe Mason was a heavyweight, noted locally for his cleverness. When the gong for the first round sounded, both men met in the center of the ring. Neither rushed. Nor did they strike a blow. They felt around each other, their arms bent, their gloves so close together that they almost touched. This lasted for perhaps five seconds. Then it happened, and so quickly that not one in a hundred of the audience saw. Rufe Mason made a feint with his right. It was obviously not a real feint, but a feeler, a mere tenative threatening of a possible blow. It was at this instant that Pat losed his punch. So close together were they that the distance the blow traveled was a scant eight inches. It was a short-arm left jolt, and it was acccomplished by a twist of the left forearm and a thrust of the shoulder. It landed flush on the point of the chin and the astounded audience saw Rufe Mason's legs crumple under him as his body sank to the floor. But the referee had seen, and he promptly proceeded to count him out. Again Pat carried his opponent to his corner, and it was ten minutes before Rufe Mason, supported by his seconds, with sagging knees and rolling, glassy eyes, was able to move down the aisle through the stupified and incredulous audience on the way to his dressing room.

"No wonder," he told a reporter, "that Rough-House Kelly thought the roof hit him."

After Chub Collins had been put out in the twelfth second of the first round of a fifteen-round contest, Stubener felt compelled to speak to Pat.

"Do you know what they're calling you now?" he asked.

Pat shook his head.

"One punch Glendon."

Pat smiled politely. He was little interested in what he was called. He had certain work cut out which he must do ere he could win back his mountains, and he was phlegmatically doing it, that was all.

"It won't do," his manager continued, with an ominous shake of the head. "You can't go on putting your men out so quickly. You must give them more time."

"I'm here to fight, ain't I?" Pat demanded in surprise.

Again Stubener shook his head.

"It's this way, Pat. You've got to be big and generous in the fighting game. Don't get all the other fighters sore. And it's not fair to the audience. They want a run for their money. Besides, no one will fight you. They'll all be scared out. And you can't draw crowds with ten-second fights. I leave it to you. Would you pay a dollar, or five, to see a ten-second fight?"

Pat was convinced, and he promised to give the audiences the requisite run for their money, though he stated that, personally, he preferred going fishing to witnessing a hundred rounds of fighting.

And still, Pat had got practically nowhere in the game. The local sports laughed when his name was mentioned. It called to mind funny fights and Rough-House Kelly's remark about the roof. Nobody knew how Pat could fight. They had never seen him. Where was his wind, his stamina, his ability to mix it with rough customers through long grueling contests? He had demonstrated nothing but the posession of a lucky punch and a depressing proclivity for flukes.

So it was that his fourth match was arranged with Pete Sosso, a Portuguese fighter from Butchertown, known only for the amazing tricks he played in the ring. Pat did not train for the fight. Instead he made a flying and sorrowful trip to the mountains to bury his father. Old Pat had known well the condition of his heart, and it had stopped suddenly on him.

Young Pat arrived back in San Francisco with so close a margin of time that he changed into his fighting togs directly from his traveling suit, and even then the audience was kept waiting ten minutes.

"Remember, give him a chance," Stubener cautioned him as he climbed through the ropes. "Play with him, but do it seriously. Let him go ten or twelve rounds, then get him,"

Pat obeyed instructions, and , thought it would have been easy enough to put Sosso out, so tricky was he that to stand up to him and not put him out kept his hands full. It was a pretty exhibition, and the audience was delighted. Sosso's whirlwind attacks, wild feints, retreats, and rushes, required all Pat's science to protect himself, and even then he did not escape unscathed.

Stubener praised him in the minute-rests, and all would have been well, had not Sosso, in the fourth round, played one of his most spectacular tricks. Pat, in a mix-up, had landed a hook to Sosso's jaw, when to his amazement, the latter dropped his hands and reeled backward, eyes rolling, legs bending and giving, in a high state of grogginess. Pat could not understand. It had not been a knock-out blow, and yet there was his man all ready to fall to the mat. Pat dropped his own hands and wonderingly watched his reeling opponent. Sosso staggered away, almost fell, recovered, and staggered obliquely and blindly forward again.

For the first and the last time in his fighting career, Pat was caught off his guard. He actually stepped aside to let the reeling man go by. Still reeling, Sosso suddenly loosed his right. Pat received it full on his jaw with an impact that rattled his teeth. A great roar of delight went up from the audience. But Pat did not hear. He saw only Sosso before him, grinning and defiant, and not the least bit groggy. Pat was hurt by the blow, but vastly more outraged by the trick. All the wrath that his father ever had surged up in him. He shook his head as if to get rid of the shock of the blow and steadied himself before his man. It all occurred in the next second. With a feint that drew his opponent, Pat fetched his left to the solar plexus, almost at the same instant whipping his right across to the jaw. The latter blow landed on Sosso’s mouth ere his falling body struck the floor. The club doctors worked half an hour to bring him to. After that they put eleven stitches in his mouth and packed him off in an ambulance.

“I’m sorry,” Pat told his manager, “I’m afraid I lost my temper. I’ll never do it again in the ring. Dad always cautioned me about it. He said it had made him lose more than one battle. I didn’t know I could lose my temper that way, but now that I know I’ll keep it in control.”

And Stubener believed him. He was coming to the stage where he could believe anything about his young charge.

“You don’t need to get angry,” he said, “you’re so thoroughly the master of your man at any stage.”

“At any inch or second of the fight,” Pat affirmed.

“And you can put them out any time you want.”

“Sure I can. I don’t want to boast. But I just seem to possess the ability. My eyes show me the opening that my skill knows how to make, and time and distance are second nature to me. Dad called it a gift, but I thought he was blarneying me. Now that I’ve been up against these men, I guess he was right. He said I had the mind and muscle correlation.”

“At any inch or second of the fight,” Stubener repeated musingly.

Pat nodded, and Stubener, absolutely believing him, caught a vision of a golden future that should have fetched old Pat out of his grave.

"Well, don't forget, we've got to give the crowd a run for its money," he said. "We'll fix it up between us how many rounds a fight should go. Now your next bout will be with the Flying Dutchman. Suppose you let it run the full fifteen and put him out in the last round. That will give you a chance to make a showing as well."

"All right, Sam," was the answer.

"It will be a test for you," Stubener warned. "You may fail to put him out in that last round."

"Watch me." Pat paused to put weight to his promise, and picked up a volume of Longfellow. "If I don't I'll never read poetry again, and that's going some."

"You bet it is," his manager proclaimed jubilantly, "though what you see in such stuff is beyond me."

Pat sighed, but did not reply. In all his life he had found but one person who cared for poetry, and that had been the red-haired school teacher who scared him off into the woods.

Chapter V

"Where are you going?" Stubener demanded in surprise, looking at his watch.

Pat, with his hand on the door-knob, paused and turned around.

"To the Academy of Sciences," he said.

"There's a professor who's going to give a lecture there on Browning tonight, and Browning is the sort of writer you need assistance with. Sometimes I think I ought to go to night school."

"But great Scott, man!" exclaimed the horrified manager. "you're on with the Flying Dutchman to-night."

"I know it. But I won't enter the ring a moment before half past nine or quarter to ten. The lecture will be over at nine fifteen. If you want to make sure, come around and pick me up in your machine."

Stubener shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"You've got no kick coming," Pat assured him. "Dad used to tell me a man's worst time was in the hours just before a fight, and that many a fight was lost by a man's breaking down right there, with nothing to do but think and be anxious. Well, you'll never need to worry about me that way. You ought to be glad I can go off to a lecture."

And later that night, in the course of watching fifteen splendid rounds, Stubener chuckled to himself more than once at the idea of what that audience of sports would think, did it know that this magnificent young prize-fighter had come to the ring directly from a Browning lecture.

The Flying Dutchman was a young Swede who possessed an unwonted willingness to fight and who was blessed with phenomenal endurance. He never rested, was always on the offensive, and rushed and fought from gong to gong. In the out-fighting his arms whirled about like flails, in the infighting he was forever shouldering or half-wrestling and starting blows whenever he could get a hand free. From start to finish he was a whirlwind, hence his name. His flailing was lack of judgement in time and distance. Nevertheless he had won many fights by virtue of landing one in each dozen or so of the unending fusillades of punches he delivered. Pat, with strong upon him the caution that he must not put his opponent out, was kept busy. Nor, though he escaped vital damage, could he avoid entirely those eternal flying gloves. But it was good training, and in a mild way he enjoyed the contest.

"Could you get him now?" Stubener whispered in his ear during the minute rest at the end of the fifth round.

"Sure," was Pat's answer.

"You know he's never yet been knocked out by any one," Stubener warned a couple seconds later.

"Then I'm afraid I'll have to break my knuckles," Pat smiled. "I know the punch I've got in me, and when I land it something's got to go. If he won't, my knuckles will."

"Do you think you could get him now?" Stubener asked at the end of the thirteenth round.

"Any time, I tell you."

"Well, then. Pat, let him run to the fifteenth."

In the fourteenth round the Flying Dutchman exceeded himself. At the stroke of the gong he rushed clear across the ring to the opposite corner where Pat was leisurely getting to his feet. The house cheered, for it knew the Flying Dutchman had cut loose. Pat, catching the fun of it, whimsically decided to meet the terrific onslaught with a wholly passive defense and not to strike a blow. Nor did he strike a blow, nor feint a blow, during the three minutes of whirlwind that followed. He gave a rare exhibition of stalling, sometimes hugging his bowed face with his left arm, his abdomen with his right; at other times, changing as the point of attack changed, so that both gloves were held on either side his face, or both elbows and forearms guarded his mid-section; and all the time moving about, clumsily shouldering, or half-falling forward against his opponent and clogging his efforts; himself never striking nor threatening to strike, the while rocking with the impacts of the storming blows that beat upon his various guards the devil's own tattoo.

Those close at the ringside saw and appreciated, but the rest of the audience, fooled, arose to its feet and roared its applause in the mistaken notion that Pat, helpless, was receiving a terrible beating. With the end of the round, the audience, dumbfounded, sank back into its seats as Pat walked steadily to his corner. It was not understandable. He should have been beaten to a pulp, and yet nothing happened to him.

"Now are you going to get him?" Stubener queried anxiously.

"Inside ten seconds," was Pat's confident assertion. "Watch me."

There was no trick about it. When the gong struck and Pat bounded to his feet, he advertised it unmistakenly that for the first time in the fight he was starting after his man. Not one onlooker misunderstood. The Flying Dutchman read the advertisement, too, and for the first time in his career, as they met in the center of the ring, visibly hesitated. For the fraction of a second they faced each other in position. Then the Flying Dutchman leaped forward upon his man, and Pat, with a timed right-cross, dropped him cold as he leaped.

It was after this battle that Pat Glendon started on his upward rush to fame. The sports and the sporting writers took him up. For the first time the Flying Dutchman had been knocked out. His conqueror had proved a wizard of defense. His previous victories had not been flukes. He had a kick in both his hands. Giant that he was, he would go far. The time was already past, the writers asserted, for him to waste himself on the third-raters and chopping blocks. Where were Ben Menzies, Rege Rede, Bill Tarwater, and Ernest Lawson? It was time for them to meet this young cub that had suddenly shown himself a fighter of quality. Where was his manager anyway, that he was not issuing the challenges?

And then fame came in a day; for Stubener divulged the secret that his man was none other than the son of Pat Glendon, Old Pat, the old-time ring hero. “Young” Pat Glendon, he was promptly christened, and sports and writers flocked about him to admire him, and back him, and write him up.

Beginning with Ben Menzies and finishing with Bill Tarwater, he challenged, fought, and knocked out the four second-raters. To do this, he was compelled to travel, the battles taking place in Goldfield, Denver, Texas, and New York. To accomplish it required months, for the bigger fights were not easily arranged, and the men themselves demanded more time for training.

The second year saw him running to cover and disposing of the half-dozen big fighters that clustered just beneath the top of the heavyweight ladder. On this top, firmly planted, stood “Big” Jim Hanford, the undefeated world champion. Here, on the top rungs, progress was slower, though Stubener was indefatigable in issuing challenges and in promoting sporting opinion to force the man to fight. Will King was disposed of in England, and Glendon pursued Tom Harrison half way around the world to defeat him on Boxing Day in Australia.

But the purses grew larger and larger. In place of a hundred dollars, such as his first battles had earned him, he was now receiving from twenty to thirty thousand dollars a fight, as well as equally large sums from the moving picture men. Stubener took his manager's percentage of all this, according to the terms of the contract old Pat had drawn up, and both he and Glendon, despite their heavy expenses, were waxing rich. This was due, more than anything else, to the clean lives they lived. They were not wasters.

Stubener was attracted to real estate, and his holdings in San Francisco, consisting of building flats and apartment houses, were bigger than Glendon ever dreamed. There was a secret syndicate of bettors, however, which could have made an accurate guess at the size of Stubener's holdings, while heavy bonus after heavy bonus, of which Glendon never heard, was paid over to his manager by the moving picture men.

Stubener's most serious task was in maintaining the innocence of his young gladiator. Nor did he find it difficult. Glendon, who had nothing to do with the business end, was little interested. Besides, wherever his travels took him, he spent his spare time in hunting and fishing. He rarely mingled with those of the sporting world, was notoriously shy and secluded, and preferred art galleries and books of verse to sporting gossip. Also, his trainers and sparring partners were rigorously instructed by the manager to keep their tongues away from the slightest hints of ring rottenness. In every way Stubener intervened between Glendon and the world. He was never even interviewed save in Stubener's presence.

Only once was Glendon approached. It was just prior to his battle with Henderson, and an offer of a hundred thousand was made to him to throw the fight. It was made hurriedly, in swift whispers, in a hotel corridor, and it was fortunate for the man that Pat controlled his temper and shouldered past him without reply. He brought the tale of it to Stubener, who said:

"It's only con, Pat. They were trying to josh you." He noted the blue eyes blaze. "And maybe worse than that. If they could have got you to fall for it, there might have been a big sensation in the papers that would have finished you. But I doubt it. Such things don't happen any more. It's a myth, that's what it is, that has come down from the middle history of the ring. There has been rottenness in the past, but no fighter or manager of reputation would dare anything of the sort to-day. Why, Pat, the men in the game are as clean and straight as those in professional baseball, than which there is nothing cleaner or straighter."

And all the while he talked, Stubener knew in his heart that the forthcoming fight with Henderson was not to be shorter than twelve rounds — this for the moving pictures — and not longer than the fourteenth round. And he knew, furthermore, so big were the stakes involved, that Henderson himself was pledged not to last beyond the fourteenth.

And Glendon, never approached again, dismissed the matter from his mind and went out to spend the afternoon in taking color photographs. The camera had become his latest hobby. Loving pictures, yet unable to paint, he had compromised by taking up photography. In his hand baggage was one grip packed with books on the subject, and he spent long hours in the dark room, realizing for himself the various processes. Never had there been a great fighter who was as aloof from the fighting world as he. Because he had little to say with those he encountered, he was called sullen and unsocial, and out of this a newspaper reputation took form that was not an exaggeration so much as it was an entire misconception. Boiled down, his character in print was that of an ox-muscled and dumbly stupid brute, and one callow sporting writer dubbed him the "abysmal brute." The name stuck. The rest of the fraternity hailed it with delight, and thereafter Glendon's name never appeared in print unconnected with it. Often, in a headline or under a photograph, "The Abysmal Brute," capitalized and without quotation marks, appeared alone. All the world knew who was this brute. This made him draw into himself closer than ever, while it developed a bitter prejudice against newspaper folk.

Regarding fighting itself, his earlier mild interest grew stronger. The men he now fought were anything but dubs, and victory did not come so easily. They were picked men, experienced ring generals, and each battle was a problem. There were occasions when he found it impossible to put them out in any designated later round of a fight. Thus, with Sulzberger, the gigantic German, try as he would in the eighteenth round, he failed to get him, in the nineteenth it was the same story, and not till the twentieth did he manage to break through the baffling guard and drop him. Glendon's increasing enjoyment of the game was accompanied by severer and prolonged training. Never dissipating, spending much of his time on hunting trips in the hills, he was practically always in the pink of condition, and, unlike his father, no unfortunate accidents marred his career. He never broke a bone, nor injured so much as a knuckle. One thing that Stubener noted with secret glee was that his young fighter no longer talked of going permanently back to his mountains when he had won the championship away from Jim Hanford.

Chapter VI

The consummation of his career was rapidly approaching. The great champion had even publicly intimated his readiness to take on Glendon as soon as the latter had disposed of the three or four aspirants for the championship who intervened. In six months Pat managed to put away Kid McGrath and Philadelphia Jack McBride, and there remained only Nat Powers and Tom Cannam. And all would have been well had not a certain society girl gone adventuring into journalism, and had not Stubener agreed to an interview with the woman reporter of the San Francisco "Courier-Journal."

Her work was always published over the name of Maud Sangster, which, by the way, was her own name. The Sangsters were a notoriously wealthy family. The founder, old Jacob Sangster, had packed his blankets and worked as a farm-hand in the West. He had discovered an inexhaustible borax deposit in Nevada, and, from hauling it out by mule-teams, had built a railroad to do the freighting. Following that, he had poured the profits of borax into the purchase of hundreds and thousands of square miles of timber lands in California, Oregon, and Washington. Still later, he had combined politics with business, bought statesmen, judges, and machines, and become a captain of complicated industry. And after that he died, full of honor and pessimism, leaving his name a muddy blot for future historians to smudge, and also leaving a matter of a couple of hundreds of millions for his four sons to squabble over. The legal, industrial, and political battles that followed, vexed and amused California for a generation, and culminated in deadly hatred and unspeaking terms between the four sons. The youngest, Theodore, in middle life experienced a change of heart, sold out his stock farms and racing stables, and plunged into a fight with all the corrupt powers of his native state, including most of its millionaires, in a quixotic attempt to purge it of the infamy which had been implanted by old Jacob Sangster.

Maud Sangster was Theodore's oldest daughter. The Sangster stock uniformly bred fighters among the men and beauties among the women. Nor was Maud an exception. Also, she must have inherited some of the virus of adventure from the Sangster breed, for she had come to womanhood and done a multitude of things of which no woman in her position should have been guilty. A match in ten thousand, she remained unmarried. She had sojourned in Europe without bringing home a nobleman for spouse, and had declined a goodly portion of her own set at home. She had gone in for outdoor sports, won the tennis championship of the state, kept the society weeklies agog with her unconventionalities, walked from San Mateo to Santa Cruz against time on a wager, and once caused a sensation by playing polo in a men's team at a private Burlingame practice game. Incidentally, she had gone in for art, and maintained a studio in San Francisco's Latin Quarter.

All this had been of little moment until her father's reform attack became acute. Passionately independent, never yet having met the man to whom she could gladly submit, and bored by those who had aspired, she resented her father's interference with her way of life and put the climax on all her social misdeeds by leaving home and going to work on the "Courier-Journal." Beginning at twenty dollars a week, her salary had swiftly risen to fifty. Her work was principally musical, dramatic, and art criticism, though she was not above mere journalistic stunts if they promised to be suffciently interesting. Thus she scooped the big interview with Morgan at a time when he was being futilely trailed by a dozen New York star journalists, went down to the bottom of the Golden Gate in a diver's suit, and flew with Rood, the bird man, when he broke all records of continuous flight by reaching as far as Riverside.

Now it must not be imagined that Maud Sangster was a hard-bitten Amazon. On the contrary, she was gray-eyed, slender young woman, of three or four and twenty, of medium stature, and possessing uncommonly small hands and feet for an outdoor woman or any other kind of women, she knew how to be daintly feminine.

It was on her own suggestion that she received the editor's commission to interview Pat Glendon. With the exception of having caught a glimpse, once, of Bob Fitzsimmons in evening dress at the Palace Grill, she had never seen a prize-fighter in her life. Nor was she curious to see one — at least she had not been curious until Young Pat Glendon came to San Francisco to train for his fight with Nat Powers. Then his newspaper reputation had aroused her. The Abysmal Brute! — it certainly must be worth seeing. From what she read of him she gleaned that he was a man-monster, profoundly stupid and with the sullenness and ferocity of a jungle beast. True, his published photographs did not show all that, but they did show the hugeness of brawn that might be expected to go with it. And so, accompanied by a staff photographer, she went out to the training quarters at the Cliff House at the hour appointed by Stubener.

That real estate owner was having trouble. Pat was rebellious. He sat, one big leg dangling over the side of the arm chair and Shakespeare's Sonnets face downward on his knee, orating against the new woman.

"What do they want to come butting into the game for?" he demanded. "It's not their place. What do they know about it anyway? The men are bad enough as it is. I'm not a holy show. This woman's coming here to make me one. I never have stood for women around the training quarters, and I don't care if she is a reporter."

"But she's not an ordinary reporter," Stubener interposed. "You've heard of the Sangsters? — the millionaires?"

Pat nodded.

"Well, she's one of them. She's high society and all that stuff. She could be running with the Blingum crowd now if she wanted to instead of working for wages. Her old man's worth fifty millions if he's worth a cent."

"Then what's she working on a paper for? — keeping some poor devil out of a job."

"She and the old man fell out, had a tiff or something, about the time he started to clean up San Francisco. She quit. That's all — left home and got a job. And let me tell you one thing, Pat: she can everlastingly sling English. There isn't a pen-pusher on the Coast can touch her when she gets going."

Pat began to show interest, and Stubener hurried on.

"She writes poetry, too — the regular la-de-dah stuff, just like you. Only I guess hers is better, because she published a whole book of it once. And she writes up the shows. She interviews every big actor that hits this burg."

"I've seen her name in the papers," Pat commented.

"Sure you have. And you're honored, Pat, by her coming to interview you. It won't bother you any. I'll stick right by and give her most of the dope myself. You know I've always done that."

Pat looked his gratitude.

"And another thing, Pat: don't forget you've got to put up with this interviewing. It's part of your business. It's big advertising, and it comes free. We can't buy it. It interests people, draws the crowds, and it's crowds that pile up the gate receipts." He stopped and listened, then looked at his watch. "I think that's her now. I'll go and get her and bring her in. I'll tip it off to her to cut it short, you know, and it won't take long." He turned in the doorway. "And be decent, Pat. Don't shut up like a clam. Talk a bit to her when she asks you questions."

Pat put the Sonnets on the table, took up a newspaper, and was apparently deep in its contents when the two entered the room and he stood up. The meeting was a mutual shock. When blue eyes met gray, it was almost as if the man and the woman shouted triumphantly to each other, as if each had found something sought and unexpected. But this was for the instant only. Each had anticipated in the other something so totally different that the next moment the clear cry of recognition gave way to confusion. As is the way of women, she was the first to achieve control, and she did it without having given any outward sign that she had ever lost it. She advanced most of the distance across the floor to meet Glendon. As for him, he scarcely knew how he stumbled through the introduction. Here was a woman, a WOMAN. He had not known that such a creature could exist. The few women he had noticed had never prefigured this. He wondered what Old Pat's judgment would have been of her, if she was the sort he had recommended to hang on to with both his hands. He discovered that in some way he was holding her hand. He looked at it, curious and fascinated, marveling at its fragility.

She, on the other hand, had proceeded to obliterate the echoes of that first clear call. It had been a peculiar experience, that was all, this sudden out-rush of her toward this strange man. For was not he the abysmal brute of the prize-ring, the great, fighting, stupid, bulk of a male animal who hammered up his fellow males of the same stupid order? She smiled at the way he continued to hold her hand.

"I'll have it back, please, Mr. Glendon," she said. "I . . . I really need it, you know."

He looked at her blankly, followed her gaze to her imprisoned hand, and dropped it in a rush of awkwardness that sent the blood in a manifest blush to his face.

She noted the blush, and the thought came to her that he did not seem quite the uncouth brute she had pictured. She could not conceive of a brute blushing anything. And also, she found herself pleased with the fact that he lacked the easy glibness to murmur an apology. But the way he devoured her with his eyes was disconcerting. He stared at her as if in a trance, while his cheeks flushed even more redly.

Stubener by this time had fetched a chair for her, and Glendon automatically sank down into his.

"He's in fine shape, Miss Sangster, in fine shape," the manager was saying. "That's right, isn't it, Pat? Never felt better in your life?"

Glendon was bothered by this. His brows contracted in a troubled way, and he made no reply.

"I've wanted to meet you for a long time, Mr. Glendon," Miss Sangster said. "I never interviewed a pugilist before, so if I don't go about it expertly you'll forgive me, I am sure."

"Maybe you'd better start in by seeing him in action," was the manager's suggestion. "While he's getting into his fighting togs I can tell you a lot about him — fresh stuff, too. We'll call in Walsh, Pat, and go a couple of rounds.

We'll do nothing of the sort," Glendon growled roughly, in just the way an abysmal brute should. "Go ahead with the interview."

The business went ahead unsatisfactorily. Stubener did most of the talking and suggesting, which was sufficient to irritate Maud Sangster, while Pat volunteered nothing. She studied his fine countenance, the eyes clear blue and wide apart, the well-modeled, almost aquiline, nose, the firm, chaste lips that were sweet in a masculine way in their curl at the corners and that gave no hint of any sullenness. It was a baffling personality, she concluded, if what the papers said of him was so. In vain she sought for earmarks of the brute. And in vain she attempted to establish contacts. For one thing, she knew too little about prize-fighters and the ring, and whenever she opened up a lead it was promptly snatched away by the information-oozing Stubener.

"It must be most interesting, this life of a pugilist," she said once, adding with a sigh, " I wish I knew more about it. Tell me: why do you fight? — Oh, aside for money reasons." (This latter to forestall Stubener). "Do you enjoy fighting? Are you stirred by it, by pitting yourself against other men? I hardly know how to express what I mean, so you must be patient with me."

Pat and Stubener began speaking together, but for once Pat bore his manager down.

"I didn't care for it at first — "

"You see, it was to dead easy for him," Stubener interrupted.

“But later, Pat went on, “when I encountered the better fighters, the real big clever ones, where I was more — ”

“On the mettle?” she suggested.

“Yes, that’s it, more on my mettle, I found I did care for it . . . a great deal, in fact. But still, it’s not so absorbing to me as it might be. You see, while each battle is a sort of problem which I must work out with my wits and muscle, yet to me the issue is never in doubt — ”

“He’s never had a fight go to a decision,” Stubener proclaimed. “He’s won every battle by the knock-out route.”

“And it ‘s this certainty of the outcome that robs it of what I imagine must be its finest thrills,” Pat concluded.

“Maybe you’ll get some of them thrills when you go against Jim Hanford,” said the manager.

Pat smiled, but did not speak.

“Tell me some more,” she urged, “more about the way you feel when you are fighting.”

And then Pat amazed his manager, Miss Sangster, and himself, by blurting out:

“It seems to me I don’t want to talk with you on such things. It ‘s as if there are things more important for you and me to talk about. I — ”

He stopped abruptly, aware of what he was saying but unaware of why he was saying it.

“Yes,” she cried eagerly. “That ‘s it. That is what makes a good interview — the real personality, you know.”

But Pat remained tongue-tied, and Stubener wandered away on a statistical comparison of his champion’s weights, measurments, and expansions with those of Sandow, the Terrible Turk, Jeffries, and the other modern strong men. This was of little interest to Maud Sangster, and she showed that she was bored. Her eyes chanced to rest on the Sonnets. She picked the book up and glanced inquiringly at Stubener.

“That’s Pat’s,” he said, “He goes in for that kind of stuff, and color photography, and art exhibits, and such things. But for heaven’s sake don’t publish anything about it. It would ruin his reputation.”

She looked accusingly at Glendon, who immediately became awkward. To her it was delicious. A shy young man, with the body of a giant, who was one of the kings of bruisers, and who read poetry, and went to art exhibits, and experimented with color photography! Of a surety there was no abysmal brute here.

His very shyness she divined now was due to sensitiveness and not stupidity. Shakespeare's Sonnets! This was a phrase that would bear investigation. But Stubener stole the opportunity away and was back chanting his everlasting statistics.

A few minutes later, and most unwittingly, she opened up the biggest lead of all. That first sharp attraction toward him had begun to stir again after the discovery of the Sonnets. The magnificent frame of his, the handsome face, the chaste lips, the clear-looking eyes, the fine forehead, which the short crop of blond hair did not hide, the aura of physical well-being and cleanness which he seemed to emanate — all this, and more that she sensed, drew her as she had never been drawn by any man, and yet through her mind kept running the nasty rumors that she had heard only the day before at the "Courier-Journal" office.

"You were right," she said. "There is something more important to talk about. There is something in my mind I want you to reconcile for me. Do you mind?"

Pat shook his head.

"If I may be frank? — abominably frank? I've heard the men, sometimes, talking of particular fights and of the betting odds, and, while I gave no heed to it at the time, it seemed to me it was firmly agreed that there was a great deal of trickery and cheating connected with the sport. Now, when I look at you, for instance, I find it hard to understand how you can be a party to such cheating. I can understand your liking the sport for a sport, as well as for the money it brings you, but I can't understand — "

"There's nothing to understand," Stubener broke in, while Pat's lips were wreathed in a gentle, tolerant smile. "It's all fairy tales, this talk about faking, about fixed fights, and all that rot. There's nothing to it, Miss Sangster, I assure you. And now let me tell you about how I discovered Mr. Glendon. It was a letter I got from his father — :"

But Maud Sangster refused to be sidetracked, and addressed herself to Pat.

"Listen. I remember one case particularly. It was some fight that took place several months ago — I forget the contestants. One of the editors of the "Courier-Journal" told me he intended to make a good winning. He said he was on the inside and was betting on the number of rounds. He told me the fight would end in the nineteenth. This was the night before. And the next day he triumphantly called my attention to the fact that it had ended in that very round. I didn't think anything of it one way or the other. I was not interested in prize-fighting then. But I am now. At the time it seemed quite in accord with the vague conception I had about fighting. So you see, it isn't all fairy tales, is it?"

"I know that fight," Glendon said.

"It was Owen and Murgweather. And it did end in the nineteenth round, Sam. And she said she heard that round named the day before. How do you account for it, Sam?"

"How do you account for a man picking a lucky lottery ticket?" the manager evaded, while getting his wits together to answer. "That's the very point. Men who study form and condition and seconds and rules and such things often pick the number of rounds, just as men have been known to pick hundred-to-one shots in the races. And don't forget one thing: for every man that wins, there's another that loses, there's another that didn't pick right. Miss Sangster, I assure you, on my honor, that faking and fixing in the fight game is . . . is non-existent."

"What is your opinion, Mr. Glendon?" she asked.

"The same as mine," Stubener snatched the answer. "He knows what I say is true, every word of it. He's never fought anything but a straight fight in his life. Isn't that right, Pat?"

"Yes; it's right," Pat affirmed, and the peculiar thing to Maud Sangster was that she was convinced he spoke the truth.

She brushed her forehead with her hand, as if to rid herself of the bepuzzlement that clouded her brain.

"Listen," she said. "Last night the same editor told me that your forthcoming fight was arranged to the very round which it would end."

Stubener was verging on a panic, but Pat's speech saved him from replying.

"Then the editor lies," Pat's voice boomed now for the first time.

"He did not lie before, about that other fight," she challenged.

"What round did he say my fight with Nat Powers would end in?"

Before she could answer, the manager was into the thick of it.

"Oh, rats, Pat!" he cried. "Shut up. It's only the regular run of ring rumors. Let's get on with this interview."

He was ignored by Glendon, whose eyes, bent on hers, were no longer mildly blue, but harsh and imparative. She was sure now that she had stumbled on something tremendous, something that would explain all that had baffled her. At the same time she thrilled to the mastery of his voice and gaze. Here was a male man who would take hold of life and shake out of it what he wanted.

"What round did the editor say?" Glendon reiterated his demand.

"For the love of Mike, Pat, stop this foolishness," Stubener broke in.

"I wish you would give me a chance to answer," Maud Sangster said.

"I guess I'm able to talk with Miss Sangster," Glendon added. "You get out, Sam. Go off and take care of that photographer."

They looked at each other for a tense, silent moment, then the manager moved slowly to the door, opened it, and turned his head to listen.

"And now what round did he say?"

"I hope I haven't made a mistake," she said tremulously, "but I am very sure that he said the sixteenth round."

She saw surprise and anger leap into Glendon's face, and the anger and accusation in the glance he cast at his manager, and she knew the blow had driven home.

And there was reason for his anger. he knew he had talked it over with Stubener, and they had reached a decision to give the audience a good run for its money without unnecessarily prolonging the fight, and to end it in the sixteenth. And here was a woman, from a newspaper office, naming the very round.

Stubener, in the doorway, looked limp and pale, and it was evident he was holding together by an effort.

"I'll see you later," Pat told him. "Shut the door behind you."

The door closed, and the two were left alone. Glendon did not speak. The expression on his face was frankly one of trouble and perplexity.

"Well?" she asked.

He got up and towered above her, then sat down again, moistening his lips with his tongue.

"I'll tell you one thing," he finally said. "The fight won't end in the sixteenth round."

She did not speak, but her unconvinced and quizzical smile hurt him.

"You wait and see, Miss Sangster, and you'll see the editor man is mistaken."

"You mean the program is to be changed?" she queried audaciously.

He quivered to the cut of her words.

"I am not accustomed to lying," he said stiffly, "even to women."

"Neither have you to me, nor have you denied the program is to be changed. Perhaps, Mr. Glendon, I am stupid, but I fail to see the difference in what number the final round occurs so long as it is predetermined and known."

"I'll tell you that round, and not another soul shall know."

She shrugged her shoulders and smiled.

"It sounds to me very much like a racing tip. They are always given that way, you know. Furthermore, I am not quite stupid, and I know there is something wrong here. Why were you made angry by my naming the round? Why were you angry with your manager? Why did you send him from the room?"

For reply, Glendon walked over to the window, as if to look out, where he changed his mind and partly turned, and she knew, without seeing, that he was studying her face. He came back and sat down.

"You've said I haven't lied to you, Miss Sangster, and you were right. I haven't." He paused, groping painfully for a correct statement of the situation. "Now do you think you can believe what I am going to tell you? Will you take the word of a . . . prize-fighter?"

She nodded gravely, looking him straight in the eyes and certain that what he was about to tell was the truth.

"I've always fought straight and square. I've never touched a piece of dirty money in my life, nor attempted a dirty trick. Now I can go on from that. You've shaken me up pretty badly by what you told me. I don't know what to make of it. I can't pass a snap judgment on it. I don't know. But it looks bad. That's what troubles me. For see you, Stubener and I have talked this fight over, and it was understood between us that I would end the fight in the sixteenth round. Now you bring the same word. How did that editor know? Not from me. Stubener must have let it out . . . unless . . ." He stopped to debate the problem. "Unless the editor is a lucky guesser. I can't make up my mind about it. I'll have to keep my eyes open and wait and learn. Every word I've given you is straight, and there's my hand on it."

Again he towered out of his chair and over to her. Her small hand was gripped in his big one as she arose to meet him, and after a fair, straight look into the eyes between them, both glanced unconsciously at the clasped hands. She felt that she had never been more aware that she was a woman. The sex emphasis of those two hands — the soft and fragile feminine and the heavy, muscular masculine — was startling. Glendon was the first to speak.

"You could be hurt so easily," he said; and at the same time she felt the firmness of his grip almost caressingly relax.

She remembered the old Prussian king's love for giants, and laughed at the incongruity of the thought-association as she withdrew her hand.

"I am glad you came here to-day," he said, then hurried on awkwardly to make an explanation which the warm light of admiration in his eyes belied. "I mean because maybe you have opened my eyes to the crooked dealing that has been going on."

"You have surprised me," she urged. "It seemed to me that it is so generally understood that prize-fighting is full of crookedness, that I cannot understand how you, one of its chief exponents, could be ignorant of it. I thought as a matter of course that you would know all about it, and now you have convinced me that you never dreamed of it. You must be different from other fighters."

He nodded his head.

"That explains it, I guess. And that's what comes of keeping away from it — from the other fighters, and promoters, and sports. It was easy to pull the wool over my eyes. Yet it remains to be seen whether it has really been pulled over or not. You see, I am going to find out for myself."

"And change it?" she queried, rather breathlessly, convinced somehow that he could do anything he set out to accomplish.

"No; quit it," was his answer. "If it isn't straight I won't have anything more to do with it. And one thing is certain: this coming fight with Nat Powers won't end in the sixteenth round. If there is any truth in that editor's tip, they'll all be fooled. Instead of putting him out in the sixteenth, I'll let the fight run on into the twenties. You wait and see."

"And I'm not to tell the editor?"

She was on her feet now, preparing to go.

"Certainly not. If he is only guessing, let him take his chances. And if there's anything rotten about it he deserves to lose all he bets. This is to be a little secret between you and me. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll name the round to you. I won't run it into the twenties. I'll stop Nat Powers in the eighteenth."

“And I’ll not whisper it,” she assured him.

“I’d like to ask you a favor,” he said tentatively. “Maybe it’s a big favor.”

She showed her acquiescence in her face, as if it were already granted, and he went on:

“Of course, I know you won’t use this faking in the interview. But I want more than that. I don’t want you to publish anything at all.

She gave him a quick look with her searching gray eyes, then surprised herself by her answer.

“Certainly,” she said. “It will not be published. I won’t write a line of it.”

“I knew it,” he said simply.

For the moment she was disappointed by the lack of thanks, and the next moment she was glad that he had not thanked her. She sensed the different foundation he was building under this meeting of an hour with her, and she became daringly explorative.

“How did you know it?” she asked.

“I don’t know.” He shook his head. “I can’t explain it. I knew it as a matter of course. Somehow it seems to me I know a lot about you and me.”

“But why not publish the interview? As your manager says, it is good advertising.”

“I know it,” he answered slowly. “But I don’t want to know you that way. I think it would hurt if you should publish it. I don’t want to think that I knew you professionally. I’d like to remember our talk here as a talk between a man and a woman.”

As he spoke, in his eyes was all the expression with which a man looks at a woman. She felt the force and beat of him, and she felt strangely tongue-tied and awkward before this man who had been reputed tongue-tied and awkward. He could certainly talk straighter to the point and more convincingly than most men, and what struck her most forcibly was her own inborn certainty that it was mere naïve and simple frankness on his part and not a practised artfulness.

He saw her in to her machine, and gave her another thrill when he said good-by. Once again their hands were clasped as he said:

“Some day I’ll see you again. I want to see you again. Somehow I have a feeling that the last word has not been said between us.”

And as the machine rolled away she was aware of a similar feeling. She had not seen the last of this very disquieting Pat Glendon, king of the bruisers and abysmal brute.

Back in the training quarters, Glendon encountered his perturbed manager.

“What did you fire me out for?” Stubener demanded. “We’re finished. A hell of a mess you’ve made. You’ve never stood for meeting a reporter alone before, and now you’ll see when that interview comes out.”

Glendon, who had been regarding him with cool amusement, made as if to turn and pass on, and then changed his mind.

“It won’t come out,” he said.

Stubener looked up sharply.

“I asked her not to,” Glendon explained.

Then Stubener exploded.

“As if she’d kill a juicy thing like that.”

Glendon become very cold and his voice was harsh and grating.

“It won’t be published. She told me so. And to doubt it is to call her a liar.”

The Irish flame was in his eyes, and by that, and by the unconscious clenching of his passion-wrought hands, Stubener, who knew the strength of them, and of the man he faced, no longer dared to doubt.

Chapter VII

It did not take Stubener long to find out that Glendon intended extending the distance of the fight, though try as he would he could get no hint of the number of the round. He wasted no time, however, and privily clinched certain arrangements with Nat Powers and Nat Powers' manager. Powers had a faithful following of bettors, and the betting syndicate was not to be denied its harvest.

On the night of the fight, Maud Sangster was guilty of a more daring unconventionality than any she had yet committed, though no whisper of it leaked out to shock society. Under the protection of the editor, she occupied a ring-side seat. Her hair and most of her face were hidden under a slouch hat, while she wore a man's long overcoat that fell to her heels. Entering in the thick of the crowd, she was not noticed; nor did the newspaper men, in the press seats against the ring directly in front of her, recognize her.

As was the growing custom, there were no preliminary bouts, and she had barely gained her seat when roars of applause announced the arrival of Nat Powers. He came down the aisle in the midst of his seconds, and she was almost frightened by the formidable bulk of him. Yet he leaped the ropes as lightly as a man half his weight, and grinned acknowledgement to the tumultuous greeting that arose from all the house. He was not pretty. Two cauliflower ears attested his profession and its attendant brutality, while his broken nose had been so often spread over his face as to defy the surgeon's art to reconstruct it.

Another uproar heralded the arrival of Glendon, and she watched him eagerly as he went through the ropes to his corner. But it was not until the tedious time of announcements, introductions, and challenges was over, that the two men threw off their wraps and faced each other in ring costume. Concentrated upon them from overhead was the white glare of many electric lights — this for the benefit of the moving picture cameras; and she felt, as she looked at the two sharply contrasted men, that it was in Glendon that she saw the thoroughbred and in Powers the abysmal brute. Both looked their parts — Glendon, clean cut in face and form, softly and massively beautiful, Powers almost asymmetrically rugged and heavily matted with hair.

As they made their preliminary pose for the cameras, confronting each other in fighting attitudes, it chanced that Glendon's gaze dropped down through the ropes and rested on her face. Though he gave no sign, she knew, with a swift leap of the heart, that he had recognized her. The next moment the gong sounded, the announcer cried "Let her go!" and the battle was on.

It was a good fight. There was no blood, no marring, and both were clever. Half of the first round was spent in feeling each other out, but Maud Sangster found the play and feint and tap of the gloves sufficiently exciting. During some of the fiercer rallies in later stages of the fight, the editor was compelled to touch her arm to remind her who she was and where she was.

Powers fought easily and cleanly, as became the hero of half a hundred ring battles, and an admiring claque applauded his every cleverness. Yet he did not unduly exert himself save in occasional strenous rallies that brought the audience yelling to its feet in the mistaken notion that he was getting his man.

It was at such a moment, when her unpractised eye could not inform her that Glendon was escaping serious damage, that the editor leaned to her and said:

"Young Pat will win all right. He's a comer, and they can't stop him. But he'll win in the sixteenth and not before."

"Or after?" she asked.

She almost laughed at the certitude of her companion's negative. She knew better.

Powers was noted for hunting his man from moment to moment and round to round, and Glendon was content to accede to this program. His defense was admirable, and he threw in just enough of offense to whet the edge of the audience's interest. Though he knew he was scheduled to lose, Powers had had too long a ring experience to hesitate from knocking his man out if the opportunity offered. He had had the double cross worked too often on him to be chary in working it on others. If he got his chance he was prepared to knock his man out and let the syndicate go hang. Thanks to clever press publicity, the idea was prevalent that at last Young Glendon had met his master. In his heart, Powers, however, knew that it was himself who had encountered the better man. More than once, in the faster in-fighting, he received the weight of punches that he knew had been deliberately made no heavier. On Glendon's part, there were times and times when a slip or error of judgement could have exposed him to one of his antagonist's sledge-hammer blows and lost the fight. Yet his was that almost miraculous power of accurate timing and distancing, and confidence was not shaken by several close shaves he experienced. He had never lost a fight, never been knocked down, and he had always been thoroughly the master of the man he faced, that such a possibility was unthinkable.

At the end of the fifteenth round, both men were in good condition, though Powers was breathing a trifle heavily and there were men in the ringside seats offering odds that he would "blow up."

It was just before the gong for the sixteenth round struck that Stubener, leaning over Glendon from behind in his corner, whispered:

"Are you going to get him now?"

Glendon, with a back toss of his head, shook it and laughed mockingly up into his manager's anxious face.

With the stroke of the gong for the sixteenth round, Glendon was surprised to see Powers cut loose. From the first second it was a tornado of fighting, and Glendon was hard put to escape serious damage. He blocked, clinched, ducked, sidestepped, was rushed backward against the ropes and was met by fresh rushes when he surged out to center. Several times Powers left inviting openings, but Glendon refused to loose the lighting-bolt of a blow that would drop his man. He was reserving that blow for two rounds later. Not in the whole fight had he ever exerted his full strength, nor struck with the force that was in him.

For two minutes, without the slightest let-up, Powers went at him hammer and tongs. In another minute the round would be over and the betting snydicate hard hit. But that minute was not to be. They had just come together in the center of the ring. It was as ordinary a clinch as any in the fight, save that Powers was struggling and roughing it every instant. Glendon whipped his left over in a crisp but easy jolt to the side of the face. It was like any of a score of similar jolts he had already delivered in the course of the fight. To his amazement he felt Powers go limp in his arms and begin sinking to the floor on sagging, spraddling legs that refused to bear his weight. He struck the floor with a thump, rolled half over on his side, and lay with closed eyes and motionless. The referee, bending above him, was shouting the count.

At the cry of "Nine!" Powers quivered as if making a vain effort to rise.

"Ten! — and out!" cried the referee.

He caught Glendon's hand and raised it aloft to the roaring audience in token that he was the winner.

For the first time in the ring, Glendon was dazed. It had not been a knockout blow. He could stake his life on that. It had not been to the jaw but to the side of the face, and he knew it had gone there and nowhere else. Yet the man was out, had been counted out, and he had faked it beautifully. That final thump on the floor had been a convincing masterpiece. To the audience it was indubitably a knockout, and the moving picture machines would perpetuate the lie. The editor had called the turn after all, and a crooked turn it was.

Glendon shot a swift glance through the ropes to the face of Maud Sangster. She was looking straight at him, but her eyes were bleak and hard, and there was neither recognition nor expression in them. Even as he looked, she turned away unconcernedly and said something to the man beside her.

Power's seconds were carrying him to his corner, a seeming limp wreck of a man. Glendon's seconds were advancing upon him to congratulate him and to remove his gloves. But Stubener was ahead of them. His face was beaming as he caught Glendon's right glove in both his hands and cried:

"Good boy, Pat. I knew you'd do it."

Glendon pulled his glove away. And for the first time in the years they had been together, his manager heard him swear.

"You go to hell," he said, and turned to hold out his hands for his seconds to pull off the gloves.

Chapter VIII

That night, after receiving the editor's final dictum that there was not a square fighter in the game, Maud Sangster cried quietly for a moment on the edge of her bed, grew angry, and went to sleep hugely disgusted with herself, prize-fighters, and the world in general.

The next afternoon she began work on an interview with Henry Addison that was destined never to be finished. It was in the private room that was accorded her at the "Courier-Journal" office that the thing happened. She had paused in her writing to glance at a headline in the afternoon paper announcing that Glendon was matched with Tom Cannam, when one of the door-boys brought in a card. It was Glendon's.

"Tell him I can't be seen," she told the boy.

In a minute he was back.

"He says he's coming in anyway, but he'd rather have permission."

"Did you tell him I was busy?" she asked.

"Yes'm, but he said he was coming just the same."

She made no answer, and the boy, his eyes shining with admiration for the importunate visitor, rattled on.

"I know'm. He's a awful big guy. If he started roughhousing he could clean the whole office out. He's young Glendon, who won the fight last night."

"Very well, then. Bring him in. We don't want the office cleaned out, you know."

No greetings were exchanged when Glendon entered. She was as cold and inhospitable as a gray day, and neither invited him to a chair nor recognized him with her eyes, sitting half turned away from him at her desk and waiting for him to state his business. He gave no sign of how this cavalier treatment affected him, but plunged directly into his subject.

"I want to talk to you," he said shortly. "That fight. It did not end in that round."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I knew it would."

"You didn't," he retorted. "You didn't. I didn't."

She turned and looked at him with quiet affection of boredom.

“What is the use?” she asked. “Prize-fighting is prize-fighting, and we all know what it means. The fight did end in the round I told you it would.”

“It did,” he agreed. “But you didn’t know it would. In all the world you and I were at least two that knew Powers wouldn’t be knocked out in the sixteenth.”

She remained silent.

“I say you knew he wouldn’t.” He spoke peremptorily, and, when she still declined to speak, stepped nearer to her. “Answer me,” he commanded.

She nodded her head.

“But he was,” she insisted.

“He wasn’t. He wasn’t knocked out at all. Do you get that? I am going to tell you about it, and you are going to listen. I didn’t lie to you. Do you get that? I didn’t lie to you. I was a fool, and they fooled me, and you along with me. You thought you saw him knocked out. Yet the blow I struck was not heavy enough. It didn’t hit him in the right place either. He made believe it did. He faked that knockout.”

He paused and looked at her expectantly. And somehow, with a leap and thrill, she knew that she believed him, and she felt pervaded by a warm happiness at the reinstatement of this man who meant nothing to her and whom she had seen but twice in her life.

“Well?” he demanded, and she thrilled anew at the compellingness of him.

She stood up, and her hand went out to his.

“I believe you,” she said. “And I am glad, most glad.”

It was a longer grip than she had anticipated. He looked at her with eyes that burned and to which her own unconsciously answered back. Never was there such a man, was her thought. Her eyes dropped first, and his followed, so that, as before, both gazed at the clasped hands. He made a movement of his whole body toward her, impulsive and involuntary, as if to gather her to him, then checked himself abruptly, with an unmistakable effort. She saw it, and felt the pull of his hand as it started to draw her to him. And to her amazement she felt the desire to yield, the desire almost overwhelmingly to be drawn into the strong circle of those arms. And had he compelled, she knew that she would not have refrained. She was almost dizzy, when he checked himself and with a closing of his fingers that half crushed hers, dropped her hand, almost flung it from him.

“God!” he breathed. “You were made for me.”

He turned partly away from her, sweeping his hand to his forehead. She knew she would hate him forever if he dared one stammered word of apology or explanation. But he seemed to have the way always of doing the right thing where she was concerned. She sank into her chair, and he into another, first drawing it around so as to face her across the corner of the desk.

"I spent last night in a Turkish bath," he said. "I sent for an old broken-down bruiser. He was a friend of my father an the old days. I knew there couldn't be a thing about the ring he didn't know, and I made him talk. The funny thing was that it was all I could do to convince him that I didn't know the things I asked him about. He called me the babe in the woods. I guess he was right. I was raised in the woods, and woods is about all I know.

"Well, I received an education from that old man last night. The ring is rottener than you told me. It seems everybody connected with it is crooked. The very supervisors that grant the fight permits graft off of the promoters; and the promoters, managers, and fighters graft off each other and off the public. It's down to a system, in one way, and on the other hand they 're always — do you know what the double cross is?" (She nodded.) "Well, they don't seem to miss a chance to give each other the double cross.

"The stuff that old man told me took my breath away. And here I've been in the thick of it for several years and knew nothing of it. I was a real babe in the woods. And yet I can see how I've been fooled. I was so made that nobody could stop me. I was bound to win, and, thanks to Stubener, everything crooked was kept away from me. This morning I cornered Spider Walsh and made him talk. He was my first trainer, you know, and he followed Stubener's instructions. They kept me in ignorance. Besides, I didn't herd with the sporting crowd. I spent my time hunting and fishing and monkeying with cameras and such things. Do you know what Walsh and Stubener called me between themselves? — the Virgin. I only learned it this morning from Walsh, and it was like pulling teeth. And they were right. I was a little innocent lamb.

"And Stubener was using me for crookedness, too, only I didn't know it. I can look back now and see how it was worked. But you see, I wasn't interested enough in the game to be suspicious. I was born with a good body and a cool head, I was raised in the open, and I was taught by my father, who knew more about fighting than any man living or dead. It was too easy. The ring didn't absorb me. There was never any doubt of the outcome. But I'm done with it now."

She pointed to the headline announcing his match with Tom Cannam.

"That's Stubener's work," he explained. "It was programmed months ago. But I don't care. I'm heading for the mountains. I've quit."

She glanced at the unfinished interview on the desk and sighed.

"How lordly men are," she said. "Masters of destiny. They do as they please — "

"From what I've heard," he interrupted, "you've done pretty much as you please. It's one of those things I like about you. And what struck me hard from the first was the way you and I understand each other."

He broke off and looked at her with burning eyes.

"Well, the ring did one thing for me," he went on. "It made me acquainted with you. And when you find the one woman, there's just one thing to do. Take her in your two hands and don't let go. Come on, let us start for the mountains."

It had come with the suddeness of a thunder-clap, and yet she felt that she had been expecting it. Her heart was beating up and almost choking her in a strangely delicious way. Here at last was the primitive and the simple with a vengeance. Then, too, it seemed a dream. Such things did not take place in modern nespaper offices. Love could not be made in such fashion; it only occurred on the stage and in novels.

He had risen, and was holding out both hands to her.

"I don't dare," she said in a whisper, half to herself. "I don't dare."

And thereat she was stung by the quick contempt that flashed in his eyes but that swiftly changed to open incredulity.

"You'd dare anything you wanted," he was saying. "I know that. It's not a case of dare, but of want. Do you want?"

She had arisen, and was now swaying as if in a dream. It flashed into her mind to wonder if it were hypnotism. She wanted to glance about her at the familiar objects of the room in order to identify herself with reality, but she could not take her eys from his. Nor did she speak.

He had stepped beside her. His hand was on her arm, and she leaned toward him involuntarily. It was all part of the dream. and it was no longer hers to question anything. It was the great dare. He was right. She could dare what she wanted, and she did want. He was helping her into her jacket. She was thrusting the hat-pins through her hair. And even as she realized it, she found herself walking beside him through the opened door. The “Flight of the Duchess” and “The Statue and the Bust,” darted through her mind. Then she remembered “Waring.”

“‘What’s become of Waring?’“ she murmured.

“‘Land travel or sea-faring?’“ he murmured back.

And to her this kindred sufficient note was a vindication of her madness.

At the entrance of the building he raised his hand to call a taxi, but was stopped by her touch on his arm.

“Where are we going?” she breathed.

“To the Ferry. We’ve just time to catch that Sacramento train.”

“But I can’t go this way,” she protested. “I . . . I haven’t even a change of handkerchiefs.”

He held up his hand again before replying.

“You can shop in Sacramento. We’ll get married there and catch the night overland north. I’ll arrange everything by telegraph from the train.”

As the cab drew to the curb, she looked quickly about her at the familiar street and the familiar throng, then, with almost a flurry of alarm, into Glendon’s face.

“I don’t know a thing about you,” she said.

“We know everything about each other,” was his answer.

She felt the support and urge of his arms, and lifted her foot to the step. The next moment the door had closed, he was beside her, and the cab was heading down Market Street. He passed his arm around her, drew her close, and kissed her. When next she glimpsed his face she was certain that it was dyed with a faint blush.

“I . . . I’ve heard there was an art in kissing,” he stammered. “I don’t know anything about it myself, but I’ll learn. You see, you’re the first woman I ever kissed.”

Chapter IX

Where a jagged peak of rock thrust above the vast virgin forest, reclined a man and a woman. Beneath them, on the edge of the trees, were tethered two horses. Behind each saddle were a pair of small saddle-bags. The trees were monotonously huge. Towering hundreds of feet into the air, they ran from eight to ten and twelve feet in diameter. Many were much larger. All morning they had toiled up the divide through this unbroken forest, and this peak of rock had been the first spot where they could get out of the forest in order to see the forest.

Beneath them and away, far as they could see, lay range upon range of haze empurpled mountains. There was no end to these ranges. They rose only behind another to the dim, distant skyline, where they faded away with a vague promise of unending extension beyond. There were no clearings in the forest; north, south, east, and west, untouched, unbroken, it covered the land with its mighty growth.

They lay, feasting their eyes on the sight, her hand clasped in one of his; for this was their honeymoon, and these were the redwoods of Mendocino. Across from Shasta they had come, with horses and saddle-bags, and down through the wilds of the coast counties, and they had no plan except to continue until some other plan entered their heads. They were roughly dressed, she in travel-stained khaki, he in overalls and woolen shirt. The latter was open at the sunburned neck, and in his hugeness he seemed a fit dweller among the forest giants, while for her, as a dweller with him, there were no signs of aught else but happiness.

“Well, Big Man,” she said, propping herself up on an elbow to gaze at him, “it is more wonderful than you promised. And we are going through it together.”

“And there ‘s a lot of the rest of the world we’ll go through together,” he answered, shifting his position so as to get her hand in both of his.

“But not till we’ve finished with this,” she urged. “I seem never to grow tired of the big woods . . . and of you.”

He slid effortlessly into a sitting posture and gathered her into his arms.

“Oh, you lover,” she whispered. “And I had given up hope of finding such a one.”

"And I never hoped at all. I must just have known all the time that I was going to find you. Glad?"

Her answer was a soft pressure where her hand rested on his neck, and for long minutes they looked out over the great woods and dreamed.

"You remember I told you how I ran away from the red-haired school teacher? That was the first time I saw this country. I was on foot, but forty or fifty miles a day was play for me. I was a regular Indian. I wasn't thinking about you then. Game was pretty scarce in the redwoods, but there was plenty of fine trout. That was when I camped on these rocks. I didn't dream that some day I'd be back with you, YOU."

"And be champion of the ring, too," he suggested.

"No; I didn't think about that at all. Dad had always told me I was going to be, and I took it for granted. You see, he was very wise. He was a great man."

"But he didn't see you leaving the ring."

"I don't know. He was so careful in hiding its crookedness from me, that I think he feared it. I've told you about the contract with Stubener. Dad put in that clause about crookedness. The first crooked thing my manager did was to break the contract."

"And yet you are going to fight this Tom Cannam. Is it worth while?"

He looked at her quickly.

"Don't you want me to?"

"Dear lover, I want you to do whatever you want."

So she said, and to herself, her words still ringing in her ears, she marveled that she, not least among the stubbonly independent of the breed of Sangster, should utter them. Yet she knew they were true, and she was glad.

"It will be fun," he said.

"But I don't understand all the gleeful details."

"I haven't worked them out yet. You might help me. In the first place I'm going to double-cross Stubener and the betting syndicate. It will be part of the joke. I am going to put Cannam out in the first round. For the first time I shall be really angry when I fight. Poor Tom Cannam, who's as crooked as the rest, will be the chief sacrifice. You see, I intend to make a speech in the ring. It's unusual, but it will be a success, for I am going to tell the audience all the inside workings of the game. It's a good game, too, but they're running it on business principles, and that’s what spoils it. But there, I’m giving the speech to you instead of at the ring.”

“I wish I could be there to hear,” she said.

He looked at her and debated.

“I’d like to have you. But it’s sure to be a rough time. There is no telling what may happen when I start my program. But I’ll come straight to you as soon as it’s over. And it will be the last appearnce of Young Glendon in the ring, in any ring.”

“But, dear, you’ve never made a speech in your life,” she objected. “You might fail.”

He shook his head positively.

“I’m Irish,” he announced, “and what Irishman was there who couldn’t speak?” He paused to laugh merrily. “Stubener thinks I’m crazy. Says a man can’t train on matrimony. A lot he knows about matrimony, or me, or you, or anything except real estate and fixed fights. But I’ll show him that night, and poor Tom, too. I really feel sorry for Tom.”

“My dear abysmal brute is going to behave most abysmally and brutally, I fear,” she murmured.

He laughed.

“I’m going to make a noble attempt at it. Positively my last appearance, you know. And then it will be you, YOU. But if you don’t want that last appearance, say the word.”

“Of course I want it, Big Man. I want my Big Man for himself, and to be himself he must be himself. If you want this, I want it for you, and for myself, too. Suppose I said I wanted to go on the stage, or to the South Seas or the North Pole?”

He answered slowly, almost solemnly.

“Then I’d say go ahead. Because you are you and must be yourself and do whatever you want. I love you because you are you.”

“And we’re both a silly pair of lovers,” she said, when his embrace had relaxed.

“Isn’t it great!” he cried.

He stood up, measured the sun with his eye, and extended his hand out over the big woods that covered the serried, purple ranges.

“We’ve got to sleep out there somewhere. It’s thirty miles to the nearest camp.”

Chapter X

Who, of all the sports present, will ever forget the memorable night at the Golden Gate Arena, when Young Glendon put Tom Cannam to sleep and an even greater one than Tom Cannam, kept the great audience on the ragged edge of riot for an hour, caused the subsequent graft investigation of the supervisors and the indictments of the contractors and the building commisioners, and pretty generally disrupted the whole fight game. It was a complete surprise. Nor even Stubener had the slightest apprehension of what was coming. It was true that his man had been insubordinate after the Nat Powers affair, and had run off and got married; but all that was over. Young Pat had done the expected, swallowed the inevitable crookedness of the ring, and come back into it again.

The Golden Gate Arena was new. This was its first fight, and it was the biggest building of the kind San Francisco had ever erected. It seated twenty-five thousand, and every seat was occupied. Sports had traveled from all the world to be present, and they had paid fifty dollars for their ring-side seats. The cheapest seat in the house had sold for five dollars.

The old familiar roar of applause went up when Billy Morgan, the veteran announcer, climbed through the ropes and bared his gray head. As he opened his mouth to speak, a heavy crash came from a near section where several tiers of low seats had collapsed. The crowd broke into loud laughter and shouted jocular regrets and advice to the victims, none of whom had been hurt. The crash of the seats and the hilarious uproar caused the captain of police in charge to look at one of his lieutenants and lift his eyebrows in token that they would have their hands full and a lively night.

One by one, welcomed by uproarious applause, seven doughty old ring heroes climbed through the ropes to be introduced. They were all ex-heavy-weight champions of the world. Billy Morgan accompanied each presentation to the audience with an appropriate phrase. One was hailed as “Honest John” and “Old Reliable,” another was “the squarest two-fisted fighter the ring ever saw.” And others: “the hero of a hundred battles and never threw one and never lay down”; “the gamest of the old guard”; “the only one who ever came back”; “the greatest warrior of them all”; and “the hardest nut in the ring to crack.”

All this took time. A speech was insisted from each one of them, and they mumbled and muttered in reply with proud blushes and awkward shamblings. The longest speech was from “Old Reliable” and lasted nearly a minute. Then they had to be photographed. The ring filled up with celebrities, with champion wrestlers, famous conditioners, and veteran time-keepers and referees. Light-weights and middle-weights swarmed. Everybody seemed to be challenging everybody. Nat Powers was there, demanding a return match from Young Glendon, and so were all the other shining lights whom Glendon had snuffed out. Also, they all challenged Jim Hanford, who, in turn, had to make his statement, which was to the effect that he would accord the next fighter to the winner of the one that was about to take place. The audience immediately proceeded to name the winner, half of it wildly crying “Glendon,” and the other half “Powers.” In the midst of the pandemonium another tier of seats went down, and half a dozen rows were on between cheated ticket holders and the stewards who had been reaping a fat harvest. The captain despatched a message to headquarters for additional police details.

The crowd was feeling good. When Cannam and Glendon made their ring entrances the Arena resembled a national political convention. Each was cheered for a solid five minutes. The ring was now cleared. Glendon sat in his corner surrounded by his seconds. As usual, Stubener was at his back. Cannam was introduced first, and after he had scraped and ducked his head, he was compelled to respond to the cries for a speech. He stammered and halted, but managed to grind out several ideas.

“I’m proud to be here to-night,” he said, and found space to capture another thought while the applause was thundering. “I’ve fought square. I’ve fought square all my life. Nobody can deny that. And I’m going to do my best tonight.”

There were loud cries of: “That’s right, Tom!” “We know that!” “Good boy, Tom!” “You’re the boy to fetch the bacon home!”

Then came Glendon’s turn. From him, likewise, a speech was demanded, though for principals to give speeches was an unprecedented thing in the prize-ring. Billy Morgan held up his hand for silence, and in a clear, powerful voice Glendon began.

“Everybody has told you they were proud to be here to-night,” he said. “I am not.” The audience was startled, and he paused long enough to let it sink home. “I am not proud of my company. You wanted a speech. I’ll give you a real one. This is my last fight. After tonight I leave the ring for good. Why? I have already told you. I don't like my company. The prize-ring is so crooked that no man engaged in it can hide behind a corkscrew. It is rotten to the core, from the little professional clubs right up to this affair tonight."

The low rumble of astonishment that had been rising at this point burst into a roar. There were loud boos and hisses, and many began crying: "Go on with the fight!" "We want the fight!" "Why don't you fight?" Glendon, waiting, noted that the principal disturbers near the ring were promoters and managers and fighters. In vain did he strive to make himself heard. The audience was divided, half crying out, "Fight!" and the other half, "Speech! Speech!"

Ten minutes of hopeless madness prevailed. Stubener, the referee, the owner of the Arena, and the promoter of the fight, pleaded with Glendon to go on with the fight. When he refused, the referee declared that he would award the fight in forfeit to Cannam if Glendon did not fight.

"You can't do it," the latter retorted. "I'll sue you in all the courts if you try that on, and I'll not promise you that you'll survive this crowd if you cheat it out of the fight. Besides, I'm going to fight. But before I do I'm going to finish my speech."

"But it's against the rules," protested the referee.

"It's nothing of the sort. There's not a word in the rules against ring-side speeches. Every big fighter here tonight has made a speech."

"Only a few words," shouted the promoter in Glendon's ear. "But you're giving a lecture."

"There's nothing in the rules against lectures," Glendon answered. "And now you fellows get out of the ring or I'll throw you out."

The promoter, apoplectic and struggling, was dropped over the ropes by his coat-collar. He was a large man, but so easily had Glendon done it with one hand that the audience went wild with delight. The cries for a speech increased in volume. Stubener and the owner beat a wise retreat. Glendon held up his hands to be heard, whereupon those that shouted for the fight redoubled their efforts. Two or three tiers of seats crashed down, and numbers who had thus lost their places, added to the turmoil by making a concerted rush to squeeze in on the still intact seats, while those behind, blocked from sight of the ring, yelled and raved for them to sit down.

Glendon walked to the ropes and spoke to the police captain. He was compelled to bend over and shout in his ear.

“If I don’t give this speech,” he said, “this crowd will wreck the place. If they break lose you can never hold them, you know that. Now you’ve got to help. You keep the ring clear and I’ll silence the crowd.”

He went back to the center of the ring and again held up his hands.

“You want that speech?” he shouted in a tremendous voice.

Hundreds near the ring heard him and cried “Yes!”

“Then let every man who wants to hear shut up the noise-maker next to him!”

The advice was taken, so that when he repeated it, his voice penetrated farther. Again and again he shouted it, and slowly, zone by zone, the silence pressed outward from the ring, accompanied by a muffled undertone of smacks and thuds and scuffles as the obstreperous were subdued by their neighbors. Almost had all confusion been smothered, when a tier of seats near the ring went down. This was greeted with fresh roars of laughter, which of itself died away, so that a lone voice, far back, was heard distinctly as it piped: “Go on, Glendon! We’re with you!”

Glendon had the Celt’s intuitive knowledge of the psychology of the crowd. He knew that what had been a vast disorderly mob five minutes before was now tightly in hand, and for added effect he deliberately delayed. Yet the delay was just long enough and not a second too long. For thirty seconds the silence was complete, and the effect produced was one of awe. Then, just as the first faint hints of restlessness came to his ears, he began to speak:

“When I finish this speech,” he said, “I am going to fight. I promise you it will be a real fight, one of the few real fights you have ever seen. I am going to get my man in the shortest possible time. Billy Morgan, in making his final announcement, will tell you that it is to be a forty-five-round contest. Let me tell you that it will be nearer forty-five seconds.

“When I was interrupted I was telling you that the ring was rotten. It is — from top to bottom. It is run on business principles, and you all know what business principles are. Enough said. You are the suckers, every last one of you that is not making anything out of it. Why are the seats falling down to-night? Graft. Like the fight game, they were built on business principles.”

He now held the audience stronger than ever, and knew it.

“There are three men squeezed on two seats. I can see that everywhere. What does it mean? Graft. The stewards don’t get any wages. They are supposed to graft. Business principles again. You pay. Of course you pay. How are the fight permits obtained? Graft. And now let me ask you: if the men who build the seats graft, if the stewards graft, if the authorities graft, why shouldn't those higher up in the fight game graft? They do. And you pay.

"And let me tell you it is not the fault of the fighters. They don't run it; they're the business men. The fighters are only fighters. They begin honestly enough, but the managers and promoters make them give in or kick them out. There have been straight fighters. And there are now a few, but they don't earn much as a rule. I guess there have been straight managers. Mine is about the best of the boiling. But just ask him how much he's got salted down in real estate and apartment houses."

Here the uproar began to drown his voice.

"Let every man who wants to hear shut up the man alongside of him!" Glendon instructed.

Again, like the murmur of a surf, there was a rustling of smacks, and thuds, and scuffles, and the house quieted down.

"Why does every fighter work overtime insisting that he's always fought square? Why are they called Honest Johns, and Honest Bills, and Honest Blacksmiths, and all the rest? Doesn't it ever strike you that they seem to be afraid of something? When a man comes to you shouting he is honest, you get suspicious. But when a prize-fighter passes the same dope out to you, you swallow it down.

"May the best man win! How often have you heard Billy Morgan say that! Let me tell you that the best man doesn't win so often, and when he does it's usually arranged for him. Most of the grudge fights you've heard or seen were arranged, too. It's a program. The whole thing is programmed. Do you think the promoters and managers are in it for their health? They're not. They're business men.

"Tom, Dick, and Harry are three fighters. Dick is the best man. In two fights he could prove it. But what happens? Tom licks Harry. Dick licks Tom. Harry licks Dick. Nothing proved. Then come the return matches. Harry licks Tom. Tom licks Dick. Dick licks Harry. Nothing proved. Then they try again. Dick is kicking. Says he wants to get along in the game. So Dick licks Tom, and Dick licks Harry. Eight fights to prove Dick the best man, when two could have done it. All arranged. A regular program. And you pay for it, and when your seats don’t break down you get robbed of them by the stewards.

“It’s a good game, too, if it were only square. The fighters would be square if they had a chance. But the graft is too big. When a handful of men can divide up three-quarters of a million dollars on three fights — ”

A wild outburst compelled him to stop. Out of the medley of cries from all over the house, he could distinguish such as “What million dollars?” “What three fights?” “Tell us!” “Go on!” Likewise there were boos and hisses, and cries of “Muckraker! Muckraker!”

“Do you want to hear?” Glendon shouted. “Then keep order!”

Once more he compelled the impressive half minute of silence.

“What is Jim Hanford planning? What is the program his crowd and mine are framing up? They know I’ve got him. He knows I’ve got him. I can whip him in one fight. But he’s the champion of the world. If I don’t give in to the program, they’ll never give me a chance to fight him. The program calls for three fights. I am to win the first fight. It will be pulled off in Nevada if San Francisco won’t stand for it. We are to make it a good fight. To make it good, each of us will put up a side bet of twenty thousand. It will be real money, but it won’t be a real bet. Each gets his own slipped back to him. The same way with the purse. We’ll divide it evenly, though the public division will be thirty-five and sixty-five. The purse, the moving picture royalities, the advertisements, and all the rest of the drags won’t be a cent less than two hundred and fifty thousand. We’ll divide it, and go to work on the return match. Hanford will win that, and we divide again. Then comes the third fight; I win as I have every right to; and we have taken three-quarters of a million out of the pockets of the fighting public. That’s the program, but the money is dirty. And that’s why I am quitting the ring to-night — ”

It was at this moment that Jim Hanford, kicking a clinging policeman back among the seat-holders, heaved his huge frame through the ropes, bellowing:

“It’s a lie!”

He rushed like an infuriated bull at Glendon, who sprang back, and then, instead of meeting the rush, ducked cleanly away. Unable to check himself, the big man fetched up against the ropes. Flung back by the spring of them, he was turning to make another rush, when Glendon landed him. Glendon, cool, clear-seeing, distanced his man perfectly to the jaw and struck the first full-strength blow of his career. All his strength, and his reserve of strength, went into that one smashing muscular explosion.

Hanford was dead in the air — in so far as unconsciousness may resemble death. So far as he was concerned, he ceased at the moment of contact with Glendon's fist. His feet left the floor and he was in the air until he struck the topmost rope. His inert body sprawled across it, sagged at the middle, and fell through the ropes and down out of the ring upon the heads of the men in the press seats.

The audience broke loose. It had already seen more than it had paid to see, for the great Jim Hanford, the world champion, had been knocked out. It was unofficial, but it had been with a single punch. Never had there been such a night in fistiana. Glendon looked ruefully at his damaged knuckles, cast a glance through the ropes to where Hanford was groggily coming to, and held up his hands. He had clinched his right to be heard, and the audience grew still.

"When I began to fight," he said, "they called me 'One-Punch Glendon.' You saw that punch a moment ago. I always had that punch. I went after my men and got them on the jump, though I was careful not to hit with all my might. Then I was educated. My manager told me it wasn't fair to the crowd. He advised me to make long fights so that the crowd could get a run for its money. I was a fool, a mutt. I was a green lad from the mountains. So help me God, I swallowed it as truth. My manager used to talk over with me what round I would put my man out in. Then he tipped it off to the betting syndicate, and the betting syndicate went to it. Of course you paid. But I am glad for one thing. I never touched a cent of the money. They didn't dare offer it to me, because they knew it would give the game away.

"You remember my fight with Nat Powers. I never knocked him out. I had got suspicious. So the gang framed it up with him. I didn't know. I intended to let him go a couple of rounds over the sixteenth. That last punch in the sixteenth didn't shake him. But he faked the knock-out just the same and fooled all of you."

"How about to-night?" a voice called out. "Is it a frame-up?"

"It is," was Glendon's answer.

"How's the syndicate betting? That Cannam will last to the fourteenth."

Howls and hoots went up. For the last time Glendon held up his hand for silence.

"I'm almost done now. But I want to tell you one thing. The syndicate gets landed to-night. This is to be a square fight. Tom Cannam won't last till the fourteenth round. He won't last the first round."

Cannam sprang to his feet in his corner and cried out in a fury:

"You can't do it. The man don't live who can get me in one round!"

Glendon ignored him and went on. "Once now in my life I have struck with all my strength. You saw that a moment ago when I caught Hanford. To-night, for the second time, I am going to hit with all my strength — that is, if Cannam doesn't jump through the ropes right now and get away. And now I'm ready."

He went to his corner and held out his hands for his gloves. In the opposite corner Cannam raged while his seconds tried vainly to calm him. At last Billy Morgan managed to make the final announcement.

"This will be a forty-five round contest," he shouted. "Marquis of Queensbury Rules! And may the best man win! Let her go!"

The gong struck. The two men advanced. Glendon's right hand was extended for the customary shake, but Cannam, with an angry toss of the head, refused to take it. To the general surprise, he did not rush. Angry though he was, he fought carefully, his touched pride impelling him to bend every effort to last out the round. Several times he struck, but he struck cautiously, never relaxing his defense. Glendon hunted him about the ring, ever advancing with the remorseless tap-tap of his left foot. Yet he struck no blows, nor attempted to strike. He even dropped his hands to his sides and hunted the other defenselessly in an effort to draw him out. Cannam grinned defiantly, but declined to take advantage of the proffered opening.

Two minutes passed, and then a change came over Glendon. By every muscle, by every line of his face, he advertised that the moment had come for him to get his man. Acting it was, and it was well acted. He seemed to have become a thing of steel, as hard and pitiless as steel. The effect was apparent on Cannam, who redoubled his caution. Glendon quickly worked him into a corner and herded and held him there. Still he struck no blow, nor attempted to strike, and the suspense on Cannam's part grew painful. In vain he tried to work out of the corner, while he could not summon resolution to rush upon his opponent in an attempt to gain the respite of a clinch.

Then it came — a swift series of simple feints that were muscle flashes. Cannam was dazzled. So was the audience. No two onlookers could agree afterwards as to what took place. Cannam ducked one feint and at the same time threw up his face guard to meet another feint for his jaw. He also attempted to change position with his legs. Ring-side witnesses swore that they saw Glendon start the blow from his right hip and leap forward like a tiger to add the weight of his body to it. Be that as it may, the blow caught Cannam on the point of the chin at the moment of his shift of position. And like Hanford, he was unconscious in the air before he struck the ropes and fell through on the heads of the reporters.

Of what happened afterward that night in the Golden Gate Arena, columns in the newspapers were unable adequately to describe. The police kept the ring clear, but they could not save the Arena. It was not a riot. It was an orgy. Not a seat was left standing. All over the great hall, by main strength, crowding and jostling to lay hands on beams and boards, the crowd uprooted and overturned. Prize-fighters sought protection of the police, but there were not enough police to escort them out, and fighters, managers, and promoters were beaten and battered. Jim Hanford alone was spared. His jaw, prodigiously swollen, earned him this mercy. Outside, when finally driven from the building, the crowd fell upon a new seven-thousand-dollar motor car belonging to a well-known fight promoter and reduced it to scrapiron and kindling wood.

Glendon, unable to dress amid the wreckage of dressing rooms, gained his automobile, still in his ring costume and wrapped in a bath robe, but failed to escape. By weight of numbers the crowd caught and held his machine. The police were too busy to rescue him, and in the end a compromise was effected, whereby the car was permitted to proceed at a walk escorted by five thousand cheering madmen.

It was midnight when this storm swept past Union Square and down upon the St. Francis. Cries for a speech went up, and though at the hotel entrance, Glendon was good-naturedly restrained from escaping. He even tried leaping out upon the heads of the enthusiasts, but his feet never touched the pavement. On heads and shoulders, clutched at and uplifted by every hand that could touch his body, he went back through the air to the machine. Then he gave a speech, and Maud Glendon, looking down from an upper window at her young Hercules towering on the seat of the automobile, knew, as she always knew, that he meant it when he repeated that he had fought his last fight and retired from the ring forever.

THE VALLEY OF THE MOON

The Valley of the Moon was first published in 1913 and is set in the wine-growing Sonoma Valley of California, where London was a resident, having built his ranch in Glen Ellen. The novel is a story of a working-class couple, Billy and Saxon Roberts, struggling laborers in Oakland at the Turn-of-the-Century, who left the city life behind and searched Central and Northern California for a suitable farmland to own.

London’s ranch at Glen Ellen

CONTENTS

BOOK I
CHAPTER 1
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
BOOK II
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX

BOOK III
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII

BOOK I

CHAPTER 1

“You hear me, Saxon? Come on along. What if it is the Bricklayers? I’ll have gentlemen friends there, and so’ll you. The Al Vista band’ll be along, an’ you know it plays heavenly. An’ you just love dancin’ —-“

Twenty feet away, a stout, elderly woman interrupted the girl’s persuasions. The elderly woman’s back was turned, and the back-loose, bulging, and misshapen — began a convulsive heaving.

“Gawd!” she cried out. “O Gawd!”

She flung wild glances, like those of an entrapped animal, up and down the big whitewashed room that panted with heat and that was thickly humid with the steam that sizzled from the damp cloth under the irons of the many ironers. From the girls and women near her, all swinging irons steadily but at high pace, came quick glances, and labor efficiency suffered to the extent of a score of suspended or inadequate movements. The elderly woman’s cry had caused a tremor of money-loss to pass among the piece-work ironers of fancy starch.

She gripped herself and her iron with a visible effort, and dabbed futilely at the frail, frilled garment on the board under her hand.

“I thought she’d got’em again — didn’t you?” the girl said.

“It’s a shame, a women of her age, and... condition,” Saxon answered, as she frilled a lace ruffle with a hot fluting-iron. Her movements were delicate, safe, and swift, and though her face was wan with fatigue and exhausting heat, there was no slackening in her pace.

“An’ her with seven, an’ two of ‘em in reform school,” the girl at the next board sniffed sympathetic agreement. “But you just got to come to Weasel Park to-morrow, Saxon. The Bricklayers’ is always lively — tugs-of-war, fat-man races, real Irish jiggin’, an’... an’ everything. An’ The floor of the pavilion’s swell.”

But the elderly woman brought another interruption. She dropped her iron on the shirtwaist, clutched at the board, fumbled it, caved in at the knees and hips, and like a half-empty sack collapsed on the floor, her long shriek rising in the pent room to the acrid smell of scorching cloth. The women at the boards near to her scrambled, first, to the hot iron to save the cloth, and then to her, while the forewoman hurried belligerently down the aisle. The women farther away continued unsteadily at their work, losing movements to the extent of a minute's set-back to the totality of the efficiency of the fancy-starch room.

"Enough to kill a dog," the girl muttered, thumping her iron down on its rest with reckless determination. "Workin' girls' life ain't what it's cracked up. Me to quit — that's what I'm comin' to."

"Mary!" Saxon uttered the other's name with a reproach so profound that she was compelled to rest her own iron for emphasis and so lose a dozen movements.

Mary flashed a half-frightened look across.

"I didn't mean it, Saxon," she whimpered. "Honest, I didn't. I wouldn't never go that way. But I leave it to you, if a day like this don't get on anybody's nerves. Listen to that!"

The stricken woman, on her back, drumming her heels on the floor, was shrieking persistently and monotonously, like a mechanical siren. Two women, clutching her under the arms, were dragging her down the aisle. She drummed and shrieked the length of it. The door opened, and a vast, muffled roar of machinery burst in; and in the roar of it the drumming and the shrieking were drowned ere the door swung shut. Remained of the episode only the scorch of cloth drifting ominously through the air.

"It's sickenin'," said Mary.

And thereafter, for a long time, the many irons rose and fell, the pace of the room in no wise diminished; while the forewoman strode the aisles with a threatening eye for incipient breakdown and hysteria. Occasionally an ironer lost the stride for an instant, gasped or sighed, then caught it up again with weary determination. The long summer day waned, but not the heat, and under the raw flare of electric light the work went on.

By nine o'clock the first women began to go home. The mountain of fancy starch had been demolished — all save the few remnants, here and there, on the boards, where the ironers still labored.

Saxon finished ahead of Mary, at whose board she paused on the way out.

"Saturday night an' another week gone," Mary said mournfully, her young cheeks pallid and hollowed, her black eyes blue-shadowed and tired. "What d'you think you've made, Saxon?"

“Twelve and a quarter,” was the answer, just touched with pride “And I’d a-made more if it wasn’t for that fake bunch of starchers.”

“My! I got to pass it to you,” Mary congratulated. “You’re a sure fierce hustler — just eat it up. Me — I’ve only ten an’ a half, an’ for a hard week... See you on the nine-forty. Sure now. We can just fool around until the dancin’ begins. A lot of my gentlemen friends’ll be there in the afternoon.”

Two blocks from the laundry, where an arc-light showed a gang of toughs on the corner, Saxon quickened her pace. Unconsciously her face set and hardened as she passed. She did not catch the words of the muttered comment, but the rough laughter it raised made her guess and warmed her checks with resentful blood. Three blocks more, turning once to left and once to right, she walked on through the night that was already growing cool. On either side were workingmen’s houses, of weathered wood, the ancient paint grimed with the dust of years, conspicuous only for cheapness and ugliness.

Dark it was, but she made no mistake, the familiar sag and screeching reproach of the front gate welcome under her hand. She went along the narrow walk to the rear, avoided the missing step without thinking about it, and entered the kitchen, where a solitary gas-jet flickered. She turned it up to the best of its flame. It was a small room, not disorderly, because of lack of furnishings to disorder it. The plaster, discolored by the steam of many wash-days, was crisscrossed with cracks from the big earthquake of the previous spring. The floor was ridged, wide-cracked, and uneven, and in front of the stove it was worn through and repaired with a five-gallon oil-can hammered flat and double. A sink, a dirty roller-towel, several chairs, and a wooden table completed the picture.

An apple-core crunched under her foot as she drew a chair to the table. On the frayed oilcloth, a supper waited. She attempted the cold beans, thick with grease, but gave them up, and buttered a slice of bread.

The rickety house shook to a heavy, prideless tread, and through the inner door came Sarah, middle-aged, lop-breasted, hair-tousled, her face lined with care and fat petulance.

“Huh, it’s you,” she grunted a greeting. “I just couldn’t keep things warm. Such a day! I near died of the heat. An’ little Henry cut his lip awful. The doctor had to put four stitches in it.”

Sarah came over and stood mountainously by the table.

“What’s the matter with them beans?” she challenged.

“Nothing, only...” Saxon caught her breath and avoided the threatened outburst. “Only I’m not hungry. It’s been so hot all day. It was terrible in the laundry.”

Recklessly she took a mouthful of the cold tea that had been steeped so long that it was like acid in her mouth, and recklessly, under the eye of her sister-in-law, she swallowed it and the rest of the cupful. She wiped her mouth on her handkerchief and got up.

“I guess I’ll go to bed.”

“Wonder you ain’t out to a dance,” Sarah sniffed. “Funny, ain’t it, you come home so dead tired every night, an’ yet any night in the week you can get out an’ dance unearthly hours.”

Saxon started to speak, suppressed herself with tightened lips, then lost control and blazed out. “Wasn’t you ever young?”

Without waiting for reply, she turned to her bedroom, which opened directly off the kitchen. It was a small room, eight by twelve, and the earthquake had left its marks upon the plaster. A bed and chair of cheap pine and a very ancient chest of drawers constituted the furniture. Saxon had known this chest of drawers all her life. The vision of it was woven into her earliest recollections. She knew it had crossed the plains with her people in a prairie schooner. It was of solid mahogany. One end was cracked and dented from the capsize of the wagon in Rock Canyon. A bullet-hole, plugged, in the face of the top drawer, told of the fight with the Indians at Little Meadow. Of these happenings her mother had told her; also had she told that the chest had come with the family originally from England in a day even earlier than the day on which George Washington was born.

Above the chest of drawers, on the wall, hung a small looking-glass. Thrust under the molding were photographs of young men and women, and of picnic groups wherein the young men, with hats rakishly on the backs of their heads, encircled the girls with their arms. Farther along on the wall were a colored calendar and numerous colored advertisements and sketches torn out of magazines. Most of these sketches were of horses. From the gas-fixture hung a tangled bunch of well-scribbled dance programs.

Saxon started to take off her hat, but suddenly sat down on the bed. She sobbed softly, with considered repression, but the weak-latched door swung noiselessly open, and she was startled by her sister-in-law’s voice.

“NOW what’s the matter with you? If you didn’t like them beans — ”

"No, no," Saxon explained hurriedly. "I'm just tired, that's all, and my feet hurt. I wasn't hungry, Sarah. I'm just beat out."

"If you took care of this house," came the retort, "an' cooked an' baked, an' washed, an' put up with what I put up, you'd have something to be beat out about. You've got a snap, you have. But just wait." Sarah broke off to cackle gloatingly. "Just wait, that's all, an' you'll be fool enough to get married some day, like me, an' then you'll get yours — an' it'll be brats, an' brats, an' brats, an' no more dancin', an' silk stockin's, an' three pairs of shoes at one time. You've got a cinch-nobody to think of but your own precious self — an' a lot of young hoodlums makin' eyes at you an' tellin' you how beautiful your eyes are. Huh! Some fine day you'll tie up to one of 'em, an' then, mebbe, on occasion, you'll wear black eyes for a change."

"Don't say that, Sarah," Saxon protested. "My brother never laid hands on you. You know that."

"No more he didn't. He never had the gumption. Just the same, he's better stock than that tough crowd you run with, if he can't make a livin' an' keep his wife in three pairs of shoes. Just the same he's oodles better'n your bunch of hoodlums that no decent woman'd wipe her one pair of shoes on. How you've missed trouble this long is beyond me. Mebbe the younger generation is wiser in such thins — I don't know. But I do know that a young woman that has three pairs of shoes ain't thinkin' of anything but her own enjoyment, an' she's goin' to get hers, I can tell her that much. When I was a girl there wasn't such doin's. My mother'd taken the hide off me if I done the things you do. An' she was right, just as everything in the world is wrong now. Look at your brother, a-runnin' around to socialist meetin's, an' chewin' hot air, an' diggin' up extra strike dues to the union that means so much bread out of the mouths of his children, instead of makin' good with his bosses. Why, the dues he pays would keep me in seventeen pairs of shoes if I was nannygoat enough to want 'em. Some day, mark my words, he'll get his time, an' then what'll we do? What'll I do, with five mouths to feed an' nothin' comin' in?"

She stopped, out of breath but seething with the tirade yet to come.

"Oh, Sarah, please won't you shut the door?" Saxon pleaded.

The door slammed violently, and Saxon, ere she fell to crying again, could hear her sister-in-law lumbering about the kitchen and talking loudly to herself.

CHAPTER II

Each bought her own ticket at the entrance to Weasel Park. And each, as she laid her half-dollar down, was distinctly aware of how many pieces of fancy starch were represented by the coin. It was too early for the crowd, but bricklayers and their families, laden with huge lunch-baskets and armfuls of babies, were already going in — a healthy, husky race of workmen, well-paid and robustly fed. And with them, here and there, undisguised by their decent American clothing, smaller in bulk and stature, weazened not alone by age but by the pinch of lean years and early hardship, were grandfathers and mothers who had patently first seen the light of day on old Irish soil. Their faces showed content and pride as they limped along with this lusty progeny of theirs that had fed on better food.

Not with these did Mary and Saxon belong. They knew them not, had no acquaintances among them. It did not matter whether the festival were Irish, German, or Slavonian; whether the picnic was the Bricklayers’, the Brewers’, or the Butchers’. They, the girls, were of the dancing crowd that swelled by a certain constant percentage the gate receipts of all the picnics.

They strolled about among the booths where peanuts were grinding and popcorn was roasting in preparation for the day, and went on and inspected the dance floor of the pavilion. Saxon, clinging to an imaginary partner, essayed a few steps of the dip-waltz. Mary clapped her hands.

“My!” she cried. “You’re just swell! An’ them stockin’s is peaches.”

Saxon smiled with appreciation, pointed out her foot, velvet-slippered with high Cuban heels, and slightly lifted the tight black skirt, exposing a trim ankle and delicate swell of calf, the white flesh gleaming through the thinnest and flimsiest of fifty-cent black silk stockings. She was slender, not tall, yet the due round lines of womanhood were hers. On her white shirtwaist was a pleated jabot of cheap lace, caught with a large novelty pin of imitation coral. Over the shirtwaist was a natty jacket, elbow-sleeved, and to the elbows she wore gloves of imitation suede. The one essentially natural touch about her appearance was the few curls, strangers to curling-irons, that escaped from under the little naughty hat of black velvet pulled low over the eyes.

Mary’s dark eyes flashed with joy at the sight, and with a swift little run she caught the other girl in her arms and kissed her in a breast-crushing embrace. She released her, blushing at her own extravagance.

“You look good to me,” she cried, in extenuation. “If I was a man I couldn’t keep my hands off you. I’d eat you, I sure would.”

They went out of the pavilion hand in hand, and on through the sunshine they strolled, swinging hands gaily, reacting exuberantly from the week of deadening toil. They hung over the railing of the bear-pit, shivering at the huge and lonely denizen, and passed quickly on to ten minutes of laughter at the monkey cage. Crossing the grounds, they looked down into the little race track on the bed of a natural amphitheater where the early afternoon games were to take place. After that they explored the woods, threaded by countless paths, ever opening out in new surprises of green-painted rustic tables and benches in leafy nooks, many of which were already pre-empted by family parties. On a grassy slope, tree-surrounded, they spread a newspaper and sat down on the short grass already tawny-dry under the California sun. Half were they minded to do this because of the grateful indolence after six days of insistent motion, half in conservation for the hours of dancing to come.

“Bert Wanhope’ll be sure to come,” Mary chattered. “An’ he said he was going to bring Billy Roberts — ’Big Bill,’ all the fellows call him. He’s just a big boy, but he’s awfully tough. He’s a prizefighter, an’ all the girls run after him. I’m afraid of him. He ain’t quick in talkin’. He’s more like that big bear we saw. Brr-rf! Brr-rf! — bite your head off, just like that. He ain’t really a prize-fighter. He’s a teamster — belongs to the union. Drives for Coberly and Morrison. But sometimes he fights in the clubs. Most of the fellows are scared of him. He’s got a bad temper, an’ he’d just as soon hit a fellow as eat, just like that. You won’t like him, but he’s a swell dancer. He’s heavy, you know, an’ he just slides and glides around. You wanta have a dance with’m anyway. He’s a good spender, too. Never pinches. But my! — he’s got one temper.”

The talk wandered on, a monologue on Mary’s part, that centered always on Bert Wanhope.

“You and he are pretty thick,” Saxon ventured.

“I’d marry’m to-morrow,” Mary flashed out impulsively. Then her face went bleakly forlorn, hard almost in its helpless pathos. “Only, he never asks me. He’s...” Her pause was broken by sudden passion. “You watch out for him, Saxon, if he ever comes foolin’ around you. He’s no good. Just the same, I’d marry him to-morrow. He’ll never get me any other way.” Her mouth opened, but instead of speaking she drew a long sigh. “It’s a funny world, ain’t it?” she added. “More like a scream. And all the stars are worlds, too. I wonder where God hides. Bert Wanhope says there ain’t no God. But he’s just terrible. He says the most terrible things. I believe in God. Don’t you? What do you think about God, Saxon?”

Saxon shrugged her shoulders and laughed.

“But if we do wrong we get ours, don’t we?” Mary persisted. “That’s what they all say, except Bert. He says he don’t care what he does, he’ll never get his, because when he dies he’s dead, an’ when he’s dead he’d like to see any one put anything across on him that’d wake him up. Ain’t he terrible, though? But it’s all so funny. Sometimes I get scared when I think God’s keepin’ an eye on me all the time. Do you think he knows what I’m sayin’ now? What do you think he looks like, anyway?”

“I don’t know,” Saxon answered. “He’s just a funny proposition.”

“Oh!” the other gasped.

“He IS, just the same, from what all people say of him,” Saxon went on stoutly. “My brother thinks he looks like Abraham Lincoln. Sarah thinks he has whiskers.”

“An’ I never think of him with his hair parted,” Mary confessed, daring the thought and shivering with apprehension. “He just couldn’t have his hair parted. THAT’D be funny.”

“You know that little, wrinkly Mexican that sells wire puzzles?” Saxon queried. “Well, God somehow always reminds me of him.”

Mary laughed outright.

“Now that IS funny. I never thought of him like that How do you make it out?”

“Well, just like the little Mexican, he seems to spend his time peddling puzzles. He passes a puzzle out to everybody, and they spend all their lives tryin’ to work it out They all get stuck. I can’t work mine out. I don’t know where to start. And look at the puzzle he passed Sarah. And she’s part of Tom’s puzzle, and she only makes his worse. And they all, an’ everybody I know — you, too — are part of my puzzle.”

“Mebbe the puzzles is all right,” Mary considered. “But God don’t look like that yellow little Greaser. THAT I won’t fall for. God don’t look like anybody. Don’t you remember on the wall at the Salvation Army it says ‘God is a spirit’?”

“That’s another one of his puzzles, I guess, because nobody knows what a spirit looks like.”

“That’s right, too.” Mary shuddered with reminiscent fear. “Whenever I try to think of God as a spirit, I can see Hen Miller all wrapped up in a sheet an’ runnin’ us girls. We didn’t know, an’ it scared the life out of us. Little Maggie Murphy fainted dead away, and Beatrice Peralta fell an’ scratched her face horrible. When I think of a spirit all I can see is a white sheet runnin’ in the dark. Just the same, God don’t look like a Mexican, an’ he don’t wear his hair parted.”

A strain of music from the dancing pavilion brought both girls scrambling to their feet.

“We can get a couple of dances in before we eat,” Mary proposed. “An’ then it’ll be afternoon an’ all the fellows ‘ll be here. Most of them are pinchers — that’s why they don’t come early, so as to get out of taking the girls to dinner. But Bert’s free with his money, an’ so is Billy. If we can beat the other girls to it, they’ll take us to the restaurant. Come on, hurry, Saxon.”

There were few couples on the floor when they arrived at the pavilion, and the two girls essayed the first waltz together.

“There’s Bert now,” Saxon whispered, as they came around the second time.

“Don’t take any notice of them,” Mary whispered back. “We’ll just keep on goin’. They needn’t think we’re chasin’ after them.”

But Saxon noted the heightened color in the other’s cheek, and felt her quicker breathing.

“Did you see that other one?” Mary asked, as she backed Saxon in a long slide across the far end of the pavilion. “That was Billy Roberts. Bert said he’d come. He’ll take you to dinner, and Bert’ll take me. It’s goin’ to be a swell day, you’ll see. My! I only wish the music’ll hold out till we can get back to the other end.”

Down the floor they danced, on man-trapping and dinner-getting intent, two fresh young things that undeniably danced well and that were delightfully surprised when the music stranded them perilously near to their desire.

Bert and Mary addressed each other by their given names, but to Saxon Bert was “Mr. Wanhope,” though he called her by her first name. The only introduction was of Saxon and Billy Roberts. Mary carried it off with a flurry of nervous carelessness.

"Mr. Robert — Miss Brown. She's my best friend. Her first name's Saxon. Ain't it a scream of a name?"

"Sounds good to me," Billy retorted, hat off and hand extended. "Pleased to meet you, Miss Brown."

As their hands clasped and she felt the teamster callouses on his palm, her quick eyes saw a score of things. About all that he saw was her eyes, and then it was with a vague impression that they were blue. Not till later in the day did he realize that they were gray. She, on the contrary, saw his eyes as they really were — deep blue, wide, and handsome in a sullen-boyish way. She saw that they were straight-looking, and she liked them, as she had liked the glimpse she had caught of his hand, and as she liked the contact of his hand itself. Then, too, but not sharply, she had perceived the short, square-set nose, the rosiness of cheek, and the firm, short upper lip, ere delight centered her flash of gaze on the well-modeled, large clean mouth where red lips smiled clear of the white, enviable teeth. A BOY, A GREAT BIG MAN-BOY, was her thought; and, as they smiled at each other and their hands slipped apart, she was startled by a glimpse of his hair — short and crisp and sandy, hinting almost of palest gold save that it was too flaxen to hint of gold at all.

So blond was he that she was reminded of stage-types she had seen, such as Ole Olson and Yon Yonson; but there resemblance ceased. It was a matter of color only, for the eyes were dark-lashed and-browed, and were cloudy with temperament rather than staring a child-gaze of wonder, and the suit of smooth brown cloth had been made by a tailor. Saxon appraised the suit on the instant, and her secret judgment was NOT A CENT LESS THAN FIFTY DOLLARS. Further, he had none of the awkwardness of the Scandinavian immigrant. On the contrary, he was one of those rare individuals that radiate muscular grace through the ungraceful man-garments of civilization. Every movement was supple, slow, and apparently considered. This she did not see nor analyze. She saw only a clothed man with grace of carriage and movement. She felt, rather than perceived, the calm and certitude of all the muscular play of him, and she felt, too, the promise of easement and rest that was especially grateful and craved-for by one who had incessantly, for six days and at top-speed, ironed fancy starch.

As the touch of his hand had been good, so, to her, this subtler feel of all of him, body and mind, was good.

As he took her program and skirmished and joked after the way of young men, she realized the immediacy of delight she had taken in him. Never in her life had she been so affected by any man. She wondered to herself: IS THIS THE MAN?

He danced beautifully. The joy was hers that good dancers take when they have found a good dancer for a partner. The grace of those slow-moving, certain muscles of his accorded perfectly with the rhythm of the music. There was never doubt, never a betrayal of indecision. She glanced at Bert, dancing "tough" with Mary, caroming down the long floor with more than one collision with the increasing couples. Graceful himself in his slender, tall, lean-stomached way, Bert was accounted a good dancer; yet Saxon did not remember ever having danced with him with keen pleasure. Just a hit of a jerk spoiled his dancing — a jerk that did not occur, usually, but that always impended. There was something spasmodic in his mind. He was too quick, or he continually threatened to be too quick. He always seemed just on the verge of overrunning the time. It was disquieting. He made for unrest.

"You're a dream of a dancer," Billy Roberts was saying. "I've heard lots of the fellows talk about your dancing."

"I love it," she answered.

But from the way she said it he sensed her reluctance to speak, and danced on in silence, while she warmed with the appreciation of a woman for gentle consideration. Gentle consideration was a thing rarely encountered in the life she lived. IS THIS THE MAN? She remembered Mary's "I'd marry him to-morrow," and caught herself speculating on marrying Billy Roberts by the next day — if he asked her.

With eyes that dreamily desired to close, she moved on in the arms of this masterful, guiding pressure. A PRIZE-FIGHTER! She experienced a thrill of wickedness as she thought of what Sarah would say could she see her now. Only he wasn't a prizefighter, but a teamster.

Came an abrupt lengthening of step, the guiding pressure grew more compelling, and she was caught up and carried along, though her velvet-shod feet never left the floor. Then came the sudden control down to the shorter step again, and she felt herself being held slightly from him so that he might look into her face and laugh with her in joy at the exploit. At the end, as the band slowed in the last bars, they, too, slowed, their dance fading with the music in a lengthening glide that ceased with the last lingering tone.

"We're sure cut out for each other when it comes to dancin'," he said, as they made their way to rejoin the other couple.

"It was a dream," she replied.

So low was her voice that he bent to hear, and saw the flush in her cheeks that seemed communicated to her eyes, which were softly warm and sensuous. He took the program from her and gravely and gigantically wrote his name across all the length of it.

"An' now it's no good," he dared. "Ain't no need for it."

He tore it across and tossed it aside.

"Me for you, Saxon, for the next," was Bert's greeting, as they came up. "You take Mary for the next whirl, Bill."

"Nothin' doin', Bo," was the retort. "Me an' Saxon's framed up to last the day."

"Watch out for him, Saxon," Mary warned facetiously. "He's liable to get a crush on you."

"I guess I know a good thing when I see it," Billy responded gallantly.

"And so do I," Saxon aided and abetted.

"I'd 'a' known you if I'd seen you in the dark," Billy added.

Mary regarded them with mock alarm, and Bert said good-naturedly:

"All I got to say is you ain't wastin' any time gettin' together. Just the same, if' you can spare a few minutes from each other after a couple more whirls, Mary an' me'd be complimented to have your presence at dinner."

"Just like that," chimed Mary.

"Quit your kiddin'," Billy laughed back, turning his head to look into Saxon's eyes. "Don't listen to 'em. They're grouched because they got to dance together. Bert's a rotten dancer, and Mary ain't so much. Come on, there she goes. See you after two more dances."

CHAPTER III

They had dinner in the open-air, tree-walled dining-room, and Saxon noted that it was Billy who paid the reckoning for the four. They knew many of the young men and women at the other tables, and greetings and fun flew back and forth. Bert was very possessive with Mary, almost roughly so, resting his hand on hers, catching and holding it, and, once, forcibly slipping off her two rings and refusing to return them for a long while. At times, when he put his arm around her waist, Mary promptly disengaged it; and at other times, with elaborate obliviousness that deceived no one, she allowed it to remain.

And Saxon, talking little but studying Billy Roberts very intently, was satisfied that there would be an utter difference in the way he would do such things... if ever he would do them. Anyway, he'd never paw a girl as Bert and lots of the other fellows did. She measured the breadth of Billy's heavy shoulders.

"Why do they call you 'Big' Bill?" she asked. "You're not so very tall."

"Nope," he agreed. "I'm only five feet eight an' three-quarters. I guess it must be my weight."

"He fights at a hundred an' eighty," Bert interjected.

"Oh, out it," Billy said quickly, a cloud-rift of displeasure showing in his eyes. "I ain't a fighter. I ain't fought in six months. I've quit it. It don't pay."

"Yon got two hundred the night you put the Frisco Slasher to the bad," Bert urged proudly.

"Cut it. Cut it now. — Say, Saxon, you ain't so big yourself, are you? But you're built just right if anybody should ask you. You're round an' slender at the same time. I bet I can guess your weight."

"Everybody guesses over it," she warned, while inwardly she was puzzled that she should at the same time be glad and regretful that he did not fight any more.

"Not me," he was saying. "I'm a wooz at weight-guessin'. Just you watch me." He regarded her critically, and it was patent that warm approval played its little rivalry with the judgment of his gaze. "Wait a minute."

He reached over to her and felt her arm at the biceps. The pressure of the encircling fingers was firm and honest, and Saxon thrilled to it. There was magic in this man-boy. She would have known only irritation had Bert or any other man felt her arm. But this man! IS HE THE MAN? she was questioning, when he voiced his conclusion.

"Your clothes don't weigh more'n seven pounds. And seven from — hum — say one hundred an' twenty-three — one hundred an' sixteen is your stripped weight."

But at the penultimate word, Mary cried out with sharp reproof:

"Why, Billy Roberts, people don't talk about such things."

He looked at her with slow-growing, uncomprehending surprise.

"What things?" he demanded finally.

"There you go again! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Look! You've got Saxon blushing!"

"I am not," Saxon denied indignantly.

"An' if you keep on, Mary, you'll have me blushing," Billy growled. "I guess I know what's right an' what ain't. It ain't what a guy says, but what he thinks. An' I'm thinkin' right, an' Saxon knows it. An' she an' I ain't thinkin' what you're thinkin' at all."

"Oh! Oh!" Mary cried. "You're gettin' worse an' worse. I never think such things."

"Whoa, Mary! Backup!" Bert checked her peremptorily. "You're in the wrong stall. Billy never makes mistakes like that."

"But he needn't be so raw," she persisted.

"Come on, Mary, an' be good, an' cut that stuff," was Billy's dismissal of her, as he turned to Saxon. "How near did I come to it?"

"One hundred and twenty-two," she answered, looking deliberately at Mary. "One twenty two with my clothes."

Billy burst into hearty laughter, in which Bert joined.

"I don't care," Mary protested, "You're terrible, both of you — an' you, too, Saxon. I'd never a-thought it of you."

"Listen to me, kid," Bert began soothingly, as his arm slipped around her waist.

But in the false excitement she had worked herself into, Mary rudely repulsed the arm, and then, fearing that she had wounded her lover's feelings, she took advantage of the teasing and banter to recover her good humor. His arm was permitted to return, and with heads bent together, they talked in whispers.

Billy discreetly began to make conversation with Saxon.

“Say, you know, your name is a funny one. I never heard it tagged on anybody before. But it’s all right. I like it.”

“My mother gave it to me. She was educated, and knew all kinds of words. She was always reading books, almost until she died. And she wrote lots and lots. I’ve got some of her poetry published in a San Jose newspaper long ago. The Saxons were a race of people — she told me all about them when I was a little girl. They were wild, like Indians, only they were white. And they had blue eyes, and yellow hair, and they were awful fighters.”

As she talked, Billy followed her solemnly, his eyes steadily turned on hers.

“Never heard of them,” he confessed. “Did they live anywhere around here?”

She laughed.

“No. They lived in England. They were the first English, and you know the Americans came from the English. We’re Saxons, you an’ me, an’ Mary, an’ Bert, and all the Americans that are real Americans, you know, and not Dagoes and Japs and such.”

“My folks lived in America a long time,” Billy said slowly, digesting the information she had given and relating himself to it. “Anyway, my mother’s folks did. They crossed to Maine hundreds of years ago.”

“My father was ‘State of Maine,” she broke in, with a little gurgle of joy. “And my mother was horn in Ohio, or where Ohio is now. She used to call it the Great Western Reserve. What was your father?”

“Don’t know.” Billy shrugged his shoulders. “He didn’t know himself. Nobody ever knew, though he was American, all right, all right.”

“His name’s regular old American,” Saxon suggested. “There’s a big English general right now whose name is Roberts. I’ve read it in the papers.”

“But Roberts wasn’t my father’s name. He never knew what his name was. Roberts was the name of a gold-miner who adopted him. You see, it was this way. When they was Indian-fightin’ up there with the Modoc Indians, a lot of the miners an’ settlers took a hand. Roberts was captain of one outfit, and once, after a fight, they took a lot of prisoners — squaws, an’ kids an’ babies. An’ one of the kids was my father. They figured he was about five years old. He didn’t know nothin’ but Indian.”

Saxon clapped her hands, and her eyes sparkled: “He’d been captured on an Indian raid!”

“That’s the way they figured it,” Billy nodded. “They recollected a wagon-train of Oregon settlers that’d been killed by the Modocs four years before. Roberts adopted him, and that’s why I don’t know his real name. But you can bank on it, he crossed the plains just the same.”

“So did my father,” Saxon said proudly.

“An’ my mother, too,” Billy added, pride touching his own voice. “Anyway, she came pretty close to crossin’ the plains, because she was born in a wagon on the River Platte on the way out.”

“My mother, too,” said Saxon. “She was eight years old, an’ she walked most of the way after the oxen began to give out.”

Billy thrust out his hand.

“Put her there, kid,” he said. “We’re just like old friends, what with the same kind of folks behind us.”

With shining eyes, Saxon extended her hand to his, and gravely they shook.

“Isn’t it wonderful?” she murmured. “We’re both old American stock. And if you aren’t a Saxon there never was one — your hair, your eyes, your skin, everything. And you’re a fighter, too.”

“I guess all our old folks was fighters when it comes to that. It come natural to ‘em, an’ dog-gone it, they just had to fight or they’d never come through.”

“What are you two talkin’ about?” Mary broke in upon them.

“They’re thicker’n mush in no time,” Bert girded. “You’d think they’d known each other a week already.”

“Oh, we knew each other longer than that,” Saxon returned. “Before ever we were born our folks were walkin’ across the plains together.”

“When your folks was waitin’ for the railroad to be built an’ all the Indians killed off before they dasted to start for California,” was Billy’s way of proclaiming the new alliance. “We’re the real goods, Saxon an’n me, if anybody should ride up on a buzz-wagon an’ ask you.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Mary boasted with quiet petulance. “My father stayed behind to fight in the Civil War. He was a drummer-boy. That’s why he didn’t come to California until afterward.”

“And my father went back to fight in the Civil War,” Saxon said.

“And mine, too,” said Billy.

They looked at each other gleefully. Again they had found a new contact.

"Well, they're all dead, ain't they?" was Bert's saturnine comment. "There ain't no difference dyin' in battle or in the poorhouse. The thing is they're deado. I wouldn't care a rap if my father'd been hanged. It's all the same in a thousand years. This braggin' about folks makes me tired. Besides, my father couldn't a-fought. He wasn't born till two years after the war. Just the same, two of my uncles were killed at Gettysburg. Guess we done our share."

"Just like that," Mary applauded.

Bert's arm went around her waist again.

"We're here, ain't we?" he said. "An' that's what counts. The dead are dead, an' you can bet your sweet life they just keep on stayin' dead."

Mary put her hand over his mouth and began to chide him for his awfulness, whereupon he kissed the palm of her hand and put his head closer to hers.

The merry clatter of dishes was increasing as the dining-room filled up. Here and there voices were raised in snatches of song. There were shrill squeals and screams and bursts of heavier male laughter as the everlasting skirmishing between the young men and girls played on. Among some of the men the signs of drink were already manifest. At a near table girls were calling out to Billy. And Saxon, the sense of temporary possession already strong on her, noted with jealous eyes that he was a favorite and desired object to them.

"Ain't they awful?" Mary voiced her disapproval. "They got a nerve. I know who they are. No respectable girl 'd have a thing to do with them. Listen to that!"

"Oh, you Bill, you," one of them, a buxom young brunette, was calling. "Hope you ain't forgotten me, Bill."

"Oh, you chicken," he called back gallantly.

Saxon flattered herself that he showed vexation, and she conceived an immense dislike for the brunette.

"Goin' to dance?" the latter called.

"Mebbe," he answered, and turned abruptly to Saxon. "Say, we old Americans oughta stick together, don't you think? They ain't many of us left. The country's fillin' up with all kinds of foreigners."

He talked on steadily, in a low, confidential voice, head close to hers, as advertisement to the other girl that he was occupied.

From the next table on the opposite side, a young man had singled out Saxon. His dress was tough. His companions, male and female, were tough. His face was inflamed, his eyes touched with wildness.

“Hey, you!” he called. “You with the velvet slippers. Me for you.”

The girl beside him put her arm around his neck and tried to hush him, and through the mufflement of her embrace they could hear him gurgling:

“I tell you she’s some goods. Watch me go across an’ win her from them cheap skates.”

“Butchertown hoodlums,” Mary sniffed.

Saxon’s eyes encountered the eyes of the girl, who glared hatred across at her. And in Billy’s eyes she saw moody anger smouldering. The eyes were more sullen, more handsome than ever, and clouds and veils and lights and shadowe shifted and deepened in the blue of them until they gave her a sense of unfathomable depth. He had stopped talking, and he made no effort to talk.

“Don’t start a rough house, Bill,” Bert cautioned. “They’re from across the hay an’ they don’t know you, that’s all.”

Bert stood up suddenly, stepped over to the other table, whispered briefly, and came back. Every face at the table was turned on Billy. The offender arose brokenly, shook off the detaining hand of his girl, and came over. He was a large man, with a hard, malignant face and bitter eyes. Also, he was a subdued man.

“You’re Big Bill Roberts,” he said thickly, clinging to the table as he reeled. “I take my hat off to you. I apologize. I admire your taste in skirts, an’ take it from me that’s a compliment; but I did’nt know who you was. If I’d knowed you was Bill Roberts there wouldn’t been a peep from my fly-trap. D’ye get me? I apologize. Will you shake hands?”

Gruffly, Billy said, “It’s all right — forget it, sport;” and sullenly he shook hands and with a slow, massive movement thrust the other back toward his own table.

Saxon was glowing. Here was a man, a protector, something to lean against, of whom even the Butchertown toughs were afraid as soon as his name was mentioned.

CHAPTER IV

After dinner there were two dances in the pavilion, and then the band led the way to the race track for the games. The dancers followed, and all through the grounds the picnic parties left their tables to join in. Five thousand packed the grassy slopes of the amphitheater and swarmed inside the race track. Here, first of the events, the men were lining up for a tug of war. The contest was between the Oakland Bricklayers and the San Francisco Bricklayers, and the picked braves, huge and heavy, were taking their positions along the rope. They kicked heel-holds in the soft earth, rubbed their hands with the soil from underfoot, and laughed and joked with the crowd that surged about them.

The judges and watchers struggled vainly to keep back this crowd of relatives and friends. The Celtic blood was up, and the Celtic faction spirit ran high. The air was filled with cries of cheer, advice, warning, and threat. Many elected to leave the side of their own team and go to the side of the other team with the intention of circumventing foul play. There were as many women as men among the jostling supporters. The dust from the trampling, scuffling feet rose in the air, and Mary gasped and coughed and begged Bert to take her away. But he, the imp in him elated with the prospect of trouble, insisted on urging in closer. Saxon clung to Billy, who slowly and methodically elbowed and shouldered a way for her.

“No place for a girl,” he grumbled, looking down at her with a masked expression of absent-mindedness, while his elbow powerfully crushed on the ribs of a big Irishman who gave room. “Things’ll break loose when they start pullin’. They’s been too much drink, an’ you know what the Micks are for a rough house.”

Saxon was very much out of place among these large-bodied men and women. She seemed very small and childlike, delicate and fragile, a creature from another race. Only Billy’s skilled bulk and muscle saved her. He was continually glancing from face to face of the women and always returning to study her face, nor was she unaware of the contrast he was making.

Some excitement occurred a score of feet away from them, and to the sound of exclamations and blows a surge ran through the crowd. A large man, wedged sidewise in the jam, was shoved against Saxon, crushing her closely against Billy, who reached across to the man's shoulder with a massive thrust that was not so slow as usual. An involuntary grunt came from the victim, who turned his head, showing sun-reddened blond skin and unmistakable angry Irish eyes.

"What's eatin' yeh?" he snarled.

"Get off your foot; you're standin' on it," was Billy's contemptuous reply, emphasized by an increase of thrust.

The Irishman grunted again and made a frantic struggle to twist his body around, but the wedging bodies on either side held him in a vise.

"I'll break yer ugly face for yeh in a minute," he announced in wrath-thick tones.

Then his own face underwent transformation. The snarl left the lips, and the angry eyes grew genial.

"An' sure an' it's yerself," he said. "I didn't know it was yeh a-shovin'. I seen yeh lick the Terrible Swede, if yeh WAS robbed on the decision."

"No, you didn't, Bo," Billy answered pleasantly. "You saw me take a good beatin' that night. The decision was all right."

The Irishman was now beaming. He had endeavored to pay a compliment with a lie, and the prompt repudiation of the lie served only to increase his hero-worship.

"Sure, an' a bad beatin' it was," he acknowledged, "but yeh showed the grit of a bunch of wildcats. Soon as I can get me arm free I'm goin' to shake yeh by the hand an' help yeh aise yer young lady."

Frustrated in the struggle to get the crowd back, the referee fired his revolver in the air, and the tug-of-war was on. Pandemonium broke loose. Saxon, protected by the two big men, was near enough to the front to see much that ensued. The men on the rope pulled and strained till their faces were red with effort and their joints crackled. The rope was new, and, as their hands slipped, their wives and daughters sprang in, scooping up the earth in double handfuls and pouring it on the rope and the hands of their men to give them better grip.

A stout, middle-aged woman, carried beyond herself by the passion of the contest, seized the rope and pulled beside her husband, encouraged him with loud cries. A watcher from the opposing team dragged her screaming away and was dropped like a steer by an ear-blow from a partisan from the woman's team. He, in turn, went down, and brawny women joined with their men in the battle. Vainly the judges and watchers begged, pleaded, yelled, and swung with their fists. Men, as well as women, were springing in to the rope and pulling. No longer was it team against team, but all Oakland against all San Francisco, festooned with a free-for-all fight. Hands overlaid hands two and three deep in the struggle to grasp the rope. And hands that found no holds, doubled into bunches of knuckles that impacted on the jaws of the watchers who strove to tear hand-holds from the rope.

Bert yelped with joy, while Mary clung to him, mad with fear. Close to the rope the fighters were going down and being trampled. The dust arose in clouds, while from beyond, all around, unable to get into the battle, could be heard the shrill and impotent rage-screams and rage-yells of women and men.

“Dirty work, dirty work,” Billy muttered over and over; and, though he saw much that occurred, assisted by the friendly Irishman he was coolly and safely working Saxon back out of the melee.

At last the break came. The losing team, accompanied by its host of volunteers, was dragged in a rush over the ground and disappeared under the avalanche of battling forms of the onlookers.

Leaving Saxon under the protection of the Irishman in an outer eddy of calm, Billy plunged back into the mix-up. Several minutes later he emerged with the missing couple — Bert bleeding from a blow on the ear, but hilarious, and Mary rumpled and hysterical.

“This ain’t sport,” she kept repeating. “It’s a shame, a dirty shame.”

“We got to get outa this,” Billy said. “The fun’s only commenced.”

“Aw, wait,” Bert begged. “It’s worth eight dollars. It’s cheap at any price. I ain’t seen so many black eyes and bloody noses in a month of Sundays.”

“Well, go on back an’ enjoy yourself,” Billy commended. “I’ll take the girls up there on the side hill where we can look on. But I won’t give much for your good looks if some of them Micks lands on you.”

The trouble was over in an amazingly short time, for from the judges’ stand beside the track the announcer was bellowing the start of the boys’ foot-race; and Bert, disappointed, joined Billy and the two girls on the hillside looking down upon the track.

There were boys’ races and girls’ races, races of young women and old women, of fat men and fat women, sack races and three-legged races, and the contestants strove around the small track through a Bedlam of cheering supporters. The tug-of-war was already forgotten, and good nature reigned again.

Five young men toed the mark, crouching with fingertips to the ground and waiting the starter's revolver-shot. Three were in their stocking-feet, and the remaining two wore spiked running-shoes.

"Young men's race," Bert read from the program. "An' only one prize — twenty-five dollars. See the red-head with the spikes — the one next to the outside. San Francisco's set on him winning. He's their crack, an' there's a lot of bets up."

"Who's goin' to win?" Mary deferred to Billy's superior athletic knowledge.

"How can I tell!" he answered. "I never saw any of 'em before. But they all look good to me. May the best one win, that's all."

The revolver was fired, and the five runners were off and away. Three were outdistanced at the start. Redhead led, with a black-haired young man at his shoulder, and it was plain that the race lay between these two. Halfway around, the black-haired one took the lead in a spurt that was intended to last to the finish. Ten feet he gained, nor could Red-head cut it down an inch.

"The boy's a streak," Billy commented. "He ain't tryin' his hardest, an' Red-head's just bustin' himself."

Still ten feet in the lead, the black-haired one breasted the tape in a hubbub of cheers. Yet yells of disapproval could be distinguished. Bert hugged himself with joy.

"Mm-mm," he gloated. "Ain't Frisco sore? Watch out for fireworks now. See! He's bein' challenged. The judges ain't payin' him the money. An' he's got a gang behind him. Oh! Oh! Oh! Ain't had so much fun since my old woman broke her leg!"

"Why don't they pay him, Billy?" Saxon asked. "He won."

"The Frisco bunch is challengin' him for a professional," Billy elucidated. "That's what they're all beefin' about. But it ain't right. They all ran for that money, so they're all professional."

The crowd surged and argued and roared in front of the judges' stand. The stand was a rickety, two-story affair, the second story open at the front, and here the judges could be seen debating as heatedly as the crowd beneath them.

"There she starts!" Bert cried. "Oh, you rough-house!"

The black-haired racer, backed by a dozen supporters, was climbing the outside stairs to the judges.

"The purse-holder's his friend," Billy said. "See, he's paid him, an' some of the judges is willin' an' some are beefin'. An' now that other gang's going up — they're Redhead's." He turned to Saxon with a reassuring smile. "We're well out of it this time. There's goin' to be rough stuff down there in a minute."

"The judges are tryin' to make him give the money back," Bert explained. "An' if he don't the other gang'll take it away from him. See! They're reachin' for it now."

High above his head, the winner held the roll of paper containing the twenty-five silver dollars. His gang, around him, was shouldering back those who tried to seize the money. No blows had been struck yet, but the struggle increased until the frail structure shook and swayed. From the crowd beneath the winner was variously addressed: "Give it back, you dog!" "Hang on to it, Tim!" "You won fair, Timmy!" "Give it back, you dirty robber!" Abuse unprintable as well as friendly advice was hurled at him.

The struggle grew more violent. Tim's supporters strove to hold him off the floor so that his hand would still be above the grasping hands that shot up. Once, for an instant, his arm was jerked down. Again it went up. But evidently the paper had broken, and with a last desperate effort, before he went down, Tim flung the coin out in a silvery shower upon the heads of the crowd beneath. Then ensued a weary period of arguing and quarreling.

"I wish they'd finish, so as we could get back to the dancin'," Mary complained. "This ain't no fun."

Slowly and painfully the judges' stand was cleared, and an announcer, stepping to the front of the stand, spread his arms appealing for silence. The angry clamor died down.

"The judges have decided," he shouted, "that this day of good fellowship an' brotherhood — "

"Hear! Hear!" Many of the cooler heads applauded. "That's the stuff!" "No fightin'!" "No hard feelin's!"

"An' therefore," the announcer became audible again, "the judges have decided to put up another purse of twenty-five dollars an' run the race over again!"

"An' Tim?" bellowed scores of throats. "What about Tim?" "He's been robbed!" "The judges is rotten!"

Again the announcer stilled the tumult with his arm appeal.

“The judges have decided, for the sake of good feelin’, that Timothy McManus will also run. If he wins, the money’s his.”

“Now wouldn’t that jar you?” Billy grumbled disgustedly. “If Tim’s eligible now, he was eligible the first time. An’ if he was eligible the first time, then the money was his.”

“Red-head’ll bust himself wide open this time,” Bert jubilated.

“An’ so will Tim,” Billy rejoined. “You can bet he’s mad clean through, and he’ll let out the links he was holdin’ in last time.”

Another quarter of an hour was spent in clearing the track of the excited crowd, and this time only Tim and Red-head toed the mark. The other three young men had abandoned the contest.

The leap of Tim, at the report of the revolver, put him a clean yard in the lead.

“I guess he’s professional, all right, all right,” Billy remarked. “An’ just look at him go!”

Half-way around, Tim led by fifty feet, and, running swiftly, maintaining the same lead, he came down the homestretch an easy winner. When directly beneath the group on the hillside, the incredible and unthinkable happened. Standing close to the inside edge of the track was a dapper young man with a light switch cane. He was distinctly out of place in such a gathering, for upon him was no ear-mark of the working class. Afterward, Bert was of the opinion that he looked like a swell dancing master, while Billy called him “the dude.”

So far as Timothy McManus was concerned, the dapper young man was destiny; for as Tim passed him, the young man, with utmost deliberation, thrust his cane between Tim’s flying legs. Tim sailed through the air in a headlong pitch, struck spread-eagled on his face, and plowed along in a cloud of dust.

There was an instant of vast and gasping silence. The young man, too, seemed petrified by the ghastliness of his deed. It took an appreciable interval of time for him, as well as for the onlookers, to realize what he had done. They recovered first, and from a thousand throats the wild Irish yell went up. Red-head won the race without a cheer. The storm center had shifted to the young man with the cane. After the yell, he had one moment of indecision; then he turned and darted up the track.

“Go it, sport!” Bert cheered, waving his hat in the air. “You’re the goods for me! Who’d a-thought it? Who’d a-thought it? Say! — wouldn’t it, now? Just wouldn’t it?”

“Phew! He’s a streak himself,” Billy admired. “But what did he do it for? He’s no bricklayer.”

Like a frightened rabbit, the mad roar at his heels, the young man tore up the track to an open space on the hillside, up which he clawed and disappeared among the trees. Behind him toiled a hundred vengeful runners.

“It’s too bad he’s missing the rest of it,” Billy said. “Look at ‘em goin’ to it.”

Bert was beside himself. He leaped up and down and cried continuously.

“Look at ‘em! Look at ‘em! Look at ‘em!”

The Oakland faction was outraged. Twice had its favorite runner been jobbed out of the race. This last was only another vile trick of the Frisco faction. So Oakland doubled its brawny fists and swung into San Francisco for blood. And San Francisco, consciously innocent, was no less willing to join issues. To be charged with such a crime was no less monstrous than the crime itself. Besides, for too many tedious hours had the Irish heroically suppressed themselves. Five thousands of them exploded into joyous battle. The women joined with them. The whole amphitheater was filled with the conflict. There were rallies, retreats, charges, and counter-charges. Weaker groups were forced fighting up the hillsides. Other groups, bested, fled among the trees to carry on guerrilla warfare, emerging in sudden dashes to overwhelm isolated enemies. Half a dozen special policemen, hired by the Weasel Park management, received an impartial trouncing from both sides.

“Nobody’s the friend of a policeman,” Bert chortled, dabbing his handkerchief to his injured ear, which still bled.

The bushes crackled behind him, and he sprang aside to let the locked forms of two men go by, rolling over and over down the hill, each striking when uppermost, and followed by a screaming woman who rained blows on the one who was patently not of her clan.

The judges, in the second story of the stand, valiantly withstood a fierce assault until the frail structure toppled to the ground in splinters.

“What’s that woman doing?” Saxon asked, calling attention to an elderly woman beneath them on the track, who had sat down and was pulling from her foot an elastic-sided shoe of generous dimensions.

“Goin’ swimming,” Bert chuckled, as the stocking followed.

They watched, fascinated. The shoe was pulled on again over the bare foot. Then the woman slipped a rock the size of her fist into the stocking, and, brandishing this ancient and horrible weapon, lumbered into the nearest fray.

“Oh! — Oh! — Oh!” Bert screamed, with every blow she struck “Hey, old flannel-mouth! Watch out! You’ll get yours in a second. Oh! Oh! A peach! Did you see it? Hurray for the old lady! Look at her tearin’ into ‘em! Watch out, old girl!... Ah-h-h.”

His voice died away regretfully, as the one with the stocking, whose hair had been clutched from behind by another Amazon, was whirled about in a dizzy semicircle.

Vainly Mary clung to his arm, shaking him back and forth and remonstrating.

“Can’t you be sensible?” she cried. “It’s awful! I tell you it’s awful!”

But Bert was irrepressible.

“Go it, old girl!” he encouraged. “You win! Me for you every time! Now’s your chance! Swat! Oh! My! A peach! A peach!”

“It’s the biggest rough-house I ever saw,” Billy confided to Saxon. “It sure takes the Micks to mix it. But what did that dude wanta do it for? That’s what gets me. He wasn’t a bricklayer — not even a workingman — just a regular sissy dude that didn’t know a livin’ soul in the grounds. But if he wanted to raise a rough-house he certainly done it. Look at ‘em. They’re fightin’ everywhere.”

He broke into sudden laughter, so hearty that the tears came into his eyes.

“What is it?” Saxon asked, anxious not to miss anything.

“It’s that dude,” Billy explained between gusts. “What did he wanta do it for? That’s what gets my goat. What’d he wanta do it for?”

There was more crashing in the brush, and two women erupted upon the scene, one in flight, the other pursuing. Almost ere they could realize it, the little group found itself merged in the astounding conflict that covered, if not the face of creation, at least all the visible landscape of Weasel Park.

The fleeing woman stumbled in rounding the end of a picnic bench, and would have been caught had she not seized Mary’s arm to recover balance, and then flung Mary full into the arms of the woman who pursued. This woman, largely built, middle-aged, and too irate to comprehend, clutched

Mary's hair by one hand and lifted the other to smack her. Before the blow could fall, Billy had seized both the woman's wrists.

"Come on, old girl, cut it out," he said appeasingly. "You're in wrong. She ain't done nothin'."

Then the woman did a strange thing. Making no resistance, but maintaining her hold on the girl's hair, she stood still and calmly began to scream. The scream was hideously compounded of fright and fear. Yet in her face was neither fright nor fear. She regarded Billy coolly and appraisingly, as if to see how he took it — her scream merely the cry to the clan for help.

"Aw, shut up, you battleax!" Bert vociferated, trying to drag her off by the shoulders.

The result was that The four rocked back and forth, while the woman calmly went on screaming. The scream became touched with triumph as more crashing was heard in the brush.

Saxon saw Billy's slow eyes glint suddenly to the hardness of steel, and at the same time she saw him put pressure on his wrist-holds. The woman released her grip on Mary and was shoved back and free. Then the first man of the rescue was upon them. He did not pause to inquire into the merits of the affair. It was sufficient that he saw the woman reeling away from Billy and screaming with pain that was largely feigned.

"It's all a mistake," Billy cried hurriedly. "We apologize, sport — "

The Irishman swung ponderously. Billy ducked, cutting his apology short, and as the sledge-like fist passed over his head, he drove his left to the other's jaw. The big Irishman toppled over sidewise and sprawled on the edge of the slope. Half-scrambled back to his feet and out of balance, he was caught by Bert's fist, and this time went clawing down the slope that was slippery with short, dry grass. Bert was redoubtable. "That for you, old girl — my compliments," was his cry, as he shoved the woman over the edge on to the treacherous slope. Three more men were emerging from the brush.

In the meantime, Billy had put Saxon in behind the protection of the picnic table. Mary, who was hysterical, had evinced a desire to cling to him, and he had sent her sliding across the top of the table to Saxon.

"Come on, you flannel-mouths!" Bert yelled at the newcomers, himself swept away by passion, his black eyes flashing wildly, his dark face inflamed by the too-ready blood. “Come on, you cheap skates! Talk about Gettysburg. We’ll show you all the Americans ain’t dead yet!”

“Shut your trap — we don’t want a scrap with the girls here,” Billy growled harshly, holding his position in front of the table. He turned to the three rescuers, who were bewildered by the lack of anything visible to rescue. “Go on, sports. We don’t want a row. You’re in wrong. They ain’t nothin’ doin’ in the fight line. We don’t wanta fight — d’ye get me?”

They still hesitated, and Billy might have succeeded in avoiding trouble had not the man who had gone down the bank chosen that unfortunate moment to reappear, crawling groggily on hands and knees and showing a bleeding face. Again Bert reached him and sent him downslope, and the other three, with wild yells, sprang in on Billy, who punched, shifted position, ducked and punched, and shifted again ere he struck the third time. His blows were clean end hard, scientifically delivered, with the weight of his body behind.

Saxon, looking on, saw his eyes and learned more about him. She was frightened, but clear-seeing, and she was startled by the disappearance of all depth of light and shadow in his eyes. They showed surface only — a hard, bright surface, almost glazed, devoid of all expression save deadly seriousness. Bert’s eyes showed madness. The eyes of the Irishmen were angry and serious, and yet not all serious. There was a wayward gleam in them, as if they enjoyed the fracas. But in Billy’s eyes was no enjoyment. It was as if he had certain work to do and had doggedly settled down to do it.

Scarcely more expression did she note in the face, though there was nothing in common between it and the one she had seen all day. The boyishness had vanished. This face was mature in a terrifying, ageless way. There was no anger in it, nor was it even pitiless. It seemed to have glazed as hard and passionlessly as his eyes. Something came to her of her wonderful mother’s tales of the ancient Saxons, and he seemed to her one of those Saxons, and she caught a glimpse, on the well of her consciousness, of a long, dark boat, with a prow like the beak of a bird of prey, and of huge, half-naked men, wing-helmeted, and one of their faces, it seemed to her, was his face. She did not reason this. She felt it, and visioned it as by an unthinkable clairvoyance, and gasped, for the flurry of war was over. It had lasted only seconds, Bert was dancing on the edge of the slippery slope and mocking the vanquished who had slid impotently to the bottom. But Billy took charge.

"Come on, you girls," he commanded. "Get onto yourself, Bert. We got to get onta this. We can't fight an army."

He led the retreat, holding Saxon's arm, and Bert, giggling and jubilant, brought up the rear with an indignant Mary who protested vainly in his unheeding ears.

For a hundred yards they ran and twisted through the trees, and then, no signs of pursuit appearing, they slowed down to a dignified saunter. Bert, the trouble-seeker, pricked his ears to the muffled sound of blows and sobs, and stepped aside to investigate.

"Oh! look what I've found!" he called.

They joined him on the edge of a dry ditch and looked down. In the bottom were two men, strays from the fight, grappled together and still fighting. They were weeping out of sheer fatigue and helplessness, and the blows they only occasionally struck were open-handed and ineffectual.

"Hey, you, sport — throw sand in his eyes," Bert counseled. "That's it, blind him an' he's your'n."

"Stop that!" Billy shouted at the man, who was following instructions, "Or I'll come down there an' beat you up myself. It's all over — d'ye get me? It's all over an' everybody's friends. Shake an' make up. The drinks are on both of you. That's right — here, gimme your hand an' I'll pull you out."

They left them shaking hands and brushing each other's clothes.

"It soon will be over," Billy grinned to Saxon. "I know 'em. Fight's fun with them. An' this big scrap's made the days howlin' success. What did I tell you! — look over at that table there."

A group of disheveled men and women, still breathing heavily, were shaking hands all around.

"Come on, let's dance," Mary pleaded, urging them in the direction of the pavilion.

All over the park the warring bricklayers were shaking hands and making up, while the open-air bars were crowded with the drinkers.

Saxon walked very close to Billy. She was proud of him. He could fight, and he could avoid trouble. In all that had occurred he had striven to avoid trouble. And, also, consideration for her and Mary had been uppermost in his mind.

"You are brave," she said to him.

"It's like takin' candy from a baby," he disclaimed. "They only roughhouse. They don't know boxin'. They're wide open, an' all you gotta do is hit ‘em. It ain’t real fightin’, you know.” With a troubled, boyish look in his eyes, he stared at his bruised knuckles. “An’ I’ll have to drive team tomorrow with ‘em,” he lamented. “Which ain’t fun, I’m tellin’ you, when they stiffen up.”

CHAPTER V

At eight o’clock the Al Vista band played “Home, Sweet Home,” and, following the hurried rush through the twilight to the picnic train, the four managed to get double seats facing each other. When the aisles and platforms were packed by the hilarious crowd, the train pulled out for the short run from the suburbs into Oakland. All the car was singing a score of songs at once, and Bert, his head pillowed on Mary’s breast with her arms around him, started “On the Banks of the Wabash.” And he sang the song through, undeterred by the bedlam of two general fights, one on the adjacent platform, the other at the opposite end of the car, both of which were finally subdued by special policemen to the screams of women and the crash of glass.

Billy sang a lugubrious song of many stanzas about a cowboy, the refrain of which was, “Bury me out on the lone pr-rairie.”

“That’s one you never heard before; my father used to sing it,” he told Saxon, who was glad that it was ended.

She had discovered the first flaw in him. He was tonedeaf. Not once had he been on the key.

“I don’t sing often,” he added.

“You bet your sweet life he don’t,” Bert exclaimed. “His friends’d kill him if he did.”

“They all make fun of my singin’,” he complained to Saxon. “Honest, now, do you find it as rotten as all that?”

“It’s... it’s maybe flat a bit,” she admitted reluctantly.

“It don’t sound flat to me,” he protested. “It’s a regular josh on me. I’ll bet Bert put you up to it. You sing something now, Saxon. I bet you sing good. I can tell it from lookin’ at you.”

She began “When the Harvest Days Are Over.” Bert and Mary joined in; but when Billy attempted to add his voice he was dissuaded by a shin-kick from Bert. Saxon sang in a clear, true soprano, thin but sweet, and she was aware that she was singing to Billy.

“Now THAT is singing what is,” he proclaimed, when she had finished. “Sing it again. Aw, go on. You do it just right. It’s great.”

His hand slipped to hers and gathered it in, and as she sang again she felt the tide of his strength flood warmingly through her.

"Look at 'em holdin' hands," Bert jeered. "Just a-holdin' hands like they was afraid. Look at Mary an' me. Come on an' kick in, you cold-feets. Get together. If you don't, it'll look suspicious. I got my suspicions already. You're framin' somethin' up."

There was no mistaking his innuendo, and Saxon felt her cheeks flaming.

"Get onto yourself, Bert," Billy reproved.

"Shut up!" Mary added the weight of her indignation. "You're awfully raw, Bert Wanhope, an' I won't have anything more to do with you — there!"

She withdrew her arms and shoved him away, only to receive him forgivingly half a dozen seconds afterward.

"Come on, the four of us," Bert went on irrepressibly. "The night's young. Let's make a time of it — Pabst's Cafe first, and then some. What you say, Bill? What you say, Saxon? Mary's game."

Saxon waited and wondered, half sick with apprehension of this man beside her whom she had known so short a time.

"Nope," he said slowly. "I gotta get up to a hard day's work to-morrow, and I guess the girls has got to, too."

Saxon forgave him his tone-deafness. Here was the kind of man she always had known existed. It was for some such man that she had waited. She was twenty-two, and her first marriage offer had come when she was sixteen. The last had occurred only the month before, from the foreman of the washing-room, and he had been good and kind, but not young. But this one beside her — he was strong and kind and good, and YOUNG. She was too young herself not to desire youth. There would have been rest from fancy starch with the foreman, but there would have been no warmth. But this man beside her.... She caught herself on the verge involuntarily of pressing his hand that held hers.

"No, Bert, don't tease he's right," Mary was saying. "We've got to get some sleep. It's fancy starch to-morrow, and all day on our feet."

It came to Saxon with a chill pang that she was surely older than Billy. She stole glances at the smoothness of his face, and the essential boyishness of him, so much desired, shocked her. Of course he would marry some girl years younger than himself, than herself. How old was he? Could it be that he was too young for her? As he seemed to grow inaccessible, she was drawn toward him more compellingly. He was so strong, so gentle. She lived over the events of the day. There was no flaw there. He had considered her and Mary, always. And he had torn the program up and danced only with her. Surely he had liked her, or he would not have done it.

She slightly moved her hand in his and felt the harsh contact of his teamster callouses. The sensation was exquisite. He, too, moved his hand, to accommodate the shift of hers, and she waited fearfully. She did not want him to prove like other men, and she could have hated him had he dared to take advantage of that slight movement of her fingers and put his arm around her. He did not, and she flamed toward him. There was fineness in him. He was neither rattle-brained, like Bert, nor coarse like other men she had encountered. For she had had experiences, not nice, and she had been made to suffer by the lack of what was termed chivalry, though she, in turn, lacked that word to describe what she divined and desired.

And he was a prizefighter. The thought of it almost made her gasp. Yet he answered not at all to her conception of a prizefighter. But, then, he wasn't a prizefighter. He had said he was not. She resolved to ask him about it some time if... if he took her out again. Yet there was little doubt of that, for when a man danced with one girl a whole day he did not drop her immediately. Almost she hoped that he was a prizefighter. There was a delicious tickle of wickedness about it. Prizefighters were such terrible and mysterious men. In so far as they were out of the ordinary and were not mere common workingmen such as carpenters and laundrymen, they represented romance. Power also they represented. They did not work for bosses, but spectacularly and magnificently, with their own might, grappled with the great world and wrung splendid living from its reluctant hands. Some of them even owned automobiles and traveled with a retinue of trainers and servants. Perhaps it had been only Billy's modesty that made him say he had quit fighting. And yet, there were the callouses on his hands. That showed he had quit.

CHAPTER VI

They said good-bye at the gate. Billy betrayed awkwardness that was sweet to Saxon. He was not one of the take-it-for-granted young men. There was a pause, while she feigned desire to go into the house, yet waited in secret eagerness for the words she wanted him to say.

"When am I goin' to see you again?" he asked, holding her hand in his.

She laughed consentingly.

"I live 'way up in East Oakland," he explained. "You know there's where the stable is, an' most of our teaming is done in that section, so I don't knock around down this way much. But, say — " His hand tightened on hers. "We just gotta dance together some more. I'll tell you, the Orindore Club has its dance Wednesday. If you haven't a date — have you?"

"No," she said.

"Then Wednesday. What time'll I come for you?"

And when they had arranged the details, and he had agreed that she should dance some of the dances with the other fellows, and said good night again, his hand closed more tightly on hers and drew her toward him. She resisted slightly, but honestly. It was the custom, but she felt she ought not for fear he might misunderstand. And yet she wanted to kiss him as she had never wanted to kiss a man. When it came, her face upturned to his, she realized that on his part it was an honest kiss. There hinted nothing behind it. Rugged and kind as himself, it was virginal almost, and betrayed no long practice in the art of saying good-bye. All men were not brutes after all, was her thought.

"Good night," she murmured; the gate screeched under her hand; and she hurried along the narrow walk that led around to the corner of the house.

"Wednesday," he celled softly.

"Wednesday," she answered.

But in the shadow of the narrow alley between the two houses she stood still and pleasured in the ring of his foot falls down the cement sidewalk. Not until they had quite died away did she go on. She crept up the back stairs and across the kitchen to her room, registering her thanksgiving that Sarah was asleep.

She lighted the gas, and, as she removed the little velvet hat, she felt her lips still tingling with the kiss. Yet it had meant nothing. It was the way of the young men. They all did it. But their good-night kisses had never tingled, while this one tingled in her brain as wall as on her lip. What was it? What did it mean? With a sudden impulse she looked at herself in the glass. The eyes were happy and bright. The color that tinted her cheeks so easily was in them and glowing. It was a pretty reflection, and she smiled, partly in joy, partly in appreciation, and the smile grew at sight of the even rows of strong white teeth. Why shouldn't Billy like that face? was her unvoiced query. Other men had liked it. Other men did like it. Even the other girls admitted she was a good-looker. Charley Long certainly liked it from the way he made life miserable for her.

She glanced aside to the rim of the looking-glass where his photograph was wedged, shuddered, and made a moue of distaste. There was cruelty in those eyes, and brutishness. He was a brute. For a year, now, he had bullied her. Other fellows were afraid to go with her. He warned them off. She had been forced into almost slavery to his attentions. She remembered the young bookkeeper at the laundry — not a workingman, but a soft-handed, soft-voiced gentleman — whom Charley had beaten up at the corner because he had been bold enough to come to take her to the theater. And she had been helpless. For his own sake she had never dared accept another invitation to go out with him.

And now, Wednesday night, she was going with Billy. Billy! Her heart leaped. There would be trouble, but Billy would save her from him. She'd like to see him try and beat Billy up.

With a quick movement, she jerked the photograph from its niche and threw it face down upon the chest of drawers. It fell beside a small square case of dark and tarnished leather. With a feeling as of profanation she again seized the offending photograph and flung it across the room into a corner. At the same time she picked up the leather case. Springing it open, she gazed at the daguerreotype of a worn little woman with steady gray eyes and a hopeful, pathetic mouth. Opposite, on the velvet lining, done in gold lettering, was, CARLTON FROM DAISY. She read it reverently, for it represented the father she had never known, and the mother she had so little known, though she could never forget that those wise sad eyes were gray.

Despite lack of conventional religion, Saxon's nature was deeply religious. Her thoughts of God were vague and nebulous, and there she was frankly puzzled. She could not vision God. Here, in the daguerreotype, was the concrete; much she had grasped from it, and always there seemed an infinite more to grasp. She did not go to church. This was her high altar and holy of holies. She came to it in trouble, in loneliness, for counsel, divination, end comfort. In so far as she found herself different from the girls of her acquaintance, she quested here to try to identify her characteristics in the pictured face. Her mother had been different from other women, too. This, forsooth, meant to her what God meant to others. To this she strove to be true, and not to hurt nor vex. And how little she really knew of her mother, and of how much was conjecture and surmise, she was unaware; for it was through many years she had erected this mother-myth.

Yet was it all myth? She resented the doubt with quick jealousy, and, opening the bottom drawer of the chest, drew forth a battered portfolio. Out rolled manuscripts, faded and worn, and arose a faint far scent of sweet-kept age. The writing was delicate and curled, with the quaint fineness of half a century before. She read a stanza to herself:

“Sweet as a wind-lute’s airy strains Your gentle muse has learned to sing, And California’s boundless plains Prolong the soft notes echoing.”

She wondered, for the thousandth time, what a windlute was; yet much of beauty, much of beyondness, she sensed of this dimly remembered beautiful mother of hers. She communed a while, then unrolled a second manuscript. “To C. B.,” it read. To Carlton Brown, she knew, to her father, a love-poem from her mother. Saxon pondered the opening lines:

“I have stolen away from the crowd in the groves, Where the nude statues stand, and the leaves point and shiver At ivy-crowned Bacchus, the Queen of the Loves, Pandora and Psyche, struck voiceless forever.”

This, too, was beyond her. But she breathed the beauty of it. Bacchus, and Pandora and Psyche — talismans to conjure with! But alas! the necromancy was her mother’s. Strange, meaningless words that meant so much! Her marvelous mother had known their meaning. Saxon spelled the three words aloud, letter by letter, for she did not dare their pronunciation; and in her consciousness glimmered august connotations, profound and unthinkable. Her mind stumbled and halted on the star-bright and dazzling boundaries of a world beyond her world in which her mother had roamed at will. Again and again, solemnly, she went over the four lines. They were radiance and light to the world, haunted with phantoms of pain and unrest, in which she had her being. There, hidden among those cryptic singing lines, was the clue. If she could only grasp it, all would be made clear. Of this she was sublimely confident. She would understand Sarah's sharp tongue, her unhappy brother, the cruelty of Charley Long, the justness of the bookkeeper's beating, the day-long, month-long, year-long toil at the ironing-board.

She skipped a stanza that she knew was hopelessly beyond her, and tried again:

"The dusk of the greenhouse is luminous yet
With quivers of opal and tremors of gold;
For the sun is at rest, and the light from the west,
Like delicate wine that is mellow and old,

"Flushes faintly the brow of a naiad that stands In the spray of a fountain, whose seed-amethysts Tremble lightly a moment on bosom and hands, Then dip in their basin from bosom and wrists."

"It's beautiful, just beautiful," she sighed. And then, appalled at the length of all the poem, at the volume of the mystery, she rolled the manuscript and put it away. Again she dipped in the drawer, seeking the clue among the cherished fragments of her mother's hidden soul.

This time it was a small package, wrapped in tissue paper and tied with ribbon. She opened it carefully, with the deep gravity and circumstance of a priest before an altar. Appeared a little red-satin Spanish girdle, whale-boned like a tiny corset, pointed, the pioneer finery of a frontier woman who had crossed the plains. It was hand-made after the California-Spanish model of forgotten days. The very whalebone had been home-shaped of the raw material from the whaleships traded for in hides and tallow. The black lace trimming her mother had made. The triple edging of black velvet strips — her mother's hands had sewn the stitches.

Saxon dreamed over it in a maze of incoherent thought. This was concrete. This she understood. This she worshiped as man-created gods have been worshiped on less tangible evidence of their sojourn on earth.

Twenty-two inches it measured around. She knew it out of many verifications. She stood up and put it about her waist. This was part of the ritual. It almost met. In places it did meet. Without her dress it would meet everywhere as it had met on her mother. Closest of all, this survival of old California-Ventura days brought Saxon in touch. Hers was her mother's form. Physically, she was like her mother. Her grit, her ability to turn off work that was such an amazement to others, were her mother's. Just so had her mother been an amazement to her generation — her mother, the toy-like creature, the smallest and the youngest of the strapping pioneer brood, who nevertheless had mothered the brood. Always it had been her wisdom that was sought, even by the brothers and sisters a dozen years her senior. Daisy, it was, who had put her tiny foot down and commanded the removal from the fever flatlands of Colusa to the healthy mountains of Ventura; who had backed the savage old Indian-fighter of a father into a corner and fought the entire family that Vila might marry the man of her choice; who had flown in the face of the family and of community morality and demanded the divorce of Laura from her criminally weak husband; and who on the other hand, had held the branches of the family together when only misunderstanding and weak humanness threatened to drive them apart.

The peacemaker and the warrior! All the old tales trooped before Saxon's eyes. They were sharp with detail, for she had visioned them many times, though their content was of things she had never seen. So far as details were concerned, they were her own creation, for she had never seen an ox, a wild Indian, nor a prairie schooner. Yet, palpitating and real, shimmering in the sun-flashed dust of ten thousand hoofs, she saw pass, from East to West, across a continent, the great hegira of the land-hungry Anglo-Saxon. It was part and fiber of her. She had been nursed on its traditions and its facts from the lips of those who had taken part. Clearly she saw the long wagon-train, the lean, gaunt men who walked before, the youths goading the lowing oxen that fell and were goaded to their feet to fall again. And through it all, a flying shuttle, weaving the golden dazzling thread of personality, moved the form of her little, indomitable mother, eight years old, and nine ere the great traverse was ended, a necromancer and a law-giver, willing her way, and the way and the willing always good and right.

Saxon saw Punch, the little, rough-coated Skye-terrier with the honest eyes (who had plodded for weary months), gone lame and abandoned; she saw Daisy, the chit of a child, hide Punch in the wagon. She saw the savage old worried father discover the added burden of the several pounds to the dying oxen. She saw his wrath, as he held Punch by the scruff of the neck. And she saw Daisy, between the muzzle of the long-barreled rifle and the little dog. And she saw Daisy thereafter, through days of alkali and heat, walking, stumbling, in the dust of the wagons, the little sick dog, like a baby, in her arms.

But most vivid of all, Saxon saw the fight at Little Meadow — and Daisy, dressed as for a gala day, in white, a ribbon sash about her waist, ribbons and a round-comb in her hair, in her hands small water-pails, step forth into the sunshine on the flower-grown open ground from the wagon circle, wheels interlocked, where the wounded screamed their delirium and babbled of flowing fountains, and go on, through the sunshine and the wonder-inhibition of the bullet-dealing Indians, a hundred yards to the waterhole and back again.

Saxon kissed the little, red satin Spanish girdle passionately, and wrapped it up in haste, with dewy eyes, abandoning the mystery and godhead of mother and all the strange enigma of living.

In bed, she projected against her closed eyelids the few rich scenes of her mother that her child-memory retained. It was her favorite way of wooing sleep. She had done it all her life — sunk into the death-blackness of sleep with her mother limned to the last on her fading consciousness. But this mother was not the Daisy of the plains nor of the daguerreotype. They had been before Saxon's time. This that she saw nightly was an older mother, broken with insomnia and brave with sorrow, who crept, always crept, a pale, frail creature, gentle and unfaltering, dying from lack of sleep, living by will, and by will refraining from going mad, who, nevertheless, could not will sleep, and whom not even the whole tribe of doctors could make sleep. Crept — always she crept, about the house, from weary bed to weary chair and back again through long days and weeks of torment, never complaining, though her unfailing smile was twisted with pain, and the wise gray eyes, still wise and gray, were grown unutterably larger and profoundly deep.

But on this night Saxon did not win to sleep quickly; the little creeping mother came and went; and in the intervals the face of Billy, with the cloud-drifted, sullen, handsome eyes, burned against her eyelids. And once again, as sleep welled up to smother her, she put to herself the question IS THIS THE MAN?

CHAPTER VII

Tun work in the ironing-room slipped off, but the three days until Wednesday night were very long. She hummed over the fancy starch that flew under the iron at an astounding rate.

"I can't see how you do it," Mary admired. "You'll make thirteen or fourteen this week at that rate."

Saxon laughed, and in the steam from the iron she saw dancing golden letters that spelled WEDNESDAY.

"What do you think of Billy?" Mary asked.

"I like him," was the frank answer.

"Well, don't let it go farther than that."

"I will if I want to," Saxon retorted gaily.

"Better not," came the warning. "You'll only make trouble for yourself. He ain't marryin'. Many a girl's found that out. They just throw themselves at his head, too."

"I'm not going to throw myself at him, or any other man."

"Just thought I'd tell you," Mary concluded. "A word to the wise."

Saxon had become grave.

"He's not... not..." she began, than looked the significance of the question she could not complete.

"Oh, nothin' like that — though there's nothin' to stop him. He's straight, all right, all right. But he just won't fall for anything in skirts. He dances, an' runs around, an' has a good time, an' beyond that — nitsky. A lot of 'em's got fooled on him. I bet you there's a dozen girls in love with him right now. An' he just goes on turnin' 'em down. There was Lily Sanderson — you know her. You seen her at that Slavonic picnic last summer at Shellmound — that tall, nice-lookin' blonde that was with Butch Willows?"

"Yes, I remember her," Saxon sald. "What about her?"

"Well, she'd been runnin' with Butch Willows pretty steady, an' just because she could dance, Billy dances a lot with her. Butch ain't afraid of nothin'. He wades right in for a showdown, an' nails Billy outside, before everybody, an' reads the riot act. An' Billy listens in that slow, sleepy way of his, an' Butch gets hotter an' hotter, an' everybody expects a scrap.

"An' then Billy says to Butch, 'Are you done?' 'Yes,' Butch says; 'I've said my say, an' what are you goin' to do about it?' An' Billy says — an' what d’ye think he said, with everybody lookin’ on an’ Butch with blood in his eye? Well, he said, ‘I guess nothin’, Butch.’ Just like that. Butch was that surprised you could knocked him over with a feather. ‘An’ never dance with her no more?’ he says. ‘Not if you say I can’t, Butch,’ Billy says. Just like that.

“Well, you know, any other man to take water the way he did from Butch — why, everybody’d despise him. But not Billy. You see, he can afford to. He’s got a rep as a fighter, an’ when he just stood back ‘an’ let Butch have his way, everybody knew he wasn’t scared, or backin’ down, or anything. He didn’t care a rap for Lily Sanderson, that was all, an’ anybody could see she was just crazy after him.”

The telling of this episode caused Saxon no little worry. Hers was the average woman’s pride, but in the matter of man-conquering prowess she was not unduly conceited. Billy had enjoyed her dancing, and she wondered if that were all. If Charley Long bullied up to him would he let her go as he had let Lily Sanderson go? He was not a marrying man; nor could Saxon blind her eyes to the fact that he was eminently marriageable. No wonder the girls ran after him. And he was a man-subduer as well as a woman-subduer. Men liked him. Bert Wanhope seemed actually to love him. She remembered the Butchertown tough in the dining-room at Weasel Park who had come over to the table to apologize, and the Irishman at the tug-of-war who had abandoned all thought of fighting with him the moment he learned his identity.

A very much spoiled young man was a thought that flitted frequently through Saxon’s mind; and each time she condemned it as ungenerous. He was gentle in that tantalizing slow way of his. Despite his strength, he did not walk rough-shod over others. There was the affair with Lily Sanderson. Saxon analysed it again and again. He had not cared for the girl, and he had immediately stepped from between her and Butch. It was just the thing that Bert, out of sheer wickedness and love of trouble, would not have done. There would have been a fight, hard feelings, Butch turned into an enemy, and nothing profited to Lily. But Billy had done the right thing — done it slowly and imperturbably and with the least hurt to everybody. All of which made him more desirable to Saxon and less possible.

She bought another pair of silk stockings that she had hesitated at for weeks, and on Tuesday night sewed and drowsed wearily over a new shirtwaist and earned complaint from Sarah concerning her extravagant use of gas.

Wednesday night, at the Orindore dance, was not all undiluted pleasure. It was shameless the way the girls made up to Billy, and, at times, Saxon found his easy consideration for them almost irritating. Yet she was compelled to acknowledge to herself that he hurt none of the other fellows' feelings in the way the girls hurt hers. They all but asked him outright to dance with them, and little of their open pursuit of him escaped her eyes. She resolved that she would not be guilty of throwing herself at him, and withheld dance after dance, and yet was secretly and thrillingly aware that she was pursuing the right tactics. She deliberately demonstrated that she was desirable to other men, as he involuntarily demonstrated his own desirableness to the women.

Her happiness came when he coolly overrode her objections and insisted on two dances more than she had allotted him. And she was pleased, as well as angered, when she chanced to overhear two of the strapping young cannery girls. "The way that little sawed-off is monopolizin' him," said one. And the other: "You'd think she might have the good taste to run after somebody of her own age." "Cradle-snatcher," was the final sting that sent the angry blood into Saxon's cheeks as the two girls moved away, unaware that they had been overheard.

Billy saw her home, kissed her at the gate, and got her consent to go with him to the dance at Germania Hall on Friday night.

"I wasn't thinkin' of goin'," he sald. "But if you'll say the word... Bert's goin' to be there."

Next day, at the ironing boards, Mary told her that she and Bert were dated for Germania Hall.

"Are you goin'?" Mary asked.

Saxon nodded.

"Billy Roberts?"

The nod was repeated, and Mary, with suspended iron, gave her a long and curions look.

"Say, an' what if Charley Long butts in?"

Saxon shrugged her shoulders.

They ironed swiftly and silently for a quarter of an hour.

"Well," Mary decided, "if he does butt in maybe he'll get his. I'd like to see him get it — the big stiff! It all depends how Billy feels — about you, I mean.”

“I’m no Lily Sanderson,” Saxon answered indignantly. “I’ll never give Billy Roberts a chance to turn me down.”

“You will, if Charley Long butts in. Take it from me, Saxon, he ain’t no gentleman. Look what he done to Mr. Moody. That was a awful beatin’. An’ Mr. Moody only a quiet little man that wouldn’t harm a fly. Well, he won’t find Billy Roberts a sissy by a long shot.”

That night, outside the laundry entrance, Saxon found Charley Long waiting. As he stepped forward to greet her and walk alongside, she felt the sickening palpitation that he had so thoroughly taught her to know. The blood ebbed from her face with the apprehension and fear his appearance caused. She was afraid of the rough bulk of the man; of the heavy brown eyes, dominant and confident; of the big blacksmith-hands and the thick strong fingers with the hair-pads on the back to every first joint. He was unlovely to the eye, and he was unlovely to all her finer sensibilities. It was not his strength itself, but the quality of it and the misuse of it, that affronted her. The beating he had given the gentle Mr. Moody had meant half-hours of horror to her afterward. Always did the memory of it come to her accompanied by a shudder. And yet, without shock, she had seen Billy fight at Weasel Park in the same primitive man-animal way. But it had been different. She recognized, but could not analyze, the difference. She was aware only of the brutishness of this man’s hands and mind.

“You’re lookin’ white an’ all beat to a frazzle,” he was saying. “Why don’t you cut the work? You got to some time, anyway. You can’t lose me, kid.”

“I wish I could,” she replied.

He laughed with harsh joviality. “Nothin’ to it, Saxon. You’re just cut out to be Mrs. Long, an’ you’re sure goin’ to be.”

“I wish I was as certain about all things as you are,” she said with mild sarcasm that missed.

“Take it from me,” he went on, “there’s just one thing you can be certain of — an’ that is that I am certain.” He was pleased with the cleverness of his idea and laughed approvingly. “When I go after anything I get it, an’ if anything gets in between it gets hurt. D’ye get that? It’s me for you, an’ that’s all there is to it, so you might as well make up your mind and go to workin’ in my home instead of the laundry. Why, it’s a snap. There wouldn’t be much to do. I make good money, an’ you wouldn’t want for anything.

You know, I just washed up from work an' skinned over here to tell it to you once more, so you wouldn't forget. I ain't ate yet, an' that shows how much I think of you."

"You'd better go and eat then," she advised, though she knew the futility of attempting to get rid of him.

She scarcely heard what he said. It had come upon her suddenly that she was very tired and very small and very weak alongside this colossus of a man. Would he dog her always? she asked despairingly, and seemed to glimpse a vision of all her future life stretched out before her, with always the form and face of the burly blacksmith pursuing her.

"Come on, kid, an' kick in," he continued. "It's the good old summer time, an' that's the time to get married."

"But I'm not going to marry you," she protested. "I've told you a thousand times already."

"Aw, forget it. You want to get them ideas out of your think-box. Of course, you're goin' to marry me. It's a pipe. An' I'll tell you another pipe. You an' me's goin' acrost to Frisco Friday night. There's goin' to be big doin's with the Horseshoers."

"Only I'm not," she contradicted.

"Oh, yes you are," he asserted with absolute assurance. "We'll catch the last boat back, an' you'll have one fine time. An' I'll put you next to some of the good dancers. Oh, I ain't a pincher, an' I know you like dancin'."

"But I tell you I can't," she reiterated.

He shot a glance of suspicion at her from under the black thatch of brows that met above his nose and were as one brow.

"Why can't you?"

"A date," she said.

"Who's the bloke?"

"None of your business, Charley Long. I've got a date, that's all."

"I'll make it my business. Remember that lah-de-dah bookkeeper rummy? Well, just keep on rememberin' him an' what he got."

"I wish you'd leave me alone," she pleaded resentfully. "Can't you be kind just for once?"

The blacksmith laughed unpleasantly.

"If any rummy thinks he can butt in on you an' me, he'll learn different, an' I'm the little boy that'll learn 'm. — Friday night, eh? Where?"

"I won't tell you."

“Where?” he repeated.

Her lips were drawn in tight silence, and in her cheeks were little angry spots of blood.

“Huh! — As if I couldn’t guess! Germania Hall. Well, I’ll be there, an’ I’ll take you home afterward. D’ye get that? An’ you’d better tell the rummy to beat it unless you want to see’m get his face hurt.”

Saxon, hurt as a prideful woman can be hurt by cavalier treatment, was tempted to cry out the name and prowess of her new-found protector. And then came fear. This was a big man, and Billy was only a boy. That was the way he affected her. She remembered her first impression of his hands and glanced quickly at the hands of the man beside her. They seemed twice as large as Billy’s, and the mats of hair seemed to advertise a terrible strength. No, Billy could not fight this big brute. He must not. And then to Saxon came a wicked little hope that by the mysterious and unthinkable ability that prizefighters possessed, Billy might be able to whip this bully and rid her of him. With the next glance doubt came again, for her eye dwelt on the blacksmith’s broad shoulders, the cloth of the coat muscle-wrinkled and the sleeves bulging above the biceps.

“If you lay a hand on anybody I’m going with again —-“ she began.

“Why, they’ll get hurt, of course,” Long grinned. “And they’ll deserve it, too. Any rummy that comes between a fellow an’ his girl ought to get hurt.”

“But I’m not your girl, and all your saying so doesn’t make it so.”

“That’s right, get mad,” he approved. “I like you for that, too. You’ve got spunk an’ fight. I like to see it. It’s what a man needs in his wife — and not these fat cows of women. They’re the dead ones. Now you’re a live one, all wool, a yard long and a yard wide.”

She stopped before the house and put her hand on the gate.

“Good-bye,” she said. “I’m going in.”

“Come on out afterward for a run to Idora Park,” he suggested.

“No, I’m not feeling good, and I’m going straight to bed as soon as I eat supper.”

“Huh!” he sneered. “Gettin’ in shape for the fling to-morrow night, eh?”

With an impatient movement she opened the gate and stepped inside.

“I’ve given it to you straight,” he went on. “If you don’t go with me to-morrow night somebody’ll get hurt.”

“I hope it will be you,” she cried vindictively.

He laughed as he threw his head back, stretched his big chest, and half-lifted his heavy arms. The action reminded her disgustingly of a great ape she had once seen in a circus.

“Well, good-bye,” he said. “See you to-morrow night at Germania Hall.”

“I haven’t told you it was Germania Hall.”

“And you haven’t told me it wasn’t. All the same, I’ll be there. And I’ll take you home, too. Be sure an’ keep plenty of round dances open fer me. That’s right. Get mad. It makes you look fine.”

CHAPTER VIII

The music stopped at the end of the waltz, leaving Billy and Saxon at the big entrance doorway of the ballroom. Her hand rested lightly on his arm, and they were promenading on to find seats, when Charley Long, evidently just arrived, thrust his way in front of them.

“So you’re the buttinsky, eh?” he demanded, his face malignant with passion and menace.

“Who? — me?” Billy queried gently. “Some mistake, sport. I never butt in.”

“You’re goin’ to get your head beaten off if you don’t make yourself scarce pretty lively.”

“I wouldn’t want that to happen for the world,” Billy drawled. “Come on, Saxon. This neighborhood’s unhealthy for us.”

He started to go on with her, but Long thrust in front again.

“You’re too fresh to keep, young fellow,” he snarled. “You need saltin’ down. D’ye get me?”

Billy scratched his head, on his face exaggerated puzzlement.

“No, I don’t get you,” he said. “Now just what was it you said?”

But the big blacksmith turned contemptuously away from him to Saxon.

“Come here, you. Let’s see your program.”

“Do you want to dance with him?” Billy asked.

She shook her head.

“Sorry, sport, nothin’ doin’,” Billy said, again making to start on.

For the third time the blacksmith blocked the way.

“Get off your foot,” said Billy. “You’re standin’ on it.”

Long all but sprang upon him, his hands clenched, one arm just starting back for the punch while at the same instant shoulders and chest were coming forward. But he restrained himself at sight of Billy’s unstartled body and cold and cloudy ayes. He had made no move of mind or muscle. It was as if he were unaware of the threatened attack. All of which constituted a new thing in Long’s experience.

“Maybe you don’t know who I am,” he bullied.

“Yep, I do,” Billy answered airily. “You’re a record-breaker at rough-housin’.” (Here Long’s face showed pleasure.) “You ought to have the

Police Gazette diamond belt for rough-bousin' baby buggies'. I guess there ain't a one you're afraid to tackle."

"Leave 'm alone, Charley," advised one of the young men who had crowded about them. "He's Bill Roberts, the fighter. You know'm. Big Bill."

"I don't care if he's Jim Jeffries. He can't butt in on me this way."

Nevertheless it was noticeable, even to Saxon, that the fire had gone out of his fierceness. Billy's name seemed to have a quieting effect on obstreperous males.

"Do you know him?" Billy asked her.

She signified yes with her eyes, though it seemed she must cry out a thousand things against this man who so steadfastly persecuted her. Billy turned to the blacksmith.

"Look here, sport, you don't want trouble with me. I've got your number. Besides, what do we want to fight for? Hasn't she got a say so in the matter?"

"No, she hasn't. This is my affair an' yourn."

Billy shook his head slowly. "No; you're in wrong. I think she has a say in the matter."

"Well, say it then," Long snarled at Saxon, "who're you goin' to go with? — me or him? Let's get it settled."

For reply, Saxon reached her free hand over to the hand that rested on Billy's arm.

"Nuff said," was Billy's remark.

Long glared at Saxon, then transferred the glare to her protector.

"I've a good mind to mix it with you anyway," Long gritted through his teeth.

Saxon was elated as they started to move away. Lily Sanderson's fate had not been hers, and her wonderful man-boy, without the threat of a blow, slow of speech and imperturbable, had conquered the big blacksmith.

"He's forced himself upon me all the time," she whispered to Billy. "He's tried to run me, and beaten up every man that came near me. I never want to see him again."

Billy halted immediately. Long, who was reluctantly moving to get out of the way, also halted.

"She says she don't want anything more to do with you," Billy said to him. "An' what she says goes. If I get a whisper any time that you've been botherin' her, I'll attend to your case. D'ye get that?"

Long glowered and remained silent.

"D'ye get that?" Billy repeated, more imperatively.

A growl of assent came from the blacksmith

"All right, then. See you remember it. An' now get outa the way or I'll walk over you."

Long slunk back, muttering inarticulate threats, and Saxon moved on as in a dream. Charley Long had taken water. He had been afraid of this smooth-skinned, blue-eyed boy. She was quit of him — something no other man had dared attempt for her. And Billy had liked her better than Lily Sanderson.

Twice Saxon tried to tell Billy the details of her acquaintance with Long, but each time was put off.

"I don't care a rap about it," Billy said the second time. "You're here, ain't you?"

But she insisted, and when, worked up and angry by the recital, she had finished, he patted her hand soothingly.

"It's all right, Saxon," he said. "He's just a big stiff. I took his measure as soon as I looked at him. He won't bother you again. I know his kind. He's a dog. Roughhouse? He couldn't rough-house a milk wagon."

"But how do you do it?" she asked breathlessly. "Why are men so afraid of you? You're just wonderful."

He smiled in an embarrassed way and changed the subject.

"Say," he said, "I like your teeth. They're so white an' regular, an' not big, an' not dinky little baby's teeth either. They're ... they're just right, an' they fit you. I never seen such fine teeth on a girl yet. D'ye know, honest, they kind of make me hungry when I look at 'em. They're good enough to eat."

At midnight, leaving the insatiable Bert and Mary still dancing, Billy and Saxon started for home. It was on his suggestion that they left early, and he felt called upon to explain.

"It's one thing the fightin' game's taught me," he said. "To take care of myself. A fellow can't work all day and dance all night and keep in condition. It's the same way with drinkin' — an' not that I'm a little tin angel. I know what it is. I've been soused to the guards an' all the rest of it. I like my beer — big schooners of it; but I don't drink all I want of it. I've tried, but it don't pay. Take that big stiff to-night that butted in on us. He ought to had my number. He's a dog anyway, but besides he had beer bloat. I sized that up the first rattle, an' that's the difference about who takes the other fellow's number. Condition, that's what it is."

"But he is so big," Saxon protested. "Why, his fists are twice as big as yours."

"That don't mean anything. What counts is what's behind the fists. He'd turn loose like a buckin' bronco. If I couldn't drop him at the start, all I'd do is to keep away, smother up, an' wait. An' all of a sudden he'd blow up — go all to pieces, you know, wind, heart, everything, and then I'd have him where I wanted him. And the point is he knows it, too."

"You're the first prizefighter I ever knew," Saxon said, after a pause.

"I'm not any more," he disclaimed hastily. "That's one thing the fightin' game taught me — to leave it alone. It don't pay. A fellow trains as fine as silk — till he's all silk, his skin, everything, and he's fit to live for a hundred years; an' then he climbs through the ropes for a hard twenty rounds with some tough customer that's just as good as he is, and in those twenty rounds he frazzles out all his silk an' blows in a year of his life. Yes, sometimes he blows in five years of it, or cuts it in half, or uses up all of it. I've watched 'em. I've seen fellows strong as bulls fight a hard battle and die inside the year of consumption, or kidney disease, or anything else. Now what's the good of it? Money can't buy what they throw away. That's why I quit the game and went back to drivin' team. I got my silk, an' I'm goin' to keep it, that's all."

"It must make you feel proud to know you are the master of other men," she said softly, aware herself of pride in the strength and skill of him.

"It does," he admitted frankly. "I'm glad I went into the game — just as glad as I am that I pulled out of it.... Yep, it's taught me a lot — to keep my eyes open an' my head cool. Oh, I've got a temper, a peach of a temper. I get scared of myself sometimes. I used to be always breakin' loose. But the fightin' taught me to keep down the steam an' not do things I'd be sorry for afterward."

"Why, you're the sweetest, easiest tempered man I know," she interjected.

"Don't you believe it. Just watch me, and sometime you'll see me break out that bad that I won't know what I'm doin' myself. Oh, I'm a holy terror when I get started!"

This tacit promise of continued acquaintance gave Saxon a little joy-thrill.

“Say,” he said, as they neared her neighborhood, “what are you doin’ next Sunday?”

“Nothing. No plans at all.”

“Well, suppose you an’ me go buggy-riding all day out in the hills?”

She did not answer immediately, and for the moment she was seeing the nightmare vision of her last buggy-ride; of her fear and her leap from the buggy; and of the long miles and the stumbling through the darkness in thin-soled shoes that bruised her feet on every rock. And then it came to her with a great swell of joy that this man beside her was not such a man.

“I love horses,” she said. “I almost love them better than I do dancing, only I don’t know anything about them. My father rode a great roan war-horse. He was a captain of cavalry, you know. I never saw him, but somehow I always can see him on that big horse, with a sash around his waist and his sword at his side. My brother George has the sword now, but Tom — he’s the brother I live with says it is mine because it wasn’t his father’s. You see, they’re only my half-brothers. I was the only child by my mother’s second marriage. That was her real marriage — her love-marriage, I mean.”

Saxon ceased abruptly, embarrassed by her own garrulity; and yet the impulse was strong to tell this young man all about herself, and it seemed to her that these far memories were a large part of her.

“Go on an’ tell me about it,” Billy urged. “I like to hear about the old people of the old days. My people was along in there, too, an’ somehow I think it was a better world to live in than now. Things was more sensible and natural. I don’t exactly say what I mean. But it’s like this: I don’t understand life to-day. There’s the labor unions an’ employers’ associations, an’ strikes’, an’ hard times, an’ huntin’ for jobs, an’ all the rest. Things wasn’t like that in the old days. Everybody farmed, an’ shot their meat, an’ got enough to eat, an’ took care of their old folks. But now it’s all a mix-up that I can’t understand. Mebbe I’m a fool, I don’t know. But, anyway, go ahead an’ tell us about your mother.”

“Well, you see, when she was only a young woman she and Captain Brown fell in love. He was a soldier then, before the war. And he was ordered East for the war when she was away nursing her sister Laura. And then came the news that he was killed at Shiloh. And she married a man who had loved her for years and years. He was a boy in the same wagon-train coming across the plains. She liked him, but she didn't love him. And afterward came the news that my father wasn't killed after all. So it made her very sad, but it did not spoil her life. She was a good mother end a good wife and all that, but she was always sad, and sweet, and gentle, and I think her voice was the most beautiful in the world."

"She was game, all right," Billy approved.

"And my father never married. He loved her all the time. I've got a lovely poem home that she wrote to him. It's just wonderful, and it sings like music. Well, long, long afterward her husband died, and then she and my father made their love marriage. They didn't get married until 1882, and she was pretty well along."

More she told him, as they stood by the gate, and Saxon tried to think that the good-bye kiss was a trifle longer than just ordinary.

"How about nine o'clock?" he queried across the gate. "Don't bother about lunch or anything. I'll fix all that up. You just be ready at nine."

CHAPTER IX

Sunday morning Saxon was beforehand in getting ready, and on her return to the kitchen from her second journey to peep through the front windows, Sarah began her customary attack.

"It's a shame an' a disgrace the way some people can afford silk stockings," she began. "Look at me, a-toilin' and a-stewin' day an' night, and I never get silk stockings — nor shoes, three pairs of them all at one time. But there's a just God in heaven, and there'll be some mighty big surprises for some when the end comes and folks get passed out what's comin' to them."

Tom, smoking his pipe and cuddling his youngest-born on his knees, dropped an eyelid surreptitiously on his cheek in token that Sarah was in a tantrum. Saxon devoted herself to tying a ribbon in the hair of one of the little girls. Sarah lumbered heavily about the kitchen, washing and putting away the breakfast dishes. She straightened her back from the sink with a groan and glared at Saxon with fresh hostility.

"You ain't sayin' anything, eh? An' why don't you? Because I guess you still got some natural shame in you a-runnin' with a prizefighter. Oh, I've heard about your goings-on with Bill Roberts. A nice specimen he is. But just you wait till Charley Long gets his hands on him, that's all."

"Oh, I don't know," Tom intervened. "Bill Roberts is a pretty good boy from what I hear."

Saxon smiled with superior knowledge, and Sarah, catching her, was infuriated.

"Why don't you marry Charley Long? He's crazy for you, and he ain't a drinkin' man."

"I guess he gets outside his share of beer," Saxon retorted.

"That's right," her brother supplemented. "An' I know for a fact that he keeps a keg in the house all the time as well."

"Maybe you've been guzzling from it," Sarah snapped.

"Maybe I have," Tom said, wiping his mouth reminiscently with the back of his hand.

"Well, he can afford to keep a keg in the house if he wants to," she returned to the attack, which now was directed at her husband as well. "He pays his bills, and he certainly makes good money — better than most men, anyway.”

“An’ he hasn’t a wife an’ children to watch out for,” Tom said.

“Nor everlastin’ dues to unions that don’t do him no good.”

“Oh, yes, he has,” Tom urged genially. “Blamed little he’d work in that shop, or any other shop in Oakland, if he didn’t keep in good standing with the Blacksmiths. You don’t understand labor conditions, Sarah. The unions have got to stick, if the men aren’t to starve to death.”

“Oh, of course not,” Sarah sniffed. “I don’t understand anything. I ain’t got a mind. I’m a fool, an’ you tell me so right before the children.” She turned savagely on her eldest, who startled and shrank away. “Willie, your mother is a fool. Do you get that? Your father says she’s a fool — says it right before her face and yourn. She’s just a plain fool. Next he’ll be sayin’ she’s crazy an’ puttin’ her away in the asylum. An’ how will you like that, Willie? How will you like to see your mother in a straitjacket an’ a padded cell, shut out from the light of the sun an’ beaten like a nigger before the war, Willie, beaten an’ clubbed like a regular black nigger? That’s the kind of a father you’ve got, Willie. Think of it, Willie, in a padded cell, the mother that bore you, with the lunatics screechin’ an’ screamin’ all around, an’ the quick-lime eatin’ into the dead bodies of them that’s beaten to death by the cruel wardens — ”

She continued tirelessly, painting with pessimistic strokes the growing black future her husband was meditating for her, while the boy, fearful of some vague, incomprehensible catastrophe, began to weep silently, with a pendulous, trembling underlip. Saxon, for the moment, lost control of herself.

“Oh, for heaven’s sake, can’t we be together five minutes without quarreling?” she blazed.

Sarah broke off from asylum conjurations and turned upon her sister-in-law.

“Who’s quarreling? Can’t I open my head without bein’ jumped on by the two of you?”

Saxon shrugged her shoulders despairingly, and Sarah swung about on her husband.

“Seein’ you love your sister so much better than your wife, why did you want to marry me, that’s borne your children for you, an’ slaved for you, an’ toiled for you, an’ worked her fingernails off for you, with no thanks, an ‘insultin’ me before the children, an’ sayin’ I’m crazy to their faces. An’ what have you ever did for me? That’s what I want to know — me, that’s cooked for you, an’ washed your stinkin’ clothes, and fixed your socks, an’ sat up nights with your brats when they was ailin’. Look at that!”

She thrust out a shapeless, swollen foot, encased in a monstrous, untended shoe, the dry, raw leather of which showed white on the edges of bulging cracks.

“Look at that! That’s what I say. Look at that!” Her voice was persistently rising and at the same time growing throaty. “The only shoes I got. Me. Your wife. Ain’t you ashamed? Where are my three pairs? Look at that stockin’.”

Speech failed her, and she sat down suddenly on a chair at the table, glaring unutterable malevolence and misery. She arose with the abrupt stiffness of an automaton, poured herself a cup of cold coffee, and in the same jerky way sat down again. As if too hot for her lips, she filled her saucer with the greasy-looking, nondescript fluid, and continued her set glare, her breast rising and falling with staccato, mechanical movement.

“Now, Sarah, be c’am, be c’am,” Tom pleaded anxiously.

In response, slowly, with utmost deliberation, as if the destiny of empires rested on the certitude of her act, she turned the saucer of coffee upside down on the table. She lifted her right hand, slowly, hugely, and in the same slow, huge way landed the open palm with a sounding slap on Tom’s astounded cheek. Immediately thereafter she raised her voice in the shrill, hoarse, monotonous madness of hysteria, sat down on the floor, and rocked back and forth in the throes of an abysmal grief.

Willie’s silent weeping turned to noise, and the two little girls, with the fresh ribbons in their hair, joined him. Tom’s face was drawn and white, though the smitten cheek still blazed, and Saxon wanted to put her arms comfortingly around him, yet dared not. He bent over his wife.

“Sarah, you ain’t feelin’ well. Let me put you to bed, and I’ll finish tidying up.”

“Don’t touch me! — don’t touch me!” she screamed, jerking violently away from him.

“Take the children out in the yard, Tom, for a walk, anything — get them away,” Saxon said. She was sick, and white, and trembling. “Go, Tom, please, please. There’s your hat. I’ll take care of her. I know just how.”

Left to herself, Saxon worked with frantic haste, assuming the calm she did not possess, but which she must impart to the screaming bedlamite upon the floor. The light frame house leaked the noise hideously, and Saxon knew that the houses on either side were hearing, and the street itself and the houses across the street. Her fear was that Billy should arrive in the midst of it. Further, she was incensed, violated. Every fiber rebelled, almost in a nausea; yet she maintained cool control and stroked Sarah's forehead and hair with slow, soothing movements. Soon, with one arm around her, she managed to win the first diminution in the strident, atrocious, unceasing scream. A few minutes later, sobbing heavily, the elder woman lay in bed, across her forehead and eyes a wet-pack of towel for easement of the headache she and Saxon tacitly accepted as substitute for the brain-storm.

When a clatter of hoofs came down the street and stopped, Saxon was able to slip to the front door and wave her hand to Billy. In the kitchen she found Tom waiting in sad anxiousness.

"It's all right," she said. "Billy Roberts has come, and I've got to go. You go in and sit beside her for a while, and maybe she'll go to sleep. But don't rush her. Let her have her own way. If she'll let you take her hand, why do it. Try it, anyway. But first of all, as an opener and just as a matter of course, start wetting the towel over her eyes."

He was a kindly, easy-going man; but, after the way of a large percentage of the Western stock, he was undemonstrative. He nodded, turned toward the door to obey, and paused irresolutely. The look he gave back to Saxon was almost dog-like in gratitude and all-brotherly in love. She felt it, and in spirit leapt toward it.

"It's all right — everything's all right," she cried hastily.

Tom shook his head.

"No, it ain't. It's a shame, a blamed shame, that's what it is." He shrugged his shoulders. "Oh, I don't care for myself. But it's for you. You got your life before you yet, little kid sister. You'll get old, and all that means, fast enough. But it's a bad start for a day off. The thing for you to do is to forget all this, and skin out with your fellow, an' have a good time." In the open door, his hand on the knob to close it after him, he halted a second time. A spasm contracted his brow. "Hell! Think of it! Sarah and I used to go buggy-riding once on a time. And I guess she had her three pairs of shoes, too. Can you beat it?"

In her bedroom Saxon completed her dressing, for an instant stepping upon a chair so as to glimpse critically in the small wall-mirror the hang of her ready-made linen skirt. This, and the jacket, she had altered to fit, and she had double-stitched the seams to achieve the coveted tailored effect. Still on the chair, all in the moment of quick clear-seeing, she drew the skirt tightly back and raised it. The sight was good to her, nor did she under-appraise the lines of the slender ankle above the low tan tie nor did she under-appraise the delicate yet mature swell of calf outlined in the fresh brown of a new cotton stocking. Down from the chair, she pinned on a firm sailor hat of white straw with a brown ribbon around the crown that matched her ribbon belt. She rubbed her cheeks quickly and fiercely to bring back the color Sarah had driven out of them, and delayed a moment longer to put on her tan lisle-thread gloves. Once, in the fashion-page of a Sunday supplement, she had read that no lady ever put on her gloves after she left the door.

With a resolute self-grip, as she crossed the parlor and passed the door to Sarah's bedroom, through the thin wood of which came elephantine moanings and low slubberings, she steeled herself to keep the color in her cheeks and the brightness in her eyes. And so well did she succeed that Billy never dreamed that the radiant, live young thing, tripping lightly down the steps to him, had just come from a bout with soul-sickening hysteria and madness.

To her, in the bright sun, Billy's blondness was startling. His cheeks, smooth as a girl's, were touched with color. The blue eyes seemed more cloudily blue than usual, and the crisp, sandy hair hinted more than ever of the pale straw-gold that was not there. Never had she seen him quite so royally young. As he smiled to greet her, with a slow white flash of teeth from between red lips, she caught again the promise of easement and rest. Fresh from the shattering chaos of her sister-in-law's mind, Billy's tremendous calm was especially satisfying, and Saxon mentally laughed to scorn the terrible temper he had charged to himself.

She had been buggy-riding before, but always behind one horse, jaded, and livery, in a top-buggy, heavy and dingy, such as livery stables rent because of sturdy unbreakableness. But here stood two horses, head-tossing and restless, shouting in every high-light glint of their satin, golden-sorrel coats that they had never been rented out in all their glorious young lives. Between them was a pole inconceivably slender, on them were harnesses preposterously string-like and fragile. And Billy belonged here, by elemental right, a part of them and of it, a master-part and a component, along with the spidery-delicate, narrow-boxed, wide-and yellow-wheeled, rubber-tired rig, efficient and capable, as different as he was different from the other man who had taken her out behind stolid, lumbering horses. He held the reins in one hand, yet, with low, steady voice, confident and assuring, held the nervous young animals more by the will and the spirit of him.

It was no time for lingering. With the quick glance and fore-knowledge of a woman, Saxon saw, not merely the curious children clustering about, but the peering of adult faces from open doors and windows, and past window-shades lifted up or held aside. With his free hand, Billy drew back the linen robe and helped her to a place beside him. The high-backed, luxuriously upholstered seat of brown leather gave her a sense of great comfort; yet even greater, it seemed to her, was the nearness and comfort of the man himself and of his body.

“How d’ye like ‘em?” he asked, changing the reins to both hands and chirruping the horses, which went out with a jerk in an immediacy of action that was new to her. “They’re the boss’s, you know. Couldn’t rent animals like them. He lets me take them out for exercise sometimes. If they ain’t exercised regular they’re a handful. — Look at King, there, prancin’. Some style, eh? Some style! The other one’s the real goods, though. Prince is his name. Got to have some bit on him to hold’m. — Ah! Would you? — Did you see’m, Saxon? Some horse! Some horse!”

From behind came the admiring cheer of the neighborhood children, and Saxon, with a sigh of content, knew that the happy day had at last begun.

CHAPTER X

"I don't know horses," Saxon said. "I've never been on one's back, and the only ones I've tried to drive were single, and lame, or almost falling down, or something. But I'm not afraid of horses. I just love them. I was born loving them, I guess."

Billy threw an admiring, appreciative glance at her.

"That's the stuff. That's what I like in a woman — grit. Some of the girls I've had out — well, take it from me, they made me sick. Oh, I'm hep to 'em. Nervous, an' trembly, an' screechy, an' wabbly. I reckon they come out on my account an' not for the ponies. But me for the brave kid that likes the ponies. You're the real goods, Saxon, honest to God you are. Why, I can talk like a streak with you. The rest of 'em make me sick. I'm like a clam. They don't know nothin', an' they're that scared all the time — well, I guess you get me"

"You have to be born to love horses, maybe," she answered. "Maybe it's because I always think of my father on his roan war-horse that makes me love horses. But, anyway, I do. When I was a little girl I was drawing horses all the time. My mother always encouraged me. I've a scrapbook mostly filled with horses I drew when I was little. Do you know, Billy, sometimes I dream I actually own a horse, all my own. And lots of times I dream I'm on a horse's back, or driving him."

"I'll let you drive 'em, after a while, when they've worked their edge off. They're pullin' now. — There, put your hands in front of mine — take hold tight. Feel that? Sure you feel it. An' you ain't feelin' it all by a long shot. I don't dast slack, you bein' such a lightweight."

Her eyes sparkled as she felt the apportioned pull of the mouths of the beautiful, live things; and he, looking at her, sparkled with her in her delight.

"What's the good of a woman if she can't keep up with a man?" he broke out enthusiastically.

"People that like the same things always get along best together," she answered, with a triteness that concealed the joy that was hers at being so spontaneously in touch with him.

"Why, Saxon, I've fought battles, good ones, frazzlin' my silk away to beat the band before whisky-soaked, smokin' audiences of rotten fight-fans, that just made me sick clean through. An' them, that couldn't take just one stiff jolt or hook to jaw or stomach, a-cheerin' me an' yellin' for blood. Blood, mind you! An' them without the blood of a shrimp in their bodies. Why, honest, now, I'd sooner fight before an audience of one — you for instance, or anybody I liked. It'd do me proud. But them sickenin', sapheaded stiffs, with the grit of rabbits and the silk of mangy ky-yi's, a-cheerin' me — ME! Can you blame me for quittin' the dirty game? — Why, I'd sooner fight before broke-down old plugs of work-horses that's candidates for chicken-meat, than before them rotten bunches of stiffs with nothin' thicker'n water in their veins, an' Contra Costa water at that when the rains is heavy on the hills."

"I... I didn't know prizefighting was like that," she faltered, as she released her hold on the lines and sank back again beside him.

"It ain't the fightin', it's the fight-crowds," he defended with instant jealousy. "Of course, fightin' hurts a young fellow because it frazzles the silk outa him an' all that. But it's the low-lifers in the audience that gets me. Why the good things they say to me, the praise an' that, is insulting. Do you get me? It makes me cheap. Think of it — booze-guzzlin' stiffs that 'd be afraid to mix it with a sick cat, not fit to hold the coat of any decent man, think of them a-standin' up on their hind legs an' yellin' an' cheerin' me — ME!"

"Ha! ha! What d'ye think of that? Ain't he a rogue?"

A big bulldog, sliding obliquely and silently across the street, unconcerned with the team he was avoiding, had passed so close that Prince, baring his teeth like a stallion, plunged his head down against reins and check in an effort to seize the dog.

"Now he's some fighter, that Prince. An' he's natural. He didn't make that reach just for some low-lifer to yell'm on. He just done it outa pure cussedness and himself. That's clean. That's right. Because it's natural. But them fight-fans! Honest to God, Saxon...."

And Saxon, glimpsing him sidewise, as he watched the horses and their way on the Sunday morning streets, checking them back suddenly and swerving to avoid two boys coasting across street on a toy wagon, saw in him deeps and intensities, all the magic connotations of temperament, the glimmer and hint of rages profound, bleaknesses as cold and far as the stars, savagery as keen as a wolf's and clean as a stallion's, wrath as implacable as a destroying angel's, and youth that was fire and life beyond time and place. She was awed and fascinated, with the hunger of woman bridging the vastness to him, daring to love him with arms and breast that ached to him, murmuring to herself and through all the halls of her soul, "You dear, you dear."

"Honest to God, Saxon," he took up the broken thread, "they's times when I've hated them, when I wanted to jump over the ropes and wade into them, knock-down and drag-out, an' show'm what fightin' was. Take that night with Billy Murphy. Billy Murphy! — if you only knew him. My friend. As clean an' game a boy as ever jumped inside the ropes to take the decision. Him! We went to the Durant School together. We grew up chums. His fight was my fight. My trouble was his trouble. We both took to the fightin' game. They matched us. Not the first time. Twice we'd fought draws. Once the decision was his; once it was mine. The fifth fight of two lovin' men that just loved each other. He's three years older'n me. He's a wife and two or three kids, an' I know them, too. And he's my friend. Get it?

"I'm ten pounds heavier — but with heavyweights that 'a all right. He can't time an' distance as good as me, an' I can keep set better, too. But he's cleverer an' quicker. I never was quick like him. We both can take punishment, an' we're both two-handed, a wallop in all our fists. I know the kick of his, an' he knows my kick, an' we're both real respectful. And we're even-matched. Two draws, and a decision to each. Honest, I ain't any kind of a hunch who's gain' to win, we're that even.

"Now, the fight. — You ain't squeamish, are you?"

"No, no," she cried. "I'd just love to hear — you are so wonderful."

He took the praise with a clear, unwavering look, and without hint of acknowledgment.

"We go along — six rounds — seven rounds — eight rounds; an' honors even. I've been timin' his rushes an' straight-leftin' him, an' meetin' his duck with a wicked little right upper-cut, an' he's shaken me on the jaw an' walloped my ears till my head's all singin' an' buzzin'. An' everything lovely with both of us, with a noise like a draw decision in sight. Twenty rounds is the distance, you know.

"An' then his bad luck comes. We're just mixin' into a clinch that ain't arrived yet, when he shoots a short hook to my head — his left, an' a real hay-maker if it reaches my jaw. I make a forward duck, not quick enough, an' he lands bingo on the side of my head. Honest to God, Saxon, it's that heavy I see some stars. But it don’t hurt an’ ain’t serious, that high up where the bone’s thick. An’ right there he finishes himself, for his bad thumb, which I’ve known since he first got it as a kid fightin’ in the sandlot at Watts Tract — he smashes that thumb right there, on my hard head, back into the socket with an out-twist, an’ all the old cords that’d never got strong gets theirs again. I didn’t mean it. A dirty trick, fair in the game, though, to make a guy smash his hand on your head. But not between friends. I couldn’t a-done that to Bill Murphy for a million dollars. It was a accident, just because I was slow, because I was born slow.

“The hurt of it! Honest, Saxon, you don’t know what hurt is till you’ve got a old hurt like that hurt again. What can Billy Murphy do but slow down? He’s got to. He ain’t fightin’ two-handed any more. He knows it; I know it; The referee knows it; but nobody else. He goes on a-moving that left of his like it’s all right. But it ain’t. It’s hurtin’ him like a knife dug into him. He don’t dast strike a real blow with that left of his. But it hurts, anyway. Just to move it or not move it hurts, an’ every little dab-feint that I’m too wise to guard, knowin’ there’s no weight behind, why them little dab-touches on that poor thumb goes right to the heart of him, an’ hurts worse than a thousand boils or a thousand knockouts — just hurts all over again, an’ worse, each time an’ touch.

“Now suppose he an’ me was boxin’ for fun, out in the back yard, an’ he hurts his thumb that way, why we’d have the gloves off in a jiffy an’ I’d be putting cold compresses on that poor thumb of his an’ bandagin’ it that tight to keep the inflammation down. But no. This is a fight for fight-fans that’s paid their admission for blood, an’ blood they’re goin’ to get. They ain’t men. They’re wolves.

“He has to go easy, now, an’ I ain’t a-forcin’ him none. I’m all shot to pieces. I don’t know what to do. So I slow down, an’ the fans get hep to it. ‘Why don’t you fight?’ they begin to yell; ‘Fake! Fake!’ ‘Why don’t you kiss’m?’ ‘Lovin’ cup for yours, Bill Roberts!’ an’ that sort of bunk.

“‘Fight!’ says The referee to me, low an’ savage. ‘Fight, or I’ll disqualify you — you, Bill, I mean you.’ An’ this to me, with a touch on the shoulder ‘so they’s no mistakin’.

“It ain’t pretty. It ain’t right. D’ye know what we was fightin’ for? A hundred bucks. Think of it! An’ the game is we got to do our best to put our man down for the count because of the fans has bet on us. Sweet, ain’t it? Well, that’s my last fight. It finishes me deado. Never again for yours truly.

"'Quit,' I says to Billy Murphy in a clinch; 'for the love of God, Bill, quit.' An' he says back, in a whisper, 'I can't, Bill — you know that.'

"An' then the referee drags us apart, an' a lot of the fans begins to hoot an' boo.

"'Now kick in, damn you, Bill Roberts, an' finish'm' the referee says to me, an' I tell'm to go to hell as Bill an' me flop into the next clinch, not hittin', an' Bill touches his thumb again, an' I see the pain shoot across his face. Game? That good boy's the limit. An' to look into the eyes of a brave man that's sick with pain, an' love 'm, an' see love in them eyes of his, an' then have to go on givin' 'm pain — call that sport? I can't see it. But the crowd's got its money on us. We don't count. We've sold ourselves for a hundred bucks, an' we gotta deliver the goods.

"Let me tell you, Saxon, honest to God, that was one of the times I wanted to go through the ropes an' drop them fans a-yellin' for blood an' show 'em what blood is.

"'For God's sake finish me, Bill,' Bill says to me in that clinch; 'put her over an' I'll fall for it, but I can't lay down.'

"D'ye want to know? I cry there, right in the ring, in that clinch. The weeps for me. 'I can't do it, Bill,' I whisper back, hangin' onto'm like a brother an' the referee ragin' an' draggin' at us to get us apart, an' all the wolves in the house snarlin'.

"'You got 'm!' the audience is yellin'. 'Go in an' finish 'm!' 'The hay for him, Bill; put her across to the jaw an' see 'm fall!'

"'You got to, Bill, or you're a dog,' Bill says, lookin' love at me in his eyes as the referee's grip untangles us clear.

"An' them wolves of fans yellin': 'Fake! Fake! Fake!' like that, an' keepin' it up.

"Well, I done it. They's only that way out. I done it. By God, I done it. I had to. I feint for 'm, draw his left, duck to the right past it, takin' it across my shoulder, an come up with my right to his jaw. An' he knows the trick. He's hep. He's beaten me to it an' blocked it with his shoulder a thousan' times. But this time he don't. He keeps himself wide open on purpose. Blim! It lands. He's dead in the air, an' he goes down sideways, strikin' his face first on the rosin-canvas an' then layin' dead, his head twisted under 'm till you'd a-thought his neck was broke. ME — I did that for a hundred bucks an' a bunch of stiffs I'd be ashamed to wipe my feet on. An' then I pick Bill up in my arms an' carry'm to his corner, an' help bring'm around.

Well, they ain't no kick comin'. They pay their money an' they get their blood, an' a knockout. An' a better man than them, that I love, layin' there dead to the world with a skinned face on the mat."

For a moment he was still, gazing straight before him at the horses, his face hard and angry. He sighed, looked at Saxon, and smiled.

"An' I quit the game right there. An' Billy Murphy's laughed at me for it. He still follows it. A side-line, you know, because he works at a good trade. But once in a while, when the house needs paintin', or the doctor bills are up, or his oldest kid wants a bicycle, he jumps out an' makes fifty or a hundred bucks before some of the clubs. I want you to meet him when it comes handy. He's some boy I'm tellin' you. But it did make me sick that night."

Again the harshness and anger were in his face, and Saxon amazed herself by doing unconsciously what women higher in the social scale have done with deliberate sincerity. Her hand went out impulsively to his holding the lines, resting on top of it for a moment with quick, firm pressure. Her reward was a smile from lips and eyes, as his face turned toward her.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "I never talk a streak like this to anybody. I just hold my hush an' keep my thinks to myself. But, somehow, I guess it's funny, I kind of have a feelin' I want to make good with you. An' that's why I'm tellin' you my thinks. Anybody can dance."

The way led uptown, past the City Hall and the Fourteenth Street skyscrapers, and out Broadway to Mountain View. Turning to the right at the cemetery, they climbed the Piedmont Heights to Blair Park and plunged into the green coolness of Jack Hayes Canyon. Saxon could not suppress her surprise and joy at the quickness with which they covered the ground.

"They are beautiful," she said. "I never dreamed I'd ever ride behind horses like them. I'm afraid I'll wake up now and find it's a dream. You know, I dream horses all the time. I'd give anything to own one some time."

"It's funny, ain't it?" Billy answered. "I like horses that way. The boss says I'm a wooz at horses. An' I know he's a dub. He don't know the first thing. An' yet he owns two hundred big heavy draughts besides this light drivin' pair, an' I don't own one."

"Yet God makes the horses," Saxon said.

"It's a sure thing the boss don't. Then how does he have so many? — two hundred of 'em, I'm tellin' you. He thinks he likes horses. Honest to God, Saxon, he don’t like all his horses as much as I like the last hair on the last tail of the scrubbiest of the bunch. Yet they’re his. Wouldn’t it jar you?”

“Wouldn’t it?” Saxon laughed appreciatively. “I just love fancy shirtwaists, an’ I spent my life ironing some of the beautifullest I’ve ever seen. It’s funny, an’ it isn’t fair.”

Billy gritted his teeth in another of his rages.

“An’ the way some of them women gets their shirtwaists. It makes me sick, thinkin’ of you ironin’ ‘em. You know what I mean, Saxon. They ain’t no use wastin’ words over it. You know. I know. Everybody knows. An’ it’s a hell of a world if men an’ women sometimes can’t talk to each other about such things.” His manner was almost apologetic yet it was defiantly and assertively right. “I never talk this way to other girls. They’d think I’m workin up to designs on ‘em. They make me sick the way they’re always lookin’ for them designs. But you’re different I can talk to you that way. I know I’ve got to. It’s the square thing. You’re like Billy Murphy, or any other man a man can talk to.”

She sighed with a great happiness, and looked at him with unconscious, love-shining eyes.

“It’s the same way with me,” she said. “The fellows I’ve run with I’ve never dared let talk about such things, because I knew they’d take advantage of it. Why, all the time, with them, I’ve a feeling that we’re cheating and lying to each other, playing a game like at a masquerade ball.” She paused for a moment, hesitant and debating, then went on in a queer low voice. “I haven’t been asleep. I’ve seen... and heard. I’ve had my chances, when I was that tired of the laundry I’d have done almost anything. I could have got those fancy shirtwaists... an’ all the rest... and maybe a horse to ride. There was a bank cashier... married, too, if you please. He talked to me straight out. I didn’t count, you know. I wasn’t a girl, with a girl’s feelings, or anything. I was nobody. It was just like a business talk. I learned about men from him. He told me what he’d do. He...”

Her voice died away in sadness, and in the silence she could hear Billy grit his teeth.

“You can’t tell me,” he cried. “I know. It’s a dirty world — an unfair, lousy world. I can’t make it out. They’s no squareness in it. — Women, with the best that’s in ‘em, bought an’ sold like horses. I don’t understand women that way. I don’t understand men that way. I can’t see how a man gets anything but cheated when he buys such things. It’s funny, ain’t it? Take my boss an’ his horses. He owns women, too. He might a-owned you, just because he’s got the price. An’, Saxon, you was made for fancy shirtwaists an’ all that, but, honest to God, I can’t see you payin’ for them that way. It’d be a crime — ”

He broke off abruptly and reined in the horses. Around a sharp turn, speeding down the grade upon them, had appeared an automobile. With slamming of brakes it was brought to a stop, while the faces of the occupants took new lease of interest of life and stared at the young man and woman in the light rig that barred the way. Billy held up his hand.

“Take the outside, sport,” he said to the chauffeur.

“Nothin’ doin’, kiddo,” came the answer, as the chauffeur measured with hard, wise eyes the crumbling edge of the road and the downfall of the outside bank.

“Then we camp,” Billy announced cheerfully. “I know the rules of the road. These animals ain’t automobile broke altogether, an’ if you think I’m goin’ to have ‘em shy off the grade you got another guess comin’.”

A confusion of injured protestation arose from those that sat in the car.

“You needn’t be a road-hog because you’re a Rube,” said the chauffeur. “We ain’t a-goin’ to hurt your horses. Pull out so we can pass. If you don’t...”

“That’ll do you, sport,” was Billy’s retort. “You can’t talk that way to yours truly. I got your number an’ your tag, my son. You’re standin’ on your foot. Back up the grade an’ get off of it. Stop on the outside at the first psssin’-place an’ we’ll pass you. You’ve got the juice. Throw on the reverse.”

After a nervous consultation, the chauffeur obeyed, and the car backed up the hill and out of sight around the turn.

“Them cheap skates,” Billy sneered to Saxon, “with a couple of gallons of gasoline an’ the price of a machine a-thinkin’ they own the roads your folks an’ my folks made.”

“Talkin’ all night about it?” came the chauffeur’s voice from around the bend. “Get a move on. You can pass.”

“Get off your foot,” Billy retorted contemptuously. “I’m a-comin’ when I’m ready to come, an’ if you ain’t given room enough I’ll go clean over you an’ your load of chicken meat.”

He slightly slacked the reins on the restless, head-tossing animals, and without need of chirrup they took the weight of the light vehicle and passed up the hill and apprehensively on the inside of the purring machine.

"Where was we?" Billy queried, as the clear road showed in front. "Yep, take my boss. Why should he own two hundred horses, an' women, an' the rest, an' you an' me own nothin'?"

"You own your silk, Billy," she said softly.

"An' you yours. Yet we sell it to 'em like it was cloth across the counter at so much a yard. I guess you're hep to what a few more years in the laundry'll do to you. Take me. I'm sellin' my silk slow every day I work. See that little finger?" He shifted the reins to one hand for a moment and held up the free hand for inspection. "I can't straighten it like the others, an' it's growin'. I never put it out fightin'. The teamin's done it. That's silk gone across the counter, that's all. Ever see a old four-horse teamster's hands? They look like claws they're that crippled an' twisted."

"Things weren't like that in the old days when our folks crossed the plains," she answered. "They might a-got their fingers twisted, but they owned the best goin' in the way of horses and such."

"Sure. They worked for themselves. They twisted their fingers for themselves. But I'm twistin' my fingers for my boss. Why, d'ye know, Saxon, his hands is soft as a woman's that's never done any work. Yet he owns the horses an' the stables, an' never does a tap of work, an' I manage to scratch my meal-ticket an' my clothes. It's got my goat the way things is run. An' who runs 'em that way? That's what I want to know. Times has changed. Who changed 'em?"

"God didn't."

"You bet your life he didn't. An' that's another thing that gets me. Who's God anyway? If he's runnin' things — an' what good is he if he ain't? — then why does he let my boss, an' men like that cashier you mentioned, why does he let them own the horses, an' buy the women, the nice little girls that oughta be lovin' their own husbands, an' havin' children they're not ashamed of, an' just bein' happy accordin' to their nature?"

CHAPTER XI

The horses, resting frequently and lathered by the work, had climbed the steep grade of the old road to Moraga Valley, and on the divide of the Contra Costa hills the way descended sharply through the green and sunny stillness of Redwood Canyon.

“Say, ain’t it swell?” Billy queried, with a wave of his hand indicating the circled tree-groups, the trickle of unseen water, and the summer hum of bees.

“I love it”‘ Saxon affirmed. “It makes me want to live in the country, and I never have.”

“Me, too, Saxon. I’ve never lived in the country in my life — an’ all my folks was country folks.”

“No cities then. Everybody lived in the country.”

“I guess you’re right,” he nodded. “They just had to live in the country.”

There was no brake on the light carriage, and Billy became absorbed in managing his team down the steep, winding road. Saxon leaned back, eyes closed, with a feeling of ineffable rest. Time and again he shot glances at her closed eyes.

“What’s the matter?” he asked finally, in mild alarm. “You ain’t sick?”

“It’s so beautiful I’m afraid to look,” she answered. “It’s so brave it hurts.”

“BRAVE? — now that’s funny.”

“Isn’t it? But it just makes me feel that way. It’s brave. Now the houses and streets and things in the city aren’t brave. But this is. I don’t know why. It just is.”

“By golly, I think you’re right,” he exclaimed. “It strikes me that way, now you speak of it. They ain’t no games or tricks here, no cheatin’ an’ no lyin’. Them trees just stand up natural an’ strong an’ clean like young boys their first time in the ring before they’ve learned its rottenness an’ how to double-cross an’ lay down to the bettin’ odds an’ the fight-fans. Yep; it is brave. Say, Saxon, you see things, don’t you?” His pause was almost wistful, and he looked at her and studied her with a caressing softness that ran through her in resurgent thrills. “D’ye know, I’d just like you to see me fight some time — a real fight, with something doin’ every moment. I’d be proud to death to do it for you. An’ I’d sure fight some with you lookin’ on an’ understandin’. That’d be a fight what is, take it from me. An’ that’s funny, too. I never wanted to fight before a woman in my life. They squeal and screech an’ don’t understand. But you’d understand. It’s dead open an’ shut you would.”

A little later, swinging along the flat of the valley, through the little clearings of the farmers and the ripe grain-stretches golden in the sunshine, Billy turned to Saxon again.

“Say, you’ve ben in love with fellows, lots of times. Tell me about it. What’s it like?”

She shook her head slowly.

“I only thought I was in love — and not many times, either — ”

“Many times!” he cried.

“Not really ever,” she assured him, secretly exultant at his unconscious jealousy. “I never was really in love. If I had been I’d be married now. You see, I couldn’t see anything else to it but to marry a man if I loved him.”

“But suppose he didn’t love you?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” she smiled, half with facetiousness and half with certainty and pride. “I think I could make him love me.”

“I guess you sure could,” Billy proclaimed enthusiastically.

“The trouble is,” she went on, “the men that loved me I never cared for that way. — Oh, look!”

A cottontail rabbit had scuttled across the road, and a tiny dust cloud lingered like smoke, marking the way of his flight. At the next turn a dozen quail exploded into the air from under the noses of the horses. Billy and Saxon exclaimed in mutual delight.

“Gee,” he muttered, “I almost wisht I’d ben born a farmer. Folks wasn’t made to live in cities.”

“Not our kind, at least,” she agreed. Followed a pause and a long sigh. “It’s all so beautiful. It would be a dream just to live all your life in it. I’d like to be an Indian squaw sometimes.”

Several times Billy checked himself on the verge of speech.

“About those fellows you thought you was in love with,” he said finally. “You ain’t told me, yet.”

“You want to know?” she asked. “They didn’t amount to anything.”

“Of course I want to know. Go ahead. Fire away.”

“Well, first there was Al Stanley — ”

“What did he do for a livin’?” Billy demanded, almost as with authority.

"He was a gambler."

Billy's face abruptly stiffened, and she could see his eyes cloudy with doubt in the quick glance he flung at her.

"Oh, it was all right," she laughed. "I was only eight years old. You see, I'm beginning at the beginning. It was after my mother died and when I was adopted by Cady. He kept a hotel and saloon. It was down in Los Angeles. Just a small hotel. Workingmen, just common laborers, mostly, and some railroad men, stopped at it, and I guess Al Stanley got his share of their wages. He was so handsome and so quiet and soft-spoken. And he had the nicest eyes and the softest, cleanest hands. I can see them now. He played with me sometimes, in the afternoon, and gave me candy and little presents. He used to sleep most of the day. I didn't know why, then. I thought he was a fairy prince in disguise. And then he got killed, right in the bar-room, but first he killed the man that killed him. So that was the end of that love affair.

"Next was after the asylum, when I was thirteen and living with my brother — I've lived with him ever since. He was a boy that drove a bakery wagon. Almost every morning, on the way to school, I used to pass him. He would come driving down Wood Street and turn in on Twelfth. Maybe it was because he drove a horse that attracted me. Anyway, I must have loved him for a couple of months. Then he lost his job, or something, for another boy drove the wagon. And we'd never even spoken to each other.

"Then there was a bookkeeper when I was sixteen. I seem to run to bookkeepers. It was a bookkeeper at the laundry that Charley Long beat up. This other one was when I was working in Hickmeyer's Cannery. He had soft hands, too. But I quickly got all I wanted of him. He was... well, anyway, he had ideas like your boss. And I never really did love him, truly and honest, Billy. I felt from the first that he wasn't just right. And when I was working in the paper-box factory I thought I loved a clerk in Kahn's Emporium — you know, on Eleventh and Washington. He was all right. That was the trouble with him. He was too much all right. He didn't have any life in him, any go. He wanted to marry me, though. But somehow I couldn't see it. That shows I didn't love him. He was narrow-chested and skinny, and his hands were always cold and fishy. But my! he could dress — just like he came out of a bandbox. He said he was going to drown himself, and all kinds of things, but I broke with him just the same.

"And after that... well, there isn't any after that. I must have got particular, I guess, but I didn't see anybody I could love. It seemed more like a game with the men I met, or a fight. And we never fought fair on either side. Seemed as if we always had cards up our sleeves. We weren't honest or outspoken, but instead it seemed as if we were trying to take advantage of each other. Charley Long was honest, though. And so was that bank cashier. And even they made me have the fight feeling harder than ever. All of them always made me feel I had to take care of myself. They wouldn't. That was sure."

She stopped and looked with interest at the clean profile of his face as he watched and guided the homes. He looked at her inquiringly, and her eyes laughed lazily into his as she stretched her arms.

"That's all," she concluded. "I've told you everything, which I've never done before to any one. And it's your turn now."

"Not much of a turn, Saxon. I've never cared for girls — that is, not enough to want to marry 'em. I always liked men better — fellows like Billy Murphy. Besides, I guess I was too interested in trainin' an' fightin' to bother with women much. Why, Saxon, honest, while I ain't ben altogether good — you understand what I mean — just the same I ain't never talked love to a girl in my life. They was no call to."

"The girls have loved you just the same," she teased, while in her heart was a curious elation at his virginal confession.

He devoted himself to the horses.

"Lots of them," she urged.

Still he did not reply.

"Now, haven't they?"

"Well, it wasn't my fault," he said slowly. "If they wanted to look sideways at me it was up to them. And it was up to me to sidestep if I wanted to, wasn't it? You've no idea, Saxon, how a prizefighter is run after. Why, sometimes it's seemed to me that girls an' women ain't got an ounce of natural shame in their make-up. Oh, I was never afraid of them, believe muh, but I didn't hanker after 'em. A man's a fool that'd let them kind get his goat.

"Maybe you haven't got love in you," she challenged.

"Maybe I haven't," was his discouraging reply. "Anyway, I don't see myself lovin' a girl that runs after me. It's all right for Charley-boys, but a man that is a man don't like bein' chased by women."

"My mother always said that love was the greatest thing in the world," Saxon argued. "She wrote poems about it, too. Some of them were published in the San Jose Mercury."

"What do you think about it?"

"Oh, I don't know," she baffled, meeting his eyes with another lazy smile. "All I know is it's pretty good to be alive a day like this."

"On a trip like this — you bet it is," he added promptly.

At one o'clock Billy turned off the road and drove into an open space among the trees.

"Here's where we eat," he announced. "I thought it'd be better to have a lunch by ourselves than atop at one of these roadside dinner counters. An' now, just to make everything safe an' comfortable, I'm goin' to unharness the horses. We got lots of time. You can get the lunch basket out an' spread it on the lap-robe."

As Saxon unpacked she basket she was appalled at his extravagance. She spread an amazing array of ham and chicken sandwiches, crab salad, hard-boiled eggs, pickled pigs' feet, ripe olives and dill pickles, Swiss cheese, salted almonds, oranges and bananas, and several pint bottles of beer. It was the quantity as well as the variety that bothered her. It had the appearance of a reckless attempt to buy out a whole delicatessen shop.

"You oughtn't to blow yourself that way," she reproved him as he sat down beside her. "Why it's enough for half a dozen bricklayers."

"It's all right, isn't it?"

"Yes," she acknowledged. "But that's the trouble. It's too much so."

"Then it's all right," he concluded. "I always believe in havin' plenty. Have some beer to wash the dust away before we begin? Watch out for the glasses. I gotta return them."

Later, the meal finished, he lay on his back, smoking a cigarette, and questioned her about her earlier history. She had been telling him of her life in her brother's house, where she paid four dollars and a half a week board. At fifteen she had graduated from grammar school and gone to work in the jute mills for four dollars a week, three of which she had paid to Sarah.

"How about that saloonkeeper?" Billy asked. "How come it he adopted you?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know, except that all my relatives were hard up. It seemed they just couldn't get on. They managed to scratch a lean living for themselves, and that was all. Cady — he was the saloonkeeper — had been a soldier in my father's company, and he always swore by Captain Kit, which was their nickname for him. My father had kept the surgeons from amputating his leg in the war, and he never forgot it. He was making money in the hotel and saloon, and I found out afterward he helped out a lot to pay the doctors and to bury my mother alongside of father. I was to go to Uncle Will — that was my mother's wish; but there had been fighting up in the Ventura Mountains where his ranch was, and men had been killed. It was about fences and cattlemen or something, and anyway he was in jail a long time, and when he got his freedom the lawyers had got his ranch. He was an old man, then, and broken, and his wife took sick, and he got a job as night watchman for forty dollars a month. So he couldn't do anything for me, and Cady adopted me.

"Cady was a good man, if he did run a saloon. His wife was a big, handsome-looking woman. I don't think she was all right... and I've heard so since. But she was good to me. I don't care what they say about her, or what she was. She was awful good to me. After he died, she went altogether bad, and so I went into the orphan asylum. It wasn't any too good there, and I had three years of it. And then Tom had married and settled down to steady work, and he took me out to live with him. And — well, I've been working pretty steady ever since."

She gazed sadly away across the fields until her eyes came to rest on a fence bright-splashed with poppies at its base. Billy, who from his supine position had been looking up at her, studying and pleasuring in the pointed oval of her woman's face, reached his hand out slowly as he murmured:

"You poor little kid."

His hand closed sympathetically on her bare forearm, and as she looked down to greet his eyes she saw in them surprise and delight.

"Say, ain't your skin cool though," he said. "Now me, I'm always warm. Feel my hand."

It was warmly moist, and she noted microscopic beads of sweat on his forehead and clean-shaven upper lip.

"My, but you are sweaty."

She bent to him and with her handkerchief dabbed his lip and forehead dry, then dried his palms.

"I breathe through my skin, I guess," he explained. "The wise guys in the trainin' camps and gyms say it's a good sign for health. But somehow I'm sweatin' more than usual now. Funny, ain't it?"

She had been forced to unclasp his hand from her arm in order to dry it, and when she finished, it returned to its old position.

"But, say, ain't your skin cool," he repeated with renewed wonder. "Soft as velvet, too, an' smooth as silk. It feels great."

Gently explorative, he slid his hand from wrist to elbow and came to rest half way back. Tired and languid from the morning in the sun, she found herself thrilling to his touch and half-dreamily deciding that here was a man she could love, hands and all.

"Now I've taken the cool all out of that spot." He did not look up to her, and she could see the roguish smile that curled on his lips. "So I guess I'll try another."

He shifted his hand along her arm with soft sensuousness, and she, looking down at his lips, remembered the long tingling they had given hers the first time they had met.

"Go on and talk," he urged, after a delicious five minutes of silence. "I like to watch your lips talking. It's funny, but every move they make looks like a tickly kiss."

Greatly she wanted to stay where she was. Instead, she said:

"If I talk, you won't like what I say."

"Go on," he insisted. "You can't say anything I won't like."

"Well, there's some poppies over there by the fence I want to pick. And then it's time for us to be going."

"I lose," he laughed. "But you made twenty-five tickle kisses just the same. I counted 'em. I'll tell you what: you sing 'When the Harvest Days Are Over,' and let me have your other cool arm while you're doin' it, and then we'll go."

She sang looking down into his eyes, which ware centered, not on hers, but on her lips. When she finished, she slipped his hands from her arms and got up. He was about to start for the horses, when she held her jacket out to him. Despite the independence natural to a girl who earned her own living, she had an innate love of the little services and finenesses; and, also, she remembered from her childhood the talk by the pioneer women of the courtesy and attendance of the caballeros of the Spanish-California days.

Sunset greeted them when, after a wide circle to the east and south, they cleared the divide of the Contra Costa hills and began dropping down the long grade that led past Redwood Peak to Fruitvale. Beneath them stretched the flatlands to the bay, checkerboarded into fields and broken by the towns of Elmhurst, San Leandro, and Haywards. The smoke of Oakland filled the western sky with haze and murk, while beyond, across the bay, they could see the first winking lights of San Francisco.

Darkness was on them, and Billy had become curiously silent. For half an hour he had given no recognition of her existence save once, when the chill evening wind caused him to tuck the robe tightly about her and himself. Half a dozen times Saxon found herself on the verge of the remark, “What’s on your mind?” but each time let it remain unuttered. She sat very close to him. The warmth of their bodies intermingled, and she was aware of a great restfulness and content.

“Say, Saxon,” he began abruptly. “It’s no use my holdin’ it in any longer. It’s ben in my mouth all day, ever since lunch. What’s the matter with you an’ me gettin’ married?”

She knew, very quietly and very gladly, that he meant it. Instinctively she was impelled to hold off, to make him woo her, to make herself more desirably valuable ere she yielded. Further, her woman’s sensitiveness and pride were offended. She had never dreamed of so forthright and bald a proposal from the man to whom she would give herself. The simplicity and directness of Billy’s proposal constituted almost a hurt. On the other hand she wanted him so much — how much she had not realized until now, when he had so unexpectedly made himself accessible.

“Well you gotta say something, Saxon. Hand it to me, good or bad; but anyway hand it to me. An’ just take into consideration that I love you. Why, I love you like the very devil, Saxon. I must, because I’m askin’ you to marry me, an’ I never asked any girl that before.”

Another silence fell, and Saxon found herself dwelling on the warmth, tingling now, under the lap-robe. When she realized whither her thoughts led, she blushed guiltily in the darkness.

“How old are you, Billy?” she questioned, with a suddenness and irrelevance as disconcerting as his first words had been.

“Twenty-two,” he answered.

“I am twenty-four.”

“As if I didn’t know. When you left the orphan asylum and how old you were, how long you worked in the jute mills, the cannery, the paper-box factory, the laundry — maybe you think I can’t do addition. I knew how old you was, even to your birthday.”

“That doesn’t change the fact that I’m two years older.”

"What of it? If it counted for anything, I wouldn't be lovin' you, would I? Your mother was dead right. Love's the big stuff. It's what counts. Don't you see? I just love you, an' I gotta have you. It's natural, I guess; and I've always found with horses, dogs, and other folks, that what's natural is right. There's no gettin' away from it, Saxon; I gotta have you, an' I'm just hopin' hard you gotta have me. Maybe my hands ain't soft like bookkeepers' an' clerks, but they can work for you, an' fight like Sam Hill for you, and, Saxon, they can love you."

The old sex antagonism which she had always experienced with men seemed to have vanished. She had no sense of being on the defensive. This was no game. It was what she had been looking for and dreaming about. Before Billy she was defenseless, and there was an all-satisfaction in the knowledge. She could deny him nothing. Not even if he proved to be like the others. And out of the greatness of the thought rose a greater thought — he would not so prove himself.

She did not speak. Instead, in a glow of spirit and flesh, she reached out to his left hand and gently tried to remove it from the rein. He did not understand; but when she persisted he shifted the rein to his right and let her have her will with the other hand. Her head bent over it, and she kissed the teamster callouses.

For the moment he was stunned.

"You mean it?" he stammered.

For reply, she kissed the hand again and murmured:

"I love your hands, Billy. To me they are the most beautiful hands in the world, and it would take hours of talking to tell you all they mean to me."

"Whoa!" he called to the horses.

He pulled them in to a standstill, soothed them with his voice, and made the reins fast around the whip. Then he turned to her with arms around her and lips to lips.

"Oh, Billy, I'll make you a good wife," she sobbed, when the kiss was broken.

He kissed her wet eyes and found her lips again.

"Now you know what I was thinkin' and why I was sweatin' when we was eatin' lunch. Just seemed I couldn't hold in much longer from tellin' you. Why, you know, you looked good to me from the first moment I spotted you."

"And I think I loved you from that first day, too, Billy. And I was so proud of you all that day, you were so kind and gentle, and so strong, and the way the men all respected you and the girls all wanted you, and the way you fought those three Irishmen when I was behind the picnic table. I couldn't love or marry a man I wasn't proud of, and I'm so proud of you, so proud."

"Not half as much as I am right now of myself," he answered, "for having won you. It's too good to be true. Maybe the alarm clock'll go off and wake me up in a couple of minutes. Well, anyway, if it does, I'm goin' to make the best of them two minutes first. Watch out I don't eat you, I'm that hungry for you."

He smothered her in an embrace, holding her so tightly to him that it almost hurt. After what was to her an age-long period of bliss, his arms relaxed and he seemed to make an effort to draw himself together.

"An' the clock ain't gone off yet," he whispered against her cheek. "And it's a dark night, an' there's Fruitvale right ahead, an' if there ain't King and Prince standin' still in the middle of the road. I never thought the time'd come when I wouldn't want to take the ribbons on a fine pair of horses. But this is that time. I just can't let go of you, and I've gotta some time to-night. It hurts worse'n poison, but here goes."

He restored her to herself, tucked the disarranged robe about her, and chirruped to the impatient team.

Half an hour later he called "Whoa!"

"I know I'm awake now, but I don't know but maybe I dreamed all the rest, and I just want to make sure."

And again be made the reins fast and took her in his arms.

CHAPTER XII

The days flew by for Saxon. She worked on steadily at the laundry, even doing more overtime than usual, and all her free waking hours were devoted to preparations for the great change and to Billy. He had proved himself God's own impetuous lover by insisting on getting married the next day after the proposal, and then by resolutely refusing to compromise on more than a week's delay.

"Why wait?" he demanded. "We're not gettin' any younger so far as I can notice, an' think of all we lose every day we wait."

In the end, he gave in to a month, which was well, for in two weeks he was transferred, with half a dozen other drivers, to work from the big stables of Corberly and Morrison in West Oakland. House-hunting in the other end of town ceased, and on Pine Street, between Fifth and Fourth, and in immediate proximity to the great Southern Pacific railroad yards, Billy and Saxon rented a neat cottage of four small rooms for ten dollars a month.

"Dog-cheap is what I call it, when I think of the small rooms I've ben soaked for," was Billy's judgment. "Look at the one I got now, not as big as the smallest here, an' me payin' six dollars a month for it."

"But it's furnished," Saxon reminded him. "You see, that makes a difference."

But Billy didn't see.

"I ain't much of a scholar, Saxon, but I know simple arithmetic; I've soaked my watch when I was hard up, and I can calculate interest. How much do you figure it will cost to furnish the house, carpets on the floor, linoleum on the kitchen, and all?"

"We can do it nicely for three hundred dollars," she answered. "I've been thinking it over and I'm sure we can do it for that."

"Three hundred," he muttered, wrinkling his brows with concentration. "Three hundred, say at six per cent. — that'd be six cents on the dollar, sixty cents on ten dollars, six dollars on the hundred, on three hundred eighteen dollars. Say — I'm a bear at multiplyin' by ten. Now divide eighteen by twelve, that'd be a dollar an' a half a month interest." He stopped, satisfied that he had proved his contention. Then his face quickened with a fresh thought. "Hold on! That ain't all. That'd be the interest on the furniture for four rooms. Divide by four. What's a dollar an' a half divided by four?"

"Four into fifteen, three times and three to carry," Saxon recited glibly. "Four into thirty is seven, twenty-eight, two to carry; and two-fourths is one-half. There you are."

"Gee! You're the real bear at figures." He hesitated. "I didn't follow you. How much did you say it was?"

"Thirty-seven and a half cents."

"Ah, ha! Now we'll see how much I've ben gouged for my one room. Ten dollars a month for four rooms is two an' a half for one. Add thirty-seven an' a half cents interest on furniture, an' that makes two dollars an' eighty-seven an' a half cents. Subtract from six dollars...."

"Three dollars and twelve and a half cents," she supplied quickly.

"There we are! Three dollars an' twelve an' a half cents I'm jiggered out of on the room I'm rentin'. Say! Bein' married is like savin' money, ain't it?"

"But furniture wears out, Billy."

"By golly, I never thought of that. It ought to be figured, too. Anyway, we've got a snap here, and next Saturday afternoon you've gotta get off from the laundry so as we can go an' buy our furniture. I saw Salinger's last night. I give'm fifty down, and the rest installment plan, ten dollars a month. In twenty-five months the furniture's ourn. An' remember, Saxon, you wanta buy everything you want, no matter how much it costs. No scrimpin' on what's for you an' me. Get me?"

She nodded, with no betrayal on her face of the myriad secret economies that filled her mind. A hint of moisture glistened in her eyes.

"You're so good to me, Billy," she murmured, as she came to him and was met inside his arms.

"So you've gone an' done it," Mary commented, one morning in the laundry. They had not been at work ten minutes ere her eye had glimpsed the topaz ring on the third finger of Saxon's left hand. "Who's the lucky one? Charley Long or Billy Roberts?"

"Billy," was the answer.

"Huh! Takin' a young boy to raise, eh?"

Saxon showed that the stab had gone home, and Mary was all contrition.

"Can't you take a josh? I'm glad to death at the news. Billy's a awful good man, and I'm glad to see you get him. There ain't many like him knockin' 'round, an' they ain't to be had for the askin'. An' you're both lucky. You was just made for each other, an' you'll make him a better wife than any girl I know. When is it to be?"

Going home from the laundry a few days later, Saxon encountered Charley Long. He blocked the sidewalk, and compelled speech with her.

"So you're runnin' with a prizefighter," he sneered. "A blind man can see your finish."

For the first time she was unafraid of this big-bodied, black-browed men with the hairy-matted hands and fingers. She held up her left hand.

"See that? It's something, with all your strength, that you could never put on my finger. Billy Roberts put it on inside a week. He got your number, Charley Long, and at the same time he got me."

"Skiddoo for you," Long retorted. "Twenty-three's your number."

"He's not like you," Saxon went on. "He's a man, every bit of him, a fine, clean man."

Long laughed hoarsely.

"He's got your goat all right."

"And yours," she flashed back.

"I could tell you things about him. Saxon, straight, he ain't no good. If I was to tell you — "

"You'd better get out of my way," she interrupted, "or I'll tell him, and you know what you'll get, you great big bully."

Long shuffled uneasily, then reluctantly stepped aside.

"You're a caution," he said, half admiringly.

"So's Billy Roberts," she laughed, and continued on her way. After half a dozen steps she stopped. "Say," she called.

The big blacksmith turned toward her with eagerness.

"About a block back," she said, "I saw a man with hip disease. You might go and beat him up."

Of one extravagance Saxon was guilty in the course of the brief engagement period. A full day's wages she spent in the purchase of half a dozen cabinet photographs of herself. Billy had insisted that life was unendurable could he not look upon her semblance the last thing when he went to bed at night and the first thing when he got up in the morning. In return, his photographs, one conventional and one in the stripped fighting costume of the ring, ornamented her looking glass. It was while gazing at the latter that she was reminded of her wonderful mother's tales of the ancient Saxons and sea-foragers of the English coasts. From the chest of drawers that had crossed the plains she drew forth another of her several precious heirloom — a scrap-book of her mother's in which was pasted much of the fugitive newspaper verse of pioneer California days. Also, there were copies of paintings and old wood engravings from the magazines of a generation and more before.

Saxon ran the pages with familiar fingers and stopped at the picture she was seeking. Between bold headlands of rock and under a gray cloud-blown sky, a dozen boats, long and lean and dark, beaked like monstrous birds, were landing on a foam-whitened beach of sand. The men in the boats, half naked, huge-muscled and fair-haired, wore winged helmets. In their hands were swords and spears, and they were leaping, waist-deep, into the sea-wash and wading ashore. Opposed to them, contesting the landing, were skin-clad savages, unlike Indians, however, who clustered on the beach or waded into the water to their knees. The first blows were being struck, and here and there the bodies of the dead and wounded rolled in the surf. One fair-haired invader lay across the gunwale of a boat, the manner of his death told by the arrow that transfixed his breast. In the air, leaping past him into the water, sword in hand, was Billy. There was no mistaking it. The striking blondness, the face, the eyes, the mouth were the same. The very expression on the face was what had been on Billy's the day of the picnic when he faced the three wild Irishmen.

Somewhere out of the ruck of those warring races had emerged Billy's ancestors, and hers, was her afterthought, as she closed the book and put it back in the drawer. And some of those ancestors had made this ancient and battered chest of drawers which had crossed the salt ocean and the plains and been pierced by a bullet in the fight with the Indians at Little Meadow. Almost, it seemed, she could visualize the women who had kept their pretties and their family homespun in its drawers — the women of those wandering generations who were grandmothers and greater great grandmothers of her own mother. Well, she sighed, it was a good stock to be born of, a hard-working, hard-fighting stock. She fell to wondering what her life would have been like had she been born a Chinese woman, or an Italian woman like those she saw, head-shawled or bareheaded, squat, ungainly and swarthy, who carried great loads of driftwood on their heads up from the beach. Then she laughed at her foolishness, remembered Billy and the four-roomed cottage on Pine Street, and went to bed with her mind filled for the hundredth time with the details of the furniture.

CHAPTER XIII

“Our cattle were all played out,” Saxon was saying, “and winter was so near that we couldn’t dare try to cross the Great American Desert, so our train stopped in Salt Lake City that winter. The Mormons hadn’t got bad yet, and they were good to us.”

“You talk as though you were there,” Bert commented.

“My mother was,” Saxon answered proudly. “She was nine years old that winter.”

They were seated around the table in the kitchen of the little Pine Street cottage, making a cold lunch of sandwiches, tamales, and bottled beer. It being Sunday, the four were free from work, and they had come early, to work harder than on any week day, washing walls and windows, scrubbing floors, laying carpets and linoleum, hanging curtains, setting up the stove, putting the kitchen utensils and dishes away, and placing the furniture.

“Go on with the story, Saxon,” Mary begged. “I’m just dyin’ to hear. And Bert, you just shut up and listen.”

“Well, that winter was when Del Hancock showed up. He was Kentucky born, but he’d been in the West for years. He was a scout, like Kit Carson, and he knew him well. Many’s a time Kit Carson and he slept under the same blankets. They were together to California and Oregon with General Fremont. Well, Del Hancock was passing on his way through Salt Lake, going I don’t know where to raise a company of Rocky Mountain trappers to go after beaver some new place he knew about. Ha was a handsome man. He wore his hair long like in pictures, and had a silk sash around his waist he’d learned to wear in California from the Spanish, and two revolvers in his belt. Any woman ‘d fall in love with him first sight. Well, he saw Sadie, who was my mother’s oldest sister, and I guess she looked good to him, for he stopped right there in Salt Lake and didn’t go a step. He was a great Indian fighter, too, and I heard my Aunt Villa say, when I was a little girl, that he had the blackest, brightest eyes, and that the way he looked was like an eagle. He’d fought duels, too, the way they did in those days, and he wasn’t afraid of anything.

“Sadie was a beauty, and she flirted with him and drove him crazy. Maybe she wasn’t sure of her own mind, I don’t know. But I do know that she didn’t give in as easy as I did to Billy. Finally, he couldn’t stand it any more. Ha rode up that night on horseback, wild as could be. ‘Sadie,’ he said, ‘if you don’t promise to marry me to-morrow, I’ll shoot myself to-night right back of the corral.’ And he’d have done it, too, and Sadie knew it, and said she would. Didn’t they make love fast in those days?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Mary sniffed. “A week after you first laid eyes on Billy you was engaged. Did Billy say he was going to shoot himself back of the laundry if you turned him down?”

“I didn’t give him a chance,” Saxon confessed. “Anyway Del Hancock and Aunt Sadie got married next day. And they were very happy afterward, only she died. And after that he was killed, with General Custer and all the rest, by the Indians. He was an old man by then, but I guess he got his share of Indians before they got him. Men like him always died fighting, and they took their dead with them. I used to know Al Stanley when I was a little girl. He was a gambler, but he was game. A railroad man shot him in the back when he was sitting at a table. That shot killed him, too. He died in about two seconds. But before he died he’d pulled his gun and put three bullets into the man that killed him.”

“I don’t like fightin’,” Mary protested. “It makes me nervous. Bert gives me the willies the way he’s always lookin’ for trouble. There ain’t no sense in it.”

“And I wouldn’t give a snap of my fingers for a man without fighting spirit,” Saxon answered. “Why, we wouldn’t be here to-day if it wasn’t for the fighting spirit of our people before us.”

“You’ve got the real goods of a fighter in Billy,” Bert assured her; “a yard long and a yard wide and genuine A Number One, long-fleeced wool. Billy’s a Mohegan with a scalp-lock, that’s what he is. And when he gets his mad up it’s a case of get out from under or something will fall on you — hard.”

“Just like that,” Mary added.

Billy, who had taken no part in the conversation, got up, glanced into the bedroom off the kitchen, went into the parlor and the bedroom off the parlor, then returned and stood gazing with puzzled brows into the kitchen bedroom.

“What’s eatin’ you, old man,” Bert queried. “You look as though you’d lost something or was markin’ a three-way ticket. What you got on your chest? Cough it up.”

“Why, I’m just thinkin’ where in Sam Hill’s the bed an’ stuff for the back bedroom.”

“There isn’t any,” Saxon explained. “We didn’t order any.”

“Then I’ll see about it to-morrow.”

“What d’ye want another bed for?” asked Bert. “Ain’t one bed enough for the two of you?”

“You shut up, Bert!” Mary cried. “Don’t get raw.”

“Whoa, Mary!” Bert grinned. “Back up. You’re in the wrong stall as usual.”

“We don’t need that room,” Saxon was saying to Billy. “And so I didn’t plan any furniture. That money went to buy better carpets and a better stove.”

Billy came over to her, lifted her from the chair, and seated himself with her on his knees.

“That’s right, little girl. I’m glad you did. The best for us every time. And to-morrow night I want you to run up with me to Salinger’s an’ pick out a good bedroom set an’ carpet for that room. And it must be good. Nothin’ snide.”

“It will cost fifty dollars,” she objected.

“That’s right,” he nodded. “Make it cost fifty dollars and not a cent less. We’re goin’ to have the best. And what’s the good of an empty room? It’d make the house look cheap. Why, I go around now, seein’ this little nest just as it grows an’ softens, day by day, from the day we paid the cash money down an’ nailed the keys. Why, almost every moment I’m drivin’ the horses, all day long, I just keep on seein’ this nest. And when we’re married, I’ll go on seein’ it. And I want to see it complete. If that room’d he bare-floored an’ empty, I’d see nothin’ but it and its bare floor all day long. I’d be cheated. The house’d be a lie. Look at them curtains you put up in it, Saxon. That’s to make believe to the neighbors that it’s furnished. Saxon, them curtains are lyin’ about that room, makin’ a noise for every one to hear that that room’s furnished. Nitsky for us. I’m goin’ to see that them curtains tell the truth.”

“You might rent it,” Bert suggested. “You’re close to the railroad yards, and it’s only two blocks to a restaurant.”

“Not on your life. I ain’t marryin’ Saxon to take in lodgers. If I can’t take care of her, d’ye know what I’ll do? Go down to Long Wharf, say ‘Here goes nothin',' an' jump into the bay with a stone tied to my neck. Ain't I right, Saxon?"

It was contrary to her prudent judgment, but it fanned her pride. She threw her arms around her lover's neck, and said, ere she kissed him:

"You're the boss, Billy. What you say goes, and always will go."

"Listen to that!" Bert gibed to Mary. "That's the stuff. Saxon's onto her job."

"I guess we'll talk things over together first before ever I do anything," Billy was saying to Saxon.

"Listen to that," Mary triumphed. "You bet the man that marries me'll have to talk things over first."

"Billy's only givin' her hot air," Bert plagued. "They all do it before they're married."

Mary sniffed contemptuously.

"I'll bet Saxon leads him around by the nose. And I'm goin' to say, loud an' strong, that I'll lead the man around by the nose that marries me."

"Not if you love him," Saxon interposed.

"All the more reason," Mary pursued.

Bert assumed an expression and attitude of mournful dejection.

"Now you see why me an' Mary don't get married," he said. "I'm some big Indian myself, an' I'll be everlastingly jiggerooed if I put up for a wigwam I can't be boss of."

"And I'm no squaw," Mary retaliated, "an' I wouldn't marry a big buck Indian if all the rest of the men in the world was dead."

"Well this big buck Indian ain't asked you yet."

"He knows what he'd get if he did."

"And after that maybe he'll think twice before he does ask you."

Saxon, intent on diverting the conversation into pleasanter channels, clapped her hands as if with sudden recollection.

"Oh! I forgot! I want to show you something." From her purse she drew a slender ring of plain gold and passed it around. "My mother's wedding ring. I've worn it around my neck always, like a locket. I cried for it so in the orphan asylum that the matron gave it back for me to wear. And now, just to think, after next Tuesday I'll be wearing it on my finger. Look, Billy, see the engraving on the inside."

"C to D, 1879," he read.

“Carlton to Daisy — Carlton was my father’s first name. And now, Billy, you’ve got to get it engraved for you and me.”

Mary was all eagerness and delight.

“Oh, it’s fine,” she cried. “W to S, 1907.”

Billy considered a moment.

“No, that wouldn’t be right, because I’m not giving it to Saxon.”

“I’ll tell you what,” Saxon said. “W and S.”

“Nope.” Billy shook his head. “S and W, because you come first with me.”

“If I come first with you, you come first with us. Billy, dear, I insist on W and S.”

“You see,” Mary said to Bert. “Having her own way and leading him by the nose already.”

Saxon acknowledged the sting.

“Anyway you want, Billy,” she surrendered. His arms tightened about her.

“We’ll talk it over first, I guess.”

CHAPTER XIV

Sarah was conservative. Worse, she had crystallized at the end of her love-time with the coming of her first child. After that she was as set in her ways as plaster in a mold. Her mold was the prejudices and notions of her girlhood and the house she lived in. So habitual was she that any change in the customary round assumed the proportions of a revolution. Tom had gone through many of these revolutions, three of them when he moved house. Then his stamina broke, and he never moved house again.

So it was that Saxon had held back the announcement of her approaching marriage until it was unavoidable. She expected a scene, and she got it.

"A prizefighter, a hoodlum, a plug-ugly," Sarah sneered, after she had exhausted herself of all calamitous forecasts of her own future and the future of her children in the absence of Saxon's weekly four dollars and a half. "I don't know what your mother'd thought if she lived to see the day when you took up with a tough like Bill Roberts. Bill! Why, your mother was too refined to associate with a man that was called Bill. And all I can say is you can say good-bye to silk stockings and your three pair of shoes. It won't be long before you'll think yourself lucky to go sloppin' around in Congress gaiters and cotton stockin's two pair for a quarter."

"Oh, I'm not afraid of Billy not being able to keep me in all kinds of shoes," Saxon retorted with a proud toss of her head.

"You don't know what you're talkin' about." Sarah paused to laugh in mirthless discordance. "Watch for the babies to come. They come faster than wages raise these days."

"But we're not going to have any babies... that is, at first. Not until after the furniture is all paid for anyway."

"Wise in your generation, eh? In my days girls were more modest than to know anything about disgraceful subjects."

"As babies?" Saxon queried, with a touch of gentle malice.

"Yes, as babies."

"The first I knew that babies were disgraceful. Why, Sarah, you, with your five, how disgraceful you have been. Billy and I have decided not to be half as disgraceful. We're only going to have two — a boy and a girl."

Tom chuckled, but held the peace by hiding his face in his coffee cup. Sarah, though checked by this flank attack, was herself an old hand in the art. So temporary was the setback that she scarcely paused ere hurling her assault from a new angle.

“An’ marryin’ so quick, all of a sudden, eh? If that ain’t suspicious, nothin’ is. I don’t know what young women’s comin’ to. They ain’t decent, I tell you. They ain’t decent. That’s what comes of Sunday dancin’ an’ all the rest. Young women nowadays are like a lot of animals. Such fast an’ looseness I never saw....”

Saxon was white with anger, but while Sarah wandered on in her diatribe, Tom managed to wink privily and prodigiously at his sister and to implore her to help in keeping the peace.

“It’s all right, kid sister,” he comforted Saxon when they were alone. “There’s no use talkin’ to Sarah. Bill Roberts is a good boy. I know a lot about him. It does you proud to get him for a husband. You’re bound to be happy with him...” His voice sank, and his face seemed suddenly to be very old and tired as he went on anxiously. “Take warning from Sarah. Don’t nag. Whatever you do, don’t nag. Don’t give him a perpetual-motion line of chin. Kind of let him talk once in a while. Men have some horse sense, though Sarah don’t know it. Why, Sarah actually loves me, though she don’t make a noise like it. The thing for you is to love your husband, and, by thunder, to make a noise of lovin’ him, too. And then you can kid him into doing ‘most anything you want. Let him have his way once in a while, and he’ll let you have yourn. But you just go on lovin’ him, and leanin’ on his judgement — he’s no fool — and you’ll be all hunky-dory. I’m scared from goin’ wrong, what of Sarah. But I’d sooner be loved into not going wrong.”

“Oh, I’ll do it, Tom,” Saxon nodded, smiling through the tears his sympathy had brought into her eyes. “And on top of it I’m going to do something else, I’m going to make Billy love me and just keep on loving me. And then I won’t have to kid him into doing some of the things I want. He’ll do them because he loves me, you see.”

“You got the right idea, Saxon. Stick with it, an’ you’ll win out.”

Later, when she had put on her hat to start for the laundry, she found Tom waiting for her at the corner.

“An’, Saxon,” he said, hastily and haltingly, “you won’t take anything I’ve said... you know... — about Sarah... as bein’ in any way disloyal to her? She’s a good woman, an’ faithful. An’ her life ain’t so easy by a long shot. I’d bite out my tongue before I’d say anything against her. I guess all folks have their troubles. It’s hell to be poor, ain’t it?”

"You've been awful good to me, Tom. I can never forget it. And I know Sarah means right. She does do her best."

"I won't be able to give you a wedding present," her brother ventured apologetically. "Sarah won't hear of it. Says we didn't get none from my folks when we got married. But I got something for you just the same. A surprise. You'd never guess it."

Saxon waited.

"When you told me you was goin' to get married, I just happened to think of it, an' I wrote to brother George, askin' him for it for you. An' by thunder he sent it by express. I didn't tell you because I didn't know but maybe he'd sold it. He did sell the silver spurs. He needed the money, I guess. But the other, I had it sent to the shop so as not to bother Sarah, an' I sneaked it in last night an' hid it in the woodshed."

"Oh, it is something of my father's! What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"His army sword."

"The one he wore on his roan war horse! Oh, Tom, you couldn't give me a better present. Let's go back now. I want to see it. We can slip in the back way. Sarah's washing in the kitchen, and she won't begin hanging out for an hour."

"I spoke to Sarah about lettin' you take the old chest of drawers that was your mother's," Tom whispered, as they stole along the narrow alley between the houses. "Only she got on her high horse. Said that Daisy was as much my mother as yourn, even if we did have different fathers, and that the chest had always belonged in Daisy's family and not Captain Kit's, an' that it was mine, an' what was mine she had some say-so about."

"It's all right," Saxon reassured him. "She sold it to me last night. She was waiting up for me when I got home with fire in her eye."

"Yep, she was on the warpath all day after I mentioned it. How much did you give her for it?"

"Six dollars."

"Robbery — it ain't worth it," Tom groaned. "It's all cracked at one end and as old as the hills."

"I'd have given ten dollars for it. I'd have given 'most anything for it, Tom. It was mother's, you know. I remember it in her room when she was still alive."

In the woodshed Tom resurrected the hidden treasure and took off the wrapping paper. Appeared a rusty, steel-scabbarded saber of the heavy type carried by cavalry officers in Civil War days. It was attached to a moth-eaten sash of thick-woven crimson silk from which hung heavy silk tassels. Saxon almost seized it from her brother in her eagerness. She drew forth the blade and pressed her lips to the steel.

It was her last day at the laundry. She was to quit work that evening for good. And the next afternoon, at five, she and Billy were to go before a justice of the peace and be married. Bert and Mary were to be the witnesses, and after that the four were to go to a private room in Barnum's Restaurant for the wedding supper. That over, Bert and Mary would proceed to a dance at Myrtle Hall, while Billy and Saxon would take the Eighth Street car to Seventh and Pine. Honeymoons are infrequent in the working class. The next morning Billy must be at the stable at his regular hour to drive his team out.

All the women in the fancy starch room knew it was Saxon's last day. Many exulted for her, and not a few were envious of her, in that she had won a husband and to freedom from the suffocating slavery of the ironing board. Much of bantering she endured; such was the fate of every girl who married out of the fancy starch room. But Saxon was too happy to be hurt by the teasing, a great deal of which was gross, but all of which was good-natured.

In the steam that arose from under her iron, and on the surfaces of the dainty lawns and muslins that flew under her hands, she kept visioning herself in the Pine Street cottage; and steadily she hummed under her breath her paraphrase of the latest popular song:

"And when I work, and when I work, I'll always work for Billy."

By three in the afternoon the strain of the piece-workers in the humid, heated room grew tense. Elderly women gasped and sighed; the color went out of the cheeks of the young women, their faces became drawn and dark circles formed under their eyes; but all held on with weary, unabated speed. The tireless, vigilant forewoman kept a sharp lookout for incipient hysteria, and once led a narrow-chested, stoop-shouldered young thing out of the place in time to prevent a collapse.

Saxon was startled by the wildest scream of terror she had ever heard. The tense thread of human resolution snapped; wills and nerves broke down, and a hundred women suspended their irons or dropped them. It was Mary who had screamed so terribly, and Saxon saw a strange black animal flapping great claw-like wings and nestling on Mary's shoulder. With the scream, Mary crouched down, and the strange creature, darting into the air, fluttered full into the startled face of a woman at the next board. This woman promptly screamed and fainted. Into the air again, the flying thing darted hither and thither, while the shrieking, shrinking women threw up their arms, tried to run away along the aisles, or cowered under their ironing boards.

"It's only a bat!" the forewoman shouted. She was furious. "Ain't you ever seen a bat? It won't eat you!"

But they were ghetto people, and were not to be quieted. Some woman who could not see the cause of the uproar, out of her overwrought apprehension raised the cry of fire and precipitated the panic rush for the doors. All of them were screaming the stupid, soul-sickening high note of terror, drowning the forewoman's voice. Saxon had been merely startled at first, but the screaming panic broke her grip on herself and swept her away. Though she did not scream, she fled with the rest. When this horde of crazed women debouched on the next department, those who worked there joined in the stampede to escape from they knew not what danger. In ten minutes the laundry was deserted, save for a few men wandering about with hand grenades in futile search for the cause of the disturbance.

The forewoman was stout, but indomitable. Swept along half the length of an aisle by the terror-stricken women, she had broken her way back through the rout and quickly caught the light-blinded visitant in a clothes basket.

"Maybe I don't know what God looks like, but take it from me I've seen a tintype of the devil," Mary gurgled, emotionally fluttering back and forth between laughter and tears.

But Saxon was angry with herself, for she had been as frightened as the rest in that wild flight for out-of-doors.

"We're a lot of fools," she said. "It was only a bat. I've heard about them. They live in the country. They wouldn't hurt a fly. They can't see in the daytime. That was what was the matter with this one. It was only a bat."

"Huh, you can't string me," Mary replied. "It was the devil." She sobbed a moment, and then laughed hysterically again. "Did you see Mrs. Bergstrom faint? And it only touched her in the face. Why, it was on my shoulder and touching my bare neck like the hand of a corpse. And I didn't faint." She laughed again. "I guess, maybe, I was too scared to faint."

"Come on back," Saxon urged. "We've lost half an hour."

“Not me. I’m goin’ home after that, if they fire me. I couldn’t iron for sour apples now, I’m that shaky.”

One woman had broken a leg, another an arm, and a number nursed milder bruises and bruises. No bullying nor entreating of the forewoman could persuade the women to return to work. They were too upset and nervous, and only here and there could one be found brave enough to re-enter the building for the hats and lunch baskets of the others. Saxon was one of the handful that returned and worked till six o’clock.

CHAPTER XV

“Why, Bert! — you’re squiffed!” Mary cried reproachfully.

The four were at the table in the private room at Barnum’s. The wedding supper, simple enough, but seemingly too expensive to Saxon, had been eaten. Bert, in his hand a glass of California red wine, which the management supplied for fifty cents a bottle, was on his feet endeavoring a speech. His face was flushed; his black eyes were feverishly bright.

“You’ve ben drinkin’ before you met me,” Mary continued. “I can see it stickin’ out all over you.”

“Consult an oculist, my dear,” he replied. “Bertram is himself to-night. An’ he is here, arisin’ to his feet to give the glad hand to his old pal. Bill, old man, here’s to you. It’s how-de-do an’ good-bye, I guess. You’re a married man now, Bill, an’ you got to keep regular hours. No more runnin’ around with the boys. You gotta take care of yourself, an’ get your life insured, an’ take out an accident policy, an’ join a buildin’ an’ loan society, an’ a buryin’ association — ”

“Now you shut up, Bert,” Mary broke in. “You don’t talk about buryin’s at weddings. You oughta be ashamed of yourself.”

“Whoa, Mary! Back up! I said what I said because I meant it. I ain’t thinkin’ what Mary thinks. What I was thinkin’.... Let me tell you what I was thinkin’. I said buryin’ association, didn’t I? Well, it was not with the idea of castin’ gloom over this merry gatherin’. Far be it....”

He was so evidently seeking a way out of his predicament, that Mary tossed her head triumphantly. This acted as a spur to his reeling wits.

“Let me tell you why,” he went on. “Because, Bill, you got such an all-fired pretty wife, that’s why. All the fellows is crazy over her, an’ when they get to runnin’ after her, what’ll you be doin’? You’ll be gettin’ busy. And then won’t you need a buryin’ association to bury ‘em? I just guess yes. That was the compliment to your good taste in skirts I was tryin’ to come across with when Mary butted in.”

His glittering eyes rested for a moment in bantering triumph on Mary.

“Who says I’m squiffed? Me? Not on your life. I’m seein’ all things in a clear white light. An’ I see Bill there, my old friend Bill. An’ I don’t see two Bills. I see only one. Bill was never two-faced in his life. Bill, old man, when I look at you there in the married harness, I’m sorry — ” He ceased abruptly and turned on Mary. “Now don’t go up in the air, old girl. I’m onto my job. My grandfather was a state senator, and he could spiel graceful an’ pleasin’ till the cows come home. So can I. — Bill, when I look at you, I’m sorry. I repeat, I’m sorry.” He glared challengingly at Mary. “For myself when I look at you an’ know all the happiness you got a hammerlock on. Take it from me, you’re a wise guy, bless the women. You’ve started well. Keep it up. Marry ‘em all, bless ‘em. Bill, here’s to you. You’re a Mohegan with a scalplock. An’ you got a squaw that is some squaw, take it from me. Minnehaha, here’s to you — to the two of you — an’ to the papooses, too, gosh-dang them!”

He drained the glass suddenly and collapsed in his chair, blinking his eyes across at the wedded couple while tears trickled unheeded down his cheeks. Mary’s hand went out soothingly to his, completing his breakdown.

“By God, I got a right to cry,” he sobbed. “I’m losin’ my best friend, ain’t I? It’ll never be the same again never. When I think of the fun, an’ scrapes, an’ good times Bill an’ me has had together, I could darn near hate you, Saxon, sittin’ there with your hand in his.”

“Cheer up, Bert,” she laughed gently. “Look at whose hand you are holding.”

“Aw, it’s only one of his cryin’ jags,” Mary said, with a harshness that her free hand belied as it caressed his hair with soothing strokes. “Buck up, Bert. Everything’s all right. And now it’s up to Bill to say something after your dandy spiel.”

Bert recovered himself quickly with another glass of wine.

“Kick in, Bill,” he cried. “It’s your turn now.”

“I’m no hotair artist,” Billy grumbled. “What’ll I say, Saxon? They ain’t no use tellin’ ‘em how happy we are. They know that.”

“Tell them we’re always going to be happy,” she said. “And thank them for all their good wishes, and we both wish them the same. And we’re always going to be together, like old times, the four of us. And tell them they’re invited down to 507 Pine Street next Sunday for Sunday dinner. — And, Mary, if you want to come Saturday night you can sleep in the spare bedroom.”

“You’ve told’m yourself, better’n I could.” Billy clapped his hands. “You did yourself proud, an’ I guess they ain’t much to add to it, but just the same I’m goin’ to pass them a hot one.”

He stood up, his hand on his glass. His clear blue eyes under the dark brows and framed by the dark lashes, seemed a deeper blue, and accentuated the blondness of hair and skin. The smooth cheeks were rosy — not with wine, for it was only his second glass — but with health and joy. Saxon, looking up at him, thrilled with pride in him, he was so well-dressed, so strong, so handsome, so clean-looking — her man-boy. And she was aware of pride in herself, in her woman's desirableness that had won for her so wonderful a lover.

"Well, Bert an' Mary, here you are at Saxon's and my wedding supper. We're just goin' to take all your good wishes to heart, we wish you the same back, and when we say it we mean more than you think we mean. Saxon an' I believe in tit for tat. So we're wishin' for the day when the table is turned clear around an' we're sittin' as guests at your weddin' supper. And then, when you come to Sunday dinner, you can both stop Saturday night in the spare bedroom. I guess I was wised up when I furnished it, eh?"

"I never thought it of you, Billy!" Mary exclaimed. "You're every hit as raw as Bert. But just the same..."

There was a rush of moisture to her eyes. Her voice faltered and broke. She smiled through her tears at them, then turned to look at Bert, who put his arm around her and gathered her on to his knees.

When they left the restaurant, the four walked to Eighth and Broadway, where they stopped beside the electric car. Bert and Billy were awkward and silent, oppressed by a strange aloofness. But Mary embraced Saxon with fond anxiousness.

"It's all right, dear," Mary whispered. "Don't be scared. It's all right. Think of all the other women in the world."

The conductor clanged the gong, and the two couples separated in a sudden hubbub of farewell.

"Oh, you Mohegan!" Bert called after, as the car got under way. "Oh, you Minnehaha!"

"Remember what I said," was Mary's parting to Saxon.

The car stopped at Seventh and Pine, the terminus of the line. It was only a little over two blocks to the cottage. On the front steps Billy took the key from his pocket.

"Funny, isn't it?" he said, as the key turned in the lock. "You an' me. Just you an' me."

While he lighted the lamp in the parlor, Saxon was taking off her hat. He went into the bedroom and lighted the lamp there, then turned back and stood in the doorway. Saxon, still unaccountably fumbling with her hatpins, stole a glance at him. He held out his arms.

“Now,” he said.

She came to him, and in his arms he could feel her trembling.

BOOK II

CHAPTER I

The first evening after the marriage night Saxon met Billy at the door as he came up the front steps. After their embrace, and as they crossed the parlor hand in hand toward the kitchen, he filled his lungs through his nostrils with audible satisfaction.

"My, but this house smells good, Saxon! It ain't the coffee — I can smell that, too. It's the whole house. It smells... well, it just smells good to me, that's all."

He washed and dried himself at the sink, while she heated the frying pan on the front hole of the stove with the lid off. As he wiped his hands he watched her keenly, and cried out with approbation as she dropped the steak in the fryin pan.

"Where'd you learn to cook steak on a dry, hot pan? It's the only way, but darn few women seem to know about it."

As she took the cover off a second frying pan and stirred the savory contents with a kitchen knife, he came behind her, passed his arms under her arm-pits with down-drooping hands upon her breasts, and bent his head over her shoulder till cheek touched cheek.

"Um-um-um-m-m! Fried potatoes with onions like mother used to make. Me for them. Don't they smell good, though! Um-um-m-m-m!"

The pressure of his hands relaxed, and his cheek slid caressingly past hers as he started to release her. Then his hands closed down again. She felt his lips on her hair and heard his advertised inhalation of delight.

"Um-um-m-m-m! Don't you smell good — yourself, though! I never understood what they meant when they said a girl was sweet. I know, now. And you're the sweetest I ever knew."

His joy was boundless. When he returned from combing his hair in the bedroom and sat down at the small table opposite her, he paused with knife and fork in hand.

"Say, bein' married is a whole lot more than it's cracked up to be by most married folks. Honest to God, Saxon, we can show 'em a few. We can give 'em cards and spades an' little casino an' win out on big casino and the aces. I've got but one kick comin'."

The instant apprehension in her eyes provoked a chuckle from him.

“An’ that is that we didn’t get married quick enough. Just think. I’ve lost a whole week of this.”

Her eyes shone with gratitude and happiness, and in her heart she solemnly pledged herself that never in all their married life would it be otherwise.

Supper finished, she cleared the table and began washing the dishes at the sink. When he evinced the intention of wiping them, she caught him by the lapels of the coat and backed him into a chair.

“You’ll sit right there, if you know what’s good for you. Now be good and mind what I say. Also, you will smoke a cigarette. — No; you’re not going to watch me. There’s the morning paper beside you. And if you don’t hurry to read it, I’ll be through these dishes before you’ve started.”

As he smoked and read, she continually glanced across at him from her work. One thing more, she thought — slippers; and then the picture of comfort and content would be complete.

Several minutes later Billy put the paper aside with a sigh.

“It’s no use,” he complained. “I can’t read.”

“What’s the matter?” she teased. “Eyes weak?”

“Nope. They’re sore, and there’s only one thing to do ‘em any good, an’ that’s lookin’ at you.”

“All right, then, baby Billy; I’ll be through in a jiffy.”

When she had washed the dish towel and scalded out the sink, she took off her kitchen apron, came to him, and kissed first one eye and then the other.

“How are they now. Cured?”

“They feel some better already.”

She repeated the treatment.

“And now?”

“Still better.”

“And now?”

“Almost well.”

After he had adjudged them well, he ouched and informed her that there was still some hurt in the right eye.

In the course of treating it, she cried out as in pain. Billy was all alarm.

“What is it? What hurt you?”

“My eyes. They’re hurting like sixty.”

And Billy became physician for a while and she the patient. When the cure was accomplished, she led him into the parlor, where, by the open window, they succeeded in occupying the same Morris chair. It was the most expensive comfort in the house. It had cost seven dollars and a half, and, though it was grander than anything she had dreamed of possessing, the extravagance of it had worried her in a half-guilty way all day.

The salt chill of the air that is the blessing of all the bay cities after the sun goes down crept in about them. They heard the switch engines puffing in the railroad yards, and the rumbling thunder of the Seventh Street local slowing down in its run from the Mole to stop at West Oakland station. From the street came the noise of children playing in the summer night, and from the steps of the house next door the low voices of gossiping housewives.

“Can you beat it?” Billy murmured. “When I think of that six-dollar furnished room of mine, it makes me sick to think what I was missin’ all the time. But there’s one satisfaction. If I’d changed it sooner I wouldn’t a-had you. You see, I didn’t know you existed only until a couple of weeks ago.”

His hand crept along her bare forearm and up and partly under the elbow-sleeve.

“Your skin’s so cool,” he said. “It ain’t cold; it’s cool. It feels good to the hand.”

“Pretty soon you’ll be calling me your cold-storage baby,” she laughed.

“And your voice is cool,” he went on. “It gives me the feeling just as your hand does when you rest it on my forehead. It’s funny. I can’t explain it. But your voice just goes all through me, cool and fine. It’s like a wind of coolness — just right. It’s like the first of the sea-breeze settin’ in in the afternoon after a scorchin’ hot morning. An’ sometimes, when you talk low, it sounds round and sweet like the ‘cello in the Macdonough Theater orchestra. And it never goes high up, or sharp, or squeaky, or scratchy, like some women’s voices when they’re mad, or fresh, or excited, till they remind me of a bum phonograph record. Why, your voice, it just goes through me till I’m all trembling — like with the everlastin’ cool of it. It’s it’s straight delicious. I guess angels in heaven, if they is any, must have voices like that.”

After a few minutes, in which, so inexpressible was her happiness that she could only pass her hand through his hair and cling to him, he broke out again.

"I'll tell you what you remind me of. Did you ever see a thoroughbred mare, all shinin' in the sun, with hair like satin an' skin so thin an' tender that the least touch of the whip leaves a mark — all fine nerves, an' delicate an' sensitive, that'll kill the toughest bronco when it comes to endurance an' that can strain a tendon in a flash or catch death-of-cold without a blanket for a night? I wanta tell you they ain't many beautifuler sights in this world. An' they're that fine-strung, an' sensitive, an' delicate. You gotta handle 'em right-side up, glass, with care. Well, that's what you remind me of. And I'm goin' to make it my job to see you get handled an' gentled in the same way. You're as different from other women as that kind of a mare is from scrub work-horse mares. You're a thoroughbred. You're clean-cut an' spirited, an' your lines...

"Say, d'ye know you've got some figure? Well, you have. Talk about Annette Kellerman. You can give her cards and spades. She's Australian, an' you're American, only your figure ain't. You're different. You're nifty — I don't know how to explain it. Other women ain't built like you. You belong in some other country. You're Frenchy, that's what. You're built like a French woman an' more than that — the way you walk, move, stand up or sit down, or don't do anything."

And he, who had never been out of California, or, for that matter, had never slept a night away from his birthtown of Oakland, was right in his judgment. She was a flower of Anglo-Saxon stock, a rarity in the exceptional smallness and fineness of hand and foot and bone and grace of flesh and carriage — some throw-back across the face of time to the foraying Norman-French that had intermingled with the sturdy Saxon breed.

"And in the way you carry your clothes. They belong to you. They seem just as much part of you as the cool of your voice and skin. They're always all right an' couldn't be better. An' you know, a fellow kind of likes to be seen taggin' around with a woman like you, that wears her clothes like a dream, an' hear the other fellows say: 'Who's Bill's new skirt? She's a peach, ain't she? Wouldn't I like to win her, though.' And all that sort of talk."

And Saxon, her cheek pressed to his, knew that she was paid in full for all her midnight sewings and the torturing hours of drowsy stitching when her head nodded with the weariness of the day's toil, while she recreated for herself filched ideas from the dainty garments that had steamed under her passing iron.

"Say, Saxon, I got a new name for you. You're my Tonic Kid. That's what you are, the Tonic Kid."

"And you'll never get tired of me?" she queried.

"Tired? Why we was made for each other."

"Isn't it wonderful, our meeting, Billy? We might never have met. It was just by accident that we did."

"We was born lucky," he proclaimed. "That's a cinch."

"Maybe it was more than luck," she ventured.

"Sure. It just had to be. It was fate. Nothing could a-kept us apart."

They sat on in a silence that was quick with unuttered love, till she felt him slowly draw her more closely and his lips come near to her ear as they whispered: "What do you say we go to bed?"

Many evenings they spent like this, varied with an occasional dance, with trips to the Orpheum and to Bell's Theater, or to the moving picture shows, or to the Friday night band concerts in City Hall Park. Often, on Sunday, she prepared a lunch, and he drove her out into the hills behind Prince and King, whom Billy's employer was still glad to have him exercise.

Each morning Saxon was called by the alarm clock. The first morning he had insisted upon getting up with her and building the fire in the kitchen stove. She gave in the first morning, but after that she laid the fire in the evening, so that all that was required was the touching of a match to it. And in bed she compelled him to remain for a last little doze ere she called him for breakfast. For the first several weeks she prepared his lunch for him. Then, for a week, he came down to dinner. After that he was compelled to take his lunch with him. It depended on how far distant the teaming was done.

"You're not starting right with a man," Mary cautioned. "You wait on him hand and foot. You'll spoil him if you don't watch out. It's him that ought to be waitin' on you."

"He's the bread-winner," Saxon replied. "He works harder than I, and I've got more time than I know what to do with — time to burn. Besides, I want to wait on him because I love to, and because... well, anyway, I want to."

CHAPTER II

Despite the fastidiousness of her housekeeping, Saxon, once she had systematized it, found time and to spare on her hands. Especially during the periods in which her husband carried his lunch and there was no midday meal to prepare, she had a number of hours each day to herself. Trained for years to the routine of factory and laundry work, she could not abide this unaccustomed idleness. She could not bear to sit and do nothing, while she could not pay calls on her girlhood friends, for they still worked in factory and laundry. Nor was she acquainted with the wives of the neighborhood, save for one strange old woman who lived in the house next door and with whom Saxon had exchanged snatches of conversation over the backyard division fence.

One time-consuming diversion of which Saxon took advantage was free and unlimited baths. In the orphan asylum and in Sarah's house she had been used to but one bath a week. As she grew to womanhood she had attempted more frequent baths. But the effort proved disastrous, arousing, first, Sarah's derision, and next, her wrath. Sarah had crystallized in the era of the weekly Saturday night bath, and any increase in this cleansing function was regarded by her as putting on airs and as an insinuation against her own cleanliness. Also, it was an extravagant misuse of fuel, and occasioned extra towels in the family wash. But now, in Billy's house, with her own stove, her own tub and towels and soap, and no one to say her nay, Saxon was guilty of a daily orgy. True, it was only a common washtub that she placed on the kitchen floor and filled by hand; but it was a luxury that had taken her twenty-four years to achieve. It was from the strange woman next door that Saxon received a hint, dropped in casual conversation, of what proved the culminating joy of bathing. A simple thing — a few drops of druggist's ammonia in the water; but Saxon had never heard of it before.

She was destined to learn much from the strange woman. The acquaintance had begun one day when Saxon, in the back yard, was hanging out a couple of corset covers and several pieces of her finest undergarments. The woman leaning on the rail of her back porch, had caught her eye, and nodded, as it seemed to Saxon, half to her and half to the underlinen on the line.

“You’re newly married, aren’t you?” the woman asked. “I’m Mrs. Higgins. I prefer my first name, which is Mercedes.”

“And I’m Mrs. Roberts,” Saxon replied, thrilling to the newness of the designation on her tongue. “My first name is Saxon.”

“Strange name for a Yankee woman,” the other commented.

“Oh, but I’m not Yankee,” Saxon exclaimed. “I’m Californian.”

“La la,” laughed Mercedes Higgins. “I forgot I was in America. In other lands all Americans are called Yankees. It is true that you are newly married?”

Saxon nodded with a happy sigh. Mercedes sighed, too.

“Oh, you happy, soft, beautiful young thing. I could envy you to hatred — you with all the man-world ripe to be twisted about your pretty little fingers. And you don’t realize your fortune. No one does until it’s too late.”

Saxon was puzzled and disturbed, though she answered readily:

“Oh, but I do know how lucky I am. I have the finest man in the world.”

Mercedes Higgins sighed again and changed the subject. She nodded her head at the garments.

“I see you like pretty things. It is good judgment for a young woman. They’re the bait for men — half the weapons in the battle. They win men, and they hold men — ” She broke off to demand almost fiercely: “And you, you would keep your husband? — always, always — if you can?”

“I intend to. I will make him love me always and always.”

Saxon ceased, troubled and surprised that she should be so intimate with a stranger.

“‘Tis a queer thing, this love of men,” Mercedes said. “And a failing of all women is it to believe they know men like books. And with breaking hearts, die they do, most women, out of their ignorance of men and still foolishly believing they know all about them. Oh, la la, the little fools. And so you say, little new-married woman, that you will make your man love you always and always? And so they all say it, knowing men and the queerness of men’s love the way they think they do. Easier it is to win the capital prize in the Little Louisiana, but the little new-married women never know it until too late. But you — you have begun well. Stay by your pretties and your looks. ‘Twas so you won your man, ‘tis so you’ll hold him. But that is not all. Some time I will talk with you and tell what few women trouble to know, what few women ever come to know. — Saxon! — ’tis a strong, handsome name for a woman. But you don’t look it. Oh, I’ve watched you. French you are, with a Frenchiness beyond dispute. Tell Mr. Roberts I congratulate him on his good taste."

She paused, her hand on the knob of her kitchen door.

"And come and see me some time. You will never be sorry. I can teach you much. Come in the afternoon. My man is night watchman in the yards and sleeps of mornings. He's sleeping now."

Saxon went into the house puzzling and pondering. Anything but ordinary was this lean, dark-skinned woman, with the face withered as if scorched in great heats, and the eyes, large and black, that flashed and flamed with advertisement of an unquenched inner conflagration. Old she was — Saxon caught herself debating anywhere between fifty and seventy; and her hair, which had once been blackest black, was streaked plentifully with gray. Especially noteworthy to Saxon was her speech. Good English it was, better than that to which Saxon was accustomed. Yet the woman was not American. On the other hand, she had no perceptible accent. Rather were her words touched by a foreignness so elusive that Saxon could not analyze nor place it.

"Uh, huh," Billy said, when she had told him that evening of the day's event. "So SHE'S Mrs. Higgins? He's a watchman. He's got only one arm. Old Higgins an' her — a funny bunch, the two of them. The people's scared of her — some of 'em. The Dagoes an' some of the old Irish dames thinks she's a witch. Won't have a thing to do with her. Bert was tellin' me about it. Why, Saxon, d'ye know, some of 'em believe if she was to get mad at 'em, or didn't like their mugs, or anything, that all she's got to do is look at 'em an' they'll curl up their toes an' croak. One of the fellows that works at the stable — you've seen 'm — Henderson — he lives around the corner on Fifth — he says she's bughouse."

"Oh, I don't know," Saxon defended her new acquaintance. "She may be crazy, but she says the same thing you're always saying. She says my form is not American but French."

"Then I take my hat off to her," Billy responded. "No wheels in her head if she says that. Take it from me, she's a wise gazabo."

"And she speaks good English, Billy, like a school teacher, like what I guess my mother used to speak. She's educated."

"She ain't no fool, or she wouldn't a-sized you up the way she did."

"She told me to congratulate you on your good taste in marrying me," Saxon laughed.

“She did, eh? Then give her my love. Me for her, because she knows a good thing when she sees it, an’ she ought to be congratulating you on your good taste in me.”

It was on another day that Mercedes Higgins nodded, half to Saxon, and half to the dainty women’s things Saxon was hanging on the line.

“I’ve been worrying over your washing, little new-wife,” was her greeting.

“Oh, but I’ve worked in the laundry for years,” Saxon said quickly.

Mercedes sneered scornfully.

“Steam laundry. That’s business, and it’s stupid. Only common things should go to a steam laundry. That is their punishment for being common. But the pretties! the dainties! the flimsies! — la la, my dear, their washing is an art. It requires wisdom, genius, and discretion fine as the clothes are fine. I will give you a recipe for homemade soap. It will not harden the texture. It will give whiteness, and softness, and life. You can wear them long, and fine white clothes are to be loved a long time. Oh, fine washing is a refinement, an art. It is to be done as an artist paints a picture, or writes a poem, with love, holily, a true sacrament of beauty.

“I shall teach you better ways, my dear, better ways than you Yankees know. I shall teach you new pretties.” She nodded her head to Saxon’s underlinen on the line. “I see you make little laces. I know all laces — the Belgian, the Maltese, the Mechlin — oh, the many, many loves of laces! I shall teach you some of the simpler ones so that you can make them for yourself, for your brave man you are to make love you always and always.”

On her first visit to Mercedes Higgins, Saxon received the recipe for home-made soap and her head was filled with a minutiae of instruction in the art of fine washing. Further, she was fascinated and excited by all the newness and strangeness of the withered old woman who blew upon her the breath of wider lands and seas beyond the horizon.

“You are Spanish?” Saxon ventured.

“No, and yes, and neither, and more. My father was Irish, my mother Peruvian-Spanish. ‘Tis after her I took, in color and looks. In other ways after my father, the blue-eyed Celt with the fairy song on his tongue and the restless feet that stole the rest of him away to far-wandering. And the feet of him that he lent me have led me away on as wide far roads as ever his led him.”

Saxon remembered her school geography, and with her mind's eye she saw a certain outline map of a continent with jiggly wavering parallel lines that denoted coast.

"Oh," she cried, "then you are South American."

Mercedes shrugged her shoulders.

"I had to be born somewhere. It was a great ranch, my mother's. You could put all Oakland in one of its smallest pastures."

Mercedes Higgins sighed cheerfully and for the time was lost in retrospection. Saxon was curious to hear more about this woman who must have lived much as the Spanish-Californians had lived in the old days.

"You received a good education," she said tentatively. "Your English is perfect."

"Ah, the English came afterward, and not in school. But, as it goes, yes, a good education in all things but the most important — men. That, too, came afterward. And little my mother dreamed — she was a grand lady, what you call a cattle-queen — little she dreamed my fine education was to fit me in the end for a night watchman's wife." She laughed genuinely at the grotesqueness of the idea. "Night watchman, laborers, why, we had hundreds, yes, thousands that toiled for us. The peons — they are like what you call slaves, almost, and the cowboys, who could ride two hundred miles between side and side of the ranch. And in the big house servants beyond remembering or counting. La la, in my mother's house were many servants."

Mercedes Higgins was voluble as a Greek, and wandered on in reminiscence.

"But our servants were lazy and dirty. The Chinese are the servants par excellence. So are the Japanese, when you find a good one, but not so good as the Chinese. The Japanese maidservants are pretty and merry, but you never know the moment they'll leave you. The Hindoos are not strong, but very obedient. They look upon sahibs and memsahibs as gods! I was a memsahib — which means woman. I once had a Russian cook who always spat in the soup for luck. It was very funny. But we put up with it. It was the custom."

"How you must have traveled to have such strange servants!" Saxon encouraged.

The old woman laughed corroboration.

"And the strangest of all, down in the South Seas, black slaves, little kinky-haired cannibals with bones through their noses. When they did not mind, or when they stole, they were tied up to a cocoanut palm behind the compound and lashed with whips of rhinoceros hide. They were from an island of cannibals and head-hunters, and they never cried out. It was their pride. There was little Vibi, only twelve years old — he waited on me — and when his back was cut in shreds and I wept over him, he would only laugh and say, 'Short time little bit I take 'm head belong big fella white marster.' That was Bruce Anstey, the Englishman who whipped him. But little Vibi never got the head. He ran away and the bushmen cut off his own head and ate every bit of him."

Saxon chilled, and her face was grave; but Mercedes Higgins rattled on.

"Ah, those were wild, gay, savage days. Would you believe it, my dear, in three years those Englishmen of the plantation drank up oceans of champagne and Scotch whisky and dropped thirty thousand pounds on the adventure. Not dollars — pounds, which means one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. They were princes while it lasted. It was splendid, glorious. It was mad, mad. I sold half my beautiful jewels in New Zealand before I got started again. Bruce Anstey blew out his brains at the end. Roger went mate on a trader with a black crew, for eight pounds a month. And Jack Gilbraith — he was the rarest of them all. His people were wealthy and titled, and he went home to England and sold cat's meat, sat around their big house till they gave him more money to start a rubber plantation in the East Indies somewhere, on Sumatra, I think — or was it New Guinea?"

And Saxon, back in her own kitchen and preparing supper for Billy, wondered what lusts and rapacities had led the old, burnt-faced woman from the big Peruvian ranch, through all the world, to West Oakland and Barry Higgins Old Barry was not the sort who would fling away his share of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, much less ever attain to such opulence. Besides, she had mentioned the names of other men, but not his.

Much more Mercedes had talked, in snatches and fragments. There seemed no great country nor city of the old world or the new in which she had not been. She had even been in Klondike, ten years before, in a half-dozen flashing sentences picturing the fur-clad, be-moccasined miners sowing the barroom floors with thousands of dollars' worth of gold dust.

Always, so it seemed to Saxon, Mrs. Higgins had been with men to whom money was as water.

CHAPTER III

Saxon, brooding over her problem of retaining Billy's love, of never staling the freshness of their feeling for each other and of never descending from the heights which at present they were treading, felt herself impelled toward Mrs. Higgins. SHE knew; surely she must know. Had she not hinted knowledge beyond ordinary women's knowledge?

Several weeks went by, during which Saxon was often with her. But Mrs. Higgins talked of all other matters, taught Saxon the making of certain simple laces, and instructed her in the arts of washing and of marketing. And then, one afternoon, Saxon found Mrs. Higgins more voluble than usual, with words, clean-uttered, that rippled and tripped in their haste to escape. Her eyes were flaming. So flamed her face. Her words were flames. There was a smell of liquor in the air and Saxon knew that the old woman had been drinking. Nervous and frightened, at the same time fascinated, Saxon hemstitched a linen handkerchief intended for Billy and listened to Mercedes' wild flow of speech.

"Listen, my dear. I shall tell you about the world of men. Do not be stupid like all your people, who think me foolish and a witch with the evil eye. Ha! ha! When I think of silly Maggie Donahue pulling the shawl across her baby's face when we pass each other on the sidewalk! A witch I have been, 'tis true, but my witchery was with men. Oh, I am wise, very wise, my dear. I shall tell you of women's ways with men, and of men's ways with women, the best of them and the worst of them. Of the brute that is in all men, of the queerness of them that breaks the hearts of stupid women who do not understand. And all women are stupid. I am not stupid. La la, listen.

"I am an old woman. And like a woman, I'll not tell you how old I am. Yet can I hold men. Yet would I hold men, toothless and a hundred, my nose touching my chin. Not the young men. They were mine in my young days. But the old men, as befits my years. And well for me the power is mine. In all this world I am without kin or cash. Only have I wisdom and memories — memories that are ashes, but royal ashes, jeweled ashes. Old women, such as I, starve and shiver, or accept the pauper's dole and the pauper's shroud. Not I. I hold my man. True, 'tis only Barry Higgins — old Barry, heavy, an ox, but a male man, my dear, and queer as all men are queer. 'Tis true, he has one arm." She shrugged her shoulders. "A compensation. He cannot beat me, and old bones are tender when the round flesh thins to strings.

"But when I think of my wild young lovers, princes, mad with the madness of youth! I have lived. It is enough. I regret nothing. And with old Barry I have my surety of a bite to eat and a place by the fire. And why? Because I know men, and shall never lose my cunning to hold them. 'Tis bitter sweet, the knowledge of them, more sweet than bitter — men and men and men! Not stupid dolts, nor fat bourgeois swine of business men, but men of temperament, of flame and fire; madmen, maybe, but a lawless, royal race of madmen.

"Little wife-woman, you must learn. Variety! There lies the magic. 'Tis the golden key. 'Tis the toy that amuses. Without it in the wife, the man is a Turk; with it, he is her slave, and faithful. A wife must be many wives. If you would have your husband's love you must be all women to him. You must be ever new, with the dew of newness ever sparkling, a flower that never blooms to the fulness that fades. You must be a garden of flowers, ever new, ever fresh, ever different. And in your garden the man must never pluck the last of your posies.

"Listen, little wife-woman. In the garden of love is a snake. It is the commonplace. Stamp on its head, or it will destroy the garden. Remember the name. Commonplace. Never be too intimate. Men only seem gross. Women are more gross than men. — No, do not argue, little new-wife. You are an infant woman. Women are less delicate than men. Do I not know? Of their own husbands they will relate the most intimate love-secrets to other women. Men never do this of their wives. Explain it. There is only one way. In all things of love women are less delicate. It is their mistake. It is the father and the mother of the commonplace, and it is the commonplace, like a loathsome slug, that beslimes and destroys love.

"Be delicate, little wife-woman. Never be without your veil, without many veils. Veil yourself in a thousand veils, all shimmering and glittering with costly textures and precious jewels. Never let the last veil be drawn. Against the morrow array yourself with more veils, ever more veils, veils without end. Yet the many veils must not seem many. Each veil must seem the only one between you and your hungry lover who will have nothing less than all of you. Each time he must seem to get all, to tear aside the last veil that hides you. He must think so. It must not be so. Then there will be no satiety, for on the morrow he will find another last veil that has escaped him.

"Remember, each veil must seem the last and only one. Always you must seem to abandon all to his arms; always you must reserve more that on the morrow and on all the morrows you may abandon. Of such is variety, surprise, so that your man's pursuit will be everlasting, so that his eyes will look to you for newness, and not to other women. It was the freshness and the newness' of your beauty and you, the mystery of you, that won your man. When a man has plucked and smelled all the sweetness of a flower, he looks for other flowers. It is his queerness. You must ever remain a flower almost plucked yet never plucked, stored with vats of sweet unbroached though ever broached.

"Stupid women, and all are stupid, think the first winning of the man the final victory. Then they settle down and grow fat, and state, and dead, and heartbroken. Alas, they are so stupid. But you, little infant-woman with your first victory, you must make your love-life an unending chain of victories. Each day you must win your man again. And when you have won the last victory, when you can find no more to win, then ends love. Finis is written, and your man wanders in strange gardens. Remember, love must be kept insatiable. It must have an appetite knife-edged and never satisfied. You must feed your lover well, ah, very well, most well; give, give, yet send him away hungry to come back to you for more."

Mrs. Higgins stood up suddenly and crossed out of the room. Saxon had not failed to note the litheness and grace in that lean and withered body. She watched for Mrs. Higgins' return, and knew that the litheness and grace had not been imagined.

"Scarcely have I told you the first letter in love's alphabet," said Mercedes Higgins, as she reseated herself.

In her hands was a tiny instrument, beautifully grained and richly brown, which resembled a guitar save that it bore four strings. She swept them back and forth with rhythmic forefinger and lifted a voice, thin and mellow, in a fashion of melody that was strange, and in a foreign tongue, warm-voweled, all-voweled, and love-exciting. Softly throbbing, voice and strings arose on sensuous crests of song, died away to whisperings and caresses, drifted through love-dusks and twilights, or swelled again to love-cries barbarically imperious in which were woven plaintive calls and madnesses of invitation and promise. It went through Saxon until she was as this instrument, swept with passional strains. It seemed to her a dream, and almost was she dizzy, when Mercedes Higgins ceased.

"If your man had clasped the last of you, and if all of you were known to him as an old story, yet, did you sing that one song, as I have sung it, yet would his arms again go out to you and his eyes grow warm with the old mad lights. Do you see? Do you understand, little wife-woman?"

Saxon could only nod, her lips too dry for speech.

"The golden koa, the king of woods," Mercedes was crooning over the instrument. "The ukulele — that is what the Hawaiians call it, which means, my dear, the jumping flea. They are golden-fleshed, the Hawalians, a race of lovers, all in the warm cool of the tropic night where the trade winds blow."

Again she struck the strings. She sang in another language, which Saxon deemed must be French. It was a gayly-devilish lilt, tripping and tickling. Her large eyes at times grew larger and wilder, and again narrowed in enticement and wickedness. When she ended, she looked to Saxon for a verdict.

"I don't like that one so well," Saxon said.

Mercedes shrugged her shoulders.

"They all have their worth, little infant-woman with so much to learn. There are times when men may be won with wine. There are times when men may be won with the wine of song, so queer they are. La la, so many ways, so many ways. There are your pretties, my dear, your dainties. They are magic nets. No fisherman upon the sea ever tangled fish more successfully than we women with our flimsies. You are on the right path. I have seen men enmeshed by a corset cover no prettier, no daintier, than these of yours I have seen on the line.

"I have called the washing of fine linen an art. But it is not for itself alone. The greatest of the arts is the conquering of men. Love is the sum of all the arts, as it is the reason for their existence. Listen. In all times and ages have been women, great wise women. They did not need to be beautiful. Greater then all woman's beauty was their wisdom. Princes end potentates bowed down before them. Nations battled over them. Empires crashed because of them. Religions were founded on them. Aphrodite, Astarte, the worships of the night — listen, infant-woman, of the great women who conquered worlds of men."

And thereafter Saxon listened, in a maze, to what almost seemed a wild farrago, save that the strange meaningless phrases were fraught with dim, mysterious significance. She caught glimmerings of profounds inexpressible and unthinkable that hinted connotations lawless and terrible. The woman's speech was a lava rush, scorching and searing; and Saxon's cheeks, and forehead, and neck burned with a blush that continuously increased. She trembled with fear, suffered qualms of nausea, thought sometimes that she would faint, so madly reeled her brain; yet she could not tear herself away, sad sat on and on, her sewing forgotten on her lap, staring with inward sight upon a nightmare vision beyond all imagining. At last, when it seemed she could endure no more, and while she was wetting her dry lips to cry out in protest, Mercedes ceased.

"And here endeth the first lesson," she said quite calmly, then laughed with a laughter that was tantalizing and tormenting. "What is the matter? You are not shocked?"

"I am frightened," Saxon quavered huskily, with a half-sob of nervousness. "You frighten me. I am very foolish, and I know so little, that I had never dreamed... THAT."

Mercedes nodded her head comprehendingly.

"It is indeed to be frightened at," she said. "It is solemn; it is terrible; it is magnificent!"

CHAPTER IV

Saxon had been clear-eyed all her days, though her field of vision had been restricted. Clear-eyed, from her childhood days with the saloonkeeper Cady and Cady's good-natured but unmoral spouse, she had observed, and, later, generalized much upon sex. She knew the post-nuptial problem of retaining a husband's love, as few wives of any class knew it, just as she knew the pre-nuptial problem of selecting a husband, as few girls of the working class knew it.

She had of herself developed an eminently rational philosophy of love. Instinctively, and consciously, too, she had made toward delicacy, and shunned the perils of the habitual and commonplace. Thoroughly aware she was that as she cheapened herself so did she cheapen love. Never, in the weeks of their married life, had Billy found her dowdy, or harshly irritable, or lethargic. And she had deliberately permeated her house with her personal atmosphere of coolness, and freshness, and equableness. Nor had she been ignorant of such assets as surprise and charm. Her imagination had not been asleep, and she had been born with wisdom. In Billy she had won a prize, and she knew it. She appreciated his lover's ardor and was proud. His open-handed liberality, his desire for everything of the best, his own personal cleanliness and care of himself she recognized as far beyond the average. He was never coarse. He met delicacy with delicacy, though it was obvious to her that the initiative in all such matters lay with her and must lie with her always. He was largely unconscious of what he did and why. But she knew in all full clarity of judgment. And he was such a prize among men.

Despite her clear sight of her problem of keeping Billy a lover, and despite the considerable knowledge and experience arrayed before her mental vision, Mercedes Higgins had spread before her a vastly wider panorama. The old woman had verified her own conclusions, given her new ideas, clinched old ones, and even savagely emphasized the tragic importance of the whole problem. Much Saxon remembered of that mad preachment, much she guessed and felt, and much had been beyond her experience and understanding. But the metaphors of the veils and the flowers, and the rules of giving to abandonment with always more to abandon, she grasped thoroughly, and she was enabled to formulate a bigger and stronger love-philosophy. In the light of the revelation she re-examined the married lives of all she had ever known, and, with sharp definiteness as never before, she saw where and why so many of them had failed.

With renewed ardor Saxon devoted herself to her household, to her pretties, and to her charms. She marketed with a keener desire for the best, though never ignoring the need for economy. From the women's pages of the Sunday supplements, and from the women's magazines in the free reading room two blocks away, she gleaned many ideas for the preservation of her looks. In a systematic way she exercised the various parts of her body, and a certain period of time each day she employed in facial exercises and massage for the purpose of retaining the roundness and freshness, and firmness and color. Billy did not know. These intimacies of the toilette were not for him. The results, only, were his. She drew books from the Carnegie Library and studied physiology and hygiene, and learned a myriad of things about herself and the ways of woman's health that she had never been taught by Sarah, the women of the orphan asylum, nor by Mrs. Cady.

After long debate she subscribed to a woman's magazine, the patterns and lessons of which she decided were the best suited to her taste and purse. The other woman's magazines she had access to in the free reading room, and more than one pattern of lace and embroidery she copied by means of tracing paper. Before the lingerie windows of the uptown shops she often stood and studied; nor was she above taking advantage, when small purchases were made, of looking over the goods at the hand-embroidered underwear counters. Once, she even considered taking up with hand-painted china, but gave over the idea when she learned its expensiveness.

She slowly replaced all her simple maiden underlinen with garments which, while still simple, were wrought with beautiful French embroidery, tucks, and drawnwork. She crocheted fine edgings on the inexpensive knitted underwear she wore in winter. She made little corset covers and chemises of fine but fairly inexpensive lawns, and, with simple flowered designs and perfect laundering, her nightgowns were always sweetly fresh and dainty. In some publication she ran across a brief printed note to the effect that French women were just beginning to wear fascinating beruffled caps at the breakfast table. It meant nothing to her that in her case she must first prepare the breakfast. Promptly appeared in the house a yard of dotted Swiss muslin, and Saxon was deep in experimenting on patterns for herself, and in sorting her bits of laces for suitable trimmings. The resultant dainty creation won Mercedes Higgins' enthusiastic approval.

Saxon made for herself simple house slips of pretty gingham, with neat low collars turned back from her fresh round throat. She crocheted yards of laces for her underwear, and made Battenberg in abundance for her table and for the bureau. A great achievement, that aroused Billy's applause, was an Afghan for the bed. She even ventured a rag carpet, which, the women's magazines informed her, had newly returned into fashion. As a matter of course she hemstitched the best table linen and bed linen they could afford.

As the happy months went by she was never idle. Nor was Billy forgotten. When the cold weather came on she knitted him wristlets, which he always religiously wore from the house and pocketed immediately thereafter. The two sweaters she made for him, however, received a better fate, as did the slippers which she insisted on his slipping into, on the evenings they remained at home.

The hard practical wisdom of Mercedes Higgins proved of immense help, for Saxon strove with a fervor almost religious to have everything of the best and at the same time to be saving. Here she faced the financial and economic problem of keeping house in a society where the cost of living rose faster than the wages of industry. And here the old woman taught her the science of marketing so thoroughly that she made a dollar of Billy's go half as far again as the wives of the neighborhood made the dollars of their men go.

Invariably, on Saturday night, Billy poured his total wages into her lap. He never asked for an accounting of what she did with it, though he continually reiterated that he had never fed so well in his life. And always, the wages still untouched in her lap, she had him take out what he estimated he would need for spending money for the week to come. Not only did she bid him take plenty but she insisted on his taking any amount extra that he might desire at any time through the week. And, further, she insisted he should not tell her what it was for.

"You've always had money in your pocket," she reminded him, "and there's no reason marriage should change that. If it did, I'd wish I'd never married you. Oh, I know about men when they get together. First one treats and then another, and it takes money. Now if you can't treat just as freely as the rest of them, why I know you so well that I know you'd stay away from them. And that wouldn't be right... to you, I mean. I want you to be together with men. It's good for a man."

And Billy buried her in his arms and swore she was the greatest little bit of woman that ever came down the pike.

"Why," he jubilated; "not only do I feed better, and live more comfortable, and hold up my end with the fellows; but I'm actually saving money — or you are for me. Here I am, with furniture being paid for regular every month, and a little woman I'm mad over, and on top of it money in the bank. How much is it now?"

"Sixty-two dollars," she told him. "Not so bad for a rainy day. You might get sick, or hurt, or something happen."

It was in mid-winter, when Billy, with quite a deal of obvious reluctance, broached a money matter to Saxon. His old friend, Billy Murphy, was laid up with la grippe, and one of his children, playing in the street, had been seriously injured by a passing wagon. Billy Murphy, still feeble after two weeks in bed, had asked Billy for the loan of fifty dollars.

"It's perfectly safe," Billy concluded to Saxon. "I've known him since we was kids at the Durant School together. He's straight as a die."

"That's got nothing to do with it," Saxon chided. "If you were single you'd have lent it to him immediately, wouldn't you?"

Billy nodded.

"Then it's no different because you're married. It's your money, Billy."

"Not by a damn sight," he cried. "It ain't mine. It's ourn. And I wouldn't think of lettin' anybody have it without seein' you first."

"I hope you didn't tell him that," she said with quick concern.

"Nope," Billy laughed. "I knew, if I did, you'd be madder'n a hatter. I just told him I'd try an' figure it out. After all, I was sure you'd stand for it if you had it."

"Oh, Billy," she murmured, her voice rich and low with love; "maybe you don't know it, but that's one of the sweetest things you've said since we got married."

The more Saxon saw of Mercedes Higgins the less did she understand her. That the old woman was a close-fisted miser, Saxon soon learned. And this trait she found hard to reconcile with her tales of squandering. On the other hand, Saxon was bewildered by Mercedes' extravagance in personal matters. Her underlinen, hand-made of course, was very costly. The table she set for Barry was good, but the table for herself was vastly better. Yet both tables were set on the same table. While Barry contented himself with solid round steak, Mercedes ate tenderloin. A huge, tough muttonchop on Barry's plate would be balanced by tiny French chops on Mercedes' plate. Tea was brewed in separate pots. So was coffee. While Barry gulped twenty-five cent tea from a large and heavy mug, Mercedes sipped three-dollar tea from a tiny cup of Belleek, rose-tinted, fragile as all egg-shell. In the same manner, his twenty-five cent coffee was diluted with milk, her eighty cent Turkish with cream.

"'Tis good enough for the old man," she told Saxon. "He knows no better, and it would be a wicked sin to waste it on him."

Little traffickings began between the two women. After Mercedes had freely taught Saxon the loose-wristed facility of playing accompaniments on the ukulele, she proposed an exchange. Her time was past, she said, for such frivolities, and she offered the instrument for the breakfast cap of which Saxon had made so good a success.

"It's worth a few dollars," Mercedes said. "It cost me twenty, though that was years ago. Yet it is well worth the value of the cap."

"But wouldn't the cap be frivolous, too?" Saxon queried, though herself well pleased with the bargain.

"'Tis not for my graying hair," Mercedes frankly disclaimed. "I shall sell it for the money. Much that I do, when the rheumatism is not maddening my fingers, I sell. La la, my dear, 'tis not old Barry's fifty a month that'll satisfy all my expensive tastes. 'Tis I that make up the difference. And old age needs money as never youth needs it. Some day you will learn for yourself."

"I am well satisfied with the trade," Saxon said. "And I shall make me another cap when I can lay aside enough for the material."

"Make several," Mercedes advised. "I'll sell them for you, keeping, of course, a small commission for my services. I can give you six dollars apiece for them. We will consult about them. The profit will more than provide material for your own."

CHAPTER V

Four eventful things happened in the course of the winter. Bert and Mary got married and rented a cottage in the neighborhood three blocks away. Billy's wages were cut, along with the wages of all the teamsters in Oakland. Billy took up shaving with a safety razor. And, finally, Saxon was proven a false prophet and Sarah a true one.

Saxon made up her mind, beyond any doubt, ere she confided the news to Billy. At first, while still suspecting, she had felt a frightened sinking of the heart and fear of the unknown and unexperienced. Then had come economic fear, as she contemplated the increased expense entailed. But by the time she had made surety doubly sure, all was swept away before a wave of passionate gladness. HERS AND BILLY'S! The phrase was continually in her mind, and each recurrent thought of it brought an actual physical pleasure-pang to her heart.

The night she told the news to Billy, he withheld his own news of the wage-cut, and joined with her in welcoming the little one.

"What'll we do? Go to the theater to celebrate?" he asked, relaxing the pressure of his embrace so that she might speak. "Or suppose we stay in, just you and me, and... and the three of us?"

"Stay in," was her verdict. "I just want you to hold me, and hold me, and hold me."

"That's what I wanted, too, only I wasn't sure, after bein' in the house all day, maybe you'd want to go out."

There was frost in the air, and Billy brought the Morris chair in by the kitchen stove. She lay cuddled in his arms, her head on his shoulder, his cheek against her hair.

"We didn't make no mistake in our lightning marriage with only a week's courtin'," he reflected aloud. "Why, Saxon, we've been courtin' ever since just the same. And now... my God, Saxon, it's too wonderful to be true. Think of it! Ourn! The three of us! The little rascal! I bet he's goin' to be a boy. An' won't I learn 'm to put up his fists an' take care of himself! An' swimmin' too. If he don't know how to swim by the time he's six..."

"And if HE'S a girl?"

"SHE'S goin' to be a boy," Billy retorted, joining in the playful misuse of pronouns.

And both laughed and kissed, and sighed with content. “I’m goin’ to turn pincher, now,” he announced, after quite an interval of meditation. “No more drinks with the boys. It’s me for the water wagon. And I’m goin’ to ease down on smokes. Huh! Don’t see why I can’t roll my own cigarettes. They’re ten times cheaper’n tailor-mades. An’ I can grow a beard. The amount of money the barbers get out of a fellow in a year would keep a baby.”

“Just you let your beard grow, Mister Roberts, and I’ll get a divorce,” Saxon threatened. “You’re just too handsome and strong with a smooth face. I love your face too much to have it covered up. — Oh, you dear! you dear! Billy, I never knew what happiness was until I came to live with you.”

“Nor me neither.”

“And it’s always going to be so?”

“You can just bet,” he assured her.

“I thought I was going to be happy married,” she went on; “but I never dreamed it would be like this.” She turned her head on his shoulder and kissed his cheek. “Billy, it isn’t happiness. It’s heaven.”

And Billy resolutely kept undivulged the cut in wages. Not until two weeks later, when it went into effect, and he poured the diminished sum into her lap, did he break it to her. The next day, Bert and Mary, already a month married, had Sunday dinner with them, and the matter came up for discussion. Bert was particularly pessimistic, and muttered dark hints of an impending strike in the railroad shops.

“If you’d all shut your traps, it’d be all right,” Mary criticized. “These union agitators get the railroad sore. They give me the cramp, the way they butt in an’ stir up trouble. If I was boss I’d cut the wages of any man that listened to them.”

“Yet you belonged to the laundry workers’ union,” Saxon rebuked gently.

“Because I had to or I wouldn’t a-got work. An’ much good it ever done me.”

“But look at Billy,” Bert argued “The teamsters ain’t ben sayin’ a word, not a peep, an’ everything lovely, and then, bang, right in the neck, a ten per cent cut. Oh, hell, what chance have we got? We lose. There’s nothin’ left for us in this country we’ve made and our fathers an’ mothers before us. We’re all shot to pieces. We Can see our finish — we, the old stock, the children of the white people that broke away from England an’ licked the tar outa her, that freed the slaves, an' fought the Indians, 'an made the West! Any gink with half an eye can see it comin'."

"But what are we going to do about it?" Saxon questioned anxiously.

"Fight. That's all. The country's in the hands of a gang of robbers. Look at the Southern Pacific. It runs California."

"Aw, rats, Bert," Billy interrupted. "You're takin' through your lid. No railroad can ran the government of California."

"You're a bonehead," Bert sneered. "And some day, when it's too late, you an' all the other boneheads'll realize the fact. Rotten? I tell you it stinks. Why, there ain't a man who wants to go to state legislature but has to make a trip to San Francisco, an' go into the S. P. offices, an' take his hat off, an' humbly ask permission. Why, the governors of California has been railroad governors since before you and I was born. Huh! You can't tell me. We're finished. We're licked to a frazzle. But it'd do my heart good to help string up some of the dirty thieves before I passed out. D'ye know what we are? — we old white stock that fought in the wars, an' broke the land, an' made all this? I'll tell you. We're the last of the Mohegans."

"He scares me to death, he's so violent," Mary said with unconcealed hostility. "If he don't quit shootin' off his mouth he'll get fired from the shops. And then what'll we do? He don't consider me. But I can tell you one thing all right, all right. I'll not go back to the laundry." She held her right hand up and spoke with the solemnity of an oath. "Not so's you can see it. Never again for yours truly."

"Oh, I know what you're drivin' at," Bert said with asperity. "An' all I can tell you is, livin' or dead, in a job or out, no matter what happens to me, if you will lead that way, you will, an' there's nothin' else to it."

"I guess I kept straight before I met you," she came back with a toss of the head. "And I kept straight after I met you, which is going some if anybody should ask you."

Hot words were on Bert's tongue, but Saxon intervened and brought about peace. She was concerned over the outcome of their marriage. Both were highstrung, both were quick and irritable, and their continual clashes did not augur well for their future.

The safety razor was a great achievement for Saxon. Privily she conferred with a clerk she knew in Pierce's hardware store and made the purchase. On Sunday morning, after breakfast, when Billy was starting to go to the barber shop, she led him into the bedroom, whisked a towel aside, and revealed the razor box, shaving mug, soap, brush, and lather all ready. Billy recoiled, then came back to make curious investigation. He gazed pityingly at the safety razor.

"Huh! Call that a man's tool!"

"It'll do the work," she said. "It does it for thousands of men every day."

But Billy shook his head and backed away.

"You shave three times a week," she urged. "That's forty-five cents. Call it half a dollar, and there are fifty-two weeks in the year. Twenty-six dollars a year just for shaving. Come on, dear, and try it. Lots of men swear by it."

He shook his head mutinously, and the cloudy deeps of his eyes grew more cloudy. She loved that sullen handsomeness that made him look so boyish, and, laughing and kissing him, she forced him into a chair, got off his coat, and unbuttoned shirt and undershirt and turned them in.

Threatening him with, "If you open your mouth to kick I'll shove it in," she coated his face with lather.

"Wait a minute," she checked him, as he reached desperately for the razor. "I've been watching the barbers from the sidewalk. This is what they do after the lather is on."

And thereupon she proceeded to rub the lather in with her fingers.

"There," she said, when she had coated his face a second time. "You're ready to begin. Only remember, I'm not always going to do this for you. I'm just breaking you in, you see."

With great outward show of rebellion, half genuine, half facetious, he made several tentative scrapes with the razor. He winced violently, and violently exclaimed:

"Holy jumping Jehosaphat!"

He examined his face in the glass, and a streak of blood showed in the midst of the lather.

"Cut! — by a safety razor, by God! Sure, men swear by it. Can't blame 'em. Cut! By a safety!"

"But wait a second," Saxon pleaded. "They have to be regulated. The clerk told me. See those little screws. There.... That's it... turn them around."

Again Billy applied the blade to his face. After a couple of scrapes, he looked at himself closely in the mirror, grinned, and went on shaving. With swiftness and dexterity he scraped his face clean of lather. Saxon clapped her hands.

"Fine," Billy approved. "Great! Here. Give me your hand. See what a good job it made."

He started to rub her hand against his cheek. Saxon jerked away with a little cry of disappointment, then examined him closely.

"It hasn't shaved at all," she said.

"It's a fake, that's what it is. It cuts the hide, but not the hair. Me for the barber."

But Saxon was persistent.

"You haven't given it a fair trial yet. It was regulated too much. Let me try my hand at it. There, that's it, betwixt and between. Now, lather again and try it."

This time the unmistakable sand-papery sound of hair-severing could be heard.

"How is it?" she fluttered anxiously.

"It gets the — ouch! — hair," Billy grunted, frowning and making faces. "But it — gee! — say! — ouch! — pulls like Sam Hill."

"Stay with it," she encouraged. "Don't give up the ship, big Injun with a scalplock. Remember what Bert says and be the last of the Mohegans."

At the end of fifteen minutes he rinsed his face and dried it, sighing with relief.

"It's a shave, in a fashion, Saxon, but I can't say I'm stuck on it. It takes out the nerve. I'm as weak as a cat."

He groaned with sudden discovery of fresh misfortune.

"What's the matter now?" she asked.

"The back of my neck — how can I shave the back of my neck? I'll have to pay a barber to do it."

Saxon's consternation was tragic, but it only lasted a moment. She took the brush in her hand.

"Sit down, Billy."

"What? — you?" he demanded indignantly.

"Yes; me. If any barber is good enough to shave your neck, and then I am, too."

Billy moaned and groaned in the abjectness of humility and surrender, and let her have her way.

"There, and a good job," she informed him when she had finished. "As easy as falling off a log. And besides, it means twenty-six dollars a year.

And you'll buy the crib, the baby buggy, the pinning blankets, and lots and lots of things with it. Now sit still a minute longer."

She rinsed and dried the back of his neck and dusted it with talcum powder.

"You're as sweet as a clean little baby, Billy Boy."

The unexpected and lingering impact of her lips on the back of his neck made him writhe with mingled feelings not all unpleasant.

Two days later, though vowing in the intervening time to have nothing further to do with the instrument of the devil, he permitted Saxon to assist him to a second shave. This time it went easier.

"It ain't so bad," he admitted. "I'm gettin' the hang of it. It's all in the regulating. You can shave as close as you want an' no more close than you want. Barbers can't do that. Every once an' awhile they get my face sore."

The third shave was an unqualified success, and the culminating bliss was reached when Saxon presented him with a bottle of witch hazel. After that he began active proselyting. He could not wait a visit from Bert, but carried the paraphernalia to the latter's house to demonstrate.

"We've ben boobs all these years, Bert, runnin' the chances of barber's itch an' everything. Look at this, eh? See her take hold. Smooth as silk. Just as easy.... There! Six minutes by the clock. Can you beat it? When I get my hand in, I can do it in three. It works in the dark. It works under water. You couldn't cut yourself if you tried. And it saves twenty-six dollars a year. Saxon figured it out, and she's a wonder, I tell you."

CHAPTER VI

The trafficking between Saxon and Mercedes increased. The latter commanded a ready market for all the fine work Saxon could supply, while Saxon was eager and happy in the work. The expected babe and the cut in Billy's wages had caused her to regard the economic phase of existence more seriously than ever. Too little money was being laid away in the bank, and her conscience pricked her as she considered how much she was laying out on the pretty necessaries for the household and herself. Also, for the first time in her life she was spending another's earnings. Since a young girl she had been used to spending her own, and now, thanks to Mercedes she was doing it again, and, out of her profits, assaying more expensive and delightful adventures in lingerie.

Mercedes suggested, and Saxon carried out and even bettered, the dainty things of thread and texture. She made ruffled chemises of sheer linen, with her own fine edgings and French embroidery on breast and shoulders; linen hand-made combination undersuits; and nightgowns, fairy and cobwebby, embroidered, trimmed with Irish lace. On Mercedes' instigation she executed an ambitious and wonderful breakfast cap for which the old woman returned her twelve dollars after deducting commission.

She was happy and busy every waking moment, nor was preparation for the little one neglected. The only ready made garments she bought were three fine little knit shirts. As for the rest, every bit was made by her own hands — featherstitched pinning blankets, a crocheted jacket and cap, knitted mittens, embroidered bonnets; slim little princess slips of sensible length; underskirts on absurd Lilliputian yokes; silk-embroidered white flannel petticoats; stockings and crocheted boots, seeming to burgeon before her eyes with wriggly pink toes and plump little calves; and last, but not least, many deliciously soft squares of bird's-eye linen. A little later, as a crowning masterpiece, she was guilty of a dress coat of white silk, embroidered. And into all the tiny garments, with every stitch, she sewed love. Yet this love, so unceasingly sewn, she knew when she came to consider and marvel, was more of Billy than of the nebulous, ungraspable new bit of life that eluded her fondest attempts at visioning.

"Huh," was Billy's comment, as he went over the mite's wardrobe and came back to center on the little knit shirts, "they look more like a real kid than the whole kit an' caboodle. Why, I can see him in them regular manshirts."

Saxon, with a sudden rush of happy, unshed tears, held one of the little shirts up to his lips. He kissed it solemnly, his eyes resting on Saxon's.

"That's some for the boy," he said, "but a whole lot for you."

But Saxon's money-earning was doomed to cease ignominiously and tragically. One day, to take advantage of a department store bargain sale, she crossed the bay to San Francisco. Passing along Sutter Street, her eye was attracted by a display in the small window of a small shop. At first she could not believe it; yet there, in the honored place of the window, was the wonderful breakfast cap for which she had received twelve dollars from Mercedes. It was marked twenty-eight dollars. Saxon went in and interviewed the shopkeeper, an emaciated, shrewd-eyed and middle-aged woman of foreign extraction.

"Oh, I don't want to buy anything," Saxon said. "I make nice things like you have here, and I wanted to know what you pay for them — for that breakfast cap in the window, for instance."

The woman darted a keen glance to Saxon's left hand, noted the innumerable tiny punctures in the ends of the first and second fingers, then appraised her clothing and her face.

"Can you do work like that?"

Saxon nodded.

"I paid twenty dollars to the woman that made that." Saxon repressed an almost spasmodic gasp, and thought coolly for a space. Mercedes had given her twelve. Then Mercedes had pocketed eight, while she, Saxon, had furnished the material and labor.

"Would you please show me other hand-made things nightgowns, chemises, and such things, and tell me the prices you pay?"

"Can you do such work?"

"Yes."

"And will you sell to me?"

"Certainly," Saxon answered. "That is why I am here."

"We add only a small amount when we sell," the woman went on; "you see, light and rent and such things, as well as a profit or else we could not be here."

"It's only fair," Saxon agreed.

Amongst the beautiful stuff Saxon went over, she found a nightgown and a combination undersuit of her own manufacture. For the former she had received eight dollars from Mercedes, it was marked eighteen, and the woman had paid fourteen; for the latter Saxon received six, it was marked fifteen, and the woman had paid eleven.

“Thank you,” Saxon said, as she drew on her gloves. “I should like to bring you some of my work at those prices.”

“And I shall be glad to buy it... if it is up to the mark.” The woman looked at her severely. “Mind you, it must be as good as this. And if it is, I often get special orders, and I’ll give you a chance at them.”

Mercedes was unblushingly candid when Saxon reproached her.

“You told me you took only a commission,” was Saxon’s accusation.

“So I did; and so I have.”

“But I did all the work and bought all the materials, yet you actually cleared more out of it than I did. You got the lion’s share.”

“And why shouldn’t I, my dear? I was the middleman. It’s the way of the world. ‘Tis the middlemen that get the lion’s share.”

“It seems to me most unfair,” Saxon reflected, more in sadness than anger.

“That is your quarrel with the world, not with me,” Mercedes rejoined sharply, then immediately softened with one of her quick changes. “We mustn’t quarrel, my dear. I like you so much. La la, it is nothing to you, who are young and strong with a man young and strong. Listen, I am an old woman. And old Barry can do little for me. He is on his last legs. His kidneys are ‘most gone. Remember, ‘tis I must bury him. And I do him honor, for beside me he’ll have his last long steep. A stupid, dull old man, heavy, an ox, ‘tis true; but a good old fool with no trace of evil in him. The plot is bought and paid for — the final installment was made up, in part, out of my commissions from you. Then there are the funeral expenses. It must be done nicely. I have still much to save. And Barry may turn up his toes any day.”

Saxon sniffed the air carefully, and knew the old woman had been drinking again.

“Come, my dear, let me show you.” Leading Saxon to a large sea chest in the bedroom, Mercedes lifted the lid. A faint perfume, as of rose-petals, floated up. “Behold, my burial trousseau. Thus I shall wed the dust.”

Saxon's amazement increased, as, article by article, the old woman displayed the airiest, the daintiest, the most delicious and most complete of bridal outfits. Mercedes held up an ivory fan.

"In Venice 'twas given me, my dear. — See, this comb, turtle shell; Bruce Anstey made it for me the week before he drank his last bottle and scattered his brave mad brains with a Colt's 44. — This scarf. La la, a Liberty scarf — "

"And all that will be buried with you," Saxon mused, "Oh, the extravagance of it!"

Mercedes laughed.

"Why not? I shall die as I have lived. It is my pleasure. I go to the dust as a bride. No cold and narrow bed for me. I would it were a coach, covered with the soft things of the East, and pillows, pillows, without end."

"It would buy you twenty funerals and twenty plots," Saxon protested, shocked by this blasphemy of conventional death. "It is downright wicked."

"'Twill be as I have lived," Mercedes said complacently. "And it's a fine bride old Barry'll have to come and lie beside him." She closed the lid and sighed. "Though I wish it were Bruce Anstey, or any of the pick of my young men to lie with me in the great dark and to crumble with me to the dust that is the real death."

She gazed at Saxon with eyes heated by alcohol and at the same time cool with the coolness of content.

"In the old days the great of earth were buried with their live slaves with them. I but take my flimsies, my dear."

"Then you aren't afraid of death?... in the least?"

Mercedes shook her head emphatically.

"Death is brave, and good, and kind. I do not fear death. 'Tis of men I am afraid when I am dead. So I prepare. They shall not have me when I am dead."

Saxon was puzzled.

"They would not want you then," she said.

"Many are wanted," was the answer. "Do you know what becomes of the aged poor who have no money for burial? They are not buried. Let me tell you. We stood before great doors. He was a queer man, a professor who ought to have been a pirate, a man who lectured in class rooms when he ought to have been storming walled cities or robbing banks. He was slender, like Don Juan. His hands were strong as steel. So was his spirit. And he was mad, a bit mad, as all my young men have been. ‘Come, Mercedes,’ he said; ‘we will inspect our brethren and become humble, and glad that we are not as they — as yet not yet. And afterward, to-night, we will dine with a more devilish taste, and we will drink to them in golden wine that will be the more golden for having seen them. Come, Mercedes.’

“He thrust the great doors open, and by the hand led me in. It was a sad company. Twenty-four, that lay on marble slabs, or sat, half erect and propped, while many young men, bright of eye, bright little knives in their hands, glanced curiously at me from their work.”

“They were dead?” Saxon interrupted to gasp.

“They were the pauper dead, my dear. ‘Come, Mercedes,’ said he. ‘There is more to show you that will make us glad we are alive.’ And he took me down, down to the vats. The salt vats, my dear. I was not afraid. But it was in my mind, then, as I looked, how it would be with me when I was dead. And there they were, so many lumps of pork. And the order came, ‘A woman; an old woman.’ And the man who worked there fished in the vats. The first was a man he drew to see. Again he fished and stirred. Again a man. He was impatient, and grumbled at his luck. And then, up through the brine, he drew a woman, and by the face of her she was old, and he was satisfied.”

“It is not true!” Saxon cried out.

“I have seen, my dear, I know. And I tell you fear not the wrath of God when you are dead. Fear only the salt vats. And as I stood and looked, and as he who led me there looked at me and smiled and questioned and bedeviled me with those mad, black, tired-scholar’s eyes of his, I knew that that was no way for my dear clay. Dear it is, my clay to me; dear it has been to others. La la, the salt vat is no place for my kissed lips and love-lavished body.” Mercedes lifted the lid of the chest and gazed fondly at her burial pretties. “So I have made my bed. So I shall lie in it. Some old philosopher said we know we must die; we do not believe it. But the old do believe. I believe.

“My dear, remember the salt vats, and do not be angry with me because my commissions have been heavy. To escape the vats I would stop at nothing steal the widow’s mite, the orphan’s crust, and pennies from a dead man’s eyes.”

“Do you believe in God?” Saxon asked abruptly, holding herself together despite cold horror.

Mercedes dropped the lid and shrugged her shoulders.

“Who knows? I shall rest well.”

“And punishment?” Saxon probed, remembering the unthinkable tale of the other’s life.

“Impossible, my dear. As some old poet said, ‘God’s a good fellow.’ Some time I shall talk to you about God. Never be afraid of him. Be afraid only of the salt vats and the things men may do with your pretty flesh after you are dead.”

CHAPTER VII

Billy quarreled with good fortune. He suspected he was too prosperous on the wages he received. What with the accumulating savings account, the paying of the monthly furniture installment and the house rent, the spending money in pocket, and the good fare he was eating, he was puzzled as to how Saxon managed to pay for the goods used in her fancy work. Several times he had suggested his inability to see how she did it, and been baffled each time by Saxon's mysterious laugh.

"I can't see how you do it on the money," he was contending one evening.

He opened his mouth to speak further, then closed it and for five minutes thought with knitted brows.

"Say," he said, "what's become of that frilly breakfast cap you was workin' on so hard, I ain't never seen you wear it, and it was sure too big for the kid."

Saxon hesitated, with pursed lips and teasing eyes. With her, untruthfulness had always been a difficult matter. To Billy it was impossible. She could see the cloud-drift in his eyes deepening and his face hardening in the way she knew so well when he was vexed.

"Say, Saxon, you ain't... you ain't... sellin' your work?"

And thereat she related everything, not omitting Mercedes Higgins' part in the transaction, nor Mercedes Higgins' remarkable burial trousseau. But Billy was not to be led aside by the latter. In terms anything but uncertain he told Saxon that she was not to work for money.

"But I have so much spare time, Billy, dear," she pleaded.

He shook his head.

"Nothing doing. I won't listen to it. I married you, and I'll take care of you. Nobody can say Bill Roberts' wife has to work. And I don't want to think it myself. Besides, it ain't necessary."

"But Billy — " she began again.

"Nope. That's one thing I won't stand for, Saxon. Not that I don't like fancy work. I do. I like it like hell, every bit you make, but I like it on YOU. Go ahead and make all you want of it, for yourself, an' I'll put up for the goods. Why, I'm just whistlin' an' happy all day long, thinkin' of the boy an' seein' you at home here workin' away on all them nice things. Because I know how happy you are a-doin' it. But honest to God, Saxon, it'd all be spoiled if I knew you was doin' it to sell. You see, Bill Roberts' wife don't have to work. That's my brag — to myself, mind you. An' besides, it ain't right."

"You're a dear," she whispered, happy despite her disappointment.

"I want you to have all you want," he continued. "An' you're goin' to get it as long as I got two hands stickin' on the ends of my arms. I guess I know how good the things are you wear — good to me, I mean, too. I'm dry behind the ears, an' maybe I've learned a few things I oughtn't to before I knew you. But I know what I'm talkin' about, and I want to say that outside the clothes down underneath, an' the clothes down underneath the outside ones, I never saw a woman like you. Oh — "

He threw up his hands as if despairing of ability to express what he thought and felt, then essayed a further attempt.

"It's not a matter of bein' only clean, though that's a whole lot. Lots of women are clean. It ain't that. It's something more, an' different. It's... well, it's the look of it, so white, an' pretty, an' tasty. It gets on the imagination. It's something I can't get out of my thoughts of you. I want to tell you lots of men can't strip to advantage, an' lots of women, too. But you — well, you're a wonder, that's all, and you can't get too many of them nice things to suit me, and you can't get them too nice.

"For that matter, Saxon, you can just blow yourself. There's lots of easy money layin' around. I'm in great condition. Billy Murphy pulled down seventy-five round iron dollars only last week for puttin' away the Pride of North Beach. That's what ha paid us the fifty back out of."

But this time it was Saxon who rebelled.

"There's Carl Hansen," Billy argued. "The second Sharkey, the alfalfa sportin' writers are callin' him. An' he calls himself Champion of the United States Navy. Well, I got his number. He's just a big stiff. I've seen 'm fight, an' I can pass him the sleep medicine just as easy. The Secretary of the Sportin' Life Club offered to match me. An' a hundred iron dollars in it for the winner. And it'll all be yours to blow in any way you want. What d'ye say?"

"If I can't work for money, you can't fight," was Saxon's ultimatum, immediately withdrawn. "But you and I don't drive bargains. Even if you'd let me work for money, I wouldn't let you fight. I've never forgotten what you told me about how prizefighters lose their silk. Well, you're not going to lose yours. It’s half my silk, you know. And if you won’t fight, I won’t work — there. And more, I’ll never do anything you don’t want me to, Billy.”

“Same here,” Billy agreed. “Though just the same I’d like most to death to have just one go at that squarehead Hansen.” He smiled with pleasure at the thought. “Say, let’s forget it all now, an’ you sing me ‘Harvest Days’ on that dinky what-you-may-call-it.”

When she had complied, accompanying herself on the ukulele, she suggested his weird “Cowboy’s Lament.” In some inexplicable way of love, she had come to like her husband’s one song. Because he sang it, she liked its inanity and monotonousness; and most of all, it seemed to her, she loved his hopeless and adorable flatting of every note. She could even sing with him, flatting as accurately and deliciously as he. Nor did she undeceive him in his sublime faith.

“I guess Bert an’ the rest have joshed me all the time,” he said.

“You and I get along together with it fine,” she equivocated; for in such matters she did not deem the untruth a wrong.

Spring was on when the strike came in the railroad shops. The Sunday before it was called, Saxon and Billy had dinner at Bert’s house. Saxon’s brother came, though he had found it impossible to bring Sarah, who refused to budge from her household rut. Bert was blackly pessimistic, and they found him singing with sardonic glee:

“Nobody loves a mil-yun-aire. Nobody likes his looks. Nobody’ll share his slightest care, He classes with thugs and crooks. Thriftiness has become a crime, So spend everything you earn; We’re living now in a funny time, When money is made to burn.”

Mary went about the dinner preparation, flaunting unmistakable signals of rebellion; and Saxon, rolling up her sleeves and tying on an apron, washed the breakfast dishes. Bert fetched a pitcher of steaming beer from the corner saloon, and the three men smoked and talked about the coming strike.

“It oughta come years ago,” was Bert’s dictum. “It can’t come any too quick now to suit me, but it’s too late. We’re beaten thumbs donn. Here’s where the last of the Mohegans gets theirs, in the neck, ker-whop!”

“Oh, I don’t know,” Tom, who had been smoking his pipe gravely, began to counsel. “Organized labor’s gettin’ stronger every day. Why, I can remember when there wasn't any unions in California, Look at us now — wages, an' hours, an' everything."

"You talk like an organizer," Bert sneered, "shovin' the bull con on the boneheads. But we know different. Organized wages won't buy as much now as unorganized wages used to buy. They've got us whipsawed. Look at Frisco, the labor leaders doin' dirtier polities than the old parties, pawin' an' squabblin' over graft, an' goin' to San Quentin, while — what are the Frisco carpenters doin'? Let me tell you one thing, Tom Brown, if you listen to all you hear you'll hear that every Frisco carpenter is union an' gettin' full union wages. Do you believe it? It's a damn lie. There ain't a carpenter that don't rebate his wages Saturday night to the contractor. An' that's your buildin' trades in San Francisco, while the leaders are makin' trips to Europe on the earnings of the tenderloin — when they ain't coughing it up to the lawyers to get out of wearin' stripes."

"That's all right," Tom concurred. "Nobody's denyin' it. The trouble is labor ain't quite got its eyes open. It ought to play politics, but the politics ought to be the right kind."

"Socialism, eh?" Bert caught him up with scorn. "Wouldn't they sell us out just as the Ruefs and Schmidts have?"

"Get men that are honest," Billy said. "That's the whole trouble. Not that I stand for socialism. I don't. All our folks was a long time in America, an' I for one won't stand for a lot of fat Germans an' greasy Russian Jews tellin' me how to run my country when they can't speak English yet."

"Your country!" Bert cried. "Why, you bonehead, you ain't got a country. That's a fairy story the grafters shove at you every time they want to rob you some more."

"But don't vote for the grafters," Billy contended. "If we selected honest men we'd get honest treatment."

"I wish you'd come to some of our meetings, Billy," Tom said wistfully. "If you would, you'd get your eyes open an' vote the socialist ticket next election."

"Not on your life," Billy declined. "When you catch me in a socialist meeting'll be when they can talk like white men."

Bert was humming:

"We're living now in a funny time, When money is made to burn."

Mary was too angry with her husband, because of the impending strike and his incendiary utterances, to hold conversation with Saxon, and the latter, bepuzzled, listened to the conflicting opinions of the men.

"Where are we at?" she asked them, with a merriness that concealed her anxiety at heart.

"We ain't at," Bert snarled. "We're gone."

"But meat and oil have gone up again," she chafed. "And Billy's wages have been cut, and the shop men's were cut last year. Something must be done."

"The only thing to do is fight like hell," Bert answered. "Fight, an' go down fightin'. That's all. We're licked anyhow, but we can have a last run for our money."

"That's no way to talk," Tom rebuked.

"The time for talkin' 's past, old cock. The time for fightin' 's come."

"A hell of a chance you'd have against regular troops and machine guns," Billy retorted.

"Oh, not that way. There's such things as greasy sticks that go up with a loud noise and leave holes. There's such things as emery powder — "

"Oh, ho!" Mary burst out upon him, arms akimbo. "So that's what it means. That's what the emery in your vest pocket meant."

Her husband ignored her. Tom smoked with a troubled air. Billy was hurt. It showed plainly in his face.

"You ain't ben doin' that, Bert?" he asked, his manner showing his expectancy of his friend's denial.

"Sure thing, if you wont to know. I'd see'm all in hell if I could, before I go."

"He's a bloody-minded anarchist," Mary complained. "Men like him killed McKinley, and Garfield, an' — an' an' all the rest. He'll be hung. You'll see. Mark my words. I'm glad there's no children in sight, that's all."

"It's hot air," Billy comforted her.

"He's just teasing you," Saxon soothed. "He always was a josher."

But Mary shook her head.

"I know. I hear him talkin' in his sleep. He swears and curses something awful, an' grits his teeth. Listen to him now."

Bert, his handsome face bitter and devil-may-care, had tilted his chair back against the wall and was singing

"Nobody loves a mil-yun-aire, Nobody likes his looks, Nobody'll share his slightest care, He classes with thugs and crooks."

Tom was saying something about reasonableness and justice, and Bert ceased from singing to catch him up.

"Justice, eh? Another pipe-dream. I'll show you where the working class gets justice. You remember Forbes — J. Alliston Forbes — wrecked the Alta California Trust Company an' salted down two cold millions. I saw him yesterday, in a big hell-bent automobile. What'd he get? Eight years' sentence. How long did he serve? Less'n two years. Pardoned out on account of ill health. Ill hell! We'll be dead an' rotten before he kicks the bucket. Here. Look out this window. You see the back of that house with the broken porch rail. Mrs. Danaker lives there. She takes in washin'. Her old man was killed on the railroad. Nitsky on damages — contributory negligence, or fellow-servant-something-or-other flimflam. That's what the courts handed her. Her boy, Archie, was sixteen. He was on the road, a regular road-kid. He blew into Fresno an' rolled a drunk. Do you want to know how much he got? Two dollars and eighty cents. Get that? — Two-eighty. And what did the alfalfa judge hand'm? Fifty years. He's served eight of it already in San Quentin. And he'll go on serving it till he croaks. Mrs. Danaker says he's bad with consumption — caught it inside, but she ain't got the pull to get'm pardoned. Archie the Kid steals two dollars an' eighty cents from a drunk and gets fifty years. J. Alliston Forbes sticks up the Alta Trust for two millions en' gets less'n two years. Who's country is this anyway? Yourn an' Archie the Kid's? Guess again. It's J. Alliston Forbes' — Oh:

"Nobody likes a mil-yun-aire, Nobody likes his looks, Nobody'll share his slightest care, He classes with thugs and crooks."

Mary, at the sink, where Saxon was just finishing the last dish, untied Saxon's apron and kissed her with the sympathy that women alone feel for each other under the shadow of maternity.

"Now you sit down, dear. You mustn't tire yourself, and it's a long way to go yet. I'll get your sewing for you, and you can listen to the men talk. But don't listen to Bert. He's crazy."

Saxon sewed and listened, and Bert's face grew bleak and bitter as he contemplated the baby clothes in her lap.

"There you go," he blurted out, "bringin' kids into the world when you ain't got any guarantee you can feed em.

"You must a-had a souse last night," Tom grinned.

Bert shook his head.

"Aw, what's the use of gettin' grouched?" Billy cheered. "It's a pretty good country."

"It WAS a pretty good country," Bert replied, "when we was all Mohegans. But not now. We're jiggerooed. We're hornswoggled. We're backed to a standstill. We're double-crossed to a fare-you-well. My folks fought for this country. So did yourn, all of you. We freed the niggers, killed the Indians, an starved, an' froze, an' sweat, an' fought. This land looked good to us. We cleared it, an' broke it, an' made the roads, an' built the cities. And there was plenty for everybody. And we went on fightin' for it. I had two uncles killed at Gettysburg. All of us was mixed up in that war. Listen to Saxon talk any time what her folks went through to get out here an' get ranches, an' horses, an' cattle, an' everything. And they got 'em. All our folks' got 'em, Mary's, too — "

"And if they'd ben smart they'd a-held on to them," she interpolated.

"Sure thing," Bert continued. "That's the very point. We're the losers. We've ben robbed. We couldn't mark cards, deal from the bottom, an' ring in cold decks like the others. We're the white folks that failed. You see, times changed, and there was two kinds of us, the lions and the plugs. The plugs only worked, the lions only gobbled. They gobbled the farms, the mines, the factories, an' now they've gobbled the government. We're the white folks an' the children of white folks, that was too busy being good to be smart. We're the white folks that lost out. We're the ones that's ben skinned. D'ye get me?"

"You'd make a good soap-boxer," Tom commended, "if only you'd get the kinks straightened out in your reasoning."

"It sounds all right, Bert," Billy said, "only it ain't. Any man can get rich to-day — "

"Or be president of the United States," Bert snapped. "Sure thing — if he's got it in him. Just the same I ain't heard you makin' a noise like a millionaire or a president. Why? You ain't got it in you. You're a bonehead. A plug. That's why. Skiddoo for you. Skiddoo for all of us."

At the table, while they ate, Tom talked of the joys of farm-life he had known as a boy and as a young man, and confided that it was his dream to go and take up government land somewhere as his people had done before him. Unfortunately, as he explained, Sarah was set, so that the dream must remain a dream.

"It's all in the game," Billy sighed. "It's played to rules. Some one has to get knocked out, I suppose."

A little later, while Bert was off on a fresh diatribe, Billy became aware that he was making comparisons. This house was not like his house. Here was no satisfying atmosphere. Things seemed to run with a jar. He recollected that when they arrived the breakfast dishes had not yet been washed. With a man's general obliviousness of household affairs, he had not noted details; yet it had been borne in on him, all morning, in a myriad ways, that Mary was not the housekeeper Saxon was. He glanced proudly across at her, and felt the spur of an impulse to leave his seat, go around, and embrace her. She was a wife. He remembered her dainty undergarmenting, and on the instant, into his brain, leaped the image of her so appareled, only to be shattered by Bert.

"Hey, Bill, you seem to think I've got a grouch. Sure thing. I have. You ain't had my experiences. You've always done teamin' an' pulled down easy money prizefightin'. You ain't known hard times. You ain't ben through strikes. You ain't had to take care of an old mother an' swallow dirt on her account. It wasn't until after she died that I could rip loose an' take or leave as I felt like it.

"Take that time I tackled the Niles Electric an' see what a work-plug gets handed out to him. The Head Cheese sizes me up, pumps me a lot of questions, an' gives me an application blank. I make it out, payin' a dollar to a doctor they sent me to for a health certificate. Then I got to go to a picture garage an' get my mug taken for the Niles Electric rogues' gallery. And I cough up another dollar for the mug. The Head Squirt takes the blank, the health certificate, and the mug, an' fires more questions. DID I BELONG TO A LABOR UNION? — ME? Of course I told'm the truth I guess nit. I needed the job. The grocery wouldn't give me any more tick, and there was my mother.

"Huh, thinks I, here's where I'm a real carman. Back platform for me, where I can pick up the fancy skirts. Nitsky. Two dollars, please. Me — my two dollars. All for a pewter badge. Then there was the uniform — nineteen fifty, and get it anywhere else for fifteen. Only that was to be paid out of my first month. And then five dollars in change in my pocket, my own money. That was the rule. — I borrowed that five from Tom Donovan, the policeman. Then what? They worked me for two weeks without pay, breakin' me in."

“Did you pick up any fancy skirts?” Saxon queried teasingly.

Bert shook his head glumly.

“I only worked a month. Then we organized, and they busted our union higher’n a kite.”

“And you boobs in the shops will be busted the same way if you go out on strike,” Mary informed him.

“That’s what I’ve ben tellin’ you all along,” Bert replied. “We ain’t got a chance to win.”

“Then why go out?” was Saxon’s question.

He looked at her with lackluster eyes for a moment, then answered

“Why did my two uncles get killed at Gettysburg?”

CHAPTER VIII

Saxon went about her housework greatly troubled. She no longer devoted herself to the making of pretties. The materials cost money, and she did not dare. Bert's thrust had sunk home. It remained in her quivering consciousness like a shaft of steel that ever turned and rankled. She and Billy were responsible for this coming young life. Could they be sure, after all, that they could adequately feed and clothe it and prepare it for its way in the world? Where was the guaranty? She remembered, dimly, the blight of hard times in the past, and the plaints of fathers and mothers in those days returned to her with a new significance. Almost could she understand Sarah's chronic complaining.

Hard times were already in the neighborhood, where lived the families of the shopmen who had gone out on strike. Among the small storekeepers, Saxon, in the course of the daily marketing, could sense the air of despondency. Light and geniality seemed to have vanished. Gloom pervaded everywhere. The mothers of the children that played in the streets showed the gloom plainly in their faces. When they gossiped in the evenings, over front gates and on door stoops, their voices were subdued and less of laughter rang out.

Mary Donahue, who had taken three pints from the milkman, now took one pint. There were no more family trips to the moving picture shows. Scrap-meat was harder to get from the butcher. Nora Delaney, in the third house, no longer bought fresh fish for Friday. Salted codfish, not of the best quality, was now on her table. The sturdy children that ran out upon the street between meals with huge slices of bread and butter and sugar now came out with no sugar and with thinner slices spread more thinly with butter. The very custom was dying out, and some children already had desisted from piecing between meals.

Everywhere was manifest a pinching and scraping, a tightning and shortening down of expenditure. And everywhere was more irritation. Women became angered with one another, and with the children, more quickly than of yore; and Saxon knew that Bert and Mary bickered incessantly.

"If she'd only realize I've got troubles of my own," Bert complained to Saxon.

She looked at him closely, and felt fear for him in a vague, numb way. His black eyes seemed to burn with a continuous madness. The brown face was leaner, the skin drawn tightly across the cheekbones. A slight twist had come to the mouth, which seemed frozen into bitterness. The very carriage of his body and the way he wore his hat advertised a recklessness more intense than had been his in the past.

Sometimes, in the long afternoons, sitting by the window with idle hands, she caught herself reconstructing in her vision that folk-migration of her people across the plains and mountains and deserts to the sunset land by the Western sea. And often she found herself dreaming of the arcadian days of her people, when they had not lived in cities nor been vexed with labor unions and employers' associations. She would remember the old people's tales of self-sufficingness, when they shot or raised their own meat, grew their own vegetables, were their own blacksmiths and carpenters, made their own shoes — yes, and spun the cloth of the clothes they wore. And something of the wistfulness in Tom's face she could see as she recollected it when he talked of his dream of taking up government land.

A farmer's life must be fine, she thought. Why was it that people had to live in cities? Why had times changed? If there had been enough in the old days, why was there not enough now? Why was it necessary for men to quarrel and jangle, and strike and fight, all about the matter of getting work? Why wasn't there work for all? — Only that morning, and she shuddered with the recollection, she had seen two scabs, on their way to work, beaten up by the strikers, by men she knew by sight, and some by name, who lived in the neighhorhood. It had happened directly across the street. It had been cruel, terrible — a dozen men on two. The children had begun it by throwing rocks at the scabs and cursing them in ways children should not know. Policemen had run upon the scene with drawn revolvers, and the strikers had retreated into the houses and through the narrow alleys between the houses. One of the scabs, unconscious, had been carried away in an ambulance; the other, assisted by special railroad police, had been taken away to the shops. At him, Mary Donahue, standing on her front stoop, her child in her arms, had hurled such vile abuse that it had brought the blush of shame to Saxon's cheeks. On the stoop of the house on the other side, Saxon had noted Mercedes, in the height of the beating up, looking on with a queer smile. She had seemed very eager to witness, her nostrils dilated and swelling like the beat of pulses as she watched. It had struck Saxon at the time that the old woman was quite unalarmed and only curious to see.

To Mercedes, who was so wise in love, Saxon went for explanation of what was the matter with the world. But the old woman's wisdom in affairs industrial and economic was cryptic and unpalatable.

"La la, my dear, it is so simple. Most men are born stupid. They are the slaves. A few are born clever. They are the masters. God made men so, I suppose."

"Then how about God and that terrible beating across the street this morning?"

"I'm afraid he was not interested," Mercedes smiled. "I doubt he even knows that it happened."

"I was frightened to death," Saxon declared. "I was made sick by it. And yet you — I saw you — you looked on as cool as you please, as if it was a show."

"It was a show, my dear."

"Oh, how could you?"

"La la, I have seen men killed. It is nothing strange. All men die. The stupid ones die like oxen, they know not why. It is quite funny to see. They strike each other with fists and clubs, and break each other's heads. It is gross. They are like a lot of animals. They are like dogs wrangling over bones. Jobs are bones, you know. Now, if they fought for women, or ideas, or bars of gold, or fabulous diamonds, it would be splendid. But no; they are only hungry, and fight over scraps for their stomach."

"Oh, if I could only understand!" Saxon murmured, her hands tightly clasped in anguish of incomprehension and vital need to know.

"There is nothing to understand. It is clear as print. There have always been the stupid and the clever, the slave and the master, the peasant and the prince. There always will be."

"But why?"

"Why is a peasant a peasant, my dear? Because he is a peasant. Why is a flea a flea?"

Saxon tossed her head fretfully.

"Oh, but my dear, I have answered. The philosophies of the world can give no better answer. Why do you like your man for a husband rather than any other man? Because you like him that way, that is all. Why do you like? Because you like. Why does fire burn and frost bite? Why are there clever men and stupid men? masters and slaves? employers and workingmen? Why is black black? Answer that and you answer everything."

"But it is not right That men should go hungry and without work when they want to work if only they can get a square deal," Saxon protested.

"Oh, but it is right, just as it is right that stone won't burn like wood, that sea sand isn't sugar, that thorns prick, that water is wet, that smoke rises, that things fall down and not up."

But such doctrine of reality made no impression on Saxon. Frankly, she could not comprehend. It seemed like so much nonsense.

"Then we have no liberty and independence," she cried passionately. "One man is not as good as another. My child has not the right to live that a rich mother's child has."

"Certainly not," Mercedes answered.

"Yet all my people fought for these things," Saxon urged, remembering her school history and the sword of her father.

"Democracy — the dream of the stupid peoples. Oh, la la, my dear, democracy is a lie, an enchantment to keep the work brutes content, just as religion used to keep them content. When they groaned in their misery and toil, they were persuaded to keep on in their misery and toil by pretty tales of a land beyond the skies where they would live famously and fat while the clever ones roasted in everlasting fire. Ah, how the clever ones must have chuckled! And when that lie wore out, and democracy was dreamed, the clever ones saw to it that it should be in truth a dream, nothing but a dream. The world belongs to the great and clever."

"But you are of the working people," Saxon charged.

The old woman drew herself up, and almost was angry.

"I? Of the working people? My dear, because I had misfortune with moneys invested, because I am old and can no longer win the brave young men, because I have outlived the men of my youth and there is no one to go to, because I live here in the ghetto with Barry Higgins and prepare to die — why, my dear, I was born with the masters, and have trod all my days on the necks of the stupid. I have drunk rare wines and sat at feasts that would have supported this neighborhood for a lifetime. Dick Golden and I — it was Dickie's money, but I could have had it Dick Golden and I dropped four hundred thousand francs in a week's play at Monte Carlo. He was a Jew, but he was a spender. In India I have worn jewels that could have saved the lives of ten thousand families dying before my eyes."

“You saw them die?... and did nothing?” Saxon asked aghast.

“I kept my jewels — la la, and was robbed of them by a brute of a Russian officer within the year.”

“And you let them die,” Saxon reiterated.

“They were cheap spawn. They fester and multiply like maggots. They meant nothing — nothing, my dear, nothing. No more than your work people mean here, whose crowning stupidity is their continuing to beget more stupid spawn for the slavery of the masters.”

So it was that while Saxon could get little glimmering of common sense from others, from the terrible old woman she got none at all. Nor could Saxon bring herself to believe much of what she considered Mercedes’ romancing. As the weeks passed, the strike in the railroad shops grew bitter and deadly. Billy shook his head and confessed his inability to make head or tail of the troubles that were looming on the labor horizon.

“I don’t get the hang of it,” he told Saxon. “It’s a mix-up. It’s like a roughhouse with the lights out. Look at us teamsters. Here we are, the talk just starting of going out on sympathetic strike for the mill-workers. They’ve ben out a week, most of their places is filled, an’ if us teamsters keep on haulin’ the mill-work the strike’s lost.”

“Yet you didn’t consider striking for yourselves when your wages were cut,” Saxon said with a frown.

“Oh, we wasn’t in position then. But now the Frisco teamsters and the whole Frisco Water Front Confederation is liable to back us up. Anyway, we’re just talkin’ about it, that’s all. But if we do go out, we’ll try to get back that ten per cent cut.”

“It’s rotten politics,” he said another time. “Everybody’s rotten. If we’d only wise up and agree to pick out honest men — ”

“But if you, and Bert, and Tom can’t agree, how do you expect all the rest to agree?” Saxon asked.

“It gets me,” he admitted. “It’s enough to give a guy the willies thinkin’ about it. And yet it’s plain as the nose on your face. Get honest men for politics, an’ the whole thing’s straightened out. Honest men’d make honest laws, an’ then honest men’d get their dues. But Bert wants to smash things, an’ Tom smokes his pipe and dreams pipe dreams about by an’ by when everybody votes the way he thinks. But this by an’ by ain’t the point. We want things now. Tom says we can’t get them now, an’ Bert says we ain’t never goin’ to get them. What can a fellow do when everybody’s of different minds? Look at the socialists themselves. They're always disagreeing, splittin' up, an' firin' each other out of the party. The whole thing's bughouse, that's what, an' I almost get dippy myself thinkin' about it. The point I can't get out of my mind is that we want things now."

He broke off abruptly and stared at Saxon.

"What is it?" he asked, his voice husky with anxiety. "You ain't sick... or... or anything?"

One hand she had pressed to her heart; but the startle and fright in her eyes was changing into a pleased intentness, while on her mouth was a little mysterious smile. She seemed oblivious to her husband, as if listening to some message from afar and not for his ears. Then wonder and joy transfused her face, and she looked at Billy, and her hand went out to his.

"It's life," she whispered. "I felt life. I am so glad, so glad."

The next evening when Billy came home from work, Saxon caused him to know and undertake more of the responsibilities of fatherhood.

"I've been thinking it over, Billy," she began, "and I'm such a healthy, strong woman that it won't have to be very expensive. There's Martha Skelton — she's a good midwife."

But Billy shook his head.

"Nothin' doin' in that line, Saxon. You're goin' to have Doc Hentley. He's Bill Murphy's doc, an' Bill swears by him. He's an old cuss, but he's a wooz."

"She confined Maggie Donahue," Saxon argued; "and look at her and her baby."

"Well, she won't confine you — not so as you can notice it."

"But the doctor will charge twenty dollars," Saxon pursued, "and make me get a nurse because I haven't any womenfolk to come in. But Martha Skelton would do everything, and it would be so much cheaper."

But Billy gathered her tenderly in his arms and laid down the law.

"Listen to me, little wife. The Roberts family ain't on the cheap. Never forget that. You've gotta have the baby. That's your business, an' it's enough for you. My business is to get the money an' take care of you. An' the best ain't none too good for you. Why, I wouldn't run the chance of the teeniest accident happenin' to you for a million dollars. It's you that counts. An' dollars is dirt. Maybe you think I like that kid some. I do. Why, I can't get him outa my head. I'm thinkin' about'm all day long. If I get fired, it'll be his fault. I'm clean dotty over him. But just the same, Saxon, honest to

God, before I'd have anything happen to you, break your little finger, even, I'd see him dead an' buried first. That'll give you something of an idea what you mean to me.

"Why, Saxon, I had the idea that when folks got married they just settled down, and after a while their business was to get along with each other. Maybe it's the way it is with other people; but it ain't that way with you an' me. I love you more 'n more every day. Right now I love you more'n when I began talkin' to you five minutes ago. An' you won't have to get a nurse. Doc Hentley'll come every day, an' Mary'll come in an' do the housework, an' take care of you an' all that, just as you'll do for her if she ever needs it."

As the days and weeks pussed, Saxon was possessed by a conscious feeling of proud motherhood in her swelling breasts. So essentially a normal woman was she, that motherhood was a satisfying and passionate happiness. It was true that she had her moments of apprehension, but they were so momentary and faint that they tended, if anything, to give zest to her happiness.

Only one thing troubled her, and that was the puzzling and perilous situation of labor which no one seemed to understand, her self least of all.

"They're always talking about how much more is made by machinery than by the old ways," she told her brother Tom. "Then, with all the machinery we've got now, why don't we get more?"

"Now you're talkin'," he answered. "It wouldn't take you long to understand socialism."

But Saxon had a mind to the immediate need of things.

"Tom, how long have you been a socialist?"

"Eight years."

"And you haven't got anything by it?"

"But we will... in time."

"At that rate you'll be dead first," she challenged.

Tom sighed.

"I'm afraid so. Things move so slow."

Again he sighed. She noted the weary, patient look in his face, the bent shoulders, the labor-gnarled hands, and it all seemed to symbolize the futility of his social creed.

CHAPTER IX

It began quietly, as the fateful unexpected so often begins. Children, of all ages and sizes, were playing in the street, and Saxon, by the open front window, was watching them and dreaming day dreams of her child soon to be. The sunshine mellowed peacefully down, and a light wind from the bay cooled the air and gave to it a tang of salt. One of the children pointed up Pine Street toward Seventh. All the children ceased playing, and stared and pointed. They formed into groups, the larger boys, of from ten to twelve, by themselves, the older girls anxiously clutching the small children by the hands or gathering them into their arms.

Saxon could not see the cause of all this, but she could guess when she saw the larger boys rush to the gutter, pick up stones, and sneak into the alleys between the houses. Smaller boys tried to imitate them. The girls, dragging the tots by the arms, banged gates and clattered up the front steps of the small houses. The doors slammed behind them, and the street was deserted, though here and there front shades were drawn aside so that anxious-faced women might peer forth. Saxon heard the uptown train puffing and snorting as it pulled out from Center Street. Then, from the direction of Seventh, came a hoarse, throaty manroar. Still, she could see nothing, and she remembered Mercedes Higgins' words "THEY ARE LIKE DOGS WRANGLING OVER BONES. JOBS ARE BONES, YOU KNOW"

The roar came closer, and Saxon, leaning out, saw a dozen scabs, conveyed by as many special police and Pinkertons, coming down the sidewalk on her side of the street. They came compactly, as if with discipline, while behind, disorderly, yelling confusedly, stooping to pick up rocks, were seventy-five or a hundred of the striking shopmen. Saxon discovered herself trembling with apprehension, knew that she must not, and controlled herself. She was helped in this by the conduct of Mercedes Higgins. The old woman came out of her front door, dragging a chair, on which she coolly seated herself on the tiny stoop at the top of the steps.

In the hands of the special police were clubs. The Pinkertons carried no visible weapons. The strikers, urging on from behind, seemed content with yelling their rage and threats, and it remained for the children to precipitate the conflict. From across the street, between the Olsen and the Isham houses, came a shower of stones. Most of these fell short, though one struck a scab on the head. The man was no more than twenty feet away from Saxon. He reeled toward her front picket fence, drawing a revolver. With one hand he brushed the blood from his eyes and with the other he discharged the revolver into the Isham house. A Pinkerton seized his arm to prevent a second shot, and dragged him along. At the same instant a wilder roar went up from the strikers, while a volley of stones came from between Saxon's house and Maggie Donahue's. The scabs and their protectors made a stand, drawing revolvers. From their hard, determined faces — fighting men by profession — Saxon could augur nothing but bloodshed and death. An elderly man, evidently the leader, lifted a soft felt hat and mopped the perspiration from the bald top of his head. He was a large man, very rotund of belly and helpless looking. His gray beard was stained with streaks of tobacco juice, and he was smoking a cigar. He was stoop-shouldered, and Saxon noted the dandruff on the collar of his coat.

One of the men pointed into the street, and several of his companions laughed. The cause of it was the little Olsen boy, barely four years old, escaped somehow from his mother and toddling toward his economic enemies. In his right he bore a rock so heavy that he could scarcely lift it. With this he feebly threatened them. His rosy little face was convulsed with rage, and he was screaming over and over "Dam scabs! Dam scabs! Dam scabs!" The laughter with which they greeted him only increased his fury. He toddled closer, and with a mighty exertion threw the rock. It fell a scant six feet beyond his hand.

This much Saxon saw, and also Mrs. Olsen rushing into the street for her child. A rattling of revolver-shots from the strikers drew Saxon's attention to the men beneath her. One of them cursed sharply and examined the biceps of his left arm, which hung limply by his side. Down the hand she saw the blood beginning to drip. She knew she ought not remain and watch, but the memory of her fighting forefathers was with her, while she possessed no more than normal human fear — if anything, less. She forgot her child in the eruption of battle that had broken upon her quiet street. And she forgot the strikers, and everything else, in amazement at what had happened to the round-bellied, cigar-smoking leader. In some strange way, she knew not how, his head had become wedged at the neck between the tops of the pickets of her fence. His body hung down outside, the knees not quite touching the ground. His hat had fallen off, and the sun was making an astounding high light on his bald spot. The cigar, too, was gone. She saw he was looking at her. One hand, between the pickets, seemed waving at her, and almost he seemed to wink at her jocosely, though she knew it to be the contortion of deadly pain.

Possibly a second, or, at most, two seconds, she gazed at this, when she was aroused by Bert's voice. He was running along the sidewalk, in front of her house, and behind him charged several more strikers, while he shouted: "Come on, you Mohegans! We got 'em nailed to the cross!"

In his left hand he carried a pick-handle, in his right a revolver, already empty, for he clicked the cylinder vainly around as he ran. With an abrupt stop, dropping the pick-handle, he whirled half about, facing Saxon's gate. He was sinking down, when he straightened himself to throw the revolver into the face of a scab who was jumping toward him. Then he began swaying, at the same time sagging at the knees and waist. Slowly, with infinite effort, he caught a gate picket in his right hand, and, still slowly, as if lowering himself, sank down, while past him leaped the crowd of strikers he had led.

It was battle without quarter — a massacre. The scabs and their protectors, surrounded, backed against Saxon's fence, fought like cornered rats, but could not withstand the rush of a hundred men. Clubs and pick-handles were swinging, revolvers were exploding, and cobblestones were flung with crushing effect at arm's distance. Saxon saw young Frank Davis, a friend of Bert's and a father of several months' standing, press the muzzle of his revolver against a scab's stomach and fire. There were curses and snarls of rage, wild cries of terror and pain. Mercedes was right. These things were not men. They were beasts, fighting over bones, destroying one another for bones.

JOBS ARE BONES; JOBS ARE BONES. The phrase was an incessant iteration in Saxon's brain. Much as she might have wished it, she was powerless now to withdraw from the window. It was as if she were paralyzed. Her brain no longer worked. She sat numb, staring, incapable of anything save seeing the rapid horror before her eyes that flashed along like a moving picture film gone mad. She saw Pinkertons, special police, and strikers go down. One scab, terribly wounded, on his knees and begging for mercy, was kicked in the face. As he sprawled backward another striker, standing over him, fired a revolver into his chest, quickly and deliberately, again and again, until the weapon was empty. Another scab, backed over the pickets by a hand clutching his throat, had his face pulped by a revolver butt. Again and again, continually, the revolver rose and fell, and Saxon knew the man who wielded it — Chester Johnson. She had met him at dances and danced with him in the days before she was married. He had always been kind and good natured. She remembered the Friday night, after a City Hall band concert, when he had taken her and two other girls to Tony's Tamale Grotto on Thirteenth street. And after that they had all gone to Pabst's Cafe and drunk a glass of beer before they went home. It was impossible that this could be the same Chester Johnson. And as she looked, she saw the round-bellied leader, still wedged by the neck between the pickets, draw a revolver with his free hand, and, squinting horribly sidewise, press the muzzle against Chester's side. She tried to scream a warning. She did scream, and Chester looked up and saw her. At that moment the revolver went off, and he collapsed prone upon the body of the scab. And the bodies of three men hung on her picket fence.

Anything could happen now. Quite without surprise, she saw the strikers leaping the fence, trampling her few little geraniums and pansies into the earth as they fled between Mercedes' house and hers. Up Pine street, from the railroad yards, was coming a rush of railroad police and Pinkertons, firing as they ran. While down Pine street, gongs clanging, horses at a gallop, came three patrol wagons packed with police. The strikers were in a trap. The only way out was between the houses and over the back yard fences. The jam in the narrow alley prevented them all from escaping. A dozen were cornered in the angle between the front of her house and the steps. And as they had done, so were they done by. No effort was made to arrest. They were clubbed down and shot down to the last man by the guardians of the peace who were infuriated by what had been wreaked on their brethren.

It was all over, and Saxon, moving as in a dream, clutching the banister tightly, came down the front steps. The round-bellied leader still leered at her and fluttered one hand, though two big policemen were just bending to extricate him. The gate was off its hinges, which seemed strange, for she had been watching all the time and had not seen it happen.

Bert's eyes were closed. His lips were blood-flecked, and there was a gurgling in his throat as if he were trying to say something. As she stooped above him, with her handkerchief brushing the blood from his cheek where some one had stepped on him, his eyes opened. The old defiant light was in them. He did not know her. The lips moved, and faintly, almost reminiscently, he murmured, “The last of the Mohegans, the last of the Mohegans.” Then he groaned, and the eyelids drooped down again. He was not dead. She knew that, the chest still rose and fell, and the gurgling still continued in his throat.

She looked up. Mercedes stood beside her. The old woman’s eyes were very bright, her withered cheeks flushed.

“Will you help me carry him into the house?” Saxon asked.

Mercedes nodded, turned to a sergeant of police, and made the request to him. The sergeant gave a swift glance at Bert, and his eyes were bitter and ferocious as he refused.

“To hell with’m. We’ll care for our own.”

“Maybe you and I can do it,” Saxon said.

“Don’t be a fool.” Mercedes was beckoning to Mrs. Olsen across the street. “You go into the house, little mother that is to be. This is bad for you. We’ll carry him in. Mrs. Olsen is coming, and we’ll get Maggie Donahue.”

Saxon led the way into the back bedroom which Billy had insisted on furnishing. As she opened the door, the carpet seemed to fly up into her face as with the force of a blow, for she remembered Bert had laid that carpet. And as the women placed him on the bed she recalled that it was Bert and she, between them, who had set the bed up one Sunday morning.

And then she felt very queer, and was surprised to see Mercedes regarding her with questioning, searching eyes. After that her queerness came on very fast, and she descended into the hell of pain that is given to women alone to know. She was supported, half-carried, to the front bedroom. Many faces were about her — Mercedes, Mrs. Olsen, Maggie Donahue. It seemed she must ask Mrs. Olsen if she had saved little Emil from the street, but Mercedes cleared Mrs. Olsen out to look after Bert, and Maggie Donahue went to answer a knock at the front door. From the street came a loud hum of voices, punctuated by shouts and commands, and from time to time there was a clanging of the gongs of ambulances and patrol wagon’s. Then appeared the fat, comfortable face of Martha Shelton, and, later, Dr. Hentley came. Once, in a clear interval, through the thin wall Saxon heard the high opening notes of Mary’s hysteria. And, another time, she heard Mary repeating over and over. “I’ll never go back to the laundry. Never. Never.”

CHAPTER X

Billy could never get over the shock, during that period, of Saxon's appearance. Morning after morning, and evening after evening when he came home from work, he would enter the room where she lay and fight a royal battle to hide his feelings and make a show of cheerfulness and geniality. She looked so small lying there so small and shrunken and weary, and yet so child-like in her smallness. Tenderly, as he sat beside her, he would take up her pale hand and stroke the slim, transparent arm, marveling at the smallness and delicacy of the bones.

One of her first questions, puzzling alike to Billy and Mary, was:

"Did they save little Emil Olsen?"

And when she told them how he had attacked, singlehanded, the whole twenty-four fighting men, Billy's face glowed with appreciation.

"The little cuss!" he said. "That's the kind of a kid to be proud of."

He halted awkwardly, and his very evident fear that he had hurt her touched Saxon. She put her hand out to his.

"Billy," she began; then waited till Mary left the room.

"I never asked before — not that it matters... now. But I waited for you to tell me. Was it...?"

He shook his head.

"No; it was a girl. A perfect little girl. Only... it was too soon."

She pressed his hand, and almost it was she that sympathized with him in his affliction.

"I never told you, Billy — you were so set on a boy; but I planned, just the same, if it was a girl, to call her Daisy. You remember, that was my mother's name."

He nodded his approbation.

"Say, Saxon, you know I did want a boy like the very dickens... well, I don't care now. I think I'm set just as hard on a girl, an', well, here's hopin' the next will be called... you wouldn't mind, would you?"

"What?"

"If we called it the same name, Daisy?"

"Oh, Billy! I was thinking the very same thing."

Then his face grew stern as he went on.

"Only there ain't goin' to be a next. I didn't know what havin' children was like before. You can't run any more risks like that."

"Hear the big, strong, afraid-man talk!" she jeered, with a wan smile. "You don't know anything about it. How can a man? I am a healthy, natural woman. Everything would have been all right this time if... if all that fighting hadn't happened. Where did they bury Bert?"

"You knew?"

"All the time. And where is Mercedes? She hasn't been in for two days."

"Old Barry's sick. She's with him."

He did not tell her that the old night watchman was dying, two thin walls and half a dozen feet away.

Saxon's lips were trembling, and she began to cry weakly, clinging to Billy's hand with both of hers.

"I — I can't help it," she sobbed. "I'll be all right in a minute.... Our little girl, Billy. Think of it! And I never saw her!"

She was still lying on her bed, when, one evening, Mary saw fit to break out in bitter thanksgiving that she had escaped, and was destined to escape, what Saxon had gone through.

"Aw, what are you talkin' about?" Billy demanded. "You'll get married some time again as sure as beans is beans."

"Not to the best man living," she proclaimed. "And there ain't no call for it. There's too many people in the world now, else why are there two or three men for every job? And, besides, havin' children is too terrible."

Saxon, with a look of patient wisdom in her face that became glorified as she spoke, made answer:

"I ought to know what it means. I've been through it, and I'm still in the thick of it, and I want to say to you right now, out of all the pain and the ache and the sorrow, that it is the most beautiful, wonderful thing in the world."

As Saxon's strength came back to her (and when Doctor Hentley had privily assured Billy that she was sound as a dollar), she herself took up the matter of the industrial tragedy that had taken place before her door. The militia had been called out immediately, Billy informed her, and was encamped then at the foot of Pine street on the waste ground next to the railroad yards. As for the strikers, fifteen of them were in jail. A house to house search had been made in the neighborhood by the police, and in this way nearly the whole fifteen, all wounded, had been captured. It would go hard with them, Billy foreboded gloomily. The newspapers were demanding blood for blood, and all the ministers in Oakland had preached fierce sermons against the strikers. The railroad had filled every place, and it was well known that the striking shopmen not only would never get their old jobs back but were blacklisted in every railroad in the United States. Already they were beginning to scatter. A number had gone to Panama, and four were talking of going to Ecuador to work in the shops of the railroad that ran over the Andes to Quito.

With anxiety keenly concealed, she tried to feel out Billy's opinion on what had happened.

"That shows what Bert's violent methods come to," she said.

He shook his head slowly and gravely.

"They'll hang Chester Johnson, anyway," he answered indirectly. "You know him. You told me you used to dance with him. He was caught red-handed, lyin' on the body of a scab he beat to death. Old Jelly Belly's got three bullet holes in him, but he ain't goin' to die, and he's got Chester's number. They'll hang'm on Jelly Belly's evidence. It was all in the papers. Jelly Belly shot him, too, a-hangin' by the neck on our pickets."

Saxon shuddered. Jelly Belly must be the man with the bald spot and the tobacco-stained whiskers.

"Yes," she said. "I saw it all. It seemed he must have hung there for hours."

"It was all over, from first to last, in five minutes."

"It seemed ages and ages."

"I guess that's the way it seemed to Jelly Belly, stuck on the pickets," Billy smiled grimly. "But he's a hard one to kill. He's been shot an' cut up a dozen different times. But they say now he'll be crippled for life — have to go around on crutches, or in a wheel-chair. That'll stop him from doin' any more dirty work for the railroad. He was one of their top gun-fighters — always up to his ears in the thick of any fightin' that was goin' on. He never was leery of anything on two feet, I'll say that much for'm."

"Where does he live?" Saxon inquired.

"Up on Adeline, near Tenth — fine neighborhood an' fine two-storied house. He must pay thirty dollars a month rent. I guess the railroad paid him pretty well."

"Then he must be married?"

"Yep. I never seen his wife, but he's got one son, Jack, a passenger engineer. I used to know him. He was a nifty boxer, though he never went into the ring. An' he's got another son that's teacher in the high school. His name's Paul. We're about the same age. He was great at baseball. I knew him when we was kids. He pitched me out three times hand-runnin' once, when the Durant played the Cole School."

Saxon sat back in the Morris chair, resting and thinking. The problem was growing more complicated than ever. This elderly, round-bellied, and bald-headed gunfighter, too, had a wife and family. And there was Frank Davis, married barely a year and with a baby boy. Perhaps the scab he shot in the stomach had a wife and children. All seemed to be acquainted, members of a very large family, and yet, because of their particular families, they battered and killed each other. She had seen Chester Johnson kill a scab, and now they were going to hang Chester Johnson, who had married Kittie Brady out of the cannery, and she and Kittie Brady had worked together years before in the paper box factory.

Vainly Saxon waked for Billy to say something that would show he did not countenance the killing of the scabs.

"It was wrong," she ventured finally.

"They killed Bert," he countered. "An' a lot of others. An' Frank Davis. Did you know he was dead? Had his whole lower jaw shot away — died in the ambulance before they could get him to the receiving hospital. There was never so much killin' at one time in Oakland before."

"But it was their fault," she contended. "They began it. It was murder."

Billy did not reply, but she heard him mutter hoarsely. She knew he said "God damn them"; but when she asked, "What?" he made no answer. His eyes were deep with troubled clouds, while the mouth had hardened, and all his face was bleak.

To her it was a heart-stab. Was he, too, like the rest? Would he kill other men who had families, like Bert, and Frank Davis, and Chester Johnson had killed? Was he, too, a wild beast, a dog that would snarl over a bone?

She sighed. Life was a strange puzzle. Perhaps Mercedes Higgins was right in her cruel statement of the terms of existence.

"What of it," Billy laughed harshly, as if in answer to her unuttered questions. "It's dog eat dog, I guess, and it's always ben that way. Take that scrap outside there. They killed each other just like the North an' South did in the Civil War."

"But workingmen can't win that way, Billy. You say yourself that it spoiled their chance of winning."

"I suppose not," he admitted reluctantly. "But what other chance they've got to win I don't see. Look at 'us. We'll be up against it next."

"Not the teamsters?" she cried.

He nodded gloomily.

"The bosses are cuttin' loose all along the line for a high old time. Say they're goin' to beat us to our knees till we come crawlin' back a-beggin' for our jobs. They've bucked up real high an' mighty what of all that killin' the other day. Havin' the troops out is half the fight, along with havin' the preachers an' the papers an' the public behind 'em. They're shootin' off their mouths already about what they're goin' to do. They're sure gunning for trouble. First, they're goin' to hang Chester Johnson an' as many more of the fifteen as they can. They say that flat. The Tribune, an' the Enquirer an' the Times keep sayin' it over an over every day. They're all union-hustin' to beat the band. No more closed shop. To hell with organized labor. Why, the dirty little Intelligencer come out this morning an' said that every union official in Oakland ought to be run outa town or stretched up. Fine, eh? You bet it's fine.

"Look at us. It ain't a case any more of sympathetic strike for the mill-workers. We got our own troubles. They've fired our four best men — the ones that was always on the conference committees. Did it without cause. They're lookin' for trouble, as I told you, an' they'll get it, too, if they don't watch out. We got our tip from the Frisco Water Front Confederation. With them backin' us we'll go some."

"You mean you'll... strike?" Saxon asked.

He bent his head.

"But isn't that what they want you to do? — from the way they're acting?"

"What's the difference?" Billy shrugged his shoulders, then continued. "It's better to strike than to get fired. We beat 'em to it, that's all, an' we catch 'em before they're ready. Don't we know what they're doin'? They're collectin' gradin'-camp drivers an' mule-skinners all up an' down the state. They got forty of 'em, feedin' 'em in a hotel in Stockton right now, an' ready to rush 'em in on us an' hundreds more like 'em. So this Saturday's the last wages I'll likely bring home for some time."

Saxon closed her eyes and thought quietly for five minutes. It was not her way to take things excitedly. The coolness of poise that Billy so admired never deserted her in time of emergency. She realized that she herself was no more than a mote caught up in this tangled, nonunderstandable conflict of many motes.

"We'll have to draw from our savings to pay for this month's rent," she said brightly.

Billy's face fell.

"We ain't got as much in the bank as you think," he confessed. "Bert had to be buried, you know, an I coughed up what the others couldn't raise."

"How much was it?"

"Forty dollars. I was goin' to stand off the butcher an' the rest for a while. They knew I was good pay. But they put it to me straight. They'd been carryin' the shopmen right along an was up against it themselves. An' now with that strike smashed they're pretty much smashed themselves. So I took it all out of the bank. I knew you wouldn't mind. You don't, do you?"

She smiled bravely, and bravely overcame the sinking feeling at her heart.

"It was the only right thing to do, Billy. I would have done it if you were lying sick, and Bert would have done it for you an' me if it had been the other way around."

His face was glowing.

"Gee, Saxon, a fellow can always count on you. You're like my right hand. That's why I say no more babies. If I lose you I'm crippled for life."

"We've got to economize," she mused, nodding her appreciation. "How much is in bank?"

"Just about thirty dollars. You see, I had to pay Martha Skelton an' for the... a few other little things. An' the union took time by the neck and levied a four dollar emergency assessment on every member just to be ready if the strike was pulled off. But Doc Hentley can wait. He said as much. He's the goods, if anybody should ask you. How'd you like'm?"

"I liked him. But I don't know about doctors. He's the first I ever had — except when I was vaccinated once, and then the city did that."

"Looks like the street car men are goin' out, too. Dan Fallon's come to town. Came all the way from New York. Tried to sneak in on the quiet, but the fellows knew when he left New York, an' kept track of him all the way acrost. They have to. He's Johnny-on-the-Spot whenever street car men are licked into shape. He's won lots of street car strikes for the bosses. Keeps an army of strike breakers an' ships them all over the country on special trains wherever they're needed. Oakland's never seen labor troubles like she's got and is goin' to get. All hell's goin' to break loose from the looks of it."

"Watch out for yourself, then, Billy. I don't want to lose you either."

"Aw, that's all right. I can take care of myself. An' besides, it ain't as though we was licked. We got a good chance."

"But you'll lose if there is any killing."

"Yep; we gotta keep an eye out against that."

"No violence."

"No gun-fighting or dynamite," he assented. "But a heap of scabs'll get their heads broke. That has to be."

"But you won't do any of that, Billy."

"Not so as any slob can testify before a court to havin' seen me." Then, with a quick shift, he changed the subject. "Old Barry Higgins is dead. I didn't want to tell you till you was outa bed. Buried'm a week ago. An' the old woman's movin' to Frisco. She told me she'd be in to say good-bye. She stuck by you pretty well them first couple of days, an' she showed Martha Shelton a few that made her hair curl. She got Martha's goat from the jump."

CHAPTER XI

With Billy on strike and away doing picket duty, and with the departure of Mercedes and the death of Bert, Saxon was left much to herself in a loneliness that even in one as healthy-minded as she could not fail to produce morbidness. Mary, too, had left, having spoken vaguely of taking a job at housework in Piedmont.

Billy could help Saxon little in her trouble. He dimly sansed her suffering, without comprehending the scope and intensity of it. He was too man-practical, and, by his very sex, too remote from the intimate tragedy that was hers. He was an outsider at the best, a friendly onlooker who saw little. To her the baby had been quick and real. It was still quick and real. That was her trouble. By no deliberate effort of will could she fill the aching void of its absence. Its reality became, at times, an hallucination. Somewhere it still was, and she must find it. She would catch herself, on occasion, listening with strained ears for the cry she had never heard, yet which, in fancy, she had heard a thousand times in the happy months before the end. Twice she left her bed in her sleep and went searching — each time coming to herself beside her mother's chest of drawers in which were the tiny garments. To herself, at such moments, she would say, "I had a baby once." And she would say it, aloud, as she watched the children playing in the street.

One day, on the Eighth street cars, a young mother sat beside her, a crowing infant in her arms. And Saxon said to her:

"I had a baby once. It died."

The mother looked at her, startled, half-drew the baby tighter in her arms, jealously, or as if in fear; then she softened as she said:

"You poor thing."

"Yes," Saxon nodded. "It died."

Tear's welled into her eyes, and the telling of her grief seemed to have brought relief. But all the day she suffered from an almost overwhelming desire to recite her sorrow to the world — to the paying teller at the bank, to the elderly floor-walker in Salinger's, to the blind woman, guided by a little boy, who played on the concertina — to every one save the policeman. The police were new and terrible creatures to her now. She had seen them kill the strikers as mercilessly as the strikers had killed the scabs. And, unlike the strikers, the police were professional killers. They were not fighting for jobs. They did it as a business. They could have taken prisoners that day, in the angle of her front steps and the house. But they had not. Unconsciously, whenever approaching one, she edged across the sidewalk so as to get as far as possible away from him. She did not reason it out, but deeper than consciousness was the feeling that they were typical of something inimical to her and hers.

At Eighth and Broadway, waiting for her car to return home, the policeman on the corner recognized her and greeted her. She turned white to the lips, and her heart fluttered painfully. It was only Ned Hermanmann, fatter, bronder-faced, jollier looking than ever. He had sat across the aisle from her for three terms at school. He and she had been monitors together of the composition books for one term. The day the powder works blew up at Pinole, breaking every window in the school, he and she had not joined in the panic rush for out-of-doors. Both had remained in the room, and the irate principal had exhibited them, from room to room, to the cowardly classes, and then rewarded them with a month's holiday from school. And after that Ned Hermanmann had become a policeman, and married Lena Highland, and Saxon had heard they had five children.

But, in spite of all that, he was now a policeman, and Billy was now a striker. Might not Ned Hermanmann some day club and shoot Billy just as those other policemen clubbed and shot the strikers by her front steps?

"What's the matter, Saxon?" he asked. "Sick?"

She nodded and choked, unable to speak, and started to move toward her car which was coming to a stop.

"I'll help you," he offered.

She shrank away from his hand.

"No; I'm all right," she gasped hurriedly. "I'm not going to take it. I've forgotten something."

She turned away dizzily, up Broadway to Ninth. Two blocks along Ninth, she turned down Clay and back to Eighth street, where she waited for another car.

As the summer months dragged along, the industrial situation in Oakland grew steadily worse. Capital everywhere seemed to have selected this city for the battle with organized labor. So many men in Oakland were out on strike, or were locked out, or were unable to work because of the dependence of their trades on the other tied-up trade's, that odd jobs at common labor were hard to obtain. Billy occasionally got a day's work to do, but did not earn enough to make both ends meet, despite the small strike wages received at first, and despite the rigid economy he and Saxon practiced.

The table she set had scarcely anything in common with that of their first married year. Not alone was every item of cheaper quality, but many items had disappeared. Meat, and the poorest, was very seldom on the table. Cow's milk had given place to condensed milk, and even the sparing use of the latter had ceased. A roll of butter, when they had it, lasted half a dozen times as long as formerly. Where Billy had been used to drinking three cups of coffee for breakfast, he now drank one. Saxon boiled this coffee an atrocious length of time, and she paid twenty cents a pound for it.

The blight of hard times was on all the neighborhood. The families not involved in one strike were touched by some other strike or by the cessation of work in some dependent trade. Many single young men who were lodgers had drifted away, thus increasing the house rent of the families which had sheltered them.

"Gott!" said the butcher to Saxon. "We working class all suffer together. My wife she cannot get her teeth fixed now. Pretty soon I go smash broke maybe."

Once, when Billy was preparing to pawn his watch, Saxon suggested his borrowing the money from Billy Murphy.

"I was plannin' that," Billy answered, "only I can't now. I didn't tell you what happened Tuesday night at the Sporting Life Club. You remember that squarehead Champion of the United States Navy? Bill was matched with him, an' it was sure easy money. Bill had 'm goin' south by the end of the sixth round, an' at the seventh went in to finish 'm. And then — just his luck, for his trade's idle now — he snaps his right forearm. Of course the squarehead comes back at 'm on the jump, an' it's good night for Bill. Gee! Us Mohegans are gettin' our bad luck handed to us in chunks these days."

"Don't!" Saxon cried, shuddering involuntarily.

"What?" Billy asked with open mouth of surprise.

"Don't say that word again. Bert was always saying it."

"Oh, Mohegans. All right, I won't. You ain't superstitions, are you?"

"No; but just the same there's too much truth in the word for me to like it. Sometimes it seems as though he was right. Times have changed. They've changed even since I was a little girl. We crossed the plains and opened up this country, and now we're losing even the chance to work for a living in it. And it's not my fault, it's not your fault. We've got to live well or bad just by luck, it seems. There's no other way to explain it."

"It beats me," Billy concurred. "Look at the way I worked last year. Never missed a day. I'd want to never miss a day this year, an' here I haven't done a tap for weeks an' weeks an' weeks. Say! Who runs this country anyway?"

Saxon had stopped the morning paper, but frequently Maggie Donahue's boy, who served a Tribune route, tossed an "extra" on her steps. From its editorials Saxon gleaned that organized labor was trying to run the country and that it was making a mess of it. It was all the fault of domineering labor — so ran the editorials, column by column, day by day; and Saxon was convinced, yet remained unconvinced. The social puzzle of living was too intricate.

The teamsters' strike, backed financially by the teamsters of San Francisco and by the allied unions of the San Francisco Water Front Confederation, promised to be long-drawn, whether or not it was successful. The Oakland harness-washers and stablemen, with few exceptions, had gone out with the teamsters. The teaming firm's were not half-filling their contracts, but the employers' association was helping them. In fact, half the employers' associations of the Pacific Coast were helping the Oakland Employers' Association.

Saxon was behind a month's rent, which, when it is considered that rent was paid in advance, was equivalent to two months. Likewise, she was two months behind in the installments on the furniture. Yet she was not pressed very hard by Salinger's, the furniture dealers.

"We're givin' you all the rope we can," said their collector. "My orders is to make you dig up every cent I can and at the same time not to be too hard. Salinger's are trying to do the right thing, but they're up against it, too. You've no idea how many accounts like yours they're carrying along. Sooner or later they'll have to call a halt or get it in the neck themselves. And in the meantime just see if you can't scrape up five dollars by next week — just to cheer them along, you know."

One of the stablemen who had not gone out, Henderson by name, worked at Billy's stables. Despite the urging of the bosses to eat and sleep in the stable like the other men, Henderson had persisted in coming home each morning to his little house around the corner from Saxon's on Fifth street.

Several times she had seen him swinging along defiantly, his dinner pail in his hand, while the neighborhood boys dogged his heels at a safe distance and informed him in yapping chorus that he was a scab and no good. But one evening, on his way to work, in a spirit of bravado he went into the Pile-Drivers' Home, the saloon at Seventh and Pine. There it was his mortal mischance to encounter Otto Frank, a striker who drove from the same stable. Not many minutes later an ambulance was hurrying Henderson to the receiving hospital with a fractured skull, while a patrol wagon was no less swiftly carrying Otto Frank to the city prison.

Maggie Donahue it was, eyes shining with gladness, who told Saxon of the happening.

"Served him right, too, the dirty scab," Maggie concluded.

"But his poor wife!" was Saxon's cry. "She's not strong. And then the children. She'll never be able to take care of them if her husband dies."

"An' serve her right, the damned slut!"

Saxon was both shocked and hurt by the Irishwoman's brutality. But Maggie was implacable.

"'Tis all she or any woman deserves that'll put up an' live with a scab. What about her children? Let'm starve, an' her man a-takin' the food out of other children's mouths."

Mrs. Olsen's attitude was different. Beyond passive sentimental pity for Henderson's wife and children, she gave them no thought, her chief concern being for Otto Frank and Otto Frank's wife and children — herself and Mrs. Frank being full sisters.

"If he dies, they will hang Otto," she said. "And then what will poor Hilda do? She has varicose veins in both legs, and she never can stand on her feet all day an' work for wages. And me, I cannot help. Ain't Carl out of work, too?"

Billy had still another point of view.

"It will give the strike a black eye, especially if Henderson croaks," he worried, when he came home. "They'll hang Frank on record time. Besides, we'll have to put up a defense, an' lawyers charge like Sam Hill. They'll eat a hole in our treasury you could drive every team in Oakland through. An' if Frank hadn't ben screwed up with whisky he'd never a-done it. He's the mildest, good-naturedest man sober you ever seen."

Twice that evening Billy left the house to find out if Henderson was dead yet. In the morning the papers gave little hope, and the evening papers published his death. Otto Frank lay in jail without bail. The Tribune demanded a quick trial and summary execution, calling on the prospective jury manfully to do its duty and dwelling at length on the moral effect that would be so produced upon the lawless working class. It went further, emphasizing the salutary effect machine guns would have on the mob that had taken the fair city of Oakland by the throat.

And all such occurrences struck at Saxon personally. Practically alone in the world, save for Billy, it was her life, and his, and their mutual love-life, that was menaced. From the moment he left the house to the moment of his return she knew no peace of mind. Rough work was afoot, of which he told her nothing, and she knew he was playing his part in it. On more than one occasion she noticed fresh-broken skin on his knuckles. At such times he was remarkably taciturn, and would sit in brooding silence or go almost immediately to bed. She was afraid to have this habit of reticence grow on him, and bravely she bid for his confidence. She climbed into his lap and inside his arms, one of her arms around his neck, and with the free hand she caressed his hair back from the forehead and smoothed out the moody brows.

“Now listen to me, Billy Boy,” she began lightly. “You haven’t been playing fair, and I won’t have it. No!” She pressed his lips shut with her fingers. “I’m doing the talking now, and because you haven’t been doing your share of the talking for some time. You remember we agreed at the start to always talk things over. I was the first to break this, when I sold my fancy work to Mrs. Higgins without speaking to you about it. And I was very sorry. I am still sorry. And I’ve never done it since. Now it’s your turn. You’re not talking things over with me. You are doing things you don’t tell me about.

“Billy, you’re dearer to me than anything else in the world. You know that. We’re sharing each other’s lives, only, just now, there’s something you’re not sharing. Every time your knuckles are sore, there’s something you don’t share. If you can’t trust me, you can’t trust anybody. And, besides, I love you so that no matter what you do I’ll go on loving you just the same.”

Billy gazed at her with fond incredulity.

“Don’t be a pincher,” she teased. “Remember, I stand for whatever you do.”

“And you won’t buck against me?” he queried.

"How can I? I'm not your boss, Billy. I wouldn't boss you for anything in the world. And if you'd let me boss you, I wouldn't love you half as much."

He digested this slowly, and finally nodded.

"An' you won't be mad?"

"With you? You've never seen me mad yet. Now come on and be generous and tell me how you hurt your knuckles. It's fresh to-day. Anybody can see that."

"All right. I'll tell you how it happened." He stopped and giggled with genuine boyish glee at some recollection. "It's like this. You won't be mad, now? We gotta do these sort of things to hold our own. Well, here's the show, a regular movin' picture except for file talkin'. Here's a big rube comin' along, hayseed stickin' out all over, hands like hams an' feet like Mississippi gunboats. He'd make half as much again as me in size an' he's young, too. Only he ain't lookin' for trouble, an' he's as innocent as... well, he's the innocentest scab that ever come down the pike an' bumped into a couple of pickets. Not a regular strike-breaker, you see, just a big rube that's read the bosses' ads an' come a-humpin' to town for the big wages.

"An' here's Bud Strothers an' me comin' along. We always go in pairs that way, an' sometimes bigger bunches. I flag the rube. 'Hello,' says I, 'lookin' for a job?' 'You bet,' says he. 'Can you drive?' 'Yep.' 'Four horses!' 'Show me to 'em,' says he. 'No josh, now,' says I; 'you're sure wantin' to drive?' 'That's what I come to town for,' he says. 'You're the man we're lookin' for,' says I. 'Come along, an' we'll have you busy in no time.'

"You see, Saxon, we can't pull it off there, because there's Tom Scanlon — you know, the red-headed cop only a couple of blocks away an' pipin' us off though not recognizin' us. So away we go, the three of us, Bud an' me leadin' that boob to take our jobs away from us I guess nit. We turn into the alley back of Campwell's grocery. Nobody in sight. Bud stops short, and the rube an' me stop.

"'I don't think he wants to drive,' Bud says, considerin'. An' the rube says quick, 'You betcher life I do.' 'You're dead sure you want that job?' I says. Yes, he's dead sure. Nothin's goin' to keep him away from that job. Why, that job's what he come to town for, an' we can't lead him to it too quick.

"'Well, my friend,' says I, 'it's my sad duty to inform you that you've made a mistake.' 'How's that?' he says. 'Go on,' I says; 'you're standin' on your foot.' And, honest to God, Saxon, that gink looks down at his feet to see. 'I don't understand,' says he. 'We're goin' to show you,' says I.

"An' then — Biff! Bang! Bingo! Swat! Zooie! Ker-slambango-blam! Fireworks, Fourth of July, Kingdom Come, blue lights, sky-rockets, an' hell fire — just like that. It don't take long when you're scientific an' trained to tandem work. Of course it's hard on the knuckles. But say, Saxon, if you'd seen that rube before an' after you'd thought he was a lightnin' change artist. Laugh? You'd a-busted."

Billy halted to give vent to his own mirth. Saxon forced herself to join with him, but down in her heart was horror. Mercedes was right. The stupid workers wrangled and snarled over jobs. The clever masters rode in automobiles and did not wrangle and snarl. They hired other stupid ones to do the wrangling and snarling for them. It was men like Bert and Frank Davis, like Chester Johnson and Otto Frank, like Jelly Belly and the Pinkertons, like Henderson and all the rest of the scabs, who were beaten up, shot, clubbed, or hanged. Ah, the clever ones were very clever. Nothing happened to them. They only rode in their automobiles.

"'You big stiffs,' the rube snivels as he crawls to his feet at the end," Billy was continuing. "'You think you still want that job?' I ask. He shakes his head. Then I read'm the riot act 'They's only one thing for you to do, old hoss, an' that's beat it. D'ye get me? Beat it. Back to the farm for YOU. An' if you come monkeyin' around town again, we'll be real mad at you. We was only foolin' this time. But next time we catch you your own mother won't know you when we get done with you.'

"An' — say! — you oughta seen'm beat it. I bet he's goin' yet. Ah' when he gets back to Milpitas, or Sleepy Hollow, or wherever he hangs out, an' tells how the boys does things in Oakland, it's dollars to doughnuts they won't be a rube in his district that'd come to town to drive if they offered ten dollars an hour."

"It was awful," Saxon said, then laughed well-simulated appreciation.

"But that was nothin'," Billy went on. "A bunch of the boys caught another one this morning. They didn't do a thing to him. My goodness gracious, no. In less'n two minutes he was the worst wreck they ever hauled to the receivin' hospital. The evenin' papers gave the score: nose broken, three bad scalp wounds, front teeth out, a broken collarbone, an' two broken ribs. Gee! He certainly got all that was comin' to him. But that's nothin'. D'ye want to know what the Frisco teamsters did in the big strike before the

Earthquake? They took every scab they caught an’ broke both his arms with a crowbar. That was so he couldn’t drive, you see. Say, the hospitals was filled with ‘em. An’ the teamsters won that strike, too.”

“But is it necessary, Billy, to be so terrible? I know they’re scabs, and that they’re taking the bread out of the strikers’ children’s mouths to put in their own children’s mouths, and that it isn’t fair and all that; but just the same is it necessary to be so... terrible?”

“Sure thing,” Billy answered confidently. “We just gotta throw the fear of God into them — when we can do it without bein’ caught.”

“And if you’re caught?”

“Then the union hires the lawyers to defend us, though that ain’t much good now, for the judges are pretty hostyle, an’ the papers keep hammerin’ away at them to give stiffer an’ stiffer sentences. Just the same, before this strike’s over there’ll be a whole lot of guys a-wishin’ they’d never gone scabbin’.”

Very cautiously, in the next half hour, Saxon tried to feel out her husband’s attitude, to find if he doubted the rightness of the violence he and his brother teamsters committed. But Billy’s ethical sanction was rock-bedded and profound. It never entered his head that he was not absolutely right. It was the game. Caught in its tangled meshes, he could see no other way to play it than the way all men played it. He did not stand for dynamite and murder, however. But then the unions did not stand for such. Quite naive was his explanation that dynamite and murder did not pay; that such actions always brought down the condemnation of the public and broke the strikes. But the healthy beating up of a scab, he contended — the “throwing of the fear of God into a scab,” as he expressed it — was the only right and proper thing to do.

“Our folks never had to do such things,” Saxon said finally. “They never had strikes nor scabs in those times.”

“You bet they didn’t,” Billy agreed “Them was the good old days. I’d liked to a-lived then.” He drew a long breath and sighed. “But them times will never come again.”

“Would you have liked living in the country?” Saxon asked.

“Sure thing.”

“There’s lots of men living in the country now,” she suggested.

“Just the same I notice them a-hikin’ to town to get our jobs,” was his reply.

CHAPTER XII

A gleam of light came, when Billy got a job driving a grading team for the contractors of the big bridge then building at Niles. Before he went he made certain that it was a union job. And a union job it was for two days, when the concrete workers threw down their tools. The contractors, evidently prepared for such happening, immediately filled the places of the concrete men with nonunion Italians. Whereupon the carpenters, structural ironworkers and teamsters walked out; and Billy, lacking train fare, spent the rest of the day in walking home.

"I couldn't work as a scab," he concluded his tale.

"No," Saxon said; "you couldn't work as a scab."

But she wondered why it was that when men wanted to work, and there was work to do, yet they were unable to work because their unions said no. Why were there unions? And, if unions had to be, why were not all workingmen in them? Then there would be no scabs, and Billy could work every day. Also, she wondered where she was to get a sack of flour, for she had long since ceased the extravagance of baker's bread. And so many other of the neighborhood women had done this, that the little Welsh baker had closed up shop and gone away, taking his wife and two little daughters with him. Look where she would, everybody was being hurt by the industrial strife.

One afternoon came a caller at her door, and that evening came Billy with dubious news. He had been approached that day. All he had to do, he told Saxon, was to say the word, and he could go into the stable as foreman at one hundred dollars a month.

The nearness of such a sum, the possibility of it, was almost stunning to Saxon, sitting at a supper which consisted of boiled potatoes, warmed-over beans, and a small dry onion which they were eating raw. There was neither bread, coffee, nor butter. The onion Billy had pulled from his pocket, having picked it up in the street. One hundred dollars a month! She moistened her lips and fought for control.

"What made them offer it to you?" she questioned.

"That's easy," was his answer. "They got a dozen reasons. The guy the boss has had exercisin' Prince and King is a dub. King has gone lame in the shoulders. Then they're guessin' pretty strong that I'm the party that's put a lot of their scabs outa commission. Macklin's ben their foreman for years an' years — why I was in knee pants when he was foreman. Well, he's sick an' all in. They gotta have somebody to take his place. Then, too, I've been with 'em a long time. An' on top of that, I'm the man for the job. They know I know horses from the ground up. Hell, it's all I'm good for, except sluggin'."

"Think of it, Billy!" she breathed. "A hundred dollars a month! A hundred dollars a month!"

"An' throw the fellows down," he said.

It was not a question. Nor was it a statement. It was anything Saxon chose to make of it. They looked at each other. She waited for him to speak; but he continued merely to look. It came to her that she was facing one of the decisive moments of her life, and she gripped herself to face it in all coolness. Nor would Billy proffer her the slightest help. Whatever his own judgment might be, he masked it with an expressionless face. His eyes betrayed nothing. He looked and waited.

"You... you can't do that, Billy," she said finally. "You can't throw the fellows down."

His hand shot out to hers, and his face was a sudden, radiant dawn.

"Put her there!" he cried, their hands meeting and clasping. "You're the truest true blue wife a man ever had. If all the other fellows' wives was like you, we could win any strike we tackled."

"What would you have done if you weren't married, Billy?"

"Seen 'em in hell first."

"Than it doesn't make any difference being married. I've got to stand by you in everything you stand for. I'd be a nice wife if I didn't."

She remembered her caller of the afternoon, and knew the moment was too propitious to let pass.

"There was a man here this afternoon, Billy. He wanted a room. I told him I'd speak to you. He said he would pay six dollars a month for the back bedroom. That would pay half a month's installment on the furniture and buy a sack of flour, and we're all out of flour."

Billy's old hostility to the idea was instantly uppermost, and Saxon watched him anxiously.

"Some scab in the shops, I suppose?"

"No; he's firing on the freight run to San Jose. Harmon, he said his name was, James Harmon. They've just transferred him from the Truckee division. He'll sleep days mostly, he said; and that's why he wanted a quiet house without children in it."

In the end, with much misgiving, and only after Saxon had insistently pointed out how little work it entailed on her, Billy consented, though he continued to protest, as an afterthought:

"But I don't want you makin' beds for any man. It ain't right, Saxon. I oughta take care of you."

"And you would," she flashed back at him, "if you'd take the foremanship. Only you can't. It wouldn't be right. And if I'm to stand by you it's only fair to let me do what I can."

James Harmon proved even less a bother than Saxon had anticipated. For a fireman he was scrupulously clean, always washing up in the roundhouse before he came home. He used the key to the kitchen door, coming and going by the back steps. To Saxon he barely said how-do-you-do or good day; and, sleeping in the day time and working at night, he was in the house a week before Billy laid eyes on him.

Billy had taken to coming home later and later, and to going out after supper by himself. He did not offer to tell Saxon where he went. Nor did she ask. For that matter it required little shrewdness on her part to guess. The fumes of whisky were on his lips at such times. His slow, deliberate ways were even slower, even more deliberate. Liquor did not affect his legs. He walked as soberly as any man. There was no hesitancy, no faltering, in his muscular movements. The whisky went to his brain, making his eyes heavy-lidded and the cloudiness of them more cloudy. Not that he was flighty, nor quick, nor irritable. On the contrary, the liquor imparted to his mental processes a deep gravity and brooding solemnity. He talked little, but that little was ominous and oracular. At such times there was no appeal from his judgment, no discussion. He knew, as God knew. And when he chose to speak a harsh thought, it was ten-fold harsher than ordinarily, because it seemed to proceed out of such profundity of cogitation, because it was as prodigiously deliberate in its incubation as it was in its enunciation.

It was not a nice side he was showing to Saxon. It was, almost, as if a stranger had come to live with her. Despite herself, she found herself beginning to shrink from him. And little could she comfort herself with the thought that it was not his real self, for she remembered his gentleness and considerateness, all his finenesses of the past. Then he had made a continual effort to avoid trouble and fighting. Now he enjoyed it, exulted in it, went looking for it. All this showed in his face. No longer was he the smiling, pleasant-faced boy. He smiled infrequently now. His face was a man's face. The lips, the eyes, the lines were harsh as his thoughts were harsh.

He was rarely unkind to Saxon; but, on the other hand he was rarely kind. His attitude toward her was growing negative. He was disinterested. Despite the fight for the union she was enduring with him, putting up with him shoulder to shoulder, she occupied but little space in his mind. When he acted toward her gently, she could see that it was merely mechanical, just as she was well aware that the endearing terms he used, the endearing caresses he gave, were only habitual. The spontaneity and warmth had gone out. Often, when he was not in liquor, flashes of the old Billy came back, but even such flashes dwindled in frequency. He was growing preoccupied, moody. Hard times and the bitter stresses of industrial conflict strained him. Especially was this apparent in his sleep, when he suffered paroxysms of lawless dreams, groaning and muttering, clenching his fists, grinding his teeth, twisting with muscular tensions, his face writhing with passions and violences, his throat guttering with terrible curses that rasped and aborted on his lips. And Saxon, lying beside him, afraid of this visitor to her bed whom she did not know, remembered what Mary had told her of Bert. He, too, had cursed and clenched his fists, in his nights fought out the battles of his days.

One thing, however, Saxon saw clearly. By no deliberate act of Billy's was he becoming this other and unlovely Billy. Were there no strike, no snarling and wrangling over jobs, there would be only the old Billy she had loved in all absoluteness. This sleeping terror in him would have lain asleep. It was something that was being awakened in him, an image incarnate of outward conditions, as cruel, as ugly, as maleficent as were those outward conditions. But if the strike continued, then, she feared, with reason, would this other and grisly self of Billy strengthen to fuller and more forbidding stature. And this, she knew, would mean the wreck of their love-life. Such a Billy she could not love; in its nature such a Billy was not lovable nor capable of love. And then, at the thought of offspring, she shuddered. It was too terrible. And at such moments of contemplation, from her soul the inevitable plaint of the human went up: WHY? WHY? WHY?

Billy, too, had his unanswerable queries.

"Why won't the building trades come out?" he demanded wrathfuly of the obscurity that veiled the ways of living and the world. "But no; O'Brien won't stand for a strike, and he has the Building Trades Council under his thumb. But why don't they chuck him and come out anyway? We'd win hands down all along the line. But no, O'Brien's got their goat, an' him up to his dirty neck in politics an' graft! An' damn the Federation of Labor! If all the railroad boys had come out, wouldn't the shop men have won instead of bein' licked to a frazzle? Lord, I ain't had a smoke of decent tobacco or a cup of decent coffee in a coon's age. I've forgotten what a square meal tastes like. I weighed myself yesterday. Fifteen pounds lighter than when the strike begun. If it keeps on much more I can fight middleweight. An' this is what I get after payin' dues into the union for years and years. I can't get a square meal, an' my wife has to make other men's beds. It makes my tired ache. Some day I'll get real huffy an' chuck that lodger out."

"But it's not his fault, Billy," Saxon protested.

"Who said it was?" Billy snapped roughly. "Can't I kick in general if I want to? Just the same it makes me sick. What's the good of organized labor if it don't stand together? For two cents I'd chuck the whole thing up an' go over to the employers. Only I wouldn't, God damn them! If they think they can beat us down to our knees, let 'em go ahead an' try it, that's all. But it gets me just the same. The whole world's clean dippy. They ain't no sense in anything. What's the good of supportin' a union that can't win a strike? What's the good of knockin' the blocks off of scabs when they keep a-comin' thick as ever? The whole thing's bughouse, an' I guess I am, too."

Such an outburst on Billy's part was so unusual that it was the only time Saxon knew it to occur. Always he was sullen, and dogged, and unwhipped; while whisky only served to set the maggots of certitude crawling in his brain.

One night Billy did not get home till after twelve. Saxon's anxiety was increased by the fact that police fighting and head breaking had been reported to have occurred. When Billy came, his appearance verified the report. His coatsleeves were half torn off. The Windsor tie had disappeared from under his soft turned-down collar, and every button had been ripped off the front of the shirt. When he took his hat off, Saxon was frightened by a lump on his head the size of an apple.

"D'ye know who did that? That Dutch slob Hermanmann, with a riot club. An' I'll get'm for it some day, good an' plenty. An' there's another fellow I got staked out that'll be my meat when this strike's over an' things is settled down. Blanchard's his name, Roy Blanchard."

"Not of Blanchard, Perkins and Company?" Saxon asked, busy washing Billy's hurt and making her usual fight to keep him calm.

"Yep; except he's the son of the old man. What's he do, that ain't done a tap of work in all his life except to blow the old man's money? He goes strike-breakin'. Grandstand play, that's what I call it. Gets his name in the papers an makes all the skirts he runs with fluster up an' say: 'My! Some bear, that Roy Blanchard, some bear.' Some bear — the gazabo! He'll be bear-meat for me some day. I never itched so hard to lick a man in my life.

"And — oh, I guess I'll pass that Dutch cop up. He got his already. Somebody broke his head with a lump of coal the size of a water bucket. That was when the wagons was turnin' into Franklin, just off Eighth, by the old Galindo Hotel. They was hard fightin' there, an' some guy in the hotel lams that coal down from the second story window.

"They was fightin' every block of the way — bricks, cobblestones, an' police-clubs to beat the band. They don't dast call out the troops. An' they was afraid to shoot. Why, we tore holes through the police force, an' the ambulances and patrol wagons worked over-time. But say, we got the procession blocked at Fourteenth and Broadway, right under the nose of the City Hall, rushed the rear end, cut out the horses of five wagons, an' handed them college guys a few love-pats in passin'. All that saved 'em from hospital was the police reserves. Just the same we had 'em jammed an hour there. You oughta seen the street cars blocked, too — Broadway, Fourteenth, San Pablo, as far as you could see."

"But what did Blanchard do?" Saxon called him back.

"He led the procession, an' he drove my team. All the teams was from my stable. He rounded up a lot of them college fellows — fraternity guys, they're called — yaps that live off their fathers' money. They come to the stable in big tourin' cars an' drove out the wagons with half the police of Oakland to help them. Say, it was sure some day. The sky rained cobblestones. An' you oughta heard the clubs on our heads — rat-tat-tat-tat, rat-tat-tat-tat! An' say, the chief of police, in a police auto, sittin' up like God Almighty — just before we got to Peralta street they was a block an' the police chargin', an' an old woman, right from her front gate, lammed the chief of police full in the face with a dead cat. Phew! You could hear it. 'Arrest that woman!' he yells, with his handkerchief out. But the boys beat the cops to her an' got her away. Some day? I guess yes. The receivin' hospital went outa commission on the jump, an' the overflow was spilled into St. Mary's Hospital, an' Fabiola, an' I don't know where else. Eight of our men was pulled, an' a dozen of the Frisco teamsters that's come over to help. They're holy terrors, them Frisco teamsters. It seemed half the workingmen of Oakland was helpin' us, an' they must be an army of them in jail. Our lawyers'll have to take their cases, too.

"But take it from me, it's the last we'll see of Roy Blanchard an' yaps of his kidney buttin' into our affairs. I guess we showed 'em some football. You know that brick buildin' they're puttin' up on Bay street? That's where we loaded up first, an', say, you couldn't see the wagon-seats for bricks when they started from the stables. Blanchard drove the first wagon, an' he was knocked clean off the seat once, but he stayed with it."

"He must have been brave," Saxon commented.

"Brave?" Billy flared. "With the police, an' the army an' navy behind him? I suppose you'll be takin' their part next. Brave? A-takin' the food outa the mouths of our women an children. Didn't Curley Jones's little kid die last night? Mother's milk not nourishin', that's what it was, because she didn't have the right stuff to eat. An' I know, an' you know, a dozen old aunts, an' sister-in-laws, an' such, that's had to hike to the poorhouse because their folks couldn't take care of 'em in these times."

In the morning paper Saxon read the exciting account of the futile attempt to break the teamsters' strike. Roy Blanchard was hailed a hero and held up as a model of wealthy citizenship. And to save herself she could not help glowing with appreciation of his courage. There was something fine in his going out to face the snarling pack. A brigadier general of the regular army was quoted as lamenting the fact that the troops had not been called out to take the mob by the throat and shake law and order into it. "This is the time for a little healthful bloodletting," was the conclusion of his remarks, after deploring the pacific methods of the police. "For not until the mob has been thoroughly beaten and cowed will tranquil industrial conditions obtain."

That evening Saxon and Billy went up town. Returning home and finding nothing to eat, he had taken her on one arm, his overcoat on the other. The overcoat he had pawned at Uncle Sam's, and he and Saxon had eaten drearily at a Japanese restaurant which in some miraculous way managed to set a semi-satisfying meal for ten cents. After eating, they started on their way to spend an additional five cents each on a moving picture show.

At the Central Bank Building, two striking teamsters accosted Billy and took him away with them. Saxon waited on the corner, and when he returned, three quarters of an hour later, she knew he had been drinking.

Half a block on, passing the Forum Cafe, he stopped suddenly. A limousine stood at the curb, and into it a young man was helping several wonderfully gowned women. A chauffeur sat in the driver's sent. Billy touched the young man on the arm. He was as broad-shouldered as Billy and slightly taller. Blue-eyed, strong-featured, in Saxon's opinion he was undeniably handsome.

"Just a word, sport," Billy said, in a low, slow voice.

The young man glanced quickly at Billy and Saxon, and asked impatiently:

"Well, what is it?"

"You're Blanchard," Billy began. "I seen you yesterday lead out that bunch of teams."

"Didn't I do it all right?" Blanchard asked gaily, with a flash of glance to Saxon and back again.

"Sure. But that ain't what I want to talk about."

"Who are you?" the other demanded with sudden suspicion.

"A striker. It just happens you drove my team, that's all. No; don't move for a gun." (As Blanchard half reached toward his hip pocket.) "I ain't startin' anythin' here. But I just want to tell you something."

"Be quick, then."

Blanchard lifted one foot to step into the machine.

"Sure," Billy went on without any diminution of his exasperating slowness. "What I want to tell you is that I'm after you. Not now, when the strike's on, but some time later I'm goin' to get you an' give you the beatin' of your life."

Blanchard looked Billy over with new interest and measuring eyes that sparkled with appreciation.

"You are a husky yourself," he said. "But do you think you can do it?"

"Sure. You're my meat."

"All right, then, my friend. Look me up after the strike is settled, and I'll give you a chance at me."

"Remember," Billy added, "I got you staked out."

Blanchard nodded, smiled genially to both of them, raised his hat to Saxon, and stepped into the machine.

CHAPTER XIII

From now on, to Saxon, life seemed bereft of its last reason and rhyme. It had become senseless, nightmarish. Anything irrational was possible. There was nothing stable in the anarchic flux of affairs that swept her on she knew not to what catastrophic end. Had Billy been dependable, all would still have been well. With him to cling to she would have faced everything fearlessly. But he had been whirled away from her in the prevailing madness. So radical was the change in him that he seemed almost an intruder in the house. Spiritually he was such an intruder. Another man looked out of his eyes — a man whose thoughts were of violence and hatred; a man to whom there was no good in anything, and who had become an ardent protagonist of the evil that was rampant and universal. This man no longer condemned Bert, himself muttering vaguely of dynamite, end sabotage, and revolution.

Saxon strove to maintain that sweetness and coolness of flesh and spirit that Billy had praised in the old days. Once, only, she lost control. He had been in a particularly ugly mood, and a final harshness and unfairness cut her to the quick.

“Who are you speaking to?” she flamed out at him.

He was speechless and abashed, and could only stare at her face, which was white with anger.

“Don’t you ever speak to me like that again, Billy,” she commanded.

“Aw, can’t you put up with a piece of bad temper?” he muttered, half apologetically, yet half defiantly. “God knows I got enough to make me cranky.”

After he left the house she flung herself on the bed and cried heart-brokenly. For she, who knew so thoroughly the humility of love, was a proud woman. Only the proud can be truly humble, as only the strong may know the fullness of gentleness. But what was the use, she demanded, of being proud and game, when the only person in the world who mattered to her lost his own pride and gameness and fairness and gave her the worse share of their mutual trouble?

And now, as she had faced alone the deeper, organic hurt of the loss of her baby, she faced alone another, and, in a way, an even greater personal trouble. Perhaps she loved Billy none the less, but her love was changing into something less proud, less confident, less trusting; it was becoming shot through with pity — with the pity that is parent to contempt. Her own loyalty was threatening to weaken, and she shuddered and shrank from the contempt she could see creeping in.

She struggled to steel herself to face the situation. Forgiveness stole into her heart, and she knew relief until the thought came that in the truest, highest love forgiveness should have no place. And again she cried, and continued her battle. After all, one thing was incontestable: THIS BILLY WES NOT THE BILLY SHE HAD LOVED. This Billy was another man, a sick man, and no more to be held responsible than a fever-patient in the ravings of delirium. She must be Billy's nurse, without pride, without contempt, with nothing to forgive. Besides, he was really bearing the brunt of the fight, was in the thick of it, dizzy with the striking of blows and the blows he received. If fault there was, it lay elsewhere, somewhere in the tangled scheme of things that made men snarl over jobs like dogs over bones.

So Saxon arose and buckled on her armor again for the hardest fight of all in the world's arena — the woman's fight. She ejected from her thought all doubting and distrust. She forgave nothing, for there was nothing requiring forgiveness. She pledged herself to an absoluteness of belief that her love and Billy's was unsullied, unperturbed — severe as it had always been, as it would be when it came back again after the world settled down once more to rational ways.

That night, when he came home, she proposed, as an emergency measure, that she should resume her needlework and help keep the pot boiling until the strike was over. But Billy would hear nothing of it.

"It's all right," he assured her repeatedly. "They ain't no call for you to work. I'm goin' to get some money before the week is out. An' I'll turn it over to you. An' Saturday night we'll go to the show — a real show, no movin' pictures. Harvey's nigger minstrels is comin' to town. We'll go Saturday night. I'll have the money before that, as sure as beans is beans."

Friday evening he did not come home to supper, which Saxon regretted, for Maggie Donahue had returned a pan of potatoes and two quarts of flour (borrowed the week before), and it was a hearty meal that awaited him. Saxon kept the stove going till nine o'clock, when, despite her reluctance, she went to bed. Her preference would have been to wait up, but she did not dare, knowing full well what the effect would be on him did he come home in liquor.

The clock had just struck one, when she heard the click of the gate. Slowly, heavily, ominously, she heard him come up the steps and fumble with his key at the door. He entered the bedroom, and she heard him sigh as he sat down. She remained quiet, for she had learned the hypersensitiveness induced by drink and was fastidiously careful not to hurt him even with the knowledge that she had lain awake for him. It was not easy. Her hands were clenched till the nails dented the palms, and her body was rigid in her passionate effort for control. Never had he come home as bad as this.

"Saxon," he called thickly. "Saxon."

She stired and yawned.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Won't you strike a light? My fingers is all thumbs."

Without looking at him, she complied; but so violent was the nervous trembling of her hands that the glass chimney tinkled against the globe and the match went out.

"I ain't drunk, Saxon," he said in the darkness, a hint of amusement in his thick voice. "I've only had two or three jolts ... of that sort."

On her second attempt with the lamp she succeeded. When she turned to look at him she screamed with fright. Though she had heard his voice and knew him to be Billy, for the instant she did not recognize him. His face was a face she had never known. Swollen, bruised, discolored, every feature had been beaten out of all semblance of familiarity. One eye was entirely closed, the other showed through a narrow slit of blood-congested flesh. One ear seemed to have lost most of its skin. The whole face was a swollen pulp. His right jaw, in particular, was twice the size of the left. No wonder his speech had been thick, was her thought, as she regarded the fearfully cut and swollen lips that still bled. She was sickened by the sight, and her heart went out to him in a great wave of tenderness. She wanted to put her arms around him, and cuddle and soothe him; but her practical judgment bade otherwise.

"You poor, poor boy," she cried. "Tell me what you want me to do first. I don't know about such things."

"If you could help me get my clothes off," he suggested meekly and thickly. "I got 'em on before I stiffened up."

"And then hot water — that will be good," she said, as she began gently drawing his coat sleeve over a puffed and helpless hand.

"I told you they was all thumbs," he grimaced, holding up his hand and squinting at it with the fraction of sight remaining to him.

"You sit and wait," she said, "till I start the fire and get the hot water going. I won't be a minute. Then I'll finish getting your clothes off."

From the kitchen she could hear him mumbling to himself, and when she returned he was repeating over and over:

"We needed the money, Saxon. We needed the money."

Drunken he was not, she could see that, and from his babbling she knew he was partly delirious.

"He was a surprise box," he wandered on, while she proceeded to undress him; and bit by bit she was able to piece together what had happened. "He was an unknown from Chicago. They sprang him on me. The secretary of the Acme Club warned me I'd have my hands full. An' I'd a-won if I'd been in condition. But fifteen pounds off without trainin' ain't condition. Then I'd been drinkin' pretty regular, an' I didn't have my wind."

But Saxon, stripping his undershirt, no longer heard him. As with his face, she could not recognize his splendidly muscled back. The white sheath of silken skin was torn and bloody. The lacerations occurred oftenest in horizontal lines, though there were perpendicular lines as well.

"How did you get all that?" she asked.

"The ropes. I was up against 'em more times than I like to remember. Gee! He certainly gave me mine. But I fooled 'm. He couldn't put me out. I lasted the twenty rounds, an' I wanta tell you he's got some marks to remember me by. If he ain't got a couple of knuckles broke in the left hand I'm a geezer. — Here, feel my head here. Swollen, eh? Sure thing. He hit that more times than he's wishin' he had right now. But, oh, what a lacin'! What a lacin'! I never had anything like it before. The Chicago Terror, they call 'm. I take my hat off to 'm. He's some bear. But I could a-made 'm take the count if I'd ben in condition an' had my wind. — Oh! Ouch! Watch out! It's like a boil!"

Fumbling at his waistband, Saxon's hand had come in contact with a brightly inflamed surface larger than a soup plate.

"That's from the kidney blows," Billy explained. "He was a regular devil at it. 'Most every clench, like clock work, down he'd chop one on me. It got so sore I was wincin'... until I got groggy an' didn't know much of anything. It ain't a knockout blow, you know, but it's awful wearin' in a long fight. It takes the starch out of you."

When his knees were bared, Saxon could see the skin across the kneecaps was broken and gone.

"The skin ain't made to stand a heavy fellow like me on the knees," he volunteered. "An' the rosin in the canvas cuts like Sam Hill."

The tears were in Saxon's eyes, and she could have cried over the manhandled body of her beautiful sick boy.

As she carried his pants across the room to hang them up, a jingle of money came from them. He called her back, and from the pocket drew forth a handful of silver.

"We needed the money, we needed the money," he kept muttering, as he vainly tried to count the coins; and Saxon knew that his mind was wandering again.

It cut her to the heart, for she could not but remember the harsh thoughts that had threatened her loyalty during the week past. After all, Billy, the splendid physical man, was only a boy, her boy. And he had faced and endured all this terrible punishment for her, for the house and the furniture that were their house and furniture. He said so, now, when he scarcely knew what he said. He said "WE needed the money." She was not so absent from his thoughts as she had fancied. Here, down to the naked tie-ribs of his soul, when he was half unconscious, the thought of her persisted, was uppermost. We needed the money. WE!

The tears were trickling down her checks as she bent over him, and it seemed she had never loved him so much as now.

"Here; you count," he said, abandoning the effort and handing the money to her. "... How much do you make it?"

"Nineteen dollars and thirty-five cents."

"That's right... the loser's end... twenty dollars. I had some drinks, an' treated a couple of the boys, an' then there was carfare. If I'd a-won, I'd a-got a hundred. That's what I fought for. It'd a-put us on Easy street for a while. You take it an' keep it. It's better 'n nothin'."

In bed, he could not sleep because of his pain, and hour by hour she worked over him, renewing the hot compresses over his bruises, soothing the lacerations with witch hazel and cold cream and the tenderest of finger tips. And all the while, with broken intervals of groaning, he babbled on, living over the fight, seeking relief in telling her his trouble, voicing regret at loss of the money, and crying out the hurt to his pride. Far worse than the sum of his physical hurts was his hurt pride.

“He couldn’t put me out, anyway. He had full swing at me in the times when I was too much in to get my hands up. The crowd was crazy. I showed ‘em some stamina. They was times when he only rocked me, for I’d evaporated plenty of his steam for him in the openin’ rounds. I don’t know how many times he dropped me. Things was gettin’ too dreamy....

“Sometimes, toward the end, I could see three of him in the ring at once, an’ I wouldn’t know which to hit an’ which to duck....

“But I fooled ‘m. When I couldn’t see, or feel, an’ when my knees was shakin an my head goin’ like a merry-go-round, I’d fall safe into clenches just the same. I bet the referee’s arms is tired from draggin’ us apart....

“But what a lacin’! What a lacin’! Say, Saxon... where are you? Oh, there, eh? I guess I was dreamin’. But, say, let this be a lesson to you. I broke my word an’ went fightin’, an’ see what I got. Look at me, an’ take warnin’ so you won’t make the same mistake an’ go to makin’ an’ sellin’ fancy work again....

“But I fooled ‘em — everybody. At the beginnin’ the bettin’ was even. By the sixth round the wise gazabos was offerin’ two to one against me. I was licked from the first drop outa the box — anybody could see that; but he couldn’t put me down for the count. By the tenth round they was offerin’ even that I wouldn’t last the round. At the eleventh they was offerin’ I wouldn’t last the fifteenth. An’ I lasted the whole twenty. But some punishment, I want to tell you, some punishment.

“Why, they was four rounds I was in dreamland all the time... only I kept on my feet an’ fought, or took the count to eight an’ got up, an’ stalled an’ covered an’ whanged away. I don’t know what I done, except I must a-done like that, because I wasn’t there. I don’t know a thing from the thirteenth, when he sent me to the mat on my head, till the eighteenth.

“Where was I? Oh, yes. I opened my eyes, or one eye, because I had only one that would open. An’ there I was, in my corner, with the towels goin’ an’ ammonia in my nose an’ Bill Murphy with a chunk of ice at the back of my neck. An’ there, across the ring, I could see the Chicago Terror, an’ I had to do some thinkin’ to remember I was fightin’ him. It was like I’d been away somewhere an’ just got back. ‘What round’s this comin’?’ I ask Bill. ‘The eighteenth,’ says he. ‘The hell,’ I says. ‘What’s come of all the other rounds? The last I was fightin’ in was the thirteenth.’ ‘You’re a wonder,’ says Bill. ‘You’ve ben out four rounds, only nobody knows it except me. I’ve ben tryin’ to get you to quit all the time.’ Just then the gong sounds, an’ I can see the Terror startin’ for me. ‘Quit,’ says Bill, makin’ a move to throw in the towel. ‘Not on your life,’ I says. ‘Drop it, Bill.’ But he went on wantin’ me to quit. By that time the Terror had come across to my corner an’ was standin’ with his hands down, lookin’ at me. The referee was lookin’, too, an’ the house was that quiet, lookin’, you could hear a pin drop. An’ my head was gettin’ some clearer, but not much.

“‘You can’t win,’ Bill says.

“‘Watch me,’ says I. An’ with that I make a rush for the Terror, catchin’ him unexpected. I’m that groggy I can’t stand, but I just keep a-goin’, wallopin’ the Terror clear across the ring to his corner, where he slips an’ falls, an’ I fall on top of ‘m. Say, that crowd goes crazy.

“Where was I? — My head’s still goin’ round I guess. It’s buzzin’ like a swarm of bees.”

“You’d just fallen on top of him in his corner,” Saxon prompted.

“Oh, yes. Well, no sooner are we on our feet — an’ I can’t stand — I rush ‘m the same way back across to my corner an’ fall on ‘m. That was luck. We got up, an’ I’d a-fallen, only I clenched an’ held myself up by him. ‘I got your goat,’ I says to him. ‘An’ now I’m goin’ to eat you up.’

“I hadn’t his goat, but I was playin’ to get a piece of it, an’ I got it, rushin’ ‘m as soon as the referee drags us apart an’ fetchin’ ‘m a lucky wallop in the stomach that steadied ‘m an’ made him almighty careful. Too almighty careful. He was afraid to chance a mix with me. He thought I had more fight left in me than I had. So you see I got that much of his goat anyway.

“An’ he couldn’t get me. He didn’t get me. An’ in the twentieth we stood in the middle of the ring an’ exchanged wallops even. Of course, I’d made a fine showin’ for a licked man, but he got the decision, which was right. But I fooled ‘m. He couldn’t get me. An’ I fooled the gazabos that was bettin’ he would on short order.”

At last, as dawn came on, Billy slept. He groaned and moaned, his face twisting with pain, his body vainly moving and tossing in quest of easement.

So this was prizefighting, Saxon thought. It was much worse than she had dreamed. She had had no idea that such damage could be wrought with padded gloves. He must never fight again. Street rioting was preferable. She was wondering how much of his silk had been lost, when he mumbled and opened his eyes.

“What is it?” she asked, ere it came to her that his eyes were unseeing and that he was in delirium.

“Saxon!... Saxon!” he called.

“Yes, Billy. What is it?”

His hand fumbled over the bed where ordinarily it would have encountered her.

Again he called her, and she cried her presence loudly in his ear. He sighed with relief and muttered brokenly:

“I had to do it.... We needed the money.”

His eyes closed, and he slept more soundly, though his muttering continued. She had heard of congestion of the brain, and was frightened. Then she remembered his telling her of the ice Billy Murphy had held against his head.

Throwing a shawl over her head, she ran to the Pile Drivers’ Home on Seventh street. The barkeeper had just opened, and was sweeping out. From the refrigerator he gave her all the ice she wished to carry, breaking it into convenient pieces for her. Back in the house, she applied the ice to the base of Billy’s brain, placed hot irons to his feet, and bathed his head with witch hazel made cold by resting on the ice.

He slept in the darkened room until late afternoon, when, to Saxon’s dismay, he insisted on getting up.

“Gotta make a showin’,” he explained. “They ain’t goin’ to have the laugh on me.”

In torment he was helped by her to dress, and in torment he went forth from the house so that his world should have ocular evidence that the beating he had received did not keep him in bed.

It was another kind of pride, different from a woman’s, and Saxon wondered if it were the less admirable for that.

CHAPTER XIV

In the days that followed Billy's swellings went down and the bruises passed away with surprising rapidity. The quick healing of the lacerations attested the healthiness of his blood. Only remained the black eyes, unduly conspicuous on a face as blond as his. The discoloration was stubborn, persisting half a month, in which time happened divers events of importance.

Otto Frank's trial had been expeditious. Found guilty by a jury notable for the business and professional men on it, the death sentence was passed upon him and he was removed to San Quentin for execution.

The case of Chester Johnson and the fourteen others had taken longer, but within the same week, it, too, was finished. Chester Johnson was sentenced to be hanged. Two got life; three, twenty years. Only two were acquitted. The remaining seven received terms of from two to ten years.

The effect on Saxon was to throw her into deep depression. Billy was made gloomy, but his fighting spirit was not subdued.

"Always some men killed in battle," he said. "That's to be expected. But the way of sentencin' 'em gets me. All found guilty was responsible for the killin'; or none was responsible. If all was, then they should get the same sentence. They oughta hang like Chester Johnson, or else he oughtn't to hang. I'd just like to know how the judge makes up his mind. It must be like markin' China lottery tickets. He plays hunches. He looks at a guy an' waits for a spot or a number to come into his head. How else could he give Johnny Black four years an' Cal Hutchins twenty years? He played the hunches as they came into his head, an' it might just as easy ben the other way around an' Cal Hutchins got four years an' Johnny Black twenty.

"I know both them boys. They hung out with the Tenth an' Kirkham gang mostly, though sometimes they ran with my gang. We used to go swimmin' after school down to Sandy Beach on the marsh, an' in the Transit slip where they said the water was sixty feet deep, only it wasn't. An' once, on a Thursday, we dug a lot of clams together, an' played hookey Friday to peddle them. An' we used to go out on the Rock Wall an' catch pogies an' rock cod. One day — the day of the eclipse — Cal caught a perch half as big as a door. I never seen such a fish. An' now he's got to wear the stripes for twenty years. Lucky he wasn't married. If he don't get the consumption he'll be an old man when he comes out. Cal's mother wouldn't let 'm go swimmin', an' whenever she suspected she always licked his hair with her tongue. If it tasted salty, he got a beltin'. But he was onto himself. Comin' home, he'd jump somebody's front fence an' hold his head under a faucet."

"I used to dance with Chester Johnson," Saxon said. "And I knew his wife, Kittie Brady, long and long ago. She had next place at the table to me in the paper-box factory. She's gone to San Francisco to her married sister's. She's going to have a baby, too. She was awfully pretty, and there was always a string of fellows after her."

The effect of the conviction and severe sentences was a bad one on the union men. Instead of being disheartening, it intensified the bitterness. Billy's repentance for having fought and the sweetness and affection which had flashed up in the days of Saxon's nursing of him were blotted out. At home, he scowled and brooded, while his talk took on the tone of Bert's in the last days ere that Mohegan died. Also, Billy stayed away from home longer hours, and was again steadily drinking.

Saxon well-nigh abandoned hope. Almost was she steeled to the inevitable tragedy which her morbid fancy painted in a thousand guises. Oftenest, it was of Billy being brought home on a stretcher. Sometimes it was a call to the telephone in the corner grocery and the curt information by a strange voice that her husband was lying in the receiving hospital or the morgue. And when the mysterious horse-poisoning cases occurred, and when the residence of one of the teaming magnates was half destroyed by dynamite, she saw Billy in prison, or wearing stripes, or mounting to the scaffold at San Quentin while at the same time she could see the little cottage on Pine street besieged by newspaper reporters and photographers.

Yet her lively imagination failed altogether to anticipate the real catastrophe. Harmon, the fireman lodger, passing through the kitchen on his way out to work, had paused to tell Saxon about the previous day's train-wreck in the Alviso marshes, and of how the engineer, imprisoned under the overturned engine and unhurt, being drowned by the rising tide, had begged to be shot. Billy came in at the end of the narrative, and from the somber light in his heavy-lidded eyes Saxon knew he had been drinking. He glowered at Harmon, and, without greeting to him or Saxon, leaned his shoulder against the wall.

Harmon felt the awkwardness of the situation, and did his best to appear oblivious.

“I was just telling your wife — ” he began, but was savagely interrupted.

“I don’t care what you was tellin’ her. But I got something to tell you, Mister Man. My wife’s made up your bed too many times to suit me.”

“Billy!” Saxon cried, her face scarlet with resentment, and hurt, and shame.

Billy ignored her. Harmon was saying:

“I don’t understand — ”

“Well, I don’t like your mug,” Billy informed him. “You’re standin’ on your foot. Get off of it. Get out. Beat it. D’ye understand that?”

“I don’t know what’s got into him,” Saxon gasped hurriedly to the fireman. “He’s not himself. Oh, I am so ashamed, so ashamed.”

Billy turned on her.

“You shut your mouth an’ keep outa this.”

“But, Billy,” she remonstrated.

“An’ get outa here. You go into the other room.”

“Here, now,” Harmon broke in. “This is a fine way to treat a fellow.”

“I’ve given you too much rope as it is,” was Billy’s answer.

“I’ve paid my rent regularly, haven’t I?”

“An’ I oughta knock your block off for you. Don’t see any reason I shouldn’t, for that matter.”

“If you do anything like that, Billy — ” Saxon began.

“You here still? Well, if you won’t go into the other room, I’ll see that you do.”

His hand clutched her arm. For one instant she resisted his strength; and in that instant, the flesh crushed under his fingers, she realized the fullness of his strength.

In the front room she could only lie back in the Morris chair sobbing, and listen to what occurred in the kitchen. “I’ll stay to the end of the week,” the fireman was saying. “I’ve paid in advance.”

“Don’t make no mistake,” came Billy’s voice, so slow that it was almost a drawl, yet quivering with rage. “You can’t get out too quick if you wanta stay healthy — you an’ your traps with you. I’m likely to start something any moment.”

“Oh, I know you’re a slugger — ” the fireman’s voice began.

Then came the unmistakable impact of a blow; the crash of glass; a scuffle on the back porch; and, finally, the heavy bumps of a body down the steps. She heard Billy reenter the kitchen, move about, and knew he was sweeping up the broken glass of the kitchen door. Then he washed himself at the sink, whistling while he dried his face and hands, and walked into the front room. She did not look at him. She was too sick and sad. He paused irresolutely, seeming to make up his mind.

"I'm goin' up town," he stated. "They's a meeting of the union. If I don't come back it'll be because that geezer's sworn out a warrant."

He opened the front door and paused. She knew he was looking at her. Then the door closed and she heard him go down the steps.

Saxon was stunned. She did not think. She did not know what to think. The whole thing was incomprehensible, incredible. She lay back in the chair, her eyes closed, her mind almost a blank, crushed by a leaden feeling that the end had come to everything.

The voices of children playing in the street aroused her. Night had fallen. She groped her way to a lamp and lighted it. In the kitchen she stared, lips trembling, at the pitiful, half prepared meal. The fire had gone out. The water had boiled away from the potatoes. When she lifted the lid, a burnt smell arose. Methodically she scraped and cleaned the pot, put things in order, and peeled and sliced the potatoes for next day's frying. And just as methodically she went to bed. Her lack of nervousness, her placidity, was abnormal, so abnormal that she closed her eyes and was almost immediately asleep. Nor did she awaken till the sunshine was streaming into the room.

It was the first night she and Billy had slept apart. She was amazed that she had not lain awake worrying about him. She lay with eyes wide open, scarcely thinking, until pain in her arm attracted her attention. It was where Billy had gripped her. On examination she found the bruised flesh fearfully black and blue. She was astonished, not by the spiritual fact that such bruise had been administered by the one she loved most in the world, but by the sheer physical fact that an instant's pressure had inflicted so much damage. The strength of a man was a terrible thing. Quite impersonally, she found herself wondering if Charley Long were as strong as Billy.

It was not until she dressed and built the fire that she began to think about more immediate things. Billy had not returned. Then he was arrested. What was she to do? — leave him in jail, go away, and start life afresh? Of course it was impossible to go on living with a man who had behaved as he had. But then, came another thought, WAS it impossible? After all, he was her husband. FOR BETTER OR WORSE — the phrase reiterated itself, a monotonous accompaniment to her thoughts, at the back of her consciousness. To leave him was to surrender. She carried the matter before the tribunal of her mother's memory. No; Daisy would never have surrendered. Daisy was a fighter. Then she, Saxon, must fight. Besides — and she acknowledged it — readily, though in a cold, dead way — besides, Billy was better than most husbands. Better than any other husband she had heard of, she concluded, as she remembered many of his earlier nicenesses and finenesses, and especially his eternal chant: NOTHING IS TOO GOOD FOR US. THE ROBERTSES AIN'T ON THE CHEAP.

At eleven o'clock she had a caller. It was Bud Strothers, Billy's mate on strike duty. Billy, he told her, had refused bail, refused a lawyer, had asked to be tried by the Court, had pleaded guilty, and had received a sentence of sixty dollars or thirty days. Also, he had refused to let the boys pay his fine.

"He's clean looney," Strothers summed up. "Won't listen to reason. Says he'll serve the time out. He's been tankin' up too regular, I guess. His wheels are buzzin'. Here, he give me this note for you. Any time you want anything send for me. The boys'll all stand by Bill's wife. You belong to us, you know. How are you off for money?"

Proudly she disclaimed any need for money, and not until her visitor departed did she read Billy's note:

Dear Saxon — Bud Strothers is going to give you this. Don't worry about me. I am going to take my medicine. I deserve it — you know that. I guess I am gone bughouse. Just the same, I am sorry for what I done. Don't come to see me. I don't want you to. If you need money, the union will give you some. The business agent is all right. I will be out in a month. Now, Saxon, you know I love you, and just say to yourself that you forgive me this time, and you won't never have to do it again.

Billy.

Bud Strothers was followed by Maggie Donahue, and Mrs. Olsen, who paid neighborly calls of cheer and were tactful in their offers of help and in studiously avoiding more reference than was necessary to Billy's predicament.

In the afternoon James Harmon arrived. He limped slightly, and Saxon divined that he was doing his best to minimize that evidence of hurt. She tried to apologize to him, but he would not listen.

"I don't blame you, Mrs. Roberts," he said. "I know it wasn't your doing. But your husband wasn't just himself, I guess. He was fightin' mad on general principles, and it was just my luck to get in the way, that was all."

"But just the same — "

The fireman shook his head.

"I know all about it. I used to punish the drink myself, and I done some funny things in them days. And I'm sorry I swore that warrant out and testified. But I was hot in the collar. I'm cooled down now, an' I'm sorry I done it."

"You're awfully good and kind," she said, and then began hesitantly on what was bothering her. "You... you can't stay now, with him... away, you know."

"Yes; that wouldn't do, would it? I'll tell you: I'll pack up right now, and skin out, and then, before six o'clock, I'll send a wagon for my things. Here's the key to the kitchen door."

Much as he demurred, she compelled him to receive back the unexpired portion of his rent. He shook her hand heartily at leaving, and tried to get her to promise to call upon him for a loan any time she might be in need.

"It's all right," he assured her. "I'm married, and got two boys. One of them's got his lungs touched, and she's with 'em down in Arizona campin' out. The railroad helped with passes."

And as he went down the steps she wondered that so kind a man should be in so madly cruel a world.

The Donahue boy threw in a spare evening paper, and Saxon found half a column devoted to Billy. It was not nice. The fact that he had stood up in the police court with his eyes blacked from some other fray was noted. He was described as a bully, a hoodlum, a rough-neck, a professional slugger whose presence in the ranks was a disgrace to organized labor. The assault he had pleaded guilty of was atrocious and unprovoked, and if he were a fair sample of a striking teamster, the only wise thing for Oakland to do was to break up the union and drive every member from the city. And, finally, the paper complained at the mildness of the sentence. It should have been six months at least. The judge was quoted as expressing regret that he had been unable to impose a six months' sentence, this inability being due to the condition of the jails, already crowded beyond capacity by the many eases of assault committed in the course of the various strikes.

That night, in bed, Saxon experienced her first loneliness. Her brain seemed in a whirl, and her sleep was broken by vain gropings for the form of Billy she imagined at her side. At last, she lighted the lamp and lay staring at the ceiling, wide-eyed, conning over and over the details of the disaster that had overwhelmed her. She could forgive, and she could not forgive. The blow to her love-life had been too savage, too brutal. Her pride was too lacerated to permit her wholly to return in memory to the other Billy whom she loved. Wine in, wit out, she repeated to herself; but the phrase could not absolve the man who had slept by her side, and to whom she had consecrated herself. She wept in the loneliness of the all-too-spacious bed, strove to forget Billy's incomprehensible cruelty, even pillowed her cheek with numb fondness against the bruise of her arm; but still resentment burned within her, a steady flame of protest against Billy and all that Billy had done. Her throat was parched, a dull ache never ceased in her breast, and she was oppressed by a feeling of goneness. WHY, WHY? — And from the puzzle of the world came no solution.

In the morning she received a visit from Sarah — the second in all the period of her marriage; and she could easily guess her sister-in-law's ghoulish errand. No exertion was required for the assertion of all of Saxon's pride. She refused to be in the slightest on the defensive. There was nothing to defend, nothing to explain. Everything was all right, and it was nobody's business anyway. This attitude but served to vex Sarah.

"I warned you, and you can't say I didn't," her diatribe ran. "I always knew he was no good, a jailbird, a hoodlum, a slugger. My heart sunk into my boots when I heard you was runnin' with a prizefighter. I told you so at the time. But no; you wouldn't listen, you with your highfalutin' notions an' more pairs of shoes than any decent woman should have. You knew better'n me. An' I said then, to Tom, I said, 'It's all up with Saxon now.' Them was my very words. Them that touches pitch is defiled. If you'd only a-married Charley Long! Then the family wouldn't a-ben disgraced. An' this is only the beginnin', mark me, only the beginnin'. Where it'll end, God knows. He'll kill somebody yet, that plug-ugly of yourn, an' be hanged for it. You wait an' see, that's all, an' then you'll remember my words. As you make your bed, so you will lay in it"

"Best bed I ever had," Saxon commented.

"So you can say, so you can say," Sarah snorted.

"I wouldn't trade it for a queen's bed," Saxon added.

"A jailbird's bed," Sarah rejoined witheringly.

"Oh, it's the style," Saxon retorted airily. "Everybody's getting a taste of jail. Wasn't Tom arrested at some street meeting of the socialists?

Everybody goes to jail these days."

The barb had struck home.

"But Tom was acquitted," Sarah hastened to proclaim.

"Just the same he lay in jail all night without bail."

This was unanswerable, and Sarah executed her favorite tactic of attack in flank.

"A nice come-down for you, I must say, that was raised straight an' right, a-cuttin' up didoes with a lodger."

"Who says so?" Saxon blazed with an indignation quickly mastered.

"Oh, a blind man can read between the lines. A lodger, a young married woman with no self respect, an' a prizefighter for a husband — what else would they fight about?"

"Just like any family quarrel, wasn't it?" Saxon smiled placidly.

Sarah was shocked into momentary speechlessness.

"And I want you to understand it," Saxon continued. "It makes a woman proud to have men fight over her. I am proud. Do you hear? I am proud. I want you to tell them so. I want you to tell all your neighbors. Tell everybody. I am no cow. Men like me. Men fight for me. Men go to jail for me. What is a woman in the world for, if it isn't to have men like her? Now, go, Sarah; go at once, and tell everybody what you've read between the lines. Tell them Billy is a jailbird and that I am a bad woman whom all men desire. Shout it out, and good luck to you. And get out of my house. And never put your feet in it again. You are too decent a woman to come here. You might lose your reputation. And think of your children. Now get out. Go."

Not until Sarah had taken an amazed and horrified departure did Saxon fling herself on the bed in a convulsion of tears. She had been ashamed, before, merely of Billy's inhospitality, and surliness, and unfairness. But she could see, now, the light in which others looked on the affair. It had not entered Saxon's head. She was confident that it had not entered Billy's. She knew his attitude from the first. Always he had opposed taking a lodger because of his proud faith that his wife should not work. Only hard times had compelled his consent, and, now that she looked back, almost had she inveigled him into consenting.

But all this did not alter the viewpoint the neighborhood must hold, that every one who had ever known her must hold. And for this, too, Billy was responsible. It was more terrible than all the other things he had been guilty of put together. She could never look any one in the face again. Maggie Donahue and Mrs. Olsen had been very kind, but of what must they have been thinking all the time they talked with her? And what must they have said to each other? What was everybody saying? — over front gates and back fences, — the men standing on the corners or talking in saloons?

Later, exhausted by her grief, when the tears no longer fell, she grew more impersonal, and dwelt on the disasters that had befallen so many women since the strike troubles began — Otto Frank's wife, Henderson's widow, pretty Kittie Brady, Mary, all the womenfolk of the other workmen who were now wearing the stripes in San Quentin. Her world was crashing about her ears. No one was exempt. Not only had she not escaped, but hers was the worst disgrace of all. Desperately she tried to hug the delusion that she was asleep, that it was all a nightmare, and that soon the alarm would go off and she would get up and cook Billy's breakfast so that he could go to work.

She did not leave the bed that day. Nor did she sleep. Her brain whirled on and on, now dwelling at insistent length upon her misfortunes, now pursuing the most fantastic ramifications of what she considered her disgrace, and, again, going back to her childhood and wandering through endless trivial detail. She worked at all the tasks she had ever done, performing, in fancy, the myriads of mechanical movements peculiar to each occupation — shaping and pasting in the paper box factory, ironing in the laundry, weaving in the jute mill, peeling fruit in the cannery and countless boxes of scalded tomatoes. She attended all her dances and all her picnics over again; went through her school days, recalling the face and name and seat of every schoolmate; endured the gray bleakness of the years in the orphan asylum; revisioned every memory of her mother, every tale; and relived all her life with Billy. But ever — and here the torment lay — she was drawn back from these far-wanderings to her present trouble, with its parch in the throat, its ache in the breast, and its gnawing, vacant goneness.

CHAPTER XV

All that night Saxon lay, unsleeping, without taking off her clothes, and when she arose in the morning and washed her face and dressed her hair she was aware of a strange numbness, of a feeling of constriction about her head as if it were bound by a heavy band of iron. It seemed like a dull pressure upon her brain. It was the beginning of an illness that she did not know as illness. All she knew was that she felt queer. It was not fever. It was not cold. Her bodily health was as it should be, and, when she thought about it, she put her condition down to nerves — nerves, according to her ideas and the ideas of her class, being unconnected with disease.

She had a strange feeling of loss of self, of being a stranger to herself, and the world in which she moved seemed a vague and shrouded world. It lacked sharpness of definition. Its customary vividness was gone. She had lapses of memory, and was continually finding herself doing unplanned things. Thus, to her astonishment, she came to in the back yard hanging up the week's wash. She had no recollection of having done it, yet it had been done precisely as it should have been done. She had boiled the sheets and pillow-slips and the table linen. Billy's woolens had been washed in warm water only, with the home-made soap, the recipe of which Mercedes had given her. On investigation, she found she had eaten a mutton chop for breakfast. This meant that she had been to the butcher shop, yet she had no memory of having gone. Curiously, she went into the bedroom. The bed was made up and everything in order.

At twilight she came upon herself in the front room, seated by the window, crying in an ecstasy of joy. At first she did not know what this joy was; then it came to her that it was because she had lost her baby. "A blessing, a blessing," she was chanting aloud, wringing her hands, but with joy, she knew it was with joy that she wrung her hands.

The days came and went. She had little notion of time. Sometimes, centuries agone, it seemed to her it was since Billy had gone to jail. At other times it was no more than the night before. But through it all two ideas persisted: she must not go to see Billy in jail; it was a blessing she had lost her baby.

Once, Bud Strothers came to see her. She sat in the front room and talked with him, noting with fascination that there were fringes to the heels of his trousers. Another day, the business agent of the union called. She told him, as she had told Bud Strothers, that everything was all right, that she needed nothing, that she could get along comfortably until Billy came out.

A fear began to haunt her. WHEN HE CAME OUT. No; it must not be. There must not be another baby. It might LIVE. No, no, a thousand times no. It must not be. She would run away first. She would never see Billy again. Anything but that. Anything but that.

This fear persisted. In her nightmare-ridden sleep it became an accomplished fact, so that she would awake, trembling, in a cold sweat, crying out. Her sleep had become wretched. Sometimes she was convinced that she did not sleep at all, and she knew that she had insomnia, and remembered that it was of insomnia her mother had died.

She came to herself one day, sitting in Doctor Hentley's office. He was looking at her in a puzzled way.

"Got plenty to eat?" he was asking.

She nodded.

"Any serious trouble?"

She shook her head.

"Everything's all right, doctor... except..."

"Yes, yes," he encouraged.

And then she knew why she had come. Simply, explicitly, she told him. He shook his head slowly.

"It can't be done, little woman," he said

"Oh, but it can!" she cried. "I know it can."

"I don't mean that," he answered. "I mean I can't tell you. I dare not. It is against the law. There is a doctor in Leavenworth prison right now for that."

In vain she pleaded with him. He instanced his own wife and children whose existence forbade his imperiling.

"Besides, there is no likelihood now," he told her.

"But there will be, there is sure to be," she urged.

But he could only shake his head sadly.

"Why do you want to know?" he questioned finally.

Saxon poured her heart out to him. She told of her first year of happiness with Billy, of the hard times caused by the labor troubles, of the change in Billy so that there was no love-life left, of her own deep horror. Not if it died, she concluded. She could go through that again. But if it should live. Billy would soon be out of jail, and then the danger would begin. It was only a few words. She would never tell any one. Wild horses could not drag it out of her.

But Doctor Hentley continued to shake his head. “I can’t tell you, little woman. It’s a shame, but I can’t take the risk. My hands are tied. Our laws are all wrong. I have to consider those who are dear to me.”

It was when she got up to go that he faltered. “Come here,” he said. “Sit closer.”

He prepared to whisper in her ear, then, with a sudden excess of caution, crossed the room swiftly, opened the door, and looked out. When he sat down again he drew his chair so close to hers that the arms touched, and when he whispered his beard tickled her ear.

“No, no,” he shut her off when she tried to voice her gratitude. “I have told you nothing. You were here to consult me about your general health. You are run down, out of condition — ”

As he talked he moved her toward the door. When he opened it, a patient for the dentist in the adjoining office was standing in the hall. Doctor Hentley lifted his voice.

“What you need is that tonic I prescribed. Remember that. And don’t pamper your appetite when it comes back. Eat strong, nourishing food, and beefsteak, plenty of beefsteak. And don’t cook it to a cinder. Good day.”

At times the silent cottage became unendurable, and Saxon would throw a shawl about her head and walk out the Oakland Mole, or cross the railroad yards and the marshes to Sandy Beach where Billy had said he used to swim. Also, by going out the Transit slip, by climbing down the piles on a precarious ladder of iron spikes, and by crossing a boom of logs, she won access to the Rock Wall that extended far out into the bay and that served as a barrier between the mudflats and the tide-scoured channel of Oakland Estuary. Here the fresh sea breezes blew and Oakland sank down to a smudge of smoke behind her, while across the bay she could see the smudge that represented San Francisco. Ocean steamships passed up and down the estuary, and lofty-masted ships, towed by red-stacked tugs.

She gazed at the sailors on the ships, wondered on what far voyages and to what far lands they went, wondered what freedoms were theirs. Or were they girt in by as remorseless and cruel a world as the dwellers in Oakland were? Were they as unfair, as unjust, as brutal, in their dealings with their fellows as were the city dwellers? It did not seem so, and sometimes she wished herself on board, out-bound, going anywhere, she cared not where, so long as it was away from the world to which she had given her best and which had trampled her in return.

She did not know always when she left the house, nor where her feet took her. Once, she came to herself in a strange part of Oakland. The street was wide and lined with rows of shade trees. Velvet lawns, broken only by cement sidewalks, ran down to the gutters. The houses stood apart and were large. In her vocabulary they were mansions. What had shocked her to consciousness of herself was a young man in the driver's seat of a touring car standing at the curb. He was looking at her curiously and she recognized him as Roy Blanchard, whom, in front of the Forum, Billy had threatened to whip. Beside the car, bareheaded, stood another young man. He, too, she remembered. He it was, at the Sunday picnic where she first met Billy, who had thrust his cane between the legs of the flying foot-racer and precipitated the free-for-all fight. Like Blanchard, he was looking at her curiously, and she became aware that she had been talking to herself. The babble of her lips still beat in her ears. She blushed, a rising tide of shame heating her face, and quickened her pace. Blanchard sprang out of the car and came to her with lifted hat. "Is anything the matter?" he asked.

She shook her head, and, though she had stopped, she evinced her desire to go on.

"I know you," he said, studying her face. "You were with the striker who promised me a licking."

"He is my husband," she said.

"Oh! Good for him." He regarded her pleasantly and frankly. "But about yourself? Isn't there anything I can do for you? Something IS the matter."

"No, I'm all right," she answered. "I have been sick," she lied; for she never dreamed of connecting her queerness with sickness.

"You look tired," he pressed her. "I can take you in the machine and run you anywhere you want. It won't be any trouble. I've plenty of time."

Saxon shook her head.

"If... if you would tell me where I can catch the Eighth street cars. I don't often come to this part of town."

He told her where to find an electric car and what transfers to make, and she was surprised at the distance she had wandered.

"Thank you," she said. "And good bye."

"Sure I can't do anything now?"

"Sure."

"Well, good bye," he smiled good humoredly. "And tell that husband of yours to keep in good condition. I'm likely to make him need it all when he tangles up with me."

"Oh, but you can't fight with him," she warned. "You mustn't. You haven't got a show."

"Good for you," he admired. "That's the way for a woman to stand up for her man. Now the average woman would be so afraid he was going to get licked — "

"But I'm not afraid... for him. It's for you. He's a terrible fighter. You wouldn't have any chance. It would be like... like..."

"Like taking candy from a baby?" Blanchard finished for her.

"Yes," she nodded. "That's just what he would call it. And whenever he tells you you are standing on your foot watch out for him. Now I must go. Good bye, and thank you again."

She went on down the sidewalk, his cheery good bye ringing in her ears. He was kind — she admitted it honestly; yet he was one of the clever ones, one of the masters, who, according to Billy, were responsible for all the cruelty to labor, for the hardships of the women, for the punishment of the labor men who were wearing stripes in San Quentin or were in the death cells awaiting the scaffold. Yet he was kind, sweet natured, clean, good. She could read his character in his face. But how could this be, if he were responsible for so much evil? She shook her head wearily. There was no explanation, no understanding of this world which destroyed little babes and bruised women's breasts.

As for her having strayed into that neighborhood of fine residences, she was unsurprised. It was in line with her queerness. She did so many things without knowing that she did them. But she must be careful. It was better to wander on the marshes and the Rock Wall.

Especially she liked the Rock Wall. There was a freedom about it, a wide spaciousness that she found herself instinctively trying to breathe, holding her arms out to embrace and make part of herself. It was a more natural world, a more rational world. She could understand it — understand the green crabs with white-bleached claws that scuttled before her and which she could see pasturing on green-weeded rocks when the tide was low. Here, hopelessly man-made as the great wall was, nothing seemed artificial. There were no men here, no laws nor conflicts of men. The tide flowed and ebbed; the sun rose and set; regularly each afternoon the brave west wind came romping in through the Golden Gate, darkening the water, cresting tiny wavelets, making the sailboats fly. Everything ran with frictionless order. Everything was free. Firewood lay about for the taking. No man sold it by the sack. Small boys fished with poles from the rocks, with no one to drive them away for trespass, catching fish as Billy had caught fish, as Cal Hutchins had caught fish. Billy had told her of the great perch Cal Hutchins caught on the day of the eclipse, when he had little dreamed the heart of his manhood would be spent in convict's garb.

And here was food, food that was free. She watched the small boys on a day when she had eaten nothing, and emulated them, gathering mussels from the rocks at low water, cooking them by placing them among the coals of a fire she built on top of the wall. They tasted particularly good. She learned to knock the small oysters from the rocks, and once she found a string of fresh-caught fish some small boy had forgotten to take home with him.

Here drifted evidences of man's sinister handiwork — from a distance, from the cities. One flood tide she found the water covered with muskmelons. They bobbed and bumped along up the estuary in countless thousands. Where they stranded against the rocks she was able to get them. But each and every melon — and she patiently tried scores of them — had been spoiled by a sharp gash that let in the salt water. She could not understand. She asked an old Portuguese woman gathering driftwood.

"They do it, the people who have too much," the old woman explained, straightening her labor-stiffened back with such an effort that almost Saxon could hear it creak. The old woman's black eyes flashed angrily, and her wrinkled lips, drawn tightly across toothless gums, wry with bitterness. "The people that have too much. It is to keep up the price. They throw them overboard in San Francisco."

"But why don't they give them away to the poor people?" Saxon asked.

"They must keep up the price."

"But the poor people cannot buy them anyway," Saxon objected. "It would not hurt the price."

The old woman shrugged her shoulders.

"I do not know. It is their way. They chop each melon so that the poor people cannot fish them out and eat anyway. They do the same with the oranges, with the apples. Ah, the fishermen! There is a trust. When the boats catch too much fish, the trust throws them overboard from Fisherman

Wharf, boat-loads, and boat-loads, and boatloads of the beautiful fish. And the beautiful good fish sink and are gone. And no one gets them. Yet they are dead and only good to eat. Fish are very good to eat.”

And Saxon could not understand a world that did such things — a world in which some men possessed so much food that they threw it away, paying men for their labor of spoiling it before they threw it away; and in the same world so many people who did not have enough food, whose babies died because their mothers’ milk was not nourishing, whose young men fought and killed one another for the chance to work, whose old men and women went to the poorhouse because there was no food for them in the little shacks they wept at leaving. She wondered if all the world were that way, and remembered Mercedes’ tales. Yes; all the world was that way. Had not Mercedes seen ten thousand families starve to death in that far away India, when, as she had said, her own jewels that she wore would have fed and saved them all? It was the poorhouse and the salt vats for the stupid, jewels and automobiles for the clever ones.

She was one of the stupid. She must be. The evidence all pointed that way. Yet Saxon refused to accept it. She was not stupid. Her mother had not been stupid, nor had the pioneer stock before her. Still it must be so. Here she sat, nothing to eat at home, her love-husband changed to a brute beast and lying in jail, her arms and heart empty of the babe that would have been there if only the stupid ones had not made a shambles of her front yard in their wrangling over jobs.

She sat there, racking her brain, the smudge of Oakland at her back, staring across the bay at the smudge of Ban Francisco. Yet the sun was good; the wind was good, as was the keen salt air in her nostrils; the blue sky, flecked with clouds, was good. All the natural world was right, and sensible, and beneficent. It was the man-world that was wrong, and mad, and horrible. Why were the stupid stupid? Was it a law of God? No; it could not be. God had made the wind, and air, and sun. The man-world was made by man, and a rotten job it was. Yet, and she remembered it well, the teaching in the orphan asylum, God had made everything. Her mother, too, had believed this, had believed in this God. Things could not be different. It was ordained.

For a time Saxon sat crushed, helpless. Then smoldered protest, revolt. Vainly she asked why God had it in for her. What had she done to deserve such fate? She briefly reviewed her life in quest of deadly sins committed, and found them not. She had obeyed her mother; obeyed Cady, the saloon-keeper, and Cady's wife; obeyed the matron and the other women in the orphan asylum; obeyed Tom when she came to live in his house, and never run in the streets because he didn't wish her to. At school she had always been honorably promoted, and never had her deportment report varied from one hundred per cent. She had worked from the day she left school to the day of her marriage. She had been a good worker, too. The little Jew who ran the paper box factory had almost wept when she quit. It was the same at the cannery. She was among the high-line weavers when the jute mills closed down. I And she had kept straight. It was not as if she had been ugly or unattractive. She had known her temptations and encountered her dangers. The fellows had been crazy about her. They had run after her, fought over her, in a way to turn most girls' heads. But she had kept straight. And then had come Billy, her reward. She had devoted herself to him, to his house, to all that would nourish his love; and now she and Billy were sinking down into this senseless vortex of misery and heartbreak of the man-made world.

No, God was not responsible. She could have made a better world herself — a finer, squarer world. This being so, then there was no God. God could not make a botch. The matron had been wrong, her mother had been wrong. Then there was no immortality, and Bert, wild and crazy Bert, falling at her front gate with his foolish death-cry, was right. One was a long time dead.

Looking thus at life, shorn of its superrational sanctions, Saxon floundered into the morass of pessimism. There was no justification for right conduct in the universe, no square deal for her who had earned reward, for the millions who worked like animals, died like animals, and were a long time and forever dead. Like the hosts of more learned thinkers before her, she concluded that the universe was unmoral and without concern for men.

And now she sat crushed in greater helplessness than when she had included God in the scheme of injustice. As long as God was, there was always chance for a miracle, for some supernatural intervention, some rewarding with ineffable bliss. With God missing, the world was a trap. Life was a trap. She was like a linnet, caught by small boys and imprisoned in a cage. That was because the linnet was stupid. But she rebelled. She fluttered and beat her soul against the hard face of things as did the linnet against the bars of wire. She was not stupid. She did not belong in the trap. She would fight her way out of the trap. There must be such a way out. When canal boys and rail-splitters, the lowliest of the stupid lowly, as she had read in her school history, could find their way out and become presidents of the nation and rule over even the clever ones in their automobiles, then could she find her way out and win to the tiny reward she craved — Billy, a little love, a little happiness. She would not mind that the universe was unmoral, that there was no God, no immortality. She was willing to go into the black grave and remain in its blackness forever, to go into the salt vats and let the young men cut her dead flesh to sausage-meat, if — if only she could get her small meed of happiness first.

How she would work for that happiness! How she would appreciate it, make the most of each least particle of it! But how was she to do it. Where was the path? She could not vision it. Her eyes showed her only the smudge of San Francisco, the smudge of Oakland, where men were breaking heads and killing one another, where babies were dying, born and unborn, and where women were weeping with bruised breasts.

CHAPTER XVI

Her vague, unreal existence continued. It seemed in some previous life-time that Billy had gone away, that another life-time would have to come before he returned. She still suffered from insomnia. Long nights passed in succession, during which she never closed her eyes. At other times she slept through long stupors, waking stunned and numbed, scarcely able to open her heavy eyes, to move her weary limbs. The pressure of the iron band on her head never relaxed. She was poorly nourished. Nor had she a cent of money. She often went a whole day without eating. Once, seventy-two hours elapsed without food passing her lips. She dug clams in the marsh, knocked the tiny oysters from the rocks, and gathered mussels.

And yet, when Bud Strothers came to see how she was getting along, she convinced him that all was well. One evening after work, Tom came, and forced two dollars upon her. He was terribly worried. He would like to help more, but Sarah was expecting another baby. There had been slack times in his trade because of the strikes in the other trades. He did not know what the country was coming to. And it was all so simple. All they had to do was see things in his way and vote the way he voted. Then everybody would get a square deal. Christ was a Socialist, he told her.

“Christ died two thousand years ago,” Saxon said.

“Well?” Tom queried, not catching her implication.

“Think,” she said, “think of all the men and women who died in those two thousand years, and socialism has not come yet. And in two thousand years more it may be as far away as ever. Tom, your socialism never did you any good. It is a dream.”

“It wouldn’t be if — ” he began with a flash of resentment.

“If they believed as you do. Only they don’t. You don’t succeed in making them.”

“But we are increasing every year,” he argued.

“Two thousand years is an awfully long time,” she said quietly.

Her brother’s tired face saddened as he noted. Then he sighed:

“Well, Saxon, if it’s a dream, it is a good dream.”

“I don’t want to dream,” was her reply. “I want things real. I want them now.”

And before her fancy passed the countless generations of the stupid lowly, the Billys and Saxons, the Berts and Marys, the Toms and Sarahs. And to what end? The salt vats and the grave. Mercedes was a hard and wicked woman, but Mercedes was right. The stupid must always be under the heels of the clever ones. Only she, Saxon, daughter of Daisy who had written wonderful poems and of a soldier-father on a roan war-horse, daughter of the strong generations who hall won half a world from wild nature and the savage Indian — no, she was not stupid. It was as if she suffered false imprisonment. There was some mistake. She would find the way out.

With the two dollars she bought a sack of flour and half a sack of potatoes. This relieved the monotony of her clams and mussels. Like the Italian and Portuguese women, she gathered driftwood and carried it home, though always she did it with shamed pride, timing her arrival so that it would be after dark. One day, on the mud-flat side of the Rock Wall, an Italian fishing boat hauled up on the sand dredged from the channel. From the top of the wall Saxon watched the men grouped about the charcoal brazier, eating crusty Italian bread and a stew of meat and vegetables, washed down with long draughts of thin red wine. She envied them their freedom that advertised itself in the heartiness of their meal, in the tones of their chatter and laughter, in the very boat itself that was not tied always to one place and that carried them wherever they willed. Afterward, they dragged a seine across the mud-flats and up on the sand, selecting for themselves only the larger kinds of fish. Many thousands of small fish, like sardines, they left dying on the sand when they sailed away. Saxon got a sackful of the fish, and was compelled to make two trips in order to carry them home, where she salted them down in a wooden washtubs.

Her lapses of consciousness continued. The strangest thing she did while in such condition was on Sandy Beach. There she discovered herself, one windy afternoon, lying in a hole she had dug, with sacks for blankets. She had even roofed the hole in rough fashion by means of drift wood and marsh grass. On top of the grass she had piled sand.

Another time she came to herself walking across the marshes, a bundle of driftwood, tied with bale-rope, on her shoulder. Charley Long was walking beside her. She could see his face in the starlight. She wondered dully how long he had been talking, what he had said. Then she was curious to hear what he was saying. She was not afraid, despite his strength, his wicked nature, and the loneliness and darkness of the marsh.

"It's a shame for a girl like you to have to do this," he was saying, apparently in repetition of what he had already urged. "Come on an' say the word, Saxon. Come on an' say the word."

Saxon stopped and quietly faced him.

"Listen, Charley Long. Billy's only doing thirty days, and his time is almost up. When he gets out your life won't be worth a pinch of salt if I tell him you've been bothering me. Now listen. If you go right now away from here, and stay away, I won't tell him. That's all I've got to say."

The big blacksmith stood in scowling indecisions his face pathetic in its fierce yearning, his hands making unconscious, clutching contractions.

"Why, you little, small thing," he said desperately, "I could break you in one hand. I could — why, I could do anything I wanted. I don't want to hurt you, Saxon. You know that. Just say the word — "

"I've said the only word I'm going to say."

"God!" he muttered in involuntary admiration. "You ain't afraid. You ain't afraid."

They faced each other for long silent minutes.

"Why ain't you afraid?" he demanded at last, after peering into the surrounding darkness as if searching for her hidden allies.

"Because I married a man," Saxon said briefly. "And now you'd better go."

When he had gone she shifted the load of wood to her other shoulder and started on, in her breast a quiet thrill of pride in Billy. Though behind prison bars, still she leaned against his strength. The mere naming of him was sufficient to drive away a brute like Charley Long.

On the day that Otto Frank was hanged she remained indoors. The evening papers published the account. There had been no reprieve. In Sacramento was a railroad Governor who might reprieve or even pardon bank-wreckers and grafters, but who dared not lift his finger for a workingman. All this was the talk of the neighborhood. It had been Billy's talk. It had been Bert's talk.

The next day Saxon started out the Rock Wall, and the specter of Otto Frank walked by her side. And with him was a dimmer, mistier specter that she recognized as Billy. Was he, too, destined to tread his way to Otto Frank's dark end? Surely so, if the blood and strike continued. He was a fighter. He felt he was right in fighting. It was easy to kill a man. Even if he did not intend it, some time, when he was slugging a scab, the scab would fracture his skull on a stone curbing or a cement sidewalk. And then Billy would hang. That was why Otto Frank hanged. He had not intended to kill Henderson. It was only by accident that Henderson's skull was fractured. Yet Otto Frank had been hanged for it just the same.

She wrung her hands and wept loudly as she stumbled among the windy rocks. The hours passed, and she was lost to herself and her grief. When she came to she found herself on the far end of the wall where it jutted into the bay between the Oakland and Alameda Moles. But she could see no wall. It was the time of the full moon, and the unusual high tide covered the rocks. She was knee deep in the water, and about her knees swam scores of big rock rats, squeaking and fighting, scrambling to climb upon her out of the flood. She screamed with fright and horror, and kicked at them. Some dived and swam away under water; others circled about her warily at a distance; and one big fellow laid his teeth into her shoe. Him she stepped on and crushed with her free foot. By this time, though still trembling, she was able coolly to consider the situation. She waded to a stout stick of driftwood a few feet away, and with this quickly cleared a space about herself.

A grinning small boy, in a small, bright-painted and half-decked skiff, sailed close in to the wall and let go his sheet to spill the wind. "Want to get aboard?" he called.

"Yes," she answered. "There are thousands of big rats here. I'm afraid of them."

He nodded, ran close in, spilled the wind from his sail, the boat's way carrying it gently to her.

"Shove out its bow," he commanded. "That's right. I don't want to break my centerboard.... An' then jump aboard in the stern — quick! — alongside of me."

She obeyed, stepping in lightly beside him. He held the tiller up with his elbow, pulled in on the sheet, and as the sail filled the boat sprang away over the rippling water.

"You know boats," the boy said approvingly.

He was a slender, almost frail lad, of twelve or thirteen years, though healthy enough, with sunburned freckled face and large gray eyes that were clear and wistful.

Despite his possession of the pretty boat, Saxon was quick to sense that he was one of them, a child of the people.

“First boat I was ever in, except ferryboats,” Saxon laughed.

He looked at her keenly. “Well, you take to it like a duck to water is all I can say about it. Where d’ye want me to land you?”

“Anywhere.”

He opened his mouth to speak, gave her another long look, considered for a space, then asked suddenly: “Got plenty of time?”

She nodded.

“All day?”

Again she nodded.

“Say — I’ll tell you, I’m goin’ out on this ebb to Goat Island for rockcod, an’ I’ll come in on the flood this evening. I got plenty of lines an’ bait. Want to come along? We can both fish. And what you catch you can have.”

Saxon hesitated. The freedom and motion of the small boat appealed to her. Like the ships she had envied, it was outbound.

“Maybe you’ll drown me,” she parleyed.

The boy threw back his head with pride.

“I guess I’ve been sailin’ many a long day by myself, an’ I ain’t drowned yet.”

“All right,” she consented. “Though remember, I don’t know anything about boats.”

“Aw, that’s all right. — Now I’m goin’ to go about. When I say ‘Hard a-lee!’ like that, you duck your head so the boom don’t hit you, an’ shift over to the other side.”

He executed the maneuver, Saxon obeyed, and found herself sitting beside him on the opposite side of the boat, while the boat itself, on the other tack, was heading toward Long Wharf where the coal bunkers were. She was aglow with admiration, the more so because the mechanics of boat-sailing was to her a complex and mysterious thing.

“Where did you learn it all?” she inquired.

“Taught myself, just naturally taught myself. I liked it, you see, an’ what a fellow likes he’s likeliest to do. This is my second boat. My first didn’t have a centerboard. I bought it for two dollars an’ learned a lot, though it never stopped leaking. What d ‘ye think I paid for this one? It’s worth twenty-five dollars right now. What d ‘ye think I paid for it?”

“I give up,” Saxon said. “How much?”

“Six dollars. Think of it! A boat like this! Of course I done a lot of work, an’ the sail cost two dollars, the oars one forty, an’ the paint one seventy-five. But just the same eleven dollars and fifteen cents is a real bargain. It took me a long time saving for it, though. I carry papers morning and evening — there’s a boy taking my route for me this afternoon — I give ‘m ten cents, an’ all the extras he sells is his; and I’d a-got the boat sooner only I had to pay for my shorthand lessons. My mother wants me to become a court reporter. They get sometimes as much as twenty dollars a day. Gee! But I don’t want it. It’s a shame to waste the money on the lessons.”

“What do you want?” she asked, partly from idleness, and yet with genuine curiosity; for she felt drawn to this boy in knee pants who was so confident and at the same time so wistful.

“What do I want?” he repeated after her.

Turning his head slowly, he followed the sky-line, pausing especially when his eyes rested landward on the brown Contra Costa hills, and seaward, past Alcatraz, on the Golden Glate. The wistfulness in his eyes was overwhelming and went to her heart.

“That,” he said, sweeping the circle of the world with a wave of his arm.

“That?” she queried.

He looked at her, perplexed in that he had not made his meaning clear.

“Don’t you ever feel that way?” he asked, bidding for sympathy with his dream. “Don’t you sometimes feel you’d die if you didn’t know what’s beyond them hills an’ what’s beyond the other hills behind them hills? An’ the Golden Gate! There’s the Pacific Ocean beyond, and China, an’ Japan, an’ India, an’... an’ all the coral islands. You can go anywhere out through the Golden Gate — to Australia, to Africa, to the seal islands, to the North Pole, to Cape Horn. Why, all them places are just waitin’ for me to come an’ see ‘em. I’ve lived in Oakland all my life, but I’m not going to live in Oakland the rest of my life, not by a long shot. I’m goin’ to get away... away....”

Again, as words failed to express the vastness of his desire, the wave of his arm swept the circle of the world.

Saxon thrilled with him. She too, save for her earlier childhood, had lived in Oakland all her life. And it had been a good place in which to live... until now. And now, in all its nightmare horror, it was a place to get away from, as with her people the East had been a place to get away from. And why not? The world tugged at her, and she felt in touch with the lad’s desire.

Now that she thought of it, her race had never been given to staying long in one place. Always it had been on the move. She remembered back to her mother's tales, and to the wood engraving in her scrapbook where her half-clad forebears, sword in hand, leaped from their lean beaked boats to do battle on the blood-drenched sands of England.

"Did you ever hear about the Anglo-Saxons?" she asked the boy.

"You bet!" His eyes glistened, and he looked at her with new interest. "I'm an Anglo-Saxon, every inch of me. Look at the color of my eyes, my skin. I'm awful white where I ain't sunburned. An' my hair was yellow when I was a baby. My mother says it'll be dark brown by the time I'm grown up, worse luck. Just the same, I'm Anglo-Saxon. I am of a fighting race. We ain't afraid of nothin'. This bay — think I'm afraid of it!" He looked out over the water with flashing eye of scorn. "Why, I've crossed it when it was howlin' an' when the scow schooner sailors said I lied an' that I didn't. Huh! They were only squareheads. Why, we licked their kind thousands of years ago. We lick everything we go up against. We've wandered all over the world, licking the world. On the sea, on the land, it's all the same. Look at Ivory Nelson, look at Davy Crockett, look at Paul Jones, look at Clive, an' Kitchener, an' Fremont, an' Kit Carson, an' all of 'em."

Saxon nodded, while he continued, her own eyes shining, and it came to her what a glory it would be to be the mother of a man-child like this. Her body ached with the fancied quickening of unborn life. A good stock, a good stock, she thought to herself. Then she thought of herself and Billy, healthy shoots of that same stock, yet condemned to childlessness because of the trap of the manmade world and the curse of being herded with the stupid ones.

She came back to the boy.

"My father was a soldier in the Civil War," he was telling her, "a scout an' a spy. The rebels were going to hang him twice for a spy. At the battle of Wilson's Creek he ran half a mile with his captain wounded on his back. He's got a bullet in his leg right now, just above the knee. It's been there all these years. He let me feel it once. He was a buffalo hunter and a trapper before the war. He was sheriff of his county when he was twenty years old. An' after the war, when he was marshal of Silver City, he cleaned out the bad men an' gun-fighters. He's been in almost every state in the Union. He could wrestle any man at the railings in his day, an' he was bully of the raftsmen of the Susquehanna when he was only a youngster. His father killed a man in a standup fight with a blow of his fist when he was sixty years old. An’ when he was seventy-four, his second wife had twins, an’ he died when he was plowing in the field with oxen when he was ninety-nine years old. He just unyoked the oxen, an’ sat down under a tree, an’ died there sitting up. An’ my father’s just like him. He’s pretty old now, but he ain’t afraid of nothing. He’s a regular Anglo-Saxon, you see. He’s a special policeman, an’ he didn’t do a thing to the strikers in some of the fightin’. He had his face all cut up with a rock, but he broke his club short off over some hoodlum’s head.”

He paused breathlessly and looked at her.

“Gee!” he said. “I’d hate to a-ben that hoodlum.”

“My name is Saxon,” she said.

“Your name?”

“My first name.”

“Gee!” he cried. “You’re lucky. Now if mine had been only Erling — you know, Erling the Bold — or Wolf, or Swen, or Jarl!”

“What is it?” she asked.

“Only John,” he admitted sadly. “But I don’t let ‘em call one John. Everybody’s got to call me Jack. I’ve scrapped with a dozen fellows that tried to call me John, or Johnnie — wouldn’t that make you sick? — Johnnie!”

They were now off the coal bunkers of Long Wharf, and the boy put the skiff about, heading toward San Francisco. They were well out in the open bay. The west wind had strengthened and was whitecapping the strong ebb tide. The boat drove merrily along. When splashes of spray flew aboard, wetting them, Saxon laughed, and the boy surveyed her with approval. They passed a ferryboat, and the passengers on the upper deck crowded to one side to watch them. In the swell of the steamer’s wake, the skiff shipped quarter-full of water. Saxon picked up an empty can and looked at the boy.

“That’s right,” he said. “Go ahead an’ bale out.” And, when she had finished: “We’ll fetch Goat Island next tack. Right there off the Torpedo Station is where we fish, in fifty feet of water an’ the tide runnin’ to beat the band. You’re wringing wet, ain’t you? Gee! You’re like your name. You’re a Saxon, all right. Are you married?”

Saxon nodded, and the boy frowned.

“What’d you want to do that for. Now you can’t wander over the world like I’m going to. You’re tied down. You’re anchored for keeps.”

“It’s pretty good to be married, though,” she smiled.

“Sure, everybody gets married. But that’s no reason to be in a rush about it. Why couldn’t you wait a while, like me, I’m goin’ to get married, too, but not until I’m an old man an’ have been everywheres.”

Under the lee of Goat Island, Saxon obediently sitting still, he took in the sail, and, when the boat had drifted to a position to suit him, he dropped a tiny anchor. He got out the fish lines and showed Saxon how to bait her hooks with salted minnows. Then they dropped the lines to bottom, where they vibrated in the swift tide, and waited for bites.

“They’ll bite pretty soon,” he encouraged. “I’ve never failed but twice to catch a mess here. What d’ye say we eat while we’re waiting?”

Vainly she protested she was not hungry. He shared his lunch with her with a boy’s rigid equity, even to the half of a hard-boiled egg and the half of a big red apple.

Still the rockcod did not bite. From under the stern-sheets he drew out a cloth-bound book.

“Free Library,” he vouchsafed, as he began to read, with one hand holding the place while with the other he waited for the tug on the fishline that would announce rockcod.

Saxon read the title. It was “Afloat in the Forest.”

“Listen to this,” he said after a few minutes, and he read several pages descriptive of a great flooded tropical forest being navigated by boys on a raft.

“Think of that!” he concluded. “That’s the Amazon river in flood time in South America. And the world’s full of places like that — everywhere, most likely, except Oakland. Oakland’s just a place to start from, I guess. Now that’s adventure, I want to tell you. Just think of the luck of them boys! All the same, some day I’m going to go over the Andes to the headwaters of the Amazon, all through the rubber country, an’ canoe down the Amazon thousands of miles to its mouth where it’s that wide you can’t see one bank from the other an’ where you can scoop up perfectly fresh water out of the ocean a hundred miles from land.”

But Saxon was not listening. One pregnant sentence had caught her fancy. Oakland just a place to start from. She had never viewed the city in that light. She had accepted it as a place to live in, as an end in itself. But a place to start from! Why not! Why not like any railroad station or ferry depot! Certainly, as things were going, Oakland was not a place to stop in. The boy was right. It was a place to start from. But to go where? Here she was halted, and she was driven from the train of thought by a strong pull and a series of jerks on the line. She began to haul in, hand under hand, rapidly and deftly, the boy encouraging her, until hooks, sinker, and a big gasping rockcod tumbled into the bottom of the boat. The fish was free of the hook, and she baited afresh and dropped the line over. The boy marked his place and closed the book.

“They’ll be biting soon as fast as we can haul ‘em in,” he said.

But the rush of fish did not come immediately.

“Did you ever read Captain Mayne Reid?” he asked. “Or Captain Marryatt? Or Ballantyne?”

She shook her head.

“And you an Anglo-Saxon!” he cried derisively. “Why, there’s stacks of ‘em in the Free Library. I have two cards, my mother’s an’ mine, an’ I draw ‘em out all the time, after school, before I have to carry my papers. I stick the books inside my shirt, in front, under the suspenders. That holds ‘em. One time, deliverin’ papers at Second an’ Market — there’s an awful tough gang of kids hang out there — I got into a fight with the leader. He hauled off to knock my wind out, an’ he landed square on a book. You ought to seen his face. An’ then I landed on him. An’ then his whole gang was goin’ to jump on me, only a couple of iron-molders stepped in an’ saw fair play. I gave ‘em the books to hold.”

“Who won?” Saxon asked.

“Nobody,” the boy confessed reluctantly. “I think I was lickin’ him, but the molders called it a draw because the policeman on the beat stopped us when we’d only teen fightin’ half an hour. But you ought to seen the crowd. I bet there was five hundred — ”

He broke off abruptly and began hauling in his line. Saxon, too, was hauling in. And in the next couple of hours they caught twenty pounds of fish between them.

That night, long after dark, the little, half-decked skiff sailed up the Oakland Estuary. The wind was fair but light, and the boat moved slowly, towing a long pile which the boy had picked up adrift and announced as worth three dollars anywhere for the wood that was in it. The tide flooded smoothly under the full moon, and Saxon recognized the points they passed

— the Transit slip, Sandy Beach, the shipyards, the nail works, Market street wharf. The boy took the skiff in to a dilapidated boat-wharf at the foot of Castro street, where the scow schooners, laden with sand and gravel, lay hauled to the shore in a long row. He insisted upon an equal division of the fish, because Saxon had helped catch them, though he explained at length the ethics of flotsam to show her that the pile was wholly his.

At Seventh and Poplar they separated, Saxon walking on alone to Pine street with her load of fish. Tired though she was from the long day, she had a strange feeling of well-being, and, after cleaning the fish, she fell asleep wondering, when good times came again, if she could persuade Billy to get a boat and go out with her on Sundays as she had gone out that day.

CHAPTER VII

She slept all night, without stirring, without dreaming, and awoke naturally and, for the first time in weeks, refreshed. She felt her old self, as if some depressing weight had been lifted, or a shadow had been swept away from between her and the sun. Her head was clear. The seeming iron band that had pressed it so hard was gone. She was cheerful. She even caught herself humming aloud as she divided the fish into messes for Mrs. Olsen, Maggie Donahue, and herself. She enjoyed her gossip with each of them, and, returning home, plunged joyfully into the task of putting the neglected house in order. She sang as she worked, and ever as she sang the magic words of the boy danced and sparkled among the notes: OAKLAND IS JUST A PLACE TO START FROM.

Everything was clear as print. Her and Billy's problem was as simple as an arithmetic problem at school: to carpet a room so many feet long, so many feet wide, to paper a room so many feet high, so many feet around. She had been sick in her head, she had had strange lapses, she had been irresponsible. Very well. All this had been because of her troubles — troubles in which she had had no hand in the making. Billy's case was hers precisely. He had behaved strangely because he had been irresponsible. And all their troubles were the troubles of the trap. Oakland was the trap. Oakland was a good place to start from.

She reviewed the events of her married life. The strikes and the hard times had caused everything. If it had not been for the strike of the shopmen and the fight in her front yard, she would not have lost her baby. If Billy had not been made desperate by the idleness and the hopeless fight of the teamsters, he would not have taken to drinking. If they had not been hard up, they would not have taken a lodger, and Billy would not be in jail.

Her mind was made up. The city was no place for her and Billy, no place for love nor for babies. The way out was simple. They would leave Oakland. It was the stupid that remained and bowed their heads to fate. But she and Billy were not stupid. They would not bow their heads. They would go forth and face fate. — Where, she did not know. But that would come. The world was large. Beyond the encircling hills, out through the Golden Gate, somewhere they would find what they desired. The boy had been wrong in one thing. She was not tied to Oakland, even if she was married.

The world was free to her and Billy as it had been free to the wandering generations before them. It was only the stupid who had been left behind everywhere in the race's wandering. The strong had gone on. Well, she and Billy were strong. They would go on, over the brown Contra Costa hills or out through the Golden Gate.

The day before Billy's release Saxon completed her meager preparations to receive him. She was without money, and, except for her resolve not to offend Billy in that way again, she would have borrowed ferry fare from Maggie Donahue and journeyed to San Francisco to sell some of her personal pretties. As it was, with bread and potatoes and salted sardines in the house, she went out at the afternoon low tide and dug clams for a chowder. Also, she gathered a load of driftwood, and it was nine in the evening when she emerged from the marsh, on her shoulder a bundle of wood and a short-handled spade, in her free hand the pail of clams. She sought the darker side of the street at the corner and hurried across the zone of electric light to avoid detection by the neighbors. But a woman came toward her, looked sharply and stopped in front of her. It was Mary.

"My God, Saxon!" she exclaimed. "Is it as bad as this?"

Saxon looked at her old friend curiously, with a swift glance that sketched all the tragedy. Mary was thinner, though there was more color in her cheeks — color of which Saxon had her doubts. Mary's bright eyes were handsomer, larger — too large, too feverish bright, too restless. She was well dressed — too well dressed; and she was suffering from nerves. She turned her head apprehensively to glance into the darkness behind her.

"My God!" Saxon breathed. "And you..." She shut her lips, then began anew. "Come along to the house," she said.

"If you're ashamed to be seen with me — " Mary blurted, with one of her old quick angers.

"No, no," Saxon disclaimed. "It's the driftwood and the clams. I don't want the neighbors to know. Come along."

"No; I can't, Saxon. I'd like to, but I can't. I've got to catch the next train to F'risco. I've ben waitin' around. I knocked at your back door. But the house was dark. Billy's still in, ain't he?"

"Yes, he gets out to-morrow."

"I read about it in the papers," Mary went on hurriedly, looking behind her. "I was in Stockton when it happened." She turned upon Saxon almost savagely. "You don't blame me, do you? I just couldn't go back to work after bein' married. I was sick of work. Played out, I guess, an' no good anyway. But if you only knew how I hated the laundry even before I got married. It's a dirty world. You don't dream. Saxon, honest to God, you could never guess a hundredth part of its dirtiness. Oh, I wish I was dead, I wish I was dead an' out of it all. Listen — no, I can't now. There's the down train puffin' at Adeline. I'll have to run for it. Can I come — "

"Aw, get a move on, can't you?" a man's voice interrupted.

Behind her the speaker had partly emerged from the darkness. No workingman, Saxon could see that — lower in the world scale, despite his good clothes, than any workingman.

"I'm comin', if you'll only wait a second," Mary placated.

And by her answer and its accents Saxon knew that Mary was afraid of this man who prowled on the rim of light.

Mary turned to her.

"I got to beat it; good bye," she said, fumbling in the palm of her glove.

She caught Saxon's free hand, and Saxon felt a small hot coin pressed into it. She tried to resist, to force it back.

"No, no," Mary pleaded. "For old times. You can do as much for me some day. I'll see you again. Good bye."

Suddenly, sobbing, she threw her arms around Saxon's waist, crushing the feathers of her hat against the load of wood as she pressed her face against Saxon's breast. Then she tore herself away to arm's length, passionate, queering, and stood gazing at Saxon.

"Aw, get a hustle, get a hustle," came from the darkness the peremptory voice of the man.

"Oh, Saxon!" Mary sobbed; and was gone.

In the house, the lamp lighted, Saxon looked at the coin. It was a five-dollar piece — to her, a fortune. Then she thought of Mary, and of the man of whom she was afraid. Saxon registered another black mark against Oakland. Mary was one more destroyed. They lived only five years, on the average, Saxon had heard somewhere. She looked at the coin and tossed it into the kitchen sink. When she cleaned the clams, she heard the coin tinkle down the vent pipe.

It was the thought of Billy, next morning, that led Saxon to go under the sink, unscrew the cap to the catchtrap, and rescue the five-dollar piece. Prisoners were not well fed, she had been told; and the thought of placing clams and dry bread before Billy, after thirty days of prison fare, was too appalling for her to contemplate. She knew how he liked to spread his butter on thick, how he liked thick, rare steak fried on a dry hot pan, and how he liked coffee that was coffee and plenty of it.

Not until after nine o'clock did Billy arrive, and she was dressed in her prettiest house gingham to meet him. She peeped on him as he came slowly up the front steps, and she would have run out to him except for a group of neighborhood children who were staring from across the street. The door opened before him as his hand reached for the knob, and, inside, he closed it by backing against it, for his arms were filled with Saxon. No, he had not had breakfast, nor did he want any now that he had her. He had only stopped for a shave. He had stood the barber off, and he had walked all the way from the City Hall because of lack of the nickel carfare. But he'd like a bath most mighty well, and a change of clothes. She mustn't come near him until he was clean.

When all this was accomplished, he sat in the kitchen and watched her cook, noting the driftwood she put in the stove and asking about it. While she moved about, she told how she had gathered the wood, how she had managed to live and not be beholden to the union, and by the time they were seated at the table she was telling him about her meeting with Mary the night before. She did not mention the five dollars.

Billy stopped chewing the first mouthful of steak. His expression frightened her. He spat the meat out on his plate.

"You got the money to buy the meat from her," he accused slowly. "You had no money, no more tick with the butcher, yet here's meat. Am I right?"

Saxon could only bend her head.

The terrifying, ageless look had come into his face, the bleak and passionless glaze into his eyes, which she had first seen on the day at Weasel Park when he had fought with the three Irishmen.

"What else did you buy?" he demanded — not roughly, not angrily, but with the fearful coldness of a rage that words could not express.

To her surprise, she had grown calm. What did it matter? It was merely what one must expect, living in Oakland — something to be left behind when Oakland was a thing behind, a place started from.

"The coffee," she answered. "And the butter."

He emptied his plate of meat and her plate into the frying pan, likewise the roll of butter and the slice on the table, and on top he poured the contents of the coffee canister. All this he carried into the back yard and dumped in the garbage can. The coffee pot he emptied into the sink. "How much of the money you got left?" he next wanted to know.

Saxon had already gone to her purse and taken it out.

"Three dollars and eighty cents," she counted, handing it to him. "I paid forty-five cents for the steak."

He ran his eye over the money, counted it, and went to the front door. She heard the door open and close, and knew that the silver had been flung into the street. When he came back to the kitchen, Saxon was already serving him fried potatoes on a clean plate.

"Nothin's too good for the Robertses," he said; "but, by God, that sort of truck is too high for my stomach. It's so high it stinks."

He glanced at the fried potatoes, the fresh slice of dry bread, and the glass of water she was placing by his plate.

"It's all right," she smiled, as he hesitated. "There's nothing left that's tainted."

He shot a swift glance at her face, as if for sarcasm, then sighed and sat down. Almost immediately he was up again and holding out his arms to her.

"I'm goin' to eat in a minute, but I want to talk to you first," he said, sitting down and holding her closely. "Besides, that water ain't like coffee. Gettin' cold won't spoil it none. Now, listen. You're the only one I got in this world. You wasn't afraid of me an' what I just done, an' I'm glad of that. Now we'll forget all about Mary. I got charity enough. I'm just as sorry for her as you. I'd do anything for her. I'd wash her feet for her like Christ did. I'd let her eat at my table, an' sleep under my roof. But all that ain't no reason I should touch anything she's earned. Now forget her. It's you an' me, Saxon, only you an' me an' to hell with the rest of the world. Nothing else counts. You won't never have to be afraid of me again. Whisky an' I don't mix very well, so I'm goin' to cut whisky out. I've been clean off my nut, an' I ain't treated you altogether right. But that's all past. It won't never happen again. I'm goin' to start out fresh.

"Now take this thing. I oughtn't to acted so hasty. But I did. I oughta talked it over. But I didn't. My damned temper got the best of me, an' you know I got one. If a fellow can keep his temper in boxin', why he can keep it in bein' married, too. Only this got me too sudden-like. It's something I can't stomach, that I never could stomach. An' you wouldn't want me to any more'n I'd want you to stomach something you just couldn't."

She sat up straight on his knees and looked at him, afire with an idea.

“You mean that, Billy?”

“Sure I do.”

“Then I’ll tell you something I can’t stomach any more. I’ll die if I have to.”

“Well?” he questioned, after a searching pause.

“It’s up to you,” she said.

“Then fire away.”

“You don’t know what you’re letting yourself in for,” she warned. “Maybe you’d better back out before it’s too late.”

He shook his head stubbornly.

“What you don’t want to stomach you ain’t goin’ to stomach. Let her go.”

“First,” she commenced, “no more slugging of scabs.”

His mouth opened, but he checked the involuntary protest.

“And, second, no more Oakland.”

“I don’t get that last.”

“No more Oakland. No more living in Oakland. I’ll die if I have to. It’s pull up stakes and get out.”

He digested this slowly.

“Where?” he asked finally.

“Anywhere. Everywhere. Smoke a cigarette and think it over.”

He shook his head and studied her.

“You mean that?” he asked at length.

“I do. I want to chuck Oakland just as hard as you wanted to chuck the beefsteak, the coffee, and the butter.”

She could see him brace himself. She could feel him brace his very body ere he answered.

“All right then, if that’s what you want. We’ll quit Oakland. We’ll quit it cold. God damn it, anyway, it never done nothin’ for me, an’ I guess I’m husky enough to scratch for us both anywheres. An’ now that’s settled, just tell me what you got it in for Oakland for.”

And she told him all she had thought out, marshaled all the facts in her indictment of Oakland, omitting nothing, not even her last visit to Doctor Hentley’s office nor Billy’s drinking. He but drew her closer and proclaimed his resolves anew. The time passed. The fried potatoes grew cold, and the stove went out.

When a pause came, Billy stood up, still holding her. He glanced at the fried potatoes.

"Stone cold," he said, then turned to her. "Come on. Put on your prettiest. We're goin' up town for something to eat an' to celebrate. I guess we got a celebration comin', seein' as we're going to pull up stakes an' pull our freight from the old burg. An' we won't have to walk. I can borrow a dime from the barber, an' I got enough junk to hock for a blowout."

His junk proved to be several gold medals won in his amateur days at boxing tournaments. Once up town and in the pawnshop, Uncle Sam seemed thoroughly versed in the value of the medals, and Billy jingled a handful of silver in his pocket as they walked out.

He was as hilarious as a boy, and she joined in his good spirits. When he stopped at a corner cigar store to buy a sack of Bull Durham, he changed his mind and bought Imperials.

"Oh, I'm a regular devil," he laughed. "Nothing's too good to-day — not even tailor-made smokes. An' no chop houses nor Jap joints for you an' me. It's Barnum's."

They strolled to the restaurant at Seventh and Broadway where they had had their wedding supper.

"Let's make believed we're not married," Saxon suggested.

"Sure," he agreed, " — an' take a private room so as the waiter'll have to knock on the door each time he comes in."

Saxon demurred at that.

"It will be too expensive, Billy. You'll have to tip him for the knocking. We'll take the regular dining room."

"Order anything you want," Billy said largely, when they were seated. "Here's family porterhouse, a dollar an' a half. What d'ye say?"

"And hash-browned," she abetted, "and coffee extra special, and some oysters first — I want to compare them with the rock oysters."

Billy nodded, and looked up from the bill of fare.

"Here's mussels bordelay. Try an order of them, too, an' see if they beat your Rock Wall ones."

"Why not?" Saxon cried, her eyes dancing. "The world is ours. We're just travelers through this town."

"Yep, that's the stuff," Billy muttered absently. He was looking at the theater column. He lifted his eyes from the paper. "Matinee at Bell's. We can get reserved seats for a quarter. — Doggone the luck anyway!"

His exclamation was so aggrieved and violent that it brought alarm into her eyes.

"If I'd only thought," he regretted, "we could a-gone to the Forum for grub. That's the swell joint where fellows like Roy Blanchard hangs out, blowin' the money we sweat for them."

They bought reserved tickets at Bell's Theater; but it was too early for the performance, and they went down Broadway and into the Electric Theater to while away the time on a moving picture show. A cowboy film was run off, and a French comic; then came a rural drama situated somewhere in the Middle West. It began with a farm yard scene. The sun blazed down on a corner of a barn and on a rail fence where the ground lay in the mottled shade of large trees overhead. There were chickens, ducks, and turkeys, scratching, waddling, moving about. A big sow, followed by a roly-poly litter of seven little ones, marched majestically through the chickens, rooting them out of the way. The hens, in turn, took it out on the little porkers, pecking them when they strayed too far from their mother. And over the top rail a horse looked drowsily on, ever and anon, at mathematically precise intervals, switching a lazy tail that flashed high lights in the sunshine.

"It's a warm day and there are flies — can't you just feel it?" Saxon whispered.

"Sure. An' that horse's tail! It's the most natural ever. Gee! I bet he knows the trick of clampin' it down over the reins. I wouldn't wonder if his name was Iron Tail."

A dog ran upon the scene. The mother pig turned tail and with short ludicrous jumps, followed by her progeny and pursued by the dog, fled out of the film. A young girl came on, a sunbonnet hanging down her back, her apron caught up in front and filled with grain which she threw to the buttering fowls. Pigeons flew down from the top of the film and joined in the scrambling feast. The dog returned, wading scarcely noticed among the feathered creatures, to wag his tail and laugh up at the girl. And, behind, the horse nodded over the rail and switched on. A young man entered, his errand immediately known to an audience educated in moving pictures. But Saxon had no eyes for the love-making, the pleading forcefulness, the shy reluctance, of man and maid. Ever her gaze wandered back to the chickens, to the mottled shade under the trees, to the warm wall of the barn, to the sleepy horse with its ever recurrent whisk of tail.

She drew closer to Billy, and her hand, passed around his arm, sought his hand.

"Oh, Billy," she sighed. "I'd just die of happiness in a place like that." And, when the film was ended. "We got lots of time for Bell's. Let's stay and see that one over again."

They sat through a repetition of the performance, and when the farm yard scene appeared, the longer Saxon looked at it the more it affected her. And this time she took in further details. She saw fields beyond, rolling hills in the background, and a cloud-flecked sky. She identified some of the chickens, especially an obstreperous old hen who resented the thrust of the sow's muzzle, particularly pecked at the little pigs, and laid about her with a vengeance when the grain fell. Saxon looked back across the fields to the hills and sky, breathing the spaciousness of it, the freedom, the content. Tears welled into her eyes and she wept silently, happily.

"I know a trick that'd fix that old horse if he ever clamped his tail down on me," Billy whispered.

"Now I know where we're going when we leave Oakland," she informed him.

"Where?"

"There."

He looked at her, and followed her gaze to the screen. "Oh," he said, and cogitated. "An' why shouldn't we?" he added.

"Oh, Billy, will you?"

Her lips trembled in her eagerness, and her whisper broke and was almost inaudible "Sure," he said. It was his day of royal largess.

"What you want is yourn, an' I'll scratch my fingers off for it. An' I've always had a hankerin' for the country myself. Say! I've known horses like that to sell for half the price, an' I can sure cure 'em of the habit."

CHAPTER XVIII

It was early evening when they got off the car at Seventh and Pine on their way home from Bell’s Theater. Billy and Saxon did their little marketing together, then separated at the corner, Saxon to go on to the house and prepare supper, Billy to go and see the boys — the teamsters who had fought on in the strike during his month of retirement.

“Take care of yourself, Billy,” she called, as he started off.

“Sure,” he answered, turning his face to her over his shoulder.

Her heart leaped at the smile. It was his old, unsullied love-smile which she wanted always to see on his face — for which, armed with her own wisdom and the wisdom of Mercedes, she would wage the utmost woman’s war to possess. A thought of this flashed brightly through her brain, and it was with a proud little smile that she remembered all her pretty equipment stored at home in the bureau and the chest of drawers.

Three-quarters of an hour later, supper ready, all but the putting on of the lamb chops at the sound of his step, Saxon waited. She heard the gate click, but instead of his step she heard a curious and confused scraping of many steps. She flew to open the door. Billy stood there, but a different Billy from the one she had parted from so short a time before. A small boy, beside him, held his hat. His face had been fresh-washed, or, rather, drenched, for his shirt and shoulders were wet. His pale hair lay damp and plastered against his forehead, and was darkened by oozing blood. Both arms hung limply by his side. But his face was composed, and he even grinned.

“It’s all right,” he reassured Saxon. “The joke’s on me. Somewhat damaged but still in the ring.” He stepped gingerly across the threshold. “ — Come on in, you fellows. We’re all mutts together.”

He was followed in by the boy with his hat, by Bud Strothers and another teamster she knew, and by two strangers. The latter were big, hard-featured, sheepish-faced men, who stared at Saxon as if afraid of her.

“It’s all right, Saxon,” Billy began, but was interrupted by Bud.

“First thing is to get him on the bed an’ cut his clothes off him. Both arms is broke, and here are the ginks that done it.”

He indicated the two strangers, who shuffled their feet with embarrassment and looked more sheepish than ever.

Billy sat down on the bed, and while Saxon held the lamp, Bud and the strangers proceeded to cut coat, shirt, and undershirt from him.

"He wouldn't go to the receivin' hospital," Bud said to Saxon.

"Not on your life," Billy concurred. "I had 'em send for Doc Hentley. He'll be here any minute. Them two arms is all I got. They've done pretty well by me, an' I gotta do the same by them. — No medical students a-learnin' their trade on me."

"But how did it happens" Saxon demanded, looking from Billy to the two strangers, puzzled by the amity that so evidently existed among them all.

"Oh, they're all right," Billy dashed in. "They done it through mistake. They're Frisco teamsters, an' they come over to help us — a lot of 'em."

The two teamsters seemed to cheer up at this, and nodded their heads.

"Yes, missus," one of them rumbled hoarsely. "It's all a mistake, an'... well, the joke's on us."

"The drinks, anyway," Billy grinned.

Not only was Saxon not excited, but she was scarcely perturbed. What had happened was only to be expected.

It was in line with all that Oakland had already done to her and hers, and, besides, Billy was not dangerously hurt. Broken arms and a sore head would heal. She brought chairs and seated everybody.

"Now tell me what happened," she begged. "I'm all at sea, what of you two burleys breaking my husband's arms, then seeing him home and holding a love-fest with him."

"An' you got a right," Bud Strothers assured her. "You see, it happened this way — "

"You shut up, Bud," Billy broke it. "You didn't see anything of it."

Saxon looked to the San Francisco teamsters.

"We'd come over to lend a hand, seein' as the Oakland boys was gettin' some the short end of it," one spoke up, "an' we've sure learned some scabs there's better trades than drivin' team. Well, me an' Jackson here was nosin' around to see what we can see, when your husband comes moseyin' along. When he — "

"Hold on," Jackson interrupted. "Get it straight as you go along. We reckon we know the boys by sight. But your husband we ain't never seen around, him bein'..."

"As you might say, put away for a while," the first teamster took up the tale. "So, when we sees what we thinks is a scab dodgin' away from us an' takin’ the shortcut through the alley — ”

“The alley back of Campbell’s grocery,” Billy elucidated.

“Yep, back of the grocery,” the first teamster went on; “why, we’re sure he’s one of them squarehead scabs, hired through Murray an’ Ready, makin’ a sneak to get into the stables over the back fences.”

“We caught one there, Billy an’ me,” Bud interpolated.

“So we don’t waste any time,” Jackson said, addressing himself to Saxon. “We’ve done it before, an’ we know how to do ‘em up brown an’ tie ‘em with baby ribbon. So we catch your husband right in the alley.”

“I was lookin’ for Bud,” said Billy. “The boys told me I’d find him somewhere around the other end of the alley. An’ the first thing I know, Jackson, here, asks me for a match.”

“An’ right there’s where I get in my fine work,” resumed the first teamster.

“What?” asked Saxon.

“That.” The man pointed to the wound in Billy’s scalp. “I laid ‘m out. He went down like a steer, an’ got up on his knees dippy, a-gabblin’ about somebody standin’ on their foot. He didn’t know where he was at, you see, clean groggy. An’ then we done it.”

The man paused, the tale told.

“Broke both his arms with the crowbar,” Bud supplemented.

“That’s when I come to myself, when the bones broke,” Billy corroborated. “An’ there was the two of ‘em givin’ me the ha-ha. ‘That’ll last you some time,’ Jackson was sayin’. An’ Anson says, ‘I’d like to see you drive horses with them arms.’ An’ then Jackson says, ‘let’s give ‘m something for luck.’ An’ with that he fetched me a wallop on the jaw — ”

“No,” corrected Anson. “That wallop was mine.”

“Well, it sent me into dreamland over again,” Billy sighed. “An’ when I come to, here was Bud an’ Anson an’ Jackson dousin’ me at a water trough. An’ then we dodged a reporter an’ all come home together.”

Bud Strothers held up his fist and indicated freshly abraded skin.

“The reporter-guy just insisted on samplin’ it,” he said. Then, to Billy: “That’s why I cut around Ninth an’ caught up with you down on Sixth.”

A few minutes later Doctor Hentley arrived, and drove the men from the rooms. They waited till he had finished, to assure themselves of Billy’s well being, and then departed. In the kitchen Doctor Hentley washed his hands and gave Saxon final instructions. As he dried himself he sniffed the air and looked toward the stove where a pot was simmering.

“Clams,” he said. “Where did you buy them?”

“I didn’t buy them,” replied Saxon. “I dug them myself.”

“Not in the marsh?” he asked with quickened interest.

“Yes.”

“Throw them away. Throw them out. They’re death and corruption. Typhoid — I’ve got three cases now, all traced to the clams and the marsh.”

When he had gone, Saxon obeyed. Still another mark against Oakland, she reflected — Oakland, the man-trap, that poisoned those it could not starve.

“If it wouldn’t drive a man to drink,” Billy groaned, when Saxon returned to him. “Did you ever dream such luck? Look at all my fights in the ring, an’ never a broken bone, an’ here, snap, snap, just like that, two arms smashed.”

“Oh, it might be worse,” Saxon smiled cheerfully.

“I’d like to know how. It might have been your neck.”

“An’ a good job. I tell you, Saxon, you gotta show me anything worse.”

“I can,” she said confidently.

“Well?”

“Well, wouldn’t it be worse if you intended staying on in Oakland where it might happen again?”

“I can see myself becomin’ a farmer an’ plowin’ with a pair of pipe-stems like these,” he persisted.

“Doctor Hentley says they’ll be stronger at the break than ever before. And you know yourself that’s true of clean-broken bones. Now you close your eyes and go to sleep. You’re all done up, and you need to keep your brain quiet and stop thinking.”

He closed his eyes obediently. She slipped a cool hand under the nape of his neck and let it rest.

“That feels good,” he murmured. “You’re so cool, Saxon. Your hand, and you, all of you. Bein’ with you is like comin’ out into the cool night after dancin’ in a hot room.”

After several minutes of quiet, he began to giggle.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Oh, nothin’. I was just thinkin’ — thinking of them mutts doin’ me up — me, that’s done up more scabs than I can remember.”

Next morning Billy awoke with his blues dissipated. From the kitchen Saxon heard him painfully wrestling strange vocal acrobatics.

“I got a new song you never heard,” he told her when she came in with a cup of coffee. “I only remember the chorus though. It’s the old man talkin’ to some hobo of a hired man that wants to marry his daughter. Mamie, that Billy Murphy used to run with before he got married, used to sing it. It’s a kind of a sobby song. It used to always give Mamie the weeps. Here’s the way the chorus goes — an’ remember, it’s the old man spielin’.”

And with great solemnity and excruciating Batting, Billy sang:

“O treat my daughter kind-i-ly; An’ say you’ll do no harm, An’ when I die I’ll will to you My little house an’ farm — My horse, my plow, my sheep, my cow, An’ all them little chickens in the ga-a-rden.

“It’s them little chickens in the garden that gets me,” he explained. “That’s how I remembered it — from the chickens in the movin’ pictures yesterday. An’ some day we’ll have little chickens in the garden, won’t we, old girl?”

“And a daughter, too,” Saxon amplified.

“An’ I’ll be the old geezer sayin’ them same words to the hired man,” Billy carried the fancy along. “It don’t take long to raise a daughter if you ain’t in a hurry.”

Saxon took her long-neglected ukulele from its case and strummed it into tune.

“And I’ve a song you never heard, Billy. Tom’s always singing it. He’s crazy about taking up government land and going farming, only Sarah won’t think of it. He sings it something like this:

“We’ll have a little farm, A pig, a horse, a cow, And you will drive the wagon, And I will drive the plow.”

“Only in this case I guess it’s me that’ll do the plowin’,” Billy approved. “Say, Saxon, sing ‘Harvest Days.’ That’s a farmer’s song, too.”

After that she feared the coffee was growing cold and compelled Billy to take it. In the helplessness of two broken arms, he had to be fed like a baby, and as she fed him they talked.

“I’ll tell you one thing,” Billy said, between mouthfuls. “Once we get settled down in the country you’ll have that horse you’ve been wishin’ for all your life. An’ it’ll be all your own, to ride, drive, sell, or do anything you want with.”

And, again, he ruminated: “One thing that’ll come handy in the country is that I know horses; that’s a big start. I can always get a job at that — if it ain’t at union wages. An’ the other things about farmin’ I can learn fast enough. — Say, d’ye remember that day you first told me about wantin’ a horse to ride all your life?”

Saxon remembered, and it was only by a severe struggle that she was able to keep the tears from welling into her eyes. She seemed bursting with happiness, and she was remembering many things — all the warm promise of life with Billy that had been hers in the days before hard times. And now the promise was renewed again. Since its fulfillment had not come to them, they were going away to fulfill it for themselves and make the moving pictures come true.

Impelled by a half-feigned fear, she stole away into the kitchen bedroom where Bert had died, to study her face in the bureau mirror. No, she decided; she was little changed. She was still equipped for the battlefield of love. Beautiful she was not. She knew that. But had not Mercedes said that the great women of history who had won men had not been beautiful? And yet, Saxon insisted, as she gazed at her reflection, she was anything but unlovely. She studied her wide gray eyes that were so very gray, that were always alive with light and vivacities, where, in the surface and depths, always swam thoughts unuttered, thoughts that sank down and dissolved to give place to other thoughts. The brows were excellent — she realized that. Slenderly penciled, a little darker than her light brown hair, they just fitted her irregular nose that was feminine but not weak, that if anything was piquant and that picturesquely might be declared impudent.

She could see that her face was slightly thin, that the red of her lips was not quite so red, and that she had lost some of her quick coloring. But all that would come back again. Her mouth was not of the rosebud type she saw in the magazines. She paid particular attention to it. A pleasant mouth it was, a mouth to be joyous with, a mouth for laughter and to make laughter in others. She deliberately experimented with it, smiled till the corners dented deeper. And she knew that when she smiled her smile was provocative of smiles. She laughed with her eyes alone — a trick of hers. She threw back her head and laughed with eyes and mouth together, between her spread lips showing the even rows of strong white teeth.

And she remembered Billy’s praise of her teeth, the night at Germanic Hall after he had told Charley Long he was standing on his foot. “Not big, and not little dinky baby's teeth either," Billy had said, "... just right, and they fit you." Also, he had said that to look at them made him hungry, and that they were good enough to eat.

She recollected all the compliments he had ever paid her. Beyond all treasures, these were treasures to her — the love phrases, praises, and admirations. He had said her skin was cool — soft as velvet, too, and smooth as silk. She rolled up her sleeve to the shoulder, brushed her cheek with the white skin for a test, with deep scrutiny examined the fineness of its texture. And he had told her that she was sweet; that he hadn't known what it meant when they said a girl was sweet, not until he had known her. And he had told her that her voice was cool, that it gave him the feeling her hand did when it rested on his forehead. Her voice went all through him, he had said, cool and fine, like a wind of coolness. And he had likened it to the first of the sea breeze setting in the afternoon after a scorching hot morning. And, also, when she talked low, that it was round and sweet, like the 'cello in the Macdonough Theater orchestra.

He had called her his Tonic Kid. He had called her a thoroughbred, clean-cut and spirited, all fine nerves and delicate and sensitive. He had liked the way she carried her clothes. She carried them like a dream, had been his way of putting it. They were part of her, just as much as the cool of her voice and skin and the scent of her hair.

And her figure! She got upon a chair and tilted the mirror so that she could see herself from hips to feet. She drew her skirt back and up. The slender ankle was just as slender. The calf had lost none of its delicately mature swell. She studied her hips, her waist, her bosom, her neck, the poise of her head, and sighed contentedly. Billy must be right, and he had said that she was built like a French woman, and that in the matter of lines and form she could give Annette Kellerman cards and spades.

He had said so many things, now that she recalled them all at one time. Her lips! The Sunday he proposed he had said: "I like to watch your lips talking. It's funny, but every move they make looks like a tickly kiss." And afterward, that same day: "You looked good to me from the first moment I spotted you." He had praised her housekeeping. He had said he fed better, lived more comfortably, held up his end with the fellows, and saved money. And she remembered that day when he had crushed her in his arms and declared she was the greatest little bit of a woman that had ever come down the pike.

She ran her eyes over all herself in the mirror again, gathered herself together into a whole, compact and good to look upon — delicious, she knew. Yes, she would do. Magnificent as Billy was in his man way, in her own way she was a match for him. Yes, she had done well by Billy. She deserved much — all he could give her, the best he could give her. But she made no blunder of egotism. Frankly valuing herself, she as frankly valued him. When he was himself, his real self, not harassed by trouble, not pinched by the trap, not maddened by drink, her man-boy and lover, he was well worth all she gave him or could give him.

Saxon gave herself a farewell look. No. She was not dead, any more than was Billy's love dead, than was her love dead. All that was needed was the proper soil, and their love would grow and blossom. And they were turning their backs upon Oakland to go and seek that proper soil.

"Oh, Billy!" she called through the partition, still standing on the chair, one hand tipping the mirror forward and back, so that she was able to run her eyes from the reflection of her ankles and calves to her face, warm with color and roguishly alive.

"Yes?" she heard him answer.

"I'm loving myself," she called back.

"What's the game?" came his puzzled query. "What are you so stuck on yourself for!"

"Because you love me," she answered. "I love every bit of me, Billy, because... because... well, because you love every bit of me."

CHAPTER XIX

Between feeding and caring for Billy, doing the housework, making plans, and selling her store of pretty needlework, the days flew happily for Saxon. Billy's consent to sell her pretties had been hard to get, but at last she succeeded in coaxing it out of him.

"It's only the ones I haven't used," she urged; "and I can always make more when we get settled somewhere."

What she did not sell, along with the household linen and hers and Billy's spare clothing, she arranged to store with Tom.

"Go ahead," Billy said. "This is your picnic. What you say goes. You're Robinson Crusoe an' I'm your man Friday. Make up your mind yet which way you're goin' to travel?"

Saxon shook her head.

"Or how?"

She held up one foot and then the other, encased in stout walking shoes which she had begun that morning to break in about the house. "Shank's mare, eh?"

"It's the way our people came into the West," she said proudly.

"It'll be regular trampin', though," he argued. "An' I never heard of a woman tramp."

"Then here's one. Why, Billy, there's no shame in tramping. My mother tramped most of the way across the Plains. And 'most everybody else's mother tramped across in those days. I don't care what people will think. I guess our race has been on the tramp since the beginning of creation, just like we'll be, looking for a piece of land that looked good to settle down on."

After a few days, when his scalp was sufficiently healed and the bone-knitting was nicely in process, Billy was able to be up and about. He was still quite helpless, however, with both his arms in splints.

Doctor Hentley not only agreed, but himself suggested, that his bill should wait against better times for settlement. Of government land, in response to Saxon's eager questioning, he knew nothing, except that he had a hazy idea that the days of government land were over.

Tom, on the contrary, was confident that there was plenty of government hand. He talked of Honey Lake, of Shasta County, and of Humboldt.

"But you can't tackle it at this time of year, with winter comin' on," he advised Saxon. "The thing for you to do is head south for warmer weather — say along the coast. It don't snow down there. I tell you what you do. Go down by San Jose and Salinas an' come out on the coast at Monterey. South of that you'll find government land mixed up with forest reserves and Mexican rancheros. It's pretty wild, without any roads to speak of. All they do is handle cattle. But there's some fine redwood canyons, with good patches of farming ground that run right down to the ocean. I was talkin' last year with a fellow that's been all through there. An' I'd a-gone, like you an' Billy, only Sarah wouldn't hear of it. There's gold down there, too. Quite a bunch is in there prospectin', an' two or three good mines have opened. But that's farther along and in a ways from the coast. You might take a look."

Saxon shook her head. "We're not looking for gold but for chickens and a place to grow vegetables. Our folks had all the chance for gold in the early days, and what have they got to show for it?"

"I guess you're right," Tom conceded. "They always played too big a game, an' missed the thousand little chances right under their nose. Look at your pa. I've heard him tell of selling three Market street lots in San Francisco for fifty dollars each. They're worth five hundred thousand right now. An' look at Uncle Will. He had ranches till the cows come home. Satisfied? No. He wanted to be a cattle king, a regular Miller and Lux. An' when he died he was a night watchman in Los Angeles at forty dollars a month. There's a spirit of the times, an' the spirit of the times has changed. It's all big business now, an' we're the small potatoes. Why, I've heard our folks talk of livin' in the Western Reserve. That was all around what's Ohio now. Anybody could get a farm them days. All they had to do was yoke their oxen an' go after it, an' the Pacific Ocean thousands of miles to the west, an' all them thousands of miles an' millions of farms just waitin' to be took up. A hundred an' sixty acres? Shucks. In the early days in Oregon they talked six hundred an' forty acres. That was the spirit of them times — free land, an' plenty of it. But when we reached the Pacific Ocean them times was ended. Big business begun; an' big business means big business men; an' every big business man means thousands of little men without any business at all except to work for the big ones. They're the losers, don't you see? An' if they don't like it they can lump it, but it won't do them no good. They can't yoke up their oxen an' pull on. There's no place to pull on.

China's over there, an' in between's a mighty lot of salt water that's no good for farmin' purposes."

"That's all clear enough," Saxon commented.

"Yes," her brother went on. "We can all see it after it's happened, when it's too late."

"But the big men were smarter," Saxon remarked.

"They were luckier," Tom contended. "Some won, but most lost, an' just as good men lost. It was almost like a lot of boys scramblin' on the sidewalk for a handful of small change. Not that some didn't have far-seein'. But just take your pa, for example. He come of good Down East stock that's got business instinct an' can add to what it's got. Now suppose your pa had developed a weak heart, or got kidney disease, or caught rheumatism, so he couldn't go gallivantin' an' rainbow chasin', an' fightin' an' explorin' all over the West. Why, most likely he'd a settled down in San Francisco — he'd a-had to — an' held onto them three Market street lots, an' bought more lots, of course, an' gone into steamboat companies, an' stock gamblin', an' railroad buildin', an' Comstock-tunnelin'.

"Why, he'd a-become big business himself. I know 'm. He was the most energetic man I ever saw, think quick as a wink, as cool as an icicle an' as wild as a Comanche. Why, he'd a-cut a swath through the free an' easy big business gamblers an' pirates of them days; just as he cut a swath through the hearts of the ladies when he went gallopin' past on that big horse of his, sword clatterin', spurs jinglin', his long hair flyin', straight as an Indian, clean-built an' graceful as a blue-eyed prince out of a fairy book an' a Mexican caballero all rolled into one; just as he cut a swath through the Johnny Rebs in Civil War days, chargin' with his men all the way through an' back again, an' yellin' like a wild Indian for more. Cady, that helped raise you, told me about that. Cady rode with your pa.

"Why, if your pa'd only got laid up in San Francisco, he would a-ben one of the big men of the West. An' in that case, right now, you'd be a rich young woman, travelin' in Europe, with a mansion on Nob Hill along with the Floods and Crockers, an' holdin' majority stock most likely in the Fairmount Hotel an' a few little concerns like it. An' why ain't you? Because your pa wasn't smart? No. His mind was like a steel trap. It's because he was filled to burstin' an' spillin' over with the spirit of the times; because he was full of fire an' vinegar an' couldn't set down in one place. That's all the difference between you an' the young women right now in the

Flood and Crocker families. Your father didn't catch rheumatism at the right time, that's all."

Saxon sighed, then smiled.

"Just the same, I've got them beaten," she said. "The Miss Floods and Miss Crockers can't marry prize-fighters, and I did."

Tom looked at her, taken aback for the moment, with admiration, slowly at first, growing in his face.

"Well, all I got to say," he enunciated solemnly, "is that Billy's so lucky he don't know how lucky he is."

Not until Doctor Hentley gave the word did the splints come off Billy's arms, and Saxon insisted upon an additional two weeks' delay so that no risk would be run. These two weeks would complete another month's rent, and the landlord had agreed to wait payment for the last two months until Billy was on his feet again.

Salinger's awaited the day set by Saxon for taking back their furniture. Also, they had returned to Billy seventy-five dollars.

"The rest you've paid will be rent," the collector told Saxon. "And the furniture's second hand now, too. The deal will be a loss to Salinger's' and they didn't have to do it, either; you know that. So just remember they've been pretty square with you, and if you start over again don't forget them."

Out of this sum, and out of what was realized from Saxon's pretties, they were able to pay all their small bills and yet have a few dollars remaining in pocket.

"I hate owin' things worse 'n poison," Billy said to Saxon. "An' now we don't owe a soul in this world except the landlord an' Doc Hentley."

"And neither of them can afford to wait longer than they have to," she said.

"And they won't," Billy answered quietly.

She smiled her approval, for she shared with Billy his horror of debt, just as both shared it with that early tide of pioneers with a Puritan ethic, which had settled the West.

Saxon timed her opportunity when Billy was out of the house to pack the chest of drawers which had crossed the Atlantic by sailing ship and the Plains by ox team. She kissed the bullet hole in it, made in the fight at Little Meadow, as she kissed her father's sword, the while she visioned him, as she always did, astride his roan warhorse. With the old religious awe, she pored over her mother's poems in the scrap-book, and clasped her mother's red satin Spanish girdle about her in a farewell embrace. She unpacked the scrap-book in order to gaze a last time at the wood engraving of the Vikings, sword in hand, leaping upon the English sands. Again she identified Billy as one of the Vikings, and pondered for a space on the strange wanderings of the seed from which she sprang. Always had her race been land-hungry, and she took delight in believing she had bred true; for had not she, despite her life passed in a city, found this same land-hunger in her? And was she not going forth to satisfy that hunger, just as her people of old time had done, as her father and mother before her? She remembered her mother's tale of how the promised land looked to them as their battered wagons and weary oxen dropped down through the early winter snows of the Sierras to the vast and flowering sun-land of California: In fancy, herself a child of nine, she looked down from the snowy heights as her mother must have looked down. She recalled and repeated aloud one of her mother's stanzas:

"'Sweet as a wind-lute's airy strains Your gentle muse has learned to sing And California's boundless plains Prolong the soft notes echoing.'"

She sighed happily and dried her eyes. Perhaps the hard times were past. Perhaps they had constituted HER Plains, and she and Billy had won safely across and were even then climbing the Sierras ere they dropped down into the pleasant valley land.

Salinger's wagon was at the house, taking out the furniture, the morning they left. The landlord, standing at the gate, received the keys, shook hands with them, and wished them luck. "You're goin' at it right," he congratulated them. "Sure an' wasn't it under me roll of blankets I tramped into Oakland meself forty year ago! Buy land, like me, when it's cheap. It'll keep you from the poorhouse in your old age. There's plenty of new towns springin' up. Get in on the ground floor. The work of your hands'll keep you in food an' under a roof, an' the lend 'll make you well to do. An' you know me address. When you can spare send me along that small bit of rent. An' good luck. An' don't mind what people think. 'Tis them that looks that finds."

Curious neighbors peeped from behind the blinds as Billy and Saxon strode up the street, while the children gazed at them in gaping astonishment. On Billy's back, inside a painted canvas tarpaulin, was slung the roll of bedding. Inside the roll were changes of underclothing and odds and ends of necessaries. Outside, from the lashings, depended a frying pan and cooking pail. In his hand he carried the coffee pot. Saxon carried a small telescope basket protected by black oilcloth, and across her back was the tiny ukulele case.

"We must look like holy frights," Billy grumbled, shrinking from every gaze that was bent upon him.

"It'd be all right, if we were going camping," Saxon consoled. "Only we're not."

"But they don't know that," she continued. "It's only you know that, and what you think they're thinking isn't what they're thinking at all. Most probably they think we're going camping. And the best of it is we are going camping. We are! We are!"

At this Billy cheered up, though he muttered his firm intention to knock the block off of any guy that got fresh. He stole a glance at Saxon. Her cheeks were red, her eyes glowing.

"Say," he said suddenly. "I seen an opera once, where fellows wandered over the country with guitars slung on their backs just like you with that strummy-strum. You made me think of them. They was always singin' songs."

"That's what I brought it along for," Saxon answered.

"And when we go down country roads we'll sing as we go along, and we'll sing by the campfires, too. We're going camping, that's all. Taking a vacation and seeing the country. So why shouldn't we have a good time? Why, we don't even know where we're going to sleep to-night, or any night. Think of the fun!"

"It's a sporting proposition all right, all right," Billy considered. "But, just the same, let's turn off an' go around the block. There's some fellows I know, standin' up there on the next corner, an' I don't want to knock THEIR blocks off."

BOOK III

CHAPTER I

The car ran as far as Hayward's, but at Saxon's suggestion they got off at San Leandro.

"It doesn't matter where we start walking," she said, "for start to walk somewhere we must. And as we're looking for land and finding out about land, the quicker we begin to investigate the better. Besides, we want to know all about all kinds of land, close to the big cities as well as back in the mountains."

"Gee! — this must be the Porchugeeze headquarters," was Billy's reiterated comment, as they walked through San Leandro.

"It looks as though they'd crowd our kind out," Saxon adjudged.

"Some tall crowdin', I guess," Billy grumbled. "It looks like the free-born American ain't got no room left in his own land."

"Then it's his own fault," Saxon said, with vague asperity, resenting conditions she was just beginning to grasp.

"Oh, I don't know about that. I reckon the American could do what the Porchugeeze do if he wanted to. Only he don't want to, thank God. He ain't much given to livin' like a pig often leavin's."

"Not in the country, maybe," Saxon controverted. "But I've seen an awful lot of Americans living like pigs in the cities."

Billy grunted unwilling assent. "I guess they quit the farms an' go to the city for something better, an' get it in the neck."

"Look at all the children!" Saxon cried. "School's letting out. And nearly all are Portuguese, Billy, NOT Porchugeeze. Mercedes taught me the right way."

"They never wore glad rags like them in the old country," Billy sneered. "They had to come over here to get decent clothes and decent grub. They're as fat as butterballs."

Saxon nodded affirmation, and a great light seemed suddenly to kindle in her understanding.

"That's the very point, Billy. They're doing it — doing it farming, too. Strikes don't bother THEM."

"You don't call that dinky gardening farming," he objected, pointing to a piece of land barely the size of an acre, which they were passing.

“Oh, your ideas are still big,” she laughed. “You’re like Uncle Will, who owned thousands of acres and wanted to own a million, and who wound up as night watchman. That’s what was the trouble with all us Americans. Everything large scale. Anything less than one hundred and sixty acres was small scale.”

“Just the same,” Billy held stubbornly, “large scale’s a whole lot better’n small scale like all these dinky gardens.”

Saxon sighed. “I don’t know which is the dinkier,” she observed finally, “ — owning a few little acres and the team you’re driving, or not owning any acres and driving a team somebody else owns for wages.”

Billy winced.

“Go on, Robinson Crusoe,” he growled good naturedly. “Rub it in good an’ plenty. An’ the worst of it is it’s correct. A hell of a free-born American I’ve been, adrivin’ other folkses’ teams for a livin’, a-strikin’ and a-sluggin’ scabs, an’ not bein’ able to keep up with the installments for a few sticks of furniture. Just the same I was sorry for one thing. I hated worse in Sam Hill to see that Morris chair go back — you liked it so. We did a lot of honeymoonin’ in that chair.”

They were well out of San Leandro, walking through a region of tiny holdings — ”farmlets,” Billy called them; and Saxon got out her ukulele to cheer him with a song.

First, it was “Treat my daughter kind-i-ly,” and then she swung into old-fashioned darky camp-meeting hymns, beginning with:

“Oh! de Judgmen’ Day am rollin’ roan’, Rollin’, yes, a-rollin’, I hear the trumpets’ awful soun’, Rollin’, yes, a-rollin’.”

A big touring car, dashing past, threw a dusty pause in her singing, and Saxon delivered herself of her latest wisdom.

“Now, Billy, remember we’re not going to take up with the first piece of land we see. We’ve got to go into this with our eyes open — ”

“An’ they ain’t open yet,” he agreed.

“And we’ve got to get them open. “‘Tis them that looks that finds.’ There’s lots of time to learn things. We don’t care if it takes months and months. We’re footloose. A good start is better than a dozen bad ones. We’ve got to talk and find out. We’ll talk with everybody we meet. Ask questions. Ask everybody. It’s the only way to find out.”

“I ain’t much of a hand at askin’ questions,” Billy demurred.

"Then I'll ask," she cried. "We've got to win out at this game, and the way is to know. Look at all these Portuguese. Where are all the Americans? They owned the land first, after the Mexicans. What made the Americans clear out? How do the Portuguese make it go? Don't you see? We've got to ask millions of questions."

She strummed a few chords, and then her clear sweet voice rang out gaily:

"I's g'wine back to Dixie, I's g'wine back to Dixie, I's g'wine where de orange blossoms grow, For I hear de chillun callin', I see de sad tears fallin' — My heart's turned back to Dixie, An' I mus'go."

She broke off to exclaim: "Oh! What a lovely place! See that arbor — just covered with grapes!"

Again and again she was attracted by the small places they passed. Now it was: "Look at the flowers!" or: "My! those vegetables!" or: "See! They've got a cow!"

Men — Americans — driving along in buggies or runabouts looked at Saxon and Billy curiously. This Saxon could brook far easier than could Billy, who would mutter and grumble deep in his throat.

Beside the road they came upon a lineman eating his lunch.

"Stop and talk," Saxon whispered.

"Aw, what's the good? He's a lineman. What'd he know about farmin'?"

"You never can tell. He's our kind. Go ahead, Billy. You just speak to him. He isn't working now anyway, and he'll be more likely to talk. See that tree in there, just inside the gate, and the way the branches are grown together. It's a curiosity. Ask him about it. That's a good way to get started."

Billy stopped, when they were alongside.

"How do you do," he said gruffly.

The lineman, a young fellow, paused in the cracking of a hard-boiled egg to stare up at the couple.

"How do you do," he said.

Billy swung his pack from his shoulders to the ground, and Saxon rested her telescope basket.

"Peddlin'?" the young man asked, too discreet to put his question directly to Saxon, yet dividing it between her and Billy, and cocking his eye at the covered basket.

"No," she spoke up quickly. "We're looking for land. Do you know of any around here?"

Again he desisted from the egg, studying them with sharp eyes as if to fathom their financial status.

"Do you know what land sells for around here?" he asked.

"No," Saxon answered. "Do you?"

"I guess I ought to. I was born here. And land like this all around you runs at from two to three hundred to four an' five hundred dollars an acre."

"Whew!" Billy whistled. "I guess we don't want none of it."

"But what makes it that high? Town lots?" Saxon wanted to know.

"Nope. The Porchugeeze make it that high, I guess."

"I thought it was pretty good land that fetched a hundred an acre," Billy said.

"Oh, them times is past. They used to give away land once, an' if you was good, throw in all the cattle runnin' on it."

"How about government land around here?" was Billy'a next query.

"Ain't none, an' never was. This was old Mexican grants. My grandfather bought sixteen hundred of the best acres around here for fifteen hundred dollars — five hundred down an' the balance in five years without interest. But that was in the early days. He come West in '48, tryin' to find a country without chills an' fever."

"He found it all right," said Billy.

"You bet he did. An' if him an' father 'd held onto the land it'd been better than a gold mine, an' I wouldn't be workin' for a livin'. What's your business?"

"Teamster."

"Ben in the strike in Oakland?"

"Sure thing. I've teamed there most of my life."

Here the two men wandered off into a discussion of union affairs and the strike situation; but Saxon refused to be balked, and brought back the talk to the land.

"How was it the Portuguese ran up the price of lend?" she asked.

The young fellow broke away from union matters with an effort, and for a moment regarded her with lack luster eyes, until the question sank into his consciousness.

"Because they worked the land overtime. Because they worked mornin', noon, an' night, all hands, women an' kids. Because they could get more out of twenty acres than we could out of a hundred an' sixty. Look at old Silva — Antonio Silva. I've known him ever since I was a shaver. He didn't have the price of a square meal when he hit this section and begun leasin' land from my folks. Look at him now — worth two hundred an' fifty thousan' cold, an' I bet he's got credit for a million, an' there's no tellin' what the rest of his family owns."

"And he made all that out of your folks' land?" Saxon demanded.

The young man nodded his head with evident reluctance.

"Then why didn't your folks do it?" she pursued.

The lineman shrugged his shoulders.

"Search me," he said.

"But the money was in the land," she persisted.

"Blamed if it was," came the retort, tinged slightly with color. "We never saw it stickin' out so as you could notice it. The money was in the hands of the Porchugeeze, I guess. They knew a few more 'n we did, that's all."

Saxon showed such dissatisfaction with his explanation that he was stung to action. He got up wrathfully. "Come on, an' I'll show you," he said. "I'll show you why I'm workin' for wages when I might a-ben a millionaire if my folks hadn't been mutts. That's what we old Americans are, Mutts, with a capital M."

He led them inside the gate, to the fruit tree that had first attracted Saxon's attention. From the main crotch diverged the four main branches of the tree. Two feet above the crotch the branches were connected, each to the ones on both sides, by braces of living wood.

"You think it growed that way, eh? Well, it did. But it was old Silva that made it just the same — caught two sprouts, when the tree was young, an' twisted 'em together. Pretty slick, eh? You bet. That tree'll never blow down. It's a natural, springy brace, an' beats iron braces stiff. Look along all the rows. Every tree's that way. See? An' that's just one trick of the Porchugeeze. They got a million like it.

"Figure it out for yourself. They don't need props when the crop's heavy. Why, when we had a heavy crop, we used to use five props to a tree. Now take ten acres of trees. That'd be some several thousan' props. Which cost money, an' labor to put in an' take out every year. These here natural braces don't have to have a thing done. They're Johnny-on-the-spot all the time. Why, the Porchugeeze has got us skinned a mile. Come on, I'll show you."

Billy, with city notions of trespass, betrayed perturbation at the freedom they were making of the little farm.

“Oh, it’s all right, as long as you don’t step on nothin’,” the lineman reassured him. “Besides, my grandfather used to own this. They know me. Forty years ago old Silva come from the Azores. Went sheep-herdin’ in the mountains for a couple of years, then blew in to San Leandro. These five acres was the first land he leased. That was the beginnin’. Then he began leasin’ by the hundreds of acres, an’ by the hundred-an’-sixties. An’ his sisters an’ his uncles an’ his aunts begun pourin’ in from the Azores — they’re all related there, you know; an’ pretty soon San Leandro was a regular Porchugeeze settlement.

“An’ old Silva wound up by buyin’ these five acres from grandfather. Pretty soon — an’ father by that time was in the hole to the neck — he was buyin’ father’s land by the hundred-an’-sixties. An’ all the rest of his relations was coin’ the same thing. Father was always gettin’ rich quick, an’ he wound up by dyin’ in debt. But old Silva never overlooked a bet, no matter how dinky. An’ all the rest are just like him. You see outside the fence there, clear to the wheel-tracks in the road — horse-beans. We’d a-scorned to do a picayune thing like that. Not Silva. Why he’s got a town house in San Leandro now. An’ he rides around in a four-thousan’-dollar tourin’ car. An’ just the same his front door yard grows onions clear to the sidewalk. He clears three hundred a year on that patch alone. I know ten acres of land he bought last year, — a thousan’ an acre they asked’m, an’ he never batted an eye. He knew it was worth it, that’s all. He knew he could make it pay. Back in the hills, there, he’s got a ranch of five hundred an’ eighty acres, bought it dirt cheap, too; an’ I want to tell you I could travel around in a different tourin’ car every day in the week just outa the profits he makes on that ranch from the horses all the way from heavy draughts to fancy steppers.

“But how? — how? — how did he get it all?” Saxon clamored.

“By bein’ wise to farmin’. Why, the whole blame family works. They ain’t ashamed to roll up their sleeves an’ dig — sons an’ daughters an’ daughter-in-laws, old man, old woman, an’ the babies. They have a sayin’ that a kid four years old that can’t pasture one cow on the county road an’ keep it fat ain’t worth his salt. Why, the Silvas, the whole tribe of ‘em, works a hundred acres in peas, eighty in tomatoes, thirty in asparagus, ten in pie-plant, forty in cucumbers, an’ — oh, stacks of other things.”

“But how do they do it?” Saxon continued to demand. “We’ve never been ashamed to work. We’ve worked hard all our lives. I can out-work any

Portuguese woman ever born. And I've done it, too, in the jute mills. There were lots of Portuguese girls working at the looms all around me, and I could out-weave them, every day, and I did, too. It isn't a case of work. What is it?"

The lineman looked at her in a troubled way.

"Many's the time I've asked myself that same question. 'We're better'n these cheap emigrants,' I'd say to myself. 'We was here first, an' owned the land. I can lick any Dago that ever hatched in the Azores. I got a better education. Then how in thunder do they put it all over us, get our land, an' start accounts in the banks?' An' the only answer I know is that we ain't got the sabe. We don't use our head-pieces right. Something's wrong with us. Anyway, we wasn't wised up to farming. We played at it. Show you? That's what I brung you in for — the way old Silva an' all his tribe farms. Book at this place. Some cousin of his, just out from the Azores, is makin' a start on it, an' payin' good rent to Silva. Pretty soon he'll be up to snuff an' buyin' land for himself from some perishin' American farmer.

"Look at that — though you ought to see it in summer. Not an inch wasted. Where we got one thin crop, they get four fat crops. An' look at the way they crowd it — currants between the tree rows, beans between the currant rows, a row of beans close on each side of the trees, an' rows of beans along the ends of the tree rows. Why, Silva wouldn't sell these five acres for five hundred an acre cash down. He gave grandfather fifty an acre for it on long time, an' here am I, workin' for the telephone company an' putting' in a telephone for old Silva's cousin from the Azores that can't speak American yet. Horse-beans along the road — say, when Silva swung that trick he made more outa fattenin' hogs with 'em than grandfather made with all his farmin'. Grandfather stuck up his nose at horse-beans. He died with it stuck up, an' with more mortgages on the land he had left than you could shake a stick at. Plantin' tomatoes wrapped up in wrappin' paper — ever heard of that? Father snorted when he first seen the Porchugeeze doin' it. An' he went on snortin'. Just the same they got bumper crops, an' father's house-patch of tomatoes was eaten by the black beetles. We ain't got the sabe, or the knack, or something or other. Just look at this piece of ground — four crops a year, an' every inch of soil workin' over time. Why, back in town there, there's single acres that earns more than fifty of ours in the old days. The Porchugeeze is natural-born farmers, that's all, an' we don't know nothin' about farmin' an' never did."

Saxon talked with the lineman, following him about, till one o’clock, when he looked at his watch, said good bye, and returned to his task of putting in a telephone for the latest immigrant from the Azores.

When in town, Saxon carried her oilcloth-wrapped telescope in her hand; but it was so arranged with loops, that, once on the road, she could thrust her arms through the loops and carry it on her back. When she did this, the tiny ukulele case was shifted so that it hung under her left arm.

A mile on from the lineman, they stopped where a small creek, fringed with brush, crossed the county road. Billy was for the cold lunch, which was the last meal Saxon had prepared in the Pine street cottage; but she was determined upon building a fire and boiling coffee. Not that she desired it for herself, but that she was impressed with the idea that everything at the starting of their strange wandering must be as comfortable as possible for Billy’s sake. Bent on inspiring him with enthusiasm equal to her own, she declined to dampen what sparks he had caught by anything so uncheerful as a cold meal.

“Now one thing we want to get out of our heads right at the start, Billy, is that we’re in a hurry. We’re not in a hurry, and we don’t care whether school keeps or not. We’re out to have a good time, a regular adventure like you read about in books. — My! I wish that boy that took me fishing to Goat Island could see me now. Oakland was just a place to start from, he said. And, well, we’ve started, haven’t we? And right here’s where we stop and boil coffee. You get the fire going, Billy, and I’ll get the water and the things ready to spread out.”

“Say,” Billy remarked, while they waited for the water to boil, “d’ye know what this reminds me of?”

Saxon was certain she did know, but she shook her head. She wanted to hear him say it.

“Why, the second Sunday I knew you, when we drove out to Moraga Valley behind Prince and King. You spread the lunch that day.”

“Only it was a more scrumptious lunch,” she added, with a happy smile.

“But I wonder why we didn’t have coffee that day,” he went on.

“Perhaps it would have been too much like housekeeping,” she laughed; “kind of what Mary would call indelicate — ”

“Or raw,” Billy interpolated. “She was always springin’ that word.”

“And yet look what became of her.”

“That’s the way with all of them,” Billy growled somberly. “I’ve always noticed it’s the fastidious, la-de-da ones that turn out the rottenest. They’re like some horses I know, a-shyin’ at the things they’re the least afraid of.”

Saxon was silent, oppressed by a sadness, vague and remote, which the mention of Bert’s widow had served to bring on.

“I know something else that happened that day which you’d never guess,” Billy reminisced. “I bet you couldn’t.

“I wonder,” Saxon murmured, and guessed it with her eyes.

Billy’s eyes answered, and quite spontaneously he reached over, caught her hand, and pressed it caressingly to his cheek.

“It’s little, but oh my,” he said, addressing the imprisoned hand. Then he gazed at Saxon, and she warmed with his words. “We’re beginnin’ courtin’ all over again, ain’t we?”

Both ate heartily, and Billy was guilty of three cups of coffee.

“Say, this country air gives some appetite,” he mumbled, as he sank his teeth into his fifth bread-and-meat sandwich. “I could eat a horse, an’ drown his head off in coffee afterward.”

Saxon’s mind had reverted to all the young lineman had told her, and she completed a sort of general resume of the information. “My!” she exclaimed, “but we’ve learned a lot!”

“An’ we’ve sure learned one thing,” Billy said. “An’ that is that this is no place for us, with land a thousan’ an acre an’ only twenty dollars in our pockets.”

“Oh, we’re not going to stop here,” she hastened to say.

“But just the same it’s the Portuguese that gave it its price, and they make things go on it — send their children to school... and have them; and, as you said yourself, they’re as fat as butterballs.”

“An’ I take my hat off to them,” Billy responded.

“But all the same, I’d sooner have forty acres at a hundred an acre than four at a thousan’ an acre. Somehow, you know, I’d be scared stiff on four acres — scared of fallin’ off, you know.”

She was in full sympathy with him. In her heart of hearts the forty acres tugged much the harder. In her way, allowing for the difference of a generation, her desire for spaciousness was as strong as her Uncle Will’s.

“Well, we’re not going to stop here,” she assured Billy. “We’re going in, not for forty acres, but for a hundred and sixty acres free from the government.”

“An’ I guess the government owes it to us for what our fathers an’ mothers done. I tell you, Saxon, when a woman walks across the plains like your mother done, an’ a man an’ wife gets massacred by the Indians like my grandfather an’ mother done, the government does owe them something.”

“Well, it’s up to us to collect.”

“An’ we’ll collect all right, all right, somewhere down in them redwood mountains south of Monterey.”

CHAPTER II

It was a good afternoon’s tramp to Niles, passing through the town of Haywards; yet Saxon and Billy found time to diverge from the main county road and take the parallel roads through acres of intense cultivation where the land was farmed to the wheel-tracks. Saxon looked with amazement at these small, brown-skinned immigrants who came to the soil with nothing and yet made the soil pay for itself to the tune of two hundred, of five hundred, and of a thousand dollars an acre.

On every hand was activity. Women and children were in the fields as well as men. The land was turned endlessly over and over. They seemed never to let it rest. And it rewarded them. It must reward them, or their children would not be able to go to school, nor would so many of them be able to drive by in rattletrap, second-hand buggies or in stout light wagons.

“Look at their faces,” Saxon said. “They are happy and contented. They haven’t faces like the people in our neighborhood after the strikes began.”

“Oh, sure, they got a good thing,” Billy agreed. “You can see it stickin’ out all over them. But they needn’t get chesty with ME, I can tell you that much — just because they’ve jiggerooed us out of our land an’ everything.”

“But they’re not showing any signs of chestiness,” Saxon demurred.

“No, they’re not, come to think of it. All the same, they ain’t so wise. I bet I could tell ‘em a few about horses.”

It was sunset when they entered the little town of Niles. Billy, who had been silent for the last half mile, hesitantly ventured a suggestion.

“Say... I could put up for a room in the hotel just as well as not. What d ‘ye think?”

But Saxon shook her head emphatically.

“How long do you think our twenty dollars will last at that rate? Besides, the only way to begin is to begin at the beginning. We didn’t plan sleeping in hotels.”

“All right,” he gave in. “I’m game. I was just thinkin’ about you.”

“Then you’d better think I’m game, too,” she flashed forgivingly. “And now we’ll have to see about getting things for supper.”

They bought a round steak, potatoes, onions, and a dozen eating apples, then went out from the town to the fringe of trees and brush that advertised a creek. Beside the trees, on a sand bank, they pitched camp. Plenty of dry wood lay about, and Billy whistled genially while he gathered and chopped. Saxon, keen to follow his every mood, was cheered by the atrocious discord on his lips. She smiled to herself as she spread the blankets, with the tarpaulin underneath, for a table, having first removed all twigs from the sand. She had much to learn in the matter of cooking over a camp-fire, and made fair progress, discovering, first of all, that control of the fire meant far more than the size of it. When the coffee was boiled, she settled the grounds with a part-cup of cold water and placed the pot on the edge of the coals where it would keep hot and yet not boil. She fried potato dollars and onions in the same pan, but separately, and set them on top of the coffee pot in the tin plate she was to eat from, covering it with Billy's inverted plate. On the dry hot pan, in the way that delighted Billy, she fried the steak. This completed, and while Billy poured the coffee, she served the steak, putting the dollars and onions back into the frying pan for a moment to make them piping hot again.

"What more d'ye want than this?" Billy challenged with deep-toned satisfaction, in the pause after his final cup of coffee, while he rolled a cigarette. He lay on his side, full length, resting on his elbow. The fire was burning brightly, and Saxon's color was heightened by the flickering flames. "Now our folks, when they was on the move, had to be afraid for Indians, and wild animals and all sorts of things; an' here we are, as safe as bugs in a rug. Take this sand. What better bed could you ask? Soft as feathers. Say — you look good to me, heap little squaw. I bet you don't look an inch over sixteen right now, Mrs. Babe-in-the-Woods."

"Don't I?" she glowed, with a flirt of the head sideward and a white flash of teeth. "If you weren't smoking a cigarette I'd ask you if your mother knew you're out, Mr. Babe-in-the-Sandbank."

"Say," he began, with transparently feigned seriousness. "I want to ask you something, if you don't mind. Now, of course, I don't want to hurt your feelin's or nothin', but just the same there's something important I'd like to know."

"Well, what is it?" she inquired, after a fruitless wait.

"Well, it's just this, Saxon. I like you like anything an' all that, but here's night come on, an' we're a thousand miles from anywhere, and — well, what I wanta know is: are we really an' truly married, you an' me?"

"Really and truly," she assured him. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing; but I'd kind a-forgotten, an' I was gettin' embarrassed, you know, because if we wasn't, seein' the way I was brought up, this'd be no place — "

"That will do you," she said severely. "And this is just the time and place for you to get in the firewood for morning while I wash up the dishes and put the kitchen in order."

He started to obey, but paused to throw his arm about her and draw her close. Neither spoke, but when he went his way Saxon's breast was fluttering and a song of thanksgiving breathed on her lips.

The night had come on, dim with the light of faint stars. But these had disappeared behind clouds that seemed to have arisen from nowhere. It was the beginning of California Indian summer. The air was warm, with just the first hint of evening chill, and there was no wind.

"I've a feeling as if we've just started to live," Saxon said, when Billy, his firewood collected, joined her on the blankets before the fire. "I've learned more to-day than ten years in Oakland." She drew a long breath and braced her shoulders. "Farming's a bigger subject than I thought."

Billy said nothing. With steady eyes he was staring into the fire, and she knew he was turning something over in his mind.

"What is it," she asked, when she saw he had reached a conclusion, at the same time resting her hand on the back of his.

"Just been framin' up that ranch of ourn," he answered. "It's all well enough, these dinky farmlets. They'll do for foreigners. But we Americans just gotta have room. I want to be able to look at a hilltop an' know it's my land, and know it's my land down the other side an' up the next hilltop, an' know that over beyond that, down alongside some creek, my mares are most likely grazin', an' their little colts grazin' with 'em or kickin' up their heels. You know, there's money in raisin' horses — especially the big workhorses that run to eighteen hundred an' two thousand pounds. They're payin' for 'em, in the cities, every day in the year, seven an' eight hundred a pair, matched geldings, four years old. Good pasture an' plenty of it, in this kind of a climate, is all they need, along with some sort of shelter an' a little hay in long spells of bad weather. I never thought of it before, but let me tell you that this ranch proposition is beginnin' to look good to ME."

Saxon was all excitement. Here was new information on the cherished subject, and, best of all, Billy was the authority. Still better, he was taking an interest himself.

“There’ll be room for that and for everything on a quarter section,” she encouraged.

“Sure thing. Around the house we’ll have vegetables an’ fruit and chickens an’ everything, just like the Porchugeeze, an’ plenty of room beside to walk around an’ range the horses.”

“But won’t the colts cost money, Billy?”

“Not much. The cobblestones eat horses up fast. That’s where I’ll get my brood mares, from the ones knocked out by the city. I know THAT end of it. They sell ‘em at auction, an’ they’re good for years an’ years, only no good on the cobbles any more.”

There ensued a long pause. In the dying fire both were busy visioning the farm to be.

“It’s pretty still, ain’t it?” Billy said, rousing himself at last. He gazed about him. “An’ black as a stack of black cats.” He shivered, buttoned his coat, and tossed several sticks on the fire. “Just the same, it’s the best kind of a climate in the world. Many’s the time, when I was a little kid, I’ve heard my father brag about California’s bein’ a blanket climate. He went East, once, an’ staid a summer an’ a winter, an’ got all he wanted. Never again for him.”

“My mother said there never was such a land for climate. How wonderful it must have seemed to them after crossing the deserts and mountains. They called it the land of milk and honey. The ground was so rich that all they needed to do was scratch it, Cady used to say.”

“And wild game everywhere,” Billy contributed. “Mr. Roberts, the one that adopted my father, he drove cattle from the San Josquin to the Columbia river. He had forty men helpin’ him, an’ all they took along was powder an’ salt. They lived off the game they shot.”

“The hills were full of deer, and my mother saw whole herds of elk around Santa Rosa. Some time we’ll go there, Billy. I’ve always wanted to.”

“And when my father was a young man, somewhere up north of Sacramento, in a creek called Cache Slough, the tules was full of grizzliest He used to go in an’ shoot ‘em. An’ when they caught ‘em in the open, he an’ the Mexicans used to ride up an’ rope them — catch them with lariats, you know. He said a horse that wasn’t afraid of grizzlies fetched ten times as much as any other horse An’ panthers! — all the old folks called ‘em painters an’ catamounts an’ varmints. Yes, we’ll go to Santa Rosa some time. Maybe we won’t like that land down the coast, an’ have to keep on hikin’.”

By this time the fire had died down, and Saxon had finished brushing and braiding her hair. Their bed-going preliminaries were simple, and in a few minutes they were side by side under the blankets. Saxon closed her eyes, but could not sleep. On the contrary, she had never been more wide awake. She had never slept out of doors in her life, and by no exertion of will could she overcome the strangeness of it. In addition, she was stiffened from the long trudge, and the sand, to her surprise, was anything but soft. An hour passed. She tried to believe that Billy was asleep, but felt certain he was not. The sharp crackle of a dying ember startled her. She was confident that Billy had moved slightly.

“Billy,” she whispered, “are you awake?”

“Yep,” came his low answer, “ — an’ thinkin’ this sand is harder’n a cement floor. It’s one on me, all right. But who’d a-thought it?”

Both shifted their postures slightly, but vain was the attempt to escape from the dull, aching contact of the sand.

An abrupt, metallic, whirring noise of some nearby cricket gave Saxon another startle. She endured the sound for some minutes, until Billy broke forth.

“Say, that gets my goat whatever it is.”

“Do you think it’s a rattlesnake?” she asked, maintaining a calmness she did not feel.

“Just what I’ve been thinkin’.”

“I saw two, in the window of Bowman’s Drug Store An’ you know, Billy, they’ve got a hollow fang, and when they stick it into you the poison runs down the hollow.”

“Br-r-r-r,” Billy shivered, in fear that was not altogether mockery. “Certain death, everybody says, unless you’re a Bosco. Remember him?”

“He eats ‘em alive! He eats ‘em alive! Bosco! Bosco!” Saxon responded, mimicking the cry of a side-show barker. “Just the same, all Bosco’s rattlers had the poison-sacs cut outa them. They must a-had. Gee! It’s funny I can’t get asleep. I wish that damned thing’d close its trap. I wonder if it is a rattlesnake.”

“No; it can’t be,” Saxon decided. “All the rattlesnakes are killed off long ago.”

“Then where did Bosco get his?” Billy demanded with unimpeachable logic. “An’ why don’t you get to sleep?”

“Because it’s all new, I guess,” was her reply. “You see, I never camped out in my life.”

“Neither did I. An’ until now I always thought it was a lark.” He changed his position on the maddening sand and sighed heavily. “But we’ll get used to it in time, I guess. What other folks can do, we can, an’ a mighty lot of ‘em has camped out. It’s all right. Here we are, free an’ independent, no rent to pay, our own bosses — ”

He stopped abruptly. From somewhere in the brush came an intermittent rustling. When they tried to locate it, it mysteriously ceased, and when the first hint of drowsiness stole upon them the rustling as mysteriously recommenced.

“It sounds like something creeping up on us,” Saxon suggested, snuggling closer to Billy.

“Well, it ain’t a wild Indian, at all events,” was the best he could offer in the way of comfort. He yawned deliberately. “Aw, shucks! What’s there to be scared of? Think of what all the pioneers went through.”

Several minutes later his shoulders began to shake, and Saxon knew he was giggling.

“I was just thinkin’ of a yarn my father used to tell about,” he explained. “It was about old Susan Kleghorn, one of the Oregon pioneer women. Wall-Eyed Susan, they used to call her; but she could shoot to beat the band. Once, on the Plains, the wagon train she was in, was attacked by Indians. They got all the wagons in a circle, an’ all hands an’ the oxen inside, an’ drove the Indians off, killin’ a lot of ‘em. They was too strong that way, so what’d the Indians do, to draw ‘em out into the open, but take two white girls, captured from some other train, an’ begin to torture ‘em. They done it just out of gunshot, but so everybody could see. The idea was that the white men couldn’t stand it, an’ would rush out, an’ then the Indians’d have ‘em where they wanted ‘em.

“The white men couldn’t do a thing. If they rushed out to save the girls, they’d be finished, an’ then the Indians’d rush the train. It meant death to everybody. But what does old Susan do, but get out an old, long-barreled Kentucky rifle. She rams down about three times the regular load of powder, takes aim at a big buck that’s pretty busy at the torturin’, an’ bangs away. It knocked her clean over backward, an’ her shoulder was lame all the rest of the way to Oregon, but she dropped the big Indian deado. He never knew what struck ‘m.

“But that wasn’t the yarn I wanted to tell. It seems old Susan liked John Barleycorn. She’d souse herself to the ears every chance she got. An’ her sons an’ daughters an’ the old man had to be mighty careful not to leave any around where she could get hands on it.”

“On what?” asked Saxon.

“On John Barleycorn. — Oh, you ain’t on to that. It’s the old fashioned name for whisky. Well, one day all the folks was goin’ away — that was over somewhere at a place called Bodega, where they’d settled after comin’ down from Oregon. An’ old Susan claimed her rheumatics was hurtin’ her an’ so she couldn’t go. But the family was on. There was a two-gallon demijohn of whisky in the house. They said all right, but before they left they sent one of the grandsons to climb a big tree in the barnyard, where he tied the demijohn sixty feet from the ground. Just the same, when they come home that night they found Susan on the kitchen floor dead to the world.”

“And she’d climbed the tree after all,” Saxon hazarded, when Billy had shown no inclination of going on.

“Not on your life,” he laughed jubilantly. “All she’d done was to put a washtub on the ground square under the demijohn. Then she got out her old rifle an’ shot the demijohn to smithereens, an’ all she had to do was lap the whisky outa the tub.”

Again Saxon was drowsing, when the rustling sound was heard, this time closer. To her excited apprehension there was something stealthy about it, and she imagined a beast of prey creeping upon them. “Billy,” she whispered.

“Yes, I’m a-listenin’ to it,” came his wide awake answer.

“Mightn’t that be a panther, or maybe... a wildcat?”

“It can’t be. All the varmints was killed off long ago. This is peaceable farmin’ country.”

A vagrant breeze sighed through the trees and made Saxon shiver. The mysterious cricket-noise ceased with suspicious abruptness. Then, from the rustling noise, ensued a dull but heavy thump that caused both Saxon and Billy to sit up in the blankets. There were no further sounds, and they lay down again, though the very silence now seemed ominous.

"Huh," Billy muttered with relief. "As though I don't know what it was. It was a rabbit. I've heard tame ones bang their hind feet down on the floor that way."

In vain Saxon tried to win sleep. The sand grew harder with the passage of time. Her flesh and her bones ached from contact with it. And, though her reason flouted any possibility of wild dangers, her fancy went on picturing them with unflagging zeal.

A new sound commenced. It was neither a rustling nor a rattling, and it tokened some large body passing through the brush. Sometimes twigs crackled and broke, and, once, they heard bush-branches press aside and spring back into place.

"If that other thing was a panther, this is an elephant," was Billy's uncheering opinion. "It's got weight. Listen to that. An' it's comin' nearer."

There were frequent stoppages, then the sounds would begin again, always louder, always closer. Billy sat up in the blankets once more, passing one arm around Saxon, who had also sat up.

"I ain't slept a wink," he complained. " — There it goes again. I wish I could see."

"It makes a noise big enough for a grizzly," Saxon chattered, partly from nervousness, partly from the chill of the night.

"It ain't no grasshopper, that's sure."

Billy started to leave the blankets, but Saxon caught his arm.

"What are you going to do?"

"Oh, I ain't scairt none," he answered. "But, honest to God, this is gettin' on my nerves. If I don't find what that thing is, it'll give me the willies. I'm just goin' to reconnoiter. I won't go close."

So intensely dark was the night, that the moment Billy crawled beyond the reach of her hand he was lost to sight. She sat and waited. The sound had ceased, though she could follow Billy's progress by the cracking of dry twigs and limbs. After a few moments he returned and crawled under the blankets.

"I scared it away, I guess. It's got better ears, an' when it heard me comin' it skinned out most likely. I did my dangdest, too, not to make a sound. — O Lord, there it goes again."

They sat up. Saxon nudged Billy.

"There," she warned, in the faintest of whispers. "I can hear it breathing. It almost made a snort."

A dead branch cracked loudly, and so near at hand, that both of them jumped shamelessly.

"I ain't goin' to stand any more of its foolin'," Billy declared wrathfully. "It'll be on top of us if I don't."

"What are you going to do?" she queried anxiously.

"Yell the top of my head off. I'll get a fall outa whatever it is."

He drew a deep breath and emitted a wild yell.

The result far exceeded any expectation he could have entertained, and Saxon's heart leaped up in sheer panic. On the instant the darkness erupted into terrible sound and movement. There were trashings of underbrush and lunges and plunges of heavy bodies in different directions. Fortunately for their ease of mind, all these sounds receded and died away.

"An' what d'ye think of that?" Billy broke the silence.

"Gee! all the fight fans used to say I was scairt of nothin'. Just the same I'm glad they ain't seein' me to-night."

He groaned. "I've got all I want of that blamed sand. I'm goin' to get up and start the fire."

This was easy. Under the ashes were live embers which quickly ignited the wood he threw on. A few stars were peeping out in the misty zenith. He looked up at them, deliberated, and started to move away.

"Where are you going now?" Saxon called.

"Oh, I've got an idea," he replied noncommittally, and walked boldly away beyond the circle of the firelight.

Saxon sat with the blankets drawn closely under her chin, and admired his courage. He had not even taken the hatchet, and he was going in the direction in which the disturbance had died away.

Ten minutes later he came back chuckling.

"The sons-of-guns, they got my goat all right. I'll be scairt of my own shadow next. — What was they? Huh! You couldn't guess in a thousand years. A bunch of half-grown calves, an' they was worse scairt than us."

He smoked a cigarette by the fire, then rejoined Saxon under the blankets.

"A hell of a farmer I'll make," he chafed, "when a lot of little calves can scare the stuffin' outa me. I bet your father or mine wouldn't a-batted an eye. The stock has gone to seed, that's what it has."

"No, it hasn't," Saxon defended. "The stock is all right. We're just as able as our folks ever were, and we're healthier on top of it. We've been brought up different, that's all. We've lived in cities all our lives. We know the city sounds and thugs, but we don't know the country ones. Our training has been unnatural, that's the whole thing in a nutshell. Now we're going in for natural training. Give us a little time, and we'll sleep as sound out of doors as ever your father or mine did."

"But not on sand," Billy groaned.

"We won't try. That's one thing, for good and all, we've learned the very first time. And now hush up and go to sleep."

Their fears had vanished, but the sand, receiving now their undivided attention, multiplied its unyieldingness. Billy dozed off first, and roosters were crowing somewhere in the distance when Saxon's eyes closed. But they could not escape the sand, and their sleep was fitful.

At the first gray of dawn, Billy crawled out and built a roaring fire. Saxon drew up to it shiveringly. They were hollow-eyed and weary. Saxon began to laugh. Billy joined sulkily, then brightened up as his eyes chanced upon the coffee pot, which he immediately put on to boil.

CHAPTER III

It is forty miles from Oakland to San Jose, and Saxon and Billy accomplished it in three easy days. No more obliging and angrily garrulous linemen were encountered, and few were the opportunities for conversation with chance wayfarers. Numbers of tramps, carrying rolls of blankets, were met, traveling both north and south on the county road; and from talks with them Saxon quickly learned that they knew little or nothing about farming. They were mostly old men, feeble or besotted, and all they knew was work — where jobs might be good, where jobs had been good; but the places they mentioned were always a long way off. One thing she did glean from them, and that was that the district she and Billy were passing through was "small-farmer" country in which labor was rarely hired, and that when it was it generally was Portuguese.

The farmers themselves were unfriendly. They drove by Billy and Saxon, often with empty wagons, but never invited them to ride. When chance offered and Saxon did ask questions, they looked her over curiously, or suspiciously, and gave ambiguous and facetious answers.

"They ain't Americans, damn them," Billy fretted. "Why, in the old days everybody was friendly to everybody."

But Saxon remembered her last talk with her brother.

"It's the spirit of the times, Billy. The spirit has changed. Besides, these people are too near. Wait till we get farther away from the cities, then we'll find them more friendly."

"A measly lot these ones are," he sneered.

"Maybe they've a right to be," she laughed. "For all you know, more than one of the scabs you've slugged were sons of theirs."

"If I could only hope so," Billy said fervently. "But I don't care if I owned ten thousand acres, any man hikin' with his blankets might be just as good a man as me, an' maybe better, for all I'd know. I'd give 'm the benefit of the doubt, anyway."

Billy asked for work, at first, indiscriminately, later, only at the larger farms. The unvarying reply was that there was no work. A few said there would be plowing after the first rains. Here and there, in a small way, dry plowing was going on. But in the main the farmers were waiting.

"But do you know how to plow?" Saxon asked Billy.

"No; but I guess it ain't much of a trick to turn. Besides, next man I see plowing I'm goin' to get a lesson from."

In the mid-afternoon of the second day his opportunity came. He climbed on top of the fence of a small field and watched an old man plow round and round it.

"Aw, shucks, just as easy as easy," Billy commented scornfully. "If an old codger like that can handle one plow, I can handle two."

"Go on and try it," Saxon urged.

"What's the good?"

"Cold feet," she jeered, but with a smiling face. "All you have to do is ask him. All he can do is say no. And what if he does? You faced the Chicago Terror twenty rounds without flinching."

"Aw, but it's different," he demurred, then dropped to the ground inside the fence. "Two to one the old geezer turns me down."

"No, he won't. Just tell him you want to learn, and ask him if he'll let you drive around a few times. Tell him it won't cost him anything."

"Huh! If he gets chesty I'll take his blamed plow away from him."

From the top of the fence, but too far away to hear, Saxon watched the colloquy. After several minutes, the lines were transferred to Billy's neck, the handles to his hands. Then the team started, and the old man, delivering a rapid fire of instructions, walked alongside of Billy. When a few turns had been made, the farmer crossed the plowed strip to Saxon, and joined her on the rail.

"He's plowed before, a little mite, ain't he?"

Saxon shook her head.

"Never in his life. But he knows how to drive horses."

"He showed he wasn't all greenhorn, an' he learns pretty quick." Here the farmer chuckled and cut himself a chew from a plug of tobacco. "I reckon he won't tire me out a-settin' here."

The unplowed area grew smaller and smaller, but Billy evinced no intention of quitting, and his audience on the fence was deep in conversation. Saxon's questions flew fast and furious, and she was not long in concluding that the old man bore a striking resemblance to the description the lineman had given of his father.

Billy persisted till the field was finished, and the old man invited him and Saxon to stop for the night. There was a disused outbuilding where they would find a small cook stove, he said, and also he would give them fresh milk. Further, if Saxon wanted to test HER desire for farming, she could try her hand on the cow.

The milking lesson did not prove as successful as Billy's plowing; but when he had mocked sufficiently, Saxon challenged him to try, and he failed as grievously as she. Saxon had eyes and questions for everything, and it did not take her long to realize that she was looking upon the other side of the farming shield. Farm and farmer were old-fashioned. There was no intensive cultivation. There was too much land too little farmed. Everything was slipshod. House and barn and outbuildings were fast falling into ruin. The front yard was weed-grown. There was no vegetable garden. The small orchard was old, sickly, and neglected. The trees were twisted, spindling, and overgrown with a gray moss. The sons and daughters were away in the cities, Saxon found out. One daughter had married a doctor, the other was a teacher in the state normal school; one son was a locomotive engineer, the second was an architect, and the third was a police court reporter in San Francisco. On occasion, the father said, they helped out the old folks.

"What do you think?" Saxon asked Billy as he smoked his after-supper cigarette.

His shoulders went up in a comprehensive shrug.

"Huh! That's easy. The old geezer's like his orchard — covered with moss. It's plain as the nose on your face, after San Leandro, that he don't know the first thing. An' them horses. It'd be a charity to him, an' a savin' of money for him, to take 'em out an' shoot 'em both. You bet you don't see the Porchugeeze with horses like them. An' it ain't a case of bein' proud, or puttin' on side, to have good horses. It's brass tacks an' business. It pays. That's the game. Old horses eat more in young ones to keep in condition an' they can't do the same amount of work. But you bet it costs just as much to shoe them. An' his is scrub on top of it. Every minute he has them horses he's losin' money. You oughta see the way they work an' figure horses in the city."

They slept soundly, and, after an early breakfast, prepared to start.

"I'd like to give you a couple of days' work," the old man regretted, at parting, "but I can't see it. The ranch just about keeps me and the old woman, now that the children are gone. An' then it don't always. Seems times have been bad for a long spell now. Ain't never been the same since Grover Cleveland."

Early in the afternoon, on the outskirts of San Jose, Saxon called a halt.

"I'm going right in there and talk," she declared, "unless they set the dogs on me. That's the prettiest place yet, isn't it?"

Billy, who was always visioning hills and spacious ranges for his horses, mumbled unenthusiastic assent.

"And the vegetables! Look at them! And the flowers growing along the borders! That beats tomato plants in wrapping paper."

"Don't see the sense of it," Billy objected. "Where's the money come in from flowers that take up the ground that good vegetables might be growin' on?"

"And that's what I'm going to find out." She pointed to a woman, stooped to the ground and working with a trowel; in front of the tiny bungalow. "I don't know what she's like, but at the worst she can only be mean. See! She's looking at us now. Drop your load alongside of mine, and come on in."

Billy slung the blankets from his shoulder to the ground, but elected to wait. As Saxon went up the narrow, flower-bordered walk, she noted two men at work among the vegetables — one an old Chinese, the other old and of some dark-eyed foreign breed. Here were neatness, efficiency, and intensive cultivation with a vengeance — even her untrained eye could see that. The woman stood up and turned from her flowers, and Saxon saw that she was middle-aged, slender, and simply but nicely dressed. She wore glasses, and Saxon's reading of her face was that it was kind but nervous looking.

"I don't want anything to-day," she said, before Saxon could speak, administering the rebuff with a pleasant smile.

Saxon groaned inwardly over the black-covered telescope basket. Evidently the woman had seen her put it down.

"We're not peddling," she explained quickly.

"Oh, I am sorry for the mistake."

This time the woman's smile was even pleasanter, and she waited for Saxon to state her errand.

Nothing loath, Saxon took it at a plunge.

"We're looking for land. We want to be farmers, you know, and before we get the land we want to find out what kind of land we want. And seeing your pretty place has just filled me up with questions. You see, we don't know anything about farming. We've lived in the city all our life, and now we've given it up and are going to live in the country and be happy."

She paused. The woman's face seemed to grow quizzical, though the pleasantness did not abate.

"But how do you know you will be happy in the country?" she asked.

"I don't know. All I do know is that poor people can't be happy in the city where they have labor troubles all the time. If they can't be happy in the country, then there's no happiness anywhere, and that doesn't seem fair, does it?"

"It is sound reasoning, my dear, as far as it goes. But you must remember that there are many poor people in the country and many unhappy people."

"You look neither poor nor unhappy," Saxon challenged.

"You ARE a dear."

Saxon saw the pleased flush in the other's face, which lingered as she went on.

"But still, I may be peculiarly qualified to live and succeed in the country. As you say yourself, you've spent your life in the city. You don't know the first thing about the country. It might even break your heart."

Saxon's mind went back to the terrible months in the Pine street cottage.

"I know already that the city will break my heart. Maybe the country will, too, but just the same it's my only chance, don't you see. It's that or nothing. Besides, our folks before us were all of the country. It seems the more natural way. And better, here I am, which proves that 'way down inside I must want the country, must, as you call it, be peculiarly qualified for the country, or else I wouldn't be here."

The other nodded approval, and looked at her with growing interest.

"That young man — " she began.

"Is my husband. He was a teamster until the big strike came. My name is Roberts, Saxon Roberts, and my husband is William Roberts."

"And I am Mrs. Mortimer," the other said, with a bow of acknowledgment. "I am a widow. And now, if you will ask your husband in, I shall try to answer some of your many questions. Tell him to put the bundles inside the gate.. .. And now what are all the questions you are filled with?"

"Oh, all kinds. How does it pay? How did you manage it all? How much did the land cost? Did you build that beautiful house? How much do you pay the men? How did you learn all the different kinds of things, and which grew best and which paid best? What is the best way to sell them? How do you sell them?” Saxon paused and laughed. “Oh, I haven’t begun yet. Why do you have flowers on the borders everywhere? I looked over the Portuguese farms around San Leandro, but they never mixed flowers and vegetables.”

Mrs. Mortimer held up her hand. “Let me answer the last first. It is the key to almost everything.”

But Billy arrived, and the explanation was deferred until after his introduction.

“The flowers caught your eyes, didn’t they, my dear?” Mrs. Mortimer resumed. “And brought you in through my gate and right up to me. And that’s the very reason they were planted with the vegetables — to catch eyes. You can’t imagine how many eyes they have caught, nor how many owners of eyes they have lured inside my gate. This is a good road, and is a very popular short country drive for townsfolk. Oh, no; I’ve never had any luck with automobiles. They can’t see anything for dust. But I began when nearly everybody still used carriages. The townswomen would drive by. My flowers, and then my place, would catch their eyes. They would tell their drivers to stop. And — well, somehow, I managed to be in the front within speaking distance. Usually I succeeded in inviting them in to see my flowers... and vegetables, of course. Everything was sweet, clean, pretty. It all appealed. And — ” Mrs. Mortimer shrugged her shoulders. “It is well known that the stomach sees through the eyes. The thought of vegetables growing among flowers pleased their fancy. They wanted my vegetables. They must have them. And they did, at double the market price, which they were only too glad to pay. You see, I became the fashion, or a fad, in a small way. Nobody lost. The vegetables were certainly good, as good as any on the market and often fresher. And, besides, my customers killed two birds with one stone; for they were pleased with themselves for philanthropic reasons. Not only did they obtain the finest and freshest possible vegetables, but at the same time they were happy with the knowledge that they were helping a deserving widow-woman. Yes, and it gave a certain tone to their establishments to be able to say they bought Mrs. Mortimer’s vegetables. But that’s too big a side to go into. In short, my little place became a show place — anywhere to go, for a drive or anything, you know, when time has to be killed. And it became noised about who I was, and who my husband had been, what I had been. Some of the townsladies I had known personally in the old days. They actually worked for my success. And then, too, I used to serve tea. My patrons became my guests for the time being. I still serve it, when they drive out to show me off to their friends. So you see, the flowers are one of the ways I succeeded."

Saxon was glowing with appreciation, but Mrs. Mortimer, glancing at Billy, noted not entire approval. His blue eyes were clouded.

"Well, out with it," she encouraged. "What are you thinking?"

To Saxon's surprise, he answered directly, and to her double surprise, his criticism was of a nature which had never entered her head.

"It's just a trick," Billy expounded. "That's what I was gettin' at — "

"But a paying trick," Mrs. Mortimer interrupted, her eyes dancing and vivacious behind the glasses.

"Yes, and no," Billy said stubbornly, speaking in his slow, deliberate fashion. "If every farmer was to mix flowers an' vegetables, then every farmer would get double the market price, an' then there wouldn't be any double market price. Everything'd be as it was before."

"You are opposing a theory to a fact," Mrs. Mortimer stated. "The fact is that all the farmers do not do it. The fact is that I do receive double the price. You can't get away from that."

Billy was unconvinced, though unable to reply.

"Just the same," he muttered, with a slow shake of the head, "I don't get the hang of it. There's something wrong so far as we're concerned — my wife an' me, I mean. Maybe I'll get hold of it after a while."

"And in the meantime, we'll look around," Mrs. Mortimer invited. "I want to show you everything, and tell you how I make it go. Afterward, we'll sit down, and I'll tell you about the beginning. You see — " she bent her gaze on Saxon — "I want you thoroughly to understand that you can succeed in the country if you go about it right. I didn't know a thing about it when I began, and I didn't have a fine big man like yours. I was all alone. But I'll tell you about that."

For the next hour, among vegetables, berry-bushes and fruit trees, Saxon stored her brain with a huge mass of information to be digested at her leisure. Billy, too, was interested, but he left the talking to Saxon, himself rarely asking a question. At the rear of the bungalow, where everything was as clean and orderly as the front, they were shown through the chicken yard. Here, in different runs, were kept several hundred small and snow-white hens.

“White Leghorns,” said Mrs. Mortimer. “You have no idea what they netted me this year. I never keep a hen a moment past the prime of her laying period — ”

“Just what I was tellin’ you, Saxon, about horses,” Billy broke in.

“And by the simplest method of hatching them at the right time, which not one farmer in ten thousand ever dreams of doing, I have them laying in the winter when most hens stop laying and when eggs are highest. Another thing: I have my special customers. They pay me ten cents a dozen more than the market price, because my specialty is one-day eggs.”

Here she chanced to glance at Billy, and guessed that he was still wrestling with his problem.

“Same old thing?” she queried.

He nodded. “Same old thing. If every farmer delivered day-old eggs, there wouldn’t be no ten cents higher ‘n the top price. They’d be no better off than they was before.”

“But the eggs would be one-day eggs, all the eggs would be one-day eggs, you mustn’t forget that,” Mrs. Mortimer pointed out.

“But that don’t butter no toast for my wife an’ me,” he objected. “An’ that’s what I’ve been tryin’ to get the hang of, an’ now I got it. You talk about theory an’ fact. Ten cents higher than top price is a theory to Saxon an’ me. The fact is, we ain’t got no eggs, no chickens, an’ no land for the chickens to run an’ lay eggs on.”

Their hostess nodded sympathetically.

“An’ there’s something else about this outfit of yourn that I don’t get the hang of,” he pursued. “I can’t just put my finger on it, but it’s there all right.”

They were shown over the cattery, the piggery, the milkers, and the kennelry, as Mrs. Mortimer called her live stock departments. None was large. All were moneymakers, she assured them, and rattled off her profits glibly. She took their breaths away by the prices given and received for pedigreed Persians, pedigreed Ohio Improved Chesters, pedigreed Scotch collies, and pedigreed Jerseys. For the milk of the last she also had a special private market, receiving five cents more a quart than was fetched by the best dairy milk. Billy was quick to point out the difference between the look of her orchard and the look of the orchard they had inspected the previous afternoon, and Mrs. Mortimer showed him scores of other differences, many of which he was compelled to accept on faith.

Then she told them of another industry, her home-made jams and jellies, always contracted for in advance, and at prices dizzyingly beyond the regular market. They sat in comfortable rattan chairs on the veranda, while she told the story of how she had drummed up the jam and jelly trade, dealing only with the one best restaurant and one best club in San Jose. To the proprietor and the steward she had gone with her samples, in long discussions beaten down their opposition, overcome their reluctance, and persuaded the proprietor, in particular, to make a "special" of her wares, to boom them quietly with his patrons, and, above all, to charge stiffly for dishes and courses in which they appeared.

Throughout the recital Billy's eyes were moody with dissatisfaction. Mrs. Mortimer saw, and waited.

"And now, begin at the beginning," Saxon begged.

But Mrs. Mortimer refused unless they agreed to stop for supper. Saxon frowned Billy's reluctance away, and accepted for both of them.

"Well, then," Mrs. Mortimer took up her tale, "in the beginning I was a greenhorn, city born and bred. All I knew of the country was that it was a place to go to for vacations, and I always went to springs and mountain and seaside resorts. I had lived among books almost all my life. I was head librarian of the Doncaster Library for years. Then I married Mr. Mortimer. He was a book man, a professor in San Miguel University. He had a long sickness, and when he died there was nothing left. Even his life insurance was eaten into before I could be free of creditors. As for myself, I was worn out, on the verge of nervous prostration, fit for nothing. I had five thousand dollars left, however, and, without going into the details, I decided to go farming. I found this place, in a delightful climate, close to San Jose — the end of the electric line is only a quarter of a mile on — and I bought it. I paid two thousand cash, and gave a mortgage for two thousand. It cost two hundred an acre, you see."

"Twenty acres!" Saxon cried.

"Wasn't that pretty small?" Billy ventured.

"Too large, oceans too large. I leased ten acres of it the first thing. And it's still leased after all this time. Even the ten I'd retained was much too large for a long, long time. It's only now that I'm beginning to feel a tiny mite crowded."

"And ten acres has supported you an' two hired men?" Billy demanded, amazed.

Mrs. Mortimer clapped her hands delightedly.

"Listen. I had been a librarian. I knew my way among books. First of all I'd read everything written on the subject, and subscribed to some of the best farm magazines and papers. And you ask if my ten acres have supported me and two hired men. Let me tell you. I have four hired men. The ten acres certainly must support them, as it supports Hannah — she's a Swedish widow who runs the house and who is a perfect Trojan during the jam and jelly season — and Hannah's daughter, who goes to school and lends a hand, and my nephew whom I have taken to raise and educate. Also, the ten acres have come pretty close to paying for the whole twenty, as well as for this house, and all the outbuildings, and all the pedigreed stock."

Saxon remembered what the young lineman had said about the Portuguese.

"The ten acres didn't do a bit of it," she cried. "It was your head that did it all, and you know it."

"And that's the point, my dear. It shows the right kind of person can succeed in the country. Remember, the soil is generous. But it must be treated generously, and that is something the old style American farmer can't get into his head. So it IS head that counts. Even when his starving acres have convinced him of the need for fertilizing, he can't see the difference between cheap fertilizer and good fertilizer."

"And that's something I want to know about," Saxon exclaimed. "And I'll tell you all I know, but, first, you must be very tired. I noticed you were limping. Let me take you in — never mind your bundles; I'll send Chang for them."

To Saxon, with her innate love of beauty and charm in all personal things, the interior of the bungalow was a revelation. Never before had she been inside a middle class home, and what she saw not only far exceeded anything she had imagined, but was vastly different from her imaginings. Mrs. Mortimer noted her sparkling glances which took in everything, and went out of her way to show Saxon around, doing it under the guise of gleeful boastings, stating the costs of the different materials, explaining how she had done things with her own hands, such as staining the doors, weathering the bookcases, and putting together the big Mission Morris chair. Billy stepped gingerly behind, and though it never entered his mind to ape to the manner born, he succeeded in escaping conspicuous awkwardness, even at the table where he and Saxon had the unique experience of being waited on in a private house by a servant.

“If you’d only come along next year,” Mrs. Mortimer mourned; “then I should have had the spare room I had planned — ”

“That’s all right,” Billy spoke up; “thank you just the same. But we’ll catch the electric cars into San Jose an’ get a room.”

Mrs. Mortimer was still disturbed at her inability to put them up for the night, and Saxon changed the conversation by pleading to be told more.

“You remember, I told you I’d paid only two thousand down on the land,” Mrs. Mortimer complied. “That left me three thousand to experiment with. Of course, all my friends and relatives prophesied failure. And, of course, I made my mistakes, plenty of them, but I was saved from still more by the thorough study I had made and continued to make.” She indicated shelves of farm books and files of farm magazines that lined the walls. “And I continued to study. I was resolved to be up to date, and I sent for all the experiment station reports. I went almost entirely on the basis that whatever the old type farmer did was wrong, and, do you know, in doing that I was not so far wrong myself. It’s almost unthinkable, the stupidity of the old-fashioned farmers. Oh, I consulted with them, talked things over with them, challenged their stereotyped ways, demanded demonstration of their dogmatic and prejudiced beliefs, and quite succeeded in convincing the last of them that I was a fool and doomed to come to grief.”

“But you didn’t! You didn’t!”

Mrs. Mortimer smiled gratefully.

“Sometimes, even now, I’m amazed that I didn’t. But I came of a hard-headed stock which had been away from the soil long enough to gain a new perspective. When a thing satisfied my judgment, I did it forthwith and downright, no matter how extravagant it seemed. Take the old orchard. Worthless! Worse than worthless! Old Calkins nearly died of heart disease when he saw the devastation I had wreaked upon it. And look at it now. There was an old rattletrap ruin where the bungalow now stands. I put up with it, but I immediately pulled down the cow barn, the pigsties, the chicken houses, everything — made a clean sweep. They shook their heads and groaned when they saw such wanton waste by a widow struggling to make a living. But worse was to come. They were paralyzed when I told them the price of the three beautiful O.I.C.’s — pigs, you know, Chesters — which I bought, sixty dollars for the three, and only just weaned. Then I hustled the nondescript chickens to market, replacing them with the White Leghorns. The two scrub cows that came with the place I sold to the butcher for thirty dollars each, paying two hundred and fifty for two blue-blooded Jersey heifers... and coined money on the exchange, while Calkins and the rest went right on with their scrubs that couldn't give enough milk to pay for their board."

Billy nodded approval.

"Remember what I told you about horses," he reiterated to Saxon; and, assisted by his hostess, he gave a very creditable disquisition on horseflesh and its management from a business point of view.

When he went out to smoke Mrs. Mortimer led Saxon into talking about herself and Billy, and betrayed not the slightest shock when she learned of his prizefighting and scab-slugging proclivities.

"He's a splendid young man, and good," she assured Saxon. "His face shows that. And, best of all, he loves you and is proud of you. You can't imagine how I have enjoyed watching the way he looks at you, especially when you are talking. He respects your judgment. Why, he must, for here he is with you on this pilgrimage which is wholly your idea." Mrs. Mortimer sighed. "You are very fortunate, dear child, very fortunate. And you don't yet know what a man's brain is. Wait till he is quite fired with enthusiasm for your project. You will be astounded by the way he takes hold. You will have to exert yourself to keep up with him. In the meantime, you must lead. Remember, he is city bred. It will be a struggle to wean him from the only life he's known."

"Oh, but he's disgusted with the city, too — " Saxon began.

"But not as you are. Love is not the whole of man, as it is of woman. The city hurt you more than it hurt him. It was you who lost the dear little babe. His interest, his connection, was no more than casual and incidental compared with the depth and vividness of yours."

Mrs. Mortimer turned her head to Billy, who was just entering.

"Have you got the hang of what was bothering you?" she asked.

"Pretty close to it," he answered, taking the indicated big Morris chair. "It's this — "

"One moment," Mrs. Mortimer checked him. "That is a beautiful, big, strong chair, and so are you, at any rate big and strong, and your little wife is very weary — no, no; sit down, it's your strength she needs. Yes, I insist. Open your arms."

And to him she led Saxon, and into his arms placed her. “Now, sir — and you look delicious, the pair of you — register your objections to my way of earning a living.”

“It ain’t your way,” Billy repudiated quickly. “Your way’s all right. It’s great. What I’m trying to get at is that your way don’t fit us. We couldn’t make a go of it your way. Why you had pull — well-to-do acquaintances, people that knew you’d been a librarian an’ your husband a professor. An’ you had....” Here he floundered a moment, seeking definiteness for the idea he still vaguely grasped. “Well, you had a way we couldn’t have. You were educated, an’... an’ — I don’t know, I guess you knew society ways an’ business ways we couldn’t know.”

“But, my dear boy, you could learn what was necessary,” she contended.

Billy shook his head.

“No. You don’t quite get me. Let’s take it this way. Just suppose it’s me, with jam an’ jelly, a-wadin’ into that swell restaurant like you did to talk with the top guy. Why, I’d be outa place the moment I stepped into his office. Worse’n that, I’d feel outa place. That’d make me have a chip on my shoulder an’ lookin’ for trouble, which is a poor way to do business. Then, too, I’d be thinkin’ he was thinkin’ I was a whole lot of a husky to be peddlin’ jam. What’d happen, I’d be chesty at the drop of the hat. I’d be thinkin’ he was thinkin’ I was standin’ on my foot, an’ I’d beat him to it in tellin’ him he was standin’ on HIS foot. Don’t you see? It’s because I was raised that way. It’d be take it or leave it with me, an’ no jam sold.”

“What you say is true,” Mrs. Mortimer took up brightly. “But there is your wife. Just look at her. She’d make an impression on any business man. He’d be only too willing to listen to her.”

Billy stiffened, a forbidding expression springing into his eyes.

“What have I done now?” their hostess laughed.

“I ain’t got around yet to tradin’ on my wife’s looks,” he rumbled gruffly.

“Right you are. The only trouble is that you, both of you, are fifty years behind the times. You’re old American. How you ever got here in the thick of modern conditions is a miracle. You’re Rip Van Winkles. Who ever heard, in these degenerate times, of a young man and woman of the city putting their blankets on their backs and starting out in search of land? Why, it’s the old Argonaut spirit. You’re as like as peas in a pod to those who yoked their oxen and held west to the lands beyond the sunset. I’ll wager your fathers and mothers, or grandfathers and grandmothers, were that very stock."

Saxon's eyes were glistening, and Billy's were friendly once more. Both nodded their heads.

"I'm of the old stock myself," Mrs. Mortimer went on proudly. "My grandmother was one of the survivors of the Donner Party. My grandfather, Jason Whitney, came around the Horn and took part in the raising of the Bear Flag at Sonoma. He was at Monterey when John Marshall discovered gold in Sutter's mill-race. One of the streets in San Francisco is named after him."

"I know it," Billy put in. "Whitney Street. It's near Russian Hill. Saxon's mother walked across the Plains."

"And Billy's grandfather and grandmother were massacred by the Indians," Saxon contributed. "His father was a little baby boy, and lived with the Indians, until captured by the whites. He didn't even know his name and was adopted by a Mr. Roberts."

"Why, you two dear children, we're almost like relatives," Mrs. Mortimer beamed. "It's a breath of old times, alas! all forgotten in these fly-away days. I am especially interested, because I've catalogued and read everything covering those times. You — " she indicated Billy, "you are historical, or at least your father is. I remember about him. The whole thing is in Bancroft's History. It was the Modoc Indians. There were eighteen wagons. Your father was the only survivor, a mere baby at the time, with no knowledge of what happened. He was adopted by the leader of the whites."

"That's right," said Billy. "It was the Modocs. His train must have ben bound for Oregon. It was all wiped out. I wonder if you know anything about Saxon's mother. She used to write poetry in the early days."

"Was any of it printed?"

"Yes," Saxon answered. "In the old San Jose papers."

"And do you know any of it?"

"Yes, there's one beginning:

"'Sweet as the wind-lute's airy strains Your gentle muse has learned to sing, And California's boundless plains Prolong the soft notes echoing.'"

"It sounds familiar," Mrs. Mortimer said, pondering.

"And there was another I remember that began:

"'I've stolen away from the crowd in the groves, Where the nude statues stand, and the leaves point and shiver,' —

"And it run on like that. I don't understand it all. It was written to my father — "

"A love poem!" Mrs. Mortimer broke in. "I remember it. Wait a minute.... Da-da-dah, da-da-dah, da-da-dah, da-da — STANDS —

"'In the spray of a fountain, whose seed-amethysts Tremble lightly a moment on bosom and hands, Then drip in their basin from bosom and wrists.'

"I've never forgotten the drip of the seed-amethysts, though I don't remember your mother's name."

"It was Daisy — " Saxon began.

"No; Dayelle," Mrs. Mortimer corrected with quickening recollection.

"Oh, but nobody called her that."

"But she signed it that way. What is the rest?"

"Daisy Wiley Brown."

Mrs. Mortimer went to the bookshelves and quickly returned with a large, soberly-bound volume.

"It's 'The Story of the Files,'" she explained. "Among other things, all the good fugitive verse was gathered here from the old newspaper files." Her eyes running down the index suddenly stopped. "I was right. Dayelle Wiley Brown. There it is. Ten of her poems, too: 'The Viking's Quest'; 'Days of Gold'; 'Constancy'; 'The Caballero'; 'Graves at Little Meadow' — "

"We fought off the Indians there," Saxon interrupted in her excitement. "And mother, who was only a little girl, went out and got water for the wounded. And the Indians wouldn't shoot at her. Everybody said it was a miracle." She sprang out of Billy's arms, reaching for the book and crying: "Oh, let me see it! Let me see it! It's all new to me. I don't know these poems. Can I copy them? I'll learn them by heart. Just to think, my mother's!"

Mrs. Mortimer's glasses required repolishing; and for half an hour she and Billy remained silent while Saxon devoured her mother's lines. At the end, staring at the book which she had closed on her finger, she could only repeat in wondering awe:

"And I never knew, I never knew."

But during that half hour Mrs. Mortimer's mind had not been idle. A little later, she broached her plan. She believed in intensive dairying as well as intensive farming, and intended, as soon as the lease expired, to establish a

Jersey dairy on the other ten acres. This, like everything she had done, would be model, and it meant that she would require more help. Billy and Saxon were just the two. By next summer she could have them installed in the cottage she intended building. In the meantime she could arrange, one way and another, to get work for Billy through the winter. She would guarantee this work, and she knew a small house they could rent just at the end of the car-line. Under her supervision Billy could take charge from the very beginning of the building. In this way they would be earning money, preparing themselves for independent farming life, and have opportunity to look about them.

But her persuasions were in vain. In the end Saxon succinctly epitomized their point of view.

“We can’t stop at the first place, even if it is as beautiful and kind as yours and as nice as this valley is. We don’t even know what we want. We’ve got to go farther, and see all kinds of places and all kinds of ways, in order to find out. We’re not in a hurry to make up our minds. We want to make, oh, so very sure! And besides....” She hesitated. “Besides, we don’t like altogether flat land. Billy wants some hills in his. And so do I.”

When they were ready to leave Mrs. Mortimer offered to present Saxon with “The Story of the Files”; but Saxon shook her head and got some money from Billy.

“It says it costs two dollars,” she said. “Will you buy me one, and keep it till we get settled? Then I’ll write, and you can send it to me.”

“Oh, you Americans,” Mrs. Mortimer chided, accepting the money. “But you must promise to write from time to time before you’re settled.”

She saw them to the county road.

“You are brave young things,” she said at parting. “I only wish I were going with you, my pack upon my back. You’re perfectly glorious, the pair of you. If ever I can do anything for you, just let me know. You’re bound to succeed, and I want a hand in it myself. Let me know how that government land turns out, though I warn you I haven’t much faith in its feasibility. It’s sure to be too far away from markets.”

She shook hands with Billy. Saxon she caught into her arms and kissed.

“Be brave,” she said, with low earnestness, in Saxon’s ear. “You’ll win. You are starting with the right ideas. And you were right not to accept my proposition. But remember, it, or better, will always be open to you. You’re young yet, both of you. Don’t be in a hurry. Any time you stop anywhere for a while, let me know, and I’ll mail you heaps of agricultural reports and farm publications. Good-bye. Heaps and heaps and heaps of luck.”

CHAPTER IV

Bill sat motionless on the edge of the bed in their little room in San Jose that night, a musing expression in his eyes.

"Well," he remarked at last, with a long-drawn breath, "all I've got to say is there's some pretty nice people in this world after all. Take Mrs. Mortimer. Now she's the real goods — regular old American."

"A fine, educated lady," Saxon agreed, "and not a bit ashamed to work at farming herself. And she made it go, too."

"On twenty acres — no, ten; and paid for 'em, an' all improvements, an' supported herself, four hired men, a Swede woman an' daughter, an' her own nephew. It gets me. Ten acres! Why, my father never talked less'n one hundred an' sixty acres. Even your brother Tom still talks in quarter sections. — An' she was only a woman, too. We was lucky in meetin' her."

"Wasn't it an adventure!" Saxon cried. "That's what comes of traveling. You never know what's going to happen next. It jumped right out at us, just when we were tired and wondering how much farther to San Jose. We weren't expecting it at all. And she didn't treat us as if we were tramping. And that house — so clean and beautiful. You could eat off the floor. I never dreamed of anything so sweet and lovely as the inside of that house."

"It smelt good," Billy supplied.

"That's the very thing. It's what the women's pages call atmosphere. I didn't know what they meant before. That house has beautiful, sweet atmosphere — "

"Like all your nice underthings," said Billy.

"And that's the next step after keeping your body sweet and clean and beautiful. It's to have your house sweet and clean and beautiful."

"But it can't be a rented one, Saxon. You've got to own it. Landlords don't build houses like that. Just the same, one thing stuck out plain: that house was not expensive. It wasn't the cost. It was the way. The wood was ordinary wood you can buy in any lumber yard. Why, our house on Pine street was made out of the same kind of wood. But the way it was made was different. I can't explain, but you can see what I'm drivin' at."

Saxon, revisioning the little bungalow they had just left, repeated absently: "That's it — the way."

The next morning they were early afoot, seeking through the suburbs of San Jose the road to San Juan and Monterey. Saxon's limp had increased. Beginning with a burst blister, her heel was skinning rapidly. Billy remembered his father's talks about care of the feet, and stopped at a butcher shop to buy five cents' worth of mutton tallow.

"That's the stuff," he told Saxon. "Clean foot-gear and the feet well greased. We'll put some on as soon as we're clear of town. An' we might as well go easy for a couple of days. Now, if I could get a little work so as you could rest up several days it'd be just the thing. I '11 keep my eye peeled."

Almost on the outskirts of town he left Saxon on the county road and went up a long driveway to what appeared a large farm. He came back beaming.

"It's all hunkydory," he called as he approached. "We'll just go down to that clump of trees by the creek an' pitch camp. I start work in the mornin', two dollars a day an' board myself. It'd been a dollar an' a half if he furnished the board. I told 'm I liked the other way best, an' that I had my camp with me. The weather's fine, an' we can make out a few days till your foot's in shape. Come on. We'll pitch a regular, decent camp."

"How did you get the job," Saxon asked, as they cast about, determining their camp-site.

"Wait till we get fixed an' I'll tell you all about it. It was a dream, a cinch."

Not until the bed was spread, the fire built, and a pot of beans boiling did Billy throw down the last armful of wood and begin.

"In the first place, Benson's no old-fashioned geezer. You wouldn't think he was a farmer to look at 'm. He's up to date, sharp as tacks, talks an' acts like a business man. I could see that, just by lookin' at his place, before I seen HIM. He took about fifteen seconds to size me up.

"'Can you plow?' says he.

"'Sure thing,' I told 'm.

"'Know horses?'

"'I was hatched in a box-stall,' says I.

"An' just then — you remember that four-horse load of machinery that come in after me? — just then it drove up.

"'How about four horses?' he asks, casual-like.

"'Right to home. I can drive 'm to a plow, a sewin' machine, or a merry-go-round.'

"'Jump up an' take them lines, then,' he says, quick an' sharp, not wastin' seconds. 'See that shed. Go 'round the barn to the right an' back in for unloadin'.'

"An' right here I wanta tell you it was some nifty drivin' he was askin'. I could see by the tracks the wagons'd all ben goin' around the barn to the left. What he was askin' was too close work for comfort — a double turn, like an S, between a corner of a paddock an' around the corner of the barn to the last swing. An', to eat into the little room there was, there was piles of manure just thrown outa the barn an' not hauled away yet. But I wasn't lettin' on nothin'. The driver gave me the lines, an' I could see he was grinnin', sure I'd make a mess of it. I bet he couldn't a-done it himself. I never let on, an away we went, me not even knowin' the horses — but, say, if you'd seen me throw them leaders clean to the top of the manure till the nigh horse was scrapin' the side of the barn to make it, an' the off hind hub was cuttin' the corner post of the paddock to miss by six inches. It was the only way. An' them horses was sure beauts. The leaders slacked back an' darn near sat down on their singletrees when I threw the back into the wheelers an' slammed on the brake an' stopped on the very precise spot.

"'You'll do,' Benson says. 'That was good work.'

"'Aw, shucks,' I says, indifferent as hell. 'Gimme something real hard.'

"He smiles an' understands.

"'You done that well,' he says. 'An' I'm particular about who handles my horses. The road ain't no place for you. You must be a good man gone wrong. Just the same you can plow with my horses, startin' in to-morrow mornin'.'

"Which shows how wise he wasn't. I hadn't showed I could plow."

When Saxon had served the beans, and Billy the coffee, she stood still a moment and surveyed the spread meal on the blankets — the canister of sugar, the condensed milk tin, the sliced corned beef, the lettuce salad and sliced tomatoes, the slices of fresh French bread, and the steaming plates of beans and mugs of coffee.

"What a difference from last night!" Saxon exclaimed, clapping her hands. "It's like an adventure out of a book. Oh, that boy I went fishing with! Think of that beautiful table and that beautiful house last night, and then look at this. Why, we could have lived a thousand years on end in Oakland and never met a woman like Mrs. Mortimer nor dreamed a house like hers existed. And, Billy, just to think, we've only just started."

Billy worked for three days, and while insisting that he was doing very well, he freely admitted that there was more in plowing than he had thought. Saxon experienced quiet satisfaction when she learned he was enjoying it.

"I never thought I'd like plowin' — much," he observed. "But it's fine. It's good for the leg-muscles, too. They don't get exercise enough in teamin'. If ever I trained for another fight, you bet I'd take a whack at plowin'. An', you know, the ground has a regular good smell to it, a-turnin' over an' turnin' over. Gosh, it's good enough to eat, that smell. An' it just goes on, turnin' up an' over, fresh an' thick an' good, all day long. An' the horses are Joe-dandies. They know their business as well as a man. That's one thing, Benson ain't got a scrub horse on the place."

The last day Billy worked, the sky clouded over, the air grew damp, a strong wind began to blow from the southeast, and all the signs were present of the first winter rain. Billy came back in the evening with a small roll of old canvas he had borrowed, which he proceeded to arrange over their bed on a framework so as to shed rain. Several times he complained about the little finger of his left hand. It had been bothering him all day he told Saxon, for several days slightly, in fact, and it was as tender as a boil — most likely a splinter, but he had been unable to locate it.

He went ahead with storm preparations, elevating the bed on old boards which he lugged from a disused barn falling to decay on the opposite bank of the creek. Upon the boards he heaped dry leaves for a mattress. He concluded by reinforcing the canvas with additional guys of odd pieces of rope and bailing-wire.

When the first splashes of rain arrived Saxon was delighted. Billy betrayed little interest. His finger was hurting too much, he said. Neither he nor Saxon could make anything of it, and both scoffed at the idea of a felon.

"It might be a run-around," Saxon hazarded.

"What's that?"

"I don't know. I remember Mrs. Cady had one once, but I was too small. It was the little finger, too. She poulticed it, I think. And I remember she dressed it with some kind of salve. It got awful bad, and finished by her losing the nail. After that it got well quick, and a new nail grew out. Suppose I make a hot bread poultice for yours."

Billy declined, being of the opinion that it would be better in the morning. Saxon was troubled, and as she dozed off she knew that he was lying restlessly wide awake. A few minutes afterward, roused by a heavy blast of wind and rain on the canvas, she heard Billy softly groaning. She raised herself on her elbow and with her free hand, in the way she knew, manipulating his forehead and the surfaces around his eyes, soothed him off to sleep.

Again she slept. And again she was aroused, this time not by the storm, but by Billy. She could not see, but by feeling she ascertained his strange position. He was outside the blankets and on his knees, his forehead resting on the boards, his shoulders writhing with suppressed anguish.

“She’s pulsin’ to beat the band,” he said, when she spoke. “It’s worsen a thousand toothaches. But it ain’t nothin’... if only the canvas don’t blow down. Think what our folks had to stand,” he gritted out between groans. “Why, my father was out in the mountains, an’ the man with ‘m got mauled by a grizzly — clean clawed to the bones all over. An’ they was outa grub an’ had to travel. Two times outa three, when my father put ‘m on the horse, he’d faint away. Had to be tied on. An’ that lasted five weeks, an’ HE pulled through. Then there was Jack Quigley. He blowed off his whole right hand with the burstin’ of his shotgun, an’ the huntin’ dog pup he had with ‘m ate up three of the fingers. An’ he was all alone in the marsh, an’ — ”

But Saxon heard no more of the adventures of Jack Quigley. A terrific blast of wind parted several of the guys, collapsed the framework, and for a moment buried them under the canvas. The next moment canvas, framework, and trailing guys were whisked away into the darkness, and Saxon and Billy were deluged with rain.

“Only one thing to do,” he yelled in her ear. “ — Gather up the things an’ get into that old barn.”

They accomplished this in the drenching darkness, making two trips across the stepping stones of the shallow creek and soaking themselves to the knees. The old barn leaked like a sieve, but they managed to find a dry space on which to spread their anything but dry bedding. Billy’s pain was heart-rending to Saxon. An hour was required to subdue him to a doze, and only by continuously stroking his forehead could she keep him asleep. Shivering and miserable, she accepted a night of wakefulness gladly with the knowledge that she kept him from knowing the worst of his pain.

At the time when she had decided it must be past midnight, there was an interruption. From the open doorway came a flash of electric light, like a tiny searchlight, which quested about the barn and came to rest on her and Billy. From the source of light a harsh voice said:

“Ah! ha! I’ve got you! Come out of that!”

Billy sat up, his eyes dazzled by the light. The voice behind the light was approaching and reiterating its demand that they come out of that.

“What’s up?” Billy asked.

“Me,” was the answer; “an’ wide awake, you bet.”

The voice was now beside them, scarcely a yard away, yet they could see nothing on account of the light, which was intermittent, frequently going out for an instant as the operator’s thumb tired on the switch.

“Come on, get a move on,” the voice went on. “Roll up your blankets an’ trot along. I want you.”

“Who in hell are you?” Billy demanded.

“I’m the constable. Come on.”

“Well, what do you want?”

“You, of course, the pair of you.”

“What for?”

“Vagrancy. Now hustle. I ain’t goin’ to loaf here all night.”

“Aw, chase yourself,” Billy advised. “I ain’t a vag. I’m a workingman.”

“Maybe you are an’ maybe you ain’t,” said the constable; “but you can tell all that to Judge Neusbaumer in the mornin’.”

“Why you... you stinkin’, dirty cur, you think you’re goin’ to pull me,” Billy began. “Turn the light on yourself. I want to see what kind of an ugly mug you got. Pull me, eh? Pull me? For two cents I’d get up there an’ beat you to a jelly, you — ”

“No, no, Billy,” Saxon pleaded. “Don’t make trouble. It would mean jail.”

“That’s right,” the constable approved, “listen to your woman.”

“She’s my wife, an’ see you speak of her as such,” Billy warned. “Now get out, if you know what’s good for yourself.”

“I’ve seen your kind before,” the constable retorted. “An’ I’ve got my little persuader with me. Take a squint.”

The shaft of light shifted, and out of the darkness, illuminated with ghastly brilliance, they saw thrust a hand holding a revolver. This hand seemed a thing apart, self-existent, with no corporeal attachment, and it appeared and disappeared like an apparition as the thumb-pressure wavered on the switch. One moment they were staring at the hand and revolver, the next moment at impenetrable darkness, and the next moment again at the hand and revolver.

"Now, I guess you'll come," the constable gloated.

"You got another guess comin'," Billy began.

But at that moment the light went out. They heard a quick movement on the officer's part and the thud of the light-stick on the ground. Both Billy and the constable fumbled for it, but Billy found it and flashed it on the other. They saw a gray-bearded man clad in streaming oilskins. He was an old man, and reminded Saxon of the sort she had been used to see in Grand Army processions on Decoration Day.

"Give me that stick," he bullied.

Billy sneered a refusal.

"Then I'll put a hole through you, by criminy."

He leveled the revolver directly at Billy, whose thumb on the switch did not waver, and they could see the gleaming bullet-tips in the chambers of the cylinder.

"Why, you whiskery old skunk, you ain't got the grit to shoot sour apples," was Billy's answer. "I know your kind — brave as lions when it comes to pullin' miserable, broken-spirited bindle stiffs, but as leery as a yellow dog when you face a man. Pull that trigger! Why, you pusillanimous piece of dirt, you'd run with your tail between your legs if I said boo!"

Suiting action to the word, Billy let out an explosive "BOO!" and Saxon giggled involuntarily at the startle it caused in the constable.

"I'll give you a last chance," the latter grated through his teeth. "Turn over that light-stick an' come along peaceable, or I'll lay you out."

Saxon was frightened for Billy's sake, and yet only half frightened. She had a faith that the man dared not fire, and she felt the old familiar thrills of admiration for Billy's courage. She could not see his face, but she knew in all certitude that it was bleak and passionless in the terrifying way she had seen it when he fought the three Irishmen.

"You ain't the first man I killed," the constable threatened. "I'm an old soldier, an' I ain't squeamish over blood — "

"And you ought to be ashamed of yourself," Saxon broke in, "trying to shame and disgrace peaceable people who've done no wrong."

"You've done wrong sleepin' here," was his vindication. "This ain't your property. It's agin the law. An' folks that go agin the law go to jail, as the two of you'll go. I've sent many a tramp up for thirty days for sleepin' in this very shack. Why, it's a regular trap for 'em. I got a good glimpse of your faces an' could see you was tough characters." He turned on Billy. "I've fooled enough with you. Are you goin' to give in an' come peaceable?"

"I'm goin' to tell you a couple of things, old boss," Billy answered. "Number one: you ain't goin' to pull us. Number two: we're goin' to sleep the night out here."

"Gimme that light-stick," the constable demanded peremptorily.

"G'wan, Whiskers. You're standin' on your foot. Beat it. Pull your freight. As for your torch you'll find it outside in the mud."

Billy shifted the light until it illuminated the doorway, and then threw the stick as he would pitch a baseball. They were now in total darkness, and they could hear the intruder gritting his teeth in rage.

"Now start your shootin' an' see what'll happen to you," Billy advised menacingly.

Saxon felt for Billy's hand and squeezed it proudly. The constable grumbled some threat.

"What's that?" Billy demanded sharply. "Ain't you gone yet? Now listen to me, Whiskers. I've put up with all your shenanigan I'm goin' to. Now get out or I'll throw you out. An' if you come monkeyin, around here again you'll get yours. Now get!"

So great was the roar of the storm that they could hear nothing. Billy rolled a cigarette. When he lighted it, they saw the barn was empty. Billy chuckled.

"Say, I was so mad I clean forgot my run-around. It's only just beginnin' to tune up again."

Saxon made him lie down and receive her soothing ministrations.

"There is no use moving till morning," she said. "Then, just as soon as it's light, we'll catch a car into San Jose, rent a room, get a hot breakfast, and go to a drug store for the proper stuff for poulticing or whatever treatment's needed."

"But Benson," Billy demurred.

"I'll telephone him from town. It will only cost five cents. I saw he had, a wire. And you couldn't plow on account of the rain, even if your finger was well. Besides, we'll both be mending together. My heel will be all right by the time it clears up and we can start traveling."

CHAPTER V

Early on Monday morning, three days later, Saxon and Billy took an electric car to the end of the line, and started a second time for San Juan. Puddles were standing in the road, but the sun shone from a blue sky, and everywhere, on the ground, was a faint hint of budding green. At Benson's Saxon waited while Billy went in to get his six dollars for the three days' plowing.

"Kicked like a steer because I was quittin'," he told her when he came back. "He wouldn't listen at first. Said he'd put me to drivin' in a few days, an' that there wasn't enough good four-horse men to let one go easily."

"And what did you say?"

"Oh, I just told 'm I had to be movin' along. An' when he tried to argue I told 'm my wife was with me, an' she was blamed anxious to get along."

"But so are you, Billy."

"Sure, Pete; but just the same I wasn't as keen as you. Doggone it, I was gettin' to like that plowin'. I'll never be scairt to ask for a job at it again. I've got to where I savvy the burro, an' you bet I can plow against most of 'm right now."

An hour afterward, with a good three miles to their credit, they edged to the side of the road at the sound of an automobile behind them. But the machine did not pass. Benson was alone in it, and he came to a stop alongside.

"Where are you bound?" he inquired of Billy, with a quick, measuring glance at Saxon.

"Monterey — if you're goin' that far," Billy answered with a chuckle.

"I can give you a lift as far as Watsonville. It would take you several days on shank's mare with those loads. Climb in." He addressed Saxon directly. "Do you want to ride in front?"

Saxon glanced to Billy.

"Go on," he approved. "It's fine in front. — This is my wife, Mr. Benson — Mrs. Roberts."

"Oh, ho, so you're the one that took your husband away from me," Benson accused good humoredly, as he tucked the robe around her.

Saxon shouldered the responsibility and became absorbed in watching him start the car.

“I’d be a mighty poor farmer if I owned no more land than you’d plowed before you came to me,” Benson, with a twinkling eye, jerked over his shoulder to Billy.

“I’d never had my hands on a plow but once before,” Billy confessed. “But a fellow has to learn some time.”

“At two dollars a day?”

“If he can get some alfalfa artist to put up for it,” Billy met him complacently.

Benson laughed heartily.

“You’re a quick learner,” he complimented. “I could see that you and plows weren’t on speaking acquaintance. But you took hold right. There isn’t one man in ten I could hire off the county road that could do as well as you were doing on the third day. But your big asset is that you know horses. It was half a joke when I told you to take the lines that morning. You’re a trained horseman and a born horseman as well.”

“He’s very gentle with horses,” Saxon said.

“But there’s more than that to it,” Benson took her up. “Your husband’s got the WAY with him. It’s hard to explain. But that’s what it is — the WAY. It’s an instinct almost. Kindness is necessary. But GRIP is more so. Your husband grips his horses. Take the test I gave him with the four-horse load. It was too complicated and severe. Kindness couldn’t have done it. It took grip. I could see it the moment he started. There wasn’t any doubt in his mind. There wasn’t any doubt in the horses. They got the feel of him. They just knew the thing was going to be done and that it was up to them to do it. They didn’t have any fear, but just the same they knew the boss was in the seat. When he took hold of those lines, he took hold of the horses. He gripped them, don’t you see. He picked them up and put them where he wanted them, swung them up and down and right and left, made them pull, and slack, and back — and they knew everything was going to come out right. Oh, horses may be stupid, but they’re not altogether fools. They know when the proper horseman has hold of them, though how they know it so quickly is beyond me.”

Benson paused, half vexed at his volubility, and gazed keenly at Saxon to see if she had followed him. What he saw in her face and eyes satisfied him, and he added, with a short laugh:

“Horseflesh is a hobby of mine. Don’t think otherwise because I am running a stink engine. I’d rather be streaking along here behind a pair of fast-steppers. But I'd lose time on them, and, worse than that, I'd be too anxious about them all the time. As for this thing, why, it has no nerves, no delicate joints nor tendons; it's a case of let her rip."

The miles flew past and Saxon was soon deep in talk with her host. Here again, she discerned immediately, was a type of the new farmer. The knowledge she had picked up enabled her to talk to advantage, and when Benson talked she was amazed that she could understand so much. In response to his direct querying, she told him her and Billy's plans, sketching the Oakland life vaguely, and dwelling on their future intentions.

Almost as in a dream, when they passed the nurseries at Morgan Hill, she learned they had come twenty miles, and realized that it was a longer stretch than they had planned to walk that day. And still the machine hummed on, eating up the distance as ever it flashed into view.

"I wondered what so good a man as your husband was doing on the road," Benson told her.

"Yes," she smiled. "He said you said he must be a good man gone wrong."

"But you see, I didn't know about YOU. Now I understand. Though I must say it's extraordinary in these days for a young couple like you to pack your blankets in search of land. And, before I forget it, I want to tell you one thing." He turned to Billy. "I am just telling your wife that there's an all-the-year job waiting for you on my ranch. And there's a tight little cottage of three rooms the two of you can housekeep in. Don't forget."

Among other things Saxon discovered that Benson had gone through the College of Agriculture at the University of California — a branch of learning she had not known existed. He gave her small hope in her search for government land.

"The only government land left," he informed her, "is what is not good enough to take up for one reason or another. If it's good land down there where you're going, then the market is inaccessible. I know no railroads tap in there."

"Wait till we strike Pajaro Valley," he said, when they had passed Gilroy and were booming on toward Sargent's. "I'll show you what can be done with the soil — and not by cow-college graduates but by uneducated foreigners that the high and mighty American has always sneered at. I'll show you. It's one of the most wonderful demonstrations in the state."

At Sargent's he left them in the machine a few minutes while he transacted business.

"Whew! It beats hikin'," Billy said. "The day's young yet and when he drops us we'll be fresh for a few miles on our own. Just the same, when we get settled an' well off, I guess I'll stick by horses. They'll always be good enough for me."

"A machine's only good to get somewhere in a hurry," Saxon agreed. "Of course, if we got very, very rich — "

"Say, Saxon," Billy broke in, suddenly struck with an idea. "I've learned one thing. I ain't afraid any more of not gettin' work in the country. I was at first, but I didn't tell you. Just the same I was dead leery when we pulled out on the San Leandro pike. An' here, already, is two places open — Mrs. Mortimer's an' Benson's; an' steady jobs, too. Yep, a man can get work in the country."

"Ah," Saxon amended, with a proud little smile, "you haven't said it right. Any GOOD man can get work in the country. The big farmers don't hire men out of charity."

"Sure; they ain't in it for their health," he grinned.

"And they jump at you. That's because you are a good man. They can see it with half an eye. Why, Billy, take all the working tramps we've met on the road already. There wasn't one to compare with you. I looked them over. They're all weak — weak in their bodies, weak in their heads, weak both ways."

"Yep, they are a pretty measly bunch," Billy admitted modestly.

"It's the wrong time of the year to see Pajaro Valley," Benson said, when he again sat beside Saxon and Sargent's was a thing of the past. "Just the same, it's worth seeing any time. Think of it — twelve thousand acres of apples! Do you know what they call Pajaro Valley now? New Dalmatia. We're being squeezed out. We Yankees thought we were smart. Well, the Dalmatians came along and showed they were smarter. They were miserable immigrants — poorer than Job's turkey. First, they worked at day's labor in the fruit harvest. Next they began, in a small way, buying the apples on the trees. The more money they made the bigger became their deals. Pretty soon they were renting the orchards on long leases. And now, they are beginning to buy the land. It won't be long before they own the whole valley, and the last American will be gone.

"Oh, our smart Yankees! Why, those first ragged Slavs in their first little deals with us only made something like two and three thousand per cent. profits. And now they're satisfied to make a hundred per cent. It's a calamity if their profits sink to twenty-five or fifty per cent."

"It's like San Leandro," Saxon said. "The original owners of the land are about all gone already. It's intensive cultivation." She liked that phrase. "It isn't a case of having a lot of acres, but of how much they can get out of one acre."

"Yes, and more than that," Benson answered, nodding his head emphatically. "Lots of them, like Luke Scurich, are in it on a large scale. Several of them are worth a quarter of a million already. I know ten of them who will average one hundred and fifty thousand each. They have a WAY with apples. It's almost a gift. They KNOW trees in much the same way your husband knows horses. Each tree is just as much an individual to them as a horse is to me. They know each tree, its whole history, everything that ever happened to it, its every idiosyncrasy. They have their fingers on its pulse. They can tell if it's feeling as well to-day as it felt yesterday. And if it isn't, they know why and proceed to remedy matters for it. They can look at a tree in bloom and tell how many boxes of apples it will pack, and not only that — they'll know what the quality and grades of those apples are going to be. Why, they know each individual apple, and they pick it tenderly, with love, never hurting it, and pack it and ship it tenderly and with love, and when it arrives at market, it isn't bruised nor rotten, and it fetches top price.

"Yes, it's more than intensive. These Adriatic Slavs are long-headed in business. Not only can they grow apples, but they can sell apples. No market? What does it matter? Make a market. That's their way, while our kind let the crops rot knee-deep under the trees. Look at Peter Mengol. Every year he goes to England, and he takes a hundred carloads of yellow Newton pippins with him. Why, those Dalmatians are showing Pajaro apples on the South African market right now, and coining money out of it hand over fist."

"What do they do with all the money?" Saxon queried.

"Buy the Americans of Pajaro Valley out, of course, as they are already doing."

"And then?" she questioned.

Benson looked at her quickly.

“Then they’ll start buying the Americans out of some other valley. And the Americans will spend the money and by the second generation start rotting in the cities, as you and your husband would have rotted if you hadn’t got out.”

Saxon could not repress a shudder. — As Mary had rotted, she thought; as Bert and all the rest had rotted; as Tom and all the rest were rotting.

“Oh, it’s a great country,” Benson was continuing. “But we’re not a great people. Kipling is right. We’re crowded out and sitting on the stoop. And the worst of it is there’s no reason we shouldn’t know better. We’re teaching it in all our agricultural colleges, experiment stations, and demonstration trains. But the people won’t take hold, and the immigrant, who has learned in a hard school, beats them out. Why, after I graduated, and before my father died — he was of the old school and laughed at what he called my theories — I traveled for a couple of years. I wanted to see how the old countries farmed. Oh, I saw.

“We’ll soon enter the valley. You bet I saw. First thing, in Japan, the terraced hillsides. Take a hill so steep you couldn’t drive a horse up it. No bother to them. They terraced it — a stone wall, and good masonry, six feet high, a level terrace six feet wide; up and up, walls and terraces, the same thing all the way, straight into the air, walls upon walls, terraces upon terraces, until I’ve seen ten-foot walls built to make three-foot terraces, and twenty-foot walls for four or five feet of soil they could grow things on. And that soil, packed up the mountainsides in baskets on their backs!

“Same thing everywhere I went, in Greece, in Ireland, in Dalmatia — I went there, too. They went around and gathered every bit of soil they could find, gleaned it and even stole it by the shovelful or handful, and carried it up the mountains on their backs and built farms — BUILT them, MADE them, on the naked rock. Why, in France, I’ve seen hill peasants mining their stream-beds for soil as our fathers mined the streams of California for gold. Only our gold’s gone, and the peasants’ soil remains, turning over and over, doing something, growing something, all the time. Now, I guess I’ll hush.”

“My God!” Billy muttered in awe-stricken tones. “Our folks never done that. No wonder they lost out.”

“There’s the valley now,” Benson said. “Look at those trees! Look at those hillsides! That’s New Dalmatia. Look at it! An apple paradise! Look at that soil! Look at the way it’s worked!”

It was not a large valley that Saxon saw. But everywhere, across the flatlands and up the low rolling hills, the industry of the Dalmatians was evident. As she looked she listened to Benson.

“Do you know what the old settlers did with this beautiful soil? Planted the flats in grain and pastured cattle on the hills. And now twelve thousand acres of it are in apples. It’s a regular show place for the Eastern guests at Del Monte, who run out here in their machines to see the trees in bloom or fruit. Take Matteo Lettunich — he’s one of the originals. Entered through Castle Garden and became a dish-washer. When he laid eyes on this valley he knew it was his Klondike. To-day he leases seven hundred acres and owns a hundred and thirty of his own — the finest orchard in the valley, and he packs from forty to fifty thousand boxes of export apples from it every year. And he won’t let a soul but a Dalmatian pick a single apple of all those apples. One day, in a banter, I asked him what he’d sell his hundred and thirty acres for. He answered seriously. He told me what it had netted him, year by year, and struck an average. He told me to calculate the principal from that at six per cent. I did. It came to over three thousand dollars an acre.”

“What are all the Chinks doin’ in the Valley?” Billy asked. “Growin’ apples, too?”

Benson shook his head.

“But that’s another point where we Americans lose out. There isn’t anything wasted in this valley, not a core nor a paring; and it isn’t the Americans who do the saving. There are fifty-seven apple-evaporating furnaces, to say nothing of the apple canneries and cider and vinegar factories. And Mr. John Chinaman owns them. They ship fifteen thousand barrels of cider and vinegar each year.”

“It was our folks that made this country,” Billy reflected. “Fought for it, opened it up, did everything — ”

“But develop it,” Benson caught him up. “We did our best to destroy it, as we destroyed the soil of New England.” He waved his hand, indicating some place beyond the hills. “Salinas lies over that way. If you went through there you’d think you were in Japan. And more than one fat little fruit valley in California has been taken over by the Japanese. Their method is somewhat different from the Dalmatians’. First they drift in fruit picking at day’s wages. They give better satisfaction than the American fruit-pickers, too, and the Yankee grower is glad to get them. Next, as they get stronger, they form in Japanese unions and proceed to run the American labor out. Still the fruit-growers are satisfied. The next step is when the Japs won't pick. The American labor is gone. The fruit-grower is helpless. The crop perishes. Then in step the Jap labor bosses. They're the masters already. They contract for the crop. The fruit-growers are at their mercy, you see. Pretty soon the Japs are running the valley. The fruit-growers have become absentee landlords and are busy learning higher standards of living in the cities or making trips to Europe. Remains only one more step. The Japs buy them out. They've got to sell, for the Japs control the labor market and could bankrupt them at will."

"But if this goes on, what is left for us?" asked Saxon.

"What is happening. Those of us who haven't anything rot in the cities. Those of us who have land, sell it and go to the cities. Some become larger capitalists; some go into the professions; the rest spend the money and start rotting when it's gone, and if it lasts their life-time their children do the rotting for them."

Their long ride was soon over, and at parting Benson reminded Billy of the steady job that awaited him any time he gave the word.

"I guess we'll take a peep at that government land first," Billy answered. "Don't know what we'll settle down to, but there's one thing sure we won't tackle."

"What's that?"

"Start in apple-growin' at three thousan' dollars an acre."

Billy and Saxon, their packs upon the backs, trudged along a hundred yards. He was the first to break silence.

"An' I tell you another thing, Saxon. We'll never be goin' around smellin' out an' swipin' bits of soil an' carryin' it up a hill in a basket. The United States is big yet. I don't care what Benson or any of 'em says, the United States ain't played out. There's millions of acres untouched an' waitin', an' it's up to us to find 'em."

"And I'll tell you one thing," Saxon said. "We're getting an education. Tom was raised on a ranch, yet he doesn't know right now as much about farming conditions as we do. And I'll tell you another thing. The more I think of it, the more it seems we are going to be disappointed about that government land."

"Ain't no use believin' what everybody tells you," he protested.

"Oh, it isn't that. It's what I think. I leave it to you. If this land around here is worth three thousand an acre, why is it that government land, if it's any good, is waiting there, only a short way off, to be taken for the asking."

Billy pondered this for a quarter of a mile, but could come to no conclusion. At last he cleared his throat and remarked:

"Well, we can wait till we see it first, can't we?"

"All right," Saxon agreed. "We'll wait till we see it."

CHAPTER VI

They had taken the direct county road across the hills from Monterey, instead of the Seventeen Mile Drive around by the coast, so that Carmel Bay came upon them without any fore-glimmerings of its beauty. Dropping down through the pungent pines, they passed woods-embowered cottages, quaint and rustic, of artists and writers, and went on across wind-blown rolling sandhills held to place by sturdy lupine and nodding with pale California poppies. Saxon screamed in sudden wonder of delight, then caught her breath and gazed at the amazing peacock-blue of a breaker, shot through with golden sunlight, overfalling in a mile-long sweep and thundering into white ruin of foam on a crescent beach of sand scarcely less white.

How long they stood and watched the stately procession of breakers, rising from out the deep and wind-capped sea to froth and thunder at their feet, Saxon did not know. She was recalled to herself when Billy, laughing, tried to remove the telescope basket from her shoulders.

“You kind of look as though you was goin’ to stop a while,” he said. “So we might as well get comfortable.”

“I never dreamed it, I never dreamed it,” she repeated, with passionately clasped hands. “I... I thought the surf at the Cliff House was wonderful, but it gave no idea of this. — Oh! Look! LOOK! Did you ever see such an unspeakable color? And the sunlight flashing right through it! Oh! Oh! Oh!”

At last she was able to take her eyes from the surf and gaze at the sea-horizon of deepest peacock-blue and piled with cloud-masses, at the curve of the beach south to the jagged point of rocks, and at the rugged blue mountains seen across soft low hills, landward, up Carmel Valley.

“Might as well sit down an’ take it easy,” Billy indulged her. “This is too good to want to run away from all at once.”

Saxon assented, but began immediately to unlace her shoes.

“You ain’t a-goin’ to?” Billy asked in surprised delight, then began unlacing his own.

But before they were ready to run barefooted on the perilous fringe of cream-wet sand where land and ocean met, a new and wonderful thing attracted their attention. Down from the dark pines and across the sandhills ran a man, naked save for narrow trunks. He was smooth and rosy-skinned, cherubic-faced, with a thatch of curly yellow hair, but his body was hugely thewed as a Hercules'.

"Gee! — must be Sandow," Billy muttered low to Saxon.

But she was thinking of the engraving in her mother's scrapbook and of the Vikings on the wet sands of England.

The runner passed them a dozen feet away, crossed the wet sand, never parsing, till the froth wash was to his knees while above him, ten feet at least, upreared a was of overtopping water. Huge and powerful as his body had seemed, it was now white and fragile in the face of that imminent, great-handed buffet of the sea. Saxon gasped with anxiety, and she stole a look at Billy to note that he was tense with watching.

But the stranger sprang to meet the blow, and, just when it seemed he must be crushed, he dived into the face of the breaker and disappeared. The mighty mass of water fell in thunder on the beach, but beyond appeared a yellow head, one arm out-reaching, and a portion of a shoulder. Only a few strokes was he able to make are he was come pelted to dye through another breaker. This was the battle — to win seaward against the Creep of the shoreward hastening sea. Each time he dived and was lost to view Saxon caught her breath and clenched her hands. Sometimes, after the passage of a breaker, they enfold not find him, and when they did he would be scores of feet away, flung there like a chip by a smoke-bearded breaker. Often it seemed he must fail and be thrown upon the beach, but at the end of half an hour he was beyond the outer edge of the surf and swimming strong, no longer diving, but topping the waves. Soon he was so far away that only at intervals could they find the speck of him. That, too, vanished, and Saxon and Billy looked at each other, she with amazement at the swimmer's valor, Billy with blue eyes flashing.

"Some swimmer, that boy, some swimmer," he praised. "Nothing chicken-hearted about him. — Say, I only know tank-swimmin', an' bay-swimmin', but now I'm goin' to learn ocean-swimmin'. If I could do that I'd be so proud you couldn't come within forty feet of me. Why, Saxon, honest to God, I'd sooner do what he done than own a thousan' farms. Oh, I can swim, too, I'm tellin' you, like a fish — I swum, one Sunday, from the Narrow Gauge Pier to Sessions' Basin, an' that's miles — but I never seen anything like that guy in the swimmin' line. An' I'm not goin' to leave this beach until he comes back. — All by his lonely out there in a mountain sea, think of it! He's got his nerve all right, all right."

Saxon and Billy ran barefooted up and down the beach, pursuing each other with brandished snakes of seaweed and playing like children for an hour. It was not until they were putting on their shoes that they sighted the yellow head bearing shoreward. Billy was at the edge of the surf to meet him, emerging, not white-skinned as he had entered, but red from the pounding he had received at the hands of the sea.

"You're a wonder, and I just got to hand it to you," Billy greeted him in outspoken admiration.

"It was a big surf to-day," the young man replied, with a nod of acknowledgment.

"It don't happen that you are a fighter I never heard of?" Billy queried, striving to get some inkling of the identity of the physical prodigy.

The other laughed and shook his head, and Billy could not guess that he was an ex-captain of a 'Varsity Eleven, and incidentally the father of a family and the author of many books. He looked Billy over with an eye trained in measuring freshmen aspirants for the gridiron.

"You're some body of a man," he appreciated. "You'd strip with the best of them. Am I right in guessing that you know your way about in the ring?"

Billy nodded. "My name's Roberts."

The swimmer scowled with a futile effort at recollection.

"Bill — Bill Roberts," Billy supplemented.

"Oh, ho! — Not BIG Bill Roberts? Why, I saw you fight, before the earthquake, in the Mechanic's Pavilion. It was a preliminary to Eddie Hanlon and some other fellow. You're a two-handed fighter, I remember that, with an awful wallop, but slow. Yes, I remember, you were slow that night, but you got your man." He put out a wet hand. "My name's Hazard — Jim Hazard."

"An' if you're the football coach that was, a couple of years ago, I've read about you in the papers. Am I right?"

They shook hands heartily, and Saxon was introduced. She felt very small beside the two young giants, and very proud, withal, that she belonged to the race that gave them birth. She could only listen to them talk.

"I'd like to put on the gloves with you every day for half an hour," Hazard said. "You could teach me a lot. Are you going to stay around here?"

“No. We’re goin’ on down the coast, lookin’ for land. Just the same, I could teach you a few, and there’s one thing you could teach me — surf swimmin’.”

“I’ll swap lessons with you any time,” Hazard offered. He turned to Saxon. “Why don’t you stop in Carmel for a while? It isn’t so bad.”

“It’s beautiful,” she acknowledged, with a grateful smile, “but — ” She turned and pointed to their packs on the edge of the lupine. “We’re on the tramp, and lookin’ for government land.”

“If you’re looking down past the Sur for it, it will keep,” he laughed. “Well, I’ve got to run along and get some clothes on. If you come back this way, look me up. Anybody will tell you where I live. So long.”

And, as he had first arrived, he departed, crossing the sandhills on the run.

Billy followed him with admiring eyes.

“Some boy, some boy,” he murmured. “Why, Saxon, he’s famous. If I’ve seen his face in the papers once, I’ve seen it a thousand times. An’ he ain’t a bit stuck on himself. Just man to man. Say! — I’m beginnin’ to have faith in the old stock again.”

They turned their backs on the beach and in the tiny main street bought meat, vegetables, and half a dozen eggs. Billy had to drag Saxon away from the window of a fascinating shop where were iridescent pearls of abalone, set and unset.

“Abalones grow here, all along the coast,” Billy assured her; “an’ I’ll get you all you want. Low tide’s the time.”

“My father had a set of cuff-buttons made of abalone shell,” she said. “They were set in pure, soft gold. I haven’t thought about them for years, and I wonder who has them now.”

They turned south. Everywhere from among the pines peeped the quaint pretty houses of the artist folk, and they were not prepared, where the road dipped to Carmel River, for the building that met their eyes.

“I know what it is,” Saxon almost whispered. “It’s an old Spanish Mission. It’s the Carmel Mission, of course. That’s the way the Spaniards came up from Mexico, building missions as they came and converting the Indians.”

“Until we chased them out, Spaniards an’ Indians, whole kit an’ caboodle,” Billy observed with calm satisfaction.

“Just the same, it’s wonderful,” Saxon mused, gazing at the big, half-ruined adobe structure. “There is the Mission Dolores, in San Francisco, but it’s smaller than this and not as old.”

Hidden from the sea by low hillocks, forsaken by human being and human habitation, the church of sun-baked clay and straw and chalk-rock stood hushed and breathless in the midst of the adobe ruins which once had housed its worshiping thousands. The spirit of the place descended upon Saxon and Billy, and they walked softly, speaking in whispers, almost afraid to go in through the open ports. There was neither priest nor worshiper, yet they found all the evidences of use, by a congregation which Billy judged must be small from the number of the benches. Inter they climbed the earthquake-racked belfry, noting the hand-hewn timbers; and in the gallery, discovering the pure quality of their voices, Saxon, trembling at her own temerity, softly sang the opening bars of “Jesus Lover of My Soul.” Delighted with the result, she leaned over the railing, gradually increasing her voice to its full strength as she sang:

“Jesus, Lover of my soul, Let me to Thy bosom fly, While the nearer waters roll, While the tempest still is nigh. Hide me, O my Saviour, hide, Till the storm of life is past; Safe into the haven guide And receive my soul at last.”

Billy leaned against the ancient wall and loved her with his eyes, and, when she had finished, he murmured, almost in a whisper:

“That was beautiful — just beautiful. An’ you ought to a-seen your face when you sang. It was as beautiful as your voice. Ain’t it funny? — I never think of religion except when I think of you.”

They camped in the willow bottom, cooked dinner, and spent the afternoon on the point of low rocks north of the mouth of the river. They had not intended to spend the afternoon, but found themselves too fascinated to turn away from the breakers bursting upon the rocks and from the many kinds of colorful sea life starfish, crabs, mussels, sea anemones, and, once, in a rock-pool, a small devilfish that chilled their blood when it cast the hooded net of its body around the small crabs they tossed to it. As the tide grew lower, they gathered a mess of mussels — huge fellows, five and six inches long and bearded like patriarchs. Then, while Billy wandered in a vain search for abalones, Saxon lay and dabbled in the crystal-clear water of a roak-pool, dipping up handfuls of glistening jewels — ground bits of shell and pebble of flashing rose and blue and green and violet. Billy came back and lay beside her, lazying in the sea-cool sunshine, and together they watched the sun sink into the horizon where the ocean was deepest peacock-blue.

She reached out her hand to Billy's and sighed with sheer repletion of content. It seemed she had never lived such a wonderful day. It was as if all old dreams were coming true. Such beauty of the world she had never guessed in her fondest imagining. Billy pressed her hand tenderly.

"What was you thinkin' of?" he asked, as they arose finally to go.

"Oh, I don't know, Billy. Perhaps that it was better, one day like this, than ten thousand years in Oakland."

CHAPTER VII

They left Carmel River and Carmel Valley behind, and with a rising sun went south across the hills between the mountains and the sea. The road was badly washed and gullied and showed little sign of travel.

"It peters out altogether farther down," Billy said. "From there on it's only horse trails. But I don't see much signs of timber, an' this soil's none so good. It's only used for pasture — no farmin' to speak of."

The hills were bare and grassy. Only the canyons were wooded, while the higher and more distant hills were furry with chaparral. Once they saw a coyote slide into the brush, and once Billy wished for a gun when a large wildcat stared at them malignantly and declined to run until routed by a clod of earth that burst about its ears like shrapnel.

Several miles along Saxon complained of thirst. Where the road dipped nearly at sea level to cross a small gulch Billy looked for water. The bed of the gulch was damp with hill-drip, and he left her to rest while he sought a spring.

"Say," he hailed a few minutes afterward. "Come on down. You just gotta see this. It'll 'most take your breath away."

Saxon followed the faint path that led steeply down through the thicket. Midway along, where a barbed wire fence was strung high across the mouth of the gulch and weighted down with big rocks, she caught her first glimpse of the tiny beach. Only from the sea could one guess its existence, so completely was it tucked away on three precipitous sides by the land, and screened by the thicket. Furthermore, the beach was the head of a narrow rock cove, a quarter of a mile long, up which pent way the sea roared and was subdued at the last to a gentle pulse of surf. Beyond the mouth many detached rocks, meeting the full force of the breakers, spouted foam and spray high in the air. The knees of these rocks, seen between the surges, were black with mussels. On their tops sprawled huge sea-lions tawny-wet and roaring in the sun, while overhead, uttering shrill cries, darted and wheeled a multitude of sea birds.

The last of the descent, from the barbed wire fence, was a sliding fall of a dozen feet, and Saxon arrived on the soft dry sand in a sitting posture.

"Oh, I tell you it's just great," Billy bubbled. "Look at it for a camping spot. In among the trees there is the prettiest spring you ever saw. An' look at all the good firewood, an'...” He gazed about and seaward with eyes that saw what no rush of words could compass. “... An', an' everything. We could live here. Look at the mussels out there. An' I bet you we could catch fish. What d'ye say we stop a few days? — It's vacation anyway — an' I could go back to Carmel for hooks an' lines.”

Saxon, keenly appraising his glowing face, realized that he was indeed being won from the city.

“An' there ain't no wind here,” he was recommending. “Not a breath. An' look how wild it is. Just as if we was a thousand miles from anywhere.”

The wind, which had been fresh and raw across the bare hills, gained no entrance to the cove; and the beach was warm and balmy, the air sweetly pungent with the thicket odors. Here and there, in the midst of the thicket, severe small oak trees and other small trees of which Saxon did not know the names. Her enthusiasm now vied with Billy's, and, hand in hand, they started to explore.

“Here's where we can play real Robinson Crusoe,” Billy cried, as they crossed the hard sand from highwater mark to the edge of the water. “Come on, Robinson. Let's stop over. Of course, I'm your Man Friday, an' what you say goes.”

“But what shall we do with Man Saturday!” She pointed in mock consternation to a fresh footprint in the sand. “He may be a savage cannibal, you know.”

“No chance. It's not a bare foot but a tennis shoe.”

“But a savage could get a tennis shoe from a drowned or eaten sailor, couldn't hey” she contended.

“But sailors don't wear tennis shoes,” was Billy's prompt refutation.

“You know too much for Man Friday,” she chided; “but, just the same; if you'll fetch the packs we'll make camp. Besides, it mightn't have been a sailor that was eaten. It might have been a passenger.”

By the end of an hour a snug camp was completed. The blankets were spread, a supply of firewood was chopped from the seasoned driftwood, and over a fire the coffee pot had begun to sing. Saxon called to Billy, who was improvising a table from a wave-washed plank. She pointed seaward. On the far point of rocks, naked except for swimming trunks, stood a man. He was gazing toward them, and they could see his long mop of dark hair blown by the wind. As he started to climb the rocks landward Billy called Saxon's attention to the fact that the stranger wore tennis shoes. In a few minutes he dropped down from the rock to the beach and walked up to them.

"Gosh!" Billy whispered to Saxon. "He's lean enough, but look at his muscles. Everybody down here seems to go in for physical culture."

As the newcomer approached, Saxon glimpsed sufficient of his face to be reminded of the old pioneers and of a certain type of face seen frequently among the old soldiers: Young though he was — not more than thirty, she decided — this man had the same long and narrow face, with the high cheekbones, high and slender forehead, and nose high, lean, and almost beaked. The lips were thin and sensitive; but the eyes were different from any she had ever seen in pioneer or veteran or any man. They were so dark a gray that they seemed brown, and there were a farness and alertness of vision in them as of bright questing through profounds of space. In a misty way Saxon felt that she had seen him before.

"Hello," he greeted. "You ought to be comfortable here." He threw down a partly filled sack. "Mussels. All I could get. The tide's not low enough yet."

Saxon heard Billy muffle an ejaculation, and saw painted on his face the extremest astonishment.

"Well, honest to God, it does me proud to meet you," he blurted out. "Shake hands. I always said if I laid eyes on you I'd shake. — Say!"

But Billy's feelings mastered him, and, beginning with a choking giggle, he roared into helpless mirth.

The stranger looked at him curiously across their clasped hands, and glanced inquiringly to Saxon.

"You gotta excuse me," Billy gurgled, pumping the other's hand up and down. "But I just gotta laugh. Why, honest to God, I've woke up nights an' laughed an' gone to sleep again. Don't you recognize 'm, Saxon? He's the same identical dude say, friend, you're some punkins at a hundred yards dash, ain't you?"

And then, in a sudden rush, Saxon placed him. He it was who had stood with Roy Blanchard alongside the automobile on the day she had wandered, sick and unwitting, into strange neighborhoods. Nor had that day been the first time she had seen him.

"Remember the Bricklayers' Picnic at Weasel Park?" Billy was asking. "An' the foot race? Why, I'd know that nose of yours anywhere among a million. You was the guy that stuck your cane between Timothy McManus's legs an' started the grandest roughhouse Weasel Park or any other park ever seen."

The visitor now commenced to laugh. He stood on one leg as he laughed harder, then stood on the other leg. Finally he sat down on a log of driftwood.

"And you were there," he managed to gasp to Billy at last. "You saw it. You saw it." He turned to Saxon. " — And you?"

She nodded.

"Say," Billy began again, as their laughter eased down, "what I wants know is what'd you wanta do it for. Say, what'd you wants do it for? I've been askin' that to myself ever since."

"So have I," was the answer.

"You didn't know Timothy McManus, did you?"

"No; I'd never seen him before, and I've never seen him since."

"But what'd you wanta do it for?" Billy persisted.

The young man laughed, then controlled himself.

"To save my life, I don't know. I have one friend, a most intelligent chap that writes sober, scientific books, and he's always aching to throw an egg into an electric fan to see what will happen. Perhaps that's the way it was with me, except that there was no aching. When I saw those legs flying past, I merely stuck my stick in between. I didn't know I was going to do it. I just did it. Timothy McManus was no more surprised than I was."

"Did they catch you?" Billy asked.

"Do I look as if they did? I was never so scared in my life. Timothy McManus himself couldn't have caught me that day. But what happened afterward? I heard they had a fearful roughhouse, but I couldn't stop to see."

It was not until a quarter of an hour had passed, during which Billy described the fight, that introductions took place. Mark Hall was their visitor's name, and he lived in a bungalow among the Carmel pines.

"But how did you ever find your way to Bierce's Cove?" he was curious to know. "Nobody ever dreams of it from the road."

"So that's its name?" Saxon said.

"It's the name we gave it. One of our crowd camped here one summer, and we named it after him. I'll take a cup of that coffee, if you don't mind." — This to Saxon. "And then I'll show your husband around. We're pretty proud of this cove. Nobody ever comes here but ourselves."

“You didn’t get all that muscle from bein’ chased by McManus,” Billy observed over the coffee.

“Massage under tension,” was the cryptic reply.

“Yes,” Billy said, pondering vacantly. “Do you eat it with a spoon?”

Hall laughed.

“I’ll show you. Take any muscle you want, tense it, then manipulate it with your fingers, so, and so.”

“An’ that done all that’“ Billy asked skeptically.

“All that!” the other scorned proudly. “For one muscle you see, there’s five tucked away but under command. Touch your finger to any part of me and see.”

Billy complied, touching the right breast.

“You know something about anatomy, picking a muscleless spot,” scolded Hall.

Billy grinned triumphantly, then, to his amazement, saw a muscle grow up under his finger. He prodded it, and found it hard and honest.

“Massage under tension!” Hall exulted. “Go on — anywhere you want.”

And anywhere and everywhere Billy touched, muscles large and small rose up, quivered, and sank down, till the whole body was a ripple of willed quick.

“Never saw anything like it,” Billy marveled at the end; “an’ I’ve seen some few good men stripped in my time. Why, you’re all living silk.”

“Massage under tension did it, my friend. The doctors gave me up. My friends called me the sick rat, and the mangy poet, and all that. Then I quit the city, came down to Carmel, and went in for the open air — and massage under tension.”

“Jim Hazard didn’t get his muscles that way,” Billy challenged.

“Certainly not, the lucky skunk; he was born with them. Mine’s made. That’s the difference. I’m a work of art. He’s a cave bear. Come along. I’ll show you around now. You’d better get your clothes off. Keep on only your shoes and pants, unless you’ve got a pair of trunks.”

“My mother was a poet,” Saxon said, while Billy was getting himself ready in the thicket. She had noted Hall’s reference to himself.

He seemed incurious, and she ventured further.

“Some of it was printed.”

“What was her name?” he asked idly.

"Dayelle Wiley Brown. She wrote: 'The Viking's Quest'; 'Days of Gold'; 'Constancy'; 'The Caballero'; 'Graves at Little Meadow'; and a lot more. Ten of them are in 'The Story of the Files.'"

"I've the book at home," he remarked, for the first time showing real interest. "She was a pioneer, of course — before my time. I'll look her up when I get back to the house. My people were pioneers. They came by Panama, in the Fifties, from Long Island. My father was a doctor, but he went into business in San Francisco and robbed his fellow men out of enough to keep me and the rest of a large family going ever since. — Say, where are you and your husband bound?"

When Saxon had told him of their attempt to get away from Oakland and of their quest for land, he sympathized with the first and shook his head over the second.

"It's beautiful down beyond the Sur," he told her. "I've been all over those redwood canyons, and the place is alive with game. The government land is there, too. But you'd be foolish to settle. It's too remote. And it isn't good farming land, except in patches in the canyons. I know a Mexican there who is wild to sell his five hundred acres for fifteen hundred dollars. Three dollars an acre! And what does that mean? That it isn't worth more. That it isn't worth so much; because he can find no takers. Land, you know, is worth what they buy and sell it for."

Billy, emerging from the thicket, only in shoes and in pants rolled to the knees, put an end to the conversation; and Saxon watched the two men, physically so dissimilar, climb the rocks and start out the south side of the cove. At first her eyes followed them lazily, but soon she grew interested and worried. Hall was leading Billy up what seemed a perpendicular wall in order to gain the backbone of the rock. Billy went slowly, displaying extreme caution; but twice she saw him slip, the weather-eaten stone crumbling away in his hand and rattling beneath him into the cove. When Hall reached the top, a hundred feet above the sea, she saw him stand upright and sway easily on the knife-edge which she knew fell away as abruptly on the other side. Billy, once on top, contented himself with crouching on hands and knees. The leader went on, upright, walking as easily as on a level floor. Billy abandoned the hands and knees position, but crouched closely and often helped himself with his hands.

The knife-edge backbone was deeply serrated, and into one of the notches both men disappeared. Saxon could not keep down her anxiety, and climbed out on the north side of the cove, which was less rugged and far less difficult to travel. Even so, the unaccustomed height, the crumbling surface, and the fierce buffets of the wind tried her nerve. Soon she was opposite the men. They had leaped a narrow chasm and were scaling another tooth. Already Billy was going more nimbly, but his leader often paused and waited for him. The way grew severer, and several times the clefts they essayed extended down to the ocean level and spouted spray from the growling breakers that burst through. At other times, standing erect, they would fall forward across deep and narrow clefts until their palms met the opposing side; then, clinging with their fingers, their bodies would be drawn across and up.

Near the end, Hall and Billy went out of sight over the south side of the backbone, and when Saxon saw them again they were rounding the extreme point of rock and coming back on the cove side. Here the way seemed barred. A wide fissure, with hopelessly vertical sides, yawned skywards from a foam-white vortex where the mad waters shot their level a dozen feet upward and dropped it as abruptly to the black depths of battered rock and writhing weed.

Clinging precariously, the men descended their side till the spray was flying about them. Here they paused. Saxon could see Hall pointing down across the fissure and imagined he was showing some curious thing to Billy. She was not prepared for what followed. The surf-level sucked and sank away, and across and down Hall jumped to a narrow foothold where the wash had roared yards deep the moment before. Without pause, as the returning sea rushed up, he was around the sharp corner and clawing upward hand and foot to escape being caught. Billy was now left alone. He could not even see Hall, much less be further advised by him, and so tensely did Saxon watch, that the pain in her finger-tips, crushed to the rock by which she held, warned her to relax. Billy waited his chance, twice made tentative preparations to leap and sank back, then leaped across and down to the momentarily exposed foothold, doubled the corner, and as he clawed up to join Hall was washed to the waist but not torn away.

Saxon did not breathe easily till they rejoined her at the fire. One glance at Billy told her that he was exceedingly disgusted with himself.

“You’ll do, for a beginner,” Hall cried, slapping him jovially on the bare shoulder. “That climb is a stunt of mine. Many’s the brave lad that’s started with me and broken down before we were half way out. I've had a dozen balk at that big jump. Only the athletes make it."

"I ain't ashamed of admittin' I was scairt," Billy growled. "You're a regular goat, an' you sure got my goat half a dozen times. But I'm mad now. It's mostly trainin', an' I'm goin' to camp right here an' train till I can challenge you to a race out an' around an' back to the beach."

"Done," said Hall, putting out his hand in ratification. "And some time, when we get together in San Francisco, I'll lead you up against Bierce — the one this cove is named after. His favorite stunt, when he isn't collecting rattlesnakes, is to wait for a forty-mile-an-hour breeze, and then get up and walk on the parapet of a skyscraper — on the lee side, mind you, so that if he blows off there's nothing to fetch him up but the street. He sprang that on me once."

"Did you do it!" Billy asked eagerly.

"I wouldn't have if I hadn't been on. I'd been practicing it secretly for a week. And I got twenty dollars out of him on the bet."

The tide was now low enough for mussel gathering and Saxon accompanied the men out the north wall. Hall had several sacks to fill. A rig was coming for him in the afternoon, he explained, to cart the mussels back to Carmel. When the sacks were full they ventured further among the rock crevices and were rewarded with three abalones, among the shells of which Saxon found one coveted blister-pearl. Hall initiated them into the mysteries of pounding and preparing the abalone meat for cooking.

By this time it seemed to Saxon that they had known him a long time. It reminded her of the old times when Bert had been with them, singing his songs or ranting about the last of the Mohicans.

"Now, listen; I'm going to teach you something," Hall commanded, a large round rock poised in his hand above the abalone meat. "You must never, never pound abalone without singing this song. Nor must you sing this song at any other time. It would be the rankest sacrilege. Abalone is the food of the gods. Its preparation is a religious function. Now listen, and follow, and remember that it is a very solemn occasion."

The stone came down with a thump on the white meat, and thereafter arose and fell in a sort of tom-tom accompaniment to the poet's song:

"Oh! some folks boast of quail on toast, Because they think it's tony; But I'm content to owe my rent And live on abalone.

“Oh! Mission Point’s a friendly joint Where every crab’s a crony, And true and kind you’ll ever find The clinging abalone.

“He wanders free beside the sea Where ‘er the coast is stony; He flaps his wings and madly sings — The plaintive abalone.

“Some stick to biz, some flirt with Liz Down on the sands of Coney; But we, by hell, stay in Carmel, And whang the abalone.”

He paused with his mouth open and stone upraised. There was a rattle of wheels and a voice calling from above where the sacks of mussels had been carried. He brought the stone down with a final thump and stood up.

“There’s a thousand more verses like those,” he said. “Sorry I hadn’t time to teach you them.” He held out his hand, palm downward. “And now, children, bless you, you are now members of the clan of Abalone Eaters, and I solemnly enjoin you, never, no matter what the circumstances, pound abalone meat without chanting the sacred words I have revealed unto you.”

“But we can’t remember the words from only one hearing,” Saxon expostulated.

“That shall be attended to. Next Sunday the Tribe of Abalone Eaters will descend upon you here in Bierce’s Cove, and you will be able to see the rites, the writers and writeresses, down even to the Iron Man with the basilisk eyes, vulgarly known as the King of the Sacerdotal Lizards.”

“Will Jim Hazard come?” Billy called, as Hall disappeared into the thicket.

“He will certainly come. Is he not the Cave-Bear Pot-Walloper and Gridironer, the most fearsome, and, next to me, the most exalted, of all the Abalone Eaters?”

Saxon and Billy could only look at each other till they heard the wheels rattle away.

“Well, I’ll be doggoned,” Billy let out. “He’s some boy, that. Nothing stuck up about him. Just like Jim Hazard, comes along and makes himself at home, you’re as good as he is an’ he’s as good as you, an’ we’re all friends together, just like that, right off the bat.”

“He’s old stock, too,” Saxon said. “He told me while you were undressing. His folks came by Panama before the railroad was built, and from what he said I guess he’s got plenty of money.”

“He sure don’t act like it.”

“And isn’t he full of fun!” Saxon cried.

“A regular josher. An’ HIM! — a POET!”

“Oh, I don’t know, Billy. I’ve heard that plenty of poets are odd.”

“That’s right, come to think of it. There’s Joaquin Miller, lives out in the hills back of Fruitvale. He’s certainly odd. It’s right near his place where I proposed to you. Just the same I thought poets wore whiskers and eyeglasses, an’ never tripped up foot-racers at Sunday picnics, nor run around with as few clothes on as the law allows, gatherin’ mussels an’ climbin’ like goats.”

That night, under the blankets, Saxon lay awake, looking at the stars, pleasuring in the balmy thicket-scents, and listening to the dull rumble of the outer surf and the whispering ripples on the sheltered beach a few feet away. Billy stirred, and she knew he was not yet asleep.

“Glad you left Oakland, Billy?” she snuggled.

“Huh!” came his answer. “Is a clam happy?”

CHAPTER VIII

Every half tide Billy raced out the south wall over the dangerous course he and Hall had traveled, and each trial found him doing it in faster time.

“Wait till Sunday,” he said to Saxon. “I’ll give that poet a run for his money. Why, they ain’t a place that bothers me now. I’ve got the head confidence. I run where I went on hands an’ knees. I figured it out this way: Suppose you had a foot to fall on each side, an’ it was soft hay. They’d be nothing to stop you. You wouldn’t fall. You’d go like a streak. Then it’s just the same if it’s a mile down on each side. That ain’t your concern. Your concern is to stay on top and go like a streak. An’, d’ye know, Saxon, when I went at it that way it never bothered me at all. Wait till he comes with his crowd Sunday. I’m ready for him.”

“I wonder what the crowd will be like,” Saxon speculated.

“Like him, of course. Birds of a feather flock together. They won’t be stuck up, any of them, you’ll see.”

Hall had sent out fish-lines and a swimming suit by a Mexican cowboy bound south to his ranch, and from the latter they learned much of the government land and how to get it. The week flew by; each day Saxon sighed a farewell of happiness to the sun; each morning they greeted its return with laughter of joy in that another happy day had begun. They made no plans, but fished, gathered mussels and abalones, and climbed among the rocks as the moment moved them. The abalone meat they pounded religiously to a verse of doggerel improvised by Saxon. Billy prospered. Saxon had never seen him at so keen a pitch of health. As for herself, she scarcely needed the little hand-mirror to know that never, since she was a young girl, had there been such color in her cheeks, such spontaneity of vivacity.

“It’s the first time in my life I ever had real play,” Billy said. “An’ you an’ me never played at all all the time we was married. This beats bein’ any kind of a millionaire.”

“No seven o’clock whistle,” Saxon exulted. “I’d lie abed in the mornings on purpose, only everything is too good not to be up. And now you just play at chopping some firewood and catching a nice big perch, Man Friday, if you expect to get any dinner.”

Billy got up, hatchet in hand, from where he had been lying prone, digging holes in the sand with his bare toes.

"But it ain't goin' to last," he said, with a deep sigh of regret. "The rains'll come any time now. The good weather's hangin' on something wonderful."

On Saturday morning, returning from his run out the south wall, he missed Saxon. After helloing for her without result, he climbed to the road. Half a mile away, he saw her astride an unsaddled, unbridled horse that moved unwillingly, at a slow walk, across the pasture.

"Lucky for you it was an old mare that had been used to ridin' — see them saddle marks," he grumbled, when she at last drew to a halt beside him and allowed him to help her down.

"Oh, Billy," she sparkled, "I was never on a horse before. It was glorious! I felt so helpless, too, and so brave."

"I'm proud of you, just the same," he said, in more grumbling tones than before. "'Tain't every married women'd tackle a strange horse that way, especially if she'd never ben on one. An' I ain't forgot that you're goin' to have a saddle animal all to yourself some day — a regular Joe dandy."

The Abalone Eaters, in two rigs and on a number of horses, descended in force on Bierce's Cove. There were half a score of men and almost as many women. All were young, between the ages of twenty-five and forty, and all seemed good friends. Most of them were married. They arrived in a roar of good spirits, tripping one another down the slippery trail and engulfing Saxon and Billy in a comradeship as artless and warm as the sunshine itself. Saxon was appropriated by the girls — she could not realize them women; and they made much of her, praising her camping and traveling equipment and insisting on hearing some of her tale. They were experienced campers themselves, as she quickly discovered when she saw the pots and pans and clothes-boilers for the mussels which they had brought.

In the meantime Billy and the men had undressed and scattered out after mussels and abalones. The girls lighted on Saxon's ukulele and nothing would do but she must play and sing. Several of them had been to Honolulu, and knew the instrument, confirming Mercedes' definition of ukulele as "jumping flea." Also, they knew Hawaiian songs she had learned from Mercedes, and soon, to her accompaniment, all were singing: "Aloha Oe," "Honolulu Tomboy," and "Sweet Lei Lehua." Saxon was genuinely shocked when some of them, even the more matronly, danced hulas on the sand.

When the men returned, burdened with sacks of shellfish, Mark Hall, as high priest, commanded the due and solemn rite of the tribe. At a wave of his hand, the many poised stones came down in unison on the white meat, and all voices were uplifted in the Hymn to the Abalone. Old verses all sang, occasionally some one sang a fresh verse alone, whereupon it was repeated in chorus. Billy betrayed Saxon by begging her in an undertone to sing the verse she had made, and her pretty voice was timidly raised in:

“We sit around and gaily pound, And bear no acrimony Because our ob — ject is a gob Of sizzling abalone.”

“Great!” cried the poet, who had winced at ob — ject. “She speaks the language of the tribe! Come on, children — now!”

And all chanted Saxon’s lines. Then Jim Hazard had a new verse, and one of the girls, and the Iron Man with the basilisk eyes of greenish-gray, whom Saxon recognized from Hall’s description. To her it seemed he had the face of a priest.

“Oh! some like ham and some like lamb And some like macaroni; But bring me in a pail of gin And a tub of abalone.

“Oh! some drink rain and some champagne Or brandy by the pony; But I will try a little rye With a dash of abalone.

“Some live on hope and some on dope And some on alimony. But our tom-cat, he lives on fat And tender abalone.”

A black-haired, black-eyed man with the roguish face of a satyr, who, Saxon learned, was an artist who sold his paintings at five hundred apiece, brought on himself universal execration and acclamation by singing:

“The more we take, the more they make In deep sea matrimony; Race suicide cannot betide The fertile abalone.”

And so it went, verses new and old, verses without end, all in glorification of the succulent shellfish of Carmel. Saxon’s enjoyment was keen, almost ecstatic, and she had difficulty in convincing herself of the reality of it all. It seemed like some fairy tale or book story come true. Again, it seemed more like a stage, and these the actors, she and Billy having blundered into the scene in some incomprehensible way. Much of wit she sensed which she did not understand. Much she did understand. And she was aware that brains were playing as she had never seen brains play before. The puritan streak in her training was astonished and shocked by some of the broadness; but she refused to sit in judgment. They SEEMED good, these light-hearted young people; they certainly were not rough or gross as were many of the crowds she had been with on Sunday picnics. None of the men got drunk, although there were cocktails in vacuum bottles and red wine in a huge demijohn.

What impressed Saxon most was their excessive jollity, their childlike joy, and the childlike things they did. This effect was heightened by the fact that they were novelists and painters, poets and critics, sculptors and musicians. One man, with a refined and delicate face — a dramatic critic on a great San Francisco daily, she was told — introduced a feat which all the men tried and failed at most ludicrously. On the beach, at regular intervals, planks were placed as obstacles. Then the dramatic critic, on all fours, galloped along the sand for all the world like a horse, and for all the world like a horse taking hurdles he jumped the planks to the end of the course.

Quoits had been brought along, and for a while these were pitched with zest. Then jumping was started, and game slid into game. Billy took part in everything, but did not win first place as often as he had expected. An English writer beat him a dozen feet at tossing the caber. Jim Hazard beat him in putting the heavy "rock." Mark Hall out-jumped him standing and running. But at the standing high back-jump Billy did come first. Despite the handicap of his weight, this victory was due to his splendid back and abdominal lifting muscles. Immediately after this, however, he was brought to grief by Mark Hall's sister, a strapping young amazon in cross-saddle riding costume, who three times tumbled him ignominiously heels over head in a bout of Indian wrestling.

"You're easy," jeered the Iron Man, whose name they had learned was Pete Bideaux. "I can put you down myself, catch-as-catch-can."

Billy accepted the challenge, and found in all truth that the other was rightly nicknamed. In the training camps Billy had sparred and clinched with giant champions like Jim Jeffries and Jack Johnson, and met the weight of their strength, but never had he encountered strength like this of the Iron Man. Do what he could, Billy was powerless, and twice his shoulders were ground into the sand in defeat.

"You'll get a chance back at him," Hazard whispered to Billy, off at one side. "I've brought the gloves along. Of course, you had no chance with him at his own game. He's wrestled in the music halls in London with

Hackenschmidt. Now you keep quiet, and we'll lead up to it in a casual sort of way. He doesn't know about you."

Soon, the Englishman who had tossed the caber was sparring with the dramatic critic, Hazard and Hall boxed in fantastic burlesque, then, gloves in hand, looked for the next appropriately matched couple. The choice of Bideaux and Billy was obvious.

"He's liable to get nasty if he's hurt," Hazard warned Billy, as he tied on the gloves for him. "He's old American French, and he's got a devil of a temper. But just keep your head and tap him — whatever you do, keep tapping him."

"Easy sparring now"; "No roughhouse, Bideaux"; "Just light tapping, you know," were admonitions variously addressed to the Iron Man.

"Hold on a second," he said to Billy, dropping his hands. "When I get rapped I do get a bit hot. But don't mind me. I can't help it, you know. It's only for the moment, and I don't mean it."

Saxon felt very nervous, visions of Billy's bloody fights and all the scabs he had slugged rising in her brain; but she had never seen her husband box, and but few seconds were required to put her at ease. The Iron Man had no chance. Billy was too completely the master, guarding every blow, himself continually and almost at will tapping the other's face and body. There was no weight in Billy's blows, only a light and snappy tingle; but their incessant iteration told on the Iron Man's temper. In vain the onlookers warned him to go easy. His face purpled with anger, and his blows became savage. But Billy went on, tap, tap, tap, calmly, gently, imperturbably. The Iron Man lost control, and rushed and plunged, delivering great swings and upper-cuts of man-killing quality. Billy ducked, side-stepped, blocked, stalled, and escaped all damage. In the clinches, which were unavoidable, he locked the Iron Man's arms, and in the clinches the Iron Man invariably laughed and apologized, only to lose his head with the first tap the instant they separated and be more infuriated than ever.

And when it was over and Billy's identity had been divulged, the Iron Man accepted the joke on himself with the best of humor. It had been a splendid exhibition on Billy's part. His mastery of the sport, coupled with his self-control, had most favorably impressed the crowd, and Saxon, very proud of her man boy, could not but see the admiration all had for him.

Nor did she prove in any way a social failure. When the tired and sweating players lay down in the dry sand to cool off, she was persuaded into accompanying their nonsense songs with the ukulele. Nor was it long, catching their spirit, ere she was singing to them and teaching them quaint songs of early days which she had herself learned as a little girl from Cady — Cady, the saloonkeeper, pioneer, and ax-cavalryman, who had been a bull-whacker on the Salt Intake Trail in the days before the railroad.

One song which became an immediate favorite was:

“Oh! times on Bitter Creek, they never can be beat, Root hog or die is on every wagon sheet; The sand within your throat, the dust within your eye, Bend your back and stand it — root hog or die.”

After the dozen verses of “Root Hog or Die,” Mark Hall claimed to be especially infatuated with:

“Obadier, he dreampt a dream, Dreampt he was drivin’ a ten-mule team, But when he woke he heaved a sigh, The lead-mule kicked e-o-wt the swing-mule’s eye.”

It was Mark Hall who brought up the matter of Billy’s challenge to race out the south wall of the cove, though he referred to the test as lying somewhere in the future. Billy surprised him by saying he was ready at any time. Forthwith the crowd clamored for the race. Hall offered to bet on himself, but there were no takers. He offered two to one to Jim Hazard, who shook his head and said he would accept three to one as a sporting proposition. Billy heard and gritted his teeth.

“I’ll take you for five dollars,” he said to Hall, “but not at those odds. I’ll back myself even.”

“It isn’t your money I want; it’s Hazard’s,” Hall demurred. “Though I’ll give either of you three to one.”

“Even or nothing,” Billy held out obstinately.

Hall finally closed both bets — even with Billy, and three to one with Hazard.

The path along the knife-edge was so narrow that it was impossible for runners to pass each other, so it was arranged to time the men, Hall to go first and Billy to follow after an interval of half a minute.

Hall toed the mark and at the word was off with the form of a sprinter. Saxon’s heart sank. She knew Billy had never crossed the stretch of sand at that speed. Billy darted forward thirty seconds later, and reached the foot of the rock when Hall was half way up. When both were on top and racing from notch to notch, the Iron Man announced that they had scaled the wall in the same time to a second.

“My money still looks good,” Hazard remarked, “though I hope neither of them breaks a neck. I wouldn’t take that run that way for all the gold that would fill the cove.”

“But you’ll take bigger chances swimming in a storm on Carmel Beach,” his wife chided.

“Oh, I don’t know,” he retorted. “You haven’t so far to fall when swimming.”

Billy and Hall had disappeared and were making the circle around the end. Those on the beach were certain that the poet had gained in the dizzy spurts of flight along the knife-edge. Even Hazard admitted it.

“What price for my money now?” he cried excitedly, dancing up and down.

Hall had reappeared, the great jump accomplished, and was running shoreward. But there was no gap. Billy was on his heels, and on his heels he stayed, in to shore, down the wall, and to the mark on the beach. Billy had won by half a minute.

“Only by the watch,” he panted. “Hall was over half a minute ahead of me out to the end. I’m not slower than I thought, but he’s faster. He’s a wooz of a sprinter. He could beat me ten times outa ten, except for accident. He was hung up at the jump by a big sea. That’s where I caught ‘m. I jumped right after ‘m on the same sea, then he set the pace home, and all I had to do was take it.”

“That’s all right,” said Hall. “You did better than beat me. That’s the first time in the history of Bierce’s Cove that two men made that jump on the same sea. And all the risk was yours, coming last.”

“It was a fluke,” Billy insisted.

And at that point Saxon settled the dispute of modesty and raised a general laugh by rippling chords on the ukulele and parodying an old hymn in negro minstrel fashion:

“De Lawd move in er mischievous way His blunders to perform.”

In the afternoon Jim Hazard and Hall dived into the breakers and swam to the outlying rocks, routing the protesting sea-lions and taking possession of their surf-battered stronghold. Billy followed the swimmers with his eyes, yearning after them so undisguisedly that Mrs. Hazard said to him:

“Why don’t you stop in Carmel this winter? Jim will teach you all he knows about the surf. And he’s wild to box with you. He works long hours at his desk, and he really needs exercise.”

Not until sunset did the merry crowd carry their pots and pans and trove of mussels up to the road and depart. Saxon and Billy watched them disappear, on horses and behind horses, over the top of the first hill, and then descended hand in hand through the thicket to the camp. Billy threw himself on the sand and stretched out.

"I don't know when I've been so tired," he yawned. "An' there's one thing sure: I never had such a day. It's worth livin' twenty years for an' then some."

He reached out his hand to Saxon, who lay beside him.

"And, oh, I was so proud of you, Billy," she said. "I never saw you box before. I didn't know it was like that. The Iron Man was at your mercy all the time, and you kept it from being violent or terrible. Everybody could look on and enjoy — and they did, too."

"Huh, I want to say you was goin' some yourself. They just took to you. Why, honest to God, Saxon, in the singin' you was the whole show, along with the ukulele. All the women liked you, too, an' that's what counts."

It was their first social triumph, and the taste of it was sweet:

"Mr. Hall said he'd looked up the 'Story of the Files,'" Saxon recounted. "And he said mother was a true poet. He said it was astonishing the fine stock that had crossed the Plains. He told me a lot about those times and the people I didn't know. And he's read all about the fight at Little Meadow. He says he's got it in a book at home, and if we come back to Carmel he'll show it to me."

"He wants us to come back all right. D'ye know what he said to me, Saxon t He gave me a letter to some guy that's down on the government land — some poet that's holdin' down a quarter of a section — so we'll be able to stop there, which'll come in handy if the big rains catch us. An' — Oh! that's what I was drivin' at. He said he had a little shack he lived in while the house was buildin'. The Iron Man's livin' in it now, but he's goin' away to some Catholic college to study to be a priest, an' Hall said the shack'd be ours as long as we wanted to use it. An' he said I could do what the Iron Man was doin' to make a livin'. Hall was kind of bashful when he was offerin' me work. Said it'd be only odd jobs, but that we'd make out. I could help'm plant potatoes, he said; an' he got half savage when he said I couldn't chop wood. That was his job, he said; an' you could see he was actually jealous over it."

"And Mrs. Hall said just about the same to me, Billy. Carmel wouldn't be so bad to pass the rainy season in. And then, too, you could go swimming with Mr. Hazard."

"Seems as if we could settle down wherever we've a mind to," Billy assented. "Carmel's the third place now that's offered. Well, after this, no man need be afraid of makin' a go in the country."

"No good man," Saxon corrected.

"I guess you're right." Billy thought for a moment. "Just the same a dub, too, has a better chance in the country than in the city."

"Who'd have ever thought that such fine people existed?" Saxon pondered. "It's just wonderful, when you come to think of it."

"It's only what you'd expect from a rich poet that'd trip up a foot-racer at an Irish picnic," Billy exposited.

"The only crowd such a guy'd run with would be like himself, or he'd make a crowd that was. I wouldn't wonder that he'd make this crowd. Say, he's got some sister, if anybody'd ride up on a sea-lion an' ask you. She's got that Indian wrestlin' down pat, an' she's built for it. An' say, ain't his wife a beaut?"

A little longer they lay in the warm sand. It was Billy who broke the silence, and what he said seemed to proceed out of profound meditation.

"Say, Saxon, d'ye know I don't care if I never see movie pictures again."

CHAPTER IX

Saxon and Billy were gone weeks on the trip south, but in the end they came back to Carmel. They had stopped with Hafler, the poets in the Marble House, which he had built with his own hands. This queer dwelling was all in one room, built almost entirely of white marble. Hailer cooked, as over a campfire, in the huge marble fireplace, which he used in all ways as a kitchen. There were divers shelves of books, and the massive furniture he had made from redwood, as he had made the shakes for the roof. A blanket, stretched across a corner, gave Saxon privacy. The poet was on the verge of departing for San Francisco and New York, but remained a day over with them to explain the country and run over the government land with Billy. Saxon had wanted to go along that morning, but Hafler scornfully rejected her, telling her that her legs were too short. That night, when the men returned, Billy was played out to exhaustion. He frankly acknowledged that Hafler had walked him into the ground, and that his tongue had been hanging out from the first hour. Hafler estimated that they had covered fifty-five miles.

"But such miles!" Billy enlarged. "Half the time up or down, an' 'most all the time without trails. An' such a pace. He was dead right about your short legs, Saxon. You wouldn't a-lasted the first mile. An' such country! We ain't seen anything like it yet."

Hafler left the next day to catch the train at Monterey. He gave them the freedom of the Marble House, and told them to stay the whole winter if they wanted. Billy elected to loaf around and rest up that day. He was stiff and sore. Moreover, he was stunned by the exhibition of walking prowess on the part of the poet.

"Everybody can do something top-notch down in this country," he marveled. "Now take that Hafler. He's a bigger man than me, an' a heavier. An' weight's against walkin', too. But not with him. He's done eighty miles inside twenty-four hours, he told me, an' once a hundred an' seventy in three days. Why, he made a show outa me. I felt ashamed as a little kid."

"Remember, Billy," Saxon soothed him, "every man to his own game. And down here you're a top-notcher at your own game. There isn't one you're not the master of with the gloves."

"I guess that's right," he conceded. "But just the same it goes against the grain to be walked off my legs by a poet — by a poet, mind you."

They spent days in going over the government land, and in the end reluctantly decided against taking it up. The redwood canyons and great cliffs of the Santa Lucia Mountains fascinated Saxon; but she remembered what Hafler had told her of the summer fogs which hid the sun sometimes for a week or two at a time, and which lingered for months. Then, too, there was no access to market. It was many miles to where the nearest wagon road began, at Post's, and from there on, past Point Sur to Carmel, it was a weary and perilous way. Billy, with his teamster judgment, admitted that for heavy hauling it was anything but a picnic. There was the quarry of perfect marble on Hafler's quarter section. He had said that it would be worth a fortune if near a railroad; but, as it was, he'd make them a present of it if they wanted it.

Billy visioned the grassy slopes pastured with his horses and cattle, and found it hard to turn his back; but he listened with a willing ear to Saxon's argument in favor of a farm-home like the one they had seen in the moving pictures in Oakland. Yes, he agreed, what they wanted was an all-around farm, and an all-around farm they would have if they hiked forty years to find it.

"But it must have redwoods on it," Saxon hastened to stipulate. "I've fallen in love with them. And we can get along without fog. And there must be good wagon-roads, and a railroad not more than a thousand miles away."

Heavy winter rains held them prisoners for two weeks in the Marble House. Saxon browsed among Hafler's books, though most of them were depressingly beyond her, while Billy hunted with Hafler's guns. But he was a poor shot and a worse hunter. His only success was with rabbits, which he managed to kill on occasions when they stood still. With the rifle he got nothing, although he fired at half a dozen different deer, and, once, at a huge cat-creature with a long tail which he was certain was a mountain lion. Despite the way he grumbled at himself, Saxon could see the keen joy he was taking. This belated arousal of the hunting instinct seemed to make almost another man of him. He was out early and late, compassing prodigious climbs and tramps — once reaching as far as the gold mines Tom had spoken of, and being away two days.

"Talk about pluggin' away at a job in the city, an' goin' to movie' pictures and Sunday picnics for amusement!" he would burst out. "I can't see what was eatin' me that I ever put up with such truck. Here's where I oughta ben all the time, or some place like it."

He was filled with this new mode of life, and was continually recalling old hunting tales of his father and telling them to Saxon.

"Say, I don't get stiffened any more after an all-day tramp," he exulted. "I'm broke in. An' some day, if I meet up with that Hafler, I'll challenge'm to a tramp that'll break his heart."

"Foolish boy, always wanting to play everybody's game and beat them at it," Saxon laughed delightedly.

"Aw, I guess you're right," he growled. "Hafler can always out-walk me. He's made that way. But some day, just the same, if I ever see 'm again, I'll invite 'm to put on the gloves.. .. though I won't be mean enough to make 'm as sore as he made me."

After they left Post's on the way back to Carmel, the condition of the road proved the wisdom of their rejection of the government land. They passed a rancher's wagon overturned, a second wagon with a broken axle, and the stage a hundred yards down the mountainside, where it had fallen, passengers, horses, road, and all.

"I guess they just about quit tryin' to use this road in the winter," Billy said. "It's horse-killin' an' man-killin', an' I can just see 'm freightin' that marble out over it I don't think."

Settling down at Carmel was an easy matter. The Iron Man had already departed to his Catholic college, and the "shack" turned out to be a three-roomed house comfortably furnished for housekeeping. Hall put Billy to work on the potato patch — a matter of three acres which the poet farmed erratically to the huge delight of his crowd. He planted at all seasons, and it was accepted by the community that what did not rot in the ground was evenly divided between the gophers and trespassing cows. A plow was borrowed, a team of horses hired, and Billy took hold. Also he built a fence around the patch, and after that was set to staining the shingled roof of the bungalow. Hall climbed to the ridge-pole to repeat his warning that Billy must keep away from his wood-pile. One morning Hall came over and watched Billy chopping wood for Saxon. The poet looked on covetously as long as he could restrain himself.

"It's plain you don't know how to use an axe," he sneered. "Here, let me show you."

He worked away for an hour, all the while delivering an exposition on the art of chopping wood.

“Here,” Billy expostulated at last, taking hold of the axe. “I’ll have to chop a cord of yours now in order to make this up to you.”

Hall surrendered the axe reluctantly.

“Don’t let me catch you around my wood-pile, that’s all,” he threatened. “My wood-pile is my castle, and you’ve got to understand that.”

From a financial standpoint, Saxon and Billy were putting aside much money. They paid no rent, their simple living was cheap, and Billy had all the work he cared to accept. The various members of the crowd seemed in a conspiracy to keep him busy. It was all odd jobs, but he preferred it so, for it enabled him to suit his time to Jim Hazard’s. Each day they boxed and took a long swim through the surf. When Hazard finished his morning’s writing, he would whoop through the pines to Billy, who dropped whatever work he was doing. After the swim, they would take a fresh shower at Hazard’s house, rub each other down in training camp style, and be ready for the noon meal. In the afternoon Hazard returned to his desk, and Billy to his outdoor work, although, still later, they often met for a few miles’ run over the hills. Training was a matter of habit to both men. Hazard, when he had finished with seven years of football, knowing the dire death that awaits the big-muscled athlete who ceases training abruptly, had been compelled to keep it up. Not only was it a necessity, but he had grown to like it. Billy also liked it, for he took great delight in the silk of his body.

Often, in the early morning, gun in hand, he was off with Mark Hall, who taught him to shoot and hunt. Hall had dragged a shotgun around from the days when he wore knee pants, and his keen observing eyes and knowledge of the habits of wild life were a revelation to Billy. This part of the country was too settled for large game, but Billy kept Saxon supplied with squirrels and quail, cottontails and jackrabbits, snipe and wild ducks. And they learned to eat roasted mallard and canvasback in the California style of sixteen minutes in a hot oven. As he became expert with shotgun and rifle, he began to regret the deer and the mountain lion he had missed down below the Sur; and to the requirements of the farm he and Saxon sought he added plenty of game.

But it was not all play in Carmel. That portion of the community which Saxon and Billy came to know, “the crowd,” was hard-working. Some worked regularly, in the morning or late at night. Others worked spasmodically, like the wild Irish playwright, who would shut himself up for a week at a time, then emerge, pale and drawn, to play like a madman against the time of his next retirement. The pale and youthful father of a family, with the face of Shelley, who wrote vaudeville turns for a living and blank verse tragedies and sonnet cycles for the despair of managers and publishers, hid himself in a concrete cell with three-foot walls, so piped, that, by turning a lever, the whole structure spouted water upon the impending intruder. But in the main, they respected each other's work-time. They drifted into one another's houses as the spirit prompted, but if they found a man at work they went their way. This obtained to all except Mark Hall, who did not have to work for a living; and he climbed trees to get away from popularity and compose in peace.

The crowd was unique in its democracy and solidarity. It had little intercourse with the sober and conventional part of Carmel. This section constituted the aristocracy of art and letters, and was sneered at as bourgeois. In return, it looked askance at the crowd with its rampant bohemianism. The taboo extended to Billy and Saxon. Billy took up the attitude of the clan and sought no work from the other camp. Nor was work offered him.

Hall kept open house. The big living room, with its huge fireplace, divans, shelves and tables of books and magazines, was the center of things. Here, Billy and Saxon were expected to be, and in truth found themselves to be, as much at home as anybody. Here, when wordy discussions on all subjects under the sun were not being waged, Billy played at cut-throat Pedro, horrible fives, bridge, and pinochle. Saxon, a favorite of the young women, sewed with them, teaching them pretties and being taught in fair measure in return.

It was Billy, before they had been in Carmel a week, who said shyly to Saxon:

"Say, you can't guess how I'm missin' all your nice things. What's the matter with writin' Tom to express 'm down? When we start trampin' again, we'll express 'm back."

Saxon wrote the letter, and all that day her heart was singing. Her man was still her lover. And there were in his eyes all the old lights which had been blotted out during the nightmare period of the strike.

"Some pretty nifty skirts around here, but you've got 'em all beat, or I'm no judge," he told her. And again: "Oh, I love you to death anyway. But if them things ain't shipped down there'll be a funeral."

Hall and his wife owned a pair of saddle horses which were kept at the livery stable, and here Billy naturally gravitated. The stable operated the stage and carried the mails between Carmel and Monterey. Also, it rented out carriages and mountain wagons that seated nine persons. With carriages and wagons a driver was furnished The stable often found itself short a driver, and Billy was quickly called upon. He became an extra man at the stable. He received three dollars a day at such times, and drove many parties around the Seventeen Mile Drive, up Carmel Valley, and down the coast to the various points and beaches.

"But they're a pretty uppish sort, most of 'em," he said to Saxon, referring to the persons he drove. "Always MISTER Roberts this, an' MISTER Roberts that — all kinds of ceremony so as to make me not forget they consider themselves better 'n me. You see, I ain't exactly a servant, an' yet I ain't good enough for them. I'm the driver — something half way between a hired man and a chauffeur. Huh! When they eat they give me my lunch off to one side, or afterward. No family party like with Hall an' HIS kind. An' that crowd to-day, why, they just naturally didn't have no lunch for me at all. After this, always, you make me up my own lunch. I won't be be holdin' to 'em for nothin', the damned geezers. An' you'd a-died to seen one of 'em try to give me a tip. I didn't say nothin'. I just looked at 'm like I didn't see 'm, an' turned away casual-like after a moment, leavin' him as embarrassed as hell."

Nevertheless, Billy enjoyed the driving, never more so than when he held the reins, not of four plodding workhorses, but of four fast driving animals, his foot on the powerful brake, and swung around curves and along dizzy cliff-rims to a frightened chorus of women passengers. And when it came to horse judgment and treatment of sick and injured horses even the owner of the stable yielded place to Billy.

"I could get a regular job there any time," he boasted quietly to Saxon. "Why, the country's just sproutin' with jobs for any so-so sort of a fellow. I bet anything, right now, if I said to the boss that I'd take sixty dollars an' work regular, he'd jump for me. He's hinted as much. — And, say! Are you onta the fact that yours truly has learnt a new trade. Well he has. He could take a job stage-drivin' anywheres. They drive six on some of the stages up in Lake County. If we ever get there, I'll get thick with some driver, just to get the reins of six in my hands. An' I'll have you on the box beside me. Some goin' that! Some goin'!"

Billy took little interest in the many discussions waged in Hall's big living room. "Wind-chewin'," was his term for it. To him it was so much good time wasted that might be employed at a game of Pedro, or going swimming, or wrestling in the sand. Saxon, on the contrary, delighted in the logomachy, though little enough she understood of it, following mainly by feeling, and once in a while catching a high light.

But what she could never comprehend was the pessimism that so often cropped up. The wild Irish playwright had terrible spells of depression. Shelley, who wrote vaudeville turns in the concrete cell, was a chronic pessimist. St. John, a young magazine writer, was an anarchic disciple of Nietzsche. Masson, a painter, held to a doctrine of eternal recurrence that was petrifying. And Hall, usually so merry, could outfoot them all when he once got started on the cosmic pathos of religion and the gibbering anthropomorphisms of those who loved not to die. At such times Saxon was oppressed by these sad children of art. It was inconceivable that they, of all people, should be so forlorn.

One night Hall turned suddenly upon Billy, who had been following dimly and who only comprehended that to them everything in life was rotten and wrong.

"Here, you pagan, you, you stolid and flesh-fettered ox, you monstrosity of over-weening and perennial health and joy, what do you think of it?" Hall demanded.

"Oh, I've had my troubles," Billy answered, speaking in his wonted slow way. "I've had my hard times, an' fought a losin' strike, an' soaked my watch, an' ben unable to pay my rent or buy grub, an' slugged scabs, an' ben slugged, and ben thrown into jail for makin' a fool of myself. If I get you, I'd be a whole lot better to be a swell hog fattenin' for market an' nothin' worryin', than to be a guy sick to his stomach from not savvyin' how the world is made or from wonderin' what's the good of anything."

"That's good, that prize hog," the poet laughed. "Least irritation, least effort — a compromise of Nirvana and life. Least irritation, least effort, the ideal existence: a jellyfish floating in a tideless, tepid, twilight sea."

"But you're missin' all the good things," Billy objected.

"Name them," came the challenge.

Billy was silent a moment. To him life seemed a large and generous thing. He felt as if his arms ached from inability to compass it all, and he began, haltingly at first, to put his feeling into speech.

"If you'd ever stood up in the ring an' out-gamed an' out-fought a man as good as yourself for twenty rounds, you'd get what I'm drivin' at. Jim Hazard an' I get it when we swim out through the surf an' laugh in the teeth of the biggest breakers that ever pounded the beach, an' when we come out from the shower, rubbed down and dressed, our skin an' muscles like silk, our bodies an' brains all a-tinglin' like silk.. .."

He paused and gave up from sheer inability to express ideas that were nebulous at best and that in reality were remembered sensations.

"Silk of the body, can you beat it?" he concluded lamely, feeling that he had failed to make his point, embarrassed by the circle of listeners.

"We know all that," Hall retorted. "The lies of the flesh. Afterward come rheumatism and diabetes. The wine of life is heady, but all too quickly it turns to — "

"Uric acid," interpolated the wild Irish playwright.

"They's plenty more of the good things," Billy took up with a sudden rush of words. "Good things all the way up from juicy porterhouse and the kind of coffee Mrs. Hall makes to...." He hesitated at what he was about to say, then took it at a plunge. "To a woman you can love an' that loves you. Just take a look at Saxon there with the ukulele in her lap. There's where I got the jellyfish in the dishwater an' the prize hog skinned to death."

A shout of applause and great hand-clapping went up from the girls, and Billy looked painfully uncomfortable.

"But suppose the silk goes out of your body till you creak like a rusty wheelbarrow?" Hall pursued. "Suppose, just suppose, Saxon went away with another man. What then?"

Billy considered a space.

"Then it'd be me for the dishwater an' the jellyfish, I guess." He straightened up in his chair and threw back his shoulders unconsciously as he ran a hand over his biceps and swelled it. Then he took another look at Saxon. "But thank the Lord I still got a wallop in both my arms an' a wife to fill 'em with love."

Again the girls applauded, and Mrs. Hall cried:

"Look at Saxon! She blushing! What have you to say for yourself?"

"That no woman could be happier," she stammered, "and no queen as proud. And that — "

She completed the thought by strumming on the ukulele and singing:

"De Lawd move in or mischievous way His blunders to perform."

"I give you best," Hall grinned to Billy.

"Oh, I don't know," Billy disclaimed modestly. "You've read so much I guess you know more about everything than I do."

"Oh! Oh!" "Traitor!" "Taking it all back!" the girls cried variously.

Billy took heart of courage, reassured them with a slow smile, and said:

"Just the same I'd sooner be myself than have book indigestion. An' as for Saxon, why, one kiss of her lips is worth more'n all the libraries in the world."

CHAPTER X

"There be hills and valleys, and rich land, and streams of clear water, good wagon roads and a railroad not too far away, plenty of sunshine, and cold enough at night to need blankets, and not only pines but plenty of other kinds of trees, with open spaces to pasture Billy's horses and cattle, and deer and rabbits for him to shoot, and lots and lots of redwood trees, and... and... well, and no fog," Saxon concluded the description of the farm she and Billy sought.

Mark Hall laughed delightedly.

"And nightingales roosting in all the trees," he cried; "flowers that neither fail nor fade, bees without stings, honey dew every morning, showers of manna betweenwhiles, fountains of youth and quarries of philosopher's stones — why, I know the very place. Let me show you."

She waited while he pored over road-maps of the state. Failing in them, he got out a big atlas, and, though all the countries of the world were in it, he could not find what he was after.

"Never mind," he said. "Come over to-night and I'll be able to show you."

That evening he led her out on the veranda to the telescope, and she found herself looking through it at the full moon.

"Somewhere up there in some valley you'll find that farm," he teased.

Mrs. Hall looked inquiringly at them as they returned inside.

"I've been showing her a valley in the moon where she expects to go farming," he laughed.

"We started out prepared to go any distance," Saxon said. "And if it's to the moon, I expect we can make it."

"But my dear child, you can't expect to find such a paradise on the earth," Hall continued. "For instance, you can't have redwoods without fog. They go together. The redwoods grow only in the fog belt."

Saxon debated a while.

"Well, we could put up with a little fog," she conceded, " — almost anything to have redwoods. I don't know what a quarry of philosopher's stones is like, but if it's anything like Mr. Hafler's marble quarry, and there's a railroad handy, I guess we could manage to worry along. And you don't have to go to the moon for honey dew. They scrape it off of the leaves of the bushes up in Nevada County. I know that for a fact, because my father told my mother about it, and she told me."

A little later in the evening, the subject of farming having remained uppermost, Hall swept off into a diatribe against the "gambler's paradise," which was his epithet for the United States.

"When you think of the glorious chance," he said. "A new country, bounded by the oceans, situated just right in latitude, with the richest land and vastest natural resources of any country in the world, settled by immigrants who had thrown off all the leading strings of the Old World and were in the humor for democracy. There was only one thing to stop them from perfecting the democracy they started, and that thing was greediness.

"They started gobbling everything in sight like a lot of swine, and while they gobbled democracy went to smash. Gobbling became gambling. It was a nation of tin horns. Whenever a man lost his stake, all he had to do was to chase the frontier west a few miles and get another stake. They moved over the face of the land like so many locusts. They destroyed everything — the Indians, the soil, the forests, just as they destroyed the buffalo and the passenger pigeon. Their morality in business and politics was gambler morality. Their laws were gambling laws — how to play the game. Everybody played. Therefore, hurrah for the game. Nobody objected, because nobody was unable to play. As I said, the losers chased the frontier for fresh stakes. The winner of to-day, broke to-morrow, on the day following might be riding his luck to royal flushes on five-card draws.

"So they gobbled and gambled from the Atlantic to the Pacific, until they'd swined a whole continent. When they'd finished with the lands and forests and mines, they turned back, gambling for any little stakes they'd overlooked, gambling for franchises and monopolies, using politics to protect their crooked deals and brace games. And democracy gone clean to smash.

"And then was the funniest time of all. The losers couldn't get any more stakes, while the winners went on gambling among themselves. The losers could only stand around with their hands in their pockets and look on. When they got hungry, they went, hat in hand, and begged the successful gamblers for a job. The losers went to work for the winners, and they've been working for them ever since, and democracy side-tracked up Salt Creek. You, Billy Roberts, have never had a hand in the game in your life. That's because your people were among the also-rans."

“How about yourself?” Billy asked. “I ain’t seen you holdin’ any hands.”

“I don’t have to. I don’t count. I am a parasite.”

“What’s that?”

“A flea, a woodtick, anything that gets something for nothing. I batten on the mangy hides of the workingmen. I don’t have to gamble. I don’t have to work. My father left me enough of his winnings. — Oh, don’t preen yourself, my boy. Your folks were just as bad as mine. But yours lost, and mine won, and so you plow in my potato patch.”

“I don’t see it,” Billy contended stoutly. “A man with gumption can win out to-day — ”

“On government land?” Hall asked quickly.

Billy swallowed and acknowledged the stab.

“Just the same he can win out,” he reiterated.

“Surely — he can win a job from some other fellow? A young husky with a good head like yours can win jobs anywhere. But think of the handicaps on the fellows who lose. How many tramps have you met along the road who could get a job driving four horses for the Carmel Livery Stabler And some of them were as husky as you when they were young. And on top of it all you’ve got no shout coming. It’s a mighty big come-down from gambling for a continent to gambling for a job.”

“Just the same — ” Billy recommenced.

“Oh, you’ve got it in your blood,” Hall cut him off cavalierly. “And why not? Everybody in this country has been gambling for generations. It was in the air when you were born. You’ve breathed it all your life. You, who ‘ve never had a white chip in the game, still go on shouting for it and capping for it.”

“But what are all of us losers to do?” Saxon inquired.

“Call in the police and stop the game,” Hall recommended. “It’s crooked.”

Saxon frowned.

“Do what your forefathers didn’t do,” he amplified. “Go ahead and perfect democracy.”

She remembered a remark of Mercedes. “A friend of mine says that democracy is an enchantment.”

“It is — in a gambling joint. There are a million boys in our public schools right now swallowing the gump of canal boy to President, and millions of worthy citizens who sleep sound every night in the belief that they have a say in running the country."

"You talk like my brother Tom," Saxon said, failing to comprehend. "If we all get into politics and work hard for something better maybe we'll get it after a thousand years or so. But I want it now." She clenched her hands passionately. "I can't wait; I want it now."

"But that is just what I've been telling you, my dear girl. That's what's the trouble with all the losers. They can't wait. They want it now — a stack of chips and a fling at the game. Well, they won't get it now. That's what's the matter with you, chasing a valley in the moon. That's what's the matter with Billy, aching right now for a chance to win ten cents from me at Pedro cussing wind-chewing under his breath."

"Gee! you'd make a good soap-boxer," commented Billy.

"And I'd be a soap-boxer if I didn't have the spending of my father's ill-gotten gains. It's none of my affair. Islet them rot. They'd be just as bad if they were on top. It's all a mess — blind bats, hungry swine, and filthy buzzards — "

Here Mrs. Hall interferred.

"Now, Mark, you stop that, or you'll be getting the blues."

He tossed his mop of hair and laughed with an effort.

"No I won't," he denied. "I'm going to get ten cents from Billy at a game of Pedro. He won't have a look in."

Saxon and Billy flourished in the genial human atmosphere of Carmel. They appreciated in their own estimation. Saxon felt that she was something more than a laundry girl and the wife of a union teamster. She was no longer pent in the narrow working class environment of a Pine street neighborhood. Life had grown opulent. They fared better physically, materially, and spiritually; and all this was reflected in their features, in the carriage of their bodies. She knew Billy had never been handsomer nor in more splendid bodily condition. He swore he had a harem, and that she was his second wife — twice as beautiful as the first one he had married. And she demurely confessed to him that Mrs. Hall and several others of the matrons had enthusiastically admired her form one day when in for a cold dip in Carmel river. They had got around her, and called her Venus, and made her crouch and assume different poses.

Billy understood the Venus reference; for a marble one, with broken arms, stood in Hall's living room, and the poet had told him the world worshiped it as the perfection of female form.

“I always said you had Annette Kellerman beat a mile,” Billy said; and so proud was his air of possession that Saxon blushed and trembled, and hid her hot face against his breast.

The men in the crowd were open in their admiration of Saxon, in an above-board manner. But she made no mistake. She did not lose her head. There was no chance of that, for her love for Billy beat more strongly than ever. Nor was she guilty of over-appraisal. She knew him for what he was, and loved him with open eyes. He had no book learning, no art, like the other men. His grammar was bad; she knew that, just as she knew that he would never mend it. Yet she would not have exchanged him for any of the others, not even for Mark Hall with the princely heart whom she loved much in the same way that she loved his wife.

For that matter, she found in Billy a certain health and rightness, a certain essential integrity, which she prized more highly than all book learning and bank accounts. It was by virtue of this health, and rightness, and integrity, that he had beaten Hall in argument the night the poet was on the pessimistic rampage. Billy had beaten him, not with the weapons of learning, but just by being himself and by speaking out the truth that was in him. Best of all, he had not even known that he had beaten, and had taken the applause as good-natured banter. But Saxon knew, though she could scarcely tell why; and she would always remember how the wife of Shelley had whispered to her afterward with shining eyes: “Oh, Saxon, you must be so happy.”

Were Saxon driven to speech to attempt to express what Billy meant to her, she would have done it with the simple word “man.” Always he was that to her. Always in glowing splendor, that was his connotation — MAN. Sometimes, by herself, she would all but weep with joy at recollection of his way of informing some truculent male that he was standing on his foot. “Get off your foot. You’re standin’ on it.” It was Billy! It was magnificently Billy. And it was this Billy who loved her. She knew it. She knew it by the pulse that only a woman knows how to gauge. He loved her less wildly, it was true; but more fondly, more maturely. It was the love that lasted — if only they did not go back to the city where the beautiful things of the spirit perished and the beast bared its fangs.

In the early spring, Mark Hall and his wife went to New York, the two Japanese servants of the bungalow were dismissed, and Saxon and Billy were installed as caretakers. Jim Hazard, too, departed on his yearly visit to Paris; and though Billy missed him, he continued his long swims out through the breakers. Hall's two saddle horses had been left in his charge, and Saxon made herself a pretty cross-saddle riding costume of tawny-brown corduroy that matched the glints in her hair. Billy no longer worked at odd jobs. As extra driver at the stable he earned more than they spent, and, in preference to cash, he taught Saxon to ride, and was out and away with her over the country on all-day trips. A favorite ride was around by the coast to Monterey, where he taught her to swim in the big Del Monte tank. They would come home in the evening across the hills. Also, she took to following him on his early morning hunts, and life seemed one long vacation.

"I'll tell you one thing," he said to Saxon, one day, as they drew their horses to a halt and gazed down into Carmel Valley. "I ain't never going to work steady for another man for wages as long as I live."

"Work isn't everything," she acknowledged.

"I should guess not. Why, look here, Saxon, what'd it mean if I worked teamin' in Oakland for a million dollars a day for a million years and just had to go on stayin' there an' livin' the way we used to? It'd mean work all day, three squares, an' movie' pictures for recreation. Movin' pictures! Huh! We're livin' movie' pictures these days. I'd sooner have one year like what we're havin' here in Carmel and then die, than a thousan' million years like on Pine street."

Saxon had warned the Halls by letter that she and Billy intended starting on their search for the valley in the moon as soon as the first of summer arrived. Fortunately, the poet was put to no inconvenience, for Bideaux, the Iron Man with the basilisk eyes, had abandoned his dreams of priesthood and decided to become an actor. He arrived at Carmel from the Catholic college in time to take charge of the bungalow.

Much to Saxon's gratification, the crowd was loth to see them depart. The owner of the Carmel stable offered to put Billy in charge at ninety dollars a month. Also, he received a similar offer from the stable in Pacific Grove.

"Whither away," the wild Irish playwright hailed them on the station platform at Monterey. He was just returning from New York.

"To a valley in the moon," Saxon answered gaily.

He regarded their business-like packs.

“By George!” he cried. “I’ll do it! By George! Let me come along.” Then his face fell. “And I’ve signed the contract,” he groaned. “Three acts! Say, you’re lucky. And this time of year, too.”

CHAPTER XI

“We hiked into Monterey last winter, but we’re ridin’ out now, b ‘gosh!” Billy said as the train pulled out and they leaned back in their seats.

They had decided against retracing their steps over the ground already traveled, and took the train to San Francisco. They had been warned by Mark Hall of the enervation of the south, and were bound north for their blanket climate. Their intention was to cross the Bay to Sausalito and wander up through the coast counties Here, Hall had told them, they would find the true home of the redwood. But Billy, in the smoking car for a cigarette, seated himself beside a man who was destined to deflect them from their course. He was a keen-faced, dark-eyed man, undoubtedly a Jew; and Billy, remembering Saxon’s admonition always to ask questions, watched his opportunity and started a conversation. It took but a little while to learn that Gunston was a commission merchant, and to realize that the content of his talk was too valuable for Saxon to lose. Promptly, when he saw that the other’s cigar was finished, Billy invited him into the next car to meet Saxon. Billy would have been incapable of such an act prior to his sojourn in Carmel. That much at least he had acquired of social facility.

“He’s just teen tellin’ me about the potato kings, and I wanted him to tell you,” Billy explained to Saxon after the introduction. “Go on and tell her, Mr. Gunston, about that fan tan sucker that made nineteen thousan’ last year in celery an’ asparagus.”

“I was just telling your husband about the way the Chinese make things go up the San Joaquin river. It would be worth your while to go up there and look around. It’s the good season now — too early for mosquitoes. You can get off the train at Black Diamond or Antioch and travel around among the big farming islands on the steamers and launches. The fares are cheap, and you’ll find some of those big gasoline boats, like the Duchess and Princess, more like big steamboats.”

“Tell her about Chow Lam,” Billy urged.

The commission merchant leaned back and laughed.

“Chow Lam, several years ago, was a broken-down fan tan player. He hadn’t a cent, and his health was going back on him. He had worn out his back with twenty years’ work in the gold mines, washing over the tailings of the early miners. And whatever he’d made he’d lost at gambling. Also, he was in debt three hundred dollars to the Six Companies — you know, they're Chinese affairs. And, remember, this was only seven years ago — health breaking down, three hundred in debt, and no trade. Chow Lam blew into Stockton and got a job on the peat lands at day's wages. It was a Chinese company, down on Middle River, that farmed celery and asparagus. This was when he got onto himself and took stock of himself. A quarter of a century in the United States, back not so strong as it used to was, and not a penny laid by for his return to China. He saw how the Chinese in the company had done it — saved their wages and bought a share.

"He saved his wages for two years, and bought one share in a thirty-share company. That was only five years ago. They leased three hundred acres of peat land from a white man who preferred traveling in Europe. Out of the profits of that one share in the first year, he bought two shares in another company. And in a year more, out of the three shares, he organized a company of his own. One year of this, with bad luck, and he just broke even. That brings it up to three years ago. The following year, bumper crops, he netted four thousand. The next year it wan five thousand. And last year he cleaned up nineteen thousand dollars. Pretty good, eh, for old broken-down Chow Lam?"

"My!" was all Saxon could say.

Her eager interest, however, incited the commission merchant to go on.

"Look at Sing Kee — the Potato King of Stockton. I know him well. I've had more large deals with him and made less money than with any man I know. He was only a coolie, and he smuggled himself into the United States twenty years ago. Started at day's wages, then peddled vegetables in a couple of baskets slung on a stick, and after that opened up a store in Chinatown in San Francisco. But he had a head on him, and he was soon onto the curves of the Chinese farmers that dealt at his store. The store couldn't make money fast enough to suit him. He headed up the San Joaquin. Didn't do much for a couple of years except keep his eyes peeled. Then he jumped in and leased twelve hundred acres at seven dollars an acre."

"My God!" Billy said in an awe-struck voice. "Eight thousan', four hundred dollars just for rent the first year. I know five hundred acres I can buy for three dollars an acre."

"Will it grow potatoes?" Gunston asked.

Billy shook his head. "Nor nothin' else, I guess."

All three laughed heartily and the commission merchant resumed:

"That seven dollars was only for the land. Possibly you know what it costs to plow twelve hundred acres?"

Billy nodded solemnly.

"And he got a hundred and sixty sacks to the acre that year," Gunston continued. "Potatoes were selling at fifty cents. My father was at the head of our concern at the time, so I know for a fact. And Sing Kee could have sold at fifty cents and made money. But did he? Trust a Chinaman to know the market. They can skin the commission merchants at it. Sing Kee held on. When 'most everybody else had sold, potatoes began to climb. He laughed at our buyers when we offered him sixty cents, seventy cents, a dollar. Do you want to know what he finally did sell for? One dollar and sixty-five a sack. Suppose they actually cost him forty cents. A hundred and sixty times twelve hundred... let me see... twelve times nought is nought and twelve times sixteen is a hundred and ninety-two... a hundred and ninety-two thousand sacks at a dollar and a quarter net... four into a hundred and ninety-two is forty-eight, plus, is two hundred and forty — there you are, two hundred and forty thousand dollars clear profit on that year's deal."

"An' him a Chink," Billy mourned disconsolately. He turned to Saxon. "They ought to be some new country for us white folks to go to. Gosh! — we're settin' on the stoop all right, all right."

"But, of course, that was unusual," Glunston hastened to qualify. "There was a failure of potatoes in other districts, and a corner, and in some strange way Sing Kee was dead on. He never made profits like that again. But he goes ahead steadily. Last year he had four thousand acres in potatoes, a thousand in asparagus, five hundred in celery and five hundred in beans. And he's running six hundred acres in seeds. No matter what happens to one or two crops, he can't lose on all of them."

"I've seen twelve thousand acres of apple trees," Saxon said. "And I'd like to see four thousand acres in potatoes."

"And we will," Billy rejoined with great positiveness. "It's us for the San Joaquin. We don't know what's in our country. No wonder we're out on the stoop."

"You'll find lots of kings up there," Gunston related. "Yep Hong Lee — they call him 'Big Jim,' and Ah Pock, and Ah Whang, and — then there's Shima, the Japanese potato king. He's worth several millions. Lives like a prince."

“Why don’t Americans succeed like that?” asked Saxon.

“Because they won’t, I guess. There’s nothing to stop them except themselves. I’ll tell you one thing, though — give me the Chinese to deal with. He’s honest. His word is as good as his bond. If he says he’ll do a thing, he’ll do it. And, anyway, the white man doesn’t know how to farm. Even the up-to-date white farmer is content with one crop at a time and rotation of crops. Mr. John Chinaman goes him one better, and grows two crops at one time on the same soil. I’ve seen it — radishes and carrots, two crops, sown at one time.”

“Which don’t stand to reason,” Billy objected. “They’d be only a half crop of each.”

“Another guess coming,” Gunston jeered. “Carrots have to be thinned when they’re so far along. So do radishes. But carrots grow slow. Radishes grow fast. The slow-going carrots serve the purpose of thinning the radishes. And when the radishes are pulled, ready for market, that thins the carrots, which come along later. You can’t beat the Chink.”

“Don’t see why a white man can’t do what a Chink can,” protested Billy.

“That sounds all right,” Gunston replied. “The only objection is that the white man doesn’t. The Chink is busy all the time, and he keeps the ground just as busy. He has organization, system. Who ever heard of white farmers keeping books? The Chink does. No guess work with him. He knows just where he stands, to a cent, on any crop at any moment. And he knows the market. He plays both ends. How he does it is beyond me, but he knows the market better than we commission merchants.

“Then, again, he’s patient but not stubborn. Suppose he does make a mistake, and gets in a crop, and then finds the market is wrong. In such a situation the white man gets stubborn and hangs on like a bulldog. But not the Chink. He’s going to minimize the losses of that mistake. That land has got to work, and make money. Without a quiver or a regret, the moment he’s learned his error, he puts his plows into that crop, turns it under, and plants something else. He has the savve. He can look at a sprout, just poked up out of the ground, and tell how it’s going to turn out — whether it will head up or won’t head up; or if it’s going to head up good, medium, or bad. That’s one end. Take the other end. He controls his crop. He forces it or holds it back with an eye on the market. And when the market is just right, there’s his crop, ready to deliver, timed to the minute.”

The conversation with Gunston lasted hours, and the more he talked of the Chinese and their farming ways the more Saxon became aware of a growing dissatisfaction. She did not question the facts. The trouble was that they were not alluring. Somehow, she could not find place for them in her valley of the moon. It was not until the genial Jew left the train that Billy gave definite statement to what was vaguely bothering her.

“Huh! We ain’t Chinks. We’re white folks. Does a Chink ever want to ride a horse, hell-bent for election an’ havin’ a good time of it? Did you ever see a Chink go swimmin’ out through the breakers at Carmel? — or boxin’, wrestlin’, runnin’ an’ jumpin’ for the sport of it? Did you ever see a Chink take a shotgun on his arm, tramp six miles, an’ come back happy with one measly rabbit? What does a Chink do? Work his damned head off. That’s all he’s good for. To hell with work, if that’s the whole of the game — an’ I’ve done my share of work, an’ I can work alongside of any of ‘em. But what’s the good? If they’s one thing I’ve learned solid since you an’ me hit the road, Saxon, it is that work’s the least part of life. God! — if it was all of life I couldn’t cut my throat quick enough to get away from it. I want shotguns an’ rifles, an’ a horse between my legs. I don’t want to be so tired all the time I can’t love my wife. Who wants to be rich an’ clear two hundred an’ forty thousand on a potato deal! Look at Rockefeller. Has to live on milk. I want porterhouse and a stomach that can bite sole-leather. An’ I want you, an’ plenty of time along with you, an’ fun for both of us. What’s the good of life if they ain’t no fun?”

“Oh, Billy!” Saxon cried. “It’s just what I’ve been trying to get straightened out in my head. It’s been worrying me for ever so long. I was afraid there was something wrong with me — that I wasn’t made for the country after all. All the time I didn’t envy the San Leandro Portuguese. I didn’t want to be one, nor a Pajaro Valley Dalmatian, nor even a Mrs. Mortimer. And you didn’t either. What we want is a valley of the moon, with not too much work, and all the fun we want. And we’ll just keep on looking until we find it. And if we don’t find it, we’ll go on having the fun just as we have ever since we left Oakland. And, Billy... we’re never, never going to work our damned heads off, are we?”

“Not on your life,” Billy growled in fierce affirmation.

They walked into Black Diamond with their packs on their backs. It was a scattered village of shabby little cottages, with a main street that was a wallow of black mud from the last late spring rain. The sidewalks bumped up and down in uneven steps and landings. Everything seemed un-American. The names on the strange dingy shops were unspeakably foreign. The one dingy hotel was run by a Greek. Greeks were everywhere — swarthy men in sea-boots and tam-o'-shanters, hatless women in bright colors, hordes of sturdy children, and all speaking in outlandish voices, crying shrilly and vivaciously with the volubility of the Mediterranean.

"Huh! — this ain't the United States," Billy muttered. Down on the water front they found a fish cannery and an asparagus cannery in the height of the busy season, where they looked in vain among the toilers for familiar American faces. Billy picked out the bookkeepers and foremen for Americans. All the rest were Greeks, Italians, and Chinese.

At the steamboat wharf, they watched the bright-painted Greek boats arriving, discharging their loads of glorious salmon, and departing. New York Cut-Off, as the slough was called, curved to the west and north and flowed into a vast body of water which was the united Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers.

Beyond the steamboat wharf, the fishing wharves dwindled to stages for the drying of nets; and here, away from the noise and clatter of the alien town, Saxon and Billy took off their packs and rested. The tall, rustling tules grew out of the deep water close to the dilapidated boat-landing where they sat. Opposite the town lay a long flat island, on which a row of ragged poplars leaned against the sky.

"Just like in that Dutch windmill picture Mark Hall has," Saxon said.

Billy pointed out the mouth of the slough and across the broad reach of water to a cluster of tiny white buildings, behind which, like a glimmering mirage, rolled the low Montezuma Hills.

"Those houses is Collinsville," he informed her. "The Sacramento river comes in there, and you go up it to Rio Vista an' Isleton, and Walnut Grove, and all those places Mr. Gunston was tellin' us about. It's all islands and sloughs, connectin' clear across an' back to the San Joaquin."

"Isn't the sun good," Saxon yawned. "And how quiet it is here, so short a distance away from those strange foreigners. And to think! in the cities, right now, men are beating and killing each other for jobs."

Now and again an overland passenger train rushed by in the distance, echoing along the background of foothills of Mt. Diablo, which bulked, twin-peaked, greencrinkled, against the sky. Then the slumbrous quiet would fall, to be broken by the far call of a foreign tongue or by a gasoline fishing boat chugging in through the mouth of the slough.

Not a hundred feet away, anchored close in the tules, lay a beautiful white yacht. Despite its tininess, it looked broad and comfortable. Smoke was rising for'ard from its stovepipe. On its stern, in gold letters, they read Roamer. On top of the cabin, basking in the sunshine, lay a man and woman, the latter with a pink scarf around her head. The man was reading aloud from a book, while she sewed. Beside them sprawled a fox terrier.

"Gosh! they don't have to stick around cities to be happy," Billy commented.

A Japanese came on deck from the cabin, sat down for'ard, and began picking a chicken. The feathers floated away in a long line toward the mouth of the slough.

"Oh! Look!" Saxon pointed in her excitement. "He's fishing! And the line is fast to his toe!"

The man had dropped the book face-downward on the cabin and reached for the line, while the woman looked up from her sewing, and the terrier began to bark. In came the line, hand under hand, and at the end a big catfish. When this was removed, and the line rebaited and dropped overboard, the man took a turn around his toe and went on reading.

A Japanese came down on the landing-stage beside Saxon and Billy, and hailed the yacht. He carried parcels of meat and vegetables; one coat pocket bulged with letters, the other with morning papers. In response to his hail, the Japanese on the yacht stood up with the part-plucked chicken. The man said something to him, put aside the book, got into the white skiff lying astern, and rowed to the landing. As he came alongside the stage, he pulled in his oars, caught hold, and said good morning genially.

"Why, I know you," Saxon said impulsively, to Billy's amazement. "You are.. .."

Here she broke off in confusion.

"Go on," the man said, smiling reassurance.

"You are Jack Hastings, I 'm sure of it. I used to see your photograph in the papers all the time you were war correspondent in the Japanese-Russian War. You've written lots of books, though I've never read them."

"Right you are," he ratified. "And what's your name?"

Saxon introduced herself and Billy, and, when she noted the writer's observant eye on their packs, she sketched the pilgrimage they were on. The farm in the valley of the moon evidently caught his fancy, and, though the Japanese and his parcels were safely in the skiff, Hastings still lingered. When Saxon spoke of Carmel, he seemed to know everybody in Hall’s crowd, and when he heard they were intending to go to Rio Vista, his invitation was immediate.

“Why, we’re going that way ourselves, inside an hour, as soon as slack water comes,” he exclaimed. “It’s just the thing. Come on on board. We’ll be there by four this afternoon if there’s any wind at all. Come on. My wife’s on board, and Mrs. Hall is one of her best chums. We’ve been away to South America — just got back; or you’d have seen us in Carmel. Hal wrote to us about the pair of you.”

It was the second time in her life that Saxon had been in a small boat, and the Roamer was the first yacht she had ever been on board. The writer’s wife, whom he called Clara, welcomed them heartily, and Saxon lost no time in falling in love with her and in being fallen in love with in return. So strikingly did they resemble each other, that Hastings was not many minutes in calling attention to it. He made them stand side by side, studied their eyes and mouths and ears, compared their hands, their hair, their ankles, and swore that his fondest dream was shattered — namely, that when Clara had been made the mold was broken.

On Clara’s suggestion that it might have been pretty much the same mold, they compared histories. Both were of the pioneer stock. Clara’s mother, like Saxon’s, had crossed the Plains with ox-teams, and, like Saxon’s, had wintered in Salt Intake City — in fact, had, with her sisters, opened the first Gentile school in that Mormon stronghold. And, if Saxon’s father had helped raise the Bear Flag rebellion at Sonoma, it was at Sonoma that Clara’s father had mustered in for the War of the Rebellion and ridden as far east with his troop as Salt Lake City, of which place he had been provost marshal when the Mormon trouble flared up. To complete it all, Clara fetched from the cabin an ukulele of boa wood that was the twin to Saxon’s, and together they sang “Honolulu Tomboy.”

Hastings decided to eat dinner — he called the midday meal by its old-fashioned name — before sailing; and down below Saxon was surprised and delighted by the measure of comfort in so tiny a cabin. There was just room for Billy to stand upright. A centerboard-case divided the room in half longitudinally, and to this was attached the hinged table from which they ate. Low bunks that ran the full cabin length, upholstered in cheerful green, served as seats. A curtain, easily attached by hooks between the centerboard-case and the roof, at night screened Mrs. Hastings' sleeping quarters. On the opposite side the two Japanese bunked, while for'ard, under the deck, was the galley. So small was it that there was just room beside it for the cook, who was compelled by the low deck to squat on his hands. The other Japanese, who had brought the parcels on board, waited on the table.

"They are looking for a ranch in the valley of the moon," Hastings concluded his explanation of the pilgrimage to Clara.

"Oh! — don't you know — " she cried; but was silenced by her husband.

"Hush," he said peremptorily, then turned to their guests. "Listen. There's something in that valley of the moon idea, but I won't tell you what. It is a secret. Now we've a ranch in Sonoma Valley about eight miles from the very town of Sonoma where you two girls' fathers took up soldiering; and if you ever come to our ranch you'll learn the secret. Oh, believe me, it's connected with your valley of the moon. — Isn't it, Mate?"

This last was the mutual name he and Clara had for each other.

She smiled and laughed and nodded her head.

"You might find our valley the very one you are looking for," she said.

But Hastings shook his head at her to check further speech. She turned to the fox terrier and made it speak for a piece of meat.

"Her name's Peggy," she told Saxon. "We had two Irish terriers down in the South Seas, brother and sister, but they died. We called them Peggy and Possum. So she's named after the original Peggy."

Billy was impressed by the ease with which the Roamer was operated. While they lingered at table, at a word from Hastings the two Japanese had gone on deck. Billy could hear them throwing down the halyards, casting off gaskets, and heaving the anchor short on the tiny winch. In several minutes one called down that everything was ready, and all went on deck. Hoisting mainsail and jigger was a matter of minutes. Then the cook and cabin-boy broke out anchor, and, while one hove it up, the other hoisted the jib. Hastings, at the wheel, trimmed the sheet. The Roamer paid off, filled her sails, slightly heeling, and slid across the smooth water and out the mouth of New York Slough. The Japanese coiled the halyards and went below for their own dinner.

"The flood is just beginning to make," said Hastings, pointing to a striped spar-buoy that was slightly tipping up-stream on the edge of the channel.

The tiny white houses of Collinsville, which they were nearing, disappeared behind a low island, though the Montezuma Hills, with their long, low, restful lines, slumbered on the horizon apparently as far away as ever.

As the Roamer passed the mouth of Montezuma Slough and entered the Sacramento, they came upon Collinsville close at hand. Saxon clapped her hands.

“It’s like a lot of toy houses,” she said, “cut out of cardboard. And those hilly fields are just painted up behind.”

They passed many arks and houseboats of fishermen moored among the tules, and the women and children, like the men in the boats, were dark-skinned, black-eyed, foreign. As they proceeded up the river, they began to encounter dredges at work, biting out mouthfuls of the sandy river bottom and heaping it on top of the huge levees. Great mats of willow brush, hundreds of yards in length, were laid on top of the river-slope of the levees and held in place by steel cables and thousands of cubes of cement. The willows soon sprouted, Hastings told them, and by the time the mats were rotted away the sand was held in place by the roots of the trees.

“It must cost like Sam Hill,” Billy observed.

“But the land is worth it,” Hastings explained. “This island land is the most productive in the world. This section of California is like Holland. You wouldn’t think it, but this water we’re sailing on is higher than the surface of the islands. They’re like leaky boats — calking, patching, pumping, night and day and all the time. But it pays. It pays.”

Except for the dredgers, the fresh-piled sand, the dense willow thickets, and always Mt. Diablo to the south, nothing was to be seen. Occasionally a river steamboat passed, and blue herons flew into the trees.

“It must be very lonely,” Saxon remarked.

Hastings laughed and told her she would change her mind later. Much he related to them of the river lands, and after a while he got on the subject of tenant farming. Saxon had started him by speaking of the land-hungry Anglo-Saxons.

“Land-hogs,” he snapped. “That’s our record in this country. As one old Reuben told a professor of an agricultural experiment station: ‘They ain’t no sense in tryin’ to teach me farmin’. I know all about it. Ain’t I worked out three farms?’ It was his kind that destroyed New England. Back there great sections are relapsing to wilderness. In one state, at least, the deer have increased until they are a nuisance. There are abandoned farms by the tens of thousands. I've gone over the lists of them — farms in New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut. Offered for sale on easy payment. The prices asked wouldn't pay for the improvements, while the land, of course, is thrown in for nothing.

"And the same thing is going on, in one way or another, the same land-robbing and hogging, over the rest of the country — down in Texas, in Missouri, and Kansas, out here in California. Take tenant farming. I know a ranch in my county where the land was worth a hundred and twenty-five an acre. And it gave its return at that valuation. When the old man died, the son leased it to a Portuguese and went to live in the city. In five years the Portuguese skimmed the cream and dried up the udder. The second lease, with another Portuguese for three years, gave one-quarter the former return. No third Portuguese appeared to offer to lease it. There wasn't anything left. That ranch was worth fifty thousand when the old man died. In the end the son got eleven thousand for it. Why, I've seen land that paid twelve per cent., that, after the skimming of a five-years' lease, paid only one and a quarter per cent."

"It's the same in our valley," Mrs. Hastings supplemented. "All the old farms are dropping into ruin. Take the Ebell Place, Mate." Her husband nodded emphatic indorsement. "When we used to know it, it was a perfect paradise of a farm. There were dams and lakes, beautiful meadows, lush hayfields, red hills of grape-lands, hundreds of acres of good pasture, heavenly groves of pines and oaks, a stone winery, stone barns, grounds — oh, I couldn't describe it in hours. When Mrs. Bell died, the family scattered, and the leasing began. It's a ruin to-day. The trees have been cut and sold for firewood. There's only a little bit of the vineyard that isn't abandoned — just enough to make wine for the present Italian lessees, who are running a poverty-stricken milk ranch on the leavings of the soil. I rode over it last year, and cried. The beautiful orchard is a horror. The grounds have gone back to the wild. Just because they didn't keep the gutters cleaned out, the rain trickled down and dry-rotted the timbers, and the big stone barn is caved in. The same with part of the winery — the other part is used for stabling the cows. And the house! — words can't describe!"

"It's become a profession," Hastings went on. "The 'movers.' They lease, clean out and gut a place in several years, and then move on. They're not like the foreigners, the Chinese, and Japanese, and the rest. In the main they're a lazy, vagabond, poor-white sort, who do nothing else but skin the soil and move, skin the soil and move. Now take the Portuguese and Italians in our country. They are different. They arrive in the country without a penny and work for others of their countrymen until they've learned the language and their way about. Now they're not movers. What they are after is land of their own, which they will love and care for and conserve. But, in the meantime, how to get it? Saving wages is slow. There is a quicker way. They lease. In three years they can gut enough out of somebody else's land to set themselves up for life. It is sacrilege, a veritable rape of the land; but what of it? It's the way of the United States."

He turned suddenly on Billy.

"Look here, Roberts. You and your wife are looking for your bit of land. You want it bad. Now take my advice. It's cold, hard advice. Become a tenant farmer. Lease some place, where the old folks have died and the country isn't good enough for the sons and daughters. Then gut it. Wring the last dollar out of the soil, repair nothing, and in three years you'll have your own place paid for. Then turn over a new leaf, and love your soil. Nourish it. Every dollar you feed it will return you two. Lend have nothing scrub about the place. If it's a horse, a cow, a pig, a chicken, or a blackberry vine, see that it's thoroughbred."

"But it's wicked!" Saxon wrung out. "It's wicked advice."

"We live in a wicked age," Hastings countered, smiling grimly. "This wholesale land-skinning is the national crime of the United States to-day. Nor would I give your husband such advice if I weren't absolutely certain that the land he skins would be skinned by some Portuguese or Italian if he refused. As fast as they arrive and settle down, they send for their sisters and their cousins and their aunts. If you were thirsty, if a warehouse were burning and beautiful Rhine wine were running to waste, would you stay your hand from scooping a drink? Well, the national warehouse is afire in many places, and no end of the good things are running to waste. Help yourself. If you don't, the immigrants will."

"Oh, you don't know him," Mrs. Hastings hurried to explain. "He spends all his time on the ranch in conserving the soil. There are over a thousand acres of woods alone, and, though he thins and forests like a surgeon, he won't let a tree be chopped without his permission. He's even planted a hundred thousand trees. He's always draining and ditching to stop erosion, and experimenting with pasture grasses. And every little while he buys some exhausted adjoining ranch and starts building up the soil.”

“Wherefore I know what I ‘m talking about,” Hastings broke in. “And my advice holds. I love the soil, yet to-morrow, things being as they are and if I were poor, I’d gut five hundred acres in order to buy twenty-five for myself. When you get into Sonoma Valley, look me up, and I’ll put you onto the whole game, and both ends of it. I’ll show you construction as well as destruction. When you find a farm doomed to be gutted anyway, why jump in and do it yourself.”

“Yes, and he mortgaged himself to the eyes,” laughed Mrs. Hastings, “to keep five hundred acres of woods out of the hands of the charcoal burners.”

Ahead, on the left bank of the Sacramento, just at the fading end of the Montezuma Hills, Rio Vista appeared. The Roamer slipped through the smooth water, past steamboat wharves, landing stages, and warehouses. The two Japanese went for’ard on deck. At command of Hastings, the jib ran down, and he shot the Roomer into the wind, losing way, until he called, “Let go the hook!” The anchor went down, and the yacht swung to it, so close to shore that the skiff lay under overhanging willows.

“Farther up the river we tie to the bank,” Mrs. Hastings said, “so that when you wake in the morning you find the branches of trees sticking down into the cabin.”

“Ooh!” Saxon murmured, pointing to a lump on her wrist. “Look at that. A mosquito.”

“Pretty early for them,” Hastings said. “But later on they’re terrible. I’ve seen them so thick I couldn’t back the jib against them.”

Saxon was not nautical enough to appreciate his hyperbole, though Billy grinned.

“There are no mosquitoes in the valley of the moon,” she said.

“No, never,” said Mrs. Hastings, whose husband began immediately to regret the smallness of the cabin which prevented him from offering sleeping accommodations.

An automobile bumped along on top of the levee, and the young boys and girls in it cried, “Oh, you kid!” to Saxon and Billy, and Hastings, who was rowing them ashore in the skiff. Hastings called, “Oh, you kid!” back to them; and Saxon, pleasuring in the boyishness of his sunburned face, was reminded of the boyishness of Mark Hall and his Carmel crowd.

CHAPTER XII

Crossing the Sacramento on an old-fashioned ferry a short distance above Rio Vista, Saxon and Billy entered the river country. From the top of the levee she got her revelation. Beneath, lower than the river, stretched broad, flat land, far as the eye could see. Roads ran in every direction, and she saw countless farmhouses of which she had never dreamed when sailing on the lonely river a few feet the other side of the willowy fringe.

Three weeks they spent among the rich farm islands, which heaped up levees and pumped day and night to keep afloat. It was a monotonous land, with an unvarying richness of soil and with only one landmark — Mt. Diablo, ever to be seen, sleeping in the midday azure, limping its crinkled mass against the sunset sky, or forming like a dream out of the silver dawn. Sometimes on foot, often by launch, they cries-crossed and threaded the river region as far as the peat lands of the Middle River, down the San Joaquin to Antioch, and up Georgiana Slough to Walnut Grove on the Sacramento. And it proved a foreign land. The workers of the soil teemed by thousands, yet Saxon and Billy knew what it was to go a whole day without finding any one who spoke English. They encountered — sometimes in whole villages — Chinese, Japanese, Italians, Portuguese, Swiss, Hindus, Koreans, Norwegians, Danes, French, Armenians, Slavs, almost every nationality save American. One American they found on the lower reaches of Georgiana who eked an illicit existence by fishing with traps. Another American, who spouted blood and destruction on all political subjects, was an itinerant bee-farmer. At Walnut Grove, bustling with life, the few Americans consisted of the storekeeper, the saloonkeeper, the butcher, the keeper of the drawbridge, and the ferryman. Yet two thriving towns were in Walnut Grove, one Chinese, one Japanese. Most of the land was owned by Americans, who lived away from it and were continually selling it to the foreigners.

A riot, or a merry-making — they could not tell which — was taking place in the Japanese town, as Saxon and Billy steamed out on the Apache, bound for Sacramento.

“We’re settin’ on the stoop,” Billy railed. “Pretty soon they’ll crowd us off of that.”

“There won’t be any stoop in the valley of the moon,” Saxon cheered him.

But he was inconsolable, remarking bitterly:

“An’ they ain’t one of them damn foreigners that can handle four horses like me.

“But they can everlastingly farm,” he added.

And Saxon, looking at his moody face, was suddenly reminded of a lithograph she had seen in her childhood It was of a Plains Indian, in paint and feathers, astride his horse and gazing with wondering eye at a railroad train rushing along a fresh-made track. The Indian had passed, she remembered, before the tide of new life that brought the railroad. And were Billy and his kind doomed to pass, she pondered, before this new tide of life, amazingly industrious, that was flooding in from Asia and Europe?

At Sacramento they stopped two weeks, where Billy drove team and earned the money to put them along on their travels. Also, life in Oakland and Carmel, close to the salt edge of the coast, had spoiled them for the interior. Too warm, was their verdict of Sacramento and they followed the railroad west, through a region of swamp-land, to Davisville. Here they were lured aside and to the north to pretty Woodland, where Billy drove team for a fruit farm, and where Saxon wrung from him a reluctant consent for her to work a few days in the fruit harvest. She made an important and mystifying secret of what she intended doing with her earnings, and Billy teased her about it until the matter passed from his mind. Nor did she tell him of a money order inclosed with a certain blue slip of paper in a letter to Bud Strothers.

They began to suffer from the heat. Billy declared they had strayed out of the blanket climate.

“There are no redwoods here,” Saxon said. “We must go west toward the coast. It is there we’ll find the valley of the moon.”

From Woodland they swung west and south along the county roads to the fruit paradise of Vacaville. Here Billy picked fruit, then drove team; and here Saxon received a letter and a tiny express package from Bud Strothers. When Billy came into camp from the day’s work, she bade him stand still and shut his eyes. For a few seconds she fumbled and did something to the breast of his cotton work-shirt. Once, he felt a slight prick, as of a pin point, and grunted, while she laughed and bullied him to continue keeping his eyes shut.

“Close your eyes and give me a kiss,” she sang, “and then I’ll show you what iss.”

She kissed him and when he looked down he saw, pinned to his shirt, the gold medals he had pawned the day they had gone to the moving picture show and received their inspiration to return to the land.

“You darned kid!” he exclaimed, as he caught her to him. “So that’s what you blew your fruit money in on? An’ I never guessed! — Come here to you.”

And thereupon she suffered the pleasant mastery of his brawn, and was hugged and wrestled with until the coffee pot boiled over and she darted from him to the rescue.

“I kinda always been a mite proud of ‘em,” he confessed, as he rolled his after-supper cigarette. “They take me back to my kid days when I amateured it to beat the band. I was some kid in them days, believe muh. — But say, d’ye know, they’d clean slipped my recollection. Oakland’s a thousan’ years away from you an’ me, an’ ten thousan’ miles.”

“Then this will bring you back to it,” Saxon said, opening Bud’s letter and reading it aloud.

Bud had taken it for granted that Billy knew the wind-up of the strike; so he devoted himself to the details as to which men had got back their jobs, and which had been blacklisted. To his own amazement he had been taken back, and was now driving Billy’s horses. Still more amazing was the further information he had to impart. The old foreman of the West Oakland stables had died, and since then two other foremen had done nothing but make messes of everything. The point of all which was that the Boss had spoken that day to Bud, regretting the disappearance of Billy.

“Don’t make no mistake,” Bud wrote. “The Boss is onto all your curves. I bet he knows every scab you slugged. Just the same he says to me — Strothers, if you ain’t at liberty to give me his address, just write yourself and tell him for me to come a running. I’ll give him a hundred and twenty-five a month to take hold the stables.”

Saxon waited with well-concealed anxiety when the letter was finished. Billy, stretched out, leaning on one elbow, blew a meditative ring of smoke. His cheap workshirt, incongruously brilliant with the gold of the medals that flashed in the firelight, was open in front, showing the smooth skin and splendid swell of chest. He glanced around — at the blankets bowered in a green screen and waiting, at the campfire and the blackened, battered coffee pot, at the well-worn hatchet, half buried in a tree trunk, and lastly at Saxon. His eyes embraced her; then into them came a slow expression of inquiry. But she offered no help.

"Well," he uttered finally, "all you gotta do is write Bud Strothers, an' tell 'm not on the Boss's ugly tintype. — An' while you're about it, I'll send 'm the money to get my watch out. You work out the interest. The overcoat can stay there an' rot."

But they did not prosper in the interior heat. They lost weight. The resilience went out of their minds and bodies. As Billy expressed it, their silk was frazzled. So they shouldered their packs and headed west across the wild mountains. In the Berryessa Valley, the shimmering heat waves made their eyes ache, and their heads; so that they traveled on in the early morning and late afternoon. Still west they headed, over more mountains, to beautiful Napa Valley. The next valley beyond was Sonoma, where Hastings had invited them to his ranch. And here they would have gone, had not Billy chanced upon a newspaper item which told of the writer's departure to cover some revolution that was breaking out somewhere in Mexico.

"We'll see 'm later on," Billy said, as they turned northwest, through the vineyards and orchards of Napa Valley. "We're like that millionaire Bert used to sing about, except it's time that we've got to burn. Any direction is as good as any other, only west is best."

Three times in the Napa Valley Billy refused work. Past St. Helena, Saxon hailed with joy the unmistakable redwoods they could see growing up the small canyons that penetrated the western wall of the valley. At Calistoga, at the end of the railroad, they saw the six-horse stages leaving for Middletown and Lower Lake. They debated their route. That way led to Lake County and not toward the coast, so Saxon and Billy swung west through the mountains to the valley of the Russian River, coming out at Healdsburg. They lingered in the hop-fields on the rich bottoms, where Billy scorned to pick hops alongside of Indians, Japanese, and Chinese.

"I couldn't work alongside of 'em an hour before I'd be knockin' their blocks off," he explained. "Besides, this Russian River's some nifty. Let's pitch camp and go swimmin'."

So they idled their way north up the broad, fertile valley, so happy that they forgot that work was ever necessary, while the valley of the moon was a golden dream, remote, but sure, some day of realization. At Cloverdale, Billy fell into luck. A combination of sickness and mischance found the stage stables short a driver. Each day the train disgorged passengers for the Geysers, and Billy, as if accustomed to it all his life, took the reins of six horses and drove a full load over the mountains in stage time. The second trip he had Saxon beside him on the high boxseat. By the end of two weeks the regular driver was back. Billy declined a stable-job, took his wages, and continued north.

Saxon had adopted a fox terrier puppy and named him Possum, after the dog Mrs. Hastings had told them about. So young was he that he quickly became footsore, and she carried him until Billy perched him on top of his pack and grumbled that Possum was chewing his back hair to a frazzle.

They passed through the painted vineyards of Asti at the end of the grape-picking, and entered Ukiah drenched to the skin by the first winter rain.

"Say," Billy said, "you remember the way the Roamer just skated along. Well, this summer's done the same thing — gone by on wheels. An' now it's up to us to find some place to winter. This Ukiah looks like a pretty good burg. We'll get a room to-night an' dry out. An' to-morrow I'll hustle around to the stables, an' if I locate anything we can rent a shack an' have all winter to think about where we'll go next year."

CHAPTER XIII

The winter proved much less exciting than the one spent in Carmel, and keenly as Saxon had appreciated the Carmel folk, she now appreciated them more keenly than ever. In Ukiah she formed nothing more than superficial acquaintances. Here people were more like those of the working class she had known in Oakland, or else they were merely wealthy and herded together in automobiles. There was no democratic artist-colony that pursued fellowship disregardful of the caste of wealth.

Yet it was a more enjoyable winter than any she had spent in Oakland. Billy had failed to get regular employment; so she saw much of him, and they lived a prosperous and happy hand-to-mouth existence in the tiny cottage they rented. As extra man at the biggest livery stable, Billy's spare time was so great that he drifted into horse-trading. It was hazardous, and more than once he was broke, but the table never wanted for the best of steak and coffee, nor did they stint themselves for clothes.

"Them blamed farmers — I gotta pass it to 'em," Billy grinned one day, when he had been particularly bested in a horse deal. "They won't tear under the wings, the sons of guns. In the summer they take in boarders, an' in the winter they make a good livin' coin' each other up at tradin' horses. An' I just want to tell YOU, Saxon, they've sure shown me a few. An' I 'm gettin' tough under the wings myself. I'll never tear again so as you can notice it. Which means one more trade learned for yours truly. I can make a livin' anywhere now tradin' horses."

Often Billy had Saxon out on spare saddle horses from the stable, and his horse deals took them on many trips into the surrounding country. Likewise she was with him when he was driving horses to sell on commission; and in both their minds, independently, arose a new idea concerning their pilgrimage. Billy was the first to broach it.

"I run into an outfit the other day, that's stored in town," he said, "an' it's kept me thinkin' ever since. Ain't no use tryin' to get you to guess it, because you can't. I'll tell you — the swellest wagon-campin' outfit; anybody ever heard of. First of all, the wagon's a peacherino. Strong as they make 'em. It was made to order, upon Puget Sound, an' it was tested out all the way down here. No load an' no road can strain it. The guy had consumption that had it built. A doctor an' a cook traveled with 'm till he passed in his checks here in Ukiah two years ago. But say — if you could see it. Every kind of a contrivance — a place for everything — a regular home on wheels. Now, if we could get that, an' a couple of plugs, we could travel like kings, an' laugh at the weather."

"Oh! Billy! it's just what I've been dreamin' all winter. It would be ideal. And... well, sometimes on the road I 'm sure you can't help forgetting what a nice little wife you've got... and with a wagon I could have all kinds of pretty clothes along."

Billy's blue eyes glowed a caress, cloudy and warm; as he said quietly:

"I've ben thinkin' about that."

"And you can carry a rifle and shotgun and fishing poles and everything," she rushed along. "And a good big axe, man-size, instead of that hatchet you're always complaining about. And Possum can lift up his legs and rest. And — but suppose you can't buy it? How much do they want?"

"One hundred an' fifty big bucks," he answered. "But dirt cheap at that. It's givin' it away. I tell you that rig wasn't built for a cent less than four hundred, an' I know wagon-work in the dark. Now, if I can put through that dicker with Caswell's six horses — say, I just got onto that horse-buyer to-day. If he buys 'em, who d'ye think he'll ship 'em to? To the Boss, right to the West Oakland stables. I 'm goin' to get you to write to him. Travelin', as we're goin' to, I can pick up bargains. An' if the Boss'll talk, I can make the regular horse-buyer's commissions. He'll have to trust me with a lot of money, though, which most likely he won't, knowin' all his scabs I beat up."

"If he could trust you to run his stable, I guess he isn't afraid to let you handle his money," Saxon said.

Billy shrugged his shoulders in modest dubiousness.

"Well, anyway, as I was sayin' if I can sell Caswell's six horses, why, we can stand off this month's bills an' buy the wagon."

"But horses!" Saxon queried anxiously.

"They'll come later — if I have to take a regular job for two or three months. The only trouble with that 'd be that it'd run us pretty well along into summer before we could pull out. But come on down town an' I'll show you the outfit right now."

Saxon saw the wagon and was so infatuated with it that she lost a night's sleep from sheer insomnia of anticipation. Then Caswell's six horses were sold, the month's bills held over, and the wagon became theirs. One rainy morning, two weeks later, Billy had scarcely left the house, to be gone on an all-day trip into the country after horses, when he was back again.

"Come on!" he called to Saxon from the street. "Get your things on an' come along. I want to show you something."

He drove down town to a board stable, and took her through to a large, roofed inclosure in the rear. There he led to her a span of sturdy dappled chestnuts, with cream-colored manes and tails.

"Oh, the beauties! the beauties!" Saxon cried, resting her cheek against the velvet muzzle of one, while the other roguishly nuzzled for a share.

"Ain't they, though?" Billy reveled, leading them up and down before her admiring gaze. "Thirteen hundred an' fifty each, an' they don't look the weight, they're that slick put together. I couldn't believe it myself, till I put 'em on the scales. Twenty-seven hundred an' seven pounds, the two of 'em. An' I tried 'em out — that was two days ago. Good dispositions, no faults, an' true-pullers, automobile broke an' all the rest. I'd back 'em to out-pull any team of their weight I ever seen. — Say, how'd they look hooked up to that wagon of ourn?"

Saxon visioned the picture, and shook her head slowly in a reaction of regret.

"Three hundred spot cash buys 'em," Billy went on. "An' that's bed-rock. The owner wants the money so bad he's droolin' for it. Just gotta sell, an' sell quick. An' Saxon, honest to God, that pair'd fetch five hundred at auction down in the city. Both mares, full sisters, five an' six years old, registered Belgian sire, out of a heavy standard-bred mare that I know. Three hundred takes 'em, an' I got the refusal for three days."

Saxon's regret changed to indignation.

"Oh, why did you show them to me? We haven't any three hundred, and you know it. All I've got in the house is six dollars, and you haven't that much."

"Maybe you think that's all I brought you down town for," he replied enigmatically. "Well, it ain't."

He paused, licked his lips, and shifted his weight uneasily from one leg to the other.

"Now you listen till I get all done before you say anything. Ready?"

She nodded.

"Won't open your mouth?"

This time she obediently shook her head.

"Well, it's this way," he began haltingly. "They's a youngster come up from Frisco, Young Sandow they call 'm, an' the Pride of Telegraph Hill. He's the real goods of a heavyweight, an' he was to fight Montana Red Saturday night, only Montana Red, just in a little trainin' bout, snapped his forearm yesterday. The managers has kept it quiet. Now here's the proposition. Lots of tickets sold, an' they'll be a big crowd Saturday night. At the last moment, so as not to disappoint 'em, they'll spring me to take Montana's place. I 'm the dark horse. Nobody knows me — not even Young Sandow. He's come up since my time. I'll be a rube fighter. I can fight as Horse Roberts.

"Now, wait a minute. The winner'll pull down three hundred big round iron dollars. Wait, I 'm tellin' you! It's a lead-pipe cinch. It's like robbin' a corpse. Sandow's got all the heart in the world — regular knock-down-an'-drag-out-an'-hang-on fighter. I've followed 'm in the papers. But he ain't clever. I 'm slow, all right, all right, but I 'm clever, an' I got a hay-maker in each arm. I got Sandow's number an' I know it.

"Now, you got the say-so in this. If you say yes, the nags is ourn. If you say no, then it's all bets off, an' everything all right, an' I'll take to harness-washin' at the stable so as to buy a couple of plugs. Remember, they'll only be plugs, though. But don't look at me while you're makin' up your mind. Keep your lamps on the horses."

It was with painful indecision that she looked at the beautiful animals.

"Their names is Hazel an' Hattie," Billy put in a sly wedge. "If we get 'em we could call it the 'Double H' outfit."

But Saxon forgot the team and could only see Billy's frightfully bruised body the night he fought the Chicago Terror. She was about to speak, when Billy, who had been hanging on her lips, broke in:

"Just hitch 'em up to our wagon in your mind an' look at the outfit. You got to go some to beat it."

"But you're not in training, Billy," she said suddenly and without having intended to say it.

"Huh!" he snorted. "I've been in half trainin' for the last year. My legs is like iron. They'll hold me up as long as I've got a punch left in my arms, and I always have that. Besides, I won't let 'm make a long fight. He's a man-eater, an' man-eaters is my meat. I eat 'm alive. It's the clever boys with the stamina an' endurance that I can't put away. But this young

Sandow's my meat. I'll get 'm maybe in the third or fourth round — you know, time 'm in a rush an' hand it to 'm just as easy. It's a lead-pipe cinch, I tell you. Honest to God, Saxon, it's a shame to take the money."

"But I hate to think of you all battered up," she temporized. "If I didn't love you so, it might be different. And then, too, you might get hurt."

Billy laughed in contemptuous pride of youth and brawn.

"You won't know I've been in a fight, except that we'll own Hazel an' Hattie there. An' besides, Saxon, I just gotta stick my fist in somebody's face once in a while. You know I can go for months peaceable an' gentle as a lamb, an' then my knuckles actually begin to itch to land on something. Now, it's a whole lot sensibler to land on Young Sandow an' get three hundred for it, than to land on some hayseed an' get hauled up an' fined before some justice of the peace. Now take another squint at Hazel an' Hattie. They're regular farm furniture, good to breed from when we get to that valley of the moon. An' they're heavy enough to turn right into the plowin', too."

The evening of the fight at quarter past eight, Saxon parted from Billy. At quarter past nine, with hot water, ice, and everything ready in anticipation, she heard the gate click and Billy's step come up the porch. She had agreed to the fight much against her better judgment, and had regretted her consent every minute of the hour she had just waited; so that, as she opened the front door, she was expectant of any sort of a terrible husband-wreck. But the Billy she saw was precisely the Billy she had parted from.

"There was no fights" she cried, in so evident disappointment that he laughed.

"They was all yellin' 'Fake! Fake!' when I left, an' wantin' their money back."

"Well, I've got YOU," she laughed, leading him in, though secretly she sighed farewell to Hazel and Hattie.

"I stopped by the way to get something for you that you've been wantin' some time," Billy said casually. "Shut your eyes an' open your hand; an' when you open your eyes you'll find it grand," he chanted.

Into her hand something was laid that was very heavy and very cold, and when her eyes opened she saw it was a stack of fifteen twenty-dollar gold pieces.

"I told you it was like takin' money from a corpse," he exulted, as he emerged grinning from the whirlwind of punches, whacks, and hugs in which she had enveloped him. “They wasn’t no fight at all. D ‘ye want to know how long it lasted? Just twenty-seven seconds — less ‘n half a minute. An’ how many blows struck? One. An’ it was me that done it. Here, I’ll show you. It was just like this — a regular scream.”

Billy had taken his place in the middle of the room, slightly crouching, chin tucked against the sheltering left shoulder, fists closed, elbows in so as to guard left side and abdomen, and forearms close to the body.

“It’s the first round,” he pictured. “Gong’s sounded, an’ we’ve shook hands. Of course, seein’ as it’s a long fight an’ we’ve never seen each other in action, we ain’t in no rush. We’re just feelin’ each other out an’ fiddlin’ around. Seventeen seconds like that. Not a blow struck. Nothin’. An’ then it’s all off with the big Swede. It takes some time to tell it, but it happened in a jiffy, in fess In a tenth of a second. I wasn’t expectin’ it myself. We’re awful close together. His left glove ain’t a foot from my jaw, an’ my left glove ain’t a foot from his. He feints with his right, an’ I know it’s a feint, an’ just hunch up my left shoulder a bit an’ feint with my right. That draws his guard over just about an inch, an’ I see my openin’. My left ain’t got a foot to travel. I don’t draw it back none. I start it from where it is, corkscrewin’ around his right guard an’ pivotin’ at the waist to put the weight of my shoulder into the punch. An’ it connects! — Square on the point of the chin, sideways. He drops deado. I walk back to my corner, an’, honest to God, Saxon, I can’t help gigglin’ a little, it was that easy. The referee stands over ‘m an’ counts ‘m out. He never quivers. The audience don’t know what to make of it an’ sits paralyzed. His seconds carry ‘m to his corner an’ set ‘m on the stool. But they gotta hold ‘m up. Five minutes afterward he opens his eyes — but he ain’t seein’ nothing. They’re glassy. Five minutes more, an’ he stands up. They got to help hold ‘m, his legs givin’ under ‘m like they was sausages. An’ the seconds has to help ‘m through the ropes, an’ they go down the aisle to his dressin’ room a-helpin’ ‘m. An’ the crowd beginning to yell fake an’ want its money back. Twenty-seven seconds — one punch — n’ a spankin’ pair of horses for the best wife Billy Roberts ever had in his long experience.”

All of Saxon’s old physical worship of her husband revived and doubled on itself many times. He was in all truth a hero, worthy to be of that wing-helmeted company leaping from the beaked boats upon the bloody English sands. The next morning he was awakened by her lips pressed on his left hand.

"Hey! — what are you doin'?'" he demanded.

"Kissing Hazel and Hattie good morning," she answered demurely. "And now I 'm going to kiss you good morning.. .. And just where did your punch land? Show me."

Billy complied, touching the point of her chin with his knuckles. With both her hands on his arm, she shored it back and tried to draw it forward sharply in similitude of a punch. But Billy withstrained her.

"Wait," he said. "You don't want to knock your jaw off. I'll show you. A quarter of an inch will do."

And at a distance of a quarter of an inch from her chin he administered the slightest flick of a tap.

On the instant Saxon's brain snapped with a white flash of light, while her whole body relaxed, numb and weak, volitionless, sad her vision reeled and blurred. The next instant she was herself again, in her eyes terror and understanding.

"And it was at a foot that you struck him," she murmured in a voice of awe.

"Yes, and with the weight of my shoulders behind it," Billy laughed. "Oh, that's nothing. — Here, let me show you something else."

He searched out her solar plexus, and did no more than snap his middle finger against it. This time she experienced a simple paralysis, accompanied by a stoppage of breath, but with a brain and vision that remained perfectly clear. In a moment, however, all the unwonted sensations were gone.

"Solar Plexus," Billy elucidated. "Imagine what it's like when the other fellow lifts a wallop to it all the way from his knees. That's the punch that won the championship of the world for Bob Fitzsimmons."

Saxon shuddered, then resigned herself to Billy's playful demonstration of the weak points in the human anatomy. He pressed the tip of a finger into the middle of her forearm, and she knew excruciating agony. On either side of her neck, at the base, he dented gently with his thumbs, and she felt herself quickly growing unconscious.

"That's one of the death touches of the Japs," he told her, and went on, accompanying grips and holds with a running exposition. "Here's the toe-hold that Notch defeated Hackenschmidt with. I learned it from Farmer Burns. — An' here's a half-Nelson. — An' here's you makin' roughhouse at a dance, an' I 'm the floor manager, an' I gotta put you out."

One hand grasped her wrist, the other hand passed around and under her forearm and grasped his own wrist. And at the first hint of pressure she felt that her arm was a pipe-stem about to break.

“That’s called the ‘come along.’ — An’ here’s the strong arm. A boy can down a man with it. An’ if you ever get into a scrap an’ the other fellow gets your nose between his teeth — you don’t want to lose your nose, do you? Well, this is what you do, quick as a flash.”

Involuntarily she closed her eyes as Billy’s thumb-ends pressed into them. She could feel the fore-running ache of a dull and terrible hurt.

“If he don’t let go, you just press real hard, an’ out pop his eyes, an’ he’s blind as a bat for the rest of his life. Oh, he’ll let go all right all right.”

He released her and lay back laughing.

“How d’ye feel?” he asked. “Those ain’t boxin’ tricks, but they’re all in the game of a roughhouse.”

“I feel like revenge,” she said, trying to apply the “come along” to his arm.

When she exerted the pressure she cried out with pain, for she had succeeded only in hurting herself. Billy grinned at her futility. She dug her thumbs into his neck in imitation of the Japanese death touch, then gazed ruefully at the bent ends of her nails. She punched him smartly on the point of the chin, and again cried out, this time to the bruise of her knuckles.

“Well, this can’t hurt me,” she gritted through her teeth, as she assailed his solar plexus with her doubled fists.

By this time he was in a roar of laughter. Under the sheaths of muscles that were as armor, the fatal nerve center remained impervious.

“Go on, do it some more,” he urged, when she had given up, breathing heavily. “It feels fine, like you was ticklin’ me with a feather.”

“All right, Mister Man,” she threatened balefully. “You can talk about your grips and death touches and all the rest, but that’s all man’s game. I know something that will beat them all, that will make a strong man as helpless as a baby. Wait a minute till I get it. There. Shut your eyes. Ready? I won’t be a second.”

He waited with closed eyes, and then, softly as rose petals fluttering down, he felt her lips on his mouth.

“You win,” he said in solemn ecstasy, and passed his arms around her.

CHAPTER XIV

In the morning Billy went down town to pay for Hazel and Hattie. It was due to Saxon's impatient desire to see them, that he seemed to take a remarkably long time about so simple a transaction. But she forgave him when he arrived with the two horses hitched to the camping wagon.

"Had to borrow the harness," he said. "Pass Possum up and climb in, an' I'll show you the Double H Outfit, which is some outfit, I'm tellin' you."

Saxon's delight was unbounded and almost speechless as they drove out into the country behind the dappled chestnuts with the cream-colored tails and manes. The seat was upholstered, high-backed, and comfortable; and Billy raved about the wonders of the efficient brake. He trotted the team along the hard county road to show the standard-going in them, and put them up a steep earthroad, almost hub-deep with mud, to prove that the light Belgian sire was not wanting in their make-up.

When Saxon at last lapsed into complete silence, he studied her anxiously, with quick sidelong glances. She sighed and asked:

"When do you think we'll be able to start?"

"Maybe in two weeks... or, maybe in two or three months." He sighed with solemn deliberation. "We're like the Irishman with the trunk an' nothin' to put in it. Here's the wagon, here's the horses, an' nothin' to pull. I know a peach of a shotgun I can get, second-hand, eighteen dollars; but look at the bills we owe. Then there's a new '22 Automatic rifle I want for you. An' a 30-30 I've had my eye on for deer. An' you want a good jointed pole as well as me. An' tackle costs like Sam Hill. An' harness like I want will cost fifty bucks cold. An' the wagon ought to be painted. Then there's pasture ropes, an' nose-bags, an' a harness punch, an' all such things. An' Hazel an' Hattie eatin' their heads off all the time we're waitin'. An' I 'm just itchin' to be started myself."

He stopped abruptly and confusedly.

"Now, Billy, what have you got up your sleeve? — I can see it in your eyes," Saxon demanded and indicted in mixed metaphors.

"Well, Saxon, you see, it's like this. Sandow ain't satisfied. He's madder 'n a hatter. Never got one punch at me. Never had a chance to make a showin', an' he wants a return match. He's blattin' around town that he can lick me with one hand tied behind 'm, an' all that kind of hot air. Which ain’t the point. The point is, the fight-fans is wild to see a return-match. They didn’t get a run for their money last time. They’ll fill the house. The managers has seen me already. That was why I was so long. They’s three hundred more waitin’ on the tree for me to pick two weeks from last night if you’ll say the word. It’s just the same as I told you before. He’s my meat. He still thinks I ‘m a rube, an’ that it was a fluke punch.”

“But, Billy, you told me long ago that fighting took the silk out of you. That was why you’d quit it and stayed by teaming.”

“Not this kind of fightin’,” he answered. “I got this one all doped out. I’ll let ‘m last till about the seventh. Not that it’ll be necessary, but just to give the audience a run for its money. Of course, I’ll get a lump or two, an’ lose some skin. Then I’ll time ‘m to that glass jaw of his an’ drop ‘m for the count. An’ we’ll be all packed up, an’ next mornin’ we’ll pull out. What d’ye say? Aw, come on.”

Saturday night, two weeks later, Saxon ran to the door when the gate clicked. Billy looked tired. His hair was wet, his nose swollen, one cheek was puffed, there was skin missing from his ears, and both eyes were slightly bloodshot.

“I ‘m darned if that boy didn’t fool me,” he said, as he placed the roll of gold pieces in her hand and sat down with her on his knees. “He’s some boy when he gets extended. Instead of stoppin’ ‘m at the seventh, he kept me hustlin’ till the fourteenth. Then I got ‘m the way I said. It’s too bad he’s got a glass jaw. He’s quicker’n I thought, an’ he’s got a wallop that made me mighty respectful from the second round — an’ the prettiest little chop an’ come-again I ever saw. But that glass jaw! He kept it in cotton wool till the fourteenth an’ then I connected.

“ — An’, say. I ‘m mighty glad it did last fourteen rounds. I still got all my silk. I could see that easy. I wasn’t breathin’ much, an’ every round was fast. An’ my legs was like iron. I could a-fought forty rounds. You see, I never said nothin’, but I’ve been suspicious all the time after that beatin’ the Chicago Terror gave me.”

“Nonsense! — you would have known it long before now,” Saxon cried. “Look at all your boxing, and wrestling, and running at Carmel.”

“Nope.” Billy shook his head with the conviction of utter knowledge. “That’s different. It don’t take it outa you. You gotta be up against the real thing, fightin’ for life, round after round, with a husky you know ain’t lost a thread of his silk yet — then, if you don’t blow up, if your legs is steady, an’ your heart ain’t burstin’, an’ you ain’t wobbly at all, an’ no signs of queer street in your head — why, then you know you still got all your silk. An’ I got it, I got all mine, d’ye hear me, an’ I ain’t goin’ to risk it on no more fights. That’s straight. Easy money’s hardest in the end. From now on it’s horsebuyin’ on commish, an’ you an’ me on the road till we find that valley of the moon.”

Next morning, early, they drove out of Ukiah. Possum sat on the seat between them, his rosy mouth agape with excitement. They had originally planned to cross over to the coast from Ukiah, but it was too early in the season for the soft earth-roads to be in shape after the winter rains; so they turned east, for Lake County, their route to extend north through the upper Sacramento Valley and across the mountains into Oregon. Then they would circle west to the coast, where the roads by that time would be in condition, and come down its length to the Golden Gate.

All the land was green and flower-sprinkled, and each tiny valley, as they entered the hills, was a garden.

“Huh!” Billy remarked scornfully to the general landscape. “They say a rollin’ stone gathers no moss. Just the same this looks like some outfit we’ve gathered. Never had so much actual property in my life at one time — an’ them was the days when I wasn’t rollin’. Hell — even the furniture wasn’t ourn. Only the clothes we stood up in, an’ some old socks an’ things.”

Saxon reached out and touched his hand, and he knew that it was a hand that loved his hand.

“I’ve only one regret,” she said. “You’ve earned it all yourself. I’ve had nothing to do with it.”

“Huh! — you’ve had everything to do with it. You’re like my second in a fight. You keep me happy an’ in condition. A man can’t fight without a good second to take care of him. Hell, I wouldn’t a-ben here if it wasn’t for you. You made me pull up stakes an’ head out. Why, if it hadn’t been for you I’d a-drunk myself dead an’ rotten by this time, or had my neck stretched at San Quentin over hittin’ some scab too hard or something or other. An’ look at me now. Look at that roll of greenbacks” — he tapped his breast — ”to buy the Boss some horses. Why, we’re takin’ an unendin’ vacation, an’ makin’ a good livin’ at the same time. An’ one more trade I got — horse-buyin’ for Oakland. If I show I’ve got the savve, an’ I have, all the Frisco firms’ll be after me to buy for them. An’ it’s all your fault. You’re my Tonic Kid all right, all right, an' if Possum wasn't lookin', I'd — well, who cares if he does look?"

And Billy leaned toward her sidewise and kissed her.

The way grew hard and rocky as they began to climb, but the divide was an easy one, and they soon dropped down the canyon of the Blue Lakes among lush fields of golden poppies. In the bottom of the canyon lay a wandering sheet of water of intensest blue. Ahead, the folds of hills interlaced the distance, with a remote blue mountain rising in the center of the picture.

They asked questions of a handsome, black-eyed man with curly gray hair, who talked to them in a German accent, while a cheery-faced woman smiled down at them out of a trellised high window of the Swiss cottage perched on the bank. Billy watered the horses at a pretty hotel farther on, where the proprietor came out and talked and told him he had built it himself, according to the plans of the black-eyed man with the curly gray hair, who was a San Francisco architect.

"Goin' up, goin' up," Billy chortled, as they drove on through the winding hills past another lake of intensest blue. "D'ye notice the difference in our treatment already between ridin' an' walkin' with packs on our backs? With Hazel an' Hattie an' Saxon an' Possum, an' yours truly, an' this high-toned wagon, folks most likely take us for millionaires out on a lark."

The way widened. Broad, oak-studded pastures with grazing livestock lay on either hand. Then Clear Lake opened before them like an inland sea, flecked with little squalls and flaws of wind from the high mountains on the northern slopes of which still glistened white snow patches.

"I've heard Mrs. Hazard rave about Lake Geneva," Saxon recalled; "but I wonder if it is more beautiful than this."

"That architect fellow called this the California Alps, you remember," Billy confirmed. "An' if I don't mistake, that's Lakeport showin' up ahead. An' all wild country, an' no railroads."

"And no moon valleys here," Saxon criticized. "But it is beautiful, oh, so beautiful."

"Hotter'n hell in the dead of summer, I'll bet," was Billy's opinion. "Nope, the country we're lookin' for lies nearer the coast. Just the same it is beautiful... like a picture on the wall. What d'ye say we stop off an' go for a swim this afternoon?"

Ten days later they drove into Williams, in Colusa County, and for the first time again encountered a railroad. Billy was looking for it, for the reason that at the rear of the wagon walked two magnificent work-horses which he had picked up for shipment to Oakland.

"Too hot," was Saxon's verdict, as she gazed across the shimmering level of the vast Sacramento Valley. "No redwoods. No hills. No forests. No manzanita. No madronos. Lonely, and sad — "

"An' like the river islands," Billy interpolated. "Richer in hell, but looks too much like hard work. It'll do for those that's stuck on hard work — God knows, they's nothin' here to induce a fellow to knock off ever for a bit of play. No fishin', no huntin', nothin' but work. I'd work myself, if I had to live here."

North they drove, through days of heat and dust, across the California plains, and everywhere was manifest the "new" farming — great irrigation ditches, dug and being dug, the land threaded by power-lines from the mountains, and many new farmhouses on small holdings newly fenced. The bonanza farms were being broken up. However, many of the great estates remained, five to ten thousand acres in extent, running from the Sacramento bank to the horizon dancing in the heat waves, and studded with great valley oaks.

"It takes rich soil to make trees like those," a ten-acre farmer told them.

They had driven off the road a hundred feet to his tiny barn in order to water Hazel and Hattie. A sturdy young orchard covered most of his ten acres, though a goodly portion was devoted to whitewashed henhouses and wired runways wherein hundreds of chickens were to be seen. He had just begun work on a small frame dwelling.

"I took a vacation when I bought," he explained, "and planted the trees. Then I went back to work an' stayed with it till the place was cleared. Now I 'm here for keeps, an' soon as the house is finished I'll send for the wife. She's not very well, and it will do her good. We've been planning and working for years to get away from the city." He stopped in order to give a happy sigh. "And now we're free."

The water in the trough was warm from the sun.

"Hold on," the man said. "Don't let them drink that. I'll give it to them cool."

Stepping into a small shed, he turned an electric switch, and a motor the size of a fruit box hummed into action. A five-inch stream of sparkling water splashed into the shallow main ditch of his irrigation system and flowed away across the orchard through many laterals.

“Isn’ tit beautiful, eh? — beautiful! beautiful!” the man chanted in an ecstasy. “It’s bud and fruit. It’s blood and life. Look at it! It makes a gold mine laughable, and a saloon a nightmare. I know. I... I used to be a barkeeper. In fact, I’ve been a barkeeper most of my life. That’s how I paid for this place. And I’ve hated the business all the time. I was a farm boy, and all my life I’ve been wanting to get back to it. And here I am at last.”

He wiped his glasses the better to behold his beloved water, then seized a hoe and strode down the main ditch to open more laterals.

“He’s the funniest barkeeper I ever seen,” Billy commented. “I took him for a business man of some sort. Must a-ben in some kind of a quiet hotel.”

“Don’t drive on right away,” Saxon requested. “I want to talk with him.”

He came back, polishing his glasses, his face beaming, watching the water as if fascinated by it. It required no more exertion on Saxon’s part to start him than had been required on his part to start the motor.

“The pioneers settled all this in the early fifties,” he said. “The Mexicans never got this far, so it was government land. Everybody got a hundred and sixty acres. And such acres! The stories they tell about how much wheat they got to the acre are almost unbelievable. Then several things happened. The sharpest and steadiest of the pioneers held what they had and added to it from the other fellows. It takes a great many quarter sections to make a bonanza farm. It wasn’t long before it was ‘most all bonanza farms.”

“They were the successful gamblers,” Saxon put in, remembering Mark Hall’s words.

The man nodded appreciatively and continued.

“The old folks schemed and gathered and added the land into the big holdings, and built the great barns and mansions, and planted the house orchards and flower gardens. The young folks were spoiled by so much wealth and went away to the cities to spend it. And old folks and young united in one thing: in impoverishing the soil. Year after year they scratched it and took out bonanza crops. They put nothing back. All they left was plow-sole and exhausted land. Why, there’s big sections they exhausted and left almost desert.

“The bonanza farmers are all gone now, thank the Lord, and here’s where we small farmers come into our own. It won’t be many years before the whole valley will be farmed in patches like mine. Look at what we’re doing! Worked-out land that had ceased to grow wheat, and we turn the water on, treat the soil decently, and see our orchards!

"We've got the water — from the mountains, and from under the ground. I was reading an account the other day. All life depends on food. All food depends on water. It takes a thousand pounds of water to produce one pound of food; ten thousand pounds to produce one pound of meat. How much water do you drink in a year? About a ton. But you eat about two hundred pounds of vegetables and two hundred pounds of meat a year — which means you consume one hundred tons of water in the vegetables and one thousand tons in the meat — which means that it takes eleven hundred and one tons of water each year to keep a small woman like you going."

"Gee!" was all Billy could say.

"You see how population depends upon water," the ax-barkeeper went on. "Well, we've got the water, immense subterranean supplies, and in not many years this valley will be populated as thick as Belgium."

Fascinated by the five-inch stream, sluiced out of the earth and back to the earth by the droning motor, he forgot his discourse and stood and gazed, rapt and unheeding, while his visitors drove on.

"An' him a drink-slinger!" Billy marveled. "He can sure sling the temperance dope if anybody should ask you."

"It's lovely to think about — all that water, and all the happy people that will come here to live — "

"But it ain't the valley of the moon!" Billy laughed.

"No," she responded. "They don't have to irrigate in the valley of the moon, unless for alfalfa and such crops. What we want is the water bubbling naturally from the ground, and crossing the farm in little brooks, and on the boundary a fine big creek — "

"With trout in it!" Billy took her up. "An' willows and trees of all kinds growing along the edges, and here a riffle where you can flip out trout, and there a deep pool where you can swim and high-dive. An' kingfishers, an' rabbits comin' down to drink, an', maybe, a deer."

"And meadowlarks in the pasture," Saxon added. "And mourning doves in the trees. We must have mourning doves — and the big, gray tree-squirrels."

"Gee! — that valley of the moon's goin' to be some valley," Billy meditated, flicking a fly away with his whip from Hattie's side. "Think we'll ever find it?"

Saxon nodded her head with great certitude.

“Just as the Jews found the promised land, and the Mormons Utah, and the Pioneers California. You remember the last advice we got when we left Oakland’ ‘‘Tis them that looks that finds.’“

CHAPTER XV

Ever north, through a fat and flourishing rejuvenated land, stopping at the towns of Willows, Red Bluff and Redding, crossing the counties of Colusa, Glenn, Tehama, and Shasta, went the spruce wagon drawn by the dappled chestnuts with cream-colored manes and tails. Billy picked up only three horses for shipment, although he visited many farms; and Saxon talked with the women while he looked over the stock with the men. And Saxon grew the more convinced that the valley she sought lay not there.

At Redding they crossed the Sacramento on a cable ferry, and made a day's scorching traverse through rolling foot-hills and flat tablelands. The heat grew more insupportable, and the trees and shrubs were blasted and dead. Then they came again to the Sacramento, where the great smelters of Kennett explained the destruction of the vegetation.

They climbed out of the smelting town, where eyrie houses perched insecurely on a precipitous landscape. It was a broad, well-engineered road that took them up a grade miles long and plunged down into the Canyon of the Sacramento. The road, rock-surfaced and easy-graded, hewn out of the canyon wall, grew so narrow that Billy worried for fear of meeting opposite-bound teams. Far below, the river frothed and flowed over pebbly shallows, or broke tumultuously over boulders and cascades, in its race for the great valley they had left behind.

Sometimes, on the wider stretches of road, Saxon drove and Billy walked to lighten the load. She insisted on taking her turns at walking, and when he breathed the panting mares on the steep, and Saxon stood by their heads caressing them and cheering them, Billy's joy was too deep for any turn of speech as he gazed at his beautiful horses and his glowing girl, trim and colorful in her golden brown corduroy, the brown corduroy calves swelling sweetly under the abbreviated slim skirt. And when her answering look of happiness came to him — a sudden dimness in her straight gray eyes — he was overmastered by the knowledge that he must say something or burst.

"O, you kid!" he cried.

And with radiant face she answered, "O, you kid!"

They camped one night in a deep dent in the canyon, where was snuggled a box-factory village, and where a toothless ancient, gazing with faded eyes at their traveling outfit, asked: "Be you showin'?"

They passed Castle Crags, mighty-bastioned and glowing red against the palpitating blue sky. They caught their first glimpse of Mt. Shasta, a rose-tinted snow-peak rising, a sunset dream, between and beyond green interlacing walls of canyon — a landmark destined to be with them for many days. At unexpected turns, after mounting some steep grade, Shasta would appear again, still distant, now showing two peaks and glacial fields of shimmering white. Miles and miles and days and days they climbed, with Shasta ever developing new forms and phases in her summer snows.

"A moving picture in the sky," said Billy at last.

"Oh, — it is all so beautiful," sighed Saxon. "But there are no moon-valleys here."

They encountered a plague of butterflies, and for days drove through untold millions of the fluttering beauties that covered the road with uniform velvet-brown. And ever the road seemed to rise under the noses of the snorting mares, filling the air with noiseless flight, drifting down the breeze in clouds of brown and yellow soft-flaked as snow, and piling in mounds against the fences, ever driven to float helplessly on the irrigation ditches along the roadside. Hazel and Hattie soon grew used to them though Possum never ceased being made frantic.

"Huh! — who ever heard of butterfly-broke horses?" Billy chaffed. "That's worth fifty bucks more on their price."

"Wait till you get across the Oregon line into the Rogue River Valley," they were told. "There's God's Paradise — climate, scenery, and fruit-farming; fruit ranches that yield two hundred per cent. on a valuation of five hundred dollars an acre."

"Gee!" Billy said, when he had driven on out of hearing; "that's too rich for our digestion."

And Saxon said, "I don't know about apples in the valley of the moon, but I do know that the yield is ten thousand per cent. of happiness on a valuation of one Billy, one Saxon, a Hazel, a Hattie, and a Possum."

Through Siskiyou County and across high mountains, they came to Ashland and Medford and camped beside the wild Rogue River.

"This is wonderful and glorious," pronounced Saxon; "but it is not the valley of the moon."

"Nope, it ain't the valley of the moon," agreed Billy, and he said it on the evening of the day he hooked a monster steelhead, standing to his neck in the ice-cold water of the Rogue and fighting for forty minutes, with screaming reel, ere he drew his finny prize to the bank and with the scalp-yell of a Comanche jumped and clutched it by the gills.

"'Them that looks finds,'" predicted Saxon, as they drew north out of Grant's Pass, and held north across the mountains and fruitful Oregon valleys.

One day, in camp by the Umpqua River, Billy bent over to begin skinning the first deer he had ever shot. He raised his eyes to Saxon and remarked:

"If I didn't know California, I guess Oregon'd suit me from the ground up."

In the evening, replete with deer meat, resting on his elbow and smoking his after-supper cigarette, he said:

"Maybe they ain't no valley of the moon. An' if they ain't, what of it? We could keep on this way forever. I don't ask nothing better."

"There is a valley of the moon," Saxon answered soberly. "And we are going to find it. We've got to. Why Billy, it would never do, never to settle down. There would be no little Hazels and little Hatties, nor little... Billies — "

"Nor little Saxons," Billy interjected.

"Nor little Possums," she hurried on, nodding her head and reaching out a caressing hand to where the fox terrier was ecstatically gnawing a deer-rib. A vicious snarl and a wicked snap that barely missed her fingers were her reward.

"Possum!" she cried in sharp reproof, again extending her hand.

"Don't," Billy warned. "He can't help it, and he's likely to get you next time."

Even more compelling was the menacing threat that Possum growled, his jaws close-guarding the bone, eyes blazing insanely, the hair rising stiffly on his neck.

"It's a good dog that sticks up for its bone," Billy championed. "I wouldn't care to own one that didn't."

"But it's my Possum," Saxon protested. "And he loves me. Besides, he must love me more than an old bone. And he must mind me. — Here, you, Possum, give me that bone! Give me that bone, sir!"

Her hand went out gingerly, and the growl rose in volume and key till it culminated in a snap.

"I tell you it's instinct," Billy repeated. "He does love you, but he just can't help doin' it."

“He’s got a right to defend his bones from strangers but not from his mother,” Saxon argued. “I shall make him give up that bone to me.”

“Fox terriers is awful highstrung, Saxon. You’ll likely get him hysterical.”

But she was obstinately set in her purpose. She picked up a short stick of firewood.

“Now, sir, give me that bone.”

She threatened with the stick, and the dog’s growling became ferocious. Again he snapped, then crouched back over his bone. Saxon raised the stick as if to strike him, and he suddenly abandoned the bone, rolled over on his back at her feet, four legs in the air, his ears lying meekly back, his eyes swimming and eloquent with submission and appeal.

“My God!” Billy breathed in solemn awe. “Look at it! — presenting his solar plexus to you, his vitals an’ his life, all defense down, as much as sayin’: ‘Here I am. Stamp on me. Kick the life outa me.’ I love you, I am your slave, but I just can’t help defendin’ my bone. My instinct’s stronger’n me. Kill me, but I can’t help it.”

Saxon was melted. Tears were in her eyes as she stooped and gathered the mite of an animal in her arms. Possum was in a frenzy of agitation, whining, trembling, writhing, twisting, licking her face, all for forgiveness.

“Heart of gold with a rose in his mouth,” Saxon crooned, burying her face in the soft and quivering bundle of sensibilities. “Mother is sorry. She’ll never bother you again that way. There, there, little love. See? There’s your bone. Take it.”

She put him down, but he hesitated between her and the bone, patently looking to her for surety of permission, yet continuing to tremble in the terrible struggle between duty and desire that seemed tearing him asunder. Not until she repeated that it was all right and nodded her head consentingly did he go to the bone. And once, a minute later, he raised his head with a sudden startle and gazed inquiringly at her. She nodded and smiled, and Possum, with a happy sigh of satisfaction, dropped his head down to the precious deer-rib.

“That Mercedes was right when she said men fought over jobs like dogs over bones,” Billy enunciated slowly. “It’s instinct. Why, I couldn’t no more help reaching my fist to the point of a scab’s jaw than could Possum from snappin’ at you. They’s no explainin’ it. What a man has to he has to. The fact that he does a thing shows he had to do it whether he can explain it or not. You remember Hall couldn’t explain why he stuck that stick between Timothy McManus’s legs in the foot race. What a man has to, he has to. That’s all I know about it. I never had no earthly reason to beat up that lodger we had, Jimmy Harmon. He was a good guy, square an’ all right. But I just had to, with the strike goin’ to smash, an’ everything so bitter inside me that I could taste it. I never told you, but I saw ‘m once after I got out — when my arms was mendin’. I went down to the roundhouse an’ waited for ‘m to come in off a run, an’ apologized to ‘m. Now why did I apologize? I don’t know, except for the same reason I punched ‘m — I just had to.”

And so Billy expounded the why of like in terms of realism, in the camp by the Umpqua River, while Possum expounded it, in similar terms of fang and appetite, on the rib of deer.

CHAPTER XVI

With Possum on the seat beside her, Saxon drove into the town of Roseburg. She drove at a walk. At the back of the wagon were tied two heavy young work-horses. Behind, half a dozen more marched free, and the rear was brought up by Billy, astride a ninth horse. All these he shipped from Roseburg to the West Oakland stables.

It was in the Umpqua Valley that they heard the parable of the white sparrow. The farmer who told it was elderly and flourishing. His farm was a model of orderliness and system. Afterwards, Billy heard neighbors estimate his wealth at a quarter of a million.

“You’ve heard the story of the farmer and the white sparrow’“ he asked Billy, at dinner.

“Never heard of a white sparrow even,” Billy answered.

“I must say they’re pretty rare,” the farmer owned. “But here’s the story: Once there was a farmer who wasn’t making much of a success. Things just didn’t seem to go right, till at last, one day, he heard about the wonderful white sparrow. It seems that the white sparrow comes out only just at daybreak with the first light of dawn, and that it brings all kinds of good luck to the farmer that is fortunate enough to catch it. Next morning our farmer was up at daybreak, and before, looking for it. And, do you know, he sought for it continually, for months and months, and never caught even a glimpse of it.” Their host shook his head. “No; he never found it, but he found so many things about the farm needing attention, and which he attended to before breakfast, that before he knew it the farm was prospering, and it wasn’t long before the mortgage was paid off and he was starting a bank account.”

That afternoon, as they drove along, Billy was plunged in a deep reverie.

“Oh, I got the point all right,” he said finally. “An’ yet I ain’t satisfied. Of course, they wasn’t a white sparrow, but by getting up early an’ attendin’ to things he’d been slack about before — oh, I got it all right. An’ yet, Saxon, if that’s what a farmer’s life means, I don’t want to find no moon valley. Life ain’t hard work. Daylight to dark, hard at it — might just as well be in the city. What’s the difference? Al’ the time you’ve got to yourself is for sleepin’, an’ when you’re sleepin’ you’re not enjoyin’ yourself. An’ what’s it matter where you sleep, you’re deado. Might as well be dead an’ done with it as work your head off that way. I'd sooner stick to the road, an' shoot a deer an' catch a trout once in a while, an' lie on my back in the shade, an' laugh with you an' have fun with you, an'... an' go swimmin'. An' I 'm a willin' worker, too. But they's all the difference in the world between a decent amount of work an' workin' your head off."

Saxon was in full accord. She looked back on her years of toil and contrasted them with the joyous life she had lived on the road.

"We don't want to be rich," she said. "Let them hunt their white sparrows in the Sacramento islands and the irrigation valleys. When we get up early in the valley of the moon, it will be to hear the birds sing and sing with them. And if we work hard at times, it will be only so that we'll have more time to play. And when you go swimming I 'm going with you. And we'll play so hard that we'll be glad to work for relaxation."

"I 'm gettin' plumb dried out," Billy announced, mopping the sweat from his sunburned forehead. "What d'ye say we head for the coast?"

West they turned, dropping down wild mountain gorges from the height of land of the interior valleys. So fearful was the road, that, on one stretch of seven miles, they passed ten broken-down automobiles. Billy would not force the mares and promptly camped beside a brawling stream from which he whipped two trout at a time. Here, Saxon caught her first big trout. She had been accustomed to landing them up to nine and ten inches, and the screech of the reel when the big one was hooked caused her to cry out in startled surprise. Billy came up the riffle to her and gave counsel. Several minutes later, cheeks flushed and eyes dancing with excitement, Saxon dragged the big fellow carefully from the water's edge into the dry sand. Here it threw the hook out and flopped tremendously until she fell upon it and captured it in her hands.

"Sixteen inches," Billy said, as she held it up proudly for inspection. " — Hey! — what are you goin' to do?"

"Wash off the sand, of course," was her answer.

"Better put it in the basket," he advised, then closed his mouth and grimly watched.

She stooped by the side of the stream and dipped in the splendid fish. It flopped, there was a convulsive movement on her part, and it was gone.

"Oh!" Saxon cried in chagrin.

"Them that finds should hold," quoth Billy.

“I don’t care,” she replied. “It was a bigger one than you ever caught anyway.”

“Oh, I ‘m not denyin’ you’re a peach at fishin’,” he drawled. “You caught me, didn’t you?”

“I don’t know about that,” she retorted. “Maybe it was like the man who was arrested for catching trout out of season. His defense was self defense.”

Billy pondered, but did not see.

“The trout attacked him,” she explained.

Billy grinned. Fifteen minutes later he said:

“You sure handed me a hot one.”

The sky was overcast, and, as they drove along the bank of the Coquille River, the fog suddenly enveloped them.

“Whoof!” Billy exhaled joyfully. “Ain’t it great! I can feel myself moppin’ it up like a dry sponge. I never appreciated fog before.”

Saxon held out her arms to receive it, making motions as if she were bathing in the gray mist.

“I never thought I’d grow tired of the sun,” she said; “but we’ve had more than our share the last few weeks.”

“Ever since we hit the Sacramento Valley,” Billy affirmed. “Too much sun ain’t good. I’ve worked that out. Sunshine is like liquor. Did you ever notice how good you felt when the sun come out after a week of cloudy weather. Well, that sunshine was just like a jolt of whiskey. Had the same effect. Made you feel good all over. Now, when you’re swimmin’, an’ come out an’ lay in the sun, how good you feel. That’s because you’re lappin’ up a sun-cocktail. But suppose you lay there in the sand a couple of hours. You don’t feel so good. You’re so slow-movin’ it takes you a long time to dress. You go home draggin’ your legs an’ feelin’ rotten, with all the life sapped outa you. What’s that? It’s the katzenjammer. You’ve been soused to the ears in sunshine, like so much whiskey, an’ now you’re payin’ for it. That’s straight. That’s why fog in the climate is best.”

“Then we’ve been drunk for months,” Saxon said. “And now we’re going to sober up.”

“You bet. Why, Saxon, I can do two days’ work in one in this climate. — Look at the mares. Blame me if they ain’t perkin’ up already.”

Vainly Saxon’s eye roved the pine forest in search of her beloved redwoods. They would find them down in California, they were told in the town of Bandon.

“Then we’re too far north,” said Saxon. “We must go south to find our valley of the moon.”

And south they went, along roads that steadily grew worse, through the dairy country of Langlois and through thick pine forests to Port Orford, where Saxon picked jeweled agates on the beach while Billy caught enormous rockcod. No railroads had yet penetrated this wild region, and the way south grew wilder and wilder. At Gold Beach they encountered their old friend, the Rogue River, which they ferried across where it entered the Pacific. Still wilder became the country, still more terrible the road, still farther apart the isolated farms and clearings.

And here were neither Asiatics nor Europeans. The scant population consisted of the original settlers and their descendants. More than one old man or woman Saxon talked with, who could remember the trip across the Plains with the plodding oxen. West they had fared until the Pacific itself had stopped them, and here they had made their clearings, built their rude houses, and settled. In them Farthest West had been reached. Old customs had changed little. There were no railways. No automobile as yet had ventured their perilous roads. Eastward, between them and the populous interior valleys, lay the wilderness of the Coast Range — a game paradise, Billy heard; though he declared that the very road he traveled was game paradise enough for him. Had he not halted the horses, turned the reins over to Saxon, and shot an eight-pronged buck from the wagon-seat?

South of Gold Beach, climbing a narrow road through the virgin forest, they heard from far above the jingle of bells. A hundred yards farther on Billy found a place wide enough to turn out. Here he waited, while the merry bells, descending the mountain, rapidly came near. They heard the grind of brakes, the soft thud of horses’ hoofs, once a sharp cry of the driver, and once a woman’s laughter.

“Some driver, some driver,” Billy muttered. “I take my hat off to ‘m whoever he is, hittin’ a pace like that on a road like this. — Listen to that! He’s got powerful brakes. — Zocie! That WAS a chuck-hole! Some springs, Saxon, some springs!”

Where the road zigzagged above, they glimpsed through the trees four sorrel horses trotting swiftly, and the flying wheels of a small, tan-painted trap.

At the bend of the road the leaders appeared again, swinging wide on the curve, the wheelers flashed into view, and the light two-seated rig; then the whole affair straightened out and thundered down upon them across a narrow plank-bridge. In the front seat were a man and woman; in the rear seat a Japanese was squeezed in among suit cases, rods, guns, saddles, and a typewriter case, while above him and all about him, fastened most intricately, sprouted a prodigious crop of deer-and elk-horns.

"It's Mr. and Mrs. Hastings," Saxon cried.

"Whoa!" Hastings yelled, putting on the brake and gathering his horses in to a stop alongside. Greetings flew back and forth, in which the Japanese, whom they had last seen on the Roamer at Rio Vista, gave and received his share.

"Different from the Sacramento islands, eh?" Hastings said to Saxon. "Nothing but old American stock in these mountains. And they haven't changed any. As John Fox, Jr., said, they're our contemporary ancestors. Our old folks were just like them."

Mr. and Mrs. Hastings, between them, told of their long drive. They were out two months then, and intended to continue north through Oregon and Washington to the Canadian boundary.

"Then we'll ship our horses and come home by train," concluded Hastings.

"But the way you drive you oughta be a whole lot further along than this," Billy criticized.

"But we keep stopping off everywhere," Mrs. Hastings explained.

"We went in to the Hoopa Reservation," said Mr. Elastings, "and canoed down the Trinity and Klamath Rivers to the ocean. And just now we've come out from two weeks in the real wilds of Curry County."

"You must go in," Hastings advised. "You'll get to Mountain Ranch to-night. And you can turn in from there. No roads, though. You'll have to pack your horses. But it's full of game. I shot five mountain lions and two bear, to say nothing of deer. And there are small herds of elk, too. — No; I didn't shoot any. They're protected. These horns I got from the old hunters. I'll tell you all about it."

And while the men talked, Saxon and Mrs. Hastings were not idle.

"Found your valley of the moon yet?" the writer's wife asked, as they were saying good-by.

Saxon shook her head.

"You will find it if you go far enough; and be sure you go as far as Sonoma Valley and our ranch. Then, if you haven't found it yet, we'll see what we can do."

Three weeks later, with a bigger record of mountain lions and bear than Hastings' to his credit, Billy emerged from Curry County and drove across the line into California. At once Saxon found herself among the redwoods. But they were redwoods unbelievable. Billy stopped the wagon, got out, and paced around one.

"Forty-five feet," he announced. "That's fifteen in diameter. And they're all like it only bigger. No; there's a runt. It's only about nine feet through. An' they're hundreds of feet tall."

"When I die, Billy, you must bury me in a redwood grove," Saxon adjured.

"I ain't goin' to let you die before I do," he assured her. "An' then we'll leave it in our wills for us both to be buried that way."

CHAPTER XVII

South they held along the coast, hunting, fishing, swimming, and horse-buying. Billy shipped his purchases on the coasting steamers. Through Del Norte and Humboldt counties they went, and through Mendocino into Sonoma — counties larger than Eastern states — threading the giant woods, whipping innumerable trout-streams, and crossing countless rich valleys. Ever Saxon sought the valley of the moon. Sometimes, when all seemed fair, the lack was a railroad, sometimes madrono and manzanita trees, and, usually, there was too much fog.

“We do want a sun-cocktail once in a while,” she told Billy.

“Yep,” was his answer. “Too much fog might make us soggy. What we’re after is betwixt an’ between, an’ we’ll have to get back from the coast a ways to find it.”

This was in the fall of the year, and they turned their backs on the Pacific at old Fort Ross and entered the Russian River Valley, far below Ukiah, by way of Cazadero and Guerneville. At Santa Rosa Billy was delayed with the shipping of several horses, so that it was not until afternoon that he drove south and east for Sonoma Valley.

“I guess we’ll no more than make Sonoma Valley when it’ll be time to camp,” he said, measuring the sun with his eye. “This is called Bennett Valley. You cross a divide from it and come out at Glen Ellen. Now this is a mighty pretty valley, if anybody should ask you. An’ that’s some nifty mountain over there.”

“The mountain is all right,” Saxon adjudged. “But all the rest of the hills are too bare. And I don’t see any big trees. It takes rich soil to make big trees.”

“Oh, I ain’t sayin’ it’s the valley of the moon by a long ways. All the same, Saxon, that’s some mountain. Look at the timber on it. I bet they’s deer there.”

“I wonder where we’ll spend this winter,” Saxon remarked.

“D’ye know, I’ve just been thinkin’ the same thing. Let’s winter at Carmel. Mark Hall’s back, an’ so is Jim Hazard. What d’ye say?”

Saxon nodded.

“Only you won’t be the odd-job man this time.”

"Nope. We can make trips in good weather horse-buyin'," Billy confirmed, his face beaming with self-satisfaction. "An' if that walkin' poet of the Marble House is around, I'll sure get the gloves on with 'm just in memory of the time he walked me off my legs — "

"Oh! Oh!" Saxon cried. "Look, Billy! Look!"

Around a bend in the road came a man in a sulky, driving a heavy stallion. The animal was a bright chestnut-sorrel, with cream-colored mane and tail. The tail almost swept the ground, while the mane was so thick that it crested out of the neck and flowed down, long and wavy. He scented the mares and stopped short, head flung up and armfuls of creamy mane tossing in the breeze. He bent his head until flaring nostrils brushed impatient knees, and between the fine-pointed ears could be seen a mighty and incredible curve of neck. Again he tossed his head, fretting against the bit as the driver turned widely aside for safety in passing. They could see the blue glaze like a sheen on the surface of the horse's bright, wild eyes, and Billy closed a wary thumb on his reins and himself turned widely. He held up his hand in signal, and the driver of the stallion stopped when well past, and over his shoulder talked draught-horses with Billy.

Among other things, Billy learned that the stallion's name was Barbarossa, that the driver was the owner, and that Santa Rosa was his headquarters.

"There are two ways to Sonoma Valley from here," the man directed. "When you come to the crossroads the turn to the left will take you to Glen Ellen by Bennett Peak — that's it there."

Rising from rolling stubble fields, Bennett Peak towered hot in the sun, a row of bastion hills leaning against its base. But hills and mountains on that side showed bare and heated, though beautiful with the sunburnt tawniness of California.

"The turn to the right will take you to Glen Ellen, too, only it's longer and steeper grades. But your mares don't look as though it'd bother them."

"Which is the prettiest way?" Saxon asked.

"Oh, the right hand road, by all means," said the man. "That's Sonoma Mountain there, and the road skirts it pretty well up, and goes through Cooper's Grove."

Billy did not start immediately after they had said good-by, and he and Saxon, heads over shoulders, watched the roused Barbarossa plunging mutinously on toward Santa Rosa.

“Gee!” Billy said. “I’d like to be up here next spring.”

At the crossroads Billy hesitated and looked at Saxon.

“What if it is longer?” she said. “Look how beautiful it is — all covered with green woods; and I just know those are redwoods in the canyons. You never can tell. The valley of the moon might be right up there somewhere. And it would never do to miss it just in order to save half an hour.”

They took the turn to the right and began crossing a series of steep foothills. As they approached the mountain there were signs of a greater abundance of water. They drove beside a running stream, and, though the vineyards on the hills were summer-dry, the farmhouses in the hollows and on the levels were grouped about with splendid trees.

“Maybe it sounds funny,” Saxon observed; “but I ‘m beginning to love that mountain already. It almost seems as if I d seen it before, somehow, it’s so all-around satisfying — oh!”

Crossing a bridge and rounding a sharp turn, they were suddenly enveloped in a mysterious coolness and gloom. All about them arose stately trunks of redwood. The forest floor was a rosy carpet of autumn fronds. Occasional shafts of sunlight, penetrating the deep shade, warmed the somberness of the grove. Alluring paths led off among the trees and into cozy nooks made by circles of red columns growing around the dust of vanished ancestors — witnessing the titantic dimensions of those ancestors by the girth of the circles in which they stood.

Out of the grove they pulled to the steep divide, which was no more than a buttress of Sonoma Mountain. The way led on through rolling uplands and across small dips and canyons, all well wooded and a-drip with water. In places the road was muddy from wayside springs.

“The mountain’s a sponge,” said Billy. “Here it is, the tail-end of dry summer, an’ the ground’s just leakin’ everywhere.”

“I know I’ve never been here before,” Saxon communed aloud. “But it’s all so familiar! So I must have dreamed it. And there’s madronos! — a whole grove! And manzanita! Why, I feel just as if I was coming home... Oh, Billy, if it should turn out to be our valley.”

“Plastered against the side of a mountain?” he queried, with a skeptical laugh.

“No; I don’t mean that. I mean on the way to our valley. Because the way — all ways — to our valley must be beautiful. And this; I’ve seen it all before, dreamed it.”

"It's great," he said sympathetically. "I wouldn't trade a square mile of this kind of country for the whole Sacramento Valley, with the river islands thrown in and Middle River for good measure. If they ain't deer up there, I miss my guess. An' where they's springs they's streams, an' streams means trout."

They passed a large and comfortable farmhouse, surrounded by wandering barns and cow-sheds, went on under forest arches, and emerged beside a field with which Saxon was instantly enchanted. It flowed in a gentle concave from the road up the mountain, its farther boundary an unbroken line of timber. The field glowed like rough gold in the approaching sunset, and near the middle of it stood a solitary great redwood, with blasted top suggesting a nesting eyrie for eagles. The timber beyond clothed the mountain in solid green to what they took to be the top. But, as they drove on, Saxon, looking back upon what she called her field, saw the real summit of Sonoma towering beyond, the mountain behind her field a mere spur upon the side of the larger mass.

Ahead and toward the right, across sheer ridges of the mountains, separated by deep green canyons and broadening lower down into rolling orchards and vineyards, they caught their first sight of Sonoma Valley and the wild mountains that rimmed its eastern side. To the left they gazed across a golden land of small hills and valleys. Beyond, to the north, they glimpsed another portion of the valley, and, still beyond, the opposing wall of the valley — a range of mountains, the highest of which reared its red and battered ancient crater against a rosy and mellowing sky. From north to southeast, the mountain rim curved in the brightness of the sun, while Saxon and Billy were already in the shadow of evening. He looked at Saxon, noted the ravished ecstasy of her face, and stopped the horses. All the eastern sky was blushing to rose, which descended upon the mountains, touching them with wine and ruby. Sonoma Valley began to fill with a purple flood, laying the mountain bases, rising, inundating, drowning them in its purple. Saxon pointed in silence, indicating that the purple flood was the sunset shadow of Sonoma Mountain. Billy nodded, then chirruped to the mares, and the descent began through a warm and colorful twilight.

On the elevated sections of the road they felt the cool, delicious breeze from the Pacific forty miles away; while from each little dip and hollow came warm breaths of autumn earth, spicy with sunburnt grass and fallen leaves and passing flowers.

They came to the rim of a deep canyon that seemed to penetrate to the heart of Sonoma Mountain. Again, with no word spoken, merely from watching Saxon, Billy stopped the wagon. The canyon was wildly beautiful. Tall redwoods lined its entire length. On its farther rim stood three rugged knolls covered with dense woods of spruce and oak. From between the knolls, a feeder to the main canyon and likewise fringed with redwoods, emerged a smaller canyon. Billy pointed to a stubble field that lay at the feet of the knolls.

"It's in fields like that I've seen my mares a-pasturing," he said.

They dropped down into the canyon, the road following a stream that sang under maples and alders. The sunset fires, refracted from the cloud-driftage of the autumn sky, bathed the canyon with crimson, in which ruddy-limbed madronos and wine-wooded manzanitas burned and smoldered. The air was aromatic with laurel. Wild grape vines bridged the stream from tree to tree. Oaks of many sorts were veiled in lacy Spanish moss. Ferns and brakes grew lush beside the stream. From somewhere came the plaint of a mourning dove. Fifty feet above the ground, almost over their heads, a Douglas squirrel crossed the road — a flash of gray between two trees; and they marked the continuance of its aerial passage by the bending of the boughs.

"I've got a hunch," said Billy.

"Let me say it first," Saxon begged.

He waited, his eyes on her face as she gazed about her in rapture.

"We've found our valley," she whispered. "Was that it?"

He nodded, but checked speech at sight of a small boy driving a cow up the road, a preposterously big shotgun in one hand, in the other as preposterously big a jackrabbit. "How far to Glen Ellen?" Billy asked.

"Mile an' a half," was the answer.

"What creek is this?" inquired Saxon.

"Wild Water. It empties into Sonoma Creek half a mile down."

"Trout?" — this from Billy.

"If you know how to catch 'em," grinned the boy.

"Deer up the mountain?"

"It ain't open season," the boy evaded.

"I guess you never shot a deer," Billy slyly baited, and was rewarded with:

"I got the horns to show."

"Deer shed their horns," Billy teased on. "Anybody can find 'em."

"I got the meat on mine. It ain't dry yet — "

The boy broke off, gazing with shocked eyes into the pit Billy had dug for him.

"It's all right, sonny," Billy laughed, as he drove on. "I ain't the game warden. I 'm buyin' horses."

More leaping tree squirrels, more ruddy madronos and majestic oaks, more fairy circles of redwoods, and, still beside the singing stream, they passed a gate by the roadside. Before it stood a rural mail box, on which was lettered "Edmund Hale." Standing under the rustic arch, leaning upon the gate, a man and woman composed a picture so arresting and beautiful that Saxon caught her breath. They were side by side, the delicate hand of the woman curled in the hand of the man, which looked as if made to confer benedictions. His face bore out this impression — a beautiful-browed countenance, with large, benevolent gray eyes under a wealth of white hair that shone like spun glass. He was fair and large; the little woman beside him was daintily wrought. She was saffron-brown, as a woman of the white race can well be, with smiling eyes of bluest blue. In quaint sage-green draperies, she seemed a flower, with her small vivid face irresistibly reminding Saxon of a springtime wake-robin.

Perhaps the picture made by Saxon and Billy was equally arresting and beautiful, as they drove down through the golden end of day. The two couples had eyes only for each other. The little woman beamed joyously. The man's face glowed into the benediction that had trembled there. To Saxon, like the field up the mountain, like the mountain itself, it seemed that she had always known this adorable pair. She knew that she loved them.

"How d'ye do," said Billy.

"You blessed children," said the man. "I wonder if you know how dear you look sitting there."

That was all. The wagon had passed by, rustling down the road, which was carpeted with fallen leaves of maple, oak, and alder. Then they came to the meeting of the two creeks.

"Oh, what a place for a home," Saxon cried, pointing across Wild Water. "See, Billy, on that bench there above the meadow."

"It's a rich bottom, Saxon; and so is the bench rich. Look at the big trees on it. An' they's sure to be springs."

“Drive over,” she said.

Forsaking the main road, they crossed Wild Water on a narrow bridge and continued along an ancient, rutted road that ran beside an equally ancient worm-fence of split redwood rails. They came to a gate, open and off its hinges, through which the road led out on the bench.

“This is it — I know it,” Saxon said with conviction. “Drive in, Billy.”

A small, whitewashed farmhouse with broken windows showed through the trees.

“Talk about your madronos — ”

Billy pointed to the father of all madronos, six feet in diameter at its base, sturdy and sound, which stood before the house.

They spoke in low tones as they passed around the house under great oak trees and came to a stop before a small barn. They did not wait to unharness. Tying the horses, they started to explore. The pitch from the bench to the meadow was steep yet thickly wooded with oaks and manzanita. As they crashed through the underbrush they startled a score of quail into flight.

“How about game?” Saxon queried.

Billy grinned, and fell to examining a spring which bubbled a clear stream into the meadow. Here the ground was sunbaked and wide open in a multitude of cracks.

Disappointment leaped into Saxon’s face, but Billy, crumbling a clod between his fingers, had not made up his mind.

“It’s rich,” he pronounced; “ — the cream of the soil that’s been washin’ down from the hills for ten thousan’ years. But — ”

He broke off, stared all about, studying the configuration of the meadow, crossed it to the redwood trees beyond, then came back.

“It’s no good as it is,” he said. “But it’s the best ever if it’s handled right. All it needs is a little common sense an’ a lot of drainage. This meadow’s a natural basin not yet filled level. They’s a sharp slope through the redwoods to the creek. Come on, I’ll show you.”

They went through the redwoods and came out on Sonoma Creek. At this spot was no singing. The stream poured into a quiet pool. The willows on their side brushed the water. The opposite side was a steep bank. Billy measured the height of the bank with his eye, the depth of the water with a driftwood pole.

“Fifteen feet,” he announced. “That allows all kinds of high-divin’ from the bank. An’ it’s a hundred yards of a swim up an’ down.”

They followed down the pool. It emptied in a riffle, across exposed bedrock, into another pool. As they looked, a trout flashed into the air and back, leaving a widening ripple on the quiet surface.

“I guess we won’t winter in Carmel,” Billy said. “This place was specially manufactured for us. In the morning I’ll find out who owns it.”

Half an hour later, feeding the horses, he called Saxon’s attention to a locomotive whistle.

“You’ve got your railroad,” he said. “That’s a train pulling into Glen Ellen, an’ it’s only a mile from here.”

Saxon was dozing off to sleep under the blankets when Billy aroused her.

“Suppose the guy that owns it won’t sell?”

“There isn’t the slightest doubt,” Saxon answered with unruffled certainty. “This is our place. I know it.”

CHAPTER XVIII

They were awakened by Possum, who was indignantly reproaching a tree squirrel for not coming down to be killed. The squirrel chattered garrulous remarks that drove Possum into a mad attempt to climb the tree. Billy and Saxon giggled and hugged each other at the terrier's frenzy.

"If this is goin' to be our place, they'll be no shootin' of tree squirrels," Billy said.

Saxon pressed his hand and sat up. From beneath the bench came the cry of a meadow lark.

"There isn't anything left to be desired," she sighed happily.

"Except the deed," Billy corrected.

After a hasty breakfast, they started to explore, running the irregular boundaries of the place and repeatedly crossing it from rail fence to creek and back again. Seven springs they found along the foot of the bench on the edge of the meadow.

"There's your water supply," Billy said. "Drain the meadow, work the soil up, and with fertilizer and all that water you can grow crops the year round. There must be five acres of it, an' I wouldn't trade it for Mrs. Mortimer's."

They were standing in the old orchard, on the bench where they had counted twenty-seven trees, neglected but of generous girth.

"And on top the bench, back of the house, we can grow berries." Saxon paused, considering a new thought "If only Mrs. Mortimer would come up and advise us! — Do you think she would, Billy?"

"Sure she would. It ain't more 'n four hours' run from San Jose. But first we'll get our hooks into the place. Then you can write to her."

Sonoma Creek gave the long boundary to the little farm, two sides were worm fenced, and the fourth side was Wild Water.

"Why, we'll have that beautiful man and woman for neighbors," Saxon recollected. "Wild Water will be the dividing line between their place and ours."

"It ain't ours yet," Billy commented. "Let's go and call on 'em. They'll be able to tell us all about it."

"It's just as good as," she replied. "The big thing has been the finding. And whoever owns it doesn't care much for it. It hasn't been lived in for a long time. And — Oh, Billy — are you satisfied!"

"With every bit of it," he answered frankly, "as far as it goes. But the trouble is, it don't go far enough."

The disappointment in her face spurred him to renunciation of his particular dream.

"We'll buy it — that's settled," he said. "But outside the meadow, they's so much woods that they's little pasture — not more 'n enough for a couple of horses an' a cow. But I don't care. We can't have everything, an' what they is is almighty good."

"Let us call it a starter," she consoled. "Later on we can add to it — maybe the land alongside that runs up the Wild Water to the three knolls we saw yesterday."

"Where I seen my horses pasturin'," he remembered, with a flash of eye. "Why not? So much has come true since we hit the road, maybe that'll come true, too.

"We'll work for it, Billy."

"We'll work like hell for it," he said grimly.

They passed through the rustic gate and along a path that wound through wild woods. There was no sign of the house until they came abruptly upon it, bowered among the trees. It was eight-sided, and so justly proportioned that its two stories made no show of height. The house belonged there. It might have sprung from the soil just as the trees had. There were no formal grounds. The wild grew to the doors. The low porch of the main entrance was raised only a step from the ground. "Trillium Covert," they read, in quaint carved letters under the eave of the porch.

"Come right upstairs, you dears," a voice called from above, in response to Saxon's knock.

Stepping back and looking up, she beheld the little lady smiling down from a sleeping-porch. Clad in a rosy-tissued and flowing house gown, she again reminded Saxon of a flower.

"Just push the front door open and find your way," was the direction.

Saxon led, with Billy at her heels. They came into a room bright with windows, where a big log smoldered in a rough-stone fireplace. On the stone slab above stood a huge Mexican jar, filled with autumn branches and trailing fluffy smoke-vine. The walls were finished in warm natural woods, stained but without polish. The air was aromatic with clean wood odors. A walnut organ loomed in a shallow corner of the room. All corners were shallow in this octagonal dwelling. In another corner were many rows of books. Through the windows, across a low couch indubitably made for use, could be seen a restful picture of autumn trees and yellow grasses, threaded by wellworn paths that ran here and there over the tiny estate. A delightful little stairway wound past more windows to the upper story. Here the little lady greeted them and led them into what Saxon knew at once was her room. The two octagonal sides of the house which showed in this wide room were given wholly to windows. Under the long sill, to the floor, were shelves of books. Books lay here and there, in the disorder of use, on work table, couch and desk. On a sill by an open window, a jar of autumn leaves breathed the charm of the sweet brown wife, who seated herself in a tiny rattan chair, enameled a cheery red, such as children delight to rock in.

"A queer house," Mrs. Hale laughed girlishly and contentedly. "But we love it. Edmund made it with his own hands even to the plumbing, though he did have a terrible time with that before he succeeded."

"How about that hardwood floor downstairs? — an' the fireplace?" Billy inquired.

"All, all," she replied proudly. "And half the furniture. That cedar desk there, the table — with his own hands."

"They are such gentle hands," Saxon was moved to say.

Mrs. Hale looked at her quickly, her vivid face alive with a grateful light.

"They are gentle, the gentlest hands I have ever known," she said softly. "And you are a dear to have noticed it, for you only saw them yesterday in passing."

"I couldn't help it," Saxon said simply.

Her gaze slipped past Mrs. Hale, attracted by the wall beyond, which was done in a bewitching honeycomb pattern dotted with golden bees. The walls were hung with a few, a very few, framed pictures.

"They are all of people," Saxon said, remembering the beautiful paintings in Mark Hall's bungalow.

"My windows frame my landscape paintings," Mrs. Hale answered, pointing out of doors. "Inside I want only the faces of my dear ones whom I cannot have with me always. Some of them are dreadful rovers."

"Oh!" Saxon was on her feet and looking at a photograph. "You know Clara Hastings!"

"I ought to. I did everything but nurse her at my breast. She came to me when she was a little baby. Her mother was my sister. Do you know how greatly you resemble her? I remarked it to Edmund yesterday. He had already seen it. It wasn't a bit strange that his heart leaped out to you two as you came drilling down behind those beautiful horses."

So Mrs. Hale was Clara's aunt — old stock that had crossed the Plains. Saxon knew now why she had reminded her so strongly of her own mother.

The talk whipped quite away from Billy, who could only admire the detailed work of the cedar desk while he listened. Saxon told of meeting Clara and Jack Hastings on their yacht and on their driving trip in Oregon. They were off again, Mrs. Hale said, having shipped their horses home from Vancouver and taken the Canadian Pacific on their way to England. Mrs. Hale knew Saxon's mother or, rather, her poems; and produced, not only "The Story of the Files," but a ponderous scrapbook which contained many of her mother's poems which Saxon had never seen. A sweet singer, Mrs. Hale said; but so many had sung in the days of gold and been forgotten. There had been no army of magazines then, and the poems had perished in local newspapers.

Jack Hastings had fallen in love with Clara, the talk ran on; then, visiting at Trillium Covert, he had fallen in love with Sonoma Valley and bought a magnificent home ranch, though little enough he saw of it, being away over the world so much of the time. Mrs. Hale talked of her own Journey across the Plains, a little girl, in the late Fifties, and, like Mrs. Mortimer, knew all about the fight at Little Meadow, and the tale of the massacre of the emigrant train of which Billy's father had been the sole survivor.

"And so," Saxon concluded, an hour later, "we've been three years searching for our valley of the moon, and now we've found it."

"Valley of the Moon?" Mrs. Hale queried. "Then you knew about it all the time. What kept you so long?"

"No; we didn't know. We just started on a blind search for it. Mark Hall called it a pilgrimage, and was always teasing us to carry long staffs. He said when we found the spot we'd know, because then the staffs would burst into blossom. He laughed at all the good things we wanted in our valley, and one night he took me out and showed me the moon through a telescope. He said that was the only place we could find such a wonderful valley. He meant it was moonshine, but we adopted the name and went on looking for it."

"What a coincidence!" Mrs. Hale exclaimed. "For this is the Valley of the Moon."

"I know it," Saxon said with quiet confidence. "It has everything we wanted."

"But you don't understand, my dear. This is the Valley of the Moon. This is Sonoma Valley. Sonoma is an Indian word, and means the Valley of the Moon. That was what the Indians called it for untold ages before the first white men came. We, who love it, still so call it."

And then Saxon recalled the mysterious references Jack Hastings and his wife had made to it, and the talk tripped along until Billy grew restless. He cleared his throat significantly and interrupted.

"We want to find out about that ranch acrost the creek — who owns it, if they'll sell, where we'll find 'em, an' such things."

Mrs. Hale stood up.

"We'll go and see Edmund," she said, catching Saxon by the hand and leading the way.

"My!" Billy ejaculated, towering above her. "I used to think Saxon was small. But she'd make two of you."

"And you're pretty big," the little woman smiled; "but Edmund is taller than you, and broader-shouldered."

They crossed a bright hall, and found the big beautiful husband lying back reading in a huge Mission rocker. Beside it was another tiny child's chair of red-enameled rattan. Along the length of his thigh, the head on his knee and directed toward a smoldering log in a fireplace, clung an incredibly large striped cat. Like its master, it turned its head to greet the newcomers. Again Saxon felt the loving benediction that abided in his face, his eyes, his hands — toward which she involuntarily dropped her eyes. Again she was impressed by the gentleness of them. They were hands of love. They were the hands of a type of man she had never dreamed existed. No one in that merry crowd of Carmel had prefigured him. They were artists. This was the scholar, the philosopher. In place of the passion of youth and all youth's mad revolt, was the benignance of wisdom. Those gentle hands had passed all the bitter by and plucked only the sweet of life. Dearly as she loved them, she shuddered to think what some of those Carmelites would be like when they were as old as he — especially the dramatic critic and the Iron Man.

"Here are the dear children, Edmund," Mrs. Hale said. "What do you think! They want to buy the Madrono Ranch. They've been three years searching for it — I forgot to tell them we had searched ten years for

Trillium Covert. Tell them all about it. Surely Mr. Naismith is still of a mind to sell!"

They seated themselves in simple massive chairs, and Mrs. Hale took the tiny rattan beside the big Mission rocker, her slender hand curled like a tendril in Edmund's. And while Saxon listened to the talk, her eyes took in the grave rooms lined with books. She began to realize how a mere structure of wood and stone may express the spirit of him who conceives and makes it. Those gentle hands had made all this — the very furniture, she guessed as her eyes roved from desk to chair, from work table to reading stand beside the bed in the other room, where stood a green-shaded lamp and orderly piles of magazines and books.

As for the matter of Madrono Ranch, it was easy enough he was saying. Naismith would sell. Had desired to sell for the past five years, ever since he had engaged in the enterprise of bottling mineral water at the springs lower down the valley. It was fortunate that he was the owner, for about all the rest of the surrounding land was owned by a Frenchman — an early settler. He would not part with a foot of it. He was a peasant, with all the peasant's love of the soil, which, in him, had become an obsession, a disease. He was a land-miser. With no business capacity, old and opinionated, he was land poor, and it was an open question which would arrive first, his death or bankruptcy.

As for Madrono Ranch, Naismith owned it and had set the price at fifty dollars an acre. That would be one thousand dollars, for there were twenty acres. As a farming investment, using old-fashioned methods, it was not worth it. As a business investment, yes; for the virtues of the valley were on the eve of being discovered by the outside world, and no better location for a summer home could be found. As a happiness investment in joy of beauty and climate, it was worth a thousand times the price asked. And he knew Naismith would allow time on most of the amount. Edmund's suggestion was that they take a two years' lease, with option to buy, the rent to apply to the purchase if they took it up. Naismith had done that once with a Swiss, who had paid a monthly rental of ten dollars. But the man's wife had died, and he had gone away.

Edmund soon divined Billy's renunciation, though not the nature of it; and several questions brought it forth — the old pioneer dream of land spaciousness; of cattle on a hundred hills; one hundred and sixty acres of land the smallest thinkable division.

"But you don't need all that land, dear lad," Edmund said softly. "I see you understand intensive farming. Have you thought about intensive horse-raising?"

Billy's jaw dropped at the smashing newness of the idea. He considered it, but could see no similarity in the two processes. Unbelief leaped into his eyes.

"You gotta show me!" he cried.

The elder man smiled gently.

"Let us see. In the first place, you don't need those twenty acres except for beauty. There are five acres in the meadow. You don't need more than two of them to make your living at selling vegetables. In fact, you and your wife, working from daylight to dark, cannot properly farm those two acres. Remains three acres. You have plenty of water for it from the springs. Don't be satisfied with one crop a year, like the rest of the old-fashioned farmers in this valley. Farm it like your vegetable plot, intensively, all the year, in crops that make horse-feed, irrigating, fertilizing, rotating your crops. Those three acres will feed as many horses as heaven knows how huge an area of unseeded, uncared for, wasted pasture would feed. Think it over. I'll lend you books on the subject. I don't know how large your crops will be, nor do I know how much a horse eats; that's your business. But I am certain, with a hired man to take your place helping your wife on her two acres of vegetables, that by the time you own the horses your three acres will feed, you will have all you can attend to. Then it will be time to get more land, for more horses, for more riches, if that way happiness lie."

Billy understood. In his enthusiasm he dashed out:

"You're some farmer."

Edmund smiled and glanced toward his wife.

"Give him your opinion of that, Annette."

Her blue eyes twinkled as she complied.

"Why, the dear, he never farms. He has never farmed. But he knows." She waved her hand about the booklined walls. "He is a student of good. He studies all good things done by good men under the sun. His pleasure is in books and wood-working."

"Don't forget Dulcie," Edmund gently protested.

"Yes, and Dulcie." Annette laughed. "Dulcie is our cow. It is a great question with Jack Hastings whether Edmund dotes more on Dulcie, or Dulcie dotes more on Edmund. When he goes to San Francisco Dulcie is miserable. So is Edmund, until he hastens back. Oh, Dulcie has given me no few jealous pangs. But I have to confess he understands her as no one else does."

"That is the one practical subject I know by experience," Edmund confirmed. "I am an authority on Jersey cows. Call upon me any time for counsel."

He stood up and went toward his book-shelves; and they saw how magnificently large a man he was. He paused a book in his hand, to answer a question from Saxon. No; there were no mosquitoes, although, one summer when the south wind blew for ten days — an unprecedented thing — a few mosquitoes had been carried up from San Pablo Bay. As for fog, it was the making of the valley. And where they were situated, sheltered behind Sonoma Mountain, the fogs were almost invariably high fogs. Sweeping in from the ocean forty miles away, they were deflected by Sonoma Mountain and shunted high into the air. Another thing, Trillium Covert and Madrono Ranch were happily situated in a narrow thermal belt, so that in the frosty mornings of winter the temperature was always several degrees higher than in the rest of the valley. In fact, frost was very rare in the thermal belt, as was proved by the successful cultivation of certain orange and lemon trees.

Edmund continued reading titles and selecting books until he had drawn out quite a number. He opened the top one, Bolton Hall's "Three Acres and Liberty," and read to them of a man who walked six hundred and fifty miles a year in cultivating, by old-fashioned methods, twenty acres, from which he harvested three thousand bushels of poor potatoes; and of another man, a "new" farmer, who cultivated only five acres, walked two hundred miles, and produced three thousand bushels of potatoes, early and choice, which he sold at many times the price received by the first man.

Saxon receded the books from Edmund, and, as she heaped them in Billy's arms, read the titles. They were: Wickson's "California Fruits," Wickson's "California Vegetables," Brooks' "Fertilizers," Watson's "Farm Poultry," King's "Irrigation and Drainage," Kropotkin's "Fields, Factories and Workshops," and Farmer's Bulletin No. 22 on "The Feeding of Farm Animals."

"Come for more any time you want them," Edmund invited. "I have hundreds of volumes on farming, and all the Agricultural Bulletins... . And you must come and get acquainted with Dulcie your first spare time," he called after them out the door.

CHAPTER XIX

Mrs. Mortimer arrived with seed catalogs and farm books, to find Saxon immersed in the farm books borrowed from Edmund. Saxon showed her around, and she was delighted with everything, including the terms of the lease and its option to buy.

“And now,” she said. “What is to be done? Sit down, both of you. This is a council of war, and I am the one person in the world to tell you what to do. I ought to be. Anybody who has reorganized and recatalogued a great city library should be able to start you young people on in short order. Now, where shall we begin?”

She paused for breath of consideration.

“First, Madrono Ranch is a bargain. I know soil, I know beauty, I know climate. Madrono Ranch is a gold mine. There is a fortune in that meadow. Tilth — I’ll tell you about that later. First, here’s the land. Second, what are you going to do with it? Make a living? Yes. Vegetables? Of course. What are you going to do with them after you have grown them? Sell. Where? — Now listen. You must do as I did. Cut out the middle man. Sell directly to the consumer. Drum up your own market. Do you know what I saw from the car windows coming up the valley, only several miles from here? Hotels, springs, summer resorts, winter resorts — population, mouths, market. How is that market supplied? I looked in vain for truck gardens. — Billy, harness up your horses and be ready directly after dinner to take Saxon and me driving. Never mind everything else. Let things stand. What’s the use of starting for a place of which you haven’t the address. We’ll look for the address this afternoon. Then we’ll know where we are — at.” — The last syllable a smiling concession to Billy.

But Saxon did not accompany them. There was too much to be done in cleaning the long-abandoned house and in preparing an arrangement for Mrs. Mortimer to sleep. And it was long after supper time when Mrs. Mortimer and Billy returned.

“You lucky, lucky children,” she began immediately. “This valley is just waking up. Here’s your market. There isn’t a competitor in the valley. I thought those resorts looked new — Caliente, Boyes Hot Springs, El Verano, and all along the line. Then there are three little hotels in Glen Ellen, right next door. Oh, I’ve talked with all the owners and managers.”

"She's a wooz," Billy admired. "She'd brace up to God on a business proposition. You oughta seen her."

Mrs. Mortimer acknowledged the compliment and dashed on.

"And where do all the vegetables come from? Wagons drive down twelve to fifteen miles from Santa Rosa, and up from Sonoma. Those are the nearest truck farms, and when they fail, as they often do, I am told, to supply the increasing needs, the managers have to express vegetables all the way from San Francisco. I've introduced Billy. They've agreed to patronize home industry. Besides, it is better for them. You'll deliver just as good vegetables just as cheap; you will make it a point to deliver better, fresher vegetables; and don't forget that delivery for you will be cheaper by virtue of the shorter haul.

"No day-old egg stunt here. No jams nor jellies. But you've got lots of space up on the bench here on which you can't grow vegetables. To-morrow morning I'll help you lay out the chicken runs and houses. Besides, there is the matter of capons for the San Francisco market. You'll start small. It will be a side line at first. I'll tell you all about that, too, and send you the literature. You must use your head. Let others do the work. You must understand that thoroughly. The wages of superintendence are always larger than the wages of the laborers. You must keep books. You must know where you stand. You must know what pays and what doesn't and what pays best. Your books will tell that. I'll show you all in good time."

"An' think of it — all that on two acres!" Billy murmured.

Mrs. Mortimer looked at him sharply.

"Two acres your granny," she said with asperity. "Five acres. And then you won't be able to supply your market. And you, my boy, as soon as the first rains come will have your hands full and your horses weary draining that meadow. We'll work those plans out to-morrow Also, there is the matter of berries on the bench here — and trellised table grapes, the choicest. They bring the fancy prices. There will be blackberries — Burbank's, he lives at Santa Rosa — Loganberries, Mammoth berries. But don't fool with strawberries. That's a whole occupation in itself. They're not vines, you know. I've examined the orchard. It's a good foundation. We'll settle the pruning and grafts later."

"But Billy wanted three acres of the meadow," Saxon explained at the first chance.

"What for?"

"To grow hay and other kinds of food for the horses he's going to raise."

"Buy it out of a portion of the profits from those three acres," Mrs. Mortimer decided on the instant.

Billy swallowed, and again achieved renunciation.

"All right," he said, with a brave show of cheerfulness. "Let her go. Us for the greens."

During the several days of Mrs. Mortimer's visit, Billy let the two women settle things for themselves. Oakland had entered upon a boom, and from the West Oakland stables had come an urgent letter for more horses. So Billy was out, early and late, scouring the surrounding country for young work animals. In this way, at the start, he learned his valley thoroughly. There was also a clearing out at the West Oakland stables of mares whose feet had been knocked out on the hard city pave meets, and he was offered first choice at bargain prices. They were good animals. He knew what they were because he knew them of old time. The soft earth of the country, with a preliminary rest in pasture with their shoes pulled off, would put them in shape. They would never do again on hard-paved streets, but there were years of farm work in them. And then there was the breeding. But he could not undertake to buy them. He fought out the battle in secret and said nothing to Saxon.

At night, he would sit in the kitchen and smoke, listening to all that the two women had done and planned in the day. The right kind of horses was hard to buy, and, as he put it, it was like pulling a tooth to get a farmer to part with one, despite the fact that he had been authorized to increase the buying sum by as much as fifty dollars. Despite the coming of the automobile, the price of heavy draught animals continued to rise. From as early as Billy could remember, the price of the big work horses had increased steadily. After the great earthquake, the price had jumped; yet it had never gone back.

"Billy, you make more money as a horse-buyer than a common laborer, don't you?" Mrs. Mortimer asked. "Very well, then. You won't have to drain the meadow, or plow it, or anything. You keep right on buying horses. Work with your head. But out of what you make you will please pay the wages of one laborer for Saxon's vegetables. It will be a good investment, with quick returns."

"Sure," he agreed. "That's all anybody hires any body for — to make money outa 'm. But how Saxon an' one man are goin' to work them five acres, when Mr. Hale says two of us couldn't do what's needed on two acres, is beyond me."

"Saxon isn't going to work," Mrs. Mortimer retorted.

"Did you see me working at San Jose? Saxon is going to use her head. It's about time you woke up to that. A dollar and a half a day is what is earned by persons who don't use their heads. And she isn't going to be satisfied with a dollar and a half a day. Now listen. I had a long talk with Mr. Hale this afternoon. He says there are practically no efficient laborers to be hired in the valley."

"I know that," Billy interjected. "All the good men go to the cities. It's only the leavin's that's left. The good ones that stay behind ain't workin' for wages."

"Which is perfectly true, every word. Now listen, children. I knew about it, and I spoke to Mr. Hale. He is prepared to make the arrangements for you. He knows all about it himself, and is in touch with the Warden. In short, you will parole two good-conduct prisoners from San Quentin; and they will be gardeners. There are plenty of Chinese and Italians there, and they are the best truck-farmers. You kill two birds with one stone. You serve the poor convicts, and you serve yourselves."

Saxon hesitated, shocked; while Billy gravely considered the question.

"You know John," Mrs. Mortimer went on, "Mr. Hale's man about the place? How do you like him?"

"Oh, I was wishing only to-day that we could find somebody like him," Saxon said eagerly. "He's such a dear, faithful soul. Mrs. Hale told me a lot of fine things about him."

"There's one thing she didn't tell you," smiled Mrs. Mortimer. "John is a paroled convict. Twenty-eight years ago, in hot blood, he killed a man in a quarrel over sixty-five cents. He's been out of prison with the Hales three years now. You remember Louis, the old Frenchman, on my place? He's another. So that's settled. When your two come — of course you will pay them fair wages — and we'll make sure they're the same nationality, either Chinese or Italians — well, when they come, John, with their help, and under Mr. Hale's guidance, will knock together a small cabin for them to live in. We'll select the spot. Even so, when your farm is in full swing you'll have to have more outside help. So keep your eyes open, Billy, while you're gallivanting over the valley."

The next night Billy failed to return, and at nine o'clock a Glen Ellen boy on horseback delivered a telegram. Billy had sent it from Lake County. He was after horses for Oakland.

Not until the third night did he arrive home, tired to exhaustion, but with an ill concealed air of pride.

"Now what have you been doing these three days?" Mrs. Mortimer demanded.

"Usin' my head," he boasted quietly. "Killin' two birds with one stone; an', take it from me, I killed a whole flock. Huh! I got word of it at Lawndale, an' I wanta tell you Hazel an' Hattie was some tired when I stabled 'm at Calistoga an' pulled out on the stage over St. Helena. I was Johnny-on-the-spot, an' I nailed 'm — eight whoppers — the whole outfit of a mountain teamster. Young animals, sound as a-dollar, and the lightest of 'em over fifteen hundred. I shipped 'm last night from Calistoga. An', well, that ain't all.

"Before that, first day, at Lawndale, I seen the fellow with the teamin' contract for the pavin'-stone quarry. Sell horses! He wanted to buy 'em. He wanted to buy 'em bad. He'd even rent 'em, he said."

"And you sent him the eight you bought!" Saxon broke in.

"Guess again. I bought them eight with Oakland money, an' they was shipped to Oakland. But I got the Lawndale contractor on long distance, and he agreed to pay me half a dollar a day rent for every work horse up to half a dozen. Then I telegraphed the Boss, tellin' him to ship me six sore-footed mares, Bud Strothers to make the choice, an' to charge to my commission. Bud knows what I 'm after. Soon as they come, off go their shoes. Two weeks in pasture, an' then they go to Lawndale. They can do the work. It's a down-hill haul to the railroad on a dirt road. Half a dollar rent each — that's three dollars a day they'll bring me six days a week. I don't feed 'em, shoe 'm, or nothin', an' I keep an eye on 'm to see they're treated right. Three bucks a day, eh! Well, I guess that'll keep a couple of dollar-an '-a-half men goin' for Saxon, unless she works 'em Sundays. Huh! The Valley of the Moon! Why, we'll be wearin' diamonds before long. Gosh! A fellow could live in the city a thousan' years an' not get such chances. It beats China lottery."

He stood up.

"I 'm goin' out to water Hazel an' Hattie, feed 'm, an' bed 'm down. I'll eat soon as I come back."

The two women were regarding each other with shining eyes, each on the verge of speech when Billy returned to the door and stuck his head in.

“They’s one thing maybe you ain’t got,” he said. “I pull down them three dollars every day; but the six mares is mine, too. I own ‘m. They’re mine. Are you on?”

CHAPTER XX

"I'm not done with you children," had been Mrs. Mortimer's parting words; and several times that winter she ran up to advise, and to teach Saxon how to calculate her crops for the small immediate market, for the increasing spring market, and for the height of summer, at which time she would be able to sell all she could possibly grow and then not supply the demand. In the meantime, Hazel and Hattie were used every odd moment in hauling manure from Glen Ellen, whose barnyards had never known such a thorough cleaning. Also there were loads of commercial fertilizer from the railroad station, bought under Mrs. Mortimer's instructions.

The convicts paroled were Chinese. Both had served long in prison, and were old men; but the day's work they were habitually capable of won Mrs. Mortimer's approval. Gow Yum, twenty years before, had had charge of the vegetable garden of one of the great Menlo Park estates. His disaster had come in the form of a fight over a game of fan tan in the Chinese quarter at Redwood City. His companion, Chan Chi, had been a hatchet-man of note, in the old fighting days of the San Francisco tongs. But a quarter of century of discipline in the prison vegetable gardens had cooled his blood and turned his hand from hatchet to hoe. These two assistants had arrived in Glen Ellen like precious goods in bond and been receipted for by the local deputy sheriff, who, in addition, reported on them to the prison authorities each month. Saxon, too, made out a monthly report and sent it in.

As for the danger of their cutting her throat, she quickly got over the idea of it. The mailed hand of the State hovered over them. The taking of a single drink of liquor would provoke that hand to close down and jerk them back to prison-cells. Nor had they freedom of movement. When old Gow Yum needed to go to San Francisco to sign certain papers before the Chinese Consul, permission had first to be obtained from San Quentin. Then, too, neither man was nasty tempered. Saxon had been apprehensive of the task of bossing two desperate convicts; but when they came she found it a pleasure to work with them. She could tell them what to do, but it was they who knew how do. Prom them she learned all the ten thousand tricks and quirks of artful gardening, and she was not long in realizing how helpless she would have been had she depended on local labor.

Still further, she had no fear, because she was not alone. She had been using her head. It was quickly apparent to her that she could not adequately oversee the outside work and at the same time do the house work. She wrote to Ukiah to the energetic widow who had lived in the adjoining house and taken in washing. She had promptly closed with Saxon's offer. Mrs. Paul was forty, short in stature, and weighed two hundred pounds, but never wearied on her feet. Also she was devoid of fear, and, according to Billy, could settle the hash of both Chinese with one of her mighty arms. Mrs. Paul arrived with her son, a country lad of sixteen who knew horses and could milk Hilda, the pretty Jersey which had successfully passed Edmund's expert eye. Though Mrs. Paul ably handled the house, there was one thing Saxon insisted on doing — namely, washing her own pretty flimsies.

"When I 'm no longer able to do that," she told Billy, "you can take a spade to that clump of redwoods beside Wild Water and dig a hole. It will be time to bury me."

It was early in the days of Madrono Ranch, at the time of Mrs. Mortimer's second visit, that Billy drove in with a load of pipe; and house, chicken yards, and barn were piped from the second-hand tank he installed below the house-spring.

"Huh! I guess I can use my head," he said. "I watched a woman over on the other side of the valley, packin' water two hundred feet from the spring to the house; an' I did some figurin'. I put it at three trips a day and on wash days a whole lot more; an' you can't guess what I made out she traveled a year packin' water. One hundred an' twenty-two miles. D'ye get that? One hundred and twenty-two miles! I asked her how long she'd been there. Thirty-one years. Multiply it for yourself. Three thousan', seven hundred an' eighty-two miles — all for the sake of two hundred feet of pipe. Wouldn't that jar you?"

"Oh, I ain't done yet. They's a bath-tub an' stationary tubs a-comin' soon as I can see my way. An', say, Saxon, you know that little clear flat just where Wild Water runs into Sonoma. They's all of an acre of it. An' it's mine! Got that? An' no walkin' on the grass for you. It'll be my grass. I 'm goin' up stream a ways an' put in a ram. I got a big second-hand one staked out that I can get for ten dollars, an' it'll pump more water'n I need. An' you'll see alfalfa growin' that'll make your mouth water. I gotta have another horse to travel around on. You're usin' Hazel an' Hattie too much to give me a chance; an' I'll never see 'm as soon as you start deliverin' vegetables. I guess that alfalfa'll help some to keep another horse goin'."

But Billy was destined for a time to forget his alfalfa in the excitement of bigger ventures. First, came trouble. The several hundred dollars he had arrived with in Sonoma Valley, and all his own commissions since earned, had gone into improvements and living. The eighteen dollars a week rental for his six horses at Lawndale went to pay wages. And he was unable to buy the needed saddle-horse for his horse-buying expeditions. This, however, he had got around by again using his head and killing two birds with one stone. He began breaking colts to drive, and in the driving drove them wherever he sought horses.

So far all was well. But a new administration in San Francisco, pledged to economy, had stopped all street work. This meant the shutting down of the Lawndale quarry, which was one of the sources of supply for paving blocks. The six horses would not only be back on his hands, but he would have to feed them. How Mrs. Paul, Gow Yum, and Chan Chi were to be paid was beyond him.

"I guess we've bit off more'n we could chew," he admitted to Saxon.

That night he was late in coming home, but brought with him a radiant face. Saxon was no less radiant.

"It's all right," she greeted him, coming out to the barn where he was unhitching a tired but fractious colt. "I've talked with all three. They see the situation, and are perfectly willing to let their wages stand a while. By another week I start Hazel and Hattie delivering vegetables. Then the money will pour in from the hotels and my books won't look so lopsided. And — oh, Billy — you'd never guess. Old Gow Yum has a bank account. He came to me afterward — I guess he was thinking it over — and offered to lend me four hundred dollars. What do you think of that?"

"That I ain't goin' to be too proud to borrow it off 'm, if he IS a Chink. He's a white one, an' maybe I'll need it. Because, you see — well, you can't guess what I've been up to since I seen you this mornin'. I've been so busy I ain't had a bite to eat."

"Using your head?" She laughed.

"You can call it that," he joined in her laughter. "I've been spendin' money like water."

"But you haven't got any to spend," she objected.

"I've got credit in this valley, I'll let you know," he replied. "An' I sure strained it some this afternoon. Now guess."

"A saddle-horse?"

He roared with laughter, startling the colt, which tried to bolt and lifted him half off the ground by his grip on its frightened nose and neck.

"Oh, I mean real guessin'," he urged, when the animal had dropped back to earth and stood regarding him with trembling suspicion.

"Two saddle-horses?"

"Aw, you ain't got imagination. I'll tell you. You know Thiercroft. I bought his big wagon from 'm for sixty dollars. I bought a wagon from the Kenwood blacksmith — so-so, but it'll do — for forty-five dollars. An' I bought Ping's wagon — a peach — for sixty-five dollars. I could a-got it for fifty if he hadn't seen I wanted it bad."

"But the money?" Saxon questioned faintly. "You hadn't a hundred dollars left."

"Didn't I tell you I had credit? Well, I have. I stood 'm off for them wagons. I ain't spent a cent of cash money to-day except for a couple of long-distance switches. Then I bought three sets of work-harness — they're chain harness an' second-hand — for twenty dollars a set. I bought 'm from the fellow that's doin' the haulin' for the quarry. He don't need 'm any more. An' I rented four wagons from 'm, an' four span of horses, too, at half a dollar a day for each horse, an' half a dollar a day for each wagon — that's six dollars a day rent I gotta pay 'm. The three sets of spare harness is for my six horses. Then... lemme see... yep, I rented two barns in Glen Ellen, an' I ordered fifty tons of hay an' a carload of bran an' barley from the store in Glenwood — you see, I gotta feed all them fourteen horses, an' shoe 'm, an' everything.

"Oh, sure Pete, I've went some. I hired seven men to go drivin' for me at two dollars a day, an' — ouch! Jehosaphat! What you doin'!"

"No," Saxon said gravely, having pinched him, "you're not dreaming." She felt his pulse and forehead. "Not a sign of fever." She sniffed his breath. "And you've not been drinking. Go on, tell me the rest of this... whatever it is."

"Ain't you satisfied?"

"No. I want more. I want all."

"All right. But I just want you to know, first, that the boss I used to work for in Oakland ain't got nothin' on me. I 'm some man of affairs, if anybody should ride up on a vegetable wagon an' ask you. Now, I 'm goin' to tell you, though I can't see why the Glen Ellen folks didn't beat me to it. I guess they was asleep. Nobody'd a-overlooked a thing like it in the city. You see, it was like this: you know that fancy brickyard they're gettin' ready to start for makin' extra special fire brick for inside walls? Well, here was I worryin' about the six horses comin' back on my hands, earnin' me nothin' an' eatin' me into the poorhouse. I had to get 'm work somehow, an' I remembered the brickyard. I drove the colt down an' talked with that Jap chemist who's been doin' the experimentin'. Gee! They was foremen lookin' over the ground an' everything gettin' ready to hum. I looked over the lay an' studied it. Then I drove up to where they're openin' the clay pit — you know, that fine, white chalky stuff we saw 'em borin' out just outside the hundred an' forty acres with the three knolls. It's a down-hill haul, a mile, an' two horses can do it easy. In fact, their hardest job'll be haulin' the empty wagons up to the pit. Then I tied the colt an' went to figurin'.

"The Jap professor'd told me the manager an' the other big guns of the company was comin' up on the mornin' train. I wasn't shoutin' things out to anybody, but I just made myself into a committee of welcome; an', when the train pulled in, there I was, extendin' the glad hand of the burg — likewise the glad hand of a guy you used to know in Oakland once, a third-rate dub prizefighter by the name of — lemme see — yep, I got it right — Big Bill Roberts was the name he used to sport, but now he's known as William Roberts, E. S. Q.

"Well, as I was sayin', I gave 'm the glad hand, an' trailed along with 'em to the brickyard, an' from the talk I could see things was doin'. Then I watched my chance an' sprung my proposition. I was scared stiff all the time for maybe the teamin' was already arranged. But I knew it wasn't when they asked for my figures. I had 'm by heart, an' I rattled 'm off, and the top-guy took 'm down in his note-book.

"'We're goin' into this big, an' at once,' he says, lookin' at me sharp. 'What kind of an outfit you got, Mr. Roberts?'"

"Me! — with only Hazel an' Hattie, an' them too small for heavy teamin'.

"'I can slap fourteen horses an' seven wagons onto the job at the jump,' says I. 'An' if you want more, I'll get 'm, that's all.'

"'Give us fifteen minutes to consider, Mr. Roberts,' he says.

"'Sure,' says I, important as all hell — ahem — me! — 'but a couple of other things first. I want a two year contract, an' them figures all depends on one thing. Otherwise they don't go.'

"'What's that,' he says.

"'The dump,' says I. 'Here we are on the ground, an' I might as well show you.'

"An' I did. I showed 'm where I'd lose out if they stuck to their plan, on account of the dip down an' pull up to the dump. 'All you gotta do,' I says, 'is to build the bunkers fifty feet over, throw the road around the rim of the hill, an' make about seventy or eighty feet of elevated bridge.'

"Say, Saxon, that kind of talk got 'em. It was straight. Only they'd been thinkin' about bricks, while I was only thinkin' of teamin'.

"I guess they was all of half an hour considerin', an' I was almost as miserable waitin' as when I waited for you to say yes after I asked you. I went over the figures, calculatin' what I could throw off if I had to. You see, I'd given it to 'em stiff — regular city prices; an' I was prepared to trim down. Then they come back.

"'Prices oughta be lower in the country,' says the top-guy.

"'Nope,' I says. 'This is a wine-grape valley. It don't raise enough hay an' feed for its own animals. It has to be shipped in from the San Joaquin Valley. Why, I can buy hay an' feed cheaper in San Francisco, laid down, than I can here an' haul it myself.'

"An' that struck 'm hard. It was true, an' they knew it. But — say! If they'd asked about wages for drivers, an' about horse-shoein' prices, I'd a-had to come down; because, you see, they ain't no teamsters' union in the country, an' no horseshoers' union, an' rent is low, an' them two items come a whole lot cheaper. Huh! This afternoon I got a word bargain with the blacksmith across from the post office; an' he takes my whole bunch an' throws off twenty-five cents on each shoein', though it's on the Q. T. But they didn't think to ask, bein' too full of bricks."

Billy felt in his breast pocket, drew out a legal-looking document, and handed it to Saxon.

"There it is," he said, "the contract, full of all the agreements, prices, an' penalties. I saw Mr. Hale down town an' showed it to 'm. He says it's O.K. An' say, then I lit out. All over town, Kenwood, Lawndale, everywhere, everybody, everything. The quarry teamin' finishes Friday of this week. An' I take the whole outfit an' start Wednesday of next week haulin' lumber for the buildin's, an' bricks for the kilns, an' all the rest. An' when they're ready for the clay I 'm the boy that'll give it to them.

"But I ain't told you the best yet. I couldn't get the switch right away from Kenwood to Lawndale, and while I waited I went over my figures again. You couldn't guess it in a million years. I'd made a mistake in addition somewhere, an' soaked 'm ten per cent. more'n I'd expected. Talk about findin' money! Any time you want them couple of extra men to help out with the vegetables, say the word. Though we're goin' to have to pinch the next couple of months. An' go ahead an' borrow that four hundred from Gow Yum. An' tell him you'll pay eight per cent. interest, an' that we won't want it more 'n three or four months."

When Billy got away from Saxon's arms, he started leading the colt up and down to cool it off. He stopped so abruptly that his back collided with the colt's nose, and there was a lively minute of rearing and plunging. Saxon waited, for she knew a fresh idea had struck Billy.

"Say," he said, "do you know anything about bank accounts and drawin' checks?"

CHAPTER XXI

It was on a bright June morning that Billy told Saxon to put on her riding clothes to try out a saddle-horse.

“Not until after ten o’clock,” she said “By that time I’ll have the wagon off on a second trip.”

Despite the extent of the business she had developed, her executive ability and system gave her much spare time. She could call on the Hales, which was ever a delight, especially now that the Hastings were back and that Clara was often at her aunt’s. In this congenial atmosphere Saxon Burgeoned. She had begun to read — to read with understanding; and she had time for her books, for work on her pretties, and for Billy, whom she accompanied on many expeditions.

Billy was even busier than she, his work being more scattered and diverse. And, as well, he kept his eye on the home barn and horses which Saxon used. In truth he had become a man of affairs, though Mrs. Mortimer had gone over his accounts, with an eagle eye on the expense column, discovering several minor leaks, and finally, aided by Saxon, bullied him into keeping books. Each night, after supper, he and Saxon posted their books. Afterward, in the big morris chair he had insisted on buying early in the days of his brickyard contract, Saxon would creep into his arms and strum on the ukelele; or they would talk long about what they were doing and planning to do. Now it would be:

“I’m mixin’ up in politics, Saxon. It pays. You bet it pays. If by next spring I ain’t got a half a dozen teams workin’ on the roads an’ pullin’ down the county money, it’s me back to Oakland an’ askin’ the Boss for a job.”

Or, Saxon: “They’re really starting that new hotel between Caliente and Eldridge. And there’s some talk of a big sanitarium back in the hills.”

Or, it would be: “Billy, now that you’ve piped that acre, you’ve just got to let me have it for my vegetables. I’ll rent it from you. I’ll take your own estimate for all the alfalfa you can raise on it, and pay you full market price less the cost of growing it.”

“It’s all right, take it.” Billy suppressed a sigh. “Besides, I ‘m too busy to fool with it now.”

Which prevarication was bare-faced, by virtue of his having just installed the ram and piped the land.

"It will be the wisest, Billy," she soothed, for she knew his dream of land-spaciousness was stronger than ever. "You don't want to fool with an acre. There's that hundred and forty. We'll buy it yet if old Chavon ever dies. Besides, it really belongs to Madrono Ranch. The two together were the original quarter section."

"I don't wish no man's death," Billy grumbled. "But he ain't gettin' no good out of it, over-pasturin' it with a lot of scrub animals. I've sized it up every inch of it. They's at least forty acres in the three cleared fields, with water in the hills behind to beat the band. The horse feed I could raise on it'd take your breath away. Then they's at least fifty acres I could run my brood mares on, pasture mixed up with trees and steep places and such. The other fifty's just thick woods, an' pretty places, an' wild game. An' that old adobe barn's all right. With a new roof it'd shelter any amount of animals in bad weather. Cook at me now, rentin' that measly pasture back of Ping's just to run my restin' animals. They could run in the hundred an' forty if I only had it. I wonder if Chavon would lease it."

Or, less ambitious, Billy would say: "I gotta skin over to Petaluma to-morrow, Saxon. They's an auction on the Atkinson Ranch an' maybe I can pick up some bargains."

"More horses!"

"Ain't I got two teams haulin' lumber for the new winery? An' Barney's got a bad shoulder-sprain. He'll have to lay off a long time if he's to get it in shape. An' Bridget ain't ever goin' to do a tap of work again. I can see that stickin' out. I've doctored her an' doctored her. She's fooled the vet, too. An' some of the other horses has gotta take a rest. That span of grays is showin' the hard work. An' the big roan's goin' loco. Everybody thought it was his teeth, but it ain't. It's straight loco. It's money in pocket to take care of your animals, an' horses is the delicatest things on four legs. Some time, if I can ever see my way to it, I 'm goin' to ship a carload of mules from Colusa County — big, heavy ones, you know. They'd sell like hot cakes in the valley here — them I didn't want for myself."

Or, in lighter vein, Billy: "By the way, Saxon, talkin' of accounts, what d'you think Hazel an' Hattie is worth? — fair market price?"

"Why?"

"I 'm askin' you."

"Well, say, what you paid for them — three hundred dollars."

"Hum." Billy considered deeply. "They're worth a whole lot more, but let it go at that. An' now, gettin' back to accounts, suppose you write me a check for three hundred dollars."

"Oh! Robber!"

"You can't show me. Why, Saxon, when I let you have grain an' hay from my carloads, don't you give me a check for it? An' you know how you're stuck on keepin' your accounts down to the penny," he teased. "If you're any kind of a business woman you just gotta charge your business with them two horses. I ain't had the use of 'em since I don't know when."

"But the colts will be yours," she argued. "Besides, I can't afford brood mares in my business. In almost no time, now, Hazel and Hattie will have to be taken off from the wagon — they're too good for it anyway. And you keep your eyes open for a pair to take their place. I'll give you a check for THAT pair, but no commission."

"All right," Billy conceded. "Hazel an' Hattie come back to me; but you can pay me rent for the time you did use 'em."

"If you make me, I'll charge you board," she threatened.

"An' if you charge me board, I'll charge you interest for the money I've stuck into this shebang."

"You can't," Saxon laughed. "It's community property."

He grunted spasmodically, as if the breath had been knocked out of him.

"Straight on the solar plexus," he said, "an' me down for the count. But say, them's sweet words, ain't they — community property." He rolled them over and off his tongue with keen relish. "An' when we got married the top of our ambition was a steady job an' some rags an' sticks of furniture all paid up an' half-worn out. We wouldn't have had any community property only for you."

"What nonsense! What could I have done by myself? You know very well that you earned all the money that started us here. You paid the wages of Gow Yum and Chan Chi, and old Hughie, and Mrs. Paul, and — why, you've done it all."

She drew her two hands caressingly across his shoulders and down along his great biceps muscles.

"That's what did it, Billy."

"Aw hell! It's your head that done it. What was my muscles good for with no head to run 'em, — sluggin' scabs, beatin' up lodgers, an' crookin' the elbow over a bar. The only sensible thing my head ever done was when it run me into you. Honest to God, Saxon, you've been the makin' of me."

"Aw hell, Billy," she mimicked in the way that delighted him, "where would I have been if you hadn't taken me out of the laundry? I couldn't take myself out. I was just a helpless girl. I'd have been there yet if it hadn't been for you. Mrs. Mortimer had five thousand dollars; but I had you."

"A woman ain't got the chance to help herself that a man has," he generalized. "I'll tell you what: It took the two of us. It's been team-work. We've run in span. If we'd a-run single, you might still be in the laundry; an', if I was lucky, I'd be still drivin' team by the day an' sportin' around to cheap dances."

Saxon stood under the father of all madronos, watching Hazel and Hattie go out the gate, the full vegetable wagon behind them, when she saw Billy ride in, leading a sorrel mare from whose silken coat the sun flashed golden lights.

"Four-year-old, high-life, a handful, but no vicious tricks," Billy chanted, as he stopped beside Saxon. "Skin like tissue paper, mouth like silk, but kill the toughest broncho ever foaled — look at them lungs an' nostrils. They call her Ramona — some Spanish name: sired by Morellita outa genuine Morgan stock."

"And they will sell her?" Saxon gasped, standing with hands clasped in inarticulate delight.

"That's what I brought her to show you for."

"But how much must they want for her?" was Saxon's next question, so impossible did it seem that such an amazement of horse-flesh could ever be hers.

"That ain't your business," Billy answered brusquely. "The brickyard's payin' for her, not the vegetable ranch. She's yourn at the word. What d'ye say?"

"I'll tell you in a minute."

Saxon was trying to mount, but the animal danced nervously away.

"Hold on till I tie," Billy said. "She ain't skirt-broke, that's the trouble."

Saxon tightly gripped reins and mane, stepped with spurred foot on Billy's hand, and was lifted lightly into the saddle.

"She's used to spurs," Billy called after. "Spanish broke, so don't check her quick. Come in gentle. An' talk to her. She's high-life, you know."

Saxon nodded, dashed out the gate and down the road, waved a hand to Clara Hastings as she passed the gate of Trillium Covert, and continued up Wild Water canyon.

When she came back, Ramona in a pleasant lather, Saxon rode to the rear of the house, past the chicken houses and the flourishing berry-rows, to join Billy on the rim of the bench, where he sat on his horse in the shade, smoking a cigarette. Together they looked down through an opening among the trees to the meadow which was a meadow no longer. With mathematical accuracy it was divided into squares, oblongs, and narrow strips, which displayed sharply the thousand hues of green of a truck garden. Gow Yum and Chan Chi, under enormous Chinese grass hats, were planting green onions. Old Hughie, hoe in hand, plodded along the main artery of running water, opening certain laterals, closing others. From the work-shed beyond the barn the strokes of a hammer told Saxon that Carlsen was wire-binding vegetable boxes. Mrs. Paul's cheery soprano, lifted in a hymn, doated through the trees, accompanied by the whirr of an egg-beater. A sharp barking told where Possum still waged hysterical and baffled war on the Douglass squirrels. Billy took a long draw from his cigarette, exhaled the smoke, and continued to look down at the meadow. Saxon divined trouble in his manner. His rein-hand was on the pommel, and her free hand went out and softly rested on his. Billy turned his slow gaze upon her mare's lather, seeming not to note it, and continued on to Saxon's face.

"Huh!" he equivocated, as if waking up. "Them San Leandro Porchugeeze ain't got nothin' on us when it comes to intensive farmin'. Look at that water runnin'. You know, it seems so good to me that sometimes I just wanta get down on hands an' knees an' lap it all up myself."

"Oh, to have all the water you want in a climate like this!" Saxon exclaimed.

"An' don't be scared of it ever goin' back on you. If the rains fooled you, there's Sonoma Creek alongside. All we gotta do is install a gasolene pump."

"But we'll never have to, Billy. I was talking with 'Redwood' Thompson. He's lived in the valley since Fifty-three, and he says there's never been a failure of crops on account of drought. We always get our rain."

"Come on, let's go for a ride," he said abruptly. "You've got the time."

"All right, if you'll tell me what's bothering you."

He looked at her quickly.

"Nothin'," he grunted. "Yes, there is, too. What's the difference? You'd know it sooner or later. You ought to see old Chavon. His face is that long he can't walk without bumpin' his knee on his chin. His gold-mine's peterin' out."

"Gold mine!"

"His clay pit. It's the same thing. He's gettin' twenty cents a yard for it from the brickyard."

"And that means the end of your teaming contract." Saxon saw the disaster in all its hugeness. "What about the brickyard people?"

"Worried to death, though they've kept secret about it. They've had men out punchin' holes all over the hills for a week, an' that Jap chemist settin' up nights analyzin' the rubbish they've brought in. It's peculiar stuff, that clay, for what they want it for, an' you don't find it everywhere. Them experts that reported on Chavon's pit made one hell of a mistake. Maybe they was lazy with their borin's. Anyway, they slipped up on the amount of clay they was in it. Now don't get to botherin'. It'd come out somehow. You can't do nothin'."

"But I can," Saxon insisted. "We won't buy Ramona."

"You ain't got a thing to do with that," he answered. "I 'm buyin' her, an' her price don't cut any figure alongside the big game I 'm playin'. Of course, I can always sell my horses. But that puts a stop to their makin' money, an' that brickyard contract was fat."

"But if you get some of them in on the road work for the county?" she suggested.

"Oh, I got that in mind. An' I 'm keepin' my eyes open. They's a chance the quarry will start again, an' the fellow that did that teamin' has gone to Puget Sound. An' what if I have to sell out most of the horses? Here's you and the vegetable business. That's solid. We just don't go ahead so fast for a time, that's all. I ain't scared of the country any more. I sized things up as we went along. They ain't a jerk burg we hit all the time on the road that I couldn't jump into an' make a go. An' now where d'you want to ride?"

CHAPTER XXII

They cantered out the gate, thundered across the bridge, and passed Trillium Covert before they pulled in on the grade of Wild Water Canyon. Saxon had chosen her field on the big spur of Sonoma Mountains as the objective of their ride.

"Say, I bumped into something big this mornin' when I was goin' to fetch Ramona," Billy said, the clay pit trouble banished for the time. "You know the hundred an' forty. I passed young Chavon along the road, an' — I don't know why — just for ducks, I guess — I up an' asked 'm if he thought the old man would lease the hundred an' forty to me. An' what d 'you think! He said the old man didn't own it. Was just leasin' it himself. That's how we was always seein' his cattle on it. It's a gouge into his land, for he owns everything on three sides of it.

"Next I met Ping. He said Hilyard owned it an' was willin' to sell, only Chavon didn't have the price. Then, comin' back, I looked in on Payne. He's quit blacksmithin' — his back's hurtin' 'm from a kick — an' just startin' in for real estate. Sure, he said, Hilyard would sell, an' had already listed the land with 'm. Chavon's over-pastured it, an' Hilyard won't give 'm another lease."

When they had climbed out of Wild Water Canyon they turned their horses about and halted on the rim where they could look across at the three densely wooded knolls in the midst of the desired hundred and forty.

"We'll get it yet," Saxon said.

"Sure we will," Billy agreed with careless certitude. "I've ben lookin' over the big adobe barn again. Just the thing for a raft of horses, an' a new roof'll be cheaper 'n I thought. Though neither Chavon or me'll be in the market to buy it right away, with the clay pinchin' out."

When they reached Saxon's field, which they had learned was the property of Redwood Thompson, they tied the horses and entered it on foot. The hay, just cut, was being raked by Thompson, who hallo'd a greeting to them. It was a cloudless, windless day, and they sought refuge from the sun in the woods beyond. They encountered a dim trail.

"It's a cow trail," Billy declared. "I bet they's a teeny pasture tucked away somewhere in them trees. Let's follow it."

A quarter of an hour later, several hundred feet up the side of the spur, they emerged on an open, grassy space of bare hillside. Most of the hundred and forty, two miles away, lay beneath them, while they were level with the tops of the three knolls. Billy paused to gaze upon the much-desired land, and Saxon joined him.

“What is that?” she asked, pointing toward the knolls. “Up the little canyon, to the left of it, there on the farthest knoll, right under that spruce that’s leaning over.”

What Billy saw was a white scar on the canyon wall.

“It’s one on me,” he said, studying the scar. “I thought I knew every inch of that land, but I never seen that before. Why, I was right in there at the head of the canyon the first part of the winter. It’s awful wild. Walls of the canyon like the sides of a steeple an’ covered with thick woods.”

“What is it?” she asked. “A slide?”

“Must be — brought down by the heavy rains. If I don’t miss my guess — ” Billy broke off, forgetting in the intensity with which he continued to look.

“Hilyard’ll sell for thirty an acre,” he began again, disconnectedly. “Good land, bad land, an’ all, just as it runs, thirty an acre. That’s forty-two hundred. Payne’s new at real estate, an’ I’ll make ‘m split his commission an’ get the easiest terms ever. We can re-borrow that four hundred from Gow Yum, an’ I can borrow money on my horses an’ wagons — ”

“Are you going to buy it to-day?” Saxon teased.

She scarcely touched the edge of his thought. He looked at her, as if he had heard, then forgot her the next moment.

“Head work,” he mumbled. “Head work. If I don’t put over a hot one — ”

He started back down the cow trail, recollected Saxon, and called over his shoulder:

“Come on. Let’s hustle. I wanta ride over an’ look at that.”

So rapidly did he go down the trail and across the field, that Saxon had no time for questions. She was almost breathless from her effort to keep up with him.

“What is it?” she begged, as he lifted her to the saddle.

“Maybe it’s all a joke — I’ll tell you about it afterward,” he put her off.

They galloped on the levels, trotted down the gentler slopes of road, and not until on the steep descent of Wild Water canyon did they rein to a walk.

Billy's preoccupation was gone, and Saxon took advantage to broach a subject which had been on her mind for some time.

"Clara Hastings told me the other day that they're going to have a house party. The Hazards are to be there, and the Halls, and Roy Blanchard...."

She looked at Billy anxiously. At the mention of Blanchard his head had tossed up as to a bugle call. Slowly a whimsical twinkle began to glint up through the cloudy blue of his eyes.

"It's a long time since you told any man he was standing on his foot," she ventured slyly.

Billy began to grin sheepishly.

"Aw, that's all right," he said in mock-lordly fashion. "Roy Blanchard can come. I'll let 'm. All that was a long time ago. Besides, I 'm too busy to fool with such things."

He urged his horse on at a faster walk, and as soon as the slope lessened broke into a trot. At Trillium Covert they were galloping.

"You'll have to stop for dinner first," Saxon said, as they neared the gate of Madrono Ranch.

"You stop," he answered. "I don't want no dinner."

"But I want to go with you," she pleaded. "What is it?"

"I don't dast tell you. You go on in an' get your dinner."

"Not after that," she said. "Nothing can keep me from coming along now."

Half a mile farther on, they left the highway, passed through a patent gate which Billy had installed, and crossed the fields on a road which was coated thick with chalky dust. This was the road that led to Chavon's clay pit. The hundred and forty lay to the west. Two wagons, in a cloud of dust, came into sight.

"Your teams, Billy," cried Saxon. "Think of it! Just by the use of the head, earning your money while you're riding around with me."

"Makes me ashamed to think how much cash money each one of them teams is bringin' me in every day," he acknowledged.

They were turning off from the road toward the bars which gave entrance to the one hundred and forty, when the driver of the foremost wagon hallo'd and waved his hand. They drew in their horses and waited.

"The big roan's broke loose," the dryer said, as he stopped beside them. "Clean crazy loco — bitin', squealin', strikin', kickin'. Kicked clean out of the harness like it was paper. Bit a chunk out of Baldy the size of a saucer, an’ wound up by breakin’ his own hind leg. Liveliest fifteen minutes I ever seen.”

“Sure it’s broke?” Billy demanded sharply.

“Sure thing.”

“Well, after you unload, drive around by the other barn and get Ben. He’s in the corral. Tell Matthews to be easy with ‘m. An’ get a gun. Sammy’s got one. You’ll have to see to the big roan. I ain’t got time now. — Why couldn’t Matthews a-come along with you for Ben? You’d save time.”

“Oh, he’s just stickin’ around waitin’,” the driver answered. “He reckoned I could get Ben.”

“An’ lose time, eh? Well, get a move on.”

“That’s the way of it,” Billy growled to Saxon as they rode on. “No savve. No head. One man settin’ down an’ holdin his hands while another team drives outa its way doin what he oughta done. That’s the trouble with two-dollar-a-day men.”

“With two-dollar-a-day heads,” Saxon said quickly. “What kind of heads do you expect for two dollars?”

“That’s right, too,” Billy acknowledged the hit. “If they had better heads they’d be in the cities like all the rest of the better men. An’ the better men are a lot of dummies, too. They don’t know the big chances in the country, or you couldn’t hold ‘m from it.”

Billy dismounted, took the three bars down, led his horse through, then put up the bars.

“When I get this place, there’ll be a gate here,” he announced. “Pay for itself in no time. It’s the thousan’ an’ one little things like this that count up big when you put ‘m together.” He sighed contentedly. “I never used to think about such things, but when we shook Oakland I began to wise up. It was them San Leandro Porchugeeze that gave me my first eye-opener. I’d been asleep, before that.”

They skirted the lower of the three fields where the ripe hay stood uncut. Billy pointed with eloquent disgust to a break in the fence, slovenly repaired, and on to the standing grain much-trampled by cattle.

“Them’s the things,” he criticized. “Old style. An’ look how thin that crop is, an’ the shallow plowin’. Scrub cattle, scrub seed, scrub farmin’. Chavon’s worked it for eight years now, an’ never rested it once, never put anything in for what he took out, except the cattle into the stubble the minute the hay was on.”

In a pasture glade, farther on, they came upon a bunch of cattle.

“Look at that bull, Saxon. Scrub’s no name for it. They oughta be a state law against lettin’ such animals exist. No wonder Chavon’s that land poor he’s had to sink all his clay-pit earnin’s into taxes an’ interest. He can’t make his land pay. Take this hundred an forty. Anybody with the savve can just rake silver dollars offen it. I’ll show ‘m.”

They passed the big adobe barn in the distance.

“A few dollars at the right time would a-saved hundreds on that roof,” Billy commented. “Well, anyway, I won’t be payin’ for any improvements when I buy. An I’ll tell you another thing. This ranch is full of water, and if Glen Ellen ever grows they’ll have to come to see me for their water supply.”

Billy knew the ranch thoroughly, and took short-cuts through the woods by way of cattle paths. Once, he reined in abruptly, and both stopped. Confronting them, a dozen paces away, was a half-grown red fox. For half a minute, with beady eyes, the wild thing studied them, with twitching sensitive nose reading the messages of the air. Then, velvet-footed, it leapt aside and was gone among the trees.

“The son-of-a-gun!” Billy ejaculated.

As they approached Wild Water; they rode out into a long narrow meadow. In the middle was a pond.

“Natural reservoir, when Glen Ellen begins to buy water,” Billy said. “See, down at the lower end there? — wouldn’t cost anything hardly to throw a dam across. An’ I can pipe in all kinds of hill-drip. An’ water’s goin’ to be money in this valley not a thousan’ years from now. — An’ all the ginks, an’ boobs, an’ dubs, an’ gazabos poundin’ their ear deado an’ not seein’ it comin. — An’ surveyors workin’ up the valley for an electric road from Sausalito with a branch up Napa Valley.”

They came to the rim of Wild Water canyon. Leaning far back in their saddles, they slid the horses down a steep declivity, through big spruce woods, to an ancient and all but obliterated trail.

“They cut this trail ‘way back in the Fifties,” Billy explained. “I only found it by accident. Then I asked Poppe yesterday. He was born in the valley. He said it was a fake minin’ rush across from Petaluma. The gamblers got it up, an’ they must a-drawn a thousan’ suckers. You see that flat there, an’ the old stumps. That’s where the camp was. They set the tables up under the trees. The flat used to be bigger, but the creek's eaten into it. Poppe said they was a couple of killin's an' one lynchin'."

Lying low against their horses' necks, they scrambled up a steep cattle trail out of the canyon, and began to work across rough country toward the knolls.

"Say, Saxon, you're always lookin' for something pretty. I'll show you what'll make your hair stand up... soon as we get through this manzanita."

Never, in all their travels, had Saxon seen so lovely a vista as the one that greeted them when they emerged. The dim trail lay like a rambling red shadow cast on the soft forest floor by the great redwoods and over-arching oaks. It seemed as if all local varieties of trees and vines had conspired to weave the leafy roof — maples, big madronos and laurels, and lofty tan-bark oaks, scaled and wrapped and interwound with wild grape and flaming poison oak. Saxon drew Billy's eyes to a mossy bank of five-finger ferns. All slopes seemed to meet to form this basin and colossal forest bower. Underfoot the floor was spongy with water. An invisible streamlet whispered under broad-fronded brakes. On every hand opened tiny vistas of enchantment, where young redwoods grouped still and stately about fallen giants, shoulder-high to the horses, moss-covered and dissolving into mold.

At last, after another quarter of an hour, they tied their horses on the rim of the narrow canyon that penetrated the wilderness of the knolls. Through a rift in the trees Billy pointed to the top of the leaning spruce.

"It's right under that," he said. "We'll have to follow up the bed of the creek. They ain't no trail, though you'll see plenty of deer paths crossin' the creek. You'll get your feet wet."

Saxon laughed her joy and held on close to his heels, splashing through pools, crawling hand and foot up the slippery faces of water-worn rocks, and worming under trunks of old fallen trees.

"They ain't no real bed-rock in the whole mountain," Billy elucidated, "so the stream cuts deeper'n deeper, an' that keeps the sides cavin' in. They're as steep as they can be without fallin' down. A little farther up, the canyon ain't much more'n a crack in the ground — but a mighty deep one if anybody should ask you. You can spit across it an' break your neck in it."

The climbing grew more difficult, and they were finally halted, in a narrow cleft, by a drift-jam.

"You wait here," Billy directed, and, lying flat, squirmed on through crashing brush.

Saxon waited till all sound had died away. She waited ten minutes longer, then followed by the way Billy had broken. Where the bed of the canyon became impossible, she came upon what she was sure was a deer path that skirted the steep side and was a tunnel through the close greenery. She caught a glimpse of the overhanging spruce, almost above her head on the opposite side, and emerged on a pool of clear water in a clay-like basin. This basin was of recent origin, having been formed by a slide of earth and trees. Across the pool arose an almost sheer wall of white. She recognized it for what it was, and looked about for Billy. She heard him whistle, and looked up. Two hundred feet above, at the perilous top of the white wall, he was holding on to a tree trunk. The overhanging spruce was nearby.

"I can see the little pasture back of your field," he called down. "No wonder nobody ever piped this off. The only place they could see it from is that speck of pasture. An' you saw it first. Wait till I come down and tell you all about it. I didn't dast before."

It required no shrewdness to guess the truth. Saxon knew this was the precious clay required by the brickyard. Billy circled wide of the slide and came down the canyon-wall, from tree to tree, as descending a ladder.

"Ain't it a peach?" he exulted, as he dropped beside her. "Just look at it — hidden away under four feet of soil where nobody could see it, an' just waitin' for us to hit the Valley of the Moon. Then it up an' slides a piece of the skin off so as we can see it."

"Is it the real clay?" Saxon asked anxiously.

"You bet your sweet life. I've handled too much of it not to know it in the dark. Just rub a piece between your fingers. — Like that. Why, I could tell by the taste of it. I've eaten enough of the dust of the teams. Here's where our fun begins. Why, you know we've been workin' our heads off since we hit this valley. Now we're on Easy street."

"But you don't own it," Saxon objected.

"Well, you won't be a hundred years old before I do. Straight from here I hike to Payne an' bind the bargain — an option, you know, while title's searchin' an' I 'm raisin' money. We'll borrow that four hundred back again from Gow Yum, an' I'll borrow all I can get on my horses an' wagons, an' Hazel and Hattie, an' everything that's worth a cent. An' then I get the deed with a mortgage on it to Hilyard for the balance. An' then — it's takin' candy from a baby — I'll contract with the brickyard for twenty cents a yard — maybe more. They'll be crazy with joy when they see it. Don't need any borin's. They's nearly two hundred feet of it exposed up an' down. The whole knoll's clay, with a skin of soil over it."

"But you'll spoil all the beautiful canyon hauling out the clay," Saxon cried with alarm.

"Nope; only the knoll. The road'll come in from the other side. It'll be only half a mile to Chavon's pit. I'll build the road an' charge steeper teamin', or the brickyard can build it an' I'll team for the same rate as before. An' twenty cents a yard pourin' in, all profit, from the jump. I'll sure have to buy more horses to do the work."

They sat hand in hand beside the pool and talked over the details.

"Say, Saxon," Billy said, after a pause had fallen, "sing 'Harvest Days,' won't you?"

And, when she had complied: "The first time you sung that song for me was comin' home from the picnic on the train — "

"The very first day we met each other," she broke in. "What did you think about me that day?"

"Why, what I've thought ever since — that you was made for me. — I thought that right at the jump, in the first waltz. An' what'd you think of me?

"Oh, I wondered, and before the first waltz, too, when we were introduced and shook hands — I wondered if you were the man. Those were the very words that flashed into my mind. — IS HE THE MAN?"

"An' I kinda looked a little some good to you?" he queried. "*I* thought so, and my eyesight has always been good."

"Say!" Billy went off at a tangent. "By next winter, with everything hummin' an' shipshape, what's the matter with us makin' a visit to Carmel? It'll be slack time for you with the vegetables, an' I'll be able to afford a foreman."

Saxon's lack of enthusiasm surprised him.

"What's wrong?" he demanded quickly.

With downcast demurest eyes and hesitating speech, Saxon said:

"I did something yesterday without asking your advice, Billy."

He waited.

"I wrote to Tom," she added, with an air of timid confession.

Still he waited — for he knew not what.

"I asked him to ship up the old chest of drawers — my mother's, you remember — that we stored with him."

“Huh! I don’t see anything outa the way about that,” Billy said with relief. “We need the chest, don’t we? An’ we can afford to pay the freight on it, can’t we?”

“You are a dear stupid man, that’s what you are. Don’t you know what is in the chest?”

He shook his head, and what she added was so soft that it was almost a whisper:

“The baby clothes.”

“No!” he exclaimed.

“True.”

“Sure?”

She nodded her head, her cheeks flooding with quick color.

“It’s what I wanted, Saxon, more’n anything else in the world. I’ve been thinkin’ a whole lot about it lately, ever since we hit the valley,” he went on, brokenly, and for the first time she saw tears unmistakable in his eyes. “But after all I’d done, an’ the hell I’d raised, an’ everything, I... I never urged you, or said a word about it. But I wanted it... oh, I wanted it like ... like I want you now.”

His open arms received her, and the pool in the heart of the canyon knew a tender silence.

Saxon felt Billy’s finger laid warningly on her lips. Guided by his hand, she turned her head back, and together they gazed far up the side of the knoll where a doe and a spotted fawn looked down upon them from a tiny open space between the trees.

THE MUTINY OF THE ELSINORE

This novel was first published in 1914. It tells the story of a ship's crew, who, after the mutiny and overthrowing of their brutal captain, are led by a journalist taking command of the vessel.

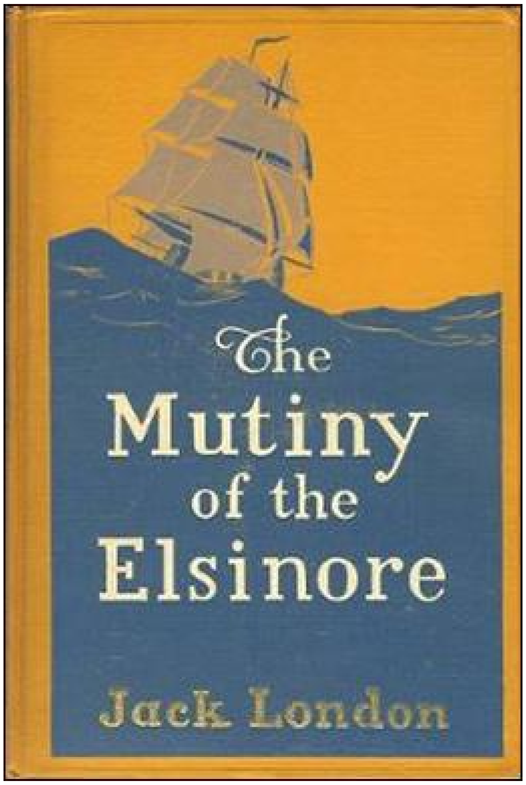
The Mutiny of the Elsinore
Jack London

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII
CHAPTER XXVIII
CHAPTER XXIX
CHAPTER XXX
CHAPTER XXXI
CHAPTER XXXII
CHAPTER XXXIII
CHAPTER XXXIV
CHAPTER XXXV
CHAPTER XXXVI

CHAPTER XXXVII
CHAPTER XXXVIII
CHAPTER XXXIX
CHAPTER XL
CHAPTER XLI
CHAPTER XLII
CHAPTER XLIII
CHAPTER XLIV
CHAPTER XLV
CHAPTER XLVI
CHAPTER XLVII
CHAPTER XLVIII
CHAPTER XLIX
CHAPTER L

CHAPTER I

From the first the voyage was going wrong. Routed out of my hotel on a bitter March morning, I had crossed Baltimore and reached the pier-end precisely on time. At nine o'clock the tug was to have taken me down the bay and put me on board the *Elsinore*, and with growing irritation I sat frozen inside my taxicab and waited. On the seat, outside, the driver and Wada sat hunched in a temperature perhaps half a degree colder than mine. And there was no tug.

Possum, the fox-terrier puppy Galbraith had so inconsiderately foisted upon me, whimpered and shivered on my lap inside my greatcoat and under the fur robe. But he would not settle down. Continually he whimpered and clawed and struggled to get out. And, once out and bitten by the cold, with equal insistence he whimpered and clawed to get back.

His unceasing plaint and movement was anything but sedative to my jangled nerves. In the first place I was uninterested in the brute. He meant nothing to me. I did not know him. Time and again, as I drearily waited, I was on the verge of giving him to the driver. Once, when two little girls — evidently the wharfinger's daughters — went by, my hand reached out to the door to open it so that I might call to them and present them with the puling little wretch.

A farewell surprise package from Galbraith, he had arrived at the hotel the night before, by express from New York. It was Galbraith's way. Yet he might so easily have been decently like other folk and sent fruit . . . or flowers, even. But no; his affectionate inspiration had to take the form of a yelping, yapping two months' old puppy. And with the advent of the terrier the trouble had begun. The hotel clerk judged me a criminal before the act I had not even had time to meditate. And then Wada, on his own initiative and out of his own foolish stupidity, had attempted to smuggle the puppy into his room and been caught by a house detective. Promptly Wada had forgotten all his English and lapsed into hysterical Japanese, and the house detective remembered only his Irish; while the hotel clerk had given me to understand in no uncertain terms that it was only what he had expected of me.

Damn the dog, anyway! And damn Galbraith too! And as I froze on in the cab on that bleak pier-end, I damned myself as well, and the mad freak that had started me voyaging on a sailing-ship around the Horn.

By ten o'clock a nondescript youth arrived on foot, carrying a suit-case, which was turned over to me a few minutes later by the wharfinger. It belonged to the pilot, he said, and gave instructions to the chauffeur how to find some other pier from which, at some indeterminate time, I should be taken aboard the *Elsinore* by some other tug. This served to increase my irritation. Why should I not have been informed as well as the pilot?

An hour later, still in my cab and stationed at the shore end of the new pier, the pilot arrived. Anything more unlike a pilot I could not have imagined. Here was no blue-jacketed, weather-beaten son of the sea, but a soft-spoken gentleman, for all the world the type of successful business man one meets in all the clubs. He introduced himself immediately, and I invited him to share my freezing cab with Possum and the baggage. That some change had been made in the arrangements by Captain West was all he knew, though he fancied the tug would come along any time.

And it did, at one in the afternoon, after I had been compelled to wait and freeze for four mortal hours. During this time I fully made up my mind that I was not going to like this Captain West. Although I had never met him, his treatment of me from the outset had been, to say the least, cavalier. When the *Elsinore* lay in Erie Basin, just arrived from California with a cargo of barley, I had crossed over from New York to inspect what was to be my home for many months. I had been delighted with the ship and the cabin accommodation. Even the stateroom selected for me was satisfactory and far more spacious than I had expected. But when I peeped into the captain's room I was amazed at its comfort. When I say that it opened directly into a bath-room, and that, among other things, it was furnished with a big brass bed such as one would never suspect to find at sea, I have said enough.

Naturally, I had resolved that the bath-room and the big brass bed should be mine. When I asked the agents to arrange with the captain they seemed non-committal and uncomfortable. "I don't know in the least what it is worth," I said. "And I don't care. Whether it costs one hundred and fifty dollars or five hundred, I must have those quarters."

Harrison and Gray, the agents, debated silently with each other and scarcely thought Captain West would see his way to the arrangement. "Then he is the first sea captain I ever heard of that wouldn't," I asserted confidently. “Why, the captains of all the Atlantic liners regularly sell their quarters.”

“But Captain West is not the captain of an Atlantic liner,” Mr. Harrison observed gently.

“Remember, I am to be on that ship many a month,” I retorted. “Why, heavens, bid him up to a thousand if necessary.”

“We’ll try,” said Mr. Gray, “but we warn you not to place too much dependence on our efforts. Captain West is in Searsport at the present time, and we will write him to-day.”

To my astonishment Mr. Gray called me up several days later to inform me that Captain West had declined my offer. “Did you offer him up to a thousand?” I demanded. “What did he say?”

“He regretted that he was unable to concede what you asked,” Mr. Gray replied.

A day later I received a letter from Captain West. The writing and the wording were old-fashioned and formal. He regretted not having yet met me, and assured me that he would see personally that my quarters were made comfortable. For that matter he had already dispatched orders to Mr. Pike, the first mate of the *Elsinore*, to knock out the partition between my state-room and the spare state-room adjoining. Further — and here is where my dislike for Captain West began — he informed me that if, when once well at sea, I should find myself dissatisfied, he would gladly, in that case, exchange quarters with me.

Of course, after such a rebuff, I knew that no circumstance could ever persuade me to occupy Captain West’s brass bed. And it was this Captain Nathaniel West, whom I had not yet met, who had now kept me freezing on pier-ends through four miserable hours. The less I saw of him on the voyage the better, was my decision; and it was with a little tickle of pleasure that I thought of the many boxes of books I had dispatched on board from New York. Thank the Lord, I did not depend on sea captains for entertainment.

I turned Possum over to Wada, who was settling with the cabman, and while the tug’s sailors were carrying my luggage on board I was led by the pilot to an introduction with Captain West. At the first glimpse I knew that he was no more a sea captain than the pilot was a pilot. I had seen the best of the breed, the captains of the liners, and he no more resembled them than did he resemble the bluff-faced, gruff-voiced skippers I had read about in books. By his side stood a woman, of whom little was to be seen and who made a warm and gorgeous blob of colour in the huge muff and boa of red fox in which she was well-nigh buried.

"My God! — his wife!" I darted in a whisper at the pilot. "Going along with him? . . . "

I had expressly stipulated with Mr. Harrison, when engaging passage, that the one thing I could not possibly consider was the skipper of the *Elsinore* taking his wife on the voyage. And Mr. Harrison had smiled and assured me that Captain West would sail unaccompanied by a wife.

"It's his daughter," the pilot replied under his breath. "Come to see him off, I fancy. His wife died over a year ago. They say that is what sent him back to sea. He'd retired, you know."

Captain West advanced to meet me, and before our outstretched hands touched, before his face broke from repose to greeting and the lips moved to speech, I got the first astonishing impact of his personality. Long, lean, in his face a touch of race I as yet could only sense, he was as cool as the day was cold, as poised as a king or emperor, as remote as the farthest fixed star, as neutral as a proposition of Euclid. And then, just ere our hands met, a twinkle of — oh — such distant and controlled geniality quickened the many tiny wrinkles in the corner of the eyes; the clear blue of the eyes was suffused by an almost colourful warmth; the face, too, seemed similarly to suffuse; the thin lips, harsh-set the instant before, were as gracious as Bernhardt's when she moulds sound into speech.

So curiously was I affected by this first glimpse of Captain West that I was aware of expecting to fall from his lips I knew not what words of untold beneficence and wisdom. Yet he uttered most commonplace regrets at the delay in a voice provocative of fresh surprise to me. It was low and gentle, almost too low, yet clear as a bell and touched with a faint reminiscent twang of old New England.

"And this is the young woman who is guilty of the delay," he concluded my introduction to his daughter. "Margaret, this is Mr. Pathurst."

Her gloved hand promptly emerged from the fox-skins to meet mine, and I found myself looking into a pair of gray eyes bent steadily and gravely upon me. It was discomfiting, that cool, penetrating, searching gaze. It was not that it was challenging, but that it was so insolently business-like. It was much in the very way one would look at a new coachman he was about to engage. I did not know then that she was to go on the voyage, and that her curiosity about the man who was to be a fellow-passenger for half a year was therefore only natural. Immediately she realized what she was doing, and her lips and eyes smiled as she spoke.

As we moved on to enter the tug's cabin I heard Possum's shivering whimper rising to a screech, and went forward to tell Wada to take the creature in out of the cold. I found him hovering about my luggage, wedging my dressing-case securely upright by means of my little automatic rifle. I was startled by the mountain of luggage around which mine was no more than a fringe. Ship's stores, was my first thought, until I noted the number of trunks, boxes, suit-cases, and parcels and bundles of all sorts. The initials on what looked suspiciously like a woman's hat trunk caught my eye — "M.W." Yet Captain West's first name was Nathaniel. On closer investigation I did find several "N.W's." but everywhere I could see "M.W's." Then I remembered that he had called her Margaret.

I was too angry to return to the cabin, and paced up and down the cold deck biting my lips with vexation. I had so expressly stipulated with the agents that no captain's wife was to come along. The last thing under the sun I desired in the pet quarters of a ship was a woman. But I had never thought about a captain's daughter. For two cents I was ready to throw the voyage over and return on the tug to Baltimore.

By the time the wind caused by our speed had chilled me bitterly, I noticed Miss West coming along the narrow deck, and could not avoid being struck by the spring and vitality of her walk. Her face, despite its firm moulding, had a suggestion of fragility that was belied by the robustness of her body. At least, one would argue that her body must be robust from her fashion of movement of it, though little could one divine the lines of it under the shapelessness of the furs.

I turned away on my heel and fell moodily to contemplating the mountain of luggage. A huge packing-case attracted my attention, and I was staring at it when she spoke at my shoulder.

"That's what really caused the delay," she said.

"What is it?" I asked incuriously.

"Why, the *Elsinore's* piano, all renovated. When I made up my mind to come, I telegraphed Mr. Pike — he's the mate, you know. He did his best. It was the fault of the piano house. And while we waited to-day I gave them a piece of my mind they'll not forget in a hurry."

She laughed at the recollection, and commenced to peep and peer into the luggage as if in search of some particular piece. Having satisfied herself, she was starting back, when she paused and said:

"Won't you come into the cabin where it's warm? We won't be there for half an hour."

"When did you decide to make this voyage?" I demanded abruptly.

So quick was the look she gave me that I knew she had in that moment caught all my disgruntlement and disgust.

"Two days ago," she answered. "Why?"

Her readiness for give and take took me aback, and before I could speak she went on:

"Now you're not to be at all silly about my coming, Mr. Pathurst. I probably know more about long-voyaging than you do, and we're all going to be comfortable and happy. You can't bother me, and I promise you I won't bother you. I've sailed with passengers before, and I've learned to put up with more than they ever proved they were able to put up with. So there. Let us start right, and it won't be any trouble to keep on going right. I know what is the matter with you. You think you'll be called upon to entertain me. Please know that I do not need entertainment. I never saw the longest voyage that was too long, and I always arrive at the end with too many things not done for the passage ever to have been tedious, and . . . I don't play *Chopsticks*."

CHAPTER II

The *Elsinore*, fresh-loaded with coal, lay very deep in the water when we came alongside. I knew too little about ships to be capable of admiring her lines, and, besides, I was in no mood for admiration. I was still debating with myself whether or not to chuck the whole thing and return on the tug. From all of which it must not be taken that I am a vacillating type of man. On the contrary.

The trouble was that at no time, from the first thought of it, had I been keen for the voyage. Practically the reason I was taking it was because there was nothing else I was keen on. For some time now life had lost its savour. I was not jaded, nor was I exactly bored. But the zest had gone out of things. I had lost taste for my fellow-men and all their foolish, little, serious endeavours. For a far longer period I had been dissatisfied with women. I had endured them, but I had been too analytic of the faults of their primitiveness, of their almost ferocious devotion to the destiny of sex, to be enchanted with them. And I had come to be oppressed by what seemed to me the futility of art — a pompous legerdemain, a consummate charlatanry that deceived not only its devotees but its practitioners.

In short, I was embarking on the *Elsinore* because it was easier to than not; yet everything else was as equally and perilously easy. That was the curse of the condition into which I had fallen. That was why, as I stepped upon the deck of the *Elsinore*, I was half of a mind to tell them to keep my luggage where it was and bid Captain West and his daughter good-day.

I almost think what decided me was the welcoming, hospitable smile Miss West gave me as she started directly across the deck for the cabin, and the knowledge that it must be quite warm in the cabin.

Mr. Pike, the mate, I had already met, when I visited the ship in Erie Basin. He smiled a stiff, crack-faced smile that I knew must be painful, but did not offer to shake hands, turning immediately to call orders to half-a-dozen frozen-looking youths and aged men who shambled up from somewhere in the waist of the ship. Mr. Pike had been drinking. That was patent. His face was puffed and discoloured, and his large gray eyes were bitter and bloodshot.

I lingered, with a sinking heart watching my belongings come aboard and chiding my weakness of will which prevented me from uttering the few words that would put a stop to it. As for the half-dozen men who were now carrying the luggage aft into the cabin, they were unlike any concept I had ever entertained of sailors. Certainly, on the liners, I had observed nothing that resembled them.

One, a most vivid-faced youth of eighteen, smiled at me from a pair of remarkable Italian eyes. But he was a dwarf. So short was he that he was all sea-boots and sou'wester. And yet he was not entirely Italian. So certain was I that I asked the mate, who answered morosely:

"Him? Shorty? He's a dago half-breed. The other half's Jap or Malay."

One old man, who I learned was a bosun, was so decrepit that I thought he had been recently injured. His face was stolid and ox-like, and as he shuffled and dragged his brogans over the deck he paused every several steps to place both hands on his abdomen and execute a queer, pressing, lifting movement. Months were to pass, in which I saw him do this thousands of times, ere I learned that there was nothing the matter with him and that his action was purely a habit. His face reminded me of the Man with the Hoe, save that it was unthinkably and abysmally stupider. And his name, as I was to learn, of all names was Sundry Buyers. And he was bosun of the fine American sailing-ship *Elsinore* — rated one of the finest sailing-ships afloat!

Of this group of aged men and boys that moved the luggage along I saw only one, called Henry, a youth of sixteen, who approximated in the slightest what I had conceived all sailors to be like. He had come off a training ship, the mate told me, and this was his first voyage to sea. His face was keen-cut, alert, as were his bodily movements, and he wore sailor-appearing clothes with sailor-seeming grace. In fact, as I was to learn, he was to be the only sailor-seeming creature fore and aft.

The main crew had not yet come aboard, but was expected at any moment, the mate vouchsafed with a snarl of ominous expectancy. Those already on board were the miscellaneous ones who had shipped themselves in New York without the mediation of boarding-house masters. And what the crew itself would be like God alone could tell — so said the mate. Shorty, the Japanese (or Malay) and Italian half-caste, the mate told me, was an able seaman, though he had come out of steam and this was his first sailing voyage.

"Ordinary seamen!" Mr. Pike snorted, in reply to a question. "We don't carry Landsmen! — forget it! Every clodhopper an' cow-walloper these days is an able seaman. That's the way they rank and are paid. The merchant service is all shot to hell. There ain't no more sailors. They all died years ago, before you were born even."

I could smell the raw whiskey on the mate's breath. Yet he did not stagger nor show any signs of intoxication. Not until afterward was I to know that his willingness to talk was most unwonted and was where the liquor gave him away.

"It'd a-ben a grace had I died years ago," he said, "rather than to a-lived to see sailors an' ships pass away from the sea."

"But I understand the *Elsinore* is considered one of the finest," I urged.

"So she is . . . to-day. But what is she? — a damned cargo-carrier. She ain't built for sailin', an' if she was there ain't no sailors left to sail her. Lord! Lord! The old clippers! When I think of 'em! — *The Gamecock*, *Shootin' Star*, *Flyin' Fish*, *Witch o' the Wave*, *Staghound*, *Harvey Birch*, *Canvas-back*, *Fleetwing*, *Sea Serpent*, *Northern Light*! An' when I think of the fleets of the tea-clippers that used to load at Hong Kong an' race the Eastern Passages. A fine sight! A fine sight!"

I was interested. Here was a man, a live man. I was in no hurry to go into the cabin, where I knew Wada was unpacking my things, so I paced up and down the deck with the huge Mr. Pike. Huge he was in all conscience, broad-shouldered, heavy-boned, and, despite the profound stoop of his shoulders, fully six feet in height.

"You are a splendid figure of a man," I complimented.

"I was, I was," he muttered sadly, and I caught the whiff of whiskey strong on the air.

I stole a look at his gnarled hands. Any finger would have made three of mine. His wrist would have made three of my wrist.

"How much do you weigh?" I asked.

"Two hundred an' ten. But in my day, at my best, I tipped the scales close to two-forty."

"And the *Elsinore* can't sail," I said, returning to the subject which had roused him.

"I'll take you even, anything from a pound of tobacco to a month's wages, she won't make it around in a hundred an' fifty days," he answered. "Yet I've come round in the old *Flyin' Cloud* in eighty-nine days — eighty-nine days, sir, from Sandy Hook to 'Frisco. Sixty men for'ard that *was* men, an' eight boys, an' drive! drive! drive! Three hundred an' seventy-four miles for a day's run under t'gallantsails, an' in the squalls eighteen knots o' line not enough to time her. Eighty-nine days — never beat, an' tied once by the old *Andrew Jackson* nine years afterwards. Them was the days!"

"When did the *Andrew Jackson* tie her?" I asked, because of the growing suspicion that he was "having" me.

"In 1860," was his prompt reply.

"And you sailed in the *Flying Cloud* nine years before that, and this is 1913 — why, that was sixty-two years ago," I charged.

"And I was seven years old," he chuckled. "My mother was stewardess on the *Flyin' Cloud*. I was born at sea. I was boy when I was twelve, on the *Herald o' the Morn*, when she made around in ninety-nine days — half the crew in irons most o' the time, five men lost from aloft off the Horn, the points of our sheath-knives broken square off, knuckle-dusters an' belayin'-pins flyin', three men shot by the officers in one day, the second mate killed dead an' no one to know who done it, an' drive! drive! drive! ninety-nine days from land to land, a run of seventeen thousand miles, an' east to west around Cape Stiff!"

"But that would make you sixty-nine years old," I insisted.

"Which I am," he retorted proudly, "an' a better man at that than the scrubby younglings of these days. A generation of 'em would die under the things I've been through. Did you ever hear of the *Sunny South*? — she that was sold in Havana to run slaves an' changed her name to *Emanuela*?"

"And you've sailed the Middle Passage!" I cried, recollecting the old phrase.

"I was on the *Emanuela* that day in Mozambique Channel when the *Brisk* caught us with nine hundred slaves between-decks. Only she wouldn't a-caught us except for her having steam."

I continued to stroll up and down beside this massive relic of the past, and to listen to his hints and muttered reminiscences of old man-killing and man-driving days. He was too real to be true, and yet, as I studied his shoulder-stoop and the age-drag of his huge feet, I was convinced that his years were as he asserted. He spoke of a Captain Sonurs.

"He was a great captain," he was saying. "An' in the two years I sailed mate with him there was never a port I didn't jump the ship goin' in an' stay in hiding until I sneaked aboard when she sailed again."

"But why?"

"The men, on account of the men swearin' blood an' vengeance and warrants against me because of my ways of teachin' them to be sailors. Why, the times I was caught, and the fines the skipper paid for me — and yet it was my work that made the ship make money."

He held up his huge paws, and as I stared at the battered, malformed knuckles I understood the nature of his work.

"But all that's stopped now," he lamented. "A sailor's a gentleman these days. You can't raise your voice or your hand to them."

At this moment he was addressed from the poop-rail above by the second mate, a medium-sized, heavily built, clean-shaven, blond man.

"The tug's in sight with the crew, sir," he announced.

The mate grunted an acknowledgment, then added, "Come on down, Mr. Mellaire, and meet our passenger."

I could not help noting the air and carriage with which Mr. Mellaire came down the poop-ladder and took his part in the introduction. He was courteous in an old-world way, soft-spoken, suave, and unmistakably from south of Mason and Dixon.

"A Southerner," I said.

"Georgia, sir." He bowed and smiled, as only a Southerner can bow and smile.

His features and expression were genial and gentle, and yet his mouth was the cruellest gash I had ever seen in a man's face. It was a gash. There is no other way of describing that harsh, thin-lipped, shapeless mouth that uttered gracious things so graciously. Involuntarily I glanced at his hands. Like the mate's, they were thick-boned, broken-knuckled, and malformed. Back into his blue eyes I looked. On the surface of them was a film of light, a gloss of gentle kindness and cordiality, but behind that gloss I knew resided neither sincerity nor mercy. Behind that gloss was something cold and terrible, that lurked and waited and watched — something catlike, something inimical and deadly. Behind that gloss of soft light and of social sparkle was the live, fearful thing that had shaped that mouth into the gash it was. What I sensed behind in those eyes chilled me with its repulsiveness and strangeness.

As I faced Mr. Mellaire, and talked with him, and smiled, and exchanged amenities, I was aware of the feeling that comes to one in the forest or jungle when he knows unseen wild eyes of hunting animals are spying upon him. Frankly I was afraid of the thing ambushed behind there in the skull of Mr. Mellaire. One so as a matter of course identifies form and feature with the spirit within. But I could not do this with the second mate. His face and form and manner and suave ease were one thing, inside which he, an entirely different thing, lay hid.

I noticed Wada standing in the cabin door, evidently waiting to ask for instructions. I nodded, and prepared to follow him inside. Mr. Pike looked at me quickly and said:

"Just a moment, Mr. Pathurst."

He gave some orders to the second mate, who turned on his heel and started for'ard. I stood and waited for Mr. Pike's communication, which he did not choose to make until he saw the second mate well out of ear-shot. Then he leaned closely to me and said:

"Don't mention that little matter of my age to anybody. Each year I sign on I sign my age one year younger. I am fifty-four, now, on the articles."

"And you don't look a day older," I answered lightly, though I meant it in all sincerity.

"And I don't feel it. I can outwork and outgame the huskiest of the younglings. And don't let my age get to anybody's ears, Mr. Pathurst. Skippers are not particular for mates getting around the seventy mark. And owners neither. I've had my hopes for this ship, and I'd a-got her, I think, except for the old man decidin' to go to sea again. As if he needed the money! The old skinflint!"

"Is he well off?" I inquired.

"Well off! If I had a tenth of his money I could retire on a chicken ranch in California and live like a fighting cock — yes, if I had a fiftieth of what he's got salted away. Why, he owns more stock in all the Blackwood ships . . . and they've always been lucky and always earned money. I'm getting old, and it's about time I got a command. But no; the old cuss has to take it into his head to go to sea again just as the berth's ripe for me to fall into."

Again I started to enter the cabin, but was stopped by the mate.

"Mr. Pathurst? You won't mention about my age?"

"No, certainly not, Mr. Pike," I said.

CHAPTER III

Quite chilled through, I was immediately struck by the warm comfort of the cabin. All the connecting doors were open, making what I might call a large suite of rooms or a whale house. The main-deck entrance, on the port side, was into a wide, well-carpeted hallway. Into this hallway, from the port side, opened five rooms: first, on entering, the mate's; next, the two state-rooms which had been knocked into one for me; then the steward's room; and, adjoining his, completing the row, a state-room which was used for the slop-chest.

Across the hall was a region with which I was not yet acquainted, though I knew it contained the dining-room, the bath-rooms, the cabin proper, which was in truth a spacious living-room, the captain's quarters, and, undoubtedly, Miss West's quarters. I could hear her humming some air as she bustled about with her unpacking. The steward's pantry, separated by crosshalls and by the stairway leading into the chart-room above on the poop, was placed strategically in the centre of all its operations. Thus, on the starboard side of it were the state-rooms of the captain and Miss West, for'ard of it were the dining-room and main cabin; while on the port side of it was the row of rooms I have described, two of which were mine.

I ventured down the hall toward the stern, and found it opened into the stern of the *Elsinore*, forming a single large apartment at least thirty-five feet from side to side and fifteen to eighteen feet in depth, curved, of course, to the lines of the ship's stern. This seemed a store-room. I noted wash-tubs, bolts of canvas, many lockers, hams and bacon hanging, a step-ladder that led up through a small hatch to the poop, and, in the floor, another hatch.

I spoke to the steward, an old Chinese, smooth-faced and brisk of movement, whose name I never learned, but whose age on the articles was fifty-six.

"What is down there?" I asked, pointing to the hatch in the floor.

"Him lazarette," he answered.

"And who eats there?" I indicated a table with two stationary sea-chairs.

"Him second table. Second mate and carpenter him eat that table."

When I had finished giving instructions to Wada for the arranging of my things I looked at my watch. It was early yet, only several minutes after three so I went on deck again to witness the arrival of the crew.

The actual coming on board from the tug I had missed, but for’ard of the amidship house I encountered a few laggards who had not yet gone into the forecastle. These were the worse for liquor, and a more wretched, miserable, disgusting group of men I had never seen in any slum. Their clothes were rags. Their faces were bloated, bloody, and dirty. I won’t say they were villainous. They were merely filthy and vile. They were vile of appearance, of speech, and action.

“Come! Come! Get your dunnage into the fo’c’s’le!”

Mr. Pike uttered these words sharply from the bridge above. A light and graceful bridge of steel rods and planking ran the full length of the *Elsinore*, starting from the poop, crossing the amidship house and the forecastle, and connecting with the forecastle-head at the very bow of the ship.

At the mate’s command the men reeled about and glowered up at him, one or two starting clumsily to obey. The others ceased their drunken yammerings and regarded the mate sullenly. One of them, with a face mashed by some mad god in the making, and who was afterwards to be known by me as Larry, burst into a guffaw, and spat insolently on the deck. Then, with utmost deliberation, he turned to his fellows and demanded loudly and huskily:

“Who in hell’s the old stiff, anyways?”

I saw Mr. Pike’s huge form tense convulsively and involuntarily, and I noted the way his huge hands strained in their clutch on the bridge-railing. Beyond that he controlled himself.

“Go on, you,” he said. “I’ll have nothing out of you. Get into the fo’c’s’le.”

And then, to my surprise, he turned and walked aft along the bridge to where the tug was casting off its lines. So this was all his high and mighty talk of kill and drive, I thought. Not until afterwards did I recollect, as I turned aft down the deck, that I saw Captain West leaning on the rail at the break of the poop and gazing for’ard.

The tug’s lines were being cast off, and I was interested in watching the manoeuvre until she had backed clear of the ship, at which moment, from for’ard, arose a queer babel of howling and yelping, as numbers of drunken voices cried out that a man was overboard. The second mate sprang down the poop-ladder and darted past me along the deck. The mate, still on the slender, white-painted bridge, that seemed no more than a spider thread, surprised me by the activity with which he dashed along the bridge to the ’midship house, leaped upon the canvas-covered long-boat, and swung outboard where he might see. Before the men could clamber upon the rail the second mate was among them, and it was he who flung a coil of line overboard.

What impressed me particularly was the mental and muscular superiority of these two officers. Despite their age — the mate sixty-nine and the second mate at least fifty — their minds and their bodies had acted with the swiftness and accuracy of steel springs. They were potent. They were iron. They were perceivers, willers, and doers. They were as of another species compared with the sailors under them. While the latter, witnesses of the happening and directly on the spot, had been crying out in befuddled helplessness, and with slow wits and slower bodies been climbing upon the rail, the second mate had descended the steep ladder from the poop, covered two hundred feet of deck, sprung upon the rail, grasped the instant need of the situation, and cast the coil of line into the water.

And of the same nature and quality had been the actions of Mr. Pike. He and Mr. Mellaire were masters over the wretched creatures of sailors by virtue of this remarkable difference of efficiency and will. Truly, they were more widely differentiated from the men under them than were the men under them differentiated from Hottentots — ay, and from monkeys.

I, too, by this time, was standing on the big hawser-bitts in a position to see a man in the water who seemed deliberately swimming away from the ship. He was a dark-skinned Mediterranean of some sort, and his face, in a clear glimpse I caught of it, was distorted by frenzy. His black eyes were maniacal. The line was so accurately flung by the second mate that it fell across the man’s shoulders, and for several strokes his arms tangled in it ere he could swim clear. This accomplished, he proceeded to scream some wild harangue and once, as he uptossed his arms for emphasis, I saw in his hand the blade of a long knife.

Bells were jangling on the tug as it started to the rescue. I stole a look up at Captain West. He had walked to the port side of the poop, where, hands in pockets, he was glancing, now for’ard at the struggling man, now aft at the tug. He gave no orders, betrayed no excitement, and appeared, I may well say, the most casual of spectators.

The creature in the water seemed now engaged in taking off his clothes. I saw one bare arm, and then the other, appear. In his struggles he sometimes sank beneath the surface, but always he emerged, flourishing the knife and screaming his addled harangue. He even tried to escape the tug by diving and swimming underneath.

I strolled for'ard, and arrived in time to see him hoisted in over the rail of the *Elsinore*. He was stark naked, covered with blood, and raving. He had cut and slashed himself in a score of places. From one wound in the wrist the blood spurted with each beat of the pulse. He was a loathsome, non-human thing. I have seen a scared orang in a zoo, and for all the world this bestial-faced, mowing, gibbering thing reminded me of the orang. The sailors surrounded him, laying hands on him, withstraining him, the while they guffawed and cheered. Right and left the two mates shoved them away, and dragged the lunatic down the deck and into a room in the 'midship house. I could not help marking the strength of Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire. I had heard of the superhuman strength of madmen, but this particular madman was as a wisp of straw in their hands. Once into the bunk, Mr. Pike held down the struggling fool easily with one hand while he dispatched the second mate for marlin with which to tie the fellow's arms.

"Bughouse," Mr. Pike grinned at me. "I've seen some bughouse crews in my time, but this one's the limit."

"What are you going to do?" I asked. "The man will bleed to death."

"And good riddance," he answered promptly. "We'll have our hands full of him until we can lose him somehow. When he gets easy I'll sew him up, that's all, if I have to ease him with a clout of the jaw."

I glanced at the mate's huge paw and appreciated its anæsthetic qualities. Out on deck again, I saw Captain West on the poop, hands still in pockets, quite uninterested, gazing at a blue break in the sky to the north-east. More than the mates and the maniac, more than the drunken callousness of the men, did this quiet figure, hands in pockets, impress upon me that I was in a different world from any I had known.

Wada broke in upon my thoughts by telling me he had been sent to say that Miss West was serving tea in the cabin.

CHAPTER IV

The contrast, as I entered the cabin, was startling. All contrasts aboard the *Elsinore* promised to be startling. Instead of the cold, hard deck my feet sank into soft carpet. In place of the mean and narrow room, built of naked iron, where I had left the lunatic, I was in a spacious and beautiful apartment. With the bawling of the men's voices still in my ears, and with the pictures of their drink-puffed and filthy faces still vivid under my eyelids, I found myself greeted by a delicate-faced, prettily-gowned woman who sat beside a lacquered oriental table on which rested an exquisite tea-service of Canton china. All was repose and calm. The steward, noiseless-footed, expressionless, was a shadow, scarcely noticed, that drifted into the room on some service and drifted out again.

Not at once could I relax, and Miss West, serving my tea, laughed and said:

"You look as if you had been seeing things. The steward tells me a man has been overboard. I fancy the cold water must have sobered him."

I resented her unconcern.

"The man is a lunatic," I said. "This ship is no place for him. He should be sent ashore to some hospital."

"I am afraid, if we begin that, we'd have to send two-thirds of our complement ashore — one lump?

"Yes, please," I answered. "But the man has terribly wounded himself. He is liable to bleed to death."

She looked at me for a moment, her gray eyes serious and scrutinizing, as she passed me my cup; then laughter welled up in her eyes, and she shook her head reprovingly.

"Now please don't begin the voyage by being shocked, Mr. Pathurst. Such things are very ordinary occurrences. You'll get used to them. You must remember some queer creatures go down to the sea in ships. The man is safe. Trust Mr. Pike to attend to his wounds. I've never sailed with Mr. Pike, but I've heard enough about him. Mr. Pike is quite a surgeon. Last voyage, they say, he performed a successful amputation, and so elated was he that he turned his attention on the carpenter, who happened to be suffering from some sort of indigestion. Mr. Pike was so convinced of the correctness of his diagnosis that he tried to bribe the carpenter into having his appendix removed." She broke off to laugh heartily, then added: "They say he offered the poor man just pounds and pounds of tobacco to consent to the operation."

"But is it safe . . . for the . . . the working of the ship," I urged, "to take such a lunatic along?"

She shrugged her shoulders, as if not intending to reply, then said:

"This incident is nothing. There are always several lunatics or idiots in every ship's company. And they always come aboard filled with whiskey and raving. I remember, once, when we sailed from Seattle, a long time ago, one such madman. He showed no signs of madness at all; just calmly seized two boarding-house runners and sprang overboard with them. We sailed the same day, before the bodies were recovered."

Again she shrugged her shoulders.

"What would you? The sea is hard, Mr. Pathurst. And for our sailors we get the worst type of men. I sometimes wonder where they find them. And we do our best with them, and somehow manage to make them help us carry on our work in the world. But they are low . . . low."

As I listened, and studied her face, contrasting her woman's sensitivity and her soft pretty dress with the brute faces and rags of the men I had noticed, I could not help being convinced intellectually of the rightness of her position. Nevertheless, I was hurt sentimentally, — chiefly, I do believe, because of the very hardness and unconcern with which she enunciated her view. It was because she was a woman, and so different from the sea-creatures, that I resented her having received such harsh education in the school of the sea.

"I could not help remarking your father's — er, er *sang froid* during the occurrence." I ventured.

"He never took his hands from his pockets!" she cried.

Her eyes sparkled as I nodded confirmation.

"I knew it! It's his way. I've seen it so often. I remember when I was twelve years old — mother was alone — we were running into San Francisco. It was in the *Dixie*, a ship almost as big as this. There was a strong fair wind blowing, and father did not take a tug. We sailed right through the Golden Gate and up the San Francisco water-front. There was a swift flood tide, too; and the men, both watches, were taking in sail as fast as they could.

"Now the fault was the steamboat captain's. He miscalculated our speed and tried to cross our bow. Then came the collision, and the *Dixie's* bow cut through that steamboat, cabin and hull. There were hundreds of passengers, men, women, and children. Father never took his hands from his pockets. He sent the mate for'ard to superintend rescuing the passengers, who were already climbing on to our bowsprit and forecastle-head, and in a voice no different from what he'd use to ask some one to pass the butter he told the second mate to set all sail. And he told him which sails to begin with."

"But why set more sails?" I interrupted.

"Because he could see the situation. Don't you see, the steamboat was cut wide open. All that kept her from sinking instantly was the bow of the *Dixie* jammed into her side. By setting more sail and keeping before the wind, he continued to keep the bow of the *Dixie* jammed.

"I was terribly frightened. People who had sprung or fallen overboard were drowning on each side of us, right in my sight, as we sailed along up the water-front. But when I looked at father, there he was, just as I had always known him, hands in pockets, walking slowly up and down, now giving an order to the wheel — you see, he had to direct the *Dixie's* course through all the shipping — now watching the passengers swarming over our bow and along our deck, now looking ahead to see his way through the ships at anchor. Sometimes he did glance at the poor, drowning ones, but he was not concerned with them.

"Of course, there were numbers drowned, but by keeping his hands in his pockets and his head cool he saved hundreds of lives. Not until the last person was off the steamboat — he sent men aboard to make sure — did he take off the press of sail. And the steamboat sank at once."

She ceased, and looked at me with shining eyes for approbation.

"It was splendid," I acknowledged. "I admire the quiet man of power, though I confess that such quietness under stress seems to me almost unearthly and beyond human. I can't conceive of myself acting that way, and I am confident that I was suffering more while that poor devil was in the water than all the rest of the onlookers put together."

"Father suffers!" she defended loyally. "Only he does not show it."

I bowed, for I felt she had missed my point.

CHAPTER V

I came out from tea in the cabin to find the tug *Britannia* in sight. She was the craft that was to tow us down Chesapeake Bay to sea. Strolling for'ard I noted the sailors being routed out of the forecastle by Sundry Buyers, for ever tenderly pressing his abdomen with his hands. Another man was helping Sundry Buyers at routing out the sailors. I asked Mr. Pike who the man was.

"Nancy — my bosun; ain't he a peach?" was the answer I got, and from the mate's manner of enunciation I was quite aware that "Nancy" had been used derisively.

Nancy could not have been more than thirty, though he looked as if he had lived a very long time. He was toothless and sad and weary of movement. His eyes were slate-coloured and muddy, his shaven face was sickly yellow. Narrow-shouldered, sunken-chested, with cheeks cavernously hollow, he looked like a man in the last stages of consumption. Little life as Sundry Buyers showed, Nancy showed even less life. And these were bosuns! — bosuns of the fine American sailing-ship *Elsinore*! Never had any illusion of mine taken a more distressing cropper.

It was plain to me that the pair of them, spineless and spunkless, were afraid of the men they were supposed to boss. And the men! Doré could never have conjured a more delectable hell's broth. For the first time I saw them all, and I could not blame the two bosuns for being afraid of them. They did not walk. They slouched and shambled, some even tottered, as from weakness or drink.

But it was their faces. I could not help remembering what Miss West had just told me — that ships always sailed with several lunatics or idiots in their crews. But these looked as if they were all lunatic or feeble-minded. And I, too, wondered where such a mass of human wreckage could have been obtained. There was something wrong with all of them. Their bodies were twisted, their faces distorted, and almost without exception they were under-sized. The several quite fairly large men I marked were vacant-faced. One man, however, large and unmistakably Irish, was also unmistakably mad. He was talking and muttering to himself as he came out. A little, curved, lop-sided man, with his head on one side and with the shrewdest and wickedest of faces and pale blue eyes, addressed an obscene remark to the mad Irishman, calling him O’Sullivan. But O’Sullivan took no notice and muttered on. On the heels of the little lop-sided man appeared an overgrown dolt of a fat youth, followed by another youth so tall and emaciated of body that it seemed a marvel his flesh could hold his frame together.

Next, after this perambulating skeleton, came the weirdest creature I have ever beheld. He was a twisted oaf of a man. Face and body were twisted as with the pain of a thousand years of torture. His was the face of an ill-treated and feeble-minded faun. His large black eyes were bright, eager, and filled with pain; and they flashed questioningly from face to face and to everything about. They were so pitifully alert, those eyes, as if for ever astrain to catch the clue to some perplexing and threatening enigma. Not until afterwards did I learn the cause of this. He was stone deaf, having had his ear-drums destroyed in the boiler explosion which had wrecked the rest of him.

I noticed the steward, standing at the galley door and watching the men from a distance. His keen, Asiatic face, quick with intelligence, was a relief to the eye, as was the vivid face of Shorty, who came out of the forecastle with a leap and a gurgle of laughter. But there was something wrong with him, too. He was a dwarf, and, as I was to come to know, his high spirits and low mentality united to make him a clown.

Mr. Pike stopped beside me a moment and while he watched the men I watched him. The expression on his face was that of a cattle-buyer, and it was plain that he was disgusted with the quality of cattle delivered.

“Something the matter with the last mother’s son of them,” he growled.

And still they came: one, pallid, furtive-eyed, that I instantly adjudged a drug fiend; another, a tiny, wizened old man, pinch-faced and wrinkled, with beady, malevolent blue eyes; a third, a small, well-fleshed man, who seemed to my eye the most normal and least unintelligent specimen that had yet appeared. But Mr. Pike’s eye was better trained than mine.

“What’s the matter with *you*?” he snarled at the man.

“Nothing, sir,” the fellow answered, stopping immediately.

“What’s your name?”

Mr. Pike never spoke to a sailor save with a snarl.

“Charles Davis, sir.”

“What are you limping about?”

"I ain't limpin', sir," the man answered respectfully, and, at a nod of dismissal from the mate, marched off jauntily along the deck with a heodlum swing to the shoulders.

"He's a sailor all right," the mate grumbled; "but I'll bet you a pound of tobacco or a month's wages there's something wrong with him."

The forecastle now seemed empty, but the mate turned on the bosuns with his customary snarl.

"What in hell are you doing? Sleeping? Think this is a rest cure? Get in there an' rustle 'em out!"

Sundry Buyers pressed his abdomen gingerly and hesitated, while Nancy, his face one dogged, long-suffering bleakness, reluctantly entered the forecastle. Then, from inside, we heard oaths, vile and filthy, urgings and expostulations on the part of Nancy, meekly and pleadingly uttered.

I noted the grim and savage look that came on Mr. Pike's face, and was prepared for I knew not what awful monstrosities to emerge from the forecastle. Instead, to my surprise, came three fellows who were strikingly superior to the ruck that had preceded them. I looked to see the mate's face soften to some sort of approval. On the contrary, his blue eyes contracted to narrow slits, the snarl of his voice was communicated to his lips, so that he seemed like a dog about to bite.

But the three fellows. They were small men, all; and young men, anywhere between twenty-five and thirty. Though roughly dressed, they were well dressed, and under their clothes their bodily movements showed physical well-being. Their faces were keen cut, intelligent. And though I felt there was something queer about them, I could not divine what it was.

Here were no ill-fed, whiskey-poisoned men, such as the rest of the sailors, who, having drunk up their last pay-days, had starved ashore until they had received and drunk up their advance money for the present voyage. These three, on the other hand were supple and vigorous. Their movements were spontaneously quick and accurate. Perhaps it was the way they looked at me, with incurious yet calculating eyes that nothing escaped. They seemed so worldly wise, so indifferent, so sure of themselves. I was confident they were not sailors. Yet, as shore-dwellers, I could not place them. They were a type I had never encountered. Possibly I can give a better idea of them by describing what occurred.

As they passed before us they favoured Mr. Pike with the same indifferent, keen glances they gave me.

“What’s your name — you?” Mr. Pike barked at the first of the trio, evidently a hybrid Irish-Jew. Jewish his nose unmistakably was. Equally unmistakable was the Irish of his eyes, and jaw, and upper lip.

The three had immediately stopped, and, though they did not look directly at one another, they seemed to be holding a silent conference. Another of the trio, in whose veins ran God alone knows what Semitic, Babylonish and Latin strains, gave a warning signal. Oh, nothing so crass as a wink or a nod. I almost doubted that I had intercepted it, and yet I knew he had communicated a warning to his fellows. More a shade of expression that had crossed his eyes, or a glint in them of sudden light — or whatever it was, it carried the message.

“Murphy,” the other answered the mate.

“Sir!” Mr. Pike snarled at him.

Murphy shrugged his shoulders in token that he did not understand. It was the poise of the man, of the three of them, the cool poise that impressed me.

“When you address any officer on this ship you’ll say ‘sir,’” Mr. Pike explained, his voice as harsh as his face was forbidding. “Did you get *that*?”

“Yes . . . sir,” Murphy drawled with deliberate slowness. “I gotcha.”

“Sir!” Mr. Pike roared.

“Sir,” Murphy answered, so softly and carelessly that it irritated the mate to further bullyragging.

“Well, Murphy’s too long,” he announced. “Nosey’ll do you aboard this craft. Got *that*?”

“I gotcha . . . sir,” came the reply, insolent in its very softness and unconcern. “Nosey Murphy goes . . . sir.”

And then he laughed — the three of them laughed, if laughter it might be called that was laughter without sound or facial movement. The eyes alone laughed, mirthlessly and cold-bloodedly.

Certainly Mr. Pike was not enjoying himself with these baffling personalities. He turned upon the leader, the one who had given the warning and who looked the admixture of all that was Mediterranean and Semitic.

“What’s *your* name?”

“Bert Rhine . . . sir,” was the reply, in tones as soft and careless and silkily irritating as the other’s.

"And *you*?" — this to the remaining one, the youngest of the trio, a dark-eyed, olive-skinned fellow with a face most striking in its cameo-like beauty. American-born, I placed him, of immigrants from Southern Italy — from Naples, or even Sicily.

"Twist . . . sir," he answered, precisely in the same manner as the others.

"Too long," the mate sneered. "The Kid'll do you. Got *that*?"

"I gotcha . . . sir. Kid Twist'll do me . . . sir."

"Kid'll do!"

"Kid . . . sir."

And the three laughed their silent, mirthless laugh. By this time Mr. Pike was beside himself with a rage that could find no excuse for action.

"Now I'm going to tell you something, the bunch of you, for the good of your health." The mate's voice grated with the rage he was suppressing. "I know your kind. You're dirt. D'ye get *that*? You're dirt. And on this ship you'll be treated as dirt. You'll do your work like men, or I'll know the reason why. The first time one of you bats an eye, or even looks like batting an eye, he gets his. D'ye get that? Now get out. Get along for'ard to the windlass."

Mr. Pike turned on his heel, and I swung alongside of him as he moved aft.

"What do you make of them?" I queried.

"The limit," he grunted. "I know their kidney. They've done time, the three of them. They're just plain sweepings of hell — "

Here his speech was broken off by the spectacle that greeted him on Number Two hatch. Sprawled out on the hatch were five or six men, among them Larry, the tatterdemalion who had called him "old stiff" earlier in the afternoon. That Larry had not obeyed orders was patent, for he was sitting with his back propped against his sea-bag, which ought to have been in the forecastle. Also, he and the group with him ought to have been for'ard manning the windlass.

The mate stepped upon the hatch and towered over the man.

"Get up," he ordered.

Larry made an effort, groaned, and failed to get up.

"I can't," he said.

"Sir!"

"I can't, sir. I was drunk last night an' slept in Jefferson Market. An' this mornin' I was froze tight, sir. They had to pry me loose."

"Stiff with the cold you were, eh?" the mate grinned.

"It's well ye might say it, sir," Larry answered.

"And you feel like an old stiff, eh?"

Larry blinked with the troubled, querulous eyes of a monkey. He was beginning to apprehend he knew not what, and he knew that bending over him was a man-master.

"Well, I'll just be showin' you what an old stiff feels like, anyways." Mr. Pike mimicked the other's brogue.

And now I shall tell what I saw happen. Please remember what I have said of the huge paws of Mr. Pike, the fingers much longer than mine and twice as thick, the wrists massive-boned, the arm-bones and the shoulder-bones of the same massive order. With one flip of his right hand, with what I might call an open-handed, lifting, upward slap, save that it was the ends of the fingers only that touched Larry's face, he lifted Larry into the air, sprawling him backward on his back across his sea-bag.

The man alongside of Larry emitted a menacing growl and started to spring belligerently to his feet. But he never reached his feet. Mr. Pike, with the back of same right hand, open, smote the man on the side of the face. The loud smack of the impact was startling. The mate's strength was amazing. The blow looked so easy, so effortless; it had seemed like the lazy stroke of a good-natured bear, but in it was such a weight of bone and muscle that the man went down sidewise and rolled off the hatch on to the deck.

At this moment, lurching aimlessly along, appeared O'Sullivan. A sudden access of muttering, on his part, reached Mr. Pike's ear, and Mr. Pike, instantly keen as a wild animal, his paw in the act of striking O'Sullivan, whipped out like a revolver shot, "What's that?" Then he noted the sense-struck face of O'Sullivan and withheld the blow. "Bug-house," Mr. Pike commented.

Involuntarily I had glanced to see if Captain West was on the poop, and found that we were hidden from the poop by the 'midship house.

Mr. Pike, taking no notice of the man who lay groaning on the deck, stood over Larry, who was likewise groaning. The rest of the sprawling men were on their feet, subdued and respectful. I, too, was respectful of this terrific, aged figure of a man. The exhibition had quite convinced me of the verity of his earlier driving and killing days.

"Who's the old stiff now?" he demanded.

“’Tis me, sir,” Larry moaned contritely.

“Get up!”

Larry got up without any difficulty at all.

“Now get for’ard to the windlass! The rest of you!”

And they went, sullenly, shamblingly, like the cowed brutes they were.

CHAPTER VI

I climbed the ladder on the side of the for'ard house (which house contained, as I discovered, the forecastle, the galley, and the donkey-engine room), and went part way along the bridge to a position by the foremast, where I could observe the crew heaving up anchor. The *Britannia* was alongside, and we were getting under way.

A considerable body of men was walking around with the windlass or variously engaged on the forecastle-head. Of the crew proper were two watches of fifteen men each. In addition were sailmakers, boys, bosuns, and the carpenter. Nearly forty men were they, but such men! They were sad and lifeless. There was no vim, no go, no activity. Every step and movement was an effort, as if they were dead men raised out of coffins or sick men dragged from hospital beds. Sick they were — whiskey-poisoned. Starved they were, and weak from poor nutrition. And worst of all, they were imbecile and lunatic.

I looked aloft at the intricate ropes, at the steel masts rising and carrying huge yards of steel, rising higher and higher, until steel masts and yards gave way to slender spars of wood, while ropes and stays turned into a delicate tracery of spider-thread against the sky. That such a wretched muck of men should be able to work this magnificent ship through all storm and darkness and peril of the sea was beyond all seeming. I remembered the two mates, the super-efficiency, mental and physical, of Mr. Mellaire and Mr. Pike — could they make this human wreckage do it? They, at least, evinced no doubts of their ability. The sea? If this feat of mastery were possible, then clear it was that I knew nothing of the sea.

I looked back at the misshapen, starved, sick, stumbling hulks of men who trod the dreary round of the windlass. Mr. Pike was right. These were not the brisk, devilish, able-bodied men who manned the ships of the old clipper-ship days; who fought their officers, who had the points of their sheath-knives broken off, who killed and were killed, but who did their work as men. These men, these shambling carcasses at the windlass — I looked, and looked, and vainly I strove to conjure the vision of them swinging aloft in rack and storm, "clearing the raffle," as Kipling puts it, "with their clasp knives in their teeth." Why didn't they sing a chanty as they hove the anchor up? In the old days, as I had read, the anchor always came up to the rollicking sailor songs of sea-chested men.

I tired of watching the spiritless performance, and went aft on an exploring trip along the slender bridge. It was a beautiful structure, strong yet light, traversing the length of the ship in three aerial leaps. It spanned from the forecastle-head to the forecastle-house, next to the ’midship house, and then to the poop. The poop, which was really the roof or deck over all the cabin space below, and which occupied the whole after-part of the ship, was very large. It was broken only by the half-round and half-covered wheel-house at the very stern and by the chart-house. On either side of the latter two doors opened into a tiny hallway. This, in turn, gave access to the chart-room and to a stairway that led down into the cabin quarters beneath.

I peeped into the chart-room and was greeted with a smile by Captain West. He was lolling back comfortably in a swing chair, his feet cocked on the desk opposite. On a broad, upholstered couch sat the pilot. Both were smoking cigars; and, lingering for a moment to listen to the conversation, I grasped that the pilot was an ex-sea-captain.

As I descended the stairs, from Miss West’s room came a sound of humming and bustling, as she settled her belongings. The energy she displayed, to judge by the cheerful noises of it, was almost perturbing.

Passing by the pantry, I put my head inside the door to greet the steward and courteously let him know that I was aware of his existence. Here, in his little realm, it was plain that efficiency reigned. Everything was spotless and in order, and I could have wished and wished vainly for a more noiseless servant than he ashore. His face, as he regarded me, had as little or as much expression as the Sphinx. But his slant, black eyes were bright, with intelligence.

“What do you think of the crew?” I asked, in order to put words to my invasion of his castle.

“Buggy-house,” he answered promptly, with a disgusted shake of the head. “Too much buggy-house. All crazy. You see. No good. Rotten. Down to hell.”

That was all, but it verified my own judgment. While it might be true, as Miss West had said, that every ship’s crew contained several lunatics and idiots, it was a foregone conclusion that our crew contained far more than several. In fact, and as it was to turn out, our crew, even in these degenerate sailing days, was an unusual crew in so far as its helplessness and worthlessness were beyond the average.

I found my own room (in reality it was two rooms) delightful. Wada had unpacked and stored away my entire outfit of clothing, and had filled numerous shelves with the library I had brought along. Everything was in order and place, from my shaving outfit in the drawer beside the wash-basin, and my sea-boots and oilskins hung ready to hand, to my writing materials on the desk, before which a swing arm-chair, leather-upholstered and screwed solidly to the floor, invited me. My pyjamas and dressing-gown were out. My slippers, in their accustomed place by the bed, also invited me.

Here, aft, all was fitness, intelligence. On deck it was what I have described — a nightmare spawn of creatures, assumably human, but malformed, mentally and physically, into caricatures of men. Yes, it was an unusual crew; and that Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire could whip it into the efficient shape necessary to work this vast and intricate and beautiful fabric of a ship was beyond all seeming of possibility.

Depressed as I was by what I had just witnessed on deck, there came to me, as I leaned back in my chair and opened the second volume of George Moore's *Hail and Farewell*, a premonition that the voyage was to be disastrous. But then, as I looked about the room, measured its generous space, realized that I was more comfortably situated than I had ever been on any passenger steamer, I dismissed foreboding thoughts and caught a pleasant vision of myself, through weeks and months, catching up with all the necessary reading which I had so long neglected.

Once, I asked Wada if he had seen the crew. No, he hadn't, but the steward had said that in all his years at sea this was the worst crew he had ever seen.

"He say, all crazy, no sailors, rotten," Wada said. "He say all big fools and bime by much trouble. 'You see,' he say all the time. 'You see, You see.' He pretty old man — fifty-five years, he say. Very smart man for Chinaman. Just now, first time for long time, he go to sea. Before, he have big business in San Francisco. Then he get much trouble — police. They say he opium smuggle. Oh, big, big trouble. But he catch good lawyer. He no go to jail. But long time lawyer work, and when trouble all finish lawyer got all his business, all his money, everything. Then he go to sea, like before. He make good money. He get sixty-five dollars a month on this ship. But he don’t like. Crew all crazy. When this time finish he leave ship, go back start business in San Francisco.”

Later, when I had Wada open one of the ports for ventilation, I could hear the gurgle and swish of water alongside, and I knew the anchor was up and that we were in the grip of the *Britannia*, towing down the Chesapeake to sea. The idea suggested itself that it was not too late. I could very easily abandon the adventure and return to Baltimore on the *Britannia* when she cast off the *Elsinore*. And then I heard a slight tinkling of china from the pantry as the steward proceeded to set the table, and, also, it was so warm and comfortable, and George Moore was so irritatingly fascinating.

CHAPTER VII

In every way dinner proved up beyond my expectations, and I registered a note that the cook, whoever or whatever he might be, was a capable man at his trade. Miss West served, and, though she and the steward were strangers, they worked together splendidly. I should have thought, from the smoothness of the service, that he was an old house servant who for years had known her every way.

The pilot ate in the chart-house, so that at table were the four of us that would always be at table together. Captain West and his daughter faced each other, while I, on the captain's right, faced Mr. Pike. This put Miss West across the corner on my right.

Mr. Pike, his dark sack coat (put on for the meal) bulging and wrinkling over the lumps of muscles that padded his stooped shoulders, had nothing at all to say. But he had eaten too many years at captains' tables not to have proper table manners. At first I thought he was abashed by Miss West's presence. Later, I decided it was due to the presence of the captain. For Captain West had a way with him that I was beginning to learn. Far removed as Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire were from the sailors, individuals as they were of an entirely different and superior breed, yet equally as different and far removed from his officers was Captain West. He was a serene and absolute aristocrat. He neither talked "ship" nor anything else to Mr. Pike.

On the other hand, Captain West's attitude toward me was that of a social equal. But then, I was a passenger. Miss West treated me the same way, but unbent more to Mr. Pike. And Mr. Pike, answering her with "Yes, Miss," and "No, Miss," ate good-manneredly and with his shaggy-browed gray eyes studied me across the table. I, too, studied him. Despite his violent past, killer and driver that he was, I could not help liking the man. He was honest, genuine. Almost more than for that, I liked him for the spontaneous boyish laugh he gave on the occasions when I reached the points of several funny stories. No man could laugh like that and be all bad. I was glad that it was he, and not Mr. Mellaire, who was to sit opposite throughout the voyage. And I was very glad that Mr. Mellaire was not to eat with us at all.

I am afraid that Miss West and I did most of the talking. She was breezy, vivacious, tonic, and I noted again that the delicate, almost fragile oval of her face was given the lie by her body. She was a robust, healthy young woman. That was undeniable. Not fat — heaven forbid! — not even plump; yet her lines had that swelling roundness that accompanies long, live muscles. She was full-bodied, vigorous; and yet not so full-bodied as she seemed. I remember with what surprise, when we arose from table, I noted her slender waist. At that moment I got the impression that she was willowy. And willowy she was, with a normal waist and with, in addition, always that informing bodily vigour that made her appear rounder and robuster than she really was.

It was the health of her that interested me. When I studied her face more closely I saw that only the lines of the oval of it were delicate. Delicate it was not, nor fragile. The flesh was firm, and the texture of the skin was firm and fine as it moved over the firm muscles of face and neck. The neck was a beautiful and adequate pillar of white. Its flesh was firm, its skin fine, and it was muscular. The hands, too, attracted me — not small, but well-shaped, fine, white and strong, and well cared for. I could only conclude that she was an unusual captain's daughter, just as her father was an unusual captain and man. And their noses were alike, just the hint-touch of the beak of power and race.

While Miss West was telling of the unexpectedness of the voyage, of how suddenly she had decided to come — she accounted for it as a whim — and while she told of all the complications she had encountered in her haste of preparation, I found myself casting up a tally of the efficient ones on board the *Elsinore*. They were Captain West and his daughter, the two mates, myself, of course, Wada and the steward, and, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the cook. The dinner vouched for him. Thus I found our total of efficients to be eight. But the cook, the steward, and Wada were servants, not sailors, while Miss West and myself were supernumeraries. Remained to work, direct, do, but three efficients out of a total ship's company of forty-five. I had no doubt that other efficients there were; it seemed impossible that my first impression of the crew should be correct. There was the carpenter. He might, at his trade, be as good as the cook. Then the two sailmakers, whom I had not yet seen, might prove up.

A little later during the meal I ventured to talk about what had interested me and aroused my admiration, namely, the masterfulness with which Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire had gripped hold of that woeful, worthless crew. It was all new to me, I explained, but I appreciated the need of it. As I led up to the occurrence on Number Two hatch, when Mr. Pike had lifted up Larry and toppled him back with a mere slap from the ends of his fingers, I saw in Mr. Pike's eyes a warning, almost threatening, expression. Nevertheless, I completed my description of the episode.

When I had quite finished there was a silence. Miss West was busy serving coffee from a copper percolator. Mr. Pike, profoundly occupied with cracking walnuts, could not quite hide the wicked, little, half-humorous, half-revengeful gleam in his eyes. But Captain West looked straight at me, but from oh! such a distance — millions and millions of miles away. His clear blue eyes were as serene as ever, his tones as low and soft.

"It is the one rule I ask to be observed, Mr. Pathurst — we never discuss the sailors."

It was a facer to me, and with quite a pronounced fellow-feeling for Larry I hurriedly added:

"It was not merely the discipline that interested me. It was the feat of strength."

"Sailors are trouble enough without our hearing about them, Mr. Pathurst," Captain West went on, as evenly and imperturbably as if I had not spoken. "I leave the handling of the sailors to my officers. That's their business, and they are quite aware that I tolerate no undeserved roughness or severity."

Mr. Pike's harsh face carried the faintest shadow of an amused grin as he stolidly regarded the tablecloth. I glanced to Miss West for sympathy. She laughed frankly, and said:

"You see, father never has any sailors. And it's a good plan, too."

"A very good plan," Mr. Pike muttered.

Then Miss West kindly led the talk away from that subject, and soon had us laughing with a spirited recital of a recent encounter of hers with a Boston cab-driver.

Dinner over, I stepped to my room in quest of cigarettes, and incidentally asked Wada about the cook. Wada was always a great gatherer of information.

"His name Louis," he said. "He Chinaman, too. No; only half Chinaman. Other half Englishman. You know one island Napoleon he stop long time and bime by die that island?"

"St. Helena," I prompted.

“Yes, that place Louis he born. He talk very good English.”

At this moment, entering the hall from the deck, Mr. Mellaire, just relieved by the mate, passed me on his way to the big room in the stern where the second table was set. His “Good evening, sir,” was as stately and courteous as any southern gentleman of the old days could have uttered it. And yet I could not like the man. His outward seeming was so at variance with the personality that resided within. Even as he spoke and smiled I felt that from inside his skull he was watching me, studying me. And somehow, in a flash of intuition, I knew not why, I was reminded of the three strange young men, routed last from the forecastle, to whom Mr. Pike had read the law. They, too, had given me a similar impression.

Behind Mr. Mellaire slouched a self-conscious, embarrassed individual, with the face of a stupid boy and the body of a giant. His feet were even larger than Mr. Pike’s, but the hands — I shot a quick glance to see — were not so large as Mr. Pike’s.

As they passed I looked inquiry to Wada.

“He carpenter. He sat second table. His name Sam Lavroff. He come from New York on ship. Steward say he very young for carpenter, maybe twenty-two, three years old.”

As I approached the open port over my desk I again heard the swish and gurgle of water and again realized that we were under way. So steady and noiseless was our progress, that, say seated at table, it never entered one’s head that we were moving or were anywhere save on the solid land. I had been used to steamers all my life, and it was difficult immediately to adjust myself to the absence of the propeller-thrust vibration.

“Well, what do you think?” I asked Wada, who, like myself, had never made a sailing-ship voyage.

He smiled politely.

“Very funny ship. Very funny sailors. I don’t know. Mebbe all right. We see.”

“You think trouble?” I asked pointedly.

“I think sailors very funny,” he evaded.

CHAPTER VIII

Having lighted my cigarette, I strolled for'ard along the deck to where work was going on. Above my head dim shapes of canvas showed in the starlight. Sail was being made, and being made slowly, as I might judge, who was only the veriest tyro in such matters. The indistinguishable shapes of men, in long lines, pulled on ropes. They pulled in sick and dogged silence, though Mr. Pike, ubiquitous, snarled out orders and rapped out oaths from every angle upon their miserable heads.

Certainly, from what I had read, no ship of the old days ever proceeded so sadly and blunderingly to sea. Ere long Mr. Mellaire joined Mr. Pike in the struggle of directing the men. It was not yet eight in the evening, and all hands were at work. They did not seem to know the ropes. Time and again, when the half-hearted suggestions of the bosuns had been of no avail, I saw one or the other of the mates leap to the rail and put the right rope in the hands of the men.

These, on the deck, I concluded, were the hopeless ones. Up aloft, from sounds and cries, I knew were other men, undoubtedly those who were at least a little seaman-like, loosing the sails.

But on deck! Twenty or thirty of the poor devils, tailed on a rope that hoisted a yard, would pull without concerted effort and with painfully slow movements. "Walk away with it!" Mr. Pike would yell. And perhaps for two or three yards they would manage to walk with the rope ere they came to a halt like stalled horses on a hill. And yet, did either of the mates spring in and add his strength, they were able to move right along the deck without stopping. Either of the mates, old men that they were, was muscularly worth half-a-dozen of the wretched creatures.

"This is what sailin's come to," Mr. Pike paused to snort in my ear. "This ain't the place for an officer down here pulling and hauling. But what can you do when the bosuns are worse than the men?"

"I thought sailors sang songs when they pulled," I said.

"Sure they do. Want to hear 'em?"

I knew there was malice of some sort in his voice, but I answered that I'd like to very much.

"Here, you bosun!" Mr. Pike snarled. "Wake up! Start a song! Topsail halyards!"

In the pause that followed I could have sworn that Sundry Buyers was pressing his hands against his abdomen, while Nancy, infinite bleakness freezing upon his face, was wetting his lips to begin.

Nancy it was who began, for from no other man, I was confident, could have issued so sepulchral a plaint. It was unmusical, unbeautiful, unlively, and indescribably doleful. Yet the words showed that it should have ripped and crackled with high spirits and lawlessness, for the words poor Nancy sang were:

“Away, way, way, yar,
We’ll kill Paddy Doyle for bus boots.”

“Quit it! Quit it!” Mr. Pike roared. “This ain’t a funeral! Ain’t there one of you that can sing? Come on, now! It’s a topsail-yard — ”

He broke off to leap in to the pin-rail and get the wrong ropes out of the men’s hands to put into them the right rope.

“Come on, bosun! Break her out!”

Then out of the gloom arose Sundry Buyers’ voice, cracked and crazy and even more lugubrious than Nancy’s:

“Then up aloft that yard must go,
Whiskey for my Johnny.”

The second line was supposed to be the chorus, but not more than two men feebly mumbled it. Sundry Buyers quavered the next line:

“Oh, whiskey killed my sister Sue.”

Then Mr. Pike took a hand, seizing the hauling-part next to the pin and lifting his voice with a rare snap and devilishness:

“And whiskey killed the old man, too,
Whiskey for my Johnny.”

He sang the devil-may-care lines on and on, lifting the crew to the work and to the chorused emphasis of “Whiskey for my Johnny.”

And to his voice they pulled, they moved, they sang, and were alive, until he interrupted the song to cry “Belay!”

And then all the life and lilt went out of them, and they were again maundering and futile things, getting in one another’s way, stumbling and shuffling through the darkness, hesitating to grasp ropes, and, when they did take hold, invariably taking hold of the wrong rope first. Skulkers there were among them, too; and once, from for’ard of the ’midship house, I heard smacks, and curses, and groans, and out of the darkness hurriedly emerged two men, on their heels Mr. Pike, who chanted a recital of the distressing things that would befall them if he caught them at such tricks again.

The whole thing was too depressing for me to care to watch further, so I strolled aft and climbed the poop. In the lee of the chart-house Captain West and the pilot were pacing slowly up and down. Passing on aft, I saw steering at the wheel the weazened little old man I had noted earlier in the day. In the light of the binnacle his small blue eyes looked more malevolent than ever. So weazened and tiny was he, and so large was the brass-studded wheel, that they seemed of a height. His face was withered, scorched, and wrinkled, and in all seeming he was fifty years older than Mr. Pike. He was the most remarkable figure of a burnt-out, aged man one would expect to find able seaman on one of the proudest sailing-ships afloat. Later, through Wada, I was to learn that his name was Andy Fay and that he claimed no more years than sixty-three.

I leaned against the rail in the lee of the wheel-house, and stared up at the lofty spars and myriad ropes that I could guess were there. No, I decided I was not keen on the voyage. The whole atmosphere of it was wrong. There were the cold hours I had waited on the pier-ends. There was Miss West coming along. There was the crew of broken men and lunatics. I wondered if the wounded Greek in the ’midship house still gibbered, and if Mr. Pike had yet sewed him up; and I was quite sure I would not care to witness such a transaction in surgery.

Even Wada, who had never been in a sailing-ship, had his doubts of the voyage. So had the steward, who had spent most of a life-time in sailing-ships. So far as Captain West was concerned, crews did not exist. And as for Miss West, she was so abominably robust that she could not be anything else than an optimist in such matters. She had always lived; her red blood sang to her only that she would always live and that nothing evil would ever happen to her glorious personality.

Oh, trust me, I knew the way of red blood. Such was my condition that the red-blood health of Miss West was virtually an affront to me — for I knew how unthinking and immoderate such blood could be. And for five months at least — there was Mr. Pike’s offered wager of a pound of tobacco or a month’s wages to that effect — I was to be pent on the same ship with her. As sure as cosmic sap was cosmic sap, just that sure was I that ere the voyage was over I should be pestered by her making love to me. Please do not mistake me. My certainty in this matter was due, not to any exalted sense of my own desirableness to women, but to my anything but exalted concept of women as instinctive huntresses of men. In my experience women hunted men with quite the same blind tropism that marks the pursuit of the sun by the sunflower, the pursuit of attachable surfaces by the tendrils of the grapevine.

Call me blasé — I do not mind, if by blasé is meant the world-weariness, intellectual, artistic, sensational, which can come to a young man of thirty. For I was thirty, and I was weary of all these things — weary and in doubt. It was because of this state that I was undertaking the voyage. I wanted to get away by myself, to get away from all these things, and, with proper perspective, mull the matter over.

It sometimes seemed to me that the culmination of this world-sickness had been brought about by the success of my play — my first play, as every one knows. But it had been such a success that it raised the doubt in my own mind, just as the success of my several volumes of verse had raised doubts. Was the public right? Were the critics right? Surely the function of the artist was to voice life, yet what did I know of life?

So you begin to glimpse what I mean by the world-sickness that afflicted me. Really, I had been, and was, very sick. Mad thoughts of isolating myself entirely from the world had hounded me. I had even canvassed the idea of going to Molokai and devoting the rest of my years to the lepers — I, who was thirty years old, and healthy and strong, who had no particular tragedy, who had a bigger income than I knew how to spend, who by my own achievement had put my name on the lips of men and proved myself a power to be reckoned with — I was that mad that I had considered the lazar house for a destiny.

Perhaps it will be suggested that success had turned my head. Very well. Granted. But the turned head remains a fact, an incontrovertible fact — my sickness, if you will, and a real sickness, and a fact. This I knew: I had reached an intellectual and artistic climacteric, a life-climacteric of some sort. And I had diagnosed my own case and prescribed this voyage. And here was the atrociously healthy and profoundly feminine Miss West along — the very last ingredient I would have considered introducing into my prescription.

A woman! Woman! Heaven knows I had been sufficiently tormented by their persecutions to know them. I leave it to you: thirty years of age, not entirely unhandsome, an intellectual and artistic place in the world, and an income most dazzling — why shouldn’t women pursue me? They would have pursued me had I been a hunchback, for the sake of my artistic place alone, for the sake of my income alone.

Yes; and love! Did I not know love — lyric, passionate, mad, romantic love? That, too, was of old time with me. I, too, had throbbed and sung and sobbed and sighed — yes, and known grief, and buried my dead. But it was so long ago. How young I was — turned twenty-four! And after that I had learned the bitter lesson that even deathless grief may die; and I had laughed again and done my share of philandering with the pretty, ferocious moths that fluttered around the light of my fortune and artistry; and after that, in turn, I had retired disgusted from the lists of woman, and gone on long lance-breaking adventures in the realm of mind. And here I was, on board the *Elsinore*, unhorsed by my encounters with the problems of the ultimate, carried off the field with a broken pate.

As I leaned against the rail, dismissing premonitions of disaster, I could not help thinking of Miss West below, bustling and humming as she made her little nest. And from her my thought drifted on to the everlasting mystery of woman. Yes, I, with all the futuristic contempt for woman, am ever caught up afresh by the mystery of woman.

Oh, no illusions, thank you. Woman, the love-seeker, obsessing and possessing, fragile and fierce, soft and venomous, prouder than Lucifer and as prideless, holds a perpetual, almost morbid, attraction for the thinker. What is this flame of her, blazing through all her contradictions and ignobilities? — this ruthless passion for life, always for life, more life on the planet? At times it seems to me brazen, and awful, and soulless. At times I am made petulant by it. And at other times I am swayed by the sublimity of it. No; there is no escape from woman. Always, as a savage returns to a dark glen where goblins are and gods may be, so do I return to the contemplation of woman.

Mr. Pike’s voice interrupted my musings. From for’ard, on the main deck, I heard him snarl:

“On the main-topsail-yard, there! — if you cut that gasket I’ll split your damned skull!”

Again he called, with a marked change of voice, and the Henry he called to I concluded was the training-ship boy.

“You, Henry, main-skysail-yard, there!” he cried. “Don’t make those gaskets up! Fetch ’em in along the yard and make fast to the tye!”

Thus routed from my reverie, I decided to go below to bed. As my hand went out to the knob of the chart-house door again the mate's voice rang out:

"Come on, you gentlemen's sons in disguise! Wake up! Lively now!"

CHAPTER IX

I did not sleep well. To begin with, I read late. Not till two in the morning did I reach up and turn out the kerosene reading-lamp which Wada had purchased and installed for me. I was asleep immediately — perfect sleep being perhaps my greatest gift; but almost immediately I was awake again. And thereafter, with dozings and cat-naps and restless tossings, I struggled to win to sleep, then gave it up. For of all things, in my state of jangled nerves, to be afflicted with hives! And still again, to be afflicted with hives in cold winter weather!

At four I lighted up and went to reading, forgetting my irritated skin in Vernon Lee's delightful screed against William James, and his "will to believe." I was on the weather side of the ship, and from overhead, through the deck, came the steady footfalls of some officer on watch. I knew that they were not the steps of Mr. Pike, and wondered whether they were Mr. Mellaire's or the pilot's. Somebody above there was awake. The work was going on, the vigilant seeing and overseeing, that, I could plainly conclude, would go on through every hour of all the hours on the voyage.

At half-past four I heard the steward's alarm go off, instantly suppressed, and five minutes later I lifted my hand to motion him in through my open door. What I desired was a cup of coffee, and Wada had been with me through too many years for me to doubt that he had given the steward precise instructions and turned over to him my coffee and my coffee-making apparatus.

The steward was a jewel. In ten minutes he served me with a perfect cup of coffee. I read on until daylight, and half-past eight found me, breakfast in bed finished, dressed and shaved, and on deck. We were still towing, but all sails were set to a light favouring breeze from the north. In the chart-room Captain West and the pilot were smoking cigars. At the wheel I noted what I decided at once was an efficient. He was not a large man; if anything he was undersized. But his countenance was broad-browed and intelligently formed. Tom, I later learned, was his name — Tom Spink, an Englishman. He was blue-eyed, fair-skinned, well-grizzled, and, to the eye, a hale fifty years of age. His reply of "Good morning, sir" was cheery, and he smiled as he uttered the simple phrase. He did not look sailor-like, as did Henry, the training-ship boy; and yet I felt at once that he was a sailor, and an able one.

It was Mr. Pike's watch, and on asking him about Tom he grudgingly admitted that the man was the "best of the boiling."

Miss West emerged from the chart-house, with a rosy morning face and her vital, springy limb-movement, and immediately began establishing her contacts. On asking how I had slept, and when I said wretchedly, she demanded an explanation. I told her of my affliction of hives and showed her the lumps on my wrists.

"Your blood needs thinning and cooling," she adjudged promptly. "Wait a minute. I'll see what can be done for you."

And with that she was away and below and back in a trice, in her hand a part glass of water into which she stirred a teaspoonful of cream of tartar.

"Drink it," she ordered, as a matter of course.

I drank it. And at eleven in the morning she came up to my deck-chair with a second dose of the stuff. Also she reproached me soundly for permitting Wada to feed meat to Possum. It was from her that Wada and I learned how mortal a sin it was to give meat to a young puppy. Furthermore, she laid down the law and the diet for Possum, not alone to me and Wada, but to the steward, the carpenter, and Mr. Mellaire. Of the latter two, because they ate by themselves in the big after-room and because Possum played there, she was especially suspicious; and she was outspoken in voicing her suspicions to their faces. The carpenter mumbled embarrassed asseverations in broken English of past, present, and future innocence, the while he humbly scraped and shuffled before her on his huge feet. Mr. Mellaire's protestations were of the same nature, save that they were made with the grace and suavity of a Chesterfield.

In short, Possum's diet raised quite a tempest in the *Elsinore* teapot, and by the time it was over Miss West had established this particular contact with me and given me a feeling that we were the mutual owners of the puppy. I noticed, later in the day, that it was to Miss West that Wada went for instructions as to the quantity of warm water he must use to dilute Possum's condensed milk.

Lunch won my continued approbation of the cook. In the afternoon I made a trip for'ard to the galley to make his acquaintance. To all intents he was a Chinese, until he spoke, whereupon, measured by speech alone, he was an Englishman. In fact, so cultured was his speech that I can fairly say it was vested with an Oxford accent. He, too, was old, fully sixty — he acknowledged fifty-nine. Three things about him were markedly conspicuous: his smile, that embraced all of his clean-shaven Asiatic face and Asiatic eyes; his even-rowed, white, and perfect teeth, which I deemed false until Wada ascertained otherwise for me; and his hands and feet. It was his hands, ridiculously small and beautifully modelled, that led my scrutiny to his feet. They, too, were ridiculously small and very neatly, almost dandifiedly, shod.

We had put the pilot off at midday, but the *Britannia* towed us well into the afternoon and did not cast us off until the ocean was wide about us and the land a faint blur on the western horizon. Here, at the moment of leaving the tug, we made our "departure" — that is to say, technically began the voyage, despite the fact that we had already travelled a full twenty-four hours away from Baltimore.

It was about the time of casting off, when I was leaning on the poop-rail gazing for'ard, when Miss West joined me. She had been busy below all day, and had just come up, as she put it, for a breath of air. She surveyed the sky in weather-wise fashion for a full five minutes, then remarked:

"The barometer's very high — 30 degrees 60. This light north wind won't last. It will either go into a calm or work around into a north-east gale."

"Which would you prefer?" I asked.

"The gale, by all means. It will help us off the land, and it will put me through my torment of sea-sickness more quickly. Oh, yes," she added, "I'm a good sailor, but I do suffer dreadfully at the beginning of every voyage. You probably won't see me for a couple of days now. That's why I've been so busy getting settled first."

"Lord Nelson, I have read, never got over his squeamishness at sea," I said.

"And I've seen father sea-sick on occasion," she answered. "Yes, and some of the strongest, hardest sailors I have ever known."

Mr. Pike here joined us for a moment, ceasing from his everlasting pacing up and down to lean with us on the poop-rail.

Many of the crew were in evidence, pulling on ropes on the main deck below us. To my inexperienced eye they appeared more unprepossessing than ever.

"A pretty scraggly crew, Mr. Pike," Miss West remarked.

"The worst ever," he growled, "and I've seen some pretty bad ones. We're teachin' them the ropes just now — most of 'em."

"They look starved," I commented.

"They are, they almost always are," Miss West answered, and her eyes roved over them in the same appraising, cattle-buyer's fashion I had marked in Mr. Pike. "But they'll fatten up with regular hours, no whiskey, and solid food — won't they, Mr. Pike?"

"Oh, sure. They always do. And you'll see them liven up when we get 'em in hand . . . maybe. They're a measly lot, though."

I looked aloft at the vast towers of canvas. Our four masts seemed to have flowered into all the sails possible, yet the sailors beneath us, under Mr. Mellaire's direction, were setting triangular sails, like jibs, between the masts, and there were so many that they overlapped one another. The slowness and clumsiness with which the men handled these small sails led me to ask:

"But what would you do, Mr. Pike, with a green crew like this, if you were caught right now in a storm with all this canvas spread?"

He shrugged his shoulders, as if I had asked what he would do in an earthquake with two rows of New York skyscrapers falling on his head from both sides of a street.

"Do?" Miss West answered for him. "We'd get the sail off. Oh, it can be done, Mr. Pathurst, with any kind of a crew. If it couldn't, I should have been drowned long ago."

"Sure," Mr. Pike upheld her. "So would I."

"The officers can perform miracles with the most worthless sailors, in a pinch," Miss West went on.

Again Mr. Pike nodded his head and agreed, and I noted his two big paws, relaxed the moment before and drooping over the rail, quite unconsciously tensed and folded themselves into fists. Also, I noted fresh abrasions on the knuckles. Miss West laughed heartily, as from some recollection.

"I remember one time when we sailed from San Francisco with a most hopeless crew. It was in the *Lallah Rookh* — you remember her, Mr. Pike?"

"Your father's fifth command," he nodded. "Lost on the West Coast afterwards — went ashore in that big earthquake and tidal wave. Parted her anchors, and when she hit under the cliff, the cliff fell on her."

"That's the ship. Well, our crew seemed mostly cow-boys, and bricklayers, and tramps, and more tramps than anything else. Where the boarding-house masters got them was beyond imagining. A number of them were shanghaied, that was certain. You should have seen them when they were first sent aloft." Again she laughed. "It was better than circus clowns. And scarcely had the tug cast us off, outside the Heads, when it began to blow up and we began to shorten down. And then our mates performed miracles. You remember Mr. Harding — Silas Harding?"

"Don't I though!" Mr. Pike proclaimed enthusiastically. "He was some man, and he must have been an old man even then."

"He was, and a terrible man," she concurred, and added, almost reverently: "And a wonderful man." She turned her face to me. "He was our mate. The men were sea-sick and miserable and green. But Mr. Harding got the sail off the *Lallah Rookh* just the same. What I wanted to tell you was this:

"I was on the poop, just like I am now, and Mr. Harding had a lot of those miserable sick men putting gaskets on the main-lower-topsail. How far would that be above the deck, Mr. Pike?"

"Let me see . . . the *Lallah Rookh*." Mr. Pike paused to consider. "Oh, say around a hundred feet."

"I saw it myself. One of the green hands, a tramp — and he must already have got a taste of Mr. Harding — fell off the lower-topsail-yard. I was only a little girl, but it looked like certain death, for he was falling from the weather side of the yard straight down on deck. But he fell into the belly of the mainsail, breaking his fall, turned a somersault, and landed on his feet on deck and unhurt. And he landed right alongside of Mr. Harding, facing him. I don't know which was the more astonished, but I think Mr. Harding was, for he stood there petrified. He had expected the man to be killed. Not so the man. He took one look at Mr. Harding, then made a wild jump for the rigging and climbed right back up to that topsail-yard."

Miss West and the mate laughed so heartily that they scarcely heard me say:

"Astonishing! Think of the jar to the man's nerves, falling to apparent death that way."

"He'd been jarred harder by Silas Harding, I guess," was Mr. Pike's remark, with another burst of laughter, in which Miss West joined.

Which was all very well in a way. Ships were ships, and judging by what I had seen of our present crew harsh treatment was necessary. But that a young woman of the niceness of Miss West should know of such things and be so saturated in this side of ship life was not nice. It was not nice for me, though it interested me, I confess, — and strengthened my grip on reality. Yet it meant a hardening of one's fibres, and I did not like to think of Miss West being so hardened.

I looked at her and could not help marking again the fineness and firmness of her skin. Her hair was dark, as were her eyebrows, which were almost straight and rather low over her long eyes. Gray her eyes were, a warm gray, and very steady and direct in expression, intelligent and alive. Perhaps, taking her face as a whole, the most noteworthy expression of it was a great calm. She seemed always in repose, at peace with herself and with the external world. The most beautiful feature was her eyes, framed in lashes as dark as her brows and hair. The most admirable feature was her nose, quite straight, very straight, and just the slightest trifle too long. In this it was reminiscent of her father's nose. But the perfect modelling of the bridge and nostrils conveyed an indescribable advertisement of race and blood.

Hers was a slender-lipped, sensitive, sensible, and generous mouth — generous, not so much in size, which was quite average, but generous rather in tolerance, in power, and in laughter. All the health and buoyancy of her was in her mouth, as well as in her eyes. She rarely exposed her teeth in smiling, for which purpose she seemed chiefly to employ her eyes; but when she laughed she showed strong white teeth, even, not babyish in their smallness, but just the firm, sensible, normal size one would expect in a woman as healthy and normal as she.

I would never have called her beautiful, and yet she possessed many of the factors that go to compose feminine beauty. She had all the beauty of colouring, a white skin that was healthy white and that was emphasized by the darkness of her lashes, brows, and hair. And, in the same way, the darkness of lashes and brows and the whiteness of skin set off the warm gray of her eyes. The forehead was, well, medium-broad and medium high, and quite smooth. No lines nor hints of lines were there, suggestive of nervousness, of blue days of depression and white nights of insomnia. Oh, she bore all the marks of the healthy, human female, who never worried nor was vexed in the spirit of her, and in whose body every process and function was frictionless and automatic.

"Miss West has posed to me as quite a weather prophet," I said to the mate. "Now what is your forecast of our coming weather?"

"She ought to be," was Mr. Pike's reply as he lifted his glance across the smooth swell of sea to the sky. "This ain't the first time she's been on the North Atlantic in winter." He debated a moment, as he studied the sea and sky. "I should say, considering the high barometer, we ought to get a mild gale from the north-east or a calm, with the chances in favour of the calm."

She favoured me with a triumphant smile, and suddenly clutched the rail as the *Elsinore* lifted on an unusually large swell and sank into the trough with a roll from windward that flapped all the sails in hollow thunder.

"The calm has it," Miss West said, with just a hint of grimness. "And if this keeps up I'll be in my bunk in about five minutes."

She waved aside all sympathy. "Oh, don't bother about me, Mr. Pathurst. Sea-sickness is only detestable and horrid, like sleet, and muddy weather, and poison ivy; besides, I'd rather be sea-sick than have the hives."

Something went wrong with the men below us on the deck, some stupidity or blunder that was made aware to us by Mr. Mellaire's raised voice. Like Mr. Pike, he had a way of snarling at the sailors that was distinctly unpleasant to the ear.

On the faces of several of the sailors bruises were in evidence. One, in particular, had an eye so swollen that it was closed.

"Looks as if he had run against a stanchion in the dark," I observed.

Most eloquent, and most unconscious, was the quick flash of Miss West's eyes to Mr. Pike's big paws, with freshly abraded knuckles, resting on the rail. It was a stab of hurt to me. *She knew*.

CHAPTER X

That evening the three men of us had dinner alone, with racks on the table, while the *Elsinore* rolled in the calm that had sent Miss West to her room.

"You won't see her for a couple of days," Captain West told me. "Her mother was the same way — a born sailor, but always sick at the outset of a voyage."

"It's the shaking down." Mr. Pike astonished me with the longest observation I had yet heard him utter at table. "Everybody has to shake down when they leave the land. We've got to forget the good times on shore, and the good things money'll buy, and start watch and watch, four hours on deck and four below. And it comes hard, and all our tempers are strung until we can make the change. Did it happen that you heard Caruso and Blanche Arral this winter in New York, Mr. Pathurst?"

I nodded, still marvelling over this spate of speech at table.

"Well, think of hearing them, and Homer, and Witherspoon, and Amato, every night for nights and nights at the Metropolitan; and then to give it the go-by, and get to sea and shake down to watch and watch."

"You don't like the sea?" I queried.

He sighed.

"I don't know. But of course the sea is all I know — "

"Except music," I threw in.

"Yes, but the sea and all the long-voyaging has cheated me out of most of the music I oughta have had coming to me."

"I suppose you've heard Schumann Heink?"

"Wonderful, wonderful!" he murmured fervently, then regarded me with an eager wistfulness. "I've half-a-dozen of her records, and I've got the second dog-watch below. If Captain West don't mind . . . " (Captain West nodded that he didn't mind). "And if you'd want to hear them? The machine is a good one."

And then, to my amazement, when the steward had cleared the table, this hoary old relic of man-killing and man-driving days, battered waif of the sea that he was, carried in from his room a most splendid collection of phonograph records. These, and the machine, he placed on the table. The big doors were opened, making the dining-room and the main cabin into one large room. It was in the cabin that Captain West and I lolled in big leather chairs while Mr. Pike ran the phonograph. His face was in a blaze of light from the swinging lamps, and every shade of expression was visible to me.

In vain I waited for him to start some popular song. His records were only of the best, and the care he took of them was a revelation. He handled each one reverently, as a sacred thing, untying and unwrapping it and brushing it with a fine camel's hair brush while it revolved and ere he placed the needle on it. For a time all I could see was the huge brute hands of a brute-driver, with skin off the knuckles, that expressed love in their every movement. Each touch on the discs was a caress, and while the record played he hovered over it and dreamed in some heaven of music all his own.

During this time Captain West lay back and smoked a cigar. His face was expressionless, and he seemed very far away, untouched by the music. I almost doubted that he heard it. He made no remarks between whiles, betrayed no sign of approbation or displeasure. He seemed preternaturally serene, preternaturally remote. And while I watched him I wondered what his duties were. I had not seen him perform any. Mr. Pike had attended to the loading of the ship. Not until she was ready for sea had Captain West come on board. I had not seen him give an order. It looked to me that Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire did the work. All Captain West did was to smoke cigars and keep blissfully oblivious of the *Elsinore's* crew.

When Mr. Pike had played the "Hallelujah Chorus" from the *Messiah*, and "He Shall Feed His Flock," he mentioned to me, almost apologetically, that he liked sacred music, and for the reason, perhaps, that for a short period, a child ashore in San Francisco, he had been a choir boy.

"And then I hit the dominie over the head with a baseball bat and sneaked off to sea again," he concluded with a harsh laugh.

And thereat he fell to dreaming while he played Meyerbeer's "King of Heaven," and Mendelssohn's "O Rest in the Lord."

When one bell struck, at quarter to eight, he carried his music, all carefully wrapped, back into his room. I lingered with him while he rolled a cigarette ere eight bells struck.

"I've got a lot more good things," he said confidentially: "Coenen's 'Come Unto Me,' and Faure's 'Crucifix'; and there's 'O Salutaris,' and 'Lead, Kindly Light' by the Trinity Choir; and 'Jesu, Lover of My Soul' would just melt your heart. I'll play 'em for you some night."

“Do you believe in them?” I was led to ask by his rapt expression and by the picture of his brute-driving hands which I could not shake from my consciousness.

He hesitated perceptibly, then replied:

“I do . . . when I’m listening to them.”

* * * * *

My sleep that night was wretched. Short of sleep from the previous night, I closed my book and turned my light off early. But scarcely had I dropped into slumber when I was aroused by the recrudescence of my hives. All day they had not bothered me; yet the instant I put out the light and slept, the damnable persistent itching set up. Wada had not yet gone to bed, and from him I got more cream of tartar. It was useless, however, and at midnight, when I heard the watch changing, I partially dressed, slipped into my dressing-gown, and went up on to the poop.

I saw Mr. Mellaire beginning his four hours’ watch, pacing up and down the port side of the poop; and I slipped away aft, past the man at the wheel, whom I did not recognize, and took refuge in the lee of the wheel-house.

Once again I studied the dim loom and tracery of intricate rigging and lofty, sail-carrying spars, thought of the mad, imbecile crew, and experienced premonitions of disaster. How could such a voyage be possible, with such a crew, on the huge *Elsinore*, a cargo-carrier that was only a steel shell half an inch thick burdened with five thousand tons of coal? It was appalling to contemplate. The voyage had gone wrong from the first. In the wretched unbalance that loss of sleep brings to any good sleeper, I could decide only that the voyage was doomed. Yet how doomed it was, in truth, neither I nor a madman could have dreamed.

I thought of the red-blooded Miss West, who had always lived and had no doubts but what she would always live. I thought of the killing and driving and music-loving Mr. Pike. Many a haler remnant than he had gone down on a last voyage. As for Captain West, he did not count. He was too neutral a being, too far away, a sort of favoured passenger who had nothing to do but serenely and passively exist in some Nirvana of his own creating.

Next I remembered the self-wounded Greek, sewed up by Mr. Pike and lying gibbering between the steel walls of the ’midship-house. This picture almost decided me, for in my fevered imagination he typified the whole mad, helpless, idiotic crew. Certainly I could go back to Baltimore. Thank God I had the money to humour my whims. Had not Mr. Pike told me, in reply to a question, that he estimated the running expenses of the *Elsinore* at two hundred dollars a day? I could afford to pay two hundred a day, or two thousand, for the several days that might be necessary to get me back to the land, to a pilot tug, or any inbound craft to Baltimore.

I was quite wholly of a mind to go down and rout out Captain West to tell him my decision, when another presented itself: *Then are you*, *the thinker and philosopher*, *the world-sick one*, *afraid to go down*, *to cease in the darkness*? Bah! My own pride in my life-pridelessness saved Captain West's sleep from interruption. Of course I would go on with the adventure, if adventure it might be called, to go sailing around Cape Horn with a shipload of fools and lunatics — and worse; for I remembered the three Babylonish and Semitic ones who had aroused Mr. Pike's ire and who had laughed so terribly and silently.

Night thoughts! Sleepless thoughts! I dismissed them all and started below, chilled through by the cold. But at the chart-room door I encountered Mr. Mellaire.

"A pleasant evening, sir," he greeted me. "A pity there's not a little wind to help us off the land."

"What do you think of the crew?" I asked, after a moment or so.

Mr. Mellaire shrugged his shoulders.

"I've seen many queer crews in my time, Mr. Pathurst. But I never saw one as queer as this — boys, old men, cripples and — you saw Tony the Greek go overboard yesterday? Well, that's only the beginning. He's a sample. I've got a big Irishman in my watch who's going bad. Did you notice a little, dried-up Scotchman?"

"Who looks mean and angry all the time, and who was steering the evening before last?"

"The very one — Andy Fay. Well, Andy Fay's just been complaining to me about O'Sullivan. Says O'Sullivan's threatened his life. When Andy Fay went off watch at eight he found O'Sullivan stropping a razor. I'll give you the conversation as Andy gave it to me:

"'Says O'Sullivan to me, "Mr. Fay, I'll have a word wid yeh?" "Certainly," says I; "what can I do for you?" "Sell me your sea-boots, Mr. Fay," says O'Sullivan, polite as can be. "But what will you be wantin' of them?" says I. "'Twill be a great favour," says O'Sullivan. "But it's my only pair," says I; "and you have a pair of your own," says I. "Mr. Fay, I'll be needin' me own in bad weather," says O'Sullivan. "Besides," says I, "you have no money." "I'll pay for them when we pay off in Seattle," says O'Sullivan. "I'll not do it," says I; "besides, you're not tellin' me what you'll be doin' with them." "But I will tell yeh," says O'Sullivan; "I'm wantin' to throw 'em over the side." And with that I turns to walk away, but O'Sullivan says, very polite and seducin'-like, still a-stroppin' the razor, "Mr. Fay," says he, "will you kindly step this way an' have your throat cut?" And with that I knew my life was in danger, and I have come to make report to you, sir, that the man is a violent lunatic.'

"Or soon will be," I remarked. "I noticed him yesterday, a big man muttering continually to himself?"

"That's the man," Mr. Mellaire said.

"Do you have many such at sea?" I asked.

"More than my share, I do believe, sir."

He was lighting a cigarette at the moment, and with a quick movement he pulled off his cap, bent his head forward, and held up the blazing match that I might see.

I saw a grizzled head, the full crown of which was not entirely bald, but partially covered with a few sparse long hairs. And full across this crown, disappearing in the thicker fringe above the ears, ran the most prodigious scar I had ever seen. Because the vision of it was so fleeting, ere the match blew out, and because of the scar's very prodigiousness, I may possibly exaggerate, but I could have sworn that I could lay two fingers deep into the horrid cleft and that it was fully two fingers broad. There seemed no bone at all, just a great fissure, a deep valley covered with skin; and I was confident that the brain pulsed immediately under that skin.

He pulled his cap on and laughed in an amused, reassuring way.

"A crazy sea cook did that, Mr. Pathurst, with a meat-axe. We were thousands of miles from anywhere, in the South Indian Ocean at the time, running our Easting down, but the cook got the idea into his addled head that we were lying in Boston Harbour, and that I wouldn't let him go ashore. I had my back to him at the time, and I never knew what struck me."

"But how could you recover from so fearful an injury?" I questioned. "There must have been a splendid surgeon on board, and you must have had wonderful vitality."

He shook his head.

"It must have been the vitality . . . and the molasses."

"Molasses!"

"Yes; the captain had old-fashioned prejudices against antiseptics. He always used molasses for fresh wound-dressings. I lay in my bunk many weary weeks — we had a long passage — and by the time we reached Hong Kong the thing was healed, there was no need for a shore surgeon, and I was standing my third mate's watch — we carried third mates in those days."

Not for many a long day was I to realize the dire part that scar in Mr. Mellaire's head was to play in his destiny and in the destiny of the *Elsinore*. Had I known at the time, Captain West would have received the most unusual awakening from sleep that he ever experienced; for he would have been routed out by a very determined, partially-dressed passenger with a proposition capable of going to the extent of buying the *Elsinore* outright with all her cargo, so that she might be sailed straight back to Baltimore.

As it was, I merely thought it a very marvellous thing that Mr. Mellaire should have lived so many years with such a hole in his head.

We talked on, and he gave me many details of that particular happening, and of other happenings at sea on the part of the lunatics that seem to infest the sea.

And yet I could not like the man. In nothing he said, nor in the manner of saying things, could I find fault. He seemed generous, broad-minded, and, for a sailor, very much of a man of the world. It was easy for me to overlook his excessive suavity of speech and super-courtesy of social mannerism. It was not that. But all the time I was distressingly, and, I suppose, intuitively aware, though in the darkness I couldn't even see his eyes, that there, behind those eyes, inside that skull, was ambuscaded an alien personality that spied upon me, measured me, studied me, and that said one thing while it thought another thing.

When I said good night and went below it was with the feeling that I had been talking with the one half of some sort of a dual creature. The other half had not spoken. Yet I sensed it there, fluttering and quick, behind the mask of words and flesh.

CHAPTER XI

But I could not sleep. I took more cream of tartar. It must be the heat of the bed-clothes, I decided, that excited my hives. And yet, whenever I ceased struggling for sleep, and lighted the lamp and read, my skin irritation decreased. But as soon as I turned out the lamp and closed my eyes I was troubled again. So hour after hour passed, through which, between vain attempts to sleep, I managed to wade through many pages of Rosny's *Le Termite* — a not very cheerful proceeding, I must say, concerned as it is with the microscopic and over-elaborate recital of Noël Servaise's tortured nerves, bodily pains, and intellectual phantasma. At last I tossed the novel aside, damned all analytical Frenchmen, and found some measure of relief in the more genial and cynical Stendhal.

Over my head I could hear Mr. Mellaire steadily pace up and down. At four the watches changed, and I recognized the age-lag in Mr. Pike's promenade. Half an hour later, just as the steward's alarm went off, instantly checked by that light-sleeping Asiatic, the *Elsinore* began to heel over on my side. I could hear Mr. Pike barking and snarling orders, and at times a trample and shuffle of many feet passed over my head as the weird crew pulled and hauled. The *Elsinore* continued to heel over until I could see the water against my port, and then she gathered way and dashed ahead at such a rate that I could hear the stinging and singing of the foam through the circle of thick glass beside me.

The steward brought me coffee, and I read till daylight and after, when Wada served me breakfast and helped me dress. He, too, complained of inability to sleep. He had been bunked with Nancy in one of the rooms in the 'midship-house. Wada described the situation. The tiny room, made of steel, was air-tight when the steel door was closed. And Nancy insisted on keeping the door closed. As a result Wada, in the upper bunk, had stifled. He told me that the air had got so bad that the flame of the lamp, no matter how high it was turned, guttered down and all but refused to burn. Nancy snored beautifully through it all, while he had been unable to close his eyes.

"He is not clean," quoth Wada. "He is a pig. No more will I sleep in that place."

On the poop I found the *Elsinore*, with many of her sails furled, slashing along through a troubled sea under an overcast sky. Also I found Mr.

Mellaire marching up and down, just as I had left him hours before, and it took quite a distinct effort for me to realize that he had had the watch off between four and eight. Even then, he told me, he had slept from four until half-past seven.

"That is one thing, Mr. Pathurst, I always sleep like a baby . . . which means a good conscience, sir, yes, a good conscience."

And while he enunciated the platitude I was uncomfortably aware that that alien thing inside his skull was watching me, studying me.

In the cabin Captain West smoked a cigar and read the Bible. Miss West did not appear, and I was grateful that to my sleeplessness the curse of seasickness had not been added.

Without asking permission of anybody, Wada arranged a sleeping place for himself in a far corner of the big after-room, screening the corner with a solidly lashed wall of my trunks and empty book boxes.

It was a dreary enough day, no sun, with occasional splatters of rain and a persistent crash of seas over the weather rail and swash of water across the deck. With my eyes glued to the cabin ports, which gave for'ard along the main deck, I could see the wretched sailors, whenever they were given some task of pull and haul, wet through and through by the boarding seas. Several times I saw some of them taken off their feet and rolled about in the creaming foam. And yet, erect, unstaggering, with certitude of weight and strength, among these rolled men, these clutching, cowering ones, moved either Mr. Pike or Mr. Mellaire. They were never taken off their feet. They never shrank away from a splash of spray or heavier bulk of down-falling water. They had fed on different food, were informed with a different spirit, were of iron in contrast with the poor miserables they drove to their bidding.

In the afternoon I dozed for half-an-hour in one of the big chairs in the cabin. Had it not been for the violent motion of the ship I could have slept there for hours, for the hives did not trouble. Captain West, stretched out on the cabin sofa, his feet in carpet slippers, slept enviably. By some instinct, I might say, in the deep of sleep, he kept his place and was not rolled off upon the floor. Also, he lightly held a half-smoked cigar in one hand. I watched him for an hour, and knew him to be asleep, and marvelled that he maintained his easy posture and did not drop the cigar.

After dinner there was no phonograph. The second dog-watch was Mr. Pike's on deck. Besides, as he explained, the rolling was too severe. It would make the needle jump and scratch his beloved records.

And no sleep! Another weary night of torment, and another dreary, overcast day and leaden, troubled sea. And no Miss West. Wada, too, is sea-sick, although heroically he kept his feet and tried to tend on me with glassy, unseeing eyes. I sent him to his bunk, and read through the endless hours until my eyes were tired, and my brain, between lack of sleep and over-use, was fuzzy.

Captain West is no conversationalist. The more I see of him the more I am baffled. I have not yet found a reason for that first impression I received of him. He has all the poise and air of a remote and superior being, and yet I wonder if it be not poise and air and nothing else. Just as I had expected, that first meeting, ere he spoke a word, to hear fall from his lips words of untold beneficence and wisdom, and then heard him utter mere social commonplaces, so I now find myself almost forced to conclude that his touch of race, and beak of power, and all the tall, aristocratic slenderness of him have nothing behind them.

And yet, on the other hand, I can find no reason for rejecting that first impression. He has not shown any strength, but by the same token he has not shown any weakness. Sometimes I wonder what resides behind those clear blue eyes. Certainly I have failed to find any intellectual backing. I tried him out with William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience*. He glanced at a few pages, then returned it to me with the frank statement that it did not interest him. He has no books of his own. Evidently he is not a reader. Then what is he? I dared to feel him out on politics. He listened courteously, said sometimes yes and sometimes no, and, when I ceased from very discouragement, said nothing.

Aloof as the two officers are from the men, Captain West is still more aloof from his officers. I have not seen him address a further word to Mr. Mellaire than "Good morning" on the poop. As for Mr. Pike, who eats three times a day with him, scarcely any more conversation obtains between them. And I am surprised by what seems the very conspicuous awe with which Mr. Pike seems to regard his commander.

Another thing. What are Captain West's duties? So far he has done nothing, save eat three times a day, smoke many cigars, and each day stroll a total of one mile around the poop. The mates do all the work, and hard work it is, four hours on deck and four below, day and night with never a variation. I watch Captain West and am amazed. He will loll back in the cabin and stare straight before him for hours at a time, until I am almost frantic to demand of him what are his thoughts. Sometimes I doubt that he is thinking at all. I give him up. I cannot fathom him.

Altogether a depressing day of rain-splatter and wash of water across the deck. I can see, now, that the problem of sailing a ship with five thousand tons of coal around the Horn is more serious than I had thought. So deep is the *Elsinore* in the water that she is like a log awash. Her tall, six-foot bulwarks of steel cannot keep the seas from boarding her. She has not the buoyancy one is accustomed to ascribe to ships. On the contrary, she is weighted down until she is dead, so that, for this one day alone, I am appalled at the thought of how many thousands of tons of the North Atlantic have boarded her and poured out through her spouting scuppers and clanging ports.

Yes, a depressing day. The two mates have alternated on deck and in their bunks. Captain West has dozed on the cabin sofa or read the Bible. Miss West is still sea-sick. I have tired myself out with reading, and the fuzziness of my unsleeping brain makes for melancholy. Even Wada is anything but a cheering spectacle, crawling out of his bunk, as he does at stated intervals, and with sick, glassy eyes trying to discern what my needs may be. I almost wish I could get sea-sick myself. I had never dreamed that a sea voyage could be so unenlivening as this one is proving.

CHAPTER XII

Another morning of overcast sky and leaden sea, and of the *Elsinore*, under half her canvas, clanging her deck ports, spouting water from her scuppers, and dashing eastward into the heart of the Atlantic. And I have failed to sleep half-an-hour all told. At this rate, in a very short time I shall have consumed all the cream of tartar on the ship. I never have had hives like these before. I can't understand it. So long as I keep my lamp burning and read I am untroubled. The instant I put out the lamp and drowse off the irritation starts and the lumps on my skin begin to form.

Miss West may be sea-sick, but she cannot be comatose, because at frequent intervals she sends the steward to me with more cream of tartar.

I have had a revelation to-day. I have discovered Captain West. He is a Samurai. — You remember the Samurai that H. G. Wells describes in his *Modern Utopia* — the superior breed of men who know things and are masters of life and of their fellow-men in a super-benevolent, super-wise way? Well, that is what Captain West is. Let me tell it to you.

We had a shift of wind to-day. In the height of a south-west gale the wind shifted, in the instant, eight points, which is equivalent to a quarter of the circle. Imagine it! Imagine a gale howling from out of the south-west. And then imagine the wind, in a heavier and more violent gale, abruptly smiting you from the north-west. We had been sailing through a circular storm, Captain West vouchsafed to me, before the event, and the wind could be expected to box the compass.

Clad in sea-boots, oilskins and sou'wester, I had for some time been hanging upon the rail at the break of the poop, staring down fascinated at the poor devils of sailors, repeatedly up to their necks in water, or submerged, or dashed like straws about the deck, while they pulled and hauled, stupidly, blindly, and in evident fear, under the orders of Mr. Pike.

Mr. Pike was with them, working them and working with them. He took every chance they took, yet somehow he escaped being washed off his feet, though several times I saw him entirely buried from view. There was more than luck in the matter; for I saw him, twice, at the head of a line of the men, himself next to the pin. And twice, in this position, I saw the North Atlantic curl over the rail and fall upon them. And each time he alone remained, holding the turn of the rope on the pin, while the rest of them were rolled and sprawled helplessly away.

Almost it seemed to me good fun, as at a circus, watching their antics. But I did not apprehend the seriousness of the situation until, the wind screaming higher than ever and the sea a-smoke and white with wrath, two men did not get up from the deck. One was carried away for'ard with a broken leg — it was Iare Jacobson, a dull-witted Scandinavian; and the other, Kid Twist, was carried away, unconscious, with a bleeding scalp.

In the height of the gusts, in my high position, where the seas did not break, I found myself compelled to cling tightly to the rail to escape being blown away. My face was stung to severe pain by the high-driving spindrift, and I had a feeling that the wind was blowing the cobwebs out of my sleep-starved brain.

And all the time, slender, aristocratic, graceful in streaming oilskins, in apparent unconcern, giving no orders, effortlessly accommodating his body to the violent rolling of the *Elsinore*, Captain West strolled up and down.

It was at this stage in the gale that he unbent sufficiently to tell me that we were going through a circular storm and that the wind was boxing the compass. I did notice that he kept his gaze pretty steadily fixed on the overcast, cloud-driven sky. At last, when it seemed the wind could not possibly blow more fiercely, he found in the sky what he sought. It was then that I first heard his voice — a sea-voice, clear as a bell, distinct as silver, and of an ineffable sweetness and volume, as it might be the trump of Gabriel. That voice! — effortless, dominating! The mighty threat of the storm, made articulate by the resistance of the *Elsinore*, shouted in all the stays, bellowed in the shrouds, thrummed the taut ropes against the steel masts, and from the myriad tiny ropes far aloft evoked a devil's chorus of shrill pipings and screechings. And yet, through this bedlam of noise, came Captain West's voice, as of a spirit visitant, distinct, unrelated, mellow as all music and mighty as an archangel's call to judgment. And it carried understanding and command to the man at the wheel, and to Mr. Pike, waist-deep in the wash of sea below us. And the man at the wheel obeyed, and Mr. Pike obeyed, barking and snarling orders to the poor wallowing devils who wallowed on and obeyed him in turn. And as the voice was the face. This face I had never seen before. It was the face of the spirit visitant, chaste with wisdom, lighted by a splendour of power and calm. Perhaps it was the calm that smote me most of all. It was as the calm of one who had crossed chaos to bless poor sea-worn men with the word that all was well. It was not the face of the fighter. To my thrilled imagination it was the face of one who dwelt beyond all strivings of the elements and broody dissensions of the blood.

The Samurai had arrived, in thunders and lightnings, riding the wings of the storm, directing the gigantic, labouring *Elsinore* in all her intricate massiveness, commanding the wisps of humans to his will, which was the will of wisdom.

And then, that wonderful Gabriel voice of his, silent (while his creatures laboured his will), unconcerned, detached and casual, more slenderly tall and aristocratic than ever in his streaming oilskins, Captain West touched my shoulder and pointed astern over our weather quarter. I looked, and all that I could see was a vague smoke of sea and air and a cloud-bank of sky that tore at the ocean's breast. And at the same moment the gale from the south-west ceased. There was no gale, no moving zephyrs, nothing but a vast quietude of air.

"What is it?" I gasped, out of equilibrium from the abrupt cessation of wind.

"The shift," he said. "There she comes."

And it came, from the north-west, a blast of wind, a blow, an atmospheric impact that bewildered and stunned and again made the *Elsinore* harp protest. It forced me down on the rail. I was like a windle-straw. As I faced this new abruptness of gale it drove the air back into my lungs, so that I suffocated and turned my head aside to breathe in the lee of the draught. The man at the wheel again listened to the Gabriel voice; and Mr. Pike, on the deck below, listened and repeated the will of the voice; and Captain West, in slender and stately balance, leaned into the face of the wind and slowly paced the deck.

It was magnificent. Now, and for the first time, I knew the sea, and the men who overlord the sea. Captain West had vindicated himself, exposited himself. At the height and crisis of storm he had taken charge of the *Elsinore*, and Mr. Pike had become, what in truth was all he was, the foreman of a gang of men, the slave-driver of slaves, serving the one from beyond — the Samurai.

A minute or so longer Captain West strolled up and down, leaning easily into the face of this new and abominable gale or resting his back against it, and then he went below, pausing for a moment, his hand on the knob of the chart-room door, to cast a last measuring look at the storm-white sea and wrath-sombre sky he had mastered.

Ten minutes later, below, passing the open cabin door, I glanced in and saw him. Sea-boots and storm-trappings were gone; his feet, in carpet slippers, rested on a hassock; while he lay back in the big leather chair smoking dreamily, his eyes wide open, absorbed, non-seeing — or, if they saw, seeing things beyond the reeling cabin walls and beyond my ken. I have developed an immense respect for Captain West, though now I know him less than the little I thought I knew him before.

CHAPTER XIII

Small wonder that Miss West remains sea-sick on an ocean like this, which has become a factory where the veering gales manufacture the selectest and most mountainous brands of cross-seas. The way the poor *Elsinore* pitches, plunges, rolls, and shivers, with all her lofty spars and masts and all her five thousand tons of dead-weight cargo, is astonishing. To me she is the most erratic thing imaginable; yet Mr. Pike, with whom I now pace the poop on occasion, tells me that coal is a good cargo, and that the *Elsinore* is well-loaded because he saw to it himself.

He will pause abruptly, in the midst of his interminable pacing, in order to watch her in her maddest antics. The sight is very pleasant to him, for his eyes glisten and a faint glow seems to irradiate his face and impart to it a hint of ecstasy. The *Elsinore* has a snug place in his heart, I am confident. He calls her behaviour admirable, and at such times will repeat to me that it was he who saw to her loading.

It is very curious, the habituation of this man, through a long life on the sea, to the motion of the sea. There *is* a rhythm to this chaos of crossing, buffeting waves. I sense this rhythm, although I cannot solve it. But Mr. Pike *knows* it. Again and again, as we paced up and down this afternoon, when to me nothing unusually antic seemed impending, he would seize my arm as I lost balance, and as the *Elsinore* smashed down on her side and heeled over and over with a colossal roll that seemed never to end, and that always ended with an abrupt, snap-of-the-whip effect as she began the corresponding roll to windward. In vain I strove to learn how Mr. Pike forecasts these antics, and I am driven to believe that he does not consciously forecast them at all. He *feels* them; he knows them. They, and the sea, are ingrained in him.

Toward the end of our little promenade I was guilty of impatiently shaking off a sudden seizure of my arm in his big paw. If ever, in an hour, the *Elsinore* had been less gymnastic than at that moment, I had not noticed it. So I shook off the sustaining clutch, and the next moment the *Elsinore* had smashed down and buried a couple of hundred feet of her starboard rail beneath the sea, while I had shot down the deck and smashed myself breathless against the wall of the chart-house. My ribs and one shoulder are sore from it yet. Now how did he know?

And he never staggers nor seems in danger of being rolled away. On the contrary, such a surplus of surety of balance has he that time and again he lent his surplus to me. I begin to have more respect, not for the sea, but for the men of the sea, and not for the sweepings of seamen that are as slaves on our decks, but for the real seamen who are their masters — for Captain West, for Mr. Pike, yes, and for Mr. Mellaire, dislike him as I do.

As early as three in the afternoon the wind, still a gale, went back to the south-west. Mr. Mellaire had the deck, and he went below and reported the change to Captain West.

"We'll wear ship at four, Mr. Pathurst," the second mate told me when he came back. "You'll find it an interesting manoeuvre."

"But why wait till four?" I asked.

"The Captain's orders, sir. The watches will be changing, and we'll have the use of both of them, without working a hardship on the watch below by calling it out now."

And when both watches were on deck Captain West, again in oilskins, came out of the chart-house. Mr. Pike, out on the bridge, took charge of the many men who, on deck and on the poop, were to manage the mizzen-braces, while Mr. Mellaire went for'ard with his watch to handle the fore- and main-braces. It was a pretty manoeuvre, a play of leverages, by which they cased the force of the wind on the after part of the *Elsinore* and used the force of the wind on the for'ard part.

Captain West gave no orders whatever, and, to all intents, was quite oblivious of what was being done. He was again the favoured passenger, taking a stroll for his health's sake. And yet I knew that both his officers were uncomfortably aware of his presence and were keyed to their finest seamanship. I know, now, Captain West's position on board. He is the brains of the *Elsinore*. He is the master strategist. There is more in directing a ship on the ocean than in standing watches and ordering men to pull and haul. They are pawns, and the two officers are pieces, with which Captain West plays the game against sea, and wind, and season, and ocean current. He is the knower. They are his tongue, by which he makes his knowledge articulate.

* * * * *

A bad night — equally bad for the *Elsinore* and for me. She is receiving a sharp buffeting at the hands of the wintry North Atlantic. I fell asleep early, exhausted from lack of sleep, and awoke in an hour, frantic with my lumped and burning skin. More cream of tartar, more reading, more vain attempts to sleep, until shortly before five, when the steward brought me my coffee, I wrapped myself in my dressing-gown, and like a being distracted prowled into the cabin. I dozed in a leather chair and was thrown out by a violent roll of the ship. I tried the sofa, sinking to sleep immediately, and immediately thereafter finding myself precipitated to the floor. I am convinced that when Captain West naps on the sofa he is only half asleep. How else can he maintain so precarious a position? — unless, in him, too, the sea and its motion be ingrained.

I wandered into the dining-room, wedged myself into a screwed chair, and fell asleep, my head on my arms, my arms on the table. And at quarter past seven the steward roused me by shaking my shoulders. It was time to set table.

Heavy with the brief heaviness of sleep I had had, I dressed and stumbled up on to the poop in the hope that the wind would clear my brain. Mr. Pike had the watch, and with sure, age-lagging step he paced the deck. The man is a marvel — sixty-nine years old, a life of hardship, and as sturdy as a lion. Yet of the past night alone his hours had been: four to six in the afternoon on deck; eight to twelve on deck; and four to eight in the morning on deck. In a few minutes he would be relieved, but at midday he would again be on deck.

I leaned on the poop-rail and stared for'ard along the dreary waste of deck. Every port and scupper was working to ease the weight of North Atlantic that perpetually fell on board. Between the rush of the cascades, streaks of rust showed everywhere. Some sort of a wooden pin-rail had carried away on the starboard-rail at the foot of the mizzen-shrouds, and an amazing raffle of ropes and tackles washed about. Here Nancy and half-a-dozen men worked sporadically, and in fear of their lives, to clear the tangle.

The long-suffering bleakness was very pronounced on Nancy's face, and when the walls of water, in impending downfall, reared above the *Elsinore's* rail, he was always the first to leap for the life-line which had been stretched fore and aft across the wide space of deck.

The rest of the men were scarcely less backward in dropping their work and springing to safety — if safety it might be called, to grip a rope in both hands and have legs sweep out from under, and be wrenched full-length upon the boiling surface of an ice-cold flood. Small wonder they look wretched. Bad as their condition was when they came aboard at Baltimore, they look far worse now, what of the last several days of wet and freezing hardship.

From time to time, completing his for'ard pace along the poop, Mr. Pike would pause, ere he retraced his steps, and snort sardonic glee at what happened to the poor devils below. The man's heart is callous. A thing of iron, he has endured; and he has no patience nor sympathy with these creatures who lack his own excessive iron.

I noticed the stone-deaf man, the twisted oaf whose face I have described as being that of an ill-treated and feeble-minded faun. His bright, liquid, pain-filled eyes were more filled with pain than ever, his face still more lean and drawn with suffering. And yet his face showed an excess of nervousness, sensitiveness, and a pathetic eagerness to please and do. I could not help observing that, despite his dreadful sense-handicap and his wrecked, frail body, he did the most work, was always the last of the group to spring to the life-line and always the first to loose the life-line and slosh knee-deep or waist-deep through the churning water to attack the immense and depressing tangle of rope and tackle.

I remarked to Mr. Pike that the men seemed thinner and weaker than when they came on board, and he delayed replying for a moment while he stared down at them with that cattle-buyer's eye of his.

"Sure they are," he said disgustedly. "A weak breed, that's what they are — nothing to build on, no stamina. The least thing drags them down. Why, in my day we grew fat on work like that — only we didn't; we worked so hard there wasn't any chance for fat. We kept in fighting trim, that was all. But as for this scum and slum — say, you remember, Mr. Pathurst, that man I spoke to the first day, who said his name was Charles Davis?"

"The one you thought there was something the matter with?"

"Yes, and there was, too. He's in that 'midship room with the Greek now. He'll never do a tap of work the whole Voyage. He's a hospital case, if there ever was one. Talk about shot to pieces! He's got holes in him I could shove my fist through. I don't know whether they're perforating ulcers, or cancers, or cannon-shot wounds, or what not. And he had the nerve to tell me they showed up after he came on board!"

"And he had them all the time?" I asked.

"All the time! Take my word, Mr. Pathurst, they're years old. But he's a wonder. I watched him those first days, sent him aloft, had him down in the fore-hold trimming a few tons of coal, did everything to him, and he never showed a wince. Being up to the neck in the salt water finally fetched him, and now he's reported off duty — for the voyage. And he'll draw his wages for the whole time, have all night in, and never do a tap. Oh, he's a hot one to have passed over on us, and the *Elsinore's* another man short."

"Another!" I exclaimed. "Is the Greek going to die?"

"No fear. I'll have him steering in a few days. I refer to the misfits. If we rolled a dozen of them together they wouldn't make one real man. I'm not saying it to alarm you, for there's nothing alarming about it; but we're going to have proper hell this voyage." He broke off to stare reflectively at his broken knuckles, as if estimating how much drive was left in them, then sighed and concluded, "Well, I can see I've got my work cut out for me."

Sympathizing with Mr. Pike is futile; the only effect is to make his mood blacker. I tried it, and he retaliated with:

"You oughta see the bloke with curvature of the spine in Mr. Mellaire's watch. He's a proper hobo, too, and a land lubber, and don't weigh more'n a hundred pounds, and must be fifty years old, and he's got curvature of the spine, and he's able seaman, if you please, on the *Elsinore*. And worse than all that, he puts it over on you; he's nasty, he's mean, he's a viper, a wasp. He ain't afraid of anything because he knows you dassent hit him for fear of croaking him. Oh, he's a pearl of purest ray serene, if anybody should slide down a backstay and ask you. If you fail to identify him any other way, his name is Mulligan Jacobs."

* * * * *

After breakfast, again on deck, in Mr. Mellaire's watch, I discovered another efficient. He was at the wheel, a small, well-knit, muscular man of say forty-five, with black hair graying on the temples, a big eagle-face, swarthy, with keen, intelligent black eyes.

Mr. Mellaire vindicated my judgment by telling me the man was the best sailor in his watch, a proper seaman. When he referred to the man as the

Maltese Cockney, and I asked why, he replied:

"First, because he is Maltese, Mr. Pathurst; and next, because he talks Cockney like a native. And depend upon it, he heard Bow Bells before he lisped his first word."

"And has O'Sullivan bought Andy Fay's sea-boots yet?" I queried.

It was at this moment that Miss West emerged upon the poop. She was as rosy and vital as ever, and certainly, if she had been sea-sick, she flew no signals of it. As she came toward me, greeting me, I could not help remarking again the lithe and springy limb-movement with which she walked, and her fine, firm skin. Her neck, free in a sailor collar, with white sweater open at the throat, seemed almost redoubtably strong to my sleepless, jaundiced eyes. Her hair, under a white knitted cap, was smooth and well-groomed. In fact, the totality of impression she conveyed was of a well-groomedness one would not expect of a sea-captain's daughter, much less of a woman who had been sea-sick. Life! — that is the key of her, the essential note of her — life and health. I'll wager she has never entertained a morbid thought in that practical, balanced, sensible head of hers.

"And how have you been?" she asked, then rattled on with sheer exuberance ere I could answer. "Had a lovely night's sleep. I was really over my sickness yesterday, but I just devoted myself to resting up. I slept ten solid hours — what do you think of that?"

"I wish I could say the same," I replied with appropriate dejection, as I swung in beside her, for she had evinced her intention of promenading.

"Oh, then you've been sick?"

"On the contrary," I answered dryly. "And I wish I had been. I haven't had five hours' sleep all told since I came on board. These pestiferous hives. . . "

I held up a lumpy wrist to show. She took one glance at it, halted abruptly, and, neatly balancing herself to the roll, took my wrist in both her hands and gave it close scrutiny.

"Mercy!" she cried; and then began to laugh.

I was of two minds. Her laughter was delightful to the ear, there was such a mellowness, and healthiness, and frankness about it. On the other hand, that it should be directed at my misfortune was exasperating. I suppose my perplexity showed in my face, for when she had eased her laughter and looked at me with a sobering countenance, she immediately went off into more peals.

“You poor child,” she gurgled at last. “And when I think of all the cream of tartar I made you consume!”

It was rather presumptuous of her to poor-child me, and I resolved to take advantage of the data I already possessed in order to ascertain just how many years she was my junior. She had told me she was twelve years old the time the *Dixie* collided with the river steamer in San Francisco Bay. Very well, all I had to do was to ascertain the date of that disaster and I had her. But in the meantime she laughed at me and my hives.

“I suppose it is — er — humorous, in some sort of way,” I said a bit stiffly, only to find that there was no use in being stiff with Miss West, for it only set her off into more laughter.

“What you needed,” she announced, with fresh gurglings, “was an exterior treatment.”

“Don’t tell me I’ve got the chicken-pox or the measles,” I protested.

“No.” She shook her head emphatically while she enjoyed another paroxysm. “What you are suffering from is a severe attack . . . ”

She paused deliberately, and looked me straight the eyes.

“Of bedbugs,” she concluded. And then, all seriousness and practicality, she went on: “But we’ll have that righted in a jiffy. I’ll turn the *Elsinore’s* after-quarters upside down, though I know there are none in father’s room or mine. And though this is my first voyage with Mr. Pike I know he’s too hard-bitten” (here I laughed at her involuntary pun) “an old sailor not to know that his room is clean. Yours” (I was perturbed for fear she was going to say that I had brought them on board) “have most probably drifted in from for’ard. They always have them for’ard.

“And now, Mr. Pathurst, I am going down to attend to your case. You’d better get your Wada to make up a camping kit for you. The next couple of nights you’ll spend in the cabin or chart-room. And be sure Wada removes all silver and metallic tarnishable stuff from your rooms. There’s going to be all sorts of fumigating, and tearing out of woodwork, and rebuilding. Trust me. I know the vermin.”

CHAPTER XIV

Such a cleaning up and turning over! For two nights, one in the chart-room and one on the cabin sofa, I have soaked myself in sleep, and I am now almost stupid with excess of sleep. The land seems very far away. By some strange quirk, I have an impression that weeks, or months, have passed since I left Baltimore on that bitter March morning. And yet it was March 28, and this is only the first week in April.

I was entirely right in my first estimation of Miss West. She is the most capable, practically masterful woman I have ever encountered. What passed between her and Mr. Pike I do not know; but whatever it was, she was convinced that he was not the erring one. In some strange way, my two rooms are the only ones which have been invaded by this plague of vermin. Under Miss West's instructions bunks, drawers, shelves, and all superficial woodwork have been ripped out. She worked the carpenter from daylight till dark, and then, after a night of fumigation, two of the sailors, with turpentine and white lead, put the finishing touches on the cleansing operations. The carpenter is now busy rebuilding my rooms. Then will come the painting, and in two or three more days I expect to be settled back in my quarters.

Of the men who did the turpentining and white-leading there have been four. Two of them were quickly rejected by Miss West as not being up to the work. The first one, Steve Roberts, which he told me was his name, is an interesting fellow. I talked with him quite a bit ere Miss West sent him packing and told Mr. Pike that she wanted a real sailor.

This is the first time Steve Roberts has ever seen the sea. How he happened to drift from the western cattle-ranges to New York he did not explain, any more than did he explain how he came to ship on the *Elsinore*. But here he is, not a sailor on horseback, but a cowboy on the sea. He is a small man, but most powerfully built. His shoulders are very broad, and his muscles bulge under his shirt; and yet he is slender-waisted, lean-limbed, and hollow-cheeked. This last, however, is not due to sickness or ill-health. Tyro as he is on the sea, Steve Roberts is keen and intelligent . . . yes, and crooked. He has a way of looking straight at one with utmost frankness while he talks, and yet it is at such moments I get most strongly the impression of crookedness. But he is a man, if trouble should arise, to be reckoned with. In ways he suggests a kinship with the three men Mr. Pike took so instant a prejudice against — Kid Twist, Nosey Murphy, and Bert Rhine. And I have already noticed, in the dog-watches, that it is with this trio that Steve Roberts chums.

The second sailor Miss West rejected, after silently watching him work for five minutes, was Mulligan Jacobs, the wisp of a man with curvature of the spine. But before she sent him packing other things occurred in which I was concerned. I was in the room when Mulligan Jacobs first came in to go to work, and I could not help observing the startled, avid glance he threw at my big shelves of books. He advanced on them in the way a robber might advance on a secret hoard of gold, and as a miser would fondle gold so Mulligan Jacobs fondled these book-titles with his eyes.

And such eyes! All time bitterness and venom Mr. Pike had told me the man possessed was there in his eyes. They were small, pale-blue, and gimlet-pointed with fire. His eyelids were inflamed, and but served to ensanguine the bitter and cold-blazing intensity of the pupils. The man was constitutionally a hater, and I was not long in learning that he hated all things except books.

“Would you care to read some of them?” I said hospitably.

All the caress in his eyes for the books vanished as he turned his head to look at me, and ere he spoke I knew that I, too, was hated.

“It’s hell, ain’t it? — you with a strong body and servants to carry for you a weight of books like this, and me with a curved spine that puts the pot-hooks of hell-fire into my brain?”

How can I possibly convey the terrible venomousness with which he uttered these words? I know that Mr. Pike, dragging his feet down the hall past my open door, gave me a very gratifying sense of safety. Being alone in the room with this man seemed much the same as if I were locked in a cage with a tiger-cat. The devilishness, the wickedness, and, above all, the pitch of glaring hatred with which the man eyed me and addressed me, were most unpleasant. I swear I knew fear — not calculated caution, not timid apprehension, but blind, panic, unreasoned terror. The malignancy of the creature was blood curdling; nor did it require words to convey it: it poured from him, out of his red-rimmed, blazing eyes, out of his withered, twisted, tortured face, out of his broken-nailed, crooked talons of hands. And yet, in that very moment of instinctive startle and repulsion, the thought was in my mind that with one hand I could take the throat of the weazened wisp of a crippled thing and throttle the malformed life out of it.

But there was little encouragement in such thought — no more than a man might feel in a cave of rattlesnakes or a pit of centipedes, for, crush them with his very bulk, nevertheless they would first sink their poison into him. And so with this Mulligan Jacobs. My fear of him was the fear of being infected with his venom. I could not help it; for I caught a quick vision of the black and broken teeth I had seen in his mouth sinking into my flesh, polluting me, eating me with their acid, destroying me.

One thing was very clear. In the creature was no fear. Absolutely, he did not know fear. He was as devoid of it as the fetid slime one treads underfoot in nightmares. Lord, Lord! that is what the thing was, a nightmare.

“You suffer pain often?” I asked, attempting to get myself in hand by the calculated use of sympathy.

“The hooks are in me, in the brain, white-hot hooks that burn an’ burn,” was his reply. “But by what damnable right do you have all these books, and time to read ’em, an’ all night in to read ’em, an’ soak in them, when me brain’s on fire, and I’m watch and watch, an’ me broken spine won’t let me carry half a hundredweight of books about with me?”

Another madman, was my conclusion; and yet I was quickly compelled to modify it, for, thinking to play with a rattle-brain, I asked him what were the books up to half a hundredweight he carried, and what were the writers he preferred. His library, he told me, among other things included, first and fore-most, a complete Byron. Next was a complete Shakespeare; also a complete Browning in one volume. A full hall-dozen he had in the forecastle of Renan, a stray volume of Lecky, Winwood Reade’s *Martyrdom of Man*, several of Carlyle, and eight or ten of Zola. Zola he swore by, though Anatole France was a prime favourite.

He might be mad, was my revised judgment, but he was most differently mad from any madman I had ever encountered. I talked on with him about books and bookmen. He was most universal and particular. He liked O. Henry. George Moore was a cad and a four — flusher. Edgar Saltus’ *Anatomy of Negation* was profounder than Kant. Maeterlinck was a mystic frump. Emerson was a charlatan. Ibsen’s *Ghosts* was the stuff, though Ibsen was a bourgeois lickspittler. Heine was the real goods. He preferred Flaubert to de Maupassant, and Turgenieff to Tolstoy; but Gorky was the best of the Russian boiling. John Masefield knew what he was writing about, and Joseph Conrad was living too fat to turn out the stuff he first turned out.

And so it went, the most amazing running commentary on literature I had ever heard. I was hugely interested, and I quizzed him on sociology. Yes, he was a Red, and knew his Kropotkin, but he was no anarchist. On the other hand, political action was a blind-alley leading to reformism and quietism. Political socialism had gone to pot, while industrial unionism was the logical culmination of Marxism. He was a direct actionist. The mass strike was the thing. Sabotage, not merely as a withdrawal of efficiency, but as a keen destruction-of-profits policy, was the weapon. Of course he believed in the propaganda of the deed, but a man was a fool to talk about it. His job was to do it and keep his mouth shut, and the way to do it was to shoot the evidence. Of course, *he* talked; but what of it? Didn't he have curvature of the spine? He didn't care when he got his, and woe to the man who tried to give it to him.

And while he talked he hated me. He seemed to hate the things he talked about and espoused. I judged him to be of Irish descent, and it was patent that he was self-educated. When I asked him how it was he had come to sea, he replied that the hooks in his brain were as hot one place as another. He unbent enough to tell me that he had been an athlete, when he was a young man, a professional foot-racer in Eastern Canada. And then his disease had come upon him, and for a quarter of a century he had been a common tramp and vagabond, and he bragged of a personal acquaintance with more city prisons and county jails than any man that ever existed.

It was at this stage in our talk that Mr. Pike thrust his head into the doorway. He did not address me, but he favoured me with a most sour look of disapprobation. Mr. Pike's countenance is almost petrified. Any expression seems to crack it — with the exception of sourness. But when Mr. Pike wants to look sour he has no difficulty at all. His hard-skinned, hard-muscled face just flows to sourness. Evidently he condemned my consuming Mulligan Jacobs's time. To Mulligan Jacobs he said in his customary snarl:

"Go on an' get to your work. Chew the rag in your watch below."

And then I got a sample of Mulligan Jacobs. The venom of hatred I had already seen in his face was as nothing compared with what now was manifested. I had a feeling that, like stroking a cat in cold weather, did I touch his face it would crackle electric sparks.

“Aw, go to hell, you old stiff,” said Mulligan Jacobs.

If ever I had seen murder in a man’s eyes, I saw it then in the mate’s. He lunged into the room, his arm tensed to strike, the hand not open but clenched. One stroke of that bear’s paw and Mulligan Jacobs and all the poisonous flame of him would have been quenched in the everlasting darkness. But he was unafraid. Like a cornered rat, like a rattlesnake on the trail, unflinching, sneering, snarling, he faced the irate giant. More than that. He even thrust his face forward on its twisted neck to meet the blow.

It was too much for Mr. Pike; it was too impossible to strike that frail, crippled, repulsive thing.

“It’s me that can call you the stiff,” said Mulligan Jacobs. “I ain’t no Larry. G’wan an’ hit me. Why don’t you hit me?”

And Mr. Pike was too appalled to strike the creature. He, whose whole career on the sea had been that of a bucko driver in a shambles, could not strike this fractured splinter of a man. I swear that Mr. Pike actually struggled with himself to strike. I saw it. But he could not.

“Go on to your work,” he ordered. “The voyage is young yet, Mulligan. I’ll have you eatin’ outa my hand before it’s over.”

And Mulligan Jacobs’s face thrust another inch closer on its twisted neck, while all his concentrated rage seemed on the verge of bursting into incandescence. So immense and tremendous was the bitterness that consumed him that he could find no words to clothe it. All he could do was to hawk and guttural deep in his throat until I should not have been surprised had he spat poison in the mate’s face.

And Mr. Pike turned on his heel and left the room, beaten, absolutely beaten.

* * * * *

I can’t get it out of my mind. The picture of the mate and the cripple facing each other keeps leaping up under my eyelids. This is different from the books and from what I know of existence. It is revelation. Life is a profoundly amazing thing. What is this bitter flame that informs Mulligan Jacobs? How dare he — with no hope of any profit, not a hero, not a leader of a forlorn hope nor a martyr to God, but a mere filthy, malignant rat —

how dare he, I ask myself, be so defiant, so death-inviting? The spectacle of him makes me doubt all the schools of the metaphysicians and the realists. No philosophy has a leg to stand on that does not account for Mulligan Jacobs. And all the midnight oil of philosophy I have burned does not enable me to account for Mulligan Jacobs . . . unless he be insane. And then I don't know.

Was there ever such a freight of human souls on the sea as these humans with whom I am herded on the *Elsinore*?

* * * * *

And now, working in my rooms, white-leading and turpentining, is another one of them. I have learned his name. It is Arthur Deacon. He is the pallid, furtive-eyed man whom I observed the first day when the men were routed out of the forecastle to man the windlass — the man I so instantly adjudged a drug-fiend. He certainly looks it.

I asked Mr. Pike his estimate of the man.

"White slaver," was his answer. "Had to skin outa New York to save his skin. He'll be consorting with those other three larrakins I gave a piece of my mind to."

"And what do you make of them?" I asked.

"A month's wages to a pound of tobacco that a district attorney, or a committee of some sort investigating the New York police is lookin' for 'em right now. I'd like to have the cash somebody's put up in New York to send them on this get-away. Oh, I know the breed."

"Gangsters?" I queried.

"That's what. But I'll trim their dirty hides. I'll trim 'em. Mr. Pathurst, this voyage ain't started yet, and this old stiff's a long way from his last legs. I'll give them a run for their money. Why, I've buried better men than the best of them aboard this craft. And I'll bury some of them that think me an old stiff."

He paused and looked at me solemnly for a full half minute.

"Mr. Pathurst, I've heard you're a writing man. And when they told me at the agents' you were going along passenger, I made a point of going to see your play. Now I'm not saying anything about that play, one way or the other. But I just want to tell you, that as a writing man you'll get stuff in plenty to write about on this voyage. Hell's going to pop, believe me, and right here before you is the stiff that’ll do a lot of the poppin’. Some several and plenty’s going to learn who’s an old stiff.”

CHAPTER XV

How I have been sleeping! This relief of renewed normality is delicious — thanks to Miss West. Now why did not Captain West, or Mr. Pike, both experienced men, diagnose my trouble for me? And then there was Wada. But no; it required Miss West. Again I contemplate the problem of woman. It is just such an incident among a million others that keeps the thinker's gaze fixed on woman. They truly are the mothers and the conservers of the race.

Rail as I will at Miss West's red-blood complacency of life, yet I must bow my head to her life-giving to me. Practical, sensible, hard-headed, a comfort-maker and a nest-builder, possessing all the distressing attributes of the blind-instinctive race-mother, nevertheless I must confess I am most grateful that she is along. Had she not been on the *Elsinore*, by this time I should have been so overwrought from lack of sleep that I would be biting my veins and howling — as mad a hatter as any of our cargo of mad hatters. And so we come to it — the everlasting mystery of woman. One may not be able to get along with her; yet is it patent, as of old time, that one cannot get along without her. But, regarding Miss West, I do entertain one fervent hope, namely, that she is not a suffragette. That would be too much.

Captain West may be a Samurai, but he is also human. He was really a bit fluttery this morning, in his reserved, controlled way, when he regretted the plague of vermin I had encountered in my rooms. It seems he has a keen sense of hospitality, and that he is my host on the *Elsinore*, and that, although he is oblivious of the existence of the crew, he is not oblivious of my comfort. By his few expressions of regret it appears that he cannot forgive himself for his careless acceptance of the erroneous diagnosis of my affliction. Yes; Captain West is a real human man. Is he not the father of the slender-faced, strapping-bodied Miss West?

"Thank goodness that's settled," was Miss West's exclamation this morning, when we met on the poop and after I had told her how gloriously I had slept.

And then, that nightmare episode dismissed because, forsooth, for all practical purposes — it was settled, she next said:

"Come on and see the chickens."

And I accompanied her along the spidery bridge to the top of the ’midship-house, to look at the one rooster and the four dozen fat hens in the ship’s chicken-coop.

As I accompanied her, my eyes dwelling pleasurably on that vital gait of hers as she preceded me, I could not help reflecting that, coming down on the tug from Baltimore, she had promised not to bother me nor require to be entertained.

Come and see the chickens! — Oh, the sheer female possessiveness of that simple invitation! For effrontery of possessiveness is there anything that can exceed the nest-making, planet-populating, female, human woman? — *Come and see the chickens*! Oh, well, the sailors for’ard may be hard-bitten, but I can promise Miss West that here, aft, is one male passenger, unmarried and never married, who is an equally hard-bitten adventurer on the sea of matrimony. When I go over the census I remember at least several women, superior to Miss West, who trilled their song of sex and failed to shipwreck me.

As I read over what I have written I notice how the terminology of the sea has stolen into my mental processes. Involuntarily I think in terms of the sea. Another thing I notice is my excessive use of superlatives. But then, everything on board the *Elsinore* is superlative. I find myself continually combing my vocabulary in quest of just and adequate words. Yet am I aware of failure. For example, all the words of all the dictionaries would fail to approximate the exceeding terribleness of Mulligan Jacobs.

But to return to the chickens. Despite every precaution, it was evident that they had had a hard time during the past days of storm. It was equally evident that Miss West, even during her sea-sickness, had not neglected them. Under her directions the steward had actually installed a small oil-stove in the big coop, and she now beckoned him up to the top of the house as he was passing for’ard to the galley. It was for the purpose of instructing him further in the matter of feeding them.

Where were the grits? They needed grits. He didn’t know. The sack had been lost among the miscellaneous stores, but Mr. Pike had promised a couple of sailors that afternoon to overhaul the lazarette.

“Plenty of ashes,” she told the steward. “Remember. And if a sailor doesn’t clean the coop each day, you report to me. And give them only clean food — no spoiled scraps, mind. How many eggs yesterday?”

The steward’s eyes glistened with enthusiasm as he said he had got nine the day before and expected fully a dozen to-day.

“The poor things,” said Miss West — to me. “You’ve no idea how bad weather reduces their laying.” She turned back upon the steward. “Mind now, you watch and find out which hens don’t lay, and kill them first. And you ask me each time before you kill one.”

I found myself neglected, out there on top the draughty house, while Miss West talked chickens with the Chinese ex-smuggler. But it gave me opportunity to observe her. It is the length of her eyes that accentuates their steadiness of gaze — helped, of course, by the dark brows and lashes. I noted again the warm gray of her eyes. And I began to identify her, to locate her. She is a physical type of the best of the womanhood of old New England. Nothing spare nor meagre, nor bred out, but generously strong, and yet not quite what one would call robust. When I said she was strapping-bodied I erred. I must fall back on my other word, which will have to be the last: Miss West is vital-bodied. That is the key-word.

When we had regained the poop, and Miss West had gone below, I ventured my customary pleasantry with Mr. Mellaire of:

“And has O’Sullivan bought Andy Fay’s sea-boots yet?”

“Not yet, Mr. Pathurst,” was the reply, “though he nearly got them early this morning. Come on along, sir, and I’ll show you.”

Vouchsafing no further information, the second mate led the way along the bridge, across the ’midship-house and the for’ard-house. From the edge of the latter, looking down on Number One hatch, I saw two Japanese, with sail-needles and twine, sewing up a canvas-swathed bundle that unmistakably contained a human body.

“O’Sullivan used a razor,” said Mr. Mellaire.

“And that is Andy Fay?” I cried.

“No, sir, not Andy. That’s a Dutchman. Christian Jespersen was his name on the articles. He got in O’Sullivan’s way when O’Sullivan went after the boots. That’s what saved Andy. Andy was more active. Jespersen couldn’t get out of his own way, much less out of O’Sullivan’s. There’s Andy sitting over there.”

I followed Mr. Mellaire’s gaze, and saw the burnt-out, aged little Scotchman squatted on a spare spar and sucking a pipe. One arm was in a sling and his head was bandaged. Beside him squatted Mulligan Jacobs. They were a pair. Both were blue-eyed, and both were malevolent-eyed.

And they were equally emaciated. It was easy to see that they had discovered early in the voyage their kinship of bitterness. Andy Fay, I knew, was sixty-three years old, although he looked a hundred; and Mulligan Jacobs, who was only about fifty, made up for the difference by the furnace-heat of hatred that burned in his face and eyes. I wondered if he sat beside the injured bitter one in some sense of sympathy, or if he were there in order to gloat.

Around the corner of the house strolled Shorty, flinging up to me his inevitable clown-grin. One hand was swathed in bandages.

"Must have kept Mr. Pike busy," was my comment to Mr. Mellaire.

"He was sewing up cripples about all his watch from four till eight."

"What?" I asked. "Are there any more?"

"One more, sir, a sheeny. I didn't know his name before, but Mr. Pike got it — Isaac B. Chantz. I never saw in all my life at sea as many sheenies as are on board the *Elsinore* right now. Sheenies don't take to the sea as a rule. We've certainly got more than our share of them. Chantz isn't badly hurt, but you ought to hear him whimper."

"Where's O'Sullivan?" I inquired.

"In the 'midship-house with Davis, and without a mark. Mr. Pike got into the rumpus and put him to sleep with one on the jaw. And now he's lashed down and talking in a trance. He's thrown the fear of God into Davis. Davis is sitting up in his bunk with a marlin-spike, threatening to brain O'Sullivan if he starts to break loose, and complaining that it's no way to run a hospital. He'd have padded cells, straitjackets, night and day nurses, and violent wards, I suppose — and a convalescents' home in a Queen Anne cottage on the poop.

"Oh dear, oh dear," Mr. Mellaire sighed. "This is the funniest voyage and the funniest crew I've ever tackled. It's not going to come to a good end. Anybody can see that with half an eye. It'll be dead of winter off the Horn, and a fo'c's'le full of lunatics and cripples to do the work. — Just take a look at that one. Crazy as a bedbug. He's likely to go overboard any time."

I followed his glance and saw Tony the Greek, the one who had sprung overboard the first day. He had just come around the corner of the house, and, beyond one arm in a sling, seemed in good condition. He walked easily and with strength, a testimonial to the virtues of Mr. Pike's rough surgery.

My eyes kept returning to the canvas-covered body of Christian Jespersen, and to the Japanese who sewed with sail-twine his sailor's shroud. One of them had his right hand in a huge wrapping of cotton and bandage.

"Did he get hurt, too?" I asked.

"No, sir. He's the sail-maker. They're both sail-makers. He's a good one, too. Yatsuda is his name. But he's just had blood-poisoning and lain in hospital in New York for eighteen months. He flatly refused to let them amputate. He's all right now, but the hand is dead, all except the thumb and fore-finger, and he's teaching himself to sew with his left hand. He's as clever a sail-maker as you'll find at sea."

"A lunatic and a razor make a cruel combination," I remarked.

"It's put five men out of commission," Mr. Mellaire sighed. "There's O'Sullivan himself, and Christian Jespersen gone, and Andy Fay, and Shorty, and the sheeny. And the voyage not started yet. And there's Lars with the broken leg, and Davis laid off for keeps — why, sir, we'll soon be that weak it'll take both watches to set a staysail."

Nevertheless, while I talked in a matter-of-fact way with Mr. Mellaire, I was shocked — no; not because death was aboard with us. I have stood by my philosophic guns too long to be shocked by death, or by murder. What affected me was the utter, stupid bestiality of the affair. Even murder — murder for cause — I can understand. It is comprehensible that men should kill one another in the passion of love, of hatred, of patriotism, of religion. But this was different. Here was killing without cause, an orgy of blind-brutishness, a thing monstrously irrational.

Later on, strolling with Possum on the main deck, as I passed the open door of the hospital I heard the muttering chant of O'Sullivan, and peeped in. There he lay, lashed fast on his back in the lower bunk, rolling his eyes and raving. In the top bunk, directly above, lay Charles Davis, calmly smoking a pipe. I looked for the marlin-spike. There it was, ready to hand, on the bedding beside him.

"It's hell, ain't it, sir?" was his greeting. "And how am I goin' to get any sleep with that baboon chattering away there. He never lets up — keeps his chin-music goin' right along when he's asleep, only worse. The way he grits his teeth is something awful. Now I leave it to you, sir, is it right to put a crazy like that in with a sick man? And I am a sick man."

While he talked the massive form of Mr. Pike loomed beside me and halted just out of sight of the man in the bunk. And the man talked on.

"By rights, I oughta have that lower bunk. It hurts me to crawl up here. It's inhumanity, that's what it is, and sailors at sea are better protected by the law than they used to be. And I'll have you for a witness to this before the court when we get to Seattle."

Mr. Pike stepped into the doorway.

"Shut up, you damned sea-lawyer, you," he snarled. "Haven't you played a dirty trick enough comin' on board this ship in your condition? And if I have anything more out of you . . . "

Mr. Pike was so angry that he could not complete the threat. After spluttering for a moment he made a fresh attempt.

"You . . . you . . . well, you annoy me, that's what you do."

"I know the law, sir," Davis answered promptly. "I worked full able seaman on this here ship. All hands can testify to that. I was aloft from the start. Yes, sir, and up to my neck in salt water day and night. And you had me below trimmin' coal. I did full duty and more, until this sickness got me — "

"You were petrified and rotten before you ever saw this ship," Mr. Pike broke in.

"The court'll decide that, sir," replied the imperturbable Davis.

"And if you go to shoutin' off your sea-lawyer mouth," Mr. Pike continued, "I'll jerk you out of that and show you what real work is."

"An' lay the owners open for lovely damages when we get in," Davis sneered.

"Not if I bury you before we get in," was the mate's quick, grim retort. "And let me tell you, Davis, you ain't the first sea-lawyer I've dropped over the side with a sack of coal to his feet."

Mr. Pike turned, with a final "Damned sea-lawyer!" and started along the deck. I was walking behind him when he stopped abruptly.

"Mr. Pathurst."

Not as an officer to a passenger did he thus address me. His tone was imperative, and I gave heed.

"Mr. Pathurst. From now on the less you see aboard this ship the better. That is all."

And again he turned on his heel and went his way.

CHAPTER XVI

No, the sea is not a gentle place. It must be the very hardness of the life that makes all sea-people hard. Of course, Captain West is unaware that his crew exists, and Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire never address the men save to give commands. But Miss West, who is more like myself, a passenger, ignores the men. She does not even say good-morning to the man at the wheel when she first comes on deck. Nevertheless I shall, at least to the man at the wheel. Am I not a passenger?

Which reminds me. Technically I am not a passenger. The *Elsinore* has no licence to carry passengers, and I am down on the articles as third mate and am supposed to receive thirty-five dollars a month. Wada is down as cabin boy, although I paid a good price for his passage and he is my servant.

Not much time is lost at sea in getting rid of the dead. Within an hour after I had watched the sail-makers at work Christian Jespersen was slid overboard, feet first, a sack of coal to his feet to sink him. It was a mild, calm day, and the *Elsinore*, logging a lazy two knots, was not hove to for the occasion. At the last moment Captain West came for'ard, prayer-book in hand, read the brief service for burial at sea, and returned immediately aft. It was the first time I had seen him for'ard.

I shall not bother to describe the burial. All I shall say of it is that it was as sordid as Christian Jespersen's life had been and as his death had been.

As for Miss West, she sat in a deck-chair on the poop busily engaged with some sort of fancy work. When Christian Jespersen and his coal splashed into the sea the crew immediately dispersed, the watch below going to its bunks, the watch on deck to its work. Not a minute elapsed ere Mr. Mellaire was giving orders and the men were pulling and hauling. So I returned to the poop to be unpleasantly impressed by Miss West's smiling unconcern.

"Well, he's buried," I observed.

"Oh," she said, with all the tonelessness of disinterest, and went on with her stitching.

She must have sensed my frame of mind, for, after a moment, she paused from her sewing and looked at me.

Your first sea funeral, Mr. Pathurst?

"Death at sea does not seem to affect you," I said bluntly.

"Not any more than on the land." She shrugged her shoulders. "So many people die, you know. And when they are strangers to you . . . well, what do you do on the land when you learn that some workers have been killed in a factory you pass every day coming to town? It is the same on the sea."

"It's too bad we are a hand short," I said deliberately.

It did not miss her. Just as deliberately she replied:

"Yes, isn't it? And so early in the voyage, too." She looked at me, and when I could not forbear a smile of appreciation she smiled back.

"Oh, I know very well, Mr. Pathurst, that you think me a heartless wretch. But it isn't that it's . . . it's the sea, I suppose. And yet, I didn't know this man. I don't remember ever having seen him. At this stage of the voyage I doubt if I could pick out half-a-dozen of the sailors as men I had ever laid eyes on. So why vex myself with even thinking of this stupid stranger who was killed by another stupid stranger? As well might one die of grief with reading the murder columns of the daily papers."

"And yet, it seems somehow different," I contended.

"Oh, you'll get used to it," she assured me cheerfully, and returned to her sewing.

I asked her if she had read Moody's *Ship of Souls*, but she had not. I searched her out further. She liked Browning, and was especially fond of *The Ring and the Book*. This was the key to her. She cared only for healthful literature — for the literature that exposits the vital lies of life.

For instance, the mention of Schopenhauer produced smiles and laughter. To her all the philosophers of pessimism were laughable. The red blood of her would not permit her to take them seriously. I tried her out with a conversation I had had with De Casseres shortly before leaving New York. De Casseres, after tracing Jules de Gaultier's philosophic genealogy back to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, had concluded with the proposition that out of their two formulas de Gaultier had constructed an even profounder formula. The "Will-to-Live" of the one and the "Will-to-Power" of the other were, after all, only parts of de Gaultier's supreme generalization, the "Will-to-Illusion."

I flatter myself that even De Casseres would have been pleased with the way I repeated his argument. And when I had concluded it, Miss West promptly demanded if the realists might not be fooled by their own phrases as often and as completely as were the poor common mortals with the vital lies they never questioned.

And there we were. An ordinary young woman, who had never vexed her brains with ultimate problems, hears such things stated for the first time, and immediately, and with a laugh, sweeps them all away. I doubt not that De Casseres would have agreed with her.

"Do you believe in God?" I asked rather abruptly. She dropped her sewing into her lap, looked at me meditatively, then gazed on and away across the flashing sea and up into the azure dome of sky. And finally, with true feminine evasion, she replied:

"My father does."

"But you?" I insisted.

"I really don't know. I don't bother my head about such things. I used to when I was a little girl. And yet . . . yes, surely I believe in God. At times, when I am not thinking about it at all, I am very sure, and my faith that all is well is just as strong as the faith of your Jewish friend in the phrases of the philosophers. That's all it comes to, I suppose, in every case — faith. But, as I say, why bother?"

"Ah, I have you now, Miss West!" I cried. "You are a true daughter of Herodias."

"It doesn't sound nice," she said with a *moue*.

"And it isn't," I exulted. "Nevertheless, it is what you are. It is Arthur Symon's poem, *The Daughters of Herodias*. Some day I shall read it to you, and you will answer. I know you will answer that you, too, have looked often upon the stars."

We had just got upon the subject of music, of which she possesses a surprisingly solid knowledge, and she was telling me that Debussy and his school held no particular charm for her, when Possum set up a wild yelping.

The puppy had strayed for'ard along the bridge to the 'midship-house, and had evidently been investigating the chickens when his disaster came upon him. So shrill was his terror that we both stood up. He was dashing along the bridge toward us at full speed, yelping at every jump and continually turning his head back in the direction whence he came.

I spoke to him and held out my hand, and was rewarded with a snap and clash of teeth as he scuttled past. Still with head turned back, he went on along the poop. Before I could apprehend his danger, Mr. Pike and Miss West were after him. The mate was the nearer, and with a magnificent leap gained the rail just in time to intercept Possum, who was blindly going overboard under the slender railing. With a sort of scooping kick Mr. Pike sent the animal rolling half across the poop. Howling and snapping more violently, Possum regained his feet and staggered on toward the opposite railing.

"Don't touch him!" Mr. Pike cried, as Miss West showed her intention of catching the crazed little animal with her hands. "Don't touch'm! He's got a fit."

But it did not deter her. He was half-way under the railing when she caught him up and held him at arm's length while he howled and barked and slavered.

"It's a fit," said Mr. Pike, as the terrier collapsed and lay on the deck jerking convulsively.

"Perhaps a chicken pecked him," said Miss West. "At any rate, get a bucket of water."

"Better let me take him," I volunteered helplessly, for I was unfamiliar with fits.

"No; it's all right," she answered. "I'll take charge of him. The cold water is what he needs. He got too close to the coop, and a peck on the nose frightened him into the fit."

"First time I ever heard of a fit coming that way," Mr. Pike remarked, as he poured water over the puppy under Miss West's direction. "It's just a plain puppy fit. They all get them at sea."

"I think it was the sails that caused it," I argued. "I've noticed that he is very afraid of them. When they flap, he crouches down in terror and starts to run. You noticed how he ran with his head turned back?"

"I've seen dogs with fits do that when there was nothing to frighten them," Mr. Pike contended.

"It was a fit, no matter what caused it," Miss West stated conclusively. "Which means that he has not been fed properly. From now on I shall feed him. You tell your boy that, Mr. Pathurst. Nobody is to feed Possum anything without my permission."

At this juncture Wada arrived with Possum's little sleeping box, and they prepared to take him below.

"It was splendid of you, Miss West," I said, "and rash, as well, and I won't attempt to thank you. But I tell you what-you take him. He's your dog now."

She laughed and shook her head as I opened the chart-house door for her to pass.

"No; but I'll take care of him for you. Now don't bother to come below. This is my affair, and you would only be in the way. Wada will help me."

And I was rather surprised, as I returned to my deck chair and sat down, to find how affected I was by the little episode. I remembered, at the first, that my pulse had been distinctly accelerated with the excitement of what had taken place. And somehow, as I leaned back in my chair and lighted a cigarette, the strangeness of the whole voyage vividly came to me. Miss West and I talk philosophy and art on the poop of a stately ship in a circle of flashing sea, while Captain West dreams of his far home, and Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire stand watch and watch and snarl orders, and the slaves of men pull and haul, and Possum has fits, and Andy Fay and Mulligan Jacobs burn with hatred unconsumable, and the small-handed half-caste Chinese cooks for all, and Sundry Buyers perpetually presses his abdomen, and O'Sullivan raves in the steel cell of the 'midship-house, and Charles Davis lies about him nursing a marlin-spike, and Christian Jespersen, miles astern, is deep sunk in the sea with a sack of coal at his feet.

CHAPTER XVII

Two weeks out to-day, on a balmy sea, under a cloud-flecked sky, and slipping an easy eight knots through the water to a light easterly wind. Captain West said he was almost convinced that it was the north-east trade. Also, I have learned that the *Elsinore*, in order to avoid being jammed down on Cape San Roque, on the Brazil coast, must first fight eastward almost to the coast of Africa. On occasion, on this traverse, the Cape Verde Islands are raised. No wonder the voyage from Baltimore to Seattle is reckoned at eighteen thousand miles.

I found Tony, the suicidal Greek, steering this morning when I came on deck. He seemed sensible enough, and quite rationally took off his hat when I said good morning to him. The sick men are improving nicely, with the exceptions of Charles Davis and O'Sullivan. The latter still is lashed to his bunk, and Mr. Pike has compelled Davis to attend on him. As a result, Davis moves about the deck, bringing food and water from the galley and grumbling his wrongs to every member of the crew.

Wada told me a strange thing this morning. It seems that he, the steward, and the two sail-makers foregather each evening in the cook's room — all being Asiatics — where they talk over ship's gossip. They seem to miss little, and Wada brings it all to me. The thing Wada told me was the curious conduct of Mr. Mellaire. They have sat in judgment on him and they do not approve of his intimacy with the three gangsters for'ard.

"But, Wada," I said, "he is not that kind of a man. He is very hard and rough with all the sailors. He treats them like dogs. You know that."

"Sure," assented Wada. "Other sailors he do that. But those three very bad men he make good friends. Louis say second mate belong aft like first mate and captain. No good for second mate talk like friend with sailors. No good for ship. Bime by trouble. You see. Louis say Mr. Mellaire crazy do that kind funny business."

All of which, if it were true, and I saw no reason to doubt it, led me to inquire. It seems that the gangsters, Kid Twist, Nosey Murphy, and Bert Rhine, have made themselves cocks of the forecastle. Standing together, they have established a reign of terror and are ruling the forecastle. All their training in New York in ruling the slum brutes and weaklings in their gangs fits them for the part. As near as I could make out from Wada's tale, they first began on the two Italians in their watch, Guido Bombini and Mike Cipriani. By means I cannot guess, they have reduced these two wretches to trembling slaves. As an instance, the other night, according to the ship's gossip, Bert Rhine made Bombini get out of bed and fetch him a drink of water.

Isaac Chantz is likewise under their rule, though he is treated more kindly. Herman Lunkenheimer, a good-natured but simple-minded dolt of a German, received a severe beating from the three because he refused to wash some of Nosey Murphy's dirty garments. The two bosuns are in fear of their lives with this clique, which is growing; for Steve Roberts, the ex-cowboy, and the white-slaver, Arthur Deacon, have been admitted to it.

I am the only one aft who possesses this information, and I confess I don't know what to do with it. I know that Mr. Pike would tell me to mind my own business. Mr. Mellaire is out of the question. And Captain West hasn't any crew. And I fear Miss West would laugh at me for my pains. Besides, I understand that every forecastle has its bully, or group of bullies; so this is merely a forecastle matter and no concern of the afterguard. The ship's work goes on. The only effect I can conjecture is an increase in the woes of the unfortunates who must bow to this petty tyranny for'ard.

— Oh, and another thing Wada told me. The gangster clique has established its privilege of taking first cut of the salt-beef in the meat-kids. After that, the rest take the rejected pieces. But I will say, contrary to my expectations, the *Elsinore's* forecastle is well found. The men are not on whack. They have all they want to eat. A barrel of good hardtack stands always open in the forecastle. Louis bakes fresh bread for the sailors three times a week. The variety of food is excellent, if not the quality. There is no restriction in the amount of water for drinking purposes. And I can only say that in this good weather the men's appearance improves daily.

Possum is very sick. Each day he grows thinner. Scarcely can I call him a perambulating skeleton, because he is too weak to walk. Each day, in this delightful weather, Wada, under Miss West's instructions, brings him up in his box and places him out of the wind on the awninged poop. She has taken full charge of the puppy, and has him sleep in her room each night. I found her yesterday, in the chart-room, reading up the *Elsinore's* medical library. Later on she overhauled the medicine-chest. She is essentially the life-giving, life-conserving female of the species. All her ways, for herself and for others, make toward life.

And yet — and this is so curious it gives me pause — she shows no interest in the sick and injured for'ard.

They are to her cattle, or less than cattle. As the life-giver and race-conserver, I should have imagined her a Lady Bountiful, tripping regularly into that ghastly steel-walled hospital room of the midship-house and dispensing gruel, sunshine, and even tracts. On the contrary, as with her father, these wretched humans do not exist.

And still again, when the steward jammed a splinter under his nail, she was greatly concerned, and manipulated the tweezers and pulled it out. The Elsinore reminds me of a slave plantation before the war; and Miss West is the lady of the plantation, interested only in the house-slaves. The field slaves are beyond her ken or consideration, and the sailors are the Elsinore's field slaves. Why, several days back, when Wada suffered from a severe headache, she was quite perturbed, and dosed him with aspirin. Well, I suppose this is all due to her sea-training. She has been trained hard.

We have the phonograph in the second dog-watch every other evening in this fine weather. On the alternate evenings this period is Mr. Pike's watch on deck. But when it is his evening below, even at dinner, he betrays his anticipation by an eagerness ill suppressed. And yet, on each such occasion, he punctiliously waits until we ask if we are to be favoured with music. Then his hard-bitten face lights up, although the lines remain hard as ever, hiding his ecstasy, and he remarks gruffly, off-handedly, that he guesses he can play over a few records. And so, every other evening, we watch this killer and driver, with lacerated knuckles and gorilla paws, brushing and caressing his beloved discs, ravished with the music of them, and, as he told me early in the voyage, at such moments believing in God.

A strange experience is this life on the Elsinore. I confess, while it seems that I have been here for long months, so familiar am I with every detail of the little round of living, that I cannot orient myself. My mind continually strays from things non-understandable to things incomprehensible — from our Samurai captain with the exquisite Gabriel voice that is heard only in the tumult and thunder of storm; on to the ill-treated and feeble-minded faun with the bright, liquid, pain-filled eyes; to the three gangsters who rule the forecastle and seduce the second mate; to the perpetually muttering O'Sullivan in the steel-walled hole and the complaining Davis nursing the marlin-spike in the upper bunk; and to Christian Jespersen somewhere adrift in this vastitude of ocean with a coal-sack at his feet. At such moments all the life on the *Elsinore* becomes as unreal as life to the philosopher is unreal.

I am a philosopher. Therefore, it is unreal to me. But is it unreal to Messrs. Pike and Mellaire? to the lunatics and idiots? to the rest of the stupid herd for'ard? I cannot help remembering a remark of De Casseres. It was over the wine in Mouquin's. Said he: "The profoundest instinct in man is to war against the truth; that is, against the Real. He shuns facts from his infancy. His life is a perpetual evasion. Miracle, chimera and to-morrow keep him alive. He lives on fiction and myth. It is the Lie that makes him free. Animals alone are given the privilege of lifting the veil of Isis; men dare not. The animal, awake, has no fictional escape from the Real because he has no imagination. Man, awake, is compelled to seek a perpetual escape into Hope, Belief, Fable, Art, God, Socialism, Immortality, Alcohol, Love. From Medusa-Truth he makes an appeal to Maya-Lie."

Ben will agree that I have quoted him fairly. And so, the thought comes to me, that to all these slaves of the *Elsinore* the Real is real because they fictionally escape it. One and all they are obsessed with the belief that they are free agents. To me the Real is unreal, because I have torn aside the veils of fiction and myth. My pristine fictional escape from the Real, making me a philosopher, has bound me absolutely to the wheel of the Real. I, the super-realist, am the only unrealist on board the *Elsinore*. Therefore I, who penetrate it deepest, in the whole phenomena of living on the *Elsinore* see it only as phantasmagoria.

Paradoxes? I admit it. All deep thinkers are drowned in the sea of contradictions. But all the others on the *Elsinore*, sheer surface swimmers, keep afloat on this sea — forsooth, because they have never dreamed its depth. And I can easily imagine what Miss West's practical, hard-headed judgment would be on these speculations of mine. After all, words are traps. I don't know what I know, nor what I think I think.

This I do know: I cannot orient myself. I am the maddest and most sea-lost soul on board. Take Miss West. I am beginning to admire her. Why, I know not, unless it be because she is so abominably healthy. And yet, it is this very health of her, the absence of any shred of degenerative genius, that prevents her from being great . . . for instance, in her music.

A number of times, now, I have come in during the day to listen to her playing. The piano is good, and her teaching has evidently been of the best. To my astonishment I learn that she is a graduate of Bryn Mawr, and that her father took a degree from old Bowdoin long ago. And yet she lacks in her music.

Her touch is masterful. She has the firmness and weight (without sharpness or pounding) of a man's playing — the strength and surety that most women lack and that some women know they lack. When she makes a slip she is ruthless with herself, and replays until the difficulty is overcome. And she is quick to overcome it.

Yes, and there is a sort of temperament in her work, but there is no sentiment, no fire. When she plays Chopin, she interprets his sureness and neatness. She is the master of Chopin's technique, but she never walks where Chopin walks on the heights. Somehow, she stops short of the fulness of music.

I did like her method with Brahms, and she was not unwilling, at my suggestion, to go over and over the Three Rhapsodies. On the Third Intermezzo she was at her best, and a good best it was.

"You were talking of Debussy," she remarked. "I've got some of his stuff here. But I don't get into it. I don't understand it, and there is no use in trying. It doesn't seem altogether like real music to me. It fails to get hold of me, just as I fail to get hold of it."

"Yet you like MacDowell," I challenged.

"Y. . . es," she admitted grudgingly. "His New England Idylls and Fireside Tales. And I like that Finnish man's stuff, Sibelius, too, although it seems to me too soft, too richly soft, too beautiful, if you know what I mean. It seems to cloy."

What a pity, I thought, that with that noble masculine touch of hers she is unaware of the deeps of music. Some day I shall try to get from her just what Beethoven, say, and Chopin, mean to her. She has not read Shaw's *Perfect Wagnerite*, nor had she ever heard of Nietzsche's *Case of Wagner*. She likes Mozart, and old Boccherini, and Leonardo Leo. Likewise she is partial to Schumann, especially Forest Scenes. And she played his Papillons most brilliantly. When I closed my eyes I could have sworn it was a man's fingers on the keys.

And yet, I must say it, in the long run her playing makes me nervous. I am continually led up to false expectations. Always, she seems just on the verge of achieving the big thing, the super-big thing, and always she just misses it by a shade. Just as I am prepared for the culminating flash and illumination, I receive more perfection of technique. She is cold. She must be cold . . . Or else, and the theory is worth considering, she is too healthy.

I shall certainly read to her *The Daughters of Herodias*.

CHAPTER XVIII

Was there ever such a voyage! This morning, when I came on deck, I found nobody at the wheel. It was a startling sight — the great *Elsinore*, by the wind, under an Alpine range of canvas, every sail set from skysails to try-sails and spanker, slipping across the surface of a mild trade-wind sea, and no hand at the wheel to guide her.

No one was on the poop. It was Mr. Pike's watch, and I strolled for'ard along the bridge to find him. He was on Number One hatch giving some instructions to the sail-makers. I awaited my chance, until he glanced up and greeted me.

"Good morning," I answered. "And what man is at the wheel now?"

"That crazy Greek, Tony," he replied.

"A month's wages to a pound of tobacco he isn't," I offered.

Mr. Pike looked at me with quick sharpness.

"Who is at the wheel?"

"Nobody," I replied.

And then he exploded into action. The age-lag left his massive frame, and he bounded aft along the deck at a speed no man on board could have exceeded; and I doubt if very many could have equalled it. He went up the poop-ladder three steps at a time and disappeared in the direction of the wheel behind the chart-house.

Next came a promptitude of bellowed orders, and all the watch was slacking away after braces to starboard and pulling on after braces to port. I had already learned the manoeuvre. Mr. Pike was wearing ship.

As I returned aft along the bridge Mr. Mellaire and the carpenter emerged from the cabin door. They had been interrupted at breakfast, for they were wiping their mouths. Mr. Pike came to the break of the poop, called down instructions to the second mate, who proceeded for'ard, and ordered the carpenter to take the wheel.

As the *Elsinore* swung around on her heel Mr. Pike put her on the back track so as to cover the water she had just crossed over. He lowered the glasses through which he was scanning the sea and pointed down the hatchway that opened into the big after-room beneath. The ladder was gone.

"Must have taken the lazarette ladder with him," said Mr. Pike.

Captain West strolled out of the chart-room. He said good morning in his customary way, courteously to me and formally to the mate, and strolled on along the poop to the wheel, where he paused to glance into the binnacle. Turning, he went on leisurely to the break of the poop. Again he came back to us. Fully two minutes must have elapsed ere he spoke.

"What is the matter, Mr. Pike? Man overboard?"

"Yes, sir," was the answer.

"And took the lazarette ladder along with him?" Captain West queried.

"Yes, sir. It's the Greek that jumped over at Baltimore."

Evidently the affair was not serious enough for Captain West to be the Samurai. He lighted a cigar and resumed his stroll. And yet he had missed nothing, not even the absence of the ladder.

Mr. Pike sent look-outs aloft to every skysail-yard, and the *Elsinore* slipped along through the smooth sea. Miss West came up and stood beside me, searching the ocean with her eyes while I told her the little I knew. She evidenced no excitement, and reassured me by telling me how difficult it was to lose a man of Tony's suicidal type.

"Their madness always seems to come upon them in fine weather or under safe circumstances," she smiled, "when a boat can be lowered or a tug is alongside. And sometimes they take life — preservers with them, as in this case."

At the end of an hour Mr. Pike wore the *Elsinore* around, and again retraced the course she must have been sailing when the Greek went over. Captain West still strolled and smoked, and Miss West made a brief trip below to give Wada forgotten instructions about Possum. Andy Pay was called to the wheel, and the carpenter went below to finish his breakfast.

It all seemed rather callous to me. Nobody was much concerned for the man who was overboard somewhere on that lonely ocean. And yet I had to admit that everything possible was being done to find him. I talked a little with Mr. Pike, and he seemed more vexed than anything else. He disliked to have the ship's work interrupted in such fashion.

Mr. Mellaire's attitude was different.

"We are short-handed enough as it is," he told me, when he joined us on the poop. "We can't afford to lose him even if he is crazy. We need him. He's a good sailor most of the time."

The hail came from the mizzen-skysail-yard. The Maltese Cockney it was who first sighted the man and called down the information. The mate, looking to windwards, suddenly lowered his glasses, rubbed his eyes in a puzzled way, and looked again. Then Miss West, using another pair of glasses, cried out in surprise and began to laugh.

“What do you make of it, Miss West?” the mate asked.

“He doesn’t seem to be in the water. He’s standing up.”

Mr. Pike nodded.

“He’s on the ladder,” he said. “I’d forgotten that. It fooled me at first. I couldn’t understand it.” He turned to the second mate. “Mr. Mellaire, will you launch the long boat and get some kind of a crew into it while I back the main-yard? I’ll go in the boat. Pick men that can pull an oar.”

“You go, too,” Miss West said to me. “It will be an opportunity to get outside the *Elsinore* and see her under full sail.”

Mr. Pike nodded consent, so I went along, sitting near him in the stern-sheets where he steered, while half a dozen hands rowed us toward the suicide, who stood so weirdly upon the surface of the sea. The Maltese Cockney pulled the stroke oar, and among the other five men was one whose name I had but recently learned — Ditman Olansen, a Norwegian. A good seaman, Mr. Mellaire had told me, in whose watch he was; a good seaman, but “crank-eyed.” When pressed for an explanation Mr. Mellaire had said that he was the sort of man who flew into blind rages, and that one never could tell what little thing would produce such a rage. As near as I could grasp it, Ditman Olansen was a Berserker type. Yet, as I watched him pulling in good time at the oar, his large, pale-blue eyes seemed almost bovine — the last man in the world, in my judgment, to have a Berserker fit.

As we drew close to the Greek he began to scream menacingly at us and to brandish a sheath-knife. His weight sank the ladder until the water washed his knees, and on this submerged support he balanced himself with wild writhing and outflinging of arms. His face, grimacing like a monkey’s, was not a pretty thing to look upon. And as he continued to threaten us with the knife I wondered how the problem of rescuing him would be solved.

But I should have trusted Mr. Pike for that. He removed the boat-stretcher from under the Maltese Cockney’s feet and laid it close to hand in the stern-sheets. Then he had the men reverse the boat and back it upon the Greek. Dodging a sweep of the knife, Mr. Pike awaited his chance, until a passing wave lifted the boat’s stern high, while Tony was sinking toward the trough. This was the moment. Again I was favoured with a sample of the lightning speed with which that aged man of sixty-nine could handle his body. Timed precisely, and delivered in a flash and with weight, the boat-stretcher came down on the Greek's head. The knife fell into the sea, and the demented creature collapsed and followed it, knocked unconscious. Mr. Pike scooped him out, quite effortlessly it seemed to me, and flung him into the boat's bottom at my feet.

The next moment the men were bending to their oars and the mate was steering back to the *Elsinore*. It was a stout rap Mr. Pike had administered with the boat-stretcher. Thin streaks of blood oozed on the damp, plastered hair from the broken scalp. I could but stare at the lump of unconscious flesh that dripped sea-water at my feet. A man, all life and movement one moment, defying the universe, reduced the next moment to immobility and the blackness and blankness of death, is always a fascinating object for the contemplative eye of the philosopher. And in this case it had been accomplished so simply, by means of a stick of wood brought sharply in contact with his skull.

If Tony the Greek be accounted an *appearance*, what was he now? — a *disappearance*? And if so, whither had he disappeared? And whence would he journey back to reoccupy that body when what we call consciousness returned to him? The first word, much less the last, of the phenomena of personality and consciousness yet remains to be uttered by the psychologists.

Pondering thus, I chanced to lift my eyes, and the glorious spectacle of the *Elsinore* burst upon me. I had been so long on board, and in board of her, that I had forgotten she was a white-painted ship. So low to the water was her hull, so delicate and slender, that the tall, sky-reaching spars and masts and the hugeness of the spread of canvas seemed preposterous and impossible, an insolent derision of the law of gravitation. It required effort to realize that that slim curve of hull inclosed and bore up from the sea's bottom five thousand tons of coal. And again, it seemed a miracle that the mites of men had conceived and constructed so stately and magnificent an element-defying fabric — mites of men, most woefully like the Greek at my feet, prone to precipitation into the blackness by means of a rap on the head with a piece of wood.

Tony made a struggling noise in his throat, then coughed and groaned. From somewhere he was reappearing. I noticed Mr. Pike look at him quickly, as if apprehending some recrudescence of frenzy that would require more boat-stretcher. But Tony merely fluttered his big black eyes open and stared at me for a long minute of incurious amaze ere he closed them again.

“What are you going to do with him?” I asked the mate.

“Put ’m back to work,” was the reply. “It’s all he’s good for, and he ain’t hurt. Somebody’s got to work this ship around the Horn.”

When we hoisted the boat on board I found Miss West had gone below. In the chart-room Captain West was winding the chronometers. Mr. Mellaire had turned in to catch an hour or two of sleep ere his watch on deck at noon. Mr. Mellaire, by the way, as I have forgotten to state, does not sleep aft. He shares a room in the ’midship-house with Mr. Pike’s Nancy.

Nobody showed sympathy for the unfortunate Greek. He was bundled out upon Number Two hatch like so much carrion and left there unattended, to recover consciousness as he might elect. Yes, and so inured have I become that I make free to admit I felt no sympathy for him myself. My eyes were still filled with the beauty of the *Elsinore*. One does grow hard at sea.

CHAPTER XIX

One does not mind the trades. We have held the north-east trade for days now, and the miles roll off behind us as the patent log whirls and tinkles on the taffrail. Yesterday, log and observation approximated a run of two hundred and fifty-two miles; the day before we ran two hundred and forty, and the day before that two hundred and sixty-one. But one does not appreciate the force of the wind. So balmy and exhilarating is it that it is so much atmospheric wine. I delight to open my lungs and my pores to it. Nor does it chill. At any hour of the night, while the cabin lies asleep, I break off from my reading and go up on the poop in the thinnest of tropical pyjamas.

I never knew before what the trade wind was. And now I am infatuated with it. I stroll up and down for an hour at a time, with whichever mate has the watch. Mr. Mellaire is always full-garmented, but Mr. Pike, on these delicious nights, stands his first watch after midnight in his pyjamas. He is a fearfully muscular man. Sixty-nine years seem impossible when I see his single, slimpsy garments pressed like fleshings against his form and bulged by heavy bone and huge muscle. A splendid figure of a man! What he must have been in the hey-day of youth two score years and more ago passes comprehension.

The days, so filled with simple routine, pass as in a dream. Here, where time is rigidly measured and emphasized by the changing of the watches, where every hour and half-hour is persistently brought to one's notice by the striking of the ship's bells fore and aft, time ceases. Days merge into days, and weeks slip into weeks, and I, for one, can never remember the day of the week or month.

The *Elsinore* is never totally asleep. Day and night, always, there are the men on watch, the look-out on the forecastle head, the man at the wheel, and the officer of the deck. I lie reading in my bunk, which is on the weather side, and continually over my head during the long night hours impact the footsteps of one mate or the other, pacing up and down, and, as I well know, the man himself is for ever peering for'ard from the break of the poop, or glancing into the binnacle, or feeling and gauging the weight and direction of wind on his cheek, or watching the cloud-stuff in the sky adrift and a-scud across the stars and the moon. Always, always, there are wakeful eyes on the *Elsinore*.

Last night, or this morning, rather, about two o’clock, as I lay with the printed page swimming drowsily before me, I was aroused by an abrupt outbreak of snarl from Mr. Pike. I located him as at the break of the poop; and the man at whom he snarled was Larry, evidently on the main deck beneath him. Not until Wada brought me breakfast did I learn what had occurred.

Larry, with his funny pug nose, his curiously flat and twisted face, and his querulous, plaintive chimpanzee eyes, had been moved by some unlucky whim to venture an insolent remark under the cover of darkness on the main deck. But Mr. Pike, from above, at the break of the poop, had picked the offender unerringly. This was when the explosion occurred. Then the unfortunate Larry, truly half-devil and all child, had waxed sullen and retorted still more insolently; and the next he knew, the mate, descending upon him like a hurricane, had handcuffed him to the mizzen fife-rail.

Imagine, on Mr. Pike’s part, that this was one for Larry and at least ten for Kid Twist, Nosey Murphy, and Bert Rhine. I’ll not be so absurd as to say that the mate is afraid of those gangsters. I doubt if he has ever experienced fear. It is not in him. On the other hand, I am confident that he apprehends trouble from these men, and that it was for their benefit he made this example of Larry.

Larry could stand no more than an hour in irons, at which time his stupid brutishness overcame any fear he might have possessed, because he bellowed out to the poop to come down and loose him for a fair fight. Promptly Mr. Pike was there with the key to the handcuffs. As if Larry had the shred of a chance against that redoubtable aged man! Wada reported that Larry, amongst other things, had lost a couple of front teeth and was laid up in his bunk for the day. When I met Mr. Pike on deck after eight o’clock I glanced at his knuckles. They verified Wada’s tale.

I cannot help being amused by the keen interest I take in little events like the foregoing. Not only has time ceased, but the world has ceased. Strange it is, when I come to think of it, in all these weeks I have received no letter, no telephone call, no telegram, no visitor. I have not been to the play. I have not read a newspaper. So far as I am concerned, there are no plays nor newspapers. All such things have vanished with the vanished world. All that exists is the *Elsinore*, with her queer human freightage and her cargo of coal, cleaving a rotund of ocean of which the skyline is a dozen miles away.

I am reminded of Captain Scott, frozen on his south-polar venture, who for ten months after his death was believed by the world to be alive. Not until the world learned of his death was he anything but alive to the world. By the same token, was he not alive? And by the same token, here on the *Elsinore*, has not the land-world ceased? May not the pupil of one's eye be, not merely the centre of the world, but the world itself? Truly, it is tenable that the world exists only in consciousness. "The world is my idea," said Schopenhauer. Said Jules de Gaultier, "The world is my invention." His dogma was that imagination created the Real. Ah, me, I know that the practical Miss West would dub my metaphysics a depressing and unhealthful exercise of my wits.

To-day, in our deck chairs on the poop, I read *The Daughters of Herodias* to Miss West. It was superb in its effect — just what I had expected of her. She hemstitched a fine white linen handkerchief for her father while I read. (She is never idle, being so essentially a nest-maker and comfort-producer and race-conserver; and she has a whole pile of these handkerchiefs for her father.)

She smiled, how shall I say? — oh, incredulously, triumphantly, oh, with all the sure wisdom of all the generations of women in her warm, long gray eyes, when I read:

"But they smile innocently and dance on,
Having no thought but this unslumbering thought:
'Am I not beautiful? Shall I not be loved?'
Be patient, for they will not understand,
Not till the end of time will they put by
The weaving of slow steps about men's hearts."

"But it is well for the world that it is so," was her comment.

Ah, Symons knew women! His perfect knowledge she attested when I read that magnificent passage:

"They do not understand that in the world
There grows between the sunlight and the grass
Anything save themselves desirable.
It seems to them that the swift eyes of men
Are made but to be mirrors, not to see
Far-off, disastrous, unattainable things.

‘For are not we,’ they say, ‘the end of all?
Why should you look beyond us? If you look
Into the night, you will find nothing there:
We also have gazed often at the stars.’”

“It is true,” said Miss West, in the pause I permitted in order to see how she had received the thought. “We also have gazed often at the stars.”

It was the very thing I had predicted to her face that she would say.

“But wait,” I cried. “Let me read on.” And I read:

“‘We, we alone among all beautiful things,
We only are real: for the rest are dreams.
Why will you follow after wandering dreams
When we await you? And you can but dream
Of us, and in our image fashion them.’”

“True, most true,” she murmured, while all unconsciously pride and power mounted in her eyes.

“A wonderful poem,” she conceded — nay, proclaimed — when I had done.

“But do you not see . . .” I began impulsively, then abandoned the attempt. For how could she see, being woman, the “far-off, disastrous, unattainable things,” when she, as she so stoutly averred, had gazed often on the stars?

She? What could she see, save what all women see — that they only are real, and that all the rest are dreams.

“I am proud to be a daughter of Herodias,” said Miss West.

“Well,” I admitted lamely, “we agree. You remember it is what I told you you were.”

“I am grateful for the compliment,” she said; and in those long gray eyes of hers were limned and coloured all the satisfaction, and self-certitude and answering complacency of power that constitute so large a part of the seductive mystery and mastery that is possessed by woman.

CHAPTER XX

Heavens! — how I read in this fine weather. I take so little exercise that my sleep need is very small; and there are so few interruptions, such as life teems with on the land, that I read myself almost stupid. Recommend me a sea-voyage any time for a man who is behind in his reading. I am making up years of it. It is an orgy, a debauch; and I am sure the addled sailors adjudge me the queerest creature on board.

At times, so fuzzy do I get from so much reading, that I am glad for any diversion. When we strike the doldrums, which lie between the north-east and the south-east trades, I shall have Wada assemble my little twenty-two automatic rifle and try to learn how to shoot. I used to shoot, when I was a wee lad. I can remember dragging a shot-gun around with me over the hills. Also, I possessed an air-rifle, with which, on great occasion, I was even able to slaughter a robin.

While the poop is quite large for promenading, the available space for deck-chairs is limited to the awnings that stretch across from either side of the chart-house and that are of the width of the chart-house. This space again is restricted to one side or the other according to the slant of the morning and afternoon sun and the freshness of the breeze. Wherefore, Miss West's chair and mine are most frequently side by side. Captain West has a chair, which he infrequently occupies. He has so little to do in the working of the ship, taking his regular observations and working them up with such celerity, that he is rarely in the chart-room for any length of time. He elects to spend his hours in the main cabin, not reading, not doing anything save dream with eyes wide open in the draught of wind that pours through the open ports and door from out the huge crojack and the jigger staysails.

Miss West is never idle. Below, in the big after-room, she does her own laundering. Nor will she let the steward touch her father's fine linen. In the main cabin she has installed a sewing-machine. All hand-stitching, and embroidering, and fancy work she does in the deck-chair beside me. She avers that she loves the sea and the atmosphere of sea-life, yet, verily, she has brought her home-things and land-things along with her — even to her pretty china for afternoon tea.

Most essentially is she the woman and home-maker. She is a born cook. The steward and Louis prepare dishes extraordinary and *de luxe* for the cabin table; yet Miss West is able at a moment's notice to improve on these dishes. She never lets any of their dishes come on the table without first planning them or passing on them. She has quick judgment, an unerring taste, and is possessed of the needful steel of decision. It seems she has only to look at a dish, no matter who has cooked it, and immediately divine its lack or its surplusage, and prescribe a treatment that transforms it into something indescribably different and delicious — My, how I do eat! I am quite dumbfounded by the unfailing voracity of my appetite. Already am I quite convinced that I am glad Miss West is making the voyage.

She has sailed "out East," as she quaintly calls it, and has an enormous repertoire of tasty, spicy, Eastern dishes. In the cooking of rice Louis is a master; but in the making of the accompanying curry he fades into a blundering amateur compared with Miss West. In the matter of curry she is a sheer genius. How often one's thoughts dwell upon food when at sea!

So in this trade-wind weather I see a great deal of Miss West. I read all the time, and quite a good part of the time I read aloud to her passages, and even books, with which I am interested in trying her out. Then, too, such reading gives rise to discussions, and she has not yet uttered anything that would lead me to change my first judgment of her. She is a genuine daughter of Herodias.

And yet she is not what one would call a cute girl. She isn't a girl, she is a mature woman with all the freshness of a girl. She has the carriage, the attitude of mind, the aplomb of a woman, and yet she cannot be described as being in the slightest degree stately. She is generous, dependable, sensible — yes, and sensitive; and her superabundant vitality, the vitality that makes her walk so gloriously, discounts the maturity of her. Sometimes she seems all of thirty to me; at other times, when her spirits and risibilities are aroused, she scarcely seems thirteen. I shall make a point of asking Captain West the date of the *Dixie's* collision with that river steamer in San Francisco Bay. In a word, she is the most normal, the most healthy, natural woman I have ever known.

Yes, and she is feminine, despite, no matter how she does her hair, that it is as invariably smooth and well-groomed as all the rest of her. On the other hand, this perpetual well-groomedness is relieved by the latitude of dress she allows herself. She never fails of being a woman. Her sex, and the lure of it, is ever present. Possibly she may possess high collars, but I have never seen her in one on board. Her blouses are always open at the throat, disclosing one of her choicest assets, the muscular, adequate neck, with its fine-textured garmenture of skin. I embarrass myself by stealing long glances at that bare throat of hers and at the hint of fine, firm-surfaced shoulder.

Visiting the chickens has developed into a regular function. At least once each day we make the journey for’ard along the bridge to the top of the ’midship-house. Possum, who is now convalescent, accompanies us. The steward makes a point of being there so as to receive instructions and report the egg-output and laying conduct of the many hens. At the present time our four dozen hens are laying two dozen eggs a day, with which record Miss West is greatly elated.

Already she has given names to most of them. The cock is Peter, of course. A much-speckled hen is Dolly Varden. A slim, trim thing that dogs Peter’s heels she calls Cleopatra. Another hen — the mellowest-voiced one of all — she addresses as Bernhardt. One thing I have noted: whenever she and the steward have passed death sentence on a non-laying hen (which occurs regularly once a week), she takes no part in the eating of the meat, not even when it is metamorphosed into one of her delectable curries. At such times she has a special curry made for herself of tinned lobster, or shrimp, or tinned chicken.

Ah, I must not forget. I have learned that it was no man-interest (in me, if you please) that brought about her sudden interest to come on the voyage. It was for her father that she came. Something is the matter with Captain West. At rare moments I have observed her gazing at him with a world of solicitude and anxiety in her eyes.

I was telling an amusing story at table yesterday midday, when my glance chanced to rest upon Miss West. She was not listening. Her food on her fork was suspended in the air a sheer instant as she looked at her father with all her eyes. It was a stare of fear. She realized that I was observing, and with superb control, slowly, quite naturally, she lowered the fork and rested it on her plate, retaining her hold on it and retaining her father’s face in her look.

But I had seen. Yes; I had seen more than that. I had seen Captain West’s face a transparent white, while his eyelids fluttered down and his lips moved noiselessly. Then the eyelids raised, the lips set again with their habitual discipline, and the colour slowly returned to his face. It was as if he had been away for a time and just returned. But I had seen, and guessed her secret.

And yet it was this same Captain West, seven hours later, who chastened the proud sailor spirit of Mr. Pike. It was in the second dog-watch that evening, a dark night, and the watch was pulling away on the main deck. I had just come out of the chart-house door and seen Captain West pace by me, hands in pockets, toward the break of the poop. Abruptly, from the mizzen-mast, came a snap of breakage and crash of fabric. At the same instant the men fell backward and sprawled over the deck.

A moment of silence followed, and then Captain West's voice went out:

"What carried away, Mr. Pike?"

"The halyards, sir," came the reply out of the darkness.

There was a pause. Again Captain West's voice went out.

"Next time slack away on your sheet first."

Now Mr. Pike is incontestably a splendid seaman. Yet in this instance he had been wrong. I have come to know him, and I can well imagine the hurt to his pride. And more — he has a wicked, resentful, primitive nature, and though he answered respectfully enough, "Yes, sir," I felt safe in predicting to myself that the poor devils under him would receive the weight of his resentment in the later watches of the night.

They evidently did; for this morning I noted a black eye on John Hackey, a San Francisco hoodlum, and Guido Bombini was carrying a freshly and outrageously swollen jaw. I asked Wada about the matter, and he soon brought me the news. Quite a bit of beating up takes place for'ard of the deck-houses in the night watches while we of the after-guard peacefully slumber.

Even to-day Mr. Pike is going around sullen and morose, snarling at the men more than usual, and barely polite to Miss West and me when we chance to address him. His replies are grunted in monosyllables, and his face is set in superlative sourness. Miss West who is unaware of the occurrence, laughs and calls it a "sea grouch" — a phenomenon with which she claims large experience.

But I know Mr. Pike now — the stubborn, wonderful old sea-dog. It will be three days before he is himself again. He takes a terrible pride in his seamanship, and what hurts him most is the knowledge that he was guilty of the blunder.

CHAPTER XXI

To-day, twenty-eight days out, in the early morning, while I was drinking my coffee, still carrying the north-east trade, we crossed the line. And Charles Davis signalized the event by murdering O'Sullivan. It was Boney, the lanky splinter of a youth in Mr. Mellaire's watch, who brought the news. The second mate and I had just arrived in the hospital room, when Mr. Pike entered.

O'Sullivan's troubles were over. The man in the upper bunk had completed the mad, sad span of his life with the marlin-spike.

I cannot understand this Charles Davis. He sat up calmly in his bunk, and calmly lighted his pipe ere he replied to Mr. Mellaire. He certainly is not insane. Yet deliberately, in cold blood, he has murdered a helpless man.

"What'd you do it for?" Mr. Mellaire demanded.

"Because, sir," said Charles Davis, applying a second match to his pipe, "because" — puff, puff — "he bothered my sleep." Here he caught Mr. Pike's glowering eye. "Because" — puff, puff — "he annoyed me. The next time" — puff, puff — "I hope better judgment will be shown in what kind of a man is put in with me. Besides" — puff, puff — "this top bunk ain't no place for me. It hurts me to get into it" — puff, puff — "an' I'm gem' back to that lower bunk as soon as you get O'Sullivan out of it."

"But what'd you do it for?" Mr. Pike snarled.

"I told you, sir, because he annoyed me. I got tired of it, an' so, this morning, I just put him out of his misery. An' what are you goin' to do about it? The man's dead, ain't he? An' I killed 'm in self-defence. I know the law. What right'd you to put a ravin' lunatic in with me, an' me sick an' helpless?"

"By God, Davis!" the mate burst forth. "You'll never draw your pay-day in Seattle. I'll fix you out for this, killing a crazy lashed down in his bunk an' harmless. You'll follow 'm overside, my hearty."

"If I do, you'll hang for it, sir," Davis retorted. He turned his cool eyes on me. "An' I call on you, sir, to witness the threats he's made. An' you'll testify to them, too, in court. An' he'll hang as sure as I go over the side. Oh, I know his record. He's afraid to face a court with it. He's been up too many a time with charges of man-killin' an' brutality on the high seas. An' a man could retire for life an live off the interest of the fines he's paid, or his owners paid for him — "

"Shut your mouth or I'll knock it out of your face!" Mr. Pike roared, springing toward him with clenched, up-raised fist.

Davis involuntarily shrank away. His flesh was weak, but not so his spirit. He got himself promptly in hand and struck another match.

"You can't get my goat, sir," he sneered, under the shadow of the impending blow. "I ain't scared to die. A man's got to die once anyway, an' it's none so hard a trick to do when you can't help it. O'Sullivan died so easy it was amazin'. Besides, I ain't goin' to die. I'm goin' to finish this voyage, an' sue the owners when I get to Seattle. I know my rights an' the law. An' I got witnesses."

Truly, I was divided between admiration for the courage of this wretched sailor and sympathy for Mr. Pike thus bearded by a sick man he could not bring himself to strike.

Nevertheless he sprang upon the man with calculated fury, gripped him between the base of the neck and the shoulders with both gnarled paws, and shook him back and forth, violently and frightfully, for a full minute. It was a wonder the man's neck was not dislocated.

"I call on you to witness, sir," Davis gasped at me the instant he was free.

He coughed and strangled, felt his throat, and made wry neck-movements indicative of injury.

"The marks'll begin to show in a few minutes," he murmured complacently as his dizziness left him and his breath came back.

This was too much for Mr. Pike, who turned and left the room, growling and cursing incoherently, deep in his throat. When I made my departure, a moment later, Davis was refilling his pipe and telling Mr. Mellaire that he'd have him up for a witness in Seattle.

* * * * *

So we have had another burial at sea. Mr. Pike was vexed by it because the *Elsinore*, according to sea tradition, was going too fast through the water for a proper ceremony. Thus a few minutes of the voyage were lost by backing the *Elsinore's* main-topsail and deadening her way while the service was read and O'Sullivan was slid overboard with the inevitable sack of coal at his feet.

"Hope the coal holds out," Mr. Pike grumbled morosely at me five minutes later.

* * * * *

And we sit on the poop, Miss West and I, tended on by servants, sipping afternoon tea, sewing fancy work, discussing philosophy and art, while a few feet away from us, on this tiny floating world, all the grimy, sordid tragedy of sordid, malformed, brutish life plays itself out. And Captain West, remote, untroubled, sits dreaming in the twilight cabin while the draught of wind from the crojack blows upon him through the open ports. He has no doubts, no worries. He believes in God. All is settled and clear and well as he nears his far home. His serenity is vast and enviable. But I cannot shake from my eyes that vision of him when life forsook his veins, and his mouth slacked, and his eyelids closed, while his face took on the white transparency of death.

I wonder who will be the next to finish the game and depart with a sack of coal.

"Oh, this is nothing, sir," Mr. Mellaire remarked to me cheerfully as we strolled the poop during the first watch. "I was once on a voyage on a tramp steamer loaded with four hundred Chinks — I beg your pardon, sir — Chinese. They were coolies, contract labourers, coming back from serving their time.

"And the cholera broke out. We hove over three hundred of them overboard, sir, along with both bosuns, most of the Lascar crew, and the captain, the mate, the third mate, and the first and third engineers. The second and one white oiler was all that was left below, and I was in command on deck, when we made port. The doctors wouldn't come aboard. They made me anchor in the outer roads and told me to heave out my dead. There was some tall buryin' about that time, Mr. Pathurst, and they went overboard without canvas, coal, or iron. They had to. I had nobody to help me, and the Chinks below wouldn't lift a hand.

"I had to go down myself, drag the bodies on to the slings, then climb on deck and heave them up with the donkey. And each trip I took a drink. I was pretty drunk when the job was done."

"And you never caught it yourself?" I queried. Mr. Mellaire held up his left hand. I had often noted that the index finger was missing.

"That's all that happened to me, sir. The old man'd had a fox-terrier like yours. And after the old man passed out the puppy got real, chummy with me. Just as I was making the hoist of the last sling-load, what does the puppy do but jump on my leg and sniff my hand. I turned to pat him, and the next I knew my other hand had slipped into the gears and that finger wasn't there any more.

"Heavens!" I cried. "What abominable luck to come through such a terrible experience like that and then lose your finger!"

"That's what I thought, sir," Mr. Mellaire agreed.

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Oh, just held it up and looked at it, and said 'My goodness gracious!' and took another drink."

"And you didn't get the cholera afterwards?"

"No, sir. I reckon I was so full of alcohol the germs dropped dead before they could get to me." He considered a moment. "Candidly, Mr. Pathurst, I don't know about that alcohol theory. The old man and the mates died drunk, and so did the third engineer. But the chief was a teetotaller, and he died, too."

* * * * *

Never again shall I wonder that the sea is hard. I walked apart from the second mate and stared up at the magnificent fabric of the *Elsinore* sweeping and swaying great blotting curves of darkness across the face of the starry sky.

CHAPTER XXII

Something has happened. But nobody knows, either fore or aft, except the interested persons, and they will not say anything. Yet the ship is abuzz with rumours and guesses.

This I do know: Mr. Pike has received a fearful blow on the head. At table, yesterday, at midday, I arrived late, and, passing behind his chair, I saw a prodigious lump on top of his head. When I was seated, facing him, I noted that his eyes seemed dazed; yes, and I could see pain in them. He took no part in the conversation, ate perfunctorily, behaved stupidly at times, and it was patent that he was controlling himself with an iron hand.

And nobody dares ask him what has happened. I know I don't dare ask him, and I am a passenger, a privileged person. This redoubtable old sea-relic has inspired me with a respect for him that partakes half of timidity and half of awe.

He acts as if he were suffering from concussion of the brain. His pain is evident, not alone in his eyes and the strained expression of his face, but by his conduct when he thinks he is unobserved. Last night, just for a breath of air and a moment's gaze at the stars, I came out of the cabin door and stood on the main deck under the break of the poop. From directly over my head came a low and persistent groaning. My curiosity was aroused, and I retreated into the cabin, came out softly on to the poop by way of the chart-house, and strolled noiselessly for'ard in my slippers. It was Mr. Pike. He was leaning collapsed on the rail, his head resting on his arms. He was giving voice in secret to the pain that racked him. A dozen feet away he could not be heard. But, close to his shoulder, I could hear his steady, smothered groaning that seemed to take the form of a chant. Also, at regular intervals, he would mutter:

"Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear." Always he repeated the phrase five times, then returned to his groaning. I stole away as silently as I had come.

Yet he resolutely stands his watches and performs all his duties of chief officer. Oh, I forgot. Miss West dared to quiz him, and he replied that he had a toothache, and that if it didn't get better he'd pull it out.

Wada cannot learn what has happened. There were no eye-witnesses. He says that the Asiatic clique, discussing the affair in the cook's room, thinks the three gangsters are responsible. Bert Rhine is carrying a lame shoulder. Nosey Murphy is limping as from some injury in the hips. And Kid Twist has been so badly beaten that he has not left his bunk for two days. And that is all the data to build on. The gangsters are as close-mouthed as Mr. Pike. The Asiatic clique has decided that murder was attempted and that all that saved the mate was his hard skull.

Last evening, in the second dog-watch, I got another proof that Captain West is not so oblivious of what goes on aboard the *Elsinore* as he seems. I had gone for'ard along the bridge to the mizzen-mast, in the shadow of which I was leaning. From the main deck, in the alley-way between the 'midship-house and the rail, came the voices of Bert Rhine, Nosey Murphy, and Mr. Mellaire. It was not ship's work. They were having a friendly, even sociable chat, for their voices hummed genially, and now and again one or another laughed, and sometimes all laughed.

I remembered Wada's reports on this unseamanlike intimacy of the second mate with the gangsters, and tried to make out the nature of the conversation. But the gangsters were low-voiced, and all I could catch was the tone of friendliness and good-nature.

Suddenly, from the poop, came Captain West's voice. It was the voice, not of the Samurai riding the storm, but of the Samurai calm and cold. It was clear, soft, and mellow as the mellowest bell ever cast by eastern artificers of old time to call worshippers to prayer. I know I slightly chilled to it — it was so exquisitely sweet and yet as passionless as the ring of steel on a frosty night. And I knew the effect on the men beneath me was electrical. I could *feel* them stiffen and chill to it as I had stiffened and chilled. And yet all he said was:

"Mr. Mellaire."

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Mellaire, after a moment of tense silence.

"Come aft here," came Captain West's voice.

I heard the second mate move along the deck beneath me and stop at the foot of the poop-ladder.

"Your place is aft on the poop, Mr. Mellaire," said the cold, passionless voice.

"Yes, sir," answered the second mate.

That was all. Not another word was spoken. Captain West resumed his stroll on the weather side of the poop, and Mr. Mellaire, ascending the ladder, went to pacing up and down the lee side.

I continued along the bridge to the forecastle head and purposely remained there half an hour ere I returned to the cabin by way of the main deck. Although I did not analyze my motive, I knew I did not desire any one to know that I had overheard the occurrence.

* * * * *

I have made a discovery. Ninety per cent. of our crew is brunette. Aft, with the exception of Wada and the steward, who are our servants, we are all blonds. What led me to this discovery was Woodruff's *Effects of Tropical Light on White Men*, which I am just reading. Major Woodruff's thesis is that the white-skinned, blue-eyed Aryan, born to government and command, ever leaving his primeval, overcast and foggy home, ever commands and governs the rest of the world and ever perishes because of the too-white light he encounters. It is a very tenable hypothesis, and will bear looking into.

But to return. Every one of us who sits aft in the high place is a blond Aryan. For'ard, leavened with a ten per cent, of degenerate blonds, the remaining ninety per cent, of the slaves that toil for us are brunettes. They will not perish. According to Woodruff, they will inherit the earth, not because of their capacity for mastery and government, but because of their skin-pigmentation which enables their tissues to resist the ravages of the sun.

And I look at the four of us at table — Captain West, his daughter, Mr. Pike, and myself — all fair-skinned, blue-eyed, and perishing, yet mastering and commanding, like our fathers before us, to the end of our type on the earth. Ah, well, ours is a lordly history, and though we may be doomed to pass, in our time we shall have trod on the faces of all peoples, disciplined them to obedience, taught them government, and dwelt in the palaces we have compelled them by the weight of our own right arms to build for us.

The *Elsinore* depicts this in miniature. The best of the food and all spacious and beautiful accommodation is ours. For'ard is a pig-sty and a slave-pen.

As a king, Captain West sits above all. As a captain of soldiers, Mr. Pike enforces his king's will. Miss West is a princess of the royal house. And I? Am I not an honourable, noble-lineaged pensioner on the deeds and achievements of my father, who, in his day, compelled thousands of the lesser types to the building of the fortune I enjoy?

CHAPTER XXIII

The north-west trade carried us almost into the south-east trade, and then left us for several days to roll and swelter in the doldrums.

During this time I have discovered that I have a genius for rifle-shooting. Mr. Pike swore I must have had long practice; and I confess I was myself startled by the ease of the thing. Of course, it's the knack; but one must be so made, I suppose, in order to be able to acquire the knack.

By the end of half an hour, standing on the heaving deck and shooting at bottles floating on the rolling swell, I found that I broke each bottle at the first shot. The supply of empty bottles giving out, Mr. Pike was so interested that he had the carpenter saw me a lot of small square blocks of hard wood. These were more satisfactory. A well-aimed shot threw them out of the water and spinning into the air, and I could use a single block until it had drifted out of range. In an hour's time I could, shooting quickly and at short range, empty my magazine at a block and hit it nine times, and, on occasion, ten times, out of eleven.

I might not have judged my aptitude as unusual, had I not induced Miss West and Wada to try their hands. Neither had luck like mine. I finally persuaded Mr. Pike, and he went behind the wheel-house so that none of the crew might see how poor a shot he was. He was never able to hit the mark, and was guilty of the most ludicrous misses.

"I never could get the hang of rifle-shooting," he announced disgustedly, "but when it comes to close range with a gat I'm right there. I guess I might as well overhaul mine and limber it up."

He went below and came back with a huge '44 automatic pistol and a handful of loaded clips.

"Anywhere from right against the body up to ten or twelve feet away, holding for the stomach, it's astonishing, Mr. Pathurst, what you can do with a weapon like this. Now you can't use a rifle in a mix-up. I've been down and under, with a bunch giving me the boot, when I turned loose with this. Talk about damage! It ranged them the full length of their bodies. One of them'd just landed his brogans on my face when I let'm have it. The bullet entered just above his knee, smashed the collarbone, where it came out, and then clipped off an ear. I guess that bullet's still going. It took more than a full-sized man to stop it. So I say, give me a good handy gat when something's doing."

"Ain't you afraid you'll use all your ammunition up?" he asked anxiously half an hour later, as I continued to crack away with my new toy.

He was quite reassured when I told him Wada had brought along fifty thousand rounds for me.

In the midst of the shooting, two sharks came swimming around. They were quite large, Mr. Pike said, and he estimated their length at fifteen feet. It was Sunday morning, so that the crew, except for working the ship, had its time to itself, and soon the carpenter, with a rope for a fish-line and a great iron hook baited with a chunk of salt pork the size of my head, captured first one, and then the other, of the monsters. They were hoisted in on the main deck. And then I saw a spectacle of the cruelty of the sea.

The full crew gathered about with sheath knives, hatchets, clubs, and big butcher knives borrowed from the galley. I shall not give the details, save that they gloated and lusted, and roared and bellowed their delight in the atrocities they committed. Finally, the first of the two fish was thrown back into the ocean with a pointed stake thrust into its upper and lower jaws so that it could not close its mouth. Inevitable and prolonged starvation was the fate thus meted out to it.

"I'll show you something, boys," Andy Fay cried, as they prepared to handle the second shark.

The Maltese Cockney had been a most capable master of ceremonies with the first one. More than anything else, I think, was I hardened against these brutes by what I saw them do. In the end, the maltreated fish thrashed about the deck entirely eviscerated. Nothing remained but the mere flesh-shell of the creature, yet it would not die. It was amazing the life that lingered when all the vital organs were gone. But more amazing things were to follow.

Mulligan Jacobs, his arms a butcher's to the elbows, without as much as "by your leave," suddenly thrust a hunk of meat into my hand. I sprang back, startled, and dropped it to the deck, while a gleeful howl went up from the two-score men. I was shamed, despite myself. These brutes held me in little respect; and, after all, human nature is so strange a compound that even a philosopher dislikes being held in disesteem by the brutes of his own species.

I looked at what I had dropped. It was the heart of the shark, and as I looked, there under my eyes, on the scorching deck where the pitch oozed from the seams, the heart pulsed with life.

And I dared. I would not permit these animals to laugh at any fastidiousness of mine. I stooped and picked up the heart, and while I concealed and conquered my qualms I held it in my hand and felt it beat in my hand.

At any rate, I had won a mild victory over Mulligan Jacobs; for he abandoned me for the more delectable diversion of torturing the shark that would not die. For several minutes it had been lying quite motionless. Mulligan Jacobs smote it a heavy blow on the nose with the flat of a hatchet, and as the thing galvanized into life and flung its body about the deck the little venomous man screamed in ecstasy:

“The hooks are in it! — the hooks are in it! — and burnin’ hot!”

He squirmed and writhed with fiendish delight, and again he struck it on the nose and made it leap.

This was too much, and I beat a retreat — feigning boredom, or cessation of interest, of course; and absently carrying the still throbbing heart in my hand.

As I came upon the poop I saw Miss West, with her sewing basket, emerging from the port door of the chart-house. The deck-chairs were on that side, so I stole around on the starboard side of the chart-house in order to fling overboard unobserved the dreadful thing I carried. But, drying on the surface in the tropic heat and still pulsing inside, it stuck to my hand, so that it was a bad cast. Instead of clearing the railing, it struck on the pin-rail and stuck there in the shade, and as I opened the door to go below and wash my hands, with a last glance I saw it pulse where it had fallen.

When I came back it was still pulsing. I heard a splash overside from the waist of the ship, and knew the carcass had been flung overboard. I did not go around the chart-house and join Miss West, but stood enthralled by the spectacle of that heart that beat in the tropic heat.

Boisterous shouts from the sailors attracted my attention. They had all climbed to the top of the tall rail and were watching something outboard. I followed their gaze and saw the amazing thing. That long-eviscerated shark was not dead. It moved, it swam, it thrashed about, and ever it strove to escape from the surface of the ocean. Sometimes it swam down as deep as fifty or a hundred feet, and then, still struggling to escape the surface, struggled involuntarily to the surface. Each failure thus to escape fetched wild laughter from the men. But why did they laugh? The thing was sublime, horrible, but it was not humorous. I leave it to you. What is there laughable in the sight of a pain-distraught fish rolling helplessly on the surface of the sea and exposing to the sun all its essential emptiness?

I was turning away, when renewed shouting drew my gaze. Half a dozen other sharks had appeared, smaller ones, nine or ten feet long. They attacked their helpless comrade. They tore him to pieces they destroyed him, devoured him. I saw the last shred of him disappear down their maws. He was gone, disintegrated, entombed in the living bodies of his kind, and already entering into the processes of digestion. And yet, there, in the shade on the pin-rail, that unbelievable and monstrous heart beat on.

CHAPTER XXIV

The voyage is doomed to disaster and death. I know Mr. Pike, now, and if ever he discovers the identity of Mr. Mellaire, murder will be done. Mr. Mellaire is not Mr. Mellaire. He is not from Georgia. He is from Virginia. His name is Waltham — Sidney Waltham. He is one of the Walthams of Virginia, a black sheep, true, but a Waltham. Of this I am convinced, just as utterly as I am convinced that Mr. Pike will kill him if he learns who he is.

Let me tell how I have discovered all this. It was last night, shortly before midnight, when I came up on the poop to enjoy a whiff of the south-east trades in which we are now bowling along, close-hauled in order to weather Cape San Roque. Mr. Pike had the watch, and I paced up and down with him while he told me old pages of his life. He has often done this, when not "sea-grouched," and often he has mentioned with pride — yes, with reverence — a master with whom he sailed five years. "Old Captain Somers," he called him — "the finest, squarest, noblest man I ever sailed under, sir."

Well, last night our talk turned on lugubrious subjects, and Mr. Pike, wicked old man that he is, descanted on the wickedness of the world and on the wickedness of the man who had murdered Captain Somers.

"He was an old man, over seventy years old," Mr. Pike went on. "And they say he'd got a touch of palsy — I hadn't seen him for years. You see, I'd had to clear out from the coast because of trouble. And that devil of a second mate caught him in bed late at night and beat him to death. It was terrible. They told me about it. Right in San Francisco, on board the *Jason Harrison*, it happened, eleven years ago.

"And do you know what they did? First, they gave the murderer life, when he should have been hanged. His plea was insanity, from having had his head chopped open a long time before by a crazy sea-cook. And when he'd served seven years the governor pardoned him. He wasn't any good, but his people were a powerful old Virginian family, the Walthams — I guess you've heard of them — and they brought all kinds of pressure to bear. His name was Sidney Waltham."

At this moment the warning bell, a single stroke fifteen minutes before the change of watch, rang out from the wheel and was repeated by the look-out on the forecastle head. Mr. Pike, under his stress of feeling, had stopped walking, and we stood at the break of the poop. As chance would have it, Mr. Mellaire was a quarter of an hour ahead of time, and he climbed the poop-ladder and stood beside us while the mate concluded his tale.

"I didn't mind it," Mr. Pike continued, "as long as he'd got life and was serving his time. But when they pardoned him out after only seven years I swore I'd get him. And I will. I don't believe in God or devil, and it's a rotten crazy world anyway; but I do believe in hunches. And I know I'm going to get him."

"What will you do?" I queried.

"Do?" Mr. Pike's voice was fraught with surprise that I should not know. "Do? Well, what did he do to old Captain Somers? Yet he's disappeared these last three years now. I've heard neither hide nor hair of him. But he's a sailor, and he'll drift back to the sea, and some day . . . "

In the illumination of a match with which the second mate was lighting his pipe I saw Mr. Pike's gorilla arms and huge clenched paws raised to heaven, and his face convulsed and working. Also, in that brief moment of light, I saw that the second mate's hand which held the match was shaking.

"And I ain't never seen even a photo of him," Mr. Pike added. "But I've got a general idea of his looks, and he's got a mark unmistakable. I could know him by it in the dark. All I'd have to do is feel it. Some day I'll stick my fingers into that mark."

"What did you say, sir, was the captain's name?" Mr. Mellaire asked casually.

"Somers — old Captain Somers," Mr. Pike answered.

Mr. Mellaire repeated the name aloud several times, and then hazarded:

"Didn't he command the *Lammermoor* thirty years ago?"

"That's the man."

"I thought I recognized him. I lay at anchor in a ship next to his in Table Bay that time ago."

"Oh, the wickedness of the world, the wickedness of the world," Mr. Pike muttered as he turned and strode away.

I said good-night to the second mate and had started to go below, when he called to me in a low voice, "Mr. Pathurst!"

I stopped, and then he said, hurriedly and confusedly:

"Never mind, sir . . . I beg your pardon . . . I — I changed my mind."

Below, lying in my bunk, I found myself unable to read. My mind was bent on returning to what had just occurred on deck, and, against my will, the most gruesome speculations kept suggesting themselves.

And then came Mr. Mellaire. He had slipped down the booby hatch into the big after-room and thence through the hallway to my room. He entered noiselessly, on clumsy tiptoes, and pressed his finger warningly to his lips. Not until he was beside my bunk did he speak, and then it was in a whisper.

"I beg your pardon, sir, Mr. Pathurst . . . I — I beg your pardon; but, you see, sir, I was just passing, and seeing you awake I . . . I thought it would not inconvenience you to . . . you see, I thought I might just as well prefer a small favour . . . seeing that I would not inconvenience you, sir . . . I . . . I . . . ."

I waited for him to proceed, and in the pause that ensued, while he licked his dry lips with his tongue, the thing ambushed in his skull peered at me through his eyes and seemed almost on the verge of leaping out and pouncing upon me.

"Well, sir," he began again, this time more coherently, "it's just a little thing — foolish on my part, of course — a whim, so to say — but you will remember, near the beginning of the voyage, I showed you a scar on my head . . . a really small affair, sir, which I contracted in a misadventure. It amounts to a deformity, which it is my fancy to conceal. Not for worlds, sir, would I care to have Miss West, for instance, know that I carried such a deformity. A man is a man, sir — you understand — and you have not spoken of it to her?"

"No," I replied. "It just happens that I have not."

"Nor to anybody else? — to, say, Captain West? — or, say, Mr. Pike?"

"No, I haven't mentioned it to anybody," I averred.

He could not conceal the relief he experienced. The perturbation went out of his face and manner, and the ambushed thing drew back deeper into the recess of his skull.

"The favour, sir, Mr. Pathurst, that I would prefer is that you will not mention that little matter to anybody. I suppose" (he smiled, and his voice was superlatively suave) "it is vanity on my part — you understand, I am sure."

I nodded, and made a restless movement with my book as evidence that I desired to resume my reading.

"I can depend upon you for that, Mr. Pathurst?" His whole voice and manner had changed. It was practically a command, and I could almost see fangs, bared and menacing, sprouting in the jaws of that thing I fancied dwelt behind his eyes.

"Certainly," I answered coldly.

"Thank you, sir — I thank you," he said, and, without more ado, tiptoed from the room.

Of course I did not read. How could I? Nor did I sleep. My mind ran on, and on, and not until the steward brought my coffee, shortly before five, did I sink into my first doze.

One thing is very evident. Mr. Pike does not dream that the murderer of Captain Somers is on board the *Elsinore*. He has never glimpsed that prodigious fissure that clefts Mr. Mellaire's, or, rather, Sidney Waltham's, skull. And I, for one, shall never tell Mr. Pike. And I know, now, why from the very first I disliked the second mate. And I understand that live thing, that other thing, that lurks within and peers out through the eyes. I have recognized the same thing in the three gangsters for'ard. Like the second mate, they are prison birds. The restraint, the secrecy, and iron control of prison life has developed in all of them terrible other selves.

Yes, and another thing is very evident. On board this ship, driving now through the South Atlantic for the winter passage of Cape Horn, are all the elements of sea tragedy and horror. We are freighted with human dynamite that is liable at any moment to blow our tiny floating world to fragments.

CHAPTER XXV

The days slip by. The south-east trade is brisk and small splashes of sea occasionally invade my open ports. Mr. Pike's room was soaked yesterday. This is the most exciting thing that has happened for some time. The gangsters rule in the forecastle. Larry and Shorty have had a harmless *fight*. The hooks continue to burn in Mulligan Jacobs's brain. Charles Davis resides alone in his little steel room, coming out only to get his food from the galley. Miss West plays and sings, doctors Possum, launders, and is for ever otherwise busy with her fancy work. Mr. Pike runs the phonograph every other evening in the second dog-watch. Mr. Mellaire hides the cleft in his head. I keep his secret. And Captain West, more remote than ever, sits in the draught of wind in the twilight cabin.

We are now thirty-seven days at sea, in which time, until to-day, we have not sighted a vessel. And to-day, at one time, no less than six vessels were visible from the deck. Not until I saw these ships was I able thoroughly to realize how lonely this ocean is.

Mr. Pike tells me we are several hundred miles off the South American coast. And yet, only the other day, it seems, we were scarcely more distant from Africa. A big velvety moth fluttered aboard this morning, and we are filled with conjecture. How possibly could it have come from the South American coast these hundreds of miles in the teeth of the trades?

The Southern Cross has been visible, of course, for weeks; the North Star has disappeared behind the bulge of the earth; and the Great Bear, at its highest, is very low. Soon it, too, will be gone and we shall be raising the Magellan Clouds.

I remember the fight between Larry and Shorty. Wada reports that Mr. Pike watched it for some time, until, becoming incensed at their awkwardness, he clouted both of them with his open hands and made them stop, announcing that until they could make a better showing he intended doing all the fighting on the *Elsinore* himself.

It is a feat beyond me to realize that he is sixty-nine years old. And when I look at the tremendous build of him and at his fearful, man-handling hands, I conjure up a vision of him avenging Captain Somers's murder.

Life is cruel. Amongst the *Elsinore's* five thousand tons of coal are thousands of rats. There is no way for them to get out of their steel-walled prison, for all the ventilators are guarded with stout wire-mesh. On her previous voyage, loaded with barley, they increased and multiplied. Now they are imprisoned in the coal, and cannibalism is what must occur among them. Mr. Pike says that when we reach Seattle there will be a dozen or a score of survivors, huge fellows, the strongest and fiercest. Sometimes, passing the mouth of one ventilator that is in the after wall of the chart-house, I can hear their plaintive squealing and crying from far beneath in the coal.

Other and luckier rats are in the ’tween decks for’ard, where all the spare suits of sails are stored. They come out and run about the deck at night, steal food from the galley, and lap up the dew. Which reminds me that Mr. Pike will no longer look at Possum. It seems, under his suggestion, that Wada trapped a rat in the donkey-engine room. Wada swears that it was the father of all rats, and that, by actual measurement, it scaled eighteen inches from nose to the tip of tail. Also, it seems that Mr. Pike and Wada, with the door shut in the former’s room, pitted the rat against Possum, and that Possum was licked. They were compelled to kill the rat themselves, while Possum, when all was over, lay down and had a fit.

Now Mr. Pike abhors a coward, and his disgust with Possum is profound. He no longer plays with the puppy, nor even speaks to him, and, whenever he passes him on the deck, glowers sourly at him.

I have been reading up the South Atlantic Sailing Directions, and I find that we are now entering the most beautiful sunset region in the world. And this evening we were favoured with a sample. I was in my quarters, overhauling my books, when Miss West called to me from the foot of the chart-house stairs:

“Mr. Pathurst! — Come quick! Oh, do come quick! You can’t afford to miss it!”

Half the sky, from the zenith to the western sea-line, was an astonishing sheet of pure, pale, even gold. And through this sheen, on the horizon, burned the sun, a disc of richer gold. The gold of the sky grew more golden, then tarnished before our eyes and began to glow faintly with red. As the red deepened, a mist spread over the whole sheet of gold and the burning yellow sun. Turner was never guilty of so audacious an orgy in gold-mist.

Presently, along the horizon, entirely completing the circle of sea and sky, the tight-packed shapes of the trade wind clouds began to show through the mist; and as they took form they spilled with rose-colour at their upper edges, while their bases were a pulsing, bluish-white. I say it advisedly. All the colours of this display *pulsed*.

As the gold-mist continued to clear away, the colours became garish, bold; the turquoises went into greens and the roses turned to the red of blood. And the purple and indigo of the long swells of sea were bronzed with the colour-riot in the sky, while across the water, like gigantic serpents, crawled red and green sky-reflections. And then all the gorgeousness quickly dulled, and the warm, tropic darkness drew about us.

CHAPTER XXVI

The *Elsinore* is truly the ship of souls, the world in miniature; and, because she is such a small world, cleaving this vastitude of ocean as our larger world cleaves space, the strange juxtapositions that continually occur are startling.

For instance, this afternoon on the poop. Let me describe it. Here was Miss West, in a crisp duck sailor suit, immaculately white, open at the throat, where, under the broad collar, was knotted a man-of-war black silk neckerchief. Her smooth-groomed hair, a trifle rebellious in the breeze, was glorious. And here was I, in white ducks, white shoes, and white silk shirt, as immaculate and well-tended as she. The steward was just bringing the pretty tea-service for Miss West, and in the background Wada hovered.

We had been discussing philosophy — or, rather, I had been feeling her out; and from a sketch of Spinoza's anticipations of the modern mind, through the speculative interpretations of the latest achievements in physics of Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir William Ramsay, I had come, as usual, to De Casseres, whom I was quoting, when Mr. Pike snarled orders to the watch.

"'In this rise into the azure of pure perception, attainable only by a very few human beings, the spectacular sense is born,'." I was quoting. "'Life is no longer good or evil. It is a perpetual play of forces without beginning or end. The freed Intellect merges itself with the World-Will and partakes of its essence, which is not a moral essence but an æsthetic essence . . . "

And at this moment the watch swarmed on to the poop to haul on the port-braces of the mizzen-sky-sail, royal and topgallant-sail. The sailors passed us, or toiled close to us, with lowered eyes. They did not look at us, so far removed from them were we. It was this contrast that caught my fancy. Here were the high and low, slaves and masters, beauty and ugliness, cleanness and filth. Their feet were bare and scaled with patches of tar and pitch. Their unbathed bodies were garmented in the meanest of clothes, dingy, dirty, ragged, and sparse. Each one had on but two garments — dungaree trousers and a shoddy cotton shirt.

And we, in our comfortable deck-chairs, our two servants at our backs, the quintessence of elegant leisure, sipped delicate tea from beautiful, fragile cups, and looked on at these wretched ones whose labour made possible the journey of our little world. We did not speak to them, nor recognize their existence, any more than would they have dared speak to us.

And Miss West, with the appraising eye of a plantation mistress for the condition of her field slaves, looked them over.

"You see how they have fleshed up," she said, as they coiled the last turns of the ropes over the pins and faded away for'ard off the poop. "It is the regular hours, the good weather, the hard work, the open air, the sufficient food, and the absence of whisky. And they will keep in this fettle until they get off the Horn. And then you will see them go down from day to day. A winter passage of the Horn is always a severe strain on the men.

"But then, once we are around and in the good weather of the Pacific, you will see them gain again from day to day. And when we reach Seattle they will be in splendid shape. Only they will go ashore, drink up their wages in several days, and ship away on other vessels in precisely the same sodden, miserable condition that they were in when they sailed with us from Baltimore."

And just then Captain West came out the chart-house door, strolled by for a single turn up and down, and with a smile and a word for us and an all-observant eye for the ship, the trim of her sails, the wind, and the sky, and the weather promise, went back through the chart-house door — the blond Aryan master, the king, the Samurai.

And I finished sipping my tea of delicious and most expensive aroma, and our slant-eyed, dark-skinned servitors carried the pretty gear away, and I read, continuing De Casseres:

"'Instinct wills, creates, carries on the work of the species. The Intellect destroys, negatives, satirizes and ends in pure nihilism, instinct creates life, endlessly, hurling forth profusely and blindly its clowns, tragedians and comedians. Intellect remains the eternal spectator of the play. It participates at will, but never gives itself wholly to the fine sport. The Intellect, freed from the trammels of the personal will, soars into the ether of perception, where Instinct follows it in a thousand disguises, seeking to draw it down to earth.'"

CHAPTER XXVII

We are now south of Rio and working south. We are out of the latitude of the trades, and the wind is capricious. Rain squalls and wind squalls vex the *Elsinore*. One hour we may be rolling sickeningly in a dead calm, and the next hour we may be dashing fourteen knots through the water and taking off sail as fast as the men can clew up and lower away. A night of calm, when sleep is well-nigh impossible in the sultry, muggy air, may be followed by a day of blazing sun and an oily swell from the south'ard, connoting great gales in that area of ocean we are sailing toward — or all day long the *Elsinore*, under an overcast sky, royals and sky sails furled, may plunge and buck under wind-pressure into a short and choppy head-sea.

And all this means work for the men. Taking Mr. Pike's judgment, they are very inadequate, though by this time they know the ropes. He growls and grumbles, and snorts and sneers whenever he watches them doing anything. To-day, at eleven in the morning, the wind was so violent, continuing in greater gusts after having come in a great gust, that Mr. Pike ordered the mainsail taken off. The great crojack was already off. But the watch could not clew up the mainsail, and, after much vain sing-songing and pull-hauling, the watch below was routed out to bear a hand.

"My God!" Mr. Pike groaned to me. "Two watches for a rag like that when half a decent watch could do it! Look at that preventer bosun of mine!"

Poor Nancy! He looked the saddest, sickest, bleakest creature I had ever seen. He was so wretched, so miserable, so helpless. And Sundry Buyers was just as impotent. The expression on his face was of pain and hopelessness, and as he pressed his abdomen he lumbered futilely about, ever seeking something he might do and ever failing to find it. He pottered. He would stand and stare at one rope for a minute or so at a time, following it aloft with his eyes through the maze of ropes and stabs and gears with all the intentness of a man working out an intricate problem. Then, holding his hand against his stomach, he would lumber on a few steps and select another rope for study.

"Oh dear, oh dear," Mr. Pike lamented. "How can one drive with bosuns like that and a crew like that? Just the same, if I was captain of this ship I'd drive ’em. I’d show ’em what drive was, if I had to lose a few of them. And when they grow weak off the Horn what’ll we do? It’ll be both watches all the time, which will weaken them just that much the faster.”

Evidently this winter passage of the Horn is all that one has been led to expect from reading the narratives of the navigators. Iron men like the two mates are very respectful of “Cape Stiff,” as they call that uttermost tip of the American continent. Speaking of the two mates, iron-made and iron-mouthed that they are, it is amusing that in really serious moments both of them curse with “Oh dear, oh dear.”

In the spells of calm I take great delight in the little rifle. I have already fired away five thousand rounds, and have come to consider myself an expert. Whatever the knack of shooting may be, I’ve got it. When I get back I shall take up target practice. It is a neat, deft sport.

Not only is Possum afraid of the sails and of rats, but he is afraid of rifle-fire, and at the first discharge goes yelping and ki-yi-ing below. The dislike Mr. Pike has developed for the poor little puppy is ludicrous. He even told me that if it were his dog he’d throw it overboard for a target. Just the same, he is an affectionate, heart-warming little rascal, and has already crept so deep into my heart that I am glad Miss West did not accept him.

And — oh! — he insists on sleeping with me on top the bedding; a proceeding which has scandalized the mate. “I suppose he’ll be using your toothbrush next,” Mr. Pike growled at me. But the puppy loves my companionship, and is never happier than when on the bed with me. Yet the bed is not entirely paradise, for Possum is badly frightened when ours is the lee side and the seas pound and smash against the glass ports. Then the little beggar, electric with fear to every hair tip, crouches and snarls menacingly and almost at the same time whimpers appeasingly at the storm-monster outside.

“Father *knows* the sea,” Miss West said to me this afternoon. “He understands it, and he loves it.”

“Or it may be habit,” I ventured.

She shook her head.

“He does know it. And he loves it. That is why he has come back to it. All his people before him were sea folk. His grandfather, Anthony West, made forty-six voyages between 1801 and 1847. And his father, Robert, sailed master to the north-west coast before the gold days and was captain of some of the fastest Cape Horn clippers after the gold discovery. Elijah

West, father's great-grandfather, was a privateersman in the Revolution. He commanded the armed brig *New Defence*. And, even before that, Elijah's father, in turn, and Elijah's father's father, were masters and owners on long-voyage merchant adventures.

"Anthony West, in 1813 and 1814, commanded the *David Bruce*, with letters of marque. He was half-owner, with Gracie & Sons as the other half-owners. She was a two-hundred-ton schooner, built right up in Maine. She carried a long eighteen-pounder, two ten-pounders, and ten six-pounders, and she sailed like a witch. She ran the blockade off Newport and got away to the English Channel and the Bay of Biscay. And, do you know, though she only cost twelve thousand dollars all told, she took over three hundred thousand dollars of British prizes. A brother of his was on the *Wasp*.

"So, you see, the sea is in our blood. She is our mother. As far back as we can trace all our line was born to the sea." She laughed and went on. "We've pirates and slavers in our family, and all sorts of disreputable sea-rovers. Old Ezra West, just how far back I don't remember, was executed for piracy and his body hung in chains at Plymouth.

"The sea is father's blood. And he knows, well, a ship, as you would know a dog or a horse. Every ship he sails has a distinct personality for him. I have watched him, in high moments, and *seen* him think. But oh! the times I have seen him when he does not think — when he *feels* and knows everything without thinking at all. Really, with all that appertains to the sea and ships, he is an artist. There is no other word for it."

"You think a great deal of your father," I remarked.

"He is the most wonderful man I have ever known," she replied. "Remember, you are not seeing him at his best. He has never been the same since mother's death. If ever a man and woman were one, they were." She broke off, then concluded abruptly. "You don't know him. You don't know him at all."

CHAPTER XXVIII

"I think we are going to have a fine sunset," Captain West remarked last evening.

Miss West and I abandoned our rubber of cribbage and hastened on deck. The sunset had not yet come, but all was preparing. As we gazed we could see the sky gathering the materials, grouping the gray clouds in long lines and towering masses, spreading its palette with slow-growing, glowing tints and sudden blobs of colour.

"It's the Golden Gate!" Miss West cried, indicating the west. "See! We're just inside the harbour. Look to the south there. If that isn't the sky-line of San Francisco! There's the Call Building, and there, far down, the Ferry Tower, and surely that is the Fairmount." Her eyes roved back through the opening between the cloud masses, and she clapped her hands. "It's a sunset within a sunset! See! The Farallones!" — swimming in a miniature orange and red sunset all their own. "Isn't it the Golden Gate, and San Francisco, and the Farallones?" She appealed to Mr. Pike, who, leaning near, on the poop-rail, was divided between gazing sourly at Nancy pottering on the main deck and sourly at Possum, who, on the bridge, crouched with terror each time the crojack flapped emptily above him.

The mate turned his head and favoured the sky picture with a solemn stare.

"Oh, I don't know," he growled. "It may look like the Farallones to you, but to me it looks like a battleship coming right in the Gate with a bone in its teeth at a twenty-knot clip."

Sure enough. The floating Farallones had metamorphosed into a giant warship.

Then came the colour riot, the dominant tone of which was green. It was green, green, green — the blue-green of the springing year, and sere and yellow green and tawny-brown green of autumn. There were orange green, gold green, and a copper green. And all these greens were rich green beyond description; and yet the richness and the greenness passed even as we gazed upon it, going out of the gray clouds and into the sea, which assumed the exquisite golden pink of polished copper, while the hollows of the smooth and silken ripples were touched by a most ethereal pea green.

The gray clouds became a long, low swathe of ruby red, or garnet red — such as one sees in a glass of heavy burgundy when held to the light. There was such depth to this red! And, below it, separated from the main colour-mass by a line of gray-white fog, or line of sea, was another and smaller streak of ruddy-coloured wine.

I strolled across the poop to the port side.

"Oh! Come back! Look! Look!" Miss West cried to me.

"What's the use?" I answered. "I've something just as good over here."

She joined me, and as she did so I noted, a sour grin on Mr. Pike's face.

The eastern heavens were equally spectacular. That quarter of the sky was sheer and delicate shell of blue, the upper portions of which faded, changed, through every harmony, into a pale, yet warm, rose, all trembling, palpitating, with misty blue tinting into pink. The reflection of this coloured sky-shell upon the water made of the sea a glimmering watered silk, all changeable, blue, Nile-green, and salmon-pink. It was silky, silken, a wonderful silk that veneered and flossed the softly moving, wavy water.

And the pale moon looked like a wet pearl gleaming through the tinted mist of the sky-shell.

In the southern quadrant of the sky we discovered an entirely different sunset — what would be accounted a very excellent orange-and-red sunset anywhere, with grey clouds hanging low and lighted and tinted on all their under edges.

"Huh!" Mr. Pike muttered gruffly, while we were exclaiming over our fresh discovery. "Look at the sunset I got here to the north. It ain't doing so badly now, I leave it to you."

And it wasn't. The northern quadrant was a great fen of colour and cloud, that spread ribs of feathery pink, fleece-frilled, from the horizon to the zenith. It was all amazing. Four sunsets at the one time in the sky! Each quadrant glowed, and burned, and pulsed with a sunset distinctly its own.

And as the colours dulled in the slow twilight, the moon, still misty, wept tears of brilliant, heavy silver into the dim lilac sea. And then came the hush of darkness and the night, and we came to ourselves, out of reverie, sated with beauty, leaning toward each other as we leaned upon the rail side by side.

* * * * *

I never grow tired of watching Captain West. In a way he bears a sort of resemblance to several of Washington's portraits. He is six feet of aristocratic thinness, and has a very definite, leisurely and stately grace of movement. His thinness is almost ascetic. In appearance and manner he is the perfect old-type New England gentleman.

He has the same gray eyes as his daughter, although his are genial rather than warm; and his eyes have the same trick of smiling. His skin is pinker than hers, and his brows and lashes are fairer. But he seems removed beyond passion, or even simple enthusiasm. Miss West is firm, like her father; but there is warmth in her firmness. He is clean, he is sweet and courteous; but he is coolly sweet, coolly courteous. With all his certain graciousness, in cabin or on deck, so far as his social equals are concerned, his graciousness is cool, elevated, thin.

He is the perfect master of the art of doing nothing. He never reads, except the Bible; yet he is never bored. Often, I note him in a deck-chair, studying his perfect finger-nails, and, I'll swear, not seeing them at all. Miss West says he loves the sea. And I ask myself a thousand times, "But how?" He shows no interest in any phase of the sea. Although he called our attention to the glorious sunset I have just described, he did not remain on deck to enjoy it. He sat below, in the big leather chair, not reading, not dozing, but merely gazing straight before him at nothing.

* * * * *

The days pass, and the seasons pass. We left Baltimore at the tail-end of winter, went into spring and on through summer, and now we are in fall weather and urging our way south to the winter of Cape Horn. And as we double the Cape and proceed north, we shall go through spring and summer — a long summer — pursuing the sun north through its declination and arriving at Seattle in summer. And all these seasons have occurred, and will have occurred, in the space of five months.

Our white ducks are gone, and, in south latitude thirty-five, we are wearing the garments of a temperate clime. I notice that Wada has given me heavier underclothes and heavier pyjamas, and that Possum, of nights, is no longer content with the top of the bed but must crawl underneath the bed-clothes.

* * * * *

We are now off the Plate, a region notorious for storms, and Mr. Pike is on the lookout for a pampero. Captain West does not seem to be on the lookout for anything; yet I notice that he spends longer hours on deck when the sky and barometer are threatening.

Yesterday we had a hint of Plate weather, and to-day an awesome fiasco of the same. The hint came last evening between the twilight and the dark. There was practically no wind, and the *Elsinore*, just maintaining steerage way by means of intermittent fans of air from the north, floundered exasperatingly in a huge glassy swell that rolled up as an echo from some blown-out storm to the south.

Ahead of us, arising with the swiftness of magic, was a dense slate-blackness. I suppose it was cloud-formation, but it bore no semblance to clouds. It was merely and sheerly a blackness that towered higher and higher until it overhung us, while it spread to right and left, blotting out half the sea.

And still the light puffs from the north filled our sails; and still, as the *Elsinore* floundered on the huge, smooth swells and the sails emptied and flapped a hollow thunder, we moved slowly towards that ominous blackness. In the cast, in what was quite distinctly an active thunder cloud, the lightning fairly winked, while the blackness in front of us was rent with blobs and flashes of lightning.

The last puffs left us, and in the hushes, between the rumbles of the nearing thunder, the voices of the men aloft on the yards came to one’s ear as if they were right beside one instead of being hundreds of feet away and up in the air. That they were duly impressed by what was impending was patent from the earnestness with which they worked. Both watches toiled under both mates, and Captain West strolled the poop in his usual casual way, and gave no orders at all, save in low conventional tones, when Mr. Pike came upon the poop and conferred with him.

Miss West, having deserted the scene five minutes before, returned, a proper sea-woman, clad in oil-skins, sou’wester, and long sea-boots. She ordered me, quite peremptorily, to do the same. But I could not bring myself to leave the deck for fear of missing something, so I compromised by having Wada bring my storm-gear to me.

And then the wind came, smack out of the blackness, with the abruptness of thunder and accompanied by the most diabolical thunder. And with the rain and thunder came the blackness. It was tangible. It drove past us in the bellowing wind like so much stuff that one could feel. Blackness as well as wind impacted on us. There is no other way to describe it than by the old, ancient old, way of saying one could not see his hand before his face.

"Isn't it splendid!" Miss West shouted into my ear, close beside me, as we clung to the railing of the break of the poop.

"Superb!" I shouted back, my lips to her ear, so that her hair tickled my face.

And, I know not why — it must have been spontaneous with both of us — in that shouting blackness of wind, as we clung to the rail to avoid being blown away, our hands went out to each other and my hand and hers gripped and pressed and then held mutually to the rail.

"Daughter of Herodias," I commented grimly to myself; but my hand did not leave hers.

"What is happening?" I shouted in her ear.

"We've lost way," came her answer. "I think we're caught aback! The wheel's up, but she could not steer!"

The Gabriel voice of the Samurai rang out. "Hard over?" was his mellow storm-call to the man at the wheel. "Hard over, sir," came the helmsman's reply, vague, cracked with strain, and smothered.

Came the lightning, before us, behind us, on every side, bathing us in flaming minutes at a time. And all the while we were deafened by the unceasing uproar of thunder. It was a weird sight — far aloft the black skeleton of spars and masts from which the sails had been removed; lower down, the sailors clinging like monstrous bugs as they passed the gaskets and furled; beneath them the few set sails, filled backward against the masts, gleaming whitely, wickedly, evilly, in the fearful illumination; and, at the bottom, the deck and bridge and houses of the *Elsinore*, and a tangled riff-raff of flying ropes, and clumps and bunches of swaying, pulling, hauling, human creatures.

It was a great moment, the master's moment — caught all aback with all our bulk and tonnage and infinitude of gear, and our heaven-aspiring masts two hundred feet above our heads. And our master was there, in sheeting flame, slender, casual, imperturbable, with two men — one of them a murderer — under him to pass on and enforce his will, and with a horde of inefficients and weaklings to obey that will, and pull, and haul, and by the sheer leverages of physics manipulate our floating world so that it would endure this fury of the elements.

What happened next, what was done, I do not know, save that now and again I heard the Gabriel voice; for the darkness came, and the rain in pouring, horizontal sheets. It filled my mouth and strangled my lungs as if I had fallen overboard. It seemed to drive up as well as down, piercing its way under my sou'wester, through my oilskins, down my tight-buttoned collar, and into my sea-boots. I was dizzied, obfuscated, by all this onslaught of thunder, lightning, wind, blackness, and water. And yet the master, near to me, there on the poop, lived and moved serenely in all, voicing his wisdom and will to the wisps of creatures who obeyed and by their brute, puny strength pulled braces, slacked sheets, dragged courses, swung yards and lowered them, hauled on buntlines and clewlines, smoothed and gasketed the huge spreads of canvas.

How it happened I know not, but Miss West and I crouched together, clinging to the rail and to each other in the shelter of the thrumming weather-cloth. My arm was about her and fast to the railing; her shoulder pressed close against me, and by one hand she held tightly to the lapel of my oilskin.

An hour later we made our way across the poop to the chart-house, helping each other to maintain footing as the *Elsinore* plunged and bucked in the rising sea and was pressed over and down by the weight of wind on her few remaining set sails. The wind, which had lulled after the rain, had risen in recurrent gusts to storm violence. But all was well with the gallant ship. The crisis was past, and the ship lived, and we lived, and with streaming faces and bright eyes we looked at each other and laughed in the bright light of the chart-room.

"Who can blame one for loving the sea?" Miss West cried out exultantly, as she wrung the rain from her ropes of hair which had gone adrift in the turmoil. "And the men of the sea!" she cried. "The masters of the sea! You saw my father . . . "

"He is a king," I said.

"He is a king," she repeated after me.

And the *Elsinore* lifted on a cresting sea and flung down on her side, so that we were thrown together and brought up breathless against the wall.

I said good-night to her at the foot of the stairs, and as I passed the open door to the cabin I glanced in. There sat Captain West, whom I had thought still on deck. His storm-trappings were removed, his sea-boots replaced by slippers; and he leaned back in the big leather chair, eyes wide open, beholding visions in the curling smoke of a cigar against a background of wildly reeling cabin wall.

It was at eleven this morning that the Plate gave us a fiasco. Last night's was a real pampero — though a mild one. To-day's promised to be a far worse one, and then laughed at us as a proper cosmic joke. The wind, during the night, had so eased that by nine in the morning we had all our topgallant-sails set. By ten we were rolling in a dead calm. By eleven the stuff began making up ominously in the south'ard.

The overcast sky closed down. Our lofty trucks seemed to scrape the cloud-zenith. The horizon drew in on us till it seemed scarcely half a mile away. The *Elsinore* was embayed in a tiny universe of mist and sea. The lightning played. Sky and horizon drew so close that the *Elsinore* seemed on the verge of being absorbed, sucked in by it, sucked up by it.

Then from zenith to horizon the sky was cracked with forked lightning, and the wet atmosphere turned to a horrid green. The rain, beginning gently, in dead calm, grew into a deluge of enormous streaming drops. It grew darker and darker, a green darkness, and in the cabin, although it was midday, Wada and the steward lighted lamps. The lightning came closer and closer, until the ship was enveloped in it. The green darkness was continually a-tremble with flame, through which broke greater illuminations of forked lightning. These became more violent as the rain lessened, and, so absolutely were we centred in this electrical maelstrom, there was no connecting any chain or flash or fork of lightning with any particular thunder-clap. The atmosphere all about us paled and flamed. Such a crashing and smashing! We looked every moment for the *Elsinore* to be struck. And never had I seen such colours in lightning. Although from moment to moment we were dazzled by the greater bolts, there persisted always a tremulous, pulsing lesser play of light, sometimes softly blue, at other times a thin purple that quivered on into a thousand shades of lavender.

And there was no wind. No wind came. Nothing happened. The *Elsinore*, naked-sparred, under only lower-topsails, with spanker and crojack furled, was prepared for anything. Her lower-topsails hung in limp emptiness from the yards, heavy with rain and flapping soggily when she rolled. The cloud mass thinned, the day brightened, the green blackness passed into gray twilight, the lightning eased, the thunder moved along away from us, and there was no wind. In half an hour the sun was shining, the thunder muttered intermittently along the horizon, and the *Elsinore* still rolled in a hush of air.

"You can't tell, sir," Mr. Pike growled to me. "Thirty years ago I was dismasted right here off the Plate in a clap of wind that come on just as that come on."

It was the changing of the watches, and Mr. Mellaire, who had come on the poop to relieve the mate, stood beside me.

"One of the nastiest pieces of water in the world," he concurred. "Eighteen years ago the Plate gave it to me — lost half our sticks, twenty hours on our beam-ends, cargo shifted, and foundered. I was two days in the boat before an English tramp picked us up. And none of the other boats ever was picked up."

"The *Elsinore* behaved very well last night," I put in cheerily.

"Oh, hell, that wasn't nothing," Mr. Pike grumbled. "Wait till you see a real pampero. It's a dirty stretch hereabouts, and I, for one, 'll be glad when we get across It. I'd sooner have a dozen Cape Horn snorters than one of these. How about you, Mr. Mellaire?"

"Same here, sir," he answered. "Those sou'-westers are honest. You know what to expect. But here you never know. The best of ship-masters can get tripped up off the Plate."

"'As I've found out . . .
Beyond a doubt,"

Mr. Pike hummed from Newcomb's *Celeste*, as he went down the ladder.

CHAPTER XXIX

The sunsets grow more bizarre and spectacular off this coast of the Argentine. Last evening we had high clouds, broken white and golden, flung disorderly, generously, over the western half of the sky, while in the east was painted a second sunset — a reflection, perhaps, of the first. At any rate, the eastern sky was a bank of pale clouds that shed soft, spread rays of blue and white upon a blue-grey sea.

And the evening before last we had a gorgeous Arizona riot in the west. Bastioned upon the ocean cloud-tier was piled upon cloud-tier, spacious and lofty, until we gazed upon a Grand Canyon a myriad times vaster and more celestial than that of the Colorado. The clouds took on the same stratified, serrated, rose-rock formation, and all the hollows were filled with the opal blues and purple hazes of the Painted Lands.

The Sailing Directions say that these remarkable sunsets are due to the dust being driven high into the air by the winds that blow across the pampas of the Argentine.

And our sunset to-night — I am writing this at midnight, as I sit propped in my blankets, wedged by pillows, while the *Elsinore* wallows damnably in a dead calm and a huge swell rolling up from the Cape Horn region, where, it does seem, gales perpetually blow. But our sunset. Turner might have perpetrated it. The west was as if a painter had stood off and slapped brushfuls of gray at a green canvas. On this green background of sky the clouds spilled and crumpled.

But such a background! Such an orgy of green! No shade of green was missing in the interstices, large and small, between the milky, curdled clouds — Nile-green high up, and then, in order, each with a thousand shades, blue-green, brown-green, grey-green, and a wonderful olive-green that tarnished into a rich bronze-green.

During the display the rest of the horizon glowed with broad bands of pink, and blue, and pale green, and yellow. A little later, when the sun was quite down, in the background of the curdled clouds smouldered a wine-red mass of colour, that faded to bronze and tinged all the fading greens with its sanguinary hue. The clouds themselves flushed to rose of all shades, while a fan of gigantic streamers of pale rose radiated toward the zenith. These deepened rapidly into flaunting rose-flame and burned long in the slow-closing twilight.

And with all this wonder of the beauty of the world still glowing in my brain hours afterward, I hear the snarling of Mr. Pike above my head, and the trample and drag of feet as the men move from rope to rope and pull and haul. More weather is making, and from the way sail is being taken in it cannot be far off.

* * * * *

Yet at daylight this morning we were still wallowing in the same dead calm and sickly swell. Miss West says the barometer is down, but that the warning has been too long, for the Plate, to amount to anything. Pamperos happen quickly here, and though the *Elsinore*, under bare poles to her upper-topsails, is prepared for anything, it may well be that they will be crowding on canvas in another hour.

Mr. Pike was so fooled that he actually had set the topgallant-sails, and the gaskets were being taken off the royals, when the Samurai came on deck, strolled back and forth a casual five minutes, then spoke in an undertone to Mr. Pike. Mr. Pike did not like it. To me, a tyro, it was evident that he disagreed with his master. Nevertheless, his voice went out in a snarl aloft to the men on the royal-yards to make all fast again. Then it was clewlines and buntlines and lowering of yards as the topgallant-sails were stripped off. The crojack was taken in, and some of the outer fore-and-aft handsails, whose order of names I can never remember.

A breeze set in from the south-west, blowing briskly under a clear sky. I could see that Mr. Pike was secretly pleased. The Samurai had been mistaken. And each time Mr. Pike glanced aloft at the naked topgallant-and royal-yards, I knew his thought was that they might well be carrying sail. I was quite convinced that the Plate had fooled Captain West. So was Miss West convinced, and, being a favoured person like myself, she frankly told me so.

“Father will be setting sail in half an hour,” she prophesied.

What superior weather-sense Captain West possesses I know not, save that it is his by Samurai right. The sky, as I have said, was clear. The air was brittle — sparkling gloriously in the windy sun. And yet, behold, in a brief quarter of an hour, the change that took place. I had just returned from a trip below, and Miss West was venting her scorn on the River Plate and promising to go below to the sewing-machine, when we heard Mr. Pike groan. It was a whimsical groan of disgust, contrition, and acknowledgment of inferiority before the master.

"Here comes the whole River Plate," was what he groaned.

Following his gaze to the south-west, we saw it coming. It was a cloud-mass that blotted out the sunlight and the day. It seemed to swell and belch and roll over and over on itself as it advanced with a rapidity that told of enormous wind behind it and in it. Its speed was headlong, terrific; and, beneath it, covering the sea, advancing with it, was a gray bank of mist.

Captain West spoke to the mate, who bawled the order along, and the watch, reinforced by the watch below, began dewing up the mainsail and foresail and climbing into the rigging.

"Keep off! Put your wheel over! Hard over!" Captain West called gently to the helmsman.

And the big wheel spun around, and the *Elsinore's* bow fell off so that she might not be caught aback by the onslaught of wind.

Thunder rode in that rushing, rolling blackness of cloud; and it was rent by lightning as it fell upon us.

Then it was rain, wind, obscureness of gloom, and lightning. I caught a glimpse of the men on the lower-yards as they were blotted from view and as the *Elsinore* heeled over and down. There were fifteen men of them to each yard, and the gaskets were well passed ere we were struck. How they regained the deck I do not know, I never saw; for the *Elsinore*, under only upper-and lower-topsails, lay down on her side, her port-rail buried in the sea, and did not rise.

There was no maintaining an unsupported upright position on that acute slant of deck. Everybody held on. Mr. Pike frankly gripped the poop-rail with both hands, and Miss West and I made frantic clutches and scrambled for footing. But I noticed that the Samurai, poised lightly, like a bird on the verge of flight, merely rested one hand on the rail. He gave no orders. As I divined, there was nothing to be done. He waited — that was all — in tranquillity and repose. The situation was simple. Either the masts would go, or the *Elsinore* would rise with her masts intact, or she would never rise again.

In the meantime she lay dead, her lee yardarms almost touching the sea, the sea creaming solidly to her hatch-combings across the buried, unseen rail.

The minutes were as centuries, until the bow paid off and the *Elsinore*, turned tail before it, righted to an even keel. Immediately this was accomplished Captain West had her brought back upon the wind. And immediately, thereupon, the big foresail went adrift from its gaskets. The shock, or succession of shocks, to the ship, from the tremendous buffeting that followed, was fearful. It seemed she was being racked to pieces. Master and mate were side by side when this happened, and the expressions on their faces typified them. In neither face was apprehension. Mr. Pike's face bore a sour sneer for the worthless sailors who had botched the job. Captain West's face was serenely considerative.

Still, nothing was to be done, could be done; and for five minutes the *Elsinore* was shaken as in the maw of some gigantic monster, until the last shreds of the great piece of canvas had been torn away.

"Our foresail has departed for Africa," Miss West laughed in my ear.

She is like her father, unaware of fear.

"And now we may as well go below and be comfortable," she said five minutes later. "The worst is over. It will only be blow, blow, blow, and a big sea making."

* * * * *

All day it blew. And the big sea that arose made the *Elsinore's* conduct almost unlivable. My only comfort was achieved by taking to my bunk and wedging myself with pillows buttressed against the bunk's sides by empty soap-boxes which Wada arranged. Mr. Pike, clinging to my door-casing while his legs sprawled adrift in a succession of terrific rolls, paused to tell me that it was a new one on him in the pampero line. It was all wrong from the first. It had not come on right. It had no reason to be.

He paused a little longer, and, in a casual way, that under the circumstances was ridiculously transparent, exposed what was at ferment in his mind.

First of all he was absurd enough to ask if Possum showed symptoms of sea-sickness. Next, he unburdened his wrath for the inefficients who had lost the foresail, and sympathized with the sail-makers for the extra work thrown upon them. Then he asked permission to borrow one of my books, and, clinging to my bunk, selected Buchner's *Force and Matter* from my shelf, carefully wedging the empty space with the doubled magazine I use for that purpose.

Still he was loth to depart, and, cudgelling his brains for a pretext, he set up a rambling discourse on River Plate weather. And all the time I kept wondering what was behind it all. At last it came.

"By the way, Mr. Pathurst," he remarked, "do you happen to remember how many years ago Mr. Mellaire said it was that he was dismasted and foundered off here?"

I caught his drift on the instant.

"Eight years ago, wasn't it?" I lied.

Mr. Pike let this sink in and slowly digested it, while the *Elsinore* was guilty of three huge rolls down to port and back again.

"Now I wonder what ship was sunk off the Plate eight years ago?" he communed, as if with himself. "I guess I'll have to ask Mr. Mellaire her name. You can search me for all any I can recollect."

He thanked me with unwonted elaborateness for *Force and Matter*, of which I knew he would never read a line, and felt his way to the door. Here he hung on for a moment, as if struck by a new and most accidental idea.

"Now it wasn't, by any chance, that he said eighteen years ago?" he queried.

I shook my head.

"Eight years ago," I said. "That's the way I remember it, though why I should remember it at all I don't know. But that is what he said," I went on with increasing confidence. "Eight years ago. I am sure of it."

Mr. Pike looked at me ponderingly, and waited until the *Elsinore* had fairly righted for an instant ere he took his departure down the hall.

I think I have followed the working of his mind. I have long since learned that his memory of ships, officers, cargoes, gales, and disasters is remarkable. He is a veritable encyclopædia of the sea. Also, it is patent that he has equipped himself with Sidney Waltham's history. As yet, he does not dream that Mr. Mellaire is Sidney Waltham, and he is merely wondering if Mr. Mellaire was a ship-mate of Sidney Waltham eighteen years ago in the ship lost off the Plate.

In the meantime, I shall never forgive Mr. Mellaire for this slip he has made. He should have been more careful.

CHAPTER XXX

An abominable night! A wonderful night! Sleep? I suppose I did sleep, in catnaps, but I swear I heard every bell struck until three-thirty. Then came a change, an easement. No longer was it a stubborn, loggy fight against pressures. The *Elsinore* moved. I could feel her slip, and slide, and send, and soar. Whereas before she had been flung continually down to port, she now rolled as far to one side as to the other.

I knew what had taken place. Instead of remaining hove-to on the pampero, Captain West had turned tail and was running before it. This, I understood, meant a really serious storm, for the north-east was the last direction in which Captain West desired to go. But at any rate the movement, though wilder, was easier, and I slept. I was awakened at five by the thunder of seas that fell aboard, rushed down the main deck, and crashed against the cabin wall. Through my open door I could see water swashing up and down the hall, while half a foot of water creamed and curdled from under my bunk across the floor each time the ship rolled to starboard.

The steward brought me my coffee, and, wedged by boxes and pillows, like an equilibrist, I sat up and drank it. Luckily I managed to finish it in time, for a succession of terrific rolls emptied one of my book-shelves. Possum, crawling upward from my feet under the covered way of my bed, yapped with terror as the seas smashed and thundered and as the avalanche of books descended upon us. And I could not but grin when the *Paste Board Crown* smote me on the head, while the puppy was knocked gasping with Chesterton's *What's Wrong with the World*?

"Well, what do you think?" I queried of the steward who was helping to set us and the books to rights.

He shrugged his shoulders, and his bright slant eyes were very bright as he replied:

"Many times I see like this. Me old man. Many times I see more bad. Too much wind, too much work. Rotten dam bad."

I could guess that the scene on deck was a spectacle, and at six o'clock, as gray light showed through my ports in the intervals when they were not submerged, I essayed the side-board of my bunk like a gymnast, captured my careering slippers, and shuddered as I thrust my bare feet into their chill sogginess. I did not wait to dress. Merely in pyjamas I headed for the poop, Possum wailing dismally at my desertion.

It was a feat to travel the narrow halls. Time and again I paused and held on until my finger-tips hurt. In the moments of easement I made progress. Yet I miscalculated. The foot of the broad stairway to the chart-house rested on a cross-hall a dozen feet in length. Over-confidence and an unusually violent antic of the *Elsinore* caused the disaster. She flung down to starboard with such suddenness and at such a pitch that the flooring seemed to go out from under me and I hustled helplessly down the incline. I missed a frantic clutch at the newel-post, flung up my arm in time to save my face, and, most fortunately, whirled half about, and, still falling, impacted with my shoulder muscle-pad on Captain West's door.

Youth will have its way. So will a ship in a sea. And so will a hundred and seventy pounds of a man. The beautiful hardwood door-panel splintered, the latch fetched away, and I broke the nails of the four fingers of my right hand in a futile grab at the flying door, marring the polished surface with four parallel scratches. I kept right on, erupting into Captain West's spacious room with the big brass bed.

Miss West, swathed in a woollen dressing-gown, her eyes heavy still with sleep, her hair glorious and for the once ungroomed, clinging in the doorway that gave entrance on the main cabin, met my startled gaze with an equally startled gaze.

It was no time for apologies. I kept right on my mad way, caught the foot stanchion, and was whipped around in half a circle flat upon Captain West's brass bed.

Miss West was beginning to laugh.

"Come right in," she gurgled.

A score of retorts, all deliciously inadvisable, tickled my tongue, so I said nothing, contenting myself with holding on with my left hand while I nursed my stinging right hand under my arm-pit. Beyond her, across the floor of the main cabin, I saw the steward in pursuit of Captain West's Bible and a sheaf of Miss West's music. And as she gurgled and laughed at me, beholding her in this intimacy of storm, the thought flashed through my brain:

She is a woman. She is desirable.

Now did she sense this fleeting, unuttered flash of mine? I know not, save that her laughter left her, and long conventional training asserted itself as she said:

“I just knew everything was adrift in father’s room. He hasn’t been in it all night. I could hear things rolling around . . . What is wrong? Are you hurt?”

“Stubbed my fingers, that’s all,” I answered, looking at my broken nails and standing gingerly upright.

“My, that *was* a roll,” she sympathized.

“Yes; I’d started to go upstairs,” I said, “and not to turn into your father’s bed. I’m afraid I’ve ruined the door.”

Came another series of great rolls. I sat down on the bed and held on. Miss West, secure in the doorway, began gurgling again, while beyond, across the cabin carpet, the steward shot past, embracing a small writing-desk that had evidently carried away from its fastenings when he seized hold of it for support. More seas smashed and crashed against the for’ard wall of the cabin; and the steward, failing of lodgment, shot back across the carpet, still holding the desk from harm.

Taking advantage of favouring spells, I managed to effect my exit and gain the newel-post ere the next series of rolls came. And as I clung on and waited, I could not forget what I had just seen. Vividly under my eyelids burned the picture of Miss West’s sleep-laden eyes, her hair, and all the softness of her. *A woman and desirable* kept drumming in my brain.

But I forgot all this, when, nearly at the top, I was thrown up the hill of the stairs as if it had suddenly become downhill. My feet flew from stair to stair to escape falling, and I flew, or fell, apparently upward, until, at the top, I hung on for dear life while the stern of the *Elsinore* flung skyward on some mighty surge.

Such antics of so huge a ship! The old stereotyped “toy” describes her; for toy she was, the sheerest splinter of a plaything in the grip of the elements. And yet, despite this overwhelming sensation of microscopic helplessness, I was aware of a sense of surety. There was the Samurai. Informed with his will and wisdom, the *Elsinore* was no cat’s-paw. Everything was ordered, controlled. She was doing what he ordained her to do, and, no matter what storm-Titans bellowed about her and buffeted her, she would continue to do what he ordained her to do.

I glanced into the chart-room. There he sat, leaned back in a screw-chair, his sea-booted legs, wedged against the settee, holding him in place in the most violent rolls. His black oilskin coat glistened in the lamplight with a myriad drops of ocean that advertised a recent return from deck. His sou'wester, black and glistening, was like the helmet of some legendary hero. He was smoking a cigar, and he smiled and greeted me. But he seemed very tired and very old — old with wisdom, however, not weakness. The flesh of his face, the pink pigment quite washed and worn away, was more transparent than ever; and yet never was he more serene, never more the master absolute of our tiny, fragile world. The age that showed in him was not a matter of terrestrial years. It was ageless, passionless, beyond human. Never had he appeared so great to me, so far remote, so much a spirit visitant.

And he cautioned and advised me, in silver-mellow beneficent voice, as I essayed the venture of opening the chart-house door to gain outside. He knew the moment, although I never could have guessed it for myself, and gave the word that enabled me to win the poop.

Water was everywhere. The *Elsinore* was rushing through a blurring whirr of water. Seas creamed and licked the poop-deck edge, now to starboard, now to port. High in the air, over-towering and perilously down-toppling, following-seas pursued our stern. The air was filled with spindrift like a fog or spray. No officer of the watch was in sight. The poop was deserted, save for two helmsmen in streaming oilskins under the half-shelter of the open wheel-house. I nodded good morning to them.

One was Tom Spink, the elderly but keen and dependable English sailor. The other was Bill Quigley, one of a forecastle group of three that herded uniquely together, though the other two, Frank Fitzgibbon and Richard Oiler, were in the second mate's watch. The three had proved handy with their fists, and clannish; they had fought pitched forecastle battles with the gangster clique and won a sort of neutrality of independence for themselves. They were not exactly sailors — Mr. Mellaire sneeringly called them the "bricklayers" — but they had successfully refused subservience to the gangster crowd.

To cross the deck from the chart-house to the break of the poop was no slight feat, but I managed it and hung on to the railing while the wind stung my flesh with the flappings of my pyjamas. At this moment, and for the moment, the *Elsinore* righted to an even keel, and dashed along and down the avalanching face of a wave. And as she thus righted her deck was filled with water level from rail to rail. Above this flood, or knee-deep in it, Mr.

Pike and half-a-dozen sailors were bunched on the fife-rail of the mizzen-mast. The carpenter, too, was there, with a couple of assistants.

The next roll spilled half a thousand tons of water outboard sheer over the starboard-rail, while all the starboard ports opened automatically and gushed huge streams. Then came the opposite roll to port, with a clanging shut of the iron doors; and a hundred tons of sea sloshed outboard across the port-rail, while all the iron doors on that side opened wide and gushed. And all this time, it must not be forgotten, the *Elsinore* was dashing ahead through the sea.

The only sail she carried was three upper-topsails. Not the tiniest triangle of headsail was on her. I had never seen her with so little wind-surface, and the three narrow strips of canvas, bellied to the seemingness of sheet-iron with the pressure of the wind, drove her before the gale at astonishing speed.

As the water on the deck subsided the men on the fife-rail left their refuge. One group, led by the redoubtable Mr. Pike, strove to capture a mass of planks and twisted steel. For the moment I did not recognize what it was. The carpenter, with two men, sprang upon Number Three hatch and worked hurriedly and fearfully. And I knew why Captain West had turned tail to the storm. Number Three hatch was a wreck. Among other things the great timber, called the "strong-back," was broken. He had had to run, or founder. Before our decks were swept again I could make out the carpenter's emergency repairs. With fresh timbers he was bolting, lashing, and wedging Number Three hatch into some sort of tightness.

When the *Elsinore* dipped her port-rail under and scooped several hundred tons of South Atlantic, and then, immediately rolling her starboard-rail under, had another hundred tons of breaking sea fall in board upon her, all the men forsook everything and scrambled for life upon the fife-rail. In the bursting spray they were quite hidden; and then I saw them and counted them all as they emerged into view. Again they waited for the water to subside.

The mass of wreckage pursued by Mr. Pike and his men ground a hundred feet along the deck for'ard, and, as the *Elsinore's* stern sank down in some abyss, ground back again and smashed up against the cabin wall. I identified this stuff as part of the bridge. That portion which spanned from the mizzen-mast to the 'midship-house was missing, while the starboard boat on the 'midship-house was a splintered mess.

Watching the struggle to capture and subdue the section of bridge, I was reminded of Victor Hugo's splendid description of the sailor's battle with a ship's gun gone adrift in a night of storm. But there was a difference, I found that Hugo's narrative had stirred me more profoundly than was I stirred by this actual struggle before my eyes.

I have repeatedly said that the sea makes one hard. I now realized how hard I had become as I stood there at the break of the poop in my wind-shipped, spray-soaked pyjamas. I felt no solicitude for the forecastle humans who struggled in peril of their lives beneath me. They did not count. Ah — I was even curious to see what might happen, did they get caught by those crashing avalanches of sea ere they could gain the safety of the fife-rail.

And I saw. Mr. Pike, in the lead, of course, up to his waist in rushing water, dashed in, caught the flying wreckage with a turn of rope, and fetched it up short with a turn around one of the port mizzen-shrouds. The *Elsinore* flung down to port, and a solid wall of down-toppling green upreared a dozen feet above the rail. The men fled to the fife-rail. But Mr. Pike, holding his turn, held on, looked squarely into the wall of the wave, and received the downfall. He emerged, still holding by the turn the captured bridge.

The feeble-minded faun (the stone-deaf man) led the way to Mr. Pike's assistance, followed by Tony, the suicidal Greek. Paddy was next, and in order came Shorty, Henry the training-ship boy, and Nancy, last, of course, and looking as if he were going to execution.

The deck-water was no more than knee-deep, though rushing with torrential force, when Mr. Pike and the six men lifted the section of bridge and started for'ard with it. They swayed and staggered, but managed to keep going.

The carpenter saw the impending ocean-mountain first. I saw him cry to his own men and then to Mr. Pike ere he fled to the fife-rail. But Mr. Pike's men had no chance. Abreast of the 'midship-house, on the starboard side, fully fifteen feet above the rail and twenty above the deck, the sea fell on board. The top of the 'midship-house was swept clean of the splintered boat. The water, impacting against the side of the house, spouted skyward as high as the crojack-yard. And all this, in addition to the main bulk of the wave, swept and descended upon Mr. Pike and his men.

They disappeared. The bridge disappeared. The *Elsinore* rolled to port and dipped her deck full from rail to rail. Next, she plunged down by the head, and all this mass of water surged forward. Through the creaming, foaming surface now and then emerged an arm, or a head, or a back, while cruel edges of jagged plank and twisted steel rods advertised that the bridge was turning over and over. I wondered what men were beneath it and what mauling they were receiving.

And yet these men did not count. I was aware of anxiety only for Mr. Pike. He, in a way, socially, was of my caste and class. He and I belonged aft in the high place; ate at the same table. I was acutely desirous that he should not be hurt or killed. The rest did not matter. They were not of my world. I imagine the old-time skippers, on the middle passage, felt much the same toward their slave-cargoes in the fetid ’tween decks.

The *Elsinore’s* bow tilted skyward while her stern fell into a foaming valley. Not a man had gained his feet. Bridge and men swept back toward me and fetched up against the mizzen-shrouds. And then that prodigious, incredible old man appeared out of the water, on his two legs, upright, dragging with him, a man in each hand, the helpless forms of Nancy and the Faun. My heart leapt at beholding this mighty figure of a man-killer and slave-driver, it is true, but who sprang first into the teeth of danger so that his slaves might follow, and who emerged with a half-drowned slave in either hand.

I knew augustness and pride as I gazed — pride that my eyes were blue, like his; that my skin was blond, like his; that my place was aft with him, and with the Samurai, in the high place of government and command. I nearly wept with the chill of pride that was akin to awe and that tingled and bristled along my spinal column and in my brain. As for the rest — the weaklings and the rejected, and the dark-pigmented things, the half-castes, the mongrel-bloods, and the dregs of long-conquered races — how could they count? My heels were iron as I gazed on them in their peril and weakness. Lord! Lord! For ten thousand generations and centuries we had stamped upon their faces and enslaved them to the toil of our will.

Again the *Elsinore* rolled to starboard and to port, while the spume spouted to our lower-yards and a thousand tons of South Atlantic surged across from rail to rail. And again all were down and under, with jagged plank and twisted steel overriding them. And again that amazing blond-skinned giant emerged, on his two legs upstanding, a broken waif like a rat in either hand. He forced his way through rushing, waist-high water, deposited his burdens with the carpenter on the fife-rail, and returned to drag Larry reeling to his feet and help him to the fife-rail. Out of the wash, Tony, the Greek, crawled on hands and knees and sank down helplessly at the fife-rail. There was nothing suicidal now in his mood. Struggle as he would, he could not lift himself until the mate, gripping his oilskin at the collar, with one hand flung him through the air into the carpenter's arms.

Next came Shorty, his face streaming blood, one arm hanging useless, his sea-boots stripped from him. Mr. Pike pitched him into the fife-rail, and returned for the last man. It was Henry, the training-ship boy. Him I had seen, unstruggling, motionless, show at the surface like a drowned man and sink again as the flood surged aft and smashed him against the cabin. Mr. Pike, shoulder-deep, twice beaten to his knees and under by bursting seas, caught the lad, shouldered him, and carried him away for'ard.

An hour later, in the cabin, I encountered Mr. Pike going into breakfast. He had changed his clothes, and he had shaved! Now how could one treat a hero such as he save as I treated him when I remarked off-handedly that he must have had a lively watch?

"My," he answered, equally off-handedly, "I did get a prime soaking."

That was all. He had had no time to see me at the poop-rail. It was merely the day's work, the ship's work, the MAN'S work — all capitals, if you please, in MAN. I was the only one aft who knew, and I knew because I had chanced to see. Had I not been on the poop at that early hour no one aft ever would have known those gray, storm-morning deeds of his.

"Anybody hurt?" I asked.

"Oh, some of the men got wet. But no bones broke. Henry'll be laid off for a day. He got turned over in a sea and bashed his head. And Shorty's got a wrenched shoulder, I think. — But, say, we got Davis into the top bunk! The seas filled him full and he had to climb for it. He's all awash and wet now, and you oughta seen me praying for more." He paused and sighed. "I'm getting old, I guess. I oughta wring his neck, but somehow I ain't got the gumption. Just the same, he'll be overside before we get in."

"A month's wages against a pound of tobacco he won't," I challenged.

"No," said Mr. Pike slowly. "But I'll tell you what I will do. I'll bet you a pound of tobacco even, or a month's wages even, that I'll have the pleasure of putting a sack of coal to his feet that never will come off."

"Done," said I.

“Done,” said Mr. Pike. “And now I guess I’ll get a bite to eat.”

CHAPTER XXXI

The more I see of Miss West the more she pleases me. Explain it in terms of propinquity, or isolation, or whatever you will; I, at least, do not attempt explanation. I know only that she is a woman and desirable. And I am rather proud, in a way, to find that I am just a man like any man. The midnight oil, and the relentless pursuit I have endured in the past from the whole tribe of women, have not, I am glad to say, utterly spoiled me.

I am obsessed by that phrase — a *woman and desirable*. It beats in my brain, in my thought. I go out of my way to steal a glimpse of Miss West through a cabin door or vista of hall when she does not know I am looking. A woman is a wonderful thing. A woman's hair is wonderful. A woman's softness is a magic. — Oh, I know them for what they are, and yet this very knowledge makes them only the more wonderful. I know — I would stake my soul — that Miss West has considered me as a mate a thousand times to once that I have so considered her. And yet — she is a woman and desirable.

And I find myself continually reminded of Richard Le Gallienne's inimitable quatrain:

"Were I a woman, I would all day long
Sing my own beauty in some holy song,
Bend low before it, hushed and half afraid,
And say 'I am a woman' all day long."

Let me advise all philosophers suffering from world-sickness to take a long sea voyage with a woman like Miss West.

In this narrative I shall call her "Miss West" no more. She has ceased to be Miss West. She is Margaret. I do not think of her as Miss West. I think of her as Margaret. It is a pretty word, a woman-word. What poet must have created it! Margaret! I never tire of it. My tongue is enamoured of it. Margaret West! What a name to conjure with! A name provocative of dreams and mighty connotations. The history of our westward-faring race is written in it. There is pride in it, and dominion, and adventure, and conquest. When I murmur it I see visions of lean, beaked ships, of winged helmets, and heels iron-shod of restless men, royal lovers, royal adventurers, royal fighters. Yes, and even now, in these latter days when the sun consumes us, still we sit in the high seat of government and command.

Oh — and by the way — she is twenty-four years old. I asked Mr. Pike the date of the *Dixie's* collision with the river steamer in San Francisco Bay. This occurred in 1901. Margaret was twelve years old at the time. This is 1913. Blessings on the head of the man who invented arithmetic! She is twenty-four. Her name is Margaret, and she is desirable.

* * * * *

There are so many things to tell about. Where and how this mad voyage, with a mad crew, will end is beyond all surmise. But the *Elsinore* drives on, and day by day her history is bloodily written. And while murder is done, and while the whole floating drama moves toward the bleak southern ocean and the icy blasts of Cape Horn, I sit in the high place with the masters, unafraid, I am proud to say, in an ecstasy, I am proud to say, and I murmur over and over to *myself — Margaret*, *a woman*; *Margaret*, *and desirable*.

But to resume. It is the first day of June. Ten days have passed since the pampero. When the strong back on Number Three hatch was repaired Captain West came back on the wind, hove to, and rode out the gale. Since then, in calm, and fog, and damp, and storm, we have won south until to-day we are almost abreast of the Falklands. The coast of the Argentine lies to the West, below the sea-line, and some time this morning we crossed the fiftieth parallel of south latitude. Here begins the passage of Cape Horn, for so it is reckoned by the navigators — fifty south in the Atlantic to fifty south in the Pacific.

And yet all is well with us in the matter of weather. The *Elsinore* slides along with favouring winds. Daily it grows colder. The great cabin stove roars and is white-hot, and all the connecting doors are open, so that the whole after region of the ship is warm and comfortable. But on the deck the air bites, and Margaret and I wear mittens as we promenade the poop or go for'ard along the repaired bridge to see the chickens on the 'midship-house. The poor, wretched creatures of instinct and climate! Behold, as they approach the southern mid-winter of the Horn, when they have need of all their feathers, they proceed to moult, because, forsooth, this is the summer time in the land they came from. Or is moulting determined by the time of year they happen to be born? I shall have to look into this. Margaret will know.

Yesterday ominous preparations were made for the passage of the Horn. All the braces were taken from the main deck pin-rails and geared and arranged so that they may be worked from the tops of the houses.

Thus, the fore-braces run to the top of the forecastle, the main-braces to the top of the ’midship-house, and the mizzen-braces to the poop. It is evident that they expect our main deck frequently to be filled with water. So evident is it that a laden ship when in big seas is like a log awash, that fore and aft, on both sides, along the deck, shoulder-high, life-lines have been rigged. Also, the two iron doors, on port and starboard, that open from the cabin directly upon the main deck, have been barricaded and caulked. Not until we are in the Pacific and flying north will these doors open again.

And while we prepare to battle around the stormiest headland in the world our situation on board grows darker. This morning Petro Marinkovich, a sailor in Mr. Mellaire’s watch, was found dead on Number One hatch. The body bore several knife-wounds and the throat was cut. It was palpably done by some one or several of the forecastle hands; but not a word can be elicited. Those who are guilty of it are silent, of course; while others who may chance to know are afraid to speak.

Before midday the body was overside with the customary sack of coal. Already the man is a past episode. But the humans for’ard are tense with expectancy of what is to come. I strolled for’ard this afternoon, and noted for the first time a distinct hostility toward me. They recognize that I belong with the after-guard in the high place. Oh, nothing was said; but it was patent by the way almost every man looked at me, or refused to look at me. Only Mulligan Jacobs and Charles Davis were outspoken.

“Good riddance,” said Mulligan Jacobs. “The Guinea didn’t have the spunk of a louse. And he’s better off, ain’t he? He lived dirty, an’ he died dirty, an’ now he’s over an’ done with the whole dirty game. There’s men on board that oughta wish they was as lucky as him. Theirs is still a-coming to ’em.”

“You mean . . . ?” I queried.

“Whatever you want to think I mean,” the twisted wretch grinned malevolently into my face.

Charles Davis, when I peeped into his iron room, was exuberant.

"A pretty tale for the court in Seattle," he exulted. "It'll only make my case that much stronger. And wait till the reporters get hold of it! The hell-ship *Elsinore*! They'll have pretty pickin's!"

"I haven't seen any hell-ship," I said coldly.

"You've seen my treatment, ain't you?" he retorted. "You've seen the hell I've got, ain't you?"

"I know you for a cold-blooded murderer," I answered.

"The court will determine that, sir. All you'll have to do is to testify to facts."

"I'll testify that had I been in the mate's place I'd have hanged you for murder."

His eyes positively sparkled.

"I'll ask you to remember this conversation when you're under oath, sir," he cried eagerly.

I confess the man aroused in me a reluctant admiration. I looked about his mean, iron-walled room. During the pampero the place had been awash. The white paint was peeling off in huge scabs, and iron-rust was everywhere. The floor was filthy. The place stank with the stench of his sickness. His pannikin and unwashed eating-gear from the last meal were scattered on the floor: His blankets were wet, his clothing was wet. In a corner was a heterogeneous mass of soggy, dirty garments. He lay in the very bunk in which he had brained O'Sullivan. He had been months in this vile hole. In order to live he would have to remain months more in it. And while his rat-like vitality won my admiration, I loathed and detested him in very nausea.

"Aren't you afraid?" I demanded. "What makes you think you will last the voyage? Don't you know bets are being made that you won't?"

So interested was he that he seemed to prick up his ears as he raised on his elbow.

"I suppose you're too scared to tell me about them bets," he sneered.

"Oh, I've bet you'll last," I assured him.

"That means there's others that bet I won't," he rattled on hastily. "An' that means that there's men aboard the *Elsinore* right now financially interested in my taking-off."

At this moment the steward, bound aft from the galley, paused in the doorway and listened, grinning. As for Charles Davis, the man had missed his vocation. He should have been a land-lawyer, not a sea-lawyer.

"Very well, sir," he went on. "I'll have you testify to that in Seattle, unless you're lying to a helpless sick man, or unless you'll perjure yourself under oath."

He got what he was seeking, for he stung me to retort:

"Oh, I'll testify. Though I tell you candidly that I don't think I'll win my bet."

"You loose 'm bet sure," the steward broke in, nodding his head. "That fellow him die damn soon."

"Bet with'm, sir," David challenged me. "It's a straight tip from me, an' a regular cinch."

The whole situation was so gruesome and grotesque, and I had been swept into it so absurdly, that for the moment I did not know what to do or say.

"It's good money," Davis urged. "I ain't goin' to die. Look here, steward, how much you want to bet?"

"Five dollar, ten dollar, twenty dollar," the steward answered, with a shoulder-shrug that meant that the sum was immaterial.

"Very well then, steward. Mr. Pathurst covers your money, say for twenty. Is it a go, sir?"

"Why don't you bet with him yourself?" I demanded.

"Sure I will, sir. Here, you steward, I bet you twenty even I don't die."

The steward shook his head.

"I bet you twenty to ten," the sick man insisted. "What's eatin' you, anyway?"

"You live, me lose, me pay you," the steward explained. "You die, I win, you dead; no pay me."

Still grinning and shaking his head, he went his way.

"Just the same, sir, it'll be rich testimony," David chuckled. "An' can't you see the reporters eatin' it up?"

The Asiatic clique in the cook's room has its suspicions about the death of Marinkovich, but will not voice them. Beyond shakings of heads and dark mutterings, I can get nothing out of Wada or the steward. When I talked with the sail-maker, he complained that his injured hand was hurting him and that he would be glad when he could get to the surgeons in Seattle. As for the murder, when pressed by me, he gave me to understand that it was no affair of the Japanese or Chinese on board, and that he was a Japanese.

But Louis, the Chinese half-caste with the Oxford accent, was more frank. I caught him aft from the galley on a trip to the lazarette for provisions.

"We are of a different race, sir, from these men," he said; "and our safest policy is to leave them alone. We have talked it over, and we have nothing to say, sir, nothing whatever to say. Consider my position. I work for'ard in the galley; I am in constant contact with the sailors; I even sleep in their section of the ship; and I am one man against many. The only other countryman I have on board is the steward, and he sleeps aft. Your servant and the two sail-makers are Japanese. They are only remotely kin to us, though we've agreed to stand together and apart from whatever happens."

"There is Shorty," I said, remembering Mr. Pike's diagnosis of his mixed nationality.

"But we do not recognize him, sir," Louis answered suavely. "He is Portuguese; he is Malay; he is Japanese, true; but he is a mongrel, sir, a mongrel and a bastard. Also, he is a fool. And please, sir, remember that we are very few, and that our position compels us to neutrality."

"But your outlook is gloomy," I persisted. "How do you think it will end?"

"We shall arrive in Seattle most probably, some of us. But I can tell you this, sir: I have lived a long life on the sea, but I have never seen a crew like this. There are few sailors in it; there are bad men in it; and the rest are fools and worse. You will notice I mention no names, sir; but there are men on board whom I do not care to antagonize. I am just Louis, the cook. I do my work to the best of my ability, and that is all, sir."

"And will Charles Davis arrive in Seattle?" I asked, changing the topic in acknowledgment of his right to be reticent.

"No, I do not think so, sir," he answered, although his eyes thanked me for my courtesy. "The steward tells me you have bet that he will. I think, sir, it is a poor bet. We are about to go around the Horn. I have been around it many times. This is midwinter, and we are going from east to west. Davis' room will be awash for weeks. It will never be dry. A strong healthy man confined in it could well die of the hardship. And Davis is far from well. In short, sir, I know his condition, and he is in a shocking state. Surgeons might prolong his life, but here in a wind-jammer it is shortened very rapidly. I have seen many men die at sea. I know, sir. Thank you, sir."

And the Eurasian Chinese-Englishman bowed himself away.

CHAPTER XXXII

Things are worse than I fancied. Here are two episodes within the last seventy-two hours. Mr. Mellaire, for instance, is going to pieces. He cannot stand the strain of being on the same vessel with the man who has sworn to avenge Captain Somers's murder, especially when that man is the redoubtable Mr. Pike.

For several days Margaret and I have been remarking the second mate's bloodshot eyes and pain-lined face and wondering if he were sick. And to-day the secret leaked out. Wada does not like Mr. Mellaire, and this morning, when he brought me breakfast, I saw by the wicked, gleeful gleam in his almond eyes that he was spilling over with some fresh, delectable ship's gossip.

For several days, I learned, he and the steward have been solving a cabin mystery. A gallon can of wood alcohol, standing on a shelf in the after-room, had lost quite a portion of its contents. They compared notes and then made of themselves a Sherlock Holmes and a Doctor Watson. First, they gauged the daily diminution of alcohol. Next they gauged it several times daily, and learned that the diminution, whenever it occurred, was first apparent immediately after meal-time. This focussed their attention on two suspects — the second mate and the carpenter, who alone sat in the after-room. The rest was easy. Whenever Mr. Mellaire arrived ahead of the carpenter more alcohol was missing. When they arrived and departed together, the alcohol was undisturbed. The carpenter was never alone in the room. The syllogism was complete. And now the steward stores the alcohol under his bunk.

But wood alcohol is deadly poison. What a constitution this man of fifty must have! Small wonder his eyes have been bloodshot. The great wonder is that the stuff did not destroy him.

I have not whispered a word of this to Margaret; nor shall I whisper it. I should like to put Mr. Pike on his guard; and yet I know that the revealing of Mr. Mellaire's identity would precipitate another killing. And still we drive south, close-hauled on the wind, toward the inhospitable tip of the continent. To-day we are south of a line drawn between the Straits of Magellan and the Falklands, and to-morrow, if the breeze holds, we shall pick up the coast of Tierra del Fuego close to the entrance of the Straits of Le Maire, through which Captain West intends to pass if the wind favours.

The other episode occurred last night. Mr. Pike says nothing, yet he knows the crew situation. I have been watching some time now, ever since the death of Marinkovich; and I am certain that Mr. Pike never ventures on the main deck after dark. Yet he holds his tongue, confides in no man, and plays out the bitter perilous game as a commonplace matter of course and all in the day's work.

And now to the episode. Shortly after the close of the second dog-watch last evening I went for'ard to the chickens on the 'midship-house on an errand for Margaret. I was to make sure that the steward had carried out her orders. The canvas covering to the big chicken coop had to be down, the ventilation insured, and the kerosene stove burning properly. When I had proved to my satisfaction the dependableness of the steward, and just as I was on the verge of returning to the poop, I was drawn aside by the weird crying of penguins in the darkness and by the unmistakable noise of a whale blowing not far away.

I had climbed around the end of the port boat, and was standing there, quite hidden in the darkness, when I heard the unmistakable age-lag step of the mate proceed along the bridge from the poop. It was a dim starry night, and the *Elsinore*, in the calm ocean under the lee of Tierra del Fuego, was slipping gently and prettily through the water at an eight-knot clip.

Mr. Pike paused at the for'ard end of the housetop and stood in a listening attitude. From the main deck below, near Number Two hatch, across the mumbling of various voices, I could recognize Kid Twist, Nosey Murphy, and Bert Rhine — the three gangsters. But Steve Roberts, the cow-boy, was also there, as was Mr. Mellaire, both of whom belonged in the other watch and should have been turned in; for, at midnight, it would be their watch on deck. Especially wrong was Mr. Mellaire's presence, holding social converse with members of the crew — a breach of ship ethics most grievous.

I have always been cursed with curiosity. Always have I wanted to know; and, on the *Elsinore*, I have already witnessed many a little scene that was a clean-cut dramatic gem. So I did not discover myself, but lurked behind the boat.

Five minutes passed. Ten minutes passed. The men still talked. I was tantalized by the crying of the penguins, and by the whale, evidently playful, which came so close that it spouted and splashed a biscuit-toss away. I saw Mr. Pike's head turn at the sound; he glanced squarely in my direction, but did not see me. Then he returned to listening to the mumble of voices from beneath.

Now whether Mulligan Jacobs just happened along, or whether he was deliberately scouting, I do not know. I tell what occurred. Up-and-down the side of the 'midship-house is a ladder. And up this ladder Mulligan Jacobs climbed so noiselessly that I was not aware of his presence until I heard Mr. Pike snarl:

"What the hell you doin' here?"

Then I saw Mulligan Jacobs in the gloom, within two yards of the mate.

"What's it to you?" Mulligan Jacobs snarled back. The voices below hushed. I knew every man stood there tense and listening. No; the philosophers have not yet explained Mulligan Jacobs. There is something more to him than the last word has said in any book. He stood there in the darkness, a fragile creature with curvature of the spine, facing alone the first mate, and he was not afraid.

Mr. Pike cursed him with fearful, unrepeatable words, and again demanded what he was doing there.

"I left me plug of tobacco here when I was coiling down last," said the little twisted man — no; he did not say it. He spat it out like so much venom.

"Get off of here, or I'll throw you off, you and your tobacco," raged the mate.

Mulligan Jacobs lurched closer to Mr. Pike, and in the gloom and with the roll of the ship swayed in the other's face.

"By God, Jacobs!" was all the mate could say.

"You old stiff," was all the terrible little cripple could retort.

Mr. Pike gripped him by the collar and swung him in the air.

"Are you goin' down? — or am I goin' to throw you down?" the mate demanded.

I cannot describe their manner of utterance. It was that of wild beasts.

"I ain't ate outa your hand yet, have I?" was the reply.

Mr. Pike tried to say something, still holding the cripple suspended, but he could do no more than strangle in his impotence of rage.

"You're an old stiff, an old stiff, an old stiff," Mulligan Jacobs chanted, equally incoherent and unimaginative with brutish fury.

“Say it again and over you go,” the mate managed to enunciate thickly.

“You’re an old stiff,” gasped Mulligan Jacobs. He was flung. He soared through the air with the might of the fling, and even as he soared and fell through the darkness he reiterated:

“Old stiff! Old stiff!”

He fell among the men on Number Two hatch, and there were confusion and movement below, and groans.

Mr. Pike paced up and down the narrow house and gritted his teeth. Then he paused. He leaned his arms on the bridge-rail, rested his head on his arms for a full minute, then groaned:

“Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, oh dear.” That was all. Then he went aft, slowly, dragging his feet along the bridge.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The days grow gray. The sun has lost its warmth, and each noon, at meridian, it is lower in the northern sky. All the old stars have long since gone, and it would seem the sun is following them. The world — the only world I know — has been left behind far there to the north, and the hill of the earth is between it and us. This sad and solitary ocean, gray and cold, is the end of all things, the falling-off place where all things cease. Only it grows colder, and grayer, and penguins cry in the night, and huge amphibians moan and slubber, and great albatrosses, gray with storm-battling of the Horn, wheel and veer.

* * * * *

“Land ho!” was the cry yesterday morning. I shivered as I gazed at this, the first land since Baltimore a few centuries ago. There was no sun, and the morning was damp and cold with a brisk wind that penetrated any garment. The deck thermometer marked 30 — two degrees below freezing-point; and now and then easy squalls of snow swept past.

All of the land that was to be seen was snow. Long, low chains of peaks, snow-covered, arose out of the ocean. As we drew closer, there were no signs of life. It was a sheer, savage, bleak, forsaken land. By eleven, off the entrance of Le Maire Straits, the squalls ceased, the wind steadied, and the tide began to make through in the direction we desired to go.

Captain West did not hesitate. His orders to Mr. Pike were quick and tranquil. The man at the wheel altered the course, while both watches sprang aloft to shake out royals and skysails. And yet Captain West knew every inch of the risk he took in this graveyard of ships.

When we entered the narrow strait, under full sail and gripped by a tremendous tide, the rugged headlands of Tierra del Fuego dashed by with dizzying swiftness. Close we were to them, and close we were to the jagged coast of Staten Island on the opposite shore. It was here, in a wild bight, between two black and precipitous walls of rock where even the snow could find no lodgment, that Captain West paused in a casual sweep of his glasses and gazed steadily at one place. I picked the spot up with my own glasses and was aware of an instant chill as I saw the four masts of a great ship sticking out of the water. Whatever craft it was, it was as large as the *Elsinore*, and it had been but recently wrecked.

"One of the German nitrate ships," said Mr. Pike. Captain West nodded, still studying the wreck, then said:

"She looks quite deserted. Just the same, Mr. Pike, send several of your best-sighted sailors aloft, and keep a good lookout yourself. There may be some survivors ashore trying to signal us."

But we sailed on, and no signals were seen. Mr. Pike was delighted with our good fortune. He was guilty of walking up and down, rubbing his hands and chuckling to himself. Not since 1888, he told me, had he been through the Straits of Le Maire. Also, he said that he knew of shipmasters who had made forty voyages around the Horn and had never once had the luck to win through the straits. The regular passage is far to the east around Staten Island, which means a loss of westing, and here, at the tip of the world, where the great west wind, unobstructed by any land, sweeps round and around the narrow girth of earth, westing is the thing that has to be fought for mile by mile and inch by inch. The Sailing Directions advise masters on the Horn passage: *Make Westing*. *Whatever you do*, *make westing*.

When we emerged from the straits in the early afternoon the same steady breeze continued, and in the calm water under the lee of Tierra del Fuego, which extends south-westerly to the Horn, we slipped along at an eight-knot clip.

Mr. Pike was beside himself. He could scarcely tear himself from the deck when it was his watch below. He chuckled, rubbed his hands, and incessantly hummed snatches from the Twelfth Mass. Also, he was voluble.

"To-morrow morning we'll be up with the Horn. We'll shave it by a dozen or fifteen miles. Think of it! We'll just steal around! I never had such luck, and never expected to. Old girl *Elsinore*, you're rotten for'ard, but the hand of God is at your helm."

Once, under the weather cloth, I came upon him talking to himself. It was more a prayer.

"If only she don't pipe up," he kept repeating. "If only she don't pipe up."

Mr. Mellaire was quite different.

"It never happens," he told me. "No ship ever went around like this. You watch her come. She always comes a-smoking out of the sou'west."

“But can’t a vessel ever steal around?” I asked.

“The odds are mighty big against it, sir,” he answered. “I’ll give you a line on them. I’ll wager even, sir, just a nominal bet of a pound of tobacco, that inside twenty-four hours we’ll he hove to under upper-topsails. I’ll wager ten pounds to five that we’re not west of the Horn a week from now; and, fifty to fifty being the passage, twenty pounds to five that two weeks from now we’re not up with fifty in the Pacific.”

As for Captain West, the perils of Le Maire behind, he sat below, his slippered feet stretched before him, smoking a cigar. He had nothing to say whatever, although Margaret and I were jubilant and dared duets through all of the second dog-watch.

* * * * *

And this morning, in a smooth sea and gentle breeze, the Horn bore almost due north of us not more than six miles away. Here we were, well abreast and reeling off westing.

“What price tobacco this morning?” I quizzed Mr. Mellaire.

“Going up,” he came back. “Wish I had a thousand bets like the one with you, sir.”

I glanced about at sea and sky and gauged the speed of our way by the foam, but failed to see anything that warranted his remark. It was surely fine weather, and the steward, in token of the same, was trying to catch fluttering Cape pigeons with a bent pin on a piece of thread.

For’ard, on the poop, I encountered Mr. Pike. It *was* an encounter, for his salutation was a grunt.

“Well, we’re going right along,” I ventured cheerily.

He made no reply, but turned and stared into the gray south-west with an expression sourer than any I had ever seen on his face. He mumbled something I failed to catch, and, on my asking him to repeat it, he said:

“It’s breeding weather. Can’t you see it?”

I shook my head.

“What d’ye think we’re taking off the kites for?” he growled.

I looked aloft. The skysails were already furled; men were furling the royals; and the topgallant-yards were running down while clewlines and buntlines bagged the canvas. Yet, if anything, our northerly breeze fanned even more gently.

"Bless me if I can see any weather," I said.

"Then go and take a look at the barometer," he grunted, as he turned on his heel and swung away from me.

In the chart-room was Captain West, pulling on his long sea-boots. That would have told me had there been no barometer, though the barometer was eloquent enough of itself. The night before it had stood at 30.10. It was now 28.64. Even in the pampero it had not been so low as that.

"The usual Cape Horn programme," Captain West smiled to me, as he stood up in all his lean and slender gracefulness and reached for his long oilskin coat.

Still I could scarcely believe.

"Is it very far away?" I inquired.

He shook his head, and forebore in the act of speaking to lift his hand for me to listen. The *Elsinore* rolled uneasily, and from without came the soft and hollow thunder of sails emptying themselves against the masts and gear.

We had chatted a bare five minutes, when again he lifted his head. This time the *Elsinore* heeled over slightly and remained heeled over, while the sighing whistle of a rising breeze awoke in the rigging.

"It's beginning to make," he said, in the good old Anglo-Saxon of the sea.

And then I heard Mr. Pike snarling out orders, and in my heart discovered a growing respect for Cape Horn — Cape Stiff, as the sailors call it.

An hour later we were hove to on the port tack under upper-topsails and foresail. The wind had come out of the south-west, and our leeway was setting us down upon the land. Captain West gave orders to the mate to stand by to wear ship. Both watches had been taking in sail, so that both watches were on deck for the manoeuvre.

It was astounding, the big sea that had arisen in so short a time. The wind was blowing a gale that ever, in recurring gusts, increased upon itself. Nothing was visible a hundred yards away. The day had become black-gray. In the cabin lamps were burning. The view from the poop, along the length of the great labouring ship, was magnificent. Seas burst and surged across her weather-rail and kept her deck half filled, despite the spouting ports and gushing scuppers.

On each of the two houses and on the poop the ship's complement, all in oilskins, was in groups. For'ard, Mr. Mellaire had charge. Mr. Pike took charge of the ’midship-house and the poop. Captain West strolled up and down, saw everything, said nothing; for it was the mate’s affair.

When Mr. Pike ordered the wheel hard up, he slacked off all the mizzen-yards, and followed it with a partial slacking of the main-yards, so that the after-pressures were eased. The foresail and fore-lower-and-upper-topsails remained flat in order to pay the head off before the wind. All this took time. The men were slow, not strong, and without snap. They reminded me of dull oxen by the way they moved and pulled. And the gale, ever snorting harder, now snorted diabolically. Only at intervals could I glimpse the group on top the for’ard-house. Again and again, leaning to it and holding their heads down, the men on the ’midship-house were obliterated by the drive of crested seas that burst against the rail, spouted to the lower-yards, and swept in horizontal volumes across to leeward. And Mr. Pike, like an enormous spider in a wind-tossed web, went back and forth along the slender bridge that was itself a shaken thread in the blast of the storm.

So tremendous were the gusts that for the time the *Elsinore* refused to answer. She lay down to it; she was swept and racked by it; but her head did not pay off before it, and all the while we drove down upon that bitter, iron coast. And the world was black-gray, and violent, and very cold, with the flying spray freezing to ice in every lodgment.

We waited. The groups of men, head down to it, waited. Mr. Pike, restless, angry, his blue eyes as bitter as the cold, his mouth as much a-snarl as the snarl of the elements with which he fought, waited. The Samurai waited, tranquil, casual, remote. And Cape Horn waited, there on our lee, for the bones of our ship and us.

And then the *Elsinore’s* bow paid off. The angle of the beat of the gale changed, and soon, with dreadful speed, we were dashing straight before it and straight toward the rocks we could not see. But all doubt was over. The success of the manoeuvre was assured. Mr. Mellaire, informed by messenger along the bridge from Mr. Pike, slacked off the head-yards. Mr. Pike, his eye on the helmsman, his hand signalling the order, had the wheel put over to port to check the *Elsinore’s* rush into the wind as she came up on the starboard tack. All was activity. Main-and mizzen-yards were braced up, and the *Elsinore*, snugged down and hove to, had a lee of thousands of miles of Southern Ocean.

And all this had been accomplished in the stamping ground of storm, at the end of the world, by a handful of wretched weaklings, under the drive of two strong mates, with behind them the placid will of the Samurai.

It had taken thirty minutes to wear ship, and I had learned how the best of shipmasters can lose their ships without reproach. Suppose the *Elsinore* had persisted in her refusal to payoff? Suppose anything had carried away? And right here enters Mr. Pike. It is his task ever to see that every rope and block and all the myriad other things in the vast and complicated gear of the *Elsinore* are in strength not to carry away. Always have the masters of our race required henchmen like Mr. Pike, and it seems the race has well supplied those henchmen.

Ere I went below I heard Captain West tell Mr. Pike that while both watches were on deck it would be just as well to put a reef in the foresail before they furled it. The mainsail and the crojack being off, I could see the men black on the fore-yard. For half-an-hour I lingered, watching them. They seemed to make no progress with the reef. Mr. Mellaire was with them, having direct supervision of the job, while Mr. Pike, on the poop, growled and grumbled and spat endless blasphemies into the flying air.

“What’s the matter?” I asked.

“Two watches on a single yardarm and unable to put a reef in a handkerchief like that!” he snorted. “What’ll it be if we’re off here a month?”

“A month!” I cried.

“A month isn’t anything for Cape Stiff,” he said grimly. “I’ve been off here seven weeks and then turned tail and run around the other way.”

“Around the world?” I gasped.

“It was the only way to get to ’Frisco,” he answered. “The Horn’s the Horn, and there’s no summer seas that I’ve ever noticed in this neighbourhood.”

My fingers were numb and I was chilled through when I took a last look at the wretched men on the fore-yard and went below to warm up.

A little later, as I went in to table, through a cabin port I stole a look for’ard between seas and saw the men still struggling on the freezing yard.

The four of us were at table, and it was very comfortable, in spite of the *Elsinore’s* violent antics. The room was warm. The storm-racks on the table kept each dish in its place. The steward served and moved about with ease and apparent unconcern, although I noticed an occasional anxious gleam in his eyes when he poised some dish at a moment when the ship pitched and flung with unusual wildness.

And now and again I thought of the poor devils on the yard. Well, they belonged there by right, just as we belonged here by right in this oasis of the cabin. I looked at Mr. Pike and wagered to myself that half-a-dozen like him could master that stubborn foresail. As for the Samurai, I was convinced that alone, not moving from his seat, by a tranquil exertion of will, he could accomplish the same thing.

The lighted sea-lamps swung and leaped in their gimbals, ever battling with the dancing shadows in the murky gray. The wood-work creaked and groaned. The jiggermast, a huge cylinder of hollow steel that perforated the apartment through deck above and floor beneath, was hideously vocal with the storm. Far above, taut ropes beat against it so that it clanged like a boiler-shop. There was a perpetual thunder of seas falling on our deck and crash of water against our for'ard wall; while the ten thousand ropes and gears aloft bellowed and screamed as the storm smote them.

And yet all this was from without. Here, at this well-appointed table, was no draught nor breath of wind, no drive of spray nor wash of sea. We were in the heart of peace in the midmost centre of the storm. Margaret was in high spirits, and her laughter vied with the clang of the jiggermast. Mr. Pike was gloomy, but I knew him well enough to attribute his gloom, not to the elements, but to the inefficients futilely freezing on the yard. As for me, I looked about at the four of us — blue-eyed, gray-eyed, all fair-skinned and royal blond — and somehow it seemed that I had long since lived this, and that with me and in me were all my ancestors, and that their lives and memories were mine, and that all this vexation of the sea and air and labouring ship was of old time and a thousand times before.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"How are you for a climb?" Margaret asked me, shortly after we had left the table.

She stood challengingly at my open door, in oilskins, sou'wester, and sea-boots.

"I've never seen you with a foot above the deck since we sailed," she went on. "Have you a good head?"

I marked my book, rolled out of my bunk in which I had been wedged, and clapped my hands for Wada.

"Will you?" she cried eagerly.

"If you let me lead," I answered airily, "and if you will promise to hold on tight. Whither away?"

"Into the top of the jigger. It's the easiest. As for holding on, please remember that I have often done it. It is with you the doubt rests."

"Very well," I retorted; "do you lead then. I shall hold on tight."

"I have seen many a landsman funk it," she teased. "There are no lubber-holes in our tops."

"And most likely I shall," I agreed. "I've never been aloft in my life, and since there is no hole for a lubber."

She looked at me, half believing my confession of weakness, while I extended my arms for the oilskin which Wada struggled on to me.

On the poop it was magnificent, and terrible, and sombre. The universe was very immediately about us. It blanketed us in storming wind and flying spray and grayness. Our main deck was impassable, and the relief of the wheel came aft along the bridge. It was two o'clock, and for over two hours the frozen wretches had laid out upon the fore-yard. They were still there, weak, feeble, hopeless. Captain West, stepping out in the lee of the chart-house, gazed at them for several minutes.

"We'll have to give up that reef," he said to Mr. Pike. "Just make the sail fast. Better put on double gaskets."

And with lagging feet, from time to time pausing and holding on as spray and the tops of waves swept over him, the mate went for'ard along the bridge to vent his scorn on the two watches of a four-masted ship that could not reef a foresail.

It is true. They could not do it, despite their willingness, for this I have learned: *the men do their weak best whenever the order is given to shorten sail*. It must be that they are afraid. They lack the iron of Mr. Pike, the wisdom and the iron of Captain West. Always, have I noticed, with all the alacrity of which they are capable, do they respond to any order to shorten down. That is why they are for'ard, in that pigsty of a forecastle, because they lack the iron. Well, I can say only this: If nothing else could have prevented the funk hinted at by Margaret, the sorry spectacle of these ironless, spineless creatures was sufficient safeguard. How could I funk in the face of their weakness — I, who lived aft in the high place?

Margaret did not disdain the aid of my hand as she climbed upon the pin-rail at the foot of the weather jigger-rigging. But it was merely the recognition of a courtesy on her part, for the next moment she released her mittened hand from mine, swung boldly outboard into the face of the gale, and around against the ratlines. Then she began to climb. I followed, almost unaware of the ticklishness of the exploit to a tyro, so buoyed up was I by her example and by my scorn of the weaklings for'ard. Where men could go, I could go. What men could do, I could do. And no daughter of the Samurai could out-game me.

Yet it was slow work. In the windward rolls against the storm-gusts one was pinned helplessly, like a butterfly, against the rigging. At such times, so great was the pressure one could not lift hand nor foot. Also, there was no need for holding on. As I have said, one was pinned against the rigging by the wind.

Through the snow beginning to drive the deck grew small beneath me, until a fall meant a broken back or death, unless one landed in the sea, in which case the result would be frigid drowning. And still Margaret climbed. Without pause she went out under the overhanging platform of the top, shifted her holds to the rigging that went aloft from it, and swung around this rigging, easily, carelessly, timing the action to the roll, and stood safely upon the top.

I followed. I breathed no prayers, knew no qualms, as I presented my back to the deck and climbed out under the overhang, feeling with my hands for holds I could not see. I was in an ecstasy. I could dare anything. Had she sprung into the air, stretched out her arms, and soared away on the breast of the gale, I should have unhesitatingly followed her.

As my head outpassed the edge of the top so that she came into view, I could see she was looking at me with storm-bright eyes. And as I swung around the rigging lightly and joined her, I saw approval in her eyes that was quickly routed by petulance.

"Oh, you've done this sort of thing before," she reproached, calling loudly, so that I might hear, her lips close to my ear.

I shook a denial with my head that brightened her eyes again. She nodded and smiled, and sat down, dangling her sea-boots into snow-swirled space from the edge of the top. I sat beside her, looking down into the snow that hid the deck while it exaggerated the depth out of which we had climbed.

We were all alone there, a pair of storm petrels perched in mid air on a steel stick that arose out of snow and that vanished above into snow. We had come to the tip of the world, and even that tip had ceased to be. But no. Out of the snow, down wind, with motionless wings, driving fully eighty or ninety miles an hour, appeared a huge albatross. He must have been fifteen feet from wing-tip to wing-tip. He had seen his danger ere we saw him, and, tilting his body on the blast, he carelessly veered clear of collision. His head and neck were rimed with age or frost — we could not tell which — and his bright bead-eye noted us as he passed and whirled away on a great circle into the snow to leeward.

Margaret's hand shot out to mine.

"It alone was worth the climb!" she cried. And then the *Elsinore* flung down, and Margaret's hand clutched tighter for holding, while from the hidden depths arose the crash and thunder of the great west wind drift upon our decks.

Quickly as the snow-squall had come, it passed with the same sharp quickness, and as in a flash we could see the lean length of the ship beneath us — the main deck full with boiling flood, the forecastle-head buried in a bursting sea, the lookout, stationed for very life back on top the for'ard-house, hanging on, head down, to the wind-drive of ocean, and, directly under us, the streaming poop and Mr. Mellaire, with a handful of men, rigging relieving tackles on the tiller. And we saw the Samurai emerge in the lee of the chart-house, swaying with casual surety on the mad deck, as he spoke what must have been instructions to Mr. Pike.

The gray circle of the world had removed itself from us for several hundred yards, and we could see the mighty sweep of sea. Shaggy graybeards, sixty feet from trough to crest, leapt out of the windward murky gray, and in unending procession rushed upon the *Elsinore*, one moment overtoppling her slender frailness, the next moment splashing a hundred tons of water on her deck and flinging her skyward as they passed beneath and foamed and crested from sight in the murky gray to leeward. And the great albatrosses veered and circled about us, beating up into the bitter violence of the gale and sweeping grandly away before it far faster than it blew.

Margaret forbore from looking to challenge me with eloquent, questioning eyes. With numb fingers inside my thick mitten, I drew aside the ear-flap of her sou'wester and shouted:

"It is nothing new. I have been here before. In the lives of all my fathers have I been here. The frost is on my cheek, the salt bites my nostrils, the wind chants in my ears, and it is an old happening. I know, now, that my forbears were Vikings. I was seed of them in their own day. With them I have raided English coasts, dared the Pillars of Hercules, forayed the Mediterranean, and sat in the high place of government over the soft sun-warm peoples. I am Hengist and Horsa; I am of the ancient heroes, even legendary to them. I have bearded and bitten the frozen seas, and, aforetime of that, ere ever the ice-ages came to be, I have dripped my shoulders in reindeer gore, slain the mastodon and the sabre-tooth, scratched the record of my prowess on the walls of deep-buried caves — ay, and suckled she-wolves side by side with my brother-cubs, the scars of whose fangs are now upon me."

She laughed deliciously, and a snow-squall drove upon us and cut our cheeks, and the *Elsinore* flung over and down as if she would never rise again, while we held on and swept through the air in a dizzying arc. Margaret released a hand, still laughing, and pressed aside my ear-flap.

"I don't know anything about it," she cried. "It sounds like poetry. But I believe it. It has to be, for it has been. I have heard it aforetime, when skin-clad men sang in fire-circles that pressed back the frost and night."

"And the books?" she queried maliciously, as we prepared to descend.

"They can go hang, along with all the brain-sick, world-sick fools that wrote them," I replied.

Again she laughed deliciously, though the wind tore the sound away as she swung out into space, muscled herself by her arms while she caught footholds beneath her which she could not see, and passed out of my sight under the perilous overhang of the top.

CHAPTER XXXV

"What price tobacco?" was Mr. Mellaire's greeting, when I came on deck this morning, bruised and weary, aching in every bone and muscle from sixty hours of being tossed about.

The wind had fallen to a dead calm toward morning, and the Elsinore, her several spread sails booming and slatting, rolled more miserably than ever. Mr. Mellaire pointed for'ard of our starboard beam. I could make out a bleak land of white and jagged peaks.

"Staten Island, the easterly end of it," said Mr. Mellaire.

And I knew that we were in the position of a vessel just rounding Staten Island preliminary to bucking the Horn. And, yet, four days ago, we had run through the Straits of Le Maire and stolen along toward the Horn. Three days ago we had been well abreast of the Horn and even a few miles past. And here we were now, starting all over again and far in the rear of where we had originally started.

* * * * *

The condition of the men is truly wretched. During the gale the forecastle was washed out twice. This means that everything in it was afloat and that every article of clothing, including mattresses and blankets, is wet and will remain wet in this bitter weather until we are around the Horn and well up in the good-weather latitudes. The same is true of the 'midship-house. Every room in it, with the exception of the cook's and the sail-makers' (which open for'ard on Number Two hatch), is soaking. And they have no fires in their rooms with which to dry things out.

I peeped into Charles Davis's room. It was terrible. He grinned to me and nodded his head.

"It's just as well O'Sullivan wasn't here, sir," he said. "He'd a-drowned in the lower bunk. And I want to tell you I was doing some swimmin' before I could get into the top one. And salt water's bad for my sores. I oughtn't to be in a hole like this in Cape Horn weather. Look at the ice, there, on the floor. It's below freezin' right now in this room, and my blankets are wet, and I'm a sick man, as any man can tell that's got a nose."

"If you'd been decent to the mate you might have got decent treatment in return," I said.

"Huh!" he sneered. "You needn't think you can lose me, sir. I can grow fat on this sort of stuff. Why, sir, when I think of the court doin's in Seattle I just couldn't die. An' if you'll listen to me, sir, you'll cover the steward's money. You can't lose. I'm advisin' you, sir, because you're a sort of decent sort. Anybody that bets on my going over the side is a sure loser."

"How could you dare ship on a voyage like this in your condition?" I demanded.

"Condition?" he queried with a fine assumption of innocence. "Why, that is why I did ship. I was in tiptop shape when I sailed. All this come out on me afterward. You remember seem' me aloft, an' up to my neck in water. And I trimmed coal below, too. A sick man couldn't do it. And remember, sir, you'll have to testify to how I did my duty at the beginning before I took down."

"I'll bet with you myself if you think I'm goin' to die," he called after me.

Already the sailors show marks of the hardship they are enduring. It is surprising, in so short a time, how lean their faces have grown, how lined and seamed. They must dry their underclothing with their body heat. Their outer garments, under their oilskins, are soggy. And yet, paradoxically, despite their lean, drawn faces, they have grown very stout. Their walk is a waddle, and they bulge with seaming corpulency. This is due to the amount of clothing they have on. I noticed Larry, to-day, had on two vests, two coats, and an overcoat, with his oilskin outside of that. They are elephantine in their gait for, in addition to everything else, they have wrapped their feet, outside their sea-boots, with gunny sacking.

It *is* cold, although the deck thermometer stood at thirty-three to-day at noon. I had Wada weigh the clothing I wear on deck. Omitting oilskins and boots, it came to eighteen pounds. And yet I am not any too warm in all this gear when the wind is blowing. How sailors, after having once experienced the Horn, can ever sign on again for a voyage around is beyond me. It but serves to show how stupid they must be.

I feel sorry for Henry, the training-ship boy. He is more my own kind, and some day he will make a henchman of the afterguard and a mate like Mr. Pike. In the meantime, along with Buckwheat, the other boy who berths in the 'midship-house with him, he suffers the same hardship as the men. He is very fair-skinned, and I noticed this afternoon, when he was pulling on a brace, that the sleeves of his oil-skins, assisted by the salt water, have chafed his wrists till they are raw and bleeding and breaking out in sea-boils. Mr. Mellaire tells me that in another week there will be a plague of these boils with all hands for'ard.

"When do you think we'll be up with the Horn again?" I innocently queried of Mr. Pike.

He turned upon me in a rage, as if I had insulted him, and positively snarled in my face ere he swung away without the courtesy of an answer. It is evident that he takes the sea seriously. That is why, I fancy, he is so excellent a seaman.

* * * * *

The days pass — if the interval of sombre gray that comes between the darknesses can be called day. For a week, now, we have not seen the sun. Our ship's position in this waste of storm and sea is conjectural. Once, by dead reckoning, we gained up with the Horn and a hundred miles south of it. And then came another sou'west gale that tore our fore-topsail and brand new spencer out of the belt-ropes and swept us away to a conjectured longitude east of Staten Island.

Oh, I know now this Great West Wind that blows for ever around the world south of 55. And I know why the chart-makers have capitalized it, as, for instance, when I read "The Great West Wind Drift." And I know why the *Sailing Directions* advise: "*Whatever you do*, *make westing*! *make westing*!"

And the West Wind and the drift of the West Wind will not permit the *Elsinore* to make westing. Gale follows gale, always from the west, and we make easting. And it is bitter cold, and each gale snorts up with a prelude of driving snow.

In the cabin the lamps burn all day long. No more does Mr. Pike run the phonograph, nor does Margaret ever touch the piano. She complains of being bruised and sore. I have a wrenched shoulder from being hurled against the wall. And both Wada and the steward are limping. Really, the only comfort I can find is in my bunk, so wedged with boxes and pillows that the wildest rolls cannot throw me out. There, save for my meals and for an occasional run on deck for exercise and fresh air, I lie and read eighteen and nineteen hours out of the twenty-four. But the unending physical strain is very wearisome.

How it must be with the poor devils for'ard is beyond conceiving. The forecastle has been washed out several times, and everything is soaking wet. Besides, they have grown weaker, and two watches are required to do what one ordinary watch could do. Thus, they must spend as many hours on the sea-swept deck and aloft on the freezing yards as I do in my warm, dry bunk. Wada tells me that they never undress, but turn into their wet bunks in their oil-skins and sea-boots and wet undergarments.

To look at them crawling about on deck or in the rigging is enough. They are truly weak. They are gaunt-cheeked and haggard-gray of skin, with great dark circles under their eyes. The predicted plague of sea-boils and sea-cuts has come, and their hands and wrists and arms are frightfully afflicted. Now one, and now another, and sometimes several, either from being knocked down by seas or from general miserableness, take to the bunk for a day or so off. This means more work for the others, so that the men on their feet are not tolerant of the sick ones, and a man must be very sick to escape being dragged out to work by his mates.

I cannot but marvel at Andy Fay and Mulligan Jacobs. Old and fragile as they are, it seems impossible that they can endure what they do. For that matter, I cannot understand why they work at all. I cannot understand why any of them toil on and obey an order in this freezing hell of the Horn. Is it because of fear of death that they do not cease work and bring death to all of us? Or is it because they are slave-beasts, with a slave-psychology, so used all their lives to being driven by their masters that it is beyond their mental power to refuse to obey?

And yet most of them, in a week after we reach Seattle, will be on board other ships outward bound for the Horn. Margaret says the reason for this is that sailors forget. Mr. Pike agrees. He says give them a week in the south-east trades as we run up the Pacific and they will have forgotten that they have ever been around the Horn. I wonder. Can they be as stupid as this? Does pain leave no record with them? Do they fear only the immediate thing? Have they no horizons wider than a day? Then indeed do they belong where they are.

They *are* cowardly. This was shown conclusively this morning at two o'clock. Never have I witnessed such panic fear, and it was fear of the immediate thing — fear, stupid and beast-like. It was Mr. Mellaire's watch. As luck would have it, I was reading Boas's *Mind of Primitive Man* when I heard the rush of feet over my head. The *Elsinore* was hove to on the port tack at the time, under very short canvas. I was wondering what emergency had brought the watch upon the poop, when I heard another rush of feet that meant the second watch. I heard no pulling and hauling, and the thought of mutiny flashed across my mind.

Still nothing happened, and, growing curious, I got into my sea-boots, sheepskin coat, and oilskin, put on my sou'wester and mittens, and went on deck. Mr. Pike had already dressed and was ahead of me. Captain West, who in this bad weather sleeps in the chart-room, stood in the lee doorway of the house, through which the lamplight streamed on the frightened faces of the men.

Those of the 'midship-house were not present, but every man Jack of the forecastle, with the exception of Andy Fay and Mulligan Jacobs, as I afterwards learned, had joined in the flight aft. Andy Fay, who belonged in the watch below, had calmly remained in his bunk, while Mulligan Jacobs had taken advantage of the opportunity to sneak into the forecastle and fill his pipe.

"What is the matter, Mr. Pike?" Captain West asked.

Before the mate could reply, Bert Rhine snickered:

"The devil's come aboard, sir."

But his snicker was palpably an assumption of unconcern he did not possess. The more I think over it the more I am surprised that such keen men as the gangsters should have been frightened by what had occurred. But frightened they were, the three of them, out of their bunks and out of the precious surcease of their brief watch below.

So fear-struck was Larry that he chattered and grimaced like an ape, and shouldered and struggled to get away from the dark and into the safety of the shaft of light that shone out of the chart-house. Tony, the Greek, was just as bad, mumbling to himself and continually crossing himself. He was joined in this, as a sort of chorus, by the two Italians, Guido Bombini and Mike Cipriani. Arthur Deacon was almost in collapse, and he and Chantz, the Jew, shamelessly clung to each other for support. Bob, the fat and overgrown youth, was sobbing, while the other youth, Bony the Splinter, was shivering and chattering his teeth. Yes, and the two best sailors for'ard, Tom Spink and the Maltese Cockney, stood in the background, their backs to the dark, their faces yearning toward the light.

More than all other contemptible things in this world there are two that I loathe and despise: hysteria in a woman; fear and cowardice in a man. The first turns me to ice. I cannot sympathize with hysteria. The second turns my stomach. Cowardice in a man is to me positively nauseous. And this fear-smitten mass of human animals on our reeling poop raised my gorge. Truly, had I been a god at that moment, I should have annihilated the whole mass of them. No; I should have been merciful to one. He was the Faun. His bright, pain-liquid, and flashing-eager eyes strained from face to face with desire to understand. He did not know what had occurred, and, being stone-deaf, had thought the rush aft a response to a call for all hands.

I noticed Mr. Mellaire. He may be afraid of Mr. Pike, and he is a murderer; but at any rate he has no fear of the supernatural. With two men above him in authority, although it was his watch, there was no call for him to do anything. He swayed back and forth in balance to the violent motions of the *Elsinore* and looked on with eyes that were amused and cynical.

“What does the devil look like, my man?” Captain West asked.

Bert Rhine grinned sheepishly.

“Answer the captain!” Mr. Pike snarled at him.

Oh, it was murder, sheer murder, that leapt into the gangster’s eyes for the instant, in acknowledgment of the snarl. Then he replied to Captain West:

“I didn’t wait to see, sir. But it’s one whale of a devil.”

“He’s as big as a elephant, sir,” volunteered Bill Quigley. “I seen’m face to face, sir. He almost got me when I run out of the fo’c’s’le.”

“Oh, Lord, sir!” Larry moaned. “The way he hit the house, sir. It was the call to Judgment.”

“Your theology is mixed, my man,” Captain West smiled quietly, though I could not help seeing how tired was his face and how tired were his wonderful Samurai eyes.

He turned to the mate.

“Mr. Pike, will you please go for’ard and interview this devil? Fasten him up and tie him down and I’ll take a look at him in the morning.”

“Yes, sir,” said Mr. Pike; and Kipling’s line came to me:

“Woman, Man, or God or Devil, was there anything we feared?”

And as I went for’ard through the wall of darkness after Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire along the freezing, slender, sea-swept bridge — not a sailor dared to accompany us — other lines of “The Galley Slave” drifted through my brain, such as:

“Our bulkheads bulged with cotton and our masts were stepped in gold —
We ran a mighty merchandise of niggers in the hold. . . ”

And:

“By the brand upon my shoulder, by the gall of clinging steel,
By the welts the whips have left me, by the scars that never heal . . . ”

And:

“Battered chain-gangs of the orlop, grizzled draughts of years gone by . . . ”

And I caught my great, radiant vision of Mr. Pike, galley slave of the race, and a driver of men under men greater than he; the faithful henchman, the able sailorman, battered and grizzled, branded and galled, the servant of the sweep-head that made mastery of the sea. I know him now. He can never again offend me. I forgive him everything — the whiskey raw on his breath the day I came aboard at Baltimore, his moroseness when sea and wind do not favour, his savagery to the men, his snarl and his sneer.

On top the ’midship-house we got a ducking that makes me shiver to recall. I had dressed too hastily properly to fasten my oilskin about my neck, so that I was wet to the skin. We crossed the next span of bridge through driving spray, and were well upon the top of the for’ard-house when something adrift on the deck hit the for’ard wall a terrific smash.

“Whatever it is, it’s playing the devil,” Mr. Pike yelled in my ear, as he endeavoured to locate the thing by the dry-battery light-stick which he carried.

The pencil of light travelled over dark water, white with foam, that churned upon the deck.

“There it goes!” Mr. Pike cried, as the *Elsinore* dipped by the head and hurtled the water for’ard.

The light went out as the three of us caught holds and crouched to a deluge of water from overside. As we emerged, from under the forecastle-head we heard a tremendous thumping and battering. Then, as the bow lifted, for an instant in the pencil of light that immediately lost it, I glimpsed a vague black object that bounded down the inclined deck where no water was. What became of it we could not see.

Mr. Pike descended to the deck, followed by Mr. Mellaire. Again, as the *Elsinore* dipped by the head and fetched a surge of sea-water from aft along the runway, I saw the dark object bound for'ard directly at the mates. They sprang to safety from its charge, the light went out, while another icy sea broke aboard.

For a time I could see nothing of the two men. Next, in the light flashed from the stick, I guessed that Mr. Pike was in pursuit of the thing. He evidently must have captured it at the rail against the starboard rigging and caught a turn around it with a loose end of rope. As the vessel rolled to windward some sort of a struggle seemed to be going on. The second mate sprang to the mate's assistance, and, together, with more loose ends, they seemed to subdue the thing.

I descended to see. By the light-stick we made it out to be a large, barnacle-crusted cask.

"She's been afloat for forty years," was Mr. Pike's judgment. "Look at the size of the barnacles, and look at the whiskers."

"And it's full of something," said Mr. Mellaire. "Hope it isn't water."

I rashly lent a hand when they started to work the cask for'ard, between seas and taking advantage of the rolls and pitches, to the shelter under the forecastle-head. As a result, even through my mittens, I was cut by the sharp edges of broken shell.

"It's liquor of some sort," said the mate, "but we won't risk broaching it till morning."

"But where did it come from?" I asked.

"Over the side's the only place it could have come from." Mr. Pike played the light over it. "Look at it! It's been afloat for years and years."

"The stuff ought to be well-seasoned," commented Mr. Mellaire.

Leaving them to lash the cask securely, I stole along the deck to the forecastle and peered in. The men, in their headlong flight, had neglected to close the doors, and the place was afloat. In the flickering light from a small and very smoky sea-lamp it was a dismal picture. No self-respecting cave-man, I am sure, would have lived in such a hole.

Even as I looked a bursting sea filled the runway between the house and rail, and through the doorway in which I stood the freezing water rushed waist-deep. I had to hold on to escape being swept inside the room. From a top bunk, lying on his side, Andy Fay regarded me steadily with his bitter blue eyes. Seated on the rough table of heavy planks, his sea-booted feet swinging in the water, Mulligan Jacobs pulled at his pipe. When he observed me he pointed to pulpy book-pages that floated about.

"Me library's gone to hell," he mourned as he indicated the flotsam. "There's me Byron. An' there goes Zola an' Browning with a piece of Shakespeare runnin' neck an' neck, an' what's left of *Anti-Christ* makin' a bad last. An' there's Carlyle and Zola that cheek by jowl you can't tell 'em apart."

Here the *Elsinore* lay down to starboard, and the water in the forecastle poured out against my legs and hips. My wet mittens slipped on the iron work, and I swept down the runway into the scuppers, where I was turned over and over by another flood that had just boarded from windward.

I know I was rather confused, and that I had swallowed quite a deal of salt water, ere I got my hands on the rungs of the ladder and climbed to the top of the house. On my way aft along the bridge I encountered the crew coming for'ard. Mr. Mellaire and Mr. Pike were talking in the lee of the chart-house, and inside, as I passed below, Captain West was smoking a cigar.

After a good rub down, in dry pyjamas, I was scarcely back in my bunk with the *Mind of Primitive Man* before me, when the stampede over my head was repeated. I waited for the second rush. It came, and I proceeded to dress.

The scene on the poop duplicated the previous one, save that the men were more excited, more frightened. They were babbling and chattering all together.

"Shut up!" Mr. Pike was snarling when I came upon them. "One at a time, and answer the captain's question."

"It ain't no barrel this time, sir," Tom Spink said. "It's alive. An' if it ain't the devil it's the ghost of a drownded man. I see 'm plain an' clear. He's a man, or was a man once — "

"They was two of 'em, sir," Richard Giller, one of the "bricklayers," broke in.

"I think he looked like Petro Marinkovich, sir," Tom Spink went on.

"An' the other was Jespersen — I seen 'm," Giller added.

"They was three of 'em, sir," said Nosey Murphy. "O'Sullivan, sir, was the other one. They ain't devils, sir. They're drownded men. They come aboard right over the bows, an' they moved slow like drownded men. Sorensen seen the first one first. He caught my arm an' pointed, an' then I seen ’m. He was on top the for’ard-house. And Olansen seen ’m, an’ Deacon, sir, an’ Hackey. We all seen ’m, sir . . . an’ the second one; an’ when the rest run away I stayed long enough to see the third one. Mebbe there’s more. I didn’t wait to see.”

Captain West stopped the man.

“Mr. Pike,” he said wearily, “will you straighten this nonsense out.”

“Yes, sir,” Mr. Pike responded, then turned on the man. “Come on, all of you! There’s three devils to tie down this time.”

But the men shrank away from the order and from him.

“For two cents . . . ” I heard Mr. Pike growl to himself, then choke off utterance.

He flung about on his heel and started for the bridge. In the same order as on the previous trip, Mr. Mellaire second, and I bringing up the rear, we followed. It was a similar journey, save that we caught a ducking midway on the first span of bridge as well as a ducking on the ’midship-house.

We halted on top the for’ard-house. In vain Mr. Pike flashed his light-stick. Nothing was to be seen nor heard save the white-flecked dark water on our deck, the roar of the gale in our rigging, and the crash and thunder of seas falling aboard. We advanced half-way across the last span of bridge to the fore-castle head, and were driven to pause and hang on at the foremast by a bursting sea.

Between the drives of spray Mr. Pike flashed his stick. I heard him exclaim something. Then he went on to the forecastle-head, followed by Mr. Mellaire, while I waited by the foremast, clinging tight, and endured another ducking. Through the emergencies I could see the pencil of light, appearing and disappearing, darting here and there. Several minutes later the mates were back with me.

“Half our head-gear’s carried away,” Mr. Pike told me. “We must have run into something.”

“I felt a jar, right after you’ went below, sir, last time,” said Mr. Mellaire. “Only I thought it was a thump of sea.”

“So did I feel it,” the mate agreed. “I was just taking off my boots. I thought it was a sea. But where are the three devils?”

“Broaching the cask,” the second mate suggested.

We made the forecastle-head, descended the iron ladder, and went for’ard, inside, underneath, out of the wind and sea. There lay the cask, securely lashed. The size of the barnacles on it was astonishing. They were as large as apples and inches deep. A down-fling of bow brought a foot of water about our boots; and as the bow lifted and the water drained away, it drew out from the shell-crusted cask streamers of seaweed a foot or so in length.

Led by Mr. Pike and watching our chance between seas, we searched the deck and rails between the forecastle-head and the for'ard-house and found no devils. The mate stepped into the forecastle doorway, and his light-stick cut like a dagger through the dim illumination of the murky sea-lamp. And we saw the devils. Nosey Murphy had been right. There were three of them.

Let me give the picture: A drenched and freezing room of rusty, paint-scabbed iron, low-roofed, double-tiered with bunks, reeking with the filth of thirty men, despite the washing of the sea. In a top bunk, on his side, in sea-boots and oilskins, staring steadily with blue, bitter eyes, Andy Fay; on the table, pulling at a pipe, with hanging legs dragged this way and that by the churn of water, Mulligan Jacobs, solemnly regarding three men, sea-booted and bloody, who stand side by side, of a height and not duly tall, swaying in unison to the *Elsinore's* down-flinging and up-lifting.

But such men! I know my East Side and my East End, and I am accustomed to the faces of all the ruck of races, yet with these three men I was at fault. The Mediterranean had surely never bred such a breed; nor had Scandinavia. They were not blonds. They were not brunettes. Nor were they of the Brown, or Black, or Yellow. Their skin was white under a bronze of weather. Wet as was their hair, it was plainly a colourless, sandy hair. Yet their eyes were dark — and yet not dark. They were neither blue, nor gray, nor green, nor hazel. Nor were they black. They were topaz, pale topaz; and they gleamed and dreamed like the eyes of great cats. They regarded us like walkers in a dream, these pale-haired storm-waifs with pale, topaz eyes. They did not bow, they did not smile, in no way did they recognize our presence save that they looked at us and dreamed.

But Andy Fay greeted us.

"It's a hell of a night an' not a wink of sleep with these goings-on," he said.

"Now where did they blow in from a night like this?" Mulligan Jacobs complained.

"You've got a tongue in your mouth," Mr. Pike snarled. "Why ain't you asked 'em?"

"As though you didn't know I could use the tongue in me mouth, you old stiff," Jacobs snarled back.

But it was no time for their private feud. Mr. Pike turned on the dreaming new-comers and addressed them in the mangled and aborted phrases of a dozen languages such as the world-wandering Anglo-Saxon has had every opportunity to learn but is too stubborn-brained and wilful-mouthed to wrap his tongue about.

The visitors made no reply. They did not even shake their heads. Their faces remained peculiarly relaxed and placid, incurious and pleasant, while in their eyes floated profounder dreams. Yet they were human. The blood of their injuries stained them and clotted on their clothes.

"Dutchmen," snorted Mr. Pike, with all due contempt for other breeds, as he waved them to make themselves at home in any of the bunks.

Mr. Pike's ethnology is narrow. Outside his own race he is aware of only three races: niggers, Dutchmen, and Dagoes.

Again our visitors proved themselves human. They understood the mate's invitation, and, glancing first at one another, they climbed into three top-bunks and closed their eyes. I could swear the first of them was asleep in half a minute.

"We'll have to clean up for'ard, or we'll be having the sticks about our ears," the mate said, already starting to depart. "Get the men along, Mr. Mellaire, and call out the carpenter."

CHAPTER XXXVI

And no westing! We have been swept back three degrees of casting since the night our visitors came on board. They are the great mystery, these three men of the sea. “Horn Gypsies,” Margaret calls them; and Mr. Pike dubs them “Dutchmen.” One thing is certain, they have a language of their own which they talk with one another. But of our hotch-potch of nationalities fore and aft there is no person who catches an inkling of their language or nationality.

Mr. Mellaire raised the theory that they were Finns of some sort, but this was indignantly denied by our big-footed youth of a carpenter, who swears he is a Finn himself. Louis, the cook, avers that somewhere over the world, on some forgotten voyage, he has encountered men of their type; but he can neither remember the voyage nor their race. He and the rest of the Asiatics accept their presence as a matter of course; but the crew, with the exception of Andy Fay and Mulligan Jacobs, is very superstitious about the new-comers, and will have nothing to do with them.

“No good will come of them, sir,” Tom Spink, at the wheel, told us, shaking his head forebodingly.

Margaret’s mittened hand rested on my arm as we balanced to the easy roll of the ship. We had paused from our promenade, which we now take each day, religiously, as a constitutional, between eleven and twelve.

“Why, what is the matter with them?” she queried, nudging me privily in warning of what was coming.

“Because they ain’t men, Miss, as we can rightly call men. They ain’t regular men.”

“It was a bit irregular, their manner of coming on board,” she gurgled.

“That’s just it, Miss,” Tom Spink exclaimed, brightening perceptibly at the hint of understanding. “Where’d they come from? They won’t tell. Of course they won’t tell. They ain’t men. They’re spirits — ghosts of sailors that drowned as long ago as when that cask went adrift from a sinkin’ ship, an’ that’s years an’ years, Miss, as anybody can see, lookin’ at the size of the barnacles on it.”

“Do you think so?” Margaret queried.

“We all think so, Miss. We ain’t spent our lives on the sea for nothin’. There’s no end of landsmen don’t believe in the Flyin’ Dutchman. But what do they know? They're just landsmen, ain't they? They ain't never had their leg grabbed by a ghost, such as I had, on the *Kathleen*, thirty-five years ago, down in the hole 'tween the water-casks. An' didn't that ghost rip the shoe right off of me? An' didn't I fall through the hatch two days later an' break my shoulder?"

"Now, Miss, I seen 'em makin' signs to Mr. Pike that we'd run into their ship hove to on the other tack. Don't you believe it. There wasn't no ship."

"But how do you explain the carrying away of our head-gear?" I demanded.

"There's lots of things can't be explained, sir," was Tom Spink's answer. "Who can explain the way the Finns plays tom-fool tricks with the weather? Yet everybody knows it. Why are we havin' a hard passage around the Horn, sir? I ask you that. Why, sir?"

I shook my head.

"Because of the carpenter, sir. We've found out he's a Finn. Why did he keep it quiet all the way down from Baltimore?"

"Why did he tell it?" Margaret challenged.

"He didn't tell it, Miss — leastways, not until after them three others boarded us. I got my suspicions he knows more about 'm than he's lettin' on. An' look at the weather an' the delay we're gettin'. An' don't everybody know the Finns is regular warlocks an' weather-breeders?"

My ears pricked up.

"Where did you get that word *warlock*?" I questioned.

Tom Spink looked puzzled.

"What's wrong with it, sir?" he asked.

"Nothing. It's all right. But where did you get it?"

"I never got it, sir. I always had it. That's what Finns is — warlocks."

"And these three new-comers — they aren't Finns?" asked Margaret.

The old Englishman shook his head solemnly.

"No, Miss. They're drownded sailors a long time drownded. All you have to do is look at 'm. An' the carpenter could tell us a few if he was minded."

* * * * *

Nevertheless, our mysterious visitors are a welcome addition to our weakened crew. I watch them at work. They are strong and willing. Mr.

Pike says they are real sailormen, even if he doesn't understand their lingo. His theory is that they are from some small old-country or outlander ship, which, hove to on the opposite tack to the *Elsinore*, was run down and sunk.

I have forgotten to say that we found the barnacled cask nearly filled with a most delicious wine which none of us can name. As soon as the gale moderated Mr. Pike had the cask brought aft and broached, and now the steward and Wada have it all in bottles and spare demijohns. It is beautifully aged, and Mr. Pike is certain that it is some sort of a mild and unheard-of brandy. Mr. Mellaire merely smacks his lips over it, while Captain West, Margaret, and I steadfastly maintain that it is wine.

The condition of the men grows deplorable. They were always poor at pulling on ropes, but now it takes two or three to pull as much as one used to pull. One thing in their favour is that they are well, though grossly, fed. They have all they want to eat, such as it is, but it is the cold and wet, the terrible condition of the forecastle, the lack of sleep, and the almost continuous toil of both watches on deck. Either watch is so weak and worthless that any severe task requires the assistance of the other watch. As an instance, we finally managed a reef in the foresail in the thick of a gale. It took both watches two hours, yet Mr. Pike tells me that under similar circumstances, with an average crew of the old days, he has seen a single watch reef the foresail in twenty minutes.

I have learned one of the prime virtues of a steel sailing-ship. Such a craft, heavily laden, does not strain her seams open in bad weather and big seas. Except for a tiny leak down in the fore-peak, with which we sailed from Baltimore and which is bailed out with a pail once in several weeks, the *Elsinore* is bone-dry. Mr. Pike tells me that had a wooden ship of her size and cargo gone through the buffeting we have endured, she would be leaking like a sieve.

And Mr. Mellaire, out of his own experience, has added to my respect for the Horn. When he was a young man he was once eight weeks in making around from 50 in the Atlantic to 50 in the Pacific. Another time his vessel was compelled to put back twice to the Falklands for repairs. And still another time, in a wooden ship running back in distress to the Falklands, his vessel was lost in a shift of gale in the very entrance to Port Stanley. As he told me:

"And after we'd been there a month, sir, who should come in but the old *Lucy Powers*. She was a sight! — her foremast clean gone out of her and half her spars, the old man killed from one of the spars falling on him, the mate with two broken arms, the second mate sick, and what was left of the crew at the pumps. We'd lost our ship, so my skipper took charge, refitted her, doubled up both crews, and we headed the other way around, pumping two hours in every watch clear to Honolulu."

The poor wretched chickens! Because of their ill-judged moulting they are quite featherless. It is a marvel that one of them survives, yet so far we have lost only six. Margaret keeps the kerosene stove going, and, though they have ceased laying, she confidently asserts that they are all layers and that we shall have plenty of eggs once we get fine weather in the Pacific.

There is little use to describe these monotonous and perpetual westerly gales. One is very like another, and they follow so fast on one another's heels that the sea never has a chance to grow calm. So long have we rolled and tossed about that the thought, say, of a solid, unmoving billiard-table is inconceivable. In previous incarnations I have encountered things that did not move, but . . . they were in previous incarnations.

We have been up to the Diego Ramirez Rocks twice in the past ten days. At the present moment, by vague dead reckoning, we are two hundred miles east of them. We have been hove down to our hatches three times in the last week. We have had six stout sails, of the heaviest canvas, furled and double-gasketed, torn loose and stripped from the yards. Sometimes, so weak are our men, not more than half of them can respond to the call for all hands.

Lars Jacobson, who had his leg broken early in the voyage, was knocked down by a sea several days back and had the leg rebroken. Ditman Olansen, the crank-eyed Norwegian, went Berserker last night in the second dog-watch and pretty well cleaned out his half of the forecastle. Wada reports that it required the bricklayers, Fitzgibbon and Gilder, the Maltese Cockney, and Steve Roberts, the cowboy, finally to subdue the madman. These are all men of Mr. Mellaire's watch. In Mr. Pike's watch John Hackey, the San Francisco hoodlum, who has stood out against the gangsters, has at last succumbed and joined them. And only this morning Mr. Pike dragged Charles Davis by the scruff of the neck out of the forecastle, where he had caught him expounding sea-law to the miserable creatures. Mr. Mellaire, I notice on occasion, remains unduly intimate with the gangster clique. And yet nothing serious happens.

And Charles Davis does not die. He seems actually to be gaining in weight. He never misses a meal. From the break of the poop, in the shelter of the weather cloth, our decks a thunder and rush of freezing water, I often watch him slip out of his room between seas, mug and plate in hand, and hobble for’ard to the galley for his food. He is a keen judge of the ship’s motions, for never yet have I seen him get a serious ducking. Sometimes, of course, he may get splattered with spray or wet to the knees, but he manages to be out of the way whenever a big graybeard falls on board.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A wonderful event to-day! For five minutes, at noon, the sun was actually visible. But such a sun! — a pale and cold and sickly orb that at meridian was only 90 degrees 18 minutes above the horizon. And within the hour we were taking in sail and lying down to the snow-gusts of a fresh south-west gale.

Whatever you do, *make westing*! *make westing*! — this sailing rule of the navigators for the Horn has been bitten out of iron. I can understand why shipmasters, with a favouring slant of wind, have left sailors, fallen overboard, to drown without heaving-to to lower a boat. Cape Horn is iron, and it takes masters of iron to win around from east to west.

And we make easting! This west wind is eternal. I listen incredulously when Mr. Pike or Mr. Mellaire tells of times when easterly winds have blown in these latitudes. It is impossible. Always does the west wind blow, gale upon gale and gales everlasting, else why the "Great West Wind Drift" printed on the charts! We of the afterguard are weary of this eternal buffeting. Our men have become pulpy, washed-out, sore-corroded shadows of men. I should not be surprised, in the end, to see Captain West turn tail and run eastward around the world to Seattle. But Margaret smiles with surety, and nods her head, and affirms that her father will win around to 50 in the Pacific.

How Charles Davis survives in that wet, freezing, paint-scabbed room of iron in the 'midship-house is beyond me — just as it is beyond me that the wretched sailors in the wretched forecastle do not lie down in their bunks and die, or, at least, refuse to answer the call of the watches.

Another week has passed, and we are to-day, by observation, sixty miles due south of the Straits of Le Maire, and we are hove-to, in a driving gale, on the port tack. The glass is down to 28.58, and even Mr. Pike acknowledges that it is one of the worst Cape Horn snorters he has ever experienced.

In the old days the navigators used to strive as far south as 64 degrees or 65 degrees, into the Antarctic drift ice, hoping, in a favouring spell, to make westing at a prodigious rate across the extreme-narrowing wedges of longitude. But of late years all shipmasters have accepted the hugging of the land all the way around. Out of ten times ten thousand passages of

Cape Stiff from east to west, this, they have concluded, is the best strategy. So Captain West hugs the land. He heaves-to on the port tack until the leeward drift brings the land into perilous proximity, then wears ship and heaves-to on the port tack and makes leeway off shore.

I may be weary of all this bitter movement of a labouring ship on a frigid sea, but at the same time I do not mind it. In my brain burns the flame of a great discovery and a great achievement. I have found what makes all the books go glimmering; I have achieved what my very philosophy tells me is the greatest achievement a man can make. I have found the love of woman. I do not know whether she cares for me. Nor is that the point. The point is that in myself I have risen to the greatest height to which the human male animal can rise.

I know a woman and her name is Margaret. She is Margaret, a woman and desirable. My blood is red. I am not the pallid scholar I so proudly deemed myself to be. I am a man, and a lover, despite the books. As for De Casseres — if ever I get back to New York, equipped as I now am, I shall confute him with the same ease that he has confuted all the schools. Love is the final word. To the rational man it alone gives the super-rational sanction for living. Like Bergson in his overhanging heaven of intuition, or like one who has bathed in Pentecostal fire and seen the New Jerusalem, so I have trod the materialistic dictums of science underfoot, scaled the last peak of philosophy, and leaped into my heaven, which, after all, is within myself. The stuff that composes me, that is I, is so made that it finds its supreme realization in the love of woman. It is the vindication of being. Yes, and it is the wages of being, the payment in full for all the brittleness and frailty of flesh and breath.

And she is only a woman, like any woman, and the Lord knows I know what women are. And I know Margaret for what she is — mere woman; and yet I know, in the lover's soul of me, that she is somehow different. Her ways are not as the ways of other women, and all her ways are delightful to me. In the end, I suppose, I shall become a nest-builder, for of a surety nest-building is one of her pretty ways. And who shall say which is the worthier — the writing of a whole library or the building of a nest?

The monotonous days, bleak and gray and soggy cold, drag by. It is now a month since we began the passage of the Horn, and here we are, not so well forward as a month ago, because we are something like a hundred miles south of the Straits of Le Maire. Even this position is conjectural, being arrived at by dead reckoning, based on the leeway of a ship hove-to, now on the one tack, now on the other, with always the Great West Wind Drift making against us. It is four days since our last instrument-sight of the sun.

This storm-vexed ocean has become populous. No ships are getting round, and each day adds to our number. Never a brief day passes without our sighting from two or three to a dozen hove-to on port tack or starboard tack. Captain West estimates there must be at least two hundred sail of us. A ship hove-to with preventer tackles on the rudder-head is unmanageable. Each night we take our chance of unavoidable and disastrous collision. And at times, glimpsed through the snow-squalls, we see and curse the ships, east-bound, that drive past us with the West Wind and the West Wind Drift at their backs. And so wild is the mind of man that Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire still aver that on occasion they have known gales to blow ships from east to west around the Horn. It surely has been a year since we of the *Elsinore* emerged from under the lee of Tierra Del Fuego into the snorting south-west gales. A century, at least, has elapsed since we sailed from Baltimore.

* * * * *

And I don’t give a snap of my fingers for all the wrath and fury of this dim-gray sea at the tip of the earth. I have told Margaret that I love her. The tale was told in the shelter of the weather cloth, where we clung together in the second dog-watch last evening. And it was told again, and by both of us, in the bright-lighted chart-room after the watches had been changed at eight bells. Yes, and her face was storm-bright, and all of her was very proud, save that her eyes were warm and soft and fluttered with lids that just would flutter maidenly and womanly. It was a great hour — our great hour.

A poor devil of a man is most lucky when, loving, he is loved. Grievous indeed must be the fate of the lover who is unloved. And I, for one, and for still other reasons, congratulate myself upon the vastitude of my good fortune. For see, were Margaret any other sort of a woman, were she . . . well, just the lovely and lovable and adorably snuggly sort who seem made just precisely for love and loving and nestling into the strong arms of a man — why, there wouldn’t be anything remarkable or wonderful about her loving me. But Margaret is Margaret, strong, self-possessed, serene, controlled, a very mistress of herself. And there's the miracle — that such a woman should have been awakened to love by me. It is almost unbelievable. I go out of my way to get another peep into those long, cool, gray eyes of hers and see them grow melting soft as she looks at me. She is no Juliet, thank the Lord; and thank the Lord I am no Romeo. And yet I go up alone on the freezing poop, and under my breath chant defiantly at the snorting gale, and at the graybeards thundering down on us, that I am a lover. And I send messages to the lonely albatrosses veering through the murk that I am a lover. And I look at the wretched sailors crawling along the spray-swept bridge and know that never in ten thousand wretched lives could they experience the love I experience, and I wonder why God ever made them.

* * * * *

"And the one thing I had firmly resolved from the start," Margaret confessed to me this morning in the cabin, when I released her from my arms, "was that I would not permit you to make love to me."

"True daughter of Herodias," I gaily gibed, "so such was the drift of your thoughts even as early as the very start. Already you were looking upon me with a considerative female eye."

She laughed proudly, and did not reply.

"What possibly could have led you to expect that I would make love to you?" I insisted.

"Because it is the way of young male passengers on long voyages," she replied.

"Then others have . . . ?"

"They always do," she assured me gravely.

And at that instant I knew the first ridiculous pang of jealousy; but I laughed it away and retorted:

"It was an ancient Chinese philosopher who is first recorded as having said, what doubtlessly the cave men before him gibbered, namely, that a woman pursues a man by fluttering away in advance of him."

"Wretch!" she cried. "I never fluttered. When did I ever flutter!"

"It is a delicate subject . . . " I began with assumed hesitancy.

"When did I ever flutter?" she demanded.

I availed myself of one of Schopenhauer's ruses by making a shift.

"From the first you observed nothing that a female could afford to miss observing," I charged. "I'll wager you knew as quickly as I the very instant when I first loved you."

"I knew the first time you hated me," she evaded.

"Yes, I know, the first time I saw you and learned that you were coming on the voyage," I said. "But now I repeat my challenge. You knew as quickly as I the first instant I loved you."

Oh, her eyes were beautiful, and the repose and certitude of her were tremendous, as she rested her hand on my arm for a moment and in a low, quiet voice said:

"Yes, I . . . I think I know. It was the morning of that pampero off the Plate, when you were thrown through the door into my father's stateroom. I saw it in your eyes. I knew it. I think it was the first time, the very instant."

I could only nod my head and draw her close to me. And she looked up at me and added:

"You were very ridiculous. There you sat, on the bed, holding on with one hand and nursing the other hand under your arm, staring at me, irritated, startled, utterly foolish, and then . . . how, I don't know . . . I knew that you had just come to know . . . "

"And the very next instant you froze up," I charged ungallantly.

"And that was why," she admitted shamelessly, then leaned away from me, her hands resting on my shoulders, while she gurgled and her lips parted from over her beautiful white teeth.

One thing I, John Pathurst, know: that gurgling laughter of hers is the most adorable laughter that was ever heard.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

I wonder. I wonder. Did the Samurai make a mistake? Or was it the darkness of oncoming death that chilled and clouded that star-cool brain of his, and made a mock of all his wisdom? Or was it the blunder that brought death upon him beforehand? I do not know, I shall never know; for it is a matter no one of us dreams of hinting at, much less discussing.

I shall begin at the beginning — yesterday afternoon. For it was yesterday afternoon, five weeks to a day since we emerged from the Straits of Le Maire into this gray storm-ocean, that once again we found ourselves hove to directly off the Horn. At the changing of the watches at four o'clock, Captain West gave the command to Mr. Pike to wear ship. We were on the starboard tack at the time, making leeway off shore. This manoeuvre placed us on the port tack, and the consequent leeway, to me, seemed on shore, though at an acute angle, to be sure.

In the chart-room, glancing curiously at the chart, I measured the distance with my eye and decided that we were in the neighbourhood of fifteen miles off Cape Horn.

"With our drift we'll be close up under the land by morning, won't we?" I ventured tentatively.

"Yes," Captain West nodded; "and if it weren't for the West Wind Drift, and if the land did not trend to the north-east, we'd be ashore by morning. As it is, we'll be well under it at daylight, ready to steal around if there is a change, ready to wear ship if there is no change."

It did not enter my head to question his judgment. What he said had to be. Was he not the Samurai?

And yet, a few minutes later, when he had gone below, I noticed Mr. Pike enter the chart-house. After several paces up and down, and a brief pause to watch Nancy and several men shift the weather cloth from lee to weather, I strolled aft to the chart-house. Prompted by I know not what, I peeped through one of the glass ports.

There stood Mr. Pike, his sou'wester doffed, his oilskins streaming rivulets to the floor, while he, dividers and parallel rulers in hand, bent over the chart. It was the expression of his face that startled me. The habitual sourness had vanished. All that I could see was anxiety and apprehension . . . yes, and age. I had never seen him look so old; for there, at that moment, I beheld the wastage and weariness of all his sixty-nine years of sea-battling and sea-staring.

I slipped away from the port and went along the deck to the break of the poop, where I held on and stood staring through the gray and spray in the conjectural direction of our drift. Somewhere, there, in the north-east and north, I knew was a broken, iron coast of rocks upon which the graybeards thundered. And there, in the chart-room, a redoubtable sailorman bent anxiously over a chart as he measured and calculated, and measured and calculated again, our position and our drift.

And I knew it could not be. It was not the Samurai but the henchman who was weak and wrong. Age was beginning to tell upon him at last, which could not be otherwise than expected when one considered that no man in ten thousand had weathered age so successfully as he.

I laughed at my moment's qualm of foolishness and went below, well content to meet my loved one and to rest secure in her father's wisdom. Of course he was right. He had proved himself right too often already on the long voyage from Baltimore.

At dinner Mr. Pike was quite distrait. He took no part whatever in the conversation, and seemed always to be listening to something from without — to the vexing clang of taut ropes that came down the hollow jiggermast, to the muffled roar of the gale in the rigging, to the smash and crash of the seas along our decks and against our iron walls.

Again I found myself sharing his apprehension, although I was too discreet to question him then, or afterwards alone, about his trouble. At eight he went on deck again to take the watch till midnight, and as I went to bed I dismissed all forebodings and speculated as to how many more voyages he could last after this sudden onslaught of old age.

I fell asleep quickly, and awoke at midnight, my lamp still burning, Conrad's *Mirror of the Sea* on my breast where it had dropped from my hands. I heard the watches change, and was wide awake and reading when Mr. Pike came below by the booby-hatch and passed down my hail by my open door, on his way to his room.

In the pause I had long since learned so well I knew he was rolling a cigarette. Then I heard him cough, as he always did, when the cigarette was lighted and the first inhalation of smoke flushed his lungs.

At twelve-fifteen, in the midst of Conrad's delightful chapter, "The Weight of the Burden," I heard Mr. Pike come along the hall.

Stealing a glance over the top of my book, I saw him go by, sea-booted, oilskinned, sou'westered. It was his watch below, and his sleep was meagre in this perpetual bad weather, yet he was going on deck.

I read and waited for an hour, but he did not return; and I knew that somewhere up above he was staring into the driving dark. I dressed fully, in all my heavy storm-gear, from sea-boots and sou'-wester to sheepskin under my oilskin coat. At the foot of the stairs I noted along the hall that Margaret's light was burning. I peeped in — she keeps her door open for ventilation — and found her reading.

"Merely not sleepy," she assured me.

Nor in the heart of me do I believe she had any apprehension. She does not know even now, I am confident, the Samurai's blunder — if blunder it was. As she said, she was merely not sleepy, although there is no telling in what occult ways she may have received though not recognized Mr. Pike's anxiety.

At the head of the stairs, passing along the tiny hall to go out the lee door of the chart-house, I glanced into the chart-room. On the couch, lying on his back, his head uncomfortably high, I thought, slept Captain West. The room was warm from the ascending heat of the cabin, so that he lay unblanketed, fully dressed save for oilskins and boots. He breathed easily and steadily, and the lean, ascetic lines of his face seemed softened by the light of the low-turned lamp. And that one glance restored to me all my surety and faith in his wisdom, so that I laughed at myself for having left my warm bed for a freezing trip on deck.

Under the weather cloth at the break of the poop I found Mr. Mellaire. He was wide awake, but under no strain. Evidently it had not entered his mind to consider, much less question, the manoeuvre of wearing ship the previous afternoon.

"The gale is breaking," he told me, waving his mittened hand at a starry segment of sky momentarily exposed by the thinning clouds.

But where was Mr. Pike? Did the second mate know he was on deck? I proceeded to feel Mr. Mellaire out as we worked our way aft, along the mad poop toward the wheel. I talked about the difficulty of sleeping in stormy weather, stated the restlessness and semi-insomnia that the violent motion of the ship caused in me, and raised the query of how bad weather affected the officers.

"I noticed Captain West, in the chart-room, as I came up, sleeping like a baby," I concluded.

We leaned in the lee of the chart-house and went no farther.

"Trust us to sleep just the same way, Mr. Pathurst," the second mate laughed. "The harder the weather the harder the demand on us, and the harder we sleep. I'm dead the moment my head touches the pillow. It takes Mr. Pike longer, because he always finishes his cigarette after he turns in. But he smokes while he's undressing, so that he doesn't require more than a minute to go deado. I'll wager he hasn't moved, right now, since ten minutes after twelve."

So the second mate did not dream the first was even on deck. I went below to make sure. A small sea-lamp was burning in Mr. Pike's room, and I saw his bunk unoccupied. I went in by the big stove in the dining-room and warmed up, then again came on deck. I did not go near the weather cloth, where I was certain Mr. Mellaire was; but, keeping along the lee of the poop, I gained the bridge and started for'ard.

I was in no hurry, so I paused often in that cold, wet journey. The gale was breaking, for again and again the stars glimmered through the thinning storm-clouds. On the 'midship-house was no Mr. Pike. I crossed it, stung by the freezing, flying spray, and carefully reconnoitred the top of the for'ard-house, where, in such bad weather, I knew the lookout was stationed. I was within twenty feet of them, when a wider clearance of starry sky showed me the figures of the lookout, whoever he was, and of Mr. Pike, side by side. Long I watched them, not making my presence known, and I knew that the old mate's eyes were boring like gimlets into the windy darkness that separated the *Elsinore* from the thunder-surfed iron coast he sought to find.

Coming back to the poop I was caught by the surprised Mr. Mellaire.

"Thought you were asleep, sir," he chided.

"I'm too restless," I explained. "I've read until my eyes are tired, and now I'm trying to get chilled so that I can fall asleep while warming up in my blankets."

"I envy you, sir," he answered. "Think of it! So much of all night in that you cannot sleep. Some day, if ever I make a lucky strike, I shall make a voyage like this as a passenger, and have all watches below. Think of it! All blessed watches below! And I shall, like you, sir, bring a Jap servant along, and I'll make him call me at every changing of the watches, so that, wide awake, I can appreciate my good fortune in the several minutes before I roll over and go to sleep again."

We laughed good night to each other. Another peep into the chart-room showed me Captain West sleeping as before. He had not moved in general, though all his body moved with every roll and fling of the ship. Below, Margaret's light still burned, but a peep showed her asleep, her book fallen from her hands just as was the so frequent case with my books.

And I wondered. Half the souls of us on the *Elsinore* slept. The Samurai slept. Yet the old first mate, who should have slept, kept a bitter watch on the for'ard-house. Was his anxiety right? Could it be right? Or was it the crankiness of ultimate age? Were we drifting and leewaying to destruction? Or was it merely an old man being struck down by senility in the midst of his life-task?

Too wide awake to think of sleeping, I ensconced myself with *The Mirror of the Sea* at the dining-table. Nor did I remove aught of my storm-gear save the soggy mittens, which I wrung out and hung to dry by the stove. Four bells struck, and six bells, and Mr. Pike had not returned below. At eight bells, with the changing of the watches, it came upon me what a night of hardship the old mate was enduring. Eight to twelve had been his own watch on deck. He had now completed the four hours of the second mate's watch and was beginning his own watch, which would last till eight in the morning — twelve consecutive hours in a Cape Horn gale with the mercury at freezing.

Next — for I had dozed — I heard loud cries above my head that were repeated along the poop. I did not know till afterwards that it was Mr. Pike's command to hard-up the helm, passed along from for'ard by the men he had stationed at intervals on the bridge.

All that I knew at this shock of waking was that something was happening above. As I pulled on my steaming mittens and hurried my best up the reeling stairs, I could hear the stamp of men's feet that for once were not lagging. In the chart-house hall I heard Mr. Pike, who had already covered the length of the bridge from the for'ard-house, shouting:

"Mizzen-braces! Slack, damn you! Slack on the run! But hold a turn! Aft, here, all of you! Jump! Lively, if you don't want to swim! Come in, port-braces! Don't let 'm get away! Lee-braces! — if you lose that turn I'll split your skull! Lively! Lively! — Is that helm hard over! Why in hell don't you answer?"

All this I heard as I dashed for the lee door and as I wondered why I did not hear the Samurai's voice.

Then, as I passed the chart-room door, I saw him.

He was sitting on the couch, white-faced, one sea-boot in his hands, and I could have sworn his hands were shaking. That much I saw, and the next moment was out on deck.

At first, just emerged from the light, I could see nothing, although I could hear men at the pin-rails and the mate snarling and shouting commands. But I knew the manoeuvre. With a weak crew, in the big, tail-end sea of a broken gale, breakers and destruction under her lee, the *Elsinore* was being worn around. We had been under lower-topsails and a reefed foresail all night. Mr. Pike's first action, after putting the wheel up, had been to square the mizzen-yards. With the wind-pressure thus eased aft, the stern could more easily swing against the wind while the wind-pressure on the for'ard-sails paid the bow off.

But it takes time to wear a ship, under short canvas, in a big sea. Slowly, very slowly, I could feel the direction of the wind altering against my cheek. The moon, dim at first, showed brighter and brighter as the last shreds of a flying cloud drove away from before it. In vain I looked for any land.

"Main-braces! — all of you! — jump!" Mr. Pike shouted, himself leading the rush along the poop. And the men really rushed. Not in all the months I had observed them had I seen such swiftness of energy.

I made my way to the wheel, where Tom Spink stood. He did not notice me. With one hand holding the idle wheel, he was leaning out to one side, his eyes fixed in a fascinated stare. I followed its direction, on between the chart-house and the port-jigger shrouds, and on across a mountain sea that was very vague in the moonlight. And then I saw it! The *Elsinore's* stern was flung skyward, and across that cold ocean I saw land — black rocks and snow-covered slopes and crags. And toward this land the *Elsinore*, now almost before the wind, was driving.

From the 'midship-house came the snarls of the mate and the cries of the sailors. They were pulling and hauling for very life. Then came Mr. Pike, across the poop, leaping with incredible swiftness, sending his snarl before him.

"Ease that wheel there! What the hell you gawkin' at? Steady her as I tell you. That's all you got to do!"

From for'ard came a cry, and I knew Mr. Mellaire was on top of the for'ard-house and managing the fore-yards.

"Now!" — from Mr. Pike. "More spokes! Steady! Steady! And be ready to check her!"

He bounded away along the poop again, shouting for men for the mizzen-braces. And the men appeared, some of his watch, others of the second mate's watch, routed from sleep — men coatless, and hatless, and bootless; men ghastly-faced with fear but eager for once to spring to the orders of the man who knew and could save their miserable lives from miserable death. Yes — and I noted the delicate-handed cook, and Yatsuda, the sail-maker, pulling with his one unparalysed hand. It was all hands to save ship, and all hands knew it. Even Sundry Buyers, who had drifted aft in his stupidity instead of being for'ard with his own officer, forebore to stare about and to press his abdomen. For the nonce he pulled like a youngling of twenty.

The moon covered again, and it was in darkness that the *Elsinore* rounded up on the wind on the starboard tack. This, in her case, under lower-topsails only, meant that she lay eight points from the wind, or, in land terms, at right angles to the wind.

Mr. Pike was splendid, marvellous. Even as the *Elsinore* was rounding to on the wind, while the head-yards were still being braced, and even as he was watching the ship's behaviour and the wheel, in between his commands to Tom Spink of "A spoke! A spoke or two! Another! Steady! Hold her! Ease her!" he was ordering the men aloft to loose sail. I had thought, the manoeuvre of wearing achieved, that we were saved, but this setting of all three upper-topsails unconvinced me.

The moon remained hidden, and to leeward nothing could be seen. As each sail was set, the *Elsinore* was pressed farther and farther over, and I realized that there was plenty of wind left, despite the fact that the gale had broken or was breaking. Also, under this additional canvas, I could feel the *Elsinore* moving through the water. Pike now sent the Maltese Cockney to help Tom Spink at the wheel. As for himself, he took his stand beside the booby-hatch, where he could gauge the *Elsinore*, gaze to leeward, and keep his eye on the helmsmen.

"Full and by," was his reiterated command. "Keep her a good full — a rap-full; but don't let her fall away. Hold her to it, and drive her."

He took no notice whatever of me, although I, on my way to the lee of the chart-house, stood at his shoulder a full minute, offering him a chance to speak. He knew I was there, for his big shoulder brushed my arm as he swayed and turned to warn the helmsmen in the one breath to hold her up to it but to keep her full. He had neither time nor courtesy for a passenger in such a moment.

Sheltering by the chart-house, I saw the moon appear. It grew brighter and brighter, and I saw the land, dead to leeward of us, not three hundred yards away. It was a cruel sight — black rock and bitter snow, with cliffs so perpendicular that the *Elsinore* could have laid alongside of them in deep water, with great gashes and fissures, and with great surges thundering and spouting along all the length of it.

Our predicament was now clear to me. We had to weather the bight of land and islands into which we had drifted, and sea and wind worked directly on shore. The only way out was to drive through the water, to drive fast and hard, and this was borne in upon me by Mr. Pike bounding past to the break of the poop, where I heard him shout to Mr. Mellaire to set the mainsail.

Evidently the second mate was dubious, for the next cry of Mr. Pike's was:

"Damn the reef! You'd be in hell first! Full mainsail! All hands to it!"

The difference was appreciable at once when that huge spread of canvas opposed the wind. The *Elsinore* fairly leaped and quivered as she sprang to it, and I could feel her eat to windward as she at the same time drove faster ahead. Also, in the rolls and gusts, she was forced down till her lee-rail buried and the sea foamed level across to her hatches. Mr. Pike watched her like a hawk, and like certain death he watched the Maltese Cockney and Tom Spink at the wheel.

"Land on the lee bow!" came a cry from for'ard, that was carried on from mouth to mouth along the bridge to the poop.

I saw Mr. Pike nod his head grimly and sarcastically. He had already seen it from the lee-poop, and what he had not seen he had guessed. A score of times I saw him test the weight of the gusts on his cheek and with all the brain of him study the *Elsinore's* behaviour. And I knew what was in his mind. Could she carry what she had? Could she carry more?

Small wonder, in this tense passage of time, that I had forgotten the Samurai. Nor did I remember him until the chart-house door swung open and I caught him by the arm. He steadied and swayed beside me, while he watched that cruel picture of rock and snow and spouting surf.

"A good full!" Mr. Pike snarled. "Or I'll eat your heart out. God damn you for the farmer's hound you are, Tom Spink! Ease her! Ease her! Ease her into the big ones, damn you! Don't let her head fall off! Steady! Where in hell did you learn to steer? What cow-farm was you raised on?"

Here he bounded for'ard past us with those incredible leaps of his.

"It would be good to set the mizzen-topgallant," I heard Captain West mutter in a weak, quavery voice. "Mr. Pathurst, will you please tell Mr. Pike to set the mizzen-topgallant?"

And at that very instant Mr. Pike's voice rang out from the break of the poop:

"Mr. Mellaire! — the mizzen-topgallant!"

Captain West's head drooped until his chin rested on his breast, and so low did he mutter that I leaned to hear.

"A very good officer," he said. "An excellent officer. Mr. Pathurst, if you will kindly favour me, I should like to go in. I . . . I haven't got on my boots."

The muscular feat was to open the heavy iron door and hold it open in the rolls and plunges. This I accomplished; but when I had helped Captain West across the high threshold he thanked me and waived further services. And I did not know even then he was dying.

Never was a Blackwood ship driven as was the *Elsinore* during the next half-hour. The full-jib was also set, and, as it departed in shreds, the fore-topmast staysail was being hoisted. For'ard of the 'midship-house it was made unlivable by the bursting seas. Mr. Mellaire, with half the crew, clung on somehow on top the 'midship-house, while the rest of the crew was with us in the comparative safety of the poop. Even Charles Davis, drenched and shivering, hung on beside me to the brass ring-handle of the chart-house door.

Such sailing! It was a madness of speed and motion, for the *Elsinore* drove over and through and under those huge graybeards that thundered shore-ward. There were times, when rolls and gusts worked against her at the same moment, when I could have sworn the ends of her lower-yardarms swept the sea.

It was one chance in ten that we could claw off. All knew it, and all knew there was nothing more to do but await the issue. And we waited in silence. The only voice was that of the mate, intermittently cursing, threatening, and ordering Tom Spink and the Maltese Cockney at the wheel. Between whiles, and all the while, he gauged the gusts, and ever his eyes lifted to the main-topgallant-yard. He wanted to set that one more sail. A dozen times I saw him half-open his mouth to give the order he dared not give. And as I watched him, so all watched him. Hard-bitten, bitter-natured, sour-featured and snarling-mouthed, he was the one man, the henchman of the race, the master of the moment. "And where," was my thought, "O where was the Samurai?"

One chance in ten? It was one in a hundred as we fought to weather the last bold tooth of rock that gashed into sea and tempest between us and open ocean. So close were we that I looked to see our far-reeling skysail-yards strike the face of the rock. So close were we, no more than a biscuit toss from its iron buttress, that as we sank down into the last great trough between two seas I can swear every one of us held breath and waited for the *Elsinore* to strike.

Instead we drove free. And as if in very rage at our escape, the storm took that moment to deal us the mightiest buffet of all. The mate felt that monster sea coming, for he sprang to the wheel ere the blow fell. I looked for'ard, and I saw all for'ard blotted out by the mountain of water that fell aboard. The *Elsinore* righted from the shock and reappeared to the eye, full of water from rail to rail. Then a gust caught her sails and heeled her over, spilling half the enormous burden outboard again.

Along the bridge came the relayed cry of "Man overboard!"

I glanced at the mate, who had just released the wheel to the helmsmen. He shook his head, as if irritated by so trivial a happening, walked to the corner of the half-wheelhouse, and stared at the coast he had escaped, white and black and cold in the moonlight.

Mr. Mellaire came aft, and they met beside me in the lee of the chart-house.

"All hands, Mr. Mellaire," the mate said, "and get the mainsail off of her. After that, the mizzen-topgallant."

"Yes, sir," said the second.

"Who was it?" the mate asked, as Mr. Mellaire was turning away.

"Boney — he was no good, anyway," came the answer.

That was all. Boney the Splinter was gone, and all hands were answering the command of Mr. Mellaire to take in the mainsail. But they never took it in; for at that moment it started to blow away out of the bolt-ropes, and in but few moments all that was left of it was a few short, slatting ribbons.

“Mizzen-topgallant-sail!” Mr. Pike ordered. Then, and for the first time, he recognized my existence.

“Well rid of it,” he growled. “It never did set properly. I was always aching to get my hands on the sail-maker that made it.”

On my way below a glance into the chart-room gave me the cue to the Samurai’s blunder — if blunder it can be called, for no one will ever know. He lay on the floor in a loose heap, rolling willy-nilly with every roll of the *Elsinore*.

CHAPTER XXXIX

There is so much to write about all at once. In the first place, Captain West. Not entirely unexpected was his death. Margaret tells me that she was apprehensive from the start of the voyage — and even before. It was because of her apprehension that she so abruptly changed her plans and accompanied her father.

What really happened we do not know, but the agreed surmise is that it was some stroke of the heart. And yet, after the stroke, did he not come out on deck? Or could the first stroke have been followed by another and fatal one after I had helped him inside through the door? And even so, I have never heard of a heart-stroke being preceded hours before by a weakening of the mind. Captain West's mind seemed quite clear, and must have been quite clear, that last afternoon when he wore the *Elsinore* and started the lee-shore drift. In which case it was a blunder. The Samurai blundered, and his heart destroyed him when he became aware of the blunder.

At any rate the thought of blunder never enters Margaret's head. She accepts, as a matter of course, that it was all a part of the oncoming termination of his sickness. And no one will ever undeceive her. Neither Mr. Pike, Mr. Mellaire, nor I, among ourselves, mention a whisper of what so narrowly missed causing disaster. In fact, Mr. Pike does not talk about the matter at all. — And then, again, might it not have been something different from heart disease? Or heart disease complicated with something else that obscured his mind that afternoon before his death? Well, no one knows, and I, for one, shall not sit, even in secret judgment, on the event.

* * * * *

At midday of the day we clawed off Tierra Del Fuego the *Elsinore* was rolling in a dead calm, and all afternoon she rolled, not a score of miles off the land. Captain West was buried at four o'clock, and at eight bells that evening Mr. Pike assumed command and made a few remarks to both watches. They were straight-from-the-shoulder remarks, or, as he called them, they were "brass tacks."

Among other things he told the sailors that they had another boss, and that they would toe the mark as they never had before. Up to this time they had been loafing in an hotel, but from this time on they were going to work.

"On this hooker, from now on," he perorated, "it's going to be like old times, when a man jumped the last day of the voyage as well as the first. And God help the man that don't jump. That's all. Relieve the wheel and lookout."

* * * * *

And yet the men are in terribly wretched condition. I don't see how they can jump. Another week of westerly gales, alternating with brief periods of calm, has elapsed, making a total of six weeks off the Horn. So weak are the men that they have no spirit left in them — not even the gangsters. And so afraid are they of the mate that they really do their best to jump when he drives them, and he drives them all the time. Mr. Mellaire shakes his head.

"Wait till they get around and up into better weather," he astonished me by telling me the other afternoon. "Wait till they get dried out, and rested up, with more sleep, and their sores healed, and more flesh on their bones, and more spunk in their blood — then they won't stand for this driving. Mr. Pike can't realize that times have changed, sir, and laws have changed, and men have changed. He's an old man, and I know what I am talking about."

"You mean you've been listening to the talk of the men?" I challenged rashly, all my gorge rising at the unofficerlike conduct of this ship's officer.

The shot went home, for, in a flash, that suave and gentle film of light vanished from the surface of the eyes, and the watching, fearful thing that lurked behind inside the skull seemed almost to leap out at me, while the cruel gash of mouth drew thinner and crueller. And at the same time, on my inner sight, was grotesquely limned a picture of a brain pulsing savagely against the veneer of skin that covered that cleft of skull beneath the dripping sou'-wester. Then he controlled himself, the mouth-gash relaxed, and the suave and gentle film drew again across the eyes.

"I mean, sir," he said softly, "that I am speaking out of a long sea experience. Times have changed. The old driving days are gone. And I trust, Mr. Pathurst, that you will not misunderstand me in the matter, nor misinterpret what I have said."

Although the conversation drifted on to other and calmer topics, I could not ignore the fact that he had not denied listening to the talk of the men.

And yet, even as Mr. Pike grudgingly admits, he is a good sailorman and second mate save for his unholy intimacy with the men for'ard — an intimacy which even the Chinese cook and the Chinese steward deplore as unseamanlike and perilous.

Even though men like the gangsters are so worn down by hardship that they have no heart of rebellion, there remain three of the frailest for'ard who will not die, and who are as spunky as ever. They are Andy Fay, Mulligan Jacobs, and Charles Davis. What strange, abysmal vitality informs them is beyond all speculation. Of course, Charles Davis should have been overside with a sack of coal at his feet long ago. And Andy Fay and Mulligan Jacobs are only, and have always been, wrecked and emaciated wisps of men. Yet far stronger men than they have gone over the side, and far stronger men than they are laid up right now in absolute physical helplessness in the soggy forecastle bunks. And these two bitter flames of shreds of things stand all their watches and answer all calls for both watches.

Yes; and the chickens have something of this same spunk of life in them. Featherless, semi-frozen despite the oil-stove, sprayed dripping on occasion by the frigid seas that pound by sheer weight through canvas tarpaulins, nevertheless not a chicken has died. Is it a matter of selection? Are these the iron-vigoured ones that survived the hardships from Baltimore to the Horn, and are fitted to survive anything? Then for a De Vries to take them, save them, and out of them found the hardiest breed of chickens on the planet! And after this I shall always query that phrase, most ancient in our language — "chicken-hearted." Measured by the *Elsinore's* chickens, it is a misnomer.

Nor are our three Horn Gypsies, the storm-visitors with the dreaming, topaz eyes, spunkless. Held in superstitious abhorrence by the rest of the crew, aliens by lack of any word of common speech, nevertheless they are good sailors and are always first to spring into any enterprise of work or peril. They have gone into Mr. Mellaire's watch, and they are quite apart from the rest of the sailors. And when there is a delay, or wait, with nothing to do for long minutes, they shoulder together, and stand and sway to the heave of deck, and dream far dreams in those pale, topaz eyes, of a country, I am sure, where mothers, with pale, topaz eyes and sandy hair, birth sons and daughters that breed true in terms of topaz eyes and sandy hair.

But the rest of the crew! Take the Maltese Cockney. He is too keenly intelligent, too sharply sensitive, successfully to endure. He is a shadow of his former self. His cheeks have fallen in. Dark circles of suffering are under his eyes, while his eyes, Latin and English intermingled, are cavernously sunken and as bright-burning as if aflame with fever.

Tom Spink, hard-fibred Anglo-Saxon, good seaman that he is, long tried and always proved, is quite wrecked in spirit. He is whining and fearful. So broken is he, though he still does his work, that he is prideless and shameless.

“I’ll never ship around the Horn again, sir,” he began on me the other day when I greeted him good morning at the wheel. “I’ve sworn it before, but this time I mean it. Never again, sir. Never again.”

“Why did you swear it before?” I queried.

“It was on the *Nahoma*, sir, four years ago. Two hundred and thirty days from Liverpool to ’Frisco. Think of it, sir. Two hundred and thirty days! And we was loaded with cement and creosote, and the creosote got loose. We buried the captain right here off the Horn. The grub gave out. Most of us nearly died of scurvy. Every man Jack of us was carted to hospital in ’Frisco. It was plain hell, sir, that’s what it was, an’ two hundred and thirty days of it.”

“Yet here you are,” I laughed; “signed on another Horn voyage.”

And this morning Tom Spink confided the following tome:

“If only we’d lost the carpenter, sir, instead of Boney.”

I did not catch his drift for the moment; then I remembered. The carpenter was the Finn, the Jonah, the warlock who played tricks with the winds and despitefully used poor sailormen.

* * * * *

Yes, and I make free to confess that I have grown well weary of this eternal buffeting by the Great West Wind. Nor are we alone in our travail on this desolate ocean. Never a day does the gray thin, or the snow-squalls cease that we do not sight ships, west-bound like ourselves, hove-to and trying to hold on to the meagre westing they possess. And occasionally, when the gray clears and lifts, we see a lucky ship, bound east, running before it and reeling off the miles. I saw Mr. Pike, yesterday, shaking his fist in a fury of hatred at one such craft that flew insolently past us not a quarter of a mile away.

And the men are jumping. Mr. Pike is driving with those block-square fists of his, as many a man's face attests. So weak are they, and so terrible is he, that I swear he could whip either watch single-handed. I cannot help but note that Mr. Mellaire refuses to take part in this driving. Yet I know that he is a trained driver, and that he was not averse to driving at the outset of the voyage. But now he seems bent on keeping on good terms with the crew. I should like to know what Mr. Pike thinks of it, for he cannot possibly be blind to what is going on; but I am too well aware of what would happen if I raised the question. He would insult me, snap my head off, and indulge in a three-days' sea-grouch. Things are sad and monotonous enough for Margaret and me in the cabin and at table, without invoking the blight of the mate's displeasure.

CHAPTER XL

Another brutal sea-superstition vindicated. From now on and for always these imbeciles of ours will believe that Finns are Jonahs. We are west of the Diego de Ramirez Rocks, and we are running west at a twelve-knot clip with an easterly gale at our backs. And the carpenter is gone. His passing, and the coming of the easterly wind, were coincidental.

It was yesterday morning, as he helped me to dress, that I was struck by the solemnity of Wada's face. He shook his head lugubriously as he broke the news. The carpenter was missing. The ship had been searched for him high and low. There just was no carpenter.

"What does the steward think?" I asked. "What does Louis think? — and Yatsuda?"

"The sailors, they kill 'm carpenter sure," was the answer. "Very bad ship this. Very bad hearts. Just the same pig, just the same dog. All the time kill. All the time kill. Bime-by everybody kill. You see."

The old steward, at work in his pantry, grinned at me when I mentioned the matter.

"They make fool with me, I fix 'em," he said vindictively. "Mebbe they kill me, all right; but I kill some, too."

He threw back his coat, and I saw, strapped to the left side of his body, in a canvas sheath, so that the handle was ready to hand, a meat knife of the heavy sort that butchers hack with. He drew it forth — it was fully two feet long — and, to demonstrate its razor-edge, sliced a sheet of newspaper into many ribbons.

"Huh!" he laughed sardonically. "I am Chink, monkey, damn fool, eh? — no good, eh? all rotten damn to hell. I fix 'em, they make fool with me."

And yet there is not the slightest evidence of foul play. Nobody knows what happened to the carpenter. There are no clues, no traces. The night was calm and snowy. No seas broke on board. Without doubt the clumsy, big-footed, over-grown giant of a boy is overside and dead. The question is: did he go over of his own accord, or was he put over?

At eight o'clock Mr. Pike proceeded to interrogate the watches. He stood at the break of the poop, in the high place, leaning on the rail and gazing down at the crew assembled on the main deck beneath him.

Man after man he questioned, and from each man came the one story. They knew no more about it than did we — or so they averred.

"I suppose you'll be chargin' next that I hove that big lummux overboard with me own hands," Mulligan Jacobs snarled, when he was questioned. "An' mebbe I did, bein' that husky an' rampagin' bull-like."

The mate's face grew more forbidding and sour, but without comment he passed on to John Hackey, the San Francisco hoodlum.

It was an unforgettable scene — the mate in the high place, the men, sullen and irresponsive, grouped beneath. A gentle snow drifted straight down through the windless air, while the *Elsinore*, with hollow thunder from her sails, rolled down on the quiet swells so that the ocean lapped the mouths of her scuppers with long-drawn, shuddering sucks and sobs. And all the men swayed in unison to the rolls, their hands in mittens, their feet in sack-wrapped sea-boots, their faces worn and sick. And the three dreamers with the topaz eyes stood and swayed and dreamed together, incurious of setting and situation.

And then it came — the hint of easterly air. The mate noted it first. I saw him start and turn his cheek to the almost imperceptible draught. Then I felt it. A minute longer he waited, until assured, when, the dead carpenter forgotten, he burst out with orders to the wheel and the crew. And the men jumped, though in their weakness the climb aloft was slow and toilsome; and when the gaskets were off the topgallant-sails and the men on deck were hoisting yards and sheeting home, those aloft were loosing the royals.

While this work went on, and while the yards were being braced around, the *Elsinore*, her bow pointing to the west, began moving through the water before the first fair wind in a month and a half.

Slowly that light air fanned to a gentle breeze while all the time the snow fell steadily. The barometer, down to 28.80, continued to fall, and the breeze continued to grow upon itself. Tom Spink, passing by me on the poop to lend a hand at the final finicky trimming of the mizzen-yards, gave me a triumphant look. Superstition was vindicated. Events had proved him right. Fair wind had come with the going of the carpenter, which said warlock had incontestably taken with him overside his bag of wind-tricks.

Mr. Pike strode up and down the poop, rubbing his hands, which he was too disdainfully happy to mitten, chuckling and grinning to himself, glancing at the draw of every sail, stealing adoring looks astern into the gray of snow out of which blew the favouring wind. He even paused beside me to gossip for a moment about the French restaurants of San Francisco and how, therein, the delectable California fashion of cooking wild duck obtained.

"Throw 'em through the fire," he chanted. "That's the way — throw 'em through the fire — a hot oven, sixteen minutes — I take mine fourteen, to the second — an' squeeze the carcasses."

By midday the snow had ceased and we were bowling along before a stiff breeze. At three in the afternoon we were running before a growing gale. It was across a mad ocean we tore, for the mounting sea that made from eastward bucked into the West End Drift and battled and battered down the huge south-westerly swell. And the big grinning dolt of a Finnish carpenter, already food for fish and bird, was astern there somewhere in the freezing rack and drive.

Make westing! We ripped it off across these narrowing degrees of longitude at the southern tip of the planet where one mile counts for two. And Mr. Pike, staring at his bending topgallant-yards, swore that they could carry away for all he cared ere he eased an inch of canvas. More he did. He set the huge crojack, biggest of all sails, and challenged God or Satan to start a seam of it or all its seams.

He simply could not go below. In such auspicious occasions all watches were his, and he strode the poop perpetually with all age-lag banished from his legs. Margaret and I were with him in the chart-room when he hurrahed the barometer, down to 28.55 and falling. And we were near him, on the poop, when he drove by an east-bound lime-juicer, hove-to under upper-topsails. We were a biscuit-toss away, and he sprang upon the rail at the jigger-shrouds and danced a war-dance and waved his free arm, and yelled his scorn and joy at their discomfiture to the several oilskinned figures on the stranger vessel's poop.

Through the pitch-black night we continued to drive. The crew was sadly frightened, and I sought in vain, in the two dog-watches, for Tom Spink, to ask him if he thought the carpenter, astern, had opened wide the bag-mouth and loosed all his tricks. For the first time I saw the steward apprehensive.

"Too much," he told me, with ominous rolling head. "Too much sail, rotten bad damn all to hell. Bime-by, pretty quick, all finish. You see."

"They talk about running the easting down," Mr. Pike chortled to me, as we clung to the poop-rail to keep from fetching away and breaking ribs and necks. “Well, this is running your westing down if anybody should ride up in a go-devil and ask you.”

It was a wretched, glorious night. Sleep was impossible — for me, at any rate. Nor was there even the comfort of warmth. Something had gone wrong with the big cabin stove, due to our wild running, I fancy, and the steward was compelled to let the fire go out. So we are getting a taste of the hardship of the forecastle, though in our case everything is dry instead of soggy or afloat. The kerosene stoves burned in our state room, but so smelly was mine that I preferred the cold.

To sail on one’s nerve in an over-canvassed harbour cat-boat is all the excitement any glutton can desire. But to sail, in the same fashion, in a big ship off the Horn, is incredible and terrible. The Great West Wind Drift, setting squarely into the teeth of the easterly gale, kicked up a tideway sea that was monstrous. Two men toiled at the wheel, relieving in pairs every half-hour, and in the face of the cold they streamed with sweat long ere their half-hour shift was up.

Mr. Pike is of the elder race of men. His endurance is prodigious. Watch and watch, and all watches, he held the poop.

“I never dreamed of it,” he told me, at midnight, as the great gusts tore by and as we listened for our lighter spars to smash aloft and crash upon the deck. “I thought my last whirling sailing was past. And here we are! Here we are!

“Lord! Lord! I sailed third mate in the little *Vampire* before you were born. Fifty-six men before the mast, and the last Jack of ’em an able seaman. And there were eight boys, an’ bosuns that was bosuns, an’ sail-makers an’ carpenters an’ stewards an’ passengers to jam the decks. An’ three driving mates of us, an’ Captain Brown, the Little Wonder. He didn’t weigh a hundredweight, an’ he drove us — he drove *us*, three drivin’ mates that learned from him what drivin’ was.

“It was knock down and drag out from the start. The first hour of puttin’ the men to fair perished our knuckles. I’ve got the smashed joints yet to show. Every sea-chest broke open, every sea-bag turned out, and whiskey bottles, knuckle-dusters, sling-shots, bowie-knives, an’ guns chucked overside by the armful. An’ when we chose the watches, each man of fifty-six of ’em laid his knife on the main-hatch an’ the carpenter broke the point square off. — Yes, an’ the little *Vampire* only eight hundred tons. The

Elsinore could carry her on her deck. But she was ship, all ship, an' them was men's days."

Margaret, save for inability to sleep, did not mind the driving, although Mr. Mellaire, on the other hand, admitted apprehension.

"He's got my goat," he confided to me. "It isn't right to drive a cargo-carrier this way. This isn't a ballasted yacht. It's a coal-hulk. I know what driving was, but it was in ships made to drive. Our iron-work aloft won't stand it. Mr. Pathurst, I tell you frankly that it is criminal, it is sheer murder, to run the *Elsinore* with that crojack on her. You can see yourself, sir. It's an after-sail. All its tendency is to throw her stern off and her bow up to it. And if it ever happens, sir, if she ever gets away from the wheel for two seconds and broaches to . . . "

"Then what?" I asked, or, rather, shouted; for all conversation had to be shouted close to ear in that blast of gale.

He shrugged his shoulders, and all of him was eloquent with the unuttered, unmistakable word — "finish."

At eight this morning Margaret and I struggled up to the poop. And there was that indomitable, iron old man. He had never left the deck all night. His eyes were bright, and he appeared in the pink of well-being. He rubbed his hands and chuckled greeting to us, and took up his reminiscences.

"In '51, on this same stretch, Miss West, the *Flying Cloud*, in twenty-four hours, logged three hundred and seventy-four miles under her topgallant-sails. That was sailing. She broke the record, that day, for sail an' steam."

"And what are we averaging, Mr. Pike?" Margaret queried, while her eyes were fixed on the main deck, where continually one rail and then the other dipped under the ocean and filled across from rail to rail, only to spill out and take in on the next roll.

"Thirteen for a fair average since five o'clock yesterday afternoon," he exulted. "In the squalls she makes all of sixteen, which is going some, for the *Elsinore*."

"I'd take the crojack off if I had charge," Margaret criticised.

"So would I, so would I, Miss West," he replied; "if we hadn't been six weeks already off the Horn."

She ran her eyes aloft, spar by spar, past the spars of hollow steel to the wooden royals, which bent in the gusts like bows in some invisible archer's hands.

"They're remarkably good sticks of timber," was her comment.

“Well may you say it, Miss West,” he agreed. “I’d never a-believed they’d a-stood it myself. But just look at ’m! Just look at ’m!”

There was no breakfast for the men. Three times the galley had been washed out, and the men, in the forecastle awash, contented themselves with hard tack and cold salt horse. Aft, with us, the steward scalded himself twice ere he succeeded in making coffee over a kerosene-burner.

At noon we picked up a ship ahead, a lime-juicer, travelling in the same direction, under lower-topsails and one upper-topsail. The only one of her courses set was the foresail.

“The way that skipper’s carryin’ on is shocking,” Mr. Pike sneered. “He should be more cautious, and remember God, the owners, the underwriters, and the Board of Trade.”

Such was our speed that in almost no time we were up with the stranger vessel and passing her. Mr. Pike was like a boy just loosed from school. He altered our course so that we passed her a hundred yards away. She was a gallant sight, but, such was our speed, she appeared standing still. Mr. Pike jumped upon the rail and insulted those on her poop by extending a rope’s end in invitation to take a tow.

Margaret shook her head privily to me as she gazed at our bending royal-yards, but was caught in the act by Mr. Pike, who cried out:

“What kites she won’t carry she can drag!”

An hour later I caught Tom Spink, just relieved from his shift at the wheel and weak from exhaustion.

“What do you think now of the carpenter and his bag of tricks?” I queried.

“Lord lumme, it should a-ben the mate, sir,” was his reply.

By five in the afternoon we had logged 314 miles since five the previous day, which was two over an average of thirteen knots for twenty-four consecutive hours.

“Now take Captain Brown of the little *Vampire*,” Mr. Pike grinned to me, for our sailing made him good-natured. “He never would take in until the kites an’ stu’n’sails was about his ears. An’ when she was blown’ her worst an’ we was half-fairly shortened down, he’d turn in for a snooze, an’ say to us, ‘Call me if she moderates.’ Yes, and I’ll never forget the night when I called him an’ told him that everything on top the houses had gone adrift, an’ that two of the boats had been swept aft and was kindling-wood against the break of the cabin. ‘Very well, Mr. Pike,’ he says, battin’ his eyes and turnin' over to go to sleep again. 'Very well, Mr. Pike,' says he. 'Watch her. An' Mr. Pike . . .' 'Yes, sir,' says I. 'Give me a call, Mr. Pike, when the windlass shows signs of comin' aft.' That's what he said, his very words, an' the next moment, damme, he was snorin'."

* * * * *

It is now midnight, and, cunningly wedged into my bunk, unable to sleep, I am writing these lines with flying dabs of pencil at my pad. And no more shall I write, I swear, until this gale is blown out, or we are blown to Kingdom Come.

CHAPTER XLI

The days have passed and I have broken my resolve; for here I am again writing while the *Elsinore* surges along across a magnificent, smoky, dusty sea. But I have two reasons for breaking my word. First, and minor, we had a real dawn this morning. The gray of the sea showed a streaky blue, and the cloud-masses were actually pink-tipped by a really and truly sun.

Second, and major, *we are around the Horn*! We are north of 50 in the Pacific, in Longitude 80.49, with Cape Pillar and the Straits of Magellan already south of east from us, and we are heading north-north-west. *We are around the Horn*! The profound significance of this can be appreciated only by one who has wind-jammed around from east to west. Blow high, blow low, nothing can happen to thwart us. No ship north of 50 was ever blown back. From now on it is plain sailing, and Seattle suddenly seems quite near.

All the ship's company, with the exception of Margaret, is better spirited. She is quiet, and a little down, though she is anything but prone to the wastage of grief. In her robust, vital philosophy God's always in heaven. I may describe her as being merely subdued, and gentle, and tender. And she is very wistful to receive gentle consideration and tenderness from me. She is, after all, the genuine woman. She wants the strength that man has to give, and I flatter myself that I am ten times a stronger man than I was when the voyage began, because I am a thousand times a more human man since I told the books to go hang and began to revel in the human maleness of the man that loves a woman and is loved.

Returning to the ship's company. The rounding of the Horn, the better weather that is continually growing better, the easement of hardship and toil and danger, with the promise of the tropics and of the balmy south-east trades before them — all these factors contribute to pick up our men again. The temperature has already so moderated that the men are beginning to shed their surplusage of clothing, and they no longer wrap sacking about their sea-boots. Last evening, in the second dog-watch, I heard a man actually singing.

The steward has discarded the huge, hacking knife and relaxed to the extent of engaging in an occasional sober romp with Possum. Wada's face is no longer solemnly long, and Louis' Oxford accent is more mellifluous than ever. Mulligan Jacobs and Andy Fay are the same venomous scorpions they have always been. The three gangsters, with the clique they lead, have again asserted their tyrrany and thrashed all the weaklings and feeblings in the forecastle. Charles Davis resolutely refuses to die, though how he survived that wet and freezing room of iron through all the weeks off the Horn has elicited wonder even from Mr. Pike, who has a most accurate knowledge of what men can stand and what they cannot stand.

How Nietzsche, with his eternal slogan of "Be hard! Be hard!" would have delighted in Mr. Pike!

And — oh! — Larry has had a tooth removed. For some days distressed with a jumping toothache, he came aft to the mate for relief. Mr. Pike refused to "monkey" with the "fangled" forceps in the medicine-chest. He used a tenpenny nail and a hammer in the good old way to which he was brought up. I vouch for this. I saw it done. One blow of the hammer and the tooth was out, while Larry was jumping around holding his jaw. It is a wonder it wasn't fractured. But Mr. Pike avers he has removed hundreds of teeth by this method and never known a fractured jaw. Also, he avers he once sailed with a skipper who shaved every Sunday morning and never touched a razor, nor any cutting-edge, to his face. What he used, according to Mr. Pike, was a lighted candle and a damp towel. Another candidate for Nietzsche's immortals who are hard!

As for Mr. Pike himself, he is the highest-spirited, best-conditioned man on board. The driving to which he subjected the *Elsinore* was meat and drink. He still rubs his hands and chuckles over the memory of it.

"Huh!" he said to me, in reference to the crew; "I gave 'em a taste of real old-fashioned sailing. They'll never forget this hooker — at least them that don't take a sack of coal overside before we reach port."

"You mean you think we'll have more sea-burials?" I inquired.

He turned squarely upon me, and squarely looked me in the eyes for the matter of five long seconds.

"Huh!" he replied, as he turned on his heel. "Hell ain't begun to pop on this hooker."

He still stands his mate's watch, alternating with Mr. Mellaire, for he is firm in his conviction that there is no man for'ard fit to stand a second mate's watch. Also, he has kept his old quarters. Perhaps it is out of delicacy for Margaret; for I have learned that it is the invariable custom for the mate to occupy the captain's quarters when the latter dies. So Mr.

Mellaire still eats by himself in the big after-room, as he has done since the loss of the carpenter, and bunks as before in the ’midship-house with Nancy.

CHAPTER XLII

Mr. Mellaire was right. The men would not accept the driving when the *Elsinore* won to easier latitudes. Mr. Pike was right. Hell had not begun to pop. But it has popped now, and men are overboard without even the kindliness of a sack of coal at their feet. And yet the men, though ripe for it, did not precipitate the trouble. It was Mr. Mellaire. Or, rather, it was Ditman Olansen, the crank-eyed Norwegian. Perhaps it was Possum. At any rate, it was an accident, in which the several-named, including Possum, played their respective parts.

To begin at the beginning. Two weeks have elapsed since we crossed 50, and we are now in 37 — the same latitude as San Francisco, or, to be correct, we are as far south of the equator as San Francisco is north of it. The trouble was precipitated yesterday morning shortly after nine o'clock, and Possum started the chain of events that culminated in downright mutiny. It was Mr. Mellaire's watch, and he was standing on the bridge, directly under the mizzen-top, giving orders to Sundry Buyers, who, with Arthur Deacon and the Maltese Cockney, was doing rigging work aloft.

Get the picture and the situation in all its ridiculousness. Mr. Pike, thermometer in hand, was coming back along the bridge from taking the temperature of the coal in the for'ard hold. Ditman Olansen was just swinging into the mizzen-top as he went up with several turns of rope over one shoulder. Also, in some way, to the end of this rope was fastened a sizable block that might have weighed ten pounds. Possum, running free, was fooling around the chicken-coop on top the 'midship-house. And the chickens, featherless but indomitable, were enjoying the milder weather as they pecked at the grain and grits which the steward had just placed in their feeding-trough. The tarpaulin that covered their pen had been off for several days.

Now observe. I am at the break of the poop, leaning on the rail and watching Ditman Olansen swing into the top with his cumbersome burden. Mr. Pike, proceeding aft, has just passed Mr. Mellaire. Possum, who, on account of the Horn weather and the tarpaulin, has not seen the chickens for many weeks, is getting reacquainted, and is investigating them with that keen nose of his. And a hen's beak, equally though differently keen, impacts on Possum's nose, which is as sensitive as it is keen.

I may well say, now that I think it over, that it was this particular hen that started the mutiny. The men, well-driven by Mr. Pike, were ripe for an explosion, and Possum and the hen laid the train.

Possum fell away backwards from the coop and loosed a wild cry of pain and indignation. This attracted Ditman Olansen's attention. He paused and craned his neck out in order to see, and, in this moment of carelessness, the block he was carrying fetched away from him along with the several turns of rope around his shoulder. Both the mates sprang away to get out from under. The rope, fast to the block and following it, lashed about like a blacksnake, and, though the block fell clear of Mr. Mellaire, the bight of the rope snatched off his cap.

Mr. Pike had already started an oath aloft when his eyes caught sight of the terrible cleft in Mr. Mellaire's head. There it was, for all the world to read, and Mr. Pike's and mine were the only eyes that could read it. The sparse hair upon the second mate's crown served not at all to hide the cleft. It began out of sight in the thicker hair above the ears, and was exposed nakedly across the whole dome of head.

The stream of abuse for Ditman Olansen was choked in Mr. Pike's throat. All he was capable of for the moment was to stare, petrified, at that enormous fissure flanked at either end with a thatch of grizzled hair. He was in a dream, a trance, his great hands knotting and clenching unconsciously as he stared at the mark unmistakable by which he had said that he would some day identify the murderer of Captain Somers. And in that moment I remembered having heard him declare that some day he would stick his fingers in that mark.

Still as in a dream, moving slowly, right hand outstretched like a talon, with the fingers drawn downward, he advanced on the second mate with the evident intention of thrusting his fingers into that cleft and of clawing and tearing at the brain-life beneath that pulsed under the thin film of skin.

The second mate backed away along the bridge, and Mr. Pike seemed partially to come to himself. His outstretched arm dropped to his side, and he paused.

"I know you," he said, in a strange, shaky voice, blended of age and passion. "Eighteen years ago you were dismasted off the Plate in the *Cyrus Thompson*. She foundered, after you were on your beam ends and lost your sticks. You were in the only boat that was saved. Eleven years ago, on the *Jason Harrison*, in San Francisco, Captain Somers was beaten to death by his second mate. This second mate was a survivor of the *Cyrus Thompson*. This second mate'd had his skull split by a crazy sea-cook. Your skull is split. This second mate's name was Sidney Waltham. And if you ain't Sidney Waltham . . . "

At this point Mr. Mellaire, or, rather, Sidney Waltham, despite his fifty years, did what only a sailor could do. He went over the bridge-rail sidewise, caught the running gear up-and-down the mizzen-mast, and landed lightly on his feet on top of Number Three hatch. Nor did he stop there. He ran across the hatch and dived through the doorway of his room in the 'midship-house.

Such must have been Mr. Pike's profundity of passion, that he paused like a somnambulist, actually rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand, and seemed to awaken.

But the second mate had not run to his room for refuge. The next moment he emerged, a thirty-two Smith and Wesson in his hand, and the instant he emerged he began shooting.

Mr. Pike was wholly himself again, and I saw him perceptibly pause and decide between the two impulses that tore at him. One was to leap over the bridge-rail and down at the man who shot at him; the other was to retreat. He retreated. And as he bounded aft along the narrow bridge the mutiny began. Arthur Deacon, from the mizzen-top, leaned out and hurled a steel marlin-spike at the fleeing mate. The thing flashed in the sunlight as it hurtled down. It missed Mr. Pike by twenty feet and nearly impaled Possum, who, afraid of firearms, was wildly rushing and ki-yi-ing aft. It so happened that the sharp point of the marlin-spike struck the wooden floor of the bridge, and it penetrated the planking with such force that after it had fetched to a standstill it vibrated violently for long seconds.

I confess that I failed to observe a tithe of what occurred during the next several minutes. Piece together as I will, after the event, I know that I missed much of what took place. I know that the men aloft in the mizzen descended to the deck, but I never saw them descend. I know that the second mate emptied the chambers of his revolver, but I did not hear all the shots. I know that Lars Johnson left the wheel, and on his broken leg, rebroken and not yet really mended, limped and scuttled across the poop, down the ladder, and gained for'ard. I know he must have limped and scuttled on that bad leg of his; I know that I must have seen him; and yet I swear that I have no impression of seeing him.

I do know that I heard the rush of feet of men from for’ard along the main deck. And I do know that I saw Mr. Pike take shelter behind the steel jiggermast. Also, as the second mate manoeuvred to port on top of Number Three hatch for his last shot, I know that I saw Mr. Pike duck around the corner of the chart-house to starboard and get away aft and below by way of the booby-hatch. And I did hear that last futile shot, and the bullet also as it ricochetted from the corner of the steel-walled chart-house.

As for myself, I did not move. I was too interested in seeing. It may have been due to lack of presence of mind, or to lack of habituation to an active part in scenes of quick action; but at any rate I merely retained my position at the break of the poop and looked on. I was the only person on the poop when the mutineers, led by the second mate and the gangsters, rushed it. I saw them swarm up the ladder, and it never entered my head to attempt to oppose them. Which was just as well, for I would have been killed for my pains, and I could never have stopped them.

I was alone on the poop, and the men were quite perplexed to find no enemy in sight. As Bert Rhine went past, he half fetched up in his stride, as if to knife me with the sheath knife, sharp-pointed, which he carried in his right hand; then, and I know I correctly measured the drift of his judgment, he unflatteringly dismissed me as unimportant and ran on.

Right here I was impressed by the lack of clear-thinking on any of their parts. So spontaneously had the ship’s company exploded into mutiny that it was dazed and confused even while it acted. For instance, in the months since we left Baltimore there had never been a moment, day or night, even when preventer tackles were rigged, that a man had not stood at the wheel. So habituated were they to this, that they were shocked into consternation at sight of the deserted wheel. They paused for an instant to stare at it. Then Bert Rhine, with a quick word and gesture, sent the Italian, Guido Bombini, around the rear of the half-wheelhouse. The fact that he completed the circuit was proof that nobody was there.

Again, in the swift rush of events, I must confess that I saw but little. I was aware that more of the men were climbing up the ladder and gaining the poop, but I had no eyes for them. I was watching that sanguinary group aft near the wheel and noting the most important thing, namely, that it was Bert Rhine, the gangster, and not the second mate, who gave orders and was obeyed.

He motioned to the Jew, Isaac Chantz, who had been wounded earlier in the voyage by O'Sullivan, and Chantz led the way to the starboard chart-house door. While this was going on, all in flashing fractions of seconds, Bert Rhine was cautiously inspecting the lazarette through the open booby-hatch.

Isaac Chantz jerked open the chart-house door, which swung outward. Things did happen so swiftly! As he jerked the iron door open a two-foot hacking butcher knife, at the end of a withered, yellow hand, flashed out and down on him. It missed head and neck, but caught him on top of the left shoulder.

All hands recoiled before this, and the Jew reeled across to the rail, his right hand clutching at his wound, and between the fingers I could see the blood welling darkly. Bert Rhine abandoned his inspection of the booby-hatch, and, with the second mate, the latter still carrying his empty Smith & Wesson, sprang into the press about the chart-house door.

O wise, clever, cautious, old Chinese steward! He made no emergence. The door swung emptily back and forth to the rolling of the *Elsinore*, and no man knew but what, just inside, with that heavy, hacking knife upraised, lurked the steward. And while they hesitated and stared at the aperture that alternately closed and opened with the swinging of the door, the booby-hatch, situated between chart-house and wheel, erupted. It was Mr. Pike, with his .44 automatic Colt.

There were shots fired, other than by him. I know I heard them, like "red-heads" at an old-time Fourth of July; but I do not know who discharged them. All was mess and confusion. Many shots were being fired, and through the uproar I heard the reiterant, monotonous explosions from the Colt's .44

I saw the Italian, Mike Cipriani, clutch savagely at his abdomen and sink slowly to the deck. Shorty, the Japanese half-caste, clown that he was, dancing and grinning on the outskirts of the struggle, with a final grimace and hysterical giggle led the retreat across the poop and down the poop-ladder. Never had I seen a finer exemplification of mob psychology. Shorty, the most unstable-minded of the individuals who composed this mob, by his own instability precipitated the retreat in which the mob joined. When he broke before the steady discharge of the automatic in the hand of the mate, on the instant the rest broke with him. Least-balanced, his balance was the balance of all of them.

Chantz, bleeding prodigiously, was one of the first on Shorty's heels. I saw Nosey Murphy pause long enough to throw his knife at the mate. The missile went wide, with a metallic clang struck the brass tip of one of the spokes of the *Elsinore's* wheel, and clattered on the deck. The second mate, with his empty revolver, and Bert Rhine with his sheath-knife, fled past me side by side.

Mr. Pike emerged from the booby-hatch and with an unaimed shot brought down Bill Quigley, one of the "bricklayers," who fell at my feet. The last man off the poop was the Maltese Cockney, and at the top of the ladder he paused to look back at Mr. Pike, who, holding the automatic in both hands, was taking careful aim. The Maltese Cockney, disdaining the ladder, leaped through the air to the main deck. But the Colt merely clicked. It was the last bullet in it that had fetched down Bill Quigley.

And the poop was ours.

Events still crowded so closely that I missed much. I saw the steward, belligerent and cautious, his long knife poised for a slash, emerge from the chart-house. Margaret followed him, and behind her came Wada, who carried my .22 Winchester automatic rifle. As he told me afterwards, he had brought it up under instructions from her.

Mr. Pike was glancing with cool haste at his Colt to see whether it was jammed or empty, when Margaret asked him the course.

"By the wind," he shouted to her, as he bounded for'ard. "Put your helm hard up or we'll be all aback."

Ah! — yeoman and henchman of the race, he could not fail in his fidelity to the ship under his command. The iron of all his years of iron training was there manifest. While mutiny spread red, and death was on the wing, he could not forget his charge, the ship, the *Elsinore*, the insensate fabric compounded of steel and hemp and woven cotton that was to him glorious with personality.

Margaret waved Wada in my direction as she ran to the wheel. As Mr. Pike passed the corner of the chart-house, simultaneously there was a report from amidships and the ping of a bullet against the steel wall. I saw the man who fired the shot. It was the cowboy, Steve Roberts.

As for the mate, he ducked in behind the sheltering jiggermast, and even as he ducked his left hand dipped into his side coat-pocket, so that when he had gained shelter it was coming out with a fresh clip of cartridges. The empty clip fell to the deck, the loader clip slipped up the hollow butt, and he was good for eight more shots.

Wada turned the little automatic rifle over to me, where I still stood under the weather cloth at the break of the poop.

"All ready," he said. "You take off safety."

"Get Roberts," Mr. Pike called to me. "He's the best shot for'ard. If you can't get 'm, jolt the fear of God into him anyway."

It was the first time I had a human target, and let me say, here and now, that I am convinced I am immune to buck fever. There he was before me, less than a hundred feet distant, in the gangway between the door to Davis' room and the starboard-rail, manoeuvring for another shot at Mr. Pike.

I must have missed Steve Roberts that first time, but I came so near him that he jumped. The next instant he had located me and turned his revolver on me. But he had no chance. My little automatic was discharging as fast as I could tickle the trigger with my fore-finger. The cowboy's first shot went wild of me, because my bullet arrived ere he got his swift aim. He swayed and stumbled backward, but the bullets — ten of them — poured from the muzzle of my Winchester like water from a garden hose. It was a stream of lead I played upon him. I shall never know how many times I hit him, but I am confident that after he had begun his long staggering fall at least three additional bullets entered him ere he impacted on the deck. And even as he was falling, aimlessly and mechanically, stricken then with death, he managed twice again to discharge his weapon.

And after he struck the deck he never moved. I do believe he died in the air.

As I held up my gun and gazed at the abruptly-deserted main-deck I was aware of Wada's touch on my arm. I looked. In his hand were a dozen little .22 long, soft-nosed, smokeless cartridges. He wanted me to reload. I threw on the safety, opened the magazine, and tilted the rifle so that he could let the fresh cartridges of themselves slide into place.

"Get some more," I told him.

Scarcely had he departed on the errand when Bill Quigley, who lay at my feet, created a diversion. I jumped — yes, and I freely confess that I yelled — with startle and surprise, when I felt his paws clutch my ankles and his teeth shut down on the calf of my leg.

It was Mr. Pike to the rescue. I understand now the Western hyperbole of "hitting the high places." The mate did not seem in contact with the deck.

My impression was that he soared through the air to me, landing beside me, and, in the instant of landing, kicking out with one of those big feet of his. Bill Quigley was kicked clear away from me, and the next moment he was flying overboard. It was a clean throw. He never touched the rail.

Whether Mike Cipriani, who, till then, had lain in a welter, began crawling aft in quest of safety, or whether he intended harm to Margaret at the wheel, we shall never know; for there was no opportunity given him to show his purpose. As swiftly as Mr. Pike could cross the deck with those giant bounds, just that swiftly was the Italian in the air and following Bill Quigley overside.

The mate missed nothing with those eagle eyes of his as he returned along the poop. Nobody was to be seen on the main deck. Even the lookout had deserted the forecastle-head, and the *Elsinore*, steered by Margaret, slipped a lazy two knots through the quiet sea. Mr. Pike was apprehensive of a shot from ambush, and it was not until after a scrutiny of several minutes that he put his pistol into his side coat-pocket and snarled for'ard:

"Come out, you rats! Show your ugly faces! I want to talk with you!"

Guido Bombini, gesticulating peaceable intentions and evidently thrust out by Bert Rhine, was the first to appear. When it was observed that Mr. Pike did not fire, the rest began to dribble into view. This continued till all were there save the cook, the two sail-makers, and the second mate. The last to come out were Tom Spink, the boy Buckwheat, and Herman Lunkenheimer, the good-natured but simple-minded German; and these three came out only after repeated threats from Bert Rhine, who, with Nosey Murphy and Kid Twist, was patently in charge. Also, like a faithful dog, Guido Bombini fawned close to him.

"That will do — stop where you are," Mr. Pike commanded, when the crew was scattered abreast, to starboard and to port, of Number Three hatch.

It was a striking scene. *Mutiny on the high seas*! That phrase, learned in boyhood from my Marryatt and Cooper, recrudesced in my brain. This was it — mutiny on the high seas in the year nineteen thirteen — and I was part of it, a perishing blond whose lot was cast with the perishing but lordly blonds, and I had already killed a man.

Mr. Pike, in the high place, aged and indomitable; leaned his arm on the rail at the break of the poop and gazed down at the mutineers, the like of which I'll wager had never been assembled in mutiny before. There were the three gangsters and ex-jailbirds, anything but seamen, yet in control of this affair that was peculiarly an affair of the sea. With them was the Italian hound, Bombini, and beside them were such strangely assorted men as Anton Sorensen, Lars Jacobsen, Frank Fitzgibbon, and Richard Giller — also Arthur Deacon the white slaver, John Hackey the San Francisco hoodlum, the Maltese Cockney, and Tony the suicidal Greek.

I noticed the three strange ones, shouldering together and standing apart from the others as they swayed to the lazy roll and dreamed with their pale, topaz eyes. And there was the Faun, stone deaf but observant, straining to understand what was taking place. Yes, and Mulligan Jacobs and Andy Fay were bitterly and eagerly side by side, and Ditman Olansen, crank-eyed, as if drawn by some affinity of bitterness, stood behind them, his head appearing between their heads. Farthest advanced of all was Charles Davis, the man who by all rights should long since be dead, his face with its wax-like pallor startlingly in contrast to the weathered faces of the rest.

I glanced back at Margaret, who was coolly steering, and she smiled to me, and love was in her eyes — she, too, of the perishing and lordly race of blonds, her place the high place, her heritage government and command and mastery over the stupid lowly of her kind and over the ruck and spawn of the dark-pigmented breeds.

"Where's Sidney Waltham?" the mate snarled. "I want him. Bring him out. After that, the rest of you filth get back to work, or God have mercy on you."

The men moved about restlessly, shuffling their feet on the deck.

"Sidney Waltham, I want you — come out!" Mr. Pike called, addressing himself beyond them to the murderer of the captain under whom once he had sailed.

The prodigious old hero! It never entered his head that he was not the master of the rabble there below him. He had but one idea, an idea of passion, and that was his desire for vengeance on the murderer of his old skipper.

"You old stiff!" Mulligan Jacobs snarled back.

"Shut up, Mulligan!" was Bert Rhine's command, in receipt of which he received a venomous stare from the cripple.

"Oh, ho, my hearty," Mr. Pike sneered at the gangster. "I'll take care of your case, never fear. In the meantime, and right now, fetch out that dog."

Whereupon he ignored the leader of the mutineers and began calling, “Waltham, you dog, come out! Come out, you sneaking cur! Come out!”

Another lunatic, was the thought that flashed through my mind; another lunatic, the slave of a single idea. He forgets the mutiny, his fidelity to the ship, in his personal thirst for vengeance.

But did he? Even as he forgot and called his heart’s desire, which was the life of the second mate, even then, without intention, mechanically, his sailor’s considerative eye lifted to note the draw of the sails and roved from sail to sail. Thereupon, so reminded, he returned to his fidelity.

“Well?” he snarled at Bert Rhine. “Go on and get for’ard before I spit on you, you scum and slum. I’ll give you and the rest of the rats two minutes to return to duty.”

And the leader, with his two fellow-gangsters, laughed their weird, silent laughter.

“I guess you’ll listen to our talk, first, old horse,” Bert Rhine retorted. “ — Davis, get up now and show what kind of a spieler you are. Don’t get cold feet. Spit it out to Foxy Grandpa an’ tell ’m what’s doin’.”

“You damned sea-lawyer!” Mr. Pike snarled as Davis opened his mouth to speak.

Bert Rhine shrugged his shoulders, and half turned on his heel as if to depart, as he said quietly:

“Oh, well, if you don’t want to talk . . . ”

Mr. Pike conceded a point.

“Go on!” he snarled. “Spit the dirt out of your system, Davis; but remember one thing: you’ll pay for this, and you’ll pay through the nose. Go on!”

The sea-lawyer cleared his throat in preparation.

“First of all, I ain’t got no part in this,” he began.

“I’m a sick man, an’ I oughta be in my bunk right now. I ain’t fit to be on my feet. But they’ve asked me to advise ’em on the law, an’ I have advised ’em — ”

“And the law — what is it?” Mr. Pike broke in.

But Davis was uncowed.

“The law is that when the officers is inefficient, the crew can take charge peaceably an’ bring the ship into port. It’s all law an’ in the records. There was the *Abyssinia*, in eighteen ninety-two, when the master’d died of fever and the mates took to drinkin’ — ”

"Go on!" Mr. Pike shut him off. "I don't want your citations. What d'ye want? Spit it out."

"Well — and I'm talkin' as an outsider, as a sick man off duty that's been asked to talk — well, the point is our skipper was a good one, but he's gone. Our mate is violent, seekin' the life of the second mate. We don't care about that. What we want is to get into port with our lives. An' our lives is in danger. We ain't hurt nobody. You've done all the bloodshed. You've shot an' killed an' thrown two men overboard, as witnesses'll testify to in court. An' there's Roberts, there, dead, too, an' headin' for the sharks — an' what for? For defendin' himself from murderous an' deadly attack, as every man can testify an' tell the truth, the whole truth, an' nothin' but the truth, so help 'm, God — ain't that right, men?"

A confused murmur of assent arose from many of them.

"You want my job, eh?" Mr. Pike grinned. "An' what are you goin' to do with me?"

"You'll be taken care of until we get in an' turn you over to the lawful authorities," Davis answered promptly. "Most likely you can plead insanity an' get off easy."

At this moment I felt a stir at my shoulder. It was Margaret, armed with the long knife of the steward, whom she had put at the wheel.

"You've got another guess comin', Davis," Mr. Pike said. "I've got no more talk with you. I'm goin' to talk to the bunch. I'll give you fellows just two minutes to choose, and I'll tell you your choices. You've only got two choices. You'll turn the second mate over to me an' go back to duty and take what's comin' to you, or you'll go to jail with the stripes on you for long sentences. You've got two minutes. The fellows that want jail can stand right where they are. The fellows that don't want jail and are willin' to work faithful, can walk right back to me here on the poop. Two minutes, an' you can keep your jaws stopped while you think over what it's goin' to be."

He turned his head to me and said in an undertone, "Be ready with that pop-gun for trouble. An' don't hesitate. Slap it into 'em — the swine that think they can put as raw a deal as this over on us."

It was Buckwheat who made the first move; but so tentative was it that it got no farther than a tensing of the legs and a sway forward of the shoulders. Nevertheless it was sufficient to start Herman Lunkenheimer, who thrust out his foot and began confidently to walk aft. Kid Twist gained him in a single spring, and Kid Twist, his wrist under the German's throat from behind; his knee pressed into the German's back, bent the man backward and held him. Even as the rifle came to my shoulder, the hound Bombini drew his knife directly beneath Kid Twist's wrist across the up-stretched throat of the man.

It was at this instant that I heard Mr. Pike's "Plug him!" and pulled the trigger; and of all ungodly things the bullet missed and caught the Faun, who staggered back, sat down on the hatch, and began to cough. And even as he coughed he still strained with pain-eloquent eyes to try to understand.

No other man moved. Herman Lunkenheimer, released by Kid Twist, sank down on the deck. Nor did I shoot again. Kid Twist stood again by the side of Bert Rhine and Guido Bombini fawned near.

Bert Rhine actually visibly smiled.

"Any more of you guys want to promenade aft?" he queried in velvet tones.

"Two minutes up," Mr. Pike declared.

"An' what are you goin' to do about it, Grandpa?" Bert Rhine sneered.

In a flash the big automatic was out of the mate's pocket and he was shooting as fast as he could pull trigger, while all hands fled to shelter. But, as he had long since told me, he was no shot and could effectively use the weapon only at close range — muzzle to stomach preferably.

As we stared at the main deck, deserted save for the dead cowboy on his back and for the Faun who still sat on the hatch and coughed, an eruption of men occurred over the for'ard edge of the 'midship-house.

"Shoot!" Margaret cried at my back.

"Don't!" Mr. Pike roared at me.

The rifle was at my shoulder when I desisted. Louis, the cook, led the rush aft to us across the top of the house and along the bridge. Behind him, in single file and not wasting any time, came the Japanese sail-makers, Henry the training-ship boy, and the other boy Buckwheat. Tom Spink brought up the rear. As he came up the ladder of the 'midship-house somebody from beneath must have caught him by a leg in an effort to drag him back. We saw half of him in sight and knew that he was struggling and kicking. He fetched clear abruptly, gained the top of the house in a surge, and raced aft along the bridge until he overtook and collided with Buckwheat, who yelled out in fear that a mutineer had caught him.

CHAPTER XLIII

We who are aft, besieged in the high place, are stronger in numbers than I dreamed until now, when I have just finished taking the ship's census. Of course Margaret, Mr. Pike, and myself are apart. We alone represent the ruling class. With us are servants and serfs, faithful to their salt, who look to us for guidance and life.

I use my words advisedly. Tom Spink and Buckwheat are serfs and nothing else. Henry, the training-ship boy, occupies an anomalous classification. He is of our kind, but he can scarcely be called even a cadet of our kind. He will some day win to us and become a mate or a captain, but in the meantime, of course, his past is against him. He is a candidate, rising from the serf class to our class. Also, he is only a youth, the iron of his heredity not yet tested and proven.

Wada, Louis, and the steward are servants of Asiatic breed. So are the two Japanese sail-makers — scarcely servants, not to be called slaves, but something in between.

So, all told, there are eleven of us aft in the citadel. But our followers are too servant-like and serf-like to be offensive fighters. They will help us defend the high place against all attack; but they are incapable of joining with us in an attack on the other end of the ship. They will fight like cornered rats to preserve their lives; but they will not advance like tigers upon the enemy. Tom Spink is faithful but spirit-broken. Buckwheat is hopelessly of the stupid lowly. Henry has not yet won his spurs. On our side remain Margaret, Mr. Pike, and myself. The rest will hold the wall of the poop and fight thereon to the death, but they are not to be depended upon in a sortie.

At the other end of the ship — and I may as well give the roster, are: the second mate, either to be called Mellaire or Waltham, a strong man of our own breed but a renegade; the three gangsters, killers and jackals, Bert Rhine, Nosey Murphy, and Kid Twist; the Maltese Cockney and Tony the crazy Greek; Frank Fitzgibbon and Richard Giller, the survivors of the trio of "bricklayers"; Anton Sorensen and Lars Jacobsen, stupid Scandinavian sailor-men; Ditman Olansen, the crank-eyed Berserk; John Hackey and Arthur Deacon, respectively hoodlum and white slaver; Shorty, the mixed-breed clown; Guido Bombini, the Italian hound; Andy Pay and Mulligan

Jacobs, the bitter ones; the three topaz-eyed dreamers, who are unclassifiable; Isaac Chantz, the wounded Jew; Bob, the overgrown dolt; the feeble-minded Faun, lung-wounded; Nancy and Sundry Buyers, the two hopeless, helpless bosuns; and, finally, the sea-lawyer, Charles Davis.

This makes twenty-seven of them against the eleven of us. But there are men, strong in viciousness, among them. They, too, have their serfs and bravos. Guido Bombini and Isaac Chantz are certainly bravos. And weaklings like Sorensen, and Jacobsen, and Bob, cannot be anything else than slaves to the men who compose the gangster clique.

I failed to tell what happened yesterday, after Mr. Pike emptied his automatic and cleared the deck. The poop was indubitably ours, and there was no possibility of the mutineers making a charge on us in broad daylight. Margaret had gone below, accompanied by Wada, to see to the security of the port and starboard doors that open from the cabin directly on the main deck. These are still caulked and tight and fastened on the inside, as they have been since the passage of Cape Horn began.

Mr. Pike put one of the sail-makers at the wheel, and the steward, relieved and starting below, was attracted to the port quarter, where the patent log that towed astern was made fast. Margaret had returned his knife to him, and he was carrying it in his hand when his attention was attracted astern to our wake. Mike Cipriani and Bill Quigley had managed to catch the lazily moving log-line and were clinging to it. The *Elsinore* was moving just fast enough to keep them on the surface instead of dragging them under. Above them and about them circled curious and hungry albatrosses, Cape hens, and mollyhawks. Even as I glimpsed the situation one of the big birds, a ten-footer at least, with a ten-inch beak to the fore, dropped down on the Italian. Releasing his hold with one hand, he struck with his knife at the bird. Feathers flew, and the albatross, deflected by the blow, fell clumsily into the water.

Quite methodically, just as part of the day's work, the steward chopped down with his knife, catching the log-line between the steel edge and the rail. At once, no longer buoyed up by the *Elsinore's* two-knot drag ahead, the wounded men began to swim and flounder. The circling hosts of huge sea-birds descended upon them, with carnivorous beaks striking at their heads and shoulders and arms. A great screeching and squawking arose from the winged things of prey as they strove for the living meat. And yet, somehow, I was not very profoundly shocked. These were the men whom I had seen eviscerate the shark and toss it overboard, and shout with joy as they watched it devoured alive by its brethren. They had played a violent, cruel game with the things of life, and the things of life now played upon them the same violent, cruel game. As they that rise by the sword perish by the sword, just so did these two men who had lived cruelly die cruelly.

"Oh, well," was Mr. Pike's comment, "we've saved two sacks of mighty good coal."

* * * * *

Certainly our situation might be worse. We are cooking on the coal-stove and on the oil-burners. We have servants to cook and serve for us. And, most important of all, we are in possession of all the food on the *Elsinore*.

Mr. Pike makes no mistake. Realizing that with our crowd we cannot rush the crowd at the other end of the ship, he accepts the siege, which, as he says, consists of the besieged holding all food supplies while the besiegers are on the imminent edge of famine.

"Starve the dogs," he growls. "Starve 'm until they crawl aft and lick our shoes. Maybe you think the custom of carrying the stores aft just happened. Only it didn't. Before you and I were born it was long-established and it was established on brass tacks. They knew what they were about, the old cusses, when they put the grub in the lazarette."

Louis says there is not more than three days' regular whack in the galley; that the barrel of hard-tack in the forecastle will quickly go; and that our chickens, which they stole last night from the top of the 'midship-house, are equivalent to no more than an additional day's supply. In short, at the outside limit, we are convinced the men will be keen to talk surrender within the week.

We are no longer sailing. In last night's darkness we helplessly listened to the men loosing headsail-halyards and letting yards go down on the run. Under orders of Mr. Pike I shot blindly and many times into the dark, but without result, save that we heard the bullets of answering shots strike against the chart-house. So to-day we have not even a man at the wheel. The *Elsinore* drifts idly on an idle sea, and we stand regular watches in the shelter of chart-house and jiggermast. Mr. Pike says it is the laziest time he has had on the whole voyage.

I alternate watches with him, although when on duty there is little to be done, save, in the daytime, to stand rifle in hand behind the jiggermast, and, in the night, to lurk along the break of the poop. Behind the chart-house, ready to repel assault, are my watch of four men: Tom Spink, Wada, Buckwheat, and Louis. Henry, the two Japanese sail-makers, and the old steward compose Mr. Pike's watch.

It is his orders that no one for'ard is to be allowed to show himself, so, to-day, when the second mate appeared at the corner of the 'midship-house, I made him take a quick leap back with the thud of my bullet against the iron wall a foot from his head. Charles David tried the same game and was similarly stimulated.

Also, this evening, after dark, Mr. Pike put block-and-tackle on the first section of the bridge, heaved it out of place, and lowered it upon the poop. Likewise he hoisted in the ladder at the break of the poop that leads down to the main deck. The men will have to do some climbing if they ever elect to rush us.

I am writing this in my watch below. I came off duty at eight o'clock, and at midnight I go on deck to stay till four to-morrow morning. Wada shakes his head and says that the Blackwood Company should rebate us on the first-class passage paid in advance. We are working our passage, he contends.

Margaret takes the adventure joyously. It is the first time she has experienced mutiny, but she is such a thorough sea-woman that she appears like an old hand at the game. She leaves the deck to the mate and me; but, still acknowledging his leadership, she has taken charge below and entirely manages the commissary, the cooking, and the sleeping arrangements. We still keep our old quarters, and she has bedded the new-comers in the big after-room with blankets issued from the slop-chest.

In a way, from the standpoint of her personal welfare, the mutiny is the best thing that could have happened to her. It has taken her mind off her father and filled her waking hours with work to do. This afternoon, standing above the open booby-hatch, I heard her laugh ring out as in the old days coming down the Atlantic. Yes, and she hums snatches of songs under her breath as she works. In the second dog-watch this evening, after Mr. Pike had finished dinner and joined us on the poop, she told him that if he did not soon re-rig his phonograph she was going to start in on the piano. The reason she advanced was the psychological effect such sounds of revelry would have on the starving mutineers.

* * * * *

The days pass, and nothing of moment happens. We get nowhere. The *Elsinore*, without the steadying of her canvas, rolls emptily and drifts a lunatic course. Sometimes she is bow on to the wind, and at other times she is directly before it; but at all times she is circling vaguely and hesitantly to get somewhere else than where she is. As an illustration, at daylight this morning she came up into the wind as if endeavouring to go about. In the course of half an hour she worked off till the wind was directly abeam. In another half hour she was back into the wind. Not until evening did she manage to get the wind on her port bow; but when she did, she immediately paid off, accomplished the complete circle in an hour, and recommenced her morning tactics of trying to get into the wind.

And there is nothing for us to do save hold the poop against the attack that is never made. Mr. Pike, more from force of habit than anything else, takes his regular observations and works up the *Elsinore's* position. This noon she was eight miles east of yesterday's position, yet to-day's position, in longitude, was within a mile of where she was four days ago. On the other hand she invariably makes nothing at the rate of seven or eight miles a day.

Aloft, the *Elsinore* is a sad spectacle. All is confusion and disorder. The sails, unfurled, are a slovenly mess along the yards, and many loose ends sway dismally to every roll. The only yard that is loose is the main-yard. It is fortunate that wind and wave are mild, else would the iron-work carry away and the mutineers find the huge thing of steel about their ears.

There is one thing we cannot understand. A week has passed, and the men show no signs of being starved into submission. Repeatedly and in vain has Mr. Pike interrogated the hands aft with us. One and all, from the cook to Buckwheat, they swear they have no knowledge of any food for'ard, save the small supply in the galley and the barrel of hardtack in the forecastle. Yet it is very evident that those for'ard are not starving. We see the smoke from the galley-stove and can only conclude that they have food to cook.

Twice has Bert Rhine attempted a truce, but both times his white flag, as soon as it showed above the edge of the ’midship-house, was fired upon by Mr. Pike. The last occurrence was two days ago. It is Mr. Pike’s intention thoroughly to starve them into submission, but now he is beginning to worry about their mysterious food supply.

Mr. Pike is not quite himself. He is obsessed, I know beyond any doubt, with the idea of vengeance on the second mate. On divers occasions, now, I have come unexpectedly upon him and found him muttering to himself with grim set face, or clenching and unclenching his big square fists and grinding his teeth. His conversation continually runs upon the feasibility of our making a night attack for’ard, and he is perpetually questioning Tom Spink and Louis on their ideas of where the various men may be sleeping — the point of which always is: *Where is the second mate likely to be sleeping*?

No later than yesterday afternoon did he give me most positive proof of his obsession. It was four o’clock, the beginning of the first dog-watch, and he had just relieved me. So careless have we grown, that we now stand in broad daylight at the exposed break of the poop. Nobody shoots at us, and, occasionally, over the top of the for’ard-house, Shorty sticks up his head and grins or makes clownish faces at us. At such times Mr. Pike studies Shorty’s features through the telescope in an effort to find signs of starvation. Yet he admits dolefully that Shorty is looking fleshed-up.

But to return. Mr. Pike had just relieved me yesterday afternoon, when the second mate climbed the forecastle-head and sauntered to the very eyes of the *Elsinore*, where he stood gazing overside.

“Take a crack at ’m,” Mr. Pike said.

It was a long shot, and I was taking slow and careful aim, when he touched my arm.

“No; don’t,” he said.

I lowered the little rifle and looked at him inquiringly.

“You might hit him,” he explained. “And I want him for myself.”

* * * * *

Life is never what we expect it to be. All our voyage from Baltimore south to the Horn and around the Horn has been marked by violence and death. And now that it has culminated in open mutiny there is no more violence, much less death. We keep to ourselves aft, and the mutineers keep to themselves for'ard. There is no more harshness, no more snarling and bellowing of commands; and in this fine weather a general festival obtains.

Aft, Mr. Pike and Margaret alternate with phonograph and piano; and for'ard, although we cannot see them, a full-fledged "foo-foo" band makes most of the day and night hideous. A squealing accordion that Tom Spink says was the property of Mike Cipriani is played by Guido Bombini, who sets the pace and seems the leader of the foo-foo. There are two broken-reeded harmonicas. Someone plays a jew's-harp. Then there are home-made fifes and whistles and drums, combs covered with paper, extemporized triangles, and bones made from ribs of salt horse such as negro minstrels use.

The whole crew seems to compose the band, and, like a lot of monkey-folk rejoicing in rude rhythm, emphasizes the beat by hammering kerosene cans, frying-pans, and all sorts of things metallic or reverberant. Some genius has rigged a line to the clapper of the ship's bell on the forecastle-head and clangs it horribly in the big foo-foo crises, though Bombini can be heard censuring him severely on occasion. And to cap it all, the fog-horn machine pumps in at the oddest moments in imitation of a big bass viol.

And this is mutiny on the high seas! Almost every hour of my deck-watches I listen to this infernal din, and am maddened into desire to join with Mr. Pike in a night attack and put these rebellious and inharmonious slaves to work.

Yet they are not entirely inharmonious. Guido Bombini has a respectable though untrained tenor voice, and has surprised me by a variety of selections, not only from Verdi, but from Wagner and Massenet. Bert Rhine and his crowd are full of rag-time junk, and one phrase that has caught the fancy of all hands, and which they roar out at all times, is: "*It's a bear*! *It's a bear*! *It's a bear*!" This morning Nancy, evidently very strongly urged, gave a doleful rendering of *Flying Cloud*. Yes, and in the second dog-watch last evening our three topaz-eyed dreamers sang some folk-song strangely sweet and sad.

And this is mutiny! As I write I can scarcely believe it. Yet I know Mr. Pike keeps the watch over my head. I hear the shrill laughter of the steward and Louis over some ancient Chinese joke. Wada and the sail-makers, in the pantry, are, I know, talking Japanese politics. And from across the cabin, along the narrow halls, I can hear Margaret softly humming as she goes to bed.

But all doubts vanish at the stroke of eight bells, when I go on deck to relieve Mr. Pike, who lingers a moment for a “gain,” as he calls it.

“Say,” he said confidentially, “you and I can clean out the whole gang. All we got to do is sneak for’ard and turn loose. As soon as we begin to shoot up, half of ’em’ll bolt aft — lobsters like Nancy, an’ Sundry Buyers, an’ Jacobsen, an’ Bob, an’ Shorty, an’ them three castaways, for instance. An’ while they’re doin’ that, an’ our bunch on the poop is takin’ ’em in, you an’ me can make a pretty big hole in them that’s left. What d’ye say?”

I hesitated, thinking of Margaret.

“Why, say,” he urged, “once I jumped into that fo’c’s’le, at close range, I’d start right in, blim-blam-blim, fast as you could wink, nailing them gangsters, an’ Bombini, an’ the Sheeny, an’ Deacon, an’ the Cockney, an’ Mulligan Jacobs, an’ . . . an’ . . . Waltham.”

“That would be mine,” I smiled. “You’ve only eight shots in your Colt.”

Mr. Pike considered a moment, and revised his list. “All right,” he agreed, “I guess I’ll have to let Jacobs go. What d’ye say? Are you game?”

Still I hesitated, but before I could speak he anticipated me and returned to his fidelity.

“No, you can’t do it, Mr. Pathurst. If by any luck they got the both of us . . . No; we’ll just stay aft and sit tight until they’re starved to it . . . But where they get their tucker gets me. For’ard she’s as bare as a bone, as any decent ship ought to be, and yet look at ’em, rolling hog fat. And by rights they ought to a-quit eatin’ a week ago.”

CHAPTER XLIV

Yes, it is certainly mutiny. Collecting water from the leaders of the chart-house in a shower of rain this morning, Buckwheat exposed himself, and a long, lucky revolver-shot from for'ard caught him in the shoulder. The bullet was small-calibre and spent ere it reached him, so that he received no more than a flesh-wound, though he carried on as if he were dying until Mr. Pike hushed his noise by cuffing his ears.

I should not like to have Mr. Pike for my surgeon. He probed for the bullet with his little finger, which was far too big for the aperture; and with his little finger, while with his other hand he threatened another ear-clout, he gouged out the leaden pellet. Then he sent the boy below, where Margaret took him in charge with antiseptics and dressings.

I see her so rarely that a half-hour alone with her these days is an adventure. She is busy morning to night in keeping her house in order. As I write this, through my open door I can hear her laying the law down to the men in the after-room. She has issued underclothes all around from the slop-chest, and is ordering them to take a bath in the rain-water just caught. And to make sure of their thoroughness in the matter, she has told off Louis and the steward to supervise the operation. Also, she has forbidden them smoking their pipes in the after-room. And, to cap everything, they are to scrub walls, ceiling, everything, and then start to-morrow morning at painting. All of which serves to convince me almost that mutiny does not obtain and that I have imagined it.

But no. I hear Buckwheat blubbering and demanding how he can take a bath in his wounded condition. I wait and listen for Margaret's judgment. Nor am I disappointed. Tom Spink and Henry are told off to the task, and the thorough scrubbing of Buckwheat is assured.

* * * * *

The mutineers are not starving. To-day they have been fishing for albatrosses. A few minutes after they caught the first one its carcase was flung overboard. Mr. Pike studied it through his sea-glasses, and I heard him grit his teeth when he made certain that it was not the mere feathers and skin but the entire carcass. They had taken only its wing-bones to make into pipe-stems. The inference was obvious: *starving men would not throw meat away in such fashion*.

But where do they get their food? It is a sea-mystery in itself, although I might not so deem it were it not for Mr. Pike.

"I think, and think, till my brain is all frazzled out," he tells me; "and yet I can't get a line on it. I know every inch of space on the *Elsinore*, and know there isn't an ounce of grub anywhere for'ard, and yet they eat! I've overhauled the lazarette. As near as I can make it out, nothing is missing. Then where do they get it? That's what I want to know. Where do they get it?"

I know that this morning he spent hours in the lazarette with the steward and the cook, overhauling and checking off from the lists of the Baltimore agents. And I know that they came up out of the lazarette, the three of them, dripping with perspiration and baffled. The steward has raised the hypothesis that, first of all, there were extra stores left over from the previous voyage, or from previous voyages, and, next, that the stealing of these stores must have taken place during the night-watches when it was Mr. Pike's turn below.

At any rate, the mate takes the food mystery almost as much to heart as he takes the persistent and propinquitous existence of Sidney Waltham.

I am coming to realize the meaning of watch-and-watch. To begin with, I spend on deck twelve hours, and a fraction more, of each twenty-four. A fair portion of the remaining twelve is spent in eating, in dressing, and in undressing, and with Margaret. As a result, I feel the need for more sleep than I am getting. I scarcely read at all, now. The moment my head touches the pillow I am asleep. Oh, I sleep like a baby, eat like a navvy, and in years have not enjoyed such physical well-being. I tried to read George Moore last night, and was dreadfully bored. He may be a realist, but I solemnly aver he does not know reality on that tight, little, sheltered-life archipelago of his. If he could wind-jam around the Horn just one voyage he would be twice the writer.

And Mr. Pike, for practically all of his sixty-nine years, has stood his watch-and-watch, with many a spill-over of watches into watches. And yet he is iron. In a struggle with him I am confident that he would break me like so much straw. He is truly a prodigy of a man, and, so far as to-day is concerned, an anachronism.

The Faun is not dead, despite my unlucky bullet. Henry insisted that he caught a glimpse of him yesterday. To-day I saw him myself. He came to the corner of the ’midship-house and gazed wistfully aft at the poop, straining and eager to understand. In the same way I have often seen Possum gaze at me.

It has just struck me that of our eight followers five are Asiatic and only three are our own breed. Somehow it reminds me of India and of Clive and Hastings.

And the fine weather continues, and we wonder how long a time must elapse ere our mutineers eat up their mysterious food and are starved back to work.

We are almost due west of Valparaiso and quite a bit less than a thousand miles off the west coast of South America. The light northerly breezes, varying from north-east to west, would, according to Mr. Pike, work us in nicely for Valparaiso if only we had sail on the *Elsinore*. As it is, sailless, she drifts around and about and makes nowhere save for the slight northerly drift each day.

* * * * *

Mr. Pike is beside himself. In the past two days he has displayed increasing possession of himself by the one idea of vengeance on the second mate. It is not the mutiny, irksome as it is and helpless as it makes him; it is the presence of the murderer of his old-time and admired skipper, Captain Somers.

The mate grins at the mutiny, calls it a snap, speaks gleefully of how his wages are running up, and regrets that he is not ashore, where he would be able to take a hand in gambling on the reinsurance. But the sight of Sidney Waltham, calmly gazing at sea and sky from the forecastle-head, or astride the far end of the bowsprit and fishing for sharks, saddens him. Yesterday, coming to relieve me, he borrowed my rifle and turned loose the stream of tiny pellets on the second mate, who coolly made his line secure ere he scrambled in-board. Of course, it was only one chance in a hundred that Mr. Pike might have hit him, but Sidney Waltham did not care to encourage the chance.

And yet it is not like mutiny — not like the conventional mutiny I absorbed as a boy, and which has become classic in the literature of the sea.

There is no hand-to-hand fighting, no crash of cannon and flash of cutlass, no sailors drinking grog, no lighted matches held over open powder-magazines. Heavens! — there isn't a single cutlass nor a powder-magazine on board. And as for grog, not a man has had a drink since Baltimore.

* * * * *

Well, it is mutiny after all. I shall never doubt it again. It may be nineteen-thirteen mutiny on a coal-carrier, with feeblings and imbeciles and criminals for mutineers; but at any rate mutiny it is, and at least in the number of deaths it is reminiscent of the old days. For things have happened since last I had opportunity to write up this log. For that matter, I am now the keeper of the *Elsinore's* official log as well, in which work Margaret helps me.

And I might have known it would happen. At four yesterday morning I relieved Mr. Pike. When in the darkness I came up to him at the break of the poop, I had to speak to him twice to make him aware of my presence. And then he merely grunted acknowledgment in an absent sort of way.

The next moment he brightened up, and was himself save that he was too bright. He was making an effort. I felt this, but was quite unprepared for what followed.

"I'll be back in a minute," he said, as he put his leg over the rail and lightly and swiftly lowered himself down into the darkness.

There was nothing I could do. To cry out or to attempt to reason with him would only have drawn the mutineers' attention. I heard his feet strike the deck beneath as he let go. Immediately he started for'ard. Little enough precaution he took. I swear that clear to the 'midship-house I heard the dragging age-lag of his feet. Then that ceased, and that was all.

I repeat. That was all. Never a sound came from for'ard. I held my watch till daylight. I held it till Margaret came on deck with her cheery "What ho of the night, brave mariner?" I held the next watch (which should have been the mate's) till midday, eating both breakfast and lunch behind the sheltering jiggermast. And I held all afternoon, and through both dog-watches, my dinner served likewise on the deck.

And that was all. Nothing happened. The galley-stove smoked three times, advertising the cooking of three meals. Shorty made faces at me as usual across the rim of the for'ard-house. The Maltese Cockney caught an albatross. There was some excitement when Tony the Greek hooked a shark off the jib-boom, so big that half a dozen tailed on to the line and failed to land it. But I caught no glimpse of Mr. Pike nor of the renegade Sidney Waltham.

In short, it was a lazy, quiet day of sunshine and gentle breeze. There was no inkling to what had happened to the mate. Was he a prisoner? Was he already overside? Why were there no shots? He had his big automatic. It is inconceivable that he did not use it at least once. Margaret and I discussed the affair till we were well a-weary, but reached no conclusion.

She is a true daughter of the race. At the end of the second dog-watch, armed with her father's revolver, she insisted on standing the first watch of the night. I compromised with the inevitable by having Wada make up my bed on the deck in the shelter of the cabin skylight just for'ard of the jiggermast. Henry, the two sail-makers and the steward, variously equipped with knives and clubs, were stationed along the break of the poop.

And right here I wish to pass my first criticism on modern mutiny. On ships like the *Elsinore* there are not enough weapons to go around. The only firearms now aft are Captain West's .38 Colt revolver, and my .22 automatic Winchester. The old steward, with a penchant for hacking and chopping, has his long knife and a butcher's cleaver. Henry, in addition to his sheath-knife, has a short bar of iron. Louis, despite a most sanguinary array of butcher-knives and a big poker, pins his cook's faith on hot water and sees to it that two kettles are always piping on top the cabin stove. Buckwheat, who on account of his wound is getting all night in for a couple of nights, cherishes a hatchet.

The rest of our retainers have knives and clubs, although Yatsuda, the first sail-maker, carries a hand-axe, and Uchino, the second sail-maker, sleeping or waking, never parts from a claw-hammer. Tom Spink has a harpoon. Wada, however, is the genius. By means of the cabin stove he has made a sharp pike-point of iron and fitted it to a pole. To-morrow be intends to make more for the other men.

It is rather shuddery, however, to speculate on the terrible assortment of cutting, gouging, jabbing and slashing weapons with which the mutineers are able to equip themselves from the carpenter's shop. If it ever comes to an assault on the poop there will be a weird mess of wounds for the survivors to dress. For that matter, master as I am of my little rifle, no man could gain the poop in the day-time. Of course, if rush they will, they will rush us in the night, when my rifle will be worthless. Then it will be blow for blow, hand-to-hand, and the strongest pates and arms will win.

But no. I have just bethought me. We shall be ready for any night-rush. I'll take a leaf out of modern warfare, and show them not only that we are top-dog (a favourite phrase of the mate), but *why* we are top-dog. It is simple — night illumination. As I write I work opt the idea — gasoline, balls of oakum, caps and gunpowder from a few cartridges, Roman candles, and flares blue, red, and green, shallow metal receptacles to carry the explosive and inflammable stuff; and a trigger-like arrangement by which, pulling on a string, the caps are exploded in the gunpowder and fire set to the gasoline-soaked oakum and to the flares and candles. It will be brain as well as brawn against mere brawn.

* * * * *

I have worked like a Trojan all day, and the idea is realized. Margaret helped me out with suggestions, and Tom Spink did the sailorizing. Over our head, from the jiggermast, the steel stays that carry the three jigger-trysails descend high above the break of the poop and across the main deck to the mizzenmast. A light line has been thrown over each stay, and been thrown repeatedly around so as to form an unslipping knot. Tom Spink waited till dark, when he went aloft and attached loose rings of stiff wire around the stays below the knots. Also he bent on hoisting-gear and connected permanent fastenings with the sliding rings. And further, between rings and fastenings, is a slack of fifty feet of light line.

This is the idea: after dark each night we shall hoist our three metal wash-basins, loaded with inflammables, up to the stays. The arrangement is such that at the first alarm of a rush, by pulling a cord the trigger is pulled that ignites the powder, and the very same pull operates a trip-device that lets the rings slide down the steel stays. Of course, suspended from the rings, are the illuminators, and when they have run down the stays fifty feet the lines will automatically bring them to rest. Then all the main deck between the poop and the mizzen-mast will be flooded with light, while we shall be in comparative darkness.

Of course each morning before daylight we shall lower all this apparatus to the deck, so that the men for'ard will not guess what we have up our sleeve, or, rather, what we have up on the trysail-stays. Even to-day the little of our gear that has to be left standing aroused their curiosity. Head after head showed over the edge of the for'ard-house as they peeped and peered and tried to make out what we were up to. Why, I find myself almost looking forward to an attack in order to see the device work.

CHAPTER XLV

And what has happened to Mr. Pike remains a mystery. For that matter, what has happened to the second mate? In the past three days we have by our eyes taken the census of the mutineers. Every man has been seen by us with the sole exception of Mr. Mellaire, or Sidney Waltham, as I assume I must correctly name him. He has not appeared — does not appear; and we can only speculate and conjecture.

In the past three days various interesting things have taken place. Margaret stands watch and watch with me, day and night, the clock around; for there is no one of our retainers to whom we can entrust the responsibility of a watch. Though mutiny obtains and we are besieged in the high place, the weather is so mild and there is so little call on our men that they have grown careless and sleep aft of the chart-house when it is their watch on deck. Nothing ever happens, and, like true sailors, they wax fat and lazy. Even have I found Louis, the steward, and Wada guilty of cat-napping. In fact, the training-ship boy, Henry, is the only one who has never lapsed.

Oh, yes, and I gave Tom Spink a thrashing yesterday. Since the disappearance of the mate he had had little faith in me, and had been showing vague signs of insolence and insubordination. Both Margaret and I had noted it independently. Day before yesterday we talked it over.

“He is a good sailor, but weak,” she said. “If we let him go on, he will infect the rest.”

“Very well, I’ll take him in hand,” I announced valorously.

“You will have to,” she encouraged. “Be hard. Be hard. You must be hard.”

Those who sit in the high places must be hard, yet have I discovered that it is hard to be hard. For instance, easy enough was it to drop Steve Roberts as he was in the act of shooting at me. Yet it is most difficult to be hard with a chuckle-headed retainer like Tom Spink — especially when he continually fails by a shade to give sufficient provocation. For twenty-four hours after my talk with Margaret I was on pins and needles to have it out with him, yet rather than have had it out with him I should have preferred to see the poop rushed by the gang from the other side.

Not in a day can the tyro learn to employ the snarling immediacy of mastery of Mr. Pike, nor the reposeful, voiceless mastery of a Captain West. Truly, the situation was embarrassing. I was not trained in the handling of men, and Tom Spink knew it in his chuckle-headed way. Also, in his chuckle-headed way, he was dispirited by the loss of the mate. Fearing the mate, nevertheless he had depended on the mate to fetch him through with a whole skin, or at least alive. On me he has no dependence. What chance had the gentleman passenger and the captain's daughter against the gang for'ard? So he must have reasoned, and, so reasoning, become despairing and desperate.

After Margaret had told me to be hard I watched Tom Spink with an eagle eye, and he must have sensed my attitude, for he carefully forebore from overstepping, while all the time he palpitated just on the edge of overstepping. Yes, and it was clear that Buckwheat was watching to learn the outcome of this veiled refractoriness. For that matter, the situation was not being missed by our keen-eyed Asiatics, and I know that I caught Louis several times verging on the offence of offering me advice. But he knew his place and managed to keep his tongue between his teeth.

At last, yesterday, while I held the watch, Tom Spink was guilty of spitting tobacco juice on the deck.

Now it must be understood that such an act is as grave an offence of the sea as blasphemy is of the Church.

It was Margaret who came to where I was stationed by the jiggermast and told me what had occurred; and it was she who took my rifle and relieved me so that I could go aft.

There was the offensive spot, and there was Tom Spink, his cheek bulging with a quid.

"Here, you, get a swab and mop that up," I commanded in my harshest manner.

Tom Spink merely rolled his quid with his tongue and regarded me with sneering thoughtfulness. I am sure he was no more surprised than was I by the immediateness of what followed. My fist went out like an arrow from a released bow, and Tom Spink staggered back, tripped against the corner of the tarpaulin-covered sounding-machine, and sprawled on the deck. He tried to make a fight of it, but I followed him up, giving him no chance to set himself or recover from the surprise of my first onslaught.

Now it so happens that not since I was a boy have I struck a person with my naked fist, and I candidly admit that I enjoyed the trouncing I administered to poor Tom Spink. Yes, and in the rapid play about the deck I caught a glimpse of Margaret. She had stepped out of the shelter of the mast and was looking on from the corner of the chart-house. Yes, and more; she was looking on with a cool, measuring eye.

Oh, it was all very grotesque, to be sure. But then, mutiny on the high seas in the year nineteen-thirteen is also grotesque. No lists here between mailed knights for a lady's favour, but merely the trouncing of a chucklehead for spitting on the deck of a coal-carrier. Nevertheless, the fact that my lady looked on added zest to my enterprise, and, doubtlessly, speed and weight to my blows, and at least half a dozen additional clouts to the unlucky sailor.

Yes, man is strangely and wonderfully made. Now that I coolly consider the matter, I realize that it was essentially the same spirit with which I enjoyed beating up Tom Spink, that I have in the past enjoyed contests of the mind in which I have out-epigrammed clever opponents. In the one case, one proves himself top-dog of the mind; in the other, top-dog of the muscle. Whistler and Wilde were just as much intellectual bullies as I was a physical bully yesterday morning when I punched Tom Spink into lying down and staying down.

And my knuckles are sore and swollen. I cease writing for a moment to look at them and to hope that they will not stay permanently enlarged.

At any rate, Tom Spink took his disciplining and promised to come in and be good.

"Sir!" I thundered at him, quite in Mr. Pike's most bloodthirsty manner.

"Sir," he mumbled with bleeding lips. "Yes, sir, I'll mop it up, sir. Yes, sir."

I could scarcely keep from laughing in his face, the whole thing was so ludicrous; but I managed to look my haughtiest, and sternest, and fiercest, while I superintended the deck-cleansing. The funniest thing about the affair was that I must have knocked Tom Spink's quid down his throat, for he was gagging and hiccoughing all the time he mopped and scrubbed.

The atmosphere aft has been wonderfully clear ever since. Tom Spink obeys all orders on the jump, and Buckwheat jumps with equal celerity. As for the five Asiatics, I feel that they are stouter behind me now that I have shown masterfulness. By punching a man's face I verily believe I have doubled our united strength. And there is no need to punch any of the rest. The Asiatics are keen and willing. Henry is a true cadet of the breed, Buckwheat will follow Tom Spink's lead, and Tom Spink, a proper Anglo-Saxon peasant, will lead Buckwheat all the better by virtue of the punching.

* * * * *

Two days have passed, and two noteworthy things have happened. The men seem to be nearing the end of their mysterious food supply, and we have had our first truce.

I have noted, through the glasses, that no more carcasses of the mollyhawks they are now catching are thrown overboard. This means that they have begun to eat the tough and unsavoury creatures, although it does not mean, of course, that they have entirely exhausted their other stores.

It was Margaret, her sailor's eye on the falling barometer and on the "making" stuff adrift in the sky, who called my attention to a coming blow.

"As soon as the sea rises," she said, "we'll have that loose main-yard and all the rest of the top-hamper tumbling down on deck."

So it was that I raised the white flag for a parley. Bert Rhine and Charles Davis came abaft the 'midship-house, and, while we talked, many faces peered over the for'ard edge of the house and many forms slouched into view on the deck on each side of the house.

"Well, getting tired?" was Bert Rhine's insolent greeting. "Anything we can do for you?"

"Yes, there is," I answered sharply. "You can save your heads so that when you return to work there will be enough of you left to do the work."

"If you are making threats — " Charles Davis began, but was silenced by a glare from the gangster.

"Well, what is it?" Bert Rhine demanded. "Cough it off your chest."

"It's for your own good," was my reply. "It is coming on to blow, and all that unfurled canvas aloft will bring the yards down on your heads. We're safe here, aft. You are the ones who will run risks, and it is up to you to hustle your crowd aloft and make things fast and ship-shape."

"And if we don't?" the gangster sneered.

"Why, you'll take your chances, that is all," I answered carelessly. "I just want to call your attention to the fact that one of those steel yards, end-on, will go through the roof of your forecastle as if it were so much eggshell."

Bert Rhine looked to Charles Davis for verification, and the latter nodded.

"We'll talk it over first," the gangster announced.

"And I'll give you ten minutes," I returned. "If at the end of ten minutes you've not started taking in, it will be too late. I shall put a bullet into any man who shows himself."

"All right, we'll talk it over."

As they started to go back, I called:

"One moment."

They stopped and turned about.

"What have you done to Mr. Pike?" I asked.

Even the impassive Bert Rhine could not quite conceal his surprise.

"An' what have you done with Mr. Mellaire!" he retorted. "You tell us, an' we'll tell you."

I am confident of the genuineness of his surprise. Evidently the mutineers have been believing us guilty of the disappearance of the second mate, just as we have been believing them guilty of the disappearance of the first mate. The more I dwell upon it the more it seems the proposition of the Kilkenny cats, a case of mutual destruction on the part of the two mates.

"Another thing," I said quickly. "Where do you get your food?"

Bert Rhine laughed one of his silent laughs; Charles Davis assumed an expression of mysteriousness and superiority; and Shorty, leaping into view from the corner of the house, danced a jig of triumph.

I drew out my watch.

"Remember," I said, "you've ten minutes in which to make a start."

They turned and went for'ard, and, before the ten minutes were up, all hands were aloft and stowing canvas. All this time the wind, out of the north-west, was breezing up. The old familiar harp-chords of a rising gale were strumming along the rigging, and the men, I verily believe from lack of practice, were particularly slow at their work.

"It would be better if the upper-and-lower top-sails are set so that we can heave to," Margaret suggested. "They will steady her and make it more comfortable for us."

I seized the idea and improved upon it.

"Better set the upper and lower topsails so that we can handle the ship," I called to the gangster, who was ordering the men about, quite like a mate, from the top of the 'midship-house.

He considered the idea, and then gave the proper orders, although it was the Maltese Cockney, with Nancy and Sundry Buyers under him, who carried the orders out.

I ordered Tom Spink to the long-idle wheel, and gave him the course, which was due east by the steering compass. This put the wind on our port quarter, so that the *Elsinore* began to move through the water before a fair breeze. And due east, less than a thousand miles away, lay the coast of South America and the port of Valparaiso.

Strange to say, none of our mutineers objected to this, and after dark, as we tore along before a full-sized gale, I sent my own men up on top the chart-house to take the gaskets off the spanker. This was the only sail we could set and trim and in every way control. It is true the mizzen-braces were still rigged aft to the poop, according to Horn practice. But, while we could thus trim the mizzen-yards, the sails themselves, in setting or furling, were in the hands of the for'ard crowd.

Margaret, beside me in the darkness at the break of the poop, put her hand in mine with a warm pressure, as both our tiny watches swayed up the spanker and as both of us held our breaths in an effort to feel the added draw in the *Elsinore's* speed.

"I never wanted to marry a sailor," she said. "And I thought I was safe in the hands of a landsman like you. And yet here you are, with all the stuff of the sea in you, running down your easting for port. Next thing, I suppose, I'll see you out with a sextant, shooting the sun or making star-observations."

CHAPTER XLVI

Four more days have passed; the gale has blown itself out; we are not more than three hundred and fifty miles off Valparaiso; and the *Elsinore*, this time due to me and my own stubbornness, is rolling in the wind and heading nowhere in a light breeze at the rate of nothing but driftage per hour.

In the height of the gusts, in the three days and nights of the gale, we logged as much as eight, and even nine, knots. What bothered me was the acquiescence of the mutineers in my programme. They were sensible enough in the simple matter of geography to know what I was doing. They had control of the sails, and yet they permitted me to run for the South American coast.

More than that, as the gale eased on the morning of the third day, they actually went aloft, set top-gallant-sails, royals, and skysails, and trimmed the yards to the quartering breeze. This was too much for the Saxon streak in me, whereupon I wore the *Elsinore* about before the wind, fetched her up upon it, and lashed the wheel. Margaret and I are agreed in the hypothesis that their plan is to get inshore until land is sighted, at which time they will desert in the boats.

"But we don't want them to desert," she proclaims with flashing eyes. "We are bound for Seattle. They must return to duty. They've got to, soon, for they are beginning to starve."

"There isn't a navigator aft," I oppose.

Promptly she withers me with her scorn.

"You, a master of books, by all the sea-blood in your body should be able to pick up the theoretics of navigation while I snap my fingers. Furthermore, remember that I can supply the seamanship. Why, any squarehead peasant, in a six months' cramming course at any seaport navigation school, can pass the examiners for his navigator's papers. That means six hours for you. And less. If you can't, after an hour's reading and an hour's practice with the sextant, take a latitude observation and work it out, I'll do it for you."

"You mean you know?"

She shook her head.

"I mean, from the little I know, that I know I can learn to know a meridian sight and the working out of it. I mean that I can learn to know inside of two hours."

Strange to say, the gale, after easing to a mild breeze, recrudesced in a sort of after-clap. With sails untrimmed and flapping, the consequent smashing, crashing, and rending of our gear can be imagined. It brought out in alarm every man for'ard.

"Trim the yards!" I yelled at Bert Rhine, who, backed for counsel by Charles Davis and the Maltese Cockney, actually came directly beneath me on the main deck in order to hear above the commotion aloft.

"Keep a-runnin, an' you won't have to trim," the gangster shouted up to me.

"Want to make land, eh?" I girded down at him. "Getting hungry, eh? Well, you won't make land or anything else in a thousand years once you get all your top-hamper piled down on deck."

I have forgotten to state that this occurred at midday yesterday.

"What are you goin' to do if we trim?" Charles Davis broke in.

"Run off shore," I replied, "and get your gang out in deep sea where it will be starved back to duty."

"We'll furl, an' let you heave to," the gangster proposed.

I shook my head and held up my rifle. "You'll have to go aloft to do it, and the first man that gets into the shrouds will get this."

"Then she can go to hell for all we care," he said, with emphatic conclusiveness.

And just then the fore-topgallant-yard carried away — luckily as the bow was down-pitched into a trough of sea-and when the slow, confused, and tangled descent was accomplished the big stick lay across the wreck of both bulwarks and of that portion of the bridge between the foremast and the forecastle head.

Bert Rhine heard, but could not see, the damage wrought. He looked up at me challengingly, and sneered:

"Want some more to come down?"

It could not have happened more apropos. The port-brace, and immediately afterwards the starboard-brace, of the crojack-yard — carried away. This was the big, lowest spar on the mizzen, and as the huge thing of steel swung wildly back and forth the gangster and his followers turned and crouched as they looked up to see. Next, the gooseneck of the truss, on which it pivoted, smashed away. Immediately the lifts and lower-topsail sheets parted, and with a fore-and-aft pitch of the ship the spar up-ended and crashed to the deck upon Number Three hatch, destroying that section of the bridge in its fall.

All this was new to the gangster — as it was to me — but Charles Davis and the Maltese Cockney thoroughly apprehended the situation.

"Stand out from under!" I yelled sardonically; and the three of them cowered and shrank away as their eyes sought aloft for what new spar was thundering down upon them.

The lower-topsail, its sheets parted by the fall of the crojack-yard, was tearing out of the bolt-ropes and ribboning away to leeward and making such an uproar that they might well expect its yard to carry away. Since this wreckage of our beautiful gear was all new to me, I was quite prepared to see the thing happen.

The gangster-leader, no sailor, but, after months at sea, intelligent enough and nervously strong enough to appreciate the danger, turned his head and looked up at me. And I will do him the credit to say that he took his time while all our world of gear aloft seemed smashing to destruction.

"I guess we'll trim yards," he capitulated.

"Better get the skysails and royals off," Margaret said in my ear.

"While you're about it, get in the skysails and royals!" I shouted down. "And make a decent job of the gasketing!"

Both Charles Davis and the Maltese Cockney advertised their relief in their faces as they heard my words, and, at a nod from the gangster, they started for'ard on the run to put the orders into effect.

Never, in the whole voyage, did our crew spring to it in more lively fashion. And lively fashion was needed to save our gear. As it was, they cut away the remnants of the mizzen-lower-topsail with their sheath-knives, and they loosed the main-skysail out of its bolt-ropes.

The first infraction of our agreement was on the main-lower-topsail. This they attempted to furl. The carrying away of the crojack and the blowing away of the mizzen-lower-topsail gave me freedom to see and aim, and when the tiny messengers from my rifle began to spat through the canvas and to spat against the steel of the yard, the men strung along it desisted from passing the gaskets. I waved my will to Bert Rhine, who acknowledged me and ordered the sail set again and the yard trimmed.

"What is the use of running off-shore?" I said to Margaret, when the kites were snugged down and all yards trimmed on the wind. "Three hundred and fifty miles off the land is as good as thirty-five hundred so far as starvation is concerned."

So, instead of making speed through the water toward deep sea, I hove the *Elsinore* to on the starboard tack with no more than leeway driftage to the west and south.

But our gallant mutineers had their will of us that very night. In the darkness we could hear the work aloft going on as yards were run down, sheets let go, and sails dewed up and gasketed. I did try a few random shots, and all my reward was to hear the whine and creak of ropes through sheaves and to receive an equally random fire of revolver-shots.

It is a most curious situation. We of the high place are masters of the steering of the *Elsinore*, while those for'ard are masters of the motor power. The only sail that is wholly ours is the spanker. They control absolutely — sheets, halyards, clewlines, buntlines, braces, and down-hauls — every sail on the fore and main. We control the braces on the mizzen, although they control the canvas on the mizzen. For that matter, Margaret and I fail to comprehend why they do not go aloft any dark night and sever the mizzen-braces at the yard-ends. All that prevents this, we are decided, is laziness. For if they did sever the braces that lead aft into our hands, they would be compelled to rig new braces for'ard in some fashion, else, in the rolling, would the mizzenmast be stripped of every spar.

And still the mutiny we are enduring is ridiculous and grotesque. There was never a mutiny like it. It violates all standards and precedents. In the old classic mutinies, long ere this, attacking like tigers, the seamen should have swarmed over the poop and killed most of us or been most of them killed.

Wherefore I sneer at our gallant mutineers, and recommend trained nurses for them, quite in the manner of Mr. Pike. But Margaret shakes her head and insists that human nature is human nature, and that under similar circumstances human nature will express itself similarly. In short, she points to the number of deaths that have already occurred, and declares that on some dark night, sooner or later, whenever the pinch of hunger sufficiently sharpens, we shall see our rascals storming aft.

And in the meantime, except for the tenseness of it, and for the incessant watchfulness which Margaret and I alone maintain, it is more like a mild adventure, more like a page out of some book of romance which ends happily.

It is surely romance, watch and watch for a man and a woman who love, to relieve each other's watches. Each such relief is a love passage and unforgettable. Never was there wooing like it — the muttered surmises of wind and weather, the whispered councils, the kissed commands in palms of hands, the dared contacts of the dark.

Oh, truly, I have often, since this voyage began, told the books to go hang. And yet the books are at the back of the race-life of me. I am what I am out of ten thousand generations of my kind. Of that there is no discussion. And yet my midnight philosophy stands the test of my breed. I must have selected my books out of the ten thousand generations that compose me. I have killed a man — Steve Roberts. As a perishing blond without an alphabet I should have done this unwaveringly. As a perishing blond with an alphabet, plus the contents in my brain of the philosophizing of all philosophers, I have killed this same man with the same unwaveringness. Culture has not emasculated me. I am quite unaffected. It was in the day's work, and my kind have always been day-workers, doing the day's work, whatever it might be, in high adventure or dull ploddingness, and always doing it.

Never would I ask to set back the dial of time or event. I would kill Steve Roberts again, under the same circumstances, as a matter of course. When I say I am unaffected by this happening I do not quite mean it. I am affected. I am aware that the spirit of me is informed with a sober elation of efficiency. I have done something that had to be done, as any man will do what has to be done in the course of the day's work.

Yes, I am a perishing blond, and a man, and I sit in the high place and bend the stupid ones to my will; and I am a lover, loving a royal woman of my own perishing breed, and together we occupy, and shall occupy, the high place of government and command until our kind perish from the earth.

CHAPTER XLVII

Margaret was right. The mutiny is not violating standards and precedents. We have had our hands full for days and nights. Ditman Olansen, the crank-eyed Berserker, has been killed by Wada, and the training-ship boy, the one lone cadet of our breed, has gone overside with the regulation sack of coal at his feet. The poop has been rushed. My illuminating invention has proved a success. The men are getting hungry, and we still sit in command in the high place.

First of all the attack on the poop, two nights ago, in Margaret's watch. No; first, I have made another invention. Assisted by the old steward, who knows, as a Chinese ought, a deal about fireworks, and getting my materials from our signal rockets and Roman candles, I manufactured half a dozen bombs. I don't really think they are very deadly, and I know our extemporized fuses are slower than our voyage is at the present time; but nevertheless the bombs have served the purpose, as you shall see.

And now to the attempt to rush the poop. It was in Margaret's watch, from midnight till four in the morning, when the attack was made. Sleeping on the deck by the cabin skylight, I was very close to her when her revolver went off, and continued to go off.

My first spring was to the tripping-lines on my illuminators. The igniting and releasing devices worked cleverly. I pulled two of the tripping-lines, and two of the contraptions exploded into light and noise and at the same time ran automatically down the jigger-trysail-stays, and automatically fetched up at the ends of their lines. The illumination was instantaneous and gorgeous. Henry, the two sail-makers, and the steward — at least three of them awakened from sound sleep, I am sure — ran to join us along the break of the poop. All the advantage lay with us, for we were in the dark, while our foes were outlined against the light behind them.

But such light! The powder crackled, fizzed, and spluttered and spilled out the excess of gasolene from the flaming oakum balls so that streams of fire dripped down on the main deck beneath. And the stuff of the signal-flares dripped red light and blue and green.

There was not much of a fight, for the mutineers were shocked by our fireworks. Margaret fired her revolver haphazardly, while I held my rifle for any that gained the poop. But the attack faded away as quickly as it had come. I did see Margaret overshoot some man, scaling the poop from the port-rail, and the next moment I saw Wada, charging like a buffalo, jab him in the chest with the spear he had made and thrust the boarder back and down.

That was all. The rest retreated for’ard on the dead run, while the three trysails, furled at the foot of the stays next to the mizzen and set on fire by the dripping gasolene, went up in flame and burned entirely away and out without setting the rest of the ship on fire. That is one of the virtues of a ship steel-masted and steel-stayed.

And on the deck beneath us, crumpled, twisted, face hidden so that we could not identify him, lay the man whom Wada had speared.

And now I come to a phase of adventure that is new to me. I have never found it in the books. In short, it is carelessness coupled with laziness, or vice versa. I had used two of my illuminators. Only one remained. An hour later, convinced of the movement aft of men along the deck, I let go the third and last and with its brightness sent them scurrying for’ard. Whether they were attacking the poop tentatively to learn whether or not I had exhausted my illuminators, or whether or not they were trying to rescue Ditman Olansen, we shall never know. The point is: they did come aft; they were compelled to retreat by my illuminator; and it was my last illuminator. And yet I did not start in, there and then, to manufacture fresh ones. This was carelessness. It was laziness. And I hazarded our lives, perhaps, if you please, on a psychological guess that I had convinced our mutineers that we had an inexhaustible stock of illuminators in reserve.

The rest of Margaret’s watch, which I shared with her, was undisturbed. At four I insisted that she go below and turn in, but she compromised by taking my own bed behind the skylight.

At break of day I was able to make out the body, still lying as last I had seen it. At seven o’clock, before breakfast, and while Margaret still slept, I sent the two boys, Henry and Buckwheat, down to the body. I stood above them, at the rail, rifle in hand and ready. But from for’ard came no signs of life; and the lads, between them, rolled the crank-eyed Norwegian over so that we could recognize him, carried him to the rail, and shoved him stiffly across and into the sea. Wada’s spear-thrust had gone clear through him.

But before twenty-four hours were up the mutineers evened the score handsomely. They more than evened it, for we are so few that we cannot so well afford the loss of one as they can. To begin with — and a thing I had anticipated and for which I had prepared my bombs — while Margaret and I ate a deck-breakfast in the shelter of the jiggermast a number of the men sneaked aft and got under the overhang of the poop. Buckwheat saw them coming and yelled the alarm, but it was too late. There was no direct way to get them out. The moment I put my head over the rail to fire at them, I knew they would fire up at me with all the advantage in their favour. They were hidden. I had to expose myself.

Two steel doors, tight-fastened and caulked against the Cape Horn seas, opened under the overhang of the poop from the cabin on to the main deck. These doors the men proceeded to attack with sledge-hammers, while the rest of the gang, sheltered by the ’midship-house, showed that it stood ready for the rush when the doors were battered down.

Inside, the steward guarded one door with his hacking knife, while with his spear Wada guarded the other door. Nor, while I had dispatched them to this duty, was I idle. Behind the jiggermast I lighted the fuse of one of my extemporized bombs. When it was sputtering nicely I ran across the poop to the break and dropped the bomb to the main deck beneath, at the same time making an effort to toss it in under the overhang where the men battered at the port-door. But this effort was distracted and made futile by a popping of several revolver shots from the gangways amidships. One *is* jumpy when soft-nosed bullets putt-putt around him. As a result, the bomb rolled about on the open deck.

Nevertheless, the illuminators had earned the respect of the mutineers for my fireworks. The sputtering and fizzling of the fuse were too much for them, and from under the poop they ran for’ard like so many scuttling rabbits. I know I could have got a couple with my rifle had I not been occupied with lighting the fuse of a second bomb. Margaret managed three wild shots with her revolver, and the poop was immediately peppered by a scattering revolver fire from for’ard.

Being provident (and lazy, for I have learned that it takes time and labour to manufacture home-made bombs), I pinched off the live end of the fuse in my hand. But the fuse of the first bomb, rolling about on the main deck, merely fizzled on; and as I waited I resolved to shorten my remaining fuses. Any of the men who fled, had he had the courage, could have pinched off the fuse, or tossed the bomb overboard, or, better yet, he could have tossed it up amongst us on the poop.

It took fully five minutes for that blessed fuse to burn its slow length, and when the bomb did go off it was a sad disappointment. I swear it could have been sat upon with nothing more than a jar to one's nerves. And yet, in so far as the intimidation goes, it did its work. The men have not since ventured under the overhang of the poop.

That the mutineers were getting short of food was patent. The *Elsinore*, sailless, drifted about that morning, the sport of wind and wave; and the gang put many lines overboard for the catching of mollyhawks and albatrosses. Oh, I worried the hungry fishers with my rifle. No man could show himself for'ard without having a bullet whop against the iron-work perilously near him. And still they caught birds — not, however, without danger to themselves, and not without numerous losses of birds due to my rifle.

Their procedure was to toss their hooks and bait over the rail from shelter and slowly to pay the lines out as the slight windage of the *Elsinore's* hull, spars, and rigging drifted her through the water. When a bird was hooked they hauled in the line, still from shelter, till it was alongside. This was the ticklish moment. The hook, merely a hollow and acute-angled triangle of sheet-copper floating on a piece of board at the end of the line, held the bird by pinching its curved beak into the acute angle. The moment the line slacked the bird was released. So, when alongside, this was the problem: to lift the bird out of the water, straight up the side of the ship, without once jamming and easing and slacking. When they tried to do this from shelter invariably they lost the bird.

They worked out a method. When the bird was alongside the several men with revolvers turned loose on me, while one man, overhauling and keeping the line taut, leaped to the rail and quickly hove the bird up and over and inboard. I know this long-distance revolver fire seriously bothered me. One cannot help jumping when death, in the form of a piece of flying lead, hits the rail beside him, or the mast over his head, or whines away in a ricochet from the steel shrouds. Nevertheless, I managed with my rifle to bother the exposed men on the rail to the extent that they lost one hooked bird out of two. And twenty-six men require a quantity of albatrosses and mollyhawks every twenty-four hours, while they can fish only in the daylight.

As the day wore along I improved on my obstructive tactics. When the *Elsinore* was up in the eye of the wind, and making sternway, I found that by putting the wheel sharply over, one way or the other, I could swing her bow off. Then, when she had paid off till the wind was abeam, by reversing the wheel hard across to the opposite hard-over I could take advantage of her momentum away from the wind and work her off squarely before it. This made all the wood-floated triangles of bird-snares tow aft along her sides.

The first time I was ready for them. With hooks and sinkers on our own lines aft, we tossed out, grappled, captured, and broke off nine of their lines. But the next time, so slow is the movement of so large a ship, the mutineers hauled all their lines safely inboard ere they towed aft within striking distance of my grapnels.

Still I improved. As long as I kept the *Elsinore* before the wind they could not fish. I experimented. Once before it, by means of a winged-out spanker coupled with patient and careful steering, I could keep her before it. This I did, hour by hour one of my men relieving another at the wheel. As a result all fishing ceased.

Margaret was holding the first dog-watch, four to six. Henry was at the wheel steering. Wada and Louis were below cooking the evening meal over the big coal-stove and the oil-burners. I had just come up from below and was standing beside the sounding-machine, not half a dozen feet from Henry at the wheel. Some obscure sound from the ventilator must have attracted me, for I was gazing at it when the thing happened.

But first, the ventilator. This is a steel shaft that leads up from the coal-carrying bowels of the ship beneath the lazarette and that wins to the outside-world via the after-wall of the chart-house. In fact, it occupies the hollow inside of the double walls of the afterwall of the chart-house. Its opening, at the height of a man’s head, is screened with iron bars so closely set that no mature-bodied rat can squeeze between. Also, this opening commands the wheel, which is a scant fifteen feet away and directly across the booby-hatch. Some mutineer, crawling along the space between the coal and the deck of the lower hold, had climbed the ventilator shaft and was able to take aim through the slits between the bars.

Practically simultaneously, I saw the out-rush of smoke and heard the report. I heard a grunt from Henry, and, turning my head, saw him cling to the spokes and turn the wheel half a revolution as he sank to the deck. It must have been a lucky shot. The boy was perforated through the heart or very near to the heart — we have no time for post-mortems on the *Elsinore*.

Tom Spink and the second sail-maker, Uchino, sprang to Henry’s side. The revolver continued to go off through the ventilator slits, and the bullets thudded into the front of the half wheel-house all about them. Fortunately they were not hit, and they immediately scrambled out of range. The boy quivered for the space of a few seconds, and ceased to move; and one more cadet of the perishing breed perished as he did his day’s work at the wheel of the *Elsinore* off the west coast of South America, bound from Baltimore to Seattle with a cargo of coal.

CHAPTER XLVIII

The situation is hopelessly grotesque. We in the high place command the food of the *Elsinore*, but the mutineers have captured her steering-gear. That is to say, they have captured it without coming into possession of it. They cannot steer, neither can we. The poop, which is the high place, is ours. The wheel is on the poop, yet we cannot touch the wheel. From that slitted opening in the ventilator-shaft they are able to shoot down any man who approaches the wheel. And with that steel wall of the chart-house as a shield they laugh at us as from a conning tower.

I have a plan, but it is not worth while putting into execution unless its need becomes imperative. In the darkness of night it would be an easy trick to disconnect the steering-gear from the short tiller on the rudder-head, and then, by re-rigging the preventer tackles, steer from both sides of the poop well enough for'ard to be out of the range of the ventilator.

In the meantime, in this fine weather, the *Elsinore* drifts as she lists, or as the windage of her lists and the sea-movement of waves lists. And she can well drift. Let the mutineers starve. They can best be brought to their senses through their stomachs.

* * * * *

And what are wits for, if not for use? I am breaking the men's hungry hearts. It is great fun in its way. The mollyhawks and albatrosses, after their fashion, have followed the *Elsinore* up out of their own latitudes. This means that there are only so many of them and that their numbers are not recruited. Syllogism: major premise, a definite and limited amount of bird-meat; minor premise, the only food the mutineers now have is bird-meat; conclusion, destroy the available food and the mutineers will be compelled to come back to duty.

I have acted on this bit of logic. I began experimentally by tossing small chunks of fat pork and crusts of stale bread overside. When the birds descended for the feast I shot them. Every carcass thus left floating on the surface of the sea was so much less meat for the mutineers.

But I bettered the method. Yesterday I overhauled the medicine-chest, and I dosed my chunks of fat pork and bread with the contents of every bottle that bore a label of skull and cross-bones. I even added rough-on-rats to the deadliness of the mixture — this on the suggestion of the steward.

And to-day, behold, there is no bird left in the sky. True, while I played my game yesterday, the mutineers hooked a few of the birds; but now the rest are gone, and that is bound to be the last food for the men for'ard until they resume duty.

Yes; it is grotesque. It is a boy's game. It reads like Midshipman Easy, like Frank Mildmay, like Frank Reade, Jr.; and yet, i' faith, life and death's in the issue. I have just gone over the toll of our dead since the voyage began.

First, was Christian Jespersen, killed by O'Sullivan when that maniac aspired to throw overboard Andy Fay's sea-boots; then O'Sullivan, because he interfered with Charles Davis' sleep, brained by that worthy with a steel marlin-spike; next Petro Marinkovich, just ere we began the passage of the Horn, murdered undoubtedly by the gangster clique, his life cut out of him with knives, his carcass left lying on deck to be found by us and be buried by us; and the Samurai, Captain West, a sudden though not a violent death, albeit occurring in the midst of all elemental violence as Mr. Pike clawed the *Elsinore* off the lee-shore of the Horn; and Boney the Splinter, following, washed overboard to drown as we cleared the sea-gashing rock-tooth where the southern tip of the continent bit into the storm-wrath of the Antarctic; and the big-footed, clumsy youth of a Finnish carpenter, hove overside as a Jonah by his fellows who believed that Finns control the winds; and Mike Cipriani and Bill Quigley, Rome and Ireland, shot down on the poop and flung overboard alive by Mr. Pike, still alive and clinging to the log-line, cut adrift by the steward to be eaten alive by great-beaked albatrosses, mollyhawks, and sooty-plumaged Cape hens; Steve Roberts, one-time cowboy, shot by me as he tried to shoot me; Herman Lunkenheimer, his throat cut before all of us by the hound Bombini as Kid Twist stretched the throat taut from behind; the two mates, Mr. Pike and Mr. Mellaire, mutually destroying each other in what must have been an unwitnessed epic combat; Ditman Olansen, speared by Wada as he charged Berserk at the head of the mutineers in the attempt to rush the poop; and last, Henry, the cadet of the perishing house, shot at the wheel, from the ventilator-shaft, in the course of his day's work.

No; as I contemplate this roll-call of the dead which I have just made I see that we are not playing a boy's game. Why, we have lost a third of us, and the bloodiest battles of history have rarely achieved such a percentage of mortality. Fourteen of us have gone overside, and who can tell the end?

Nevertheless, here we are, masters of matter, adventurers in the micro-organic, planet-weighers, sun-analysers, star-rovers, god-dreamers, equipped with the human wisdom of all the ages, and yet, quoting Mr. Pike, to come down to brass tacks, we are a lot of primitive beasts, fighting bestially, slaying bestially, pursuing bestially food and water, air for our lungs, a dry space above the deep, and carcasses skin-covered and intact. And over this menagerie of beasts Margaret and I, with our Asiatics under us, rule top-dog. We are all dogs — there is no getting away from it. And we, the fair-pigmented ones, by the seed of our ancestry rulers in the high place, shall remain top-dog over the rest of the dogs. Oh, there is material in plenty for the cogitation of any philosopher on a windjammer in mutiny in this Year of our Lord 1913.

* * * * *

Henry was the fourteenth of us to go overside into the dark and salty disintegration of the sea. And in one day he has been well avenged; for two of the mutineers have followed him. The steward called my attention to what was taking place. He touched my arm half beyond his servant's self, as he gloated for'ard at the men heaving two corpses overside. Weighted with coal, they sank immediately, so that we could not identify them.

"They have been fighting," I said. "It is good that they should fight among themselves."

But the old Chinese merely grinned and shook his head.

"You don't think they have been fighting?" I queried.

"No fight. They eat'm mollyhawk and albatross; mollyhawk and albatross eat'm fat pork; two men he die, plenty men much sick, you bet, damn to hell me very much glad. I savve."

And I think he was right. While I was busy baiting the sea-birds the mutineers were catching them, and of a surety they must have caught some that had eaten of my various poisons.

The two poisoned ones went over the side yesterday. Since then we have taken the census. Two men only have not appeared, and they are Bob, the fat and overgrown feebling youth, and, of all creatures, the Faun. It seems my fate that I had to destroy the Faun — the poor, tortured Faun, always willing and eager, ever desirous to please. There is a madness of ill luck in all this. Why couldn't the two dead men have been Charles Davis and Tony the Greek? Or Bert Rhine and Kid Twist? or Bombini and Andy Fay? Yes, and in my heart I know I should have felt better had it been Isaac Chantz and Arthur Deacon, or Nancy and Sundry Buyers, or Shorty and Larry.

* * * * *

The steward has just tendered me a respectful bit of advice.

"Next time we chuck'm overboard like Henry, much better we use old iron."

"Getting short of coal?" I asked.

He nodded affirmation. We use a great deal of coal in our cooking, and when the present supply gives out we shall have to cut through a bulkhead to get at the cargo.

CHAPTER XLIX

The situation grows tense. There are no more sea-birds, and the mutineers are starving. Yesterday I talked with Bert Rhine. To-day I talked with him again, and he will never forget, I am certain, the little talk we had this morning.

To begin with, last evening, at five o'clock, I heard his voice issuing from between the slits of the ventilator in the after-wall of the chart-house. Standing at the corner of the house, quite out of range, I answered him.

"Getting hungry?" I jeered. "Let me tell you what we are going to have for dinner. I have just been down and seen the preparations. Now, listen: first, caviare on toast; then, clam bouillon; and creamed lobster; and tinned lamb chops with French peas — you know, the peas that melt in one's mouth; and California asparagus with mayonnaise; and — oh, I forgot to mention fried potatoes and cold pork and beans; and peach pie; and coffee, real coffee. Doesn't it make you hungry for your East Side? And, say, think of the free lunch going to waste right now in a thousand saloons in good old New York."

I had told him the truth. The dinner I described (principally coming out of tins and bottles, to be sure) was the dinner we were to eat.

"Cut that," he snarled. "I want to talk business with *you*."

"Right down to brass tacks," I gibed. "Very well, when are you and the rest of your rats going to turn to?"

"Cut that," he reiterated. "I've got you where 1 want you now. Take it from me, I'm givin' it straight. I'm not tellin' you how, but I've got you under my thumb. When I come down on you, you'll crack."

"Hell is full of cocksure rats like you," I retorted; although I never dreamed how soon he would be writhing in the particular hell preparing for him.

"Forget it," he sneered back. "I've got you where I want you. I'm just tellin' you, that's all."

"Pardon me," I replied, "when I tell you that I'm from Missouri. You'll have to show *me*."

And as I thus talked the thought went through my mind of how I naturally sought out the phrases of his own vocabulary in order to make myself intelligible to him. The situation was bestial, with sixteen of our complement already gone into the dark; and the terms I employed, perforce, were terms of bestiality. And I thought, also, of I who was thus compelled to dismiss the dreams of the utopians, the visions of the poets, the king-thoughts of the king-thinkers, in a discussion with this ripened product of the New York City inferno. To him I must talk in the elemental terms of life and death, of food and water, of brutality and cruelty.

"I give you your choice," he went on. "Give in now, an' you won't be hurt, none of you."

"And if we don't?" I dared airily.

"You'll be sorry you was ever born. You ain't a mush-head, you've got a girl there that's stuck on you. It's about time you think of her. You ain't altogether a mutt. You get my drive?"

Ay, I did get it; and somehow, across my brain flashed a vision of all I had ever read and heard of the siege of the Legations at Peking, and of the plans of the white men for their womenkind in the event of the yellow hordes breaking through the last lines of defence. Ay, and the old steward got it; for I saw his black eyes glint murderously in their narrow, tilted slits. He knew the drift of the gangster's meaning.

"You get my drive?" the gangster repeated.

And I knew anger. Not ordinary anger, but cold anger. And I caught a vision of the high place in which we had sat and ruled down the ages in all lands, on all seas. I saw my kind, our women with us, in forlorn hopes and lost endeavours, pent in hill fortresses, rotted in jungle fastnesses, cut down to the last one on the decks of rocking ships. And always, our women with us, had we ruled the beasts. We might die, our women with us; but, living, we had ruled. It was a royal vision I glimpsed. Ay, and in the purple of it I grasped the ethic, which was the stuff of the fabric of which it was builded. It was the sacred trust of the seed, the bequest of duty handed down from all ancestors.

And I flamed more coldly. It was not red-brute anger. It was intellectual. It was based on concept and history; it was the philosophy of action of the strong and the pride of the strong in their own strength. Now at last I knew Nietzsche. I knew the rightness of the books, the relation of high thinking to high-conduct, the transmutation of midnight thought into action in the high place on the poop of a coal-carrier in the year nineteen-thirteen, my woman beside me, my ancestors behind me, my slant-eyed servitors under me, the beasts beneath me and beneath the heel of me. God! I felt kingly. I knew at last the meaning of kingship.

My anger was white and cold. This subterranean rat of a miserable human, crawling through the bowels of the ship to threaten me and mine! A rat in the shelter of a knot-hole making a noise as beast-like as any rat ever made! And it was in this spirit that I answered the gangster.

“When you crawl on your belly, along the open deck, in the broad light of day, like a yellow cur that has been licked to obedience, and when you show by your every action that you like it and are glad to do it, then, and not until then, will I talk with you.”

Thereafter, for the next ten minutes, he shouted all the Billingsgate of his kind at me through the slits in the ventilator. But I made no reply. I listened, and I listened coldly, and as I listened I knew why the English had blown their mutinous Sepoys from the mouths of cannon in India long years ago.

* * * * *

And when, this morning, I saw the steward struggling with a five-gallon carboy of sulphuric acid, I never dreamed the use he intended for it.

In the meantime I was devising another way to overcome that deadly ventilator shaft. The scheme was so simple that I was shamed in that it had not occurred to me at the very beginning. The slitted opening was small. Two sacks of flour, in a wooden frame, suspended by ropes from the edge of the chart-house roof directly above, would effectually cover the opening and block all revolver fire.

No sooner thought than done. Tom Spink and Louis were on top the chart-house with me and preparing to lower the flour, when we heard a voice issuing from the shaft.

“Who’s in there now?” I demanded. “Speak up.”

“I’m givin’ you a last chance,” Bert Rhine answered.

And just then, around the corner of the house, stepped the steward. In his hand he carried a large galvanized pail, and my casual thought was that he had come to get rain-water from the barrels. Even as I thought it, he made a sweeping half-circle with the pail and sloshed its contents into the ventilator-opening. And even as the liquid flew through the air I knew it for what it was — undiluted sulphuric acid, two gallons of it from the carboy.

The gangster must have received the liquid fire in the face and eyes. And, in the shock of pain, he must have released all holds and fallen upon the coal at the bottom of the shaft. His cries and shrieks of anguish were terrible, and I was reminded of the starving rats which had squealed up that same shaft during the first months of the voyage. The thing was sickening. I prefer that men be killed cleanly and easily.

The agony of the wretch I did not fully realize until the steward, his bare fore-arms sprayed by the splash from the ventilator slats, suddenly felt the bite of the acid through his tight, whole skin and made a mad rush for the water-barrel at the corner of the house. And Bert Rhine, the silent man of soundless laughter, screaming below there on the coal, was enduring the bite of the acid in his eyes!

We covered the ventilator opening with our flour-device; the screams from below ceased as the victim was evidently dragged for'ard across the coal by his mates; and yet I confess to a miserable forenoon. As Carlyle has said: "Death is easy; all men must die"; but to receive two gallons of full-strength sulphuric acid full in the face is a vastly different and vastly more horrible thing than merely to die. Fortunately, Margaret was below at the time, and, after a few minutes, in which I recovered my balance, I bullied and swore all our hands into keeping the happening from her.

* * * * *

Oh, well, and we have got ours in retaliation. Off and on, through all of yesterday, after the ventilator tragedy, there were noises beneath the cabin floor or deck. We heard them under the dining-table, under the steward's pantry, under Margaret's stateroom.

This deck is overlaid with wood, but under the wood is iron, or steel rather, such as of which the whole *Elsinore* is builded.

Margaret and I, followed by Louis, Wada, and the steward, walked about from place to place, wherever the sounds arose of tappings and of cold-chisels against iron. The tappings seemed to come from everywhere; but we concluded that the concentration necessary on any spot to make an opening large enough for a man's body would inevitably draw our attention to that spot. And, as Margaret said:

"If they do manage to cut through, they must come up head-first, and, in such emergence, what chance would they have against us?"

So I relieved Buckwheat from deck duty, placed him on watch over the cabin floor, to be relieved by the steward in Margaret's watches.

In the late afternoon, after prodigious hammerings and clangings in a score of places, all noises ceased. Neither in the first and second dog-watches, nor in the first watch of the night, were the noises resumed. When I took charge of the poop at midnight Buckwheat relieved the steward in the vigil over the cabin floor; and as I leaned on the rail at the break of the poop, while my four hours dragged slowly by, least of all did I apprehend danger from the cabin — especially when I considered the two-gallon pail of raw sulphuric acid ready to hand for the first head that might arise through an opening in the floor not yet made. Our rascals for'ard might scale the poop; or cross aloft from mizzenmast to jigger and descend upon our heads; but how they could invade us through the floor was beyond me.

But they did invade. A modern ship is a complex affair. How was I to guess the manner of the invasion?

It was two in the morning, and for an hour I had been puzzling my head with watching the smoke arise from the after-division of the for'ard-house and with wondering why the mutineers should have up steam in the donkey-engine at such an ungodly hour. Not on the whole voyage had the donkey-engine been used. Four bells had just struck, and I was leaning on the rail at the break of the poop when I heard a prodigious coughing and choking from aft. Next, Wada ran across the deck to me.

"Big trouble with Buckwheat," he blurted at me. "You go quick."

I shoved him my rifle and left him on guard while I raced around the chart-house. A lighted match, in the hands of Tom Spink, directed me. Between the booby-hatch and the wheel, sitting up and rocking back and forth with wringings of hands and wavings of arms, tears of agony bursting from his eyes, was Buckwheat. My first thought was that in some stupid way he had got the acid into his own eyes. But the terrible fashion in which he coughed and strangled would quickly have undeceived me, had not Louis, bending over the booby-companion, uttered a startled exclamation.

I joined him, and one whiff of the air that came up from below made me catch my breath and gasp. I had inhaled sulphur. On the instant I forgot the *Elsinore*, the mutineers for'ard, everything save one thing.

The next I know, I was down the booby-ladder and reeling dizzily about the big after-room as the sulphur fumes bit my lungs and strangled me. By the dim light of a sea-lantern I saw the old steward, on hands and knees, coughing and gasping, the while he shook awake Yatsuda, the first sail-maker. Uchino, the second sail-maker, still strangled in his sleep.

It struck me that the air might be better nearer the floor, and I proved it when I dropped on my hands and knees. I rolled Uchino out of his blankets with a quick jerk, wrapped the blankets about my head, face, and mouth, arose to my feet, and dashed for’ard into the hall. After a couple of collisions with the wood-work I again dropped to the floor and rearranged the blankets so that, while my mouth remained covered, I could draw or withdraw, a thickness across my eyes.

The pain of the fumes was bad enough, but the real hardship was the dizziness I suffered. I blundered into the steward’s pantry, and out of it, missed the cross-hall, stumbled through the next starboard opening in the long hall, and found myself bent double by violent collision with the dining-room table.

But I had my bearings. Feeling my way around the table and bumping most of the poisoned breath out of me against the rotund-bellied stove, I emerged in the cross-hall and made my way to starboard. Here, at the base of the chart-room stairway, I gained the hall that led aft. By this time my own situation seemed so serious that, careless of any collision, I went aft in long leaps.

Margaret’s door was open. I plunged into her room. The moment I drew the blanket-thickness from my eyes I knew blindness and a modicum of what Bert Rhine must have suffered. Oh, the intolerable bite of the sulphur in my lungs, nostrils, eyes, and brain! No light burned in the room. I could only strangle and stumble for’ard to Margaret’s bed, upon which I collapsed.

She was not there. I felt about, and I felt only the warm hollow her body had left in the under-sheet. Even in my agony and helplessness the intimacy of that warmth her body had left was very dear to me. Between the lack of oxygen in my lungs (due to the blankets), the pain of the sulphur, and the mortal dizziness in my brain, I felt that I might well cease there where the linen warmed my hand.

Perhaps I should have ceased, had I not heard a terrible coughing from along the hall. It was new life to me. I fell from bed to floor and managed to get upright until I gained the hall, where again I fell. Thereafter I crawled on hands and knees to the foot of the stairway. By means of the newel-post I drew myself upright and listened. Near me something moved and strangled. I fell upon it and found in my arms all the softness of Margaret.

How describe that battle up the stairway? It was a crucifixion of struggle, an age-long nightmare of agony. Time after time, as my consciousness blurred, the temptation was upon me to cease all effort and let myself blur down into the ultimate dark. I fought my way step by step. Margaret was now quite unconscious, and I lifted her body step by step, or dragged it several steps at a time, and fell with it, and back with it, and lost much that had been so hardly gained. And yet out of it all this I remember: that warm soft body of hers was the dearest thing in the world — vastly more dear than the pleasant land I remotely remembered, than all the books and all the humans I had ever known, than the deck above, with its sweet pure air softly blowing under the cool starry sky.

As I look back upon it I am aware of one thing: the thought of leaving her there and saving myself never crossed my mind. The one place for me was where she was.

Truly, this which I write seems absurd and purple; yet it was not absurd during those long minutes on the chart-room stairway. One must taste death for a few centuries of such agony ere he can receive sanction for purple passages.

And as I fought my screaming flesh, my reeling brain, and climbed that upward way, I prayed one prayer: that the chart-house doors out upon the poop might not be shut. Life and death lay right there in that one point of the issue. Was there any creature of my creatures aft with common sense and anticipation sufficient to make him think to open those doors? How I yearned for one man, for one proved henchman, such as Mr. Pike, to be on the poop! As it was, with the sole exception of Tom Spink and Buckwheat, my men were Asiatics.

I gained the top of the stairway, but was too far gone to rise to my feet. Nor could I rise upright on my knees. I crawled like any four-legged animal — nay, I wormed my way like a snake, prone to the deck. It was a matter of several feet to the doorway. I died a score of times in those several feet; but ever I endured the agony of resurrection and dragged Margaret with me. Sometimes the full strength I could exert did not move her, and I lay with her and coughed and strangled my way through to another resurrection.

And the door was open. The doors to starboard and to port were both open; and as the *Elsinore* rolled a draught through the chart-house hall my lungs filled with pure, cool air. As I drew myself across the high threshold and pulled Margaret after me, from very far away I heard the cries of men and the reports of rifle and revolver. And, ere I fainted into the blackness, on my side, staring, my pain gone so beyond endurance that it had achieved its own anæsthesia, I glimpsed, dream-like and distant, the sharply silhouetted poop-rail, dark forms that cut and thrust and smote, and, beyond, the mizzen-mast brightly lighted by our illuminators.

* * * * *

Well, the mutineers failed to take the poop. My five Asiatics and two white men had held the citadel while Margaret and I lay unconscious side by side.

The whole affair was very simple. Modern maritime quarantine demands that ships shall not carry vermin that are themselves plague-carriers. In the donkey-engine section of the for'ard house is a complete fumigating apparatus. The mutineers had merely to lay and fasten the pipes aft across the coal, to chisel a hole through the double-deck of steel and wood under the cabin, and to connect up and begin to pump. Buckwheat had fallen asleep and been awakened by the strangling sulphur fumes. We in the high place had been smoked out by our rascals like so many rats.

It was Wada who had opened one of the doors. The old steward had opened the other. Together they had attempted the descent of the stairway and been driven back by the fumes. Then they had engaged in the struggle to repel the rush from for'ard.

Margaret and I are agreed that sulphur, excessively inhaled, leaves the lungs sore. Only now, after a lapse of a dozen hours, can we draw breath in anything that resembles comfort. But still my lungs were not so sore as to prevent my telling her what I had learned she meant to me. And yet she is only a woman — I tell her so; I tell her that there are at least seven hundred and fifty millions of two-legged, long-haired, gentle-voiced, soft-bodied, female humans like her on the planet, and that she is really swamped by the immensity of numbers of her sex and kind. But I tell her something more. I tell her that of all of them she is the only one. And, better yet, to myself and for myself, I believe it. I know it. The last least part of me and all of me proclaims it.

Love *is* wonderful. It is the everlasting and miraculous amazement. Oh, trust me, I know the old, hard scientific method of weighing and calculating and classifying love. It is a profound foolishness, a cosmic trick and quip, to the contemplative eye of the philosopher — yes, and of the futurist. But when one forsakes such intellectual flesh-pots and becomes mere human and male human, in short, a lover, then all he may do, and which is what he cannot help doing, is to yield to the compulsions of being and throw both his arms around love and hold it closer to him than is his own heart close to him. This is the summit of his life, and of man's life. Higher than this no man may rise. The philosophers toil and struggle on mole-hill peaks far below. He who has not loved has not tasted the ultimate sweet of living. I know. I love Margaret, a woman. She is desirable.

CHAPTER L

In the past twenty-four hours many things have happened. To begin with, we nearly lost the steward in the second dog-watch last evening. Through the slits in the ventilator some man thrust a knife into the sacks of flour and cut them wide open from top to bottom. In the dark the flour poured to the deck unobserved.

Of course, the man behind could not see through the screen of empty sacks, but he took a blind pot-shot at point-blank range when the steward went by, slip-sloppily dragging the heels of his slippers. Fortunately it was a miss, but so close a miss was it that his cheek and neck were burned with powder grains.

At six bells in the first watch came another surprise. Tom Spink came to me where I stood guard at the for’ard end of the poop. His voice shook as he spoke.

“For the love of God, sir, they’ve come,” he said.

“Who?” I asked sharply.

“Them,” he chattered. “The ones that come aboard off the Horn, sir, the three drownded sailors. They’re there, aft, sir, the three of ’em, standin’ in a row by the wheel.”

“How did they get there?”

“Bein’ warlocks, they flew, sir. You didn’t see ’m go by you, did you, sir?”

“No,” I admitted. “They never went by me.”

Poor Tom Spink groaned.

“But there are lines aloft there on which they could cross over from mizzen to jigger,” I added. “Send Wada to me.”

When the latter relieved me I went aft. And there in a row were our three pale-haired storm-waifs with the topaz eyes. In the light of a bull’s-eye, held on them by Louis, their eyes never seemed more like the eyes of great cats. And, heavens, they purred! At least, the inarticulate noises they made sounded more like purring than anything else. That these sounds meant friendliness was very evident. Also, they held out their hands, palms upward, in unmistakable sign of peace. Each in turn doffed his cap and placed my hand for a moment on his head. Without doubt this meant their offer of fealty, their acceptance of me as master.

I nodded my head. There was nothing to be said to men who purred like cats, while sign-language in the light of the bull's-eye was rather difficult. Tom Spink groaned protest when I told Louis to take them below and give them blankets.

I made the sleep-sign to them, and they nodded gratefully, hesitated, then pointed to their mouths and rubbed their stomachs.

"Drowned men do not eat," I laughed to Tom Spink. "Go down and watch them. Feed them up, Louis, all they want. It's a good sign of short rations for'ard."

At the end of half an hour Tom Spink was back.

"Well, did they eat?" I challenged him.

But he was unconvinced. The very quantity they had eaten was a suspicious thing, and, further, he had heard of a kind of ghost that devoured dead bodies in graveyards. Therefore, he concluded, mere non-eating was no test for a ghost.

The third event of moment occurred this morning at seven o'clock. The mutineers called for a truce; and when Nosey Murphy, the Maltese Cockney, and the inevitable Charles Davis stood beneath me on the main deck, their faces showed lean and drawn. Famine had been my great ally. And in truth, with Margaret beside me in that high place of the break of the poop, as I looked down on the hungry wretches I felt very strong. Never had the inequality of numbers fore and aft been less than now. The three deserters, added to our own nine, made twelve of us, while the mutineers, after subtracting Ditman Olansen, Bob and the Faun, totalled only an even score. And of these Bert Rhine must certainly be in a bad way, while there were many weaklings, such as Sundry Buyers, Nancy, Larry, and Lars Jacobsen.

"Well, what do you want?" I demanded. "I haven't much time to waste. Breakfast is ready and waiting."

Charles Davis started to speak, but I shut him off.

"I'll have nothing out of you, Davis. At least not now. Later on, when I'm in that court of law you've bothered me with for half the voyage, you'll get your turn at talking. And when that time comes don't forget that I shall have a few words to say."

Again he began, but this time was stopped by Nosey Murphy.

"Aw, shut your trap, Davis," the gangster snarled, "or I'll shut it for you." He glanced up to me. "We want to go back to work, that's what we want.”

“Which is not the way to ask for it,” I answered.

“Sir,” he added hastily.

“That’s better,” I commented.

“Oh, my God, sir, don’t let ’m come aft.” Tom Spink muttered hurriedly in my ear. “That’d be the end of all of us. And even if they didn’t get you an’ the rest, they’d heave me over some dark night. They ain’t never goin’ to forgive me, sir, for joinin’ in with the afterguard.”

I ignored the interruption and addressed the gangster.

“There’s nothing like going to work when you want to as badly as you seem to. Suppose all hands get sail on her just to show good intention.”

“We’d like to eat first, sir,” he objected.

“I’d like to see you setting sail, first,” was my reply. “And you may as well get it from me straight that what I like goes, aboard this ship.” — I almost said “hooker.”

Nosey Murphy hesitated and looked to the Maltese Cockney for counsel. The latter debated, as if gauging the measure of his weakness while he stared aloft at the work involved. Finally he nodded.

“All right, sir,” the gangster spoke up. “We’ll do it . . . but can’t something be cookin’ in the galley while we’re doin’ it?”

I shook my head.

“I didn’t have that in mind, and I don’t care to change my mind now. When every sail is stretched and every yard braced, and all that mess of gear cleared up, food for a good meal will be served out. You needn’t bother about the spanker nor the mizzen-braces. We’ll make your work lighter by that much.”

In truth, as they climbed aloft they showed how miserably weak they were. There were some too feeble to go aloft. Poor Sundry Buyers continually pressed his abdomen as he toiled around the deck-capstans; and never was Nancy’s face quite so forlorn as when he obeyed the Maltese Cockney’s command and went up to loose the mizzen-skysail.

In passing, I must note one delicious miracle that was worked before our eyes. They were hoisting the mizzen-upper-topsail-yard by means of one of the patent deck-capstans. Although they had reversed the gear so as to double the purchase, they were having a hard time of it. Lars Jacobsen was limping on his twice-broken leg, and with him were Sundry Buyers, Tony the Greek, Bombini, and Mulligan Jacobs. Nosey Murphy held the turn.

When they stopped from sheer exhaustion Murphy's glance chanced to fall on Charles Davis, the one man who had not worked since the outset of the voyage and who was not working now.

"Bear a hand, Davis," the gangster called.

Margaret gurgled low laughter in my ear as she caught the drift of the episode.

The sea-lawyer looked at the other in amazement ere he answered:

"I guess not."

After nodding Sundry Buyers over to him to take the turn Murphy straightened his back and walked close to Davis, then said very quietly:

"I guess yes."

That was all. For a space neither spoke. Davis seemed to be giving the matter judicial consideration. The men at the capstan panted, rested, and looked on — all save Bombini, who slunk across the deck until he stood at Murphy's shoulder.

Under such circumstances the decision Charles Davis gave was eminently the right one, although even then he offered a compromise.

"I'll hold the turn," he volunteered.

"You'll lump around one of them capstan-bars," Murphy said.

The sea-lawyer made no mistake. He knew in all absoluteness that he was choosing between life and death, and he limped over to the capstan and found his place. And as the work started, and as he toiled around and around the narrow circle, Margaret and I shamelessly and loudly laughed our approval. And our own men stole for'ard along the poop to peer down at the spectacle of Charles Davis at work.

All of which must have pleased Nosey Murphy, for, as he continued to hold the turn and coil down, he kept a critical eye on Davis.

"More juice, Davis!" he commanded with abrupt sharpness.

And Davis, with a startle, visibly increased his efforts.

This was too much for our fellows, who, Asiatics and all, applauded with laughter and hand-clapping. And what could I do? It was a gala day, and our faithful ones deserved some little recompense of amusement. So I ignored the breach of discipline and of poop etiquette by strolling away aft with Margaret.

At the wheel was one of our storm-waifs. I set the course due east for Valparaiso, and sent the steward below to bring up sufficient food for one substantial meal for the mutineers.

"When do we get our next grub, sir?" Nosey Murphy asked, as the steward served the supplies down to him from the poop.

"At midday," I answered. "And as long as you and your gang are good, you'll get your grub three times each day. You can choose your own watches any way you please. But the ship's work must be done, and done properly. If it isn't, then the grub stops. That will do. Now go for'ard."

"One thing more, sir," he said quickly. "Bert Rhine is awful bad. He can't see, sir. It looks like he's going to lose his face. He can't sleep. He groans all the time."

* * * * *

It was a busy day. I made a selection of things from the medicine-chest for the acid-burned gangster; and, finding that Murphy knew how to manipulate a hypodermic syringe, entrusted him with one.

Then, too, I practised with the sextant and think I fairly caught the sun at noon and correctly worked up the observation. But this is latitude, and is comparatively easy. Longitude is more difficult. But I am reading up on it.

All afternoon a gentle northerly fan of air snored the *Elsinore* through the water at a five-knot clip, and our course lay east for land, for the habitations of men, for the law and order that men institute whenever they organize into groups. Once in Valparaiso, with police flag flying, our mutineers will be taken care of by the shore authorities.

Another thing I did was to rearrange our watches aft so as to split up the three storm-visitors. Margaret took one in her watch, along with the two sail-makers, Tom Spink, and Louis. Louis is half white, and all trustworthy, so that, at all times, on deck or below, he is told off to the task of never letting the topaz-eyed one out of his sight.

In my watch are the steward, Buckwheat, Wada, and the other two topaz-eyed ones. And to one of them Wada is told off; and to the other is assigned the steward. We are not taking any chances. Always, night and day, on duty or off, these storm-strangers will have one of our proved men watching them.

* * * * *

Yes; and I tried the stranger men out last evening. It was after a council with Margaret. She was sure, and I agreed with her, that the men for'ard are not blindly yielding to our bringing them in to be prisoners in Valparaiso. As we tried to forecast it, their plan is to desert the *Elsinore* in the boats as soon as we fetch up with the land. Also, considering some of the bitter lunatic spirits for'ard, there would be a large chance of their drilling the *Elsinore's* steel sides and scuttling her ere they took to the boats. For scuttling a ship is surely as ancient a practice as mutiny on the high seas.

So it was, at one in the morning, that I tried out our strangers. Two of them I took for'ard with me in the raid on the small boats. One I left beside Margaret, who kept charge of the poop. On the other side of him stood the steward with his big hacking knife. By signs I had made it clear to him, and to his two comrades who were to accompany me for'ard, that at the first sign of treachery he would be killed. And not only did the old steward, with signs emphatic and unmistakable, pledge himself to perform the execution, but we were all convinced that he was eager for the task.

With Margaret I also left Buckwheat and Tom Spink. Wada, the two sail-makers, Louis, and the two topaz-eyed ones accompanied me. In addition to fighting weapons we were armed with axes. We crossed the main deck unobserved, gained the bridge by way of the 'midship-house, and by way of the bridge gained the top of the for'ard-house. Here were the first boats we began work on; but, first of all, I called in the lookout from the forecastle-head.

He was Mulligan Jacobs; and he picked his way back across the wreck of the bridge where the fore-topgallant-yard still lay, and came up to me unafraid, as implacable and bitter as ever.

"Jacobs," I whispered, "you are to stay here beside me until we finish the job of smashing the boats. Do you get that?"

"As though it could fright me," he growled all too loudly. "Go ahead for all I care. I know your game. And I know the game of the hell's maggots under our feet this minute. 'Tis they that'd desert in the boats. 'Tis you that'll smash the boats an' jail 'm kit an' crew."

"S-s-s-h," I vainly interpolated.

"What of it?" he went on as loudly as ever. "They're sleepin' with full bellies. The only night watch we keep is the lookout. Even Rhine's asleep. A few jolts of the needle has put a clapper to his eternal moanin'. Go on with your work. Smash the boats. 'Tis nothin' I care. 'Tis well I know my own crooked back is worth more to me than the necks of the scum of the world below there."

"If you felt that way, why didn't you join us?" I queried.

"Because I like you no better than them an' not half so well. They are what you an' your fathers have made 'em. An' who in hell are you an' your fathers? Robbers of the toil of men. I like them little. I like you and your fathers not at all. Only I like myself and me crooked back that's a livin' proof there ain't no God and makes Browning a liar."

"Join us now," I urged, meeting him in his mood. "It will be easier for your back."

"To hell with you," was his answer. "Go ahead an' smash the boats. You can hang some of them. But you can't touch me with the law. 'Tis me that's a crippled creature of circumstance, too weak to raise a hand against any man — a feather blown about by the windy contention of men strong in their back an' brainless in their heads."

"As you please," I said.

"As I can't help pleasin'," he retorted, "bein' what I am an' so made for the little flash between the darknesses which men call life. Now why couldn't I a-ben a butterfly, or a fat pig in a full trough, or a mere mortal man with a straight back an' women to love me? Go on an' smash the boats. Play hell to the top of your bent. Like me, you'll end in the darkness. And your darkness'll be — as dark as mine."

"A full belly puts the spunk back into you," I sneered.

"'Tis on an empty belly that the juice of my dislike turns to acid. Go on an' smash the boats."

"Whose idea was the sulphur?" I asked.

"I'm not tellin' you the man, but I envied him until it showed failure. An' whose idea was it — to douse the sulphuric into Rhine's face? He'll lose that same face, from the way it's shedding."

"Nor will I tell you," I said. "Though I will tell you that I am glad the idea was not mine."

"Oh, well," he muttered cryptically, "different customs on different ships, as the cook said when he went for'ard to cast off the spanker sheet."

Not until the job was done and I was back on the poop did I have time to work out the drift of that last figure in its terms of the sea. Mulligan Jacobs might have been an artist, a philosophic poet, had he not been born crooked with a crooked back.

And we smashed the boats. With axes and sledges it was an easier task than I had imagined. On top of both houses we left the boats masses of splintered wreckage, the topaz-eyed ones working most energetically; and we regained the poop without a shot being fired. The forecastle turned out, of course, at our noise, but made no attempt to interfere with us.

And right here I register another complaint against the sea-novelists. A score of men for'ard, desperate all, with desperate deeds behind them, and jail and the gallows facing them not many days away, should have only begun to fight. And yet this score of men did nothing while we destroyed their last chance for escape.

"But where did they get the grub?" the steward asked me afterwards.

This question he has asked me every day since the first day Mr. Pike began cudgelling his brains over it. I wonder, had I asked Mulligan Jacobs the question, if he would have told me? At any rate, in court at Valparaiso that question will be answered. In the meantime I suppose I shall submit to having the steward ask me it daily.

"It is murder and mutiny on the high seas," I told them this morning, when they came aft in a body to complain about the destruction of the boats and to demand my intentions.

And as I looked down upon the poor wretches from the break of the poop, standing there in the high place, the vision of my kind down all its mad, violent, and masterful past was strong upon me. Already, since our departure from Baltimore, three other men, masters, had occupied this high place and gone their way — the Samurai, Mr. Pike, and Mr. Mellaire. I stood here, fourth, no seaman, merely a master by the blood of my ancestors; and the work of the *Elsinore* in the world went on.

Bert Rhine, his head and face swathed in bandages, stood there beneath me, and I felt for him a tingle of respect. He, too, in a subterranean, ghetto way was master over his rats. Nosey Murphy and Kid Twist stood shoulder to shoulder with their stricken gangster leader. It was his will, because of his terrible injury, to get in to land and doctors as quickly as possible. He preferred taking his chance in court against the chance of losing his life, or, perhaps, his eyesight.

The crew was divided against itself; and Isaac Chantz, the Jew, his wounded shoulder with a hunch to it, seemed to lead the revolt against the gangsters. His wound was enough to convict him in any court, and well he knew it. Beside him, and at his shoulders, clustered the Maltese Cockney, Andy Fay, Arthur Deacon, Frank Fitzgibbon, Richard Giller, and John Hackey.

In another group, still allegiant to the gangsters, were men such as Shorty, Sorensen, Lars Jacobsen, and Larry. Charles Davis was prominently in the gangster group. A fourth group was composed of Sundry Buyers, Nancy, and Tony the Greek. This group was distinctly neutral. And, finally, unaffiliated, quite by himself, stood Mulligan Jacobs — listening, I fancy, to far echoes of ancient wrongs, and feeling, I doubt not, the bite of the iron-hot hooks in his brain.

"What are you going to do with us, sir?" Isaac Chantz demanded of me, in defiance to the gangsters, who were expected to do the talking.

Bert Rhine lurched angrily toward the sound of the Jew's voice. Chantz's partisans drew closer to him.

"Jail you," I answered from above. "And it shall go as hard with all of you as I can make it hard."

"Maybe you will an' maybe you won't," the Jew retorted.

"Shut up, Chantz!" Bert Rhine commanded.

"And you'll get yours, you wop," Chantz snarled, "if I have to do it myself."

I am afraid that I am not so successfully the man of action that I have been priding myself on being; for, so curious and interested was I in observing the moving drama beneath me that for the moment I failed to glimpse the tragedy into which it was culminating.

"Bombini!" Bert Rhine said.

His voice was imperative. It was the order of a master to the dog at heel. Bombini responded. He drew his knife and started to advance upon the Jew. But a deep rumbling, animal-like in its *sound* and menace, arose in the throats of those about the Jew.

Bombini hesitated and glanced back across his shoulder at the leader, whose face he could not see for bandages and who he knew could not see.

"'Tis a good deed — do it, Bombini," Charles Davis encouraged.

"Shut your face, Davis!" came out from Bert Rhine's bandages.

Kid Twist drew a revolver, shoved the muzzle of it first into Bombini's side, then covered the men about the Jew.

Really, I felt a momentary twinge of pity for the Italian. He was caught between the mill-stones, "Bombini, stick that Jew," Bert Rhine commanded.

The Italian advanced a step, and, shoulder to shoulder, on either side, Kid Twist and Nosey Murphy advanced with him.

"I cannot see him," Bert Rhine went on; "but by God I will see him!"

And so speaking, with one single, virile movement he tore away the bandages. The toll of pain he must have paid is beyond measurement. I saw the horror of his face, but the description of it is beyond the limits of any English I possess. I was aware that Margaret, at my shoulder, gasped and shuddered.

"Bombini! — stick him," the gangster repeated. "And stick any man that raises a yap. Murphy! See that Bombini does his work."

Murphy's knife was out and at the bravo's back. Kid Twist covered the Jew's group with his revolver. And the three advanced.

It was at this moment that I suddenly recollected myself and passed from dream to action.

"Bombini!" I said sharply.

He paused and looked up.

"Stand where you are," I ordered, "till I do some talking. — Chantz! Make no mistake. Rhine is boss for'ard. You take his orders . . . until we get into Valparaiso; then you'll take your chances along with him in jail. In the meantime, what Rhine says goes. Get that, and get it straight. I am behind Rhine until the police come on board. — Bombini! do whatever Rhine tells you. I'll shoot the man who tries to stop you. — Deacon! Stand away from Chantz. Go over to the fife-rail."

All hands knew the stream of lead my automatic rifle could throw, and Arthur Deacon knew it. He hesitated barely a moment, then obeyed.

"Fitzgibbon! — Giller! — Hackey!" I called in turn, and was obeyed. "Fay!" I called twice, ere the response came.

Isaac Chantz stood alone, and Bombini now showed eagerness.

"Chantz!" I said; "don't you think it would be healthier to go over to the fife-rail and be good?"

He debated the matter not many seconds, resheathed his knife, and complied.

The tang of power! I was minded to let literature get the better of me and read the rascals a lecture; but thank heaven I had sufficient proportion and balance to refrain.

"Rhine!" I said.

He turned his corroded face up to me and blinked in an effort to see.

“As long as Chantz takes your orders, leave him alone. We’ll need every hand to work the ship in. As for yourself, send Murphy aft in half an hour and I’ll give him the best the medicine-chest affords. That is all. Go for’ard.”

And they shambled away, beaten and dispirited.

“But that man — his face — what happened to him?” Margaret asked of me.

Sad it is to end love with lies. Sadder still is it to begin love with lies. I had tried to hide this one happening from Margaret, and I had failed. It could no longer be hidden save by lying; and so I told her the truth, told her how and why the gangster had had his face dashed with sulphuric acid by the old steward who knew white men and their ways.

* * * * *

There is little more to write. The mutiny of the *Elsinore* is over. The divided crew is ruled by the gangsters, who are as intent on getting their leader into port as I am intent on getting all of them into jail. The first lap of the voyage of the *Elsinore* draws to a close. Two days, at most, with our present sailing, will bring us into Valparaiso. And then, as beginning a new voyage, the *Elsinore* will depart for Seattle.

* * * * *

One thing more remains for me to write, and then this strange log of a strange cruise will be complete. It happened only last night. I am yet fresh from it, and athrill with it and with the promise of it.

Margaret and I spent the last hour of the second dog-watch together at the break of the poop. It was good again to feel the *Elsinore* yielding to the wind-pressure on her canvas, to feel her again slipping and sliding through the water in an easy sea.

Hidden by the darkness, clasped in each other’s arms, we talked love and love plans. Nor am I shamed to confess that I was all for immediacy. Once in Valparaiso, I contended, we would fit out the *Elsinore* with fresh crew and officers and send her on her way. As for us, steamers and rapid travelling would fetch us quickly home. Furthermore, Valparaiso being a place where such things as licences and ministers obtained, we would be married ere we caught the fast steamers for home.

But Margaret was obdurate. The Wests had always stood by their ships, she urged; had always brought their ships in to the ports intended or had gone down with their ships in the effort. The *Elsinore* had cleared from Baltimore for Seattle with the Wests in the high place. The *Elsinore* would re-equip with officers and men in Valparaiso, and the *Elsinore* would arrive in Seattle with a West still on board.

"But think, dear heart," I objected. "The voyage will require months. Remember what Henley has said: 'Every kiss we take or give leaves us less of life to live.'"

She pressed her lips to mine.

"We kiss," she said.

But I was stupid.

* * * * *

"Oh, the weary, weary months," I complained. "You dear silly," she gurgled. "Don't you understand?"

"I understand only that it is many a thousand miles from Valparaiso to Seattle," I answered.

"You won't understand," she challenged.

"I am a fool," I admitted. "I am aware of only one thing: I want you. I want you."

"You are a dear, but you are very, very stupid," she said, and as she spoke she caught my hand and pressed the palm of it against her cheek. "What do you feel?" she asked.

"Hot cheeks — cheeks most hot."

"I am blushing for what your stupidity compels me to say," she explained. "You have already said that such things as licences and ministers obtain in Valparaiso . . . and . . . and, well . . . "

"You mean . . . ?" I stammered.

"Just that," she confirmed.

"The honeymoon shall be on the *Elsinore* from Valparaiso all the way to Seattle?" I rattled on.

"The many thousands of miles, the weary, weary months," she teased in my own intonations, until I stifled her teasing with my lips.

THE STAR ROVER

OR

THE JACKET

First published in 1915, this novel is a story of reincarnation. A framing story is told in the first person by Darrell Standing, a university professor serving life imprisonment in San Quentin State Prison for murder. Prison officials try to break his spirit by means of a torture device called “the jacket,” a canvas jacket which can be tightly laced so as to compress the whole body, inducing angina. Standing discovers how to withstand the torture by entering a kind of trance state, in which he walks among the stars and experiences portions of past lives.

The novel has received mixed reviews, at times being judged as poetic, while at other times it has been criticised as having a melodramatic cliché-style.

The Star Rover
By Jack London

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII

CHAPTER I

All my life I have had an awareness of other times and places. I have been aware of other persons in me. — Oh, and trust me, so have you, my reader that is to be. Read back into your childhood, and this sense of awareness I speak of will be remembered as an experience of your childhood. You were then not fixed, not crystallized. You were plastic, a soul in flux, a consciousness and an identity in the process of forming — ay, of forming and forgetting.

You have forgotten much, my reader, and yet, as you read these lines, you remember dimly the hazy vistas of other times and places into which your child eyes peered. They seem dreams to you to-day. Yet, if they were dreams, dreamed then, whence the substance of them? Our dreams are grotesquely compounded of the things we know. The stuff of our sheerest dreams is the stuff of our experience. As a child, a wee child, you dreamed you fell great heights; you dreamed you flew through the air as things of the air fly; you were vexed by crawling spiders and many-legged creatures of the slime; you heard other voices, saw other faces nightmarishly familiar, and gazed upon sunrises and sunsets other than you know now, looking back, you ever looked upon.

Very well. These child glimpses are of other-worldness, of other-lifeness, of things that you had never seen in this particular world of your particular life. Then whence? Other lives? Other worlds? Perhaps, when you have read all that I shall write, you will have received answers to the perplexities I have propounded to you, and that you yourself, ere you came to read me, propounded to yourself.

* * * * *

Wordsworth knew. He was neither seer nor prophet, but just ordinary man like you or any man. What he knew, you know, any man knows. But he most aptly stated it in his passage that begins “Not in utter nakedness, not in entire forgetfulness. . .”

Ah, truly, shades of the prison-house close about us, the new-born things, and all too soon do we forget. And yet, when we were new-born we did remember other times and places. We, helpless infants in arms or creeping quadruped-like on the floor, dreamed our dreams of air-flight. Yes; and we endured the torment and torture of nightmare fears of dim and monstrous things. We new-born infants, without experience, were born with fear, with memory of fear; and *memory is experience*.

As for myself, at the beginnings of my vocabulary, at so tender a period that I still made hunger noises and sleep noises, yet even then did I know that I had been a star-rover. Yes, I, whose lips had never lisped the word "king," remembered that I had once been the son of a king. More — I remembered that once I had been a slave and a son of a slave, and worn an iron collar round my neck.

Still more. When I was three, and four, and five years of age, I was not yet I. I was a mere becoming, a flux of spirit not yet cooled solid in the mould of my particular flesh and time and place. In that period all that I had ever been in ten thousand lives before strove in me, and troubled the flux of me, in the effort to incorporate itself in me and become me.

Silly, isn't it? But remember, my reader, whom I hope to have travel far with me through time and space — remember, please, my reader, that I have thought much on these matters, that through bloody nights and sweats of dark that lasted years-long, I have been alone with my many selves to consult and contemplate my many selves. I have gone through the hells of all existences to bring you news which you will share with me in a casual comfortable hour over my printed page.

So, to return, I say, during the ages of three and four and five, I was not yet I. I was merely becoming as I took form in the mould of my body, and all the mighty, indestructible past wrought in the mixture of me to determine what the form of that becoming would be. It was not my voice that cried out in the night in fear of things known, which I, forsooth, did not and could not know. The same with my childish angers, my loves, and my laughters. Other voices screamed through my voice, the voices of men and women aforetime, of all shadowy hosts of progenitors. And the snarl of my anger was blended with the snarls of beasts more ancient than the mountains, and the vocal madness of my child hysteria, with all the red of its wrath, was chorded with the insensate, stupid cries of beasts pre-Adamic and progeologic in time.

And there the secret is out. The red wrath! It has undone me in this, my present life. Because of it, a few short weeks hence, I shall be led from this cell to a high place with unstable flooring, graced above by a well-stretched rope; and there they will hang me by the neck until I am dead. The red wrath always has undone me in all my lives; for the red wrath is my disastrous catastrophic heritage from the time of the slimy things ere the world was prime.

* * * * *

It is time that I introduce myself. I am neither fool nor lunatic. I want you to know that, in order that you will believe the things I shall tell you. I am Darrell Standing. Some few of you who read this will know me immediately. But to the majority, who are bound to be strangers, let me exposit myself. Eight years ago I was Professor of Agronomics in the College of Agriculture of the University of California. Eight years ago the sleepy little university town of Berkeley was shocked by the murder of Professor Haskell in one of the laboratories of the Mining Building. Darrell Standing was the murderer.

I am Darrell Standing. I was caught red-handed. Now the right and the wrong of this affair with Professor Haskell I shall not discuss. It was purely a private matter. The point is, that in a surge of anger, obsessed by that catastrophic red wrath that has cursed me down the ages, I killed my fellow professor. The court records show that I did; and, for once, I agree with the court records.

No; I am not to be hanged for his murder. I received a life-sentence for my punishment. I was thirty-six years of age at the time. I am now forty-four years old. I have spent the eight intervening years in the California State Prison of San Quentin. Five of these years I spent in the dark. Solitary confinement, they call it. Men who endure it, call it living death. But through these five years of death-in-life I managed to attain freedom such as few men have ever known. Closest-confined of prisoners, not only did I range the world, but I ranged time. They who immured me for petty years gave to me, all unwittingly, the largess of centuries. Truly, thanks to Ed Morrell, I have had five years of star-roving. But Ed Morrell is another story. I shall tell you about him a little later. I have so much to tell I scarce know how to begin.

Well, a beginning. I was born on a quarter-section in Minnesota. My mother was the daughter of an immigrant Swede. Her name was Hilda Tonnesson. My father was Chauncey Standing, of old American stock. He traced back to Alfred Standing, an indentured servant, or slave if you please, who was transported from England to the Virginia plantations in the days that were even old when the youthful Washington went a-surveying in the Pennsylvania wilderness.

A son of Alfred Standing fought in the War of the Revolution; a grandson, in the War of 1812. There have been no wars since in which the Standings have not been represented. I, the last of the Standings, dying soon without issue, fought as a common soldier in the Philippines, in our latest war, and to do so I resigned, in the full early ripeness of career, my professorship in the University of Nebraska. Good heavens, when I so resigned I was headed for the Deanship of the College of Agriculture in that university — I, the star-rover, the red-blooded adventurer, the vagabondish Cain of the centuries, the militant priest of remotest times, the moon-dreaming poet of ages forgotten and to-day unrecorded in man's history of man!

And here I am, my hands dyed red in Murderers' Row, in the State Prison of Folsom, awaiting the day decreed by the machinery of state when the servants of the state will lead me away into what they fondly believe is the dark — the dark they fear; the dark that gives them fearsome and superstitious fancies; the dark that drives them, drivelling and yammering, to the altars of their fear-created, anthropomorphic gods.

No; I shall never be Dean of any college of agriculture. And yet I knew agriculture. It was my profession. I was born to it, reared to it, trained to it; and I was a master of it. It was my genius. I can pick the high-percentage butter-fat cow with my eye and let the Babcock Tester prove the wisdom of my eye. I can look, not at land, but at landscape, and pronounce the virtues and the shortcomings of the soil. Litmus paper is not necessary when I determine a soil to be acid or alkali. I repeat, farm-husbandry, in its highest scientific terms, was my genius, and is my genius. And yet the state, which includes all the citizens of the state, believes that it can blot out this wisdom of mine in the final dark by means of a rope about my neck and the abruptive jerk of gravitation — this wisdom of mine that was incubated through the millenniums, and that was well-hatched ere the farmed fields of Troy were ever pastured by the flocks of nomad shepherds!

Corn? Who else knows corn? There is my demonstration at Wistar, whereby I increased the annual corn-yield of every county in Iowa by half a million dollars. This is history. Many a farmer, riding in his motor-car to-day, knows who made possible that motor-car. Many a sweet-bosomed girl and bright-browed boy, poring over high-school text-books, little dreams that I made that higher education possible by my corn demonstration at Wistar.

And farm management! I know the waste of superfluous motion without studying a moving picture record of it, whether it be farm or farm-hand, the layout of buildings or the layout of the farm-hands' labour. There is my handbook and tables on the subject. Beyond the shadow of any doubt, at this present moment, a hundred thousand farmers are knotting their brows over its spread pages ere they tap out their final pipe and go to bed. And yet, so far was I beyond my tables, that all I needed was a mere look at a man to know his predispositions, his co-ordinations, and the index fraction of his motion-wastage.

And here I must close this first chapter of my narrative. It is nine o'clock, and in Murderers' Row that means lights out. Even now, I hear the soft tread of the gum-shoed guard as he comes to censure me for my coal-oil lamp still burning. As if the mere living could censure the doomed to die!

CHAPTER II

I am Darrell Standing. They are going to take me out and hang me pretty soon. In the meantime I say my say, and write in these pages of the other times and places.

After my sentence, I came to spend the rest of my "natural life" in the prison of San Quentin. I proved incorrigible. An incorrigible is a terrible human being — at least such is the connotation of "incorrigible" in prison psychology. I became an incorrigible because I abhorred waste motion. The prison, like all prisons, was a scandal and an affront of waste motion. They put me in the jute-mill. The criminality of wastefulness irritated me. Why should it not? Elimination of waste motion was my speciality. Before the invention of steam or steam-driven looms three thousand years before, I had rotted in prison in old Babylon; and, trust me, I speak the truth when I say that in that ancient day we prisoners wove more efficiently on hand-looms than did the prisoners in the steam-powered loom-rooms of San Quentin.

The crime of waste was abhorrent. I rebelled. I tried to show the guards a score or so of more efficient ways. I was reported. I was given the dungeon and the starvation of light and food. I emerged and tried to work in the chaos of inefficiency of the loom-rooms. I rebelled. I was given the dungeon, plus the strait-jacket. I was spread-eagled, and thumbed-up, and privily beaten by the stupid guards whose totality of intelligence was only just sufficient to show them that I was different from them and not so stupid.

Two years of this witless persecution I endured. It is terrible for a man to be tied down and gnawed by rats. The stupid brutes of guards were rats, and they gnawed the intelligence of me, gnawed all the fine nerves of the quick of me and of the consciousness of me. And I, who in my past have been a most valiant fighter, in this present life was no fighter at all. I was a farmer, an agriculturist, a desk-tied professor, a laboratory slave, interested only in the soil and the increase of the productiveness of the soil.

I fought in the Philippines because it was the tradition of the Standings to fight. I had no aptitude for fighting. It was all too ridiculous, the introducing of disruptive foreign substances into the bodies of little black men-folk. It was laughable to behold Science prostituting all the might of its achievement and the wit of its inventors to the violent introducing of foreign substances into the bodies of black folk.

As I say, in obedience to the tradition of the Standings I went to war and found that I had no aptitude for war. So did my officers find me out, because they made me a quartermaster's clerk, and as a clerk, at a desk, I fought through the Spanish-American War.

So it was not because I was a fighter, but because I was a thinker, that I was enraged by the motion-wastage of the loom-rooms and was persecuted by the guards into becoming an "incorrigible." One's brain worked and I was punished for its working. As I told Warden Atherton, when my incorrigibility had become so notorious that he had me in on the carpet in his private office to plead with me; as I told him then:

"It is so absurd, my dear Warden, to think that your rat-throttlers of guards can shake out of my brain the things that are clear and definite in my brain. The whole organization of this prison is stupid. You are a politician. You can weave the political pull of San Francisco saloon-men and ward heelers into a position of graft such as this one you occupy; but you can't weave jute. Your loom-rooms are fifty years behind the times. . . ."

But why continue the tirade? — for tirade it was. I showed him what a fool he was, and as a result he decided that I was a hopeless incorrigible.

Give a dog a bad name — you know the saw. Very well. Warden Atherton gave the final sanction to the badness of my name. I was fair game. More than one convict's dereliction was shunted off on me, and was paid for by me in the dungeon on bread and water, or in being triced up by the thumbs on my tip-toes for long hours, each hour of which was longer than any life I have ever lived.

Intelligent men are cruel. Stupid men are monstrously cruel. The guards and the men over me, from the Warden down, were stupid monsters. Listen, and you shall learn what they did to me. There was a poet in the prison, a convict, a weak-chinned, broad-browed, degenerate poet. He was a forger. He was a coward. He was a snitcher. He was a stool — strange words for a professor of agronomics to use in writing, but a professor of agronomics may well learn strange words when pent in prison for the term of his natural life.

This poet-forger's name was Cecil Winwood. He had had prior convictions, and yet, because he was a snivelling cur of a yellow dog, his last sentence had been only for seven years. Good credits would materially reduce this time. My time was life. Yet this miserable degenerate, in order to gain several short years of liberty for himself, succeeded in adding a fair portion of eternity to my own lifetime term.

I shall tell what happened the other way around, for it was only after a weary period that I learned. This Cecil Winwood, in order to curry favour with the Captain of the Yard, and thence the Warden, the Prison Directors, the Board of Pardons, and the Governor of California, framed up a prison-break. Now note three things: (a) Cecil Winwood was so detested by his fellow-convicts that they would not have permitted him to bet an ounce of Bull Durham on a bed-bug race — and bed-bug racing was a great sport with the convicts; (b) I was the dog that had been given a bad name: (c) for his frame-up, Cecil Winwood needed the dogs with bad names, the lifetimers, the desperate ones, the incorrigibles.

But the lifers detested Cecil Winwood, and, when he approached them with his plan of a wholesale prison-break, they laughed at him and turned away with curses for the stool that he was. But he fooled them in the end, forty of the bitterest-wise ones in the pen. He approached them again and again. He told of his power in the prison by virtue of his being trusty in the Warden's office, and because of the fact that he had the run of the dispensary.

"Show me," said Long Bill Hodge, a mountaineer doing life for train robbery, and whose whole soul for years had been bent on escaping in order to kill the companion in robbery who had turned state's evidence on him.

Cecil Winwood accepted the test. He claimed that he could dope the guards the night of the break.

"Talk is cheap," said Long Bill Hodge. "What we want is the goods. Dope one of the guards to-night. There's Barnum. He's no good. He beat up that crazy Chink yesterday in Bughouse Alley — when he was off duty, too. He's on the night watch. Dope him to-night an' make him lose his job. Show me, and we'll talk business with you."

All this Long Bill told me in the dungeons afterward. Cecil Winwood demurred against the immediacy of the demonstration. He claimed that he must have time in which to steal the dope from the dispensary. They gave him the time, and a week later he announced that he was ready. Forty hard-bitten lifers waited for the guard Barnum to go to sleep on his shift. And Barnum did. He was found asleep, and he was discharged for sleeping on duty.

Of course, that convinced the lifers. But there was the Captain of the Yard to convince. To him, daily, Cecil Winwood was reporting the progress of the break — all fancied and fabricated in his own imagination. The Captain of the Yard demanded to be shown. Winwood showed him, and the full details of the showing I did not learn until a year afterward, so slowly do the secrets of prison intrigue leak out.

Winwood said that the forty men in the break, in whose confidence he was, had already such power in the Prison that they were about to begin smuggling in automatic pistols by means of the guards they had bought up.

"Show me," the Captain of the Yard must have demanded.

And the forger-poet showed him. In the Bakery, night work was a regular thing. One of the convicts, a baker, was on the first night-shift. He was a stool of the Captain of the Yard, and Winwood knew it.

"To-night," he told the Captain, "Summerface will bring in a dozen '44 automatics. On his next time off he'll bring in the ammunition. But to-night he'll turn the automatics over to me in the bakery. You've got a good stool there. He'll make you his report to-morrow."

Now Summerface was a strapping figure of a bucolic guard who hailed from Humboldt County. He was a simple-minded, good-natured dolt and not above earning an honest dollar by smuggling in tobacco for the convicts. On that night, returning from a trip to San Francisco, he brought in with him fifteen pounds of prime cigarette tobacco. He had done this before, and delivered the stuff to Cecil Winwood. So, on that particular night, he, all unwitting, turned the stuff over to Winwood in the bakery. It was a big, solid, paper-wrapped bundle of innocent tobacco. The stool baker, from concealment, saw the package delivered to Winwood and so reported to the Captain of the Yard next morning.

But in the meantime the poet-forger's too-lively imagination ran away with him. He was guilty of a slip that gave me five years of solitary confinement and that placed me in this condemned cell in which I now write. And all the time I knew nothing about it. I did not even know of the break he had inveigled the forty lifers into planning. I knew nothing, absolutely nothing. And the rest knew little. The lifers did not know he was giving them the cross. The Captain of the Yard did not know that the cross know was being worked on him. Summerface was the most innocent of all. At the worst, his conscience could have accused him only of smuggling in some harmless tobacco.

And now to the stupid, silly, melodramatic slip of Cecil Winwood. Next morning, when he encountered the Captain of the Yard, he was triumphant. His imagination took the bit in its teeth.

"Well, the stuff came in all right as you said," the captain of the Yard remarked.

"And enough of it to blow half the prison sky-high," Winwood corroborated.

"Enough of what?" the Captain demanded.

"Dynamite and detonators," the fool rattled on. "Thirty-five pounds of it. Your stool saw Summerface pass it over to me."

And right there the Captain of the Yard must have nearly died. I can actually sympathize with him — thirty-five pounds of dynamite loose in the prison.

They say that Captain Jamie — that was his nickname — sat down and held his head in his hands.

"Where is it now?" he cried. "I want it. Take me to it at once."

And right there Cecil Winwood saw his mistake.

"I planted it," he lied — for he was compelled to lie because, being merely tobacco in small packages, it was long since distributed among the convicts along the customary channels.

"Very well," said Captain Jamie, getting himself in hand. "Lead me to it at once."

But there was no plant of high explosives to lead him to. The thing did not exist, had never existed save in the imagination of the wretched Winwood.

In a large prison like San Quentin there are always hiding-places for things. And as Cecil Winwood led Captain Jamie he must have done some rapid thinking.

As Captain Jamie testified before the Board of Directors, and as Winwood also so testified, on the way to the hiding-place Winwood said that he and I had planted the powder together.

And I, just released from five days in the dungeons and eighty hours in the jacket; I, whom even the stupid guards could see was too weak to work in the loom-room; I, who had been given the day off to recuperate — from too terrible punishment — I was named as the one who had helped hide the non-existent thirty-five pounds of high explosive!

Winwood led Captain Jamie to the alleged hiding-place. Of course they found no dynamite in it.

"My God!" Winwood lied. "Standing has given me the cross. He's lifted the plant and stowed it somewhere else."

The Captain of the Yard said more emphatic things than "My God!" Also, on the spur of the moment but cold-bloodedly, he took Winwood into his own private office, looked the doors, and beat him up frightfully — all of which came out before the Board of Directors. But that was afterward. In the meantime, even while he took his beating, Winwood swore by the truth of what he had told.

What was Captain Jamie to do? He was convinced that thirty-five pounds of dynamite were loose in the prison and that forty desperate lifers were ready for a break. Oh, he had Summerface in on the carpet, and, although Summerface insisted the package contained tobacco, Winwood swore it was dynamite and was believed.

At this stage I enter or, rather, I depart, for they took me away out of the sunshine and the light of day to the dungeons, and in the dungeons and in the solitary cells, out of the sunshine and the light of day, I rotted for five years.

I was puzzled. I had only just been released from the dungeons, and was lying pain-racked in my customary cell, when they took me back to the dungeon.

"Now," said Winwood to Captain Jamie, "though we don't know where it is, the dynamite is safe. Standing is the only man who does know, and he can't pass the word out from the dungeon. The men are ready to make the break. We can catch them red-handed. It is up to me to set the time. I'll tell them two o'clock to-night and tell them that, with the guards doped, I'll unlock their cells and give them their automatics. If, at two o'clock to-night, you don't catch the forty I shall name with their clothes on and wide awake, then, Captain, you can give me solitary for the rest of my sentence. And with Standing and the forty tight in the dungeons, we'll have all the time in the world to locate the dynamite."

"If we have to tear the prison down stone by stone," Captain Jamie added valiantly.

That was six years ago. In all the intervening time they have never found that non-existent explosive, and they have turned the prison upside-down a thousand times in searching for it. Nevertheless, to his last day in office

Warden Atherton believed in the existence of that dynamite. Captain Jamie, who is still Captain of the Yard, believes to this day that the dynamite is somewhere in the prison. Only yesterday, he came all the way up from San Quentin to Folsom to make one more effort to get me to reveal the hiding-place. I know he will never breathe easy until they swing me off.

CHAPTER III

All that day I lay in the dungeon cudgelling my brains for the reason of this new and inexplicable punishment. All I could conclude was that some stool had lied an infraction of the rules on me in order to curry favour with the guards.

Meanwhile Captain Jamie fretted his head off and prepared for the night, while Winwood passed the word along to the forty lifers to be ready for the break. And two hours after midnight every guard in the prison was under orders. This included the day-shift which should have been asleep. When two o'clock came, they rushed the cells occupied by the forty. The rush was simultaneous. The cells were opened at the same moment, and without exception the men named by Winwood were found out of their bunks, fully dressed, and crouching just inside their doors. Of course, this was verification absolute of all the fabric of lies that the poet-forger had spun for Captain Jamie. The forty lifers were caught in red-handed readiness for the break. What if they did unite, afterward, in averring that the break had been planned by Winwood? The Prison Board of Directors believed, to a man, that the forty lied in an effort to save themselves. The Board of Pardons likewise believed, for, ere three months were up, Cecil Winwood, forger and poet, most despicable of men, was pardoned out.

Oh, well, the stir, or the pen, as they call it in convict argot, is a training school for philosophy. No inmate can survive years of it without having had burst for him his fondest illusions and fairest metaphysical bubbles. Truth lives, we are taught; murder will out. Well, this is a demonstration that murder does not always come out. The Captain of the Yard, the late Warden Atherton, the Prison Board of Directors to a man — all believe, right now, in the existence of that dynamite that never existed save in the slippery-geared and all too-accelerated brain of the degenerate forger and poet, Cecil Winwood. And Cecil Winwood still lives, while I, of all men concerned, the utterest, absolutist, innocentest, go to the scaffold in a few short weeks.

* * * * *

And now I must tell how entered the forty lifers upon my dungeon stillness. I was asleep when the outer door to the corridor of dungeons clanged open and aroused me. “Some poor devil,” was my thought; and my next thought was that he was surely getting his, as I listened to the scuffling of feet, the dull impact of blows on flesh, the sudden cries of pain, the filth of curses, and the sounds of dragging bodies. For, you see, every man was man-handled all the length of the way.

Dungeon-door after dungeon-door clanged open, and body after body was thrust in, flung in, or dragged in. And continually more groups of guards arrived with more beaten convicts who still were being beaten, and more dungeon-doors were opened to receive the bleeding frames of men who were guilty of yearning after freedom.

Yes, as I look back upon it, a man must be greatly a philosopher to survive the continual impact of such brutish experiences through the years and years. I am such a philosopher. I have endured eight years of their torment, and now, in the end, failing to get rid of me in all other ways, they have invoked the machinery of state to put a rope around my neck and shut off my breath by the weight of my body. Oh, I know how the experts give expert judgment that the fall through the trap breaks the victim’s neck. And the victims, like Shakespeare’s traveller, never return to testify to the contrary. But we who have lived in the stir know of the cases that are hushed in the prison crypts, where the victim’s necks are not broken.

It is a funny thing, this hanging of a man. I have never seen a hanging, but I have been told by eye-witnesses the details of a dozen hangings so that I know what will happen to me. Standing on the trap, leg-manacled and arm-manacled, the knot against the neck, the black cap drawn, they will drop me down until the momentum of my descending weight is fetched up abruptly short by the tautening of the rope. Then the doctors will group around me, and one will relieve another in successive turns in standing on a stool, his arms passed around me to keep me from swinging like a pendulum, his ear pressed close to my chest, while he counts my fading heart-beats. Sometimes twenty minutes elapse after the trap is sprung ere the heart stops beating. Oh, trust me, they make most scientifically sure that a man is dead once they get him on a rope.

I still wander aside from my narrative to ask a question or two of society. I have a right so to wander and so to question, for in a little while they are going to take me out and do this thing to me. If the neck of the victim be broken by the alleged shrewd arrangement of knot and noose, and by the alleged shrewd calculation of the weight of the victim and the length of slack, then why do they manacle the arms of the victim? Society, as a whole, is unable to answer this question. But I know why; so does any amateur who ever engaged in a lynching bee and saw the victim throw up his hands, clutch the rope, and ease the throttle of the noose about his neck so that he might breathe.

Another question I will ask of the smug, cotton-wooled member of society, whose soul has never strayed to the red hells. Why do they put the black cap over the head and the face of the victim ere they drop him through the trap? Please remember that in a short while they will put that black cap over my head. So I have a right to ask. Do they, your hang-dogs, O smug citizen, do these your hang-dogs fear to gaze upon the facial horror of the horror they perpetrate for you and ours and at your behest?

Please remember that I am not asking this question in the twelve-hundredth year after Christ, nor in the time of Christ, nor in the twelve-hundredth year before Christ. I, who am to be hanged this year, the nineteen-hundred-and-thirteenth after Christ, ask these questions of you who are assumably Christ’s followers, of you whose hang-dogs are going to take me out and hide my face under a black cloth because they dare not look upon the horror they do to me while I yet live.

And now back to the situation in the dungeons. When the last guard departed and the outer door clanged shut, all the forty beaten, disappointed men began to talk and ask questions. But, almost immediately, roaring like a bull in order to be heard, Skysail Jack, a giant sailor of a lifer, ordered silence while a census could be taken. The dungeons were full, and dungeon by dungeon, in order of dungeons, shouted out its quota to the roll-call. Thus, every dungeon was accounted for as occupied by trusted convicts, so that there was no opportunity for a stool to be hidden away and listening.

Of me, only, were the convicts dubious, for I was the one man who had not been in the plot. They put me through a searching examination. I could but tell them how I had just emerged from dungeon and jacket in the morning, and without rhyme or reason, so far as I could discover, had been put back in the dungeon after being out only several hours. My record as an incorrigible was in my favour, and soon they began to talk.

As I lay there and listened, for the first time I learned of the break that had been a-hatching. "Who had squealed?" was their one quest, and throughout the night the quest was pursued. The quest for Cecil Winwood was vain, and the suspicion against him was general.

"There's only one thing, lads," Skysail Jack finally said. "It'll soon be morning, and then they'll take us out and give us bloody hell. We were caught dead to rights with our clothes on. Winwood crossed us and squealed. They're going to get us out one by one and mess us up. There's forty of us. Any lyin's bound to be found out. So each lad, when they sweat him, just tells the truth, the whole truth, so help him God."

And there, in that dark hole of man's inhumanity, from dungeon cell to dungeon cell, their mouths against the gratings, the two-score lifers solemnly pledged themselves before God to tell the truth.

Little good did their truth-telling do them. At nine o'clock the guards, paid bravoes of the smug citizens who constitute the state, full of meat and sleep, were upon us. Not only had we had no breakfast, but we had had no water. And beaten men are prone to feverishness. I wonder, my reader, if you can glimpse or guess the faintest connotation of a man beaten — "beat up," we prisoners call it. But no, I shall not tell you. Let it suffice to know that these beaten, feverish men lay seven hours without water.

At nine the guards arrived. There were not many of them. There was no need for many, because they unlocked only one dungeon at a time. They were equipped with pick-handles — a handy tool for the "disciplining" of a helpless man. One dungeon at a time, and dungeon by dungeon, they messed and pulped the lifers. They were impartial. I received the same pulping as the rest. And this was merely the beginning, the preliminary to the examination each man was to undergo alone in the presence of the paid brutes of the state. It was the forecast to each man of what each man might expect in inquisition hall.

I have been through most of the red hells of prison life, but, worst of all, far worse than what they intend to do with me in a short while, was the particular hell of the dungeons in the days that followed.

Long Bill Hodge, the hard-bitten mountaineer, was the first man interrogated. He came back two hours later — or, rather, they conveyed him back, and threw him on the stone of his dungeon floor. They then took away Luigi Polazzo, a San Francisco hoodlum, the first native generation of

Italian parentage, who jeered and sneered at them and challenged them to wreak their worst upon him.

It was some time before Long Bill Hodge mastered his pain sufficiently to be coherent.

“What about this dynamite?” he demanded. “Who knows anything about dynamite?”

And of course nobody knew, although it had been the burden of the interrogation put to him.

Luigi Polazzo came back in a little less than two hours, and he came back a wreck that babbled in delirium and could give no answer to the questions showered upon him along the echoing corridor of dungeons by the men who were yet to get what he had got, and who desired greatly to know what things had been done to him and what interrogations had been put to him.

Twice again in the next forty-eight hours Luigi was taken out and interrogated. After that, a gibbering imbecile, he went to live in Bughouse Alley. He has a strong constitution. His shoulders are broad, his nostrils wide, his chest is deep, his blood is pure; he will continue to gibber in Bughouse Alley long after I have swung off and escaped the torment of the penitentiaries of California.

Man after man was taken away, one at a time, and the wrecks of men were brought back, one by one, to rave and howl in the darkness. And as I lay there and listened to the moaning and the groaning, and all the idle chattering of pain-addled wits, somehow, vaguely reminiscent, it seemed to me that somewhere, some time, I had sat in a high place, callous and proud, and listened to a similar chorus of moaning and groaning. Afterwards, as you shall learn, I identified this reminiscence and knew that the moaning and the groaning was of the sweep-slaves manacled to their benches, which I heard from above, on the poop, a soldier passenger on a galley of old Rome. That was when I sailed for Alexandria, a captain of men, on my way to Jerusalem . . . but that is a story I shall tell you later. In the meanwhile . . . .

CHAPTER IV

In the meanwhile obtained the horror of the dungeons, after the discovery of the plot to break prison. And never, during those eternal hours of waiting, was it absent from my consciousness that I should follow these other convicts out, endure the hells of inquisition they endured, and be brought back a wreck and flung on the stone floor of my stone-walled, iron-doored dungeon.

They came for me. Ungraciously and ungently, with blow and curse, they haled me forth, and I faced Captain Jamie and Warden Atherton, themselves arrayed with the strength of half a dozen state-bought, tax-paid brutes of guards who lingered in the room to do any bidding. But they were not needed.

"Sit down," said Warden Atherton, indicating a stout arm-chair.

I, beaten and sore, without water for a night long and a day long, faint with hunger, weak from a beating that had been added to five days in the dungeon and eighty hours in the jacket, oppressed by the calamity of human fate, apprehensive of what was to happen to me from what I had seen happen to the others — I, a wavering waif of a human man and an erstwhile professor of agronomy in a quiet college town, I hesitated to accept the invitation to sit down.

Warden Atherton was a large man and a very powerful man. His hands flashed out to a grip on my shoulders. I was a straw in his strength. He lifted me clear of the floor and crashed me down in the chair.

"Now," he said, while I gasped and swallowed my pain, "tell me all about it, Standing. Spit it out — all of it, if you know what's healthy for you."

"I don't know anything about what has happened . . .", I began.

That was as far as I got. With a growl and a leap he was upon me. Again he lifted me in the air and crashed me down into the chair.

"No nonsense, Standing," he warned. "Make a clean breast of it. Where is the dynamite?"

"I don't know anything of any dynamite," I protested.

Once again I was lifted and smashed back into the chair.

I have endured tortures of various sorts, but when I reflect upon them in the quietness of these my last days, I am confident that no other torture was quite the equal of that chair torture. By my body that stout chair was battered out of any semblance of a chair. Another chair was brought, and in time that chair was demolished. But more chairs were brought, and the eternal questioning about the dynamite went on.

When Warden Atherton grew tired, Captain Jamie relieved him; and then the guard Monohan took Captain Jamie's place in smashing me down into the chair. And always it was dynamite, dynamite, "Where is the dynamite?" and there was no dynamite. Why, toward the last I would have given a large portion of my immortal soul for a few pounds of dynamite to which I could confess.

I do not know how many chairs were broken by my body. I fainted times without number, and toward the last the whole thing became nightmarish. I was half-carried, half-shoved and dragged back to the dark. There, when I became conscious, I found a stool in my dungeon. He was a pallid-faced, little dope-fiend of a short-timer who would do anything to obtain the drug. As soon as I recognized him I crawled to the grating and shouted out along the corridor:

"There is a stool in with me, fellows! He's Ignatius Irvine! Watch out what you say!"

The outburst of imprecations that went up would have shaken the fortitude of a braver man than Ignatius Irvine. He was pitiful in his terror, while all about him, roaring like beasts, the pain-racked lifers told him what awful things they would do to him in the years that were to come.

Had there been secrets, the presence of a stool in the dungeons would have kept the men quiet, As it was, having all sworn to tell the truth, they talked openly before Ignatius Irvine. The one great puzzle was the dynamite, of which they were as much in the dark as was I. They appealed to me. If I knew anything about the dynamite they begged me to confess it and save them all from further misery. And I could tell them only the truth, that I knew of no dynamite.

One thing the stool told me, before the guards removed him, showed how serious was this matter of the dynamite. Of course, I passed the word along, which was that not a wheel had turned in the prison all day. The thousands of convict-workers had remained locked in their cells, and the outlook was that not one of the various prison-factories would be operated again until after the discovery of some dynamite that somebody had hidden somewhere in the prison.

And ever the examination went on. Ever, one at a time, convicts were dragged away and dragged or carried back again. They reported that Warden Atherton and Captain Jamie, exhausted by their efforts, relieved each other every two hours. While one slept, the other examined. And they slept in their clothes in the very room in which strong man after strong man was being broken.

And hour by hour, in the dark dungeons, our madness of torment grew. Oh, trust me as one who knows, hanging is an easy thing compared with the way live men may be hurt in all the life of them and still live. I, too, suffered equally with them from pain and thirst; but added to my suffering was the fact that I remained conscious to the sufferings of the others. I had been an incorrigible for two years, and my nerves and brain were hardened to suffering. It is a frightful thing to see a strong man broken. About me, at the one time, were forty strong men being broken. Ever the cry for water went up, and the place became lunatic with the crying, sobbing, babbling and raving of men in delirium.

Don’t you see? Our truth, the very truth we told, was our damnation. When forty men told the same things with such unanimity, Warden Atherton and Captain Jamie could only conclude that the testimony was a memorized lie which each of the forty rattled off parrot-like.

From the standpoint of the authorities, their situation was as desperate as ours. As I learned afterward, the Board of Prison Directors had been summoned by telegraph, and two companies of state militia were being rushed to the prison.

It was winter weather, and the frost is sometimes shrewd even in a California winter. We had no blankets in the dungeons. Please know that it is very cold to stretch bruised human flesh on frosty stone. In the end they did give us water. Jeering and cursing us, the guards ran in the fire-hoses and played the fierce streams on us, dungeon by dungeon, hour after hour, until our bruised flesh was battered all anew by the violence with which the water smote us, until we stood knee-deep in the water which we had raved for and for which now we raved to cease.

I shall skip the rest of what happened in the dungeons. In passing I shall merely state that no one of those forty lifers was ever the same again. Luigi Polazzo never recovered his reason. Long Bill Hodge slowly lost his sanity, so that a year later, he, too, went to live in Bughouse Alley. Oh, and others followed Hodge and Polazzo; and others, whose physical stamina had been impaired, fell victims to prison-tuberculosis. Fully 25 per cent. of the forty have died in the succeeding six years.

After my five years in solitary, when they took me away from San Quentin for my trial, I saw Skysail Jack. I could see little, for I was blinking in the sunshine like a bat, after five years of darkness; yet I saw enough of Skysail Jack to pain my heart. It was in crossing the Prison Yard that I saw him. His hair had turned white. He was prematurely old. His chest had caved in. His cheeks were sunken. His hands shook as with palsy. He tottered as he walked. And his eyes blurred with tears as he recognized me, for I, too, was a sad wreck of what had once been a man. I weighed eighty-seven pounds. My hair, streaked with gray, was a five-years' growth, as were my beard and moustache. And I, too, tottered as I walked, so that the guards helped to lead me across that sun-blinding patch of yard. And Skysail Jack and I peered and knew each other under the wreckage.

Men such as he are privileged, even in a prison, so that he dared an infraction of the rules by speaking to me in a cracked and quavering voice.

"You're a good one, Standing," he cackled. "You never squealed."

"But I never knew, Jack," I whispered back — I was compelled to whisper, for five years of disuse had well-nigh lost me my voice. "I don't think there ever was any dynamite."

"That's right," he cackled, nodding his head childishly. "Stick with it. Don't ever let'm know. You're a good one. I take my hat off to you, Standing. You never squealed."

And the guards led me on, and that was the last I saw of Skysail Jack. It was plain that even he had become a believer in the dynamite myth.

* * * * *

Twice they had me before the full Board of Directors. I was alternately bullied and cajoled. Their attitude resolved itself into two propositions. If I delivered up the dynamite, they would give me a nominal punishment of thirty days in the dungeon and then make me a trusty in the prison library. If I persisted in my stubbornness and did not yield up the dynamite, then they would put me in solitary for the rest of my sentence. In my case, being a life prisoner, this was tantamount to condemning me to solitary confinement for life.

Oh, no; California is civilized. There is no such law on the statute books. It is a cruel and unusual punishment, and no modern state would be guilty of such a law. Nevertheless, in the history of California I am the third man who has been condemned for life to solitary confinement. The other two were Jake Oppenheimer and Ed Morrell. I shall tell you about them soon, for I rotted with them for years in the cells of silence.

Oh, another thing. They are going to take me out and hang me in a little while — no, not for killing Professor Haskell. I got life-imprisonment for that. They are going to take me out and hang me because I was found guilty of assault and battery. And this is not prison discipline. It is law, and as law it will be found in the criminal statutes.

I believe I made a man's nose bleed. I never saw it bleed, but that was the evidence. Thurston, his name was. He was a guard at San Quentin. He weighed one hundred and seventy pounds and was in good health. I weighed under ninety pounds, was blind as a bat from the long darkness, and had been so long pent in narrow walls that I was made dizzy by large open spaces. Really, mime was a well-defined case of incipient agoraphobia, as I quickly learned that day I escaped from solitary and punched the guard Thurston on the nose.

I struck him on the nose and made it bleed when he got in my way and tried to catch hold of me. And so they are going to hang me. It is the written law of the State of California that a lifetimer like me is guilty of a capital crime when he strikes a prison guard like Thurston. Surely, he could not have been inconvenienced more than half an hour by that bleeding nose; and yet they are going to hang me for it.

And, see! This law, in my case, is *ex post facto*. It was not a law at the time I killed Professor Haskell. It was not passed until after I received my life-sentence. And this is the very point: my life-sentence gave me my status under this law which had not yet been written on the books. And it is because of my status of lifetimer that I am to be hanged for battery committed on the guard Thurston. It is clearly *ex post facto*, and, therefore, unconstitutional.

But what bearing has the Constitution on constitutional lawyers when they want to put the notorious Professor Darrell Standing out of the way? Nor do I even establish the precedent with my execution. A year ago, as everybody who reads the newspapers knows, they hanged Jake Oppenheimer, right here in Folsom, for a precisely similar offence . . . only, in his case of battery, he was not guilty of making a guard's nose bleed. He cut a convict unintentionally with a bread-knife.

It is strange — life and men's ways and laws and tangled paths. I am writing these lines in the very cell in Murderers' Row that Jake Oppenheimer occupied ere they took him out and did to him what they are going to do to me.

I warned you I had many things to write about. I shall now return to my narrative. The Board of Prison Directors gave me my choice: a prison trustyship and surcease from the jute-looms if I gave up the non-existent dynamite; life imprisonment in solitary if I refused to give up the non-existent dynamite.

They gave me twenty-four hours in the jacket to think it over. Then I was brought before the Board a second time. What could I do? I could not lead them to the dynamite that was not. I told them so, and they told me I was a liar. They told me I was a hard case, a dangerous man, a moral degenerate, the criminal of the century. They told me many other things, and then they carried me away to the solitary cells. I was put into Number One cell. In Number Five lay Ed Morrell. In Number Twelve lay Jake Oppenheimer. And he had been there for ten years. Ed Morrell had been in his cell only one year. He was serving a fifty-years' sentence. Jake Oppenheimer was a lifer. And so was I a lifer. Wherefore the outlook was that the three of us would remain there for a long time. And yet, six years only are past, and not one of us is in solitary. Jake Oppenheimer was swung off. Ed Morrell was made head trusty of San Quentin and then pardoned out only the other day. And here I am in Folsom waiting the day duly set by Judge Morgan, which will be my last day.

The fools! As if they could throttle my immortality with their clumsy device of rope and scaffold! I shall walk, and walk again, oh, countless times, this fair earth. And I shall walk in the flesh, be prince and peasant, savant and fool, sit in the high place and groan under the wheel.

CHAPTER V

It was very lonely, at first, in solitary, and the hours were long. Time was marked by the regular changing of the guards, and by the alternation of day and night. Day was only a little light, but it was better than the all-dark of the night. In solitary the day was an ooze, a slimy seepage of light from the bright outer world.

Never was the light strong enough to read by. Besides, there was nothing to read. One could only lie and think and think. And I was a lifer, and it seemed certain, if I did not do a miracle, make thirty-five pounds of dynamite out of nothing, that all the years of my life would be spent in the silent dark.

My bed was a thin and rotten tick of straw spread on the cell floor. One thin and filthy blanket constituted the covering. There was no chair, no table — nothing but the tick of straw and the thin, aged blanket. I was ever a short sleeper and ever a busy-brained man. In solitary one grows sick of oneself in his thoughts, and the only way to escape oneself is to sleep. For years I had averaged five hours' sleep a night. I now cultivated sleep. I made a science of it. I became able to sleep ten hours, then twelve hours, and, at last, as high as fourteen and fifteen hours out of the twenty-four. But beyond that I could not go, and, perforce, was compelled to lie awake and think and think. And that way, for an active-brained man, lay madness.

I sought devices to enable me mechanically to abide my waking hours. I squared and cubed long series of numbers, and by concentration and will carried on most astonishing geometric progressions. I even dallied with the squaring of the circle . . . until I found myself beginning to believe that that possibility could be accomplished. Whereupon, realizing that there, too, lay madness, I forwent the squaring of the circle, although I assure you it required a considerable sacrifice on my part, for the mental exercise involved was a splendid time-killer.

By sheer visualization under my eyelids I constructed chess-boards and played both sides of long games through to checkmate. But when I had become expert at this visualized game of memory the exercise palled on me. Exercise it was, for there could be no real contest when the same player played both sides. I tried, and tried vainly, to split my personality into two personalities and to pit one against the other. But ever I remained the one player, with no planned ruse or strategy on one side that the other side did not immediately apprehend.

And time was very heavy and very long. I played games with flies, with ordinary house-flies that oozed into solitary as did the dim gray light; and learned that they possessed a sense of play. For instance, lying on the cell floor, I established an arbitrary and imaginary line along the wall some three feet above the floor. When they rested on the wall above this line they were left in peace. The instant they lighted on the wall below the line I tried to catch them. I was careful never to hurt them, and, in time, they knew as precisely as did I where ran the imaginary line. When they desired to play, they lighted below the line, and often for an hour at a time a single fly would engage in the sport. When it grew tired, it would come to rest on the safe territory above.

Of the dozen or more flies that lived with me, there was only one who did not care for the game. He refused steadfastly to play, and, having learned the penalty of alighting below the line, very carefully avoided the unsafe territory. That fly was a sullen, disgruntled creature. As the convicts would say, it had a "grouch" against the world. He never played with the other flies either. He was strong and healthy, too; for I studied him long to find out. His indisposition for play was temperamental, not physical.

Believe me, I knew all my flies. It was surprising to me the multitude of differences I distinguished between them. Oh, each was distinctly an individual — not merely in size and markings, strength, and speed of flight, and in the manner and fancy of flight and play, of dodge and dart, of wheel and swiftly repeat or wheel and reverse, of touch and go on the danger wall, or of feint the touch and alight elsewhere within the zone. They were likewise sharply differentiated in the minutest shades of mentality and temperament.

I knew the nervous ones, the phlegmatic ones. There was a little undersized one that would fly into real rages, sometimes with me, sometimes with its fellows. Have you ever seen a colt or a calf throw up its heels and dash madly about the pasture from sheer excess of vitality and spirits? Well, there was one fly — the keenest player of them all, by the way — who, when it had alighted three or four times in rapid succession on my taboo wall and succeeded each time in eluding the velvet-careful swoop of my hand, would grow so excited and jubilant that it would dart around and around my head at top speed, wheeling, veering, reversing, and always keeping within the limits of the narrow circle in which it celebrated its triumph over me.

Why, I could tell well in advance when any particular fly was making up its mind to begin to play. There are a thousand details in this one matter alone that I shall not bore you with, although these details did serve to keep me from being bored too utterly during that first period in solitary. But one thing I must tell you. To me it is most memorable — the time when the one with a grouch, who never played, alighted in a moment of absent-mindedness within the taboo precinct and was immediately captured in my hand. Do you know, he sulked for an hour afterward.

And the hours were very long in solitary; nor could I sleep them all away; nor could I while them away with house-flies, no matter how intelligent. For house-flies are house-flies, and I was a man, with a man's brain; and my brain was trained and active, stuffed with culture and science, and always geared to a high tension of eagerness to do. And there was nothing to do, and my thoughts ran abominably on in vain speculations. There was my pentose and methyl-pentose determination in grapes and wines to which I had devoted my last summer vacation at the Asti Vineyards. I had all but completed the series of experiments. Was anybody else going on with it, I wondered; and if so, with what success?

You see, the world was dead to me. No news of it filtered in. The history of science was making fast, and I was interested in a thousand subjects. Why, there was my theory of the hydrolysis of casein by trypsin, which Professor Walters had been carrying out in his laboratory. Also, Professor Schleimer had similarly been collaborating with me in the detection of phytosterol in mixtures of animal and vegetable fats. The work surely was going on, but with what results? The very thought of all this activity just beyond the prison walls and in which I could take no part, of which I was never even to hear, was maddening. And in the meantime I lay there on my cell floor and played games with house-flies.

And yet all was not silence in solitary. Early in my confinement I used to hear, at irregular intervals, faint, low tappings. From farther away I also heard fainter and lower tappings. Continually these tappings were interrupted by the snarling of the guard. On occasion, when the tapping went on too persistently, extra guards were summoned, and I knew by the sounds that men were being strait-jacketed.

The matter was easy of explanation. I had known, as every prisoner in San Quentin knew, that the two men in solitary were Ed Morrell and Jake Oppenheimer. And I knew that these were the two men who tapped knuckle-talk to each other and were punished for so doing.

That the code they used was simple I had not the slightest doubt, yet I devoted many hours to a vain effort to work it out. Heaven knows — it had to be simple, yet I could not make head nor tail of it. And simple it proved to be, when I learned it; and simplest of all proved the trick they employed which had so baffled me. Not only each day did they change the point in the alphabet where the code initialled, but they changed it every conversation, and, often, in the midst of a conversation.

Thus, there came a day when I caught the code at the right initial, listened to two clear sentences of conversation, and, the next time they talked, failed to understand a word. But that first time!

"Say — Ed — what — would — you — give — right — now — for — brown — papers — and — a — sack — of — Bull — Durham!" asked the one who tapped from farther away.

I nearly cried out in my joy. Here was communication! Here was companionship! I listened eagerly, and the nearer tapping, which I guessed must be Ed Morrell's, replied:

"I — would — do — twenty — hours — strait — in — the — jacket — for — a — five — cent — sack — "

Then came the snarling interruption of the guard: "Cut that out, Morrell!"

It may be thought by the layman that the worst has been done to men sentenced to solitary for life, and therefore that a mere guard has no way of compelling obedience to his order to cease tapping.

But the jacket remains. Starvation remains. Thirst remains. Man-handling remains. Truly, a man pent in a narrow cell is very helpless.

So the tapping ceased, and that night, when it was next resumed, I was all at sea again. By pre-arrangement they had changed the initial letter of the code. But I had caught the clue, and, in the matter of several days, occurred again the same initialment I had understood. I did not wait on courtesy.

"Hello," I tapped

"Hello, stranger," Morrell tapped back; and, from Oppenheimer, "Welcome to our city."

They were curious to know who I was, how long I was condemned to solitary, and why I had been so condemned. But all this I put to the side in order first to learn their system of changing the code initial. After I had this clear, we talked. It was a great day, for the two lifers had become three, although they accepted me only on probation. As they told me long after, they feared I might be a stool placed there to work a frame-up on them. It had been done before, to Oppenheimer, and he had paid dearly for the confidence he reposed in Warden Atherton's tool.

To my surprise — yes, to my elation be it said — both my fellow-prisoners knew me through my record as an incorrigible. Even into the living grave Oppenheimer had occupied for ten years had my fame, or notoriety, rather, penetrated.

I had much to tell them of prison happenings and of the outside world. The conspiracy to escape of the forty lifers, the search for the alleged dynamite, and all the treacherous frame-up of Cecil Winwood was news to them. As they told me, news did occasionally dribble into solitary by way of the guards, but they had had nothing for a couple of months. The present guards on duty in solitary were a particularly bad and vindictive set.

Again and again that day we were cursed for our knuckle talking by whatever guard was on. But we could not refrain. The two of the living dead had become three, and we had so much to say, while the manner of saying it was exasperatingly slow and I was not so proficient as they at the knuckle game.

"Wait till Pie-Face comes on to-night," Morrell rapped to me. "He sleeps most of his watch, and we can talk a streak."

How we did talk that night! Sleep was farthest from our eyes. Pie-Face Jones was a mean and bitter man, despite his fatness; but we blessed that fatness because it persuaded to stolen snatches of slumber. Nevertheless our incessant tapping bothered his sleep and irritated him so that he reprimanded us repeatedly. And by the other night guards we were roundly cursed. In the morning all reported much tapping during the night, and we paid for our little holiday; for, at nine, came Captain Jamie with several guards to lace us into the torment of the jacket. Until nine the following morning, for twenty-four straight hours, laced and helpless on the floor, without food or water, we paid the price for speech.

Oh, our guards were brutes! And under their treatment we had to harden to brutes in order to live. Hard work makes calloused hands. Hard guards make hard prisoners. We continued to talk, and, on occasion, to be jacketed for punishment. Night was the best time, and, when substitute guards chanced to be on, we often talked through a whole shift.

Night and day were one with us who lived in the dark. We could sleep any time, we could knuckle-talk only on occasion. We told one another much of the history of our lives, and for long hours Morrell and I have lain silently, while steadily, with faint, far taps, Oppenheimer slowly spelled out his life-story, from the early years in a San Francisco slum, through his gang-training, through his initiation into all that was vicious, when as a lad of fourteen he served as night messenger in the red light district, through his first detected infraction of the laws, and on and on through thefts and robberies to the treachery of a comrade and to red slayings inside prison walls.

They called Jake Oppenheimer the "Human Tiger." Some cub reporter coined the phrase that will long outlive the man to whom it was applied. And yet I ever found in Jake Oppenheimer all the cardinal traits of right humanness. He was faithful and loyal. I know of the times he has taken punishment in preference to informing on a comrade. He was brave. He was patient. He was capable of self-sacrifice — I could tell a story of this, but shall not take the time. And justice, with him, was a passion. The prison-killings done by him were due entirely to this extreme sense of justice. And he had a splendid mind. A lifetime in prison, ten years of it in solitary, had not dimmed his brain.

Morrell, ever a true comrade, too had a splendid brain. In fact, and I who am about to die have the right to say it without incurring the charge of immodesty, the three best minds in San Quentin from the Warden down were the three that rotted there together in solitary. And here at the end of my days, reviewing all that I have known of life, I am compelled to the conclusion that strong minds are never docile. The stupid men, the fearful men, the men ungifted with passionate rightness and fearless championship — these are the men who make model prisoners. I thank all gods that Jake Oppenheimer, Ed Morrell, and I were not model prisoners.

CHAPTER VI

There is more than the germ of truth in things erroneous in the child's definition of memory as the thing one forgets with. To be able to forget means sanity. Incessantly to remember, means obsession, lunacy. So the problem I faced in solitary, where incessant remembering strove for possession of me, was the problem of forgetting. When I gamed with flies, or played chess with myself, or talked with my knuckles, I partially forgot. What I desired was entirely to forget.

There were the boyhood memories of other times and places — the "trailing clouds of glory" of Wordsworth. If a boy had had these memories, were they irretrievably lost when he had grown to manhood? Could this particular content of his boy brain be utterly eliminated? Or were these memories of other times and places still residual, asleep, immured in solitary in brain cells similarly to the way I was immured in a cell in San Quentin?

Solitary life-prisoners have been known to resurrect and look upon the sun again. Then why could not these other-world memories of the boy resurrect?

But how? In my judgment, by attainment of complete forgetfulness of present and of manhood past.

And again, how? Hypnotism should do it. If by hypnotism the conscious mind were put to sleep, and the subconscious mind awakened, then was the thing accomplished, then would all the dungeon doors of the brain be thrown wide, then would the prisoners emerge into the sunshine.

So I reasoned — with what result you shall learn. But first I must tell how, as a boy, I had had these other-world memories. I had glowed in the clouds of glory I trailed from lives aforetime. Like any boy, I had been haunted by the other beings I had been at other times. This had been during my process of becoming, ere the flux of all that I had ever been had hardened in the mould of the one personality that was to be known by men for a few years as Darrell Standing.

Let me narrate just one incident. It was up in Minnesota on the old farm. I was nearly six years old. A missionary to China, returned to the United States and sent out by the Board of Missions to raise funds from the farmers, spent the night in our house. It was in the kitchen just after supper, as my mother was helping me undress for bed, and the missionary was showing photographs of the Holy Land.

And what I am about to tell you I should long since have forgotten had I not heard my father recite it to wondering listeners so many times during my childhood.

I cried out at sight of one of the photographs and looked at it, first with eagerness, and then with disappointment. It had seemed of a sudden most familiar, in much the same way that my father's barn would have been in a photograph. Then it had seemed altogether strange. But as I continued to look the haunting sense of familiarity came back.

"The Tower of David," the missionary said to my mother.

"No!" I cried with great positiveness.

"You mean that isn't its name?" the missionary asked.

I nodded.

"Then what is its name, my boy?"

"It's name is . . ." I began, then concluded lamely, "I, forget."

"It don't look the same now," I went on after a pause. "They've ben fixin' it up awful."

Here the missionary handed to my mother another photograph he had sought out.

"I was there myself six months ago, Mrs. Standing." He pointed with his finger. "That is the Jaffa Gate where I walked in and right up to the Tower of David in the back of the picture where my finger is now. The authorities are pretty well agreed on such matters. El Kul'ah, as it was known by — "

But here I broke in again, pointing to rubbish piles of ruined masonry on the left edge of the photograph.

"Over there somewhere," I said. "That name you just spoke was what the Jews called it. But we called it something else. We called it . . . I forget."

"Listen to the youngster," my father chuckled. "You'd think he'd ben there."

I nodded my head, for in that moment I knew I had been there, though all seemed strangely different. My father laughed the harder, but the missionary thought I was making game of him. He handed me another photograph. It was just a bleak waste of a landscape, barren of trees and vegetation, a shallow canyon with easy-sloping walls of rubble. In the middle distance was a cluster of wretched, flat-roofed hovels.

"Now, my boy, where is that?" the missionary quizzed.

And the name came to me!

"Samaria," I said instantly.

My father clapped his hands with glee, my mother was perplexed at my antic conduct, while the missionary evinced irritation.

"The boy is right," he said. "It is a village in Samaria. I passed through it. That is why I bought it. And it goes to show that the boy has seen similar photographs before."

This my father and mother denied.

"But it's different in the picture," I volunteered, while all the time my memory was busy reconstructing the photograph. The general trend of the landscape and the line of the distant hills were the same. The differences I noted aloud and pointed out with my finger.

"The houses was about right here, and there was more trees, lots of trees, and lots of grass, and lots of goats. I can see 'em now, an' two boys drivin' 'em. An' right here is a lot of men walkin' behind one man. An' over there" — I pointed to where I had placed my village — "is a lot of tramps. They ain't got nothin' on exceptin' rags. An' they're sick. Their faces, an' hands, an' legs is all sores."

"He's heard the story in church or somewhere — you remember, the healing of the lepers in Luke," the missionary said with a smile of satisfaction. "How many sick tramps are there, my boy?"

I had learned to count to a hundred when I was five years old, so I went over the group carefully and announced:

"Ten of 'em. They're all wavin' their arms an' yellin' at the other men."

"But they don't come near them?" was the query.

I shook my head. "They just stand right there an' keep a-yellin' like they was in trouble."

"Go on," urged the missionary. "What next? What's the man doing in the front of the other crowd you said was walking along?"

"They've all stopped, an' he's sayin' something to the sick men. An' the boys with the goats 's stopped to look. Everybody's lookin'."

"And then?"

"That's all. The sick men are headin' for the houses. They ain't yellin' any more, an' they don't look sick any more. An' I just keep settin' on my horse a-lookin' on."

At this all three of my listeners broke into laughter.

“An’ I’m a big man!” I cried out angrily. “An’ I got a big sword!”

“The ten lepers Christ healed before he passed through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem,” the missionary explained to my parents. “The boy has seen slides of famous paintings in some magic lantern exhibition.”

But neither father nor mother could remember that I had ever seen a magic lantern.

“Try him with another picture,” father suggested.

“It’s all different,” I complained as I studied the photograph the missionary handed me. “Ain’t nothin’ here except that hill and them other hills. This ought to be a country road along here. An’ over there ought to be gardens, an’ trees, an’ houses behind big stone walls. An’ over there, on the other side, in holes in the rocks ought to be where they buried dead folks. You see this place? — they used to throw stones at people there until they killed ’m. I never seen ’m do it. They just told me about it.”

“And the hill?” the missionary asked, pointing to the central part of the print, for which the photograph seemed to have been taken. “Can you tell us the name of the hill?”

I shook my head.

“Never had no name. They killed folks there. I’ve seem ’m more ’n once.”

“This time he agrees with the majority of the authorities,” announced the missionary with huge satisfaction. “The hill is Golgotha, the Place of Skulls, or, as you please, so named because it resembles a skull. Notice the resemblance. That is where they crucified — ” He broke off and turned to me. “Whom did they crucify there, young scholar? Tell us what else you see.”

Oh, I saw — my father reported that my eyes were bulging; but I shook my head stubbornly and said:

“I ain’t a-goin’ to tell you because you’re laughin’ at me. I seen lots an’ lots of men killed there. They nailed ’em up, an’ it took a long time. I seen — but I ain’t a-goin’ to tell. I don’t tell lies. You ask dad an’ ma if I tell lies. He’d whale the stuffin’ out of me if I did. Ask ’m.”

And thereat not another word could the missionary get from me, even though he baited me with more photographs that sent my head whirling with a rush of memory-pictures and that urged and tickled my tongue with spates of speech which I sullenly resisted and overcame.

“He will certainly make a good Bible scholar,” the missionary told father and mother after I had kissed them good-night and departed for bed. “Or else, with that imagination, he’ll become a successful fiction-writer.”

Which shows how prophecy can go agley. I sit here in Murderers’ Row, writing these lines in my last days, or, rather, in Darrell Standing’s last days ere they take him out and try to thrust him into the dark at the end of a rope, and I smile to myself. I became neither Bible scholar nor novelist. On the contrary, until they buried me in the cells of silence for half a decade, I was everything that the missionary forecasted not — an agricultural expert, a professor of agronomy, a specialist in the science of the elimination of waste motion, a master of farm efficiency, a precise laboratory scientist where precision and adherence to microscopic fact are absolute requirements.

And I sit here in the warm afternoon, in Murderers’ Row, and cease from the writing of my memoirs to listen to the soothing buzz of flies in the drowsy air, and catch phrases of a low-voiced conversation between Josephus Jackson, the negro murderer on my right, and Bambeccio, the Italian murderer on my left, who are discussing, through grated door to grated door, back and forth past my grated door, the antiseptic virtues and excellences of chewing tobacco for flesh wounds.

And in my suspended hand I hold my fountain pen, and as I remember that other hands of me, in long gone ages, wielded ink-brush, and quill, and stylus, I also find thought-space in time to wonder if that missionary, when he was a little lad, ever trailed clouds of glory and glimpsed the brightness of old star-roving days.

Well, back to solitary, after I had learned the code of knuckle-talk and still found the hours of consciousness too long to endure. By self-hypnosis, which I began successfully to practise, I became able to put my conscious mind to sleep and to awaken and loose my subconscious mind. But the latter was an undisciplined and lawless thing. It wandered through all nightmarish madness, without coherence, without continuity of scene, event, or person.

My method of mechanical hypnosis was the soul of simplicity. Sitting with folded legs on my straw-mattress, I gazed fixedly at a fragment of bright straw which I had attached to the wall of my cell near the door where the most light was. I gazed at the bright point, with my eyes close to it, and tilted upward till they strained to see. At the same time I relaxed all the will of me and gave myself to the swaying dizziness that always eventually came to me. And when I felt myself sway out of balance backward, I closed my eyes and permitted myself to fall supine and unconscious on the mattress.

And then, for half-an-hour, ten minutes, or as long as an hour or so, I would wander erratically and foolishly through the stored memories of my eternal recurrence on earth. But times and places shifted too swiftly. I knew afterward, when I awoke, that I, Darrell Standing, was the linking personality that connected all bizarreness and grotesqueness. But that was all. I could never live out completely one full experience, one point of consciousness in time and space. My dreams, if dreams they may be called, were rhymeless and reasonless.

Thus, as a sample of my rovings: in a single interval of fifteen minutes of subconsciousness I have crawled and bellowed in the slime of the primeval world and sat beside Haas — further and cleaved the twentieth century air in a gas-driven monoplane. Awake, I remembered that I, Darrell Standing, in the flesh, during the year preceding my incarceration in San Quentin, had flown with Haas further over the Pacific at Santa Monica. Awake, I did not remember the crawling and the bellowing in the ancient slime. Nevertheless, awake, I reasoned that somehow I had remembered that early adventure in the slime, and that it was a verity of long-previous experience, when I was not yet Darrell Standing but somebody else, or something else that crawled and bellowed. One experience was merely more remote than the other. Both experiences were equally real — or else how did I remember them?

Oh, what a fluttering of luminous images and actions! In a few short minutes of loosed subconsciousness I have sat in the halls of kings, above the salt and below the salt, been fool and jester, man-at-arms, clerk and monk; and I have been ruler above all at the head of the table — temporal power in my own sword arm, in the thickness of my castle walls, and the numbers of my fighting men; spiritual power likewise mine by token of the fact that cowled priests and fat abbots sat beneath me and swigged my wine and swined my meat.

I have worn the iron collar of the serf about my neck in cold climes; and I have loved princesses of royal houses in the tropic-warmed and sun-scented night, where black slaves fanned the sultry air with fans of peacock plumes, while from afar, across the palm and fountains, drifted the roaring of lions and the cries of jackals. I have crouched in chill desert places warming my hands at fires builded of camel's dung; and I have lain in the meagre shade of sun-parched sage-brush by dry water-holes and yearned dry-tongued for water, while about me, dismembered and scattered in the alkali, were the bones of men and beasts who had yearned and died.

I have been sea-cuny and bravo, scholar and recluse. I have pored over hand-written pages of huge and musty tomes in the scholastic quietude and twilight of cliff-perched monasteries, while beneath on the lesser slopes, peasants still toiled beyond the end of day among the vines and olives and drove in from pastures the blatting goats and lowing kine; yes, and I have led shouting rabbles down the wheel-worn, chariot-rutted paves of ancient and forgotten cities; and, solemn-voiced and grave as death, I have enunciated the law, stated the gravity of the infraction, and imposed the due death on men, who, like Darrell Standing in Folsom Prison, had broken the law.

Aloft, at giddy mastheads oscillating above the decks of ships, I have gazed on sun-flashed water where coral-growths iridesced from profounds of turquoise deeps, and conned the ships into the safety of mirrored lagoons where the anchors rumbled down close to palm-fronded beaches of sea-pounded coral rock; and I have striven on forgotten battlefields of the elder days, when the sun went down on slaughter that did not cease and that continued through the night-hours with the stars shining down and with a cool night wind blowing from distant peaks of snow that failed to chill the sweat of battle; and again, I have been little Darrell Standing, bare-footed in the dew-lush grass of spring on the Minnesota farm, chilblained when of frosty mornings I fed the cattle in their breath-steaming stalls, sobered to fear and awe of the splendour and terror of God when I sat on Sundays under the rant and preachment of the New Jerusalem and the agonies of hell-fire.

Now, the foregoing were the glimpses and glimmerings that came to me, when, in Cell One of Solitary in San Quentin, I stared myself unconscious by means of a particle of bright, light-radiating straw. How did these things come to me? Surely I could not have manufactured them out of nothing inside my pent walls any more than could I have manufactured out of nothing the thirty-five pounds of dynamite so ruthlessly demanded of me by Captain Jamie, Warden Atherton, and the Prison Board of Directors.

I am Darrell Standing, born and raised on a quarter section of land in Minnesota, erstwhile professor of agronomy, a prisoner incorrigible in San Quentin, and at present a death-sentenced man in Folsom. I do not know, of Darrell Standing's experience, these things of which I write and which I have dug from out my store-houses of subconsciousness. I, Darrell Standing, born in Minnesota and soon to die by the rope in California, surely never loved daughters of kings in the courts of kings; nor fought cutlass to cutlass on the swaying decks of ships; nor drowned in the spirit-rooms of ships, guzzling raw liquor to the wassail-shouting and death-singing of seamen, while the ship lifted and crashed on the black-toothed rocks and the water bubbled overhead, beneath, and all about.

Such things are not of Darrell Standing's experience in the world. Yet I, Darrell Standing, found these things within myself in solitary in San Quentin by means of mechanical self-hypnosis. No more were these experiences Darrell Standing's than was the word "Samaria" Darrell Standing's when it leapt to his child lips at sight of a photograph.

One cannot make anything out of nothing. In solitary I could not so make thirty-five pounds of dynamite. Nor in solitary, out of nothing in Darrell Standing's experience, could I make these wide, far visions of time and space. These things were in the content of my mind, and in my mind I was just beginning to learn my way about.

CHAPTER VII

So here was my predicament: I knew that within myself was a Golconda of memories of other lives, yet I was unable to do more than flit like a madman through those memories. I had my Golconda but could not mine it.

I remembered the case of Stainton Moses, the clergyman who had been possessed by the personalities of St. Hippolytus, Plotinus, Athenodorus, and of that friend of Erasmus named Grocyn. And when I considered the experiments of Colonel de Rochas, which I had read in tyro fashion in other and busier days, I was convinced that Stainton Moses had, in previous lives, been those personalities that on occasion seemed to possess him. In truth, they were he, they were the links of the chain of recurrence.

But more especially did I dwell upon the experiments of Colonel de Rochas. By means of suitable hypnotic subjects he claimed that he had penetrated backwards through time to the ancestors of his subjects. Thus, the case of Josephine which he describes. She was eighteen years old and she lived at Voiron, in the department of the Isère. Under hypnotism Colonel de Rochas sent her adventuring back through her adolescence, her girlhood, her childhood, breast-infancy, and the silent dark of her mother's womb, and, still back, through the silence and the dark of the time when she, Josephine, was not yet born, to the light and life of a previous living, when she had been a churlish, suspicious, and embittered old man, by name Jean-Claude Bourdon, who had served his time in the Seventh Artillery at Besançon, and who died at the age of seventy, long bedridden. *Yes*, and did not Colonel de Rochas in turn hypnotize this shade of Jean-Claude Bourdon, so that he adventured farther back into time, through infancy and birth and the dark of the unborn, until he found again light and life when, as a wicked old woman, he had been Philomène Carteron?

But try as I would with my bright bit of straw in the oozement of light into solitary, I failed to achieve any such definiteness of previous personality. I became convinced, through the failure of my experiments, that only through death could I clearly and coherently resurrect the memories of my previous selves.

But the tides of life ran strong in me. I, Darrell Standing, was so strongly disinclined to die that I refused to let Warden Atherton and Captain Jamie kill me. I was always so innately urged to live that sometimes I think that is why I am still here, eating and sleeping, thinking and dreaming, writing this narrative of my various me's, and awaiting the incontestable rope that will put an ephemeral period in my long-linked existence.

And then came death in life. I learned the trick, Ed Morrell taught it me, as you shall see. It began through Warden Atherton and Captain Jamie. They must have experienced a recrudescence of panic at thought of the dynamite they believed hidden. They came to me in my dark cell, and they told me plainly that they would jacket me to death if I did not confess where the dynamite was hidden. And they assured me that they would do it officially without any hurt to their own official skins. My death would appear on the prison register as due to natural causes.

Oh, dear, cotton-wool citizen, please believe me when I tell you that men are killed in prisons to-day as they have always been killed since the first prisons were built by men.

I well knew the terror, the agony, and the danger of the jacket. Oh, the men spirit-broken by the jacket! I have seen them. And I have seen men crippled for life by the jacket. I have seen men, strong men, men so strong that their physical stamina resisted all attacks of prison tuberculosis, after a prolonged bout with the jacket, their resistance broken down, fade away, and die of tuberculosis within six months. There was Slant-Eyed Wilson, with an unguessed weak heart of fear, who died in the jacket within the first hour while the unconvinced inefficient of a prison doctor looked on and smiled. And I have seen a man confess, after half an hour in the jacket, truths and fictions that cost him years of credits.

I had had my own experiences. At the present moment half a thousand scars mark my body. They go to the scaffold with me. Did I live a hundred years to come those same scars in the end would go to the grave with me.

Perhaps, dear citizen who permits and pays his hang-dogs to lace the jacket for you — perhaps you are unacquainted with the jacket. Let me describe, it, so that you will understand the method by which I achieved death in life, became a temporary master of time and space, and vaulted the prison walls to rove among the stars.

Have you ever seen canvas tarpaulins or rubber blankets with brass eyelets set in along the edges? Then imagine a piece of stout canvas, some four and one-half feet in length, with large and heavy brass eyelets running down both edges. The width of this canvas is never the full girth of the human body it is to surround. The width is also irregular — broadest at the shoulders, next broadest at the hips, and narrowest at the waist.

The jacket is spread on the floor. The man who is to be punished, or who is to be tortured for confession, is told to lie face-downward on the flat canvas. If he refuses, he is man-handled. After that he lays himself down with a will, which is the will of the hang-dogs, which is your will, dear citizen, who feeds and fees the hang-dogs for doing this thing for you.

The man lies face-downward. The edges of the jacket are brought as nearly together as possible along the centre of the man's back. Then a rope, on the principle of a shoe-lace, is run through the eyelets, and on the principle of a shoe-lacing the man is laced in the canvas. Only he is laced more severely than any person ever laces his shoe. They call it "cinching" in prison lingo. On occasion, when the guards are cruel and vindictive, or when the command has come down from above, in order to insure the severity of the lacing the guards press with their feet into the man's back as they draw the lacing tight.

Have you ever laced your shoe too tightly, and, after half an hour, experienced that excruciating pain across the instep of the obstructed circulation? And do you remember that after a few minutes of such pain you simply could not walk another step and had to untie the shoe-lace and ease the pressure? Very well. Then try to imagine your whole body so laced, only much more tightly, and that the squeeze, instead of being merely on the instep of one foot, is on your entire trunk, compressing to the seeming of death your heart, your lungs, and all the rest of your vital and essential organs.

I remember the first time they gave me the jacket down in the dungeons. It was at the beginning of my incorrigibility, shortly after my entrance to prison, when I was weaving my loom-task of a hundred yards a day in the jute-mill and finishing two hours ahead of the average day. Yes, and my jute-sacking was far above the average demanded. I was sent to the jacket that first time, according to the prison books, because of "skips" and "breaks" in the cloth, in short, because my work was defective. Of course this was ridiculous. In truth, I was sent to the jacket because I, a new convict, a master of efficiency, a trained expert in the elimination of waste motion, had elected to tell the stupid head weaver a few things he did not know about his business. And the head weaver, with Captain Jamie present, had me called to the table where atrocious weaving, such as could never have gone through my loom, was exhibited against me. Three times was I thus called to the table. The third calling meant punishment according to the loom-room rules. My punishment was twenty-four hours in the jacket.

They took me down into the dungeons. I was ordered to lie face-downward on the canvas spread flat upon the floor. I refused. One of the guards, Morrison, gulletted me with his thumbs. Mobins, the dungeon trusty, a convict himself, struck me repeatedly with his fists. In the end I lay down as directed. And, because of the struggle I had vexed them with, they laced me extra tight. Then they rolled me over like a log upon my back.

It did not seem so bad at first. When they closed my door, with clang and clash of levered boltage, and left me in the utter dark, it was eleven o'clock in the morning. For a few minutes I was aware merely of an uncomfortable constriction which I fondly believed would ease as I grew accustomed to it. On the contrary, my heart began to thump and my lungs seemed unable to draw sufficient air for my blood. This sense of suffocation was terrorizing, and every thump of the heart threatened to burst my already bursting lungs.

After what seemed hours, and after what, out of my countless succeeding experiences in the jacket I can now fairly conclude to have been not more than half-an-hour, I began to cry out, to yell, to scream, to howl, in a very madness of dying. The trouble was the pain that had arisen in my heart. It was a sharp, definite pain, similar to that of pleurisy, except that it stabbed hotly through the heart itself.

To die is not a difficult thing, but to die in such slow and horrible fashion was maddening. Like a trapped beast of the wild, I experienced ecstasies of fear, and yelled and howled until I realized that such vocal exercise merely stabbed my heart more hotly and at the same time consumed much of the little air in my lungs.

I gave over and lay quiet for a long time — an eternity it seemed then, though now I am confident that it could have been no longer than a quarter of an hour. I grew dizzy with semi-asphyxiation, and my heart thumped until it seemed surely it would burst the canvas that bound me. Again I lost control of myself and set up a mad howling for help.

In the midst of this I heard a voice from the next dungeon.

"Shut up," it shouted, though only faintly it percolated to me. "Shut up. You make me tired."

"I'm dying," I cried out.

"Pound your ear and forget it," was the reply.

"But I *am* dying," I insisted.

"Then why worry?" came the voice. "You'll be dead pretty quick an' out of it. Go ahead and croak, but don't make so much noise about it. You're interruptin' my beauty sleep."

So angered was I by this callous indifference that I recovered self-control and was guilty of no more than smothered groans. This endured an endless time — possibly ten minutes; and then a tingling numbness set up in all my body. It was like pins and needles, and for as long as it hurt like pins and needles I kept my head. But when the prickling of the multitudinous darts ceased to hurt and only the numbness remained and continued verging into greater numbness I once more grew frightened.

"How am I goin' to get a wink of sleep?" my neighbour, complained. "I ain't any more happy than you. My jacket's just as tight as yourn, an' I want to sleep an' forget it."

"How long have you been in?" I asked, thinking him a new-comer compared to the centuries I had already suffered.

"Since day before yesterday," was his answer.

"I mean in the jacket," I amended.

"Since day before yesterday, brother."

"My God!" I screamed.

"Yes, brother, fifty straight hours, an' you don't hear me raisin' a roar about it. They cinched me with their feet in my back. I am some tight, believe *me*. You ain't the only one that's got troubles. You ain't ben in an hour yet."

"I've been in hours and hours," I protested.

"Brother, you may think so, but it don't make it so. I'm just tellin' you you ain't ben in an hour. I heard 'm lacin' you."

The thing was incredible. Already, in less than an hour, I had died a thousand deaths. And yet this neighbour, balanced and equable, calm-voiced and almost beneficent despite the harshness of his first remarks, had been in the jacket fifty hours!

"How much longer are they going to keep you in?" I asked.

"The Lord only knows. Captain Jamie is real peeved with me, an' he won't let me out until I'm about croakin'. Now, brother, I'm going to give you the tip. The only way is shut your face an' forget it. Yellin' an' hollerin' don't win you no money in this joint. An' the way to forget is to forget. Just get to rememberin’ every girl you ever knew. That’ll cat up hours for you. Mebbe you’ll feel yourself gettin’ woozy. Well, get woozy. You can’t beat that for killin’ time. An’ when the girls won’t hold you, get to thinkin’ of the fellows you got it in for, an’ what you’d do to ’em if you got a chance, an’ what you’re goin’ to do to ’em when you get that same chance.”

That man was Philadelphia Red. Because of prior conviction he was serving fifty years for highway robbery committed on the streets of Alameda. He had already served a dozen of his years at the time he talked to me in the jacket, and that was seven years ago. He was one of the forty lifers who were double-crossed by Cecil Winwood. For that offence Philadelphia Red lost his credits. He is middle-aged now, and he is still in San Quentin. If he survives he will be an old man when they let him out.

I lived through my twenty-four hours, and I have never been the same man since. Oh, I don’t mean physically, although next morning, when they unlaced me, I was semi-paralyzed and in such a state of collapse that the guards had to kick me in the ribs to make me crawl to my feet. But I was a changed man mentally, morally. The brute physical torture of it was humiliation and affront to my spirit and to my sense of justice. Such discipline does not sweeten a man. I emerged from that first jacketing filled with a bitterness and a passionate hatred that has only increased through the years. My God — when I think of the things men have done to me! Twenty-four hours in the jacket! Little I thought that morning when they kicked me to my feet that the time would come when twenty-four hours in the jacket meant nothing; when a hundred hours in the jacket found me smiling when they released me; when two hundred and forty hours in the jacket found the same smile on my lips.

Yes, two hundred and forty hours. Dear cotton-woolly citizen, do you know what that means? It means ten days and ten nights in the jacket. Of course, such things are not done anywhere in the Christian world nineteen hundred years after Christ. I don’t ask you to believe me. I don’t believe it myself. I merely know that it was done to me in San Quentin, and that I lived to laugh at them and to compel them to get rid of me by swinging me off because I bloodied a guard’s nose.

I write these lines to-day in the Year of Our Lord 1913, and to-day, in the Year of Our Lord 1913, men are lying in the jacket in the dungeons of San Quentin.

I shall never forget, as long as further living and further lives be vouchsafed me, my parting from Philadelphia Red that morning. He had then been seventy-four hours in the jacket.

"Well, brother, you're still alive an' kickin'," he called to me, as I was totteringly dragged from my cell into the corridor of dungeons.

"Shut up, you, Red," the sergeant snarled at him.

"Forget it," was the retort.

"I'll get you yet, Red," the sergeant threatened.

"Think so?" Philadelphia Red queried sweetly, ere his tones turned to savageness. "Why, you old stiff, you couldn't get nothin'. You couldn't get a free lunch, much less the job you've got now, if it wasn't for your brother's pull. An' I guess we all ain't mistaken on the stink of the place where your brother's pull comes from."

It was admirable — the spirit of man rising above its extremity, fearless of the hurt any brute of the system could inflict.

"Well, so long, brother," Philadelphia Red next called to me. "So long. Be good, an' love the Warden. An' if you see 'em, just tell 'em that you saw me but that you didn't see me saw."

The sergeant was red with rage, and, by the receipt of various kicks and blows, I paid for Red's pleasantry.

CHAPTER VIII

In solitary, in Cell One, Warden Atherton and Captain Jamie proceeded to put me to the inquisition. As Warden Atherton said to me:

"Standing, you're going to come across with that dynamite, or I'll kill you in the jacket. Harder cases than you have come across before I got done with them. You've got your choice — dynamite or curtains."

"Then I guess it is curtains," I answered, "because I don't know of any dynamite."

This irritated the Warden to immediate action. "Lie down," he commanded.

I obeyed, for I had learned the folly of fighting three or four strong men. They laced me tightly, and gave me a hundred hours. Once each twenty-four hours I was permitted a drink of water. I had no desire for food, nor was food offered me. Toward the end of the hundred hours Jackson, the prison doctor, examined my physical condition several times.

But I had grown too used to the jacket during my incorrigible days to let a single jacketing injure me. Naturally, it weakened me, took the life out of me; but I had learned muscular tricks for stealing a little space while they were lacing me. At the end of the first hundred hours' bout I was worn and tired, but that was all. Another bout of this duration they gave me, after a day and a night to recuperate. And then they gave one hundred and fifty hours. Much of this time I was physically numb and mentally delirious. Also, by an effort of will, I managed to sleep away long hours.

Next, Warden Atherton tried a variation. I was given irregular intervals of jacket and recuperation. I never knew when I was to go into the jacket. Thus I would have ten hours' recuperation, and do twenty in the jacket; or I would receive only four hours' rest. At the most unexpected hours of the night my door would clang open and the changing guards would lace me. Sometimes rhythms were instituted. Thus, for three days and nights I alternated eight hours in the jacket and eight hours out. And then, just as I was growing accustomed to this rhythm, it was suddenly altered and I was given two days and nights straight.

And ever the eternal question was propounded to me: Where was the dynamite? Sometimes Warden Atherton was furious with me. On occasion, when I had endured an extra severe jacketing, he almost pleaded with me to confess. Once he even promised me three months in the hospital of absolute rest and good food, and then the trusty job in the library.

Dr. Jackson, a weak stick of a creature with a smattering of medicine, grew sceptical. He insisted that jacketing, no matter how prolonged, could never kill me; and his insistence was a challenge to the Warden to continue the attempt.

"These lean college guys 'd fool the devil," he grumbled. "They're tougher 'n raw-hide. Just the same we'll wear him down. Standing, you hear me. What you've got ain't a caution to what you're going to get. You might as well come across now and save trouble. I'm a man of my word. You've heard me say dynamite or curtains. Well, that stands. Take your choice."

"Surely you don't think I'm holding out because I enjoy it?" I managed to gasp, for at the moment Pie-Face Jones was forcing his foot into my back in order to cinch me tighter, while I was trying with my muscle to steal slack. "There is nothing to confess. Why, I'd cut off my right hand right now to be able to lead you to any dynamite."

"Oh, I've seen your educated kind before," he sneered. "You get wheels in your head, some of you, that make you stick to any old idea. You get baulky, like horses. Tighter, Jones; that ain't half a cinch. Standing, if you don't come across it's curtains. I stick by that."

One compensation I learned. As one grows weaker one is less susceptible to suffering. There is less hurt because there is less to hurt. And the man already well weakened grows weaker more slowly. It is of common knowledge that unusually strong men suffer more severely from ordinary sicknesses than do women or invalids. As the reserves of strength are consumed there is less strength to lose. After all superfluous flesh is gone what is left is stringy and resistant. In fact, that was what I became — a sort of string-like organism that persisted in living.

Morrell and Oppenheimer were sorry for me, and rapped me sympathy and advice. Oppenheimer told me he had gone through it, and worse, and still lived.

"Don't let them beat you out," he spelled with his knuckles. "Don't let them kill you, for that would suit them. And don't squeal on the plant."

"But there isn't any plant," I rapped back with the edge of the sole of my shoe against the grating — I was in the jacket at the time and so could talk only with my feet. "I don't know anything about the damned dynamite."

“That’s right,” Oppenheimer praised. “He’s the stuff, ain’t he, Ed?”

Which goes to show what chance I had of convincing Warden Atherton of my ignorance of the dynamite. His very persistence in the quest convinced a man like Jake Oppenheimer, who could only admire me for the fortitude with which I kept a close mouth.

During this first period of the jacket-inquisition I managed to sleep a great deal. My dreams were remarkable. Of course they were vivid and real, as most dreams are. What made them remarkable was their coherence and continuity. Often I addressed bodies of scientists on abstruse subjects, reading aloud to them carefully prepared papers on my own researches or on my own deductions from the researches and experiments of others. When I awakened my voice would seem still ringing in my ears, while my eyes still could see typed on the white paper whole sentences and paragraphs that I could read again and marvel at ere the vision faded. In passing, I call attention to the fact that at the time I noted that the process of reasoning employed in these dream speeches was invariably deductive.

Then there was a great farming section, extending north and south for hundreds of miles in some part of the temperate regions, with a climate and flora and fauna largely resembling those of California. Not once, nor twice, but thousands of different times I journeyed through this dream-region. The point I desire to call attention to was that it was always the same region. No essential feature of it ever differed in the different dreams. Thus it was always an eight-hour drive behind mountain horses from the alfalfa meadows (where I kept many Jersey cows) to the straggly village beside the big dry creek, where I caught the little narrow-gauge train. Every landmark in that eight-hour drive in the mountain buckboard, every tree, every mountain, every ford and bridge, every ridge and eroded hillside was ever the same.

In this coherent, rational farm-region of my strait-jacket dreams the minor details, according to season and to the labour of men, did change. Thus on the upland pastures behind my alfalfa meadows I developed a new farm with the aid of Angora goats. Here I marked the changes with every dream-visit, and the changes were in accordance with the time that elapsed between visits.

Oh, those brush-covered slopes! How I can see them now just as when the goats were first introduced. And how I remembered the consequent changes — the paths beginning to form as the goats literally ate their way through the dense thickets; the disappearance of the younger, smaller bushes that were not too tall for total browsing; the vistas that formed in all directions through the older, taller bushes, as the goats browsed as high as they could stand and reach on their hind legs; the driftage of the pasture grasses that followed in the wake of the clearing by the goats. Yes, the continuity of such dreaming was its charm. Came the day when the men with axes chopped down all the taller brush so as to give the goats access to the leaves and buds and bark. Came the day, in winter weather, when the dry denuded skeletons of all these bushes were gathered into heaps and burned. Came the day when I moved my goats on to other brush-impregnable hillsides, with following in their wake my cattle, pasturing knee-deep in the succulent grasses that grew where before had been only brush. And came the day when I moved my cattle on, and my plough-men went back and forth across the slopes' contour — ploughing the rich sod under to rot to live and crawling humous in which to bed my seeds of crops to be.

Yes, and in my dreams, often, I got off the little narrow-gauge train where the straggly village stood beside the big dry creek, and got into the buckboard behind my mountain horses, and drove hour by hour past all the old familiar landmarks of my alfalfa meadows, and on to my upland pastures where my rotated crops of corn and barley and clover were ripe for harvesting and where I watched my men engaged in the harvest, while beyond, ever climbing, my goats browsed the higher slopes of brush into cleared, tilled fields.

But these were dreams, frank dreams, fancied adventures of my deductive subconscious mind. Quite unlike them, as you shall see, were my other adventures when I passed through the gates of the living death and relived the reality of the other lives that had been mine in other days.

In the long hours of waking in the jacket I found that I dwelt a great deal on Cecil Winwood, the poet-forger who had wantonly put all this torment on me, and who was even then at liberty out in the free world again. No; I did not hate him. The word is too weak. There is no word in the language strong enough to describe my feelings. I can say only that I knew the gnawing of a desire for vengeance on him that was a pain in itself and that exceeded all the bounds of language. I shall not tell you of the hours I devoted to plans of torture on him, nor of the diabolical means and devices of torture that I invented for him. Just one example. I was enamoured of the ancient trick whereby an iron basin, containing a rat, is fastened to a man’s body. The only way out for the rat is through the man himself. As I say, I was enamoured of this until I realized that such a death was too quick, whereupon I dwelt long and favourably on the Moorish trick of — but no, I promised to relate no further of this matter. Let it suffice that many of my pain-maddening waking hours were devoted to dreams of vengeance on Cecil Winwood.

CHAPTER IX

One thing of great value I learned in the long, pain-weary hours of waking — namely, the mastery of the body by the mind. I learned to suffer passively, as, undoubtedly, all men have learned who have passed through the post-graduate courses of strait-jacketing. Oh, it is no easy trick to keep the brain in such serene repose that it is quite oblivious to the throbbing, exquisite complaint of some tortured nerve.

And it was this very mastery of the flesh by the spirit which I so acquired that enabled me easily to practise the secret Ed Morrell told to me.

“Think it is curtains?” Ed Morrell rapped to me one night.

I had just been released from one hundred hours, and I was weaker than I had ever been before. So weak was I that though my whole body was one mass of bruise and misery, nevertheless I scarcely was aware that I had a body.

“It looks like curtains,” I rapped back. “They will get me if they keep it up much longer.”

“Don’t let them,” he advised. “There is a way. I learned it myself, down in the dungeons, when Massie and I got ours good and plenty. I pulled through. But Massie croaked. If I hadn’t learned the trick, I’d have croaked along with him. You’ve got to be pretty weak first, before you try it. If you try it when you are strong, you make a failure of it, and then that queers you for ever after. I made the mistake of telling Jake the trick when he was strong. Of course, he could not pull it off, and in the times since when he did need it, it was too late, for his first failure had queered it. He won’t even believe it now. He thinks I am kidding him. Ain’t that right, Jake?”

And from cell thirteen Jake rapped back, “Don’t swallow it, Darrell. It’s a sure fairy story.”

“Go on and tell me,” I rapped to Morrell.

“That is why I waited for you to get real weak,” he continued. “Now you need it, and I am going to tell you. It’s up to you. If you have got the will you can do it. I’ve done it three times, and I know.”

“Well, what is it?” I rapped eagerly.

“The trick is to die in the jacket, to will yourself to die. I know you don’t get me yet, but wait. You know how you get numb in the jacket — how your arm or your leg goes to sleep. Now you can't help that, but you can take it for the idea and improve on it. Don't wait for your legs or anything to go to sleep. You lie on your back as comfortable as you can get, and you begin to use your will.

"And this is the idea you must think to yourself, and that you must believe all the time you're thinking it. If you don't believe, then there's nothing to it. The thing you must think and believe is that your body is one thing and your spirit is another thing. You are you, and your body is something else that don't amount to shucks. Your body don't count. You're the boss. You don't need any body. And thinking and believing all this you proceed to prove it by using your will. You make your body die.

"You begin with the toes, one at a time. You make your toes die. You will them to die. And if you've got the belief and the will your toes will die. That is the big job — to start the dying. Once you've got the first toe dead, the rest is easy, for you don't have to do any more believing. You know. Then you put all your will into making the rest of the body die. I tell you, Darrell, I know. I've done it three times.

"Once you get the dying started, it goes right along. And the funny thing is that you are all there all the time. Because your toes are dead don't make you in the least bit dead. By-and-by your legs are dead to the knees, and then to the thighs, and you are just the same as you always were. It is your body that is dropping out of the game a chunk at a time. And you are just you, the same you were before you began."

"And then what happens?" I queried.

"Well, when your body is all dead, and you are all there yet, you just skin out and leave your body. And when you leave your body you leave the cell. Stone walls and iron doors are to hold bodies in. They can't hold the spirit in. You see, you have proved it. You are spirit outside of your body. You can look at your body from outside of it. I tell you I know because I have done it three times — looked at my body lying there with me outside of it."

"Ha! ha! ha!" Jake Oppenheimer rapped his laughter thirteen cells away.

"You see, that's Jake's trouble," Morrell went on. "He can't believe. That one time he tried it he was too strong and failed. And now he thinks I am kidding."

"When you die you are dead, and dead men stay dead," Oppenheimer retorted.

"I tell you I've been dead three times," Morrell argued.

"And lived to tell us about it," Oppenheimer jeered.

"But don't forget one thing, Darrell," Morrell rapped to me. "The thing is ticklish. You have a feeling all the time that you are taking liberties. I can't explain it, but I always had a feeling if I was away when they came and let my body out of the jacket that I couldn't get back into my body again. I mean that my body would be dead for keeps. And I didn't want it to be dead. I didn't want to give Captain Jamie and the rest that satisfaction. But I tell you, Darrell, if you can turn the trick you can laugh at the Warden. Once you make your body die that way it don't matter whether they keep you in the jacket a month on end. You don't suffer none, and your body don't suffer. You know there are cases of people who have slept a whole year at a time. That's the way it will be with your body. It just stays there in the jacket, not hurting or anything, just waiting for you to come back.

"You try it. I am giving you the straight steer."

"And if he don't come back?" Oppenheimer, asked.

"Then the laugh will be on him, I guess, Jake," Morrell answered. "Unless, maybe, it will be on us for sticking round this old dump when we could get away that easy."

And here the conversation ended, for Pie-Face Jones, waking crustily from stolen slumber, threatened Morrell and Oppenheimer with a report next morning that would mean the jacket for them. Me he did not threaten, for he knew I was doomed for the jacket anyway.

I lay long there in the silence, forgetting the misery of my body while I considered this proposition Morrell had advanced. Already, as I have explained, by mechanical self-hypnosis I had sought to penetrate back through time to my previous selves. That I had partly succeeded I knew; but all that I had experienced was a fluttering of apparitions that merged erratically and were without continuity.

But Morrell's method was so patently the reverse of my method of self-hypnosis that I was fascinated. By my method, my consciousness went first of all. By his method, consciousness persisted last of all, and, when the body was quite gone, passed into stages so sublimated that it left the body, left the prison of San Quentin, and journeyed afar, and was still consciousness.

It was worth a trial, anyway, I concluded. And, despite the sceptical attitude of the scientist that was mine, I believed. I had no doubt I could do what Morrell said he had done three times. Perhaps this faith that so easily possessed me was due to my extreme debility. Perhaps I was not strong enough to be sceptical. This was the hypothesis already suggested by Morrell. It was a conclusion of pure empiricism, and I, too, as you shall see, demonstrated it empirically.

CHAPTER X

And above all things, next morning Warden Atherton came into my cell on murder intent. With him were Captain Jamie, Doctor Jackson, Pie-Face Jones, and Al Hutchins. Al Hutchins was serving a forty-years' sentence, and was in hopes of being pardoned out. For four years he had been head trusty of San Quentin. That this was a position of great power you will realize when I tell you that the graft alone of the head trusty was estimated at three thousand dollars a year. Wherefore Al Hutchins, in possession of ten or twelve thousand dollars and of the promise of a pardon, could be depended upon to do the Warden's bidding blind.

I have just said that Warden Atherton came into my cell intent on murder. His face showed it. His actions proved it.

"Examine him," he ordered Doctor Jackson.

That wretched apology of a creature stripped from me my dirt-encrusted shirt that I had worn since my entrance to solitary, and exposed my poor wasted body, the skin ridged like brown parchment over the ribs and sore-infested from the many bouts with the jacket. The examination was shamelessly perfunctory.

"Will he stand it?" the Warden demanded.

"Yes," Doctor Jackson answered.

"How's the heart?"

"Splendid."

"You think he'll stand ten days of it, Doc.?"

"Sure."

"I don't believe it," the Warden announced savagely. "But we'll try it just the same. — Lie down, Standing."

I obeyed, stretching myself face-downward on the flat-spread jacket. The Warden seemed to debate with himself for a moment.

"Roll over," he commanded.

I made several efforts, but was too weak to succeed, and could only sprawl and squirm in my helplessness.

"Putting it on," was Jackson's comment.

"Well, he won't have to put it on when I'm done with him," said the Warden. "Lend him a hand. I can't waste any more time on him."

So they rolled me over on my back, where I stared up into Warden Atherton's face.

"Standing," he said slowly, "I've given you all the rope I am going to. I am sick and tired of your stubbornness. My patience is exhausted. Doctor Jackson says you are in condition to stand ten days in the jacket. You can figure your chances. But I am going to give you your last chance now. Come across with the dynamite. The moment it is in my hands I'll take you out of here. You can bathe and shave and get clean clothes. I'll let you loaf for six months on hospital grub, and then I'll put you trusty in the library. You can't ask me to be fairer with you than that. Besides, you're not squealing on anybody. You are the only person in San Quentin who knows where the dynamite is. You won't hurt anybody's feelings by giving in, and you'll be all to the good from the moment you do give in. And if you don't — "

He paused and shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"Well, if you don't, you start in the ten days right now."

The prospect was terrifying. So weak was I that I was as certain as the Warden was that it meant death in the jacket. And then I remembered Morrell's trick. Now, if ever, was the need of it; and now, if ever, was the time to practise the faith of it. I smiled up in the face of Warden Atherton. And I put faith in that smile, and faith in the proposition I made to him.

"Warden," I said, "do you see the way I am smiling? Well, if, at the end of the ten days, when you unlace me, I smile up at you in the same way, will you give a sack of Bull Durham and a package of brown papers to Morrell and Oppenheimer?"

"Ain't they the crazy ginks, these college guys," Captain Jamie snorted.

Warden Atherton was a choleric man, and he took my request for insulting braggadocio.

"Just for that you get an extra cinching," he informed me.

"I made you a sporting proposition, Warden," I said quietly. "You can cinch me as tight as you please, but if I smile ten days from now will you give the Bull Durham to Morrell and Oppenheimer?"

"You are mighty sure of yourself," he retorted.

"That's why I made the proposition," I replied.

"Getting religion, eh?" he sneered.

"No," was my answer. "It merely happens that I possess more life than you can ever reach the end of. Make it a hundred days if you want, and I'll smile at you when it's over."

"I guess ten days will more than do you, Standing."

"That's your opinion," I said. "Have you got faith in it? If you have you won't even lose the price of the two five-cents sacks of tobacco. Anyway, what have you got to be afraid of?"

"For two cents I'd kick the face off of you right now," he snarled.

"Don't let me stop you." I was impudently suave. "Kick as hard as you please, and I'll still have enough face left with which to smile. In the meantime, while you are hesitating, suppose you accept my original proposition."

A man must be terribly weak and profoundly desperate to be able, under such circumstances, to beard the Warden in solitary. Or he may be both, and, in addition, he may have faith. I know now that I had the faith and so acted on it. I believed what Morrell had told me. I believed in the lordship of the mind over the body. I believed that not even a hundred days in the jacket could kill me.

Captain Jamie must have sensed this faith that informed me, for he said:

"I remember a Swede that went crazy twenty years ago. That was before your time, Warden. He'd killed a man in a quarrel over twenty-five cents and got life for it. He was a cook. He got religion. He said that a golden chariot was coming to take him to heaven, and he sat down on top the red-hot range and sang hymns and hosannahs while he cooked. They dragged him off, but he croaked two days afterward in hospital. He was cooked to the bone. And to the end he swore he'd never felt the heat. Couldn't get a squeal out of him."

"We'll make Standing squeal," said the Warden.

"Since you are so sure of it, why don't you accept my proposition?" I challenged.

The Warden was so angry that it would have been ludicrous to me had I not been in so desperate plight. His face was convulsed. He clenched his hands, and, for a moment, it seemed that he was about to fall upon me and give me a beating. Then, with an effort, he controlled himself.

"All right, Standing," he snarled. "I'll go you. But you bet your sweet life you'll have to go some to smile ten days from now. Roll him over, boys, and cinch him till you hear his ribs crack. Hutchins, show him you know how to do it."

And they rolled me over and laced me as I had never been laced before. The head trusty certainly demonstrated his ability. I tried to steal what little space I could. Little it was, for I had long since shed my flesh, while my muscles were attenuated to mere strings. I had neither the strength nor bulk to steal more than a little, and the little I stole I swear I managed by sheer expansion at the joints of the bones of my frame. And of this little I was robbed by Hutchins, who, in the old days before he was made head trusty, had learned all the tricks of the jacket from the inside of the jacket.

You see, Hutchins was a cur at heart, or a creature who had once been a man, but who had been broken on the wheel. He possessed ten or twelve thousand dollars, and his freedom was in sight if he obeyed orders. Later, I learned that there was a girl who had remained true to him, and who was even then waiting for him. The woman factor explains many things of men.

If ever a man deliberately committed murder, Al Hutchins did that morning in solitary at the Warden's bidding. He robbed me of the little space I stole. And, having robbed me of that, my body was defenceless, and, with his foot in my back while he drew the lacing light, he constricted me as no man had ever before succeeded in doing. So severe was this constriction of my frail frame upon my vital organs that I felt, there and then, immediately, that death was upon me. And still the miracle of faith was mine. I did not believe that I was going to die. I knew — I say I *knew* — that I was not going to die. My head was swimming, and my heart was pounding from my toenails to the hair-roots in my scalp.

"That's pretty tight," Captain Jamie urged reluctantly.

"The hell it is," said Doctor Jackson. "I tell you nothing can hurt him. He's a wooz. He ought to have been dead long ago."

Warden Atherton, after a hard struggle, managed to insert his forefinger between the lacing and my back. He brought his foot to bear upon me, with the weight of his body added to his foot, and pulled, but failed to get any fraction of an inch of slack.

"I take my hat off to you, Hutchins," he said. "You know your job. Now roll him over and let's look at him."

They rolled me over on my back. I stared up at them with bulging eyes. This I know: Had they laced me in such fashion the first time I went into the jacket, I would surely have died in the first ten minutes. But I was well trained. I had behind me the thousands of hours in the jacket, and, plus that, I had faith in what Morrell had told me.

“Now, laugh, damn you, laugh,” said the Warden to me. “Start that smile you’ve been bragging about.”

So, while my lungs panted for a little air, while my heart threatened to burst, while my mind reeled, nevertheless I was able to smile up into the Warden’s face.

CHAPTER XI

The door clanged, shutting out all but a little light, and I was left alone on my back. By the tricks I had long since learned in the jacket, I managed to writhe myself across the floor an inch at a time until the edge of the sole of my right shoe touched the door. There was an immense cheer in this. I was not utterly alone. If the need arose, I could at least rap knuckle talk to Morrell.

But Warden Atherton must have left strict injunctions on the guards, for, though I managed to call Morrell and tell him I intended trying the experiment, he was prevented by the guards from replying. Me they could only curse, for, in so far as I was in the jacket for a ten days' bout, I was beyond all threat of punishment.

I remember remarking at the time my serenity of mind. The customary pain of the jacket was in my body, but my mind was so passive that I was no more aware of the pain than was I aware of the floor beneath me or the walls around me. Never was a man in better mental and spiritual condition for such an experiment. Of course, this was largely due to my extreme weakness. But there was more to it. I had long schooled myself to be oblivious to pain. I had neither doubts nor fears. All the content of my mind seemed to be an absolute faith in the over-lordship of the mind. This passivity was almost dream-like, and yet, in its way, it was positive almost to a pitch of exaltation.

I began my concentration of will. Even then my body was numbing and prickling through the loss of circulation. I directed my will to the little toe of my right foot, and I willed that toe to cease to be alive in my consciousness. I willed that toe to die — to die so far as I, its lord, and a different thing entirely from it, was concerned. There was the hard struggle. Morrell had warned me that it would be so. But there was no flicker of doubt to disturb my faith. I knew that that toe would die, and I knew when it was dead. Joint by joint it had died under the compulsion of my will.

The rest was easy, but slow, I will admit. Joint by joint, toe by toe, all the toes of both my feet ceased to be. And joint by joint, the process went on. Came the time when my flesh below the ankles had ceased. Came the time when all below my knees had ceased.

Such was the pitch of my perfect exaltation, that I knew not the slightest prod of rejoicing at my success. I knew nothing save that I was making my body die. All that was I was devoted to that sole task. I performed the work as thoroughly as any mason laying bricks, and I regarded the work as just about as commonplace as would a brick-mason regard his work.

At the end of an hour my body was dead to the hips, and from the hips up, joint by joint, I continued to will the ascending death.

It was when I reached the level of my heart that the first blurring and dizzying of my consciousness' occurred. For fear that I should lose consciousness, I willed to hold the death I had gained, and shifted my concentration to my fingers. My brain cleared again, and the death of my arms to the shoulders was most rapidly accomplished.

At this stage my body was all dead, so far as I was concerned, save my head and a little patch of my chest. No longer did the pound and smash of my compressed heart echo in my brain. My heart was beating steadily but feebly. The joy of it, had I dared joy at such a moment, would have been the cessation of sensations.

At this point my experience differs from Morrell's. Still willing automatically, I began to grow dreamy, as one does in that borderland between sleeping and waking. Also, it seemed as if a prodigious enlargement of my brain was taking place within the skull itself that did not enlarge. There were occasional glintings and flashings of light as if even I, the overlord, had ceased for a moment and the next moment was again myself, still the tenant of the fleshly tenement that I was making to die.

Most perplexing was the seeming enlargement of brain. Without having passed through the wall of skull, nevertheless it seemed to me that the periphery of my brain was already outside my skull and still expanding. Along with this was one of the most remarkable sensations or experiences that I have ever encountered. Time and space, in so far as they were the stuff of my consciousness, underwent an enormous extension. Thus, without opening my eyes to verify, I knew that the walls of my narrow cell had receded until it was like a vast audience-chamber. And while I contemplated the matter, I knew that they continued to recede. The whim struck me for a moment that if a similar expansion were taking place with the whole prison, then the outer walls of San Quentin must be far out in the Pacific Ocean on one side and on the other side must be encroaching on the Nevada desert. A companion whim was that since matter could permeate matter, then the walls of my cell might well permeate the prison walls, pass through the prison walls, and thus put my cell outside the prison and put me at liberty. Of course, this was pure fantastic whim, and I knew it at the time for what it was.

The extension of time was equally remarkable. Only at long intervals did my heart beat. Again a whim came to me, and I counted the seconds, slow and sure, between my heart-beats. At first, as I clearly noted, over a hundred seconds intervened between beats. But as I continued to count the intervals extended so that I was made weary of counting.

And while this illusion of the extension of time and space persisted and grew, I found myself dreamily considering a new and profound problem. Morrell had told me that he had won freedom from his body by killing his body — or by eliminating his body from his consciousness, which, of course, was in effect the same thing. Now, my body was so near to being entirely dead that I knew in all absoluteness that by a quick concentration of will on the yet-alive patch of my torso it, too, would cease to be. But — and here was the problem, and Morrell had not warned me: should I also will my head to be dead? If I did so, no matter what befell the spirit of Darrell Standing, would not the body of Darrell Standing be for ever dead?

I chanced the chest and the slow-beating heart. The quick compulsion of my will was rewarded. I no longer had chest nor heart. I was only a mind, a soul, a consciousness — call it what you will — incorporate in a nebulous brain that, while it still centred inside my skull, was expanded, and was continuing to expand, beyond my skull.

And then, with flashings of light, I was off and away. At a bound I had vaulted prison roof and California sky, and was among the stars. I say “stars” advisedly. I walked among the stars. I was a child. I was clad in frail, fleece-like, delicate-coloured robes that shimmered in the cool starlight. These robes, of course, were based upon my boyhood observance of circus actors and my boyhood conception of the garb of young angels.

Nevertheless, thus clad, I trod interstellar space, exalted by the knowledge that I was bound on vast adventure, where, at the end, I would find all the cosmic formulæ and have made clear to me the ultimate secret of the universe. In my hand I carried a long glass wand. It was borne in upon me that with the tip of this wand I must touch each star in passing. And I knew, in all absoluteness, that did I but miss one star I should be precipitated into some unplummeted abyss of unthinkable and eternal punishment and guilt.

Long I pursued my starry quest. When I say "long," you must bear in mind the enormous extension of time that had occurred in my brain. For centuries I trod space, with the tip of my wand and with unerring eye and hand tapping each star I passed. Ever the way grew brighter. Ever the ineffable goal of infinite wisdom grew nearer. And yet I made no mistake. This was no other self of mine. This was no experience that had once been mine. I was aware all the time that it was I, Darrell Standing, who walked among the stars and tapped them with a wand of glass. In short, I knew that here was nothing real, nothing that had ever been nor could ever be. I knew that it was nothing else than a ridiculous orgy of the imagination, such as men enjoy in drug dreams, in delirium, or in mere ordinary slumber.

And then, as all went merry and well with me on my celestial quest, the tip of my wand missed a star, and on the instant I knew I had been guilty of a great crime. And on the instant a knock, vast and compulsive, inexorable and mandatory as the stamp of the iron hoof of doom, smote me and reverberated across the universe. The whole sidereal system coruscated, reeled and fell in flame.

I was torn by an exquisite and disruptive agony. And on the instant I was Darrell Standing, the life-convict, lying in his strait-jacket in solitary. And I knew the immediate cause of that summons. It was a rap of the knuckle by Ed Morrell, in Cell Five, beginning the spelling of some message.

And now, to give some comprehension of the extension of time and space that I was experiencing. Many days afterwards I asked Morrell what he had tried to convey to me. It was a simple message, namely: "Standing, are you there?" He had tapped it rapidly, while the guard was at the far end of the corridor into which the solitary cells opened. As I say, he had tapped the message very rapidly. And now behold! Between the first tap and the second I was off and away among the stars, clad in fleecy garments, touching each star as I passed in my pursuit of the formulæ that would explain the last mystery of life. And, as before, I pursued the quest for centuries. Then came the summons, the stamp of the hoof of doom, the exquisite disruptive agony, and again I was back in my cell in San Quentin. It was the second tap of Ed Morrell's knuckle. The interval between it and the first tap could have been no more than a fifth of a second. And yet, so unthinkably enormous was the extension of time to me, that in the course of that fifth of a second I had been away star-roving for long ages.

Now I know, my reader, that the foregoing seems all a farrago. I agree with you. It is farrago. It was experience, however. It was just as real to me as is the snake beheld by a man in delirium tremens.

Possibly, by the most liberal estimate, it may have taken Ed Morrell two minutes to tap his question. Yet, to me, æons elapsed between the first tap of his knuckle and the last. No longer could I tread my starry path with that ineffable pristine joy, for my way was beset with dread of the inevitable summons that would rip and tear me as it jerked me back to my strait-jacket hell. Thus my æons of star-wandering were æons of dread.

And all the time I knew it was Ed Morrell's knuckle that thus cruelly held me earth-bound. I tried to speak to him, to ask him to cease. But so thoroughly had I eliminated my body from my consciousness that I was unable to resurrect it. My body lay dead in the jacket, though I still inhabited the skull. In vain I strove to will my foot to tap my message to Morrell. I reasoned I had a foot. And yet, so thoroughly had I carried out the experiment, I had no foot.

Next — and I know now that it was because Morrell had spelled his message quite out — I pursued my way among the stars and was not called back. After that, and in the course of it, I was aware, drowsily, that I was falling asleep, and that it was delicious sleep. From time to time, drowsily, I stirred — please, my reader, don't miss that verb — I STIRRED. I moved my legs, my arms. I was aware of clean, soft bed linen against my skin. I was aware of bodily well-being. Oh, it was delicious! As thirsting men on the desert dream of splashing fountains and flowing wells, so dreamed I of easement from the constriction of the jacket, of cleanliness in the place of filth, of smooth velvety skin of health in place of my poor parchment-crinkled hide. But I dreamed with a difference, as you shall see.

I awoke. Oh, broad and wide awake I was, although I did not open my eyes. And please know that in all that follows I knew no surprise whatever. Everything was the natural and the expected. I was I, be sure of that. *But I was not Darrell Standing*. Darrell Standing had no more to do with the being I was than did Darrell Standing's parchment-crinkled skin have aught to do with the cool, soft skin that was mine. Nor was I aware of any Darrell Standing — as I could not well be, considering that Darrell Standing was as yet unborn and would not be born for centuries. But you shall see.

I lay with closed eyes, lazily listening. From without came the clacking of many hoofs moving orderly on stone flags. From the accompanying jingle of metal bits of man-harness and steed-harness I knew some cavalcade was passing by on the street beneath my windows. Also, I wondered idly who it was. From somewhere — and I knew where, for I knew it was from the inn yard — came the ring and stamp of hoofs and an impatient neigh that I recognized as belonging to my waiting horse.

Came steps and movements — steps openly advertised as suppressed with the intent of silence and that yet were deliberately noisy with the secret intent of rousing me if I still slept. I smiled inwardly at the rascal's trick.

"Pons," I ordered, without opening my eyes, "water, cold water, quick, a deluge. I drank over long last night, and now my gullet scorches."

"And slept over long to-day," he scolded, as he passed me the water, ready in his hand.

I sat up, opened my eyes, and carried the tankard to my lips with both my hands. And as I drank I looked at Pons.

Now note two things. I spoke in French; I was not conscious that I spoke in French. Not until afterward, back in solitary, when I remembered what I am narrating, did I know that I had spoken in French — ay, and spoken well. As for me, Darrell Standing, at present writing these lines in Murderers' Row of Folsom Prison, why, I know only high school French sufficient to enable me to read the language. As for my speaking it — impossible. I can scarcely intelligibly pronounce my way through a menu.

But to return. Pons was a little withered old man. He was born in our house — I know, for it chanced that mention was made of it this very day I am describing. Pons was all of sixty years. He was mostly toothless, and, despite a pronounced limp that compelled him to go slippity-hop, he was very alert and spry in all his movements. Also, he was impudently familiar. This was because he had been in my house sixty years. He had been my father's servant before I could toddle, and after my father's death (Pons and I talked of it this day) he became my servant. The limp he had acquired on a stricken field in Italy, when the horsemen charged across. He had just dragged my father clear of the hoofs when he was lanced through the thigh, overthrown, and trampled. My father, conscious but helpless from his own wounds, witnessed it all. And so, as I say, Pons had earned such a right to impudent familiarity that at least there was no gainsaying him by my father's son.

Pons shook his head as I drained the huge draught.

"Did you hear it boil?" I laughed, as I handed back the empty tankard.

"Like your father," he said hopelessly. "But your father lived to learn better, which I doubt you will do."

"He got a stomach affliction," I devilled, "so that one mouthful of spirits turned it outside in. It were wisdom not to drink when one's tank will not hold the drink."

While we talked Pons was gathering to my bedside my clothes for the day.

"Drink on, my master," he answered. "It won't hurt you. You'll die with a sound stomach."

"You mean mine is an iron-lined stomach?" I wilfully misunderstood him.

"I mean — " he began with a quick peevishness, then broke off as he realized my teasing and with a pout of his withered lips draped my new sable cloak upon a chair-back. "Eight hundred ducats," he sneered. "A thousand goats and a hundred fat oxen in a coat to keep you warm. A score of farms on my gentleman's fine back."

"And in that a hundred fine farms, with a castle or two thrown in, to say nothing, perhaps, of a palace," I said, reaching out my hand and touching the rapier which he was just in the act of depositing on the chair.

"So your father won with his good right arm," Pons retorted. "But what your father won he held."

Here Pons paused to hold up to scorn my new scarlet satin doublet — a wondrous thing of which I had been extravagant.

"Sixty ducats for that," Pons indicted. "Your father'd have seen all the tailors and Jews of Christendom roasting in hell before he'd a-paid such a price."

And while we dressed — that is, while Pons helped me to dress — I continued to quip with him.

"It is quite clear, Pons, that you have not heard the news," I said slyly.

Whereat up pricked his ears like the old gossip he was.

"Late news?" he queried. "Mayhap from the English Court?"

"Nay," I shook my head. "But news perhaps to you, but old news for all of that. Have you not heard? The philosophers of Greece were whispering it nigh two thousand years ago. It is because of that news that I put twenty fat farms on my back, live at Court, and am become a dandy. You see, Pons, the world is a most evil place, life is most sad, all men die, and, being dead . . . well, are dead. Wherefore, to escape the evil and the sadness, men in these days, like me, seek amazement, insensibility, and the madnesses of dalliance."

"But the news, master? What did the philosophers whisper about so long ago?"

"That God was dead, Pons," I replied solemnly. "Didn't you know that? God is dead, and I soon shall be, and I wear twenty fat farms on my back."

"God lives," Pons asserted fervently. "God lives, and his kingdom is at hand. I tell you, master, it is at hand. It may be no later than to-morrow that the earth shall pass away."

"So said they in old Rome, Pons, when Nero made torches of them to light his sports."

Pons regarded me pityingly.

"Too much learning is a sickness," he complained. "I was always opposed to it. But you must have your will and drag my old body about with you — a-studying astronomy and numbers in Venice, poetry and all the Italian *fol-de-rols* in Florence, and astrology in Pisa, and God knows what in that madman country of Germany. Pish for the philosophers! I tell you, master, I, Pons, your servant, a poor old man who knows not a letter from a pike-staff — I tell you God lives, and the time you shall appear before him is short." He paused with sudden recollection, and added: "He is here, the priest you spoke of."

On the instant I remembered my engagement.

"Why did you not tell me before?" I demanded angrily.

"What did it matter?" Pons shrugged his shoulders. "Has he not been waiting two hours as it is?"

"Why didn't you call me?"

He regarded me with a thoughtful, censorious eye.

"And you rolling to bed and shouting like chanticleer, 'Sing cucu, sing cucu, cucu nu nu cucu, sing cucu, sing cucu, sing cucu, sing cucu.'"

He mocked me with the senseless refrain in an ear-jangling falsetto. Without doubt I had bawled the nonsense out on my way to bed.

"You have a good memory," I commented drily, as I essayed a moment to drape my shoulders with the new sable cloak ere I tossed it to Pons to put aside. He shook his head sourly.

"No need of memory when you roared it over and over for the thousandth time till half the inn was a-knock at the door to spit you for the sleep-killer you were. And when I had you decently in the bed, did you not call me to you and command, if the devil called, to tell him my lady slept? And did you not call me back again, and, with a grip on my arm that leaves it bruised and black this day, command me, as I loved life, fat meat, and the warm fire, to call you not of the morning save for one thing?"

"Which was?" I prompted, unable for the life of me to guess what I could have said.

"Which was the heart of one, a black buzzard, you said, by name Martinelli — whoever he may be — for the heart of Martinelli smoking on a gold platter. The platter must be gold, you said; and you said I must call you by singing, 'Sing cucu, sing cucu, sing cucu.' Whereat you began to teach me how to sing, 'Sing cucu, sing cucu, sing cucu.'"

And when Pons had said the name, I knew it at once for the priest, Martinelli, who had been knocking his heels two mortal hours in the room without.

When Martinelli was permitted to enter and as he saluted me by title and name, I knew at once my name and all of it. I was Count Guillaume de Sainte-Maure. (You see, only could I know then, and remember afterward, what was in my conscious mind.)

The priest was Italian, dark and small, lean as with fasting or with a wasting hunger not of this world, and his hands were as small and slender as a woman's. But his eyes! They were cunning and trustless, narrow-slitted and heavy-lidded, at one and the same time as sharp as a ferret's and as indolent as a basking lizard's.

"There has been much delay, Count de Sainte-Maure," he began promptly, when Pons had left the room at a glance from me. "He whom I serve grows impatient."

"Change your tune, priest," I broke in angrily. "Remember, you are not now in Rome."

"My august master — " he began.

"Rules augustly in Rome, mayhap," I again interrupted. "This is France."

Martinelli shrugged his shoulders meekly and patiently, but his eyes, gleaming like a basilisk's, gave his shoulders the lie.

“My august master has some concern with the doings of France,” he said quietly. “The lady is not for you. My master has other plans. . .” He moistened his thin lips with his tongue. “Other plans for the lady . . . and for you.”

Of course, by the lady I knew he referred to the great Duchess Philippa, widow of Geoffrey, last Duke of Aquitaine. But great duchess, widow, and all, Philippa was a woman, and young, and gay, and beautiful, and, by my faith, fashioned for me.

“What are his plans?” I demanded bluntly.

“They are deep and wide, Count Sainte-Maure — too deep and wide for me to presume to imagine, much less know or discuss with you or any man.”

“Oh, I know big things are afoot and slimy worms squirming underground,” I said.

“They told me you were stubborn-necked, but I have obeyed commands.”

Martinelli arose to leave, and I arose with him.

“I said it was useless,” he went on. “But the last chance to change your mind was accorded you. My august master deals more fairly than fair.”

“Oh, well, I’ll think the matter over,” I said airily, as I bowed the priest to the door.

He stopped abruptly at the threshold.

“The time for thinking is past,” he said. “It is decision I came for.”

“I will think the matter over,” I repeated, then added, as afterthought: “If the lady’s plans do not accord with mine, then mayhap the plans of your master may fruit as he desires. For remember, priest, he is no master of mine.”

“You do not know my master,” he said solemnly.

“Nor do I wish to know him,” I retorted.

And I listened to the lithe, light step of the little intriguing priest go down the creaking stairs.

Did I go into the minutiæ of detail of all that I saw this half a day and half a night that I was Count Guillaume de Sainte-Maure, not ten books the size of this I am writing could contain the totality of the matter. Much I shall skip; in fact, I shall skip almost all; for never yet have I heard of a condemned man being reprieved in order that he might complete his memoirs — at least, not in California.

When I rode out in Paris that day it was the Paris of centuries agone. The narrow streets were an unsanitary scandal of filth and slime. But I must skip. And skip I shall, all of the afternoon's events, all of the ride outside the walls, of the grand fête given by Hugh de Meung, of the feasting and the drinking in which I took little part. Only of the end of the adventure will I write, which begins with where I stood jesting with Philippa herself — ah, dear God, she was wondrous beautiful. A great lady — ay, but before that, and after that, and always, a woman.

We laughed and jested lightly enough, as about us jostled the merry throng; but under our jesting was the deep earnestness of man and woman well advanced across the threshold of love and yet not too sure each of the other. I shall not describe her. She was small, exquisitely slender — but there, I am describing her. In brief, she was the one woman in the world for me, and little I recked the long arm of that gray old man in Rome could reach out half across Europe between my woman and me.

And the Italian, Fortini, leaned to my shoulder and whispered:

"One who desires to speak."

"One who must wait my pleasure," I answered shortly.

"I wait no man's pleasure," was his equally short reply.

And, while my blood boiled, I remembered the priest, Martinelli, and the gray old man at Rome. The thing was clear. It was deliberate. It was the long arm. Fortini smiled lazily at me while I thus paused for the moment to debate, but in his smile was the essence of all insolence.

This, of all times, was the time I should have been cool. But the old red anger began to kindle in me. This was the work of the priest. This was the Fortini, poverished of all save lineage, reckoned the best sword come up out of Italy in half a score of years. To-night it was Fortini. If he failed the gray old man's command to-morrow it would be another sword, the next day another. And, perchance still failing, then might I expect the common bravo's steel in my back or the common poisoner's philter in my wine, my meat, or bread.

"I am busy," I said. "Begone."

"My business with you presses," was his reply.

Insensibly our voices had slightly risen, so that Philippa heard.

"Begone, you Italian hound," I said. "Take your howling from my door. I shall attend to you presently."

"The moon is up," he said. "The grass is dry and excellent. There is no dew. Beyond the fish-pond, an arrow's flight to the left, is an open space, quiet and private."

"Presently you shall have your desire," I muttered impatiently.

But still he persisted in waiting at my shoulder.

"Presently," I said. "Presently I shall attend to you."

Then spoke Philippa, in all the daring spirit and the iron of her.

"Satisfy the gentleman's desire, Sainte-Maure. Attend to him now. And good fortune go with you." She paused to beckon to her her uncle, Jean de Joinville, who was passing — uncle on her mother's side, of the de Joinvilles of Anjou. "Good fortune go with you," she repeated, and then leaned to me so that she could whisper: "And my heart goes with you, Sainte-Maure. Do not be long. I shall await you in the big hall."

I was in the seventh heaven. I trod on air. It was the first frank admittance of her love. And with such benediction I was made so strong that I knew I could kill a score of Fortinis and snap my fingers at a score of gray old men in Rome.

Jean de Joinville bore Philippa away in the press, and Fortini and I settled our arrangements in a trice. We separated — he to find a friend or so, and I to find a friend or so, and all to meet at the appointed place beyond the fish-pond.

First I found Robert Lanfranc, and, next, Henry Bohemond. But before I found them I encountered a windlestraw which showed which way blew the wind and gave promise of a very gale. I knew the windlestraw, Guy de Villehardouin, a raw young provincial, come up the first time to Court, but a fiery little cockerel for all of that. He was red-haired. His blue eyes, small and pinched close to ether, were likewise red, at least in the whites of them; and his skin, of the sort that goes with such types, was red and freckled. He had quite a parboiled appearance.

As I passed him by a sudden movement he jostled me. Oh, of course, the thing was deliberate. And he flamed at me while his hand dropped to his rapier.

"Faith," thought I, "the gray old man has many and strange tools," while to the cockerel I bowed and murmured, "Your pardon for my clumsiness. The fault was mine. Your pardon, Villehardouin."

But he was not to be appeased thus easily. And while he fumed and strutted I glimpsed Robert Lanfranc, beckoned him to us, and explained the happening.

"Sainte-Maure has accorded you satisfaction," was his judgment. "He has prayed your pardon."

"In truth, yes," I interrupted in my suavest tones. "And I pray your pardon again, Villehardouin, for my very great clumsiness. I pray your pardon a thousand times. The fault was mine, though unintentioned. In my haste to an engagement I was clumsy, most woful clumsy, but without intention."

What could the dolt do but grudgingly accept the amends I so freely proffered him? Yet I knew, as Lanfranc and I hastened on, that ere many days, or hours, the flame-headed youth would see to it that we measured steel together on the grass.

I explained no more to Lanfranc than my need of him, and he was little interested to pry deeper into the matter. He was himself a lively youngster of no more than twenty, but he had been trained to arms, had fought in Spain, and had an honourable record on the grass. Merely his black eyes flashed when he learned what was toward, and such was his eagerness that it was he who gathered Henry Bohemond in to our number.

When the three of us arrived in the open space beyond the fish-pond Fortini and two friends were already waiting us. One was Felix Pasquini, nephew to the Cardinal of that name, and as close in his uncle's confidence as was his uncle close in the confidence of the gray old man. The other was Raoul de Goncourt, whose presence surprised me, he being too good and noble a man for the company he kept.

We saluted properly, and properly went about the business. It was nothing new to any of us. The footing was good, as promised. There was no dew. The moon shone fair, and Fortini's blade and mine were out and at earnest play.

This I knew: good swordsman as they reckoned me in France, Fortini was a better. This, too, I knew: that I carried my lady's heart with me this night, and that this night, because of me, there would be one Italian less in the world. I say I knew it. In my mind the issue could not be in doubt. And as our rapiers played I pondered the manner I should kill him. I was not minded for a long contest. Quick and brilliant had always been my way. And further, what of my past gay months of carousal and of singing "Sing cucu, sing cucu, sing cucu," at ungodly hours, I knew I was not conditioned for a long contest. Quick and brilliant was my decision.

But quick and brilliant was a difficult matter with so consummate a swordsman as Fortini opposed to me. Besides, as luck would have it, Fortini, always the cold one, always the tireless-wristed, always sure and long, as report had it, in going about such business, on this night elected, too, the quick and brilliant.

It was nervous, tingling work, for as surely as I sensed his intention of briefness, just as surely had he sensed mine. I doubt that I could have done the trick had it been broad day instead of moonlight. The dim light aided me. Also was I aided by divining, the moment in advance, what he had in mind. It was the time attack, a common but perilous trick that every novice knows, that has laid on his back many a good man who attempted it, and that is so fraught with danger to the perpetrator that swordsmen are not enamoured of it.

We had been at work barely a minute, when I knew under all his darting, flashing show of offence that Fortini meditated this very time attack. He desired of me a thrust and lunge, not that he might parry it but that he might time it and deflect it by the customary slight turn of the wrist, his rapier point directed to meet me as my body followed in the lunge. A ticklish thing — ay, a ticklish thing in the best of light. Did he deflect a fraction of a second too early, I should be warned and saved. Did he deflect a fraction of a second too late, my thrust would go home to him.

“Quick and brilliant is it?” was my thought. “Very well, my Italian friend, quick and brilliant shall it be, and especially shall it be quick.”

In a way, it was time attack against time attack, but I would fool him on the time by being over-quick. And I was quick. As I said, we had been at work scarcely a minute when it happened. Quick? That thrust and lunge of mine were one. A snap of action it was, an explosion, an instantaneousness. I swear my thrust and lunge were a fraction of a second quicker than any man is supposed to thrust and lunge. I won the fraction of a second. By that fraction of a second too late Fortini attempted to deflect my blade and impale me on his. But it was his blade that was deflected. It flashed past my breast, and I was in — inside his weapon, which extended full length in the empty air behind me — and my blade was inside of him, and through him, heart-high, from right side of him to left side of him and outside of him beyond.

It is a strange thing to do, to spit a live man on a length of steel. I sit here in my cell, and cease from writing a space, while I consider the matter. And

I have considered it often, that moonlight night in France of long ago, when I taught the Italian hound quick and brilliant. It was so easy a thing, that perforation of a torso. One would have expected more resistance. There would have been resistance had my rapier point touched bone. As it was, it encountered only the softness of flesh. Still it perforated so easily. I have the sensation of it now, in my hand, my brain, as I write. A woman's hat-pin could go through a plum pudding not more easily than did my blade go through the Italian. Oh, there was nothing amazing about it at the time to Guillaume de Sainte-Maure, but amazing it is to me, Darrell Standing, as I recollect and ponder it across the centuries. It is easy, most easy, to kill a strong, live, breathing man with so crude a weapon as a piece of steel. Why, men are like soft-shell crabs, so tender, frail, and vulnerable are they.

But to return to the moonlight on the grass. My thrust made home, there was a perceptible pause. Not at once did Fortini fall. Not at once did I withdraw the blade. For a full second we stood in pause — I, with legs spread, and arched and tense, body thrown forward, right arm horizontal and straight out; Fortini, his blade beyond me so far that hilt and hand just rested lightly against my left breast, his body rigid, his eyes open and shining.

So statuesque were we for that second that I swear those about us were not immediately aware of what had happened. Then Fortini gasped and coughed slightly. The rigidity of his pose slackened. The hilt and hand against my breast wavered, then the arm drooped to his side till the rapier point rested on the lawn. By this time Pasquini and de Goncourt had sprung to him and he was sinking into their arms. In faith, it was harder for me to withdraw the steel than to drive it in. His flesh clung about it as if jealous to let it depart. Oh, believe me, it required a distinct physical effort to get clear of what I had done.

But the pang of the withdrawal must have stung him back to life and purpose, for he shook off his friends, straightened himself, and lifted his rapier into position. I, too, took position, marvelling that it was possible I had spitted him heart-high and yet missed any vital spot. Then, and before his friends could catch him, his legs crumpled under him and he went heavily to grass. They laid him on his back, but he was already dead, his face ghastly still under the moon, his right hand still a-clutch of the rapier.

Yes; it is indeed a marvellous easy thing to kill a man.

We saluted his friends and were about to depart, when Felix Pasquini detained me.

"Pardon me," I said. "Let it be to-morrow."

"We have but to move a step aside," he urged, "where the grass is still dry."

"Let me then wet it for you, Sainte-Maure," Lanfranc asked of me, eager himself to do for an Italian.

I shook my head.

"Pasquini is mine," I answered. "He shall be first to-morrow."

"Are there others?" Lanfranc demanded.

"Ask de Goncourt," I grinned. "I imagine he is already laying claim to the honour of being the third."

At this, de Goncourt showed distressed acquiescence. Lanfranc looked inquiry at him, and de Goncourt nodded.

"And after him I doubt not comes the cockerel," I went on.

And even as I spoke the red-haired Guy de Villehardouin, alone, strode to us across the moonlit grass.

"At least I shall have him," Lanfranc cried, his voice almost wheedling, so great was his desire.

"Ask him," I laughed, then turned to Pasquini. "To-morrow," I said. "Do you name time and place, and I shall be there."

"The grass is most excellent," he teased, "the place is most excellent, and I am minded that Fortini has you for company this night."

"'Twere better he were accompanied by a friend," I quipped. "And now your pardon, for I must go."

But he blocked my path.

"Whoever it be," he said, "let it be now."

For the first time, with him, my anger began to rise.

"You serve your master well," I sneered.

"I serve but my pleasure," was his answer. "Master I have none."

"Pardon me if I presume to tell you the truth," I said.

"Which is?" he queried softly.

"That you are a liar, Pasquini, a liar like all Italians."

He turned immediately to Lanfranc and Bohemond.

"You heard," he said. "And after that you cannot deny me him."

They hesitated and looked to me for counsel of my wishes. But Pasquini did not wait.

"And if you still have any scruples," he hurried on, "then allow me to remove them . . . thus."

And he spat in the grass at my feet. Then my anger seized me and was beyond me. The red wrath I call it — an overwhelming, all-mastering desire to kill and destroy. I forgot that Philippa waited for me in the great hall. All I knew was my wrongs — the unpardonable interference in my affairs by the gray old man, the errand of the priest, the insolence of Fortini, the impudence of Villehardouin, and here Pasquini standing in my way and spitting in the grass. I saw red. I thought red. I looked upon all these creatures as rank and noisome growths that must be hewn out of my path, out of the world. As a netted lion may rage against the meshes, so raged I against these creatures. They were all about me. In truth, I was in the trap. The one way out was to cut them down, to crush them into the earth and stamp upon them.

"Very well," I said, calmly enough, although my passion was such that my frame shook. "You first, Pasquini. And you next, de Goncourt? And at the end, de Villehardouin?"

Each nodded in turn and Pasquini and I prepared to step aside.

"Since you are in haste," Henry Bohemond proposed to me, "and since there are three of them and three of us, why not settle it at the one time?"

"Yes, yes," was Lanfranc's eager cry. "Do you take de Goncourt. De Villehardouin for mine."

But I waved my good friends back.

"They are here by command," I explained. "It is I they desire so strongly that by my faith I have caught the contagion of their desire, so that now I want them and will have them for myself."

I had observed that Pasquini fretted at my delay of speech-making, and I resolved to fret him further.

"You, Pasquini," I announced, "I shall settle with in short account. I would not that you tarried while Fortini waits your companionship. You, Raoul de Goncourt, I shall punish as you deserve for being in such bad company. You are getting fat and wheezy. I shall take my time with you until your fat melts and your lungs pant and wheeze like leaky bellows. You, de Villehardouin, I have not decided in what manner I shall kill."

And then I saluted Pasquini, and we were at it. Oh, I was minded to be rarely devilish this night. Quick and brilliant — that was the thing. Nor was I unmindful of that deceptive moonlight. As with Fortini would I settle with him if he dared the time attack. If he did not, and quickly, then I would dare it.

Despite the fret I had put him in, he was cautious. Nevertheless I compelled the play to be rapid, and in the dim light, depending less than usual on sight and more than usual on feel, our blades were in continual touch.

Barely was the first minute of play past when I did the trick. I feigned a slight slip of the foot, and, in the recovery, feigned loss of touch with Pasquini's blade. He thrust tentatively, and again I feigned, this time making a needlessly wide parry. The consequent exposure of myself was the bait I had purposely dangled to draw him on. And draw him on I did. Like a flash he took advantage of what he deemed an involuntary exposure. Straight and true was his thrust, and all his will and body were heartily in the weight of the lunge he made. And all had been feigned on my part and I was ready for him. Just lightly did my steel meet his as our blades slithered. And just firmly enough and no more did my wrist twist and deflect his blade on my basket hilt. Oh, such a slight deflection, a matter of inches, just barely sufficient to send his point past me so that it pierced a fold of my satin doublet in passing. Of course, his body followed his rapier in the lunge, while, heart-high, right side, my rapier point met his body. And my outstretched arm was stiff and straight as the steel into which it elongated, and behind the arm and the steel my body was braced and solid.

Heart-high, I say, my rapier entered Pasquini's side on the right, but it did not emerge, on the left, for, well-nigh through him, it met a rib (oh, man-killing is butcher's work!) with such a will that the forcing overbalanced him, so that he fell part backward and part sidewise to the ground. And even as he fell, and ere he struck, with jerk and wrench I cleared my weapon of him.

De Goncourt was to him, but he waved de Goncourt to attend on me. Not so swiftly as Fortini did Pasquini pass. He coughed and spat, and, helped by de Villehardouin, propped his elbow under him, rested his head on hand, and coughed and spat again.

"A pleasant journey, Pasquini," I laughed to him in my red anger. "Pray hasten, for the grass where you lie is become suddenly wet and if you linger you will catch your death of cold."

When I made immediately to begin with de Goncourt, Bohemond protested that I should rest a space.

“Nay,” I said. “I have not properly warmed up.” And to de Goncourt, “Now will we have you dance and wheeze — Salute!”

De Goncourt’s heart was not in the work. It was patent that he fought under the compulsion of command. His play was old-fashioned, as any middle-aged man’s is apt to be, but he was not an indifferent swordsman. He was cool, determined, dogged. But he was not brilliant, and he was oppressed with foreknowledge of defeat. A score of times, by quick and brilliant, he was mine. But I refrained. I have said that I was devilish-minded. Indeed I was. I wore him down. I backed him away from the moon so that he could see little of me because I fought in my own shadow. And while I wore him down until he began to wheeze as I had predicted, Pasquini, head on hand and watching, coughed and spat out his life.

“Now, de Goncourt,” I announced finally. “You see I have you quite helpless. You are mine in any of a dozen ways. Be ready, brace yourself, for this is the way I will.”

And, so saying, I merely went from carte to tierce, and as he recovered wildly and parried widely I returned to carte, took the opening, and drove home heart-high and through and through. And at sight of the conclusion Pasquini let go his hold on life, buried his face in the grass, quivered a moment, and lay still.

“Your master will be four servants short this night,” I assured de Villehardouin, in the moment just ere we engaged.

And such an engagement! The boy was ridiculous. In what bucolic school of fence he had been taught was beyond imagining. He was downright clownish. “Short work and simple” was my judgment, while his red hair seemed a-bristle with very rage and while he pressed me like a madman.

Alas! It was his clownishness that undid me. When I had played with him and laughed at him for a handful of seconds for the clumsy boor he was, he became so angered that he forgot the worse than little fence he knew. With an arm-wide sweep of his rapier, as though it bore heft and a cutting edge, he whistled it through the air and rapped it down on my crown. I was in amaze. Never had so absurd a thing happened to me. He was wide open, and I could have run him through forthright. But, as I said, I was in amaze, and the next I knew was the pang of the entering steel as this clumsy provincial ran me through and charged forward, bull-like, till his hilt bruised my side and I was borne backward.

As I fell I could see the concern on the faces of Lanfranc and Bohemond and the glut of satisfaction in the face of de Villehardouin as he pressed me.

I was falling, but I never reached the grass. Came a blurr of flashing lights, a thunder in my ears, a darkness, a glimmering of dim light slowly dawning, a wrenching, racking pain beyond all describing, and then I heard the voice of one who said:

"I can't feel anything."

I knew the voice. It was Warden Atherton's. And I knew myself for Darrell Standing, just returned across the centuries to the jacket hell of San Quentin. And I knew the touch of finger-tips on my neck was Warden Atherton's. And I knew the finger-tips that displaced his were Doctor Jackson's. And it was Doctor Jackson's voice that said:

"You don't know how to take a man's pulse from the neck. There — right there — put your fingers where mine are. D'ye get it? Ah, I thought so. Heart weak, but steady as a chronometer."

"It's only twenty-four hours," Captain Jamie said, "and he was never in like condition before."

"Putting it on, that's what he's doing, and you can stack on that," Al Hutchins, the head trusty, interjected.

"I don't know," Captain Jamie insisted. "When a man's pulse is that low it takes an expert to find it — "

"Aw, I served my apprenticeship in the jacket," Al Hutchins sneered. "And I've made you unlace me, Captain, when you thought I was croaking, and it was all I could do to keep from snickering in your face."

"What do you think, Doc?" Warden Atherton asked.

"I tell you the heart action is splendid," was the answer. "Of course it is weak. That is only to be expected. I tell you Hutchins is right. The man is feigning."

With his thumb he turned up one of my eyelids, whereat I opened my other eye and gazed up at the group bending over me.

"What did I tell you?" was Doctor Jackson's cry of triumph.

And then, although it seemed the effort must crack my face, I summoned all the will of me and smiled.

They held water to my lips, and I drank greedily. It must be remembered that all this while I lay helpless on my back, my arms pinioned along with my body inside the jacket. When they offered me food — dry prison bread — I shook my head. I closed my eyes in advertisement that I was tired of their presence. The pain of my partial resuscitation was unbearable. I could feel my body coming to life. Down the cords of my neck and into my patch of chest over the heart darting pains were making their way. And in my brain the memory was strong that Philippa waited me in the big hall, and I was desirous to escape away back to the half a day and half a night I had just lived in old France.

So it was, even as they stood about me, that I strove to eliminate the live portion of my body from my consciousness. I was in haste to depart, but Warden Atherton's voice held me back.

"Is there anything you want to complain about?" he asked.

Now I had but one fear, namely, that they would unlace me; so that it must be understood that my reply was not uttered in braggadocio but was meant to forestall any possible unlacing.

"You might make the jacket a little tighter," I whispered. "It's too loose for comfort. I get lost in it. Hutchins is stupid. He is also a fool. He doesn't know the first thing about lacing the jacket. Warden, you ought to put him in charge of the loom-room. He is a more profound master of inefficiency than the present incumbent, who is merely stupid without being a fool as well. Now get out, all of you, unless you can think of worse to do to me. In which case, by all means remain. I invite you heartily to remain, if you think in your feeble imaginings that you have devised fresh torture for me."

"He's a wooz, a true-blue, dyed-in-the-wool wooz," Doctor Jackson chanted, with the medico's delight in a novelty.

"Standing, you *are* a wonder," the Warden said. "You've got an iron will, but I'll break it as sure as God made little apples."

"And you've the heart of a rabbit," I retorted. "One-tenth the jacketing I have received in San Quentin would have squeezed your rabbit heart out of your long ears."

Oh, it was a touch, that, for the Warden did have unusual ears. They would have interested Lombroso, I am sure.

"As for me," I went on, "I laugh at you, and I wish no worse fate to the loom-room than that you should take charge of it yourself. Why, you've got me down and worked your wickedness on me, and still I live and laugh in your face. Inefficient? You can't even kill me. Inefficient? You couldn't kill a cornered rat with a stick of dynamite — *real* dynamite, and not the sort you are deluded into believing I have hidden away."

"Anything more?" he demanded, when I had ceased from my diatribe.

And into my mind flashed what I had told Fortini when he pressed his insolence on me.

"Begone, you prison cur," I said. "Take your yapping from my door."

It must have been a terrible thing for a man of Warden Atherton's stripe to be thus bearded by a helpless prisoner. His face whitened with rage and his voice shook as he threatened:

"By God, Standing, I'll do for you yet."

"There is only one thing you can do," I said. "You can tighten this distressingly loose jacket. If you won't, then get out. And I don't care if you fail to come back for a week or for the whole ten days."

And what can even the Warden of a great prison do in reprisal on a prisoner upon whom the ultimate reprisal has already been wreaked? It may be that Warden Atherton thought of some possible threat, for he began to speak. But my voice had strengthened with the exercise, and I began to sing, "Sing cucu, sing cucu, sing cucu." And sing I did until my door clanged and the bolts and locks squeaked and grated fast.

CHAPTER XII

Now that I had learned the trick the way was easy. And I knew the way was bound to become easier the more I travelled it. Once establish a line of least resistance, every succeeding journey along it will find still less resistance. And so, as you shall see, my journeys from San Quentin life into other lives were achieved almost automatically as time went by.

After Warden Atherton and his crew had left me it was a matter of minutes to will the resuscitated portion of my body back into the little death. Death in life it was, but it was only the little death, similar to the temporary death produced by an anæsthetic.

And so, from all that was sordid and vile, from brutal solitary and jacket hell, from acquainted flies and sweats of darkness and the knuckle-talk of the living dead, I was away at a bound into time and space.

Came the duration of darkness, and the slow-growing awareness of other things and of another self. First of all, in this awareness, was dust. It was in my nostrils, dry and acrid. It was on my lips. It coated my face, my hands, and especially was it noticeable on the finger-tips when touched by the ball of my thumb.

Next I was aware of ceaseless movement. All that was about me lurched and oscillated. There was jolt and jar, and I heard what I knew as a matter of course to be the grind of wheels on axles and the grate and clash of iron tyres against rock and sand. And there came to me the jaded voices of men, in curse and snarl of slow-plodding, jaded animals.

I opened my eyes, that were inflamed with dust, and immediately fresh dust bit into them. On the coarse blankets on which I lay the dust was half an inch thick. Above me, through sifting dust, I saw an arched roof of lurching, swaying canvas, and myriads of dust motes descended heavily in the shafts of sunshine that entered through holes in the canvas.

I was a child, a boy of eight or nine, and I was weary, as was the woman, dusty-visaged and haggard, who sat up beside me and soothed a crying babe in her arms. She was my mother; that I knew as a matter of course, just as I knew, when I glanced along the canvas tunnel of the wagon-top, that the shoulders of the man on the driver's seat were the shoulders of my father.

When I started to crawl along the packed gear with which the wagon was laden my mother said in a tired and querulous voice, "Can't you ever be still a minute, Jesse?”

That was my name, Jesse. I did not know my surname, though I heard my mother call my father John. I have a dim recollection of hearing, at one time or another, the other men address my father as Captain. I knew that he was the leader of this company, and that his orders were obeyed by all.

I crawled out through the opening in the canvas and sat down beside my father on the seat. The air was stifling with the dust that rose from the wagons and the many hoofs of the animals. So thick was the dust that it was like mist or fog in the air, and the low sun shone through it dimly and with a bloody light.

Not alone was the light of this setting sun ominous, but everything about me seemed ominous — the landscape, my father’s face, the fret of the babe in my mother’s arms that she could not still, the six horses my father drove that had continually to be urged and that were without any sign of colour, so heavily had the dust settled on them.

The landscape was an aching, eye-hurting desolation. Low hills stretched endlessly away on every hand. Here and there only on their slopes were occasional scrub growths of heat-parched brush. For the most part the surface of the hills was naked-dry and composed of sand and rock. Our way followed the sand-bottoms between the hills. And the sand-bottoms were bare, save for spots of scrub, with here and there short tufts of dry and withered grass. Water there was none, nor sign of water, except for washed gullies that told of ancient and torrential rains.

My father was the only one who had horses to his wagon. The wagons went in single file, and as the train wound and curved I saw that the other wagons were drawn by oxen. Three or four yoke of oxen strained and pulled weakly at each wagon, and beside them, in the deep sand, walked men with ox-goads, who prodded the unwilling beasts along. On a curve I counted the wagons ahead and behind. I knew that there were forty of them, including our own; for often I had counted them before. And as I counted them now, as a child will to while away tedium, they were all there, forty of them, all canvas-topped, big and massive, crudely fashioned, pitching and lurching, grinding and jarring over sand and sage-brush and rock.

To right and left of us, scattered along the train, rode a dozen or fifteen men and youths on horses. Across their pommels were long-barrelled rifles. Whenever any of them drew near to our wagon I could see that their faces, under the dust, were drawn and anxious like my father's. And my father, like them, had a long-barrelled rifle close to hand as he drove.

Also, to one side, limped a score or more of foot-sore, yoke-galled, skeleton oxen, that ever paused to nip at the occasional tufts of withered grass, and that ever were prodded on by the tired-faced youths who herded them. Sometimes one or another of these oxen would pause and low, and such lowing seemed as ominous as all else about me.

Far, far away I have a memory of having lived, a smaller lad, by the tree-lined banks of a stream. And as the wagon jolts along, and I sway on the seat with my father, I continually return and dwell upon that pleasant water flowing between the trees. I have a sense that for an interminable period I have lived in a wagon and travelled on, ever on, with this present company.

But strongest of all upon me is what is strong upon all the company, namely, a sense of drifting to doom. Our way was like a funeral march. Never did a laugh arise. Never did I hear a happy tone of voice. Neither peace nor ease marched with us. The faces of the men and youths who outrode the train were grim, set, hopeless. And as we toiled through the lurid dust of sunset often I scanned my father's face in vain quest of some message of cheer. I will not say that my father's face, in all its dusty haggardness, was hopeless. It was dogged, and oh! so grim and anxious, most anxious.

A thrill seemed to run along the train. My father's head went up. So did mine. And our horses raised their weary heads, scented the air with long-drawn snorts, and for the nonce pulled willingly. The horses of the outriders quickened their pace. And as for the herd of scarecrow oxen, it broke into a forthright gallop. It was almost ludicrous. The poor brutes were so clumsy in their weakness and haste. They were galloping skeletons draped in mangy hide, and they out-distanced the boys who herded them. But this was only for a time. Then they fell back to a walk, a quick, eager, shambling, sore-footed walk; and they no longer were lured aside by the dry bunch-grass.

"What is it?" my mother asked from within the wagon.

"Water," was my father's reply. "It must be Nephi."

And my mother: "Thank God! And perhaps they will sell us food."

And into Nephi, through blood-red dust, with grind and grate and jolt and jar, our great wagons rolled. A dozen scattered dwellings or shanties composed the place. The landscape was much the same as that through which we had passed. There were no trees, only scrub growths and sandy bareness. But here were signs of tilled fields, with here and there a fence. Also there was water. Down the stream ran no current. The bed, however, was damp, with now and again a water-hole into which the loose oxen and the saddle-horses stamped and plunged their muzzles to the eyes. Here, too, grew an occasional small willow.

"That must be Bill Black's mill they told us about," my father said, pointing out a building to my mother, whose anxiousness had drawn her to peer out over our shoulders.

An old man, with buckskin shirt and long, matted, sunburnt hair, rode back to our wagon and talked with father. The signal was given, and the head wagons of the train began to deploy in a circle. The ground favoured the evolution, and, from long practice, it was accomplished without a hitch, so that when the forty wagons were finally halted they formed a circle. All was bustle and orderly confusion. Many women, all tired-faced and dusty like my mother, emerged from the wagons. Also poured forth a very horde of children. There must have been at least fifty children, and it seemed I knew them all of long time; and there were at least two score of women. These went about the preparations for cooking supper.

While some of the men chopped sage-brush and we children carried it to the fires that were kindling, other men unyoked the oxen and let them stampede for water. Next the men, in big squads, moved the wagons snugly into place. The tongue of each wagon was on the inside of the circle, and, front and rear, each wagon was in solid contact with the next wagon before and behind. The great brakes were locked fast; but, not content with this, the wheels of all the wagons were connected with chains. This was nothing new to us children. It was the trouble sign of a camp in hostile country. One wagon only was left out of the circle, so as to form a gate to the corral. Later on, as we knew, ere the camp slept, the animals would be driven inside, and the gate-wagon would be chained like the others in place. In the meanwhile, and for hours, the animals would be herded by men and boys to what scant grass they could find.

While the camp-making went on my father, with several others of the men, including the old man with the long, sunburnt hair, went away on foot in the direction of the mill. I remember that all of us, men, women, and even the children, paused to watch them depart; and it seemed their errand was of grave import.

While they were away other men, strangers, inhabitants of desert Nephi, came into camp and stalked about. They were white men, like us, but they were hard-faced, stern-faced, sombre, and they seemed angry with all our company. Bad feeling was in the air, and they said things calculated to rouse the tempers of our men. But the warning went out from the women, and was passed on everywhere to our men and youths, that there must be no words.

One of the strangers came to our fire, where my mother was alone, cooking. I had just come up with an armful of sage-brush, and I stopped to listen and to stare at the intruder, whom I hated, because it was in the air to hate, because I knew that every last person in our company hated these strangers who were white-skinned like us and because of whom we had been compelled to make our camp in a circle.

This stranger at our fire had blue eyes, hard and cold and piercing. His hair was sandy. His face was shaven to the chin, and from under the chin, covering the neck and extending to the ears, sprouted a sandy fringe of whiskers well-streaked with gray. Mother did not greet him, nor did he greet her. He stood and glowered at her for some time, he cleared his throat and said with a sneer:

"Wisht you was back in Missouri right now I bet."

I saw mother tighten her lips in self-control ere she answered:

"We are from Arkansas."

"I guess you got good reasons to deny where you come from," he next said, "you that drove the Lord's people from Missouri."

Mother made no reply.

". . . Seein'," he went on, after the pause accorded her, "as you're now comin' a-whinin' an' a-beggin' bread at our hands that you persecuted."

Whereupon, and instantly, child that I was, I knew anger, the old, red, intolerant wrath, ever unrestrainable and unsubduable.

"You lie!" I piped up. "We ain't Missourians. We ain't whinin'. An' we ain't beggars. We got the money to buy."

"Shut up, Jesse!" my mother cried, landing the back of her hand stingingly on my mouth. And then, to the stranger, "Go away and let the boy alone."

"I'll shoot you full of lead, you damned Mormon!" I screamed and sobbed at him, too quick for my mother this time, and dancing away around the fire from the back-sweep of her hand.

As for the man himself, my conduct had not disturbed him in the slightest. I was prepared for I knew not what violent visitation from this terrible stranger, and I watched him warily while he considered me with the utmost gravity.

At last he spoke, and he spoke solemnly, with solemn shaking of the head, as if delivering a judgment.

"Like fathers like sons," he said. "The young generation is as bad as the elder. The whole breed is unregenerate and damned. There is no saving it, the young or the old. There is no atonement. Not even the blood of Christ can wipe out its iniquities."

"Damned Mormon!" was all I could sob at him. "Damned Mormon! Damned Mormon! Damned Mormon!"

And I continued to damn him and to dance around the fire before my mother's avenging hand, until he strode away.

When my father, and the men who had accompanied him, returned, camp-work ceased, while all crowded anxiously about him. He shook his head.

"They will not sell?" some woman demanded.

Again he shook his head.

A man spoke up, a blue-eyed, blond-whiskered giant of thirty, who abruptly pressed his way into the centre of the crowd.

"They say they have flour and provisions for three years, Captain," he said. "They have always sold to the immigration before. And now they won't sell. And it ain't our quarrel. Their quarrel's with the government, an' they're takin' it out on us. It ain't right, Captain. It ain't right, I say, us with our women an' children, an' California months away, winter comin' on, an' nothin' but desert in between. We ain't got the grub to face the desert."

He broke off for a moment to address the whole crowd.

"Why, you-all don't know what desert is. This around here ain't desert. I tell you it's paradise, and heavenly pasture, an' flowin' with milk an' honey alongside what we're goin' to face."

"I tell you, Captain, we got to get flour first. If they won't sell it, then we must just up an' take it."

Many of the men and women began crying out in approval, but my father hushed them by holding up his hand.

"I agree with everything you say, Hamilton," he began.

But the cries now drowned his voice, and he again held up his hand.

"Except one thing you forgot to take into account, Hamilton — a thing that you and all of us must take into account. Brigham Young has declared martial law, and Brigham Young has an army. We could wipe out Nephi in the shake of a lamb's tail and take all the provisions we can carry. But we wouldn't carry them very far. Brigham's Saints would be down upon us and we would be wiped out in another shake of a lamb's tail. You know it. I know it. We all know it."

His words carried conviction to listeners already convinced. What he had told them was old news. They had merely forgotten it in a flurry of excitement and desperate need.

"Nobody will fight quicker for what is right than I will," father continued. "But it just happens we can't afford to fight now. If ever a ruction starts we haven't a chance. And we've all got our women and children to recollect. We've got to be peaceable at any price, and put up with whatever dirt is heaped on us."

"But what will we do with the desert coming?" cried a woman who nursed a babe at her breast.

"There's several settlements before we come to the desert," father answered. "Fillmore's sixty miles south. Then comes Corn Creek. And Beaver's another fifty miles. Next is Parowan. Then it's twenty miles to Cedar City. The farther we get away from Salt Lake the more likely they'll sell us provisions."

"And if they won't?" the same woman persisted.

"Then we're quit of them," said my father. "Cedar City is the last settlement. We'll have to go on, that's all, and thank our stars we are quit of them. Two days' journey beyond is good pasture, and water. They call it Mountain Meadows. Nobody lives there, and that's the place we'll rest our cattle and feed them up before we tackle the desert. Maybe we can shoot some meat. And if the worst comes to the worst, we'll keep going as long as we can, then abandon the wagons, pack what we can on our animals, and make the last stages on foot. We can eat our cattle as we go along. It would be better to arrive in California without a rag to our backs than to leave our bones here; and leave them we will if we start a ruction."

With final reiterated warnings against violence of speech or act, the impromptu meeting broke up. I was slow in falling asleep that night. My rage against the Mormon had left my brain in such a tingle that I was still awake when my father crawled into the wagon after a last round of the night-watch. They thought I slept, but I heard mother ask him if he thought that the Mormons would let us depart peacefully from their land. His face was turned aside from her as he busied himself with pulling off a boot, while he answered her with hearty confidence that he was sure the Mormons would let us go if none of our own company started trouble.

But I saw his face at that moment in the light of a small tallow dip, and in it was none of the confidence that was in his voice. So it was that I fell asleep, oppressed by the dire fate that seemed to overhang us, and pondering upon Brigham Young who bulked in my child imagination as a fearful, malignant being, a very devil with horns and tail and all.

* * * * *

And I awoke to the old pain of the jacket in solitary. About me were the customary four: Warden Atherton, Captain Jamie, Doctor Jackson, and Al Hutchins. I cracked my face with my willed smile, and struggled not to lose control under the exquisite torment of returning circulation. I drank the water they held to me, waved aside the proffered bread, and refused to speak. I closed my eyes and strove to win back to the chain-locked wagon-circle at Nephi. But so long as my visitors stood about me and talked I could not escape.

One snatch of conversation I could not tear myself away from hearing.

“Just as yesterday,” Doctor Jackson said. “No change one way or the other.”

“Then he can go on standing it?” Warden Atherton queried.

“Without a quiver. The next twenty-four hours as easy as the last. He’s a wooz, I tell you, a perfect wooz. If I didn’t know it was impossible, I’d say he was doped.”

“I know his dope,” said the Warden. “It’s that cursed will of his. I’d bet, if he made up his mind, that he could walk barefoot across red-hot stones, like those Kanaka priests from the South Seas.”

Now perhaps it was the word “priests” that I carried away with me through the darkness of another flight in time. Perhaps it was the cue. More probably it was a mere coincidence. At any rate I awoke, lying upon a rough rocky floor, and found myself on my back, my arms crossed in such fashion that each elbow rested in the palm of the opposite hand. As I lay there, eyes closed, half awake, I rubbed my elbows with my palms and found that I was rubbing prodigious calluses. There was no surprise in this. I accepted the calluses as of long time and a matter of course.

I opened my eyes. My shelter was a small cave, no more than three feet in height and a dozen in length. It was very hot in the cave. Perspiration noduled the entire surface of my body. Now and again several nodules coalesced and formed tiny rivulets. I wore no clothing save a filthy rag about the middle. My skin was burned to a mahogany brown. I was very thin, and I contemplated my thinness with a strange sort of pride, as if it were an achievement to be so thin. Especially was I enamoured of my painfully prominent ribs. The very sight of the hollows between them gave me a sense of solemn elation, or, rather, to use a better word, of sanctification.

My knees were callused like my elbows. I was very dirty. My beard, evidently once blond, but now a dirt-stained and streaky brown, swept my midriff in a tangled mass. My long hair, similarly stained and tangled, was all about my shoulders, while wisps of it continually strayed in the way of my vision so that sometimes I was compelled to brush it aside with my hands. For the most part, however, I contented myself with peering through it like a wild animal from a thicket.

Just at the tunnel-like mouth of my dim cave the day reared itself in a wall of blinding sunshine. After a time I crawled to the entrance, and, for the sake of greater discomfort, lay down in the burning sunshine on a narrow ledge of rock. It positively baked me, that terrible sun, and the more it hurt me the more I delighted in it, or in myself rather, in that I was thus the master of my flesh and superior to its claims and remonstrances. When I found under me a particularly sharp, but not too sharp, rock-projection, I ground my body upon the point of it, rowelled my flesh in a very ecstasy of mastery and of purification.

It was a stagnant day of heat. Not a breath of air moved over the river valley on which I sometimes gazed. Hundreds of feet beneath me the wide river ran sluggishly. The farther shore was flat and sandy and stretched away to the horizon. Above the water were scattered clumps of palm-trees.

On my side, eaten into a curve by the river, were lofty, crumbling cliffs. Farther along the curve, in plain view from my eyrie, carved out of the living rock, were four colossal figures. It was the stature of a man to their ankle joints. The four colossi sat, with hands resting on knees, with arms crumbled quite away, and gazed out upon the river. At least three of them so gazed. Of the fourth all that remained were the lower limbs to the knees and the huge hands resting on the knees. At the feet of this one, ridiculously small, crouched a sphinx; yet this sphinx was taller than I.

I looked upon these carven images with contempt, and spat as I looked. I knew not what they were, whether forgotten gods or unremembered kings. But to me they were representative of the vanity of earth-men and earth-aspirations.

And over all this curve of river and sweep of water and wide sands beyond arched a sky of aching brass unflecked by the tiniest cloud.

The hours passed while I roasted in the sun. Often, for quite decent intervals, I forgot my heat and pain in dreams and visions and in memories. All this I knew — crumbling colossi and river and sand and sun and brazen sky — was to pass away in the twinkling of an eye. At any moment the trumps of the archangels might sound, the stars fall out of the sky, the heavens roll up as a scroll, and the Lord God of all come with his hosts for the final judgment.

Ah, I knew it so profoundly that I was ready for such sublime event. That was why I was here in rags and filth and wretchedness. I was meek and lowly, and I despised the frail needs and passions of the flesh. And I thought with contempt, and with a certain satisfaction, of the far cities of the plain I had known, all unheeding, in their pomp and lust, of the last day so near at hand. Well, they would see soon enough, but too late for them. And I should see. But I was ready. And to their cries and lamentations would I arise, reborn and glorious, and take my well-earned and rightful place in the City of God.

At times, between dreams and visions in which I was verily and before my time in the City of God, I conned over in my mind old discussions and controversies. Yes, Novatus was right in his contention that penitent apostates should never again be received into the churches. Also, there was no doubt that Sabellianism was conceived of the devil. So was Constantine, the arch-fiend, the devil's right hand.

Continually I returned to contemplation of the nature of the unity of God, and went over and over the contentions of Noetus, the Syrian. Better, however, did I like the contentions of my beloved teacher, Arius. Truly, if human reason could determine anything at all, there must have been a time, in the very nature of sonship, when the Son did not exist. In the nature of sonship there must have been a time when the Son commenced to exist. A father must be older than his son. To hold otherwise were a blasphemy and a belittlement of God.

And I remembered back to my young days when I had sat at the feet of Arius, who had been a presbyter of the city of Alexandria, and who had been robbed of the bishopric by the blasphemous and heretical Alexander. Alexander the Sabellianite, that is what he was, and his feet had fast hold of hell.

Yes, I had been to the Council of Nicea, and seen it avoid the issue. And I remembered when the Emperor Constantine had banished Arius for his uprightness. And I remembered when Constantine repented for reasons of state and policy and commanded Alexander — the other Alexander, thrice cursed, Bishop of Constantinople — to receive Arius into communion on the morrow. And that very night did not Arius die in the street? They said it was a violent sickness visited upon him in answer to Alexander's prayer to God. But I said, and so said all we Arians, that the violent sickness was due to a poison, and that the poison was due to Alexander himself, Bishop of Constantinople and devil's poisoner.

And here I ground my body back and forth on the sharp stones, and muttered aloud, drunk with conviction:

"Let the Jews and Pagans mock. Let them triumph, for their time is short. And for them there will be no time after time."

I talked to myself aloud a great deal on that rocky shelf overlooking the river. I was feverish, and on occasion I drank sparingly of water from a stinking goatskin. This goatskin I kept hanging in the sun that the stench of the skin might increase and that there might be no refreshment of coolness in the water. Food there was, lying in the dirt on my cave-floor — a few roots and a chunk of mouldy barley-cake; and hungry I was, although I did not eat.

All I did that blessed, livelong day was to sweat and swelter in the sun, mortify my lean flesh upon the rock, gaze out of the desolation, resurrect old memories, dream dreams, and mutter my convictions aloud.

And when the sun set, in the swift twilight I took a last look at the world so soon to pass. About the feet of the colossi I could make out the creeping forms of beasts that laired in the once proud works of men. And to the snarls of the beasts I crawled into my hole, and, muttering and dozing, visioning fevered fancies and praying that the last day come quickly, I ebbed down into the darkness of sleep.

* * * * *

Consciousness came back to me in solitary, with the quartet of torturers about me.

"Blasphemous and heretical Warden of San Quentin whose feet have fast hold of hell," I gibed, after I had drunk deep of the water they held to my lips. "Let the jailers and the trusties triumph. Their time is short, and for them there is no time after time."

"He's out of his head," Warden Atherton affirmed.

"He's putting it over on you," was Doctor Jackson's surer judgment.

"But he refuses food," Captain Jamie protested.

"Huh, he could fast forty days and not hurt himself," the doctor answered.

"And I have," I said, "and forty nights as well. Do me the favour to tighten the jacket and then get out of here."

The head trusty tried to insert his forefinger inside the lacing.

"You couldn't get a quarter of an inch of slack with block and tackle," he assured them.

"Have you any complaint to make, Standing?" the Warden asked.

"Yes," was my reply. "On two counts."

"What are they?"

"First," I said, "the jacket is abominably loose. Hutchins is an ass. He could get a foot of slack if he wanted."

"What is the other count?" Warden Atherton asked.

"That you are conceived of the devil, Warden."

Captain Jamie and Doctor Jackson tittered, and the Warden, with a snort, led the way out of my cell.

* * * * *

Left alone, I strove to go into the dark and gain back to the wagon circle at Nephi. I was interested to know the outcome of that doomed drifting of our forty great wagons across a desolate and hostile land, and I was not at all interested in what came of the mangy hermit with his rock-roweled ribs and stinking water-skin. And I gained back, neither to Nephi nor the Nile, but to —

But here I must pause in the narrative, my reader, in order to explain a few things and make the whole matter easier to your comprehension. This is necessary, because my time is short in which to complete my jacket-memoirs. In a little while, in a very little while, they are going to take me out and hang me. Did I have the full time of a thousand lifetimes, I could not complete the last details of my jacket experiences. Wherefore I must briefen the narrative.

First of all, Bergson is right. Life cannot be explained in intellectual terms. As Confucius said long ago: "When we are so ignorant of life, can we know death?" And ignorant of life we truly are when we cannot explain it in terms of the understanding. We know life only phenomenally, as a savage may know a dynamo; but we know nothing of life noumenonally, nothing of the nature of the intrinsic stuff of life.

Secondly, Marinetti is wrong when he claims that matter is the only mystery and the only reality. I say and as you, my reader, realize, I speak with authority — I say that matter is the only illusion. Comte called the world, which is tantamount to matter, the great fetich, and I agree with Comte.

It is life that is the reality and the mystery. Life is vastly different from mere chemic matter fluxing in high modes of notion. Life persists. Life is the thread of fire that persists through all the modes of matter. I know. I am life. I have lived ten thousand generations. I have lived millions of years. I have possessed many bodies. I, the possessor of these many bodies, have persisted. I am life. I am the unquenched spark ever flashing and astonishing the face of time, ever working my will and wreaking my passion on the cloddy aggregates of matter, called bodies, which I have transiently inhabited.

For look you. This finger of mine, so quick with sensation, so subtle to feel, so delicate in its multifarious dexterities, so firm and strong to crook and bend or stiffen by means of cunning leverages — this finger is not I. Cut it off. I live. The body is mutilated. I am not mutilated. The spirit that is I is whole.

Very well. Cut off all my fingers. I am I. The spirit is entire. Cut off both hands. Cut off both arms at the shoulder-sockets. Cut off both legs at the hip-sockets. And I, the unconquerable and indestructible I, survive. Am

I any the less for these mutilations, for these subtractions of the flesh? Certainly not. Clip my hair. Shave from me with sharp razors my lips, my nose, my ears — ay, and tear out the eyes of me by the roots; and there, mewed in that featureless skull that is attached to a hacked and mangled torso, there in that cell of the chemic flesh, will still be I, unmutilated, undiminished.

Oh, the heart still beats. Very well. Cut out the heart, or, better, fling the flesh-remnant into a machine of a thousand blades and make mincemeat of it — and I, *I*, don't you understand, all the spirit and the mystery and the vital fire and life of me, am off and away. I have not perished. Only the body has perished, and the body is not I.

I believe Colonel de Rochas was correct when he asserted that under the compulsion of his will he sent the girl Josephine, while she was in hypnotic trance, back through the eighteen years she had lived, back through the silence and the dark ere she had been born, back to the light of a previous living when she was a bedridden old man, the ex-artilleryman, Jean-Claude Bourdon. And I believe that Colonel de Rochas did truly hypnotize this resurrected shade of the old man and, by compulsion of will, send him back through the seventy years of his life, back into the dark and through the dark into the light of day when he had been the wicked old woman, Philomène Carteron.

Already, have I not shown you, my reader, that in previous times, inhabiting various cloddy aggregates of matter, I have been Count Guillaume de Sainte-Maure, a mangy and nameless hermit of Egypt, and the boy Jesse, whose father was captain of forty wagons in the great westward emigration. And, also, am I not now, as I write these lines, Darrell Sanding, under sentence of death in Folsom Prison and one time professor of agronomy in the College of Agriculture of the University of California?

Matter is the great illusion. That is, matter manifests itself in form, and form is apparitional. Where, now, are the crumbling rock-cliffs of old Egypt where once I laired me like a wild beast while I dreamed of the City of God? Where, now, is the body of Guillaume de Sainte-Maure that was thrust through on the moonlit grass so long ago by the flame-headed Guy de Villehardouin? Where, now, are the forty great wagons in the circle at Nephi, and all the men and women and children and lean cattle that sheltered inside that circle? All such things no longer are, for they were forms, manifestations of fluxing matter ere they melted into the flux again. They have passed and are not.

And now my argument becomes plain. The spirit is the reality that endures. I am spirit, and I endure. I, Darrell Standing, the tenant of many fleshly tenements, shall write a few more lines of these memoirs and then pass on my way. The form of me that is my body will fall apart when it has been sufficiently hanged by the neck, and of it naught will remain in all the world of matter. In the world of spirit the memory of it will remain. Matter has no memory, because its forms are evanescent, and what is engraved on its forms perishes with the forms.

One word more ere I return to my narrative. In all my journeys through the dark into other lives that have been mine I have never been able to guide any journey to a particular destination. Thus many new experiences of old lives were mine before ever I chanced to return to the boy Jesse at Nephi. Possibly, all told, I have lived over Jesse's experiences a score of times, sometimes taking up his career when he was quite small in the Arkansas settlements, and at least a dozen times carrying on past the point where I left him at Nephi. It were a waste of time to detail the whole of it; and so, without prejudice to the verity of my account, I shall skip much that is vague and tortuous and repetitional, and give the facts as I have assembled them out of the various times, in whole and part, as I relived them.

CHAPTER XIII

Long before daylight the camp at Nephi was astir. The cattle were driven out to water and pasture. While the men unchained the wheels and drew the wagons apart and clear for yoking in, the women cooked forty breakfasts over forty fires. The children, in the chill of dawn, clustered about the fires, sharing places, here and there, with the last relief of the night-watch waiting sleepily for coffee.

It requires time to get a large train such as ours under way, for its speed is the speed of the slowest. So the sun was an hour high and the day was already uncomfortably hot when we rolled out of Nephi and on into the sandy barrens. No inhabitant of the place saw us off. All chose to remain indoors, thus making our departure as ominous as they had made our arrival the night before.

Again it was long hours of parching heat and biting dust, sage-brush and sand, and a land accursed. No dwellings of men, neither cattle nor fences, nor any sign of human kind, did we encounter all that day; and at night we made our wagon-circle beside an empty stream, in the damp sand of which we dug many holes that filled slowly with water seepage.

Our subsequent journey is always a broken experience to me. We made camp so many times, always with the wagons drawn in circle, that to my child mind a weary long time passed after Nephi. But always, strong upon all of us, was that sense of drifting to an impending and certain doom.

We averaged about fifteen miles a day. I know, for my father had said it was sixty miles to Fillmore, the next Mormon settlement, and we made three camps on the way. This meant four days of travel. From Nephi to the last camp of which I have any memory we must have taken two weeks or a little less.

At Fillmore the inhabitants were hostile, as all had been since Salt Lake. They laughed at us when we tried to buy food, and were not above taunting us with being Missourians.

When we entered the place, hitched before the largest house of the dozen houses that composed the settlement were two saddle-horses, dusty, streaked with sweat, and drooping. The old man I have mentioned, the one with long, sunburnt hair and buckskin shirt and who seemed a sort of aide or lieutenant to father, rode close to our wagon and indicated the jaded saddle-animals with a cock of his head.

"Not sparin' horseflesh, Captain," he muttered in a low voice. "An' what in the name of Sam Hill are they hard-riding for if it ain't for us?"

But my father had already noted the condition of the two animals, and my eager eyes had seen him. And I had seen his eyes flash, his lips tighten, and haggard lines form for a moment on his dusty face. That was all. But I put two and two together, and knew that the two tired saddle-horses were just one more added touch of ominousness to the situation.

"I guess they're keeping an eye on us, Laban," was my father's sole comment.

It was at Fillmore that I saw a man that I was to see again. He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, well on in middle age, with all the evidence of good health and immense strength — strength not alone of body but of will. Unlike most men I was accustomed to about me, he was smooth-shaven. Several days' growth of beard showed that he was already well-grayed. His mouth was unusually wide, with thin lips tightly compressed as if he had lost many of his front teeth. His nose was large, square, and thick. So was his face square, wide between the cheekbones, underhung with massive jaws, and topped with a broad, intelligent forehead. And the eyes, rather small, a little more than the width of an eye apart, were the bluest blue I had ever seen.

It was at the flour-mill at Fillmore that I first saw this man. Father, with several of our company, had gone there to try to buy flour, and I, disobeying my mother in my curiosity to see more of our enemies, had tagged along unperceived. This man was one of four or five who stood in a group with the miller during the interview.

"You seen that smooth-faced old cuss?" Laban said to father, after we had got outside and were returning to camp.

Father nodded.

"Well, that's Lee," Laban continued. "I seen'm in Salt Lake. He's a regular son-of-a-gun. Got nineteen wives and fifty children, they all say. An' he's rank crazy on religion. Now, what's he followin' us up for through this God-forsaken country?"

Our weary, doomed drifting went on. The little settlements, wherever water and soil permitted, were from twenty to fifty miles apart. Between stretched the barrenness of sand and alkali and drought. And at every settlement our peaceful attempts to buy food were vain. They denied us harshly, and wanted to know who of us had sold them food when we drove them from Missouri. It was useless on our part to tell them we were from Arkansas. From Arkansas we truly were, but they insisted on our being Missourians.

At Beaver, five days' journey south from Fillmore, we saw Lee again. And again we saw hard-ridden horses tethered before the houses. But we did not see Lee at Parowan.

Cedar City was the last settlement. Laban, who had ridden on ahead, came back and reported to father. His first news was significant.

"I seen that Lee skedaddling out as I rid in, Captain. An' there's more men-folk an' horses in Cedar City than the size of the place 'd warrant."

But we had no trouble at the settlement. Beyond refusing to sell us food, they left us to ourselves. The women and children stayed in the houses, and though some of the men appeared in sight they did not, as on former occasions, enter our camp and taunt us.

It was at Cedar City that the Wainwright baby died. I remember Mrs. Wainwright weeping and pleading with Laban to try to get some cow's milk.

"It may save the baby's life," she said. "And they've got cow's milk. I saw fresh cows with my own eyes. Go on, please, Laban. It won't hurt you to try. They can only refuse. But they won't. Tell them it's for a baby, a wee little baby. Mormon women have mother's hearts. They couldn't refuse a cup of milk for a wee little baby."

And Laban tried. But, as he told father afterward, he did not get to see any Mormon women. He saw only the Mormon men, who turned him away.

This was the last Mormon outpost. Beyond lay the vast desert, with, on the other side of it, the dream land, ay, the myth land, of California. As our wagons rolled out of the place in the early morning I, sitting beside my father on the driver's seat, saw Laban give expression to his feelings. We had gone perhaps half a mile, and were topping a low rise that would sink Cedar City from view, when Laban turned his horse around, halted it, and stood up in the stirrups. Where he had halted was a new-made grave, and I knew it for the Wainwright baby's — not the first of our graves since we had crossed the Wasatch mountains.

He was a weird figure of a man. Aged and lean, long-faced, hollow-checked, with matted, sunburnt hair that fell below the shoulders of his buckskin shirt, his face was distorted with hatred and helpless rage. Holding his long rifle in his bridle-hand, he shook his free fist at Cedar City.

"God's curse on all of you!" he cried out. "On your children, and on your babes unborn. May drought destroy your crops. May you eat sand seasoned with the venom of rattlesnakes. May the sweet water of your springs turn to bitter alkali. May . . ."

Here his words became indistinct as our wagons rattled on; but his heaving shoulders and brandishing fist attested that he had only begun to lay the curse. That he expressed the general feeling in our train was evidenced by the many women who leaned from the wagons, thrusting out gaunt forearms and shaking bony, labour-malformed fists at the last of Mormondom. A man, who walked in the sand and goaded the oxen of the wagon behind ours, laughed and waved his goad. It was unusual, that laugh, for there had been no laughter in our train for many days.

"Give 'm hell, Laban," he encouraged. "Them's my sentiments."

And as our train rolled on I continued to look back at Laban, standing in his stirrups by the baby's grave. Truly he was a weird figure, with his long hair, his moccasins, and fringed leggings. So old and weather-beaten was his buckskin shirt that ragged filaments, here and there, showed where proud fringes once had been. He was a man of flying tatters. I remember, at his waist, dangled dirty tufts of hair that, far back in the journey, after a shower of rain, were wont to show glossy black. These I knew were Indian scalps, and the sight of them always thrilled me.

"It will do him good," father commended, more to himself than to me. "I've been looking for days for him to blow up."

"I wish he'd go back and take a couple of scalps," I volunteered.

My father regarded me quizzically.

"Don't like the Mormons, eh, son?"

I shook my head and felt myself swelling with the inarticulate hate that possessed me.

"When I grow up," I said, after a minute, "I'm goin' gunning for them."

"You, Jesse!" came my mother's voice from inside the wagon. "Shut your mouth instanter." And to my father: "You ought to be ashamed letting the boy talk on like that."

Two days' journey brought us to Mountain Meadows, and here, well beyond the last settlement, for the first time we did not form the wagon-circle. The wagons were roughly in a circle, but there were many gaps, and the wheels were not chained. Preparations were made to stop a week. The cattle must be rested for the real desert, though this was desert enough in all seeming. The same low hills of sand were about us, but sparsely covered with scrub brush. The flat was sandy, but there was some grass — more than we had encountered in many days. Not more than a hundred feet from camp was a weak spring that barely supplied human needs. But farther along the bottom various other weak springs emerged from the hillsides, and it was at these that the cattle watered.

We made camp early that day, and, because of the programme to stay a week, there was a general overhauling of soiled clothes by the women, who planned to start washing on the morrow. Everybody worked till nightfall. While some of the men mended harness others repaired the frames and ironwork of the wagons. Them was much heating and hammering of iron and tightening of bolts and nuts. And I remember coming upon Laban, sitting cross-legged in the shade of a wagon and sewing away till nightfall on a new pair of moccasins. He was the only man in our train who wore moccasins and buckskin, and I have an impression that he had not belonged to our company when it left Arkansas. Also, he had neither wife, nor family, nor wagon of his own. All he possessed was his horse, his rifle, the clothes he stood up in, and a couple of blankets that were hauled in the Mason wagon.

Next morning it was that our doom fell. Two days' journey beyond the last Mormon outpost, knowing that no Indians were about and apprehending nothing from the Indians on any count, for the first time we had not chained our wagons in the solid circle, placed guards on the cattle, nor set a night-watch.

My awakening was like a nightmare. It came as a sudden blast of sound. I was only stupidly awake for the first moments and did nothing except to try to analyze and identify the various noises that went to compose the blast that continued without let up. I could hear near and distant explosions of rifles, shouts and curses of men, women screaming, and children bawling. Then I could make out the thuds and squeals of bullets that hit wood and iron in the wheels and under-construction of the wagon. Whoever it was that was shooting, the aim was too low. When I started to rise, my mother, evidently just in the act of dressing, pressed me down with her hand. Father, already up and about, at this stage erupted into the wagon.

"Out of it!" he shouted. "Quick! To the ground!"

He wasted no time. With a hook-like clutch that was almost a blow, so swift was it, he flung me bodily out of the rear end of the wagon. I had barely time to crawl out from under when father, mother, and the baby came down pell-mell where I had been.

"Here, Jesse!" father shouted to me, and I joined him in scooping out sand behind the shelter of a wagon-wheel. We worked bare-handed and wildly. Mother joined in.

"Go ahead and make it deeper, Jesse," father ordered,

He stood up and rushed away in the gray light, shouting commands as he ran. (I had learned by now my surname. I was Jesse Fancher. My father was Captain Fancher).

"Lie down!" I could hear him. "Get behind the wagon wheels and burrow in the sand! Family men, get the women and children out of the wagons! Hold your fire! No more shooting! Hold your fire and be ready for the rush when it comes! Single men, join Laban at the right, Cochrane at the left, and me in the centre! Don't stand up! Crawl for it!"

But no rush came. For a quarter of an hour the heavy and irregular firing continued. Our damage had come in the first moments of surprise when a number of the early-rising men were caught exposed in the light of the campfires they were building. The Indians — for Indians Laban declared them to be — had attacked us from the open, and were lying down and firing at us. In the growing light father made ready for them. His position was near to where I lay in the burrow with mother so that I heard him when he cried out:

"Now! all together!"

From left, right, and centre our rifles loosed in a volley. I had popped my head up to see, and I could make out more than one stricken Indian. Their fire immediately ceased, and I could see them scampering back on foot across the open, dragging their dead and wounded with them.

All was work with us on the instant. While the wagons were being dragged and chained into the circle with tongues inside — I saw women and little boys and girls flinging their strength on the wheel spokes to help — we took toll of our losses. First, and gravest of all, our last animal had been run off. Next, lying about the fires they had been building, were seven of our men. Four were dead, and three were dying. Other men, wounded, were being cared for by the women. Little Rish Hardacre had been struck in the arm by a heavy ball. He was no more than six, and I remember looking on with mouth agape while his mother held him on her lap and his father set about bandaging the wound. Little Rish had stopped crying. I could see the tears on his cheeks while he stared wonderingly at a sliver of broken bone sticking out of his forearm.

Granny White was found dead in the Foxwell wagon. She was a fat and helpless old woman who never did anything but sit down all the time and smoke a pipe. She was the mother of Abby Foxwell. And Mrs. Grant had been killed. Her husband sat beside her body. He was very quiet. There were no tears in his eyes. He just sat there, his rifle across his knees, and everybody left him alone.

Under father's directions the company was working like so many beavers. The men dug a big rifle pit in the centre of the corral, forming a breastwork out of the displaced sand. Into this pit the women dragged bedding, food, and all sorts of necessaries from the wagons. All the children helped. There was no whimpering, and little or no excitement. There was work to be done, and all of us were folks born to work.

The big rifle pit was for the women and children. Under the wagons, completely around the circle, a shallow trench was dug and an earthwork thrown up. This was for the fighting men.

Laban returned from a scout. He reported that the Indians had withdrawn the matter of half a mile, and were holding a powwow. Also he had seen them carry six of their number off the field, three of which, he said, were deaders.

From time to time, during the morning of that first day, we observed clouds of dust that advertised the movements of considerable bodies of mounted men. These clouds of dust came toward us, hemming us in on all sides. But we saw no living creature. One cloud of dirt only moved away from us. It was a large cloud, and everybody said it was our cattle being driven off. And our forty great wagons that had rolled over the Rockies and half across the continent stood in a helpless circle. Without cattle they could roll no farther.

At noon Laban came in from another scout. He had seen fresh Indians arriving from the south, showing that we were being closed in. It was at this time that we saw a dozen white men ride out on the crest of a low hill to the east and look down on us.

"That settles it," Laban said to father. "The Indians have been put up to it."

"They're white like us," I heard Abby Foxwell complain to mother. "Why don't they come in to us?"

"They ain't whites," I piped up, with a wary eye for the swoop of mother's hand. "They're Mormons."

That night, after dark, three of our young men stole out of camp. I saw them go. They were Will Aden, Abel Milliken, and Timothy Grant.

"They are heading for Cedar City to get help," father told mother while he was snatching a hasty bite of supper.

Mother shook her head.

"There's plenty of Mormons within calling distance of camp," she said. "If they won't help, and they haven't shown any signs, then the Cedar City ones won't either."

"But there are good Mormons and bad Mormons — " father began.

"We haven't found any good ones so far," she shut him off.

Not until morning did I hear of the return of Abel Milliken and Timothy Grant, but I was not long in learning. The whole camp was downcast by reason of their report. The three had gone only a few miles when they were challenged by white men. As soon as Will Aden spoke up, telling that they were from the Fancher Company, going to Cedar City for help, he was shot down. Milliken and Grant escaped back with the news, and the news settled the last hope in the hearts of our company. The whites were behind the Indians, and the doom so long apprehended was upon us.

This morning of the second day our men, going for water, were fired upon. The spring was only a hundred feet outside our circle, but the way to it was commanded by the Indians who now occupied the low hill to the east. It was close range, for the hill could not have been more than fifteen rods away. But the Indians were not good shots, evidently, for our men brought in the water without being hit.

Beyond an occasional shot into camp the morning passed quietly. We had settled down in the rifle pit, and, being used to rough living, were comfortable enough. Of course it was bad for the families of those who had been killed, and there was the taking care of the wounded. I was for ever stealing away from mother in my insatiable curiosity to see everything that was going on, and I managed to see pretty much of everything. Inside the corral, to the south of the big rifle pit, the men dug a hole and buried the seven men and two women all together. Only Mrs. Hastings, who had lost her husband and father, made much trouble. She cried and screamed out, and it took the other women a long time to quiet her.

On the low hill to the east the Indians kept up a tremendous powwowing and yelling. But beyond an occasional harmless shot they did nothing.

“What’s the matter with the ornery cusses?” Laban impatiently wanted to know. “Can’t they make up their minds what they’re goin’ to do, an’ then do it?”

It was hot in the corral that afternoon. The sun blazed down out of a cloudless sky, and there was no wind. The men, lying with their rifles in the trench under the wagons, were partly shaded; but the big rifle pit, in which were over a hundred women and children, was exposed to the full power of the sun. Here, too, were the wounded men, over whom we erected awnings of blankets. It was crowded and stifling in the pit, and I was for ever stealing out of it to the firing-line, and making a great to-do at carrying messages for father.

Our grave mistake had been in not forming the wagon-circle so as to inclose the spring. This had been due to the excitement of the first attack, when we did not know how quickly it might be followed by a second one. And now it was too late. At fifteen rods’ distance from the Indian position on the hill we did not dare unchain our wagons. Inside the corral, south of the graves, we constructed a latrine, and, north of the rifle pit in the centre, a couple of men were told off by father to dig a well for water.

In the mid-afternoon of that day, which was the second day, we saw Lee again. He was on foot, crossing diagonally over the meadow to the north-west just out of rifle-shot from us. Father hoisted one of mother’s sheets on a couple of ox-goads lashed together. This was our white flag. But Lee took no notice of it, continuing on his way.

Laban was for trying a long shot at him, but father stopped him, saying that it was evident the whites had not made up their minds what they were going to do with us, and that a shot at Lee might hurry them into making up their minds the wrong way.

“Here, Jesse,” father said to me, tearing a strip from the sheet and fastening it to an ox-goad. “Take this and go out and try to talk to that man. Don’t tell him anything about what’s happened to us. Just try to get him to come in and talk with us.”

As I started to obey, my chest swelling with pride in my mission, Jed Dunham cried out that he wanted to go with me. Jed was about my own age.

“Dunham, can your boy go along with Jesse?” father asked Jed’s father. “Two’s better than one. They’ll keep each other out of mischief.”

So Jed and I, two youngsters of nine, went out under the white flag to talk with the leader of our enemies. But Lee would not talk. When he saw us coming he started to sneak away. We never got within calling distance of him, and after a while he must have hidden in the brush; for we never laid eyes on him again, and we knew he couldn’t have got clear away.

Jed and I beat up the brush for hundreds of yards all around. They hadn’t told us how long we were to be gone, and since the Indians did not fire on us we kept on going. We were away over two hours, though had either of us been alone he would have been back in a quarter of the time. But Jed was bound to outbrave me, and I was equally bound to outbrave him.

Our foolishness was not without profit. We walked, boldly about under our white flag, and learned how thoroughly our camp was beleaguered. To the south of our train, not more than half a mile away, we made out a large Indian camp. Beyond, on the meadow, we could see Indian boys riding hard on their horses.

Then there was the Indian position on the hill to the east. We managed to climb a low hill so as to look into this position. Jed and I spent half an hour trying to count them, and concluded, with much guessing, that there must be at least a couple of hundred. Also, we saw white men with them and doing a great deal of talking.

North-east of our train, not more than four hundred yards from it, we discovered a large camp of whites behind a low rise of ground. And beyond we could see fifty or sixty saddle-horses grazing. And a mile or so away, to the north, we saw a tiny cloud of dust approaching. Jed and I waited until we saw a single man, riding fast, gallop into the camp of the whites.

When we got back into the corral the first thing that happened to me was a smack from mother for having stayed away so long; but father praised Jed and me when we gave our report.

“Watch for an attack now maybe, Captain,” Aaron Cochrane said to father. “That man the boys seen has rid in for a purpose. The whites are holding the Indians till they get orders from higher up. Maybe that man brung the orders one way or the other. They ain't sparing horseflesh, that's one thing sure."

Half an hour after our return Laban attempted a scout under a white flag. But he had not gone twenty feet outside the circle when the Indians opened fire on him and sent him back on the run.

Just before sundown I was in the rifle pit holding the baby, while mother was spreading the blankets for a bed. There were so many of us that we were packed and jammed. So little room was there that many of the women the night before had sat up and slept with their heads bowed on their knees. Right alongside of me, so near that when he tossed his arms about he struck me on the shoulder, Silas Dunlap was dying. He had been shot in the head in the first attack, and all the second day was out of his head and raving and singing doggerel. One of his songs, that he sang over and over, until it made mother frantic nervous, was:

"Said the first little devil to the second little devil,
'Give me some tobaccy from your old tobaccy box.'
Said the second little devil to the first little devil,
'Stick close to your money and close to your rocks,
An' you'll always have tobaccy in your old tobaccy box.'"

I was sitting directly alongside of him, holding the baby, when the attack burst on us. It was sundown, and I was staring with all my eyes at Silas Dunlap who was just in the final act of dying. His wife, Sarah, had one hand resting on his forehead. Both she and her Aunt Martha were crying softly. And then it came — explosions and bullets from hundreds of rifles. Clear around from east to west, by way of the north, they had strung out in half a circle and were pumping lead in our position. Everybody in the rifle pit flattened down. Lots of the younger children set up a-squalling, and it kept the women busy hushing them. Some of the women screamed at first, but not many.

Thousands of shots must haven rained in on us in the next few minutes. How I wanted to crawl out to the trench under the wagons where our men were keeping up a steady but irregular fire! Each was shooting on his own whenever he saw a man to pull trigger on. But mother suspected me, for she made me crouch down and keep right on holding the baby.

I was just taking a look at Silas Dunlap — he was still quivering — when the little Castleton baby was killed. Dorothy Castleton, herself only about ten, was holding it, so that it was killed in her arms. She was not hurt at all. I heard them talking about it, and they conjectured that the bullet must have struck high on one of the wagons and been deflected down into the rifle pit. It was just an accident, they said, and that except for such accidents we were safe where we were.

When I looked again Silas Dunlap was dead, and I suffered distinct disappointment in being cheated out of witnessing that particular event. I had never been lucky enough to see a man actually die before my eyes.

Dorothy Castleton got hysterics over what had happened, and yelled and screamed for a long time and she set Mrs. Hastings going again. Altogether such a row was raised that father sent Watt Cummings crawling back to us to find out what was the matter.

Well along into twilight the heavy firing ceased, although there were scattering shots during the night. Two of our men were wounded in this second attack, and were brought into the rifle pit. Bill Tyler was killed instantly, and they buried him, Silas Dunlap, and the Castleton baby, in the dark alongside of the others.

All during the night men relieved one another at sinking the well deeper; but the only sign of water they got was damp sand. Some of the men fetched a few pails of water from the spring, but were fired upon, and they gave it up when Jeremy Hopkins had his left hand shot off at the wrist.

Next morning, the third day, it was hotter and dryer than ever. We awoke thirsty, and there was no cooking. So dry were our mouths that we could not eat. I tried a piece of stale bread mother gave me, but had to give it up. The firing rose and fell. Sometimes there were hundreds shooting into the camp. At other times came lulls in which not a shot was fired. Father was continually cautioning our men not to waste shots because we were running short of ammunition.

And all the time the men went on digging the well. It was so deep that they were hoisting the sand up in buckets. The men who hoisted were exposed, and one of them was wounded in the shoulder. He was Peter Bromley, who drove oxen for the Bloodgood wagon, and he was engaged to marry Jane Bloodgood. She jumped out of the rifle pit and ran right to him while the bullets were flying and led him back into shelter. About midday the well caved in, and there was lively work digging out the couple who were buried in the sand. Amos Wentworth did not come to for an hour. After that they timbered the well with bottom boards from the wagons and wagon tongues, and the digging went on. But all they could get, and they were twenty feet down, was damp sand. The water would not seep.

By this time the conditions in the rifle pit were terrible. The children were complaining for water, and the babies, hoarse from much crying, went on crying. Robert Carr, another wounded man, lay about ten feet from mother and me. He was out of his head, and kept thrashing his arms about and calling for water. And some of the women were almost as bad, and kept raving against the Mormons and Indians. Some of the women prayed a great deal, and the three grown Demdike sisters, with their mother, sang gospel hymns. Other women got damp sand that was hoisted out of the bottom of the well, and packed it against the bare bodies of the babies to try to cool and soothe them.

The two Fairfax brothers couldn't stand it any longer, and, with pails in their hands, crawled out under a wagon and made a dash for the spring. Giles never got half way, when he went down. Roger made it there and back without being hit. He brought two pails part-full, for some splashed out when he ran. Giles crawled back, and when they helped him into the rifle pit he was bleeding at the mouth and coughing.

Two part-pails of water could not go far among over a hundred of us, not counting the, men. Only the babies, and the very little children, and the wounded men, got any. I did not get a sip, although mother dipped a bit of cloth into the several spoonfuls she got for the baby and wiped my mouth out. She did not even do that for herself, for she left me the bit of damp rag to chew.

The situation grew unspeakably worse in the afternoon. The quiet sun blazed down through the clear windless air and made a furnace of our hole in the sand. And all about us were the explosions of rifles and yells of the Indians. Only once in a while did father permit a single shot from the trench, and at that only by our best marksmen, such as Laban and Timothy Grant. But a steady stream of lead poured into our position all the time. There were no more disastrous ricochets, however; and our men in the trench, no longer firing, lay low and escaped damage. Only four were wounded, and only one of them very badly.

Father came in from the trench during a lull in the firing. He sat for a few minutes alongside mother and me without speaking. He seemed to be listening to all the moaning and crying for water that was going up. Once he climbed out of the rifle pit and went over to investigate the well. He brought back only damp sand, which he plastered thick on the chest and shoulders of Robert Carr. Then he went to where Jed Dunham and his mother were, and sent for Jed's father to come in from the trench. So closely packed were we that when anybody moved about inside the rifle pit he had to crawl carefully over the bodies of those lying down.

After a time father came crawling back to us.

"Jesse," he asked, "are you afraid of the Indians?"

I shook my head emphatically, guessing that I was to be seat on another proud mission.

"Are you afraid of the damned Mormons?"

"Not of any damned Mormon," I answered, taking advantage of the opportunity to curse our enemies without fear of the avenging back of mother's hand.

I noted the little smile that curled his tired lips for the moment when he heard my reply.

"Well, then, Jesse," he said, "will you go with Jed to the spring for water?"

I was all eagerness.

"We're going to dress the two of you up as girls," he continued, "so that maybe they won't fire on you."

I insisted on going as I was, as a male human that wore pants; but I surrendered quickly enough when father suggested that he would find some other boy to dress up and go along with Jed.

A chest was fetched in from the Chattox wagon. The Chattox girls were twins and of about a size with Jed and me. Several of the women got around to help. They were the Sunday dresses of the Chattox twins, and had come in the chest all the way from Arkansas.

In her anxiety mother left the baby with Sarah Dunlap, and came as far as the trench with me. There, under a wagon and behind the little breastwork of sand, Jed and I received our last instructions. Then we crawled out and stood up in the open. We were dressed precisely alike — white stockings, white dresses, with big blue sashes, and white sunbonnets. Jed's right and my left hand were clasped together. In each of our free hands we carried two small pails.

"Take it easy," father cautioned, as we began our advance. "Go slow. Walk like girls."

Not a shot was fired. We made the spring safely, filled our pails, and lay down and took a good drink ourselves. With a full pail in each hand we made the return trip. And still not a shot was fired.

I cannot remember how many journeys we made — fully fifteen or twenty. We walked slowly, always going out with hands clasped, always coming back slowly with four pails of water. It was astonishing how thirsty we were. We lay down several times and took long drinks.

But it was too much for our enemies. I cannot imagine that the Indians would have withheld their fire for so long, girls or no girls, had they not obeyed instructions from the whites who were with them. At any rate Jed and I were just starting on another trip when a rifle went off from the Indian hill, and then another.

"Come back!" mother cried out.

I looked at Jed, and found him looking at me. I knew he was stubborn and had made up his mind to be the last one in. So I started to advance, and at the same instant he started.

"You! — Jesse!" cried my mother. And there was more than a smacking in the way she said it.

Jed offered to clasp hands, but I shook my head.

"Run for it," I said.

And while we hotfooted it across the sand it seemed all the rifles on Indian hill were turned loose on us. I got to the spring a little ahead, so that Jed had to wait for me to fill my pails.

"Now run for it," he told me; and from the leisurely way he went about filling his own pails I knew he was determined to be in last.

So I crouched down, and, while I waited, watched the puffs of dust raised by the bullets. We began the return side by side and running.

"Not so fast," I cautioned him, "or you'll spill half the water."

That stung him, and he slacked back perceptibly. Midway I stumbled and fell headlong. A bullet, striking directly in front of me, filled my eyes with sand. For the moment I thought I was shot.

"Done it a-purpose," Jed sneered as I scrambled to my feet. He had stood and waited for me.

I caught his idea. He thought I had fallen deliberately in order to spill my water and go back for more. This rivalry between us was a serious matter — so serious, indeed, that I immediately took advantage of what he had imputed and raced back to the spring. And Jed Dunham, scornful of the bullets that were puffing dust all around him, stood there upright in the open and waited for me. We came in side by side, with honours even in our boys' foolhardiness. But when we delivered the water Jed had only one pailful. A bullet had gone through the other pail close to the bottom.

Mother took it out on me with a lecture on disobedience. She must have known, after what I had done, that father wouldn't let her smack me; for, while she was lecturing, father winked at me across her shoulder. It was the first time he had ever winked at me.

Back in the rifle pit Jed and I were heroes. The women wept and blessed us, and kissed us and mauled us. And I confess I was proud of the demonstration, although, like Jed, I let on that I did not like all such making-over. But Jeremy Hopkins, a great bandage about the stump of his left wrist, said we were the stuff white men were made out of — men like Daniel Boone, like Kit Carson, and Davy Crockett. I was prouder of that than all the rest.

The remainder of the day I seem to have been bothered principally with the pain of my right eye caused by the sand that had been kicked into it by the bullet. The eye was bloodshot, mother said; and to me it seemed to hurt just as much whether I kept it open or closed. I tried both ways.

Things were quieter in the rifle pit, because all had had water, though strong upon us was the problem of how the next water was to be procured. Coupled with this was the known fact that our ammunition was almost exhausted. A thorough overhauling of the wagons by father had resulted in finding five pounds of powder. A very little more was in the flasks of the men.

I remembered the sundown attack of the night before, and anticipated it this time by crawling to the trench before sunset. I crept into a place alongside of Laban. He was busy chewing tobacco, and did not notice me. For some time I watched him, fearing that when he discovered me he would order me back. He would take a long squint out between the wagon wheels, chew steadily a while, and then spit carefully into a little depression he had made in the sand.

"How's tricks?" I asked finally. It was the way he always addressed me.

"Fine," he answered. "Most remarkable fine, Jesse, now that I can chew again. My mouth was that dry that I couldn't chew from sun-up to when you brung the water."

Here a man showed head and shoulders over the top of the little hill to the north-east occupied by the whites. Laban sighted his rifle on him for a long minute. Then he shook his head.

"Four hundred yards. Nope, I don't risk it. I might get him, and then again I mightn't, an' your dad is mighty anxious about the powder."

"What do you think our chances are?" I asked, man-fashion, for, after my water exploit, I was feeling very much the man.

Laban seemed to consider carefully for a space ere he replied.

"Jesse, I don't mind tellin' you we're in a damned bad hole. But we'll get out, oh, we'll get out, you can bet your bottom dollar."

"Some of us ain't going to get out," I objected.

"Who, for instance?" he queried.

"Why, Bill Tyler, and Mrs. Grant, and Silas Dunlap, and all the rest."

"Aw, shucks, Jesse — they're in the ground already. Don't you know everybody has to bury their dead as they traipse along? They've ben doin' it for thousands of years I reckon, and there's just as many alive as ever they was. You see, Jesse, birth and death go hand-in-hand. And they're born as fast as they die — faster, I reckon, because they've increased and multiplied. Now you, you might a-got killed this afternoon packin' water. But you're here, ain't you, a-gassin' with me an' likely to grow up an' be the father of a fine large family in Californy. They say everything grows large in Californy."

This cheerful way of looking at the matter encouraged me to dare sudden expression of a long covetousness.

"Say, Laban, supposin' you got killed here — "

"Who? — me?" he cried.

"I'm just sayin' supposin'," I explained.

"Oh, all right then. Go on. Supposin' I am killed?"

"Will you give me your scalps?"

"Your ma'll smack you if she catches you a-wearin' them," he temporized.

"I don't have to wear them when she's around. Now if you got killed, Laban, somebody'd have to get them scalps. Why not me?"

"Why not?" he repeated. "That's correct, and why not you? All right, Jesse. I like you, and your pa. The minute I'm killed the scalps is yourn, and the scalpin' knife, too. And there's Timothy Grant for witness. Did you hear, Timothy?"

Timothy said he had heard, and I lay there speechless in the stifling trench, too overcome by my greatness of good fortune to be able to utter a word of gratitude.

I was rewarded for my foresight in going to the trench. Another general attack was made at sundown, and thousands of shots were fired into us. Nobody on our side was scratched. On the other hand, although we fired barely thirty shots, I saw Laban and Timothy Grant each get an Indian. Laban told me that from the first only the Indians had done the shooting. He was certain that no white had fired a shot. All of which sorely puzzled him. The whites neither offered us aid nor attacked us, and all the while were on visiting terms with the Indians who were attacking us.

Next morning found the thirst harsh upon us. I was out at the first hint of light. There had been a heavy dew, and men, women, and children were lapping it up with their tongues from off the wagon-tongues, brake-blocks, and wheel-tyres.

There was talk that Laban had returned from a scout just before daylight; that he had crept close to the position of the whites; that they were already up; and that in the light of their campfires he had seen them praying in a large circle. Also he reported from what few words he caught that they were praying about us and what was to be done with us.

"May God send them the light then," I heard one of the Demdike sisters say to Abby Foxwell.

"And soon," said Abby Foxwell, "for I don't know what we'll do a whole day without water, and our powder is about gone."

Nothing happened all morning. Not a shot was fired. Only the sun blazed down through the quiet air. Our thirst grew, and soon the babies were crying and the younger children whimpering and complaining. At noon Will Hamilton took two large pails and started for the spring. But before he could crawl under the wagon Ann Demdike ran and got her arms around him and tried to hold him back. But he talked to her, and kissed her, and went on. Not a shot was fired, nor was any fired all the time he continued to go out and bring back water.

"Praise God!" cried old Mrs. Demdike. "It is a sign. They have relented."

This was the opinion of many of the women.

About two o'clock, after we had eaten and felt better, a white man appeared, carrying a white flag. Will Hamilton went out and talked to him, came back and talked with father and the rest of our men, and then went out to the stranger again. Farther back we could see a man standing and looking on, whom we recognized as Lee.

With us all was excitement. The women were so relieved that they were crying and kissing one another, and old Mrs. Demdike and others were hallelujahing and blessing God. The proposal, which our men had accepted, was that we would put ourselves under the flag of truce and be protected from the Indians.

"We had to do it," I heard father tell mother.

He was sitting, droop-shouldered and dejected, on a wagon-tongue.

"But what if they intend treachery?" mother asked.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"We've got to take the chance that they don't," he said. "Our ammunition is gone."

Some of our men were unchaining one of our wagons and rolling it out of the way. I ran across to see what was happening. In came Lee himself, followed by two empty wagons, each driven by one man. Everybody crowded around Lee. He said that they had had a hard time with the Indians keeping them off of us, and that Major Higbee, with fifty of the Mormon militia, were ready to take us under their charge.

But what made father and Laban and some of the men suspicious was when Lee said that we must put all our rifles into one of the wagons so as not to arouse the animosity of the Indians. By so doing we would appear to be the prisoners of the Mormon militia.

Father straightened up and was about to refuse when he glanced to Laban, who replied in an undertone. "They ain't no more use in our hands than in the wagon, seein' as the powder's gone."

Two of our wounded men who could not walk were put into the wagons, and along with them were put all the little children. Lee seemed to be picking them out over eight and under eight. Jed and I were large for our age, and we were nine besides; so Lee put us with the older bunch and told us we were to march with the women on foot.

When he took our baby from mother and put it in a wagon she started to object. Then I saw her lips draw tightly together, and she gave in. She was a gray-eyed, strong-featured, middle-aged woman, large-boned and fairly stout. But the long journey and hardship had told on her, so that she was hollow-cheeked and gaunt, and like all the women in the company she wore an expression of brooding, never-ceasing anxiety.

It was when Lee described the order of march that Laban came to me. Lee said that the women and the children that walked should go first in the line, following behind the two wagons. Then the men, in single file, should follow the women. When Laban heard this he came to me, untied the scalps from his belt, and fastened them to my waist.

"But you ain't killed yet," I protested.

"You bet your life I ain't," he answered lightly.

"I've just reformed, that's all. This scalp-wearin' is a vain thing and heathen." He stopped a moment as if he had forgotten something, then, as he turned abruptly on his heel to regain the men of our company, he called over his shoulder, "Well, so long, Jesse."

I was wondering why he should say good-bye when a white man came riding into the corral. He said Major Higbee had sent him to tell us to hurry up, because the Indians might attack at any moment.

So the march began, the two wagons first. Lee kept along with the women and walking children. Behind us, after waiting until we were a couple of hundred feet in advance, came our men. As we emerged from the corral we could see the militia just a short distance away. They were leaning on their rifles and standing in a long line about six feet apart. As we passed them I could not help noticing how solemn-faced they were. They looked like men at a funeral. So did the women notice this, and some of them began to cry.

I walked right behind my mother. I had chosen this position so that she would not catch-sight of my scalps. Behind me came the three Demdike sisters, two of them helping the old mother. I could hear Lee calling all the time to the men who drove the wagons not to go so fast. A man that one of the Demdike girls said must be Major Higbee sat on a horse watching us go by. Not an Indian was in sight.

By the time our men were just abreast of the militia — I had just looked back to try to see where Jed Dunham was — the thing happened. I heard Major Higbee cry out in a loud voice, "Do your duty!" All the rifles of the militia seemed to go off at once, and our men were falling over and sinking down. All the Demdike women went down at one time. I turned quickly to see how mother was, and she was down. Right alongside of us, out of the bushes, came hundreds of Indians, all shooting. I saw the two Dunlap sisters start on the run across the sand, and took after them, for whites and Indians were all killing us. And as I ran I saw the driver of one of the wagons shooting the two wounded men. The horses of the other wagon were plunging and rearing and their driver was trying to hold them.

* * * * *

It was when the little boy that was I was running after the Dunlap girls that blackness came upon him. All memory there ceases, for Jesse Fancher there ceased, and, as Jesse Fancher, ceased for ever. The form that was Jesse Fancher, the body that was his, being matter and apparitional, like an apparition passed and was not. But the imperishable spirit did not cease. It continued to exist, and, in its next incarnation, became the residing spirit of that apparitional body known as Darrell Standing's which soon is to be taken out and hanged and sent into the nothingness whither all apparitions go.

There is a lifer here in Folsom, Matthew Davies, of old pioneer stock, who is trusty of the scaffold and execution chamber. He is an old man, and his folks crossed the plains in the early days. I have talked with him, and he has verified the massacre in which Jesse Fancher was killed. When this old lifer was a child there was much talk in his family of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. The children in the wagons, he said, were saved, because they were too young to tell tales.

All of which I submit. Never, in my life of Darrell Standing, have I read a line or heard a word spoken of the Fancher Company that perished at Mountain Meadows. Yet, in the jacket in San Quentin prison, all this knowledge came to me. I could not create this knowledge out of nothing, any more than could I create dynamite out of nothing. This knowledge and these facts I have related have but one explanation. They are out of the spirit content of me — the spirit that, unlike matter, does not perish.

In closing this chapter I must state that Matthew Davies also told me that some years after the massacre Lee was taken by United States Government officials to the Mountain Meadows and there executed on the site of our old corral.

CHAPTER XIV

When, at the conclusion of my first ten days' term in the jacket, I was brought back to consciousness by Doctor Jackson's thumb pressing open an eyelid, I opened both eyes and smiled up into the face of Warden Atherton.

"Too cussed to live and too mean to die," was his comment.

"The ten days are up, Warden," I whispered.

"Well, we're going to unlace you," he growled.

"It is not that," I said. "You observed my smile. You remember we had a little wager. Don't bother to unlace me first. Just give the Bull Durham and cigarette papers to Morrell and Oppenheimer. And for full measure here's another smile."

"Oh, I know your kind, Standing," the Warden lectured. "But it won't get you anything. If I don't break you, you'll break all strait-jacket records."

"He's broken them already," Doctor Jackson said. "Who ever heard of a man smiling after ten days of it?"

"Well and bluff," Warden Atherton answered. "Unlace him, Hutchins."

"Why such haste?" I queried, in a whisper, of course, for so low had life ebbed in me that it required all the little strength I possessed and all the will of me to be able to whisper even. "Why such haste? I don't have to catch a train, and I am so confounded comfortable as I am that I prefer not to be disturbed."

But unlace me they did, rolling me out of the fetid jacket and upon the floor, an inert, helpless thing.

"No wonder he was comfortable," said Captain Jamie. "He didn't feel anything. He's paralysed."

"Paralysed your grandmother," sneered the Warden. "Get him up on his feat and you'll see him stand."

Hutchins and the doctor dragged me to my feet.

"Now let go!" the Warden commanded.

Not all at once could life return into the body that had been practically dead for ten days, and as a result, with no power as yet over my flesh, I gave at the knees, crumpled, pitched sidewise, and gashed my forehead against the wall.

"You see," said Captain Jamie.

"Good acting," retorted the Warden. "That man's got nerve to do anything."

"You're right, Warden," I whispered from the floor. "I did it on purpose. It was a stage fall. Lift me up again, and I'll repeat it. I promise you lots of fun."

I shall not dwell upon the agony of returning circulation. It was to become an old story with me, and it bore its share in cutting the lines in my face that I shall carry to the scaffold.

When they finally left me I lay for the rest of the day stupid and half-comatose. There is such a thing as anæsthesia of pain, engendered by pain too exquisite to be borne. And I have known that anæsthesia.

By evening I was able to crawl about my cell, but not yet could I stand up. I drank much water, and cleansed myself as well as I could; but not until next day could I bring myself to eat, and then only by deliberate force of my will.

The program me, as given me by Warden Atherton, was that I was to rest up and recuperate for a few days, and then, if in the meantime I had not confessed to the hiding-place of the dynamite, I should be given another ten days in the jacket.

"Sorry to cause you so much trouble, Warden," I had said in reply. "It's a pity I don't die in the jacket and so put you out of your misery."

At this time I doubt that I weighed an ounce over ninety pounds. Yet, two years before, when the doors of San Quentin first closed on me, I had weighed one hundred and sixty-five pounds. It seems incredible that there was another ounce I could part with and still live. Yet in the months that followed, ounce by ounce I was reduced until I know I must have weighed nearer eighty than ninety pounds. I do know, after I managed my escape from solitary and struck the guard Thurston on the nose, that before they took me to San Rafael for trial, while I was being cleaned and shaved I weighed eighty-nine pounds.

There are those who wonder how men grow hard. Warden Atherton was a hard man. He made me hard, and my very hardness reacted on him and made him harder. And yet he never succeeded in killing me. It required the state law of California, a hanging judge, and an unpardoning governor to send me to the scaffold for striking a prison guard with my fist. I shall always contend that that guard had a nose most easily bleedable. I was a bat-eyed, tottery skeleton at the time. I sometimes wonder if his nose really did bleed. Of course he swore it did, on the witness stand. But I have known prison guards take oath to worse perjuries than that.

Ed Morrell was eager to know if I had succeeded with the experiment; but when he attempted to talk with me he was shut up by Smith, the guard who happened to be on duty in solitary.

“That’s all right, Ed,” I rapped to him. “You and Jake keep quiet, and I’ll tell you about it. Smith can’t prevent you from listening, and he can’t prevent me from talking. They have done their worst, and I am still here.”

“Cut that out, Standing!” Smith bellowed at me from the corridor on which all the cells opened.

Smith was a peculiarly saturnine individual, by far the most cruel and vindictive of our guards. We used to canvass whether his wife bullied him or whether he had chronic indigestion.

I continued rapping with my knuckles, and he came to the wicket to glare in at me.

“I told you to out that out,” he snarled.

“Sorry,” I said suavely. “But I have a sort of premonition that I shall go right on rapping. And — er — excuse me for asking a personal question — what are you going to do about it?”

“I’ll — ” he began explosively, proving, by his inability to conclude the remark, that he thought in henids.

“Yes?” I encouraged. “Just what, pray?”

“I’ll have the Warden here,” he said lamely.

“Do, please. A most charming gentleman, to be sure. A shining example of the refining influences that are creeping into our prisons. Bring him to me at once. I wish to report you to him.”

“Me?”

“Yes, just precisely you,” I continued. “You persist, in a rude and boorish manner, in interrupting my conversation with the other guests in this hostelry.”

And Warden Atherton came. The door was unlocked, and he blustered into my cell. But oh, I was so safe! He had done his worst. I was beyond his power.

“I’ll shut off your grub,” he threatened.

“As you please,” I answered. “I’m used to it. I haven’t eaten for ten days, and, do you know, trying to begin to eat again is a confounded nuisance.

"Oh, ho, you're threatening me, are you? A hunger strike, eh?"

"Pardon me," I said, my voice sulky with politeness. "The proposition was yours, not mine. Do try and be logical on occasion. I trust you will believe me when I tell you that your illogic is far more painful for me to endure than all your tortures."

"Are you going to stop your knuckle-talking?" he demanded.

"No; forgive me for vexing you — for I feel so strong a compulsion to talk with my knuckles that — "

"For two cents I'll put you back in the jacket," he broke in.

"Do, please. I dote on the jacket. I am the jacket baby. I get fat in the jacket. Look at that arm." I pulled up my sleeve and showed a biceps so attenuated that when I flexed it it had the appearance of a string. "A real blacksmith's biceps, eh, Warden? Cast your eyes on my swelling chest. Sandow had better look out for his laurels. And my abdomen — why, man, I am growing so stout that my case will be a scandal of prison overfeeding. Watch out, Warden, or you'll have the taxpayers after you."

"Are you going to stop knuckle-talk?" he roared.

"No, thanking you for your kind solicitude. On mature deliberation I have decided that I shall keep on knuckle-talking."

He stared at me speechlessly for a moment, and then, out of sheer impotency, turned to go.

"One question, please."

"What is it?" he demanded over his shoulder.

"What are you going to do about it?"

From the choleric exhibition he gave there and then it has been an unceasing wonder with me to this day that he has not long since died of apoplexy.

Hour by hour, after the warden's discomfited departure, I rapped on and on the tale of my adventures. Not until that night, when Pie-Face Jones came on duty and proceeded to steal his customary naps, were Morrell and Oppenheimer able to do any talking.

"Pipe dreams," Oppenheimer rapped his verdict.

Yes, was my thought; our experiences *are* the stuff of our dreams.

"When I was a night messenger I hit the hop once," Oppenheimer continued. "And I want to tell you you haven't anything on me when it came to seeing things. I guess that is what all the novel-writers do — hit the hop so as to throw their imagination into the high gear."

But Ed Morrell, who had travelled the same road as I, although with different results, believed my tale. He said that when his body died in the jacket, and he himself went forth from prison, he was never anybody but Ed Morrell. He never experienced previous existences. When his spirit wandered free, it wandered always in the present. As he told us, just as he was able to leave his body and gaze upon it lying in the jacket on the cell floor, so could he leave the prison, and, in the present, revisit San Francisco and see what was occurring. In this manner he had visited his mother twice, both times finding her asleep. In this spirit-roving he said he had no power over material things. He could not open or close a door, move any object, make a noise, nor manifest his presence. On the other hand, material things had no power over him. Walls and doors were not obstacles. The entity, or the real thing that was he, was thought, spirit.

"The grocery store on the corner, half a block from where mother lived, changed hands," he told us. "I knew it by the different sign over the place. I had to wait six months after that before I could write my first letter, but when I did I asked mother about it. And she said yes, it had changed."

"Did you read that grocery sign?" Jake Oppenheimer asked.

"Sure thing I did," was Morrell's response. "Or how could I have known it?"

"All right," rapped Oppenheimer the unbelieving. "You can prove it easy. Some time, when they shift some decent guards on us that will give us a peep at a newspaper, you get yourself thrown into the jacket, climb out of your body, and sashay down to little old 'Frisco. Slide up to Third and Market just about two or three a.m. when they are running the morning papers off the press. Read the latest news. Then make a swift sneak for San Quentin, get here before the newspaper tug crosses the bay, and tell me what you read. Then we'll wait and get a morning paper, when it comes in, from a guard. Then, if what you told me is in that paper, I am with you to a fare-you-well."

It was a good test. I could not but agree with Oppenheimer that such a proof would be absolute. Morrell said he would take it up some time, but that he disliked to such an extent the process of leaving his body that he would not make the attempt until such time that his suffering in the jacket became too extreme to be borne.

"That is the way with all of them — won't come across with the goods," was Oppenheimer's criticism. "My mother believed in spirits. When I was a kid she was always seeing them and talking with them and getting advice from them. But she never come across with any goods from them. The spirits couldn't tell her where the old man could nail a job or find a gold-mine or mark an eight-spot in Chinese lottery. Not on your life. The bunk they told her was that the old man's uncle had had a goitre, or that the old man's grandfather had died of galloping consumption, or that we were going to move house inside four months, which last was dead easy, seeing as we moved on an average of six times a year."

I think, had Oppenheimer had the opportunity for thorough education, he would have made a Marinetti or a Haeckel. He was an earth-man in his devotion to the irrefragable fact, and his logic was admirable though frosty. "You've got to show me," was the ground rule by which he considered all things. He lacked the slightest iota of faith. This was what Morrell had pointed out. Lack of faith had prevented Oppenheimer from succeeding in achieving the little death in the jacket.

You will see, my reader, that it was not all hopelessly bad in solitary. Given three minds such as ours, there was much with which to while away the time. It might well be that we kept one another from insanity, although I must admit that Oppenheimer rotted five years in solitary entirely by himself, ere Morrell joined him, and yet had remained sane.

On the other hand, do not make the mistake of thinking that life in solitary was one wild orgy of blithe communion and exhilarating psychological research.

We had much and terrible pain. Our guards were brutes — your hang-dogs, citizen. Our surroundings were vile. Our food was filthy, monotonous, innutritious. Only men, by force of will, could live on so unbalanced a ration. I know that our prize cattle, pigs, and sheep on the University Demonstration Farm at Davis would have faded away and died had they received no more scientifically balanced a ration than what we received.

We had no books to read. Our very knuckle-talk was a violation of the rules. The world, so far as we were concerned, practically did not exist. It was more a ghost-world. Oppenheimer, for instance, had never seen an automobile or a motor-cycle. News did occasionally filter in — but such dim, long-after-the-event, unreal news. Oppenheimer told me he had not learned of the Russo-Japanese war until two years after it was over.

We were the buried alive, the living dead. Solitary was our tomb, in which, on occasion, we talked with our knuckles like spirits rapping at a séance.

News? Such little things were news to us. A change of bakers — we could tell it by our bread. What made Pie-face Jones lay off a week? Was it vacation or sickness? Why was Wilson, on the night shift for only ten days, transferred elsewhere? Where did Smith get that black eye? We would speculate for a week over so trivial a thing as the last.

Some convict given a month in solitary was an event. And yet we could learn nothing from such transient and ofttimes stupid Dantes who would remain in our inferno too short a time to learn knuckle-talk ere they went forth again into the bright wide world of the living.

Still, again, all was not so trivial in our abode of shadows. As example, I taught Oppenheimer to play chess. Consider how tremendous such an achievement is — to teach a man, thirteen cells away, by means of knuckle-raps; to teach him to visualize a chessboard, to visualize all the pieces, pawns and positions, to know the various manners of moving; and to teach him it all so thoroughly that he and I, by pure visualization, were in the end able to play entire games of chess in our minds. In the end, did I say? Another tribute to the magnificence of Oppenheimer's mind: in the end he became my master at the game — he who had never seen a chessman in his life.

What image of a bishop, for instance, could possibly form in his mind when I rapped our code-sign for *bishop*? In vain and often I asked him this very question. In vain he tried to describe in words that mental image of something he had never seen but which nevertheless he was able to handle in such masterly fashion as to bring confusion upon me countless times in the course of play.

I can only contemplate such exhibitions of will and spirit and conclude, as I so often conclude, that precisely there resides reality. The spirit only is real. The flesh is phantasmagoria and apparitional. I ask you how — I repeat, I ask you *how* matter or flesh in any form can play chess on an imaginary board with imaginary pieces, across a vacuum of thirteen cell spanned only with knuckle-taps?

CHAPTER XV

I was once Adam Strang, an Englishman. The period of my living, as near as I can guess it, was somewhere between 1550 and 1650, and I lived to a ripe old age, as you shall see. It has been a great regret to me, ever since Ed Morrell taught me the way of the little death, that I had not been a more thorough student of history. I should have been able to identity and place much that is obscure to me. As it is, I am compelled to grope and guess my way to times and places of my earlier existences.

A peculiar thing about my Adam Strang existence is that I recollect so little of the first thirty years of it. Many times, in the jacket, has Adam Strang recrudesced, but always he springs into being full-statured, heavy-thewed, a full thirty years of age.

I, Adam Strang, invariably assume my consciousness on a group of low, sandy islands somewhere under the equator in what must be the western Pacific Ocean. I am always at home there, and seem to have been there some time. There are thousands of people on these islands, although I am the only white man. The natives are a magnificent breed, big-muscled, broad-shouldered, tall. A six-foot man is a commonplace. The king, Raa Kook, is at least six inches above six feet, and though he would weigh fully three hundred pounds, is so equitably proportioned that one could not call him fat. Many of his chiefs are as large, while the women are not much smaller than the men.

There are numerous islands in the group, over all of which Raa Kook is king, although the cluster of islands to the south is restive and occasionally in revolt. These natives with whom I live are Polynesian, I know, because their hair is straight and black. Their skin is a sun-warm golden-brown. Their speech, which I speak uncommonly easy, is round and rich and musical, possessing a paucity of consonants, being composed principally of vowels. They love flowers, music, dancing, and games, and are childishly simple and happy in their amusements, though cruelly savage in their angers and wars.

I, Adam Strang, know my past, but do not seem to think much about it. I live in the present. I brood neither over past nor future. I am careless, improvident, uncautious, happy out of sheer well-being and overplus of physical energy. Fish, fruits, vegetables, and seaweed — a full stomach —

and I am content. I am high in place with Raa Kook, than whom none is higher, not even Abba Taak, who is highest over the priest. No man dare lift hand or weapon to me. I am taboo — sacred as the sacred canoe-house under the floor of which repose the bones of heaven alone knows how many previous kings of Raa Kook's line.

I know all about how I happened to be wrecked and be there alone of all my ship's company — it was a great drowning and a great wind; but I do not moon over the catastrophe. When I think back at all, rather do I think far back to my childhood at the skirts of my milk-skinned, flaxen-haired, buxom English mother. It is a tiny village of a dozen straw-thatched cottages in which I lived. I hear again blackbirds and thrushes in the hedges, and see again bluebells spilling out from the oak woods and over the velvet turf like a creaming of blue water. And most of all I remember a great, hairy-fetlocked stallion, often led dancing, sidling, and nickering down the narrow street. I was frightened of the huge beast and always fled screaming to my mother, clutching her skirts and hiding in them wherever I might find her.

But enough. The childhood of Adam Strang is not what I set out to write.

I lived for several years on the islands which are nameless to me, and upon which I am confident I was the first white man. I was married to Lei-Lei, the king's sister, who was a fraction over six feet and only by that fraction topped me. I was a splendid figure of a man, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, well-set-up. Women of any race, as you shall see, looked on me with a favouring eye. Under my arms, sun-shielded, my skin was milk-white as my mother's. My eyes were blue. My moustache, beard and hair were that golden-yellow such as one sometimes sees in paintings of the northern sea-kings. Ay — I must have come of that old stock, long-settled in England, and, though born in a countryside cottage, the sea still ran so salt in my blood that I early found my way to ships to become a sea-cuny. That is what I was — neither officer nor gentleman, but sea-cuny, hard-worked, hard-bitten, hard-enduring.

I was of value to Raa Kook, hence his royal protection. I could work in iron, and our wrecked ship had brought the first iron to Raa Kook's land. On occasion, ten leagues to the north-west, we went in canoes to get iron from the wreck. The hull had slipped off the reef and lay in fifteen fathoms. And in fifteen fathoms we brought up the iron. Wonderful divers and workers under water were these natives. I learned to do my fifteen fathoms, but never could I equal them in their fishy exploits. On the land, by virtue of my English training and my strength, I could throw any of them. Also, I taught them quarter-staff, until the game became a very contagion and broken heads anything but novelties.

Brought up from the wreck was a journal, so torn and mushed and pulped by the sea-water, with ink so run about, that scarcely any of it was decipherable. However, in the hope that some antiquarian scholar may be able to place more definitely the date of the events I shall describe, I here give an extract. The peculiar spelling may give the clue. Note that while the letter *s* is used, it more commonly is replaced by the letter *f*.

The wind being favourable, gave us an opportunity of examining and drying some of our provifion, particularly, fome Chinefe hams and dry filh, which conftituted part of our victualling. Divine service alfo was performed on deck. In the afternoon the wind was foutherly, with frefh gales, but dry, fo that we were able the following morning to clean between decks, and alfo to fumigate the fhip with gunpowder.

But I must hasten, for my narrative is not of Adam Strang the shipwrecked sea-cuny on a coral isle, but of Adam Strang, later named Yi Yong-ik, the Mighty One, who was one time favourite of the powerful Yunsan, who was lover and husband of the Lady Om of the princely house of Min, and who was long time beggar and pariah in all the villages of all the coasts and roads of Cho-Sen. (Ah, ha, I have you there — Cho-Sen. It means the land of the morning calm. In modern speech it is called Korea.)

Remember, it was between three and four centuries back that I lived, the first white man, on the coral isles of Raa Kook. In those waters, at that time, the keels of ships were rare. I might well have lived out my days there, in peace and fatness, under the sun where frost was not, had it not been for the *Sparwehr*. The *Sparwehr* was a Dutch merchantman daring the uncharted seas for Indies beyond the Indies. And she found me instead, and I was all she found.

Have I not said that I was a gay-hearted, golden, bearded giant of an irresponsible boy that had never grown up? With scarce a pang, when the *Sparwehrs*’ water-casks were filled, I left Raa Kook and his pleasant land, left Lei-Lei and all her flower-garlanded sisters, and with laughter on my lips and familiar ship-smells sweet in my nostrils, sailed away, sea-cuny once more, under Captain Johannes Maartens.

A marvellous wandering, that which followed on the old *Sparwehr*. We were in quest of new lands of silk and spices. In truth, we found fevers, violent deaths, pestilential paradises where death and beauty kept charnel-house together. That old Johannes Maartens, with no hint of romance in that stolid face and grizzly square head of his, sought the islands of Solomon, the mines of Golconda — ay, he sought old lost Atlantis which he hoped to find still afloat unscuppered. And he found head-hunting, tree-dwelling anthropophagi instead.

We landed on strange islands, sea-pounded on their shores and smoking at their summits, where kinky-haired little animal-men made monkey-wailings in the jungle, planted their forest run-ways with thorns and stake-pits, and blew poisoned splinters into us from out the twilight jungle bush. And whatsoever man of us was wasp-stung by such a splinter died horribly and howling. And we encountered other men, fiercer, bigger, who faced us on the beaches in open fight, showering us with spears and arrows, while the great tree drums and the little tom-toms rumbled and rattled war across the tree-filled hollows, and all the hills were pillared with signal-smokes.

Hendrik Hamel was supercargo and part owner of the *Sparwehr* adventure, and what he did not own was the property of Captain Johannes Maartens. The latter spoke little English, Hendrik Hamel but little more. The sailors, with whom I gathered, spoke Dutch only. But trust a sea-cuny to learn Dutch — ay, and Korean, as you shall see.

Toward the end we came to the charted country of Japan. But the people would have no dealings with us, and two sworded officials, in sweeping robes of silk that made Captain Johannes Maartens' mouth water, came aboard of us and politely requested us to begone. Under their suave manners was the iron of a warlike race, and we knew, and went our way.

We crossed the Straits of Japan and were entering the Yellow Sea on our way to China, when we laid the *Sparwehr* on the rocks. She was a crazy tub the old *Sparwehr*, so clumsy and so dirty with whiskered marine-life on her bottom that she could not get out of her own way. Close-hauled, the closest she could come was to six points of the wind; and then she bobbed up and down, without way, like a derelict turnip. Galliots were clippers compared with her. To tack her about was undreamed of; to wear her required all hands and half a watch. So situated, we were caught on a lee shore in an eight-point shift of wind at the height of a hurricane that had beaten our souls sick for forty-eight hours.

We drifted in upon the land in the chill light of a stormy dawn across a heartless cross-sea mountain high. It was dead of winter, and between smoking snow-squalls we could glimpse the forbidding coast, if coast it might be called, so broken was it. There were grim rock isles and islets beyond counting, dim snow-covered ranges beyond, and everywhere upstanding cliffs too steep for snow, outjuts of headlands, and pinnacles and slivers of rock upthrust from the boiling sea.

There was no name to this country on which we drove, no record of it ever having been visited by navigators. Its coast-line was only hinted at in our chart. From all of which we could argue that the inhabitants were as inhospitable as the little of their land we could see.

The *Sparwehr* drove in bow-on upon a cliff. There was deep water to its sheer foot, so that our sky-aspiring bowsprit crumpled at the impact and snapped short off. The foremast went by the board, with a great snapping of rope-shrouds and stays, and fell forward against the cliff.

I have always admired old Johannes Maartens. Washed and rolled off the high poop by a burst of sea, we were left stranded in the waist of the ship, whence we fought our way for’ard to the steep-pitched forecastle-head. Others joined us. We lashed ourselves fast and counted noses. We were eighteen. The rest had perished.

Johannes Maartens touched me and pointed upward through cascading salt-water from the back-fling of the cliff. I saw what he desired. Twenty feet below the truck the foremast ground and crunched against a boss of the cliff. Above the boss was a cleft. He wanted to know if I would dare the leap from the mast-head into the cleft. Sometimes the distance was a scant six feet. At other times it was a score, for the mast reeled drunkenly to the rolling and pounding of the hull on which rested its splintered butt.

I began the climb. But they did not wait. One by one they unlashed themselves and followed me up the perilous mast. There was reason for haste, for at any moment the *Sparwehr* might slip off into deep water. I timed my leap, and made it, landing in the cleft in a scramble and ready to lend a hand to those who leaped after. It was slow work. We were wet and half freezing in the wind-drive. Besides, the leaps had to be timed to the roll of the hull and the sway of the mast.

The cook was the first to go. He was snapped off the mast-end, and his body performed cart-wheels in its fall. A fling of sea caught him and crushed him to a pulp against the cliff. The cabin boy, a bearded man of twenty-odd, lost hold, slipped, swung around the mast, and was pinched against the boss of rock. Pinched? The life squeezed from him on the instant. Two others followed the way of the cook. Captain Johannes Maartens was the last, completing the fourteen of us that clung on in the cleft. An hour afterward the *Sparwehr* slipped off and sank in deep water.

Two days and nights saw us near to perishing on that cliff, for there was way neither up nor down. The third morning a fishing-boat found us. The men were clad entirely in dirt white, with their long hair done up in a curious knot on their pates — the marriage knot, as I was afterward to learn, and also, as I was to learn, a handy thing to clutch hold of with one hand whilst you clouted with the other when an argument went beyond words.

The boat went back to the village for help, and most of the villagers, most of their gear, and most of the day were required to get us down. They were a poor and wretched folk, their food difficult even for the stomach of a sea-cuny to countenance. Their rice was brown as chocolate. Half the husks remained in it, along with bits of chaff, splinters, and unidentifiable dirt which made one pause often in the chewing in order to stick into his mouth thumb and forefinger and pluck out the offending stuff. Also, they ate a sort of millet, and pickles of astounding variety and ungodly hot.

Their houses were earthen-walled and straw-thatched. Under the floors ran flues through which the kitchen smoke escaped, warming the sleeping-room in its passage. Here we lay and rested for days, soothing ourselves with their mild and tasteless tobacco, which we smoked in tiny bowls at the end of yard-long pipes. Also, there was a warm, sourish, milky-looking drink, heady only when taken in enormous doses. After guzzling I swear gallons of it, I got singing drunk, which is the way of sea-cunies the world over. Encouraged by my success, the others persisted, and soon we were all a-roaring, little reeking of the fresh snow gale piping up outside, and little worrying that we were cast away in an uncharted, God-forgotten land. Old Johannes Maartens laughed and trumpeted and slapped his thighs with the best of us. Hendrik Hamel, a cold-blooded, chilly-poised dark brunette of a Dutchman with beady black eyes, was as rarely devilish as the rest of us, and shelled out silver like any drunken sailor for the purchase of more of the milky brew. Our carrying-on was a scandal; but the women fetched the drink while all the village that could crowd in jammed the room to witness our antics.

The white man has gone around the world in mastery, I do believe, because of his unwise uncaringness. That has been the manner of his going, although, of course, he was driven on by restiveness and lust for booty. So it was that Captain Johannes Maartens, Hendrik Hamel, and the twelve sea-cunies of us roystered and bawled in the fisher village while the winter gales whistled across the Yellow Sea.

From the little we had seen of the land and the people we were not impressed by Cho-Sen. If these miserable fishers were a fair sample of the natives, we could understand why the land was unvisited of navigators. But we were to learn different. The village was on an in-lying island, and its headmen must have sent word across to the mainland; for one morning three big two-masted junks with lateens of rice-matting dropped anchor off the beach.

When the sampans came ashore Captain Johannes Maartens was all interest, for here were silks again. One strapping Korean, all in pale-tinted silks of various colours, was surrounded by half a dozen obsequious attendants, also clad in silk. Kwan Yung-jin, as I came to know his name, was a *yang-ban*, or noble; also he was what might be called magistrate or governor of the district or province. This means that his office was appointive, and that he was a tithe-squeezer or tax-farmer.

Fully a hundred soldiers were also landed and marched into the village. They were armed with three-pronged spears, slicing spears, and chopping spears, with here and there a matchlock of so heroic mould that there were two soldiers to a matchlock, one to carry and set the tripod on which rested the muzzle, the other to carry and fire the gun. As I was to learn, sometimes the gun went off, sometimes it did not, all depending upon the adjustment of the fire-punk and the condition of the powder in the flash-pan.

So it was that Kwan-Yung-jin travelled. The headmen of the village were cringingly afraid of him, and for good reason, as we were not overlong in finding out. I stepped forward as interpreter, for already I had the hang of several score of Korean words. He scowled and waved me aside. But what did I reek? I was as tall as he, outweighed him by a full two stone, and my skin was white, my hair golden. He turned his back and addressed the head man of the village while his six silken satellites made a cordon between us. While he talked more soldiers from the ship carried up several shoulder-loads of inch-planking. These planks were about six feet long and two feet wide, and curiously split in half lengthwise. Nearer one end than the other was a round hole larger than a man's neck.

Kwan Yung-jin gave a command. Several of the soldiers approached Tromp, who was sitting on the ground nursing a felon. Now Tromp was a rather stupid, slow-thinking, slow-moving cuny, and before he knew what was doing one of the planks, with a scissors-like opening and closing, was about his neck and clamped. Discovering his predicament, he set up a bull-roaring and dancing, till all had to back away to give him clear space for the flying ends of his plank.

Then the trouble began, for it was plainly Kwan Yung-jin's intention to plank all of us. Oh, we fought, bare-fisted, with a hundred soldiers and as many villagers, while Kwan Yung-jin stood apart in his silks and lordly disdain. Here was where I earned my name Yi Yong-ik, the Mighty. Long after our company was subdued and planked I fought on. My fists were of the hardness of topping-mauls, and I had the muscles and will to drive them.

To my joy, I quickly learned that the Koreans did not understand a fist-blow and were without the slightest notion of guarding. They went down like tenpins, fell over each other in heaps. But Kwan Yung-jin was my man, and all that saved him when I made my rush was the intervention of his satellites. They were flabby creatures. I made a mess of them and a muss and muck of their silks ere the multitude could return upon me. There were so many of them. They clogged my blows by the sneer numbers of them, those behind shoving the front ones upon me. And how I dropped them! Toward the end they were squirming three-deep under my feet. But by the time the crews of the three junks and most of the village were on top of me I was fairly smothered. The planking was easy.

"God in heaven, what now!" asked Vandervoot, another cuny, when we had been bundled aboard a junk.

We sat on the open deck, like so many trussed fowls, when he asked the question, and the next moment, as the junk heeled to the breeze, we shot down the deck, planks and all, fetching up in the lee-scuppers with skinned necks. And from the high poop Kwan Yung-jin gazed down at us as if he did not see us. For many years to come Vandervoot was known amongst us as "What-Now Vandervoot." Poor devil! He froze to death one night on the streets of Keijo; with every door barred against him.

To the mainland we were taken and thrown into a stinking, vermin-infested prison. Such was our introduction to the officialdom of Cho-Sen. But I was to be revenged for all of us on Kwan Yung-jin, as you shall see, in the days when the Lady Om was kind and power was mine.

In prison we lay for many days. We learned afterward the reason. Kwan Yung-jin had sent a dispatch to Keijo, the capital, to find what royal disposition was to be made of us. In the meantime we were a menagerie. From dawn till dark our barred windows were besieged by the natives, for no member of our race had they ever seen before. Nor was our audience mere rabble. Ladies, borne in palanquins on the shoulders of coolies, came to see the strange devils cast up by the sea, and while their attendants drove back the common folk with whips, they would gaze long and timidly at us. Of them we saw little, for their faces were covered, according to the custom of the country. Only dancing girls, low women, and granddams ever were seen abroad with exposed faces.

I have often thought that Kwan Yung-jin suffered from indigestion, and that when the attacks were acute he took it out on us. At any rate, without rhyme or reason, whenever the whim came to him, we were all taken out on the street before the prison and well beaten with sticks to the gleeful shouts of the multitude. The Asiatic is a cruel beast, and delights in spectacles of human suffering.

At any rate we were pleased when an end to our beatings came. This was caused by the arrival of Kim. Kim? All I can say, and the best I can say, is that he was the whitest man I ever encountered in Cho-Sen. He was a captain of fifty men when I met him. He was in command of the palace guards before I was done doing my best by him. And in the end he died for the Lady Om's sake and for mine. Kim — well, Kim was Kim.

Immediately he arrived the planks were taken from our necks and we were lodged in the beet inn the place boasted. We were still prisoners, but honourable prisoners, with a guard of fifty mounted soldiers. The next day we were under way on the royal highroad, fourteen sailormen astride the dwarf horses that obtain in Cho-Sen, and bound for Keijo itself. The Emperor, so Kim told me, had expressed a desire to gaze upon the strangeness of the sea devils.

It was a journey of many days, half the length of Cho-Sen, north and south as it lies. It chanced, at the first off-saddling, that I strolled around to witness the feeding of the dwarf horses. And what I witnessed set me bawling, “What now, Vandervoot?” till all our crew came running. As I am a living man what the horses were feeding on was bean soup, hot bean soup at that, and naught else did they have on all the journey but hot bean soup. It was the custom of the country.

They were truly dwarf horses. On a wager with Kim I lifted one, despite his squeals and struggles, squarely across my shoulders, so that Kim’s men, who had already heard my new name, called me Yi Yong-ik, the Mighty One. Kim was a large man as Koreans go, and Koreans are a tall muscular race, and Kim fancied himself a bit. But, elbow to elbow and palm to palm, I put his arm down at will. And his soldiers and the gaping villagers would look on and murmur “Yi Yong-ik.”

In a way we were a travelling menagerie. The word went on ahead, so that all the country folk flocked to the roadside to see us pass. It was an unending circus procession. In the towns at night our inns were besieged by multitudes, so that we got no peace until the soldiers drove them off with lance-pricks and blows. But first Kim would call for the village strong men and wrestlers for the fun of seeing me crumple them and put them in the dirt.

Bread there was none, but we ate white rice (the strength of which resides in one’s muscles not long), a meat which we found to be dog (which animal is regularly butchered for food in Cho-Sen), and the pickles ungodly hot but which one learns to like exceeding well. And there was drink, real drink, not milky slush, but white, biting stuff distilled from rice, a pint of which would kill a weakling and make a strong man mad and merry. At the walled city of Chong-ho I put Kim and the city notables under the table with the stuff — or on the table, rather, for the table was the floor where we squatted to cramp-knots in my hams for the thousandth time. And again all muttered “Yi Yong-ik,” and the word of my prowess passed on before even to Keijo and the Emperor’s Court.

I was more an honoured guest than a prisoner, and invariably I rode by Kim’s side, my long legs near reaching the ground, and, where the going was deep, my feet scraping the muck. Kim was young. Kim was human. Kim was universal. He was a man anywhere in any country. He and I talked and laughed and joked the day long and half the night. And I verify ate up the language. I had a gift that way anyway. Even Kim marvelled at the way I mastered the idiom. And I learned the Korean points of view, the Korean humour, the Korean soft places, weak places, touchy places. Kim taught me flower songs, love songs, drinking songs. One of the latter was his own, of the end of which I shall give you a crude attempt at translation. Kim and Pak, in their youth, swore a pact to abstain from drinking, which pact was speedily broken. In old age Kim and Pak sing:

"No, no, begone! The merry bowl
Again shall bolster up my soul
Against itself. What, good man, hold!
Canst tell me where red wine is sold?
Nay, just beyond yon peach-tree? There?
Good luck be thine; I'll thither fare."

Hendrik Hamel, scheming and crafty, ever encouraged and urged me in my antic course that brought Kim's favour, not alone to me, but through me to Hendrik Hamel and all our company. I here mention Hendrik Hamel as my adviser, for it has a bearing on much that followed at Keijo in the winning of Yunsan's favour, the Lady Om's heart, and the Emperor's tolerance. I had the will and the fearlessness for the game I played, and some of the wit; but most of the wit I freely admit was supplied me by Hendrik Hamel.

And so we journeyed up to Keijo, from walled city to walled city across a snowy mountain land that was hollowed with innumerable fat farming valleys. And every evening, at fall of day, beacon fires sprang from peak to peak and ran along the land. Always Kim watched for this nightly display. From all the coasts of Cho-Sen, Kim told me, these chains of fire-speech ran to Keijo to carry their message to the Emperor. One beacon meant the land was in peace. Two beacons meant revolt or invasion. We never saw but one beacon. And ever, as we rode, Vandervoot brought up the rear, wondering, "God in heaven, what now?"

Keijo we found a vast city where all the population, with the exception of the nobles or yang-bans, dressed in the eternal white. This, Kim explained, was an automatic determination and advertisement of caste. Thus, at a glance, could one tell, the status of an individual by the degrees of cleanness or of filthiness of his garments. It stood to reason that a coolie, possessing but the clothes he stood up in, must be extremely dirty. And to reason it stood that the individual in immaculate white must possess many changes and command the labour of laundresses to keep his changes immaculate. As for the yang-bans who wore the pale, vari-coloured silks, they were beyond such common yardstick of place.

After resting in an inn for several days, during which time we washed our garments and repaired the ravages of shipwreck and travel, we were summoned before the Emperor. In the great open space before the palace wall were colossal stone dogs that looked more like tortoises. They crouched on massive stone pedestals of twice the height of a tall man. The walls of the palace were huge and of dressed stone. So thick were these walls that they could defy a breach from the mightiest of cannon in a year-long siege. The mere gateway was of the size of a palace in itself, rising pagoda-like, in many retreating stories, each story fringed with tile-roofing. A smart guard of soldiers turned out at the gateway. These, Kim told me, were the Tiger Hunters of Pyeng-yang, the fiercest and most terrible fighting men of which Cho-Sen could boast.

But enough. On mere description of the Emperor's palace a thousand pages of my narrative could be worthily expended. Let it suffice that here we knew power in all its material expression. Only a civilization deep and wide and old and strong could produce this far-walled, many-gabled roof of kings.

To no audience-hall were we sea-cunies led, but, as we took it, to a feasting-hall. The feasting was at its end, and all the throng was in a merry mood. And such a throng! High dignitaries, princes of the blood, sworded nobles, pale priests, weather-tanned officers of high command, court ladies with faces exposed, painted *ki-sang* or dancing girls who rested from entertaining, and duennas, waiting women, eunuchs, lackeys, and palace slaves a myriad of them.

All fell away from us, however, when the Emperor, with a following of intimates, advanced to look us over. He was a merry monarch, especially so for an Asiatic. Not more than forty, with a clear, pallid skin that had never known the sun, he was paunched and weak-legged. Yet he had once been a fine man. The noble forehead attested that. But the eyes were bleared and weak-lidded, the lips twitching and trembling from the various excesses in which he indulged, which excesses, as I was to learn, were largely devised and pandered by Yunsan, the Buddhist priest, of whom more anon.

In our sea-garments we mariners were a motley crew, and motley was the cue of our reception. Exclamations of wonder at our strangeness gave way to laughter. The *ki-sang* invaded us, dragging us about, making prisoners of us, two or three of them to one of us, leading us about like go many dancing boars and putting us through our antics. It was offensive, true, but what could poor sea-cunies do? What could old Johannes Maartens do, with a bevy of laughing girls about him, tweaking his nose, pinching his arms, tickling his ribs till he pranced? To escape such torment Hans Amden cleared a space and gave a clumsy-footed Hollandish breakdown till all the Court roared its laughter.

It was offensive to me who had been equal and boon companion of Kim for many days. I resisted the laughing *ki-sang*. I braced my legs and stood upright with folded arms; nor could pinch or tickle bring a quiver from me. Thus they abandoned me for easier prey.

"For God's sake, man, make an impression," Hendrik Hamel, who had struggled to me with three *ki-sang* dragging behind, mumbled.

Well might he mumble, for whenever he opened his mouth to speak they crammed it with sweets.

"Save us from this folly," he persisted, ducking his head about to avoid their sweet-filled palms. "We must have dignity, understand, dignity. This will ruin us. They are making tame animals of us, playthings. When they grow tired of us they will throw us out. You're doing the right thing. Stick to it. Stand them off. Command respect, respect for all of us — "

The last was barely audible, for by this time the *ki-sang* had stuffed his mouth to speechlessness.

As I have said, I had the will and the fearlessness, and I racked my sea-cuny brains for the wit. A palace eunuch, tickling my neck with a feather from behind, gave me my start. I had already drawn attention by my aloofness and imperviousness to the attacks of the *ki-sang*, so that many were looking on at the eunuch's baiting of me. I gave no sign, made no move, until I had located him and distanced him. Then, like a shot, without turning head or body, merely by my arm I fetched him an open, back-handed slap. My knuckles landed flat on his cheek and jaw. There was a crack like a spar parting in a gale. He was bowled clean over, landing in a heap on the floor a dozen feet away.

There was no laughter, only cries of surprise and murmurings and whisperings of "Yi Yong-ik." Again I folded my arms and stood with a fine assumption of haughtiness. I do believe that I, Adam Strang, had among other things the soul of an actor in me. For see what follows. I was now the most significant of our company. Proud-eyed, disdainful, I met unwavering the eyes upon me and made them drop, or turn away — all eyes but one. These were the eyes of a young woman, whom I judged, by richness of dress and by the half-dozen women fluttering at her back, to be a court lady of distinction. In truth, she was the Lady Om, princess of the house of Min. Did I say young? She was fully my own age, thirty, and for all that and her ripeness and beauty a princess still unmarried, as I was to learn.

She alone looked me in the eyes without wavering until it was I who turned away. She did not look me down, for there was neither challenge nor antagonism in her eyes — only fascination. I was loth to admit this defeat by one small woman, and my eyes, turning aside, lighted on the disgraceful rout of my comrades and the trailing *ki-sang* and gave me the pretext. I clapped my hands in the Asiatic fashion when one gives command.

"Let be!" I thundered in their own language, and in the form one addressee underlings.

Oh, I had a chest and a throat, and could bull-roar to the hurt of ear-drums. I warrant so loud a command had never before cracked the sacred air of the Emperor's palace.

The great room was aghast. The women were startled, and pressed toward one another as for safety. The *ki-sang* released the cunies and shrank away giggling apprehensively. Only the Lady Om made no sign nor motion but continued to gaze wide-eyed into my eyes which had returned to hers.

Then fell a great silence, as if all waited some word of doom. A multitude of eyes timidly stole back and forth from the Emperor to me and from me to the Emperor. And I had wit to keep the silence and to stand there, arms folded, haughty and remote.

"He speaks our language," quoth the Emperor at the last; and I swear there was such a relinquishment of held breaths that the whole room was one vast sigh.

"I was born with this language," I replied, my cuny wits running rashly to the first madness that prompted. "I spoke it at my mother's breast. I was the marvel of my land. Wise men journeyed far to see me and to hear. But no man knew the words I spoke. In the many years since I have forgotten much, but now, in Cho-Sen, the words come back like long-lost friends."

An impression I certainly made. The Emperor swallowed and his lips twitched ere he asked:

"How explain you this?"

"I am an accident," I answered, following the wayward lead my wit had opened. "The gods of birth were careless, and I was mislaid in a far land and nursed by an alien people. I am Korean, and now, at last, I have come to my home."

What an excited whispering and conferring took place. The Emperor himself interrogated Kim.

"He was always thus, our speech in his mouth, from the time he came out of the sea," Kim lied like the good fellow he was.

"Bring me *yang-ban's* garments as befits me," I interrupted, "and you shall see." As I was led away in compliance, I turned on the *ki-sang*. "And leave my slaves alone. They have journeyed far and are weary. They are my faithful slaves."

In another room Kim helped me change, sending the lackeys away; and quick and to the point was the dress-rehearsal he gave me. He knew no more toward what I drove than did I, but he was a good fellow.

The funny thing, once back in the crowd and spouting Korean which I claimed was rusty from long disuse, was that Hendrik Hamel and the rest, too stubborn-tongued to learn new speech, did not know a word I uttered.

"I am of the blood of the house of Koryu," I told the Emperor, "that ruled at Songdo many a long year agone when my house arose on the ruins of Silla."

Ancient history, all, told me by Kim on the long ride, and he struggled with his face to hear me parrot his teaching.

"These," I said, when the Emperor had asked me about my company, "these are my slaves, all except that old churl there" — I indicated Johannes Maartens — "who is the son of a freed man." I told Hendrik Hamel to approach. "This one," I wantoned on, "was born in my father's house of a seed slave who was born there before him. He is very close to me. We are of an age, born on the same day, and on that day my father gave him me."

Afterwards, when Hendrik Hamel was eager to know all that I had said, and when I told him, he reproached me and was in a pretty rage.

"The fat's in the fire, Hendrik," quoth I. "What I have done has been out of witlessness and the need to be saying something. But done it is. Nor you nor I can pluck forth the fat. We must act our parts and make the best of it."

Taiwun, the Emperor’s brother, was a sot of sots, and as the night wore on he challenged me to a drinking. The Emperor was delighted, and commanded a dozen of the noblest sots to join in the bout. The women were dismissed, and we went to it, drink for drink, measure for measure. Kim I kept by me, and midway along, despite Hendrik Hamel’s warning scowls, dismissed him and the company, first requesting, and obtaining, palace lodgment instead of the inn.

Next day the palace was a-buzz with my feast, for I had put Taiwun and all his champions snoring on the mats and walked unaided to my bed. Never, in the days of vicissitude that came later, did Taiwun doubt my claim of Korean birth. Only a Korean, he averred, could possess so strong a head.

The palace was a city in itself, and we were lodged in a sort of summer-house that stood apart. The princely quarters were mine, of course, and Hamel and Maartens, with the rest of the grumbling cunies, had to content themselves with what remained.

I was summoned before Yunsan, the Buddhist priest I have mentioned. It was his first glimpse of me and my first of him. Even Kim he dismissed from me, and we sat alone on deep mats in a twilight room. Lord, Lord, what a man and a mind was Yunsan! He made to probe my soul. He knew things of other lands and places that no one in Cho-Sen dreamed to know. Did he believe my fabled birth? I could not guess, for his face was less changeful than a bowl of bronze.

What Yunsan’s thoughts were only Yunsan knew. But in him, this poor-clad, lean-bellied priest, I sensed the power behind power in all the palace and in all Cho-Sen. I sensed also, through the drift of speech, that he had use of me. Now was this use suggested by the Lady Om? — a nut I gave Hendrik Hamel to crack. I little knew, and less I cared, for I lived always in the moment and let others forecast, forfend, and travail their anxiety.

I answered, too, the summons of the Lady Om, following a sleek-faced, cat-footed eunuch through quiet palace byways to her apartments. She lodged as a princess of the blood should lodge. She, too, had a palace to herself, among lotus ponds where grow forests of trees centuries old but so dwarfed that they reached no higher than my middle. Bronze bridges, so delicate and rare that they looked as if fashioned by jewel-smiths, spanned her lily ponds, and a bamboo grove screened her palace apart from all the palace.

My head was awhirl. Sea-cuny that I was, I was no dolt with women, and I sensed more than idle curiosity in her sending for me. I had heard love-tales of common men and queens, and was a-wondering if now it was my fortune to prove such tales true.

The Lady Om wasted little time. There were women about her, but she regarded their presence no more than a carter his horses. I sat beside her on deep mats that made the room half a couch, and wine was given me and sweets to nibble, served on tiny, foot-high tables inlaid with pearl.

Lord, Lord, I had but to look into her eyes — But wait. Make no mistake. The Lady Om was no fool. I have said she was of my own age. All of thirty she was, with the poise of her years. She knew what she wanted. She knew what she did not want. It was because of this she had never married, although all pressure that an Asiatic court could put upon a woman had been vainly put upon her to compel her to marry Chong Mong-ju. He was a lesser cousin of the great Min family, himself no fool, and grasping so greedily for power as to perturb Yunsan, who strove to retain all power himself and keep the palace and Cho-Sen in ordered balance. Thus Yunsan it was who in secret allied himself with the Lady Om, saved her from her cousin, used her to trim her cousin's wings. But enough of intrigue. It was long before I guessed a tithe of it, and then largely through the Lady Om's confidences and Hendrik Hamel's conclusions.

The Lady Om was a very flower of woman. Women such as she are born rarely, scarce twice a century the whole world over. She was unhampered by rule or convention. Religion, with her, was a series of abstractions, partly learned from Yunsan, partly worked out for herself. Vulgar religion, the public religion, she held, was a device to keep the toiling millions to their toil. She had a will of her own, and she had a heart all womanly. She was a beauty — yes, a beauty by any set rule of the world. Her large black eyes were neither slitted nor slanted in the Asiatic way. They were long, true, but set squarely, and with just the slightest hint of obliqueness that was all for piquancy.

I have said she was no fool. Behold! As I palpitated to the situation, princess and sea-cuny and love not a little that threatened big, I racked my cuny's brains for wit to carry the thing off with manhood credit. It chanced, early in this first meeting, that I mentioned what I had told all the Court, that I was in truth a Korean of the blood of the ancient house of Koryu.

"Let be," she said, tapping my lips with her peacock fan. "No child's tales here. Know that with me you are better and greater than of any house of Koryu. You are . . ."

She paused, and I waited, watching the daring grow in her eyes.

"You are a man," she completed. "Not even in my sleep have I ever dreamed there was such a man as you on his two legs upstanding in the world."

Lord, Lord! and what could a poor sea-cuny do? This particular sea-cuny, I admit, blushed through his sea tan till the Lady Om's eyes were twin pools of roguishness in their teasing deliciousness and my arms were all but about her. And she laughed tantalizingly and alluringly, and clapped her hands for her women, and I knew that the audience, for this once, was over. I knew, also, there would be other audiences, there must be other audiences.

Back to Hamel, my head awhirl.

"The woman," said he, after deep cogitation. He looked at me and sighed an envy I could not mistake. "It is your brawn, Adam Strang, that bull throat of yours, your yellow hair. Well, it's the game, man. Play her, and all will be well with us. Play her, and I shall teach you how."

I bristled. Sea-cuny I was, but I was man, and to no man would I be beholden in my way with women. Hendrik Hamel might be one time part-owner of the old *Sparwehr*, with a navigator's knowledge of the stars and deep versed in books, but with women, no, there I would not give him better.

He smiled that thin-lipped smile of his, and queried:

"How like you the Lady Om?"

"In such matters a cuny is naught particular," I temporized.

"How like you her?" he repeated, his beady eyes boring into me.

"Passing well, ay, and more than passing well, if you will have it."

"Then win to her," he commanded, "and some day we will get ship and escape from this cursed land. I'd give half the silks of the Indies for a meal of Christian food again."

He regarded me intently.

"Do you think you can win to her?" he questioned.

I was half in the air at the challenge. He smiled his satisfaction.

"But not too quickly," he advised. "Quick things are cheap things. Put a prize upon yourself. Be chary of your kindnesses. Make a value of your bull throat and yellow hair, and thank God you have them, for they are of more worth in a woman's eyes than are the brains of a dozen philosophers."

Strange whirling days were those that followed, what of my audiences with the Emperor, my drinking bouts with Taiwun, my conferences with Yunsan, and my hours with the Lady Om. Besides, I sat up half the nights, by Hamel's command, learning from Kim all the minutiæ of court etiquette and manners, the history of Korea and of gods old and new, and the forms of polite speech, noble speech, and coolie speech. Never was sea-cuny worked so hard. I was a puppet — puppet to Yunsan, who had need of me; puppet to Hamel, who schemed the wit of the affair that was so deep that alone I should have drowned. Only with the Lady Om was I man, not puppet . . . and yet, and yet, as I look back and ponder across time, I have my doubts. I think the Lady Om, too, had her will with me, wanting me for her heart's desire. Yet in this she was well met, for it was not long ere she was my heart's desire, and such was the immediacy of my will that not her will, nor Hendrik Hamel's, nor Yunsan's, could hold back my arms from about her.

In the meantime, however, I was caught up in a palace intrigue I could not fathom. I could catch the drift of it, no more, against Chong Mong-ju, the princely cousin of the Lady Om. Beyond my guessing there were cliques and cliques within cliques that made a labyrinth of the palace and extended to all the Seven Coasts. But I did not worry. I left that to Hendrik Hamel. To him I reported every detail that occurred when he was not with me; and he, with furrowed brows, sitting darkling by the hour, like a patient spider unravelled the tangle and spun the web afresh. As my body slave he insisted upon attending me everywhere; being only barred on occasion by Yunsan. Of course I barred him from my moments with the Lady Om, but told him in general what passed, with exception of tenderer incidents that were not his business.

I think Hamel was content to sit back and play the secret part. He was too cold-blooded not to calculate that the risk was mine. If I prospered, he prospered. If I crashed to ruin, he might creep out like a ferret. I am convinced that he so reasoned, and yet it did not save him in the end, as you shall see.

"Stand by me," I told Kim, "and whatsoever you wish shall be yours. Have you a wish?"

“I would command the Tiger Hunters of Pyeng-Yang, and so command the palace guards,” he answered.

“Wait,” said I, “and that will you do. I have said it.”

The how of the matter was beyond me. But he who has naught can dispense the world in largess; and I, who had naught, gave Kim captaincy of the palace guards. The best of it is that I did fulfil my promise. Kim did come to command the Tiger Hunters, although it brought him to a sad end.

Scheming and intriguing I left to Hamel and Yunsan, who were the politicians. I was mere man and lover, and merrier than theirs was the time I had. Picture it to yourself — a hard-bitten, joy-loving sea-cuny, irresponsible, unaware ever of past or future, wining and dining with kings, the accepted lover of a princess, and with brains like Hamel’s and Yunsan’s to do all planning and executing for me.

More than once Yunsan almost divined the mind behind my mind; but when he probed Hamel, Hamel proved a stupid slave, a thousand times less interested in affairs of state and policy than was he interested in my health and comfort and garrulously anxious about my drinking contests with Taiwun. I think the Lady Om guessed the truth and kept it to herself; wit was not her desire, but, as Hamel had said, a bull throat and a man’s yellow hair.

Much that pawed between us I shall not relate, though the Lady Om is dear dust these centuries. But she was not to be denied, nor was I; and when a man and woman will their hearts together heads may fall and kingdoms crash and yet they will not forgo.

Came the time when our marriage was mooted — oh, quietly, at first, most quietly, as mere palace gossip in dark corners between eunuchs and waiting-women. But in a palace the gossip of the kitchen scullions will creep to the throne. Soon there was a pretty to-do. The palace was the pulse of Cho-Sen, and when the palace rocked, Cho-Sen trembled. And there was reason for the rocking. Our marriage would be a blow straight between the eyes of Chong Mong-ju. He fought, with a show of strength for which Yunsan was ready. Chong Mong-ju disaffected half the provincial priesthood, until they pilgrimaged in processions a mile long to the palace gates and frightened the Emperor into a panic.

But Yunsan held like a rock. The other half of the provincial priesthood was his, with, in addition, all the priesthood of the great cities such as Keijo, Fusan, Songdo, Pyen-Yang, Chenampo, and Chemulpo. Yunsan and the Lady Om, between them, twisted the Emperor right about. As she confessed to me afterward, she bullied him with tears and hysteria and threats of a scandal that would shake the throne. And to cap it all, at the psychological moment, Yunsan pandered the Emperor to novelties of excess that had been long preparing.

"You must grow your hair for the marriage knot," Yunsan warned me one day, with the ghost of a twinkle in his austere eyes, more nearly facetious and human than I had ever beheld him.

Now it is not meet that a princess espouse a sea-cuny, or even a claimant of the ancient blood of Koryu, who is without power, or place, or visible symbols of rank. So it was promulgated by imperial decree that I was a prince of Koryu. Next, after breaking the bones and decapitating the then governor of the five provinces, himself an adherent of Chong Mong-ju, I was made governor of the seven home provinces of ancient Koryu. In Cho-Sen seven is the magic number. To complete this number two of the provinces were taken over from the hands of two more of Chong Mong-ju's adherents.

Lord, Lord, a sea-cuny . . . and dispatched north over the Mandarin Road with five hundred soldiers and a retinue at my back! I was a governor of seven provinces, where fifty thousand troops awaited me. Life, death, and torture, I carried at my disposal. I had a treasury and a treasurer, to say nothing of a regiment of scribes. Awaiting me also was a full thousand of tax-farmers; who squeezed the last coppers from the toiling people.

The seven provinces constituted the northern march. Beyond lay what is now Manchuria, but which was known by us as the country of the Hong-du, or "Red Heads." They were wild raiders, on occasion crossing the Yalu in great masses and over-running northern Cho-Sen like locusts. It was said they were given to cannibal practices. I know of experience that they were terrible fighters, most difficult to convince of a beating.

A whirlwind year it was. While Yunsan and the Lady Om at Keijo completed the disgrace of Chong Mong-ju, I proceeded to make a reputation for myself. Of course it was really Hendrik Hamel at my back, but I was the fine figure-head that carried it off. Through me Hamel taught our soldiers drill and tactics and taught the Red Heads strategy. The fighting was grand, and though it took a year, the year's end saw peace on the northern border and no Red Heads but dead Red Heads on our side the Yalu.

I do not know if this invasion of the Red Heads is recorded in Western history, but if so it will give a clue to the date of the times of which I write. Another clue: when was Hideyoshi the Shogun of Japan? In my time I heard the echoes of the two invasions, a generation before, driven by Hideyoshi through the heart of Cho-Sen from Fusan in the south to as far north as Pyeng-Yang. It was this Hideyoshi who sent back to Japan a myriad tubs of pickled ears and noses of Koreans slain in battle. I talked with many old men and women who had seen the fighting and escaped the pickling.

Back to Keijo and the Lady Om. Lord, Lord, she was a woman. For forty years she was my woman. I know. No dissenting voice was raised against the marriage. Chong Mong-ju, clipped of power, in disgrace, had retired to sulk somewhere on the far north-east coast. Yunsan was absolute. Nightly the single beacons flared their message of peace across the land. The Emperor grew more weak-legged and blear-eyed what of the ingenious deviltries devised for him by Yunsan. The Lady Om and I had won to our hearts' desires. Kim was in command of the palace guards. Kwan Yung-jin, the provincial governor who had planked and beaten us when we were first cast away, I had shorn of power and banished for ever from appearing within the walls of Keijo.

Oh, and Johannes Maartens. Discipline is well hammered into a sea-cuny, and, despite my new greatness, I could never forget that he had been my captain in the days we sought new Indies in the *Sparwehr*. According to my tale first told in Court, he was the only free man in my following. The rest of the cunies, being considered my slaves, could not aspire to office of any sort under the crown. But Johannes could, and did. The sly old fox! I little guessed his intent when he asked me to make him governor of the paltry little province of Kyong-ju. Kyong-ju had no wealth of farms or fisheries. The taxes scarce paid the collecting, and the governorship was little more than an empty honour. The place was in truth a graveyard — a sacred graveyard, for on Tabong Mountain were shrined and sepultured the bones of the ancient kings of Silla. Better governor of Kyong-ju than retainer of Adam Strang, was what I thought was in his mind; nor did I dream that it was except for fear of loneliness that caused him to take four of the cunies with him.

Gorgeous were the two years that followed. My seven provinces I governed mainly though needy *yang-bans* selected for me by Yunsan. An occasional inspection, done in state and accompanied by the Lady Om, was all that was required of me. She possessed a summer palace on the south coast, which we frequented much. Then there were man's diversions. I became patron of the sport of wrestling, and revived archery among the yang-bans. Also, there was tiger-hunting in the northern mountains.

A remarkable thing was the tides of Cho-Sen. On our north-east coast there was scarce a rise and fall of a foot. On our west coast the neap tides ran as high as sixty feet. Cho-Sen had no commerce, no foreign traders. There was no voyaging beyond her coasts, and no voyaging of other peoples to her coasts. This was due to her immemorial policy of isolation. Once in a decade or a score of years Chinese ambassadors arrived, but they came overland, around the Yellow Sea, across the country of the Hong-du, and down the Mandarin Road to Keijo. The round trip was a year-long journey. Their mission was to exact from our Emperor the empty ceremonial of acknowledgment of China's ancient suzerainty.

But Hamel, from long brooding, was ripening for action. His plans grew apace. Cho-Sen was Indies enough for him could he but work it right. Little he confided, but when he began to play to have me made admiral of the Cho-Sen navy of junks, and to inquire more than casually of the details of the store-places of the imperial treasury, I could put two and two together.

Now I did not care to depart from Cho-Sen except with the Lady Om. When I broached the possibility of it she told me, warm in my arms, that I was her king and that wherever I led she would follow. As you shall see it was truth, full truth, that she uttered.

It was Yunsan's fault for letting Chong Mong-ju live. And yet it was not Yunsan's fault. He had not dared otherwise. Disgraced at Court, nevertheless Chong Mong-ju had been too popular with the provincial priesthood. Yunsan had been compelled to hold his hand, and Chong Mong-ju, apparently sulking on the north-east coast, had been anything but idle. His emissaries, chiefly Buddhist priests, were everywhere, went everywhere, gathering in even the least of the provincial magistrates to allegiance to him. It takes the cold patience of the Asiatic to conceive and execute huge and complicated conspiracies. The strength of Chong Mong-ju's palace clique grew beyond Yunsan's wildest dreaming. Chong Mong-ju corrupted the very palace guards, the Tiger Hunters of Pyeng-Yang whom Kim commanded. And while Yunsan nodded, while I devoted myself to sport and to the Lady Om, while Hendrik Hamel perfected plans for the looting of the Imperial treasury, and while Johannes Maartens schemed his own scheme among the tombs of Tabong Mountain, the volcano of Chong Mong-ju's devising gave no warning beneath us.

Lord, Lord, when the storm broke! It was stand out from under, all hands, and save your necks. And there were necks that were not saved. The springing of the conspiracy was premature. Johannes Maartens really precipitated the catastrophe, and what he did was too favourable for Chong Mong-ju not to advantage by.

For, see. The people of Cho-Sen are fanatical ancestor-worshippers, and that old pirate of a booty-lusting Dutchman, with his four cunies, in far Kyong-ju, did no less a thing than raid the tombs of the gold-coffined, long-buried kings of ancient Silla. The work was done in the night, and for the rest of the night they travelled for the sea-coast. But the following day a dense fog lay over the land and they lost their way to the waiting junk which Johannes Maartens had privily outfitted. He and the cunies were rounded in by Yi Sun-sin, the local magistrate, one of Chong Mong-ju's adherents. Only Herman Tromp escaped in the fog, and was able, long after, to tell me of the adventure.

That night, although news of the sacrilege was spreading through Cho-Sen and half the northern provinces had risen on their officials, Keijo and the Court slept in ignorance. By Chong Mong-ju's orders the beacons flared their nightly message of peace. And night by night the peace-beacons flared, while day and night Chong Mong-ju's messengers killed horses on all the roads of Cho-Sen. It was my luck to see his messenger arrive at Keijo. At twilight, as I rode out through the great gate of the capital, I saw the jaded horse fall and the exhausted rider stagger in on foot; and I little dreamed that that man carried my destiny with him into Keijo.

His message sprang the palace revolution. I was not due to return until midnight, and by midnight all was over. At nine in the evening the conspirators secured possession of the Emperor in his own apartments. They compelled him to order the immediate attendance of the heads of all departments, and as they presented themselves, one by one, before his eyes, they were cut down. Meantime the Tiger Hunters were up and out of hand. Yunsan and Hendrik Hamel were badly beaten with the flats of swords and made prisoners. The seven other cunies escaped from the palace along with the Lady Om. They were enabled to do this by Kim, who held the way, sword in hand, against his own Tiger Hunters. They cut him down and trod over him. Unfortunately he did not die of his wounds.

Like a flaw of wind on a summer night the revolution, a palace revolution of course, blew and was past. Chong Mong-ju was in the saddle. The Emperor ratified whatever Chong Mong-ju willed. Beyond gasping at the sacrilege of the king's tombs and applauding Chong Mong-ju, Cho-Sen was unperturbed. Heads of officials fell everywhere, being replaced by Chong Mong-ju's appointees; but there were no risings against the dynasty.

And now to what befell us. Johannes Maartens and his three cunies, after being exhibited to be spat upon by the rabble of half the villages and walled cities of Cho-Sen, were buried to their necks in the ground of the open space before the palace gate. Water was given them that they might live longer to yearn for the food, steaming hot and savoury and changed hourly, that was place temptingly before them. They say old Johannes Maartens lived longest, not giving up the ghost for a full fifteen days.

Kim was slowly crushed to death, bone by bone and joint by joint, by the torturers, and was a long time in dying. Hamel, whom Chong Mong-ju divined as my brains, was executed by the paddle — in short, was promptly and expeditiously beaten to death to the delighted shouts of the Keijo populace. Yunsan was given a brave death. He was playing a game of chess with the jailer, when the Emperor's, or, rather, Chong Mong-ju's, messenger arrived with the poison-cup. "Wait a moment," said Yunsan. "You should be better-mannered than to disturb a man in the midst of a game of chess. I shall drink directly the game is over." And while the messenger waited Yunsan finished the game, winning it, then drained the cup.

It takes an Asiatic to temper his spleen to steady, persistent, life-long revenge. This Chong Mong-ju did with the Lady Om and me. He did not destroy us. We were not even imprisoned. The Lady Om was degraded of all rank and divested of all possessions. An imperial decree was promulgated and posted in the last least village of Cho-Sen to the effect that I was of the house of Koryu and that no man might kill me. It was further declared that the eight sea-cunies who survived must not be killed. Neither were they to be favoured. They were to be outcasts, beggars on the highways. And that is what the Lady Om and I became, beggars on the highways.

Forty long years of persecution followed, for Chong Mong-ju's hatred of the Lady Om and me was deathless. Worse luck, he was favoured with long life as well as were we cursed with it. I have said the Lady Om was a wonder of a woman. Beyond endlessly repeating that statement, words fail me, with which to give her just appreciation. Somewhere I have heard that a great lady once said to her lover: "A tent and a crust of bread with you." In effect that is what the Lady Om said to me. More than to say it, she lived the last letter of it, when more often than not crusts were not plentiful and the sky itself was our tent.

Every effort I made to escape beggary was in the end frustrated by Chong Mong-ju. In Songdo I became a fuel-carrier, and the Lady Om and I shared a hut that was vastly more comfortable than the open road in bitter winter weather. But Chong Mong-ju found me out, and I was beaten and planked and put out upon the road. That was a terrible winter, the winter poor "What-Now" Vandervoot froze to death on the streets of Keijo.

In Pyeng-yang I became a water-carrier, for know that that old city, whose walls were ancient even in the time of David, was considered by the people to be a canoe, and that, therefore, to sink a well inside the walls would be to scupper the city. So all day long thousands of coolies, water-jars yoked to their shoulders, tramp out the river gate and back. I became one of these, until Chong Mong-ju sought me out, and I was beaten and planked and set upon the highway.

Ever it was the same. In far Wiju I became a dog-butcher, killing the brutes publicly before my open stall, cutting and hanging the caresses for sale, tanning the hides under the filth of the feet of the passers-by by spreading the hides, raw-side up, in the muck of the street. But Chong Mong-ju found me out. I was a dyer's helper in Pyonhan, a gold-miner in the placers of Kang-wun, a rope-maker and twine-twister in Chiksan. I plaited straw hats in Padok, gathered grass in Whang-hai, and in Masenpo sold myself to a rice farmer to toil bent double in the flooded paddies for less than a coolie's pay. But there was never a time or place that the long arm of Chong Mong-ju did not reach out and punish and thrust me upon the beggar's way.

The Lady Om and I searched two seasons and found a single root of the wild mountain ginseng, which is esteemed so rare and precious a thing by the doctors that the Lady Om and I could have lived a year in comfort from the sale of our one root. But in the selling of it I was apprehended, the root confiscated, and I was better beaten and longer planked than ordinarily.

Everywhere the wandering members of the great Peddlers' Guild carried word of me, of my comings and goings and doings, to Chong Mong-ju at Keijo. Only twice, in all the days after my downfall, did I meet Chong Mong-ju face to face. The first time was a wild winter night of storm in the high mountains of Kang-wun. A few hoarded coppers had bought for the Lady Om and me sleeping space in the dirtiest and coldest corner of the one large room of the inn. We were just about to begin on our meagre supper of horse-beans and wild garlic cooked into a stew with a scrap of bullock that must have died of old age, when there was a tinkling of bronze pony bells and the stamp of hoofs without. The doors opened, and entered Chong Mong-ju, the personification of well-being, prosperity and power, shaking the snow from his priceless Mongolian furs. Place was made for him and his dozen retainers, and there was room for all without crowding, when his eyes chanced to light on the Lady Om and me.

"The vermin there in the corner — clear it out," he commanded.

And his horse-boys lashed us with their whips and drove us out into the storm. But there was to be another meeting, after long years, as you shall see.

There was no escape. Never was I permitted to cross the northern frontier. Never was I permitted to put foot to a sampan on the sea. The Peddlers' Guild carried these commands of Chong Mong-ju to every village and every soul in all Cho-Sen. I was a marked man.

Lord, Lord, Cho-Sen, I know your every highway and mountain path, all your walled cities and the least of your villages. For two-score years I wandered and starved over you, and the Lady Om ever wandered and starved with me. What we in extremity have eaten! — Leavings of dog's flesh, putrid and unsaleable, flung to us by the mocking butchers; *minari*, a water-cress gathered from stagnant pools of slime; spoiled *kimchi* that would revolt the stomachs of peasants and that could be smelled a mile. Ay — I have stolen bones from curs, gleaned the public road for stray grains of rice, robbed ponies of their steaming bean-soup on frosty nights.

It is not strange that I did not die. I knew and was upheld by two things: the first, the Lady Om by my side; the second, the certain faith that the time would come when my thumbs and fingers would fast-lock in the gullet of Chong Mong-ju.

Turned always away at the city gates of Keijo, where I sought Chong Mong-ju, we wandered on, through seasons and decades of seasons, across Cho-Sen, whose every inch of road was an old story to our sandals. Our history and identity were wide-scattered as the land was wide. No person breathed who did not know us and our punishment. There were coolies and peddlers who shouted insults at the Lady Om and who felt the wrath of my clutch in their topknots, the wrath of my knuckles in their faces. There were old women in far mountain villages who looked on the beggar woman by my side, the lost Lady Om, and sighed and shook their heads while their eyes dimmed with tears. And there were young women whose faces warmed with compassion as they gazed on the bulk of my shoulders, the blue of my eyes, and my long yellow hair — I who had once been a prince of Koryu and the ruler of provinces. And there were rabbles of children that tagged at our heels, jeering and screeching, pelting us with filth of speech and of the common road.

Beyond the Yalu, forty miles wide, was the strip of waste that constituted the northern frontier and that ran from sea to sea. It was not really waste land, but land that had been deliberately made waste in carrying out Cho-Sen's policy of isolation. On this forty-mile strip all farms, villages and cities had been destroyed. It was no man's land, infested with wild animals and traversed by companies of mounted Tiger Hunters whose business was to kill any human being they found. That way there was no escape for us, nor was there any escape for us by sea.

As the years passed my seven fellow-cunies came more to frequent Fusan. It was on the south-east coast where the climate was milder. But more than climate, it lay nearest of all Cho-Sen to Japan. Across the narrow straits, just farther than the eye can see, was the one hope of escape Japan, where doubtless occasional ships of Europe came. Strong upon me is the vision of those seven ageing men on the cliffs of Fusan yearning with all their souls across the sea they would never sail again.

At times junks of Japan were sighted, but never lifted a familiar topsail of old Europe above the sea-rim. Years came and went, and the seven cunies and myself and the Lady Om, passing through middle life into old age, more and more directed our footsteps to Fusan. And as the years came and went, now one, now another failed to gather at the usual place. Hans Amden was the first to die. Jacob Brinker, who was his road-mate, brought the news. Jacob Brinker was the last of the seven, and he was nearly ninety when he died, outliving Tromp a scant two years. I well remember the pair of them, toward the last, worn and feeble, in beggars' rags, with beggars' bowls, sunning themselves side by side on the cliffs, telling old stories and cackling shrill-voiced like children. And Tromp would maunder over and over of how Johannes Maartens and the cunies robbed the kings on Tabong Mountain, each embalmed in his golden coffin with an embalmed maid on either side; and of how these ancient proud ones crumbled to dust within the hour while the cunies cursed and sweated at junking the coffins.

As sure as loot is loot, old Johannes Maartens would have got away and across the Yellow Sea with his booty had it not been for the fog next day that lost him. That cursed fog! A song was made of it, that I heard and hated through all Cho-Sen to my dying day. Here run two lines of it:

"*Yanggukeni chajin anga*
Wheanpong tora deunda,
The thick fog of the Westerners
Broods over Whean peak."

For forty years I was a beggar of Cho-Sen. Of the fourteen of us that were cast away only I survived. The Lady Om was of the same indomitable stuff, and we aged together. She was a little, weazened, toothless old woman toward the last; but ever she was the wonder woman, and she carried my heart in hers to the end. For an old man, three score and ten, I still retained great strength. My face was withered, my yellow hair turned white, my broad shoulders shrunken, and yet much of the strength of my sea-cuny days resided in the muscles left me.

Thus it was that I was able to do what I shall now relate. It was a spring morning on the cliffs of Fusan, hard by the highway, that the Lady Om and I sat warming in the sun. We were in the rags of beggary, prideless in the dust, and yet I was laughing heartily at some mumbled merry quip of the Lady Om when a shadow fell upon us. It was the great litter of Chong Mong-ju, borne by eight coolies, with outriders before and behind and fluttering attendants on either side.

Two emperors, civil war, famine, and a dozen palace revolutions had come and gone; and Chong Mong-ju remained, even then the great power at Keijo. He must have been nearly eighty that spring morning on the cliffs when he signalled with palsied hand for his litter to be rested down that he might gaze upon us whom he had punished for so long.

"Now, O my king," the Lady Om mumbled low to me, then turned to whine an alms of Chong Mong-ju, whom she affected not to recognize.

And I knew what was her thought. Had we not shared it for forty years? And the moment of its consummation had come at last. So I, too, affected not to recognize my enemy, and, putting on an idiotic senility, I, too, crawled in the dust toward the litter whining for mercy and charity.

The attendants would have driven me back, but with age-quavering cackles Chong Mong-ju restrained them. He lifted himself on a shaking elbow, and with the other shaking hand drew wider apart the silken curtains. His withered old face was transfigured with delight as he gloated on us.

"O my king," the Lady Om whined to me in her beggar's chant; and I knew all her long-tried love and faith in my emprise were in that chant.

And the red wrath was up in me, ripping and tearing at my will to be free. Small wonder that I shook with the effort to control. The shaking, happily, they took for the weakness of age. I held up my brass begging bowl, and whined more dolefully, and bleared my eyes to hide the blue fire I knew was in them, and calculated the distance and my strength for the leap.

Then I was swept away in a blaze of red. There was a crashing of curtains and curtain-poles and a squawking and squalling of attendants as my hands closed on Chong Mong-ju's throat. The litter overturned, and I scarce knew whether I was heads or heels, but my clutch never relaxed.

In the confusion of cushions and quilts and curtains, at first few of the attendants' blows found me. But soon the horsemen were in, and their heavy whip-butts began to fall on my head, while a multitude of hands clawed and tore at me. I was dizzy, but not unconscious, and very blissful with my old fingers buried in that lean and scraggly old neck I had sought for so long. The blows continued to rain on my head, and I had whirling thoughts in which I likened myself to a bulldog with jaws fast-locked. Chong Mong-ju could not escape me, and I know he was well dead ere darkness, like that of an anæsthetic, descended upon me there on the cliffs of Fusan by the Yellow Sea.

CHAPTER XVI

Warden Atherton, when he thinks of me, must feel anything but pride. I have taught him what spirit is, humbled him with my own spirit that rose invulnerable, triumphant, above all his tortures. I sit here in Folsom, in Murderers' Row, awaiting my execution; Warden Atherton still holds his political job and is king over San Quentin and all the damned within its walls; and yet, in his heart of hearts, he knows that I am greater than he.

In vain Warden Atherton tried to break my spirit. And there were times, beyond any shadow of doubt, when he would have been glad had I died in the jacket. So the long inquisition went on. As he had told me, and as he told me repeatedly, it was dynamite or curtains.

Captain Jamie was a veteran in dungeon horrors, yet the time came when he broke down under the strain I put on him and on the rest of my torturers. So desperate did he become that he dared words with the Warden and washed his hands of the affair. From that day until the end of my torturing he never set foot in solitary.

Yes, and the time came when Warden Atherton grew afraid, although he still persisted in trying to wring from me the hiding-place of the non-existent dynamite. Toward the last he was badly shaken by Jake Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer was fearless and outspoken. He had passed unbroken through all their prison hells, and out of superior will could beard them to their teeth. Morrell rapped me a full account of the incident. I was unconscious in the jacket at the time.

"Warden," Oppenheimer had said, "you've bitten off more than you can chew. It ain't a case of killing Standing. It's a case of killing three men, for as sure as you kill him, sooner or later Morrell and I will get the word out and what you have done will be known from one end of California to the other. You've got your choice. You've either got to let up on Standing or kill all three of us. Standing's got your goat. So have I. So has Morrell. You are a stinking coward, and you haven't got the backbone and guts to carry out the dirty butcher's work you'd like to do."

Oppenheimer got a hundred hours in the jacket for it, and, when he was unlaced, spat in the Warden's face and received a second hundred hours on end. When he was unlaced this time, the Warden was careful not to be in solitary. That he was shaken by Oppenheimer's words there is no doubt.

But it was Doctor Jackson who was the arch-fiend. To him I was a novelty, and he was ever eager to see how much more I could stand before I broke.

"He can stand twenty days off the bat," he bragged to the Warden in my presence.

"You are conservative," I broke in. "I can stand forty days. Pshaw! I can stand a hundred when such as you administer it." And, remembering my sea-cuny's patience of forty years' waiting ere I got my hands on Chong Mong-ju's gullet, I added: "You prison curs, you don't know what a man is. You think a man is made in your own cowardly images. Behold, I am a man. You are feeblings. I am your master. You can't bring a squeal out of me. You think it remarkable, for you know how easily you would squeal."

Oh, I abused them, called them sons of toads, hell's scullions, slime of the pit. For I was above them, beyond them. They were slaves. I was free spirit. My flesh only lay pent there in solitary. I was not pent. I had mastered the flesh, and the spaciousness of time was mine to wander in, while my poor flesh, not even suffering, lay in the little death in the jacket.

Much of my adventures I rapped to my two comrades. Morrell believed, for he had himself tasted the little death. But Oppenheimer, enraptured with my tales, remained a sceptic to the end. His regret was naïve, and at times really pathetic, in that I had devoted my life to the science of agriculture instead of to fiction writing.

"But, man," I reasoned with him, "what do I know of myself about this Cho-Sen? I am able to identify it with what is to-day called Korea, and that is about all. That is as far as my reading goes. For instance, how possibly, out of my present life's experience, could I know anything about *kimchi*? Yet I know *kimchi*. It is a sort of sauerkraut. When it is spoiled it stinks to heaven. I tell you, when I was Adam Strang, I ate *kimchi* thousands of times. I know good *kimchi*, bad *kimchi*, rotten *kimchi*. I know the best *kimchi* is made by the women of Wosan. Now how do I know that? It is not in the content of my mind, Darrell Standing's mind. It is in the content of Adam Strang's mind, who, through various births and deaths, bequeathed his experiences to me, Darrell Standing, along with the rest of the experiences of those various other lives that intervened. Don't you see, Jake? That is how men come to be, to grow, how spirit develops."

"Aw, come off," he rapped back with the quick imperative knuckles I knew so well. "Listen to your uncle talk now. I am Jake Oppenheimer. I always have been Jake Oppenheimer. No other guy is in my makings. What I know I know as Jake Oppenheimer. Now what do I know? I'll tell you one thing. I know *kimchi*. *Kimchi* is a sort of sauerkraut made in a country that used to be called Cho-Sen. The women of Wosan make the best *kimchi*, and when *kimchi* is spoiled it stinks to heaven. You keep out of this, Ed. Wait till I tie the professor up.

"Now, professor, how do I know all this stuff about *kimchi*? It is not in the content of my mind."

"But it is," I exulted. "I put it there."

"All right, old boss. Then who put it into your mind?"

"Adam Strang."

"Not on your tintype. Adam Strang is a pipe-dream. You read it somewhere."

"Never," I averred. "The little I read of Korea was the war correspondence at the time of the Japanese-Russian War."

"Do you remember all you read?" Oppenheimer queried.

"No."

"Some you forget?"

"Yes, but — "

"That's all, thank you," he interrupted, in the manner of a lawyer abruptly concluding a cross-examination after having extracted a fatal admission from a witness.

It was impossible to convince Oppenheimer of my sincerity. He insisted that I was making it up as I went along, although he applauded what he called my "to-be-continued-in-our-next," and, at the times they were resting me up from the jacket, was continually begging and urging me to run off a few more chapters.

"Now, professor, cut out that high-brow stuff," he would interrupt Ed Morrell's and my metaphysical discussions, "and tell us more about the *ki-sang* and the cunies. And, say, while you're about it, tell us what happened to the Lady Om when that rough-neck husband of hers choked the old geezer and croaked."

How often have I said that form perishes. Let me repeat. Form perishes. Matter has no memory. Spirit only remembers, as here, in prison cells, after the centuries, knowledge of the Lady Om and Chong Mong-ju persisted in my mind, was conveyed by me into Jake Oppenheimer's mind, and by him was reconveyed into my mind in the argot and jargon of the West. And now

I have conveyed it into your mind, my reader. Try to eliminate it from your mind. You cannot. As long as you live what I have told will tenant your mind. Mind? There is nothing permanent but mind. Matter fluxes, crystallizes, and fluxes again, and forms are never repeated. Forms disintegrate into the eternal nothingness from which there is no return. Form is apparitional and passes, as passed the physical forms of the Lady Om and Chong Mong-ju. But the memory of them remains, shall always remain as long as spirit endures, and spirit is indestructible.

"One thing sticks out as big as a house," was Oppenheimer's final criticism of my Adam Strang adventure. "And that is that you've done more hanging around Chinatown dumps and hop-joints than was good for a respectable college professor. Evil communications, you know. I guess that's what brought you here."

Before I return to my adventures I am compelled to tell one remarkable incident that occurred in solitary. It is remarkable in two ways. It shows the astounding mental power of that child of the gutters, Jake Oppenheimer; and it is in itself convincing proof of the verity of my experiences when in the jacket coma.

"Say, professor," Oppenheimer tapped to me one day. "When you was spieling that Adam Strang yarn, I remember you mentioned playing chess with that royal souse of an emperor's brother. Now is that chess like our kind of chess?"

Of course I had to reply that I did not know, that I did not remember the details after I returned to my normal state. And of course he laughed good-naturedly at what he called my foolery. Yet I could distinctly remember that in my Adam Strang adventure I had frequently played chess. The trouble was that whenever I came back to consciousness in solitary, unessential and intricate details faded from my memory.

It must be remembered that for convenience I have assembled my intermittent and repetitional jacket experiences into coherent and consecutive narratives. I never knew in advance where my journeys in time would take me. For instance, I have a score of different times returned to Jesse Fancher in the wagon-circle at Mountain Meadows. In a single ten-days' bout in the jacket I have gone back and back, from life to life, and often skipping whole series of lives that at other times I have covered, back to prehistoric time, and back of that to days ere civilization began.

So I resolved, on my next return from Adam Strang's experiences, whenever it might be, that I should, immediately, I on resuming consciousness, concentrate upon what visions and memories. I had brought back of chess playing. As luck would have it, I had to endure Oppenheimer's chaffing for a full month ere it happened. And then, no sooner out of jacket and circulation restored, than I started knuckle-rapping the information.

Further, I taught Oppenheimer the chess Adam Strang had played in Cho-Sen centuries agone. It was different from Western chess, and yet could not but be fundamentally the same, tracing back to a common origin, probably India. In place of our sixty-four squares there are eighty-one squares. We have eight pawns on a side; they have nine; and though limited similarly, the principle of moving is different.

Also, in the Cho-Sen game, there are twenty pieces and pawns against our sixteen, and they are arrayed in three rows instead of two. Thus, the nine pawns are in the front row; in the middle row are two pieces resembling our castles; and in the back row, midway, stands the king, flanked in order on either side by "gold money," "silver money," "knight," and "spear." It will be observed that in the Cho-Sen game there is no queen. A further radical variation is that a captured piece or pawn is not removed from the board. It becomes the property of the captor and is thereafter played by him.

Well, I taught Oppenheimer this game — a far more difficult achievement than our own game, as will be admitted, when the capturing and recapturing and continued playing of pawns and pieces is considered. Solitary is not heated. It would be a wickedness to ease a convict from any spite of the elements. And many a dreary day of biting cold did Oppenheimer and I forget that and the following winter in the absorption of Cho-Sen chess.

But there was no convincing him that I had in truth brought this game back to San Quentin across the centuries. He insisted that I had read about it somewhere, and, though I had forgotten the reading, the stuff of the reading was nevertheless in the content of my mind, ripe to be brought out in any pipe-dream. Thus he turned the tenets and jargon of psychology back on me.

"What's to prevent your inventing it right here in solitary?" was his next hypothesis. "Didn't Ed invent the knuckle-talk? And ain't you and me improving on it right along? I got you, bo. You invented it. Say, get it patented. I remember when I was night-messenger some guy invented a fool thing called Pigs in Clover and made millions out of it."

"There's no patenting this," I replied. "Doubtlessly the Asiatics have been playing it for thousands of years. Won't you believe me when I tell you I didn't invent it?"

"Then you must have read about it, or seen the Chinks playing it in some of those hop-joints you was always hanging around," was his last word.

But I have a last word. There is a Japanese murderer here in Folsom — or was, for he was executed last week. I talked the matter over with him; and the game Adam Strang played, and which I taught Oppenheimer, proved quite similar to the Japanese game. They are far more alike than is either of them like the Western game.

CHAPTER XVII

You, my reader, will remember, far back at the beginning of this narrative, how, when a little lad on the Minnesota farm, I looked at the photographs of the Holy Land and recognized places and pointed out changes in places. Also you will remember, as I described the scene I had witnessed of the healing of the lepers, I told the missionary that I was a big man with a big sword, astride a horse and looking on.

That childhood incident was merely a trailing cloud of glory, as Wordsworth puts it. Not in entire forgetfulness had I, little Darrell Standing, come into the world. But those memories of other times and places that glimmered up to the surface of my child consciousness soon failed and faded. In truth, as is the way with all children, the shades of the prison-house closed about me, and I remembered my mighty past no more. Every man born of woman has a past mighty as mine. Very few men born of women have been fortunate enough to suffer years of solitary and strait-jacketing. That was my good fortune. I was enabled to remember once again, and to remember, among other things, the time when I sat astride a horse and beheld the lepers healed.

My name was Ragnar Lodbrog. I was in truth a large man. I stood half a head above the Romans of my legion. But that was later, after the time of my journey from Alexandria to Jerusalem, that I came to command a legion. It was a crowded life, that. Books and books, and years of writing could not record it all. So I shall briefen and no more than hint at the beginnings of it.

Now all is clear and sharp save the very beginning. I never knew my mother. I was told that I was tempest-born, on a beaked ship in the Northern Sea, of a captured woman, after a sea fight and a sack of a coastal stronghold. I never heard the name of my mother. She died at the height of the tempest. She was of the North Danes, so old Lingaard told me. He told me much that I was too young to remember, yet little could he tell. A sea fight and a sack, battle and plunder and torch, a flight seaward in the long ships to escape destruction upon the rocks, and a killing strain and struggle against the frosty, foundering seas — who, then, should know aught or mark a stranger woman in her hour with her feet fast set on the way of death? Many died. Men marked the living women, not the dead.

Sharp-bitten into my child imagination are the incidents immediately after my birth, as told me by old Lingaard. Lingaard, too old to labour at the sweeps, had been surgeon, undertaker, and midwife of the huddled captives in the open midships. So I was delivered in storm, with the spume of the cresting seas salt upon me.

Not many hours old was I when Tostig Lodbrog first laid eyes on me. His was the lean ship, and his the seven other lean ships that had made the foray, fled the rapine, and won through the storm. Tostig Lodbrog was also called Muspell, meaning “The Burning”; for he was ever aflame with wrath. Brave he was, and cruel he was, with no heart of mercy in that great chest of his. Ere the sweat of battle had dried on him, leaning on his axe, he ate the heart of Ngrun after the fight at Hasfarth. Because of mad anger he sold his son, Garulf, into slavery to the Juts. I remember, under the smoky rafters of Brunanbuhr, how he used to call for the skull of Guthlaf for a drinking beaker. Spiced wine he would have from no other cup than the skull of Guthlaf.

And to him, on the reeling deck after the storm was past, old Lingaard brought me. I was only hours old, wrapped naked in a salt-crusted wolfskin. Now it happens, being prematurely born, that I was very small.

“Ho! ho! — a dwarf!” cried Tostig, lowering a pot of mead half-drained from his lips to stare at me.

The day was bitter, but they say he swept me naked from the wolfskin, and by my foot, between thumb and forefinger, dangled me to the bite of the wind.

“A roach!” he ho-ho’d. “A shrimp! A sea-louse!” And he made to squash me between huge forefinger and thumb, either of which, Lingaard avers, was thicker than my leg or thigh.

But another whim was upon him.

“The youngling is a-thirst. Let him drink.”

And therewith, head-downward, into the half-pot of mead he thrust me. And might well have drowned in this drink of men — I who had never known a mother’s breast in the briefness of time I had lived — had it not been for Lingaard. But when he plucked me forth from the brew, Tostig Lodbrog struck him down in a rage. We rolled on the deck, and the great bear hounds, captured in the fight with the North Danes just past, sprang upon us.

“Ho! ho!” roared Tostig Lodbrog, as the old man and I and the wolfskin were mauled and worried by the dogs.

But Lingaard gained his feet, saving me but losing the wolfskin to the hounds.

Tostig Lodbrog finished the mead and regarded me, while Lingaard knew better than to beg for mercy where was no mercy.

“Hop o’ my thumb,” quoth Tostig. “By Odin, the women of the North Danes are a scurvy breed. They birth dwarfs, not men. Of what use is this thing? He will never make a man. Listen you, Lingaard, grow him to be a drink-boy at Brunanbuhr. And have an eye on the dogs lest they slobber him down by mistake as a meat-crumb from the table.”

I knew no woman. Old Lingaard was midwife and nurse, and for nursery were reeling decks and the stamp and trample of men in battle or storm. How I survived puling infancy, God knows. I must have been born iron in a day of iron, for survive I did, to give the lie to Tostig’s promise of dwarf-hood. I outgrew all beakers and tankards, and not for long could he half-drown me in his mead pot. This last was a favourite feat of his. It was his raw humour, a sally esteemed by him delicious wit.

My first memories are of Tostig Lodbrog’s beaked ships and fighting men, and of the feast hall at Brunanbuhr when our boats lay beached beside the frozen fjord. For I was made drink-boy, and amongst my earliest recollections are toddling with the wine-filled skull of Guthlaf to the head of the table where Tostig bellowed to the rafters. They were madmen, all of madness, but it seemed the common way of life to me who knew naught else. They were men of quick rages and quick battling. Their thoughts were ferocious; so was their eating ferocious, and their drinking. And I grew like them. How else could I grow, when I served the drink to the bellowings of drunkards and to the skalds singing of Hialli, and the bold Hogni, and of the Niflung’s gold, and of Gudrun’s revenge on Atli when she gave him the hearts of his children and hers to eat while battle swept the benches, tore down the hangings raped from southern coasts, and, littered the feasting board with swift corpses.

Oh, I, too, had a rage, well tutored in such school. I was but eight when I showed my teeth at a drinking between the men of Brunanbuhr and the Juts who came as friends with the jarl Agard in his three long ships. I stood at Tostig Lodbrog’s shoulder, holding the skull of Guthlaf that steamed and stank with the hot, spiced wine. And I waited while Tostig should complete his ravings against the North Dane men. But still he raved and still I waited, till he caught breath of fury to assail the North Dane woman. Whereat I remembered my North Dane mother, and saw my rage red in my eyes, and smote him with the skull of Guthlaf, so that he was wine-drenched, and wine-blinded, and fire-burnt. And as he reeled unseeing, smashing his great groping clutches through the air at me, I was in and short-dirked him thrice in belly, thigh and buttock, than which I could reach no higher up the mighty frame of him.

And the jarl Agard's steel was out, and his Juts joining him as he shouted:

"A bear cub! A bear cub! By Odin, let the cub fight!"

And there, under that roaring roof of Brunanbuhr, the babbling drink-boy of the North Danes fought with mighty Lodbrog. And when, with one stroke, I was flung, dazed and breathless, half the length of that great board, my flying body mowing down pots and tankards, Lodbrog cried out command:

"Out with him! Fling him to the hounds!"

But the jarl would have it no, and clapped Lodbrog on the shoulder, and asked me as a gift of friendship.

And south I went, when the ice passed out of the fjord, in Jarl Agard's ships. I was made drink-boy and sword-bearer to him, and in lieu of other name was called Ragnar Lodbrog. Agard's country was neighbour to the Frisians, and a sad, flat country of fog and fen it was. I was with him for three years, to his death, always at his back, whether hunting swamp wolves or drinking in the great hall where Elgiva, his young wife, often sat among her women. I was with Agard in south foray with his ships along what would be now the coast of France, and there I learned that still south were warmer seasons and softer climes and women.

But we brought back Agard wounded to death and slow-dying. And we burned his body on a great pyre, with Elgiva, in her golden corselet, beside him singing. And there were household slaves in golden collars that burned of a plenty there with her, and nine female thralls, and eight male slaves of the Angles that were of gentle birth and battle-captured. And there were live hawks so burned, and the two hawk-boys with their birds.

But I, the drink-boy, Ragnar Lodbrog, did not burn. I was eleven, and unafraid, and had never worn woven cloth on my body. And as the flames sprang up, and Elgiva sang her death-song, and the thralls and slaves screeched their unwillingness to die, I tore away my fastenings, leaped, and gained the fens, the gold collar of my slavehood still on my neck, footing it with the hounds loosed to tear me down.

In the fens were wild men, masterless men, fled slaves, and outlaws, who were hunted in sport as the wolves were hunted.

For three years I knew never roof nor fire, and I grew hard as the frost, and would have stolen a woman from the Juts but that the Frisians by mischance, in a two days' hunt, ran me down. By them I was looted of my gold collar and traded for two wolf-hounds to Edwy, of the Saxons, who put an iron collar on me, and later made of me and five other slaves a present to Athel of the East Angles. I was thrall and fighting man, until, lost in an unlucky raid far to the east beyond our marches, I was sold among the Huns, and was a swineherd until I escaped south into the great forests and was taken in as a freeman by the Teutons, who were many, but who lived in small tribes and drifted southward before the Hun advance.

And up from the south into the great forests came the Romans, fighting men all, who pressed us back upon the Huns. It was a crushage of the peoples for lack of room; and we taught the Romans what fighting was, although in truth we were no less well taught by them.

But always I remembered the sun of the south-land that I had glimpsed in the ships of Agard, and it was my fate, caught in this south drift of the Teutons, to be captured by the Romans and be brought back to the sea which I had not seen since I was lost away from the East Angles. I was made a sweep-slave in the galleys, and it was as a sweep-slave that at last I came to Rome.

All the story is too long of how I became a freeman, a citizen, and a soldier, and of how, when I was thirty, I journeyed to Alexandria, and from Alexandria to Jerusalem. Yet what I have told from the time when I was baptized in the mead-pot of Tostig Lodbrog I have been compelled to tell in order that you may understand what manner of man rode in through the Jaffa Gate and drew all eyes upon him.

Well might they look. They were small breeds, lighter-boned and lighter-thewed, these Romans and Jews, and a blonde like me they had never gazed upon. All along the narrow streets they gave before me but stood to stare wide-eyed at this yellow man from the north, or from God knew where so far as they knew aught of the matter.

Practically all Pilate's troops were auxiliaries, save for a handful of Romans about the palace and the twenty Romans who rode with me. Often enough have I found the auxiliaries good soldiers, but never so steadily dependable as the Romans. In truth they were better fighting men the year round than were we men of the North, who fought in great moods and sulked in great moods. The Roman was invariably steady and dependable.

There was a woman from the court of Antipas, who was a friend of Pilate's wife and whom I met at Pilate's the night of my arrival. I shall call her Miriam, for Miriam was the name I loved her by. If it were merely difficult to describe the charm of women, I would describe Miriam. But how describe emotion in words? The charm of woman is wordless. It is different from perception that culminates in reason, for it arises in sensation and culminates in emotion, which, be it admitted, is nothing else than super-sensation.

In general, any woman has fundamental charm for any man. When this charm becomes particular, then we call it love. Miriam had this particular charm for me. Verily I was co-partner in her charm. Half of it was my own man's life in me that leapt and met her wide-armed and made in me all that she was desirable plus all my desire of her.

Miriam was a grand woman. I use the term advisedly. She was fine-bodied, commanding, over and above the average Jewish woman in stature and in line. She was an aristocrat in social caste; she was an aristocrat by nature. All her ways were large ways, generous ways. She had brain, she had wit, and, above all, she had womanliness. As you shall see, it was her womanliness that betrayed her and me in they end. Brunette, olive-skinned, oval-faced, her hair was blue-black with its blackness and her eyes were twin wells of black. Never were more pronounced types of blonde and brunette in man and woman met than in us.

And we met on the instant. There was no self-discussion, no waiting, wavering, to make certain. She was mine the moment I looked upon her. And by the same token she knew that I belonged to her above all men. I strode to her. She half-lifted from her couch as if drawn upward to me. And then we looked with all our eyes, blue eyes and black, until Pilate's wife, a thin, tense, overwrought woman, laughed nervously. And while I bowed to the wife and gave greeting, I thought I saw Pilate give Miriam a significant glance, as if to say, "Is he not all I promised?" For he had had word of my coming from Sulpicius Quirinius, the legate of Syria. As well had Pilate and I been known to each other before ever he journeyed out to be procurator over the Semitic volcano of Jerusalem.

Much talk we had that night, especially Pilate, who spoke in detail of the local situation, and who seemed lonely and desirous to share his anxieties with some one and even to bid for counsel. Pilate was of the solid type of Roman, with sufficient imagination intelligently to enforce the iron policy of Rome, and not unduly excitable under stress.

But on this night it was plain that he was worried. The Jews had got on his nerves. They were too volcanic, spasmodic, eruptive. And further, they were subtle. The Romans had a straight, forthright way of going about anything. The Jews never approached anything directly, save backwards, when they were driven by compulsion. Left to themselves, they always approached by indirection. Pilate's irritation was due, as he explained, to the fact that the Jews were ever intriguing to make him, and through him Rome, the catspaw in the matter of their religious dissensions. As was well known to me, Rome did not interfere with the religious notions of its conquered peoples; but the Jews were for ever confusing the issues and giving a political cast to purely unpolitical events.

Pilate waxed eloquent over the diverse sects and the fanatic uprisings and riotings that were continually occurring.

"Lodbrog," he said, "one can never tell what little summer cloud of their hatching may turn into a thunderstorm roaring and rattling about one's ears. I am here to keep order and quiet. Despite me they make the place a hornets' nest. Far rather would I govern Scythians or savage Britons than these people who are never at peace about God. Right now there is a man up to the north, a fisherman turned preacher, and miracle-worker, who as well as not may soon have all the country by the ears and my recall on its way from Rome."

This was the first I had heard of the man called Jesus, and I little remarked it at the time. Not until afterward did I remember him, when the little summer cloud had become a full-fledged thunderstorm.

"I have had report of him," Pilate went on. "He is not political. There is no doubt of that. But trust Caiaphas, and Hanan behind Caiaphas, to make of this fisherman a political thorn with which to prick Rome and ruin me."

"This Caiaphas, I have heard of him as high priest, then who is this Hanan?" I asked.

"The real high priest, a cunning fox," Pilate explained. "Caiaphas was appointed by Gratus, but Caiaphas is the shadow and the mouthpiece of Hanan."

“They have never forgiven you that little matter of the votive shields,” Miriam teased.

Whereupon, as a man will when his sore place is touched, Pilate launched upon the episode, which had been an episode, no more, at the beginning, but which had nearly destroyed him. In all innocence before his palace he had affixed two shields with votive inscriptions. Ere the consequent storm that burst on his head had passed the Jews had written their complaints to Tiberius, who approved them and reprimanded Pilate.

I was glad, a little later, when I could have talk with Miriam. Pilate’s wife had found opportunity to tell me about her. She was of old royal stock. Her sister was wife of Philip, tetrarch of Gaulonitis and Batanæa. Now this Philip was brother to Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee and Peræa, and both were sons of Herod, called by the Jews the “Great.” Miriam, as I understood, was at home in the courts of both tetrarchs, being herself of the blood. Also, when a girl, she had been betrothed to Archelaus at the time he was ethnarch of Jerusalem. She had a goodly fortune in her own right, so that marriage had not been compulsory. To boot, she had a will of her own, and was doubtless hard to please in so important a matter as husbands.

It must have been in the very air we breathed, for in no time Miriam and I were at it on the subject of religion. Truly, the Jews of that day battened on religion as did we on fighting and feasting. For all my stay in that country there was never a moment when my wits were not buzzing with the endless discussions of life and death, law, and God. Now Pilate believed neither in gods, nor devils, nor anything. Death, to him, was the blackness of unbroken sleep; and yet, during his years in Jerusalem, he was ever vexed with the inescapable fuss and fury of things religious. Why, I had a horse-boy on my trip into Idumæa, a wretched creature that could never learn to saddle and who yet could talk, and most learnedly, without breath, from nightfall to sunrise, on the hair-splitting differences in the teachings of all the rabbis from Shemaiah to Gamaliel.

But to return to Miriam.

“You believe you are immortal,” she was soon challenging me. “Then why do you fear to talk about it?”

“Why burden my mind with thoughts about certainties?” I countered.

“But are you certain?” she insisted. “Tell me about it. What is it like — your immortality?”

And when I had told her of Niflheim and Muspell, of the birth of the giant Ymir from the snowflakes, of the cow Andhumbla, and of Fenrir and Loki and the frozen Jötuns — as I say, when I had told her of all this, and of Thor and Odin and our own Valhalla, she clapped her hands and cried out, with sparkling eyes:

"Oh, you barbarian! You great child! You yellow giant-thing of the frost! You believer of old nurse tales and stomach satisfactions! But the spirit of you, that which cannot die, where will it go when your body is dead?"

"As I have said, Valhalla," I answered. "And my body shall be there, too."

"Eating? — drinking? — fighting?"

"And loving," I added. "We must have our women in heaven, else what is heaven for?"

"I do not like your heaven," she said. "It is a mad place, a beast place, a place of frost and storm and fury."

"And your heaven?" I questioned.

"Is always unending summer, with the year at the ripe for the fruits and flowers and growing things."

I shook my head and growled:

"I do not like your heaven. It is a sad place, a soft place, a place for weaklings and eunuchs and fat, sobbing shadows of men."

My remarks must have glamoured her mind, for her eyes continued to sparkle, and mine was half a guess that she was leading me on.

"My heaven," she said, "is the abode of the blest."

"Valhalla is the abode of the blest," I asserted. "For look you, who cares for flowers where flowers always are? in my country, after the iron winter breaks and the sun drives away the long night, the first blossoms twinkling on the melting ice-edge are things of joy, and we look, and look again.

"And fire!" I cried out. "Great glorious fire! A fine heaven yours where a man cannot properly esteem a roaring fire under a tight roof with wind and snow a-drive outside."

"A simple folk, you," she was back at me. "You build a roof and a fire in a snowbank and call it heaven. In my heaven we do not have to escape the wind and snow."

"No," I objected. "We build roof and fire to go forth from into the frost and storm and to return to from the frost and storm. Man's life is fashioned for battle with frost and storm. His very fire and roof he makes by his battling. I know. For three years, once, I knew never roof nor fire. I was sixteen, and a man, ere ever I wore woven cloth on my body. I was birthed in storm, after battle, and my swaddling cloth was a wolfskin. Look at me and see what manner of man lives in Valhalla."

And look she did, all a-glamour, and cried out:

"You great, yellow giant-thing of a man!" Then she added pensively, "Almost it saddens me that there may not be such men in my heaven."

"It is a good world," I consoled her. "Good is the plan and wide. There is room for many heavens. It would seem that to each is given the heaven that is his heart's desire. A good country, truly, there beyond the grave. I doubt not I shall leave our feast halls and raid your coasts of sun and flowers, and steal you away. My mother was so stolen."

And in the pause I looked at her, and she looked at me, and dared to look. And my blood ran fire. By Odin, this was a woman!

What might have happened I know not, for Pilate, who had ceased from his talk with Ambivius and for some time had sat grinning, broke the pause.

"A rabbi, a Teutoberg rabbi!" he gibed. "A new preacher and a new doctrine come to Jerusalem. Now will there be more dissensions, and riotings, and stonings of prophets. The gods save us, it is a mad-house. Lodbrog, I little thought it of you. Yet here you are, spouting and fuming as wildly as any madman from the desert about what shall happen to you when you are dead. One life at a time, Lodbrog. It saves trouble. It saves trouble."

"Go on, Miriam, go on," his wife cried.

She had sat entranced during the discussion, with hands tightly clasped, and the thought flickered up in my mind that she had already been corrupted by the religious folly of Jerusalem. At any rate, as I was to learn in the days that followed, she was unduly bent upon such matters. She was a thin woman, as if wasted by fever. Her skin was tight-stretched. Almost it seemed I could look through her hands did she hold them between me and the light. She was a good woman, but highly nervous, and, at times, fancy-flighted about shades and signs and omens. Nor was she above seeing visions and hearing voices. As for me, I had no patience with such weaknesses. Yet was she a good woman with no heart of evil.

* * * * *

I was on a mission for Tiberius, and it was my ill luck to see little of Miriam. On my return from the court of Antipas she had gone into Batanæa to Philip's court, where was her sister. Once again I was back in Jerusalem, and, though it was no necessity of my business to see Philip, who, though weak, was faithful to Roman will, I journeyed into Batanæa in the hope of meeting with Miriam.

Then there was my trip into Idumæa. Also, I travelled into Syria in obedience to the command of Sulpicius Quirinius, who, as imperial legate, was curious of my first-hand report of affairs in Jerusalem. Thus, travelling wide and much, I had opportunity to observe the strangeness of the Jews who were so madly interested in God. It was their peculiarity. Not content with leaving such matters to their priests, they were themselves for ever turning priests and preaching wherever they could find a listener. And listeners they found a-plenty.

They gave up their occupations to wander about the country like beggars, disputing and bickering with the rabbis and Talmudists in the synagogues and temple porches. It was in Galilee, a district of little repute, the inhabitants of which were looked upon as witless, that I crossed the track of the man Jesus. It seems that he had been a carpenter, and after that a fisherman, and that his fellow-fishermen had ceased dragging their nets and followed him in his wandering life. Some few looked upon him as a prophet, but the most contended that he was a madman. My wretched horse-boy, himself claiming Talmudic knowledge second to none, sneered at Jesus, calling him the king of the beggars, calling his doctrine Ebionism, which, as he explained to me, was to the effect that only the poor should win to heaven, while the rich and powerful were to burn for ever in some lake of fire.

It was my observation that it was the custom of the country for every man to call every other man a madman. In truth, in my judgment, they were all mad. There was a plague of them. They cast out devils by magic charms, cured diseases by the laying on of hands, drank deadly poisons unharmed, and unharmed played with deadly snakes — or so they claimed. They ran away to starve in the deserts. They emerged howling new doctrine, gathering crowds about them, forming new sects that split on doctrine and formed more sects.

"By Odin," I told Pilate, "a trifle of our northern frost and snow would cool their wits. This climate is too soft. In place of building roofs and hunting meat, they are ever building doctrine."

"And altering the nature of God," Pilate corroborated sourly. "A curse on doctrine."

"So say I," I agreed. "If ever I get away with unaddled wits from this mad land, I'll cleave through whatever man dares mention to me what may happen after I am dead."

Never were such trouble makers. Everything under the sun was pious or impious to them. They, who were so clever in hair-splitting argument, seemed incapable of grasping the Roman idea of the State. Everything political was religious; everything religious was political. Thus every procurator's hands were full. The Roman eagles, the Roman statues, even the votive shields of Pilate, were deliberate insults to their religion.

The Roman taking of the census was an abomination. Yet it had to be done, for it was the basis of taxation. But there it was again. Taxation by the State was a crime against their law and God. Oh, that Law! It was not the Roman law. It was their law, what they called God's law. There were the zealots, who murdered anybody who broke this law. And for a procurator to punish a zealot caught red-handed was to raise a riot or an insurrection.

Everything, with these strange people, was done in the name of God. There were what we Romans called the *thaumaturgi*. They worked miracles to prove doctrine. Ever has it seemed to me a witless thing to prove the multiplication table by turning a staff into a serpent, or even into two serpents. Yet these things the *thaumaturgi* did, and always to the excitement of the common people.

Heavens, what sects and sects! Pharisees, Essenes, Sadducees — a legion of them! No sooner did they start with a new quirk when it turned political. Coponius, procurator fourth before Pilate, had a pretty time crushing the Gaulonite sedition which arose in this fashion and spread down from Gamala.

In Jerusalem, that last time I rode in, it was easy to note the increasing excitement of the Jews. They ran about in crowds, chattering and spouting. Some were proclaiming the end of the world. Others satisfied themselves with the imminent destruction of the Temple. And there were rank revolutionises who announced that Roman rule was over and the new Jewish kingdom about to begin.

Pilate, too, I noted, showed heavy anxiety. That they were giving him a hard time of it was patent. But I will say, as you shall see, that he matched their subtlety with equal subtlety; and from what I saw of him I have little doubt but what he would have confounded many a disputant in the synagogues.

"But half a legion of Romans," he regretted to me, "and I would take Jerusalem by the throat . . . and then be recalled for my pains, I suppose."

Like me, he had not too much faith in the auxiliaries; and of Roman soldiers we had but a scant handful.

Back again, I lodged in the palace, and to my great joy found Miriam there. But little satisfaction was mine, for the talk ran long on the situation. There was reason for this, for the city buzzed like the angry hornets' nest it was. The fast called the Passover — a religious affair, of course — was near, and thousands were pouring in from the country, according to custom, to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem. These newcomers, naturally, were all excitable folk, else they would not be bent on such pilgrimage. The city was packed with them, so that many camped outside the walls. As for me, I could not distinguish how much of the ferment was due to the teachings of the wandering fisherman, and how much of it was due to Jewish hatred for Rome.

"A tithe, no more, and maybe not so much, is due to this Jesus," Pilate answered my query. "Look to Caiaphas and Hanan for the main cause of the excitement. They know what they are about. They are stirring it up, to what end who can tell, except to cause me trouble."

"Yes, it is certain that Caiaphas and Hanan are responsible," Miriam said, "but you, Pontius Pilate, are only a Roman and do not understand. Were you a Jew, you would realize that there is a greater seriousness at the bottom of it than mere dissension of the sectaries or trouble-making for you and Rome. The high priests and Pharisees, every Jew of place or wealth, Philip, Antipas, myself — we are all fighting for very life.

"This fisherman may be a madman. If so, there is a cunning in his madness. He preaches the doctrine of the poor. He threatens our law, and our law is our life, as you have learned ere this. We are jealous of our law, as you would be jealous of the air denied your body by a throttling hand on your throat. It is Caiaphas and Hanan and all they stand for, or it is the fisherman. They must destroy him, else he will destroy them."

"Is it not strange, so simple a man, a fisherman?" Pilate's wife breathed forth. "What manner of man can he be to possess such power? I would that I could see him. I would that with my own eyes I could see so remarkable a man."

Pilate's brows corrugated at her words, and it was clear that to the burden on his nerves was added the overwrought state of his wife's nerves.

"If you would see him, beat up the dens of the town," Miriam laughed spitefully. "You will find him wine-bibbing or in the company of nameless women. Never so strange a prophet came up to Jerusalem."

"And what harm in that?" I demanded, driven against my will to take the part of the fisherman. "Have I not wine-guzzled a-plenty and passed strange nights in all the provinces? The man is a man, and his ways are men's ways, else am I a madman, which I here deny."

Miriam shook her head as she spoke.

"He is not mad. Worse, he is dangerous. All Ebionism is dangerous. He would destroy all things that are fixed. He is a revolutionist. He would destroy what little is left to us of the Jewish state and Temple."

Here Pilate shook his head.

"He is not political. I have had report of him. He is a visionary. There is no sedition in him. He affirms the Roman tax even."

"Still you do not understand," Miriam persisted. "It is not what he plans; it is the effect, if his plans are achieved, that makes him a revolutionist. I doubt that he foresees the effect. Yet is the man a plague, and, like any plague, should be stamped out."

"From all that I have heard, he is a good-hearted, simple man with no evil in him," I stated.

And thereat I told of the healing of the ten lepers I had witnessed in Samaria on my way through Jericho.

Pilate's wife sat entranced at what I told. Came to our ears distant shoutings and cries of some street crowd, and we knew the soldiers were keeping the streets cleared.

"And you believe this wonder, Lodbrog?" Pilate demanded. "You believe that in the flash of an eye the festering sores departed from the lepers?"

"I saw them healed," I replied. "I followed them to make certain. There was no leprosy in them."

"But did you see them sore? — before the healing?" Pilate insisted.

I shook my head.

"I was only told so," I admitted. "When I saw them afterward, they had all the seeming of men who had once been lepers. They were in a daze. There was one who sat in the sun and ever searched his body and stared and stared at the smooth flesh as if unable to believe his eyes. He would not speak, nor look at aught else than his flesh, when I questioned him. He was in a maze. He sat there in the sun and stared and stated."

Pilate smiled contemptuously, and I noted the quiet smile on Miriam's face was equally contemptuous. And Pilate's wife sat as if a corpse, scarce breathing, her eyes wide and unseeing.

Spoke Ambivius: "Caiaphas holds — he told me but yesterday — that the fisherman claims that he will bring God down on earth and make here a new kingdom over which God will rule — "

"Which would mean the end of Roman rule," I broke in.

"That is where Caiaphas and Hanan plot to embroil Rome," Miriam explained. "It is not true. It is a lie they have made."

Pilate nodded and asked:

"Is there not somewhere in your ancient books a prophecy that the priests here twist into the intent of this fisherman's mind?"

To this she agreed, and gave him the citation. I relate the incident to evidence the depth of Pilate's study of this people he strove so hard to keep in order.

"What I have heard," Miriam continued, "is that this Jesus preaches the end of the world and the beginning of God's kingdom, not here, but in heaven."

"I have had report of that," Pilate raid. "It is true. This Jesus holds the justness of the Roman tax. He holds that Rome shall rule until all rule passes away with the passing of the world. I see more clearly the trick Hanan is playing me."

"It is even claimed by some of his followers," Ambivius volunteered, "that he is God Himself."

"I have no report that he has so said," Pilate replied.

"Why not?" his wife breathed. "Why not? Gods have descended to earth before."

“Look you,” Pilate said. “I have it by creditable report, that after this Jesus had worked some wonder whereby a multitude was fed on several loaves and fishes, the foolish Galileans were for making him a king. Against his will they would make him a king. To escape them he fled into the mountains. No madness there. He was too wise to accept the fate they would have forced upon him.”

“Yet that is the very trick Hanan would force upon you,” Miriam reiterated. “They claim for him that he would be king of the Jews — an offence against Roman law, wherefore Rome must deal with him.”

Pilate shrugged his shoulders.

“A king of the beggars, rather; or a king of the dreamers. He is no fool. He is visionary, but not visionary of this world’s power. All luck go with him in the next world, for that is beyond Rome’s jurisdiction.”

“He holds that property is sin — that is what hits the Pharisees,” Ambivius spoke up.

Pilate laughed heartily.

“This king of the beggars and his fellow-beggars still do respect property,” he explained. “For, look you, not long ago they had even a treasurer for their wealth. Judas his name was, and there were words in that he stole from their common purse which he carried.”

“Jesus did not steal?” Pilate’s wife asked.

“No,” Pilate answered; “it was Judas, the treasurer.”

“Who was this John?” I questioned. “He was in trouble up Tiberias way and Antipas executed him.”

“Another one,” Miriam answered. “He was born near Hebron. He was an enthusiast and a desert-dweller. Either he or his followers claimed that he was Elijah raised from the dead. Elijah, you see, was one of our old prophets.”

“Was he seditious?” I asked.

Pilate grinned and shook his head, then said:

“He fell out with Antipas over the matter of Herodias. John was a moralist. It is too long a story, but he paid for it with his head. No, there was nothing political in that affair.”

“It is also claimed by some that Jesus is the Son of David,” Miriam said. “But it is absurd. Nobody at Nazareth believes it. You see, his whole family, including his married sisters, lives there and is known to all of them. They are a simple folk, mere common people.”

"I wish it were as simple, the report of all this complexity that I must send to Tiberius," Pilate grumbled. "And now this fisherman is come to Jerusalem, the place is packed with pilgrims ripe for any trouble, and Hanan stirs and stirs the broth."

"And before he is done he will have his way," Miriam forecast. "He has laid the task for you, and you will perform it."

"Which is?" Pilate queried.

"The execution of this fisherman."

Pilate shook his head stubbornly, but his wife cried out:

"No! No! It would be a shameful wrong. The man has done no evil. He has not offended against Rome."

She looked beseechingly to Pilate, who continued to shake his head.

"Let them do their own beheading, as Antipas did," he growled. "The fisherman counts for nothing; but I shall be no catspaw to their schemes. If they must destroy him, they must destroy him. That is their affair."

"But you will not permit it," cried Pilate's wife.

"A pretty time would I have explaining to Tiberius if I interfered," was his reply.

"No matter what happens," said Miriam, "I can see you writing explanations, and soon; for Jesus is already come up to Jerusalem and a number of his fishermen with him."

Pilate showed the irritation this information caused him.

"I have no interest in his movements," he pronounced. "I hope never to see him."

"Trust Hanan to find him for you," Miriam replied, "and to bring him to your gate."

Pilate shrugged his shoulders, and there the talk ended. Pilate's wife, nervous and overwrought, must claim Miriam to her apartments, so that nothing remained for me but to go to bed and doze off to the buzz and murmur of the city of madmen.

* * * * *

Events moved rapidly. Over night the white heat of the city had scorched upon itself. By midday, when I rode forth with half a dozen of my men, the streets were packed, and more reluctant than ever were the folk to give way before me. If looks could kill I should have been a dead man that day. Openly they spat at sight of me, and, everywhere arose snarls and cries.

Less was I a thing of wonder, and more was I the thing hated in that I wore the hated harness of Rome. Had it been any other city, I should have given command to my men to lay the flats of their swords on those snarling fanatics. But this was Jerusalem, at fever heat, and these were a people unable in thought to divorce the idea of State from the idea of God.

Hanan the Sadducee had done his work well. No matter what he and the Sanhedrim believed of the true inwardness of the situation, it was clear this rabble had been well tutored to believe that Rome was at the bottom of it.

I encountered Miriam in the press. She was on foot, attended only by a woman. It was no time in such turbulence for her to be abroad garbed as became her station. Through her sister she was indeed sister-in-law to Antipas for whom few bore love. So she was dressed discreetly, her face covered, so that she might pass as any Jewish woman of the lower orders. But not to my eye could she hide that fine stature of her, that carriage and walk, so different from other women's, of which I had already dreamed more than once.

Few and quick were the words we were able to exchange, for the way jammed on the moment, and soon my men and horses were being pressed and jostled. Miriam was sheltered in an angle of house-wall.

"Have they got the fisherman yet?" I asked.

"No; but he is just outside the wall. He has ridden up to Jerusalem on an ass, with a multitude before and behind; and some, poor dupes, have hailed him as he passed as King of Israel. That finally is the pretext with which Hanan will compel Pilate. Truly, though not yet taken, the sentence is already written. This fisherman is a dead man."

"But Pilate will not arrest him," I defended. Miriam shook her head.

"Hanan will attend to that. They will bring him before the Sanhedrim. The sentence will be death. They may stone him."

"But the Sanhedrim has not the right to execute," I contended.

"Jesus is not a Roman," she replied. "He is a Jew. By the law of the Talmud he is guilty of death, for he has blasphemed against the law."

Still I shook my head.

"The Sanhedrim has not the right."

"Pilate is willing that it should take that right."

"But it is a fine question of legality," I insisted. "You know what the Romans are in such matters."

"Then will Hanan avoid the question," she smiled, "by compelling Pilate to crucify him. In either event it will be well."

A surging of the mob was sweeping our horses along and grinding our knees together. Some fanatic had fallen, and I could feel my horse recoil and half rear as it tramped on him, and I could hear the man screaming and the snarling menace from all about rising to a roar. But my head was over my shoulder as I called back to Miriam:

"You are hard on a man you have said yourself is without evil."

"I am hard upon the evil that will come of him if he lives," she replied.

Scarcely did I catch her words, for a man sprang in, seizing my bridle-rein and leg and struggling to unhorse me. With my open palm, leaning forward, I smote him full upon cheek and jaw. My hand covered the face of him, and a hearty will of weight was in the blow. The dwellers in Jerusalem are not used to man's buffets. I have often wondered since if I broke the fellow's neck.

* * * * *

Next I saw Miriam was the following day. I met her in the court of Pilate's palace. She seemed in a dream. Scarce her eyes saw me. Scarce her wits embraced my identity. So strange was she, so in daze and amaze and far-seeing were her eyes, that I was reminded of the lepers I had seen healed in Samaria.

She became herself by an effort, but only her outward self. In her eyes was a message unreadable. Never before had I seen woman's eyes so.

She would have passed me ungreeted had I not confronted her way. She paused and murmured words mechanically, but all the while her eyes dreamed through me and beyond me with the largeness of the vision that filled them.

"I have seen Him, Lodbrog," she whispered. "I have seen Him."

"The gods grant that he is not so ill-affected by the sight of you, whoever he may be," I laughed.

She took no notice of my poor-timed jest, and her eyes remained full with vision, and she would have passed on had I not again blocked her way.

"Who is this he?" I demanded. "Some man raised from the dead to put such strange light in your eyes?"

"One who has raised others from the dead," she replied. "Truly I believe that He, this Jesus, has raised the dead. He is the Prince of Light, the Son of God. I have seen Him. Truly I believe that He is the Son of God."

Little could I glean from her words, save that she had met this wandering fisherman and been swept away by his folly. For surely this Miriam was not the Miriam who had branded him a plague and demanded that he be stamped out as any plague.

"He has charmed you," I cried angrily.

Her eyes seemed to moisten and grow deeper as she gave confirmation.

"Oh, Lodbrog, His is charm beyond all thinking, beyond all describing. But to look upon Him is to know that here is the all-soul of goodness and of compassion. I have seen Him. I have heard Him. I shall give all I have to the poor, and I shall follow Him."

Such was her certitude that I accepted it fully, as I had accepted the amazement of the lepers of Samaria staring at their smooth flesh; and I was bitter that so great a woman should be so easily wit-addled by a vagrant wonder-worker.

"Follow him," I sneered. "Doubtless you will wear a crown when he wins to his kingdom."

She nodded affirmation, and I could have struck her in the face for her folly. I drew aside, and as she moved slowly on she murmured:

"His kingdom is not here. He is the Son of David. He is the Son of God. He is whatever He has said, or whatever has been said of Him that is good and great."

* * * * *

"A wise man of the East," I found Pilate chuckling. "He is a thinker, this unlettered fisherman. I have sought more deeply into him. I have fresh report. He has no need of wonder-workings. He out-sophisticates the most sophistical of them. They have laid traps, and He has laughed at their traps. Look you. Listen to this."

Whereupon he told me how Jesus had confounded his confounders when they brought to him for judgment a woman taken in adultery.

"And the tax," Pilate exulted on. "'To Cæsar what is Cæsar's, to God what is God's,' was his answer to them. That was Hanan's trick, and Hanan is confounded. At last has there appeared one Jew who understands our Roman conception of the State."

* * * * *

Next I saw Pilate's wife. Looking into her eyes I knew, on the instant, after having seen Miriam's eyes, that this tense, distraught woman had likewise seen the fisherman.

"The Divine is within Him," she murmured to me. "There is within Him a personal awareness of the indwelling of God."

"Is he God?" I queried, gently, for say something I must.

She shook her head.

"I do not know. He has not said. But this I know: of such stuff gods are made."

* * * * *

"A charmer of women," was my privy judgment, as I left Pilate's wife walking in dreams and visions.

The last days are known to all of you who read these lines, and it was in those last days that I learned that this Jesus was equally a charmer of men. He charmed Pilate. He charmed me.

After Hanan had sent Jesus to Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrim, assembled in Caiaphas's house, had condemned Jesus to death, Jesus, escorted by a howling mob, was sent to Pilate for execution.

Now, for his own sake and for Rome's sake, Pilate did not want to execute him. Pilate was little interested in the fisherman and greatly interested in peace and order. What cared Pilate for a man's life? — for many men's lives? The school of Rome was iron, and the governors sent out by Rome to rule conquered peoples were likewise iron. Pilate thought and acted in governmental abstractions. Yet, look: when Pilate went out scowling to meet the mob that had fetched the fisherman, he fell immediately under the charm of the man.

I was present. I know. It was the first time Pilate had ever seen him. Pilate went out angry. Our soldiers were in readiness to clear the court of its noisy vermin. And immediately Pilate laid eyes on the fisherman Pilate was subdued — nay, was solicitous. He disclaimed jurisdiction, demanded that they should judge the fisherman by their law and deal with him by their law, since the fisherman was a Jew and not a Roman. Never were there Jews so obedient to Roman rule. They cried out that it was unlawful, under Rome, for them to put any man to death. Yet Antipas had beheaded John and come to no grief of it.

And Pilate left them in the court, open under the sky, and took Jesus alone into the judgment hall. What happened therein I know not, save that when Pilate emerged he was changed. Whereas before he had been disinclined to execute because he would not be made a catspaw to Hanan, he was now disinclined to execute because of regard for the fisherman. His effort now was to save the fisherman. And all the while the mob cried: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

You, my reader, know the sincerity of Pilate's effort. You know how he tried to befool the mob, first by mocking Jesus as a harmless fool; and second by offering to release him according to the custom of releasing one prisoner at time of the Passover. And you know how the priests' quick whisperings led the mob to cry out for the release of the murderer Bar-Abba.

In vain Pilate struggled against the fate being thrust upon him by the priests. By sneer and jibe he hoped to make a farce of the transaction. He laughingly called Jesus the King of the Jews and ordered him to be scourged. His hope was that all would end in laughter and in laugher be forgotten.

I am glad to say that no Roman soldiers took part in what followed. It was the soldiers of the auxiliaries who crowned and cloaked Jesus, put the reed of sovereignty in his hand, and, kneeling, hailed him King of the Jews. Although it failed, it was a play to placate. And I, looking on, learned the charm of Jesus. Despite the cruel mockery of situation, he was regal. And I was quiet as I gazed. It was his own quiet that went into me. I was soothed and satisfied, and was without bewilderment. This thing had to be. All was well. The serenity of Jesus in the heart of the tumult and pain became my serenity. I was scarce moved by any thought to save him.

On the other hand, I had gazed on too many wonders of the human in my wild and varied years to be affected to foolish acts by this particular wonder. I was all serenity. I had no word to say. I had no judgment to pass. I knew that things were occurring beyond my comprehension, and that they must occur.

Still Pilate struggled. The tumult increased. The cry for blood rang through the court, and all were clamouring for crucifixion. Again Pilate went back into the judgment hall. His effort at a farce having failed, he attempted to disclaim jurisdiction. Jesus was not of Jerusalem. He was a born subject of Antipas, and to Antipas Pilate was for sending Jesus.

But the uproar was by now communicating itself to the city. Our troops outside the palace were being swept away in the vast street mob. Rioting had begun that in the flash of an eye could turn into civil war and revolution. My own twenty legionaries were close to hand and in readiness. They loved the fanatic Jews no more than did I, and would have welcomed my command to clear the court with naked steel.

When Pilate came out again his words for Antipas' jurisdiction could not be heard, for all the mob was shouting that Pilate was a traitor, that if he let the fisherman go he was no friend of Tiberius. Close before me, as I leaned against the wall, a mangy, bearded, long-haired fanatic sprang up and down unceasingly, and unceasingly chanted: "Tiberius is emperor; there is no king! Tiberius is emperor; there is no king!" I lost patience. The man's near noise was an offence. Lurching sidewise, as if by accident, I ground my foot on his to a terrible crushing. The fool seemed not to notice. He was too mad to be aware of the pain, and he continued to chant: "Tiberius is emperor; there is no king!"

I saw Pilate hesitate. Pilate, the Roman governor, for the moment was Pilate the man, with a man's anger against the miserable creatures clamouring for the blood of so sweet and simple, brave and good a spirit as this Jesus.

I saw Pilate hesitate. His gaze roved to me, as if he were about to signal to me to let loose; and I half-started forward, releasing the mangled foot under my foot. I was for leaping to complete that half-formed wish of Pilate and to sweep away in blood and cleanse the court of the wretched scum that howled in it.

It was not Pilate's indecision that decided me. It was this Jesus that decided Pilate and me. This Jesus looked at me. He commanded me. I tell you this vagrant fisherman, this wandering preacher, this piece of driftage from Galilee, commanded me. No word he uttered. Yet his command was there, unmistakable as a trumpet call. And I stayed my foot, and held my hand, for who was I to thwart the will and way of so greatly serene and sweetly sure a man as this? And as I stayed I knew all the charm of him — all that in him had charmed Miriam and Pilate's wife, that had charmed Pilate himself.

You know the rest. Pilate washed his hands of Jesus' blood, and the rioters took his blood upon their own heads. Pilate gave orders for the crucifixion. The mob was content, and content, behind the mob, were Caiaphas, Hanan, and the Sanhedrim. Not Pilate, not Tiberius, not Roman soldiers crucified Jesus. It was the priestly rulers and priestly politicians of Jerusalem. I saw. I know. And against his own best interests Pilate would have saved Jesus, as I would have, had it not been that no other than Jesus himself willed that he was not to be saved.

Yes, and Pilate had his last sneer at this people he detested. In Hebrew, Greek, and Latin he had a writing affixed to Jesus' cross which read, "The King of the Jews." In vain the priests complained. It was on this very pretext that they had forced Pilate's hand; and by this pretext, a scorn and insult to the Jewish race, Pilate abided. Pilate executed an abstraction that had never existed in the real. The abstraction was a cheat and a lie manufactured in the priestly mind. Neither the priests nor Pilate believed it. Jesus denied it. That abstraction was "The King of the Jews."

* * * * *

The storm was over in the courtyard. The excitement had simmered down. Revolution had been averted. The priests were content, the mob was satisfied, and Pilate and I were well disgusted and weary with the whole affair. And yet for him and me was more and most immediate storm. Before Jesus was taken away one of Miriam's women called me to her. And I saw Pilate, summoned by one of his wife's women, likewise obey.

"Oh, Lodbrog, I have heard," Miriam met me. We were alone, and she was close to me, seeking shelter and strength within my arms. "Pilate has weakened. He is going to crucify Him. But there is time. Your own men are ready. Ride with them. Only a centurion and a handful of soldiers are with Him. They have not yet started. As soon as they do start, follow. They must not reach Golgotha. But wait until they are outside the city wall. Then countermand the order. Take an extra horse for Him to ride.

The rest is easy. Ride away into Syria with Him, or into Idumæa, or anywhere so long as He be saved."

She concluded with her arms around my neck, her face upturned to mine and temptingly close, her eyes greatly solemn and greatly promising.

Small wonder I was slow of speech. For the moment there was but one thought in my brain. After all the strange play I had seen played out, to have this come upon me! I did not misunderstand. The thing was clear. A great woman was mine if . . . if I betrayed Rome. For Pilate was governor, his order had gone forth; and his voice was the voice of Rome.

As I have said, it was the woman of her, her sheer womanliness, that betrayed Miriam and me in the end. Always she had been so clear, so reasonable, so certain of herself and me, so that I had forgotten, or, rather, I there learned once again the eternal lesson learned in all lives, that woman is ever woman . . . that in great decisive moments woman does not reason but feels; that the last sanctuary and innermost pulse to conduct is in woman's heart and not in woman's head.

Miriam misunderstood my silence, for her body moved softly within my arms as she added, as if in afterthought:

"Take two spare horses, Lodbrog. I shall ride the other . . . with you . . . with you, away over the world, wherever you may ride."

It was a bribe of kings; it was an act, paltry and contemptible, that was demanded of me in return. Still I did not speak. It was not that I was in confusion or in any doubt. I was merely sad — greatly and suddenly sad, in that I knew I held in my arms what I would never hold again.

"There is but one man in Jerusalem this day who can save Him," she urged, "and that man is you, Lodbrog."

Because I did not immediately reply she shook me, as if in impulse to clarify wits she considered addled. She shook me till my harness rattled.

"Speak, Lodbrog, speak!" she commanded. "You are strong and unafraid. You are all man. I know you despise the vermin who would destroy Him. You, you alone can save Him. You have but to say the word and the thing is done; and I will well love you and always love you for the thing you have done."

"I am a Roman," I said slowly, knowing full well that with the words I gave up all hope of her.

"You are a man-slave of Tiberius, a hound of Rome," she flamed, "but you owe Rome nothing, for you are not a Roman. You yellow giants of the north are not Romans."

"The Romans are the elder brothers of us younglings of the north," I answered. "Also, I wear the harness and I eat the bread of Rome." Gently I added: "But why all this fuss and fury for a mere man's life? All men must die. Simple and easy it is to die. To-day, or a hundred years, it little matters. Sure we are, all of us, of the same event in the end."

Quick she was, and alive with passion to save as she thrilled within my arms.

"You do not understand, Lodbrog. This is no mere man. I tell you this is a man beyond men — a living God, not of men, but over men."

I held her closely and knew that I was renouncing all the sweet woman of her as I said:

"We are man and woman, you and I. Our life is of this world. Of these other worlds is all a madness. Let these mad dreamers go the way of their dreaming. Deny them not what they desire above all things, above meat and wine, above song and battle, even above love of woman. Deny them not their hearts' desires that draw them across the dark of the grave to their dreams of lives beyond this world. Let them pass. But you and I abide here in all the sweet we have discovered of each other. Quickly enough will come the dark, and you depart for your coasts of sun and flowers, and I for the roaring table of Valhalla."

"No! no!" she cried, half-tearing herself away. "You do not understand. All of greatness, all of goodness, all of God are in this man who is more than man; and it is a shameful death to die. Only slaves and thieves so die. He is neither slave nor thief. He is an immortal. He is God. Truly I tell you He is God."

"He is immortal you say," I contended. "Then to die to-day on Golgotha will not shorten his immortality by a hair's breadth in the span of time. He is a god you say. Gods cannot die. From all I have been told of them, it is certain that gods cannot die."

"Oh!" she cried. "You will not understand. You are only a great giant thing of flesh."

"Is it not said that this event was prophesied of old time?" I queried, for I had been learning from the Jews what I deemed their subtleties of thinking.

"Yes, yes," she agreed, "the Messianic prophecies. This is the Messiah."

"Then who am I," I asked, "to make liars of the prophets? to make of the Messiah a false Messiah? Is the prophecy of your people so feeble a thing that I, a stupid stranger, a yellow northling in the Roman harness, can give the lie to prophecy and compel to be unfulfilled — the very thing willed by the gods and foretold by the wise men?"

"You do not understand," she repeated.

"I understand too well," I replied. "Am I greater than the gods that I may thwart the will of the gods? Then are gods vain things and the playthings of men. I am a man. I, too, bow to the gods, to all gods, for I do believe in all gods, else how came all gods to be?"

She flung herself so that my hungry arms were empty of her, and we stood apart and listened to the uproar of the street as Jesus and the soldiers emerged and started on their way. And my heart was sore in that so great a woman could be so foolish. She would save God. She would make herself greater than God.

"You do not love me," she said slowly, and slowly grew in her eyes a promise of herself too deep and wide for any words.

"I love you beyond your understanding, it seems," was my reply. "I am proud to love you, for I know I am worthy to love you and am worth all love you may give me. But Rome is my foster-mother, and were I untrue to her, of little pride, of little worth would be my love for you."

The uproar that followed about Jesus and the soldiers died away along the street. And when there was no further sound of it Miriam turned to go, with neither word nor look for me.

I knew one last rush of mad hunger for her. I sprang and seized her. I would horse her and ride away with her and my men into Syria away from this cursed city of folly. She struggled. I crushed her. She struck me on the face, and I continued to hold and crush her, for the blows were sweet. And there she ceased to struggle. She became cold and motionless, so that I knew there was no woman's love that my arms girdled. For me she was dead. Slowly I let go of her. Slowly she stepped back. As if she did not see me she turned and went away across the quiet room, and without looking back passed through the hangings and was gone.

* * * * *

I, Ragnar Lodbrog, never came to read nor write. But in my days I have listened to great talk. As I see it now, I never learned great talk, such as that of the Jews, learned in their law, nor such as that of the Romans, learned in their philosophy and in the philosophy of the Greeks. Yet have I talked in simplicity and straightness, as a man may well talk who has lived life from the ships of Tostig Lodbrog and the roof of Brunanbuhr across the world to Jerusalem and back again. And straight talk and simple I gave Sulpicius Quirinius, when I went away into Syria to report to him of the various matters that had been at issue in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XVIII

Suspended animation is nothing new, not alone in the vegetable world and in the lower forms of animal life, but in the highly evolved, complex organism of man himself. A cataleptic trance is a cataleptic trance, no matter how induced. From time immemorial the fakir of India has been able voluntarily to induce such states in himself. It is an old trick of the fakirs to have themselves buried alive. Other men, in similar trances, have misled the physicians, who pronounced them dead and gave the orders that put them alive under the ground.

As my jacket experiences in San Quentin continued I dwelt not a little on this problem of suspended animation. I remembered having read that the far northern Siberian peasants made a practice of hibernating through the long winters just as bears and other wild animals do. Some scientist studied these peasants and found that during these periods of the "long sleep" respiration and digestion practically ceased, and that the heart was at so low tension as to defy detection by ordinary layman's examination.

In such a trance the bodily processes are so near to absolute suspension that the air and food consumed are practically negligible. On this reasoning, partly, was based my defiance of Warden Atherton and Doctor Jackson. It was thus that I dared challenge them to give me a hundred days in the jacket. And they did not dare accept my challenge.

Nevertheless I did manage to do without water, as well as food, during my ten-days' bouts. I found it an intolerable nuisance, in the deeps of dream across space and time, to be haled back to the sordid present by a despicable prison doctor pressing water to my lips. So I warned Doctor Jackson, first, that I intended doing without water while in the jacket; and next, that I would resist any efforts to compel me to drink.

Of course we had our little struggle; but after several attempts Doctor Jackson gave it up. Thereafter the space occupied in Darrell Standing's life by a jacket-bout was scarcely more than a few ticks of the clock. Immediately I was laced I devoted myself to inducing the little death. From practice it became simple and easy. I suspended animation and consciousness so quickly that I escaped the really terrible suffering consequent upon suspending circulation. Most quickly came the dark. And the next I, Darrell Standing, knew was the light again, the faces bending over me as I was unlaced, and the knowledge that ten days had passed in the twinkling of an eye.

But oh, the wonder and the glory of those ten days spent by me elsewhere! The journeys through the long chain of existences! The long darks, the growings of nebulous lights, and the fluttering apparitional selves that dawned through the growing light!

Much have I pondered upon the relation of these other selves to me, and of the relation of the total experience to the modern doctrine of evolution. I can truly say that my experience is in complete accord with our conclusions of evolution.

I, like any man, am a growth. I did not begin when I was born nor when I was conceived. I have been growing, developing, through incalculable myriads of millenniums. All these experiences of all these lives, and of countless other lives, have gone to the making of the soul-stuff or the spirit-stuff that is I. Don't you see? They are the stuff of me. Matter does not remember, for spirit is memory. I am this spirit compounded of the memories of my endless incarnations.

Whence came in me, Darrell Standing, the red pulse of wrath that has wrecked my life and put me in the condemned cells? Surely it did not come into being, was not created, when the babe that was to be Darrell Standing was conceived. That old red wrath is far older than my mother, far older than the oldest and first mother of men. My mother, at my inception, did not create that passionate lack of fear that is mine. Not all the mothers of the whole evolution of men manufactured fear or fearlessness in men. Far back beyond the first men were fear and fearlessness, love, hatred, anger, all the emotions, growing, developing, becoming the stuff that was to become men.

I am all of my past, as every protagonist of the Mendelian law must agree. All my previous selves have their voices, echoes, promptings in me. My every mode of action, heat of passion, flicker of thought is shaded, toned, infinitesimally shaded and toned, by that vast array of other selves that preceded me and went into the making of me.

The stuff of life is plastic. At the same time this stuff never forgets. Mould it as you will, the old memories persist. All manner of horses, from ton Shires to dwarf Shetlands, have been bred up and down from those first wild ponies domesticated by primitive man. Yet to this day man has not bred out the kick of the horse. And I, who am composed of those first horse-tamers, have not had their red anger bred out of me.

I am man born of woman. My days are few, but the stuff of me is indestructible. I have been woman born of woman. I have been a woman and borne my children. And I shall be born again. Oh, incalculable times again shall I be born; and yet the stupid dolts about me think that by stretching my neck with a rope they will make me cease.

Yes, I shall be hanged . . . soon. This is the end of June. In a little while they will try to befool me. They will take me from this cell to the bath, according to the prison custom of the weekly bath. But I shall not be brought back to this cell. I shall be dressed outright in fresh clothes and be taken to the death-cell. There they will place the death-watch on me. Night or day, waking or sleeping, I shall be watched. I shall not be permitted to put my head under the blankets for fear I may anticipate the State by choking myself.

Always bright light will blaze upon me. And then, when they have well wearied me, they will lead me out one morning in a shirt without a collar and drop me through the trap. Oh, I know. The rope they will do it with is well-stretched. For many a month now the hangman of Folsom has been stretching it with heavy weights so as to take the spring out of it.

Yes, I shall drop far. They have cunning tables of calculations, like interest tables, that show the distance of the drop in relation to the victim's weight. I am so emaciated that they will have to drop me far in order to break my neck. And then the onlookers will take their hats off, and as I swing the doctors will press their ears to my chest to count my fading heart-beats, and at last they will say that I am dead.

It is grotesque. It is the ridiculous effrontery of men-maggots who think they can kill me. I cannot die. I am immortal, as they are immortal; the difference is that I know it and they do not know it.

Pah! I was once a hangman, or an executioner, rather. Well I remember it! I used the sword, not the rope. The sword is the braver way, although all ways are equally inefficacious. Forsooth, as if spirit could be thrust through with steel or throttled by a rope!

CHAPTER XIX

Next to Oppenheimer and Morrell, who rotted with me through the years of darkness, I was considered the most dangerous prisoner in San Quentin. On the other hand I was considered the toughest — tougher even than Oppenheimer and Morrell. Of course by toughness I mean enduringness. Terrible as were the attempts to break them in body and in spirit, more terrible were the attempts to break me. And I endured. Dynamite or curtains had been Warden Atherton's ultimatum. And in the end it was neither. I could not produce the dynamite, and Warden Atherton could not induce the curtains.

It was not because my body was enduring, but because my spirit was enduring. And it was because, in earlier existences, my spirit had been wrought to steel-hardness by steel-hard experiences. There was one experience that for long was a sort of nightmare to me. It had neither beginning nor end. Always I found myself on a rocky, surge-battered islet so low that in storms the salt spray swept over its highest point. It rained much. I lived in a lair and suffered greatly, for I was without fire and lived on uncooked meat.

Always I suffered. It was the middle of some experience to which I could get no clue. And since, when I went into the little death I had no power of directing my journeys, I often found myself reliving this particularly detestable experience. My only happy moments were when the sun shone, at which times I basked on the rocks and thawed out the almost perpetual chill I suffered.

My one diversion was an oar and a jackknife. Upon this oar I spent much time, carving minute letters and cutting a notch for each week that passed. There were many notches. I sharpened the knife on a flat piece of rock, and no barber was ever more careful of his favourite razor than was I of that knife. Nor did ever a miser prize his treasure as did I prize the knife. It was as precious as my life. In truth, it was my life.

By many repetitions, I managed to bring back out of the jacket the legend that was carved on the oar. At first I could bring but little. Later, it grew easier, a matter of piecing portions together. And at last I had the thing complete. Here it is:

This is to acquaint the person into whose hands this Oar may fall, that Daniel Foss, a native of Elkton, in Maryland, one of the United States of America, and who sailed from the port of Philadelphia, in 1809, on board the brig Negociator, bound to the Friendly Islands, was cast upon this desolate island the February following, where he erected a hut and lived a number of years, subsisting on seals — he being the last who survived of the crew of said brig, which ran foul of an island of ice, and foundered on the 25th Nov. 1809.

There it was, quite clear. By this means I learned a lot about myself. One vexed point, however, I never did succeed in clearing up. Was this island situated in the far South Pacific or the far South Atlantic? I do not know enough of sailing-ship tracks to be certain whether the brig *Negociator* would sail for the Friendly Islands via Cape Horn or via the Cape of Good Hope. To confess my own ignorance, not until after I was transferred to Folsom did I learn in which ocean were the Friendly Islands. The Japanese murderer, whom I have mentioned before, had been a sailmaker on board the Arthur Sewall ships, and he told me that the probable sailing course would be by way of the Cape of Good Hope. If this were so, then the dates of sailing from Philadelphia and of being wrecked would easily determine which ocean. Unfortunately, the sailing date is merely 1809. The wreck might as likely have occurred in one ocean as the other.

Only once did I, in my trances, get a hint of the period preceding the time spent on the island. This begins at the moment of the brig's collision with the iceberg, and I shall narrate it, if for no other reason, at least to give an account of my curiously cool and deliberate conduct. This conduct at this time, as you shall see, was what enabled me in the end to survive alone of all the ship's company.

I was awakened, in my bunk in the forecastle, by a terrific crash. In fact, as was true of the other six sleeping men of the watch below, awaking and leaping from bunk to floor were simultaneous. We knew what had happened. The others waited for nothing, rushing only partly clad upon deck. But I knew what to expect, and I did wait. I knew that if we escaped at all, it would be by the longboat. No man could swim in so freezing a sea. And no man, thinly clad, could live long in the open boat. Also, I knew just about how long it would take to launch the boat.

So, by the light of the wildly swinging slush-lamp, to the tumult on deck and to cries of “She’s sinking!” I proceeded to ransack my sea-chest for suitable garments. Also, since they would never use them again, I ransacked the sea chests of my shipmates. Working quickly but collectedly, I took nothing but the warmest and stoutest of clothes. I put on the four best woollen shirts the forecastle boasted, three pairs of pants, and three pairs of thick woollen socks. So large were my feet thus incased that I could not put on my own good boots. Instead, I thrust on Nicholas Wilton’s new boots, which were larger and even stouter than mine. Also, I put on Jeremy Nalor’s pea jacket over my own, and, outside of both, put on Seth Richard’s thick canvas coat which I remembered he had fresh-oiled only a short while previous.

Two pairs of heavy mittens, John Robert’s muffler which his mother had knitted for him, and Joseph Dawes’ beaver cap atop my own, both bearing ear-and neck-flaps, completed my outfitting. The shouts that the brig was sinking redoubled, but I took a minute longer to fill my pockets with all the plug tobacco I could lay hands on. Then I climbed out on deck, and not a moment too soon.

The moon, bursting through a crack of cloud, showed a bleak and savage picture. Everywhere was wrecked gear, and everywhere was ice. The sails, ropes, and spars of the mainmast, which was still standing, were fringed with icicles; and there came over me a feeling almost of relief in that never again should I have to pull and haul on the stiff tackles and hammer ice so that the frozen ropes could run through the frozen shivs. The wind, blowing half a gale, cut with the sharpness that is a sign of the proximity of icebergs; and the big seas were bitter cold to look upon in the moonlight.

The longboat was lowering away to larboard, and I saw men, struggling on the ice-sheeted deck with barrels of provisions, abandon the food in their haste to get away. In vain Captain Nicholl strove with them. A sea, breaching across from windward, settled the matter and sent them leaping over the rail in heaps. I gained the captain’s shoulder, and, holding on to him, I shouted in his ear that if he would board the boat and prevent the men from casting off, I would attend to the provisioning.

Little time was given me, however. Scarcely had I managed, helped by the second mate, Aaron Northrup, to lower away half-a-dozen barrels and kegs, when all cried from the boat that they were casting off. Good reason they had. Down upon us from windward was drifting a towering ice-mountain, while to leeward, close aboard, was another ice-mountain upon which we were driving.

Quicker in his leap was Aaron Northrup. I delayed a moment, even as the boat was shoving away, in order to select a spot amidships where the men were thickest, so that their bodies might break my fall. I was not minded to embark with a broken member on so hazardous a voyage in the longboat. That the men might have room at the oars, I worked my way quickly aft into the sternsheets. Certainly, I had other and sufficient reasons. It would be more comfortable in the sternsheets than in the narrow bow. And further, it would be well to be near the afterguard in whatever troubles that were sure to arise under such circumstances in the days to come.

In the sternsheets were the mate, Walter Drake, the surgeon, Arnold Bentham, Aaron Northrup, and Captain Nicholl, who was steering. The surgeon was bending over Northrup, who lay in the bottom groaning. Not so fortunate had he been in his ill-considered leap, for he had broken his right leg at the hip joint.

There was little time for him then, however, for we were labouring in a heavy sea directly between the two ice islands that were rushing together. Nicholas Wilton, at the stroke oar, was cramped for room; so I better stowed the barrels, and, kneeling and facing him, was able to add my weight to the oar. For'ard, I could see John Roberts straining at the bow oar. Pulling on his shoulders from behind, Arthur Haskins and the boy, Benny Hardwater, added their weight to his. In fact, so eager were all hands to help that more than one was thus in the way and cluttered the movements of the rowers.

It was close work, but we went clear by a matter of a hundred yards, so that I was able to turn my head and see the untimely end of the *Negociator*. She was caught squarely in the pinch and she was squeezed between the ice as a sugar plum might be squeezed between thumb and forefinger of a boy. In the shouting of the wind and the roar of water we heard nothing, although the crack of the brig's stout ribs and deckbeams must have been enough to waken a hamlet on a peaceful night.

Silently, easily, the brig's sides squeezed together, the deck bulged up, and the crushed remnant dropped down and was gone, while where she had been was occupied by the grinding conflict of the ice-islands. I felt regret at the destruction of this haven against the elements, but at the same time was well pleased at thought of my snugness inside my four shirts and three coats.

Yet it proved a bitter night, even for me. I was the warmest clad in the boat. What the others must have suffered I did not care to dwell upon over much. For fear that we might meet up with more ice in the darkness, we bailed and held the boat bow-on to the seas. And continually, now with one mitten, now with the other, I rubbed my nose that it might not freeze. Also, with memories lively in me of the home circle in Elkton, I prayed to God.

In the morning we took stock. To commence with, all but two or three had suffered frost-bite. Aaron Northrup, unable to move because of his broken hip, was very bad. It was the surgeon's opinion that both of Northrup's feet were hopelessly frozen.

The longboat was deep and heavy in the water, for it was burdened by the entire ship's company of twenty-one. Two of these were boys. Benny Hardwater was a bare thirteen, and Lish Dickery, whose family was near neighbour to mine in Elkton, was just turned sixteen. Our provisions consisted of three hundred-weight of beef and two hundred-weight of pork. The half-dozen loaves of brine-pulped bread, which the cook had brought, did not count. Then there were three small barrels of water and one small keg of beer.

Captain Nicholl frankly admitted that in this uncharted ocean he had no knowledge of any near land. The one thing to do was to run for more clement climate, which we accordingly did, setting our small sail and steering quartering before the fresh wind to the north-east.

The food problem was simple arithmetic. We did not count Aaron Northrup, for we knew he would soon be gone. At a pound per day, our five hundred pounds would last us twenty-five days; at half a pound, it would last fifty. So half a pound had it. I divided and issued the meat under the captain's eyes, and managed it fairly enough, God knows, although some of the men grumbled from the first. Also, from time to time I made fair division among the men of the plug tobacco I had stowed in my many pockets — a thing which I could not but regret, especially when I knew it was being wasted on this man and that who I was certain could not live a day more, or, at best, two days or three.

For we began to die soon in the open boat. Not to starvation but to the killing cold and exposure were those earlier deaths due. It was a matter of the survival of the toughest and the luckiest. I was tough by constitution, and lucky inasmuch as I was warmly clad and had not broken my leg like Aaron Northrup. Even so, so strong was he that, despite being the first to be severely frozen, he was days in passing. Vance Hathaway was the first. We found him in the gray of dawn crouched doubled in the bow and frozen stiff. The boy, Lish Dickery, was the second to go. The other boy, Benny Hardwater, lasted ten or a dozen days.

So bitter was it in the boat that our water and beer froze solid, and it was a difficult task justly to apportion the pieces I broke off with Northrup's claspknife. These pieces we put in our mouths and sucked till they melted. Also, on occasion of snow-squalls, we had all the snow we desired. All of which was not good for us, causing a fever of inflammation to attack our mouths so that the membranes were continually dry and burning. And there was no allaying a thirst so generated. To suck more ice or snow was merely to aggravate the inflammation. More than anything else, I think it was this that caused the death of Lish Dickery. He was out of his head and raving for twenty-four hours before he died. He died babbling for water, and yet he did not die for need of water. I resisted as much as possible the temptation to suck ice, contenting myself with a shred of tobacco in my cheek, and made out with fair comfort.

We stripped all clothing from our dead. Stark they came into the world, and stark they passed out over the side of the longboat and down into the dark freezing ocean. Lots were cast for the clothes. This was by Captain Nicholl's command, in order to prevent quarrelling.

It was no time for the follies of sentiment. There was not one of us who did not know secret satisfaction at the occurrence of each death. Luckiest of all was Israel Stickney in casting lots, so that in the end, when he passed, he was a veritable treasure trove of clothing. It gave a new lease of life to the survivors.

We continued to run to the north-east before the fresh westerlies, but our quest for warmer weather seemed vain. Ever the spray froze in the bottom of the boat, and I still chipped beer and drinking water with Northrup's knife. My own knife I reserved. It was of good steel, with a keen edge and stoutly fashioned, and I did not care to peril it in such manner.

By the time half our company was overboard, the boat had a reasonably high freeboard and was less ticklish to handle in the gusts. Likewise there was more room for a man to stretch out comfortably.

A source of continual grumbling was the food. The captain, the mate, the surgeon, and myself, talking it over, resolved not to increase the daily whack of half a pound of meat. The six sailors, for whom Tobias Snow made himself spokesman, contended that the death of half of us was equivalent to a doubling of our provisioning, and that therefore the ration should be increased to a pound. In reply, we of the afterguard pointed out that it was our chance for life that was doubled did we but bear with the half-pound ration.

It is true that eight ounces of salt meat did not go far in enabling us to live and to resist the severe cold. We were quite weak, and, because of our weakness, we frosted easily. Noses and cheeks were all black with frost-bite. It was impossible to be warm, although we now had double the garments we had started with.

Five weeks after the loss of the *Negociator* the trouble over the food came to a head. I was asleep at the time — it was night — when Captain Nicholl caught Jud Hetchkins stealing from the pork barrel. That he was abetted by the other five men was proved by their actions. Immediately Jud Hetchkins was discovered, the whole six threw themselves upon us with their knives. It was close, sharp work in the dim light of the stars, and it was a mercy the boat was not overturned. I had reason to be thankful for my many shirts and coats which served me as an armour. The knife-thrusts scarcely more than drew blood through the so great thickness of cloth, although I was scratched to bleeding in a round dozen of places.

The others were similarly protected, and the fight would have ended in no more than a mauling all around, had not the mate, Walter Dakon, a very powerful man, hit upon the idea of ending the matter by tossing the mutineers overboard. This was joined in by Captain Nicholl, the surgeon, and myself, and in a trice five of the six were in the water and clinging to the gunwale. Captain Nicholl and the surgeon were busy amidships with the sixth, Jeremy Nalor, and were in the act of throwing him overboard, while the mate was occupied with rapping the fingers along the gunwale with a boat-stretcher. For the moment I had nothing to do, and so was able to observe the tragic end of the mate. As he lifted the stretcher to rap Seth Richards' fingers, the latter, sinking down low in the water and then jerking himself up by both hands, sprang half into the boat, locked his arms about the mate and, falling backward and outboard, dragged the mate with him. Doubtlessly he never relaxed his grip, and both drowned together.

Thus left alive of the entire ship’s company were three of us: Captain Nicholl, Arnold Bentham (the surgeon), and myself. Seven had gone in the twinkling of an eye, consequent on Jud Hetchkins’ attempt to steal provisions. And to me it seemed a pity that so much good warm clothing had been wasted there in the sea. There was not one of us who could not have managed gratefully with more.

Captain Nicholl and the surgeon were good men and honest. Often enough, when two of us slept, the one awake and steering could have stolen from the meat. But this never happened. We trusted one another fully, and we would have died rather than betray that trust.

We continued to content ourselves with half a pound of meat each per day, and we took advantage of every favouring breeze to work to the north’ard. Not until January fourteenth, seven weeks since the wreck, did we come up with a warmer latitude. Even then it was not really warm. It was merely not so bitterly cold.

Here the fresh westerlies forsook us and we bobbed and blobbed about in doldrummy weather for many days. Mostly it was calm, or light contrary winds, though sometimes a burst of breeze, as like as not from dead ahead, would last for a few hours. In our weakened condition, with so large a boat, it was out of the question to row. We could merely hoard our food and wait for God to show a more kindly face. The three of us were faithful Christians, and we made a practice of prayer each day before the apportionment of food. Yes, and each of us prayed privately, often and long.

By the end of January our food was near its end. The pork was entirely gone, and we used the barrel for catching and storing rainwater. Not many pounds of beef remained. And in all the nine weeks in the open boat we had raised no sail and glimpsed no land. Captain Nicholl frankly admitted that after sixty-three days of dead reckoning he did not know where we were.

The twentieth of February saw the last morsel of food eaten. I prefer to skip the details of much that happened in the next eight days. I shall touch only on the incidents that serve to show what manner of men were my companions. We had starved so long, that we had no reserves of strength on which to draw when the food utterly ceased, and we grew weaker with great rapidity.

On February twenty-fourth we calmly talked the situation over. We were three stout-spirited men, full of life and toughness, and we did not want to die. No one of us would volunteer to sacrifice himself for the other two. But we agreed on three things: we must have food; we must decide the matter by casting lots; and we would cast the lots next morning if there were no wind.

Next morning there was wind, not much of it, but fair, so that we were able to log a sluggish two knots on our northerly course. The mornings of the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh found us with a similar breeze. We were fearfully weak, but we abided by our decision and continued to sail.

But with the morning of the twenty-eighth we knew the time was come. The longboat rolled drearily on an empty, windless sea, and the stagnant, overcast sky gave no promise of any breeze. I cut three pieces of cloth, all of a size, from my jacket. In the ravel of one of these pieces was a bit of brown thread. Whoever drew this lost. I then put the three lots into my hat, covering it with Captain Nicholl's hat.

All was ready, but we delayed for a time while each prayed silently and long, for we knew that we were leaving the decision to God. I was not unaware of my own honesty and worth; but I was equally aware of the honesty and worth of my companions, so that it perplexed me how God could decide so fine-balanced and delicate a matter.

The captain, as was his right and due, drew first. After his hand was in the hat he delayed for sometime with closed eyes, his lips moving a last prayer. And he drew a blank. This was right — a true decision I could not but admit to myself; for Captain Nicholl's life was largely known to me and I knew him to be honest, upright, and God-fearing.

Remained the surgeon and me. It was one or the other, and, according to ship's rating, it was his due to draw next. Again we prayed. As I prayed I strove to quest back in my life and cast a hurried tally-sheet of my own worth and unworth.

I held the hat on my knees with Captain Nicholl's hat over it. The surgeon thrust in his hand and fumbled about for some time, while I wondered whether the feel of that one brown thread could be detected from the rest of the ravel.

At last he withdrew his hand. The brown thread was in his piece of cloth. I was instantly very humble and very grateful for God's blessing thus extended to me; and I resolved to keep more faithfully than ever all of His commandments. The next moment I could not help but feel that the surgeon and the captain were pledged to each other by closer ties of position and intercourse than with me, and that they were in a measure disappointed with the outcome. And close with that thought ran the conviction that they were such true men that the outcome would not interfere with the plan arranged.

I was right. The surgeon bared arm and knife and prepared to open a great vein. First, however, he spoke a few words.

“I am a native of Norfolk in the Virginias,” he said, “where I expect I have now a wife and three children living. The only favour that I have to request of you is, that should it please God to deliver either of you from your perilous situation, and should you be so fortunate as to reach once more your native country, that you would acquaint my unfortunate family with my wretched fate.”

Next he requested courteously of us a few minutes in which to arrange his affairs with God. Neither Captain Nicholl nor I could utter a word, but with streaming eyes we nodded our consent.

Without doubt Arnold Bentham was the best collected of the three of us. My own anguish was prodigious, and I am confident that Captain Nicholl suffered equally. But what was one to do? The thing was fair and proper and had been decided by God.

But when Arnold Bentham had completed his last arrangements and made ready to do the act, I could contain myself no longer, and cried out:

“Wait! We who have endured so much surely can endure a little more. It is now mid-morning. Let us wait until twilight. Then, if no event has appeared to change our dreadful destiny, do you Arnold Bentham, do as we have agreed.”

He looked to Captain Nicholl for confirmation of my suggestion, and Captain Nicholl could only nod. He could utter no word, but in his moist and frosty blue eyes was a wealth of acknowledgment I could not misread.

I did not, I could not, deem it a crime, having so determined by fair drawing of lots, that Captain Nicholl and myself should profit by the death of Arnold Bentham. I could not believe that the love of life that actuated us had been implanted in our breasts by aught other than God. It was God’s will, and we His poor creatures could only obey and fulfil His will. And yet, God was kind. In His all-kindness He saved us from so terrible, though so righteous, an act.

Scarce had a quarter of an hour passed, when a fan of air from the west, with a hint of frost and damp in it, crisped on our cheeks. In another five minutes we had steerage from the filled sail, and Arnold Bentham was at the steering sweep.

"Save what little strength you have," he had said. "Let me consume the little strength left in me in order that it may increase your chance to survive."

And so he steered to a freshening breeze, while Captain Nicholl and I lay sprawled in the boat's bottom and in our weakness dreamed dreams and glimpsed visions of the dear things of life far across the world from us.

It was an ever-freshening breeze of wind that soon began to puff and gust. The cloud stuff flying across the sky foretold us of a gale. By midday Arnold Bentham fainted at the steering, and, ere the boat could broach in the tidy sea already running, Captain Nicholl and I were at the steering sweep with all the four of our weak hands upon it. We came to an agreement, and, just as Captain Nicholl had drawn the first lot by virtue of his office, so now he took the first spell at steering. Thereafter the three of us spelled one another every fifteen minutes. We were very weak and we could not spell longer at a time.

By mid-afternoon a dangerous sea was running. We should have rounded the boat to, had our situation not been so desperate, and let her drift bow-on to a sea-anchor extemporized of our mast and sail. Had we broached in those great, over-topping seas, the boat would have been rolled over and over.

Time and again, that afternoon, Arnold Bentham, for our sakes, begged that we come to a sea-anchor. He knew that we continued to run only in the hope that the decree of the lots might not have to be carried out. He was a noble man. So was Captain Nicholl noble, whose frosty eyes had wizened to points of steel. And in such noble company how could I be less noble? I thanked God repeatedly, through that long afternoon of peril, for the privilege of having known two such men. God and the right dwelt in them and no matter what my poor fate might be, I could but feel well recompensed by such companionship. Like them I did not want to die, yet was unafraid to die. The quick, early doubt I had had of these two men was long since dissipated. Hard the school, and hard the men, but they were noble men, God's own men.

I saw it first. Arnold Bentham, his own death accepted, and Captain Nicholl, well nigh accepting death, lay rolling like loose-bodied dead men in the boat's bottom, and I was steering when I saw it. The boat, foaming and surging with the swiftness of wind in its sail, was uplifted on a crest, when, close before me, I saw the sea-battered islet of rock. It was not half a mile off. I cried out, so that the other two, kneeling and reeling and clutching for support, were peering and staring at what I saw.

"Straight for it, Daniel," Captain Nicholl mumbled command. "There may be a cove. There may be a cove. It is our only chance."

Once again he spoke, when we were atop that dreadful lee shore with no cove existent.

"Straight for it, Daniel. If we go clear we are too weak ever to win back against sea and wind."

He was right. I obeyed. He drew his watch and looked, and I asked the time. It was five o'clock. He stretched out his hand to Arnold Bentham, who met and shook it weakly; and both gazed at me, in their eyes extending that same hand-clasp. It was farewell, I knew; for what chance had creatures so feeble as we to win alive over those surf-battered rocks to the higher rocks beyond?

Twenty feet from shore the boat was snatched out of my control. In a trice it was overturned and I was strangling in the salt. I never saw my companions again. By good fortune I was buoyed by the steering-oar I still grasped, and by great good fortune a fling of sea, at the right instant, at the right spot, threw me far up the gentle slope of the one shelving rock on all that terrible shore. I was not hurt. I was not bruised. And with brain reeling from weakness I was able to crawl and scramble farther up beyond the clutching backwash of the sea.

I stood upright, knowing myself saved, and thanking God, and staggering as I stood. Already the boat was pounded to a thousand fragments. And though I saw them not, I could guess how grievously had been pounded the bodies of Captain Nicholl and Arnold Bentham. I saw an oar on the edge of the foam, and at certain risk I drew it clear. Then I fell to my knees, knowing myself fainting. And yet, ere I fainted, with a sailor's instinct I dragged my body on and up among the cruel hurting rocks to faint finally beyond the reach of the sea.

I was near a dead man myself, that night, mostly in stupor, only dimly aware at times of the extremity of cold and wet that I endured. Morning brought me astonishment and terror. No plant, not a blade of grass, grew on that wretched projection of rock from the ocean's bottom. A quarter of a mile in width and a half mile in length, it was no more than a heap of rocks. Naught could I discover to gratify the cravings of exhausted nature. I was consumed with thirst, yet was there no fresh water. In vain I tasted to my mouth's undoing every cavity and depression in the rocks. The spray of the gale so completely had enveloped every portion of the island that every depression was filled with water salt as the sea.

Of the boat remained nothing — not even a splinter to show that a boat had been. I stood possessed of my garments, a stout knife, and the one oar I had saved. The gale had abated, and all that day, staggering and falling, crawling till hands and knees bled, I vainly sought water.

That night, nearer death than ever, I sheltered behind a rock from the wind. A heavy shower of rain made me miserable. I removed my various coats and spread them to soak up the rain; but, when I came to wring the moisture from them into my mouth, I was disappointed, because the cloth had been thoroughly impregnated with the salt of the ocean in which I had been immersed. I lay on my back, my mouth open to catch the few raindrops that fell directly into it. It was tantalizing, but it kept my membranes moist and me from madness.

The second day I was a very sick man. I, who had not eaten for so long, began to swell to a monstrous fatness — my legs, my arms, my whole body. With the slightest of pressures my fingers would sink in a full inch into my skin, and the depressions so made were long in going away. Yet did I labour sore in order to fulfil God's will that I should live. Carefully, with my hands, I cleaned out the salt water from every slight hole, in the hope that succeeding showers of rain might fill them with water that I could drink.

My sad lot and the memories of the loved ones at Elkton threw me into a melancholy, so that I often lost my recollection for hours at a time. This was a mercy, for it veiled me from my sufferings that else would have killed me.

In the night I was roused by the beat of rain, and I crawled from hole to hole, lapping up the rain or licking it from the rocks. Brackish it was, but drinkable. It was what saved me, for, toward morning, I awoke to find myself in a profuse perspiration and quite free of all delirium.

Then came the sun, the first time since my stay on the island, and I spread most of my garments to dry. Of water I drank my careful fill, and I calculated there was ten days' supply if carefully husbanded. It was amazing how rich I felt with this vast wealth of brackish water. And no great merchant, with all his ships returned from prosperous voyages, his warehouses filled to the rafters, his strong-boxes overflowing, could have felt as wealthy as did I when I discovered, cast up on the rocks, the body of a seal that had been dead for many days. Nor did I fail, first, to thank God on my knees for this manifestation of His ever-unfailing kindness. The thing was clear to me: God had not intended I should die. From the very first He had not so intended.

I knew the debilitated state of my stomach, and I ate sparingly in the knowledge that my natural voracity would surely kill me did I yield myself to it. Never had sweeter morsels passed my lips, and I make free to confess that I shed tears of joy, again and again, at contemplation of that putrefied carcass.

My heart of hope beat strong in me once more. Carefully I preserved the portions of the carcass remaining. Carefully I covered my rock cisterns with flat stones so that the sun's rays might not evaporate the precious fluid and in precaution against some upspringing of wind in the night and the sudden flying of spray. Also I gathered me tiny fragments of seaweed and dried them in the sun for an easement between my poor body and the rough rocks whereon I made my lodging. And my garments were dry — the first time in days; so that I slept the heavy sleep of exhaustion and of returning health.

When I awoke to a new day I was another man. The absence of the sun did not depress me, and I was swiftly to learn that God, not forgetting me while I slumbered, had prepared other and wonderful blessings for me. I would have fain rubbed my eyes and looked again, for, as far as I could see, the rocks bordering upon the ocean were covered with seals. There were thousands of them, and in the water other thousands disported themselves, while the sound that went up from all their throats was prodigious and deafening. I knew it when: I saw it — meat lay there for the taking, meat sufficient for a score of ships' companies.

I directly seized my oar — than which there was no other stick of wood on the island — and cautiously advanced upon all that immensity of provender. It was quickly guessed by me that these creatures of the sea were unacquainted with man. They betrayed no signals of timidity at my approach, and I found it a boy's task to rap them on the head with the oar.

And when I had so killed my third and my fourth, I went immediately and strangely mad. Indeed quite bereft was I of all judgment as I slew and slew and continued to slay. For the space of two hours I toiled unceasingly with the oar till I was ready to drop. What excess of slaughter I might have been guilty of I know not, for at the end of that time, as if by a signal, all the seals that still lived threw themselves into the water and swiftly disappeared.

I found the number of slain seals to exceed two hundred, and I was shocked and frightened because of the madness of slaughter that had possessed me. I had sinned by wanton wastefulness, and after I had duly refreshed myself with this good wholesome food, I set about as well as I could to make amends. But first, ere the great task began, I returned thanks to that Being through whose mercy I had been so miraculously preserved. Thereupon I laboured until dark, and after dark, skinning the seals, cutting the meat into strips, and placing it upon the tops of rocks to dry in the sun. Also, I found small deposits of salt in the nooks and crannies of the rocks on the weather side of the island. This I rubbed into the meat as a preservative.

Four days I so toiled, and in the end was foolishly proud before God in that no scrap of all that supply of meat had been wasted. The unremitting labour was good for my body, which built up rapidly by means of this wholesome diet in which I did not stint myself. Another evidence of God's mercy; never, in the eight years I spent on that barren islet, was there so long a spell of clear weather and steady sunshine as in the period immediately following the slaughter of the seals.

Months were to pass ore ever the seals revisited my island. But in the meantime I was anything but idle. I built me a hut of stone, and, adjoining it, a storehouse for my cured meat. The hut I roofed with many sealskins, so that it was fairly water-proof. But I could never cease to marvel, when the rain beat on that roof, that no less than a king's ransom in the London fur market protected a castaway sailor from the elements.

I was quickly aware of the importance of keeping some kind of reckoning of time, without which I was sensible that I should soon lose all knowledge of the day of the week, and be unable to distinguish one from the other, and not know which was the Lord's day.

I remembered back carefully to the reckoning of time kept in the longboat by Captain Nicholl; and carefully, again and again, to make sure beyond any shadow of uncertainty, I went over the tale of the days and nights I had spent on the island. Then, by seven stones outside my hut, I kept my weekly calendar. In one place on the oar I cut a small notch for each week, and in another place on the oar I notched the months, being duly careful indeed, to reckon in the additional days to each month over and beyond the four weeks.

Thus I was enabled to pay due regard to the Sabbath. As the only mode of worship I could adopt, I carved a short hymn, appropriate to my situation, on the oar, which I never failed to chant on the Sabbath. God, in His all-mercy, had not forgotten me; nor did I, in those eight years, fail at all proper times to remember God.

It was astonishing the work required, under such circumstances, to supply one's simple needs of food and shelter. Indeed, I was rarely idle, that first year. The hut, itself a mere lair of rocks, nevertheless took six weeks of my time. The tardy curing and the endless scraping of the sealskins, so as to make them soft and pliable for garments, occupied my spare moments for months and months.

Then there was the matter of my water supply. After any heavy gale, the flying spray salted my saved rainwater, so that at times I was grievously put to live through till fresh rains fell unaccompanied by high winds. Aware that a continual dropping will wear a stone, I selected a large stone, fine and tight of texture and, by means of smaller stones, I proceeded to pound it hollow. In five weeks of most arduous toil I managed thus to make a jar which I estimated to hold a gallon and a half. Later, I similarly made a four-gallon jar. It took me nine weeks. Other small ones I also made from time to time. One, that would have contained eight gallons, developed a flaw when I had worked seven weeks on it.

But it was not until my fourth year on the island, when I had become reconciled to the possibility that I might continue to live there for the term of my natural life, that I created my masterpiece. It took me eight months, but it was tight, and it held upwards of thirty gallons. These stone vessels were a great gratification to me — so much so, that at times I forgot my humility and was unduly vain of them. Truly, they were more elegant to me than was ever the costliest piece of furniture to any queen. Also, I made me a small rock vessel, containing no more than a quart, with which to convey water from the catching-places to my large receptacles. When I say that this one-quart vessel weighed all of two stone, the reader will realize that the mere gathering of the rainwater was no light task.

Thus, I rendered my lonely situation as comfortable as could be expected. I had completed me a snug and secure shelter; and, as to provision, I had always on hand a six months' supply, preserved by salting and drying. For these things, so essential to preserve life, and which one could scarcely have expected to obtain upon a desert island, I was sensible that I could not be too thankful.

Although denied the privilege of enjoying the society of any human creature, not even of a dog or a cat, I was far more reconciled to my lot than thousands probably would have been. Upon the desolate spot, where fate had placed me, I conceived myself far more happy than many, who, for ignominious crimes, were doomed to drag out their lives in solitary confinement with conscience ever biting as a corrosive canker.

However dreary my prospects, I was not without hope that that Providence, which, at the very moment when hunger threatened me with dissolution, and when I might easily have been engulfed in the maw of the sea, had cast me upon those barren rocks, would finally direct some one to my relief.

If deprived of the society of my fellow creatures, and of the conveniences of life, I could not but reflect that my forlorn situation was yet attended with some advantages. Of the whole island, though small, I had peaceable possession. No one, it was probable, would ever appear to dispute my claim, unless it were the amphibious animals of the ocean. Since the island was almost inaccessible, at night my repose was not disturbed by continual apprehension of the approach of cannibals or of beasts of prey. Again and again I thanked God on my knees for these various and many benefactions.

Yet is man ever a strange and unaccountable creature. I, who had asked of God's mercy no more than putrid meat to eat and a sufficiency of water not too brackish, was no sooner blessed with an abundance of cured meat and sweet water than I began to know discontent with my lot. I began to want fire, and the savour of cooked meat in my mouth. And continually I would discover myself longing for certain delicacies of the palate such as were part of the common daily fare on the home table at Elkton. Strive as I would, ever my fancy eluded my will and wantoned in day-dreaming of the good things I had eaten and of the good things I would eat if ever I were rescued from my lonely situation.

It was the old Adam in me, I suppose — the taint of that first father who was the first rebel against God's commandments. Most strange is man, ever insatiable, ever unsatisfied, never at peace with God or himself, his days filled with restlessness and useless endeavour, his nights a glut of vain dreams of desires wilful and wrong. Yes, and also I was much annoyed by my craving for tobacco. My sleep was often a torment to me, for it was then that my desires took licence to rove, so that a thousand times I dreamed myself possessed of hogsheads of tobacco — ay, and of warehouses of tobacco, and of shiploads and of entire plantations of tobacco.

But I revenged myself upon myself. I prayed God unceasingly for a humble heart, and chastised my flesh with unremitting toil. Unable to improve my mind, I determined to improve my barren island. I laboured four months at constructing a stone wall thirty feet long, including its wings, and a dozen feet high. This was as a protection to the hut in the periods of the great gales when all the island was as a tiny petrel in the maw of the hurricane. Nor did I conceive the time misspent. Thereafter I lay snug in the heart of calm while all the air for a hundred feet above my head was one stream of gust-driven water.

In the third year I began me a pillar of rock. Rather was it a pyramid, four-square, broad at the base, sloping upward not steeply to the apex. In this fashion I was compelled to build, for gear and timber there was none in all the island for the construction of scaffolding. Not until the close of the fifth year was my pyramid complete. It stood on the summit of the island. Now, when I state that the summit was but forty feet above the sea, and that the peak of my pyramid was forty feet above the summit, it will be conceived that I, without tools, had doubled the stature of the island. It might be urged by some unthinking ones that I interfered with God's plan in the creation of the world. Not so, I hold. For was not I equally a part of God's plan, along with this heap of rocks upjutting in the solitude of ocean? My arms with which to work, my back with which to bend and lift, my hands cunning to clutch and hold — were not these parts too in God's plan? Much I pondered the matter. I know that I was right.

In the sixth year I increased the base of my pyramid, so that in eighteen months thereafter the height of my monument was fifty feet above the height of the island. This was no tower of Babel. It served two right purposes. It gave me a lookout from which to scan the ocean for ships, and increased the likelihood of my island being sighted by the careless roving eye of any seaman. And it kept my body and mind in health. With hands never idle, there was small opportunity for Satan on that island. Only in my dreams did he torment me, principally with visions of varied foods and with imagined indulgence in the foul weed called tobacco.

On the eighteenth day of the month of June, in the sixth year of my sojourn on the island, I descried a sail. But it passed far to leeward at too great a distance to discover me. Rather than suffering disappointment, the very appearance of this sail afforded me the liveliest satisfaction. It convinced me of a fact that I had before in a degree doubted, to wit: that these seas were sometimes visited by navigators.

Among other things, where the seals hauled up out of the sea, I built wide-spreading wings of low rock walls that narrowed to a *cul de sac*, where I might conveniently kill such seals as entered without exciting their fellows outside and without permitting any wounded or frightening seal to escape and spread a contagion of alarm. Seven months to this structure alone were devoted.

As the time passed, I grew more contented with my lot, and the devil came less and less in my sleep to torment the old Adam in me with lawless visions of tobacco and savoury foods. And I continued to eat my seal meat and call it good, and to drink the sweet rainwater of which always I had plenty, and to be grateful to God. And God heard me, I know, for during all my term on that island I knew never a moment of sickness, save two, both of which were due to my gluttony, as I shall later relate.

In the fifth year, ere I had convinced myself that the keels of ships did on occasion plough these seas, I began carving on my oar minutes of the more remarkable incidents that had attended me since I quitted the peaceful shores of America. This I rendered as intelligible and permanent as possible, the letters being of the smallest size. Six, and even five, letters were often a day's work for me, so painstaking was I.

And, lest it should prove my hard fortune never to meet with the long-wished opportunity to return to my friends and to my family at Elkton, I engraved, or nitched, on the broad end of the oar, the legend of my ill fate which I have already quoted near the beginning of this narrative.

This oar, which had proved so serviceable to me in my destitute situation, and which now contained a record of my own fate and that of my shipmates, I spared no pains to preserve. No longer did I risk it in knocking seals on the head. Instead, I equipped myself with a stone club, some three feet in length and of suitable diameter, which occupied an even month in the fashioning. Also, to secure the oar from the weather (for I used it in mild breezes as a flagstaff on top of my pyramid from which to fly a flag I made me from one of my precious shirts) I contrived for it a covering of well-cured sealskins.

In the month of March of the sixth year of my confinement I experienced one of the most tremendous storms that was perhaps ever witnessed by man. It commenced at about nine in the evening, with the approach of black clouds and a freshening wind from the south-west, which, by eleven, had become a hurricane, attended with incessant peals of thunder and the sharpest lightning I had ever witnessed.

I was not without apprehension for the safety of the island. Over every part the seas made a clean breach, except of the summit of my pyramid. There the life was nigh beaten and suffocated out of my body by the drive of the wind and spray. I could not but be sensible that my existence was spared solely because of my diligence in erecting the pyramid and so doubling the stature of the island.

Yet, in the morning, I had great reason for thankfulness. All my saved rainwater was turned brackish, save that in my largest vessel which was sheltered in the lee of the pyramid. By careful economy I knew I had drink sufficient until the next rain, no matter how delayed, should fall. My hut was quite washed out by the seas, and of my great store of seal meat only a wretched, pulpy modicum remained. Nevertheless I was agreeably surprised to find the rocks plentifully distributed with a sort of fish more nearly like the mullet than any I had ever observed. Of these I picked up no less than twelve hundred and nineteen, which I split and cured in the sun after the manner of cod. This welcome change of diet was not without its consequence. I was guilty of gluttony, and for all of the succeeding night I was near to death’s door.

In the seventh year of my stay on the island, in the very same month of March, occurred a similar storm of great violence. Following upon it, to my astonishment, I found an enormous dead whale, quite fresh, which had been cast up high and dry by the waves. Conceive my gratification when in the bowels of the great fish I found deeply imbedded a harpoon of the common sort with a few fathoms of new line attached thereto.

Thus were my hopes again revived that I should finally meet with an opportunity to quit the desolate island. Beyond doubt these seas were frequented by whalemen, and, so long as I kept up a stout heart, sooner or later I should be saved. For seven years I had lived on seal meat, so that at sight of the enormous plentitude of different and succulent food I fell a victim to my weakness and ate of such quantities that once again I was well nigh to dying. And yet, after all, this, and the affair of the small fish, were mere indispositions due to the foreignness of the food to my stomach, which had learned to prosper on seal meat and on nothing but seal meat.

Of that one whale I preserved a full year's supply of provision. Also, under the sun's rays, in the rock hollows, I tried out much of the oil, which, with the addition of salt, was a welcome thing in which to dip my strips of seal-meat whilst dining. Out of my precious rags of shirts I could even have contrived a wick, so that, with the harpoon for steel and rock for flint, I might have had a light at night. But it was a vain thing, and I speedily forwent the thought of it. I had no need for light when God's darkness descended, for I had schooled myself to sleep from sundown to sunrise, winter and summer.

I, Darrell Standing, cannot refrain from breaking in on this recital of an earlier existence in order to note a conclusion of my own. Since human personality is a growth, a sum of all previous existences added together, what possibility was there for Warden Atherton to break down my spirit in the inquisition of solitary? I am life that survived, a structure builded up through the ages of the past — and such a past! What were ten days and nights in the jacket to me? — to me, who had once been Daniel Foss, and for eight years learned patience in that school of rocks in the far South Ocean?

* * * * *

At the end of my eighth year on the island in the month of September, when I had just sketched most ambitious plans to raise my pyramid to sixty feet above the summit of the island, I awoke one morning to stare out upon a ship with topsails aback and nearly within hail. That I might be discovered, I swung my oar in the air, jumped from rock to rock, and was guilty of all manner of livelinesses of action, until I could see the officers on the quarter-deck looking at me through their spyglasses. They answered by pointing to the extreme westerly end of the island, whither I hastened and discovered their boat manned by half a dozen men. It seems, as I was to learn afterward, the ship had been attracted by my pyramid and had altered its course to make closer examination of so strange a structure that was greater of height than the wild island on which it stood.

But the surf proved to be too great to permit the boat to land on my inhospitable shore. After divers unsuccessful attempts they signalled me that they must return to the ship. Conceive my despair at thus being unable to quit the desolate island. I seized my oar (which I had long since determined to present to the Philadelphia Museum if ever I were preserved) and with it plunged headlong into the foaming surf. Such was my good fortune, and my strength and agility, that I gained the boat.

I cannot refrain from telling here a curious incident. The ship had by this time drifted so far away, that we were all of an hour in getting aboard. During this time I yielded to my propensities that had been baffled for eight long years, and begged of the second mate, who steered, a piece of tobacco to chew. This granted, the second mate also proffered me his pipe, filled with prime Virginia leaf. Scarce had ten minutes passed when I was taken violently sick. The reason for this was clear. My system was entirely purged of tobacco, and what I now suffered was tobacco poisoning such as afflicts any boy at the time of his first smoke. Again I had reason to be grateful to God, and from that day to the day of my death, I neither used nor desired the foul weed.

* * * * *

I, Darrell Standing, must now complete the amazingness of the details of this existence which I relived while unconscious in the strait-jacket in San Quentin prison. I often wondered if Daniel Foss had been true in his resolve and deposited the carved oar in the Philadelphia Museum.

It is a difficult matter for a prisoner in solitary to communicate with the outside world. Once, with a guard, and once with a short-timer in solitary, I entrusted, by memorization, a letter of inquiry addressed to the curator of the Museum. Although under the most solemn pledges, both these men failed me. It was not until after Ed Morrell, by a strange whirl of fate, was released from solitary and appointed head trusty of the entire prison, that I was able to have the letter sent. I now give the reply, sent me by the curator of the Philadelphia Museum, and smuggled to me by Ed Morrell:

* * * * *

"It is true there is such an oar here as you have described. But few persons can know of it, for it is not on exhibition in the public rooms. In fact, and I have held this position for eighteen years, I was unaware of its existence myself.

"But upon consulting our old records I found that such an oar had been presented by one Daniel Foss, of Elkton, Maryland, in the year 1821. Not until after a long search did we find the oar in a disused attic lumber-room of odds and ends. The notches and the legend are carved on the oar just as you have described.

"We have also on file a pamphlet presented at the same time, written by the said Daniel Foss, and published in Boston by the firm of N. Coverly, Jr., in the year 1834. This pamphlet describes eight years of a castaway's life on a desert island. It is evident that this mariner, in his old age and in want, hawked this pamphlet about among the charitable.

"I am very curious to learn how you became aware of this oar, of the existence of which we of the museum were ignorant. Am I correct in assuming that you have read an account in some diary published later by this Daniel Foss? I shall be glad for any information on the subject, and am proceeding at once to have the oar and the pamphlet put back on exhibition.

"Very truly yours,

"HOSEA SALSBURTY." {1}.

CHAPTER XX

The time came when I humbled Warden Atherton to unconditional surrender, making a vain and empty mouthing of his ultimatum, "Dynamite or curtains." He gave me up as one who could not be killed in a strait-jacket. He had had men die after several hours in the jacket. He had had men die after several days in the jacket, although, invariably, they were unlaced and carted into hospital ere they breathed their last . . . and received a death certificate from the doctor of pneumonia, or Bright's disease, or valvular disease of the heart.

But me Warden Atherton could never kill. Never did the urgency arise of carting my maltreated and perishing carcass to the hospital. Yet I will say that Warden Atherton tried his best and dared his worst. There was the time when he double-jacketed me. It is so rich an incident that I must tell it.

It happened that one of the San Francisco newspapers (seeking, as every newspaper and as every commercial enterprise seeks, a market that will enable it to realize a profit) tried to interest the radical portion of the working class in prison reform. As a result, union labour possessing an important political significance at the time, the time-serving politicians at Sacramento appointed a senatorial committee of investigation of the state prisons.

This State Senate committee *investigated* (pardon my italicized sneer) San Quentin. Never was there so model an institution of detention. The convicts themselves so testified. Nor can one blame them. They had experienced similar investigations in the past. They knew on which side their bread was buttered. They knew that all their sides and most of their ribs would ache very quickly after the taking of their testimony . . . if said testimony were adverse to the prison administration. Oh, believe me, my reader, it is a very ancient story. It was ancient in old Babylon, many a thousand years ago, as I well remember of that old time when I rotted in prison while palace intrigues shook the court.

As I have said, every convict testified to the humaneness of Warden Atherton's administration. In fact, so touching were their testimonials to the kindness of the Warden, to the good and varied quality of the food and the cooking, to the gentleness of the guards, and to the general decency and ease and comfort of the prison domicile, that the opposition newspapers of

San Francisco raised an indignant cry for more rigour in the management of our prisons, in that, otherwise, honest but lazy citizens would be seduced into seeking enrolment as prison guests.

The Senate Committee even invaded solitary, where the three of us had little to lose and nothing to gain. Jake Oppenheimer spat in its faces and told its members, all and sundry, to go to hell. Ed Morrell told them what a noisome stews the place was, insulted the Warden to his face, and was recommended by the committee to be given a taste of the antiquated and obsolete punishments that, after all, must have been devised by previous Wardens out of necessity for the right handling of hard characters like him.

I was careful not to insult the Warden. I testified craftily, and as a scientist, beginning with small beginnings, making an art of my exposition, step by step, by tiny steps, inveigling my senatorial auditors on into willingness and eagerness to listen to the next exposure, the whole fabric so woven that there was no natural halting place at which to drop a period or interpolate a query . . . in this fashion, thus, I got my tale across.

Alas! no whisper of what I divulged ever went outside the prison walls. The Senate Committee gave a beautiful whitewash to Warden Atherton and San Quentin. The crusading San Francisco newspaper assured its working-class readers that San Quentin was whiter than snow, and further, that while it was true that the strait-jacket was still a recognized legal method of punishment for the refractory, that, nevertheless, at the present time, under the present humane and spiritually right-minded Warden, the strait-jacket was never, under any circumstance, used.

And while the poor asses of labourers read and believed, while the Senate Committee dined and wined with the Warden at the expense of the state and the tax payer, Ed Morrell, Jake Oppenheimer, and I were lying in our jackets, laced just a trifle more tightly and more vindictively than we had ever been laced before.

"It is to laugh," Ed Morrell tapped to me, with the edge of the sole of his shoe.

"I should worry," tapped Jake.

And as for me, I too capped my bitter scorn and laughter, remembered the prison houses of old Babylon, smiled to myself a huge cosmic smile, and drifted off and away into the largeness of the little death that made me heir of all the ages and the rider full-panoplied and astride of time.

Yea, dear brother of the outside world, while the whitewash was running off the press, while the august senators were wining and dining, we three of the living dead, buried alive in solidarity, were sweating our pain in the canvas torture.

And after the dinner, warm with wine, Warden Atherton himself came to see how fared it with us. Me, as usual, they found in coma. Doctor Jackson for the first time must have been alarmed. I was brought back across the dark to consciousness with the bite of ammonia in my nostrils. I smiled into the faces bent over me.

"Shamming," snorted the Warden, and I knew by the flush on his face and the thickness in his tongue that he had been drinking.

I licked my lips as a sign for water, for I desired to speak.

"You are an ass," I at last managed to say with cold distinctness. "You are an ass, a coward, a cur, a pitiful thing so low that spittle would be wasted on your face. In such matter Jake Oppenheimer is over-generous with you. As for me, without shame I tell you the only reason I do not spit upon you is that I cannot demean myself nor so degrade my spittle."

"I've reached the limit of my patience!" he bellowed. "I will kill you, Standing!"

"You've been drinking," I retorted. "And I would advise you, if you must say such things, not to take so many of your prison curs into your confidence. They will snitch on you some day, and you will lose your job."

But the wine was up and master of him.

"Put another jacket on him," he commanded. "You are a dead man, Standing. But you'll not die in the jacket. We'll bury you from the hospital."

This time, over the previous jacket, the second jacket was put on from behind and laced up in front.

"Lord, Lord, Warden, it is bitter weather," I sneered. "The frost is sharp. Wherefore I am indeed grateful for your giving me two jackets. I shall be almost comfortable."

"Tighter!" he urged to Al Hutchins, who was drawing the lacing. "Throw your feet into the skunk. Break his ribs."

I must admit that Hutchins did his best.

"You *will* lie about me," the Warden raved, the flush of wine and wrath flooding ruddier into his face. "Now see what you get for it. Your number is taken at last, Standing. This is your finish. Do you hear? This is your finish.”

“A favour, Warden,” I whispered faintly. Faint I was. Perforce I was nearly unconscious from the fearful constriction. “Make it a triple jacketing,” I managed to continue, while the cell walls swayed and reeled about me and while I fought with all my will to hold to my consciousness that was being squeezed out of me by the jackets. “Another jacket . . . Warden . . . It . . . will . . . be . . . so . . . much . . . er . . . warmer.”

And my whisper faded away as I ebbed down into the little death.

I was never the same man after that double-jacketing. Never again, to this day, no matter what my food, was I properly nurtured. I suffered internal injuries to an extent I never cared to investigate. The old pain in my ribs and stomach is with me now as I write these lines. But the poor, maltreated machinery has served its purpose. It has enabled me to live thus far, and it will enable me to live the little longer to the day they take me out in the shirt without a collar and stretch my neck with the well-stretched rope.

But the double-jacketing was the last straw. It broke down Warden Atherton. He surrendered to the demonstration that I was unkillable. As I told him once:

“The only way you can get me, Warden, is to sneak in here some night with a hatchet.”

Jake Oppenheimer was responsible for a good one on the Warden which I must relate:

“I say, Warden, it must be straight hell for you to have to wake up every morning with yourself on your pillow.”

And Ed Morrell to the Warden:

“Your mother must have been damn fond of children to have raised you.”

It was really an offence to me when the jacketing ceased. I sadly missed that dream world of mine. But not for long. I found that I could suspend animation by the exercise of my will, aided mechanically by constricting my chest and abdomen with the blanket. Thus I induced physiological and psychological states similar to those caused by the jacket. So, at will, and without the old torment, I was free to roam through time.

Ed Morrell believed all my adventures, but Jake Oppenheimer remained sceptical to the last. It was during my third year in solitary that I paid

Oppenheimer a visit. I was never able to do it but that once, and that one time was wholly unplanned and unexpected.

It was merely after unconsciousness had come to me that I found myself in his cell. My body, I knew, lay in the jacket back in my own cell. Although never before had I seen him, I knew that this man was Jake Oppenheimer. It was summer weather, and he lay without clothes on top his blanket. I was shocked by his cadaverous face and skeleton-like body. He was not even the shell of a man. He was merely the structure of a man, the bones of a man, still cohering, stripped practically of all flesh and covered with a parchment-like skin.

Not until back in my own cell and consciousness was I able to mull the thing over and realize that just as was Jake Oppenheimer, so was Ed Morrell, so was I. And I could not but thrill as I glimpsed the vastitude of spirit that inhabited these frail, perishing carcasses of us — the three incorrigibles of solitary. Flesh is a cheap, vain thing. Grass is flesh, and flesh becomes grass; but the spirit is the thing that abides and survives. I have no patience with these flesh-worshippers. A taste of solitary in San Quentin would swiftly convert them to a due appreciation and worship of the spirit.

But to return to my experience in Oppenheimer's cell. His body was that of a man long dead and shrivelled by desert heat. The skin that covered it was of the colour of dry mud. His sharp, yellow-gray eyes seemed the only part of him that was alive. They were never at rest. He lay on his back, and the eyes darted hither and thither, following the flight of the several flies that disported in the gloomy air above him. I noted, too, a scar, just above his right elbow, and another scar on his right ankle.

After a time he yawned, rolled over on his side, and inspected an angry-looking sore just above his hip. This he proceeded to cleanse and dress by the crude methods men in solitary must employ. I recognized the sore as one of the sort caused by the strait-jacket. On my body, at this moment of writing, are hundreds of scars of the jacket.

Next, Oppenheimer rolled on his back, gingerly took one of his front upper tooth — an eye teeth — between thumb and forefinger, and consideratively moved it back and forth. Again he yawned, stretched his arms, rolled over, and knocked the call to Ed Morrell.

I read the code as a matter of course.

“Thought you might be awake,” Oppenheimer tapped. “How goes it with the Professor?”

Then, dim and far, I could hear Morrell’s taps enunciating that they had put me in the jacket an hour before, and that, as usual, I was already deaf to all knuckle talk.

“He is a good guy,” Oppenheimer rapped on. “I always was suspicious of educated mugs, but he ain’t been hurt none by his education. He is sure square. Got all the spunk in the world, and you could not get him to squeal or double cross in a million years.”

To all of which, and with amplification, Ed Morrell agreed. And I must, right here, ere I go a word further, say that I have lived many years and many lives, and that in those many lives I have known proud moments; but that the proudest moment I have ever known was the moment when my two comrades in solitary passed this appraisal of me. Ed Morrell and Jake Oppenheimer were great spirits, and in all time no greater honour was ever accorded me than this admission of me to their comradeship. Kings have knighted me, emperors have ennobled me, and, as king myself, I have known stately moments. Yet of it all nothing do I adjudge so splendid as this accolade delivered by two lifers in solitary deemed by the world as the very bottom-most of the human cesspool.

Afterwards, recuperating from this particular bout with the jacket, I brought up my visit to Jake’s cell as a proof that my spirit did leave my body. But Jake was unshakable.

“It is guessing that is more than guessing,” was his reply, when I had described to him his successive particular actions at the time my spirit had been in his cell. “It is figuring. You have been close to three years in solitary yourself, Professor, and you can come pretty near to figuring what any guy will do to be killing time. There ain’t a thing you told me that you and Ed ain’t done thousands of times, from lying with your clothes off in hot weather to watching flies, tending sores, and rapping.”

Morrell sided with me, but it was no use.

“Now don’t take it hard, Professor,” Jake tapped. “I ain’t saying you lied. I just say you get to dreaming and figuring in the jacket without knowing you’re doing it. I know you believe what you say, and that you think it happened; but it don’t buy nothing with me. You figure it, but you don’t know you figure it — that is something you know all the time, though you don’t know you know it until you get into them dreamy, woozy states.”

"Hold on, Jake," I tapped. "You know I have never seen you with my own eyes. Is that right?"

"I got to take your word for it, Professor. You might have seen me and not known it was me."

"The point is," I continued, "not having seen you with your clothes off, nevertheless I am able to tell you about that scar above your right elbow, and that scar on your right ankle."

"Oh, shucks," was his reply. "You'll find all that in my prison description and along with my mug in the rogues' gallery. They is thousands of chiefs of police and detectives know all that stuff."

"I never heard of it," I assured him.

"You don't remember that you ever heard of it," he corrected. "But you must have just the same. Though you have forgotten about it, the information is in your brain all right, stored away for reference, only you've forgot where it is stored. You've got to get woozy in order to remember."

"Did you ever forget a man's name you used to know as well as your own brother's? I have. There was a little juror that convicted me in Oakland the time I got handed my fifty-years. And one day I found I'd forgotten his name. Why, bo, I lay here for weeks puzzling for it. Now, just because I could not dig it out of my memory box was no sign it was not there. It was mislaid, that was all. And to prove it, one day, when I was not even thinking about it, it popped right out of my brain to the tip of my tongue. 'Stacy,' I said right out loud. 'Joseph Stacy.' That was it. Get my drive?

"You only tell me about them scars what thousands of men know. I don't know how you got the information, I guess you don't know yourself. That ain't my lookout. But there she is. Telling me what many knows buys nothing with me. You got to deliver a whole lot more than that to make me swallow the rest of your whoppers."

Hamilton's Law of Parsimony in the weighing of evidence! So intrinsically was this slum-bred convict a scientist, that he had worked out Hamilton's law and rigidly applied it.

And yet — and the incident is delicious — Jake Oppenheimer was intellectually honest. That night, as I was dozing off, he called me with the customary signal.

"Say, Professor, you said you saw me wiggling my loose tooth. That has got my goat. That is the one thing I can't figure out any way you could know. It only went loose three days ago, and I ain’t whispered it to a soul.”

CHAPTER XXI

Pascal somewhere says: “In viewing the march of human evolution, the philosophic mind should look upon humanity as one man, and not as a conglomeration of individuals.”

I sit here in Murderers’ Row in Folsom, the drowsy hum of flies in my ears as I ponder that thought of Pascal. It is true. Just as the human embryo, in its brief ten lunar months, with bewildering swiftness, in myriad forms and semblances a myriad times multiplied, rehearses the entire history of organic life from vegetable to man; just as the human boy, in his brief years of boyhood, rehearses the history of primitive man in acts of cruelty and savagery, from wantonness of inflicting pain on lesser creatures to tribal consciousness expressed by the desire to run in gangs; just so, I, Darrell Standing, have rehearsed and relived all that primitive man was, and did, and became until he became even you and me and the rest of our kind in a twentieth century civilization.

Truly do we carry in us, each human of us alive on the planet to-day, the incorruptible history of life from life’s beginning. This history is written in our tissues and our bones, in our functions and our organs, in our brain cells and in our spirits, and in all sorts of physical and psychic atavistic urgencies and compulsions. Once we were fish-like, you and I, my reader, and crawled up out of the sea to pioneer in the great, dry-land adventure in the thick of which we are now. The marks of the sea are still on us, as the marks of the serpent are still on us, ere the serpent became serpent and we became we, when pre-serpent and pre-we were one. Once we flew in the air, and once we dwelt arboreally and were afraid of the dark. The vestiges remain, graven on you and me, and graven on our seed to come after us to the end of our time on earth.

What Pascal glimpsed with the vision of a seer, I have lived. I have seen myself that one man contemplated by Pascal’s philosophic eye. Oh, I have a tale, most true, most wonderful, most real to me, although I doubt that I have wit to tell it, and that you, my reader, have wit to perceive it when told. I say that I have seen myself that one man hinted at by Pascal. I have lain in the long trances of the jacket and glimpsed myself a thousand living men living the thousand lives that are themselves the history of the human man climbing upward through the ages.

Ah, what royal memories are mine, as I flutter through the æons of the long ago. In single jacket trances I have lived the many lives involved in the thousand-years-long Odysseys of the early drifts of men. Heavens, before I was of the flaxen-haired Aesir, who dwelt in Asgard, and before I was of the red-haired Vanir, who dwelt in Vanaheim, long before those times I have memories (living memories) of earlier drifts, when, like thistledown before the breeze, we drifted south before the face of the descending polar ice-cap.

I have died of frost and famine, fight and flood. I have picked berries on the bleak backbone of the world, and I have dug roots to eat from the fat-soiled fens and meadows. I have scratched the reindeer's semblance and the semblance of the hairy mammoth on ivory tusks gotten of the chase and on the rock walls of cave shelters when the winter storms moaned outside. I have cracked marrow-bones on the sites of kingly cities that had perished centuries before my time or that were destined to be builded centuries after my passing. And I have left the bones of my transient carcasses in pond bottoms, and glacial gravels, and asphaltum lakes.

I have lived through the ages known to-day among the scientists as the Paleolithic, the Neolithic, and the Bronze. I remember when with our domesticated wolves we herded our reindeer to pasture on the north shore of the Mediterranean where now are France and Italy and Spain. This was before the ice-sheet melted backward toward the pole. Many processions of the equinoxes have I lived through and died in, my reader . . . only that I remember and that you do not.

I have been a Son of the Plough, a Son of the Fish, a Son of the Tree. All religions from the beginnings of man's religious time abide in me. And when the Dominie, in the chapel, here in Folsom of a Sunday, worships God in his own good modern way, I know that in him, the Dominie, still abide the worships of the Plough, the Fish, the Tree — ay, and also all worships of Astarte and the Night.

I have been an Aryan master in old Egypt, when my soldiers scrawled obscenities on the carven tombs of kings dead and gone and forgotten aforetime. And I, the Aryan master in old Egypt, have myself builded my two burial places — the one a false and mighty pyramid to which a generation of slaves could attest; the other humble, meagre, secret, rock-hewn in a desert valley by slaves who died immediately their work was done. . . . And I wonder me here in Folsom, while democracy dreams its enchantments o’er the twentieth century world, whether there, in the rock-hewn crypt of that secret, desert valley, the bones still abide that once were mine and that stiffened my animated body when I was an Aryan master high-stomached to command.

And on the great drift, southward and eastward under the burning sun that perished all descendants of the houses of Asgard and Vanaheim, I have been a king in Ceylon, a builder of Aryan monuments under Aryan kings in old Java and old Sumatra. And I have died a hundred deaths on the great South Sea drift ere ever the rebirth of me came to plant monuments, that only Aryans plant, on volcanic tropic islands that I, Darrell Standing, cannot name, being too little versed to-day in that far sea geography.

If only I were articulate to paint in the frail medium of words what I see and know and possess incorporated in my consciousness of the mighty driftage of the races in the times before our present written history began! Yes, we had our history even then. Our old men, our priests, our wise ones, told our history into tales and wrote those tales in the stars so that our seed after us should not forget. From the sky came the life-giving rain and the sunlight. And we studied the sky, learned from the stars to calculate time and apportion the seasons; and we named the stars after our heroes and our foods and our devices for getting food; and after our wanderings, and drifts, and adventures; and after our functions and our furies of impulse and desire.

And, alas! we thought the heavens unchanging on which we wrote all our humble yearnings and all the humble things we did or dreamed of doing. When I was a Son of the Bull, I remember me a lifetime I spent at star-gazing. And, later and earlier, there were other lives in which I sang with the priests and bards the taboo-songs of the stars wherein we believed was written our imperishable record. And here, at the end of it all, I pore over books of astronomy from the prison library, such as they allow condemned men to read, and learn that even the heavens are passing fluxes, vexed with star-driftage as the earth is by the drifts of men.

Equipped with this modern knowledge, I have, returning through the little death from my earlier lives, been able to compare the heavens then and now. And the stars do change. I have seen pole stars and pole stars and dynasties of pole stars. The pole star to-day is in Ursa Minor. Yet, in those far days I have seen the pole star in Draco, in Hercules, in Vega, in Cygnus, and in Cepheus. No; not even the stars abide, and yet the memory and the knowledge of them abides in me, in the spirit of me that is memory and that is eternal. Only spirit abides. All else, being mere matter, passes, and must pass.

Oh, I do see myself to-day that one man who appeared in the elder world, blonde, ferocious, a killer and a lover, a meat-eater and a root-digger, a gypsy and a robber, who, club in hand, through millenniums of years wandered the world around seeking meat to devour and sheltered nests for his younglings and sucklings.

I am that man, the sum of him, the all of him, the hairless biped who struggled upward from the slime and created love and law out of the anarchy of fecund life that screamed and squalled in the jungle. I am all that that man was and did become. I see myself, through the painful generations, snaring and killing the game and the fish, clearing the first fields from the forest, making rude tools of stone and bone, building houses of wood, thatching the roofs with leaves and straw, domesticating the wild grasses and meadow-roots, fathering them to become the progenitors of rice and millet and wheat and barley and all manner of succulent edibles, learning to scratch the soil, to sow, to reap, to store, beating out the fibres of plants to spin into thread and to weave into cloth, devising systems of irrigation, working in metals, making markets and trade-routes, building boats, and founding navigation — ay, and organizing village life, welding villages to villages till they became tribes, welding tribes together till they became nations, ever seeking the laws of things, ever making the laws of humans so that humans might live together in amity and by united effort beat down and destroy all manner of creeping, crawling, squalling things that might else destroy them.

I was that man in all his births and endeavours. I am that man to-day, waiting my due death by the law that I helped to devise many a thousand years ago, and by which I have died many times before this, many times. And as I contemplate this vast past history of me, I find several great and splendid influences, and, chiefest of these, the love of woman, man's love for the woman of his kind. I see myself, the one man, the lover, always the lover. Yes, also was I the great fighter, but somehow it seems to me as I sit here and evenly balance it all, that I was, more than aught else, the great lover. It was because I loved greatly that I was the great fighter.

Sometimes I think that the story of man is the story of the love of woman. This memory of all my past that I write now is the memory of my love of woman. Ever, in the ten thousand lives and guises, I loved her. I love her now. My sleep is fraught with her; my waking fancies, no matter whence they start, lead me always to her. There is no escaping her, that eternal, splendid, ever-resplendent figure of woman.

Oh, make no mistake. I am no callow, ardent youth. I am an elderly man, broken in health and body, and soon to die. I am a scientist and a philosopher. I, as all the generations of philosophers before me, know woman for what she is — her weaknesses, and meannesses, and immodesties, and ignobilities, her earth-bound feet, and her eyes that have never seen the stars. But — and the everlasting, irrefragable fact remains: *Her feet are beautiful, her eyes are beautiful, her arms and breasts are paradise, her charm is potent beyond all charm that has ever dazzled men; and, as the pole willy-nilly draws the needle, just so, willy-nilly, does she draw men*.

Woman has made me laugh at death and distance, scorn fatigue and sleep. I have slain men, many men, for love of woman, or in warm blood have baptized our nuptials or washed away the stain of her favour to another. I have gone down to death and dishonour, my betrayal of my comrades and of the stars black upon me, for woman's sake — for my sake, rather, I desired her so. And I have lain in the barley, sick with yearning for her, just to see her pass and glut my eyes with the swaying wonder of her and of her hair, black with the night, or brown or flaxen, or all golden-dusty with the sun.

For woman *is* beautiful . . . to man. She is sweet to his tongue, and fragrance in his nostrils. She is fire in his blood, and a thunder of trumpets; her voice is beyond all music in his ears; and she can shake his soul that else stands steadfast in the draughty presence of the Titans of the Light and of the Dark. And beyond his star-gazing, in his far-imagined heavens, Valkyrie or houri, man has fain made place for her, for he could see no heaven without her. And the sword, in battle, singing, sings not so sweet a song as the woman sings to man merely by her laugh in the moonlight, or her love-sob in the dark, or by her swaying on her way under the sun while he lies dizzy with longing in the grass.

I have died of love. I have died for love, as you shall see. In a little while they will take me out, me, Darrell Standing, and make me die. And that death shall be for love. Oh, not lightly was I stirred when I slew Professor Haskell in the laboratory at the University of California. He was a man. I was a man. And there was a woman beautiful. Do you understand? She was a woman and I was a man and a lover, and all the heredity of love was mine up from the black and squalling jungle ere love was love and man was man.

Oh, ay, it is nothing new. Often, often, in that long past have I given life and honour, place and power for love. Man is different from woman. She is close to the immediate and knows only the need of instant things. We know honour above her honour, and pride beyond her wildest guess of pride. Our eyes are far-visioned for star-gazing, while her eyes see no farther than the solid earth beneath her feet, the lover's breast upon her breast, the infant lusty in the hollow of her arm. And yet, such is our alchemy compounded of the ages, woman works magic in our dreams and in our veins, so that more than dreams and far visions and the blood of life itself is woman to us, who, as lovers truly say, is more than all the world. Yet is this just, else would man not be man, the fighter and the conqueror, treading his red way on the face of all other and lesser life — for, had man not been the lover, the royal lover, he could never have become the kingly fighter. We fight best, and die best, and live best, for what we love.

I am that one man. I see myself the many selves that have gone into the constituting of me. And ever I see the woman, the many women, who have made me and undone me, who have loved me and whom I have loved.

I remember, oh, long ago when human kind was very young, that I made me a snare and a pit with a pointed stake upthrust in the middle thereof, for the taking of Sabre-Tooth. Sabre-Tooth, long-fanged and long-haired, was the chiefest peril to us of the squatting place, who crouched through the nights over our fires and by day increased the growing shell-bank beneath us by the clams we dug and devoured from the salt mud-flats beside us.

And when the roar and the squall of Sabre-Tooth roused us where we squatted by our dying embers, and I was wild with far vision of the proof of the pit and the stake, it was the woman, arms about me, leg-twining, who fought with me and restrained me not to go out through the dark to my desire. She was part-clad, for warmth only, in skins of animals, mangy and fire-burnt, that I had slain; she was swart and dirty with camp smoke, unwashed since the spring rains, with nails gnarled and broken, and hands that were calloused like footpads and were more like claws than like hands; but her eyes were blue as the summer sky is, as the deep sea is, and there was that in her eyes, and in her clasped arms about me, and in her heart beating against mine, that withheld me . . . though through the dark until dawn, while Sabre-Tooth squalled his wrath and his agony, I could hear my comrades snickering and sniggling to their women in that I had not the faith in my emprise and invention to venture through the night to the pit and the stake I had devised for the undoing of Sabre-Tooth. But my woman, my savage mate held me, savage that I was, and her eyes drew me, and her arms chained me, and her twining legs and heart beating to mine seduced me from my far dream of things, my man's achievement, the goal beyond goals, the taking and the slaying of Sabre-Tooth on the stake in the pit.

Once I wan Ushu, the archer. I remember it well. For I was lost from my own people, through the great forest, till I emerged on the flat lands and grass lands, and was taken in by a strange people, kin in that their skin was white, their hair yellow, their speech not too remote from mine. And she was Igar, and I drew her as I sang in the twilight, for she was destined a race-mother, and she was broad-built and full-dugged, and she could not but draw to the man heavy-muscled, deep-chested, who sang of his prowess in man-slaying and in meat-getting, and so, promised food and protection to her in her weakness whilst she mothered the seed that was to hunt the meat and live after her.

And these people knew not the wisdom of my people, in that they snared and pitted their meat and in battle used clubs and stone throwing-sticks and were unaware of the virtues of arrows swift-flying, notched on the end to fit the thong of deer-sinew, well-twisted, that sprang into straightness when released to the spring of the ask-stick bent in the middle.

And while I sang, the stranger men laughed in the twilight. And only she, Igar, believed and had faith in me. I took her alone to the hunting, where the deer sought the water-hole. And my bow twanged and sang in the covert, and the deer fell fast-stricken, and the warm meat was sweet to us, and she was mine there by the water-hole.

And because of Igar I remained with the strange men. And I taught them the making of bows from the red and sweet-smelling wood like unto cedar. And I taught them to keep both eyes open, and to aim with the left eye, and to make blunt shafts for small game, and pronged shafts of bone for the fish in the clear water, and to flake arrow-heads from obsidian for the deer and the wild horse, the elk and old Sabre-Tooth. But the flaking of stone they laughed at, till I shot an elk through and through, the flaked stone standing out and beyond, the feathered shaft sunk in its vitals, the whole tribe applauding.

I was Ushu, the archer, and Igar was my woman and mate. We laughed under the sun in the morning, when our man-child and woman-child, yellowed like honey-bees, sprawled and rolled in the mustard, and at night she lay close in my arms, and loved me, and urged me, because of my skill at the seasoning of woods and the flaking of arrow-heads, that I should stay close by the camp and let the other men bring to me the meat from the perils of hunting. And I listened, and grew fat and short-breathed, and in the long nights, unsleeping, worried that the men of the stranger tribe brought me meat for my wisdom and honour, but laughed at my fatness and undesire for the hunting and fighting.

And in my old age, when our sons were man-grown and our daughters were mothers, when up from the southland the dark men, flat-browed, kinky-headed, surged like waves of the sea upon us and we fled back before them to the hill-slopes, Igar, like my mates far before and long after, leg-twining, arm-clasping, unseeing far visions, strove to hold me aloof from the battle.

And I tore myself from her, fat and short-breathed, while she wept that no longer I loved her, and I went out to the night-fighting and dawn-fighting, where, to the singing of bowstrings and the shrilling of arrows, feathered, sharp-pointed, we showed them, the kinky-heads, the skill of the killing and taught them the wit and the willing of slaughter.

And as I died them at the end of the fighting, there were death songs and singing about me, and the songs seemed to sing as these the words I have written when I was Ushu, the archer, and Igar, my mate-woman, leg-twining, arm-clasping, would have held me back from the battle.

Once, and heaven alone knows when, save that it was in the long ago when man was young, we lived beside great swamps, where the hills drew down close to the wide, sluggish river, and where our women gathered berries and roots, and there were herds of deer, of wild horses, of antelope, and of elk, that we men slew with arrows or trapped in the pits or hill-pockets. From the river we caught fish in nets twisted by the women of the bark of young trees.

I was a man, eager and curious as the antelope when we lured it by waving grass clumps where we lay hidden in the thick of the grass. The wild rice grew in the swamp, rising sheer from the water on the edges of the channels. Each morning the blackbirds awoke us with their chatter as they left their roosts to fly to the swamp. And through the long twilight the air was filled with their noise as they went back to their roosts. It was the time that the rice ripened. And there were ducks also, and ducks and blackbirds feasted to fatness on the ripe rice half unhusked by the sun.

Being a man, ever restless, ever questing, wondering always what lay beyond the hills and beyond the swamps and in the mud at the river's bottom, I watched the wild ducks and blackbirds and pondered till my pondering gave me vision and I saw. And this is what I saw, the reasoning of it:

Meat was good to eat. In the end, tracing it back, or at the first, rather, all meat came from grass. The meat of the duck and of the blackbird came from the seed of the swamp rice. To kill a duck with an arrow scarce paid for the labour of stalking and the long hours in hiding. The blackbirds were too small for arrow-killing save by the boys who were learning and preparing for the taking of larger game. And yet, in rice season, blackbirds and ducks were succulently fat. Their fatness came from the rice. Why should I and mine not be fat from the rice in the same way?

And I thought it out in camp, silent, morose, while the children squabbled about me unnoticed, and while Arunga, my mate-woman, vainly scolded me and urged me to go hunting for more meat for the many of us.

Arunga was the woman I had stolen from the hill-tribes. She and I had been a dozen moons in learning common speech after I captured her. Ah, that day when I leaped upon her, down from the over-hanging tree-branch as she padded the runway! Fairly upon her shoulders with the weight of my body I smote her, my fingers wide-spreading to clutch her. She squalled like a cat there in the runway. She fought me and bit me. The nails of her hands were like the claws of a tree-cat as they tore at me. But I held her and mastered her, and for two days beat her and forced her to travel with me down out of the canyons of the Hill-Men to the grass lands where the river flowed through the rice-swamps and the ducks and the blackbirds fed fat.

I saw my vision when the rice was ripe. I put Arunga in the bow of the fire-hollowed log that was most rudely a canoe. I bade her paddle. In the stern I spread a deerskin she had tanned. With two stout sticks I bent the stalks over the deerskin and threshed out the grain that else the blackbirds would have eaten. And when I had worked out the way of it, I gave the two stout sticks to Arunga, and sat in the bow paddling and directing.

In the past we had eaten the raw rice in passing and not been pleased with it. But now we parched it over our fire so that the grains puffed and exploded in whiteness and all the tribe came running to taste.

After that we became known among men as the Rice-Eaters and as the Sons of the Rice. And long, long after, when we were driven by the Sons of the River from the swamps into the uplands, we took the seed of the rice with us and planted it. We learned to select the largest grains for the seed, so that all the rice we thereafter ate was larger-grained and puffier in the parching and the boiling.

But Arunga. I have said she squalled and scratched like a cat when I stole her. Yet I remember the time when her own kin of the Hill-Men caught me and carried me away into the hills. They were her father, his brother, and her two own blood-brothers. But she was mine, who had lived with me. And at night, where I lay bound like a wild pig for the slaying, and they slept weary by the fire, she crept upon them and brained them with the war-club that with my hands I had fashioned. And she wept over me, and loosed me, and fled with me, back to the wide sluggish river where the blackbirds and wild ducks fed in the rice swamps — for this was before the time of the coming of the Sons of the River.

For she was Arunga, the one woman, the eternal woman. She has lived in all times and places. She will always live. She is immortal. Once, in a far land, her name was Ruth. Also has her name been Iseult, and Helen, Pocahontas, and Unga. And no stranger man, from stranger tribes, but has found her and will find her in the tribes of all the earth.

I remember so many women who have gone into the becoming of the one woman. There was the time that Har, my brother, and I, sleeping and pursuing in turn, ever hounding the wild stallion through the daytime and night, and in a wide circle that met where the sleeping one lay, drove the stallion unresting through hunger and thirst to the meekness of weakness, so that in the end he could but stand and tremble while we bound him with ropes twisted of deer-hide. On our legs alone, without hardship, aided merely by wit — the plan was mine — my brother and I walked that fleet-footed creature into possession.

And when all was ready for me to get on his back — for that had been my vision from the first — Selpa, my woman, put her arms about me, and raised her voice and persisted that Har, and not I, should ride, for Har had neither wife nor young ones and could die without hurt. Also, in the end she wept, so that I was raped of my vision, and it was Har, naked and clinging, that bestrode the stallion when he vaulted away.

It was sunset, and a time of great wailing, when they carried Har in from the far rocks where they found him. His head was quite broken, and like honey from a fallen bee-tree his brains dripped on the ground. His mother strewed wood-ashes on her head and blackened her face. His father cut off half the fingers of one hand in token of sorrow. And all the women, especially the young and unwedded, screamed evil names at me; and the elders shook their wise heads and muttered and mumbled that not their fathers nor their fathers' fathers had betrayed such a madness. Horse meat was good to eat; young colts were tender to old teeth; and only a fool would come to close grapples with any wild horse save when an arrow had pierced it, or when it struggled on the stake in the midst of the pit.

And Selpa scolded me to sleep, and in the morning woke me with her chatter, ever declaiming against my madness, ever pronouncing her claim upon me and the claims of our children, till in the end I grew weary, and forsook my far vision, and said never again would I dream of bestriding the wild horse to fly swift as its feet and the wind across the sands and the grass lands.

And through the years the tale of my madness never ceased from being told over the camp-fire. Yet was the very telling the source of my vengeance; for the dream did not die, and the young ones, listening to the laugh and the sneer, redreamed it, so that in the end it was Othar, my eldest-born, himself a sheer stripling, that walked down a wild stallion, leapt on its back, and flew before all of us with the speed of the wind. Thereafter, that they might keep up with him, all men were trapping and breaking wild horses. Many horses were broken, and some men, but I lived at the last to the day when, at the changing of camp-sites in the pursuit of the meat in its seasons, our very babes, in baskets of willow-withes, were slung side and side on the backs of our horses that carried our camp-trappage and dunnage.

I, a young man, had seen my vision, dreamed my dream; Selpa, the woman, had held me from that far desire; but Othar, the seed of us to live after, glimpsed my vision and won to it, so that our tribe became wealthy in the gains of the chase.

There was a woman — on the great drift down out of Europe, a weary drift of many generations, when we brought into India the shorthorn cattle and the planting of barley. But this woman was long before we reached India. We were still in the mid-most of that centuries-long drift, and no shrewdness of geography can now place for me that ancient valley.

The woman was Nuhila. The valley was narrow, not long, and the swift slope of its floor and the steep walls of its rim were terraced for the growing of rice and of millet — the first rice and millet we Sons of the Mountain had known. They were a meek people in that valley. They had become soft with the farming of fat land made fatter by water. Theirs was the first irrigation we had seen, although we had little time to mark their ditches and channels by which all the hill waters flowed to the fields they had builded. We had little time to mark, for we Sons of the Mountain, who were few, were in flight before the Sons of the Snub-Nose, who were many. We called them the Noseless, and they called themselves the Sons of the Eagle. But they were many, and we fled before them with our shorthorn cattle, our goats, and our barleyseed, our women and children.

While the Snub-Noses slew our youths at the rear, we slew at our fore the folk of the valley who opposed us and were weak. The village was mud-built and grass-thatched; the encircling wall was of mud, but quite tall. And when we had slain the people who had built the wall, and sheltered within it our herds and our women and children, we stood on the wall and shouted insult to the Snub-Noses. For we had found the mud granaries filled with rice and millet. Our cattle could eat the thatches. And the time of the rains was at hand, so that we should not want for water.

It was a long siege. Near to the beginning, we gathered together the women, and elders, and children we had not slain, and forced them out through the wall they had builded. But the Snub-Noses slew them to the last one, so that there was more food in the village for us, more food in the valley for the Snub-Noses.

It was a weary long siege. Sickness smote us, and we died of the plague that arose from our buried ones. We emptied the mud-granaries of their rice and millet. Our goats and shorthorns ate the thatch of the houses, and we, ere the end, ate the goats and the shorthorns.

Where there had been five men of us on the wall, there came a time when there was one; where there had been half a thousand babes and younglings of ours, there were none. It was Nuhila, my woman, who cut off her hair and twisted it that I might have a strong string for my bow. The other women did likewise, and when the wall was attacked, stood shoulder to shoulder with us, in the midst of our spears and arrows raining down potsherds and cobblestones on the heads of the Snub-Noses.

Even the patient Snub-Noses we well-nigh out-patienced. Came a time when of ten men of us, but one was alive on the wall, and of our women remained very few, and the Snub-Noses held parley. They told us we were a strong breed, and that our women were men-mothers, and that if we would let them have our women they would leave us alone in the valley to possess for ourselves and that we could get women from the valleys to the south.

And Nuhila said no. And the other women said no. And we sneered at the Snub-Noses and asked if they were weary of fighting. And we were as dead men then, as we sneered at our enemies, and there was little fight left in us we were so weak. One more attack on the wall would end us. We knew it. Our women knew it. And Nuhila said that we could end it first and outwit the Snub-Noses. And all our women agreed. And while the Snub-Noses prepared for the attack that would be final, there, on the wall, we slew our women. Nuhila loved me, and leaned to meet the thrust of my sword, there on the wall. And we men, in the love of tribehood and tribesmen, slew one another till remained only Horda and I alive in the red of the slaughter. And Horda was my elder, and I leaned to his thrust. But not at once did I die. I was the last of the Sons of the Mountain, for I saw Horda, himself fall on his blade and pass quickly. And dying with the shouts of the oncoming Snub-Noses growing dim in my ears, I was glad that the Snub-Noses would have no sons of us to bring up by our women.

I do not know when this time was when I was a Son of the Mountain and when we died in the narrow valley where we had slain the Sons of the Rice and the Millet. I do not know, save that it was centuries before the wide-spreading drift of all us Sons of the Mountain fetched into India, and that it was long before ever I was an Aryan master in Old Egypt building my two burial places and defacing the tombs of kings before me.

I should like to tell more of those far days, but time in the present is short. Soon I shall pass. Yet am I sorry that I cannot tell more of those early drifts, when there was crushage of peoples, or descending ice-sheets, or migrations of meat.

Also, I should like to tell of Mystery. For always were we curious to solve the secrets of life, death, and decay. Unlike the other animals, man was for ever gazing at the stars. Many gods he created in his own image and in the images of his fancy. In those old times I have worshipped the sun and the dark. I have worshipped the husked grain as the parent of life.

I have worshipped Sar, the Corn Goddess. And I have worshipped sea gods, and river gods, and fish gods.

Yes, and I remember Ishtar ere she was stolen from us by the Babylonians, and Ea, too, was ours, supreme in the Under World, who enabled Ishtar to conquer death. Mitra, likewise, was a good old Aryan god, ere he was filched from us or we discarded him. And I remember, on a time, long after the drift when we brought the barley into India, that I came down into India, a horse-trader, with many servants and a long caravan at my back, and that at that time they were worshipping Bodhisatwa.

Truly, the worships of the Mystery wandered as did men, and between filchings and borrowings the gods had as vagabond a time of it as did we. As the Sumerians took the loan of Shamashnapishtin from us, so did the Sons of Shem take him from the Sumerians and call him Noah.

Why, I smile me to-day, Darrell Standing, in Murderers' Row, in that I was found guilty and awarded death by twelve jurymen staunch and true. Twelve has ever been a magic number of the Mystery. Nor did it originate with the twelve tribes of Israel. Star-gazers before them had placed the twelve signs of the Zodiac in the sky. And I remember me, when I was of the Assir, and of the Vanir, that Odin sat in judgment over men in the court of the twelve gods, and that their names were Thor, Baldur, Niord, Frey, Tyr, Bregi, Heimdal, Hoder, Vidar, Ull, Forseti, and Loki.

Even our Valkyries were stolen from us and made into angels, and the wings of the Valkyries' horses became attached to the shoulders of the angels. And our Helheim of that day of ice and frost has become the hell of to-day, which is so hot an abode that the blood boils in one's veins, while with us, in our Helheim, the place was so cold as to freeze the marrow inside the bones. And the very sky, that we dreamed enduring, eternal, has drifted and veered, so that we find to-day the scorpion in the place where of old we knew the goat, and the archer in the place of the crab.

Worships and worships! Ever the pursuit of the Mystery! I remember the lame god of the Greeks, the master-smith. But their vulcan was the Germanic Wieland, the master-smith captured and hamstrung lame of a leg by Nidung, the kind of the Nids. But before that he was our master-smith, our forger and hammerer, whom we named Il-marinen. And him we begat of our fancy, giving him the bearded sun-god for father, and nursing him by the stars of the bear. For, he, Vulcan, or Wieland, or Il-marinen, was born under the pine tree, from the hair of the wolf, and was called also the bear-father ere ever the Germans and Greeks purloined and worshipped him. In that day we called ourselves the Sons of the Bear and the Sons of the Wolf, and the bear and the wolf were our totems. That was before our drift south on which we joined with the Sons of the Tree-Grove and taught them our totems and tales.

Yes, and who was Kashyapa, who was Pururavas, but our lame master-smith, our iron-worker, carried by us in our drifts and re-named and worshipped by the south-dwellers and the east-dwellers, the Sons of the Pole and of the Fire Drill and Fire Socket.

But the tale is too long, though I should like to tell of the three-leaved Herb of Life by which Sigmund made Sinfioti alive again. For this is the very soma-plant of India, the holy grail of King Arthur, the — but enough! enough!

And yet, as I calmly consider it all, I conclude that the greatest thing in life, in all lives, to me and to all men, has been woman, is woman, and will be woman so long as the stars drift in the sky and the heavens flux eternal change. Greater than our toil and endeavour, the play of invention and fancy, battle and star-gazing and mystery — greatest of all has been woman.

Even though she has sung false music to me, and kept my feet solid on the ground, and drawn my star-roving eyes ever back to gaze upon her, she, the conserver of life, the earth-mother, has given me my great days and nights and fulness of years. Even mystery have I imaged in the form of her, and in my star-charting have I placed her figure in the sky.

All my toils and devices led to her; all my far visions saw her at the end. When I made the fire-drill and fire-socket, it was for her. It was for her, although I did not know it, that I put the stake in the pit for old Sabre-Tooth, tamed the horse, slew the mammoth, and herded my reindeer south in advance of the ice-sheet. For her I harvested the wild rice, tamed the barley, the wheat, and the corn.

For her, and the seed to come after whose image she bore, I have died in tree-tops and stood long sieges in cave-mouths and on mud-walls. For her I put the twelve signs in the sky. It was she I worshipped when I bowed before the ten stones of jade and adored them as the moons of gestation.

Always has woman crouched close to earth like a partridge hen mothering her young; always has my wantonness of roving led me out on the shining ways; and always have my star-paths returned me to her, the figure everlasting, the woman, the one woman, for whose arms I had such need that clasped in them I have forgotten the stars.

For her I accomplished Odysseys, scaled mountains, crossed deserts; for her I led the hunt and was forward in battle; and for her and to her I sang my songs of the things I had done. All ecstasies of life and rhapsodies of delight have been mine because of her. And here, at the end, I can say that I have known no sweeter, deeper madness of being than to drown in the fragrant glory and forgetfulness of her hair.

One word more. I remember me Dorothy, just the other day, when I still lectured on agronomy to farmer-boy students. She was eleven years old. Her father was dean of the college. She was a woman-child, and a woman, and she conceived that she loved me. And I smiled to myself, for my heart was untouched and lay elsewhere.

Yet was the smile tender, for in the child's eyes I saw the woman eternal, the woman of all times and appearances. In her eyes I saw the eyes of my mate of the jungle and tree-top, of the cave and the squatting-place. In her eyes I saw the eyes of Igar when I was Ushu the archer, the eyes of Arunga when I was the rice-harvester, the eyes of Selpa when I dreamed of bestriding the stallion, the eyes of Nuhila who leaned to the thrust of my sword. Yes, there was that in her eyes that made them the eyes of Lei-Lei whom I left with a laugh on my lips, the eyes of the Lady Om for forty years my beggar-mate on highway and byway, the eyes of Philippa for whom I was slain on the grass in old France, the eyes of my mother when I was the lad Jesse at the Mountain Meadows in the circle of our forty great wagons.

She was a woman-child, but she was daughter of all women, as her mother before her, and she was the mother of all women to come after her. She was Sar, the corn-goddess. She was Isthar who conquered death. She was Sheba and Cleopatra; she was Esther and Herodias. She was Mary the Madonna, and Mary the Magdalene, and Mary the sister of Martha, also she was Martha. And she was Brünnhilde and Guinevere, Iseult and Juliet, Héloïse and Nicolette. Yes, and she was Eve, she was Lilith, she was Astarte. She was eleven years old, and she was all women that had been, all women to be.

I sit in my cell now, while the flies hum in the drowsy summer afternoon, and I know that my time is short. Soon they will apparel me in the shirt without a collar. . . . But hush, my heart. The spirit is immortal. After the dark I shall live again, and there will be women. The future holds the little women for me in the lives I am yet to live. And though the stars drift, and the heavens lie, ever remains woman, resplendent, eternal, the one woman, as I, under all my masquerades and misadventures, am the one man, her mate.

CHAPTER XXII

My time grows very short. All the manuscript I have written is safely smuggled out of the prison. There is a man I can trust who will see that it is published. No longer am I in Murderers Row. I am writing these lines in the death cell, and the death-watch is set on me. Night and day is this death-watch on me, and its paradoxical function is to see that I do not die. I must be kept alive for the hanging, or else will the public be cheated, the law blackened, and a mark of demerit placed against the time-serving warden who runs this prison and one of whose duties is to see that his condemned ones are duly and properly hanged. Often I marvel at the strange way some men make their livings.

This shall be my last writing. To-morrow morning the hour is set. The governor has declined to pardon or reprieve, despite the fact that the Anti-Capital-Punishment League has raised quite a stir in California. The reporters are gathered like so many buzzards. I have seen them all. They are queer young fellows, most of them, and most queer is it that they will thus earn bread and butter, cocktails and tobacco, room-rent, and, if they are married, shoes and schoolbooks for their children, by witnessing the execution of Professor Darrell Standing, and by describing for the public how Professor Darrell Standing died at the end of a rope. Ah, well, they will be sicker than I at the end of the affair.

As I sit here and muse on it all, the footfalls of the death-watch going up and down outside my cage, the man's suspicious eyes ever peering in on me, almost I weary of eternal recurrence. I have lived so many lives. I weary of the endless struggle and pain and catastrophe that come to those who sit in the high places, tread the shining ways, and wander among the stars.

Almost I hope, when next I reinhabit form, that it shall be that of a peaceful farmer. There is my dream-farm. I should like to engage just for one whole life in that. Oh, my dream-farm! My alfalfa meadows, my efficient Jersey cattle, my upland pastures, my brush-covered slopes melting into tilled fields, while ever higher up the slopes my angora goats eat away brush to tillage!

There is a basin there, a natural basin high up the slopes, with a generous watershed on three sides. I should like to throw a dam across the fourth side, which is surprisingly narrow. At a paltry price of labour I could impound twenty million gallons of water. For, see: one great drawback to farming in California is our long dry summer. This prevents the growing of cover crops, and the sensitive soil, naked, a mere surface dust-mulch, has its humus burned out of it by the sun. Now with that dam I could grow three crops a year, observing due rotation, and be able to turn under a wealth of green manure. . . .

* * * * *

I have just endured a visit from the Warden. I say “endured” advisedly. He is quite different from the Warden of San Quentin. He was very nervous, and perforce I had to entertain him. This is his first hanging. He told me so. And I, with a clumsy attempt at wit, did not reassure him when I explained that it was also my first hanging. He was unable to laugh. He has a girl in high school, and his boy is a freshman at Stanford. He has no income outside his salary, his wife is an invalid, and he is worried in that he has been rejected by the life insurance doctors as an undesirable risk. Really, the man told me almost all his troubles. Had I not diplomatically terminated the interview he would still be here telling me the remainder of them.

My last two years in San Quentin were very gloomy and depressing. Ed Morrell, by one of the wildest freaks of chance, was taken out of solitary and made head trusty of the whole prison. This was Al Hutchins’ old job, and it carried a graft of three thousand dollars a year. To my misfortune, Jake Oppenheimer, who had rotted in solitary for so many years, turned sour on the world, on everything. For eight months he refused to talk even to me.

In prison, news will travel. Give it time and it will reach dungeon and solitary cell. It reached me, at last, that Cecil Winwood, the poet-forger, the snitcher, the coward, and the stool, was returned for a fresh forgery. It will be remembered that it was this Cecil Winwood who concocted the fairy story that I had changed the plant of the non-existent dynamite and who was responsible for the five years I had then spent in solitary.

I decided to kill Cecil Winwood. You see, Morrell was gone, and Oppenheimer, until the outbreak that finished him, had remained in the silence. Solitary had grown monotonous for me. I had to do something.

So I remembered back to the time when I was Adam Strang and patiently nursed revenge for forty years. What he had done I could do if once I locked my hands on Cecil Winwood's throat.

It cannot be expected of me to divulge how I came into possession of the four needles. They were small cambric needles. Emaciated as my body was, I had to saw four bars, each in two places, in order to make an aperture through which I could squirm. I did it. I used up one needle to each bar. This meant two cuts to a bar, and it took a month to a cut. Thus I should have been eight months in cutting my way out. Unfortunately, I broke my last needle on the last bar, and I had to wait three months before I could get another needle. But I got it, and I got out.

I regret greatly that I did not get Cecil Winwood. I had calculated well on everything save one thing. The certain chance to find Winwood would be in the dining-room at dinner hour. So I waited until Pie-Face Jones, the sleepy guard, should be on shift at the noon hour. At that time I was the only inmate of solitary, so that Pie-Face Jones was quickly snoring. I removed my bars, squeezed out, stole past him along the ward, opened the door and was free . . . to a portion of the inside of the prison.

And here was the one thing I had not calculated on — myself. I had been five years in solitary. I was hideously weak. I weighed eighty-seven pounds. I was half blind. And I was immediately stricken with agoraphobia. I was affrighted by spaciousness. Five years in narrow walls had unfitted me for the enormous declivity of the stairway, for the vastitude of the prison yard.

The descent of that stairway I consider the most heroic exploit I ever accomplished. The yard was deserted. The blinding sun blazed down on it. Thrice I essayed to cross it. But my senses reeled and I shrank back to the wall for protection. Again, summoning all my courage, I attempted it. But my poor blear eyes, like a bat's, startled me at my shadow on the flagstones. I attempted to avoid my own shadow, tripped, fell over it, and like a drowning man struggling for shore crawled back on hands and knees to the wall.

I leaned against the wall and cried. It was the first time in many years that I had cried. I remember noting, even in my extremity, the warmth of the tears on my cheeks and the salt taste when they reached my lips. Then I had a chill, and for a time shook as with an ague. Abandoning the openness of the yard as too impossible a feat for one in my condition, still shaking with the chill, crouching close to the protecting wall, my hands touching it, I started to skirt the yard.

Then it was, somewhere along, that the guard Thurston espied me. I saw him, distorted by my bleared eyes, a huge, well-fed monster, rushing upon me with incredible speed out of the remote distance. Possibly, at that moment, he was twenty feet away. He weighed one hundred and seventy pounds. The struggle between us can be easily imagined, but somewhere in that brief struggle it was claimed that I struck him on the nose with my fist to such purpose as to make that organ bleed.

At any rate, being a lifer, and the penalty in California for battery by a lifer being death, I was so found guilty by a jury which could not ignore the asseverations of the guard Thurston and the rest of the prison hang-dogs that testified, and I was so sentenced by a judge who could not ignore the law as spread plainly on the statute book.

I was well pummelled by Thurston, and all the way back up that prodigious stairway I was roundly kicked, punched, and cuffed by the horde of trusties and guards who got in one another's way in their zeal to assist him. Heavens, if his nose did bleed, the probability is that some of his own kind were guilty of causing it in the confusion of the scuffle. I shouldn't care if I were responsible for it myself, save that it is so pitiful a thing for which to hang a man. . . .

* * * * *

I have just had a talk with the man on shift of my death-watch. A little less than a year ago, Jake Oppenheimer occupied this same death-cell on the road to the gallows which I will tread to-morrow. This man was one of the death-watch on Jake. He is an old soldier. He chews tobacco constantly, and untidily, for his gray beard and moustache are stained yellow. He is a widower, with fourteen living children, all married, and is the grandfather of thirty-one living grandchildren, and the great-grandfather of four younglings, all girls. It was like pulling teeth to extract such information. He is a queer old codger, of a low order of intelligence. That is why, I fancy, he has lived so long and fathered so numerous a progeny. His mind must have crystallized thirty years ago. His ideas are none of them later than that vintage. He rarely says more than yes and no to me. It is not because he is surly. He has no ideas to utter. I don't know, when I live again, but what one incarnation such as his would be a nice vegetative existence in which to rest up ere I go star-roving again. . . .

But to go back. I must take a line in which to tell, after I was hustled and bustled, kicked and punched, up that terrible stairway by Thurston and the rest of the prison-dogs, of the infinite relief of my narrow cell when I found myself back in solitary. It was all so safe, so secure. I felt like a lost child returned home again. I loved those very walls that I had so hated for five years. All that kept the vastness of space, like a monster, from pouncing upon me were those good stout walls of mine, close to hand on every side. Agoraphobia is a terrible affliction. I have had little opportunity to experience it, but from that little I can only conclude that hanging is a far easier matter. . . .

I have just had a hearty laugh. The prison doctor, a likable chap, has just been in to have a yarn with me, incidentally to proffer me his good offices in the matter of dope. Of course I declined his proposition to "shoot me" so full of morphine through the night that to-morrow I would not know, when I marched to the gallows, whether I was "coming or going."

But the laugh. It was just like Jake Oppenheimer. I can see the lean keenness of the man as he strung the reporters with his deliberate bull which they thought involuntary. It seems, his last morning, breakfast finished, incased in the shirt without a collar, that the reporters, assembled for his last word in his cell, asked him for his views on capital punishment.

— Who says we have more than the slightest veneer of civilization coated over our raw savagery when a group of living men can ask such a question of a man about to die and whom they are to see die?

But Jake was ever game. "Gentlemen," he said, "I hope to live to see the day when capital punishment is abolished."

I have lived many lives through the long ages. Man, the individual, has made no moral progress in the past ten thousand years. I affirm this absolutely. The difference between an unbroken colt and the patient draught-horse is purely a difference of training. Training is the only moral difference between the man of to-day and the man of ten thousand years ago. Under his thin skin of morality which he has had polished onto him, he is the same savage that he was ten thousand years ago. Morality is a social fund, an accretion through the painful ages. The new-born child will become a savage unless it is trained, polished, by the abstract morality that has been so long accumulating.

“Thou shalt not kill” — piffle! They are going to kill me to-morrow morning. “Thou shalt not kill” — piffle! In the shipyards of all civilized countries they are laying to-day the keels of Dreadnoughts and of Superdreadnoughts. Dear friends, I who am about to die, salute you with — “Piffle!”

I ask you, what finer morality is preached to-day than was preached by Christ, by Buddha, by Socrates and Plato, by Confucius and whoever was the author of the “Mahabharata”? Good Lord, fifty thousand years ago, in our totem-families, our women were cleaner, our family and group relations more rigidly right.

I must say that the morality we practised in those old days was a finer morality than is practised to-day. Don’t dismiss this thought hastily. Think of our child labour, of our police graft and our political corruption, of our food adulteration and of our slavery of the daughters of the poor. When I was a Son of the Mountain and a Son of the Bull, prostitution had no meaning. We were clean, I tell you. We did not dream such depths of depravity. Yea, so are all the lesser animals of to-day clean. It required man, with his imagination, aided by his mastery of matter, to invent the deadly sins. The lesser animals, the other animals, are incapable of sin.

I read hastily back through the many lives of many times and many places. I have never known cruelty more terrible, nor so terrible, as the cruelty of our prison system of to-day. I have told you what I have endured in the jacket and in solitary in the first decade of this twentieth century after Christ. In the old days we punished drastically and killed quickly. We did it because we so desired, because of whim, if you so please. But we were not hypocrites. We did not call upon press, and pulpit, and university to sanction us in our wilfulness of savagery. What we wanted to do we went and did, on our legs upstanding, and we faced all reproof and censure on our legs upstanding, and did not hide behind the skirts of classical economists and bourgeois philosophers, nor behind the skirts of subsidized preachers, professors, and editors.

Why, goodness me, a hundred years ago, fifty years ago, five years ago, in these United States, assault and battery was not a civil capital crime. But this year, the year of Our Lord 1913, in the State of California, they hanged Jake Oppenheimer for such an offence, and to-morrow, for the civil capital crime of punching a man on the nose, they are going to take me out and hang me. Query: Doesn’t it require a long time for the ape and the tiger to die when such statutes are spread on the statute book of California in the nineteen-hundred-and-thirteenth year after Christ? Lord, Lord, they only crucified Christ. They have done far worse to Jake Oppenheimer and me. . . .

* * * * *

As Ed Morrell once rapped to me with his knuckles: "The worst possible use you can put a man to is to hang him." No, I have little respect for capital punishment. Not only is it a dirty game, degrading to the hang-dogs who personally perpetrate it for a wage, but it is degrading to the commonwealth that tolerates it, votes for it, and pays the taxes for its maintenance. Capital punishment is so *silly*, so stupid, so horribly unscientific. "To be hanged by the neck until dead" is society's quaint phraseology . . .

* * * * *

Morning is come — my last morning. I slept like a babe throughout the night. I slept so peacefully that once the death-watch got a fright. He thought I had suffocated myself in my blankets. The poor man's alarm was pitiful. His bread and butter was at stake. Had it truly been so, it would have meant a black mark against him, perhaps discharge and the outlook for an unemployed man is bitter just at present. They tell me that Europe began liquidating two years ago, and that now the United States has begun. That means either a business crisis or a quiet panic and that the armies of the unemployed will be large next winter, the bread-lines long. . . .

I have had my breakfast. It seemed a silly thing to do, but I ate it heartily. The Warden came with a quart of whiskey. I presented it to Murderers Row with my compliments. The Warden, poor man, is afraid, if I be not drunk, that I shall make a mess of the function and cast reflection on his management . . .

They have put on me the shirt without a collar. . .

It seems I am a very important man this day. Quite a lot of people are suddenly interested in me. . . .

The doctor has just gone. He has taken my pulse. I asked him to. It is normal. . . .

I write these random thoughts, and, a sheet at a time, they start on their secret way out beyond the walls. . . .

I am the calmest man in the prison. I am like a child about to start on a journey. I am eager to be gone, curious for the new places I shall see. This fear of the lesser death is ridiculous to one who has gone into the dark so often and lived again. . . .

The Warden with a quart of champagne. I have dispatched it down Murderers Row. Queer, isn't it, that I am so considered this last day. It must be that these men who are to kill me are themselves afraid of death. To quote Jake Oppenheimer: I, who am about to die, must seem to them something God-awful. . . .

Ed Morrell has just sent word in to me. They tell me he has paced up and down all night outside the prison wall. Being an ex-convict, they have red-taped him out of seeing me to say good-bye. Savages? I don't know. Possibly just children. I'll wager most of them will be afraid to be alone in the dark to-night after stretching my neck.

But Ed Morrell's message: "My hand is in yours, old pal. I know you'll swing off game." . . .

* * * * *

The reporters have just left. I'll see them next, and last time, from the scaffold, ere the hangman hides my face in the black cap. They will be looking curiously sick. Queer young fellows. Some show that they have been drinking. Two or three look sick with foreknowledge of what they have to witness. It seems easier to be hanged than to look on. . . .

* * * * *

My last lines. It seems I am delaying the procession. My cell is quite crowded with officials and dignitaries. They are all nervous. They want it over. Without a doubt, some of them have dinner engagements. I am really offending them by writing these few words. The priest has again preferred his request to be with me to the end. The poor man — why should I deny him that solace? I have consented, and he now appears quite cheerful. Such small things make some men happy! I could stop and laugh for a hearty five minutes, if they were not in such a hurry.

Here I close. I can only repeat myself. There is no death. Life is spirit, and spirit cannot die. Only the flesh dies and passes, ever a-crawl with the chemic ferment that informs it, ever plastic, ever crystallizing, only to melt into the flux and to crystallize into fresh and diverse forms that are ephemeral and that melt back into the flux. Spirit alone endures and continues to build upon itself through successive and endless incarnations as it works upward toward the light. What shall I be when I live again? I wonder. I wonder. . . .

THE LITTLE LADY OF THE BIG HOUSE

This 1915 novel features many autobiographical aspects from London’s life. The story concerns a love triangle, with protagonist, Dick Forrest, a rancher with a poetic streak, and his wife, Paula, a vivacious, athletic, and sexually self-aware woman.

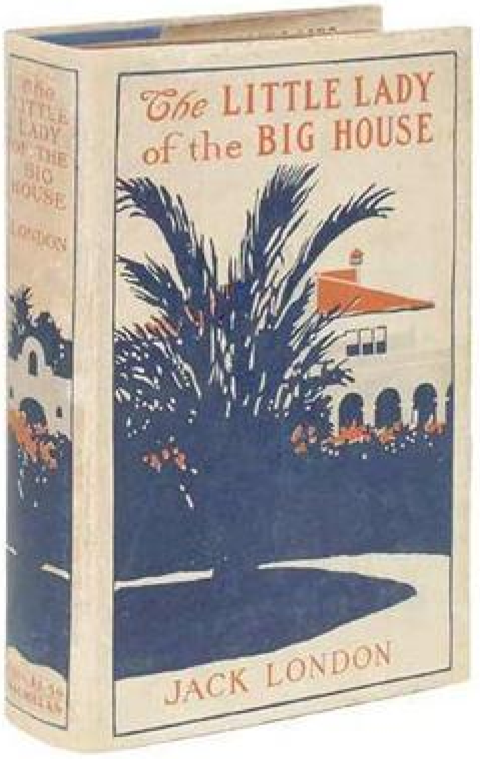
The LITTLE LADY of the BIG HOUSE
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV.
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII
CHAPTER XXVIII
CHAPTER XXIX
CHAPTER XXX
CHAPTER XXXI

CHAPTER I

He awoke in the dark. His awakening was simple, easy, without movement save for the eyes that opened and made him aware of darkness. Unlike most, who must feel and grope and listen to, and contact with, the world about them, he knew himself on the moment of awakening, instantly identifying himself in time and place and personality. After the lapsed hours of sleep he took up, without effort, the interrupted tale of his days. He knew himself to be Dick Forrest, the master of broad acres, who had fallen asleep hours before after drowsily putting a match between the pages of “Road Town” and pressing off the electric reading lamp.

Near at hand there was the ripple and gurgle of some sleepy fountain. From far off, so faint and far that only a keen ear could catch, he heard a sound that made him smile with pleasure. He knew it for the distant, throaty bawl of King Polo — King Polo, his champion Short Horn bull, thrice Grand Champion also of all bulls at Sacramento at the California State Fairs. The smile was slow in easing from Dick Forrest’s face, for he dwelt a moment on the new triumphs he had destined that year for King Polo on the Eastern livestock circuits. He would show them that a bull, California born and finished, could compete with the cream of bulls corn-fed in Iowa or imported overseas from the immemorial home of Short Horns.

Not until the smile faded, which was a matter of seconds, did he reach out in the dark and press the first of a row of buttons. There were three rows of such buttons. The concealed lighting that spilled from the huge bowl under the ceiling revealed a sleeping-porch, three sides of which were fine-meshed copper screen. The fourth side was the house wall, solid concrete, through which French windows gave access.

He pressed the second button in the row and the bright light concentered at a particular place on the concrete wall, illuminating, in a row, a clock, a barometer, and centigrade and Fahrenheit thermometers. Almost in a sweep of glance he read the messages of the dials: time 4:30; air pressure, 29:80, which was normal at that altitude and season; and temperature, Fahrenheit, 36°. With another press, the gauges of time and heat and air were sent back into the darkness.

A third button turned on his reading lamp, so arranged that the light fell from above and behind without shining into his eyes. The first button turned off the concealed lighting overhead. He reached a mass of proofsheets from the reading stand, and, pencil in hand, lighting a cigarette, he began to correct.

The place was clearly the sleeping quarters of a man who worked. Efficiency was its key note, though comfort, not altogether Spartan, was also manifest. The bed was of gray enameled iron to tone with the concrete wall. Across the foot of the bed, an extra coverlet, hung a gray robe of wolfskins with every tail a-dangle. On the floor, where rested a pair of slippers, was spread a thick-coated skin of mountain goat.

Heaped orderly with books, magazines and scribble-pads, there was room on the big reading stand for matches, cigarettes, an ash-tray, and a thermos bottle. A phonograph, for purposes of dictation, stood on a hinged and swinging bracket. On the wall, under the barometer and thermometers, from a round wooden frame laughed the face of a girl. On the wall, between the rows of buttons and a switchboard, from an open holster, loosely projected the butt of a .44 Colt's automatic.

At six o'clock, sharp, after gray light had begun to filter through the wire netting, Dick Forrest, without raising his eyes from the proofsheets, reached out his right hand and pressed a button in the second row. Five minutes later a soft-slippered Chinese emerged on the sleeping-porch. In his hands he bore a small tray of burnished copper on which rested a cup and saucer, a tiny coffee pot of silver, and a correspondingly tiny silver cream pitcher.

"Good morning, Oh My," was Dick Forrest's greeting, and his eyes smiled and his lips smiled as he uttered it.

"Good morning, Master," Oh My returned, as he busied himself with making room on the reading stand for the tray and with pouring the coffee and cream.

This done, without waiting further orders, noting that his master was already sipping coffee with one hand while he made a correction on the proof with the other, Oh My picked up a rosy, filmy, lacy boudoir cap from the floor and departed. His exit was noiseless. He ebbed away like a shadow through the open French windows.

At six-thirty, sharp to the minute, he was back with a larger tray. Dick Forrest put away the proofs, reached for a book entitled "Commercial Breeding of Frogs," and prepared to eat. The breakfast was simple yet fairly substantial — more coffee, a half grape-fruit, two soft-boiled eggs made ready in a glass with a dab of butter and piping hot, and a sliver of bacon, not over-cooked, that he knew was of his own raising and curing.

By this time the sunshine was pouring in through the screening and across the bed. On the outside of the wire screen clung a number of house-flies, early-hatched for the season and numb with the night's cold. As Forrest ate he watched the hunting of the meat-eating yellow-jackets. Sturdy, more frost-resistant than bees, they were already on the wing and preying on the benumbed flies. Despite the rowdy noise of their flight, these yellow hunters of the air, with rarely ever a miss, pounced on their helpless victims and sailed away with them. The last fly was gone ere Forrest had sipped his last sip of coffee, marked "Commercial Breeding of Frogs" with a match, and taken up his proofsheets.

After a time, the liquid-mellow cry of the meadow-lark, first vocal for the day, caused him to desist. He looked at the clock. It marked seven. He set aside the proofs and began a series of conversations by means of the switchboard, which he manipulated with a practiced hand.

"Hello, Oh Joy," was his first talk. "Is Mr. Thayer up?… Very well. Don't disturb him. I don't think he'll breakfast in bed, but find out…. That's right, and show him how to work the hot water. Maybe he doesn't know… Yes, that's right. Plan for one more boy as soon as you can get him. There's always a crowd when the good weather comes on…. Sure. Use your judgment. Good-by."

"Mr. Hanley?… Yes," was his second conversation, over another switch. "I've been thinking about the dam on the Buckeye. I want the figures on the gravel-haul and on the rock-crushing…. Yes, that's it. I imagine that the gravel-haul will cost anywhere between six and ten cents a yard more than the crushed rock. That last pitch of hill is what eats up the gravel-teams. Work out the figures. … No, we won't be able to start for a fortnight. … Yes, yes; the new tractors, if they ever deliver, will release the horses from the plowing, but they'll have to go back for the checking…. No, you'll have to see Mr. Everan about that. Good-by."

And his third call:

"Mr. Dawson? Ha! Ha! Thirty-six on my porch right now. It must be white with frost down on the levels. But it's most likely the last this year…. Yes, they swore the tractors would be delivered two days ago…. Call up the station agent. … By the way, you catch Hanley for me. I forgot to tell him to start the 'rat-catchers' out with the second instalment of fly-traps…. Yes, pronto. There were a couple of dozen roosting on my screen this morning…. Yes…. Good-by.”

At this stage, Forrest slid out of bed in his pajamas, slipped his feet into the slippers, and strode through the French windows to the bath, already drawn by Oh My. A dozen minutes afterward, shaved as well, he was back in bed, reading his frog book while Oh My, punctual to the minute, massaged his legs.

They were the well-formed legs of a well-built, five-foot-ten man who weighed a hundred and eighty pounds. Further, they told a tale of the man. The left thigh was marred by a scar ten inches in length. Across the left ankle, from instep to heel, were scattered half a dozen scars the size of half-dollars. When Oh My prodded and pulled the left knee a shade too severely, Forrest was guilty of a wince. The right shin was colored with several dark scars, while a big scar, just under the knee, was a positive dent in the bone. Midway between knee and groin was the mark of an ancient three-inch gash, curiously dotted with the minute scars of stitches.

A sudden, joyous nicker from without put the match between the pages of the frog book, and, while Oh My proceeded partly to dress his master in bed, including socks and shoes, the master, twisting partly on his side, stared out in the direction of the nicker. Down the road, through the swaying purple of the early lilacs, ridden by a picturesque cowboy, paced a great horse, glinting ruddy in the morning sun-gold, flinging free the snowy foam of his mighty fetlocks, his noble crest tossing, his eyes roving afield, the trumpet of his love-call echoing through the springing land.

Dick Forrest was smitten at the same instant with joy and anxiety — joy in the glorious beast pacing down between the lilac hedges; anxiety in that the stallion might have awakened the girl who laughed from the round wooden frame on his wall. He glanced quickly across the two-hundred-foot court to the long, shadowy jut of her wing of the house. The shades of her sleeping-porch were down. They did not stir. Again the stallion nickered, and all that moved was a flock of wild canaries, upspringing from the flowers and shrubs of the court, rising like a green-gold spray of light flung from the sunrise.

He watched the stallion out of sight through the lilacs, seeing visions of fair Shire colts mighty of bone and frame and free from blemish, then turned, as ever he turned to the immediate thing, and spoke to his body servant.

"How's that last boy, Oh My? Showing up?"

"Him pretty good boy, I think," was the answer. "Him young boy.

Everything new. Pretty slow. All the same bime by him show up good."

"Why? What makes you think so?"

"I call him three, four morning now. Him sleep like baby. Him wake up smiling just like you. That very good."

"Do I wake up smiling?" Forrest queried.

Oh My nodded his head violently.

"Many times, many years, I call you. Always your eyes open, your eyes smile, your mouth smile, your face smile, you smile all over, just like that, right away quick. That very good. A man wake up that way got plenty good sense. I know. This new boy like that. Bime by, pretty soon, he make fine boy. You see. His name Chow Gam. What name you call him this place?"

Dick Forrest meditated.

"What names have we already?" he asked.

"Oh Joy, Ah Well, Ah Me, and me; I am Oh My," the Chinese rattled off.

"Oh Joy him say call new boy — "

He hesitated and stared at his master with a challenging glint of eye.

Forrest nodded.

"Oh Joy him say call new boy 'Oh Hell.'"

"Oh ho!" Forrest laughed in appreciation. "Oh Joy is a josher. A good name, but it won't do. There is the Missus. We've got to think another name."

"Oh Ho, that very good name."

Forrest's exclamation was still ringing in his consciousness so that he recognized the source of Oh My's inspiration.

"Very well. The boy's name is Oh Ho."

Oh My lowered his head, ebbed swiftly through the French windows, and as swiftly returned with the rest of Forrest's clothes-gear, helping him into undershirt and shirt, tossing a tie around his neck for him to knot, and, kneeling, putting on his leggings and spurs. A Baden Powell hat and a quirt completed his appareling — the quirt, Indian-braided of rawhide, with ten ounces of lead braided into the butt that hung from his wrist on a loop of leather.

But Forrest was not yet free. Oh My handed him several letters, with the explanation that they had come up from the station the previous night after Forrest had gone to bed. He tore the right-hand ends across and glanced at the contents of all but one with speed. The latter he dwelt upon for a moment, with an irritated indrawing of brows, then swung out the phonograph from the wall, pressed the button that made the cylinder revolve, and swiftly dictated, without ever a pause for word or idea:

"In reply to yours of March 14, 1914, I am indeed sorry to learn that you were hit with hog cholera. I am equally sorry that you have seen fit to charge me with the responsibility. And just as equally am I sorry that the boar we sent you is dead.

"I can only assure you that we are quite clear of cholera here, and that we have been clear of cholera for eight years, with the exception of two Eastern importations, the last two years ago, both of which, according to our custom, were segregated on arrival and were destroyed before the contagion could be communicated to our herds.

"I feel that I must inform you that in neither case did I charge the sellers with having sent me diseased stock. On the contrary, as you should know, the incubation of hog cholera being nine days, I consulted the shipping dates of the animals and knew that they had been healthy when shipped.

"Has it ever entered your mind that the railroads are largely responsible for the spread of cholera? Did you ever hear of a railroad fumigating or disinfecting a car which had carried cholera? Consult the dates: First, of shipment by me; second, of receipt of the boar by you; and, third, of appearance of symptoms in the boar. As you say, because of washouts, the boar was five days on the way. Not until the seventh day after you receipted for same did the first symptoms appear. That makes twelve days after it left my hands.

"No; I must disagree with you. I am not responsible for the disaster that overtook your herd. Furthermore, doubly to assure you, write to the State Veterinary as to whether or not my place is free of cholera.

"Very truly yours…"

CHAPTER II

When Forrest went through the French windows from his sleeping-porch, he crossed, first, a comfortable dressing room, window-divaned, many-lockered, with a generous fireplace, out of which opened a bathroom; and, second, a long office room, wherein was all the paraphernalia of business — desks, dictaphones, filing cabinets, book cases, magazine files, and drawer-pigeonholes that tiered to the low, beamed ceiling.

Midway in the office room, he pressed a button and a series of book-freightened shelves swung on a pivot, revealing a tiny spiral stairway of steel, which he descended with care that his spurs might not catch, the bookshelves swinging into place behind him.

At the foot of the stairway, a press on another button pivoted more shelves of books and gave him entrance into a long low room shelved with books from floor to ceiling. He went directly to a case, directly to a shelf, and unerringly laid his hand on the book he sought. A minute he ran the pages, found the passage he was after, nodded his head to himself in vindication, and replaced the book.

A door gave way to a pergola of square concrete columns spanned with redwood logs and interlaced with smaller trunks of redwood, all rough and crinkled velvet with the ruddy purple of the bark.

It was evident, since he had to skirt several hundred feet of concrete walls of wandering house, that he had not taken the short way out. Under wide-spreading ancient oaks, where the long hitching-rails, bark-chewed, and the hoof-beaten gravel showed the stamping place of many horses, he found a pale-golden, almost tan-golden, sorrel mare. Her well-groomed spring coat was alive and flaming in the morning sun that slanted straight under the edge of the roof of trees. She was herself alive and flaming. She was built like a stallion, and down her backbone ran a narrow dark strip of hair that advertised an ancestry of many range mustangs.

“How’s the Man-Eater this morning?” he queried, as he unsnapped the tie-rope from her throat.

She laid back the tiniest ears that ever a horse possessed — ears that told of some thoroughbred’s wild loves with wild mares among the hills — and snapped at Forrest with wicked teeth and wicked-gleaming eyes.

She sidled and attempted to rear as he swung into the saddle, and, sidling and attempting to rear, she went off down the graveled road. And rear she would have, had it not been for the martingale that held her head down and that, as well, saved the rider's nose from her angry-tossing head.

So used was he to the mare, that he was scarcely aware of her antics. Automatically, with slightest touch of rein against arched neck, or with tickle of spur or press of knee, he kept the mare to the way he willed. Once, as she whirled and danced, he caught a glimpse of the Big House. Big it was in all seeming, and yet, such was the vagrant nature of it, it was not so big as it seemed. Eight hundred feet across the front face, it stretched. But much of this eight hundred feet was composed of mere corridors, concrete-walled, tile-roofed, that connected and assembled the various parts of the building. There were patios and pergolas in proportion, and all the walls, with their many right-angled juts and recessions, arose out of a bed of greenery and bloom.

Spanish in character, the architecture of the Big House was not of the California-Spanish type which had been introduced by way of Mexico a hundred years before, and which had been modified by modern architects to the California-Spanish architecture of the day. Hispano-Moresque more technically classified the Big House in all its hybridness, although there were experts who heatedly quarreled with the term.

Spaciousness without austerity and beauty without ostentation were the fundamental impressions the Big House gave. Its lines, long and horizontal, broken only by lines that were vertical and by the lines of juts and recesses that were always right-angled, were as chaste as those of a monastery. The irregular roof-line, however, relieved the hint of monotony.

Low and rambling, without being squat, the square upthrusts of towers and of towers over-topping towers gave just proportion of height without being sky-aspiring. The sense of the Big House was solidarity. It defied earthquakes. It was planted for a thousand years. The honest concrete was overlaid by a cream-stucco of honest cement. Again, this very sameness of color might have proved monotonous to the eye had it not been saved by the many flat roofs of warm-red Spanish tile.

In that one sweeping glance while the mare whirled unduly, Dick Forrest's eyes, embracing all of the Big House, centered for a quick solicitous instant on the great wing across the two-hundred-foot court, where, under climbing groups of towers, red-snooded in the morning sun, the drawn shades of the sleeping-porch tokened that his lady still slept.

About him, for three quadrants of the circle of the world, arose low-rolling hills, smooth, fenced, cropped, and pastured, that melted into higher hills and steeper wooded slopes that merged upward, steeper, into mighty mountains. The fourth quadrant was unbounded by mountain walls and hills. It faded away, descending easily to vast far flatlands, which, despite the clear brittle air of frost, were too vast and far to scan across.

The mare under him snorted. His knees tightened as he straightened her into the road and forced her to one side. Down upon him, with a pattering of feet on the gravel, flowed a river of white shimmering silk. He knew it at sight for his prize herd of Angora goats, each with a pedigree, each with a history. There had to be a near two hundred of them, and he knew, according to the rigorous selection he commanded, not having been clipped in the fall, that the shining mohair draping the sides of the least of them, as fine as any human new-born baby's hair and finer, as white as any human albino's thatch and whiter, was longer than the twelve-inch staple, and that the mohair of the best of them would dye any color into twenty-inch switches for women's heads and sell at prices unreasonable and profound.

The beauty of the sight held him as well. The roadway had become a flowing ribbon of silk, gemmed with yellow cat-like eyes that floated past wary and curious in their regard for him and his nervous horse. Two Basque herders brought up the rear. They were short, broad, swarthy men, black-eyed, vivid-faced, contemplative and philosophic of expression. They pulled off their hats and ducked their heads to him. Forrest lifted his right hand, the quirt dangling from wrist, the straight forefinger touching the rim of his Baden Powell in semi-military salute.

The mare, prancing and whirling again, he held her with a touch of rein and threat of spur, and gazed after the four-footed silk that filled the road with shimmering white. He knew the significance of their presence. The time for kidding was approaching and they were being brought down from their brush-pastures to the brood-pens and shelters for jealous care and generous feed through the period of increase. And as he gazed, in his mind, comparing, was a vision of all the best of Turkish and South African mohair he had ever seen, and his flock bore the comparison well. It looked good. It looked very good.

He rode on. From all about arose the clacking whir of manure-spreaders. In the distance, on the low, easy-sloping hills, he saw team after team, and many teams, three to a team abreast, what he knew were his Shire mares, drawing the plows back and forth across, contour-plowing, turning the green sod of the hillsides to the rich dark brown of humus-filled earth so organic and friable that it would almost melt by gravity into fine-particled seed-bed. That was for the corn — and sorghum-planting for his silos. Other hill-slopes, in the due course of his rotation, were knee-high in barley; and still other slopes were showing the good green of burr clover and Canada pea.

Everywhere about him, large fields and small were arranged in a system of accessibility and workability that would have warmed the heart of the most meticulous efficiency-expert. Every fence was hog-tight and bull-proof, and no weeds grew in the shelters of the fences. Many of the level fields were in alfalfa. Others, following the rotations, bore crops planted the previous fall, or were in preparation for the spring-planting. Still others, close to the brood barns and pens, were being grazed by rotund Shropshire and French-Merino ewes, or were being hogged off by white Gargantuan brood-sows that brought a flash of pleasure in his eyes as he rode past and gazed.

He rode through what was almost a village, save that there were neither shops nor hotels. The houses were bungalows, substantial, pleasing to the eye, each set in the midst of gardens where stouter blooms, including roses, were out and smiling at the threat of late frost. Children were already astir, laughing and playing among the flowers or being called in to breakfast by their mothers.

Beyond, beginning at a half-mile distant to circle the Big House, he passed a row of shops. He paused at the first and glanced in. One smith was working at a forge. A second smith, a shoe fresh-nailed on the fore-foot of an elderly Shire mare that would disturb the scales at eighteen hundred weight, was rasping down the outer wall of the hoof to smooth with the toe of the shoe. Forrest saw, saluted, rode on, and, a hundred feet away, paused and scribbled a memorandum in the notebook he drew from his hip-pocket.

He passed other shops — a paint-shop, a wagon-shop, a plumbing shop, a carpenter-shop. While he glanced at the last, a hybrid machine, half-auto, half-truck, passed him at speed and took the main road for the railroad station eight miles away. He knew it for the morning butter-truck freighting from the separator house the daily output of the dairy.

The Big House was the hub of the ranch organization. Half a mile from it, it was encircled by the various ranch centers. Dick Forrest, saluting continually his people, passed at a gallop the dairy center, which was almost a sea of buildings with batteries of silos and with litter carriers emerging on overhead tracks and automatically dumping into waiting manure-spreaders. Several times, business-looking men, college-marked, astride horses or driving carts, stopped him and conferred with him. They were foremen, heads of departments, and they were as brief and to the point as was he. The last of them, astride a Palomina three-year-old that was as graceful and wild as a half-broken Arab, was for riding by with a bare salute, but was stopped by his employer.

"Good morning, Mr. Hennessy, and how soon will she be ready for Mrs.

Forrest?" Dick Forrest asked.

"I'd like another week," was Hennessy's answer. "She's well broke now, just the way Mrs. Forrest wanted, but she's over-strung and sensitive and I'd like the week more to set her in her ways."

Forrest nodded concurrence, and Hennessy, who was the veterinary, went on:

"There are two drivers in the alfalfa gang I'd like to send down the hill."

"What's the matter with them?"

"One, a new man, Hopkins, is an ex-soldier. He may know government mules, but he doesn't know Shires."

Forrest nodded.

"The other has worked for us two years, but he's drinking now, and he takes his hang-overs out on his horses — "

"That's Smith, old-type American, smooth-shaven, with a cast in his left eye?" Forrest interrupted.

The veterinary nodded.

"I've been watching him," Forrest concluded. "He was a good man at first, but he's slipped a cog recently. Sure, send him down the hill. And send that other fellow — Hopkins, you said? — along with him. By the way, Mr. Hennessy." As he spoke, Forrest drew forth his pad book, tore off the last note scribbled, and crumpled it in his hand. "You've a new horse-shoer in the shop. How does he strike you?"

"He's too new to make up my mind yet."

“Well, send him down the hill along with the other two. He can’t take your orders. I observed him just now fitting a shoe to old Alden Bessie by rasping off half an inch of the toe of her hoof.”

“He knew better.”

“Send him down the hill,” Forrest repeated, as he tickled his champing mount with the slightest of spur-tickles and shot her out along the road, sidling, head-tossing, and attempting to rear.

Much he saw that pleased him. Once, he murmured aloud, “A fat land, a fat land.” Divers things he saw that did not please him and that won a note in his scribble pad. Completing the circle about the Big House and riding beyond the circle half a mile to an isolated group of sheds and corrals, he reached the objective of the ride: the hospital. Here he found but two young heifers being tested for tuberculosis, and a magnificent Duroc Jersey boar in magnificent condition. Weighing fully six hundred pounds, its bright eyes, brisk movements, and sheen of hair shouted out that there was nothing the matter with it. Nevertheless, according to the ranch practice, being a fresh importation from Iowa, it was undergoing the regular period of quarantine. Burgess Premier was its name in the herd books of the association, age two years, and it had cost Forrest five hundred dollars laid down on the ranch.

Proceeding at a hand gallop along a road that was one of the spokes radiating from the Big House hub, Forrest overtook Crellin, his hog manager, and, in a five-minute conference, outlined the next few months of destiny of Burgess Premier, and learned that the brood sow, Lady Isleton, the matron of all matrons of the O. I. C.’s and blue-ribboner in all shows from Seattle to San Diego, was safely farrowed of eleven. Crellin explained that he had sat up half the night with her and was then bound home for bath and breakfast.

“I hear your oldest daughter has finished high school and wants to enter Stanford,” Forrest said, curbing the mare just as he had half-signaled departure at a gallop.

Crellin, a young man of thirty-five, with the maturity of a long-time father stamped upon him along with the marks of college and the youthfulness of a man used to the open air and straight-living, showed his appreciation of his employer’s interest as he half-flushed under his tan and nodded.

“Think it over,” Forrest advised. “Make a statistic of all the college girls — yes, and State Normal girls — you know. How many of them follow career, and how many of them marry within two years after their degrees and take to baby farming."

"Helen is very seriously bent on the matter," Crellin urged.

"Do you remember when I had my appendix out?" Forrest queried. "Well, I had as fine a nurse as I ever saw and as nice a girl as ever walked on two nice legs. She was just six months a full-fledged nurse, then. And four months after that I had to send her a wedding present. She married an automobile agent. She's lived in hotels ever since. She's never had a chance to nurse — never a child of her own to bring through a bout with colic. But… she has hopes… and, whether or not her hopes materialize, she's confoundedly happy. But… what good was her nursing apprenticeship?"

Just then an empty manure-spreader passed, forcing Crellin, on foot, and Forrest, on his mare, to edge over to the side of the road. Forrest glanced with kindling eye at the off mare of the machine, a huge, symmetrical Shire whose own blue ribbons, and the blue ribbons of her progeny, would have required an expert accountant to enumerate and classify.

"Look at the Fotherington Princess," Forrest said, nodding at the mare that warmed his eye. "She is a normal female. Only incidentally, through thousands of years of domestic selection, has man evolved her into a draught beast breeding true to kind. But being a draught-beast is secondary. Primarily she is a female. Take them by and large, our own human females, above all else, love us men and are intrinsically maternal. There is no biological sanction for all the hurly burly of woman to-day for suffrage and career."

"But there is an economic sanction," Crellin objected.

"True," his employer agreed, then proceeded to discount. "Our present industrial system prevents marriage and compels woman to career. But, remember, industrial systems come, and industrial systems go, while biology runs on forever."

"It's rather hard to satisfy young women with marriage these days," the hog-manager demurred.

Dick Forrest laughed incredulously.

"I don't know about that," he said. "There's your wife for an instance. She with her sheepskin — classical scholar at that — well, what has she done with it?… Two boys and three girls, I believe? As I remember your telling me, she was engaged to you the whole last half of her senior year."

"True, but — " Crellin insisted, with an eye-twinkle of appreciation of the point, "that was fifteen years ago, as well as a love-match. We just couldn't help it. That far, I agree. She had planned unheard-of achievements, while I saw nothing else than the deanship of the College of Agriculture. We just couldn't help it. But that was fifteen years ago, and fifteen years have made all the difference in the world in the ambitions and ideals of our young women."

"Don't you believe it for a moment. I tell you, Mr. Crellin, it's a statistic. All contrary things are transient. Ever woman remains Avoman, everlasting, eternal. Not until our girl-children cease from playing with dolls and from looking at their own enticingness in mirrors, will woman ever be otherwise than what she has always been: first, the mother, second, the mate of man. It is a statistic. I've been looking up the girls who graduate from the State Normal. You will notice that those who marry by the way before graduation are excluded. Nevertheless, the average length of time the graduates actually teach school is little more than two years. And when you consider that a lot of them, through ill looks and ill luck, are foredoomed old maids and are foredoomed to teach all their lives, you can see how they cut down the period of teaching of the marriageable ones."

"A woman, even a girl-woman, will have her way where mere men are concerned," Crellin muttered, unable to dispute his employer's figures but resolved to look them up.

"And your girl-woman will go to Stanford," Forrest laughed, as he prepared to lift his mare into a gallop, "and you and I and all men, to the end of time, will see to it that they do have their way."

Crellin smiled to himself as his employer diminished down the road; for Crellin knew his Kipling, and the thought that caused the smile was: "But where's the kid of your own, Mr. Forrest?" He decided to repeat it to Mrs. Crellin over the breakfast coffee.

Once again Dick Forrest delayed ere he gained the Big House. The man he stopped he addressed as Mendenhall, who was his horse-manager as well as pasture expert, and who was reputed to know, not only every blade of grass on the ranch, but the length of every blade of grass and its age from seed-germination as well.

At signal from Forrest, Mendenhall drew up the two colts he was driving in a double breaking-cart. What had caused Forrest to signal was a glance he had caught, across the northern edge of the valley, of great, smooth-hill ranges miles beyond, touched by the sun and deeply green where they projected into the vast flat of the Sacramento Valley.

The talk that followed was quick and abbreviated to terms of understanding between two men who knew. Grass was the subject. Mention was made of the winter rainfall and of the chance for late spring rains to come. Names occurred, such as the Little Coyote and Los Cuatos creeks, the Yolo and the Miramar hills, the Big Basin, Round Valley, and the San Anselmo and Los Banos ranges. Movements of herds and droves, past, present, and to come, were discussed, as well as the outlook for cultivated hay in far upland pastures and the estimates of such hay that still remained over the winter in remote barns in the sheltered mountain valleys where herds had wintered and been fed.

Under the oaks, at the stamping posts, Forrest was saved the trouble of tying the Man-Eater. A stableman came on the run to take the mare, and Forrest, scarce pausing for a word about a horse by the name of Duddy, was clanking his spurs into the Big House.

CHAPTER III

Forrest entered a section of the Big House by way of a massive, hewn-timber, iron-studded door that let in at the foot of what seemed a donjon keep. The floor was cement, and doors let off in various directions. One, opening to a Chinese in the white apron and starched cap of a chef, emitted at the same time the low hum of a dynamo. It was this that deflected Forrest from his straight path. He paused, holding the door ajar, and peered into a cool, electric-lighted cement room where stood a long, glass-fronted, glass-shelved refrigerator flanked by an ice-machine and a dynamo. On the floor, in greasy overalls, squatted a greasy little man to whom his employer nodded.

"Anything wrong, Thompson?" he asked.

"There was," was the answer, positive and complete.

Forrest closed the door and went on along a passage that was like a tunnel. Narrow, iron-barred openings, like the slits for archers in medieval castles, dimly lighted the way. Another door gave access to a long, low room, beam-ceilinged, with a fireplace in which an ox could have been roasted. A huge stump, resting on a bed of coals, blazed brightly. Two billiard tables, several card tables, lounging corners, and a miniature bar constituted the major furnishing. Two young men chalked their cues and returned Forrest's greeting.

"Good morning, Mr. Naismith," he bantered. " — More material for the Breeders' Gazette?"

Naismith, a youngish man of thirty, with glasses, smiled sheepishly and cocked his head at his companion.

"Wainwright challenged me," he explained.

"Which means that Lute and Ernestine must still be beauty-sleeping,"

Forrest laughed.

Young Wainwright bristled to acceptance of the challenge, but before he could utter the retort on his lips his host was moving on and addressing Naismith over his shoulder.

"Do you want to come along at eleven:thirty? Thayer and I are running out in the machine to look over the Shropshires. He wants about ten carloads of rams. You ought to find good stuff in this matter of Idaho shipments. Bring your camera along. — Seen Thayer this morning?"

"Just came in to breakfast as we were leaving," Bert Wainwright volunteered.

"Tell him to be ready at eleven-thirty if you see him. You're not invited, Bert… out of kindness. The girls are sure to be up then."

"Take Rita along with you anyway," Bert pleaded.

"No fear," was Forrest's reply from the door. "We're on business.

Besides, you can't pry Rita from Ernestine with block-and-tackle."

"That's why I wanted to see if you could," Bert grinned.

"Funny how fellows never appreciate their own sisters." Forrest paused for a perceptible moment. "I always thought Rita was a real nice sister. What's the matter with her?"

Before a reply could reach him, he had closed the door and was jingling his spurs along the passage to a spiral stairway of broad concrete steps. As he left the head of the stairway, a dance-time piano measure and burst of laughter made him peep into a white morning room, flooded with sunshine. A young girl, in rose-colored kimono and boudoir cap, was at the instrument, while two others, similarly accoutered, in each other's arms, were parodying a dance never learned at dancing school nor intended by the participants for male eyes to see.

The girl at the piano discovered him, winked, and played on. Not for another minute did the dancers spy him. They gave startled cries, collapsed, laughing, in each other's arms, and the music stopped. They were gorgeous, healthy young creatures, the three of them, and Forrest's eye kindled as he looked at them in quite the same way that it had kindled when he regarded the Fotherington Princess.

Persiflage, of the sort that obtains among young things of the human kind, flew back and forth.

"I've been here five minutes," Dick Forrest asserted.

The two dancers, to cover their confusion, doubted his veracity and instanced his many well-known and notorious guilts of mendacity. The girl at the piano, Ernestine, his sister-in-law, insisted that pearls of truth fell from his lips, that she had seen him from the moment he began to look, and that as she estimated the passage of time he had been looking much longer than five minutes.

"Well, anyway," Forrest broke in on their babel, "Bert, the sweet innocent, doesn't think you are up yet."

"We're not… to him," one of the dancers, a vivacious young Venus, retorted. "Nor are we to you either. So run along, little boy. Run along."

"Look here, Lute," Forrest began sternly. "Just because I am a decrepit old man, and just because you are eighteen, just eighteen, and happen to be my wife's sister, you needn't presume to put the high and mighty over on me. Don't forget — and I state the fact, disagreeable as it may be, for Rita's sake — don't forget that in the past ten years I've paddled you more disgraceful times than you care to dare me to enumerate.

"It is true, I am not so young as I used to was, but — " He felt the biceps of his right arm and made as if to roll up the sleeve. " — But, I'm not all in yet, and for two cents…"

"What?" the young woman challenged belligerently.

"For two cents," he muttered darkly. "For two cents… Besides, and it grieves me to inform you, your cap is not on straight. Also, it is not a very tasteful creation at best. I could make a far more becoming cap with my toes, asleep, and… yes, seasick as well."

Lute tossed her blond head defiantly, glanced at her comrades in solicitation of support, and said:

"Oh, I don't know. It seems humanly reasonable that the three of us can woman-handle a mere man of your elderly and insulting avoirdupois. What do you say, girls? Let's rush him. He's not a minute under forty, and he has an aneurism. Yes, and though loath to divulge family secrets, he's got Meniere's Disease."

Ernestine, a small but robust blonde of eighteen, sprang from the piano and joined her two comrades in a raid on the cushions of the deep window seats. Side by side, a cushion in each hand, and with proper distance between them cannily established for the swinging of the cushions, they advanced upon the foe.

Forrest prepared for battle, then held up his hand for parley.

"'Fraid cat!" they taunted, in several at first, and then in chorus.

He shook his head emphatically.

"Just for that, and for all the rest of your insolences, the three of you are going to get yours. All the wrongs of a lifetime are rising now in my brain in a dazzling brightness. I shall go Berserk in a moment. But first, and I speak as an agriculturist, and I address myself to you, Lute, in all humility, in heaven's name what is Meniere's Disease? Do sheep catch it?"

“Meniere’s Disease is,” Lute began,… “is what you’ve got. Sheep are the only known living creatures that get it.”

Ensued red war and chaos. Forrest made a football rush of the sort that obtained in California before the adoption of Rugby; and the girls broke the line to let him through, turned upon him, flanked him on either side, and pounded him with cushions.

He turned, with widespread arms, extended fingers, each finger a hook, and grappled the three. The battle became a whirlwind, a be-spurred man the center, from which radiated flying draperies of flimsy silk, disconnected slippers, boudoir caps, and hairpins. There were thuds from the cushions, grunts from the man, squeals, yelps and giggles from the girls, and from the totality of the combat inextinguishable laughter and a ripping and tearing of fragile textures.

Dick Forrest found himself sprawled on the floor, the wind half knocked out of him by shrewdly delivered cushions, his head buzzing from the buffeting, and, in one hand, a trailing, torn, and generally disrupted girdle of pale blue silk and pink roses.

In one doorway, cheeks flaming from the struggle, stood Rita, alert as a fawn and ready to flee. In the other doorway, likewise flame-checked, stood Ernestine in the commanding attitude of the Mother of the Gracchi, the wreckage of her kimono wrapped severely about her and held severely about her by her own waist-pressing arm. Lute, cornered behind the piano, attempted to run but was driven back by the menace of Forrest, who, on hands and knees, stamped loudly with the palms of his hands on the hardwood floor, rolled his head savagely, and emitted bull-like roars.

“And they still believe that old prehistoric myth,” Ernestine proclaimed from safety, “that once he, that wretched semblance of a man-thing prone in the dirt, captained Berkeley to victory over Stanford.”

Her breasts heaved from the exertion, and he marked the pulsating of the shimmering cherry-colored silk with delight as he flung his glance around to the other two girls similarly breathing.

The piano was a miniature grand — a dainty thing of rich white and gold to match the morning room. It stood out from the wall, so that there was possibility for Lute to escape around either way of it. Forrest gained his feet and faced her across the broad, flat top of the instrument. As he threatened to vault it, Lute cried out in horror:

“But your spurs, Dick! Your spurs!”

“Give me time to take them off,” he offered.

As he stooped to unbuckle them, Lute darted to escape, but was herded back to the shelter of the piano.

“All right,” he growled. “On your head be it. If the piano’s scratched I’ll tell Paula.”

“I’ve got witnesses,” she panted, indicating with her blue joyous eyes the young things in the doorways.

“Very well, my dear.” Forrest drew back his body and spread his resting palms. “I’m coming over to you.”

Action and speech were simultaneous. His body, posited sidewise from his hands, was vaulted across, the perilous spurs a full foot above the glossy white surface. And simultaneously Lute ducked and went under the piano on hands and knees. Her mischance lay in that she bumped her head, and, before she could recover way, Forrest had circled the piano and cornered her under it.

“Come out!” he commanded. “Come out and take your medicine!”

“A truce,” she pleaded. “A truce, Sir Knight, for dear love’s sake and all damsels in distress.”

“I ain’t no knight,” Forrest announced in his deepest bass. “I’m an ogre, a filthy, debased and altogether unregenerate ogre. I was born in the tule-swamps. My father was an ogre and my mother was more so. I was lulled to slumber on the squalls of infants dead, foreordained, and predamned. I was nourished solely on the blood of maidens educated in Mills Seminary. My favorite chophouse has ever been a hardwood floor, a loaf of Mills Seminary maiden, and a roof of flat piano. My father, as well as an ogre, was a California horse-thief. I am more reprehensible than my father. I have more teeth. My mother, as well as an ogress, was a Nevada book-canvasser. Let all her shame be told. She even solicited subscriptions for ladies’ magazines. I am more terrible than my mother. I have peddled safety razors.”

“Can naught soothe and charm your savage breast?” Lute pleaded in soulful tones while she studied her chances for escape.

“One thing only, miserable female. One thing only, on the earth, over the earth, and under its ruining waters — ”

A squawk of recognized plagiarism interrupted him from Ernestine.

“See Ernest Dowson, page seventy-nine, a thin book of thin verse ladled out with porridge to young women detentioned at Mills Seminary,” Forrest went on. “As I had already enunciated before I was so rudely interrupted, the one thing only that can balm and embalm this savage breast is the ‘Maiden’s Prayer.’ Listen, with all your ears ere I chew them off in multitude and gross! Listen, silly, unbeautiful, squat, short-legged and ugly female under the piano! Can you recite the ‘Maiden’s Prayer’?”

Screams of delight from the young things in the doorways prevented the proper answer and Lute, from under the piano, cried out to young Wainwright, who had appeared:

“A rescue, Sir Knight! A rescue!”

“Unhand the maiden!” was Bert’s challenge.

“Who art thou?” Forrest demanded.

“King George, sirrah! — I mean, er, Saint George.”

“Then am I thy dragon,” Forrest announced with due humility. “Spare this ancient, honorable, and only neck I have.”

“Off with his head!” the young things encouraged.

“Stay thee, maidens, I pray thee,” Bert begged. “I am only a Small Potato. Yet am I unafraid. I shall beard the dragon. I shall beard him in his gullet, and, while he lingeringly chokes to death over my unpalatableness and general spinefulness, do you, fair damsels, flee to the mountains lest the valleys fall upon you. Yolo, Petaluma, and West Sacramento are about to be overwhelmed by a tidal wave and many big fishes.”

“Off with his head!” the young things chanted. “Slay him in his blood and barbecue him!”

“Thumbs down,” Forrest groaned. “I am undone. Trust to the unstrained quality of mercy possessed by Christian young women in the year 1914 who will vote some day if ever they grow up and do not marry foreigners. Consider my head off, Saint George. I am expired. Further deponent sayeth not.”

And Forrest, with sobs and slubberings, with realistic shudders and kicks and a great jingling of spurs, lay down on the floor and expired.

Lute crawled out from under the piano, and was joined by Rita and Ernestine in an extemporized dance of the harpies about the slain.

In the midst of it, Forrest sat up, protesting. Also, he was guilty of a significant and privy wink to Lute.

“The hero!” he cried. “Forget him not. Crown him with flowers.”

And Bert was crowned with flowers from the vases, unchanged from the day before. When a bunch of water-logged stems of early tulips, propelled by Lute’s vigorous arm, impacted soggily on his neck under the ear, he fled. The riot of pursuit echoed along the hall and died out down the stairway toward the stag room. Forrest gathered himself together, and, grinning, went jingling on through the Big House.

He crossed two patios on brick walks roofed with Spanish tile and swamped with early foliage and blooms, and gained his wing of the house, still breathing from the fun, to find, in the office, his secretary awaiting him.

“Good morning, Mr. Blake,” he greeted. “Sorry I was delayed.” He glanced at his wrist-watch. “Only four minutes, however. I just couldn’t get away sooner.”

CHAPTER IV

From nine till ten Forrest gave himself up to his secretary, achieving a correspondence that included learned societies and every sort of breeding and agricultural organization and that would have compelled the average petty business man, unaided, to sit up till midnight to accomplish.

For Dick Forrest was the center of a system which he himself had built and of which he was secretly very proud. Important letters and documents he signed with his ragged fist. All other letters were rubber-stamped by Mr. Blake, who, also, in shorthand, in the course of the hour, put down the indicated answers to many letters and received the formula designations of reply to many other letters. Mr. Blake's private opinion was that he worked longer hours than his employer, although it was equally his private opinion that his employer was a wonder for discovering work for others to perform.

At ten, to the stroke of the clock, as Pittman, Forrest's show-manager, entered the office, Blake, burdened with trays of correspondence, sheafs of documents, and phonograph cylinders, faded away to his own office.

From ten to eleven a stream of managers and foremen flowed in and out. All were well disciplined in terseness and time-saving. As Dick Forrest had taught them, the minutes spent with him were not minutes of cogitation. They must be prepared before they reported or suggested. Bonbright, the assistant secretary, always arrived at ten to replace Blake; and Bonbright, close to shoulder, with flying pencil, took down the rapid-fire interchange of question and answer, statement and proposal and plan. These shorthand notes, transcribed and typed in duplicate, were the nightmare and, on occasion, the Nemesis, of the managers and foremen. For, first, Forrest had a remarkable memory; and, second, he was prone to prove its worth by reference to those same notes of Bonbright.

A manager, at the end of a five or ten minute session, often emerged sweating, limp and frazzled. Yet for a swift hour, at high tension, Forrest met all comers, with a master's grip handling them and all the multifarious details of their various departments. He told Thompson, the machinist, in four flashing minutes, where the fault lay in the dynamo to the Big House refrigerator, laid the fault home to Thompson, dictated a note to Bonbright, with citation by page and chapter to a volume from the library to be drawn by Thompson, told Thompson that Parkman, the dairy manager, was not satisfied with the latest wiring up of milking machines, and that the refrigerating plant at the slaughter house was balking at its accustomed load.

Each man was a specialist, yet Forrest was the proved master of their specialties. As Paulson, the head plowman, complained privily to Dawson, the crop manager: “I’ve worked here twelve years and never have I seen him put his hands to a plow, and yet, damn him, he somehow seems to know. He’s a genius, that’s what he is. Why, d’ye know, I’ve seen him tear by a piece of work, his hands full with that Man-Eater of his a-threatenin’ sudden funeral, an’, next morning, had ‘m mention casually to a half-inch how deep it was plowed an’ what plows’d done the plowin’! — Take that plowin’ of the Poppy Meadow, up above Little Meadow, on Los Cuatos. I just couldn’t see my way to it, an’ had to cut out the cross-sub-soiling, an’ thought I could slip it over on him. After it was all finished he kind of happened up that way — I was lookin’ an’ he didn’t seem to look — an’, well, next A.M. I got mine in the office. No; I didn’t slip it over. I ain’t tried to slip nothing over since.”

At eleven sharp, Wardman, his sheep manager, departed with an engagement scheduled at eleven: thirty to ride in the machine along with Thayer, the Idaho buyer, to look over the Shropshire rams. At eleven, Bonbright having departed with Wardman to work up his notes, Forrest was left alone in the office. From a wire tray of unfinished business — one of many wire trays superimposed in groups of five — he drew a pamphlet issued by the State of Iowa on hog cholera and proceeded to scan it.

Five feet, ten inches in height, weighing a clean-muscled one hundred and eighty pounds, Dick Forrest was anything but insignificant for a forty years’ old man. The eyes were gray, large, over-arched by bone of brow, and lashes and brows were dark. The hair, above an ordinary forehead, was light brown to chestnut. Under the forehead, the cheeks showed high-boned, with underneath the slight hollows that necessarily accompany such formation. The jaws were strong without massiveness, the nose, large-nostriled, was straight enough and prominent enough without being too straight or prominent, the chin square without harshness and uncleft, and the mouth girlish and sweet to a degree that did not hide the firmness to which the lips could set on due provocation. The skin was smooth and well-tanned, although, midway between eyebrows and hair, the tan of forehead faded in advertisement of the rim of the Baden Powell interposed between him and the sun.

Laughter lurked in the mouth corners and eye-corners, and there were cheek lines about the mouth that would seem to have been formed by laughter. Equally strong, however, every line of the face that meant blended things carried a notice of surety. Dick Forrest was sure — sure, when his hand reached out for any object on his desk, that the hand would straightly attain the object without a fumble or a miss of a fraction of an inch; sure, when his brain leaped the high places of the hog cholera text, that it was not missing a point; sure, from his balanced body in the revolving desk-chair to the balanced back-head of him; sure, in heart and brain, of life and work, of all he possessed, and of himself.

He had reason to be sure. Body, brain, and career were long-proven sure. A rich man's son, he had not played ducks and drakes with his father's money. City born and reared, he had gone back to the land and made such a success as to put his name on the lips of breeders wherever breeders met and talked. He was the owner, without encumbrance, of two hundred and fifty thousand acres of land — land that varied in value from a thousand dollars an acre to a hundred dollars, that varied from a hundred dollars to ten cents an acre, and that, in stretches, was not worth a penny an acre. The improvements on that quarter of a million acres, from drain-tiled meadows to dredge-drained tule swamps, from good roads to developed water-rights, from farm buildings to the Big House itself, constituted a sum gaspingly ungraspable to the country-side.

Everything was large-scale but modern to the last tick of the clock. His managers lived, rent-free, with salaries commensurate to ability, in five — and ten-thousand-dollar houses — but they were the cream of specialists skimmed from the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. When he ordered gasoline-tractors for the cultivation of the flat lands, he ordered a round score. When he dammed water in his mountains he dammed it by the hundreds of millions of gallons. When he ditched his tule-swamps, instead of contracting the excavation, he bought the huge dredgers outright, and, when there was slack work on his own marshes, he contracted for the draining of the marshes of neighboring big farmers, land companies, and corporations for a hundred miles up and down the Sacramento River.

He had brain sufficient to know the need of buying brains and to pay a tidy bit over the current market price for the most capable brains. And he had brain sufficient to direct the brains he bought to a profitable conclusion.

And yet, he was just turned forty was clear-eyed, calm-hearted, hearty-pulsed, man-strong; and yet, his history, until he was thirty, had been harum-scarum and erratic to the superlative. He had run away from a millionaire home when he was thirteen. He had won enviable college honors ere he was twenty-one and after that he had known all the purple ports of the purple seas, and, with cool head, hot heart, and laughter, played every risk that promised and provided in the wild world of adventure that he had lived to see pass under the sobriety of law.

In the old days of San Francisco Forrest had been a name to conjure with. The Forrest Mansion had been one of the pioneer palaces on Nob Hill where dwelt the Floods, the Mackays, the Crockers, and the O’Briens. “Lucky” Richard Forrest, the father, had arrived, via the Isthmus, straight from old New England, keenly commercial, interested before his departure in clipper ships and the building of clipper ships, and interested immediately after his arrival in water-front real estate, river steamboats, mines, of course, and, later, in the draining of the Nevada Comstock and the construction of the Southern Pacific.

He played big, he won big, he lost big; but he won always more than he lost, and what he paid out at one game with one hand, he drew back with his other hand at another game. His winnings from the Comstock he sank into the various holes of the bottomless Daffodil Group in Eldorado County. The wreckage from the Benicia Line he turned into the Napa Consolidated, which was a quicksilver venture, and it earned him five thousand per cent. What he lost in the collapse of the Stockton boom was more than balanced by the realty appreciation of his key-holdings at Sacramento and Oakland.

And, to cap it all, when “Lucky” Richard Forrest had lost everything in a series of calamities, so that San Francisco debated what price his Nob Hill palace would fetch at auction, he grubstaked one, Del Nelson, to a prospecting in Mexico. As soberly set down in history, the result of the said Del Nelson’s search for quartz was the Harvest Group, including the fabulous and inexhaustible Tattlesnake, Voice, City, Desdemona, Bullfrog, and Yellow Boy claims. Del Nelson, astounded by his achievement, within the year drowned himself in an enormous quantity of cheap whisky, and, the will being incontestible through lack of kith and kin, left his half to Lucky Richard Forrest.

Dick Forrest was the son of his father. Lucky Richard, a man of boundless energy and enterprise, though twice married and twice widowed, had not been blessed with children. His third marriage occurred in 1872, when he was fifty-eight, and in 1874, although he lost the mother, a twelve-pound boy, stout-barreled and husky-lunged, remained to be brought up by a regiment of nurses in the palace on Nob Hill.

Young Dick was precocious. Lucky Richard was a democrat. Result: Young Dick learned in a year from a private teacher what would have required three years in the grammar school, and used all of the saved years in playing in the open air. Also, result of precocity of son and democracy of father, Young Dick was sent to grammar school for the last year in order to learn shoulder-rubbing democracy with the sons and daughters of workmen, tradesmen, saloon-keepers and politicians.

In class recitation or spelling match his father's millions did not aid him in competing with Patsy Halloran, the mathematical prodigy whose father was a hod-carrier, nor with Mona Sanguinetti who was a wizard at spelling and whose widowed mother ran a vegetable store. Nor were his father's millions and the Nob Hill palace of the slightest assistance to Young Dick when he peeled his jacket and, bareknuckled, without rounds, licking or being licked, milled it to a finish with Jimmy Botts, Jean Choyinsky, and the rest of the lads that went out over the world to glory and cash a few years later, a generation of prizefighters that only San Francisco, raw and virile and yeasty and young, could have produced.

The wisest thing Lucky Richard did for his boy was to give him this democratic tutelage. In his secret heart, Young Dick never forgot that he lived in a palace of many servants and that his father was a man of power and honor. On the other hand, Young Dick learned two-legged, two-fisted democracy. He learned it when Mona Sanguinetti spelled him down in class. He learned it when Berney Miller out-dodged and out-ran him when running across in Black Man.

And when Tim Hagan, with straight left for the hundredth time to bleeding nose and mangled mouth, and with ever reiterant right hook to stomach, had him dazed and reeling, the breath whistling and sobbing through his lacerated lips — was no time for succor from palaces and bank accounts. On his two legs, with his two fists, it was either he or Tim. And it was right there, in sweat and blood and iron of soul, that Young Dick learned how not to lose a losing fight. It had been uphill from the first blow, but he stuck it out until in the end it was agreed that neither could best the other, although this agreement was not reached until they had first lain on the ground in nausea and exhaustion and with streaming eyes wept their rage and defiance at each other. After that, they became chums and between them ruled the schoolyard.

Lucky Richard died the same month Young Dick emerged from grammar school. Young Dick was thirteen years old, with twenty million dollars, and without a relative in the world to trouble him. He was the master of a palace of servants, a steam yacht, stables, and, as well, of a summer palace down the Peninsula in the nabob colony at Menlo. One thing, only, was he burdened with: guardians.

On a summer afternoon, in the big library, he attended the first session of his board of guardians. There were three of them, all elderly, and successful, all legal, all business comrades of his father. Dick's impression, as they explained things to him, was that, although they meant well, he had no contacts with them. In his judgment, their boyhood was too far behind them. Besides that, it was patent that him, the particular boy they were so much concerned with, they did not understand at all. Furthermore, in his own sure way he decided that he was the one person in the world fitted to know what was best for himself.

Mr. Crockett made a long speech, to which Dick listened with alert and becoming attention, nodding his head whenever he was directly addressed or appealed to. Messrs. Davidson and Slocum also had their say and were treated with equal consideration. Among other things, Dick learned what a sterling, upright man his father had been, and the program already decided upon by the three gentlemen which would make him into a sterling and upright man.

When they were quite done, Dick took it upon himself to say a few things.

"I have thought it over," he announced, "and first of all I shall go traveling."

"That will come afterward, my boy," Mr. Slocum explained soothingly. "When — say — when you are ready to enter the university. At that time a year abroad would be a very good thing… a very good thing indeed."

"Of course," Mr. Davidson volunteered quickly, having noted the annoyed light in the lad's eyes and the unconscious firm-drawing and setting of the lips, "of course, in the meantime you could do some traveling, a limited amount of traveling, during your school vacations. I am sure my fellow guardians will agree — under the proper management and safeguarding, of course — that such bits of travel sandwiched between your school-terms, would be advisable and beneficial.”

“How much did you say I am worth?” Dick asked with apparent irrelevance.

“Twenty millions — at a most conservative estimate — that is about the sum,” Mr. Crockett answered promptly.

“Suppose I said right now that I wanted a hundred dollars!” Dick went on.

“Why — er — ahem.” Mr. Slocum looked about him for guidance.

“We would be compelled to ask what you wanted it for,” answered Mr. Crockett.

“And suppose,” Dick said very slowly, looking Mr. Crockett squarely in the eyes, “suppose I said that I was very sorry, but that I did not care to say what I wanted it for?”

“Then you wouldn’t get it,” Mr. Crockett said so immediately that there was a hint of testiness and snap in his manner.

Dick nodded slowly, as if letting the information sink in.

“But, of course, my boy,” Mr. Slocum took up hastily, “you understand you are too young to handle money yet. We must decide that for you.”

“You mean I can’t touch a penny without your permission?”

“Not a penny,” Mr. Crockett snapped.

Dick nodded his head thoughtfully and murmured, “Oh, I see.”

“Of course, and quite naturally, it would only be fair, you know, you will have a small allowance for your personal spending,” Mr. Davidson said. “Say, a dollar, or, perhaps, two dollars, a week. As you grow older this allowance will be increased. And by the time you are twenty-one, doubtlessly you will be fully qualified — with advice, of course — to handle your own affairs.”

“And until I am twenty-one my twenty million wouldn’t buy me a hundred dollars to do as I please with?” Dick queried very subduedly.

Mr. Davidson started to corroborate in soothing phrases, but was waved to silence by Dick, who continued:

“As I understand it, whatever money I handle will be by agreement between the four of us?”

The Board of Guardians nodded.

“That is, whatever we agree, goes?”

Again the Board of Guardians nodded.

“Well, I’d like to have a hundred right now,” Dick announced.

“What for?” Mr. Crockett demanded.

“I don’t mind telling you,” was the lad’s steady answer. “To go traveling.”

“You’ll go to bed at eight:thirty this evening,” Mr. Crockett retorted. “And you don’t get any hundred. The lady we spoke to you about will be here before six. She is to have, as we explained, daily and hourly charge of you. At six-thirty, as usual, you will dine, and she will dine with you and see you to bed. As we told you, she will have to serve the place of a mother to you — see that your ears are clean, your neck washed — ”

“And that I get my Saturday night bath,” Dick amplified meekly for him.

“Precisely.”

“How much are you — am I — paying the lady for her services?” Dick questioned in the disconcerting, tangential way that was already habitual to him, as his school companions and teachers had learned to their cost.

Mr. Crockett for the first time cleared his throat for pause.

“I’m paying her, ain’t I?” Dick prodded. “Out of the twenty million, you know.”

“The spit of his father,” said Mr. Slocum in an aside.

“Mrs. Summerstone, the lady as you elect to call her, receives one hundred and fifty a month, eighteen hundred a year in round sum,” said Mr. Crockett.

“It’s a waste of perfectly good money,” Dick sighed. “And board and lodging thrown in!”

He stood up — not the born aristocrat of the generations, but the reared aristocrat of thirteen years in the Nob Hill palace. He stood up with such a manner that his Board of Guardians left their leather chairs to stand up with him. But he stood up as no Lord Fauntleroy ever stood up; for he was a mixer. He had knowledge that human life was many-faced and many-placed. Not for nothing had he been spelled down by Mona Sanguinetti. Not for nothing had he fought Tim Hagan to a standstill and, co-equal, ruled the schoolyard roost with him.

He was birthed of the wild gold-adventure of Forty-nine. He was a reared aristocrat and a grammar-school-trained democrat. He knew, in his precocious immature way, the differentiations between caste and mass; and, behind it all, he was possessed of a will of his own and of a quiet surety of self that was incomprehensible to the three elderly gentlemen who had been given charge of his and his destiny and who had pledged themselves to increase his twenty millions and make a man of him in their own composite image.

"Thank you for your kindness," Young Dick said generally to the three. "I guess we'll get along all right. Of course, that twenty millions is mine, and of course you've got to take care of it for me, seeing I know nothing of business — "

"And we'll increase it for you, my boy, we'll increase it for you in safe, conservative ways," Mr. Slocum assured him.

"No speculation," Young Dick warned. "Dad's just been lucky — I've heard him say that times have changed and a fellow can't take the chances everybody used to take."

From which, and from much which has already passed, it might erroneously be inferred that Young Dick was a mean and money-grubbing soul. On the contrary, he was at that instant entertaining secret thoughts and plans so utterly regardless and disdainful of his twenty millions as to place him on a par with a drunken sailor sowing the beach with a three years' pay-day.

"I am only a boy," Young Dick went on. "But you don't know me very well yet. We'll get better acquainted by and by, and, again thanking you…."

He paused, bowed briefly and grandly as lords in Nob Hill palaces early learn to bow, and, by the quality of the pause, signified that the audience was over. Nor did the impact of dismissal miss his guardians. They, who had been co-lords with his father, withdrew confused and perplexed. Messrs. Davidson and Slocum were on the point of resolving their perplexity into wrath, as they went down the great stone stairway to the waiting carriage, but Mr. Crockett, the testy and snappish, muttered ecstatically: "The son of a gun! The little son of a gun!"

The carriage carried them down to the old Pacific Union Club, where, for another hour, they gravely discussed the future of Young Dick Forrest and pledged themselves anew to the faith reposed in them by Lucky Richard Forrest. And down the hill, on foot, where grass grew on the paved streets too steep for horse-traffic, Young Dick hurried. As the height of land was left behind, almost immediately the palaces and spacious grounds of the nabobs gave way to the mean streets and wooden warrens of the working people. The San Francisco of 1887 as incontinently intermingled its slums and mansions as did the old cities of Europe. Nob Hill arose, like any medieval castle, from the mess and ruck of common life that denned and laired at its base.

Young Dick came to pause alongside a corner grocery, the second story of which was rented to Timothy Hagan Senior, who, by virtue of being a policeman with a wage of a hundred dollars a month, rented this high place to dwell above his fellows who supported families on no more than forty and fifty dollars a month.

In vain Young Dick whistled up through the unscreened, open windows. Tim Hagan Junior was not at home. But Young Dick wasted little wind in the whistling. He was debating on possible adjacent places where Tim Hagan might be, when Tim himself appeared around the corner, bearing a lidless lard-can that foamed with steam beer. He grunted greeting, and Young Dick grunted with equal roughness, just as if, a brief space before, he had not, in most lordly fashion, terminated an audience with three of the richest merchant-kings of an imperial city. Nor did his possession of twenty increasing millions hint the slightest betrayal in his voice or mitigate in the slightest the gruffness of his grunt.

“Ain’t seen yeh since yer old man died,” Tim Hagan commented.

“Well, you’re seein’ me now, ain’t you?” was Young Dick’s retort.

“Say, Tim, I come to see you on business.”

“Wait till I rush the beer to the old man,” said Tim, inspecting the state of the foam in the lard-can with an experienced eye. “He’ll roar his head off if it comes in flat.”

“Oh, you can shake it up,” Young Dick assured him. “Only want to see you a minute. I’m hitting the road to-night. Want to come along?”

Tim’s small, blue Irish eyes flashed with interest.

“Where to?” he queried.

“Don’t know. Want to come? If you do, we can talk it over after we start? You know the ropes. What d’ye say?”

“The old man’ll beat the stuffin’ outa me,” Tim demurred.

“He’s done that before, an’ you don’t seem to be much missing,” Young Dick callously rejoined. “Say the word, an’ we’ll meet at the Ferry Building at nine to-night. What d’ye say? I’ll be there.”

“Supposin’ I don’t show up?” Tim asked.

“I’ll be on my way just the same.” Young Dick turned as if to depart, paused casually, and said over his shoulder, “Better come along.”

Tim shook up the beer as he answered with equal casualness, “Aw right.

I’ll be there.”

After parting from Tim Hagan Young Dick spent a busy hour or so looking up one, Marcovich, a Slavonian schoolmate whose father ran a chop-house in which was reputed to be served the finest twenty-cent meal in the city. Young Marcovich owed Young Dick two dollars, and Young Dick accepted the payment of a dollar and forty cents as full quittance of the debt.

Also, with shyness and perturbation, Young Dick wandered down Montgomery Street and vacillated among the many pawnshops that graced that thoroughfare. At last, diving desperately into one, he managed to exchange for eight dollars and a ticket his gold watch that he knew was worth fifty at the very least.

Dinner in the Nob Hill palace was served at six-thirty. He arrived at six-forty-five and encountered Mrs. Summerstone. She was a stout, elderly, decayed gentlewoman, a daughter of the great Porter-Rickington family that had shaken the entire Pacific Coast with its financial crash in the middle seventies. Despite her stoutness, she suffered from what she called shattered nerves.

“This will never, never do, Richard,” she censured. “Here is dinner waiting fifteen minutes already, and you have not yet washed your face and hands.”

“I am sorry, Mrs. Summerstone,” Young Dick apologized. “I won’t keep you waiting ever again. And I won’t bother you much ever.”

At dinner, in state, the two of them alone in the great dining room, Young Dick strove to make things easy for the lady, whom, despite his knowledge that she was on his pay-roll, he felt toward as a host must feel toward a guest.

“You’ll be very comfortable here,” he promised, “once you are settled down. It’s a good old house, and most of the servants have been here for years.”

“But, Richard,” she smiled seriously to him; “it is not the servants who will determine my happiness here. It is you.”

“I’ll do my best,” he said graciously. “Better than that. I’m sorry I came in late for dinner. In years and years you’ll never see me late again. I won’t bother you at all. You'll see. It will be just as though I wasn't in the house."

When he bade her good night, on his way to bed, he added, as a last thought:

"I'll warn you of one thing: Ah Sing. He's the cook. He's been in our house for years and years — oh, I don't know, maybe twenty-five or thirty years he's cooked for father, from long before this house was built or I was born. He's privileged. He's so used to having his own way that you'll have to handle him with gloves. But once he likes you he'll work his fool head off to please you. He likes me that way. You get him to like you, and you'll have the time of your life here. And, honest, I won't give you any trouble at all. It'll be a regular snap, just as if I wasn't here at all."

CHAPTER V

AT nine in the evening, sharp to the second, clad in his oldest clothes, Young Dick met Tim Hagan at the Ferry Building.

“No use headin’ north,” said Tim. “Winter’ll come on up that way and make the sleepin’ crimpy. D’ye want to go East — that means Nevada and the deserts.”

“Any other way?” queried Young Dick. “What’s the matter with south? We can head for Los Angeles, an’ Arizona, an’ New Mexico — oh, an’ Texas.”

“How much money you got?” Tim demanded.

“What for?” Young Dick countered.

“We gotta get out quick, an’ payin’ our way at the start is quickest. Me — I’m all hunkydory; but you ain’t. The folks that’s lookin’ after you’ll raise a roar. They’ll have more detectives out than you can shake at stick at. We gotta dodge ‘em, that’s what.”

“Then we will dodge,” said Young Dick. “We’ll make short jumps this way and that for a couple of days, layin’ low most of the time, paying our way, until we can get to Tracy. Then we’ll quit payin’ an’ beat her south.”

All of which program was carefully carried out. They eventually went through Tracy as pay passengers, six hours after the local deputy sheriff had given up his task of searching the trains. With an excess of precaution Young Dick paid beyond Tracy and as far as Modesto. After that, under the teaching of Tim, he traveled without paying, riding blind baggage, box cars, and cow-catchers. Young Dick bought the newspapers, and frightened Tim by reading to him the lurid accounts of the kidnapping of the young heir to the Forrest millions.

Back in San Francisco the Board of Guardians offered rewards that totaled thirty thousand dollars for the recovery of their ward. And Tim Hagan, reading the same while they lay in the grass by some water-tank, branded forever the mind of Young Dick with the fact that honor beyond price was a matter of neither place nor caste and might outcrop in the palace on the height of land or in the dwelling over a grocery down on the flat.

“Gee!” Tim said to the general landscape. “The old man wouldn’t raise a roar if I snitched on you for that thirty thousand. It makes me scared to think of it.”

And from the fact that Tim thus openly mentioned the matter, Young Dick concluded that there was no possibility of the policeman's son betraying him.

Not until six weeks afterward, in Arizona, did Young Dick bring up the subject.

"You see, Tim," he said, "I've got slathers of money. It's growing all the time, and I ain't spending a cent of it, not so as you can notice… though that Mrs. Summerstone is getting a cold eighteen hundred a year out of me, with board and carriages thrown in, while you an' I are glad to get the leavings of firemen's pails in the round-houses. Just the same, my money's growing. What's ten per cent, on twenty dollars?"

Tim Hagan stared at the shimmering heat-waves of the desert and tried to solve the problem.

"What's one-tenth of twenty million?" Young Dick demanded irritably.

"Huh! — two million, of course."

"Well, five per cent's half of ten per cent. What does twenty million earn at five per cent, for one year?"

Tim hesitated.

"Half of it, half of two million!" Young Dick cried. "At that rate I'm a million richer every year. Get that, and hang on to it, and listen to me. When I'm good and willing to go back — but not for years an' years — we'll fix it up, you and I. When I say the word, you'll write to your father. He'll jump out to where we are waiting, pick me up, and cart me back. Then he'll collect the thirty thousand reward from my guardians, quit the police force, and most likely start a saloon."

"Thirty thousand's a hell of a lot of money," was Tim's nonchalant way of expressing his gratitude.

"Not to me," Young Dick minimized his generosity. "Thirty thousand goes into a million thirty-three times, and a million's only a year's turnover of my money."

But Tim Hagan never lived to see his father a saloon keeper. Two days later, on a trestle, the lads were fired out of an empty box-car by a brakeman who should have known better. The trestle spanned a dry ravine. Young Dick looked down at the rocks seventy feet below and demurred.

"There's room on the trestle," he said; "but what if the train starts up?"

"It ain't goin' to start — beat it while you got time," the brakeman insisted. "The engine's takin' water at the other side. She always takes it here."

But for once the engine did not take water. The evidence at the inquest developed that the engineer had found no water in the tank and started on. Scarcely had the two boys dropped from the side-door of the box-car, and before they had made a score of steps along the narrow way between the train and the abyss, than the train began to move. Young Dick, quick and sure in all his perceptions and adjustments, dropped on the instant to hands and knees on the trestle. This gave him better holding and more space, because he crouched beneath the overhang of the box-cars. Tim, not so quick in perceiving and adjusting, also overcome with Celtic rage at the brakeman, instead of dropping to hands and knees, remained upright to flare his opinion of the brakeman, to the brakeman, in lurid and ancestral terms.

"Get down! — drop!" Young Dick shouted.

But the opportunity had passed. On a down grade, the engine picked up the train rapidly. Facing the moving cars, with empty air at his back and the depth beneath, Tim tried to drop on hands and knees. But the first twist of his shoulders brought him in contact with the car and nearly out-balanced him. By a miracle he recovered equilibrium. But he stood upright. The train was moving faster and faster. It was impossible to get down.

Young Dick, kneeling and holding, watched. The train gathered way. The cars moved more swiftly. Tim, with a cool head, his back to the fall, his face to the passing cars, his arms by his sides, with nowhere save under his feet a holding point, balanced and swayed. The faster the train moved, the wider he swayed, until, exerting his will, he controlled himself and ceased from swaying.

And all would have been well with him, had it not been for one car. Young Dick knew it, and saw it coming. It was a "palace horse-car," projecting six inches wider than any car on the train. He saw Tim see it coming. He saw Tim steel himself to meet the abrupt subtraction of half a foot from the narrow space wherein he balanced. He saw Tim slowly and deliberately sway out, sway out to the extremest limit, and yet not sway out far enough. The thing was physically inevitable. An inch more, and Tim would have escaped the car. An inch more and he would have fallen without impact from the car. It caught him, in that margin of an inch, and hurled him backward and side-twisting. Twice he whirled sidewise, and two and a half times he turned over, ere he struck on his head and neck on the rocks.

He never moved after he struck. The seventy-foot fall broke his neck and crushed his skull. And right there Young Dick learned death — not the ordered, decent death of civilization, wherein doctors and nurses and hypodermics ease the stricken one into the darkness, and ceremony and function and flowers and undertaking institutions conspire to give a happy leave-taking and send-off to the departing shade, but sudden death, primitive death, ugly and ungarnished, like the death of a steer in the shambles or a fat swine stuck in the jugular.

And right there Young Dick learned more — the mischance of life and fate; the universe hostile to man; the need to perceive and to act, to see and know, to be sure and quick, to adjust instantly to all instant shiftage of the balance of forces that bear upon the living. And right there, beside the strangely crumpled and shrunken remnant of what had been his comrade the moment before, Young Dick learned that illusion must be discounted, and that reality never lied.

In New Mexico, Young Dick drifted into the Jingle-bob Ranch, north of Roswell, in the Pecos Valley. He was not yet fourteen, and he was accepted as the mascot of the ranch and made into a “sure-enough” cowboy by cowboys who, on legal papers, legally signed names such as Wild Horse, Willie Buck, Boomer Deacon, and High Pockets.

Here, during a stay of six months, Young Dick, soft of frame and unbreakable, achieved a knowledge of horses and horsemanship, and of men in the rough and raw, that became a life asset. More he learned. There was John Chisum, owner of the Jingle-bob, the Bosque Grande, and of other cattle ranches as far away as the Black River and beyond. John Chisum was a cattle king who had foreseen the coming of the farmer and adjusted from the open range to barbed wire, and who, in order to do so, had purchased every forty acres carrying water and got for nothing the use of the millions of acres of adjacent range that was worthless without the water he controlled. And in the talk by the camp-fire and chuck wagon, among forty-dollar-a-month cowboys who had not foreseen what John Chisum foresaw, Young Dick learned precisely why and how John Chisum had become a cattle king while a thousand of his contemporaries worked for him on wages.

But Young Dick was no cool-head. His blood was hot. He had passion, and fire, and male pride. Ready to cry from twenty hours in the saddle, he learned to ignore the thousand aching creaks in his body and with the stoic brag of silence to withstain from his blankets until the hard-bitten punchers led the way. By the same token he straddled the horse that was apportioned him, insisted on riding night-herd, and knew no hint of uncertainty when it came to him to turn the flank of a stampede with a flying slicker. He could take a chance. It was his joy to take a chance. But at such times he never failed of due respect for reality. He was well aware that men were soft-shelled and cracked easily on hard rocks or under pounding hoofs. And when he rejected a mount that tangled its legs in quick action and stumbled, it was not because he feared to be cracked, but because, when he took a chance on being cracked, he wanted, as he told John Chisum himself, "an even break for his money."

It was while at the Jingle-bob, but mailed by a cattleman from Chicago, that Young Dick wrote a letter to his guardians. Even then, so careful was he, that the envelope was addressed to Ah Sing. Though unburdened by his twenty millions, Young Dick never forgot them, and, fearing his estate might be distributed among remote relatives who might possibly inhabit New England, he warned his guardians that he was still alive and that he would return home in several years. Also, he ordered them to keep Mrs. Summerstone on at her regular salary.

But Young Dick's feet itched. Half a year, he felt, was really more than he should have spent at the Jingle-bob. As a boy hobo, or road-kid, he drifted on across the United States, getting acquainted with its peace officers, police judges, vagrancy laws, and jails. And he learned vagrants themselves at first hand, and floating laborers and petty criminals. Among other things, he got acquainted with farms and farmers, and, in New York State, once picked berries for a week with a Dutch farmer who was experimenting with one of the first silos erected in the United States. Nothing of what he learned came to him in the spirit of research. He had merely the human boy's curiosity about all things, and he gained merely a huge mass of data concerning human nature and social conditions that was to stand him in good stead in later years, when, with the aid of the books, he digested and classified it.

His adventures did not harm him. Even when he consorted with jail-birds in jungle camps, and listened to their codes of conduct and measurements of life, he was not affected. He was a traveler, and they were alien breeds. Secure in the knowledge of his twenty millions, there was neither need nor temptation for him to steal or rob. All things and all places interested him, but he never found a place nor a situation that could hold him. He wanted to see, to see more and more, and to go on seeing.

At the end of three years, nearly sixteen, hard of body, weighing a hundred and thirty pounds, he judged it time to go home and open the books. So he took his first long voyage, signing on as boy on a windjammer bound around the Horn from the Delaware Breakwater to San Francisco. It was a hard voyage, of one hundred and eighty days, but at the end he weighed ten pounds the more for having made it.

Mrs. Summerstone screamed when he walked in on her, and Ah Sing had to be called from the kitchen to identify him. Mrs. Summerstone screamed a second time. It was when she shook hands with him and lacerated her tender skin in the fisty grip of his rope-calloused palms.

He was shy, almost embarrassed, as he greeted his guardians at the hastily summoned meeting. But this did not prevent him from talking straight to the point.

“It’s this way,” he said. “I am not a fool. I know what I want, and I want what I want. I am alone in the world, outside of good friends like you, of course, and I have my own ideas of the world and what I want to do in it. I didn’t come home because of a sense of duty to anybody here. I came home because it was time, because of my sense of duty to myself. I’m all the better from my three years of wandering about, and now it’s up to me to go on with my education — my book education, I mean.”

“The Belmont Academy,” Mr. Slocum suggested. “That will fit you for the university — ”

Dick shook his head decidedly.

“And take three years to do it. So would a high school. I intend to be in the University of California inside one year. That means work. But my mind’s like acid. It’ll bite into the books. I shall hire a coach, or half a dozen of them, and go to it. And I’ll hire my coaches myself — hire and fire them. And that means money to handle.”

“A hundred a month,” Mr. Crockett suggested.

Dick shook his head.

“I’ve taken care of myself for three years without any of my money. I guess. I can take care of myself along with some of my money here in San Francisco. I don’t care to handle my business affairs yet, but I do want a bank account, a respectable-sized one. I want to spend it as I see fit, for what I see fit.”

The guardians looked their dismay at one another.

"It's ridiculous, impossible," Mr. Crockett began. "You are as unreasonable as you were before you went away."

"It's my way, I guess," Dick sighed. "The other disagreement was over my money. It was a hundred dollars I wanted then."

"Think of our position, Dick," Mr. Davidson urged. "As your guardians, how would it be looked upon if we gave you, a lad of sixteen, a free hand with money."

"What's the Freda worth, right now?" Dick demanded irrelevantly.

"Can sell for twenty thousand any time," Mr. Crockett answered.

"Then sell her. She's too large for me, and she's worth less every year. I want a thirty-footer that I can handle myself for knocking around the Bay, and that won't cost a thousand. Sell the Freda and put the money to my account. Now what you three are afraid of is that I'll misspend my money — taking to drinking, horse-racing, and running around with chorus girls. Here's my proposition to make you easy on that: let it be a drawing account for the four of us. The moment any of you decide I am misspending, that moment you can draw out the total balance. I may as well tell you, that just as a side line I'm going to get a business college expert to come here and cram me with the mechanical side of the business game."

Dick did not wait for their acquiescence, but went on as from a matter definitely settled.

"How about the horses down at Menlo? — never mind, I'll look them over and decide what to keep. Mrs. Summerstone will stay on here in charge of the house, because I've got too much work mapped out for myself already. I promise you you won't regret giving me a free hand with my directly personal affairs. And now, if you want to hear about the last three years, I'll spin the yarn for you."

Dick Forrest had been right when he told his guardians that his mind was acid and would bite into the books. Never was there such an education, and he directed it himself — but not without advice. He had learned the trick of hiring brains from his father and from John Chisum of the Jingle-bob. He had learned to sit silent and to think while cow men talked long about the campfire and the chuck wagon. And, by virtue of name and place, he sought and obtained interviews with professors and college presidents and practical men of affairs; and he listened to their talk through many hours, scarcely speaking, rarely asking a question, merely listening to the best they had to offer, content to receive from several such hours one idea, one fact, that would help him to decide what sort of an education he would go in for and how.

Then came the engaging of coaches. Never was there such an engaging and discharging, such a hiring and firing. He was not frugal in the matter. For one that he retained a month, or three months, he discharged a dozen on the first day, or the first week. And invariably he paid such dischargees a full month although their attempts to teach him might not have consumed an hour. He did such things fairly and grandly, because he could afford to be fair and grand.

He, who had eaten the leavings from firemen's pails in round-houses and "scoffed" mulligan-stews at water-tanks, had learned thoroughly the worth of money. He bought the best with the sure knowledge that it was the cheapest. A year of high school physics and a year of high school chemistry were necessary to enter the university. When he had crammed his algebra and geometry, he sought out the heads of the physics and chemistry departments in the University of California. Professor Carey laughed at him… at the first.

"My dear boy," Professor Carey began.

Dick waited patiently till he was through. Then Dick began, and concluded.

"I'm not a fool, Professor Carey. High school and academy students are children. They don't know the world. They don't know what they want, or why they want what is ladled out to them. I know the world. I know what I want and why I want it. They do physics for an hour, twice a week, for two terms, which, with two vacations, occupy one year. You are the top teacher on the Pacific Coast in physics. The college year is just ending. In the first week of your vacation, giving every minute of your time to me, I can get the year's physics. What is that week worth to you?"

"You couldn't buy it for a thousand dollars," Professor Carey rejoined, thinking he had settled the matter.

"I know what your salary is — " Dick began.

"What is it?" Professor Carey demanded sharply.

"It's not a thousand a week," Dick retorted as sharply. "It's not five hundred a week, nor two-fifty a week — " He held up his hand to stall off interruption. "You've just told me I couldn't buy a week of your time for a thousand dollars. I’m not going to. But I am going to buy that week for two thousand. Heavens! — I’ve only got so many years to live — ”

“And you can buy years?” Professor Carey queried slyly.

“Sure. That’s why I’m here. I buy three years in one, and the week from you is part of the deal.”

“But I have not accepted,” Professor Carey laughed.

“If the sum is not sufficient,” Dick said stiffly, “why name the sum you consider fair.”

And Professor Carey surrendered. So did Professor Barsdale, head of the department of chemistry.

Already had Dick taken his coaches in mathematics duck hunting for weeks in the sloughs of the Sacramento and the San Joaquin. After his bout with physics and chemistry he took his two coaches in literature and history into the Curry County hunting region of southwestern Oregon. He had learned the trick from his father, and he worked, and played, lived in the open air, and did three conventional years of adolescent education in one year without straining himself. He fished, hunted, swam, exercised, and equipped himself for the university at the same time. And he made no mistake. He knew that he did it because his father’s twenty millions had invested him with mastery. Money was a tool. He did not over-rate it, nor under-rate it. He used it to buy what he wanted.

“The weirdest form of dissipation I ever heard,” said Mr. Crockett, holding up Dick’s account for the year. “Sixteen thousand for education, all itemized, including railroad fares, porters’ tips, and shot-gun cartridges for his teachers.”

“He passed the examinations just the same,” quoth Mr. Slocum.

“And in a year,” growled Mr. Davidson. “My daughter’s boy entered Belmont at the same time, and, if he’s lucky, it will be two years yet before he enters the university.”

“Well, all I’ve got to say,” proclaimed Mr. Crockett, “is that from now on what that boy says in the matter of spending his money goes.”

“And now I’ll have a snap,” Dick told his guardians. “Here I am, neck and neck again, and years ahead of them in knowledge of the world. Why, I know things, good and bad, big and little, about men and women and life that sometimes I almost doubt myself that they’re true. But I know them.

“From now on, I’m not going to rush. I’ve caught up, and I’m going through regular. All I have to do is to keep the speed of the classes, and I’ll be graduated when I’m twenty-one. From now on I’ll need less money for education — no more coaches, you know — and more money for a good time.”

Mr. Davidson was suspicious.

“What do you mean by a good time?”

“Oh, I’m going in for the frats, for football, hold my own, you know — and I’m interested in gasoline engines. I’m going to build the first ocean-going gasoline yacht in the world — ”

“You’ll blow yourself up,” Mr. Crockett demurred. “It’s a fool notion all these cranks are rushing into over gasoline.”

“I’ll make myself safe,” Dick answered, “and that means experimenting, and it means money, so keep me a good drawing account — same old way — all four of us can draw.”

CHAPTER VI

Dick Forrest proved himself no prodigy at the university, save that he cut more lectures the first year than any other student. The reason for this was that he did not need the lectures he cut, and he knew it. His coaches, while preparing him for the entrance examinations, had carried him nearly through the first college year. Incidentally, he made the Freshman team, a very scrub team, that was beaten by every high school and academy it played against.

But Dick did put in work that nobody saw. His collateral reading was wide and deep, and when he went on his first summer cruise in the ocean-going gasoline yacht he had built no gay young crowd accompanied him. Instead, his guests, with their families, were professors of literature, history, jurisprudence, and philosophy. It was long remembered in the university as the "high-brow" cruise. The professors, on their return, reported a most enjoyable time. Dick returned with a greater comprehension of the general fields of the particular professors than he could have gained in years at their class-lectures. And time thus gained, enabled him to continue to cut lectures and to devote more time to laboratory work.

Nor did he miss having his good college time. College widows made love to him, and college girls loved him, and he was indefatigable in his dancing. He never cut a smoker, a beer bust, or a rush, and he toured the Pacific Coast with the Banjo and Mandolin Club.

And yet he was no prodigy. He was brilliant at nothing. Half a dozen of his fellows could out-banjo and out-mandolin him. A dozen fellows were adjudged better dancers than he. In football, and he gained the Varsity in his Sophomore year, he was considered a solid and dependable player, and that was all. It seemed never his luck to take the ball and go down the length of the field while the Blue and Gold host tore itself and the grandstand to pieces. But it was at the end of heart-breaking, grueling slog in mud and rain, the score tied, the second half imminent to its close, Stanford on the five-yard line, Berkeley's ball, with two downs and three yards to gain — it was then that the Blue and Gold arose and chanted its demand for Forrest to hit the center and hit it hard.

He never achieved super-excellence at anything. Big Charley Everson drank him down at the beer busts. Harrison Jackson, at hammer-throwing, always exceeded his best by twenty feet. Carruthers out-pointed him at boxing. Anson Burge could always put his shoulders to the mat, two out of three, but always only by the hardest work. In English composition a fifth of his class excelled him. Edlin, the Russian Jew, out-debated him on the contention that property was robbery. Schultz and Debret left him with the class behind in higher mathematics; and Otsuki, the Japanese, was beyond all comparison with him in chemistry.

But if Dick Forrest did not excel at anything, he failed in nothing. He displayed no superlative strength, he betrayed no weakness nor deficiency. As he told his guardians, who, by his unrelenting good conduct had been led into dreaming some great career for him; as he told them, when they asked what he wanted to become:

“Nothing. Just all around. You see, I don’t have to be a specialist. My father arranged that for me when he left me his money. Besides, I couldn’t be a specialist if I wanted to. It isn’t me.”

And thus so well-keyed was he, that he expressed clearly his key. He had no flare for anything. He was that rare individual, normal, average, balanced, all-around.

When Mr. Davidson, in the presence of his fellow guardians, stated his pleasure in that Dick had shown no wildness since he had settled down, Dick replied:

“Oh, I can hold myself when I want to.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Slocum gravely. “It’s the finest thing in the world that you sowed your wild oats early and learned control.”

Dick looked at him curiously.

“Why, that boyish adventure doesn’t count,” he said. “That wasn’t wildness. I haven’t gone wild yet. But watch me when I start. Do you know Kipling’s ‘Song of Diego Valdez’? Let me quote you a bit of it. You see, Diego Valdez, like me, had good fortune. He rose so fast to be High Admiral of Spain that he found no time to take the pleasure he had merely tasted. He was lusty and husky, but he had no time, being too busy rising. But always, he thought, he fooled himself with the thought, that his lustiness and huskiness would last, and, after he became High Admiral he could then have his pleasure. Always he remembered:

“‘ — comrades —
    Old playmates on new seas —

When as we traded orpiment
Among the savages —
A thousand leagues to south'ard
And thirty years removed —
They knew not noble Valdez,
But me they knew and loved.
"'Then they that found good liquor
They drank it not alone,
And they that found fair plunder,
They told us every one,
Behind our chosen islands
Or secret shoals between,
When, walty from far voyage,
We gathered to careen.
"'There burned our breaming-fagots,
All pale along the shore:
There rose our worn pavilions —
A sail above an oar:
As flashed each yearning anchor
Through mellow seas afire,
So swift our careless captains
Rowed each to his desire.
"'Where lay our loosened harness?
Where turned our naked feet?
Whose tavern mid the palm-trees?
What quenchings of what heat?
Oh fountain in the desert!
Oh cistern in the waste!
Oh bread we ate in secret!
Oh cup we spilled in haste!
"'The youth new-taught of longing,
The widow curbed and wan —
The good wife proud at season,
And the maid aware of man;
All souls, unslaked, consuming,
Defrauded in delays,
Desire not more than quittance

Than I those forfeit days!'

"Oh, get him, get him, you three oldsters, as I've got him! Get what he saws next:

"'I dreamed to wait my pleasure,
Unchanged my spring would bide:
Wherefore, to wait my pleasure,
I put my spring aside,
Till, first in face of Fortune,
And last in mazed disdain,
I made Diego Valdez
High Admiral of Spain!'

"Listen to me, guardians!" Dick cried on, his face a flame of passion. "Don't forget for one moment that I am anything but unslaked, consuming. I am. I burn. But I hold myself. Don't think I am a dead one because I am a darn nice, meritorious boy at college. I am young. I am alive. I am all lusty and husky. But I make no mistake. I hold myself. I don't start out now to blow up on the first lap. I am just getting ready. I am going to have my time. I am not going to spill my cup in haste. And in the end I am not going to lament as Diego Valdez did:

"'There walks no wind 'neath heaven
Nor wave that shall restore
The old careening riot
And the clamorous, crowded shore —
The fountain in the desert,
The cistern in the waste,
The bread we ate in secret,
The cup we spilled in haste.'

"Listen, guardians! Do you know what it is to hit your man, to hit him in hot blood — square to the jaw — and drop him cold? I want that. And I want to love, and kiss, and risk, and play the lusty, husky fool. I want to take my chance. I want my careening riot, and I want it while I am young, but not while I am too young. And I'm going to have it. And in the meantime I play the game at college, I hold myself, I equip myself, so that when I turn loose I am going to have the best chance of my best. Oh, believe me, I do not always sleep well of nights."

"You mean?" queried Mr. Crockett.

"Sure. That's just what I mean. I haven't gone wild yet, but just watch me when I start."

"And you will start when you graduate?"

The remarkable youngster shook his head.

"After I graduate I'm going to take at least a year of post-graduate courses in the College of Agriculture. You see, I'm developing a hobby — farming. I want to do something … something constructive. My father wasn't constructive to amount to anything. Neither were you fellows. You struck a new land in pioneer days, and you picked up money like a lot of sailors shaking out nuggets from the grass roots in a virgin placer — "

"My lad, I've some little experience in Californian farming," Mr. Crockett interrupted in a hurt way.

"Sure you have, but you weren't constructive. You were — well, facts are facts — you were destructive. You were a bonanza farmer. What did you do? You took forty thousand acres of the finest Sacramento Valley soil and you grew wheat on it year after year. You never dreamed of rotation. You burned your straw. You exhausted your humus. You plowed four inches and put a plow-sole like a cement sidewalk just four inches under the surface. You exhausted that film of four inches and now you can't get your seed back.

"You've destroyed. That's what my father did. They all did it. Well, I'm going to take my father's money and construct. I'm going to take worked-out wheat-land that I can buy as at a fire-sale, rip out the plow-sole, and make it produce more in the end than it did when you fellows first farmed it."

It was at the end of his Junior year that Mr. Crockett again mentioned Dick's threatened period of wildness.

"Soon as I'm done with cow college," was his answer. "Then I'm going to buy, and stock, and start a ranch that'll be a ranch. And then I'll set out after my careening riot."

"About how large a ranch will you start with?" Mr. Davidson asked.

"Maybe fifty thousand acres, maybe five hundred thousand. It all depends. I'm going to play unearned increment to the limit. People haven't begun to come to California yet. Without a tap of my hand or a turn over, fifteen years from now land that I can buy for ten dollars an acre will be worth fifty, and what I can buy for fifty will be worth five hundred."

"A half million acres at ten dollars an acre means five million dollars," Mr. Crockett warned gravely.

"And at fifty it means twenty-five million," Dick laughed.

But his guardians never believed in the wild oats pilgrimage he threatened. He might waste his fortune on new-fangled farming, but to go literally wild after such years of self-restraint was an unthinkable thing.

Dick took his sheepskin with small honor. He was twenty-eighth in his class, and he had not set the college world afire. His most notable achievement had been his resistance and bafflement of many nice girls and of the mothers of many nice girls. Next, after that, he had signalized his Senior year by captaining the Varsity to its first victory over Stanford in five years. It was in the day prior to large-salaried football coaches, when individual play meant much; but he hammered team-work and the sacrifice of the individual into his team, so that on Thanksgiving Day, over a vastly more brilliant eleven, the Blue and Gold was able to serpentine its triumph down Market Street in San Francisco.

In his post-graduate year in cow college, Dick devoted himself to laboratory work and cut all lectures. In fact, he hired his own lecturers, and spent a sizable fortune on them in mere traveling expenses over California. Jacques Ribot, esteemed one of the greatest world authorities on agricultural chemistry, who had been seduced from his two thousand a year in France by the six thousand offered by the University of California, who had been seduced to Hawaii by the ten thousand of the sugar planters, Dick Forrest seduced with fifteen thousand and the more delectable temperate climate of California on a five years' contract.

Messrs. Crockett, Slocum, and Davidson threw up their hands in horror and knew that this was the wild career Dick Forrest had forecast.

But this was only one of Dick Forrest's similar dissipations. He stole from the Federal Government, at a prodigal increase of salary, its star specialist in livestock breeding, and by similar misconduct he robbed the University of Nebraska of its greatest milch cow professor, and broke the heart of the Dean of the College of Agriculture of the University of California by appropriating Professor Nirdenhammer, the wizard of farm management.

"Cheap at the price, cheap at the price," Dick explained to his guardians. "Wouldn't you rather see me spend my money in buying professors than in buying race horses and actresses? Besides, the trouble with you fellows is that you don't know the game of buying brains. I do. That's my specialty. I'm going to make money out of them, and, better than that, I'm going to make a dozen blades of grass grow where you fellows didn't leave room for half a blade in the soil you gutted."

So it can be understood how his guardians could not believe in his promise of wild career, of kissing and risking, and hitting men hot on the jaw. "One year more," he warned, while he delved in agricultural chemistry, soil analysis, farm management, and traveled California with his corps of high-salaried experts. And his guardians could only apprehend a swift and wide dispersal of the Forrest millions when Dick attained his majority, took charge of the totality of his fortune, and actually embarked on his agricultural folly.

The day he was twenty-one the purchase of his principality, that extended west from the Sacramento River to the mountain tops, was consummated.

"An incredible price," said Mr. Crockett.

"Incredibly cheap," said Dick. "You ought to see my soil reports. You ought to see my water-reports. And you ought to hear me sing. Listen, guardians, to a song that is a true song. I am the singer and the song."

Whereupon, in the queer quavering falsetto that is the sense of song to the North American Indian, the Eskimo, and the Mongol, Dick sang:

"Hu'-tim yo'-kim koi-o-di'!
Wi'-hi yan'-ning koi-o-di'!
Lo'-whi yan'-ning koi-o-di'!
Yo-ho' Nai-ni', hal-u'-dom yo nai, yo-ho' nai-nim'!"

"The music is my own," he murmured apologetically, "the way I think it ought to have sounded. You see, no man lives who ever heard it sung. The Nishinam got it from the Maidu, who got it from the Konkau, who made it. But the Nishinam and the Maidu and the Konkau are gone. Their last rancheria is not. You plowed it under, Mr. Crockett, with you bonanza gang-plowing, plow-soling farming. And I got the song from a certain ethnological report, volume three, of the United States Pacific Coast Geographical and Geological Survey. Red Cloud, who was formed out of the sky, first sang this song to the stars and the mountain flowers in the morning of the world. I shall now sing it for you in English."

And again, in Indian falsetto, ringing with triumph, vernal and bursting, slapping his thighs and stamping his feet to the accent, Dick sang:

“The acorns come down from heaven!
I plant the short acorns in the valley!
I plant the long acorns in the valley!
I sprout, I, the black-oak acorn, sprout, I sprout!”

Dick Forrest’s name began to appear in the newspapers with appalling frequency. He leaped to instant fame by being the first man in California who paid ten thousand dollars for a single bull. His livestock specialist, whom he had filched from the Federal Government, in England outbid the Rothschilds’ Shire farm for Hillcrest Chieftain, quickly to be known as Forrest’s Folly, paying for that kingly animal no less than five thousand guineas.

“Let them laugh,” Dick told his ex-guardians. “I am importing forty Shire mares. I’ll write off half his price the first twelvemonth. He will be the sire and grandsire of many sons and grandsons for which the Californians will fall over themselves to buy of me at from three to five thousand dollars a clatter.”

Dick Forrest was guilty of many similar follies in those first months of his majority. But the most unthinkable folly of all was, after he had sunk millions into his original folly, that he turned it over to his experts personally to develop along the general broad lines laid down by him, placed checks upon them that they might not go catastrophically wrong, bought a ticket in a passenger brig to Tahiti, and went away to run wild.

Occasionally his guardians heard from him. At one time he was owner and master of a four-masted steel sailing ship that carried the English flag and coals from Newcastle. They knew that much, because they had been called upon for the purchase price, because they read Dick’s name in the papers as master when his ship rescued the passengers of the ill-fated Orion, and because they collected the insurance when Dick’s ship was lost with most of all hands in the great Fiji hurricane. In 1896, he was in the Klondike; in 1897, he was in Kamchatka and scurvy-stricken; and, next, he erupted with the American flag into the Philippines. Once, although they could never learn how nor why, he was owner and master of a crazy tramp steamer, long since rejected by Lloyd’s, which sailed under the aegis of Siam.

From time to time business correspondence compelled them to hear from him from various purple ports of the purple seas. Once, they had to bring the entire political pressure of the Pacific Coast to bear upon Washington in order to get him out of a scrape in Russia, of which affair not one line appeared in the daily press, but which affair was secretly provocative of ticklish joy and delight in all the chancellories of Europe.

Incidentally, they knew that he lay wounded in Mafeking; that he pulled through a bout with yellow fever in Guayaquil; and that he stood trial for brutality on the high seas in New York City. Thrice they read in the press dispatches that he was dead: once, in battle, in Mexico; and twice, executed, in Venezuela. After such false flutterings, his guardians refused longer to be thrilled when he crossed the Yellow Sea in a sampan, was "rumored" to have died of beri-beri, was captured from the Russians by the Japanese at Mukden, and endured military imprisonment in Japan.

The one thrill of which they were still capable, was when, true to promise, thirty years of age, his wild oats sown, he returned to California with a wife to whom, as he announced, he had been married several years, and whom all his three guardians found they knew. Mr. Slocum had dropped eight hundred thousand along with the totality of her father's fortune in the final catastrophe at the Los Cocos mine in Chihuahua when the United States demonetized silver. Mr. Davidson had pulled a million out of the Last Stake along with her father when he pulled eight millions from that sunken, man-resurrected, river bed in Amador County. Mr. Crockett, a youth at the time, had "spooned" the Merced bottom with her father in the late 'fifties, had stood up best man with him at Stockton when he married her mother, and, at Grant's Pass, had played poker with him and with the then Lieutenant U.S. Grant when all the little the western world knew of that young lieutenant was that he was a good Indian fighter but a poor poker player.

And Dick Forrest had married the daughter of Philip Desten! It was not a case of wishing Dick luck. It was a case of garrulous insistence on the fact that he did not know how lucky he was. His guardians forgave him all his wildness. He had made good. At last he had performed a purely rational act. Better; it was a stroke of genius. Paula Desten! Philip Desten's daughter! The Desten blood! The Destens and the Forrests! It was enough. The three aged comrades of Forrest and Desten of the old Gold Days, of the two who had played and passed on, were even severe with Dick. They warned him of the extreme value of his treasure, of the sacred duty such wedlock imposed on him, of all the traditions and virtues of the Desten and Forrest blood, until Dick laughed and broke in with the disconcerting statement that they were talking like a bunch of fanciers or eugenics cranks — which was precisely what they were talking like, although they did not care to be told so crassly.

At any rate, the simple fact that he had married a Desten made them nod unqualified approbation when he showed them the plans and building estimates of the Big House. Thanks to Paula Desten, for once they were agreed that he was spending wisely and well. As for his farming, it was incontestible that the Harvest Group was unfalteringly producing, and he might be allowed his hobbies. Nevertheless, as Mr. Slocum put it: "Twenty-five thousand dollars for a mere work-horse stallion is a madness. Work-horses are work-horses; now had it been running stock…."

CHAPTER VII

While Dick Forrest scanned the pamphlet on hog cholera issued by the State of Iowa, through his open windows, across the wide court, began to come sounds of the awakening of the girl who laughed from the wooden frame by his bed and who had left on the floor of his sleeping porch, not so many hours before, the rosy, filmy, lacy, boudoir cap so circumspectly rescued by Oh My.

Dick heard her voice, for she awoke, like a bird, with song. He heard her trilling, in and out through open windows, all down the long wing that was hers. And he heard her singing in the patio garden, where, also, she desisted long enough to quarrel with her Airedale and scold the collie pup unholily attracted by the red-orange, divers-finned, and many-tailed Japanese goldfish in the fountain basin.

He was aware of pleasure that she was awake. It was a pleasure that never staled. Always, up himself for hours, he had a sense that the Big House was not really awake until he heard Paula's morning song across the patio.

But having tasted the pleasure of knowing her to be awake, Dick, as usual, forgot her in his own affairs. She went out of his consciousness as he became absorbed again in the Iowa statistics on hog cholera.

"Good morning, Merry Gentleman," was the next he heard, always adorable music in his ears; and Paula flowed in upon him, all softness of morning kimono and stayless body, as her arm passed around his neck and she perched, half in his arms, on one accommodating knee of his. And he pressed her, and advertised his awareness of her existence and nearness, although his eyes lingered a full half minute longer on the totals of results of Professor Kenealy's hog inoculations on Simon Jones' farm at Washington, Iowa.

"My!" she protested. "You are too fortunate. You are sated with riches. Here is your Lady Boy, your 'little haughty moon,' and you haven't even said, 'Good morning, Little Lady Boy, was your sleep sweet and gentle?'"

And Dick Forrest forsook the statistical columns of Professor Kenealy's inoculations, pressed his wife closer, kissed her, but with insistent right fore-finger maintained his place in the pages of the pamphlet.

Nevertheless, the very terms of her “reproof prevented him from asking what he should have asked — the prosperity of her night since the boudoir cap had been left upon his sleeping porch. He shut the pamphlet on his right fore-finger, at the place he intended to resume, and added his right arm to his left about her.

“Oh!” she cried. “Oh! Oh! Listen!”

From without came the flute-calls of quail. She quivered against him with the joy she took in the mellow-sweet notes.

“The coveys are breaking up,” he said.

“It means spring,” Paula cried.

“And the sign that good weather has come.”

“And love!”

“And nest-building and egg-laying,” Dick laughed. “Never has the world seemed more fecund than this morning. Lady Isleton is farrowed of eleven. The angoras were brought down this morning for the kidding. You should have seen them. And the wild canaries have been discussing matrimony in the patio for hours. I think some free lover is trying to break up their monogamic heaven with modern love-theories. It’s a wonder you slept through the discussion. Listen! There they go now. Is that applause? Or is it a riot?”

Arose a thin twittering, like elfin pipings, with sharp pitches and excited shrillnesses, to which Dick and Paula lent delighted ears, till, suddenly, with the abruptness of the trump of doom, all the microphonic chorus of the tiny golden lovers was swept away, obliterated, in a Gargantuan blast of sound — no less wild, no less musical, no less passionate with love, but immense, dominant, compelling by very vastitude of volume.

The eager eyes of the man and woman sought instantly the channel past open French windows and the screen of the sleeping porch to the road through the lilacs, while they waited breathlessly for the great stallion to appear who trumpeted his love-call before him. Again, unseen, he trumpeted, and Dick said:

“I will sing you a song, my haughty moon. It is not my song. It is the Mountain Lad’s. It is what he nickers. Listen! He sings it again. This is what he says: ‘Hear me! I am Eros. I stamp upon the hills. I fill the wide valleys. The mares hear me, and startle, in quiet pastures; for they know me. The grass grows rich and richer, the land is filled with fatness, and the sap is in the trees. It is the spring. The spring is mine. I am monarch of my kingdom of the spring. The mares remember my voice. They know me aforetime through their mothers before them. Hear me! I am Eros. I stamp upon the hills, and the wide valleys are my heralds, echoing the sound of my approach.’“

And Paula pressed closer to her husband, and was pressed, as her lips touched his forehead, and as the pair of them, gazing at the empty road among the lilacs, saw it filled with the eruptive vision of Mountain Lad, majestic and mighty, the gnat-creature of a man upon his back absurdly small; his eyes wild and desirous, with the blue sheen that surfaces the eyes of stallions; his mouth, flecked with the froth and fret of high spirit, now brushed to burnished knees of impatience, now tossed skyward to utterance of that vast, compelling call that shook the air.

Almost as an echo, from afar off, came a thin-sweet answering whinney.

“It is the Fotherington Princess,” Paula breathed softly.

Again Mountain Lad trumpeted his call, and Dick chanted:

“Hear me! I am Eros! I stamp upon the hills!”

And almost, for a flash of an instant, circled soft and close in his arms, Paula knew resentment of her husband’s admiration for the splendid beast. And the next instant resentment vanished, and, in acknowledgment of due debt, she cried gaily:

“And now, Red Cloud! the Song of the Acorn!” Dick glanced half absently to her from the pamphlet folded on his finger, and then, with equal pitch of gaiety, sang:

“The acorns come down from heaven!
I plant the short acorns in the valley!
I plant the long acorns in the valley!
I sprout, I, the black-oak acorn, sprout, I sprout!”

She had impressed herself very close against him during his moment of chanting, but, in the first moments that succeeded she felt the restless movement of the hand that held the finger-marked hog-pamphlet and caught the swift though involuntary flash of his eye to the clock on his desk that marked 11:25. Again she tried to hold him, although, with equal involuntariness, her attempt was made in mild terms of resentment.

“You are a strange and wonderful Red Cloud,” she said slowly. “Sometimes almost am I convinced that you are utterly Red Cloud, planting your acorns and singing your savage joy of the planting. And, sometimes, almost you are to me the ultramodern man, the last word of the two-legged, male human that finds Trojan adventures in sieges of statistics, and, armed with test tubes and hypodermics, engages in gladiatorial contests with weird microorganisms. Almost, at times, it seems you should wear glasses and be bald-headed; almost, it seems….”

“That I have no right of vigor to possess an armful of girl,” he completed for her, drawing her still closer. “That I am a silly scientific brute who doesn’t merit his ‘vain little breath of sweet rose-colored dust.’ Well, listen, I have a plan. In a few days….”

But his plan died in birth, for, at their backs, came a discreet cough of warning, and, both heads turning as one they saw Bonbright, the assistant secretary, with a sheaf of notes on yellow sheets in his hand.

“Four telegrams,” he murmured apologetically. “Mr. Blake is confident that two of them are very important. One of them concerns that Chile shipment of bulls….”

And Paula, slowly drawing away from her husband and rising to her feet, could feel him slipping from her toward his tables of statistics, bills of lading, and secretaries, foremen, and managers.

“Oh, Paula,” Dick called, as she was fading through the doorway; “I’ve christened the last boy — he’s to be known as ‘Oh Ho.’ How do you like it?”

Her reply began with a hint of forlornness that vanished with her smile, as she warned:

“You will play ducks and drakes with the house-boys’ names.”

“I never do it with pedigreed stock,” he assured her with a solemnity belied by the challenging twinkle in his eyes.

“I didn’t mean that,” was her retort. “I meant that you were exhausting the possibilities of the language. Before long you’ll have to be calling them Oh Bel, Oh Hell, and Oh Go to Hell. Your ‘Oh’ was a mistake. You should have started with ‘Red.’ Then you could have had Red Bull, Red Horse, Red Dog, Red Frog, Red Fern — and, and all the rest of the reds.”

She mingled her laughter with his, as she vanished, and, the next moment, the telegram before him, he was immersed in the details of the shipment, at two hundred and fifty dollars each, F. O. B., of three hundred registered yearling bulls to the beef ranges of Chile. Even so, vaguely, with vague pleasure, he heard Paula sing her way back across the patio to her long wing of house; though he was unaware that her voice was a trifle, just the merest trifle, subdued.

CHAPTER VIII

Five minutes after Paula had left him, punctual to the second, the four telegrams disposed of, Dick was getting into a ranch motor car, along with Thayer, the Idaho buyer, and Naismith, the special correspondent for the Breeders' Gazette. Wardman, the sheep manager, joined them at the corrals where several thousand young Shropshire rams had been assembled for inspection.

There was little need for conversation. Thayer was distinctly disappointed in this, for he felt that the purchase of ten carloads of such expensive creatures was momentous enough to merit much conversation.

"They speak for themselves," Dick had assured him, and turned aside to give data to Naismith for his impending article on Shropshires in California and the Northwest.

"I wouldn't advise you to bother to select them," Dick told Thayer ten minutes later. "The average is all top. You could spend a week picking your ten carloads and have no higher grade than if you had taken the first to hand."

This cool assumption that the sale was already consummated so perturbed Thayer, that, along with the sure knowledge that he had never seen so high a quality of rams, he was nettled into changing his order to twenty carloads.

As he told Naismith, after they had regained the Big House and as they chalked their cues to finish the interrupted game:

"It's my first visit to Forrest's. He's a wizard. I've been buying in the East and importing. But those Shropshires won my judgment. You noticed I doubled my order. Those Idaho buyers will be wild for them. I only had buying orders straight for six carloads, and contingent on my judgment for two carloads more; but if every buyer doesn't double his order, straight and contingent, when he sees them rams, and if there isn't a stampede for what's left, I don't know sheep. They're the goods. If they don't jump up the sheep game of Idaho … well, then Forrest's no breeder and I'm no buyer, that's all."

As the warning gong for lunch rang out — a huge bronze gong from Korea that was never struck until it was first indubitably ascertained that Paula was awake — Dick joined the young people at the goldfish fountain in the big patio. Bert Wainwright, variously advised and commanded by his sister, Rita, and by Paula and her sisters, Lute and Ernestine, was striving with a dip-net to catch a particularly gorgeous flower of a fish whose size and color and multiplicity of fins and tails had led Paula to decide to segregate him for the special breeding tank in the fountain of her own secret patio. Amid high excitement, and much squealing and laughter, the deed was accomplished, the big fish deposited in a can and carried away by the waiting Italian gardener.

"And what have you to say for yourself?" Ernestine challenged, as Dick joined them.

"Nothing," he answered sadly. "The ranch is depleted. Three hundred beautiful young bulls depart to-morrow for South America, and Thayer — you met him last night — is taking twenty carloads of rams. All I can say is that my congratulations are extended to Idaho and Chile."

"Plant more acorns," Paula laughed, her arms about her sisters, the three of them smilingly expectant of an inevitable antic.

"Oh, Dick, sing your acorn song," Lute begged.

He shook his head solemnly.

"I've got a better one. It's purest orthodoxy. It's got Red Cloud and his acorn song skinned to death. Listen! This is the song of the little East-sider, on her first trip to the country under the auspices of her Sunday School. She's quite young. Pay particular attention to her lisp."

And then Dick chanted, lisping:

"The goldfish thwimmeth in the bowl,
The robin thiths upon the tree;
What maketh them thit so eathily?
Who stuckth the fur upon their breasths?
God! God! He done it!"

"Cribbed," was Ernestine's judgment, as the laughter died away.

"Sure," Dick agreed. "I got it from the Rancher and Stockman, that got it from the Swine Breeders' Journal, that got it from the Western Advocate, that got it from Public Opinion, that got it, undoubtedly, from the little girl herself, or, rather from her Sunday School teacher. For that matter I am convinced it was first printed in Our Dumb Animals."

The bronze gong rang out its second call, and Paula, one arm around Dick, the other around Rita, led the way into the house, while, bringing up the rear, Bert Wainwright showed Lute Ernestine a new tango step.

"One thing, Thayer," Dick said in an aside, after releasing himself from the girls, as they jostled in confusion where they met Thayer and Naismith at the head of the stairway leading down to the dining room. "Before you leave us, cast your eyes over those Merinos. I really have to brag about them, and American sheepmen will have to come to them. Of course, started with imported stock, but I've made a California strain that will make the French breeders sit up. See Wardman and take your pick. Get Naismith to look them over with you. Stick half a dozen of them in your train-load, with my compliments, and let your Idaho sheepmen get a line on them."

They seated at a table, capable of indefinite extension, in a long, low dining room that was a replica of the hacienda dining rooms of the Mexican land-kings of old California. The floor was of large brown tiles, the beamed ceiling and the walls were whitewashed, and the huge, undecorated, cement fireplace was an achievement in massiveness and simplicity. Greenery and blooms nodded from without the deep-embrasured windows, and the room expressed the sense of cleanness, chastity, and coolness.

On the walls, but not crowded, were a number of canvases — most ambitious of all, in the setting of honor, all in sad grays, a twilight Mexican scene by Xavier Martinez, of a peon, with a crooked-stick plow and two bullocks, turning a melancholy furrow across the foreground of a sad, illimitable, Mexican plain. There were brighter pictures, of early Mexican-Californian life, a pastel of twilight eucalyptus with a sunset-tipped mountain beyond, by Reimers, a moonlight by Peters, and a Griffin stubble-field across which gleamed and smoldered California summer hills of tawny brown and purple-misted, wooded canyons.

"Say," Thayer muttered in an undertone across to Naismith, while Dick and the girls were in the thick of exclamatory and giggling banter, "here's some stuff for that article of yours, if you touch upon the Big House. I've seen the servants' dining room. Forty head sit down to it every meal, including gardeners, chauffeurs, and outside help. It's a boarding house in itself. Some head, some system, take it from me. That Chiney boy, Oh Joy, is a wooz. He's housekeeper, or manager, of the whole shebang, or whatever you want to call his job — and, say, it runs that smooth you can't hear it."

"Forrest's the real wooz," Naismith nodded. "He's the brains that picks brains. He could run an army, a campaign, a government, or even a three-ring circus."

“Which last is some compliment,” Thayer concurred heartily.

“Oh, Paula,” Dick said across to his wife. “I just got word that Graham arrives to-morrow morning. Better tell Oh Joy to put him in the watch-tower. It’s man-size quarters, and it’s possible he may carry out his threat and work on his book.”

“Graham? — Graham?” Paula queried aloud of her memory. “Do I know him?”

“You met him once two years ago, in Santiago, at the Café Venus. He had dinner with us.”

“Oh, one of those naval officers?”

Dick shook his head.

“The civilian. Don’t you remember that big blond fellow — you talked music with him for half an hour while Captain Joyce talked our heads off to prove that the United States should clean Mexico up and out with the mailed fist.”

“Oh, to be sure,” Paula vaguely recollected. “He’d met you somewhere before… South Africa, wasn’t it? Or the Philippines?”

“That’s the chap. South Africa, it was. Evan Graham. Next time we met was on the Times dispatch boat on the Yellow Sea. And we crossed trails a dozen times after that, without meeting, until that night in the Café Venus.

“Heavens — he left Bora-Bora, going east, two days before I dropped anchor bound west on my way to Samoa. I came out of Apia, with letters for him from the American consul, the day before he came in. We missed each other by three days at Levuka — I was sailing the Wild Duck then. He pulled out of Suva as guest on a British cruiser. Sir Everard Im Thurm, British High Commissioner of the South Seas, gave me more letters for Graham. I missed him at Port Resolution and at Vila in the New Hebrides. The cruiser was junketing, you see. I beat her in and out of the Santa Cruz Group. It was the same thing in the Solomons. The cruiser, after shelling the cannibal villages at Langa-Langa, steamed out in the morning. I sailed in that afternoon. I never did deliver those letters in person, and the next time I laid eyes on him was at the Café Venus two years ago.”

“But who about him, and what about him?” Paula queried. “And what’s the book?”

“Well, first of all, beginning at the end, he’s broke — that is, for him, he’s broke. He’s got an income of several thousand a year left, but all that his father left him is gone. No; he didn't blow it. He got in deep, and the 'silent panic' several years ago just about cleaned him. But he doesn't whimper.

"He's good stuff, old American stock, a Yale man. The book — he expects to make a bit on it — covers last year's trip across South America, west coast to east coast. It was largely new ground. The Brazilian government voluntarily voted him a honorarium of ten thousand dollars for the information he brought out concerning unexplored portions of Brazil. Oh, he's a man, all man. He delivers the goods. You know the type — clean, big, strong, simple; been everywhere, seen everything, knows most of a lot of things, straight, square, looks you in the eyes — well, in short, a man's man."

Ernestine clapped her hands, flung a tantalizing, man-challenging, man-conquering glance at Bert Wainwright, and exclaimed: "And he comes tomorrow!"

Dick shook his head reprovingly.

"Oh, nothing in that direction, Ernestine. Just as nice girls as you have tried to hook Evan Graham before now. And, between ourselves, I couldn't blame them. But he's had good wind and fast legs, and they've always failed to run him down or get him into a corner, where, dazed and breathless, he's mechanically muttered 'Yes' to certain interrogatories and come out of the trance to find himself, roped, thrown, branded, and married. Forget him, Ernestine. Stick by golden youth and let it drop its golden apples. Pick them up, and golden youth with them, making a noise like stupid failure all the time you are snaring swift-legged youth. But Graham's out of the running. He's old like me — just about the same age — and, like me, he's run a lot of those queer races. He knows how to make a get-away. He's been cut by barbed wire, nose-twitched, neck-burnt, cinched to a fare-you-well, and he remains subdued but uncatchable. He doesn't care for young things. In fact, you may charge him with being wobbly, but I plead guilty, by proxy, that he is merely old, hard bitten, and very wise."

CHAPTER IX

“Where’s my Boy in Breeches?” Dick shouted, stamping with jingling spurs through the Big House in quest of its Little Lady.

He came to the door that gave entrance to her long wing. It was a door without a knob, a huge panel of wood in a wood-paneled wall. But Dick shared the secret of the hidden spring with his wife, pressed the spring, and the door swung wide.

“Where’s my Boy in Breeches?” he called and stamped down the length of her quarters.

A glance into the bathroom, with its sunken Roman bath and descending marble steps, was fruitless, as were the glances he sent into Paula’s wardrobe room and dressing room. He passed the short, broad stairway that led to her empty window-seat divan in what she called her Juliet Tower, and thrilled at sight of an orderly disarray of filmy, pretty, lacy woman’s things that he knew she had spread out for her own sensuous delight of contemplation. He fetched up for a moment at a drawing easel, his reiterant cry checked on his lips, and threw a laugh of recognition and appreciation at the sketch, just outlined, of an awkward, big-boned, knobby, weanling colt caught in the act of madly whinneying for its mother.

“Where’s my Boy in Breeches?” he shouted before him, out to the sleeping porch; and found only a demure, brow-troubled Chinese woman of thirty, who smiled self-effacing embarrassment into his eyes.

This was Paula’s maid, Oh Dear, so named by Dick, many years before, because of a certain solicitous contraction of her delicate brows that made her appear as if ever on the verge of saying, “Oh dear!” In fact, Dick had taken her, as a child almost, for Paula’s service, from a fishing village on the Yellow Sea where her widow-mother earned as much as four dollars in a prosperous year at making nets for the fishermen. Oh Dear’s first service for Paula had been aboard the three-topmast schooner, All Away, at the same time that Oh Joy, cabin-boy, had begun to demonstrate the efficiency that enabled him, through the years, to rise to the majordomoship of the Big House.

“Where is your mistress, Oh Dear?” Dick asked.

Oh Dear shrank away in an agony of bashfulness.

Dick waited.

“She maybe with ‘m young ladies — I don’t know,” Oh Dear stammered; and

Dick, in very mercy, swung away on his heel.

“Where’s my Boy in Breeches?” he shouted, as he stamped out under the porte cochère just as a ranch limousine swung around the curve among the lilacs.

“I’ll be hanged if I know,” a tall, blond man in a light summer suit responded from the car; and the next moment Dick Forrest and Evan Graham were shaking hands.

Oh My and Oh Ho carried in the hand baggage, and Dick accompanied his guest to the watch tower quarters.

“You’ll have to get used to us, old man,” Dick was explaining. “We run the ranch like clockwork, and the servants are wonders; but we allow ourselves all sorts of loosenesses. If you’d arrived two minutes later there’d have been no one to welcome you but the Chinese boys. I was just going for a ride, and Paula — Mrs. Forrest — has disappeared.”

The two men were almost of a size, Graham topping his host by perhaps an inch, but losing that inch in the comparative breadth of shoulders and depth of chest. Graham was, if anything, a clearer blond than Forrest, although both were equally gray of eye, equally clear in the whites of the eyes, and equally and precisely similarly bronzed by sun and weather-beat. Graham’s features were in a slightly larger mold; his eyes were a trifle longer, although this was lost again by a heavier droop of lids. His nose hinted that it was a shade straighter as well as larger than Dick’s, and his lips were a shade thicker, a shade redder, a shade more bowed with fulsome-ness.

Forrest’s hair was light brown to chestnut, while Graham’s carried a whispering advertisement that it would have been almost golden in its silk had it not been burned almost to sandiness by the sun. The cheeks of both were high-boned, although the hollows under Forrest’s cheek-bones were more pronounced. Both noses were large-nostriled and sensitive. And both mouths, while generously proportioned, carried the impression of girlish sweetness and chastity along with the muscles that could draw the lips to the firmness and harshness that would not give the lie to the square, uncleft chins beneath.

But the inch more in height and the inch less in chest-girth gave Evan Graham a grace of body and carriage that Dick Forrest did not possess. In this particular of build, each served well as a foil to the other. Graham was all light and delight, with a hint — but the slightest of hints — of Prince Charming. Forrest's seemed a more efficient and formidable organism, more dangerous to other life, stouter-gripped on its own life.

Forrest threw a glance at his wrist watch as he talked, but in that glance, without pause or fumble of focus, with swift certainty of correlation, he read the dial.

"Eleven-thirty," he said. "Come along at once, Graham. We don't eat till twelve-thirty. I am sending out a shipment of bulls, three hundred of them, and I'm downright proud of them. You simply must see them. Never mind your riding togs. Oh Ho — fetch a pair of my leggings. You, Oh Joy, order Altadena saddled. — What saddle do you prefer, Graham?"

"Oh, anything, old man."

"English? — Australian? — McClellan? — Mexican?" Dick insisted.

"McClellan, if it's no trouble," Graham surrendered.

They sat their horses by the side of the road and watched the last of the herd beginning its long journey to Chili disappear around the bend.

"I see what you're doing — it's great," Graham said with sparkling eyes. "I've fooled some myself with the critters, when I was a youngster, down in the Argentine. If I'd had beef-blood like that to build on, I mightn't have taken the cropper I did."

"But that was before alfalfa and artesian wells," Dick smoothed for him. "The time wasn't ripe for the Shorthorn. Only scrubs could survive the droughts. They were strong in staying powers but light on the scales. And refrigerator steamships hadn't been invented. That's what revolutionized the game down there."

"Besides, I was a mere youngster," Graham added. "Though that meant nothing much. There was a young German tackled it at the same time I did, with a tenth of my capital. He hung it out, lean years, dry years, and all. He's rated in seven figures now."

They turned their horses back for the Big House. Dick flirted his wrist to see his watch.

"Lots of time," he assured his guest. "I'm glad you saw those yearlings. There was one reason why that young German stuck it out. He had to. You had your father's money to fall back on, and, I imagine not only that your feet itched, but that your chief weakness lay in that you could afford to solace the itching."

“Over there are the fish ponds,” Dick said, indicating with a nod of his head to the right an invisible area beyond the lilacs. “You’ll have plenty of opportunity to catch a mess of trout, or bass, or even catfish. You see, I’m a miser. I love to make things work. There may be a justification for the eight-hour labor day, but I make the work-day of water just twenty-four hours’ long. The ponds are in series, according to the nature of the fish. But the water starts working up in the mountains. It irrigates a score of mountain meadows before it makes the plunge and is clarified to crystal clearness in the next few rugged miles; and at the plunge from the highlands it generates half the power and all the lighting used on the ranch. Then it sub-irrigates lower levels, flows in here to the fish ponds, and runs out and irrigates miles of alfalfa farther on. And, believe me, if by that time it hadn’t reached the flat of the Sacramento, I’d be pumping out the drainage for more irrigation.”

“Man, man,” Graham laughed, “you could make a poem on the wonder of water. I’ve met fire-worshipers, but you’re the first real water-worshiper I’ve ever encountered. And you’re no desert-dweller, either. You live in a land of water — pardon the bull — but, as I was saying…”

Graham never completed his thought. From the right, not far away, came the unmistakable ring of shod hoofs on concrete, followed by a mighty splash and an outburst of women’s cries and laughter. Quickly the cries turned to alarm, accompanied by the sounds of a prodigious splashing and floundering as of some huge, drowning beast. Dick bent his head and leaped his horse through the lilacs, Graham, on Altadena, followed at his heels. They emerged in a blaze of sunshine, on an open space among the trees, and Graham came upon as unexpected a picture as he had ever chanced upon in his life.

Tree-surrounded, the heart of the open space was a tank, four-sided of concrete. The upper end of the tank, full width, was a broad spillway, sheened with an inch of smooth-slipping water. The sides were perpendicular. The lower end, roughly corrugated, sloped out gently to solid footing. Here, in distress that was consternation, and in fear that was panic, excitedly bobbed up and down a cowboy in bearskin chaps, vacuously repeating the exclamation, “Oh God! Oh God!” — the first division of it rising in inflection, the second division inflected fallingly with despair. On the edge of the farther side, facing him, in bathing suits, legs dangling toward the water, sat three terrified nymphs.

And in the tank, the center of the picture, a great horse, bright bay and wet and ruddy satin, vertical in the water, struck upward and outward into the free air with huge fore-hoofs steel-gleaming in the wet and sun, while on its back, slipping and clinging, was the white form of what Graham took at first to be some glorious youth. Not until the stallion, sinking, emerged again by means of the powerful beat of his legs and hoofs, did Graham realize that it was a woman who rode him — a woman as white as the white silken slip of a bathing suit that molded to her form like a marble-carven veiling of drapery. As marble was her back, save that the fine delicate muscles moved and crept under the silken suit as she strove to keep her head above water. Her slim round arms were twined in yards of half-drowned stallion-mane, while her white round knees slipped on the sleek, wet, satin pads of the great horse's straining shoulder muscles. The white toes of her dug for a grip into the smooth sides of the animal, vainly seeking a hold on the ribs beneath.

In a breath, or the half of a breath, Graham saw the whole breathless situation, realized that the white wonderful creature was a woman, and sensed the smallness and daintiness of her despite her gladiatorial struggles. She reminded him of some Dresden china figure set absurdly small and light and strangely on the drowning back of a titanic beast. So dwarfed was she by the bulk of the stallion that she was a midget, or a tiny fairy from fairyland come true.

As she pressed her cheek against the great arching neck, her golden-brown hair, wet from being under, flowing and tangled, seemed tangled in the black mane of the stallion. But it was her face that smote Graham most of all. It was a boy's face; it was a woman's face; it was serious and at the same time amused, expressing the pleasure it found woven with the peril. It was a white woman's face — and modern; and yet, to Graham, it was all-pagan. This was not a creature and a situation one happened upon in the twentieth century. It was straight out of old Greece. It was a Maxfield Parrish reminiscence from the Arabian Nights. Genii might be expected to rise from those troubled depths, or golden princes, astride winged dragons, to swoop down out of the blue to the rescue.

The stallion, forcing itself higher out of water, missed, by a shade, from turning over backward as it sank. Glorious animal and glorious rider disappeared together beneath the surface, to rise together, a second later, the stallion still pawing the air with fore-hoofs the size of dinner plates, the rider still clinging to the sleek, satin-coated muscles. Graham thought, with a gasp, what might have happened had the stallion turned over. A chance blow from any one of those four enormous floundering hoofs could have put out and quenched forever the light and sparkle of that superb, white-bodied, fire-animated woman.

"Ride his neck!" Dick shouted. "Catch his foretop and get on his neck till he balances out!"

The woman obeyed, digging her toes into the evasive muscle-pads for the quick effort, and leaping upward, one hand twined in the wet mane, the other hand free and up-stretched, darting between the ears and clutching the foretop. The next moment, as the stallion balanced out horizontally in obedience to her shiftage of weight, she had slipped back to the shoulders. Holding with one hand to the mane, she waved a white arm in the air and flashed a smile of acknowledgment to Forrest; and, as Graham noted, she was cool enough to note him on his horse beside Forrest. Also, Graham realized that the turning of her head and the waving of her arm was only partly in bravado, was more in aesthetic wisdom of the picture she composed, and was, most of all, sheer joy of daring and emprise of the blood and the flesh and the life that was she.

"Not many women'd tackle that," Dick said quietly, as Mountain Lad, easily retaining his horizontal position once it had been attained, swam to the lower end of the tank and floundered up the rough slope to the anxious cowboy.

The latter swiftly adjusted the halter with a turn of chain between the jaws. But Paula, still astride, leaned forward, imperiously took the lead-part from the cowboy, whirled Mountain Lad around to face Forrest, and saluted.

"Now you will have to go away," she called. "This is our hen party, and the stag public is not admitted."

Dick laughed, saluted acknowledgment, and led the way back through the lilacs to the road.

"Who … who was it?" Graham queried.

"Paula — Mrs. Forrest — the boy girl, the child that never grew up, the grittiest puff of rose-dust that was ever woman."

"My breath is quite taken away," Graham said. "Do your people do such stunts frequently?"

"First time she ever did that," Forrest replied. "That was Mountain Lad. She rode him straight down the spill-way — tobogganed with him, twenty-two hundred and forty pounds of him."

"Risked his neck and legs as well as her own," was Graham's comment.

"Thirty-five thousand dollars' worth of neck and legs," Dick smiled. "That's what a pool of breeders offered me for him last year after he'd cleaned up the Coast with his get as well as himself. And as for Paula, she could break necks and legs at that price every day in the year until I went broke — only she doesn't. She never has accidents."

"I wouldn't have given tuppence for her chance if he'd turned over."

"But he didn't," Dick answered placidly. "That's Paula's luck. She's tough to kill. Why, I've had her under shell-fire where she was actually disappointed because she didn't get hit, or killed, or near-killed. Four batteries opened on us, shrapnel, at mile-range, and we had to cover half a mile of smooth hill-brow for shelter. I really felt I was justified in charging her with holding back. She did admit a 'trifle.' We've been married ten or a dozen years now, and, d'ye know, sometimes it seems to me I don't know her at all, and that nobody knows her, and that she doesn't know herself — just the same way as you and I can look at ourselves in a mirror and wonder who the devil we are anyway. Paula and I have one magic formula: Damn the expense when fun is selling. And it doesn't matter whether the price is in dollars, hide, or life. It's our way and our luck. It works. And, d'ye know, we've never been gouged on the price yet."

CHAPTER X

It was a stag lunch. As Forrest explained, the girls were “hen-partying.”

“I doubt you’ll see a soul of them till four o’clock, when Ernestine, that’s one of Paula’s sisters, is going to wallop me at tennis — at least so she’s threatened and pledged.”

And Graham sat through the lunch, where only men sat, took his part in the conversation on breeds and breeding, learned much, contributed a mite from his own world-experiences, and was unable to shake from his eyes the persistent image of his hostess, the vision of the rounded and delicate white of her against the dark wet background of the swimming stallion. And all the afternoon, looking over prize Merinos and Berkshire gilts, continually that vision burned up under his eyelids. Even at four, in the tennis court, himself playing against Ernestine, he missed more than one stroke because the image of the flying ball would suddenly be eclipsed by the image of a white marble figure of a woman that strove and clung on the back of a great horse.

Graham, although an outlander, knew his California, and, while every girl of the swimming suits was gowned for dinner, was not surprised to find no man similarly accoutered. Nor had he made the mistake of so being himself, despite the Big House and the magnificent scale on which it operated.

Between the first and second gongs, all the guests drifted into the long dining room. Sharp after the second gong, Dick Forrest arrived and precipitated cocktails. And Graham impatiently waited the appearance of the woman who had worried his eyes since noon. He was prepared for all manner of disappointment. Too many gorgeous stripped athletes had he seen slouched into conventional garmenting, to expect too much of the marvelous creature in the white silken swimming suit when it should appear garbed as civilized women garb.

He caught his breath with an imperceptible gasp when she entered. She paused, naturally, for just the right flash of an instant in the arched doorway, limned against the darkness behind her, the soft glow of the indirect lighting full upon her. Graham’s lips gasped apart, and remained apart, his eyes ravished with the beauty and surprise of her he had deemed so small, so fairy-like. Here was no delicate midget of a child-woman or boy-girl on a stallion, but a grand lady, as only a small woman can be grand on occasion.

Taller in truth was she, as well as in seeming, than he had judged her, and as finely proportioned in her gown as in her swimming suit. He noted her shining gold-brown hair piled high; the healthy tinge of her skin that was clean and clear and white; the singing throat, full and round, incomparably set on a healthy chest; and the gown, dull blue, a sort of medieval thing with half-fitting, half-clinging body, with flowing sleeves and trimmings of gold-jeweled bands.

She smiled an embracing salutation and greeting. Graham recognized it as kin to the one he had seen when she smiled from the back of the stallion. When she started forward, he could not fail to see the inimitable way she carried the cling and weight of her draperies with her knees — round knees, he knew, that he had seen press desperately into the round muscle-pads of Mountain Lad. Graham observed, also, that she neither wore nor needed corseting. Nor could he fail, as she crossed the floor, to see two women: one, the grand lady, the mistress of the Big House; one, the lovely equestrienne statue beneath the dull-blue, golden-trimmed gown, that no gowning could ever make his memory forget.

She was upon them, among them, and Graham's hand held hers in the formal introduction as he was made welcome to the Big House and all the hacienda in a voice that he knew was a singing voice and that could proceed only from a throat that pillared, such as hers, from a chest deep as hers despite her smallness.

At table, across the corner from her, he could not help a surreptitious studying of her. While he held his own in the general fun and foolishness, it was his hostess that mostly filled the circle of his eye and the content of his mind.

It was as bizarre a company as Graham had ever sat down to dinner with. The sheep-buyer and the correspondent for the Breeders' Gazette were still guests. Three machine-loads of men, women, and girls, totaling fourteen, had arrived shortly before the first gong and had remained to ride home in the moonlight. Graham could not remember their names; but he made out that they came from some valley town thirty miles away called Wickenberg, and that they were of the small-town banking, professional, and wealthy-farmer class. They were full of spirits, laughter, and the latest jokes and catches sprung in the latest slang.

"I see right now," Graham told Paula, "if your place continues to be the caravanserai which it has been since my arrival, that I might as well give up trying to remember names and people."

"I don't blame you," she laughed concurrence. "But these are neighbors. They drop in any time. Mrs. Watson, there, next to Dick, is of the old land-aristocracy. Her grandfather, Wicken, came across the Sierras in 1846. Wickenberg is named after him. And that pretty dark-eyed girl is her daughter…."

And while Paula gave him a running sketch of the chance guests, Graham heard scarce half she said, so occupied was he in trying to sense his way to an understanding of her. Naturalness was her keynote, was his first judgment. In not many moments he had decided that her key-note was joy. But he was dissatisfied with both conclusions, and knew he had not put his finger on her. And then it came to him — pride. That was it! It was in her eye, in the poise of her head, in the curling tendrils of her hair, in her sensitive nostrils, in the mobile lips, in the very pitch and angle of the rounded chin, in her hands, small, muscular and veined, that he knew at sight to be the hard-worked hands of one who had spent long hours at the piano. Pride it was, in every muscle, nerve, and quiver of her — conscious, sentient, stinging pride.

She might be joyous and natural, boy and woman, fun and frolic; but always the pride was there, vibrant, tense, intrinsic, the basic stuff of which she was builded. She was a woman, frank, outspoken, straight-looking, plastic, democratic; but toy she was not. At times, to him, she seemed to glint an impression of steel — thin, jewel-like steel. She seemed strength in its most delicate terms and fabrics. He fondled the impression of her as of silverspun wire, of fine leather, of twisted hair-sennit from the heads of maidens such as the Marquesans make, of carven pearl-shell for the lure of the bonita, and of barbed ivory at the heads of sea-spears such as the Eskimos throw.

"All right, Aaron," they heard Dick Forrest's voice rising, in a lull, from the other end of the table. "Here's something from Phillips Brooks for you to chew on. Brooks said that no man 'has come to true greatness who has not felt in some degree that his life belongs to his race, and that what God gives him, he gives him for mankind.'"

"So at last you believe in God?" the man, addressed Aaron, genially sneered back. He was a slender, long-faced olive-brunette, with brilliant black eyes and the blackest of long black beards.

"I'm hanged if I know," Dick answered. "Anyway, I quoted only figuratively. Call it morality, call it good, call it evolution."

"A man doesn't have to be intellectually correct in order to be great," intruded a quiet, long-faced Irishman, whose sleeves were threadbare and frayed. "And by the same token many men who are most correct in sizing up the universe have been least great."

"True for you, Terrence," Dick applauded.

"It's a matter of definition," languidly spoke up an unmistakable Hindoo, crumbling his bread with exquisitely slender and small-boned fingers. "What shall we mean as great?"

"Shall we say beauty?" softly queried a tragic-faced youth, sensitive and shrinking, crowned with an abominably trimmed head of long hair.

Ernestine rose suddenly at her place, hands on table, leaning forward with a fine simulation of intensity.

"They're off!" she cried. "They're off! Now we'll have the universe settled all over again for the thousandth time. Theodore" — to the youthful poet — "it's a poor start. Get into the running. Ride your father ion and your mother ion, and you'll finish three lengths ahead."

A roar of laughter was her reward, and the poet blushed and receded into his sensitive shell.

Ernestine turned on the black-bearded one:

"Now, Aaron. He's not in form. You start it. You know how. Begin: 'As Bergson so well has said, with the utmost refinement of philosophic speech allied with the most comprehensive intellectual outlook that….'"

More laughter roared down the table, drowning Ernestine's conclusion as well as the laughing retort of the black-bearded one.

"Our philosophers won't have a chance to-night," Paula stole in an aside to Graham.

"Philosophers?" he questioned back. "They didn't come with the Wickenberg crowd. Who and what are they? I'm all at sea."

"They — " Paula hesitated. "They live here. They call themselves the jungle-birds. They have a camp in the woods a couple of miles away, where they never do anything except read and talk. I'll wager, right now, you'll find fifty of Dick's latest, uncatalogued books in their cabins. They have the run of the library, as well, and you'll see them drifting in and out, any time of the day or night, with their arms full of books — also, the latest magazines. Dick says they are responsible for his possessing the most exhaustive and up-to-date library on philosophy on the Pacific Coast. In a way, they sort of digest such things for him. It's great fun for Dick, and, besides, it saves him time. He's a dreadfully hard worker, you know."

"I understand that they… that Dick takes care of them?" Graham asked, the while he pleasured in looking straight into the blue eyes that looked so straight into his.

As she answered, he was occupied with noting the faintest hint of bronze — perhaps a trick of the light — in her long, brown lashes. Perforce, he lifted his gaze to her eyebrows, brown, delicately stenciled, and made sure that the hint of bronze was there. Still lifting his gaze to her high-piled hair, he again saw, but more pronounced, the bronze note glinting from the brown-golden hair. Nor did he fail to startle and thrill to a dazzlement of smile and teeth and eye that frequently lived its life in her face. Hers was no thin smile of restraint, he judged. When she smiled she smiled all of herself, generously, joyously, throwing the largess of all her being into the natural expression of what was herself and which domiciled somewhere within that pretty head of hers.

"Yes," she was saying. "They have never to worry, as long as they live, over mere bread and butter. Dick is most generous, and, rather immoral, in his encouragement of idleness on the part of men like them. It's a funny place, as you'll find out until you come to understand us. They… they are appurtenances, and — and hereditaments, and such things. They will be with us always until we bury them or they bury us. Once in a while one or another of them drifts away — for a time. Like the cat, you know. Then it costs Dick real money to get them back. Terrence, there — Terrence McFane — he's an epicurean anarchist, if you know what that means. He wouldn't kill a flea. He has a pet cat I gave him, a Persian of the bluest blue, and he carefully picks her fleas, not injuring them, stores them in a vial, and turns them loose in the forest on his long walks when he tires of human companionship and communes with nature.

"Well, only last year, he got a bee in his bonnet — the alphabet. He started for Egypt — without a cent, of course — to run the alphabet down in the home of its origin and thereby to win the formula that would explain the cosmos. He got as far as Denver, traveling as tramps travel, when he mixed up in some I. W. W. riot for free speech or something. Dick had to hire lawyers, pay fines, and do just about everything to get him safe home again.

"And the one with a beard — Aaron Hancock. Like Terrence, he won't work. Aaron's a Southerner. Says none of his people ever did work, and that there have always been peasants and fools who just couldn't be restrained from working. That's why he wears a beard. To shave, he holds, is unnecessary work, and, therefore, immoral. I remember, at Melbourne, when he broke in upon Dick and me, a sunburnt wild man from out the Australian bush. It seems he'd been making original researches in anthropology, or folk-lore-ology, or something like that. Dick had known him years before in Paris, and Dick assured him, if he ever drifted back to America, of food and shelter. So here he is."

"And the poet?" Graham asked, glad that she must still talk for a while, enabling him to study the quick dazzlement of smile that played upon her face.

"Oh, Theo — Theodore Malken, though we call him Leo. He won't work, either. His people are old Californian stock and dreadfully wealthy; but they disowned him and he disowned them when he was fifteen. They say he is lunatic, and he says they are merely maddening. He really writes some remarkable verse… when he does write; but he prefers to dream and live in the jungle with Terrence and Aaron. He was tutoring immigrant Jews in San Francisco, when Terrence and Aaron rescued him, or captured him, I don't know which. He's been with us two years now, and he's actually filling out, despite the facts that Dick is absurdly generous in furnishing supplies and that they'd rather talk and read and dream than cook. The only good meals they get is when they descend upon us, like to-night."

"And the Hindoo, there — who's he?"

"That's Dar Hyal. He's their guest. The three of them invited him up, just as Aaron first invited Terrence, and as Aaron and Terrence invited Leo. Dick says, in time, three more are bound to appear, and then he'll have his Seven Sages of the Madroño Grove. Their jungle camp is in a madroño grove, you know. It's a most beautiful spot, with living springs, a canyon — but I was telling you about Dar Hyal.

"He's a revolutionist, of sorts. He's dabbled in our universities, studied in France, Italy, Switzerland, is a political refugee from India, and he's hitched his wagon to two stars: one, a new synthetic system of philosophy; the other, rebellion against the tyranny of British rule in India. He advocates individual terrorism and direct mass action. That’s why his paper, Kadar, or Badar, or something like that, was suppressed here in California, and why he narrowly escaped being deported; and that’s why he’s up here just now, devoting himself to formulating his philosophy.

“He and Aaron quarrel tremendously — that is, on philosophical matters. And now — ” Paula sighed and erased the sigh with her smile — ”and now, I’m done. Consider yourself acquainted. And, oh, if you encounter our sages more intimately, a word of warning, especially if the encounter be in the stag room: Dar Hyal is a total abstainer; Theodore Malken can get poetically drunk, and usually does, on one cocktail; Aaron Hancock is an expert wine-bibber; and Terrence McFane, knowing little of one drink from another, and caring less, can put ninety-nine men out of a hundred under the table and go right on lucidly expounding epicurean anarchy.”

One thing Graham noted as the dinner proceeded. The sages called Dick Forrest by his first name; but they always addressed Paula as “Mrs. Forrest,” although she called them by their first names. There was nothing affected about it. Quite unconsciously did they, who respected few things under the sun, and among such few things not even work — quite unconsciously, and invariably, did they recognize the certain definite aloofness in Dick Forrest’s wife so that her given name was alien to their lips. By such tokens Evan Graham was not slow in learning that Dick Forrest’s wife had a way with her, compounded of sheerest democracy and equally sheer royalty.

It was the same thing, after dinner, in the big living room. She dared as she pleased, but nobody assumed. Before the company settled down, Paula seemed everywhere, bubbling over with more outrageous spirits than any of them. From this group or that, from one corner or another, her laugh rang out. And her laugh fascinated Graham. There was a fibrous thrill in it, most sweet to the ear, that differentiated it from any laugh he had ever heard. It caused Graham to lose the thread of young Mr. Wombold’s contention that what California needed was not a Japanese exclusion law but at least two hundred thousand Japanese coolies to do the farm labor of California and knock in the head the threatened eight-hour day for agricultural laborers. Young Mr. Wombold, Graham gleaned, was an hereditary large land-owner in the vicinity of Wickenberg who prided himself on not yielding to the trend of the times by becoming an absentee landlord.

From the piano, where Eddie Mason was the center of a group of girls, came much noise of ragtime music and slangtime song. Terrence McFane and Aaron Hancock fell into a heated argument over the music of futurism. And Graham was saved from the Japanese situation with Mr. Wombold by Dar Hyal, who proceeded to proclaim Asia for the Asiatics and California for the Californians.

Paula, catching up her skirts for speed, fled down the room in some romp, pursued by Dick, who captured her as she strove to dodge around the Wombold group.

"Wicked woman," Dick reproved her in mock wrath; and, the next moment, joined her in persuading Dar Hyal to dance.

And Dar Hyal succumbed, flinging Asia and the Asiatics to the winds, along with his arms and legs, as he weirdly parodied the tango in what he declared to be the "blastic" culmination of modern dancing.

"And now, Red Cloud, sing Mr. Graham your Acorn Song," Paula commanded

Dick.

Forrest, his arm still about her, detaining her for the threatened punishment not yet inflicted, shook his head somberly.

"The Acorn Song!" Ernestine called from the piano; and the cry was taken up by Eddie Mason and the girls.

"Oh, do, Dick," Paula pleaded. "Mr. Graham is the only one who hasn't heard it."

Dick shook his head.

"Then sing him your Goldfish Song."

"I'll sing him Mountain Lad's song," Dick bullied, a whimsical sparkle in his eyes. He stamped his feet, pranced, nickered a not bad imitation of Mountain Lad, tossed an imaginary mane, and cried:

"Hear me! I am Eros! I stamp upon the hills!"

"The Acorn Song," Paula interrupted quickly and quietly, with just the hint of steel in her voice.

Dick obediently ceased his chant of Mountain Lad, but shook his head like a stubborn colt.

"I have a new song," he said solemnly. "It is about you and me, Paula.

I got it from the Nishinam."

"The Nishinam are the extinct aborigines of this part of California,"

Paula shot in a swift aside of explanation to Graham.

Dick danced half a dozen steps, stiff-legged, as Indians dance, slapped his thighs with his palms, and began a new chant, still retaining his hold on his wife.

"Me, I am Ai-kut, the first man of the Nishinam. Ai-kut is the short for Adam, and my father and my mother were the coyote and the moon. And this is Yo-to-to-wi, my wife. She is the first woman of the Nishinam. Her father and her mother were the grasshopper and the ring-tailed cat. They were the best father and mother left after my father and mother. The coyote is very wise, the moon is very old; but who ever heard much of anything of credit to the grasshopper and the ring-tailed cat? The Nishinam are always right. The mother of all women had to be a cat, a little, wizened, sad-faced, shrewd ring-tailed cat."

Whereupon the song of the first man and woman was interrupted by protests from the women and acclamations from the men.

"This is Yo-to-to-wi, which is the short for Eve," Dick chanted on, drawing Paula bruskly closer to his side with a semblance of savage roughness. "Yo-to-to-wi is not much to look at. But be not hard upon her. The fault is with the grasshopper and the ring-tailed cat. Me, I am Ai-kut, the first man; but question not my taste. I was the first man, and this, I saw, was the first woman. Where there is but one choice, there is not much to choose. Adam was so circumstanced. He chose Eve. Yo-to-to-wi was the one woman in all the world for me, so I chose Yo-to-to-wi."

And Evan Graham, listening, his eyes on that possessive, encircling arm of all his hostess's fairness, felt an awareness of hurt, and arose unsummoned the thought, to be dismissed angrily, "Dick Forrest is lucky — too lucky."

"Me, I am Ai-kut," Dick chanted on. "This is my dew of woman. She is my honey-dew of woman. I have lied to you. Her father and her mother were neither hopper nor cat. They were the Sierra dawn and the summer east wind of the mountains. Together they conspired, and from the air and earth they sweated all sweetness till in a mist of their own love the leaves of the chaparral and the manzanita were dewed with the honey-dew.

"Yo-to-to-wi is my honey-dew woman. Hear me! I am Ai-kut. Yo-to-to-wi is my quail woman, my deer-woman, my lush-woman of all soft rain and fat soil. She was born of the thin starlight and the brittle dawn-light before the sun . . .

“And,” Forrest concluded, relapsing into his natural voice and enunciation, having reached the limit of extemporization, — ”and if you think old, sweet, blue-eyed Solomon has anything on me in singing the Song of Songs, just put your names down for the subscription edition of my Song of Songs.”

CHAPTER XI

It was Mrs. Mason who first asked that Paula play; but it was Terrence McFane and Aaron Hancock who evicted the rag-time group from the piano and sent Theodore Malken, a blushing ambassador, to escort Paula.

"'Tis for the confounding of this pagan that I'm askin' you to play

'Reflections on the Water,'" Graham heard Terrence say to her.

"And 'The Girl with Flaxen Hair,' after, please," begged Hancock, the indicted pagan. "It will aptly prove my disputation. This wild Celt has a bog-theory of music that predates the cave-man — and he has the unadulterated stupidity to call himself ultra-modern."

"Oh, Debussy!" Paula laughed. "Still wrangling over him, eh? I'll try and get around to him. But I don't know with what I'll begin."

Dar Hyal joined the three sages in seating Paula at the concert grand which, Graham decided, was none too great for the great room. But no sooner was she seated than the three sages slipped away to what were evidently their chosen listening places. The young poet stretched himself prone on a deep bearskin forty feet from the piano, his hands buried in his hair. Terrence and Aaron lolled into a cushioned embrasure of a window seat, sufficiently near to each other to nudge the points of their respective contentions as Paula might expound them. The girls were huddled in colored groups on wide couches or garlanded in twos and threes on and in the big koa-wood chairs.

Evan Graham half-started forward to take the honor of turning Paula's music, but saw in time that Dar Hyal had already elected to himself that office. Graham glimpsed the scene with quiet curious glances. The grand piano, under a low arch at the far-end of the room, was cunningly raised and placed as on and in a sounding board. All jollity and banter had ceased. Evidently, he thought, the Little Lady had a way with her and was accepted as a player of parts. And from this he was perversely prepared for disappointment.

Ernestine leaned across from a chair to whisper to him:

"She can do anything she wants to do. And she doesn't work . . . much. She studied under Leschetizky and Madame Carreno, you know, and she abides by their methods. She doesn't play like a woman, either. Listen to that!"

Graham knew that he expected disappointment from her confident hands, even as she rippled them over the keys in little chords and runs with which he could not quarrel but which he had heard too often before from technically brilliant but musically mediocre performers. But whatever he might have fancied she would play, he was all unprepared for Rachmaninoff's sheerly masculine Prelude, which he had heard only men play when decently played.

She took hold of the piano, with the first two ringing bars, masterfully, like a man; she seemed to lift it, and its sounding wires, with her two hands, with the strength and certitude of maleness. And then, as only he had heard men do it, she sank, or leaped — he could scarcely say which — to the sureness and pureness and ineffable softness of the Andante following.

She played on, with the calm and power of anything but the little, almost girlish woman he glimpsed through half-closed lids across the ebony board of the enormous piano, which she commanded, as she commanded herself, as she commanded the composer. Her touch was definite, authoritative, was his judgment, as the Prelude faded away in dying chords hauntingly reminiscent of its full vigor that seemed still to linger in the air.

While Aaron and Terrence debated in excited whispers in the window seat, and while Dar Hyal sought other music at Paula's direction, she glanced at Dick, who turned off bowl after bowl of mellow light till Paula sat in an oasis of soft glow that brought out the dull gold lights in her dress and hair.

Graham watched the lofty room grow loftier in the increasing shadows. Eighty feet in length, rising two stories and a half from masonry walls to tree-trunked roof, flung across with a flying gallery from the rail of which hung skins of wild animals, hand-woven blankets of Oaxaca and Ecuador, and tapas, woman-pounded and vegetable-dyed, from the islands of the South Pacific, Graham knew it for what it was — a feast-hall of some medieval castle; and almost he felt a poignant sense of lack of the long spread table, with pewter below the salt and silver above the salt, and with huge hound-dogs scuffling beneath for bones.

Later, when Paula had played sufficient Debussy to equip Terrence and Aaron for fresh war, Graham talked with her about music for a few vivid moments. So well did she prove herself aware of the philosophy of music, that, ere he knew it, he was seduced into voicing his own pet theory.

"And so," he concluded, "the true psychic factor of music took nearly three thousand years to impress itself on the Western mind. Debussy more nearly attains the idea-engendering and suggestive serenity — say of the time of Pythagoras — than any of his fore-runners — "

Here, Paula put a pause in his summary by beckoning over Terrence and Aaron from their battlefield in the windowseat.

"Yes, and what of it?" Terrence was demanding, as they came up side by side. "I defy you, Aaron, I defy you, to get one thought out of Bergson on music that is more lucid than any thought he ever uttered in his 'Philosophy of Laughter,' which is not lucid at all."

"Oh! — listen!" Paula cried, with sparkling eyes. "We have a new prophet. Hear Mr. Graham. He's worthy of your steel, of both your steel. He agrees with you that music is the refuge from blood and iron and the pounding of the table. That weak souls, and sensitive souls, and high-pitched souls flee from the crassness and the rawness of the world to the drug-dreams of the over-world of rhythm and vibration — "

"Atavistic!" Aaron Hancock snorted. "The cave-men, the monkey-folk, and the ancestral bog-men of Terrence did that sort of thing — "

"But wait," Paula urged. "It's his conclusions and methods and processes. Also, there he disagrees with you, Aaron, fundamentally. He quoted Pater's 'that all art aspires toward music' — "

"Pure prehuman and micro-organic chemistry," Aaron broke in. "The reactions of cell-elements to the doggerel punch of the wave-lengths of sunlight, the foundation of all folk-songs and rag-times. Terrence completes his circle right there and stultifies all his windiness. Now listen to me, and I will present — "

"But wait," Paula pleaded. "Mr. Graham argues that English puritanism barred music, real music, for centuries…."

"True," said Terrence.

"And that England had to win to its sensuous delight in rhythm through Milton and Shelley — "

"Who was a metaphysician." Aaron broke in.

"A lyrical metaphysician," Terrence defined instantly. "That you must acknowledge, Aaron."

"And Swinburne?" Aaron demanded, with a significance that tokened former arguments.

"He says Offenbach was the fore-runner of Arthur Sullivan," Paula cried challengingly. "And that Auber was before Offenbach. And as for Wagner, ask him, just ask him — "

And she slipped away, leaving Graham to his fate. He watched her, watched the perfect knee-lift of her draperies as she crossed to Mrs. Mason and set about arranging bridge quartets, while dimly he could hear Terrence beginning:

"It is agreed that music was the basis of inspiration of all the arts of the Greeks…."

Later, when the two sages were obliviously engrossed in a heated battle as to whether Berlioz or Beethoven had exposited in their compositions the deeper intellect, Graham managed his escape. Clearly, his goal was to find his hostess again. But she had joined two of the girls in the whispering, giggling seclusiveness of one of the big chairs, and, most of the company being deep in bridge, Graham found himself drifted into a group composed of Dick Forrest, Mr. Wombold, Dar Hyal, and the correspondent of the Breeders' Gazette.

"I'm sorry you won't be able to run over with me," Dick was saying to the correspondent. "It would mean only one more day. I'll take you tomorrow."

"Sorry," was the reply. "But I must make Santa Rosa. Burbank has promised me practically a whole morning, and you know what that means. Yet I know the Gazette would be glad for an account of the experiment. Can't you outline it? — briefly, just briefly? Here's Mr. Graham. It will interest him, I am sure."

"More water-works?" Graham queried.

"No; an asinine attempt to make good farmers out of hopelessly poor ones," Mr. Wombold answered. "I contend that any farmer to-day who has no land of his own, proves by his lack of it that he is an inefficient farmer."

"On the contrary," spoke up Dar Hyal, weaving his slender Asiatic fingers in the air to emphasize his remarks. "Quite on the contrary. Times have changed. Efficiency no longer implies the possession of capital. It is a splendid experiment, an heroic experiment. And it will succeed."

"What is it, Dick?" Graham urged. "Tell us."

"Oh, nothing, just a white chip on the table," Forrest answered lightly. "Most likely it will never come to anything, although just the same I have my hopes — "

“A white chip!” Wombold broke in. “Five thousand acres of prime valley land, all for a lot of failures to batten on, to farm, if you please, on salary, with food thrown in!”

“The food that is grown on the land only,” Dick corrected. “Now I will have to put it straight. I’ve set aside five thousand acres midway between here and the Sacramento River.”

“Think of the alfalfa it grew, and that you need,” Wombold again interrupted.

“My dredgers redeemed twice that acreage from the marshes in the past year,” Dick replied. “The thing is, I believe the West and the world must come to intensive farming. I want to do my share toward blazing the way. I’ve divided the five thousand acres into twenty-acre holdings. I believe each twenty acres should support, comfortably, not only a family, but pay at least six per cent.”

“When it is all allotted it will mean two hundred and fifty families,” the Gazette man calculated; “and, say five to the family, it will mean twelve hundred and fifty souls.”

“Not quite,” Dick corrected. “The last holding is occupied, and we have only a little over eleven hundred on the land.” He smiled whimsically. “But they promise, they promise. Several fat years and they’ll average six to the family.”

“Who is we?” Graham inquired.

“Oh, I have a committee of farm experts on it — my own men, with the exception of Professor Lieb, whom the Federal Government has loaned me. The thing is: they must farm, with individual responsibility, according to the scientific methods embodied in our instructions. The land is uniform. Every holding is like a pea in the pod to every other holding. The results of each holding will speak in no uncertain terms. The failure of any farmer, through laziness or stupidity, measured by the average result of the entire two hundred and fifty farmers, will not be tolerated. Out the failures must go, convicted by the average of their fellows.

“It’s a fair deal. No farmer risks anything. With the food he may grow and he and his family may consume, plus a cash salary of a thousand a year, he is certain, good seasons and bad, stupid or intelligent, of at least a hundred dollars a month. The stupid and the inefficient will be bound to be eliminated by the intelligent and the efficient. That’s all. It will demonstrate intensive farming with a vengeance. And there is more than the certain salary guaranty. After the salary is paid, the adventure must yield six per cent, to me. If more than this is achieved, then the entire hundred per cent, of the additional achievement goes to the farmer."

"Which means that each farmer with go in him will work nights to make good — I see," said the Gazette man. "And why not? Hundred-dollar jobs aren't picked up for the asking. The average farmer in the United States doesn't net fifty a month on his own land, especially when his wages of superintendence and of direct personal labor are subtracted. Of course able men will work their heads off to hold to such a proposition, and they'll see to it that every member of the family does the same."

"'Tis the one objection I have to this place," Terrence McFane, who had just joined the group, announced. "Ever one hears but the one thing — work. 'Tis repulsive, the thought of the work, each on his twenty acres, toilin' and moilin', daylight till dark, and after dark — an' for what? A bit of meat, a bit of bread, and, maybe, a bit of jam on the bread. An' to what end? Is meat an' bread an' jam the end of it all, the meaning of life, the goal of existence? Surely the man will die, like a work horse dies, after a life of toil. And what end has been accomplished? Bread an' meat an' jam? Is that it? A full belly and shelter from the cold till one's body drops apart in the dark moldiness of the grave?"

"But, Terrence, you, too, will die," Dick Forrest retorted.

"But, oh, my glorious life of loafing," came the instant answer. "The hours with the stars and the flowers, under the green trees with the whisperings of breezes in the grass. My books, my thinkers and their thoughts. Beauty, music, all the solaces of all the arts. What? When I fade into the dark I shall have well lived and received my wage for living. But these twenty-acre work-animals of two-legged men of yours! Daylight till dark, toil and moil, sweat on the shirts on the backs of them that dries only to crust, meat and bread in their bellies, roofs that don't leak, a brood of youngsters to live after them, to live the same beast-lives of toil, to fill their bellies with the same meat and bread, to scratch their backs with the same sweaty shirts, and to go into the dark knowing only meat and bread, and, mayhap, a bit of jam."

"But somebody must do the work that enables you to loaf," Mr. Wombold spoke up indignantly.

"'Tis true, 'tis sad 'tis true," Terrence replied lugubriously. Then his face beamed. "And I thank the good Lord for it, for the work-beasties that drag and drive the plows up and down the fields, for the bat-eyed miner-beasties that dig the coal and gold, for all the stupid peasant-beasties that keep my hands soft, and give power to fine fellows like Dick there, who smiles on me and shares the loot with me, and buys the latest books for me, and gives me a place at his board that is plenished by the two-legged work-beasties, and a place at his fire that is builded by the same beasties, and a shack and a bed in the jungle under the madroño trees where never work intrudes its monstrous head."

Evan Graham was slow in getting ready for bed that night. He was unwontedly stirred both by the Big House and by the Little Lady who was its mistress. As he sat on the edge of the bed, half-undressed, and smoked out a pipe, he kept seeing her in memory, as he had seen her in the flesh the past twelve hours, in her varied moods and guises — the woman who had talked music with him, and who had expounded music to him to his delight; who had enticed the sages into the discussion and abandoned him to arrange the bridge tables for her guests; who had nestled in the big chair as girlish as the two girls with her; who had, with a hint of steel, quelled her husband's obstreperousness when he had threatened to sing Mountain Lad's song; who, unafraid, had bestridden the half-drowning stallion in the swimming tank; and who, a few hours later, had dreamed into the dining room, distinctive in dress and person, to meet her many guests.

The Big House, with all its worthy marvels and bizarre novelties, competed with the figure of Paula Forrest in filling the content of his imagination. Once again, and yet again, many times, he saw the slender fingers of Dar Hyal weaving argument in the air, the black whiskers of Aaron Hancock enunciating Bergsonian dogmas, the frayed coat-cuffs of Terrence McFane articulating thanks to God for the two-legged work-beasties that enabled him to loaf at Dick Forrest's board and under Dick Forrest's madroño trees.

Graham knocked out his pipe, took a final sweeping survey of the strange room which was the last word in comfort, pressed off the lights, and found himself between cool sheets in the wakeful dark. Again he heard Paula Forrest laugh; again he sensed her in terms of silver and steel and strength; again, against the dark, he saw that inimitable knee-lift of her gown. The bright vision of it was almost an irk to him, so impossible was it for him to shake it from his eyes. Ever it returned and burned before him, a moving image of light and color that he knew to be subjective but that continually asserted the illusion of reality.

He saw stallion and rider sink beneath the water, and rise again, a flurry of foam and floundering of hoofs, and a woman's face that laughed while she drowned her hair in the drowning mane of the beast. And the first ringing bars of the Prelude sounded in his ears as again he saw the same hands that had guided the stallion lift the piano to all Rachmaninoff's pure splendor of sound.

And when Graham finally fell asleep, it was in the thick of marveling over the processes of evolution that could produce from primeval mire and dust the glowing, glorious flesh and spirit of woman.

CHAPTER XII

The next morning Graham learned further the ways of the Big House. Oh My had partly initiated him in particular things the preceding day and had learned that, after the waking cup of coffee, he preferred to breakfast at table, rather than in bed. Also, Oh My had warned him that breakfast at table was an irregular affair, anywhere between seven and nine, and that the breakfasters merely drifted in at their convenience. If he wanted a horse, or if he wanted a swim or a motor car, or any ranch medium or utility he desired, Oh My informed him, all he had to do was to call for it.

Arriving in the breakfast room at half past seven, Graham found himself just in time to say good-by to the Gazette man and the Idaho buyer, who, finishing, were just ready to catch the ranch machine that connected at Eldorado with the morning train for San Francisco. He sat alone, being perfectly invited by a perfect Chinese servant to order as he pleased, and found himself served with his first desire — an ice-cold, sherried grapefruit, which, the table-boy proudly informed him, was “grown on the ranch.” Declining variously suggested breakfast foods, mushes, and porridges, Graham had just ordered his soft-boiled eggs and bacon, when Bert Wainwright drifted in with a casualness that Graham recognized as histrionic, when, five minutes later, in boudoir cap and delectable negligee, Ernestine Desten drifted in and expressed surprise at finding such a multitude of early risers.

Later, as the three of them were rising from table, they greeted Lute Desten and Rita Wainwright arriving. Over the billiard table with Bert, Graham learned that Dick Forrest never appeared for breakfast, that he worked in bed from terribly wee small hours, had coffee at six, and only on unusual occasions appeared to his guests before the twelve-thirty lunch. As for Paula Forrest, Bert explained, she was a poor sleeper, a late riser, lived behind a door without a knob in a spacious wing with a rare and secret patio that even he had seen but once, and only on infrequent occasion was she known to appear before twelve-thirty, and often not then.

“You see, she’s healthy and strong and all that,” he explained, “but she was born with insomnia. She never could sleep. She couldn’t sleep as a little baby even. But it’s never hurt her any, because she’s got a will, and won’t let it get on her nerves. She’s just about as tense as they make them, yet, instead of going wild when she can't sleep, she just wills to relax, and she does relax. She calls them her `white nights,' when she gets them. Maybe she'll fall asleep at daybreak, or at nine or ten in the morning; and then she'll sleep the rest of the clock around and get down to dinner as chipper as you please."

"It's constitutional, I fancy," Graham suggested.

Bert nodded.

"It would be a handicap to nine hundred and ninety-nine women out of a thousand. But not to her. She puts up with it, and if she can't sleep one time — she should worry — she just sleeps some other time and makes it up."

More and other things Bert Wainwright told of his hostess, and Graham was not slow in gathering that the young man, despite the privileges of long acquaintance, stood a good deal in awe of her.

"I never saw anybody whose goat she couldn't get if she went after it," he confided. "Man or woman or servant, age, sex, and previous condition of servitude — it's all one when she gets on the high and mighty. And I don't see how she does it. Maybe it's just a kind of light that comes into her eyes, or some kind of an expression on her lips, or, I don't know what — anyway, she puts it across and nobody makes any mistake about it."

"She has a … a way with her," Graham volunteered.

"That's it!" Bert's face beamed. "It's a way she has. She just puts it over. Kind of gives you a chilly feeling, you don't know why. Maybe she's learned to be so quiet about it because of the control she's learned by passing sleepless nights without squealing out or getting sour. The chances are she didn't bat an eye all last night — excitement, you know, the crowd, swimming Mountain Lad and such things. Now ordinary things that'd keep most women awake, like danger, or storm at sea, and such things, Dick says don't faze her. She can sleep like a baby, he says, when the town she's in is being bombarded or when the ship she's in is trying to claw off a lee shore. She's a wonder, and no mistake. You ought to play billiards with her — the English game. She'll go some."

A little later, Graham, along with Bert, encountered the girls in the morning room, where, despite an hour of rag-time song and dancing and chatter, he was scarcely for a moment unaware of a loneliness, a lack, and a desire to see his hostess, in some fresh and unguessed mood and way, come in upon them through the open door.

Still later, mounted on Altadena and accompanied by Bert on a thoroughbred mare called Mollie, Graham made a two hours' exploration of the dairy center of the ranch, and arrived back barely in time to keep an engagement with Ernestine in the tennis court.

He came to lunch with an eagerness for which his keen appetite could not entirely account; and he knew definite disappointment when his hostess did not appear.

"A white night," Dick Forrest surmised for his guest's benefit, and went into details additional to Bert's of her constitutional inaptitude for normal sleep. "Do you know, we were married years before I ever saw her sleep. I knew she did sleep, but I never saw her. I've seen her go three days and nights without closing an eye and keep sweet and cheerful all the time, and when she did sleep, it was out of exhaustion. That was when the All Away went ashore in the Carolines and the whole population worked to get us off. It wasn't the danger, for there wasn't any. It was the noise. Also, it was the excitement. She was too busy living. And when it was almost all over, I actually saw her asleep for the first time in my life."

A new guest had arrived that morning, a Donald Ware, whom Graham met at lunch. He seemed well acquainted with all, as if he had visited much in the Big House; and Graham gathered that, despite his youth, he was a violinist of note on the Pacific Coast.

"He has conceived a grand passion for Paula," Ernestine told Graham as they passed out from the dining room.

Graham raised his eyebrows.

"Oh, but she doesn't mind," Ernestine laughed. "Every man that comes along does the same thing. She's used to it. She has just a charming way of disregarding all their symptoms, and enjoys them, and gets the best out of them in consequence. It's lots of fun to Dick. You'll be doing the same before you're here a week. If you don't, we'll all be surprised mightily. And if you don't, most likely you'll hurt Dick's feelings. He's come to expect it as a matter of course. And when a fond, proud husband gets a habit like that, it must hurt terribly to see his wife not appreciated."

"Oh, well, if I am expected to, I suppose I must," Graham sighed. "But just the same I hate to do whatever everybody does just because everybody does it. But if it's the custom — well, it's the custom, that's all. But it's mighty hard on one with so many other nice girls around."

There was a quizzical light in his long gray eyes that affected Ernestine so profoundly that she gazed into his eyes over long, became conscious of what she was doing, dropped her own eyes away, and flushed.

"Little Leo — the boy poet you remember last night," she rattled on in a patent attempt to escape from her confusion. "He's madly in love with Paula, too. I've heard Aaron Hancock chaffing him about some sonnet cycle, and it isn't difficult to guess the inspiration. And Terrence — the Irishman, you know — he's mildly in love with her. They can't help it, you see; and can you blame them?"

"She surely deserves it all," Graham murmured, although vaguely hurt in that the addle-pated, alphabet-obsessed, epicurean anarchist of an Irishman who gloried in being a loafer and a pensioner should even mildly be in love with the Little Lady. "She is most deserving of all men's admiration," he continued smoothly. "From the little I've seen of her she's quite remarkable and most charming."

"She's my half-sister," Ernestine vouchsafed, "although you wouldn't dream a drop of the same blood ran in our veins. She's so different. She's different from all the Destens, from any girl I ever knew — though she isn't exactly a girl. She's thirty-eight, you know — "

"Pussy, pussy," Graham whispered.

The pretty young blonde looked at him in surprise and bewilderment, taken aback by the apparent irrelevance of his interruption.

"Cat," he censured in mock reproof.

"Oh!" she cried. "I never meant it that way. You will find we are very frank here. Everybody knows Paula's age. She tells it herself. I'm eighteen — so, there. And now, just for your meanness, how old are you?"

"As old as Dick," he replied promptly.

"And he's forty," she laughed triumphantly. "Are you coming swimming? — the water will be dreadfully cold."

Graham shook his head. "I'm going riding with Dick."

Her face fell with all the ingenuousness of eighteen.

"Oh," she protested, "some of his eternal green manures, or hillside terracing, or water-pocketing."

"But he said something about swimming at five."

Her face brightened joyously.

"Then we'll meet at the tank. It must be the same party. Paula said swimming at five."

As they parted under a long arcade, where his way led to the tower room for a change into riding clothes, she stopped suddenly and called:

“Oh, Mr. Graham.”

He turned obediently.

“You really are not compelled to fall in love with Paula, you know. It was just my way of putting it.”

“I shall be very, very careful,” he said solemnly, although there was a twinkle in his eye as he concluded.

Nevertheless, as he went on to his room, he could not but admit to himself that the Paula Forrest charm, or the far fairy tentacles of it, had already reached him and were wrapping around him. He knew, right there, that he would prefer the engagement to ride to have been with her than with his old-time friend, Dick.

As he emerged from the house to the long hitching-rails under the ancient oaks, he looked eagerly for his hostess. Only Dick was there, and the stableman, although the many saddled horses that stamped in the shade promised possibilities. But Dick and he rode away alone. Dick pointed out her horse, an alert bay thoroughbred, stallion at that, under a small Australian saddle with steel stirrups, and double-reined and single-bitted.

“I don’t know her plans,” he said. “She hasn’t shown up yet, but at any rate she’ll be swimming later. We’ll meet her then.”

Graham appreciated and enjoyed the ride, although more than once he found himself glancing at his wrist-watch to ascertain how far away five o’clock might yet be. Lambing time was at hand, and through home field after home field he rode with his host, now one and now the other dismounting to turn over onto its feet rotund and glorious Shropshire and Ramboullet-Merino ewes so hopelessly the product of man’s selection as to be unable to get off, of themselves, from their own broad backs, once they were down with their four legs helplessly sky-aspiring.

“I’ve really worked to make the American Merino,” Dick was saying; “to give it the developed leg, the strong back, the well-sprung rib, and the stamina. The old-country breed lacked the stamina. It was too much hand-reared and manicured.”

“You’re doing things, big things,” Graham assured him. “Think of shipping rams to Idaho! That speaks for itself.”

Dick Forrest’s eyes were sparkling, as he replied:

"Better than Idaho. Incredible as it may sound, and asking forgiveness for bragging, the great flocks to-day of Michigan and Ohio can trace back to my California-bred Ramboullet rams. Take Australia. Twelve years ago I sold three rams for three hundred each to a visiting squatter. After he took them back and demonstrated them he sold them for as many thousand each and ordered a shipload more from me. Australia will never be the worse for my having been. Down there they say that lucerne, artesian wells, refrigerator ships, and Forrest's rams have tripled the wool and mutton production."

Quite by chance, on the way back, meeting Mendenhall, the horse manager, they were deflected by him to a wide pasture, broken by wooded canyons and studded with oaks, to look over a herd of yearling Shires that was to be dispatched next morning to the upland pastures and feeding sheds of the Miramar Hills. There were nearly two hundred of them, rough-coated, beginning to shed, large-boned and large for their age.

"We don't exactly crowd them," Dick Forrest explained, "but Mr. Mendenhall sees to it that they never lack full nutrition from the time they are foaled. Up there in the hills, where they are going, they'll balance their grass with grain. This makes them assemble every night at the feeding places and enables the feeders to keep track of them with a minimum of effort. I've shipped fifty stallions, two-year-olds, every year for the past five years, to Oregon alone. They're sort of standardized, you know. The people up there know what they're getting. They know my standard so well that they'll buy unsight and unseen."

"You must cull a lot, then," Graham ventured.

"And you'll see the culls draying on the streets of San Francisco," Dick answered.

"Yes, and on the streets of Denver," Mr. Mendenhall amplified, "and of Los Angeles, and — why, two years ago, in the horse-famine, we shipped twenty carloads of four-year geldings to Chicago, that averaged seventeen hundred each. The lightest were sixteen, and there were matched pairs up to nineteen hundred. Lord, Lord, that was a year for horse-prices — blue sky, and then some."

As Mr. Mendenhall rode away, a man, on a slender-legged, head-tossing Palomina, rode up to them and was introduced to Graham as Mr. Hennessy, the ranch veterinary.

“I heard Mrs. Forrest was looking over the colts,” he explained to his employer, “and I rode across to give her a glance at The Fawn here. She’ll be riding her in less than a week. What horse is she on to-day?”

“The Fop,” Dick replied, as if expecting the comment that was prompt as the disapproving shake of Mr. Hennessy’s head.

“I can never become converted to women riding stallions,” muttered the veterinary. “The Fop is dangerous. Worse — though I take my hat off to his record — he’s malicious and vicious. She — Mrs. Forrest ought to ride him with a muzzle — but he’s a striker as well, and I don’t see how she can put cushions on his hoofs.”

“Oh, well,” Dick placated, “she has a bit that is a bit in his mouth, and she’s not afraid to use it — ”

“If he doesn’t fall over on her some day,” Mr. Hennessy grumbled. “Anyway, I’ll breathe easier when she takes to The Fawn here. Now she’s a lady’s mount — all the spirit in the world, but nothing vicious. She’s a sweet mare, a sweet mare, and she’ll steady down from her friskiness. But she’ll always be a gay handful — no riding academy proposition.”

“Let’s ride over,” Dick suggested. “Mrs. Forrest’ll have a gay handful in The Fop if she’s ridden him into that bunch of younglings. — It’s her territory, you know,” he elucidated to Graham. “All the house horses and lighter stock is her affair. And she gets grand results. I can’t understand it, myself. It’s like a little girl straying into an experimental laboratory of high explosives and mixing the stuff around any old way and getting more powerful combinations than the graybeard chemists.”

The three men took a cross-ranch road for half a mile, turned up a wooded canyon where ran a spring-trickle of stream, and emerged on a wide rolling terrace rich in pasture. Graham’s first glimpse was of a background of many curious yearling and two-year-old colts, against which, in the middleground, he saw his hostess, on the back of the bright bay thoroughbred, The Fop, who, on hind legs, was striking his forefeet in the air and squealing shrilly. They reined in their mounts and watched.

“He’ll get her yet,” the veterinary muttered morosely. “That Fop isn’t safe.”

But at that moment Paula Forrest, unaware of her audience, with a sharp cry of command and a cavalier thrust of sharp spurs into The Fop’s silken sides, checked him down to four-footedness on the ground and a restless, champing quietness.

“Taking chances?” Dick mildly reproached her, as the three rode up.

“Oh, I can manage him,” she breathed between tight teeth, as, with ears back and vicious-gleaming eyes, The Fop bared his teeth in a bite that would have been perilously near to Graham’s leg had she not reined the brute abruptly away across the neck and driven both spurs solidly into his sides.

The Fop quivered, squealed, and for the moment stood still.

“It’s the old game, the white man’s game,” Dick laughed. “She’s not afraid of him, and he knows it. She outgames him, out-savages him, teaches him what savagery is in its intimate mood and tense.”

Three times, while they looked on, ready to whirl their own steeds away if he got out of hand, The Fop attempted to burst into rampage, and three times, solidly, with careful, delicate hand on the bitter bit, Paula Forrest dealt him double spurs in the ribs, till he stood, sweating, frothing, fretting, beaten, and in hand.

“It’s the way the white man has always done,” Dick moralized, while Graham suffered a fluttery, shivery sensation of admiration of the beast-conquering Little Lady. “He’s out-savaged the savage the world around,” Dick went on. “He’s out-endured him, out-filthed him, out-scalped him, out-tortured him, out-eaten him — yes, out-eaten him. It’s a fair wager that the white man, in extremis, has eaten more of the genus homo, than the savage, in extremis, has eaten.”

“Good afternoon,” Paula greeted her guest, the ranch veterinary, and her husband. “I think I’ve got him now. Let’s look over the colts. Just keep an eye, Mr. Graham, on his mouth. He’s a dreadful snapper. Ride free from him, and you’ll save your leg for old age.”

Now that The Fop’s demonstration was over, the colts, startled into flight by some impish spirit amongst them, galloped and frisked away over the green turf, until, curious again, they circled back, halted at gaze, and then, led by one particularly saucy chestnut filly, drew up in half a circle before the riders, with alert pricking ears.

Graham scarcely saw the colts at first. He was seeing his protean hostess in a new role. Would her proteanness never end? he wondered, as he glanced over the magnificent, sweating, mastered creature she bestrode. Mountain Lad, despite his hugeness, was a mild-mannered pet beside this squealing, biting, striking Fop who advertised all the spirited viciousness of the most spirited vicious thoroughbred.

"Look at her," Paula whispered to Dick, in order not to alarm the saucy chestnut filly. "Isn't she wonderful! That's what I've been working for." Paula turned to Evan. "Always they have some fault, some miss, at the best an approximation rather than an achievement. But she's an achievement. Look at her. She's as near right as I shall probably ever get. Her sire is Big Chief, if you know our racing register. He sold for sixty thousand when he was a cripple. We borrowed the use of him. She was his only get of the season. But look at her! She's got his chest and lungs. I had my choices — mares eligible for the register. Her dam wasn't eligible, but I chose her. She was an obstinate old maid, but she was the one mare for Big Chief. This is her first foal and she was eighteen years old when she bred. But I knew it was there. All I had to do was to look at Big Chief and her, and it just had to be there."

"The dam was only half thoroughbred," Dick explained.

"But with a lot of Morgan on the other side," Paula added instantly, "and a streak along the back of mustang. This shall be called Nymph, even if she has no place in the books. She'll be my first unimpeachable perfect saddle horse — I know it — the kind I like — my dream come true at last."

"A hoss has four legs, one on each corner," Mr. Hennessy uttered profoundly.

"And from five to seven gaits," Graham took up lightly,

"And yet I don't care for those many-gaited Kentuckians," Paula said quickly, " — except for park work. But for California, rough roads, mountain trails, and all the rest, give me the fast walk, the fox trot, the long trot that covers the ground, and the not too-long, ground-covering gallop. Of course, the close-coupled, easy canter; but I scarcely call that a gait — it's no more than the long lope reduced to the adjustment of wind or rough ground."

"She's a beauty," Dick admired, his eyes warm in contemplation of the saucy chestnut filly, who was daringly close and alertly sniffing of the subdued Fop's tremulous and nostril-dilated muzzle.

"I prefer my own horses to be near thoroughbred rather than all thoroughbred," Paula proclaimed. "The running horse has its place on the track, but it's too specialized for mere human use."

"Nicely coupled," Mr. Hennessy said, indicating the Nymph. "Short enough for good running and long enough for the long trot. I'll admit I didn't have any faith in the combination; but you've got a grand animal out of it just the same."

"I didn't have horses when I was a young girl," Paula said to Graham; "and the fact that I can now not only have them but breed them and mold them to my heart's desire is always too good to be true. Sometimes I can't believe it myself, and have to ride out and look them over to make sure."

She turned her head and raised her eyes gratefully to Forrest; and Graham watched them look into each other's eyes for a long half-minute. Forrest's pleasure in his wife's pleasure, in her young enthusiasm and joy of life, was clear to Graham's observation. "Lucky devil," was Graham's thought, not because of his host's vast ranch and the success and achievement of it, but because of the possession of a wonder-woman who could look unabashed and appreciative into his eyes as the Little Lady had looked.

Graham was meditating, with skepticism, Ernestine's information that Paula Forrest was thirty-eight, when she turned to the colts and pointed her riding whip at a black yearling nibbling at the spring green.

"Look at that level rump, Dick," she said, "and those trotting feet and pasterns." And, to Graham: "Rather different from Nymph's long wrists, aren't they? But they're just what I was after." She laughed a little, with just a shade of annoyance. "The dam was a bright sorrel — almost like a fresh-minted twenty-dollar piece — and I did so want a pair out of her, of the same color, for my own trap. Well, I can't say that I exactly got them, although I bred her to a splendid, sorrel trotting horse. And this is my reward, this black — and, wait till we get to the brood mares and you'll see the other, a full brother and mahogany brown. I'm so disappointed."

She singled out a pair of dark bays, feeding together: "Those are two of Guy Dillon's get — brother, you know, to Lou Dillon. They're out of different mares, not quite the same bay, but aren't they splendidly matched? And they both have Guy Dillon's coat."

She moved her subdued steed on, skirting the flank of the herd quietly in order not to alarm it; but a number of colts took flight.

"Look at them!" she cried. "Five, there, are hackneys. Look at the lift of their fore-legs as they run."

"I'll be terribly disappointed if you don't get a prize-winning four-in-hand out of them," Dick praised, and brought again the flash of grateful eyes that hurt Graham as he noted it.

"Two are out of heavier mares — see that one in the middle and the one on the far left — and there's the other three to pick from for the leaders. Same sire, five different dams, and a matched and balanced four, out of five choices, all in the same season, is a stroke of luck, isn't it?"

She turned quickly to Mr. Hennessy: "I can begin to see the ones that will have to sell for polo ponies — among the two-year-olds. You can pick them."

"If Mr. Mendenhall doesn't sell that strawberry roan for a clean fifteen hundred, it'll be because polo has gone out of fashion," the veterinary approved, with waxing enthusiasm. "I've had my eye on them. That pale sorrel, there. You remember his set-back. Give him an extra year and he'll — look at his coupling! — watch him turn! — a cow-skin? — he'll turn on a silver dollar! Give him a year to make up, and he'll stand a show for the international. Listen to me. I've had my faith in him from the beginning. Cut out that Burlingame crowd. When he's ripe, ship him straight East."

Paula nodded and listened to Mr. Hennessy's judgment, her eyes kindling with his in the warmth of the sight of the abounding young life for which she was responsible.

"It always hurts, though," she confessed to Graham, "selling such beauties to have them knocked out on the field so quickly."

Her sheer absorption in the animals robbed her speech of any hint of affectation or show — so much so, that Dick was impelled to praise her judgment to Evan.

"I can dig through a whole library of horse practice, and muddle and mull over the Mendelian Law until I'm dizzy, like the clod that I am; but she is the genius. She doesn't have to study law. She just knows it in some witch-like, intuitional way. All she has to do is size up a bunch of mares with her eyes, and feel them over a little with her hands, and hunt around till she finds the right sires, and get pretty nearly what she wants in the result — except color, eh, Paul?" he teased.

She showed her laughing teeth in the laugh at her expense, in which Mr. Hennessy joined, and Dick continued: "Look at that filly there. We all knew Paula was wrong. But look at it! She bred a rickety old thoroughbred, that we wanted to put out of her old age, to a standard stallion; got a filly; bred it back with a thoroughbred; bred its filly foal with the same standard again; knocked all our prognostications into a cocked hat, and — well, look at it, a world-beater polo pony. There is one thing we have to take off our hats to her for: she doesn't let any woman sentimentality interfere with her culling. Oh, she's cold-blooded enough. She's as remorseless as any man when it comes to throwing out the undesirables and selecting for what she wants. But she hasn't mastered color yet. There's where her genius falls down, eh, Paul? You'll have to put up with Duddy and Fuddy for a while longer for your trap. By the way, how is Duddy?"

"He's come around," she answered, "thanks to Mr. Hennessy."

"Nothing serious," the veterinarian added. "He was just off his feed a trifle. It was more a scare of the stableman than anything else."

CHAPTER XIII

From the colt pasture to the swimming tank Graham talked with his hostess and rode as nearly beside her as The Fop's wickedness permitted, while Dick and Hennessy, on ahead, were deep in ranch business.

"Insomnia has been a handicap all my life," she said, while she tickled The Fop with a spur in order to check a threatened belligerence. "But I early learned to keep the irritation of it off my nerves and the weight of it off my mind. In fact, I early came to make a function of it and actually to derive enjoyment from it. It was the only way to master a thing I knew would persist as long as I persisted. Have you — of course you have — learned to win through an undertow?"

"Yes, by never fighting it," Graham answered, his eyes on the spray of color in her cheeks and the tiny beads of sweat that arose from her continuous struggle with the high-strung creature she rode. Thirty-eight! He wondered if Ernestine had lied. Paula Forrest did not look twenty-eight. Her skin was the skin of a girl, with all the delicate, fine-pored and thin transparency of the skin of a girl.

"Exactly," she went on. "By not fighting the undertow. By yielding to its down-drag and out-drag, and working with it to reach air again. Dick taught me that trick. So with my insomnia. If it is excitement from immediate events that holds me back from the City of Sleep, I yield to it and come quicker to unconsciousness from out the entangling currents. I invite my soul to live over again, from the same and different angles, the things that keep me from unconsciousness.

"Take the swimming of Mountain Lad yesterday. I lived it over last night as I had lived it in reality. Then I lived it as a spectator — as the girls saw it, as you saw it, as the cowboy saw it, and, most of all, as my husband saw it. Then I made up a picture of it, many pictures of it, from all angles, and painted them, and framed them, and hung them, and then, a spectator, looked at them as if for the first time. And I made myself many kinds of spectators, from crabbed old maids and lean pantaloons to girls in boarding school and Greek boys of thousands of years ago.

"After that I put it to music. I played it on the piano, and guessed the playing of it on full orchestras and blaring bands. I chanted it, I sang it-epic, lyric, comic; and, after a weary long while, of course I slept in the midst of it, and knew not that I slept until I awoke at twelve to-day. The last time I had heard the clock strike was six. Six unbroken hours is a capital prize for me in the sleep lottery."

As she finished, Mr. Hennessy rode away on a cross path, and Dick Forrest dropped back to squire his wife on the other side.

"Will you sport a bet, Evan?" he queried.

"I'd like to hear the terms of it first," was the answer.

"Cigars against cigars that you can't catch Paula in the tank inside ten minutes — no, inside five, for I remember you're some swimmer."

"Oh, give him a chance, Dick," Paula cried generously. "Ten minutes will worry him."

"But you don't know him," Dicked argued. "And you don't value my cigars. I tell you he is a swimmer. He's drowned kanakas, and you know what that means."

"Perhaps I should reconsider. Maybe he'll slash a killing crawl-stroke at me before I've really started. Tell me his history and prizes."

"I'll just tell you one thing. They still talk of it in the Marquesas. It was the big hurricane of 1892. He did forty miles in forty-five hours, and only he and one other landed on the land. And they were all kanakas. He was the only white man; yet he out-endured and drowned the last kanaka of them — "

"I thought you said there was one other?" Paula interrupted.

"She was a woman," Dick answered. "He drowned the last kanaka."

"And the woman was then a white woman?" Paula insisted.

Graham looked quickly at her, and although she had asked the question of her husband, her head turned to the turn of his head, so that he found her eyes meeting his straightly and squarely in interrogation. Graham held her gaze with equal straightness as he answered: "She was a kanaka."

"A queen, if you please," Dick took up. "A queen out of the ancient chief stock. She was Queen of Huahoa."

"Was it the chief stock that enabled her to out-endure the native men?" Paula asked. "Or did you help her?"

"I rather think we helped each other toward the end," Graham replied. "We were both out of our heads for short spells and long spells. Sometimes it was one, sometimes the other, that was all in. We made the land at sunset — that is, a wall of iron coast, with the surf bursting sky-high. She took hold of me and clawed me in the water to get some sense in me. You see, I wanted to go in, which would have meant finish.

"She got me to understand that she knew where she was; that the current set westerly along shore and in two hours would drift us abreast of a spot where we could land. I swear I either slept or was unconscious most of those two hours; and I swear she was in one state or the other when I chanced to come to and noted the absence of the roar of the surf. Then it was my turn to claw and maul her back to consciousness. It was three hours more before we made the sand. We slept where we crawled out of the water. Next morning's sun burnt us awake, and we crept into the shade of some wild bananas, found fresh water, and went to sleep again. Next I awoke it was night. I took another drink, and slept through till morning. She was still asleep when the bunch of kanakas, hunting wild goats from the next valley, found us."

"I'll wager, for a man who drowned a whole kanaka crew, it was you who did the helping," Dick commented.

"She must have been forever grateful," Paula challenged, her eyes directly on Graham's. "Don't tell me she wasn't young, wasn't beautiful, wasn't a golden brown young goddess."

"Her mother was the Queen of Huahoa," Graham answered. "Her father was a Greek scholar and an English gentleman. They were dead at the time of the swim, and Nomare was queen herself. She was young. She was beautiful as any woman anywhere in the world may be beautiful. Thanks to her father's skin, she as not golden brown. She was tawny golden. But you've heard the story undoubtedly — "

He broke off with a look of question to Dick, who shook his head.

Calls and cries and splashings of water from beyond a screen of trees warned them that they were near the tank.

"You'll have to tell me the rest of the story some time," Paula said.

"Dick knows it. I can't see why he hasn't told you."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Perhaps because he's never had the time or the provocation."

"God wot, it's had wide circulation," Graham laughed. "For know that I was once morganatic — or whatever you call it — king of the cannibal isles, or of a paradise of a Polynesian isle at any rate. — 'By a purple wave on an opal beach in the hush of the Mahim woods,'" he hummed carelessly, in conclusion, and swung off from his horse.

"'The white moth to the closing vine, the bee to the opening clover,'" she hummed another line of the song, while The Fop nearly got his teeth into her leg and she straightened him out with the spur, and waited for Dick to help her off and tie him.

"Cigars! — I'm in on that! — you can't catch her!" Bert Wainwright called from the top of the high dive forty feet above. "Wait a minute! I'm coming!"

And come he did, in a swan dive that was almost professional and that brought handclapping approval from the girls.

"A sweet dive, balanced beautifully," Graham told him as he emerged from the tank.

Bert tried to appear unconscious of the praise, failed, and, to pass it off, plunged into the wager.

"I don't know what kind of a swimmer you are, Graham," he said, "but I just want in with Dick on the cigars."

"Me, too; me, too!" chorused Ernestine, and Lute, and Rita.

"Boxes of candy, gloves, or any truck you care to risk," Ernestine added.

"But I don't know Mrs. Forrest's records, either," Graham protested, after having taken on the bets. "However, if in five minutes — "

"Ten minutes," Paula said, "and to start from opposite ends of the tank. Is that fair? Any touch is a catch." Graham looked his hostess over with secret approval. She was clad, not in the single white silk slip she evidently wore only for girl parties, but in a coquettish imitation of the prevailing fashion mode, a suit of changeable light blue and green silk — almost the color of the pool; the skirt slightly above the knees whose roundedness he recognized; with long stockings to match, and tiny bathing shoes bound on with crossed ribbons. On her head was a jaunty swimming cap no jauntier than herself when she urged the ten minutes in place of five.

Rita Wainwright held the watch, while Graham walked down to the other end of the hundred-and-fifty-foot tank.

"Paula, you'll be caught if you take any chances," Dick warned. "Evan Graham is a real fish man."

"I guess Paula'll show him a few, even without the pipe," Bert bragged loyally. "And I'll bet she can out-dive him."

"There you lose," Dick answered. "I saw the rock he dived from at Huahoa. That was after his time, and after the death of Queen Nomare. He was only a youngster — twenty-two; he had to be to do it. It was off the peak of the Pau-wi Rock — one hundred and twenty-eight feet by triangulation. And he couldn't do it legitimately or technically with a swan-dive, because he had to clear two lower ledges while he was in the air. The upper ledge of the two, by their own traditions, was the highest the best of the kanakas had ever dared since their traditions began. Well, he did it. He became tradition. As long as the kanakas of Huahoa survive he will remain tradition — Get ready, Rita. Start on the full minute."

"It's almost a shame to play tricks on so reputable a swimmer," Paula confided to them, as she faced her guest down the length of the tank and while both waited the signal.

"He may get you before you can turn the trick," Dick warned again. And then, to Bert, with just a shade of anxiety: "Is it working all right? Because if it isn't, Paula will have a bad five seconds getting out of it."

"All O.K.," Bert assured. "I went in myself. The pipe is working.

There's plenty of air."

"Ready!" Rita called. "Go!"

Graham ran toward their end like a foot-racer, while Paula darted up the high dive. By the time she had gained the top platform, his hands and feet were on the lower rungs. When he was half-way up she threatened a dive, compelling him to cease from climbing and to get out on the twenty-foot platform ready to follow her to the water. Whereupon she laughed down at him and did not dive. "Time is passing — the precious seconds are ticking off," Ernestine chanted.

When he started to climb, Paula again chased him to the half-way platform with a threat to dive. But not many seconds did Graham waste. His next start was determined, and Paula, poised for her dive, could not send him scuttling back. He raced upward to gain the thirty-foot platform before she should dive, and she was too wise to linger. Out into space she launched, head back, arms bent, hands close to chest, legs straight and close together, her body balanced horizontally on the air as it fell outward and downward.

"Oh you Annette Kellerman!" Bert Wamwright's admiring cry floated up.

Graham ceased pursuit to watch the completion of the dive, and saw his hostess, a few feet above the water, bend her head forward, straighten out her arms and lock the hands to form the arch before her head, and, so shifting the balance of her body, change it from the horizontal to the perfect, water-cleaving angle.

The moment she entered the water, he swung out on the thirty-foot platform and waited. From this height he could make out her body beneath the surface swimming a full stroke straight for the far end of the tank. Not till then did he dive. He was confident that he could outspeed her, and his dive, far and flat, entered him in the water twenty feet beyond her entrance.

But at the instant he was in, Dick dipped two flat rocks into the water and struck them together. This was the signal for Paula to change her course. Graham heard the concussion and wondered. He broke surface in the full swing of the crawl and went down the tank to the far end at a killing pace. He pulled himself out and watched the surface of the tank. A burst of handclapping from the girls drew his eyes to the Little Lady drawing herself out of the tank at the other end.

Again he ran down the side of the tank, and again she climbed the scaffold. But this time his wind and endurance enabled him to cut down her lead, so that she was driven to the twenty-foot platform. She took no time for posturing or swanning, but tilted immediately off in a stiff dive, angling toward the west side of the tank. Almost they were in the air at the same time. In the water and under it, he could feel against his face and arms the agitation left by her progress; but she led into the deep shadow thrown by the low afternoon sun, where the water was so dark he could see nothing.

When he touched the side of the tank he came up. She was not in sight. He drew himself out, panting, and stood ready to dive in at the first sign of her. But there were no signs.

“Seven minutes!” Rita called. “And a half! … Eight!… And a half!”

And no Paula Forrest broke surface. Graham refused to be alarmed because he could see no alarm on the faces of the others.

“I lose,” he announced at Rita’s “Nine minutes!”

“She’s been under over two minutes, and you’re all too blessed calm about it to get me excited,” he said. “I’ve still a minute — maybe I don’t lose,” he added quickly, as he stepped off feet first into the tank.

As he went down he turned over and explored the cement wall of tank with his hands. Midway, possibly ten feet under the surface he estimated, his hands encountered an opening in the wall. He felt about, learned it Was unscreened, and boldly entered. Almost before he was in, he found he could come up; but he came up slowly, breaking surface in pitchy blackness and feeling about him without splashing.

His fingers touched a cool smooth arm that shrank convulsively at contact while the possessor of it cried sharply with the startle of fright. He held on tightly and began to laugh, and Paula laughed with him. A line from "The First Chanty" flashed into his consciousness — "Hearing her laugh in the gloom greatly I loved her."

"You did frighten me when you touched me," she said. "You came without a sound, and I was a thousand miles away, dreaming…"

"What?" Graham asked.

"Well, honestly, I had just got an idea for a gown — a dusty, musty, mulberry-wine velvet, with long, close lines, and heavy, tarnished gold borders and cords and things. And the only jewelery a ring — one enormous pigeon-blood ruby that Dick gave me years ago when we sailed the All Away."

"Is there anything you don't do?" he laughed.

She joined with him, and their mirth sounded strangely hollow in the pent and echoing dark.

"Who told you?" she next asked.

"No one. After you had been under two minutes I knew it had to be something like this, and I came exploring."

"It was Dick's idea. He had it built into the tank afterward. You will find him full of whimsies. He delighted in scaring old ladies into fits by stepping off into the tank with their sons or grandsons and hiding away in here. But after one or two nearly died of shock — old ladies, I mean — he put me up, as to-day, to fooling hardier persons like yourself. — Oh, he had another accident. There was a Miss Coghlan, friend of Ernestine, a little seminary girl. They artfully stood her right beside the pipe that leads out, and Dick went off the high dive and swam in here to the inside end of the pipe. After several minutes, by the time she was in collapse over his drowning, he spoke up the pipe to her in most horrible, sepulchral tones. And right there Miss Coghlan fainted dead away."

"She must have been a weak sister," Graham commented; while he struggled with a wanton desire for a match so that he could strike it and see how Paula Forrest looked paddling there beside him to keep afloat.

"She had a fair measure of excuse," Paula answered. "She was a young thing — eighteen; and she had a sort of school-girl infatuation for Dick. They all get it. You see, he's such a boy when he's playing that they can't realize that he's a hard-bitten, hard-working, deep-thinking, mature, elderly benedict. The embarrassing thing was that the little girl, when she was first revived and before she could gather her wits, exposed all her secret heart. Dick's face was a study while she babbled her — "

"Well? — going to stay there all night?" Bert Wainwright's voice came down the pipe, sounding megaphonically close.

"Heavens!" Graham sighed with relief; for he had startled and clutched Paula's arm. "That's the time I got my fright. The little maiden is avenged. Also, at last, I know what a lead-pipe cinch is."

"And it's time we started for the outer world," she suggested. "It's not the coziest gossiping place in the world. Shall I go first?"

"By all means — and I'll be right behind; although it's a pity the water isn't phosphorescent. Then I could follow your incandescent heel like that chap Byron wrote about — don't you remember?"

He heard her appreciative gurgle in the dark, and then her: "Well, I'm going now."

Unable to see the slightest glimmer, nevertheless, from the few sounds she made he knew she had turned over and gone down head first, and he was not beyond visioning with inner sight the graceful way in which she had done it — an anything but graceful feat as the average swimming woman accomplishes it.

"Somebody gave it away to you," was Bert's prompt accusal, when Graham rose to the surface of the tank and climbed out.

"And you were the scoundrel who rapped stone under water," Graham challenged. "If I'd lost I'd have protested the bet. It was a crooked game, a conspiracy, and competent counsel, I am confident, would declare it a felony. It's a case for the district attorney."

"But you won," Ernestine cried.

"I certainly did, and, therefore, I shall not prosecute you, nor any one of your crooked gang — if the bets are paid promptly. Let me see — you owe me a box of cigars — "

"One cigar, sir!"

"A box! A box!" "Cross tag!" Paula cried. "Let's play cross-tag! —

You're IT!"

Suiting action to word, she tagged Graham on the shoulder and plunged into the tank. Before he could follow, Bert seized him, whirled him in a circle, was himself tagged, and tagged Dick before he could escape. And while Dick pursued his wife through the tank and Bert and Graham sought a chance to cross, the girls fled up the scaffold and stood in an enticing row on the fifteen-foot diving platform.

CHAPTER XIV.

An indifferent swimmer, Donald Ware had avoided the afternoon sport in the tank; but after dinner, somewhat to the irritation of Graham, the violinist monopolized Paula at the piano. New guests, with the casual expectedness of the Big House, had drifted in — a lawyer, by name Adolph Well, who had come to confer with Dick over some big water-right suit; Jeremy Braxton, straight from Mexico, Dick's general superintendent of the Harvest Group, which bonanza, according to Jeremy Braxton, was as "unpetering" as ever; Edwin O'Hay, a red-headed Irish musical and dramatic critic; and Chauncey Bishop, editor and owner of the San Francisco Dispatch, and a member of Dick's class and frat, as Graham gleaned.

Dick had started a boisterous gambling game which he called "Horrible Fives," wherein, although excitement ran high and players plunged, the limit was ten cents, and, on a lucky coup, the transient banker might win or lose as high as ninety cents, such coup requiring at least ten minutes to play out. This game went on at a big table at the far end of the room, accompanied by much owing and borrowing of small sums and an incessant clamor for change.

With nine players, the game was crowded, and Graham, rather than draw cards, casually and occasionally backed Ernestine's cards, the while he glanced down the long room at the violinist and Paula Forrest absorbed in Beethoven Symphonies and Delibes' Ballets. Jeremy Braxton was demanding raising the limit to twenty cents, and Dick, the heaviest loser, as he averred, to the tune of four dollars and sixty cents, was plaintively suggesting the starting of a "kitty" in order that some one should pay for the lights and the sweeping out of the place in the morning, when Graham, with a profound sigh at the loss of his last bet — a nickel which he had had to pay double — announced to Ernestine that he was going to take a turn around the room to change his luck.

"I prophesied you would," she told him under her breath.

"What?" he asked.

She glanced significantly in Paula's direction.

"Just for that I simply must go down there now," he retorted.

"Can't dast decline a dare," she taunted.

"If it were a dare I wouldn't dare do it."

"In which case I dare you," she took up.

He shook his head: "I had already made up my mind to go right down there to that one spot and cut that fiddler out of the running. You can't dare me out of it at this late stage. Besides, there's Mr. O'Hay waiting for you to make your bet."

Ernestine rashly laid ten cents, and scarcely knew whether she won or lost, so intent was she on watching Graham go down the room, although she did know that Bert Wainwright had not been unobservant of her gaze and its direction. On the other hand, neither she nor Bert, nor any other at the table, knew that Dick's quick-glancing eyes, sparkling with merriment while his lips chaffed absurdities that made them all laugh, had missed no portion of the side play.

Ernestine, but little taller than Paula, although hinting of a plus roundness to come, was a sun-healthy, clear blonde, her skin sprayed with the almost transparent flush of maidenhood at eighteen. To the eye, it seemed almost that one could see through the pink daintiness of fingers, hand, wrist, and forearm, neck and cheek. And to this delicious transparency of rose and pink, was added a warmth of tone that did not escape Dick's eyes as he glimpsed her watch Evan Graham move down the length of room. Dick knew and classified her wild imagined dream or guess, though the terms of it were beyond his divination.

What she saw was what she imagined was the princely walk of Graham, the high, light, blooded carriage of his head, the delightful carelessness of the gold-burnt, sun-sanded hair that made her fingers ache to be into with caresses she for the first time knew were possible of her fingers.

Nor did Paula, during an interval of discussion with the violinist in which she did not desist from stating her criticism of O'Hay's latest criticism of Harold Bauer, fail to see and keep her eyes on Graham's progress. She, too, noted with pleasure his grace of movement, the high, light poise of head, the careless hair, the clear bronze of the smooth cheeks, the splendid forehead, the long gray eyes with the hint of drooping lids and boyish sullenness that fled before the smile with which he greeted her.

She had observed that smile often since her first meeting with him. It was an irresistible smile, a smile that lighted the eyes with the radiance of good fellowship and that crinkled the corners into tiny, genial lines. It was provocative of smiles, for she found herself smiling a silent greeting in return as she continued stating to Ware her grievance against O'Hay's too-complacent praise of Bauer.

But her engagement was tacitly with Donald Ware at the piano, and with no more than passing speech, she was off and away in a series of Hungarian dances that made Graham marvel anew as he loafed and smoked in a window-seat.

He marveled at the proteanness of her, at visions of those nimble fingers guiding and checking The Fop, swimming and paddling in submarine crypts, and, falling in swan-like flight through forty feet of air, locking just above the water to make the diver's head-protecting arch of arm.

In decency, he lingered but few minutes, returned to the gamblers, and put the entire table in a roar with a well-acted Yiddisher's chagrin and passion at losing entire nickels every few minutes to the fortunate and chesty mine superintendent from Mexico.

Later, when the game of Horrible Fives broke up, Bert and Lute Desten spoiled the Adagio from Beethoven's Sonata Pathetique by exaggeratedly ragging to it in what Dick immediately named "The Loving Slow-Drag," till Paula broke down in a gale of laughter and ceased from playing.

New groupings occurred. A bridge table formed with Weil, Rita, Bishop, and Dick. Donald Ware was driven from his monopoly of Paula by the young people under the leadership of Jeremy Braxton; while Graham and O'Hay paired off in a window-seat and O'Hay talked shop.

After a time, in which all at the piano had sung Hawaiian hulas, Paula sang alone to her own accompaniment. She sang several German love-songs in succession, although it was merely for the group about her and not for the room; and Evan Graham, almost to his delight, decided that at last he had found a weakness in her. She might be a magnificent pianist, horsewoman, diver, and swimmer, but it was patent, despite her singing throat, that she was not a magnificent singer. This conclusion he was quickly compelled to modify. A singer she was, a consummate singer. Weakness was only comparative after all. She lacked the magnificent voice. It was a sweet voice, a rich voice, with the same warm-fibered thrill of her laugh; but the volume so essential to the great voice was not there. Ear and voice seemed effortlessly true, and in her singing were feeling, artistry, training, intelligence. But volume — it was scarcely a fair average, was his judgment.

But quality — there he halted. It was a woman's voice. It was haunted with richness of sex. In it resided all the temperament in the world — with all the restraint of discipline, was the next step of his analysis. He had to admire the way she refused to exceed the limitations of her voice. In this she achieved triumphs.

And, while he nodded absently to O'Hay's lecturette on the state of the — opera, Graham fell to wondering if Paula Forrest, thus so completely the mistress of her temperament, might not be equally mistress of her temperament in the deeper, passional ways. There was a challenge there — based on curiosity, he conceded, but only partly so based; and, over and beyond, and, deeper and far beneath, a challenge to a man made in the immemorial image of man.

It was a challenge that bade him pause, and even look up and down the great room and to the tree-trunked roof far above, and to the flying gallery hung with the spoils of the world, and to Dick Forrest, master of all this material achievement and husband of the woman, playing bridge, just as he worked, with all his heart, his laughter ringing loud as he caught Rita in renig. For Graham had the courage not to shun the ultimate connotations. Behind the challenge in his speculations lurked the woman. Paula Forrest was splendidly, deliciously woman, all woman, unusually woman. From the blow between the eyes of his first striking sight of her, swimming the great stallion in the pool, she had continued to witch-ride his man's imagination. He was anything but unused to women; and his general attitude was that of being tired of the mediocre sameness of them. To chance upon the unusual woman was like finding the great pearl in a lagoon fished out by a generation of divers.

"Glad to see you're still alive," Paula laughed to him, a little later.

She was prepared to depart with Lute for bed. A second bridge quartet had been arranged — Ernestine, Bert, Jeremy Braxton, and Graham; while O'Hay and Bishop were already deep in a bout of two-handed pinochle.

"He's really a charming Irishman when he keeps off his one string,"

Paula went on.

"Which, I think I am fair, is music," Graham said.

"And on music he is insufferable," Lute observed. "It's the only thing he doesn't know the least thing about. He drives one frantic."

"Never mind," Paula soothed, in gurgling tones. "You will all be avenged. Dick just whispered to me to get the philosophers up to-morrow night. You know how they talk music. A musical critic is their awful prey."

"Terrence said the other night that there was no closed season on musical critics," Lute contributed.

"Terrence and Aaron will drive him to drink," Paula laughed her joy of anticipation. "And Dar Hyal, alone, with his blastic theory of art, can specially apply it to music to the confutation of all the first words and the last. He doesn't believe a thing he says about blastism, any more than was he serious when he danced the other evening. It's his bit of fun. He's such a deep philosopher that he has to get his fun somehow."

"And if O'Hay ever locks horns with Terrence," Lute prophesied, "I can see Terrence tucking arm in arm with him, leading him down to the stag room, and heating the argument with the absentest-minded variety of drinks that ever O'Hay accomplished."

"Which means a very sick O'Hay next day," Paula continued her gurgles of anticipation.

"I'll tell him to do it!" exclaimed Lute.

"You mustn't think we're all bad," Paula protested to Graham. "It's just the spirit of the house. Dick likes it. He's always playing jokes himself. He relaxes that way. I'll wager, right now, it was Dick's suggestion, to Lute, and for Lute to carry out, for Terrence to get O'Hay into the stag room. Now, 'fess up, Lute."

"Well, I will say," Lute answered with meticulous circumspection, "that the idea was not entirely original with me."

At this point, Ernestine joined them and appropriated Graham with:

"We're all waiting for you. We've cut, and you and I are partners. Besides, Paula's making her sleep noise. So say good night, and let her go."

Paula had left for bed at ten o'clock. Not till one did the bridge break up. Dick, his arm about Ernestine in brotherly fashion, said good night to Graham where one of the divided ways led to the watch tower, and continued on with his pretty sister-in-law toward her quarters.

"Just a tip, Ernestine," he said at parting, his gray eyes frankly and genially on hers, but his voice sufficiently serious to warn her.

"What have I been doing now?" she pouted laughingly.

"Nothing… as yet. But don't get started, or you'll be laying up a sore heart for yourself. You're only a kid yet — eighteen; and a darned nice, likable kid at that. Enough to make 'most any man sit up and take notice. But Evan Graham is not 'most any man — "

“Oh, I can take care of myself,” she blurted out in a fling of quick resentment.

“But listen to me just the same. There comes a time in the affairs of a girl when the love-bee gets a buzzing with a very loud hum in her pretty noddle. Then is the time she mustn’t make a mistake and start in loving the wrong man. You haven’t fallen in love with Evan Graham yet, and all you have to do is just not to fall in love with him. He’s not for you, nor for any young thing. He’s an oldster, an ancient, and possibly has forgotten more about love, romantic love, and young things, than you’ll ever learn in a dozen lives. If he ever marries again — ”

“Again!” Ernestine broke in.

“Why, he’s been a widower, my dear, for over fifteen years.”

“Then what of it?” she demanded defiantly.

“Just this,” Dick continued quietly. “He’s lived the young-thing romance, and lived it wonderfully; and, from the fact that in fifteen years he has not married again, means — ”

“That he’s never recovered from his loss?” Ernestine interpolated.

“But that’s no proof — ”

“ — Means that he’s got over his apprenticeship to wild young romance,” Dick held on steadily. “All you have to do is look at him and realize that he has not lacked opportunities, and that, on occasion, some very fine women, real wise women, mature women, have given him foot-races that tested his wind and endurance. But so far they’ve not succeeded in catching him. And as for young things, you know how filled the world is with them for a man like him. Think it over, and just keep your heart-thoughts away from him. If you don’t let your heart start to warm toward him, it will save your heart from a grievous chill later on.”

He took one of her hands in his, and drew her against him, an arm soothingly about her shoulder. For several minutes of silence Dick idly speculated on what her thoughts might be.

“You know, we hard-bitten old fellows — ” he began half-apologetically, half-humorously.

But she made a restless movement of distaste, and cried out:

“Are the only ones worth while! The young men are all youngsters, and that’s what’s the matter with them. They’re full of life, and coltish spirits, and dance, and song. But they’re not serious. They’re not big. They’re not

— oh, they don’t give a girl that sense of all-wiseness, of proven strength, of, of… well, of manhood.”

“I understand,” Dick murmured. “But please do not forget to glance at the other side of the shield. You glowing young creatures of women must affect the old fellows in precisely similar ways. They may look on you as toys, playthings, delightful things to whom to teach a few fine foolishnesses, but not as comrades, not as equals, not as sharers — full sharers. Life is something to be learned. They have learned it… some of it. But young things like you, Ernestine, have you learned any of it yet?”

“Tell me,” she asked abruptly, almost tragically, “about this wild young romance, about this young thing when he was young, fifteen years ago.”

“Fifteen?” Dick replied promptly. “Eighteen. They were married three years before she died. In fact — figure it out for yourself — they were actually married, by a Church of England dominie, and living in wedlock, about the same moment that you were squalling your first post-birth squalls in this world.”

“Yes, yes — go on,” she urged nervously. “What was she like?”

“She was a resplendent, golden-brown, or tan-golden half-caste, a Polynesian queen whose mother had been a queen before her, whose father was an Oxford man, an English gentleman, and a real scholar. Her name was Nomare. She was Queen of Huahoa. She was barbaric. He was young enough to out-barbaric her. There was nothing sordid in their marriage. He was no penniless adventurer. She brought him her island kingdom and forty thousand subjects. He brought to that island his fortune — and it was no inconsiderable fortune. He built a palace that no South Sea island ever possessed before or will ever possess again. It was the real thing, grass-thatched, hand-hewn beams that were lashed with cocoanut sennit, and all the rest. It was rooted in the island; it sprouted out of the island; it belonged, although he fetched Hopkins out from New York to plan it.

“Heavens! they had their own royal yacht, their mountain house, their canoe house — the last a veritable palace in itself. I know. I have been at great feasts in it — though it was after their time. Nomare was dead, and no one knew where Graham was, and a king of collateral line was the ruler.

“I told you he out-barbaricked her. Their dinner service was gold. — Oh, what’s the use in telling any more. He was only a boy. She was half-English, half-Polynesian, and a really and truly queen. They were flowers of their races. They were a pair of wonderful children. They lived a fairy tale.

And… well, Ernestine, the years have passed, and Evan Graham has passed from the realm of the young thing. It will be a remarkable woman that will ever infatuate him now. Besides, he's practically broke. Though he didn't wastrel his money. As much misfortune, and more, than anything else."

"Paula would be more his kind," Ernestine said meditatively.

"Yes, indeed," Dick agreed. "Paula, or any woman as remarkable as Paula, would attract him a thousand times more than all the sweet, young, lovely things like you in the world. We oldsters have our standards, you know."

"And I'll have to put up with the youngsters," Ernestine sighed.

"In the meantime, yes," he chuckled. "Remembering, always, that you, too, in time, may grow into the remarkable, mature woman, who can outfoot a man like Evan in a foot-race of love for possession."

"But I shall be married long before that," she pouted.

"Which will be your good fortune, my dear. And, now, good night. And you are not angry with me?"

She smiled pathetically and shook her head, put up her lips to be kissed, then said as they parted:

"I promise not to be angry if you will only show me the way that in the end will lead me to ancient graybeards like you and Graham."

Dick Forrest, turning off lights as he went, penetrated the library, and, while selecting half a dozen reference volumes on mechanics and physics, smiled as if pleased with himself at recollection of the interview with his sister-in-law. He was confident that he had spoken in time and not a moment too soon. But, half way up the book-concealed spiral staircase that led to his work room, a remark of Ernestine, echoing in his consciousness, made him stop from very suddenness to lean his shoulder against the wall. — "Paula would be more his kind."

"Silly ass!" he laughed aloud, continuing on his way. "And married a dozen years!"

Nor did he think again about it, until, in bed, on his sleeping porch, he took a glance at his barometers and thermometers, and prepared to settle down to the solution of the electrical speculation that had been puzzling him. Then it was, as he peered across the great court to his wife's dark wing and dark sleeping porch to see if she were still waking, that Ernestine's remark again echoed. He dismissed it with a "Silly ass!" of scorn, lighted a cigarette, and began running, with trained eye, the indexes of the books and marking the pages sought with matches.

CHAPTER XV

It was long after ten in the morning, when Graham, straying about restlessly and wondering if Paula Forrest ever appeared before the middle of the day, wandered into the music room. Despite the fact that he was a several days' guest in the Big House, so big was it that the music room was new territory. It was an exquisite room, possibly thirty-five by sixty and rising to a lofty trussed ceiling where a warm golden light was diffused from a skylight of yellow glass. Red tones entered largely into the walls and furnishing, and the place, to him, seemed to hold the hush of music.

Graham was lazily contemplating a Keith with its inevitable triumph of sun-gloried atmosphere and twilight-shadowed sheep, when, from the tail of his eye, he saw his hostess come in from the far entrance. Again, the sight of her, that was a picture, gave him the little catch-breath of gasp. She was clad entirely in white, and looked very young and quite tall in the sweeping folds of a holoku of elaborate simplicity and apparent shapelessness. He knew the holoku in the home of its origin, where, on the lanais of Hawaii, it gave charm to a plain woman and double-folded the charm of a charming woman.

While they smiled greeting across the room, he was noting the set of her body, the poise of head and frankness of eyes — all of which seemed articulate with a friendly, comradely, "Hello, friends." At least such was the form Graham's fancy took as she came toward him.

"You made a mistake with this room," he said gravely.

"No, don't say that! But how?"

"It should have been longer, much longer, twice as long at least."

"Why?" she demanded, with a disapproving shake of head, while he delighted in the girlish color in her cheeks that gave the lie to her thirty-eight years.

"Because, then," he answered, "you should have had to walk twice as far this morning and my pleasure of watching you would have been correspondingly increased. I've always insisted that the holoku is the most charming garment ever invented for women."

"Then it was my holoku and not I," she retorted. "I see you are like Dick — always with a string on your compliments, and lo, when we poor sillies start to nibble, back goes the compliment dragging at the end of the string.

“Now I want to show you the room,” she hurried on, closing his disclaimer. “Dick gave me a free hand with it. It’s all mine, you see, even to its proportions.”

“And the pictures?”

“I selected them,” she nodded, “every one of them, and loved them onto the walls myself. Although Dick did quarrel with me over that Vereschagin. He agreed on the two Millets and the Corot over there, and on that Isabey; and even conceded that some Vereschagins might do in a music room, but not that particular Vereschagin. He’s jealous for our local artists, you see. He wanted more of them, wanted to show his appreciation of home talent.”

“I don’t know your Pacific Coast men’s work very well,” Graham said. “Tell me about them. Show me that — Of course, that’s a Keith, there; but whose is that next one? It’s beautiful.”

“A McComas — ” she was answering; and Graham, with a pleasant satisfaction, was settling himself to a half-hour’s talk on pictures, when Donald Ware entered with questing eyes that lighted up at sight of the Little Lady.

His violin was under his arm, and he crossed to the piano in a brisk, business-like way and proceeded to lay out music.

“We’re going to work till lunch,” Paula explained to Graham. “He swears I’m getting abominably rusty, and I think he’s half right. We’ll see you at lunch. You can stay if you care, of course; but I warn you it’s really going to be work. And we’re going swimming this afternoon. Four o’clock at the tank, Dick says. Also, he says he’s got a new song he’s going to sing then. — What time is it, Mr. Ware?”

“Ten minutes to eleven,” the musician answered briefly, with a touch of sharpness.

“You’re ahead of time — the engagement was for eleven. And till eleven you’ll have to wait, sir. I must run and see Dick, first. I haven’t said good morning to him yet.”

Well Paula knew her husband’s hours. Scribbled secretly in the back of the note-book that lay always on the reading stand by her couch were hieroglyphic notes that reminded her that he had coffee at six-thirty; might possibly be caught in bed with proof-sheets or books till eight-forty-five, if not out riding; was inaccessible between nine and ten, dictating correspondence to Blake; was inaccessible between ten and eleven, conferring with managers and foremen, while Bonbright, the assistant secretary, took down, like any court reporter, every word uttered by all parties in the rapid-fire interviews.

At eleven, unless there were unexpected telegrams or business, she could usually count on finding Dick alone for a space, although invariably busy. Passing the secretaries' room, the click of a typewriter informed her that one obstacle was removed. In the library, the sight of Mr. Bonbright hunting a book for Mr. Manson, the Shorthorn manager, told her that Dick's hour with his head men was over.

She pressed the button that swung aside a section of filled book-shelves and revealed the tiny spiral of steel steps that led up to Dick's work room. At the top, a similar pivoting section of shelves swung obediently to her press of button and let her noiselessly into his room. A shade of vexation passed across her face as she recognized Jeremy Braxton's voice. She paused in indecision, neither seeing nor being seen.

"If we flood we flood," the mine superintendent was saying. "It will cost a mint — yes, half a dozen mints — to pump out again. And it's a damned shame to drown the old Harvest that way."

"But for this last year the books show that we've worked at a positive loss," Paula heard Dick take up. "Every petty bandit from Huerta down to the last peon who's stolen a horse has gouged us. It's getting too stiff — taxes extraordinary — bandits, revolutionists, and federals. We could survive it, if only the end were in sight; but we have no guarantee that this disorder may not last a dozen or twenty years."

"Just the same, the old Harvest — think of flooding her!" the superintendent protested.

"And think of Villa," Dick replied, with a sharp laugh the bitterness of which did not escape Paula. "If he wins he says he's going to divide all the land among the peons. The next logical step will be the mines. How much do you think we've coughed up to the constitutionalists in the past twelvemonth?"

"Over a hundred and twenty thousand," Braxton answered promptly. "Not counting that fifty thousand cold bullion to Torenas before he retreated. He jumped his army at Guaymas and headed for Europe with it — I wrote you all that."

"If we keep the workings afloat, Jeremy, they'll go on gouging, gouge without end, Amen. I think we'd better flood. If we can make wealth more efficiently than those rapscallions, let us show them that we can destroy wealth with the same facility."

"That's what I tell them. And they smile and repeat that such and such a free will offering, under exigent circumstances, would be very acceptable to the revolutionary chiefs — meaning themselves. The big chiefs never finger one peso in ten of it. Good Lord! I show them what we've done. Steady work for five thousand peons. Wages raised from ten centavos a day to a hundred and ten. I show them peons — ten-centavo men when we took them, and five-peso men when I showed them. And the same old smile and the same old itching palm, and the same old acceptability of a free will offering from us to the sacred cause of the revolution. By God! Old Diaz was a robber, but he was a decent robber. I said to Arranzo: 'If we shut down, here's five thousand Mexicans out of a job — what'll you do with them?' And Arranzo smiled and answered me pat. 'Do with them?' he said. 'Why, put guns in their hands and march 'em down to take Mexico City.'"

In imagination Paula could see Dick's disgusted shrug of shoulders as she heard him say:

"The curse of it is — that the stuff is there, and that we're the only fellows that can get it out. The Mexicans can't do it. They haven't the brains. All they've got is the guns, and they're making us shell out more than we make. There's only one thing for us, Jeremy. We'll forget profits for a year or so, lay off the men, and just keep the engineer force on and the pumping going."

"I threw that into Arranzo," Jeremy Braxton's voice boomed. "And what was his comeback? That if we laid off the peons, he'd see to it that the engineers laid off, too, and the mine could flood and be damned to us. — No, he didn't say that last. He just smiled, but the smile meant the same thing. For two cents I'd a-wrung his yellow neck, except that there'd have been another patriot in his boots and in my office next day proposing a stiffer gouge.

"So Arranzo got his 'bit,' and, on top of it, before he went across to join the main bunch around Juarez, he let his men run off three hundred of our mules — thirty thousand dollars' worth of mule-flesh right there, after I'd sweetened him, too. The yellow skunk!"

"Who is revolutionary chief in our diggings right now?" Paula heard her husband ask with one of his abrupt shifts that she knew of old time tokened his drawing together the many threads of a situation and proceeding to action.

"Raoul Bena."

"What's his rank?"

"Colonel — he's got about seventy ragamuffins."

"What did he do before he quit work?"

"Sheep-herder."

"Very well." Dick's utterance was quick and sharp. "You've got to play-act. Become a patriot. Hike back as fast as God will let you. Sweeten this Raoul Bena. He'll see through your play, or he's no Mexican. Sweeten him and tell him you'll make him a general —-a second Villa."

"Lord, Lord, yes, but how?" Jeremy Braxton demanded.

"By putting him at the head of an army of five thousand. Lay off the men. Make him make them volunteer. We're safe, because Huerta is doomed. Tell him you're a real patriot. Give each man a rifle. We'll stand that for a last gouge, and it will prove you a patriot. Promise every man his job back when the war is over. Let them and Raoul Bena depart with your blessing. Keep on the pumping force only. And if we cut out profits for a year or so, at the same time we are cutting down losses. And perhaps we won't have to flood old Harvest after all."

Paula smiled to herself at Dick's solution as she stole back down the spiral on her way to the music room. She was depressed, but not by the Harvest Group situation. Ever since her marriage there had always been trouble in the working of the Mexican mines Dick had inherited. Her depression was due to her having missed her morning greeting to him. But this depression vanished at meeting Graham, who had lingered with Ware at the piano and who, at her coming, was evidencing signs of departure.

"Don't run away," she urged. "Stay and witness a spectacle of industry that should nerve you up to starting on that book Dick has been telling me about."

CHAPTER XVI

On Dick's face, at lunch, there was no sign of trouble over the Harvest Group; nor could anybody have guessed that Jeremy Braxton's visit had boded anything less gratifying than a report of unfailing earnings. Although Adolph Weil had gone on the early morning train, which advertised that the business which had brought him had been transacted with Dick at some unheard of hour, Graham discovered a greater company than ever at the table. Besides a Mrs. Tully, who seemed a stout and elderly society matron, and whom Graham could not make out, there were three new men, of whose identity he gleaned a little: a Mr. Gulhuss, State Veterinary; a Mr. Deacon, a portrait painter of evident note on the Coast; and a Captain Lester, then captain of a Pacific Mail liner, who had sailed skipper for Dick nearly twenty years before and who had helped Dick to his navigation.

The meal was at its close, and the superintendent was glancing at his watch, when Dick said:

"Jeremy, I want to show you what I've been up to. We'll go right now.

You'll have time on your way to the train."

"Let us all go," Paula suggested, "and make a party of it. I'm dying to see it myself, Dick's been so obscure about it."

Sanctioned by Dick's nod, she was ordering machines and saddle horses the next moment.

"What is it?" Graham queried, when she had finished.

"Oh, one of Dick's stunts. He's always after something new. This is an invention. He swears it will revolutionize farming — that is, small farming. I have the general idea of it, but I haven't seen it set up yet. It was ready a week ago, but there was some delay about a cable or something concerning an adjustment."

"There's billions in it… if it works," Dick smiled over the table. "Billions for the farmers of the world, and perhaps a trifle of royalty for me… if it works."

"But what is it?" O'Hay asked. "Music in the dairy barns to make the cows give down their milk more placidly?"

"Every farmer his own plowman while sitting on his front porch," Dick baffled back. "In fact, the labor-eliminating intermediate stage between soil production and sheer laboratory production of food. But wait till you see it.

Gulhuss, this is where I kill my own business, if it works, for it will do away with the one horse of every ten-acre farmer between here and Jericho."

In ranch machines and on saddle animals, the company was taken a mile beyond the dairy center, where a level field was fenced squarely off and contained, as Dick announced, just precisely ten acres.

"Behold," he said, "the one-man and no-horse farm where the farmer sits on the porch. Please imagine the porch."

In the center of the field was a stout steel pole, at least twenty feet in height and guyed very low.

From a drum on top of the pole a thin wire cable ran to the extreme edge of the field and was attached to the steering lever of a small gasoline tractor. About the tractor two mechanics fluttered. At command from Dick they cranked the motor and started it on its way.

"This is the porch," Dick said. "Just imagine we're all that future farmer sitting in the shade and reading the morning paper while the manless, horseless plowing goes on."

Alone, unguided, the drum on the head of the pole in the center winding up the cable, the tractor, at the circumference permitted by the cable, turned a single furrow as it described a circle, or, rather, an inward trending spiral about the field.

"No horse, no driver, no plowman, nothing but the farmer to crank the tractor and start it on its way," Dick exulted, as the uncanny mechanism turned up the brown soil and continued unguided, ever spiraling toward the field's center. "Plow, harrow, roll, seed, fertilize, cultivate, harvest — all from the front porch. And where the farmer can buy juice from a power company, all he, or his wife, will have to do is press the button, and he to his newspaper, and she to her pie-crust."

"All you need, now, to make it absolutely perfect," Graham praised, "is to square the circle."

"Yes," Mr. Gulhuss agreed. "As it is, a circle in a square field loses some acreage."

Graham's face advertised a mental arithmetic trance for a minute, when he announced: "Loses, roughly, three acres out of every ten."

"Sure," Dick concurred. "But the farmer has to have his front porch somewhere on his ten acres. And the front porch represents the house, the barn, the chicken yard and the various outbuildings. Very well. Let him get tradition out of his mind, and, instead of building these things in the center of his ten acres, let him build them on the three acres of fringe. And let him plant his fruit and shade trees and berry bushes on the fringe. When you come to consider it, the traditionary method of erecting the buildings in the center of a rectangular ten acres compels him to plow around the center in broken rectangles."

Gulhuss nodded enthusiastically. "Sure. And there's always the roadway from the center out to the county road or right of way. That breaks the efficiency of his plowing. Break ten acres into the consequent smaller rectangles, and it's expensive cultivation."

"Wish navigation was as automatic," was Captain Lester's contribution.

"Or portrait painting," laughed Rita Wainwright with a significant glance at Mr. Deacon.

"Or musical criticism," Lute remarked, with no glance at all, but with a pointedness of present company that brought from O'Hay:

"Or just being a charming young woman."

"What price for the outfit?" Jeremy Braxton asked.

"Right now, we could manufacture and lay down, at a proper profit, for five hundred. If the thing came into general use, with up to date, large-scale factory methods, three hundred. But say five hundred. And write off fifteen per cent, for interest and constant, it would cost the farmer seventy dollars a year. What ten-acre farmer, on two-hundred-dollar land, who keeps books, can keep a horse for seventy dollars a year? And on top of that, it would save him, in labor, personal or hired, at the abjectest minimum, two hundred dollars a year."

"But what guides it?" Rita asked.

"The drum on the post. The drum is graduated for the complete radius — which took some tall figuring, I assure you — and the cable, winding around the drum and shortening, draws the tractor in toward the center."

"There are lots of objections to its general introduction, even among small farmers," Gulhuss said.

Dick nodded affirmation.

"Sure," he replied. "I have over forty noted down and classified. And I've as many more for the machine itself. If the thing is a success, it will take a long time to perfect it and introduce it."

Graham found himself divided between watching the circling tractor and casting glances at the picture Paula Forrest was on her mount. It was her first day on The Fawn, which was the Palomina mare Hennessy had trained for her. Graham smiled with secret approval of her femininity; for Paula, whether she had designed her habit for the mare, or had selected one most peculiarly appropriate, had achieved a triumph.

In place of a riding coat, for the afternoon was warm, she wore a tan linen blouse with white turnback collar. A short skirt, made like the lower part of a riding coat, reached the knees, and from knees to entrancing little bespurred champagne boots tight riding trousers showed. Skirt and trousers were of fawn-colored silk corduroy. Soft white gauntlets on her hands matched with the collar in the one emphasis of color. Her head was bare, the hair done tight and low around her ears and nape of neck.

“I don’t see how you can keep such a skin and expose yourself to the sun this way,” Graham ventured, in mild criticism.

“I don’t,” she smiled with a dazzle of white teeth. “That is, I don’t expose my face this way more than a few times a year. I’d like to, because I love the sun-gold burn in my hair; but I don’t dare a thorough tanning.”

The mare frisked, and a breeze of air blew back a flap of skirt, showing an articulate knee where the trouser leg narrowed tightly over it. Again Graham visioned the white round of knee pressed into the round muscles of the swimming Mountain Lad, as he noted the firm knee-grip on her pigskin English saddle, quite new and fawn-colored to match costume and horse.

When the magneto on the tractor went wrong, and the mechanics busied themselves with it in the midst of the partly plowed field, the company, under Paula’s guidance, leaving Dick behind with his invention, resolved itself into a pilgrimage among the brood-centers on the way to the swimming tank. Mr. Crellin, the hog-manager, showed them Lady Isleton, who, with her prodigious, fat, recent progeny of eleven, won various naïve encomiums, while Mr. Crellin warmly proclaimed at least four times, “And not a runt, not a runt, in the bunch.”

Other glorious brood-sows, of Berkshire, Duroc-Jersey, and O. I. C. blood, they saw till they were wearied, and new-born kids and lambs, and rotund does and ewes. From center to center, Paula kept the telephones warning ahead of the party’s coming, so that Mr. Manson waited to exhibit the great King Polo, and his broad-backed Shorthorn harem, and the Shorthorn harems of bulls that were only little less than King Polo in magnificence and record; and Parkman, the Jersey manager, was on hand, with staffed assistants, to parade Sensational Drake, Golden Jolly, Fontaine

Royal, Oxford Master, and Karnak's Fairy Boy — blue ribbon bulls, all, and founders and scions of noble houses of butter-fat renown, and Rosaire Queen, Standby's Dam, Golden Jolly's Lass, Olga's Pride, and Gertie of Maitlands — equally blue-ribboned and blue-blooded Jersey matrons in the royal realm of butter-fat; and Mr. Mendenhall, who had charge of the Shires, proudly exhibited a string of mighty stallions, led by the mighty Mountain Lad, and a longer string of matrons, headed by the Fotherington Princess of the silver whinny. Even old Alden Bessie, the Princess's dam, retired to but part-day's work, he sent for that they might render due honor to so notable a dam.

As four o'clock approached, Donald Ware, not keen on swimming, returned in one of the machines to the Big House, and Mr. Gulhuss remained to discuss Shires with Mr. Mendenhall. Dick was at the tank when the party arrived, and the girls were immediately insistent for the new song.

"It isn't exactly a new song," Dick explained, his gray eyes twinkling roguery, "and it's not my song. It was sung in Japan before I was born, and, I doubt not, before Columbus discovered America. Also, it is a duet — a competitive duet with forfeit penalties attached. Paula will have to sing it with me. — I'll teach you. Sit down there, that's right. — Now all the rest of you gather around and sit down."

Still in her riding habit, Paula sat down on the concrete, facing her husband, in the center of the sitting audience. Under his direction, timing her movements to his, she slapped her hands on her knees, slapped her palms together, and slapped her palms against his palms much in the fashion of the nursery game of "Bean Porridge Hot." Then he sang the song, which was short and which she quickly picked up, singing it with him and clapping the accent. While the air of it was orientally catchy, it was chanted slowly, almost monotonously, but it was quickly provocative of excitement to the spectators:

"Jong-Keena, Jong-Keena,
Jong-Jong, Keena-Keena,
Yo-ko-ham-a, Nag-a-sak-i,
Kobe-mar-o — hoy!!!"

The last syllable, hoy, was uttered suddenly, explosively, and an octave and more higher than the pitch of the melody. At the same moment that it was uttered, Paula's and Dick's hands were abruptly shot toward each other's, either clenched or open. The point of the game was that Paula's hands, open or closed, at the instant of uttering hoy, should match Dick's. Thus, the first time, she did match him, both his and her hands being closed, whereupon he took off his hat and tossed it into Lute's lap.

"My forfeit," he explained. "Come on, Paul, again." And again they sang and clapped:

"Jong-Keena, Jong-Keena,
Jong-Jong, Keena-Keena,
Yo-ko-ham-a, Nag-a-sak-i,
Kobe-mar-o — hoy!!!"

This time, with the hoy, her hands were closed and his were open.

"Forfeit! — forfeit!" the girls cried.

She looked her costume over with alarm, asking, "What can I give?"

"A hair pin," Dick advised; and one of her turtleshell hair pins joined his hat in Lute's lap.

"Bother it!" she exclaimed, when the last of her hair pins had gone the same way, she having failed seven times to Dick's once. "I can't see why I should be so slow and stupid. Besides, Dick, you're too clever. I never could out-guess you or out-anticipate you."

Again they sang the song. She lost, and, to Mrs. Tully's shocked "Paula!" she forfeited a spur and threatened a boot when the remaining spur should be gone. A winning streak of three compelled Dick to give up his wrist watch and both spurs. Then she lost her wrist watch and the remaining spur.

"Jong-Keena, Jong-Keena," they began again, while Mrs. Tully remonstrated, "Now, Paula, you simply must stop this. — Dick, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

But Dick, emitting a triumphant "Hoy!" won, and joined in the laughter as Paula took off one of her little champagne boots and added it to the heap in Lute's lap.

"It's all right, Aunt Martha," Paula assured Mrs. Tully. "Mr. Ware's not here, and he's the only one who would be shocked. — Come on, Dick. You can't win every time."

"Jong-Keena, Jong-Keena," she chanted on with her husband. The repetition, at first slow, had accelerated steadily, so that now they fairly rippled through with it, while their slapping, striking palms made a continuous patter. The exercise and excitement had added to the sun's action on her skin, so that her laughing face was all a rosy glow.

Evan Graham, a silent spectator, was aware of hurt and indignity. He knew the “Jong-Keena” of old time from the geishas of the tea houses of Nippon, and, despite the unconventionality that ruled the Forrests and the Big House, he experienced shock in that Paula should take part in such a game. It did not enter his head at the moment that he would have been merely curious to see how far the madness would go had the player been Lute, or Ernestine, or Rita. Not till afterward did he realize that his concern and sense of outrage were due to the fact that the player was Paula, and that, therefore, she was bulking bigger in his imagination than he was conscious of. What he was conscious of at the moment was that he was growing angry and that he had deliberately to check himself from protesting.

By this time Dick’s cigarette case and matches and Paula’s second boot, belt, skirt-pin, and wedding ring had joined the mound of forfeits. Mrs. Tully, her face set in stoic resignation, was silent.

“Jong-Keena, Jong-Keena,” Paula laughed and sang on, and Graham heard

Ernestine laugh to Bert, “I don’t see what she can spare next.”

“Well, you know her,” he heard Bert answer. “She’s game once she gets started, and it certainly looks like she’s started.”

“Hoy!” Paula and Dick cried simultaneously, as they thrust out their hands.

But Dick’s were closed, and hers were open. Graham watched her vainly quest her person for the consequent forfeit.

“Come on, Lady Godiva,” Dick commanded. “You hae sung, you hae danced; now pay the piper.”

“Was the man a fool?” was Graham’s thought. “And a man with a wife like that.”

“Well,” Paula sighed, her fingers playing with the fastenings of her blouse, “if I must, I must.”

Raging inwardly, Graham averted his gaze, and kept it averted. There was a pause, in which he knew everybody must be hanging on what she would do next. Then came a giggle from Ernestine, a burst of laughter from all, and, “A frame-up!” from Bert, that overcame Graham’s resoluteness. He looked quickly. The Little Lady’s blouse was off, and, from the waist up, she appeared in her swimming suit. It was evident that she had dressed over it for the ride.

“Come on, Lute — you next,” Dick was challenging.

But Lute, not similarly prepared for Jong-Keena, blushingly led the retreat of the girls to the dressing rooms.

Graham watched Paula poise at the forty-foot top of the diving scaffold and swan-dive beautifully into the tank; heard Bert's admiring "Oh, you Annette Kellerman!" and, still chagrined by the trick that had threatened to outrage him, fell to wondering about the wonder woman, the Little Lady of the Big House, and how she had happened so wonderfully to be. As he fetched down the length of tank, under water, moving with leisurely strokes and with open eyes watching the shoaling bottom, it came to him that he did not know anything about her. She was Dick Forrest's wife. That was all he knew. How she had been born, how she had lived, how and where her past had been — of all this he knew nothing.

Ernestine had told him that Lute and she were half sisters of Paula. That was one bit of data, at any rate. (Warned by the increasing brightness of the bottom that he had nearly reached the end of the tank, and recognizing Dick's and Bert's legs intertwined in what must be a wrestling bout, Graham turned about, still under water, and swam back a score or so of feet.) There was that Mrs. Tully whom Paula had addressed as Aunt Martha. Was she truly an aunt? Or was she a courtesy Aunt through sisterhood with the mother of Lute and Ernestine?

He broke surface, was hailed by the others to join in bull-in-the-ring; in which strenuous sport, for the next half hour, he was compelled more than once to marvel at the litheness and agility, as well as strategy, of Paula in her successful efforts at escaping through the ring. Concluding the game through weariness, breathing hard, the entire party raced the length of the tank and crawled out to rest in the sunshine in a circle about Mrs. Tully.

Soon there was more fun afoot, and Paula was contending impossible things with Mrs. Tully.

"Now, Aunt Martha, just because you never learned to swim is no reason for you to take such a position. I am a real swimmer, and I tell you I can dive right into the tank here, and stay under for ten minutes."

"Nonsense, child," Mrs. Tully beamed. "Your father, when he was young, a great deal younger than you, my dear, could stay under water longer than any other man; and his record, as I know, was three minutes and forty seconds, as I very well know, for I held the watch myself and kept the time when he won against Harry Selby on a wager."

"Oh, I know my father was some man in his time," Paula swaggered; "but times have changed. If I had the old dear here right now, in all his youthful excellence, I'd drown him if he tried to stay under water with me. Ten minutes? Of course I can do ten minutes. And I will. You hold the watch, Aunt Martha, and time me. Why, it's as easy as — "

"Shooting fish in a bucket," Dick completed for her.

Paula climbed to the platform above the springboard.

"Time me when I'm in the air," she said.

"Make your turn and a half," Dick called.

She nodded, smiled, and simulated a prodigious effort at filling her lungs to their utmost capacity. Graham watched enchanted. A diver himself, he had rarely seen the turn and a half attempted by women other than professionals. Her wet suit of light blue and green silk clung closely to her, showing the lines of her justly proportioned body. With what appeared to be an agonized gulp for the last cubic inch of air her lungs could contain, she sprang up, out, and down, her body vertical and stiff, her legs straight, her feet close together as they impacted on the springboard end. Flung into the air by the board, she doubled her body into a ball, made a complete revolution, then straightened out in perfect diver's form, and in a perfect dive, with scarcely a ripple, entered the water.

"A Toledo blade would have made more splash," was Graham's verdict.

"If only I could dive like that," Ernestine breathed her admiration. "But I never shall. Dick says diving is a matter of timing, and that's why Paula does it so terribly well. She's got the sense of time — "

"And of abandon," Graham added.

"Of willed abandon," Dick qualified.

"Of relaxation by effort," Graham agreed. "I've never seen a professional do so perfect a turn and a half."

"And I'm prouder of it than she is," Dick proclaimed. "You see, I taught her, though I confess it was an easy task. She coordinates almost effortlessly. And that, along with her will and sense of time — why her first attempt was better than fair."

"Paula is a remarkable woman," Mrs. Tully said proudly, her eyes fluttering between the second hand of the watch and the unbroken surface of the pool. "Women never swim so well as men. But she does. — Three minutes and forty seconds! She's beaten her father!"

"But she won't stay under any five minutes, much less ten," Dick solemnly stated. "She'll burst her lungs first."

At four minutes, Mrs. Tully began to show excitement and to look anxiously from face to face. Captain Lester, not in the secret, scrambled to his feet with an oath and dived into the tank.

"Something has happened," Mrs. Tully said with controlled quietness.

"She hurt herself on that dive. Go in after her, you men."

But Graham and Bert and Dick, meeting under water, gleefully grinned and squeezed hands. Dick made signs for them to follow, and led the way through the dark-shadowed water into the crypt, where, treading water, they joined Paula in subdued whisperings and gigglings.

"Just came to make sure you were all right," Dick explained. "And now we've got to beat it. — You first, Bert. I'll follow Evan."

And, one by one, they went down through the dark water and came up on the surface of the pool. By this time Mrs. Tully was on her feet and standing by the edge of the tank.

"If I thought this was one of your tricks, Dick Forrest," she began.

But Dick, paying no attention, acting preternaturally calmly, was directing the men loudly enough for her to hear.

"We've got to make this systematic, fellows. You, Bert, and you, Evan, join with me. We start at this end, five feet apart, and search the bottom across. Then move along and repeat it back."

"Don't exert yourselves, gentlemen," Mrs. Tully called, beginning to laugh. "As for you, Dick, you come right out. I want to box your ears."

"Take care of her, you girls," Dick shouted. "She's got hysterics."

"I haven't, but I will have," she laughed.

"But damn it all, madam, this is no laughing matter!" Captain Lester spluttered breathlessly, as he prepared for another trip to explore the bottom.

"Are you on, Aunt Martha, really and truly on?" Dick asked, after the valiant mariner had gone down.

Mrs. Tully nodded. "But keep it up, Dick, you've got one dupe. Elsie Coghlan's mother told me about it in Honolulu last year."

Not until eleven minutes had elapsed did the smiling face of Paula break the surface. Simulating exhaustion, she slowly crawled out and sank down panting near her aunt. Captain Lester, really exhausted by his strenuous exertions at rescue, studied Paula keenly, then marched to the nearest pillar and meekly bumped his head three times against the concrete.

"I'm afraid I didn't stay down ten minutes," Paula said. "But I wasn't much under that, was I, Aunt Martha?"

"You weren't much under at all," Mrs. Tully replied, "if it's my opinion you were asking. I'm surprised that you are even wet. — There, there, breathe naturally, child. The play-acting is unnecessary. I remember, when I was a young girl, traveling in India, there was a school of fakirs who leaped into deep wells and stayed down much longer than you, child, much longer indeed."

"You knew!" Paula charged.

"But you didn't know I did," her Aunt retorted. "And therefore your conduct was criminal. When you consider a woman of my age, with my heart — "

"And with your blessed, brass-tack head," Paula cried.

"For two apples I'd box your ears."

"And for one apple I'd hug you, wet as I am," Paula laughed back.

"Anyway, we did fool Captain Lester. — Didn't we, Captain?"

"Don't speak to me," that doughty mariner muttered darkly. "I'm busy with myself, meditating what form my vengeance shall take. — As for you, Mr. Dick Forrest, I'm divided between blowing up your dairy, or hamstringing Mountain Lad. Maybe I'll do both. In the meantime I am going out to kick that mare you ride."

Dick on The Outlaw, and Paula on The Fawn, rode back side by side to the Big House.

"How do you like Graham?" he asked.

"Splendid," was her reply. "He's your type, Dick. He's universal, like you, and he's got the same world-marks branded on him — the Seven Seas, the books, and all the rest. He's an artist, too, and pretty well all-around. And he's good fun. Have you noticed his smile? It's irresistible. It makes one want to smile with him."

"And he's got his serious scars, as well," Dick nodded concurrence.

"Yes — right in the corners of the eyes, just after he has smiled, you'll see them come. They're not tired marks exactly, but rather the old eternal questions: Why? What for? What's it worth? What's it all about?"

* * * * *

And bringing up the rear of the cavalcade, Ernestine and Graham talked.

"Dick's deep," she was saying. "You don't know him any too well. He's dreadfully deep. I know him a little. Paula knows him a lot. But very few others ever get under the surface of him. He's a real philosopher, and he has the control of a stoic or an Englishman, and he can play-act to fool the world."

* * * * *

At the long hitching rails under the oaks, where the dismounting party gathered, Paula was in gales of laughter.

"Go on, go on," she urged Dick, "more, more."

"She's been accusing me of exhausting my vocabulary in naming the house-boys by my system," he explained.

"And he's given me at least forty more names in a minute and a half. —
Go on, Dick, more."

"Then," he said, striking a chant, "we can have Oh Sin and Oh Pshaw,
Oh Sing and Oh Song, Oh Sung and Oh Sang, Oh Last and Oh Least, Oh
Ping and Oh Pong, Oh Some, Oh More, and Oh Most, Oh Naught and Oh
Nit…"

And Dick jingled away into the house still chanting his extemporized directory.

CHAPTER XVII

A week of dissatisfaction and restlessness ensued for Graham. Tom between belief that his business was to leave the Big House on the first train, and desire to see, and see more of Paula, to be with her, and to be more with her — he succeeded in neither leaving nor in seeing as much of her as during the first days of his visit.

At first, and for the five days that he lingered, the young violinist monopolized nearly her entire time of visibility. Often Graham strayed into the music room, and, quite neglected by the pair, sat for moody half-hours listening to their "work." They were oblivious of his presence, either flushed and absorbed with the passion of their music, or wiping their foreheads and chatting and laughing companionably in pauses to rest. That the young musician loved her with an ardency that was almost painful, was patent to Graham; but what hurt him was the abandon of devotion with which she sometimes looked at Ware after he had done something exceptionally fine. In vain Graham tried to tell himself that all this was mental on her part — purely delighted appreciation of the other's artistry. Nevertheless, being man, it hurt, and continued to hurt, until he could no longer suffer himself to remain.

Once, chancing into the room at the end of a Schumann song and just after Ware had departed, Graham found Paula still seated at the piano, an expression of rapt dreaming on her face. She regarded him almost unrecognizingly, gathered herself mechanically together, uttered an absent-minded commonplace or so, and left the room. Despite his vexation and hurt, Graham tried to think it mere artist-dreaming on her part, a listening to the echo of the just-played music in her soul. But women were curious creatures, he could not help moralizing, and were prone to lose their hearts most strangely and inconsequentially. Might it not be that by his very music this youngster of a man was charming the woman of her?

With the departure of Ware, Paula Forrest retired almost completely into her private wing behind the door without a knob. Nor did this seem unusual, Graham gleaned from the household.

"Paula is a woman who finds herself very good company," Ernestine explained, "and she often goes in for periods of aloneness, when Dick is the only person who sees her."

“Which is not flattering to the rest of the company,” Graham smiled.

“Which makes her such good company whenever she is in company,”

Ernestine retorted.

The driftage through the Big House was decreasing. A few guests, on business or friendship, continued to come, but more departed. Under Oh Joy and his Chinese staff the Big House ran so frictionlessly and so perfectly, that entertainment of guests seemed little part of the host’s duties. The guests largely entertained themselves and one another.

Dick rarely appeared, even for a moment, until lunch, and Paula, now carrying out her seclusion program, never appeared before dinner.

“Rest cure,” Dick laughed one noon, and challenged Graham to a tournament with boxing gloves, single-sticks, and foils.

“And now’s the time,” he told Graham, as they breathed between bouts, “for you to tackle your book. I’m only one of the many who are looking forward to reading it, and I’m looking forward hard. Got a letter from Havely yesterday — he mentioned it, and wondered how far along you were.”

So Graham, in his tower room, arranged his notes and photographs, schemed out the work, and plunged into the opening chapters. So immersed did he become that his nascent interest in Paula might have languished, had it not been for meeting her each evening at dinner. Then, too, until Ernestine and Lute left for Santa Barbara, there were afternoon swims and rides and motor trips to the pastures of the Miramar Hills and the upland ranges of the Anselmo Mountains. Other trips they made, sometimes accompanied by Dick, to his great dredgers working in the Sacramento basin, or his dam-building on the Little Coyote and Los Cuatos creeks, or to his five-thousand-acre colony of twenty-acre farmers, where he was trying to enable two hundred and fifty heads of families, along with their families, to make good on the soil.

That Paula sometimes went for long solitary rides, Graham knew, and, once, he caught her dismounting from the Fawn at the hitching rails.

“Don’t you think you are spoiling that mare for riding in company?” he twitted.

Paula laughed and shook her head.

“Well, then,” he asserted stoutly, “I’m spoiling for a ride with you.”

“There’s Lute, and Ernestine, and Bert, and all the rest.”

“This is new country,” he contended. “And one learns country through the people who know it. I’ve seen it through the eyes of Lute, and Ernestine and all the rest; but there is a lot I haven’t seen and which I can see only through your eyes.”

“A pleasant theory,” she evaded. “A — a sort of landscape vampirism.”

“But without the ill effects of vampirism,” he urged quickly.

Her answer was slow in coming. Her look into his eyes was frank and straight, and he could guess her words were weighed and gauged.

“I don’t know about that,” was all she said finally; but his fancy leaped at the several words, ranging and conjecturing their possible connotations.

“But we have so much we might be saying to each other,” he tried again. “So much we… ought to be saying to each other.”

“So I apprehend,” she answered quietly; and again that frank, straight look accompanied her speech.

So she did apprehend — the thought of it was flame to him, but his tongue was not quick enough to serve him to escape the cool, provoking laugh as she turned into the house.

Still the company of the Big House thinned. Paula’s aunt, Mrs. Tully, much to Graham’s disappointment (for he had expected to learn from her much that he wanted to know of Paula), had gone after only a several days’ stay. There was vague talk of her return for a longer stay; but, just back from Europe, she declared herself burdened with a round of duty visits which must be performed before her pleasure visiting began.

O’Hay, the critic, had been compelled to linger several days in order to live down the disastrous culmination of the musical raid made upon him by the philosophers. The idea and the trick had been Dick’s. Combat had joined early in the evening, when a seeming chance remark of Ernestine had enabled Aaron Hancock to fling the first bomb into the thick of O’Hay’s deepest convictions. Dar Hyal, a willing and eager ally, had charged around the flank with his blastic theory of music and taken O’Hay in reverse. And the battle had raged until the hot-headed Irishman, beside himself with the grueling the pair of skilled logomachists were giving him, accepted with huge relief the kindly invitation of Terrence McFane to retire with him to the tranquillity and repose of the stag room, where, over a soothing highball and far from the barbarians, the two of them could have a heart to heart talk on real music. At two in the morning, wild-eyed and befuddled, O’Hay had been led to bed by the upright-walking and unshakably steady Terrence.

“Never mind,” Ernestine had told O’Hay later, with a twinkle in her eye that made him guess the plot. “It was only to be expected. Those rattle-brained philosophers would drive even a saint to drink.”

“I thought you were safe in Terrence’s hands,” had been Dick’s mock apology. “A pair of Irishmen, you know. I’d forgot Terrence was case-hardened. Do you know, after he said good night to you, he came up to me for a yarn. And he was steady as a rock. He mentioned casually of having had several sips, so I… I… never dreamed … er… that he had indisposed you.”

When Lute and Ernestine departed for Santa Barbara, Bert Wainwright and his sister remembered their long-neglected home in Sacramento. A pair of painters, proteges of Paula, arrived the same day. But they were little in evidence, spending long days in the hills with a trap and driver and smoking long pipes in the stag room.

The free and easy life of the Big House went on in its frictionless way. Dick worked. Graham worked. Paula maintained her seclusion. The sages from the madrono grove strayed in for wordy dinners — and wordy evenings, except when Paula played for them. Automobile parties, from Sacramento, Wickenberg, and other valley towns, continued to drop in unexpectedly, but never to the confusion of Oh Joy and the house boys, whom Graham saw, on occasion, with twenty minutes’ warning, seat a score of unexpected guests to a perfect dinner. And there were even nights — rare ones — when only Dick and Graham and Paula sat at dinner, and when, afterward, the two men yarned for an hour before an early bed, while she played soft things to herself or disappeared earlier than they.

But one moonlight evening, when the Watsons and Masons and Wombolds arrived in force, Graham found himself out, when every bridge table was made up. Paula was at the piano. As he approached he caught the quick expression of pleasure in her eyes at sight of him, which as quickly vanished. She made a slight movement as if to rise, which did not escape his notice any more than did her quiet mastery of the impulse that left her seated.

She was immediately herself as he had always seen her — although it was little enough he had seen of her, he thought, as he talked whatever came into his head, and rummaged among her songs with her. Now one and now another song he tried with her, subduing his high baritone to her light soprano with such success as to win cries of more from the bridge players.

"Yes, I am positively aching to be out again over the world with Dick," she told him in a pause. "If we could only start to-morrow! But Dick can't start yet. He's in too deep with too many experiments and adventures on the ranch here. Why, what do you think he's up to now? As if he did not have enough on his hands, he's going to revolutionize the sales end, or, at least, the California and Pacific Coast portion of it, by making the buyers come to the ranch."

"But they do do that," Graham said. "The first man I met here was a buyer from Idaho."

"Oh, but Dick means as an institution, you know — to make them come en masse at a stated time. Not simple auction sales, either, though he says he will bait them with a bit of that to excite interest. It will be an annual fair, to last three days, in which he will be the only exhibitor. He's spending half his mornings now in conference with Mr. Agar and Mr. Pitts. Mr. Agar is his sales manager, and Mr. Pitts his showman."

She sighed and rippled her fingers along the keyboard.

"But, oh, if only we could get away — Timbuctoo, Mokpo, or Jericho."

"Don't tell me you've ever been to Mokpo," Graham laughed.

She nodded. "Cross my heart, solemnly, hope to die. It was with Dick in the All Away and in the long ago. It might almost be said we honeymooned in Mokpo."

And while Graham exchanged reminiscences of Mokpo with her, he cudgeled his brain to try and decide whether her continual reference to her husband was deliberate.

"I should imagine you found it such a paradise here," he was saying.

"I do, I do," she assured him with what seemed unnecessary vehemence. "But I don't know what's come over me lately. I feel it imperative to be up and away. The spring fret, I suppose; the Red Gods and their medicine. And if only Dick didn't insist on working his head off and getting tied down with projects! Do you know, in all the years of our marriage, the only really serious rival I have ever had has been this ranch. He's pretty faithful, and the ranch is his first love. He had it all planned and started before he ever met me or knew I existed."

"Here, let us try this together," Graham said abruptly, placing the song on the rack before her.

"Oh, but it's the 'Gypsy Trail,'" she protested. "It will only make my mood worse." And she hummed:

"'Follow the Romany patteran
West to the sinking sun,
Till the junk sails lift through the homeless drift,
And the East and the West are one.'

"What is the Romany patteran?" she broke off to ask. "I've always thought of it as patter, or patois, the Gypsy patois, and somehow it strikes me as absurd to follow a language over the world — a sort of philological excursion."

"In a way the patteran is speech," he answered. "But it always says one thing: 'This way I have passed.' Two sprigs, crossed in certain ways and left upon the trail, compose the patteran. But they must always be of different trees or shrubs. Thus, on the ranch here, a patteran could be made of manzanita and madrono, of oak and spruce, of buckeye and alder, of redwood and laurel, of huckleberry and lilac. It is a sign of Gypsy comrade to Gypsy comrade, of Gypsy lover to Gypsy lover." And he hummed:

"'Back to the road again, again,
Out of a clear sea track;
Follow the cross of the Gypsy trail,
Over the world and back.'"

She nodded comprehension, looked for a moment with troubled eyes down the long room to the card-players, caught herself in her momentary absentness, and said quickly:

"Heaven knows there's a lot of Gypsy in some of us. I have more than full share. In spite of his bucolic proclivities, Dick is a born Gypsy. And from what he has told of you, you are hopelessly one."

"After all, the white man is the real Gypsy, the king Gypsy," Graham propounded. "He has wandered wider, wilder, and with less equipment, than any Gypsy. The Gypsy has followed in his trails, but never made trail for him. — Come; let us try it."

And as they sang the reckless words to their merry, careless lilt, he looked down at her and wondered — wondered at her — at himself. This was no place for him by this woman's side, under her husband's roof-tree. Yet here he was, and he should have gone days before. After the years he was just getting acquainted with himself. This was enchantment, madness. He should tear himself away at once. He had known enchantments and madnesses before, and had torn himself away. Had he softened with the years? he questioned himself. Or was this a profounder madness than he had experienced? This meant the violation of dear things — things so dear, so jealously cherished and guarded in his secret life, that never yet had they suffered violation.

And still he did not tear himself away. He stood there beside her, looking down on her brown crown of hair glinting gold and bronze and bewitchingly curling into tendrils above her ears, singing a song that was fire to him — that must be fire to her, she being what she was and feeling what she had already, in flashes, half-unwittingly, hinted to him.

She is a witch, and her voice is not the least of her witchery, he thought, as her voice, so richly a woman’s voice, so essentially her voice in contradistinction to all women’s voices in the world, sang and throbbed in his ear. And he knew, beyond shade of doubt, that she felt some touch of this madness that afflicted him; that she sensed, as he sensed, that the man and the woman were met.

They thrilled together as they sang, and the thought and the sure knowledge of it added fuel to his own madness till his voice warmed unconsciously to the daring of the last lines, as, voices and thrills blending, they sang:

“‘The wild hawk to the wind-swept sky,
The deer to the wholesome wold,
And the heart of a man to the heart of a maid
As it was in the days of old —
The heart of a man to the heart of a maid,
Light of my tents be fleet,
Morning waits at the end of the world,
And the world is all at our feet.’“

He looked for her to look up as the last notes died away, but she remained quiet a moment, her eyes bent on the keys. And then the face that was turned to his was the face of the Little Lady of the Big House, the mouth smiling mischievously, the eyes filled with roguery, as she said:

“Let us go and devil Dick — he’s losing. I’ve never seen him lose his temper at cards, but he gets ridiculously blue after a long siege of losing.

“And he does love gambling,” she continued, as she led the way to the tables. “It’s one of his modes of relaxing. It does him good. About once or twice a year, if it’s a good poker game, he’ll sit in all night to it and play to the blue sky if they take off the limit.”

CHAPTER XVIII

Almost immediately after the singing of the “Gypsy Trail,” Paula emerged from her seclusion, and Graham found himself hard put, in the tower room, to keep resolutely to his work when all the morning he could hear snatches of song and opera from her wing, or laughter and scolding of dogs from the great patio, or the continuous pulse for hours of the piano from the distant music room. But Graham, patterning after Dick, devoted his mornings to work, so that he rarely encountered Paula before lunch.

She made announcement that her spell of insomnia was over and that she was ripe for all gaieties and excursions Dick had to offer her. Further, she threatened, in case Dick grudged these personal diversions, to fill the house with guests and teach him what liveliness was. It was at this time that her Aunt Martha — Mrs. Tully — returned for a several days’ visit, and that Paula resumed the driving of Duddy and Fuddy in the high, one-seated Stude-baker trap. Duddy and Fuddy were spirited trotters, but Mrs. Tully, despite her elderliness and avoirdupois, was without timidity when Paula held the reins.

As Mrs. Tully told Graham: “And that is a concession I make to no woman save Paula. She is the only woman I can trust myself to with horses. She has the horse-way about her. When she was a child she was wild over horses. It’s a wonder she didn’t become a circus rider.”

More, much more, Graham learned about Paula in various chats with her aunt. Of Philip Desten, Paula’s father, Mrs. Tully could never say enough. Her eldest brother, and older by many years, he had been her childhood prince. His ways had been big ways, princely ways — ways that to commoner folk had betokened a streak of madness. He was continually guilty of the wildest things and the most chivalrous things. It was this streak that had enabled him to win various fortunes, and with equal facility to lose them, in the great gold adventure of Forty-nine. Himself of old New England stock, he had had for great grandfather a Frenchman — a trifle of flotsam from a mid-ocean wreck and landed to grow up among the farmer-sailormen of the coast of Maine.

“And once, and once only, in each generation, that French Desten crops out,” Mrs. Tully assured Graham. “Philip was that Frenchman in his generation, and who but Paula, and in full measure, received that same inheritance in her generation. Though Lute and Ernestine are her half-sisters, no one would imagine one drop of the common blood was shared. That's why Paula, instead of going circus-riding, drifted inevitably to France. It was that old original Desten that drew her over."

And of the adventure in France, Graham learned much. Philip Desten's luck had been to die when the wheel of his fortune had turned over and down. Ernestine and Lute, little tots, had been easy enough for Desten's sisters to manage. But Paula, who had fallen to Mrs. Tully, had been the problem — "because of that Frenchman."

"Oh, she is rigid New England," Mrs. Tully insisted, "the solidest of creatures as to honor and rectitude, dependableness and faithfulness. As a girl she really couldn't bring herself to lie, except to save others. In which case all her New England ancestry took flight and she would lie as magnificently as her father before her. And he had the same charm of manner, the same daring, the same ready laughter, the same vivacity. But what is lightsome and blithe in her, was debonaire in him. He won men's hearts always, or, failing that, their bitterest enmity. No one was left cold by him in passing. Contact with him quickened them to love or hate. Therein Paula differs, being a woman, I suppose, and not enjoying man's prerogative of tilting at windmills. I don't know that she has an enemy in the world. All love her, unless, it may well be, there are cat-women who envy her her nice husband."

And as Graham listened, Paula's singing came through the open window from somewhere down the long arcades, and there was that ever-haunting thrill in her voice that he could not escape remembering afterward. She burst into laughter, and Mrs. Tully beamed to him and nodded at the sound.

"There laughs Philip Desten," she murmured, "and all the Frenchwomen behind the original Frenchman who was brought into Penobscot, dressed in homespun, and sent to meeting. Have you noticed how Paula's laugh invariably makes everybody look up and smile? Philip's laugh did the same thing."

"Paula had always been passionately fond of music, painting, drawing. As a little girl she could be traced around the house and grounds by the trail she left behind her of images and shapes, made in whatever medium she chanced upon — drawn on scraps of paper, scratched on bits of wood, modeled in mud and sand.

“She loved everything, and everything loved her,” said Mrs. Tully. “She was never timid of animals. And yet she always stood in awe of them; but she was born sense-struck, and her awe was beauty-awe. Yes, she was an incorrigible hero-worshiper, whether the person was merely beautiful or did things. And she never will outgrow that beauty — awe of anything she loves, whether it is a grand piano, a great painting, a beautiful mare, or a bit of landscape.

“And Paula had wanted to do, to make beauty herself. But she was sorely puzzled whether she should devote herself to music or painting. In the full swing of work under the best masters in Boston, she could not refrain from straying back to her drawing. From her easel she was lured to modeling.

“And so, with her love of the best, her soul and heart full of beauty, she grew quite puzzled and worried over herself, as to which talent was the greater and if she had genius at all. I suggested a complete rest from work and took her abroad for a year. And of all things, she developed a talent for dancing. But always she harked back to her music and painting. No, she was not flighty. Her trouble was that she was too talented — ”

“Too diversely talented,” Graham amplified.

“Yes, that is better,” Mrs. Tully nodded. “But from talent to genius is a far cry, and to save my life, at this late day, I don’t know whether the child ever had a trace of genius in her. She has certainly not done anything big in any of her chosen things.”

“Except to be herself,” Graham added.

“Which is the big thing,” Mrs. Tully accepted with a smile of enthusiasm. “She is a splendid, unusual woman, very unspoiled, very natural. And after all, what does doing things amount to? I’d give more for one of Paula’s madcap escapades — oh, I heard all about swimming the big stallion — than for all her pictures if every one was a masterpiece. But she was hard for me to understand at first. Dick often calls her the girl that never grew up. But gracious, she can put on the grand air when she needs to. I call her the most mature child I have ever seen. Dick was the finest thing that ever happened to her. It was then that she really seemed for the first time to find herself. It was this way.”

And Mrs. Tully went on to sketch the year of travel in Europe, the resumption of Paula’s painting in Paris, and the conviction she finally reached that success could be achieved only by struggle and that her aunt’s money was a handicap.

"And she had her way," Mrs. Tully sighed. "She — why, she dismissed me, sent me home. She would accept no more than the meagerest allowance, and went down into the Latin Quarter on her own, batching with two other American girls. And she met Dick. Dick was a rare one. You couldn't guess what he was doing then. Running a cabaret — oh, not these modern cabarets, but a real students' cabaret of sorts. It was very select. They were a lot of madmen. You see, he was just back from some of his wild adventuring at the ends of the earth, and, as he stated it, he wanted to stop living life for a while and to talk about life instead.

"Paula took me there once. Oh, they were engaged — the day before, and he had called on me and all that. I had known 'Lucky' Richard Forrest, and I knew all about his son. From a worldly standpoint, Paula couldn't have made a finer marriage. It was quite a romance. Paula had seen him captain the University of California eleven to victory over Stanford. And the next time she saw him was in the studio she shared with the two girls. She didn't know whether Dick was worth millions or whether he was running a cabaret because he was hard up, and she cared less. She always followed her heart. Fancy the situation: Dick the uncatchable, and Paula who never flirted. They must have sprung forthright into each other's arms, for inside the week it was all arranged, and Dick made his call on me, as if my decision meant anything one way or the other.

"But Dick's cabaret. It was the Cabaret of the Philosophers — a small pokey place, down in a cellar, in the heart of the Quarter, and it had only one table. Fancy that for a cabaret! But such a table! A big round one, of plain boards, without even an oil-cloth, the wood stained with the countless drinks spilled by the table-pounding of the philosophers, and it could seat thirty. Women were not permitted. An exception was made for Paula and me.

"You've met Aaron Hancock here. He was one of the philosophers, and to this day he swaggers that he owed Dick a bigger bill that never was paid than any of his customers. And there they used to meet, all those wild young thinkers, and pound the table, and talk philosophy in all the tongues of Europe. Dick always had a penchant for philosophers.

"But Paula spoiled that little adventure. No sooner were they married than Dick fitted out his schooner, the All Away, and away the blessed pair of them went, honeymooning from Bordeaux to Hongkong."

"And the cabaret was closed, and the philosophers left homeless and discussionless," Graham remarked.

Mrs. Tully laughed heartily and shook her head.

"He endowed it for them," she gasped, her hand to her side. "Or partially endowed it, or something. I don't know what the arrangement was. And within the month it was raided by the police for an anarchist club."

After having learned the wide scope of her interests and talents, Graham was nevertheless surprised one day at finding Paula all by herself in a corner of a window-seat, completely absorbed in her work on a piece of fine embroidery.

"I love it," she explained. "All the costly needlework of the shops means nothing to me alongside of my own work on my own designs. Dick used to fret at my sewing. He's all for efficiency, you know, elimination of waste energy and such things. He thought sewing was a wasting of time. Peasants could be hired for a song to do what I was doing. But I succeeded in making my viewpoint clear to him.

"It's like the music one makes oneself. Of course I can buy better music than I make; but to sit down at an instrument and evoke the music oneself, with one's own fingers and brain, is an entirely different and dearer satisfaction. Whether one tries to emulate another's performance, or infuses the performance with one's own personality and interpretation, it's all the same. It is soul-joy and fulfilment.

"Take this little embroidered crust of lilies on the edge of this flounce — there is nothing like it in the world. Mine the idea, all mine, and mine the delight of giving form and being to the idea. There are better ideas and better workmanship in the shops; but this is different. It is mine. I visioned it, and I made it. And who is to say that embroidery is not art?"

She ceased speaking and with her eyes laughed the insistence of her question.

"And who is to say," Graham agreed, "that the adorning of beautiful womankind is not the worthiest of all the arts as well as the sweetest?"

"I rather stand in awe of a good milliner or modiste," she nodded gravely. "They really are artists, and important ones, as Dick would phrase it, in the world's economy."

* * * * *

Another time, seeking the library for Andean reference, Graham came upon Paula, sprawled gracefully over a sheet of paper on a big table and flanked by ponderous architectural portfolios, engaged in drawing plans of a log bungalow or camp for the sages of the madroño grove.

"It's a problem," she sighed. "Dick says that if I build it I must build it for seven. We've got four sages now, and his heart is set on seven. He says never mind showers and such things, because what philosopher ever bathes? And he has suggested seriously seven stoves and seven kitchens, because it is just over such mundane things that philosophers always quarrel."

"Wasn't it Voltaire who quarreled with a king over candle-ends?" Graham queried, pleasuring in the sight of her graceful abandon. Thirty-eight! It was impossible. She seemed almost a girl, petulant and flushed over some school task. Then he remembered Mrs. Tully's remark that Paula was the most mature child she had ever known.

It made him wonder. Was she the one, who, under the oaks at the hitching rails, with two brief sentences had cut to the heart of an impending situation? "So I apprehend," she had said. What had she apprehended? Had she used the phrase glibly, without meaning? Yet she it was who had thrilled and fluttered to him and with him when they had sung the "Gypsy Trail." That he knew. But again, had he not seen her warm and glow to the playing of Donald Ware? But here Graham's ego had its will of him, for he told himself that with Donald Ware it was different. And he smiled to himself and at himself at the thought.

"What amuses you?" Paula was asking.

"Heaven knows I am no architect. And I challenge you to house seven philosophers according to all the absurd stipulations laid down by Dick."

Back in his tower room with his Andean books unopened before him, Graham gnawed his lip and meditated. The woman was no woman. She was the veriest child. Or — and he hesitated at the thought — was this naturalness that was overdone? Did she in truth apprehend? It must be. It had to be. She was of the world. She knew the world. She was very wise. No remembered look of her gray eyes but gave the impression of poise and power. That was it — strength! He recalled her that first night when she had seemed at times to glint an impression of steel, of thin and jewel-like steel. In his fancy, at the time, he remembered likening her strength to ivory, to carven pearl shell, to sennit twisted of maidens' hair.

And he knew, now, ever since the brief words at the hitching rails and the singing of the "Gypsy Trail," that whenever their eyes looked into each other’s it was with a mutual knowledge of unsaid things.

In vain he turned the pages of the books for the information he sought. He tried to continue his chapter without the information, but no words flowed from his pen. A maddening restlessness was upon him. He seized a time table and pondered the departure of trains, changed his mind, switched the room telephone to the house barn, and asked to have Altadena saddled.

It was a perfect morning of California early summer. No breath of wind stirred over the drowsing fields, from which arose the calls of quail and the notes of meadowlarks. The air was heavy with lilac fragrance, and from the distance, as he rode between the lilac hedges, Graham heard the throaty nicker of Mountain Lad and the silvery answering whinney of the Fotherington Princess.

Why was he here astride Dick Forrest’s horse? Graham asked himself. Why was he not even then on the way to the station to catch that first train he had noted on the time table? This unaccustomed weakness of decision and action was a new rôle for him, he considered bitterly. But — and he was on fire with the thought of it — this was his one life, and this was the one woman in the world.

He reined aside to let a herd of Angora goats go by. Each was a doe, and there were several hundred of them; and they were moved slowly by the Basque herdsmen, with frequent pauses, for each doe was accompanied by a young kid. In the paddock were many mares with new-born colts; and once, receiving warning in time, Graham raced into a crossroad to escape a drove of thirty yearling stallions being moved somewhere across the ranch. Their excitement was communicated to that entire portion of the ranch, so that the air was filled with shrill nickerings and squealings and answering whinneys, while Mountain Lad, beside himself at sight and sound of so many rivals, raged up and down his paddock, and again and again trumpeted his challenging conviction that he was the most amazing and mightiest thing that had ever occurred on earth in the way of horse flesh.

Dick Forrest pranced and sidled into the cross road on the Outlaw, his face beaming with delight at the little tempest among his many creatures.

“Fecundity! Fecundity!” — he chanted in greeting, as he reined in to a halt, if halt it might be called, with his tan-golden sorrel mare a-fret and a-froth, wickedly reaching with her teeth now for his leg and next for Graham’s, one moment pawing the roadway, the next moment, in sheer impotence of resentfulness, kicking the empty air with one hind leg and kicking the air repeatedly, a dozen times.

“Those youngsters certainly put Mountain Lad on his mettle,” Dick laughed. “Listen to his song:

“‘Hear me! I am Eros. I stamp upon the hills. I fill the wide valleys. The mares hear me, and startle, in quiet pastures; for they know me. The land is filled with fatness, and the sap is in the trees. It is the spring. The spring is mine. I am monarch of my kingdom of the spring. The mares remember my voice. They knew me aforetime through their mothers before them. Hear me! I am Eros. I stamp upon the hills, and the wide valleys are my heralds, echoing the sound of my approach.’“

CHAPTER XIX

After Mrs. Tully's departure, Paula, true to her threat, filled the house with guests. She seemed to have remembered all who had been waiting an invitation, and the limousine that met the trains eight miles away was rarely empty coming or going. There were more singers and musicians and artist folk, and bevies of young girls with their inevitable followings of young men, while mammas and aunts and chaperons seemed to clutter all the ways of the Big House and to fill a couple of motor cars when picnics took place.

And Graham wondered if this surrounding of herself by many people was not deliberate on Paula's part. As for himself, he definitely abandoned work on his book, and joined in the before-breakfast swims of the hardier younger folk, in the morning rides over the ranch, and in whatever fun was afoot indoors and out.

Late hours and early were kept; and one night, Dick, who adhered to his routine and never appeared to his guests before midday, made a night of it at poker in the stag-room. Graham had sat in, and felt well repaid when, at dawn, the players received an unexpected visit from Paula — herself past one of her white nights, she said, although no sign of it showed on her fresh skin and color. Graham had to struggle to keep his eyes from straying too frequently to her as she mixed golden fizzes to rejuvenate the wan-eyed, jaded players. Then she made them start the round of "jacks" that closed the game, and sent them off for a cold swim before breakfast and the day's work or frolic.

Never was Paula alone. Graham could only join in the groups that were always about her. Although the young people ragged and tangoed incessantly, she rarely danced, and then it was with the young men. Once, however, she favored him with an old-fashioned waltz. "Your ancestors in an antediluvian dance," she mocked the young people, as she stepped out; for she and Graham had the floor to themselves.

Once down the length of the room, the two were in full accord. Paula, with the sympathy Graham recognized that made her the exceptional accompanist or rider, subdued herself to the masterful art of the man, until the two were as parts of a sentient machine that operated without jar or friction. After several minutes, finding their perfect mutual step and pace, and Graham feeling the absolute giving of Paula to the dance, they essayed rhythmical pauses and dips, their feet never leaving the floor, yet affecting the onlookers in the way Dick voiced it when he cried out: “They float! They float!” The music was the “Waltz of Salomé,” and with its slow-fading end they postured slower and slower to a perfect close.

There was no need to speak. In silence, without a glance at each other, they returned to the company where Dick was proclaiming:

“Well, younglings, codlings, and other fry, that’s the way we old folks used to dance. I’m not saying anything against the new dances, mind you. They’re all right and dandy fine. But just the same it wouldn’t injure you much to learn to waltz properly. The way you waltz, when you do attempt it, is a scream. We old folks do know a thing or two that is worth while.”

“For instance?” queried one of the girls.

“I’ll tell you. I don’t mind the young generation smelling of gasoline the way it does — ”

Cries and protests drowned Dick out for a moment.

“I know I smell of it myself,” he went on. “But you’ve all failed to learn the good old modes of locomotion. There isn’t a girl of you that Paula can’t walk into the ground. There isn’t a fellow of you that Graham and I can’t walk into a receiving hospital. — Oh, I know you can all crank engines and shift gears to the queen’s taste. But there isn’t one of you that can properly ride a horse — a real horse, in the only way, I mean. As for driving a smart pair of roadsters, it’s a screech. And how many of you husky lads, hell-scooting on the bay in your speed-boats, can take the wheel of an old-time sloop or schooner, without an auxiliary, and get out of your own way in her?”

“But we get there just the same,” the same girl retorted.

“And I don’t deny it,” Dick answered. “But you are not always pretty.
I’ll tell you a pretty sight that no one of you can ever present —
Paula, there, with the reins of four slashing horses in her hands, her
foot on the brake, swinging tally-ho along a mountain road.”

On a warm morning, in the cool arcade of the great patio, a chance group of four or five, among whom was Paula, formed about Graham, who had been reading alone. After a time he returned to his magazine with such absorption that he forgot those about him until an awareness of silence penetrated to his consciousness. He looked up. All the others save Paula had strayed off. He could hear their distant laughter from across the patio. But Paula! He surprised the look on her face, in her eyes. It was a look bent on him, concerning him. Doubt, speculation, almost fear, were in her eyes; and yet, in that swift instant, he had time to note that it was a look deep and searching — almost, his quick fancy prompted, the look of one peering into the just-opened book of fate. Her eyes fluttered and fell, and the color increased in her cheeks in an unmistakable blush. Twice her lips moved to the verge of speech; yet, caught so arrantly in the act, she was unable to phrase any passing thought. Graham saved the painful situation by saying casually:

"Do you know, I've just been reading De Vries' eulogy of Luther Burbank's work, and it seems to me that Dick is to the domestic animal world what Burbank is to the domestic vegetable world. You are life-makers here — thumbing the stuff into new forms of utility and beauty."

Paula, by this time herself again, laughed and accepted the compliment.

"I fear me," Graham continued with easy seriousness, "as I watch your achievements, that I can only look back on a misspent life. Why didn't I get in and make things? I'm horribly envious of both of you."

"We are responsible for a dreadful lot of creatures being born," she said. "It makes one breathless to think of the responsibility."

"The ranch certainly spells fecundity," Graham smiled. "I never before was so impressed with the flowering and fruiting of life. Everything here prospers and multiplies — "

"Oh!" Paula cried, breaking in with a sudden thought. "Some day I'll show you my goldfish. I breed them, too — yea, and commercially. I supply the San Francisco dealers with their rarest strains, and I even ship to New York. And, best of all, I actually make money — profits, I mean. Dick's books show it, and he is the most rigid of bookkeepers. There isn't a tack-hammer on the place that isn't inventoried; nor a horse-shoe nail unaccounted for. That's why he has such a staff of bookkeepers. Why, do you know, calculating every last least item of expense, including average loss of time for colic and lameness, out of fearfully endless columns of figures he has worked the cost of an hour's labor for a draught horse to the third decimal place."

"But your goldfish," Graham suggested, irritated by her constant dwelling on her husband.

"Well, Dick makes his bookkeepers keep track of my goldfish in the same way. I'm charged every hour of any of the ranch or house labor I use on the fish — postage stamps and stationery, too, if you please. I have to pay interest on the plant. He even charges me for the water, just as if he were a city water company and I a householder. And still I net ten per cent., and have netted as high as thirty. But Dick laughs and says when I've deducted the wages of superintendence — my superintendence, he means — that I'll find I am poorly paid or else am operating at a loss; that with my net I couldn't hire so capable a superintendent.

"Just the same, that's why Dick succeeds in his undertakings. Unless it's sheer experiment, he never does anything without knowing precisely, to the last microscopic detail, what it is he is doing."

"He is very sure," Graham observed.

"I never knew a man to be so sure of himself," Paula replied warmly; "and I never knew a man with half the warrant. I know him. He is a genius — but only in the most paradoxical sense. He is a genius because he is so balanced and normal that he hasn't the slightest particle of genius in him. Such men are rarer and greater than geniuses. I like to think of Abraham Lincoln as such a type."

"I must admit I don't quite get you," Graham said.

"Oh, I don't dare to say that Dick is as good, as cosmically good, as Lincoln," she hurried on. "Dick is good, but it is not that. It is in their excessive balance, normality, lack of flare, that they are of the same type. Now I am a genius. For, see, I do things without knowing how I do them. I just do them. I get effects in my music that way. Take my diving. To save my life I couldn't tell how I swan-dive, or jump, or do the turn and a half.

"Dick, on the other hand, can't do anything unless he clearly knows in advance how he is going to do it. He does everything with balance and foresight. He's a general, all-around wonder, without ever having been a particular wonder at any one thing. — Oh, I know him. He's never been a champion or a record-breaker in any line of athletics. Nor has he been mediocre in any line. And so with everything else, mentally, intellectually. He is an evenly forged chain. He has no massive links, no weak links."

"I'm afraid I'm like you," Graham said, "that commoner and lesser creature, a genius. For I, too, on occasion, flare and do the most unintentional things. And I am not above falling on my knees before mystery."

"And Dick hates mystery — or it would seem he does. Not content with knowing how — he is eternally seeking the why of the how. Mystery is a challenge to him. It excites him like a red rag does a bull. At once he is for ripping the husks and the heart from mystery, so that he will know the how and the why, when it will be no longer mystery but a generalization and a scientifically demonstrable fact."

Much of the growing situation was veiled to the three figures of it. Graham did not know of Paula's desperate efforts to cling close to her husband, who, himself desperately busy with his thousand plans and projects, was seeing less and less of his company. He always appeared at lunch, but it was a rare afternoon when he could go out with his guests. Paula did know, from the multiplicity of long, code telegrams from Mexico, that things were in a parlous state with the Harvest Group. Also, she saw the agents and emissaries of foreign investors in Mexico, always in haste and often inopportune, arriving at the ranch to confer with Dick. Beyond his complaint that they ate the heart out of his time, he gave her no clew to the matters discussed.

"My! I wish you weren't so busy," she sighed in his arms, on his knees, one fortunate morning, when, at eleven o'clock, she had caught him alone.

It was true, she had interrupted the dictation of a letter into the phonograph; and the sigh had been evoked by the warning cough of Bonbright, whom she saw entering with more telegrams in his hand.

"Won't you let me drive you this afternoon, behind Duddy and Fuddy, just you and me, and cut the crowd?" she begged.

He shook his head and smiled.

"You'll meet at lunch a weird combination," he explained. "Nobody else needs to know, but I'll tell you." He lowered his voice, while Bonbright discreetly occupied himself at the filing cabinets. "They're Tampico oil folk. Samuels himself, President of the Nacisco; and Wishaar, the big inside man of the Pearson-Brooks crowd — the chap that engineered the purchase of the East Coast railroad and the Tiuana Central when they tried to put the Nacisco out of business; and Matthewson — he's the hi-yu-skookum big chief this side the Atlantic of the Palmerston interests — you know, the English crowd that fought the Nacisco and the Pearson-Brooks bunch so hard; and, oh, there'll be several others. It shows you that things are rickety down Mexico way when such a bunch stops scrapping and gets together.

"You see, they are oil, and I'm important in my way down there, and they want me to swing the mining interests in with the oil. Truly, big things are in the air, and we've got to hang together and do something or get out of Mexico. And I'll admit, after they gave me the turn-down in the trouble three years ago, that I've sulked in my tent and made them come to see me."

He caressed her and called her his armful of dearest woman, although she detected his eye roving impatiently to the phonograph with its unfinished letter.

"And so," he concluded, with a pressure of his arms about her that seemed to hint that her moment with him was over and she must go, "that means the afternoon. None will stop over. And they'll be off and away before dinner."

She slipped off his knees and out of his arms with unusual abruptness, and stood straight up before him, her eyes flashing, her cheeks white, her face set with determination, as if about to say something of grave importance. But a bell tinkled softly, and he reached for the desk telephone.

Paula drooped, and sighed inaudibly, and, as she went down the room and out the door, and as Bonbright stepped eagerly forward with the telegrams, she could hear the beginning of her husband's conversation:

"No. It is impossible. He's got to come through, or I'll put him out of business. That gentleman's agreement is all poppycock. If it were only that, of course he could break it. But I've got some mighty interesting correspondence that he's forgotten about…. Yes, yes; it will clinch it in any court of law. I'll have the file in your office by five this afternoon. And tell him, for me, that if he tries to put through this trick, I'll break him. I'll put a competing line on, and his steamboats will be in the receiver's hands inside a year…. And… hello, are you there?… And just look up that point I suggested. I am rather convinced you'll find the Interstate Commerce has got him on two counts…."

Nor did Graham, nor even Paula, imagine that Dick — the keen one, the deep one, who could see and sense things yet to occur and out of intangible nuances and glimmerings build shrewd speculations and hypotheses that subsequent events often proved correct — was already sensing what had not happened but what might happen. He had not heard Paula's brief significant words at the hitching post; nor had he seen Graham catch her in that deep scrutiny of him under the arcade. Dick had heard nothing, seen little, but sensed much; and, even in advance of Paula, had he apprehended in vague ways what she afterward had come to apprehend.

The most tangible thing he had to build on was the night, immersed in bridge, when he had not been unaware of the abrupt leaving of the piano after the singing of the "Gypsy Trail"; nor when, in careless smiling greeting of them when they came down the room to devil him over his losing, had he failed to receive a hint or feeling of something unusual in Paula's roguish teasing face. On the moment, laughing retorts, giving as good as she sent, Dick's own laughing eyes had swept over Graham beside her and likewise detected the unusual. The man was overstrung, had been Dick's mental note at the time. But why should he be overstrung? Was there any connection between his overstrungness and the sudden desertion by Paula of the piano? And all the while these questions were slipping through his thoughts, he had laughed at their sallies, dealt, sorted his hand, and won the bid on no trumps.

Yet to himself he had continued to discount as absurd and preposterous the possibility of his vague apprehension ever being realized. It was a chance guess, a silly speculation, based upon the most trivial data, he sagely concluded. It merely connoted the attractiveness of his wife and of his friend. But — and on occasional moments he could not will the thought from coming uppermost in his mind — why had they broken off from singing that evening? Why had he received the feeling that there was something unusual about it? Why had Graham been overstrung?

* * * * *

Nor did Bonbright, one morning, taking dictation of a telegram in the last hour before noon, know that Dick's casual sauntering to the window, still dictating, had been caused by the faint sound of hoofs on the driveway. It was not the first of recent mornings that Dick had so sauntered to the window, to glance out with apparent absentness at the rush of the morning riding party in the last dash home to the hitching rails. But he knew, on this morning, before the first figures came in sight whose those figures would be.

"Braxton is safe," he went on with the dictation without change of tone, his eyes on the road where the riders must first come into view. "If things break he can get out across the mountains into Arizona. See Connors immediately. Braxton left Connors complete instructions. Connors to-morrow in Washington. Give me fullest details any move — signed."

Up the driveway the Fawn and Altadena clattered neck and neck. Dick had not been disappointed in the figures he expected to see. From the rear, cries and laughter and the sound of many hoofs tokened that the rest of the party was close behind.

“And the next one, Mr. Bonbright, please put in the Harvest code,” Dick went on steadily, while to himself he was commenting that Graham was a passable rider but not an excellent one, and that it would have to be seen to that he was given a heavier horse than Altadena. “It is to Jeremy Braxton. Send it both ways. There is a chance one or the other may get through…”

CHAPTER XX

Once again the tide of guests ebbed from the Big House, and more than one lunch and dinner found only the two men and Paula at the table. On such evenings, while Graham and Dick yarned for their hour before bed, Paula no longer played soft things to herself at the piano, but sat with them doing fine embroidery and listening to the talk.

Both men had much in common, had lived life in somewhat similar ways, and regarded life from the same angles. Their philosophy was harsh rather than sentimental, and both were realists. Paula made a practice of calling them the pair of "Brass Tacks."

"Oh, yes," she laughed to them, "I understand your attitude. You are successes, the pair of you — physical successes, I mean. You have health. You are resistant. You can stand things. You have survived where men less resistant have gone down. You pull through African fevers and bury the other fellows. This poor chap gets pneumonia in Cripple Creek and cashes in before you can get him to sea level. Now why didn't you get pneumonia? Because you were more deserving? Because you had lived more virtuously? Because you were more careful of risks and took more precautions?"

She shook her head.

"No. Because you were luckier — I mean by birth, by possession of constitution and stamina. Why, Dick buried his three mates and two engineers at Guayaquil. Yellow fever. Why didn't the yellow fever germ, or whatever it is, kill Dick? And the same with you, Mr. Broad-shouldered Deep-chested Graham. In this last trip of yours, why didn't you die in the swamps instead of your photographer? Come. Confess. How heavy was he? How broad were his shoulders? How deep his chest? — wide his nostrils? — tough his resistance?"

"He weighed a hundred and thirty-five," Graham admitted ruefully. "But he looked all right and fit at the start. I think I was more surprised than he when he turned up his toes." Graham shook his head. "It wasn't because he was a light weight and small. The small men are usually the toughest, other things being equal. But you've put your finger on the reason just the same. He didn't have the physical stamina, the resistance, — You know what I mean, Dick?"

"In a way it's like the quality of muscle and heart that enables some prizefighters to go the distance — twenty, thirty, forty rounds, say," Dick concurred. "Right now, in San Francisco, there are several hundred youngsters dreaming of success in the ring. I've watched them trying out. All look good, fine-bodied, healthy, fit as fiddles, and young. And their spirits are most willing. And not one in ten of them can last ten rounds. I don't mean they get knocked out. I mean they blow up. Their muscles and their hearts are not made out of first-grade fiber. They simply are not made to move at high speed and tension for ten rounds. And some of them blow up in four or five rounds. And not one in forty can go the twenty-round route, give and take, hammer and tongs, one minute of rest to three of fight, for a full hour of fighting. And the lad who can last forty rounds is one in ten thousand — lads like Nelson, Gans, and Wolgast.

"You understand the point I am making," Paula took up. "Here are the pair of you. Neither will see forty again. You're a pair of hard-bitten sinners. You've gone through hardship and exposure that dropped others all along the way. You've had your fun and folly. You've roughed and rowdied over the world — "

"Played the wild ass," Graham laughed in.

"And drunk deep," Paula added. "Why, even alcohol hasn't burned you. You were too tough. You put the other fellows under the table, or into the hospital or the grave, and went your gorgeous way, a song on your lips, with tissues uncorroded, and without even the morning-after headache. And the point is that you are successes. Your muscles are blond-beast muscles, your vital organs are blond-beast organs. And from all this emanates your blond-beast philosophy. That's why you are brass tacks, and preach realism, and practice realism, shouldering and shoving and walking over lesser and unluckier creatures, who don't dare talk back, who, like Dick's prizefighting boys, would blow up in the first round if they resorted to the arbitrament of force."

Dick whistled a long note of mock dismay.

"And that's why you preach the gospel of the strong," Paula went on. "If you had been weaklings, you'd have preached the gospel of the weak and turned the other cheek. But you — you pair of big-muscled giants — when you are struck, being what you are, you don't turn the other cheek — "

"No," Dick interrupted quietly. "We immediately roar, 'Knock his block off!' and then do it. — She's got us, Evan, hip and thigh. Philosophy, like religion, is what the man is, and is by him made in his own image."

And while the talk led over the world, Paula sewed on, her eyes filled with the picture of the two big men, admiring, wondering, pondering, without the surety of self that was theirs, aware of a slipping and giving of convictions so long accepted that they had seemed part of her.

Later in the evening she gave voice to her trouble.

"The strangest part of it," she said, taking up a remark Dick had just made, "is that too much philosophizing about life gets one worse than nowhere. A philosophic atmosphere is confusing — at least to a woman. One hears so much about everything, and against everything, that nothing is sure. For instance, Mendenhall's wife is a Lutheran. She hasn't a doubt about anything. All is fixed, ordained, immovable. Star-drifts and ice-ages she knows nothing about, and if she did they would not alter in the least her rules of conduct for men and women in this world and in relation to the next.

"But here, with us, you two pound your brass tacks, Terrence does a Greek dance of epicurean anarchism, Hancock waves the glittering veils of Bergsonian metaphysics, Leo makes solemn obeisance at the altar of Beauty, and Dar Hyal juggles his sophistic blastism to no end save all your applause for his cleverness. Don't you see? The effect is that there is nothing solid in any human judgment. Nothing is right. Nothing is wrong. One is left compassless, rudderless, chartless on a sea of ideas. Shall I do this? Must I refrain from that? Will it be wrong? Is there any virtue in it? Mrs. Mendenhall has her instant answer for every such question. But do the philosophers?"

Paula shook her head.

"No. All they have is ideas. They immediately proceed to talk about it, and talk and talk and talk, and with all their erudition reach no conclusion whatever. And I am just as bad. I listen and listen, and talk and talk, as I am talking now, and remain convictionless. There is no test — "

"But there is," Dick said. "The old, eternal test of truth — Will it work?"

"Ah, now you are pounding your favorite brass tack," Paula smiled. "And Dar Hyal, with a few arm-wavings and word-whirrings, will show that all brass tacks are illusions; and Terrence, that brass tacks are sordid, irrelevant and non-essential things at best; and Hancock, that the overhanging heaven of Bergson is paved with brass tacks, only that they are a much superior article to yours; and Leo, that there is only one brass tack in the universe, and that it is Beauty, and that it isn't brass at all but gold."

* * * * *

"Come on, Red Cloud, go riding this afternoon," Paula asked her husband. "Get the cobwebs out of your brain, and let lawyers and mines and livestock go hang."

"I'd like to, Paul," he answered. "But I can't. I've got to rush in a machine all the way to the Buckeye. Word came in just before lunch. They're in trouble at the dam. There must have been a fault in the under-strata, and too-heavy dynamiting has opened it. In short, what's the good of a good dam when the bottom of the reservoir won't hold water?"

Three hours later, returning from the Buckeye, Dick noted that for the first time Paula and Graham had gone riding together alone.

* * * * *

The Wainwrights and the Coghlans, in two machines, out for a week's trip to the Russian River, rested over for a day at the Big House, and were the cause of Paula's taking out the tally-ho for a picnic into the Los Baños Hills. Starting in the morning, it was impossible for Dick to accompany them, although he left Blake in the thick of dictation to go out and see them off. He assured himself that no detail was amiss in the harnessing and hitching, and reseated the party, insisting on Graham coming forward into the box-seat beside Paula.

"Just must have a reserve of man's strength alongside of Paula in case of need," Dick explained. "I've known a brake-rod to carry away on a down grade somewhat to the inconvenience of the passengers. Some of them broke their necks. And now, to reassure you, with Paula at the helm, I'll sing you a song:

"What can little Paula do?
Why, drive a phaeton and two.
Can little Paula do no more?
Yes, drive a tally-ho and four."

All were in laughter as Paula nodded to the grooms to release the horses' heads, took the feel of the four mouths on her hands, and shortened and slipped the reins to adjustment of four horses into the collars and taut on the traces.

In the babel of parting gibes to Dick, none of the guests was aware of aught else than a bright morning, the promise of a happy day, and a genial host bidding them a merry going. But Paula, despite the keen exhilaration that should have arisen with the handling of four such horses, was oppressed by a vague sadness in which, somehow, Dick's being left behind figured. Through Graham's mind Dick's merry face had flashed a regret of conscience that, instead of being seated there beside this one woman, he should be on train and steamer fleeing to the other side of the world.

But the merriness died on Dick's face the moment he turned on his heel to enter the house. It was a few minutes later than ten when he finished his dictation and Mr. Blake rose to go. He hesitated, then said a trifle apologetically:

"You told me, Mr. Forrest, to remind you of the proofs of your

Shorthorn book. They wired their second hurry-up yesterday."

"I won't be able to tackle it myself," Dick replied. "Will you please correct the typographical, submit the proofs to Mr. Manson for correction of fact — tell him be sure to verify that pedigree of King of Devon — and ship them off."

Until eleven Dick received his managers and foremen. But not for a quarter of an hour after that did he get rid of his show manager, Mr. Pitts, with the tentative make-up of the catalogue for the first annual stock-sale on the ranch. By that time Mr. Bonbright was on hand with his sheaf of telegrams, and the lunch-hour was at hand ere they were cleaned up.

For the first time alone since he had seen the tally-ho off, Dick stepped out on his sleeping porch to the row of barometers and thermometers on the wall. But he had come to consult, not them, but the girl's face that laughed from the round wooden frame beneath them.

"Paula, Paula," he said aloud, "are you surprising yourself and me after all these years? Are you turning madcap at sober middle age?"

He put on leggings and spurs to be ready for riding after lunch, and what his thoughts had been while buckling on the gear he epitomized to the girl in the frame.

"Play the game," he muttered. And then, after a pause, as he turned to go: "A free field and no favor … and no favor."

* * * * *

"Really, if I don't go soon, I'll have to become a pensioner and join the philosophers of the madroño grove," Graham said laughingly to Dick.

It was the time of cocktail assembling, and Paula, in addition to Graham, was the only one of the driving party as yet to put in an appearance.

“If all the philosophers together would just make one book!” Dick demurred. “Good Lord, man, you’ve just got to complete your book here. I got you started and I’ve got to see you through with it.”

Paula’s encouragement to Graham to stay on — mere stereotyped, uninterested phrases — was music to Dick. His heart leapt. After all, might he not be entirely mistaken? For two such mature, wise, middle-aged individuals as Paula and Graham any such foolishness was preposterous and unthinkable. They were not young things with their hearts on their sleeves.

“To the book!” he toasted. He turned to Paula. “A good cocktail,” he praised. “Paul, you excel yourself, and you fail to teach Oh Joy the art. His never quite touch yours. — Yes, another, please.”

CHAPTER XXI

Graham, riding solitary through the redwood canyons among the hills that overlooked the ranch center, was getting acquainted with Selim, the eleven-hundred-pound, coal-black gelding which Dick had furnished him in place of the lighter Altadena. As he rode along, learning the good nature, the roguishness and the dependableness of the animal, Graham hummed the words of the "Gypsy Trail" and allowed them to lead his thoughts. Quite carelessly, foolishly, thinking of bucolic lovers carving their initials on forest trees, he broke a spray of laurel and another of redwood. He had to stand in the stirrups to pluck a long-stemmed, five-fingered fern with which to bind the sprays into a cross. When the patteran was fashioned, he tossed it on the trail before him and noted that Selim passed over without treading upon it. Glancing back, Graham watched it to the next turn of the trail. A good omen, was his thought, that it had not been trampled.

More five-fingered ferns to be had for the reaching, more branches of redwood and laurel brushing his face as he rode, invited him to continue the manufacture of patterans, which he dropped as he fashioned them. An hour later, at the head of the canyon, where he knew the trail over the divide was difficult and stiff, he debated his course and turned back.

Selim warned him by nickering. Came an answering nicker from close at hand. The trail was wide and easy, and Graham put his mount into a fox trot, swung a wide bend, and overtook Paula on the Fawn.

"Hello!" he called. "Hello! Hello!"

She reined in till he was alongside.

"I was just turning back," she said. "Why did you turn back? I thought you were going over the divide to Little Grizzly."

"You knew I was ahead of you?" he asked, admiring the frank, boyish way of her eyes straight-gazing into his.

"Why shouldn't I? I had no doubt at the second patteran."

"Oh, I'd forgotten about them," he laughed guiltily. "Why did you turn back?"

She waited until the Fawn and Selim had stepped over a fallen alder across the trail, so that she could look into Graham's eyes when she answered:

"Because I did not care to follow your trail. — To follow anybody's trail," she quickly amended. "I turned back at the second one."

He failed of a ready answer, and an awkward silence was between them. Both were aware of this awkwardness, due to the known but unspoken things.

"Do you make a practice of dropping patterans?" Paula asked.

"The first I ever left," he replied, with a shake of the head. "But there was such a generous supply of materials it seemed a pity, and, besides, the song was haunting me."

"It was haunting me this morning when I woke up," she said, this time her face straight ahead so that she might avoid a rope of wild grapevine that hung close to her side of the trail.

And Graham, gazing at her face in profile, at her crown of gold-brown hair, at her singing throat, felt the old ache at the heart, the hunger and the yearning. The nearness of her was a provocation. The sight of her, in her fawn-colored silk corduroy, tormented him with a rush of visions of that form of hers — swimming Mountain Lad, swan-diving through forty feet of air, moving down the long room in the dull-blue dress of medieval fashion with the maddening knee-lift of the clinging draperies.

"A penny for them," she interrupted his visioning. His answer was prompt.

"Praise to the Lord for one thing: you haven't once mentioned Dick."

"Do you so dislike him?"

"Be fair," he commanded, almost sternly. "It is because I like him.
Otherwise…"

"What?" she queried.

Her voice was brave, although she looked straight before her at the
Fawn's pricking ears.

"I can't understand why I remain. I should have been gone long ago."

"Why?" she asked, her gaze still on the pricking ears.

"Be fair, be fair," he warned. "You and I scarcely need speech for understanding."

She turned full upon him, her cheeks warming with color, and, without speech, looked at him. Her whip-hand rose quickly, half way, as if to press her breast, and half way paused irresolutely, then dropped down to her side. But her eyes, he saw, were glad and startled. There was no mistake. The startle lay in them, and also the gladness. And he, knowing as it is given some men to know, changed the bridle rein to his other hand, reined close to her, put his arm around her, drew her till the horses rocked, and, knee to knee and lips on lips, kissed his desire to hers. There was no mistake — pressure to pressure, warmth to warmth, and with an elate thrill he felt her breathe against him.

The next moment she had torn herself loose. The blood had left her face. Her eyes were blazing. Her riding-whip rose as if to strike him, then fell on the startled Fawn. Simultaneously she drove in both spurs with such suddenness and force as to fetch a groan and a leap from the mare.

He listened to the soft thuds of hoofs die away along the forest path, himself dizzy in the saddle from the pounding of his blood. When the last hoof-beat had ceased, he half-slipped, half-sank from his saddle to the ground, and sat on a mossy boulder. He was hard hit — harder than he had deemed possible until that one great moment when he had held her in his arms. Well, the die was cast.

He straightened up so abruptly as to alarm Selim, who sprang back the length of his bridle rein and snorted.

What had just occurred had been unpremeditated. It was one of those inevitable things. It had to happen. He had not planned it, although he knew, now, that had he not procrastinated his going, had he not drifted, he could have foreseen it. And now, going could not mend matters. The madness of it, the hell of it and the joy of it, was that no longer was there any doubt. Speech beyond speech, his lips still tingling with the memory of hers, she had told him. He dwelt over that kiss returned, his senses swimming deliciously in the sea of remembrance.

He laid his hand caressingly on the knee that had touched hers, and was grateful with the humility of the true lover. Wonderful it was that so wonderful a woman should love him. This was no girl. This was a woman, knowing her own will and wisdom. And she had breathed quickly in his arms, and her lips had been live to his. He had evoked what he had given, and he had not dreamed, after the years, that he had had so much to give.

He stood up, made as if to mount Selim, who nozzled his shoulder, then paused to debate.

It was no longer a question of going. That was definitely settled. Dick had certain rights, true. But Paula had her rights, and did he have the right to go, after what had happened, unless … unless she went with him? To go now was to kiss and ride away. Surely, since the world of sex decreed that often the same men should love the one woman, and therefore that perfidy should immediately enter into such a triangle — surely, it was the lesser evil to be perfidious to the man than to the woman.

It was a real world, he pondered as he rode slowly along; and Paula, and Dick, and he were real persons in it, were themselves conscious realists who looked the facts of life squarely in the face. This was no affair of priest and code, of other wisdoms and decisions. Of themselves must it be settled. Some one would be hurt. But life was hurt. Success in living was the minimizing of pain. Dick believed that himself, thanks be. The three of them believed it. And it was nothing new under the sun. The countless triangles of the countless generations had all been somehow solved. This, then, would be solved. All human affairs reached some solution.

He shook sober thought from his brain and returned to the bliss of memory, reaching his hand to another caress of his knee, his lips breathing again to the breathing of hers against them. He even reined Selim to a halt in order to gaze at the hollow resting place of his bent arm which she had filled.

Not until dinner did Graham see Paula again, and he found her the very usual Paula. Not even his eye, keen with knowledge, could detect any sign of the day's great happening, nor of the anger that had whitened her face and blazed in her eyes when she half-lifted her whip to strike him. In everything she was the same Little Lady of the Big House. Even when it chanced that her eyes met his, they were serene, untroubled, with no hint of any secret in them. What made the situation easier was the presence of several new guests, women, friends of Dick and her, come for a couple of days.

Next morning, in the music room, he encountered them and Paula at the piano.

"Don't you sing, Mr. Graham?" a Miss Hoffman asked.

She was the editor of a woman's magazine published in San Francisco, Graham had learned.

"Oh, adorably," he assured her. "Don't I, Mrs. Forrest?" he appealed.

"It is quite true," Paula smiled, "if for no other reason that he is kind enough not to drown me quite."

"And nothing remains but to prove our words," he volunteered. "There's a duet we sang the other evening — " He glanced at Paula for a sign. " — Which is particularly good for my kind of singing." Again he gave her a passing glance and received no cue to her will or wish. “The music is in the living room. I’ll go and get it.”

“It’s the ‘Gypsy Trail,’ a bright, catchy thing,” he heard her saying to the others as he passed out.

They did not sing it so recklessly as on that first occasion, and much of the thrill and some of the fire they kept out of their voices; but they sang it more richly, more as the composer had intended it and with less of their own particular interpretation. But Graham was thinking as he sang, and he knew, too, that Paula was thinking, that in their hearts another duet was pulsing all unguessed by the several women who applauded the song’s close.

“You never sang it better, I’ll wager,” he told Paula.

For he had heard a new note in her voice. It had been fuller, rounder, with a generousness of volume that had vindicated that singing throat.

“And now, because I know you don’t know, I’ll tell you what a patteran is,” she was saying….

CHAPTER XXII

“Dick, boy, your position is distinctly Carlylean,” Terrence McFane said in fatherly tones.

The sages of the madrono grove were at table, and, with Paula, Dick and Graham, made up the dinner party of seven.

“Mere naming of one’s position does not settle it, Terrence,” Dick replied. “I know my point is Carlylean, but that does not invalidate it. Hero-worship is a very good thing. I am talking, not as a mere scholastic, but as a practical breeder with whom the application of Mendelian methods is an every-day commonplace.”

“And I am to conclude,” Hancock broke in, “that a Hottentot is as good as a white man?”

“Now the South speaks, Aaron,” Dick retorted with a smile. “Prejudice, not of birth, but of early environment, is too strong for all your philosophy to shake. It is as bad as Herbert Spencer’s handicap of the early influence of the Manchester School.”

“And Spencer is on a par with the Hottentot?” Dar Hyal challenged.

Dick shook his head.

“Let me say this, Hyal. I think I can make it clear. The average Hottentot, or the average Melanesian, is pretty close to being on a par with the average white man. The difference lies in that there are proportionately so many more Hottentots and negroes who are merely average, while there is such a heavy percentage of white men who are not average, who are above average. These are what I called the pace-makers that bring up the speed of their own race average-men. Note that they do not change the nature or develop the intelligence of the average-men. But they give them better equipment, better facilities, enable them to travel a faster collective pace.

“Give an Indian a modern rifle in place of his bow and arrows and he will become a vastly more efficient game-getter. The Indian hunter himself has not changed in the slightest. But his entire Indian race sported so few of the above-average men, that all of them, in ten thousand generations, were unable to equip him with a rifle.”

“Go on, Dick, develop the idea,” Terrence encouraged. “I begin to glimpse your drive, and you’ll soon have Aaron on the run with his race prejudices and silly vanities of superiority.”

“These above-average men,” Dick continued, “these pace-makers, are the inventors, the discoverers, the constructionists, the sporting dominants. A race that sports few such dominants is classified as a lower race, as an inferior race. It still hunts with bows and arrows. It is not equipped. Now the average white man, per se, is just as bestial, just as stupid, just as inelastic, just as stagnative, just as retrogressive, as the average savage. But the average white man has a faster pace. The large number of sporting dominants in his society give him the equipment, the organization, and impose the law.

“What great man, what hero — and by that I mean what sporting dominant — has the Hottentot race produced? The Hawaiian race produced only one — Kamehameha. The negro race in America, at the outside only two, Booker T. Washington and Du Bois — and both with white blood in them….”

Paula feigned a cheerful interest while the exposition went on. She did not appear bored, but to Graham’s sympathetic eyes she seemed inwardly to droop. And in an interval of tilt between Terrence and Hancock, she said in a low voice to Graham:

“Words, words, words, so much and so many of them! I suppose Dick is right — he so nearly always is; but I confess to my old weakness of inability to apply all these floods of words to life — to my life, I mean, to my living, to what I should do, to what I must do.” Her eyes were unfalteringly fixed on his while she spoke, leaving no doubt in his mind to what she referred. “I don’t know what bearing sporting dominants and race-paces have on my life. They show me no right or wrong or way for my particular feet. And now that they’ve started they are liable to talk the rest of the evening….

“Oh, I do understand what they say,” she hastily assured him; “but it doesn’t mean anything to me. Words, words, words — and I want to know what to do, what to do with myself, what to do with you, what to do with Dick.”

But the devil of speech was in Dick Forrest’s tongue, and before Graham could murmur a reply to Paula, Dick was challenging him for data on the subject from the South American tribes among which he had traveled. To look at Dick’s face it would have been unguessed that he was aught but a carefree, happy arguer. Nor did Graham, nor did Paula, Dick's dozen years' wife, dream that his casual careless glances were missing no movement of a hand, no change of position on a chair, no shade of expression on their faces.

What's up? was Dick's secret interrogation. Paula's not herself. She's positively nervous, and all the discussion is responsible. And Graham's off color. His brain isn't working up to mark. He's thinking about something else, rather than about what he is saying. What is that something else?

And the devil of speech behind which Dick hid his secret thoughts impelled him to urge the talk wider and wilder.

"For once I could almost hate the four sages," Paula broke out in an undertone to Graham, who had finished furnishing the required data.

Dick, himself talking, in cool sentences amplifying his thesis, apparently engrossed in his subject, saw Paula make the aside, although no word of it reached his ears, saw her increasing nervousness, saw the silent sympathy of Graham, and wondered what had been the few words she uttered, while to the listening table he was saying:

"Fischer and Speiser are both agreed on the paucity of unit-characters that circulate in the heredity of the lesser races as compared with the immense variety of unit-characters in say the French, or German, or English…."

No one at the table suspected that Dick deliberately dangled the bait of a new trend to the conversation, nor did Leo dream afterward that it was the master-craft and deviltry of Dick rather than his own question that changed the subject when he demanded to know what part the female sporting dominants played in the race.

"Females don't sport, Leo, my lad," Terrence, with a wink to the others, answered him. "Females are conservative. They keep the type true. They fix it and hold it, and are the everlasting clog on the chariot of progress. If it wasn't for the females every blessed mother's son of us would be a sporting dominant. I refer to our distinguished breeder and practical Mendelian whom we have with us this evening to verify my random statements."

"Let us get down first of all to bedrock and find out what we are talking about," Dick was prompt on the uptake. "What is woman?" he demanded with an air of earnestness.

"The ancient Greeks said woman was nature's failure to make a man," Dar Hyal answered, the while the imp of mockery laughed in the corners of his mouth and curled his thin cynical lips derisively.

Leo was shocked. His face flushed. There was pain in his eyes and his lips were trembling as he looked wistful appeal to Dick.

"The half-sex," Hancock gibed. "As if the hand of God had been withdrawn midway in the making, leaving her but a half-soul, a groping soul at best."

"No I no!" the boy cried out. "You must not say such things! — Dick, you know. Tell them, tell them."

"I wish I could," Dick replied. "But this soul discussion is vague as souls themselves. We all know, of our selves, that we often grope, are often lost, and are never so much lost as when we think we know where we are and all about ourselves. What is the personality of a lunatic but a personality a little less, or very much less, coherent than ours? What is the personality of a moron? Of an idiot? Of a feeble-minded child? Of a horse? A dog? A mosquito? A bullfrog? A woodtick? A garden snail? And, Leo, what is your own personality when you sleep and dream? When you are seasick? When you are in love? When you have colic? When you have a cramp in the leg? When you are smitten abruptly with the fear of death? When you are angry? When you are exalted with the sense of the beauty of the world and think you think all inexpressible unutterable thoughts?

"I say think you think intentionally. Did you really think, then your sense of the beauty of the world would not be inexpressible, unutterable. It would be clear, sharp, definite. You could put it into words. Your personality would be clear, sharp, and definite as your thoughts and words. Ergo, Leo, when you deem, in exalted moods, that you are at the summit of existence, in truth you are thrilling, vibrating, dancing a mad orgy of the senses and not knowing a step of the dance or the meaning of the orgy. You don't know yourself. Your soul, your personality, at that moment, is a vague and groping thing. Possibly the bullfrog, inflating himself on the edge of a pond and uttering hoarse croaks through the darkness to a warty mate, possesses also, at that moment, a vague and groping personality.

"No, Leo, personality is too vague for any of our vague personalities to grasp. There are seeming men with the personalities of women. There are plural personalities. There are two-legged human creatures that are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. We, as personalities, float like fog-wisps through glooms and darknesses and light-flashings. It is all fog and mist, and we are all foggy and misty in the thick of the mystery."

"Maybe it's mystification instead of mystery — man-made mystification,"
Paula said.

"There talks the true woman that Leo thinks is not a half-soul," Dick retorted. "The point is, Leo, sex and soul are all interwoven and tangled together, and we know little of one and less of the other."

"But women are beautiful," the boy stammered.

"Oh, ho!" Hancock broke in, his black eyes gleaming wickedly. "So,
Leo, you identify woman with beauty?"

The young poet's lips moved, but he could only nod.

"Very well, then, let us take the testimony of painting, during the last thousand years, as a reflex of economic conditions and political institutions, and by it see how man has molded and daubed woman into the image of his desire, and how she has permitted him — "

"You must stop baiting Leo," Paula interfered, "and be truthful, all of you, and say what you do know or do believe."

"Woman is a very sacred subject," Dar Hyal enunciated solemnly.

"There is the Madonna," Graham suggested, stepping into the breach to
Paula's aid.

"And the cérébrale," Terrence added, winning a nod of approval from
Dar Hyal.

"One at a time," Hancock said. "Let us consider the Madonna-worship, which was a particular woman-worship in relation to the general woman-worship of all women to-day and to which Leo subscribes. Man is a lazy, loafing savage. He dislikes to be pestered. He likes tranquillity, repose. And he finds himself, ever since man began, saddled to a restless, nervous, irritable, hysterical traveling companion, and her name is woman. She has moods, tears, vanities, angers, and moral irresponsibilities. He couldn't destroy her. He had to have her, although she was always spoiling his peace. What was he to do?"

"Trust him to find a way — the cunning rascal," Terrence interjected.

"He made a heavenly image of her," Hancock kept on. "He idealized her good qualities, and put her so far away that her bad qualities couldn't get on his nerves and prevent him from smoking his quiet lazy pipe of peace and meditating upon the stars. And when the ordinary every-day woman tried to pester, he brushed her aside from his thoughts and remembered his heaven-woman, the perfect woman, the bearer of life and custodian of immortality.

"Then came the Reformation. Down went the worship of the Mother. And there was man still saddled to his repose-destroyer. What did he do then?"

"Ah, the rascal," Terrence grinned.

"He said: 'I will make of you a dream and an illusion.' And he did. The Madonna was his heavenly woman, his highest conception of woman. He transferred all his idealized qualities of her to the earthly woman, to every woman, and he has fooled himself into believing in them and in her ever since… like Leo does."

"For an unmarried man you betray an amazing intimacy with the pestiferousness of woman," Dick commented. "Or is it all purely theoretical?" Terrence began to laugh.

"Dick, boy, it's Laura Marholm Aaron's been just reading. He can spout her chapter and verse."

"And with all this talk about woman we have not yet touched the hem of her garment," Graham said, winning a grateful look from Paula and Leo.

"There is love," Leo breathed. "No one has said one word about love."

"And marriage laws, and divorces, and polygamy, and monogamy, and free love," Hancock rattled off.

"And why, Leo," Dar Hyal queried, "is woman, in the game of love, always the pursuer, the huntress?"

"Oh, but she isn't," the boy answered quietly, with an air of superior knowledge. "That is just some of your Shaw nonsense."

"Bravo, Leo," Paula applauded.

"Then Wilde was wrong when he said woman attacks by sudden and strange surrenders?" Dar Hyal asked.

"But don't you see," protested Leo, "all such talk makes woman a monster, a creature of prey." As he turned to Dick, he stole a side glance at Paula and love welled in his eyes. "Is she a creature of prey, Dick?"

"No," Dick answered slowly, with a shake of head, and gentleness was in his voice for sake of what he had just seen in the boy's eyes. "I cannot say that woman is a creature of prey. Nor can I say she is a creature preyed upon. Nor will I say she is a creature of unfaltering joy to man. But I will say that she is a creature of much joy to man — "

"And of much foolishness," Hancock added.

"Of much fine foolishness," Dick gravely amended.

“Let me ask Leo something,” Dar Hyal said. “Leo, why is it that a woman loves the man who beats her?”

“And doesn’t love the man who doesn’t beat her?” Leo countered.

“Precisely.”

“Well, Dar, you are partly right and mostly wrong. — Oh, I have learned about definitions from you fellows. You’ve cunningly left them out of your two propositions. Now I’ll put them in for you. A man who beats a woman he loves is a low type man. A woman who loves the man who beats her is a low type woman. No high type man beats the woman he loves. No high type woman,” and all unconsciously Leo’s eyes roved to Paula, “could love a man who beats her.”

“No, Leo,” Dick said, “I assure you I have never, never beaten Paula.”

“So you see, Dar,” Leo went on with flushing cheeks, “you are wrong.

Paula loves Dick without being beaten.”

With what seemed pleased amusement beaming on his face, Dick turned to Paula as if to ask her silent approval of the lad’s words; but what Dick sought was the effect of the impact of such words under the circumstances he apprehended. In Paula’s eyes he thought he detected a flicker of something he knew not what. Graham’s face he found expressionless insofar as there was no apparent change of the expression of interest that had been there.

“Woman has certainly found her St. George tonight,” Graham complimented. “Leo, you shame me. Here I sit quietly by while you fight three dragons.”

“And such dragons,” Paula joined in. “If they drove O’Hay to drink, what will they do to you, Leo?”

“No knight of love can ever be discomfited by all the dragons in the world,” Dick said. “And the best of it, Leo, is in this case the dragons are more right than you think, and you are more right than they just the same.”

“Here’s a dragon that’s a good dragon, Leo, lad,” Terrence spoke up. “This dragon is going to desert his disreputable companions and come over on your side and be a Saint Terrence. And this Saint Terrence has a lovely question to ask you.”

“Let this dragon roar first,” Hancock interposed. “Leo, by all in love that is sweet and lovely, I ask you: why do lovers, out of jealousy, so often kill the woman they love?”

“Because they are hurt, because they are insane,” came the answer, “and because they have been unfortunate enough to love a woman so low in type that she could be guilty of making them jealous.”

“But, Leo, love will stray,” Dick prompted. “You must give a more sufficient answer.”

“True for Dick,” Terrence supplemented. “And it’s helping you I am to the full stroke of your sword. Love will stray among the highest types, and when it does in steps the green-eyed monster. Suppose the most perfect woman you can imagine should cease to love the man who does not beat her and come to love another man who loves her and will not beat her — what then? All highest types, mind you. Now up with your sword and slash into the dragons.”

“The first man will not kill her nor injure her in any way,” Leo asserted stoutly. “Because if he did he would not be the man you describe. He would not be high type, but low type.”

“You mean, he would get out of the way?” Dick asked, at the same time busying himself with a cigarette so that he might glance at no one’s face.

Leo nodded gravely.

“He would get out of the way, and he would make the way easy for her, and he would be very gentle with her.”

“Let us bring the argument right home,” Hancock said. “We’ll suppose you’re in love with Mrs. Forrest, and Mrs. Forrest is in love with you, and you run away together in the big limousine — ”

“Oh, but I wouldn’t,” the boy blurted out, his cheeks burning.

“Leo, you are not complimentary,” Paula encouraged.

“It’s just supposing, Leo,” Hancock urged.

The boy’s embarrassment was pitiful, and his voice quivered, but he turned bravely to Dick and said:

“That is for Dick to answer.”

“And I’ll answer,” Dick said. “I wouldn’t kill Paula. Nor would I kill you, Leo. That wouldn’t be playing the game. No matter what I felt at heart, I’d say, ‘Bless you, my children.’ But just the same — ” He paused, and the laughter signals in the corners of his eyes advertised a whimsey — ”I’d say to myself that Leo was making a sad mistake. You see, he doesn’t know Paula.”

“She would be for interrupting his meditations on the stars,” Terrence smiled.

"Never, never, Leo, I promise you," Paula exclaimed.

"There do you belie yourself, Mrs. Forrest," Terrence assured her. "In the first place, you couldn't help doing it. Besides, it'd be your bounden duty to do it. And, finally, if I may say so, as somewhat of an authority, when I was a mad young lover of a man, with my heart full of a woman and my eyes full of the stars, 'twas ever the dearest delight to be loved away from them by the woman out of my heart."

"Terrence, if you keep on saying such lovely things," cried Paula,"

I'll run away with both you and Leo in the limousine."

"Hurry the day," said Terrence gallantly. "But leave space among your fripperies for a few books on the stars that Leo and I may be studying in odd moments."

The combat ebbed away from Leo, and Dar Hyal and Hancock beset Dick.

"What do you mean by 'playing the game'?" Dar Hyal asked.

"Just what I said, just what Leo said," Dick answered; and he knew that Paula's boredom and nervousness had been banished for some time and that she was listening with an interest almost eager. "In my way of thinking, and in accord with my temperament, the most horrible spiritual suffering I can imagine would be to kiss a woman who endured my kiss."

"Suppose she fooled you, say for old sake's sake, or through desire not to hurt you, or pity for you?" Hancock propounded.

"It would be, to me, the unforgivable sin," came Dick's reply. "It would not be playing the game — for her. I cannot conceive the fairness, nor the satisfaction, of holding the woman one loves a moment longer than she loves to be held. Leo is very right. The drunken artisan, with his fists, may arouse and keep love alive in the breast of his stupid mate. But the higher human males, the males with some shadow of rationality, some glimmer of spirituality, cannot lay rough hands on love. With Leo, I would make the way easy for the woman, and I would be very gentle with her."

"Then what becomes of your boasted monogamic marriage institution of

Western civilization?" Dar Hyal asked.

And Hancock: "You argue for free love, then?"

"I can only answer with a hackneyed truism," Dick said. "There can be no love that is not free. Always, please, remember the point of view is that of the higher types. And the point of view answers you, Dar. The vast majority of individuals must be held to law and labor by the monogamic institution, or by a stern, rigid marriage institution of some sort. They are unfit for marriage freedom or love freedom. Freedom of love, for them, would be merely license of promiscuity. Only such nations have risen and endured where God and the State have kept the people’s instincts in discipline and order.”

“Then you don’t believe in the marriage laws for say yourself,” Dar Hyal inquired, “while you do believe in them for other men?”

“I believe in them for all men. Children, family, career, society, the State — all these things make marriage, legal marriage, imperative. And by the same token that is why I believe in divorce. Men, all men, and women, all women, are capable of loving more than once, of having the old love die and of finding a new love born. The State cannot control love any more than can a man or a woman. When one falls in love one falls in love, and that’s all he knows about it. There it is — throbbing, sighing, singing, thrilling love. But the State can control license.”

“It is a complicated free love that you stand for,” Hancock criticised. “True, and for the reason that man, living in society, is a most complicated animal.”

“But there are men, lovers, who would die at the loss of their loved one,” Leo surprised the table by his initiative. “They would die if she died, they would die — oh so more quickly — if she lived and loved another.”

“Well, they’ll have to keep on dying as they have always died in the past,” Dick answered grimly. “And no blame attaches anywhere for their deaths. We are so made that our hearts sometimes stray.”

“My heart would never stray,” Leo asserted proudly, unaware that all at the table knew his secret. “I could never love twice, I know.”

“True for you, lad,” Terrence approved. “The voice of all true lovers is in your throat. ‘Tis the absoluteness of love that is its joy — how did Shelley put it? — or was it Keats? — ’All a wonder and a wild delight.’ Sure, a miserable skinflint of a half-baked lover would it be that could dream there was aught in woman form one-thousandth part as sweet, as ravishing and enticing, as glorious and wonderful as his own woman that he could ever love again.”

* * * * *

And as they passed out from the dining room, Dick, continuing the conversation with Dar Hyal, was wondering whether Paula would kiss him good night or slip off to bed from the piano. And Paula, talking to Leo about his latest sonnet which he had shown her, was wondering if she could kiss Dick, and was suddenly greatly desirous to kiss him, she knew not why.

CHAPTER XXIII

There was little talk that same evening after dinner. Paula, singing at the piano, disconcerted Terrence in the midst of an apostrophe on love. He quit a phrase midmost to listen to the something new he heard in her voice, then slid noiselessly across the room to join Leo at full length on the bearskin. Dar Hyal and Hancock likewise abandoned the discussion, each isolating himself in a capacious chair. Graham, seeming least attracted, browsed in a current magazine, but Dick observed that he quickly ceased turning the pages. Nor did Dick fail to catch the new note in Paula's voice and to endeavor to sense its meaning.

When she finished the song the three sages strove to tell her all at the same time that for once she had forgotten herself and sung out as they had always claimed she could. Leo lay without movement or speech, his chin on his two hands, his face transfigured.

"It's all this talk on love," Paula laughed, "and all the lovely thoughts Leo and Terrence … and Dick have put into my head."

Terrence shook his long mop of iron-gray hair.

"Into your heart you'd be meaning," he corrected. "'Tis the very heart and throat of love that are yours this night. And for the first time, dear lady, have I heard the full fair volume that is yours. Never again plaint that your voice is thin. Thick it is, and round it is, as a great rope, a great golden rope for the mooring of argosies in the harbors of the Happy Isles."

"And for that I shall sing you the Gloria," she answered, "to celebrate the slaying of the dragons by Saint Leo, by Saint Terrence … and, of course, by Saint Richard."

Dick, missing nothing of the talk, saved himself from speech by crossing to the concealed sideboard and mixing for himself a Scotch and soda.

While Paula sang the Gloria, he sat on one of the couches, sipping his drink and remembering keenly. Once before he had heard her sing like that — in Paris, during their swift courtship, and directly afterward, during their honeymoon on the All Away.

A little later, using his empty glass in silent invitation to Graham, he mixed highballs for both of them, and, when Graham had finished his, suggested to Paula that she and Graham sing the "Gypsy Trail."

She shook her head and began Das Kraut Ver-gessenheit.

"She was not a true woman, she was a terrible woman," the song's close wrung from Leo. "And he was a true lover. She broke his heart, but still he loved her. He cannot love again because he cannot forget his love for her."

"And now, Red Cloud, the Song of the Acorn," Paula said, smiling over to her husband. "Put down your glass, and be good, and plant the acorns."

Dick lazily hauled himself off the couch and stood up, shaking his head mutinously, as if tossing a mane, and stamping ponderously with his feet in simulation of Mountain Lad.

"I'll have Leo know that he is not the only poet and love-knight on the ranch. Listen to Mountain Lad's song, all wonder and wild delight, Terrence, and more. Mountain Lad doesn't moon about the loved one. He doesn't moon at all. He incarnates love, and rears right up in meeting and tells them so. Listen to him!"

Dick filled the room and shook the air with wild, glad, stallion nickering; and then, with mane-tossing and foot-pawing, chanted:

"Hear me! I am Eros! I stamp upon the hills. I fill the wide valleys. The mares hear me, and startle, in quiet pastures; for they know me. The land is filled with fatness, and the sap is in the trees. It is the spring. The spring is mine. I am monarch of my kingdom of the spring. The mares remember my voice. They knew me aforetimes through their mothers before them. Hear me! I am Eros. I stamp upon the hills, and the wide valleys are my heralds, echoing the sound of my approach."

It was the first time the sages of the madrono grove had heard Dick's song, and they were loud in applause. Hancock took it for a fresh start in the discussion, and was beginning to elaborate a biologic Bergsonian definition of love, when he was stopped by Terrence, who had noticed the pain that swept across Leo's face.

"Go on, please, dear lady," Terrence begged. "And sing of love, only of love; for it is my experience that I meditate best upon the stars to the accompaniment of a woman's voice."

A little later, Oh Joy, entering the room, waited till Paula finished a song, then moved noiselessly to Graham and handed him a telegram. Dick scowled at the interruption.

"Very important — I think," the Chinese explained to him.

"Who took it?" Dick demanded.

"Me — I took it," was the answer. "Night clerk at Eldorado call on telephone. He say important. I take it."

"It is, fairly so," Graham spoke up, having finished reading the message. "Can I get a train out to-night for San Francisco, Dick?"

"Oh Joy, come back a moment," Dick called, looking at his watch. "What train for San Francisco stops at Eldorado?"

"Eleven-ten," came the instant information. "Plenty time. Not too much. I call chauffeur?"

Dick nodded.

"You really must jump out to-night?" he asked Graham.

"Really. It is quite important. Will I have time to pack?"

Dick gave a confirmatory nod to Oh Joy, and said to Graham:

"Just time to throw the needful into a grip." He turned to Oh Joy. "Is Oh My up yet?"

"Yessr."

"Send him to Mr. Graham's room to help, and let me know as soon as the machine is ready. No limousine. Tell Saunders to take the racer."

"One fine big strapping man, that," Terrence commented, after Graham had left the room.

They had gathered about Dick, with the exception of Paula, who remained at the piano, listening.

"One of the few men I'd care to go along with, hell for leather, on a forlorn hope or anything of that sort," Dick said. "He was on the Nethermere when she went ashore at Pango in the '97 hurricane. Pango is just a strip of sand, twelve feet above high water mark, a lot of cocoanuts, and uninhabited. Forty women among the passengers, English officers' wives and such. Graham had a bad arm, big as a leg — snake bite.

"It was a thundering sea. Boats couldn't live. They smashed two and lost both crews. Four sailors volunteered in succession to carry a light line ashore. And each man, in turn, dead at the end of it, was hauled back on board. While they were untying the last one, Graham, with an arm like a leg, stripped for it and went to it. And he did it, although the pounding he got on the sand broke his bad arm and staved in three ribs. But he made the line fast before he quit. In order to haul the hawser ashore, six more volunteered to go in on Evan's line to the beach. Four of them arrived. And only one woman of the forty was lost — she died of heart disease and fright.

"I asked him about it once. He was as bad as an Englishman. All I could get out of the beggar was that the recovery was uneventful. Thought that the salt water, the exercise, and the breaking of the bone had served as counter-irritants and done the arm good."

Oh Joy and Graham entered the room from opposite ends. Dick saw that Graham's first questing glance was for Paula.

"All ready, sir," Oh Joy announced.

Dick prepared to accompany his guest outside to the car; but Paula evidenced her intention of remaining in the house. Graham started over to her to murmur perfunctory regrets and good-by.

And she, warm with what Dick had just told of him, pleasured at the goodly sight of him, dwelling with her eyes on the light, high poise of head, the careless, sun-sanded hair, and the lightness, almost debonaireness, of his carriage despite his weight of body and breadth of shoulders. As he drew near to her, she centered her gaze on the long gray eyes whose hint of drooping lids hinted of boyish sullenness. She waited for the expression of sullenness to vanish as the eyes lighted with the smile she had come to know so well.

What he said was ordinary enough, as were her regrets; but in his eyes, as he held her hand a moment, was the significance which she had unconsciously expected and to which she replied with her own eyes. The same significance was in the pressure of the momentary handclasp. All unpremeditated, she responded to that quick pressure. As he had said, there was little need for speech between them.

As their hands fell apart, she glanced swiftly at Dick; for she had learned much, in their dozen years together, of his flashes of observance, and had come to stand in awe of his almost uncanny powers of guessing facts from nuances, and of linking nuances into conclusions often startling in their thoroughness and correctness. But Dick, his shoulder toward her, laughing over some quip of Hancock, was just turning his laughter-crinkled eyes toward her as he started to accompany Graham.

No, was her thought; surely Dick had seen nothing of the secret little that had been exchanged between them. It had been very little, very quick — a light in the eyes, a muscular quiver of the fingers, and no lingering. How could Dick have seen or sensed? Their eyes had certainly been hidden from Dick, likewise their clasped hands, for Graham's back had been toward him.

Just the same, she wished she had not made that swift glance at Dick. She was conscious of a feeling of guilt, and the thought of it hurt her as she watched the two big men, of a size and blondness, go down the room side by side. Of what had she been guilty? she asked herself. Why should she have anything to hide? Yet she was honest enough to face the fact and accept, without quibble, that she had something to hide. And her cheeks burned at the thought that she was being drifted into deception.

“I won’t be but a couple of days,” Graham was saying as he shook hands with Dick at the car.

Dick saw the square, straight look of his eyes, and recognized the firmness and heartiness of his gripping hand. Graham half began to say something, then did not; and Dick knew he had changed his mind when he said:

“I think, when I get back, that I’ll have to pack.”

“But the book,” Dick protested, inwardly cursing himself for the leap of joy which had been his at the other’s words.

“That’s just why,” Graham answered. “I’ve got to get it finished. It doesn’t seem I can work like you do. The ranch is too alluring. I can’t get down to the book. I sit over it, and sit over it, but the confounded meadowlarks keep echoing in my ears, and I begin to see the fields, and the redwood canyons, and Selim. And after I waste an hour, I give up and ring for Selim. And if it isn’t that, it’s any one of a thousand other enchantments.”

He put his foot on the running-board of the pulsing car and said,

“Well, so long, old man.”

“Come back and make a stab at it,” urged Dick. “If necessary, we’ll frame up a respectable daily grind, and I’ll lock you in every morning until you’ve done it. And if you don’t do your work all day, all day you’ll stay locked in. I’ll make you work. — Got cigarettes? — matches?”

“Right O.”

“Let her go, Saunders,” Dick ordered the chauffeur; and the car seemed to leap out into the darkness from the brilliantly lighted porte cochére.

Back in the house, Dick found Paula playing to the madrono sages, and ensconced himself on the couch to wait and wonder if she would kiss him good night when bedtime came. It was not, he recognized, as if they made a regular schedule of kissing. It had never been like that. Often and often he did not see her until midday, and then in the presence of guests. And often and often, she slipped away to bed early, disturbing no one with a good night kiss to her husband which might well hint to them that their bedtime had come.

No, Dick concluded, whether or not she kissed him on this particular night it would be equally without significance. But still he wondered.

She played on and sang on interminably, until at last he fell asleep. When he awoke he was alone in the room. Paula and the sages had gone out quietly. He looked at his watch. It marked one o’clock. She had played unusually late, he knew; for he knew she had just gone. It was the cessation of music and movement that had awakened him.

And still he wondered. Often he napped there to her playing, and always, when she had finished, she kissed him awake and sent him to bed. But this night she had not. Perhaps, after all, she was coming back. He lay and drowsed and waited. The next time he looked at his watch, it was two o’clock. She had not come back.

He turned off the lights, and as he crossed the house, pressed off the hall lights as he went, while the many unimportant little nothings, almost of themselves, ranged themselves into an ordered text of doubt and conjecture that he could not refrain from reading.

On his sleeping porch, glancing at his barometers and thermometers, her laughing face in the round frame caught his eyes, and, standing before it, even bending closer to it, he studied her long.

“Oh, well,” he muttered, as he drew up the bedcovers, propped the pillows behind him and reached for a stack of proofsheets, “whatever it is I’ll have to play it.”

He looked sidewise at her picture.

“But, oh, Little Woman, I wish you wouldn’t,” was the sighed good night.

CHAPTER XXIV

As luck would have it, beyond chance guests for lunch or dinner, the Big House was empty. In vain, on the first and second days, did Dick lay out his work, or defer it, so as to be ready for any suggestion from Paula to go for an afternoon swim or drive.

He noted that she managed always to avoid the possibility of being kissed. From her sleeping porch she called good night to him across the wide patio. In the morning he prepared himself for her eleven o'clock greeting. Mr. Agar and Mr. Pitts, with important matters concerning the forthcoming ranch sale of stock still unsettled, Dick promptly cleared out at the stroke of eleven. Up she was, he knew, for he had heard her singing. As he waited, seated at his desk, for once he was idle. A tray of letters before him continued to need his signature. He remembered this morning pilgrimage of hers had been originated by her, and by her, somewhat persistently, had been kept up. And an adorable thing it was, he decided — that soft call of "Good morning, merry gentleman," and the folding of her kimono-clad figure in his arms.

He remembered, further, that he had often cut that little visit short, conveying the impression to her, even while he clasped her, of how busy he was. And he remembered, more than once, the certain little wistful shadow on her face as she slipped away.

Quarter past eleven, and she had not come. He took down the receiver to telephone the dairy, and in the swift rush of women's conversation, ere he hung up, he caught Paula's voice:

" — Bother Mr. Wade. Bring all the little Wades and come, if only for a couple of days — "

Which was very strange of Paula. She had invariably welcomed the intervals of no guests, when she and he were left alone with each other for a day or for several days. And now she was trying to persuade Mrs. Wade to come down from Sacramento. It would seem that Paula did not wish to be alone with him, and was seeking to protect herself with company.

He smiled as he realized that that morning embrace, now that it was not tendered him, had become suddenly desirable. The thought came to him of taking her away with him on one of their travel-jaunts. That would solve the problem, perhaps. And he would hold her very close to him and draw her closer. Why not an Alaskan hunting trip? She had always wanted to go. Or back to their old sailing grounds in the days of the All Away — the South Seas. Steamers ran direct between San Francisco and Tahiti. In twelve days they could be ashore in Papeete. He wondered if Lavaina still ran her boarding house, and his quick vision caught a picture of Paula and himself at breakfast on Lavaina’s porch in the shade of the mango trees.

He brought his fist down on the desk. No, by God, he was no coward to run away with his wife for fear of any man. And would it be fair to her to take her away possibly from where her desire lay? True, he did not know where her desire lay, nor how far it had gone between her and Graham. Might it not be a spring madness with her that would vanish with the spring? Unfortunately, he decided, in the dozen years of their marriage she had never evidenced any predisposition toward spring madness. She had never given his heart a moment’s doubt. Herself tremendously attractive to men, seeing much of them, receiving their admiration and even court, she had remained always her equable and serene self, Dick Forrest’s wife —

“Good morning, merry gentleman.”

She was peeping in on him, quite naturally from the hall, her eyes and lips smiling to him, blowing him a kiss from her finger tips.

“And good morning, my little haughty moon,” he called back, himself equally his natural self.

And now she would come in, he thought; and he would fold her in his arms, and put her to the test of the kiss.

He opened his arms in invitation. But she did not enter. Instead, she startled, with one hand gathered her kimono at her breast, with the other picked up the trailing skirt as if for flight, at the same time looking apprehensively down the hall. Yet his keen ears had caught no sound. She smiled back at him, blew him another kiss, and was gone.

Ten minutes later he had no ears for Bonbright, who, telegrams in hand, startled him as he sat motionless at his desk, as he had sat, without movement, for ten minutes.

And yet she was happy. Dick knew her too long in all the expressions of her moods not to realize the significance of her singing over the house, in the arcades, and out in the patio. He did not leave his workroom till the stroke of lunch; nor did she, as she sometimes did, come to gather him up on the way. At the lunch gong, from across the patio, he heard her trilling die away into the house in the direction of the dining room.

A Colonel Harrison Stoddard — colonel from younger service in the National Guard, himself a retired merchant prince whose hobby was industrial relations and social unrest — held the table most of the meal upon the extension of the Employers' Liability Act so as to include agricultural laborers. But Paula found a space in which casually to give the news to Dick that she was running away for the afternoon on a jaunt up to Wickenberg to the Masons.

"Of course I don't know when I'll be back — you know what the Masons are. And I don't dare ask you to come, though I'd like you along."

Dick shook his head.

"And so," she continued, "if you're not using Saunders — "

Dick nodded acquiescence.

"I'm using Callahan this afternoon," he explained, on the instant planning his own time now that Paula was out of the question. "I never can make out, Paul, why you prefer Saunders. Callahan is the better driver, and of course the safest."

"Perhaps that's why," she said with a smile. "Safety first means slowest most."

"Just the same I'd back Callahan against Saunders on a speed-track,"

Dick championed.

"Where are you bound?" she asked.

"Oh, to show Colonel Stoddard my one-man and no-horse farm — you know, the automatically cultivated ten-acre stunt I've been frivoling with. A lot of changes have been made that have been waiting a week for me to see tried out. I've been too busy. And after that, I'm going to take him over the colony — what do you think? — five additions the last week."

"I thought the membership was full," Paula said.

"It was, and still is," Dick beamed. "But these are babies. And the least hopeful of the families had the rashness to have twins."

"A lot of wiseacres are shaking their heads over that experiment of yours, and I make free to say that I am merely holding my judgment — you've got to show me by bookkeeping," Colonel Stoddard was saying, immensely pleased at the invitation to be shown over in person.

Dick scarcely heard him, such was the rush of other thoughts. Paula had not mentioned whether Mrs. Wade and the little Wades were coming, much less mentioned that she had invited them. Yet this Dick tried to consider no lapse on her part, for often and often, like himself, she had guests whose arrival was the first he knew of their coming.

It was, however, evident that Mrs. Wade was not coming that day, else Paula would not be running away thirty miles up the valley. That was it, and there was no blinking it. She was running away, and from him. She could not face being alone with him with the consequent perils of intimacy — and perilous, in such circumstances, could have but the significance he feared. And further, she was making the evening sure. She would not be back for dinner, or till long after dinner, it was a safe wager, unless she brought the whole Wickenberg crowd with her. She would be back late enough to expect him to be in bed. Well, he would not disappoint her, he decided grimly, as he replied to Colonel Stoddard:

“The experiment works out splendidly on paper, with decently wide margins for human nature. And there I admit is the doubt and the danger — the human nature. But the only way to test it is to test it, which is what I am doing.”

“It won’t be the first Dick has charged to profit and loss,” Paula said.

“But five thousand acres, all the working capital for two hundred and fifty farmers, and a cash salary of a thousand dollars each a year!” Colonel Stoddard protested. “A few such failures — if it fails — would put a heavy drain on the Harvest.”

“That’s what the Harvest needs,” Dick answered lightly.

Colonel Stoddard looked blank.

“Precisely,” Dick confirmed. “Drainage, you know. The mines are flooded — the Mexican situation.”

It was during the morning of the second day — the day of Graham’s expected return — that Dick, who, by being on horseback at eleven, had avoided a repetition of the hurt of the previous day’s “Good morning, merry gentleman” across the distance of his workroom, encountered Ah Ha in a hall with an armful of fresh-cut lilacs. The house-boy’s way led toward the tower room, but Dick made sure.

“Where are you taking them, Ah Ha?” he asked.

“Mr. Graham’s room — he come to-day.”

Now whose thought was that? Dick pondered. Ah Ha’s? — Oh Joy’s — or Paula’s? He remembered having heard Graham more than once express his fancy for their lilacs.

He deflected his course from the library and strolled out through the flowers near the tower room. Through the open windows of it came Paula's happy humming. Dick pressed his lower lip with tight quickness between his teeth and strolled on.

Some great, as well as many admirable, men and women had occupied that room, and for them Paula had never supervised the flower arrangement, Dick meditated. Oh Joy, himself a master of flowers, usually attended to that, or had his house-staff ably drilled to do it.

Among the telegrams Bonbright handed him, was one from Graham, which Dick read twice, although it was simple and unmomentous, being merely a postponement of his return.

Contrary to custom, Dick did not wait for the second lunch-gong. At the sound of the first he started, for he felt the desire for one of Oh Joy's cocktails — the need of a prod of courage, after the lilacs, to meet Paula. But she was ahead of him. He found her — who rarely drank, and never alone — just placing an empty cocktail glass back on the tray.

So she, too, had needed courage for the meal, was his deduction, as he nodded to Oh Joy and held up one finger.

"Caught you at it!" he reproved gaily. "Secret tippling. The gravest of symptoms. Little I thought, the day I stood up with you, that the wife I was marrying was doomed to fill an alcoholic's grave."

Before she could retort, a young man strolled in whom she and Dick greeted as Mr. Winters, and who also must have a cocktail. Dick tried to believe that it was not relief he sensed in Paula's manner as she greeted the newcomer. He had never seen her quite so cordial to him before, although often enough she had met him. At any rate, there would be three at lunch.

Mr. Winters, an agricultural college graduate and special writer for the Pacific Rural Press, as well as a sort of protégé of Dick, had come for data for an article on California fish-ponds, and Dick mentally arranged his afternoon's program for him.

"Got a telegram from Evan," he told Paula. "Won't be back till the four o'clock day after to-morrow."

"And after all my trouble!" she exclaimed. "Now the lilacs will be wilted and spoiled."

Dick felt a warm glow of pleasure. There spoke his frank, straightforward Paula. No matter what the game was, or its outcome, at least she would play it without the petty deceptions. She had always been that way — too transparent to make a success of deceit.

Nevertheless, he played his own part by a glance of scarcely interested interrogation.

“Why, in Graham’s room,” she explained. “I had the boys bring a big armful and I arranged them all myself. He’s so fond of them, you know.”

Up to the end of lunch, she had made no mention of Mrs. Wade’s coming, and Dick knew definitely she was not coming when Paula queried casually:

“Expecting anybody?”

He shook his head, and asked, “Are you doing anything this afternoon?”

“Haven’t thought about anything,” she answered. “And now I suppose I can’t plan upon you with Mr. Winters to be told all about fish.”

“But you can,” Dick assured her. “I’m turning him over to Mr. Hanley, who’s got the trout counted down to the last egg hatched and who knows all the grandfather bass by name. I’ll tell you what — ” He paused and considered. Then his face lighted as with a sudden idea. “It’s a loafing afternoon. Let’s take the rifles and go potting squirrels. I noticed the other day they’ve become populous on that hill above the Little Meadow.”

But he had not failed to observe the flutter of alarm that shadowed her eyes so swiftly, and that so swiftly was gone as she clapped her hands and was herself.

“But don’t take a rifle for me,” she said.

“If you’d rather not — ” he began gently.

“Oh, I want to go, but I don’t feel up to shooting. I’ll take Le Gallienne’s last book along — it just came in — and read to you in betweenwhiles. Remember, the last time I did that when we went squirreling it was his ‘Quest of the Golden Girl’ I read to you.”

CHAPTER XXV

Paula on the Fawn, and Dick on the Outlaw, rode out from the Big House as nearly side by side as the Outlaw's wicked perversity permitted. The conversation she permitted was fragmentary. With tiny ears laid back and teeth exposed, she would attempt to evade Dick's restraint of rein and spur and win to a bite of Paula's leg or the Fawn's sleek flank, and with every defeat the pink flushed and faded in the whites of her eyes. Her restless head-tossing and pitching attempts to rear (thwarted by the martingale) never ceased, save when she pranced and sidled and tried to whirl.

"This is the last year of her," Dick announced. "She's indomitable. I've worked two years on her without the slightest improvement. She knows me, knows my ways, knows I am her master, knows when she has to give in, but is never satisfied. She nourishes the perennial hope that some time she'll catch me napping, and for fear she'll miss that time she never lets any time go by."

"And some time she may catch you," Paula said.

"That's why I'm giving her up. It isn't exactly a strain on me, but soon or late she's bound to get me if there's anything in the law of probability. It may be a million-to-one shot, but heaven alone knows where in the series of the million that fatal one is going to pop up."

"You're a wonder, Red Cloud," Paula smiled.

"Why?"

"You think in statistics and percentages, averages and exceptions. I wonder, when we first met, what particular formula you measured me up by."

"I'll be darned if I did," he laughed back. "There was where all signs failed. I didn't have a statistic that applied to you. I merely acknowledged to myself that here was the most wonderful female woman ever born with two good legs, and I knew that I wanted her more than I had ever wanted anything. I just had to have her — "

"And got her," Paula completed for him. "But since, Red Cloud, since.

Surely you've accumulated enough statistics on me."

"A few, quite a few," he admitted. "But I hope never to get the last one — "

He broke off at sound of the unmistakable nicker of Mountain Lad. The stallion appeared, the cowboy on his back, and Dick gazed for a moment at the perfect action of the beast's great swinging trot.

"We've got to get out of this," he warned, as Mountain Lad, at sight of them, broke into a gallop.

Together they pricked their mares, whirled them about, and fled, while from behind they heard the soothing "Whoas" of the rider, the thuds of the heavy hoofs on the roadway, and a wild imperative neigh. The Outlaw answered, and the Fawn was but a moment behind her. From the commotion they knew Mountain Lad was getting tempestuous.

Leaning to the curve, they swept into a cross-road and in fifty paces pulled up, where they waited till the danger was past.

"He's never really injured anybody yet," Paula said, as they started back.

"Except when he casually stepped on Cowley's toes. You remember he was laid up in bed for a month," Dick reminded her, straightening out the Outlaw from a sidle and with a flicker of glance catching the strange look with which Paula was regarding him.

There was question in it, he could see, and love in it, and fear — yes, almost fear, or at least apprehension that bordered on dismay; but, most of all, a seeking, a searching, a questioning. Not entirely ungermane to her mood, was his thought, had been that remark of his thinking in statistics.

But he made that he had not seen, whipping out his pad, and, with an interested glance at a culvert they were passing, making a note.

"They missed it," he said. "It should have been repaired a month ago."

"What has become of all those Nevada mustangs?" Paula inquired.

This was a flyer Dick had taken, when a bad season for Nevada pasture had caused mustangs to sell for a song with the alternative of starving to death. He had shipped a trainload down and ranged them in his wilder mountain pastures to the west.

"It's time to break them," he answered. "And I'm thinking of a real old-fashioned rodeo next week. What do you say? Have a barbecue and all the rest, and invite the country side?"

"And then you won't be there," Paula objected.

"I'll take a day off. Is it a go?"

They reined to one side of the road, as she agreed, to pass three farm tractors, all with their trailage of ganged discs and harrows.

“Moving them across to the Rolling Meadows,” he explained. “They pay over horses on the right ground.”

Rising from the home valley, passing through cultivated fields and wooded knolls, they took a road busy with many wagons hauling road-dressing from the rock-crusher they could hear growling and crunching higher up.

“Needs more exercise than I’ve been giving her,” Dick remarked, jerking the Outlaw’s bared teeth away from dangerous proximity to the Fawn’s flank.

“And it’s disgraceful the way I’ve neglected Duddy and Fuddy,” Paula said. “I’ve kept their feed down like a miser, but they’re a lively handful just the same.”

Dick heard her idly, but within forty-eight hours he was to remember with hurt what she had said.

They continued on till the crunch of the rock-crusher died away, penetrated a belt of woodland, crossed a tiny divide where the afternoon sunshine was wine-colored by the manzanita and rose-colored by madronos, and dipped down through a young planting of eucalyptus to the Little Meadow. But before they reached it, they dismounted and tied their horses. Dick took the .22 automatic rifle from his saddle-holster, and with Paula advanced softly to a clump of redwoods on the edge of the meadow. They disposed themselves in the shade and gazed out across the meadow to the steep slope of hill that came down to it a hundred and fifty yards away.

“There they are — three — four of them,” Paula whispered, as her keen eyes picked the squirrels out amongst the young grain.

These were the wary ones, the sports in the direction of infinite caution who had shunned the poisoned grain and steel traps of Dick’s vermin catchers. They were the survivors, each of a score of their fellows not so cautious, themselves fit to repopulate the hillside.

Dick filled the chamber and magazine with tiny cartridges, examined the silencer, and, lying at full length, leaning on his elbow, sighted across the meadow. There was no sound of explosion when he fired, only the click of the mechanism as the bullet was sped, the empty cartridge ejected, a fresh cartridge flipped into the chamber, and the trigger re-cocked. A big, dun-colored squirrel leaped in the air, fell over, and disappeared in the grain. Dick waited, his eye along the rifle and directed toward several holes around which the dry earth showed widely as evidence of the grain which had been destroyed. When the wounded squirrel appeared, scrambling across the exposed ground to safety, the rifle clicked again and he rolled over on his side and lay still.

At the first click, every squirrel but the stricken one, had made into its burrow. Remained nothing to do but wait for their curiosity to master caution. This was the interval Dick had looked forward to. As he lay and scanned the hillside for curious heads to appear, he wondered if Paula would have something to say to him. In trouble she was, but would she keep this trouble to herself? It had never been her way. Always, soon or late, she brought her troubles to him. But, then, he reflected, she had never had a trouble of this nature before. It was just the one thing that she would be least prone to discuss with him. On the other hand, he reasoned, there was her everlasting frankness. He had marveled at it, and joyed in it, all their years together. Was it to fail her now?

So he lay and pondered. She did not speak. She was not restless. He could hear no movement. When he glanced to the side at her he saw her lying on her back, eyes closed, arms outstretched, as if tired.

A small head, the color of the dry soil of its home, peeped from a hole. Dick waited long minutes, until, assured that no danger lurked, the owner of the head stood full up on its hind legs to seek the cause of the previous click that had startled it. Again the rifle clicked.

“Did you get him?” Paula queried, without opening her eyes.

“Yea, and a fat one,” Dick answered. “I stopped a line of generations right there.”

An hour passed. The afternoon sun beat down but was not uncomfortable in the shade. A gentle breeze fanned the young grain into lazy wavelets at times, and stirred the redwood boughs above them. Dick added a third squirrel to the score. Paula’s book lay beside her, but she had not offered to read.

“Anything the matter?” he finally nerved himself to ask.

“No; headache — a beastly little neuralgic hurt across the eyes, that’s all.”

“Too much embroidery,” he teased.

“Not guilty,” was her reply.

All was natural enough in all seeming; but Dick, as he permitted an unusually big squirrel to leave its burrow and crawl a score of feet across the bare earth toward the grain, thought to himself: No, there will be no talk between us this day. Nor will we nestle and kiss lying here in the grass.

His victim was now at the edge of the grain. He pulled trigger. The creature fell over, lay still a moment, then ran in quick awkward fashion toward its hole. Click, click, click, went the mechanism. Puffs of dust leaped from the earth close about the fleeing squirrel, showing the closeness of the misses. Dick fired as rapidly as he could twitch his forefinger on the trigger, so that it was as if he played a stream of lead from a hose.

He had nearly finished refilling the magazine when Paula spoke.

“My! What a fusillade. — Get him?”

“Yea, grandfather of all squirrels, a mighty graineater and destroyer of sustenance for young calves. But nine long smokeless cartridges on one squirrel doesn’t pay. I’ll have to do better.”

The sun dropped lower. The breeze died out. Dick managed another squirrel and sadly watched the hillside for more. He had arranged the time and made his bid for confidence. The situation was as grave as he had feared. Graver it might be, for all he knew, for his world was crumbling about him. Old landmarks were shifting their places. He was bewildered, shaken. Had it been any other woman than Paula! He had been so sure. There had been their dozen years to vindicate his surety….

“Five o’clock, sun he get low,” he announced, rising to his feet and preparing to help her up.

“It did me so much good — just resting,” she said, as they started for the horses. “My eyes feel much better. It’s just as well I didn’t try to read to you.”

“And don’t be piggy,” Dick warned, as lightly as if nothing were amiss with him. “Don’t dare steal the tiniest peek into Le Gallienne. You’ve got to share him with me later on. Hold up your hand. — Now, honest to God, Paul.”

“Honest to God,” she obeyed.

“And may jackasses dance on your grandmother’s grave — ”

“And may jackasses dance on my grandmother’s grave,” she solemnly repeated.

The third morning of Graham’s absence, Dick saw to it that he was occupied with his dairy manager when Paula made her eleven o’clock pilgrimage, peeped in upon him, and called her “Good morning, merry gentleman,” from the door. The Masons, arriving in several machines with their boisterous crowd of young people, saved Paula for lunch and the afternoon; and, on her urging, Dick noted, she made the evening safe by holding them over for bridge and dancing.

But the fourth morning, the day of Graham's expected return, Dick was alone in his workroom at eleven. Bending over his desk, signing letters, he heard Paula tiptoe into the room. He did not look up, but while he continued writing his signature he listened with all his soul to the faint, silken swish of her kimono. He knew when she was bending over him, and all but held his breath. But when she had softly kissed his hair and called her "Good morning, merry gentleman," she evaded the hungry sweep of his arm and laughed her way out. What affected him as strongly as the disappointment was the happiness he had seen in her face. She, who so poorly masked her moods, was bright-eyed and eager as a child. And it was on this afternoon that Graham was expected, Dick could not escape making the connection.

He did not care to ascertain if she had replenished the lilacs in the tower room, and, at lunch, which was shared with three farm college students from Davis, he found himself forced to extemporize a busy afternoon for himself when Paula tentatively suggested that she would drive Graham up from Eldorado.

"Drive?" Dick asked.

"Duddy and Fuddy," she explained. "They're all on edge, and I just feel like exercising them and myself. Of course, if you'll share the exercise, we'll drive anywhere you say, and let him come up in the machine."

Dick strove not to think there was anxiety in her manner while she waited for him to accept or decline her invitation.

"Poor Duddy and Fuddy would be in the happy hunting grounds if they had to cover my ground this afternoon," he laughed, at the same time mapping his program. "Between now and dinner I've got to do a hundred and twenty miles. I'm taking the racer, and it's going to be some dust and bump and only an occasional low place. I haven't the heart to ask you along. You go on and take it out of Duddy and Fuddy."

Paula sighed, but so poor an actress was she that in the sigh, intended for him as a customary reluctant yielding of his company, he could not fail to detect the relief at his decision.

"Whither away?" she asked brightly, and again he noticed the color in her face, the happiness, and the brilliance of her eyes.

"Oh, I'm shooting away down the river to the dredging work — Carlson insists I must advise him — and then up in to Sacramento, running over the Teal Slough land on the way, to see Wing Fo Wong."

"And in heaven's name who is this Wing Fo Wong?" she laughingly queried, "that you must trot and see him?"

"A very important personage, my dear. Worth all of two millions — made in potatoes and asparagus down in the Delta country. I'm leasing three hundred acres of the Teal Slough land to him." Dick addressed himself to the farm students. "That land lies just out of Sacramento on the west side of the river. It's a good example of the land famine that is surely coming. It was tule swamp when I bought it, and I was well laughed at by the old-timers. I even had to buy out a dozen hunting preserves. It averaged me eighteen dollars an acre, and not so many years ago either.

"You know the tule swamps. Worthless, save for ducks and low-water pasturage. It cost over three hundred an acre to dredge and drain and to pay my quota of the river reclamation work. And on what basis of value do you think I am making a ten years' lease to old Wing Fo Wong? TWO thousand an acre. I couldn't net more than that if I truck-farmed it myself. Those Chinese are wizards with vegetables, and gluttons for work. No eight hours for them. It's eighteen hours. The last coolie is a partner with a microscopic share. That's the way Wing Fo Wong gets around the eight hour law."

* * * * *

Twice warned and once arrested, was Dick through the long afternoon. He drove alone, and though he drove with speed he drove with safety. Accidents, for which he personally might be responsible, were things he did not tolerate. And they never occurred. That same sureness and definiteness of adjustment with which, without fumbling or approximating, he picked up a pencil or reached for a door-knob, was his in the more complicated adjustments, with which, as instance, he drove a high-powered machine at high speed over busy country roads.

But drive as he would, transact business as he would, at high pressure with Carlson and Wing Fo Wong, continually, in the middle ground of his consciousness, persisted the thought that Paula had gone out of her way and done the most unusual in driving Graham the long eight miles from Eldorado to the ranch.

"Phew!" he started to mutter a thought aloud, then suspended utterance and thought as he jumped the racer from forty-five to seventy miles an hour, swept past to the left of a horse and buggy going in the same direction, and slanted back to the right side of the road with margin to spare but seemingly under the nose of a run-about coming from the opposite direction. He reduced his speed to fifty and took up his thought:

"Phew! Imagine little Paul's thoughts if I dared that drive with some charming girl!"

He laughed at the fancy as he pictured it, for, most early in their marriage, he had gauged Paula's capacity for quiet jealousy. Never had she made a scene, or dropped a direct remark, or raised a question; but from the first, quietly but unmistakably, she had conveyed the impression of hurt that was hers if he at all unduly attended upon any woman.

He grinned with remembrance of Mrs. Dehameny, the pretty little brunette widow — Paula's friend, not his — who had visited in the long ago in the Big House. Paula had announced that she was not riding that afternoon and, at lunch, had heard him and Mrs. Dehameny arrange to ride into the redwood canyons beyond the grove of the philosophers. And who but Paula, not long after their start, should overtake them and make the party three! He had smiled to himself at the time, and felt immensely tickled with Paula, for neither Mrs. Dehameny nor the ride with her had meant anything to him.

So it was, from the beginning, that he had restricted his attentions to other women. Ever since he had been far more circumspect than Paula. He had even encouraged her, given her a free hand always, had been proud that his wife did attract fine fellows, had been glad that she was glad to be amused or entertained by them. And with reason, he mused. He had been so safe, so sure of her — more so, he acknowledged, than had she any right to be of him. And the dozen years had vindicated his attitude, so that he was as sure of her as he was of the diurnal rotation of the earth. And now, was the form his fancy took, the rotation of the earth was a shaky proposition and old Oom Paul's flat world might be worth considering.

He lifted the gauntlet from his left wrist to snatch a glimpse at his watch, In five minutes Graham would be getting off the train at Eldorado. Dick, himself homeward bound west from Sacramento, was eating up the miles. In a quarter of an hour the train that he identified as having brought Graham, went by. Not until he was well past Eldorado did he overtake Duddy and Fuddy and the trap. Graham sat beside Paula, who was driving.

Dick slowed down as he passed, waved a hello to Graham, and, as he jumped into speed again, called cheerily:

“Sorry I’ve got to give you my dust. I’ll beat you a game of billiards before dinner, Evan, if you ever get in.”

CHAPTER XXVI

"This can't go on. We must do something — at once."

They were in the music room, Paula at the piano, her face turned up to Graham who stood close to her, almost over her.

"You must decide," Graham continued.

Neither face showed happiness in the great thing that had come upon them, now that they considered what they must do.

"But I don't want you to go," Paula urged. "I don't know what I want. You must bear with me. I am not considering myself. I am past considering myself. But I must consider Dick. I must consider you. I… I am so unused to such a situation," she concluded with a wan smile.

"But it must be settled, dear love. Dick is not blind."

"What has there been for him to see?" she demanded. "Nothing, except that one kiss in the canyon, and he couldn't have seen that. Do you think of anything else — I challenge you, sir."

"Would that there were," he met the lighter touch in her mood, then immediately relapsed. "I am mad over you, mad for you. And there I stop. I do not know if you are equally mad. I do not know if you are mad at all."

As he spoke, he dropped his hand to hers on the keys, and she gently withdrew it.

"Don't you see?" he complained. "Yet you wanted me to come back?"

"I wanted you to come back," she acknowledged, with her straight look into his eyes. "I wanted you to come back," she repeated, more softly, as if musing.

"And I'm all at sea," he exclaimed impatiently. "You do love me?"

"I do love you, Evan — you know that. But…" She paused and seemed to be weighing the matter judicially.

"But what?" he commanded. "Go on."

"But I love Dick, too. Isn't it ridiculous?"

He did not respond to her smile, and her eyes delightedly warmed to the boyish sullenness that vexed his own eyes. A thought was hot on his tongue, but he restrained the utterance of it while she wondered what it was, disappointed not to have had it.

"It will work out," she assured him gravely. "It will have to work out somehow. Dick says all things work out. All is change. What is static is dead, and we're not dead, any of us… are we?"

"I don't blame you for loving Dick, for… for continuing to love Dick," he answered impatiently. "And for that matter, I don't see what you find in me compared with him. This is honest. He is a great man to me, and Great Heart is his name — " she rewarded him with a smile and nod of approval. "But if you continue to love Dick, how about me?"

"But I love you, too."

"It can't be," he cried, tearing himself from the piano to make a hasty march across the room and stand contemplating the Keith on the opposite wall as if he had never seen it before.

She waited with a quiet smile, pleasuring in his unruly impetuousness.

"You can't love two men at once," he flung at her.

"Oh, but I do, Evan. That's what I am trying to work out. Only I don't know which I love more. Dick I have known a long time. You… you are a — "

"Recent acquaintance," he broke in, returning to her with the same angry stride.

"Not that, no, not that, Evan. You have made a revelation to me of myself. I love you as much as Dick. I love you more. I — I don't know."

She broke down and buried her face in her hands, permitting his hand to rest tenderly on her shoulder.

"You see it is not easy for me," she went on. "There is so much involved, so much that I cannot understand. You say you are all at sea. Then think of me all at sea and worse confounded. You — oh, why talk about it — you are a man with a man's experiences, with a man's nature. It is all very simple to you. 'She loves me, she loves me not.' But I am tangled, confused. I — and I wasn't born yesterday — have had no experience in loving variously. I have never had affairs. I loved only one man… and now you. You, and this love for you, have broken into a perfect marriage, Evan — "

"I know — " he said.

" — I don't know," she went on. "I must have time, either to work it out myself or to let it work itself out. If it only weren't for Dick…" her voice trailed off pathetically.

Unconsciously, Graham's hand went farther about her shoulder.

"No, no — not yet," she said softly, as softly she removed it, her own lingering caressingly on his a moment ere she released it. "When you touch me, I can't think," she begged. "I — I can't think."

"Then I must go," he threatened, without any sense of threatening. She made a gesture of protest. "The present situation is impossible, unbearable. I feel like a cur, and all the time I know I am not a cur. I hate deception — oh, I can lie with the Pathan, to the Pathan — but I can't deceive a man like Great Heart. I'd prefer going right up to him and saying: 'Dick, I love your wife. She loves me. What are you going to do about it?'"

"Do so," Paula said, fired for the moment.

Graham straightened up with resolution.

"I will. And now."

"No, no," she cried in sudden panic. "You must go away." Again her voice trailed off, as she said, "But I can't let you go."

* * * * *

If Dick had had any reason to doubt his suspicion of the state of Paula's heart, that reason vanished with the return of Graham. He need look nowhere for confirmation save to Paula. She was in a flushed awakening, burgeoning like the full spring all about them, a happier tone in her happy laugh, a richer song in her throat, a warmness of excitement and a continuous energy of action animating her. She was up early and to bed late. She did not conserve herself, but seemed to live on the champagne of her spirits, until Dick wondered if it was because she did not dare allow herself time to think.

He watched her lose flesh, and acknowledged to himself that the one result was to make her look lovelier than ever, to take on an almost spiritual delicacy under her natural vividness of color and charm.

And the Big House ran on in its frictionless, happy, and remorseless way. Dick sometimes speculated how long it would continue so to run on, and recoiled from contemplation of a future in which it might not so run on. As yet, he was confident, no one knew, no one guessed, but himself. But how long could that continue? Not long, he was certain. Paula was not sufficiently the actress. And were she a master at concealment of trivial, sordid detail, yet the new note and flush of her would be beyond the power of any woman to hide.

He knew his Asiatic servants were marvels of discernment — and discretion, he had to add. But there were the women. Women were cats. To the best of them it would be great joy to catch the radiant, unimpeachable Paula as clay as any daughter of Eve. And any chance woman in the house, for a day, or an evening, might glimpse the situation — Paula's situation, at least, for he could not make out Graham's attitude yet. Trust a woman to catch a woman.

But Paula, different in other ways, was different in this. He had never seen her display cattishness, never known her to be on the lookout for other women on the chance of catching them tripping — except in relation to him. And he grinned again at the deliciousness of the affair with Mrs. Dehameney which had been an affair only in Paula's apprehension.

Among other things of wonderment, Dick speculated if Paula wondered if he knew.

And Paula did wonder, and for a time without avail. She could detect no change in his customary ways and moods or treatment of her. He turned off his prodigious amount of work as usual, played as usual, chanted his songs, and was the happy good fellow. She tried to imagine an added sweetness toward her, but vexed herself with the fear that it was imagined.

But it was not for long that she was in doubt. Sometimes in a crowd, at table, in the living room in the evening, or at cards, she would gaze at him through half-veiled lashes when he was unaware, until she was certain she saw the knowledge in his eyes and face. But no hint of this did she give to Graham. His knowing would not help matters. It might even send him away, which she frankly admitted to herself was the last thing she should want to happen.

But when she came to a realization that she was almost certain Dick knew or guessed, she hardened, deliberately dared to play with the fire. If Dick knew — since he knew, she framed it to herself — why did he not speak? He was ever a straight talker. She both desired and feared that he might, until the fear faded and her earnest hope was that he would. He was the one who acted, did things, no matter what they were. She had always depended upon him as the doer. Graham had called the situation a triangle. Well, Dick could solve it. He could solve anything. Then why didn't he?

In the meantime, she persisted in her ardent recklessness, trying not to feel the conscience-pricks of her divided allegiance, refusing to think too deeply, riding the top of the wave of her life — as she assured herself, living, living, living. At times she scarcely knew what she thought, save that she was very proud in having two such men at heel. Pride had always been one of her dominant key-notes — pride of accomplishment, achievement, mastery, as with her music, her appearance, her swimming. It was all one —

to dance, as she well knew, beautifully; to dress with distinction and beauty; to swan-dive, all grace and courage, as few women dared; or, all fragility, to avalanche down the spill-way on the back of Mountain Lad and by the will and steel of her swim the huge beast across the tank.

She was proud, a woman of their own race and type, to watch these two gray-eyed blond men together. She was excited, feverish, but not nervous. Quite coldly, sometimes, she compared the two when they were together, and puzzled to know for which of them she made herself more beautiful, more enticing. Graham she held, and she had held Dick and strove still to hold him.

There was almost a touch of cruelty in the tingles of pride that were hers at thought of these two royal men suffering for her and because of her; for she did not hide from herself the conviction that if Dick knew, or, rather, since he did know, he, too, must be suffering. She assured herself that she was a woman of imagination and purpose in sex matters, and that no part of her attraction toward Graham lay merely in his freshness, newness, difference. And she denied to herself that passion played more than the most minor part. Deep down she was conscious of her own recklessness and madness, and of an end to it all that could not but be dreadful to some one of them or all of them. But she was content willfully to flutter far above such deeps and to refuse to consider their existence. Alone, looking at herself in her mirror, she would shake her head in mock reproof and cry out, “Oh, you huntress! You huntress!” And when she did permit herself to think a little gravely, it was to admit that Shaw and the sages of the madrono grove might be right in their diatribes on the hunting proclivities of women.

She denied Dar Hyal’s statement that woman was nature’s failure to make a man; but again and again came to her Wilde’s, “Woman attacks by sudden and strange surrenders.” Had she so attacked Graham? she asked herself. Sudden and strange, to her, were the surrenders she had already made. Were there to be more? He wanted to go. With her, or without her, he wanted to go. But she held him — how? Was there a tacit promise of surrenders to come? And she would laugh away further consideration, confine herself to the fleeting present, and make her body more beautiful, and mood herself to be more fascinating, and glow with happiness in that she was living, thrilling, as she had never dreamed to live and thrill.

CHAPTER XXVII

But it is not the way for a man and a woman, in propinquity, to maintain a definite, unwavering distance asunder. Imperceptibly Paula and Graham drew closer. From lingering eye-gazings and hand-touchings the way led to permitted caresses, until there was a second clasping in the arms and a second kiss long on the lips. Nor this time did Paula flame in anger. Instead, she commanded:

"You must not go."

"I must not stay," Graham reiterated for the thousandth time. "Oh, I have kissed behind doors, and been guilty of all the rest of the silly rubbish," he complained. "But this is you, and this is Dick."

"It will work out, I tell you, Evan."

"Come with me then and of ourselves work it out. Come now."

She recoiled.

"Remember," Graham encouraged, "what Dick said at dinner the night Leo fought the dragons — that if it were you, Paula, his wife, who ran away, he would say 'Bless you, my children.'"

"And that is just why it is so hard, Evan. He is Great Heart. You named him well. Listen — you watch him now. He is as gentle as he said he would be that night — gentle toward me, I mean. And more. You watch him — "

"He knows? — he has spoken?" Graham broke in.

"He has not spoken, but I am sure he knows, or guesses. You watch him.

He won't compete against you — "

"Compete!"

"Just that. He won't compete. Remember at the rodeo yesterday. He was breaking mustangs when our party arrived, but he never mounted again. Now he is a wonderful horse-breaker. You tried your hand. Frankly, while you did fairly well, you couldn't touch him. But he wouldn't show off against you. That alone would make me certain that he guesses.

"Listen. Of late haven't you noticed that he never questions a statement you make, as he used to question, as he questions every one else. He continues to play billiards with you, because there you best him. He fences and singlesticks with you — there you are even. But he won't box or wrestle with you."

"He can out-box and out-wrestle me," Graham muttered ruefully.

"You watch and you will see what I mean by not competing. He is treating me like a spirited colt, giving me my head to make a mess of things if I want to. Not for the world would he interfere. Oh, trust me, I know him. It is his own code that he is living up to. He could teach the philosophers what applied philosophy is.

"No, no; listen," she rushed over Graham's attempt to interrupt. "I want to tell you more. There is a secret staircase that goes up from the library to Dick's work room. Only he and I use it, and his secretaries. When you arrive at the head of it, you are right in his room, surrounded by shelves of books. I have just come from there. I was going in to see him when I heard voices. Of course it was ranch business, I thought, and they would soon be gone. So I waited. It was ranch business, but it was so interesting, so, what Hancock would call, illuminating, that I remained and eavesdropped. It was illuminating of Dick, I mean.

"It was the wife of one of the workmen Dick had on the carpet. Such things do arise on a large place like this. I wouldn't know the woman if I saw her, and I didn't recognize her name. She was whimpering out her trouble when Dick stopped her. 'Never mind all that,' he said. 'What I want to know is, did you give Smith any encouragement?'

"Smith isn't his name, but he is one of our foremen and has worked eight years for Dick.

"'Oh, no, sir,' I could hear her answer. 'He went out of his way from the first to bother me. I've tried to keep out of his way, always. Besides, my husband's a violent-tempered man, and I did so want him to hold his job here. He's worked nearly a year for you now, and there aren't any complaints, are there? Before that it was irregular work for a long time, and we had real hard times. It wasn't his fault. He ain't a drinking man. He always — '

"'That's all right,' Dick stopped her. 'His work and habits have nothing to do with the matter. Now you are sure you have never encouraged Mr. Smith in any way?' And she was so sure that she talked for ten minutes, detailing the foreman's persedition of her. She had a pleasant voice — one of those sweet, timid, woman's voices, and undoubtedly is quite attractive. It was all I could do to resist peeping. I wanted to see what she looked like.

"'Now this trouble, yesterday morning,' Dick said. 'Was it general? I mean, outside of your husband, and Mr. Smith, was the scene such that those who live around you knew of it?'

"'Yes, sir. You see, he had no right to come into my kitchen. My husband doesn't work under him anyway. And he had his arm around me and was trying to kiss me when my husband came in. My husband has a temper, but he ain't overly strong. Mr. Smith would make two of him. So he pulled a knife, and Mr. Smith got him by the arms, and they fought all over the kitchen. I knew there was murder going to be done and I run out screaming for help. The folks in the other cottages'd heard the racket already. They'd smashed the window and the cook stove, and the place was filled with smoke and ashes when the neighbors dragged them away from each other. I'd done nothing to deserve all that disgrace. You know, sir, the way the women will talk — '

"And Dick hushed her up there, and took all of five minutes more in getting rid of her. Her great fear was that her husband would lose his place. From what Dick told her, I waited. He had made no decision, and I knew the foreman was next on the carpet. In he came. I'd have given the world to see him. But I could only listen.

"Dick jumped right into the thick of it. He described the scene and uproar, and Smith acknowledged that it had been riotous for a while. 'She says she gave you no encouragement,' Dick said next.

"'Then she lies,' said Smith. 'She has that way of looking with her eyes that's an invitation. She looked at me that way from the first. But it was by word-of-mouth invitation that I was in her kitchen yesterday morning. We didn't expect the husband. But she began to struggle when he hove in sight. When she says she gave me no encouragement — '

"'Never mind all that,' Dick stopped him. 'It's not essential.' 'But it is, Mr. Forrest, if I am to clear myself,' Smith insisted.

"'No; it is not essential to the thing you can't clear yourself of,' Dick answered, and I could hear that cold, hard, judicial note come into his voice. Smith could not understand. Dick told him. 'The thing you have been guilty of, Mr. Smith, is the scene, the disturbance, the scandal, the wagging of the women's tongues now going on forty to the minute, the impairment of the discipline and order of the ranch, all of which is boiled down to the one grave thing, the hurt to the ranch efficiency.'

"And still Smith couldn't see. He thought the charge was of violating social morality by pursuing a married woman, and tried to mitigate the offense by showing the woman encouraged him and by pleading: 'And after all, Mr. Forrest, a man is only a man, and I admit she made a fool of me and

I made a fool of myself.' "'Mr. Smith,' Dick said. 'You've worked for me eight years. You've been a foreman six years of that time. I have no complaint against your work. You certainly do know how to handle labor. About your personal morality I don't care a damn. You can be a Mormon or a Turk for all it matters to me. Your private acts are your private acts, and are no concern of mine as long as they do not interfere with your work or my ranch. Any one of my drivers can drink his head off Saturday night, and every Saturday night. That's his business. But the minute he shows a hold-over on Monday morning that is taken out on my horses, that excites them, or injures them, or threatens to injure them, or that decreases in the slightest the work they should perform on Monday, that moment it is my business and the driver goes down the hill.'

"'You, you mean, Mr. Forrest,' Smith stuttered, 'that, that I'm to go down the hill?' 'That is just what I mean, Mr. Smith. You are to go down the hill, not because you climbed over another man's fence — that's your business and his; but because you were guilty of causing a disturbance that is an impairment of ranch efficiency.'

"Do you know, Evan," Paula broke in on her recital, "Dick can nose more human tragedy out of columns of ranch statistics than can the average fiction writer out of the whirl of a great city. Take the milk reports — the individual reports of the milkers — so many pounds of milk, morning and night, from cow so-and-so, so many pounds from cow so-and-so. He doesn't have to know the man. But there is a decrease in the weight of milk. 'Mr. Parkman,' he'll say to the head dairyman, 'is Barchi Peratta married?' 'Yes, sir.' 'Is he having trouble with his wife?' 'Yes, sir.'

"Or it will be: 'Mr. Parkman, Simpkins has the best long-time record of any of our milkers. Now he's slumped. What's up?' Mr. Parkman doesn't know. 'Investigate,' says Dick. 'There's something on his chest. Talk to him like an uncle and find out. We've got to get it off his chest.' And Mr. Parkman finds out. Simpkins' boy; working his way through Stanford University, has elected the joy-ride path and is in jail waiting trial for forgery. Dick put his own lawyers on the case, smoothed it over, got the boy out on probation, and Simpkins' milk reports came back to par. And the best of it is, the boy made good, Dick kept an eye on him, saw him through the college of engineering, and he's now working for Dick on the dredging end, earning a hundred and fifty a month, married, with a future before him, and his father still milks."

“You are right,” Graham murmured sympathetically. “I well named him when I named him Great Heart.”

“I call him my Rock of Ages,” Paula said gratefully. “He is so solid. He stands in any storm. — Oh, you don’t really know him. He is so sure. He stands right up. He’s never taken a cropper in his life. God smiles on him. God has always smiled on him. He’s never been beaten down to his knees… yet. I… I should not care to see that sight. It would be heartbreaking. And, Evan — ” Her hand went out to his in a pleading gesture that merged into a half-caress. “ — I am afraid for him now. That is why I don’t know what to do. It is not for myself that I back and fill and hesitate. If he were ignoble, if he were narrow, if he were weak or had one tiniest shred of meanness, if he had ever been beaten to his knees before, why, my dear, my dear, I should have been gone with you long ago.”

Her eyes filled with sudden moisture. She stilled him with a pressure of her hand, and, to regain herself, she went back to her recital:

“‘Your little finger, Mr. Smith, I consider worth more to me and to the world,’ Dick, told him, ‘than the whole body of this woman’s husband. Here’s the report on him: willing, eager to please, not bright, not strong, an indifferent workman at best. Yet you have to go down the hill, and I am very, very sorry.’

“Oh, yes, there was more. But I’ve given you the main of it. You see Dick’s code there. And he lives his code. He accords latitude to the individual. Whatever the individual may do, so long as it does not hurt the group of individuals in which he lives, is his own affair. He believed Smith had a perfect right to love the woman, and to be loved by her if it came to that. I have heard him always say that love could not be held nor enforced. Truly, did I go with you, he would say, ‘Bless you, my children.’ Though it broke his heart he would say it. Past love, he believes, gives no hold over the present. And every hour of love, I have heard him say, pays for itself, on both sides, quittance in full. He claims there can be no such thing as a love-debt, laughs at the absurdity of love-claims.”

“And I agree with him,” Graham said. “‘You promised to love me always,’ says the jilted one, and then strives to collect as if it were a promissory note for so many dollars. Dollars are dollars, but love lives or dies. When it is dead how can it be collected? We are all agreed, and the way is simple. We love. It is enough. Why delay another minute?”

His fingers strayed along her fingers on the keyboard as he bent to her, first kissing her hair, then slowly turning her face up to his and kissing her willing lips.

"Dick does not love me like you," she said; "not madly, I mean. He has had me so long, I think I have become a habit to him. And often and often, before I knew you, I used to puzzle whether he cared more for the ranch or more for me."

"It is so simple," Graham urged. "All we have to do is to be straightforward. Let us go."

He drew her to her feet and made as if to start.

But she drew away from him suddenly, sat down, and buried her flushed face in her hands.

"You do not understand, Evan. I love Dick. I shall always love him."

"And me?" Graham demanded sharply.

"Oh, without saying," she smiled. "You are the only man, besides Dick, that has ever kissed me this… way, and that I have kissed this way. But I can't make up my mind. The triangle, as you call it, must be solved for me. I can't solve it myself. I compare the two of you, weigh you, measure you. I remember Dick and all our past years. And I consult my heart for you. And I don't know. I don't know. You are a great man, my great lover. But Dick is a greater man than you. You — you are more clay, more — I grope to describe you — more human, I fancy. And that is why I love you more… or at least I think perhaps I do.

"But wait," she resisted him, prisoning his eager hand in hers. "There is more I want to say. I remember Dick and all our past years. But I remember him to-day, as well, and to-morrow. I cannot bear the thought that any man should pity my husband, that you should pity him, and pity him you must when I confess that I love you more. That is why I am not sure. That is why I so quickly take it back and do not know.

"I'd die of shame if through act of mine any man pitied Dick. Truly, I would. Of all things ghastly, I can think of none so ghastly as Dick being pitied. He has never been pitied in his life. He has always been top-dog — bright, light, strong, unassailable. And more, he doesn't deserve pity. And it's my fault… and yours, Evan."

She abruptly thrust Evan's hand away.

"And every act, every permitted touch of you, does make him pitiable. Don't you see how tangled it is for me? And then there is my own pride.

That you should see me disloyal to him in little things, such as this — ” (she caught his hand again and caressed it with soft finger-tips) “ — hurts me in my love for you, diminishes me, must diminish me in your eyes. I shrink from the thought that my disloyalty to him in this I do — ” (she laid his hand against her cheek) “ — gives you reason to pity him and censure me.”

She soothed the impatience of the hand on her cheek, and, almost absently, musingly scrutinizing it without consciously seeing it, turned it over and slowly kissed the palm. The next moment she was drawn to her feet and into his arms.

“There, you see,” was her reproach as she disengaged herself.

* * * * *

“Why do you tell me all this about Dick?” Graham demanded another time, as they walked their horses side by side. “To keep me away? To protect yourself from me?”

Paula nodded, then quickly added, “No, not quite that. Because you know I don’t want to keep you away … too far. I say it because Dick is so much in my mind. For twelve years, you realize, he filled my mind. I say it because … because I think it, I suppose. Think! The situation! You are trespassing on a perfect marriage.”

“I know it,” he answered. “And I do not like the role of trespasser. It is your insistence, instead of going away with me, that I should trespass. And I can’t help it. I think away from you, try to force my thoughts elsewhere. I did half a chapter this morning, and I know it’s rotten and will have to be rewritten. For I can’t succeed in thinking away from you. What is South America and its ethnology compared to you? And when I come near you my arms go about you before I know what I am doing. And, by God, you want them there, you want them there, you know it.”

Paula gathered her reins in signal for a gallop, but first, with a roguish smile, she acknowledged.

“I do want them there, dear trespasser.”

Paula yielded and fought at the same time.

“I love my husband — never forget that,” she would warn Graham, and within the minute be in his arms.

* * * * *

“There are only the three of us for once, thank goodness,” Paula cried, seizing Dick and Graham by the hands and leading them toward Dick’s favorite lounging couch in the big room. “Come, let us sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the deaths of kings. Come, milords, and lordly perishers, and we will talk of Armageddon when the last sun goes down."

She was in a merry mood, and with surprise Dick observed her light a cigarette. He could count on his fingers the cigarettes she had smoked in a dozen years, and then, only under a hostess's provocation to give countenance to some smoking woman guest. Later, when he mixed a highball for himself and Graham, she again surprised him by asking him to mix her a "wee" one.

"This is Scotch," he warned.

"Oh, a very wee one," she insisted, "and then we'll be three good fellows together, winding up the world. And when you've got it all wound up and ready, I'll sing you the song of the Valkyries."

She took more part in the talk than usual, and strove to draw her husband out. Nor was Dick unaware of this, although he yielded and permitted himself to let go full tilt on the theme of the blond sun-perishers.

She is trying to make him compete — was Graham's thought. But Paula scarcely thought of that phase of it, her pleasure consisting in the spectacle of two such splendid men who were hers. They talk of big game hunting, she mused once to herself; but did ever one small woman capture bigger game than this?

She sat cross-legged on the couch, where, by a turn of the head, she could view Graham lounging comfortably in the big chair, or Dick, on his elbow, sprawled among the cushions. And ever, as they talked, her eyes roved from one to the other; and, as they spoke of struggle and battle, always in the cold iron terms of realists, her own thoughts became so colored, until she could look coolly at Dick with no further urge of the pity that had intermittently ached her heart for days.

She was proud of him — a goodly, eye-filling figure of a man to any woman; but she no longer felt sorry for him. They were right. It was a game. The race was to the swift, the battle to the strong. They had run such races, fought such battles. Then why not she? And as she continued to look, that self-query became reiterant.

They were not anchorites, these two men. Liberal-lived they must have been in that past out of which, like mysteries, they had come to her. They had had the days and nights that women were denied — women such as she. As for Dick, beyond all doubt — even had she heard whispers — there had been other women in that wild career of his over the world. Men were men, and they were two such men. She felt a burn of jealousy against those unknown women who must have been, and her heart hardened. They had taken their fun where they found it — Kipling's line ran through her head.

Pity? Why should she pity, any more than she should be pitied? The whole thing was too big, too natural, for pity. They were taking a hand in a big game, and all could not be winners. Playing with the fancy, she wandered on to a consideration of the outcome. Always she had avoided such consideration, but the tiny highball had given her daring. It came to her that she saw doom ahead, doom vague and formless but terrible.

She was brought back to herself by Dick's hand before her eyes and apparently plucking from the empty air the something upon which she steadfastly stared.

"Seeing things?" he teased, as her eyes turned to meet his.

His were laughing, but she glimpsed in them what, despite herself, made her veil her own with her long lashes. He knew. Beyond all possibility of error she knew now that he knew. That was what she had seen in his eyes and what had made her veil her own.

"'Cynthia, Cynthia, I've been a-thinking,'" she gayly hummed to him; and, as he resumed his talk, she reached and took a sip from his part-empty glass.

Let come what would, she asserted to herself, she would play it out. It was all a madness, but it was life, it was living. She had never so lived before, and it was worth it, no matter what inevitable payment must be made in the end. Love? — had she ever really loved Dick as she now felt herself capable of loving? Had she mistaken the fondness of affection for love all these years? Her eyes warmed as they rested on Graham, and she admitted that he had swept her as Dick never had.

Unused to alcohol in such strength, her heart was accelerated; and Dick, with casual glances, noted and knew the cause of the added brilliance, the flushed vividness of cheeks and lips.

He talked less and less, and the discussion of the sun-perishers died of mutual agreement as to its facts. Finally, glancing at his watch, he straightened up, yawned, stretched his arms and announced:

"Bed-time he stop. Head belong this fellow white man too much sleepy along him. — Nightcap, Evan?"

Graham nodded, for both felt the need of a stiffener.

"Mrs. Toper — nightcap?" Dick queried of Paula.

But she shook her head and busied herself at the piano putting away the music, while the men had their drink.

Graham closed down the piano for her, while Dick waited in the doorway, so that when they left he led them by a dozen feet. As they came along, Graham, under her instructions, turned off the lights in the halls. Dick waited where the ways diverged and where Graham would have to say good night on his way to the tower room.

The one remaining light was turned off.

“Oh, not that one, silly,” Dick heard Paula cry out. “We keep it on all night.”

Dick heard nothing, but the dark was fervent to him. He cursed himself for his own past embraces in the dark, for so the wisdom was given him to know the quick embrace that had occurred, ere, the next moment, the light flashed on again.

He found himself lacking the courage to look at their faces as they came toward him. He did not want to see Paula’s frank eyes veiled by her lashes, and he fumbled to light a cigarette while he cudgeled his wits for the wording of an ordinary good night.

“How goes the book? — what chapter?” he called after Graham down his hall, as Paula put her hand in his.

Her hand in his, swinging his, hopping and skipping and all a-chatter in simulation of a little girl with a grown-up, Paula went on with Dick; while he sadly pondered what ruse she had in mind by which to avoid the long-avoided, good night kiss.

Evidently she had not found it when they reached the dividing of the ways that led to her quarters and to his. Still swinging his hand, still buoyantly chattering fun, she continued with him into his workroom. Here he surrendered. He had neither heart nor energy to wait for her to develop whatever she contemplated.

He feigned sudden recollection, deflected her by the hand to his desk, and picked up a letter.

“I’d promised myself to get a reply off on the first machine in the morning,” he explained, as he pressed on the phonograph and began dictating.

For a paragraph she still held his hand. Then he felt the parting pressure of her fingers and her whispered good night.

“Good night, little woman,” he answered mechanically, and continued dictating as if oblivious to her going.

Nor did he cease until he knew she was well out of hearing.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A dozen times that morning, dictating to Blake or indicating answers, Dick had been on the verge of saying to let the rest of the correspondence go.

“Call up Hennessy and Mendenhall,” he told Blake, when, at ten, the latter gathered up his notes and rose to go. “You ought to catch them at the stallion barn. Tell them not to come this morning but to-morrow morning.”

Bonbright entered, prepared to shorthand Dick’s conversations with his managers for the next hour.

“And — oh, Mr. Blake,” Dick called. “Ask Hennessy about Alden Bessie. —

The old mare was pretty bad last night,” he explained to Bonbright.

“Mr. Hanley must see you right away, Mr. Forrest,” Bonbright said, and added, at sight of the irritated drawing up of his employer’s brows, “It’s the piping from Buckeye Dam. Something’s wrong with the plans — a serious mistake, he says.”

Dick surrendered, and for an hour discussed ranch business with his foremen and managers.

Once, in the middle of a hot discussion over sheep-dips with Wardman, he left his desk and paced over to the window. The sound of voices and horses, and of Paula’s laugh, had attracted him.

“Take that Montana report — I’ll send you a copy to-day,” he continued, as he gazed out. “They found the formula didn’t get down to it. It was more a sedative than a germicide. There wasn’t enough kick in it…”

Four horses, bunched, crossed his field of vision. Paula, teasing the pair of them, was between Martinez and Froelig, old friends of Dick, a painter and sculptor respectively, who had arrived on an early train. Graham, on Selim, made the fourth, and was slightly edged toward the rear. So the party went by, but Dick reflected that quickly enough it would resolve itself into two and two.

Shortly after eleven, restless and moody, he wandered out with a cigarette into the big patio, where he smiled grim amusement at the various tell-tale signs of Paula’s neglect of her goldfish. The sight of them suggested her secret patio in whose fountain pools she kept her selected and more gorgeous blooms of fish. Thither he went, through doors without knobs, by ways known only to Paula and the servants.

This had been Dick’s one great gift to Paula. It was love-lavish as only a king of fortune could make it. He had given her a free hand with it, and insisted on her wildest extravagance; and it had been his delight to tease his quondam guardians with the stubs of the checkbook she had used. It bore no relation to the scheme and architecture of the Big House, and, for that matter, so deeply hidden was it that it played no part in jar of line or color. A show-place of show-places, it was not often shown. Outside Paula’s sisters and intimates, on rare occasions some artist was permitted to enter and catch his breath. Graham had heard of its existence, but not even him had she invited to see.

It was round, and small enough to escape giving any cold hint of spaciousness. The Big House was of sturdy concrete, but here was marble in exquisite delicacy. The arches of the encircling arcade were of fretted white marble that had taken on just enough tender green to prevent any glare of reflected light. Palest of pink roses bloomed up the pillars and over the low flat roof they upheld, where Puck-like, humorous, and happy faces took the place of grinning gargoyles. Dick strolled the rosy marble pavement of the arcade and let the beauty of the place slowly steal in upon him and gentle his mood.

The heart and key of the fairy patio was the fountain, consisting of three related shallow basins at different levels, of white marble and delicate as shell. Over these basins rollicked and frolicked life-sized babies wrought from pink marble by no mean hand. Some peered over the edges into lower basins, one reached arms covetously toward the goldfish; one, on his back, laughed at the sky, another stood with dimpled legs apart stretching himself, others waded, others were on the ground amongst the roses white and blush, but all were of the fountain and touched it at some point. So good was the color of the marble, so true had been the sculptor, that the illusion was of life. No cherubs these, but live warm human babies.

Dick regarded the rosy fellowship pleasantly and long, finishing his cigarette and retaining it dead in his hand. That was what she had needed, he mused — babies, children. It had been her passion. Had she realized it… He sighed, and, struck by a fresh thought, looked to her favorite seat with certitude that he would not see the customary sewing lying on it in a pretty heap. She did not sew these days.

He did not enter the tiny gallery behind the arcade, which contained her chosen paintings and etchings, and copies in marble and bronze of her favorites of the European galleries. Instead he went up the stairway, past the glorious Winged Victory on the landing where the staircase divided, and on and up into her quarters that occupied the entire upper wing. But first, pausing by the Victory, he turned and gazed down into the fairy patio. The thing was a cut jewel in its perfectness and color, and he acknowledged, although he had made it possible for her, that it was entirely her own creation — her one masterpiece. It had long been her dream, and he had realized it for her. And yet now, he meditated, it meant nothing to her. She was not mercenary, that he knew; and if he could not hold her, mere baubles such as that would weigh nothing in the balance against her heart.

He wandered idly through her rooms, scarcely noting at what he gazed, but gazing with fondness at it all. Like everything else of hers, it was distinctive, different, eloquent of her. But when he glanced into the bathroom with its sunken Roman bath, for the life of him he was unable to avoid seeing a tiny drip and making a mental note for the ranch plumber.

As a matter of course, he looked to her easel with the expectation of finding no new work, but was disappointed; for a portrait of himself confronted him. He knew her trick of copying the pose and lines from a photograph and filling in from memory. The particular photograph she was using had been a fortunate snapshop of him on horseback. The Outlaw, for once and for a moment, had been at peace, and Dick, hat in hand, hair just nicely rumpled, face in repose, unaware of the impending snap, had at the instant looked squarely into the camera. No portrait photographer could have caught a better likeness. The head and shoulders Paula had had enlarged, and it was from this that she was working. But the portrait had already gone beyond the photograph, for Dick could see her own touches.

With a start he looked more closely. Was that expression of the eyes, of the whole face, his? He glanced at the photograph. It was not there. He walked over to one of the mirrors, relaxed his face, and led his thoughts to Paula and Graham. Slowly the expression came into his eyes and face. Not content, he returned to the easel and verified it. Paula knew. Paula knew that he knew. She had learned it from him, stolen it from him some time when it was unwittingly on his face, and carried it in her memory to the canvas.

Paula's Chinese maid, Oh Dear, entered from the wardrobe room, and Dick watched her unobserved as she came down the room toward him. Her eyes were down, and she seemed deep in thought. Dick remarked the sadness of her face, and that the little, solicitous contraction of the brows that had led to her naming was gone. She was not solicitous, that was patent. But cast down, she was, in heavy depression.

It would seem that all our faces are beginning to say things, he commented to himself.

“Good morning, Oh Dear,” he startled her.

And as she returned the greeting, he saw compassion in her eyes as they dwelt on him. She knew. The first outside themselves. Trust her, a woman, so much in Paula’s company when Paula was alone, to divine Paula’s secret.

Oh Dear’s lips trembled, and she wrung her trembling hands, nerving herself, as he could see, to speech.

“Mister Forrest,” she began haltingly, “maybe you think me fool, but I like say something. You very kind man. You very kind my old mother. You very kind me long long time…”

She hesitated, moistening her frightened lips with her tongue, then braved her eyes to his and proceeded.

“Mrs. Forrest, she, I think…”

But so forbidding did Dick’s face become that she broke off in confusion and blushed, as Dick surmised, with shame at the thoughts she had been about to utter.

“Very nice picture Mrs. Forrest make,” he put her at her ease.

The Chinese girl sighed, and the same compassion returned into her eyes as she looked long at Dick’s portrait.

She sighed again, but the coldness in her voice was not lost on Dick as she answered: “Yes, very nice picture Mrs. Forrest make.”

She looked at him with sudden sharp scrutiny, studying his face, then turned to the canvas and pointed at the eyes.

“No good,” she condemned.

Her voice was harsh, touched with anger.

“No good,” she flung over her shoulder, more loudly, still more harshly, as she continued down the room and out of sight on Paula’s sleeping porch.

Dick stiffened his shoulders, unconsciously bracing himself to face what was now soon to happen. Well, it was the beginning of the end. Oh Dear knew. Soon more would know, all would know. And in a way he was glad of it, glad that the torment of suspense would endure but little longer.

But when he started to leave he whistled a merry jingle to advertise to Oh Dear that the world wagged very well with him so far as he knew anything about it.

* * * * *

The same afternoon, while Dick was out and away with Froelig and Martinez and Graham, Paula stole a pilgrimage to Dick's quarters. Out on his sleeping porch she looked over his rows of press buttons, his switchboard that from his bed connected him with every part of the ranch and most of the rest of California, his phonograph on the hinged and swinging bracket, the orderly array of books and magazines and agricultural bulletins waiting to be read, the ash tray, cigarettes, scribble pads, and thermos bottle.

Her photograph, the only picture on the porch, held her attention. It hung under his barometers and thermometers, which, she knew, was where he looked oftenest. A fancy came to her, and she turned the laughing face to the wall and glanced from the blankness of the back of the frame to the bed and back again. With a quick panic movement, she turned the laughing face out. It belonged, was her thought; it did belong.

The big automatic pistol in the holster on the wall, handy to one's hand from the bed, caught her eye. She reached to it and lifted gently at the butt. It was as she had expected — loose — Dick's way. Trust him, no matter how long unused, never to let a pistol freeze in its holster.

Back in the work room she wandered solemnly about, glancing now at the prodigious filing system, at the chart and blue-print cabinets, at the revolving shelves of reference books, and at the long rows of stoutly bound herd registers. At last she came to his books — a goodly row of pamphlets, bound magazine articles, and an even dozen ambitious tomes. She read the titles painstakingly: "Corn in California," "Silage Practice," "Farm Organization," "Farm Book-keeping," "The Shire in America," "Humus Destruction," "Soilage," "Alfalfa in California," "Cover Crops for California," "The Shorthorn in America" — at this last she smiled affectionately with memory of the great controversy he had waged for the beef cow and the milch cow as against the dual purpose cow.

She caressed, the backs of the books with her palm, pressed her cheek against them and leaned with closed eyes. Oh, Dick, Dick — a thought began that faded to a vagueness of sorrow and died because she did not dare to think it.

The desk was so typically Dick. There was no litter. Clean it was of all work save the wire tray with typed letters waiting his signature and an unusual pile of the flat yellow sheets on which his secretaries typed the telegrams relayed by telephone from Eldorado. Carelessly she ran her eyes over the opening lines of the uppermost sheet and chanced upon a reference that puzzled and interested her. She read closely, with in-drawn brows, then went deeper into the heap till she found confirmation. Jeremy Braxton was dead — big, genial, kindly Jeremy Braxton. A Mexican mob of pulque-crazed peons had killed him in the mountains through which he had been trying to escape from the Harvest into Arizona. The date of the telegram was two days old. Dick had known it for two days and never worried her with it. And it meant more. It meant money. It meant that the affairs of the Harvest Group were going from bad to worse. And it was Dick's way.

And Jeremy was dead. The room seemed suddenly to have grown cold. She shivered. It was the way of life — death always at the end of the road. And her own nameless dread came back upon her. Doom lay ahead. Doom for whom? She did not attempt to guess. Sufficient that it was doom. Her mind was heavy with it, and the quiet room was heavy with it as she passed slowly out.

CHAPTER XXIX

"'Tis a birdlike sensuousness that is all the Little Lady's own,"

Terrence was saying, as he helped himself to a cocktail from the tray

Ah Ha was passing around.

It was the hour before dinner, and Graham, Leo and Terrence McFane had chanced together in the stag-room.

"No, Leo," the Irishman warned the young poet. "Let the one suffice you. Your cheeks are warm with it. A second one and you'll conflagrate. 'Tis no right you have to be mixing beauty and strong drink in that lad's head of yours. Leave the drink to your elders. There is such a thing as consanguinity for drink. You have it not. As for me — "

He emptied the glass and paused to turn the cocktail reminiscently on his tongue.

"'Tis women's drink," he shook his head in condemnation. "It likes me not. It bites me not. And devil a bit of a taste is there to it. — Ah Ha, my boy," he called to the Chinese, "mix me a highball in a long, long glass — a stiff one."

He held up four fingers horizontally to indicate the measure of liquor he would have in the glass, and, to Ah Ha's query as to what kind of whiskey, answered, "Scotch or Irish, bourbon or rye — whichever comes nearest to hand."

Graham shook his head to the Chinese, and laughed to the Irishman. "You'll never drink me down, Terrence. I've not forgotten what you did to O'Hay."

"'Twas an accident I would have you think," was the reply. "They say when a man's not feeling any too fit a bit of drink will hit him like a club."

"And you?" Graham questioned.

"Have never been hit by a club. I am a man of singularly few experiences."

"But, Terrence, you were saying… about Mrs. Forrest?" Leo begged.

"It sounded as if it were going to be nice."

"As if it could be otherwise," Terrence censured. "But as I was saying, 'tis a bird-like sensuousness — oh, not the little, hoppy, wagtail kind, nor yet the sleek and solemn dove, but a merry sort of bird, like the wild canaries you see bathing in the fountains, always twittering and singing, flinging the water in the sun, and glowing the golden hearts of them on their happy breasts. ‘Tis like that the Little Lady is. I have observed her much.

“Everything on the earth and under the earth and in the sky contributes to the passion of her days — the untoward purple of the ground myrtle when it has no right to aught more than pale lavender, a single red rose tossing in the bathing wind, one perfect Duchesse rose bursting from its bush into the sunshine, as she said to me, ‘pink as the dawn, Terrence, and shaped like a kiss.’

“‘Tis all one with her — the Princess’s silver neigh, the sheep bells of a frosty morn, the pretty Angora goats making silky pictures on the hillside all day long, the drifts of purple lupins along the fences, the long hot grass on slope and roadside, the summer-burnt hills tawny as crouching lions — and even have I seen the sheer sensuous pleasure of the Little Lady with bathing her arms and neck in the blessed sun.”

“She is the soul of beauty,” Leo murmured. “One understands how men can die for women such as she.”

“And how men can live for them, and love them, the lovely things,” Terrence added. “Listen, Mr. Graham, and I’ll tell you a secret. We philosophers of the madroño grove, we wrecks and wastages of life here in the quiet backwater and easement of Dick’s munificence, are a brotherhood of lovers. And the lady of our hearts is all the one — the Little Lady. We, who merely talk and dream our days away, and who would lift never a hand for God, or country, or the devil, are pledged knights of the Little Lady.”

“We would die for her,” Leo affirmed, slowly nodding his head.

“Nay, lad, we would live for her and fight for her, dying is that easy.”

Graham missed nothing of it. The boy did not understand, but in the blue eyes of the Celt, peering from under the mop of iron-gray hair, there was no mistaking the knowledge of the situation.

Voices of men were heard coming down the stairs, and, as Martinez and Dar Hyal entered, Terrence was saying:

“‘Tis fine weather they say they’re having down at Catalina now, and I hear the tunny fish are biting splendid.”

Ah Ha served cocktails around, and was kept busy, for Hancock and Froelig followed along. Terrence impartially drank stiff highballs of whatever liquor the immobile-faced Chinese elected to serve him, and discoursed fatherly to Leo on the iniquities and abominations of the flowing bowl.

Oh My entered, a folded note in his hand, and looked about in doubt as to whom to give it.

"Hither, wing-heeled Celestial," Terrence waved him up.

"'Tis a petition, couched in very proper terms," Terrence explained, after a glance at its contents. "And Ernestine and Lute have arrived, for 'tis they that petition. Listen." And he read: "'Oh, noble and glorious stags, two poor and lowly meek-eyed does, wandering lonely in the forest, do humbly entreat admission for the brief time before dinner to the stamping ground of the herd.'

"The metaphor is mixed," said Terrence. "Yet have they acted well. 'Tis the rule — Dick's rule — and a good rule it is: no petticoats in the stag-room save by the stags' unanimous consent. — Is the herd ready for the question? All those in favor will say 'Aye.' — Contrary minded? — The ayes have it.

"Oh My, fleet with thy heels and bring in the ladies."

"'With sandals beaten from the crowns of kings,'" Leo added, murmuring the words reverently, loving them with his lips as his lips formed them and uttered them.

"'Shall he tread down the altars of their night,'" Terrence completed the passage. "The man who wrote that is a great man. He is Leo's friend, and Dick's friend, and proud am I that he is my friend."

"And that other line," Leo said. "From the same sonnet," he explained to Graham. "Listen to the sound of it: 'To hear what song the star of morning sings' — oh, listen," the boy went on, his voice hushed low with beauty-love for the words: "'With perished beauty in his hands as clay, Shall he restore futurity its dream — '"

He broke off as Paula's sisters entered, and rose shyly to greet them.

* * * * *

Dinner that night was as any dinner at which the madroño sages were present. Dick was as robustly controversial as usual, locking horns with Aaron Hancock on Bergson, attacking the latter's metaphysics in sharp realistic fashion.

"Your Bergson is a charlatan philosopher, Aaron," Dick concluded. "He has the same old medicine-man's bag of metaphysical tricks, all decked out and frilled with the latest ascertained facts of science."

"'Tis true," Terrence agreed. "Bergson is a charlatan thinker. 'Tis why he is so popular — "

“I deny — ” Hancock broke in.

“Wait a wee, Aaron. ‘Tis a thought I have glimmered. Let me catch it before it flutters away into the azure. Dick’s caught Bergson with the goods on him, filched straight from the treasure-house of science. His very cocksureness is filched from Darwin’s morality of strength based on the survival of the fittest. And what did Bergson do with it? Touched it up with a bit of James’ pragmatism, rosied it over with the eternal hope in man’s breast that he will live again, and made it all a-shine with Nietzsche’s ‘nothing succeeds like excess — ’“

“Wilde’s, you mean,” corrected Ernestine.

“Heaven knows I should have filched it for myself had you not been present,” Terrence sighed, with a bow to her. “Some day the antiquarians will decide the authorship. Personally I would say it smacked of Methuselah — But as I was saying, before I was delightfully interrupted…”

“Who more cocksure than Dick?” Aaron was challenging a little later; while Paula glanced significantly to Graham.

“I was looking at the herd of yearling stallions but yesterday,” Terrence replied, “and with the picture of the splendid beasties still in my eyes I’ll ask: And who more delivers the goods?”

“But Hancock’s objection is solid,” Martinez ventured. “It would be a mean and profitless world without mystery. Dick sees no mystery.”

“There you wrong him,” Terrence defended. “I know him well. Dick recognizes mystery, but not of the nursery-child variety. No cock-and-bull stories for him, such as you romanticists luxuriate in.”

“Terrence gets me,” Dick nodded. “The world will always be mystery. To me man’s consciousness is no greater mystery than the reaction of the gases that make a simple drop of water. Grant that mystery, and all the more complicated phenomena cease to be mysteries. That simple chemical reaction is like one of the axioms on which the edifice of geometry is reared. Matter and force are the everlasting mysteries, manifesting themselves in the twin mysteries of space and time. The manifestations are not mysteries — only the stuff of the manifestations, matter and force; and the theater of the manifestations, space and time.”

Dick ceased and idly watched the expressionless Ah Ha and Ah Me who chanced at the moment to be serving opposite him. Their faces did not talk, was his thought; although ten to one was a fair bet that they were informed with the same knowledge that had perturbed Oh Dear.

"And there you are," Terrence was triumphing. "'Tis the perfect joy of him — never up in the air with dizzy heels. Flat on the good ground he stands, four square to fact and law, set against all airy fancies and bubbly speculations…."

* * * * *

And as at table, so afterward that evening no one could have guessed from Dick that all was not well with him. He seemed bent on celebrating Lute's and Ernestine's return, refused to tolerate the heavy talk of the philosophers, and bubbled over with pranks and tricks. Paula yielded to the contagion, and aided and abetted him in his practical jokes which none escaped.

Choicest among these was the kiss of welcome. No man escaped it. To Graham was accorded the honor of receiving it first so that he might witness the discomfiture of the others, who, one by one, were ushered in by Dick from the patio.

Hancock, Dick's arm guiding him, came down the room to confront Paula and her sisters standing in a row on three chairs in the middle of the floor. He scanned them suspiciously, and insisted upon walking around behind them. But there seemed nothing unusual about them save that each wore a man's felt hat.

"Looks good to me," Hancock announced, as he stood on the floor before them and looked up at them.

"And it is good," Dick assured him. "As representing the ranch in its fairest aspects, they are to administer the kiss of welcome. Make your choice, Aaron."

Aaron, with a quick whirl to catch some possible lurking disaster at his back, demanded, "They are all three to kiss me?"

"No, make your choice which is to give you the kiss."

"The two I do not choose will not feel that I have discriminated against them?" Aaron insisted.

"Whiskers no objection?" was his next query.

"Not in the way at all," Lute told him. "I have always wondered what it would be like to kiss black whiskers."

"Here's where all the philosophers get kissed tonight, so hurry up," Ernestine said. "The others are waiting. I, too, have yet to be kissed by an alfalfa field."

"Whom do you choose?" Dick urged.

"As if, after that, there were any choice about it," Hancock returned jauntily. "I kiss my lady — the Little Lady."

As he put up his lips, Paula bent her head forward, and, nicely directed, from the indented crown of her hat canted a glassful of water into his face.

When Leo's turn came, he bravely made his choice of Paula and nearly spoiled the show by reverently bending and kissing the hem of her gown.

"It will never do," Ernestine told him. "It must be a real kiss. Put up your lips to be kissed."

"Let the last be first and kiss me, Leo," Lute begged, to save him from his embarrassment.

He looked his gratitude, put up his lips, but without enough tilt of his head, so that he received the water from Lute's hat down the back of his neck.

"All three shall kiss me and thus shall paradise be thrice multiplied," was Terrence's way out of the difficulty; and simultaneously he received three crowns of water for his gallantry.

Dick's boisterousness waxed apace. His was the most care-free seeming in the world as he measured Froelig and Martinez against the door to settle the dispute that had arisen as to whether Froelig or Martinez was the taller.

"Knees straight and together, heads back," Dick commanded.

And as their heads touched the wood, from the other side came a rousing thump that jarred them. The door swung open, revealing Ernestine with a padded gong-stick in either hand.

Dick, a high-heeled satin slipper in his hand, was under a sheet with Terrence, teaching him "Brother Bob I'm bobbed" to the uproarious joy of the others, when the Masons and Watsons and all their Wickenberg following entered upon the scene.

Whereupon Dick insisted that the young men of their party receive the kiss of welcome. Nor did he miss, in the hubbub of a dozen persons meeting as many more, Lottie Mason's: "Oh, good evening, Mr. Graham. I thought you had gone."

And Dick, in the midst of the confusion of settling such an influx of guests, still maintaining his exuberant jolly pose, waited for that sharp scrutiny that women have only for women. Not many moments later he saw Lottie Mason steal such a look, keen with speculation, at Paula as she chanced face to face with Graham, saying something to him.

Not yet, was Dick’s conclusion. Lottie did not know. But suspicion was rife, and nothing, he was certain, under the circumstances, would gladden her woman’s heart more than to discover the unimpeachable Paula as womanly weak as herself.

Lottie Mason was a tall, striking brunette of twenty-five, undeniably beautiful, and, as Dick had learned, undeniably daring. In the not remote past, attracted by her, and, it must be submitted, subtly invited by her, he had been guilty of a philandering that he had not allowed to go as far as her wishes. The thing had not been serious on his part. Nor had he permitted it to become serious on her side. Nevertheless, sufficient flirtatious passages had taken place to impel him this night to look to her, rather than to the other Wickenberg women, for the first signals of suspicion.

“Oh, yes, he’s a beautiful dancer,” Dick, as he came up to them half an hour later, heard Lottie Mason telling little Miss Maxwell. “Isn’t he, Dick?” she appealed to him, with innocent eyes of candor through which disguise he knew she was studying him.

“Who? — Graham, you must mean,” he answered with untroubled directness.

“He certainly is. What do you say we start dancing and let Miss Maxwell see? Though there’s only one woman here who can give him full swing to show his paces.”

“Paula, of course,” said Lottie.

“Paula, of course. Why, you young chits don’t know how to waltz. You never had a chance to learn.” — Lottie tossed her fine head. “Perhaps you learned a little before the new dancing came in,” he amended. “Anyway, I’ll get Evan and Paula started, you take me on, and I’ll wager we’ll be the only couples on the floor.”

Half through the waltz, he broke it off with: “Let them have the floor to themselves. It’s worth seeing.”

And, glowing with appreciation, he stood and watched his wife and Graham finish the dance, while he knew that Lottie, beside him, stealing side glances at him, was having her suspicions allayed.

The dancing became general, and, the evening being warm, the big doors to the patio were thrown open. Now one couple, and now another, danced out and down the long arcades where the moonlight streamed, until it became the general thing.

"What a boy he is," Paula said to Graham, as they listened to Dick descanting to all and sundry on the virtues of his new night camera. "You heard Aaron complaining at table, and Terrence explaining, his sureness. Nothing terrible has ever happened to him in his life. He has never been overthrown. His sureness has always been vindicated. As Terrence said, it has always delivered the goods. He does know, he does know, and yet he is so sure of himself, so sure of me."

Graham taken away to dance with Miss Maxwell, Paula continued her train of thought to herself. Dick was not suffering so much after all. And she might have expected it. He was the cool-head, the philosopher. He would take her loss with the same equanimity as he would take the loss of Mountain Lad, as he had taken the death of Jeremy Braxton and the flooding of the Harvest mines. It was difficult, she smiled to herself, aflame as she was toward Graham, to be married to a philosopher who would not lift a hand to hold her. And it came to her afresh that one phase of Graham's charm for her was his humanness, his flamingness. They met on common ground. At any rate, even in the heyday of their coming together in Paris, Dick had not so inflamed her. A wonderful lover he had been, too, with his gift of speech and lover's phrases, with his love-chants that had so delighted her; but somehow it was different from this what she felt for Graham and what Graham must feel for her. Besides, she had been most young in experience of love and lovers in that long ago when Dick had burst so magnificently upon her.

And so thinking, she hardened toward him and recklessly permitted herself to flame toward Graham. The crowd, the gayety, the excitement, the closeness and tenderness of contact in the dancing, the summer-warm of the evening, the streaming moonlight, and the night-scents of flowers — all fanned her ardency, and she looked forward eagerly to the at least one more dance she might dare with Graham.

"No flash light is necessary," Dick was explaining. "It's a German invention. Half a minute exposure under the ordinary lighting is sufficient. And the best of it is that the plate can be immediately developed just like an ordinary blue print. Of course, the drawback is one cannot print from the plate."

"But if it's good, an ordinary plate can be copied from it from which prints can be made," Ernestine amplified.

She knew the huge, twenty-foot, spring snake coiled inside the camera and ready to leap out like a jack-in-the-box when Dick squeezed the bulb. And there were others who knew and who urged Dick to get the camera and make an exposure.

He was gone longer than he expected, for Bonbright had left on his desk several telegrams concerning the Mexican situation that needed immediate replies. Trick camera in hand, Dick returned by a short cut across the house and patio. The dancing couples were ebbing down the arcade and disappearing into the hall, and he leaned against a pillar and watched them go by. Last of all came Paula and Evan, passing so close that he could have reached out and touched them. But, though the moon shone full on him, they did not see him. They saw only each other in the tender sport of gazing.

The last preceding couple was already inside when the music ceased. Graham and Paula paused, and he was for giving her his arm and leading her inside, but she clung to him in sudden impulse. Man-like, cautious, he slightly resisted for a moment, but with one arm around his neck she drew his head willingly down to the kiss. It was a flash of quick passion. The next instant, Paula on his arm, they were passing in and Paula's laugh was ringing merrily and naturally.

Dick clutched at the pillar and eased himself down abruptly until he sat flat on the pavement. Accompanying violent suffocation, or causing it, his heart seemed rising in his chest. He panted for air. The cursed thing rose and choked and stifled him until, in the grim turn his fancy took, it seemed to him that he chewed it between his teeth and gulped it back and down his throat along with the reviving air. He felt chilled, and was aware that he was wet with sudden sweat.

"And who ever heard of heart disease in the Forrests?" he muttered, as, still sitting, leaning against the pillar for support, he mopped his face dry. His hand was shaking, and he felt a slight nausea from an internal quivering that still persisted.

It was not as if Graham had kissed her, he pondered. It was Paula who had kissed Graham. That was love, and passion. He had seen it, and as it burned again before his eyes, he felt his heart surge, and the premonitory sensation of suffocation seized him. With a sharp effort of will he controlled himself and got to his feet.

"By God, it came up in my mouth and I chewed it," he muttered. "I chewed it."

Returning across the patio by the round-about way, he entered the lighted room jauntily enough, camera in hand, and unprepared for the reception he received.

"Seen a ghost?" Lute greeted.

"Are you sick?" — "What's the matter?" were other questions.

"What is the matter?" he countered.

"Your face — the look of it," Ernestine said. "Something has happened.

What is it?"

And while he oriented himself he did not fail to note Lottie Mason's quick glance at the faces of Graham and Paula, nor to note that Ernestine had observed Lottie's glance and followed it up for herself.

"Yes," he lied. "Bad news. Just got the word. Jeremy Braxton is dead.

Murdered. The Mexicans got him while he was trying to escape into

Arizona."

"Old Jeremy, God love him for the fine man he was," Terrence said, tucking his arm in Dick's. "Come on, old man, 'tis a stiffener you're wanting and I'm the lad to lead you to it."

"Oh, I'm all right," Dick smiled, shaking his shoulders and squaring himself as if gathering himself together. "It did hit me hard for the moment. I hadn't a doubt in the world but Jeremy would make it out all right. But they got him, and two engineers with him. They put up a devil of a fight first. They got under a cliff and stood off a mob of half a thousand for a day and night. And then the Mexicans tossed dynamite down from above. Oh, well, all flesh is grass, and there is no grass of yesteryear. Terrence, your suggestion is a good one. Lead on."

After a few steps he turned his head over his shoulder and called back: "Now this isn't to stop the fun. I'll be right back to take that photograph. You arrange the group, Ernestine, and be sure to have them under the strongest light."

Terrence pressed open the concealed buffet at the far end of the room and set out the glasses, while Dick turned on a wall light and studied his face in the small mirror inside the buffet door.

"It's all right now, quite natural," he announced.

"'Twas only a passing shade," Terrence agreed, pouring the whiskey.

"And man has well the right to take it hard the going of old friends."

They toasted and drank silently.

“Another one,” Dick said, extending his glass.

“Say ‘when,’“ said the Irishman, and with imperturbable eyes he watched the rising tide of liquor in the glass.

Dick waited till it was half full.

Again they toasted and drank silently, eyes to eyes, and Dick was grateful for the offer of all his heart that he read in Terrence’s eyes.

Back in the middle of the hall, Ernestine was gayly grouping the victims, and privily, from the faces of Lottie, Paula, and Graham, trying to learn more of the something untoward that she sensed. Why had Lottie looked so immediately and searchingly at Graham and Paula? — she asked herself. And something was wrong with Paula now. She was worried, disturbed, and not in the way to be expected from the announcement of Jeremy Braxton’s death. From Graham, Ernestine could glean nothing. He was quite his ordinary self, his facetiousness the cause of much laughter to Miss Maxwell and Mrs. Watson.

Paula was disturbed. What had happened? Why had Dick lied? He had known of Jeremy’s death for two days. And she had never known anybody’s death so to affect him. She wondered if he had been drinking unduly. In the course of their married life she had seen him several times in liquor. He carried it well, the only noticeable effects being a flush in his eyes and a loosening of his tongue to whimsical fancies and extemporized chants. Had he, in his trouble, been drinking with the iron-headed Terrence down in the stag room? She had found them all assembled there just before dinner. The real cause for Dick’s strangeness never crossed her mind, if, for no other reason, than that he was not given to spying.

He came back, laughing heartily at a joke of Terrence’s, and beckoned Graham to join them while Terrence repeated it. And when the three had had their laugh, he prepared to take the picture. The burst of the huge snake from the camera and the genuine screams of the startled women served to dispel the gloom that threatened, and next Dick was arranging a tournament of peanut-carrying.

From chair to chair, placed a dozen yards apart, the feat was with a table knife to carry the most peanuts in five minutes. After the preliminary try-out, Dick chose Paula for his partner, and challenged the world, Wickenberg and the madroño grove included. Many boxes of candy were wagered, and in the end he and Paula won out against Graham and Ernestine, who had proved the next best couple. Demands for a speech changed to clamor for a peanut song. Dick complied, beating the accent, Indian fashion, with stiff-legged hops and hand-slaps on thighs.

"I am Dick Forrest, son of Richard the Lucky, Son of Jonathan the Puritan, son of John who was a sea-rover, as his father Albert before him, who was the son of Mortimer, a pirate who was hanged in chains and died without issue.

"I am the last of the Forrests, but first of the peanut-carriers. Neither Nimrod nor Sandow has anything on me. I carry the peanuts on a knife, a silver knife. The peanuts are animated by the devil. I carry the peanuts with grace and celerity and in quantity. The peanut never sprouted that can best me.

"The peanuts roll. The peanuts roll. Like Atlas who holds the world, I never let them fall. Not every one can carry peanuts. I am God-gifted. I am master of the art. It is a fine art. The peanuts roll, the peanuts roll, and I carry them on forever.

"Aaron is a philosopher. He cannot carry peanuts. Ernestine is a blonde. She cannot carry peanuts. Evan is a sportsman. He drops peanuts. Paula is my partner. She fumbles peanuts. Only I, I, by the grace of God and my own cleverness, carry peanuts.

"When anybody has had enough of my song, throw something at me. I am proud. I am tireless. I can sing on forever. I shall sing on forever.

"Here beginneth the second canto. When I die, bury me in a peanut patch. While I live — "

The expected avalanche of cushions quenched his song but not his ebullient spirits, for he was soon in a corner with Lottie Mason and Paula concocting a conspiracy against Terrence.

And so the evening continued to be danced and joked and played away. At midnight supper was served, and not till two in the morning were the Wickenbergers ready to depart. While they were getting on their wraps, Paula was proposing for the following afternoon a trip down to the Sacramento River to look over Dick's experiment in rice-raising.

"I had something else in view," he told her. "You know the mountain pasture above Sycamore Creek. Three yearlings have been killed there in the last ten days."

"Mountain lions!" Paula cried.

"Two at least. — Strayed in from the north," he explained to Graham. "They sometimes do that. We got three five years ago. — Moss and Hartley will be there with the dogs waiting. They've located two of the beasts. What do you say all of you join me. We can leave right after lunch."

"Let me have Mollie?" Lute asked.

"And you can ride Altadena," Paula told Ernestine.

Quickly the mounts were decided upon, Froelig and Martinez agreeing to go, but promising neither to shoot well nor ride well.

All went out to see the Wickenbergers off, and, after the machines were gone, lingered to make arrangements for the hunting.

"Good night, everybody," Dick said, as they started to move inside. "I'm going to take a look at Alden Bessie before I turn in. Hennessy is sitting up with her. Remember, you girls, come to lunch in your riding togs, and curses on the head of whoever's late."

The ancient dam of the Fotherington Princess was in a serious way, but Dick would not have made the visit at such an hour, save that he wanted to be by himself and that he could not nerve himself for a chance moment alone with Paula so soon after what he had overseen in the patio.

Light steps in the gravel made him turn his head. Ernestine caught up with him and took his arm.

"Poor old Alden Bessie," she explained. "I thought I'd go along."

Dick, still acting up to his night's rôle, recalled to her various funny incidents of the evening, and laughed and chuckled with reminiscent glee.

"Dick," she said in the first pause, "you are in trouble." She could feel him stiffen, and hurried on: "What can I do? You know you can depend on me. Tell me."

"Yes, I'll tell you," he answered. "Just one thing." She pressed his arm gratefully. "I'll have a telegram sent you to-morrow. It will be urgent enough, though not too serious. You will just bundle up and depart with Lute."

"Is that all?" she faltered.

"It will be a great favor."

"You won't talk with me?" she protested, quivering under the rebuff.

"I'll have the telegram come so as to rout you out of bed. And now never mind Alden Bessie. You run a long in. Good night."

He kissed her, gently thrust her toward the house, and went on his way.

CHAPTER XXX

On the way back from the sick mare, Dick paused once to listen to the restless stamp of Mountain Lad and his fellows in the stallion barn. In the quiet air, from somewhere up the hills, came the ringing of a single bell from some grazing animal. A cat’s-paw of breeze fanned him with sudden balmy warmth. All the night was balmy with the faint and almost aromatic scent of ripening grain and drying grass. The stallion stamped again, and Dick, with a deep breath and realization that never had he more loved it all, looked up and circled the sky-line where the crests of the mountains blotted the field of stars.

“No, Cato,” he mused aloud. “One cannot agree with you. Man does not depart from life as from an inn. He departs as from a dwelling, the one dwelling he will ever know. He departs … nowhere. It is good night. For him the Noiseless One … and the dark.”

He made as if to start, but once again the stamp of the stallions held him, and the hillside bell rang out. He drew a deep inhalation through his nostrils of the air of balm, and loved it, and loved the fair land of his devising.

“‘I looked into time and saw none of me there,’“ he quoted, then capped it, smiling, with a second quotation: “‘She gat me nine great sons…. The other nine were daughters.’“

Back at the house, he did not immediately go in, but stood a space gazing at the far flung lines of it. Nor, inside, did he immediately go to his own quarters. Instead, he wandered through the silent rooms, across the patios, and along the dim-lit halls. His frame of mind was as of one about to depart on a journey. He pressed on the lights in Paula’s fairy patio, and, sitting in an austere Roman seat of marble, smoked a cigarette quite through while he made his plans.

Oh, he would do it nicely enough. He could pull off a hunting accident that would fool the world. Trust him not to bungle it. Next day would be the day, in the woods above Sycamore Creek. Grandfather Jonathan Forrest, the straight-laced Puritan, had died of a hunting accident. For the first time Dick doubted that accident. Well, if it hadn’t been an accident, the old fellow had done it well. It had never been hinted in the family that it was aught but an accident.

His hand on the button to turn off the lights, Dick delayed a moment for a last look at the marble babies that played in the fountain and among the roses.

"So long, younglings," he called softly to them. "You're the nearest I ever came to it."

From his sleeping porch he looked across the big patio to Paula's porch. There was no light. The chance was she slept.

On the edge of the bed, he found himself with one shoe unlaced, and, smiling at his absentness, relaced it. What need was there for him to sleep? It was already four in the morning. He would at least watch his last sunrise. Last things were coming fast. Already had he not dressed for the last time? And the bath of the previous morning would be his last. Mere water could not stay the corruption of death. He would have to shave, however — a last vanity, for the hair did continue to grow for a time on dead men's faces.

He brought a copy of his will from the wall-safe to his desk and read it carefully. Several minor codicils suggested themselves, and he wrote them out in long-hand, pre-dating them six months as a precaution. The last was the endowment of the sages of the madroño grove with a fellowship of seven.

He ran through his life insurance policies, verifying the permitted suicide clause in each one; signed the tray of letters that had waited his signature since the previous morning; and dictated a letter into the phonograph to the publisher of his books. His desk cleaned, he scrawled a quick summary of income and expense, with all earnings from the Harvest mines deducted. He transposed the summary into a second summary, increasing the expense margins, and cutting down the income items to an absurdest least possible. Still the result was satisfactory.

He tore up the sheets of figures and wrote out a program for the future handling of the Harvest situation. He did it sketchily, with casual tentativeness, so that when it was found among the papers there would be no suspicions. In the same fashion he worked out a line-breeding program for the Shires, and an in-breeding table, up and down, for Mountain Lad and the Fotherington Princess and certain selected individuals of their progeny.

When Oh My came in with coffee at six, Dick was on his last paragraph of his scheme for rice-growing.

"Although the Italian rice may be worth experimenting with for quick maturity," he wrote, "I shall for a time confine the main plantings in equal proportions to Moti, Ioko, and the Wateribune. Thus, with different times of maturing, the same crews and the same machinery, with the same overhead, can work a larger acreage than if only one variety is planted."

Oh My served the coffee at his desk, and made no sign even after a glance to the porch at the bed which had not been slept in — all of which control Dick permitted himself privily to admire.

At six-thirty the telephone rang and he heard Hennessy's tired voice: "I knew you'd be up and glad to know Alden Bessie's pulled through. It was a squeak, though. And now it's me for the hay."

When Dick had shaved, he looked at the shower, hesitated a moment, then his face set stubbornly. I'm darned if I will, was his thought; a sheer waste of time. He did, however, change his shoes to a pair of heavy, high-laced ones fit for the roughness of hunting. He was at his desk again, looking over the notes in his scribble pads for the morning's work, when Paula entered. She did not call her "Good morning, merry gentleman"; but came quite close to him before she greeted him softly with:

"The Acorn-planter. Ever tireless, never weary Red Cloud."

He noted the violet-blue shadows under her eyes, as he arose, without offering to touch her. Nor did she offer invitation.

"A white night?" he asked, as he placed a chair.

"A white night," she answered wearily. "Not a second's sleep, though I tried so hard."

Both were reluctant of speech, and they labored under a mutual inability to draw their eyes away from each other.

"You … you don't look any too fit yourself," she said.

"Yes, my face," he nodded. "I was looking at it while I shaved. The expression won't come off."

"Something happened to you last night," she probed, and he could not fail to see the same compassion in her eyes that he had seen in Oh Dear's. "Everybody remarked your expression. What was it?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "It has been coming on for some time," he evaded, remembering that the first hint of it had been given him by Paula's portrait of him. "You've noticed it?" he inquired casually.

She nodded, then was struck by a sudden thought. He saw the idea leap to life ere her words uttered it.

“Dick, you haven’t an affair?”

It was a way out. It would straighten all the tangle. And hope was in her voice and in her face.

He smiled, shook his head slowly, and watched her disappointment.

“I take it back,” he said. “I have an affair.”

“Of the heart?”

She was eager, as he answered, “Of the heart.”

But she was not prepared for what came next. He abruptly drew his chair close, till his knees touched hers, and, leaning forward, quickly but gently prisoned her hands in his resting on her knees.

“Don’t be alarmed, little bird-woman,” he quieted her. “I shall not kiss you. It is a long time since I have. I want to tell you about that affair. But first I want to tell you how proud I am — proud of myself. I am proud that I am a lover. At my age, a lover! It is unbelievable, and it is wonderful. And such a lover! Such a curious, unusual, and quite altogether remarkable lover. In fact, I have laughed all the books and all biology in the face. I am a monogamist. I love the woman, the one woman. After a dozen years of possession I love her quite madly, oh, so sweetly madly.”

Her hands communicated her disappointment to him, making a slight, impulsive flutter to escape; but he held them more firmly.

“I know her every weakness, and, weakness and strength and all, I love her as madly as I loved her at the first, in those mad moments when I first held her in my arms.”

Her hands were mutinous of the restraint he put upon them, and unconsciously she was beginning to pull and tug to be away from him. Also, there was fear in her eyes. He knew her fastidiousness, and he guessed, with the other man’s lips recent on hers, that she feared a more ardent expression on his part.

“And please, please be not frightened, timid, sweet, beautiful, proud, little bird-woman. See. I release you. Know that I love you most dearly, and that I am considering you as well as myself, and before myself, all the while.”

He drew his chair away from her, leaned back, and saw confidence grow in her eyes.

“I shall tell you all my heart,” he continued, “and I shall want you to tell me all your heart.”

“This love for me is something new?” she asked. “A recrudescence?”

“Yes, a recrudescence, and no.”

“I thought that for a long time I had been a habit to you,” she said.

“But I was loving you all the time.”

“Not madly.”

“No,” he acknowledged. “But with certainty. I was so sure of you, of myself. It was, to me, all a permanent and forever established thing. I plead guilty. But when that permanency was shaken, all my love for you fired up. It was there all the time, a steady, long-married flame.”

“But about me?” she demanded.

“That is what we are coming to. I know your worry right now, and of a minute ago. You are so intrinsically honest, so intrinsically true, that the thought of sharing two men is abhorrent to you. I have not misread you. It is a long time since you have permitted me any love-touch.” He shrugged his shoulders “And an equally long time since I offered you a love-touch.”

“Then you have known from the first?” she asked quickly.

He nodded.

“Possibly,” he added, with an air of judicious weighing, “I sensed it coming before even you knew it. But we will not go into that or other things.”

“You have seen…” she attempted to ask, stung almost to shame at thought of her husband having witnessed any caress of hers and Graham’s.

“We will not demean ourselves with details, Paula. Besides, there was and is nothing wrong about any of it. Also, it was not necessary for me to see anything. I have my memories of when I, too, kissed stolen kisses in the pause of the seconds between the frank, outspoken ‘Good nights.’ When all the signs of ripeness are visible — the love-shades and love-notes that cannot be hidden, the unconscious caress of the eyes in a fleeting glance, the involuntary softening of voices, the cuckoo-sob in the throat — why, the night-parting kiss does not need to be seen. It has to be. Still further, oh my woman, know that I justify you in everything.”

“It… it was not ever… much,” she faltered.

“I should have been surprised if it had been. It couldn’t have been you. As it is, I have been surprised. After our dozen years it was unexpected — ”

“Dick,” she interrupted him, leaning toward him and searching him. She paused to frame her thought, and then went on with directness. “In our dozen years, will you say it has never been any more with you?”

“I have told you that I justify you in everything,” he softened his reply.

"But you have not answered my question," she insisted. "Oh, I do not mean mere flirtatious passages, bits of primrose philandering. I mean unfaithfulness and I mean it technically. In the past you have?"

"In the past," he answered, "not much, and not for a long, long time."

"I often wondered," she mused.

"And I have told you I justify you in everything," he reiterated. "And now you know where lies the justification."

"Then by the same token I had a similar right," she said. "Though I haven't, Dick, I haven't," she hastened to add. "Well, anyway, you always did preach the single standard."

"Alas, not any longer," he smiled. "One's imagination will conjure, and in the past few weeks I've been forced to change my mind."

"You mean that you demand I must be faithful?"

He nodded and said, "So long as you live with me."

"But where's the equity?"

"There isn't any equity," he shook his head. "Oh, I know it seems a preposterous change of view. But at this late day I have made the discovery of the ancient truth that women are different from men. All I have learned of book and theory goes glimmering before the everlasting fact that the women are the mothers of our children. I… I still had my hopes of children with you, you see. But that's all over and done with. The question now is, what's in your heart? I have told you mine. And afterward we can determine what is to be done."

"Oh, Dick," she breathed, after silence had grown painful, "I do love you, I shall always love you. You are my Red Cloud. Why, do you know, only yesterday, out on your sleeping porch, I turned my face to the wall. It was terrible. It didn't seem right. I turned it out again, oh so quickly."

He lighted a cigarette and waited.

"But you have not told me what is in your heart, all of it," he chided finally.

"I do love you," she repeated.

"And Evan?"

"That is different. It is horrible to have to talk this way to you.

Besides, I don't know. I can't make up my mind what is in my heart."

"Love? Or amorous adventure? It must be one or the other."

She shook her head.

“Can’t you understand?” she asked. “That I don’t understand? You see, I am a woman. I have never sown any wild oats. And now that all this has happened, I don’t know what to make of it. Shaw and the rest must be right. Women are hunting animals. You are both big game. I can’t help it. It is a challenge to me. And I find I am a puzzle to myself. All my concepts have been toppled over by my conduct. I want you. I want Evan. I want both of you. It is not amorous adventure, oh believe me. And if by any chance it is, and I do not know it — no, it isn’t, I know it isn’t.”

“Then it is love.”

“But I do love you, Red Cloud.”

“And you say you love him. You can’t love both of us.”

“But I can. I do. I do love both of you. — Oh, I am straight. I shall be straight. I must work this out. I thought you might help me. That is why I came to you this morning. There must be some solution.”

She looked at him appealingly as he answered, “It is one or the other,

Evan or me. I cannot imagine any other solution.”

“That’s what he says. But I can’t bring myself to it. He was for coming straight to you. I would not permit him. He has wanted to go, but I held him here, hard as it was on both of you, in order to have you together, to compare you two, to weigh you in my heart. And I get nowhere. I want you both. I can’t give either of you up.”

“Unfortunately, as you see,” Dick began, a slight twinkle in his eyes, “while you may be polyandrously inclined, we stupid male men cannot reconcile ourselves to such a situation.”

“Don’t be cruel, Dick,” she protested.

“Forgive me. It was not so meant. It was out of my own hurt — an effort to bear it with philosophical complacence.”

“I have told him that he was the only man I had ever met who is as great as my husband, and that my husband is greater.”

“That was loyalty to me, yes, and loyalty to yourself,” Dick explained. “You were mine until I ceased being the greatest man in the world. He then became the greatest man in the world.”

She shook her head.

“Let me try to solve it for you,” he continued. “You don’t know your mind, your desire. You can’t decide between us because you equally want us both?”

“Yes,” she whispered. “Only, rather, differently want you both.”

"Then the thing is settled," he concluded shortly.

"What do you mean?"

"This, Paula. I lose. Graham is the winner. Don't you see. Here am I, even with him, even and no more, while my advantage over him is our dozen years together — the dozen years of past love, the ties and bonds of heart and memory. Heavens! If all this weight were thrown in the balance on Evan's side, you wouldn't hesitate an instant in your decision. It is the first time you have ever been bowled over in your life, and the experience, coming so late, makes it hard for you to realize."

"But, Dick, you bowled me over."

He shook his head.

"I have always liked to think so, and sometimes I have believed — but never really. I never took you off your feet, not even in the very beginning, whirlwind as the affair was. You may have been glamoured. You were never mad as I was mad, never swept as I was swept. I loved you first — "

"And you were a royal lover."

"I loved you first, Paula, and, though you did respond, it was not in the same way. I never took you off your feet. It seems pretty clear that Evan has."

"I wish I could be sure," she mused. "I have a feeling of being bowled over, and yet I hesitate. The two are not compatible. Perhaps I never shall be bowled over by any man. And you don't seem to help me in the least."

"You, and you alone, can solve it, Paula," he said gravely.

"But if you would help, if you would try — oh, such a little, to hold me," she persisted.

"But I am helpless. My hands are tied. I can't put an arm to hold you. You can't share two. You have been in his arms — " He put up his hand to hush her protest. "Please, please, dear, don't. You have been in his arms. You flutter like a frightened bird at thought of my caressing you. Don't you see? Your actions decide against me. You have decided, though you may not know it. Your very flesh has decided. You can bear his arms. The thought of mine you cannot bear."

She shook her head with slow resoluteness.

"And still I do not, cannot, make up my mind," she persisted.

"But you must. The present situation is intolerable. You must decide quickly, for Evan must go. You realize that. Or you must go. You both cannot continue on here. Take all the time in the world. Send Evan away.

Or, suppose you go and visit Aunt Martha for a while. Being away from both of us might aid you to get somewhere. Perhaps it will be better to call off the hunting. I'll go alone, and you stay and talk it over with Evan. Or come on along and talk it over with him as you ride. Whichever way, I won't be in till late. I may sleep out all night in one of the herder's cabins. When I come back, Evan must be gone. Whether or not you are gone with him will also have been decided."

"And if I should go?" she queried.

Dick shrugged his shoulders, and stood up, glancing at his wrist-watch.

"I have sent word to Blake to come earlier this morning," he explained, taking a step toward the door in invitation for her to go.

At the door she paused and leaned toward him.

"Kiss me, Dick," she said, and, afterward: "This is not a… love-touch." Her voice had become suddenly husky. "It's just in case I do decide to… to go."

The secretary approached along the hall, but Paula lingered.

"Good morning, Mr. Blake," Dick greeted him. "Sorry to rout you out so early. First of all, will you please telephone Mr. Agar and Mr. Pitts. I won't be able to see them this morning. Oh, and put the rest off till to-morrow, too. Make a point of getting Mr. Hanley. Tell him I approve of his plan for the Buckeye spillway, and to go right ahead. I will see Mr. Mendenhall, though, and Mr. Manson. Tell them nine-thirty."

"One thing, Dick," Paula said. "Remember, I made him stay. It was not his fault or wish. I wouldn't let him go."

"You've bowled him over right enough," Dick smiled. "I could not reconcile his staying on, under the circumstances, with what I knew of him. But with you not permitting him to go, and he as mad as a man has a right to be where you are concerned, I can understand. He's a whole lot better than a good sort. They don't make many like him. He will make you happy —"

She held up her hand.

"I don't know that I shall ever be happy again, Red Cloud. When I see what I have brought into your face…. And I was so happy and contented all our dozen years. I can't forget it. That is why I have been unable to decide. But you are right. The time has come for me to solve the …" She hesitated and could not utter the word "triangle" which he saw forming on her lips.

"The situation," her voice trailed away. "We'll all go hunting. I'll talk with him as we ride, and I'll send him away, no matter what I do."

"I shouldn't be precipitate, Paul," Dick advised. "You know I don't care a hang for morality except when it is useful. And in this case it is exceedingly useful. There may be children. — Please, please," he hushed her. "And in such case even old scandal is not exactly good for them. Desertion takes too long. I'll arrange to give you the real statutory grounds, which will save a year in the divorce."

"If I so make up my mind," she smiled wanly.

He nodded.

"But I may not make up my mind that way. I don't know it myself. Perhaps it's all a dream, and soon I shall wake up, and Oh Dear will come in and tell me how soundly and long I have slept."

She turned away reluctantly, and paused suddenly when she had made half a dozen steps.

"Dick," she called. "You have told me your heart, but not what's in your mind. Don't do anything foolish. Remember Denny Holbrook — no hunting accident, mind."

He shook his head, and twinkled his eyes in feigned amusement, and marveled to himself that her intuition should have so squarely hit the mark.

"And leave all this?" he lied, with a gesture that embraced the ranch and all its projects. "And that book on in-and-in-breeding? And my first annual home sale of stock just ripe to come off?"

"It would be preposterous," she agreed with brightening face. "But, Dick, in this difficulty of making up my mind, please, please know that — " She paused for the phrase, then made a gesture in mimicry of his, that included the Big House and its treasures, and said, "All this does not influence me a particle. Truly not."

"As if I did not know it," he assured her. "Of all unmercenary women — "

"Why, Dick," she interrupted him, fired by a new thought, "if I loved Evan as madly as you think, you would mean so little that I'd be content, if it were the only way out, for you to have a hunting accident. But you see, I don't. Anyway, there's a brass tack for you to ponder."

She made another reluctant step away, then called back in a whisper, her face over her shoulder:

"Red Cloud, I'm dreadfully sorry…. And through it all I'm so glad that you do still love me."

Before Blake returned, Dick found time to study his face in the glass. Printed there was the expression that had startled his company the preceding evening. It had come to stay. Oh, well, was his thought, one cannot chew his heart between his teeth without leaving some sign of it.

He strolled out on the sleeping porch and looked at Paula's picture under the barometers. He turned it to the wall, and sat on the bed and regarded the blankness for a space. Then he turned it back again.

"Poor little kid," he murmured, "having a hard time of it just waking up at this late day."

But as he continued to gaze, abruptly there leaped before his eyes the vision of her in the moonlight, clinging to Graham and drawing his lips down to hers.

Dick got up quickly, with a shake of head to shake the vision from his eyes.

By half past nine his correspondence was finished and his desk cleaned save for certain data to be used in his talks with his Shorthorn and Shire managers. He was over at the window and waving a smiling farewell to Lute and Ernestine in the limousine, as Mendenhall entered. And to him, and to Manson next, Dick managed, in casual talk, to impress much of his bigger breeding plans.

"We've got to keep an eagle eye on the bull-get of King Polo," he told Manson. "There's all the promise in the world for a greater than he from Bleakhouse Fawn, or Alberta Maid, or Moravia's Nellie Signal. We missed it this year so far, but next year, or the year after, soon or late, King Polo is going to be responsible for a real humdinger of winner."

And as with Manson, with much more talk, so with Mendenhall, Dick succeeded in emphasizing the far application of his breeding theories.

With their departure, he got Oh Joy on the house 'phone and told him to take Graham to the gun room to choose a rifle and any needed gear.

At eleven he did not know that Paula had come up the secret stairway from the library and was standing behind the shelves of books listening. She had intended coming in but had been deterred by the sound of his voice. She could hear him talking over the telephone to Hanley about the spillway of the Buckeye dam.

"And by the way," Dick's voice went on, "you've been over the reports on the Big Miramar?… Very good. Discount them. I disagree with them flatly. The water is there. I haven't a doubt we'll find a fairly shallow artesian supply. Send up the boring outfit at once and start prospecting. The soil's ungodly rich, and if we don't make that dry hole ten times as valuable in the next five years …"

Paula sighed, and turned back down the spiral to the library.

Red Cloud the incorrigible, always planting his acorns — was her thought. There he was, with his love-world crashing around him, calmly considering dams and well-borings so that he might, in the years to come, plant more acorns.

Nor was Dick ever to know that Paula had come so near to him with her need and gone away. Again, not aimlessly, but to run through for the last time the notes of the scribble pad by his bed, he was out on his sleeping porch. His house was in order. There was nothing left but to sign up the morning's dictation, answer several telegrams, then would come lunch and the hunting in the Sycamore hills. Oh, he would do it well. The Outlaw would bear the blame. And he would have an eye-witness, either Froelig or Martinez. But not both of them. One pair of eyes would be enough to satisfy when the martingale parted and the mare reared and toppled backward upon him into the brush. And from that screen of brush, swiftly linking accident to catastrophe, the witness would hear the rifle go off.

Martinez was more emotional than the sculptor and would therefore make a more satisfactory witness, Dick decided. Him would he maneuver to have with him in the narrow trail when the Outlaw should be made the scapegoat. Martinez was no horseman. All the better. It would be well, Dick judged, to make the Outlaw act up in real devilishness for a minute or two before the culmination. It would give verisimilitude. Also, it would excite Martinez's horse, and, therefore, excite Martinez so that he would not see occurrences too clearly.

He clenched his hands with sudden hurt. The Little Lady was mad, she must be mad; on no other ground could he understand such arrant cruelty, listening to her voice and Graham's from the open windows of the music room as they sang together the "Gypsy Trail."

Nor did he unclench his hands during all the time they sang. And they sang the mad, reckless song clear through to its mad reckless end. And he continued to stand, listening to her laugh herself merrily away from Graham and on across the house to her wing, from the porches of which she continued to laugh as she teased and chided Oh Dear for fancied derelictions.

From far off came the dim but unmistakable trumpeting of Mountain Lad. King Polo asserted his lordly self, and the harems of mares and heifers sent back their answering calls. Dick listened to all the whinnying and nickering and bawling of sex, and sighed aloud: “Well, the land is better for my having been. It is a good thought to take to bed.”

CHAPTER XXXI

A ring of his bed ‘phone made Dick sit on the bed to take up the receiver. As he listened, he looked out across the patio to Paula’s porches. Bonbright was explaining that it was a call from Chauncey Bishop who was at Eldorado in a machine. Chauncey Bishop, editor and owner of the San Francisco Dispatch, was sufficiently important a person, in Bonbright’s mind, as well as old friend of Dick’s, to be connected directly to him.

“You can get here for lunch,” Dick told the newspaper owner. “And, say, suppose you put up for the night…. Never mind your special writers. We’re going hunting mountain lions this afternoon, and there’s sure to be a kill. Got them located…. Who? What’s she write?… What of it? She can stick around the ranch and get half a dozen columns out of any of half a dozen subjects, while the writer chap can get the dope on lion-hunting…. Sure, sure. I’ll put him on a horse a child can ride.”

The more the merrier, especially newspaper chaps, Dick grinned to himself — and grandfather Jonathan Forrest would have nothing on him when it came to pulling off a successful finish.

But how could Paula have been so wantonly cruel as to sing the “Gypsy Trail” so immediately afterward? Dick asked himself, as, receiver near to ear, he could distantly hear Chauncey Bishop persuading his writer man to the hunting.

“All right then, come a running,” Dick told Bishop in conclusion. “I’m giving orders now for the horses, and you can have that bay you rode last time.”

Scarcely had he hung up, when the bell rang again. This time it was Paula.

“Red Cloud, dear Red Cloud,” she said, “your reasoning is all wrong. I think I love you best. I am just about making up my mind, and it’s for you. And now, just to help me to be sure, tell me what you told me a little while ago — you know — ’ I love the woman, the one woman. After a dozen years of possession I love her quite madly, oh, so sweetly madly.’ Say it to me, Red Cloud.”

“I do truly love the woman, the one woman,” Dick repeated. “After a dozen years of possession I do love her quite madly, oh, so sweetly madly.”

There was a pause when he had finished, which, waiting, he did not dare to break.

"There is one little thing I almost forgot to tell you," she said, very softly, very slowly, very clearly. "I do love you. I have never loved you so much as right now. After our dozen years you've bowled me over at last. And I was bowled over from the beginning, although I did not know it. I have made up my mind now, once and for all."

She hung up abruptly.

With the thought that he knew how a man felt receiving a reprieve at the eleventh hour, Dick sat on, thinking, forgetful that he had not hooked the receiver, until Bonbright came in from the secretaries' room to remind him.

"It was from Mr. Bishop," Bonbright explained. "Sprung an axle. I took the liberty of sending one of our machines to bring them in."

"And see what our men can do with repairing theirs," Dick nodded.

Alone again, he got up and stretched, walked absently the length of the room and back.

"Well, Martinez, old man," he addressed the empty air, "this afternoon you'll be defrauded out of as fine a histrionic stunt as you will never know you've missed."

He pressed the switch for Paula's telephone and rang her up.

Oh Dear answered, and quickly brought her mistress.

"I've a little song I want to sing to you, Paul," he said, then chanted the old negro 'spiritual':

"'Fer itself, fer itself,
Fer itself, fer itself,
Every soul got ter confess
Fer itself.'

"And I want you to tell me again, fer yourself, fer yourself, what you just told me."

Her laughter came in a merry gurgle that delighted him.

"Red Cloud, I do love you," she said. "My mind is made up. I shall never have any man but you in all this world. Now be good, and let me dress. I'll have to rush for lunch as it is."

"May I come over? — for a moment?" he begged.

"Not yet, eager one. In ten minutes. Let me finish with Oh Dear first. Then I'll be all ready for the hunt. I'm putting on my Robin Hood outfit —

you know, the greens and russets and the long feather. And I'm taking my 30-30. It's heavy enough for mountain lions."

"You've made me very happy," Dick continued.

"And you're making me late. Ring off. — Red Cloud, I love you more this minute — "

He heard her hang up, and was surprised, the next moment, that somehow he was reluctant to yield to the happiness that he had claimed was his. Rather, did it seem that he could still hear her voice and Graham's recklessly singing the "Gypsy Trail."

Had she been playing with Graham? Or had she been playing with him?

Such conduct, for her, was unprecedented and incomprehensible. As he groped for a solution, he saw her again in the moonlight, clinging to Graham with upturned lips, drawing Graham's lips down to hers.

Dick shook his head in bafflement, and glanced at his watch. At any rate, in ten minutes, in less than ten minutes, he would hold her in his arms and know.

So tedious was the brief space of time that he strolled slowly on the way, pausing to light a cigarette, throwing it away with the first inhalation, pausing again to listen to the busy click of typewriters from the secretaries' room. With still two minutes to spare, and knowing that one minute would take him to the door without a knob, he stopped in the patio and gazed at the wild canaries bathing in the fountain.

When they startled into the air, a cloud of fluttering gold and crystal droppings in the sunshine, Dick startled. The report of the rifle had come from Paula's wing above, and he identified it as her 30-30 as he dashed across the patio. She beat me to it, was his next thought, and what had been incomprehensible the moment before was as sharply definite as the roar of her rifle.

And across the patio, up the stairs, through the door left wide-flung behind him, continued to pulse in his brain: She beat me to it. She beat me to it.

She lay, crumpled and quivering, in hunting costume complete, save for the pair of tiny bronze spurs held over her in anguished impotence by the frightened maid.

His examination was quick. Paula breathed, although she was unconscious. From front to back, on the left side, the bullet had torn through. His next spring was to the telephone, and as he waited the delay of connecting through the house central he prayed that Hennessy would be at the stallion barn. A stable boy answered, and, while he ran to fetch the veterinary, Dick ordered Oh Joy to stay by the switches, and to send Oh My to him at once.

From the tail of his eye he saw Graham rush into the room and on to Paula.

"Hennessy," Dick commanded. "Come on the jump. Bring the needful for first aid. It's a rifle shot through the lungs or heart or both. Come right to Mrs. Forrest's rooms. Now jump."

"Don't touch her," he said sharply to Graham. "It might make it worse, start a worse hemorrhage."

Next he was back at Oh Joy.

"Start Callahan with the racing car for Eldorado. Tell him he'll meet Doctor Robinson on the way, and that he is to bring Doctor Robinson back with him on the jump. Tell him to jump like the devil was after him. Tell him Mrs. Forrest is hurt and that if he makes time he'll save her life."

Receiver to ear, he turned to look at Paula. Graham, bending over her but not touching her, met his eyes.

"Forrest," he began, "if you have done — "

But Dick hushed him with a warning glance directed toward Oh Dear who still held the bronze spurs in speechless helplessness.

"It can be discussed later," Dick said shortly, as he turned his mouth to the transmitter.

"Doctor Robinson?… Good. Mrs. Forrest has a rifle-shot through lungs or heart or maybe both. Callahan is on his way to meet you in the racing car. Keep coming as fast as God'll let you till you meet Callahan. Good-by."

Back to Paula, Graham stepped aside as Dick, on his knees, bent over her. His examination was brief. He looked up at Graham with a shake of the head and said:

"It's too ticklish to fool with."

He turned to Oh Dear.

"Put down those spurs and bring pillows. — Evan, lend a hand on the other side, and lift gently and steadily. — Oh Dear, shove that pillow under — easy, easy."

He looked up and saw Oh My standing silently, awaiting orders.

“Get Mr. Bonbright to relieve Oh Joy at the switches,” Dick commanded. “Tell Oh Joy to stand near to Mr. Bonbright to rush orders. Tell Oh Joy to have all the house boys around him to rush the orders. As soon as Saunders comes back with Mr. Bishop’s crowd, tell Oh Joy to start him out on the jump to Eldorado to look for Callahan in case Callahan has a smash up. Tell Oh Joy to get hold of Mr. Manson, and Mr. Pitts or any two of the managers who have machines and have them, with their machines, waiting here at the house. Tell Oh Joy to take care of Mr. Bishop’s crowd as usual. And you come back here where I can call you.”

Dick turned to Oh Dear.

“Now tell me how it happened.”

Oh Dear shook her head and wrung her hands.

“Where were you when the rifle went off?”

The Chinese girl swallowed and pointed toward the wardrobe room.

“Go on, talk,” Dick commanded harshly.

“Mrs. Forrest tell me to get spurs. I forget before. I go quick. I hear gun. I come back quick. I run.”

She pointed to Paula to show what she had found.

“But the gun?” Dick asked.

“Some trouble. Maybe gun no work. Maybe four minutes, maybe five minutes, Mrs. Forrest try make gun work.”

“Was she trying to make the gun work when you went for the spurs?”

Oh Dear nodded.

“Before that I say maybe Oh Joy can fix gun. Mrs. Forrest say never mind. She say you can fix. She put gun down. Then she try once more fix gun. Then she tell me get spurs. Then… gun go off.”

Hennessy’s arrival shut off further interrogation. His examination was scarcely less brief than Dick’s. He looked up with a shake of the head.

“Nothing I can dare tackle, Mr. Forrest. The hemorrhage has eased of itself, though it must be gathering inside. You’ve sent for a doctor?”

“Robinson. I caught him in his office. — He’s young, a good surgeon,” Dick explained to Graham. “He’s nervy and daring, and I’d trust him in this farther than some of the old ones with reputations. — What do you think, Mr. Hennessy? What chance has she?”

“Looks pretty bad, though I’m no judge, being only a horse doctor.

Robinson’ll know. Nothing to do but wait.”

Dick nodded and walked out on Paula's sleeping porch to listen for the exhaust of the racing machine Callahan drove. He heard the ranch limousine arrive leisurely and swiftly depart. Graham came out on the porch to him.

"I want to apologize, Forrest," he said. "I was rather off for the moment. I found you here, and I thought you were here when it happened. It must have been an accident.'"

"Poor little kid," Dick agreed. "And she so prided herself on never being careless with guns."

"I've looked at the rifle," Graham said, "but I couldn't find anything wrong with it."

"And that's how it happened. Whatever was wrong got right. That's how it went off."

And while Dick talked, building the fabric of the lie so that even Graham should be fooled, to himself he was understanding how well Paula had played the trick. That last singing of the "Gypsy Trail" had been her farewell to Graham and at the same time had provided against any suspicion on his part of what she had intended directly to do. It had been the same with him. She had had her farewell with him, and, the last thing, over the telephone, had assured him that she would never have any man but him in all the world.

He walked away from Graham to the far end of the porch.

"She had the grit, she had the grit," he muttered to himself with quivering lips. "Poor kid. She couldn't decide between the two, and so she solved it this way."

The noise of the racing machine drew him and Graham together, and together they entered the room to wait for the doctor. Graham betrayed unrest, reluctant to go, yet feeling that he must.

"Please stay on, Evan," Dick told him. "She liked you much, and if she does open her eyes she'll be glad to see you."

Dick and Graham stood apart from Paula while Doctor Robinson made his examination. When he arose with an air of finality, Dick looked his question. Robinson shook his head.

"Nothing to be done," he said. "It is a matter of hours, maybe of minutes." He hesitated, studying Dick's face for a moment. "I can ease her off if you say the word. She might possibly recover consciousness and suffer for a space."

Dick took a turn down the room and back, and when he spoke it was to Graham.

"Why not let her live again, brief as the time may be? The pain is immaterial. It will have its inevitable quick anodyne. It is what I would wish, what you would wish. She loved life, every moment of it. Why should we deny her any of the little left her?"

Graham bent his head in agreement, and Dick turned to the doctor.

"Perhaps you can stir her, stimulate her, to a return of consciousness. If you can, do so. And if the pain proves too severe, then you can ease her."

* * * * *

When her eyes fluttered open, Dick nodded Graham up beside him. At first bewilderment was all she betrayed, then her eyes focused first on Dick's face, then on Graham's, and, with recognition, her lips parted in a pitiful smile.

"I… I thought at first that I was dead," she said.

But quickly another thought was in her mind, and Dick divined it in her eyes as they searched him. The question was if he knew it was no accident. He gave no sign. She had planned it so, and she must pass believing it so.

"I… was… wrong," she said. She spoke slowly, faintly, in evident pain, with a pause for strength of utterance between each word. "I was always so cocksure I'd never have an accident, and look what I've gone and done."

"It's a darn shame," Dick said, sympathetically. "What was it? A jam?"

She nodded, and again her lips parted in the pitiful brave smile as she said whimsically: "Oh, Dick, go call the neighbors in and show them what little Paula's din.

"How serious is it?" she asked. "Be honest, Red Cloud, you know me," she added, after the briefest of pauses in which Dick had not replied.

He shook his head.

"How long?" she queried.

"Not long," came his answer. "You can ease off any time."

"You mean…?" She glanced aside curiously at the doctor and back to Dick, who nodded.

"It's only what I should have expected from you, Red Cloud," she murmured gratefully. "But is Doctor Robinson game for it?"

The doctor stepped around so that she could see him, and nodded.

"Thank you, doctor. And remember, I am to say when."

"Is there much pain?" Dick queried.

Her eyes were wide and brave and dreadful, and her lips quivered for the moment ere she replied, "Not much, but dreadful, quite dreadful. I won't care to stand it very long. I'll say when."

Once more the smile on her lips announced a whimsey.

"Life is queer, most queer, isn't it? And do you know, I want to go out with love-songs in my ears. You first, Evan, sing the 'Gypsy Trail.' — Why, I was singing it with you less than an hour ago. Think of it! Do, Evan, please."

Graham looked to Dick for permission, and Dick gave it with his eyes.

"Oh, and sing it robustly, gladly, madly, just as a womaning Gypsy man should sing it," she urged. "And stand back there, so, where I can see you."

And while Graham sang the whole song through to its:

"The heart of a man to the heart of a maid, light of my
tents be fleet,
Morning waits at the end of the world and the world is
all at our feet,"

Oh My, immobile-faced, a statue, stood in the far doorway awaiting commands. Oh Dear, grief-stricken, stood at her mistress's head, no longer wringing her hands, but holding them so tightly clasped that the finger-tips and nails showed white. To the rear, at Paula's dressing table, Doctor Robinson noiselessly dissolved in a glass the anodyne pellets and filled his hypodermic.

When Graham had finished, Paula thanked him with her eyes, closed them, and lay still for a space.

"And now, Red Cloud," she said when next she opened them, "the song of Ai-kut, and of the Dew-Woman, the Lush-Woman. Stand where Evan did, so that I can see you well."

And Dick chanted:

"I am Ai-kut, the first man of the Nishinam. Ai-kut is the short for Adam, and my father and my mother were the coyote and the moon. And this is Yo-to-to-wi, my wife. Yo-to-to-wi is the short for Eve. She is the first woman of the Nishinam.

"Me, I am Ai-kut. This is my dew of women. This is my honey-dew of women. Her father and her mother were the Sierra dawn and the summer east wind of the mountains. Together they conspired, and from the air and earth they sweated all sweetness till in a mist of their own love the leaves of the chaparral and the manzanita were dewed with the honey dew.

"Yo-to-to-wi is my honey-dew woman. Hear me! I am Ai-kut! Yo-to-to-wi is my quail-woman, my deer-woman, my lush-woman of all soft rain and fat soil. She was born of the thin starlight and the brittle dawn-light, in the morning of the world, and she is the one woman of all women to me."

Again, with closed eyes, she lay silent for a while. Once she attempted to draw a deeper breath, which caused her to cough slightly several times.

"Try not to cough," Dick said.

They could see her brows contract with the effort of will to control the irritating tickle that might precipitate a paroxysm.

"Oh Dear, come around where I can see you," she said, when she opened her eyes.

The Chinese girl obeyed, moving blindly, so that Robinson, with a hand on her arm, was compelled to guide her.

"Good-by, Oh Dear. You've been very good to me always. And sometimes, maybe, I have not been good to you. I am sorry. Remember, Mr. Forrest will always be your father and your mother…. And all my jade is yours."

She closed her eyes in token that the brief audience was over.

Again she was vexed by the tickling cough that threatened to grow more pronounced.

"I am ready, Dick," she said faintly, still with closed eyes. "I want to make my sleepy, sleepy noise. Is the doctor ready? Come closer. Hold my hand like you did before in the little death."

She turned her eyes to Graham, and Dick did not look, for he knew love was in that last look of hers, as he knew it would be when she looked into his eyes at the last.

"Once," she explained to Graham, "I had to go on the table, and I made Dick go with me into the anaesthetic chamber and hold my hand until I went under. You remember, Henley called it the drunken dark, the little death in life. It was very easy."

In the silence she continued her look, then turned her face and eyes back to Dick, who knelt close to her, holding her hand.

With a pressure of her fingers on his and a beckoning of her eyes, she drew his ear down to her lips.

“Red Cloud,” she whispered, “I love you best. And I am proud I belonged to you for such a long, long time.” Still closer she drew him with the pressure of her fingers. “I’m sorry there were no babies, Red Cloud.”

With the relaxing of her fingers she eased him from her so that she could look from one to the other.

“Two bonnie, bonnie men. Good-by, bonnie men. Good-by, Red Cloud.”

In the pause, they waited, while the doctor bared her arm for the needle.

“Sleepy, sleepy,” she twittered in mimicry of drowsy birds. “I am ready, doctor. Stretch the skin tight, first. You know I don’t like to be hurt. — Hold me tight, Dick.”

Robinson, receiving the eye permission from Dick, easily and quickly thrust the needle through the stretched skin, with steady hand sank the piston home, and with the ball of the finger soothingly rubbed the morphine into circulation.

“Sleepy, sleepy, boo’ful sleepy,” she murmured drowsily, after a time.

Semi-consciously she half-turned on her side, curved her free arm on the pillow and nestled her head on it, and drew her body up in nestling curves in the way Dick knew she loved to sleep.

After a long time, she sighed faintly, and began so easily to go that she was gone before they guessed. From without, the twittering of the canaries bathing in the fountain penetrated the silence of the room, and from afar came the trumpeting of Mountain Lad and the silver whinny of the Fotherington Princess.

THE END

JERRY OF THE ISLANDS

This lesser known work was first published in 1917.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV

FOREWORD

It is a misfortune to some fiction-writers that fiction and unveracity in the average person's mind mean one and the same thing. Several years ago I published a South Sea novel. The action was placed in the Solomon Islands. The action was praised by the critics and reviewers as a highly creditable effort of the imagination. As regards reality — they said there wasn't any. Of course, as every one knew, kinky-haired cannibals no longer obtained on the earth's surface, much less ran around with nothing on, chopping off one another's heads, and, on occasion, a white man's head as well.

Now listen. I am writing these lines in Honolulu, Hawaii. Yesterday, on the beach at Waikiki, a stranger spoke to me. He mentioned a mutual friend, Captain Kellar. When I was wrecked in the Solomons on the blackbirder, the *Minota*, it was Captain Kellar, master of the blackbirder, the *Eugénie*, who rescued me. The blacks had taken Captain Kellar's head, the stranger told me. He knew. He had represented Captain Kellar's mother in settling up the estate.

Listen. I received a letter the other day from Mr. C. M. Woodford, Resident Commissioner of the British Solomons. He was back at his post, after a long furlough to England, where he had entered his son into Oxford. A search of the shelves of almost any public library will bring to light a book entitled, "A Naturalist Among the Head Hunters." Mr. C. M. Woodford is the naturalist. He wrote the book.

To return to his letter. In the course of the day's work he casually and briefly mentioned a particular job he had just got off his hands. His absence in England had been the cause of delay. The job had been to make a punitive expedition to a neighbouring island, and, incidentally, to recover the heads of some mutual friends of ours — a white-trader, his white wife and children, and his white clerk. The expedition was successful, and Mr. Woodford concluded his account of the episode with a statement to the effect: "What especially struck me was the absence of pain and terror in their faces, which seemed to express, rather, serenity and repose" — this, mind you, of men and women of his own race whom he knew well and who had sat at dinner with him in his own house.

Other friends, with whom I have sat at dinner in the brave, rollicking days in the Solomons have since passed out — by the same way. My goodness! I sailed in the teak-built ketch, the *Minota*, on a blackbirding cruise to Malaita, and I took my wife along. The hatchet-marks were still raw on the door of our tiny stateroom advertising an event of a few months before. The event was the taking of Captain Mackenzie's head, Captain Mackenzie, at that time, being master of the Minota. As we sailed in to Langa-Langa, the British cruiser, the *Cambrian*, steamed out from the shelling of a village.

It is not expedient to burden this preliminary to my story with further details, which I do make asseveration I possess a-plenty. I hope I have given some assurance that the adventures of my dog hero in this novel are real adventures in a very real cannibal world. Bless you! — when I took my wife along on the cruise of the *Minota*, we found on board a nigger-chasing, adorable Irish terrier puppy, who was smooth-coated like Jerry, and whose name was Peggy. Had it not been for Peggy, this book would never have been written. She was the chattel of the *Minota's* splendid skipper. So much did Mrs. London and I come to love her, that Mrs. London, after the wreck of the *Minota*, deliberately and shamelessly stole her from the *Minota's* skipper. I do further admit that I did, deliberately and shamelessly, compound my wife's felony. We loved Peggy so! Dear royal, glorious little dog, buried at sea off the east coast of Australia!

I must add that Peggy, like Jerry, was born at Meringe Lagoon, on Meringe Plantation, which is of the Island of Ysabel, said Ysabel Island lying next north of Florida Island, where is the seat of government and where dwells the Resident Commissioner, Mr. C. M. Woodford. Still further and finally, I knew Peggy's mother and father well, and have often known the warm surge in the heart of me at the sight of that faithful couple running side by side along the beach. Terrence was his real name. Her name was Biddy.

JACK LONDON
WAIKIKI BEACH,
HONOLULU, OAHU, T.H.
June 5, 1915

CHAPTER I

Not until *Mister* Haggin abruptly picked him up under one arm and stepped into the sternsheets of the waiting whaleboat, did Jerry dream that anything untoward was to happen to him. *Mister* Haggin was Jerry's beloved master, and had been his beloved master for the six months of Jerry's life. Jerry did not know *Mister* Haggin as "master," for "master" had no place in Jerry's vocabulary, Jerry being a smooth-coated, golden-sorrel Irish terrier.

But in Jerry's vocabulary, "*Mister* Haggin" possessed all the definiteness of sound and meaning that the word "master" possesses in the vocabularies of humans in relation to their dogs. "*Mister* Haggin" was the sound Jerry had always heard uttered by Bob, the clerk, and by Derby, the foreman on the plantation, when they addressed his master. Also, Jerry had always heard the rare visiting two-legged man-creatures such as came on the *Arangi*, address his master as *Mister* Haggin.

But dogs being dogs, in their dim, inarticulate, brilliant, and heroic-worshipping ways misappraising humans, dogs think of their masters, and love their masters, more than the facts warrant. "Master" means to them, as "*Mister*" Haggin meant to Jerry, a deal more, and a great deal more, than it means to humans. The human considers himself as "master" to his dog, but the dog considers his master "God."

Now "God" was no word in Jerry's vocabulary, despite the fact that he already possessed a definite and fairly large vocabulary. "*Mister* Haggin" was the sound that meant "God." In Jerry's heart and head, in the mysterious centre of all his activities that is called consciousness, the sound, "*Mister* Haggin," occupied the same place that "God" occupies in human consciousness. By word and sound, to Jerry, "*Mister* Haggin" had the same connotation that "God" has to God-worshipping humans. In short, *Mister* Haggin was Jerry's God.

And so, when *Mister* Haggin, or God, or call it what one will with the limitations of language, picked Jerry up with imperative abruptness, tucked him under his arm, and stepped into the whaleboat, whose black crew immediately bent to the oars, Jerry was instantly and nervously aware that the unusual had begun to happen. Never before had he gone out on board the *Arangi*, which he could see growing larger and closer to each lip-hissing stroke of the oars of the blacks.

Only an hour before, Jerry had come down from the plantation house to the beach to see the *Arangi* depart. Twice before, in his half-year of life, had he had this delectable experience. Delectable it truly was, running up and down the white beach of sand-pounded coral, and, under the wise guidance of Biddy and Terrence, taking part in the excitement of the beach and even adding to it.

There was the nigger-chasing. Jerry had been born to hate niggers. His first experiences in the world as a puling puppy, had taught him that Biddy, his mother, and his father Terrence, hated niggers. A nigger was something to be snarled at. A nigger, unless he were a house-boy, was something to be attacked and bitten and torn if he invaded the compound. Biddy did it. Terrence did it. In doing it, they served their God — *Mister* Haggin. Niggers were two-legged lesser creatures who toiled and slaved for their two-legged white lords, who lived in the labour barracks afar off, and who were so much lesser and lower that they must not dare come near the habitation of their lords.

And nigger-chasing was adventure. Not long after he had learned to sprawl, Jerry had learned that. One took his chances. As long as *Mister* Haggin, or Derby, or Bob, was about, the niggers took their chasing. But there were times when the white lords were not about. Then it was "'Ware niggers!" One must dare to chase only with due precaution. Because then, beyond the white lord's eyes, the niggers had a way, not merely of scowling and muttering, but of attacking four-legged dogs with stones and clubs. Jerry had seen his mother so mishandled, and, ere he had learned discretion, alone in the high grass had been himself club-mauled by Godarmy, the black who wore a china door-knob suspended on his chest from his neck on a string of sennit braided from cocoanut fibre. More. Jerry remembered another high-grass adventure, when he and his brother Michael had fought Owmi, another black distinguishable for the cogged wheels of an alarm clock on his chest. Michael had been so severely struck on his head that for ever after his left ear had remained sore and had withered into a peculiar wilted and twisted upward cock.

Still more. There had been his brother Patsy, and his sister Kathleen, who had disappeared two months before, who had ceased and no longer were. The great god, *Mister* Haggin, had raged up and down the plantation. The bush had been searched. Half a dozen niggers had been whipped. And *Mister* Haggin had failed to solve the mystery of Patsy's and

Kathleen's disappearance. But Biddy and Terrence knew. So did Michael and Jerry. The four-months' old Patsy and Kathleen had gone into the cooking-pot at the barracks, and their puppy-soft skins had been destroyed in the fire. Jerry knew this, as did his father and mother and brother, for they had smelled the unmistakable burnt-meat smell, and Terrence, in his rage of knowledge, had even attacked Mogom the house-boy, and been reprimanded and cuffed by *Mister* Haggin, who had not smelled and did not understand, and who had always to impress discipline on all creatures under his roof-tree.

But on the beach, when the blacks, whose terms of service were up came down with their trade-boxes on their heads to depart on the *Arangi*, was the time when nigger-chasing was not dangerous. Old scores could be settled, and it was the last chance, for the blacks who departed on the *Arangi* never came back. As an instance, this very morning Biddy, remembering a secret mauling at the hands of Lerumie, laid teeth into his naked calf and threw him sprawling into the water, trade-box, earthly possessions and all, and then laughed at him, sure in the protection of *Mister* Haggin who grinned at the episode.

Then, too, there was usually at least one bush-dog on the *Arangi* at which Jerry and Michael, from the beach, could bark their heads off. Once, Terrence, who was nearly as large as an Airedale and fully as lion-hearted — Terrence the Magnificent, as Tom Haggin called him — had caught such a bush-dog trespassing on the beach and given him a delightful thrashing, in which Jerry and Michael, and Patsy and Kathleen, who were at the time alive, had joined with many shrill yelps and sharp nips. Jerry had never forgotten the ecstasy of the hair, unmistakably doggy in scent, which had filled his mouth at his one successful nip. Bush-dogs were dogs — he recognized them as his kind; but they were somehow different from his own lordly breed, different and lesser, just as the blacks were compared with *Mister* Haggin, Derby, and Bob.

But Jerry did not continue to gaze at the nearing *Arangi*. Biddy, wise with previous bitter bereavements, had sat down on the edge of the sand, her fore-feet in the water, and was mouthing her woe. That this concerned him, Jerry knew, for her grief tore sharply, albeit vaguely, at his sensitive, passionate heart. What it presaged he knew not, save that it was disaster and catastrophe connected with him. As he looked back at her, rough-coated and grief-stricken, he could see Terrence hovering solicitously near her. He, too, was rough-coated, as was Michael, and as Patsy and Kathleen had been, Jerry being the one smooth-coated member of the family.

Further, although Jerry did not know it and Tom Haggin did, Terrence was a royal lover and a devoted spouse. Jerry, from his earliest impressions, could remember the way Terrence had of running with Biddy, miles and miles along the beaches or through the avenues of cocoanuts, side by side with her, both with laughing mouths of sheer delight. As these were the only dogs, besides his brothers and sisters and the several eruptions of strange bush-dogs that Jerry knew, it did not enter his head otherwise than that this was the way of dogs, male and female, wedded and faithful. But Tom Haggin knew its unusualness. "Proper affinities," he declared, and repeatedly declared, with warm voice and moist eyes of appreciation. "A gentleman, that Terrence, and a four-legged proper man. A man-dog, if there ever was one, four-square as the legs on the four corners of him. And prepotent! My word! His blood'd breed true for a thousand generations, and the cool head and the kindly brave heart of him."

Terrence did not voice his sorrow, if sorrow he had; but his hovering about Biddy tokened his anxiety for her. Michael, however, yielding to the contagion, sat beside his mother and barked angrily out across the increasing stretch of water as he would have barked at any danger that crept and rustled in the jungle. This, too, sank to Jerry's heart, adding weight to his sure intuition that dire fate, he knew not what, was upon him.

For his six months of life, Jerry knew a great deal and knew very little. He knew, without thinking about it, without knowing that he knew, why Biddy, the wise as well as the brave, did not act upon all the message that her heart voiced to him, and spring into the water and swim after him. She had protected him like a lioness when the big *puarka* (which, in Jerry's vocabulary, along with grunts and squeals, was the combination of sound, or word, for "pig") had tried to devour him where he was cornered under the high-piled plantation house. Like a lioness, when the cook-boy had struck him with a stick to drive him out of the kitchen, had Biddy sprung upon the black, receiving without wince or whimper one straight blow from the stick, and then downing him and mauling him among his pots and pans until dragged (for the first time snarling) away by the unchiding *Mister* Haggin, who; however, administered sharp words to the cook-boy for daring to lift hand against a four-legged dog belonging to a god.

Jerry knew why his mother did not plunge into the water after him. The salt sea, as well as the lagoons that led out of the salt sea, were taboo. "Taboo," as word or sound, had no place in Jerry's vocabulary. But its definition, or significance, was there in the quickest part of his consciousness. He possessed a dim, vague, imperative knowingness that it was not merely not good, but supremely disastrous, leading to the mistily glimpsed sense of utter endingness for a dog, for any dog, to go into the water where slipped and slid and noiselessly paddled, sometimes on top, sometimes emerging from the depths, great scaly monsters, huge-jawed and horribly-toothed, that snapped down and engulfed a dog in an instant just as the fowls of *Mister* Haggin snapped and engulfed grains of corn.

Often he had heard his father and mother, on the safety of the sand, bark and rage their hatred of those terrible sea-dwellers, when, close to the beach, they appeared on the surface like logs awash. "Crocodile" was no word in Jerry's vocabulary. It was an image, an image of a log awash that was different from any log in that it was alive. Jerry, who heard, registered, and recognized many words that were as truly tools of thought to him as they were to humans, but who, by inarticulateness of birth and breed, could not utter these many words, nevertheless in his mental processes, used images just as articulate men use words in their own mental processes. And after all, articulate men, in the act of thinking, willy nilly use images that correspond to words and that amplify words.

Perhaps, in Jerry's brain, the rising into the foreground of consciousness of an image of a log awash connoted more intimate and fuller comprehension of the thing being thought about, than did the word "crocodile," and its accompanying image, in the foreground of a human's consciousness. For Jerry really did know more about crocodiles than the average human. He could smell a crocodile farther off and more differentiatingly than could any man, than could even a salt-water black or a bushman smell one. He could tell when a crocodile, hauled up from the lagoon, lay without sound or movement, and perhaps asleep, a hundred feet away on the floor mat of jungle.

He knew more of the language of crocodiles than did any man. He had better means and opportunities of knowing. He knew their many noises that were as grunts and slubbers. He knew their anger noises, their fear noises, their food noises, their love noises. And these noises were as definitely words in his vocabulary as are words in a human's vocabulary. And these crocodile noises were tools of thought. By them he weighed and judged and determined his own consequent courses of action, just like any human; or, just like any human, lazily resolved upon no course of action, but merely noted and registered a clear comprehension of something that was going on about him that did not require a correspondence of action on his part.

And yet, what Jerry did not know was very much. He did not know the size of the world. He did not know that this Meringe Lagoon, backed by high, forested mountains and fronted and sheltered by the off-shore coral islets, was anything else than the entire world. He did not know that it was a mere fractional part of the great island of Ysabel, that was again one island of a thousand, many of them greater, that composed the Solomon Islands that men marked on charts as a group of specks in the vastitude of the far-western South Pacific.

It was true, there was a somewhere else or a something beyond of which he was dimly aware. But whatever it was, it was mystery. Out of it, things that had not been, suddenly were. Chickens and puarkas and cats, that he had never seen before, had a way of abruptly appearing on Meringe Plantation. Once, even, had there been an eruption of strange four-legged, horned and hairy creatures, the images of which, registered in his brain, would have been identifiable in the brains of humans with what humans worded "goats."

It was the same way with the blacks. Out of the unknown, from the somewhere and something else, too unconditional for him to know any of the conditions, instantly they appeared, full-statured, walking about Meringe Plantation with loin-cloths about their middles and bone bodkins through their noses, and being put to work by *Mister* Haggin, Derby, and Bob. That their appearance was coincidental with the arrival of the *Arangi* was an association that occurred as a matter of course in Jerry's brain. Further, he did not bother, save that there was a companion association, namely, that their occasional disappearances into the beyond was likewise coincidental with the *Arangi's* departure.

Jerry did not query these appearances and disappearances. It never entered his golden-sorrel head to be curious about the affair or to attempt to solve it. He accepted it in much the way he accepted the wetness of water and the heat of the sun. It was the way of life and of the world he knew. His hazy awareness was no more than an awareness of something — which, by the way, corresponds very fairly with the hazy awareness of the average human of the mysteries of birth and death and of the beyondness about which they have no definiteness of comprehension.

For all that any man may gainsay, the ketch *Arangi*, trader and blackbirder in the Solomon Islands, may have signified in Jerry's mind as much the mysterious boat that traffics between the two worlds, as, at one time, the boat that Charon sculled across the Styx signified to the human mind. Out of the nothingness men came. Into the nothingness they went. And they came and went always on the *Arangi*.

And to the *Arangi*, this hot-white tropic morning, Jerry went on the whaleboat under the arm of his *Mister* Haggin, while on the beach Biddy moaned her woe, and Michael, not sophisticated, barked the eternal challenge of youth to the Unknown.

CHAPTER II

From the whaleboat, up the low side of the *Arangi*, and over her six-inch rail of teak to her teak deck, was but a step, and Tom Haggin made it easily with Jerry still under his arm. The deck was cluttered with an exciting crowd. Exciting the crowd would have been to untravelled humans of civilization, and exciting it was to Jerry; although to Tom Haggin and Captain Van Horn it was a mere commonplace of everyday life.

The deck was small because the *Arangi* was small. Originally a teak-built, gentleman's yacht, brass-fitted, copper-fastened, angle-ironed, sheathed in man-of-war copper and with a fin-keel of bronze, she had been sold into the Solomon Islands' trade for the purpose of blackbirding or nigger-running. Under the law, however, this traffic was dignified by being called "recruiting."

The *Arangi* was a labour-recruit ship that carried the new-caught, cannibal blacks from remote islands to labour on the new plantations where white men turned dank and pestilential swamp and jungle into rich and stately cocoanut groves. The *Arangi's* two masts were of Oregon cedar, so scraped and hot-paraffined that they shone like tan opals in the glare of sun. Her excessive sail plan enabled her to sail like a witch, and, on occasion, gave Captain Van Horn, his white mate, and his fifteen black boat's crew as much as they could handle. She was sixty feet over all, and the cross beams of her crown deck had not been weakened by deck-houses. The only breaks — and no beams had been cut for them — were the main cabin skylight and companionway, the booby hatch for'ard over the tiny forecastle, and the small hatch aft that let down into the store-room.

And on this small deck, in addition to the crew, were the "return" niggers from three far-flung plantations. By "return" was meant that their three years of contract labour was up, and that, according to contract, they were being returned to their home villages on the wild island of Malaita. Twenty of them — familiar, all, to Jerry — were from Meringe; thirty of them came from the Bay of a Thousand Ships, in the Russell Isles; and the remaining twelve were from Pennduffryn on the east coast of Guadalcanar. In addition to these — and they were all on deck, chattering and piping in queer, almost elfish, falsetto voices — were the two white men, Captain

Van Horn and his Danish mate, Borckman, making a total of seventy-nine souls.

"Thought your heart 'd failed you at the last moment," was Captain Van Horn's greeting, a quick pleasure light glowing into his eyes as they noted Jerry.

"It was sure near to doin' it," Tom Haggin answered. "It's only for you I'd a done it, annyways. Jerry's the best of the litter, barrin' Michael, of course, the two of them bein' all that's left and no better than them that was lost. Now that Kathleen was a sweet dog, the spit of Biddy if she'd lived. — Here, take 'm."

With a jerk of abruptness, he deposited Jerry in Van Horn's arms and turned away along the deck.

"An' if bad luck comes to him I'll never forgive you, Skipper," he flung roughly over his shoulder.

"They'll have to take my head first," the skipper chuckled.

"An' not unlikely, my brave laddy buck," Haggin growled. "Meringe owes Somo four heads, three from the dysentery, an' another wan from a tree fallin' on him the last fortnight. He was the son of a chief at that."

"Yes, and there's two heads more that the *Arangi* owes Somo," Van Horn nodded. "You recollect, down to the south'ard last year, a chap named Hawkins was lost in his whaleboat running the Arli Passage?" Haggin, returning along the deck, nodded. "Two of his boat's crew were Somo boys. I'd recruited them for Ugi Plantation. With your boys, that makes six heads the *Arangi* owes. But what of it? There's one salt-water village, acrost on the weather coast, where the *Arangi* owes eighteen. I recruited them for Aolo, and being salt-water men they put them on the *Sandfly* that was lost on the way to the Santa Cruz. They've got a jack-pot over there on the weather coast — my word, the boy that could get my head would be a second Carnegie! A hundred and fifty pigs and shell money no end the village's collected for the chap that gets me and delivers."

"And they ain't — yet," Haggin snorted.

"No fear," was the cheerful retort.

"You talk like Arbuckle used to talk," Haggin censured. "Manny's the time I've heard him string it off. Poor old Arbuckle. The most sure and most precautious chap that ever handled niggers. He never went to sleep without spreadin' a box of tacks on the floor, and when it wasn't them it was crumpled newspapers. I remember me well, bein' under the same roof at the time on Florida, when a big tomcat chased a cockroach into the papers. And it was blim, blam, blim, six times an' twice over, with his two big horse-pistols, an' the house perforated like a cullender. Likewise there was a dead tom-cat. He could shoot in the dark with never an aim, pullin' trigger with the second finger and pointing with the first finger laid straight along the barrel.

"No, sir, my laddy buck. He was the bully boy with the glass eye. The nigger didn't live that'd lift his head. But they got 'm. They got 'm. He lasted fourteen years, too. It was his cook-boy. Hatcheted 'm before breakfast. An' it's well I remember our second trip into the bush after what was left of 'm."

"I saw his head after you'd turned it over to the Commissioner at Tulagi," Van Horn supplemented.

"An' the peaceful, quiet, everyday face of him on it, with almost the same old smile I'd seen a thousand times. It dried on 'm that way over the smokin' fire. But they got 'm, if it did take fourteen years. There's manny's the head that goes to Malaita, manny's the time untooken; but, like the old pitcher, it's tooken in the end."

"But I've got their goat," the captain insisted. "When trouble's hatching, I go straight to them and tell them what. They can't get the hang of it. Think I've got some powerful devil-devil medicine."

Tom Haggin thrust out his hand in abrupt good-bye, resolutely keeping his eyes from dropping to Jerry in the other's arms.

"Keep your eye on my return boys," he cautioned, as he went over the side, "till you land the last mother's son of 'm. They've got no cause to love Jerry or his breed, an' I'd hate ill to happen 'm at a nigger's hands. An' in the dark of the night 'tis like as not he can do a fare-you-well overside. Don't take your eye off 'm till you're quit of the last of 'm."

At sight of big *Mister* Haggin deserting him and being pulled away in the whaleboat, Jerry wriggled and voiced his anxiety in a low, whimpering whine. Captain Van Horn snuggled him closer in his arm with a caress of his free hand.

"Don't forget the agreement," Tom Haggin called back across the widening water. "If aught happens you, Jerry's to come back to me."

"I'll make a paper to that same and put it with the ship's articles," was Van Horn's reply.

Among the many words possessed by Jerry was his own name; and in the talk of the two men he had recognised it repeatedly, and he was aware, vaguely, that the talk was related to the vague and unguessably terrible thing that was happening to him. He wriggled more determinedly, and Van Horn set him down on the deck. He sprang to the rail with more quickness than was to be expected of an awkward puppy of six months, and not the quick attempt of Van Horn to cheek him would have succeeded. But Jerry recoiled from the open water lapping the *Arangi's* side. The taboo was upon him. It was the image of the log awash that was not a log but that was alive, luminous in his brain, that checked him. It was not reason on his part, but inhibition which had become habit.

He plumped down on his bob tail, lifted golden muzzle skyward, and emitted a long puppy-wail of dismay and grief.

"It's all right, Jerry, old man, brace up and be a man-dog," Van Horn soothed him.

But Jerry was not to be reconciled. While this indubitably was a white-skinned god, it was not his god. *Mister* Haggin was his god, and a superior god at that. Even he, without thinking about it at all, recognized that. His *Mister* Haggin wore pants and shoes. This god on the deck beside him was more like a black. Not only did he not wear pants, and was barefooted and barelegged, but about his middle, just like any black, he wore a brilliant-coloured loin-cloth, that, like a kilt, fell nearly to his sunburnt knees.

Captain Van Horn was a handsome man and a striking man, although Jerry did not know it. If ever a Holland Dutchman stepped out of a Rembrandt frame, Captain Van Horn was that one, despite the fact that he was New York born, as had been his knickerbocker ancestors before him clear back to the time when New York was not New York but New Amsterdam. To complete his costume, a floppy felt hat, distinctly Rembrandtish in effect, perched half on his head and mostly over one ear; a sixpenny, white cotton undershirt covered his torso; and from a belt about his middle dangled a tobacco pouch, a sheath-knife, filled clips of cartridges, and a huge automatic pistol in a leather holster.

On the beach, Biddy, who had hushed her grief, lifted it again when she heard Jerry's wail. And Jerry, desisting a moment to listen, heard Michael beside her, barking his challenge, and saw, without being conscious of it, Michael's withered ear with its persistent upward cock. Again, while Captain Van Horn and the mate, Borckman, gave orders, and while the

Arangi's mainsail and spanker began to rise up the masts, Jerry loosed all his heart of woe in what Bob told Derby on the beach was the "grandest vocal effort" he had ever heard from any dog, and that, except for being a bit thin, Caruso didn't have anything on Jerry. But the song was too much for Haggin, who, as soon as he had landed, whistled Biddy to him and strode rapidly away from the beach.

At sight of her disappearing, Jerry was guilty of even more Caruso-like effects, which gave great joy to a Pennduffryn return boy who stood beside him. He laughed and jeered at Jerry with falsetto chucklings that were more like the jungle-noises of tree-dwelling creatures, half-bird and half-man, than of a man, all man, and therefore a god. This served as an excellent counter-irritant. Indignation that a mere black should laugh at him mastered Jerry, and the next moment his puppy teeth, sharp-pointed as needles, had scored the astonished black's naked calf in long parallel scratches from each of which leaped the instant blood. The black sprang away in trepidation, but the blood of Terrence the Magnificent was true in Jerry, and, like his father before him, he followed up, slashing the black's other calf into a ruddy pattern.

At this moment, anchor broken out and headsails running up, Captain Van Horn, whose quick eye had missed no detail of the incident, with an order to the black helmsman turned to applaud Jerry.

"Go to it, Jerry!" he encouraged. "Get him! Shake him down! Sick him! Get him! Get him!"

The black, in defence, aimed a kick at Jerry, who, leaping in instead of away — another inheritance from Terrence — avoided the bare foot and printed a further red series of parallel lines on the dark leg. This was too much, and the black, afraid more of Van Horn than of Jerry, turned and fled for'ard, leaping to safety on top of the eight Lee-Enfield rifles that lay on top of the cabin skylight and that were guarded by one member of the boat's crew. About the skylight Jerry stormed, leaping up and falling back, until Captain Van Horn called him off.

"Some nigger-chaser, that pup, *some* nigger-chaser!" Van Horn confided to Borckman, as he bent to pat Jerry and give him due reward of praise.

And Jerry, under this caressing hand of a god, albeit it did not wear pants, forgot for a moment longer the fate that was upon him.

"He's a lion-dog — more like an Airedale than an Irish terrier," Van Horn went on to his mate, still petting. "Look at the size of him already. Look at the bone of him. Some chest that. He's got the endurance. And he'll be some dog when he grows up to those feet of his."

Jerry had just remembered his grief and was starting a rush across the deck to the rail to gaze at Meringe growing smaller every second in the distance, when a gust of the South-east Trade smote the sails and pressed the *Arangi* down. And down the deck, slanted for the moment to forty-five degrees, Jerry slipped and slid, vainly clawing at the smooth surface for a hold. He fetched up against the foot of the mizzenmast, while Captain Van Horn, with the sailor's eye for the coral patch under his bow, gave the order "Hard a-lee!"

Borckman and the black steersman echoed his words, and, as the wheel spun down, the *Arangi*, with the swiftness of a witch, rounded into the wind and attained a momentary even keel to the flapping of her headsails and a shifting of headsheets.

Jerry, still intent on Meringe, took advantage of the level footing to recover himself and scramble toward the rail. But he was deflected by the crash of the mainsheet blocks on the stout deck-traveller, as the mainsail, emptied of the wind and feeling the wind on the other side, swung crazily across above him. He cleared the danger of the mainsheet with a wild leap (although no less wild had been Van Horn's leap to rescue him), and found himself directly under the mainboom with the huge sail looming above him as if about to fall upon him and crush him.

It was Jerry's first experience with sails of any sort. He did not know the beasts, much less the way of them, but, in his vivid recollection, when he had been a tiny puppy, burned the memory of the hawk, in the middle of the compound, that had dropped down upon him from out of the sky. Under that colossal threatened impact he crouched down to the deck. Above him, falling upon him like a bolt from the blue, was a winged hawk unthinkably vaster than the one he had encountered. But in his crouch was no hint of cower. His crouch was a gathering together, an assembling of all the parts of him under the rule of the spirit of him, for the spring upward to meet in mid career this monstrous, menacing thing.

But, the succeeding fraction of a moment, so that Jerry, leaping, missed even the shadow of it, the mainsail, with a second crash of blocks on traveller, had swung across and filled on the other tack.

Van Horn had missed nothing of it. Before, in his time, he had seen young dogs frightened into genuine fits by their first encounters with heaven-filling, sky-obscuring, down-impending sails. This was the first dog he had seen leap with bared teeth, undismayed, to grapple with the huge unknown.

With spontaneity of admiration, Van Horn swept Jerry from the deck and gathered him into his arms.

CHAPTER III

Jerry quite forgot Meringe for the time being. As he well remembered, the hawk had been sharp of beak and claw. This air-flapping, thunder-crashing monster needed watching. And Jerry, crouching for the spring and ever struggling to maintain his footing on the slippery, heeling deck, kept his eyes on the mainsail and uttered low growls at any display of movement on its part.

The *Arangi* was beating out between the coral patches of the narrow channel into the teeth of the brisk trade wind. This necessitated frequent tacks, so that, overhead, the mainsail was ever swooping across from port tack to starboard tack and back again, making air-noises like the swish of wings, sharply rat-tat-tatting its reef points and loudly crashing its mainsheet gear along the traveller. Half a dozen times, as it swooped overhead, Jerry leaped for it, mouth open to grip, lips writhed clear of the clean puppy teeth that shone in the sun like gems of ivory.

Failing in every leap, Jerry achieved a judgment. In passing, it must be noted that this judgment was only arrived at by a definite act of reasoning. Out of a series of observations of the thing, in which it had threatened, always in the same way, a series of attacks, he had found that it had not hurt him nor come in contact with him at all. Therefore — although he did not stop to think that he was thinking — it was not the dangerous, destroying thing he had first deemed it. It might be well to be wary of it, though already it had taken its place in his classification of things that appeared terrible but were not terrible. Thus, he had learned not to fear the roar of the wind among the palms when he lay snug on the plantation-house veranda, nor the onslaught of the waves, hissing and rumbling into harmless foam on the beach at his feet.

Many times, in the course of the day, alertly and nonchalantly, almost with a quizzical knowingness, Jerry cocked his head at the mainsail when it made sudden swooping movements or slacked and tautened its crashing sheet-gear. But he no longer crouched to spring for it. That had been the first lesson, and quickly mastered.

Having settled the mainsail, Jerry returned in mind to Meringe. But there was no Meringe, no Biddy and Terrence and Michael on the beach; no *Mister* Haggin and Derby and Bob; no beach: no land with the palm-trees near and the mountains afar off everlastingly lifting their green peaks into the sky. Always, to starboard or to port, at the bow or over the stern, when he stood up resting his fore-feet on the six-inch rail and gazing, he saw only the ocean, broken-faced and turbulent, yet orderly marching its white-crested seas before the drive of the trade.

Had he had the eyes of a man, nearly two yards higher than his own from the deck, and had they been the trained eyes of a man, sailor-man at that, Jerry could have seen the low blur of Ysabel to the north and the blur of Florida to the south, ever taking on definiteness of detail as the *Arangi* sagged close-hauled, with a good full, port-tacked to the south-east trade. And had he had the advantage of the marine glasses with which Captain Van Horn elongated the range of his eyes, he could have seen, to the east, the far peaks of Malaita lifting life-shadowed pink cloud-puffs above the sea-rim.

But the present was very immediate with Jerry. He had early learned the iron law of the immediate, and to accept what *was* when it was, rather than to strain after far other things. The sea was. The land no longer was. The *Arangi* certainly was, along with the life that cluttered her deck. And he proceeded to get acquainted with what was — in short, to know and to adjust himself to his new environment.

His first discovery was delightful — a wild-dog puppy from the Ysabel bush, being taken back to Malaita by one of the Meringe return boys. In age they were the same, but their breeding was different. The wild-dog was what he was, a wild-dog, cringing and sneaking, his ears for ever down, his tail for ever between his legs, for ever apprehending fresh misfortune and ill-treatment to fall on him, for ever fearing and resentful, fending off threatened hurt with lips curling malignantly from his puppy fangs, cringing under a blow, squalling his fear and his pain, and ready always for a treacherous slash if luck and safety favoured.

The wild-dog was maturer than Jerry, larger-bodied, and wiser in wickedness; but Jerry was blue-blooded, right-selected, and valiant. The wild-dog had come out of a selection equally rigid; but it was a different sort of selection. The bush ancestors from whom he had descended had survived by being fear-selected. They had never voluntarily fought against odds. In the open they had never attacked save when the prey was weak or defenceless. In place of courage, they had lived by creeping, and slinking, and hiding from danger. They had been selected blindly by nature, in a cruel and ignoble environment, where the prize of living was to be gained, in the main, by the cunning of cowardice, and, on occasion, by desperateness of defence when in a corner.

But Jerry had been love-selected and courage-selected. His ancestors had been deliberately and consciously chosen by men, who, somewhere in the forgotten past, had taken the wild-dog and made it into the thing they visioned and admired and desired it to be. It must never fight like a rat in a corner, because it must never be rat-like and slink into a corner. Retreat must be unthinkable. The dogs in the past who retreated had been rejected by men. They had not become Jerry's ancestors. The dogs selected for Jerry's ancestors had been the brave ones, the up-standing and out-dashing ones, who flew into the face of danger and battled and died, but who never gave ground. And, since it is the way of kind to beget kind, Jerry was what Terrence was before him, and what Terrence's forefathers had been for a long way back.

So it was that Jerry, when he chanced upon the wild-dog stowed shrewdly away from the wind in the lee-corner made by the mainmast and the cabin skylight, did not stop to consider whether the creature was bigger or fiercer than he. All he knew was that it was the ancient enemy — the wild-dog that had not come in to the fires of man. With a wild paean of joy that attracted Captain Van Horn's all-hearing ears and all-seeing eyes, Jerry sprang to the attack. The wild puppy gained his feet in full retreat with incredible swiftness, but was caught by the rush of Jerry's body and rolled over and over on the sloping deck. And as he rolled, and felt sharp teeth pricking him, he snapped and snarled, alternating snarls with whimperings and squallings of terror, pain, and abject humility.

And Jerry was a gentleman, which is to say he was a gentle dog. He had been so selected. Because the thing did not fight back, because it was abject and whining, because it was helpless under him, he abandoned the attack, disengaging himself from the top of the tangle into which he had slid in the lee scuppers. He did not think about it. He did it because he was so made. He stood up on the reeling deck, feeling excellently satisfied with the delicious, wild-doggy smell of hair in his mouth and consciousness, and in his ears and consciousness the praising cry of Captain Van Horn: "Good boy, Jerry! You're the goods, Jerry! Some dog, eh! *Some* dog!"

As he stalked away, it must be admitted that Jerry displayed pride in himself, his gait being a trifle stiff-legged, the cocking of his head back over his shoulder at the whining wild-dog having all the articulateness of: “Well, I guess I gave you enough this time. You’ll keep out of my way after this.”

Jerry continued the exploration of his new and tiny world that was never at rest, for ever lifting, heeling, and lunging on the rolling face of the sea. There were the Meringe return boys. He made it a point to identify all of them, receiving, while he did so, scowls and mutterings, and reciprocating with cocky bullyings and threatenings. Being so trained, he walked on his four legs superior to them, two-legged though they were; for he had moved and lived always under the aegis of the great two-legged and be-trousered god, *Mister* Haggin.

Then there were the strange return boys, from Pennduffryn and the Bay of a Thousand Ships. He insisted on knowing them all. He might need to know them in some future time. He did not think this. He merely equipped himself with knowledge of his environment without any awareness of provision or without bothering about the future.

In his own way of acquiring knowledge, he quickly discovered, just as on the plantation house-boys were different from field-boys, that on the *Arangi* there was a classification of boys different from the return boys. This was the boat’s crew. The fifteen blacks who composed it were closer than the others to Captain Van Horn. They seemed more directly to belong to the *Arangi* and to him. They laboured under him at word of command, steering at the wheel, pulling and hauling on ropes, healing water upon the deck from overside and scrubbing with brooms.

Just as Jerry had learned from *Mister* Haggin that he must be more tolerant of the house-boys than of the field-boys if they trespassed on the compound, so, from Captain Van Horn, he learned that he must be more tolerant of the boat’s crew than of the return boys. He had less license with them, more license with the others. As long as Captain Van Horn did not want his boat’s crew chased, it was Jerry’s duty not to chase. On the other hand he never forgot that he was a white-god’s dog. While he might not chase these particular blacks, he declined familiarity with them. He kept his eye on them. He had seen blacks as tolerated as these, lined up and whipped by *Mister* Haggin. They occupied an intermediate place in the scheme of things, and they were to be watched in case they did not keep their place. He accorded them room, but he did not accord them equality. At the best, he could be stand-offishly considerate of them.

He made thorough examination of the galley, a rude affair, open on the open deck, exposed to wind and rain and storm, a small stove that was not even a ship's stove, on which somehow, aided by strings and wedges, commingled with much smoke, two blacks managed to cook the food for the four-score persons on board.

Next, he was interested by a strange proceeding on the part of the boat's crew. Upright pipes, serving as stanchions, were being screwed into the top of the *Arangi's* rail so that they served to support three strands of barbed wire that ran completely around the vessel, being broken only at the gangway for a narrow space of fifteen inches. That this was a precaution against danger, Jerry sensed without a passing thought to it. All his life, from his first impressions of life, had been passed in the heart of danger, ever-impending, from the blacks. In the plantation house at Meringe, always the several white men had looked askance at the many blacks who toiled for them and belonged to them. In the living-room, where were the eating-table, the billiard-table, and the phonograph, stood stands of rifles, and in each bedroom, beside each bed, ready to hand, had been revolvers and rifles. As well, *Mister* Haggin and Derby and Bob had always carried revolvers in their belts when they left the house to go among their blacks.

Jerry knew these noise-making things for what they were — instruments of destruction and death. He had seen live things destroyed by them, such as puarkas, goats, birds, and crocodiles. By means of such things the white-gods by their will crossed space without crossing it with their bodies, and destroyed live things. Now he, in order to damage anything, had to cross space with his body to get to it. He was different. He was limited. All impossible things were possible to the unlimited, two-legged white-gods. In a way, this ability of theirs to destroy across space was an elongation of claw and fang. Without pondering it, or being conscious of it, he accepted it as he accepted the rest of the mysterious world about him.

Once, even, had Jerry seen his *Mister* Haggin deal death at a distance in another noise-way. From the veranda he had seen him fling sticks of exploding dynamite into a screeching mass of blacks who had come raiding from the Beyond in the long war canoes, beaked and black, carved and inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which they had left hauled up on the beach at the door of Meringe.

Many precautions by the white-gods had Jerry been aware of, and so, sensing it almost in intangible ways, as a matter of course he accepted this barbed-wire fence on the floating world as a mark of the persistence of danger. Disaster and death hovered close about, waiting the chance to leap upon life and drag it down. Life had to be very alive in order to live was the law Jerry had learned from the little of life he knew.

Watching the rigging up of the barbed wire, Jerry's next adventure was an encounter with Lerumie, the return boy from Meringe, who, only that morning, on the beach embarking, had been rolled by Biddy, along with his possessions into the surf. The encounter occurred on the starboard side of the skylight, alongside of which Lerumie was standing as he gazed into a cheap trade-mirror and combed his kinky hair with a hand-carved comb of wood.

Jerry, scarcely aware of Lerumie's presence, was trotting past on his way aft to where Borckman, the mate, was superintending the stringing of the barbed wire to the stanchions. And Lerumie, with a side-long look to see if the deed meditated for his foot was screened from observation, aimed a kick at the son of his four-legged enemy. His bare foot caught Jerry on the sensitive end of his recently bobbed tail, and Jerry, outraged, with the sense of sacrilege committed upon him, went instantly wild.

Captain Van Horn, standing aft on the port quarter, gauging the slant of the wind on the sails and the inadequate steering of the black at the wheel, had not seen Jerry because of the intervening skylight. But his eyes had taken in the shoulder movement of Lerumie that advertised the balancing on one foot while the other foot had kicked. And from what followed, he divined what had already occurred.

Jerry's outcry, as he sprawled, whirled, sprang, and slashed, was a veritable puppy-scream of indignation. He slashed ankle and foot as he received the second kick in mid-air; and, although he slid clear down the slope of deck into the scuppers, he left on the black skin the red tracery of his puppy-needle teeth. Still screaming his indignation, he clawed his way back up the steep wooden hill.

Lerumie, with another side-long look, knew that he was observed and that he dare not go to extremes. He fled along the skylight to escape down the companionway, but was caught by Jerry's sharp teeth in his calf. Jerry, attacking blindly, got in the way of the black's feet. A long, stumbling fall, accelerated by a sudden increase of wind in the sails, ensued, and Lerumie, vainly trying to catch his footing, fetched up against the three strands of barbed wire on the lee rail.

The deck-full of blacks shrieked their merriment, and Jerry, his rage undiminished, his immediate antagonist out of the battle, mistaking himself as the object of the laughter of the blacks, turned upon them, charging and slashing the many legs that fled before him. They dropped down the cabin and forecastle companionways, ran out the bowsprit, and sprang into the rigging till they were perched everywhere in the air like monstrous birds. In the end, the deck belonged to Jerry, save for the boat's crew; for he had already learned to differentiate. Captain Van Horn was hilariously vocal of his praise, calling Jerry to him and giving him man-thumps of joyful admiration. Next, the captain turned to his many passengers and orated in *bêche-de-mer* English.

"Hey! You fella boy! I make 'm big fella talk. This fella dog he belong along me. One fella boy hurt 'm that fella dog — my word! — me cross too much along that fella boy. I knock 'm seven bells outa that fella boy. You take 'm care leg belong you. I take 'm care dog belong me. Savve?"

And the passengers, still perched in the air, with gleaming black eyes and with querulerus chirpings one to another, accepted the white man's law. Even Lerumie, variously lacerated by the barbed wire, did not scowl nor mutter threats. Instead, and bringing a roar of laughter from his fellows and a twinkle into the skipper's eyes, he rubbed questing fingers over his scratches and murmured: "My word! Some big fella dog that fella!"

It was not that Jerry was unkindly. Like Biddy and Terrence, he was fierce and unafraid; which attributes were wrapped up in his heredity. And, like Biddy and Terrence, he delighted in nigger-chasing, which, in turn, was a matter of training. From his earliest puppyhood he had been so trained. Niggers were niggers, but white men were gods, and it was the white-gods who had trained him to chase niggers and keep them in their proper lesser place in the world. All the world was held in the hollow of the white man's hands. The niggers — well, had not he seen them always compelled to remain in their lesser place? Had he not seen them, on occasion, triced up to the palm-trees of the Meringe compound and their backs lashed to ribbons by the white-gods? Small wonder that a high-born Irish terrier, in the arms of love of the white-god, should look at niggers through white-god's eyes, and act toward niggers in the way that earned the white-god's reward of praise.

It was a busy day for Jerry. Everything about the *Arangi* was new and strange, and so crowded was she that exciting things were continually happening. He had another encounter with the wild-dog, who treacherously attacked him in flank from ambuscade. Trade boxes belonging to the blacks had been irregularly piled so that a small space was left between two boxes in the lower tier. From this hole, as Jerry trotted past in response to a call from the skipper, the wild-dog sprang, scratched his sharp puppy-teeth into Jerry's yellow-velvet hide, and scuttled back into his lair.

Again Jerry's feelings were outraged. He could understand flank attack. Often he and Michael had played at that, although it had only been playing. But to retreat without fighting from a fight once started was alien to Jerry's ways and nature. With righteous wrath he charged into the hole after his enemy. But this was where the wild-dog fought to best advantage — in a corner. When Jerry sprang up in the confined space he bumped his head on the box above, and the next moment felt the snarling impact of the other's teeth against his own teeth and jaw.

There was no getting at the wild-dog, no chance to rush against him whole heartedly, with generous full weight in the attack. All Jerry could do was to crawl and squirm and belly forward, and always he was met by a snarling mouthful of teeth. Even so, he would have got the wild-dog in the end, had not Borckman, in passing, reached in and dragged Jerry out by a hind-leg. Again came Captain Van Horn's call, and Jerry, obedient, trotted on aft.

A meal was being served on deck in the shade of the spanker, and Jerry, sitting between the two men received his share. Already he had made the generalization that of the two, the captain was the superior god, giving many orders that the mate obeyed. The mate, on the other hand, gave orders to the blacks, but never did he give orders to the captain. Furthermore, Jerry was developing a liking for the captain, so he snuggled close to him. When he put his nose into the captain's plate, he was gently reprimanded. But once, when he merely sniffed at the mate's steaming tea-cup, her received a snub on the nose from the mate's grimy forefinger. Also, the mate did not offer him food.

Captain Van Horn gave him, first of all, a pannikin of oatmeal mush, generously flooded with condensed cream and sweetened with a heaping spoonful of sugar. After that, on occasion, he gave him morsels of buttered bread and slivers of fried fish from which he first carefully picked the tiny bones.

His beloved *Mister* Haggin had never fed him from the table at meal time, and Jerry was beside himself with the joy of this delightful experience. And, being young, he allowed his eagerness to take possession of him, so that soon he was unduly urging the captain for more pieces of fish and of bread and butter. Once, he even barked his demand. This put the idea into the captain's head, who began immediately to teach him to "speak."

At the end of five minutes he had learned to speak softly, and to speak only once — a low, mellow, bell-like bark of a single syllable. Also, in this first five minutes, he had learned to "sit down," as distinctly different from "lie down"; and that he must sit down whenever he spoke, and that he must speak without jumping or moving from the sitting position, and then must wait until the piece of food was passed to him.

Further, he had added three words to his vocabulary. For ever after, "speak" would mean to him "speak," and "sit down" would mean "sit down" and would not mean "lie down." The third addition to his vocabulary was "Skipper." That was the name he had heard the mate repeatedly call Captain Van Horn. And just as Jerry knew that when a human called "Michael," that the call referred to Michael and not to Biddy, or Terrence, or himself, so he knew that *Skipper* was the name of the two-legged white master of this new floating world.

"That isn't just a dog," was Van Horn's conclusion to the mate. "There's a sure enough human brain there behind those brown eyes. He's six months old. Any boy of six years would be an infant phenomenon to learn in five minutes all that he's just learned. Why, Gott-fer-dang, a dog's brain has to be like a man's. If he does things like a man, he's got to think like a man."

CHAPTER IV

The companionway into the main cabin was a steep ladder, and down this, after his meal, Jerry was carried by the captain. The cabin was a long room, extending for the full width of the *Arangi* from a lazarette aft to a tiny room for’ard. For’ard of this room, separated by a tight bulkhead, was the forecastle where lived the boat’s crew. The tiny room was shared between Van Horn and Borckman, while the main cabin was occupied by the three-score and odd return boys. They squatted about and lay everywhere on the floor and on the long low bunks that ran the full length of the cabin along either side.

In the little stateroom the captain tossed a blanket on the floor in a corner, and he did not find it difficult to get Jerry to understand that that was his bed. Nor did Jerry, with a full stomach and weary from so much excitement, find it difficult to fall immediately asleep.

An hour later he was awakened by the entrance of Borckman. When he wagged his stub of a tail and smiled friendly with his eyes, the mate scowled at him and muttered angrily in his throat. Jerry made no further overtures, but lay quietly watching. The mate had come to take a drink. In truth, he was stealing the drink from Van Horn’s supply. Jerry did not know this. Often, on the plantation, he had seen the white men take drinks. But there was something somehow different in the manner of Borckman’s taking a drink. Jerry was aware, vaguely, that there was something surreptitious about it. What was wrong he did not know, yet he sensed the wrongness and watched suspiciously.

After the mate departed, Jerry would have slept again had not the carelessly latched door swung open with a bang. Opening his eyes, prepared for any hostile invasion from the unknown, he fell to watching a large cockroach crawling down the wall. When he got to his feet and warily stalked toward it, the cockroach scuttled away with a slight rustling noise and disappeared into a crack. Jerry had been acquainted with cockroaches all his life, but he was destined to learn new things about them from the particular breed that dwelt on the *Arangi*.

After a cursory examination of the stateroom he wandered out into the cabin. The blacks, sprawled about everywhere, but, conceiving it to be his duty to his *Skipper*, Jerry made it a point to identify each one. They scowled and uttered low threatening noises when he sniffed close to them. One dared to menace him with a blow, but Jerry, instead of slinking away, showed his teeth and prepared to spring. The black hastily dropped the offending hand to his side and made soothing, penitent noises, while others chuckled; and Jerry passed on his way. It was nothing new. Always a blow was to be expected from blacks when white men were not around. Both the mate and the captain were on deck, and Jerry, though unafraid, continued his investigations cautiously.

But at the doorless entrance to the lazarette aft, he threw caution to the winds and darted in in pursuit of the new scent that came to his nostrils. A strange person was in the low, dark space whom he had never smelled. Clad in a single shift and lying on a coarse grass-mat spread upon a pile of tobacco cases and fifty-pound tins of flour, was a young black girl.

There was something furtive and lurking about her that Jerry did not fail to sense, and he had long since learned that something was wrong when any black lurked or skulked. She cried out with fear as he barked an alarm and pounced upon her. Even though his teeth scratched her bare arm, she did not strike at him. Not did she cry out again. She cowered down and trembled and did not fight back. Keeping his teeth locked in the hold he had got on her flimsy shift, he shook and dragged at her, all the while growling and scolding for her benefit and yelping a high clamour to bring Skipper or the mate.

In the course of the struggle the girl over-balanced on the boxes and tins and the entire heap collapsed. This caused Jerry to yelp a more frenzied alarm, while the blacks, peering in from the cabin, laughed with cruel enjoyment.

When Skipper arrived, Jerry wagged his stump tail and, with ears laid back, dragged and tugged harder than ever at the thin cotton of the girl’s garment. He expected praise for what he had done, but when Skipper merely told him to let go, he obeyed with the realization that this lurking, fear-struck creature was somehow different, and must be treated differently, from other lurking creatures.

Fear-struck she was, as it is given to few humans to be and still live. Van Horn called her his parcel of trouble, and he was anxious to be rid of the parcel, without, however, the utter annihilation of the parcel. It was this annihilation which he had saved her from when he bought her in even exchange for a fat pig.

Stupid, worthless, spiritless, sick, not more than a dozen years old, no delight in the eyes of the young men of her village, she had been consigned by her disappointed parents to the cooking-pot. When Captain Van Horn first encountered her had been when she was the central figure in a lugubrious procession on the banks of the Balebuli River.

Anything but a beauty — had been his appraisal when he halted the procession for a pow-wow. Lean from sickness, her skin mangy with the dry scales of the disease called *bukua*, she was tied hand and foot and, like a pig, slung from a stout pole that rested on the shoulders of the bearers, who intended to dine off of her. Too hopeless to expect mercy, she made no appeal for help, though the horrible fear that possessed her was eloquent in her wild-staring eyes.

In the universal bêche-de-mer English, Captain Van Horn had learned that she was not regarded with relish by her companions, and that they were on their way to stake her out up to her neck in the running water of the Balebuli. But first, before they staked her, their plan was to dislocate her joints and break the big bones of the arms and legs. This was no religious rite, no placation of the brutish jungle gods. Merely was it a matter of gastronomy. Living meat, so treated, was made tender and tasty, and, as her companions pointed out, she certainly needed to be put through such a process. Two days in the water, they told the captain, ought to do the business. Then they would kill her, build the fire, and invite in a few friends.

After half an hour of bargaining, during which Captain Van Horn had insisted on the worthlessness of the parcel, he had bought a fat pig worth five dollars and exchanged it for her. Thus, since he had paid for the pig in trade goods, and since trade goods were rated at a hundred per cent. profit, the girl had actually cost him two dollars and fifty cents.

And then Captain Van Horn's troubles had begun. He could not get rid of the girl. Too well he knew the natives of Malaita to turn her over to them anywhere on the island. Chief Ishikola of Su'u had offered five twenties of drinking coconuts for her, and Bau, a bush chief, had offered two chickens on the beach at Malu. But this last offer had been accompanied by a sneer, and had tokened the old rascal's scorn of the girl's scrawniness. Failing to connect with the missionary brig, the *Western Cross*, on which she would not have been eaten, Captain Van Horn had been compelled to keep her in the cramped quarters of the *Arangi* against a problematical future time when he would be able to turn her over to the missionaries.

But toward him the girl had no heart of gratitude because she had no brain of understanding. She, who had been sold for a fat pig, considered her pitiful rôle in the world to be unchanged. Eatee she had been. Eatee she remained. Her destination merely had been changed, and this big fella white marster of the *Arangi* would undoubtedly be her destination when she had sufficiently fattened. His designs on her had been transparent from the first, when he had tried to feed her up. And she had outwitted him by resolutely eating no more than would barely keep her alive.

As a result, she, who had lived in the bush all her days and never so much as set foot in a canoe, rocked and rolled unendingly over the broad ocean in a perpetual nightmare of fear. In the bêche-de-mer that was current among the blacks of a thousand islands and ten thousand dialects, the *Arangi's* procession of passengers assured her of her fate. “My word, you fella Mary,” one would say to her, “short time little bit that big fella white marster kai-kai along you.” Or, another: “Big fella white marster kai-kai along you, my word, belly belong him walk about too much.”

Kai-kai was the bêche-de-mer for “eat.” Even Jerry knew that. “Eat” did not obtain in his vocabulary; but kai-kai did, and it meant all and more than “eat,” for it served for both noun and verb.

But the girl never replied to the jeering of the blacks. For that matter, she never spoke at all, not even to Captain Van Horn, who did not so much as know her name.

It was late afternoon, after discovering the girl in the lazarette, when Jerry again came on deck. Scarcely had Skipper, who had carried him up the steep ladder, dropped him on deck than Jerry made a new discovery — land. He did not see it, but he smelled it. His nose went up in the air and quested to windward along the wind that brought the message, and he read the air with his nose as a man might read a newspaper — the salt smells of the seashore and of the dank muck of mangrove swamps at low tide, the spicy fragrances of tropic vegetation, and the faint, most faint, acrid tingle of smoke from smudgy fires.

The trade, which had laid the *Arangi* well up under the lee of this outjutting point of Malaita, was now failing, so that she began to roll in the easy swells with crashings of sheets and tackles and thunderous flappings of her sails. Jerry no more than cocked a contemptuous quizzical eye at the mainsail anticking above him. He knew already the empty windiness of its threats, but he was careful of the mainsheet blocks, and walked around the traveller instead of over it.

While Captain Van Horn, taking advantage of the calm to exercise the boat's crew with the fire-arms and to limber up the weapons, was passing out the Lee-Enfields from their place on top the cabin skylight, Jerry suddenly crouched and began to stalk stiff-legged. But the wild-dog, three feet from his lair under the trade-boxes, was not unobservant. He watched and snarled threateningly. It was not a nice snarl. In fact, it was as nasty and savage a snarl as all his life had been nasty and savage. Most small creatures were afraid of that snarl, but it had no deterrent effect on Jerry, who continued his steady stalking. When the wild-dog sprang for the hole under the boxes, Jerry sprang after, missing his enemy by inches. Tossing overboard bits of wood, bottles and empty tins, Captain Van Horn ordered the eight eager boat's crew with rifles to turn loose. Jerry was excited and delighted with the fusillade, and added his puppy yelpings to the noise. As the empty brass cartridges were ejected, the return boys scrambled on the deck for them, esteeming them as very precious objects and thrusting them, still warm, into the empty holes in their ears. Their ears were perforated with many of these holes, the smallest capable of receiving a cartridge, while the larger ones contained-clay pipes, sticks of tobacco, and even boxes of matches. Some of the holes in the ear-lobes were so huge that they were plugged with carved wooden cylinders three inches in diameter.

Mate and captain carried automatics in their belts, and with these they turned loose, shooting away clip after clip to the breathless admiration of the blacks for such marvellous rapidity of fire. The boat's crew were not even fair shots, but Van Horn, like every captain in the Solomons, knew that the bush natives and salt-water men were so much worse shots, and knew that the shooting of his boat's crew could be depended upon — if the boat's crew itself did not turn against the ship in a pinch.

At first, Borckman's automatic jammed, and he received a caution from Van Horn for his carelessness in not keeping it clean and thin-oiled. Also, Borckman was twittingly asked how many drinks he had taken, and if that was what accounted for his shooting being under his average. Borckman explained that he had a touch of fever, and Van Horn deferred stating his doubts until a few minutes later, squatting in the shade of the spanker with Jerry in his arms, he told Jerry all about it.

"The trouble with him is the schnapps, Jerry," he explained. "Gott-ferdang, it makes me keep all my watches and half of his. And he says it's the fever. Never believe it, Jerry. It's the schnapps — just the plain s-c-h-n-a-p-p-s schnapps. An' he's a good sailor-man, Jerry, when he's sober. But when he's schnappy he's sheer lunatic. Then his noddle goes pinwheeling and he's a blighted fool, and he'd snore in a gale and suffer for sleep in a dead calm. — Jerry, you're just beginning to pad those four little soft feet of yours into the world, so take the advice of one who knows and leave the schnapps alone. Believe me, Jerry, boy — listen to your father — schnapps will never buy you anything."

Whereupon, leaving Jerry on deck to stalk the wild-dog, Captain Van Horn went below into the tiny stateroom and took a long drink from the very bottle from which Borckman was stealing.

The stalking of the wild-dog became a game, at least to Jerry, who was so made that his heart bore no malice, and who hugely enjoyed it. Also, it gave him a delightful consciousness of his own mastery, for the wild-dog always fled from him. At least so far as dogs were concerned, Jerry was cock of the deck of the *Arangi*. It did not enter his head to query how his conduct affected the wild-dog, though, in truth, he led that individual a wretched existence. Never, except when Jerry was below, did the wild one dare venture more than several feet from his retreat, and he went about in fear and trembling of the fat roly-poly puppy who was unafraid of his snarl.

In the late afternoon, Jerry trotted aft, after having administered another lesson to the wild-dog, and found Skipper seated on the deck, back against the low rail, knees drawn up, and gazing absently off to leeward. Jerry sniffed his bare calf — not that he needed to identify it, but just because he liked to, and in a sort of friendly greeting. But Van Horn took no notice, continuing to stare out across the sea. Nor was he aware of the puppy's presence.

Jerry rested the length of his chin on Skipper's knee and gazed long and earnestly into Skipper's face. This time Skipper knew, and was pleasantly thrilled; but still he gave no sign. Jerry tried a new tack. Skipper's hand drooped idly, half open, from where the forearm rested on the other knee. Into the part-open hand Jerry thrust his soft golden muzzle to the eyes and remained quite still. Had he been situated to see, he would have seen a twinkle in Skipper's eyes, which had been withdrawn from the sea and were looking down upon him. But Jerry could not see. He kept quiet a little longer, and then gave a prodigious sniff.

This was too much for Skipper, who laughed with such genial heartiness as to lay Jerry's silky ears back and down in self-deprecation of affection and pleadingness to bask in the sunshine of the god's smile. Also, Skipper's laughter set Jerry's tail wildly bobbing. The half-open hand closed in a firm grip that gathered in the slack of the skin of one side of Jerry's head and jowl. Then the hand began to shake him back and forth with such good will that he was compelled to balance back and forth on all his four feet.

It was bliss to Jerry. Nay, more, it was ecstasy. For Jerry knew there was neither anger nor danger in the roughness of the shake, and that it was play of the sort that he and Michael had indulged in. On occasion, he had so played with Biddy and lovingly mauled her about. And, on very rare occasion, *Mister* Haggin had lovingly mauled him about. It was speech to Jerry, full of unmistakable meaning.

As the shake grew rougher, Jerry emitted his most ferocious growl, which grew more ferocious with the increasing violence of the shaking. But that, too, was play, a making believe to hurt the one he liked too well to hurt. He strained and tugged at the grip, trying to twist his jowl in the slack of skin so as to reach a bite.

When Skipper, with a quick thrust, released him and shoved him clear, he came back, all teeth and growl, to be again caught and shaken. The play continued, with rising excitement to Jerry. Once, too quick for Skipper, he caught his hand between teeth; but he did not bring them together. They pressed lovingly, denting the skin, but there was no bite in them.

The play grew rougher, and Jerry lost himself in the play. Still playing, he grew so excited that all that had been feigned became actual. This was battle a struggle against the hand that seized and shook him and thrust him away. The make-believe of ferocity passed out of his growls; the ferocity in them became real. Also, in the moments when he was shoved away and was springing back to the attack, he yelped in high-pitched puppy hysteria. And Captain Van Horn, realizing, suddenly, instead of clutching, extended his hand wide open in the peace sign that is as ancient as the human hand. At the same time his voice rang out the single word, “Jerry!” In it was all the imperativeness of reproof and command and all the solicitous insistence of love.

Jerry knew and was checked back to himself. He was instantly contrite, all soft humility, ears laid back with pleadingness for forgiveness and protestation of a warm throbbing heart of love. Instantly, from an open-mouthed, fang-bristling dog in full career of attack, he melted into a bundle of softness and silkiness, that trotted to the open hand and kissed it with a tongue that flashed out between white gleaming teeth like a rose-red jewel. And the next moment he was in Skipper's arms, jowl against cheek, and the tongue was again flashing out in all the articulateness possible for a creature denied speech. It was a veritable love-feast, as dear to one as to the other.

"Gott-fer-dang!" Captain Van Horn crooned. "You're nothing but a bunch of high-strung sensitiveness, with a golden heart in the middle and a golden coat wrapped all around. Gott-fer-dang, Jerry, you're gold, pure gold, inside and out, and no dog was ever minted like you in all the world. You're heart of gold, you golden dog, and be good to me and love me as I shall always be good to you and love you for ever and for ever."

And Captain Van Horn, who ruled the *Arangi* in bare legs, a loin cloth, and a sixpenny under-shirt, and ran cannibal blacks back and forth in the blackbird trade with an automatic strapped to his body waking and sleeping and with his head forfeit in scores of salt-water villages and bush strongholds, and who was esteemed the toughest skipper in the Solomons where only men who are tough may continue to live and esteem toughness, blinked with sudden moisture in his eyes, and could not see for the moment the puppy that quivered all its body of love in his arms and kissed away the salty softness of his eyes.

CHAPTER V

And swift tropic night smote the *Arangi*, as she alternately rolled in calms and heeled and plunged ahead in squalls under the lee of the cannibal island of Malaita. It was a stoppage of the south-east trade wind that made for variable weather, and that made cooking on the exposed deck galley a misery and sent the return boys, who had nothing to wet but their skins, scuttling below.

The first watch, from eight to twelve, was the mate's; and Captain Van Horn, forced below by the driving wet of a heavy rain squall, took Jerry with him to sleep in the tiny stateroom. Jerry was weary from the manifold excitements of the most exciting day in his life; and he was asleep and kicking and growling in his sleep, ere Skipper, with a last look at him and a grin as he turned the lamp low, muttered aloud: "It's that wild-dog, Jerry. Get him. Shake him. Shake him hard."

So soundly did Jerry sleep, that when the rain, having robbed the atmosphere of its last breath of wind, ceased and left the stateroom a steaming, suffocating furnace, he did not know when Skipper, panting for air, his loin cloth and undershirt soaked with sweat, arose, tucked blanket and pillow under his arm, and went on deck.

Jerry only awakened when a huge three-inch cockroach nibbled at the sensitive and hairless skin between his toes. He awoke kicking the offended foot, and gazed at the cockroach that did not scuttle, but that walked dignifiedly away. He watched it join other cockroaches that paraded the floor. Never had he seen so many gathered together at one time, and never had he seen such large ones. They were all of a size, and they were everywhere. Long lines of them poured out of cracks in the walls and descended to join their fellows on the floor.

The thing was indecent — at least, in Jerry's mind, it was not to be tolerated. *Mister* Haggin, Derby, and Bob had never tolerated cockroaches, and their rules were his rules. The cockroach was the eternal tropic enemy. He sprang at the nearest, pouncing to crush it to the floor under his paws. But the thing did what he had never known a cockroach to do. It arose in the air strong-flighted as a bird. And as if at a signal, all the multitude of cockroaches took wings of flight and filled the room with their flutterings and circlings.

He attacked the winged host, leaping into the air, snapping at the flying vermin, trying to knock them down with his paws. Occasionally he succeeded and destroyed one; nor did the combat cease until all the cockroaches, as if at another signal, disappeared into the many cracks, leaving the room to him.

Quickly, his next thought was: Where is Skipper? He knew he was not in the room, though he stood up on his hind-legs and investigated the low bunk, his keen little nose quivering delightedly while he made little sniffs of delight as he smelled the recent presence of Skipper. And what made his nose quiver and sniff, likewise made his stump of a tail bob back and forth.

Butwhere was Skipper? It was a thought in his brain that was as sharp and definite as a similar thought would be in a human brain. And it similarly preceded action. The door had been left hooked open, and Jerry trotted out into the cabin where half a hundred blacks made queer sleep-moanings, and sighings, and snorings. They were packed closely together, covering the floor as well as the long sweep of bunks, so that he was compelled to crawl over their naked legs. And there was no white god about to protect him. He knew it, but was unafraid.

Having made sure that Skipper was not in the cabin, Jerry prepared for the perilous ascent of the steep steps that were almost a ladder, then recollected the lazarette. In he trotted and sniffed at the sleeping girl in the cotton shift who believed that Van Horn was going to eat her if he could succeed in fattening her.

Back at the ladder-steps, he looked up and waited in the hope that Skipper might appear from above and carry him up. Skipper had passed that way, he knew, and he knew for two reasons. It was the only way he could have passed, and Jerry's nose told him that he had passed. His first attempt to climb the steps began well. Not until a third of the way up, as the *Arangi* rolled in a sea and recovered with a jerk, did he slip and fall. Two or three boys awoke and watched him while they prepared and chewed betel nut and lime wrapped in green leaves.

Twice, barely started, Jerry slipped back, and more boys, awakened by their fellows, sat up and enjoyed his plight. In the fourth attempt he managed to gain half way up before he fell, coming down heavily on his side. This was hailed with low laughter and querulous chirpings that might well have come from the throats of huge birds. He regained his feet, absurdly bristled the hair on his shoulders and absurdly growled his high disdain of these lesser, two-legged things that came and went and obeyed the wills of great, white-skinned, two-legged gods such as Skipper and Mister Haggin.

Undeterred by his heavy fall, Jerry essayed the ladder again. A temporary easement of the *Arangi's* rolling gave him his opportunity, so that his forefeet were over the high combing of the companion when the next big roll came. He held on by main strength of his bent forelegs, then scrambled over and out on deck.

Amidships, squatting on the deck near the sky-light, he investigated several of the boat's crew and Lerumie. He identified them circumspectly, going suddenly stiff-legged as Lerumie made a low, hissing, menacing noise. Aft, at the wheel, he found a black steering, and, near him, the mate keeping the watch. Just as the mate spoke to him and stooped to pat him, Jerry whiffed Skipper somewhere near at hand. With a conciliating, apologetic bob of his tail, he trotted on up wind and came upon Skipper on his back, rolled in a blanket so that only his head stuck out, and sound asleep.

First of all Jerry needs must joyfully sniff him and joyfully wag his tail. But Skipper did not awake and a fine spray of rain, almost as thin as mist, made Jerry curl up and press closely into the angle formed by Skipper's head and shoulder. This did awake him, for he uttered "Jerry" in a low, crooning voice, and Jerry responded with a touch of his cold damp nose to the other's cheek. And then Skipper went to sleep again. But not Jerry. He lifted the edge of the blanket with his nose and crawled across the shoulder until he was altogether inside. This roused Skipper, who, half-asleep, helped him to curl up.

Still Jerry was not satisfied, and he squirmed around until he lay in the hollow of Skipper's arm, his head resting on Skipper's shoulder, when, with a profound sigh of content, he fell asleep.

Several times the noises made by the boat's crew in trimming the sheets to the shifting draught of air roused Van Horn, and each time, remembering the puppy, he pressed him caressingly with his hollowed arm. And each time, in his sleep, Jerry stirred responsively and snuggled cosily to him.

For all that he was a remarkable puppy, Jerry had his limitations, and he could never know the effect produced on the hard-bitten captain by the soft warm contact of his velvet body. But it made the captain remember back across the years to his own girl babe asleep on his arm. And so poignantly did he remember, that he became wide awake, and many pictures, beginning, with the girl babe, burned their torment in his brain. No white man in the Solomons knew what he carried about with him, waking and often sleeping; and it was because of these pictures that he had come to the Solomons in a vain effort to erase them.

First, memory-prodded by the soft puppy in his arm, he saw the girl and the mother in the little Harlem flat. Small, it was true, but tight-packed with the happiness of three that made it heaven.

He saw the girl's flaxen-yellow hair darken to her mother's gold as it lengthened into curls and ringlets until finally it became two thick long braids. From striving not to see these many pictures he came even to dwelling upon them in the effort so to fill his consciousness as to keep out the one picture he did not want to see.

He remembered his work, the wrecking car, and the wrecking crew that had toiled under him, and he wondered what had become of Clancey, his right-hand man. Came the long day, when, routed from bed at three in the morning to dig a surface car out of the wrecked show windows of a drug store and get it back on the track, they had laboured all day clearing up a half-dozen smash-ups and arrived at the car house at nine at night just as another call came in.

"Glory be!" said Clancey, who lived in the next block from him. He could see him saying it and wiping the sweat from his grimy face. "Glory be, 'tis a small matter at most, an' right in our neighbourhood — not a dozen blocks away. Soon as it's done we can beat it for home an' let the down-town boys take the car back to the shop."

"We've only to jack her up for a moment," he had answered.

"What is it?" Billy Jaffers, another of the crew, asked.

"Somebody run over — can't get them out," he said, as they swung on board the wrecking-car and started.

He saw again all the incidents of the long run, not omitting the delay caused by hose-carts and a hook-and-ladder running to a cross-town fire, during which time he and Clancey had joked Jaffers over the dates with various fictitious damsels out of which he had been cheated by the night's extra work.

Came the long line of stalled street-cars, the crowd, the police holding it back, the two ambulances drawn up and waiting their freight, and the young policeman, whose beat it was, white and shaken, greeting him with: "It's horrible, man. It's fair sickening. Two of them. We can't get them out. I tried. One was still living, I think."

But he, strong man and hearty, used to such work, weary with the hard day and with a pleasant picture of the bright little flat waiting him a dozen blocks away when the job was done, spoke cheerfully, confidently, saying that he'd have them out in a jiffy, as he stooped and crawled under the car on hands and knees.

Again he saw himself as he pressed the switch of his electric torch and looked. Again he saw the twin braids of heavy golden hair ere his thumb relaxed from the switch, leaving him in darkness.

"Is the one alive yet?" the shaken policeman asked.

And the question was repeated, while he struggled for will power sufficient to press on the light.

He heard himself reply, "I'll tell you in a minute."

Again he saw himself look. For a long minute he looked.

"Both dead," he answered quietly. "Clancey, pass in a number three jack, and get under yourself with another at the other end of the truck."

He lay on his back, staring straight up at one single star that rocked mistily through a thinning of cloud-stuff overhead. The old ache was in his throat, the old harsh dryness in mouth and eyes. And he knew — what no other man knew — why he was in the Solomons, skipper of the teak-built yacht *Arangi*, running niggers, risking his head, and drinking more Scotch whiskey than was good for any man.

Not since that night had he looked with warm eyes on any woman. And he had been noted by other whites as notoriously cold toward pickanninnies white or black.

But, having visioned the ultimate horror of memory, Van Horn was soon able to fall asleep again, delightfully aware, as he drowsed off, of Jerry's head on his shoulder. Once, when Jerry, dreaming of the beach at Meringe and of *Mister* Haggin, Biddy, Terrence, and Michael, set up a low whimpering, Van Horn roused sufficiently to soothe him closer to him, and to mutter ominously: "Any nigger that'd hurt that pup. . . "

At midnight when the mate touched him on the shoulder, in the moment of awakening and before he was awake Van Horn did two things automatically and swiftly. He darted his right hand down to the pistol at his hip, and muttered: "Any nigger that'd hurt that pup . . ."

"That'll be Kopo Point abreast," Borckman explained, as both men stared to windward at the high loom of the land. "She hasn't made more than ten miles, and no promise of anything steady."

"There's plenty of stuff making up there, if it'll ever come down," Van Horn said, as both men transferred their gaze to the clouds drifting with many breaks across the dim stars.

Scarcely had the mate fetched a blanket from below and turned in on deck, than a brisk steady breeze sprang up from off the land, sending the *Arangi* through the smooth water at a nine-knot clip. For a time Jerry tried to stand the watch with Skipper, but he soon curled up and dozed off, partly on the deck and partly on Skipper's bare feet.

When Skipper carried him to the blanket and rolled him in, he was quickly asleep again; and he was quickly awake, out of the blanket, and padding after along the deck as Skipper paced up and down. Here began another lesson, and in five minutes Jerry learned it was the will of Skipper that he should remain in the blanket, that everything was all right, and that Skipper would be up and down and near him all the time.

At four the mate took charge of the deck.

"Reeled off thirty miles," Van Horn told him. "But now it is baffling again. Keep an eye for squalls under the land. Better throw the halyards down on deck and make the watch stand by. Of course they'll sleep, but make them sleep on the halyards and sheets."

Jerry roused to Skipper's entrance under the blanket, and, quite as if it were a long-established custom, curled in between his arm and side, and, after one happy sniff and one kiss of his cool little tongue, as Skipper pressed his cheek against him caressingly, dozed off to sleep.

Half an hour later, to all intents and purposes, so far as Jerry could or could not comprehend, the world might well have seemed suddenly coming to an end. What awoke him was the flying leap of Skipper that sent the blanket one way and Jerry the other. The deck of the *Arangi* had become a wall, down which Jerry slipped through the roaring dark. Every rope and shroud was thrumming and screeching in resistance to the fierce weight of the squall.

"Stand by main halyards! — Jump!" he could hear Skipper shouting loudly; also he heard the high note of the mainsheet screaming across the sheaves as Van Horn, bending braces in the dark, was swiftly slacking the sheet through his scorching palms with a single turn on the cleat.

While all this, along with many other noises, squealings of boat-boys and shouts of Borckman, was impacting on Jerry's ear-drums, he was still sliding down the steep deck of his new and unstable world. But he did not bring up against the rail where his fragile ribs might well have been broken. Instead, the warm ocean water, pouring inboard across the buried rail in a flood of pale phosphorescent fire, cushioned his fall. A raffle of trailing ropes entangled him as he struck out to swim.

And he swam, not to save his life, not with the fear of death upon him. There was but one idea in his mind. *Where was Skipper*? Not that he had any thought of trying to save Skipper, nor that he might be of assistance to him. It was the heart of love that drives one always toward the beloved. As the mother in catastrophe tries to gain her babe, as the Greek who, dying, remembered sweet Argos, as soldiers on a stricken field pass with the names of their women upon their lips, so Jerry, in this wreck of a world, yearned toward Skipper.

The squall ceased as abruptly as it had struck. The *Arangi* righted with a jerk to an even keel, leaving Jerry stranded in the starboard scuppers. He trotted across the level deck to Skipper, who, standing erect on wide-spread legs, the bight of the mainsheet still in his hand, was exclaiming:

"Gott-fer-dang! Wind he go! Rain he no come!"

He felt Jerry's cool nose against his bare calf, heard his joyous sniff, and bent and caressed him. In the darkness he could not see, but his heart warmed with knowledge that Jerry's tail was surely bobbing.

Many of the frightened return boys had crowded on deck, and their plaintive, querulous voices sounded like the sleepy noises of a roost of birds. Borckman came and stood by Van Horn's shoulder, and both men, strung to their tones in the tenseness of apprehension, strove to penetrate the surrounding blackness with their eyes, while they listened with all their ears for any message of the elements from sea and air.

"Where's the rain?" Borckman demanded peevishly. "Always wind first, the rain follows and kills the wind. There is no rain."

Van Horn still stared and listened, and made no answer.

The anxiety of the two men was sensed by Jerry, who, too, was on his toes. He pressed his cool nose to Skipper's leg, and the rose-kiss of his tongue brought him the salt taste of sea-water.

Skipper bent suddenly, rolled Jerry with quick toughness into the blanket, and deposited him in the hollow between two sacks of yams lashed on deck aft of the mizzenmast. As an afterthought, he fastened the blanket with a piece of rope yarn, so that Jerry was as if tied in a sack.

Scarcely was this finished when the spanker smashed across overhead, the headsails thundered with a sudden filling, and the great mainsail, with all the scope in the boom-tackle caused by Van Horn's giving of the sheet, came across and fetched up to tautness on the tackle with a crash that shook the vessel and heeled her violently to port. This second knock-down had come from the opposite direction, and it was mightier than the first.

Jerry heard Skipper's voice ring out, first, to the mate: "Stand by main-halyards! Throw off the turns! I'll take care of the tackle!"; and, next, to some of the boat's crew: "Batto! you fella slack spanker tackle quick fella! Ranga! you fella let go spanker sheet!"

Here Van Horn was swept off his legs by an avalanche of return boys who had cluttered the deck with the first squall. The squirming mass, of which he was part, slid down into the barbed wire of the port rail beneath the surface of the sea.

Jerry was so secure in his nook that he did not roll away. But when he heard Skipper's commands cease, and, seconds later, heard his cursings in the barbed wire, he set up a shrill yelping and clawed and scratched frantically at the blanket to get out. Something had happened to Skipper. He knew that. It was all that he knew, for he had no thought of himself in the chaos of the ruining world.

But he ceased his yelping to listen to a new noise — a thunderous slatting of canvas accompanied by shouts and cries. He sensed, and sensed wrongly, that it boded ill, for he did not know that it was the mainsail being lowered on the run after Skipper had slashed the boom-tackle across with his sheath-knife.

As the pandemonium grew, he added his own yelping to it until he felt a fumbling hand without the blanket. He stilled and sniffed. No, it was not Skipper. He sniffed again and recognized the person. It was Lerumie, the black whom he had seen rolled on the beach by Biddy only the previous morning, who, still were recently, had kicked him on his stub of a tail, and who not more than a week before he had seen throw a rock at Terrence.

The rope yarn had been parted, and Lerumie's fingers were feeling inside the blanket for him. Jerry snarled his wickedest. The thing was sacrilege. He, as a white man's dog, was taboo to all blacks. He had early learned the law that no nigger must ever touch a white-god's dog. Yet Lerumie, who was all of evil, at this moment when the world crashed about their ears, was daring to touch him.

And when the fingers touched him, his teeth closed upon them. Next, he was clouted by the black's free hand with such force as to tear his clenched teeth down the fingers through skin and flesh until the fingers went clear.

Raging like a tiny fiend, Jerry found himself picked up by the neck, half-throttled, and flung through the air. And while flying through the air, he continued to squall his rage. He fell into the sea and went under, gulping a mouthful of salt water into his lungs, and came up strangling but swimming. Swimming was one of the things he did not have to think about. He had never had to learn to swim, any more than he had had to learn to breathe. In fact, he had been compelled to learn to walk; but he swam as a matter of course.

The wind screamed about him. Flying froth, driven on the wind's breath, filled his mouth and nostrils and beat into his eyes, stinging and blinding him. In the struggle to breathe he, all unlearned in the ways of the sea, lifted his muzzle high in the air to get out of the suffocating welter. As a result, off the horizontal, the churning of his legs no longer sustained him, and he went down and under perpendicularly. Again he emerged, strangling with more salt water in his windpipe. This time, without reasoning it out, merely moving along the line of least resistance, which was to him the line of greatest comfort, he straightened out in the sea and continued so to swim as to remain straightened out.

Through the darkness, as the squall spent itself, came the slatting of the half-lowered mainsail, the shrill voices of the boat's crew, a curse of Borckman's, and, dominating all, Skipper's voice, shouting:

"Grab the leech, you fella boys! Hang on! Drag down strong fella! Come in mainsheet two blocks! Jump, damn you, jump!"

CHAPTER VI

At recognition of Skipper's voice, Jerry, floundering in the stiff and crisping sea that sprang up with the easement of the wind, yelped eagerly and yearningly, all his love for his new-found beloved eloquent in his throat. But quickly all sounds died away as the *Arangi* drifted from him. And then, in the loneliness of the dark, on the heaving breast of the sea that he recognized as one more of the eternal enemies, he began to whimper and cry plaintively like a lost child.

Further, by the dim, shadowy ways of intuition, he knew his weakness in that merciless sea with no heart of warmth, that threatened the unknowable thing, vaguely but terribly guessed, namely, death. As regarded himself, he did not comprehend death. He, who had never known the time when he was not alive, could not conceive of the time when he would cease to be alive.

Yet it was there, shouting its message of warning through every tissue cell, every nerve quickness and brain sensitivity of him — a totality of sensation that foreboded the ultimate catastrophe of life about which he knew nothing at all, but which, nevertheless, he *felt* to be the conclusive supreme disaster. Although he did not comprehend it, he apprehended it no less poignantly than do men who know and generalize far more deeply and widely than mere four-legged dogs.

As a man struggles in the throes of nightmare, so Jerry struggled in the vexed, salt-suffocating sea. And so he whimpered and cried, lost child, lost puppy-dog that he was, only half a year existent in the fair world sharp with joy and suffering. And he *wanted Skipper*. Skipper was a god.

* * * * *

On board the *Arangi*, relieved by the lowering of her mainsail, as the fierceness went out of the wind and the cloudburst of tropic rain began to fall, Van Horn and Borckman lurched toward each other in the blackness.

"A double squall," said Van Horn. "Hit us to starboard and to port."

"Must a-split in half just before she hit us," the mate concurred.

"And kept all the rain in the second half — "

Van Horn broke off with an oath.

"Hey! What's the matter along you fella boy?" he shouted to the man at the wheel.

For the ketch, under her spanker which had just then been flat-hauled, had come into the wind, emptying her after-sail and permitting her headsails to fill on the other tack. The *Arangi* was beginning to work back approximately over the course she had just traversed. And this meant that she was going back toward Jerry floundering in the sea. Thus, the balance, on which his life titubated, was inclined in his favour by the blunder of a black steersman.

Keeping the *Arangi* on the new tack, Van Horn set Borckman clearing the mess of ropes on deck, himself, squatting in the rain, undertaking to long-splice the tackle he had cut. As the rain thinned, so that the crackle of it on deck became less noisy, he was attracted by a sound from out over the water. He suspended the work of his hands to listen, and, when he recognized Jerry's wailing, sprang to his feet, galvanized into action.

"The pup's overboard!" he shouted to Borckman. "Back your jib to wind'ard!"

He sprang aft, scattering a cluster of return boys right and left.

"Hey! You fella boat's crew! Come in spanker sheet! Flatten her down good fella!"

He darted a look into the binnacle and took a hurried compass bearing of the sounds Jerry was making.

"Hard down your wheel!" he ordered the helmsman, then leaped to the wheel and put it down himself, repeating over and over aloud, "Nor'east by east a quarter, nor'east by east a quarter."

Back and peering into the binnacle, he listened vainly for another wail from Jerry in the hope of verifying his first hasty bearing. But not long he waited. Despite the fact that by his manoeuvre the *Arangi* had been hove to, he knew that windage and sea-driftage would quickly send her away from the swimming puppy. He shouted Borckman to come aft and haul in the whaleboat, while he hurried below for his electric torch and a boat compass.

The ketch was so small that she was compelled to tow her one whaleboat astern on long double painters, and by the time the mate had it hauled in under the stern, Van Horn was back. He was undeterred by the barbed wire, lifting boy after boy of the boat's crew over it and dropping them sprawling into the boat, following himself, as the last, by swinging over on the spanker boom, and calling his last instructions as the painters were cast off.

"Get a riding light on deck, Borckman. Keep her hove to. Don't hoist the mainsail. Clean up the decks and bend the watch tackle on the main boom."

He took the steering-sweep and encouraged the rowers with: "Washee-washee, good fella, washee-washee!" — which is the bêche-de-mer for "row hard."

As he steered, he kept flashing the torch on the boat compass so that he could keep headed north-east by east a quarter east. Then he remembered that the boat compass, on such course, deviated two whole points from the *Arangi's* compass, and altered his own course accordingly.

Occasionally he bade the rowers cease, while he listened and called for Jerry. He had them row in circles, and work back and forth, up to windward and down to leeward, over the area of dark sea that he reasoned must contain the puppy.

"Now you fella boy listen ear belong you," he said, toward the first. "Maybe one fella boy hear 'm pickaninny dog sing out, I give 'm that fella boy five fathom calico, two ten sticks tobacco."

At the end of half an hour he was offering "Two ten fathoms calico and ten ten sticks tobacco" to the boy who first heard "pickaninny dog sing out."

* * * * *

Jerry was in bad shape. Not accustomed to swimming, strangled by the salt water that lapped into his open mouth, he was getting loggy when first he chanced to see the flash of the captain's torch. This, however, he did not connect with Skipper, and so took no more notice of it than he did of the first stars showing in the sky. It never entered his mind that it might be a star nor even that it might not be a star. He continued to wail and to strangle with more salt water. But when he at length heard Skipper's voice he went immediately wild. He attempted to stand up and to rest his forepaws on Skipper's voice coming out of the darkness, as he would have rested his forepaws on Skipper's leg had he been near. The result was disastrous. Out of the horizontal, he sank down and under, coming up with a new spasm of strangling.

This lasted for a short time, during which the strangling prevented him from answering Skipper's cry, which continued to reach him. But when he could answer he burst forth in a joyous yelp. Skipper was coming to take him out of the stinging, biting sea that blinded his eyes and hurt him to breathe. Skipper was truly a god, his god, with a god's power to save.

Soon he heard the rhythmic clack of the oars on the thole-pins, and the joy in his own yelp was duplicated by the joy in Skipper's voice, which kept up a running encouragement, broken by objurgations to the rowers.

"All right, Jerry, old man. All right, Jerry. All right. — Washee-washee, you fella boy! — Coming, Jerry, coming. Stick it out, old man. Stay with it. — Washee-washee like hell! — Here we are, Jerry. Stay with it. Hang on, old boy, we'll get you. — Easy . . . easy. 'Vast washee."

And then, with amazing abruptness, Jerry saw the whaleboat dimly emerge from the gloom close upon him, was blinded by the stab of the torch full in his eyes, and, even as he yelped his joy, felt and recognized Skipper's hand clutching him by the slack of the neck and lifting him into the air.

He landed wet and soppily against Skipper's rain-wet chest, his tail bobbing frantically against Skipper's containing arm, his body wriggling, his tongue dabbing madly all over Skipper's chin and mouth and cheeks and nose. And Skipper did not know that he was himself wet, and that he was in the first shock of recurrent malaria precipitated by the wet and the excitement. He knew only that the puppy-dog, given him only the previous morning, was safe back in his arms.

While the boat's crew bent to the oars, he steered with the sweep between his arm and his side in order that he might hold Jerry with the other arm.

"You little son of a gun," he crooned, and continued to croon, over and over. "You little son of a gun."

And Jerry responded with tongue-kisses, whimpering and crying as is the way of lost children immediately after they are found. Also, he shivered violently. But it was not from the cold. Rather was it due to his overstrung, sensitive nerves.

Again on board, Van Horn stated his reasoning to the mate.

"The pup didn't just calmly walk overboard. Nor was he washed overboard. I had him fast and triced in the blanket with a rope yarn."

He walked over, the centre of the boat's crew and of the three-score return boys who were all on deck, and flashed his torch on the blanket still lying on the yams.

"That proves it. The rope-yarn's cut. The knot's still in it. Now what nigger is responsible?"

He looked about at the circle of dark faces, flashing the light on them, and such was the accusation and anger in his eyes, that all eyes fell before his or looked away.

“If only the pup could speak,” he complained. “He’d tell who it was.”

He bent suddenly down to Jerry, who was standing as close against his legs as he could, so close that his wet forepaws rested on Skipper’s bare feet.

“You know ’m, Jerry, you known the black fella boy,” he said, his words quick and exciting, his hand moving in questing circles toward the blacks.

Jerry was all alive on the instant, jumping about, barking with short yelps of eagerness.

“I do believe the dog could lead me to him,” Van Horn confided to the mate. “Come on, Jerry, find ’m, sick ’m, shake ’m down. Where is he, Jerry? Find ’m. Find ’m.”

All that Jerry knew was that Skipper wanted something. He must find something that Skipper wanted, and he was eager to serve. He pranced about aimlessly and willingly for a space, while Skipper’s urging cries increased his excitement. Then he was struck by an idea, and a most definite idea it was. The circle of boys broke to let him through as he raced for’ard along the starboard side to the tight-lashed heap of trade-boxes. He put his nose into the opening where the wild-dog laired, and sniffed. Yes, the wild-dog was inside. Not only did he smell him, but he heard the menace of his snarl.

He looked up to Skipper questioningly. Was it that Skipper wanted him to go in after the wild-dog? But Skipper laughed and waved his hand to show that he wanted him to search in other places for something else.

He leaped away, sniffing in likely places where experience had taught him cockroaches and rats might be. Yet it quickly dawned on him that it was not such things Skipper was after. His heart was wild with desire to serve, and, without clear purpose, he began sniffing legs of black boys.

This brought livelier urgings and encouragements from Skipper, and made him almost frantic. That was it. He must identify the boat’s crew and the return boys by their legs. He hurried the task, passing swiftly from boy to boy, until he came to Lerumie.

And then he forgot that Skipper wanted him to do something. All he knew was that it was Lerumie who had broken the taboo of his sacred person by laying hands on him, and that it was Lerumie who had thrown him overboard.

With a cry of rage, a flash of white teeth, and a bristle of short neck-hair, he sprang for the black. Lerumie fled down the deck, and Jerry pursued amid the laughter of all the blacks. Several times, in making the circuit of the deck, he managed to scratch the flying calves with his teeth. Then Lerumie took to the main rigging, leaving Jerry impotently to rage on the deck beneath him.

About this point the blacks grouped in a semi-circle at a respectful distance, with Van Horn to the fore beside Jerry. Van Horn centred his electric torch on the black in the rigging, and saw the long parallel scratches on the fingers of the hand that had invaded Jerry's blanket. He pointed them out significantly to Borckman, who stood outside the circle so that no black should be able to come at his back.

Skipper picked Jerry up and soothed his anger with:

"Good boy, Jerry. You marked and sealed him. Some dog, you, some big man-dog."

He turned back to Lerumie, illuminating him as he clung in the rigging, and his voice was harsh and cold as he addressed him.

"What name belong along you fella boy?" he demanded.

"Me fella Lerumie," came the chirping, quavering answer.

"You come along Pennduffryn?"

"Me come along Meringe."

Captain Van Horn debated the while he fondled the puppy in his arms. After all, it was a return boy. In a day, in two days at most, he would have him landed and be quit of him.

"My word," he harangued, "me angry along you. Me angry big fella too much along you. Me angry along you any amount. What name you fella boy make 'm pickaninny dog belong along me walk about along water?"

Lerumie was unable to answer. He rolled his eyes helplessly, resigned to receive a whipping such as he had long since bitterly learned white masters were wont to administer.

Captain Van Horn repeated the question, and the black repeated the helpless rolling of his eyes.

"For two sticks tobacco I knock 'm seven bells outa you," the skipper bullied. "Now me give you strong fella talk too much. You look 'm eye belong you one time along this fella dog belong me, I knock ’m seven bells and whole starboard watch outa you. Savve?”

“Me savve,” Lerumie, plaintively replied; and the episode was closed.

The return boys went below to sleep in the cabin. Borckman and the boat’s crew hoisted the mainsail and put the *Arangi* on her course. And Skipper, under a dry blanket from below, lay down to sleep with Jerry, head on his shoulder, in the hollow of his arm.

CHAPTER VII

At seven in the morning, when Skipper rolled him out of the blanket and got up, Jerry celebrated the new day by chasing the wild-dog back into his hole and by drawing a snicker from the blacks on deck, when, with a growl and a flash of teeth, he made Lerumie side-step half a dozen feet and yield the deck to him.

He shared breakfast with Skipper, who, instead of eating, washed down with a cup of coffee fifty grains of quinine wrapped in a cigarette paper, and who complained to the mate that he would have to get under the blankets and sweat out the fever that was attacking him. Despite his chill, and despite his teeth that were already beginning to chatter while the burning sun extracted the moisture in curling mist-wreaths from the deck planking, Van Horn cuddled Jerry in his arms and called him princeling, and prince, and a king, and a son of kings.

For Van Horn had often listened to the recitals of Jerry's pedigree by Tom Haggin, over Scotch-and-sodas, when it was too pestilentially hot to go to bed. And the pedigree was as royal-blooded as was possible for an Irish terrier to possess, whose breed, beginning with the ancient Irish wolf-hound, had been moulded and established by man in less than two generations of men.

There was Terrence the Magnificent — descended, as Van Horn remembered, from the American-bred Milton Droleen, out of the Queen of County Antrim, Breda Muddler, which royal bitch, as every one who is familiar with the stud book knows, goes back as far as the almost mythical Spuds, with along the way no primrose dallyings with black-and-tan Killeney Boys and Welsh nondescripts. And did not Biddy trace to Erin, mother and star of the breed, through a long descendant out of Breda Mixer, herself an ancestress of Breda Muddler? Nor could be omitted from the purple record the later ancestress, Moya Doolen.

So Jerry knew the ecstasy of loving and of being loved in the arms of his love-god, although little he knew of such phrases as "king's son" and "son of kings," save that they connoted love for him in the same way that Lerumie's hissing noises connoted hate. One thing Jerry knew without knowing that he knew, namely, that in the few hours he had been with Skipper he loved him more than he had loved Derby and Bob, who, with the exception of Mister Haggin, were the only other white-gods he had ever known. He was not conscious of this. He merely loved, merely acted on the prompting of his heart, or head, or whatever organic or anatomical part of him that developed the mysterious, delicious, and insatiable hunger called "love."

Skipper went below. He went all unheeding of Jerry, who padded softly at his heels until the companionway was reached. Skipper was unheeding of Jerry because of the fever that wrenched his flesh and chilled his bones, that made his head seem to swell monstrously, that glazed the world to his swimming eyes and made him walk feebly and totteringly like a drunken man or a man very aged. And Jerry sensed that something was wrong with Skipper.

Skipper, beginning the babblings of delirium which alternated with silent moments of control in order to get below and under blankets, descended the ladder-like stairs, and Jerry, all-yearning, controlled himself in silence and watched the slow descent with the hope that when Skipper reached the bottom he would raise his arms and lift him down. But Skipper was too far gone to remember that Jerry existed. He staggered, with wide-spread arms to keep from falling, along the cabin floor for'ard to the bunk in the tiny stateroom.

Jerry was truly of a kingly line. He wanted to call out and beg to be taken down. But he did not. He controlled himself, he knew not why, save that he was possessed by a nebulous awareness that Skipper must be considered as a god should be considered, and that this was no time to obtrude himself on Skipper. His heart was torn with desire, although he made no sound, and he continued only to yearn over the companion combing and to listen to the faint sounds of Skipper's progress for'ard.

But even kings and their descendants have their limitations, and at the end of a quarter of an hour Jerry was ripe to cease from his silence. With the going below of Skipper, evidently in great trouble, the light had gone out of the day for Jerry. He might have stalked the wild-dog, but no inducement lay there. Lerumie passed by unnoticed, although he knew he could bully him and make him give deck space. The myriad scents of the land entered his keen nostrils, but he made no note of them. Not even the flopping, bellying mainsail overhead, as the *Arangi* rolled becalmed, could draw a glance of quizzical regard from him.

Just as it was tremblingly imperative that Jerry must suddenly squat down, point his nose at the zenith, and vocalize his heart-rending woe, an idea came to him. There is no explaining how this idea came. No more can it be explained than can a human explain why, at luncheon to-day, he selects green peas and rejects string beans, when only yesterday he elected to choose string beans and to reject green peas. No more can it be explained than can a human judge, sentencing a convicted criminal and imposing eight years imprisonment instead of the five or nine years that also at the same time floated upward in his brain, explain why he categorically determined on eight years as the just, adequate punishment. Since not even humans, who are almost half-gods, can fathom the mystery of the genesis of ideas and the dictates of choice, appearing in their consciousness as ideas, it is not to be expected of a more dog to know the why of the ideas that animate it to definite acts toward definite ends.

And so Jerry. Just as he must immediately howl, he was aware that the idea, an entirely different idea, was there, in the innermost centre of the quick-thinkingness of him, with all its compulsion. He obeyed the idea as a marionette obeys the strings, and started forthwith down the deck aft in quest of the mate.

He had an appeal to make to Borckman. Borckman was also a two-legged white-god. Easily could Borckman lift him down the precipitous ladder, which was to him, unaided, a taboo, the violation of which was pregnant with disaster. But Borckman had in him little of the heart of love, which is understanding. Also, Borckman was busy. Besides overseeing the continuous adjustment, by trimming of sails and orders to the helmsman, of the *Arangi* to her way on the sea, and overseeing the boat's crew at its task of washing deck and polishing brasswork, he was engaged in steadily nipping from a stolen bottle of his captain's whiskey which he had stowed away in the hollow between the two sacks of yams lashed on deck aft the mizzenmast.

Borckman was on his way for another nip, after having thickly threatened to knock seven bells and the ten commandments out of the black at the wheel for faulty steering, when Jerry appeared before him and blocked the way to his desire. But Jerry did not block him as he would have blocked Lerumie, for instance. There was no showing of teeth, no bristling of neck hair. Instead, Jerry was all placation and appeal, all softness of pleading in a body denied speech that nevertheless was articulate, from wagging tail and wriggling sides to flat-laid ears and eyes that almost spoke, to any human sensitive of understanding.

But Borckman saw in his way only a four-legged creature of the brute world, which, in his arrogant brutalness he esteemed more brute than himself. All the pretty picture of the soft puppy, instinct with communicativeness, bursting with tenderness of petition, was veiled to his vision. What he saw was merely a four-legged animal to be thrust aside while he continued his lordly two-legged progress toward the bottle that could set maggots crawling in his brain and make him dream dreams that he was prince, not peasant, that he was a master of matter rather than a slave of matter.

And thrust aside Jerry was, by a rough and naked foot, as harsh and unfeeling in its impact as an inanimate breaking sea on a beach-jut of insensate rock. He half-sprawled on the slippery deck, regained his balance, and stood still and looked at the white-god who had treated him so cavalierly. The meanness and unfairness had brought from Jerry no snarling threat of retaliation, such as he would have offered Lerumie or any other black. Nor in his brain was any thought of retaliation. This was no Lerumie. This was a superior god, two-legged, white-skinned, like Skipper, like Mister Haggin and the couple of other superior gods he had known. Only did he know hurt, such as any child knows under the blow of a thoughtless or unloving mother.

In the hurt was mingled a resentment. He was keenly aware that there were two sorts of roughness. There was the kindly roughness of love, such as when Skipper gripped him by the jowl, shook him till his teeth rattled, and thrust him away with an unmistakable invitation to come back and be so shaken again. Such roughness, to Jerry, was heaven. In it was the intimacy of contact with a beloved god who in such manner elected to express a reciprocal love.

But this roughness of Borckman was different. It was the other kind of roughness in which resided no warm affection, no heart-touch of love. Jerry did not quite understand, but he sensed the difference and resented, without expressing in action, the wrongness and unfairness of it. So he stood, after regaining balance, and soberly regarded, in a vain effort to understand, the mate with a bottle-bottom inverted skyward, the mouth to his lips, the while his throat made gulping contractions and noises. And soberly he continued to regard the mate when he went aft and threatened to knock the “Song of Songs” and the rest of the Old Testament out of the black helmsman whose smile of teeth was as humbly gentle and placating as Jerry’s had been when he made his appeal.

Leaving this god as a god unliked and not understood, Jerry sadly trotted back to the companionway and yearned his head over the combing in the direction in which he had seen Skipper disappear. What bit at his consciousness and was a painful incitement in it, was his desire to be with Skipper who was not right, and who was in trouble. He wanted Skipper. He wanted to be with him, first and sharply, because he loved him, and, second and dimly, because he might serve him. And, wanting Skipper, in his helplessness and youngness in experience of the world, he whimpered and cried his heart out across the companion combing, and was too clean and direct in his sorrow to be deflected by an outburst of anger against the niggers, on deck and below, who chuckled at him and derided him.

From the crest of the combing to the cabin floor was seven feet. He had, only a few hours before, climbed the precipitous stairway; but it was impossible, and he knew it, to descend the stairway. And yet, at the last, he dared it. So compulsive was the prod of his heart to gain to Skipper at any cost, so clear was his comprehension that he could not climb down the ladder head first, with no grippingness of legs and feet and muscles such as were possible in the ascent, that he did not attempt it. He launched outward and down, in one magnificent and love-heroic leap. He knew that he was violating a taboo of life, just as he knew he was violating a taboo if he sprang into Meringe Lagoon where swam the dreadful crocodiles. Great love is always capable of expressing itself in sacrifice and self-immolation. And only for love, and for no lesser reason, could Jerry have made the leap.

He struck on his side and head. The one impact knocked the breath out of him; the other stunned him. Even in his unconsciousness, lying on his side and quivering, he made rapid, spasmodic movements of his legs as if running for’ard to Skipper. The boys looked on and laughed, and when he no longer quivered and churned his legs they continued to laugh. Born in savagery, having lived in savagery all their lives and known naught else, their sense of humour was correspondingly savage. To them, the sight of a stunned and possibly dead puppy was a side-splitting, ludicrous event.

Not until the fourth minute ticked off did returning consciousness enable Jerry to crawl to his feet and with wide-spread legs and swimming eyes adjust himself to the *Arangi’s* roll. Yet with the first glimmerings of consciousness persisted the one idea that he must gain to Skipper. Blacks? In his anxiety and solicitude and love they did not count. He ignored the chuckling, grinning, girding black boys, who, but for the fact that he was under the terrible aegis of the big fella white marster, would have delighted to kill and eat the puppy who, in the process of training, was proving a most capable nigger-chaser. Without a turn of head or roll of eye, aristocratically positing their non-existingness to their faces, he trotted for'ard along the cabin floor and into the stateroom where Skipper babbled maniacally in the bunk.

Jerry, who had never had malaria, did not understand. But in his heart he knew great trouble in that Skipper was in trouble. Skipper did not recognize him, even when he sprang into the bunk, walked across Skipper's heaving chest, and licked the acrid sweat of fever from Skipper's face. Instead, Skipper's wildly-thrashing arms brushed him away and flung him violently against the side of the bunk.

This was roughness that was not love-roughness. Nor was it the roughness of Borckman spurning him away with his foot. It was part of Skipper's trouble. Jerry did not reason this conclusion. But, and to the point, he acted upon it as if he had reasoned it. In truth, through inadequacy of one of the most adequate languages in the world, it can only be said that Jerry *sensed* the new difference of this roughness.

He sat up, just out of range of one restless, beating arm, yearned to come closer and lick again the face of the god who knew him not, and who, he knew, loved him well, and palpitatingly shared and suffered all Skipper's trouble.

"Eh, Clancey," Skipper babbled. "It's a fine job this day, and no better crew to clean up after the dubs of motormen. . . . Number three jack, Clancey. Get under the for'ard end." And, as the spectres of his nightmare metamorphosed: "Hush, darling, talking to your dad like that, telling him the combing of your sweet and golden hair. As if I couldn't, that have combed it these seven years — better than your mother, darling, better than your mother. I'm the one gold-medal prize-winner in the combing of his lovely daughter's lovely hair. . . . She's broken out! Give her the wheel aft there! Jib and fore-topsail halyards! Full and by, there! A good full! . . . Ah, she takes it like the beauty fairy boat that she is upon the sea. . . I'll just lift that — sure, the limit. Blackey, when you pay as much to see my cards as I'm going to pay to see yours, you're going to see some cards, believe me!"

And so the farrago of unrelated memories continued to rise vocal on Skipper's lips to the heave of his body and the beat of his arms, while Jerry, crouched against the side of the bunk mourned and mourned his grief and inability to be of help. All that was occurring was beyond him. He knew no more of poker hands than did he know of getting ships under way, of clearing up surface car wrecks in New York, or of combing the long yellow hair of a loved daughter in a Harlem flat.

"Both dead," Skipper said in a change of delirium. He said it quietly, as if announcing the time of day, then wailed: "But, oh, the bonnie, bonnie braids of all the golden hair of her!"

He lay motionlessly for a space and sobbed out a breaking heart. This was Jerry's chance. He crept inside the arm that tossed, snuggled against Skipper's side, laid his head on Skipper's shoulder, his cool nose barely touching Skipper's cheek, and felt the arm curl about him and press him closer. The hand bent from the wrist and caressed him protectingly, and the warm contact of his velvet body put a change in Skipper's sick dreams, for he began to mutter in cold and bitter ominousness: "Any nigger that as much as bats an eye at that puppy. . ."

CHAPTER VIII

When, in half an hour, Van Horn's sweat culminated in profusion, it marked the breaking of the malarial attack. Great physical relief was his, and the last mists of delirium ebbed from his brain. But he was left limply weak, and, after tossing off the blankets and recognizing Jerry, he fell into a refreshing natural sleep.

Not till two hours later did he awake and start to go on deck. Half-way up the companion, he deposited Jerry on deck and went back to the stateroom for a forgotten bottle of quinine. But he did not immediately return to Jerry. The long drawer under Borckman's bunk caught his eye. The wooden button that held it shut was gone, and it was far out and hanging at an angle that jammed it and prevented it from falling to the floor. The matter was serious. There was little doubt in his mind, had the drawer, in the midst of the squall of the previous night, fallen to the floor, that no *Arangi* and no soul of the eighty souls on board would have been left. For the drawer was filled with a heterogeneous mess of dynamite sticks, boxes of fulminating caps, coils of fuses, lead sinkers, iron tools, and many boxes of rifle, revolver and pistol cartridges. He sorted and arranged the varied contents, and with a screwdriver and a longer screw reattached the button.

In the meantime, Jerry was encountering new adventure not of the pleasantest. While waiting for Skipper to return, Jerry chanced to see the wild-dog brazenly lying on deck a dozen feet from his lair in the trade-boxes. Instantly stiffly crouching, Jerry began to stalk. Success seemed assured, for the wild-dog, with closed eyes, was apparently asleep.

And at this moment the mate, two-legging it along the deck from for'ard in the direction of the bottle stored between the yam sacks, called, "Jerry," in a remarkably husky voice. Jerry flattened his filbert-shaped ears and wagged his tail in acknowledgment, but advertised his intention of continuing to stalk his enemy. And at sound of the mate's voice the wild-dog flung quick-opened eyes in Jerry's direction and flashed into his burrow, where he immediately turned around, thrust his head out with a show of teeth, and snarled triumphant defiance.

Baulked of his quarry by the inconsiderateness of the mate, Jerry trotted back to the head of the companion to wait for Skipper. But Borckman, whose brain was well a-crawl by virtue of the many nips, clung to a petty idea after the fashion of drunken men. Twice again, imperatively, he called Jerry to him, and twice again, with flattened ears of gentleness and wagging tail, Jerry good-naturedly expressed his disinclination. Next, he yearned his head over the coming and into the cabin after Skipper.

Borckman remembered his first idea and continued to the bottle, which he generously inverted skyward. But the second idea, petty as it was, persisted; and, after swaying and mumbling to himself for a time, after unseeingly making believe to study the crisp fresh breeze that filled the *Arangi's* sails and slanted her deck, and, after sillily attempting on the helmsman to portray eagle-like vigilance in his drink-swimming eyes, he lurched amidships toward Jerry.

Jerry's first intimation of Borckman's arrival was a cruel and painful clutch on his flank and groin that made him cry out in pain and whirl around. Next, as the mate had seen Skipper do in play, Jerry had his jowls seized in a tooth-clattering shake that was absolutely different from the Skipper's rough love-shake. His head and body were shaken, his teeth clattered painfully, and with the roughest of roughness he was flung part way down the slippery slope of deck.

Now Jerry was a gentleman. All the soul of courtesy was in him, for equals and superiors. After all, even in an inferior like the wild-dog, he did not consciously press an advantage very far — never extremely far. In his stalking and rushing of the wild-dog, he had been more sound and fury than an overbearing bully. But with a superior, with a two-legged white-god like Borckman, there was more a demand upon his control, restraint, and inhibition of primitive promptings. He did not want to play with the mate a game that he ecstatically played with Skipper, because he had experienced no similar liking for the mate, two-legged white-god that he was.

And still Jerry was all gentleness. He came back in a feeble imitation rush of the whole-hearted rush that he had learned to make on Skipper. He was, in truth, acting, play-acting, attempting to do what he had no heart-prompting to do. He made believe to play, and uttered simulated growls that failed of the verity of simulation.

He bobbed his tail good-naturedly and friendly, and growled ferociously and friendly; but the keenness of the drunkenness of the mate discerned the difference and aroused in him, vaguely, the intuition of difference, of play-acting, of cheating. Jerry was cheating — out of his heart of consideration.

Borckman drunkenly recognized the cheating without crediting the heart of good behind it. On the instant he was antagonistic. Forgetting that he was only a brute, he posited that this was no more than a brute with which he strove to play in the genial comradely way that the Skipper played.

Red war was inevitable — not first on Jerry's part, but on Borckman's part. Borckman felt the abysmal urgings of the beast, as a beast, to prove himself master of this four-legged beast. Jerry felt his jowl and jaw clutched still more harshly and hardly, and, with increase of harshness and hardness, he was flung farther down the deck, which, on account of its growing slant due to heavier gusts of wind, had become a steep and slippery hill.

He came back, clawing frantically up the slope that gave him little footing; and he came back, no longer with poorly attempted simulation of ferocity, but impelled by the first flickerings of real ferocity. He did not know this. If he thought at all, he was under the impression that he was playing the game as he had played it with Skipper. In short, he was taking an interest in the game, although a radically different interest from what he had taken with Skipper.

This time his teeth flashed quicker and with deeper intent at the jowl-clutching hand, and, missing, he was seized and flung down the smooth incline harder and farther than before. He was growing angry, as he clawed back, though he was not conscious of it. But the mate, being a man, albeit a drunken one, sensed the change in Jerry's attack ere Jerry dreamed there was any change in it. And not only did Borckman sense it, but it served as a spur to drive him back into primitive beastliness, and to fight to master this puppy as a primitive man, under dissimilar provocation, might have fought with the members of the first litter stolen from a wolf-den among the rocks.

True, Jerry could trace as far back. His ancient ancestors had been Irish wolf-hounds, and, long before that, the ancestors of the wolf-hounds had been wolves. The note in Jerry's growls changed. The unforgotten and ineffaceable past strummed the fibres of his throat. His teeth flashed with fierce intent, in the desire of sinking as deep in the man's hand as passion could drive. For Jerry by this time was all passion. He had leaped back into the dark stark rawness of the early world almost as swiftly as had Borckman. And this time his teeth scored, ripping the tender and sensitive and flesh of all the inside of the first and second joints of Borckman's right hand. Jerry's teeth were needles that stung, and Borckman, gaining the grasp on Jerry's jaw, flung him away and down so that almost he hit the *Arangi's* tiny-rail ere his clawing feet stopped him.

And Van Horn, having finished his rearrangement and repair of the explosive-filled drawer under the mate's bunk, climbed up the companion steps, saw the battle, paused, and quietly looked on.

But he looked across a million years, at two mad creatures who had slipped the leach of the generations and who were back in the darkness of spawning life ere dawning intelligence had modified the chemistry of such life to softness of consideration. What stirred in the brain crypts of Borckman's heredity, stirred in the brain-crypts of Jerry's heredity. Time had gone backward for both. All the endeavour and achievement of the ten thousand generations was not, and, as wolf-dog and wild-man, the combat was between Jerry and the mate. Neither saw Van Horn, who was inside the companionway hatch, his eyes level with the combing.

To Jerry, Borckman was now no more a god than was he himself a mere, smooth-coated Irish terrier. Both had forgotten the million years stamped into their heredity more feebly, less eraseably, than what had been stamped in prior to the million years. Jerry did not know drunkenness, but he did know unfairness; and it was with raging indignation that he knew it. Borckman fumbled his next counter to Jerry's attack, missed, and had both hands slashed in quick succession ere he managed to send the puppy sliding.

And still Jerry came back. As any screaming creature of the jungle, he hysterically squalled his indignation. But he made no whimper. Nor did he wince or cringe to the blows. He bored straight in, striving, without avoiding a blow, to beat and meet the blow with his teeth. So hard was he flung down the last time that his side smashed painfully against the rail, and Van Horn cried out:

"Cut that out, Borckman! Leave the puppy alone!"

The mate turned in the startle of surprise at being observed. The sharp, authoritative words of Van Horn were a call across the million years. Borckman's anger-convulsed face ludicrously attempted a sheepish, deprecating grin, and he was just mumbling, "We was only playing," when Jerry arrived back, leaped in the air, and sank his teeth into the offending hand.

Borckman immediately and insanely went back across the million years. An attempted kick got his ankle scored for his pains. He gibbered his own rage and hurt, and, stooping, dealt Jerry a tremendous blow alongside the head and neck. Being in mid-leap when he received the blow Jerry was twistingly somersaulted sidewise before he struck the deck on his back. As swiftly as he could scramble to footing and charge, he returned to the attack, but was checked by Skipper's:

"Jerry! Stop it! Come here!"

He obeyed, but only by prodigious effort, his neck bristling and his lips writhing clear of his teeth as he passed the mate. For the first time there was a whimper in his throat; but it was not the whimper of fear, nor of pain, but of outrage, and of desire to continue the battle which he struggled to control at Skipper's behest.

Stepping out on deck, Skipper picked him up and patted and soothed him the while he expressed his mind to the mate.

"Borckman, you ought to be ashamed. You ought to be shot or have your block knocked off for this. A puppy, a little puppy scarcely weaned. For two cents I'd give you what-for myself. The idea of it. A little puppy, a weanling little puppy. Glad your hands are ripped. You deserved it. Hope you get blood-poisoning in them. Besides, you're drunk. Go below and turn in, and don't you dare come on deck until you're sober. Savve?"

And Jerry, far-journeyer across life and across the history of all life that goes to make the world, strugglingly mastering the abysmal slime of the prehistoric with the love that had come into existence and had become warp and woof of him in far later time, his wrath of ancientness still faintly reverberating in his throat like the rumblings of a passing thunder-storm, knew, in the wide warm ways of feeling, the augustness and righteousness of Skipper. Skipper was in truth a god who did right, who was fair, who protected, and who imperiously commanded this other and lesser god that slunk away before his anger.

CHAPTER IX

Jerry and Skipper shared the long afternoon-watch together, the latter being guilty of recurrent chuckles and exclamations such as: “Gott-fer-dang, Jerry, believe *me*, you’re some fighter and all dog”; or, “You’re a proper man’s dog, you are, a lion dog. I bet the lion don’t live that could get your goat.”

And Jerry, understanding none of the words, with the exception of his own name, nevertheless knew that the sounds made by Skipper were broad of praise and warm of love. And when Skipper stooped and rubbed his ears, or received a rose-kiss on extended fingers, or caught him up in his arms, Jerry’s heart was nigh to bursting. For what greater ecstasy can be the portion of any creature than that it be loved by a god? This was just precisely Jerry’s ecstasy. This was a god, a tangible, real, three-dimensioned god, who went about and ruled his world in a loin-cloth and on two bare legs, and who loved him with crooning noises in throat and mouth and with two wide-spread arms that folded him in.

At four o’clock, measuring a glance at the afternoon sun and gauging the speed of the *Arangi* through the water in relation to the closeness of Su’u, Van Horn went below and roughly shook the mate awake. Until both returned, Jerry held the deck alone. But for the fact that the white-gods were there below and were certain to be back at any moment, not many moments would Jerry have held the deck, for every lessened mile between the return boys and Malaita contributed a rising of their spirits, and under the imminence of their old-time independence, Lerumie, as an instance of many of them, with strong gustatory sensations and a positive drooling at the mouth, regarded Jerry in terms of food and vengeance that were identical.

Flat-hauled on the crisp breeze, the *Arangi* closed in rapidly with the land. Jerry peered through the barbed wire, sniffing the air, Skipper beside him and giving orders to the mate and helmsman. The heap of trade-boxes was now unlashed, and the boys began opening and shutting them. What gave them particular delight was the ringing of the bell with which each box was equipped and which rang whenever a lid was raised. Their pleasure in the toy-like contrivance was that of children, and each went back again and again to unlock his own box and make the bell ring.

Fifteen of the boys were to be landed at Su'u and with wild gesticulations and cries they began to recognize and point out the infinitesimal details of the landfall of the only spot they had known on earth prior to the day, three years before, when they had been sold into slavery by their fathers, uncles, and chiefs.

A narrow neck of water, scarcely a hundred yards across, gave entrance to a long and tiny bay. The shore was massed with mangroves and dense, tropical vegetation. There was no sign of houses nor of human occupancy, although Van Horn, staring at the dense jungle so close at hand, knew as a matter of course that scores, and perhaps hundreds, of pairs of human eyes were looking at him.

"Smell 'm, Jerry, smell 'm," he encouraged.

And Jerry's hair bristled as he barked at the mangrove wall, for truly his keen scent informed him of lurking niggers.

"If I could smell like him," the captain said to the mate, "there wouldn't be any risk at all of my ever losing my head."

But Borckman made no reply and sullenly went about his work. There was little wind in the bay, and the *Arangi* slowly forged in and dropped anchor in thirty fathoms. So steep was the slope of the harbour bed from the beach that even in such excessive depth the *Arangi's* stern swung in within a hundred feet of the mangroves.

Van Horn continued to cast anxious glances at the wooded shore. For Su'u had an evil name. Since the schooner *Fair Hathaway*, recruiting labour for the Queensland plantations, had been captured by the natives and all hands slain fifteen years before, no vessel, with the exception of the *Arangi*, had dared to venture into Su'u. And most white men condemned Van Horn's recklessness for so venturing.

Far up the mountains, that towered many thousands of feet into the trade-wind clouds, arose many signal smokes that advertised the coming of the vessel. Far and near, the *Arangi's* presence was known; yet from the jungle so near at hand only shrieks of parrots and chatterings of cockatoos could be heard.

The whaleboat, manned with six of the boat's crew, was drawn alongside, and the fifteen Su'u boys and their boxes were loaded in. Under the canvas flaps along the thwarts, ready to hand for the rowers, were laid five of the Lee-Enfields. On deck, another of the boat's crew, rifle in hand, guarded the remaining weapons. Borckman had brought up his own rifle to be ready for instant use. Van Horn's rifle lay handy in the stern sheets where he stood near Tambi, who steered with a long sweep. Jerry raised a low whine and yearned over the rail after Skipper, who yielded and lifted him down.

The place of danger was in the boat; for there was little likelihood, at this particular time, of a rising of the return boys on the *Arangi*. Being of Somo, No-ola, Langa-Langa, and far Malu they were in wholesome fear, did they lose the protection of their white masters, of being eaten by the Su'u folk, just as the Su'u boys would have feared being eaten by the Somo and Langa-Langa and No-ola folk.

What increased the danger of the boat was the absence of a covering boat. The invariable custom of the larger recruiting vessels was to send two boats on any shore errand. While one landed on the beach, the other lay off a short distance to cover the retreat of the shore party, if trouble broke out. Too small to carry one boat on deck, the *Arangi* could not conveniently tow two astern; so Van Horn, who was the most daring of the recruiters, lacked this essential safeguard.

Tambi, under Van Horn's low-uttered commands, steered a parallel course along the shore. Where the mangroves ceased, and where high ground and a beaten runway came down to the water's edge, Van Horn motioned the rowers to back water and lay on their oars. High palms and lofty, wide-branched trees rose above the jungle at this spot, and the runway showed like the entrance of a tunnel into the dense, green wall of tropical vegetation.

Van Horn, regarding the shore for some sign of life, lighted a cigar and put one hand to the waist-line of his loin-cloth to reassure himself of the presence of the stick of dynamite that was tucked between the loin-cloth and his skin. The lighted cigar was for the purpose, if emergency arose, of igniting the fuse of the dynamite. And the fuse was so short, with its end split to accommodate the inserted head of a safety match, that between the time of touching it off with the live cigar to the time of the explosion not more than three seconds could elapse. This required quick cool work on Van Horn's part, in case need arose. In three seconds he would have to light the fuse and throw the sputtering stick with directed aim to its objective. However, he did not expect to use it, and had it ready merely as a precautionary measure.

Five minutes passed, and the silence of the shore remained profound. Jerry sniffed Skipper's bare leg as if to assure him that he was beside him no matter what threatened from the hostile silence of the land, then stood up with his forepaws on the gunwale and continued to sniff eagerly and audibly, to prick his neck hair, and to utter low growls.

“They’re there, all right,” Skipper confided to him; and Jerry, with a sideward glance of smiling eyes, with a bobbing of his tail and a quick love-flattening of his ears, turned his nose shoreward again and resumed his reading of the jungle tale that was wafted to him on the light fans of the stifling and almost stagnant air.

“Hey!” Van Horn suddenly shouted. “Hey, you fella boy stick ’m head out belong you!”

As if in a transformation scene, the apparently tenantless jungle spawned into life. On the instant a hundred stark savages appeared. They broke forth everywhere from the vegetation. All were armed, some with Snider rifles and ancient horse pistols, others with bows and arrows, with long throwing spears, with war-clubs, and with long-handled tomahawks. In a flash, one of them leaped into the sunlight in the open space where runway and water met. Save for decorations, he was naked as Adam before the Fall. A solitary white feather uprose from his kinky, glossy, black hair. A polished bodkin of white petrified shell, with sharp-pointed ends, thrust through a hole in the partition of his nostrils, extended five inches across his face. About his neck, from a cord of twisted coconut sennit, hung an ivory-white necklace of wild-boar’s tusks. A garter of white cowrie shells encircled one leg just below the knee. A flaming scarlet flower was coquettishly stuck over one ear, and through a hole in the other ear was threaded a pig’s tail so recently severed that it still bled.

As this dandy of Melanesia leaped into the sunshine, the Snider rifle in his hands came into position, aimed from his hip, the generous muzzle bearing directly on Van Horn. No less quick was Van Horn. With equal speed he had snatched his rifle and brought it to bear from his hip. So they stood and faced each other, death in their finger-tips, forty feet apart. The million years between barbarism and civilization also yawned between them across that narrow gulf of forty feet. The hardest thing for modern, evolved man to do is to forget his ancient training. Easiest of all things is it for him to forget his modernity and slip back across time to the howling ages. A lie in the teeth, a blow in the face, a love-thrust of jealousy to the heart, in a fraction of an instant can turn a twentieth-century philosopher into an ape-like arborean pounding his chest, gnashing his teeth, and seeing red.

So Van Horn. But with a difference. He straddled time. He was at one and the same instant all modern, all imminently primitive, capable of fighting in redness of tooth and claw, desirous of remaining modern for as long as he could with his will master the study of ebon black of skin and dazzling white of decoration that confronted him.

A long ten seconds of silence endured. Even Jerry, he knew not why, stilled the growl in his throat. Five score of head-hunting cannibals on the fringe of the jungle, fifteen Su'u return blacks in the boat, seven black boat's crew, and a solitary white man with a cigar in his mouth, a rifle at his hip, and an Irish terrier bristling against his bare calf, kept the solemn pact of those ten seconds, and no one of them knew or guessed what the outcome would be.

One of the return boys, in the bow of the whaleboat, made the peace sign with his palm extended outward and weaponless, and began to chirp in the unknown Su'u dialect. Van Horn held his aim and waited. The dandy lowered his Snider, and breath came more easily to the chests of all who composed the picture.

"Me good fella boy," the dandy piped, half bird-like and half elf.

"You big fella fool too much," Van Horn retorted harshly, dropping his gun into the stern-sheets, motioning to rowers and steersman to turn the boat around, and puffing his cigar as carelessly casual as if, the moment before, life and death had not been the debate.

"My word," he went on with fine irritable assumption. "What name you stick 'm gun along me? Me no kai-kai (eat) along you. Me kai-kai along you, stomach belong me walk about. You kai-kai along me, stomach belong you walk about. You no like 'm kai-kai Su'u boy belong along you? Su'u boy belong you all the same brother along you. Long time before, three monsoon before, me speak 'm true speak. Me say three monsoon boy come back. My word, three monsoon finish, boy stop along me come back."

By this time the boat had swung around, reversing bow and stern, Van Horn pivoting so as to face the Snider-armed dandy. At another signal from Van Horn the rowers backed water and forced the boat, stern in, up to the solid ground of the runway. And each rower, his oar in position in case of attack, privily felt under the canvas flap to make sure of the exact location of his concealed Lee-Enfield.

“All right boy belong you walk about?” Van Horn queried of the dandy, who signified the affirmative in the Solomon Islands fashion by half-closing his eyes and nodding his head upward, in a queer, perky way;

“No kai-kai ’m Su’u fella boy suppose walk about along you?”

“No fear,” the dandy answered. “Suppose ’m Su’u fella boy, all right. Suppose ’m no fella Su’u boy, my word, big trouble. Ishikola, big fella black marster along this place, him talk ’m me talk along you. Him say any amount bad fella boy stop ’m along bush. Him say big fella white marster no walk about. Him say jolly good big fella white marster stop ’m along ship.”

Van Horn nodded in an off-hand way, as if the information were of little value, although he knew that for this time Su’u would furnish him no fresh recruits. One at a time, compelling the others to remain in their places, he directed the return boys astern and ashore. It was Solomon Islands tactics. Crowding was dangerous. Never could the blacks be risked to confusion in numbers. And Van Horn, smoking his cigar in lordly indifferent fashion, kept his apparently uninterested eyes glued to each boy who made his way aft, box on shoulder, and stepped out on the land. One by one they disappeared into the runway tunnel, and when the last was ashore he ordered the boat back to the ship.

“Nothing doing here this trip,” he told the mate. “We’ll up hook and out in the morning.”

The quick tropic twilight swiftly blent day and darkness. Overhead all stars were out. No faintest breath of air moved over the water, and the humid heat beaded the faces and bodies of both men with profuse sweat. They ate their deck-spread supper languidly and ever and anon used their forearms to wipe the stinging sweat from their eyes.

“Why a man should come to the Solomons — beastly hole,” the mate complained.

“Or stay on,” the captain rejoined.

“I’m too rotten with fever,” the mate grumbled. “I’d die if I left. Remember, I tried it two years ago. It takes the cold weather to bring out the fever. I arrived in Sydney on my back. They had to take me to hospital in an ambulance. I got worse and worse. The doctors told me the only thing to do was to head back where I got the fever. If I did I might live a long time. If I hung on in Sydney it meant a quick finish. They packed me on board in another ambulance. And that's all I saw of Australia for my holiday. I don't want to stay in the Solomons. It's plain hell. But I got to, or croak."

He rolled, at a rough estimate, thirty grains of quinine in a cigarette paper, regarded the result sourly for a moment, then swallowed it at a gulp. This reminded Van Horn, who reached for the bottle and took a similar dose.

"Better put up a covering cloth," he suggested.

Borckman directed several of the boat's crew in the rigging up of a thin tarpaulin, like a curtain along the shore side of the *Arangi*. This was a precaution against any bushwhacking bullet from the mangroves only a hundred feet away.

Van Horn sent Tambi below to bring up the small phonograph and run off the dozen or so scratchy, screechy records that had already been under the needle a thousand times. Between records, Van Horn recollected the girl, and had her haled out of her dark hole in the lazarette to listen to the music. She obeyed in fear, apprehensive that her time had come. She looked dumbly at the big fella white master, her eyes large with fright; nor did the trembling of her body cease for a long time after he had made her lie down. The phonograph meant nothing to her. She knew only fear — fear of this terrible white man that she was certain was destined to eat her.

Jerry left the caressing hand of Skipper for a moment to go over and sniff her. This was an act of duty. He was identifying her once again. No matter what happened, no matter what months or years might elapse, he would know her again and for ever know her again. He returned to the free hand of Skipper that resumed its caressing. The other hand held the cigar which he was smoking.

The wet sultry heat grew more oppressive. The air was nauseous with the dank mucky odour that cooked out of the mangrove swamp. Rowelled by the squeaky music to recollection of old-world ports and places, Borckman lay on his face on the hot planking, beat a tattoo with his naked toes, and gutturally muttered an unending monologue of curses. But Van Horn, with Jerry panting under his hand, placidly and philosophically continued to smoke, lighting a fresh cigar when the first gave out.

He roused abruptly at the faint wash of paddles which he was the first on board to hear. In fact, it was Jerry's low growl and neck-rippling of hair that had keyed Van Horn to hear. Pulling the stick of dynamite out from the twist of his loin cloth and glancing at the cigar to be certain it was alight, he rose to his feet with leisurely swiftness and with leisurely swiftness gained the rail.

"What name belong you?" was his challenge to the dark.

"Me fella Ishikola," came the answer in the quavering falsetto of age.

Van Horn, before speaking again, loosened his automatic pistol half out of its holster, and slipped the holster around from his hip till it rested on his groin conveniently close to his hand.

"How many fella boy stop along you?" he demanded.

"One fella ten-boy altogether he stop," came the aged voice.

"Come alongside then." Without turning his head, his right hand unconsciously dropping close to the butt of the automatic, Van Horn commanded: "You fella Tambi. Fetch 'm lantern. No fetch 'm this place. Fetch 'm aft along mizzen rigging and look sharp eye belong you."

Tambi obeyed, exposing the lantern twenty feet away from where his captain stood. This gave Van Horn the advantage over the approaching canoe-men, for the lantern, suspended through the barbed wire across the rail and well down, would clearly illuminate the occupants of the canoe while he was left in semi-darkness and shadow.

"Washee-washee!" he urged peremptorily, while those in the invisible canoe still hesitated.

Came the sound of paddles, and, next, emerging into the lantern's area of light, the high, black bow of a war canoe, curved like a gondola, inlaid with silvery-glistening mother-of-pearl; the long lean length of the canoe which was without outrigger; the shining eyes and the black-shining bodies of the stark blacks who knelt in the bottom and paddled; Ishikola, the old chief, squatting amidships and not paddling, an unlighted, empty-bowled, short-stemmed clay pipe upside-down between his toothless gums; and, in the stern, as coxswain, the dandy, all nakedness of blackness, all whiteness of decoration, save for the pig's tail in one ear and the scarlet hibiscus that still flamed over the other ear.

Less than ten blacks had been known to rush a blackbirder officered by no more than two white men, and Van Horn's hand closed on the butt of his automatic, although he did not pull it clear of the holster, and although, with his left hand, he directed the cigar to his mouth and puffed it lively alight.

"Hello, Ishikola, you blooming old blighter," was Van Horn's greeting to the old chief, as the dandy, with a pry of his steering-paddle against the side of the canoe and part under its bottom, brought the dug-out broadside-on to the *Arangi* so that the sides of both crafts touched.

Ishikola smiled upward in the lantern light. He smiled with his right eye, which was all he had, the left having been destroyed by an arrow in a youthful jungle-skirmish.

"My word!" he greeted back. "Long time you no stop eye belong me."

Van Horn joked him in understandable terms about the latest wives he had added to his harem and what price he had paid for them in pigs.

"My word," he concluded, "you rich fella too much together."

"Me like 'm come on board gammon along you," Ishikola meekly suggested.

"My word, night he stop," the captain objected, then added, as a concession against the known rule that visitors were not permitted aboard after nightfall: "You come on board, boy stop 'm along boat."

Van Horn gallantly helped the old man to clamber to the rail, straddle the barbed wire, and gain the deck. Ishikola was a dirty old savage. One of his tambos (tambo being bêche-de-mer and Melanesian for "taboo") was that water unavoidable must never touch his skin. He who lived by the salt sea, in a land of tropic downpour, religiously shunned contact with water. He never went swimming or wading, and always fled to shelter from a shower. Not that this was true of the rest of his tribe. It was the peculiar tambo laid upon him by the devil-devil doctors. Other tribesmen the devil-devil doctors tabooed against eating shark, or handling turtle, or contacting with crocodiles or the fossil remains of crocodiles, or from ever being smirched by the profanity of a woman's touch or of a woman's shadow cast across the path.

So Ishikola, whose tambo was water, was crusted with the filth of years. He was sealed like a leper, and, weazen-faced and age-shrunken, he hobbled horribly from an ancient spear-thrust to the thigh that twisted his torso droopingly out of the vertical. But his one eye gleamed brightly and wickedly, and Van Horn knew that it observed as much as did both his own eyes.

Van Horn shook hands with him — an honour he accorded only chiefs — and motioned him to squat down on deck on his hams close to the fear-struck girl, who began trembling again at recollection of having once heard

Ishikola offer five twenties of drinking coconuts for the meat of her for a dinner.

Jerry needs must sniff, for future identification purposes, this graceless, limping, naked, one-eyed old man. And, when he had sniffed and registered the particular odour, Jerry must growl intimidatingly and win a quick eye-glance of approval from Skipper.

"My word, good fella kai-kai dog," said Ishikola. "Me give 'm half-fathom shell money that fella dog."

For a mere puppy this offer was generous, because half a fathom of shell-money, strung on a thread of twisted coconut fibres, was equivalent in cash to half a sovereign in English currency, to two dollars and a half in American, or, in live-pig currency, to half of a fair-sized fat pig.

"One fathom shell-money that fella dog," Van Horn countered, in his heart knowing that he would not sell Jerry for a hundred fathoms, or for any fabulous price from any black, but in his head offering so small a price over par as not to arouse suspicion among the blacks as to how highly he really valued the golden-coated son of Biddy and Terrence.

Ishikola next averred that the girl had grown much thinner, and that he, as a practical judge of meat, did not feel justified this time in bidding more than three twenty-strings of drinking coconuts.

After these amenities, the white master and the black talked of many things, the one bluffing with the white-man's superiority of intellect and knowledge, the other feeling and guessing, primitive statesman that he was, in an effort to ascertain the balance of human and political forces that bore upon his Su'u territory, ten miles square, bounded by the sea and by landward lines of an inter-tribal warfare that was older than the oldest Su'u myth. Eternally, heads had been taken and bodies eaten, now on one side, now on the other, by the temporarily victorious tribes. The boundaries had remained the same. Ishikola, in crude bêche-de-mer, tried to learn the Solomon Islands general situation in relation to Su'u, and Van Horn was not above playing the unfair diplomatic game as it is unfairly played in all the chancellories of the world powers.

"My word," Van Horn concluded; "you bad fella too much along this place. Too many heads you fella take; too much kai-kai long pig along you." (Long pig, meaning barbecued human flesh.)

"What name, long time black fella belong Su'u take 'm heads, kai-kai along long pig?" Ishikola countered.

"My word," Van Horn came back, "too much along this place. Bime by, close up, big fella warship stop 'm along Su'u, knock seven balls outa Su'u."

"What name him big fella warship stop 'm along Solomons?" Ishikola demanded.

"Big fella *Cambrian*, him fella name belong ship," Van Horn lied, too well aware that no British cruiser had been in the Solomons for the past two years.

The conversation was becoming rather a farcical dissertation upon the relations that should obtain between states, irrespective of size, when it was broken off by a cry from Tambi, who, with another lantern hanging overside at the end of his arm had made a discovery.

"Skipper, gun he stop along canoe!" was his cry.

Van Horn, with a leap, was at the rail and peering down over the barbed wire. Ishikola, despite his twisted body, was only seconds behind him.

"What name that fella gun stop 'm along bottom?" Van Horn indignantly demanded.

The dandy, in the stern, with a careless look upward, tried with his foot to shove over the green leaves so as to cover the out-jutting butts of several rifles, but made the matter worse by exposing them more fully. He bent to rake the leaves over with his hand, but sat swiftly upright when Van Horn roared at him:

"Stand clear! Keep 'm fella hand belong you long way big bit!"

Van Horn turned on Ishikola, and simulated wrath which he did not feel against the ancient and ever-recurrent trick.

"What name you come alongside, gun he stop along canoe belong you?" he demanded.

The old salt-water chief rolled his one eye and blinked a fair simulation of stupidity and innocence.

"My word, me cross along you too much," Van Horn continued. "Ishikola, you plenty bad fella boy. You get 'm to hell overside."

The old fellow limped across the deck with more agility than he had displayed coming aboard, straddled the barbed wire without assistance, and without assistance dropped into the canoe, cleverly receiving his weight on his uninjured leg. He blinked up for forgiveness and in reassertion of innocence. Van Horn turned his face aside to hide a grin, and then grinned outright when the old rascal, showing his empty pipe, wheedled up:

“Suppose ’m five stick tobacco you give ’m along me?”

While Borckman went below for the tobacco, Van Horn orated to Ishikola on the sacred solemnity of truth and promises. Next, he leaned across the barbed wire and handed down the five sticks of tobacco.

“My word,” he threatened. “Somo day, Ishikola, I finish along you altogether. You no good friend stop along salt-water. You big fool stop along bush.”

When Ishikola attempted protest, he shut him off with, “My word, you gammon along me too much.”

Still the canoe lingered. The dandy’s toe strayed privily to feel out the butts of the Sniders under the green leaves, and Ishikola was loth to depart.

“Washee-washee!” Van Horn cried with imperative suddenness.

The paddlers, without command from chief or dandy, involuntarily obeyed, and with deep, strong strokes sent the canoe into the encircling darkness. Just as quickly Van Horn changed his position on deck to the tune of a dozen yards, so that no hazarded bullet might reach him. He crouched low and listened to the wash of paddles fade away in the distance.

“All right, you fella Tambi,” he ordered quietly. “Make ’m music he fella walk about.”

And while “Red Wing” screeched its cheap and pretty rhythm, he reclined elbow on deck, smoked his cigar, and gathered Jerry into caressing inclosure.

As he smoked he watched the abrupt misting of the stars by a rain-squall that made to windward or to where windward might vaguely be configured. While he gauged the minutes ere he must order Tambi below with the phonograph and records, he noted the bush-girl gazing at him in dumb fear. He nodded consent with half-closed eyes and up-tilting face, clinching his consent with a wave of hand toward the companionway. She obeyed as a beaten dog, spirit-broken, might have obeyed, dragging herself to her feet, trembling afresh, and with backward glances of her perpetual terror of the big white master that she was convinced would some day eat her. In such fashion, stabbing Van Horn to the heart because of his inability to convey his kindness to her across the abyss of the ages that separated them, she slunk away to the companionway and crawled down it feet-first like some enormous, large-headed worm.

After he had sent Tambi to follow her with the precious phonograph, Van Horn continued to smoke on while the sharp, needle-like spray of the rain impacted soothingly on his heated body.

Only for five minutes did the rain descend. Then, as the stars drifted back in the sky, the smell of steam seemed to stench forth from deck and mangrove swamp, and the suffocating heat wrapped all about.

Van Horn knew better, but ill health, save for fever, had never concerned him; so he did not bother for a blanket to shelter him.

"Yours the first watch," he told Borckman. "I'll have her under way in the morning, before I call you."

He tucked his head on the biceps of his right arm, with the hollow of the left snuggling Jerry in against his chest, and dozed off to sleep.

And thus adventuring, white men and indigenous black men from day to day lived life in the Solomons, bickering and trafficking, the whites striving to maintain their heads on their shoulders, the blacks striving, no less single-heartedly, to remove the whites' heads from their shoulders and at the same time to keep their own anatomies intact.

And Jerry, who knew only the world of Meringe Lagoon, learning that these new worlds of the ship *Arangi* and of the island of Malaita were essentially the same, regarded the perpetual game between the white and the black with some slight sort of understanding.

CHAPTER X

Daylight saw the *Arangi* under way, her sails drooping heavily in the dead air while the boat's crew toiled at the oars of the whaleboat to tow her out through the narrow entrance. Once, when the ketch, swerved by some vagrant current, came close to the break of the shore-surf, the blacks on board drew toward one another in apprehension akin to that of startled sheep in a fold when a wild woods marauder howls outside. Nor was there any need for Van Horn's shout to the whaleboat: "Washee-washee! Damn your hides!" The boat's crew lifted themselves clear of the thwarts as they threw all their weight into each stroke. They knew what dire fate was certain if ever the sea-washed coral rock gripped the *Arangi's* keel. And they knew fear precisely of the same sort as that of the fear-struck girl below in the lazarette. In the past more than one Langa-Langa and Somo boy had gone to make a Su'u feast day, just as Su'u boys, on occasion, had similarly served feasts at Langa-Langa and at Somo.

"My word," Tambi, at the wheel, addressed Van Horn as the period of tension passed and the *Arangi* went clear. "Brother belong my father, long time before he come boat's crew along this place. Big fella schooner brother belong my father he come along. All finish this place Su'u. Brother belong my father Su'u boys kai-kai along him altogether."

Van Horn recollected the *Fair Hathaway* of fifteen years before, looted and burned by the people of Su'u after all hands had been killed. Truly, the Solomons at this beginning of the twentieth century were savage, and truly, of the Solomons, this great island of Malaita was savagest of all.

He cast his eyes speculatively up the slopes of the island to the seaman's landmark, Mount Kolorat, green-forested to its cloud-capped summit four thousand feet in the air. Even as he looked, thin smoke-columns were rising along the slopes and lesser peaks, and more were beginning to rise.

"My word," Tambi grinned. "Plenty boy stop 'm bush lookout along you eye belong him."

Van Horn smiled understandingly. He knew, by the ancient telegraphy of smoke-signalling, the message was being conveyed from village to village and tribe to tribe that a labour-recruiter was on the leeward coast.

All morning, under a brisk beam wind which had sprung up with the rising of the sun, the *Arangi* flew north, her course continuously advertised by the increasing smoke-talk that gossiped along the green summits. At high noon, with Van Horn, ever-attended by Jerry, standing for'ard and conning, the *Arangi* headed into the wind to thread the passage between two palm-tufted islets. There was need for conning. Coral patches uprose everywhere from the turquoise depths, running the gamut of green from deepest jade to palest tourmaline, over which the sea filtered changing shades, creamed lazily, or burst into white fountains of sun-flashed spray.

The smoke columns along the heights became garrulous, and long before the *Arangi* was through the passage the entire leeward coast, from the salt-water men of the shore to the remotest bush villagers, knew that the labour recruiter was going in to Langa-Langa. As the lagoon, formed by the chain of islets lying off shore, opened out, Jerry began to smell the reef-villages. Canoes, many canoes, urged by paddles or sailed before the wind by the weight of the freshening South East trade on spread fronds of coconut palms, moved across the smooth surface of the lagoon. Jerry barked intimidatingly at those that came closest, bristling his neck and making a ferocious simulation of an efficient protector of the white god who stood beside him. And after each such warning, he would softly dab his cool damp muzzle against the sun-heated skin of Skipper's leg.

Once inside the lagoon, the *Arangi* filled away with the wind a-beam. At the end of a swift half-mile she rounded to, with head-sails trimming down and with a great flapping of main and mizzen, and dropped anchor in fifty feet of water so clear that every huge fluted clamshell was visible on the coral floor. The whaleboat was not necessary to put the Langa-Langa return boys ashore. Hundreds of canoes lay twenty deep along both sides of the *Arangi*, and each boy, with his box and bell, was clamoured for by scores of relatives and friends.

In such height of excitement, Van Horn permitted no one on board. Melanesians, unlike cattle, are as prone to stampede to attack as to retreat. Two of the boat's crew stood beside the Lee-Enfields on the skylight. Borckman, with half the boat's crew, went about the ship's work. Van Horn, Jerry at his heels, careful that no one should get at his back, superintended the departure of the Langa-Langa returns and kept a vigilant eye on the remaining half of the boat's crew that guarded the barbed-wire rails. And each Somo boy sat on his trade-box to prevent it from being tossed into the waiting canoes by some Langa-Langa boy.

In half an hour the riot departed ashore. Only several canoes lingered, and from one of these Van Horn beckoned aboard Nau-hau, the biggest chief of the stronghold of Langa-Langa. Unlike most of the big chiefs, Nau-hau was young, and, unlike most of the Melanesians, he was handsome, even beautiful.

"Hello, King o' Babylon," was Van Horn's greeting, for so he had named him because of fancied Semitic resemblance blended with the crude power that marked his visage and informed his bearing.

Born and trained to nakedness, Nau-hau trod the deck boldly and unashamed. His sole gear of clothing was a length of trunk strap buckled about his waist. Between this and his bare skin was thrust the naked blade of a ten-inch ripping knife. His sole decoration was a white China soup-plate, perforated and strung on coconut sennit, suspended from about his neck so that it rested flat on his chest and half-concealed the generous swell of muscles. It was the greatest of treasures. No man of Malaita he had ever heard of possessed an unbroken soup-plate.

Nor was he any more ridiculous because of the soup-plate than was he ludicrous because of his nakedness. He was royal. His father had been a king before him, and he had proved himself greater than his father. Life and death he bore in his hands and head. Often he had exercised it, chirping to his subjects in the tongue of Langa-Langa: "Slay here," and "Slay there"; "Thou shalt die," and "Thou shalt live." Because his father, a year abdicated, had chosen foolishly to interfere with his son's government, he had called two boys and had them twist a cord of coconut around his father's neck so that thereafter he never breathed again. Because his favourite wife, mother of his eldest born, had dared out of silliness of affection to violate one of his kingly tamboos, he had had her killed and had himself selfishly and religiously eaten the last of her even to the marrow of her cracked joints, sharing no morsel with his boonest of comrades.

Royal he was, by nature, by training, by deed. He carried himself with consciousness of royalty. He looked royal — as a magnificent stallion may look royal, as a lion on a painted tawny desert may look royal. He was as splendid a brute — an adumbration of the splendid human conquerors and rulers, higher on the ladder of evolution, who have appeared in other times and places. His pose of body, of chest, of shoulders, of head, was royal. Royal was the heavy-lidded, lazy, insolent way he looked out of his eyes.

Royal in courage was he, this moment on the *Arangi*, despite the fact that he knew he walked on dynamite. As he had long since bitterly learned, any white man was as much dynamite as was the mysterious death-dealing missile he sometimes employed. When a stripling, he had made one of the canoe force that attacked the sandalwood-cutter that had been even smaller than the *Arangi*. He had never forgotten that mystery. Two of the three white men he had seen slain and their heads removed on deck. The third, still fighting, had but the minute before fled below. Then the cutter, along with all her wealth of hoop-iron, tobacco, knives and calico, had gone up into the air and fallen back into the sea in scattered and fragmented nothingness. It had been dynamite — the MYSTERY. And he, who had been hurled uninjured through the air by a miracle of fortune, had divined that white men in themselves were truly dynamite, compounded of the same mystery as the substance with which they shot the swift-darting schools of mullet, or blow up, in extremity, themselves and the ships on which they voyaged the sea from far places. And yet on this unstable and death-terrific substance of which he was well aware Van Horn was composed, he trod heavily with his personality, daring, to the verge of detonation, to impact it with his insolence.

"My word," he began, "what name you make 'm boy belong me stop along you too much?" Which was a true and correct charge that the boys which Van Horn had just returned had been away three years and a half instead of three years.

"You talk that fella talk I get cross too much along you," Van Horn bristled back, and then added, diplomatically, dipping into a half-case of tobacco sawed across and proffering a handful of stick tobacco: "Much better you smoke 'm up and talk 'm good fella talk."

But Nau-hau grandly waved aside the gift for which he hungered.

"Plenty tobacco stop along me," he lied. "What name one fella boy go way no come back?" he demanded.

Van Horn pulled the long slender account book out of the twist of his loin-cloth, and, while he skimmed its pages, impressed Nau-hau with the dynamite of the white man's superior powers which enabled him to remember correctly inside the scrawled sheets of a book instead of inside his head.

"Sati," Van Horn read, his finger marking the place, his eyes alternating watchfully between the writing and the black chief before him, while the black chief himself speculated and studied the chance of getting behind him and, with the single knife-thrust he knew so well, of severing the other's spinal cord at the base of the neck.

"Sati," Van Horn read. "Last monsoon begin about this time, him fella Sati get 'm sick belly belong him too much; bime by him fella Sati finish altogether," he translated into bêche-de-mer the written information: *Died of dysentery July 4th*, 1901.

"Plenty work him fella Sati, long time," Nau-hau drove to the point. "What come along money belong him?"

Van Horn did mental arithmetic from the account.

"Altogether him make 'm six tens pounds and two fella pounds gold money," was his translation of sixty-two pounds of wages. "I pay advance father belong him one ten pounds and five fella pounds. Him finish altogether four tens pounds and seven fella pounds."

"What name stop four tens pounds and seven fella pounds?" Nau-hau demanded, his tongue, but not his brain, encompassing so prodigious a sum.

Van Horn held up his hand.

"Too much hurry you fella Nau-hau. Him fella Sati buy 'm slop chest along plantation two tens pounds and one fella pound. Belong Sati he finish altogether two tens pounds and six fella pounds."

"What name stop two tens pounds and six fella pounds?" Nau-hau continued inflexibly.

"Stop 'm along me," the captain answered curtly.

"Give 'm me two tens pounds and six fella pounds."

"Give 'm you hell," Van Horn refused, and in the blue of his eyes the black chief sensed the impression of the dynamite out of which white men seemed made, and felt his brain quicken to the vision of the bloody day he first encountered an explosion of dynamite and was hurled through the air.

"What name that old fella boy stop 'm along canoe?" Van Horn asked, pointing to an old man in a canoe alongside. "Him father belong Sati?"

"Him father belong Sati," Nau-hau affirmed.

Van Horn motioned the old man in and on board, beckoned Borckman to take charge of the deck and of Nau-hau, and went below to get the money from his strong-box. When he returned, cavalierly ignoring the chief, he addressed himself to the old man.

"What name belong you?"

"Me fella Nino," was the quavering response. "Him fella Sati belong along me."

Van Horn glanced for verification to Nau-hau, who nodded affirmation in the reverse Solomon way; whereupon Van Horn counted twenty-six gold sovereigns into the hand of Sati's father.

Immediately thereafter Nau-hau extended his hand and received the sum. Twenty gold pieces the chief retained for himself, returning to the old man the remaining six. It was no quarrel of Van Horn's. He had fulfilled his duty and paid properly. The tyranny of a chief over a subject was none of his business.

Both masters, white and black, were fairly contented with themselves. Van Horn had paid the money where it was due; Nau-hau, by virtue of kingship, had robbed Sati's father of Sati's labour before Van Horn's eyes. But Nau-hau was not above strutting. He declined a proffered present of tobacco, bought a case of stick tobacco from Van Horn, paying him five pounds for it, and insisted on having it sawed open so that he could fill his pipe.

"Plenty good boy stop along Langa-Langa?" Van Horn, unperturbed, politely queried, in order to make conversation and advertise nonchalance.

The King o' Babylon grinned, but did not deign to reply.

"Maybe I go ashore and walk about?" Van Horn challenged with tentative emphasis.

"Maybe too much trouble along you," Nau-hau challenged back. "Maybe plenty bad fella boy kai-kai along you."

Although Van Horn did not know it, at this challenge he experienced the hair-pricking sensations in his scalp that Jerry experienced when he bristled his back.

"Hey, Borckman," he called. "Man the whaleboat."

When the whaleboat was alongside, he descended into it first, superiorly, then invited Nau-hau to accompany him.

"My word, King o' Babylon," he muttered in the chief's ears as the boat's crew bent to the oars, "one fella boy make 'm trouble, I shoot 'm hell outa you first thing. Next thing I shoot 'm hell outa Langa-Langa. All the time you me fella walk about, you walk about along me. You no like walk about along me, you finish close up altogether."

And ashore, a white man alone, attended by an Irish terrier puppy with a heart flooded with love and by a black king resentfully respectful of the dynamite of the white man, Van Horn went, swashbuckling barelegged through a stronghold of three thousand souls, while his white mate, addicted to schnapps, held the deck of the tiny craft at anchor off shore, and while his black boat's crew, oars in hands, held the whaleboat stern-on to the beach to receive the expected flying leap of the man they served but did not love, and whose head they would eagerly take any time were it not for fear of him.

Van Horn had had no intention of going ashore, and that he went ashore at the black chief's insolent challenge was merely a matter of business. For an hour he strolled about, his right hand never far from the butt of the automatic that lay along his groin, his eyes never too far from the unwilling Nau-hau beside him. For Nau-hau, in sullen volcanic rage, was ripe to erupt at the slightest opportunity. And, so strolling, Van Horn was given to see what few white men have seen, for Langa-Langa and her sister islets, beautiful beads strung along the lee coast of Malaita, were as unique as they were unexplored.

Originally these islets had been mere sand-banks and coral reefs awash in the sea or shallowly covered by the sea. Only a hunted, wretched creature, enduring incredible hardship, could have eked out a miserable existence upon them. But such hunted, wretched creatures, survivors of village massacres, escapes from the wrath of chiefs and from the long-pig fate of the cooking-pot, did come, and did endure. They, who knew only the bush, learned the salt water and developed the salt-water-man breed. They learned the ways of the fish and the shell-fish, and they invented hooks and lines, nets and fish-traps, and all the diverse cunning ways by which swimming meat can be garnered from the shifting, unstable sea.

Such refugees stole women from the mainland, and increased and multiplied. With herculean labour, under the burning sun, they conquered the sea. They walled the confines of their coral reefs and sand-banks with coral-rock stolen from the mainland on dark nights. Fine masonry, without mortar or cutting chisel, they builded to withstand the ocean surge. Likewise stolen from the mainland, as mice steal from human habitations when humans sleep, they stole canoe-loads, and millions of canoe-loads, of fat, rich soil.

Generations and centuries passed, and, behold, in place of naked sandbanks half awash were walled citadels, perforated with launching-ways for the long canoes, protected against the mainland by the lagoons that were to them their narrow seas. Coconut palms, banana trees, and lofty breadfruit trees gave food and sun-shelter. Their gardens prospered. Their long, lean war-canoes ravaged the coasts and visited vengeance for their forefathers upon the descendants of them that had persecuted and desired to eat.

Like the refugees and renegades who slunk away in the salt marshes of the Adriatic and builded the palaces of powerful Venice on her deep-sunk piles, so these wretched hunted blacks builded power until they became masters of the mainland, controlling traffic and trade-routes, compelling the bushmen for ever after to remain in the bush and never to dare attempt the salt-water.

And here, amidst the fat success and insolence of the sea-people, Van Horn swaggered his way, taking his chance, incapable of believing that he might swiftly die, knowing that he was building good future business in the matter of recruiting labour for the plantations of other adventuring white men on far islands who dared only less greatly than he.

And when, at the end of an hour, Van Horn passed Jerry into the sternsheets of the whaleboat and followed, he left on the beach a stunned and wondering royal black, who, more than ever before, was respectful of the dynamite-compounded white men who brought to him stick tobacco, calico, knives and hatchets, and inexorably extracted from such trade a profit.

CHAPTER XI

Back on board, Van Horn immediately hove short, hoisted sail, broke out the anchor, and filled away for the ten-mile beat up the lagoon to windward that would fetch Somo. On the way, he stopped at Binu to greet Chief Johnny and land a few Binu returns. Then it was on to Somo, and to the end of voyaging for ever of the *Arangi* and of many that were aboard of her.

Quite the opposite to his treatment at Langa-Langa was that accorded Van Horn at Somo. Once the return boys were put ashore, and this was accomplished no later than three-thirty in the afternoon, he invited Chief Bashti on board. And Chief Bashti came, very nimble and active despite his great age, and very good-natured — so good-natured, in fact, that he insisted on bringing three of his elderly wives on board with him. This was unprecedented. Never had he permitted any of his wives to appear before a white man, and Van Horn felt so honoured that he presented each of them with a gay clay pipe and a dozen sticks of tobacco.

Late as the afternoon was, trade was brisk, and Bashti, who had taken the lion's share of the wages due to the fathers of two boys who had died, bought liberally of the *Arangi's* stock. When Bashti promised plenty of fresh recruits, Van Horn, used to the changeableness of the savage mind, urged signing them up right away. Bashti demurred, and suggested next day. Van Horn insisted that there was no time like the present, and so well did he insist that the old chief sent a canoe ashore to round up the boys who had been selected to go away to the plantations.

"Now, what do you think?" Van Horn asked of Borckman, whose eyes were remarkably fishy. "I never saw the old rascal so friendly. Has he got something up his sleeve?"

The mate stared at the many canoes alongside, noted the numbers of women in them, and shook his head.

"When they're starting anything they always send the Marys into the bush," he said.

"You never can tell about these niggers," the captain grumbled. "They may be short on imagination, but once in a while they do figure out something new. Now Bashti's the smartest old nigger I've ever seen. What's to prevent his figuring out that very bet and playing it in reverse?

Just because they've never had their women around when trouble was on the carpet is no reason that they will always keep that practice."

"Not even Bashti's got the savvee to pull a trick like that," Borckman objected. "He's just feeling good and liberal. Why, he's bought forty pounds of goods from you already. That's why he wants to sign on a new batch of boys with us, and I'll bet he's hoping half of them die so's he can have the spending of their wages."

All of which was most reasonable. Nevertheless, Van Horn shook his head.

"All the same keep your eyes sharp on everything," he cautioned. "And remember, the two of us mustn't ever be below at the same time. And no more schnapps, mind, until we're clear of the whole kit and caboodle."

Bashti was incredibly lean and prodigiously old. He did not know how old he was himself, although he did know that no person in his tribe had been alive when he was a young boy in the village. He remembered the days when some of the old men, still alive, had been born; and, unlike him, they were now decrepit, shaken with palsy, blear-eyed, toothless of mouth, deaf of ear, or paralysed. All his own faculties remained unimpaired. He even boasted a dozen worn fangs of teeth, gum-level, on which he could still chew. Although he no longer had the physical endurance of youth, his thinking was as original and clear as it had always been. It was due to his thinking that he found his tribe stronger than when he had first come to rule it. In his small way he had been a Melanesian Napoleon. As a warrior, the play of his mind had enabled him to beat back the bushmen's boundaries. The scars on his withered body attested that he had fought to the fore. As a Law-giver, he had encouraged and achieved strength and efficiency within his tribe. As a statesman, he had always kept one thought ahead of the thoughts of the neighbouring chiefs in the making of treaties and the granting of concessions.

And with his mind, still keenly alive, he had but just evolved a scheme whereby he might outwit Van Horn and get the better of the vast British Empire about which he guessed little and know less.

For Somo had a history. It was that queer anomaly, a salt-water tribe that lived on the lagoon mainland where only bushmen were supposed to live. Far back into the darkness of time, the folk-lore of Somo cast a glimmering light. On a day, so far back that there was no way of estimating its distance, one, Somo, son of Loti, who was the chief of the island fortress of Umbo, had quarrelled with his father and fled from his wrath along with a dozen canoe-loads of young men. For two monsoons they had engaged in an odyssey. It was in the myth that they circumnavigated Malaita twice, and forayed as far as Ugi and San Cristobal across the wide seas.

Women they had inevitably stolen after successful combats, and, in the end, being burdened with women and progeny, Somo had descended upon the mainland shore, driven the bushmen back, and established the salt-water fortress of Somo. Built it was, on its sea-front, like any island fortress, with walled coral-rock to oppose the sea and chance marauders from the sea, and with launching ways through the walls for the long canoes. To the rear, where it encroached on the jungle, it was like any scattered bush village. But Somo, the wide-seeing father of the new tribe, had established his boundaries far up in the bush on the shoulders of the lesser mountains, and on each shoulder had planted a village. Only the greatly daring that fled to him had Somo permitted to join the new tribe. The weaklings and cowards they had promptly eaten, and the unbelievable tale of their many heads adorning the canoe-houses was part of the myth.

And this tribe, territory, and stronghold, at the latter end of time, Bashti had inherited, and he had bettered his inheritance. Nor was he above continuing to better it. For a long time he had reasoned closely and carefully in maturing the plan that itched in his brain for fulfilment. Three years before, the tribe of Ano Ano, miles down the coast, had captured a recruiter, destroyed her and all hands, and gained a fabulous store of tobacco, calico, beads, and all manner of trade goods, rifles and ammunition.

Little enough had happened in the way of price that was paid. Half a year after, a war vessel had poked her nose into the lagoon, shelled Ano Ano, and sent its inhabitants scurrying into the bush. The landing-party that followed had futilely pursued along the jungle runways. In the end it had contented itself with killing forty fat pigs and chopping down a hundred coconut trees. Scarcely had the war vessel passed out to open sea, when the people of Ano Ano were back from the bush to the village. Shell fire on flimsy grass houses is not especially destructive. A few hours' labour of the women put that little matter right. As for the forty dead pigs, the entire tribe fell upon the carcasses, roasted them under the ground with hot stones, and feasted. The tender tips of the fallen palms were likewise eaten, while the thousands of coconuts were husked and split and sun-dried and smoke-cured into copra to be sold to the next passing trader.

Thus, the penalty exacted had proved a picnic and a feast — all of which appealed to the thrifty, calculating brain of Bashti. And what was good for Ano Ano, in his judgment was surely good for Somo. Since such were white men's ways who sailed under the British flag and killed pigs and cut down coconuts in cancellation of blood-debts and headtakings, Bashti saw no valid reason why he should not profit as Ano Ano had profited. The price to be paid at some possible future time was absurdly disproportionate to the immediate wealth to be gained. Besides, it had been over two years since the last British war vessel had appeared in the Solomons.

And thus, Bashti, with a fine fresh idea inside his head, bowed his chief's head in consent that his people could flock aboard and trade. Very few of them knew what his idea was or that he even had an idea.

Trade grew still brisker as more canoes came alongside and black men and women thronged the deck. Then came the recruits, new-caught, young, savage things, timid as deer, yet yielding to stern parental and tribal law and going down into the *Arangi's* cabin, one by one, their fathers and mothers and relatives accompanying them in family groups, to confront the big fella white marster, who wrote their names down in a mysterious book, had them ratify the three years' contract of their labour by a touch of the right hand to the pen with which he wrote, and who paid the first year's advance in trade goods to the heads of their respective families.

Old Bashti sat near, taking his customary heavy tithes out of each advance, his three old wives squatting humbly at his feet and by their mere presence giving confidence to Van Horn, who was elated by the stroke of business. At such rate his cruise on Malaita would be a short one, when he would sail away with a full ship.

On deck, where Borckman kept a sharp eye out against danger, Jerry prowled about, sniffing the many legs of the many blacks he had never encountered before. The wild-dog had gone ashore with the return boys, and of the return boys only one had come back. It was Lerumie, past whom Jerry repeatedly and stiff-leggedly bristled without gaining response of recognition. Lerumie coolly ignored him, went down below once and purchased a trade hand-mirror, and, with a look of the eyes, assured old Bashti that all was ready and ripe to break at the first favourable moment.

On deck, Borckman gave this favourable moment. Nor would he have so given it had he not been guilty of carelessness and of disobedience to his captain's orders. He did not leave the schnapps alone. Be did not sense what was impending all about him. Aft, where he stood, the deck was almost deserted. Amidships and for'ard, gamming with the boat's crew, the deck was crowded with blacks of both sexes. He made his way to the yam sacks lashed abaft the mizzenmast and got his bottle. Just before he drank, with a shred of caution, he cast a glance behind him. Near him stood a harmless Mary, middle-aged, fat, squat, asymmetrical, unlovely, a sucking child of two years astride her hip and taking nourishment. Surely no harm was to be apprehended there. Furthermore, she was patently a weaponless Mary, for she wore no stitch of clothing that otherwise might have concealed a weapon. Over against the rail, ten feet to one side, stood Lerumie, smirking into the trade mirror he had just bought.

It was in the trade mirror that Lerumie saw Borckman bend to the yam-sacks, return to the erect, throw his head back, the mouth of the bottle glued to his lips, the bottom elevated skyward. Lerumie lifted his right hand in signal to a woman in a canoe alongside. She bent swiftly for something that she tossed to Lerumie. It was a long-handled tomahawk, the head of it an ordinary shingler's hatchet, the haft of it, native-made, a black and polished piece of hard wood, inlaid in rude designs with mother-of-pearl and wrapped with coconut sennit to make a hand grip. The blade of the hatchet had been ground to razor-edge.

As the tomahawk flew noiselessly through the air to Lerumie's hand, just as noiselessly, the next instant, it flew through the air from his hand into the hand of the fat Mary with the nursing child who stood behind the mate. She clutched the handle with both hands, while the child, astride her hip, held on to her with both small arms part way about her.

Still she waited the stroke, for with Borckman's head thrown back was no time to strive to sever the spinal cord at the neck. Many eyes beheld the impending tragedy. Jerry saw, but did not understand. With all his hostility to niggers he had not divined the attack from the air. Tambi, who chanced to be near the skylight, saw, and, seeing, reached for a Lee-Enfield. Lerumie saw Tambi's action and hissed haste to the Mary.

Borckman, as unaware of this, his last second of life, as he had been of his first second of birth, lowered the bottle and straightened forward his head. The keen edge sank home. What, in that flash of instant when his brain was severed from the rest of his body, Borckman may have felt or thought, if he felt or thought at all, is a mystery unsolvable to living man. No man, his spinal cord so severed, has ever given one word or whisper of testimony as to what were his sensations and impressions. No less swift than the hatchet stroke was the limp placidity into which Borckman's body melted to the deck. He did not reel or pitch. He *melted*, as a sack of wind suddenly emptied, as a bladder of air suddenly punctured. The bottle fell from his dead hand upon the yams without breaking, although the remnant of its contents gurgled gently out upon the deck.

So quick was the occurrence of action, that the first shot from Tambi's musket missed the Mary ere Borckman had quite melted to the deck. There was no time for a second shot, for the Mary, dropping the tomahawk, holding her child in both her hands and plunging to the rail, was in the air and overboard, her fall capsizing the canoe which chanced to be beneath her.

Scores of actions were simultaneous. From the canoes on both sides uprose a glittering, glistening rain of mother-of-pearl-handled tomahawks that descended into the waiting hands of the Somo men on deck, while the Marys on deck crouched down and scrambled out of the fray. At the same time that the Mary who had killed Borckman leapt the rail, Lerumie bent for the tomahawk she had dropped, and Jerry, aware of red war, slashed the hand that reached for the tomahawk. Lerumie stood upright and loosed loudly, in a howl, all the pent rage and hatred, of months which he had cherished against the puppy. Also, as he gained the perpendicular and as Jerry flew at his legs, he launched a kick with all his might that caught and lifted Jerry squarely under the middle.

And in the next second, or fraction of second, as Jerry lifted and soared through the air, over the barbed wire of the rail and overboard, while Sniders were being passed up overside from the canoes, Tambi fired his next hasty shot. And Lerumie, the foot with which he had kicked not yet returned to the deck as again he was in mid-action of stooping to pick up the tomahawk, received the bullet squarely in the heart and pitched down to melt with Borckman into the softness of death.

Ere Jerry struck the water, the glory of Tambi's marvellously lucky shot was over for Tambi; for, at the moment he pressed trigger to the successful shot, a tomahawk bit across his skull at the base of the brain and darkened from his eyes for ever the bright vision of the sea-washed, sun-blazoned tropic world. As swiftly, all occurring almost simultaneously, did the rest of the boat's crew pass and the deck became a shambles.

It was to the reports of the Sniders and the noises of the death scuffle that Jerry's head emerged from the water. A man's hand reached over a canoe-side and dragged him in by the scruff of the neck, and, although he snarled and struggled to bite his rescuer, he was not so much enraged as was he torn by the wildest solicitude for Skipper. He knew, without thinking about it, that the *Arangi* had been boarded by the hazily sensed supreme disaster of life that all life intuitively apprehends and that only man knows and calls by the name of "death." Borckman he had seen struck down. Lerumie he had heard struck down. And now he was hearing the explosions of rifles and the yells and screeches of triumph and fear.

So it was, helpless, suspended in the air by the nape of the neck, that he bawled and squalled and choked and coughed till the black, disgusted, flung him down roughly in the canoe's bottom. He scrambled to his feet and made two leaps: one upon the gunwale of the canoe; the next, despairing and hopeless, without consideration of self, for the rail of the *Arangi*.

His forefeet missed the rail by a yard, and he plunged down into the sea. He came up, swimming frantically, swallowing and strangling salt water because he still yelped and wailed and barked his yearning to be on board with Skipper.

But a boy of twelve, in another canoe, having witnessed the first black's adventure with Jerry, treated him without ceremony, laying, first the flat, and next the edge, of a paddle upon his head while he still swam. And the darkness of unconsciousness welled over his bright little love-suffering brain, so that it was a limp and motionless puppy that the black boy dragged into his canoe.

In the meantime, down below in the *Arangi's* cabin, ere ever Jerry hit the water from Lerumie's kick, even while he was in the air, Van Horn, in one great flashing profound fraction of an instant, had known his death. Not for nothing had old Bashti lived longest of any living man in his tribe, and ruled wisest of all the long line of rulers since Somo's time. Had he been placed more generously in earth space and time, he might well have proved an Alexander, a Napoleon, or a swarthy Kahehameha. As it was, he performed well, and splendidly well, in his limited little kingdom on the leeward coast of the dark cannibal island of Malaita.

And such a performance! In cool good nature in rigid maintenance of his chiefship rights, he had smiled at Van Horn, given royal permission to his young men to sign on for three years of plantation slavery, and exacted his share of each year's advance. Aora, who might be described as his prime minister and treasurer, had received the tithes as fast as they were paid over, and filled them into large, fine-netted bags of coconut sennit. At Bashti's back, squatting on the bunk-boards, a slim and smooth-skinned maid of thirteen had flapped the flies away from his royal head with the royal fly-flapper. At his feet had squatted his three old wives, the oldest of them, toothless and somewhat palsied, ever presenting to his hand, at his head nod, a basket rough-woven of pandanus leaf.

And Bashti, his keen old ears pitched for the first untoward sound from on deck, had continually nodded his head and dipped his hand into the proffered basket — now for betel-nut, and lime-box, and the invariable green leaf with which to wrap the mouthful; now for tobacco with which to fill his short clay pipe; and, again, for matches with which to light the pipe which seemed not to draw well and which frequently went out.

Toward the last the basket had hovered constantly close to his hand, and, at the last, he made one final dip. It was at the moment when the Mary's axe, on deck, had struck Borckman down and when Tambi loosed the first shot at her from his Lee-Enfield. And Bashti's withered ancient hand, the back of it netted with a complex of large up-standing veins from which the flesh had shrunk away, dipped out a huge pistol of such remote vintage that one of Cromwell's round-heads might well have carried it or that it might well have voyaged with Quiros or La Perouse. It was a flint-lock, as long as a man's forearm, and it had been loaded that afternoon by no less a person than Bashti himself.

Quick as Bashti had been, Van Horn was almost as quick, but not quite quick enough. Even as his hand leapt to the modern automatic lying out of it's holster and loose on his knees, the pistol of the centuries went off. Loaded with two slugs and a round bullet, its effect was that of a sawed-off shotgun. And Van Horn knew the blaze and the black of death, even as "Gott fer dang!" died unuttered on his lips and as his fingers relaxed from the part-lifted automatic, dropping it to the floor.

Surcharged with black powder, the ancient weapon had other effect. It burst in Bashti's hand. While Aora, with a knife produced apparently from nowhere, proceeded to hack off the white master's head, Bashti looked quizzically at his right forefinger dangling by a strip of skin. He seized it with his left hand, with a quick pull and twist wrenched it off, and grinningly tossed it, as a joke, into the pandanus basket which still his wife with one hand held before him while with the other she clutched her forehead bleeding from a flying fragment of pistol.

Collaterally with this, three of the young recruits, joined by their fathers and uncles, had downed, and were finishing off the only one of the boat's crew that was below. Bashti, who had lived so long that he was a philosopher who minded pain little and the loss of a finger less, chuckled and chirped his satisfaction and pride of achievement in the outcome, while his three old wives, who lived only at the nod of his head, fawned under him on the floor in the abjectness of servile congratulation and worship. Long had they lived, and they had lived long only by his kingly whim. They floundered and gibbered and mowed at his feet, lord of life and death that he was, infinitely wise as he had so often proved himself, as he had this time proved himself again.

And the lean, fear-stricken girl, like a frightened rabbit in the mouth of its burrow, on hands and knees peered forth upon the scene from the lazarette and knew that the cooking-pot and the end of time had come for her.

CHAPTER XII

What happened aboard the *Arangi* Jerry never knew. He did know that it was a world destroyed, for he saw it destroyed. The boy who had knocked him on the head with the paddle, tied his legs securely and tossed him out on the beach ere he forgot him in the excitement of looting the *Arangi*.

With great shouting and song, the pretty teak-built yacht was towed in by the long canoes and beached close to where Jerry lay just beyond the confines of the coral-stone walls. Fires blazed on the beach, lanterns were lighted on board, and, amid a great feasting, the *Arangi* was gutted and stripped. Everything portable was taken ashore, from her pigs of iron ballast to her running gear and sails. No one in Somo slept that night. Even the tiniest of children toddled about the feasting fires or sprawled surfeited on the sands. At two in the morning, at Bashti's command, the shell of the boat was fired. And Jerry, thirsting for water, having whimpered and wailed himself to exhaustion, lying helpless, leg-tied, on his side, saw the floating world he had known so short a time go up in flame and smoke.

And by the light of her burning, old Bashti apportioned the loot. No one of the tribe was too mean to receive nothing. Even the wretched bush-slaves, who had trembled through all the time of their captivity from fear of being eaten, received each a clay pipe and several sticks of tobacco. The main bulk of the trade goods, which was not distributed, Bashti had carried up to his own large grass house. All the wealth of gear was stored in the several canoe houses. While in the devil devil houses the devil devil doctors set to work curing the many heads over slow smudges; for, along with the boat's crew there were a round dozen of No-ola return boys and several Malu boys which Van Horn had not yet delivered.

Not all these had been slain, however. Bashti had issued stern injunctions against wholesale slaughter. But this was not because his heart was kind. Rather was it because his head was shrewd. Slain they would all be in the end. Bashti had never seen ice, did not know it existed, and was unversed in the science of refrigeration. The only way he knew to keep meat was to keep it alive. And in the biggest canoe house, the club house of the stags, where no Mary might come under penalty of death by torture, the captives were stored.

Tied or trussed like fowls or pigs, they were tumbled on the hard-packed earthen floor, beneath which, shallowly buried, lay the remains of ancient chiefs, while, overhead, in wrappings of grass mats, swung all that was left of several of Bashti's immediate predecessors, his father latest among them and so swinging for two full generations. Here, too, since she was to be eaten and since the taboo had no bearing upon one condemned to be cooked, the thin little Mary from the lazarette was tumbled trussed upon the floor among the many blacks who had teased and mocked her for being fattened by Van Horn for the eating.

And to this canoe house Jerry was also brought to join the others on the floor. Agno, chief of the devil devil doctors, had stumbled across him on the beach, and, despite the protestations of the boy who claimed him as personal trove, had ordered him to the canoe house. Carried past the fires of the feasting, his keen nostrils had told him of what the feast consisted. And, new as the experience was, he had bristled and snarled and struggled against his bonds to be free. Likewise, at first, tossed down in the canoe house, he had bristled and snarled at his fellow captives, not realizing their plight, and, since always he had been trained to look upon niggers as the eternal enemy, considering them responsible for the catastrophe to the *Arangi* and to Skipper.

For Jerry was only a little dog, with a dog's limitations, and very young in the world. But not for long did he throat his rage at them. In vague ways it was borne in upon him that they, too, were not happy. Some had been cruelly wounded, and kept up a moaning and groaning. Without any clearness of concept, nevertheless Jerry had a realization that they were as painfully circumstanced as himself. And painful indeed was his own circumstance. He lay on his side, the cords that bound his legs so tight as to bite into his tender flesh and shut off the circulation. Also, he was perishing for water, and panted, dry-tongued, dry-mouthed, in the stagnant heat.

A dolorous place it was, this canoe house, filled with groans and sighs, corpses beneath the floor and composing the floor, creatures soon to be corpses upon the floor, corpses swinging in aerial sepulchre overhead, long black canoes, high-ended like beaked predatory monsters, dimly looming in the light of a slow fire where sat an ancient of the tribe of Somo at his interminable task of smoke-curing a bushman's head. He was withered, and blind, and senile, gibbering and mowing like some huge ape as ever he turned and twisted, and twisted back again, the suspended head in the pungent smoke, and handful by handful added rotten punk of wood to the smudge fire.

Sixty feet in the clear, the dim fire occasionally lighted, through shadowy cross-beams, the ridge-pole that was covered with sennit of coconut that was braided in barbaric designs of black and white and that was stained by the smoke of years almost to a monochrome of dirty brown. From the lofty cross-beams, on long sennit strings, hung the heads of enemies taken aforetime in jungle raid and sea foray. The place breathed the very atmosphere of decay and death, and the imbecile ancient, curing in the smoke the token of death, was himself palsiedly shaking into the disintegration of the grave.

Toward daylight, with great shouting and heaving and pull and haul, scores of Somo men brought in another of the big war canoes. They made way with foot and hand, kicking and thrusting dragging and shoving, the bound captives to either side of the space which the canoe was to occupy. They were anything but gentle to the meat with which they had been favoured by good fortune and the wisdom of Bashti.

For a time they sat about, all pulling at clay pipes and chirruping and laughing in queer thin falsettos at the events of the night and the previous afternoon. Now one and now another stretched out and slept without covering; for so, directly under the path of the sun, had they slept nakedly from the time they were born.

Remained awake, as dawn paled the dark, only the grievously wounded or the too-tightly bound, and the decrepit ancient who was not so old as Bashti. When the boy who had stunned Jerry with his paddle-blade and who claimed him as his own stole into the canoe house, the ancient did not hear him. Being blind, he did not see him. He continued gibbering and chuckling dementedly, to twist the bushman’s head back and forth and to feed the smudge with punk-wood. This was no night-task for any man, nor even for him who had forgotten how to do aught else. But the excitement of cutting out the *Arangi* had been communicated to his addled brain, and, with vague reminiscent flashes of the strength of life triumphant, he shared deliriously in this triumph of Somo by applying himself to the curing of the head that was in itself the concrete expression of triumph.

But the twelve-year-old lad who stole in and cautiously stepped over the sleepers and threaded his way among the captives, did so with his heart in his mouth. He knew what taboos he was violating. Not old enough even to leave his father's grass roof and sleep in the youths' canoe house, much less to sleep with the young bachelors in their canoe house, he knew that he took his life, with all of its dimly guessed mysteries and arrogances, in his hand thus to trespass into the sacred precinct of the full-made, full-realized, full-statured men of Somo.

But he wanted Jerry and he got him. Only the lean little Mary, trussed for the cooking, staring through her wide eyes of fear, saw the boy pick Jerry up by his tied legs and carry him out and away from the booty of meat of which she was part. Jerry's heroic little heart of courage would have made him snarl and resent such treatment of handling had he not been too exhausted and had not his mouth and throat been too dry for sound. As it was, miserably and helplessly, not half himself, a puppet dreamer in a half-nightmare, he knew, as a restless sleeper awakening between vexing dreams, that he was being transported head-downward out of the canoe house that stank of death, through the village that was only less noisome, and up a path under lofty, wide-spreading trees that were beginning languidly to stir with the first breathings of the morning wind.

CHAPTER XIII

The boy's name, as Jerry was to learn, was Lamai, and to Lamai's house Jerry was carried. It was not much of a house, even as cannibal grass-houses go. On an earthen floor, hard-packed of the filth of years, lived Lamai's father and mother and a spawn of four younger brothers and sisters. A thatched roof that leaked in every heavy shower leaned to a wabbly ridge-pole over the floor. The walls were even more pervious to a driving rain. In fact, the house of Lamai, who was the father of Lumai, was the most miserable house in all Somo.

Lumai, the house-master and family head, unlike most Malaitans, was fat. And of his fatness it would seem had been begotten his good nature with its allied laziness. But as the fly in his ointment of jovial irresponsibility was his wife, Lenerengo — the prize shrew of Somo, who was as lean about the middle and all the rest of her as her husband was rotund; who was as remarkably sharp-spoken as he was soft-spoken; who was as ceaselessly energetic as he was unceasingly idle; and who had been born with a taste for the world as sour in her mouth as it was sweet in his.

The boy merely peered into the house as he passed around it to the rear, and he saw his father and mother, at opposite corners, sleeping without covering, and, in the middle of the floor, his four naked brothers and sisters curled together in a tangle like a litter of puppies. All about the house, which in truth was scarcely more than an animal lair, was an earthly paradise. The air was spicily and sweetly heavy with the scents of wild aromatic plants and gorgeous tropic blooms. Overhead three breadfruit trees interlaced their noble branches. Banana and plantain trees were burdened with great bunches of ripening fruit. And huge, golden melons of the papaia, ready for the eating, globuled directly from the slender-trunked trees not one-tenth the girth of the fruits they bore. And, for Jerry, most delightful of all, there was the gurgle and plash of a brooklet that pursued its invisible way over mossy stones under a garmenture of tender and delicate ferns. No conservatory of a king could compare with this wild wantonness of sun-generous vegetation.

Maddened by the sound of the water, Jerry had first to endure an embracing and hugging from the boy, who, squatted on his hams, rocked back and forth and mumbled a strange little crooning song. And Jerry, lacking articulate speech, had no way of telling him of the thirst of which he was perishing.

Next, Lamai tied him securely with a sennit cord about the neck and untied the cords that bit into his legs. So numb was Jerry from lack of circulation, and so weak from lack of water through part of a tropic day and all of a tropic night, that he stood up, tottered and fell, and, time and again, essaying to stand, floundered and fell. And Lamai understood, or tentatively guessed. He caught up a coconut calabash attached to the end of a stick of bamboo, dipped into the greenery of ferns, and presented to Jerry the calabash brimming with the precious water.

Jerry lay on his side at first as he drank, until, with the moisture, life flowed back into the parched channels of him, so that, soon, still weak and shaky, he was up and braced on all his four wide-spread legs and still eagerly lapping. The boy chuckled and chirped his delight in the spectacle, and Jerry found surcease and easement sufficient to enable him to speak with his tongue after the heart-eloquent manner of dogs. He took his nose out of the calabash and with his rose-ribbon strip of tongue licked Lamai’s hand. And Lamai, in ecstasy over this establishment of common speech, urged the calabash back under Jerry’s nose, and Jerry drank again.

He continued to drink. He drank until his sun-shrunken sides stood out like the walls of a balloon, although longer were the intervals from the drinking in which, with his tongue of gratefulness, he spoke against the black skin of Lamai’s hand. And all went well, and would have continued to go well, had not Lamai’s mother, Lenerengo, just awakened, stepped across her black litter of progeny and raised her voice in shrill protest against her eldest born’s introducing of one more mouth and much more nuisance into the household.

A squabble of human speech followed, of which Jerry knew no word but of which he sensed the significance. Lamai was with him and for him. Lamai’s mother was against him. She shrilled and shrewed her firm conviction that her son was a fool and worse because he had neither the consideration nor the silly sense of a fool’s solicitude for a hard-worked mother. She appealed to the sleeping Lumai, who awoke heavily and fatly, who muttered and mumbled easy terms of Somo dialect to the effect that it was a most decent world, that all puppy dogs and eldest-born sons were right delightful things to possess, that he had never yet starved to death, and that peace and sleep were the finest things that ever befell the lot of mortal man — and, in token thereof, back into the peace of sleep, he snuggled his nose into the biceps of his arm for a pillow and proceeded to snore.

But Lamai, eyes stubbornly sullen, with mutinous foot-stampings and a perfect knowledge that all was clear behind him to leap and flee away if his mother rushed upon him, persisted in retaining his puppy dog. In the end, after an harangue upon the worthlessness of Lamai's father, she went back to sleep.

Ideas beget ideas. Lamai had learned how astonishingly thirsty Jerry had been. This engendered the idea that he might be equally hungry. So he applied dry branches of wood to the smouldering coals he dug out of the ashes of the cooking-fire, and builded a large fire. Into this, as it gained strength, he placed many stones from a convenient pile, each fire-blackened in token that it had been similarly used many times. Next, hidden under the water of the brook in a netted hand-bag, he brought to light the carcass of a fat wood-pigeon he had snared the previous day. He wrapped the pigeon in green leaves, and, surrounding it with the hot stones from the fire, covered pigeon and stones with earth.

When, after a time, he removed the pigeon and stripped from it the scorched wrappings of leaves, it gave forth a scent so savoury as to prick up Jerry's ears and set his nostrils to quivering. When the boy had torn the steaming carcass across and cooled it, Jerry's meal began; nor did the meal cease till the last sliver of meat had been stripped and tongued from the bones and the bones crunched and crackled to fragments and swallowed. And throughout the meal Lamai made love to Jerry, crooning over and over his little song, and patting and caressing him.

On the other hand, refreshed by the water and the meat, Jerry did not reciprocate so heartily in the love-making. He was polite, and received his petting with soft-shining eyes, tail-waggings and the customary body-wrigglings; but he was restless, and continually listened to distant sounds and yearned away to be gone. This was not lost upon the boy, who, before he curled himself down to sleep, securely tied to a tree the end of the cord that was about Jerry's neck.

After straining against the cord for a time, Jerry surrendered and slept. But not for long. Skipper was too much with him. He knew, and yet he did not know, the irretrievable ultimate disaster to Skipper. So it was, after low whinings and whimperings, that he applied his sharp first-teeth to the sennit cord and chewed upon it till it parted.

Free, like a homing pigeon, he headed blindly and directly for the beach and the salt sea over which had floated the *Arangi*, on her deck Skipper in command. Somo was largely deserted, and those that were in it were sunk in sleep. So no one vexed him as he trotted through the winding pathways between the many houses and past the obscene kingposts of totemic heraldry, where the forms of men, carved from single tree trunks, were seated in the gaping jaws of carved sharks. For Somo, tracing back to Somo its founder, worshipped the shark-god and the salt-water deities as well as the deities of the bush and swamp and mountain.

Turning to the right until he was past the sea-wall, Jerry came on down to the beach. No *Arangi* was to be seen on the placid surface of the lagoon. All about him was the debris of the feast, and he scented the smouldering odours of dying fires and burnt meat. Many of the feasters had not troubled to return to their houses, but lay about on the sand, in the mid-morning sunshine, men, women, and children and entire families, wherever they had yielded to slumber.

Down by the water's edge, so close that his fore-feet rested in the water, Jerry sat down, his heart bursting for Skipper, thrust his nose heavenward at the sun, and wailed his woe as dogs have ever wailed since they came in from the wild woods to the fires of men.

And here Lamai found him, hushed his grief against his breast with cuddling arms, and carried him back to the grass house by the brook. Water he offered, but Jerry could drink no more. Love he offered, but Jerry could not forget his torment of desire for Skipper. In the end, disgusted with so unreasonable a puppy, Lamai forgot his love in his boyish savageness, clouted Jerry over the head, right side and left, and tied him as few whites men's dogs have ever been tied. For, in his way, Lamai was a genius. He had never seen the thing done with any dog, yet he devised, on the spur of the moment, the invention of tying Jerry with a stick. The stick was of bamboo, four feet long. One end he tied shortly to Jerry's neck, the other end, just as shortly to a tree. All that Jerry's teeth could reach was the stick, and dry and seasoned bamboo can defy the teeth of any dog.

CHAPTER XIV

For many days, tied by the stick, Jerry remained Lamai's prisoner. It was not a happy time, for the house of Lumai was a house of perpetual bickering and quarrelling. Lamai fought pitched battles with his brothers and sisters for teasing Jerry, and these battles invariably culminated in Lenerengo taking a hand and impartially punishing all her progeny.

After that, as a matter of course and on general principles, she would have it out with Lumai, whose soft voice always was for quiet and repose, and who always, at the end of a tongue-lashing, took himself off to the canoe house for a couple of days. Here, Lenerengo was helpless. Into the canoe house of the stags no Mary might venture. Lenerengo had never forgotten the fate of the last Mary who had broken the taboo. It had occurred many years before, when she was a girl, and the recollection was ever vivid of the unfortunate woman hanging up in the sun by one arm for all of a day, and for all of a second day by the other arm. After that she had been feasted upon by the stags of the canoe house, and for long afterward all women had talked softly before their husbands.

Jerry did discover liking for Lamai, but it was not strong nor passionate. Rather was it out of gratitude, for only Lamai saw to it that he received food and water. Yet this boy was no Skipper, no Mister Haggin. Nor was he even a Derby or a Bob. He was that inferior man-creature, a nigger, and Jerry had been thoroughly trained all his brief days to the law that the white men were the superior two-legged gods.

He did not fail to recognize, however, the intelligence and power that resided in the niggers. He did not reason it out. He accepted it. They had power of command over other objects, could propel sticks and stones through the air, could even tie him a prisoner to a stick that rendered him helpless. Inferior as they might be to the white-gods, still they were gods of a sort.

It was the first time in his life that Jerry had been tied up, and he did not like it. Vainly he hurt his teeth, some of which were loosening under the pressure of the second teeth rising underneath. The stick was stronger than he. Although he did not forget Skipper, the poignancy of his loss faded with the passage of time, until uppermost in his mind was the desire to be free.

But when the day came that he was freed, he failed to take advantage of it and scuttle away for the beach. It chanced that Lenerengo released him. She did it deliberately, desiring to be quit of him. But when she untied Jerry, he stopped to thank her, wagging his tail and smiling up at her with his hazel-brown eyes. She stamped her foot at him to be gone, and uttered a harsh and intimidating cry. This Jerry did not understand, and so unused was he to fear that he could not be frightened into running away. He ceased wagging his tail, and, though he continued to look up at her, his eyes no longer smiled. Her action and noise he identified as unfriendly, and he became alert and watchful, prepared for whatever hostile act she might next commit.

Again she cried out and stamped her foot. The only effect on Jerry was to make him transfer his watchfulness to the foot. This slowness in getting away, now that she had released him, was too much for her short temper. She launched the kick, and Jerry, avoiding it, slashed her ankle.

War broke on the instant, and that she might have killed Jerry in her rage was highly probable had not Lamai appeared on the scene. The stick untied from Jerry's neck told the tale of her perfidy and incensed Lamai, who sprang between and deflected the blow with a stone poi-pounder that might have brained Jerry.

Lamai was now the one in danger of grievous damage, and his mother had just knocked him down with a clout alongside the head when poor Lumai, roused from sleep by the uproar, ventured out to make peace. Lenerengo, as usual, forgot everything else in the fiercer pleasure of berating her spouse.

The conclusion of the affair was harmless enough. The children stopped their crying, Lamai retied Jerry with the stick, Lenerengo harangued herself breathless, and Lumai departed with hurt feelings for the canoe house where stags could sleep in peace and Marys pestered not.

That night, in the circle of his fellow stags, Lumai recited his sorrows and told the cause of them — the puppy dog which had come on the *Arangi*. It chanced that Agno, chief of the devil devil doctors, or high priest, heard the tale, and recollected that he had sent Jerry to the canoe house along with the rest of the captives. Half an hour later he was having it out with Lamai. Beyond doubt, the boy had broken the taboos, and privily he told him so, until Lamai trembled and wept and squirmed abjectly at his feet, for the penalty was death.

It was too good an opportunity to get a hold over the boy for Agno to misplay it. A dead boy was worth nothing to him, but a living boy whose life he carried in his hand would serve him well. Since no one else knew of the broken taboo, he could afford to keep quiet. So he ordered Lamai forthright down to live in the youths' canoe house, there to begin his novitiate in the long series of tasks, tests and ceremonies that would graduate him into the bachelors' canoe house and half way along toward being a recognized man.

* * * * *

In the morning, obeying the devil devil doctor's commands, Lenerengo tied Jerry's feet together, not without a struggle in which his head was banged about and her hands were scratched. Then she carried him down through the village on the way to deliver him at Agno's house. On the way, in the open centre of the village where stood the kingposts, she left him lying on the ground in order to join in the hilarity of the population.

Not only was old Bashti a stern law-giver, but he was a unique one. He had selected this day at the one time to administer punishment to two quarrelling women, to give a lesson to all other women, and to make all his subjects glad once again that they had him for ruler. Tiha and Wiwau, the two women, were squat and stout and young, and had long been a scandal because of their incessant quarrelling. Bashti had set them a race to run. But such a race. It was side-splitting. Men, women, and children, beholding, howled with delight. Even elderly matrons and greybeards with a foot in the grave screeched and shrilled their joy in the spectacle.

The half-mile course lay the length of the village, through its heart, from the beach where the *Arangi* had been burned to the beach at the other end of the sea-wall. It had to be covered once in each direction by Tiha and Wiwau, in each case one of them urging speed on the other and the other desiring speed that was unattainable.

Only the mind of Bashti could have devised the show. First, two round coral stones, weighing fully forty pounds each, were placed in Tiha's arms. She was compelled to clasp them tightly against her sides in order that they might not roll to the ground. Behind her, Bashti placed Wiwau, who was armed with a bristle of bamboo splints mounted on a light long shaft of bamboo. The splints were sharp as needles, being indeed the needles used in tattooing, and on the end of the pole they were intended to be applied to Tiha's back in the same way that men apply ox-goads to oxen. No serious damage, but much pain, could be inflicted, which was just what Bashti had intended.

Wiwau prodded with the goad, and Tiha stumbled and wabbled in gymnastic efforts to make speed. Since, when the farther beach had been reached, the positions would be reversed and Wiwau would carry the stones back while Tiha prodded, and since Wiwau knew that for what she gave Tiha would then try to give more, Wiwau exerted herself to give the utmost while yet she could. The perspiration ran down both their faces. Each had her partisans in the crowd, who encouraged and heaped ridicule with every prod.

Ludicrous as it was, behind it lay iron savage law. The two stones were to be carried the entire course. The woman who prodded must do so with conviction and dispatch. The woman who was prodded must not lose her temper and fight her tormentor. As they had been duly forewarned by Bashti, the penalty for infraction of the rules he had laid down was staking out on the reef at low tide to be eaten by the fish-sharks.

As the contestants came opposite where Bashti and Aora his prime minister stood, they redoubled their efforts, Wiwau goading enthusiastically, Tiha jumping with every thrust to the imminent danger of dropping the stones. At their heels trooped the children of the village and all the village dogs, whooping and yelping with excitement.

“Long time you fella Tiha no sit ’m along canoe,” Aora bawled to the victim and set Bashti cackling again.

At an unusually urgent prod, Tiha dropped a stone and was duly goaded while she sank to her knees and with one arm scooped it in against her side, regained her feet, and waddled on.

Once, in stark mutiny at so much pain, she deliberately stopped and addressed her tormentor.

“Me cross along you too much,” she told Wiwau. “Bime by, close — ”

But she never completed the threat. A warmly administered prod broke through her stoicism and started her tottering along.

The shouting of the rabble ebbed away as the queer race ran on toward the beach. But in a few minutes it could be heard flooding back, this time Wiwau panting with the weight of coral stone and Tiha, a-smart with what she had endured, trying more than to even the score.

Opposite Bashti, Wiwau lost one of the stones, and, in the effort to recover it, lost the other, which rolled a dozen feet away from the first. Tiha became a whirlwind of avenging fury. And all Somo went wild. Bashti held his lean sides with merriment while tears of purest joy ran down his prodigiously wrinkled cheeks.

And when all was over, quoth Bashti to his people: “Thus shall all women fight when they desire over much to fight.”

Only he did not say it in this way. Nor did he say it in the Somo tongue. What he did say was in bêche-de-mer, and his words were:

“Any fella Mary he like ’m fight, all fella Mary along Somo fight ’m this fella way.”

CHAPTER XV

For some time after the conclusion of the race, Bashti stood talking with his head men, Agno among them. Lenerengo was similarly engaged with several old cronies. As Jerry lay off to one side where she had forgotten him, the wild-dog he had bullied on the *Arangi* came up and sniffed at him. At first he sniffed at a distance, ready for instant flight. Then he drew cautiously closer. Jerry watched him with smouldering eyes. At the moment wild-dog's nose touched him, he uttered a warning growl. Wild-dog sprang back and whirled away in headlong flight for a score of yards before he learned that he was not pursued.

Again he came back cautiously, as it was the instinct in him to stalk wild game, crouching so close to the ground that almost his belly touched. He lifted and dropped his feet with the lithe softness of a cat, and from time to time glanced to right and to left as if in apprehension of some flank attack. A noisy outburst of boys' laughter in the distance caused him to crouch suddenly down, his claws thrust into the ground for purchase, his muscles tense springs for the leap he knew not in what direction, from the danger he knew not what that might threaten him. Then he identified the noise, know that no harm impended, and resumed his stealthy advance on the Irish terrier.

What might have happened there is no telling, for at that moment Bashti's eyes chanced to rest on the golden puppy for the first time since the capture of the *Arangi*. In the rush of events Bashti had forgotten the puppy.

"What name that fella dog?" he cried out sharply, causing wild-dog to crouch down again and attracting Lenerengo's attention.

She cringed in fear to the ground before the terrible old chief and quavered a recital of the facts. Her good-for-nothing boy Lamai had picked the dog from the water. It had been the cause of much trouble in her house. But now Lamai had gone to live with the youths, and she was carrying the dog to Agno's house at Agno's express command.

"What name that dog stop along you?" Bashti demanded directly of Agno.

"Me kai-kai along him," came the answer. "Him fat fella dog. Him good fella dog kai-kai."

Into Bashti's alert old brain flashed an idea that had been long maturing.

"Him good fella dog too much," he announced. "Better you eat 'm bush fella dog," he advised, pointing at wild-dog.

Agno shook his head. "Bush fella dog no good kai-kai."

"Bush fella dog no good too much," was Bashti's judgment. "Bush fella dog too much fright. Plenty fella bush dog too much fright. White marster's dog no fright. Bush dog no fight. White marster's dog fight like hell. Bush dog run like hell. You look 'm eye belong you, you see."

Bashti stepped over to Jerry and cut the cords that tied his legs. And Jerry, upon his feet in a surge, was for once in too great haste to pause to give thanks. He hurled himself after wild-dog, caught him in mid-flight, and rolled him over and over in a cloud of dust. Ever wild-dog strove to escape, and ever Jerry cornered him, rolled him, and bit him, while Bashti applauded and called on his head men to behold.

By this time Jerry had become a raging little demon. Fired by all his wrongs, from the bloody day on the *Arangi* and the loss of Skipper down to this latest tying of his legs, he was avenging himself on wild-dog for everything. The owner of wild-dog, a return boy, made the mistake of trying to kick Jerry away. Jerry was upon him in a flash scratching his calves with his teeth, in the suddenness of his onslaught getting between the black's legs and tumbling him to the ground.

"What name!" Bashti cried in a rage at the offender, who lay fear-stricken where he had fallen, trembling for what next words might fall from his chief's lips.

But Bashti was already doubling with laughter at sight of wild-dog running for his life down the street with Jerry a hundred feet behind and tearing up the dust.

As they disappeared, Bashti expounded his idea. If men planted banana trees, it ran, what they would get would be bananas. If they planted yams, yams would be produced, not sweet potatoes or plantains, but yams, nothing but yams. The same with dogs. Since all black men's dogs were cowards, all the breeding of all black men's dogs would produce cowards. White men's dogs were courageous fighters. When they were bred they produced courageous fighters. Very well, and to the conclusion, namely, here was a white man's dog in their possession. The height of foolishness would be to eat it and to destroy for all time the courage that resided in it. The wise thing to do was to regard it as a seed dog, to keep it alive, so that in the coming generations of Somo dogs its courage would be repeated over and over and spread until all Somo dogs would be strong and brave.

Further, Bashti commanded his chief devil devil doctor to take charge of Jerry and guard him well. Also, he sent his word forth to all the tribe that Jerry was taboo. No man, woman, or child was to throw spear or stone at him, strike him with club or tomahawk, or hurt him in any way.

* * * * *

Thenceforth, and until Jerry himself violated one of the greatest of taboos, he had a happy time in Agno's gloomy grass house. For Bashti, unlike most chiefs, ruled his devil devil doctors with an iron hand. Other chiefs, even Nau-hau of Langa-Langa, were ruled by their devil devil doctors. For that matter, the population of Somo believed that Bashti was so ruled. But the Somo folk did not know what went on behind the scenes, when Bashti, a sheer infidel, talked alone now with one doctor and now with another.

In these private talks he demonstrated that he knew their game as well as they did, and that he was no slave to the dark superstitions and gross impostures with which they kept the people in submission. Also, he exposited the theory, as ancient as priests and rulers, that priests and rulers must work together in the orderly governance of the people. He was content that the people should believe that the gods, and the priests who were the mouth-pieces of the gods, had the last word, but he would have the priests know that in private the last word was his. Little as they believed in their trickery, he told them, he believed less.

He knew taboo, and the truth behind taboo. He explained his personal taboos, and how they came to be. Never must he eat clam-meat, he told Agno. It was so selected by himself because he did not like clam-meat. It was old Nino, high priest before Agno, with an ear open to the voice of the shark-god, who had so laid the taboo. But, he, Bashti, had privily commanded Nino to lay the taboo against clam-meat upon him, because he, Bashti, did not like clam-meat and had never liked clam-meat.

Still further, since he had lived longer than the oldest priest of them, his had been the appointing of every one of them. He knew them, had made them, had placed them, and they lived by his pleasure. And they would continue to take program from him, as they had always taken it, or else they would swiftly and suddenly pass. He had but to remind them of the passing of Kori, the devil devil doctor who had believed himself stronger than his chief, and who, for his mistake, had screamed in pain for a week ere what composed him had ceased to scream and for ever ceased to scream.

* * * * *

In Agno's large grass house was little light and much mystery. There was no mystery there for Jerry, who merely knew things, or did not know things, and who never bothered about what he did not know. Dried heads and other cured and mouldy portions of human carcasses impressed him no more than the dried alligators and dried fish that contributed to the festooning of Agno's dark abode.

Jerry found himself well cared for. No children nor wives cluttered the devil devil doctor's house. Several old women, a fly-flapping girl of eleven, and two young men who had graduated from the canoe house of the youths and who were studying priestcraft under the master, composed the household and waited upon Jerry. Food of the choicest was his. After Agno had eaten first-cut of pig, Jerry was served second. Even the two acolytes and the fly-flapping maid ate after him, leaving the debris for the several old women. And, unlike the mere bush dogs, who stole shelter from the rain under overhanging eaves, Jerry was given a dry place under the roof where the heads of bushmen and of forgotten sandalwood traders hung down from above in the midst of a dusty confusion of dried viscera of sharks, crocodile skulls, and skeletons of Solomons rats that measured two-thirds of a yard in length from bone-tip of nose to bone-tip of tail.

A number of times, all freedom being his, Jerry stole away across the village to the house of Lumai. But never did he find Lamai, who, since Skipper, was the only human he had met that had placed a bid to his heart. Jerry never appeared openly, but from the thick fern of the brookside observed the house and scented out its occupants. No scent of Lamai did he ever obtain, and, after a time, he gave up his vain visits and accepted the devil devil doctor's house as his home and the devil devil doctor as his master.

But he bore no love for this master. Agno, who had ruled by fear so long in his house of mystery, did not know love. Nor was affection any part of him, nor was geniality. He had no sense of humour, and was as frostily cruel as an icicle. Next to Bashti he stood in power, and all his days had been embittered in that he was not first in power. He had no softness for Jerry. Because he feared Bashti he feared to harm Jerry.

The months passed, and Jerry got his firm, massive second teeth and increased in weight and size. He came as near to being spoiled as is possible for a dog. Himself taboo, he quickly learned to lord it over the Somo folk and to have his way and will in all matters. No one dared to dispute with him with stick or stone. Agno hated him — he knew that; but also he gleaned the knowledge that Agno feared him and would not dare to hurt him. But Agno was a chill-blooded philosopher and bided his time, being different from Jerry in that he possessed human prevision and could adjust his actions to remote ends.

From the edge of the lagoon, into the waters of which, remembering the crocodile taboo he had learned on Meringe, he never ventured, Jerry ranged to the outlying bush villages of Bashti's domain. All made way for him. All fed him when he desired food. For the taboo was upon him, and he might unchidden invade their sleeping-mats or food calabashes. He might bully as he pleased, and be arrogant beyond decency, and there was no one to say him nay. Even had Bashti's word gone forth that if Jerry were attacked by the full-grown bush dogs, it was the duty of the Somo folk to take his part and kick and stone and beat the bush dogs. And thus his own four-legged cousins came painfully to know that he was taboo.

And Jerry prospered. Fat to stupidity he might well have become, had it not been for his high-strung nerves and his insatiable, eager curiosity. With the freedom of all Somo his, he was ever a-foot over it, learning its metes and bounds and the ways of the wild creatures that inhabited its swamps and forests and that did not acknowledge his taboo.

Many were his adventures. He fought two battles with the wood-rats that were almost of his size, and that, being mature and wild and cornered, fought him as he had never been fought before. The first he had killed, unaware that it was an old and feeble rat. The second, in prime of vigour, had so punished him that he crawled back, weak and sick to the devil devil doctor's house, where, for a week, under the dried emblems of death, he licked his wounds and slowly came back to life and health.

He stole upon the dugong and joyed to stampede that silly timid creature by sudden ferocious onslaughts which he knew himself to be all sound and fury, but which tickled him and made him laugh with the consciousness of playing a successful joke. He chased the unmigratory tropi-ducks from their shrewd-hidden nests, walked circumspectly among the crocodiles hauled out of water for slumber, and crept under the jungle-roof and spied upon the snow-white saucy cockatoos, the fierce ospreys, the heavy-flighted buzzards, the lories and kingfishers, and the absurdly garrulous little pygmy parrots.

Thrice, beyond the boundaries of Somo, he encountered the little black bushmen who were more like ghosts than men, so noiseless and unperceivable were they, and who, guarding the wild-pig runways of the jungle, missed spearing him on the three memorable occasions. As the wood-rats had taught him discretion, so did these two-legged lurkers in the jungle twilight. He had not fought with them, although they tried to spear him. He quickly came to know that these were other folk than Somo folk, that his taboo did not extend to them, and that, even of a sort, they were two-legged gods who carried flying death in their hands that reached farther than their hands and bridged distance.

As he ran the jungle, so Jerry ran the village. No place was sacred to him. In the devil devil houses, where, before the face of mystery men and women crawled in fear and trembling, he walked stiff-legged and bristling; for fresh heads were suspended there — heads his eyes and keen nostrils identified as those of once living blacks he had known on board the *Arangi*. In the biggest devil devil house he encountered the head of Borckman, and snarled at it, without receiving response, in recollection of the fight he had fought with the schnapps-addled mate on the deck of the *Arangi*.

Once, however, in Bashti's house, he chanced upon all that remained on earth of Skipper. Bashti had lived very long, had lived most wisely and thought much, and was thoroughly aware that, having lived far beyond the span of man his own span was very short. And he was curious about it all — the meaning and purpose of life. He loved the world and life, into which he had been fortunately born, both as to constitution and to place, which latter, for him, had been the high place over hie priests and people. He was not afraid to die, but he wondered if he might live again. He discounted the silly views of the tricky priests, and he was very much alone in the chaos of the confusing problem.

For he had lived so long, and so luckily, that he had watched the waning to extinction of all the vigorous appetites and desires. He had known wives and children, and the keen-edge of youthful hunger. He had seen his children grow to manhood and womanhood and become fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers. But having known woman, and love, and fatherhood, and the belly-delights of eating, he had passed on beyond. Food? Scarcely did he know its meaning, so little did he eat. Hunger, that bit him like a spur when he was young and lusty, had long since ceased to stir and prod him. He ate out of a sense of necessity and duty, and cared little for what he ate, save for one thing: the eggs of the megapodes that were, in season, laid in his private, personal, strictly tabooed megapode laying-yard. Here was left to him his last lingering flesh thrill. As for the rest, he lived in his intellect, ruling his people, seeking out data from which to induce laws that would make his people stronger and rivet his people's clinch upon life.

But he realized clearly the difference between that abstract thing, the tribe, and that most concrete of things, the individual. The tribe persisted. Its members passed. The tribe was a memory of the history and habits of all previous members, which the living members carried on until they passed and became history and memory in the intangible sum that was the tribe. He, as a member, soon or late, and late was very near, must pass. But pass to what? There was the rub. And so it was, on occasion, that he ordered all forth from his big grass house, and, alone with his problem, lowered from the roof-beams the matting-wrapped parcels of heads of men he had once seen live and who had passed into the mysterious nothingness of death.

Not as a miser had he collected these heads, and not as a miser counting his secret hoard did he ponder these heads, unwrapped, held in his two hands or lying on his knees. He wanted to know. He wanted to know what he guessed they might know, now that they had long since gone into the darkness that rounds the end of life.

Various were the heads Bashti thus interrogated — in his hands, on his knees, in his dim-lighted grasshouse, while the overhead sun blazed down and the fading south-east sighed through the palm-fronds and breadfruit branches. There was the head of a Japanese — the only one he had ever seen or heard of. Before he was born it had been taken by his father. Ill-cured it was, and battered and marred with ancientness and rough usage. Yet he studied its features, decided that it had once had two lips as live as his own and a mouth as vocal and hungry as his had often been in the past. Two eyes and a nose it had, a thatched crown of roof, and a pair of ears like to his own. Two legs and a body it must once have had, and desires and lusts. Heats of wrath and of love, so he decided, had also been its once on a time when it never thought to die.

A head that amazed him much, whose history went back before his father's and grandfather's time, was the head of a Frenchman, although Bashti knew it not. Nor did he know it was the head of La Perouse, the doughty old navigator, who had left his bones, the bones of his crews, and the bones of his two frigates, the *Astrolabe* and the *Boussole*, on the shores of the cannibal Solomons. Another head — for Bashti was a confirmed head-collector — went back two centuries before La Perouse to Alvaro de Mendana, the Spaniard. It was the head of one of Mendana's armourers, lost in a beach scrimmage to one of Bashti's remote ancestors.

Still another head, the history of which was vague, was a white woman's head. What wife of what navigator there was no telling. But earrings of gold and emerald still clung to the withered ears, and the hair, two-thirds of a fathom long, a shimmering silk of golden floss, flowed from the scalp that covered what had once been the wit and will of her that Bashti reasoned had in her ancient time been quick with love in the arms of man.

Ordinary heads, of bushmen and salt-water men, and even of schnapps-drinking white men like Borckman, he relegated to the canoe houses and devil devil houses. For he was a connoisseur in the matter of heads. There was a strange head of a German that lured him much. Red-bearded it was, and red-haired, but even in dried death there was an ironness of feature and a massive brow that hinted to him of mastery of secrets beyond his ken. No more than did he know it once had been a German, did he know it was a German professor's head, an astronomer's head, a head that in its time had carried within its content profound knowledge of the stars in the vasty heavens, of the way of star-directed ships upon the sea, and of the way of the earth on its starry course through space that was a myriad million times beyond the slight concept of space that he possessed.

Last of all, sharpest of bite in his thought, was the head of Van Horn. And it was the head of Van Horn that lay on his knees under his contemplation when Jerry, who possessed the freedom of Somo, trotted into Bashti's grass house, scented and identified the mortal remnant of Skipper, wailed first in woe over it, then bristled into rage.

Bashti did not notice at first, for he was deep in interrogation of Van Horn's head. Only short months before this head had been alive, he pondered, quick with wit, attached to a two-legged body that stood erect and that swaggered about, a loincloth and a belted automatic around its middle, more powerful, therefrom, than Bashti, but with less wit, for had not he, Bashti, with an ancient pistol, put darkness inside that skull where wit resided, and removed that skull from the soddenly relaxed framework of flesh and bone on which it had been supported to tread the earth and the deck of the *Arangi*?

What had become of that wit? Had that wit been all of the arrogant, upstanding Van Horn, and had it gone out as the flickering flame of a splinter of wood goes out when it is quite burnt to a powder-fluff of ash? Had all that made Van Horn passed like the flame of the splinter? Had he passed into the darkness for ever into which the beast passed, into which passed the speared crocodile, the hooked bonita, the netted mullet, the slain pig that was fat to eat? Was Van Horn's darkness as the darkness of the blue-bottle fly that his fly-flapping maid smashed and disrupted in mid-flight of the air? — as the darkness into which passed the mosquito that knew the secret of flying, and that, despite its perfectness of flight, with almost an unthought action, he squashed with the flat of his hand against the back of his neck when it bit him?

What was true of this white man's head, so recently alive and erectly dominant, Bashti knew was true of himself. What had happened to this white man, after going through the dark gate of death, would happen to him. Wherefore he questioned the head, as if its dumb lips might speak to him from out of the mystery and tell him the meaning of life, and the meaning of death that inevitably laid life by the heels.

Jerry's long-drawn howl of woe at sight and scent of all that was left of Skipper, roused Bashti from his reverie. He looked at the sturdy, golden-brown puppy, and immediately included it in his reverie. It was alive. It was like man. It knew hunger, and pain, anger and love. It had blood in its veins, like man, that a thrust of a knife could make redly gush forth and denude it to death. Like the race of man it loved its kind, and birthed and breast-nourished its young. And passed. Ay, it passed; for many a dog, as well as a human, had he, Bashti, devoured in his hey-dey of appetite and youth, when he knew only motion and strength, and fed motion and strength out of the calabashes of feasting.

But from woe Jerry went on into anger. He stalked stiff-legged, with a snarl writhen on his lips, and with recurrent waves of hair-bristling along his back and up his shoulders and neck. And he stalked not the head of Skipper, where rested his love, but Bashti, who held the head on his knees. As the wild wolf in the upland pasture stalks the mare mother with her newly delivered colt, so Jerry stalked Bashti. And Bashti, who had never feared death all his long life and who had laughed a joke with his forefinger blown off by the bursting flint-lock pistol, smiled gleefully to himself, for his glee was intellectual and in admiration of this half-grown puppy whom he rapped on the nose with a short, hardwood stick and compelled to keep distance. No matter how often and fiercely Jerry rushed him, he met the rush with the stick, and chuckled aloud, understanding the puppy's courage, marvelling at the stupidity of life that impelled him continually to thrust his nose to the hurt of the stick, and that drove him, by passion of remembrance of a dead man to dare the pain of the stick again and again.

This, too, was life, Bashti meditated, as he deftly rapped the screaming puppy away from him. Four-legged life it was, young and silly and hot, heart-prompted, that was like any young man making love to his woman in the twilight, or like any young man fighting to the death with any other young man over a matter of passion, hurt pride, or thwarted desire. As much as in the dead head of Van Horn or of any man, he realized that in this live puppy might reside the clue to existence, the solution of the riddle.

So he continued to rap Jerry on the nose away from him, and to marvel at the persistence of the vital something within him that impelled him to leap forward always to the stick that hurt him and made him recoil. The valour and motion, the strength and the unreasoning of youth he knew it to be, and he admired it sadly, and envied it, willing to exchange for it all his lean grey wisdom if only he could find the way.

"Some dog, that dog, sure some dog," he might have uttered in Van Horn's fashion of speech. Instead, in bêche-de-mer, which was as habitual to him as his own Somo speech, he thought:

"My word, that fella dog no fright along me."

But age wearied sooner of the play, and Bashti put an end to it by rapping Jerry heavily behind the ear and stretching him out stunned. The spectacle of the puppy, so alive and raging the moment before, and, the moment after, lying as if dead, caught Bashti's speculative fancy. The stick, with a single sharp rap of it, had effected the change. Where had gone the anger and wit of the puppy? Was that all it was, the flame of the splinter that could be quenched by any chance gust of air? One instant Jerry had raged and suffered, snarled and leaped, willed and directed his actions. The next instant he lay limp and crumpled in the little death of unconsciousness. In a brief space, Bashti knew, consciousness, sensation, motion, and direction would flow back into the wilted little carcass. But where, in the meanwhile, at the impact of the stick, had gone all the consciousness, and sensitiveness, and will?

Bashti sighed wearily, and wearily wrapped the heads in their grass-mat coverings — all but Van Horn's; and hoisted them up in the air to hang from the roof-beams — to hang as he debated, long after he was dead and out if it, even as some of them had so hung from long before his father's and his grandfather's time. The head of Van Horn he left lying on the floor, while he stole out himself to peer in through a crack and see what next the puppy might do.

Jerry quivered at first, and in the matter of a minute struggled feebly to his feet where he stood swaying and dizzy; and thus Bashti, his eye to the crack, saw the miracle of life flow back through the channels of the inert body and stiffen the legs to upstanding, and saw consciousness, the mystery of mysteries, flood back inside the head of bone that was covered with hair, smoulder and glow in the opening eyes, and direct the lips to writhe away from the teeth and the throat to vibrate to the snarl that had been interrupted when the stick smashed him down into darkness.

And more Bashti saw. At first, Jerry looked about for his enemy, growling and bristling his neck hair. Next, in lieu of his enemy, he saw Skipper's head, and crept to it and loved it, kissing with his tongue the hard cheeks, the closed lids of the eyes that his love could not open, the immobile lips that would not utter one of the love-words they had been used to utter to the little dog.

Next, in profound desolation, Jerry set down before Skipper's head, pointed his nose toward the lofty ridge-pole, and howled mournfully and long. Finally, sick and subdued, he crept out of the house and away to the house of his devil devil master, where, for the round of twenty-four hours, he waked and slept and dreamed centuries of nightmares.

For ever after in Somo, Jerry feared that grass house of Bashti. He was not in fear of Bashti. His fear was indescribable and unthinkable. In that house was the nothingness of what once was Skipper. It was the token of the ultimate catastrophe to life that was wrapped and twisted into every fibre of his heredity. One step advanced beyond this, Jerry's uttermost, the folk of Somo, from the contemplation of death, had achieved concepts of the spirits of the dead still living in immaterial and supersensuous realms.

And thereafter Jerry hated Bashti intensely, as a lord of life who possessed and laid on his knees the nothingness of Skipper. Not that Jerry reasoned it out. All dim and vague it was, a sensation, an emotion, a feeling, an instinct, an intuition, name it mistily as one will in the misty nomenclature of speech wherein words cheat with the impression of definiteness and lie to the brain an understanding which the brain does not possess.

CHAPTER XVI

Three months more passed; the north-west monsoon, after its half-year of breath, had given way to the south-east trade; and Jerry still continued to live in the house of Agno and to have the run of the village. He had put on weight, increased in size, and, protected by the taboo, had become self-confident almost to lordliness. But he had found no master. Agno had never won a heart-throb from him. For that matter, Agno had never tried to win him. Nor, in his cold-blooded way, had he ever betrayed his hatred of Jerry.

Not even the several old women, the two acolytes, and the fly-flapping maid in Agno's house dreamed that the devil devil doctor hated Jerry. Nor did Jerry dream it. To him Agno was a neutral sort of person, a person who did not count. Those of the household Jerry recognized as slaves or servants to Agno, and he knew when they fed him that the food he ate proceeded from Agno and was Agno's food. Save himself, taboo protected, all of them feared Agno, and his house was truly a house of fear in which could bloom no love for a stray puppy dog. The eleven-years' maid might have placed a bid for Jerry's affection, had she not been deterred at the start by Agno, who reprimanded her sternly for presuming to touch or fondle a dog of such high taboo.

What delayed Agno's plot against Jerry for the half-year of the monsoon was the fact that the season of egg-laying for the megapodes in Bashti's private laying-yard did not begin until the period of the south-east trades. And Agno, having early conceived his plot, with the patience that was characteristic of him was content to wait the time.

Now the megapode of the Solomons is a distant cousin to the brush turkey of Australia. No larger than a large pigeon, it lays an egg the size of a domestic duck's. The megapode, with no sense of fear, is so silly that it would have been annihilated hundreds of centuries before had it not been preserved by the taboos of the chiefs and priests. As it was, the chiefs were compelled to keep cleared patches of sand for it, and to fence out the dogs. It buried its eggs two feet deep, depending on the heat of the sun for the hatching. And it would dig and lay, and continue to dig and lay, while a black dug out its eggs within two or three feet of it.

The laying-yard was Bashti's. During the season, he lived almost entirely on megapode eggs. On rare occasion he even had megapodes that were near to finishing their laying killed for his kai-kai. This was no more than a whim, however, prompted by pride in such exclusiveness of diet only possible to one in such high place. In truth, he cared no more for megapode meat than for any other meat. All meat tasted alike to him, for his taste for meat was one of the vanished pleasures in the limbo of memory.

But the eggs! He liked to eat them. They were the only article of food he liked to eat, They gave him reminiscent thrills of the ancient food-desires of his youth. Actually was he hungry when he had megapode eggs, and the well-nigh dried founts of saliva and of internal digestive juices were stimulated to flow again at contemplation of a megapode egg prepared for the eating. Wherefore, he alone of all Somo, barred rigidly by taboo, ate megapode eggs. And, since the taboo was essentially religious, to Agno was deputed the ecclesiastical task of guarding and cherishing and caring for the royal laying-yard.

But Agno was no longer young. The acid bite of belly desire had long since deserted him, and he, too, ate from a sense of duty, all meat tasting alike to him. Megapode eggs only stung his taste alive and stimulated the flow of his juices. Thus it was that he broke the taboos he imposed, and, privily, before the eyes of no man, woman, or child ate the eggs he stole from Bashti's private preserve.

So it was, as the laying season began, and when both Bashti and Agno were acutely egg-yearning after six months of abstinence, that Agno led Jerry along the taboo path through the mangroves, where they stepped from root to root above the muck that ever steamed and stank in the stagnant air where the wind never penetrated.

The path, which was not an ordinary path and which consisted, for a man, in wide strides from root to root, and for a dog in four-legged leaps and plunges, was new to Jerry. In all his ranging of Somo, because it was so unusual a path, he had never discovered it. The unbending of Agno, thus to lead him, was a surprise and a delight to Jerry, who, without reasoning about it, in a vague way felt the preliminary sensations that possibly Agno, in a small way, might prove the master which his dog's soul continually sought.

Emerging from the swamp of mangroves, abruptly they came upon a patch of sand, still so salt and inhospitable from the sea's deposit that no great trees rooted and interposed their branches between it and the sun's heat. A primitive gate gave entrance, but Agno did not take Jerry through it. Instead, with weird little chirrupings of encouragement and excitation, he persuaded Jerry to dig a tunnel beneath the rude palisade of fence. He helped with his own hands, dragging out the sand in quantities, but imposing on Jerry the leaving of the indubitable marks of a dog's paws and claws.

And, when Jerry was inside, Agno, passing through the gate, enticed and seduced him into digging out the eggs. But Jerry had no taste of the eggs. Eight of them Agno sucked raw, and two of them he tucked whole into his arm-pits to take back to his house of the devil devils. The shells of the eight he sucked he broke to fragments as a dog might break them, and, to build the picture he had long visioned, of the eighth egg he reserved a tiny portion which he spread, not on Jerry's jowls where his tongue could have erased it, but high up about his eyes and above them, where it would remain and stand witness against him according to the plot he had planned.

Even worse, in high priestly sacrilege, he encouraged Jerry to attack a megapode hen in the act of laying. And, while Jerry slew it, knowing that the lust of killing, once started, would lead him to continue killing the silly birds, Agno left the laying-yard to hot-foot it through the mangrove swamp and present to Bashti an ecclesiastical quandary. The taboo of the dog, as he expounded it, had prevented him from interfering with the taboo dog when it ate the taboo egg-layers. Which taboo might be the greater was beyond him. And Bashti, who had not tasted a megapode egg in half a year, and who was keen for the one recrudescent thrill of remote youth still left to him, led the way back across the mangrove swamp at so prodigious a pace as quite to wind his high priest who was many years younger than he.

And he arrived at the laying-yard and caught Jerry, red-pawed and red-mouthed, in the midst of his fourth kill of an egg-layer, the raw yellow yolk of the portion of one egg, plastered by Agno to represent many eggs, still about his eyes and above his eyes to the bulge of his forehead. In vain Bashti looked about for one egg, the six months' hunger stronger than ever upon him in the thick of the disaster. And Jerry, under the consent and encouragement of Agno, wagged his tail to Bashti in a bid for recognition, of prowess, and laughed with his red-dripping jowls and yellow plastered eyes.

Bashti did not rage as he would have done had he been alone. Before the eyes of his chief priest he disdained to lower himself to such commonness of humanity. Thus it is always with those in the high places, ever temporising with their natural desires, ever masking their ordinariness under a show of disinterest. So it was that Bashti displayed no vexation at the disappointment to his appetite. Agno was a shade less controlled, for he could not quite chase away the eager light in his eyes. Bashti glimpsed it and mistook it for simple curiosity of observation not guessing its real nature. Which goes to show two things of those in the high place: one, that they may fool those beneath them; the other, that they may be fooled by those beneath them.

Bashti regarded Jerry quizzically, as if the matter were a joke, and shot a careless side glance to note the disappointment in his priest's eyes. Ah, ha, thought Bashti; I have fooled him.

"Which is the high taboo?" Agno queried in the Somo tongue.

"As you should ask. Of a surety, the megapode."

"And the dog?" was Agno's next query.

"Must pay for breaking the taboo. It is a high taboo. It is my taboo. It was so placed by Somo, the ancient father and first ruler of all of us, and it has been ever since the taboo of the chiefs. The dog must die."

He paused and considered the matter, while Jerry returned to digging the sand where the scent was auspicious. Agno made to stop him, but Bashti interposed.

"Let be," he said. "Let the dog convict himself before my eyes."

And Jerry did, uncovering two eggs, breaking them and lapping that portion of their precious contents which was not spilled and wasted in the sand. Bashti's eyes were quite lack-lustre as he asked

"The feast of dogs for the men is to-day?"

"To-morrow, at midday," Agno answered. "Already are the dogs coming in. There will be at least fifty of them."

"Fifty and one," was Bashti's verdict, as he nodded at Jerry.

The priest made a quick movement of impulse to capture Jerry.

"Why now?" the chief demanded. "You will but have to carry him through the swamp. Let him trot back on his own legs, and when he is before the canoe house tie his legs there."

Across the swamp and approaching the canoe house, Jerry, trotting happily at the heels of the two men, heard the wailing and sorrowing of many dogs that spelt unmistakable woe and pain. He developed instant suspicion that was, however, without direct apprehension for himself. And at that moment, his ears cocked forward and his nose questing for further information in the matter, Bashti seized him by the nape of the neck and held him in the air while Agno proceeded to tie his legs.

No whimper, nor sound, nor sign of fear, came from Jerry — only choking growls of ferociousness, intermingled with snarls of anger, and a belligerent up-clawing of hind-legs. But a dog, clutched by the neck from the back, can never be a match for two men, gifted with the intelligence and deftness of men, each of them two-handed with four fingers and an opposable thumb to each hand.

His fore-legs and hind-legs tied lengthwise and crosswise, he was carried head-downward the short distance to the place of slaughter and cooking, and flung to the earth in the midst of the score or more of dogs similarly tied and helpless. Although it was mid-afternoon, a number of them had so lain since early morning in the hot sun. They were all bush dogs or wild-dogs, and so small was their courage that their thirst and physical pain from cords drawn too tight across veins and arteries, and their dim apprehension of the fate such treatment foreboded, led them to whimper and wail and howl their despair and suffering.

The next thirty hours were bad hours for Jerry. The word had gone forth immediately that the taboo on him had been removed, and of the men and boys none was so low as to do him reverence. About him, till night-fall, persisted a circle of teasers and tormenters. They harangued him for his fall, sneered and jeered at him, rooted him about contemptuously with their feet, made a hollow in the sand out of which he could not roll and desposited him in it on his back, his four tied legs sticking ignominiously in the air above him.

And all he could do was growl and rage his helplessness. For, unlike the other dogs, he would not howl or whimper his pain. A year old now, the last six months had gone far toward maturing him, and it was the nature of his breed to be fearless and stoical. And, much as he had been taught by his white masters to hate and despise niggers, he learned in the course of these thirty hours an especially bitter and undying hatred.

His torturers stopped at nothing. Even they brought wild-dog and set him upon Jerry. But it was contrary to wild-dog’s nature to attack an enemy that could not move, even if the enemy was Jerry who had so often bullied him and rolled him on the deck. Had Jerry, with a broken leg or so, still retained power of movement, then he would have mauled him, perhaps to death. But this utter helplessness was different. So the expected show proved a failure. When Jerry snarled and growled, wild-dog snarled and growled back and strutted and bullied around him, him to persuasion of the blacks could induce but no sink his teeth into Jerry.

The killing-ground before the canoe house was a bedlam of horror. From time to time more bound dogs were brought in and flung down. There was a continuous howling, especially contributed to by those which had lain in the sun since early morning and had no water. At times, all joined in, the control of the quietest breaking down before the wave of excitement and fear that swept spasmodically over all of them. This howling, rising and falling, but never ceasing, continued throughout the night, and by morning all were suffering from the intolerable thirst.

The sun blazing down upon them in the white sand and almost parboiling them, brought anything but relief. The circle of torturers formed about Jerry again, and again was wreaked upon him all abusive contempt for having lost his taboo. What drove Jerry the maddest were not the blows and physical torment, but the laughter. No dog enjoys being laughed at, and Jerry, least of all, could restrain his wrath when they jeered him and cackled close in his face.

Although he had not howled once, his snarling and growling, combined with his thirst, had hoarsened his throat and dried the mucous membranes of his mouth so that he was incapable, except under the sheerest provocation, of further sound. His tongue hung out of his mouth, and the eight o’clock sun began slowly to burn it.

It was at this time that one of the boys cruelly outraged him. He rolled Jerry out of the hollow in which he had lain all night on his back, turned him over on his side, and presented to him a small calabash filled with water. Jerry lapped it so fanatically that not for half a minute did he become aware that the boy had squeezed into it many hot seeds of ripe red peppers. The circle shrieked with glee, and what Jerry’s thirst had been before was as nothing compared with this new thirst to which had been added the stinging agony of pepper.

Next in event, and a most important event it was to prove, came Nalasu. Nalasu was an old man of three-score years, and he was blind, walking with a large staff with which he prodded his path. In his free hand he carried a small pig by its tied legs.

"They say the white master's dog is to be eaten," he said in the Somo speech. "Where is the white master's dog? Show him to me."

Agno, who had just arrived, stood beside him as he bent over Jerry and examined him with his fingers. Nor did Jerry offer to snarl or bite, although the blind man's hands came within reach of his teeth more than once. For Jerry sensed no enmity in the fingers that passed so softly over him. Next, Nalasu felt over the pig, and several times, as if calculating, alternated between Jerry and the pig.

Nalasu stood up and voiced judgment:

"The pig is as small as the dog. They are of a size, but the pig has more meat on it for the eating. Take the pig and I shall take the dog."

"Nay," said Agno. "The white master's dog has broken the taboo. It must be eaten. Take any other dog and leave the pig. Take a big dog."

"I will have the white master's dog," Nalasu persisted. "Only the white master's dog and no other."

The matter was at a deadlock when Bashti chanced upon the scene and stood listening.

"Take the dog, Nalasu," he said finally. "It is a good pig, and I shall myself eat it."

"But he has broken the taboo, your great taboo of the laying-yard, and must go to the eating," Agno interposed quickly.

Too quickly, Bashti thought, while a vague suspicion arose in his mind of he knew not what.

"The taboo must be paid in blood and cooking," Agno continued.

"Very well," said Bashti. "I shall eat the small pig. Let its throat be cut and its body know the fire."

"I but speak the law of the taboo. Life must pay for the breaking."

"There is another law," Bashti grinned. "Long has it been since ever Somo built these walls that life may buy life."

"But of life of man and life of woman," Agno qualified.

"I know the law," Bashti held steadily on. "Somo made the law. Never has it been said that animal life may not buy animal life."

"It has never been practised," was the devil devil doctor's fling.

"And for reason enough," the old chief retorted. "Never before has a man been fool enough to give a pig for a dog. It is a young pig, and it is fat and tender. Take the dog, Nalasu. Take the dog now."

But the devil devil doctor was not satisfied.

"As you said, O Bashti, in your very great wisdom, he is the seed dog of strength and courage. Let him be slain. When he comes from the fire, his body shall be divided into many small pieces so that every man may eat of him and thereby get his portion of strength and courage. Better is it for Somo that its men be strong and brave rather than its dogs."

But Bashti held no anger against Jerry. He had lived too long and too philosophically to lay blame on a dog for breaking a taboo which it did not know. Of course, dogs often were slain for breaking the taboos. But he allowed this to be done because the dogs themselves in nowise interested him, and because their deaths emphasized the sacredness of the taboo. Further, Jerry had more than slightly interested him. Often, since, Jerry had attacked him because of Van Horn's head, he had pondered the incident. Baffling as it was, as all manifestations of life were baffling, it had given him food for thought. Then there was his admiration for Jerry's courage and that inexplicable something in him that prevented him crying out from the pain of the stick. And, without thinking of it as beauty, the beauty of line and colour of Jerry had insensibly penetrated him with a sense of pleasantness. It was good to look upon.

There was another angle to Bashti's conduct. He wondered why his devil devil doctor so earnestly desired a mere dog's death. There were many dogs. Then why this particular dog? That the weight of something was on the other's mind was patent, although what it was Bashti could not gauge, guess — unless it might be revenge incubated the day he had prevented Agno from eating the dog. If such were the case, it was a state of mind he could not tolerate in any of his tribespeople. But whatever was the motive, guarding as he always did against the unknown, he thought it well to discipline his priest and demonstrate once again whose word was the last word in Somo. Wherefore Bashti replied:

"I have lived long and eaten many pigs. What man may dare say that the many pigs have entered into me and made me a pig?"

He paused and cast a challenging eye around the circle of his audience; but no man spoke. Instead, some men grinned sheepishly and were restless on their feet, while Agno's expression advertised sturdy unbelief that there was anything pig-like about his chief.

"I have eaten much fish," Bashti continued. "Never has one scale of a fish grown out on my skin. Never has a gill appeared on my throat. As you all know, by the looking, never have I sprouted one fin out of my backbone. — Nalasu, take the dog. — Aga, carry the pig to my house. I shall eat it to-day. — Agno, let the killing of the dogs begin so that the canoe-men shall eat at due time."

Then, as he turned to go, he lapsed into bêche-de-mer English and flung sternly over his shoulder, "My word, you make 'm me cross along you."

CHAPTER XVII

As blind Nalasu slowly plodded away, with one hand tapping the path before him and with the other carrying Jerry head-downward suspended by his tied legs, Jerry heard a sudden increase in the wild howling of the dogs as the killing began and they realized that death was upon them.

But, unlike the boy Lamai, who had known no better, the old man did not carry Jerry all the way to his house. At the first stream pouring down between the low hills of the rising land, he paused and put Jerry down to drink. And Jerry knew only the delight of the wet coolness on his tongue, all about his mouth, and down his throat. Nevertheless, in his subconsciousness was being planted the impression that, kinder than Lamai, than Agno, than Bashti, this was the kindest black he had encountered in Somo.

When he had drunk till for the moment he could drink no more, he thanked Nalasu with his tongue — not warmly nor ecstatically as had it been Skipper's hand, but with due gratefulness for the life-giving draught. The old man chuckled in a pleased way, rolled Jerry's parched body into the water, and, keeping his head above the surface, rubbed the water into his dry skin and let him lie there for long blissful minutes.

From the stream to Nalasu's house, a goodly distance, Nalasu still carried him with bound legs, although not head-downward but clasped in one arm against his chest. His idea was to love the dog to him. For Nalasu, having sat in the lonely dark for many years, had thought far more about the world around him and knew it far better than had he been able to see it. For his own special purpose he had need of a dog. Several bush dogs he had tried, but they had shown little appreciation of his kindness and had invariably run away. The last had remained longest because he had treated it with the greatest kindness, but run away it had before he had trained it to his purpose. But the white master's dog, he had heard, was different. It never ran away in fear, while it was said to be more intelligent than the dogs of Somo.

The invention Lamai had made of tying Jerry with a stick had been noised abroad in the village, and by a stick, in Nalasu's house, Jerry found himself again tied. But with a difference. Never once was the blind man impatient, while he spent hours each day in squatting on his hams and petting Jerry. Yet, had he not done this, Jerry, who ate his food and who was growing accustomed to changing his masters, would have accepted Nalasu for master. Further, it was fairly definite in Jerry's mind, after the devil devil doctor's tying him and flinging him amongst the other helpless dogs on the killing-ground, that all mastership of Agno had ceased. And Jerry, who had never been without a master since his first days in the world, felt the imperative need of a master.

So it was, when the day came that the stick was untied from him, that Jerry remained, voluntarily in Nalasu's house. When the old man was satisfied there would be no running away, he began Jerry's training. By slow degrees he advanced the training until hours a day were devoted to it.

First of all Jerry learned a new name for himself, which was Bao, and he was taught to respond to it from an ever-increasing distance no matter how softly it was uttered, and Nalasu continued to utter it more softly until it no longer was a spoken word, but a whisper. Jerry's ears were keen, but Nalasu's, from long use, were almost as keen.

Further, Jerry's own hearing was trained to still greater acuteness. Hours at a time, sitting by Nalasu or standing apart from him, he was taught to catch the slightest sounds or rustlings from the bush. Still further, he was taught to differentiate between the bush noises and between the ways he growled warnings to Nalasu. If a rustle took place that Jerry identified as a pig or a chicken, he did not growl at all. If he did not identify the noise, he growled fairly softly. But if the noise were made by a man or boy who moved softly and therefore suspiciously, Jerry learned to growl loudly; if the noise were loud and careless, then Jerry's growl was soft.

It never entered Jerry's mind to question why he was taught all this. He merely did it because it was this latest master's desire that he should. All this, and much more, at a cost of interminable time and patience, Nalasu taught him, and much more he taught him, increasing his vocabulary so that, at a distance, they could hold quick and sharply definite conversations.

Thus, at fifty feet away, Jerry would "Whuff!" softly the information that there was a noise he did not know; and Nalasu, with different sibilances, would hiss to him to stand still, to whuff more softly, or to keep silent, or to come to him noiselessly, or to go into the bush and investigate the source of the strange noise, or, barking loudly, to rush and attack it.

Perhaps, if from the opposite direction Nalasu's sharp ears alone caught a strange sound, he would ask Jerry if he had heard it. And Jerry, alert to his toes to listen, by an alteration in the quantity or quality of his whuff, would tell Nalasu that he did not hear; next, that he did hear; and, perhaps finally, that it was a strange dog, or a wood-rat, or a man, or a boy — all in the softest of sounds that were scarcely more than breath-exhalations, all monosyllables, a veritable shorthand of speech.

Nalasu was a strange old man. He lived by himself in a small grass house on the edge of the village. The nearest house was quite a distance away, while his own stood in a clearing in the thick jungle which approached no where nearer than sixty feet. Also, this cleared space he kept continually free from the fast-growing vegetation. Apparently he had no friends. At least no visitors ever came to his dwelling. Years had passed since he discouraged the last. Further, he had no kindred. His wife was long since dead, and his three sons, not yet married, in a foray behind the bounds of Somo had lost their heads in the jungle runways of the higher hills and been devoured by their bushman slayers.

For a blind man he was very busy. He asked favour of no one and was self-supporting. In his house-clearing he grew yams, sweet potatoes, and taro. In another clearing — because it was his policy to have no trees close to his house — he had plantains, bananas, and half a dozen coconut palms. Fruits and vegetables he exchanged down in the village for meat and fish and tobacco.

He spent a good portion of his time on Jerry's education, and, on occasion, would make bows and arrows that were so esteemed by his tribespeople as to command a steady sale. Scarcely a day passed in which he did not himself practise with bow and arrow. He shot only by direction of sound; and whenever a noise or rustle was heard in the jungle, and when Jerry had informed him of its nature, he would shoot an arrow at it. Then it was Jerry's duty cautiously to retrieve the arrow had it missed the mark.

A curious thing about Nalasu was that he slept no more than three hours in the twenty-four, that he never slept at night, and that his brief daylight sleep never took place in the house. Hidden in the thickest part of the neighbouring jungle was a sort of nest to which led no path. He never entered nor left by the same way, so that the tropic growth on the rich soil, being so rarely trod upon, ever obliterated the slightest sign of his having passed that way. Whenever he slept, Jerry was trained to remain on guard and never to go to sleep.

Reason enough there was and to spare for Nalasu's infinite precaution. The oldest of his three sons had slain one, Ao, in a quarrel. Ao had been one of six brothers of the family of Anno which dwelt in one of the upper villages. According to Somo law, the Anno family was privileged to collect the blood-debt from the Nalasu family, but had been balked of it by the deaths of Nalasu's three sons in the bush. And, since the Somo code was a life for a life, and since Nalasu alone remained alive of his family, it was well known throughout the tribe that the Annos would never be content until they had taken the blind man's life.

But Nalasu had been famous as a great fighter, as well as having been the progenitor of three such warlike sons. Twice had the Annos sought to collect, the first time while Nalasu still retained his eyesight. Nalasu had discovered their trap, circled about it, and in the rear encountered and slain Anno himself, the father, thus doubling the blood-debt.

Then had come his accident. While refilling many-times used Snider cartridges, an explosion of black powder put out both his eyes. Immediately thereafter, while he sat nursing his wounds, the Annos had descended upon him — just what he had expected. And for which he had made due preparation. That night two uncles and another brother stepped on poisoned thorns and died horribly. Thus the sum of lives owing the Annos had increased to five, with only a blind man from whom to collect.

Thenceforth the Annos had feared the thorns too greatly to dare again, although ever their vindictiveness smouldered and they lived in hope of the day when Nalasu's head should adorn their ridgepole. In the meantime the state of affairs was not that of a truce but of a stalemate. The old man could not proceed against them, and they were afraid to proceed against him. Nor did the day come until after Jerry's adoption, when one of the Annos made an invention the like of which had never been known in all Malaita.

CHAPTER XVIII

Meanwhile the months slipped by, the south-east trade blew itself out, the monsoon had begun to breathe, and Jerry added to himself six months of time, weight, stature, and thickness of bone. An easy time his half-year with the blind man had been, despite the fact that Nalasu was a rigid disciplinarian who insisted on training Jerry for longer hours, day in and day out, than falls to the lot of most dogs. Never did Jerry receive from him a blow, never a harsh word. This man, who had slain four of the Annos, three of them after he had gone blind, who had slain still more men in his savage youth, never raised his voice in anger to Jerry and ruled him by nothing severer than the gentlest of chidings.

Mentally, the persistent education Jerry received, in this period of late puppyhood, fixed in him increased brain power for all his life. Possibly no dog in all the world had ever been so vocal as he, and for three reasons: his own intelligence, the genius for teaching that was Nalasu's, and the long hours devoted to the teaching.

His shorthand vocabulary, for a dog, was prodigious. Almost might it be said that he and the man could talk by the hour, although few and simple were the abstractions they could talk; very little of the immediate concrete past, and scarcely anything of the immediate concrete future, entered into their conversations. Jerry could no more tell him of Meringe, nor of the *Arangi*, than could he tell him of the great love he had borne Skipper, or of his reason for hating Bashti. By the same token, Nalasu could not tell Jerry of the blood-feud with the Annos, nor of how he had lost his eyesight.

Practically all their conversation was confined to the instant present, although they could compass a little of the very immediate past. Nalasu would give Jerry a series of instructions, such as, going on a scout by himself, to go to the nest, then circle about it widely, to continue to the other clearing where were the fruit trees, to cross the jungle to the main path, to proceed down the main path toward the village till he came to the great banyan tree, and then to return along the small path to Nalasu and Nalasu's house. All of which Jerry would carry out to the letter, and, arrived back, would make report. As, thus: at the nest nothing unusual save that a buzzard was near it; in the other clearing three coconuts had fallen to the ground — for Jerry could count unerringly up to five; between the other clearing and the main path were four pigs; along the main path he had passed a dog, more than five women, and two children; and on the small path home he had noted a cockatoo and two boys.

But he could not tell Nalasu his states of mind and heart that prevented him from being fully contented in his present situation. For Nalasu was not a white-god, but only a mere nigger god. And Jerry hated and despised all niggers save for the two exceptions of Lamai and Nalasu. He tolerated them, and, for Nalasu, had even developed a placid and sweet affection. Love him he did not and could not.

At the best, they were only second-rate gods, and he could not forget the great white-gods such as Skipper and Mister Haggin, and, of the same breed, Derby and Bob. They were something else, something other, something better than all this black savagery in which he lived. They were above and beyond, in an unattainable paradise which he vividly remembered, for which he yearned, but to which he did not know the way, and which, dimly sensing the ending that comes to all things, might have passed into the ultimate nothingness which had already overtaken Skipper and the *Arangi*.

In vain did the old man play to gain Jerry's heart of love. He could not bid against Jerry's many reservations and memories, although he did win absolute faithfulness and loyalty. Not passionately, as he would have fought to the death for Skipper, but devotedly would he have fought to the death for Nalasu. And the old man never dreamed but what he had won all of Jerry's heart.

* * * * *

Came the day of the Annos, when one of them made the invention, which was thick-plaited sandals to armour the soles of their feet against the poisoned thorns with which Nalasu had taken three of their lives. The day, in truth, was the night, a black night, a night so black under a cloud-palled sky that a tree-trunk could not be seen an eighth of an inch beyond one's nose. And the Annos descended on Nalasu's clearing, a dozen of them, armed with Sniders, horse pistols, tomahawks and war clubs, walking gingerly, despite their thick sandals, because of fear of the thorns which Nalasu no longer planted.

Jerry, sitting between Nalasu's knees and nodding sleepily, gave the first warning to Nalasu, who sat outside his door, wide-eyed, ear-strung, as he had sat through all the nights of the many years. He listened still more tensely through long minutes in which he heard nothing, at the same time whispering to Jerry for information and commanding him to be soft-spoken; and Jerry, with whuffs and whiffs and all the short-hand breath-exhalations of speech he had been taught, told him that men approached, many men, more men than five.

Nalasu reached the bow beside him, strung an arrow, and waited. At last his own ears caught the slightest of rustlings, now here, now there, advancing upon him in the circle of the compass. Still speaking for softness, he demanded verification from Jerry, whose neck hair rose bristling under Nalasu's sensitive fingers, and who, by this time, was reading the night air with his nose as well as his ears. And Jerry, as softly as Nalasu, informed him again that it was men, many men, more men than five.

With the patience of age Nalasu sat on without movement, until, close at hand, on the very edge of the jungle, sixty feet away, he located a particular noise of a particular man. He stretched his bow, loosed the arrow, and was rewarded by a gasp and a groan strangely commingled. First he restrained Jerry from retrieving the arrow, which he knew had gone home; and next he fitted a fresh arrow to the bow string.

Fifteen minutes of silence passed, the blind man as if carven of stone, the dog, trembling with eagerness under the articulate touch of his fingers, obeying the bidding to make no sound. For Jerry, as well as Nalasu, knew that death rustled and lurked in the encircling dark. Again came a softness of movement, nearer than before; but the sped arrow missed. They heard its impact against a tree trunk beyond and a confusion of small sounds caused by the target's hasty retreat. Next, after a time of silence, Nalasu told Jerry silently to retrieve the arrow. He had been well trained and long trained, for with no sound even to Nalasu's ears keener than seeing men's ears, he followed the direction of the arrow's impact against the tree and brought the arrow back in his mouth.

Again Nalasu waited, until the rustlings of a fresh drawing-in of the circle could be heard, whereupon Nalasu, Jerry accompanying him, picked up all his arrows and moved soundlessly half-way around the circle. Even as they moved, a Snider exploded that was aimed in the general direction of the spot just vacated.

And the blind man and the dog, from midnight to dawn, successfully fought off twelve men equipped with the thunder of gunpowder and the wide-spreading, deep-penetrating, mushroom bullets of soft lead. And the blind man defended himself only with a bow and a hundred arrows. He discharged many hundreds of arrows which Jerry retrieved for him and which he discharged over and over. But Jerry aided valiantly and well, adding to Nalasu's acute hearing his own acuter hearing, circling noiselessly about the house and reporting where the attack pressed closest.

Much of their precious powder the Annos wasted, for the affair was like a game of invisible ghosts. Never was anything seen save the flashes of the rifles. Never did they see Jerry, although they became quickly aware of his movements close to them as he searched out the arrows. Once, as one of them felt for an arrow which had narrowly missed him, he encountered Jerry's back with his hand and acknowledged the sharp slash of Jerry's teeth with a wild yell of terror. They tried firing at the twang of Nalasu's bowstring, but every time Nalasu fired he instantly changed position. Several times, warned of Jerry's nearness, they fired at him, and, once even, was his nose slightly powder burned.

When day broke, in the quick tropic grey that marks the leap from dark to sun, the Annos retreated, while Nalasu, withdrawn from the light into his house, still possessed eighty arrows, thanks to Jerry. The net result to Nalasu was one dead man and no telling how many arrow-pricked wounded men who dragged themselves away.

And half the day Nalasu crouched over Jerry, fondling and caressing him for what he had done. Then he went abroad, Jerry with him, and told of the battle. Bashti paid him a visit ere the day was done, and talked with him earnestly.

"As an old man to an old man, I talk," was Bashti's beginning. "I am older than you, O Nalasu; I have ever been unafraid. Yet never have I been braver than you. I would that every man of the tribe were as brave as you. Yet do you give me great sorrow. Of what worth are your courage and cunning, when you have no seed to make your courage and cunning live again?"

"I am an old man," Nalasu began.

"Not so old as I am," Bashti interrupted. "Not too old to marry so that your seed will add strength to the tribe."

"I was married, and long married, and I fathered three brave sons. But they are dead. I shall not live so long as you. I think of my young days as pleasant dreams remembered after sleep. More I think of death, and the end. Of marriage I think not at all. I am too old to marry. I am old enough to make ready to die, and a great curiousness have I about what will happen to me when I am dead. Will I be for ever dead? Will I live again in a land of dreams — a shadow of a dream myself that will still remember the days when I lived in the warm world, the quick juices of hunger in my mouth, in the chest of the body of me the love of woman?"

Bashti shrugged his shoulders.

"I too, have thought much on the matter," he said. "Yet do I arrive nowhere. I do not know. You do not know. We will not know until we are dead, if it happens that we know anything when what we are we no longer are. But this we know, you and I: the tribe lives. The tribe never dies. Wherefore, if there be meaning at all to our living, we must make the tribe strong. Your work in the tribe is not done. You must marry so that your cunning and your courage live after you. I have a wife for you — nay, two wives, for your days are short and I shall surely live to see you hang with my fathers from the canoe-house ridgepole."

"I will not pay for a wife," Nalasu protested. "I will not pay for any wife. I would not pay a stick of tobacco or a cracked coconut for the best woman in Somo."

"Worry not," Bashti went on placidly. "I shall pay you for the price of the wife, of the two wives. There is Bubu. For half a case of tobacco shall I buy her for you. She is broad and square, round-legged, broad-hipped, with generous breasts of richness. There is Nena. Her father sets a stiff price upon her — a whole case of tobacco. I will buy her for you as well. Your time is short. We must hurry."

"I will not marry," the old blind man proclaimed hysterically.

"You will. I have spoken."

"No, I say, and say again, no, no, no, no. Wives are nuisances. They are young things, and their heads are filled with foolishness. Their tongues are loose with idleness of speech. I am old, I am quiet in my ways, the fires of life have departed from me, I prefer to sit alone in the dark and think. Chattering young things about me, with nothing but foam and spume in their heads, on their tongues, would drive me mad. Of a surety they would drive me mad — so mad that I will spit into every clam shell, make faces at the moon, and bite my veins and howl."

"And if you do, what of it? So long as your seed does not perish. I shall pay for the wives to their fathers and send them to you in three days."

"I will have nothing to do with them," Nalasu asserted wildly.

"You will," Bashti insisted calmly. "Because if you do not you will have to pay me. It will be a sore, hard debt. I will have every joint of you unhinged so that you will be like a jelly-fish, like a fat pig with the bones removed, and I will then stake you out in the midmost centre of the dog-killing ground to swell in pain under the sun. And what is left of you I shall fling to the dogs to eat. Your seed shall not perish out of Somo. I, Bashti, so tell you. In three days I shall send to you your two wives. . . . "

He paused, and a long silence fell upon them.

"Well?" Bashti reiterated. "It is wives or staking out unhinged in the sun. You choose, but think well before you choose the unhinging."

"At my age, with all the vexations of youngness so far behind me!" Nalasu complained.

"Choose. You will find there is vexation, and liveliness and much of it, in the centre of the dog-killing yard when the sun cooks your sore joints till the grease of the leanness of you bubbles like the tender fat of a cooked sucking-pig."

"Then send me the wives," Nalasu managed to utter after a long pause. "But send them in three days, not in two, nor to-morrow."

"It is well," Bashti nodded gravely. "You have lived at all only because of those before you, now long in the dark, who worked so that the tribe might live and you might come to be. You are. They paid the price for you. It is your debt. You came into being with this debt upon you. You will pay the debt before you pass out of being. It is the law. It is very well."

CHAPTER XIX

And had Bashti hastened delivery of the wives by one day, or by even two days, Nalasu would have entered the feared, purgatory of matrimony. But Bashti kept his word, and on the third day was too busy, with a more momentous problem, to deliver Bubu and Nena to the blind old man who apprehensively waited their coming. For the morning of the third day all the summits of leeward Malaita smoked into speech. A warship was on the coast — so the tale ran; a big warship that was heading in through the reef islands at Langa-Langa. The tale grew. The warship was not stopping at Langa-Langa. The warship was not stopping at Binu. It was directing its course toward Somo.

Nalasu, blind, could not see this smoke speech written in the air. Because of the isolation of his house, no one came and told him. His first warning was when shrill voices of women, cries of children, and wailings of babes in nameless fear came to him from the main path that led from the village to the upland boundaries of Somo. He read only fear and panic from the sounds, deduced that the village was fleeing to its mountain fastnesses, but did not know the cause of the flight.

He called Jerry to him and instructed him to scout to the great banyan tree, where Nalasu’s path and the main path joined, and to observe and report. And Jerry sat under the banyan tree and observed the flight of all Somo. Men, women, and children, the young and the aged, babes at breast and patriarchs leaning on sticks and staffs passed before his eyes, betraying the greatest haste and alarm. The village dogs were as frightened, whimpering and whining as they ran. And the contagion of terror was strong upon Jerry. He knew the prod of impulse to join in this rush away from some unthinkably catastrophic event that impended and that stirred his intuitive apprehensions of death. But he mastered the impulse with his sense of loyalty to the blind man who had fed him and caressed him for a long six months.

Back with Nalasu, sitting between his knees, he made his report. It was impossible for him to count more than five, although he knew the fleeing population numbered many times more than five. So he signified five men, and more; five women, and more five children, and more; five babies, and more; five dogs, and more — even of pigs did he announce five and more.

Nalasu's ears told him that it was many, many times more, and he asked for names. Jerry know the names of Bashti, of Agno, and of Lamai, and Lumai. He did not pronounce them with the slightest of resemblance to their customary soundings, but pronounced them in the whiff-whuff of shorthand speech that Nalasu had taught him.

Nalasu named over many other names that Jerry knew by ear but could not himself evoke in sound, and he answered yes to most of them by simultaneously nodding his head and advancing his right paw. To some names he remained without movement in token that he did not know them. And to other names, which he recognized, but the owners of which he had not seen, he answered no by advancing his left paw.

And Nalasu, beyond knowing that something terrible was impending — something horribly more terrible than any foray of neighbouring salt-water tribes, which Somo, behind her walls, could easily fend off, divined that it was the long-expected punitive man-of-war. Despite his three-score years, he had never experienced a village shelling. He had heard vague talk of what had happened in the matter of shell-fire in other villages, but he had no conception of it save that it must be, bullets on a larger scale than Snider bullets that could be fired correspondingly longer distances through the air.

But it was given to him to know shell-fire before he died. Bashti, who had long waited the cruiser that was to avenge the destruction of the *Arangi* and the taking of the heads of the two white men, and who had long calculated the damage to be wrought, had given the command to his people to flee to the mountains. First in the vanguard, borne by a dozen young men, went his mat-wrapped parcels of heads. The last slow trailers in the rear of the exodus were just passing, and Nalasu, his bow and his eighty arrows clutched to him, Jerry at his heels, made his first step to follow, when the air above him was rent by a prodigiousness of sound.

Nalasu sat down abruptly. It was his first shell, and it was a thousand times more terrible than he had imagined. It was a rip-snorting, sky-splitting sound as of a cosmic fabric being torn asunder between the hands of some powerful god. For all the world it was like the roughest tearing across of sheets that were thick as blankets, that were broad as the earth and wide as the sky.

Not only did he sit down just outside his door, but he crouched his head to his knees and shielded it with the arch of his arms. And Jerry, who had never heard shell-fire, much less imagined what it was like, was impressed with the awfulness of it. It was to him a natural catastrophe such as had happened to the *Arangi* when she was flung down reeling on her side by the shouting wind. But, true to his nature, he did not crouch down under the shriek of that first shell. On the contrary, he bristled his hair and snarled up with menacing teeth at whatever the thing was which was so enormously present and yet invisible to his eyes.

Nalasu crouched closer when the shell burst beyond, and Jerry snarled and rippled his hair afresh. Each repeated his actions with each fresh shell, for, while they screamed no more loudly, they burst in the jungle more closely. And Nalasu, who had lived a long life most bravely in the midst of perils he had known, was destined to die a coward out of his fear of the thing unknown, the chemically propelled missile of the white masters. As the dropping shells burst nearer and nearer, what final self-control he possessed left him. Such was his utter panic that he might well have bitten his veins and howled. With a lunatic scream, he sprang to his feet and rushed inside the house as if forsooth its grass thatch could protect his head from such huge projectiles. He collided with the door-jamb, and, ere Jerry could follow him, whirled around in a part circle into the centre of the floor just in time to receive the next shell squarely upon his head.

Jerry had just gained the doorway when the shell exploded. The house went into flying fragments, and Nalasu flew into fragments with it. Jerry, in the doorway, caught in the out-draught of the explosion, was flung a score of feet away. All in the same fraction of an instant, earthquake, tidal wave, volcanic eruption, the thunder of the heavens and the fire-flashing of an electric bolt from the sky smote him and smote consciousness out of him.

He had no conception of how long he lay. Five minutes passed before his legs made their first spasmodic movements, and, as he stumbled to his feet and rocked giddily, he had no thought of the passage of time. He had no thought about time at all. As a matter of course, his own idea, on which he proceeded to act without being aware of it, was that, a part of a second before, he had been struck a terrific blow magnified incalculable times beyond the blow of a stick at a nigger’s hands.

His throat and lungs filled with the pungent stifling smoke of powder, his nostrils with earth and dust, he frantically wheezed and sneezed, leaping about, falling drunkenly, leaping into the air again, staggering on his hind-legs, dabbing with his forepaws at his nose head-downward between his forelegs, and even rubbing his nose into the ground. He had no thought for anything save to remove the biting pain from his nose and mouth, the suffocation from his lungs.

By a miracle he had escaped being struck by the flying splinters of iron, and, thanks to his strong heart, had escaped being killed by the shock of the explosion. Not until the end of five minutes of mad struggling, in which he behaved for all the world like a beheaded chicken, did he find life tolerable again. The maximum of stifling and of agony passed, and, although he was still weak and giddy, he tottered in the direction of the house and of Nalasu. And there was no house and no Nalasu — only a debris intermingled of both.

While the shells continued to shriek and explode, now near, now far, Jerry investigated the happening. As surely as the house was gone, just as surely was Nalasu gone. Upon both had descended the ultimate nothingness. All the immediate world seemed doomed to nothingness. Life promised only somewhere else, in the high hills and remote bush whither the tribe had already fled. Loyal he was to his salt, to the master whom he had obeyed so long, nigger that he was, who so long had fed him, and for whom he had entertained a true affection. But this master no longer was.

Retreat Jerry did, but he was not hasty in retreat. For a time he snarled at every shell-scream in the air and every shell-burst in the bush. But after a time, while the awareness of them continued uncomfortably with him, the hair on his neck remained laid down and he neither uttered a snarl nor bared his teeth.

And when he parted from what had been and which had ceased to be, not like the bush dogs did he whimper and run. Instead, he trotted along the path at a regular and dignified pace. When he emerged upon the main path, he found it deserted. The last refugee had passed. The path, always travelled from daylight to dark, and which he had so recently seen glutted with humans, now in its emptiness affected him profoundly with the impression of the endingness of all things in a perishing world. So it was that he did not sit down under the banyan tree, but trotted along at the far rear of the tribe.

With his nose he read the narrative of the flight. Only once did he encounter what advertised its terror. It was an entire group annihilated by a shell. There were: an old man of fifty, with a crutch because of the leg which had been slashed off by a shark when he was a young boy; a dead Mary with a dead babe at her breast and a dead child of three clutching her hand; and two dead pigs, huge and fat, which the woman had been herding to safety.

And Jerry's nose told him of how the stream of the fugitives had split and flooded past on each side and flowed together again beyond. Incidents of the flight he did encounter: a part-chewed joint of sugar-cane some child had dropped; a clay pipe, the stem short from successive breakages; a single feather from some young man's hair, and a calabash, full of cooked yams and sweet potatoes, deposited carefully beside the trail by some Mary for whom its weight had proved too great.

The shell-fire ceased as Jerry trotted along; next he heard the rifle-fire from the landing-party, as it shot down the domestic pigs on Somo's streets. He did not hear, however, the chopping down of the coconut trees, any more than did he ever return to behold what damage the axes had wrought.

For right here occurred with Jerry a wonderful thing that thinkers of the world have not explained. He manifested in his dog's brain the free agency of life, by which all the generations of metaphysicians have postulated God, and by which all the deterministic philosophers have been led by the nose despite their clear denouncement of it as sheer illusion. What Jerry did he did. He did not know how or why he did it any more than does the philosopher know how or why he decides on mush and cream for breakfast instead of two soft-boiled eggs.

What Jerry did was to yield in action to a brain impulse to do, not what seemed the easier and more usual thing, but to do what seemed the harder and more unusual thing. Since it is easier to endure the known than to fly to the unknown; since both misery and fear love company; the apparent easiest thing for Jerry to have done would have been to follow the tribe of Somo into its fastnesses. Yet what Jerry did was to diverge from the line of retreat and to start northward, across the bounds of Somo, and continue northward into a strange land of the unknown.

Had Nalasu not been struck down by the ultimate nothingness, Jerry would have remained. This is true, and this, perhaps, to the one who considers his action, might have been the way he reasoned. But he did not reason it, did not reason at all; he acted on impulse. He could count five objects, and pronounce them by name and number, but he was incapable of reasoning that he would remain in Somo if Nalasu lived, depart from Somo if Nalasu died. He merely departed from Somo because Nalasu was dead, and the terrible shell-fire passed quickly into the past of his consciousness, while the present became vivid after the way of the present. Almost on his toes did he tread the wild bushmen's trails, tense with apprehension of the lurking death he know infested such paths, his ears cocked alertly for jungle sounds, his eyes following his ears to discern what made the sounds.

No more doughty nor daring was Columbus, venturing all that he was to the unknown, than was Jerry in venturing this jungle-darkness of black Malaita. And this wonderful thing, this seeming great deed of free will, he performed in much the same way that the itching of feet and tickle of fancy have led the feet of men over all the earth.

Though Jerry never laid eyes on Somo again, Bashti returned with his tribe the same day, grinning and chuckling as he appraised the damage. Only a few grass houses had been damaged by the shells. Only a few coconuts had been chopped down. And as for the slain pigs, lest they spoil, he made of their carcasses a great feast. One shell had knocked a hole through his sea-wall. He enlarged it for a launching-ways, faced the sides of it with dry-fitted coral rock, and gave orders for the building of an additional canoe-house. The only vexation he suffered was the death of Nalasu and the disappearance of Jerry — his two experiments in primitive eugenics.

CHAPTER XX

A week Jerry spent in the bush, deterred always from penetrating to the mountains by the bushmen who ever guarded the runways. And it would have gone hard with him in the matter of food, had he not, on the second day, encountered a lone small pig, evidently lost from its litter. It was his first hunting adventure for a living, and it prevented him from travelling farther, for, true to his instinct, he remained by his kill until it was nearly devoured.

True, he ranged widely about the neighbourhood, finding no other food he could capture. But always, until it was gone, he returned to the slain pig. Yet he was not happy in his freedom. He was too domesticated, too civilized. Too many thousands of years had elapsed since his ancestors had run freely wild. He was lonely. He could not get along without man. Too long had he, and the generations before him, lived in intimate relationship with the two-legged gods. Too long had his kind loved man, served him for love, endured for love, died for love, and, in return, been partly appreciated, less understood, and roughly loved.

So great was Jerry's loneliness that even a two-legged black-god was desirable, since white-gods had long since faded into the limbo of the past. For all he might have known, had he been capable of conjecturing, the only white-gods in existence had perished. Acting on the assumption that a black-god was better than no god, when he had quite finished the little pig, he deflected his course to the left, down-hill, toward the sea. He did this, again without reasoning, merely because, in the subtle processes of his brain, experience worked. His experience had been to live always close by the sea; humans he had always encountered close by the sea; and down-hill had invariably led to the sea.

He came out upon the shore of the reef-sheltered lagoon where ruined grass houses told him men had lived. The jungle ran riot through the place. Six-inch trees, throated with rotten remnants of thatched roofs through which they had aspired toward the sun, rose about him. Quick-growing trees had shadowed the kingposts so that the idols and totems, seated in carved shark jaws, grinned greenly and monstrously at the futility of man through a rime of moss and mottled fungus. A poor little sea-wall, never much at its best, sprawled in ruin from the coconut roots to the placid sea.

Bananas, plantains, and breadfruit lay rotting on the ground. Bones lay about, human bones, and Jerry nosed them out, knowing them for what they were, emblems of the nothingness of life. Skulls he did not encounter, for the skulls that belonged to the scattered bones ornamented the devil devil houses in the upland bush villages.

The salt tang of the sea gladdened his nostrils, and he snorted with the pleasure of the stench of the mangrove swamp. But, another Crusoe chancing upon the footprint of another man Friday, his nose, not his eyes, shocked him electrically alert as he smelled the fresh contact of a living man's foot with the ground. It was a nigger's foot, but it was alive, it was immediate; and, as he traced it a score of yards, he came upon another foot-scent, indubitably a white man's.

Had there been an onlooker, he would have thought Jerry had gone suddenly mad. He rushed frantically about, turning and twisting his course, now his nose to the ground, now up in the air, whining as frantically as he rushed, leaping abruptly at right angles as new scents reached him, scurrying here and there and everywhere as if in a game of tag with some invisible playfellow.

But he was reading the full report which many men had written on the ground. A white man had been there, he learned, and a number of blacks. Here a black had climbed a coconut tree and cast down the nuts. There a banana tree had been despoiled of its clustered fruit; and, beyond, it was evident that a similar event had happened to a breadfruit tree. One thing, however, puzzled him — a scent new to him that was neither black man's nor white man's. Had he had the necessary knowledge and the wit of eye-observance, he would have noted that the footprint was smaller than a man's and that the toeprints were different from a Mary's in that they were close together and did not press deeply into the earth. What bothered him in his smelling was his ignorance of talcum powder. Pungent it was in his nostrils, but never, since first he had smelled out the footprints of man, had he encountered such a scent. And with this were combined other and fainter scents that were equally strange to him.

Not long did he interest himself in such mystery. A white man's footprints he had smelled, and through the maze of all the other prints he followed the one print down through a breach of sea-wall to the sea-pounded coral sand lapped by the sea. Here the latest freshness of many feet drew together where the nose of a boat had rested on the beach and where men had disembarked and embarked again. He smelled up all the story, and, his forelegs in the water till it touched his shoulders, he gazed out across the lagoon where the disappearing trail was lost to his nose.

Had he been half an hour sooner he would have seen a boat, without oars, gasoline-propelled, shooting across the quiet water. What he did see was an *Arangi*. True, it was far larger than the *Arangi* he had known, but it was white, it was long, it had masts, and it floated on the surface of the sea. It had three masts, sky-lofty and all of a size; but his observation was not trained to note the difference between them and the one long and the one short mast of the *Arangi*. The one floating world he had known was the white-painted *Arangi*. And, since, without a quiver of doubt, this was the *Arangi*, then, on board, would be his beloved Skipper. If *Arangis* could resurrect, then could Skippers resurrect, and in utter faith that the head of nothingness he had last seen on Bashti's knees he would find again rejoined to its body and its two legs on the deck of the white-painted floating world, he waded out to his depth, and, swimming dared the sea.

He greatly dared, for in venturing the water he broke one of the greatest and earliest taboos he had learned. In his vocabulary was no word for "crocodile"; yet in his thought, as potent as any utterable word, was an image of dreadful import — an image of a log awash that was not a log and that was alive, that could swim upon the surface, under the surface, and haul out across the dry land, that was huge-toothed, mighty-mawed, and certain death to a swimming dog.

But he continued the breaking of the taboo without fear. Unlike a man who can be simultaneously conscious of two states of mind, and who, swimming, would have known both the fear and the high courage with which he overrode the fear, Jerry, as he swam, knew only one state of mind, which was that he was swimming to the *Arangi* and to Skipper. At the moment preceding the first stroke of his paws in the water out of his depth, he had known all the terribleness of the taboo he deliberately broke. But, launched out, the decision made, the line of least resistance taken, he knew, single-thoughted, single-hearted, only that he was going to Skipper.

Little practised as he was in swimming, he swam with all his strength, whimpering in a sort of chant his eager love for Skipper who indubitably must be aboard the white yacht half a mile away. His little song of love, fraught with keenness of anxiety, came to the ears of a man and woman lounging in deck-chairs under the awning; and it was the quick-eyed woman who first saw the golden head of Jerry and cried out what she saw.

"Lower a boat, Husband-Man," she commanded. "It's a little dog. He mustn't drown."

"Dogs don't drown that easily," was "Husband-Man's" reply. "He'll make it all right. But what under the sun a dog's doing out here . . . " He lifted his marine glasses to his eyes and stared a moment. "And a white man's dog at that!"

Jerry beat the water with his paws and moved steadily along, straining his eyes at the growing yacht until suddenly warned by a sensing of immediate danger. The taboo smote him. This that moved toward him was the log awash that was not a log but a live thing of peril. Part of it he saw above the surface moving sluggishly, and ere that projecting part sank, he had an awareness that somehow it was different from a log awash.

Next, something brushed past him, and he encountered it with a snarl and a splashing of his forepaws. He was half-whirled about in the vortex of the thing's passage caused by the alarmed flirt of its tail. Shark it was, and not crocodile, and not so timidly would it have sheered clear but for the fact that it was fairly full with a recent feed of a huge sea turtle too feeble with age to escape.

Although he could not see it, Jerry sensed that the thing, the instrument of nothingness, lurked about him. Nor did he see the dorsal fin break surface and approach him from the rear. From the yacht he heard rifle-shots in quick succession. From the rear a panic splash came to his ears. That was all. The peril passed and was forgotten. Nor did he connect the rifle-shots with the passing of the peril. He did not know, and he was never to know, that one, known to men as Harley Kennan, but known as "Husband-Man" by the woman he called "Wife-Woman," who owned the three-topmast schooner yacht *Ariel*, had saved his life by sending a thirty-thirty Marlin bullet through the base of a shark's fin.

But Jerry was to know Harley Kennan, and quickly, for it was Harley Kennan, a bowline around his body under his arm-pits, lowered by a couple of seamen down the generous freeboard of the *Ariel*, who gathered in by the nape of the neck the smooth-coated Irish terrier that, treading water perpendicularly, had no eyes for him so eagerly did he gaze at the line of faces along the rail in quest of the one face.

No pause for thanks did he make when he was dropped down upon the deck. Instead, shaking himself instinctively as he ran, he scurried along the deck for Skipper. The man and his wife laughed at the spectacle.

“He acts as if he were demented with delight at being rescued,” Mrs. Kennan observed.

And Mr. Kennan: “It’s not that. He must have a screw loose somewhere. Perhaps he’s one of those creatures who’ve slipped the ratchet off the motion cog. Maybe he can’t stop running till he runs down.”

In the meantime Jerry continued to run, up port side and down starboard side, from stern to bow and back again, wagging his stump tail and laughing friendliness to the many two-legged gods he encountered. Had he been able to think to such abstraction he would have been astounded at the number of white-gods. Thirty there were at least of them, not counting other gods that were neither black nor white, but that still, two-legged, upright and garmented, were beyond all peradventure gods. Likewise, had he been capable of such generalization, he would have decided that the white-gods had not yet all of them passed into the nothingness. As it was, he realized all this without being aware that he realized it.

But there was no Skipper. He sniffed down the forecastle hatch, sniffed into the galley where two Chinese cooks jabbered unintelligibly to him, sniffed down the cabin companionway, sniffed down the engine-room skylight and for the first time knew gasoline and engine oil; but sniff as he would, wherever he ran, no scent did he catch of Skipper.

Aft, at the wheel, he would have sat down and howled his heartbreak of disappointment, had not a white-god, evidently of command, in gold-decorated white duck cap and uniform, spoken to him. Instantly, always a gentleman, Jerry smiled with flattened ears of courtesy, wagged his tail, and approached. The hand of this high god had almost caressed his head when the woman’s voice came down the deck in speech that Jerry did not understand. The words and terms of it were beyond him. But he sensed power of command in it, which was verified by the quick withdrawal of the hand of the god in white and gold who had almost caressed him. This god, stiffened electrically and pointed Jerry along the deck, and, with mouth encouragements and urgings the import of which Jerry could only guess, directed him toward the one who so commanded by saying:

“Send him, please, along to me, Captain Winters.”

Jerry wriggled his body in delight of obeying, and would loyally have presented his head to her outreaching caress of hand, had not the strangeness and difference of her deterred him. He broke off in mid-approach and with a show of teeth snarled himself back and away from the windblown skirt of her. The only human females he had known were naked Marys. This skirt, flapping in the wind like a sail, reminded him of the menacing mainsail of the *Arangi* when it had jarred and crashed and swooped above his head. The noises her mouth made were gentle and ingratiating, but the fearsome skirt still flapped in the breeze.

"You ridiculous dog!" she laughed. "I'm not going to bite you."

But her husband thrust out a rough, sure hand and drew Jerry in to him. And Jerry wriggled in ecstasy under the god's caress, kissing the hand with a red flicker of tongue. Next, Harley Kennan directed him toward the woman sitting up in the deck-chair and bending forward, with hovering hands of greeting. Jerry obeyed. He advanced with flattened ears and laughing mouth: but, just ere she could touch him, the wind fluttered the skirt again and he backed away with a snarl.

"It's not you that he's afraid of, Villa," he said. "But of your skirt. Perhaps he's never seen a skirt before."

"You mean," Villa Kennan challenged, "that these head-hunting cannibals ashore here keep records of pedigrees and maintain kennels; for surely this absurd adventurer of a dog is as proper an Irish terrier as the *Ariel* is an Oregon-pine-planked schooner."

Harley Kennan laughed in acknowledgment. Villa Kennan laughed too; and Jerry knew that these were a pair of happy gods, and himself laughed with them.

Of his own initiative, he approached the lady god again, attracted by the talcum powder and other minor fragrances he had already identified as the strange scents encountered on the beach. But the unfortunate trade wind again fluttered her skirt, and again he backed away — not so far, this time, with much less of a bristle of his neck and shoulder hair, and with no more of a snarl than a mere half-baring of his fangs.

"He's afraid of your skirt," Harley insisted. "Look at him! He wants to come to you, but the skirt keeps him away. Tuck it under you so that it won't flutter, and see what happens."

Villa Kennan carried out the suggestion, and Jerry came circumspectly, bent his head to her hand and writhed his back under it, the while he sniffed her feet, stocking-clad and shoe-covered, and knew them as the feet which had trod uncovered the ruined ways of the village ashore.

"No doubt of it," Harley agreed. "He's white-man selected, white-man bred and born. He has a history. He knows adventure from the ground-roots up. If he could tell his story, we'd sit listening entranced for days. Depend on it, he's not known blacks all his life. Let's try him on Johnny."

Johnny, whom Kennan beckoned up to him, was a loan from the Resident Commissioner of the British Solomons at Tulagi, who had come along as pilot and guide to Kennan rather than as philosopher and friend. Johnny approached grinning, and Jerry's demeanour immediately changed. His body stiffened under Villa Kennan's hand as he drew away from her and stalked stiff-legged to the black. Jerry's ears did not flatten, nor did he laugh fellowship with his mouth, as he inspected Johnny and smelt his calves for future reference. Cavalier he was to the extreme, and, after the briefest of inspection, he turned back to Villa Kennan.

"What did I say?" her husband exulted. "He knows the colour line. He's a white man's dog that has been trained to it."

"My word," spoke up Johnny. "Me know 'm that fella dog. Me know 'm papa and mamma belong along him. Big fella white marster Mister Haggin stop along Meringe, mamma and papa stop along him that fella place."

Harley Kennan uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Of course," he cried. "The Commissioner told me all about it. The *Arangi*, that the Somo people captured, sailed last from Meringe Plantation. Johnny recognizes the dog as the same breed as the pair Haggin, of Meringe, must possess. But that was a long time ago. He must have been a little puppy. Of course he's a white man's dog."

"And yet you've overlooked the crowning proof of it," Villa Kennan teased. "The dog carries the evidence around with him."

Harley looked Jerry over carefully.

"Indisputable evidence," she insisted.

After another prolonged scrutiny, Kennan shook his head.

"Blamed if I can see anything so indisputable as to leave conjecture out."

"The tail," his wife gurgled. "Surely the natives do not bob the tails of their dogs. — Do they, Johnny? Do black man stop along Malaita chop 'm off tail along dog."

“No chop ’m off,” Johnny agreed. “Mister Haggin along Meringe he chop ’m off. My word, he chop ’m that fella tail, you bet.”

“Then he’s the sole survivor of the *Arangi*,” Villa Kennan concluded. “Don’t you agree, Mr. Sherlock Holmes Kennan?”

“I salute you, Mrs. S. Holmes,” her husband acknowledged gallantly. “And all that remains is for you to lead me directly to the head of La Perouse himself. The sailing directions record that he left it somewhere in these islands.”

Little did they guess that Jerry had lived on intimate terms with one Bashti, not many miles away along the shore, who, in Somo, at that very moment, sat in his grass house pondering over a head on his withered knees that had once been the head of the great navigator, the history of which had been forgotten by the sons of the chief who had taken it.

CHAPTER XXI

The fine, three-topmast schooner *Ariel*, on a cruise around the world, had already been out a year from San Francisco when Jerry boarded her. As a world, and as a white-god world, she was to him beyond compare. She was not small like the *Arangi*, nor was she cluttered fore and aft, on deck and below, with a spawn of niggers. The only black Jerry found on her was Johnny; while her spaciousness was filled principally with two-legged white-gods.

He met them everywhere, at the wheel, on lookout, washing decks, polishing brass-work, running aloft, or tailing on to sheets and tackles half a dozen at a time. But there was a difference. There were gods and gods, and Jerry was not long in learning that in the hierarchy of the heaven of these white-gods on the *Ariel*, the sailorizing, ship-working ones were far beneath the captain and his two white-and-gold-clad officers. These, in turn, were less than Harley Kennan and Villa Kennan; for them, it came quickly to him, Harley Kennan commanded. Nevertheless, there was one thing he did not learn and was destined never to learn, namely, the supreme god over all on the *Ariel*. Although he never tried to know, being unable to think to such a distance, he never came to know whether it was Harley Kennan who commanded Villa, or Villa Kennan who commanded Harley. In a way, without vexing himself with the problem, he accepted their over-lordship of the world as dual. Neither out-ranked the other. They seemed to rule co-equal, while all others bowed before them.

It is not true that to feed a dog is to win a dog’s heart. Never did Harley or Villa feed Jerry; yet it was to them he elected to belong, them he elected to love and serve rather than to the Japanese steward who regularly fed him. For that matter, Jerry, like any dog, was able to differentiate between the mere direct food-giver and the food source. That is, subconsciously, he was aware that not alone his own food, but the food of all on board found its source in the man and woman. They it was who fed all and ruled all. Captain Winters might give orders to the sailors, but Captain Winters took orders from Harley Kennan. Jerry knew this as indubitably as he acted upon it, although all the while it never entered his head as an item of conscious knowledge.

And, as he had been accustomed, all his life, as with Mister Haggin, Skipper, and even with Bashti and the chief devil devil doctor of Somo, he attached himself to the high gods themselves, and from the gods under them received deference accordingly. As Skipper, on the *Arangi*, and Bashti in Somo, had promulgated taboos, so the man and the woman on the *Ariel* protected Jerry with taboos. From Sano, the Japanese steward, and from him alone, did Jerry receive food. Not from any sailor in whaleboat or launch could he accept, or would he be offered, a bit of biscuit or an invitation to go ashore for a run. Nor did they offer it. Nor were they permitted to become intimate, to the extent of romping and playing with him, nor even of whistling to him along the deck.

By nature a "one-man" dog, all this was very acceptable to Jerry. Differences of degree there were, of course; but no one more delicately and definitely knew those differences than did Jerry himself. Thus, it was permissible for the two officers to greet him with a "Hello," or a "Good morning," and even to touch a hand in a brief and friendly pat to his head. With Captain Winters, however, greater familiarity obtained. Captain Winters could rub his ears, shake hands with his, scratch his back, and even roughly catch him by the jowls. But Captain Winters invariably surrendered him up when the one man and the one woman appeared on deck.

When it came to liberties, delicious, wanton liberties, Jerry alone of all on board could take them with the man and woman, and, on the other hand, they were the only two to whom he permitted liberties. Any indignity that Villa Kennan chose to inflict upon him he was throbbingly glad to receive, such as doubling his ears inside out till they stuck, at the same time making him sit upright, with helpless forefeet paddling the air for equilibrium, while she blew roguishly in his face and nostrils. As bad was Harley Kennan's trick of catching him gloriously asleep on an edge of Villa's skirt and of tickling the hair between his toes and making him kick involuntarily in his sleep, until he kicked himself awake to hearing of gurgles and snickers of laughter at his expense.

In turn, at night on deck, wriggling her toes at him under a rug to simulate some strange and crawling creature of an invader, he would dare to simulate his own befoolment and quite disrupt Villa's bed with his frantic ferocious attack on the thing that he knew was only her toes. In gales of laughter, intermingled with half-genuine cries of alarm as almost his teeth caught her toes, she always concluded by gathering him into her arms and laughing the last of her laughter away into his flattened ears of joy and love. Who else, of all on board the *Ariel*, would have dared such devilishness with the lady-god's bed? This question it never entered his mind to ask himself; yet he was fully aware of how exclusively favoured he was.

Another of his deliberate tricks was one discovered by accident. Thrusting his muzzle to meet her in love, he chanced to encounter her face with his soft-hard little nose with such force as to make her recoil and cry out. When, another time, in all innocence this happened again, he became conscious of it and of its effect upon her; and thereafter, when she grew too wildly wild, too wantonly facetious in her teasing playful love of him, he would thrust his muzzle at her face and make her throw her head back to escape him. After a time, learning that if he persisted, she would settle the situation by gathering him into her arms and gurgling into his ears, he made it a point to act his part until such delectable surrender and joyful culmination were achieved.

Never, by accident, in this deliberate game, did he hurt her chin or cheek so severely as he hurt his own tender nose, but in the hurt itself he found more of delight than pain. All of fun it was, all through, and, in addition, it was love fun. Such hurt was more than fun. Such pain was heart-pleasure.

All dogs are god-worshippers. More fortunate than most dogs, Jerry won to a pair of gods that, no matter how much they commanded, loved more. Although his nose might threaten grievously to hurt the cheek of his adored god, rather than have it really hurt he would have spilled out all the love-tide of his heart that constituted the life of him. He did not live for food, for shelter, for a comfortable place between the darknesses that rounded existence. He lived for love. And as surely as he gladly lived for love, would he have died gladly for love.

Not quickly, in Somo, had Jerry's memory of Skipper and Mister Haggin faded. Life in the cannibal village had been too unsatisfying. There had been too little love. Only love can erase the memory of love, or rather, the hurt of lost love. And on board the *Ariel* such erasement occurred quickly. Jerry did not forget Skipper and Mister Haggin. But at the moments he remembered them the yearning that accompanied the memory grew less pronounced and painful. The intervals between the moments widened, nor did Skipper and Mister Haggin take form and reality so frequently in his dreams; for, after the manner of dogs, he dreamed much and vividly.

CHAPTER XXII

Northward, along the leeward coast of Malaita, the *Ariel* worked her leisurely way, threading the colour-riotous lagoon that lay between the shore-reefs and outer-reefs, daring passages so narrow and coral-patched that Captain Winters averred each day added a thousand grey hairs to his head, and dropping anchor off every walled inlet of the outer reef and every mangrove swamp of the mainland that looked promising of cannibal life. For Harley and Villa Kennan were in no hurry. So long as the way was interesting, they dared not how long it proved from anywhere to anywhere.

During this time Jerry learned a new name for himself — or, rather, an entire series of names for himself. This was because of an aversion on Harley Kennan's part against renaming a named thing.

"A name he must have had," he argued to Villa. "Haggin must have named him before he sailed on the *Arangi*. Therefore, nameless he must be until we get back to Tulagi and find out his real name."

"What's in a name?" Villa had begun to tease.

"Everything," her husband retorted. "Think of yourself, shipwrecked, called by your rescuers 'Mrs. Riggs,' or 'Mademoiselle de Maupin,' or just plain 'Topsy.' And think of me being called 'Benedict Arnold,' or ' Judas,' or . . . or . . . 'Haman.' No, keep him nameless, until we find out his original name."

"Must call him something," she objected. "Can't think of him without thinking something."

"Then call him many names, but never the same name twice. Call him 'Dog' to-day, and 'Mister Dog' to-morrow, and the next day something else."

So it was, more by tone and emphasis and context of situation than by anything else, that Jerry came hazily to identify himself with names such as: Dog, Mister Dog, Adventurer, Strong Useful One, Sing Song Silly, Noname, and Quivering Love-Heart. These were a few of the many names lavished on him by Villa. Harley, in turn, addressed him as: Man-Dog, Incorruptible One, Brass Tacks, Then Some, Sin of Gold, South Sea Satrap, Nimrod, Young Nick, and Lion-Slayer. In brief, the man and woman competed with each other to name him most without naming him ever the same. And Jerry, less by sound and syllable than by what of their hearts vibrated in their throats, soon learned to know himself by any name they chose to address to him. He no longer thought of himself as Jerry, but, instead, as any sound that sounded nice or was love-sounded.

His great disappointment (if "disappointment" may be considered to describe an unconsciousness of failure to realize the expected) was in the matter of language. No one on board, not even Harley and Villa, talked Nalasu's talk. All Jerry's large vocabulary, all his proficiency in the use of it, which would have set him apart as a marvel beyond all other dogs in the mastery of speech, was wasted on those of the *Ariel*. They did not speak, much less guess, the existence of the whiff-whuff shorthand language which Nalasu had taught him, and which, Nalasu dead, Jerry alone knew of all living creatures in the world.

In vain Jerry tried it on the lady-god. Sitting squatted on his haunches, his head bowed forward and held between her hands, he would talk and talk and elicit never a responsive word from her. With tiny whines and thin whimperings, with whiffs and whuffs and growly sorts of noises down in his throat, he would try to tell her somewhat of his tale. She was all meltingness of sympathy; she would hold her ear so near to the articulate mouth of him as almost to drown him in the flowing fragrance of her hair; and yet her brain told her nothing of what he uttered, although her heart surely sensed his intent.

"Bless me, Husband-Man!" she would cry out. "The Dog is talking. I know he is talking. He is telling me all about himself. The story of his life is mine, could I but understand. It's right here pouring into my miserable inadequate ears, only I can't catch it."

Harley was sceptical, but her woman's intuition guessed aright.

"I know it!" she would assure her husband. "I tell you he could tell the tale of all his adventures if only we had understanding. No other dog has ever talked this way to me. There's a tale there. I feel its touches. Sometimes almost do I know he is telling of joy, of love, of high elation, and combat. Again, it is indignation, hurt of outrage, despair and sadness."

"Naturally," Harley agreed quietly. "A white man's dog, adrift among the anthropophagi of Malaita, would experience all such sensations and, just as naturally, a white man's woman, a Wife-Woman, a dear, delightful Villa Kennan woman, can of herself imagine such a dog's experiences and deem his silly noises a recital of them, failing to recognize them as projections of her own delicious, sensitive, sympathetic self. The song of the sea from the lips of the shell — Pshaw! The song oneself makes of the sea and puts into the shell."

"Just the same — "

"Always the same," he gallantly cut her off. "Always right, especially when most wrong. Not in navigation, of course, nor in affairs such as the multiplication table, where the brass tacks of reality stud the way of one's ship among the rocks and shoals of the sea; but right, truth beyond truth to truth higher than truth, namely, intuitional truth."

"Now you are laughing at me with your superior man-wisdom," she retorted. "But I know — " she paused for the strength of words she needed, and words forsook her, so that her quick sweeping gesture of hand-touch to heart named authority that overrode all speech.

"We agree — I salute," he laughed gaily. "It was just precisely what I was saying. Our hearts can talk our heads down almost any time, and, best all, our hearts are always right despite the statistic that they are mostly wrong."

Harley Kennan did not believe, and never did believe, his wife's report of the tales Jerry told. And through all his days to the last one of them, he considered the whole matter a pleasant fancy, all poesy of sentiment, on Villa's part.

But Jerry, four-legged, smooth-coated, Irish terrier that he was, had the gift of tongues. If he could not teach languages, at least he could learn languages. Without effort, and quickly, practically with no teaching, he began picking up the language of the *Ariel*. Unfortunately, it was not a whiff-whuff, dog-possible language such as Nalasu had invented. While Jerry came to understand much that was spoken on the *Ariel*, he could speak none of it. Three names, at least, he had for the lady-god: "Villa," "Wife-Woman," "Missis Kennan," for so he heard her variously called. But he could not so call her. This was god-language entire, which only gods could talk. It was unlike the language of Nalasu's devising, which had been a compromise between god-talk and dog-talk, so that a god and a dog could talk in the common medium.

In the same way he learned many names for the one-man god: "Mister Kennan," "Harley," "Captain Kennan," and "Skipper." Only in the intimacy of the three of them alone did Jerry hear him called: "Husband-Man," "My Man," "Patient One," "Dear Man," "Lover," and "This Woman's Delight." But in no way could Jerry utter these names in address of the one-man nor the many names in address of the one-woman. Yet on a quiet night with no wind among the trees, often and often had he whispered to Nalasu, by whiff-whuff of name, from a hundred feet away.

One day, bending over him, her hair (drying from a salt-water swim) flying about him, the one-woman, her two hands holding his head and jowls so that his ribbon of kissing tongue just missed her nose in the empty air, sang to him: "'Don't know what to call him, but he's mighty lak' a rose!'"

On another day she repeated this, at the same time singing most of the song to him softly in his ear. In the midst of it Jerry surprised her. Equally true might be the statement that he surprised himself. Never, had he consciously done such a thing before. And he did it without volition. He never intended to do it. For that matter, the very thing he did was what mastered him into doing it. No more than could he refrain from shaking the water from his back after a swim, or from kicking in his sleep when his feet were tickled, could he have avoided doing this imperative thing.

As her voice, in the song, made soft vibrations in his ears, it seemed to him that she grew dim and vague before him, and that somehow, under the soft searching prod of her song, he was otherwhere. So much was he otherwhere that he did the surprising thing. He sat down abruptly, almost cataleptically, drew his head away from the clutch of her hands and out of the entanglement of her hair, and, his nose thrust upward at an angle of forty-five degrees, he began to quiver and to breathe audibly in rhythm to the rhythm of her singing. With a quick jerk, cataleptically, his nose pointed to the zenith, his mouth opened, and a flood of sound poured forth, running swiftly upward in crescendo and slowly falling as it died away.

This howl was the beginning, and it led to the calling him "Sing Song Silly." For Villa Kennan was quick to seize upon the howling her singing induced and to develop it. Never did he hang back when she sat down, extended her welcoming hands to him, and invited: "Come on, Sing Song Silly." He would come to her, sit down with the loved fragrance of her hair in his nostrils, lay the side of his head against hers, point his nose past her ear, and almost immediately follow her when she began her low singing. Minor strains were especially provocative in getting him started, and, once started, he would sing with her as long as she wished.

Singing it truly was. Apt in all ways of speech, he quickly learned to soften and subdue his howl till it was mellow and golden. Even could he manage it to die away almost to a whisper, and to rise and fall, accelerate and retard, in obedience to her own voice and in accord with it.

Jerry enjoyed the singing much in the same way the opium eater enjoys his dreams. For dream he did, vaguely and indistinctly, eyes wide open and awake, the lady-god’s hair in a faint-scented cloud about him, her voice mourning with his, his consciousness drowning in the dreams of otherwhereness that came to him of the singing and that was the singing. Memories of pain were his, but of pain so long forgotten that it was no longer pain. Rather did it permeate him with a delicious sadness, and lift him away and out of the *Ariel* (lying at anchor in some coral lagoon) to that unreal place of Otherwhere.

For visions were his at such times. In the cold bleakness of night, it would seem he sat on a bare hill and raised his howl to the stars, while out of the dark, from far away, would drift to him an answering howl. And other howls, near and far, would drift along until the night was vocal with his kind. His kind it was. Without knowing it he *knew* it, this camaraderie of the land of Otherwhere.

Nalasu, in teaching him the whiff-whuff language, deliberately had gone into the intelligence of him; but Villa, unwitting of what she was doing, went into the heart of him, and into the heart of his heredity, touching the profoundest chords of ancient memories and making them respond.

As instance: dim shapes and shadowy forms would sometimes appear to him out of the night, and as they flitted spectrally past he would hear, as in a dream, the hunting cries of the pack; and, as his pulse quickened, his own hunting instinct would rouse until his controlled soft-howling in the song broke into eager whinings. His head would lower out of the entanglement of the woman’s hair; his feet would begin making restless, spasmodic movements as if running; and Presto, in a flash, he would be out and away, across the face of time, out of reality and into the dream, himself running in the midst of those shadowy forms in the hunting fellowship of the pack.

And as men have ever desired the dust of the poppy and the juice of the hemp, so Jerry desired the joys that were his when Villa Kennan opened her arms to him, embraced him with her hair, and sang him across time and space into the dream of his ancient kind.

Not always, however, were such experiences his when they sang together. Usually, unaccompanied by visions, he knew no more than vaguenesses of sensations, sadly sweet, ghosts of memories that they were.

At other times, incited by such sadness, images of Skipper and Mister Haggin would throng his mind; images, too, of Terrence, and Biddy, and Michael, and the rest of the long-vanished life at Meringe Plantation.

"My dear," Harley said to Villa at the conclusion of one such singing, "it's fortunate for him that you are not an animal trainer, or, rather, I suppose, it would be better called 'trained animal show-woman'; for you'd be topping the bill in all the music-halls and vaudeville houses of the world."

"If I did," she replied, "I know he'd just love to do it with me — "

"Which would make it a very unusual turn," Harley caught her up.

"You mean . . .?"

"That in about one turn in a hundred does the animal love its work or is the animal loved by its trainer."

"I thought all the cruelty had been done away with long ago," she contended.

"So the audience thinks, and the audience is ninety-nine times wrong."

Villa heaved a great sigh of renunciation as she said, "Then I suppose I must abandon such promising and lucrative career right now in the very moment you have discovered it for me. Just the same the billboards would look splendid with my name in the hugest letters — "

"Villa Kennan the Thrush-throated Songstress, and Sing Song Silly the Irish-Terrier Tenor," her husband pictured the head-lines for her.

And with dancing eyes and lolling tongue Jerry joined in the laughter, not because he knew what it was about, but because it tokened they were happy and his love prompted him to be happy with them.

For Jerry had found, and in the uttermost, what his nature craved — the love of a god. Recognizing the duality of their lordship over the *Ariel*, he loved the pair of them; yet, somehow, perhaps because she had penetrated deepest into his heart with her magic voice that transported him to the land of Otherwhere, he loved the lady-god beyond all love he had ever known, not even excluding his love for Skipper.

CHAPTER XXIII

One thing Jerry learned early on the *Ariel*, namely, that nigger-chasing was not permitted. Eager to please and serve his new gods, he took advantage of the first opportunity to worry a canoe-load of blacks who came visiting on board. The quick chiding of Villa and the command of Harley made him pause in amazement. Fully believing he had been mistaken, he resumed his ragging of the particular black he had picked upon. This time Harley's voice was peremptory, and Jerry came to him, his wagging tail and wriggling body all eagerness of apology, as was his rose-strip of tongue that kissed the hand of forgiveness with which Harley patted him.

Next, Villa called him to her. Holding him close to her with her hands on his jowls, eye to eye and nose to nose, she talked to him earnestly about the sin of nigger-chasing. She told him that he was no common bush-dog, but a blooded Irish gentleman, and that no dog that was a gentleman ever did such things as chase unoffending black men. To all of which he listened with unblinking serious eyes, understanding little of what she said, yet comprehending all. "Naughty" was a word in the *Ariel* language he had already learned, and she used it several times. "Naughty," to him, meant "must not," and was by way of expressing a taboo.

Since it was their way and their will, who was he, he might well have asked himself, to disobey their rule or question it? If niggers were not to be chased, then chase them he would not, despite the fact that Skipper had encouraged him to chase them. Not in such set terms did Jerry consider the matter; but in his own way he accepted the conclusions.

Love of a god, with him, implied service. It pleased him to please with service. And the foundation-stone of service, in his case, was obedience. Yet it strained him sore for a time to refrain from snarl and snap when the legs of strange and presumptuous blacks passed near him along the *Ariel's* white deck.

But there were times and times, as he was to learn, and the time came when Villa Kennan wanted a bath, a real bath in fresh, rain-descended, running water, and when Johnny, the black pilot from Tulagi, made a mistake. The chart showed a mile of the Suli river where it emptied into the sea. Why it showed only a mile was because no white man had ever explored it farther. When Villa proposed the bath, her husband advised with Johnny. Johnny shook his head.

"No fella boy stop 'm along that place," he said. "No make 'm trouble along you. Bush fella boy stop 'm long way too much."

So it was that the launch went ashore, and, while its crew lolled in the shade of the beach coconuts, Villa, Harley, and Jerry followed the river inland a quarter of a mile to the first likely pool.

"One can never be too sure," Harley said, taking his automatic pistol from its holster and placing it on top his heap of clothes. "A stray bunch of blacks might just happen to surprise us."

Villa stepped into the water to her knees, looked up at the dark jungle roof high overhead through which only occasional shafts of sunlight penetrated, and shuddered.

"An appropriate setting for a dark deed," she smiled, then scooped a handful of chill water against her husband, who plunged in in pursuit.

For a time Jerry sat by their clothes and watched the frolic. Then the drifting shadow of a huge butterfly attracted his attention, and soon he was nosing through the jungle on the trail of a wood-rat. It was not a very fresh trail. He knew that well enough; but in the deeps of him were all his instincts of ancient training — instincts to hunt, to prowl, to pursue living things, in short, to play the game of getting his own meat though for ages man had got the meat for him and his kind.

So it was, exercising faculties that were no longer necessary, but that were still alive in him and clamorous for exercise, he followed the long-since passed wood-rat with all the soft-footed crouching craft of the meat-pursuer and with utmost fineness of reading the scent. The trail crossed a fresh trail, a trail very fresh, very immediately fresh. As if a rope had been attached to it, his head was jerked abruptly to right angles with his body. The unmistakable smell of a black was in his nostrils. Further, it was a strange black, for he did not identify it with the many he possessed filed away in the pigeon-holes of his brain.

Forgotten was the stale wood-rat as he followed the new trail. Curiosity and play impelled him. He had no thought of apprehension for Villa and Harley — not even when he reached the spot where the black, evidently startled by bearing their voices, had stood and debated, and so left a very strong scent. From this point the trail swerved off toward the pool.

Nervously alert, strung to extreme tension, but without alarm, still playing at the game of tracking, Jerry followed.

From the pool came occasional cries and laughter, and each time they reached his ears Jerry experienced glad little thrills. Had he been asked, and had he been able to express the sensations of emotion in terms of thought, he would have said that the sweetest sound in the world was any sound of Villa Kennan's voice, and that, next sweetest, was any sound of Harley Kennan's voice. Their voices thrilled him, always, reminding him of his love for them and that he was beloved of them.

With the first sight of the strange black, which occurred close to the pool, Jerry's suspicions were aroused. He was not conducting himself as an ordinary black, not on evil intent, should conduct himself. Instead, he betrayed all the actions of one who lurked in the perpetration of harm. He crouched on the jungle floor, peering around a great root of a board tree. Jerry bristled and himself crouched as he watched.

Once, the black raised his rifle half-way to his shoulder; but, with an outburst of splashing and laughter, his unconscious victims evidently removed themselves from his field of vision. His rifle was no old-fashioned Snider, but a modern, repeating Winchester; and he showed habituation to firing it from his shoulder rather than from the hip after the manner of most Malaitans.

Not satisfied with his position by the board tree, he lowered his gun to his side and crept closer to the pool. Jerry crouched low and followed. So low did he crouch that his head, extended horizontally forward, was much lower than his shoulders which were humped up queerly and composed the highest part of him. When the black paused, Jerry paused, as if instantly frozen. When the black moved, he moved, but more swiftly, cutting down the distance between them. And all the while the hair of his neck and shoulders bristled in recurrent waves of ferocity and wrath. No golden dog this, ears flattened and tongue laughing in the arms of the lady-god, no Sing Song Silly chanting ancient memories in the cloud-entanglement of her hair; but a four-legged creature of battle, a fanged killer ripe to rend and destroy.

Jerry intended to attack as soon as he had crept sufficiently near. He was unaware of the *Ariel* taboo against nigger-chasing. At that moment it had no place in his consciousness. All he knew was that harm threatened the man and woman and that this nigger intended this harm.

So much had Jerry gained on his quarry, that when again the black squatted for his shot, Jerry deemed he was near enough to rush. The rifle was coming to shoulder when he sprang forward. Swiftly as he sprang, he made no sound, and his victim's first warning was when Jerry's body, launched like a projectile, smote the black squarely between the shoulders. At the same moment his teeth entered the back of the neck, but too near the base in the lumpy shoulder muscles to permit the fangs to penetrate to the spinal cord.

In the first fright of surprise, the black's finger pulled the trigger and his throat loosed an unearthly yell. Knocked forward on his face, he rolled over and grappled with Jerry, who slashed cheek-bone and cheek and ribboned an ear; for it is the way of an Irish terrier to bite repeatedly and quickly rather than to hold a bulldog grip.

When Harley Kennan, automatic in hand and naked as Adam, reached the spot, he found dog and man locked together and tearing up the forest mould in their struggle. The black, his face streaming blood, was throttling Jerry with both hands around his neck; and Jerry, snorting, choking, snarling, was scratching for dear life with the claws of his hind feet. No puppy claws were they, but the stout claws of a mature dog that were stiffened by a backing of hard muscles. And they ripped naked chest and abdomen full length again and again until the whole front of the man was streaming red. Harley Kennan did not dare chance a shot, so closely were the combatants locked. Instead, stepping in close; he smashed down the butt of his automatic upon the side of the man's head. Released by the relaxing of the stunned black's hands, Jerry flung himself in a flash upon the exposed throat, and only Harley's hand on his neck and Harley's sharp command made him cease and stand clear. He trembled with rage and continued to snarl ferociously, although he would desist long enough to glance up with his eyes, flatten his ears, and wag his tail each time Harley uttered "Good boy."

"Good boy" he knew for praise; and he knew beyond any doubt, by Harley's repetition of it, that he had served him and served him well.

"Do you know the beggar intended to bush-whack us," Harley told Villa, who, half-dressed and still dressing, had joined him. "It wasn't fifty feet and he couldn't have missed. Look at the Winchester. No old smooth bore. And a fellow with a gun like that would know how to use it."

"But why didn't he?" she queried.

Her husband pointed to Jerry.

Villa's eyes brightened with quick comprehension. "You mean . . . ?" she began.

He nodded. "Just that. Sing Song Silly beat him to it." He bent, rolled the man over, and discovered the lacerated back of the neck. "That's where he landed on him first, and he must have had his finger on the trigger, drawing down on you and me, most likely me first, when Sing Song Silly broke up his calculations."

Villa was only half hearing, for she had Jerry in her arms and was calling him "Blessed Dog," the while she stilled his snarling and soothed down the last bristling hair.

But Jerry snarled again and was for leaping upon the black when he stirred restlessly and dizzily sat up. Harley removed a knife from between the bare skin and a belt.

"What name belong you?" he demanded.

But the black had eyes only for Jerry, staring at him in wondering amaze until he pieced the situation together in his growing clarity of brain and realized that such a small chunky animal had spoiled his game.

"My word," he grinned to Harley, "that fella dog put 'm crimp along me any amount."

He felt out the wounds of his neck and face, while his eyes embraced the fact that the white master was in possession of his rifle.

"You give 'm musket belong me," he said impudently.

"I give 'm you bang alongside head," was Harley's answer.

"He doesn't seem to me to be a regular Malaitan," he told Villa. "In the first place, where would he get a rifle like that? Then think of his nerve. He must have seen us drop anchor, and he must have known our launch was on the beach. Yet he played to take our heads and get away with them back into the bush — "

"What name belong you?" he again demanded.

But not until Johnny and the launch crew arrived breathless from their run, did he learn. Johnny's eyes gloated when he beheld the prisoner, and he addressed Kennan in evident excitement.

"You give 'm me that fella boy," he begged. "Eh? You give 'm me that fella boy."

"What name you want 'm?"

Not for some time would Johnny answer this question, and then only when Kennan told him that there was no harm done and that he intended to let the black go. At this Johnny protested vehemently.

"Maybe you fetch 'm that fella boy along Government House, Tulagi, Government House give 'm you twenty pounds. Him plenty bad fella boy too much. Makawao he name stop along him. Bad fella boy too much. Him Queensland boy — "

"What name Queensland?" Kennan interrupted. "He belong that fella place?"

Johnny shook his head.

"Him belong along Malaita first time. Long time before too much he recruit 'm along schooner go work along Queensland."

"He's a return Queenslander," Harley interpreted to Villa. "You know, when Australia went 'all white,' the Queensland plantations had to send all the black birds back. This Makawao is evidently one of them, and a hard case as well, if there's anything in Johnny's gammon about twenty pounds reward for him. That's a big price for a black."

Johnny continued his explanation which, reduced to flat and sober English, was to the effect that Makawao had always borne a bad character. In Queensland he had served a total of four years in jail for thefts, robberies, and attempted murder. Returned to the Solomons by the Australian government, he had recruited on Buli Plantation for the purpose — as was afterwards proved — of getting arms and ammunition. For an attempt to kill the manager he had received fifty lashes at Tulagi and served a year. Returned to Buli Plantation to finish his labour service, he had contrived to kill the owner in the manager's absence and to escape in a whaleboat.

In the whaleboat with him he had taken all the weapons and ammunition of the plantation, the owner's head, ten Malaita recruits, and two recruits from San Cristobal — the two last because they were salt-water men and could handle the whaleboat. Himself and the ten Malaitans, being bushmen, were too ignorant of the sea to dare the long passage from Guadalcanar.

On the way, he had raided the little islet of Ugi, sacked the store, and taken the head of the solitary trader, a gentle-souled half-caste from Norfolk Island who traced back directly to a Pitcairn ancestry straight from the loins of McCoy of the Bounty. Arrived safely at Malaita, he and his fellows, no longer having any use for the two San Cristobal boys, had taken their heads and eaten their bodies.

"My word, him bad fella boy any amount," Johnny finished his tale. "Government House, Tulagi, damn glad give 'm twenty pounds along that fella."

"You blessed Sing Song Silly," Villa, murmured in Jerry's ears. "If it hadn't been for you — "

"Your head and mine would even now be galumping through the bush as Makawao hit the high places for home," Harley concluded for her. "My word, some fella dog that, any amount," he added lightly. "And I gave him merry Ned just the other day for nigger-chasing, and he knew his business better than I did all the time."

"If anybody tries to claim him — " Villa threatened.

Harley confirmed her muttered sentiment with a nod.

"Any way," he said, with a smile, "there would have been one consolation if your head had gone up into the bush."

"Consolation!" she cried, throaty with indignation.

"Why, yes; because in that case my head would have gone along."

"You dear and blessed Husband-Man," she murmured, a quick cloudiness of moisture in her eyes, as with her eyes she embraced him, her arms still around Jerry, who, sensing the ecstasy of the moment, kissed her fragrant cheek with his ribbon-tongue of love.

CHAPTER XXIV

When the *Ariel* cleared from Malu, on the north-west coast of Malaita, Malaita sank down beneath the sea-rim astern and, so far as Jerry's life was concerned, remained sunk for ever — another vanished world, that, in his consciousness, partook of the ultimate nothingness that had befallen Skipper. For all Jerry might have known, though he pondered it not, Malaita was a universe, beheaded and resting on the knees of some brooding lesser god, himself vastly mightier than Bashti whose knees bore the brooding weight of Skipper's sun-dried, smoke-cured head, this lesser god vexed and questing, feeling and guessing at the dual twin-mysteries of time and space and of motion and matter, above, beneath, around, and beyond him.

Only, in Jerry's case, there was no pondering of the problem, no awareness of the existence of such mysteries. He merely accepted Malaita as another world that had ceased to be. He remembered it as he remembered dreams. Himself a live thing, solid and substantial, possessed of weight and dimension, a reality incontrovertible, he moved through the space and place of being, concrete, hard, quick, convincing, an absoluteness of something surrounded by the shades and shadows of the fluxing phantasmagoria of nothing.

He took his worlds one by one. One by one his worlds evaporated, rose beyond his vision as vapours in the hot alembic of the sun, sank for ever beneath sea-levels, themselves unreal and passing as the phantoms of a dream. The totality of the minute, simple world of the humans, microscopic and negligible as it was in the siderial universe, was as far beyond his guessing as is the siderial universe beyond the starriest guesses and most abysmal imaginings of man.

Jerry was never to see the dark island of savagery again, although often in his sleeping dreams it was to return to him in vivid illusion, as he relived his days upon it, from the destruction of the *Arangi* and the man-eating orgy on the beach to his flight from the shell-scattered house and flesh of Nalasu. These dream episodes constituted for him another land of Otherwhere, mysterious, unreal, and evanescent as clouds drifting across the sky or bubbles taking iridescent form and bursting on the surface of the sea. Froth and foam it was, quick-vanishing as he awoke, non-existent as

Skipper, Skipper's head on the withered knees of Bashti in the lofty grass house. Malaita the real, Malaita the concrete and ponderable, vanished and vanished for ever, as Meringe had vanished, as Skipper had vanished, into the nothingness.

From Malaita the *Ariel* steered west of north to Ongtong Java and to Tasman — great atolls that sweltered under the Line not quite awash in the vast waste of the West South Pacific. After Tasman was another wide sea-stretch to the high island of Bougainville. Thence, bearing generally south-east and making slow progress in the dead beat to windward, the *Ariel* dropped anchor in nearly every harbour of the Solomons, from Choiseul and Ronongo islands, to the islands of Kulambangra, Vangunu, Pavuvu, and New Georgia. Even did she ride to anchor, desolately lonely, in the Bay of a Thousand Ships.

Last of all, so far as concerned the Solomons, her anchor rumbled down and bit into the coral-sanded bottom of the harbour of Tulagi, where, ashore on Florida Island, lived and ruled the Resident Commissioner.

To the Commissioner, Harley Kennan duly turned over Makawao, who was committed to a grass-house jail, well guarded, to sit in leg-irons against the time of trial for his many crimes. And Johnny, the pilot, ere he returned to the service of the Commissioner, received a fair portion of the twenty pounds of head money that Kennan divided among the members of the launch crew who had raced through the jungle to the rescue the day Jerry had taken Makawao by the back of the neck and startled him into pulling the trigger of his unaimed rifle.

"I'll tell you his name," the Commissioner said, as they sat on the wide veranda of his bungalow. "It's one of Haggin's terriers — Haggin of Meringe Lagoon. The dog's father is Terrence, the mother is Biddy. The dog's own name is Jerry, for I was present at the christening before ever his eyes were open. Better yet, I'll show you his brother. His brother's name is Michael. He's nigger-chaser on the *Eugénie*, the two-topmast schooner that rides abreast of you. Captain Kellar is the skipper. I'll have him bring Michael ashore. Beyond all doubt, this Jerry is the sole survivor of the *Arangi*."

"When I get the time, and a sufficient margin of funds, I shall pay a visit to Chief Bashti — oh, no British cruiser program. I'll charter a couple of trading ketches, take my own black police force and as many white men as I cannot prevent from volunteering. There won't be any shelling of grass houses. I'll land my shore party down the coast and cut in and come down upon Somo from the rear, timing my vessels to arrive on Somo's sea-front at the same time."

"You will answer slaughter with slaughter?" Villa Kennan objected.

"I will answer slaughter with law," the Commissioner replied. "I will teach Somo law. I hope that no accidents will occur. I hope that no life will be lost on either side. I know, however, that I shall recover Captain Van Horn's head, and his mate Borckman's, and bring them back to Tulagi for Christian burial. I know that I shall get old Bashti by the scruff of the neck and sit him down while I pump law and square-dealing into him. Of course . . ."

The Commissioner, ascetic-looking, an Oxford graduate, narrow-shouldered and elderly, tired-eyed and bespectacled like the scholar he was, like the scientist he was, shrugged his shoulders. "Of course, if they are not amenable to reason, there may be trouble, and some of them and some of us will get hurt. But, one way or the other, the conclusion will be the same. Old Bashti will learn that it is expedient to maintain white men's heads on their shoulders."

"But how will he learn?" Villa Kennan asked. "If he is shrewd enough not to fight you, and merely sits and listens to your English law, it will be no more than a huge joke to him. He will no more than pay the price of listening to a lecture for any atrocity he commits."

"On the contrary, my dear Mrs. Kennan. If he listens peaceably to the lecture, I shall fine him only a hundred thousand coconuts, five tons of ivory nut, one hundred fathoms of shell money, and twenty fat pigs. If he refuses to listen to the lecture and goes on the war path, then, unpleasantly for me, I assure you, I shall be compelled to thrash him and his village, first: and, next, I shall triple the fine he must pay and lecture the law into him a trifle more compendiously."

"Suppose he doesn't fight, stops his ears to the lecture, and declines to pay?" Villa Kennan persisted.

"Then he shall be my guest, here in Tulagi, until he changes his mind and heart, and does pay, and listens to an entire course of lectures."

* * * * *

So it was that Jerry came to hear his old-time name on the lips of Villa and Harley, and saw once again his full-brother Michael.

“Say nothing,” Harley muttered to Villa, as they made out, peering over the bow of the shore-coming whaleboat, the rough coat, red-wheaten in colour, of Michael. “We won’t know anything about anything, and we won’t even let on we’re watching what they do.”

Jerry, feigning interest in digging a hole in the sand as if he were on a fresh scent, was unaware of Michael’s nearness. In fact, so well had Jerry feigned that he had forgotten it was all a game, and his interest was very real as he sniffed and snorted joyously in the bottom of the hole he had dug. So deep was it, that all he showed of himself was his hind-legs, his rump, and an intelligent and stiffly erect stump of a tail.

Little wonder that he and Michael failed to see each other. And Michael, spilling over with unused vitality from the cramped space of the *Eugénie’s* deck, scampered down the beach in a hurly-burly of joy, scenting a thousand intimate land-scents as he ran, and describing a jerky and eccentric course as he made short dashes and good-natured snaps at the coconut crabs that scuttled across his path to the safety of the water or reared up and menaced him with formidable claws and a spluttering and foaming of the shell-lids of their mouths.

The beach was only so long. The end of it reached where rose the rugged wall of a headland, and while the Commissioner introduced Captain Kellar to Mr. and Mrs. Kennan, Michael came tearing back across the wet-hard sand. So interested was he in everything that he failed to notice the small rear-end portion of Jerry that was visible above the level surface of the beach. Jerry’s ears had given him warning, and, the precise instant that he backed hurriedly up and out of the hole, Michael collided with him. As Jerry was rolled, and as Michael fell clear over him, both erupted into ferocious snarls and growls. They regained their legs, bristled and showed teeth at each other, and stalked stiff-leggedly, in a stately and dignified sort of way, as they drew intimidating semi-circles about each other.

But they were fooling all the while, and were more than a trifle embarrassed. For in each of their brains were bright identification pictures of the plantation house and compound and beach of Meringe. They knew, but they were reticent of recognition. No longer puppies, vaguely proud of the sedateness of maturity, they strove to be proud and sedate while all their impulse was to rush together in a frantic ecstasy.

Michael it was, less travelled in the world than Jerry, by nature not so self-controlled, who threw the play-acting of dignity to the wind, and, with shrill whinings of emotion, with body-wrigglings of delight, flashed out his tongue of love and shouldered his brother roughly in eagerness to get near to him.

Jerry responded as eagerly with kiss of tongue and contact of shoulder; then both, springing apart, looked at each other, alert and querying, almost in half challenge, Jerry's ears pricked into living interrogations, Michael's one good ear similarly questioning, his withered ear retaining its permanent queer and crinkly cock in the tip of it. As one, they sprang away in a wild scurry down the beach, side by side, laughing to each other and occasionally striking their shoulders together as they ran.

"No doubt of it," said the Commissioner. "The very way their father and mother run. I have watched them often."

* * * * *

But, after ten days of comradeship, came the parting. It was Michael's first visit on the *Ariel*, and he and Jerry had spent a frolicking half-hour on her white deck amid the sound and commotion of hoisting in boats, making sail, and heaving out anchor. As the *Ariel* began to move through the water and heeled to the filling of her canvas by the brisk trade-wind, the Commissioner and Captain Kellar shook last farewells and scrambled down the gang-plank to their waiting whaleboats. At the last moment Captain Kellar had caught Michael up, tucked him under an arm, and with him dropped into the, sternsheets of his whaleboat.

Painters were cast off, and in the sternsheets of each boat solitary white men were standing up, heads bared in graciousness of conduct to the furnace-stab of the tropic sun, as they waved additional and final farewells. And Michael, swept by the contagion of excitement, barked and barked again, as if it were a festival of the gods being celebrated.

"Say good-bye to your brother, Jerry," Villa Kennan prompted in Jerry's ear, as she held him, his quivering flanks between her two palms, on the rail where she had lifted him.

And Jerry, not understanding her speech, torn about with conflicting desires, acknowledged her speech with wriggling body, a quick back-toss of head, and a red flash of kissing tongue, and, the next moment, his head over the rail and lowered to see the swiftly diminishing Michael, was mouthing grief and woe very much akin to the grief and woe his mother, Biddy, had mouthed in the long ago, on the beach of Meringe, when he had sailed away with Skipper.

For Jerry had learned partings, and beyond all peradventure this was a parting, though little he dreamed that he would again meet Michael across the years and across the world, in a fabled valley of far California, where they would live out their days in the hearts and arms of the beloved gods.

Michael, his forefeet on the gunwale, barked to him in a puzzled, questioning sort of way, and Jerry whimpered back incommunicable understanding. The lady-god pressed his two flanks together reassuringly, and he turned to her, his cool nose touched questioningly to her cheek. She gathered his body close against her breast in one encircling arm, her free hand resting on the rail, half-closed, a pink-and-white heart of flower, fragrant and seducing. Jerry's nose quested the way of it. The aperture invited. With snuggling, budging, and nudging-movements he spread the fingers slightly wider as his nose penetrated into the sheer delight and loveliness of her hand.

He came to rest, his golden muzzle soft-enfolded to the eyes, and was very still, all forgetful of the *Ariel* showing her copper to the sun under the press of the wind, all forgetful of Michael growing small in the distance as the whaleboat grew small astern. No less still was Villa. Both were playing the game, although to her it was new.

As long as he could possibly contain himself, Jerry maintained his stiffness. And then, his love bursting beyond the control of him, he gave a sniff — as prodigious a one as he had sniffed into the tunnel of Skipper's hand in the long ago on the deck of the *Arangi*. And, as Skipper had relaxed into the laughter of love, so did the lady-god now. She gurgled gleefully. Her fingers tightened, in a caress that almost hurt, on Jerry's muzzle. Her other hand and arm crushed him against her till he gasped. Yet all the while his stump of tail valiantly bobbed back and forth, and, when released from such blissful contact, his silky ears flattened back and down as, with first a scarlet slash of tongue to cheek, he seized her hand between his teeth and dented the soft skin with a love bite that did not hurt.

And so, for Jerry, vanished Tulagi, its Commissioner's bungalow on top of the hill, its vessels riding to anchor in the harbour, and Michael, his full blood-brother. He had grown accustomed to such vanishments. In such way had vanished as in the mirage of a dream, Meringe, Somo, and the *Arangi*. In such way had vanished all the worlds and harbours and roadsteads and atoll lagoons where the *Ariel* had lifted her laid anchor and gone on across and over the erasing sea-rim.

MICHAEL, BROTHER OF JERRY

This lesser known work was first published in 1917.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD
CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII
CHAPTER XXVIII
CHAPTER XXIX
CHAPTER XXX
CHAPTER XXXI
CHAPTER XXXII
CHAPTER XXXIII
CHAPTER XXXIV
CHAPTER XXXV

CHAPTER XXXVI

FOREWORD

Very early in my life, possibly because of the insatiable curiosity that was born in me, I came to dislike the performances of trained animals. It was my curiosity that spoiled for me this form of amusement, for I was led to seek behind the performance in order to learn how the performance was achieved. And what I found behind the brave show and glitter of performance was not nice. It was a body of cruelty so horrible that I am confident no normal person exists who, once aware of it, could ever enjoy looking on at any trained-animal turn.

Now I am not a namby-pamby. By the book reviewers and the namby-pambys I am esteemed a sort of primitive beast that delights in the spilled blood of violence and horror. Without arguing this matter of my general reputation, accepting it at its current face value, let me add that I have indeed lived life in a very rough school and have seen more than the average man's share of inhumanity and cruelty, from the forecastle and the prison, the slum and the desert, the execution-chamber and the lazar-house, to the battlefield and the military hospital. I have seen horrible deaths and mutilations. I have seen imbeciles hanged, because, being imbeciles, they did not possess the hire of lawyers. I have seen the hearts and stamina of strong men broken, and I have seen other men, by ill-treatment, driven to permanent and howling madness. I have witnessed the deaths of old and young, and even infants, from sheer starvation. I have seen men and women beaten by whips and clubs and fists, and I have seen the rhinoceros-hide whips laid around the naked torsos of black boys so heartily that each stroke stripped away the skin in full circle. And yet, let me add finally, never have I been so appalled and shocked by the world's cruelty as have I been appalled and shocked in the midst of happy, laughing, and applauding audiences when trained-animal turns were being performed on the stage.

One with a strong stomach and a hard head may be able to tolerate much of the unconscious and undeliberate cruelty and torture of the world that is perpetrated in hot blood and stupidity. I have such a stomach and head. But what turns my head and makes my gorge rise, is the cold-blooded, conscious, deliberate cruelty and torment that is manifest behind ninety-nine of every hundred trained-animal turns. Cruelty, as a fine art, has attained its perfect flower in the trained-animal world.

Possessed myself of a strong stomach and a hard head, inured to hardship, cruelty, and brutality, nevertheless I found, as I came to manhood, that I unconsciously protected myself from the hurt of the trained-animal turn by getting up and leaving the theatre whenever such turns came on the stage. I say "unconsciously." By this I mean it never entered my mind that this was a programme by which the possible death-blow might be given to trained-animal turns. I was merely protecting myself from the pain of witnessing what it would hurt me to witness.

But of recent years my understanding of human nature has become such that I realize that no normal healthy human would tolerate such performances did he or she know the terrible cruelty that lies behind them and makes them possible. So I am emboldened to suggest, here and now, three things:

First, let all humans inform themselves of the inevitable and eternal cruelty by the means of which only can animals be compelled to perform before revenue-paying audiences. Second, I suggest that all men and women, and boys and girls, who have so acquainted themselves with the essentials of the fine art of animal-training, should become members of, and ally themselves with, the local and national organizations of humane societies and societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals.

And the third suggestion I cannot state until I have made a preamble. Like hundreds of thousands of others, I have worked in other fields, striving to organize the mass of mankind into movements for the purpose of ameliorating its own wretchedness and misery. Difficult as this is to accomplish, it is still more difficult to persuade the human into any organised effort to alleviate the ill conditions of the lesser animals.

Practically all of us will weep red tears and sweat bloody sweats as we come to knowledge of the unavoidable cruelty and brutality on which the trained-animal world rests and has its being. But not one-tenth of one per cent. of us will join any organization for the prevention of cruelty to animals, and by our words and acts and contributions work to prevent the perpetration of cruelties on animals. This is a weakness of our own human nature. We must recognize it as we recognize heat and cold, the opaqueness of the non-transparent, and the everlasting down-pull of gravity.

And still for us, for the ninety-nine and nine-tenths per cent. of us, under the easy circumstance of our own weakness, remains another way most easily to express ourselves for the purpose of eliminating from the world the cruelty that is practised by some few of us, for the entertainment of the rest of us, on the trained animals, who, after all, are only lesser animals than we on the round world's surface. It is so easy. We will not have to think of dues or corresponding secretaries. We will not have to think of anything, save when, in any theatre or place of entertainment, a trained-animal turn is presented before us. Then, without premeditation, we may express our disapproval of such a turn by getting up from our seats and leaving the theatre for a promenade and a breath of fresh air outside, coming back, when the turn is over, to enjoy the rest of the programme. All we have to do is just that to eliminate the trained-animal turn from all public places of entertainment. Show the management that such turns are unpopular, and in a day, in an instant, the management will cease catering such turns to its audiences.

JACK LONDON
GLEN ELLEN, SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA,
December 8, 1915

CHAPTER I

But Michael never sailed out of Tulagi, nigger-chaser on the *Eugénie*. Once in five weeks the steamer *Makambo* made Tulagi its port of call on the way from New Guinea and the Shortlands to Australia. And on the night of her belated arrival Captain Kellar forgot Michael on the beach. In itself, this was nothing, for, at midnight, Captain Kellar was back on the beach, himself climbing the high hill to the Commissioner's bungalow while the boat's crew vainly rummaged the landscape and canoe houses.

In fact, an hour earlier, as the *Makambo's* anchor was heaving out and while Captain Kellar was descending the port gang-plank, Michael was coming on board through a starboard port-hole. This was because Michael was inexperienced in the world, because he was expecting to meet Jerry on board this boat since the last he had seen of him was on a boat, and because he had made a friend.

Dag Daughtry was a steward on the *Makambo*, who should have known better and who would have known better and done better had he not been fascinated by his own particular and peculiar reputation. By luck of birth possessed of a genial but soft disposition and a splendid constitution, his reputation was that for twenty years he had never missed his day's work nor his six daily quarts of bottled beer, even, as he bragged, when in the German islands, where each bottle of beer carried ten grains of quinine in solution as a specific against malaria.

The captain of the *Makambo* (and, before that, the captains of the *Moresby*, the *Masena*, the *Sir Edward Grace*, and various others of the queerly named Burns Philp Company steamers had done the same) was used to pointing him out proudly to the passengers as a man-thing novel and unique in the annals of the sea. And at such times Dag Daughtry, below on the for'ard deck, feigning unawareness as he went about his work, would steal side-glances up at the bridge where the captain and his passengers stared down on him, and his breast would swell pridefully, because he knew that the captain was saying: "See him! that's Dag Daughtry, the human tank. Never's been drunk or sober in twenty years, and has never missed his six quarts of beer per diem. You wouldn't think it, to look at him, but I assure you it's so. I can't understand. Gets my admiration. Always does his time, his time-and-a-half and his double-time over time. Why, a single glass of beer would give me heartburn and spoil my next good meal. But he flourishes on it. Look at him! Look at him!"

And so, knowing his captain's speech, swollen with pride in his own prowess, Dag Daughtry would continue his ship-work with extra vigour and punish a seventh quart for the day in advertisement of his remarkable constitution. It was a queer sort of fame, as queer as some men are; and Dag Daughtry found in it his justification of existence.

Wherefore he devoted his energy and the soul of him to the maintenance of his reputation as a six-quart man. That was why he made, in odd moments of off-duty, turtle-shell combs and hair ornaments for profit, and was prettily crooked in such a matter as stealing another man's dog. Somebody had to pay for the six quarts, which, multiplied by thirty, amounted to a tidy sum in the course of the month; and, since that man was Dag Daughtry, he found it necessary to pass Michael inboard on the *Makambo* through a starboard port-hole.

On the beach, that night at Tulagi, vainly wondering what had become of the whaleboat, Michael had met the squat, thick, hair-grizzled ship's steward. The friendship between them was established almost instantly, for Michael, from a merry puppy, had matured into a merry dog. Far beyond Jerry, was he a sociable good fellow, and this, despite the fact that he had known very few white men. First, there had been Mister Haggin, Derby and Bob, of Meringe; next, Captain Kellar and Captain Kellar's mate of the *Eugénie*; and, finally, Harley Kennan and the officers of the *Ariel*. Without exception, he had found them all different, and delightfully different, from the hordes of blacks he had been taught to despise and to lord it over.

And Dag Daughtry had proved no exception from his first greeting of "Hello, you white man's dog, what 'r' you doin' herein nigger country?" Michael had responded coyly with an assumption of dignified aloofness that was given the lie by the eager tilt of his ears and the good-humour that shone in his eyes. Nothing of this was missed by Dag Daughtry, who knew a dog when he saw one, as he studied Michael in the light of the lanterns held by black boys where the whaleboats were landing cargo.

Two estimates the steward quickly made of Michael: he was a likable dog, genial-natured on the face of it, and he was a valuable dog. Because of those estimates Dag Daughtry glanced about him quickly. No one was observing. For the moment, only blacks stood about, and their eyes were turned seaward where the sound of oars out of the darkness warned them to stand ready to receive the next cargo-laden boat. Off to the right, under another lantern, he could make out the Resident Commissioner's clerk and the *Makambo's* super-cargo heatedly discussing some error in the bill of lading.

The steward flung another quick glance over Michael and made up his mind. He turned away casually and strolled along the beach out of the circle of lantern light. A hundred yards away he sat down in the sand and waited.

"Worth twenty pounds if a penny," he muttered to himself. "If I couldn't get ten pounds for him, just like that, with a thank-you-ma'am, I'm a sucker that don't know a terrier from a greyhound. — Sure, ten pounds, in any pub on Sydney beach."

And ten pounds, metamorphosed into quart bottles of beer, reared an immense and radiant vision, very like a brewery, inside his head.

A scurry of feet in the sand, and low sniffings, stiffened him to alertness. It was as he had hoped. The dog had liked him from the start, and had followed him.

For Dag Daughtry had a way with him, as Michael was quickly to learn, when the man's hand reached out and clutched him, half by the jowl, half by the slack of the neck under the ear. There was no threat in that reach, nothing tentative nor timorous. It was hearty, all-confident, and it produced confidence in Michael. It was roughness without hurt, assertion without threat, surety without seduction. To him it was the most natural thing in the world thus to be familiarly seized and shaken about by a total stranger, while a jovial voice muttered: "That's right, dog. Stick around, stick around, and you'll wear diamonds, maybe."

Certainly, Michael had never met a man so immediately likable. Dag Daughtry knew, instinctively to be sure, how to get on with dogs. By nature there was no cruelty in him. He never exceeded in peremptoriness, nor in petting. He did not overbid for Michael's friendliness. He did bid, but in a manner that conveyed no sense of bidding. Scarcely had he given Michael that introductory jowl-shake, when he released him and apparently forgot all about him.

He proceeded to light his pipe, using several matches as if the wind blew them out. But while they burned close up to his fingers, and while he made a simulation of prodigious puffing, his keen little blue eyes, under shaggy, grizzled brows, intently studied Michael. And Michael, ears cocked and eyes intent, gazed at this stranger who seemed never to have been a stranger at all.

If anything, it was disappointment Michael experienced, in that this delightful, two-legged god took no further notice of him. He even challenged him to closer acquaintance with an invitation to play, with an abrupt movement lifting his paws from the ground and striking them down, stretched out well before, his body bent down from the rump in such a curve that almost his chest touched the sand, his stump of a tail waving signals of good nature while he uttered a sharp, inviting bark. And the man was uninterested, pulling stolidly away at his pipe, in the darkness following upon the third match.

Never was there a more consummate love-making, with all the base intent of betrayal, than this cavalier seduction of Michael by the elderly, six-quart ship's steward. When Michael, not entirely unwitting of the snub of the man's lack of interest, stirred restlessly with a threat to depart, he had flung at him gruffly:

"Stick around, dog, stick around."

Dag Daughtry chuckled to himself, as Michael, advancing, sniffed his trousers' legs long and earnestly. And the man took advantage of his nearness to study him some more, lighting his pipe and running over the dog's excellent lines.

"Some dog, some points," he said aloud approvingly. "Say, dog, you could pull down ribbons like a candy-kid in any bench show anywheres. Only thing against you is that ear, and I could almost iron it out myself. A vet. could do it."

Carelessly he dropped a hand to Michael's ear, and, with tips of fingers instinct with sensuous sympathy, began to manipulate the base of the ear where its roots bedded in the tightness of skin-stretch over the skull. And Michael liked it. Never had a man's hand been so intimate with his ear without hurting it. But these fingers were provocative only of physical pleasure so keen that he twisted and writhed his whole body in acknowledgment.

Next came a long, steady, upward pull of the ear, the ear slipping slowly through the fingers to the very tip of it while it tingled exquisitely down to its roots. Now to one ear, now to the other, this happened, and all the while the man uttered low words that Michael did not understand but which he accepted as addressed to him.

“Head all right, good ’n’ flat,” Dag Daughtry murmured, first sliding his fingers over it, and then lighting a match. “An’ no wrinkles, ’n’ some jaw, good ’n’ punishing, an’ not a shade too full in the cheek or too empty.”

He ran his fingers inside Michael’s mouth and noted the strength and evenness of the teeth, measured the breadth of shoulders and depth of chest, and picked up a foot. In the light of another match he examined all four feet.

“Black, all black, every nail of them,” said Daughtry, “an’ as clean feet as ever a dog walked on, straight-out toes with the proper arch ’n’ small ’n’ not too small. I bet your daddy and your mother cantered away with the ribbons in their day.”

Michael was for growing restless at such searching examination, but Daughtry, in the midst of feeling out the lines and build of the thighs and hocks, paused and took Michael’s tail in his magic fingers, exploring the muscles among which it rooted, pressing and prodding the adjacent spinal column from which it sprang, and twisting it about in a most daringly intimate way. And Michael was in an ecstasy, bracing his hindquarters to one side or the other against the caressing fingers. With open hands laid along his sides and partly under him, the man suddenly lifted him from the ground. But before he could feel alarm he was back on the ground again.

“Twenty-six or-seven — you’re over twenty-five right now, I’ll bet you on it, shillings to ha’pennies, and you’ll make thirty when you get your full weight,” Dag Daughtry told him. “But what of it? Lots of the judges fancy the thirty-mark. An’ you could always train off a few ounces. You’re all dog n’ all correct conformation. You’ve got the racing build and the fighting weight, an’ there ain’t no feathers on your legs.”

“No, sir, Mr. Dog, your weight’s to the good, and that ear can be ironed out by any respectable dog — doctor. I bet there’s a hundred men in Sydney right now that would fork over twenty quid for the right of calling you his.”

And then, just that Michael should not make the mistake of thinking he was being much made over, Daughtry leaned back, relighted his pipe, and apparently forgot his existence. Instead of bidding for good will, he was bent on making Michael do the bidding.

And Michael did, bumping his flanks against Daughtry’s knee; nudging his head against Daughtry’s hand, in solicitation for more of the blissful ear-rubbing and tail-twisting. Daughtry caught him by the jowl instead and slowly moved his head back and forth as he addressed him:

"What man's dog are you? Maybe you're a nigger's dog, an' that ain't right. Maybe some nigger's stole you, an' that'd be awful. Think of the cruel fates that sometimes happens to dogs. It's a damn shame. No white man's stand for a nigger ownin' the likes of you, an' here's one white man that ain't goin' to stand for it. The idea! A nigger ownin' you an' not knowin' how to train you. Of course a nigger stole you. If I laid eyes on him right now I'd up and knock seven bells and the Saint Paul chimes out of 'm. Sure thing I would. Just show 'm to me, that's all, an' see what I'd do to him. The idea of you takin' orders from a nigger an' fetchin' 'n' carryin' for him! No, sir, dog, you ain't goin' to do it any more. You're comin' along of me, an' I reckon I won't have to urge you."

Dag Daughtry stood up and turned carelessly along the beach. Michael looked after him, but did not follow. He was eager to, but had received no invitation. At last Daughtry made a low kissing sound with his lips. So low was it that he scarcely heard it himself and almost took it on faith, or on the testimony of his lips rather than of his ears, that he had made it. No human being could have heard it across the distance to Michael; but Michael heard it, and sprang away after in a great delighted rush.

CHAPTER II

Dag Daughtry strolled along the beach, Michael at his heels or running circles of delight around him at every repetition of that strange low lip-noise, and paused just outside the circle of lantern light where dusky forms laboured with landing cargo from the whaleboats and where the Commissioner's clerk and the *Makambo's* super-cargo still wrangled over the bill of lading. When Michael would have gone forward, the man withstrained him with the same inarticulate, almost inaudible kiss.

For Daughtry did not care to be seen on such dog-stealing enterprises and was planning how to get on board the steamer unobserved. He edged around outside the lantern shine and went on along the beach to the native village. As he had foreseen, all the able-bodied men were down at the boat-landing working cargo. The grass houses seemed lifeless, but at last, from one of them, came a challenge in the querulous, high-pitched tones of age:

"What name?"

"Me walk about plenty too much," he replied in the bêche-de-mer English of the west South Pacific. "Me belong along steamer. Suppose 'm you take 'm me along canoe, washee-washee, me give 'm you fella boy two stick tobacco."

"Suppose 'm you give 'm me ten stick, all right along me," came the reply.

"Me give 'm five stick," the six-quart steward bargained. "Suppose 'm you no like 'm five stick then you fella boy go to hell close up."

There was a silence.

"You like 'm five stick?" Daughtry insisted of the dark interior.

"Me like 'm," the darkness answered, and through the darkness the body that owned the voice approached with such strange sounds that the steward lighted a match to see.

A blear-eyed ancient stood before him, balancing on a single crutch. His eyes were half-filmed over by a growth of morbid membrane, and what was not yet covered shone red and irritated. His hair was mangy, standing out in isolated patches of wispy grey. His skin was scarred and wrinkled and mottled, and in colour was a purplish blue surfaced with a grey coating that might have been painted there had it not indubitably grown there and been part and parcel of him.

A blighted leper — was Daughtry's thought as his quick eyes leapt from hands to feet in quest of missing toe-and finger-joints. But in those items the ancient was intact, although one leg ceased midway between knee and thigh.

"My word! What place stop 'm that fella leg?" quoth Daughtry, pointing to the space which the member would have occupied had it not been absent.

"Big fella shark-fish, that fella leg stop 'm along him," the ancient grinned, exposing a horrible aperture of toothlessness for a mouth.

"Me old fella boy too much," the one-legged Methuselah quavered. "Long time too much no smoke 'm tobacco. Suppose 'm you big fella white marster give 'm me one fella stick, close up me washee-washee you that fella steamer."

"Suppose 'm me no give?" the steward impatiently temporized.

For reply, the old man half-turned, and, on his crutch, swinging his stump of leg in the air, began sidling hippity-hop into the grass hut.

"All right," Daughtry cried hastily. "Me give 'm you smoke 'm quick fella."

He dipped into a side coat-pocket for the mintage of the Solomons and stripped off a stick from the handful of pressed sticks. The old man was transfigured as he reached avidly for the stick and received it. He uttered little crooning noises, alternating with sharp cries akin to pain, half-ecstatic, half-petulant, as he drew a black clay pipe from a hole in his ear-lobe, and into the bowl of it, with trembling fingers, untwisted and crumbled the cheap leaf of spoiled Virginia crop.

Pressing down the contents of the full bowl with his thumb, he suddenly plumped upon the ground, the crutch beside him, the one limb under him so that he had the seeming of a legless torso. From a small bag of twisted coconut hanging from his neck upon his withered and sunken chest, he drew out flint and steel and tinder, and, even while the impatient steward was proffering him a box of matches, struck a spark, caught it in the tinder, blew it into strength and quantity, and lighted his pipe from it.

With the first full puff of the smoke he gave over his moans and yelps, the agitation began to fade out of him, and Daughtry, appreciatively waiting, saw the trembling go out of his hands, the pendulous lip-quivering cease, the saliva stop flowing from the corners of his mouth, and placidity come into the fiery remnants of his eyes.

What the old man visioned in the silence that fell, Daughtry did not try to guess. He was too occupied with his own vision, and vividly burned before him the sordid barrenness of a poor-house ward, where an ancient, very like what he himself would become, maundered and gibbered and drooled for a crumb of tobacco for his old clay pipe, and where, of all horrors, no sip of beer ever obtained, much less six quarts of it.

And Michael, by the dim glows of the pipe surveying the scene of the two old men, one squatted in the dark, the other standing, knew naught of the tragedy of age, and was only aware, and overwhelmingly aware, of the immense likableness of this two-legged white god, who, with fingers of magic, through ear-roots and tail-roots and spinal column, had won to the heart of him.

The clay pipe smoked utterly out, the old black, by aid of the crutch, with amazing celerity raised himself upstanding on his one leg and hobbled, with his hippity-hop, to the beach. Daughtry was compelled to lend his strength to the hauling down from the sand into the water of the tiny canoe. It was a dug-out, as ancient and dilapidated as its owner, and, in order to get into it without capsizing, Daughtry wet one leg to the ankle and the other leg to the knee. The old man contorted himself aboard, rolling his body across the gunwale so quickly, that, even while it started to capsize, his weight was across the danger-point and counterbalancing the canoe to its proper equilibrium.

Michael remained on the beach, waiting invitation, his mind not quite made up, but so nearly so that all that was required was that lip-noise. Dag Daughtry made the lip-noise so low that the old man did not hear, and Michael, springing clear from sand to canoe, was on board without wetting his feet. Using Daughtry’s shoulder for a stepping-place, he passed over him and down into the bottom of the canoe. Daughtry kissed with his lips again, and Michael turned around so as to face him, sat down, and rested his head on the steward’s knees.

“I reckon I can take my affydavy on a stack of Bibles that the dog just up an’ followed me,” he grinned in Michael’s ear.

“Washee-washee quick fella,” he commanded.

The ancient obediently dipped his paddle and started pottering an erratic course in the general direction of the cluster of lights that marked the *Makambo*. But he was too feeble, panting and wheezing continually from the exertion and pausing to rest off strokes between strokes. The steward impatiently took the paddle away from him and bent to the work.

Half-way to the steamer the ancient ceased wheezing and spoke, nodding his head at Michael.

“That fella dog he belong big white marster along schooner . . . You give ’m me ten stick tobacco,” he added after due pause to let the information sink in.

“I give ’m you bang alongside head,” Daughtry assured him cheerfully. “White marster along schooner plenty friend along me too much. Just now he stop ’m along *Makambo*. Me take ’m dog along him along *Makambo*.”

There was no further conversation from the ancient, and though he lived long years after, he never mentioned the midnight passenger in the canoe who carried Michael away with him. When he saw and heard the confusion and uproar on the beach later that night when Captain Kellar turned Tulagi upside-down in his search for Michael, the old one-legged one remained discreetly silent. Who was he to seek trouble with the strange ones, the white masters who came and went and roved and ruled?

In this the ancient was in nowise unlike the rest of his dark-skinned Melanesian race. The whites were possessed of unguessed and unthinkable ways and purposes. They constituted another world and were as a play of superior beings on an exalted stage where was no reality such as black men might know as reality, where, like the phantoms of a dream, the white men moved and were as shadows cast upon the vast and mysterious curtain of the Cosmos.

The gang-plank being on the port side, Dag Daughtry paddled around to the starboard and brought the canoe to a stop under a certain open port.

“Kwaque!” he called softly, once, and twice.

At the second call the light of the port was obscured apparently by a head that piped down in a thin squeak.

“Me stop ’m, marster.”

“One fella dog stop ’m along you,” the steward whispered up. “Keep ’m door shut. You wait along me. Stand by! Now!”

With a quick catch and lift, he passed Michael up and into unseen hands outstretched from the iron wall of the ship, and paddled ahead to an open cargo port. Dipping into his tobacco pocket, he thrust a loose handful of sticks into the ancient’s hand and shoved the canoe adrift with no thought of how its helpless occupant would ever reach shore.

The old man did not touch the paddle, and he was unregardless of the lofty-sided steamer as the canoe slipped down the length of it into the darkness astern. He was too occupied in counting the wealth of tobacco showered upon him. No easy task, his counting. Five was the limit of his numerals. When he had counted five, he began over again and counted a second five. Three fives he found in all, and two sticks over; and thus, at the end of it, he possessed as definite a knowledge of the number of sticks as would be possessed by the average white man by means of the single number *seventeen*.

More it was, far more, than his avarice had demanded. Yet he was unsurprised. Nothing white men did could surprise. Had it been two sticks instead of seventeen, he would have been equally unsurprised. Since all acts of white men were surprises, the only surprise of action they could achieve for a black man would be the doing of an unsurprising thing.

Paddling, wheezing, resting, oblivious of the shadow-world of the white men, knowing only the reality of Tulagi Mountain cutting its crest-line blackly across the dim radiance of the star-sprinkled sky, the reality of the sea and of the canoe he so feebly urged across it, and the reality of his fading strength and of the death into which he would surely end, the ancient black man slowly made his shoreward way.

CHAPTER III

In the meanwhile, Michael. Lifted through the air, exchanged into invisible hands that drew him through a narrow diameter of brass into a lighted room, Michael looked about him in expectancy of Jerry. But Jerry, at that moment, lay cuddled beside Villa Kennan's sleeping-cot on the slant deck of the *Ariel*, as that trim craft, the Shortlands astern and New Guinea dead ahead, heeled her scuppers a-whisper and garrulous to the sea-welter alongside as she logged her eleven knots under the press of the freshening trades. Instead of Jerry, from whom he had last parted on board a boat, Michael saw Kwaque.

Kwaque? Well, Kwaque was Kwaque, an individual, more unlike all other men than most men are unlike one another. No queerer estray ever drifted along the stream of life. Seventeen years old he was, as men measure time; but a century was measured in his lean-lined face, his wrinkled forehead, his hollowed temples, and his deep-sunk eyes. From his thin legs, fragile-looking as windstraws, the bones of which were sheathed in withered skin with apparently no muscle padding in between — from such frail stems sprouted the torso of a fat man. The huge and protuberant stomach was amply supported by wide and massive hips, and the shoulders were broad as those of a Hercules. But, beheld sidewise, there was no depth to those shoulders and the top of the chest. Almost, at that part of his anatomy, he seemed builded in two dimensions. Thin his arms were as his legs, and, as Michael first beheld him, he had all the seeming of a big-bellied black spider.

He proceeded to dress, a matter of moments, slipping into duck trousers and blouse, dirty and frayed from long usage. Two fingers of his left hand were doubled into a permanent bend, and, to an expert, would have advertised that he was a leper. Although he belonged to Dag Daughtry just as much as if the steward possessed a chattel bill of sale of him, his owner did not know that his anæsthetic twist of ravaged nerves tokened the dread disease.

The manner of the ownership was simple. At King William Island, in the Admiralties, Kwaque had made, in the parlance of the South Pacific, a pier-head jump. So to speak, leprosy and all, he had jumped into Dag Daughtry's arms. Strolling along the native runways in the fringe of jungle just beyond the beach, as was his custom, to see whatever he might pick up, the steward had picked up Kwaque. And he had picked him up in extremity.

Pursued by two very active young men armed with fire-hardened spears, tottering along with incredible swiftness on his two spindle legs, Kwaque had fallen exhausted at Daughtry's feet and looked up at him with the beseeching eyes of a deer fleeing from the hounds. Daughtry had inquired into the matter, and the inquiry was violent; for he had a wholesome fear of germs and bacilli, and when the two active young men tried to run him through with their filth-corroded spears, he caught the spear of one young man under his arm and put the other young man to sleep with a left hook to the jaw. A moment later the young man whose spear he held had joined the other in slumber.

The elderly steward was not satisfied with the mere spears. While the rescued Kwaque continued to moan and slubber thankfulness at his feet, he proceeded to strip them that were naked. Nothing they wore in the way of clothing, but from around each of their necks he removed a necklace of porpoise teeth that was worth a gold sovereign in mere exchange value. From the kinky locks of one of the naked young men he drew a hand-carved, fine-toothed comb, the lofty back of which was inlaid with mother-of-pearl, which he later sold in Sydney to a curio shop for eight shillings. Nose and ear ornaments of bone and turtle-shell he also rifled, as well as a chest-crescent of pearl shell, fourteen inches across, worth fifteen shillings anywhere. The two spears ultimately fetched him five shillings each from the tourists at Port Moresby. Not lightly may a ship steward undertake to maintain a six-quart reputation.

When he turned to depart from the active young men, who, back to consciousness, were observing him with bright, quick, wild-animal eyes, Kwaque followed so close at his heels as to step upon them and make him stumble. Whereupon he loaded Kwaque with his trove and put him in front to lead along the runway to the beach. And for the rest of the way to the steamer, Dag Daughtry grinned and chuckled at sight of his plunder and at sight of Kwaque, who fantastically titubated and ambled along, barrel-like, on his pipe-stems.

On board the steamer, which happened to be the *Cockspur*, Daughtry persuaded the captain to enter Kwaque on the ship's articles as steward's helper with a rating of ten shillings a month. Also, he learned Kwaque's story.

It was all an account of a pig. The two active young men were brothers who lived in the next village to his, and the pig had been theirs — so Kwaque narrated in atrocious bêche-de-mer English. He, Kwaque, had never seen the pig. He had never known of its existence until after it was dead. The two young men had loved the pig. But what of that? It did not concern Kwaque, who was as unaware of their love for the pig as he was unaware of the pig itself.

The first he knew, he averred, was the gossip of the village that the pig was dead, and that somebody would have to die for it. It was all right, he said, in reply to a query from the steward. It was the custom. Whenever a loved pig died its owners were in custom bound to go out and kill somebody, anybody. Of course, it was better if they killed the one whose magic had made the pig sick. But, failing that one, any one would do. Hence Kwaque was selected for the blood-atonement.

Dag Daughtry drank a seventh quart as he listened, so carried away was he by the sombre sense of romance of this dark jungle event wherein men killed even strangers because a pig was dead.

Scouts out on the runways, Kwaque continued, brought word of the coming of the two bereaved pig-owners, and the village had fled into the jungle and climbed trees — all except Kwaque, who was unable to climb trees.

"My word," Kwaque concluded, "me no make 'm that fella pig sick."

"My word," quoth Dag Daughtry, "you devil-devil along that fella pig too much. You look 'm like hell. You make 'm any fella thing sick look along you. You make 'm me sick too much."

It became quite a custom for the steward, as he finished his sixth bottle before turning in, to call upon Kwaque for his story. It carried him back to his boyhood when he had been excited by tales of wild cannibals in far lands and dreamed some day to see them for himself. And here he was, he would chuckle to himself, with a real true cannibal for a slave.

A slave Kwaque was, as much as if Daughtry had bought him on the auction-block. Whenever the steward transferred from ship to ship of the Burns Philp fleet, he always stipulated that Kwaque should accompany him and be duly rated at ten shillings. Kwaque had no say in the matter. Even had he desired to escape in Australian ports, there was no need for Daughtry to watch him. Australia, with her "all-white" policy, attended to that. No dark-skinned human, whether Malay, Japanese, or Polynesian, could land on her shore without putting into the Government's hand a cash security of one hundred pounds.

Nor at the other islands visited by the *Makambo* had Kwaque any desire to cut and run for it. King William Island, which was the only land he had ever trod, was his yard-stick by which he measured all other islands. And since King William Island was cannibalistic, he could only conclude that the other islands were given to similar dietary practice.

As for King William Island, the *Makambo*, on the former run of the *Cockspur*, stopped there every ten weeks; but the direst threat Daughtry ever held over him was the putting ashore of him at the place where the two active young men still mourned their pig. In fact, it was their regular programme, each trip, to paddle out and around the *Makambo* and make ferocious grimaces up at Kwaque, who grimaced back at them from over the rail. Daughtry even encouraged this exchange of facial amenities for the purpose of deterring him from ever hoping to win ashore to the village of his birth.

For that matter, Kwaque had little desire to leave his master, who, after all, was kindly and just, and never lifted a hand to him. Having survived sea-sickness at the first, and never setting foot upon the land so that he never again knew sea-sickness, Kwaque was certain he lived in an earthly paradise. He never had to regret his inability to climb trees, because danger never threatened him. He had food regularly, and all he wanted, and it was such food! No one in his village could have dreamed of any delicacy of the many delicacies which he consumed all the time. Because of these matters he even pulled through a light attack of home-sickness, and was as contented a human as ever sailed the seas.

And Kwaque it was who pulled Michael through the port-hole into Dag Daughtry's stateroom and waited for that worthy to arrive by the roundabout way of the door. After a quick look around the room and a sniff of the bunk and under the bunk which informed him that Jerry was not present, Michael turned his attention to Kwaque.

Kwaque tried to be friendly. He uttered a clucking noise in advertisement of his friendliness, and Michael snarled at this black who had dared to lay hands upon him — a contamination, according to Michael's training — and who now dared to address him who associated only with white gods.

Kwaque passed off the rebuff with a silly gibbering laugh and started to step nearer the door to be in readiness to open it at his master's coming. But at first lift of his leg, Michael flew at it. Kwaque immediately put it down, and Michael subsided, though he kept a watchful guard. What did he know of this strange black, save that he was a black and that, in the absence of a white master, all blacks required watching? Kwaque tried slowly sliding his foot along the floor, but Michael knew the trick and with bristle and growl put a stop to it.

It was upon this tableau that Daughtry entered, and, while he admired Michael much under the bright electric light, he realized the situation.

"Kwaque, you make 'm walk about leg belong you," he commanded, in order to make sure.

Kwaque's glance of apprehension at Michael was convincing enough, but the steward insisted. Kwaque gingerly obeyed, but scarcely had his foot moved an inch when Michael's was upon him. The foot and leg petrified, while Michael stiff-leggedly drew a half-circle of intimidation about him.

"Got you nailed to the floor, eh?" Daughtry chuckled. "Some nigger-chaser, my word, any amount."

"Hey, you, Kwaque, go fetch 'm two fella bottle of beer stop 'm along icey-chestis," he commanded in his most peremptory manner.

Kwaque looked beseechingly, but did not stir. Nor did he stir at a harsher repetition of the order.

"My word!" the steward bullied. "Suppose 'm you no fetch 'm beer close up, I knock 'm eight bells 'n 'a dog-watch onta you. Suppose 'm you no fetch 'm close up, me make 'm you go ashore 'n' walk about along King William Island."

"No can," Kwaque murmured timidly. "Eye belong dog look along me too much. Me no like 'm dog kai-kai along me."

"You fright along dog?" his master demanded.

"My word, me fright along dog any amount."

Dag Daughtry was delighted. Also, he was thirsty from his trip ashore and did not prolong the situation.

"Hey, you, dog," he addressed Michael. "This fella boy he all right. Savvee? He all right."

Michael bobbed his tail and flattened his ears in token that he was trying to understand. When the steward patted the black on the shoulder, Michael advanced and sniffed both the legs he had kept nailed to the floor.

“Walk about,” Daughtry commanded. “Walk about slow fella,” he cautioned, though there was little need.

Michael bristled, but permitted the first timid step. At the second he glanced up at Daughtry to make certain.

“That’s right,” he was reassured. “That fella boy belong me. He all right, you bet.”

Michael smiled with his eyes that he understood, and turned casually aside to investigate an open box on the floor which contained plates of turtle-shell, hack-saws, and emery paper.

* * * * *

“And now,” Dag Daughtry muttered weightily aloud, as, bottle in hand, he leaned back in his arm-chair while Kwaque knelt at his feet to unlace his shoes, “now to consider a name for you, Mister Dog, that will be just to your breeding and fair to my powers of invention.”

CHAPTER IV

Irish terriers, when they have gained maturity, are notable, not alone for their courage, fidelity, and capacity for love, but for their cool-headedness and power of self-control and restraint. They are less easily excited off their balance; they can recognize and obey their master's voice in the scuffle and rage of battle; and they never fly into nervous hysterics such as are common, say, with fox-terriers.

Michael possessed no trace of hysteria, though he was more temperamentally excitable and explosive than his blood-brother Jerry, while his father and mother were a sedate old couple indeed compared with him. Far more than mature Jerry, was mature Michael playful and rowdyish. His ebullient spirits were always on tap to spill over on the slightest provocation, and, as he was afterwards to demonstrate, he could weary a puppy with play. In short, Michael was a merry soul.

"Soul" is used advisedly. Whatever the human soul may be — informing spirit, identity, personality, consciousness — that intangible thing Michael certainly possessed. His soul, differing only in degree, partook of the same attributes as the human soul. He knew love, sorrow, joy, wrath, pride, self-consciousness, humour. Three cardinal attributes of the human soul are memory, will, and understanding; and memory, will, and understanding were Michael's.

Just like a human, with his five senses he contacted with the world exterior to him. Just like a human, the results to him of these contacts were sensations. Just like a human, these sensations on occasion culminated in emotions. Still further, like a human, he could and did perceive, and such perceptions did flower in his brain as concepts, certainly not so wide and deep and recondite as those of humans, but concepts nevertheless.

Perhaps, to let the human down a trifle from such disgraceful identity of the highest life-attributes, it would be well to admit that Michael's sensations were not quite so poignant, say in the matter of a needle-thrust through his foot as compared with a needle-thrust through the palm of a hand. Also, it is admitted, when consciousness suffused his brain with a thought, that the thought was dimmer, vaguer than a similar thought in a human brain. Furthermore, it is admitted that never, never, in a million lifetimes, could Michael have demonstrated a proposition in Euclid or solved a quadratic equation. Yet he was capable of knowing beyond all peradventure of a doubt that three bones are more than two bones, and that ten dogs compose a more redoubtable host than do two dogs.

One admission, however, will not be made, namely, that Michael could not love as devotedly, as wholeheartedly, unselfishly, madly, self-sacrificingly as a human. He did so love — not because he was Michael, but because he was a dog.

Michael had loved Captain Kellar more than he loved his own life. No more than Jerry for Skipper, would he have hesitated to risk his life for Captain Kellar. And he was destined, as time went by and the conviction that Captain Kellar had passed into the inevitable nothingness along with Meringe and the Solomons, to love just as absolutely this six-quart steward with the understanding ways and the fascinating lip-caress. Kwaque, no; for Kwaque was black. Kwaque he merely accepted, as an appurtenance, as a part of the human landscape, as a chattel of Dag Daughtry.

But he did not know this new god as Dag Daughtry. Kwaque called him "marster"; but Michael heard other white men so addressed by the blacks. Many blacks had he heard call Captain Kellar "marster." It was Captain Duncan who called the steward "Steward." Michael came to hear him, and his officers, and all the passengers, so call him; and thus, to Michael, his god's name was Steward, and for ever after he was to know him and think of him as Steward.

There was the question of his own name. The next evening after he came on board, Dag Daughtry talked it over with him. Michael sat on his haunches, the length of his lower jaw resting on Daughtry's knee, the while his eyes dilated, contracted and glowed, his ears ever pricking and repricking to listen, his stump tail thumping ecstatically on the floor.

"It's this way, son," the steward told him. "Your father and mother were Irish. Now don't be denying it, you rascal — "

This, as Michael, encouraged by the unmistakable geniality and kindness in the voice, wriggled his whole body and thumped double knocks of delight with his tail. Not that he understood a word of it, but that he did understand the something behind the speech that informed the string of sounds with all the mysterious likeableness that white gods possessed.

"Never be ashamed of your ancestry. An' remember, God loves the Irish — Kwaque! Go fetch 'm two bottle beer fella stop 'm along icey-chestis! — Why, the very mug of you, my lad, sticks out Irish all over it."

(Michael's tail beat a tattoo.) "Now don't be blarneyin' me. 'Tis well I'm wise to your insidyous, snugglin', heart-stealin' ways. I'll have ye know my heart's impervious. 'Tis soaked too long this many a day in beer. I stole you to sell you, not to be lovin' you. I could've loved you once; but that was before me and beer was introduced. I'd sell you for twenty quid right now, coin down, if the chance offered. An' I ain't goin' to love you, so you can put that in your pipe 'n' smoke it."

"But as I was about to say when so rudely interrupted by your 'fectionate ways — "

Here he broke off to tilt to his mouth the opened bottle Kwaque handed him. He sighed, wiped his lips with the back of his hand, and proceeded.

"'Tis a strange thing, son, this silly matter of beer. Kwaque, the Methusalem-faced ape grinnin' there, belongs to me. But by my faith do I belong to beer, bottles 'n' bottles of it 'n' mountains of bottles of it enough to sink the ship. Dog, truly I envy you, settin' there comfortable-like inside your body that's untainted of alcohol. I may own you, and the man that gives me twenty quid will own you, but never will a mountain of bottles own you. You're a freer man than I am, Mister Dog, though I don't know your name. Which reminds me — "

He drained the bottle, tossed it to Kwaque, and made signs for him to open the remaining one.

"The namin' of you, son, is not lightly to be considered. Irish, of course, but what shall it be? Paddy? Well may you shake your head. There's no smack of distinction to it. Who'd mistake you for a hod-carrier? Ballymena might do, but it sounds much like a lady, my boy. Ay, boy you are. 'Tis an idea. Boy! Let's see. Banshee Boy? Rotten. Lad of Erin!"

He nodded approbation and reached for the second bottle. He drank and meditated, and drank again.

"I've got you," he announced solemnly. "Killeny is a lovely name, and it's Killeny Boy for you. How's that strike your honourableness? — high-soundin', dignified as a earl or . . . or a retired brewer. Many's the one of that gentry I've helped to retire in my day."

He finished his bottle, caught Michael suddenly by both jowls, and, leaning forward, rubbed noses with him. As suddenly released, with thumping tail and dancing eyes, Michael gazed up into the god's face. A definite soul, or entity, or spirit-thing glimmered behind his dog's eyes, already fond with affection for this hair-grizzled god who talked with him he knew not what, but whose very talking carried delicious and unguessable messages to his heart.

“Hey! Kwaque, you!”

Kwaque, squatted on the floor, his hams on his heels, paused from the rough-polishing of a shell comb designed and cut out by his master, and looked up, eager to receive command and serve.

“Kwaque, you fella this time now savvee name stop along this fella dog. His name belong ’m him, Killeny Boy. You make ’m name stop ’m inside head belong you. All the time you speak ’m this fella dog, you speak ’m Killeny Boy. Savvee? Suppose ’m you no savvee, I knock ’m block off belong you. Killeny Boy, savvee! Killeny Boy. Killeny Boy.”

As Kwaque removed his shoes and helped him undress, Daughtry regarded Michael with sleepy eyes.

“I’ve got you, laddy,” he announced, as he stood up and swayed toward bed. “I’ve got your name, an’ here’s your number — I got that, too: *high-strung but reasonable*. It fits you like the paper on the wall.

“High-strung but reasonable, that’s what you are, Killeny Boy, high-strung but reasonable,” he continued to mumble as Kwaque helped to roll him into his bunk.

Kwaque returned to his polishing. His lips stammered and halted in the making of noiseless whispers, as, with corrugated brows of puzzlement, he addressed the steward:

“Marster, what name stop ’m along that fella dog?”

“Killeny Boy, you kinky-head man-eater, Killeny Boy, Killeny Boy,” Dag Daughtry murmured drowsily. “Kwaque, you black blood-drinker, run n’ fetch ’m one fella bottle stop ’m along icey-chestis.”

“No stop ’m, marster,” the black quavered, with eyes alert for something to be thrown at him. “Six fella bottle he finish altogether.”

The steward’s sole reply was a snore.

The black, with the twisted hand of leprosy and with a barely perceptible infiltration of the same disease thickening the skin of the forehead between the eyes, bent over his polishing, and ever his lips moved, repeating over and over, “Killeny Boy.”

CHAPTER V

For a number of days Michael saw only Steward and Kwaque. This was because he was confined to the steward's stateroom. Nobody else knew that he was on board, and Dag Daughtry, thoroughly aware that he had stolen a white man's dog, hoped to keep his presence secret and smuggle him ashore when the *Makambo* docked in Sydney.

Quickly the steward learned Michael's pre-eminent teachableness. In the course of his careful feeding of him, he gave him an occasional chicken bone. Two lessons, which would scarcely be called lessons, since both of them occurred within five minutes and each was not over half a minute in duration, sufficed to teach Michael that only on the floor of the room in the corner nearest the door could he chew chicken bones. Thereafter, without prompting, as a matter of course when handed a bone, he carried it to the corner.

And why not? He had the wit to grasp what Steward desired of him; he had the heart that made it a happiness for him to serve. Steward was a god who was kind, who loved him with voice and lip, who loved him with touch of hand, rub of nose, or enfolding arm. As all service flourishes in the soil of love, so with Michael. Had Steward commanded him to forego the chicken bone after it was in the corner, he would have served him by foregoing. Which is the way of the dog, the only animal that will cheerfully and gladly, with leaping body of joy, leave its food uneaten in order to accompany or to serve its human master.

Practically all his waking time off duty, Dag Daughtry spent with the imprisoned Michael, who, at command, had quickly learned to refrain from whining and barking. And during these hours of companionship Michael learned many things. Daughtry found that he already understood and obeyed simple things such as "no," "yes," "get up," and "lie down," and he improved on them, teaching him, "Go into the bunk and lie down," "Go under the bunk," "Bring one shoe," "Bring two shoes." And almost without any work at all, he taught him to roll over, to say his prayers, to play dead, to sit up and smoke a pipe with a hat on his head, and not merely to stand up on his hind legs but to walk on them.

Then, too, was the trick of "no can and can do." Placing a savoury, nose-tantalising bit of meat or cheese on the edge of the bunk on a level with

Michael's nose, Daughtry would simply say, "No can." Nor would Michael touch the food till he received the welcome, "Can do." Daughtry, with the "no can" still in force, would leave the stateroom, and, though he remained away half an hour or half a dozen hours, on his return he would find the food untouched and Michael, perhaps, asleep in the corner at the head of the bunk which had been allotted him for a bed. Early in this trick once when the steward had left the room and Michael's eager nose was within an inch of the prohibited morsel, Kwaque, playfully inclined, reached for the morsel himself and received a lacerated hand from the quick flash and clip of Michael's jaws.

None of the tricks that he was ever eager to do for Steward, would Michael do for Kwaque, despite the fact that Kwaque had no touch of meanness or viciousness in him. The point was that Michael had been trained, from his first dawn of consciousness, to differentiate between black men and white men. Black men were always the servants of white men — or such had been his experience; and always they were objects of suspicion, ever bent on wreaking mischief and requiring careful watching. The cardinal duty of a dog was to serve his white god by keeping a vigilant eye on all blacks that came about.

Yet Michael permitted Kwaque to serve him in matters of food, water, and other offices, at first in the absence of Steward attending to his ship duties, and, later, at any time. For he realized, without thinking about it at all, that whatever Kwaque did for him, whatever food Kwaque spread for him, really proceeded, not from Kwaque, but from Kwaque's master who was also his master. Yet Kwaque bore no grudge against Michael, and was himself so interested in his lord's welfare and comfort — this lord who had saved his life that terrible day on King William Island from the two grief-stricken pig-owners — that he cherished Michael for his lord's sake. Seeing the dog growing into his master's affection, Kwaque himself developed a genuine affection for Michael — much in the same way that he worshipped anything of the steward's, whether the shoes he polished for him, the clothes he brushed and cleaned for him, or the six bottles of beer he put into the ice-chest each day for him.

In truth, there was nothing of the master-quality in Kwaque, while Michael was a natural aristocrat. Michael, out of love, would serve Steward, but Michael lorded it over the kinky-head. Kwaque possessed overwhelmingly the slave-nature, while in Michael there was little more of the slave-nature than was found in the North American Indians when the vain attempt was made to make them into slaves on the plantations of Cuba. All of which was no personal vice of Kwaque or virtue of Michael. Michael's heredity, rigidly selected for ages by man, was chiefly composed of fierceness and faithfulness. And fierceness and faithfulness, together, invariably produce pride. And pride cannot exist without honour, nor can honour without poise.

Michael's crowning achievement, under Daughtry's tutelage, in the first days in the stateroom, was to learn to count up to five. Many hours of work were required, however, in spite of his unusual high endowment of intelligence. For he had to learn, first, the spoken numerals; second, to see with his eyes and in his brain differentiate between one object, and all other groups of objects up to and including the group of five; and, third, in his mind, to relate an object, or any group of objects, with its numerical name as uttered by Steward.

In the training Dag Daughtry used balls of paper tied about with twine. He would toss the five balls under the bunk and tell Michael to fetch three, and neither two, nor four, but three would Michael bring forth and deliver into his hand. When Daughtry threw three under the bunk and demanded four, Michael would deliver the three, search about vainly for the fourth, then dance pleadingly with bobs of tail and half-leaps about Steward, and finally leap into the bed and secure the fourth from under the pillow or among the blankets.

It was the same with other known objects. Up to five, whether shoes or shirts or pillow-slips, Michael would fetch the number requested. And between the mathematical mind of Michael, who counted to five, and the mind of the ancient black at Tulagi, who counted sticks of tobacco in units of five, was a distance shorter than that between Michael and Dag Daughtry who could do multiplication and long division. In the same manner, up the same ladder of mathematical ability, a still greater distance separated Dag Daughtry from Captain Duncan, who by mathematics navigated the *Makambo*. Greatest mathematical distance of all was that between Captain Duncan's mind and the mind of an astronomer who charted the heavens and navigated a thousand million miles away among the stars and who tossed, a mere morsel of his mathematical knowledge, the few shreds of information to Captain Duncan that enabled him to know from day to day the place of the *Makambo* on the sea.

In one thing only could Kwaque rule Michael. Kwaque possessed a jews' harp, and, whenever the world of the *Makambo* and the servitude to the steward grew wearisome, he could transport himself to King William Island by thrusting the primitive instrument between his jaws and fanning weird rhythms from it with his hand, and when he thus crossed space and time, Michael sang — or howled, rather, though his howl possessed the same soft mellowness as Jerry's. Michael did not want to howl, but the chemistry of his being was such that he reacted to music as compulsively as elements react on one another in the laboratory.

While he lay perdu in Steward's stateroom, his voice was the one thing that was not to be heard, so Kwaque was forced to seek the solace of his jews' harp in the sweltering heat of the gratings over the fire-room. But this did not continue long, for, either according to blind chance, or to the lines of fate written in the book of life ere ever the foundations of the world were laid, Michael was scheduled for an adventure that was profoundly to affect, not alone his own destiny, but the destinies of Kwaque and Dag Daughtry and determine the very place of their death and burial.

CHAPTER VI

The adventure that was so to alter the future occurred when Michael, in no uncertain manner, announced to all and sundry his presence on the *Makambo*. It was due to Kwaque's carelessness, to commence with, for Kwaque left the stateroom without tight-closing the door. As the *Makambo* rolled on an easy sea the door swung back and forth, remaining wide open for intervals and banging shut but not banging hard enough to latch itself.

Michael crossed the high threshold with the innocent intention of exploring no farther than the immediate vicinity. But scarcely was he through, when a heavier roll slammed the door and latched it. And immediately Michael wanted to get back. Obedience was strong in him, for it was his heart's desire to serve his lord's will, and from the few days' confinement he sensed, or guessed, or divined, without thinking about it, that it was Steward's will for him to stay in the stateroom.

For a long time he sat down before the closed door, regarding it wistfully but being too wise to bark or speak to such inanimate object. It had been part of his early puppyhood education to learn that only live things could be moved by plea or threat, and that while things not alive did move, as the door had moved, they never moved of themselves, and were deaf to anything life might have to say to them. Occasionally he trotted down the short cross-hall upon which the stateroom opened, and gazed up and down the long hall that ran fore and aft.

For the better part of an hour he did this, returning always to the door that would not open. Then he achieved a definite idea. Since the door would not open, and since Steward and Kwaque did not return, he would go in search of them. Once with this concept of action clear in his brain, without timidities of hesitation and irresolution, he trotted aft down the long hall. Going around the right angle in which it ended, he encountered a narrow flight of steps. Among many scents, he recognized those of Kwaque and Steward and knew they had passed that way.

Up the stairs and on the main deck, he began to meet passengers. Being white gods, he did not resent their addresses to him, though he did not linger and went out on the open deck where more of the favoured gods reclined in steamer-chairs. Still no Kwaque or Steward. Another flight of narrow, steep stairs invited, and he came out on the boat-deck. Here, under the wide awnings, were many more of the gods — many times more than he had that far seen in his life.

The for'ard end of the boat-deck terminated in the bridge, which, instead of being raised above it, was part of it. Trotting around the wheel-house to the shady lee-side of it, he came upon his fate; for be it known that Captain Duncan possessed on board in addition to two fox-terriers, a big Persian cat, and that cat possessed a litter of kittens. Her chosen nursery was the wheel-house, and Captain Duncan had humoured her, giving her a box for her kittens and threatening the quartermasters with all manner of dire fates did they so much as step on one of the kittens.

But Michael knew nothing of this. And the big Persian knew of his existence before he did of hers. In fact, the first he knew was when she launched herself upon him out of the open wheel-house doorway. Even as he glimpsed this abrupt danger, and before he could know what it was, he leaped sideways and saved himself. From his point of view, the assault was unprovoked. He was staring at her with bristling hair, recognizing her for what she was, a cat, when she sprang again, her tail the size of a large man's arm, all claws and spitting fury and vindictiveness.

This was too much for a self-respecting Irish terrier. His wrath was immediate with her second leap, and he sprang to the side to avoid her claws, and in from the side to meet her, his jaws clamping together on her spinal column with a jerk while she was still in mid-air. The next moment she lay sprawling and struggling on the deck with a broken back.

But for Michael this was only the beginning. A shrill yelling, rather than yelping, of more enemies made him whirl half about, but not quick enough. Struck in flank by two full-grown fox-terriers, he was slashed and rolled on the deck. The two, by the way, had long before made their first appearance on the *Makambo* as little puppies in Dag Daughtry's coat pockets — Daughtry, in his usual fashion, having appropriated them ashore in Sydney and sold them to Captain Duncan for a guinea apiece.

By this time, scrambling to his feet, Michael was really angry. In truth, it was raining cats and dogs, such belligerent shower all unprovoked by him who had picked no quarrels nor even been aware of his enemies until they assailed him. Brave the fox-terriers were, despite the hysterical rage they were in, and they were upon him as he got his legs under him. The fangs of one clashed with his, cutting the lips of both of them, and the lighter dog recoiled from the impact. The other succeeded in taking Michael in flank, fetching blood and hurt with his teeth. With an instant curve, that was almost spasmodic, of his body, Michael flung his flank clear, leaving the other's mouth full of his hair, and at the same moment drove his teeth through an ear till they met. The fox-terrier, with a shrill yelp of pain, sprang back so impetuously as to ribbon its ear as Michael's teeth combed through it.

The first terrier was back upon him, and he was whirling to meet it, when a new and equally unprovoked assault was made upon him. This time it was Captain Duncan, in a rage at sight of his slain cat. The instep of his foot caught Michael squarely under the chest, half knocking the breath out of him and wholly lifting him into the air, so that he fell heavily on his side. The two terriers were upon him, filling their mouths with his straight, wiry hair as they sank their teeth in. Still on his side, as he was beginning to struggle to his feet, he clipped his jaws together on a leg of one, who screamed with pain and retreated on three legs, holding up the fourth, a fore leg, the bone of which Michael's teeth had all but crushed.

Twice Michael slashed the other four-footed foe and then pursued him in a circle with Captain Duncan pursuing him in turn. Shortening the distance by leaping across a chord of the arc of the other's flight, Michael closed his jaws on the back and side of the neck. Such abrupt arrest in mid-flight by the heavier dog brought the fox-terrier down on deck with, a heavy thump. Simultaneous with this, Captain Duncan's second kick landed, communicating such propulsion to Michael as to tear his clenched teeth through the flesh and out of the flesh of the fox-terrier.

And Michael turned on the Captain. What if he were a white god? In his rage at so many assaults of so many enemies, Michael, who had been peacefully looking for Kwaque and Steward, did not stop to reckon. Besides, it was a strange white god upon whom he had never before laid eyes.

At the beginning he had snarled and growled. But it was a more serious affair to attack a god, and no sound came from him as he leaped to meet the leg flying toward him in another kick. As with the cat, he did not leap straight at it. To the side to avoid, and in with a curve of body as it passed, was his way. He had learned the trick with many blacks at Meringe and on board the *Eugénie*, so that as often he succeeded as failed at it. His teeth came together in the slack of the white duck trousers. The consequent jerk on Captain Duncan's leg made that infuriated mariner lose his balance.

Almost he fell forward on his face, part recovered himself with a violent effort, stumbled over Michael who was in for another bite, tottered wildly around, and sat down on the deck.

How long he might have sat there to recover his breath is problematical, for he rose as rapidly as his stoutness would permit, spurred on by Michael's teeth already sunk into the fleshy part of his shoulder. Michael missed his calf as he uprose, but tore the other leg of the trousers to shreds and received a kick that lifted him a yard above the deck in a half-somersault and landed him on his back on deck.

Up to this time the Captain had been on the ferocious offensive, and he was in the act of following up the kick when Michael regained his feet and soared up in the air, not for leg or thigh, but for the throat. Too high it was for him to reach it, but his teeth closed on the flowing black scarf and tore it to tatters as his weight drew him back to deck.

It was not this so much that turned Captain Duncan to the pure defensive and started him retreating backward, as it was the silence of Michael. Ominous as death it was. There were no snarls nor throat-threats. With eyes straight-looking and unblinking, he sprang and sprang again. Neither did he growl when he attacked nor yelp when he was kicked. Fear of the blow was not in him. As Tom Haggin had so often bragged of Biddy and Terrence, they bred true in Jerry and Michael in the matter of not wincing at a blow. Always — they were so made — they sprang to meet the blow and to encounter the creature who delivered the blow. With a silence that was invested with the seriousness of death, they were wont to attack and to continue to attack.

And so Michael. As the Captain retreated kicking, he attacked, leaping and slashing. What saved Captain Duncan was a sailor with a deck mop on the end of a stick. Intervening, he managed to thrust it into Michael's mouth and shove him away. This first time his teeth closed automatically upon it. But, spitting it out, he declined thereafter to bite it, knowing it for what it was, an inanimate thing upon which his teeth could inflict no hurt.

Nor, beyond trying to avoid him, was he interested in the sailor. It was Captain Duncan, leaning his back against the rail, breathing heavily, and wiping the streaming sweat from his face, who was Michael's meat. Long as it has taken to tell the battle, beginning with the slaying of the Persian cat to the thrusting of the mop into Michael's jaws, so swift had been the rush of events that the passengers, springing from their deck-chairs and hurrying to the scene, were just arriving when Michael eluded the mop of the sailor by a successful dodge and plunged in on Captain Duncan, this time sinking his teeth so savagely into a rotund calf as to cause its owner to splutter an incoherent curse and howl of wrathful surprise.

A fortunate kick hurled Michael away and enabled the sailor to intervene once again with the mop. And upon the scene came Dag Daughtry, to behold his captain, frayed and bleeding and breathing apoplectically, Michael raging in ghastly silence at the end of a mop, and a large Persian mother-cat writhing with a broken back.

"Killeny Boy!" the steward cried imperatively.

Through no matter what indignation and rage that possessed him, his lord's voice penetrated his consciousness, so that, cooling almost instantly, Michael's ears flattened, his bristling hair lay down, and his lips covered his fangs as he turned his head to look acknowledgment.

"Come here, Killeny!"

Michael obeyed — not crouching cringingly, but trotting eagerly, gladly, to Steward's feet.

"Lie down, Boy."

He turned half around as he flumped himself down with a sigh of relief, and, with a red flash of tongue, kissed Steward's foot.

"Your dog, Steward?" Captain Duncan demanded in a smothered voice wherein struggled anger and shortness of breath.

"Yes, sir. My dog. What's he been up to, sir?"

The totality of what Michael had been up to choked the Captain completely. He could only gesture around from the dying cat to his torn clothes and bleeding wounds and the fox-terriers licking their injuries and whimpering at his feet.

"It's too bad, sir . . . " Daughtry began.

"Too bad, hell!" the captain shut him off. "Bo's'n! Throw that dog overboard."

"Throw the dog overboard, sir, yes, sir," the boatswain repeated, but hesitated.

Dag Daughtry's face hardened unconsciously with the stiffening of his will to dogged opposition, which, in its own slow quiet way, would go to any length to have its way. But he answered respectfully enough, his features, by a shrewd effort, relaxing into a seeming of his customary good-nature.

"He's a good dog, sir, and an unoffending dog. I can't imagine what could a-made 'm break loose this way. He must a-had cause, sir — "

"He had," one of the passengers, a coconut planter from the Shortlands, interjected.

The steward threw him a grateful glance and continued.

"He's a good dog, sir, a most obedient dog, sir — look at the way he minded me right in the thick of the scrap an' come 'n' lay down. He's smart as chain-lightnin', sir; do anything I tell him. I'll make him make friends. See. . . "

Stepping over to the two hysterical terriers, Daughtry called Michael to him.

"He's all right, savvee, Killeny, he all right," he crooned, at the same time resting one hand on a terrier and the other on Michael.

The terrier whimpered and backed solidly against Captain Duncan's legs, but Michael, with a slow bob of tail and unbelligerent ears, advanced to him, looked up to Steward to make sure, then sniffed his late antagonist, and even ran out his tongue in a caress to the side of the other's ear.

"See, sir, no bad feelings," Daughtry exulted. "He plays the game, sir. He's a proper dog, he's a man-dog. — Here, Killeny! The other one. He all right. Kiss and make up. That's the stuff."

The other fox-terrier, the one with the injured foreleg, endured Michael's sniff with no more than hysterical growls deep in the throat; but the flipping out of Michael's tongue was too much. The wounded terrier exploded in a futile snap at Michael's tongue and nose.

"He all right, Killeny, he all right, sure," Steward warned quickly.

With a bob of his tail in token of understanding, without a shade of resentment, Michael lifted a paw and with a playful casual stroke, dab-like, brought its weight on the other's neck and rolled him, head-downward, over on the deck. Though he snarled wrathily, Michael turned away composedly and looked up into Steward's face for approval.

A roar of laughter from the passengers greeted the capsizing of the fox-terrier and the good-natured gravity of Michael. But not alone at this did they laugh, for at the moment of the snap and the turning over, Captain Duncan's unstrung nerves had exploded, causing him to jump as he tensed his whole body.

"Why, sir," the steward went on with growing confidence, "I bet I can make him friends with you, too, by this time to-morrow . . . "

“By this time five minutes he’ll be overboard,” the captain answered. “Bo’s’n! Over with him!”

The boatswain advanced a tentative step, while murmurs of protest arose from the passengers.

“Look at my cat, and look at me,” Captain Duncan defended his action.

The boatswain made another step, and Dag Daughtry glared a threat at him.

“Go on!” the Captain commanded.

“Hold on!” spoke up the Shortlands planter. “Give the dog a square deal. I saw the whole thing. He wasn’t looking for trouble. First the cat jumped him. She had to jump twice before he turned loose. She’d have scratched his eyes out. Then the two dogs jumped him. He hadn’t bothered them. Then you jumped him. He hadn’t bothered you. And then came that sailor with the mop. And now you want the bo’s’n to jump him and throw him overboard. Give him a square deal. He’s only been defending himself. What do you expect any dog that is a dog to do? — lie down and be walked over by every strange dog and cat that comes along? Play the game, Skipper. You gave him some mighty hard kicks. He only defended himself.”

“He’s some defender,” Captain Duncan grinned, with a hint of the return of his ordinary geniality, at the same time tenderly pressing his bleeding shoulder and looking woefully down at his tattered duck trousers. “All right, Steward. If you can make him friends with me in five minutes, he stays on board. But you’ll have to make it up to me with a new pair of trousers.”

“And gladly, sir, thank you, sir,” Daughtry cried. “And I’ll make it up with a new cat as well, sir — Come on, Killeny Boy. This big fella marster he all right, you bet.”

And Michael listened. Not with the smouldering, smothering, choking hysteria that still worked in the fox-terriers did he listen, nor with quivering of muscles and jumps of over-wrought nerves, but coolly, composedly, as if no battle royal had just taken place and no rips of teeth and kicks of feet still burned and ached his body.

He could not help bristling, however, when first he sniffed a trousers’ leg into which his teeth had so recently torn.

“Put your hand down on him, sir,” Daughtry begged.

And Captain Duncan, his own good self once more, bent and rested a firm, unhesitating hand on Michael's head. Nay, more; he even caressed the ears and rubbed about the roots of them. And Michael the merry-hearted, who fought like a lion and forgave and forgot like a man, laid his neck hair smoothly down, wagged his stump tail, smiled with his eyes and ears and mouth, and kissed with his tongue the hand with which a short time before he had been at war.

CHAPTER VII

For the rest of the voyage Michael had the run of the ship. Friendly to all, he reserved his love for Steward alone, though he was not above many an undignified romp with the fox-terriers.

"The most playful-minded dog, without being silly, I ever saw," was Dag Daughtry's verdict to the Shortlands planter, to whom he had just sold one of his turtle-shell combs. "You see, some dogs never get over the play-idea, an' they're never good for anything else. But not Killeny Boy. He can come down to seriousness in a second. I'll show you, and I'll show you he's got a brain that counts to five an' knows wireless telegraphy. You just watch."

At the moment the steward made his faint lip-noise — so faint that he could not hear it himself and was almost for wondering whether or not he had made it; so faint that the Shortlands planter did not dream that he was making it. At that moment Michael was lying squirming on his back a dozen feet away, his legs straight up in the air, both fox-terriers worrying with well-stimulated ferociousness. With a quick out-thrust of his four legs, he rolled over on his side and with questioning eyes and pricked ears looked and listened. Again Daughtry made the lip-noise; again the Shortlands planter did not hear nor guess; and Michael bounded to his feet and to his lord's side.

"Some dog, eh?" the steward boasted.

"But how did he know you wanted him?" the planter queried. "You never called him."

"Mental telepathy, the affinity of souls pitched in the same whatever-you-call-it harmony," the steward mystified. "You see, Killeny an' me are made of the same kind of stuff, only run into different moulds. He might a-been my full brother, or me his, only for some mistake in the creation factory somewhere. Now I'll show you he knows his bit of arithmetic."

And, drawing the paper balls from his pocket, Dag Daughtry demonstrated to the amazement and satisfaction of the ring of passengers Michael's ability to count to five.

"Why, sir," Daughtry concluded the performance, "if I was to order four glasses of beer in a public-house ashore, an' if I was absent-minded an' didn’t notice the waiter ’d only brought three, Killeny Boy there ’d raise a row instanter.”

Kwaque was no longer compelled to enjoy his jews’ harp on the gratings over the fire-room, now that Michael’s presence on the *Makambo* was known, and, in the stateroom, on stolen occasions, he made experiments of his own with Michael. Once the jews’ harp began emitting its barbaric rhythms, Michael was helpless. He needs must open his mouth and pour forth an unwilling, gushing howl. But, as with Jerry, it was not mere howl. It was more akin to a mellow singing; and it was not long before Kwaque could lead his voice up and down, in rough time and tune, within a definite register.

Michael never liked these lessons, for, looking down upon Kwaque, he hated in any way to be under the black’s compulsion. But all this was changed when Dag Daughtry surprised them at a singing lesson. He resurrected the harmonica with which it was his wont, ashore in public-houses, to while away the time between bottles. The quickest way to start Michael singing, he discovered, was with minors; and, once started, he would sing on and on for as long as the music played. Also, in the absence of an instrument, Michael would sing to the prompting and accompaniment of Steward’s voice, who would begin by wailing “kow-kow” long and sadly, and then branch out on some old song or ballad. Michael had hated to sing with Kwaque, but he loved to do it with Steward, even when Steward brought him on deck to perform before the laughter-shrieking passengers.

Two serious conversations were held by the steward toward the close of the voyage: one with Captain Duncan and one with Michael.

“It’s this way, Killeny,” Daughtry began, one evening, Michael’s head resting on his lord’s knees as he gazed adoringly up into his lord’s face, understanding no whit of what was spoken but loving the intimacy the sounds betokened. “I stole you for beer money, an’ when I saw you there on the beach that night I knew you’d bring ten quid anywheres. Ten quid’s a horrible lot of money. Fifty dollars in the way the Yankees reckon it, an’ a hundred Mex in China fashion.

“Now, fifty dollars gold ’d buy beer to beat the band — enough to drown me if I fell in head first. Yet I want to ask you one question. Can you see me takin’ ten quid for you? . . . Go on. Speak up. Can you?”

And Michael, with thumps of tail to the floor and a high sharp bark, showed that he was in entire agreement with whatever had been propounded.

"Or say twenty quid, now. That's a fair offer. Would I? Eh! Would I? Not on your life. What d'ye say to fifty quid? That might begin to interest me, but a hundred quid would interest me more. Why, a hundred quid all in beer 'd come pretty close to floatin' this old hooker. But who in Sam Hill'd offer a hundred quid? I'd like to clap eyes on him once, that's all, just once. D'ye want to know what for? All right. I'll whisper it. So as I could tell him to go to hell. Sure, Killeny Boy, just like that — oh, most polite, of course, just a kindly directin' of his steps where he'd never suffer from frigid extremities."

Michael's love for Steward was so profound as almost to be a mad but enduring infatuation. What the steward's regard for Michael was coming to be was best evidenced by his conversation with Captain Duncan.

"Sure, sir, he must 've followed me on board," Daughtry finished his unveracious recital. "An' I never knew it. Last I seen of 'm was on the beach. Next I seen of 'm there, he was fast asleep in my bunk. Now how'd he get there, sir? How'd he pick out my room? I leave it to you, sir. I call it marvellous, just plain marvellous."

"With a quartermaster at the head of the gangway!" Captain Duncan snorted. "As if I didn't know your tricks, Steward. There's nothing marvellous about it. Just a plain case of steal. Followed you on board? That dog never came over the side. He came through a port-hole, and he never came through by himself. That nigger of yours, I'll wager, had a hand in the helping. But let's have done with beating about the bush. Give me the dog, and I'll say no more about the cat."

"Seein' you believe what you believe, then you'd be for compoundin' the felony," Daughtry retorted, the habitual obstinate tightening of his brows showing which way his will set. "Me, sir, I'm only a ship's steward, an' it wouldn't mean nothin' at all bein' arrested for dog-stealin'; but you, sir, a captain of a fine steamer, how'd it sound for you, sir? No, sir; it'd be much wiser for me to keep the dog that followed me aboard."

"I'll give ten pounds in the bargain," the captain proffered.

"No, it wouldn't do, it wouldn't do at all, sir, an' you a captain," the steward continued to reiterate, rolling his head sombrely. "Besides, I know where's a peach of an Angora in Sydney. The owner is gone to the country an’ has no further use of it, an’ it’d be a kindness to the cat, air to give it a good regular home like the *Makambo*.”

CHAPTER VIIII

Another trick Dag Daughtry succeeded in teaching Michael so enhanced him in Captain Duncan's eyes as to impel him to offer fifty pounds, "and never mind the cat." At first, Daughtry practised the trick in private with the chief engineer and the Shortlands planter. Not until thoroughly satisfied did he make a public performance of it.

"Now just suppose you're policemen, or detectives," Daughtry told the first and third officers, "an' suppose I'm guilty of some horrible crime. An' suppose Killeny is the only clue, an' you've got Killeny. When he recognizes his master — me, of course — you've got your man. You go down the deck with him, leadin' by the rope. Then you come back this way with him, makin' believe this is the street, an' when he recognizes me you arrest me. But if he don't realize me, you can't arrest me. See?"

The two officers led Michael away, and after several minutes returned along the deck, Michael stretched out ahead on the taut rope seeking Steward.

"What'll you take for the dog?" Daughtry demanded, as they drew near — this the cue he had trained Michael to know.

And Michael, straining at the rope, went by, without so much as a wag of tail to Steward or a glance of eye. The officers stopped before Daughtry and drew Michael back into the group.

"He's a lost dog," said the first officer.

"We're trying to find his owner," supplemented the third.

"Some dog that — what'll you take for 'm?" Daughtry asked, studying Michael with critical eyes of interest. "What kind of a temper's he got?"

"Try him," was the answer.

The steward put out his hand to pat him on the head, but withdrew it hastily as Michael, with bristle and growl, viciously bared his teeth.

"Go on, go on, he won't hurt you," the delighted passengers urged.

This time the steward's hand was barely missed by a snap, and he leaped back as Michael ferociously sprang the length of the rope at him.

"Take 'm away!" Dag Daughtry roared angrily. "The treacherous beast! I wouldn't take 'm for gift!"

And as they obeyed, Michael strained backward in a paroxysm of rage, making fierce short jumps to the end of the tether as he snarled and growled with utmost fierceness at the steward.

"Eh? Who'd say he ever seen me in his life?" Daughtry demanded triumphantly. "It's a trick I never seen played myself, but I've heard tell about it. The old-time poachers in England used to do it with their lurcher dogs. If they did get the dog of a strange poacher, no gamekeeper or constable could identify 'm by the dog — mum was the word."

"Tell you what, he knows things, that Killeny. He knows English. Right now, in my room, with the door open, an' so as he can find 'm, is shoes, slippers, cap, towel, hair-brush, an' tobacco pouch. What'll it be? Name it an' he'll fetch it."

So immediately and variously did the passengers respond that every article was called for.

"Just one of you choose," the steward advised. "The rest of you pick 'm out."

"Slipper," said Captain Duncan, selected by acclamation.

"One or both?" Daughtry asked.

"Both."

"Come here, Killeny," Daughtry began, bending toward him but leaping back from the snap of jaws that clipped together close to his nose.

"My mistake," he apologized. "I ain't told him the other game was over. Now just listen an, watch. 'n' see if you can catch on to the tip I'm goin' to give 'm."

No one saw anything, heard anything, yet Michael, with a whine of eagerness and joy, with laughing mouth and wriggling body, was upon the steward, licking his hands madly, squirming and twisting in the embrace of the loved hands he had so recently threatened, making attempts at short upward leaps as he flashed his tongue upward toward his lord's face. For hard it was on Michael, a nerve and mental strain of the severest for him so to control himself as to play-act anger and threat of hurt to his beloved Steward.

"Takes him a little time to get over a thing like that," Daughtry explained, as he soothed Michael down.

"Now, Killeny! Go fetch 'm slipper! Wait! Fetch 'm *one* slipper. Fetch 'm *two* slipper."

Michael looked up with pricked ears, and with eyes filled with query as all his intelligent consciousness suffused them.

"*Two* slipper! Fetch 'm quick!"

He was off and away in a scurry of speed that seemed to flatten him close to the deck, and that, as he turned the corner of the deck-house to the stairs, made his hind feet slip and slide across the smooth planks.

Almost in a trice he was back, both slippers in his mouth, which he deposited at the steward's feet.

"The more I know dogs the more amazin' marvellous they are to me," Dag Daughtry, after he had compassed his fourth bottle, confided in monologue to the Shortlands planter that night just before bedtime. "Take Killeny Boy. He don't do things for me mechanically, just because he's learned to do 'm. There's more to it. He does 'm because he likes me. I can't give you the hang of it, but I feel it, I *know* it.

"Maybe, this is what I'm drivin' at. Killeny can't talk, as you 'n' me talk, I mean; so he can't tell me how he loves me, an' he's all love, every last hair of 'm. An' actions speakin' louder 'n' words, he tells me how he loves me by doin' these things for me. Tricks? Sure. But they make human speeches of eloquence cheaper 'n dirt. Sure it's speech. Dog-talk that's tongue-tied. Don't I know? Sure as I'm a livin' man born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, just as sure am I that it makes 'm happy to do tricks for me . . . just as it makes a man happy to lend a hand to a pal in a ticklish place, or a lover happy to put his coat around the girl he loves to keep her warm. I tell you . . . "

Here, Dag Daughtry broke down from inability to express the concepts fluttering in his beer-excited, beer-sodden brain, and, with a stutter or two, made a fresh start.

"You know, it's all in the matter of talkin', an' Killeny can't talk. He's got thoughts inside that head of his — you can see 'm shinin' in his lovely brown eyes — but he can't get 'em across to me. Why, I see 'm tryin' to tell me sometimes so hard that he almost busts. There's a big hole between him an' me, an' language is about the only bridge, and he can't get over the hole, though he's got all kinds of ideas an' feelings just like mine.

"But, say! The time we get closest together is when I play the harmonica an' he yow-yows. Music comes closest to makin' the bridge. It's a regular song without words. And . . . I can't explain how . . . but just the same, when we've finished our song, I know we've passed a lot over to each other that don't need words for the passin'."

"Why, d'ye know, when I'm playin' an' he's singin', it's a regular duet of what the sky-pilots 'd call religion an' knowin' God. Sure, when we sing together I'm absorbin' religion an' gettin' pretty close up to God. An' it's big, I tell you. Big as the earth an' ocean an' sky an' all the stars. I just seem to get hold of a sense that we're all the same stuff after all — you, me, Killeny Boy, mountains, sand, salt water, worms, mosquitoes, suns, an' shootin' stars an' blazin comets . . . "

Day Daughtry left his flight as beyond his own grasp of speech, and concluded, his half embarrassment masked by braggadocio over Michael:

"Oh, believe me, they don't make dogs like him every day in the week. Sure, I stole 'm. He looked good to me. An' if I had it over, knowin' as I do known 'm now, I'd steal 'm again if I lost a leg doin' it. That's the kind of a dog *he* is."

CHAPTER IX

The morning the *Makambo* entered Sydney harbour, Captain Duncan had another try for Michael. The port doctor's launch was coming alongside, when he nodded up to Daughtry, who was passing along the deck:

"Steward, I'll give you twenty pounds."

"No, sir, thank you, sir," was Dag Daughtry's answer. "I couldn't bear to part with him."

"Twenty-five pounds, then. I can't go beyond that. Besides, there are plenty more Irish terriers in the world."

"That's what I'm thinkin', sir. An' I'll get one for you. Right here in Sydney. An' it won't cost you a penny, sir."

"But I want Killeny Boy," the captain persisted.

"An' so do I, which is the worst of it, sir. Besides, I got him first."

"Twenty-five sovereigns is a lot of money . . . for a dog," Captain Duncan said.

"An' Killeny Boy's a lot of dog . . . for the money," the steward retorted. "Why, sir, cuttin' out all sentiment, his tricks is worth more 'n that. Him not recognizing me when I don't want 'm to is worth fifty pounds of itself. An' there's his countin' an' his singin', an' all the rest of his tricks. Now, no matter how I got him, he didn't have them tricks. Them tricks are mine. I taught him them. He ain't the dog he was when he come on board. He's a whole lot of me now, an' sellin' him would be like sellin' a piece of myself."

"Thirty pounds," said the captain with finality.

"No, sir, thankin' you just the same, sir," was Daughtry's refusal.

And Captain Duncan was forced to turn away in order to greet the port doctor coming over the side.

Scarcely had the *Makambo* passed quarantine, and while on her way up harbour to dock, when a trim man-of-war launch darted in to her side and a trim lieutenant mounted the *Makambo's* boarding-ladder. His mission was quickly explained. The *Albatross*, British cruiser of the second class, of which he was fourth lieutenant, had called in at Tulagi with dispatches from the High Commissioner of the English South Seas. A scant twelve hours having intervened between her arrival and the *Makambo's* departure, the Commissioner of the Solomons and Captain Kellar had been of the opinion that the missing dog had been carried away on the steamer. Knowing that the *Albatross* would beat her to Sydney, the captain of the *Albatross* had undertaken to look up the dog. Was the dog, an Irish terrier answering to the name of Michael, on board?

Captain Duncan truthfully admitted that it was, though he most unveraciously shielded Dag Daughtry by repeating his yarn of the dog coming on board of itself. How to return the dog to Captain Kellar? — was the next question; for the *Albatross* was bound on to New Zealand. Captain Duncan settled the matter.

"The *Makambo* will be back in Tulagi in eight weeks," he told the lieutenant, "and I'll undertake personally to deliver the dog to its owner. In the meantime we'll take good care of it. Our steward has sort of adopted it, so it will be in good hands."

* * * * *

"Seems we don't either of us get the dog," Daughtry commented resignedly, when Captain Duncan had explained the situation.

But when Daughtry turned his back and started off along the deck, his constitutional obstinacy tightened his brows so that the Shortlands planter, observing it, wondered what the captain had been rowing him about.

* * * * *

Despite his six quarts a day and all his easy-goingness of disposition, Dag Daughtry possessed certain integrities. Though he could steal a dog, or a cat, without a twinge of conscience, he could not but be faithful to his salt, being so made. He could not draw wages for being a ship steward without faithfully performing the functions of ship steward. Though his mind was firmly made up, during the several days of the *Makambo* in Sydney, lying alongside the Burns Philp Dock, he saw to every detail of the cleaning up after the last crowd of outgoing passengers, and to every detail of preparation for the next crowd of incoming passengers who had tickets bought for the passage far away to the coral seas and the cannibal isles.

In the midst of this devotion to his duty, he took a night off and part of two afternoons. The night off was devoted to the public-houses which sailors frequent, and where can be learned the latest gossip and news of ships and of men who sail upon the sea. Such information did he gather, over many bottles of beer, that the next afternoon, hiring a small launch at a cost of ten shillings, he journeyed up the harbour to Jackson Bay, where lay the lofty-poled, sweet-lined, three-topmast American schooner, the *Mary Turner*.

Once on board, explaining his errand, he was taken below into the main cabin, where he interviewed, and was interviewed by, a quartette of men whom Daughtry qualified to himself as “a rum bunch.”

It was because he had talked long with the steward who had left the ship, that Dag Daughtry recognized and identified each of the four men. That, surely, was the “Ancient Mariner,” sitting back and apart with washed eyes of such palest blue that they seemed a faded white. Long thin wisps of silvery, unkempt hair framed his face like an aureole. He was slender to emaciation, cavernously checked, roll after roll of skin, no longer encasing flesh or muscle, hanging grotesquely down his neck and swathing the Adam’s apple so that only occasionally, with queer swallowing motions, did it peep out of the mummy-wrappings of skin and sink back again from view.

A proper ancient mariner, thought Daughtry. Might be seventy-five, might just as well be a hundred and five, or a hundred and seventy-five.

Beginning at the right temple, a ghastly scar split the cheek-bone, sank into the depths of the hollow cheek, notched across the lower jaw, and plunged to disappearance among the prodigious skin-folds of the neck. The withered lobes of both ears were perforated by tiny gypsy-like circles of gold. On the skeleton fingers of his right hand were no less than five rings — not men’s rings, nor women’s, but foppish rings — “that would fetch a price,” Daughtry adjudged. On the left hand were no rings, for there were no fingers to wear them. Only was there a thumb; and, for that matter, most of the hand was missing as well, as if it had been cut off by the same slicing edge that had cleaved him from temple to jaw and heaven alone knew how far down that skin-draped neck.

The Ancient Mariner’s washed eyes seemed to bore right through Daughtry (or at least so Daughtry felt), and rendered him so uncomfortable as to make him casually step to the side for the matter of a yard. This was possible, because, a servant seeking a servant’s billet, he was expected to stand and face the four seated ones as if they were judges on the bench and he the felon in the dock. Nevertheless, the gaze of the ancient one pursued him, until, studying it more closely, he decided that it did not reach to him at all. He got the impression that those washed pale eyes were filmed with dreams, and that the intelligence, the *thing*, that dwelt within the skull, fluttered and beat against the dream-films and no farther.

"How much would you expect?" the captain was asking, — a most unsealike captain, in Daughtry's opinion; rather, a spick-and-span, brisk little business-man or floor-walker just out of a bandbox.

"He shall not share," spoke up another of the four, huge, raw-boned, middle-aged, whom Daughtry identified by his ham-like hands as the California wheat-farmer described by the departed steward.

"Plenty for all," the Ancient Mariner startled Daughtry by cackling shrilly. "Oodles and oodles of it, my gentlemen, in cask and chest, in cask and chest, a fathom under the sand."

"Share — *what*, sir?" Daughtry queried, though well he knew, the other steward having cursed to him the day he sailed from San Francisco on a blind lay instead of straight wages. "Not that it matters, sir," he hastened to add. "I spent a whalin' voyage once, three years of it, an' paid off with a dollar. Wages for mine, an' sixty gold a month, seein' there's only four of you."

"And a mate," the captain added.

"And a mate," Daughtry repeated. "Very good, sir. An' no share."

"But yourself?" spoke up the fourth man, a huge-bulking, colossal-bodied, greasy-seeming grossness of flesh — the Armenian Jew and San Francisco pawnbroker the previous steward had warned Daughtry about. "Have you papers — letters of recommendation, the documents you receive when you are paid off before the shipping commissioners?"

"I might ask, sir," Dag Daughtry brazened it, "for your own papers. This ain't no regular cargo-carrier or passenger-carrier, no more than you gentlemen are a regular company of ship-owners, with regular offices, doin' business in a regular way. How do I know if you own the ship even, or that the charter ain't busted long ago, or that you're being libelled ashore right now, or that you won't dump me on any old beach anywheres without a soo-markee of what's comin' to me? Howsoever" — he anticipated by a bluff of his own the show of wrath from the Jew that he knew would be wind and bluff — "howsoever, here's my papers . . . "

With a swift dip of his hand into his inside coat-pocket he scattered out in a wealth of profusion on the cabin table all the papers, sealed and stamped, that he had collected in forty-five years of voyaging, the latest date of which was five years back.

"I don't ask your papers," he went on. "What I ask is, cash payment in full the first of each month, sixty dollars a month gold — "

"Oodles and oodles of it, gold and gold and better than gold, in cask and chest, in cask and chest, a fathom under the sand," the Ancient Mariner assured him in beneficent cackles. "Kings, principalities and powers! — all of us, the least of us. And plenty more, my gentlemen, plenty more. The latitude and longitude are mine, and the bearings from the oak ribs on the shoal to Lion's Head, and the cross-bearings from the points unnamable, I only know. I only still live of all that brave, mad, scallywag ship's company . . . "

"Will you sign the articles to that?" the Jew demanded, cutting in on the ancient's maunderings.

"What port do you wind up the cruise in?" Daughtry asked.

"San Francisco."

"I'll sign the articles that I'm to sign off in San Francisco then."

The Jew, the captain, and the farmer nodded.

"But there's several other things to be agreed upon," Daughtry continued. "In the first place, I want my six quarts a day. I'm used to it, and I'm too old a stager to change my habits."

"Of spirits, I suppose?" the Jew asked sarcastically.

"No; of beer, good English beer. It must be understood beforehand, no matter what long stretches we may be at sea, that a sufficient supply is taken along."

"Anything else?" the captain queried.

"Yes, sir," Daughtry answered. "I got a dog that must come along."

"Anything else? — a wife or family maybe?" the farmer asked.

"No wife or family, sir. But I got a nigger, a perfectly good nigger, that's got to come along. He can sign on for ten dollars a month if he works for the ship all his time. But if he works for me all the time, I'll let him sign on for two an' a half a month."

"Eighteen days in the longboat," the Ancient Mariner shrilled, to Daughtry's startlement. "Eighteen days in the longboat, eighteen days of scorching hell."

"My word," quoth Daughtry, "the old gentleman'd give one the jumps. There'll sure have to be plenty of beer."

"Sea stewards put on some style, I must say," commented the wheat-farmer, oblivious to the Ancient Mariner, who still declaimed of the heat of the longboat.

"Suppose we don't see our way to signing on a steward who travels in such style?" the Jew asked, mopping the inside of his collar-band with a coloured silk handkerchief.

"Then you'll never know what a good steward you've missed, sir," Daughtry responded airily.

"I guess there's plenty more stewards on Sydney beach," the captain said briskly. "And I guess I haven't forgotten old days, when I hired them like so much dirt, yes, by Jinks, so much dirt, there were so many of them."

"Thank you, Mr. Steward, for looking us up," the Jew took up the idea with insulting oiliness. "We very much regret our inability to meet your wishes in the matter — "

"And I saw it go under the sand, a fathom under the sand, on cross-bearings unnamable, where the mangroves fade away, and the coconuts grow, and the rise of land lifts from the beach to the Lion's Head."

"Hold your horses," the wheat-farmer said, with a flare of irritation, directed, not at the Ancient Mariner, but at the captain and the Jew. "Who's putting up for this expedition? Don't I get no say so? Ain't my opinion ever to be asked? I like this steward. Strikes me he's the real goods. I notice he's as polite as all get-out, and I can see he can take an order without arguing. And he ain't no fool by a long shot."

"That's the very point, Grimshaw," the Jew answered soothingly. "Considering the unusualness of our . . . of the expedition, we'd be better served by a steward who is more of a fool. Another point, which I'd esteem a real favour from you, is not to forget that you haven't put a red copper more into this trip than I have — "

"And where'd either of you be, if it wasn't for me with my knowledge of the sea?" the captain demanded aggrievedly. "To say nothing of the mortgage on my house and on the nicest little best paying flat building in San Francisco since the earthquake."

"But who's still putting up? — all of you, I ask you." The wheat-farmer leaned forward, resting the heels of his hands on his knees so that the fingers hung down his long shins, in Daughtry's appraisal, half-way to his feet. "You, Captain Doane, can't raise another penny on your properties. My land still grows the wheat that brings the ready. You, Simon Nishikanta, won't put up another penny — yet your loan-shark offices are doing business at the same old stands at God knows what per cent. to drunken sailors. And you hang the expedition up here in this hole-in-the-wall waiting for my agent to cable more wheat-money. Well, I guess we'll just sign on this steward at sixty a month and all he asks, or I'll just naturally quit you cold on the next fast steamer to San Francisco."

He stood up abruptly, towering to such height that Daughtry looked to see the crown of his head collide with the deck above.

"I'm sick and tired of you all, yes, I am," he continued. "Get busy! Well, let's get busy. My money's coming. It'll be here by to-morrow. Let's be ready to start by hiring a steward that is a steward. I don't care if he brings two families along."

"I guess you're right, Grimshaw," Simon Nishikanta said appeasingly. "The trip is beginning to get on all our nerves. Forget it if I fly off the handle. Of course we'll take this steward if you want him. I thought he was too stylish for you."

He turned to Daughtry.

"Naturally, the least said ashore about us the better."

"That's all right, sir. I can keep my mouth shut, though I might as well tell you there's some pretty tales about you drifting around the beach right now."

"The object of our expedition?" the Jew queried quickly.

Daughtry nodded.

"Is that why you want to come?" was demanded equally quickly.

Daughtry shook his head.

"As long as you give me my beer each day, sir, I ain't goin' to be interested in your treasure-huntin'. It ain't no new tale to me. The South Seas is populous with treasure-hunters — " Almost could Daughtry have sworn that he had seen a flash of anxiety break through the dream-films that bleared the Ancient Mariner's eyes. "And I must say, sir," he went on easily, though saying what he would not have said had it not been for what he was almost certain he sensed of the ancient's anxiousness, "that the South Seas is just naturally lousy with buried treasure. There's Keeling-Cocos, millions 'n' millions of it, pounds sterling, I mean, waiting for the lucky one with the right steer."

This time Daughtry could have sworn to having sensed a change toward relief in the Ancient Mariner, whose eyes were again filmy with dreams.

"But I ain't interested in treasure, sir," Daughtry concluded. "It's beer I'm interested in. You can chase your treasure, an' I don't care how long, just as long as I’ve got six quarts to open each day. But I give you fair warning, sir, before I sign on: if the beer dries up, I’m goin’ to get interested in what you’re after. Fair play is my motto.”

“Do you expect us to pay for your beer in addition?” Simon Nishikanta demanded.

To Daughtry it was too good to be true. Here, with the Jew healing the breach with the wheat-farmer whose agents still cabled money, was the time to take advantage.

“Sure, it’s one of our agreements, sir. What time would it suit you, sir, to-morrow afternoon, for me to sign on at the shipping commissioner’s?”

“Casks and chests of it, casks and chests of it, oodles and oodles, a fathom under the sand,” chattered the Ancient Mariner.

“You’re all touched up under the roof,” Daughtry grinned. “Which ain’t got nothing to do with me as long as you furnish the beer, pay me due an’ proper what’s comin’ to me the first of each an’ every month, an’ pay me off final in San Francisco. As long as you keep up your end, I’ll sail with you to the Pit ’n’ back an’ watch you sweatin’ the casks ’n’ chests out of the sand. What I want is to sail with you if you want me to sail with you enough to satisfy me.”

Simon Nishikanta glanced about. Grimshaw and Captain Doane nodded.

“At three o’clock to-morrow afternoon, at the shipping commissioner’s,” the Jew agreed. “When will you report for duty?”

“When will you sail, sir?” Daughtry countered.

“Bright and early next morning.”

“Then I’ll be on board and on duty some time to-morrow night, sir.”

And as he went up the cabin companion, he could hear the Ancient Mariner maundering: “Eighteen days in the longboat, eighteen days of scorching hell . . . ”

CHAPTER X

Michael left the *Makambo* as he had come on board, through a port-hole. Likewise, the affair occurred at night, and it was Kwaque's hands that received him. It had been quick work, and daring, in the dark of early evening. From the boat-deck, with a bowline under Kwaque's arms and a turn of the rope around a pin, Dag Daughtry had lowered his leprous servitor into the waiting launch.

On his way below, he encountered Captain Duncan, who saw fit to warn him:

"No shannigan with Killeny Boy, Steward. He must go back to Tulagi with us."

"Yes, sir," the steward agreed. "An' I'm keepin' him tight in my room to make safe. Want to see him, sir?"

The very frankness of the invitation made the captain suspicious, and the thought flashed through his mind that perhaps Killeny Boy was already hidden ashore somewhere by the dog-stealing steward.

"Yes, indeed I'd like to say how-do-you-do to him," Captain Duncan answered.

And his was genuine surprise, on entering the steward's room, to behold Michael just rousing from his curled-up sleep on the floor. But when he left, his surprise would have been shocking could he have seen through the closed door what immediately began to take place. Out through the open port-hole, in a steady stream, Daughtry was passing the contents of the room. Everything went that belonged to him, including the turtle-shell and the photographs and calendars on the wall. Michael, with the command of silence laid upon him, went last. Remained only a sea-chest and two suit-cases, themselves too large for the port-hole but bare of contents.

When Daughtry sauntered along the main deck a few minutes later and paused for a gossip with the customs officer and a quartermaster at the head of the gang-plank, Captain Duncan little dreamed that his casual glance was resting on his steward for the last time. He watched him go down the gang-plank empty-handed, with no dog at his heels, and stroll off along the wharf under the electric lights.

Ten minutes after Captain Duncan saw the last of his broad back, Daughtry, in the launch with his belongings and heading for Jackson Bay, was hunched over Michael and caressing him, while Kwaque, crooning with joy under his breath that he was with all that was precious to him in the world, felt once again in the side-pocket of his flimsy coat to make sure that his beloved jews' harp had not been left behind.

Dag Daughtry was paying for Michael, and paying well. Among other things, he had not cared to arouse suspicion by drawing his wages from Burns Philp. The twenty pounds due him he had abandoned, and this was the very sum, that night on the beach at Tulagi, he had decided he could realize from the sale of Michael. He had stolen him to sell. He was paying for him the sales price that had tempted him.

For, as one has well said: the horse abases the base, ennobles the noble. Likewise the dog. The theft of a dog to sell for a price had been the abasement worked by Michael on Dag Daughtry. To pay the price out of sheer heart-love that could recognize no price too great to pay, had been the ennoblement of Dag Daughtry which Michael had worked. And as the launch chug-chugged across the quiet harbour under the southern stars, Dag Daughtry would have risked and tossed his life into the bargain in a battle to continue to have and to hold the dog he had originally conceived of as being interchangeable for so many dozens of beer.

* * * * *

The *Mary Turner*, towed out by a tug, sailed shortly after daybreak, and Daughtry, Kwaque, and Michael looked their last for ever on Sydney Harbour.

"Once again these old eyes have seen this fair haven," the Ancient Mariner, beside them gazing, babbled; and Daughtry could not help but notice the way the wheat-farmer and the pawnbroker pricked their ears to listen and glanced each to the other with scant eyes. "It was in '52, in 1852, on such a day as this, all drinking and singing along the decks, we cleared from Sydney in the *Wide Awake*. A pretty craft, oh sirs, a most clever and pretty craft. A crew, a brave crew, all youngsters, all of us, fore and aft, no man was forty, a mad, gay crew. The captain was an elderly gentleman of twenty-eight, the third officer another of eighteen, the down, untouched of steel, like so much young velvet on his cheek. He, too, died in the longboat. And the captain gasped out his last under the palm trees of the isle unnamable while the brown maidens wept about him and fanned the air to his parching lungs."

Dag Daughtry heard no more, for he turned below to take up his new routine of duty. But while he made up bunks with fresh linen and directed Kwaque's efforts to cleaning long-neglected floors, he shook his head to himself and muttered, "He's a keen 'un. He's a keen 'un. All ain't fools that look it."

The fine lines of the *Mary Turner* were explained by the fact that she had been built for seal-hunting; and for the same reason on board of her was room and to spare. The forecastle with bunk-space for twelve, bedded but eight Scandinavian seamen. The five staterooms of the cabin accommodated the three treasure-hunters, the Ancient Mariner, and the mate — the latter a large-bodied, gentle-souled Russian-Finn, known as Mr. Jackson through inability of his shipmates to pronounce the name he had signed on the ship's articles.

Remained the steerage, just for'ard of the cabin, separated from it by a stout bulkhead and entered by a companionway on the main deck. On this deck, between the break of the poop and the steerage companion, stood the galley. In the steerage itself, which possessed a far larger living-space than the cabin, were six capacious bunks, each double the width of the forecastle bunks, and each curtained and with no bunk above it.

"Some fella glory-hole, eh, Kwaque?" Daughtry told his seventeen-years-old brown-skinned Papuan with the withered ancient face of a centenarian, the legs of a living skeleton, and the huge-stomached torso of an elderly Japanese wrestler. "Eh, Kwaque! What you fella think?"

And Kwaque, too awed by the spaciousness to speak, eloquently rolled his eyes in agreement.

"You likee this piecee bunk?" the cook, a little old Chinaman, asked the steward with eager humility, inviting the white man's acceptance of his own bunk with a wave of arm.

Daughtry shook his head. He had early learned that it was wise to get along well with sea-cooks, since sea-cocks were notoriously given to going suddenly lunatic and slicing and hacking up their shipmates with butcher knives and meat cleavers on the slightest remembered provocation. Besides, there was an equally good bunk all the way across the width of the steerage from the Chinaman's. The bunk next on the port side to the cook's and abaft of it Daughtry allotted to Kwaque. Thus he retained for himself and Michael the entire starboard side with its three bunks. The next one abaft of his own he named "Killeny Boy's," and called on Kwaque and the cook to take notice. Daughtry had a sense that the cook, whose name had been quickly volunteered as Ah Moy, was not entirely satisfied with the arrangement; but it affected him no more than a momentary curiosity about a Chinaman who drew the line at a dog taking a bunk in the same apartment with him.

Half an hour later, returning, from setting the cabin aright, to the steerage for Kwaque to serve him with a bottle of beer, Daughtry observed that Ah Moy had moved his entire bunk belongings across the steerage to the third bunk on the starboard side. This had put him with Daughtry and Michael and left Kwaque with half the steerage to himself. Daughtry's curiosity recrudesced.

"What name along that fella Chink?" he demanded of Kwaque. "He no like 'm you fella boy stop 'm along same fella side along him. What for? My word! What name? That fella Chink make 'm me cross along him too much!"

"Suppose 'm that fella Chink maybe he think 'm me kai-kai along him," Kwaque grinned in one of his rare jokes.

"All right," the steward concluded. "We find out. You move 'm along my bunk, I move 'm along that fella Chink's bunk."

This accomplished, so that Kwaque, Michael, and Ah Moy occupied the starboard side and Daughtry alone bunked on the port side, he went on deck and aft to his duties. On his next return he found Ah Moy had transferred back to the port side, but this time into the last bunk aft.

"Seems the beggar's taken a fancy to me," the steward smiled to himself.

Nor was he capable of guessing Ah Moy's reason for bunking always on the opposite side from Kwaque.

"I changee," the little old cook explained, with anxious eyes to please and placate, in response to Daughtry's direct question. "All the time like that, changee, plentee changee. You savvee?"

Daughtry did not savvee, and shook his head, while Ah Moy's slant eyes betrayed none of the anxiety and fear with which he privily gazed on Kwaque's two permanently bent fingers of the left hand and on Kwaque's forehead, between the eyes, where the skin appeared a shade darker, a trifle thicker, and was marked by the first beginning of three short vertical lines or creases that were already giving him the lion-like appearance, the leonine face so named by the experts and technicians of the fell disease.

As the days passed, the steward took facetious occasions, when he had drunk five quarts of his daily allowance, to shift his and Kwaque's bunks about. And invariably Ah Moy shifted, though Daughtry failed to notice that he never shifted into a bunk which Kwaque had occupied. Nor did he notice that it was when the time came that Kwaque had variously occupied all the six bunks that Ah Moy made himself a canvas hammock, suspended it from the deck beams above and thereafter swung clear in space and unmolested.

Daughtry dismissed the matter from his thoughts as no more than a thing in keeping with the general inscrutability of the Chinese mind. He did notice, however, that Kwaque was never permitted to enter the galley. Another thing he noticed, which, expressed in his own words, was: "That's the all-dangdest cleanest Chink I've ever clapped my lamps on. Clean in galley, clean in steerage, clean in everything. He's always washing the dishes in boiling water, when he isn't washing himself or his clothes or bedding. My word, he actually boils his blankets once a week!"

For there were other things to occupy the steward's mind. Getting acquainted with the five men aft in the cabin, and lining up the whole situation and the relations of each of the five to that situation and to one another, consumed much time. Then there was the path of the *Mary Turner* across the sea. No old sailor breathes who does not desire to know the casual course of his ship and the next port-of-call.

"We ought to be moving along a line that'll cross somewhere northard of New Zealand," Daughtry guessed to himself, after a hundred stolen glances into the binnacle. But that was all the information concerning the ship's navigation he could steal; for Captain Doane took the observations and worked them out, to the exclusion of the mate, and Captain Doane always methodically locked up his chart and log. That there were heated discussions in the cabin, in which terms of latitude and longitude were bandied back and forth, Daughtry did know; but more than that he could not know, because it was early impressed upon him that the one place for him never to be, at such times of council, was the cabin. Also, he could not but conclude that these councils were real battles wherein Messrs. Doane, Nishikanta, and Grimahaw screamed at each other and pounded the table at each other, when they were not patiently and most politely interrogating the Ancient Mariner.

“He’s got their goat,” the steward early concluded to himself; but, thereafter, try as he would, he failed to get the Ancient Mariner’s goat.

Charles Stough Greenleaf was the Ancient Mariner’s name. This, Daughtry got from him, and nothing else did he get save maunderings and ravings about the heat of the longboat and the treasure a fathom deep under the sand.

“There’s some of us plays games, an’ some of us as looks on an’ admires the games they see,” the steward made his bid one day. “And I’m sure these days lookin’ on at a pretty game. The more I see it the more I got to admire.”

The Ancient Mariner dreamed back into the steward’s eyes with a blank, unseeing gaze.

“On the *Wide Awake* all the stewards were young, mere boys,” he murmured.

“Yes, sir,” Daughtry agreed pleasantly. “From all you say, the *Wide Awake*, with all its youngsters, was sure some craft. Not like the crowd of old ’uns on this here hooker. But I doubt, sir, that them youngsters ever played as clever games as is being played aboard us right now. I just got to admire the fine way it’s being done, sir.”

“I’ll tell you something,” the Ancient Mariner replied, with such confidential air that almost Daughtry leaned to hear. “No steward on the *Wide Awake* could mix a highball in just the way I like, as well as you. We didn’t know cocktails in those days, but we had sherry and bitters. A good appetizer, too, a most excellent appetizer.”

“I’ll tell you something more,” he continued, just as it seemed he had finished, and just in time to interrupt Daughtry away from his third attempt to ferret out the true inwardness of the situation on the *Mary Turner* and of the Ancient Mariner’s part in it. “It is mighty nigh five bells, and I should be very pleased to have one of your delicious cocktails ere I go down to dine.”

More suspicious than ever of him was Daughtry after this episode. But, as the days went by, he came more and more to the conclusion that Charles Stough Greenleaf was a senile old man who sincerely believed in the abiding of a buried treasure somewhere in the South Seas.

Once, polishing the brass-work on the hand-rails of the cabin companionway, Daughtry overheard the ancient one explaining his terrible scar and missing fingers to Grimshaw and the Armenian Jew. The pair of them had plied him with extra drinks in the hope of getting more out of him by way of his loosened tongue.

"It was in the longboat," the aged voice cackled up the companion. "On the eleventh day it was that the mutiny broke. We in the sternsheets stood together against them. It was all a madness. We were starved sore, but we were mad for water. It was over the water it began. For, see you, it was our custom to lick the dew from the oar-blades, the gunwales, the thwarts, and the inside planking. And each man of us had developed property in the dew-collecting surfaces. Thus, the tiller and the rudder-head and half of the plank of the starboard stern-sheet had become the property of the second officer. No one of us lacked the honour to respect his property. The third officer was a lad, only eighteen, a brave and charming boy. He shared with the second officer the starboard stern-sheet plank. They drew a line to mark the division, and neither, lapping up what scant moisture fell during the night-hours, ever dreamed of trespassing across the line. They were too honourable.

"But the sailors — no. They squabbled amongst themselves over the dew-surfaces, and only the night before one of them was knifed because he so stole. But on this night, waiting for the dew, a little of it, to become more, on the surfaces that were mine, I heard the noises of a dew-lapper moving aft along the port-gunwale — which was my property aft of the stroke-thwart clear to the stern. I emerged from a nightmare dream of crystal springs and swollen rivers to listen to this night-drinker that I feared might encroach upon what was mine.

"Nearer he came to the line of my property, and I could hear him making little moaning, whimpering noises as he licked the damp wood. It was like listening to an animal grazing pasture-grass at night and ever grazing nearer.

"It chanced I was holding a boat-stretcher in my hand — to catch what little dew might fall upon it. I did not know who it was, but when he lapped across the line and moaned and whimpered as he licked up my precious drops of dew, I struck out. The boat-stretcher caught him fairly on the nose — it was the bo's'n — and the mutiny began. It was the bo's'n's knife that sliced down my face and sliced away my fingers. The third officer, the eighteen-year-old lad, fought well beside me, and saved me, so that, just before I fainted, he and I, between us, hove the bo's'n's carcass overside."

A shifting of feet and changing of positions of those in the cabin plunged Daughtry back into his polishing, which he had for the time forgotten. And, as he rubbed the brass-work, he told himself under his breath: "The old party's sure been through the mill. Such things just got to happen."

"No," the Ancient Mariner was continuing, in his thin falsetto, in reply to a query. "It wasn't the wounds that made me faint. It was the exertion I made in the struggle. I was too weak. No; so little moisture was there in my system that I didn't bleed much. And the amazing thing, under the circumstances, was the quickness with which I healed. The second officer sewed me up next day with a needle he'd made out of an ivory toothpick and with twine he twisted out of the threads from a frayed tarpaulin."

"Might I ask, Mr. Greenleaf, if there were rings at the time on the fingers that were cut off?" Daughtry heard Simon Nishikanta ask.

"Yes, and one beauty. I found it afterward in the boat bottom and presented it to the sandalwood trader who rescued me. It was a large diamond. I paid one hundred and eighty guineas for it to an English sailor in the Barbadoes. He'd stolen it, and of course it was worth more. It was a beautiful gem. The sandalwood man did not merely save my life for it. In addition, he spent fully a hundred pounds in outfitting me and buying me a passage from Thursday Island to Shanghai."

* * * * *

"There's no getting away from them rings he wears," Daughtry overheard Simon Nishikanta that evening telling Grimshaw in the dark on the weather poop. "You don't see that kind nowadays. They're old, real old. They're not men's rings so much as what you'd call, in the old-fashioned days, gentlemen's rings. Real gentlemen, I mean, grand gentlemen, wore rings like them. I wish collateral like them came into my loan offices these days. They're worth big money."

* * * * *

"I just want to tell you, Killeny Boy, that maybe I'll be wishin' before the voyage is over that I'd gone on a lay of the treasure instead of straight wages," Dag Daughtry confided to Michael that night at turning-in time as Kwaque removed his shoes and as he paused midway in the draining of his sixth bottle. "Take it from me, Killeny, that old gentleman knows what he's talkin' about, an' has been some hummer in his days. Men don't lose the fingers off their hands and get their faces chopped open just for nothing — nor sport rings that makes a Jew pawnbroker's mouth water."

CHAPTER XI

Before the voyage of the *Mary Turner* came to an end, Dag Daughtry, sitting down between the rows of water-casks in the main-hold, with a great laugh rechristened the schooner "the Ship of Fools." But that was some weeks after. In the meantime he so fulfilled his duties that not even Captain Doane could conjure a shadow of complaint.

Especially did the steward attend upon the Ancient Mariner, for whom he had come to conceive a strong admiration, if not affection. The old fellow was different from his cabin-mates. They were money-lovers; everything in them had narrowed down to the pursuit of dollars. Daughtry, himself moulded on generously careless lines, could not but appreciate the spaciousness of the Ancient Mariner, who had evidently lived spaciously and who was ever for sharing the treasure they sought.

"You'll get your whack, steward, if it comes out of my share," he frequently assured Daughtry at times of special kindness on the latter's part. "There's oodles of it, and oodles of it, and, without kith or kin, I have so little time longer to live that I shall not need it much or much of it."

And so the Ship of Fools sailed on, all aft fooling and befouling, from the guileless-eyed, gentle-souled Finnish mate, who, with the scent of treasure pungent in his nostrils, with a duplicate key stole the ship's daily position from Captain Doane's locked desk, to Ah Moy, the cook, who kept Kwaque at a distance and never whispered warning to the others of the risk they ran from continual contact with the carrier of the terrible disease.

Kwaque himself had neither thought nor worry of the matter. He knew the thing as a thing that occasionally happened to human creatures. It bothered him, from the pain standpoint, scarcely at all, and it never entered his kinky head that his master did not know about it. For the same reason he never suspected why Ah Moy kept him so at a distance. Nor had Kwaque other worries. His god, over all gods of sea and jungle, he worshipped, and, himself ever intimately allowed in the presence, paradise was wherever he and his god, the steward, might be.

And so Michael. Much in the same way that Kwaque loved and worshipped did he love and worship the six-quart man. To Michael and Kwaque, the daily, even hourly, recognition and consideration of Dag Daughtry was tantamount to resting continuously in the bosom of

Abraham. The god of Messrs. Doane, Nishikanta, and Grimshaw was a graven god whose name was Gold. The god of Kwaque and Michael was a living god, whose voice could be always heard, whose arms could be always warm, the pulse of whose heart could be always felt throbbing in a myriad acts and touches.

No greater joy was Michael's than to sit by the hour with Steward and sing with him all songs and tunes he sang or hummed. With a quantity or pitch even more of genius or unusualness in him than in Jerry, Michael learned more quickly, and since the way of his education was singing, he came to sing far beyond the best Villa Kennan ever taught Jerry.

Michael could howl, or sing, rather (because his howling was so mellow and so controlled), any air that was not beyond his register that Steward elected to sing with him. In addition, he could sing by himself, and unmistakably, such simple airs as "Home, Sweet Home," "God save the King," and "The Sweet By and By." Even alone, prompted by Steward a score of feet away from him, could he lift up his muzzle and sing "Shenandoah" and "Roll me down to Rio."

Kwaque, on stolen occasions when Steward was not around, would get out his Jews' harp and by the sheer compellingness of the primitive instrument make Michael sing with him the barbaric and devil-devil rhythms of King William Island. Another master of song, but one in whom Michael delighted, came to rule over him. This master's name was Cocky. He so introduced himself to Michael at their first meeting.

"Cocky," he said bravely, without a quiver of fear or flight, when Michael had charged upon him at sight to destroy him. And the human voice, the voice of a god, issuing from the throat of the tiny, snow-white bird, had made Michael go back on his haunches, while, with eyes and nostrils, he quested the steerage for the human who had spoken. And there was no human . . . only a small cockatoo that twisted his head impudently and sidewise at him and repeated, "Cocky."

The taboo of the chicken Michael had been well taught in his earliest days at Meringe. Chickens, esteemed by *Mister* Haggin and his white-god fellows, were things that dogs must even defend instead of ever attack. But this thing, itself no chicken, with the seeming of a wild feathered thing of the jungle that was fair game for any dog, talked to him with the voice of a god.

“Get off your foot,” it commanded so peremptorily, so humanly, as again to startle Michael and made him quest about the steerage for the god-throat that had uttered it.

“Get off your foot, or I’ll throw the leg of Moses at you,” was the next command from the tiny feathered thing.

After that came a farrago of Chinese, so like the voice of Ah Moy, that again, though for the last time, Michael sought about the steerage for the utterer.

At this Cocky burst into such wild and fantastic shrieks of laughter that Michael, ears pricked, head cocked to one side, identified in the fibres of the laughter the fibres of the various voices he had just previously heard.

And Cocky, only a few ounces in weight, less than half a pound, a tiny framework of fragile bone covered with a handful of feathers and incasing a heart that was as big in pluck as any heart on the *Mary Turner*, became almost immediately Michael’s friend and comrade, as well as ruler. Minute morsel of daring and courage that Cocky was, he commanded Michael’s respect from the first. And Michael, who with a single careless paw-stroke could have broken Cocky’s slender neck and put out for ever the brave brightness of Cocky’s eyes, was careful of him from the first. And he permitted him a myriad liberties that he would never have permitted Kwaque.

Ingrained in Michael’s heredity, from the very beginning of four-legged dogs on earth, was the *defence of the meat*. He never reasoned it. Automatic and involuntary as his heart-beating and air-breathing, was his defence of his meat once he had his paw on it, his teeth in it. Only to Steward, by an extreme effort of will and control, could he accord the right to touch his meat once he had himself touched it. Even Kwaque, who most usually fed him under Steward’s instructions, knew that the safety of fingers and flesh resided in having nothing further whatever to do with anything of food once in Michael’s possession. But Cocky, a bit of feathery down, a morsel-flash of light and life with the throat of a god, violated with sheer impudence and daring Michael’s taboo, the defence of the meat.

Perched on the rim of Michael’s pannikin, this inconsiderable adventurer from out of the dark into the sun of life, a mere spark and mote between the darks, by a ruffing of his salmon-pink crest, a swift and enormous dilation of his bead-black pupils, and a raucous imperative cry, as of all the gods, in his throat, could make Michael give back and permit the fastidious selection of the choicest tidbits of his dish.

For Cocky had a way with him, and ways and ways. He, who was sheer bladed steel in the imperious flashing of his will, could swashbuckle and bully like any over-seas roisterer, or wheedle as wickedly winningly as the first woman out of Eden or the last woman of that descent. When Cocky, balanced on one leg, the other leg in the air as the foot of it held the scruff of Michael's neck, leaned to Michael's ear and wheedled, Michael could only lay down silkily the bristly hair-waves of his neck, and with silly half-idiotic eyes of bliss agree to whatever was Cocky's will or whimsey so delivered.

Cocky became more intimately Michael's because, very early, Ah Moy washed his hands of the bird. Ah Moy had bought him in Sydney from a sailor for eighteen shillings and chaffered an hour over the bargain. And when he saw Cocky, one day, perched and voluble, on the twisted fingers of Kwaque's left hand, Ah Moy discovered such instant distaste for the bird that not even eighteen shillings, coupled with possession of Cocky and possible contact, had any value to him.

"You likee him? You wanchee?" he proffered.

"Changee for changee!" Kwaque queried back, taking for granted that it was an offer to exchange and wondering whether the little old cook had become enamoured of his precious jews' harp.

"No changee for changee," Ah Moy answered. "You wanchee him, all right, can do."

"How fashion can do?" Kwaque demanded, who to his bêche-de-mer English was already adding pidgin English. "Suppose 'm me fella no got 'm what you fella likee?"

"No fashion changee," Ah Moy reiterated. "You wanchee, you likee he stop along you fella all right, my word."

And so did pass the brave bit of feathered life with the heart of pluck, called of men, and of himself, "Cocky," who had been birthed in the jungle roof of the island of Santo, in the New Hebrides, who had been netted by a two-legged black man-eater and sold for six sticks of tobacco and a shingle hatchet to a Scotch trader dying of malaria, and in turn had been traded from hand to hand, for four shillings to a blackbirder, for a turtle-shell comb made by an English coal-passer after an old Spanish design, for the appraised value of six shillings and sixpence in a poker game in the firemen’s forecastle, for a second-hand accordion worth at least twenty shillings, and on for eighteen shillings cash to a little old withered Chinaman — so did pass Cocky, as mortal or as immortal as any brave sparkle of life on the planet, from the possession of one, Ah Moy, a sea-cock who, forty years before, had slain his young wife in Macao for cause and fled away to sea, to Kwaque, a leprous Black Papuan who was slave to one, Dag Daughtry, himself a servant of other men to whom he humbly admitted “Yes, sir,” and “No, sir,” and “Thank you, sir.”

One other comrade Michael found, although Cocky was no party to the friendship. This was Scraps, the awkward young Newfoundland puppy, who was the property of no one, unless of the schooner *Mary Turner* herself, for no man, fore or aft, claimed ownership, while every man disclaimed having brought him on board. So he was called Scraps, and, since he was nobody’s dog, was everybody’s dog — so much so, that Mr. Jackson promised to knock Ah Moy’s block off if he did not feed the puppy well, while Sigurd Halvorsen, in the forecastle, did his best to knock off Henrik Gjertsen’s block when the latter was guilty of kicking Scraps out of his way. Yea, even more. When Simon Nishikanta, huge and gross as in the flesh he was and for ever painting delicate, insipid, feministic water-colours, when he threw his deck-chair at Scraps for clumsily knocking over his easel, he found the ham-like hand of Grimshaw so instant and heavy on his shoulder as to whirl him half about, almost fling him to the deck, and leave him lame-muscled and black-and-blued for days.

Michael, full grown, mature, was so merry-hearted an individual that he found all delight in interminable romps with Scraps. So strong was the play-instinct in him, as well as was his constitution strong, that he continually outplayed Scraps to abject weariness, so that he could only lie on the deck and pant and laugh through air-draughty lips and dab futilely in the air with weak forepaws at Michael’s continued ferocious-acted onslaughts. And this, despite the fact that Scraps out-bullied him and out-scaled him at least three times, and was as careless and unwitting of the weight of his legs or shoulders as a baby elephant on a lawn of daisies. Given his breath back again, Scraps was as ripe as ever for another frolic, and Michael was just as ripe to meet him. All of which was splendid training for Michael, keeping him in the tiptop of physical condition and mental wholesomeness.

CHAPTER XII

So sailed the Ship of Fools — Michael playing with Scraps, respecting Cocky and by Cocky being bullied and wheedled, singing with Steward and worshipping him; Daughtry drinking his six quarts of beer each day, collecting his wages the first of each month, and admiring Charles Stough Greenleaf as the finest man on board; Kwaque serving and loving his master and thickening and darkening and creasing his brow with the growing leprous infiltration; Ah Moy avoiding the Black Papuan as the very plague, washing himself continuously and boiling his blankets once a week; Captain Doane doing the navigating and worrying about his flat-building in San Francisco; Grimshaw resting his ham-hands on his colossal knees and girding at the pawnbroker to contribute as much to the adventure as he was contributing from his wheat-ranches; Simon Nishikanta wiping his sweaty neck with the greasy silk handkerchief and painting endless water-colours; the mate patiently stealing the ship's latitude and longitude with his duplicate key; and the Ancient Mariner, solacing himself with Scotch highballs, smoking fragrant three-for-a-dollar Havanas that were charged to the adventure, and for ever maundering about the hell of the longboat, the cross-bearings unnamable, and the treasure a fathom under the sand.

Came a stretch of ocean that to Daughtry was like all other stretches of ocean and unidentifiable from them. No land broke the sea-rim. The ship the centre, the horizon was the invariable and eternal circle of the world. The magnetic needle in the binnacle was the point on which the *Mary Turner* ever pivoted. The sun rose in the undoubted east and set in the undoubted west, corrected and proved, of course, by declination, deviation, and variation; and the nightly march of the stars and constellations proceeded across the sky.

And in this stretch of ocean, lookouts were mastheaded at day-dawn and kept mastheaded until twilight of evening, when the *Mary Turner* was hove-to, to hold her position through the night. As time went by, and the scent, according to the Ancient Mariner, grow hotter, all three of the investors in the adventure came to going aloft. Grimshaw contented himself with standing on the main crosstrees. Captain Doane climbed even higher, seating himself on the stump of the foremast with legs a-straddle of the butt of the fore-topmast. And Simon Nishikanta tore himself away from his everlasting painting of all colour-delicacies of sea and sky such as are painted by seminary maidens, to be helped and hoisted up the ratlines of the mizzen rigging, the huge bulk of him, by two grinning, slim-waisted sailors, until they lashed him squarely on the crosstrees and left him to stare with eyes of golden desire, across the sun-washed sea through the finest pair of unredeemed binoculars that had ever been pledged in his pawnshops.

"Strange," the Ancient Mariner would mutter, "strange, and most strange. This is the very place. There can be no mistake. I'd have trusted that youngster of a third officer anywhere. He was only eighteen, but he could navigate better than the captain. Didn't he fetch the atoll after eighteen days in the longboat? No standard compasses, and you know what a small-boat horizon is, with a big sea, for a sextant. He died, but the dying course he gave me held good, so that I fetched the atoll the very next day after I hove his body overboard."

Captain Doane would shrug his shoulders and defiantly meet the mistrustful eyes of the Armenian Jew.

"It cannot have sunk, surely," the Ancient Mariner would tactfully carry across the forbidding pause. "The island was no mere shoal or reef. The Lion's Head was thirty-eight hundred and thirty-five feet. I saw the captain and the third officer triangulate it."

"I've raked and combed the sea," Captain Doane would then break out, "and the teeth of my comb are not so wide apart as to let slip through a four-thousand-foot peak."

"Strange, strange," the Ancient Mariner would next mutter, half to his cogitating soul, half aloud to the treasure-seekers. Then, with a sudden brightening, he would add:

"But, of course, the variation has changed, Captain Doane. Have you allowed for the change in variation for half a century! That should make a grave difference. Why, as I understand it, who am no navigator, the variation was not so definitely and accurately known in those days as now."

"Latitude was latitude, and longitude was longitude," would be the captain's retort. "Variation and deviation are used in setting courses and estimating dead reckoning."

All of which was Greek to Simon Nishikanta, who would promptly take the Ancient Mariner's side of the discussion.

But the Ancient Mariner was fair-minded. What advantage he gave the Jew one moment, he balanced the next moment with an advantage to the skipper.

“It’s a pity,” he would suggest to Captain Doane, “that you have only one chronometer. The entire fault may be with the chronometer. Why did you sail with only one chronometer?”

“But I *was* willing for two,” the Jew would defend. “You know that, Grimshaw?”

The wheat-farmer would nod reluctantly and Captain would snap:

“But not for three chronometers.”

“But if two was no better than one, as you said so yourself and as Grimshaw will bear witness, then three was no better than two except for an expense.”

“But if you only have two chronometers, how can you tell which has gone wrong?” Captain Doane would demand.

“Search me,” would come the pawnbroker’s retort, accompanied by an incredulous shrug of the shoulders. “If you can’t tell which is wrong of two, then how much harder must it be to tell which is wrong of two dozen? With only two, it’s a fifty-fifty split that one or the other is wrong.”

“But don’t you realize — ”

“I realize that it’s all a great foolishness, all this highbrow stuff about navigation. I’ve got clerks fourteen years old in my offices that can figure circles all around you and your navigation. Ask them that if two chronometers ain’t better than one, then how can two thousand be better than one? And they’d answer quick, snap, like that, that if two dollars ain’t any better than one dollar, then two thousand dollars ain’t any better than one dollar. That’s common sense.”

“Just the same, you’re wrong on general principle,” Grimshaw would oar in. “I said at the time that the only reason we took Captain Doane in with us on the deal was because we needed a navigator and because you and me didn’t know the first thing about it. You said, ‘Yes, sure’; and right away knew more about it than him when you wouldn’t stand for buying three chronometers. What was the matter with you was that the expense hurt you. That’s about as big an idea as your mind ever had room for. You go around looking for to dig out ten million dollars with a second-hand spade you call buy for sixty-eight cents.”

Dag Daughtry could not fail to overhear some of these conversations, which were altercations rather than councils. The invariable ending, for Simon Nishikanta, would be what sailors name “the sea-grouch.” For hours afterward the sulky Jew would speak to no one nor acknowledge speech from any one. Vainly striving to paint, he would suddenly burst into violent rage, tear up his attempt, stamp it into the deck, then get out his large-calibred automatic rifle, perch himself on the forecastle-head, and try to shoot any stray porpoise, albacore, or dolphin. It seemed to give him great relief to send a bullet home into the body of some surging, gorgeous-hued fish, arrest its glorious flashing motion for ever, and turn it on its side slowly to sink down into the death and depth of the sea.

On occasion, when a school of blackfish disported by, each one of them a whale of respectable size, Nishikanta would be beside himself in the ecstasy of inflicting pain. Out of the school perhaps he would reach a score of the leviathans, his bullets biting into them like whip-lashes, so that each, like a colt surprised by the stock-whip, would leap in the air, or with a flirt of tail dive under the surface, and then charge madly across the ocean and away from sight in a foam-churn of speed.

The Ancient Mariner would shake his head sadly; and Daughtry, who likewise was hurt by the infliction of hurt on unoffending animals, would sympathize with him and fetch him unbidden another of the expensive three-for-a-dollar cigars so that his feelings might be soothed. Grimshaw would curl his lip in a sneer and mutter: "The cheap skate. The skunk. No man with half the backbone of a man would take it out of the harmless creatures. He's that kind that if he didn't like you, or if you criticised his grammar or arithmetic, he'd kick your dog to get even . . . or poison it. In the good old days up in Colusa we used to hang men like him just to keep the air we breathed clean and wholesome."

But it was Captain Doane who protested outright.

"Look at here, Nishikanta," he would say, his face white and his lips trembling with anger. "That's rough stuff, and all you can get back for it is rough stuff. I know what I'm talking about. You've got no right to risk our lives that way. Wasn't the pilot boat *Annie Mine* sunk by a whale right in the Golden Gate? Didn't I sail in as a youngster, second mate on the brig *Berncastle*, into Hakodate, pumping double watches to keep afloat just because a whale took a smash at us? Didn't the full-rigged ship, the whaler *Essex*, sink off the west coast of South America, twelve hundred miles from the nearest land for the small boats to cover, and all because of a big cow whale that butted her into kindling-wood?"

And Simon Nishikanta, in his grouch, disdaining to reply, would continue to pepper the last whale into flight beyond the circle of the sea their vision commanded.

"I remember the whaleship *Essex*," the Ancient Mariner told Dag Daughtry. "It was a cow with a calf that did for her. Her barrels were two-thirds full, too. She went down in less than an hour. One of the boats never was heard of."

"And didn't another one of her boats get to Hawaii, sir?" Daughtry queried with all due humility of respect. "Leastwise, thirty years ago, when I was in Honolulu, I met a man, an old geezer, who claimed he'd been a harpooner on a whaleship sunk by a whale off the coast of South America. That was the first and last I heard of it, until right now you speaking of it, sir. It must a-been the same ship, sir, don't you think?"

"Unless two different ships were whale-sunk off the west coast," the Ancient Mariner replied. "And of the one ship, the *Essex*, there is no discussion. It is historical. The chance is likely, steward, that the man you mentioned was from the *Essex*."

CHAPTER XIII

Captain Doane worked hard, pursuing the sun in its daily course through the sky, by the equation of time correcting its aberrations due to the earth's swinging around the great circle of its orbit, and charting Sumner lines innumerable, working assumed latitudes for position until his head grew dizzy.

Simon Nishikanta sneered openly at what he considered the captain's inefficient navigation, and continued to paint water-colours when he was serene, and to shoot at whales, sea-birds, and all things hurtable when he was downhearted and sea-sore with disappointment at not sighting the Lion's Head peak of the Ancient Mariner's treasure island.

"I'll show I ain't a pincher," Nishikanta announced one day, after having broiled at the mast-head for five hours of sea-searching. "Captain Doane, how much could we have bought extra chronometers for in San Francisco — good second-hand ones, I mean?"

"Say a hundred dollars," the captain answered.

"Very well. And this ain't a piker's proposition. The cost of such a chronometer would have been divided between the three of us. I stand for its total cost. You just tell the sailors that I, Simon Nishikanta, will pay one hundred dollars gold money for the first one that sights land on Mr. Greenleaf's latitude and longitude."

But the sailors who swarmed the mast-heads were doomed to disappointment, in that for only two days did they have opportunity to stare the ocean surface for the reward. Nor was this due entirely to Dag Daughtry, despite the fact that his own intention and act would have been sufficient to spoil their chance for longer staring.

Down in the lazarette, under the main-cabin floor, it chanced that he took toll of the cases of beer which had been shipped for his especial benefit. He counted the cases, doubted the verdict of his senses, lighted more matches, counted again, then vainly searched the entire lazarette in the hope of finding more cases of beer stored elsewhere.

He sat down under the trap door of the main-cabin floor and thought for a solid hour. It was the Jew again, he concluded — the Jew who had been willing to equip the *Mary Turner* with two chronometers, but not with three; the Jew who had ratified the agreement of a sufficient supply to permit

Daughtry his daily six quarts. Once again the steward counted the cases to make sure. There were three. And since each case contained two dozen quarts, and since his whack each day was half a dozen quarts, it was patent that, the supply that stared him in the face would last him only twelve days. And twelve days were none too long to sail from this unidentifiable naked sea-stretch to the nearest possible port where beer could be purchased.

The steward, once his mind was made up, wasted no time. The clock marked a quarter before twelve when he climbed up out of the lazarette, replaced the trapdoor, and hurried to set the table. He served the company through the noon meal, although it was all he could do to refrain from capsizing the big tureen of split-pea soup over the head of Simon Nishikanta. What did effectually withstrain him was the knowledge of the act which in the lazarette he had already determined to perform that afternoon down in the main hold where the water-casks were stored.

At three o’clock, while the Ancient Mariner supposedly drowned in his room, and while Captain Doane, Grimshaw, and half the watch on deck clustered at the mast-heads to try to raise the Lion’s Head from out the sapphire sea, Dag Daughtry dropped down the ladder of the open hatchway into the main hold. Here, in long tiers, with alleyways between, the water-casks were chocked safely on their sides.

From inside his shirt the steward drew a brace, and to it fitted a half-inch bit from his hip-pocket. On his knees, he bored through the head of the first cask until the water rushed out upon the deck and flowed down into the bilge. He worked quickly, boring cask after cask down the alleyway that led to deeper twilight. When he had reached the end of the first row of casks he paused a moment to listen to the gurglings of the many half-inch streams running to waste. His quick ears caught a similar gurgling from the right in the direction of the next alleyway. Listening closely, he could have sworn he heard the sounds of a bit biting into hard wood.

A minute later, his own brace and bit carefully secreted, his hand was descending on the shoulder of a man he could not recognize in the gloom, but who, on his knees and wheezing, was steadily boring into the head of a cask. The culprit made no effort to escape, and when Daughtry struck a match he gazed down into the upturned face of the Ancient Mariner.

“My word!” the steward muttered his amazement softly. “What in hell are you running water out for?”

He could feel the old man's form trembling with violent nervousness, and his own heart smote him for gentleness.

"It's all right," he whispered. "Don't mind me. How many have you bored?"

"All in this tier," came the whispered answer. "You will not inform on me to the . . . the others?"

"Inform?" Daughtry laughed softly. "I don't mind telling you that we're playing the same game, though I don't know why you should play it. I've just finished boring all of the starboard row. Now I tell you, sir, you skin out right now, quietly, while the goin' is good. Everybody's aloft, and you won't be noticed. I'll go ahead and finish this job . . . all but enough water to last us say a dozen days."

"I should like to talk with you . . . to explain matters," the Ancient Mariner whispered.

"Sure, sir, an' I don't mind sayin', sir, that I'm just plain mad curious to hear. I'll join you down in the cabin, say in ten minutes, and we can have a real gam. But anyway, whatever your game is, I'm with you. Because it happens to be my game to get quick into port, and because, sir, I have a great liking and respect for you. Now shoot along. I'll be with you inside ten minutes."

"I like you, steward, very much," the old man quavered.

"And I like you, sir — and a damn sight more than them money-sharks aft. But we'll just postpone this. You beat it out of here, while I finish scuppering the rest of the water."

A quarter of an hour later, with the three money-sharks still at the mast-heads, Charles Stough Greenleaf was seated in the cabin and sipping a highball, and Dag Daughtry was standing across the table from him, drinking directly from a quart bottle of beer.

"Maybe you haven't guessed it," the Ancient Mariner said; "but this is my fourth voyage after this treasure."

"You mean . . . ?" Daughtry asked.

"Just that. There isn't any treasure. There never was one — any more than the Lion's Head, the longboat, or the bearings unnamable.'"

Daughtry rumpled his grizzled thatch of hair in his perplexity, as he admitted:

"Well, you got me, sir. You sure got me to believin' in that treasure."

"And I acknowledge, steward, that I am pleased to hear it. It shows that I have not lost my cunning when I can deceive a man like you. It is easy to deceive men whose souls know only money. But you are different. You don't live and breathe for money. I've watched you with your dog. I've watched you with your nigger boy. I've watched you with your beer. And just because your heart isn't set on a great buried treasure of gold, you are harder to deceive. Those whose hearts are set, are most astonishingly easy to fool. They are of cheap kidney. Offer them a proposition of one hundred dollars for one, and they are like hungry pike snapping at the bait. Offer a thousand dollars for one, or ten thousand for one, and they become sheer lunatic. I am an old man, a very old man. I like to live until I die — I mean, to live decently, comfortably, respectably."

"And you like the voyages long? I begin to see, sir. Just as they're getting near to where the treasure ain't, a little accident like the loss of their water-supply sends them into port and out again to start hunting all over."

The Ancient Mariner nodded, and his sun-washed eyes twinkled.

"There was the *Emma Louisa*. I kept her on the long voyage over eighteen months with water accidents and similar accidents. And, besides, they kept me in one of the best hotels in New Orleans for over four months before the voyage began, and advanced to me handsomely, yes, bravely, handsomely."

"But tell me more, sir; I am most interested," Dag Daughtry concluded his simple matter of the beer. "It's a good game. I might learn it for my old age, though I give you my word, sir, I won't butt in on your game. I wouldn't tackle it until you are gone, sir, good game that it is."

"First of all, you must pick out men with money — with plenty of money, so that any loss will not hurt them. Also, they are easier to interest — "

"Because they are more hoggish," the steward interrupted. "The more money they've got the more they want."

"Precisely," the Ancient Mariner continued. "And, at least, they are repaid. Such sea-voyages are excellent for their health. After all, I do them neither hurt nor harm, but only good, and add to their health."

"But them scars — that gouge out of your face — all them fingers missing on your hand? You never got them in the fight in the longboat when the bo's'n carved you up. Then where in Sam Hill did you get the them? Wait a minute, sir. Let me fill your glass first." And with a fresh-brimmed glass, Charles Stough Greanleaf narrated the history of his scars.

"First, you must know, steward, that I am — well, a gentleman. My name has its place in the pages of the history of the United States, even back before the time when they were the United States. I graduated second in my class in a university that it is not necessary to name. For that matter, the name I am known by is not my name. I carefully compounded it out of names of other families. I have had misfortunes. I trod the quarter-deck when I was a young man, though never the deck of the *Wide Awake*, which is the ship of my fancy — and of my livelihood in these latter days.

"The scars you asked about, and the missing fingers? Thus it chanced. It was the morning, at late getting-up times in a Pullman, when the accident happened. The car being crowded, I had been forced to accept an upper berth. It was only the other day. A few years ago. I was an old man then. We were coming up from Florida. It was a collision on a high trestle. The train crumpled up, and some of the cars fell over sideways and fell off, ninety feet into the bottom of a dry creek. It was dry, though there was a pool of water just ten feet in diameter and eighteen inches deep. All the rest was dry boulders, and I bull's-eyed that pool.

"This is the way it was. I had just got on my shoes and pants and shirt, and had started to get out of the bunk. There I was, sitting on the edge of the bunk, my legs dangling down, when the locomotives came together. The berths, upper and lower, on the opposite side had already been made up by the porter.

"And there I was, sitting, legs dangling, not knowing where I was, on a trestle or a flat, when the thing happened. I just naturally left that upper berth, soared like a bird across the aisle, went through the glass of the window on the opposite side clean head-first, turned over and over through the ninety feet of fall more times than I like to remember, and by some sort of miracle was mostly flat-out in the air when I bull's-eyed that pool of water. It was only eighteen inches deep. But I hit it flat, and I hit it so hard that it must have cushioned me. I was the only survivor of my car. It struck forty feet away from me, off to the side. And they took only the dead out of it. When they took me out of the pool I wasn't dead by any means. And when the surgeons got done with me, there were the fingers gone from my hand, that scar down the side of my face . . . and, though you'd never guess it, I've been three ribs short of the regular complement ever since.

"Oh, I had no complaint coming. Think of the others in that car — all dead. Unfortunately, I was riding on a pass, and so could not sue the railroad company. But here I am, the only man who ever dived ninety feet into eighteen inches of water and lived to tell the tale. — Steward, if you don't mind replenishing my glass . . . "

Dag Daughtry complied and in his excitement of interest pulled off the top of another quart of beer for himself.

"Go on, go on, sir," he murmured huskily, wiping his lips, "and the treasure-hunting graft. I'm straight dying to hear. Sir, I salute you."

"I may say, steward," the Ancient Mariner resumed, "that I was born with a silver spoon that melted in my mouth and left me a proper prodigal son. Also, that I was born with a backbone of pride that would not melt. Not for a paltry railroad accident, but for things long before as well as after, my family let me die, and I . . . I let it live. That is the story. I let my family live. Furthermore, it was not my family's fault. I never whimpered. I never let on. I melted the last of my silver spoon — South Sea cotton, an' it please you, cacao in Tonga, rubber and mahogany in Yucatan. And do you know, at the end, I slept in Bowery lodging-houses and ate scrapple in East-Side feeding-dens, and, on more than one occasion, stood in the bread-line at midnight and pondered whether or not I should faint before I fed."

"And you never squealed to your family," Dag Daughtry murmured admiringly in the pause.

The Ancient Mariner straightened up his shoulders, threw his head back, then bowed it and repeated, "No, I never squealed. I went into the poor-house, or the county poor-farm as they call it. I lived sordidly. I lived like a beast. For six months I lived like a beast, and then I saw my way out. I set about building the *Wide Awake*. I built her plank by plank, and copper-fastened her, selected her masts and every timber of her, and personally signed on her full ship's complement fore-and-aft, and outfitted her amongst the Jews, and sailed with her to the South Seas and the treasure buried a fathom under the sand.

"You see," he explained, "all this I did in my mind, for all the time I was a hostage in the poor-farm of broken men."

The Ancient Mariner's face grew suddenly bleak and fierce, and his right hand flashed out to Daughtry's wrist, prisoning it in withered fingers of steel.

“It was a long, hard way to get out of the poor-farm and finance my miserable little, pitiful little, adventure of the *Wide Awake*. Do you know that I worked in the poor-farm laundry for two years, for one dollar and a half a week, with my one available hand and what little I could do with the other, sorting dirty clothes and folding sheets and pillow-slips until I thought a thousand times my poor old back would break in two, and until I knew a million times the location in my chest of every fraction of an inch of my missing ribs.”

“You are a young man yet — ”

Daughtry grinned denial as he rubbed his grizzled mat of hair.

“You are a young man yet, steward,” the Ancient Mariner insisted with a show of irritation. “You have never been shut out from life. In the poor-farm one is shut out from life. There is no respect — no, not for age alone, but for human life in the poor-house. How shall I say it? One is not dead. Nor is one alive. One is what once was alive and is in process of becoming dead. Lepers are treated that way. So are the insane. I know it. When I was young and on the sea, a brother-lieutenant went mad. Sometimes he was violent, and we struggled with him, twisting his arms, bruising his flesh, tying him helpless while we sat and panted on him that he might not do harm to us, himself, or the ship. And he, who still lived, died to us. Don’t you understand? He was no longer of us, like us. He was something other. That is it — *other*. And so, in the poor-farm, we, who are yet unburied, are *other*. You have heard me chatter about the hell of the longboat. That is a pleasant diversion in life compared with the poor-farm. The food, the filth, the abuse, the bullying, the — the sheer animalness of it!

“For two years I worked for a dollar and a half a week in the laundry. And imagine me, who had melted a silver spoon in my mouth — a sizable silver spoon steward — imagine me, my old sore bones, my old belly reminiscent of youth’s delights, my old palate ticklish yet and not all withered of the deviltries of taste learned in younger days — as I say, steward, imagine me, who had ever been free-handed, lavish, saving that dollar and a half intact like a miser, never spending a penny of it on tobacco, never mitigating by purchase of any little delicacy the sad condition of my stomach that protested against the harshness and indigestibility of our poor fare. I cadged tobacco, poor cheap tobacco, from poor doddering old chaps trembling on the edge of dissolution. Ay, and when Samuel Merrivale I found dead in the morning, next cot to mine, I first rummaged his poor old trousers' pocket for the half-plug of tobacco I knew was the total estate he left, then announced the news.

"Oh, steward, I was careful of that dollar and a half. Don't you see? — I was a prisoner sawing my way out with a tiny steel saw. And I sawed out!" His voice rose in a shrill cackle of triumph. "Steward, I sawed out!"

Dag Daughtry held forth and up his beer-bottle as he said gravely and sincerely:

"Sir, I salute you."

"And I thank you, sir — you understand," the Ancient Mariner replied with simple dignity to the toast, touching his glass to the bottle and drinking with the steward eyes to eyes.

"I should have had one hundred and fifty-six dollars when I left the poor-farm," the ancient one continued. "But there were the two weeks I lost, with influenza, and the one week from a confounded pleurisy, so that I emerged from that place of the living dead with but one hundred and fifty-one dollars and fifty cents."

"I see, sir," Daughtry interrupted with honest admiration. "The tiny saw had become a crowbar, and with it you were going back to break into life again."

All the scarred face and washed eyes of Charles Stough Greenleaf beamed as he held his glass up.

"Steward, I salute you. You understand. And you have said it well. I was going back to break into the house of life. It was a crowbar, that pitiful sum of money accumulated by two years of crucifixion. Think of it! A sum that in the days ere the silver spoon had melted, I staked in careless moods of an instant on a turn of the cards. But as you say, a burglar, I came back to break into life, and I came to Boston. You have a fine turn for a figure of speech, steward, and I salute you."

Again bottle and glass tinkled together, and both men drank eyes to eyes and each was aware that the eyes he gazed into were honest and understanding.

"But it was a thin crowbar, steward. I dared not put my weight on it for a proper pry. I took a room in a small but respectable hotel, European plan. It was in Boston, I think I said. Oh, how careful I was of my crowbar! I scarcely ate enough to keep my frame inhabited. But I bought drinks for others, most carefully selected — bought drinks with an air of prosperity that was as a credential to my story; and in my cups (my apparent cups, steward), spun an old man's yarn of the *Wide Awake*, the longboat, the bearings unnamable, and the treasure under the sand. — A fathom under the sand; that was literary; it was psychological; it smacked of the salt sea, and daring rovers, and the loot of the Spanish Main.

"You have noticed this nugget I wear on my watch-chain, steward? I could not afford it at that time, but I talked golden instead, California gold, nuggets and nuggets, oodles and oodles, from the diggings of forty-nine and fifty. That was literary. That was colour. Later, after my first voyage out of Boston I was financially able to buy a nugget. It was so much bait to which men rose like fishes. And like fishes they nibbled. These rings, also — bait. You never see such rings now. After I got in funds, I purchased them, too. Take this nugget: I am talking. I toy with it absently as I am telling of the great gold treasure we buried under the sand. Suddenly the nugget flashes fresh recollection into my mind. I speak of the longboat, of our thirst and hunger, and of the third officer, the fair lad with cheeks virgin of the razor, and that he it was who used it as a sinker when we strove to catch fish.

"But back in Boston. Yarns and yarns, when seemingly I was gone in drink, I told my apparent cronies — men whom I despised, stupid dolts of creatures that they were. But the word spread, until one day, a young man, a reporter, tried to interview me about the treasure and the *Wide Awake*. I was indignant, angry. — Oh, softly, steward, softly; in my heart was great joy as I denied that young reporter, knowing that from my cronies he already had a sufficiency of the details.

"And the morning paper gave two whole columns and headlines to the tale. I began to have callers. I studied them out well. Many were for adventuring after the treasure who themselves had no money. I baffled and avoided them, and waited on, eating even less as my little capital dwindled away.

"And then he came, my gay young doctor — doctor of philosophy he was, for he was very wealthy. My heart sang when I saw him. But twenty-eight dollars remained to me — after it was gone, the poor-house, or death. I had already resolved upon death as my choice rather than go back to be of that dolorous company, the living dead of the poor-farm. But I did not go back, nor did I die. The gay young doctor's blood ran warm at thought of the South Seas, and in his nostrils I distilled all the scents of the flower-drenched air of that far-off land, and in his eyes I builded him the fairy visions of the tradewind clouds, the monsoon skies, the palm isles and the coral seas.

"He was a gay, mad young dog, grandly careless of his largess, fearless as a lion's whelp, lithe and beautiful as a leopard, and mad, a trifle mad of the deviltries and whimsies that tickled in that fine brain of his. Look you, steward. Before we sailed in the *Gloucester* fishing-schooner, purchased by the doctor, and that was like a yacht and showed her heels to most yachts, he had me to his house to advise about personal equipment. We were overhauling in a gear-room, when suddenly he spoke:

"'I wonder how my lady will take my long absence. What say you? Shall she go along?'

"And I had not known that he had any wife or lady. And I looked my surprise and incredulity.

"'Just that you do not believe I shall take her on the cruise,' he laughed, wickedly, madly, in my astonished face. 'Come, you shall meet her.'

"Straight to his bedroom and his bed he led me, and, turning down the covers, showed there to me, asleep as she had slept for many a thousand years, the mummy of a slender Egyptian maid.

"And she sailed with us on the long vain voyage to the South Seas and back again, and, steward, on my honour, I grew quite fond of the dear maid myself."

The Ancient Mariner gazed dreamily into his glass, and Dag Daughtry took advantage of the pause to ask:

"But the young doctor? How did he take the failure to find the treasure?"

The Ancient Mariner's face lighted with joy.

"He called me a delectable old fraud, with his arm on my shoulder while he did it. Why, steward, I had come to love that young man like a splendid son. And with his arm on my shoulder, and I know there was more than mere kindness in it, he told me we had barely reached the River Plate when he discovered me. With laughter, and with more than one slap of his hand on my shoulder that was more caress than jollity, he pointed out the discrepancies in my tale (which I have since amended, steward, thanks to him, and amended well), and told me that the voyage had been a grand success, making him eternally my debtor.

"What could I do? I told him the truth. To him even did I tell my family name, and the shame I had saved it from by forswearing it.

"He put his arm on my shoulder, I tell you, and . . . "

The Ancient Mariner ceased talking because of a huskiness in his throat, and a moisture from his eyes trickled down both cheeks.

Dag Daughtry pledged him silently, and in the draught from his glass he recovered himself.

"He told me that I should come and live with him, and, to his great lonely house he took me the very day we landed in Boston. Also, he told me he would make arrangements with his lawyers — the idea tickled his fancy — 'I shall adopt you,' he said. 'I shall adopt you along with Isthar' — Isthar was the little maid's name, the little mummy's name.

"Here was I, back in life, steward, and legally to be adopted. But life is a fond betrayer. Eighteen hours afterward, in the morning, we found him dead in his bed, the little mummy maid beside him. Heart-failure, the burst of some blood-vessel in the brain — I never learned.

"I prayed and pleaded with them for the pair to be buried together. But they were a hard, cold, New England lot, his cousins and his aunts, and they presented Isthar to the museum, and me they gave a week to be quit of the house. I left in an hour, and they searched my small baggage before they would let me depart.

"I went to New York. It was the same game there, only that I had more money and could play it properly. It was the same in New Orleans, in Galveston. I came to California. This is my fifth voyage. I had a hard time getting these three interested, and spent all my little store of money before they signed the agreement. They were very mean. Advance any money to me! The very idea of it was preposterous. Though I bided my time, ran up a comfortable hotel bill, and, at the very last, ordered my own generous assortment of liquors and cigars and charged the bill to the schooner. Such a to-do! All three of them raged and all but tore their hair . . . and mime. They said it could not be. I fell promptly sick. I told them they got on my nerves and made me sick. The more they raged, the sicker I got. Then they gave in. As promptly I grew better. And here we are, out of water and heading soon most likely for the Marquesas to fill our barrels. Then they will return and try for it again!"

"You think so, sir?"

"I shall remember even more important data, steward," the Ancient Mariner smiled. "Without doubt they will return. Oh, I know them well. They are meagre, narrow, grasping fools."

“Fools! all fools! a ship of fools!” Dag Daughtry exulted; repeating what he had expressed in the hold, as he bored the last barrel, listened to the good water gurgling away into the bilge, and chuckled over his discovery of the Ancient Mariner on the same lay as his own.

CHAPTER XIV

Early next morning, the morning watch of sailors, whose custom was to fetch the day's supply of water for the galley and cabin, discovered that the barrels were empty. Mr. Jackson was so alarmed that he immediately called Captain Doane, and not many minutes elapsed ere Captain Doane had routed out Grimshaw and Nishikanta to tell them the disaster.

Breakfast was an excitement shared in peculiarly by the Ancient Mariner and Dag Daughtry, while the trio of partners raged and bewailed. Captain Doane particularly wailed. Simon Nishikanta was fiendish in his descriptions of whatever miscreant had done the deed and of how he should be made to suffer for it, while Grimshaw clenched and repeatedly clenched his great hands as if throttling some throat.

"I remember, it was in forty-seven — nay, forty-six — yes, forty-six," the Ancient Mariner chattered. "It was a similar and worse predicament. It was in the longboat, sixteen of us. We ran on Glister Reef. So named it was after our pretty little craft discovered it one dark night and left her bones upon it. The reef is on the Admiralty charts. Captain Doane will verify me . . . "

No one listened, save Dag Daughtry, serving hot cakes and admiring. But Simon Nishikanta, becoming suddenly aware that the old man was babbling, bellowed out ferociously:

"Oh, shut up! Close your jaw! You make me tired with your everlasting 'I remember.'"

The Ancient Mariner was guilelessly surprised, as if he had slipped somewhere in his narrative.

"No, I assure you," he continued. "It must have been some error of my poor old tongue. It was not the *Wide Awake*, but the brig *Glister*. Did I say *Wide Awake*? It was the *Glister*, a smart little brig, almost a toy brig in fact, copper-bottomed, lines like a dolphin, a sea-cutter and a wind-eater. Handled like a top. On my honour, gentlemen, it was lively work for both watches when she went about. I was super-cargo. We sailed out of New York, ostensibly for the north-west coast, with sealed orders — "

"In the name of God, peace, peace! You drive me mad with your drivel!" So Nishikanta cried out in nervous pain that was real and quivering. "Old man, have a heart. What do I care to know of your *Glister* and your sealed orders!"

"Ah, sealed orders," the Ancient Mariner went on beamingly. "A magic phrase, sealed orders." He rolled it off his tongue with unction. "Those were the days, gentlemen, when ships did sail with sealed orders. And as super-cargo, with my trifle invested in the adventure and my share in the gains, I commanded the captain. Not in him, but in me were reposed the sealed orders. I assure you I did not know myself what they were. Not until we were around old Cape Stiff, fifty to fifty, and in fifty in the Pacific, did I break the seal and learn we were bound for Van Dieman's Land. They called it Van Dieman's Land in those days . . . "

It was a day of discoveries. Captain Doane caught the mate stealing the ship's position from his desk with the duplicate key. There was a scene, but no more, for the Finn was too huge a man to invite personal encounter, and Captain Dome could only stigmatize his conduct to a running reiteration of "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," and "Sorry, sir."

Perhaps the most important discovery, although he did not know it at the time, was that of Dag Daughtry. It was after the course had been changed and all sail set, and after the Ancient Mariner had privily informed him that Taiohae, in the Marquesas, was their objective, that Daughtry gaily proceeded to shave. But one trouble was on his mind. He was not quite sure, in such an out-of-the-way place as Taiohae, that good beer could be procured.

As he prepared to make the first stroke of the razor, most of his face white with lather, he noticed a dark patch of skin on his forehead just between the eyebrows and above. When he had finished shaving he touched the dark patch, wondering how he had been sunburned in such a spot. But he did not know he had touched it in so far as there was any response of sensation. The dark place was numb.

"Curious," he thought, wiped his face, and forgot all about it.

No more than he knew what horror that dark spot represented, did he know that Ah Moy's slant eyes had long since noticed it and were continuing to notice it, day by day, with secret growing terror.

Close-hauled on the south-east trades, the *Mary Turner* began her long slant toward the Marquesas. For'ard, all were happy. Being only seamen, on seamen's wages, they hailed with delight the news that they were bound in for a tropic isle to fill their water-barrels. Aft, the three partners were in bad temper, and Nishikanta openly sneered at Captain Doane and doubted his ability to find the Marquesas. In the steerage everybody was happy — Dag Daughtry because his wages were running on and a further supply of beer was certain; Kwaque because he was happy whenever his master was happy; and Ah Moy because he would soon have opportunity to desert away from the schooner and the two lepers with whom he was domiciled.

Michael shared in the general happiness of the steerage, and joined eagerly with Steward in learning by heart a fifth song. This was "Lead, kindly Light." In his singing, which was no more than trained howling after all, Michael sought for something he knew not what. In truth, it was the *lost pack*, the pack of the primeval world before the dog ever came in to the fires of men, and, for that matter, before men built fires and before men were men.

He had been born only the other day and had lived but two years in the world, so that, of himself, he had no knowledge of the lost pack. For many thousands of generations he had been away from it; yet, deep down in the crypts of being, tied about and wrapped up in every muscle and nerve of him, was the indelible record of the days in the wild when dim ancestors had run with the pack and at the same time developed the pack and themselves. When Michael was asleep, then it was that pack-memories sometimes arose to the surface of his subconscious mind. These dreams were real while they lasted, but when he was awake he remembered them little if at all. But asleep, or singing with Steward, he sensed and yearned for the lost pack and was impelled to seek the forgotten way to it.

Waking, Michael had another and real pack. This was composed of Steward, Kwaque, Cocky, and Scraps, and he ran with it as ancient forbears had ran with their own kind in the hunting. The steerage was the lair of this pack, and, out of the steerage, it ranged the whole world, which was the *Mary Turner* ever rocking, heeling, reeling on the surface of the unstable sea.

But the steerage and its company meant more to Michael than the mere pack. It was heaven as well, where dwelt God. Man early invented God, often of stone, or clod, or fire, and placed him in trees and mountains and among the stars. This was because man observed that man passed and was lost out of the tribe, or family, or whatever name he gave to his group, which was, after all, the human pack. And man did not want to be lost out of the pack. So, of his imagination, he devised a new pack that would be eternal and with which he might for ever run. Fearing the dark, into which he observed all men passed, he built beyond the dark a fairer region, a happier hunting-ground, a jollier and robuster feasting-hall and wassailing-place, and called it variously "heaven."

Like some of the earliest and lowest of primitive men, Michael never dreamed of throwing the shadow of himself across his mind and worshipping it as God. He did not worship shadows. He worshipped a real and indubitable god, not fashioned in his own four-legged, hair-covered image, but in the flesh-and-blood image, two-legged, hairless, upstanding, of Steward.

CHAPTER XV

Had the trade wind not failed on the second day after laying the course for the Marquesas; had Captain Doane, at the mid-day meal, not grumbled once again at being equipped with only one chronometer; had Simon Nishikanta not become viciously angry thereat and gone on deck with his rifle to find some sea-denizen to kill; and had the sea-denizen that appeared close alongside been a bonita, a dolphin, a porpoise, an albacore, or anything else than a great, eighty-foot cow whale accompanied by her nursing calf — had any link been missing from this chain of events, the *Mary Turner* would have undoubtedly reached the Marquesas, filled her water-barrels, and returned to the treasure-hunting; and the destinies of Michael, Daughtry, Kwaque, and Cocky would have been quite different and possibly less terrible.

But every link was present for the occasion. The schooner, in a dead calm, was rolling over the huge, smooth seas, her boom sheets and tackles crashing to the hollow thunder of her great sails, when Simon Nishikanta put a bullet into the body of the little whale calf. By an almost miracle of chance, the shot killed the calf. It was equivalent to killing an elephant with a pea-rifle. Not at once did the calf die. It merely immediately ceased its gambols and for a while lay quivering on the surface of the ocean. The mother was beside it the moment after it was struck, and to those on board, looking almost directly down upon her, her dismay and alarm were very patent. She would nudge the calf with her huge shoulder, circle around and around it, then range up alongside and repeat her nudgings and shoulderings.

All on the *Mary Turner*, fore and aft, lined the rail and stared down apprehensively at the leviathan that was as long as the schooner.

“If she should do to us, sir, what that other one did to the *Essex*,” Dag Daughtry observed to the Ancient Mariner.

“It would be no more than we deserve,” was the response. “It was uncalled-for — a wanton, cruel act.”

Michael, aware of the excitement overside but unable to see because of the rail, leaped on top of the cabin and at sight of the monster barked defiantly. Every eye turned on him in startlement and fear, and Steward hushed him with a whispered command.

"This is the last time," Grimshaw muttered in a low voice, tense with anger, to Nishikanta. "If ever again, on this voyage, you take a shot at a whale, I'll wring your dirty neck for you. Get me. I mean it. I'll choke your eye-balls out of you."

The Jew smiled in a sickly way and whined, "There ain't nothing going to happen. I don't believe that *Essex* ever was sunk by a whale."

Urged on by its mother, the dying calf made spasmodic efforts to swim that were futile and caused it to veer and wallow from side to side.

In the course of circling about it, the mother accidentally brushed her shoulder under the port quarter of the *Mary Turner*, and the *Mary Turner* listed to starboard as her stern was lifted a yard or more. Nor was this unintentional, gentle impact all. The instant after her shoulder had touched, startled by the contact, she flailed out with her tail. The blow smote the rail just for'ard of the fore-shrouds, splintering a gap through it as if it were no more than a cigar-box and cracking the covering board.

That was all, and an entire ship's company stared down in silence and fear at a sea-monster grief-stricken over its dying progeny.

Several times, in the course of an hour, during which the schooner and the two whales drifted farther and farther apart, the calf strove vainly to swim. Then it set up a great quivering, which culminated in a wild wallowing and lashing about of its tail.

"It is the death-flurry," said the Ancient Mariner softly.

"By damn, it's dead," was Captain Doane's comment five minutes later. "Who'd believe it? A rifle bullet! I wish to heaven we could get half an hour's breeze of wind to get us out of this neighbourhood."

"A close squeak," said Grimshaw,

Captain Doane shook his head, as his anxious eyes cast aloft to the empty canvas and quested on over the sea in the hope of wind-ruffles on the water. But all was glassy calm, each great sea, of all the orderly procession of great seas, heaving up, round-topped and mountainous, like so much quicksilver.

"It's all right," Grimahaw encouraged. "There she goes now, beating it away from us."

"Of course it's all right, always was all right," Nishikanta bragged, as he wiped the sweat from his face and neck and looked with the others after the departing whale. "You're a fine brave lot, you are, losing your goat to a fish."

"I noticed your face was less yellow than usual," Grimshaw sneered. "It must have gone to your heart."

Captain Doane breathed a great sigh. His relief was too strong to permit him to join in the squabbling.

"You're yellow," Grimshaw went on, "yellow clean through." He nodded his head toward the Ancient Mariner. "Now there's the real thing as a man. No yellow in him. He never batted an eye, and I reckon he knew more about the danger than you did. If I was to choose being wrecked on a desert island with him or you, I'd take him a thousand times first. If — "

But a cry from the sailors interrupted him.

"Merciful God!" Captain Doane breathed aloud.

The great cow whale had turned about, and, on the surface, was charging straight back at them. Such was her speed that a bore was raised by her nose like that which a Dreadnought or an Atlantic liner raises on the sea.

"Hold fast, all!" Captain Doane roared.

Every man braced himself for the shock. Henrik Gjertsen, the sailor at the wheel, spread his legs, crouched down, and stiffened his shoulders and arms to hand-grips on opposite spokes of the wheel. Several of the crew fled from the waist to the poop, and others of them sprang into the main-rigging. Daughtry, one hand on the rail, with his free arm clasped the Ancient Mariner around the waist.

All held. The whale struck the *Mary Turner* just aft of the fore-shroud. A score of things, which no eye could take in simultaneously, happened. A sailor, in the main rigging, carried away a ratline in both hands, fell head-downward, and was clutched by an ankle and saved head-downward by a comrade, as the schooner cracked and shuddered, uplifted on the port side, and was flung down on her starboard side till the ocean poured level over her rail. Michael, on the smooth roof of the cabin, slithered down the steep slope to starboard and disappeared, clawing and snarling, into the runway. The port shrouds of the foremast carried away at the chain-plates, and the fore-topmast leaned over drunkenly to starboard.

"My word," quoth the Ancient Mariner. "We certainly felt that."

"Mr. Jackson," Captain Doane commanded the mate, "will you sound the well."

The mate obeyed, although he kept an anxious eye on the whale, which had gone off at a tangent and was smoking away to the eastward.

"You see, that's what you get," Grimshaw snarled at Nishikanta.

Nishikanta nodded, as he wiped the sweat away, and muttered, “And I’m satisfied. I got all I want. I didn’t think a whale had it in it. I’ll never do it again.”

“Maybe you’ll never have the chance,” the captain retorted. “We’re not done with this one yet. The one that charged the *Essex* made charge after charge, and I guess whale nature hasn’t changed any in the last few years.”

“Dry as a bone, sir,” Mr. Jackson reported the result of his sounding.

“There she turns,” Daughtry called out.

Half a mile away, the whale circled about sharply and charged back.

“Stand from under for’ard there!” Captain Doane shouted to one of the sailors who had just emerged from the forecastle scuttle, sea-bag in hand, and over whom the fore-topmast was swaying giddily.

“He’s packed for the get-away,” Daughtry murmured to the Ancient Mariner. “Like a rat leaving a ship.”

“We’re all rats,” was the reply. “I learned just that when I was a rat among the mangy rats of the poor-farm.”

By this time, all men on board had communicated to Michael their contagion of excitement and fear. Back on top of the cabin so that he might see, he snarled at the cow whale when the men seized fresh grips against the impending shock and when he saw her close at hand and oncoming.

The *Mary Turner* was struck aft of the mizzen shrouds. As she was hurled down to starboard, whither Michael was ignominiously flung, the crack of shattered timbers was plainly heard. Henrik Gjertsen, at the wheel, clutching the wheel with all his strength, was spun through the air as the wheel was spun by the fling of the rudder. He fetched up against Captain Doane, whose grip had been torn loose from the rail. Both men crumpled down on deck with the wind knocked out of them. Nishikanta leaned cursing against the side of the cabin, the nails of both hands torn off at the quick by the breaking of his grip on the rail.

While Daughtry was passing a turn of rope around the Ancient Mariner and the mizzen rigging and giving the turn to him to hold, Captain Doane crawled gasping to the rail and dragged himself erect.

“That fetched her,” he whispered huskily to the mate, hand pressed to his side to control his pain. “Sound the well again, and keep on sounding.”

More of the sailors took advantage of the interval to rush for’ard under the toppling fore-topmast, dive into the forecastle, and hastily pack their sea-bags. As Ah Moy emerged from the steerage with his own rotund sea-bag, Daughtry dispatched Kwaque to pack the belongings of both of them.

"Dry as a bone, sir," came the mate's report.

"Keep on sounding, Mr. Jackson," the captain ordered, his voice already stronger as he recovered from the shock of his collision with the helmsman. "Keep right on sounding. Here she comes again, and the schooner ain't built that'd stand such hammering."

By this time Daughtry had Michael tucked under one arm, his free arm ready to anticipate the next crash by swinging on to the rigging.

In making its circle to come back, the cow lost her bearings sufficiently to miss the stern of the *Mary Turner* by twenty feet. Nevertheless, the bore of her displacement lifted the schooner's stern gently and made her dip her bow to the sea in a stately curtsey.

"If she'd a-hit . . . " Captain Doane murmured and ceased.

"It'd a-ben good night," Daughtry concluded for him. "She's a-knocked our stern clean off of us, sir."

Again wheeling, this time at no more than two hundred yards, the whale charged back, not completing her semi-circle sufficiently, so that she bore down upon the schooner's bow from starboard. Her back hit the stem and seemed just barely to scrape the martingale, yet the *Mary Turner* sat down till the sea washed level with her stern-rail. Nor was this all. Martingale, bob-stays and all parted, as well as all starboard stays to the bowsprit, so that the bowsprit swung out to port at right angles and uplifted to the drag of the remaining topmast stays. The topmast anticked high in the air for a space, then crashed down to deck, permitting the bowsprit to dip into the sea, go clear with the butt of it of the forecastle head, and drag alongside.

"Shut up that dog!" Nishikanta ordered Daughtry savagery. "If you don't . . . "

Michael, in Steward's arms, was snarling and growling intimidatingly, not merely at the cow whale but at all the hostile and menacing universe that had thrown panic into the two-legged gods of his floating world.

"Just for that," Daughtry snarled back, "I'll let 'm sing. You made this mess, and if you lift a hand to my dog you'll miss seeing the end of the mess you started, you dirty pawnbroker, you."

"Perfectly right, perfectly right," the Ancient Mariner nodded approbation. "Do you think, steward, you could get a width of canvas, or a blanket, or something soft and broad with which to replace this rope? It cuts me too sharply in the spot where my three ribs are missing."

Daughtry thrust Michael into the old man's arm.

"Hold him, sir," the steward said. "If that pawnbroker makes a move against Killeny Boy, spit in his face, bite him, anything. I'll be back in a jiffy, sir, before he can hurt you and before the whale can hit us again. And let Killeny Boy make all the noise he wants. One hair of him's worth more than a world-full of skunks of money-lenders."

Daughtry dashed into the cabin, came back with a pillow and three sheets, and, using the first as a pad and knotting the last together in swift weaver's knots, he left the Ancient Mariner safe and soft and took Michael back into his own arms.

"She's making water, sir," the mate called. "Six inches — no, seven inches, sir."

There was a rush of sailors across the wreckage of the fore-topmast to the forecastle to pack their bags.

"Swing out that starboard boat, Mr. Jackson," the captain commanded, staring after the foaming course of the cow as she surged away for a fresh onslaught. "But don't lower it. Hold it overside in the falls, or that damned fish'll smash it. Just swing it out, ready and waiting, let the men get their bags, then stow food and water aboard of her."

Lashings were cast off the boat and the falls attached, when the men fled to holding-vantage just ere the whale arrived. She struck the *Mary Turner* squarely amidships on the port beam, so that, from the poop, one saw, as well as heard, her long side bend and spring back like a limber fabric. The starboard rail buried under the sea as the schooner heeled to the blow, and, as she righted with a violent lurch, the water swashed across the deck to the knees of the sailors about the boat and spouted out of the port scuppers.

"Heave away!" Captain Doane ordered from the poop. "Up with her! Swing her out! Hold your turns! Make fast!"

The boat was outboard, its gunwale resting against the *Mary Turner's* rail.

"Ten inches, sir, and making fast," was the mate's information, as he gauged the sounding-rod.

"I'm going after my tools," Captain Doane announced, as he started for the cabin. Half into the scuttle, he paused to add with a sneer for Nishikanta's benefit, "And for my one chronometer."

“A foot and a half, and making,” the mate shouted aft to him.

“We’d better do some packing ourselves,” Grimshaw, following on the captain, said to Nishikanta.

“Steward,” Nishikanta said, “go below and pack my bedding. I’ll take care of the rest.”

“Mr. Nishikanta, you can go to hell, sir, and all the rest as well,” was Daughtry’s quiet response, although in the same breath he was saying, respectfully and assuringly, to the Ancient Mariner: “You hold Killeny, sir. I’ll take care of your dunnage. Is there anything special you want to save, sir?”

Jackson joined the four men below, and as the five of them, in haste and trepidation, packed articles of worth and comfort, the *Mary Turner* was struck again. Caught below without warning, all were flung fiercely to port and from Simon Nishikanta’s room came wailing curses of announcement of the hurt to his ribs against his bunk-rail. But this was drowned by a prodigious smashing and crashing on deck.

“Kindling wood — there won’t be anything else left of her,” Captain Doane commented in the ensuing calm, as he crept gingerly up the companionway with his chronometer cuddled on an even keel to his breast.

Placing it in the custody of a sailor, he returned below and was helped up with his sea-chest by the steward. In turn, he helped the steward up with the Ancient Mariner’s sea-chest. Next, aided by anxious sailors, he and Daughtry dropped into the lazarette through the cabin floor, and began breaking out and passing up a stream of supplies — cases of salmon and beef, of marmalade and biscuit, of butter and preserved milk, and of all sorts of the tinned, desiccated, evaporated, and condensed stuff that of modern times goes down to the sea in ships for the nourishment of men.

Daughtry and the captain emerged last from the cabin, and both stared upward for a moment at the gaps in the slender, sky-scraping top-hamper, where, only minutes before, the main-and mizzen-topmasts had been. A second moment they devoted to the wreckage of the same on deck — the mizzen-topmast, thrust through the spanker and supported vertically by the stout canvas, thrashing back and forth with each thrash of the sail, the main-topmast squarely across the ruined companionway to the steerage.

While the mother-whale expressing her bereavement in terms of violence and destruction, was withdrawing the necessary distance for another charge, all hands of the *Mary Turner* gathered about the starboard boat swung outboard ready for lowering. A respectable hill of case goods, water-kegs, and personal dunnage was piled on the deck alongside. A glance at this, and at the many men of fore and aft, demonstrated that it was to be a perilously overloaded boat.

"We want the sailors with us, at any rate — they can row," said Simon Nishikanta.

"But do we want you?" Grimshaw queried gloomily. "You take up too much room, for your size, and you're a beast anyway."

"I guess I'll be wanted," the pawnbroker observed, as he jerked open his shirt, tearing out the four buttons in his impetuousness and showing a Colt's .44 automatic, strapped in its holster against the bare skin of his side under his left arm, the butt of the weapon most readily accessible to any hasty dip of his right hand. "I guess I'll be wanted. But just the same we can dispense with the undesirables."

"If you will have your will," the wheat-farmer conceded sardonically, although his big hand clenched involuntarily as if throttling a throat. "Besides, if we should run short of food you will prove desirable — for the quantity of you, I mean, and not otherwise. Now just who would you consider undesirable? — the black nigger? He ain't got a gun."

But his pleasantries were cut short by the whale's next attack — another smash at the stern that carried away the rudder and destroyed the steering gear.

"How much water?" Captain Doane queried of the mate.

"Three feet, sir — I just sounded," came the answer. "I think, sir, it would be advisable to part-load the boat; then, right after the next time the whale hits us, lower away on the run, chuck the rest of the dunnage in, and ourselves, and get clear."

Captain Doane nodded.

"It will be lively work," he said. "Stand ready, all of you. Steward, you jump aboard first and I'll pass the chronometer to you."

Nishikanta bellicosely shouldered his vast bulk up to the captain, opened his shirt, and exposed his revolver.

"There's too many for the boat," he said, "and the steward's one of 'em that don't go along. Get that. Hold it in your head. The steward's one of 'em that don't go along."

Captain Doane coolly surveyed the big automatic, while at the fore of his consciousness burned a vision of his flat buildings in San Francisco.

He shrugged his shoulders. “The boat would be overloaded, with all this truck, anyway. Go ahead, if you want to make it your party, but just bear in mind that I’m the navigator, and that, if you ever want to lay eyes on your string of pawnshops, you’d better see that gentle care is taken of me. — Steward!”

Daughtry stepped close.

“There won’t be room for you . . . and for one or two others, I’m sorry to say.”

“Glory be!” said Daughtry. “I was just fearin’ you’d be wantin’ me along, sir. — Kwaque, you take ’m my fella dunnage belong me, put ’m in other fella boat along other side.”

While Kwaque obeyed, the mate sounded the well for the last time, reporting three feet and a half, and the lighter freightage of the starboard boat was tossed in by the sailors.

A rangy, gangly, Scandinavian youth of a sailor, droop-shouldered, six feet six and slender as a lath, with pallid eyes of palest blue and skin and hair attuned to the same colour scheme, joined Kwaque in his work.

“Here, you Big John,” the mate interfered. “This is your boat. You work here.”

The lanky one smiled in embarrassment as he haltingly explained: “I tank I lak go along cooky.”

“Sure, let him go, the more the easier,” Nishikanta took charge of the situation. “Anybody else?”

“Sure,” Dag Daughtry sneered to his face. “I reckon what’s left of the beer goes with my boat . . . unless you want to argue the matter.”

“For two cents — ” Nishikanta spluttered in affected rage.

“Not for two billion cents would you risk a scrap with me, you money-sweater, you,” was Daughtry’s retort. “You’ve got their goats, but I’ve got your number. Not for two billion billion cents would you excite me into callin’ it right now. — Big John! Just carry that case of beer across, an’ that half case, and store in my boat. — Nishikanta, just start something, if you’ve got the nerve.”

Simon Nishikanta did not dare, nor did he know what to do; but he was saved from his perplexity by the shout:

“Here she comes!”

All rushed to holding-ground, and held, while the whale broke more timbers and the *Mary Turner* rolled sluggishly down and back again.

"Lower away! On the run! Lively!"

Captain Doane's orders were swiftly obeyed. The starboard boat, fended off by sailors, rose and fell in the water alongside while the remainder of the dunnage and provisions showered into her.

"Might as well lend a hand, sir, seein' you're bent on leaving in such a hurry," said Daughtry, taking the chronometer from Captain Doane's hand and standing ready to pass it down to him as soon as he was in the boat.

"Come on, Greenleaf," Grimshaw called up to the Ancient Mariner.

"No, thanking you very kindly, sir," came the reply. "I think there'll be more room in the other boat."

"We want the cook!" Nishikanta cried out from the stern sheets. "Come on, you yellow monkey! Jump in!"

Little old shrivelled Ah Moy debated. He visibly thought, although none knew the intrinsicness of his thinking as he stared at the gun of the fat pawnbroker and at the leprosy of Kwaque and Daughtry, and weighed the one against the other and tossed the light and heavy loads of the two boats into the balance.

"Me go other boat," said Ah Moy, starting to drag his bag away across the deck.

"Cast off," Captain Doane commanded.

Scraps, the big Newfoundland puppy, who had played and pranced about through all the excitement, seeing so many of the *Mary Turner's* humans in the boat alongside, sprang over the rail, low and close to the water, and landed sprawling on the mass of sea-bags and goods cases.

The boot rocked, and Nishikanta, his automatic in his hand, cried out:

"Back with him! Throw him on board!"

The sailors obeyed, and the astounded Scraps, after a brief flight through the air, found himself arriving on his back on the *Mary Turner's* deck. At any rate, he took it for no more than a rough joke, and rolled about ecstatically, squirming vermicularly, in anticipation of what new delights of play were to be visited upon him. He reached out, with an enticing growl of good fellowship, for Michael, who was now free on deck, and received in return a forbidding and crusty snarl.

"Guess we'll have to add him to our collection, eh, sir?" Daughtry observed, sparing a moment to pat reassurance on the big puppy's head and being rewarded with a caressing lick on his hand from the puppy's blissful tongue.

No first-class ship's steward can exist without possessing a more than average measure of executive ability. Dag Daughtry was a first-class ship's steward. Placing the Ancient Mariner in a nook of safety, and setting Big John to unlashing the remaining boat and hooking on the falls, he sent Kwaque into the hold to fill kegs of water from the scant remnant of supply, and Ah Moy to clear out the food in the galley.

The starboard boat, cluttered with men, provisions, and property and being rapidly rowed away from the danger centre, which was the *Mary Turner*, was scarcely a hundred yards away, when the whale, missing the schooner clean, turned at full speed and close range, churning the water, and all but collided with the boat. So near did she come that the rowers on the side next to her pulled in their oars. The surge she raised, heeled the loaded boat gunwale under, so that a degree of water was shipped ere it righted. Nishikanta, automatic still in hand, standing up in the sternsheets by the comfortable seat he had selected for himself, was staggered by the lurch of the boat. In his instinctive, spasmodic effort to maintain balance, he relaxed his clutch on the pistol, which fell into the sea.

"*Ha-ah*!" Daughtry girded. "What price Nishikanta? I got his number, and he's lost you fellows' goats. He's your meat now. Easy meat? I should say! And when it comes to the eating, eat him first. Sure, he's a skunk, and will taste like one, but many's the honest man that's eaten skunk and pulled through a tight place. But you'd better soak 'im all night in salt water, first."

Grimshaw, whose seat in the sternsheets was none of the best, grasped the situation simultaneously with Daughtry, and, with a quick upstanding, and hooking out-reach of hand, caught the fat pawnbroker around the back of the neck, and with anything but gentle suasion jerked him half into the air and flung him face downward on the bottom boards.

"Ha-ah!" said Daughtry across the hundred yards of ocean.

Next, and without hurry, Grimshaw took the more comfortable seat for himself.

"Want to come along?" he called to Daughtry.

"No, thank you, sir," was the latter's reply. "There's too many of us, an' we'll make out better in the other boat."

With some bailing, and with others bending to the oars, the boat rowed frantically away, while Daughtry took Ah Moy with him down into the lazarette beneath the cabin floor and broke out and passed up more provisions.

It was when he was thus below that the cow grazed the schooner just for'ard of amidships on the port side, lashed out with her mighty tail as she sounded, and ripped clean away the chain plates and rail of the mizzen-shrouds. In the next roll of the huge, glassy sea, the mizzen-mast fell overside.

"My word, some whale," Daughtry said to Ah Moy, as they emerged from the cabin companionway and gazed at this latest wreckage.

Ah Moy found need to get more food from the galley, when Daughtry, Kwaque, and Big John swung their weight on the falls, one at a time, and hoisted the port boat, one end at a time, over the rail and swung her out.

"We'll wait till the next smash, then lower away, throw everything in, an' get outa this," the steward told the Ancient Mariner. "Lots of time. The schooner'll sink no faster when she's awash than she's sinkin' now."

Even as he spoke, the scuppers were nearly level with the ocean, and her rolling in the big sea was sluggish.

"Hey!" he called with sudden forethought across the widening stretch of sea to Captain Doane. "What's the course to the Marquesas? Right now? And how far away, sir?"

"Nor'-nor'-east-quarter-east!" came the faint reply. "Will fetch Nuka-Hiva! About two hundred miles! Haul on the south-east trade with a good full and you'll make it!"

"Thank you, sir," was the steward's acknowledgment, ere he ran aft, disrupted the binnacle, and carried the steering compass back to the boat.

Almost, from the whale's delay in renewing her charging, did they think she had given over. And while they waited and watched her rolling on the sea an eighth of a mile away, the *Mary Turner* steadily sank.

"We might almost chance it," Daughtry was debating aloud to Big John, when a new voice entered the discussion.

"Cocky! — Cocky!" came plaintive tones from below out of the steerage companion.

"Devil be damned!" was the next, uttered in irritation and anger. "Devil be damned! Devil be damned!"

"Of course not," was Daughtry's judgment, as he dashed across the deck, crawled through the confusion of the main-topmast and its many stays that blocked the way, and found the tiny, white morsel of life perched on a bunk-edge, ruffling its feathers, erecting and flattening its rosy crest, and cursing in honest human speech the waywardness of the world and of ships and humans upon the sea.

The cockatoo stepped upon Daughtry's inviting index finger, swiftly ascended his shirt sleeve, and, on his shoulder, claws sunk into the flimsy shirt fabric till they hurt the flesh beneath, leaned head to ear and uttered in gratitude and relief, and in self-identification: "Cocky. Cocky."

"You son of a gun," Daughtry crooned.

"Glory be!" Cooky replied, in tones so like Daughtry's as to startle him.

"You son of a gun," Daughtry repeated, cuddling his cheek and ear against the cockatoo's feathered and crested head. "And some folks thinks it's only folks that count in this world."

Still the whale delayed, and, with the ocean washing their toes on the level deck, Daughtry ordered the boat lowered away. Ah Moy was eager in his haste to leap into the bow. Nor was Daughtry's judgment correct that the little Chinaman's haste was due to fear of the sinking ship. What Ah Moy sought was the place in the boat remotest from Kwaque and the steward.

Shoving clear, they roughly stored the supplies and dunnage out of the way of the thwarts and took their places, Ah Moy pulling bow-oar, next in order Big John and Kwaque, with Daughtry (Cocky still perched on his shoulder) at stroke. On top of the dunnage, in the sternsheets, Michael gazed wistfully at the *Mary Turner* and continued to snarl crustily at Scraps who idiotically wanted to start a romp. The Ancient Mariner stood up at the steering sweep and gave the order, when all was ready, for the first dip of the oars.

A growl and a bristle from Michael warned them that the whale was not only coming but was close upon them. But it was not charging. Instead, it circled slowly about the schooner as if examining its antagonist.

"I'll bet it's head's sore from all that banging, an' it's beginnin' to feel it," Daughtry grinned, chiefly for the purpose of keeping his comrades unafraid.

Barely had they rowed a dozen strokes, when an exclamation from Big John led them to follow his gaze to the schooners forecastle-head, where the forecastle cat flashed across in pursuit of a big rat. Other rats they saw, evidently driven out of their lairs by the rising water.

"We just can't leave that cat behind," Daughtry soliloquized in suggestive tones.

“Certainly not,” the Ancient Mariner responded swinging his weight on the steering-sweep and heading the boat back.

Twice the whale gently rolled them in the course of its leisurely circling, ere they bent to their oars again and pulled away. Of them the whale seemed to take no notice. It was from the huge thing, the schooner, that death had been wreaked upon her calf; and it was upon the schooner that she vented the wrath of her grief.

Even as they pulled away, the whale turned and headed across the ocean. At a half-mile distance she curved about and charged back.

“With all that water in her, the schooner’ll have a real kick-back in her when she’s hit,” Daughtry said. “Lordy me, rest on your oars an’ watch.”

Delivered squarely amidships, it was the hardest blow the *Mary Turner* had received. Stays and splinters of rail flew in the air as she rolled so far over as to expose half her copper wet-glistening in the sun. As she righted sluggishly, the mainmast swayed drunkenly in the air but did not fall.

“A knock-out!” Daughtry cried, at sight of the whale flurrying the water with aimless, gigantic splashings. “It must a-smashed both of ’em.”

“Schooner he finish close up altogether,” Kwaque observed, as the *Mary Turner’s* rail disappeared.

Swiftly she sank, and no more than a matter of moments was it when the stump of her mainmast was gone. Remained only the whale, floating and floundering, on the surface of the sea.

“It’s nothing to brag about,” Daughtry delivered himself of the *Mary Turner’s* epitaph. “Nobody’d believe us. A stout little craft like that sunk, deliberately sunk, by an old cow-whale! No, sir. I never believed that old moss-back in Honolulu, when he claimed he was a survivor of the sinkin’ of the *Essex*, an’ no more will anybody believe me.”

“The pretty schooner, the pretty clever craft,” mourned the Ancient Mariner. “Never were there more dainty and lovable topmasts on a three-masted schooner, and never was there a three-masted schooner that worked like the witch she was to windward.”

Dag Daughtry, who had kept always footloose and never married, surveyed the boat-load of his responsibilities to which he was anchored — Kwaque, the Black Papuan monstrosity whom he had saved from the bellies of his fellows; Ah Moy, the little old sea-cook whose age was problematical only by decades; the Ancient Mariner, the dignified, the beloved, and the respected; gangly Big John, the youthful Scandinavian with the inches of a giant and the mind of a child; Killeny Boy, the wonder of dogs; Scraps, the outrageously silly and fat-rolling puppy; Cocky, the white-feathered mite of life, imperious as a steel-blade and wheedlingly seductive as a charming child; and even the forecastle cat, the lithe and tawny slayer of rats, sheltering between the legs of Ah Moy. And the Marquesas were two hundred miles distant full-hauled on the tradewind which had ceased but which was as sure to live again as the morning sun in the sky.

The steward heaved a sigh, and whimsically shot into his mind the memory-picture in his nursery-book of the old woman who lived in a shoe. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand, and was dimly aware of the area of the numbness that bordered the centre that was sensationless between his eyebrows, as he said:

“Well, children, rowing won’t fetch us to the Marquesas. We’ll need a stretch of wind for that. But it’s up to us, right now, to put a mile or so between us an’ that peevish old cow. Maybe she’ll revive, and maybe she won’t, but just the same I can’t help feelin’ leary about her.”

CHAPTER XVI

Two days later, as the steamer *Mariposa* plied her customary route between Tahiti and San Francisco, the passengers ceased playing deck quoits, abandoned their card games in the smoker, their novels and deck chairs, and crowded the rail to stare at the small boat that skimmed to them across the sea before a light following breeze. When Big John, aided by Ah Moy and Kwaque, lowered the sail and unstepped the mast, titters and laughter arose from the passengers. It was contrary to all their preconceptions of mid-ocean rescue of ship-wrecked mariners from the open boat.

It caught their fancy that this boat was the Ark, what of its freightage of bedding, dry goods boxes, beer-cases, a cat, two dogs, a white cockatoo, a Chinaman, a kinky-headed black, a gangly pallid-haired giant, a grizzled Dag Daughtry, and an Ancient Mariner who looked every inch the part. Him a facetious, vacationing architect's clerk dubbed Noah, and so greeted him.

"I say, Noah," he called. "Some flood, eh? Located Ararat yet?"

"Catch any fish?" bawled another youngster down over the rail.

"Gracious! Look at the beer! Good English beer! Put me down for a case!"

Never was a more popular wrecked crew more merrily rescued at sea. The young blades would have it that none other than old Noah himself had come on board with the remnants of the Lost Tribes, and to elderly female passengers spun hair-raising accounts of the sinking of an entire tropic island by volcanic and earthquake action.

"I'm a steward," Dag Daughtry told the *Mariposa's* captain, "and I'll be glad and grateful to berth along with your stewards in the glory-hole. Big John there's a sailorman, an' the fo'c's'le 'll do him. The Chink is a ship's cook, and the nigger belongs to me. But Mr. Greenleaf, sir, is a gentleman, and the best of cabin fare and staterooms'll be none too good for him, sir."

And when the news went around that these were part of the survivors of the three-masted schooner, *Mary Turner*, smashed into kindling wood and sunk by a whale, the elderly females no more believed than had they the yarn of the sunken island.

"Captain Hayward," one of them demanded of the steamer's skipper, "could a whale sink the *Mariposa*?"

"She has never been so sunk," was his reply.

"I knew it!" she declared emphatically. "It's not the way of ships to go around being sunk by whales, is it, captain?"

"No, madam, I assure you it is not," was his response. "Nevertheless, all the five men insist upon it."

"Sailors are notorious for their unveracity, are they not?" the lady voiced her flat conclusion in the form of a tentative query.

"Worst liars I ever saw, madam. Do you know, after forty years at sea, I couldn't believe myself under oath."

* * * * *

Nine days later the *Mariposa* threaded the Golden Gate and docked at San Francisco. Humorous half-columns in the local papers, written in the customary silly way by unlicked cub reporters just out of grammar school, tickled the fancy of San Francisco for a fleeting moment in that the steamship *Mariposa* had rescued some sea-waifs possessed of a cock-and-bull story that not even the reporters believed. Thus, silly reportorial unveracity usually proves extraordinary truth a liar. It is the way of cub reporters, city newspapers, and flat-floor populations which get their thrills from moving pictures and for which the real world and all its spaciousness does not exist.

"Sunk by a whale!" demanded the average flat-floor person. "Nonsense, that's all. Just plain rotten nonsense. Now, in the 'Adventures of Eleanor,' which is some film, believe me, I'll tell you what I saw happen . . . "

So Daughtry and his crew went ashore into 'Frisco Town uheralded and unsung, the second following morning's lucubrations of the sea reporters being varied disportations upon the attack on an Italian crab fisherman by an enormous jellyfish. Big John promptly sank out of sight in a sailors' boarding-house, and, within the week, joined the Sailors' Union and shipped on a steam schooner to load redwood ties at Bandon, Oregon. Ah Moy got no farther ashore than the detention sheds of the Federal Immigration Board, whence he was deported to China on the next Pacific Mail steamer. The *Mary Turner's* cat was adopted by the sailors' forecastle of the *Mariposa*, and on the *Mariposa* sailed away on the back trip to Tahiti. Scraps was taken ashore by a quartermaster and left in the bosom of his family.

And ashore went Dag Daughtry, with his small savings, to rent two cheap rooms for himself and his remaining responsibilities, namely, Charles

Stough Greenleaf, Kwaque, Michael, and, not least, Cocky. But not for long did he permit the Ancient Mariner to live with him.

"It's not playing the game, sir," he told him. "What we need is capital. We've got to interest capital, and you've got to do the interesting. Now this very day you've got to buy a couple of suit-cases, hire a taxicab, go sailing up to the front door of the Bronx Hotel like good pay and be damned. She's a real stylish hotel, but reasonable if you want to make it so. A little room, an inside room, European plan, of course, and then you can economise by eatin' out."

"But, steward, I have no money," the Ancient Mariner protested.

"That's all right, sir; I'll back you for all I can."

"But, my dear man, you know I'm an old impostor. I can't stick you up like the others. You . . . why . . . why, you're a friend, don't you see?"

"Sure I do, and I thank you for sayin' it, sir. And that's why I'm with you. And when you've nailed another crowd of treasure-hunters and got the ship ready, you'll just ship me along as steward, with Kwaque, and Killeny Boy, and the rest of our family. You've adopted me, now, an' I'm your grown-up son, an' you've got to listen to me. The Bronx is the hotel for you — fine-soundin' name, ain't it? That's atmosphere. Folk'll listen half to you an' more to your hotel. I tell you, you leaning back in a big leather chair talkin' treasure with a two-bit cigar in your mouth an' a twenty-cent drink beside you, why that's like treasure. They just got to believe. An' if you'll come along now, sir, we'll trot out an' buy them suit-cases."

Right bravely the Ancient Mariner drove to the Bronx in a taxi, registered his "Charles Stough Greenleaf" in an old-fashioned hand, and took up anew the activities which for years had kept him free of the poor-farm. No less bravely did Dag Daughtry set out to seek work. This was most necessary, because he was a man of expensive luxuries. His family of Kwaque, Michael, and Cocky required food and shelter; more costly than that was maintenance of the Ancient Mariner in the high-class hotel; and, in addition, was his six-quart thirst.

But it was a time of industrial depression. The unemployed problem was bulking bigger than usual to the citizens of San Francisco. And, as regarded steamships and sailing vessels, there were three stewards for every Steward's position. Nothing steady could Daughtry procure, while his occasional odd jobs did not balance his various running expenses. Even did he do pick-and-shovel work, for the municipality, for three days, when he had to give way, according to the impartial procedure, to another needy one whom three days' work would keep afloat a little longer.

Daughtry would have put Kwaque to work, except that Kwaque was impossible. The black, who had only seen Sydney from steamers' decks, had never been in a city in his life. All he knew of the world was steamers, far-outlying south-sea isles, and his own island of King William in Melanesia. So Kwaque remained in the two rooms, cooking and housekeeping for his master and caring for Michael and Cocky. All of which was prison for Michael, who had been used to the run of ships, of coral beaches and plantations.

But in the evenings, sometimes accompanied a few steps in the rear by Kwaque, Michael strolled out with Steward. The multiplicity of man-gods on the teeming sidewalks became a real bore to Michael, so that man-gods, in general, underwent a sharp depreciation. But Steward, the particular god of his fealty and worship, appreciated. Amongst so many gods Michael felt bewildered, while Steward's Abrahamic bosom became more than ever the one sure haven where harshness and danger never troubled.

"Mind your step," is the last word and warning of twentieth-century city life. Michael was not slow to learn it, as he conserved his own feet among the countless thousands of leather-shod feet of men, ever hurrying, always unregarding of the existence and right of way of a lowly, four-legged Irish terrier.

The evening outings with Steward invariably led from saloon to saloon, where, at long bars, standing on sawdust floors, or seated at tables, men drank and talked. Much of both did men do, and also did Steward do, ere, his daily six-quart stint accomplished, he turned homeward for bed. Many were the acquaintances he made, and Michael with him. Coasting seamen and bay sailors they mostly were, although there were many 'longshoremen and waterfront workmen among them.

From one of these, a scow-schooner captain who plied up and down the bay and the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers, Daughtry had the promise of being engaged as cook and sailor on the schooner *Howard*. Eighty tons of freight, including deckload, she carried, and in all democracy Captain Jorgensen, the cook, and the two other sailors, loaded and unloaded her at all hours, and sailed her night and day on all times and tides, one man steering while three slept and recuperated. It was time, and double-time, and over-time beyond that, but the feeding was generous and the wages ran from forty-five to sixty dollars a month.

"Sure, you bet," said Captain Jorgensen. "This cook-feller, Hanson, pretty quick I smash him up an' fire him, then you can come along . . . and the bow-wow, too." Here he dropped a hearty, wholesome hand of toil down to a caress of Michael's head. "That's one fine bow-wow. A bow-wow is good on a scow when all hands sleep alongside the dock or in an anchor watch."

"Fire Hanson now," Dag Daughtry urged.

But Captain Jorgensen shook his slow head slowly. "First I smash him up."

"Then smash him now and fire him," Daughtry persisted. "There he is right now at the corner of the bar."

"No. He must give me reason. I got plenty of reason. But I want reason all hands can see. I want him make me smash him, so that all hands say, 'Hurrah, Captain, you done right.' Then you get the job, Daughtry."

Had Captain Jorgensen not been dilatory in his contemplated smashing, and had not Hanson delayed in giving sufficient provocation for a smashing, Michael would have accompanied Steward upon the schooner, *Howard*, and all Michael's subsequent experiences would have been totally different from what they were destined to be. But destined they were, by chance and by combinations of chance events over which Michael had no control and of which he had no more awareness than had Steward himself. At that period, the subsequent stage career and nightmare of cruelty for Michael was beyond any wildest forecast or apprehension. And as to forecasting Dag Daughtry's fate, along with Kwaque, no maddest drug-dream could have approximated it.

CHAPTER XVII

One night Dag Daughtry sat at a table in the saloon called the Pile-drivers' Home. He was in a parlous predicament. Harder than ever had it been to secure odd jobs, and he had reached the end of his savings. Earlier in the evening he had had a telephone conference with the Ancient Mariner, who had reported only progress with an exceptionally strong nibble that very day from a retired quack doctor.

"Let me pawn my rings," the Ancient Mariner had urged, not for the first time, over the telephone.

"No, sir," had been Daughtry's reply. "We need them in the business. They're stock in trade. They're atmosphere. They're what you call a figure of speech. I'll do some thinking to-night an' see you in the morning, sir. Hold on to them rings an' don't be no more than casual in playin' that doctor. Make 'm come to you. It's the only way. Now you're all right, an' everything's hunkydory an' the goose hangs high. Don't you worry, sir. Dag Daughtry never fell down yet."

But, as he sat in the Pile-drivers' Home, it looked as if his fall-down was very near. In his pocket was precisely the room-rent for the following week, the advance payment of which was already three days overdue and clamorously demanded by the hard-faced landlady. In the rooms, with care, was enough food with which to pinch through for another day. The Ancient Mariner's modest hotel bill had not been paid for two weeks — a prodigious sum under the circumstances, being a first-class hotel; while the Ancient Mariner had no more than a couple of dollars in his pocket with which to make a sound like prosperity in the ears of the retired doctor who wanted to go a-treasuring.

Most catastrophic of all, however, was the fact that Dag Daughtry was three quarts short of his daily allowance and did not dare break into the rent money which was all that stood between him and his family and the street. This was why he sat at the beer table with Captain Jorgensen, who was just returned with a schooner-load of hay from the Petaluma Flats. He had already bought beer twice, and evinced no further show of thirst. Instead, he was yawning from long hours of work and waking and looking at his watch. And Daughtry was three quarts short! Besides, Hanson had not yet been smashed, so that the cook-job on the schooner still lay ahead an unknown distance in the future.

In his desperation, Daughtry hit upon an idea with which to get another schooner of steam beer. He did not like steam beer, but it was cheaper than lager.

"Look here, Captain," he said. "You don't know how smart that Killeny Boy is. Why, he can count just like you and me."

"Hoh!" rumbled Captain Jorgensen. "I seen 'em do it in side shows. It's all tricks. Dogs an' horses can't count."

"This dog can," Daughtry continued quietly. "You can't fool 'm. I bet you, right now, I can order two beers, loud so he can hear and notice, and then whisper to the waiter to bring one, an', when the one comes, Killeny Boy'll raise a roar with the waiter."

"Hoh! Hoh! How much will you bet?"

The steward fingered a dime in his pocket. If Killeny failed him it meant that the rent-money would be broken in upon. But Killeny couldn't and wouldn't fail him, he reasoned, as he answered:

"I'll bet you the price of two beers."

The waiter was summoned, and, when he had received his secret instructions, Michael was called over from where he lay at Kwaque's feet in a corner. When Steward placed a chair for him at the table and invited him into it, he began to key up. Steward expected something of him, wanted him to show off. And it was not because of the showing off that he was eager, but because of his love for Steward. Love and service were one in the simple processes of Michael's mind. Just as he would have leaped into fire for Steward's sake, so would he now serve Steward in any way Steward desired. That was what love meant to him. It was all love meant to him — service.

"Waiter!" Steward called; and, when the waiter stood close at hand: "Two beers. — Did you get that, Killeny? *Two* beers."

Michael squirmed in his chair, placed an impulsive paw on the table, and impulsively flashed out his ribbon of tongue to Steward's close-bending face.

"He will remember," Daughtry told the scow-schooner captain.

"Not if we talk," was the reply. "Now we will fool your bow-wow. I will say that the job is yours when I smash Hanson. And you will say it is for me to smash Hanson now. And I will say Hanson must give me reason first to smash him. And then we will argue like two fools with mouths full of much noise. Are you ready?"

Daughtry nodded, and thereupon ensued a loud-voiced discussion that drew Michael's earnest attention from one talker to the other.

"I got you," Captain Jorgensen announced, as he saw the waiter approaching with but a single schooner of beer. "The bow-wow has forgot, if he ever remembered. He thinks you an' me is fighting. The place in his mind for *one* beer, and *two*, is wiped out, like a wave on the beach wipes out the writing in the sand."

"I guess he ain't goin' to forget arithmetic no matter how much noise you shouts," Daughtry argued aloud against his sinking spirits. "An' I ain't goin' to butt in," he added hopefully. "You just watch 'm for himself."

The tall, schooner-glass of beer was placed before the captain, who laid a swift, containing hand around it. And Michael, strung as a taut string, knowing that something was expected of him, on his toes to serve, remembered his ancient lessons on the *Makambo*, vainly looked into the impassive face of Steward for a sign, then looked about and saw, not *two* glasses, but *one* glass. So well had he learned the difference between one and two that it came to him — how the profoundest psychologist can no more state than can he state what thought is in itself — that there was one glass only when two glasses had been commanded. With an abrupt upspring, his throat half harsh with anger, he placed both forepaws on the table and barked at the waiter.

Captain Jorgensen crashed his fist down.

"You win!" he roared. "I pay for the beer! Waiter, bring one more."

Michael looked to Steward for verification, and Steward's hand on his head gave adequate reply.

"We try again," said the captain, very much awake and interested, with the back of his hand wiping the beer-foam from his moustache. "Maybe he knows one an' two. How about three? And four?"

"Just the same, Skipper. He counts up to five, and knows more than five when it is more than five, though he don't know the figures by name after five."

"Oh, Hanson!" Captain Jorgensen bellowed across the bar-room to the cook of the *Howard*. "Hey, you square-head! Come and have a drink!"

Hanson came over and pulled up a chair.

“I pay for the drinks,” said the captain; “but you order, Daughtry. See, now, Hanson, this is a trick bow-wow. He can count better than you. We are three. Daughtry is ordering three beers. The bow-wow hears three. I hold up two fingers like this to the waiter. He brings two. The bow-wow raises hell with the waiter. You see.”

All of which came to pass, Michael blissfully unappeasable until the order was filled properly.

“He can’t count,” was Hanson’s conclusion. “He sees one man without beer. That’s all. He knows every man should ought to have a glass. That’s why he barks.”

“Better than that,” Daughtry boasted. “There are three of us. We will order four. Then each man will have his glass, but Killeny will talk to the waiter just the same.”

True enough, now thoroughly aware of the game, Michael made outcry to the waiter till the fourth glass was brought. By this time many men were about the table, all wanting to buy beer and test Michael.

“Glory be,” Dag Daughtry solloquized. “A funny world. Thirsty one moment. The next moment they’d fair drown you in beer.”

Several even wanted to buy Michael, offering ridiculous sums like fifteen and twenty dollars.

“I tell you what,” Captain Jorgensen muttered to Daughtry, whom he had drawn away into a corner. “You give me that bow-wow, and I’ll smash Hanson right now, and you got the job right away — come to work in the morning.”

Into another corner the proprietor of the Pile-drivers’ Home drew Daughtry to whisper to him:

“You stick around here every night with that dog of yourn. It makes trade. I’ll give you free beer any time and fifty cents cash money a night.”

It was this proposition that started the big idea in Daughtry’s mind. As he told Michael, back in the room, while Kwaque was unlacing his shoes:

“It’s this way Killeny. If you’re worth fifty cents a night and free beer to that saloon keeper, then you’re worth that to me . . . and more, my son, more. ’Cause he’s lookin’ for a profit. That’s why he sells beer instead of buyin’ it. An’, Killeny, you won’t mind workin’ for me, I know. We need the money. There’s Kwaque, an’ Mr. Greenleaf, an’ Cocky, not even mentioning you an’ me, an’ we eat an awful lot. An’ room-rent’s hard to get, an’ jobs is harder. What d’ye say, son, to-morrow night you an’ me hustle around an’ see how much coin we can gather?”

And Michael, seated on Steward’s knees, eyes to eyes and nose to nose, his jowls held in Steward’s hand’s wriggled and squirmed with delight, flipping out his tongue and bobbing his tail in the air. Whatever it was, it was good, for it was Steward who spoke.

CHAPTER XVIII

The grizzled ship’s steward and the rough-coated Irish terrier quickly became conspicuous figures in the night life of the Barbary Coast of San Francisco. Daughtry elaborated on the counting trick by bringing Cocky along. Thus, when a waiter did not fetch the right number of glasses, Michael would remain quite still, until Cocky, at a privy signal from Steward, standing on one leg, with the free claw would clutch Michael’s neck and apparently talk into Michael’s ear. Whereupon Michael would look about the glasses on the table and begin his usual expostulation with the waiter.

But it was when Daughtry and Michael first sang “Roll me Down to Rio” together, that the ten-strike was made. It occurred in a sailors’ dance-hall on Pacific Street, and all dancing stopped while the sailors clamoured for more of the singing dog. Nor did the place lose money, for no one left, and the crowd increased to standing room as Michael went through his repertoire of “God Save the King,” “Sweet Bye and Bye,” “Lead, Kindly Light,” “Home, Sweet Home,” and “Shenandoah.”

It meant more than free beer to Daughtry, for, when he started to leave, the proprietor of the place thrust three silver dollars into his hand and begged him to come around with the dog next night.

“For that?” Daughtry demanded, looking at the money as if it were contemptible.

Hastily the proprietor added two more dollars, and Daughtry promised.

“Just the same, Killeny, my son,” he told Michael as they went to bed, “I think you an’ me are worth more than five dollars a turn. Why, the like of you has never been seen before. A real singing dog that can carry ’most any air with me, and that can carry half a dozen by himself. An’ they say Caruso gets a thousand a night. Well, you ain’t Caruso, but you’re the dog-Caruso of the entire world. Son, I’m goin’ to be your business manager. If we can’t make a twenty-dollar gold-piece a night — say, son, we’re goin’ to move into better quarters. An’ the old gent up at the Hotel de Bronx is goin’ to move into an outside room. An’ Kwaque’s goin’ to get a real outfit of clothes. Killeny, my boy, we’re goin’ to get so rich that if he can’t snare a sucker we’ll put up the cash ourselves ’n’ buy a schooner for ’m, ’n’ send him out a-treasure-huntin' on his own. We'll be the suckers, eh, just you an' me, an' love to."

* * * * *

The Barbary Coast of San Francisco, once the old-time sailor-town in the days when San Francisco was reckoned the toughest port of the Seven Seas, had evolved with the city until it depended for at least half of its earnings on the slumming parties that visited it and spent liberally. It was quite the custom, after dinner, for many of the better classes of society, especially when entertaining curious Easterners, to spend an hour or several in motoring from dance-hall to dance-hall and cheap cabaret to cheap cabaret. In short, the "Coast" was as much a sight-seeing place as was Chinatown and the Cliff House.

It was not long before Dag Daughtry was getting his twenty dollars a night for two twenty-minute turns, and was declining more beer than a dozen men with thirsts equal to his could have accommodated. Never had he been so prosperous; nor can it be denied that Michael enjoyed it. Enjoy it he did, but principally for Steward's sake. He was serving Steward, and so to serve was his highest heart's desire.

In truth, Michael was the bread-winner for quite a family, each member of which fared well. Kwaque blossomed out resplendent in russet-brown shoes, a derby hat, and a gray suit with trousers immaculately creased. Also, he became a devotee of the moving-picture shows, spending as much as twenty and thirty cents a day and resolutely sitting out every repetition of programme. Little time was required of him in caring for Daughtry, for they had come to eating in restaurants. Not only had the Ancient Mariner moved into a more expensive outside room at the Bronx; but Daughtry insisted on thrusting upon him more spending money, so that, on occasion, he could invite a likely acquaintance to the theatre or a concert and bring him home in a taxi.

"We won't keep this up for ever, Killeny," Steward told Michael. "For just as long as it takes the old gent to land another bunch of gold-pouched, retriever-snouted treasure-hunters, and no longer. Then it's hey for the ocean blue, my son, an' the roll of a good craft under our feet, an' smash of wet on the deck, an' a spout now an' again of the scuppers.

"We got to go rollin' down to Rio as well as sing about it to a lot of cheap skates. They can take their rotten cities. The sea's the life for us — you an' me, Killeny, son, an' the old gent an' Kwaque, an' Cocky, too. We ain't made for city ways. It ain't healthy. Why, son, though you maybe won't believe it, I'm losin' my spring. The rubber's goin' outa me. I'm kind o' languid, with all night in an' nothin' to do but sit around. It makes me fair sick at the thought of hearin' the old gent say once again, 'I think, steward, one of those prime cocktails would be just the thing before dinner.' We'll take a little ice-machine along next voyage, an' give 'm the best.

"An' look at Kwaque, Killeny, my boy. This ain't his climate. He's positively ailin'. If he sits around them picture-shows much more he'll develop the T.B. For the good of his health, an' mine an' yours, an' all of us, we got to get up anchor pretty soon an' hit out for the home of the trade winds that kiss you through an' through with the salt an' the life of the sea."

* * * * *

In truth, Kwaque, who never complained, was ailing fast. A swelling, slow and sensationless at first, under his right arm-pit, had become a mild and unceasing pain. No longer could he sleep a night through. Although he lay on his left side, never less than twice, and often three and four times, the hurt of the swelling woke him. Ah Moy, had he not long since been delivered back to China by the immigration authorities, could have told him the meaning of that swelling, just as he could have told Dag Daughtry the meaning of the increasing area of numbness between his eyes where the tiny, vertical, lion-lines were cutting more conspicuously. Also, could he have told him what was wrong with the little finger on his left hand. Daughtry had first diagnosed it as a sprain of a tendon. Later, he had decided it was chronic rheumatism brought on by the damp and foggy San Francisco climate. It was one of his reasons for desiring to get away again to sea where the tropic sun would warm the rheumatism out of him.

As a steward, Daughtry had been accustomed to contact with men and women of the upper world. But for the first time in his life, here in the underworld of San Francisco, in all equality he met such persons from above. Nay, more, they were eager to meet him. They sought him. They fawned upon him for an invitation to sit at his table and buy beer for him in whatever garish cabaret Michael was performing. They would have bought wine for him, at enormous expense, had he not stubbornly stuck to his beer. They were, some of them, for inviting him to their homes — "An' bring the wonderful dog along for a sing-song"; but Daughtry, proud of Michael for being the cause of such invitations, explained that the professional life was too arduous to permit of such diversions. To Michael he explained that when they proffered a fee of fifty dollars, the pair of them would “come a-runnin’.”

Among the host of acquaintances made in their cabaret-life, two were destined, very immediately, to play important parts in the lives of Daughtry and Michael. The first, a politician and a doctor, by name Emory — Walter Merritt Emory — was several times at Daughtry’s table, where Michael sat with them on a chair according to custom. Among other things, in gratitude for such kindnesses from Daughtry, Doctor Emory gave his office card and begged for the privilege of treating, free of charge, either master or dog should they ever become sick. In Daughtry’s opinion, Dr. Walter Merritt Emory was a keen, clever man, undoubtedly able in his profession, but passionately selfish as a hungry tiger. As he told him, in the brutal candour he could afford under such changed conditions: “Doc, you’re a wonder. Anybody can see it with half an eye. What you want you just go and get. Nothing’d stop you except . . . ”

“Except?”

“Oh, except that it was nailed down, or locked up, or had a policeman standing guard over it. I’d sure hate to have anything you wanted.”

“Well, you have,” Doctor assured him, with a significant nod at Michael on the chair between them.

“Br-r-r!” Daughtry shivered. “You give me the creeps. If I thought you really meant it, San Francisco couldn’t hold me two minutes.” He meditated into his beer-glass a moment, then laughed with reassurance. “No man could get that dog away from me. You see, I’d kill the man first. I’d just up an’ tell ’m, as I’m tellin’ you now, I’d kill ’m first. An’ he’d believe me, as you’re believin’ me now. You know I mean it. So’d he know I meant it. Why, that dog . . . ”

In sheer inability to express the profundity of his emotion, Dag Daughtry broke off the sentence and drowned it in his beer-glass.

Of quite different type was the other person of destiny. Harry Del Mar, he called himself; and Harry Del Mar was the name that appeared on the programmes when he was doing Orpheum “time.” Although Daughtry did not know it, because Del Mar was laying off for a vacation, the man did trained-animal turns for a living. He, too, bought drinks at Daughtry’s table. Young, not over thirty, dark of complexion with large, long-lashed brown eyes that he fondly believed were magnetic, cherubic of lip and feature, he belied all his appearance by talking business in direct business fashion.

"But you ain't got the money to buy 'm," Daughtry replied, when the other had increased his first offer of five hundred dollars for Michael to a thousand.

"I've got the thousand, if that's what you mean."

"No," Daughtry shook his head. "I mean he ain't for sale at any price. Besides, what do you want 'm for?"

"I like him," Del Mar answered. "Why do I come to this joint? Why does the crowd come here? Why do men buy wine, run horses, sport actresses, become priests or bookworms? Because they like to. That's the answer. We all do what we like when we can, go after the thing we want whether we can get it or not. Now I like your dog, I want him. I want him a thousand dollars' worth. See that big diamond on that woman's hand over there. I guess she just liked it, and wanted it, and got it, never mind the price. The price didn't mean as much to her as the diamond. Now that dog of yours — "

"Don't like you," Dag Daughtry broke in. "Which is strange. He likes most everybody without fussin' about it. But he bristled at you from the first. No man'd want a dog that don't like him."

"Which isn't the question," Del Mar stated quietly. "I like him. As for him liking or not liking me, that's my look-out, and I guess I can attend to that all right."

It seemed to Daughtry that he glimpsed or sensed under the other's unfaltering cherubicness of expression a steelness of cruelty that was abysmal in that it was of controlled intelligence. Not in such terms did Daughtry think his impression. At the most, it was a feeling, and feelings do not require words in order to be experienced or comprehended.

"There's an all-night bank," the other went on. "We can stroll over, I'll cash a cheque, and in half an hour the cash will be in your hand."

Daughtry shook his head.

"Even as a business proposition, nothing doing," he said. "Look you. Here's the dog earnin' twenty dollars a night. Say he works twenty-five days in the month. That's five hundred a month, or six thousand a year. Now say that's five per cent., because it's easier to count, it represents the interest on a capital value of one hundred an' twenty thousand-dollars. Then we'll suppose expenses and salary for me is twenty thousand. That leaves the dog worth a hundred thousand. Just to be fair, cut it in half — a fifty-thousand dog. And you're offerin' a thousand for him."

"I suppose you think he'll last for ever, like so much land'," Del Mar smiled quietly.

Daughtry saw the point instantly.

"Give 'm five years of work — that's thirty thousand. Give 'm one year of work — it's six thousand. An' you're offerin' me one thousand for six thousand. That ain't no kind of business — for me . . . an' him. Besides, when he can't work any more, an' ain't worth a cent, he'll be worth just a plumb million to me, an' if anybody offered it, I'd raise the price."

CHAPTER XIX

"I'll see you again," Harry Del Mar told Daughtry, at the end of his fourth conversation on the matter of Michael's sale.

Wherein Harry Del Mar was mistaken. He never saw Daughtry again, because Daughtry saw Doctor Emory first.

Kwaque's increasing restlessness at night, due to the swelling under his right arm-pit, had began to wake Daughtry up. After several such experiences, he had investigated and decided that Kwaque was sufficiently sick to require a doctor. For which reason, one morning at eleven, taking Kwaque along, he called at Walter Merritt Emory's office and waited his turn in the crowded reception-room.

"I think he's got cancer, Doc.," Daughtry said, while Kwaque was pulling off his shirt and undershirt. "He never squealed, you know, never peeped. That's the way of niggers. I didn't find our till he got to wakin' me up nights with his tossin' about an' groanin' in his sleep. — There! What'd you call it? Cancer or tumour — no two ways about it, eh?"

But the quick eye of Walter Merritt Emory had not missed, in passing, the twisted fingers of Kwaque's left hand. Not only was his eye quick, but it was a "leper eye." A volunteer surgeon in the first days out in the Philippines, he had made a particular study of leprosy, and had observed so many lepers that infallibly, except in the incipient beginnings of the disease, he could pick out a leper at a glance. From the twisted fingers, which was the anæsthetic form, produced by nerve-disintegration, to the corrugated lion forehead (again anæsthetic), his eyes flashed to the swelling under the right arm-pit and his brain diagnosed it as the tubercular form.

Just as swiftly flashed through his brain two thoughts: the first, the axiom, *whenever and wherever you find a leper, look for the other leper*; the second, the desired Irish terrier, who was owned by Daughtry, with whom Kwaque had been long associated. And here all swiftness of eye-flashing ceased on the part of Walter Merritt Emory. He did not know how much, if anything, the steward knew about leprosy, and he did not care to arouse any suspicions. Casually drawing his watch to see the time, he turned and addressed Daughtry.

"I should say his blood is out of order. He's run down. He's not used to the recent life he's been living, nor to the food. To make certain, I shall examine for cancer and tumour, although there's little chance of anything like that."

And as he talked, with just a waver for a moment, his gaze lifted above Daughtry's eyes to the area of forehead just above and between the eyes. It was sufficient. His "leper-eye" had seen the "lion" mark of the leper.

"You're run down yourself," he continued smoothly. "You're not up to snuff, I'll wager. Eh?"

"Can't say that I am," Daughtry agreed. "I guess I got to get back to the sea an' the tropics and warm the rheumatics outa me."

"Where?" queried Doctor Emory, almost absently, so well did he feign it, as if apparently on the verge of returning to a closer examination, of Kwaque's swelling.

Daughtry extended his left hand, with a little wiggle of the little finger advertising the seat of the affliction. Walter Merritt Emory saw, with seeming careless look out from under careless-drooping eyelids, the little finger slightly swollen, slightly twisted, with a smooth, almost shiny, silkiness of skin-texture. Again, in the course of turning to look at Kwaque, his eyes rested an instant on the lion-lines of Daughtry's brow.

"Rheumatism is still the great mystery," Doctor Emory said, returning to Daughtry as if deflected by the thought. "It's almost individual, there are so many varieties of it. Each man has a kind of his own. Any numbness?"

Daughtry laboriously wiggled his little finger.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "It ain't as lively as it used to was."

"Ah," Walter Merritt Emory murmured, with a vastitude of confidence and assurance. "Please sit down in that chair there. Maybe I won't be able to cure you, but I promise you I can direct you to the best place to live for what's the matter with you. — Miss Judson!"

And while the trained-nurse-apparelled young woman seated Dag Daughtry in the enamelled surgeon's chair and leaned him back under direction, and while Doctor Emory dipped his finger-tips into the strongest antiseptic his office possessed, behind Doctor Emory's eyes, in the midst of his brain, burned the image of a desired Irish terrier who did turns in sailor-town cabarets, was rough-coated, and answered to the full name of Killeny Boy.

"You've got rheumatism in more places than your little finger," he assured Daughtry. "There's a touch right here, I'll wager, on your forehead. One moment, please. Move if I hurt you, Otherwise sit still,

because I don't intend to hurt you. I merely want to see if my diagnosis is correct. — There, that's it. Move when you feel anything. Rheumatism has strange freaks. — Watch this, Miss Judson, and I'll wager this form of rheumatism is new to you. See. He does not resent. He thinks I have not begun yet . . . "

And as he talked, steadily, interestingly, he was doing what Dag Daughtry never dreamed he was doing, and what made Kwaque, looking on, almost dream he was seeing because of the unrealness and impossibleness of it. For, with a large needle, Doctor Emory was probing the dark spot in the midst of the vertical lion-lines. Nor did he merely probe the area. Thrusting into it from one side, under the skin and parallel to it, he buried the length of the needle from sight through the insensate infiltration. This Kwaque beheld with bulging eyes; for his master betrayed no sign that the thing was being done.

"Why don't you begin?" Dag Daughtry questioned impatiently. "Besides, my rheumatism don't count. It's the nigger-boy's swelling."

"You need a course of treatment," Doctor Emory assured him. "Rheumatism is a tough proposition. It should never be let grow chronic. I'll fix up a course of treatment for you. Now, if you'll get out of the chair, we'll look at your black servant."

But first, before Kwaque was leaned back, Doctor Emory threw over the chair a sheet that smelled of having been roasted almost to the scorching point. As he was about to examine Kwaque, he looked with a slight start of recollection at his watch. When he saw the time he startled more, and turned a reproachful face upon his assistant.

"Miss Judson," he said, coldly emphatic, "you have failed me. Here it is, twenty before twelve, and you knew I was to confer with Doctor Hadley over that case at eleven-thirty sharp. How he must be cursing me! You know how peevish he is."

Miss Judson nodded, with a perfect expression of contrition and humility, as if she knew all about it, although, in reality, she knew only all about her employer and had never heard till that moment of his engagement at eleven-thirty.

"Doctor Hadley's just across the hall," Doctor Emory explained to Daughtry. "It won't take me five minutes. He and I have a disagreement. He has diagnosed the case as chronic appendicitis and wants to operate. I have diagnosed it as pyorrhea which has infected the stomach from the mouth, and have suggested emetine treatment of the mouth as a cure for the stomach disorder. Of course, you don't understand, but the point is that I've persuaded Doctor Hadley to bring in Doctor Granville, who is a dentist and a pyorrhea expert. And they're all waiting for me these ten minutes! I must run.

"I'll return inside five minutes," he called back as the door to the hall was closing upon him. — "Miss Judson, please tell those people in the reception-room to be patient."

He did enter Doctor Hadley's office, although no sufferer from pyorrhea or appendicitis awaited him. Instead, he used the telephone for two calls: one to the president of the board of health; the other to the chief of police. Fortunately, he caught both at their offices, addressing them familiarly by their first names and talking to them most emphatically and confidentially.

Back in his own quarters, he was patently elated.

"I told him so," he assured Miss Judson, but embracing Daughtry in the happy confidence. "Doctor Granville backed me up. Straight pyorrhea, of course. That knocks the operation. And right now they're jolting his gums and the pus-sacs with emetine. Whew! A fellow likes to be right. I deserve a smoke. Do you mind, Mr. Daughtry?"

And while the steward shook his head, Doctor Emory lighted a big Havana and continued audibly to luxuriate in his fictitious triumph over the other doctor. As he talked, he forgot to smoke, and, leaning quite casually against the chair, with arrant carelessness allowed the live coal at the end of his cigar to rest against the tip of one of Kwaque's twisted fingers. A privy wink to Miss Judson, who was the only one who observed his action, warned her against anything that might happen.

"You know, Mr. Daughtry," Walter Merritt Emory went on enthusiastically, while he held the steward's eyes with his and while all the time the live end of the cigar continued to rest against Kwaque's finger, "the older I get the more convinced I am that there are too many ill-advised and hasty operations."

Still fire and flesh pressed together, and a tiny spiral of smoke began to arise from Kwaque's finger-end that was different in colour from the smoke of a cigar-end.

"Now take that patient of Doctor Hadley's. I've saved him, not merely the risk of an operation for appendicitis, but the cost of it, and the hospital expenses. I shall charge him nothing for what I did. Hadley's charge will be merely nominal. Doctor Granville, at the outside, will cure his pyorrhea with emetine for no more than a paltry fifty dollars. Yes, by George, besides the risk to his life, and the discomfort, I've saved that man, all told, a cold thousand dollars to surgeon, hospital, and nurses."

And while he talked on, holding Daughtry's eyes, a smell of roast meat began to pervade the air. Doctor Emory smelled it eagerly. So did Miss Judson smell it, but she had been warned and gave no notice. Nor did she look at the juxtaposition of cigar and finger, although she knew by the evidence of her nose that it still obtained.

"What's burning?" Daughtry demanded suddenly, sniffing the air and glancing around.

"Pretty rotten cigar," Doctor Emory observed, having removed it from contact with Kwaque's finger and now examining it with critical disapproval. He held it close to his nose, and his face portrayed disgust. "I won't say cabbage leaves. I'll merely say it's something I don't know and don't care to know. That's the trouble. They get out a good, new brand of cigar, advertise it, put the best of tobacco into it, and, when it has taken with the public, put in inferior tobacco and ride the popularity of it. No more in mine, thank you. This day I change my brand."

So speaking, he tossed the cigar into a cuspidor. And Kwaque, leaning back in the queerest chair in which he had ever sat, was unaware that the end of his finger had been burned and roasted half an inch deep, and merely wondered when the medicine doctor would cease talking and begin looking at the swelling that hurt his side under his arm.

And for the first time in his life, and for the ultimate time, Dag Daughtry fell down. It was an irretrievable fall-down. Life, in its freedom of come and go, by heaving sea and reeling deck, through the home of the trade-winds, back and forth between the ports, ceased there for him in Walter Merritt Emory's office, while the calm-browed Miss Judson looked on and marvelled that a man's flesh should roast and the man wince not from the roasting of it.

Doctor Emory continued to talk, and tried a fresh cigar, and, despite the fact that his reception-room was overflowing, delivered, not merely a long, but a live and interesting, dissertation on the subject of cigars and of the tobacco leaf and filler as grown and prepared for cigars in the tobacco-favoured regions of the earth.

"Now, as regards this swelling," he was saying, as he began a belated and distant examination of Kwaque's affliction, "I should say, at a glance, that it is neither tumour nor cancer, nor is it even a boil. I should say . . . "

A knock at the private door into the hall made him straighten up with an eagerness that he did not attempt to mask. A nod to Miss Judson sent her to open the door, and entered two policemen, a police sergeant, and a professionally whiskered person in a business suit with a carnation in his button-hole.

"Good morning, Doctor Masters," Emory greeted the professional one, and, to the others: "Howdy, Sergeant;" "Hello, Tim;" "Hello, Johnson — when did they shift you off the Chinatown squad?"

And then, continuing his suspended sentence, Walter Merritt Emory held on, looking intently at Kwaque's swelling:

"I should say, as I was saying, that it is the finest, ripest, perforating ulcer of the *bacillus leprae* order, that any San Francisco doctor has had the honour of presenting to the board of health."

"Leprosy!" exclaimed Doctor Masters.

And all started at his pronouncement of the word. The sergeant and the two policemen shied away from Kwaque; Miss Judson, with a smothered cry, clapped her two hands over her heart; and Dag Daughtry, shocked but sceptical, demanded:

"What are you givin' us, Doc.?"

"Stand still! don't move!" Walter Merritt Emory said peremptorily to Daughtry. "I want you to take notice," he added to the others, as he gently touched the live-end of his fresh cigar to the area of dark skin above and between the steward's eyes. "Don't move," he commanded Daughtry. "Wait a moment. I am not ready yet."

And while Daughtry waited, perplexed, confused, wondering why Doctor Emory did not proceed, the coal of fire burned his skin and flesh, till the smoke of it was apparent to all, as was the smell of it. With a sharp laugh of triumph, Doctor Emory stepped back.

"Well, go ahead with what you was goin' to do," Daughtry grumbled, the rush of events too swift and too hidden for him to comprehend. "An' when you're done with that, I just want you to explain what you said about leprosy an' that nigger-boy there. He's my boy, an' you can't pull anything like that off on him . . . or me."

"Gentlemen, you have seen," Doctor Emory said. "Two undoubted cases of it, master and man, the man more advanced, with the combination of both forms, the master with only the anæsthetic form — he has a touch of it, too, on his little finger. Take them away. I strongly advise, Doctor Masters, a thorough fumigation of the ambulance afterward."

"Look here . . . " Dag Daughtry began belligerently.

Doctor Emory glanced warningly to Doctor Masters, and Doctor Masters glanced authoritatively at the sergeant who glanced commandingly at his two policemen. But they did not spring upon Daughtry. Instead, they backed farther away, drew their clubs, and glared intimidatingly at him. More convincing than anything else to Daughtry was the conduct of the policemen. They were manifestly afraid of contact with him. As he started forward, they poked the ends of their extended clubs towards his ribs to ward him off.

"Don't you come any closer," one warned him, flourishing his club with the advertisement of braining him. "You stay right where you are until you get your orders."

"Put on your shirt and stand over there alongside your master," Doctor Emory commanded Kwaque, having suddenly elevated the chair and spilled him out on his feet on the floor.

"But what under the sun . . . " Daughtry began, but was ignored by his quondam friend, who was saying to Doctor Masters:

"The pest-house has been vacant since that Japanese died. I know the gang of cowards in your department so I'd advise you to give the dope to these here so that they can disinfect the premises when they go in."

"For the love of Mike," Daughtry pleaded, all of stunned belligerence gone from him in his state of stunned conviction that the dread disease possessed him. He touched his finger to his sensationless forehead, then smelled it and recognized the burnt flesh he had not felt burning. "For the love of Mike, don't be in such a rush. If I've got it, I've got it. But that ain't no reason we can't deal with each other like white men. Give me two hours an' I'll get outa the city. An' in twenty-four I'll be outa the country. I'll take ship — "

"And continue to be a menace to the public health wherever you are," Doctor Masters broke in, already visioning a column in the evening papers, with scare-heads, in which he would appear the hero, the St. George of San

Francisco standing with poised lance between the people and the dragon of leprosy.

"Take them away," said Waiter Merritt Emory, avoiding looking Daughtry in the eyes.

"Ready! March!" commanded the sergeant.

The two policemen advanced on Daughtry and Kwaque with extended clubs.

"Keep away, an' keep movin'," one of the policemen growled fiercely. "An' do what we say, or get your head cracked. Out you go, now. Out the door with you. Better tell that coon to stick right alongside you."

"Doc., won't you let me talk a moment?" Daughtry begged of Emory.

"The time for talking is past," was the reply. "This is the time for segregation. — Doctor Masters, don't forget that ambulance when you're quit of the load."

So the procession, led by the board-of-heath doctor and the sergeant, and brought up in the rear by the policemen with their protectively extended clubs, started through the doorway.

Whirling about on the threshold, at the imminent risk of having his skull cracked, Dag Daughtry called back:

"Doc! My dog! You know 'm."

"I'll get him for you," Doctor Emory consented quickly. "What's the address?"

"Room eight-seven, Clay street, the Bowhead Lodging House, you know the place, entrance just around the corner from the Bowhead Saloon. Have 'm sent out to me wherever they put me — will you?"

"Certainly I will," said Doctor Emory, "and you've got a cockatoo, too?"

"You bet, Cocky! Send 'm both along, please, sir."

* * * * *

"My!" said Miss Judson, that evening, at dinner with a certain young interne of St. Joseph's Hospital. "That Doctor Emory is a wizard. No wonder he's successful. Think of it! Two filthy lepers in our office to-day! One was a coon. And he knew what was the matter the moment he laid eyes on them. He's a caution. When I tell you what he did to them with his cigar! And he was cute about it! He gave me the wink first. And they never dreamed what he was doing. He took his cigar and . . . "

CHAPTER XX

The dog, like the horse, abases the base. Being base, Waiter Merritt Emory was abased by his desire for the possession of Michael. Had there been no Michael, his conduct would have been quite different. He would have dealt with Daughtry as Daughtry had described, as between white men. He would have warned Daughtry of his disease and enabled him to take ship to the South Seas or to Japan, or to other countries where lepers are not segregated. This would have worked no hardship on those countries, since such was their law and procedure, while it would have enabled Daughtry and Kwaque to escape the hell of the San Francisco pest-house, to which, because of his baseness, he condemned them for the rest of their lives.

Furthermore, when the expense of the maintenance of armed guards over the pest-house, day and night, throughout the years, is considered, Walter Merritt Emory could have saved many thousands of dollars to the tax-payers of the city and county of San Francisco, which thousands of dollars, had they been spent otherwise, could have been diverted to the reduction of the notorious crowding in school-rooms, to purer milk for the babies of the poor, or to an increase of breathing-space in the park system for the people of the stifling ghetto. But had Walter Merritt Emory been thus considerate, not only would Daughtry and Kwaque have sailed out and away over the sea, but with them would have sailed Michael.

Never was a reception-roomful of patients rushed through more expeditiously than was Doctor Emory’s the moment the door had closed upon the two policemen who brought up Daughtry’s rear. And before he went to his late lunch, Doctor Emory was away in his machine and down into the Barbary Coast to the door of the Bowhead Lodging House. On the way, by virtue of his political affiliations, he had been able to pick up a captain of detectives. The addition of the captain proved necessary, for the landlady put up a stout argument against the taking of the dog of her lodger. But Milliken, captain of detectives, was too well known to her, and she yielded to the law of which he was the symbol and of which she was credulously ignorant.

As Michael started out of the room on the end of a rope, a plaintive call of reminder came from the window-sill, where perched a tiny, snow-white cockatoo.

"Cocky," he called. "Cocky."

Walter Merritt Emory glanced back and for no more than a moment hesitated. "We'll send for the bird later," he told the landlady, who, still mildly expostulating as she followed them downstairs, failed to notice that the captain of the detectives had carelessly left the door to Daughtry's rooms ajar.

* * * * *

But Walter Merritt Emory was not the only base one abased by desire of possession of Michael. In a deep leather chair, his feet resting in another deep leather chair, at the Indoor Yacht Club, Harry Del Mar yielded to the somniferous digestion of lunch, which was for him breakfast as well, and glanced through the first of the early editions of the afternoon papers. His eyes lighted on a big headline, with a brief five lines under it. His feet were instantly drawn down off the chair and under him as he stood up erect upon them. On swift second thought, he sat down again, pressed the electric button, and, while waiting for the club steward, reread the headline and the brief five lines.

In a taxi, and away, heading for the Barbary Coast, Harry Del Mar saw visions that were golden. They took on the semblance of yellow, twenty-dollar gold pieces, of yellow-backed paper bills of the government stamping of the United States, of bank books, and of rich coupons ripe for the clipping — and all shot through the flashings of the form of a rough-coated Irish terrier, on a galaxy of brilliantly-lighted stages, mouth open, nose upward to the drops, singing, ever singing, as no dog had ever been known to sing in the world before.

* * * * *

Cocky himself was the first to discover that the door was ajar, and was looking at it with speculation (if by "speculation" may be described the mental processes of a bird, in some mysterious way absorbing into its consciousness a fresh impression of its environment and preparing to act, or not act, according to which way the fresh impression modifies its conduct). Humans do this very thing, and some of them call it "free will." Cocky, staring at the open door, was in just the stage of determining whether or not he should more closely inspect that crack of exit to the wider world, which inspection, in turn, would determine whether or not he should venture out through the crack, when his eyes beheld the eyes of the second discoverer staring in.

The eyes were bestial, yellow-green, the pupils dilating and narrowing with sharp swiftness as they sought about among the lights and glooms of the room. Cocky knew danger at the first glimpse — danger to the uttermost of violent death. Yet Cocky did nothing. No panic stirred his heart. Motionless, one eye only turned upon the crack, he focused that one eye upon the head and eyes of the gaunt gutter-cat whose head had erupted into the crack like an apparition.

Alert, dilating and contracting, as swift as cautious, and infinitely apprehensive, the pupils vertically slitted in jet into the midmost of amazing opals of greenish yellow, the eyes roved the room. They alighted on Cocky. Instantly the head portrayed that the cat had stiffened, crouched, and frozen. Almost imperceptibly the eyes settled into a watching that was like to the stony stare of a sphinx across aching and eternal desert sands. The eyes were as if they had so stared for centuries and millenniums.

No less frozen was Cocky. He drew no film across his one eye that showed his head cocked sideways, nor did the passion of apprehension that whelmed him manifest itself in the quiver of a single feather. Both creatures were petrified into the mutual stare that is of the hunter and the hunted, the preyer and the prey, the meat-eater and the meat.

It was a matter of long minutes, that stare, until the head in the doorway, with a slight turn, disappeared. Could a bird sigh, Cocky would have sighed. But he made no movement as he listened to the slow, dragging steps of a man go by and fade away down the hall.

Several minutes passed, and, just as abruptly the apparition reappeared — not alone the head this time, but the entire sinuous form as it glided into the room and came to rest in the middle of the floor. The eyes brooded on Cocky, and the entire body was still save for the long tail, which lashed from one side to the other and back again in an abrupt, angry, but monotonous manner.

Never removing its eyes from Cocky, the cat advanced slowly until it paused not six feet away. Only the tail lashed back and forth, and only the eyes gleamed like jewels in the full light of the window they faced, the vertical pupils contracting to scarcely perceptible black slits.

And Cocky, who could not know death with the clearness of concept of a human, nevertheless was not altogether unaware that the end of all things was terribly impending. As he watched the cat deliberately crouch for the spring, Cocky, gallant mote of life that he was, betrayed his one and forgivable panic.

"Cocky! Cocky!" he called plaintively to the blind, insensate walls.

It was his call to all the world, and all powers and things and two-legged men-creatures, and Steward in particular, and Kwaque, and Michael. The burden of his call was: "It is I, Cocky. I am very small and very frail, and this is a monster to destroy me, and I love the light, bright world, and I want to live and to continue to live in the brightness, and I am so very small, and I'm a good little fellow, with a good little heart, and I cannot battle with this huge, furry, hungry thing that is going to devour me, and I want help, help, help. I am Cocky. Everybody knows me. I am Cocky."

This, and much more, was contained in his two calls of: "Cocky! Cocky!"

And there was no answer from the blind walls, from the hall outside, nor from all the world, and, his moment of panic over, Cocky was his brave little self again. He sat motionless on the window-sill, his head cocked to the side, with one unwavering eye regarding on the floor, so perilously near, the eternal enemy of all his kind.

The human quality of his voice had startled the gutter-cat, causing her to forgo her spring as she flattened down her ears and bellied closer to the floor.

And in the silence that followed, a blue-bottle fly buzzed rowdily against an adjacent window-pane, with occasional loud bumps against the glass tokening that he too had his tragedy, a prisoner pent by baffling transparency from the bright world that blazed so immediately beyond.

Nor was the gutter-cat without her ill and hurt of life. Hunger hurt her, and hurt her meagre breasts that should have been full for the seven feeble and mewing little ones, replicas of her save that their eyes were not yet open and that they were grotesquely unsteady on their soft, young legs. She remembered them by the hurt of her breasts and the prod of her instinct; also she remembered them by vision, so that, by the subtle chemistry of her brain, she could see them, by way of the broken screen across the ventilator hole, down into the cellar in the dark rubbish-corner under the stairway, where she had stolen her lair and birthed her litter.

And the vision of them, and the hurt of her hunger stirred her afresh, so that she gathered her body and measured the distance for the leap. But Cocky was himself again.

“Devil be damned! Devil be damned!” he shouted his loudest and most belligerent, as he ruffled like a bravo at the gutter-cat beneath him, so that he sent her crouching, with startlement, lower to the floor, her ears wilting rigidly flat and down, her tail lashing, her head turning about the room so that her eyes might penetrate its obscurest corners in quest of the human whose voice had so cried out.

All of which the gutter-cat did, despite the positive evidence of her senses that this human noise had proceeded from the white bird itself on the window-sill.

The bottle fly bumped once again against its invisible prison wall in the silence that ensued. The gutter-cat prepared and sprang with sudden decision, landing where Cocky had perched the fraction of a second before. Cocky had darted to the side, but, even as he darted, and as the cat landed on the sill, the cat’s paw flashed out sidewise and Cocky leaped straight up, beating the air with his wings so little used to flying. The gutter-cat reared on her hind-legs, smote upward with one paw as a child might strike with its hat at a butterfly. But there was weight in the cat’s paw, and the claws of it were outspread like so many hooks.

Struck in mid-air, a trifle of a flying machine, all its delicate gears tangled and disrupted, Cocky fell to the floor in a shower of white feathers, which, like snowflakes, eddied slowly down after, and after the plummet-like descent of the cat, so that some of them came to rest on her back, startling her tense nerves with their gentle impact and making her crouch closer while she shot a swift glance around and overhead for any danger that might threaten.

CHAPTER XXI

Harry Del Mar found only a few white feathers on the floor of Dag Daughtry’s room in the Bowhead Lodging House, and from the landlady learned what had happened to Michael. The first thing Harry Del Mar did, still retaining his taxi, was to locate the residence of Doctor Emory and make sure that Michael was confined in an outhouse in the back yard. Next he engaged passage on the steamship *Umatilla*, sailing for Seattle and Puget Sound ports at daylight. And next he packed his luggage and paid his bills.

In the meantime, a wordy war was occurring in Walter Merritt Emory’s office.

“The man’s yelling his head off,” Doctor Masters was contending. “The police had to rap him with their clubs in the ambulance. He was violent. He wanted his dog. It can’t be done. It’s too raw. You can’t steal his dog this way. He’ll make a howl in the papers.”

“Huh!” quoth Walter Merritt Emory. “I’d like to see a reporter with backbone enough to go within talking distance of a leper in the pest-house. And I’d like to see the editor who wouldn’t send a pest-house letter (granting it’d been smuggled past the guards) out to be burned the very second he became aware of its source. Don’t you worry, Doc. There won’t be any noise in the papers.”

“But leprosy! Public health! The dog has been exposed to his master. The dog itself is a peripatetic source of infection.”

“Contagion is the better and more technical word, Doc.,” Walter Merritt Emory soothed with the sting of superior knowledge.

“Contagion, then,” Doctor Masters took him up. “The public must be considered. It must not run the risk of being infected — ”

“Of contracting the contagion,” the other corrected smoothly.

“Call it what you will. The public — ”

“Poppycock,” said Walter Merritt Emory. “What you don’t know about leprosy, and what the rest of the board of health doesn’t know about leprosy, would fill more books than have been compiled by the men who have expertly studied the disease. The one thing they have eternally tried, and are eternally trying, is to inoculate one animal outside man with the leprosy that is peculiar to man. Horses, rabbits, rats, donkeys, monkeys, mice, and dogs — heavens, they have tried it on them all, tens of thousands of times and a hundred thousand times ten thousand times, and never a successful inoculation! They have never succeeded in inoculating it on one man from another. Here — let me show you."

And from his shelves Waiter Merritt Emory began pulling down his authorities.

"Amazing . . . most interesting . . . " Doctor Masters continued to emit from time to time as he followed the expert guidance of the other through the books. "I never dreamed . . . the amount of work they have done is astounding . . . "

"But," he said in conclusion, "there is no convincing a layman of the matter contained on your shelves. Nor can I so convince my public. Nor will I try to. Besides, the man is consigned to the living death of life-long imprisonment in the pest-house. You know the beastly hole it is. He loves the dog. He's mad over it. Let him have it. I tell you it's rotten unfair and cruel, and I won't stand for it."

"Yes, you will," Walter Merritt Emory assured him coolly. "And I'll tell you why."

He told him. He said things that no doctor should say to another, but which a politician may well say, and has often said, to another politician — things which cannot bear repeating, if, for no other reason, because they are too humiliating and too little conducive to pride for the average American citizen to know; things of the inside, secret governments of imperial municipalities which the average American citizen, voting free as a king at the polls, fondly thinks he manages; things which are, on rare occasion, partly unburied and promptly reburied in the tomes of reports of Lexow Committees and Federal Commissions.

* * * * *

And Walter Merritt Emory won his desire of Michael against Doctor Masters; had his wife dine with him at Jules' that evening and took her to see Margaret Anglin in celebration of the victory; returned home at one in the morning, in his pyjamas went out to take a last look at Michael, and found no Michael.

* * * * *

The pest-house of San Francisco, as is naturally the case with pest-houses in all American cities, was situated on the bleakest, remotest, forlornest, cheapest space of land owned by the city. Poorly protected from the Pacific Ocean, chill winds and dense fog-banks whistled and swirled sadly across the sand-dunes. Picnicking parties never came there, nor did small boys hunting birds' nests or playing at being wild Indians. The only class of frequenters was the suicides, who, sad of life, sought the saddest landscape as a fitting scene in which to end. And, because they so ended, they never repeated their visits.

The outlook from the windows was not inspiriting. A quarter of a mile in either direction, looking out along the shallow canyon of the sand-hills, Dag Daughtry could see the sentry-boxes of the guards, themselves armed and more prone to kill than to lay hands on any escaping pest-man, much less persuavively discuss with him the advisability of his return to the prison house.

On the opposing sides of the prospect from the windows of the four walls of the pest-house were trees. Eucalyptus they were, but not the royal monarchs that their brothers are in native habitats. Poorly planted, by politics, illy attended, by politics, decimated and many times repeatedly decimated by the hostile forces of their environment, a straggling corporal's guard of survivors, they thrust their branches, twisted and distorted, as if writhing in agony, into the air. Scrub of growth they were, expending the major portion of their meagre nourishment in their roots that crawled seaward through the insufficient sand for anchorage against the prevailing gales.

Not even so far as the sentry-boxes were Daughtry and Kwaque permitted to stroll. A hundred yards inside was the dead-line. Here, the guards came hastily to deposit food-supplies, medicines, and written doctors' instructions, retreating as hastily as they came. Here, also, was a blackboard upon which Daughtry was instructed to chalk up his needs and requests in letters of such size that they could be read from a distance. And on this board, for many days, he wrote, not demands for beer, although the six-quart daily custom had been broken sharply off, but demands like:

WHERE IS MY DOG?

HE IS AN IRISH TERRIER.

HE IS ROUGH-COATED.

HIS NAME IS KILLENY BOY.

I WANT MY DOG.

I WANT TO TALK TO DOC. EMORY.

TELL DOC. EMORY TO WRITE TO ME ABOUT MY DOG.

One day, Dag Daughtry wrote:

IF I DON’T GET MY DOG I WILL KILL DOC. EMORY.

Whereupon the newspapers informed the public that the sad case of the two lepers at the pest-house had become tragic, because the white one had gone insane. Public-spirited citizens wrote to the papers, declaiming against the maintenance of such a danger to the community, and demanding that the United States government build a national leprosarium on some remote island or isolated mountain peak. But this tiny ripple of interest faded out in seventy-two hours, and the reporter-cubs proceeded variously to interest the public in the Alaskan husky dog that was half a bear, in the question whether or not Crispi Angelotti was guilty of having cut the carcass of Giuseppe Bartholdi into small portions and thrown it into the bay in a grain-sack off Fisherman’s Wharf, and in the overt designs of Japan upon Hawaii, the Philippines, and the Pacific Coast of North America.

And, outside of imprisonment, nothing happened of interest to Dag Daughtry and Kwaque at the pest-house until one night in the late fall. A gale was not merely brewing. It was coming on to blow. Because, in a basket of fruit, stated to have been sent by the young ladies of Miss Foote’s Seminary, Daughtry had read a note artfully concealed in the heart of an apple, telling him on the forthcoming Friday night to keep a light burning in his window. Daughtry received a visitor at five in the morning.

It was Charles Stough Greenleaf, the Ancient Mariner himself. Having wallowed for two hours through the deep sand of the eucalyptus forest, he fell exhausted against the penthouse door. When Daughtry opened it, the ancient one blew in upon him along with a gusty wet splatter of the freshening gale. Daughtry caught him first and supported him toward a chair. But, remembering his own affliction, he released the old man so abruptly as to drop him violently into the chair.

“My word, sir,” said Daughtry. “You must ’a’ ben havin’ a time of it. — Here, you fella Kwaque, this fella wringin’ wet. You fella take ’m off shoe stop along him.”

But before Kwaque, immediately kneeling, could touch hand to the shoelaces, Daughtry, remembering that Kwaque was likewise unclean, had thrust him away.

“My word, I don’t know what to do,” Daughtry murmured, staring about helplessly as he realised that it was a leper-house, that the very chair in which the old man sat was a leper-chair, that the very floor on which his exhausted feet rested was a leper-floor.

“I’m glad to see you, most exceeding glad,” the Ancient Mariner panted, extending his hand in greeting.

Dag Daughtry avoided it.

“How goes the treasure-hunting?” he queried lightly. “Any prospects in sight?”

The Ancient Mariner nodded, and with returning breath, at first whispering, gasped out:

“We’re all cleared to sail on the first of the ebb at seven this morning. She’s out in the stream now, a tidy bit of a schooner, the *Bethlehem*, with good lines and hull and large cabin accommodations. She used to be in the Tahiti trade, before the steamers ran her out. Provisions are good. Everything is most excellent. I saw to that. I cannot say I like the captain. I’ve seen his type before. A splendid seaman, I am certain, but a Bully Hayes grown old. A natural born pirate, a very wicked old man indeed. Nor is the backer any better. He is middle-aged, has a bad record, and is not in any sense of the word a gentleman, but he has plenty of money — made it first in California oil, then grub-staked a prospector in British Columbia, cheated him out of his share of the big lode he discovered and doubled his own wealth half a dozen times over. A very undesirable, unlikeable sort of a man. But he believes in luck, and is confident that he’ll make at least fifty millions out of our adventure and cheat me out of my share. He’s as much a pirate as is the captain he’s engaged.”

“Mr. Greenleaf, I congratulate you, sir,” Daughtry said. “And you have touched me, sir, touched me to the heart, coming all the way out here on such a night, and running such risks, just to say good-bye to poor Dag Daughtry, who always meant somewhat well but had bad luck.”

But while he talked so heartily, Daughtry saw, in a resplendent visioning, all the freedom of a schooner in the great South Seas, and felt his heart sink in realisation that remained for him only the pest-house, the sand-dunes, and the sad eucalyptus trees.

The Ancient Mariner sat stiffly upright.

“Sir, you have hurt me. You have hurt me to the heart.”

“No offence, sir, no offence,” Daughtry stammered in apology, although he wondered in what way he could have hurt the old gentleman’s feelings.

“You are my friend, sir,” the other went on, gravely censorious. “I am your friend, sir. And you give me to understand that you think I have come out here to this hell-hole to say good-bye. I came out here to get you, sir, and your nigger, sir. The schooner is waiting for you. All is arranged. You are signed on the articles before the shipping commissioner. Both of you. Signed on yesterday by proxies I arranged for myself. One was a Barbadoes nigger. I got him and the white man out of a sailors' boarding-house on Commercial Street and paid them five dollars each to appear before the Commissioner and sign on."

"But, my God, Mr. Greenleaf, you don't seem to grasp it that he and I are lepers."

Almost with a galvanic spring, the Ancient Mariner was out of the chair and on his feet, the anger of age and of a generous soul in his face as he cried:

"My God, sir, what you don't seem to grasp is that you are my friend, and that I am your friend."

Abruptly, still under the pressure of his wrath, he thrust out his hand.

"Steward, Daughtry. Mr. Daughtry, friend, sir, or whatever I may name you, this is no fairy-story of the open boat, the cross-bearings unnamable, and the treasure a fathom under the sand. This is real. I have a heart. That, sir" — here he waved his extended hand under Daughtry's nose — "is my hand. There is only one thing you may do, must do, right now. You must take that hand in your hand, and shake it, with your heart in your hand as mine is in my hand."

"But . . . but. . . " Daughtry faltered.

"If you don't, then I shall not depart from this place. I shall remain here, die here. I know you are a leper. You can't tell me anything about that. There's my hand. Are you going to take it? My heart is there in the palm of it, in the pulse in every finger-end of it. If you don't take it, I warn you I'll sit right down here in this chair and die. I want you to understand I am a man, sir, a gentleman. I am a friend, a comrade. I am no poltroon of the flesh. I live in my heart and in my head, sir — not in this feeble carcass I cursorily inhabit. Take that hand. I want to talk with you afterward."

Dag Daughtry extended his hand hesitantly, but the Ancient Mariner seized it and pressed it so fiercely with his age-lean fingers as to hurt.

"Now we can talk," he said. "I have thought the whole matter over. We sail on the *Bethlehem*. When the wicked man discovers that he can never get a penny of my fabulous treasure, we will leave him. He will be glad to be quit of us. We, you and I and your nigger, will go ashore in the Marquesas. Lepers roam about free there. There are no regulations. I have seen them. We will be free. The land is a paradise. And you and I will set up housekeeping. A thatched hut — no more is needed. The work is trifling. The freedom of beach and sea and mountain will be ours. For you there will be sailing, swimming, fishing, hunting. There are mountain goats, wild chickens and wild cattle. Bananas and plantains will ripen over our heads — avocados and custard apples, also. The red peppers grow by the door, and there will be fowls, and the eggs of fowls. Kwaque shall do the cooking. And there will be beer. I have long noted your thirst unquenchable. There will be beer, six quarts of it a day, and more, more.

"Quick. We must start now. I am sorry to tell you that I have vainly sought your dog. I have even paid detectives who were robbers. Doctor Emory stole Killeny Boy from you, but within a dozen hours he was stolen from Doctor Emory. I have left no stone unturned. Killeny Boy is gone, as we shall be gone from this detestable hole of a city.

"I have a machine waiting. The driver is paid well. Also, I have promised to kill him if he defaults on me. It bears just a bit north of east over the sandhill on the road that runs along the other side of the funny forest . . . That is right. We will start now. We can discuss afterward. Look! Daylight is beginning to break. The guards must not see us . . . "

Out into the storm they passed, Kwaque, with a heart wild with gladness, bringing up the rear. At the beginning Daughtry strove to walk aloof, but in a trice, in the first heavy gust that threatened to whisk the frail old man away, Dag Daughtry's hand was grasping the other's arm, his own weight behind and under, supporting and impelling forward and up the hill through the heavy sand.

"Thank you, steward, thank you, my friend," the Ancient Mariner murmured in the first lull between the gusts.

CHAPTER XXII

Not altogether unwillingly, in the darkness of night, despite that he disliked the man, did Michael go with Harry Del Mar. Like a burglar the man came, with infinite caution of silence, to the outhouse in Doctor Emory's back yard where Michael was a prisoner. Del Mar knew the theatre too well to venture any hackneyed melodramatic effect such as an electric torch. He felt his way in the darkness to the door of the outhouse, unlatched it, and entered softly, feeling with his hands for the wire-haired coat.

And Michael, a man-dog and a lion-dog in all the stuff of him, bristled at the instant of intrusion, but made no outcry. Instead, he smelled out the intruder and recognised him. Disliking the man, nevertheless he permitted the tying of the rope around his neck and silently followed him out to the sidewalk, down to the corner, and into the waiting taxi.

His reasoning — unless reason be denied him — was simple. This man he had met, more than once, in the company of Steward. Amity had existed between him and Steward, for they had sat at table, and drunk together. Steward was lost. Michael knew not where to find him, and was himself a prisoner in the back yard of a strange place. What had once happened, could again happen. It had happened that Steward, Del Mar, and Michael had sat at table together on divers occasions. It was probable that such a combination would happen again, was going to happen now, and, once more, in the bright-lighted cabaret, he would sit on a chair, Del Mar on one side, and on the other side beloved Steward with a glass of beer before him — all of which might be called "leaping to a conclusion"; for conclusion there was, and upon the conclusion Michael acted.

Now Michael could not reason to this conclusion nor think to this conclusion, in words. "Amity," as an instance, was no word in his consciousness. Whether or not he thought to the conclusion in swift-related images and pictures and swift-welded composites of images and pictures, is a problem that still waits human solution. The point is: *he did think.* If this be denied him, then must he have acted wholly by instinct — which would seem more marvellous on the face of it than if, in dim ways, he had performed a vague thought-process.

However, into the taxi and away through the maze of San Francisco's streets, Michael lay alertly on the floor near Del Mar's feet, making no overtures of friendliness, by the same token making no demonstration of the repulsion of the man's personality engendered in him. For Harry Del Mar, who was base, and who had been further abased by his money-making desire for the possession of Michael, had had his baseness sensed by Michael from the beginning. That first meeting in the Barbary Coast cabaret, Michael had bristled at him, and stiffened belligerently, when he laid his hand on Michael's head. Nor had Michael thought about the man at all, much less attempted any analysis of him. Something had been wrong with that hand — the perfunctory way in which it had touched him under a show of heartiness that could well deceive the onlooker. The *feel* of it had not been right. There had been no warmth in it, no heart, no communication of genuine good approach from the brain and the soul of the man of which it was the telegraphic tentacle and transmitter. In short, the message or feel had not been a good message or feel, and Michael had bristled and stiffened without thinking, but by mere *knowing*, which is what men call "intuition."

Electric lights, a shed-covered wharf, mountains of luggage and freight, the noisy toil of 'longshoremen and sailors, the staccato snorts of donkey engines and the whining sheaves as running lines ran through the blocks, a crowd of white-coated stewards carrying hand-baggage, the quartermaster at the gangway foot, the gangway sloping steeply up to the *Umatilla's* promenade deck, more quartermasters and gold-laced ship's officers at the head of the gangway, and more crowd and confusion blocking the narrow deck — thus Michael knew, beyond all peradventure, that he had come back to the sea and its ships, where he had first met Steward, where he had been always with Steward, save for the recent nightmare period in the great city. Nor was there absent from the flashing visions of his consciousness the images and memories of Kwaque and Cocky. Whining eagerly, he strained at the leash, risking his tender toes among the many inconsiderate, restless, leather-shod feet of the humans, as he quested and scented for Cocky and Kwaque, and, most of all, for Steward.

Michael accepted his disappointment in not immediately meeting them, for from the dawn of consciousness, the limitations and restrictions of dogs in relation to humans had been hammered into him in the form of concepts of patience. The patience of waiting, when he wanted to go home and when Steward continued to sit at table and talk and drink beer, was his, as was the patience of the rope around the neck, the fence too high to scale, the narrowed-walled room with the closed door which he could never unlatch but which humans unlatched so easily. So that he permitted himself to be led away by the ship's butcher, who on the *Umatilla* had the charge of all dog passengers. Immured in a tiny between-decks cubby which was filled mostly with boxes and bales, tied as well by the rope around his neck, he waited from moment to moment for the door to open and admit, realised in the flesh, the resplendent vision of Steward which blazed through the totality of his consciousness.

Instead, although Michael did not guess it then, and, only later, divined it as a vague manifestation of power on the part of Del Mar, the well-tipped ship's butcher opened the door, untied him, and turned him over to the well-tipped stateroom steward who led him to Del Mar's stateroom. Up to the last, Michael was convinced that he was being led to Steward. Instead, in the stateroom, he found only Del Mar. "No Steward," might be described as Michael's thought; but by *patience*, as his mood and key, might be described his acceptance of further delay in meeting up with his god, his best beloved, his Steward who was his own human god amidst the multitude of human gods he was encountering.

Michael wagged his tail, flattened his ears, even his crinkled ear, a trifle, and smiled, all in a casual way of recognition, smelled out the room to make doubly sure that there was no scent of Steward, and lay down on the floor. When Del Mar spoke to him, he looked up and gazed at him.

"Now, my boy, times have changed," Del Mar addressed him in cold, brittle tones. "I'm going to make an actor out of you, and teach you what's what. First of all, come here . . . COME HERE!"

Michael obeyed, without haste, without lagging, and patently without eagerness.

"You'll get over that, my lad, and put pep into your motions when I talk to you," Del Mar assured him; and the very manner of his utterance was a threat that Michael could not fail to recognise. "Now we'll just see if I can pull off the trick. You listen to me, and sing like you did for that leper guy."

Drawing a harmonica from his vest pocket, he put it to his lips and began to play "Marching through Georgia."

"Sit down!" he commanded.

Again Michael obeyed, although all that was Michael was in protest. He quivered as the shrill-sweet strains from the silver reeds ran through him.

All his throat and chest was in the impulse to sing; but he mastered it, for he did not care to sing for this man. All he wanted of him was Steward.

"Oh, you're stubborn, eh?" Del Mar sneered at him. "The matter with you is you're thoroughbred. Well, my boy, it just happens I know your kind and I reckon I can make you get busy and work for me just as much as you did for that other guy. Now get busy."

He shifted the tune on into "Georgia Camp Meeting." But Michael was obdurate. Not until the melting strains of "Old Kentucky Home" poured through him did he lose his self-control and lift his mellow-throated howl that was the call for the lost pack of the ancient millenniums. Under the prodding hypnosis of this music he could not but yearn and burn for the vague, forgotten life of the pack when the world was young and the pack was the pack ere it was lost for ever through the endless centuries of domestication.

"Ah, ha," Del Mar chuckled coldly, unaware of the profound history and vast past he evoked by his silver reeds.

A loud knock on the partition wall warned him that some sleepy passenger was objecting.

"That will do!" he said sharply, taking the harmonica from his lips. And Michael ceased, and hated him. "I guess I've got your number all right. And you needn't think you're going to sleep here scratching fleas and disturbing my sleep."

He pressed the call-button, and, when his room-steward answered, turned Michael over to him to be taken down below and tied up in the crowded cubby-hole.

* * * * *

During the several days and nights on the *Umatilla*, Michael learned much of what manner of man Harry Del Mar was. Almost, might it be said, he learned Del Mar's pedigree without knowing anything of his history. For instance he did not know that Del Mar's real name was Percival Grunsky, and that at grammar school he had been called "Brownie" by the girls and "Blackie" by the boys. No more did he know that he had gone from half-way-through grammar school directly into the industrial reform school; nor that, after serving two years, he had been paroled out by Harris Collins, who made a living, and an excellent one, by training animals for the stage. Much less could he know the training that for six years Del Mar, as assistant, had been taught to give the animals, and, thereby, had received for himself.

What Michael did know was that Del Mar had no pedigree and was a scrub as compared with thoroughbreds such as Steward, Captain Kellar, and *Mister* Haggin of Meringe. And he learned it swiftly and simply. In the day-time, fetched by a steward, Michael would be brought on deck to Del Mar, who was always surrounded by effusive young ladies and matrons who lavished caresses and endearments upon Michael. This he stood, although much bored; but what irked him almost beyond standing were the feigned caresses and endearments Del Mar lavished on him. He knew the cold-blooded insincerity of them, for, at night, when he was brought to Del Mar's room, he heard only the cold brittle tones, sensed only the threat and the menace of the other's personality, felt, when touched by the other's hand, only a stiffness and sharpness of contact that was like to so much steel or wood in so far as all subtle tenderness of heart and spirit was absent.

This man was two-faced, two-mannered. No thoroughbred was anything but single-faced and single-mannered. A thoroughbred, hot-blooded as it might be, was always sincere. But in this scrub was no sincerity, only a positive insincerity. A thoroughbred had passion, because of its hot blood; but this scrub had no passion. Its blood was cold as its deliberateness, and it did nothing save deliberately. These things he did not think. He merely realized them, as any creature realizes itself in *liking* and in not *liking*.

To cap it all, the last night on board, Michael lost his thoroughbred temper with this man who had no temper. It came to a fight. And Michael had no chance. He raged royally and fought royally, leaping to the attack, after being knocked over twice by open-handed blows under his ear. Quick as Michael was, slashing South Sea niggers by virtue of his quickness and cleverness, he could not touch his teeth to the flesh of this man, who had been trained for six years with animals by Harris Collins. So that, when he leaped, open-mouthed, for the bite, Del Mar's right hand shot out, gripped his under-jaw as he was in the air, and flipped him over in a somersaulting fall to the floor on his back. Once again he leapt open-mouthed to the attack, and was filliped to the floor so hard that almost the last particle of breath was knocked out of him. The next leap was nearly his last. He was clutched by the throat. Two thumbs pressed into his neck on either side of the windpipe directly on the carotid arteries, shutting off the blood to his brain and giving him most exquisite agony, at the same time rendering him unconscious far more swiftly than the swiftest anæsthetic. Darkness thrust itself upon him; and, quivering on the floor, glimmeringly he came back to the light of the room and to the man who was casually touching a match to a cigarette and cautiously keeping an observant eye on him.

"Come on," Del Mar challenged. "I know your kind. You can't get my goat, and maybe I can't get yours entirely, but I can keep you under my thumb to work for me. Come on, you!"

And Michael came. Being a thoroughbred, despite that he knew he was beaten by this two-legged thing which was not warm human but was so alien and hard that he might as well attack the wall of a room with his teeth, or a tree-trunk, or a cliff of rock, Michael leapt bare-fanged for the throat. And all that he leapt against was training, formula. The experience was repeated. His throat was gripped, the thumbs shut off the blood from his brain, and darkness smote him. Had he been more than a normal thoroughbred dog, he would have continued to assail his impregnable enemy until he burst his heart or fell in a fit. But he was normal. Here was something unassailable, adamantine. As little might he win victory from it, as from the cement-paved sidewalk of a city. The thing was a devil, with the hardness and coldness, the wickedness and wisdom, of a devil. It was as bad as Steward was good. Both were two-legged. Both were gods. But this one was an evil god.

He did not reason all this, nor any of it. Yet, transmuted into human terms of thought and understanding, it adequately describes the fulness of his state of mind toward Del Mar. Had Michael been entangled in a fight with a warm god, he could have raged and battled blindly, inflicting and receiving hurt in the chaos of conflict, as such a god, being warm, would have likewise received and given hurt, being only a flesh-and-blood, living, breathing entity after all. But this two-legged god-devil did not rage blindly and was incapable of passional heat. He was like so much cunning, massive steel machinery, and he did what Michael could never dream he did — and, for that matter, which few humans do and which all animal trainers do: *he kept one thought ahead of Michael's thought all the time*, and therefore, was able to have ready one action always in anticipation of Michael's next action. This was the training he had received from Harris Collins, who, withal he was a sentimental and doting husband and father, was the arch-devil when it came to animals other than human ones, and who reigned in an animal hell which he had created and made lucrative.

* * * * *

Michael went ashore in Seattle all eagerness, straining at his leash until he choked and coughed and was coldly cursed by Del Mar. For Michael was mastered by his expectation that he would meet Steward, and he looked for him around the first corner, and around all corners with undiminished zeal. But amongst the multitudes of men there was no Steward. Instead, down in the basement of the New Washington Hotel, where electric lights burned always, under the care of the baggage porter, he was tied securely by the neck in the midst of Alpine ranges of trunks which were for ever being heaped up, sought over, taken down, carried away, or added to.

Three days of this dolorous existence he passed. The porters made friends with him and offered him prodigious quantities of cooked meats from the leavings of the dining-room. Michael was too disappointed and grief-stricken over Steward to overeat himself, while Del Mar, accompanied by the manager of the hotel, raised a great row with the porters for violating the feeding instructions.

“That guy’s no good,” said the head porter to assistant, when Del Mar had departed. “He’s greasy. I never liked greasy brunettes anyway. My wife’s a brunette, but thank the Lord she ain’t greasy.”

“Sure,” agreed the assistant. “I know his kind. Why, if you’d stick a knife into him he wouldn’t bleed blood. It’d be straight liquid lard.”

Whereupon the pair of them immediately presented Michael with vaster quantities of meat which he could not eat because the desire for Steward was too much with him.

In the meantime Del Mar sent off two telegrams to New York, the first to Harris Collins’ animal training school, where his troupe of dogs was boarding through his vacation:

“*Sell my dogs. You know what they can do and what they are worth. Am done with them. Deduct the board and hold the balance for me until I see you. I have the limit here of a dog. Every turn I ever pulled is put in the shade by this one. He’s a ten strike. Wait till you see him.*”

The second, to his booking agent:

“*Get busy. Book me over the best. Talk it up. I have the turn. A winner. Nothing like it. Don’t talk up top price but way over top price. Prepare* *them for the dog when I give them the chance for the once over. You know me. I am giving it straight. This will head the bill anywhere all the time*."

CHAPTER XXIII

Came the crate. Because Del Mar brought it into the baggage-room, Michael was suspicious of it. A minute later his suspicion was justified. Del Mar invited him to go into the crate, and he declined. With a quick deft clutch on the collar at the back of his neck, Del Mar jerked him off his footing and thrust him in, or partly in, rather, because he had managed to get a hold on the edge of the crate with his two forepaws. The animal trainer wasted no time. He brought the clenched fist of his free hand down in two blows, rat-tat, on Michael's paws. And Michael, at the pain, relaxed both holds. The next instant he was thrust inside, snarling his indignation and rage as he vainly flung himself at the open bars, while Del Mar was locking the stout door.

Next, the crate was carried out to an express wagon and loaded in along with a number of trunks. Del Mar had disappeared the moment he had locked the door, and the two men in the wagon, which was now bouncing along over the cobblestones, were strangers. There was just room in the crate for Michael to stand upright, although he could not lift his head above the level of his shoulders. And so standing, his head pressed against the top, a rut in the road, jolting the wagon and its contents, caused his head to bump violently.

The crate was not quite so long as Michael, so that he was compelled to stand with the end of his nose pressing against the end of the crate. An automobile, darting out from a cross-street, caused the driver of the wagon to pull in abruptly and apply the brake. With the crate thus suddenly arrested, Michael's body was precipitated forward. There was no brake to stop him, unless the soft end of his nose be considered the brake, for it was his nose that brought his body to rest inside the crate.

He tried lying down, confined as the space was, and made out better, although his lips were cut and bleeding by having been forced so sharply against his teeth. But the worst was to come. One of his forepaws slipped out through the slats or bars and rested on the bottom of the wagon where the trunks were squeaking, screeching, and jigging. A rut in the roadway made the nearest trunk tilt one edge in the air and shift position, so that when it tilted back again it rested on Michael's paw. The unexpectedness of the crushing hurt of it caused him to yelp and at the same time instinctively and spasmodically to pull back with all his strength. This wrenched his shoulder and added to the agony of the imprisoned foot.

And blind fear descended upon Michael, the fear that is implanted in all animals and in man himself — *the fear of the trap*. Utterly beside himself, though he no longer yelped, he flung himself madly about, straining the tendons and muscles of his shoulder and leg and further and severely injuring the crushed foot. He even attacked the bars with his teeth in his agony to get at the monster thing outside that had laid hold of him and would not let him go. Another rut saved him, however, tilting the trunk just sufficiently to enable his violent struggling to drag the foot clear.

At the railroad station, the crate was handled, not with deliberate roughness, but with such carelessness that it half-slipped out of a baggageman's hands, capsized sidewise, and was caught when it was past the man's knees but before it struck the cement floor. But, Michael, sliding helplessly down the perpendicular bottom of the crate, fetched up with his full weight on the injured paw.

"Huh!" said Del Mar a little later to Michael, having strolled down the platform to where the crate was piled on a truck with other baggage destined for the train. "Got your foot smashed. Well, it'll teach you a lesson to keep your feet inside."

"That claw is a goner," one of the station baggage-men said, straightening up from an examination of Michael through the bars.

Del Mar bent to a closer scrutiny.

"So's the whole toe," he said, drawing his pocket-knife and opening a blade. "I'll fix it in half a jiffy if you'll lend a hand."

He unlocked the box and dipped Michael out with the customary strangle-hold on the neck. He squirmed and struggled, dabbing at the air with the injured as well as the uninjured forepaw and increasing his pain.

"You hold the leg," Del Mar commanded. "He's safe with that grip. It won't take a second."

Nor did it take longer. And Michael, back in the box and raging, was one toe short of the number which he had brought into the world. The blood ran freely from the crude but effective surgery, and he lay and licked the wound and was depressed with apprehension of he knew not what terrible fate awaited him and was close at hand. Never, in his experience of men, had he been so treated, while the confinement of the box was maddening with its suggestion of the trap. Trapped he was, and helpless, and the ultimate evil of life had happened to Steward, who had evidently been swallowed up by the Nothingness which had swallowed up Meringe, the *Eugénie*, the Solomon Islands, the *Makambo*, Australia, and the *Mary Turner*.

Suddenly, from a distance, came a bedlam of noise that made Michael prick up his ears and bristle with premonition of fresh disaster. It was a confused yelping, howling, and barking of many dogs.

"Holy Smoke! — It's them damned acting dogs," growled the baggageman to his mate. "There ought to be a law against dog-acts. It ain't decent."

"It's Peterson's Troupe," said the other. "I was on when they come in last week. One of 'em was dead in his box, and from what I could see of him it looked mighty like he'd had the tar knocked outa him."

"Got a wollopin' from Peterson most likely in the last town and then was shipped along with the bunch and left to die in the baggage car."

The bedlam increased as the animals were transferred from the wagon to a platform truck, and when the truck rolled up and stopped alongside Michael's he made out that it was piled high with crated dogs. In truth, there were thirty-five dogs, of every sort of breed and mostly mongrel, and that they were far from happy was attested by their actions. Some howled, some whimpered, others growled and raged at one another through the slots, and many maintained a silence of misery. Several licked and nursed bruised feet. Smaller dogs that did not fight much were crammed two or more into single crates. Half a dozen greyhounds were crammed into larger crates that were anything save large enough.

"Them's the high-jumpers," said the first baggageman. "An' look at the way they're packed. Peterson ain't going to pay any more excess baggage than he has to. Not half room enough for them to stand up. It must be hell for them from the time they leave one town till they arrive at the next."

But what the baggageman did not know was that in the towns the hell was not mitigated, that the dogs were still confined in their too-narrow prisons, that, in fact, they were life-prisoners. Rarely, except for their acts, were they taken out from their cages. From a business standpoint, good care did not pay. Since mongrel dogs were cheap, it was cheaper to replace them when they died than so to care for them as to keep them from dying.

What the baggageman did not know, and what Peterson did know, was that of these thirty-five dogs not one was a surviving original of the troupe when it first started out four years before. Nor had there been any originals discarded. The only way they left the troupe and its cages was by dying. Nor did Michael know even as little as the baggageman knew. He knew nothing save that here reigned pain and woe and that it seemed he was destined to share the same fate.

Into the midst of them, when with more howlings and yelpings they were loaded into the baggage car, was Michael's cage piled. And for a day and a part of two nights, travelling eastward, he remained in the dog inferno. Then they were loaded off in some large city, and Michael continued on in greater quietness and comfort, although his injured foot still hurt and was bruised afresh whenever his crate was moved about in the car.

What it was all about — why he was kept in his cramped prison in the cramped car — he did not ask himself. He accepted it as unhappiness and misery, and had no more explanation for it than for the crushing of the paw. Such things happened. It was life, and life had many evils. The *why* of things never entered his head. He knew *things* and some small bit of the *how* of things. What was, *was*. Water was wet, fire hot, iron hard, meat good. He accepted such things as he accepted the everlasting miracles of the light and of the dark, which were no miracles to him any more than was his wire coat a miracle, or his beating heart, or his thinking brain.

In Chicago, he was loaded upon a track, carted through the roaring streets of the vast city, and put into another baggage-car which was quickly in motion in continuation of the eastward journey. It meant more strange men who handled baggage, as it meant in New York, where, from railroad baggage-room to express wagon he was exchanged, for ever a crated prisoner and dispatched to one, Harris Collins, on Long Island.

First of all came Harris Collins and the animal hell over which he ruled. But the second event must be stated first. Michael never saw Harry Del Mar again. As the other men he had known had stepped out of life, which was a way they had, so Harry Del Mar stepped out of Michael's purview of life as well as out of life itself. And his stepping out was literal. A collision on the elevated, a panic scramble of the uninjured out upon the trestle over the street, a step on the third rail, and Harry Del Mar was engulfed in the Nothingness which men know as death and which is nothingness in so far as such engulfed ones never reappear nor walk the ways of life again.

CHAPTER XXIV

Harris Collins was fifty-two years of age. He was slender and dapper, and in appearance and comportment was so sweet-and gentle-spirited that the impression he radiated was almost of sissyness. He might have taught a Sunday-school, presided over a girls' seminary, or been a president of a humane society.

His complexion was pink and white, his hands were as soft as the hands of his daughters, and he weighed a hundred and twelve pounds. Moreover, he was afraid of his wife, afraid of a policeman, afraid of physical violence, and lived in constant dread of burglars. But the one thing he was not afraid of was wild animals of the most ferocious sorts, such as lions, tigers, leopards, and jaguars. He knew the game, and could conquer the most refractory lion with a broom-handle — not outside the cage, but inside and locked in.

It was because he knew the game and had learned it from his father before him, a man even smaller than himself and more fearful of all things except animals. This father, Noel Collins, had been a successful animal trainer in England, before emigrating to America, and in America he had continued the success and laid the foundation of the big animal training school at Cedarwild, which his son had developed and built up after him. So well had Harris Collins built on his father's foundation that the place was considered a model of sanitation and kindness. It entertained many visitors, who invariably went away with their souls filled with ecstasy over the atmosphere of sweetness and light that pervaded the place. Never, however, were they permitted to see the actual training. On occasion, performances were given them by the finished products which verified all their other delightful and charming conclusions about the school. But had they seen the training of raw novices, it would have been a different story. It might even have been a riot. As it was, the place was a zoo, and free at that; for, in addition to the animals he owned and trained and bought and sold, a large portion of the business was devoted to boarding trained animals and troupes of animals for owners who were out of engagements, or for estates of such owners which were in process of settlement. From mice and rats to camels and elephants, and even, on occasion, to a rhinoceros or a pair of hippopotamuses, he could supply any animal on demand.

When the Circling Brothers' big three-ring show on a hard winter went into the hands of the receivers, he boarded the menagerie and the horses and in three months turned a profit of fifteen thousand dollars. More — he mortgaged all he possessed against the day of the auction, bought in the trained horses and ponies, the giraffe herd and the performing elephants, and, in six months more was quit of an of them, save the pony Repeater who turned air-springs, at another profit of fifteen thousand dollars. As for Repeater, he sold the pony several months later for a sheer profit of two thousand. While this bankruptcy of the Circling Brothers had been the greatest financial achievement of Harris Collin's life, nevertheless he enjoyed no mean permanent income from his plant, and, in addition, split fees with the owners of his board animals when he sent them to the winter Hippodrome shows, and, more often than not, failed to split any fee at all when he rented the animals to moving-picture companies.

Animal men, the country over, acknowledged him to be, not only the richest in the business, but the king of trainers and the grittiest man who ever went into a cage. And those who from the inside had seen him work were agreed that he had no soul. Yet his wife and children, and those in his small social circle, thought otherwise. They, never seeing him at work, were convinced that no softer-hearted, more sentimental man had ever been born. His voice was low and gentle, his gestures were delicate, his views on life, the world, religion and politics, the mildest. A kind word melted him. A plea won him. He gave to all local charities, and was gravely depressed for a week when the Titanic went down. And yet — the men in the trained-animal game acknowledged him the nerviest and most nerveless of the profession. And yet — his greatest fear in the world was that his large, stout wife, at table, should crown him with a plate of hot soup. Twice, in a tantrum, she had done this during their earlier married life. In addition to his fear that she might do it again, he loved her sincerely and devotedly, as he loved his children, seven of them, for whom nothing was too good or too expensive.

So well did he love them, that the four boys from the beginning he forbade from seeing him *work*, and planned gentler careers for them. John, the oldest, in Yale, had elected to become a man of letters, and, in the meantime, ran his own automobile with the corresponding standard of living such ownership connoted in the college town of New Haven. Harold and Frederick were down at a millionaires' sons' academy in Pennsylvania; and Clarence, the youngest, at a prep. school in Massachusetts, was divided in his choice of career between becoming a doctor or an aviator. The three girls, two of them twins, were pledged to be cultured into ladies. Elsie was on the verge of graduating from Vassar. Mary and Madeline, the twins, in the most select and most expensive of seminaries, were preparing for Vassar. All of which required money which Harris Collins did not grudge, but which strained the earning capacity of his animal-training school. It compelled him to work the harder, although his wife and the four sons and three daughters did not dream that he actually worked at all. Their idea was that by virtue of superior wisdom he merely superintended, and they would have been terribly shocked could they have seen him, club in hand, thrashing forty mongrel dogs, in the process of training, which had become excited and out of hand.

A great deal of the work was done by his assistants, but it was Harris Collins who taught them continually what to do and how to do it, and who himself, on more important animals, did the work and showed them how. His assistants were almost invariably youths from the reform schools, and he picked them with skilful eye and intuition. Control of them, under their paroles, with intelligence and coldness on their part, were the conditions and qualities he sought, and such combination, as a matter of course, carried with it cruelty. Hot blood, generous impulses, sentimentality, were qualities he did not want for his business; and the Cedarwild Animal School was business from the first tick of the clock to the last bite of the lash. In short, Harris Collins, in the totality of results, was guilty of causing more misery and pain to animals than all laboratories of vivisection in Christendom.

And into this animal hell Michael descended — although his arrival was horizontal, across three thousand five hundred miles, in the same crate in which he had been placed at the New Washington Hotel in Seattle. Never once had he been out of the crate during the entire journey, and filthiness, as well as wretchedness, characterized his condition. Thanks to his general good health, the wound of the amputated toe was in the process of uneventful healing. But dirt clung to him, and he was infested with fleas.

Cedarwild, to look at, was anything save a hell. Velvet lawns, gravelled walks and drives, and flowers formally growing, led up to the group of long low buildings, some of frame and some of concrete. But Michael was not received by Harris Collins, who, at the moment, sat in his private office, Harry Del Mar's last telegram on his desk, writing a memorandum to his secretary to query the railroad and the express companies for the whereabouts of a dog, crated and shipped by one, Harry Del Mar, from Seattle and consigned to Cedarwild. It was a pallid-eyed youth of eighteen in overalls who received Michael, receipted for him to the expressman, and carried his crate into a slope-floored concrete room that smelled offensively and chemically clean.

Michael was impressed by his surroundings but not attracted by the youth, who rolled up his sleeves and encased himself in large oilskin apron before he opened the crate. Michael sprang out and staggered about on legs which had not walked for days. This particular two-legged god was uninteresting. He was as cold as the concrete floor, as methodical as a machine; and in such fashion he went about the washing, scrubbing, and disinfecting of Michael. For Harris Collins was scientific and antiseptic to the last word in his handling of animals, and Michael was scientifically made clean, without deliberate harshness, but without any slightest hint of gentleness or consideration.

Naturally, he did not understand. On top of all he had already experienced, not even knowing executioners and execution chambers, for all he knew this bare room of cement and chemical smell might well be the place of the ultimate life-disaster and this youth the god who was to send him into the dark which had engulfed all he had known and loved. What Michael did know beyond the shadow of any doubt was that it was all coldly ominous and terribly strange. He endured the hand of the youth-god on the scruff of his neck, after the collar had been unbuckled; but when the hose was turned on him, he resented and resisted. The youth, merely working by formula, tightened the safe grip on the scruff of Michael's neck and lifted him clear of the floor, at the same time, with the other hand, directing the stream of water into his mouth and increasing it to full force by the nozzle control. Michael fought, and was well drowned for his pains, until he gasped and strangled helplessly.

After that he resisted no more, and was washed out and scrubbed out and cleansed out with the hose, a big bristly brush, and much carbolic soap, the lather of which got into and stung his eyes and nose, causing him to weep copiously and sneeze violently. Apprehensive of what might at any moment happen to him, but by this time aware that the youth was neither positive nor negative for kindness or harm, Michael continued to endure without further battling, until, clean and comfortable, he was put away into a pen, sweet and wholesome, where he slept and for the time being forgot. The place was the hospital, or segregation ward, and a week of imprisonment was spent therein, in which nothing happened in the way of development of germ diseases, and nothing happened to him except regular good food, pure drinking-water, and absolute isolation from contact with all life save the youth-god who, like an automaton, attended on him.

Michael had yet to meet Harris Collins, although, from a distance, often he heard his voice, not loud, but very imperative. That the owner of this voice was a high god, Michael knew from the first sound of it. Only a high god, a master over ordinary gods, could be so imperative. Will was in that voice, and accustomedness to command. Any dog would have so decided as quickly as Michael did. And any dog would have decided that there was no love nor lovableness in the god behind the voice, nothing to warm one's heart nor to adore.

CHAPTER XXV

It was at eleven in the morning that the pale youth-god put collar and chain on Michael, led him out of the segregation ward, and turned him over to a dark youth-god who wasted no time of greeting on him and manifested no friendliness. A captive at the end of a chain, on the way Michael quickly encountered other captives going in his direction. There were three of them, and never had he seen the like. Three slouching, ambling monsters of bears they were, and at sight of them Michael bristled and uttered the lowest of growls; for he knew them, out of his heredity (as a domestic cow knows her first wolf), as immemorial enemies from the wild. But he had travelled too far, seen too much, and was altogether too sensible, to attack them. Instead, walking stiff-legged and circumspectly, but smelling with all his nose the strange scent of the creatures, he followed at the end of his chain his own captor god.

Continually a multitude of strange scents invaded his nostrils. Although he could not see through walls, he got the smells he was later to identify of lions, leopards, monkeys, baboons, and seals and sea-lions. All of which might have stunned an ordinary dog; but the effect on him was to make him very alert and at the same time very subdued. It was as if he walked in a new and monstrously populous jungle and was unacquainted with its ways and denizens.

As he was entering the arena, he shied off to the side more stiff-leggedly than ever, bristled all along his neck and back, and growled deep and low in his throat. For, emerging from the arena, came five elephants. Small elephants they were, but to him they were the hugest of monsters, in his mind comparable only with the cow-whale of which he had caught fleeting glimpses when she destroyed the schooner *Mary Turner*. But the elephants took no notice of him, each with its trunk clutching the tail of the one in front of it as it had been taught to do in making an exit.

Into the arena, he came, the bears following on his heels. It was a sawdust circle the size of a circus ring, contained inside a square building that was roofed over with glass. But there were no seats about the ring, since spectators were not tolerated. Only Harris Collins and his assistants, and buyers and sellers of animals and men in the profession, were ever permitted to behold how animals were tormented into the performance of tricks to make the public open its mouth in astonishment or laughter.

Michael forgot about the bears, who were quickly at work on the other side of the circle from that to which he was taken. Some men, rolling out stout bright-painted barrels which elephants could not crush by sitting on, attracted his attention for a moment. Next, in a pause on the part of the man who led him, he regarded with huge interest a piebald Shetland pony. It lay on the ground. A man sat on it. And ever and anon it lifted its head from the sawdust and kissed the man. This was all Michael saw, yet he sensed something wrong about it. He knew not why, had no evidence why, but he felt cruelty and power and unfairness. What he did not see was the long pin in the man's hand. Each time he thrust this in the pony's shoulder, the pony, stung by the pain and reflex action, lifted its head, and the man was deftly ready to meet the pony's mouth with his own mouth. To an audience the impression would be that in such fashion the pony was expressing its affection for the master.

Not a dozen feet away another Shetland, a coal-black one, was behaving as peculiarly as it was being treated. Ropes were attached to its forelegs, each rope held by an assistant, who jerked on the same stoutly when a third man, standing in front of the pony, tapped it on the knees with a short, stiff whip of rattan. Whereupon the pony went down on its knees in the sawdust in a genuflection to the man with the whip. The pony did not like it, sometimes so successfully resisting with spread, taut legs and mutinous head-tossings, as to overcome the jerk of the ropes, and, at the same time wheeling, to fall heavily on its side or to uprear as the pull on the ropes was relaxed. But always it was lined up again to face the man who rapped its knees with the rattan. It was being taught merely how to kneel in the way that is ever a delight to the audiences who see only the results of the schooling and never dream of the manner of the schooling. For, as Michael was quickly sensing, knowledge was here learned by pain. In short, this was the college of pain, this Cedarwild Animal School.

Harris Collins himself nodded the dark youth-god up to him, and turned an inquiring and estimating gaze on Michael.

"The Del Mar dog, sir," said the youth-god.

Collins's eyes brightened, and he looked Michael over more carefully.

"Do you know what he can do?" he queried.

The youth shook his head.

"Harry was a keen one," Collins went on, apparently to the youth-god but mostly for his own benefit, being given to thinking aloud. "He picked this dog as a winner. And now what can he do? That's the question. Poor Harry's gone, and we don't know what he can do. — Take off the chain."

Released Michael regarded the master-god and waited for what might happen. A squall of pain from one of the bears across the ring hinted to him what he might expect.

"Come here," Collins commanded in his cold, hard tones.

Michael came and stood before him.

"Lie down!"

Michael lay down, although he did it slowly, with advertised reluctance.

"Damned thoroughbred!" Collins sneered at him. "Won't put any pep into your motions, eh? Well, we'll take care of that. — Get up! — Lie down! — Get up! — Lie down! — Get up!"

His commands were staccato, like revolver shots or the cracks of whips, and Michael obeyed them in his same slow, reluctant way.

"Understands English, at any rate," said Collins.

"Wonder if he can turn the double flip," he added, expressing the golden dream of all dog-trainers. "Come on, we'll try him for a flip. Put the chain on him. Come over here, Jimmy. Put another lead on him."

Another reform-school graduate youth obeyed, snapping a girth about Michael's loins, to which was attached a thin rope.

"Line him up," Collins commanded. "Ready? — Go!"

And the most amazing, astounding indignity was wreaked upon Michael. At the word "Go!", simultaneously, the chain on his collar jerked him up and back in the air, the rope on his hindquarters jerked that portion of him under, forward, and up, and the still short stick in Collins's hand hit him under the lower jaw. Had he had any previous experience with the manoeuvre, he would have saved himself part of the pain at least by springing and whirling backward in the air. As it was, he felt as if being torn and wrenched apart while at the same time the blow under his jaw stung him and almost dazed him. And, at the same time, whirled violently into the air, he fell on the back of his head in the sawdust.

Out of the sawdust he soared in rage, neck-hair erect, throat a-snarl, teeth bared to bite, and he would have sunk his teeth into the flesh of the master-god had he not been the slave of cunning formula. The two youths knew their work. One tightened the lead ahead, the other to the rear, and Michael snarled and bristled his impotent wrath. Nothing could he do, neither advance, nor retreat, nor whirl sideways. The youth in front by the chain prevented him from attacking the youth behind, and the youth behind, with the rope, prevented him from attacking the youth in front, and both prevented him from attacking Collins, whom he knew incontrovertibly to be the master of evil and hurt.

Michael's wrath was as superlative as was his helplessness. He could only bristle and tear his vocal chords with his rage. But it was a very ancient and boresome experience to Collins. He was even taking advantage of the moment to glance across the arena and size up what the bears were doing.

"Oh, you thoroughbred," he sneered at Michael, returning his attention to him. "Slack him! Let go!"

The instant his bonds were released, Michael soared at Collins, and Collins, timing and distancing with the accuracy of long years, kicked him under the jaw and whirled him back and down into the sawdust.

"Hold him!" Collins ordered. "Line him out!"

And the two youths, pulling in opposite directions with chain and rope, stretched him into helplessness.

Collins glanced across the ring to the entrance, where two teams of heavy draft-horses were entering, followed by a woman dressed to over-dressedness in the last word of a stylish street-costume.

"I fancy he's never done any flipping," Collins remarked, coming back to the problem of Michael for a moment. "Take off your lead, Jimmy, and go over and help Smith. — Johnny, hold him to one side there and mind your legs. Here comes Miss Marie for her first lesson, and that mutt of a husband of hers can't handle her."

Michael did not understand the scene that followed, which he witnessed, for the youth led him over to look on at the arranging of the woman and the four horses. Yet, from her conduct, he sensed that she, too, was captive and ill-treated. In truth, she was herself being trained unwillingly to do a trick. She had carried herself bravely right to the moment of the ordeal, but the sight of the four horses, ranged two and two opposing her, with the thing patent that she was to hold in her hands the hooks on the double-trees and form the link that connected the two spans which were to pull in opposite directions — at the sight of this her courage failed her and she shrank back, drooping and cowering, her face buried in her hands.

"No, no, Billikens," she pleaded to the stout though youthful man who was her husband. "I can't do it. I'm afraid. I'm afraid."

"Nonsense, madam," Collins interposed. "The trick is absolutely safe. And it's a good one, a money-maker. Straighten up a moment." With his hands he began feeling out her shoulders and back under her jacket. "The apparatus is all right." He ran his hands down her arms. "Now! Drop the hooks." He shook each arm, and from under each of the fluffy lace cuffs fell out an iron hook fast to a thin cable of steel that evidently ran up her sleeves. "Not that way! Nobody must see. Put them back. Try it again. They must come down hidden in your palms. Like this. See. — That's it. That's the idea."

She controlled herself and strove to obey, though ever and anon she cast appealing glances to Billikens, who stood remote and aloof, his brows wrinkled with displeasure.

Each of the men driving the harnessed spans lifted up the double-trees so that the girl could grasp the hooks. She tried to take hold, but broke down again.

"If anything breaks, my arms will be torn out of me," she protested.

"On the contrary," Collins reassured her. "You will lose merely most of your jacket. The worst that can happen will be the exposure of the trick and the laugh on you. But the apparatus isn't going to break. Let me explain again. The horses do not pull against you. They pull against each other. The audience thinks that they are pulling against you. — Now try once more. Take hold the double-trees, and at the same moment slip down the hooks and connect. — Now!"

He spoke sharply. She shook the hooks down out of her sleeves, but drew back from grasping the double-trees. Collins did not betray his vexation. Instead, he glanced aside to where the kissing pony and the kneeling pony were leaving the ring. But the husband raged at her:

"By God, Julia, if you throw me down this way!"

"Oh, I'll try, Billikens," she whimpered. "Honestly, I'll try. See! I'm not afraid now."

She extended her hands and clasped the double-trees. With a thin writhe of a smile, Collins investigated the insides of her clenched hands to make sure that the hooks were connected.

"Now brace yourself! Spread your legs. And straighten out." With his hands he manipulated her arms and shoulders into position. "Remember, you've got to meet the first of the strain with your arms straight out. After the strain is on, you couldn't bend 'em if you wanted to. But if the strain catches them bent, the wire'll rip the hide off of you. Remember, straight out, extended, so that they form a straight line with each other and with the flat of your back and shoulders. That's it. Ready now."

"Oh, wait a minute," she begged, forsaking the position. "I'll do it — oh, I will do it, but, Billikens, kiss me first, and then I won't care if my arms are pulled out."

The dark youth who held Michael, and others looking on, grinned. Collins dissembled whatever grin might have troubled for expression, and murmured:

"All the time in the world, madam. The point is, the first time must come off right. After that you'll have the confidence. — Bill, you'd better love her up before she tackles it."

And Billikens, very angry, very disgusted, very embarrassed, obeyed, putting his arms around his wife and kissing her neither too perfunctorily nor very long. She was a pretty young thing of a woman, perhaps twenty years old, with an exceedingly childish, girlish face and a slender-waisted, generously moulded body of fully a hundred and forty pounds.

The embrace and kiss of her husband put courage into her. She stiffened and steeled herself, and with compressed lips, as he stepped clear of her, muttered, "Ready."

"Go!" Collins commanded.

The four horses, under the urge of the drivers, pressed lazily into their collars and began pulling.

"Give 'em the whip!" Collins barked, his eyes on the girl and noting that the pull of the apparatus was straight across her.

The lashes fell on the horses' rumps, and they leaped, and surged, and plunged, with their huge steel-shod hoofs, the size of soup-plates, tearing up the sawdust into smoke.

And Billikens forgot himself. The terribleness of the sight painted the honest anxiety for the woman on his face. And her face was a kaleidoscope. At the first, tense and fearful, it was like that of a Christian martyr meeting the lions, or of a felon falling through the trap. Next, and quickly, came surprise and relief in that there was no hurt. And, finally, her face was proudly happy with a smile of triumph. She even smiled to Billikens her pride at making good her love to him. And Billikens relaxed and looked love and pride back, until, on the spur of the second, Harris Collins broke in:

"This ain't a smiling act! Get that smile off your face. The audience has got to think you're carrying the pull. Show that you are. Make your face stiff till it cracks. Show determination, will-power. Show great muscular effort. Spread your legs more. Bring up the muscles through your skirt just as if you was really working. Let 'em pull you this way a bit and that way a bit. Give 'em to. Spread your legs more. Make a noise on your face as if you was being pulled to pieces an' that all that holds you is will-power. — That's the idea! That's the stuff! It's a winner, Bill! It's a winner! — Throw the leather into 'em! Make 'm jump! Make 'm get right down and pull the daylights out of each other!"

The whips fell on the horses, and the horses struggled in all their hugeness and might to pull away from the pain of the punishment. It was a spectacle to win approval from any audience. Each horse averaged eighteen hundredweight; thus, to the eye of the onlooker, seven thousand two hundred pounds of straining horse-flesh seemed wrenching and dragging apart the slim-waisted, delicately bodied, hundred-and-forty pound woman in her fancy street costume. It was a sight to make women in circus audiences scream with terror and turn their faces away.

"Slack down!" Collins commanded the drivers.

"The lady wins," he announced, after the manner of a ringmaster. — "Bill, you've got a mint in that turn. — Unhook, madam, unhook!"

Marie obeyed, and, the hooks still dangling from her sleeves, made a short run to Billikens, into whose arms she threw herself, her own arms folding him about the neck as she exclaimed before she kissed him:

"Oh, Billikens, I knew I could do it all the time! I was brave, wasn't I!"

"A give-away," Collins's dry voice broke in on her ecstasy. "Letting all the audience see the hooks. They must go up your sleeves the moment you let go. — Try it again. And another thing. When you finish the turn, no chestiness. No making out how easy it was. Make out it was the very devil. Show yourself weak, just about to collapse from the strain. Give at the knees. Make your shoulders cave in. The ringmaster will half step forward to catch you before you faint. That's your cue. Beat him to it. Stiffen up and straighten up with an effort of will-power — will-power's the idea, gameness, and all that, and kiss your hands to the audience and make a weak, pitiful sort of a smile, as though your heart's been pulled

’most out of you and you’ll have to go to the hospital, but for right then that you’re game an’ smiling and kissing your hands to the audience that’s riping the seats up and loving you. — Get me, madam? You, Bill, get the idea! And see she does it. — Now, ready! Be a bit wistful as you look at the horses. — That’s it! Nobody’d guess you’d palmed the hooks and connected them. — Straight out! — Let her go!”

And again the thirty-six-hundredweight of horses on either side pitted its strength against the similar weight on the other side, and the seeming was that Marie was the link of woman-flesh being torn asunder.

A third and a fourth time the turn was rehearsed, and, between turns, Collins sent a man to his office, for the Del Mar telegram.

“You take her now, Bill,” he told Marie’s husband, as, telegram in hand, he returned to the problem of Michael. “Give her half a dozen tries more. And don’t forget, any time any jay farmer thinks he’s got a span that can pull, bet him on the side your best span can beat him. That means advance advertising and some paper. It’ll be worth it. The ringmaster’ll favour you, and your span can get the first jump. If I was young and footloose, I’d ask nothing better than to go out with your turn.”

Harris Collins, in the pauses gazing down at Michael, read Del Mar’s Seattle telegram:

“*Sell my dogs. You know what they can do and what they are worth. Am done with them. Deduct the board and hold the balance until I see you. I have the limit of a dog. Every turn I ever pulled is put in the shade by this one. He’s a ten strike. Wait till you see him.*”

Over to one side in the busy arena, Collins contemplated Michael.

“Del Mar was the limit himself,” he told Johnny, who held Michael by the chain. “When he wired me to sell his dogs it meant he had a better turn, and here’s only one dog to show for it, a damned thoroughbred at that. He says it’s the limit. It must be, but in heaven’s name, what is its turn? It’s never done a flip in its life, much less a double flip. What do you think, Johnny? Use your head. Suggest something.”

“Maybe it can count,” Johnny advanced.

“And counting-dogs are a drug on the market. Well, anyway, let’s try.”

And Michael, who knew unerringly how to count, refused to perform.

“If he was a regular dog, he could walk anyway,” was Collins’ next idea. “We’ll try him.”

And Michael went through the humiliating ordeal of being jerked erect on his hind legs by Johnny while Collins with the stick cracked him under the jaw and across the knees. In his wrath, Michael tried to bite the master-god, and was jerked away by the chain. When he strove to retaliate on Johnny, that imperturbable youth, with extended arm, merely lifted him into the air on his chain and strangled him.

“That’s off,” quoth Collins wearily. “If he can’t stand on his hind legs he can’t barrel-jump — you’ve heard about Ruth, Johnny. She was a winner. Jump in and out of nail-kegs, on her hind legs, without ever touching with her front ones. She used to do eight kegs, in one and out into the next. Remember when she was boarded here and rehearsed. She was a gold-mine, but Carson didn’t know how to treat her, and she croaked off with penumonia at Cripple Creek.”

“Wonder if he can spin plates on his nose,” Johnny volunteered.

“Can’t stand up on hind legs,” Collins negatived. “Besides, nothing like the limit in a turn like that. This dog’s got a specially. He ain’t ordinary. He does some unusual thing unusually well, and it’s up to us to locate it. That comes of Harry dying so inconsiderately and leaving this puzzle-box on my hands. I see I just got to devote myself to him. Take him away, Johnny. Number Eighteen for him. Later on we can put him in the single compartments.”

CHAPTER XXVI

Number Eighteen was a big compartment or cage in the dog row, large enough with due comfort for a dozen Irish terriers like Michael. For Harris Collins was scientific. Dogs on vacation, boarding at the Cedarwild Animal School, were given every opportunity to recuperate from the hardships and wear and tear of from six months to a year and more on the road. It was for this reason that the school was so popular a boarding-place for performing animals when the owners were on vacation or out of “time.” Harris Collins kept his animals clean and comfortable and guarded from germ diseases. In short, he renovated them against their next trips out on vaudeville time or circus engagement.

To the left of Michael, in Number Seventeen, were five grotesquely clipped French poodles. Michael could not see them, save when he was being taken out or brought back, but he could smell them and hear them, and, in his loneliness, he even started a feud of snarling bickeringness with Pedro, the biggest of them who acted as clown in their turn. They were aristocrats among performing animals, and Michael’s feud with Pedro was not so much real as play-acted. Had he and Pedro been brought together they would have made friends in no time. But through the slow monotonous drag of the hours they developed a fictitious excitement and interest in mouthing their quarrel which each knew in his heart of hearts was no quarrel at all.

In Number Nineteen, on Michael’s right, was a sad and tragic company. They were mongrels, kept spotlessly and germicidally clean, who were unattached and untrained. They composed a sort of reserve of raw material, to be worked into established troupes when an extra one or a substitute was needed. This meant the hell of the arena where the training went on. Also, in spare moments, Collins, or his assistants, were for ever trying them out with all manner of tricks in the quest of special aptitudes on their parts. Thus, a mongrel semblance to a cooker spaniel of a dog was tried out for several days as a pony-rider who would leap through paper hoops from the pony’s back, and return upon the back again. After several falls and painful injuries, it was rejected for the feat and tried out as a plate-balancer. Failing in this, it was made into a see-saw dog who, for the rest of the turn, filled into the background of a troupe of twenty dogs.

Number Nineteen was a place of perpetual quarrelling and pain. Dogs, hurt in the training, licked their wounds, and moaned, or howled, or were irritable to excess on the slightest provocation. Always, when a new dog entered — and this was a regular happening, for others were continually being taken away to hit the road — the cage was vexed with quarrels and battles, until the new dog, by fighting or by non resistance, had commanded or been taught its proper place.

Michael ignored the denizens of Number Nineteen. They could sniff and snarl belligerently across at him, but he took no notice, reserving his companionship for the play-acted and perennial quarrel with Pedro. Also, Michael was out in the arena more often and far longer hours than any of them.

"Trust Harry not to make a mistake on a dog," was Collins's judgment; and constantly he strove to find in Michael what had made Del Mar declare him a ten strike and the limit.

Every indignity, in the attempt to find out, was wreaked upon Michael. They tried him at hurdle-jumping, at walking on forelegs, at pony-riding, at forward flips, and at clowning with other dogs. They tried him at waltzing, all his legs cord-fastened and dragged and jerked and slacked under him. They spiked his collar in some of the attempted tricks to keep him from lurching from side to side or from falling forward or backward. They used the whip and the rattan stick; and twisted his nose. They attempted to make a goal-keeper of him in a football game between two teams of pain-driven and pain-bitten mongrels. And they dragged him up ladders to make him dive into a tank of water.

Even they essayed to make him "loop the loop" — rushing him down an inclined trough at so high speed of his legs, accelerated by the slash of whips on his hindquarters, that, with such initial momentum, had he put his heart and will into it, he could have successfully run up the inside of the loop, and across the inside of the top of it, back-downward, like a fly on the ceiling, and on and down and around and out of the loop. But he refused the will and the heart, and every time, when he was unable at the beginning to leap sideways out of the inclined trough, he fell grievously from the inside of the loop, bruising and injuring himself.

"It isn't that I expect these things are what Harry had in mind," Collins would say, for always he was training his assistants; "but that through them

I may get a cue to his specially, whatever in God's name it is, that poor Harry must have known."

Out of love, at the wish of his love-god, Steward, Michael would have striven to learn these tricks and in most of them would have succeeded. But here at Cedarwild was no love, and his own thoroughbred nature made him stubbornly refuse to do under compulsion what he would gladly have done out of love. As a result, since Collins was no thoroughbred of a man, the clashes between them were for a time frequent and savage. In this fighting Michael quickly learned he had no chance. He was always doomed to defeat. He was beaten by stereotyped formula before he began. Never once could he get his teeth into Collins or Johnny. He was too common-sensed to keep up the battling in which he would surely have broken his heart and his body and gone dumb mad. Instead, he retired into himself, became sullen, undemonstrative, and, though he never cowered in defeat, and though he was always ready to snarl and bristle his hair in advertisement that inside he was himself and unconquered, he no longer burst out in furious anger.

After a time, scarcely ever trying him out on a new trick, the chain and Johnny were dispensed with, and with Collins he spent all Collins's hours in the arena. He learned, by bitter lessons, that he must follow Collins around; and follow him he did, hating him perpetually and in his own body slowly and subtly poisoning himself by the juices of his glands that did not secrete and flow in quite their normal way because of the pressure put upon them by his hatred.

The effect of this, on his body, was not perceptible. This was because of his splendid constitution and health. Wherefore, since the effect must be produced somewhere, it was his mind, or spirit, or nature, or brain, or processes of consciousness, that received it. He drew more and more within himself, became morose, and brooded much. All of which was spiritually unhealthful. He, who had been so merry-hearted, even merrier-hearted than his brother Jerry, began to grow saturnine, and peevish, and ill-tempered. He no longer experienced impulses to play, to romp around, to run about. His body became as quiet and controlled as his brain. Human convicts, in prisons, attain this quietude. He could stand by the hour, to heel to Collins, uninterested, infinitely bored, while Collins tortured some mongrel creature into the performance of a trick.

And much of this torturing Michael witnessed. There were the greyhounds, the high-jumpers and wide-leapers. They were willing to do their best, but Collins and his assistants achieved the miracle, if miracle it may be called, of making them do better than their best. Their best was natural. Their better than best was unnatural, and it killed some and shortened the lives of all. Rushed to the springboard and the leap, always, after the take-off, in mid-air, they had to encounter an assistant who stood underneath, an extraordinarily long buggy-whip in hand, and lashed them vigorously. This made them leap from the springboard beyond their normal powers, hurting and straining and injuring them in their desperate attempt to escape the whip-lash, to beat the whip-lash in the air and be past ere it could catch their flying flanks and sting them like a scorpion.

"Never will a jumping dog jump his hardest," Collins told his assistants, "unless he's made to. That's your job. That's the difference between the jumpers I turn out and some of these dub amateur-jumping outfits that fail to make good even on the bush circuits."

Collins continually taught. A graduate from his school, an assistant who received from him a letter of recommendation, carried a high credential of a sheepskin into the trained-animal world.

"No dog walks naturally on its hind legs, much less on its forelegs," Collins would say. "Dogs ain't built that way. *They have to be made to*, that's all. That's the secret of all animal training. They have to. You've got to make them. That's your job. Make them. Anybody who can't, can't make good in this factory. Put that in your pipe and smoke it, and get busy."

Michael saw, without fully appreciating, the use of the spiked saddle on the bucking mule. The mule was fat and good-natured the first day of its appearance in the arena. It had been a pet mule in a family of children until Collins's keen eyes rested on it; and it had known only love and kindness and much laughter for its foolish mulishness. But Collins's eyes had read health, vigour, and long life, as well as laughableness of appearance and action in the long-eared hybrid.

Barney Barnato he was renamed that first day in the arena, when, also, he received the surprise of his life. He did not dream of the spike in the saddle, nor, while the saddle was empty, did it press against him. But the moment Samuel Bacon, a negro tumbler, got into the saddle, the spike sank home. He knew about it and was prepared. But Barney, taken by surprise, arched his back in the first buck he had ever made. It was so prodigious a buck that Collins eyes snapped with satisfaction, while Sam landed a dozen feet away in the sawdust.

"Make good like that," Collins approved, "and when I sell the mule you'll go along as part of the turn, or I miss my guess. And it will be some turn. There'll be at least two more like you, who'll have to be nervy and know how to fall. Get busy. Try him again."

And Barney entered into the hell of education that later won his purchaser more time than he could deliver over the best vaudeville circuits in Canada and the United States. Day after day Barney took his torture. Not for long did he carry the spiked saddle. Instead, bare-back, he received the negro on his back, and was spiked and set bucking just the same; for the spike was now attached to Sam's palm by means of leather straps. In the end, Barney became so "touchy" about his back that he almost began bucking if a person as much as looked at it. Certainly, aware of the stab of pain, he started bucking, whirling, and kicking whenever the first signal was given of some one trying to mount him.

At the end of the fourth week, two other tumblers, white youths, being secured, the complete, builded turn was performed for the benefit of a slender, French-looking gentleman, with waxed moustaches. In the end he bought Barney, without haggling, at Collins's own terms and engaged Sammy and the other two tumblers as well. Collins staged the trick properly, as it would be staged in the theatre, even had ready and set up all the necessary apparatus, and himself acted as ringmaster while the prospective purchaser looked on.

Barney, fat as butter, humorous-looking, was led into the square of cloth-covered steel cables and cloth-covered steel uprights. The halter was removed and he was turned loose. Immediately he became restless, the ears were laid back, and he was a picture of viciousness.

"Remember one thing," Collins told the man who might buy. "If you buy him, you'll be ringmaster, and you must never, never spike him. When he comes to know that, you can always put your hands on him any time and control him. He's good-natured at heart, and he's the gratefullest mule I've ever seen in the business. He's just got to love you, and hate the other three. And one warning: if he goes real bad and starts biting, you'll have to pull out his teeth and feed him soft mashes and crushed grain that's steamed. I'll give you the recipe for the digestive dope you'll have to put in. Now — watch!"

Collins stopped into the ring and caressed Barney, who responded in the best of tempers and tried affectionately to nudge and shove past on the way out of the ropes to escape what he knew was coming.

"See," Collins exposited. "He's got confidence in me. He trusts me. He knows I've never spiked him and that I always save him in the end. I'm his good Samaritan, and you'll have to be the same to him if you buy him. — Now I'll give you your spiel. Of course, you can improve on it to suit yourself."

The master-trainer walked out of the rope square, stepped forward to an imaginary line, and looked down and out and up as if he were gazing at the pit of the orchestra beneath him, across at the body of the house, and up into the galleries.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he addressed the sawdust emptiness before him as if it were a packed audience, "this is Barney Barnato, the biggest joker of a mule ever born. He's as affectionate as a Newfoundland puppy — just watch — "

Stepping back to the ropes, Collins extended his hand across them, saying: "Come here, Barney, and show all these people who you love best."

And Barney twinkled forward on his small hoofs, nozzled the open hand, and came closer, nozzling up the arm, nudging Collins's shoulders with his nose, half-rearing as if to get across the ropes and embrace him. What he was really doing was begging and entreating Collins to take him away out of the squared ring from the torment he knew awaited him.

"That's what it means by never spiking him," Collins shot at the man with the waxed moustaches, as he stepped forward to the imaginary line in the sawdust, above the imaginary pit of the orchestra, and addressed the imaginary house.

"Ladies and gentlemen, Barney Barnato is a josher. He's got forty tricks up each of his four legs, and the man don't live that he'll let stick on big back for sixty seconds. I'm telling you this in fair warning, before I make my proposition. Looks easy, doesn't it? — one minute, the sixtieth part of an hour, to be precise, sixty seconds, to stick on the back of an affectionate josher mule like Barney. Well, come on you boys and broncho riders. To anybody who sticks on for one minute I shall immediately pay the sum of fifty dollars; for two whole, entire minutes, the sum of five hundred dollars."

This was the cue for Samuel Bacon, who advanced across the sawdust, awkward and grinning and embarrassed, and apparently was helped up to the stage by the extended hand of Collins.

"Is your life insured?" Collins demanded.

Sam shook his head and grinned.

"Then what are you tackling this for?"

"For the money," said Sam. "I jes' naturally needs it in my business."

"What is your business?"

"None of your business, mister." Here Sam grinned ingratiating apology for his impertinence and shuffled on his legs. "I might be investin' in lottery tickets, only I ain't. Do I get the money? — that's *our* business."

"Sure you do," Collins replied. "When you earn it. Stand over there to one side and wait a moment. — Ladies and gentlemen, if you will forgive the delay, I must ask for more volunteers. — Any more takers? Fifty dollars for sixty seconds. Almost a dollar a second . . . if you win. Better! I'll make it a dollar a second. Sixty dollars to the boy, man, woman, or girl who sticks on Barney's back for one minute. Come on, ladies. Remember this is the day of equal suffrage. Here's where you put it over on your husbands, brothers, sons, fathers, and grandfathers. Age is no limit. — Grandma, do I get you?" he uttered directly to what must have been a very elderly lady in a near front row. — "You see," (to the prospective buyer), "I've got the entire patter for you. You could do it with two rehearsals, and you can do them right here, free of charge, part of the purchase."

The next two tumblers crossed the sawdust and were helped by Collins up to the imaginary stage.

"You can change the patter according to the cities you're in," he explained to the Frenchman. "It's easy to find out the names of the most despised and toughest neighbourhoods or villages, and have the boys hail from them."

Continuing the patter, Collins put the performance on. Sam's first attempt was brief. He was not half on when he was flung to the ground. Half a dozen attempts, quickly repeated, were scarcely better, the last one permitting him to remain on Barney's back nearly ten seconds, and culminating in a ludicrous fall over Barney's head. Sam withdrew from the ring, shaking his head dubiously and holding his side as if in pain. The other lads followed. Expert tumblers, they executed most amazing and side-splitting fails. Sam recovered and came back. Toward the last, all three made a combined attack on Barney, striving to mount him simultaneously from different slants of approach. They were scattered and flung like chaff, sometimes falling heaped together. Once, the two white boys, standing apart as if recovering breath, were mowed down by Sam's flying body.

"Remember, this is a real mule," Collins told the man with the waxed moustaches. "If any outsiders butt in for a hack at the money, all the better. They'll get theirs quick. The man don't live who can stay on his back a minute . . . if you keep him rehearsed with the spike. He must live in fear of the spike. Never let him slow up on it. Never let him forget it. If you lay off any time for a few days, rehearse him with the spike a couple of times just before you begin again, or else he might forget it and queer the turn by ambling around with the first outside rube that mounts him.

"And just suppose some rube, all hooks of arms and legs and hands, is managing to stick on anyway, and the minute is getting near up. Just have Sam here, or any of your three, slide in and spike him from the palm. That'll be good night for Mr. Rube. You can't lose, and the audience'll laugh its fool head off.

"Now for the climax! Watch! This always brings the house down. Get busy you two! — Sam! Ready!"

While the white boys threatened to mount Barney from either side and kept his attention engaged, Sam, from outside, in a sudden fit of rage and desperation, made a flying dive across the ropes and from in front locked arms and legs about Barney's neck, tucking his own head close against Barney's head. And Barney reared up on his hind legs, as he had long since learned from the many palm-spikings he had received on head and neck.

"It's a corker," Collins announced, as Barney, on his hind legs, striking vainly with his fore, struggled about the ring. "There's no danger. He'll never fall over backwards. He's a mule, and he's too wise. Besides, even if he does, all Sam has to do is let go and fall clear."

The turn over, Barney gladly accepted the halter and was led out of the square ring and up to the Frenchman.

"Long life there — look him over," Collins continued to sell. "It's a full turn, including yourself, four performers, besides the mule, and besides any suckers from the audience. It's all ready to put on the boards, and dirt cheap at five thousand."

The Frenchman winced at the sum.

"Listen to arithmetic," Collins went on. "You can sell at twelve hundred a week at least, and you can net eight hundred certain. Six weeks of the net pays for the turn, and you can book a hundred weeks right off the bat and have them yelling for more. Wish I was young and footloose. I'd take it out on the road myself and coin a fortune."

And Barney was sold, and passed out of the Cedarwild Animal School to the slavery of the spike and to be provocative of much joy and laughter in the pleasure-theatre of the world.

CHAPTER XXVII

"The thing is, Johnny, you can't love dogs into doing professional tricks, which is the difference between dogs and women," Collins told his assistant. "You know how it is with any dog. You love it up into lying down and rolling over and playing dead and all such dub tricks. And then one day you show him off to your friends, and the conditions are changed, and he gets all excited and foolish, and you can't get him to do a thing. Children are like that. Lose their heads in company, forget all their training, and throw you down."

"Now on the stage, they got real tricks to do, tricks they don't do, tricks they hate. And they mightn't be feeling good — got a touch of cold, or mange, or are sour-balled. What are you going to do? Apologize to the audience? Besides, on the stage, the programme runs like clockwork. Got to start performing on the tick of the clock, and anywhere from one to seven turns a day, all depending what kind of time you've got. The point is, your dogs have got to get right up and perform. No loving them, no begging them, no waiting on them. And there's only the one way. They've got to know when you start, you mean it."

"And dogs ain't fools," Johnny opined. "They know when you mean anything, an' when you don't."

"Sure thing," Collins nodded approbation. "The moment you slack up on them is the moment they slack up in their work. You get soft, and see how quick they begin making mistakes in their tricks. You've got to keep the fear of God over them. If you don't, they won't, and you'll find yourself begging for spotted time on the bush circuits."

Half an hour later, Michael heard, though he understood no word of it, the master-trainer laying another law down to another assistant.

"Cross-breds and mongrels are what's needed, Charles. Not one thoroughbred in ten makes good, unless he's got the heart of a coward, and that's just what distinguishes them from mongrels and cross-breds. Like race-horses, they're hot-blooded. They've got sensitiveness, and pride. Pride's the worst. You listen to me. I was born into the business and I've studied it all my life. I'm a success. There's only one reason I'm a success — I KNOW. Get that. I KNOW."

"Another thing is that cross-breds and mongrels are cheap. You needn't be afraid of losing them or working them out. You can always get more, and cheap. And they ain't the trouble in teaching. You can throw the fear of God into them. That's what's the matter with the thoroughbreds. You can't throw the fear of God into them."

"Give a mongrel a real licking, and what's he do? He'll kiss your hand, and be obedient, and crawl on his belly to do what you want him to do. They're slave dogs, that's what mongrels are. They ain't got courage, and you don't want courage in a performing dog. You want fear. Now you give a thoroughbred a licking and see what happens. Sometimes they die. I've known them to die. And if they don't die, what do they do? Either they go stubborn, or vicious, or both. Sometimes they just go to biting and foaming. You can kill them, but you can't keep them from biting and foaming. Or they'll go straight stubborn. They're the worst. They're the passive resisters — that's what I call them. They won't fight back. You can flog them to death, but it won't buy you anything. They're like those Christians that used to be burned at the stake or boiled in oil. They've got their opinions, and nothing you can do will change them. They'll die first. . . . And they do. I've had them. I was learning myself . . . and I learned to leave the thoroughbred alone. They beat you out. They get your goat. You never get theirs. And they're time-wasters, and patience-wasters, and they're expensive."

"Take this terrier here." Collins nodded at Michael, who stood several feet back of him, morosely regarding the various activities of the arena. "He's both kinds of a thoroughbred, and therefore no good. I've never given him a real licking, and I never will. It would be a waste of time. He'll fight if you press him too hard. And he'll die fighting you. He's too sensible to fight if you don't press him too hard. And if you don't press him too hard, he'll just stay as he is, and refuse to learn anything. I'd chuck him right now, except Del Mar couldn't make a mistake. Poor Harry knew he had a specially, and a crackerjack, and it's up to me to find it."

"Wonder if he's a lion dog," Charles suggested.

"He's the kind that ain't afraid of lions," Collins concurred. "But what sort of a specially trick could he do with lions? Stick his head in their mouths? I never heard of a dog doing that, and it's an idea. But we can try him. We've tried him at 'most everything else."

"There's old Hannibal," said Charles. "He used to take a woman's head in his mouth with the old Sales-Sinker shows."

"But old Hannibal's getting cranky," Collins objected. "I've been watching him and trying to get rid of him. Any animal is liable to go off its nut any time, especially wild ones. You see, the life ain't natural. And when they do, it's good night. You lose your investment, and, if you don't know your business, maybe your life."

And Michael might well have been tried out on Hannibal and have lost his head inside that animal's huge mouth, had not the good fortune of apropos-ness intervened. For, the next moment, Collins was listening to the hasty report of his lion-and-tiger keeper. The man who reported was possibly forty years of age, although he looked half as old again. He was a withered-faced man, whose face-lines, deep and vertical, looked as if they had been clawed there by some beast other than himself.

"Old Hannibal is going crazy," was the burden of his report.

"Nonsense," said Harris Collins. "It's you that's getting old. He's got your goat, that's all. I'll show it to you. — Come on along, all of you. We'll take fifteen minutes off of the work, and I'll show you a show never seen in the show-ring. It'd be worth ten thousand a week anywhere . . . only it wouldn't last. Old Hannibal would turn up his toes out of sheer hurt feelings. — Come on everybody! All hands! Fifteen minutes recess!"

And Michael followed at the heels of his latest and most terrible master, the twain leading the procession of employees and visiting professional animal men who trooped along behind. As was well known, when Harris Collins performed he performed only for the élite, for the hoi-polloi of the trained-animal world.

The lion-and-tiger man, who had clawed his own face with the beast-claws of his nature, whimpered protest when he saw his employer's preparation to enter Hannibal's cage; for the preparation consisted merely in equipping himself with a broom-handle.

Hannibal was old, but he was reputed the largest lion in captivity, and he had not lost his teeth. He was pacing up and down the length of his cage, heavily and swaying, after the manner of captive animals, when the unexpected audience erupted into the space before his cage. Yet he took no notice whatever, merely continuing his pacing, swinging his head from side to side, turning lithely at each end of his cage, with all the air of being bent on some determined purpose.

“That’s the way he’s been goin’ on for two days,” whimpered his keeper. “An’ when you go near ’m, he just reaches for you. Look what he done to me.” The man held up his right arm, the shirt and undershirt ripped to shreds, and red parallel grooves, slightly clotted with blood, showing where the claws had broken the skin. “An’ I wasn’t inside. He did it through the bars, with one swipe, when I was startin’ to clean his cage. Now if he’d only roar, or something. But he never makes a sound, just keeps on goin’ up an’ down.”

“Where’s the key?” Collins demanded. “Good. Now let me in. And lock it afterward and take the key out. Lose it, forget it, throw it away. I’ll have all the time in the world to wait for you to find it to let me out.”

And Harris Collins, a sliver of a less than a light-weight man, who lived in mortal fear that at table the mother of his children would crown him with a plate of hot soup, went into the cage, before the critical audience of his employees and professional visitors, armed only with a broom-handle. Further, the door was locked behind him, and, the moment he was in, keeping a casual but alert eye on the pacing Hannibal, he reiterated his order to lock the door and remove the key.

Half a dozen times the lion paced up and down, declining to take any notice of the intruder. And then, when his back was turned as he went down the cage, Collins stepped directly in the way of his return path and stood still. Coming back and finding his way blocked, Hannibal did not roar. His muscular movements sliding each into the next like so much silk of tawny hide, he struck at the obstacle that confronted his way. But Collins, knowing ahead of the lion what the lion was going to do, struck first, with the broom-handle rapping the beast on its tender nose. Hannibal recoiled with a flash of snarl and flashed back a second sweeping stroke of his mighty paw. Again he was anticipated, and the rap on his nose sent him into recoil.

“Got to keep his head down — that way lies safety,” the master-trainer muttered in a low, tense voice.

“Ah, would you? Take it, then.”

Hannibal, in wrath, crouching for a spring, had lifted his head. The consequent blow on his nose forced his head down to the floor, and the king of beasts, nose still to floor, backed away with mouth-snarls and throat-and-chest noises.

"Follow up," Collins enunciated, himself following, rapping the nose again sharply and accelerating the lion's backward retreat.

"Man is the boss because he's got the head that thinks," Collins preached the lesson; "and he's just got to make his head boss his body, that's all, so that he can think one thought ahead of the animal, and act one act ahead. Watch me get his goat. He ain't the hard case he's trying to make himself believe he is. And that idea, which he's just starting, has got to be taken out of him. The broomstick will do it. Watch."

He backed the animal down the length of the cage, continually rapping at the nose and keeping it down to the floor.

"Now I'm going to pile him into the corner."

And Hannibal, snarling, growling, and spitting, ducking his head and with short paw-strokes trying to ward off the insistent broomstick, backed obediently into the corner, crumpled up his hind-parts, and tried to withdraw his corporeal body within itself in a pain-urged effort to make it smaller. And always he kept his nose down and himself harmless for a spring. In the thick of it he slowly raised his nose and yawned. Nor, because it came up slowly, and because Collins had anticipated the yawn by being one thought ahead of Hannibal in Hannibal's own brain, was the nose rapped.

"That's the goat," Collins announced, for the first time speaking in a hearty voice in which was no vibration of strain. "When a lion yawns in the thick of a fight, you know he ain't crazy. He's sensible. He's got to be sensible, or he'd be springing or lashing out instead of yawning. He knows he's licked, and that yawn of his merely says: 'I quit. For the I love of Mike leave me alone. My nose is awful sore. I'd like to get you, but I can't. I'll do anything you want, and I'll be dreadful good, but don't hit my poor sore nose.'

"But man is the boss, and he can't afford to be so easy. Drive the lesson home that you're boss. Rub it in. Don't stop when he quits. Make him swallow the medicine and lick the spoon. Make him kiss your foot on his neck holding him down in the dirt. Make him kiss the stick that's beaten him. — Watch!"

And Hannibal, the largest lion in captivity, with all his teeth, captured out of the jungle after he was full-grown, a veritable king of beasts, before the menacing broomstick in the hand of a sliver of a man, backed deeper and more crumpled together into the corner. His back was bowed up, the very opposite muscular position to that for a spring, while he drew his head more and more down and under his chest in utter abjectness, resting his weight on his elbows and shielding his poor nose with his massive paws, a single stroke of which could have ripped the life of Collins quivering from his body.

"Now he might be tricky," Collins announced, "but he's got to kiss my foot and the stick just the same. Watch!"

He lifted and advanced his left foot, not tentatively and hesitantly, but quickly and firmly, bringing it to rest on the lion's neck. The stick was poised to strike, one act ahead of the lion's next possible act, as Collins's mind was one thought ahead of the lion's next thought.

And Hannibal did the forecasted and predestined. His head flashed up, huge jaws distended, fangs gleaming, to sink into the slender, silken-hosed ankle above the tan low-cut shoes. But the fangs never sank. They were scarcely started a fifth of the way of the distance, when the waiting broomstick rapped on his nose and made him sink it in the floor under his chest and cover it again with his paws.

"He ain't crazy," said Collins. "He knows, from the little he knows, that I know more than him and that I've got him licked to a fare-you-well. If he was crazy, he wouldn't know, and I wouldn't know his mind either, and I wouldn't be that one jump ahead of him, and he'd get me and mess the whole cage up with my insides."

He prodded Hannibal with the end of the broom-handle, after each prod poising it for a stroke. And the great lion lay and roared in helplessness, and at each prod exposed his nose more and lifted it higher, until, at the end, his red tongue ran out between his fangs and licked the boot resting none too gently on his neck, and, after that, licked the broomstick that had administered all the punishment.

"Going to be a good lion now?" Collins demanded, roughly rubbing his foot back and forth on Hannibal's neck.

Hannibal could not refrain from growling his hatred.

"Going to be a good lion?" Collins repeated, rubbing his foot back and forth still more roughly.

And Hannibal exposed his nose and with his red tongue licked again the tan shoe and the slender, tan-silken ankle that he could have destroyed with one crunch.

CHAPTER XXVIII

One friend Michael made among the many animals he encountered in the Cedarwild School, and a strange, sad friendship it was. Sara she was called, a small, green monkey from South America, who seemed to have been born hysterical and indignant, and with no appreciation of humour. Sometimes, following Collins about the arena, Michael would meet her while she waited to be tried out on some new turn. For, unable or unwilling to try, she was for ever being tried out on turns, or, with little herself to do, as a filler-in for more important performers.

But she always caused confusion, either chattering and squealing with fright or bickering at the other animals. Whenever they attempted to make her do anything, she protested indignantly; and if they tried force, her squalls and cries excited all the animals in the arena and set the work back.

“Never mind,” said Collins finally. “She’ll go into the next monkey band we make up.”

This was the last and most horrible fate that could befall a monkey on the stage, to be a helpless marionette, compelled by unseen sticks and wires, poked and jerked by concealed men, to move and act throughout an entire turn.

But it was before this doom was passed upon her that Michael made her acquaintance. Their first meeting, she sprang suddenly at him, a screaming, chattering little demon, threatening him with nails and teeth. And Michael, already deep-sunk in habitual moroseness merely looked at her calmly, not a ripple to his neck-hair nor a prick to his ears. The next moment, her fuss and fury quite ignored, she saw him turn his head away. This gave her pause. Had he sprung at her, or snarled, or shown any anger or resentment such as did the other dogs when so treated by her, she would have screamed and screeched and raised a hubbub of expostulation, crying for help and calling all men to witness how she was being unwarrantably attacked.

As it was, Michael’s unusual behaviour seemed to fascinate her. She approached him tentatively, without further racket; and the boy who had her in charge slacked the thin chain that held her.

“Hope he breaks her back for her,” was his unholy wish; for he hated Sara intensely, desiring to be with the lions or elephants rather than dancing attendance on a cantankerous female monkey there was no reasoning with.

And because Michael took no notice of her, she made up to him. It was not long before she had her hands on him, and, quickly after that, an arm around his neck and her head snuggled against his. Then began her interminable tale. Day after day, catching him at odd times in the ring, she would cling closely to him and in a low voice, running on and on, never pausing for breath, tell him, for all he knew, the story of her life. At any rate, it sounded like the story of her woes and of all the indignities which had been wreaked upon her. It was one long complaint, and some of it might have been about her health, for she sniffed and coughed a great deal and her chest seemed always to hurt her from the way she had of continually and gingerly pressing the palm of her hand to it. Sometimes, however, she would cease her complaining, and love and mother him, uttering occasional series of gentle mellow sounds that were like croonings.

Hers was the only hand of affection that was laid on him at Cedarwild, and she was ever gentle, never pinching him, never pulling his ears. By the same token, he was the only friend she had; and he came to look forward to meeting her in the course of the morning work — and this, despite that every meeting always concluded in a scene, when she fought with her keeper against being taken away. Her cries and protests would give way to whimperings and wailings, while the men about laughed at the strangeness of the love-affair between her and the Irish terrier.

But Harris Collins tolerated, even encouraged, their friendship.

"The two sour-balls get along best together," he said. "And it does them good. Gives them something to live for, and that way lies health. But some day, mark my words, she'll turn on him and give him what for, and their friendship will get a terrible smash."

And half of it he spoke with the voice of prophecy, and, though she never turned on Michael, the day in the world was written when their friendship would truly receive a terrible smash.

"Now seals are too wise," Collins explained one day, in a sort of extempore lecture to several of his apprentice trainers. "You've just got to toss fish to them when they perform. If you don't, they won't, and there's an end of it. But you can't depend on feeding dainties to dogs, for instance, though you can make a young, untrained pig perform creditably by means of a nursing bottle hidden up your sleeve."

"All you have to do is think it over. Do you think you can make those greyhounds extend themselves with the promise of a bite of meat? It's the whip that makes them extend. — Look over there at Billy Green. There ain't another way to teach that dog that trick. You can't love her into doing it. You can't pay her to do it. There's only one way, and that's *make* her."

Billy Green, at the moment, was training a tiny, nondescript, frizzly-haired dog. Always, on the stage, he made a hit by drawing from his pocket a tiny dog that would do this particular trick. The last one had died from a wrenched back, and he was now breaking in a new one. He was catching the little mite by the hind-legs and tossing it up in the air, where, making a half-flip and descending head first, it was supposed to alight with its forefeet on his hand and there balance itself, its hind feet and body above it in the air. Again and again he stooped, caught her hind-legs and flung her up into the half-turn. Almost frozen with fear, she vainly strove to effect the trick. Time after time, and every time, she failed to make the balance. Sometimes she fell crumpled; several times she all but struck the ground: and once, she did strike, on her side and so hard as to knock the breath out of her. Her master, taking advantage of the moment to wipe the sweat from his streaming face, nudged her about with his toe till she staggered weakly to her feet.

"The dog was never born that'd learn that trick for the promise of a bit of meat," Collins went on. "Any more than was the dog ever born that'd walk on its forelegs without having its hind-legs rapped up in the air with the stick a thousand times. Yet you take that trick there. It's always a winner, especially with the women — so cunning, you know, so adorable cute, to be yanked out of its beloved master's pocket and to have such trust and confidence in him as to allow herself to be tossed around that way. Trust and confidence hell! He's put the fear of God into her, that's what."

"Just the same, to dig a dainty out of your pocket once in a while and give an animal a nibble, always makes a hit with the audience. That's about all it's good for, yet it's a good stunt. Audiences like to believe that the animals enjoy doing their tricks, and that they are treated like pampered darlings, and that they just love their masters to death. But God help all of us and our meal tickets if the audiences could see behind the scenes. Every trained-animal turn would be taken off the stage instanter, and we'd be all hunting for a job."

"Yes, and there's rough stuff no end pulled off on the stage right before the audience's eyes. The best fooler I ever saw was Lottie's. She had a bunch of trained cats. She loved them to death right before everybody, especially if a trick wasn't going good. What'd she do? She'd take that cat right up in her arms and kiss it. And when she put it down it'd perform the trick all right all right, while the audience applauded its silly head off for the kindness and humaneness she'd shown. Kiss it? Did she? I'll tell you what she did. She bit its nose."

"Eleanor Pavalo learned the trick from Lottie, and used it herself on her toy dogs. And many a dog works on the stage in a spiked collar, and a clever man can twist a dog's nose and nobody in the audience any the wiser. But it's the fear that counts. It's what the dog knows he'll get afterward when the turn's over that keeps most of them straight."

"Remember Captain Roberts and his great Danes. They weren't purebreds, though. He must have had a dozen of them — toughest bunch of brutes I ever saw. He boarded them here twice. You couldn't go among them without a club in your hand. I had a Mexican lad laid up by them. He was a tough one, too. But they got him down and nearly ate him. The doctors took over forty stitches in him and shot him full of that Pasteur dope for hydrophobia. And he always will limp with his right leg from what the dogs did to him. I tell you, they were the limit. And yet, every time the curtain went up, Captain Roberts brought the house down with the first stunt. Those dogs just flocked all over him, loving him to death, from the looks of it. And were they loving him? They hated him. I've seen him, right here in the cage at Cedarwild, wade into them with a club and whale the stuffing impartially out of all of them. Sure, they loved him not. Just a bit of the same old aniseed was what he used. He'd soak small pieces of meat in aniseed oil and stick them in his pockets. But that stunt would only work with a bunch of giant dogs like his. It was their size that got it across. Had they been a lot of ordinary dogs it would have looked silly. And, besides, they didn't do their regular tricks for aniseed. They did it for Captain Roberts's club. He was a tough bird himself."

"He used to say that the art of training animals was the art of inspiring them with fear. One of his assistants told me a nasty one about him afterwards. They had an off month in Los Angeles, and Captain Roberts got it into his head he was going to make a dog balance a silver dollar on the neck of a champagne bottle. Now just think that over and try to see yourself loving a dog into doing it. The assistant said he wore out about as many sticks as dogs, and that he wore out half a dozen dogs. He used to get them from the public pound at two and a half apiece, and every time one died he had another ready and waiting. And he succeeded with the seventh dog. I'm telling you, it learned to balance a dollar on the neck of a bottle. And it died from the effects of the learning within a week after he put it on the stage. Abscesses in the lungs, from the stick."

"There was an Englishman came over when I was a youngster. He had ponies, monkeys, and dogs. He bit the monkey's ears, so that, on the stage, all he had to do was to make a move as if he was going to bite and they'd quit their fooling and be good. He had a big chimpanzee that was a winner. It could turn four somersaults as fast as you could count on the back of a galloping pony, and he used to have to give it a real licking about twice a week. And sometimes the lickings were too stiff, and the monkey'd get sick and have to lay off. But the owner solved the problem. He got to giving him a little licking, a mere taste of the stick, regular, just before the turn came on. And that did it in his case, though with some other case the monkey most likely would have got sullen and not acted at all."

It was on that day that Harris Collins sold a valuable bit of information to a lion man who needed it. It was off time for him, and his three lions were boarding at Cedarwild. Their turn was an exciting and even terrifying one, when viewed from the audience; for, jumping about and roaring, they were made to appear as if about to destroy the slender little lady who performed with them and seemed to hold them in subjection only by her indomitable courage and a small riding-switch in her hand.

"The trouble is they're getting too used to it," the man complained. "Isadora can't prod them up any more. They just won't make a showing."

"I know them," Collins nodded. "They're pretty old now, and they're spirit-broken besides. Take old Sark there. He's had so many blank cartridges fired into his ears that he's stone deaf. And Selim — he lost his heart with his teeth. A Portuguese fellow who was handling him for the Barnum and Bailey show did that for him. You've heard?"

"I've often wondered," the man shook his head. "It must have been a smash."

"It was. The Portuguese did it with an iron bar. Selim was sulky and took a swipe at him with his paw, and he whopped it to him full in the mouth just as he opened it to let out a roar. He told me about it himself. Said Selim's teeth rattled on the floor like dominoes. But he shouldn't have done it. It was destroying valuable property. Anyway, they fired him for it."

"Well, all three of them ain't worth much to me now," said their owner. "They won't play up to Isadora in that roaring and rampaging at the end. It really made the turn. It was our finale, and we always got a great hand for it. Say, what am I going to do about it anyway? Ditch it? Or get some young lions?"

"Isadora would be safer with the old ones," Collins said.

"Too safe," Isadora's husband objected. "Of course, with younger lions, the work and responsibility piles up on me. But we've got to make our living, and this turn's about busted."

Harris Collins shook his head.

"What d'ye mean? — what's the idea?" the man demanded eagerly.

"They'll live for years yet, seeing how captivity has agreed with them," Collins elucidated. "If you invest in young lions you run the risk of having them pass out on you. And you can go right on pulling the trick off with what you've got. All you've got to do is to take my advice . . . "

The master-trainer paused, and the lion man opened his mouth to speak.

"Which will cost you," Collins went on deliberately, "say three hundred dollars."

"Just for some advice?" the other asked quickly.

"Which I guarantee will work. What would you have to pay for three new lions? Here's where you make money at three hundred. And it's the simplest of advice. I can tell it to you in three words, which is at the rate of a hundred dollars a word, and one of the words is 'the.'"

"Too steep for me," the other objected. "I've got a make a living."

"So have I," Collins assured him. "That's why I'm here. I'm a specialist, and you're paying a specialist's fee. You'll be as mad as a hornet when I tell you, it's that simple; and for the life of me I can't understand why you don't already know it."

"And if it don't work?" was the dubious query.

"If it don't work, you don't pay."

"Well, shoot it along," the lion man surrendered.

"*Wire the cage*," said Collins.

At first the man could not comprehend; then the light began to break on him.

"You mean . . . ?"

"Just that," Collins nodded. "And nobody need be the wiser. Dry batteries will do it beautifully. You can install them nicely under the cage floor. All Isadora has to do when she's ready is to step on the button; and when the electricity shoots through their feet, if they don't go up in the air and rampage and roar around to beat the band, not only can you keep the three hundred, but I'll give you three hundred more. I know. I've seen it done, and it never misses fire. It's just as though they were dancing on a red-hot stove. Up they go, and every time they come down they burn their feet again.

"But you'll have to put the juice into them slowly," Collins warned. "I'll show you how to do the wiring. Just a weak battery first, so as they can work up to it, and then stronger and stronger to the curtain. And they never get used to it. As long as they live they'll dance just as lively as the first time. What do you think of it?"

"It's worth three hundred all right," the man admitted. "I wish I could make my money that easy."

CHAPTER XXIX

"Guess I'll have to wash my hands of him," Collins told Johnny. "I know Del Mar must have been right when he said he was the limit, but I can't get a clue to it."

This followed upon a fight between Michael and Collins. Michael, more morose than ever, had become even crusty-tempered, and, scarcely with provocation at all, had attacked the man he hated, failing, as ever, to put his teeth into him, and receiving, in turn, a couple of smashing kicks under his jaw.

"He's like a gold-mine all right all right," Collins meditated, "but I'm hanged if I can crack it, and he's getting grouchier every day. Look at him. What'd he want to jump me for? I wasn't rough with him. He's piling up a sour-ball that'll make him fight a policeman some day."

A few minutes later, one of his patrons, a tow-headed young man who was boarding and rehearsing three performing leopards at Cedarwild, was asking Collins for the loan of an Airedale.

"I've only got one left now," he explained, "and I ain't safe without two."

"What's happened to the other one?" the master-trainer queried.

"Alphonso — that's the big buck leopard — got nasty this morning and settled his hash. I had to put him out of his misery. He was gutted like a horse in the bull-ring. But he saved me all right. If it hadn't been for him I'd have got a mauling. Alphonso gets these bad streaks just about every so often. That's the second dog he's killed for me."

Collins shook his head.

"Haven't got an Airedale," he said, and just then his eyes chanced to fall on Michael. "Try out the Irish terrier," he suggested. "They're like the Airedale in disposition. Pretty close cousins, at any rate."

"I pin my faith on the Airedale when it comes to lion dogs," the leopard man demurred.

"So's an Irish terrier a lion dog. Take that one there. Look at the size and weight of him. Also, take it from me, he's all spunk. He'll stand up to anything. Try him out. I'll lend him to you. If he makes good I'll sell him to you cheap. An Irish terrier for a leopard dog will be a novelty."

"If he gets fresh with them cats he'll find his finish," Johnny told Collins, as Michael was led away by the leopard man.

"Then, maybe, the stage will lose a star," Collins answered, with a shrug of shoulders. "But I'll have him off my chest anyway. When a dog gets a perpetual sour-ball like that he's finished. Never can do a thing with them. I've had them on my hands before."

* * * * *

And Michael went to make the acquaintance of Jack, the surviving Airedale, and to do his daily turn with the leopards. In the big spotted cats he recognized the hereditary enemy, and, even before he was thrust into the cage, his neck was all a-prickle as the skin nervously tightened and the hair uprose stiff-ended. It was a nervous moment for all concerned, the introduction of a new dog into the cage. The tow-headed leopard man, who was billed on the boards as Raoul Castlemon and was called Ralph by his intimates, was already in the cage. The Airedale was with him, while outside stood several men armed with iron bars and long steel forks. These weapons, ready for immediate use, were thrust between the bars as a menace to the leopards who were, very much against their wills, to be made to perform.

They resented Michael's intrusion on the instant, spitting, lashing their long tails, and crouching to spring. At the same instant the trainer spoke with sharp imperativeness and raised his whip, while the men on the outside lifted their irons and advanced them intimidatingly into the cage. And the leopards, bitter-wise of the taste of the iron, remained crouched, although they still spat and whipped their tails angrily.

Michael was no coward. He did not slink behind the man for protection. On the other hand, he was too sensible to rush to attack such formidable creatures. What he did do, with bristling neck-hair, was to stalk stiff-leggedly across the cage, turn about with his face toward the danger, and stalk stiffly back, coming to a pause alongside of Jack, who gave him a good-natured sniff of greeting.

"He's the stuff," the trainer muttered in a curiously tense voice. "They don't get his goat."

The situation was deservedly tense, and Ralph developed it with cautious care, making no abrupt movements, his eyes playing everywhere over dogs and leopards and the men outside with the prods and bars. He made the savage cats come out of their crouch and separate from one another. At his word of command, Jack walked about among them. Michael, on his own initiative, followed. And, like Jack, he walked very stiffly on his guard and very circumspectly.

One of them, Alphonso, spat suddenly at him. He did not startle, though his hair rippled erect and he bared his fangs in a silent snarl. At the same moment the nearest iron bar was shoved in threateningly close to Alphonso, who shifted his yellow eyes from Michael to the bar and back again and did not strike out.

The first day was the hardest. After that the leopards accepted Michael as they accepted Jack. No love was lost on either side, nor were friendly overtures ever offered. Michael was quick to realize that it was the men and dogs against the cats and that the men and does must stand together. Each day he spent from an hour to two hours in the cage, watching the rehearsing, with nothing for him and Jack to do save stand vigilantly on guard. Sometimes, when the leopards seemed better natured, Ralph even encouraged the two dogs to lie down. But, on bad mornings, he saw to it that they were ever ready to spring in between him and any possible attack.

For the rest of the time Michael shared his large pen with Jack. They were well cared for, as were all animals at Cedarwild, receiving frequent scrubbings and being kept clean of vermin. For a dog only three years old, Jack was very sedate. Either he had never learned to play or had already forgotten how. On the other hand, he was sweet-tempered and equable, and he did not resent the early shows of crustiness which Michael made. And Michael quickly ceased from being crusty and took pleasure in their quiet companionship. There were no demonstrations. They were content to lie awake by the hour, merely pleasantly aware of each other’s proximity.

Occasionally, Michael could hear Sara making a distant scene or sending out calls which he knew were for him. Once she got away from her keeper and located Michael coming out of the leopard cage. With a shrill squeal of joy she was upon him, clinging to him and chattering the hysterical tale of all her woes since they had been parted. The leopard man looked on tolerantly and let her have her few minutes. It was her keeper who tore her away in the end, cling as she would to Michael, screaming all the while like a harridan. When her hold was broken, she sprang at the man in a fury, and, before he could throttle her to subjection, sank her teeth into his thumb and wrist. All of which was provocative of great hilarity to the onlookers, while her squalls and cries excited the leopards to spitting and leaping against their bars. And, as she was borne away, she set up a soft wailing like that of a heart-broken child.

* * * * *

Although Michael proved a success with the leopards, Raoul Castlemon never bought him from Collins. One morning, several days later, the arena was vexed by uproar and commotion from the animal cages. The excitement, starting with revolver shots, was communicated everywhere. The various lions raised a great roaring, and the many dogs barked frantically. All tricks in the arena stopped, the animals temporarily unstrung and unable to continue. Several men, among them Collins, ran in the direction of the cages. Sara's keeper dropped her chain in order to follow.

"It's Alphonso — shillings to pence it is," Collins called to one of his assistants who was running beside him. "He'll get Ralph yet."

The affair was all but over and leaping to its culmination when Collins arrived. Castlemon was just being dragged out, and as Collins ran he could see the two men drop him to the ground so that they might slam the cage-door shut. Inside, in so wildly struggling a tangle on the floor that it was difficult to discern what animals composed it, were Alphonso, Jack, and Michael looked together. Men danced about outside, thrusting in with iron bars and trying to separate them. In the far end of the cage were the other two leopards, nursing their wounds and snarling and striking at the iron rods that kept them out of the combat.

Sara's arrival and what followed was a matter of seconds. Trailing her chain behind her, the little green monkey, the tailed female who knew love and hysteria and was remote cousin to human women, flashed up to the narrow cage-bars and squeezed through. Simultaneously the tangle underwent a violent upheaval. Flung out with such force as to be smashed against the near end of the cage, Michael fell to the floor, tried to spring up, but crumpled and sank down, his right shoulder streaming blood from a terrible mauling and crushing. To him Sara leaped, throwing her arms around him and mothering him up to her flat little hairy breast. She uttered solicitous cries, and, as Michael strove to rise on his ruined foreleg, scolded him with sharp gentleness and with her arms tried to hold him away from the battle. Also, in an interval, her eyes malevolent in her rage, she chattered piercing curses at Alphonso.

A crowbar, shoved into his side, distracted the big leopard. He struck at the weapon with his paw, and, when it was poked into him again, flung himself upon it, biting the naked iron with his teeth. With a second fling he was against the cage bars, with a single slash of paw ripping down the forearm of the man who had poked him. The crowbar was dropped as the man leaped away. Alphonso flung back on Jack, a sorry antagonist by this time, who could only pant and quiver where he lay in the welter of what was left of him.

Michael had managed to get up on his three legs and was striving to stumble forward against the restraining arms of Sara. The mad leopard was on the verge of springing upon them when deflected by another prod of the iron. This time he went straight at the man, fetching up against the cage-bars with such fierceness as to shake the structure.

More men began thrusting with more rods, but Alphonso was not to be balked. Sara saw him coming and screamed her shrillest and savagest at him. Collins snatched a revolver from one of the men.

“Don’t kill him!” Castlemon cried, seizing Collins’s arm.

The leopard man was in a bad way himself. One arm dangled helplessly at his side, while his eyes, filling with blood from a scalp wound, he wiped on the master-trainer’s shoulder so that he might see.

“He’s my property,” he protested. “And he’s worth a hundred sick monkeys and sour-balled terriers. Anyway, we’ll get them out all right. Give me a chance. — Somebody mop my eyes out, please. I can’t see. I’ve used up my blank cartridges. Has anybody any blanks?”

One moment Sara would interpose her body between Michael and the leopard, which was still being delayed by the prodding irons; and the next moment she would turn to screech at the fanged cat is if by very advertisement of her malignancy she might intimidate him into keeping back.

Michael, dragging her with him, growling and bristling, staggered forward a couple of three-legged steps, gave at the ruined shoulder, and collapsed. And then Sara did the great deed. With one last scream of utmost fury, she sprang full into the face of the monstrous cat, tearing and scratching with hands and feet, her mouth buried into the roots of one of its stubby ears. The astounded leopard upreared, with his forepaws striking and ripping at the little demon that would not let go.

The fight and the life in the little green monkey lasted a short ten seconds. But this was sufficient for Collins to get the door ajar and with a quick clutch on Michael’s hind-leg jerk him out and to the ground.

CHAPTER XXX

No rough-and-ready surgery of the Del Mar sort obtained at Cedarwild, else Michael would not have lived. A real surgeon, skilful and audacious, came very close to vivisecting him as he radically repaired the ruin of a shoulder, doing things he would not have dared with a human but which proved to be correct for Michael.

"He'll always be lame," the surgeon said, wiping his hands and gazing down at Michael, who lay, for the most part of him, a motionless prisoner set in plaster of Paris. "All the healing, and there's plenty of it, will have to be by first intention. If his temperature shoots up we'll have to put him out of his misery. What's he worth?"

"He has no tricks," Collins answered. "Possibly fifty dollars, and certainly not that now. Lame dogs are not worth teaching tricks to."

Time was to prove both men wrong. Michael was not destined to permanent lameness, although in after-years his shoulder was always tender, and, on occasion, when the weather was damp, he was compelled to ease it with a slight limp. On the other hand, he was destined to appreciate to a great price and to become the star performer Harry Del Mar had predicted of him.

In the meantime he lay for many weary days in the plaster and abstained from raising a dangerous temperature. The care taken of him was excellent. But not out of love and affection was it given. It was merely a part of the system at Cedarwild which made the institution such a success. When he was taken out of the plaster, he was still denied that instinctive pleasure which all animals take in licking their wounds, for shrewdly arranged bandages were wrapped and buckled on him. And when they were finally removed, there were no wounds to lick; though deep in the shoulder was a pain that required months in which to die out.

Harris Collins bothered him no more with trying to teach him tricks, and, one day, loaned him as a filler-in to a man and woman who had lost three of their dog-troupe by pneumonia.

"If he makes out you can have him for twenty dollars," Collins told the man, Wilton Davis.

"And if he croaks?" Davis queried.

Collins shrugged his shoulders. “I won’t sit up nights worrying about him. He’s unteachable.”

And when Michael departed from Cedarwild in a crate on an express wagon, he might well have never returned, for Wilton Davis was notorious among trained-animal men for his cruelty to dogs. Some care he might take of a particular dog with a particularly valuable trick, but mere fillers-in came too cheaply. They cost from three to five dollars apiece. Worse than that, so far as he was concerned, Michael had cost nothing. And if he died it meant nothing to Davis except the trouble of finding another dog.

The first stage of Michael’s new adventure involved no unusual hardship, despite the fact that he was so cramped in his crate that he could not stand up and that the jolting and handling of the crate sent countless twinges of pain shooting through his shoulder. The journey was only to Brooklyn, where he was duly delivered to a second-rate theatre, Wilton Davis being so indifferent a second-rate animal man that he could never succeed in getting time with the big circuits.

The hardship of the cramped crate began after Michael had been carried into a big room above the stage and deposited with nearly a score of similarly crated dogs. A sorry lot they were, all of them scrubs and most of them spirit-broken and miserable. Several had bad sores on their heads from being knocked about by Davis. No care was taken of these sores, and they were not improved by the whitening that was put on them for concealment whenever they performed. Some of them howled lamentably at times, and every little while, as if it were all that remained for them to do in their narrow cells, all of them would break out into barking.

Michael was the only one who did not join in these choruses. Long since, as one feature of his developing moroseness, he had ceased from barking. He had become too unsociable for any such demonstrations; nor did he pattern after the example of some of the sourer-tempered dogs in the room, who were for ever bickering and snarling through the slats of their cages. In fact, Michael’s sourness of temper had become too profound even for quarrelling. All he desired was to be let alone, and of this he had a surfeit for the first forty-eight hours.

Wilton Davis had assembled his troupe ahead of time, so that the change of programme was five days away. Having taken advantage of this to go to see his wife’s people over in New Jersey, he had hired one of the stage-hands to feed and water his dogs. This the stage-hand would have done, had he not had the misfortune to get into an altercation with a barkeeper which culminated in a fractured skull and an ambulance ride to the receiving hospital. To make the situation perfect for what followed, the theatre was closed for three days in order to make certain alterations demanded by the Fire Commissioners.

No one came near the room, and after several hours Michael grew aware of hunger and thirst. The time passed, and the desire for food was supplanted by the desire for water. By nightfall the barking and yelping became continuous, changing through the long night hours to whimpering and whining. Michael alone made no sound, suffering dumbly in the bedlam of misery.

Morning of the second day dawned; the slow hours dragged by to the second night; and the darkness of the second night drew down upon a scene behind the scenes, sufficient of itself to condemn all trained-animal acts in all theatres and show-tents of all the world. Whether Michael dreamed or was in semi-delirium, there is no telling; but, whichever it was, he lived most of his past life over again. Again he played as a puppy on the broad verandas of *Mister* Haggin’s plantation bungalow at Meringe; or, with Jerry, stalked the edges of the jungle down by the river-bank to spy upon the crocodiles; or, learning from *Mister* Haggin and Bob, and patterning after Biddy and Terrence, to consider black men as lesser and despised gods who must for ever be kept strictly in their places.

On the schooner *Eugénie* he sailed with Captain Kellar, his second master, and on the beach at Tulagi lost his heart to Steward of the magic fingers and sailed away with him and Kwaque on the steamer *Makambo*. Steward was most in his visions, against a hazy background of vessels, and of individuals like the Ancient Mariner, Simon Nishikanta, Grimshaw, Captain Doane, and little old Ah Moy. Nor least of all did Scraps appear, and Cocky, the valiant-hearted little fluff of life gallantly bearing himself through his brief adventure in the sun. And it would seem to Michael that on one side, clinging to him, Cocky talked farrago in his ear, and on the other side Sara clung to him and chattered an interminable and incommunicable tale. And then, deep about the roots of his ears would seem to prod the magic, caressing fingers of Steward the beloved.

“I just don’t I have no luck,” Wilton Davis mourned, gazing about at his dogs, the air still vibrating with the string of oaths he had at first ripped out.

"That comes of trusting a drunken stage-hand," his wife remarked placidly. "I wouldn't be surprised if half of them died on us now."

"Well, this is no time for talk," Davis snarled, proceeding to take off his coat. "Get busy, my love, and learn the worst. Water's what they need. I'll give them a tub of it."

Bucketful by bucketful, from the tap at the sink in the corner, he filled a large galvanized-iron tub. At sound of the running water the dogs began whimpering and yelping and moaning. Some tried to lick his hands with their swollen tongues as he dragged them roughly out of their cages. The weaker ones crawled and bellied toward the tub, and were over-trod by the stronger ones. There was not room for all, and the stronger ones drank first, with much fighting and squabbling and slashing of fangs. Into the foremost of this was Michael, slashing and being slashed, but managing to get hasty gulps of the life-saving fluid. Davis danced about among them, kicking right and left, so that all might have a chance. His wife took a hand, laying about her with a mop. It was a pandemonium of pain, for, their parched throats softened by the water, they were again able to yelp and cry out loudly all their hurt and woe.

Several were too weak to get to the water, so it was carried to them and doused and splashed into their mouths. It seemed that they would never be satisfied. They lay in collapse all about the room, but every little while one or another would crawl over to the tub and try to drink more. In the meantime Davis had started a fire and filled a caldron with potatoes.

"The place stinks like a den of skunks," Mrs. Davis observed, pausing from dabbing the end of her nose with a powder-puff. "Dearest, we'll just have to wash them."

"All right, sweetheart," her husband agreed. "And the quicker the better. We can get through with it while the potatoes are boiling and cooling. I'll scrub them and you dry them. Remember that pneumonia, and do it thoroughly."

It was quick, rough bathing. Reaching out for the dogs nearest him, he flung them in turn into the tub from which they had drunk. When they were frightened, or when they objected in any way, he rapped them on the head with the scrubbing brush or the bar of yellow laundry soap with which he was lathering them. Several minutes sufficed for a dog.

"Drink, damn you, drink — have some more," he would say, as he shoved their heads down and under the dirty, soapy water.

He seemed to hold them responsible for their horrible condition, to look upon their filthiness as a personal affront.

Michael yielded to being flung into the tub. He recognized that baths were necessary and compulsory, although they were administered in much better fashion at Cedarwild, while Kwaque and Steward had made a sort of love function of it when they bathed him. So he did his best to endure the scrubbing, and all might have been well had not Davis soused him under. Michael jerked his head up with a warning growl. Davis suspended half-way the blow he was delivering with the heavy brush, and emitted a low whistle of surprise.

"Hello!" he said. "And look who's here! — Lovey, this is the Irish terrier I got from Collins. He's no good. Collins said so. Just a fill-in. — Get out!" he commanded Michael. "That's all you get now, Mr. Fresh Dog. But take it from me pretty soon you'll be getting it fast enough to make you dizzy."

While the potatoes were cooling, Mrs. Davis kept the hungry dogs warned away by sharp cries. Michael lay down sullenly to one side, and took no part in the rush for the trough when permission was given. Again Davis danced among them, kicking away the stronger and the more eager.

"If they get to fighting after all we've done for them, kick in their ribs, lovey," he told his wife.

"There! You would, would you?" — this to a large black dog, accompanied by a savage kick in the side. The animal yelped its pain as it fled away, and, from a safe distance, looked on piteously at the steaming food.

"Well, after this they can't say I don't never give my dogs a bath," Davis remarked from the sink, where he was rinsing his arms. "What d'ye say we call it a day's work, my dear?" Mrs. Davis nodded agreement. "We can rehearse them to-morrow and next day. That will be plenty of time. I'll run in to-night and boil them some bran. They'll need an extra meal after fasting two days."

The potatoes finished, the dogs were put back in their cages for another twenty-four hours of close confinement. Water was poured into their drinking-tins, and, in the evening, still in their cages, they were served liberally with boiled bran and dog-biscuit. This was Michael's first food, for he had sulkily refused to go near the potatoes.

* * * * *

The rehearsing took place on the stage, and for Michael trouble came at the very start. The drop-curtain was supposed to go up and reveal the twenty dogs seated on chairs in a semi-circle. Because, while they were being thus arranged, the preceding turn was taking place in front of the drop-curtain, it was imperative that rigid silence should be kept. Next, when the curtain rose on full stage, the dogs were trained to make a great barking.

As a filler-in, Michael had nothing to do but sit on a chair. But he had to get upon the chair, first, and when Davis so ordered him he accompanied the order with a clout on the side of the head. Michael growled warningly.

"Oh, ho, eh?" the man sneered. "It's Fresh Dog looking for trouble. Well, you might as well get it over with now so your name can be changed to Good Dog. — My dear, just keep the rest of them in order while I teach Fresh Dog lesson number one."

Of the beating that followed, the least said the better. Michael put up a fight that was hopeless, and was thoroughly beaten in return. Bruised and bleeding, he sat on the chair, taking no part in the performance and only sullenly engendering a deeper and bitterer sourness. To keep silent before the curtain went up was no hardship for him. But when the curtain did go up, he declined to join the rest of the dogs in their frantic barking and yelping.

The dogs, sometimes alone and sometimes in couples and trios and groups, left their chairs at command and performed the conventional dog tricks such as walking on hind-legs, hopping, limping, waltzing, and throwing somersaults. Wilton Davis's temper was short and his hand heavy throughout the rehearsal, as the shrill yelps of pain from the lagging and stupid attested.

In all, during that day and the forenoon of the next, three long rehearsals took place. Michael's troubles ceased for the time being. At command, he silently got on the chair and silently sat there. "Which shows, dearest, what a bit of the stick will do," Davis bragged to his wife. Nor did the pair of them dream of the scandalizing part Michael was going to play in their first performance.

Behind the curtain all was ready on the full stage. The dogs sat on their chairs in abject silence with Davis and his wife menacing them to remain silent, while, in front of the curtain, Dick and Daisy Bell delighted the matinée audience with their singing and dancing. And all went well, and no one in the audience would have suspected the full stage of dogs behind the curtain had not Dick and Daisy, accompanied by the orchestra, begun to sing “Roll Me Down to Rio.”

Michael could not help it. Even as Kwaque had long before mastered him by the jews’ harp, and Steward by love, and Harry Del Mar by the harmonica, so now was he mastered by the strains of the orchestra and the voices of the man and woman lifting the old familiar rhythm, taught him by Steward, of “Roll Me Down to Rio.” Despite himself, despite his sullenness, the forces compulsive opened his jaws and set all his throat vibrating in accompaniment.

From beyond the curtain came a titter of children and women that grew into a roar and drowned out the voices of Dick and Daisy. Wilton Davis cursed unbelievably as he sprang down the stage to Michael. But Michael howled on, and the audience laughed on. Michael was still howling when the short club smote him. The shock and hurt of it made him break off and yelp an involuntary cry of pain.

“Knock his block off, dearest,” Mrs. Davis counselled.

And then ensued battle royal. Davis struck shrewd blows that could be heard, as were heard the snarls and growls of Michael. The audience, under the sway of the comic, ignored Dick and Daisy Bell. Their turn was spoiled. The Davis turn was “queered,” as Wilton impressed it. Michael’s block was knocked off within the meaning of the term. And the audience, on the other side of the curtain, was edified and delighted.

Dick and Daisy could not continue. The audience wanted what was behind the curtain, not in front of it. Michael was taken off stage thoroughly throttled by one of the stage-hands, and the curtain arose on the full set — full, save for the one empty chair. The boys in the audience first realized the connection between the empty chair and the previous uproar, and began clamouring for the absent dog. The audience took up the cry, the dogs barked more excitedly, and five minutes of hilarity delayed the turn which, when at last started, was marked by rustiness and erraticness on the part of the dogs and by great peevishness on the part of Wilton Davis.

“Never mind, honey,” his imperturbable wife assured him in a stage whisper. “We’ll just ditch that dog and get a regular one. And, anyway, we’ve put one over on that Daisy Bell. I ain’t told you yet what she said about me, only last week, to some of my friends.”

Several minutes later, still on the stage and handling his animals, the husband managed a chance to mutter to his wife: "It's the dog. It's him I'm after. I'm going to lay him out."

"Yes, dearest," she agreed.

The curtain down, with a gleeful audience in front and with the dogs back in the room over the stage, Wilton Davis descended to look for Michael, who, instead of cowering in some corner, stood between the legs of the stage-hand, quivering yet from his mishandling and threatening to fight as hard as ever if attacked. On his way, Davis encountered the song-and-dance couple. The woman was in a tearful rage, the man in a dry one.

"You're a peach of a dog man, you are," he announced belligerently. "Here's where you get yours."

"You keep away from me, or I'll lay you out," Wilton Davis responded desperately, brandishing a short iron bar in his right hand. "Besides, you just wait if you want to, and I'll lay you out afterward. But first of all I'm going to lay out that dog. Come on along and see — damn him! How was I to know? He was a new one. He never peeped in rehearsal. How was I to know he was going to yap when we arranged the set behind you?"

"You've raised hell," the manager of the theatre greeted Davis, as the latter, trailed by Dick Bell, came upon Michael bristling from between the legs of the stage-hand.

"Nothing to what I'm going to raise," Davis retorted, shortening his grip on the iron bar and raising it. "I'm going to kill 'm. I'm going to beat the life out of him. You just watch."

Michael snarled acknowledgment of the threat, crouched to spring, and kept his eyes on the iron weapon.

"I just guess you ain't goin' to do anything of the sort," the stage-hand assured Davis.

"It's my property," the latter asserted with an air of legal convincingness.

"And against it I'm goin' to stack up my common sense," was the stage-hand's reply. "You tap him once, and see what you'll get. Dogs is dogs, and men is men, but I'm damned if I know what you are. You can't pull off rough stuff on that dog. First time he was on a stage in his life, after being starved and thirsted for two days. Oh, I know, Mr. Manager."

"If you kill the dog it'll cost you a dollar to the garbage man to get rid of the carcass," the manager took up.

"I'll pay it gladly," Davis said, again lifting the iron bar. "I've got some come-back, ain't I?"

"You animal guys make me sick," the stage-hand uttered. "You just make me draw the line somewheres. And here it is: you tap him once with that baby crowbar, and I'll tap you hard enough to lose me my job and to send you to hospital."

"Now look here, Jackson . . . " the manager began threateningly.

"You can't say nothin' to me," was the retort. "My mind's made up. If that cheap guy lays a finger on that dog I'm just sure goin' to lose my job. I'm gettin tired anyway of seein' these skates beatin' up their animals. They've made me sick clean through."

The manager looked to Davis and shrugged his shoulders helplessly.

"There's no use pulling off a rough-house," he counselled. "I don't want to lose Jackson and he'll put you into hospital if he ever gets started. Send the dog back where you got him. Your wife's told me about him. Stick him into a box and send him back collect. Collins won't mind. He'll take the singing out of him and work him into something."

Davis, with another glance at the truculent Jackson, wavered.

"I'll tell you what," the manager went on persuasively. "Jackson will attend to the whole thing, box him up, ship him, everything — won't you, Jackson?"

The stage-hand nodded curtly, then reached down and gently caressed Michael's bruised head.

"Well," Davis gave in, turning on his heel, "they can make fools of themselves over dogs, them that wants to. But when they've been in the business as long as I have . . . "

CHAPTER XXXI

A post card from Davis to Collins explained the reasons for Michael's return. "He sings too much to suit my fancy," was Davis's way of putting it, thereby unwittingly giving the clue to what Collins had vainly sought, and which Collins as unwittingly failed to grasp. As he told Johnny:

"From the looks of the beatings he's got no wonder he's been singing. That's the trouble with these animal people. They don't know how to take care of their property. They hammer its head off and get grouched because it ain't an angel of obedience. — Put him away, Johnny. Wash him clean, and put on the regular dressing wherever the skin's broken. I give him up myself, but I'll find some place for him in the next bunch of dogs."

Two weeks later, by sheerest accident, Harris Collins made the discovery for himself of what Michael was good for. In a spare moment in the arena, he had sent for him to be tried out by a dog man who needed several fillers-in. Beyond what he knew, such as at command to stand up, to lie down, to come here and go there, Michael had done nothing. He had refused to learn the most elementary things a show-dog should know, and Collins had left him to go over to another part of the arena where a monkey band, on a sort of mimic stage, was being arranged and broken in.

Frightened and mutinous, nevertheless the monkeys were compelled to perform by being tied to their seats and instruments and by being pulled and jerked from off stage by wires fastened to their bodies. The leader of the orchestra, an irascible elderly monkey, sat on a revolving stool to which he was securely attached. When poked from off the stage by means of long poles, he flew into ecstasies of rage. At the same time, by a rope arrangement, his chair was whirled around and around. To an audience the effect would be that he was angered by the blunders of his fellow-musicians. And to an audience such anger would be highly ludicrous. As Collins said:

"A monkey band is always a winner. It fetches the laugh, and the money's in the laugh. Humans just have to laugh at monkeys because they're so similar and because the human has the advantage and feels himself superior. Suppose we're walking along the street, you and me, and you slip and fall down. Of course I laugh. That's because I'm superior to you. I didn't fall down. Same thing if your hat blows off. I laugh while you chase it down the street. I'm superior. My hat's still on my head. Same thing with the monkey band. All the fool things of it make us feel so superior. We don't see ourselves as foolish. That's why we pay to see the monkeys behave foolish."

It was scarcely a matter of training the monkeys. Rather was it the training of the men who operated the concealed mechanisms that made the monkeys perform. To this Harris Collins was devoting his effort.

"There isn't any reason why you fellows can't make them play a real tune. It's up to you, just according to how you pull the wires. Come on. It's worth going in for. Let's try something you all know. And remember, the regular orchestra will always help you out. Now, what do you all know? Something simple, and something the audience'll know, too?"

He became absorbed in trying out the idea, and even borrowed a circus rider whose act was to play the violin while standing on the back of a galloping horse and to throw somersaults on such precarious platform while still playing the violin. This man he got merely to play simple airs in slow time, so that the assistants could keep the time and the air and pull the wires accordingly.

"Of course, if you make a howling mistake," Collins told them, "that's when you all pull the wires like mad and poke the leader and whirl him around. That always brings down the house. They think he's got a real musical ear and is mad at his orchestra for the discord."

In the midst of the work, Johnny and Michael came along.

"That guy says he wouldn't take him for a gift," Johnny reported to his employer.

"All right, all right, put him back in the kennels," Collins ordered hurriedly. — "Now, you fellows, all ready! 'Home, Sweet Home!' Go to it, Fisher! Now keep the time the rest of you! . . . That's it. With a full orchestra you're making motions like the tune. — Faster, you, Simmons. You drag behind all the time."

And the accident happened. Johnny, instead of immediately obeying the order and taking Michael back to the kennels, lingered in the hope of seeing the orchestra leader whirled chattering around on his stool. The violinist, within a yard of where Michael sat squatted on his haunches, played the notes of "Home, Sweet Home" with loud slow exactitude and emphasis.

And Michael could not help it. No more could he help it than could he help responding with a snarl when threatened by a club; no more could he help it than when he had spoiled the turn of Dick and Daisy Bell when swept by the strains of “Roll Me Down to Rio”; no more could he help it than could Jerry, on the deck of the *Ariel*, help singing when Villa Kennan put her arms around him, smothered him deliciously in her cloud of hair, and sang his memory back into time and the fellowship of the ancient pack. As with Jerry, was it with Michael. Music was a drug of dream. He, too, remembered the lost pack and sought it, seeing the bare hills of snow and the stars glimmering overhead through the frosty darkness of night, hearing the faint answering howls from other hills as the pack assembled. Lost the pack was, through the thousands of years Michael’s ancestors had lived by the fires of men; yet remembered always it was when the magic of rhythm poured through him and flooded his being with visions and sensations of that Otherwhere which in his own life he had never known.

Compounded with the waking dream of Otherwhere, was the memory of Steward and the love of Steward, with whom he had learned to sing the very series of notes that now were being reproduced by the circus-rider violinist. And Michael’s jaw dropped down, his throat vibrated, his forefeet made restless little movements as if in the body he were running, as truly he was running in the mind, back to Steward, back through all the ages to the lost pack, and with the shadowy lost pack itself across the snowy wastes and through the forest aisles in the hunt of the meat.

The spectral forms of the lost pack were all about him as he sang and ran in open-eyed dream; the violinist paused in surprise; the men poked the monkey leader of the monkey orchestra and whirled him about wildly raging on his revolving stool; and Johnny laughed. But Harris Collins took note. He had heard Michael accurately follow the air. He had heard him sing — not merely howl, but *sing*.

Silence fell. The monkey leader ceased revolving and chattering. The men who had poked him held poles and wires suspended in their hands. The rest of the monkey orchestra merely shivered in apprehension of what next atrocity should be perpetrated. The violinist stared. Johnny still heaved from his laughter. But Harris Collins pondered, scratched his head, and continued to ponder.

“You can’t tell me . . . ” he began vaguely. “I know it. I heard it. That dog carried the tune. Didn’t he now? I leave it to all of you. Didn’t he? The damned dog sang. I’ll stake my life on it. — Hold on, you fellows; rest the monkeys off. This is worth following up. — Mr. Violinist, play that over again, now, ‘Home, Sweet Home,’ — let her go. Press her strong, and loud, and slow. — Now watch, all of you, and listen, and tell me if I’m crazy, or if that dog ain’t carrying the tune. — There! What d’ye call it? Ain’t it?”

There was no discussion. Michael’s jaw dropped and his forefeet began their restless lifting after several measures had been played. And Harris Collins stepped close to him and sang with him and in accord.

“Harry Del Mar was right when he said that dog was the limit and sold his troupe. He knew. The dog’s a dog Caruso. No howling chorus of mutts such as Kingman used to carry around with him, but a real singer, a soloist. No wonder he wouldn’t learn tricks. He had his specially all the time. And just to think of it! I as good as gave him away to that dog-killing Wilton Davis. Only he came back. — Johnny, take extra care of him after this. Bring him up to the house this afternoon, and I’ll give him a real try-out. My daughter plays the violin. We’ll see what music he’ll sing with her. There’s a mint of money in him, take it from me.”

* * * * *

Thus was Michael discovered. The afternoon’s try-out was partially successful. After vainly attempting strange music on him, Collins found that he could sing, and would sing, “God Save the King” and “Sweet Bye and Bye.” Many hours of many days were spent in the quest. Vainly he tried to teach Michael new airs. Michael put no heart of love in the effort and sullenly abstained. But whenever one of the songs he had learned from Steward was played, he responded. He could not help responding. The magic was stronger than he. In the end, Collins discovered five of the six songs he knew: “God Save the King,” “Sweet Bye and Bye,” “Lead, Kindly Light,” “Home, Sweet Home,” and “Roll Me Down to Rio.” Michael never sang “Shenandoah,” because Collins and Collins’s daughter did not know the old sea-chanty and therefore were unable to suggest it to him.

“Five songs are enough, if he won’t never learn another note,” Collins concluded. “They’ll make him a bill-topper anywhere. There’s a mint in him. Hang me if I wouldn’t take him out on the road myself if only I was young and footloose.”

CHAPTER XXXII

And so Michael was ultimately sold to one Jacob Henderson for two thousand dollars. “And I’m giving him away to you at that,” said Collins. “If you don’t refuse five thousand for him before six months, I don’t know anything about the show game. He’ll skin that last arithmetic dog of yours to a finish and you won’t have to show yourself and work every minute of the turn. And if you don’t insure him for fifty thousand as soon as he’s made good you’ll be a fool. Why, I wouldn’t ask anything better, if I was young and footloose, than to take him out on the road myself.”

Henderson proved totally different from any master Michael had had. The man was a neutral sort of creature. He was neither good nor evil. He neither drank, smoked, nor swore; nor did he go to church or belong to the Y.M.C.A. He was a vegetarian without being a bigoted one, liked moving pictures when they were concerned with travel, and spent most of his spare time in reading Swedenborg. He had no temper whatever. Nobody had ever witnessed anger in him, and all said he had the patience of Job. He was even timid of policemen, freight agents, and conductors, though he was not afraid of them. He was not afraid of anything, any more than was he enamoured of anything save Swedenborg. He was as colourless of character as the neutral-coloured clothes he wore, as the neutral-coloured hair that sprawled upon his crown, as the neutral-coloured eyes with which he observed the world. Nor was he a fool any more than was he a wise man or a scholar. He gave little to life, asked little of life, and, in the show business, was a recluse in the very heart of life.

Michael neither liked nor disliked him, but, rather, merely accepted him. They travelled the United States over together, and they never had a quarrel. Not once did Henderson raise his voice sharply to Michael, and not once did Michael snarl a warning at him. They simply endured together, existed together, because the currents of life had drifted them together. Of course, there was no heart-bond between them. Henderson was master. Michael was Henderson’s chattel. Michael was as dead to him as he was himself dead to all things.

Yet Jacob Henderson was fair and square, business-like and methodical. Once each day, when not travelling on the interminable trains, he gave Michael a thorough bath and thoroughly dried him afterward. He was never harsh nor hasty in the bathing. Michael never was aware whether he liked or disliked the bathing function. It was all one, part of his own fate in the world as it was part of Henderson's fate to bathe him every so often.

Michael's own work was tolerably easy, though monotonous. Leaving out the eternal travelling, the never-ending jumps from town to town and from city to city, he appeared on the stage once each night for seven nights in the week and for two afternoon performances in the week. The curtain went up, leaving him alone on the stage in the full set that befitted a bill-topper. Henderson stood in the wings, unseen by the audience, and looked on. The orchestra played four of the pieces Michael had been taught by Steward, and Michael sang them, for his modulated howling was truly singing. He never responded to more than one encore, which was always "Home, Sweet Home." After that, while the audience clapped and stamped its approval and delight of the dog Caruso, Jacob Henderson would appear on the stage, bowing and smiling in stereotyped gladness and gratefulness, rest his right hand on Michael's shoulders with a play-acted assumption of comradeliness, whereupon both Henderson and Michael would bow ere the final curtain went down.

And yet Michael was a prisoner, a life-prisoner. Fed well, bathed well, exercised well, he never knew a moment of freedom. When travelling, days and nights he spent in the cage, which, however, was generous enough to allow him to stand at full height and to turn around without too uncomfortable squirming. Sometimes, in hotels in country towns, out of the crate he shared Henderson's room with him. Otherwise, unless other animals were hewing on the same circuit time, he had, outside his cage, the freedom of the animal room attached to the particular theatre where he performed for from three days to a week.

But there was never a chance, never a moment, when he might run free of a cage about him, of the walls of a room restricting him, of a chain shackled to the collar about his throat. In good weather, in the afternoons, Henderson often took him for a walk. But always it was at the end of a chain. And almost always the way led to some park, where Henderson fastened the other end of the chain to the bench on which he sat and browsed Swedenborg. Not one act of free agency was left to Michael. Other dogs ran free, playing with one another, or behaving bellicosely. If they approached him for purposes of investigation or acquaintance, Henderson invariably ceased from his reading long enough to drive them away.

A life prisoner to a lifeless gaoler, life was all grey to Michael. His moroseness changed to a deep-seated melancholy. He ceased to be interested in life and in the freedom of life. Not that he regarded the play of life about him with a jaundiced eye, but, rather, that his eyes became unseeing. Debarred from life, he ignored life. He permitted himself to become a sheer puppet slave, eating, taking his baths, travelling in his cage, performing regularly, and sleeping much.

He had pride — the pride of the thoroughbred; the pride of the North American Indian enslaved on the plantations of the West Indies who died uncomplaining and unbroken. So Michael. He submitted to the cage and the iron of the chain because they were too strong for his muscles and teeth. He did his slave-task of performance and rendered obedience to Jacob Henderson; but he neither loved nor feared that master. And because of this his spirit turned in on itself. He slept much, brooded much, and suffered unprotestingly a great loneliness. Had Henderson made a bid for his heart, he would surely have responded; but Henderson had a heart only for the fantastic mental gyrations of Swedenborg, and merely made his living out of Michael.

Sometimes there were hardships. Michael accepted them. Especially hard did he find railroad travel in winter-time, when, on occasion, fresh from the last night's performance in a town, he remained for hours in his crate on a truck waiting for the train that would take him to the next town of performance. There was a night on a station platform in Minnesota, when two dogs of a troupe, on the next truck to his, froze to death. He was himself well frosted, and the cold bit abominably into his shoulder wounded by the leopard; but a better constitution and better general care of him enabled him to survive.

Compared with other show animals, he was well treated. And much of the ill-treatment accorded other animals on the same turn with him he did not comprehend or guess. One turn, with which he played for three months, was a scandal amongst all vaudeville performers. Even the hardiest of them heartily disliked the turn and the man, although Duckworth, and Duckworth's Trained Cats and Rats, were an invariable popular success.

"Trained cats!" sniffed dainty little Pearl La Pearle, the bicyclist. "Crushed cats, that's what they are. All the cat has been beaten out of their blood, and they've become rats. You can't tell me. I know."

"Trained rats!" Manuel Fonseca, the contortionist, exploded in the bar-room of the Hotel Annandale, after refusing to drink with Duckworth. "Doped rats, believe me. Why don't they jump off when they crawl along the tight rope with a cat in front and a cat behind? Because they ain't got the life in 'm to jump. They're doped, straight doped when they're fresh, and starved afterward so as to making a saving on the dope. They never are fed. You can't tell me. I know. Else why does he use up anywhere to forty or fifty rats a week! I know his express shipments, when he can't buy 'm in the towns."

"My Gawd!" protested Miss Merle Merryweather, the Accordion Girl, who looked like sixteen on the stage, but who, in private life among her grand-children, acknowledged forty-eight. "My Gawd, how the public can fall for it gets my honest-to-Gawd goat. I looked myself yesterday morning early. Out of thirty rats there were seven dead, — starved to death. He never feeds them. They're dying rats, dying of starvation, when they crawl along that rope. That's why they crawl. If they had a bit of bread and cheese in their tummies they'd jump and run to get away from the cats. They're dying, they're dying right there on the rope, trying to crawl as a dying man would try to crawl away from a tiger that was eating him. And my Gawd! The bonehead audience sits there and applauds the show as an educational act!"

But the audience! "Wonderful things kindness will do with animals," said a member of one, a banker and a deacon. "Even human love can be taught to them by kindness. The cat and the rat have been enemies since the world began. Yet here, to-night, we have seen them doing highly trained feats together, and neither a cat committed one hostile or overt act against a rat, nor ever a rat showed it was afraid of a cat. Human kindness! The power of human kindness!"

"The lion and the lamb," said another. "We have it that when the millennium comes the lion and the lamb will lie down together — and outside each other, my dear, outside each other. And this is a forecast, a proving up, by man, ahead of the day. Cats and rats! Think of it. And it shows conclusively the power of kindness. I shall see to it at once that we get pets for our own children, our palm branches. They shall learn kindness early, to the dog, the cat, yes, even the rat, and the pretty linnet in its cage."

"But," said his dear, beside him, "you remember what Blake said:

"'A Robin Redbreast in a cage
Puts all heaven in a rage.'"

"Ah — but not when it is treated truly with kindness, my dear. I shall immediately order some rabbits, and a canary or two, and — what sort of a dog would you prefer our dear little ones to have to play with, my sweet?"

And his dear looked at him in all his imperturbable, complacent self-consciousness of kindness, and saw herself the little rural school-teacher who, with Ella Wheeler Wilcox and Lord Byron as her idols, and with the dream of herself writing "Poems of Passion," had come up to Topeka Town to be beaten by the game into marrying the solid, substantial business man beside her, who enjoyed delight in the spectacle of cats and rats walking the tight-rope in amity, and who was blissfully unaware that she was the Robin Redbreast in a cage that put all heaven in a rage.

"The rats are bad enough," said Miss Merle Merryweather. "But look how he uses up the cats. He's had three die on him in the last two weeks to my certain knowledge. They're only alley-cats, but they've got feelings. It's that boxing match that does for them."

The boxing match, sure always of a great hand from the audience, invariably concluded Duckworth's turn. Two cats, with small boxing-gloves, were put on a table for a friendly bout. Naturally, the cats that performed with the rats were too cowed for this. It was the fresh cats he used, the ones with spunk and spirit . . . until they lost all spunk and spirit or sickened and died. To the audience it was a side-splitting, playful encounter between four-legged creatures who thus displayed a ridiculous resemblance to superior, two-legged man. But it was not playful to the cats. They were always excited into starting a real fight with each other off stage just before they were brought on. In the blows they struck were anger and pain and bewilderment and fear. And the gloves just would come off, so that they were ripping and tearing at each other, biting as well as making the fur fly, like furies, when the curtain went down. In the eyes of the audience this apparent impromptu was always the ultimate scream, and the laughter and applause would compel the curtain up again to reveal Duckworth and an assistant stage-hand, as if caught by surprise, fanning the two belligerents with towels.

But the cats themselves were so continually torn and scratched that the wounds never had a chance to heal and became infected until they were a mass of sores. On occasion they died, or, when they had become too abjectly spiritless to attack even a rat, were set to work on the tight-rope with the doped starved rats that were too near dead to run away from them. And, as Miss Merle Merryweather said: the bonehead audiences, tickled to death, applauded Duckworth's Trained Cats and Rats as an educational act!

A big chimpanzee that covered one of the circuits with Michael had an antipathy for clothes. Like a horse that fights the putting on of the bridle, and, after it is on, takes no further notice of it, so the big chimpanzee fought the putting on the clothes. Once on, it was ready to go out on the stage and through its turn. But the rub was in putting on the clothes. It took the owner and two stage-hands, pulling him up to a ring in the wall and throttling him, to dress him — and this, despite the fact that the owner had long since knocked out his incisors.

All this cruelty Michael sensed without knowing. And he accepted it as the way of life, as he accepted the daylight and the dark, the bite of the frost on bleak and windy station platforms, the mysterious land of Otherwhere that he knew in dreams and song, the equally mysterious Nothingness into which had vanished Meringe Plantation and ships and oceans and men and Steward.

CHAPTER XXXIII

For two years Michael sang his way over the United States, to fame for himself and to fortune for Jacob Henderson. There was never any time off. So great was his success, that Henderson refused flattering offers to cross the Atlantic to show in Europe. But off-time did come to Michael when Henderson fell ill of typhoid in Chicago.

It was a three-months' vacation for Michael, who, well treated but still a prisoner, spent it in a caged kennel in Mulcachy's Animal Home. Mulcachy, one of Harris Collins's brightest graduates, had emulated his master by setting up in business in Chicago, where he ran everything with the same rigid cleanliness, sanitation, and scientific cruelty. Michael received nothing but the excellent food and the cleanliness; but, a solitary and brooding prisoner in his cage, he could not help but sense the atmosphere of pain and terror about him of the animals being broken for the delight of men.

Mulcachy had originated aphorisms of his own which he continually enunciated, among which were:

"Take it from me, when an animal won't give way to pain, it can't be broke. Pain is the only school-teacher."

"Just as you got to take the buck out of a broncho, you've got to take the bite out of a lion."

"You can't break animals with a feather duster. The thicker the skull the thicker the crowbar."

"They'll always beat you in argument. First thing is to club the argument out of them."

"Heart-bonds between trainers and animals! Son, that's dope for the newspaper interviewer. The only heart-bond I know is a stout stick with some iron on the end of it."

"Sure you can make 'm eat outa your hand. But the thing to watch out for is that they don't eat your hand. A blank cartridge in the nose just about that time is the best preventive I know."

There were days when all the air was vexed with roars and squalls of ferocity and agony from the arena, until the last animal in the cages was excited and ill at ease. In truth, since it was Mulcachy's boast that he could break the best animal living, no end of the hardest cases fell to his hand. He had built a reputation for succeeding where others failed, and, endowed with fearlessness, callousness, and cunning, he never let his reputation wane. There was nothing he dared not tackle, and, when he gave up an animal, the last word was said. For it, remained nothing but to be a cage-animal, in solitary confinement, pacing ever up and down, embittered with all the world of man and roaring its bitterness to the most delicious enthrillment of the pay-spectators.

During the three months spent by Michael in Mulcachy's Animal Home, occurred two especially hard cases. Of course, the daily chant of ordinary pain of training went on all the time through the working hours, such as of "good" bears and lions and tigers that were made amenable under stress, and of elephants derricked and gaffed into making the head-stand or into the beating of a bass drum. But the two cases that were exceptional, put a mood of depression and fear into all the listening animals, such as humans might experience in an ante-room of hell, listening to the flailing and the flaying of their fellows who had preceded them into the torture-chamber.

The first was of the big Indian tiger. Free-born in the jungle, and free all his days, master, according to his nature and prowess, of all other living creatures including his fellow-tigers, he had come to grief in the end; and, from the trap to the cramped cage, by elephant-back and railroad and steamship, ever in the cramped cage, he had journeyed across seas and continents to Mulcachy's Animal Home. Prospective buyers had examined but not dared to purchase. But Mulcachy had been undeterred. His own fighting blood leapt hot at sight of the magnificent striped cat. It was a challenge of the brute in him to excel. And, two weeks of hell, for the great tiger and for all the other animals, were required to teach him his first lesson.

Ben Bolt he had been named, and he arrived indomitable and irreconcilable, though almost paralysed from eight weeks of cramp in his narrow cage which had restricted all movement. Mulcachy should have undertaken the job immediately, but two weeks were lost by the fact that he had got married and honeymooned for that length of time. And in that time, in a large cage of concrete and iron, Ben Bolt had exercised and recovered the use of his muscles, and added to his hatred of the two-legged things, puny against him in themselves, who by trick and wile had so helplessly imprisoned him.

So, on this morning when hell yawned for him, he was ready and eager to meet all comers. They came, equipped with formulas, nooses, and forked iron bars. Five of them tossed nooses in through the bars upon the floor of his cage. He snarled and struck at the curling ropes, and for ten minutes was a grand and impossible wild creature, lacking in nothing save the wit and the patience possessed by the miserable two-legged things. And then, impatient and careless of the inanimate ropes, he paused, snarling at the men, with one hind foot resting inside a noose. The next moment, craftily lifted up about the girth of his leg by an iron fork, the noose tightened and the bite of it sank home into his flesh and pride. He leaped, he roared, he was a maniac of ferocity. Again and again, almost burning their palms, he tore the rope smoking through their hands. But ever they took in the slack and paid it out again, until, ere he was aware, a similar noose tightened on his foreleg. What he had done was nothing to what he now did. But he was stupid and impatient. The man-creatures were wise and patient, and a third leg and a fourth leg were finally noosed, so that, with many men tailing on to the ropes, he was dragged ignominiously on his side to the bars, and, ignominiously, through the bars were hauled his four legs, his chiefest weapons of offence after his terribly fanged jaws.

And then a puny man-creature, Mulcachy himself, dared openly and brazenly to enter the cage and approach him. He sprang to be at him, or, rather, strove so to spring, but was withstrained by his four legs through the bars which he could not draw back and get under him. And Mulcachy knelt beside him, dared kneel beside him, and helped the fifth noose over his head and round his neck. Then his head was drawn to the bars as helplessly as his legs had been drawn through. Next, Mulcachy laid hands on him, on his head, on his ears, on his very nose within an inch of his fangs; and he could do nothing but snarl and roar and pant for breath as the noose shut off his breathing.

Quivering, not with fear but with rage, Ben Bolt perforce endured the buckling around his throat of a thick, broad collar of leather to which was attached a very stout and a very long trailing rope. After that, when Mulcachy had left the cage, one by one the five nooses were artfully manipulated off his legs and his neck. Again, after this prodigious indignity, he was free — within his cage. He went up into the air. With returning breath he roared his rage. He struck at the trailing rope that offended his nerves, clawed at the trap of the collar that encased his neck, fell, rolled over, offended his body-nerves more and more by entangling contacts with the rope, and for half an hour exhausted himself in the futile battle with the inanimate thing. Thus tigers are broken.

At the last, wearied, even with sensations of sickness from the nervous strain put upon himself by his own anger, he lay down in the middle of the floor, lashing his tail, hating with his eyes, and accepting the clinging thing about his neck which he had learned he could not get rid of.

To his amazement, if such a thing be possible in the mental processes of a tiger, the rear door to his cage was thrown open and left open. He regarded the aperture with belligerent suspicion. No one and no threatening danger appeared in the doorway. But his suspicion grew. Always, among these man-animals, occurred what he did not know and could not comprehend. His preference was to remain where he was, but from behind, through the bars of the cage, came shouts and yells, the lash of whips, and the painful thrusts of the long iron forks. Dragging the rope behind him, with no thought of escape, but in the hope that he would get at his tormentors, he leaped into the rear passage that ran behind the circle of permanent cages. The passage way was deserted and dark, but ahead he saw light. With great leaps and roars, he rushed in that direction, arousing a pandemonium of roars and screams from the animals in the cages.

He bounded through the light, and into the light, dazzled by the brightness of it, and crouched down, with long, lashing tail, to orient himself to the situation. But it was only another and larger cage that he was in, a very large cage, a big, bright performing-arena that was all cage. Save for himself, the arena was deserted, although, overhead, suspended from the roof-bars, were block-and-tackle and seven strong iron chairs that drew his instant suspicion and caused him to roar at them.

For half an hour he roamed the arena, which was the greatest area of restricted freedom he had known in the ten weeks of his captivity. Then, a hooked iron rod, thrust through the bars, caught and drew the bight of his trailing rope into the hands of the men outside. Immediately ten of them had hold of it, and he would have charged up to the bars at them had not, at that moment, Mulcachy entered the arena through a door on the opposite side. No bars stood between Ben Bolt and this creature, and Ben Bolt charged him. Even as he charged he was aware of suspicion in that the small, fragile man-creature before him did not flee or crouch down, but stood awaiting him.

Ben Bolt never reached him. First, with an access of caution, he craftily ceased from his charge, and, crouching, with lashing tail, studied the man who seemed so easily his. Mulcachy was equipped with a long-lashed whip and a sharp-pronged fork of iron.

In his belt, loaded with blank cartridges, was a revolver.

Bellying closer to the ground, Ben Bolt advanced upon him, creeping slowly like a cat stalking a mouse. When he came to his next pause, which was within certain leaping distance, he crouched lower, gathered himself for the leap, then turned his head to regard the men at his back outside the cage. The trailing rope in their hands, to his neck, he had forgotten.

"Now you might as well be good, old man," Mulcachy addressed him in soft, caressing tones, taking a step toward him and holding in advance the iron fork.

This merely incensed the huge, magnificent creature. He rumbled a low, tense growl, flattened his ears back, and soared into the air, his paws spread so that the claws stood out like talons, his tail behind him as stiff and straight as a rod. Neither did the man crouch or flee, nor did the beast attain to him. At the height of his leap the rope tightened taut on his neck, causing him to describe a somersault and fall heavily to the floor on his side.

Before he could regain his feet, Mulcachy was upon him, shouting to his small audience: "Here's where we pound the argument out of him!" And pound he did, on the nose with the butt of the whip, and jab he did, with the iron fork to the ribs. He rained a hurricane of blows and jabs on the animal's most sensitive parts. Ever Ben Bolt leaped to retaliate, but was thrown by the ten men tailed on to the rope, and, each time, even as he struck the floor on his side, Mulcachy was upon him, pounding, smashing, jabbing. His pain was exquisite, especially that of his tender nose. And the creature who inflicted the pain was as fierce and terrible as he, even more so because he was more intelligent. In but few minutes, dazed by the pain, appalled by his inability to rend and destroy the man who inflicted it, Ben Bolt lost his courage. He fled ignominiously before the little, two-legged creature who was more terrible than himself who was a full-grown Royal Bengal tiger. He leaped high in the air in sheer panic; he ran here and there, with lowered head, to avoid the rain of pain. He even charged the sides of the arena, springing up and vainly trying to climb the slippery vertical bars.

Ever, like an avenging devil, Mulcachy pursued and smashed and jabbed, gritting through his teeth: "You will argue, will you? I'll teach you what argument is! There! Take that! And that! And that!"

"Now I've got him afraid of me, and the rest ought to be easy," he announced, resting off and panting hard from his exertions, while the great tiger crouched and quivered and shrank back from him against the base of the arena-bars. "Take a five-minute spell, you fellows, and we'll got our breaths."

Lowering one of the iron chairs, and attaching it firmly in its place on the floor, Mulcachy prepared for the teaching of the first trick. Ben Bolt, jungle-born and jungle-reared, was to be compelled to sit in the chair in ludicrous and tragic imitation of man-creatures. But Mulcachy was not quite ready. The first lesson of fear of him must be reiterated and driven home.

Stepping to a near safe distance, he lashed Ben Bolt on the nose. He repeated it. He did it a score of times, and scores of times. Turn his head as he would, ever Ben Bolt received the bite of the whip on his fearfully bruised nose; for Mulcachy was as expert as a stage-driver in his manipulation of the whip, and unerringly the lash snapped and cracked and stung Ben Bolt's nose wherever Ben Bolt at the moment might have it.

When it became maddeningly unendurable, he sprang, only to be jerked back by the ten strong men who held the rope to his neck. And wrath, and ferocity, and intent to destroy, passed out utterly from the tiger's inflamed brain, until he knew fear, again and again, always fear and only fear, utter and abject fear, of this human mite who searched him with such pain.

Then the lesson of the first trick was taken up. Mulcachy tapped the chair sharply with the butt of the whip to draw the animal's attention to it, then flicked the whip-lash sharply on his nose. At the same moment, an attendant, through the bars behind, drove an iron fork into his ribs to force him away from the bars and toward the chair. He crouched forward, then shrank back against the side-bars. Again the chair was rapped, his nose was lashed, his ribs were jabbed, and he was forced by pain toward the chair. This went on interminably — for a quarter of an hour, for half an hour, for an hour; for the men-animals had the patience of gods while he was only a jungle-brute. Thus tigers are broken. And the verb means just what it means. A performing animal is *broken*. Something *breaks* in an animal of the wild ere such an animal submits to do tricks before pay-audiences.

Mulcachy ordered an assistant to enter the arena with him. Since he could not compel the tiger directly to sit in the chair, he must employ other means. The rope about Ben Bolt's neck was passed up through the bars and rove through the block-and-tackle. At signal from Mulcachy, the ten men hauled away. Snarling, struggling, choking, in a fresh madness of terror at this new outrage, Ben Bolt was slowly hoisted by his neck up from the floor, until, quite clear of it, whirling, squirming, battling, suspended by his neck like a man being hanged, his wind was shut off and he began to suffocate. He coiled and twisted, the splendid muscles of his body enabling him almost to tie knots in it.

The block-and-tackle, running like a trolley on the overhead track, made it possible for the assistant to seize his tail and drag him through the air till he was above the chair. His helpless body guided thus by the tail, his chest jabbed by the iron fork in Mulcachy's hands, the rope was suddenly lowered, and Ben Bolt, with swimming brain, found himself seated in the chair. On the instant he leaped for the floor, received a blow on the nose from the heavy whip-handle, and had a blank cartridge fired straight into his nostril. His madness of pain and fear was multiplied. He sprang away in flight, but Mulcachy's voice rang out, "Hoist him!" and he slowly rose in the air again, hanging by his neck, and began to strangle.

Once more he was swung into position by his tail, jabbed in the chest, and lowered suddenly on the run — but so suddenly, with a frantic twist of his body on his part, that he fell violently across the chair on his belly. What little wind was left him from the strangling, seemed to have been ruined out of him by the violence of the fall. The glare in his eyes was maniacal and swimming. He panted frightfully, and his head rolled back and forth. Slaver dripped from his mouth, blood ran from his nose.

"Hoist away!" Mulcachy shouted.

And again, struggling frantically as the tightening collar shut off his wind, Ben Bolt was slowly lifted into the air. So wildly did he struggle that, ere his hind feet were off the floor, he pranced back and forth, so that when he was heaved clear his body swung like a huge pendulum. Over the chair, he was dropped, and for a fraction of a second the posture was his of a man sitting in a chair. Then he uttered a terrible cry and sprang.

It was neither snarl, nor growl, nor roar, that cry, but a sheer scream, as if something had broken inside of him. He missed Mulcachy by inches, as another blank cartridge exploded up his other nostril and as the men with the rope snapped him back so abruptly as almost to break his neck.

This time, lowered quickly, he sank into the chair like a half-empty sack of meal, and continued so to sink, until, crumpling at the middle, his great tawny head falling forward, he lay on the floor unconscious. His tongue, black and swollen, lolled out of his mouth. As buckets of water were poured on him he groaned and moaned. And here ended the first lesson.

"It's all right," Mulcachy said, day after day, as the teaching went on. "Patience and hard work will pull off the trick. I've got his goat. He's afraid of me. All that's required is time, and time adds to value with an animal like him."

Not on that first day, nor on the second, nor on the third, did the requisite something really break inside Ben Bolt. But at the end of a fortnight it did break. For the day came when Mulcachy rapped the chair with his whip-butt, when the attendant through the bars jabbed the iron fork into Ben Bolt's ribs, and when Ben Bolt, anything but royal, slinking like a beaten alley-cat, in pitiable terror, crawled over to the chair and sat down in it like a man. He now was an "educated" tiger. The sight of him, so sitting, tragically travestying man, has been considered, and is considered, "educative" by multitudinous audiences.

The second case, that of St. Elias, was a harder one, and it was marked down against Mulcachy as one of his rare failures, though all admitted that it was an unavoidable failure. St. Elias was a huge monster of an Alaskan bear, who was good-natured and even facetious and humorous after the way of bears. But he had a will of his own that was correspondingly as stubborn as his bulk. He could be persuaded to do things, but he would not tolerate being compelled to do things. And in the trained-animal world, where turns must go off like clockwork, is little or no space for persuasion. An animal must do its turn, and do it promptly. Audiences will not brook the delay of waiting while a trainer tries to persuade a crusty or roguish beast to do what the audience has paid to see it do.

So St. Elias received his first lesson in compulsion. It was also his last lesson, and it never progressed so far as the training-arena, for it took place in his own cage.

Noosed in the customary way, his four legs dragged through the bars, and his head, by means of a "choke" collar, drawn against the bars, he was first of all manicured. Each one of his great claws was cut off flush with his flesh. The men outside did this. Then Mulcachy, on the inside, punched his nose. Not lightly as it sounds was this operation. The punch was a perforation. Thrusting the instrument into the huge bear’s nostril, Mulcachy cut a clean round chunk of living meat out of one side of it. Mulcachy knew the bear business. At all times, to make an untrained bear obey, one must be fast to some sensitive portion of the bear. The ears, the nose, and the eyes are the accessible sensitive parts, and, the eyes being out of the question, remain the nose and the ears as the parts to which to make fast.

Through the perforation Mulcachy immediately clamped a metal ring. To the ring he fastened a long “lunge”-rope, which was well named. Any unruly lunge, at any time during all the subsequent life of St. Elias, could thus be checked by the man who held the lunge-rope. His destiny was patent and ordained. For ever, as long as he lived and breathed, would he be a prisoner and slave to the rope in the ring in his nostril.

The nooses were slipped, and St. Elias was at liberty, within the confines of his cage, to get acquainted with the ring in his nose. With his powerful forepaws, standing erect and roaring, he proceeded to get acquainted with the ring. It certainly was not a thing persuasible. It was living fire. And he tore at it with his paws as he would have torn at the stings of bees when raiding a honey-tree. He tore the thing out, ripping the ring clear through the flesh and transforming the round perforation into a ragged chasm of pain.

Mulcachy cursed. “Here’s where hell coughs,” he said. The nooses were introduced again. Again St. Elias, helpless on his side against and partly through the bars, had his nose punched. This time it was the other nostril. And hell coughed. As before, the moment he was released, he tore the ring out through his flesh.

Mulcachy was disgusted. “Listen to reason, won’t you?” he objurgated, as, this time, the reason he referred to was the introduction of the ring clear through both nostrils, higher up, and through the central dividing wall of cartilage. But St. Elias was unreasonable. Unlike Ben Bolt, there was nothing inside of him weak enough, or nervous enough, or high-strung enough, to break. The moment he was free he ripped the ring away with half of his nose along with it. Mulcachy punched St. Elias’s right ear. St. Elias tore his right ear to shreds. Mulcachy punched his left ear. He tore his left ear to shreds. And Mulcachy gave in. He had to. As he said plaintively:

“We’re beaten. There ain’t nothing left to make fast to.”

Later, when St. Elias was condemned to be a “cage-animal” all his days, Mulcachy was wont to grumble:

“He was the most unreasonable animal! Couldn’t do a thing with him. Couldn’t ever get anything to make fast to.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

It was in the Orpheum Theatre, of Oakland, California; and Harley Kennan was in the act of reaching under his seat for his hat, when his wife said:

"Why, this isn't the interval. There's one more turn yet."

"A dog turn," he answered, and thereby explained; for it was his practice to leave a theatre during the period of the performance of an animal-act.

Villa Kennan glanced hastily at the programme.

"Of course," she said, then added: "But it's a singing dog. A dog Caruso. And it points out that there is no one on the stage with the dog. Let us stay for once, and see how he compares with Jerry."

"Some poor brute tormented into howling," Harley grumbled.

"But it has the stage to itself," Villa urged. "Besides, if it is painful, then we can go out. I'll go out with you. But I just would like to see how much better Jerry sings than does he. And it says an Irish terrier, too."

So Harley Kennan remained. The two burnt-cork comedians finished their turn and their three encores, and the curtain behind them went up on a full set of an empty stage. A rough-coated Irish terrier entered at a sedate walk, sedately walked forward to the centre, nearly to the footlights, and faced the leader of the orchestra. As the programme had stated, he had the stage to himself.

The orchestra played the opening strains of "Sweet Bye and Bye." The dog yawned and sat down. But the orchestra was thoroughly instructed to play the opening strains over and over, until the dog responded, and then to follow on with him. By the third time, the dog opened his mouth and began. It was not a mere howling. For that matter, it was too mellow to be classified as a howl at all. Nor was it merely rhythmic. The notes the dog sang were of the air, and they were correct.

But Villa Kennan scarcely heard.

"He has Jerry beaten a mile," Harley muttered to her.

"Listen," she replied, in tense whispers. "Did you ever see that dog before?"

Harley shook his head.

"You have seen him before," she insisted. "Look at that crinkled ear. Think! Think back! Remember!"

Still her husband shook his head.

"Remember the Solomons," she pressed. "Remember the *Ariel*. Remember when we came back from Malaita, where we picked Jerry up, to Tulagi, that he had a brother there, a nigger-chaser on a schooner."

"And his name was Michael — go on."

"And he had that self-same crinkled ear," she hurried. "And he was rough-coated. And he was full brother to Jerry. And their father and mother were Terrence and Biddy of Meringe. And Jerry is our Sing Song Silly. And this dog sings. And he has a crinkled ear. And his name is Michael."

"Impossible," said Harley.

"It is when the impossible comes true that life proves worth while," she retorted. "And this is one of those worth-whiles of impossibles. I know it."

Still the man of him said impossible, and still the woman of her insisted that this was an impossible come true. By this time the dog on the stage was singing "God Save the King."

"That shows I am right," Villa contended. "No American, in America, would teach a dog 'God Save the King.' An Englishman originally owned that dog and taught it. The Solomons are British."

"That's a far cry," he smiled. "But what gets me is that ear. I remember it now. I remember the day when we were on the beach at Tulagi with Jerry, and when his brother came ashore from the *Eugénie* in a whaleboat. And his brother had that self-same, loppy, crinkled ear."

"And more," Villa argued. "How many singing dogs have we ever known! Only one — Jerry. Evidently such a type occurs rarely. The same family would more likely produce similar types than different families. The family of Terrence and Biddy produced Jerry. And this is Michael."

"He *was* rough-coated, along with a crinkly ear," Harley meditated back. "I see him distinctly as he stood up in the bow of the whaleboat and as he ran along the beach side by side with Jerry."

"If Jerry should to-morrow run side by side with him you would be convinced?" she queried.

"It was their trick, and the trick of Terrence and Biddy before them," he agreed. "But it's a far cry from the Solomons to the United States."

"Jerry is such a far cry," she replied. "And if Jerry won from the Solomons to California, then is there anything more remarkable in Michael so winning? — Oh, listen!"

For the dog on the stage, now responding to its one encore, was singing "Home, Sweet Home." This finished, Jacob Henderson, to tumultuous applause, came on the stage from the wings and joined the dog in bowing. Villa and Harley sat in silence for a moment. Then Villa said, apropos of nothing:

"I have been sitting here and feeling very grateful for one particular thing."

He waited.

"It is that we are so abominably wealthy," she concluded.

"Which means that you want the dog, must have him, and are going to got him, just because I can afford to do it for you," he teased.

"Because you can't afford not to," she answered. "You must know he is Jerry's brother. At least, you must have a sneaking suspicion . . . ?"

"I have," he nodded. "The thing that can't sometimes does, and there is a chance that this may be one of those times. Of course, it isn't Michael; but, on the other hand, what's to prevent it from being Michael? Let us go behind and find out."

* * * * *

"More agents of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," was Jacob Henderson's thought, as the man and woman, accompanied by the manager of the theatre, were shown into his tiny dressing-room. Michael, on a chair and half asleep, took no notice of them. While Harley talked with Henderson, Villa investigated Michael; and Michael scarcely opened his eyes ere he closed them again. Too sour on the human world, and too glum in his own soured nature, he was anything save his old courtly self to chance humans who broke in upon him to pat his head, and say silly things, and go their way never to be seen by him again.

Villa Kennan, with a pang of disappointment at such rebuff, forwent her overtures for the moment, and listened to what tale Jacob Henderson could tell of his dog. Harry Del Mar, a trained-animal man, had picked the dog up somewhere on the Pacific Coast, most probably in San Francisco, she learned; but, having taken the dog east with him, Harry Del Mar had died by accident in New York before telling anybody anything about the animal. That was all, except that Henderson had paid two thousand dollars to one Harris Collins, and had found the investment the finest he had ever made.

Villa turned back to the dog.

"Michael," she called, caressingly, almost in a whisper.

And Michael's eyes partly opened, the base-muscles of his ears stiffened, and his body quivered.

"Michael," she repeated.

This time raising his head, the eyes open and the ears stiffly erect, Michael looked at her. Not since on the beach at Tulagi had he heard that name uttered. Across the years and the seas the word came to him out of the past. Its effect was electrical, for on the instant all the connotations of "Michael" flooded his consciousness. He saw again Captain Kellar, of the *Eugénie*, who had last called him it, and *Mister* Haggin, and Derby, and Bob of Meringe Plantation, and Biddy and Terrence, and, not least among these shades of the vanished past, his brother Jerry.

But was it the vanished past? The name which had ceased for years, had come back. It had entered the room along with this man and woman. All this he did not reason; but indubitably, as if he had so reasoned, he acted upon it.

He jumped from the chair and ran to the woman. He smelled her hand, and smelled her as she patted him. Then, as he recognized her, he went wild. He sprang away, dashing around and around the room, sniffing under the washstand and smelling out the corners. As in a frenzy he was back to the woman, whimpering eagerly as she strove to pet him. The next moment, stiff in a frenzy, he was away again, scurrying about the room and still whimpering.

Jacob Henderson looked on with mild disapproval.

"He never cuts up that way," he said. "He is a very quiet dog. Maybe it is a fit he is going to have, though he never has fits."

No one understood, not even Villa Kennan. But Michael understood. He was looking for that vanished world which had rushed back upon him at sound of his old-time name. If this name could come to him out of the Nothingness, as this woman had whom once he had seen treading the beach at Tulagi, then could all other things of Tulagi and the Nothingness come to him. As she was there, before him in the living flesh, uttering his name, so might Captain Kellar, and *Mister* Haggin, and Jerry be there, somewhere in the very room or just outside the door.

He ran to the door, whimpering as he scratched at it.

"Maybe he thinks there is something outside," said Jacob Henderson, opening the door for him.

And Michael did so think. As a matter of course, through that open door, he was prepared to have the South-Pacific Ocean flow in, bearing on its bosom schooners and ships, islands and reefs, and all men and animals and things he once had known and still remembered.

But no past flowed in through the door. Outside was the usual present. He came back dejectedly to the woman, who still called him Michael as she petted him. She, at any rate, was real. Next he carefully smelled and identified the man with the beach of Tulagi and the deck of the *Ariel*, and again his excitement began to mount.

"Oh, Harley, I know it is he!" Villa cried. "Can't you test him? Can't you prove him?"

"But how?" Harley pondered. "He seems to recognize his name. It excites him. And though he never knew us very well, he seems to remember us and to be excited by us, too. If only he could talk . . . "

"Oh, talk! Talk!" Villa pleaded with Michael, catching both sides of his head and jaws in her hands and swaying him back and forth.

"Be careful, madam," Jacob Henderson warned. "He is a very sour dog; and he don't let people take such liberties."

"He does me," she laughed, half-hysterically. "Because he knows me. . . . Harley!" She broke off as the great idea dawned on her. "I have a test. Listen! Remember, Jerry was a nigger-chaser before we got him. And Michael was a nigger-chaser. You talk in bêche-de-mer. Appear angry with some black boy, and see how it will affect him."

"I'll have to remember hard to resurrect any bêche-de-mer," Harley said, nodding approval of the suggestion.

"At the same time I'll distract him," she rushed on.

Sitting down and bending forward to Michael so that his head was buried in her arms and breast, she began swaying him and crooning to him as was her wont with Jerry. Nor did he resent the liberty she took, and, like Jerry, he yielded to her crooning and softly began to croon with her. She signalled Harley with her eyes.

"My word!" he began in tones of wrath. "What name you fella boy stop 'm along this fella place? You make 'm me cross along you any amount!"

And at the words Michael bristled, dragged himself clear of the woman's detaining hands, and, with a snarl, whirled about to get a look at the black boy who must have just then entered the room and aroused the white god's ire. But there was no black boy. He looked on, still bristling, to the door.

Harley transferred his own gaze to the door, and Michael knew, beyond all doubt, that outside the door was standing a Solomons nigger.

"Hey! Michael!" Harley shouted. "Chase 'm that black fella boy overside!"

With a roaring snarl, Michael flung himself at the door. Such was the fury and weight of his onslaught that the latch flew loose and the door swung open. The emptiness of the space which he had expected to see occupied, was appalling, and he shrank down, sick and dizzy with the baffling apparitional past that thus vexed his consciousness.

"And now," said Harley to Jacob Henderson, "we will talk business . . . "

CHAPTER XXXV

When the train arrived at Glen Ellen, in the Valley of the Moon, it was Harley Kennan himself, at the side-door of the baggage-car, who caught hold of Michael and swung him to the ground. For the first time Michael had performed a railroad journey uncrated. Merely with collar and chain had he travelled up from Oakland. In the waiting automobile he found Villa Kennan, and, chain removed, sat beside her and between her and Harley

As the machine purred along the two miles of road that wound up the side of Sonoma Mountain, Michael scarcely looked at the forest-trees and vistas of wandering glades. He had been in the United States three years, during which time he had been kept a close prisoner. Cage and crate and chain had been his portion, and narrow rooms, baggage cars, and station platforms. The nearest he had come to the country was when chained to benches in the various parks while Jacob Henderson studied Swedenborg. So that trees and hills and fields had ceased to mean anything. They were something inaccessible, as inaccessible as the blue of the sky or the drifting cloud-fleeces. Thus did he regard the trees and hills and fields, if the negative act of not regarding a thing at all can be considered a state of mind.

“Don’t seem to be enthusiastic over the ranch, eh, Michael?” Harley remarked.

He looked up at sound of his old name, and made acknowledgment by flattening his ears a quivering trifle and by touching his nose against Harley’s shoulder.

“Nor does he seem demonstrative,” was Villa’s judgment. “At least, nothing like Jerry,”

“Wait till they meet,” Harley smiled in anticipation. “Jerry will furnish enough excitement for both of them.”

“If they remember each other after all this time,” said Villa. “I wonder if they will.”

“They did at Tulagi,” he reminded her. “And they were full grown and hadn’t seen each other since they were puppies. Remember how they barked and scampered all about the beach. Michael was the hurly-burly one. At least he made twice as much noise.”

“But he seems dreadfully grown-up and subdued now.”

"Three years ought to have subdued him," Harley insisted.

But Villa shook her head.

As the machine drew up at the house and Kennan first stepped out, a dog's whimperingly joyous bark of welcome struck Michael as not altogether unfamiliar. The joyous bark turned to a suspicious and jealous snarl as Jerry scented the other dog's presence from Harley's caressing hand. The next moment he had traced the original source of the scent into the limousine and sprung in after it. With snarl and forward leap Michael met the snarling rush less than half-way, and was rolled over on the bottom of the car.

The Irish terrier, under all circumstances amenable to the control of the master as are few breeds of dogs, was instantly manifest in Jerry and Michael an Harley Kennan's voice rang out. They separated, and, despite the rumbling of low growling in their throats, refrained from attacking each other as they plunged out to the ground. The little set-to had occurred in so few seconds, or fractions of seconds, that they had not begun to betray recognition of each other until they were out of the machine. They were still comically stiff-legged and bristly as they aloofly sniffed noses.

"They know each other!" Villa cried. "Let's wait and see what they will do."

As for Michael, he accepted, without surprise, the indubitable fact that Jerry had come back out of the Nothingness. Things of this sort had begun to happen rapidly, but it was not the things themselves, but the connotations of them, that almost stunned him. If the man and woman, whom he had last seen at Tulagi, and, likewise, Jerry, had come back from the Nothingness, then could come, and might come at any moment, the beloved Steward.

Instead of responding to Jerry, Michael sniffed and glanced about in quest of Steward. Jerry's first expression of greeting and friendliness took the form of a desire to run. He barked invitation to his brother, scampered away half a dozen jumps, scampered back, and dabbed playfully at Michael with one forepaw in added emphasis of invitation ere he scampered away again.

For so many years had Michael not run with another dog, that at first Jerry's invitation had little meaning to him. Nevertheless, such running was an habitual expression of happiness and friendliness in dogdom, and especially strong had been his inheritance of it from Terrence and Biddy, the noted love-runners of the Solomons.

The next time Jerry dabbed at him with a paw, barked, and scurried away in an enticing semi-circle, Michael started involuntarily though slowly after him. But Michael did not bark; and, after half a dozen leaps, he came to a full stop and looked to Villa and Harley for permission.

"All right, Michael," Harley called heartily, deliberately turning his shoulder in the non-interest of consent as he extended his hand to help Villa from the machine.

Michael sprang away again, and was numbly aware of an ancient joy as he shouldered Jerry who shouldered against him as they ran side by side. But most of the joy was Jerry's, as was the wildest of the skurrying and the racing and the shouldering, of the body-wriggling, and ear-pricking, and yelping cries. Also, Jerry barked; and Michael did not bark.

"He used to bark," said Villa.

"Much more than Jerry," Harley supplemented.

"Then they have taken the bark out of him," she concluded. "He must have gone through terrible experiences to have lost his bark."

* * * * *

The green California spring merged into tawny summer, as Jerry, ever running afield, made Michael acquainted with the farthest and highest reaches of the Kennan ranch in the Valley of the Moon. The pageant of the wild flowers vanished until all that lingered on the burnt hillsides were orange poppies faded to palest gold, and Mariposa lilies, wind-blown on slender stems amidst the desiccated grasses, that smouldered like ornate spotted moths fluttering in rest for a space between flight and flight.

And Michael, a follower always where the exuberant Jerry led, sought throughout the passing year for what he could not find.

"Looking for something, looking for something," Harley would say to Villa. "It is not alive. It is not here. Now just what is it he is always looking for?"

Steward it was, and Michael never found him. The Nothingness held him and would not yield him up, although, could Michael have journeyed a ten-days' steamer-journey into the South Pacific to the Marquesas, Steward he would have found, and, along with him, Kwaque and the Ancient Mariner, all three living like lotus-eaters on the beach-paradise of Taiohae. Also, in and about their grass-thatched bungalow under the lofty avocado trees, Michael would have found other pet — cats, and kittens, and pigs, donkeys and ponies, a pair of love-birds, and a mischievous monkey or two; but never a dog and never a cockatoo. For Dag Daughtry, with violence of language, had laid a taboo upon dogs. After Killeny Boy, he averred, there should be no other dog. And Kwaque, without averring anything at all, resolutely refrained from possessing himself of the white cockatoos brought ashore by the sailors off the trading schooners.

But Michael was long in giving over his search for Steward, and, running the mountain trails or scrambling and sliding down into the deep canyons, was ever expectant and ready for Steward to step forth before him, or to pick up the unmistakable scent that would lead him to him.

"Looking for something, looking for something," Harley Kennan would chant curiously, as he rode beside Villa and observed Michael's unending search. "Now Jerry's after rabbits, and fox-trails; but you'll notice they don't interest Michael much. They're not what he's after. He behaves like one who has lost a great treasure and doesn't know where he lost it nor where to look for it."

Much Michael learned from Jerry of the varied life of the forest and fields. To run with Jerry seemed the one pleasure he took, for he never played. Play had passed out of him. He was not precisely morose or gloomy from his years on the trained-animal stage and in Harris Collins's college of pain, but he was sobered, subdued. The spring and the spontaneity had gone out of him. Just as the leopard had claw-marked his shoulder so that damp and frosty weather made the pain of the old wound come back, so was his mind marked by what he had gone through. He liked Jerry, was glad to be with him and to run with him; but it was Jerry who was ever in the lead, who ever raised the hue and cry of hunting pursuit, who barked indignation and eager yearning at a tree'd squirrel in refuge forty feet above the ground. Michael looked on and listened, but took no part in such antics of enthusiasm.

In the same way he looked on when Jerry fought fearful comic battles with Norman Chief, the great Percheron stallion. It was only play, for Jerry and Norman Chief were tried friends; and, though the huge horse, ears laid back, mouth open to bite, pursued Jerry in mad gyrations all about the paddock, it was with no thought of inflicting hurt, but merely to act up to his part in the sham battle. Yet no invitation of Jerry's could induce Michael to join in the fun. He contented himself with sitting down outside the rails and looking on.

"Why play?" might Michael have asked, who had had all play taken out of him.

But when it came to serious work, he was there even ahead of Jerry. On account of foot-and-mouth disease and of hog-cholera, strange dogs were taboo on the Kennan ranch. It did not take Michael long to learn this, and stray dogs got short shrift from him. With never a warning bark nor growl, in deadly silence, he rushed them, slashed and bit them, rolled them over and over in the dust, and drove them from the place. It was like nigger-chasing, a service to perform for the gods whom he loved and who willed such chasing.

No wild passion of love, such as he had had for Steward, did he bear Villa and Harley, but he did develop for them a great, sober love. He did not go out of his way to express it with overtures of wrigglings and squirmings and whimpering yelpings. Jerry could be depended upon for that. But he was always seriously glad to be with Villa and Harley and to receive recognition from them next after Jerry. Some of his deepest moments of content, before the fireplace, were to sit beside Villa or Harley and lean his head against a knee and have a hand, on occasion, drop down on his head or gently twist his crinkled ear.

Jerry was even guilty of playing with children who happened at times to be under the Kennan ægis. Michael endured children for as long as they left him alone. If they waxed familiar, he would warn them with a bristling of his neck-hair and a throaty rumbling and get up and stalk away.

"I can't understand it," Villa would say. "He was the fullest of play, and spirits, and all foolishness. He was much sillier and much more excitable than Jerry and certainly noisier. He must have some terrible story to tell, if only he could, of all that happened between Tulagi and the time we found him on the Orpheum stage."

"And that may be the least little hint of it," Harley would reply, pointing to Michael's shoulder where the leopard had scarred it on the day Jack, the Airedale, and Sara, the little green monkey, had died.

"He used to bark, I know he used to bark," Villa would continue. "Why doesn't he bark now?"

And Harley would point to the scarred shoulder and say, "That may account for it, and most possibly a hundred other things like it of which we cannot see the marks."

But the time was to come when they were to hear him bark again — not once, but twice. And both times were to be but an earnest of another and graver time when, without barking at all, he would express in action the measure of his love and worship of them who had taken him from the crate and the footlights and given him the freedom of the Valley of the Moon.

And in the meantime, running endlessly with Jerry over the ranch, he learned all the ways of it and all the life of it from the chickenyards and the duck-ponds to the highest pitch of Sonoma Mountain. He learned where the wild deer, in their season, were to be found; when they raided the prune-orchard, the vineyards, and the apple-trees; when they sought the deepest canyons and most secret coverts; and when they stamped out in open glades and on bare hillsides and crashed and clattered their antlers together in combat. Under Jerry's leadership, always running second and after on the narrow trails as a subdued dog should, he learned the ways and habits of the foxes, the coons, the weasels, and the ring-tail cats that seemed compounded of cat and coon and weasel. He came to know the ground-nesting birds and the difference between the customs of the valley quail, the mountain quail, and the pheasants. The traits and lairs of the domestic cats gone wild he also learned, as did he learn the wild loves of mountain farm-dogs with the free-roving coyotes.

He knew of the presence of the mountain lion, adrift down from Mendocino County, ere the first shorthorn calf was slain, and came home from the encounter, torn and bleeding, to attest what he had discovered and to be the cause of Harley Kennan riding trail next day with a rifle across his pommel. Likewise Michael came to know what Harley Kennan never did know and always denied as existing on his ranch — the one rocky outcrop, in the dense heart of the mountain forest, where a score of rattlesnakes denned through the winters and warmed themselves in the sun.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Winter came on in its delectable way in the Valley of the Moon. The last Mariposa lily vanished from the burnt grasses as the California Indian summer dreamed itself out in purple mists on the windless air. Soft rain-showers first broke the spell. Snow fell on the summit of Sonoma Mountain. At the ranch house the morning air was crisp and brittle, yet mid-day made the shade welcome, and in the open, under the winter sun, roses bloomed and oranges, grape-fruit, and lemons turned to golden yellow ripeness. Yet, a thousand feet beneath, on the floor of the valley, the mornings were white with frost.

And Michael barked twice. The first time was when Harley Kennan, astride a hot-blooded sorrel colt, tried to make it leap a narrow stream. Villa reined in her steed at the crest beyond, and, looking back into the little valley, waited for the colt to receive its lesson. Michael waited, too, but closer at hand. At first he lay down, panting from his run, by the stream-edge. But he did not know horses very well, and soon his anxiety for the welfare of Harley Kennan brought him to his feet.

Harley was gentle and persuasive and all patience as he strove to make the colt take the leap. The urge of voice and rein was of the mildest; but the animal balked the take-off each time, and the hot thoroughbredness in its veins made it sweat and lather. The velvet of young grass was torn up by its hoofs, and its terror of the stream was such, that, when fetched to the edge at a canter, it stiffened and crouched to an abrupt stop, then reared on its hind-legs. Which was too much for Michael.

He sprang at the horse's head as it came down with forefeet to earth, and as he sprang he barked. In his bark was censure and menace, and, as the horse reared again, he leaped into the air after it, his teeth clipping together as he just barely missed its nose.

Villa rode back down the slope to the opposite bank of the stream.

"Mercy!" she cried. "Listen to him! He's actually barking."

"He thinks the colt is trying to do some damage to me," Harley said. "That's his provocation. He hasn't forgotten how to bark. He's reading the colt a lecture."

"If he gets him by the nose it will be more than a lecture," Villa warned. "Be careful, Harley, or he will."

“Now, Michael, lie down and be good,” Harley commanded. “It’s all right, I tell you. It’s an right. Lie down.”

Michael sank down obediently, but protestingly; and he had eyes only for the horse’s antics, while all his muscles were gathered tensely to spring in case the horse threatened injury to Harley again.

“I can’t give in to him now, or he never will jump anything,” Harley said to his wife, as he whirled about to gallop back to a distance. “Either I lift him over or I take a cropper.”

He came back at full speed, and the colt, despite himself, unable to stop, lifted into the leap that would avoid the stream he feared, so that he cleared it with a good two yards to spare on the other side.

The next time Michael barked was when Harley, on the same hot-blood mount, strove to close a poorly hung gate on the steep pitch of a mountain wood-road. Michael endured the danger to his man-god as long as he could, then flew at the colt’s head in a frenzy of barking.

“Anyway, his barking helped,” Harley conceded, as he managed to close the gate. “Michael must certainly have told the colt that he’d give him what-for if he didn’t behave.”

“At any rate, he’s not tongue-tied,” Villa laughed, “even if he isn’t very loquacious.”

And Michael’s loquacity never went farther. Only on these two occasions, when his master-god seemed to be in peril, was he known to bark. He never barked at the moon, nor at hillside echoes, nor at any prowling thing. A particular echo, to be heard directly from the ranch-house, was an unfailing source of exercise for Jerry’s lungs. At such times that Jerry barked, Michael, with a bored expression, would lie down and wait until the duet was over. Nor did he bark when he attacked strange dogs that strayed upon the ranch.

“He fights like a veteran,” Harley remarked, after witnessing one such encounter. “He’s cold-blooded. There’s no excitement in him.”

“He’s old before his time,” Villa said. “There is no heart of play left in him, and no desire for speech. Just the same I know he loves me, and you —”

“Without having to be voluble about it,” her husband completed for her.

“You can see it shining in those quiet eyes of his,” she supplemented.

“Reminds me of one of the survivors of Lieutenant Greeley’s Expedition I used to know,” he agreed. “He was an enlisted soldier and one of the handful of survivors. He had been through so much that he was just as subdued as Michael and just as taciturn. He bored most people, who could not understand him. Of course, the truth was the other way around. They bored him. They knew so little of life that he knew the last word of. And one could scarcely get any word out of him. It was not that he had forgotten how to speak, but that he could not see any reason for speaking when nobody could understand. He was really crusty from too-bitter wise experience. But all you had to do was look at him in his tremendous repose and know that he had been through the thousand hells, including all the frozen ones. His eyes had the same quietness of Michael's. And they had the same wisdom. I'd give almost anything to know how he got his shoulder scarred. It must have been a tiger or a lion."

* * * * *

The man, like the mountain lion whom Michael had encountered up the mountain, had strayed down from the wilds of Mendocino County, following the ruggedest mountain stretches, and, at night, crossing the farmed valley spaces where the presence of man was a danger to him. Like the mountain lion, the man was an enemy to man, and all men were his enemies, seeking his life which he had forfeited in ways more terrible than the lion which had merely killed calves for food.

Like the mountain lion, the man was a killer. But, unlike the lion, his vague description and the narrative of his deeds was in all the newspapers, and mankind was a vast deal more interested in him than in the lion. The lion had slain calves in upland pastures. But the man, for purposes of robbery, had slain an entire family — the postmaster, his wife, and their three children, in the upstairs over the post office in the mountain village of Chisholm.

For two weeks the man had eluded and exceeded pursuit. His last crossing had been from the mountains of the Russian River, across wide-farmed Santa Rosa Valley, to Sonoma Mountain. For two days he had laired and rested, sleeping much, in the wildest and most inaccessible precincts of the Kennan Ranch. With him he had carried coffee stolen from the last house he had raided. One of Harley Kennan's angora goats had furnished him with meat. Four times he had slept the clock around from exhaustion, rousing on occasion, like any animal, to eat voraciously of the goat-meat, to drink large quantities of the coffee hot or cold, and to sink down into heavy but nightmare-ridden sleep.

And in the meantime civilization, with its efficient organization and intricate inventions, including electricity, had closed in on him. Electricity had surrounded him. The spoken word had located him in the wild canyons of Sonoma Mountain and fringed the mountain with posses of peace-officers and detachments of armed farmers. More terrible to them than any mountain lion was a man-killing man astray in their landscape. The telephone on the Kennan Ranch, and the telephones on all other ranches abutting on Sonoma Mountain, had rung often and transmitted purposeful conversations and arrangements.

So it happened, when the posses had begun to penetrate the mountain, and when the man was compelled to make a daylight dash down into the Valley of the Moon to cross over to the mountain fastnesses that lay between it and Napa Valley, that Harley Kennan rode out on the hot-blooded colt he was training. He was not in pursuit of the man who had slain the postmaster of Chisholm and his family. The mountain was alive with man-hunters, as he well knew, for a score had bedded and eaten at the ranch house the night before. So the meeting of Harley Kennan with the man was unplanned and eventful.

It was not the first meeting with men the man had had that day. During the preceding night he had noted the campfires of several posses. At dawn, attempting to break forth down the south-western slopes of the mountain toward Petaluma, he had encountered not less than five separate detachments of dairy-ranchers all armed with Winchesters and shotguns. Breaking back to cover, the chase hot on his heels, he had run full tilt into a party of village youths from Glen Ellen and Caliente. Their squirrel and deer rifles had missed him, but his back had been peppered with birdshot in a score of places, the leaden pellets penetrating maddeningly in a score of places just under the skin.

In the rush of his retreat down the canyon slope, he had plunged into a bunch of shorthorn steers, who, far more startled than he, had rolled him on the forest floor, trampled over him in their panic, and smashed his rifle under their hoofs. Weaponless, desperate, stinging and aching from his superficial wounds and bruises, he had circled the forest slopes along deer-paths, crossed two canyons, and begun to descend the horse-trail he found in the third canyon.

It was on this trail, going down, that he met the reporter coming up. The reporter was — well, just a reporter, from the city, knowing only city ways, who had never before engaged in a man-hunt. The livery horse he had rented down in the valley was a broken-kneed, jaded, and spiritless creature, that stood calmly while its rider was dragged from its back by the wild-looking and violently impetuous man who sprang out around a sharp turn of the trail. The reporter struck at his assailant once with his riding-whip. Then he received a beating, such as he had often written up about sailor-rows and saloon-frequenters in his cub-reporter days, but which for the first time it was his lot to experience.

To the man's disgust he found the reporter unarmed save for a pencil and a wad of copy paper. Out of his disappointment in not securing a weapon, he beat the reporter up some more, left him wailing among the ferns, and, astride the reporter's horse, urging it on with the reporter's whip, continued down the trail.

Jerry, ever keenest on the hunting, had ranged farther afield than Michael as the pair of them accompanied Harley Kennan on his early morning ride. Even so, Michael, at the heels of his master's horse, did not see nor understand the beginning of the catastrophe. For that matter, neither did Harley. Where a steep, eight-foot bank came down to the edge of the road along which he was riding, Harley and the hot-blood colt were startled by an eruption through the screen of manzanita bushes above. Looking up, he saw a reluctant horse and a forceful rider plunging in mid-air down upon him. In that flashing glimpse, even as he reined and spurred to make his own horse leap sidewise out from under, Harley Kennan observed the scratched skin and torn clothing, the wild-burning eyes, and the haggardness under the scraggly growth of beard, of the man-hunted man.

The livery horse was justifiably reluctant to make that leap out and down the bank. Too painfully aware of the penalty its broken knees and rheumatic joints must pay, it dug its hoofs into the steep slope of moss and only sprang out and clear in the air in order to avoid a fall. Even so, its shoulder impacted against the shoulder of the whirling colt below it, overthrowing the latter. Harley Kennan's leg, caught under against the earth, snapped, and the colt, twisted and twisting as it struck the ground, snapped its backbone.

To his utter disgust, the man, pursued by an armed countryside, found Harley Kennan, his latest victim, like the reporter, to be weaponless. Dismounted, he snarled in his rage and disappointment and deliberately kicked the helpless man in the side. He had drawn back his foot for the second kick, when Michael took a hand — or a leg, rather, sinking his teeth into the calf of the back-drawn leg about to administer the kick.

With a curse the man jerked his leg clear, Michael's teeth ribboning flesh and trousers.

"Good boy, Michael!" Harley applauded from where he lay helplessly pinioned under his horse. "Hey! Michael!" he continued, lapsing back into bêche-de-mer, "chase 'm that white fella marster to hell outa here along bush!"

"I'll kick your head off for that," the man gritted at Harley through his teeth.

Savage as were his acts and utterance, the man was nearly ready to cry. The long pursuit, his hand against all mankind and all mankind against him, had begun to break his stamina. He was surrounded by enemies. Even youths had risen up and peppered his back with birdshot, and beef cattle had trod him underfoot and smashed his rifle. Everything conspired against him. And now it was a dog that had slashed down his leg. He was on the death-road. Never before had this impressed him with such clear certainty. Everything was against him. His desire to cry was hysterical, and hysteria, in a desperate man, is prone to express itself in terrible savage ways. Without rhyme or reason he was prepared to carry out his threat to kick Harley Kennan to death. Not that Kennan had done anything to him. On the contrary, it was he who had attacked Kennan, hurling him down on the road and breaking his leg under his horse. But Harley Kennan was a man, and all mankind was his enemy; and, in killing Kennan, in some vague way it appeared to him that he was avenging himself, at least in part, on mankind in general. Going down himself in death, he would drag what he could with him into the red ruin.

But ere he could kick the man on the ground, Michael was back upon him. His other calf and trousers' leg were ribboned as he tore clear. Then, catching Michael in mid-leap with a kick that reached him under the chest, he sent him flying through the air off the road and down the slope. As mischance would have it, Michael did not reach the ground. Crashing through a scrub manzanita bush, his body was caught and pinched in an acute fork a yard above the ground.

"Now," the man announced grimly to Harley, "I'm going to do what I said. I'm just going to kick your head clean off."

"And I haven't done a thing to you," Harley parleyed. "I don't so much mind being murdered, but I'd like to know what I'm being murdered for."

"Chasing me for my life," the man snarled, as he advanced. "I know your kind. You've all got it in for me, and I ain't got a chance except to give you yours. I'll take a whole lot of it out on you."

Kennan was thoroughly aware of the gravity of his peril. Helpless himself, a man-killing lunatic was about to kill him and to kill him most horribly. Michael, a prisoner in the bush, hanging head-downward in the manzanita from his loins squeezed in the fork, and struggling vainly, could not come to his defence.

The man's first kick, aimed at Harley's face, he blocked with his forearm; and, before the man could make a second kick, Jerry erupted on the scene. Nor did he need encouragement or direction from his love-master. He flashed at the man, sinking his teeth harmlessly into the slack of the man's trousers at the waist-band above the hip, but by his weight dragging him half down to the ground.

And upon Jerry the man turned with an increase of madness. In truth all the world was against him. The very landscape rained dogs upon him. But from above, from the slopes of Sonoma Mountain, the cries and calls of the trailing poses caught his ear, and deflected his intention. They were the pursuing death, and it was from them he must escape. With another kick at Jerry, hurling him clear, he leaped astride the reporter's horse which had continued to stand, without movement or excitement, in utter apathy, where he had dismounted from it.

The horse went into a reluctant and stiff-legged gallop, while Jerry followed, snarling and growling wrath at so high a pitch that almost he squalled.

"It's all right, Michael," Harley soothed. "Take it easy. Don't hurt yourself. The trouble's over. Anybody'll happen along any time now and get us out of this fix."

But the smaller branch of the two composing the fork broke, and Michael fell to the ground, landing in momentary confusion on his head and shoulders. The next moment he was on his feet and tearing down the road in the direction of Jerry's noisy pursuit. Jerry's noise broke in a sharp cry of pain that added wings to Michael's feet. Michael passed him rolling helplessly on the road. What had happened was that the livery horse, in its stiff-jointed, broken-kneed gallop, had stumbled, nearly fallen, and, in its sprawling recovery, had accidentally stepped on Jerry, bruising and breaking his foreleg.

And the man, looking back and seeing Michael close upon him, decided that it was still another dog attacking him. But he had no fear of dogs. It was men, with their rifles and shotguns, that might bring him to ultimate grief. Nevertheless, the pain of his bleeding legs, lacerated by Jerry and Michael, maintained his rage against dogs.

"More dogs," was his bitter thought, as he leaned out and brought his whip down across Michael's face.

To his surprise, the dog did not wince under the blow. Nor for that matter did he yelp or cry out from the pain. Nor did he bark or growl or snarl. He closed in as though he had not received the blow, and as though the whip was not brandished above him. As Michael leaped for his right leg he swung the whip down, striking him squarely on the muzzle midway between nose and eyes. Deflected by the blow, Michael dropped back to earth and ran on with his longest leaps to catch up and make his next spring.

But the man had noticed another thing. At such close range, bringing his whip down, he could not help noting that Michael had kept his eyes open under the blow. Neither had he winced nor blinked as the whip slashed down on him. The thing was uncanny. It was something new in the way of dogs. Michael sprang again, the man timed him again with the whip, and he saw the uncanny thing repeated. By neither wince nor blink had the dog acknowledged the blow.

And then an entirely new kind of fear came upon the man. Was this the end for him, after all he had gone through? Was this deadly silent, rough-coated terrier the thing destined to destroy him where men had failed? He did not even know that the dog was real. Might it not be some terrible avenger, out of the mystery beyond life, placed to beset him and finish him finally on this road that he was convinced was surely the death-road? The dog was not real. It could not be real. The dog did not live that could take a full-arm whip-slash without wince or flinch.

Twice again, as the dog sprang, he deflected it with accurately delivered blows. And the dog came on with the same surety and silence. The man surrendered to his terror, clapping heels to his horse's old ribs, beating it over the head and under the belly with the whip until it galloped as it had not galloped in years. Even on that apathetic steed the terror descended. It was not terror of the dog, which it knew to be only a dog, but terror of the rider. In the past its knees had been broken and its joints stiffened for ever, by drunken-mad riders who had hired him from the stables. And here was another such drunken-mad rider — for the horse sensed the man's terror — who ached his ribs with the weight of his heels and beat him cruelly over face and nose and ears.

The best speed of the horse was not very great, not great enough to outdistance Michael, although it was fast enough to give the latter only infrequent opportunities to spring for the man's leg. But each spring was met by the unvarying whip-blow that by its very weight deflected him in the air. Though his teeth each time clipped together perilously close to the man's leg, each time he fell back to earth he had to gather himself together and run at his own top speed in order to overtake the terror-stricken man on the crazy-galloping horse.

Enrico Piccolomini saw the chase and was himself in at the finish; and the affair, his one great adventure in the world, gave him wealth as well as material for conversation to the end of his days. Enrico Piccolomini was a wood-chopper on the Kennan Ranch. On a rounded knoll, overlooking the road, he had first heard the galloping hoofs of the horse and the crack of the whip-blows on its body. Next, he had seen the running battle of the man, the horse, and the dog. When directly beneath him, not twenty feet distant, he saw the dog leap, in its queer silent way, straight up and in to the down-smash of the whip, and sink its teeth in the rider's leg. He saw the dog, with its weight, as it fell back to earth, drag the man half out of the saddle. He saw the man, in an effort to recover his balance, put his own weight on the bridle-reins. And he saw the horse, half-rearing, half-tottering and stumbling, overthrow the last shred of the man's balance so that he followed the dog to the ground.

"And then they are like two dogs, like two beasts," Piccolomini was wont to tell in after-years over a glass of wine in his little hotel in Glen Ellen. "The dog lets go the man's leg and jumps for the man's throat. And the man, rolling over, is at the dog's throat. Both his hands — so — he fastens about the throat of this dog. And the dog makes no sound. He never makes sound, before or after. After the two hands of the man stop his breath he can not make sound. But he is not that kind of a dog. He will not make sound anyway. And the horse stands and looks on, and the horse coughs. It is very strange all that I see.

"And the man is mad. Only a madman will do what I see him do. I see the man show his teeth like any dog, and bite the dog on the paw, on the nose, on the body. And when he bites the dog on the nose, the dog bites him on the check. And the man and the dog fight like hell, and the dog gets his hind legs up like a cat. And like a cat he tears the man's shirt away from his chest, and tears the skin of the chest with his claws till it is all red with bleeding. And the man yow-yowls, and makes noises like a wild mountain lion. And always he chokes the dog. It is a hell of a fight.

"And the dog is Mister Kennan's dog, a fine man, and I have worked for him two years. So I will not stand there and see Mister Kennan's dog all killed to pieces by the man who fights like a mountain lion. I run down the hill, but I am excited and forget my axe. I run down the hill, maybe from this door to that door, twenty feet or maybe thirty feet. And it is nearly all finished for the dog. His tongue is a long ways out, and his eyes like covered with cobwebs; but still he scratches the man's chest with his hind-feet and the man yow-yowls like a hen of the mountains.

"What can I do? I have forgotten the axe. The man will kill the dog. I look for a big rock. There are no rocks. I look for a club. I cannot find a club. And the man is killing the dog. I tell you what I do. I am no fool. I kick the man. My shoes are very heavy — not like shoes I wear now. They are the shoes of the wood-chopper, very thick on the sole with hard leather, with many iron nails. I kick the man on the side of the face, on the neck, right under the ear. I kick once. It is a good kick. It is enough. I know the place — right under the ear.

"And the man lets go of the dog. He shuts his eyes, and opens his mouth, and lies very still. And the dog begins once more to breathe. And with the breath comes the life, and right away he wants to kill the man. But I say 'No,' though I am very much afraid of the dog. And the man begins to become alive. He opens his eyes and he looks at me like a mountain lion. And his mouth makes a noise like a mountain lion. And I am afraid of him like I am afraid of the dog. What am I to do? I have forgotten the axe. I tell you what I do. I kick the man once again under the ear. Then I take my belt, and my bandana handkerchief, and I tie him. I tie his hands. I tie his legs, too. And all the time I am saying 'No,' to the dog, and that he must leave the man alone. And the dog looks. He knows I am his friend and am tying the man. And he does not bite me, though I am very much afraid.

The dog is a terrible dog. Do I not know? Have I not seen him take a strong man out of the saddle? — a man that is like a mountain lion?

"And then the men come. They all have guns-rifles, shotguns, revolvers, pistols. And I think, first, that justice is very quick in the United States. Only just now have I kicked a man in the head, and, one-two-three, just like that, men come with guns to take me to jail for kicking a man in the head. At first I do not understand. The many men are angry with me. They call me names, and say bad things; but they do not arrest me. Ah! I begin to understand! I hear them talk about three thousand dollars. I have robbed them of three thousand dollars. It is not true. I say so. I say never have I robbed a man of one cent. Then they laugh. And I feel better and I understand better. The three thousand dollars is the reward of the Government for this man I have tied up with my belt and my bandana. And the three thousand dollars is mine because I kicked the man in the head and tied his hands and his feet.

"So I do not work for Mister Kennan any more. I am a rich man. Three thousand dollars, all mine, from the Government, and Mister Kennan sees that it is paid to me by the Government and not robbed from me by the men with the guns. Just because I kicked the man in the head who was like a mountain lion! It is fortune. It is America. And I am glad that I have left Italy and come to chop wood on Mister Kennan's ranch. And I start this hotel in Glen Ellen with the three thousand dollars. I know there is large money in the hotel business. When I was a little boy, did not my father have a hotel in Napoli? I have now two daughters in high school. Also I own an automobile."

* * * * *

"Mercy me, the whole ranch is a hospital!" cried Villa Kennan, two days later, as she came out on the broad sleeping-porch and regarded Harley and Jerry stretched out, the one with his leg in splints, the other with his leg in a plaster cast. "Look at Michael," she continued. "You're not the only ones with broken bones. I've only just discovered that if his nose isn't broken, it ought to be, from the blow he must have received on it. I've had hot compresses on it for the last hour. Look at it!"

Michael, who had followed in at her invitation, betrayed a ridiculously swollen nose as he sniffed noses with Jerry, wagged his bobtail to Harley in greeting, and was greeted in turn with a blissful hand laid on his head.

“Must have got it in the fight,” Harley said. “The fellow struck him with the whip many times, so Piccolomini says, and, naturally, it would be right across the nose when he jumped for him.”

“And Piccolomini says he never cried out when he was struck, but went on running and jumping,” Villa took up enthusiastically. “Think of it! A dog no bigger than Michael dragging out of the saddle a man-killing outlaw whom scores of officers could not catch!”

“So far as we are concerned, he did better than that,” Harley commented quietly. “If it hadn’t been for Michael, and for Jerry, too — if it hadn’t been for the pair of them, I do verily believe that that lunatic would have kicked my head off as he promised.”

“The blessed pair of them!” Villa cried, with shining eyes, as her hand flashed out to her husband’s in a quick press of heart-thankfulness. “The last word has not been said upon the wonder of dogs,” she added, as, with a quick winking of her eyelashes to overcome the impending moistness, she controlled her emotion.

“The last word of the wonder of dogs will never be said,” Harley spoke, returning the pressure of her hand and releasing it in order to help her.

“And just for that were going to say something right now,” she smiled. “Jerry, and Michael, and I. We’ve been practising it in secret for a surprise for you. You just lie there and listen. It’s the Doxology. Don’t Laugh. No pun intended.”

She bent forward from the stool on which she sat, and drew Michael to her so that he sat between her knees, her two hands holding his head and jowls, his nose half-buried in her hair.

“Now Jerry!” she called sharply, as a singing teacher might call, so that Jerry turned his head in attention, looked at her, smiled understanding with his eyes, and waited.

It was Villa who started and pitched the Doxology, but quickly the two dogs joined with their own soft, mellow howling, if howling it may be called when it was so soft and mellow and true. And all that had vanished into the Nothingness was in the minds of the two dogs as they sang, and they sang back through the Nothingness to the land of Otherwhere, and ran once again with the Lost Pack, and yet were not entirely unaware of the present and of the indubitable two-legged god who was called Villa and who sang with them and loved them.

“No reason we shouldn’t make a quartette of it,” remarked Harley Kennan, as with his own voice he joined in.

HEARTS OF THREE

This lesser known work was first published in 1920.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD
CHAPTER 1
CHAPTER 2
CHAPTER 3
CHAPTER 4
CHAPTER 5
CHAPTER 6
CHAPTER 7
CHAPTER 8
CHAPTER 9
CHAPTER 10
CHAPTER 11
CHAPTER 12
CHAPTER 13
CHAPTER 14
CHAPTER 15
CHAPTER 16
CHAPTER 17
CHAPTER 18
CHAPTER 19
CHAPTER 20
CHAPTER 21
CHAPTER 22
CHAPTER 23
CHAPTER 24
CHAPTER 25
CHAPTER 26
CHAPTER 27
CHAPTER 28
CHAPTER 29

FOREWORD

I HOPE the reader will forgive me for beginning this foreword with a brag. In truth, this yarn is a celebration. By its completion I celebrate my fortieth birthday, my fiftieth book, my sixteenth year in the writing game, and a new departure. “Hearts of Three” is a new departure. I have certainly never done anything like it before; I am pretty certain never to do anything like it again. And I haven’t the least bit of reticence in proclaiming my pride in having done it. And now, for the reader who likes action, I advise him to skip the rest of this brag and foreword, and plunge into the narrative, and tell me if it just doesn’t read along.

For the more curious let me explain a bit further. With the rise of moving pictures into the overwhelmingly most popular form of amusement in the entire world, the stock of plots and stories in the world’s fiction fund began rapidly to be exhausted. In a year a single producing company, with a score of directors, is capable of filming the entire literary output of the entire lives of Shakespeare, Balzac, Dickens, Scott, Zola, Tolstoy, and of dozens of less voluminous writers. And since there are hundreds of moving pictures producing companies, it can be readily grasped how quickly they found themselves face to face with a shortage of the raw material of which moving pictures are fashioned.

The film rights in all novels, short stories, and plays that were still covered by copyright, were bought or contracted for, while all similar raw material on which copyright had expired was being screened as swiftly as sailors on a placer beach would pick up nuggets. Thousands of scenario writers literally tens of thousands, for no man, nor woman, nor child was too mean not to write scenarios tens of thousands of scenario writers pirated through all literature (copyright or otherwise), and snatched the magazines hot from the press to steal any new scene or plot or story hit upon by their writing brethren.

In passing, it is only fair to point out that, though only the other day, it was in the days ere scenario writers became respectable, in the days when they worked overtime for rough-neck directors for fifteen and twenty a week or freelanced their wares for from ten to twenty dollars per scenario and half the time were beaten out of the due payment, or had their stolen goods stolen from them by their equally graceless and shameless fellows who slaved by the week. But to-day, which is only a day since the other day, I know scenario writers who keep their three. machines, their two chauffeurs, send their children to the most exclusive prep schools, and maintain an unwavering solvency.

It was largely because of the shortage in raw material that scenario writers appreciated in value and esteem. They found themselves in demand, treated with respect, better remunerated, and, in return, expected to deliver a higher grade of commodity. One phase of this new quest for material was the attempt to enlist Jmown authors in the work. But because a man had written a score of novels was no guarantee that he could write a good scenario. Quite to the contrary, it was quickly discovered that the surest guarantee of failure was a previous record of success in novelwriting.

But the moving pictures producers were not to be denied. Division of labor was the thing. Allying themselves with powerful newspaper organisations, or, in the case of “Hearts of Three,” the very reverse, they had highly-skilled writers of scenario (who couldn’t write novels to save themselves) make scenarios, which, in turn, were translated into novels by novel-writers (who couldn’t, to save themselves, write scenarios).

Comes now Mr. Charles Goddard to one, Jack London, saying: “The time, the place, and the men are met; the moving pictures producers, the newspapers, and the capital, are ready: let us get together.” And we got. Eesult: “Hearts of Three.” When I state that Mr. Goddard has been responsible for “The Perils of Pauline,” “The Exploits of Elaine,” “The Goddess,” the “Get Rich Quick Wallingford “series, etc., no question of his skilled fitness can be raised. Also, the name of the present heroine, Leoncia, is of his own devising.

On the ranch, in the Valley of the Moon, he wrote his first several episodes. But he wrote faster than I, and was done with his fifteen episodes weeks ahead of me. Do not be misled by the word “episode.” The first episode covers three thousand feet of film. The succeeding fourteen episodes cover each two thousand feet of film. And each episode contains about ninety scenes, which makes a total of some thirteen hundred scenes. Nevertheless, we worked simultaneously at our respective tasks. I could not build for what was going to happen next or a dozen chapters away, because I did not know. Neither did Mr. Goddard know. The inevitable result was that “Hearts of Three” may not be very vertebrate, although it is certainly consecutive.

Imagine my surprise, down here in Hawaii and toiling at the novelization of the tenth episode, to receive by mail from Mr. Goddard in New York the scenario of the fourteenth episode, and glancing therein, to find my hero married to the wrong woman! and with only one more episode in which to get rid of the wrong woman and duly tie my hero up with the right and only woman. For all of which please see last chapter of fifteenth episode. Trust Mr. Goddard to show me how.

For Mr. Goddard is the master of action and lord of speed. Action doesn't bother him at all. "Register," he calmly says in a film direction to the moving picture actor. Evidently the actor registers, for Mr. Goddard goes right on with more action. "Register grief," he commands, or "sorrow," or "anger," or "melting sympathy," or "homicidal intent," or "suicidal tendency." That's all. It has to be all, or how else would he ever accomplish the whole thirteen hundred scenes?

But imagine the poor devil of a me, who can't utter the talismanic "register" but who must describe, and at some length inevitably, these moods and modes so airily created in passing by Mr. Goddard! Why, Dickens thought nothing of consuming a thousand words or so in describing and subtly characterizing the particular grief of a particular person. But Mr. Goddard says, "Register," and the slaves of the camera obey.

And action! I have written some novels of adventure in my time, but never, in all of the many of them, have I perpetrated a totality of action equal to what is contained in "Hearts of Three."

But I know, now, why moving pictures are popular. I know, now, why Messrs. "Barnes of New York" and "Potter of Texas" sold by the millions of copies. I know, now, why one stump speech of high-falutin' is a more efficient vote-getter than a finest and highest act or thought of statesmanship. It has been an interesting experience, this novelization by me of Mr. Goddard's scenario; and it has been instructive. It has given me high lights, foundation lines, cross-bearings, and illumination on my anciently founded sociological generalizations. I have come, by this adventure in writing, to understand the mass mind of the people more thoroughly than I thought I had understood it before, and to realize, more fully than ever, the graphic entertainment delivered by the demagogue who wins the vote of the mass out of his mastery of its mind. I should be surprised if this book does not have a large sale. (“Register surprise,” Mr. Goddard would say; or “Register large sale”).

If this adventure of “Hearts of Three “be collaboration, I am transported by it. But alack! I fear me Mr. Goddard must then be the one collaborator in a million. We have never had a word, an argument, nor a discussion. But then, I must be a jewel of a collaborator myself. Have I not, without whisper or whimper of complaint, let him “register” through fifteen episodes of scenario, through thirteen hundred scenes and thirty-one thousand feet of film, through one hundred and eleven thousand words of novelization? Just the same, having completed the task, I wish I’d never written it for the reason that I’d like to read it myself to see if it reads along. I am curious to know. I am curious to know.

JACK LONDON.
Waikiki, Hawaii, March 23, 1916.

Back to Back Against the Mainmast
Do ye seek for fun and fortune?
Listen, rovers, now to me!
Look ye for them on the ocean:
Ye shall find them on the sea.

CHORUS:
Roaring wind and deep blue water!
We're the jolly devils who,
Back to back against the mainmast,
Held at bay the entire crew.
Bring the dagger, bring the pistols!
We will have our own to-day!
Let the cannon smash the bulwarks!
Let the cutlass clear the way!

CHORUS:
Bearing wind and deep blue water!
We're the jolly devils who,
Back to back against the mainmast,
Held at bay the entire crew.
Here's to rum and here's to plunder!
Here's to all the gales that blow!
Let the seamen cry for mercy!
Let the blood of captains flow!

CHORUS:
Roaring wind and deep blue water!
We're the jolly devils who,
Back to back against the mainmast,
Held at bay the entire crew.
Here's to ships that we have taken!
They have seen which men were best.
We have lifted maids and cargo,
And the sharks have had the rest.

CHORUS:
Roaring wind and deep blue water!

We’re the jolly devils who,
Back to back against the mainmast,
Held at bay the entire crew.

George Sterling

CHAPTER 1

EVENTS happened very rapidly with Francis Morgan that late spring morning. If ever a man leaped across time into the raw, red drama and tragedy of the primitive and the medieval melodrama of sentiment and passion of the New World Latin, Francis Morgan was destined to be that man, and Destiny was very immediate upon him.

Yet he was lazily unaware that aught in the world was stirring, and was scarcely astir himself. A late night at bridge had necessitated a late rising. A late breakfast of fruit and cereal had occurred along the route to the library the austerely elegant room from which his father, toward the last, had directed vast and manifold affairs.

“Parker,” he said to the valet who had been his father’s before him, “did you ever notice any signs of fat on E.H.M. in his last days?”

“‘Oh, no, sir,” was the answer, uttered with all the due humility of the trained servant, but accompanied by an involuntarily measuring glance that scanned the young man’s splendid proportions. “Your father, sir, never lost his leanness. His figure was always the same, broad-shouldered, deep in the chest, big-boned, but lean, always lean, sir, in the middle. When he was laid out, sir, and bathed, his body would have shamed most of the young men about town. He always took good care of himself; it was those exercises in bed, sir. Half an hour every morning. Nothing prevented. He called it religion.”

“Yes, he was a fine figure of a man,” the young man responded idly, glancing to the stock-ticker and the several telephones his father had installed.

“He was that,” Parker agreed eagerly. “He was lean and aristocratic in spite of his shoulders and bone and chest. And you’ve inherited it, sir, only on more generous lines.”

Young Francis Morgan, inheritor of many millions as well as brawn, lolled back luxuriously in a huge leather chair, stretched his legs after the manner of a full-vigored menagerie lion that is over-spilling with vigor, and glanced at a headline of the morning paper which informed him of a fresh slide in the Culebra Cut at Panama.

"If I didn't know we Morgans didn't run that way," he yawned, "I'd be fat already from this existence... Eh, Parker?"

The elderly valet, who Had neglected prompt reply, startled at the abrupt interrogative interruption of the pause.

"Oh, yes, sir," he said hastily. "I mean, no, sir. You are in the pink of condition."

"Not on your life," the young man assured him. "I may not be getting fat, but I am certainly growing soft. Eh, Parker?"

"Yes, sir. No, sir; no, I mean no, sir. You're just the same as when you came home from college three years ago."

"And took up loafing as a vocation," Francis laughed. "Parker!"

Parker was alert attention. His master debated with himself ponderously, as if the problem were of profound importance, rubbing the while the bristly thatch of the small toothbrush moustache he had recently begun to sport on his upper lip.

"Parker, I'm going fishing."

"Yes, sir!"

"I ordered some rods sent up. Please joint them and let me give them the once over. The idea drifts through my mind that two weeks in the woods is what I need. If I don't, I'll surelyA start laying on flesh and disgrace the whole family tree. You remember Sir Henry? the old original Sir Henry, the buccaneer old swashbuckler?" "Yes, sir; I've read of him, sir."

Parker had paused in the doorway until such time as the ebbing of his young master's volubility would permit him to depart on the errand.

"Nothing to be proud of, the old pirate."

"Oh, no, sir," Parker protested. "He was Governor of Jamaica. He died respected."

"It was a mercy he didn't die hanged," Francis laughed. "As it was, he's the only disgrace in the family that he founded. But what I was going to say is that I've looked him up very carefully. He kept his figure and he died lean in the middle, thank God. It's a good inheritance he passed down. We Morgans never found his treasure; but beyond rubies is the lean-in-the-middle legacy he bequeathed us. It's what is called a fixed character in the breed that's what the profs taught me in the biology course."

Parker faded out of the room in the ensuing silence, during which Francis Morgan buried himself in the Panama column and learned that the canal was not expected to be open for traffic for three weeks to come.

A telephone buzzed, and, through the electric nerves of a consummate civilization, Destiny made the first out-reach of its tentacles and contacted with Francis Morgan in the library of the mansion his father had builded on Eiverside Drive.

“But my dear Mrs. Carruthers,” was his protest into the transmitter. “Whatever it is, it is a mere local flurry. Tampico Petroleum is all right. It is not a gambling proposition. It is legitimate investment. Stay with. Tie to it... Some Minnesota farmer’s come to town and is trying to buy a block or two because it looks as solid as it really is. What if it is up two points? Don’t sell. Tampico Petroleum is not a lottery or a roulette proposition. It’s bona fide industry. I wish it hadn’t been so almighty big or I’d have financed it all myself. Listen, please, it’s not a flyer. Our present contracts for tanks is over a million. Our railroad and our three pipe-lines are costing more than five millions. Why, we’ve a hundred millions in producing wells right now, and our problem is to get it down country to the oil-steamers. This is the sober investment time. A year from now, or two years, and your shares will make government bonds look like something the cat brought in.

“Yes, yes, please. Never mind how the market goes. Also, please, I didn’t advise you to go in in the first place. I never advised a friend to that. But now that they are in, stick. It’s as solid as the Bank of England. Yes, Dicky and I divided the spoils last night. Lovely party, though Dicky’s got too much temperament for bridge. Yes, bull luck. Ha! ha! My temperament? Ha! Ha!. Yes?. Tell Harry I’m off and away for a couple of weeks. Fishing, troutlets, you know, the springtime and the streams, the rise of sap, the budding and the blossoming and all the rest. Yes, good-bye, and hold on to Tampico Petroleum. If it goes down, after that Minnesota farmer’s bulled it, buy a little more. I’m going to. It’s finding money. Yes. Yes, surely. It’s too good to dare sell on a flyer now, because it mayn’t ever again go down. Of course I know what I’m talking about. I’ve just had eight hours’ sleep, and haven’t had a drink. Yes, yes. Good-bye.”

He pulled the ticker tape into the comfort of his chair and languidly ran over it, noting with mildly growing interest the message it conveyed.

Parker returned with several slender rods, each a glittering gem of artisanship and art. Francis was out of his chair, ticker flung aside and forgotten as with the exultant joy of a boy he examined the toys and, one after another, began trying them, switching them through the air till they made shrill whip-like noises, moving them gently with prudence and precision under the lofty ceiling as he made believe to cast across the floor into some unseen pool of trout-lurking mystery.

A telephone buzzed. Irritation was swift on his face.

“For heaven’s sake answer it, Parker, he commanded. “If it is some silly stock-gambling female, tell her I’m dead, or drunk, or down with typhoid, or getting married, or anything calamitous.”

After a moment’s dialogue, conducted on Parker’s part, in the discreet and modulated tones that befitted absolutely the cool, chaste, noble dignity of the room, with a “One moment, sir,” into the transmitter, he muffled the transmitter with his hand and said:

“It’s Mr. Bascom, sir. He wants you.”

“Tell Mr. Bascom to go to hell,” said Francis, simulating so long a cast, that, had it been in verity a cast, and had it pursued the course his fascinated gaze indicated, it would have gone through the window and most likely startled the gardener outside kneeling over the rose bush he was planting.

“Mr. Bascom says it’s about the market, sir, and that he’d like to talk with you only a moment,” Parker urged, but so delicately and subduedly as to seem to be merely repeating an immaterial and unnecessary message.

“All right.” Francis carefully leaned the rod against a table and went to the ‘phone.

“Hello,” he said into the telephone. “Yes, this is I, Morgan. Sboot? What is it?”

He listened for a minute, then interrupted irritably: “Sell hell. Nothing of the sort. Of course, I’m glad to know. Even if it goes up ten points, which it won’t, hold on to everything. It may be a legitimate rise, and it mayn’t ever come down. It’s solid. It’s worth far more than it’s listed. I know, if the public doesn’t. A year from now it’ll list at two hundred. that is, if Mexico can cut the revolution stuff. Whenever it drops you’ll have buying orders from me. Nonsense. Who wants control? It’s purely sporadic ... eh? I beg your pardon. I mean it’s merely temporary. Now I’m going off fishing for a fortnight. If it goes down five points, buy. Buy all that’s offered. Say, when a fellow’s got a real bona fide property, being bulled is almost as bad as having the bears after one. yes. Sure. yes. Good-bye.”

And while Francis returned delightedly to his fishing-rods, Destiny, in Thomas Regan’s down-town private office, was working overtime. Having arranged with his various brokers to buy, and, through his divers channels of secret publicity having let slip the cryptic tip that something was wrong with Tampico Petroleum's concessions from the Mexican government, Thomas Regan studied a report of his own oil-expert emissary who had spent two months on the spot spying out what Tampico Petroleum really had in sight and prospect.

A clerk brought in a card with the information that the visitor was importunate and foreign. Regan listened, glanced at the card, and said:

"Tell this Mister Senor Alvarez Torres of Ciodad de Colon that I can't see him."

Five minutes later the clerk was back, this time with a message pencilled on the card. Regan grinned as he read it:

"Dear Mr. Regan, "Honoured Sir:

"I have the honour to inform you that I have a tip on the location of the treasure Sir Henry Morgan buried in old pirate days.

"Alvarez Torres."

Regan shook his head, and the clerk was nearly out of the room when his employer suddenly recalled him.

"Show him in at once."

In the interval of being alone, Regan chuckled to himself as he rolled the new idea over in his mind. "The unlicked cub!" he muttered through the smoke of the cigar he was lighting. "Thinks he can play the lion part old E.H.M. played. A trimming is what he needs, and old Grayhead Thomas B. will see that he gets it."

Senor Alvarez Torres' English was as correct as his modish spring suit, and though the bleached yellow of his skin advertised his Latin-American origin, and though his black eyes were eloquent of the mixed lustres of Spanish and Indian long compounded, nevertheless he was as thoroughly New Yorkish as Thomas Regan could have wished.

"By great effort, and years of research, I have finally won to the clue to the buccaneer gold of Sir Henry Morgan," he preambled. "Of course it's on the Mosquito Coast. I'll tell you now that it's not a thousand miles from the Chiriqui Lagoon, and that Bocas del Toro, within reason, may be described as the nearest town. I was born there educated in Paris, however and I know the neighbourhood like a book. A small schooner the outlay is cheap, most very cheap but the returns, the reward the treasure!"

Senor Torres paused in eloquent inability to describe more definitely, and Thomas Regan, hard man used to dealing with hard-men, proceeded to bore into him and his data like a cross-examining criminal lawyer.

“Yes,” Senor Torres quickly admitted, “I am somewhat embarrassed how shall I say? for immediate funds.”

“You need the money,” the stock operator assured him brutally, and he bowed pained acquiescence.

Much more he admitted under the rapid-fire interrogation. It was true, he had but recently left Bocas del Toro, but he hoped never again to go back. And yet he would go back if possibly some arrangement.

But Regan shut him off with the abrupt way of the masterman dealing with lesser fellow-creatures. He wrote a check, in the name of Alvarez Torres, and when that gentleman glanced at it he read the figures of a thousand dollars.

“Now here’s the idea,” said Regan. “I put no belief whatsoever in your story. But I have a young friend my heart is bound up in the boy but he is too much about town, the white lights and the white-lighted ladies, and the rest you understand?” And Senor Alvarez Torres bowed as one man of the world to another. “Now, for the good of his health, as well as his wealth and the saving of his soul, the best thing that could happen to him is a trip after treasure, adventure, exercise, and. you readily understand, I am sure.”

Again Alvarez Torres bowed.

“You need the money,” Regan continued. “Strive to interest him. That thousand is for your effort. Succeed io interesting him so that he departs after old Morgan’s gold, and two thousand more is yours. So thoroughly succeed in interesting him that he remains away three months, two thousand more six months, five thousand. Oh, believe me, I knew his father. We were comrades, partners, I might say, almost brothers. I would sacrifice any sum to win his son to manhood’s wholesome path. What do you say? The thousand is yours to begin with. Well?”

With trembling fingers Senor Alvarez Torres folded and unfolded the check.

“I. I accept,” he stammered and faltered in his eagerness. “I. I. How shall I say? . I am yours to command.”

Five minutes later, as he arose to go, fully instructed in the part he was to play and with his story of Morgan’s treasure revised to convincingness by the brass-tack business acumen of the stock-gambler, he blurted out, almost facetiously, yet even more pathetically:

“And the funniest thing about it, Mr. Regan, is that it is true. Your advised changes in my narrative make it sound more true, but true it is under it all. I need the money. You are most munificent, and I shall do my best. I. I pride myself that I am an artist. But the real and solemn truth is that the clue to Morgan's buried loot is genuine. I have had access to records inaccessible to the public, which is neither here nor there, for the men of my own family they are family records have had similar access, and have wasted their lives before me in the futile search. Yet were they on the right clue except that their wits made them miss the spot by twenty miles. It was there in the records. They missed it, because it was, I think, a deliberate trick, a conundrum, a puzzle, a disguisement, a maze, which I, and I alone, have penetrated and solved. The early navigators all played such tricks on the charts they drew. My Spanish race so hid the Hawaiian Islands by five degrees of longitude."

All of which was in turn Greek to Thomas Regan, who smiled his acceptance of listening and with the same smile conveyed his busy business-man's tolerant unbelief.

Scarcely was Senor Torres gone, when Francis Morgan was shown in.

"Just thought I'd drop around for a bit of counsel," he said, greetings over. "And to whom but you should I apply, who so closely played the game with my father? You and he were partners, I understand, on some of the biggest deals. He always told me to trust your judgment. And, well, here I am, and I want to go fishing. What's up with Tampico Petroleum?"

"What is up?" Regan countered, with fine simulation of ignorance of the very thing of moment he was responsible for precipitating. "Tampico Petroleum?"

Francis nodded, dropped into a chair, and lighted a cigarette, while Regan consulted the ticker.

"Tampico Petroleum is up two points you should worry," he opined.

"That's what I say," Francis concurred. "I should worry. But just the same, do you think some bunch, onto the inside value of it and it's big I speak under the rose, you know, I mean in absolute confidence?" Regan nodded. "It is big. It is right. It is the real thing. It is legitimate. Now this activity would you think that somebody, or some bunch, is trying to get control?"

His father's associate, with the reverend gray of hair thatching his roof of crooked brain, shook the thatch.

"Why," he amplified, "it may be just a flurry, or it may be a hunch on the stock public that it's really good. What do you say?"

"Of course it's good," was Francis' warm response. "I've got reports, Regan, so good they'd make your hair stand up. As I tell all my friends, this is the real legitimate. It's a damned shame I had to let the public in on it. It was so big, I just had to. Even all the money my father left me, couldn't swing it I mean, free money, not the stuff tied up money to work with."

"Are you short?" the older man queried.

"Oh, I've got a tidy bit to operate with," was the airy reply of youth.

"You mean. ?"

"Sure. Just that. If she drops, I'll buy. It's finding money."

"Just about how far would you buy?" was the next searching interrogation, masked by an expression of mingled good humor and approbation.

"All I've got," came Francis Morgan's prompt answer. "I tell you, Regan, it's immense."

"I haven't looked into it to amount to anything, Francis; but I will say from the little I know that it listens good."

"Listens! I teil you, Regan, it's the Simon-pure, straight legitimate, and it's a shame to have it listed at all. I don't have to wreck anybody or anything to pull it across. The world will be better for my shooting into it I am afraid to say how many hundreds of millions of barrels of real oil say, I've got one well alone, in ths Huasteca field, that's gushed 27,000 barrels a day for seven months. And it's still doing it. That's the drop in the bucket we've got piped to market now. And it's twenty-two gravity, and carries less than two-tenths of one per cent, of sediment. And there's one gusher sixty miles of pipe to build to it, and pinched down to the limit of safety, that's pouring cut all over the landscape just about seventy thousand barrels a day. Of course, all in confidence, you know. We're doing nicely, and I don't want Tampico Petroleum to skyrocket."

"Don't you worry about that, my lad. You've got to get your oil piped, and the Mexican revolution straightened out before ever Tampico Petroleum soars. You go fishing and forget it." Regan paused, with finely simulated sudden recollection, and picked up Alvarez Torres' card with the pencilled note. "Look, who's just been to see me." Apparently struck with an idea, Regan retained the card a moment. "Why go fishing for mere trout? After all, it's only recreation. Here's a thing to go fishing after that there's real recreation in, full-size man's recreation, and not the Persian-palace recreation of an Adirondack camp, with ice and servants and electric push-buttons. Your father always was more than a mite proud of that old family pirate. He claimed to look like him, and you certainly look like your dad."

"Sir Henry," Francis smiled, reaching for the card. "So am I a mite proud of the old scoundrel."

He looked up questioningly from the reading of the card.

"He's a plausible cuss," Regan explained. "Claims 'to have been born right down there on the Mosquito Coast, and to have got the tip from private papers in his family. Not that I believe a word of it. I haven't time or interest to get started believing in stuff outside my own field."

"Just the same, Sir Henry died practically a poor man,"

Francis asserted, the lines of the Morgan stubbornness knitting themselves for a flash on his brows. "And they never did find any of his buried treasure."

"Good fishing," Regan girded good-humor edly.

"I'd like to meet this Alvarez Torres just the same," the young man responded.

"Fool's gold," Regan continued. "Though I must admit that the cuss is most exasperatingly plausible. Why, if I were younger but oh, the devil, my work's cut out for me here."

"Do you know where I can find him?" Francis was asking the next moment, all unwittingly putting his neck into the net of tentacles that Destiny, in the visible incarnation of Thomas Regan, was casting out to snare him.

The next morning the meeting took place in Regan's office. Senor Alvarez Torres startled and controlled himself at first sight of Francis' face. This was not missed by Regan, who grinningly demanded:

"Looks like the old pirate himself, eh?"

"Yes, the resemblance is most striking," Torres lied, or half-lied, for he did recognize the resemblance to the portraits he had seen of Sir Henry Morgan; although at the same time under his eyelids he saw the vision of another and living man who, no less than Francis and Sir Henry, looked as much like both of them as either looked like the other.

Francis was youth that was not to be denied. Modern maps and ancient charts were pored over, as well as old documents, handwritten in faded ink on time-yellowed paper, and at the end of half an hour he announced that the next fish he caught would be on either the Bull or the Calf the two islets off the Lagoon of Chiriqui, on one or the other of which Torres averred the treasure lay.

"I'll catch to-night's train for New Orleans," Francis announced. "That will just make connection with one of the United Fruit Company's boats for Colon oh, I had it all looked up before I slept last night."

"But don't charter a schooner at Colon," Torres advised. "Take the overland trip by horseback to Belen. There's the place to charter, with unsophisticated native sailors and everything else unsophisticated."

"Listens good!" Francis agreed. "I always wanted to see that country down there. You'll be ready to catch to-night's train, Senor Torres? .Of course, you understand, under the circumstances, I'll be the treasurer and foot the expenses."

But at a privy glance from Regan, Alvarez Torres lied with swift efficientness.

"I must join you later, I regret, Mr. Morgan. Some little business that presses how shall I say? an insignificant little lawsuit that must be settled first. Not that the sum at issue is important. But it is a family matter, and therefore gravely important. We Torres have our pride, which is a silly thing, I acknowledge, in this country, but which with us is very serious."

"He can join afterward, and straighten you out if you've missed the scent," Regan assured Francis. "And, before it slips your mind, it might be just as well to arrange with Senor Torres some division of the loot . if you ever find it."

"What would you say?" Francis asked.

"Equal division, fifty-fifty," Regan answered, magnificently arranging the apportionment between the two men of something he was certain did not exist.

"And you will follow after as soon as you can?" Francis asked the Latin American. "Regan, take hold of his little law affair yourself and expedite it, won't you?"

"Sure, boy," was the answer. "And, if it's needed, shall I advance cash to Senor Alvarez?"

"Fine!" Francis shook their hands in both of his. "It will save me bother. And I've got to rush to pack and break engagements and catch that train. So long, Regan. Good-bye, Senor Torres, until we meet somewhere around Bocas del Toro, or in a little hole in the ground on the Bull or the Calf you say you think it's the Calf? Well, until then adios!"

And Senor Alvarez Torres remained with Regan some time longer, receiving explicit instructions for the part he was to play, beginning with retardation and delay of Francis' expedition, and culminating in similar retardation and delay always to be continued.

"In short," Regan concluded, "I don't almost care if he never comes back if you can keep him down there for the good of his health that long and longer."

CHAPTER 2

MONEY, like youth, will not be denied, and Francis Morgan, who was the man-legal and nature-certain representative of both youth and money, found himself one afternoon, three weeks after he had said goodbye to Regan, becalmed close under the land on board his schooner, the Angelique. The water was glassy, the smooth roll scarcely perceptible, and, in sheer ennui and overplus of energy that likewise declined to be denied, he asked the captain, a breed, half Jamaica negro and half Indian, to order a small skiff over the side.

"Looks like I might shoot a parrot or a monkey or something," he explained, searching the jungle-clad shore, half a mile away, through a twelve-power Zeiss glass.

"Most problematic, sir, that you are bitten by a labarri, which is deadly viper in these parts," grinned the breed skipper and owner of the Angelique, who, from his Jamaica father had inherited the gift of tongues.

But Francis was not to be deterred; for at the moment, through his glass, he had picked out, first, in the middle ground, a white hacienda, and second, on the beach, a white-clad woman's form, and further, had seen that she was scrutinising him and the schooner through a pair of binoculars.

"Put the skiff over, skipper," he ordered. "Who lives around here? white folks?"

"The Enrico Solano family, sir," was the answer. "My word, they are important gentlefolk, old Spanish, and they own the entire general landscape from the sea to the Cordilleras and half of the Chiriqui Lagoon as well. They are very poor, most powerful rich ... in landscape and they are prideful and fiery as cayenne pepper."

As Francis, in the tiny skiff, rowed shoreward, the skipper's alert eye noted that he had neglected to take along either rifle or shotgun for the contemplated parrot or monkey. And, next, the skipper's eye picked up the whiteclad woman's figure against the dark edge of the jungle.

Straight to the white beach of coral sand Francis rowed, not trusting himself to look over his shoulder to see if the woman remained or had vanished. In his mind was merely a young man's healthy idea of encountering a bucolic young lady, or a half-wild white woman for that matter, or at the best a very provincial one, with whom he could fool and fun away a few minutes of the calm that fettered the Ang clique to immobility. When the skifl grounded, he stepped out, and with one sturdy arm lifted its nose high enough up the sand to fasten it by its own weight. Then he turned around. The beach to the jungle was bare. He strode forward confidently. Any traveller, on so strange a shore, had a right to seek inhabitants for information on his way was the idea he was acting out.

And he, who had anticipated a few moments of diversion merely, was diverted beyond his fondest expectations. Like a jack-in-the-box, the woman, who, in the flash of vision vouchsafed him demonstrated that she was a girl-woman, ripely mature and yet mostly girl, sprang out of the green wall of jungle and with both hands seized his arm. The hearty weight of grip in the seizure surprised him. He fumbled his hat off with his free hand and bowed to the strange woman with the imperturbable-ness of a Morgan, New York trained and disciplined to be surprised at nothing, and received another surprise, or several surprises compounded. Not alone was it her semi-brunette beauty that impacted upon him with the weight of a blow, but it was her gaze, driven into him, that was all of sternness. Almost it seemed to him that he must know her. Strangers, in his experience, never so looked at one another.

The double grip on his arm became a draw, as she muttered tensely:

“Quick! Follow me!”

A moment he resisted. She shook him in the fervor of her desire, and strove to pull him toward her and after her. With the feeling that it was some unusual game, such as one might meet up with on the coast of Central America, he yielded, smilingly, scarcely knowing whether he followed voluntarily or was being dragged into the jungle by her impetuosity.

“Do as I do,” she shot back at him over her shoulder, by this time leading him with one hand of hers in his.

He smiled and obeyed, crouching when she crouched, doubling over when she doubled, while memories of John Smith and Pocahontas glimmered up in his fancy.

Abruptly she checked him and sat down, her hand directing him to sit beside her ere she released him, and pressed it to her heart while she panted:

“Thank God! Oh, merciful Virgin!”

In imitation, such having been her will of him, and such seeming to be the cue of the game, he smilingly pressed his own hand to his heart, although he called neither on God nor the Virgin.

"Won't you ever be serious?" she flashed at him, noting his action.

And Francis was immediately and profoundly, as well as naturally, serious.

"My dear lady. " he began.

But an abrupt gesture checked him; and, with growing wonder, he watched her bend and listen, and heard the movement of bodies padding down some runway several yards away.

With a soft warm palm pressed commandingly to his to be silent, she left him with the abruptness that he had already come to consider as customary with her, and slipped away down the runway. Almost he whistled with astonishment. He might have whistled it, had he not heard her voice, not distant, in Spanish, sharply interrogate men whose Spanish voices, half-humbly, half-insistently and half-rebelliously, answered her.

He heard them move on, still talking, and, after five minutes of dead silence, heard her call for him peremptorily to come out.

"Gee! I wonder what Regan would do under such circumstances!" he smiled to himself as he obeyed.

He followed her, no longer hand in hand, through the jungle to the beach. When she paused, he came beside her and faced her, still under the impress of the fantasy which possessed him that it was a game.

"Tag!" he laughed, touching her on the shoulder. "Tag!" he reiterated. "You're It!"

The anger of her blazing dark eyes scorched him.

"You fool!" she cried, lifting her finger with what he considered, undue intimacy to his toothbrush moustache. "As if that could disguise you!"

"But my dear lady . " he began to protest his certain unacquaintance with her.

Her retort, which broke off his speech, was as unreal and bizarre as everything else which had gone before. So quick was it, that he failed to see whence the tiny silver revolver had been drawn, the muzzle of which was not presented merely toward his abdomen, but pressed closely against it.

"My dear lady. " he tried again.

"I won't talk with you," she shut him off. "Go back to your schooner, and go away. " He guessed the inaudible sob of the pause, ere she concluded, "Forever."

This time his mouth opened to speech that was aborted on his lips by the stiff thrust of the muzzle of the weapon into his abdomen.

"If you ever come back the Madonna forgive me I shall shoot myself."

"Guess I'd better go, then," he uttered airily, as he turned to the skiff, toward which he walked in stately embarrassment, half-filled with laughter for himself and for the ridiculous and incomprehensible figure he was cutting.

Endeavoring to retain a last shred of dignity, he took no notice that she had followed him. As he lifted the skiff's nose from the sand, he was aware that a faint wind was rustling the palm fronds. A long breeze was darkening the water close at hand, while, far out across the mirrored water the outlying keys of Chiriqui Lagoon shimmered like a mirage above the dark-crisping water.

A sob compelled him to desist from stepping into the skiff, and to turn his head. The strange young woman, revolver dropped to her side, was crying. His step back to her was instant, and the touch of his hand on her arm was sympathetic and inquiring. She shuddered at his touch, drew away from him, and gazed at him reproachfully through her tears. With a shrug of shoulders to her many moods and of surrender to the incom-prehensibleness of the situation, he was about to turn to the boat, when she stopped him.

"At least you. " she began, then faltered and swallowed, "you might kiss me good-bye."

She advanced impulsively, with outstretched arms, the revolver dangling incongruously from her right hand. Francis hesitated a puzzled moment, then gathered her in to receive an astounding passionate kiss on his lips ere she dropped her head on his shoulder in a breakdown of tears. Despite his amazement he was aware of the revolver pressing flatwise against his back between the shoulders. She lifted her tear-wet face and kissed him again and again, and he wondered to himself if he were a cad for meeting her kisses with almost equal and fully as mysterious impulsiveness.

With a feeling that he did not in the least care how long the tender episode might last, he was startled by her quick drawing away from him, as anger and contempt blazed back in her face, and as she menacingly directed him with the revolver to get into the boat.

He shrugged his shoulders as if to say that he could not say no to a lovely lady, and obeyed, sitting to the oars and facing her as he began rowing-away.

“The Virgin save me from my wayward heart,” she cried, with her free hand tearing a locket from her bosom, and, in a shower of golden beads, flinging the ornament into the waterway midway between them.

From the edge of the jungle he saw three men, armed with rifles, run toward her where she had sunk down in the sand. In the midst of lifting her up, they caught sight of Francis, who had begun rowing a strong stroke. Over his shoulder he glimpsed the Angelique, close hauled and slightly heeling, cutting through the water toward him. The next moment, one of the trio on the beach, a bearded elderly man, was directing the girl’s binoculars on him. And the moment after, dropping the glasses, he was taking aim with his rifle.

The bullet spat on the water within a yard of the skiff’s side, and Francis saw the girl spring to her feet, knock up the rifle with her arm, and spoil the second shot. Next, pulling lustily, he saw the men separate from her to sight their rifles, and saw her threatening them with the revolver into lowering their weapons.

The Angelique, thrown up into the wind to stop way, foamed alongside, and with an agile leap Francis was aboard, while already, the skipper putting the wheel up, the schooner was paying off and filling. With boyish zest, Francis wafted a kiss of farewell to the girl, who was staring toward him, and saw her collapse on the shoulders of the bearded elderly man.

“Cayenne pepper, eh those damned, horrible, crazyproud Solanos,” the breed skipper flashed at Francis with white teeth of laughter.

“Just bugs clean crazy, nobody at home,” Francis laughed back, as he sprang to the rail to waft further kisses to the strange damsel.

Before the land wind, the Ang clique made the outer rim of Chiriqui Lagoon and the Bull and Calf, some fifty miles farther along on the rim, by midnight, when the skipper hove to to wait for daylight. After breakfast, rowed by a Jamaica negro sailor in the skiff, Francis landed to recon-noiter on the Bull, which was the larger island and which the skipper had told him ho might find occupied at that season of the year by turtle-catching Indians from the mainland.

And Francis very immediately found that he had traversed not merely thirty degrees of latitude from New York but thirty hundred years, or centuries for that matter, from the last word of civilisation to almost the first word of the primeval. Naked, except for breech-clouts of gunny-sacking, armed with cruelly heavy hacking blades of machetes, the turtle-catchers were swift in proving themselves arrant beggars and dangerous man-killers. The Bull belonged to them, they told him through the medium of his Jamaican sailor's interpreting; but the Calf, which used to belong to them for the turtle season now was possessed by a madly impossible Gringo, whose reckless, dominating ways had won from them the respect of fear for a twolegged human creature who was more fearful than themselves.

While Francis, for a silver dollar, dispatched one of them with a message to the mysterious Gringo that he desired to call on him, the rest of them clustered about Francis' skiff, whining for money, glowering upon him, and even impudently stealing his pipe, yet warm from his lips, which he had laid beside him in the sternsheets. Promptly he had laid a blow on the ear of the thief, and the next thief who seized it, and recovered the pipe. Machetes out and sun-glistening their clean-slicing menace, Francis covered and controlled the gang with an automatic pistol; and, while they drew apart in a group and whispered ominously, he made the discovery that his lone sailor-interpreter was a weak brother and received his returned messenger.

The negro went over to the turtle-catchers and talked with a friendliness and subservience, the tones of which Francis did not like. The messenger handed him his note, across which was scrawled in pencil:

"Vamos."

"Guess I'll have to go across myself," Francis told the negro whom he had beckoned back to him.

"Better be very careful and utmostly cautious, sir," the negro warned him. "These animals without reason are very problematically likely to act most unreasonably, sir."

"Get into the boat and row me over," Francis commanded shortly.

"No, sir, I regret much to say, sir," was the black sailor's answer. "I signed on, sir, as a sailor to Captain Trefethen, but I didn't sign on for no suicide, and I can't see my way to rowin' you over, sir, to certain death. Best thing we can do is to get out of this hot place that's certainly and without peradventure of a doubt goin' to get hotter for us if we remain, sir."

In huge disgust and scorn Francis pocketed his automatic, turned his back on the sacking-clad savages, and walked away through the palms. Where a great boulder of coral rock had been upthrust by some ancient restlessness of the earth, he came down to the beach. On the shore of the Calf, across the narrow channel, he 'made out a dinghy drawn up. Drawn up on his own side was a crank-looking and manifestly leaky dug-out canoe. As he tilted the water out of it, he noticed that the turtle-catchers had followed and were peering at him from the edge of the coconuts, though his weak-hearted sailor was not in sight.

To paddle across the channel was a matter of moments, but scarcely was he on the beach of the Calf when further inhospitality greeted him on the part of a tall , barefooted young man, who stepped from behind a palm, automatic pistol in hand, and shouted:

“Vamos! Get out! Scut!”

“Ye gods and little fishes!” Francis grinned, half-humorously, half-seriously. “A fellow can’t move in these parts without having a gun shoved in his face. And everybody says get out pronto.”

“Nobody invited you,” the stranger retorted. “You’re intruding. Get off my island. I’ll give you half a minute.”

“I’m getting sore, friend,” Francis assured him truthfully, at the same time, out of the corner of his eye, measuring the distance to the nearest palm-trunk. “Everybody I meet around here is crazy and discourteous, and peevishly anxious to be rid of my presence, and they’ve just got me feeling that way myself. Besides, just because you tell me it’s your island is no proof.”

The swift rush he made to the shelter of the palm left his sentence unfinished. His arrival behind the trunk was simultaneous with the arrival of a bullet that thudded into the other side of it.

“Now, just for that!” he called out, as he centered a bullet into the trunk of the other man’s palm.

The next few minutes they blazed away, or waited for calculated shots, and when Francis’ eighth and last had been fired, he was unpleasantly certain that he had counted only seven shots for the stranger. He cautiously exposed part of his sun-helmet, held in his hand, and had it perforated.

“What gun are you using?” he asked with cool politeness.

“Colt’s,” came the answer.

Francis stepped boldly into the open, saying: “Then you’re all out. I counted ‘em. Eight. Now we can talk.”

The stranger stepped out, and Francis could not help admiring the fine figure of him, despite the fact that a dirty pair of canvas pants, a cotton undershirt, and a floppy sombrero constituted his garmenting. Further, it seemed he had previously known him, though it did not enter his mind that he was looking at a replica of himself.

“Talk!” the stranger sneered, throwing down his pistol and drawing a knife. “Now we’ll just cut off your ears, and maybe scalp you.”

“Gee! You’re sweet-natured and gentle animals in this neck of the woods,” Francis retorted, his anger and disgust increasing. He drew his own hunting knife, brand new from the shop and shining. “Say, let’s wrestle, and cut out this ten-twenty-and-thirty knife stuff.”

“I want your ears,” the stranger answered pleasantly, as he slowly advanced.

“Sure. First down, and the man who wins the fall gets the other fellow’s ears.”

“Agreed.” The young man in the canvas trousers sheathed his knife.

“Too bad there isn’t a moving picture camera to film this,” Francis girded, sheathing his own knife. “I’m sore as a boil. I feel like a heap bad Injun. Watch out! I’m coming in a rush! Anyway and everyway for the first fall!”

Action and word went together, and his glorious rush ended ignorainiously, for the stronger, apparently braced for the shock, yielded the instant their bodies met and fell over on his back, at the same time planting his foot in Francis’ abdomen and, from the back purchase on the ground, transforming Francis’ rush into a wild forward somersault.

The fall on the sand knocked most of Francis’ breath out of him, and the flying body of his foe, impacting on him, managed to do for what little breath was left him. As he lay speechless on his back, he observed the man on top of him gazing down at him with sudden curiosity.

“What d’ you want to wear a mustache for?” the stranger muttered.

“Go on and cut ‘em off,” Francis gasped, with the first of his returning breath. “The ears are yours, but the mustache is mine. It is not in the bond. Besides, that fall was straight jiu jiutsu.”

“You said ‘anyway and everyway for the first fall,’ the other quoted laughingly. “As for your ears, keep them. I never intended to cut them off, and now that I look at them closely the less I want them. Get up and get out of here. I’ve licked you. Vamos! And don’t come sneaking around here again! Git! Scut!”

In greater disgust than ever, to which was added the humiliation of defeat, Francis turned down to the beach toward his canoe.

"Say, Little Stranger, do you mind leaving your card?" the victor called after him.

"Visiting cards and cut-throating don't go together," Francis shot back across his shoulder, as he squatted in the canoe and dipped his paddle. "My name's Morgan."

Surprise and startlement were the stranger's portion, as he opened his mouth to speak, then changed his mind and murmured to himself, "Same stock — no wonder we look alike."

Still in the throes of disgust, Francis regained the shore of the Butt, sat down on the edge of the dugout, filled and lighted his pipe, and gloomily meditated. "Crazy, everybody," was the run of his thought. "Nobody acts with reason. I'd like to see old Regan try to do business with these people. They'd get his ears."

Could he have seen, at that moment, the young man of the canvas pants and of familiar appearance, he would have been certain that naught but lunacy resided in Latin America; for the young man in question, inside a grassthatched hut in the heart of his island, grinning to himself as he uttered aloud, "I guess I put the fear of God into that particular member of the Morgan family," had just begun to stare at a photographic reproduction of an oil painting on the wall of the original Sir Henry Morgan.

"Well, Old Pirate," he continued grinning, "two of your latest descendants came pretty close to getting each other with automatics that would make your antediluvian horsepistols look like thirty cents."

He bent to a battered and worm-eaten sea-chest, lifted the lid that was monogramed with an "M," and again addressed the portrait:

"Well, old pirate Welshman of an ancestor, all you've left me is the old duds and a face that looks like yours. And I guess, if I was really fired up, I could play your Port-au-Prince stunt about as well as you played it yourself."

A moment later, beginning to dress himself in the ageworn and moth-eaten garments of the chest, he added:

"Well, here's the old duds on my back. Come, Mister Ancestor, down out of your frame, and dare to tell me a point of looks in which we differ."

Clad in Sir Henry Morgan's ancient habiliments, a cutlass strapped on around the middle and two flint-lock pistols of huge and ponderous design thrust into his waist-scarf, the resemblance between the living man and the pictured semblance of the old buccaneer who had been long since resolved to dust, was striking.

“Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew ... “

As the young man, picking the strings of a guitar, began to sing the old buccaneer rouse, it seemed to him that the picture of his forebear faded into another picture and that he saw:

The old forebear himself, back to a mainmast, cutlass out and flashing, facing a semi-circle of fantastically clad sailor cutthroats, while behind him, on the opposite side of the mast, another similarly garbed and accoutred man, with cutlass flashing, faced the other semi-circle of cutthroats that completed the ring about the mast.

The vivid vision of his fancy was broken by the breaking of a guitar-string which he had thrummed too passionately. And in the sharp pause of silence, it seemed that a fresh vision of old Sir Henry came to him, down out of. the frame and beside him, real in all seeming, plucking at his sleeve to lead him out of the hut and whispering a ghostly repetition of:

“Back to back against the mainmast Held at bay the entire crew.”

The young man obeyed his shadowy guide, or some prompting of his own profound of intuition, and went out the door and down to the beach, where, gazing across the narrow channel, on the beach of the Bull, he saw his late antagonist, backed up against the great boulder of coral rock, standing off an attack of sack-clouted, machetewielding Indians with wide sweeping strokes of a driftwood timber.

And Francis, in extremity, swaying dizzily from the blow of a rock on his head, saw the apparition, that almost convinced him he was already dead and in the realm of the shades, of Sir Henry Morgan himself, cutlass in hand, rushing up the beach to his rescue. Further, the apparition, brandishing the cutlass and laying out Indians right and left, was bellowing:

“Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew.”

As Francis’ knees gave under him and he slowly crumpled and sank down, he saw the Indians scatter and flee before the onslaught of the weird pirate figure and heard their cries of:

“Heaven help us!” “The Virgin protect us!” “It’s the ghost of old Morgan!”

Francis next opened his eyes inside the grass hut in the midmost center of the Calf. First, in the glimmering sight of returning consciousness, he beheld the pictured lineaments of Sir Henry Morgan staring down at him from the wall. Next, it was a younger edition of the same, in three dimensions of living, moving flesh, who thrust a mug of brandy to his lips and bade him drink. Francis was on his feet ere he touched lips to the mug; and both he and the stranger man, moved by a common impulse, looked squarely into each other's eyes, glanced at the picture on the wall find touched mugs in a salute to the picture and to each other ere they drank.

"You told me you were a Morgan," the stranger said. "I am a Morgan. That man on the wall fathered my breed. Your breed?"

"The old buccaneer's," Francis returned. "My first name is Francis. And yours?"

"Henry straight from the original. We must be remote cousins or something or other. I'm after the foxy old niggardly old Welshman's loot."

"So'm I," said Francis, extending his hand. "But to hell with sharing."

"The old blood talks in you," Henry smiled approbation. "For him to have who finds. I've turned most of this island upside down in the last six months, and all I've found are these old duds. I'm with you to beat you if I can, but to put my back against the mainmast with you any time the needed call goes out."

"That song's a wonder," Francis urged. "I want to learn it. Lift the stave again."

And together, clanking their mugs, they sang:

"Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew ... "

CHAPTER 3

BUT a splitting headache put a stop to Francis' singing and made him glad to be swung' in a cool hammock by Henry, who rowed off to the Angeligue with orders from his visitor to the skipper to stay at anchor but not to permit any of his sailors to land on the Calf. Not until late in the morning of the following day, after hours of heavy sleep, did Francis get on his feet and announce that his head was clear again.

"I know what it is got bucked off a horse once," his strange relative sympathised, as he poured him a huge cup of fragrant black coffee. "Drink that down. It will make a new man of you. Can't offer you much for breakfast except bacon, sea biscuit, and some scrambled turtle eggs. They're fresh. I guarantee that, for I dug them out this morning while you slept."

"That coffee is a meal in itself," Francis praised, meanwhile studying his kinsman and ever and anon glancing at the portrait of their relative.

"You're just like him, and in more than mere looks," Henry laughed, catching him in his scrutiny. "When you refused to share yesterday, it was old Sir Henry to the fife. He had a deep-seated antipathy against sharing, even with his own crews. It's what caused most of his troubles. And he's certainly never shared a penny of his treasure with any of his descendants. Now I'm different. Not only will I share the Calf with you; but I'll present you with my half as well, lock, stock, and barrel, this grass hut, all these nice furnishings, tenements, hereditaments, and everything, and what's left of the turtle eggs. When do you want to move in?"

"You mean. ?" Francis asked.

"Just that. There's nothing here. I've just about dug the island upside down and all I found was the chest there full of old clothes."

"It must have encouraged you."

"Mightily. I thought I had a hammerlock on it. At any rate, it showed I'm on the right track."

"What's the matter with trying the Bull?" Francis queried.

"That's my idea right now," was the answer, "though I've got another clue for over on the mainland. Those oldtimers had a way of noting down their latitude and longitude whole degrees out of the way."

“Ten North and Ninety East on the chart might mean Twelve North and Ninety-two East,” Francis concurred. “Then again it might mean Eight North and Eighty-eight East. They carried the correction in their heads, and if they died unexpectedly, which was their custom, it seems, the secret died with them.”

“I’ve half a notion to go over to the Bull and chase those turtle-catchers back to the mainland,” Henry went on. “And then again I’d almost like to tackle the mainland clue first. I suppose you’ve got a stock of clues, too?”

“Sure thing,” Francis nodded. “But say, I’d like to take back what I said about not sharing.”

“Say the word,” the other encouraged.

“Then I do say it.”

Their hands extended and gripped in ratification.

“Morgan and Morgan strictly limited,” chortled Francis.

“Assets, the whole Caribbean Sea, the Spanish Main, most of Central America, one chest full of perfectly no good old clothes, and a lot of holes in the ground,” Henry joined in the other’s humor. “Liabilities, snake-bite, thieving Indians, malaria, yellow fever — ”

“And pretty girls with a habit of kissing total strangers one moment, and of sticking up said total strangers with shiny silver revolvers the next moment,” Francis cut in. “Let me tell you about it. Day before yesterday, I rowed ashore over on the mainland. The moment I landed, the prettiest girl in the world pounced out upon me and dragged me away into the jungle. Thought she was going to eat me or marry me. I didn’t know which. And before I could find out, what’s the pretty damsel do but pass uncomplimentary remarks on my mustache and chase me back to the boat with a revolver. Told me to beat it and never come back, or words to that effect.”

“Whereabouts on the mainland was this?” Henry demanded, with a tenseness which Francis, chuckling his reminiscence of the misadventure, did not notice.

“Down’ toward the other end of Chiriqui Lagoon,” he replied. “It was the stamping ground of the Solano family, I learned; and they are a red peppery family, as I found out. But I haven’t told you all. Listen. First she dragged me into the vegetation and insulted my mustache ; next she chased me to the boat with a drawn revolver ; and then she wanted to know why I didn’t kiss her. Can you beat that?”

"And did you?" Henry demanded, his hand unconsciously clinching by his side.

"What could a poor stranger in a strange land do? It was some armful of pretty girl — "

The next fraction of a second Francis had sprung to his feet and blocked before his jaw a crushing blow of Henry's fist.

"I . I beg your pardon," Henry mumbled, and slumped down on the ancient sea chest. I'm a fool, I know, but I'll be hanged if I can stand for — "

"There you go again," Francis interrupted resentfully. "As crazy as everybody else in this crazy country. One moment you bandage up my cracked head, and the next moment you want to knock that same head clean of? of me. As bad as the girl taking turns at kissing me and shoving a gun into my midrif."

"That's right, fire away, I deserve it," Henry admitted ruefully, but involuntarily began to fire up as he continued with: "Confound you, that was Leoncia."

"What if it was Leoncia? Or Mercedes? Or Dolores? Can't a fellow kiss a pretty girl at a revolver's point without having his head knocked off by the next ruffian he meets in dirty canvas pants on a notorious sand-heap of an island?"

"When the pretty girl is engaged to marry the ruffian in the dirty canvas pants."

"You don't mean to tell me," the other broke in excitedly.

"It isn't particularly amusing to said ruffian to be told that his sweetheart has been kissing a ruffian she never saw before from off a disreputable Jamaica nigger's schooner," Henry completed his sentence.

"And she took me for you," Francis mused, glimpsing the situation. "I don't blame you for losing your temper, though you must admit it's a nasty one. Wanted to cut off my ears yesterday, didn't you?"

"Yours is just as nasty, Francis, my boy. The way you insisted that I cut them off when I had you down ha! ha!" Both young men laughed in hearty amity.

"It's the old Morgan temper," Henry said. "He was by all the accounts a peppery old cuss."

"No more peppery than those Solanos you're marrying into. Why, most of the family came down on the beach and peppered me with rifles on my departing way. And your Leoncia pulled her little popgun on a long-bearded old fellow who might have been her father and gave him to understand she'd shoot him full of holes if he didn't stop plugging away at me."

"It was her father, I'll wager, old Enrico himself," Henry exclaimed. "And the other chaps were her brothers."

"Lovely lizards!" ejaculated Francis. "Say, don't you think life is liable to become a trifle monotonous when you're married into such a peaceful, dove-like family as that!" He broke off, struck by a new idea. "By the way, Henry, since they all thought it was you, and not I, why in thunder-ation did they want to kill you? Some more of your crusty Morgan temper that peeved your prospective wife's relatives?"

Henry looked at him a moment, as if debating with himself, and then answered.

"I don't mind telling you. It is a nasty mess, and I suppose my temper was to blame. I quarreled with her uncle. He was her father's youngest brother."

"Was?" interrupted Francis with significant stress on the past tense.

"Was, I said," Henry nodded. "He isn't now. His name was Alfaro Solano, and he had some temper himself. They claim to be descended from the Spanish conquistadores, and they are prouder than hornets. He'd made money in logwood, and he had just got a big henequen plantation started farther down the coast. And then we quarreled. It was in the little town over there San Antonio. It may have been a misunderstanding, though I still maintain he was wrong. He always was looking for trouble with me didn't want me to marry Leoncia, you see.

"Well, it was a hot time. It started in a pulqueria where Alfaro had been drinking more mescal than was good for him. He insulted me all right. They had to hold us apart and take our guns away, and we separated swearing death and destruction. That was the trouble our quarrel and our threats were heard by a score of witnesses.

"Within two hours the Comisario himself and two gendarmes found me bending over Alfaro's body in a back street in the town. He'd been knifed in the back, and I'd stumbled over him on the way to the beach. Explain? No such thing. There were the quarrel and the threats of vengeance, and there I was, not two hours afterward, caught dead to right with his warm corpse. I haven't been back in San Antonio since, and I didn't waste any time in getting away. Alfaro was very popular, you know the dashing type that catches the rabble's fancy. Why, they couldn't have been persuaded to give me even the semblance of a trial. Wanted my blood there and then, and I departed very pronto.

"Next, up at Bocas del Toro, a messenger from Leoncia delivered back the engagement ring. And there you are. I developed a real big disgust, and, since I didn't dare go back with all the Solanos and the rest of the population thirsting for my life, I came over here to play hermit for a while and dig for Morgan's treasure. Just the same, I wonder who did stick that knife into Alfaro. If ever I find him, then I clear myself with Leoncia and the rest of the Solanos and there isn't a doubt in the world that there'll be a wedding. And now that it's all over I don't mind admitting that Alfaro was a good scout, even if his temper did go off at half-cock."

"Clear as print," Francis murmured. "No wonder her father and brothers wanted to perforate me. Why, the more I look at you, the more I see we're as like as two peas, except for my mustache — "

"And for this. " Henry rolled up his sleeve, and on the left forearm showed a long, thin white scar. "Got that when I was a boy. Fell oft a windmill and through the glass roof of a hothouse."

"Now listen to me," Francis said, his face beginning to light with the project forming in his mind. "Somebody's got to straighten you out of this mess, and the chap's name is Francis, partner in the firm of Morgan and Morgan. You stick around here, or go over and begin prospecting on the Bull, while I go back and explain things to Leoncia and her people."

"If only they don't shoot you first before you can explain you are not I," Henry muttered bitterly. "That's the trouble with those Solanos. They shoot first and talk afterward. They won't listen to reason unless it's post mortem."

"Quess I'll take a chance, old man," Francis assured the other, himself all fire with the plan of clearing up the distressing situation between Henry and the girl.

But the thought of her perplexed him. He experienced more than a twinge of regret that the lovely creature belonged of right to the man who looked so much like him, and he saw again the vision of her on the beach, when, with conflicting emotions, she had alternately loved him and yearned toward him and blazed her scorn and contempt on him. He sighed involuntarily.

"What's that for?" Henry demanded quizzically.

"Leoncia is an exceedingly pretty girl," Francis answered with transparent frankness. "Just the same, she's yours, and I'm going to make it my business to see that you get her. Where's that ring she returned? If I don't put it on her finger for you and be back here in a week with the good news, you can cut off my mustache along with my ears."

An hour later, Captain Trefethen having sent a boat to the beach from the Angelique in response to signal, the two young men were saying good-bye.

"Just two things more, Francis. First, and I forgot to tell you, Leoncia is not a Solano at all, though she thinks she is. Alfaro told me himself. She is an adopted child, and old Enrico fairly worships her, though neither his blood nor his race runs in her veins. Alfaro never told me the ins and outs of it, though he did say she wasn't Spanish at all. I don't even know whether she's English or American. She talks good enough English, though she got that at convent. You see, she was adopted when she was a wee thing, and she's never known anything else than that Enrico is her father."

"And no wonder she scorned and hated me for you," Francis laughed, "believing, as she did, as she still does, that you knifed her full blood-uncle in the back."

Henry nodded, and went on.

"The other thing is fairly important. And that's the law. Or the absence of it, rather. They make it whatever they want it, down in this out-of-the-way hole. It's a long way to Panama, and the gobernador of this state, or district, or whatever they call it, is a sleepy old Silenus. The Jefe Politico at San Antonio is the man to keep an eye on. He's the little czar of that neck of the woods, and he's some crooked hombre, take it from yours truly. Graft is too weak a word to apply to some of his deals, and he's as cruel and blood-thirsty as a weasel. And his one crowning delight is an execution. He dotes on a hanging. Keep your weather eye on him, whatever you do ... And, well, so long. And half of whatever I find on the Bull is yours:. and see you get that ring back on Leoncia's finger."

Two days later, after the half-breed skipper had reconnoitered ashore and brought back the news that all the men of Leoncia's family were away, Francis had himself landed on the beach where he had first met her. No maidens with silver revolvers nor men with rifles were manifest. All was placid, and the only person on the beach was a ragged little Indian boy who at sight of a coin readily consented to carry a note up to the young senorita of the big hacienda. As Francis scrawled on a sheet of paper from his notebook, “I am the man whom ,you mistook for Henry Morgan, and I have a-message for you from him,” he little dreamed that untoward happenings were about to occur with as equal rapidity and frequence as on his first visit.

For that matter, could he have peeped over the outjut of rock against which he leaned his back while composing the note to Leoncia, he would have been star bled by a vision of the young lady herself, emerging like a sea-goddess fresh from a swim in the sea. But he wrote calmly on, the Indian lad even more absorbed than himself in the operation, so that it was Leoncia, coming around the rock from behind, who first caught sight of him. Stifling an exclamation, she turned and fled blindly into the green screen of jungle.

His first warning of her proximity was immediately thereafter, when a startled scream of fear aroused him. Note and pencil fell to the sand as he sprang toward the direction of the cry and collided with a wet and scantily dressed young woman who was recoiling backward from whatever had caused her scream. The unexpectedness of the collision was provocative of a second startled scream from her ere she could turn and recognize that it was not a new attack but a rescuer.

She darted past him, her face colorless from the fright, stumbled over the Indian boy, nor paused until she was out on the open sand.

“What is it?” Francis demanded. “Are you hurt? What’s happened?”

She pointed at her bare knee, where two tiny drops of blood oozed forth side by side from two scarcely perceptible lacerations.

“It was a viperine,” she said. “A deadly viperine. I shall be a dead woman in five minutes, and I am glad, glad, for then my heart will be tormented no more by you.”

She leveled an accusing finger at him, gasped the beginning of denunciation she could not utter, and sank down in a faint.

Francis knew about the snakes of Central America merely by hearsay, but the hearsay was terrible enough. Men talked of even mules and dogs dying in horrible agony five to ten minutes after being struck by tiny reptiles fifteen to twenty inches long. Small wonder she had fainted, was his thought, with so terribly rapid a poison doubtlessly beginning to work. His knowledge of the treatment of snake-bite was likewise hearsay, but flashed through his mind the recollection of the need of a tourniquet to shut off the circulation above the wound and prevent the poison from reaching the heart.

He pulled out his handkerchief and tied it loosely around her leg above the knee, thrust in a short piece of driftwood stick, and twisted the handkerchief to savage tightness. Next, and all by hearsay, working swiftly, he opened the small blade of his pocket-knife, burned it with several matches to make sure against germs, and cut carefully but re-morsely into the two lacerations made by the snake's fangs.

He was in a fright himself, working with feverish deftness and apprehending at any moment that the pangs of dissolution would begin to set in on the beautiful form before him. From all he had heard, the bodies of snake-victims began to swell quickly and prodigiously. Even as he finished excoriating the fang-wounds, his mind was made up to his next two acts. First, he would suck out all poison he possibly could; and, next, light a cigarette and with its rive end proceed to cauterize the flesh.

But while he was still making light, criss-cross cuts with the point of his knife-blade, she began to move restlessly.

"Lie down," he commanded, as she sat up, and just when he was bending his lips to the task.

In response, he received a resounding slap alongside of his face from her little hand. At the same instant the Indian lad danced out of the jungle, swinging a small dead snake by the tail and crying exultingly:

"Labarri! Labarri!"

At which Francis assumed the worst.

"Lie down, and be quiet!" he repeated harshly. "You haven't a second to lose."

But she had eyes only for the dead snake. Her relief was patent; but Francis was no witness to it, for he was bending again to perform the classic treatment of snake-bite.

"You dare!" she threatened him. "It's only a baby labarri, and its bite is harmless. I thought it was a viperine. They look alike when the labarri is small."

The constriction of the circulation by the tourniquet pained her, and she glanced down and discovered his handkerchief knotted around her leg.

"Oh, what have you done?"

A warm blush began to suffuse her face.

"But it was only a baby labarri," she reproached him.

"You told me it was a viperine," he retorted.

She hid her face in her hands, although the pink of flush burned furiously in her ears. Yet he could have sworn, unless it were hysteria, that she was laughing ; and he knew for the first time how really hard was the task he had undertaken to put the ring of another man on her finger. So he deliberately hardened his heart against the beauty and fascination of her, and said bitterly:

"And now, I suppose some of your gentry will shoot me full of holes because I don't know a labarri from a viperine. You might call some of the farm hands down to do it. Or maybe you'd like to take a shot at me yourself."

But she seemed not to have heard, for she had arisen with the quick litheness to be expected of so gloriously fashioned a creature, and was stamping her foot on the sand.

"It's asleep my foot," she explained with laughter unhidden this time by her hands.

"You're acting perfectly disgracefully," he assured her wickedly, "when you consider that I am the murderer of your uncle."

Thus reminded, the laughter ceased and the color receded from her face. She made no reply, but bending, with fingers that trembled with anger she strove to unknot the handkerchief as if it were some loathsome thing.

"Better let me help," he suggested pleasantly.

"You beast!" she flamed at him. "Step aside. Your shadow falls upon me."

"Now you are delicious, charming," he girded, belying the desire that stirred compellingly within him to clasp her in his arms. "You quite revive my last recollection of you here on the beach, one second reproaching me for not kissing you, the next second kissing me yes, you did, too — and the third second threatening to destroy my digestion forever with that little tin toy pistol of yours. No; you haven't changed an iota from last time. You're the same spitfire of a Leoncia. You'd better let me untie that for you. Don't you see the knot is jammed? Your little fingers can never manage it."

She stamped her foot in sheer inarticulateness of rage.

"Lucky for me you don't make a practice of taking your tin toy pistol in swimming with you," he teased on, "or else there'd be a funeral right here on the beach pretty pronto of a perfectly nice young man whose intentions are never less than the best."

The Indian boy returned at this moment running with her bathing wrap, which she snatched from him and put on hastily. Next, with the boy's help, she attacked the knot again. When the handkerchief came off she flung it from her as if in truth it were a viperine.

"It was contamination," she flashed, for his benefit.

But Francis, still engaged in hardening his heart against her, shook his head slowly and said:

"It doesn't save you, Leoncia. I've left my mark on you that never will come off."

He pointed to the excoriations he had made on her knee and laughed.

"The mark of the beast," she came back, turning to go. "I warn you to take yourself off, Mr. Henry Morgan."

But he stepped in her way.

"And now we'll talk business, Miss Solano," he said in changed tones. "And you will listen. Let your eyes flash all they please, but don't interrupt me." He stooped and picked up the note he had been engaged in writing. "I was just sending that to you by the boy when you screamed. Take it. Read it. It won't bite you. It isn't a viperine."

Though she refused to receive it, her eyes involuntarily scanned the opening line:

I am the man whom you mistook for Henry Morgan.

She looked at him with startled eyes that could not comprehend much but which were guessing many vague things.

"On my honor," he said gravely.

"You. are. not. Henry?" she gasped.

"No, I am not. Won't you please take it and read."

This time she complied, while he gazed with all his eyes upon the golden pallor of the sun on her tropic-touched blonde face which colored the blood beneath, or which was touched by the blood beneath, to the amazingly beautiful golden pallor.

Almost in a dream he discovered himself looking into her startled, questioning eyes of velvet brown.

"And who should have signed this?" she repeated.

He came to himself and bowed.

"But the name? your name?"

"Morgan, Francis Morgan. As I explained there, Henry and I are some sort of distant relatives forty-fifth cousins, or something like that."

To his bewilderment, a great doubt suddenly dawned in her eyes, and the old familiar anger flashed.

"Henry," she accused him. "This is a ruse, a devil's trick you're trying to play on me. Of course you are Henry."

Francis pointed to his mustache.

"You've grown that since," she challenged.

He pulled up his sleeve and showed her his left arm from wrist to elbow. But she only looked her incomprehension of the meaning of his action.

"Do you remember the scar?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Then find it."

She bent her head in swift vain search, then shook it slowly as she faltered:

"I. I ask your forgiveness. I was terribly mistaken, and when I think of the way I. I've treated you. "

"That kiss was delightful," he naughtily disclaimed.

She recollected more immediate passages, glanced down at her knee and stifled what he adjudged was a most adorable giggle.

"You say you have a message from Henry," she changed the subject abruptly. "And that he is innocent. ? This is true? Oh, I do want to believe you!"

"I am morally certain that Henry no more killed your uncle than did I."

"Then say no more, at least not now," she interrupted joyfully. "First of all I must make amends to you, though you must confess that some of the things you have done and said were abominable. You had no right to kiss me."

"If you will remember," he contended, "I did it at the pistol point. How was I to know but what I would get shot if I didn't."

"Oh, hush, hush," she begged. "You must go with me now to the house. And you can tell me about Henry on the way."

Her eyes chanced upon the handkerchief she had flung so contemptuously aside. She ran to it and picked it up.

"Poor, ill-treated kerchief," she crooned to it. "To you also must I make amends. I shall myself launder you, and. " Her eyes lifted to Francis as she addressed him. "And return it to you, sir, fresh and sweet and all wrapped around my heart of gratitude. "

"And the mark of the beast?" he queried.

"I am so sorry," she confessed penitently.

"And may I be permitted to rest my shadow upon you?"

"Do! Do!" she cried gaily. "There! I am in your shadow now. And we must start."

Francis tossed a peso to the grinning Indian boy, and, in high elation, turned and followed her into the tropic growth on the path that led up to the white hacienda.

Seated on the broad piazza of the Solano Hacienda, Alvarez Torres saw through the tropic shrubs the couple approaching along the winding driveway. And he saw what made him grit his teeth and draw vA-ry erroneous conclusions. He muttered imprecations to himself-and forgot his cigarette.

What he saw was Leoncia and Francis in such deep and excited talk as to be oblivious of everything else. He saw Francis grow so urgent of speech and gesture as to cause Leoncia to stop abruptly and listen further to his pleading. Next and Torres could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes, he saw Francis produce a ring, and Leoncia, with averted face, extend her left hand and receive the ring upon her third ringer. Engagement finger it was, and Torres could have sworn to it.

What had really occurred was the placing of Henry's engagement ring back on Leoncia's hand. And Leoncia, she knew not why, had been vaguely averse to receiving it.

Torres tossed the dead cigarette away, twisted his mustache fiercely, as if to relieve his own excitement, and advanced to meet them across the piazza. He did not return the girl's greeting at the first. Instead, with the wrathful face of the Latin, he burst out at Francis:

"One does not expect shame in a murderer, but at leastone does expect simple decency."

Francis smiled whimsically.

"There it goes again," he said. "Another lunatic in this lunatic land. The last time, Leoncia, that I saw this gentleman was in New York. He was really anxious to do business with me. Now I meet him here and the first thing he tells me is that I am an indecent, shameless murderer."

"Senor Torres, you must apologize," she declared angrily. "The house of Solano is not accustomed to having its guests insulted."

"The house of Solano, I then understand, is accustomed to having its men murdered by transient adventurers," he retorted. "No sacrifice is too great when it is in the name of hospitality."

"Get off your foot, Senor Torres," Francis advised him pleasantly. "You are standing on it. I know what your mistake is. You think I am Henry Morgan. I am Francis Morgan, and you and I, not long ago, transacted business together in Regan's office in New York. There's my hand. Your shaking of it will be sufficient apology under the circumstances."

Torres, overwhelmed for the moment by his mistake, took the extended hand and uttered apologies both to Francis and Leoncia.

"And now," she beamed through laughter, clapping her hands to call a house-servant, "I must locate Mr. Morgan, and go and get some clothes on. And after that, Senor Torres, if you will pardon us, we will tell you about Henry."

While she departed, and while Francis followed away to his room on the heels of a young and pretty mestizo woman. Torres, his brain resuming its functions, found he was more amazed and angry than ever. This, then, was a newcomer and stranger to Leoncia whom he had seen putting a ring on her engagement finger. He thought quickly and passionately for a moment. Leoncia, whom to himself he always named the queen of his dreams, had, on an instant's notice, engaged herself to a strange Gringo from New York. It was unbelievable, monstrous.

He clapped his hands, summoned his hired carriage from San Antonio, and was speeding down the drive when Francis strolled forth to have a talk with him about further details of the hiding place of old Morgan's treasure.

After lunch, when a land-breeze sprang up, which meant fair wind and a quick run across Chiriqui Lagoon and along the length of it to the Bull and the Calf, Francis, eager to bring to Henry the good word that his ring adorned Leoncia's finger, resolutely declined her proffered hospitality to remain for the night and meet Enrico Solano and his tall sons. Francis had a further reason for hasty departure. He could not endure the presence of Leoncia and this in no sense uncomplimentary to her. She charmed him, drew him, to such extent that he dared not endure her charm and draw if he were to remain man-faithful to the man in the canvas pants even then digging holes in the sands of the Bull.

So Francis departed, a letter to Henry from Leoncia in his pocket. The last moment, ere he departed, was abrupt. With a sigh so quickly suppressed that Leoncia wondered whether. or not she had imagined it, he tore himself away. She gazed after his retreating form down the driveway until it was out of sight, then stared at the ring on her finger with a vaguely troubled expression.

From the beach, Francis signaled the Angelique, riding at anchor, to send a boat ashore for him. But before it had been swung into the water, half a dozen horsemen, revolverbelted, rifles across their pommels, rode down the beach upon him at a gallop. Two men led. The following four were hang-dog half-castes. Of the two leaders, Francis recognized Torres. Every rifle came to rest on Francis, and he could not but obey the order snarled at him by the unknown leader to throw up his hands. And Francis opined aloud:

“To think of it! Once, only the other day or was it a million years ago? I thought auction bridge, at a dollar a point, was some excitement. Now, sirs, you on your horses, with your weapons threatening the violent introduction of foreign substances into my poor body, tell me what is doing now. Don’t I ever get off this beach without gunpowder complications? Is it my ears, or merely my mustache, you want?”

“We want you,” answered the stranger leader, whose mustache bristled as magnetically as his crooked black eyes.

“And in the name of original sin and of all lovely lizards, who might you be?”

“He is the honorable Senor Mariano Vercara e Hijos, Jefe Politico of San Antonio,” Torres replied.

“Good night,” Francis laughed, remembering the man’s description as given to him by Henry. “I suppose you think I’ve broken some harbor rule or sanitary regulation by anchoring here. But you must settle such things with my captain, Captain Trefethen, a very estimable gentleman. I am only the charterer of the schooner just a passenger. You will find Captain Trefethen right up in maritime law and custom.”

“You are wanted for the murder of Alfaro Solano,” was Torres’ answer. “You didn’t fool me, Henry Morgan, with your talk up at the hacienda that you were some one else. I know that some one else. His name is Francis Morgan, and I do not hesitate to add that he is not a murderer, but a gentleman.”

“Ye gods and little fishes!” Francis exclaimed. “And yet you ahook hands with me, Senor Torres.”

“I was fooled,” Torres admitted sadly. “But only for a moment. Will you come peaceably?”

“As if,” Francis shrugged his shoulders eloquently at the six rifles. “I suppose you’ll give me a pronto trial and hang me at daybreak.”

“Justice is swift in Panama,” the Jefe Politico replied, his English queerly accented but understandable. “But not so quick as that. We will not hang you at daybreak. Ten o’clock in the morning is more comfortable all around, don’t you think?”

“Oh, by all means,” Francis retorted. “Make it eleven, or twelve noon I won’t mind.”

“You will kindly come with us, Senor,” Mariano Vercara e Hijos, said, the suavity of his diction not masking the iron of its intention. “Juan! Ignacio!” he ordered in Spanish. “Dismount! Take his weapons. No, it will not be necessary to tie his hands. Put him on the horse behind Gregorio.”

Francis, in a venerably whitewashed adobe cell with walls five feet thick, its earth floor carpeted with the forms of half a dozen sleeping peon prisoners, listened to a dim hammering not very distant, remembered the trial from which he had just emerged, and whistled long and low. The hour was half-past eight in the evening. The trial had begun at eight. The hammering was the hammering together of the scaffold beams, from which place of eminence he was scheduled at ten next morning to swing off into space supported from the ground by a rope around his neck. The trial had lasted half an hour by his watch. Twenty minutes would have covered it had Leoncia not burst in and prolonged it by the ten minutes courteously accorded her as the great lady of the Solano family.

“The Jefe was right,” Francis acknowledged to himself in a matter of soliloquy. “Panama justice does move swiftly.”

The very possession of the letter given him by Leoncia and addressed to Henry Morgan had damned him. The rest had been easy. Half a dozen witnesses had testified to the murder and identified him as the murderer. The Jefe Politico himself had so testified. The one cheerful note had been the eruption on the scene of Leoncia, chaperoned by a palsied old aunt of the Solano family. That had been sweet the fight the beautiful girl had put up for his life, despite the fact that it was foredoomed to futility.

When she had made Francis roll up the sleeve and expose his left forearm, he had seen the Jefe Politico shrug his shoulders contemptuously. And he had seen Leoncia fling a passion of Spanish words, too quick for him to follow, at Torres. And he had seen and heard the gesticulation and the roar of the mob-filled court-room as Torres had taken the stand.

But what he had not seen was the whispered colloquy between Torres and the Jefe, as the former was in the thick of forcing his way through the press to the witness box. He no more saw this particular side-play than did he know that Torres was in the pay of Regan to keep him away from New York as long as possible, and as long as ever if possible, nor than did he know that Torres himself, in love with Leoncia, was consumed with a jealousy that knew no limit to its ire.

All of which had blinded Francis to the play under the interrogation of Torres by Leoncia, which had compelled Torres to acknowledge that he had never seen a scar on Francis Morgan's left forearm. While Leoncia had looked at the little old judge in triumph, the Jefe Politico had advanced and demanded of Torres in stentorian tones:

"Can you swear that you ever saw a scar on Henry Morgan's arm?"

Torres had been baffled and embarrassed, had looked bewilderment to the judge and pleadingness to Leoncia, and, in the end, without speech, shaken his head that he could not so swear.

The roar of triumph had gone up from the crowd of ragamuffins. The judge had pronounced sentence, the roar had doubled on itself, and Francis had been hustled out and to his cell, not entirely unresistingly, by the gendarmes and the Comisario, all apparently solicitous of saving him from the mob that was unwilling to wait till ten next morning for his death.

"That poor dub, Torres, who fell down on the scar on Henry!" Francis was meditating sympathetically, when the bolts of his cell door shot back and he arose to greet Leoncia.

But she declined to greet him for the moment, as she flared at the Comisario in rapid-fire Spanish, with gestures of command to which he yielded when he ordered the jailer to remove the peons to other cells, and himself, with a nervous and apologetic bowing, went out and closed the door.

And then Leoncia broke down, sobbing on his shoulder, in his arms: "It is a cursed country, a cursed country. There is no fair play."

And as Francis held her pliant form, meltingly exquisite in its maddeningness of woman, he remembered Henry, in his canvas pants, barefooted, unAer his floppy sombrero, digging holes in the sand of the Bull.

He tried to draw away from the armful of deliciousness, and only half succeeded. Still, at such slight removal of distance, he essayed the intellectual part, rather than the emotional part he desired all too strongly to act.

“And now I know at last what a frame-up is,” he assured her, farthest from the promptings of his heart. “If these Latins of your country thought more coolly instead of acting so passionately, they might be building railroads and developing their country. That trial was a straight passionate frame-up. They just knew I was guilty and were so eager to punish me that they wouldn’t even bother for mere evidence or establishment of identity. Why delay? They Imew Henry Morgan had knifed Alfaro. They knew I was Henry Morgan. When one knows, why bother to find out?”

Deaf to his words, sobbing and struggling to cling closer while he spoke, the moment he had finished she was deep again in his arms, against him, to him, her lips raised to his; and, ere he was aware, his own lips to hers. “I love you, I love you,” she whispered brokenly.

“No, no,” he denied what he most desired. “Henry and I are too alike. It is Henry you love, and I am not Henry.”

She tore herself away from her own clinging, drew Henry’s ring from her finger, and threw it on the floor. Francis was so beyond himself that he knew not what was going to happen the next moment, and was only saved from whatever it might be by the entrance of the Comisario, watch in hand, with averted face striving to see naught else than the moments registered by the second-hand on the dial.

She stiffened herself proudly, and all but broke down again as Francis slipped Henry’s ring back on her finger and kissed her hand in farewell. Just ere she passed out the door she turned and with a whispered movement of the lips that was devoid of sound told him: “I love you.”

Promptly as the stroke of the clock, at ten o’clock Francis was led out into the jail patio where stood the gallows. All San Antonio was joyously and shoutingly present,’ including much of the neighboring population and Leoncia, Enrico Solano, and his five tall sons. Enrico and his sons fumed and strutted, but the Jefe Politico, backed by the Comisario and his gendarmes, was adamant. In vain, as Francis was forced to the foot of the scaffold, did Leoncia strive to get to him and did her men strive to persuade her to leave the patio. In vain, also, did her father and brothers protest that Francis was not the man. The Jefe Politico smiled contemptuously and ordered the execution to proceed.

On top the scaffold, standing on the trap, Francis declined the ministrations of the priest, telling him in Spanish that no innocent man being hanged needed intercessions with the next world, but that the men who were doing the hanging were in need of just such intercessions.

They had tied Francis' legs, and were in the act of tying his arms, with the men who held the noose and the black cap hovering near to put them on him, when the voice of a singer was heard approaching from without; and the song he sang was:

"Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew. "

Leoncia, almost fainting, recovered at the sound of the voice, and cried out with sharp delight as she descried Henry Morgan entering, thrusting aside the guards at the gate who tried to bar his way.

At sight of him the only one present who suffered chagrin was Torres, which passed unnoticed in the excitement. The populace was in accord with the Jefe, who shrugged his shoulders and announced that one man was as good as another so long as the hanging went on. And here arose hot contention from the Solano men that Henry was likewise innocent of the murder of Alfaro. But it was Francis, from the scaffold, while his arms and legs were being untied, who shouted through the tumult:

"You tried me! You have not tried him! You cannot hang a man without trial! He must have his trial!"

And when Francis had descended from the scaffold and was shaking Henry's hand in both his own, the Comisario, with the Jefe at his back, duly arrested Henry Morgan for the murder of Alfaro Solano.

CHAPTER 4

“WE must work quickly that is the one thing sure,” Francis said to the little conclave of Solanos on the piazza of the Solano hacienda.

“One thing sure! “ Leoncia cried out scornfully ceasing from her anguished pacing up and down. “The one thing sure is that we must save him.”

As she spoke, she shook a passionate finger under Francis’ nose to emphasize her point. Not content, she shook her finger with equal emphasis under the noses of all and sundry of her father and brothers.

“Quick!” she flamed on. “Of course we must be quick. It is that, or. “Her voice trailed off into the unvoiceable horror of what would happen to Henry if they were not quick.

“All Gringos look alike to the Jefe,” Francis nodded sympathetically. She was splendidly beautiful and wonderful, he thought. “He certainly runs all San Antonio, and short shrift is his motto. He’ll give Henry no more time than he gave us. We must get him out to-night.”

“Now listen,” Leoncia began again. “We Solanos cannot permit this. this execution. Our pride. our honor. We cannot permit it. Speak! any of you. Father you. Suggest something. “

And while the discussion went on, Francis, for the time being silent, wrestled deep in the throes of sadness. Leoncia’s fervor was magnificent, but it was for another man and it did not precisely exhilarate him. Strong upon him was the memory of the jail patio after he had been released and Henry had been arrested. He could still see, with the same stab at the heart, Leoncia in Henry’s arms, Henry seeking her hand to ascertain if his ring was on it, and the long kiss of the embrace that followed.

Ah, well, he sighed to himself, he had done his best. After Henrv had been led away, had he not told Leoncia, quite deliberately and coldly, that Henry was her man and lover, and the wisest of choices for the daughter of the Solanos?

But the memory of it did not make him a bit happy. Nor did the rightness of it. Eight it was. That he never questioned, and it strengthened him into hardening his heart against her. Yet the right, he found in his case, to be the sorriest of consolation.

And yet what else could he expect? It was his misfortune to have arrived too late in Central America, that was all, and to find this flower of woman already annexed by a previous comer a man as good as himself, and, his heart of fairness prompted, even better. And his heart of fairness compelled loyalty to Henry from him to Henry Morgan, of the breed and blood ; to Henry Morgan, the wild-fire descendant of a wild-fire ancestor, in canvas pants, and floppy sombrero, with a penchant for the ears of strange young men, living on sea biscuit and turtle eggs and digging up the Bull and the Calf for old Sir Henry's treasure.

And while Enrico Solano and his sons talked plans and projects on their broad piazza, to which Francis lent only half an ear, a house servant came, whispered in Leoncia" s ear, and led her away around the ell of the piazza, where occurred a scene that would have excited Francis' risibilities and wrath.

Around the ell, Alvarez Torres, in all the medieval Spanish splendor of dress of a great haciendado-owner, such as still obtains in Latin America, greeted her, bowed low with doffed sombrero in hand, and seated her in a rattan settee. Her own greeting was sad, but shot through with curious-ness, as if she hoped he brought some word of hope.

"The trial is over, Leoncia," he said softly, tenderly, as one speaks of the dead. "He is sentenced. To-morrow at ten o'clock is the time. It is all very sad, most very sad. But. "He shrugged his shoulders. "No, I shall not speak harshly of him. He was an honorable man. His one fault was his temper. It was too quick, too fiery. It led him into a mischance of honor. Never, in a cool moment of reasonableness, would he have stabbed Alfaro — "

"He never killed my uncle!" Leoncia cried, raising her averted face.

"And it is regrettable," Torres proceeded gently and sadly, avoiding any disagreement. "The judge, the people, the Jefe Politico, unfortunately, are all united in believing that he did. Which is most regrettable. But which is not what I came to see you about. I came to offer my service in any and all ways you may command. My life, my honor, are at your disposal. Speak. I am your slave."

Dropping suddenly and gracefully on one knee before her, he caught her hand from her lap, and would have instantly flooded on with his speech, had not his eyes lighted on the diamond ring on her engagement finger. He frowned, but concealed the frown with bent face until he could drive it from his features and begin to speak.

"I knew you when you were small, Leoncia, so very, very charmingly small, and I loved you always. No, listen! Please. My heart must speak.

Hear me out. I loved you always. But when you returned from your convent, from schooling abroad, a woman, a grand and noble lady fit to rule in the house of the Solanos, I was burnt by your beauty. I have been patient. I refrained from speaking. But you may have guessed. You surely must have guessed. I have been on fire for you ever since. I have been consumed by the flame of your beauty, by the flame of you that is deeper than your beauty."

He was not to be stopped, as she well knew, and she listened patiently, gazing down on his bent head and wondering idly why his hair was so unbecomingly cut, and whether it had been last cut in New York or San Antonio.

"Do you know what you have been to me ever since your return?"

She did not reply, nor did she endeavour to withdraw her hand, although his was crushing and bruising her flesh against Henry Morgan's ring. She forgot to listen, led away by a chain of thought that linked far. Not in such rhodomontade of speech had Henry Morgan loved and won her, was the beginning of the chain. Why did those of Spanish blood always voice their emotions so exaggeratedly? Henry had been so different. Scarcely had he spoken a word. He had acted. Under her glamor, himself glamoring her, without warning, so certain was he not to surprise and frighten her, he had put his arms around her and pressed his lips to hers. And hers had been neither too startled nor altogether unresponsive. Not until after that first kiss, arms still around her, had Henry begun to speak at all.

And what plan was being broached around the corner of the ell by her men and Francis Morgan? her mind strayed on, deaf to the suitor at her feet. Francis! Ah she almost sighed, and marveled, what of her self-known love for Henry, why this stranger Gringo so enamored her heart. Was she a wanton? Was it one man? Or another man? Or any man? No! No! She was not fickle nor unfaithful. And yet?. Perhaps it was because Francis and Henry were so much alike, and her poor stupid loving woman's heart failed properly to distinguish between them. And yet while it had seemed she would have followed Henry anywhere over the world, in any luck or fortune, it seemed to her now that she would follow Francis even farther. She did love "Henry, her heart solemnly proclaimed. But also did she love Francis, and almost did she divine that Francis loved her the fervor of his lips on hers in his prison cell was iner-asable; and there was a difference in her love for the two men that confuted her powers of reason and almost drove her to the shameful conclusion that she, the latest and only woman of the house of Solano, was a wanton.

A severe pinch of her flesh against Henry's ring, caused by the impassioned grasp of Torres, brought her back to him, so that she could hear the spate of his speech pouring on:

"You have been the delicious thorn in my side, the spicked rowel of the spur forever prodding the sweetest and most poignant pangs of love into my breast. I have dreamed of you. and for you. And I have my own name for you. Ever the one name I have had for you: the Queen of my Dreams. And you will marry me, my Leoncia. We will forget this mad Gringo who is as already dead. I shall be gentle, kind. I shall love you always. And never shall any vision of him arise between us. For myself, I shall not permit it. For you . I shall love you so that it will be impossible for the memory of him to arise between us and give you one moment's heart-hurt."

Leoncia debated in a long pause that added fuel to Torres' hopes. She felt the need to temporise. If Henry were to be saved. and had not Torres offered his services? Not lightly could she turn him away when a man's life might depend upon him.

"Speak! I am consuming!" Torres urged in a choking voice.

"Hush! Hush!" she said softly. "How can I listen to love from a live man, when the man I loved is yet alive?"

Loved! The past tense of it startled her. Likewise it startled Torres, fanning his hopes to fairer flames. Almost was she his. She had said loved. She no longer bore love for Henry. She had loved him, but no longer. And she, a maid and woman of delicacy and sensibility, could not, of course, give name to her love for him while the other man still lived. It was subtle of her. He prided himself on his own subtletly, and he flattered himself that he had interpreted her veiled thought aright. And. well, he resolved, he would see to it that the man who was to die at ten next morning should have neither reprieve nor rescue. The one thing clear, if he were to win Leoncia quickly, was that Henry Morgan should die quickly.

"We will speak of it no more. now," he said with chivalric gentleness, as he gently pressed her hand, rose to his feet, and gazed down on her.

She returned a soft pressure of thanks with her own hand ere she released it and stood up.

"Come," she said. "We will join the others. They are planning now, or trying to find some plan, to save Henry Morgan."

The conversation of the group ebbed away as they joined it, as if out of half-suspicion of Torres.

“Have you hit upon anything yet?” Leoncia asked.

Old Enrico, straight and slender and graceful as any of his sons despite his age, shook his head.

“I have a plan, if you will pardon me,” Torres began, but ceased at a warning glance from Alesandro, the eldest son.

On the walk, below the piazza, had appeared two scarecrows of beggar boys. Not more than ten years of age, by their size, they seemed much older when judged by the shrewdness of their eyes and faces. Each wore a single marvelous garment, so that between them it could be said they shared a shirt and pants. But such a shirt! And such pants! The latter, man-size, of ancient duck, were buttoned around the lad’s neck, the waistband reefed with knotted twine so as not to slip down over his shoulders. His arms were thrust through the holes where the side-pockets had been. The legs of the pants had been hacked off with a knife to suit his own diminutive length of limb. The tails of the man’s shirt on the other boy dragged on the ground.

“Vamos!” Alesandro shouted fiercely at them to be gone.

But the boy in the pants gravely removed a stone which he had been carrying on top of his bare head, exposing a letter which had been thus carried. Alesandro leaned over, took the letter, and with a glance at the inscription passed it to Leoncia, while the boys began whining for money. Francis, smiling despite himself at the spectacle of them, tossed them a few pieces of small silver, whereupon the shirt and the pants toddled away down the path.

The letter was from Henry, and Leoncia scanned it hurriedly. It was not precisely in farewell, for he wrote in the tenour of a man who never expected to die save by some inconceivable accident. Nevertheless, on the chance of such inconceivable thing becoming possible, Henry did manage to say good-bye and to include a facetious recommendation to Leoncia not to forget Francis, who was well worth remembering because he was so much like himself, Henry.

Leoncia’s first impulse was to show the letter to the others, but the portion about Francis withstrained her.

“It’s from Henry,” she said, tucking the note into her bosom. “There is nothing of importance. He seems to have not the slightest doubt that he will escape somehow.” “We shall see that he does,” Francis declared positively.

With a grateful smile to him, and with one of interrogation to Torres, Leoncia said:

“You were speaking of a plan, Senor Torres?”

Torres smiled, twisted his mustache, and struck an attitude of importance.

“There is one way, the Gringo, Anglo-Saxon way, and it is simple, straight to the point. That is just what it is, straight to the point. We will go and take Henry out of jail in forthright, brutal and direct Gringo fashion. It is the one thing they will not expect. Therefore, it will succeed. There are enough unhung rascals on the beach with which, to storm the jail. Hire them, pay them well, but only partly in advance, and the thing is accomplished.”

Leoncia nodded eager agreement. Old Enrico’s eyes flashed and his nostrils distended as if already sniffing gunpowder. The young men were taking fire from his example. And all looked to Francis for his opinion or agreement. He shook his head slowly, and Leoncia uttered a sharp cry of disappointment in him.

“That way is hopeless,” he said. “Why should all of you risk your necks in a madcap attempt like that, doomed to failure from the start?” As he talked, he strode across from Leoncia’s side to the railing in such way as to be for a moment between Torres and the other men, and at the same time managed a warning look to Enrico and his sons. “As for Henry, it looks as if it were all up with him — ”

“You mean you doubt me?” Torres bristled.

“Heavens, man,” Francis protested.

But Torres dashed on: “You mean that I am forbidden by you, a man I have scarcely met, from the councils of the Solanos who are my oldest and most honored friends.”

Old Enrico, who had not missed the rising wrath against Francis in Leoncia’s face, succeeded in conveying a warning to her, ere, with a courteous gesture, he hushed Torres and began to speak.

“There are no councils of the Solanos from which you are barred, Sen-or Torres. You are indeed an old friend of the family. Your late father and I were comrades, almost brothers. But that and you will pardon an old man’s judgment does not prevent Senor Morgan from being right when he says your plan is hopeless. To storm the jail is truly madness. Look at the thickness of the walls. They could stand a siege of weeks. And yet, and I confess it, almost was I tempted when you first broached the idea. Now when I was a young man, fighting the Indians in the high Cordilleras, there was a very case in point. Come, let us all be seated and comfortable, and I will tell you the tale . “

But Torres, busy with many things, declined to wait, and with soothed amicable feelings shook hands all around, briefly apologized to Francis, and departed astride his silversaddled and silver-bridled horse for San Antonio. One of the things that busied him was the cable correspondence maintained between him and Thomas Regan’s Wall Street office. Having secret access to the Panamanian government wireless station at San Antonio, he was thus able to relay messages to the cable station at Vera Cruz. Not alone was his relationship with Regan proving lucrative, but it was jibing in with his own personal plans concerning Leoncia and the Morgans.

“What have you against Senor Torres, that you should reject his plan and anger him?” Leoncia demanded of Francis.

“Nothing,” was the answer, “except that we do not need him, and that I’m not exactly infatuated with him. He is a fool and would spoil any plan. Look at the way he fell down on testifying at my trial. Maybe he can’t be trusted. I don’t know. Anyway, what’s the good of trusting him when we don’t need him? Now his plan is all right. We’ll go straight to the jail and take Henry out, if all you are game for it. And we don’t need to trust to a mob of unhung rascals and beach-sweepings. If the six men of us can’t do it, we might as well quit.”

“There must be at least a dozen guards always hanging out at the jail,” Eicardo, Leoncia’s youngest brother, a lad of eighteen, objected.

Leoncia, her eagerness alive again, frowned at him; but Francis took his part.

“Well taken,” he agreed. “But we will eliminate the guards.”

“The five-foot walls,” said Martinez Solano, twin brother to Alvarado.

“Go through them,” Francis answered.

“But how?” Leoncia cried.

“That’s what I am arriving at. You, Senor Solano, have plenty of saddle horses? Good. And you, Alesandro, does it chance you could procure me a couple of sticks of dynamite from around the plantation? Good, and better than good. And you, Leoncia, as the lady of the hacienda, should know whether you have in your store-room a plentiful supply of that three-star rye whiskey?

“Ah, the plot thickens,” he laughed, on receiving her assurance. “We’ve all the properties for a Eider Haggard or Eex Beach adventure tale. Now listen. But wait. I want to talk to you, Leoncia, about private theatricals.

CHAPTER 5

IT was in the mid-afternoon, and Henry, at his barred cell-window, stared out into the street and wondered if any sort of breeze would ever begin to blow from off Chiriqui Lagoon and cool the stagnant air. The street was dusty and filthy filthy, because the only scavengers it had ever known since the town was founded centuries before were the carrion dogs and obscene buzzards even then prowling and hopping about in the debris. Low, white-washed buildings of stone and adobe made the street a furnace.

The white of it all, and the dust, was almost achingly intolerable to the eyes, and Henry would have withdrawn his gaze, had not the several ragged mosos, dozing in a doorway opposite, suddenly aroused and looked interestedly up the street. Henry could not see, but he could hear the rattling spokes of some vehicle coming at speed. Next, it surged into view, a rattle-trap light wagon drawn by a runaway horse. In the seat a gray-headed, gray-bearded ancient strove vainly to check the animal.

Henry smiled and marveled that the rickety wagon could hold together, so prodigious were the bumps imparted to it by the deep ruts. Every wheel, half-dished and threatening to dish, wobbled and revolved out of line with every other wheel. And if the wagon held intact, Henry judged", it was a miracle that the crazy harness did not fly to pieces. When directly opposite the window, the old man made a last effort, half-standing up from the seat as he pulled on the reins. One was rotten, and broke. As the driver fell backward into the seat, his weight on the remaining rein caused the horse to swerve sharply to the right. What happened then whether a wheel dished, or whether a wheel had come off first and dished afterward Henry could not determine. The one incontestable thing was that the wagon was a wreck. The old man, dragging in the dust and stubbornly hanging on to the remaining rein, swung the horse in a circle until it stopped, facing him and snorting at him.

By the time he gained his feet a crowd of mosos was forming about him. These were roughly shouldered right and left by the gendarmes who erupted from the jail. Henry remained at the window and, for a man with but a few hours to live, was an amused spectator and listener to what followed.

Giving his horse to a gendarme to hold, not stopping to brush the filth from his person, the old man limped hurriedly to the wagon and began an examination of the several packing cases, large and small, which composed its load. Of one case he was especially solicitous, even trying to lift it and seeming to listen as he lifted.

He straightened up, on being addressed by one of the gendarmes, and made voluble reply.

“Me? Alas senors, I am an old man, and far from home. I am Leopoldo Narvaez. It is true, my mother was German, may the Saints preserve her rest; but my father was Baltazar de Jesus y Cervallos e Narvaez, son of General Narvaez of martial memory, who fought under the great Bolivar himself. And now I am half ruined and far from home.

Prompted by other questions, interlarded with the courteous expressions of sympathy with which even the humblest mo so is over generously supplied, he managed to be politefully grateful and to run on with his tale.

“I have driven from Bocas del Toro. It has taken me five days, and business has been poor. My home is in Colon, and I wish I were safely there. But even a noble Narvaez may be a peddler, and even a peddler must live, eh, senors, is it not so? But tell me, is there not a Tomas Eomero who dwells in this pleasant city of San Antonio?”

“There are any God’s number of Tomas Komeros who dwell everywhere in Panama,” laughed Pedro Zurita, the assistant jailer. “One would need fuller description.”

“He is the cousin of my second wife,” the ancient answered hopefully, and seemed bewildered by the roar of laughter from the crowd.

“And a dozen Tomas Komeros live in and about San Antonio,” the assistant jailer went on, “any one of which may be your second wife’s cousin, Senor. There is Tomas Romero, the drunkard. There is Tomas Romero, the thief. There is Tomas Romero but no, he was hanged a month back for murder and robbery. There is the rich Tomas Romero who owns many cattle on the hills. There is. “

To each suggested one, Leopoldo Narvaez had shaken his head dolefully, until the cattle-owner was mentioned. At this he had become hopeful and broken in:

“Pardon me, senor, it must be he, or some such a one as he. I shall find him. If my precious stock-in-trade can be safely stored, I shall seek him now. It is well my misfortune came upon me where it did. I shall be able to trust it with you, who are, one can see with half an eye, an honest and an honorable man.” As he talked, he fumbled forth from his pocket two silver pesos and handed them to the jailer. “There, I wish you and your men to have some pleasure of assisting me.”

Henry grinned to himself as he noted the access of interest in the old man and of consideration for him, on the part of Pedro Zurita and the gendarmes, caused by the present of the coins. They shoved the more curious of the crowd roughly back from the wrecked wagon and began to carry the boxes into the jail.

“Careful, senors, careful,” the old one pleaded, greatly anxious, as they took hold of the big box. Handle it gently. It is of value, and it is fragile, most fragile.”

While the contents of the wagon were being carried into the jail, the old man removed and deposited in the wagon all harness from the horse save the bridle.

Pedro Zurita ordered the harness taken in as well, explaining, with a glare at the miserable crowd: “Not a strap or buckle would remain the second after our backs were turned.”

Using what was left of the wagon for a stepping block, and ably assisted by the jailer and his crew, the peddler managed to get astride his animal.

“It is well,” he said, and added gratefully: “A thousand thanks, senors. It has been my good fortune to meet with honest men with whom my goods will be safe only poor goods, peddler’s goods, you understand; but to me, everything, my way upon the road. The pleasure has been mine to meet you. To-morrow I shall return with my kinsman, whom I certainly shall find, and relieve from you the burden of safeguarding my inconsiderable property.” He doffed his hat. “Adios, senors, adios!”

He rode away at a careful walk, timid of the animal he bestrode which had caused his catastrophe. He halted and turned his head at a call from Pedro Zurita.

“Search the graveyard, Senor Narvaez,” the jailer advised. “Full a hundred Tomas Bomeros lie there.”

“And be vigilant, I beg of you, senor, of the heavy box,” the peddler called back.

Henry watched the street grow deserted as the gendarmes and the populace fled from, the scorch of the sun. Small wonder, he thought to himself, that the old peddler’s voice had sounded vaguely familiar. It had been because he had possessed only half a Spanish tongue to twis-f~around the language the other half being the German tongue of the mother. Even so, he talked like a native, and he would be robbed like a native if there was anything of value in the heavy box deposited with the jailers, Henry concluded, ere dismissing the incident from his mind.

In the guardroom, a scant fifty feet away from Henry's cell, Leopoldo Narvaez was being robbed. It had begun by Pedro Zurita making a profound and wistful survey of the large box. He lifted one end of it to sample its weight, and sniffed like a hound at the crack of it as if his nose might give him some message of its contents.

"Leave it alone, Pedro," one of the gendarmes laughed at him. "You have been paid two pesos to be honest."

The assistant jailer sighed, walked away and sat down, looked back at the box, and sighed again. Conversation languished. Continually the eyes of the men roved to the box. A greasy pack of cards could not divert them. The game languished. The gendarme who had twitted Pedro himself went to the box and sniffed.

"I smell nothing," he announced. "Absolutely in the box there is nothing to smell. Now what can it be? The caballero said that it was of value!"

"Caballero!" sniffed another of the gendarmes. "The old man's father was more like to have been peddler of rott'en fish on the streets of Colon and his father before him. Every lying beggar claims descent from the conquistadores."“

"And why not, Eafael?" Pedro Zurita retorted. "Are we not all descended?"

"Without doubt," Eafael readily agreed. "The conquistadores slew many. “

"And were the ancestors of those that survived," Pedro completed for him and aroused a general laugh. "Just the same, almost would I give one of these pesos to know what is in that box."

"There is Ignacio," Rafael greeted the entrance of a turnkey whose heavy eyes tokened he was just out of his siesta. "He was not paid to be honest. Come, Ignacio, relieve our curiosity by letting us know what is in the box."

"How should I know?" Ignacio demanded, blinking at the object of interest. "Only now have I awakened."

"You have not been paid to be honest, then?" Eafael asked.

"Merciful Mother of God, who is the man who would pay me to be honest?" the turnkey demanded.

“Then take the hatchet there and open the box,” Eafael drove his point home. “We may not, for as surely as Pedro is to share the two pesos with us, that surely have we been paid to be honest. Open the box, Ignacio, or we shall perish of our curiosity.”

We will look, we will only look,” Pedro muttered nervously, as the turnkey prized off a board with the blade of the hatchet. “Then we will close the box again and Put your hand in, Ignacio. What is it you find?, eh? what does it feel like? Ah!”

After pulling and tugging, Ignacio’s hand had reappeared, clutching a cardboard cdrton.

“Remove it carefully, for it must be replaced,” the jailer cautioned.

And when the wrappings of paper and tissue paper were removed, all eyes focused on a quart bottle of rye whiskey.

“How excellently is it composed,” Pedro murmured in tones of awe. “It must be very good that such care be taken of it.”

“It is Americano whiskey,” sighed a gendarme. “Once, only, have I drunk Americano whiskey. It was wonderful. Such was the courage of it, that I leaped into the bull-ring at Santos and faced a wild bull with my hands. It is true, the bull rolled me, but did I not leap into the ring?”

Pedro took the bottle and prepared to knock its neck off. “Hold!” cried Rafael. “You were paid to be honest.” By a man who was not himself honest,” came the retort. “The stuff is contraband. It has never paid duty. The old man was in possession of smuggled goods. Let us now gratefully and with clear conscience invest ourselves in its possession. We will confiscate it. We will destroy it.”

Not waiting for the bottle to pass, Ignacio and Rafael unwrapped fresh ones and broke off the necks.

“Three stars most excellent,” Pedro Zurita orated in a pause, pointing to the trade mark. “You see, all Gringo whiskey is good. One star shows that it is very good; two stars that it is excellent; three stars that it is superb, the best, and better than beyond that. Ah, I know. The Gringos are strong on strong drink. No pulque for them.”

“And four stars?” queried Ignacio, his voice husky from the liquor, the moisture glistening in his eyes.

“Four stars? Friend Ignacio, four stars would be either sudden death or translation into paradise.”

In not many minutes, Eafael, his arm around another gendarme, was calling him brother and proclaiming that it took little to make men happy here below.

“The old man was a fool, three times a fool, and thrice that,” volunteered Augustino, a sullen-faced gendarme, who for the first time gave tongue to speech.

“Viva Augustino! “cheered Eafael. “The three stars have worked a miracle. Behold! Have they not unlocked Augustino’s mouth?”

“‘And thrice times thrice again was the old man a fool!” Augustino bellowed fiercely. “The very drink of the gods was his, all his, and he has been five days alone with it on the road from Bocas del Toro, and never taken one little sip. Such fools as he should be stretched out naked on an ant-heap, say I.”

“The old man was a rogue,” quoth Pedro. “And when he comes back to-morrow for his three stars I shall arrest him for a smuggler. It will be a feather in all our caps.” If we destroy the evidence thus?” queried Augustino, knocking off another neck.

“We will save the evidence thus!” Pedro replied, smashing an empty bottle on the stone flags. “Listen, comrades. The box was very heavy we are all agreed. It fell. The bottles broke. The liquor ran out, and so were we made aware of the contraband. The box and the broken bottles will be evidence sufficient.”

The uproar grew as the liquor diminished. One gendarme quarreled with Ignacio over a forgotten debt of ten centavos. Two others sat upon the floor, arms around each other’s necks, and wept over the miseries of their married lot. Augustino, like a very spendthrift of speech, explained his philosophy that silence was golden. And Pedro Zurita became sentimental on brotherhood.

“Even my prisoners,” he maundered. “I love them as brothers. Life is sad.” A gush of tears in his eyes made him desist while he took another drink. “ My prisoners are my very children. My heart bleeds for them. Behold! I weep. Let us share with them. Let them have a moment’s happiness. Ignacio, dearest brother of my heart.

Do me a favor. See, I weep on your hand. Carry a bottle of this elixir to the Gringo Morgan. Tell him my sorrow that he must hang to-morrow. Give him my love and bid him drink and be happy to-day.”

And as Ignacio passed out on the errand, the gendarme who had once leapt into the bull-ring at Santos, began roaring:

"I want a bull! I want a bull!"

"He wants it, dear soul, that he may put his arms around it and love it," Pedro Zurita explained, with a fresh access of weeping. "I, too, love bulls. I love all things. I love even mosquitoes. All the world is love. That is the secret of the world. I should like to have a lion to play with. "

The unmistakable air of "Back to Back Against the Mainmast "being whistled openly in the street, caught Henry's attention, and he was crossing his big cell to the window when the grating of a key in the door made him lie down quickly on the floor and feign sleep. Ignacio staggered drunkenly in, bottle in hand, which he gravely presented to Henry.

"With the high compliments of our good jailer, Pedro Zurita," he mumbled. "He says to drink and forget that he must stretch your neck to-morrow."

"My high compliments to Senor Pedro Zurita, and tell him from me to go to hell along with his whiskey," Henry replied.

The turnkey straightened up and ceased swaying, as if suddenly become sober.

"Very well, senor," he said, then passed out and locked the door.

In a rush Henry was at the window just in time to encounter Francis face to face and thrusting a revolver to him through the bars.

"Greetings, camarada," Francis said. "We'll have you out of here in a jiffy." He held up two sticks of dynamite, with fuse and caps complete. "I have brought this pretty crowbar to pry you out. Stand well back in your cell, because real pronto there's going to be a hole in this wall that we could sail the Angelique through. And the Ang clique is right off the beach waiting for you. Now, stand back. I'm going to touch her off. It's a short fuse."

Hardly had Henry backed into a rear corner of his cell, when the door was clumsily unlocked and opened to a babel of cries and imprecations, chief est among which he could hear the ancient and invariable war-cry of Latin-America, "Kill the Gringo!"

Also, he could hear Rafael and Pedro, as they entered, babbling, the one: "He is the enemy of brotherly love "; and the other, "He said I was to go to hell is not that what he said, Ignacio?"

In their hands they carried rifles, and behind them urged the drunken rabble, variously armed, from cutlasses and horse-pistols to hatchets and bottles. At sight of Henry's revolver, they halted, and Pedro, fingering his rifle unsteadily, maundered solemnly:

"Senor Morgan, you are about to take up your rightful abode in hell."

But Ignacio did not wait. He fired wildly and widely from his hip, missing Henry by half the width of the cell and going down the next moment under the impact of Henry's bullet. The rest retreated precipitately into the jail corridor, where, themselves unseen, they began discharging their weapons into the room.

Thanking his fortunate stars for the thickness of the walls, and hoping no ricochet would get him, Henry sheltered in a protecting angle and waited for the explosion.

It came. The window and the wall beneath it became all one aperture. Struck on the head by a flying fragment, Henry sank down dizzily, and, as the dust of the mortar and the powder cleared, with wavering eyes he saw Francis apparently swim through the hole. By the time he had been dragged out through the hole, Henry was himself again. He could see Enrico Solano and Eicardo, his youngest born, rifles in hand, holding back the crowd forming up the street, while the twins, Alvarado and Martinez, similarly held back the crowd forming down the street.

But the populace was merely curious, having its lives to lose and nothing to gain if it attempted to block the way of such masterful men as these who blew up walls and stormed jails in open day. And it gave back respectfully before the compact group as it marched down the street. "The horses are waiting up the next alley," Francis told Henry, as they gripped hands. "And Leoncia is waiting with them. Fifteen minutes' gallop will take us to the beach, where the boat is waiting."

"Say, that was some song I taught you," Henry grinned. "It sounded like the very best little bit of all right when I heard you whistling it. The dogs were so previous they couldn't wait till to-morrow to hang me. They got full of whiskey and decided to finish me off right away. Funny thing that whiskey. An old caballero turned peddler wrecked a wagon-load of it right in front of the jail — "

"For even a noble Narvaez, son of Baltazar de Jesus y Cervallos e Narvaez, son of General Narvaez of martial memory, may be a peddler, and even a peddler must live, eh, senors, is it not so?" Francis mimicked. Henry looked his gleeful recognition, and added soberly: “Francis, I’m glad for one thing, most damn glad ... “ “Which is?” Francis queried in the pause, just as they swung around the corner to the horses.

“That I didn’t cut off your ears that day on the Calf when I had you down and you insisted.”

CHAPTER 6

MARIANO VERCARA E HIJOS, Jefe Politico of San Antonio, leaned back in his chair in the courtroom and with a quiet smile of satisfaction proceeded to roll a cigarette. The case had gone through as prearranged. He had kept the little old judge away from his mescal all day, and had been rewarded by having the judge try the case and give judgment according to program. He had not made a slip. The six peons, fined heavily, were ordered back to the plantation at Santos. The working out of the fines was added to the time of their contract slavery. And the Jefe was two hundred dollars good American gold richer for the transaction. Those Gringos at Santos, he smiled to himself, were men to tie to. True, they were developing the country with their henequen plantation. But, better than that, they possessed money in untold quantity and paid well for such little services as he might be able to render.

His smile was even broader as he greeted Alvarez Torres.

“Listen,” said the latter, whispering low in his ear. “We can get both these devils of Morgans. The Henry pig hangs to-morrow. There is no reason that the Francis pig should not go out to-day.”

The Jefe remained silent, questioning with a lift of his eyebrows.

“I have advised him to storm the jail. The Solanos have listened to his lies and are with him. They will surely attempt to do it this evening. They could not do it sooner. It is for you to be ready for the event, and to see to it that Francis Morgan is especially shot and killed in the fight.”

“For what and for why?” the Jefe temporised. “It is Henry I want to see out of the way. Let the Francis one go back to his beloved New York.”

“He must go out to-day, and for reasons you will appreciate. As you know, from reading my telegrams through the government wireless — ”

“Which was our agreement for my getting you your permission to use the government station,” the Jefe reminded.

“And of which I do not complain,” Torres assured him. “But as I was saying, you know my relations with the New York Regan are confidential and important.” He touched his hand to his breast pocket. “I have just received another wire. It is imperative that the Francis pig be kept away from New York for a month if forever, and I do not misunderstand Senor Regan, so much the better. In so far as I succeed in this, will you fare well.”

“But you have not told me how much you have received, nor how much you will receive,” the Jefe probed.

“It is a private agreement, and it is not so much as you may fancy. He is a hard man, this Senor Regan, a hard man. Yet will I divide fairly with you out of the success of our venture.”

The Jefe nodded acquiescence, then said:

“Will it be as much as a thousand gold you will get?”

“I think so. Surely the pig of an Irish stock-gambler could pay me no less a sum, and five hundred is yours if pig Francis leaves his bones in San Antonio.”

“Will it be as much as a hundred thousand gold?” was the Jefe’s next query.

Torres laughed as if at a joke.

“It must be more than a thousand,” the other persisted.

“And he may be generous,” Torres responded. , “He may even give me five hundred over the thousand, half of which, naturally, as I have said, will be yours as well.”

“I shall go from here immediately to the jail,” the Jefe announced. “You may trust me, Se,nor Torres, as I trust you. Come. We will go at once, now, you and I, and you may see for yourself the preparation I shall make for this Francis Morgan’s reception. I have not yet lost my cunning with a rifle. And, as well, I shall tell off three of the gendarmes to fire only at him. So this Gringo dog would storm our jail, eh? Come. We will depart at once.”

He stood up, tossing his cigarette away with a show of determined energy. But, half way across the room, a ragged boy, panting and sweating, plucked his sleeve and whined:

“I have information. You will pay me for it, most high Senor? I have run all the way.”

“I’ll have you sent to San Juan for the buzzards to peck your carcass for the worthless carrion that you are,” was the reply.

The boy quailed at the threat, then summoned courage from his emptiness of belly and meagerness of living and from his desire for the price of a ticket to the next bull-fight. “You will remember I brought you the information, Senor. I ran all the way until I am almost dead, as you can behold, Senor. I will tell you, but you will remember it was I who ran all the way and told you first.”

"Yes, yes, animal, I will remember. But woe to you if I remember too well. What is the trifling information? It may not be worth a centavo. And if it isn't I'll make you sorry the sun ever shone on you. And buzzard-picking of you at San Juan will be paradise compared with what I shall visit on you."

"The jail," the boy quavered. "The strange Gringo, the one who was to be hanged yesterday, has blown down the side of the jail. Merciful Saints! The hole is as big as the steeple of the cathedral! And the other Gringo, the one who looks like him, the one who was to hang to-morrow, has escaped with him out of the hole. He dragged him out of the hole himself. This I saw, myself, with my two eyes, and then I ran here to you all the way, and you will remember. "

But the Jefe Politico had alread turned on Torres wither-"And if this Senor Regan be princely generous, he may give you and me the munificent sum that was mentioned, eh? Five times the sum, or ten times, with this Gringo tiger blowing down law and order and our good jail-walls, would be nearer the mark."

"At any rate, the thing must be a false alarm, merely the straw that shows which way blows the wind of this Francis Morgan's intention," Torres murmured with a sickly smile. "Kemember, the suggestion was mine to him to storm the jail."

"In which case you and Senor Regan will pay for the good jail wall?" the Jefe demanded, then, with a pause, added: " Not that I believe it has been accomplished. It is not possible. Even a fool Gringo would not dare."

Bafael, the gendarme, rifle in hand, the blood still oozing down his face from a scalp-wound, came through the courtroom door and shouldered aside the curious ones who had begun to cluster around Torres and the Jefe. "We are devastated," were Rafael's first words. "The jail is 'most destroyed. Dynamite! A hundred pounds of it: A thousand! We came bravely to save the jail. But it exploded the thousand pounds of dynamite. I fell unconscious, rifle in hand. When sense came back to me, I looked about. All others, the brave Pedro, the brave Ignacio, the brave Augustino all, all, lay around me dead!" Almost could he have added, "drunk"; but, his Latin-American nature so compounded, he sincerely stated the catastrophe as it most valiantly and tragically presented itself to his imagination. "They lay dead. They may not be dead, but merely stunned. I crawled. The cell of the , Gringo Morgan was empty. There was a huge and monstrous hole in the wall. I crawled through the hole into the street. There was a great crowd. But the Gringo Morgan was gone. I talked with a moso who had seen and who knew. They had horses waiting. They rode toward the beach. There is a schooner that is not anchored. It sails back and forth waiting for them. The Francis Morgan rides with a sack of gold on his saddle. The moso saw it. It is a large sack.' r "And the hole?" the Jefe demanded. "The hole in the wall?"

"Is larger than the sack, much larger," was Rafael's reply. "But the sack is large. So the moso said. And he rides with it on his saddle."

"My jail!" the Jefe cried. He slipped a dagger from inside his coat under the left arm-pit and held it aloft by the blade so that the hilt showed as a true cross on which a finely modeled 'Christ hung crucified. "I swear by all the Saints the vengeance I shall have. My jail! Our justice! Our law! Horses! Horses! Gendarme, horses!" He whirled about upon Torres as if the latter Bad spoken, shouting: "To hell with Senor Regan! I am after my own! I have been defied! My jail is desolated! My law our law, good friends has been mocked. Horses! Horses! Commandeer them on the streets. Haste! Haste!"

Captain Trefethen, owner of the Angelique, son of a Maya Indian mother and a Jamaica negro father, paced the narrow after-deck of his schooner, stared shoreward toward San Antonio, where he could make out his crowded long-boat returning, and meditated flight from his mad American =charterer. At the same time he meditated remaining in order to break his charter and give a new one at three times the price; for he was strangely torn by his conflicting bloods. The negro portion counseled prudence and observance of Panamanian law. The Indian portion was urgent to unlawfulness and the promise of conflict.

It was the Indian mother who decided the issue and made him draw his jib, ease his mainsheet, and begin to reach in-shore the quicker to pick up the oncoming boat. When he made out the rifles carried by the Solanos and the Morgans, almost he put up his helm to run for it and leave them. When he made out a woman in the boat's sternsheets, romance and thrift whispered in him to hang on and take the boat on board. For he knew wherever woman entered into the transactions of men that peril and pelf as well entered hand in hand.

And aboard came the woman, the peril and the pelf Leoncia, the rifles, and a sack of money all in a scramble; for, the wind being light, the captain had not bothered to stop way on the schooner.

“Glad to welcome you on board, sir,” Captain Trefethen greeted Francis with a white slash of teeth between his smiling lips. “But who is this man?” He nodded his head to indicate Henry.

“A friend, captain, a guest of mine, in fact, a kinsman.”

“And who, sir, may I make bold to ask, are those gentlemen riding along the beach in fashion so lively?”

Henry looked quickly at the group of horsemen galloping along the sand, unceremoniously took the binoculars from the skipper’s hand, and gazed through them.

“It’s the Jefe himself in the lead,” he reported to Leoncia and her menfolk, “with a bunch of gendarmes.” He uttered a sharp exclamation, stared through the glasses intently, then shook his head. “Almost I thought I made out our friend Torres.”

“With our enemies!” Leoncia cried incredulously, remembering Torres’ proposal of marriage and proffer of service and honor that very day on the hacienda piazza.

“I must have been mistaken,” Francis acknowledged. “They are riding so bunched together. But it’s the Jefe all right, two jumps ahead of the outfit.”

“Who is this Torres duck?” Henry asked harshly. “I’ve never liked his looks from the first, yet he seems always welcome under your roof, Leoncia.”

=“I beg jour parson, sir, most gratifiedly, and with my humilious respects,” Captain Trefethen interrupted suavely. “But I must call your attention to the previous question, sir, which is: who and what is that cavalcade disporting itself with such earnestness along the sand?”

“They tried to hang me yesterday,” Francis laughed. “And to-morrow they were going to hang my kinsman there. Only we beat them to it. And here we are. Now, Mr. Skipper, I call your attention to your head-sheets flapping in the wind. You are standing still. How much longer do you expect to stick around here?”

“Mr. Morgan, sir,” came the answer, “it is with dumbfounded respect that I serve you as the charterer of my vessel. Nevertheless, I must inform you that I am a British subject. King George is my king, sir, and I owe obedience first of all to him and to his laws of maritime between all nations, sir. It is lucid to my comprehension that you have broken laws ashore, or else the officers ashore would not be so assiduously in quest of you, sir. And it is also lucid to clarification that it is now your wish to have me break the laws of maritime by enabling you to escape. So, in honor bound, I must stick around here until this little difficulty that you may have appertained ashore is adjusted to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, sir, and to the satisfaction of my lawful sovereign."

"Fill away and get out of this, skipper!" Henry broke in angrily.

"Sir, assuring you of your gratification of pardon, it is my unpleasant task to inform you of two things. Neither are you my charterer; nor are you the noble King George to whom I give ambitious allegiance."

"Well, I'm your charterer, skipper," Francis said pleasantly, for he had learned to humor the man of mixed words and parentage. "So just kindly put up your helm and sail us out of this Chiriqui Lagoon as fast as God and this failing wind will let you."

"It is not in the charter, sir, that my Angelique shall break the laws of Panama and King George."

"I'll pay you well," Francis retorted, beginning to lose his temper. "Get busy."

"You will then recharter, sir, at three times the present charter?"

Francis nodded shortly.

"Then wait, sir, I entreat. I must procure pen and paper from the cabin and make out the document."

"Oh, Lord," Francis groaned. "Square away and get a move on first. We can make out the paper just as easily while we are running as standing still. Look! They are beginning to fire."

The half-breed captain heard the report, and, searching his spread canvas, discovered the hole of the bullet high up near the peak of the mainsail.

"Very well, sir," he conceded. "You are a gentleman and an honorable man. I trust you to affix your signature to the document at your early convenience Hey, you nigger! Put up your wheel! Hard up! Jump, you black rascals, and slack away mainsheetf Take a hand there, you, Perciv-al, on the boom-tackle!"

All obeyed, as did Percival, a grinning shambling Kingston negro who was as black as his name was white, and as did another, addressed more respectfully as Juan, who was more Spanish and Indian than negro, as his light yellow skin attested, and whose fingers, slacking the foresheet, were as slim and delicate as a girl's.

"Knock the nigger on the head if he keeps up this freshness," Henry growled in an undertone to Francis. "For two cents I'll do it right now."

But Francis shook his head.

"He's all right, but he's a Jamaica nigger, and you know what they are. And he's Indian as well. We might as well humor him, since it's the nature of the beast. He means all right, but he wants the money, he's risking his schooner against confiscation, and he's afflicted with vocabu-laritis. He just must get those long words out of his system or else bust."

Here Enrico Solano, with quivering nostrils and fingers restless on his rifle as with half an eye he kept track of the wild shots being fired from the beach, approached Henry and held out his hand.

"I have been guilty of a grave mistake, Senor Morgan," he said. "In the first hurt of my affliction at the death of my beloved brother, Alfaro, I was guilty of thinking you guilty of his murder." Here old Enrico's eyes flashed with anger consuming but unconsumable. "For murder it was, dastardly and cowardly, a thrust in the dark in the back. I should have known better. But I was overwhelmed, and the evidence was all against you. I did not take pause of thought to consider that my dearly beloved and only daughter was betrothed to you; to remember that all I had known of you was straightness and man-likeness and courage such as never stabs from behind the shield of the dark. I regret. I am sorry. And I am proud once again to welcome you into my family as the husband-to-be of my Leoncia."

And while this whole-hearted restoration of Henry Morgan into the Solano family went on, Leoncia was irritated because her father, in Latin-American fashion, must use so many fine words and phrases, when a single phrase, a handgrip, and a square look in the eyes were all that was called for and was certainly all that either Henry or Francis would have vouchsafed had the situation been reversed. Why, why, she asked of herself, must her Spanish stock, in such extravagance of diction, seem to emulate the similar extravagance of the Jamaica negro?

While this reiteration of the betrothal of Henry and Leoncia was taking place, Francis, striving to appear uninterested, could not help taking note of the pale-yellow sailor called Juan, conferring for'ard with others of the crew, shrugging his shoulders significantly, gesticulating passionately with his hands.

CHAPTER 7

"AND now we've lost both the Gringo pigs," Alvarez Torres lamented on the beach as, with a slight freshening of the breeze and with booms winged out to port and starboard, the Ang clique passed out of range of their rifles.

"Almost would I give three bells to the cathedral," Mariano Vercara e Hijos proclaimed, "to have them within a hundred yards of this rifle. And if I had will of all Gringos they would depart so fast that the devil in hell would be compelled to study English."

Alvarez Torres beat the saddle pommel with his hand in sheer impotence of rage and disappointment.

"The Queen of my Dreams!" he almost wept. "She is gone and away, of! with the two Morgans. I saw her climb up the side of the schooner. And there is the New York Regan. Once out of Chiriqui Lagoon, the schooner may sail directly to New York. And the Francis pig will not have been delayed a month, and the Senor Regan will remit no money."

"They will not get out of Chiriqui Lagoon," the Jefe said solemnly. "I am no animal without reason. I am a man. I know they will not get out. Have I not sworn eternal vengeance? The sun is setting, and the promise is for a night of little wind. The sky tells it to one with half an eye. Behold those trailing wisps of clouds. What wind may be, and little enough of that, will come from the north-east. It will be a head beat to the Chorrera Passage. They will not attempt it. That nigger captain knows the lagoon like a book. He will try to make the long tack and go out past Bocas del Toro, or through the Cartago Passage. Even so, we will outwit him. I have brains, reason. Reason. Listen. It is a long ride. We will make it straight down the coast to Las Palmas. Captain Rosaro is there with the Dolores — "

"The second-hand old tugboat? that cannot get out of her own way?" Torres queried.

"But this night of calm and morrow of calm she will capture the Angelique," the Jefe replied. "On, comrades! We will ride! Captain Rosaro is my friend. Any favor is but mine to ask."

At daylight, the worn-out men, on beaten horses, straggled through the decaying village of Las Palmas and down to the decaying pier, where a very decayed-looking tugboat, sadly in need of paint, welcomed their eyes.

Smoke rising from the stack advertised that steam was up, and the Jefe was wearily elated.

"A happy morning, Senor Capitan Rosaro, and well met," he greeted the hard-bitten Spanish skipper, who was reclined on a coil of rope and who sipped black coffee from a mug that rattled against his teeth.

"It would be a happier morning if the cursed fever had not laid its chill upon me," Captain Rosaro grunted sourly, "the hand that held the mug, the arm, and all his body shivering so violently as to spill the hot liquid down his chin and into the black-and-gray thatch of hair that covered his half-exposed chest. "Take that, you animal of hell!" he cried, flinging mug and contents at a splinter of a half-breed boy, evidently his servant, who had been unable to repress his glee.

But the sun will rise and the fever will work its will and shortly depart," said the Jefe, politely ignoring the display of spleen. "And you are finished here, and you are bound for Bocas del Toro, and we shall go with you, all of us, on a rare adventure. We will pick up the schooner Angelique, calm-bound all last night in the lagoon, and I shall make many arrests, and all Panama will so ring with your courage and ability, Capitan, that you will forget that the fever ever whispered in you."

"How much?" Capitan Rosaro demanded bluntly.

Much?" the Jefe countered in surprise. "This is an affair of government, good friend. And it is right on your way to Bocas del Toro. It will not cost you an extra shovelful of coal."

"Muchacho! More coffee!" the tug-skipper roared at the boy.

A pause fell, wherein Torres and the Jefe and all the draggled following yearned for the piping hot coffee brought by the boy. Captain Rosaro played the rim of the mug against his teeth like a rattling of castanets, but managed to sip without spilling and so to burn his mouth.

A vacant-faced Swede, in filthy overalls, with a soiled cap on which appeared "Engineer," came up from below, lighted a pipe, and seemingly went into a trance as he sat on the tug's low rail.

"How much?" Captain Eosaro repeated.

"Let us get under way, dear friend," said the Jefe. "And then, when the fever-shock has departed, we will discuss the matter with reason, being reasonable creatures ourselves and not animals."

"How much?" Captain Eosaro repeated again. "I am never an animal. I always am a creature of reason, whether the sun is up or not up, or whether this thrice-accursed fever is upon me. How much?"

"Well, let us start, and for how much?" the Jefe conceded wearily.

"Fifty dollars gold," was the prompt answer.

"You are starting anyway, are you not, Capitan?" Torres queried softly.

"Fifty gold, as I have said."

The Jefe Politico threw up his hands with a hopeless gesture and turned on his heel to depart.

"Yet you swore eternal vengeance for the crime committed, on your jail," Torres reminded him.

"But not if it costs fifty dollars," the Jefe snapped back, out of the corner of his eye watching the shivering captain for some sign of relenting.

"Fifty gold," said the Captain, as he finished draining the mug and with shaking fingers strove to roll a cigarette. He nodded his head in the direction of the Swede, and added, "and five gold extra for my engineer. It is our custom."

Torres stepped closer to the Jefe and whispered:

"I will pay for the tug myself and charge the Gringo Regan a hundred, and you and I will divide the difference. We lose nothing. We shall make. For this Regan pig instructed me well not to mind expense."

As the sun slipped brazenly above the eastern horizon, one gendarme went back into Las Palmas with the jaded horses, the rest of the party descended to the deck of the tug, the Swede dived down into the engine-room, and Captain Eosaro, shaking off his chill in the sun's beneficent rays, ordered the deck-hands to cast off the lines, and put one of them at the wheel in the pilot-house.

And the same day-dawn found the Ang clique, after a night of almost perfect calm, off the mainland from which she had failed to get away, although she had made sufficient northing to be midway between San Antonio and the passages of Bocas del Toro and Cartago. These two passages to the open sea still lay twenty-five miles away, and the schooner truly slept on the mirror surface of the placid lagoon. Too stuffy below for sleep in the steaming tropics, the deck was littered with the sleepers.-On top the small house of the cabin, in solitary state, lay Leoncia. On the narrow runways of deck on either side lay her brothers and her father. Aft, between the cabin companionway and the wheel, side by side, Francis' arm across Henry's shoulder, as if still protecting him, were the two Morgans. On one side the wheel, sitting, with arms on knees and head on arms, the negro-

Indian skipper slept, and just as precisely postured, on the other side of the wheel, slept the helmsman, who was none other than Percival, the black Kingston negro. The waist of the schooner was strewn with the bodies of the mixed-breed seamen, while for'ard, on the tiny forecastlehead, prone, his face buried upon his folded arms, slept the lookout.

Leoncia, in her high place on the cabin-top, awoke first. Propping her head on her hand, the elbow resting on a bit of the poncho on which she lay, she looked down past one side of the hood of the companionway upon the two young men. She yearned over them, who were so alike, and knew love for both of them, remembered the kisses of Henry on her mouth, thrilled till the blush of her own thoughts mantled her cheek at memory of the kisses of Francis, and was puzzled and amazed that she should have it in her to love two men at the one time. As she had already learned of herself, she would follow Henry to the end of the world and Francis even farther. And she could not understand such wantonness of inclination.

Fleeing from her own thoughts, which frightened her, she stretched out her arm and dangled the end of her silken scarf to a tickling of Francis' nose, who, after restless movements, still in the heaviness of sleep, struck with his hand at what he must have thought to be a mosquito or a fly, and hit Henry on the chest. So it was Henry who was first awakened. He sat up with such abruptness as to awaken Francis.

"Good morning, merry kinsman," Francis greeted. "Why such violence?"

"Morning, morning, and the morning's morning, comrade," Henry muttered. "Such was the violence of your sleep that it was you who awakened me with a buffet on my breast. I thought it was the hangman, for this is the morning they planned to kink my neck." He yawned, stretched his arms, gazed out over the rail at the sleeping sea, and nudged Francis to observance of the sleeping skipper and helmsman.

They looked so bonny, the pair of Morgans, Leoncia thought; and at the same time wondered why the English word had arisen unsummoned in her mind rather than a Spanish equivalent. Was it because her heart went out so generously to the two Gringos that she must needs think of them in their language instead of her own?

To escape the perplexity of her thoughts, she dangled the scarf again, was discovered, and laughingly confessed that it was she who had caused their violence of waking.

Three hours later, breakfast of coffee and fruit over, she found herself at the wheel taking her first lesson of steering and of the compass under Francis' tuition. The Any clique, under a crisp little breeze which had hauled around well to north 'ard, was for the moment heeling it through the water at a six-knot clip. Henry, swaying on the weather side of the after-deck and searching the sea through the binoculars, was striving to be all unconcerned at the lesson, although secretly he was mutinous with himself for not having first thought of himself introducing her to the binnacle and the wheel. Yet he resolutely refrained from looking around or from even stealing a corner-of-the-eye glance at the other two.

But Captain Trefethen, with the keen cruelty of Indian curiosity and the impudence of a negro subject of King George, knew no such delicacy. He stared openly and missed nothing of the chemic drawing together of his charterer and the pretty Spanish girl. When they leaned over the wheel to look into the binnacle, they leaned toward each other and Leoncia's hair touched Francis' cheek. And the three of them, themselves and the breed skipper, knew the thrill induced by such contact. But the man and woman knew immediately what the breed skipper did not know, and what they knew was embarrassment. Their eyes lifted to each other in a flash of mutual startlement, and drooped away and down guiltily. Francis talked very fast and loud enough for half the schooner to hear, as he explained the lubber's point of the compass. But Captain Trefethen grinned.

A rising puff of breeze made Francis put the wheel up. His hand to the spoke rested on her hand already upon it. Again they thrilled, and again the skipper grinned.

Leoncia's eyes lifted to Francis', then dropped in confusion. She slipped her hand out from under and terminated the lesson by walking slowly away with a fine assumption of casualness, as if the wheel and the binnacle no longer interested her. But she had left Francis afire with what he knew was lawlessness and treason as he glanced at Henry's shoulder and profile and hoped he had not seen what had occurred. Leoncia, apparently gazing off across the lagoon to the jungle-clad shore, was seeing nothing as she thoughtfully turned her engagement ring around and around on her finger.

But Henry, turning to tell them of the smudge of smoke he had discovered on the horizon, had inadvertently seen. And the negro-Indian captain had seen him see. So the captain lurched close to him, the cruelty of the Indian dictating the impudence of the negro, as he said in a low voice:

“Ah, be not downcast, sir. The senorita is generously hearted. There is room for both you gallant gentlemen in her heart.”

And the next fraction of a second he learned the inevitable and invariable lesson that white men must have their privacy of intimate things; for he lay on his back, the back of his head sore from contact with the deck, the front of his head, between the eyes, sore from contact with the knuckles of Henry Morgan’s right hand.

But the Indian in the skipper was up and raging as he sprang to his feet, knife in hand. Juan, the pale-yellow mixed breed, leaped to the side of his skipper flourishing another knife, while several of the nearer sailors joined in forming a sAmi-circle of attack on Henry, who, with a quick step back and an upward slap of his hand, under the pin-rail, caused an iron belaying pin to leap out and up into the air. Catching it in mid-flight, he was prepared to defend himself. Francis, abandoning the wheel and drawing his automatic as he sprang, was through the circle and by the side of Henry. “What did he say?” Francis demanded of his kinsman.

“I will say what I said,” the breed skipper threatened, the negro side of him dominant as he built for a compromise of blackmail. “I said. “

“Hold on, skipper!” Henry interrupted. “I’m sorry I struck you. Hold your hush. Put a stopper on your jaw. Saw wood. Forget. I’m sorry I struck you. I. “

Henry Morgan could not help the pause in speech during which he swallowed his gorge rising at what he was about, to say. And it was because of Leoncia, and because she was looking on and listening, that he said it. “I. I apologize, skipper.”

“It is an injury,” Captain Trefethsn stated aggrievedly. “It is a physical damage. No man can perpetrate a physical damage on a subject of King George’s, God bless him, without furnishing a money requital.”

At this crass statement of the terms of the blackmail, Henry was for forgetting himself and for leaping upon the creature. But, restrained by Francis’ hand on his shoulder, he struggled to self-control, made a noise like hearty laughter, dipped into his pocket for two ten-dollar gold-pieces, and, as if they stung him, thrust them into Captain Trefethen’s palm.

“Cheap at the price,” he could not help muttering aloud.

“It is a good price,” the skipper averred. “Twenty gold is always a good price for a sore head. I am yours to command, sir. You are a sure-enough gentleman. You may hit me any time for the price.”

“Me, sir, me!” the Kingston black named Percival volunteered with broad and prideless chucklings of subservience. “Take a swat at me, sir, for the same price, any time, now. And you may swat me as often as you please to pay. “

But the episode was destined to terminate at that instant, for at that instant a sailor called from amidships:

“Smoke! A steamer-smoke dead aft!”

The passage of an hour determined the nature and import of the smoke, for the Angelique, falling into a calm, was overhauled with such rapidity that the tugboat Dolores, at half a mile distance through the binoculars, was seen fairly to bristle with armed men crowded on her tiny for’ard deck. Both Henry and Francis could recognize the faces of the Jefe Politico and of several of the gendarmes. Old Enrico Solano’s nostrils began to dilate, as, with his four sons who were aboard, he stationed them aft with him and prepared for the battle. Leoncia, divided between Henry and Francis, was secretly distracted, though outwardly she joined in laughter at the unkemptness of the little tug, and in glee at a flaw of wind that tilted the Angelique’s port rail flush to the water and foamed her along at a nine-knot clip.

But weather and wind were erratic. The face of the lagoon was vexed with squalls and alternate streaks of calm. “We cannot escape, sir, I regret to inform you,” Captain Trefethen informed Francis. “If the wind would hold, sir, yes. But the wind baffles and breaks. We are crowded down upon the mainland. We are cornered, sir, and as good as captured.”

Henry, who had been studying the near shore through the glasses, lowered them and looked at Francis.

“Shout!” cried the latter. “You have a scheme. It’s sticking out all over you. Name it.”

“Eight there are the two Tigres islands,” Henry elucidated. “They guard the narrow entrance to Juchitan Inlet, which is called El Tigre. Oh, it has the teeth of a tiger, believe me. On either side of them, between them and the shore, it is too shoal to float a whaleboat unless you know the winding channels, which I do know. But between them is deep water, though the El Tigre Passage is so pinched that there is no room to come about. A schooner can only run it with the wind abaft or abeam. Now, the wind favors. We will run it. Which is only half my scheme — ”

“And if the wind baffles or fails, sir and the tide of the inlet runs out and in like a race, as I well know my beautiful schooner will go on the rocks,” Captain Trefethen protested.

“For which, if it happens, I will pay you full value,” Francis assured him shortly and brushed him aside. “And now, Henry, what’s the other half of your scheme?”

“I’m ashamed to tell you,” Henry laughed. “But it will be provocative of more Spanish swearing than has been heard in Chiriqui Lagoon since old Sir Henry sacked San Antonio and Bocas del Toro. You just watch.”

Leoncia clapped her hands, as with sparkling eyes she cried:

“It must be good, Henry. I can see it by your face. You must tell me.”

And, aside, his arm around her to steady her on the reeling deck, Henry whispered closely in her ear, while Francis, to hide his perturbation at the sight of them, made shift through the binoculars to study the faces on the pursuing tug. Captain Trefethen grinned maliciously and exchanged significant glances with the pale-yellow sailor.”

“Now, skipper,” said Henry, returning. “We’re just opposite El Tigre. Put up your helm and run for the passage. Also, and pronto, I want a coil of half-inch, old, soft, manila rope, plenty of rope-yarns and sail twine, that case of beer from the lazarette, that five-gallon kerosene can that was emptied last night, and the coffee-pot from the galley.”

But I am distrained to remark to your attention that that rope is worth good money, sir,” Captain Trefethen complained, as Henry set to work on the heterogeneous gear. “You will be paid,” Francis hushed him.

“And the coffee-pot it is almost new.”

“You will be paid.”

The skipper sighed and surrendered, although he sighed again at Henry’s next act, which was to uncork the bottles and begin emptying the beer out into the scuppers.

“Please, sir,” begged Percival. “If you must empty the beer please empty it into me.”

No further beer was wasted, and the crew swiftly laid the empty bottles beside Henry. At intervals of six feet he fastened the recorked bottles to the half-inch line. Also, he cut off two-fathom lengths of the line and attached them like streamers between the beer bottles. The coffee-pot and two empty coffee tins were likewise added among the bottles. To one end of the main-line he made fast the kerosene can, to the other end the empty beer-case, and looked up to Francis, who replied:

“Oh, I got you five minutes ago. El Tigre must be narrow, or else the tug will go around that stuff.”

“El Tigre is just that narrow,” was the response. “There’s one place where the channel isn’t forty feet between the shoals. If the skippers-misses our trap, he’ll go around, aground. Say, they’ll be able to wade ashore from the tug if that happens. Come on, now, we’ll get the stuff aft and ready to toss out. You take starboard and I’ll take port, and when I give the word you shoot that beer case out to the side as far as you can.”

Though the wind eased down, the Angelique, square before it, managed to make five knots, while the Dolores, doing six, slowly overhauled her. As the rifles began to speak from the Dolores, the skipper, under the direction of Henry and Francis, built up on the schooner’s stern a low barricade of sacks of potatoes and onions, of old sails, and of hawser coils. Crouching low in the shelter of this, the helmsman managed to steer. Leoncia refused to go below as the firing became more continuous, but compromised by lying down behind the cabin-house. The rest of the sailors sought similar shelter in nooks and corners, while the Solano men, lying aft, returned the fire of the tug.

Henry and Francis, in their chosen positions and waiting until the narrowness of El Tigre was reached, took a hand in the free and easy battle.

“My congratulations, sir,” Captain Trefethen said to Francis, the Indian of him compelling him to raise his head to peer across the rail, the negro of him flattening his body down until almost it seemed to bore into the deck. “That was Captain Rosaro himself that was steering, and the way he jumped and grabbed his hand would lead one to conclude that you had very adequately put a bullet through it. That Captain Rosaro is a very hot-tempered hombre, sir. I can almost hear him blaspheming now.”

“Stand ready for the word, Francis,” Henry said, laying down his rifle and carefully studying the low shores of the islands of El Tigre on either side of them. “We’re almost ready. Take your time when I give the word, and at three let her go.”

The tug was two hundred yards away and overtaking fast, when Henry gave the word. He and Francis stood up, and at “three “made their fling. To either side can and beercase flew, dragging behind them through the air the beaded rope of pots and cans and bottles and rope-streamers.

In their interest, Henry and Francis remained standing in order to watch the maw of their trap as denoted by the spread of miscellaneous objects on the surface of their troubled wake. A fusillade of rifle shots from the tug made them drop back flat to the deck; but, peering over the rail, they saw the tug's forefoot press the floated rope down and under. A minute later they saw the tug slow down to a stop.

"Some mess wrapped around that propeller," Francis applauded. "Henry, salute."

"Now, if the wind holds. " said Henry modestly.

The Angelique sailed on, leaving the motionless tug to grow smaller in the distance, but not so small that they could not see her drift helplessly onto the shoal, and see men going over the side and wading about.

"We just must sing our little song," Henry cried jubilantly, starting up the stave of "Back to Back Against the Mainmast."

"Which is all very nice, sir," Captain Trefethen interrupted at the conclusion of the first chorus, his eyes glistening and his shoulders still jiggling to the rhythm of the song. "But the wind has ceased, sir. We are becalmed. How are we to get out of Juchitan Inlet without wind? The Dolores is not wrecked. She is merely delayed. Some nigger will go down and clear her propeller, and then she has us right where she wants us."

"It's not so far to shore," Henry adjudged with a measuring eye as he turned to Enrico.

"What kind of a shore have they got ashore here, Senor Solano?" he queried. "Maya Indians and haciendados which?"

"Haciendados and Mayas, both," Enrico answered. "But I know the country well. If the schooner is not safe, we should be safe ashore. We can get horses and saddles and beef and corn. The Cordilleras are beyond. What more should we want?"

"But Leoncia?" Francis asked solicitously.

"Was born in the saddle, and in the saddle there are few Americanos she would not weary," came Enrico's answer. "It would be we", with your acquiescence, to swing out the long boat in case the Dolores appears upon us."

CHAPTER 8

IT'S all right, skipper, it's all right," Henry assured the breed captain, who, standing on the beach with them, seemed loath to say farewell and pull back to the Angelique adrift half a mile away in the dead calm which had fallen on Juchitan Inlet.

"It is what we call a diversion," Francis explained. "That is a nice word diversion. And it is even nicer when you see it work."

"But if it don't work," Captain Trefethen protested, "then will it spell a confounded word, which I may name as catastrophe."

"That is what happened to the Dolores when we tangled her propeller," Henry laughed. "But we do not know the meaning of that word. We use diversion instead. The proof that it will work is that we are leaving Senor Solano's two sons with you. Alvarado and Martinez know the passages like a book. They will pilot you out with the first favoring breeze. The Jefe is not interested in you. He is after us, and when we take to the hills he'll be on our trail with every last man of his."

"Don't you see!" Francis broke in. "The Angelique is trapped. If we remain on board he will capture us and the Angelique as well. But we make the diversion of taking to the hills. He pursues us. The Angelique goes free. And of course he won't catch us."

"But suppose I do lose the schooner!" the swarthy skipper persisted. "If she goes on the rocks I will lose her, and the passages are very perilous."

"Then you will be paid for her, as I've told you before," Francis said, with a show of rising irritation.

"Also are there my numerous expenses — "

Francis pulled out a pad and pencil, scribbled a note, and passed it over, saying:

"Present that to Senor Melchor Gonzales at Bocas del Toro. It is for a thousand gold. He is the banker; he is my agent, and he will pay it to you."

Captain Trefethen stared incredulously at the scrawled bit of paper.

"Oh, he's good for it," Henry said.

"Yes, sir, I know, sir, that Mr. Francis Morgan is a wealthy gentleman of renown. But how wealthy is he? Is he as wealthy as I modestly am? I own the Angelique, free of all debt. I own two town lots, unimproved, in Colon.

And I own four water-front lots in Belen that will make me very wealthy when the Union Fruit Company begins the building of the warehouses — ”

“How much, Francis, did your father leave you?” Henry quipped teasingly. “Or, rather, how many?”

Francis shrugged his shoulders as he answered vaguely: “More than I have fingers and toes.”

“Dollars, sir?” queried the captain.

Henry shook his head sharply.

“Thousands, sir?”

Again Henry shook his head.

“Millions, sir?”

“Now you’re talking,” Henry answered. “Mr. Francis Morgan is rich enough to buy almost all of the Republic of Panama, with the Canal cut out of the deal.”

The negro-Indian mariner looked his unbelief to Enrico Solano, who replied:

“He is an honorable gentleman. I know. I have cashed his paper, drawn on Senor Melchor Gonzales at Bocas del Toro, for a thousand pesos. There it is in the bag there.”

He nodded his head up the beach to where Leoncia, in the midst of the dunnage landed with them, was toying with trying to slip cartridges into a Winchester rifle. The bag, which the skipper had long since noted, lay at her feet in the sand.

“I do hate to travel strapped,” Francis explained embarrassedly to the white men of the group. “One never knows when a dollar mayn’t come in handy. I got caught with a broken machine at Smith River Corners, up New York way, one night, with nothing but a check book, and, d’you know, I couldn’t get even a cigarette in the town.”

“I trusted a white gentleman in Barbadoes once, who chartered my boat to go fishing flying fish,” the captain began.

“Well, so long, skipper,” Henry shut him off. “You’d better be getting on board, because we’re going to hike.”

And for Captain Trefethen, staring at the backs of his departing passengers, remained naught but to obey. Helping to shove the boat off, he climbed in, took the steering sweep, and directed his course toward the Angelique. Glancing back from time to time, he saw the party on the beach shoulder the baggage and disappear into the dense green wall of vegetation.

They came out upon an inchoate clearing, and saw gangs of peons at work chopping down and grubbing out the roots of the virgin tropic forest so that rubber trees for the manufacture of automobile tires might be planted to replace it. Leoncia, beside her father, walked in the lead. Her brothers, Ricardo and Alesandro, in the middle, were burdened with the dunnage, as were Francis and Henry, who brought up the rear. And this strange procession was met by a slender, straight-backed, hidalgo-appearing, elderly gentleman, who leaped his horse across tree-trunks and stump-holes in order to gain to them.

He was off his horse, at sight of Enrico, sombrero in hand in recognition of Leoncia, his hand extended to Enrico in greeting of ancient friendship, his lips wording words and his eyes expressing admiration to Enrico's daughter.

The talk was in rapid-fire Spanish, and the request for horses preferred and qualifiedly granted, ere the introduction of the two Morgans took place. The haciendado's horse, after the Latin fashion, was immediately Leoncia's, and, without ado, he shortened the stirrups and placed her astride in the saddle. A murrain, he explained, had swept his plantation of riding animals; but his chief overseer still possessed a fair-conditioned one which was Enrico's as soon as it could be procured.

His handshake to Henry and Francis was hearty as well as dignified, as he took two full minutes ornately to state that any friend of his dear friend Enrico was his friend. When Enrico asked the haciendado about the trails up toward the Cordilleras and mentioned oil, Francis pricked up his ears.

"Don't tell me, Senor," he began, "that they have located oil in Panama?"

"They have," the haciendado nodded gravely. 'We knew of the oil ooze, and had known of it for generations. But it was the Hermosillo Company that sent its Gringo engineers in secretly and then bought up the land. They say it is a great field. But I know nothing of oil myself. They have many wells, and have bored much, and so much oil have they that it is running away over the landscape. They say they cannot choke it entirely down, such is the volume and pressure. What they need is the pipe-line to ocean-carriage, which they have begun to build. In the meantime it flows away down the canyons, an utter loss of incredible proportion."

"Have they built any tanks?" Francis demanded, his mind running eagerly on Tampico Petroleum, to which most of his own fortune was pledged, and of which, despite the rising stock-market, he had heard nothing since his departure from New York.

The haciendado shook his head.

"Transportation," he explained. "The freight from tide-water to the gushers by mule-back has been prohibitive. But they have impounded much of it. They have lakes of oil, great reservoirs in the hollows of the hills, earthendammed, and still they cannot choke down the flow, and still the precious substance flows down the canyons."

"Have they roofed these reservoirs?" Francis inquired, remembering a disastrous fire in the early days of Tampico Petroleum.

"No, Senor."

Francis shook his head disapprovingly.

"They should be roofed," he said. "A match from the drunken or revengeful hand of any peon could set the whole works off. It's poor business, poor business."

"But I am not the Hermosillo," the haciendado said.

"For the Hermosillo Company, I meant, Senor," Francis explained. "I am an oil-man. I have paid through the nose to the tune of hundreds of thousands for similar accidents or crimes. One never knows just how they happen What one does know is that they do happen — "

What more Francis might have said about the expediency of protecting oil reservoirs from stupid or wilful peons, was never to be known; for, at the moment, the chief overseer of the plantation, stick in hand, rode up, half his interest devoted to the newcomers, the other half to the squad of peons working close at hand.

"Senor Ramirez, will you favor me by dismounting," his employer, the haciendado, politely addressed him, at the same time introducing him to the strangers as soon as he had dismounted. "The animal is yours, friend Enrico," the haciendado said. "If it dies, please return at your easy convenience the saddle and gear. And if your convenience be not easy, please do not remember that there is to be any return, save ever and always, of your love for me. I regret that you and your party cannot now partake of my hospitality. But the Jefe is a bloodhound, I know. We shall do our best to send him astray."

With Leoncia and Enrico mounted, and the gear made fast to the saddles by. leather thongs, the cavalcade started, Alesandro and Ricardo clinging each to a stirrup of their father's saddle and trotting alongside. This was for making greater haste, and was emulated by Francis and Henry, who clung to Leoncia's stirrups. Fast to the pommel of her saddle was the bag of silver dollars.

"It is some mistake," the haciendado was explaining to his overseer. "Enrico Solano is an honorable man. Anything to which he pledges himself is honorable. He has pledged himself to this, whatever it may be, and yet is Mariano Vercara e" Hijos on their trail. We shall mislead him if he comes this way."

"And here he comes," the overseer remarked, "without luck so far in finding horses." Casually he turned on the laboring peons and with horrible threats urged them to do at least half a day's decent work in a day.

From the corner of his eye, the haciendado observed the fast-walking group of men, with Alvarez Torres in the lead; but, as if he had not noticed, he conferred with his overseer about the means of grubbing out the particular stump the peons were working on.

He returned the greeting of Torres pleasantly, and inquired politely, with a touch of devilry, if he led the party of men on some oil-prospecting adventure.

"No, Senor," Torres answered. "We are in search of Senor Enrico Solano, his daughter, his sons, and two tall Gringos with them. It is the Gringos we want. They have passed this way, Senor?"

"Yes, they have passed. I imagined they, too, were in some oil excitement, such was their haste that prevented them from courteously passing the time of day and stating their destination. Have they committed some offence? But I should not ask. Senor Enrico Solano is too honorable a man. "

"Which way did they go?" the Jefe demanded, thrusting himself breathlessly forward from the rear of his gendarmes with whom he had just caught up.

And while the haciendado and his overseer temporized and prevaricated, and indicated an entirely different direction, Torres noted one of the peons, leaning on his spade, listen intently. And still while the Jefe was being misled and was giving orders to proceed on the false scent, Torres flashed a silver dollar privily to the listening peon. The peon nodded his head in the right direction, caught the coin unobserved, and applied himself to his digging at the root of the huge stump.

Torres countermanded the Jefe's order.

“We will go the other way,” Torres said, with a wink to the Jefe. “A little bird has told me that our friend here is mistaken and that they have gone the other way.”

As the posse departed on the hot trail, the haciendado and his overseer looked at each other in consternation and amazement. The overseer made a movement of his lips for silence, and looked swiftly at the group of laborers. The offending peon was working furiously and absorbedly, but another peon, with a barely perceptible nod of head, indicated him to the overseer.

“There’s the little bird,” the overseer cried, striding to the traitor and shaking him violently.

Out of the peon’s rags flew the silver dollar.

“Ah, ha,” said the haciendado, grasping the situation. “He has become suddenly affluent. This is horrible, that my peons should be wealthy. Doubtless, he has murdered some one for all that sum. Beat him, and make him confess.”

The creature, on his knees, the stick of the overseer raining blows on his head and back, made confession of what he had done to earn the dollar.

“Beat him, beat him some more, beat him to death, the beast who betrayed my dearest friends,” the haciendado urged placidly. “But no caution. Do not beat him to death, but nearly so. We are short of labor now and cannot afford the full measure of our just resentment. Beat him to hurt him much, but that he shall be compelled to lay off work no more than a couple of days.”

Of the immediately subsequent agonies, adventures, and misadventures of the peon, a volume might be written which w%uld be the epic of his life. Besides, to be beaten nearly to death is not nice to contemplate or dwell upon. Let it suffice to tell that when he had received no more than part of his beating; he wrenched free, leaving half his rags in the overseer’s grasp, and fled madly for the jungle, outfooting the overseer who was unused to rapid locomotion save when on a horse’s back.

Such was the speed of the wretched creature’s flight, spurred on by the pain of his lacerations and the fear of the overseer, that, plunging wildly on, he overtook the Solano party and plunged out of the jungle and into them as they were crossing a shallow stream, and fell upon his knees, whimpering for mercy. He whimpered because of his betrayal of them. But this they did not know, and Francis, seeing his pitiable condition, lingered behind long enough to unscrew the metal top from a pocket flask and revive him with a drink of half the contents. Then Francis hastened on, leaving the poor devil muttering inarticulate thanks ere he dived off into the sheltering jungle in a different direction. But, underfed, overworked, his body gave way, and he sank down in collapse in the green covert. Next, Alvarez Torres in the lead and tracking lika a hound, the gendarmes at his back, the Jefe panting in the rear from shortness of breath, the pursuit arrived at the stream. The footmarks of the peon, still wet on the dry stones beyond the margin of the stream, caught Torres' eye. In a trice, by what little was left of his garments, tne peon was dragged out. On his knees, which portion of his anatomy he was destined to occupy much this day, he begged for mercy and received his interrogation. And he denied knowledge of the Solano party. He, who had betrayed and been beaten, but who had received only succor from those he had betrayed, felt stir in him some atom of gratitude and good. He denied knowledge of the Solanos since in the clearing where he had sold them for the silver dollar. Torres' stick fell upon his head, five times, ten times, and went on falling with the certitude that in all eternity there would be no cessation unless he told the truth. And, after all, he was a miserable and wretched thing, spirit-broken by beatings from the cradle, and the sting of Torres' stick, with the threat of the plenitude of the stick that meant the death his own owner, the haciendado, could not afford, made him give in and point the way of the chase.

But his day of tribulation had only begun. Scarcely had be betrayed the Solanos the second time, and still on his knees, when the haciendado, with the posse of neighboring haciendados and overseers he had called to his help, burst upon the scene astride sweating horses.

"My peon, senors," announced the haciendado, itching to be at him. "You maltreat him."

"And why not?" demanded the Jefe.

"Because he is mine to maltreat, and I wish to do it myself."

The peon crawled and squirmed to the Jefe's feet and begged and entreated not to be given up. But he begged for mercy where was no mercy.

"Certainly, senor," the Jefe said to the haciendado. "We give him back to you. We must uphold the law, and he is your property. Besides, we have no further use for him. Yet is he a most excellent peon, senor. He has done what no peon has ever done in the history of Panama. He has told the truth twice in one day."

His hands tied together in front of him and hitched by a rope to the horn of the overseer’s saddle, the peon was towed away on the backtrack with a certain apprehension that the worst of his beatings for that day was very imminent. Nor was he mistaken. Back at the plantation, he was tied like an animal to a post of a barbed wire fence, while his owner and the friends of his owner who had helped in the capture went into the hacienda to take their twelve o’clock breakfast. After that, he knew what he was to receive. But the barbed wire of the fence, and the lame mare in the paddock behind it, built an idea in the desperate mind of the peon. Though the sharp barbs of the wire again and again cut his wrist, he quickly sawed through his bonds, free save for the law, crawled under the fence, led the lame mare through the gate, mounted her barebacked, and, with naked heels tattooing her ribs, galloped her away toward the safety of the Cordilleras.

CHAPTER 9

IN the meantime the Solanos were being overtaken, and Henry teased Francis with:

"Here in the jungle is where dollars are worthless. They can buy neither fresh horses, nor can they repair these two spineless creatures, which must likewise be afflicted with the murrain that carried off the rest of the haciendado's riding animals."

"I've never been in a place yet where money wouldn't work," Francis replied.

"I suppose it could even buy a drink of water in hell," was Henry's retort.

Leoncia clapped her hands.

"I don't know," Francis observed. "I have never been there."

Again Leoncia clapped her hands.

"Just the same I have an idea I can make dollars work in the jungle, and I am going to try it right now," Francis continued, at the same time untying the coin-sack from Leoncia's pommel. "You go ahead and ride on."

"But you must tell me," Leoncia insisted; and, aside, in her ear as she leaned to him from the saddle, he whispered what made her laugh again, while Henry, conferring with Enrico and his sons, inwardly berated himself for being a jealous fool.

Before they were out of sight, looking back, they saw Francis, with pad and pencil out, writing something. What he wrote was eloquently brief, merely the figure "50." Tearing off the sheet, he laid it conspicuously in the middle of the trail and weighted it down with a silver dollar. Counting out forty-nine other dollars from the bag, he sowed them very immediately about the first one and ran up the trail after his party.

Augustino, the gendarme who rarely spoke when he was sober, but who when drunk preached volubly the wisdom of silence, was in the lead, with bent head nosing the track of the quarry, when his keen eyes lighted on the silver dollar holding down the sheet of paper. The first he appropriated; the second he turned over to the Jefe. Torres looked over his shoulder, and together they read the mystic "50." The Jefe tossed the scrap of paper aside as of little worth, and was for resuming the chase, but Augustino picked up and pondered the "50 "thoughtfully. Even as he pondered it, a shout from Kafael advertised the finding of another dollar. Then Augustino knew.

There were fifty of the coins to be had for the picking up. Flinging the note to the wind, he was on hands and knees overhauling the ground. The rest of the party joined in the scramble, while Torres and the Jefe screamed curses on them in a vain effort to make them proceed.

When the gendarmes could find no more, they counted up what they had recovered. The toll came to forty-seven.

“There are three more,” cried Eafael, whereupon all flung themselves into the search again. Five minutes more were lost, ere the three other coins were found. Each pocketed what he had retrieved and obediently swung into the pursuit at the heels of Torres and the Jefe.

A mile farther on, Torres tried to trample a shining dollar into the dirt, but Augustino’s ferret eyes had been too quick, and his eager fingers dug it out of the soft earth. Where was one dollar, as they had already learned, there were more dollars. The posse came to a halt, and while the two leaders fumed and imprecated, the rest of the members cast about right and left from the trail.

Vicente, a moon-faced gendarme, who looked more like a Mexican Indian than a Maya or a Panamanian “breed,” lighted first on the clue. All gathered about, like hounds around a tree into which the ‘possum has been run. In truth, it was a tree, or a rotten and hollow stump of one, a dozen feet in height and a third as many feet in diameter. Five feet from the ground was an opening. Above the opening, pinned on by a thorn, was a sheet of paper the same size as the first they had found. On it was written “100.”

In the scramble that ensued, half a dozen minutes were lost as half a dozen right arms strove to be first in dipping into the hollow heart of the stump to the treasure. But the hollow extended deeper than their arms were long. “We will chop down the stump,” Eafael cried, sounding with the back of his machete against the side of it to locate the base of the hollow. “We will all chop, and we will count what we find inside and divide equally.”

By this time their leaders were frantic, and the Jefe had begun threatening, the moment they were back in San Antonio, to send them to San Juan where their carcasses would be picked by the buzzards.

“But we are not back in San Antonio, thank God,” said Augustino, breaking his sober seal of silence in order to enunciate wisdom.

“We are poor men, and we will divide in fairness,” spoke up Rafael. “Augustino is right, and thank God for it that we are not back in San Antonio. This rich Gringo scatters more money along the way in a day for us to pick up than could we earn in a year where we come from. I, for one, am for revolution, where money is so plentiful."

"With the rich Gringo for a leader," Augustino supplemented. "For as long as he leads this way could I follow forever."

"If," Rafael nodded agreement, with a pitch of his head toward Torres and the Jefe, "if they do not give us opportunity to gather what the gods have spread for us, then to the last and deepest of the roasting hells of hell for them. We are men, not slaves. The world is wide. The Cordilleras are just beyond. We will all be rich, and free men, and live in the Cordilleras where the Indian maidens are wildly beautiful and desirable — "

"And we will be well rid of our wives, back in San Antonio," said Vicente. "Let us now chop down this treasure tree."

Swinging their machetes with heavy, hacking blows, the wood, so rotten that it was spongy, gave way readily before their blades. And when the stump fell over, they counted and divided, in equity, not one hundred silver dollars, but one hundred and forty-seven.

"He is generous, this Gringo," quoth Vicente. "He leaves more than he says. May there not be still more?"

And, from the debris of rotten wood, much of it crumbled to powder under their blows, they recovered five more coins, in the doing of which they lost ten more minutes that drove Torres and Jefe to the verge of madness.

"He does not stop to count, the wealthy Gringo," said Rafael. "He must merely open that sack and pour it out. And that is the sack with which he rode to the beach of San Antonio when he blew up with dynamite the wall of our jail."

The chase' was resumed, and all went well for half an hour, when they came upon an abandoned freehold, already half-overrun with the returning jungle. A dilapidated, strawthatched house, a fallen-in labor barracks, a broken-down corral the very posts of which had sprouted and leaved into growing trees, and a well showing recent use by virtue of a fresh length of riata attaching bucket to well-sweep, showed where some man had failed to tame the wild. And, conspicuously on the well-sweep, was pinned a familiar sheet of paper on which was written "300."

"Mother of God! a fortune!" cried Eafael.

"May the devil forever torture him in the last and deepest hell!" was Torres' contribution.

“He pays better than your Senor Regan,” the Jefe sneered in his despair and disgust.

“His bag of silver is only so large,” Torres retorted. “It seems we must pick it all up before we catch him. But when we have picked it all up, and his bag is empty, then will we catch him.”

“We will go on now, comrades,” the Jefe addressed his posse ingratiatingly. “Afterwards, we will return at our leisure and recover the silver.”

Augustino broke his seal of silence again.

“One never knows the way of one’s return, if one ever returns,” he enunciated pessimistically. Elated by the pearl of wisdom he had dropped, he essayed another. “Three hundred in hand is better than three million in the bottom of a well we may never see again.”

“Some one must descend into the well,” spoke Rafael, testing the braided rope with his weight. “See! The riata is strong. We will lower a man by it. Who is the brave one who will go down?”

“I,” said Vicente. “I will be the brave one to go down — ”

“And steal half that you find,” Eafael uttered his instant suspicion. “If you go down, first must you count over to us the pesos you already possess. Then, when you come up, we can search you for all you have found. After that, when we have divided equitably, will your other pesos be returned to you.”

“Then will I not go down for comrades who have no trust in me,” Vicente said stubbornly. “Here, beside the well, I am as wealthy as any of you. Then why should I go down? I have heard of men dying in the bottom of wells.”

“In God’s name go down!” stormed the Jefe. “Haste! Haste!”

“I am too fat, the rope is not strong, and I shall not go down,” said Vicente.

All looked to Augustino, the silent one, who had already spoken more than he was accustomed to speak in a week. “Guillermo is the thinnest and lightest,” said Augustino. “Guillermo will go down!” the rest chorused. But Guillermo, glaring apprehensively at the mouth of the well, backed away, shaking his head and crossing himself.

“Not for the sacred treasure in the secret city of the Mayas,” he muttered.

The Jefe pulled his revolver and glanced to the remainder of the posse for confirmation. With eyes and head-nods they gave it.

"In heaven's name go down," he threatened the little gendarme. "And make haste, or I shall put you in such a fix that never again will you go up or down, but you will remain here and rot forever beside this hole of perdition. Is it well, comrades, that I kill him if he does not go down?" "It is well," they shouted.

And Guillermo, with trembling fingers, counted out the coins he had already retrieved, and, in the throes of fear, crossing himself repeatedly and urged on by the handthrusts of his companions, stepped upon the bucket, sat down on it with legs wrapped about it, and was lowered away out of the light of day.

"Stop!" he screamed up the shaft. "Stop! Stop! The water! I am upon it!"

Those on the sweep held it with their weight. "I should receive ten pesos extra above my share," he called up.

"You shall receive baptism," was called down to him, and, variously: "You will have your fill of water this day "; "We will let go "; "We will cut the rope "; "There will be one less with whom to share."

"The water is not nice," he replied, his voice rising like a ghost's out of the dark depth. "There are sick lizards, and a dead bird that stinks. And there may be snakes. It is well worth ten pesos extra what I must do."

"We will drown you!" Rafael shouted.

"I shall shoot down upon you and kill you!" the Jefe bullied.

"Shoot or drown me," Guillermo's voice floated up; "but it will buy you nothing, for the treasure will still be in the well."

There was a pause, in which those at the surface questioned each other with their eyes as to what they should do.

"And the Gringos are running away farther and farther," Torres fumed. "A fine discipline you have, Senor Mariano-Vercara e Hijos, over your gendarmes!"

"This is not San Antonio," the Jefe flared back. "This is the bush of Juchitan. My dogs are good dogs in San Antonio. In the bush they must be handled gently, else may they become wild dogs, and what then will happen to you and me?"

"It is the curse of gold," Torres surrendered sadly. "It is almost enough to make one become a socialist, with a Gringo thus tying the hands of justice with ropes of gold."

"Of silver," the Jefe corrected.

"You go to hell," said Torres. "As you have pointed out, this is not San Antonio but the bush of Juchitan, and here I may well tell you to go to hell. Why should you and I quarrel because of your bad temper, when our prosperity depends on standing together?"

"Besides," the voice of Guillermo drifted up, "the water is not two feet deep. You cannot drown me in it. I have just felt the bottom and I have four round silver pesos in my hand right now. The bottom is carpeted with pesos. Do you want to let go? Or do I get ten pesos extra for the filthy job? The water stinks like a fresh graveyard."

"Yes! Yes!" they shouted down.

"Which? Let go? Or the extra ten?"

"The extra ten!" they chorused.

"In God's name, haste! haste!" cried the Jefe.

They heard splashings and curses from the bottom of the well, and, from the lightening of the strain on the riata, knew that Guillermo had left the bucket and was floundering for the coin.

"Put it in the bucket, good Guillermo," Rafael called down.

"I am putting it in my pockets," up came the reply. "Did I put it in the bucket you might haul it up first and well forget to haul me up afterward."

"The double weight might break the riata," Rafael cautioned.

"The riata may not be so strong as my will, for my will in this matter is most strong," said Guillermo.

"If the riata should break ... " Eafael began again.

"I have a solution," said Guillermo. "Do you come down. Then shall I go up first. Second, the treasure shall go up in the bucket. And, third and last, shall you go up. Thus will justice be triumphant."

Rafael, with dropped jaw of dismay, did not reply.

"Are you coming, Rafael?"

"No," he answered. "Put all the silver in your pockets and come up together with it."

"I could curse the race that bore me," was the impatient observation of the Jefe.

"I have already cursed it," said Torres.

"Haul away I " shouted Guillermo. " I have everything in my pockets save the stench; and I am suffocating. Haul quick, or I shall perish, and the three hundred pesos will perish with me. And there are more than three hundred. He must have emptied his bag."

Ahead, on the trail, where the way grew steep and the horses without stamina rested and panted, Francis overtook his party.

“Never again shall I travel without minted coin of the realm,” he exulted, as he described what he had remained behind to see from the edge of the deserted plantation. “Henry, when I die and go to heaven, I shall have a stout bag of cash along with me. Even there could it redeem me from heaven alone knows what scrapes. Listen! They fought like cats and dogs about the mouth of the well. Nobody would trust anybody to descend into the well unless he deposited what he had previously picked up with those that remained at the top. They were out of hand. The Jefe, at the point of his gun, had to force the littlest and leanest of them to go down. And when he was down he blackmailed them before he would come up. And when he came up they broke their promises and gave him a beating. They were still beating him when I left.”

“But now your sack is empty,” said Henry.

“Which is our present and most pressing trouble,” Francis agreed. “Had I sufficient pesos I could keep the pursuit well behind us forever. I’m afraid I was too generous. I did not know how cheap the poor devils were. But I’ll tell you something that will make your hair stand up. Torres, Senor Torres, Senor Alvarez Torres, the elegant gentleman and old-time friend of you Solanos, is leading the pursuit along with the Jefe. He is furious at the delay. They almost had a rupture because the Jefe couldn’t keep his men in hand. Yes, sir, and he told the Jefe to go to hell. I distinctly heard him tell the Jefe to go to hell.”

Five miles farther on, the horses of Leoncia and her father in collapse, where the trail plunged into and ascended a dark ravine, Francis urged the others on and dropped behind. Giving them a few minutes’ start, he followed on behind, a self-constituted rearguard. Part way along, in an open space where grew only a thick sod of grass, he was dismayed to find the hoof-prints of the two horses staring at him as large as dinner plates from out of the sod. Into the hoofprints had welled a dark, slimy fluid that his eye told him was crude oil. This was but the beginning, a sort of seepage from a side stream above off from the main flow. A hundred yards beyond he came upon the flow itself, a river of oil that on such a slope would have been a cataract had it been water. But being crude oil, as thick as molasses, it oozed slowly down the hill like so much molasses. And here, preferring to make his stand rather than to wade through the sticky mess, Francis sat down on a rock, laid his rifle on one side of him, his automatic pistol on the other side, rolled a cigarette, and kept his ears pricked for the first sounds of the pursuit.

And the beaten peon, threatened with more beatings and belaboring his over-ridden mare, rode across the top of the ravine above Francis, and, at the oil-well itself, had his exhausted animal collapse under him. With his heels he kicked her back to her feet, and with a stick belabored her to stagger away from him and on and into the jungle. And the first day of his adventures, although he did not know it, was not yet over. He, too, squatted on a stone, his feet out of the oil, rolled a cigarette, and, as he smoked it, contemplated the flowing oil-well. The noise of approaching men startled him, and he fled into the immediately adjacent jungle, from which he peered forth and saw two strange men appear. . They came directly to the well, and, by an iron wheel turning the valve, choked down the flow still further.

“No more,” commanded the one who seemed to be leader. “Another turn, and the pressure will blow out the pipes for so the Gringo engineer has warned me most carefully.”

And a slight flow, beyond the limited safety, continued to run from the mouth of the gusher down the mountain side. Scarcely had the two men accomplished this, when a body of horsemen rode up, whom the peon in hiding recognized as the haciendado who owned him and the overseers and haciendados of neighboring plantations who delighted in running down a fugitive laborer in much the same way that the English delight in chasing the fox.

No, the two oil-men had seen nobody. But the haciendado who led saw the footprints of the mare, and spurred his horse to follow, his crowd at his heels.

The peon waited, smoked his cigarette quite to the finish, and cogitated. When all was clear, he ventured forth, turned the mechanism controlling the well wide open t watched the oil fountaining upward under the subterranean pressure and flowing down the mountain in a veritable river. Also, he listened to and noted the sobbing, and gasping, and bubbling of the escaping gas. This he did not comprehend, and all that saved him for his further adventures was the fact that he had used his last match to light his cigarette. In vain he searched his rags, his ears, and his hair. He was out of matches.

So, chuckling at the river of oil he was wantonly running to waste, and, remembering the canyon trail below, he plunged down the mountainside and upon Francis, who received him with extended automatic. Down went the peon on his frayed and frazzled knees in terror and supplication to the man he had twice betrayed that day. Francis studied him, at first without recognition, because of the bruised and lacerated face and head on which the blood had dried like a mask.

"Amigo, amigo," chattered the peon. But at that moment, from below on the ravine trail, Francis heard the clatter of a stone dislodged by some man's foot. The next moment he identified what was left of the peon as the pitiable creature to whom he had given half the contents of his whiskey flask.

"Well, amigo," Francis said in the native language, "it looks as if they are after you."

"They will kill me, they will beat me to death, they are very angry," the wretch quavered. "You are my only friend, my father and my mother, save me."

"Can you shoot?" Francis demanded.

"I was a hunter in the Cordilleras before I was sold into slavery, Sen-or," was the reply.

Francis passed him the automatic, motioned him to take shelter, and told him not to fire until sure of a hit. And to himself he mused: The golfers are out on the links right now at Tarrytown. And Mrs. Belling-ham is on the clubhouse veranda wondering how she is going to pay the three thousand points she's behind and praying for a change of luck. And here am I, Lord! Lord, backed up to a river of oil .

His musing ceased as abruptly as appeared the Jefe, Torres, and the gendarmes down the trail. As abruptly he fired his rifle, and as abruptly they fell back out of sight. He could not tell whether he had hit one, or whether the man had merely fallen in precipitate retreat. The pursuers did not care to make a rush of it, contenting themselves with bushwhacking. Francis and the peon did the same, sheltering behind rocks and bushes and frequently changing their positions.

At the end of an hour, the last cartridge in Francis' rifle was all that remained. The peon, under his warnings and threats, still retained two cartridges in the automatic. But the hour had been an hour saved for Leoncia and her people, and Francis was contentedly aware that at any moment he could turn and escape by wading across the river of oil. So all was well, and would have been well, had not, from above, come an eruption of another body of men, who, from behind trees, fired as they descended. This was the haciendado and his fellow haciendados, in chase of the fugitive peon although Francis did not know it. His conclusion was that it was another posse that was after him. The shots they fired at him were strongly confirmative.

The peon crawled to his side, showed him that two shots remained in the automatic he was returning to him, and impressively begged from him his box of matches. Next, the peon motioned him to cross the bottom of the canyon and climb the other side. With half a guess of the creature’s intention, Francis complied, from his new position of vantage emptying his last rifle cartridge at the advancing posse and sending it back into shelter down the ravine.

The next moment, the river of oil flared into flame from where the peon had touched a match to it. In the following moment, clear up the mountainside, the well itself sent a fountain of ignited gas a hundred feet into the. air. And, in the moment after, the ravine itself poured a torrent of flame down upon the posse of Torres and the Jefe.

Scorched by the heat of the conflagration, Francis and the peon clawed up the opposite side of the ravine, circled around and past the blazing trail, and, at a dog-trot, raced up the recovered trail.

CHAPTER 10

WHILE Francis and the peon hurried up the ravine-trail in safety, the ravine itself, below where the oil flowed in, had become a river of flame, which drove the Jefe, Torres, and the gendarmes to scale the steep wall of the ravine. At the same time the party of haciendados in pursuit of the peon was compelled to claw back and up to escape out of the roaring canyon.

Ever the peon glanced back over his shoulder, until, with a cry of joy, he indicated a second black-smoke pillar rising in the air beyond the first burning well.

“More,” he chuckled. “There are more wells. They will all burn. And so shall they and all their race pay for the many blows they have beaten on me. And there is a lake of oil there, like the sea, like Juchitan Inlet it is so big.”

And Francis recollected the lake of oil about which the haciendado had told him that, containing at least five million barrels which could not yet be piped to sea transport, lay open to the sky, merely in a natural depression in the ground and contained by an earth dam.

“How much are you worth?” he demanded of the peon with apparent irrelevance.

But the peon could not understand.

“How much are your clothes worth all you’ve got on?”

“Half a peso, nay, half of a half peso,” the peon admitted ruefully, surveying what was left of his tattered rags.

“And other property?”

The wretched creature shrugged his shoulders in token of his utter destitution, then added bitterly:

“I possess nothing but a debt. I owe two hundred and fifty pesos. I am tied to it for life, damned with it for life like a man with a cancer. That is why I am a slave to the haciendado.”

“Huh!” Francis could not forbear to grin. “Worth two hundred and fifty pesos less than nothing, not even a cipher, a sheer abstraction of a minus quantity without existence save in the mathematical imagination ol man, and yet here you are burning up not less than millions of pesos’ worth of oil. And if the strata is loose and erratic and the oil leaks up outside the tubing, the chances are that the oil-body of the entire field is ignited say a billion dollars' worth. Say, for an abstraction enjoying two hundred and fifty dollars' worth of non-existence, you are some hombre, believe me."

Nothing of which the peon understood save the word "hombre."

"I am a man," he proclaimed, thrusting out his chest and straightening up his bruised head. "I am a hombre and I am a Maya."

"Maya Indian you?" Francis scoffed.

"Half Maya," was the reluctant admission. "My father is pure Maya. But the Maya women of the Cordilleras did not satisfy him. He must love a mixed-breed woman of the tierra calient e. I was so born; but she afterward betrayed him for a Barbadoes nigger, and he went back to the Cordilleras to live. And, like my father, I was born to love a mixed breed of the tierra calient e. She wanted money, and my head was fevered with want of her, and I sold myself to be a peon for two hundred pesos. And I saw never her nor the money again. For five years I have been a peon. For five years I have slaved and been beaten, and behold, at the end of five years my debt is not two hundred but two hundred and fifty pesos."

And while Francis Morgan and the long-suffering Maya half-breed plodded on deeper into the Cordilleras to overtake their party, and while the oil fields of Juchitan continued to go up in increasing smoke, still farther on, in the heart of the Cordilleras, were preparing other events destined to bring together all pursuers and all pursued Francis and Henry and Leoncia and their party; the peon; the party of the hacienda-dos; and the gendarmes of the Jefe, and, along with them, Alvarez Torres, eager to win for himself not only the promised reward of Thomas Regan but the possession of Leoncia Solano.

In a cave sat a man and a woman. Pretty the latter was, and young, a mestizo,, or half-caste woman. By the light of a cheap kerosene lamp she read aloud from a calf-bound tome which was a Spanish translation of Blackstone. Both were barefooted and bare-armed, clad in hooded gabardines of sack-cloth. Her hood lay back on her shoulders, exposing her black and generous head of hair. But the old man's hood was cowled about his head after the fashion of a monk. The face, lofty and ascetic, beaked with power, was pure Spanish. Don Quixote might have worn precisely a similar face. But there was a difference. The eyes of this old man were closed in the perpetual dark of the blind. Never could he behold a windmill at which to tilt.

He sat, while the pretty mestizo, read to him, listening and brooding, for all the world in the pose of Bodin's "Thinker." Nor was he a dreamer, nor a tilter of windmills, like Don Quixote. Despite his blindness, that ever veiled the apparent face of the world in invisibility, he was a man of action, and his soul was anything but blind, penetrating unerringly beneath the show of things to the heart and the soul of the world and reading its inmost sins and rapacities and noblenesses and virtues.

He lifted his hand and put a pause in the reading, while he thought aloud from the context of the reading.

"The law of man," he said with slow certitude, "is to-day a game of wits. Not equity, but wit, is the game of law to-day. The law in its inception was good; but the way of the law, the practice of it, has led men off into false pursuits. They have mistaken the way for the goal, the means for the end. Yet is law law, and necessary, and food. Only, law, in its practice to-day, has gone astray, udges and lawyers engage in competitions and affrays of wit and learning, quite forgetting the plaintiffs and defendants, before them and paying them, who are seeking equity and justice and not wit and learning.

"Yet is old Blackstone right. Under it all, at the bottom of it all, at the beginning of the building of the edifice of the law, is the quest, the earnest and sincere quest of righteous men, for justice and equity. But what is it that the Preacher said? "They made themselves many inventions.' And the law, good in its beginning, has been invented out of all its intent, so that it serves neither litigants nor injured ones, but merely the fatted judges and the lean and hungry lawyers who achieve names and paunches if they prove themselves cleverer than their opponents and than the judges who render decision."

He paused, still posed as Bodin's "Thinker," and meditated, while the mestizo, woman waited his customary signal to resume the reading. At last, as out of a profound of thought in which universes had been weighed in the balance, he spoke:

"But we have law, here in the Cordilleras of Panama, that is just and right and all of equity. We work for no man and serve not even paunches. Sackcloth and not broadcloth conduces to the equity of judicial decision. Eead on, Mercedes. Blackstone is always right if always rightly read which is what is called a paradox, and is what modern law ordinarily is, a paradox. Bead on. Blackstone is the very foundation of human law but, oh, how many wrongs are cleverly committed by clever men in his name!"

Ten minutes later, the blind thinker raised his head, sniffed the air, and gestured the girl to pause. Taking her cue from him, she, too, sniffed:

“Perhaps it is the lamp, Just One,” she suggested.

“It is burning oil,” he said. “But it is not the lamp. It is from far away. Also, have I heard shooting in the canyons.”

“I heard nothing” she began.

“Daughter, you who see have not the need to hear that I have. There have been many shots fired in the canyons. Order my children to investigate and make report.”

Bowing reverently to the old man who could not see but who, by keen-trained hearing and conscious timing of her every muscular action, knew that she had bowed, the young woman lifted the curtain of blankets and passed out into the day. At either side the cave-mouth sat a man of the peon class. Each was armed with rifle and machete, while through their girdles were thrust naked-bladed knives. At the girl’s order, both arose and bowed, not to her, but to the command and the invisible source of the command. One of them tapped with the back of his machete against the stone upon which he had been sitting, then laid his ear to the stone and listened. In truth, the stone was but the out-jut of a vein of metalliferous ore that extended across and through the heart of the mountain. And beyond, on the opposite slope, in an eyrie commanding the magnificent panorama of the descending slopes of the Cordilleras, sat another peon who first listened with his ear pressed to similar metalliferous quartz, and next tapped response with his machete. After that, he stepped half a dozen paces to a tall tree, half-dead, reached into the hollow heart of it, and pulled on the rope within as a man might pull who was ringing a steeple bell.

But no sound was evoked. Instead, a lofty branch, fifty feet above his head, sticking out from the main-trunk like a semaphore arm, moved up and down like the semaphore arm it was. Two miles away, on a mountain crest, the branch of a similar semaphore tree replied. Still beyond that, and farther down the slopes, the flashing of a hand-mirror in the sun heliographed the relaying of the blind man’s message from the cave. And all that portion of the Cordilleras became voluble with coded speech of vibrating ore-veins, sun-flashings, and waving tree-branches.

While Enrico Sola-no, slenderly erect on his horse as an Indian youth and convoyed on either side by his sons, Alesandro and Kicardo, hanging to his saddle trappings, made the best of the time afforded them by Francis’ rearguard battle with the gendarmes, Leoncia, on her mount, and Henry Morgan, lagged behind. One or the other was continually glancing back for the sight of Francis overtaking them. Watching his opportunity, Henry took the backtrail. Five minutes afterward, Leoncia, no less anxious than he for Francis' safety, tried to turn her horse about. But the animal, eager for the companionship of its mate ahead, refused to obey the rein, cut up and pranced, and then deliberately settled into a balk. Dismounting and throwing her reins on the ground in the Panamanian method of tethering a saddle horse, Leoncia took the back trail on foot. So rapidly did she follow Henry, that she was almost treading on his heels when he encountered Francis and the peon. The next moment, both Henry and Francis were chiding her for her conduct; but in both their voices was the involuntary tenderness of love, which pleased neither to hear the other uttering.

Their hearts more active than their heads, they were caught in total surprise by the party of haciendados that dashed out upon them with covering rifles from the surrounding jungle. Despite the fact that they had thus captured the runaway peon, whom they proceeded to kick and cuff, all would have been well with Leoncia and the two Morgans had the owner of the peon, the old-time friend of the Solano family, been present. But an attack of the malarial fever, which was his due every third day, had stretched him out in a chill near the burning oilfield.

Nevertheless, though by their blows they reduced the peon to weepings and pleadings on his knees, the haciendados were courteously gentle to Leoncia and quite decent to Francis and Henry, even though they tied the hands of the latter two behind them in preparation for the march up the ravine slope to where the horses had been left. But upon the peon, with Latin-American cruelty, they continued to reiterate their rage.

Yet were they destined to arrive nowhere, by themselves, with their captives. Shouts of joy heralded the debouchment upon the scene of the Jefe's gendarmes and of the Jefe and Alvarez Torres. Arose at once the rapid-fire, staccato, bastard-Latin of all men of both parties of pursuers, trying to explain and demanding explanation at one and the same time. And while the farrago of all talking simultaneously and of no one winning anywhere in understanding, made anarchy of speech, Torres, with a nod to Francis and a sneer of triumph to Henry, ranged before Leoncia and bowed low to her in true and deep hidalgo courtesy and respect.

"Listen!" he said, low-voiced, as she rebuffed him with an arm movement of repulsion. "Do not misunderstand me. Do not mistake me. I am here to save you, and, no matter what may happen, to protect you. You are the lady of my dreams. I will die for you yes, and gladly, though far more gladly would I live for you."

"I do not understand," she replied curtly. "I do not see life or death in the issue. We have done no wrong. I have done no wrong, nor has my father. Nor has Francis Morgan, nor has Henry Morgan. Therefore, sir, the matter is not a question of life or death."

Henry and Francis, shouldering close to Leoncia, on either side, listened and caught through the hubble-bubble of many voices the conversation of Leoncia and Torres.

"It is a question absolute of certain death by execution for Henry Morgan," Torres persisted. "Proven beyond doubt is his conviction for the murder of Alfaro Solano, who was your own full-blood uncle and your father's own fullblood brother. There is no chance to save Henry Morgan. But Francis Morgan can I save in all surety, if — "

"If?" Leoncia queried, with almost the snap of jaws of a she-leopard.

"If. you prove kind to me, and marry me," Torres said with magnificent steadiness, although two Gringos, helpless, their hands tied behind their backs, glared at him through their eyes their common desire for his immediate extinction.

Torres, in a genuine outburst of his passion, though his rapid glances had assured him of the helplessness of the two Morgans, seized her hands in his and urged:

"Leoncia, as your husband I might be able to do something for Henry. Even may it be jpossible for me to save his life and his neck, if he will yield to leaving Panama immediately."

"You Spanish dog!" Henry snarled at him, struggling with his tied hands behind his back in an effort to free them.

"Gringo cur!" Torres retorted, as, with an open backhanded blow, he struck Henry on the mouth.

On the instant Henry's foot shot out, and the kick in Torres' side drove him staggering in the direction of Francis, who was no less quick with a kick of his own. Back and forth like a shuttlecock between the battledores, Torres was kicked from one man to the other, until the gendarmes seized the two Gringos and began to beat them in their helplessness. Torres not only urged the gendarmes on, but himself drew a knife; and a red tragedy might have happened with offended Latin-American blood up and raging, had not a score or more of armed men silently appeared and silently taken charge of the situation. Some of the mysterious newcomers were clad in cotton singlets and trousers, and others were in cowled gabardines of sackcloth.

The gendarmes and haciendados recoiled in fear, crossing themselves, muttering prayers and ejaculating: “The Blind Brigand! ““The Cruel Just One! “‘ They are his people I” “We are lost.”

But the much-beaten peon sprang forward and fell on his bleeding knees before a stern-faced man who appeared to be the leader of the Blind Brigand’s men. From the mouth of the peon poured forth a stream of loud lamentation and outcry for justice.

“You know that justice to which you appeal?” the leader spoke gutturally.

“Yes, the Cruel Justice,” the peon replied. “I know what it means to appeal to the Cruel Justice, yet do I appeal, for I seek justice and my cause is just.”

“I, too, demand the Cruel Justice!” Leoncia cried with flashing eyes, although she added in an undertone to Francis and Henry: “Whatever the Cruel Justice is.”

“It will have to go some to be unfairer than the justice we can expect from Torres and the Jefe,” Henry replied in similar undertones, then stepped forward boldly before the cowled leader and said loudly: “And I demand the Cruel Justice.”

The leader nodded.

“Me, too,” Francis murmured low, and then made loud demand.

The gendarmes did not seem to count in the matter, while the haciendados signified their willingness to abide by whatever justice the Blind Brigand might mete out to them. Only the Jefe objected.

“Maybe you don’t know who I am,” he blustered. “I am Mariano Vercara e Hijos, of long illustrious name and long and honorable career. I am Jefe Politico of San Antonio, the highest friend of the governor, and high in the confidence of the government of the Republic of Panama. I am the law. There is but one law and one justice, which is of Panama and not the Cordilleras. I protest against this mountain law you call the Cruel Justice. I shall send an army against your Blind Brigand, and the buzzards will peck his bones in San Juan.”

“Remember,” Torres sarcastically warned the irate Jefe, “that this is not San Antonio, but the bush of Juchitan. Also, you have no army.”

“Have these two men been unjust to any one who has appealed to the Cruel Justice?” the leader asked abruptly.

“Yes,” asseverated the peon. “They have beaten me. Everybody has beaten me. They, too, have beaten me and without cause. My hand is bloody. My body is bruised and torn. Again I appeal to the Cruel Justice, and I charge these two men with injustice.”

The leader nodded and to his own men indicated the disarming of the prisoners and the order of the march.

“Justice! I demand equal justice!” Henry cried out. “My hands are tied behind my back. All hands should be so tied, or no hands be so tied. Besides, it is very difficult to walk when one is so tied.

The shadow of a smile drifted the lips of the leader as he directed his men to cut the lashings that invidiously advertised the inequality complained of.

“Huh!” Francis grinned to Leoncia and Henry. “I have a vague memory that somewhere around a million years ago I used to live in a quiet little old burg called New York, where we foolishly thought we were the wildest and wickedest that ever cracked at a golf ball, electrocuted an Inspector of Police, battled with Tammany, or bid four nullos with five sure tricks in one’s own hand.”

“Huh!” Henry vouchsafed half an hour later, as the trail, from a lesser crest, afforded a view of higher crests beyond. “Huh! and hell’s bells! These gunny-sack chaps are not animals of savages. Look, Henry! They are semaphoring! See that near tree there, and that big one across the canyon. Watch the branches wave.”

Blindfold for a number of miles at the last, the prisoners, still blindfolded, were led into the cave where the Cruel Justice reigned. When the bandages were removed, they found themselves hi a vast and lofty cavern, lighted by many torches, and, confronting them, a blind and white-haired man in sackcloth seated on a rock-hewn throne, with, beneath him, her shoulder at his knees, a pretty mestiza woman.

The blind man spoke, and in his voice was the thin and bell-like silver of age and weary wisdom.

“The Cruel Justice has been invoked. Speak! Who demands decision and equity?”

All held back, and not even the Jefe could summon heart of courage to protest against Cordilleras law.

“There is a woman present,” continued the Blind Brigand. “Let her speak first. All mortal men and women are guilty of something or else are charged by their fellows with some guilt.”

Henry and Francis were for withstraining her, but with an equal smile to them she addressed the Cruel Just One in clear and ringing tones:

“I only have aided the man I am engaged to marry to escape from death for a murder he did not commit.”

“You have spoken,” said the Blind Brigand. “Come forward to me.”

Piloted by sackcloth men, while the two Morgans who loved her were restless and perturbed, she was made to kneel at the blind man’s knees. The mestiza girl placed his hand on Leoncia’s head. For a full and solemn minute silence obtained, while the steady fingers of the Blind One rested about her forehead and registered the pulse-beats of her temples. Then he removed his hand and leaned back to decision.

“Arise, Senorita,” he pronounced. “Your heart is clean of evil. You go free. Who else appeals to the Cruel Justice?”

Francis immediately stepped forward.

“I likewise helped the man to escape from an undeserved death. The man and I are of the same name, and, distantly, of the same blood.”

He, too, knelt, and felt the soft finger-lobes play delicately over his brows and temples and come to rest finally on the pulse of his wrist.

“It is not all clear to me,” said the Blind One. “You are not at rest nor at peace with your soul. There is trouble within you that vexes you.”

Suddenly the peon stepped forth and spoke unbidden, his voice evoking a thrill as of the shock of blasphemy from the sackcloth men.

“Oh, Just One, let this man go,” said the peon passionately. “Twice was I weak and betrayed him to his enemy this day, and twice this day has he protected me from my enemy and saved me.”

And the peon, once again on his knees, but this time at the knees of justice, thrilled and shivered with superstitious awe, as he felt wander over him the light but firm fingertouches of the strangest judge man ever knelt before. Bruises and lacerations were swiftly explored even to the shoulders and down the back.

“The other man goes free,” the Cruel Just One announced. “Yet is there trouble and unrest within him. It one here who knows and will speak up?”

And Francis knew on the instant the trouble the blind man had divined within him the full love that burned in him for Leoncia and that threatened to shatter the full loyalty he must ever bear to Henry. No less quick was Leoncia in knowing, and could the blind man have beheld the involuntary glance of knowledge the man and woman threw at each other and the immediate embarrassment of averted eyes, he could have unerringly diagnosed Francis' trouble. The mestiza girl saw, and with a leap at her heart scented a love affair. Likewise had Henry seen and unconsciously scowled.

The Just One spoke:

"An affair of heart undoubtedly," he dismissed the matter. "The eternal vexation of woman In the heart of man. Nevertheless, this man stands free. Twice, in the one day, has he succored the man who twice betrayed him. Nor has the trouble within him aught to do with the aid he rendered the man said to be sentenced to death undeserved. Bemains to question this last man; also to settle for this beaten creature before me who twice this day has proved weak out of selfishness, and who has just now proved bravely strong out of unselfishness for another."

He leaned forward and played his fingers searchingly over the face and brows of the peon.

"Are you afraid to die?" he asked suddenly.

"Great arid Holy One, I am sore afraid to die," was the peon's reply.

"Then say that you have lied about this man, say that his twice succoring of you was a lie, and you shall live."

Under the Blind One's fingers the peon cringed and wilted.

"Think well," came the solemn warning. "Death is not good. To be forever unmoving, as the clod and rock, is not good. Say that you have lied and life is yours. Speak!"

But, although his voice shook from the exquisiteness of his fear, the peon rose to the full spiritual stature of a man.

"Twice this day did I betray him, Holy One. But my name is not Peter. Not thrice in this day will I betray him. I am sore afraid, but I cannot betray him thrice."

The blind judge leaned back and his face beamed and glowed as if transfigured.

"Well spoken," he said. "You have the makings of a man. I now lay my sentence upon you: From now on, through all your days under the sun, you shall always think like a man, act like a man, be a man. Better to die a man any time, than live a beast forever in time. The Ecclesiast was wrong. A dead lion is always better than a live dog. Go free, regenerate son, go free."

But, as the peon, at a signal from the mestiza, started to rise, the blind judge stopped him.

"In the beginning, O man who but this day has been born man, what was the cause of all your troubles?"

"My heart was weak and hungry, Holy One, for a mixed-breed woman of the tierra caliente. I myself am mountain born. For her I put myself in debt to the haciendado for the sum of two hundred pesos. She fled with the money and another man. I remained the slave of the haciendado, who is not a bad man,-but who, first and always, is a haciendado. I have toiled, been beaten, and have suffered for five long years, and my debt is now become two hundred and fifty pesos, and yet I possess naught but these rags and a body weak from insufficient food."

"Was she wonderful? this woman of the tierra caliente?" the blind judge queried softly.

"I was mad for her, Holy One. I do not think now that she was wonderful. But she was wonderful then. The fever of her burned my heart and brain and made a taskslave of me, though she fled in the night and I knew her never again."

The peon waited, on his knees, with bowed head, while, to the amazement of all, the Blind Brigand sighed deeply and seemed to forget time and place. His hand strayed involuntarily and automatically to the head of the mestiza, caressed the shining black hair and continued to caress it while he spoke.

"The woman," he said, with such gentleness that his voice, still clear and bell-like, was barely above a whisper. "Ever the woman wonderful. All women are wonderful ... to man. They love our fathers; they birth us; we love them; they birth our sons to love their daughters and to call their daughters wonderful ; and this has always beefa and shall continue always to be until the end of man's time and man's loving on earth."

A profound of silence fell within the cavern, while the Cruel Just One meditated for a space. At the last, with a touch dared of familiarity, the pretty mestiza touched him and roused him to remembrance of the peon still crouching at his feet.

“I pronounce judgment,” he spoke. “You have received many blows. Each blow on your body is quittance in full of the entire debt to the haciendado. Go free. But remain in the mountains, and next time love a mountain woman, since woman you must have, and since woman is inevitable and eternal in the affairs of men. Go free. You are half Maya?”

“I am half Maya,” the peon murmured. “My father is a Maya.”

“Arise and go free. And remain in the mountains with your Maya father. The tierra caliente is no place for the Cordilleras-born. The haciendado is not present, and therefore cannot be judged. And after all he is but a haciendado. His fellow haciendados, too, go free.”

The Cruel Just One waited, and, without waiting, Henry stepped forward.

“I am the man,” he stated boldly, “sentenced to the death undeserved for the killing of a man I did not kill. He was the blood-uncle of the girl I love, whom I shall marry if there be true justice here in this cave in the Cordilleras.”

But the Jefe interrupted.

“Before a score of witnesses he threatened to his face to kill the man. Within the hour we found him bending over the man’s dead body that was yet warm and limber with departing life.”

“He speaks true,” Henry affirmed. “I did threaten the man, both of us heady from strong drink and hot blood. I was so found, bending over his dead warm body. Yet did I not kill him. Nor do I know, nor can I guess, the coward hand in the dark that knifed out his life through the back from behind.”

“Kneel both of you, that I may interrogate you,” the Blind Brigand commanded.

Long he interrogated with his sensitive, questioning fingers. Long, and still longer, unable to attain decision, his fingers played over the faces and pulses of the two men.

“Is there a woman?” he asked Henry Morgan pointedly.

“A woman wonderful. I love her.”

“It is good to be so vexed, for a man unvexed by woman is only half a man,” the blind judge vouchsafed. He addressed the Jefe. “No woman vexes you, yet are you troubled. But this man “indicating Henry “I cannot tell if all his vexation be due to woman. Perhaps, in part, it may be due to you, or to what some prompting of evil may make him meditate against you. Stand up, both men of you. I cannot judge between you. Yet is there the test infallible, the test of the Snake and the Bird. Infallible it is, as God is infallible, for by such ways does God still maintain truth in the affairs of men. As well does Blackstone mention just such methods of determining the truth by trial and ordeal.”

CHAPTER 11

To all intents it might have been a tiny bull-ring, that pit in the heart of the Blind Brigand's domain. Ten feet in depth and thirty in diameter, with level floor and perpendicular wall, its natural formation had required little work at the hands of man to complete its symmetry. The sackcloth men, the haciendados, the gendarmes all were present, save for the Cruel Just One and the mestiza, and all were lined about the rim of the pit, as an audience, to gaze down upon some bullfight or gladiatorial combat within the pit.

At command of the stern-faced leader of the sackcloth men who had captured them, Henry and the Jefe descended down a short ladder into the pit. The leader and several of the brigands accompanied them.

"Heaven alone knows what's going to happen," Henry laughed up in English to Leoncia and Francis. "But if it's rough and tumble, bite and gouge, or Marquis of Queensbury or London Prize Eing, Mister Fat Jefe is my meat. But that old blind one is clever, and the chances are he's going to put us at each other on some basis of evenness. In which case, do you, my audience, if he gets me down,, stick your thumbs up and make all the noise you can. Depend upon it, if it's he that's down, all his crowd will be thumbs up."

The Jefe, overcome by the trap into which he had descended, in Spanish addressed the leader.

"I shall not fight with this man. He is younger than I, and has better wind. Also, the affair is illegal. It is not according to the law of the Ee-public of Panama. It is extra-territorial and entirely unjudicial."

"It is the Snake and the Bird," the leader shut him off. "You shall be the Snake. This rifle shall be in your hands. The other man shall be the Bird. In his hand shall be the bell. Behold! Thus may you understand the ordeal."

At his command, one of the brigands was given the rifle and was blindfolded. To another brigand, not blindfolded, was given a silver bell.

"The man with the rifle is the Snake," said the leader. "He has one shot at the Bird who carries the bell."

At signal to begin, the bandit with the bell, tinkled it at extended arm's length and sprang swiftly aside. The man with the rifle lowered it as if to fire at the space just vacated and pretended to fire.

"You understand?" the leader demanded of Henry and the Jefe.

The former nodded, but the latter cried exultantly:

"And I am the Snake?"

"You are the Snake," affirmed the leader.

And the Jefe was eager for the rifle, making no further protests against the extra-territoriality of the proceedings.

"Are you going to try to get me?" Henry warned the Jefe.

"No, Senor Morgan. I am merely going to get you. I am one of the two best shots in Panama. I have two score and more of medals. I can shoot with my eyes shut. I can shoot in the dark. I have often shot, and with precision, in the dark. Already may you count yourself a dead man."

Only one cartridge was put into the rifle, ere it was handed to the Jefe after he was blindfolded. Next, while Henry, equipped with the tell-tale bell, was stationed directly across the pit, the Jefe was faced to the wall and kept there while the brigands climbed out of the pit and drew the ladder up after them. The leader, from above, spoke down:

"Listen carefully, Senor Snake, and make no move until you have heard. The Snake has but one shot. The Snake cannot tamper with his blindfold. If he so tampers it is our duty to see that he immediately dies. The Snake has no time limit. He may take the rest of the day, and all of the night, and the remainder of eternity ere he fires his one shot. As for the Bird, the one rule is that never must the bell leave his hand, and never may he stop the clapper of it from making the full noise intended of the clapper against the sides of the bell. Should he do so, then will he immediately die. We are here above you, both of you Senors, rifles in hand, to see that you die the second you infract any of the rules. And now, God be with the right, proceed!"

The Jefe turned slowly about and listened, while Henry, essaying gingerly to move with the bell, caused it to tinkle. The rifle was quick to bear upon the sound, and to pursue it as Henry ran. With a quick shift he transferred the bell to the other extended hand and ran back in the opposite direction, the rifle sweeping after him in inexorable pursuit. But the Jefe was too cunning to risk all on a chance shot, and slowly advanced across the arena. Henry stood still, and the bell made no sound.

So unerringly had the Jefe's ear located the last silvery tinkle, and so straightly did he walk despite his blindfold, that he advanced just to the right of Henry and directly at the bell. With infinite caution, provoking no tinkle, Henry slightly raised his arm and permitted the Jefe's head to go under the bell with a bare inch of margin.

His rifle pointed, and within a foot of the pit-wall, the Jefe halted in indecision, listened vainly for a moment, then made a further stride that collided the rifle muzzle with the wall. He whirled about, and, with the rifle extended, like any blind man felt out the air-space for his enemy. The muzzle would have touched Henry had he not sprung away on a noisy and zig-zag course.

In the center of the pit he came to a frozen pause. The Jefe stalked past a yard to the side and collided with the opposite wall. He circled the wall, walking cat-footed, his rifle forever feeling out into the empty air. Next he ventured across the pit. After several such crossings, during which the stationary bell gave him no clue, he adopted a clever method. Tossing his hat on the ground for the mark of his starting point, he crossed the edge of the pit on a shallow chord, extended the chord by a pace farther along the wall, and felt his way back along the new and longer chord. Again against the wall, he verified the correctness of the parallelness of the two chords, by pacing back to his hat. This time, with three paces along the wall from the hat, he initiated his third chord.

Thus he combed the area of the pit, and Henry saw that he could not escape such combing. Nor did he wait to be discovered. Tinkling the bell as he ran and zigzagged and exchanging it from one hand to the other, he froze into immobility in a new place.

The Jefe repeated the laborious combing out process ; but Henry was not minded longer to prolong the tension. He waited till the Jefe's latest chord brought him directly upon him. He waited till the rifle muzzle, breast high, was within half a dozen inches of his heart. Then he exploded into two simultaneous actions. He ducked lower than the rifle and yelled "Fire!" in stentorian command.

So startled, the Jefe pulled the trigger, and the bullet sped above Henry's head. From above, the sackcloth men applauded wildly. The Jefe tore off his blindfold and saw the smiling face of his foe.

"It is well God has spoken," announced the sackcloth leader, as he descended into the pit. "The man uninjured is innocent. Remains now to test the other man."

"Me?" the Jefe almost shouted in his surprise and consternation.

"Greetings, Jefe," Henry grinned. "You did try to get me. It's my turn now. Pass over that rifle."

But the Jefe, with a curse, in his disappointment and rage forgetting that the rifle had contained only one cartridge, thrust the muzzle against Henry's heart and pulled the trigger. The hammer fell with a metallic click.

"It is well," said the leader, taking away the rifle and recharging it. "Your conduct shall be reported. The test for you remains, yet must it appear that you are not acting like God's chosen man."

Like a beaten bull in the ring seeking a way to escape and gazing up at the amphitheatre of pitiless faces, so the Jefe looked up and saw only the rifles of the sackcloth men, the triumphing faces of Leoncia and Francis, the curious looks of his own gendarmes, and the blood-eager faces of the haciendados that were like the faces of any bull-fight audience.

The shadowy smile drifted the stern lips of the leader as he handed the rifle to Henry and started to blindfold him.

"Why don't you make him face the wall until I'm ready?" the Jefe demanded, as the silver bell tinkled in his passion-convulsed hand.

"Because he is proven God's man," was the reply. "He has stood the test. Therefore he cannot do a treacherous deed. You now must stand the test of God. If you are true and honest, no harm can befall you from the Snake. For such is God's way."

Far more successful as the hunter than as the hunted one, did the Jefe prove. Across the pit from Henry, he strove to stand motionless; but out of nervousness, as Henry's rifle swept around on him, his hand trembled and the bell tinkled. The rifle came almost to rest and wavered ominously about the sound. In vain the Jefe tried to control his flesh and still the bell.

But the bell tinkled on, and, in despair, he flung it away and threw himself on the ground. But Henry, following the sound of his enemy's fall, lowered the rifle and pulled trigger. The Jefe yelled out in sharp pain as the bullet perforated his shoulder, rose to his feet, cursed, sprawled back on the ground, and lay there cursing.

Again in the cave, with the mestiza beside him at his knee, the Blind Brigand gave judgment.

"This man who is wounded and who talks much of the law of the tierra caliente, shall now learn Cordilleras law. By the test of the Snake and the Bird has he been proven guilty. For his life a ransom of ten thousand dollars gold shall be paid, or else shall he remain here, a hewer of wood and a carrier of water, for the remainder of the time God shall grant him to draw breath on earth. I have spoken, and I know that my voice is God's voice, and I know that God will not grant him long to draw breath if the ransom be not forthcoming."

A long silence obtained, during which even Henry, who could slay a foe in the heat of combat, advertised that such cold-blooded promise of murder was repugnant to him.

"The law is pitiless," said the Cruel Just One; and again silence fell.

"Let him die for want of a ransom," spoke one of the haciendados. "He has proved a treacherous dog. Let him die a dog's death."

"What say you?" the Blind Brigand asked solemnly. "What say you, peon of the many beatings, man new-born this day, half-Maya that you are and lover of the woman wonderful? Shall this man die the dog's death for want of a ransom?"

"This man is a hard man," spoke the peon. "Yet is my heart strangely soft this day. Had I ten thousand gold I would pay his ransom myself. Yea, O Holy One and Just, and had I two hundred and fifty pesos, even would I pay off my debt to the haciendado of which I am absolved."

The old man's blind face lighted up to transfiguration.

"You, too, speak with God's voice this day, regenerate one," he approved.

But Francis, who had been scribbling hurriedly in his check book, handed a check, still wet with the ink, to the mestiza.

"I, too, speak," he said. "Let not the man die the dog's death he deserves, proven treacherous hound that he is."

The mestiza read the check aloud.

"It is not necessary to explain," the Blind Brigand shut Francis off. "I am a creature of reason, and hare not lived always in the Cordilleras. I was trained in business in Barcelona. I know the Chemical National Bank of New York, and through my agents have had dealings with it aforetime. The sum is for ten thousand dollars gold. This man who writes it has told the truth already this day. The check is good. Further, I know he will not stop payment. This man who thus pays the ransom of a foe is one of three things: a very good man; a fool; or a very rich man. Tell me, Man, is there a woman wonderful?"

And Francis, not daring to glance to right or left, at Leoncia or Henry, but gazing straight before him on the Blind Brigand's face, answered because he felt he must so answer:

"Yes, Cruel Just One, there is a woman wonderful."

CHAPTER 12

AT the precise spot where they had been first blindfolded by the sackcloth men, the cavalcade halted. It was composed of a number of the sackcloth men; of Leoncia, Henry, and Francis, blindfolded and mounted on mules; and of the peon, blindfolded and on foot. Similarly escorted, the haciendados, and the Jefe and Torres with their gendarmes, had preceded by half an hour.

At permission given by the stern-faced leader, the captives, about to be released, removed their blindfolds.

“Seems I’ve been here before,” Henry laughed, looking about and identifying the place.

“Seems the oil-wells are still burning,” Francis said, pointing out half the field of day that was eaten up by the black smoke-pall. “Peon, look upon your handiwork. For a man who possesses nothing, you are the biggest spender I ever met. I have heard of drunken oil-kings lighting cigars with thousand dollar bank-notes, but hero are you burning up a million dollars a minute.

“I am not a poor man,” the peon boasted in proud mysteriousness.

“A millionaire in disguise!” Henry twitted.

“Where do you deposit?” was Leoncia’s contribution. “In the Chemical National Bank?”

The peon did not understand the allusions, but knew that he was being made fun of, and drew himself up in proud silence.

The stern leader spoke:

“From this point you may now go your various ways. The Just One has so commanded. You, senors, will dismount and turn over to me your mules. As for the senorita, she may retain her mule as a present from the Just One, who would not care to be responsible for compelling any senorita to walk. The two senors, without hardship, may walk. Especially has the Just One recommended walking for the rich senor. The possession of riches, he advised, leads to too little walking. Too little walking leads to stoutness; and stoutness does not lead to the woman wonderful. Such is the wisdom of the Just One.

“Further, he has repeated his advice to the peon to remain in the mountains. In the mountains he will find his woman wonderful, since woman he must have ; and it is wisest that such woman be of his own breed. The woman of the tierra caliente are for the men of the tierra caliente. The Cordilleras women are for the Cordilleras men. God dislikes mixed breeds. A mule is abhorrent under the sun. The world was not intended for mixed breeds, but man has made for himself many inventions. Pure races interbred leads to impurity. Neither will oil nor water congenially intermingle. Since kind begets kind, only kind should mate. Such are the words of the Just One which I have repeated as commanded. And he has especially impressed upon me to add that he knows whereof he speaks, for he, too, has sinned in just such ways.”

And Henry and Francis, of Anglo-Saxon stock, and Leoncia of the Latin, knew perturbation and embarrassment as the vicarious judgment of the Blind Brigand sank home. And Leoncia, with her splendid eyes of woman, would have appealed protest to either man she loved, had the other been absent; while both Henry and Francis would have voiced protest to Leoncia had either of them been alone with her. And yet, under it all, deep down, uncannily, was a sense of the correctness of the Blind Brigand’s thought. And heavily, on the heart of each, rested the burden of the conscious oppression of sin.

A crashing and scrambling in the brush diverted their train of thought, as descending the canyon slope on desperately slipping and sliding horses, appeared on the scene the haciendado with several followers. His greeting of the daughter of the Solanos was hidalgo-like and profound, and only less was the heartiness of his greeting to the two men for whom Enrico Solano had stood sponsor.

“Where is your noble father?” he asked Leoncia. “I have good news for him. In the week since I last saw you, I have been sick with fever and encamped. But by swift messengers, and favoring winds across Chiriqui Lagoon to Bocas del Toro, I have used the government wireless the Jefe of Bocas del Toro is my friend and have communicated with the President of Panama who is my ancient comrade whose nose I rubbed as often in the dirt as did he mine in the boyhood days when we were schoolmates and cubicle-mates together at Colon. And the word has come back that all is well; that justice has miscarried in the court at San Antonio from the too great but none the less worthy zeal of the Jefe Politico ; and that all is forgiven, pardoned, and forever legally and politically forgotten against all of the noble Solano family and their two noble Gringo friends — ”

Here, the haciendado bowed low to Henry and Francis. And here, skulking behind Leoncia's uncle, his eyes chanced to light on the peon; and, so lighting, his eyes blazed with triumph.

"Mother of God, fhou has net forgotten me!" he breathed fervently, then turned to the several friends who accompanied him. "There he is, the creature without reason or shame who has fled his debt of me. Seize him! I shall put him on his back for a month from the beating he shall receive!"

So speaking, the haciendado sprang around the rump of Leoncia's mule; and the peon, ducking under the mule's nose, would have won to the freedom of the jungle, had not another of the haciendados, with quick spurs to his horse's sides, cut him off and run him down. In a trice, used to just such work, the haciendados had the luckless wight on his feet, his hands tied behind him, a lead-rope made fast around his neck.

In one voice Francis and Henry protested.

"Senors," the haciendado replied, "my respect and consideration and desire to serve you are as deep as for the noble Solano family under whose protection you are. Your safety and comfort are sacred to me. I will defend you from harm with my life. I am yours to command. My hacienda is yours, likewise all T possess. But this matter of this peon is entirely another matter. He is none of yours. He is my peon, in my debt, who has run away from my hacienda. You will understand and forgive me, I trust. This is a mere matter of property. He is my property."

Henry and Francis glanced at each other in mutual perplexity and indecision. It was the law of the land, as they thoroughly knew.

"The Cruel Just One did remit my debt, as all here will witness," the peon whispered.

"It is true, the Cruel Justice remitted his debt," Leoncia verified.

The haciendado smiled and bowed low.

"But the peon contracted with me," he smiled. "And who is the Blind Brigand that his foolish law shall operate on my plantation and rob me of my rightful two hundred and fifty pesos?"

"He's right, Leoncia," Henry admitted.

"Then will I go back to the high Cordilleras," the peon asserted. "Oh, you men of the Cruel Just One, take me back to the Cordilleras."

But the stern leader shook his head.

"Here you were released. Our orders went no further. No further jurisdiction have we over you. We shall now bid farewell and depart."

"Hold on!" Francis cried, pulling out his check book and beginning to write. "Wait a moment. I must settle for this peon now. Next, before you depart, I have a favor to ask of you."

He passed the check to the haciendado, saying:

"I have allowed ten pesos for the exchange."

The haciendado glanced at the check, folded it away in his pocket, and placed the end of the rope around the wretched creature's neck in Francis' hand.

"The peon is now yours," he said.

Francis looked at the rope and laughed.

"Behold! I now own a human chattel. Slave, you are mine, my property now, do you understand?"

"Yes, Senor," the peon muttered humbly. "It seems, when I became mad for the woman I gave up my freedom for, that God destined me always afterward to-be the property of some man. The Cruel Just One is right. It is God's punishment for mating outside my race."

"You made a slave of yourself for what the world has always considered the best of all causes, a woman," Francis observed, cutting the thongs that bound the peon's hands. "And so, I make a present of you to yourself." So saying, he placed the neck-rope in the peon's hand. "Henceforth, lead yourself, and put not that rope in any man's hand."

While the foregoing had been taking place, a lean old man, on foot, had noiselessly joined the circle. Maya Indian he was, pure-blooded, with ribs that corrugated plainly through his parchment-like skin. Only a breechclout covered his nakedness. His unkempt hair hung in dirty-gray tangles about his face, which was high-cheeked, and emaciated to cadaverousness. Strings of muscles showed for his calves and biceps. A few scattered snags of teeth were visible between his withered lips. The hollows under his cheek-bones were prodigious. While his eyes, beads of black, deep-sunk in their sockets, burned with the wild light of a patient in fever.

He slipped eel-like through the circle and clasped the peon in his skeleton-like arms.

"He is my father," proclaimed the peon proudly. "Look at him. He is pure Maya, and he knows the secrets of the Mayas."

And while the two re-united ones talked endless explanations, Francis preferred his request to the sackcloth leader to find Enrico Solano and his two sons, wandering somewhere in the mountains, and to tell them that they were free of all claims of the law and to return home.

“They have done no wrong?” the leader demanded. “No; they have done no wrong,” Francis assured him. “Then it is well. I promise you to find them immediately, for we know the direction of their wandering, and to send them down to the coast to join you.”

“And in the meantime shall you be my guests while you wait,” the haciendado invited eagerly. “There is a freight schooner at anchor in Juchitan Inlet now off my plantation, and sailing for San Antonio. I can hold her until the noble Enrico and his sons come down from the Cordilleras.”

“And Francis will pay the demurrage, of course,” Henry interpolated with a sly sting that Leoncia caught, although it missed Francis, who cried joyously:

“Of course I will. And it proves my contention that a checkbook is pretty good to have anywhere.”

To their surprise, when they had parted from the sackcloth men, the peon and his Indian father attached themselves to the Morgans, and journeyed down through the burning oil-fields to the plantation which had been the scene of the peon’s slavery. Both father and son were unremitting in their devotion, first of all to Francis, and, next, to Leoncia and Henry. More than once they noted father and sen in long and earnest conversations; and, after Enrico and his sons had arrived, when the party went down to the beach to board the waiting schooner, the peon and his Maya parent followed along. Francis essayed to say farewell to them on the beach, but the peon stated that the pair of them were likewise journeying on the schooner.

“I have told you that I was not a poor man,” the peon explained, after they had drawn the party aside from the waiting sailors. “This is true. The hidden treasure of the Mayas, which the conquistadores and the priests of the Inquisition could never find, is in my keeping. Or, to be very true, is in my father’s keeping. He is the descendant, in the straight line, from the ancient high priest of the Mayas. He is the last high priest. He and I have talked much and long. And we are agreed that riches do not make life. You bought me for two hundred and fifty pesos, yet you made me free, gave me back to myself. The gift of a man’s life is greater than all the treasure in the world. So are we agreed, my father and I. And so, since it is the way of Gringos and Spaniards to desire treasure, we will lead you to the Maya treasure, my father and I, my father knowing the way. And the way into the mountains begins from San Antonio and not from Juchitan."

"Does your father know the location of the treasure? just where it is?" Henry demanded, with an aside to Francis that this was the very Maya treasure that had led him to abandon the quest for Morgan's gold on the Calf and to take to the mainland.

The peon shook his head.

"My father has never been to it. He was not interested in it, caring not for wealth for himself. Father, bring forth the tale written in our ancient language which you alone of living Mayas can read."

From within his loin-cloth the old man drew forth a dirty and much-frayed canvas bag. Out ot this he pulled what looked like a snarl of knotted strings. But the strings were twisted sennit of some fibrous forest bark, so ancient that they threatened to crumble as he handled them, while from under the touch and manipulation of his fingers a fine powder of decay arose. Muttering and mumbling prayers in the ancient Maya tongue, he held up the snarl of knots, and bowed reverently before it ere he shook it out.

"The knot-writing, the lost written language of the Mayas," Henry breathed softly. "This is the real thing, if only the old geezer hasn't forgotten how to read it."

All heads bent curiously toward it as it was handed to Francis. It was in the form of a crude tassel, composed of many thin, long strings. Not alone were the knots, and various kinds of knots, tied at irregular intervals in the strings, but the strings themselves were of varying lengths and diameters. He ran them through his fingers, mumbling and muttering.

"He reads!" cried the peon triumphantly. "All our old language is there in those knots, and he reads them as any man may read a book."

Bending closer to observe, Francis and Leoncia's hair touched, and, in the thrill of the immediately broken contact, their eyes met, producing the second thrill as they separated. But Henry, all eagerness, did not observe. He had eyes only for the mystic tassel.

"What d'you say, Francis?" he murmured. "It's big! It's big!"

"But New York is beginning to call," Francis demurred. "Oh, not its people and its fun, but its business," he added hastily, as he sensed Leoncia's unuttered reproach and hurt. "Don't forget, I'm mixed up in Tampico Petroleum and the stock market, and I hate to think how many millions are involved."

“Hell’s bells!” Henry ejaculated. “The Maya treasure, if a tithe of what they say about its immensity be true, could be cut three ways between Enrico, you and me, and make each of us richer than you are now.”

Still Francis was undecided, and, while Enrico expanded on the authenticity of the treasure, Leoncia managed to query in an undertone in Francis’ ear:

“Have you so soon tired of ... of treasure-hunting?”

He looked at her keenly, and down at her engagement ring, as he answered in the same low tones:

“How can I stay longer in this country, loving you as I do, while you love Henry?”

It was the first time he had openly avowed his love, and Leoncia knew the swift surge of joy, followed by the no less swift surge of mantling shame that she, a woman who had always esteemed herself good, could love two men at the same time. She glanced at Henry, as if to verify her heart, and her heart answered yes. As truly did she love Henry as she did Francis, and the emotion seemed similar where the two were similar, different where they were different.

“I’m afraid I’ll have to connect up with the Angeliquc, most likely at Bocas del Toro, and get away,” Francis told Henry. “You and Enrico can find the treasure and split it two ways.”

But the peon, having heard, broke into quick speech with his father, and, next, with Henry.

“You hear what he says, Francis,” the latter said, holding up the sacred tassel. “You’ve got to go with ‘us. It is you he feels grateful to for his son. He isn’t giving the treasure to us, but to you. And if you don’t go, be won’t read a knot of the writing.”

But it was Leoncia, looking at Francis with quiet wistfulness of pleading, seeming all but to say, “Please, for my sake,” who really caused Francis to reverse his decision.

CHAPTER 13

A WEEK later, out of San Antonio on a single day, three separate expeditions started for the Cordilleras. The first, mounted on mules, was composed of Henry, Francis, the peon and his ancient parent, and of several of the Solano peons, each leading a pack-mule, burdened with supplies and outfit. Old Enrico Solano, at the last moment, had been prevented from accompanying the party because of the bursting open of an old wound received hi the revolutionary fighting of his youth.

Up the main street of San Antonio the cavalcade proceeded, passing the jail, the wall of which Francis had dynamited, and which was only even then being tardily rebuilt by the Jefe’s prisoners. Torres, sauntering down the street, the latest wire from Regan tucked in his pocket, saw the Morgan outfit with surprise. “Whither away, senors?” he called.

So spontaneous that it might have been rehearsed, Francis pointed to the sky, Henry straight down at the earth, the peon to the right, and his father to the left. The curse from Torres at such impoliteness, caused all to burst into laughter, in which the mule-peons joined as they rode along.

Within the morning, at the time of the siesta hour, while all the town slept, Torres received a second surprise. This time it was the sight of Leoncia and her youngest brother, Ricardo, on mules’, leading a third that was evidently loaded with a camping outfit.

The third expedition was Torres’ own, neither more nor less meager than Leoncia’s, for it was composed only of himself and one, Jose Mancheno, a notorious murderer of the place whom Torres, for private reasons, had saved from the buzzards of San Juan. But Torres’ plans, in the matter of an expedition, were more ambitious than they appeared. Not far up the slopes of the Cordilleras dwelt the strange tribe of the Caroos. Originally founded by runaway negro slaves of Africa and Carib slaves of the Mosquito Coast, the renegades had perpetuated themselves with stolen women of the tierra caliente and with fled women slaves like themselves. Between the Mayas beyond, and the government of the coast, this unique colony had maintained itself in semi-independence.

Added to, in later days, by run-away Spanish prisoners, the Caroos had become a hotchpotch of, bloods and breeds, possessing a name and a taint so bad that the then governing power of Colombia, had it not been too occupied with its own particular political grafts, would have sent armies to destroy the pest-hole. And in this pest-hole of the Caroos Jose” Mancheno had been born of a Spanish-murderer father and a mes-tizamurderess mother. And to this pest-hole Jose Mancheno was leading Torres in order that the commands of Thomas Kegan of Wall Street might be carried out.

“Lucky we found him when we did,” Francis told Henry, as they rode at the rear of the last Maya priest.

“He’s pretty senile,” Henry nodded. “Look at him.”

The old man, as he led the way, was forever pulling out the sacred tassel and mumbling and muttering as he fingered it.

“Hope the old gentleman doesn’t wear it out,” was Henry’s fervent wish. “You’d think he’d read the directions once and remember them for a little while instead of continually pawing them over.”

They rode out through the jungle into a clear space that looked as if at some time man had hewn down the jungle and fought it back. Beyond, by the vista afforded by the clearing, the mountain called Blanco Kovalo towered high in the sunny sky. The old Maya halted his mule, ran over certain strings in the tassel, pointed at the mountain, and spoke in broken Spanish:

“It says: In the foot-steps of the God wait till the eyes of Chia flash.”

He indicated the particular knots of a particular string as the source of his information.

“Where are the foot-steps, old priest?” Henry demanded, staring about him at the unbroken sward.

But the old man started his mule, and, with a tattoo of bare heels on the creature’s ribs, hastened it on across the clearing and into the jungle beyond.

“He’s like a hound on the scent, and it looks as if the scent is getting hot,” Francis remarked.

At the end of half a mile, where the jungle turned to grass-land on swift-rising slopes the old man forced his mule into a gallop which he maintained until he reached a natural depression in the ground. Three feet or more in depth, of area sufficient to accommodate a dozen persons in comfort, its form was strikingly like that which some colossal human foot could have made.

“The foot-step of the God,” the old priest proclaimed solemnly, ere he slid off his mule and prostrated himself in prayer. “In the foot-step of the

God must we wait till the eyes of Chia flash so say the sacred knots."

"Pretty good place for a meal," Henry vouchsafed, looking down into the depression. While waiting for the mumbo-jumbo foolery to come oft, we might as well stay our stomachs."

"If Chia doesn't object," laughed Francis. And Chia did not object, at least the old priest could not find any objection written in the knots.

While the mules were being tethered on the edge of the first break of woods, water, was fetched from a nearby spring and a fire built in the footstep. The old Maya seemed oblivious of everything, as he mumbled endless prayers and ran the knots over and over.

"If only he doesn't blow up," Francis said. "I thought he was wild-eyed the first day we met him up in Juchitan," concurred Henry. "But it's nothing to the way his eyes are now."

Here spoke the peon, who, unable to understand a word of their English, nevertheless sensed the drift of it.

"This is very religious, very dangerous, to have anything to do with the old Maya sacred things. It is the death-road. My father knows. Many men have died. The deaths are sudden and horrible. Even Maya priests have died. My father's father so died. He, too, loved a woman of the tierra caliente. And for love of her, for gold, he sold the Maya secret and by the knot-writing led tierra caliente men to the treasure. He died. They all died. My father does not like the women of the tierra caliente now that he is old. He liked them too well in his youth, which was his sin. And he knows the danger of leading you to the treasure. Many men have sought during the centuries. Of those who found it, not one came back. It is said that even conquist adores and pirates of the English Morgan have won to the hiding-place and decorated it with their bones."

"And when your father dies," Francis queried, "then, being his son, you will be the Maya high priest?"

"No, senor," the peon shook his head. "I am only half-May a. I cannot read the knots. My father did not teach me because I was not of the pure Maya blood."

"And if he should die, right now, is there any other Maya who can read the knots?"

"No, senor. My father is the last living man who knows that ancient language."

But the conversation was broken in upon by Leoncia and Kicardo, who, having tethered their mules with the others, were gazing sheepishly down from the rim of the depression. The faces of Henry and Francis lighted with joy at the sight of Leoncia, while their mouths opened and their tongues articulated censure and scolding. Also, they insisted on her returning with Eicardo.

“But you cannot send me away before giving me something to eat,” she persisted, slipping down the slope of the depression with pure feminine cunning in order to place the discussion on a closer and more intimate basis.

Aroused by their voices, the old Maya came out of a trance of prayer and observed her with wrath. And in wrath he burst upon her, intermingling occasional Spanish words and phrases with the flood of denunciation in Maya.

“He says that women are no good,” the peon interpreted in the first pause. “He says women bring quarrels among men, the quick steel, the sudden death. Bad luck and God’s wrath are ever upon them. Their ways are not God’s ways, and they lead men to destruction. He says women are the eternal enemy of God and man, forever keeping God and man apart. He says women have ever cluttered the footsteps of God and have kept men away from travelling the path of God to God. He says this woman must go back.”

With laughing eyes, Francis whistled his appreciation of the diatribe, while Henry said:

“Now will you be good, Leoncia? You see what a Maya thinks of your sex. This is no place for you. California’s the place. Women vote there.”

“The trouble is that the old man is remembering the woman who brought misfortune upon him in the heyday of his youth,” Francis said. He turned to the peon. “Ask your father to read the knot-writing and see what it says for or against women traveling in the foot-steps of God.”

In vain the ancient high priest fumbled the sacred writing. There was not to be found the slightest authoritative objection to woman.

“He’s mixing his own experiences up with his mythology,” Francis grinned triumphantly. “So I guess it’s pretty near all right, Leoncia, for you to stay for a bite to eat. The coffee’s made. After that. “

But “after that” came before. Scarcely had they seated themselves on the ground and begun to eat, when Francis, standing up to serve Leoncia with tortillas, had his hat knocked off.

“My word!” he said, sitting down. “That was sudden. Henry, take a squint and see who tried to pot-shoot me.”

The next moment, save for the peon’s father, all eyes were peeping across the rim of the foot-step. What they saw, creeping upon them from every side, was a nondescript and bizarrely clad horde of men who seemed members of no particular race but composed of all races. The breeds of the entire human family seemed to have moulded their lineaments and vari-colored their skins.

“The mangiest bunch I ever laid eyes on,” was Francis’ comment.

“They are the Caroos,” the peon muttered, betraying fear.

“And who in,” Francis began. Instantly he amended. “And who in Paradise are the Caroos?”

“They come from hell,” was the peon’s answer. “They are more savage than the Spaniard, more terrible than the Maya. They neither give nor take in marriage, nor does a priest reside among them. They are the devil’s own spawn, and their ways are the devil’s ways, only worse.”

Here the Maya arose, and, with accusing finger, denounced Leoncia for being the cause of this latest trouble. A bullet creased his shoulder and half-whirled him about.

“Drag him down!” Henry shouted to Francis. “He’s the only man who knows the knot-language; and the eyes of Chia, whatever that may mean, have not yet flashed.”

Francis obeyed, with an out-reach of arm to the old fellow’s legs, jerking him down in a crumpled, skeleton-like fall.

Henry loosed his rifle, and elicited a fusillade in response. Next, Ricardo, Francis, and the peon joined in. But the old man, still running his knots, fixed his gaze across the far rim of the foot-step upon a rugged wall of mountain beyond.

“Hold on!” shouted Francis, in a vain attempt to make himself heard above the shooting.

He was compelled to crawl from one to another and shake them into ceasing from firing. And to each, separately, he had to explain that all their ammunition was with the mules, and that they must be sparing with the little they had in their magazines and belts.

“And don’t let them hit you,” Henry warned. “They’ve got old muskets and blunderbuses that will drive holes through you the size of dinner-plates.”

An hour later, the last cartridge, save several in Francis' automatic pistol, was gone; and to the irregular firing of the Caroos the pit replied with silence. Jose Mancheno was the first to guess the situation. He cautiously crept up to the edge of the pit to make sure, then signaled to the Caroos that the ammunition of the besieged was exhausted and to come on.

"Nicely trapped, senors," he exulted down at the defenders, while from all around the rim laughter arose from the Caroos.

But the next moment the change that came over the situation was as astounding as a transformation scene in a pantomime. With wild cries of terror the Caroos were fleeing. Such was their disorder and haste that numbers of them dropped their muskets and machetes.

"Anyway, I'll get you, Senor Buzzard," Francis pleasantly assured Mancheno, at the same time flourishing his pistol at him.

He leveled his weapon as Mancheno fled, but reconsidered and did not draw trigger.

"I've only three shots left," he explained to Henry, half in apology. "And in this country one can never tell when three shots will come in handiest, as I've found out, beyond a doubt, beyond a doubt."

"Look!" the peon cried, pointing to his father and to the distant mountainside. "That is why they ran away. They have learned the peril of the sacred things of Maya."

The old priest, running over the knots of the tassel in an ecstasy that was almost trance-like, was gazing fixedly at the distant mountainside, from which, side by side and close together, two bright flashes of light were repeating themselves.

"Twin mirrors could do it in the hands of a man," was Henry's comment.

"They are the eyes of Chia," the peon repeated. "It is so written in the knots as you have heard my father say. 'Wait in the foot-steps of the God till the eyes of Chia flash.'"

The old man rose to his feet and wildly proclaimed: "To find the treasure we must find the eyes!"

"All right, old top," Henry soothed him, as, with his small traveler's compass he took the bearings of the flashes.

"He's got a compass inside his head," Henry remarked an hour later of the old priest, who led on the foremost mule. "I check him by the compass, and, no matter how the natural obstacles compel him to deviate, he comes back to the course as if he were himself a magnetic needle."

Not since leaving the foot-step, had the flashings been visible. Only from that one spot, evidently, did the rugged landscape permit the seeing of them. Rugged the country was, broken into arroyos and cliffs, interspersed with forest patches and stretches of sand and of volcanic ash.

At last the way became impassable for their mounts, and Ricardo was left behind to keep charge of the mules and mule-peons and to make, a camp. The remainder of the party continued on, scaling the jungle-clad steep that blocked their way by hoisting themselves and one another up from root to root. The old Maya, still leading, was oblivious to Leoncia's presence.

Suddenly, half a mile farther on, he halted and shrank back as if stung by a viper. Francis laughed, and across the wild landscape came back a discordant, mocking echo. The last priest of the Mayas ran the knots hurriedly, picked out a particular string, ran its knots twice, and then announced:

"When the God laughs, beware! so say the knots."

Fifteen minutes were lost ere Henry and Francis succeeded in only partly convincing him, by repeated trials of their voices, that the thing was an echo.

Half an hour later, they debouched on a series of abruptrolling sand-dunes. Again the old man shrank back. From the sand in which they strode, arose a clamor of noise. When they stood still, all was still. A single step, and all the sand about them became vocal.

"When the God laughs, beware!" the old Maya warned.

Drawing a circle in the sand with his finger, which shouted at him as he drew it, he sank down within it on his knees, and as his knees contacted on the sand arose a very screaming and trumpeting of sound. The peon joined his father inside the noisy circle, where, with his fore-finger, the old man was tracing screeching cabalistic figures and designs.

Leoncia was overcome, and clung both to Henry and Francis. Even Francis was perturbed.

"The echo was an echo," he said. "But here is no echo. I don't understand it. Frankly, it gets my goat."

"Piffle!" Henry retorted, stirring the sand with his foot till it shouted again. "It's the barking sand. On the island of Kauai, down in the Hawaiian Islands, I have been across similar barking sands quite a place for tourists, I assure you. Only this is a better specimen, and much noisier. The scientists have a score of high-brow theories to account for the phenomenon. It occurs in several other places in the world, as I have heard. There’s only one thing to do, and that is to follow the compass bearing which leads straight across. Such sands do bark, but they have never been known to bite.”

But the last of the priests could not be persuaded out of his circle, although they succeeded in disturbing him from his prayers long enough to spout a flood of impassioned Maya speech.

“He says,” the son interpreted, “that we are bent on such sacrilege that the very sands cry out against us. He will go no nearer to the dread abode of Chia. Nor will I. His father died there, as is well known amongst the Mayas. He says he will not die there. He says he is not old enough to die.”

“The miserable octogenarian!” Francis laughed, and was startled by the ghostly, mocking laugh of the echo, while all about them the sand-dunes bayed in chorus. “Too youthful to die! How about you, Leoncia? Are you too young to die yet a while?”

“Say,” she smiled back, moving her foot slightly so as to bring a moan of reproach from the sand beneath it. “On the contrary, I am too old to die just because the cliffs echo our laughter back at us and because the sandhills bark at us. Come, let us go on. We are very close to those flashings. Let the old man wait within his circle until we come back.”

She cast off their hands and stepped forward, and as they followed, all the dunes became inarticulate, while one, near to them, down the sides of which ran a slide of sand, rumbled and thundered. Fortunately for them, as they were soon to learn, Francis, at abandoning the mules, had equipped himself with a coil of thin, strong rope.

Once across the sands they encountered more echoes. On trials, they found their halloes distinctly repeated as often as six or eight times.

“Hell’s bells,” said Henry. “No wonder the natives fight shy of such a locality!”

Wasn’t it Mark Twain who wrote about a man whose hobby was making a collection of echoes? “Francis queried.

“Never heard of him. But this is certainly some fine collection of Maya echoes. They chose the region wisely for a hiding place. Undoubtedly it was always sacred, even before the Spaniards came. The old priests knew the natural causes of the mysteries, and passed them over to the herd as mystery with a capital “M “and supernatural in origin.”

Not many minutes afterward they emerged on an open, level space, close under a crannied ‘and ledge-ribbed cliff, and exchanged their single-file mode of progression to threeabreast. The ground was a hard, brittle crust of surface, so crystalline and dry as never to suggest that it was aught else but crystalline and dry all the way down. In an ebullition of spirits, desiring to keep both men on an equality of favor, Leoncia seized their hands and started them into a run. At the end of half a dozen strides the disaster happened. Simultaneously Henry and Francis broke through the crust, sinking to their thighs, and Leoncia was only a second behind them in breaking through and sinking almost as deep.

"Hell's bells!" Henry muttered. "It's the very devil's own landscape."

And his low-spoken words were whispered back to him from the near-by cliffs on all sides and endlessly and sibilantly repeated.

Not at first did they fully apprehend their danger. It was when', by their struggles, they found themselves waistdeep and steadily sinking, that the two men grasped the gravity of the situation. Leoncia still laughed at the predicament, for it seemed no more than that to her.

"Quicksand," Francis gasped.

"Quicksand!" all the landscape gasped back at him, and continued to gasp it in fading ghostly whispers, repeating it and gossiping about it with gleeful unction.

"It's a pot-hole filled with quicksand," Henry corroborated.

"Maybe the old boy was right in sticking back there on the barking sands," observed Francis.

The ghostly whispering redoubled upon itself and was a long time in dying away.

By this time they were midway between waist and arm-pits and sinking as methodically as ever.

"Well, somebody's got to get out of the scrape alive," Henry remarked.

And, even without discussing the choice, both men began to hoist Leoncia up, although the effort and her weight thrust them more quickly down. When she stood, free and clear, a foot on the nearest shoulder of each of the two men she loved, Francis said, though the landscape mocked him:

"Now, Leoncia, we're going to toss you outAof this. At the word "Go! "let yourself go. And you must strike full length and softly on the crust. You'll slide a little. But don't let yourself stop. Keep on going. Crawl out to the solid land on your hands and knees. And, whatever you do, don't stand up until you reach the solid land. Beady, Henry?"

Between them, though it hastened their sinking, they swung her back and forth, free in the air, and, the third swing, at Francis' "Go!" heaved her shoreward.

Her obedience to their instructions was implicit, and, on hands and knees, she gained the solid rocks of the shore.

"Now for the rope!" she called to them.

But by this time Francis was too deep to be able to remove the coil from around his neck and under one arm. Henry did it for him, and, though the exertion sank him to an equal deepness, managed to fling one end of the rope to Leoncia.

At first she pulled on it. Next, she fastened a turn around a boulder the size of a motor car, and let Henry pull. But it was in vain. The strain or purchase was so lateral that it seemed only to pull him deeper. The quicksand was sucking and rising over his shoulders when Leoncia cried out, precipitating a very Bedlam of echoes:

"Wait! Stop pulling! I have an idea! Give me all the slack! Just save enough of the end to tie under your shoulders!"

The next moment, dragging the rope after her by the other end, she was scaling the cliff . Forty feet up, where a gnarled and dwarfed tree rooted in the crevices, shs paused. Passing the rope across the tree-trunk, as over a hook, she drew in the slack and made fast to a boulder of several hundredweight.

"Good for the girl!" Francis applauded to Henry.

Both men had grasped her plan, and success depended merely on her ability to dislodge the boulder and topple it off the ledge. Five precious minutes were lost, until she could find a dead branch of sufficient strength to serve as a crowbar. Attacking the boulder from behind and working with tense coolness while her two lovers continued to sink, she managed at the last to topple it over the brink.

As it fell, the rope tautened with a jerk that fetched an involuntary grunt from Henry's suddenly constricted chest. Slowly, he arose out of the quicksand, his progress being accompanied by loud sucking reports as the sand reluctantly released him. But, when he cleared the surface, the boulder so outweighed him that he shot shoreward across the crust until directly under the purchase above, when the boulder came to rest on the ground beside him.

Only Francis’ head, arms, and tops of shoulders were visible above the quicksand when the end of the rope was flung to him. And, when he stood beside them on terra firma, and when he shook his fist at the quicksand he had escaped by so narrow a shave, they joined with him in deriding it. And a myriad ghosts derided them back, and all the air about them was woven by whispering shuttles into an evil texture of mockery.

CHAPTER 14

“WE can’t be a million miles away from it,” Henry said, as the trio came to pause at the foot of a high steep cliff. “If it’s any farther on, then the course lies right straight over the cliff, and, since we can’t climb it and from the extent of it it must be miles around, the source of those flashes ought to be right here.”

“Now could it have been a man with looking-glasses?” Leoncia ventured.

“Most likely some natural phenomenon,” Francis answered. “I’m strong on natural phenomena since those barking sands.”

Leoncia, who chanced to be glancing along the face of the cliff farther on, suddenly stiffened with attention and cried, “Look!” r Their eyes followed hers, and rested on the same point. What they saw was no flash, but a steady persistence of white light that blazed and burned like the sun. Following the base of the cliff at a scramble, both men remarked, from the density of vegetation, that there had been no travel of humans that way in many years. Breathless from their exertions, they broke out through the brush upon an open-space where a not-ancient slide of rock from the cliff precluded the growth of vegetable life.

Leoncia clapped her hands. There was no need for her to point. Thirty feet above, on the face of the cliff, were two huge eyes. Fully a fathom across was each of the eyes, their surfaces brazen with some white reflecting substance.

“The eyes of Chia!” she cried.

Henry scratched his head with sudden recollection.

“I’ve a shrewd suspicion I can tell you what they’re composed of,” he said. “I’ve never seen it before, but I’ve heard old-timers mention it. It’s an old Maya trick.

My share of the treasure, Francis, against a perforated dime, that I can tell you what the reflecting stuff is.”

“Done!” cried Francis. “A man’s a fool not to take odds like that, even if it’s a question of the multiplication table. Possibly millions of dollars against a positive bad dime! I’d bet two times two made five on the chance that a miracle could prove it. Name it? What is it? The bet is on.”

“Oysters,” Henry smiled. “Oyster shells, or, rather, pearl-oyster shells. It’s mother-of-pearl, cunningly mosaicked and cemented in so as to give a continuous reflecting surface. Now you have to prove me wrong, so climb up and see."

Beneath the eyes, extending a score of feet up and down the cliff, was a curious, triangular out-jut of rock. Almost was it like an excrescence on the face of the cliff. The apex of it reached within a yard of the space that intervened between the eyes. Rough inequalities of surface, and cat-like clinging on Francis' part, enabled him to ascend the ten feet to the base of the excrescence. Thence, up to the ridge of it, the way was easier. But a twenty-fivefoot fall and a broken arm or leg in the midst of such isolation was no pleasant thing to consider, and Leoncia, causing an involuntary jealous gleam to light Henry's eyes, called up:

"Oh, do be careful, Francis!"

Standing on the tip of the triangle he was gazing, now into one, and then into the other, of the eyes. He drew his hunting knife and began to dig and pry at the right-hand eye.

"If the old gentleman were here he'd have a fit at such sacrilege," Henry commented.

"The perforated dime is yours," Francis called down, at the same time dropping into Henry's outstretched palm the fragment he had dug loose.

Mother-of-pearl it was, a flat,; piece cut with definite purpose to fit in with the many other pieces to form the eye.

"Where there's smoke there's fire," Henry adjudged. "Not for nothing did the Mayas select this God-forsaken spot and stick these eyes of Chia on the cliff."

"Looks as if we'd made a mistake in leaving the old gentleman and his sacred knots behind," Francis said.

"The knots should tell all about it and what our next move should be."

"Where there are eyes there should be a nose," Leoncia contributed.

"And there is!" exclaimed Francis. "Heavens! That was the nose I just climbed up. We're too close up against it to have perspective. At a hundred yards' distance it would look like a colossal face."

Leoncia advanced gravely and kicked at a decaying deposit of leaves and twigs evidently blown there by tropic gales.

"Then the mouth ought to be where a mouth belongs, here-under the nose," she v said.

In a trice Henry and Francis had kicked the rubbish aside and exposed an opening too small to admit a man's body. It was patent that the rock-slide had partly blocked the way. A few rocks heaved aside gave space for Francis to insert his head and shoulders and gaze about with a lighted match.

"Watch out for snakes," warned Leoncia.

Francis grunted acknowledgment and reported:

"This is no natural cavern. It's all hewn rock, and well done, if I'm any judge." A muttered expletive announced the burning of his fingers by the expiring matchstub. And next they heard his voice, in accents of surprise: "Don't need any matches. It's got a lighting system of its own from somewhere above regular concealed lighting, though it's daylight all right. Those old Mayas were certainly some goers. Wouldn't be surprised if we found an elevator, hot and cold water, a furnace, and a Swede janitor. Well, so long."

His trunk, and legs, and feet disappeared, and then his voice issued forth:

"Come on in. The cave is fine.

"And now aren't you glad you let me come along?" Leoncia twitted, as she joined the two men on the level floor of the rock-hewn chamber, where, their eyes quickly accustoming to the mysterious gray-percolation of daylight, they could see about them with surprising distinctness. "First, I found the eyes for you, and, next, the mouth. If I hadn't been along, most likely, by this time, you'd have been 4 half a mile away, going around the cliff and going farther and farther every step you took.

"But the place is bare as old Mother Hubbard's cupboard," she added, the next moment.

"Naturally," said Henry. "This is only the antechamber. Not so sillily would the Mayas hide the treasure the conquistadores were so mad after. I'm willing to wager right now that we're almost as far from finding the actual treasure as we would be if we were not here but in San Antonio."

Twelve or fifteen feet in width and of an unascertainable height, the passage led them what Henry judged "forty paces, or well over a hundred feet. Then it abruptly narrowed, turned at a right angle to the right, and, with a similar right angle to the left, made an elbow into another spacious chamber.

Still the mysterious percolation of daylight guided the way for their eyes, and Francis, in the lead, stopped so suddenly that Leoncia and Henry, in a single file behind, collided with him. Leoncia in the center, and Henry on her left, they stood abreast and gazed down a long avenue of humans, long dead, but not dust.

"Like the Egyptians, the Mayas knew embalming and mummifying," Henry said, his voice unconsciously sinking to a whisper in the presence of so many unburied dead, who stood erect and at gaze, as if still alive.

All were European-clad, and all exposed the impassive faces of Europeans. About them, as to the life, were draped the ages-rotten habiliments of the conquistadores and of the English pirates. Two of them, with visors raised, were encased in rusty armor. Their swords and cutlasses were belted to them or held in their shriveled hands, and through their belts were thrust huge flintlock pistols of archaic model.

"The old Maya was right," Francis whispered. "They've decorated the hiding place with their mortal remains and been stuck up in the lobby as a warning to trespassers. Say! If that chap isn't a real Iberian! I'll bet he played haia-lai, and his fathers before him."

"And that's a Devonshire man if ever I saw one," Henry whispered back. "Perforated dimes to pieces-ofeight that he poached the fallow deer and fled the king's wrath in the first forecastle for the Spanish Main."

"Br-r-r!" Leoncia shivered, clinging to both men. "The sacred things of the Mayas are dea'dly and ghastly. And there is a classic vengeance about it. The would-be robbers of the treasure-house have become its defenders, guarding it with their unperishing clay."

They were loath to proceed. The garmented spectres of the ancient dead held them temporarily spell-bound. Henry grew melodramatic.

"Even to this far, mad place," he said, "as early as the beginning of the Conquest, their true-hound noses led them on the treasure-scent. Even though they could not get away with it, they won unerringly to it. My hat is off to you, pirates and conquistadores! I salute you, old gallant plunderers, whose noses smelt out gold, and whose hearts were brave sufficient to fight for it!"

"Huh!" Francis concurred, as he urged the other two to traverse the avenue of the ancient adventurers. "Old Sir Henry himself ought to be here at the head of the procession."

Thirty paces they took, ere the passage elbowed as before, and, at the very end of the double-row of mummies, Henry brought his companions to a halt as he pointed and said:

"I don't know about Sir Henry, but there's Alvarez Torres."

Under a Spanish helmet, in decapitated medieval Spanish dress, a big Spanish sword in its brown and withered hand, stood a mummy whose lean brown face for all the world was the lean brown face of Alvarez Torres. Leoncia gasped, shrank back, and crossed herself at the sight.

Francis released her to Henry, advanced, and fingered the cheeks and lips and forehead of the thing, and laughed reassuringly:

“I only wish Alvarez Torres were as dead as this dead one is. I haven’t the slightest doubt, however, but what Torres descended from him I mean before he came here to take up his final earthly residence as a member of the Maya Treasure Guard.”

Leoncia passed the grim figure shudderingly. This time, the elbow passage was very dark, compelling Henry, who had changed into the lead, to light numerous matches.

“Hello!” he said, as he paused at the end of a couple of hundred feet. “Gaze on that for workmanship! Look at the dressing of that stone!”

From beyond, gray light streamed into the passage, making matches unnecessary to see. Half into a niche was thrust a stone the size of the passage. It was apparent that it had been used to block the passage. The dressing was equisite, the sides and edges of the block precisely aligned with the place in the wall into which it was made to dovetail.

“I’ll wager here’s where the old Maya’s father died,” Francis exclaimed. “He knew the secret of the balances and leverages that pivoted the stone, and it was only partly pivoted, as you’ll observe — ”

“Hell’s bells!” Henry interrupted, pointing before him on the floor at a scattered skeleton. “It must be what’s left of him. It’s fairly recent, or he would have been mummified. Most likely he was the last visitor before us.”

“The old priest said his father led men of the tierra caliente here,” Leoncia reminded Henry.

“Also,” Francis supplemented, “he said that none returned.”

Henry, who had located the skull and picked it up, uttered another exclamation and lighted a match to show the others what he had discovered-. Not only was the skull dented with what must have been a blow from a sword or a machete, but a shattered hole in the back of the skull showed the unmistakable entrance of a bullet. Henry shook the skull, was rewarded by an interior rattling, shook again, and shook out a partly flattened bullet. Francis examined it.

“From a horse-pistol,” he concluded aloud. “With weak or greatly deteriorated powder, because, in a place like this, it must have been fired pretty close t9 point blank range and yet failed to go all the way through. And it’s an aboriginal skull all right.”

A right-angled turn completed the elbow and gave them access to a small but well-lighted rock chamber. From a window, high up and barred with vertical bars of stone a foot thick and half as wide, poured gray daylight. The floor of the place was littered with white-picked bones of men. An examination of the skulls showed them to be those of Europeans. Scattered among them were rifles, pistols, and knives, with, here and there, a machete.

“Thus far they won, across the very threshold to the treasure,” Francis said, “and, from the looks, began to fight for its possession before they laid hands on it. Too bad the old man isn’t here to see what happened to his father.

“Might there not have been survivors who managed to get away with the loot?” suggested Henry.

But at that moment, casting, his eyes from the bones to a survey of the chamber, Francis saw what made him say: “Without doubt, no. See those gems in those eyes. Eubies, or I never saw a ruby!”

They followed his gaze to the stone statue of a squat and heavy female who stared at them red-eyed and openmouthed. So large was the mouth that it made a caricature of the rest of the face. Beside it, carved similarly of stone, and on somewhat more heroic lines, was a more obscene and hideous male statue, with one ear of proportioned size and the other ear as grotesquely large as the female’s mouth.

“The beauteous dame must be Chia all right,” Henry grinned. “But who’s her gentleman friend with the elephant ear and the green eyes?”

“Search me,” Francis laughed. “But this I do know: those green eyes of the elephant-eared one are the largest emeralds I’ve ever seen or dreamed of. Each of them is really too large to possess fair carat value. They should be crown jewels or nothing.”

“But a couple of emeralds and a couple of rubies, no matter what size, should not constitute the totality of the Maya treasure,” Henry contended. “We’re across the threshold of it, and yet we lack the key — ”

“Which the old Maya, back on the barking sands, undoubtedly holds in that sacred tassel of his,” Leoncia said. “Except for these two statues and the bones on the floor, the place is bare.”

As she spoke, she advanced to look the male statue over more closely. The grotesque ear centered her attention, and she pointed into it as she added: “I don’t know about the key, but there is the key-hole.”

True enough, the elephantine ear, instead of enfolding an orifice as an ear of such size should, was completely blocked up save for a small aperture that not too remotely resembled a key-hole. They wandered vainly about the chamber, tapping the walls and floor, seeking for cunningly-hidden passageways or unguessable clues to the hiding place of the treasure.

“Bones of tierra caliente men, two idols, two emeralds of enormous size, two rubies ditto, and ourselves, are all the place contains,” Francis summed up. “Only a couple of things remain for us to do: go back and bring up Kicardo and the mules to make camp outside; and bring up the old gentleman and his sacred knots if we have to carry him.”

“You wait with Leoncia, and I’ll go back and bring them up,” Henry volunteered, when they had threaded the long passages and the avenues of the erect dead and won to the sunshine and the sky outside the face of the cliff.

Back on the barking sands the peon and his father knelt in the circle so noisily drawn by the old man’s forefinger. A local rain squall beat upon them, and, though the peon shivered, the old man prayed on oblivious to what might happen to his skin in the way of wind and water. It was because the peon shivered and was uncomfortable that he observed two things which his father missed. First, he saw Alvarez Torres and Jos6 Mancheno cautiously venture out from the jungle upon the sand. Next, he saw a miracle. The miracle was that the pair of them trudged steadily across the sand without causing the slightest sound to arise from their progress. When they had disappeared ahead, he touched his finger tentatively to the sand, and aroused no ghostly whisperings. He thrust his finger into the sand, yet all was silent, as was it silent when he buffeted the sand heartily with the flat of his palm. The passing shower had rendered the sand dumb.

He shook his father out of his prayers, announcing:

“The sand no longer is noisy. It is as silent as the grave. And I have seen the enemy of the rich Gringo pass across the sand without sound. He is not devoid of sin, this Alvarez Torres, yet did the sand make no sound. The sand has died. The voice of the sand is not. Where the sinful may walk, you and I, old father, may walk.”

Inside the circle, the old Maya, with trembling forefinger in the sand, traced further cabalistic characters; and the sand did not shout back at him. Outside the circle it was the same because the sand had become wet, and because it was the way of the sand to be vocal only when it was bone-dry under the sun. He fingered the knots of the sacred writing tassel.

"It says," he reported, "that when the sand no longer talks it is safe to proceed. So far I have obeyed all instruction. In order to obey further instruction, let us now proceed."

So well did they proceed, that, shortly beyond the barking sands, they overtook Torres and Mancheno, which worthy pair slunk off into the brush on one side, watched the priest and his son go by, and took up their trail well in the rear. While Henry, taking a short cut, missed both couples of men.

CHAPTER 15

"EVEN so, it was a mistake and a weakness on my part to remain in Panama," Francis was saying to Leoncia, as they sat side by side on the rocks outside the cave entrance, waiting Henry's return.

"Does the stock market of New York then mean so much to you?" Leoncia coquettishly teased; yet only part of it was coquetry, the major portion of it being temporization. She was afraid of being alone with this man whom she loved so astoundingly and terribly.

Francis was impatient.

"I am ever a straight talker, Leoncia. I say what I mean, in the directest, shortest way — "

"Wherein you differ from us Spaniards," she interpolated, "who must garnish and dress the simplest thoughts with all decorations of speech."

But he continued undeterred what he had started to say.

"There you are a baffler, Leoncia, which was just what I was going to call you. I speak straight talk and true talk, which is a man's way. You baffle in speech, and flutter like a butterfly which, I grant, is a woman's way and to be expected. Nevertheless, it is not fair ... to me. I tell you straight out the heart of me, and you understand. You do not tell me your heart. You flutter and baffle, and I do not understand. Therefore, you have me at a disadvantage. You know I love you. I have told you plainly. I? What do I know about you?"

With downcast eyes and rising color in her cheeks, she sat silent, unable to reply.

"You see!" he insisted. "You do not answer. You look warmer and more beautiful and desirable than ever, more enticing, in short; and yet you baffle me and tell me nothing of your heart or intention. Is it because you are woman? Or because you are Spanish?"

She felt herself stirred profoundly. Beyond herself, yet in cool control of herself, she raised her eyes and looked steadily in his as steadily she said:

"I can be Anglo-Saxon, or English, or American, or whatever you choose to name the ability to look things squarely in the face and to talk squarely into the face of things." She paused and debated coolly with herself, and coolly resumed. "You complain that while you have told me that you love me, I have not told you whether or not I love you. I shall settle that forever and now. I do love you — ”

She thrust his eager arms away from her.

“Wait!” she commanded. “Who is the woman now? Or the Spaniard? I had not finished. I love you. I am proud that I love you. Yet there is more. You have asked me for my heart and intention. I have told you part of the one. I now tell you all of the other: I intend to marry Henry.”

Such Anglo-Saxon directness left Francis breathless.

“In heaven’s name, why?” was all he could utter.

“Because I love Henry,” she answered, her eyes still unshrinkingly on his.

“And you. you say you love me?” he quavered.

“And I love you, too. I love both of you. I am a good woman, at least I always used to think so. I still think so, though my reason tells me that I cannot love two men at the same time and be a good woman. I don’t care about that. If I am bad, it is I, and I cannot help myself for being what I was born to be.”

She paused and waited, but her lover was still speechless.

“And who’s the Anglo-Saxon now?” she queried, with a slight smile, half of bravery, half of amusement at the dumbness of consternation her words had produced in him. “I have told you, without baffling, without fluttering, my full heart and my full intention.”

“But you can’t!” he protested wildly. “You can’t love me and marry Henry.”

“Perhaps you have not understood,” she chided gravely. “I intend to marry Henry. I love you. I love Henry. But I cannot marry both of you. The law will not permit. Therefore I shall marry only one of you. It is my intention that that one be Henry.”

“Then why, why,” he demanded, “did you persuade me into remaining?”

“Because I loved you. I have already so told you.”

“If you keep this up I shall go mad!” he cried.

“I have felt like going mad over it myself many times,” she assured him. “If you think it is easy for me thus to play the Anglo-Saxon, you are mistaken. But no Anglo-Saxon, not even you whom I love so dearly, can hold me in contempt because I hide the shameful secrets of the impulses of my being. Less shameful I find it, for me to tell them, right out in meeting, to you. If this be Anglo-Saxon, make the most of it. If it be Spanish, and woman, and Solano, still make the most of it, for I am Spanish, and woman a Spanish woman of the Solanos — ”

“But I don’t talk with my hands,” she added with a wan smile in the silence that fell.

Just as he was about to speak, she hushed him, and both listened to a crackling and rustling from the underbrush that advertised the passage of humans.

“Listen,” she whispered hurriedly, laying her hand suddenly on his arm, as if pleading. “I shall be finally Anglo-Saxon, and for the last time, when I tell you what I am going to tell you. Afterward, and for always, I shall be the baffling, fluttering, female Spaniard you have chosen for my description. Listen: I love Henry, it is true, very true. I love you more, much more. I shall marry Henry. because I love him and am pledged to him. Yet always shall I love you more.”

Before he could protest, the old Maya priest and his peon son emerged from the underbrush close upon them. Scarcely noticing their presence, the pries,t went down on his knees, exclaiming, in Spanish:

“For the first Cirne have my eyes beheld the eyes of Chia.”

He ran the knots of the sacred tassel and began a prayer in Maya, which, could they have understood, ran as follows:

“O immortal Chia, great spouse of the divine Hzatzl who created all things out of nothingness! O immortal spouse of Hzatzl, thyself the mother of the corn, the divinity of the heart of the husked grain, goddess of the rain and the fructifying sun-rays, nourisher of all the grains and roots and fruits for the sustenance of man! O glorious Chia, whose mouth ever commands the ear of Hzatzl, to thee humbly, thy priest, I make my prayer. Be kind to me, and forgiving. From thy mouth let issue forth the golden key that opens the ear of Hzatzl. Let thy faithful priest gain to Hzatzl’s treasure Not for himself, Divinity, but for the sake of his son whom the Gringo saved. Thy children, the Mayas, pass. There is no need for them of the treasure. I am thy last priest. With me passes all understanding of thee and of thy great spouse, whose name I breathe only with my forehead on the stones. Hear me, O Chia, hear me! My head is on the stones before thee!”

For all of five minutes the old Maya lay prone, quivering and jerking as if in a catalepsy, while Leoncia and Francis looked curiously on, themselves half-swept by the unmistakable solemnity of the old man’s prayer, non-understandable though it was.

Without waiting for Henry, Francis entered the cave a second time. With Leoncia beside him, he felt quite like a guide as he showed the old priest over the place. The latter, ever reading the knots and mumbling, followed behind, while the peon was left on guard outside. In the avenue of mummies the priest halted reverently not so much for the mummies as for the sacred tassel.

"It is so written," he announced, holding out a particular string of knots. "These men were evil, and robbers. Their doom here is to wait forever outside the inner room of Maya mystery."

Francis hurried him past the heap of bones of his father before him, and led him into the inner chamber, where first of all, he prostrated himself before the two idols and prayed long and earnestly. After that, he studied certain of the strings very carefully. Then he made announcement, first in Maya, which Francis gave him to know was unintelligible, and next in broken Spanish:

"From the mouth of Chia to the ear of Hzatzl so is it written."

Francis listened to the cryptic utterance, glanced into the dark cavity of the goddess' mouth, stuck the blade of his hunting-knife into the keyhole of the god's monstrous ear, then tapped the stone with the hilt of his knife and declared the statue to be hollow. Back to Chia, he was tapping her to demonstrate her hollowness, when the old Maya muttered:

"The feet of Chia rest upon nothingness."

Francis caught by the idea, made the old man verify the message by the knots.

"Her feet are large," Leoncia laughed, "but they rest on the solid rock-floor and not on nothingness."

Francis pushed against the female deity with his hand and found that she moved easily. Gripping her with both hands, he began to wrestle, moving her with quick jerks and twists.

"For the strong men and unafraid will Chia walk," the priest read. "But the next three knots declare: Beware! Beware! Beware!"

"Well, I guess, that nothingness, whatever it is, won't bite me," Francis chuckled, as he released the statue after shifting it a yard from its original position.

There, old lady, stand there for a while, or sit down if that will rest your feet. They ought to be tired after standing on nothing for so many centuries."

A cry from Leoncia drew his gaze to the portion of the floor just vacated by the large feet of Chia. Stepping backward from the displaced goddess, he had been just about to fall into the rock-hewn hole her feet had concealed. It was circular, and a full yard in diameter. In vain he tested the depth by dropping lighted matches. They fell burning, and, without reaching bottom, still falling, were extinguished by the draught of their flight.

"It looks very much like nothingness without a bottom," he adjudged, as he dropped a tiny stone fragment.

Many seconds they listened ere they heard it strike.

"Even that may not be the bottom," Leoncia suggested. "It may have been struck against some projection from the side and even lodged there."

"Well, this will determine it," Francis cried, seizing an ancient musket from among the bones on the floor and preparing to drop it.

But the old man stopped him.

"The message of the sacred knots is: whoso violates the nothingness beneath the feet of Chia shall quickly and terribly die."

"Far be it from me to make a stir in the void," Francis grinned, tossing the musket aside. "But what are we to do now, old Maya man? From the mouth of Chia to the ear of Hzatzl sounds easy but how? and what? Run the sacred knots with thy fingers, old top, and find for us how and what."

For the son of the priest, the peon with the frayed knees, the clock had struck. All unaware, he had seen his last sun-rise. No matter what happened this day, no matter what blind efforts he might make to escape, the day was to be his last day. Had he remained on guard at the caveentrance, he would surely have been killed by Torres and Mancheno, who had arrived close on his heels.

But, instead of so remaining, it entered his cautious, timid soul to make a scout out and beyond for possible foes. Thus, he missed death in the daylight under the sky. Yet the pace of the hands of the clock was unalterable, and neither nearer nor farther was his destined end from him.

While he scouted, Alvarez Torres and Jose" Mancheno arrived at the cave-opening. The colossal, mother-of-pearl eyes of Chia on the wall of the cliff were too much for the superstition-reared Caroo.

"Do you go in," he told Torres. "I will wait here and watch and guard."

And Torres, with strong in him the blood of the ancient forebear who stood faithfully through the centuries in the avenue of the mummy dead, entered the Maya cave as courageously as that forebear had entered.

And the instant he was out of sight, Jose Mancheno, unafraid to murder treacherously any living, breathing man, but greatly afraid of the unseen world behind unexplainable phenomena, forgot the trust of watch and ward and stole away through the jungle. Thus, the peon, returning reassured from his scout and curious to learn the Maya secrets of his father and of the sacred tassel, found nobody at the cave mouth and himself entered into it close upon the heels of Torres.

The latter trod softly and cautiously, for fear of disclosing his presence to those he trailed. Also his progress was still further delayed by the spectacle of the ancient dead in the hall of mummies. Curiously he examined these men whom history had told about, and for whom history had stopped there in the antechamber of the Maya gods. Especially curious was he at the sight of the mummy at the end of the line. The resemblance to him was too striking for him not to see, and he could not but believe that he was looking upon some direct great-ancestor of his.

Still gazing and speculating, he was warned by approaching footsteps, and glanced about for some place to hide. A sardonic humor seized him. Taking the helmet from the head of his ancient kin, he placed it on his own head. Likewise did he drape the rotten mantle about his form, and equip himself with the great sword and the great floppy boots that almost fell to pieces as he pulled them on. Next, half tenderly, he deposited the nude mummy on its back in the dark shadows behind the other mummies. And, finally, in the same spot at the end of the line, his hand resting on the sword-hilt, he assumed the same posture he had observed of the mummy.

Only his eyes moved as he observed the peon venturing slowly and fearfully along the avenue of upright corpses. At sight of Torres he came to an abrupt stop and with wide eyes of dread muttered a succession of Maya prayers. Torres, so confronted, could only listen with closed eyes and conjecture. When he heard the peon move on he stole a look and saw him pause with apprehension at the narrow elbow-turn of the passage which he must venture next. Torres saw his chance and swung the sword aloft for the blow that would split the peon’s head in twain.

Though this was the day and the very hour for the peon, the last second had not yet ticked. Not there, in the thoroughfare of the dead, was he destined to die under the hand of Torres. For Torres held his hand and slowly lowered the point of the sword to the floor, while the peon passed on into the elbow.

The latter met up with his father, Leoncia, and Francis, just as Francis was demanding the priest to run the knots again for fuller information of the how and what that would open the ear of Hzatzl.

“Put your hand into the mouth of Chia and draw forth the key,” the old man commanded his reluctant son, who went about obeying him most gingerly.

“She won’t bite you she’s stone,” Francis laughed at him in Spanish.

“The Maya gods are never stone,” the old man reproved him. “They seem to be stone, but they are alive, and ever alive, and under the stone, and through the stone, and by the stone, as always, work their everlasting will.”

Leoncia shuddered away from him and clung against Francis, her hand on his arm, as if for protection.

“I know that something terrible is going to happen,” she gasped. “I don’t like this place in the heart of a mountain among all these dead old things. I like the blue of the sky and the balm of the sunshine, and the wide-spreading sea. Something terrible is going to happen. I know that something terrible is going to happen.”

While Francis reassured her, the last seconds of the last minute for the peon were ticking off. And when, summoning all his courage, he thrust his hand into the mouth of the goddess, the last second ticked and the clock struck. With a scream of terror he pulled back his hand and gazed at the wrist where a tiny drop of blood exuded directly above an artery. The mottled head of a snake thrust forth like a mocking, derisive tongue and drew back and disappeared in the darkness of the mouth of the goddess.

“A viperine!” screamed Leoncia, recognising the reptile.

And the peon, likewise recognising the viperine and knowing his certain death by it, recoiled backward in horror, stepped into the hole, and vanished down the nothingness which Chia had guarded with her feet for so many centuries.

For a full minute nobody spoke, then the old priest said: “I have angered Chia, and she has slain my son.”

“Nonsense,” Francis was comforting Leoncia. “The whole thing is natural and explainable. What more natural than that a viperine should choose a hole in a rock for a lair? It is the way of snakes. What more natural than that a man, bitten by a viperine, should step backward? And what more natural, with a hole behind him, than that he should fall into it-“

“That is then just natural!” she cried, pointing to a stream of crystal water which boiled up over the lips of the hole and fountained up in the air like a geyser. “He is right. Through stone itself the gods work their everlasting will. He warned us. He knew from reading the knots of the sacred tassel.”

“Piffle!” Francis snorted. “Not the will of the gods, but of the ancient Maya priests who invented their gods as well as this particular device. Somewhere down that hole the peon’s body struck the lever that opened stone flood-gates. And thus was released some subterranean body of water in the mountain. This is that water. No goddess with a monstrous mouth like that could ever have existed save in the monstrous imaginations of men. Beauty and divinity are one. A real and true goddess is always beautiful. Only man creates devils in all their ugliness.” So large was the stream that already the water was about their ankles.

“It’s all right,” Francis said. “I noticed, all the way from the entrance, the steady inclined plane of the floors of the rooms and passages. Those old Mayas were engineers, and they built with an eye on drainage. See how the water rushes away out through the passage. Well, old man, read your knots, where is the treasure?”

Where is my son?” the old man counter-demanded in dull and hopeless tones. “Chia has slain my only born. For his mother I broke the Maya law and stained the pure Maya blood with the mongrel blood of a woman of the tierra caliente. Because I sinned for him that he might be, is he thrice precious to me. What care I for treasure? My son is gone. The wrath of the Maya gods is upon me.”

With gurglings and burblings and explosive air-bubblings that advertised the pressure behind, the water fountained high as ever into the air. Leoncia was the first to notice the rising depth of the water on the chamber floor.

“It is half way to my knees,” she drew Francis’ attention.

“And time to get out,” he agreed, grasping the situation. “The drainage was excellently planned, perhaps.

But that slide of rocks at the cliff entrance has evidently blocked the planned way of the water. In the other passages, being lower, the water is deeper, of course, than here. Yet is it already rising here on the general level. And that way lies the only way out. Come!”

Thrusting Leoncia to lead in the place of safety, he caught the apathetic priest by the hand and dragged him after. At the entrance of the elbow turn the water was boiling above their knees. It was to their waists as they emerged into the chamber of mummies.

And out of the water, confronting Leoncia's astounded gaze, arose the helmeted head and ancient-mantled body of a mummy. Not this alone would have astounded her, for other mummies were overtoppling, falling and being washed about in the swirling waters. But this mummy moved and made gasping noises for breath, and with eyes of life stared into her eyes.

It was too much for ordinary human nature to bear a four-centuries old corpse dying the second death by drowning. Leoncia screamed, sprang forward, and fled the way she had come, while Francis, in his own way equally startled, let her go past as he drew his automatic pistol. But the mummy, finding footing in the swift rush of the current, cried out:

"Don't shoot! It is I Torres! I have just come back from the entrance. Something has happened. The way is blocked. The water is over one's head and higher than the entrance, and rocks are falling."

"And your way is blocked in this direction," Francis said, aiming the revolver at him.

"This is no time for quarreling," Torres replied. "We must save all our lives, and, afterwards, if quarrel we must, then quarrel we will."

Francis hesitated.

"What is happening to Leoncia?" Torres demanded slyly. "I saw her run back. May she not be in danger by herself?"

Letting Torres live and dragging the old man by the arm, Francis waded back to the chamber of the idols, followed by Torres. Here, at sight of him, Leoncia screamed her horror again.

"It's only Torres," Francis reassured her. "He gave me a devil of a fright myself when I first saw him. But he's real flesh. He'll bleed if a knife is stuck into him. Come, old man! We don't want to drown here like rats in a trap. This is not all of the Maya mysteries. Eead the tale of the knots and get us out of this!"

"The way is not out but in," the priest quavered.

"And we're not particular so long as we get away. But how can we get in?"

"From the mouth of Chia to the ear of Hzatzl, was the answer.

Francis was struck by a sudden grotesque and terrible thought.

"Torres," he said, "there is a key or something inside that stone lady's mouth there. You're the nearest. Stick your hand in and get it."

Leoncia gasped with horror as she divined Francis' vengeance. Of this Torres took no notice, and gaily waded toward the goddess, saying: "Only too glad to be of service."

And then Francis' sense of fair play betrayed him.

"Stop! "he commanded harshly, himself wading to the idol's side.

And Torres, at first looking on in puzzlement, saw what he had escaped. Several times Francis fired his pistol into the stone mouth, while the old priest moaned "Sacrilege!" Next, wrapping his coat around his arm and hand, he groped into the mouth and pulled out the wounded viper by the tail. With quick swings in the air he beat its head to a jelly against the goddess' side.

Wrapping his hand and arm against the possibility of a second snake, Francis thrust his hand into the mouth and drew forth a piece of worked gold of the shape and size of the hole in Hzatzl's ear. The old man pointed to the ear, and Francis inserted the key.

"Like a nickle-in-the-slot machine," he remarked, as the key disappeared from sight. "Now what's going to happen? Let's watch for the water to drain suddenly away."

But the great stream continued to spout unabated out of the hole. With an exclamation, Torres pointed to the wall, an apparently solid portion of which was slowly rising.

"The way out," said Torres.

"In, as the old man said," Francis corrected. "Well, anyway, let's start."

All were through and well along the narrow passage beyond, when the old Maya, crying, "My son!" turned and ran back.

The section of wall was already descending into its original place, and the priest had to crouch low in order to pass it. A moment later, it stopped in its old position. So accurately was it contrived and fitted that it immediately shut off the stream of water which had been flowing out of the idol room.

Outside, save for a small river of water that flowed out of the base of the cliff, there were no signs of what was vexing the interior of the mountain. Henry and Ricardo, arriving, noted the stream, and Henry observed:

"That's something new. There wasn't any stream of water here when I left."

A minute later he was saying, as he looked at a fresh slide of rock: "This was the entrance to the cave. Now there is no entrance. I wonder where the others are."

As if in answer, out of the mountain, borne by the spouting stream, shot the body of a man. Henry and Ricardo pounced upon it and dragged it clear. Recognizing it for the priest, Henry laid him face downward, squatted astride of him, and proceeded to give him the first aid for the drowned.

Not for ten minutes did the old man betray signs of life, and not until after another ten minutes did he open his eyes and look wildly about.

“Where are they?” Henry asked.

The old priest muttered in Maya, until Henry shook more thorough consciousness into him.

“Gone all gone,” he gasped in Spanish.

“Who?” Henry demanded, shook memory into the resuscitated one, and demanded again.

“My son; Chia slew him. Chia slew my son, as she slew them all.

“Who are the rest?”

Followed more shakings and repetitions of the question.

“The rich young Gringo who befriended my son, the enemy of the rich young Gringo whom men call Torres, and the young woman of the Solanos who was the cause of all that happened. I warned you. She should not have come. Women are always a curse in the affairs of men. By her presence, Chia, who is likewise a woman, was made angry. The tongue of Chia is a viperine. By her tongue Chia struck and slew my son, and the mountain vomited the ocean upon us there in the heart of the mountain, and all are dead, slain by Chia. Woe is me! I have angered the gods. Woe is me I Woe is me! And woe upon all who would seek the sacred treasure to filch it from the gods of Maya!”

CHAPTER 16

MIDWAY between the out-bursting stream of water and the rock-slide, Henry and Eicardo stood in hurried debate. Beside them, crouched on the ground, moaned and prayed the last priest of the Mayas. From him, by numerous shakings that served to clear his addled old head, Henry had managed to extract a rather vague account of what had occurred inside the mountain.

Only his son was bitten and fell into that hole," Henry reasoned hopefully.

"That's right," Eicardo concurred. "He never saw any damage, beyond a wetting, happen to the rest of them,"

And they may be, right now, high up above the floor in some chamber," Henry went on. "Now, if we could attack the slide, we might open up the cave and drain the water off. If they're alive they can last for many days, for lack of water is what kills quickly, and they've certainly more water than they know what to do with. They can get along without food for a long time. But what gets me is how Torres got inside with them."

Wonder if he wasn't responsible for that attack of the Caroos upon us," Eicardo suggested.

But Henry scouted the idea.

"Anyway," he said, "that isn't the present proposition which proposition is: how to get inside that mountain on the chance that they are still alive. You and I couldn't go through that slide in a month. If we could get fifty men to help, night and day shifts, we might open her up in fortyeight hours. So, the primary thing is to get the men. Here's what we must do. I'll take a mule and beat it back to that Caroo community and promise them the contents of one of Francis' check-books if they will come and help. Failing that, I can get up a crowd in San Antonio. So here's where I pull out on the run. In the meantime, you can work out trails and bring up all the mules, peons, grub and camp equipment. Also, keep your ears to the cliff they might start signalling through it with tappings."

Into the village of the Caroos Henry forced his mule much to the reluctance of the mule, and equally as much to the astonishment of the Caroos, who thus saw their stronghold invaded single-handed by one of the party they had attempted to annihilate. They squatted about their doors and loafed in the sunshine, under a show of lethargy hiding the astonishment that tingled through them and almost put them on their toes. As has been ever the way, the very daring of the white man, over savage and mongrel breeds, in this instance stunned the Caroos to inaction. Only a man, they could not help but reason in their slow way, a superior man, a noble or over-riding man, equipped with potencies beyond their dreaming, could dare to ride into their strength of numbers on a fagged and mutinous mule.

They spoke a mongrel Spanish which he could understand, and, in turn, they understood his Spanish; but what he told them concerning the disaster in the sacred mountain had no effect of rousing them. With impassive faces, shrugging shoulders of utmost indifference, they listened to his proposition of a rescue and promise of high pay for their time.

“If a mountain has swallowed up the Gringos, then is it the will of God, and who are we to interfere between God and His will?” they replied. “We are poor men, but we care not to work for any man, nor do we care to make war upon God. Also, it was the Gringos’ fault. This is not their country. They have no right here playing pranks on our mountains. Their troubles are between them and God. We have troubles enough of our own, and our wives are unruly.”

Long after the siesta hour, on his third and most reluctant mule, Henry rode into sleepy San Antonio. In the main street, midway between the court and the jail, he pulled up at sight of the Jefe Politico and the little fat old judge, with, at their heels, a dozen gendarmes and a couple of wretched prisoners runaway peons from the henequen plantations at Santos. While the judge and the Jefe listened to Henry’s tale and appeal for help, the Jefe gave one slow wink to the judge, who was his judge, his creature, body and soul of him.

“Yes, certainly we will help you,” the Jefe said at the end, stretching his arms and yawning. “How soon can we get the men together and start?” Henry demanded eagerly.

“As for that, we are very busy are we not, honorable judge?” the Jefe replied with lazy insolence.

“We are very busy,” the judge yawned into Henry’s face.

“Too busy for a time,” the Jefe went on. “We regret that not to-morrow nor next day shall we be able to try and rescue your Gringos. Now, a little later. “

“Say next Christmas,” the judge suggested.

"Yes," concurred the Jefe with a grateful bow. "About next Christmas come around and see us, and, if the pressure of our affairs has somewhat eased, then, maybe possibly, we shall find it convenient to go about beginning to attempt to raise the expedition you have requested. In the meantime, good day to you, Senor Morgan."

"You mean that?" Henry demanded with wrathful face.

"The very face he must have worn when he slew Senor Alfaro Solano treacherously from the back," the Jefe soliloquized ominously.

But Henry ignored the later insult.

"I'll tell you what you are," he flamed in righteous wrath.

"Beware!" the judge cautioned him.

"I snap my fingers at you,"' Henry retorted. "You have no power over me. I am a full-pardoned man by the President of Panama himself. And this is what you are. You are half-breeds. You are mongrel pigs."

"Pray proceed, Senor," said the Jefe, with the suave politeness of deathly rage.

"You've neither the virtues of the Spaniard nor of the Carib, but the vices of both thrice compounded. Mongrel pigs, that's what you are and all you are, the pair of you."

"Are you through Senor? quite through?" the Jefe queried softly.

At the same moment he gave a signal to the gendarmes, who sprang upon Henry from behind and disarmed him.

"Even the President of the Republic of Panama cannot pardon in anticipation of a crime not yet committed am I right, judge?" said the Jefe.

"This is afresh offense," the judge took the cue promptly. "This Gringo dog has blasphemed against the law."

"Then shall he be tried, and tried now, right here, immediately. We will not bother io go back and reopen court. We shall try him, and when we have disposed of him, we shall proceed. I have a very good bottle of wine — "

"I care not for wine," the judge disclaimed hastily. "Mine shall be mescal. And in the meantime, and now, having been both witness and victim of the offense and there being no need of evidence further than what I already possess, I find the prisoner guilty. Is there anything you would suggest, Senor Mariano Vercara e Hijos?"

"Twenty-four hours in the stocks to cool his heated Gringo head," the Jefe answered.

"Such is the sentence," the judge affirmed, "to begin at once. Take the prisoner away, gendarmes, and put him in the stocks."

Daybreak found Henry in the stocks, with a dozen hours of such imprisonment already behind him, lying on his back asleep. But the sleep was restless, being vexed subjectively by nightmare dreams of his mountain-imprisoned companions, and, objectively, by the stings of countless mosquitoes. So it was, twisting and squirming and striking at the winged pests, he awoke to full consciousness of his predicament. And this awoke the full expression of his profanity. Irritated beyond endurance by the poison from a thousand mosquito-bites, he filled the dawn so largely with his curses as to attract the attention of a man carrying a bag of tools. This was a trim-figured, eagle-faced young man, clad in the military garb of an aviator of the United States Army. He deflected his course so as to come by the stocks, and paused, and listened, and stared with quizzical admiration.

"Friend," he said, when Henry ceased to catch breath.

Last night, when I found myself marooned here with half my outfit left on board, I did a bit of swearing myself. But it was only a trifle compared with yours. I salute you, sir. You've an army teamster skinned a mile. Now if you don't mind running over the string again, I shall be better equipped the next time I want to do any cussing."

"And who in hell are you?" Henry demanded. "And what in hell are you doing here?"

"I don't blame you," the aviator grinned. "With a face swollen like that you've got a right to be rude. And who beat you up? In hell, I haven't ascertained my status yet. But here on earth I am known as Parsons, Lieutenant Parsons. I am not doing anything in hell as yet; but here in Panama I am scheduled to fly across this day from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Is there any way I may serve you before I start?"

"Sure," Henry nodded. "Take a tool out of that bag of yours and smash this padlock. Ill get rheumatism if I have to stick here much longer. My name's Morgan, and no man has beaten me up. Those are mosquito-bites."

With several blows of a wrench, Lieutenant Parsons smashed the ancient padlock and helped Henry to his feet. Even while rubbing the circulation back into his feet and ankles, Henry, in a rush, was telling the army aviator of the predicament and possibly tragic disaster to Leoncia and Francis.

"I love that Francis," he concluded. "He is the dead spit of myself. We're more like twins, and we must be distantly related. As for the sen-orita, not only do I love her but I am engaged to marry her. Now will you help? Where's the machine? It takes a long time to get to the Maya Mountain on foot or mule-back ; but if you give me a lift in your machine I'd be there in no time, along with a hundred sticks of dynamite, which you could procure for me and with which I could blow the side out of that mountain and drain off the water."

Lieutenant Parsons hesitated.

"Say yes, say yes," Henry pleaded.

Back in the heart of the sacred mountain, the three imprisoned ones found themselves in total darkness the instant the stone that blocked the exit from the idol chamber had settled into place. Francis and Leoncia groped for each other and touched hands. In another moment his arm was around her, and the deliciousness of the contact robbed the situation of half its terror. Near them they could hear Torres breathing heavily. At last he muttered:

"Mother of God, but that was a close shave! What next, I wonder?"

"There'll be many nexts before we get out of this neck of the woods," Francis assured him. "And we might as well start getting out."

The method of procedure was quickly arranged. Placing Leoncia behind him, her hand clutching the hem of his jacket so as to be guided by him, he moved ahead with his left hand in contact with the wall. Abreast of him, Torres felt his way along the right-hand wall. By their voices they could thus keep track of each other, measure the width of the passage, and guard against being separated into forked passages. Fortunately, the tunnel, for tunnel it truly was, had a smooth floor, so that, while they groped their way, they did not stumble. Francis refused to use his matches unless extremity arose, and took precaution against falling into a possible pit by cautiously advancing one foot at a time and ascertaining solid stone under it ere putting on his weight. As a result, their progress was slow. At no greater speed than half a mile an hour did they proceed.

Once only did they encounter branching passages. Here he lighted a precious match from his waterproof case, and found that between the two passages there was nothing to choose. They were as like as two peas.

"The only way is to try one," he concluded, "and, if it gets us nowhere, to retrace and try the other. There's one thing certain: these passages lead somewhere, or the Mayas wouldn't have gone to all the trouble of making them."

Ten minutes later he halted suddenly and cried warning. The foot he had advanced was suspended in emptiness where the floor should have been. Another match was struck, and they found themselves on the edge of a natural cavern of such proportions that neither to right nor left, nor up nor down, nor across, could the tiny flame expose any limits to it. But they did manage to make out a rough sort of stairway, half-natural, half-improved by man, which fell away beneath them into the pit of black.

In another hour, having followed the path down the length of the floor of the cavern, they were rewarded by a feeble glimmer of daylight, which grew stronger as they advanced.

Before they knew it, they had come to the source of it being much nearer than they had judged; and Francis, tearing away vines and shrubbery, crawled out into the blaze of the afternoon sun. In a moment Leon-cia and Torres were beside him, gazing down into a valley from an eyrie on a cliff. Nearly circular was the valley, a full league in diameter, and it appeared to be mountain-walled and cliff-walled for its entire circumference.

"It is the Valley of Lost Souls," Torres utterly solemnly. "I have heard of it, but never did I believe."

"So have I heard of it and never believed," Leoncia "And what of it?" demanded Francis. We're not lost souls, but good flesh-and-blood persons. We should worry." "But Francis, listen," Leon-cia said. "The tales I have heard of it, ever since I was a little girl, all agreed that no person who ever got into it ever got out again."

"Granting that that is so," Francis could not help smiling, "then how did the tales come out? If nobody ever came out again to tell about it, how does it happen that everybody outside knows about it?"

"I don't know," Leoncia admitted. "I only tell you what I have heard. Besides, I never believed. But this answers all the descriptions of the tales."

"Nobody ever got out," Torres affirmed with the same solemn utterance.

"Then how do you know that anybody got in?" Francis persisted.

"All the lost souls live here," was the reply. "That is why we've never seen them, because they never got out. I tell you, Mr. Francis Morgan, that I am no creature without reason. I have been educated. I have studied in Europe, and I have done business in your own New York. I know science and philosophy; and yet do I know that this is the valley, once in, from which no one emerges."

"Well, we're not in yet, are we?" retorted Francis with a slight manifestation of impatience. "And we don't have to go in, do we?" He crawled forward to the verge of the shelf of loose soil and crumbling stone in order to get a better view of the distant object his eye had just picked out. "If that isn't a grass-thatched roof — "

At that moment the soil broke away under his hands. In a flash, the whole soft slope on which they rested broke away, and all three were sliding and rolling down the steep slope in the midst of a miniature avalanche of soil, gravel, and grass-tufts.

The two men picked themselves up first, in the thicket of bushes which had arrested them; but, before they could get to Leoncia, she, too, was up and laughing.

"Just as you were saying we didn't have to go into the valley!" she gurgled at Francis. "Now will you believe?"

But Francis was busy. Beaching out his hand, he caught and stopped a familiar object bounding down the steep slope after them. It was Torres' helmet purloined from the chamber of mummies, and to Torres he tossed it.

"Throw it away," Leoncia said.

It's the only protection against the sun I possess," was his reply, as, turning it over in his hands, his eyes lighted upon an inscription on the inside. He showed it to his companions, reading it aloud: "DA VASCO."

"I have heard," Leoncia breathed.

And you heard right," Torres nodded. "Da Vasco was my direct ancestor. My mother was a Da Vasco. He came over the Spanish Main with Cortez."

"He mutined," Leoncia took up the tale. "I remember it well from my father and from my Uncle Alfaro. With a dozen comrades he sought the Maya treasure. They led a sea-tribe of Caribs, an hundred strong including their women, as auxiliaries. Mendoza, under Cortez's instructions, pursued; and his report, in the archives, so Uncle Alfaro told me, says that they were driven into the Valley of the Lost Souls where they were left to perish miserably."

"And he evidently tried to get out by the way we've just come in," Torres continued, "and the Mayas caught him and made a mummy of him."

He jammed the ancient helmet down on his head, saying:

"Low as the sun is in the afternoon sky, it bites my crown like acid."

“And famine bites at me like acid,” Francis confessed. “Is the valley inhabited?”

“I should know, Senor,” Torres replied. “There is the narrative of Mendoza, in which he reported that Da Vasco and his party were left there “to perish miserably. “This I do know: they were never seen again of men.”

“Looks as though plenty of food could be grown in a place like this,” Francis began, but broke off at sight of Leoncia. picking berries from a bush. “Here! Stop that, Leoncia! We’ve got enough troubles without having a very charming but very much poisoned young woman on our hands.”

“They’re all right, she said, calmly eating. “You can see where the birds have been pecking and eating them.”

“In which case I apologize and join you,” Francis cried, filling his mouth with the luscious fruit. “And if I could catch the birds that did the pecking, I’d eat them too.”

By the time they had eased the sharpest of their hungerpangs, the sun was so low that Torres removed the helmet of Da Vasco.

“We might as well stop here for the night,” he said. “I left my shoes in the cave with the mummies, and lost Da Vasco’s old boots during the swimming. My feet are cut to ribbons, and there’s plenty of seasoned grass here out of which I can plait a pair of sandals.”

While occupied with this task, Francis built a fire and gathered a supply of wood, for, despite the low latitude, the high altitude made fire a necessity for a night’s lodging. Ere he had completed the supply, Leon-cia, curled up on her side, her head in the hollow of her arm, was sound asleep. Against the side of her away from the fire, Francis thoughtfully packed a mound of dry leaves and dry forest mould.

CHAPTER 17

DAYBREAK in the Valley of the Lost Souls, and the Long House in the village of the Tribe of the Lost Souls. Fully eighty feet in length was the Long House, with half as much in width, built of adobe bricks, and rising thirty feet to a gable roof thatched with straw. Out of the house feebly walked the Priest of the Sun an old man, tottery on his legs, sandal-footed, clad in a long robe of rude homespun cloth, in whose withered Indian face were haunting reminiscences of the racial lineaments of the ancient conquistadores. On his head was a curious cap of gold, arched over by a semi-circle of polished golden spikes. The effect was obvious, namely, the rising sun and the rays of the rising sun.

He tottered across the open space to where a great hollow log swung suspended between two posts carved with totemic and heraldic devices. He glanced at the eastern horizon, already red with the dawning, to reassure himself that he was on time, lifted a stick, the end of which was fiber-woven into a ball, and struck the hollow log. Feeble as he was, and light as was the blow, the hollow log boomed and reverberated like distant thunder.

Almost immediately, while he continued slowly to beat, from the grass-thatched dwellings that formed the square about the Long House, emerged the Lost Souls. Men and women, old and young, and children and babes in arms, they all came out and converged upon the Sun Priest. No more archaic spectacle could be witnessed in the twentieth-century world. Indians, indubitably they w T ere, yet in many of their faces were the racial reminiscences of the Spaniard. Some faces, to all appearance, were all Spanish. Others, by the same token, were all Indian. But betwixt and between, the majority of them betrayed the inbred blend of both races.

But more bizarre was their costume unremarkable in the women, who were garbed in long, discreet robes of homespun cloth, but most remarkable in the men, whose homespun was grotesquely fashioned after the style of Spanish dress that obtained in Spain at the time of Columbus’ first voyage. Homely and sad-looking were the men and women as of a breed too closely interbred to retain joy of life. This was true of the youths and maidens, of the children, and of the very babes against breasts true, with the exception of two, one, a child-girl of ten, in whose face was fire, and spirit, and intelligence. Amongst the sodden faces of the sodden and stupid Lost Souls, her face stood out like a flaming flower. Only like hers was the face of the old Sun Priest, cunning, crafty, intelligent.

While the priest continued to beat the resounding log, the entire tribe formed about him in a semi-circle, facing the east. As the sun showed the edge of its upper rim, the priest greeted it and hailed it with a quaint and medieval Spanish, himself making low obeisance thrice repeated, while the tribe prostrated itself. And, when the full sun shone clear of the horizon, all the tribe, under the direction of the priest, arose and uttered a joyful chant. Just as he had dismissed his people, a thin pillar of smoke, rising in the quiet air across the valley, caught the priest's eye. He pointed it out, and commanded several of the young men.

"It rises in the Forbidden Place of Fear where no member of the tribe may wander. It is some devil of a pursuer sent out by our enemies who have vainly sought our hidingplace through the centuries. He must not escape to make report, for our enemies are powerful, and we shall be destroyed. Go. Kill him that we may not be killed."

About the fire, which had been replenished at intervals throughout the night, Leoncia, Francis, and Torres lay asleep, the latter with his new-made sandals on his feet and with the helmet of Da Vasco pulled tightly down on his head to keep off the dew. Leoncia was the first to awaken, and so curious was the scene that confronted her, that she watched quietly through her do wn-dropped lashes. Three of the strange Lost Tribe men, bows still stretched and arrows drawn in what was evident to her as the interrupted act of slaying her and her companions, were staring with amazement at the face of the unconscious Torres. They looked at each other in doubt, let their bows straighten, and shook their heads in patent advertisement that they were not going to kill. Closer they crept upon Torres, squatting on their hams the better to scrutinize his face and the helmet, which latter seemed to arouse their keenest interest.

From where she lay, Leoncia was able privily to nudge Francis' shoulder with her foot. He awoke quietly, and quietly sat up, attracting the attention of the strangers. Immediately they made the universal peace sign, laying down their bows and extending their palms outward in token of being weaponless.

"Good morning, merry strangers," Francis addressed them in English, which made them shake their heads while it aroused Torres.

"They must be Lost Souls," Leoncia whispered to Francis.

“Or real estate agents,” he smiled back. “At least the valley is inhabited. Torres, who ‘re your friends? From the way they regard you, one would think they were relatives of yours.”

Quite ignoring them, the three Lost Souls drew apart a slight distance and debated in low sibilant tones.

“Sounds like a queer sort of Spanish,” Francis observed. “It’s medieval, to say the least,” Leoncia confirmed.

“It’s the Spanish of the conquistadores pretty badly gone to seed,” Torres contributed. “You see I was right. The Lost Souls never get away.”

“At any rate they must give and be given in marriage,” Francis quipped, “else how explain these three young huskies?”

But by this time the three huskies, having reached agreement, were beckoning them with encouraging gestures to follow across the valley.

“They’re good-natured and friendly cusses, to say the least, despite their sorrowful mug,” said Francis, as they prepared to follow. But did you ever see a sadder-faced aggregation in your life? They must have been born in the dark of the moon, or had all their sweet gazelles die, or something or other worse.”

“It’s just the kind of faces one would expect of lost souls,” Leoncia answered.

“And if we never get out of here, I suppose we’ll get to looking a whole lot sadder than they do,” he came back. “Anyway, I hope they’re leading us to breakfast. Those berries were better than nothing, but that is not saying much.”

An hour or more afterward, still obediently following their guides, they emerged upon the clearings, the dwelling places, and the Long House of the tribe.

“These are descendants of Da Vasco’s party and the Caribs,” Torres affirmed, as he glanced over the assembled faces. “That is incontrovertible on the face of it.”

“And they’ve relapsed from the Christian religion of Da Vasco to old heathen worship,” added Francis. “Look at that altar there. It’s a stone altar, and, from the smell of it, that is no breakfast, but a sacrifice that is cooking, in spite of the fact that it smells like mutton.”

“Thank heaven it’s only a lamb,” Leoncia breathed. “The old Sun Worship included human sacrifice. And this is Sun Worship. See that old man there in the long shroud with the golden-rayed cap of gold. He's a sun priest. Uncle Alfaro has told me all about the sun-worshipers."

Behind and above the altar, was a great metal image of the sun.

"Gold, all gold," Francis whispered, "and without alloy. Look at those spikes, the size of them, yet so pure is the metal that I wager a child could bend them any way it wished and even tie knots in them."

Merciful God! look at that!" Leoncia gasped, indicating with her eyes a crude stone bust that stood to one side of the altar and slightly lower. "It is the face of Torres. It is the face of the mummy in the Maya cave."

"And there is an inscription. " Francis stepped closer to see and was peremptorily waved back by the priest. "It says, 'Da Vasco.' Notice that it has the same sort of helmet that Torres is wearing. And, say! Glance at the priest! If he doesn't look like Torres' full brother, I've never fancied a resemblance in my life!"

The priest, with angry face and imperative gesture, motioned Francis to silence, and made obeisance to the cooking sacrifice. As if in response, a flaw of wind put out the flame of the cooking.

"The Sun God is angry," the priest announced with great solemnity, his queer Spanish nevertheless being intelligible to the newcomers. "Strangers have come among us and remain unslain. That is why the Sun God is angry. Speak, you young men who have brought the strangers alive to our altar. Was not my bidding, which is ever and always the bidding of the Sun God, that you should slay them?"

One of the three young men stepped tremblingly forth, and with trembling forefingers pointed at the face of Torres and at the face of the stone bust.

"We recognised him," he quavered, "and we could not slay him for we remembered prophecy and that our great ancestor would some day return. Is this stranger he? We do not know. W T e dare not know nor judge. Yours, priest, is the knowledge, and yours be the judgment. Is this he?"

The priest looked closely at Torres and exclaimed incoherently. Turning his back abruptly, he rekindled the sacred cooking fire from a pot of fire at the base of an altar. But the fire flamed up, flickered down, and died.

"The Sun God is angry," the priest reiterated; whereat the Lost Souls beat their breasts and moaned and lamented. "The sacrifice is unacceptable, for the fire will not burn. Strange things are afoot. This is a matter of the deeper mysteries which I alone may know. We shall not sacrifice the strangers, now. I must take time to inform myself of the Sun God's will.

With his hands he waved the tribespeople away, ceasing the ceremonial half-completed, and directed that the three captives be taken into the Long House.

"I can't follow the play," Francis whispered in Leoncia's ear, but just the same I hope here's where we eat."

"Look at that pretty little girl," said Leoncia, indicating with her eyes the child with the face of fire and spirit.

"Torres has already spotted her," Francis whispered back. "I caught him winking at her. He doesn't know the play, nor which way the cat will jump, but he isn't missing a chance to make friends. We'll have to keep an eye on him, for he's a treacherous hound and capable of throwing us over any time if it would serve to save his skin."

Inside the Long House, seated on rough-plaited mats of grass, they found themselves quickly served with food. Clear drinking water and a thick stew of meat and vegetables were served in generous quantity in queer, unglazed pottery jars. Also, they were given hot cakes of ground Indian corn that were not altogether unlike tortillas.

After the women who served had departed, the little girl, who had led them and commanded them, remained. Torres resumed his overtures, but she, graciously ignoring him, devoted herself to Leoncia who seemed to fascinate her.

"She's a sort of hostess, I take it," Francis explained. "You know like the maids of the village in Samoa, who entertain all travellers and all visitors of no matter how high rank, and who come pretty close to presiding at all functions and ceremonials. They are selected by the high chiefs for their beauty, their virtue, and their intelligence. And this one reminds me very much of them, except that she's so awfully young."

Closer she came to Leoncia, and, fascinated though she patently was by the beautiful strange woman, in her bearing of approach there was no hint of servility nor sense of inferiority.

"Tell me," she said, in the quaint archaic Spanish of the valley, "is that man really Capitan Da Vasco returned from his home in the sun in the sky?"

Torres smirked and bowed, and proclaimed proudly: "I am a Da Vasco!"

"Not a Da Vasco, but Da Vasco himself," Leoncia coached him in English.

"It's a good bet play it!" Francis commanded, likewise in English. "It may pull us all out of a hole. I'm not particularly stuck on that priest, and he seems the high-cockalorum over these Lost Souls."

"I have at last come back from the sun," Torres told the little maid, taking his cue.

She favored him with a long and unwavering look, in which they could see her think, and judge, and appraise. Then, with expressionless face, she bowed to him respectfully, and, with scarcely a glance at Francis, turned to Leoncia and favored her with a friendly smile that was an illumination.

"I did not know that God made women so beautiful as you," the little maid said softly, ere she turned to go out. At the door she paused to add, "The Lady Who Dreams is beautiful, but she is strangely different from you."

But hardly had she gone, when the Sun Priest, followed by a number of young men, entered, apparently for the purpose of removing the dishes and the uneaten food. Even as some of them were in the act of bending over to pick up the dishes, at a signal-from the priest they sprang upon the three guests, bound their hands and arms securely behind them, and led them out to the Sun God's altar before the assembled tribe. Here, where they observed a crucible on a tripod over a fierce fire, they were tied to fresh-sunken posts, while many eager hands heaped fuel about them to their knees.

"Now buck up be as haughty as a real Spaniard!" Francis at the same time instructed and insulted Torres. "You're Da Vasco himself. Hundreds of years before, you were here on earth in this very valley with the ancestors of these mongrels."

"You must die," the Sun Priest was now addressing them, while the Lost Souls nodded unanimously. "For four hundred years, as we count our sojourn in this valley, have we slain all strangers. You were not slain, and behold the instant anger of the Sun God: our altar fire went out." The Lost Souls moaned and howled and pounded their chests. Therefore, to appease the Sun God, you shall now die."

"Beware!" Torres proclaimed, prompted in whispers, sometimes by Francis, sometimes by Leoncia. "I am Da Vasco. I have just come from the sun." He nodded with his head, because of his tied hands, at the stone bust. "I am that Da Vasco. I led your ancestors here four hundred years ago, and I left you here, commanding you to remain until my return."

The Sun Priest hesitated.

"Well, priest, speak up and answer the divine Da Vasco," Francis spoke harshly.

"How do I know that he is divine?" the priest countered quickly. "Do I not look much like him myself? Am I therefore divine? Am I Da Vasco? Is he Da Vasco? Or may not Da Vasco be yet in the sun? for truly I know that I am man born of woman three-score and eighteen years ago and that I am not Da Vasco."

"You have not spoken to Da Vasco!" Francis threatened, as he bowed in vast humility to Torres and hissed at him in English: "Be haughty, damn you, be haughty."

The priest wavered for the moment, and then addressed Torres.

"I am the faithful priest of the sun. Not lightly can I relinquish my trust. If you are the divine Da Vasco, then answer me one question."

Torres nodded with magnificent haughtiness. "Do you love gold?"

"Love gold!" Torres jeered. "I am a great captain in the sun, and the sun is made of gold. Gold? It is like to me this dirt beneath my feet and the rock of which your mighty mountains are composed."

"Bravo," Leoncia whispered approval.

"Then, divine Da Yasco," the Sun Priest said humbly, although he could not quite muffle the ring of triumph in his voice, "are you fit to pass the ancient and usual test. When you have drunk the drink of gold, and can still say that you are Da Vasco, then will I, and all of us, bow down and worship you. We have had occasional intruders in this valley. Always did they come athirst for gold. But when we had satisfied their thirst, inevitably they thirsted no more, for they were dead."

As he spoke, while the Lost Souls looked on eagerly, and while the three strangers looked on with no less keenness of apprehension, the priest thrust his hand into the open mouth of a large leather bag and began dropping handfuls of gold nuggets into the heated crucible of the tripod. So near were they, that they could see the gold melt into fluid and rise up in the crucible like the drink it was intended, to be.

The little maid, daring on her extraordinary position in the Lost Souls Tribe, came yp to the Sun Priest and spoke that all might hear.

"That is Da Vasco, the Capitan Da Vasco, the divine Capitan da Vasco, who led our ancestors here the long long time ago."

The priest tried to silence her with a frown. But the maid repeated her statement, pointing eloquently from the bust to Torres and back again; and the priest felt his grip on the situation slipping, while inwardly he cursed the sinful love of the mother of the little girl which had made her his daughter.

"Hush!" he commanded sternly. "These are things of which you know nothing. If he be the Capitan Da Vasco, being divine he will drink the gold and be unharmed."

Into a rude pottery pitcher, which had been heated in the pot of fire at the base of the altar, he poured the molten gold. At a signal, several of the young men laid aside their spears, and, with the evident intention of prying her teeth apart, advanced on Leoncia.

"Hold, priest!" Francis shouted stentoriously. "She is not divine as Da Vasco is divine. Try the golden drink on Da Vasco."

Whereat Torres bestowed upon Francis a look of malignant anger.

"Stand on your haughty pride," Francis instructed him. "Decline the drink. Show them the inside of your helmet."

"I will not drink!" Torres cried, half in a panic as the priest turned to him.

"You shall drink. If you are Da Vasco, the divine capitan from the sun, we will then know it and we will fall down and worship you."

Torres looked appeal at Francis, which the priest's narrow eyes did not fail to catch.

"Looks as though you'll have to drink it," Francis said dryly. "Anyway, do it for the lady's sake and die like a hero."

With a sudden violent strain at the cords that bound him, Torres jerked one hand free, pulled off his helmet, and held it so that the priest could gaze inside.

"Behold what is graven therein," Torres commanded.

Such was the priest's startlement at sight of the inscription, DA VASCO, that the pitcher fell from his hand. The molten gold, spilling forth, set the dry debris on the ground afire-, while one of the spearmen, spattered on the foot, danced away with wild yells of pain. But the Sun Priest quickly recovered himself. Seizing the fire pot, he was about to set fire to the faggots heaped about his three victims, when the little maid intervened.

"The Sun God would not let the great captain drink the drink," she said. "The Sun God spilled it from your hand."

And when all the Lost Souls began to murmur that there was more in the matter than appeared to their priest, the latter was compelled to hold his hand. Nevertheless was he resolved on the destruction of the three intruders. So, craftily, he addressed his people.

"We shall wait for a sign. Bring oil. We will give the Sun God time for a sign. Bring a candle."

Pouring the jar of oil over the faggots to make them more inflammable, he set the lighted stub of a candle in the midst of the saturated fuel, and said: "The life of the candle will be the duration of the time for the sign. Is it well, People?"

And all the Lost Souls murmured, "It is well."

Torres looked appeal to Francis, who replied:

"The old brute certainly pinched on the length of the candle. It won't last five minutes at best, and, maybe, inside three minutes we'll be going up in smoke."

"What can we do?" Torres demanded frantically, while Leoncia looked bravely, with a sad brave smile of love, into Francis' eyes.

"Pray for rain," Francis answered. "And the sky is as clear as a bell. After that, die game. Don't squeal too loud."

And his eyes returned to Leoncia's and expressed what he had never dared express to her before his full heart of love. Apart, by virtue of the posts to which they were tied and which separated them, they had never been so close together, and the bond that drew them and united them was their eyes.

First of all, the little maid, gazing into the sky for the sign, saw it. Torres, who had eyes only for the candle stub, nearly burned to its base, heard the maid's cry and looked up. And at the same time he heard, as all of them heard, the droning flight as of some monstrous insect in the sky.

"An aeroplane," Francis muttered. "Torres, claim it for the sign."

But no need to claim was necessary. Above them not more than a hundred feet, it swooped and circled, the first aeroplane the Lost Souls had ever seen, while from it, like a benediction from heaven, descended the familiar:

"Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew."

Completing the circle and rising to an elevation of nearly a thousand feet, they saw an object detach itself directly overhead, fall like a plummet for three hundred feet, then expand into a spread parachute, with beneath iA like a spider suspended on a web, the form of a man, which last, as it neared the ground, again began to sing:

"Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew."

And then event crowded on event with supremest rapidity. The stub of the candle fell apart, the flaming wick fell into the tiny lake of molten fat, the lake flamed, and the oil-saturated faggots about it flamed. And Henry, landing in the thick of the Lost Souls, blanketing a goodly portion of them under his parachute, in a couple of leaps was beside his friends and kicking the blazing faggots right and left. Only for a second did he desist. This was when the Sun Priest interfered. A right hook to the jaw put that aged confidant of God down on his back, and, while he slowly recuperated and crawled to his feet, Henry slashed clear the lashings that bound Leoncia, Francis, and Torres. His arms were out to embrace Leon-cia, when she thrust him away with:

"Quick! There is no time for explanation. Down on your knees to Torres and pretend you are his slave and don't talk Spanish; talk English."

Henry could not comprehend, and, while Leoncia reassured him with her eyes, he saw Francis prostrate himself at the feet of their common enemy.

"Gee!" Henry muttered, as he joined Francis. "Here goes. But it's worse than rat poison."

Leoncia followed him, and all the Lost Souls went down prone before the Capitan Da Vasco who received in their midst celestial messengers direct from the sun. All went down, except the priest, who, mightily shaken, was meditating doing it, when the mocking devil of melodrama in Torres' soul prompted him to overdo his part.

As haughtily as Francis had coached him, he lifted his right foot and placed it down on Henry's neck, incidentally covering and pinching most of his ear.

And Henry literally went up in the air. "You can't step on my ear, Torres!" he shouted, at the same time dropping him, as he had dropped the priest with his right hook.

"And now the beans are spilled," Francis commented in dry and spiritless disgust. "The Sun God stuff is finished right here and now."

The Sun Priest, exultantly signaling his spearmen, grasped the situation. But Henry dropped the muzzle of his automatic pistol to the old priest's midrif; and the priest, remembering the legends of deadly missiles propelled by the mysterious substance called "gunpowder," smiled appeasingly and waved back his spearmen. "This is beyond my powers of wisdom and judgment," he addressed his tribespeople, while ever his wavering glance returned to the muzzle of Henry's pistol. "I shall appeal to the last resort. Let the messenger be sent to wake the Lady Who Dreams. Tell her that strangers from the sky, and, mayhap, the sun, are here in our valley. And that only the wisdom of her far dreams will make clear to us what we do not understand, and what even I do not understand."

CHAPTER 18

CONVOYED by the spearmen, the party of Leoncia, the two Morgans, and Torres, was led through the pleasant fields, all under a high state of primitive cultivation, and on across running streams and through woodland stretches and knee deep pastures where grazed cows of so miniature a breed that, full-grown, they were no larger than young calves.

“They’re milch cows without mistake,” Henry commented. “And they’re perfect beauties. But did you ever see such dwarfs! A strong man could lift up the biggest specimen and walk off with it.”

“Don’t fool yourself,” Francis spoke up. “Take that one over there, the black one. I’ll wager it’s not an ounce under three hundredweight.”

“How much will you wager?” Henry challenged.

“Name the bet,” was the reply.

“Then a hundred even,” Henry stated, “that I can lift it up and walk away with it.”

“Done.”

But the bet was never to be decided, for the instant Henry left the path he was poked back by the spearmen, who scowled and made signs that they were to proceed straight ahead.

Where the way came to lead past the foot of a very rugged cliff, they saw above them many goats.

“Domesticated,” said Francis. “Look at the herd boys.”

“I was sure it was goat-meat in that stew,” Henry nodded. “I always did like goats. If the Lady Who Dreams, whoever she may be, vetoes the priest and lets us live, and if we have to stay with the Lost Souls for the rest of our days, I’m going to petition to be made master goatherd of the realm, and I’ll build you a nice little cottage, Leoncia, and you can become the Exalted Cheese-maker to the Queen.”

But he did not whimsically wander farther, for, at that ejaculaticn of appreciation from Torres. Fully a mile in length it stretched, with more than half the same in width, and was a perfect oval. With one exception, no habitation broke the fringe of trees, bamboo thickets, and rushes that circled its shore, even along the foot of the cliff where the bamboo was exceptionally luxuriant. On the placid surface was so vividly mirrored the surrounding mountains that the eye could scarcely discern where reality ended and reflection began.

In the midst of her rapture over the perfect reflection, Leoncia broke off to exclaim her disappointment in that the water was not crystal clear:

“What a pity it is so muddy!”

“That’s because of the wash of the rich soil of the valley floor,” Henry elucidated. “It’s hundreds of feet deep, that soil.”

“The whole valley must have been a lake at some time,” Francis concurred. “Run your eye along the cliff and see the old water-lines. I wonder what made it shrink.”

“Earthquake, most likely opened up some subterranean exit and drained it off to its present level and keeps on draining it, too. Its rich chocolate color shows the amount of water that flows in all the time, and that it doesn’t have much chance to settle. It’s the catch-basin for the entire circling watershed of the valley.”

“Well, there’s one house at least,” Leoncia was saying five minutes later, as they rounded an angle of the cliff and saw, tucked against the cliff and extending out over the water, a low-roofed bungalow-like dwelling.

The piles were massive tree-trunks, but the walls of the house were of bamboo, and the roof was thatched with grassstraw. So isolated was it, that the only access, except by boat, was a twenty-foot bridge so narrow that two could not walk on it abreast. At either end of the bridge, evidently armed guards or sentries, stood two young men of the tribe. They moved aside, at a gesture of command from the Sun Priest, and let the party pass, although the two Morgans did not fail to notice that the spearmen who had accompanied them from the, Long House remained beyond the bridge.

Across the bridge and entered into the bungalow-like dwelling on stilts, they found themselves in a large room better furnished, crude as the furnishings were, than they would have expected in the Valley of Lost Souls. The grass mats on the floor were of fine and careful weave, and the shades of split bamboo that covered the window-openings were of patient workmanship. At the far end, against the wall, was a huge golden emblem of the rising sun similar to the one before the altar by the Long House. But by far most striking, were two living creatures who strangely inhabited the place and who scarcely moved. Beneath the rising sun, raised above the floor on a sort of dais, was a many-pillowed divan that was half-throne. And on the divan, among the pillows, clad in a softly-shimmering robe of some material no one of them had seen before, reclined a sleeping woman. Only her breast softly rose and softly fell to her breathing. No Lost Soul was she, of the inbred and degenerate mixture of Carib and Spaniard. On her head was a tiara of beaten gold and sparkling gems so large that almost it seemed a crown.

Before her, on the floor, were two tripods of gold the one containing smouldering fire, the other, vastly larger, a golden bowl fully a fathom in diameter. Between the tripods, resting with outstretched paws like the Sphinx, with unblinking eyes and without a quiver, a great dog, snowwhite of coat and resembling a Russian wolf-hound, stedfastly regarded the intruders.

“She looks like a lady, and seems like a queen, and certainly dreams to the queen’s taste,” Henry whispered, and earned a scowl from the Sun Priest.

Leoncia was breathless, but Torres shuddered and crossed himself, and said:

“This I have never heard of the Valley of Lost Souls. This woman who sleeps is a Spanish lady. She is of the pure Spanish blood. She is Castili-an. I am as certain, as that I stand here, that her eyes are blue. And yet that pallor!” Again he shuddered. “It is an unearthly sleep. It is as if she tampered with drugs, and had long tampered with drugy — ”

“The very thing!” Francis broke in with excited whispers. “The Lady Who Dreams drug dreams. They must keep her here doped up as a sort of super-priestess or super-oracle. That’s all right, old priest,” he broke off to say in Spanish. “If we wake her up, what of it? We have been brought here to meet her, and, I hope, awake.”

The Lady stirred, as if the whispering had penetrated her profound of sleep, and, for the first time, the dog moved. turning his head toward her so that her down-dropping hand rested on his neck caressingly. The priest was imperative, now, in his scowls and gestured commands for silence. And in absolute silence they stood and watched the awakening of the oracle.

Slowly she drew herself half upright, paused, and recaressed the happy wolf hound, whose cruel fangs were exposed in a formidable, long-jawed laugh of joy. Awesome the situation was to them, yet more awesome it became to them when she turned her eyes full upon them for the first time. Never had they seen such eyes, in which smouldered the world and all the worlds. Half way did Leoncia cross herself, while Torres, swept away by his own awe, completed his own crossing of himself and with moving lips of silence enunciated his favorite prayer to the Virgin. Even Francis and Henry looked, and could not take their gaze away from the twin wells of blue that seemed almost dark in the shade of the long black eyelashes.

“A blue-eyed brunette,” Francis managed to whisper.

But such eyes! Bound they were, rather than long. And yet thy were not round. Square they might have been, had they not been more round than square. Such shape had they that they were as if blocked off in the artist’s swift and sketchy way of establishing circles out of the sums of angles. The long, dark lashes veiled them and perpetuated the illusion of their darkness. Yet was there no surprise nor startlement in them at first sight of her visitors. Dreamily incurious were they, yet were they languidly certain of comprehension of what they beheld. Still further, to awe those who so beheld, her eyes betrayed a complicated totality of paradoxical alivenesses. Pain trembled its quivering anguish perpetually impending. Sensitiveness moistily hinted of itself like a spring rain-shower on the distant sea-horizon or a dew-fall of a mountain morning. Pain ever pain resided in the midst of languorous slumberousness. The fire of immeasurable courage threatened to glint into the electric spark of action and fortitude. Deep slumber, like a palpitant, tapestried background, seemed ever ready to obliterate all in sleep. And over all, through all, permeating all, brooded ageless wisdom’. This was accentuated by cheeks slightly hollowed, hinting of asceticism. Upon them was a flush, either hectic or of the paint-box.

When she stood up, she showed herself to be slender and fragile as a fairy. Tiny were her bones, not too generously flesh-covered; yet the lines of her were not thin. Had either Henry or Francis registered his impression aloud, he would have proclaimed her the roundest thin woman he had ever seen.

The Sun Priest prostrated his aged frame till he lay stretched flat out on the floor, his old forehead burrowing into the grass mat. The rest remained upright, although Torres evidenced by a crumpling at the knees that he would have followed the priest’s action had his companions shown signs of accompanying him. As it was, his knees did partly crumple, but straightened again and stiffened under the controlled example of Leoncia and the Morgans.

At first the Lady had no eyes for aught but Leoncia; and, after a careful looking over of her, with a curt upward lift of head she commanded her to approach. Too imperative by far was it, in Leoncia's thought, to proceed from so etherially beautiful a creature, and she sensed with immediacy an antagonism that must exist between them. So she did not move, until the Sun Priest muttered harshly that she must obey. She approached, regardless of the huge, long-haired hound, threading between the tripods and past the beast, nor would stop until commanded by a second nod as curt as the first. For a long minute the two women gazed steadily into each other's eyes, at the end of which, with a flicker of triumph, Leoncia observed the other's eyes droop. But the flicker was temporary, for Leoncia saw that the Lady was studying her dress with haughty curiosity. She even reached out her slender, pallid hand and felt the texture of the cloth and caressed it as only a woman can.

"Priest!" she summoned sharply. "This is the third day of the Sun in the House of Manco. Long ago I told you something concerning this day. Speak."

Writhing in excess of servility, the Sun Priest quavered:

"That on this day strange events were to occur. They have occurred, Queen."

Already had the Queen forgotten. Still caressing the cloth of Leoncia's dress, her eyes were bent upon it in curious examination.

"You are very fortunate," the Queen said, at the same time motioning her back to rejoin the others. "You are well loved of men. All is not clear, yet does it seem that vou are too well loved of men." Her voice, mellow and low, tranquil as silver, modulated in exquisite rhythms of sound, was almost as a distant temple bell calling believers to worship or sad souls to quiet judgment. But to Leoncia it was not given to appreciate the wonderful voice. Instead, only was she aware oi anger flaming up to her cheeks and burning in her pulse.

"I have seen you before, and often," the Queen went on.

"Never!" Leoncia cried out.

"Hush!" the Sun Priest hissed at her.

"There," the Queen said, pointing at the great golden bowl. "Before, and often, have I seen you there.

"You also, there," she addressed Henry.

"And you," she confirmed to Francis, although her great blue eyes opened wider and she gazed at him long too long to suit Leoncia, who knew the stab of jealousy that only a woman can thrust into a woman's heart.

The Queen’s eyes glinted when they had moved on to rest on Torres.

“And who are you, stranger, so strangely appareled, the helmet of a knight upon your head, upon your feet the sandals of a slave?”

“I am Da Vasco,” he answered stoutly.

“The name has an ancient ring,” she smiled.

“I am the ancient Da Vasco,” he pursued, advancing unsummoiied. She smiled at his temerity but did not stay him. “This is the helmet I wore four hundred years ago when I led the ancestors of the Lost Souls into this valley.” The Queen smiled quiet unbelief, as she quietly asked:

“Then you were born four hundred years ago?”

“Yes, and never. I was never born. I am Da Vasco. I have always been. My home is in the sun.”

Her delicately stenciled brows drew quizzically to interrogation, though she said nothing. From a gold-wrought box beside her on the divan she pinched what seemed a powder between a fragile and almost transparent thumb and forefinger, and her thin beautiful lips curved to gentle mockery as she casually tossed the powder into the great tripod. A sheen of smoke arose and in a moment was lost to sight.

“Look!” she commanded.

And Torres, approaching the great bowl, gazed into it. What he saw, the rest of his party never learned. But the Queen herself leaned forward and gazing down from above, saw with him, her face a beautiful advertisement of gentle and pitying mockery. And what Torres himself saw was a bedroom and a birth in the second story of the Bocas del Tore house he had inherited. Pitiful it was, with its last secrecy exposed, as was the gently smiling pity in the Queen’s face. And, in that flashing glimpse of magic vision, Torres saw confirmed about himself what he had always guessed and suspected.

“Would you see more,” the Queen softly mocked. “I have shown you the beginning of you. Look now, and behold your ending.”

But Torres, too deeply impressed by what he had already seen, shuddered away in recoil.

“Forgive me, Beautiful Woman,” he pleaded. “And let me pass. Forget, as I shall hope ever to forget.”

“It is gone,” she said, with a careless wave of her hand over the bowl. “But I cannot forget. The record will persist always in my mind. But you, O Man, so young of life, so ancient of helmet, have I beheld before this day, there in my Mirror of the World. You have vexed me much of late with your portending. Yet not with the helmet." She smiled with quiet wisdom. "Always, it seems to me, I saw a chamber of the dead, of the long dead, upright on their unmoving legs and guarding through eternity mysteries alien to their faith and race. And in that dolorous company did it seern. that I saw one who wore your ancient helmet. Shall I speak further?"

"No, no," Torres implored.

She bowed and nodded him back. Next, her scrutiny centred on Francis, whom she nodded forward. She stood up upon the dais as if to greet him, and, as if troubled by the fact that she must gaze down on him, stepped from the dais to the floor so that she might gaze up into his face as she extended her hand. Hesitatingly he took her hand in his, then knew not what next to do. Almost did it appear that she read his thought, for she said:

"Do it. I have never had it done to me before. I have never seen it done, save in my dreams and in the visions shown me in my Mirror of the World."

And Francis bent and kissed her hand. And, because she did not signify to withdraw it, he continued to hold it, while, against his palm, he felt the faint but steady pulse of her pink finger-tips. And so they stood in pose, neither speaking, Francis embarrassed, the Queen sighing faintly, while the sex anger of woman tore at Leoncia's heart, until Henry blurted out in gleeful English:

"Do it again, Francis! She likes it!"

The Sun Priest hissed silencing command at him. But the Queen, half withdrawing her hand with a startle like a maiden's, relumed it as deeply as before into Francis' clasp, and addressed herself to Henry.

"I, too, know the language you speak," she admonished. "Yet am I unashamed, I, who have never known a man, do admit that I like it. It is the first kiss that I have ever had. Francis for such your friend calls you obey your friend. I like it. I do like it. Once again kiss my hand."

Francis obeyed, waited while her hand still lingered in his, and while she, oblivious to all else, as if toying with some beautiful thought, gazed lingeringly up into his eyes. By a visible effort she pulled herself together, released his hand abruptly, gestured him back to the others, and addressed the Sun Priest.

"Well, priest," she said, with a return of the sharpness in her voice, "You have brought these captives here for a reason which I already know. Yet would I hear you state it yourself."

“Lady Who Dreams, shall we not kill these intruders as has ever been our custom? The people are mystified and in doubt of my judgment, and demand decision from you.”

“And you would kill?”

“Such is my judgment. I seek now your judgment that yours and mine may be one.”

She glanced over the faces of the four captives. For Torres, her brooding expression portrayed only pity. To Leoncia she extended a frown; to Henry, doubt. And upon Francis she gazed a full minute, her face growing tender, at least to Leoncia’s angry observation.

“Are any of you unmarried?” the Queen asked suddenly. “Nay,” she anticipated them. “It is given me to know that you are all unmarried.” She turned quickly to Leoncia. “Is it well,” she demanded, “that a woman should have two husbands?”

Both Henry and Francis could not refrain from smiling their amusement at so absurdly irrelevant a question. But to Leoncia it was neither absurd nor irrelevant, and in her cheeks arose the flush of anger again. This was a woman, she knew, with whom she had to deal, and who was dealing with her like a woman.

“It is not well,” Leoncia answered, with clear, ringing voice.

“It is very strange,” the Queen pondered aloud. “It is very strange. Yet is it not fair. Since there are equal numbers of men and women in the world, it cannot be fair for one woman to have two husbands, for, if so, it means that another woman shall have no husband.”

Another pinch of dust she tossed into the great bowl of gold. The sheen of smoke arose and vanished as before.

“The Mirror of the World will tell me, priest, what disposition shall be made of our captives.”

Just ere she leaned over to gaze into the bowl, a fresh thought deflected her. With an embracing wave of arm she invited them all up to the bowl.

“We may all look,” she said. “I do not promise you we will see the same visions of our dreams. Nor shall I know what you will have seen. Each for himself will see and know. You, too, priest.”

They found the bowl, six feet in diameter that it was, halffull of some unknown metal liquid.

It might be quicksilver, but it isn’t,” Henry whispered to Francis. “I have never seen the like of any similar metal. It strikes me as hotly molten.”

"It is very cold," the Queen corrected him in English. "Yet is it fire. You, Francis, feel the bowl outside."

He obeyed, laying his full palm unhesitatingly to the yellow outer surface.

"Colder than the atmosphere of the room," he adjudged. But look!" the Queen, cried, tossing more powder upon the contents. "It is fire that remains cold."

"It is the powder that smokes with the heat of its own containment," Torres blurted out, at the same time feeling into the bottom of his coat pocket. He drew forth a pinch of crumbs of tobacco, match splinters, and cloth-fluff. "This will not burn," he challenged, inviting invitation by extending the pinch of rubbish over the bowl as if to drop it in.

The Queen nodded consent, and all saw the rubbish fall upon the liquid metal surface. The particles made no indentation on that surface. Only did they transform into smoke that sheened upward and was gone. No remnant of ash remained. "Still is it cold," said Torres, imitating Francis and feeling the outside of the bowl.

"Thrust your finger into the contents," the Queen suggested to Torres.

"No," he said.

"You are right," she confirmed. "Had you done so, you would now be with one finger less than the number with which you w r ere born." She tossed in more powder. "Now shall each behold what he alone will behold."

And it was so.

To Leoncia was it given to see an ocean separate her and Francis. To Henry was it given to see the Queen and Francis married by so strange a ceremony, that scarcely did he realise, until at the close, that it was a wedding taking place. The Queen, from a flying gallery in a great house, looked down into a magnificent drawing-room that Francis would have recognized as builded by his father had her vision been his. And, beside her, his arm about her, she saw Francis. Francis saw but one thing, vastly perturbing, the face of Leoncia, immobile as death, with thrust into it, squarely between the eyes, a slended-bladed dagger. Yet he did not see any blood flowing from the wound of the dagger. Torres glimpsed the beginning of what he knew must be his end, crossed himself, and alone of all of them shrank back, refusing to see further. While the Sun Priest saw the vision of his secret sin, the face and form of the woman for whom he had betrayed the Worship of the Sun, and th face and form of the maid of the village at the Long House.

As all drew back by common consent when the visions faded, Leoncia turned like a tigress, with flashing eyes, upon the Queen, crying:

“Your mirror lies! Your Mirror of the World lies!”

Francis and Henry, still under the heavy spell of what they had themselves beheld, were startled and surprised by Leoncia’s outburst. But the Queen, speaking softly, replied: My Mirror of the World has never lied. I know not what you saw. But I do know, whatever it was, that it is truth.”

“You are a monster!” Leoncia cried on. “You are a vile witch that lies!”

You and I are women,” the Queen chided with sweet gentleness, “and may not know of ourselves, being women. Men will decide whether or not I am a witch that lies or a woman with a woman’s heart of love. In the meanwhile, being women and therefore weak, let us be kind to each other.”

“And now, Priest of the Sun, to judgment. You, as priest under the Sun God, know more of the ancient rule and procedure than do I. You know more than do I about myself and how I came to be here. You know that always, mother and daughter, and by mother and daughter, has the tribe maintained a Queen of Mystery, a Lady of Dreams. The time has come when we must consider the future generations. The strangers have come, and they are unmarried. This must be the wedding day decreed, if the generations to come after of the tribe are to possess a Queen to dream for them. It is well, and time and need and place are met. I have dreamed to judgment. And the judgment is that I shall marry, of these strangers, the stranger alloted to me before the foundations of the world were laid. The test is this: If no one of these will marry, then shall they die and their warm blood be offered up by you before the altar of the Sun. If one will marry me, then all shall live, and Time hereafter will register our futures.”

The Sun Priest, trembling with anger, strove to protest, but she commanded:

“Silence, priest! By me. only do you rule the people. At a word from me to the people well, you know. It is not any easy way to die.”

She turned to the three men, saying:

“And who will marry me?”

They looked embarrassment and consternation at one another, but none spoke.

“I am a woman,” the Queen went on teasingly. “And therefore am I not desirable to men? Is it that I am not young? Is it, as women go, that I am not beautiful? Is it that men’s tastes are so strange that no man cares to clasp the sweet of me in his arms and press his lips on mine as good Francis there did on my hand?”

She turned her eyes on Leoncia.

You be judge. You are a woman well loved of men.

Am I not such a woman as you, and shall I not be loved?”

You will ever be kinder to men than to women, “ Leoncia answered cryptically as regarded the three men who heard, but clearly to the woman’s brain of the Queen. “And as a woman,” Leoncia continued, “you are strangely beautiful and luring ; and there are men in this world, many men, who could be made mad to clasp you in their arms. But I warn you, Queen, that in this world are men, and men, and men.”

Having heard and debated this, the Queen turned abruptly to the priest.

“You have heard, priest. This day a man shall marry me. If no man marries me, these three men shall be offered up on your altar. So shall be offered up this woman, who, it would seem, would put shame upon me by having me less than she.”

Still, she addressed the priest, although her message was for the others.

“There are three men of them, one of whom, long cycles before he was born, was destined to marry me. So, priest, I say, take the captives away into some other apartment, and let them decide among themselves which is the man.”

“Since it has been so long destined,” Leoncia flamed forth, “then why put it to the chance of their decision? You know the man. Why put it to the risk? Name the man, Queen, and name him now.”

M The man shall be selected in the way I have indicated,” the Queen replied, as, at the same time, absently she tossed a pinch of powder into the great bowl and absently glanced therein. “So now depart, and let the inevitable choice be made.”

They were already moving away out of the room, when a cry from the Queen stopped them.

“Wait!” she ordered. “Come, Francis. I have seen something that concerns you. Come, gaze with me upon the Mirror of the World.”

And while the others paused, Francis gazed with her upon the strange liquid metal surface. He saw himself in the library of his New York house, and he saw beside him the Lady Who Dreams, his arm around her. Next, he saw her curiosity at sight of the stock-ticker. As he tried to explain it to her, he glanced at the tape and read such disturbing information thereon that he sprang to the nearest telephone and, as the vision faded, saw himself calling up his broker.

“What was it you saw?” Leoncia questioned, as they passed out.

And Francis lied. He did not mention seeing the Lady Who Dreams in his New York library. Instead, he replied:

“It was a stock-ticker, and it showed a bear market on Wall Street somersaulting into a panic. Now how did she know I was interested in Wall Street and stock-tickers?”

CHAPTER 19

“SOMEBODY’S got to marry that crazy woman,” Leoncia spoke up, as they lolled upon the mats of the room to which the priest had taken them. “Not only will he be a hero by saving our lives, but he will save his own life as well. Now, Senor Torres, is your chance to save all our lives and your own.”

“Br-r-r!” Torres shivered. “I would not marry her for ten million gold. She is too wise. She is terrible. She how shall I say? she, as you Americans say, gets my goat. I am a brave man. But before her I am not brave. The flesh of me melts in a sweat of fear. Not for less than ten million would I dare to overcome my fear. Now Henry and Francis are braver than I. Let one of them marry her.”

But I am engaged to marry Leoncia,” Henry spoke up promptly. “Therefore, I cannot marry the Queen.”

And their eyes centered on Francis, but, before he could reply, Leoncia broke in.

“It is not fair, “she said. “No one of you wants to marry her. The only equitable way to settle it will be by drawing lots.” As she spoke, she pulled three straws from the mat on which she sat and broke one off very short. “The man who draws the short straw shall be the victim. You; Senor Torres, draw first.”

“Wedding bells for the short straw,” Henry grinned.

Torres crossed himself, shivered, and drew. So patently long was the straw, that he executed a series of dancing steps as he sang:

“No wedding bells for me, I’m as happy as can be. “

Francis drew next, and an equally long straw was his portion. To Henry there, was no choice. The remaining straw in Leoncia’s hand was the fatal one. All tragedy was in his face as he looked instantly at Leon-cia. And she, observing, melted in pity, while Francis saw her pity and did some rapid thinking. It was the way out. All the perplexity of the situation could be thus easily solved. Great as was his love for Leoncia, greater was his man’s loyalty to Henry. Francis did not hesitate. With a merry slap of his hand on Henry’s shoulder, he cried:

“Well, here’s the one unattached bachelor who isn’t afraid of matrimony. I’ll marry her.”

Henry’s relief was as if he had been reprieved from impending death. His hand shot out to Francis’ hand, and, while they clasped, their eyes gazed squarely into each other’s as only decent, honest men’s may gaze. Nor did either see the dismay registered in Leoncia’s face at this unexpected denouement. The Lady Who Dreams had been right. Leoncia, as a woman, was unfair, loving two men and denying the Lady her fair share of men.

But any discussion that might have taken place, was prevented by the little maid of the village, who entered with women to serve them the midday meal. It was Torres’ sharp eyes that first lighted upon the string of gems about the maid’s neck. Rubies they were, and magnificent.

“The Lady Who Dreams just gave them to me,” the maid said, pleased with their pleasure in her new possession.

“Has she any more?” Torres asked.

“Of course,” was the reply. “Only just now did she show me a great chest of them. And they were all kinds, and much larger; but they were not strung. They were like so much shelled corn.”

While the others ate and talked, Torres nervously smoked a cigarette. After that, he arose and claimed a passing indisposition that prevented him from eating.

“Listen,” he quoth impressively. “I speak better Spanish than either of you two Morgans. Also, I know, I am confident, the Spanish woman character better. To show you my heart’s in the right place, I’ll go in to her now and see if I can talk her out of this matrimonial proposition.”

One of the spearmen barred Torres’ way, but, after going within, returned and motioned him to enter. The Queen, reclined on the divan, nodded him to her graciously.

You do not eat?” she queried solicitously; and added, after he had reaffirmed his loss of appetite, “Then will you drink?”

Torres’ eyes sparkled. Between the excitement he had gone through for the past several days, and the new adventure he was resolved upon, he knew not how, to achieve, he felt the important need of a drink. The Queen clapped her hands, and issued commands to the waiting woman who responded.

“It is very ancient, centuries old, as you will recognize, Da Vasco, who brought it here yourself four centuries ago,” she said, as a man carried in and broached a small wooden About the age of the keg there could be no doubt, and Torres, knowing that it had crossed the Western Ocean twelve generations before, felt his throat tickle with desire to taste its contents. The drink poured by the waiting woman was a big one, yet was Torres startled by the mildness of it. But quickly the magic of four-centuries-old spirits began to course through his veins and set the maggots crawling in his brain.

The Queen bade him sit on the edge of the divan at her feet, where she could observe him, and asked:

“You came unsummoned. What is it you have to tell me or ask of me?”

“I am the one selected,” he replied, twisting his moustache and striving to look the enticingness of a male man on love adventure bent.

“Strange,” she said. “I saw not your face in the Mirror of the World. There is ... some mistake, eh?”

“A mistake,” he acknowledged readily, reading certain knowledge in her eyes. “It was the drink. There is magic in it that made me speak the message of my heart to you, I want you so.”

Again, with laughing eyes, she summoned the waiting woman and had his pottery mug replenished.

“A second mistake, perhaps will now result, eh?” she teased, when he had downed the drink.

“No, O Queen,” he replied. “Now all is clarity. My true heart I can master. Francis Morgan, the one who kissed your hand, is the man selected to be your husband.”

“It is true,” she said solemnly. “His was the face I saw, and knew from the first.”

Thus encouraged, Torres continued.

“I am his friend, his very good best friend. You, who know all things, know the custom of the marriage dowry. He has sent me, his best friend, to inquire into and examine the dowry of his bride. You must know that he is among the richest of men in his own country, where men are very rich.”

So suddenly did she arise on the divan that Torres cringed and half shrank down, in his panic expectance of a knifeblade between his shoulders. Instead, the Queen walked swiftly, or, rather, glided, to the doorway to an inner apartment.

“Come!” she summoned imperiously. Once inside, at the first glance around, Torres knew the room for what it was, her sleeping chamber.

But his eyes had little space for such details. Lifting the lid of a heavy chest of ironwood, brass-bound, she motioned him to look in. He obeyed, and saw the amazement of the world. The little maid had spoken true. Like so much shelled corn, the chest was filled with an incalculable treasure of gems diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, the most precious, the purest and largest of their kinds.

"Thrust in your arms to the shoulders," she said, "and make sure that these baubles be real and of the adamant of flint, rather than illusions and reflections of unreality dreamed real in a dream. Thus may you make certain report to your very rich friend who is to marry me."

And Torres, the madness of the ancient drink like fire in his brain, did as he was told.

"These trifles of glass are such an astonishment?" she plagued. "Your eyes are as if they were witnessing great wonders."

"I never dreamed in all the world there was such a treasure," he muttered in his drunkenness. "They are beyond price?"

"They are beyond price."

"They are beyond the value of valor, and love, and honor?"

"They are beyond all things. They are a madness."

"Can a woman's or a man's true love be purchased by them?"

"They can purchase all the world."

"Come," the Queen said. "You are a man. You have held women in your arms. Will they purchase women?"

"Since the beginning of time women have been bought and sold for them, and for them women have sold themselves."

"Will they buy me the heart of your good friend Francis?" For the first time Torres looked at her, and nodded and muttered, his eyes swimming with drink and wild-eyed with sight of such array of gems.

"Will good Francis so value them?" Torres nodded speechlessly.

Do all persons so value them?" Again he nodded emphatically.

She began to laugh in silvery derision. Bending, at haphazard she clutched a priceless handful of the pretties.

Come," she commanded. "I will show you how I value them."

She led him across the room and out on a platform that extended around three sides of a space of water, the fourth side being the perpendicular cliff. At the base of the cliff the water formed a whirlpool that advertised the drainage exit for the lake which Torres had heard the Morgans speculate about.

With another silvery tease of laughter, the Queen tossed the handful of priceless gems into the heart of the whirlpool. "Thus I value them," she said.

Torres was aghast, and, for the nonce, well-nigh sobered by such wantonness.

And they never come back,” she laughed on. “Nothing ever comes back. Look!”

She flung in a handful of flowers that raced around and around the whirl and quickly sucked down from sight in the center of it.

If nothing comes back, where does everything go?” Torres asked thickly.

The Queen shrugged her shoulders, although he knew that she knew the secret of the waters.

“More than one man has gone that way,” she said dreamily. “No one of them has ever returned. My mother went that way, after she was dead. I was a girl then.” She roused. “But you, helmeted one, go now. Make report to your master your friend, I mean. Tell him what I possess for dowry. And, if he be half as mad as you about the bits of glass, swiftly will his arms surround me. I shall remain here and in dreams await his coming. The play of the water fascinates me.”

Dismissed, Torres entered the sleeping chamber, crept back to steal a glimpse of the Queen, and saw her sunk down on the platform, head on hand, and gazing into the whirlpool. Swiftly he made his way to the chest, lifted the lid, and stowed a scooping handful into his trousers’ pocket. Ere he could scoop a second handful, the mocking laughter of the Queen was at his back.

Fear and rage mastered him to such extent, that he sprang toward her, and pursuing her out upon the platform, was only prevented from seizing her by the dagger she threatened him with.

“Thief,” she said quietly. “Without honor are you. And the way of all thieves in this valley is death. I shall summon my spearmen and have you thrown into the whirling water.”

And his extremity gave Torres cunning. Glancing apprehensively at the water that threatened him, he ejaculated a cry of horror as if at what strange thing he had seen, sank down on one knee, and buried his convulsed face of simulated fear in his hands. The Queen looked sidewise to see what he had seen. Which was his moment. He rose in the air upon her like a leaping tiger, clutching her wrists and wresting the dagger from her.

He wiped the sweat from his face and trembled while he slowly recovered himself. Meanwhile she gazed upon him curiously, without fear.

"You are a woman of evil," he snarled at her, still shaking with rage, "a witch that traffics with the powers of darkness and all devilish things. Yet are you woman, born of woman, and therefore mortal. The weakness of mortality and of woman is yours, wherefore I give you now your choice of two things. Either you shall be thrown into the whirl of water and perish, or. " "Or?" she prompted.

"Or. " He paused, licked his dry lips, and burst forth. "No! By the Mother of God, I am not afraid. Or marry me this day, which is the other choice."

You would marry me for me? Or for the treasure?" For the treasure," he admitted brazenly. "But it is written in the Book of Life that I shall marry Francis," she objected.

Then will we rewrite that page in the Book of Life." "As if it could be done!" she laughed. "Then will I prove your mortality there in the whirl, whither I shall fling you as you flung the flowers."

Truly intrepid Torres was for the time intrepid because of the ancient drink that burned in his blood and brain, and because he was master of the situation. Also, like a true Latin-American, he loved a scene wherein he could strut and elocute.

Yet she startled him by emitting a hiss similar to the Latin way of calling a servitor. He regarded her suspiciously, glanced at the doorway to the sleeping chamber, then returned his gaze to her.

Like a ghost, seeing it only vaguely out of the corner of his eye, the great white hound erupted through the doorway. Startled again, Torres involuntarily stepped to the side. But his foot failed to come to rest on the emptiness of air it encountered, and the weight of his body toppled him down off the platform into the water. Even as he fell and screamed his despair, he saw the hound in mid-air leaping after him.

Swimmer that he was, Torres was like a straw in the grip of the current; and the Lady Who Dreams, gazing down upon him fascinated from the edge of the platform, saw him disappear, and the hound after him, into the heart of the whirlpool from which there was no return.

CHAPTER 20

LONG the Lady Who Dreams gazed down at the playing waters. At last, with a sighed “My poor dog,” she arose. The passing of Torres had meant nothing to her. Accustomed from girlhood to exercise the high powers of life and death over her semi-savage and degenerate people, human life, per se, had no sacredness to her. If life were good and lovely, then, naturally, it was the right thing to let it live. But if life were evil, ugly, and dangerous to other lives, then the thing was to let it die or make it die. Thus, to her, Torres had been an episode unpleasant, but quickly over.

But it was too bad about the dog.

Clapping her hands loudly as she entered her chamber, to summon one of her women, she made sure that the lid of the jewel chest was raised. To the woman she gave a command, and herself returned to the platform, from where she could look into the room unobserved.

A few minutes later, guided by the woman, Francis entered the chamber and was left alone. He was not in a happy mood. Fine as had been his giving up of Leoncia, he got no pleasure from the deed. Nor was there any pleasure in looking forward to marrying the strange lady who ruled over the Lost Souls and resided in this weird lake-dwelling. Unlike Torres, however, she did not arouse in him fear or animosity. Quite to the contrary, Francis’ feeling toward her was largely that of pity. He could not help but be impressed by the tragic pathos of the ripe and lovely woman desperately seeking love and a mate, despite her imperious and cavalier methods.

At a glance he recognized the room for what it was, and idly wondered if he were already considered the bridegroom, sans discussion, sans acquiescence, sans ceremony. In his brown study, the chest scarcely caught his attention. The Queen, watching, saw him evidently waiting for her, and, after a few minutes, walk over to the chest. He gathered up a handful of the gems, dropped them one by one carelessly back as if they had been so many marbles, and turned and strolled over to examine the leopard skins on her couch. Next, he sat down upon it, oblivious equally of couch or treasure. All of which was provocative of such delight to the Queen that she could no longer withstrain herself to mere spying. Entering the room and greeting him, she laughed: “Was Senor Torres a liar?”

"Was?" Francis queried, for the need of saying something, as he arose before her.

"He no longer is," she assured him. "Which is neither here nor there," she hastened on as Francis began to betray interest in the matter of Torres' end. "He is gone, and it is well that he is gone, for he can never come back. But he did lie, didn't he?"

"Undoubtedly," Francis replied. "He is a confounded liar."

He could not help noticing the way her face fell when he so heartily agreed with her concerning Torres' veracity. "What did he say?" Francis questioned.

"That he was the one selected to marry me."

"A liar," Francis commented dryly.

"Next he said that you were the selected one which was also a lie," her voice trailed off.

Francis shook his head.

The involuntary cry of joy the Queen uttered touched his heart to such tenderness of pity that almost did he put his arms around her to soothe her. She waited for him to speak.

"I am the one to marry you," he went on steadily. "You are very, beautiful. When shall we be married?"

The wild joy in her face was such that he swore to himself that never would he willingly mar that face with marks of sorrow. She might be ruler over the Lost Souls, with the wealth of Ind and with supernatural powers of mirrorgazing ; but most poignantly she appealed to him as a lonely and na'ive woman, overspilling of love and totally unversed in love, "And I shall tell you of another lie this Torres animal told to me," she burst forth exultantly. "He told me that you were rich, and that, before you married me, you desired to know what wealth was mine. He told me you had sent him to inquire into what riches I possessed. This I know was a lie. You are not marrying me for that!" with a scornful gesture at the jewel chest. Francis shook his head.

"You are marrying me for myself," she rushed on in triumph.

"For yourself," Francis could not help but lie.

And then he beheld an amazing thing. The Queen, this Queen who was the sheerest autocrat, who said come here and go there, who dismissed the death of Torres with its mere announcement, and who selected her royal spouse without so much as consulting his prenuptial wishes, this Queen began to blush. Up her neck, flooding her face to her ears and forehead, welled the pink tide of maidenly modesty and embarrassment. And such sight of faltering made Francis likewise falter. He knew not what to do, and felt a warmth of blood rising under the sun-tan of his own face. Never, he thought, had there been a inan-and-wo-man situation like it in all the history of men and women. The mutual embarrassment of the pair of them was appalling, and to save his life he could not have summoned a jot of initiative. Thus, the Queen was compelled to speak first.

"And now," she said, blushing still more furiously, "you must make love to me."

Francis strove to speak, but his lips were so dry that he licked them and succeeded only in stammering incoherently.

"I never have been loved," the Queen continued bravely. "The affairs of my people are not love. My people are animals without reason. But we, you and I, are man and woman. There must be wooing, and tenderness that much I have learned from my Mirror of the World. But I am unskilled. I know not how. But you, from out of the great world, must surely know. I wait. You must love me."

She sank down upon the couch, drawing Francis beside her, and true to her word, proceeded to wait. While he, bidden to love at command, was paralyzed by the preposterous impossibility of so obeying.

"Am I not beautiful?" the Queen queried after another pause. "Are not your arms as mad to be about me as I am mad to have them about me? Never have a man's lips touched my lips. What is a kiss like on the lips, I mean? Your lips on my hand were ecstasy. You kissed then, not alone my hand, but my soul. My heart was there, throbbing against the press of your lips. Did you not feel it?"

"And so," she was saying, half an hour later, as they sat on the couch hand in hand, "I have told you the little I know of myself. I do not know the past, except what I have been told of it. The present I see clearly in my Mirror of the World. The future I can likewise see, but vaguely; nor can I always understand what I see. I was born here. So was my mother, and her mother. How it chanced is that always into the life of each queen came a lover. Sometimes, as you, they came here. My mother's mother, so it was told me, left the valley to find her lover and was gone a long time for years. So did my mother go forth. The secret way is known to me, where the long dead conquistadores guard the Maya mysteries, and where Da Vasco himself stands whose helmet this Torres animal had the impudence to steal and claim for his own. Had you not come, I should have been compelled to go forth and find you, for you were my appointed one and had to be."

A woman entered, followed by a spearman, and Francis could scarce make his way through the quaint antiquated Spanish of the conversation that ensued. In commingled anger and joy, the Queen epitomized it to him.

"We are to depart now to the Long House for our wedding. The Priest of the Sun is stubborn, I know not why, save that he has been balked of the blood of all of you on his altar. He is very bloodthirsty. He is the Sun Priest, but he is possessed of little reason. I have report that he is striving to turn the people against our wedding the dog!" She clinched her hands, her face set, and her eyes blazed with royal fury. "He shall marry us, by the ancient custom, before the Long House, at the Altar of the Sun."

"It's not too late, Francis, to change your mind," Henry urged. "Besides, it is not fair. The short straw was mine. Am I not right, Leoncia?"

Leoncia could not reply. They stood in a group, at the forefront of the assembled Lost Souls, before the altar. Inside the Long House the Queen and the Sun Priest were closeted.

"You wouldn't want to see Henry marry her, would you, Leoncia?" Francis argued.

"Nor you, either," Leoncia countered. "Torres is the only one I'd like to have seen marry her. I don't like her. I would not care to see any friend of mine her husband."

"You're almost jealous," commented Henry. "Just the same, Francis doesn't seem so very cast down over his fate."

"She's not at all bad," Francis retorted. "And I can accept my fate with dignity, if not with equanimity. And I'll tell you something else, Henry, now that you are harping on this strain: she wouldn't marry you if you asked her."

"Oh, I don't know," Henry began.

"Then ask her," was the challenge. "Here she comes now. Look at her eyes. There's trouble brewing. And the priest's black as thunder. You just propose, to her and see what chance you've got while I'm around."

Henry nodded his head stubbornly.

"I will but not to show you what kind of a woman-conqueror I am, but for the sake of fair play. I wasn't playing the game when I accepted your sacrifice of yourself, but I am going to play the game now."

Before they could prevent him, he had thrust his way to the Queen, shouldered in between her and the priest, and began to speak earnestly. And the Queen laughed as she listened. But her laughter was not for Henry. With shining triumph she laughed across at Leoncia.

Not many moments were required to say no to Henry's persuasions, whereupon the Queen joined Leoncia and Francis, the priest tagging at her heels, and Henry, following more slowly, trying to conceal the gladness that was his at being rejected.

"What do you think," the Queen addressed Leoncia directly. "Good Henry has just asked me to marry him, which makes the fourth this day. Am I not well loved? Have you ever had four lovers, all desiring to marry you on your wedding day?"

"Four!" Francis exclaimed.

The Queen looked at him tenderly.

"Yourself, and Henry whom I have just declined. And, before either of you, this day, the insolent Torres; and, just now, in the Long House, the priest here." Wrath began to fire her eyes and cheeks at the recollection. "This Priest of the Sun, this priest long since renegade to his vows, this man who is only half a man, wanted me to marry him! The dog! The beast! And he had the insolence to say, at the end, that I should not marry Francis. Come. I will show him."

She nodded her own private spearmen up about the group, and with her eyes directed two of them behind the priest to includs him. At sight of this, murmurs began to arise in the crowd.

"Proceed, priest," the Queen commanded harshly. "Else will my men kill you now."

He turned sharply about, as if to appeal to the people, but the speech that trembled to his lips died unuttered at sight of the spear-points at his breast. He bowed to the inevitable, and led the way close to the altar, placing the Queen and Francis facing him, while he stood above on the platform of the altar, looking at them and over them at the Lost Souls.

"I am the Priest of the Sun," he began. "My vows are holy. As the vowed priest I am to marry this woman, the Lady Who Dreams, to this stranger and intruder, whose blood is already forfeit to our altar. My vows are holy. I cannot be false to them. I refuse to marry this woman to this man. In the name of the Sun God I refuse to perform this ceremony — "

“Then shall you die, priest, here and now,” the Queen hissed at him, nodding the near spearmen to lift their spears against him, and nodding the other spearmen to face the murmuring and semi-mutinous Lost Souls.

Followed a pregnant pause. For less than a minute, but for nearly a minute, no word was uttered, no thought was betrayed by a restless movement. All stood, like so many statues; and all gazed upon the priest against whose heart the poised spears rested.

He, whose blood of heart and life was nearest at stake in the issue, was the first to act. He gave in. Calmly he turned his back to the threatening spears, knelt, and, in archaic Spanish, prayed an invocation of fruitful-ness to the Sun. Eeturning to the Queen and Francis, with a gesture he made them fully bow and almost half kneel before him. As he touched their hands with his finger-tips he could not forbear the involuntary scowl that convulsed his features.

As the couple arose, at his indication, he broke a small corn-cake in two, handing a half to each.

“The Eucharist,” Henry whispered to Leoncia, as the pair crumbled and ate their portions of cake.

“The Koman Catholic worship Da Vasco must have brought in with him, twisted about until it is now the marriage ceremony,” she whispered back comprehension, although, at sight of Francis thus being lost to her, she was holding herself tightly for control, her lips bloodless and stretched to thinness, her nails hurting into her palms.

From the altar the priest took and presented to the Queen a tiny dagger and a tiny golden cup. She spoke to Francis, who rolled up his sleeve and presented to her his bared left forearm. About to scarify his flesh, she paused, considered till all could see her visibly think, and, instead of breaking his skin, she touched the dagger point carefully to her tongue.

And then arose rage. At the taste of the blade she threw the weapon from her, half sprang at the priest, half gave command to her spearmen for the death of him, and shook and trembled in the violence of her effort for self-possession. Following with her eyes the flight of the dagger to assure herself that its poisoned point should not strike the flesh of another and wreak its evilness upon it, she drew from the breast-fold of her dress another tiny dagger. This, too, she tested with her tongue, ere she broke Francis’ skin with the point of it and caught in the cup of gold the several red blooddrops that exuded from the incision. Francis repeated the same for her and on her, whereupon, under her flashing eyes, the priest took the cup and offered the commingled blood upon the altar.

Came a pause. The Queen frowned.

“If blood is to be shed this day on the altar of the Sun God” she began threateningly.

And the priest, as if recollecting what he was loath to do, turned to the people and made solemn pronouncement that the twain were man and wife. The Queen turned to Francis with glowing invitation to his arms. As he folded her to him and kissed her eager lips, Leoncia gasped and leaned closely to Henry for support. Nor did Francis fail to observe and understand her passing indisposition, although when the flush-faced Queen next sparkled triumph at her sister woman, Leoncia was to all appearance proudly indifferent.

CHAPTER 21

Two thoughts flickered in Torres' mind as he was sucked down. The first was of the great white hound which had leaped after him. The second was that the Mirror of the World told lies. That this was his end he was certain, yet the little he had dared permit himself to glimpse in the Mirror had given no hint of an end anything like this.

A good swimmer, as he was engulfed and sucked on in rapid, fluid darkness, he knew fear that he might have his brains knocked out by the stone walls or roof of the subterranean passage through which he was being swept. But the freak of the currents was such that not once did he collide with any part of his anatomy. Sometimes he was aware of being banked against water-cushions that tokened the imminence of a wall or boulder, at which times he shrank as it were into smaller compass, like a sea-turtle drawing in its head before the onslaught of sharks.

Less than a minute, as he measured the passage of time by the holding of his breath, elapsed, ere, in an easier-flowing stream, his head emerged above the surface and he refreshed his lungs with great inhalations of cool air. Instead of swimming, he contented himself with keeping afloat, and with wondering what had happened to the hound and with what next excitement would vex his underground adventure. Soon he glimpsed light ahead, the dim but unmistakable light of day; and, as the way grew brighter, he turned his face back and saw what made him proceed to swim with a speed-stroke. What he saw was the hound, swimming high, with the teeth of its huge jaws gleaming in the increasing light. Under the source of the light, he saw a shelving bank and climbed out. His first thought, which he half carried out, was to reach into his pocket for the gems he had stolen from the Queen's chest. But a reverberant barking that grew to thunder in the cavern reminded him of his fanged pursuer, and he drew forth the Queen's dagger instead.

Again two thoughts divided his judgment for action. Should he try to kill the swimming brute ere it landed? Or should he retreat up the rocks toward the light on the chance that the stream might carry the hound past him? His judgment settled on the second course of action, and he fled upw r ard along a narrow ledge. But the dog landed and followed with such four-footed certainty of speed that it swiftly overtook him. Torres turned at bay on the cramped footing, crouched, and brandished the dagger against the brute's leap.

But the hound did not leap. Instead, playfully, with jaws widespread of laughter, it sat down and extended its right paw in greeting. As he took the paw in his hand and shook it, Torres almost collapsed in the revulsion of relief. He laughed with exuberant shrilliness that advertised semihysteria, and continued to pump the hound's leg up and down, while the hound, with wide jaws and gentle eyes, laughed as exuberantly back.

Pursuing the shelf, the hound contentedly at heel and occasionally sniffing his calves, Torres found that the narrow track, paralleling the river, after an ascent descended to it again. And then Torres saw two things, one that made him pause and shudder, and one that made his heart beat high with hope. The first was the underground river. Rushing straight at the wall of rock, it plunged into it in a chaos of foam and turbulence, with stiffly serrated and spitefully spitting waves that advertised its' swiftness and momentum. The second was an opening to one side, through which streamed white daylight. Possibly fifteen feet in diameter was this opening, but across it was stretched a spider web more monstrous than any product of a madman's fancy. Most ominous of all was the debris of bones that lay beneath. The threads of the web were of silver and of the thickness of a lead pencil. He shuddered as he touched a thread with his hand. It clung to his flesh like glue, and only by an effort that agitated the entire web did he succeed in freeing his hand. Upon his clothes and upon the coat of the dog he rubbed off the stickiness from his skin.

Between two of the lower guys of the great web he saw that there was space for him to crawl through the opening to the day; but, ere he attempted it, caution led him to test the opening by helping and shoving the hound ahead of him. The white beast crawled and scrambled out of sight, and Torres was about to follow when it returned. Such was the panic haste of its return that it collided with him and both fell. But the man managed to save himself by clinging with his hands to the rocks, while the four-footed brute, not able so to check itself, fell into the churning water. Even as Torres reached a hand out to try to save it, the dog was carried under the rock.

Long Torres debated. That farther subterranean plunge of the river was dreadful to contemplate. Above was the open way to the day, and the life of him yearned towards the day as a bee or a flower toward the sun. Yet what had the hound encountered to drive it back in such precipitate retreat? As he pondered, he became aware that his hand was resting on a rounded surface. He picked the object up, and gazed into the eyeless, noseless features of a human skull. His frightened glances played over the carpet of bones, and, beyond all idoubt, he made out the ribs and spinal columns and thigh bones of what had once been men. This inclined him toward the water as the way out, but at sight of the foaming madness of it plunging through solid rock he recoiled.

Drawing the Queen's dagger, he crawled up between the web-guys with infinite carefulness, saw what the hound had seen, and came back in such vertigo of retreat that he, too, fell into the water, and, with but time to fill his lungs with air, was drawn into the opening and into darkness.

In the meanwhile, back at the lake dwelling of the Queen, events no less portentous were occurring with no less equal rapidity. Just returned from the ceremony at the Long House, the wedding party was in the action of seating itself for what might be called the wedding breakfast, when an arrow, penetrating an interstice in the bamboo wall, flashed between the Queen and Francis and transfixed the opposite wall, where its feathered shaft vibrated from the violence of its suddenly arrested flight. A rush to the windows looking out upon the narrow bridge, showed Henry and Francis the gravity of the situation. Even as they looked, they saw the Queen's spearman who guarded the approach to the bridge, midway across it in flight, falling into the water with the shaft of an arrow vibrating out of his back in similar fashion to the one in the wall of the room. Beyond the bridge, on the shore, headed by their priest and backed by their women and children, all the male Lost Souls were arching the air full with feathered bolts from their bows.

A spearman of the Queen tottered into the apartment, his limbs spreading vainly to support him, his eyes glazing, his lips beating a soundless message which his fading life could not utter, as he fell prone, his back bristling with arrow shafts like a porcupine. Henry sprang to the door that gave entrance from the bridge, and, with his automatic, swept it clear of the charging Lost Souls who-could advance only in single file and who fell as they advanced before his fire.

The siege of the frail house was brief. Though Francis, protected by Henry's automatic, destroyed the bridge, by no method could the besieged put out the blazing thatch of roof ignited in a score of places by the fire-arrows discharged under the Sun Priest's directions.

“There is but one way to escape,” the Queen panted, on the platform overlooking the whirl of waters, as she clasped one hand of Francis in hers and threatened to precipitate herself clingingly into his arms. “It wins to the world.” She pointed to the sucking heart of the whirlpool. “No one has ever returned from that. In my Mirror I have beheld them pass, dead always, and out to the wider world. Except for Torres, I have never seen the living go. Only the dead. And they never returned.. Nor has Torres returned.”

All eyes looked to all eyes at sight of the dreadfumess of the way.

“There is no other way?” Henry demanded, as he drew Leoncia close to him.

The Queen shook her head. About them already burning portions of the thatch were falling, while their ears were deafened by the blood-lust chantings of the Lost Souls on the lake-shore. The Queen disengaged her hand from Francis’, with the evident intention of dashing into her sleeping room, then caught his hand and led him in. As he stood wonderingly beside her, she slammed down the lid on the chest of jewels and fastened it. Next, she kicked aside the floor matting and lifted a trap door that opened down to the water. At her indication, Francis dragged over the chest and dropped it through.

“Even the Sun Priest does not know that hiding place,” she whispered, ere she caught his hand again, and, running, led him back to the others on the platform.

“It is now time to depart from this place,” she announced.

“Hold me in your arms, good Francis, husband of mine, and lift me and leap with me,” she commanded. “We will lead the way.”

And so they leapt. As the roof was crashing down in a wrath of fire and flying embers, Henry caught Leoncia to him, and sprang after into the whirl of waters wherein Francis and the Queen had already disappeared.

Like Torres, the four fugitives escaped injury against the rocks and were borne onward by the underground river to the daylight opening where the great spider-web guarded the way. Henry had an easier time of it, for Leoncia knew how to swim. But Francis’ swimming prowess enabled him to keep the Queen up. She obeyed him implicitly, floating low in the water, nor clutched at his arms nor acted as a drag on him in any way. At the ledge, all four drew out of the water and rested. The two women devoted themselves to wringing out their hair, which had been flung adrift all about them by the swirling currents.

“It is not the first mountain I have been in the heart of with you two, “Leoncia laughed to the Morgans, although more than for them was her speech intended for the Queen.

“It is the first time I have been in the heart of 9. mountain with my husband,” the Queen laughed back, and the barb of her dart sank deep into Leoncia.

“Seems as though your wife, Francis, and my wife-to-be, aren’t going to hit it off too well together,” Henry said, with the sharpness of censure that man is wont to employ to conceal the embarrassment caused by his womankind.

And. as inevitable result of such male men’s ways, all that Henry gained was a silence more awkward and more embarrassing. The two women almost enjoyed the situation. Francis cudgeled his brains vainly for some remark that wquld ameliorate matters; while Henry, in desperation, arose suddenly with the observation that he was going to “explore a bit,” and invited, by his hand out to help her to her feet, the Queen to accompany him. Francis and Leoncia sat on for a moment in stubborn silence. He was the first to break it.

“For two cents I’d give you a thorough shaking, Leoncia.”

“And what have I done now?” she countered.

“As if you didn’t know. You’ve been behaving abominably.” “It is you who have behaved abominably,” she halfsobbed, in spite of her determination to betray no such feminine signs of weakness. “Who asked you to marry her? You did not draw the short straw. Yet you must volunteer, must rush in where even angels would fear to tread? Did I ask you to? Almost did my heart stop beating when I heard you tell Henry you would marry her. I thought I was going to faint. You had not even consulted me; yet it was on my suggestion, in order to save you from her, that the straws were drawn yes, and I am not too little shameless to admit that it was because I wanted to save you for myself . Henry does not love me as you led me to believe you loved me. I never loved Henry as I loved you, as I do love you even now, God forgive me.”

Francis was swept beyond himself. He caught her and pressed her to him in a crushing embrace.

And on your very wedding day,” she gasped reproachfully in the midmost of his embrace.

His arm died away from about her.

“And this from you, Leoncia, at such a moment,” he murmured sadly.

And why not?” she flared. “You loved me. You gave me to understand, beyond all chance of misunderstanding, that you loved me; yet here, to

day, you went out of your way, went eagerly and gladly, and married yourself to the first woman with a white skin who presented herself.”

“You are jealous,” he charged, and knew a heart-throb of joy as she nodded. “And I grant you are jealous; but at the same time, exercising the woman’s prerogative of lying, you are lying now. What I did, was not done eagerly nor gladly. I did it for your sake and my sake or for Henry’s sake, rather. Thank God, I have a man’s honor still left to me!”

“Man’s honour does not always satisfy woman,” she replied.

“Would you prefer me dishonorable?” he was swift on the uptake.

“I am only a woman who loves,” she pleaded.

“You are a stinging, female wasp,” he raged, “and you are not fair.”

“Is any woman fair when she loves?” she made the great confession and acknowledgment. “Men may succeed in living in their heads of honor; but know, and as a humble woman I humbly state my womanhood, that woman lives only in her heart of love.”

“Perhaps you are right. Honor, like arithmetic, can be reasoned and calculated. Which leaves a woman no morality, but only. “

“Only moods,” Leoncia completed abjectly for him.

Calls from Henry and the Queen put an end to the conversation, for Leoncia and Francis quickly joined the others in gazing at the great web.

“Did you ever see so monstrous a web!” Leoncia exclaimed.

“I’d like to see the monster that made it,” said Henry.

“And I’d rather see than be it,” Francis paraphrased from the “Purple Cow.”

“It is our good fortune that we do not have to go that way,” the Queen said.

All looked inquiry at her, and she pointed down to the stream.

“That is the way,” she said. “I know it. Often and often, in my Mirror of the World, have I seen the way. When my mother died and was buried in the whirlpool, I followed her body in the Mirror, and I saw it come to this place and go by this place still in the water.” But she was dead,” Leoncia objected quickly.

The rivalry between them fanned instantly.

"One of my spearmen," the Queen went on quietly, "a handsome youth, alas, dared to look at me as a lover. He was flung in alive. I watched him, too, in the Mirror. When he came to this place he climbed out. I saw him crawl under the web to the day, and I saw him retreat backward from the day and throw himself into the stream."

"Another dead one," Henry commented grimly.

"No; for I followed him on in the Mirror, and though all was darkness for a time and I could see nothing, in the end, and shortly, under the sun he emerged into the bosom of a large river, and swam to the shore, and climbed the bank it was the left hand bank as I remember well and disappeared among large trees such as do not grow in the Valley of the Lost Souls."

But, like Torres, the rest of them recoiled from thought of the dark plunge through the living rock.

"These are the bones of animals and of men," the Queen warned, "who were daunted by the way of the water and who strove to gain the sun. Men there are there behold! Or at least what remains of them for a space, the bones, ere, in time, the bones, too, pass into nothingness."

"Even so," said Francis, "I suddenly discover a pressing need to look into the eye of the sun. Do the rest of you remain here while I investigate."

Drawing his automatic, the water-tightness of the cartridges a guarantee, he crawled under the web. The moment he had disappeared from view beyond the web, they heard him begin to shoot. Next, they saw him retreating backward, still shooting. And, next, falling upon him, two yards across from black-haired leg-tip to black-haired leg-tip, the denizen of the web, a monstrous spider, still wriggling with departing life, shot through and through again and again. The solid center of its body, from which the legs radiated, was the size of a normal waste-basket, and the substantial density of it crunched audibly as it struck on Francis' shoulders and back, rebounded, the hairy legs still helplessly quivering, and pitched down into the wave-crisping water. All four pair of eyes watched the corpse of it plunge against the wall of rock, suck down, and disappear.

"Where there's one, there are two," said Henry, looking dubiously up toward the daylight.

"It is the only way," said the Queen. "Come, my husband, each in the other's arms let us win through the darkness to the sun-bright world. Kemember, I have never seen it, and soon, with you, shall I for the first time see it."

Her arms open in invitation, Francis could not decline. "It is a hole in the sheer wall of a precipice a thousand feet deep," he explained to the others the glimpse he had caught from beyond the spider web, as he clasped the Queen in his arms and leaped off.

Henry had gathered Leoncia to him and was about to leap, when she stopped him.

Why did you accept Francis' sacrifice?" she demanded. Because. He paused and looked at her wonderingly.

"Because I wanted you," he completed. "Because I was engaged to you as well, while Francis was unattached. Besides, if I'm not greatly mistaken, Francis appears to be a pretty well satisfied bridegroom."

"No," she shook her head emphatically. "He has a chivalrous spirit, and he is acting his part in order not to hurt her feelings."

Oh, I don't know. Remember, before the altar, at the Long House, when I said I was going to ask the Queen to marry me, that he bragged she wouldn't marry me if I did ask? Well, the conclusion's pretty obvious that he wanted her himself. And why shouldn't he? He's a bachelor. And she's some nice woman herself."

But Leoncia scarcely heard. With a quick movement, leaning back in his arms away from him so that she could look him squarely in the eyes, she demanded:

"How do you love me? Do you love me madly? Do you love me badly madly? Do I mean that to you, and more, and more, and more?"

He could only look his bewilderment.

"Do you? do you?" she urged passionately.

"Of course I do," he made slow answer, "but it would never have entered my head to describe it that way. Why, you're the one woman for me. Bather would I describe it as loving you deeply, and greatly, and en-duringly. W 7 hy, you seem so much a part of me that I feel almost as if I had always, known you. It was that way from the first."

"She is an abominable woman!" Leoncia broke forth irrelevantly. "I hated her from the first."

"My! What a spitfire! I hate to think how much you would have hated her had I married her instead of Francis."

"We'd better follow them," she put an end to the discussion.

And Henry, very much bepuzzled, clasped her tightly and leaped off into the white turmoil of water.

On the bank of the Gualaca Kiver sat two Indian girls fishing. Just upstream from them arose the precipitous cliff of one of the buttresses of the lofty mountains. The main stream flowed past in chocolate-colored spate; but, directly beneath them, where they fished, was a quiet eddy. No less quiet was the fishing. No bites jerked their rods in token that the bait was enticing. One of them, Nicoya, yawned, ate ja banana, yawned again, and held the skin she was about to cast aside suspended in her hand.

"We have been very quiet, Concordia," she observed to her companion, "and it has won us no fish. Now shall I make a noise and a splash. Since they say what goes up must come down,' why should not something come up after something has gone down? I am going to try. There!" She threw the banana peel into the water and lazily watched the point where it had struck.

"If anything comes up I hope it will be big," Concordia murmured with equal laziness.

And upon their astonished gaze, even as they looked, arose up out of the brown depths a great white hound. They jerked their poles up and behind them on the bank, threw their arms about each other, and watched the hound gain the shore at the lower end of the eddy, climb the sloping bank, pause to shake himself, and then disappear among the trees.

Nicoya and Concordia giggled.

"Try it again," Concordia urged.

"No; you this time. And see what you can bring up."

Quite unbelieving, Concordia tossed in a clod of earth. And almost immediately a helmeted head arose on the flood. Clutching each other very tightly, they watched the man under the helmet gain the shore where the hound had landed and disappear into the forest.

Again the two Indian girls giggled ; but this time, urge as they would, neither could raise the courage to throw anything into the water.

Some time later, still giggling over the strange occurrences, they were espied by two young Indian men, who were hugging the bank as they paddled their canoe up against the stream.

"What makes you laugh," one of them greeted.

"We have been seeing things," Nicoya gurgled down to them.

"Then have you been drinking pulque," the young man charged.

Both girls shook their heads, and Concordia said:

“We don’t have to drink to see things. First, when Nicoya threw in a banana skin, we saw a dog come up out of the water a white dog that was as big as a tiger of the mountains — ”

“And when Concordia threw in a clod,” the other girl took up the tale, “up came a man with a head of iron. It is magic. Concordia and I can work magic.”

“Jose,” one of the Indians addressed his mate, “this merits a drink.”

And each, in turn, while the other with his paddle held the canoe in place, took a swig from a square-face Holland gin bottle part full of pulque.

“No,” said Jose, when the girls had begged him for a drink. “One drink of pulque and you might see more white dogs as big as tigers or more iron-headed men.”

“All right,” Nicoya accepted the rebuff. “Then do you throw in your pulque bottle and see what you will see. We drew a dog and a man. Your prize may be the devil.”

“I should like to see the devil,” said Jose, taking another drain at the bottle. “The pulque is a true fire of bravery. I should very much like to see the devil.”

He passed the bottle to his companion with a gesture to finish it.

“Now throw it into the water,” Jose commanded.

The empty bottle struck with a forceful splash, and the evoking was realized with startling immediacy, for up to the surface floated the monstrous, hairy body of the slain spider. Which was too much for ordinary Indian flesh and blood. So suddenly did both young men recoil from the sight that they capsized the canoe. When their heads emerged from the water they struck out for the swift current, and were swiftly borne away down stream, followed more slowly by the swamped canoe.

Nicoya and Concordia had been too frightened to giggle. They held on to each other and waited, watching the magic water and out of the tails of their eyes observing the frightened young men capture the canoe, tow it to shore, and run out and hide on the bank.

The afternoon sun was getting low in the sky ere the girls summoned courage again to evoke the magic water. Only after much discussion did they agree both to fling in clods of earth at the same time. And up arose a man and a woman — Francis and the Queen. The girls fell over backward into the bushes, and were themselves unobserved as they watched Francis swim with the Queen to shore.

“It may just have happened all these things may just have happened at the very times we threw things into the water,” Nicoya whispered to Concordia five minutes later.

“But when we threw one thing in, only one came up,” Concordia argued. “And when we threw two, two came up.”

“Very well,” said Nicoya. “Let us now prove it. Let us try again, both of us. If nothing comes up, then have we no power of magic.”

Together they threw in clods, and uprose another man and woman. But this pair, Henry and Leoncia, could swim, and they swam side by side to the natural landing place, and, like the rest that had preceded them, passed on out of sight among the trees.

Long the two Indian girls lingered. For they had agreed to throw nothing, and, if something arose, then would coincidence be proved. But if nothing arose, because nothing further was by them evoked, they could only conclude that the magic was truly theirs. They lay hidden and watched the water until darkness hid it from their eyes; and, slowly and soberly, they took the trail back to their village, overcome by an awareness of having been blessed by the gods.

CHAPTER 22

NOT until the day following his escape from the subterranean river, did Torres reach San Antonio. He arrived on foot, jaded and dirty, a small Indian boy at his heels carrying the helmet of Da Vasco. For Torres wanted to show the helmet to the Jefe and the Judge in evidence of the narrative of strange adventure he chuckled to tell them.

First on the main street he encountered the Jefe, who cried out loudly at his appearance.

“Is it truly you, Senor Torres?” The Jefe crossed himself solemnly ere he shook hands.

The solid flesh, and, even more so, the dirt and grit of the other’s hand, convinced the Jefe of reality and substance.

Whereupon the Jefe became wrathful.

“And here I’ve been looking upon you as dead!” he exclaimed. “That Caroo dog of a JoseMancheno! He came back and reported you dead dead and buried until the Day of Judgment in the heart of the Maya Mountain.”

“He is a fool, and I am possibly the richest man in Panama,” Torres replied grandiosely. “At least, like the ancient and heroic conquistadores, I have braved all dangers and penetrated to the treasure. I have seen it. Nay — ”

Torres’ hand had been sunk into his trousers’ pocket to bring forth the filched gems of the Lady Who Dreams; but he withdrew the hand empty. Too many curious eyes of the street were already centered upon him and the draggled figure he cut.

“I have much to say to you,” he told the Jefe, “that cannot well be said now. I have knocked on the doors of the dead and worn the shrouds of corpses. And I have consorted with men four centuries dead but who were not dust, and I have beheld them drown in the second death. I have gone through mountains, as well as over them, and broken bread with lost souls, and gazed into the Mirror of the World. All of which I shall tell you, my best friend, and the honorable Judge, in due time, for I shall make you rich along with me.”

“Have you looked upon the pulque when it was sour?” the Jefe quipped incredulously.

"I have not had drink stronger than water since I last departed from San Antonio," was the reply. "And I shall go now to my house and drink a long long drink, and after that I shall bathe the filth from me, and put on garments whole and decent."

Not immediately, as he proceeded, did Torres gain his house. A ragged urchin exclaimed out at sight of him, ran up to him, and handed him an envelope that he knew familiarly to be from the local government wireless, and that he was certain had been sent by Regan.

You are doing well. Imperative you keep party away from New York for three weeks more. Fifty thousand if you succeed.

Borrowing a pencil from the boy, Torres wrote a reply on the back of the envelope:

Send the money. Party will never come back from mountains where he is lost.

Two other occurrences delayed Torres' long drink and bath. Just as he was entering the jewelry store of old Kodriguez Fernandez, he was intercepted by the old Maya priest with whom he had last parted in the Maya mountain. He recoiled as from an apparition, for sure he was that the old man was drowned in the Boom of the Gods. Like the Jefe at sight of Torres, so Torres, at sight of the priest, drew back in startled surprise.

"Go away," he said. "Depart, restless old man. "You are a spirit. Thy body lies drowned and horrible in the heart of the mountain. You are an appearance, a ghost. Go away, nothing corporeal resides in this illusion of you, else would I strike you. You are a ghost. Depart at once. I should not like to strike a ghost."

But the ghost seized his hands and clung to them with ouch beseeching corporality as to unconvince him.

"Money," the ancient one babbled. "Let me have money. Lend me money. I will repay! I who know the secrets of the Maya treasure. My son is lost in the mountain with the treasure. The Gringos also are lost in the mountain. Help me to rescue my son. With him alone will I be satisfied, while the treasure shall all be yours. But we must take men, and much of the white man's wonderful powder and tear a hole out of the mountain so that the water will run away. He is not drowned. He is a prisoner of the water in the room where stand the jewel-eyed Chia and Hzatzl. Their eyes of green and red alone will pay for all the wonderful powder in the world. So let me have the money with which to buy the wonderful powder."

But Alvarez Torres was a strangely constituted man. Some warp or slant or idiosyncrasy of his nature always raised insuperable obstacles to his parting with money when such parting was unavoidable. And the richer he got the more positively this idiosyncrasy asserted itself.

"Money!" he asserted harshly, as he thrust the old priest aside and pulled open the door of Fernandez's store. "Is it I who should have money . I who am all rags and tatters as a beggar. I have no money for myself, much less for you, old man. Besides, it was you, and not I, who led your son to the Maya mountain. On your head be it, not on mine, the death of your son who fell into the pit under the feet of Chia that was digged by your ancestors and not by mine."

Again the ancient one clutched at him and yammered for money with which to buy dynamite. So roughly did Torres thrust him aside that his old legs failed to perform their wonted duty and he fell upon the flagstones.

The shop of Rodriguez Fernandez was small and dirty, and contained scarcely more than a small and dirty showcase that rested upon an equally small and dirty counter. The place was grimy with the undusted and unswept filth of a generation. Lizards and cockroaches crawled along the walls. Spiders webbed in every corner, and Torres saw, crossing the ceiling above, what made him step hastily to the side. It was a seven-inch centipede which he did not care to have fall casually upon his head or down his back between shirt and skin. And, when he appeared crawling out like a huge spider himself from some inner den of an un-ventilated cubicle, Fernandez looked like an Elizabethan stage-representation of Shylock withal he was a dirtier Shylock than even the Elizabethan stage could have stomached.

The jeweler fawned to Torres and in a cracked falsetto humbled himself even beneath the dirt of his shop. Torres pulled from his pocket a haphazard dozen or more of the gems filched from the Queen's chest, selected the smallest, and, without a word, while at the same time returning the rest to his pocket, passed it over to the jeweler.

"I am a poor man," he cackled, the while Torres could not fail to see how keenly he scrutinised the gem.

He dropped it on the top of the show case as of little worth, and looked inquiringly at his customer. But Torres waited in a silence which he knew would compel the garrulity of covetous age to utterance.

"Do I understand that the honorable Senor Torres seeks advice about the quality of the stone?" the old jeweler finally quavered.

Torres did no more than nod curtly.

"It is a natural gem. It is small. It, as you can see for yourself, is not perfect. And it is clear that much of it will be lost in the cutting."

"How much is it worth?" Torres demanded with impatient bluntness.

"I am a poor man," Fernandez reiterated.

"I have not asked you to buy it, old fool. But now that you bring the matter up, how much will you give for it?"

"As I was saying, craving your patience, honorable senor, as I was saying, I am a very poor man. There are days when I cannot spend ten centavos for a morsel of spoiled fish. There are days when I cannot afford a sip of the cheap red wine I learned was tonic to my system when I was a lad, far from Barcelona, serving my apprenticeship in Italy. I am so very poor that I do not buy costly pretties "Not to sell again at a profit?" Torres cut in.

"If I am sure of my profit," the old man cackled. "Yes, then will I buy ; but, being poor, I cannot pay more than little." He picked up the gem and studied it long and carefully. "I would give," he began hesitatingly, "I would give but, please, honorable senor, know that I am a very poor man. This day only a spoonful of onion soup, with my morning coffee and a mouthful of crust, passed my lips — "

"In God's name, old fool, what will you give?" Torres thundered.

"Five hundred dollars but I doubt the profit that will remain to me."

"Gold?"

"Mex.," came the reply, which cut the offer in half and which Torres knew was a lie. "Of course, Mex., only Mex., all our transactions are in Mex."

Despite his elation at so large a price for so small a gem, Torres playacted impatience as he reached to take back the gem. But the old man jerkgd his hand away, loath to let go of the bargain it contained.

"We are old' friends," he cackled shrilly. "I first saw you, when, a boy, you came to San Antonio from Boca del Toros. And, as between old friends, we will say the sum is gold."

And Torres caught a sure but vague glimpse of the enormousness, as well as genuineness, of the Queen's treasure which at some remote time the Lost Souls had ravished from its hiding place in the Maya Mountain.

"Very good," said Torres, with a quick, cavalier action recovering the stone. "It belongs to a friend of mine. He wanted to borrow money from me on it. I can now lend him up to five hundred gold on it, thanks to your information. And I shall be grateful to buy for you, the next time we meet in the pulqueria, a drink yes, as many drinks as you can care to carry of the thin, red, tonic wine."

And as Torres passed out of the shop, not in any way attempting to hide the scorn and contempt he felt for the fool he had made of the jeweler, he knew elation in that Fernandez, the Spanish fox, must have cut his estimate of the gem's value fully in half when he uttered it.

In the meanwhile, descending the Gualaca River by canoe, Leoncia, the Queen, and the two Morgans, had made better time than Torres to the coast. But ere their arrival and briefly pending it, a matter of moment that was not appreciated at the time, had occurred at the Solano hacienda. Climbing the winding pathway to the hacienda, accompanied by a decrepit old crone whose black shawl over head and shoulders could not quite hide the lean and withered face of blasted volcanic fire, came as strange a caller as the hacienda had ever received.

He was a Chinaman, middle-aged and fat, whose moonlace beamed the beneficent good nature that seems usual with fat persons. By name, Yi Poon, meaning "the Cream of the Custard Apple," his manners were as softly and richly oily as his name. To the old crone, who tottered beside him and was half-supported by him, he was the quintessence of gentleness and consideration. When she faltered from sheer physical weakness and would have fallen, he paused and gave her chance to gain strength and breath. Thrice, at such times, on the climb to the hacienda, he fed her a spoonful of French brandy from a screw-cap pocket flask.

Seating the old woman in a selected, shady corner of the piazza, Yi Poon boldly knocked for admittance at the front door. To him, and in his business, back-stairs was the accustomed way; but his business and his wit had taught him the times when front entrances were imperative.

The Indian maid who answered his knock, took his message into the living room where sat the disconsolate Enrico Solano among his sons disconsolate at the report Bicardo had brought in of the loss of Leoncia in the Maya Mountain. The Indian maid returned to the door. The Senor Solano was indisposed and would see nobody, was her report, humbly delivered, even though the recipient was a Chinese.

"Huh!" observed Yi Poon, with braggart confidence for the purpose of awing the maid to carrying a second message. "I am no coolie. I am smart

Chinaman. I go to school plenty much. I speak Spanish. I speak English. I write Spanish. I write English. See I write now in Spanish for the Senor Solano. You cannot write, so you cannot read what I write. I write that I am Yi Poon. I belong Colon. I come this place to see Senor Solano. Big business. Much important. Very secret. I write all this here on paper which you cannot read."

But he did not say that he had further written: "The Senorita Solano. I have great secret."

It was Alesandro, the eldest of the tall sons of Solano, who evidently had received the note, for he came bounding to the door, far outstripping the returning maid.

"Tell me your business!" he almost shouted at the fat Chinese. "What is it? Quick!"

"Very good business," was the reply, Yi Poon noting the other's excitement with satisfaction. "I make much money. I buy what you call secrets. I sell secrets. Very nice business."

"What do you know about the Senorita Solano?" Alesandro shouted, gripping him by the shoulder.

"Everything. Very important information. "

But Alesandro could no longer control himself. He almost hurled the Chinaman into the house, and, not relaxing his grip, rushed him on into the living room and up to Enrico.

"He has news of Leoncia!" Alesandro shouted.

"Where is she?" Enrico and his sons shouted in chorus.

Hah! was Yi Poon's thought. Such excitement, although it augured well for his business, was rather exciting for him as well.

Mistaking his busy thinking for fright, Enrico stilled his sons back with an upraised hand, and addressed the visitor quietly.

"Where is she?" Enrico asked.

Hah! thought Yi Poon. The senorita was lost. That was a new secret. It might be worth something some day, or any day. A nice girl, of high family and wealth such as the Solanos, lost in a Latin-American country, was information well worth possessing. Some day she might be married there was that gossip he had heard in Colon and some later day she might have trouble with her husband or her husband have trouble with her-at which time, she or her husband, it mattered not which, might be eager to pay high for the secret.

“This Senorita Leoncia,” he said, finally, with sleek suavity. “She is not your girl. She has other papa and mama.”

But Enrico’s present grief at her loss was too great to permit startle-ment at this explicit statement of an old secret. “Yes,” he nodded. “Though it is not known outside my family, I adopted her when she was a baby. It is strange that you should know this. But I am not interested in having you tell me what I have long since known. What I want to know now is: where is she now?”

Yi Poon gravely and sympathetically shook his head.

“That is different secret,” he explained. “Maybe I find that secret. Then I sell it to you. But I have old secret. You do not know the name of the Senorita Leoncia’s papa and mama. I know.”

And old Enrico Solano could not hide his interest at the temptation of such information.

“Speak,” he commanded. “Name the names, and prove them, and I shall reward.”

“No,” Yi Poon shook his head. “Very poor business. I no do business that way. You pay me I tell you. My secrets good secrets. I prove my secrets. You give me five hundred pesos and big expenses from Colon to San Antonio and back to Colon and I tell you name of papa and mama.”

Enrico Solano bowed acquiescence, and was just in the act of ordering Alesandro to go and fetch the money, when the quiet, spirit-subdued Indian maid created a diversion. Bunning into the room and up to Enrico as they had never seen her run before, she wrung her hands and wept so incoherently that they knew her paroxysm was of joy, not of sadness.

“The Senorita!” she was finally able to whisper hoarsely, as she indicated the side piazza with a nod of head and glance of eyes. “The Senorita!”

And Yi Poon and his secret were forgotten. Enrico and his sons streamed out to the side piazza to behold Leoncia and the Queen and the two Morgans, dropping dust-covered off the backs of riding mules recognizable as from the pastures of the mouth of the Gualaca Kiver. At the same time two Indian man-servants, summoned by the maid, cleared the house and grounds of the fat Chinaman and his old crone of a companion.

“Come some other time,” they told him. “Just now the Senor Solano is very importantly busy.”

“Sure, I come some other time,” Yi Poon assured them pleasantly, without resentment and without betrayal of the disappointment that was his at his deal interrupted just ere the money was paid into his hand.

But he departed reluctantly. The place was good for his business. It was sprouting secrets. Never was there a riper harvest in Canaan out of which, sickle in hand, a husbandman was driven! Had it not been for the zealous Indian attendants, Yi Poon would have darted around the corner of the hacienda to note the newcomers. As it was, half way down the hill, finding the weight of the crone too fatiguing, he put into her the life and ability to carry her own weight a little farther by feeding her a double teaspoonful of brandy from his screw-top flask.

Enrico swept Leoncia off her mule ere she could dismount, so passionately eager was he to fold her in his arms. For several minutes ensued naught but noisy Latin affection as her brothers all strove to greet and embrace her at once. When they recollected themselves, Francis had already helped the Lady Who Dreams from her mount, and beside her, her hand in his, was waiting recognition.

“This is my wife,” Francis told Enrico. “I went into the Cordilleras after treasure, and behold what I found. Was there ever better fortune?”

And she sacrificed a great treasure herself,” Leoncia murmured bravely.

“She was queen of a little kingdom,” Francis added, with a grateful and admiring flash of eyes to Leoncia, who quickly added:

“And she saved all our lives but sacrificed her little kingdom in so doing.”

And Leoncia, in an exaltation of generousness, put her arm around the Queen’s waist, took her away from Francis, and led the way into the hacienda.

CHAPTER 23

IN all the magnificence of medieval Spanish and New World costume such as was still affected by certain of the great haciendados of Panama, Torres rode along the beach-road to the home of the Solanos. Running with him, at so easy a lope that it promised an extension that would out-speed the best of Torres' steed, was the great white hound that had followed him down the subterranean river. As Torres turned to take the winding road up the hill to the hacienda, he passed Yi Poon, who had paused to let the old crone gather strength. He merely noticed the strange couple as dirt of the common people. The hauteur that he put on with his magnificence of apparel forbade that he should betray any interest further than an unseeing glance.

But him Yi Poon noted with slant Oriental eyes that missed no details. And Yi Poon thought: He looks very rich. He is a friend of the Solanos. He rides to the house. He may even be a lover of the Senorita Leoncia. Or a worsted rival for her love. In almost any case, he might be expected to buy the secret of the Senorita Leoncia's birth, and he certainly looks rich, most rich.

Inside the hacienda, assembled in the living room, were the returned adventurers and all the Solanos. The Queen, taking her turn in piecing out the narrative of all that had occurred, with flashing eyes was denouncing Torres for his theft of her jewels and describing his fall into the whirlpool before the onslaught of the hound, when Leoncia, at the window with Henry, uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Speak of the devil!" said Henry. "Here comes Torres himself."

"Me first!" Francis cried, doubling his fist and flexing his biceps significantly.

"No," decreed Leoncia. "He is a wonderful liar. He is a very Wonderful liar, as we've all found out. Let us have some fun, He is dismounting now. Let the four of us dis-appear. Father!" With a wave of hand she indicated Enrico and all his sons. "You will sit around desolated over the loss of me. This scoundrel Torres will enter. You will be thirsty for information. He will tell you no one can guess what astounding lies about us. As for us, we'll hide behind the screen there. Come! All of you!"

And, catching the Queen by the hand and leading the way, with her eyes she commanded Francis and Henry to follow to the hiding place.

And Torres entered upon a scene of sorrow which had been so recently real that Enrico and his sons had no difficulty in acting it. Enrico started up from his chair in eagerness of welcome and sank weakly back. Torres caught the other's hand in both his own and manifested deep sympathy and could not speak from emotion.

"Alas!" he finally managed heart-brokenly. "They are dead. She is dead, your beautiful daughter, Leoncia. And the two Gringo Morgans are dead with her. As Eicardo, there, must know, they died in the heart of the Maya Mountain.

"It is the home of mystery," he continued, after giving due time for the subsidence of the first violent outburst of Enrico's grief. "I was with them when they died. Had they followed my counsel, they would all have lived. But not even Leoncia would listen to the old friend of the Solanos. No, she must listen to the two Gringos. After incredible dangers I won my way out through the heart of the mountain, gazed down into the Valley of Lost Souls, and returned into the mountain to find them dying — "

Here, pursued by an Indian man-servant, the white hound bounded into the room, trembling and whining in excitement as with its nose it quested the multitudinous scents of the room that advertised his mistress. Before he could follow up to where the Queen hid behind the screen, Torres caught him, by the neck and turned him over to a couple of the Indian house-men to hold.

"Let the brute remain," said Torres. "I will tell you about him afterward. But first look at this." He pulled forth a handful of gems. "I knocked on the doors of the dead, and, behold, the Maya treasure is mine. I am the richest man in Panama, in all the Americas. I shall be powerful — "

"But you were with my daughter when she died." Enrico interrupted to sob, "Had she no word for me?" "Yes," Torres sobbed back, genuinely affected by the death-scene of his fancy. "She died with your name on her lips. Her last words were — "

But, with bulging eyes, he failed to complete his sentence, for he was watching Henry and Leoncia, in the most natural, casual manner in the world stroll down the room, immersed in quiet conversation. Not noticing Torres, they crossed over to the window still deep in talk.

"You were telling me her last words were. ?" Enrico prompted.

“I. I have lied to you,” Torres stammered, while he sparred for time in which to get himself out of the scrape. “I was confident that they were as good as dead and would never find their way to the world again. And I thought to soften the blow to you, Senor Solano, by telling what I am confident would be her last words were she dying. Also, this man Francis, whom you have elected to like. I thought it better for you to believe him dead than know him for the Gringo cur he is.”

Here the hound barked joyfully at the screen, giving the two Indians all they could do to hold him back. But Torres, instead of suspecting, blundered on to his fate.

In the Valley there is a silly weak demented creature who pretends to read the future by magic. An altogether atrocious and blood-thirsty female is she. I am not denying that in physical beauty she is beautiful. For beautiful she is, as a centipede is beautiful to those who think centipedes are beautiful. You see what has happened. She has sent Henry and Leon-cia out of the Valley by some secret way, while Francis has elected to remain there with her in sin for sin it is, since there exists in the valley no Catholic priest to make their relation lawful. Oh, not that Francis is infatuated with the terrible creature. But he is infatuated with a paltry treasure the creature possesses. And this is the Gringo Francis you have welcomed into the bosom of your family, the slimy snake of a Gringo Francis who has even flared to sully the fair Leoncia by casting upon her the looks of a lover. Oh, I know of what I speak. I have seen — ”

A joyous outburst from the hound drowned his voice, and he beheld Francis and the Queen, as deep in conversation as the two who had preceded them, walk down the room. The Queen paused to caress the hound, who stood so tall against her that his forepaws, on her shoulders, elevated his head above hers; while Torres licked his suddenly dry lips and vainly cudgeled his brains for some fresh lie with which to extricate himself from the impossible situation.

Enrico Solano was the first to break down in mirth. All his sons joined him, while tears of sheer delight welled out of his eyes.

“I could have married her myself,” Torres sneered malignantly. “She begged me on her knees.”

“And now,” said Francis, “I shall save you all a dirty job by throwing him out.”

But Henry, advancing swiftly, asserted:

"I like dirty jobs equally. And this is a dirty job particularly to my liking."

Both the Morgans were about to fall on Torres, when the Queen held up her hand.

"First," she said, "let him return to me, from there in his belt, the dagger he stole from me."

"Ah," said Enrico, when this had been accomplished. "Should he not also return to you, lovely lady, the gems he filched?"

Torres did not hesitate. Dipping into his pocket, he laid a handful of the jewels on the table. Enrico glanced at the Queen, who merely waited expectantly.

"More," said Enrico.

And three more of the beautiful uncut stones Torres added to the others on the table.

"Would you search me like a common pickpocket?" he demanded in frantic indignation, turning both trousers' pockets emptily inside out.

"Me," said Francis.

"I insist," said Henry.

"Oh, all very well," Francis conceded. "Then we'll do it together. We can throw him farther off the steps."

Acting as one, they clutched Torres by collar and trousers and started in a propulsive rush for the door.

All others in the room ran to the windows to behold Torres' exjt; but Enrico, quickest of all, gained a window first. And, afterward, into the middle of the room, the Queen scooped the gems from the table into both her hands, and gave the double handful to Leoncia, saying:

"From Francis and me to you and Henry your wedding present."

Yi Poon, having left the crone by the beach and crept back to peer at the house from the bushes, chuckled gratifiedly to himself when he saw the rich caballero thrown off the steps with such a will as to be sent sprawling far out into the gravel. But Yi Poon was too clever to let on that he had seen. Hurrying away, he was half down the hill ere overtaken by Torres on his horse.

The celestial addressed him humbly, and Torres, in his general rage, lifted his riding whip savagely to slash him across the face. But Yi Poon did not quail.

"The Senorita Leoncia," he said quickly, and arrested the blow. "I have great secret." Torres waited, the whip still lifted as a threat. "You like'm some other man marry that very nice Senorita Leoncia?"

Torres dropped the whip to his side.

"Go on," he commanded harshly. "What is the secret?"

"You no want 'm other man marry that Senorita Leoncia?"

"Suppose I don't?"

"Then, suppose you have secret, you can stop other man."

"Well, what is it? Spit it out."

"But first," Yi Poon shook his head, "you pay me six hundred dollars gold. Then I tell you secret."

"I'll pay you," Torres said readily, although without the slightest thought of keeping his word. "You tell me first, then, if no lie, I'll pay you. See!"

From his breast pocket he drew a wallet bulging with paper bills; and Yi Poon, uneasily acquiescing, led him down the road to the crone on the beach.

"This old woman," he explained, "she no lie. She sick woman. Pretty soon she die. She is afraid. She talk to priest along Colon. Priest say she must tell secret, or die and go to hell. So she no lie."

"Well, if she doesn't lie, what is it she must tell?" You pay me?"

"Sure. Six hundred gold."

"Well, she born Cadiz in old country. She number one servant, number one baby nurse. One time she take job with English family that come traveling in her country. Long time she work with that family. She go back along England. Then, bime by you know Spanish blood very hot she get very mad. That family have one little baby girl. She steal little baby girl and run away to Panama. That little baby girl Senor Solano he adopt just the same his own daughter. He have plenty sons and no daughter, So that little baby girl he make his daughter. But that old woman she no tell what name belong little girl's family. That family very high blood, very rich, everybody in England know that family. That family's name "Morgan.' You know that name? In Colon comes San Antonio men who say Senor Solano's daughter marry English Gringo named Morgan. That Gringo Morgan the Senorita Leoncia's brother."

"Ah!" said Torres with maleficent delight.

"You pay me now six hundred gold," said Yi Poon.

“Thank you for the fool you are,” said Torres with untold mockery in his voice. “You will learn better perhaps some day the business of selling secrets. Secrets are not shoes or mahogany timber. A secret told is no more than a whisper in the air. It comes. It goes. It is gone. It is a ghost. Who has seen it? You can claim back shoes or mahogany timber. You can never claim back a secret when you have told it.”

“We talk of ghosts, you and I,” said Yi Poon calmly. “And the ghosts are gone. I have told you no secret. You have dreamed a dream. When you tell men they will ask you who told you. And you will say, ‘Yi Poon.’ But Yi Poon will say, ‘No.’ And they will say, ‘Ghosts,’ and laugh at you.”

Yi Poon, feeling the other yield to his superior subtlety of thought, deliberately paused.

“We have talked whispers,” he resumed after a few seconds. “You speak true when you say whispers are ghosts. When I sell secrets I do not sell ghosts. I sell shoes. I sell mahogany timber. My proofs are what I sell. They are solid. On the scales they will weigh weight. You can tear the paper of them, which is legal paper of record, on which they are written. Some of them, not paper, you can bite with your teeth and break your teeth upon. For the whispers are already gone like morning mists. I have proofs. You will pay me six hundred gold for the proofs, or men will laugh at you for lending your ears to ghosts.”

“All right,” Torres capitulated, convinced. “Show me the proofs that I can tear and bite.”

“Pay me the six hundred gold.”

“When you have shown me the proofs.”

“The proofs you can tear and bite are yours after you have put the six hundred gold into my hand. You promise. A promise is a whisper, a ghost. I do not do business with ghost money. You pay me real money I can tear or bite.” And in the end Torres surrendered, paying in advance for what did satisfy him when he had examined the documents, the old letters, the baby locket and the baby trinkets. And Torres not only assured Yi Poon that he was satisfied, but paid him in advance, on the latter’s insistence, an additional hundred gold to execute a commission for him.

Meanwhile, in the bathroom which connected their bedrooms, clad in fresh undeiiinen and shaving with safety razors, Henry and Francis were singing:

“Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew. “

In her charming quarters, aided and abetted by a couple of Indian seamstresses, Leoncia, half in mirth, half in sadness, and in all sweetness and wholesomeness of generosity, was initiating the Queen into the charmingness of civilized woman's dress. The Queen, a true woman to her heart's core, was wild with delight in the countless pretties of texture and adornment with which Leoncia's wardrobe was stored. It was a maiden frolic for the pair of them, and a stitch here and a take-up there modified certain of Leoncia's gowns to the Queen's slenderness.

No," said Leoncia judicially. "You will not need a corset. You are the one woman in a hundred for whom a corset is not necessary. You have the roundest lines for a thin woman that I ever saw. You. "Leoncia paused, apparently deflected by her need for a pin from her dressing table, for which she turned; but at the same time she swallowed the swelling that choked in her throat, so that she was able to continue: "You are a beautiful bride, and Francis can only grow prouder of you."

In the bathroom, Francis, finished shaving first, broke off the song to respond to the knock at his bedroom door and received a telegram from Fernando, the next to the youngest of the Solano brothers. And Francis read:

Important your immediate return. Need more margins. While market very weak but a strong attack on all your stocks except Tampico Petroleum, which is strong as ever. Wire me when to expect you. Situation is serious. Think I can hold out if you start to return at once. Wire me at once.

Bascom.

In the living room the two Morgans found Enrico and his sons opening wine.

"Having but had my daughter restored to me," Enrico said, "I now lose her again. But it is an easier loss, Henry. To-morrow shall be the wedding. It cannot take place too quickly. It is sure, right now, that that scoundrel Torres is whispering all over San Antonio Leoncia's latest unprotected escapade with you."

Ere Henry could express his gratification, Leoncia and the Queen entered. He held up his glass and toasted: "To the bride!"

Leoncia, not understanding, raised a glass from the table and glanced to the Queen.

"No, no," Henry said, taking her glass with the intention of passing it to the Queen.

“No, no,” said Enrico. “Neither shall drink the toast which is incomplete. Let me make it:

“To the brides!”

You and Henry are to be married to-morrow,” Alesandro explained to Leoncia.

Unexpected and bitter though the news was, Leoncia controlled herself, and dared with assumed jollity to look Francis in the eyes while she cried:

Another toast! To the bridegrooms!”

Difficult as Francis had found it to marry the Queen and maintain equanimity, he now found equanimity impossible at the announcement of the immediate marriage of Leoncia. Nor did Leoncia fail to observe how hard he struggled to control himself. His suffering gave her secret joy, and with a feeling almost of triumph she watched him take advantage of the first opportunity to leave the room.

Showing them his telegram and assuring them that his fortune was at stake, he! said he must get off an answer and asked Fernando to arrange for a rider to carry it to the government wireless at San Antonio.

Nor was Leoncia long in following him. In the library she came upon him, seated at the reading table, his telegram unwritten, while his gaze was fixed upon a large photograph of her which he had taken from its place on top the low bookshelves. All of which was too much for her. Her involuntary gasping sob brought him to his feet in time to catch her as she swayed into his arms. And before either knew it their lips were together in fervent expression. Leoncia struggled and tore herself away, gazing upon her lover with horror.

Tiiis must stop, Francis!” she cried. “More: you cannot remain here for my wedding. If you do, I shall not be responsible for my actions. There is a steamer leaves San Antonio for Colon. You and your wife must sail on it. You can easily catch passage on the fruit boats to New r Orleans and take train to New York. I love you! you know it.”

“The Queen and I are not married!” Francis pleaded, beside himself, overcome by what had taken place. “That heathen marriage before the Altar of the Sun was no marriage. In neither deed nor ceremony are we married. I assure you of that, Leoncia. It is not too late That heathen marriage has lasted you thus far,” she interrupted him with quiet firmness. Let it last you to New York, or, at least, to . Colon.”

“The Queen will not have any further marriage after our forms,” Francis said. “She insists that all her female line before her has been so married and that the Sun Altar ceremony is sacredly binding.”

Leoncia shrugged her shoulders non-committally, although her face was stern with resolution.

Marriage or no,” she replied, “you must go to-night the pair of you. Else I shall go mad. I warn you: I shall not be able to withstand the presence of you. I cannot, I know I cannot, be able to stand the sight of you while I am being married to Henry and after I am married to Henry. Oh, please, please, do not misunderstand me. I do love Henry, but not in the. not in that way. not in the way I love you. I and I am not ashamed of the boldness with which I say it I love Henry about as much as you love the Queen; but I love you as I should love Henry, as you should love the Queen, as I know you do love me.”

She caught his hand and pressed it against her heart. “There! For the last time! Now go!”

But his arms were around her, and she could not help but yield her lips. Again she tore herself away, this time fleeing to the doorway. Francis bowed his head to her decision, then picked up her picture.

“I shall keep this,” he announced.

“You oughtn’t to,” she flashed a last fond smile at him. “You may,” she added, as she turned and was gone.

Yet Yi Poon had a commission to execute, for which Torres had paid him one hundred gold hi advance. Next morning, with Francis and the Queen hours departed on their way to Colon, Yi Poon arrived at the Solano hacienda. Enrico, smoking a cigar on the veranda and very much pleased with himself and all the world and the way the world was going, recognized and welcomed Yi Poon as his visitor of the day before. Even ere they talked, Leoncia’s father had dispatched Alesandro for the five hundred pesos agreed upon. And Yi Poon, whose profession was trafficking in secrets, was not averse to selling his secret the second time. Yet was he true to his salt, in so far as he obeyed Torres’ instructions in refusing to tell the secret save in the presence of Leoncia and Henry.

“That secret has the string on it,” Yi Poon apologized, after the couple had been summoned, as he began unwrapping the parcel of proofs. “The Senorita Leoncia and the man she is going to marry must first, before anybody else, look at these things. Afterward, all can look.”

“Which is fair, since they are more interested than any of us,” Enrico conceded grandly, although at the same time he betrayed his eagerness by the impatience with which ho motioned his daughter and Henry to take the evidence to one side for examination.

He tried to appear uninterested, but his side-glances missed nothing of what they did. To his amazement, he saw Leoncia suddenly cast down a legal-appear ing document, which she and Henry had read through, and throw her arms, whole-heartedly and freely about his neck, and wholeheartedly and freely kiss him on the lips. Next, Enrico saw Henry step back and exclaim in a dazed, heart-broken way:

“But, my God, Leoncia! This is the end of everything. Never can we be husband and wife!”

“Eh?” Enrico snorted. “When everything was arranged! What do you mean, sir? This is an insult! Marry you shall, and marry to-day!”

Henry, almost in stupefaction, looked to Leoncia to speak for him.

“It is against God’s law and man’s,” she said, “for a man to marry his sister. Now I understand my strange love for Henry. He is my brother. We are full brother and sister, unless these documents lie.”

And Yi Poon knew that he could take report to Torres that the marriage would not take place and would never take place.

CHAPTER 24

CATCHING a United Fruit Company boat at Colon within fifteen minutes after landing from the small coaster, the Queen's progress with Francis to New York had been a swift rush of fortunate connections. At New Orleans a taxi from the wharf to the station and a racing of porters with hand luggage had barely got them aboard the train just as it started. Arrived at New York, Francis had been met by Bascom, in Francis' private machine, and the rush had continued to the rather ornate palace R.H.M. himself, Francis' father, had built out of his millions on Riverside Drive.

So it was that the Queen knew scarcely more of the great world than when she first started her travels by leaping into the subterranean river. Had she been a lesser creature, she would have been stunned by this vast civilisation around her. As it was, she was royally inconsequential, accepting such civilization as an offering from her royal spouse. Royal he was, served by many slaves. Had she not, on steamer and train, observed it? And here, arrived at his palace, she took as a matter of course the showing of house servants that greeted them. The chauffeur opened the door of the limousine. Other servants carried in the hand baggage. Francis touched his hand to nothing, save to her arm to assist her to alight. Even Bascom a man she divined was no servitor she also divined as one who served Francis. And she could not but observe Bascom depart in Francis' limousine, under instruction and command of Francis.

She had been a queen, in an isolated valley, over a handful of salvages. Yet here, in this mighty land of kings, her husband ruled kings. It was all very wonderful, and she was deliciously aware that her queenship had suffered no diminishing by her alliance with Francis.

Her delight in the interior of the mansion was naive and childlike. Forgetting the servants, or, rather, ignoring them as she ignored her own attendants in her lake dwelling, she clapped her hands in the great entrance hall, glanced at the marble stairway, tripped in a little run to the nearest apartment, and peeped in. It was the library, which she had vis-ioned in the Mirror of the World the first day she saw Francis. And the vision realized itself, for Francis entered with her into the great room of books, his arm about her, just as she had seen him on the fluid-metal surface of the golden bowl. The telephones, and the stock-ticker, too, she remembered; and, just as she had foreseen herself do, she crossed over to the ticker curiously to examine, and Francis, his arm still about her, stood by her side.

Hardly had he begun an attempted explanation of the instrument, and just as he realized the impossibility of teaching her in several minutes all the intricacies of the stock market institution, when his eyes noted on the tape that Frisco Consolidated was down twenty points a thing unprecedented in that little Iowa railroad which E.H.M. had financed and builded and to the day of his death maintained proudly as so legitimate a creation, that, though half the banks and all of Wall Street crashed, it would weather any storm.

The Queen viewed with alarm the alarm that grew on Francis' face.

It is magic liko my Mirror of the World?" she halfqueried, half-stated.

Francis nodded.

It tells you secrets, I know," she continued. "Like my golden bowl, it brings all the world, here within this very room, to you. It brings you trouble. That is very plain. But what trouble can this world bring you, who are one of its great kings?"

He opened his mouth to reply to her last question, halted, and said nothing, realizing the impossibility of conveying comprehension to her, the while, under his eyelids, or at the foreground of his brain, burned pictures of great railroad and steamship lines, of teeming terminals and noisy docks; of miners toiling in Alaska, in Montana, in Death Valley; of bridled rivers, and harnessed waterfalls, and of power-lines stilting across lowlands and swamps and marshes on twohundred-foot towers ; and of all the mechanics and economics and finances of the twentieth century machine-civilization.

It brings you trouble," she repeated. "And, alas! I cannot help you. My golden bowl is no more. Never again shall I see the world in it. I am no longer a ruler of the future. I am a woman merely, and helpless in this strange, colossal world to which you have brought me. I am a woman merely, and your wife, Francis, your proud wife."

Almost did he love her, as, dropping the tape, he pressed her closely for a moment ere going over to the battery of telephones. She is delightful, was his thought. There is neither guile nor malice in her, only woman, all woman, lovely and lovable alas, that Leoncia should ever and always arise in my thought between her whom I have and herself whom I shall never have!

"More magic," the Queen murmured, as Francis, getting Bascom's office, said:

"Mr. Bascom will undoubtedly arrive back in half an hour. This is Morgan talking Francis Morgan. Mr. Bascom left for his office not five minutes ago. When he arrives, tell him that I have started for his office and shall not be more than five minutes behind him. This is important. Tell him I am on the way. Thank you. Good bye."

Very naturally, with all the wonders of the great house yet to be shown her, the Queen betrayed her disappointment when Francis told her he must immediately depart for a place called Wall Street.

What is it," she asked, with a pout of displeasure, "that drags you away from me like a slave?"

"It is business and very important," he told her with a smile and a kiss.

"And what is Business that it should have power over you who are a king? Is business the name of your god whom all of you worship as the Sun God is worshipped by my people?"

He smiled at the almost perfect appositeness of her idea, saying:

It is the great American god. Also, is it a very terrible god, and when it slays it slays terribly and swiftly."

"And you have incurred its displeasure?" she queried.

"Alas, yes, though I know not how. I must go to Wall Street — "

Which is its altar?" she broke in to ask.

Which is its altar," he answered, "and where I must find out wherein I have offended and wherein I may placate and make amends."

His hurried attempt to explain to her the virtues and functions of the maid he had wired for from Colon, scarcely interested her, and she broke him off by saying that evidently the maid was similar to the Indian women who had attended her in the Valley of Lost Souls, and that she had been accustomed to personal service ever since she was a little girl learning English and Spanish from her mother in the house on the lake.

But when Francis caught up his hat and kissed her, she relented and wished him luck before the altar.

After several hours of amazing adventures in her own quarters, where the maid, a Spanish-speaking Frenchwoman, acted as guide and mentor, and after being variously measured and gloated over by a gorgeous woman who seemed herself a queen and who was attended by two young women, and who, in the Queen's mind, was without doubt summoned to serve her and Francis, she came back down the grand stairway to investigate the library with its mysterious telephones and ticker.

Long she gazed at the ticker and listened to its irregular chatter. But she, who could read and write English and Spanish, could make nothing of the strange hieroglyphics that grew miraculously on the tape. Next, she explored the first of the telephones. Eemembering how Francis had listened, she put her ear to the transmitter. Then, recollecting his use of the receiver, she took it off its hook and placed it to her ear. The voice, unmistakably a woman's, sounded so near to her that in her startled surprise she dropped the receiver and recoiled. At this moment, Parker, Francis' old valet, chanced to enter the room. She had not observed him before, and, so immaculate was his dress, so dignified his carriage, that she mistook him for a friend of Francis rather than a servitor a friend similar to Bascom who had met them at the station with Francis' machine, ridden inside with them as an equal, yet departed with Francis' commands in his ears which it was patent he was to obey.

At sight of Parker's solemn face she laughed with embarrassment and pointed inquiringly to the telephone. Solemnly he picked up the receiver, murmured "A mistake," into the transmitter, and hung up. In those several seconds the Queen's thought underwent revolution. No god's nor spirit's voice had been that which she had heard, but a woman's voice.

"Where is that woman?" she demanded.

Parker merely stiffened up more stiffly, assumed a solemner expression, and bowed.

"There is a woman concealed in the house," she charged with quick words. "Her voice speaks there in that thing. She must be in the next room —"

"It was Central," Parker attempted to stem the flood of her utterance.

"I care not what her name is," the Queen dashed on. "I shall have no other woman but myself in my house. Bid her begone. I am very angry."

Parker was even stiffer and solemner, and a new mood came over her. Perhaps this dignified gentleman was higher than she had suspected in the hierarchy of the lesser kings, she thought. Almost might he be an equal king with Francis, and she had treated him peremptorily as less, as much less.

She caught him by the hand, in her impetuousness noting his reluctance, drew him over to a sofa, and made him sit beside her. To add to Parker's discomfiture, she dipped into a box of candy and began to feed him chocolates, closing his mouth with the sweets every time he opened it to protest.

“Come,” she said, when she had almost choked him, “is it the custom of the men of this country to be polygamous?”

Parker was aghast at such rawness of frankness.

“Oh, I know the meaning of the word,” she assured him. “So I repeat: is it the custom of the men of this country to be polygamous?”

“There is no woman in this house, besides yourself, madam, except servant women,” he managed to enunciate. “That voice you heard is not the voice of a woman in this house, but the voice of a woman miles away who is your servant, or is anybody’s servant who desires to talk over the telephone.”

“She is the slave of the mystery?” the Queen questioned, beginning to get a dim glimmer of the actuality of the matter.

“Yes,” her husband’s valet admitted. “She is a slave of the telephone.”

“Of the flying speech?”

“Yes, madam, call it that, of the flying speech.” He was desperate to escape from a situation unprecedented in his entire career. “Come, I will show you, madam. This slave of the flying speech is yours to command both by night and day. If you wish, the slave will enable you to talk with your husband, Mr. Morgan. “

“Now?”

Parker nodded, arose, and led her to the telephone.

“First of all,” he instructed, “you will speak to the slave. The instant you take this down and put it to your ear, the slave will respond. It is the slave’s invariable way of saying ‘Number?’ Sometimes she says it, ‘Number? Number?’ And sometimes she is very irritable.

“When the slave has said ‘Number,’ then do you say “Eddystone 1292,’ whereupon the slave will say ‘Eddystone 1292?’ and then you will say, ‘Yes, please’. “

“To a slave I shall say ‘please’?” she interrupted.

“Yes, madam, for these slaves of the flying speech are peculiar slaves that one never sees. I am not a young man, yet I have never seen a Central in all my life. Thus, next, after a moment, another slave, a woman, who is miles away from the first one, will say to you, ‘This is Eddystone 1292,’ and you will say, ‘I am Mrs. Morgan. I wish to speak with Mr. Morgan, who is, I think, in Mr. Bascom’s private office.’ And then you wait, maybe for half a minute, or for a minute, and then Mr. Morgan will begin to talk to you.”

"From miles and miles away?"

"Yes, madam just as if he were in the next room. And when Mr. Morgan says 'Goodbye,' you will say 'Goodbye,' and hang up-as you have seen me do."

And all that Parker had told her came to pass as she carried out his instructions. The two different slaves obeyed the magic of the number she gave them, and Francis talked and laughed with her, begged her not to be lonely, and promised to be home not later than five that afternoon.

Meanwhile, and throughout the day, Francis was a very busy and perturbed man.

"What secret enemy have you?" Bascom again and again demanded, while Francis shook his head in futility of conjecture.

For see, except where your holdings are concerned, the market is reasonable and right. But take your holdings. There's Frisco Consolidated. There is neither sense nor logic that it should be beared this way. Only your holdings are being beared. New York, Vermont and Connecticut, paid fifteen per cent, the last four quarters and is as solid as Gibraltar. Yet it's down, and down hard. The same with Montana Lode, Death Valley Copper, Imperial Tungsten, Northwestern Electric. Take Alaska Trodwell as solid as the everlasting rock. The movement against it started only yesterday late. It closed eight points down, and to-day has slumped twice as much more. Every one, stock in which you are heavily interested. And no other stocks involved. The rest of the market is firm."

"So is Tampico Petroleum firm," Francis said, "and I'm interested in it heaviest of all."

Bascom shrugged his shoulders despairingly.

"Are you sure you cannot think of somebody who is doing this and who may be your enemy?"

"Not for the life of me, Bascom. Can't think of a soul. I haven't made any enemies, because, since my father died, I have not been active. Tampico Petroleum is the only thing I ever got busy with, and even now it's all right." He strolled over to the ticker. "There. Half a point up for five hundred shares."

"Just the same, somebody's after you," Bascom assured him. "The thing is clear as the sun at midday. I have been going over the reports of the different stocks at issue. They are colored, artfully and delicately colored, and the coloring matter is pessimistic and official. Why did Northwestern

Electric pass its dividend? Why did they put that black-eye stuff into Mulhaney's report on Montana Lode? Oh, never mind the rest of the black-eying, but why all this activity of unloading? It's clear. There's a raid on, and it seems on you, and it's not a sudden rush raid. It's been slowly and steadily growing. And it's ripe to break at the first rumor of war, at a big strike, or a financial panic at anything that will bear the entire market.

"Look at the situation you're in now, when all holdings except your own are normal. I've covered your margins, and covered them. A grave proportion of your straight collateral is already up. And your margins keep on shrinking. You can scarcely throw them overboard. It might start a break. It's too ticklish."

There's Tampico Petroleum, smiling as pretty as you please it's collateral enough to cover everything," Francis suggested. "Though I've been chary of touching it," he amended.

Bascom shook his head.

There's the Mexican revolution, and our own spineless administration. If we involved Tampico Petroleum, and anything serious should break down there, you'd be finished, cleaned out, broke.

"And yet," Bascom resumed, "I see no other way out than to use Tampico Petroleum. You see, I have almost exhausted what you have placed in my hands. And this is no whirlwind raid. It's slow and steady as an advancing glacier. I've only handled the market for you all these years, and this is the first tight place we've got into. Now your general business affairs? Collins has the handling and knows. You must know. What securities can you let me have? Now? And to-morrow? And next week? And the next three weeks?"

"How much do you want?" Francis questioned back.

"A million before closing time to-day." Bascom pointed eloquently at the ticker. "At least twenty million more in the next three weeks, if and mark you that if well if the world remains at peace, and if the general market remains as normal as it has been for the past six months."

Francis stood up with decision and reached for his hat.

"I'm going to Collins at once. He knows far more about my outside business than I know myself. I shall have at least the million in your hands before closing time, and I've a shrewd suspicion that I'll cover the rest during the next several weeks."

Remember," Bascom warned him, as they shook hands, it's the very slowness of this raid that is ominous. It's directed against you, and it's no fly-by-night affair. Whoever is making it, is doing it big, and must be big."

Several times, late that afternoon and evening, the Queen was called up by the slave of the flying speech and enabled to talk with her husband. To her delight, in her own room, by her bedside, she found a telephone, through which, by calling up Collins' office, she gave her good night to Francis. Also, she essayed to kiss her heart to him, and received back, queer and vague of sound, his answering kiss.

She knew not how long she had slept, when she awoke. Not moving, through her half-open eyes she saw Francis peer into the room and across to her. When he had gone softly away, she leapt out of bed and ran to the door in time to see him start down the staircase.

More trouble with the great god Business was her surmise. He was going down to that wonderful room, the library, to read more of the dread god's threats and warnings that were so mysteriously made to take form of written speech to the clicking of the ticker. She looked at herself in the mirror, adjusted her hair, and with a little love-smile of anticipation on her lips put on a dressing-gown another of the marvelous pretties of Francis' forethought and providing.

At the entrance of the library she paused, hearing the voice of another than Francis. At first thought she decided it was the flying speech, but immediately afterward she knew it to be too loud and near and different. Peeping in, she saw two men drawn up in big leather chairs near to each other and facing. Francis, tired of face from the day's exertions, still wore his business suit; but the other was clad in evening dress. And she heard him call her husband "Francis," who, in turn, called him "Johnny." That, and the familiarity of their conversation, conveyed to her that they were old, close friends.

"And don't tell me, Francis," the other was saying, "that you've frivoled through Panama all this while without losing your heart to the senoritas a dozen times."

"Only once," Francis replied, after a pause, in which the Queen noted that he gazed steadily at his friend.

Further," he went on, after another pause, "I really lost my heart but not my head. Johnny Pathmore, O Johnny Pathmore, you are a mere flirtatious brute, but I tell you that you've lots to learn. I tell you that in Panama I found the most wonderful woman in the world a woman that I was glad I had lived to know, a woman that I would gladly die for; a woman of fire, of passion, of sweetness, of nobility, a very queen of women."

And the Queen, listening and looking upon the intense exaltation of his face, smiled with proud fondness and certitude to herself, for had she not won a husband who remained a lover?

"And did the lady, er ah did she reciprocate?"

Johnny Pathmore ventured.

The Queen saw Francis nod as he solemnly replied.

"She loves me as I love her this I know in all absoluteness." He stood up suddenly. "Wait. I will show her to you."

And as he started toward the door, the Queen, in roguishness of a very extreme of happiness at her husband's confession she had overheard, fled trippingly to hide in the wide doorway of a grand room which the maid had informed her was the drawing room, whatever such room might be. Deliciously imagining Francis' surprise at not finding tier in bed, she watched him go up the wide marble staircase. In a few moment-sA he descended. With a slight chill at the heart she observed that he betrayed no perturbation at not having found her. In his hand he carried a scroll or roll of thin, white cardboard. Looking neither to right nor left, he re-entered the library.

Peeping in, she saw him unroll the scroll, present it before Johnny Pathmore's eyes, and heard him say: Judge for yourself. There she is."

"But why be so funereal about it, old man?" Johnny Pathmore queried, after a prolonged examination of the photograph.

"Because we met too late. I was compelled to marry another. And I left her forever just a few hours before she was to marry another, which marriage had been compelled before either of us ever knew the other existed. And the woman I married, please know, is a good and splendid woman. She will have my devotion forever. Unfortunately, she will never posses my heart."

In a great instant of revulsion, the entire truth came to the Queen. Clutching at her heart with clasped hands, she nearly fainted of the vertigo that assailed her. Although they still talked inside the library, she heard no further word of their utterance as she strove with slow success to draw herself together. Finally, with indrawn shoulders, a little forlorn sort of a ghost of the resplendent woman and wife she had been but minutes before, she staggered across the hall and slowly, as if in a nightmare wherein speed never resides, dragged herself upstairs. In her room, she lost all control. Francis' ring was torn from her finger and stamped upon. Her boudoir cap and her turtle-shell hairpins joined the general havoc under her feet. Convulsed, shuddering, muttering to herself in her extremity, she threw herself upon her bed and only managed, in an ecstasy of anguish, to remain perfectly quiet when Francis peeped in on his way to bed.

An hour, that seemed a thousand centuries, she gave him to go to sleep. Then she arose, took in hand the crude jeweled dagger which had been hers in the Valley of the Lost Souls, and softly tiptoed into his room. There on the dresser it was, the large photograph of Leoncia. In thorough indecision, clutching the dagger until the cramp of her palm and fingers hurt her, she debated between her husband and Leoncia. Once, beside his bed, her hand raised to strike, an effusion of tears into her dry eyes obscured her seeing so that her dagger-hand dropped as she sobbed audibly.

Stiffening herself with changed resolve, she crossed over to the dresser. A pad and pencil lying handy, caught her attention. She scribbled two words, tore off the sheet, and placed it upon the face of Leoncia as it lay flat and upturned on the surface of polished wood. Next, with an unerring drive of the dagger, she pinned the note between the pictured semblance of Leoncia's eyes, so that the point of the blade penetrated the wood and left the haft quivering and upright.

CHAPTER 25

MEANWHILE, after the manner of cross purposes in New York, wherein Regan craftily proceeded with his gigantic raid on all Francis’ holdings while Francis and Bascom vainly strove to find his identity, so in Panama were at work cross purposes which involved Leoncia and the Solanos, Torres and the Jefe, and, not least in importance, one, Yi Poon, the rotund and moon-faced Chinese.

The little old judge, who was the Jefe’s creature, sat asleep in court in San Antonio. He had slept placidly for two hours, occasionally nodding his head and muttering profoundly, although the case was a grave one, involving twenty years in San Juan, where the strongest could not survive ten years. But there was no need for the judge to consider evidence or argument. Before the case was called, decision and sentence were in his mind, having been put there by the Jefe. The prisoner’s lawyer ceased his perfunctory argument, the clerk of the court sneezed, and the judge woke up. He looked about him briskly and said: “Guilty.” No one was surprised, not even the prisoner.

“Appear to-morrow morning for sentence. Next case.”

Having so ordered, the judge prepared to settle down into another nap, when he saw Torres and the Jefe enter the courtroom. A gleam in the Jefe’s eye was his cue, and he abruptly dismissed court for the day.

“I have been to Rodriguez Fernandez,” the Jefe was explaining five minutes later, in the empty courtroom. “He says it was a natural gem, and that much would be lost in the cutting, but that nevertheless he would still give five hundred gold for it. Show it to the judge, Senor Torres, and the rest of the handful of big ones.”

And Torres began to lie. He had to lie, because he could not confess the shame of having had the gems taken away from him by the Solanos and the Morgans when they threw him out of the hacienda. And so convincingly did he lie that even the Jefe he convinced, while the judge, except in the matter of brands of strong liquor, accepted everything the Jefe wanted him to believe. In brief, shorn of the multitude of details that Torres threw in, his tale was that he was so certain of the jeweler’s under-appraisal that he had despatched the gems by special messenger to his agent in Colon with instructions to forward to New York to Tiffany’s for appraisement that might lead to sale.

As they emerged from the courtroom and descended the several steps that were flanked by single adobe pillars marred by bullet scars from previous revolutions, the Jefe was saying:

“And so, needing the aegis of the law for our adventure after these geins, and, more than that, both of us loving our good friend the judge, we will let him in for a modest share of whatever we shall gain. He shall represent us in San Antonio while we are gone, and, if needs be, furnish us with the law’s protection.”

Now it happened that behind one of the pillars, hat pulled over his face, Yi Poon half-sat, half-reclined. Nor was he there by mere accident. Long ago he had learned that secrets of value, which always connoted the troubles of humans, were markedly prevalent around courtrooms, which were the focal points for the airing of such troubles when they became acute. One could never tell. At any moment a secret might leap at one or brim over to one. Therefore it was like a fisherman casting his line into the sea for Yi Poon to watch the defendant and the plaintiff, the witnesses for and against, and even the court hangeron or casual-seeming onlooker.

So, on this morning, the one person of promise that Yi Poon had picked out was a ragged old peon who looked as if he had been drinking too much and yet would perish in his condition of reaction if he did not get another drink very immediately. Bleary-eyed he was, and red-lidded, with desperate resolve painted on all his haggard, withered lineaments. When the courtroom had emptied, he had taken up his stand. outside on the steps close to a pillar.

And why? Yi Poon had asked himself. Inside remained only the three chief men of San Antonio the Jefe, Torres, and the judge. What connection between them, or any of them, and the drink-sodden creature that shook as if freezing in the scorching blaze of the direct sun-rays? Yi Poon did not know, but he did know that it was worth while waiting on a chance, no matter how remote, of finding out. So, behind the pillar, where no atom of shade protected him from the cooking sun which he detested, he lolled on the steps with all the impersonation of one placidly infatuated with sun-baths. The old peon tottered a step, swayed as if about to fall, yet managed to deflect Torres from his companions, who paused to wait for him on the pavement a dozen paces on, restless and hot-footed as if they stood on a grid, though deep in earnest conversation. And Yi Poon missed no word nor gesture, nor glint of eye nor shifting face-line, of the dialogue that took place between the grand Torres and the wreck of a peon. “What now?” Torres demanded harshly.

“Money, a little money, for the love of God, senor, a little money,” the ancient peon whined.

“You have had your money,” Torres snarled. “When I went away I gave you double the amount to last you twice as long. Not for two weeks yet is there a centavo due you.”

“I am in debt,” was the old man’s whimper, the while all the flesh of him quivered and trembled from the nerveravishment of the drink so palpably recently consumed.

“On the pulque slate at Peter and Paul’s,” Torres, with a sneer, diagnosed unerringly.

“On the pulque slate at Peter and Paul’s,” was the frank acknowledgment. “And the slate is full. No more pulque can I get credit for. I am wretched and suffer a thousand torments without my pulque.”

“You are a pig creature without reason!”

A strange dignity, as of wisdom beyond wisdom, seemed suddenly to animate the old wreck as he straightened up, for the nonce ceased from trembling, and gravely said:

“I am old. There is no vigor left in the veins or the heart of me. The desires of my youth are gone. Not even may I labor with this broken body of mine, though well I know that labor is an easement and a forgetting. Not even may I labor and forget. Food is a distaste in my mouth and a pain in my belly. Women they are a pest that it is a vexation to remember ever having desired. Children I buried my last a dozen years gone. Religion it frightens me. Death I sleep with the terror of it. Pulque ah, dear God! the one tickle and taste of living left to me!

“What if I drink over much? It is because I have much to forget, and have but a little space yet to linger in the sun, ere the Darkness, for my old eyes, blots out the sun forever.”

Impervious to the old man’s philosophy, Torres made an impatient threat of movement that he was going.

“A few pesos, just a handful of pesos,” the old peon pleaded.

“Not a centavo,” Torres said with finality.

“Very well,” said the old man with equal finality.

“What do you mean?” Torres rasped with swift suspicion.

“Have you forgotten?” was the retort, with such emphasis of significance as to make Yi Poon wonder for what reason Torres gave the peon what seemed a pension or an allowance.

“I pay you, according to agreement, to forget,” said. Torres.

“I shall never forget that my old eyes saw you stab the Senor Alfaro Solano in the back,” the peon replied.

Although he remained hidden and motionless in his posture of repose behind the pillar, Yi Poon metaphorically sat up. The Solanos were persons of place and wealth. That Torres should have murdered one of them was indeed a secret of price.

“Beast! Pig without reason! Animal of the dirt!” Torres’ hands clenched in his rage. “Because I am kind do you treat me thus! One blabbing of your tongue and I will send you to San Juan. You know what that means. Not only will you sleep with the terror of death, but never for a moment of waking will you be free of the terror of living as you stare upon the buzzards that will surely and shortly pick your bones. And there will be no pulque in San Juan. There is never any pulque in San Juan for the men I send there. So? Eh? I thought so. You will wait two weeks for the proper time when I shall again give you money. If you do not wait, then never, this side of your interment in the bellies of buzzards, will you drink pulque again.”

Torres whirled on his heel and was gone. Yi Poon watched him and his two companions go down the street, then rounded the pillar to find the old peon sunk down in collapse at his disappointment of not getting any pulque, groaning and moaning and making sharp little yelping cries, his body quivering as dying animals quiver in the final throes, his fingers picking at his flesh and garments as if picking off centipedes. Down beside him sat Yi Poon, who began a remarkable performance of his own. Drawing gold coins and silver ones from his pockets he began to count over his money with chink and clink that was mellow and liquid and that to the distraught peon’s ear was as the sound of the rippling and riffling of fountains of pulque “We are wise,” Yi Poon told him in grandiloquent Spanish, still clinking the money, while the peon whined and yammered for the few centa-vos necessary for one drink of pulque. “We are wise, you and I, old man, and we will sit here and tell each other what we know about men and women, and life and love, and anger and sudden death, the rage red in the heart and the steel bitter cold in the back; and if you tell me what pleases me, then shall you drink pulque till your ears run cut with it, and your eyes are drowned in it. You like that pulque, eh? You like one drink now, now, soon, very quick?"

The night, while the Jefe Politico and Torres organized their expedition under cover of the dark, was destined to be a momentous one in the Solano hacienda. Things began to happen early. Dinner over, drinking their coffee and smoking their cigarettes, the family, of which Henry was accounted one by virtue of his brotherhood to Leoncia, sat on the wide front veranda. Through the moonlight, up the steps, they saw a strange figure approach.

"It is like a ghost," said Alvarado Solano.

"A fat ghost," Martinez, his twin brother, amended.

"A Chink ghost you couldn't poke your finger through," Bicardo laughed.

"The very Chink who saved Leoncia and me from marrying," said Henry Morgan, with recognition.

"The seller of secrets," Leoncia gurgled. "And if he hasn't brought a new secret, I shall be disappointed."

"What do you want, Chinaman?" Alesandro, the eldest of the Solano brothers, demanded sharply.

"Nice new secret, very nice new secret maybe you buy," Yi Poon murmured proudly.

"Your secrets are too' expensive, Chinaman," said Enrico discouragingly.

"This nice new secret very expensive," Yi Poon assured complacentJy.

"Go away," old Enrico ordered. "I shall live a long time, yet to the day of my death I care to hear no more secrets."

But Yi Poon was suavely certain of himself.

"One time you have very fine brother," he said. "One time your very fine brother, the Senor Alfaro Solano, die with knife in his back. Very well. Some secret, eh?"

But Enrico was on his feet quivering.

"You know?" he almost screamed his eager interrogation.

"How much?" said Yi Poon.

"All I possess!" Enrico cried, ere turning to Alesandro to add: "You deal with him, son. Pay him well if he can prove by witness of the eye."

"You bet," quoth Yi Poon. "I got witness. He got good eye-sight. He see man stick knife in the Senor Alfaro 's back in the dark. His name ... "

"Yes, yes," Enrico breathed his suspense.

"One thousand dollars his name," said Yi Poon, hesitating to make up his mind to what kind of dollars he could dare to claim. "One thousand dollars gold," he concluded.

Enrico forgot that he had deputed the transaction to his eldest son.

"Where is your witness?" he shouted.

And Yi Poon, calling softly down the steps into the shrubbery, evoked the pulque-ravaged peon, a real-looking ghost who slowly advanced and tottered up the steps.

At the same time, on the edge of town, twenty mounted men, among whom were the gendarmes Bafael, Ignacio, Augustino, and Vicente, herded a pack train of more than twenty mules and waited the command of the Jefe to depart on they knew not what mysterious adventure into the Cordilleras. What they did know was that, herded carefully apart from all other animals, was a strapping big mule loaded with tw r o hundred and fifty pounds of dynamite. Also, they knew that the delay was due to the Senor Torres, who had ridden away along the beach with the dreaded Caroo murderer, Jose" Mancheno, who, only by the grace of God and of the Jefe Politico, had been kept for years from expiating on the scaffold his various offenses against life and law.

And, while Torres waited on the beach and held the Caroo's horse and an extra horse, the Caroo ascended on foot the winding road that led to the hacienda of the Solanos. Little did Torres guess that twenty feet away, in the jungle that encroached on the beach, lay a placid-sleeping, pulquedrunken, old peon, with, crouching beside him, a very alert and very sober Chinese with a recently acquired thousand dollars stowed under his belt. Yi Poon had had barely time to drag the peon into hiding when Torres rode along in the sand and stopped almost beside him.

Up at the hacienda, all members of the household were going to bed. Leoncia, just starting to let down her hair, stopped when she heard the rattle of tiny pebbles against her windows. Warning her in low. whispers to make no noise, Jose" Mancheno handed her a crumpled note which Torres had written, saying mysteriously:

"From a strange Chinaman who waits not a hundred feet away on the edge of the shrubbery."

And Leoncia read, in execrable Spanish:

"First time, I tell you secret about Henry Morgan. This time I have secret about Francis. You come along and talk with me now."

Leoncia's heart leaped at mention of Francis, and as she slipped on a mantle and accompanied the Caroo it never entered her head to doubt that Yi Poon was waiting for her.

And Yi Poon, down on the beach and spying upon Torres, had no doubts when he saw the Caroo murderer appear with the Solano senorita, bound and gagged, slung across his shoulder like a sack of meal. Nor did Yi Poon have any doubts about his next action, when he saw Leoncia tied into the saddle of the spare horse and taken away down the beach at a gallop, with Torres and the Caroo riding on either side of her. Leaving the pulque-sodden peon to sleep, the fat Chinaman took the road up the hill at so stiff a pace that he arrived breathless at the hacienda. Not content with knocking at the door, he beat upon it with his fists and feet and prayed to his Chinese gods that no peevish Solano should take a shot at him before he could explain the urgency of his errand.

"O go to hell," Alesandro said, when he had opened the door and flashed a light on the face of the importunate caller.

"I have big secret," Yi Poon panted. "Very big brand new secret." "Come around to-morrow in business hours," Alesandro growled as he prepared to kick the Chinaman off the premises.

"I don't sell secret," Yi Poon stammered and gasped. "I make you present. I give secret now. The Senorita, your sister, she is stolen. She is tied upon a horse that runs fast down the beach."

But Alesandro, who had said good night to Leoncia, not half an hour before, laughed loudly his unbelief, and prepared again to boot off the trafficker in secrets. Yi Poon was desperate. He drew forth the thousand dollars and placed it in Alesandro's hand, saying:

"You go look quick. If the Senorita stop in this house now, you keep all that money. If the Senorita no stop, then you give money back. "

And Alesandro was convinced. A minute later he was rousing the house. Five minutes later the horse-peons, their eyes hardly open from sound sleep, were roping and saddling horses and pack-mules in the corrals, while the Solano tribe was pulling on riding gear and equipping itself with weapons.

Up and down the coast, and on the various paths leading back to the Cordilleras, the Solanos scattered, questing blindly in the blind dark for the trail of the abductors. As chance would have it, thirty hours afterward, Henry alone caught the scent and followed it, so that, camped in the very Footstep of God where first the old Maya priest had sighted the eyes of

Chia, he found the entire party of twenty men and Leoncia cooking and eating breakfast. Twenty to one, never fair and always impossible, did not appeal to Henry Morgan's Anglo-Saxon mind. What did appeal to him was the dynamite-loaded mule, tethered apart from the off-saddl-ed forty-odd animals and left to stand by the careless peons with its load still on its back. Instead of attempting the patently impossible rescue of Leoncia, and recognising that in numbers her woman's safety layA he stole the dynamite-mule.

Not far did he take it. In the shelter of the low woods, he opened the pack and filled all his pockets with sticks of dynamite, a box of detonators, and a short coil of fuse. With a regretful look at the rest of the dynamite which he would have liked to explode but dared not, he busied himself along the line of retreat he would have to take if he succeeded in stealing Leoncia from her captors. As Francis, on a previous occasion at Juchitan, had sown the retreat with silver dollars, so, this time, did Henry sow the retreat with dynamite the sticks in small bundles and the fuses, no longer than the length of a detonator, and with detonators fast to each end.

Three hours Henry devoted to lurking around the camp in the Footstep of God, ere he got his opportunity to signal his presence to Leoncia; and another precious two hours were wasted ere she found her opportunity to steal away to him. Which would not have been so bad, had not her escape almost immediately been discovered and had not the gendarmes and the rest of Torres' party, mounted, been able swiftly to overtake them on foot.

When Henry drew Leoncia down to hide beside him in the shelter of a rock, and at the same time brought his rifle into action ready for play, she protested.

"We haven't a chance, Henry," she said. "They are too many. If you fight you will be killed. And then what will become of me? Better that you make your own escape, and bring help, leaving me to be retaken, than that you die and let me be retaken anyway."

But he shook his head.

"We are not going to be taken, dearest sister. Put your trust in me and watch. Here they come now. You just watch."

Variously mounted, on horses and pack mules whichever had come handiest in their haste Torres, the Jefe, and their men clattered into sight. Henry drew a sight, not on them, but on the point somewhat nearer where he had made his first plant of dynamite. When he pulled trigger, the intervening distance rose up in a cloud of smoke and earth dust that obscured them. As the cloud slowly dissipated, they could be seen, half of them, animals and men, overthrown, and all of them dazed and shocked by the explosion.

Henry seized Leoncia's hand, jerked her to her feet, and ran on side by side with her. Conveniently beyond his second planting, he drew her down beside him to rest and catch breath.

"They won't come on so fast this time," he hissed exultantly. " And the longer they pursue us the slower they'll come on."

True to his forecast, when the pursuit appeared, it moved very cautiously and very slowly.

"They ought to be "killed," Henry said. "But they have no chance, and I haven't the heart to do it. But I'll surely shake them up some."

Again he fired into his planted dynamite, and again, turning his back on the confusion, he fled to his third planting.

After he had fired off the third explosion, he raced Leoncia to his tethered horse, put her in the saddle, and ran on beside her, hanging on to her stirrup.

CHAPTER 26

FRANCIS had left orders for Parker to call him at eight o'clock, and when Parker softly entered he found his master still asleep. Turning on the water in the bathroom and preparing the shaving gear, the valet re-entered the bedroom. Still moving softly about so that his master would have the advantage of the last possible second of sleep, Parker's eyes lighted on the strange dagger that stood upright, its point pinning through a note and a photograph and into the hard wood of the dresser-top. For a long time he gazed at the strange array, then, without hesitation, carefully opened the door to Mrs. Morgan's room and peeped in. Next, he firmly shook Francis by the shoulder.

The latter's eyes opened, for a second betraying the incomprehension of the sleeper suddenly awakened, then lighting with recognition and memory of the waking order he had left the previous night.

"Time to get up, sir," the valet murmured.

"Which is ever an ill time," Francis yawned with a smile. He closed his eyes with a, "Let me lie a minute, Parker. If I doze, shake me."

But Parker shook him immediately.

"You must get up right away, sir. I think something has happened to Mrs. Morgan. She is not in her room, and there is a queer note and a knife here that may explain. I don't know, sir. "

Francis was out of bed in a bound, staring one moment at the dagger, and next, drawing it out, reading the note over and over as if its simple meaning, contained in two simple words, were too abstruse for his comprehension.

"Adios forever," said the note.

What shocked him even more, was the dagger thrust between Leoncia's eyes, and, as he stared at the wound made in the thin cardboard, it came to him that he had seen this very thing before, and he remembered back to the lake-dwelling of the Queen when all had gazed into the golden bowl and seen variously, and when he had seen Leoncia's face on the strange liquid metal with the knife thrust between the eyes. He even put the dagger back into the cardboard wound and stared at it some more.

The explanation was obvious. The Queen had betrayed jealousy against Leoncia from the first, and here, in New York, finding her rival's photograph on her husband's dresser, had no more missed the true conclusion than had she missed the pictured features with her point of steel. But where was she? Where had she gone? she who was the veriest stranger that had ever entered the great city, who called the telephone the magic of the flying speech, who thought of Wall Street as a temp'le, and regarded Business as the New York man's god. For all the world she was as unsophisticated and innocent of a great city as had she been a traveler from Mars. Where and how had she passed the night? Where was she now? Was she even alive?

Visions of the Morgue with its unidentified dead, and of bodies drifting out to sea on the ebb, rushed into his brain. It was Parker who steadied him back to himself.

"Is there anything I can do, sir? Shall I call up the detective bureau? Your father always. "

"Yes, yes," Francis interrupted quickly. "There was one man he employed more than all others, a young man with the Pinkertons do you remember his name?"

"Birchman, sir," Parker answered promptly, moving away. "I shall send for him to come at once."

And thereupon, in the quest after his wife, Francis entered upon a series of adventures that were to him, a born New Yorker, a liberal education in conditions and phases of New York of which, up to that time, he had been profoundly ignorant. Not alone did Birchman search, but he had at work a score of detectives under him who fine-tooth-combed the city, while in Chicago and Boston, he directed the activities of similar men.

Between his battle with the unguessed enemy of Wall Street, and the frequent calls he received to go here and there and everywhere, on the spur of the moment, to identify what might possibly be his wife, Francis led anything but a boresome existence. He forgot what regular hours of sleep were, and grew accustomed to being dragged from luncheon or dinner, or of being routed out of his bed, to respond to hurry calls to come and look over new-found missing ladies, No trace of one answering her description, who had left the city by train or steamer had been discovered, and Birchman assiduously pursued his fine-tooth combing, convinced that she was still in the city.

Thus, Francis took trips to Mattenwan and down Blackwell's, and the Tombs and the Ail-Night court knew his presence. Nor did he escape being dragged to countless hospitals nor to the Morgue. Once, a fresh-caught shoplifter, of whom there was no criminal record and to whom there was no clew of identity, was brought to his notice. He had adventures with mysterious women cornered by Birchman's satellites in the back rooms of Eaines' Hotels, and, on the West Side, in the Fifties, was guilty of trespassing upon two comparatively innocent love-idyls, to the embarrassment of all concerned including himself.

Perhaps his most interesting and tragic adventure was in the ten-million-dollar mansion of Philip January, the Telluride mining king. The strange woman, a lady slender, had wandered in upon the Januarys a week before, ere Francis came to see her. And, as she had heartbreak-ingly done for the entire week, so she heartbreakingly did for Francis, wringing her hands, perpetually weeping, and murmuring beseechingly: "Otho, you are wrong. On my knees I tell you you are wrong. Otho, you, and you only, do I love. There is no one but you, Otho. There has never been any one but you. It is all a dreadful mistake. Believe me, Otho, believe me, or I shall die. "

And through it all, the Wall Street battle went on against the undiscoverable and powerful enemy who had launched what Francis and Bascom could not avoid acknowledging was a catastrophic, war-to-the-death raid on his fortune.

"If only we can avoid throwing Tampico Petroleum into the whirlpool," Bascom prayed.

"I look to Tampico Petroleum to save me," Francis replied. "When every security I can lay hand to has been engulfed, then, throwing in Tampico Petroleum will be like the eruption of a new army upon a losing field.

And suppose your unknown foe is powerful enough to swallow down that final, splendid asset and clamor for more?" Bascom queried.

Francis shrugged his shoulders.

"Then I shall be broke. But my father went broke half a dozen times before he won out. Also was he born broke. I should worry about a little thing like that." For a time, in the Solano hacienda, events had been moving slowly. In fact, following upon the rescue of Leoncia by Henry along his dynamite-sown trail, there had been no events. Not even had Yi Poon appeared with a perfectly fresh and entirely brand new secret to sell. Nothing had happened, save that Leoncia drooped and was apathetic, that neither Enrico nor Henry, her full brother, nor her Solano brothers who were not her brothers at all, could cheer her.

But, while Leoncia drooped, Henry and the tall sons of Eurico worried and perplexed themselves about the treasure in the Valley of the Lost Souls, into which Torres was even then dynamiting his way. One thing they did know, namely, that the Torres' expedition had sent Augustino and Vicente back to San Antonio to get two more mule-loads of dynamite.

It was Henry, after conferring with Enrico and obtaining his permission, who broached the matter to Leoncia.

"Sweet sister," had been his way, "we're going to go up and see what the scoundrel Torres and his gang are doing. We do know, thanks to you, their objective. The dynamite is to blow an entrance into the Valley. We know where the Lady Who Dreams sank her treasure when her house burned. Torres does not know this. The idea is that we can follow them into the Valley, when they have drained the Maya caves, and have as good a chance, if not a better chance than they in getting possession of that marvelous chest of gems. And the very tip of the point is that we'd like to take you along on the expedition. I fancy, if we managed to get the treasure ourselves, that you wouldn't mind repeating that journey down the subterranean river."

But Leoncia shook her head wearily.

"No," she said, after further urging. "I never want to see the Valley of the Lost Souls again, nor ever to hear it mentioned. There is where I lost Francis to that woman."

"It was all a mistake, darling sister. But who was to know? I did not. You did not. Nor did Francis. He played the man's part fairly and squarely. Not knowing that you and I were brother and sister, believing that we were truly betrothed as we were at the time he refrained from trying to win you from me, and he rendered further temptation impossible and saved the lives of all of us by marrying the Queen."

"I miss you and Francis singing your everlasting "Back to back against the mainmast,' "she murmured sadly and irrelevantly.

Quiet tears welled into her eyes and brimmed over as she turned away, passed down the steps of the veranda, crossed the grounds, and aimlessly descended the hill. For the twentieth time since she had last seen Francis she pursued the same course, covering the same ground from the time she first espied him rowing to the beach from the An-gelique, through her dragging him into the jungle to save him from her irate men-folk, to the moment, with drawn revolver, when she had kissed him and urged him-into the boat and away. This had been his first visit.

Next, she covered every detail of his second visit from the moment, coming from behind the rock after her swim in the lagoon, she had gazed upon him leaning against the rock as he scribbled his first note to her, through her startled flight into the jungle, the bite on her knee of the labarri (which she had mistaken for a deadly viperine), to her recoiling collision against Francis and her faint on the sand. And, under her parasol, she sat down on the very spot where she had fainted and come to, to find him preparing to suck the poison from the wound which he had already excoriated. As she remembered back, she realized that it had been the pain of the excoriation which brought her to her senses.

Deep she was in the sweet recollections of how she had slapped his cheek even as his lips approached her knee, blushed with her face hidden in her hands, laughed because her foot had been made asleep by his too-efficient tourniquet, turned white with anger when he reminded her that she considered him the murderer of her uncle, and repulsed his offer to untie the tourniquet. So deep was she in such fond recollections of only the other day that yet seemed separated from the present by half a century, such was the wealth of episode, adventure, and tender passages which had intervened, that she did not see the rattletrap rented carriage from San Antonio drive up the beach road. Nor did she see a lady, fashionably clad in advertisement that she was from New York, dismiss the carriage and proceed toward her on foot. This lady, who was none other than the Queen, Francis' wife, likewise sheltered herself beneath a parasol from the tropic sun.

Standing directly behind Leoncia, she did not realize that she had surprised the girl in a moment of high renunciation. All that she did know was that she saw Leoncia draw from her breast and gaze long at a tiny photograph. Over her shoulder the Queen made it out to be a snapshot of Francis, whereupon her mad jealousy raged anew. A poinard flashed to her hand from its sheath within the bosom of her dress. The quickness of this movement was sufficient to warn Leoncia, who tilted her parasol forward so as to look up at whatever person stood at her back. Too utterly dreary even to feel surprise, she greeted the wife of Francis Morgan as casually as if she had parted from her an hour before. Even the poinard failed to arouse in her curiosity or fear. Perhaps, had she displayed startlement and fear, the Queen might have driven the steel home to her. As it was, she could only cry out.

“You are a vile woman! A vile, vile woman!”

To which Leoncia merely shrugged her shoulders, and said:

“You would better keep your parasol between you and the sun.”

The Queen passed round in front of her, facing her and staring down at her w r ith woman’s wrath compounded of such jealousy as to be speechless.

“Why?” Leoncia was the first to speak, after a long pause. “Why am I a vile woman?”

“Because you are a thief,” the Queen flamed. “Because you are a stealer of men, yourself married. Because you are unfaithful to your husband in heart, at least, since more than that has so far been impossible.”

“I have no husband,” Leoncia answered quietly.

“Husband to be, then I thought you were to be married the day after our departure.”

“I have no husband to be,” Leoncia continued with the same quietness.

So swiftly tense did the other woman become that Leoncia idly thought of her as a tigress.

“Henry Morgan!” the Queen cried.

“He is my brother.”

“A word which I have discovered is of wide meaning, Leoncia Solano. In New York there are worshippers at certain altars who call all men in the world ‘brothers,’ all women “sisters.”

“His father was my father,” Leoncia explained with patient explicit-ness. “His mother was my mother. We are full brother and sister.”

“And Francis?” the other queried, convinced, with sudden access of interest. “Are you, too, his sister?”

Leoncia shook her head.

“Then you do love Francis!” the Queen charged, smarting with disappointment.

“You have him,” said Leoncia.

“No; for you have taken him from me.”

Leoncia slowly and sadly shook her head and sadly gazed out over the heat-shimmering surface of Chili qui Lagoon.

After a long lapse of silence, she said, wearily, “Believe that. Believe anything.”

“I divined it in you from the first,” the Queen cried. “You have a strange power over men. I am a woman not unbeautiful. Sine I have been out in the world I have watched the eyes of men looking at me. I know I am not all undesirable. Even have the wretched males of my Lost Valley with downcast eyes looked love at me. On dared more than look, and he died for me, or because of me, and was flung into the whirl of waters to his fate. And yet you, with this woman's power of yours, strangely exercise it over my Francis so that in my very arms he thinks of you. I know it. I know that even then he thinks of you!"

Her last words were the cry of a passion-stricken and breaking heart. And the next moment, though very little to Leoncia's surprise, being too hopelessly apathetic to b surprised at anything, the Queen dropped her knife in th sand and sank down, buried her face in her hands, and surrendered to the weakness of hysteric grief. Almost idly, and quit mechanically, Leoncia put her arm around her and comforted her. For many minutes this continued, when th Queen, growing more cairn, spoAe with sudden determination.

"I left Francis the moment I knew he loved you," she said. "I drove my knife into the photograph of you he keeps in his bedroom, and returned here to do the same to you in person. But I was wrong. It is not your fault, nor Francis'. It is my fault that I have failed to win his love. Not you, but I it is who must die. But first, I must go back to my valley and recover my treasure. In the temple called Wall Street, Francis is in great trouble. His fortune may be taken away from him, and he requires another fortune to save his fortune. I have that fortune, and there is no time to lose. Will you and yours help me? It is for Francis' sake."

CHAPTER 27

So it came about that the Valley of the Lost Souls was invaded subterraneously from opposite directions by two parties of treasure-seekers. From one side, and quickly, came the Queen and Leoncia, Henry Morgan, and the Solanos. Far more slowly, although they had started long in advance, did Torres and the Jefe progress. The first attack on the mountain had proved the chief est obstacle. To blow open an entrance to the Maya caves had required more dynamite than they had originally brought, while the rock had proved stubborner than they expected. Further, when they had finally made a way, it had proved to be above the cave floor, so that more blasting had been required to drain off the water. And, having blasted their way in to the water-logged mummies of the conquistadores and to the Room of the Idols, they had to blast their way out again and on into the heart of the mountain. But first, ere they continued on, Torres looted the ruby eyes of Chia and the emerald eyes of Hzatzl.

Meanwhile, with scarcely any delays, the Queen and her party penetrated to the Valley through the mountain on the opposite side. Nor did they entirely duplicate the course of their earlier traverse. The Queen, through long gazing into her Mirror, knew every inch of the way. Where the underground river plunged through the passage and out into the bosom of the Gualaca River it was impossible to take in their boats. But, by assiduous search under her directions, they found the tiny mouth of a cave on the steep wall of the cliff, so shielded by a growth of mountain berries that only by knowing for what they sought could they have found it. By main strength, applied to the coils of rope which they had brought along, they hoisted their canoes up the cliff, portaged them on their shoulders through the winding passage, and launched them on the subterranean river itself where it ran so broadly and placidly between wide banks that they paddled easily against its slack current. At other times, where the river proved too swift, they lined the canoes up by towing from the bank; and wherever the river made a plunge through the solid tie-ribs of mountain, the Queen showed them the obviously hewn and patently ancient passages through which to portage their light crafts around. Here we leave the canoes," the Queen directed at last, and the men began securely mooring them to the bank in the light of the flickering torches. "It is but a short distance through the last passage. Then we will come to a small opening in the cliff, shielded by climbing vines and ferns, and look down upon the spot where my house once stood beside the whirl of waters. The ropes will be necessary in order to descend the cliff, but it is only about fifty feet."

Henry, with an electric torch, led the way, the 'Queen beside him, while old Enrico and Leoncia brought up the rear, vigilant to see that no possible half-hearted peon or Indian boatman should slip back and run away. But when the party came to where the mouth of the passage ought to have been, there was no mouth. The passage ceased, being blocked off solidly from floor to roof by a debris of crumbled rocks that varied in size from paving stones to native houses.

"Who could have done this?" the Queen exclaimed angrily.

But Henry, after a cursory examination, reassured her.

"It's just a slide of rock," he said, "a superficial fault in the outer skin of the mountain that has slipped; and it won't take us long with our dynamite to remedy it. Lucky we fetched a supply along."

But it did take long. For what was the remainder of the day and throughout the night they toiled. Large charges of explosive were not used because of Henry's fear of exciting a greater slip along the fault overhead. What dynamite was used was for the purpose of loosening up the rubble so that they could shift it back along the passage. At eight the following morning the charge was exploded that opened up to them the first glimmer of daylight ahead. After that they worked carefully, being apprehensive of jarring down fresh slides. At the last, they were baffled by a ten-ton block of rock in the very mouth of the passage. Through crevices on either side of it they could squeeze their arms into the blazing sunshine, yet the stone-block thwarted them. No leverage they applied could more than quiver it, and Henry decided on one final blast that would topple it out and down into the Valley.

"They'll certainly know visitors are coming, the way we've been knocking on their back door for the last fifteen hours," he laughed, as he prepared to light the fuse.

Assembled before the altar of the Sun God at the Long House, the entire population was indeed aware, and anxiously aware, of the coming of visitors. So disastrous had been their experiences with their last ones, when the lake dwelling had been burned and their Queen lost to them, that they were now begging the Sun God to send no more visitors. But upon one thing, having been passionately harangued by their priest, they were resolved; namely, to kill at sight and without parley whatever newcomers did descend upon them.

"Even Da Vasco himself," the priest had cried.

"Even Da Vasco!" the Lost Souls had responded.

All were armed with spears, war-clubs, and bows and arrows; and while they waited they continued to pray before the altar. Every few minutes runners arrived from the lake, making the same reports that while the mountain still labored thunderously nothing had emerged from it.

The little girl of ten, the Maid of the Long House who had entertained Leoncia, was the first to spy out new arrivals. This was made possible because of the tribe's attention being fixed on the rumbling mountain beside the lake. No one expected visitors out of the mountain on the opposite side of the valley.

"Da Vasco!" she cried. "Da Vasco!"

All looked and saw, not fifty yards away, Torres, the Jefe, and their gang of followers, emerging into the open clearing. Torres wore again the helmet he had filched from his withered ancestor in the Chamber of the Mummies. Their greeting was instant and warm, taking the form of a flight of arrows that arched into them and stretched two of the followers on the ground. Next, the Lost Souls, men and women, charged; while the rifles of Torres' men began to speak. So unexpected was this charge, so swiftly made and with so short a distance to cover, that, though many fell before the bullets, a number reached the invaders and engaged in a desperate hand-to-hand conflict. Here the advantage of firearms was minimized, and gendarmes and others were thrust through by spears or had their skulls cracked under the ponderous clubs.

In the end, however, the Lost Souls were outfought, thanks chiefly to the revolvers that could kill in the thickest of the scuffling. The survivors fled, but of the invaders half were down and down forever. The women having in drastic fashion attended to every man who fell wounded. The Jefe was spluttering with pain and rage at an arrow which had perforated his arm; nor could he be appeased until Vicente cut off the barbed head and pulled out the shaft.

Torres, beyond an aching shoulder where a club had hit him, was uninjured; and he became jubilant when he saw the old priest dying on the ground with his head resting on the little maid's knees.

Since there were no wounded of their own to be attended to with rough and ready surgery, Torres and the Jefe led the way to the lake, skirted its shores, and came to the ruins of the Queen’s dwelling. Only charred stumps of piles, projecting above the water, showed where it had once stood. Torres was nonplussed, but the Jefe was furious.

“Jlere, right hi this house that was, the treasure chest stood,” he stammered.

“A wild goose chase!” the Jefe grunted. “Senor Torres, I always suspected you were a fool.”

“How was I to know the place had been burned down?”

“You ought to have known, you who are so very wise in all things,” the Jefe bickered back. “But you can’t fool me. I had my eye on you. I saw you rob the emeralds and rubies from the eye-sockets of the Maya gods. That much you shall divide with me, and now.”

“Wait, wait, be a trifle patient,” Torres begged. “Let us first investigate. Of course, I shall divide the four gems with you but what are they compared with a whole chestfull? It was a light, fragile house. The chest may have fallen into the water undamaged by fire when the roof fell in. And water will not damage precious stones.”

In amongst the burnt piling the Jefe sent his men to investigate, and they waded and swam about in the shoal water, being careful to avoid being caught by the outlying suck of the whirlpool. Augustino, the Silent, made the find, close in to shore.

“I am standing on something,” he announced, the level of the lake barely to his knees. Torres plunged in, and, reaching under till he buried his head and shoulders, felt out the object.

“It is the chest, I am certain,” he declared. “Come! All of you! Drag this out to the dry land so that we may examine into it!”

But when this was accomplished, and just as he bent to Dpen the lid, the Jefe stopped him.

“Go back into the water, the lot of you,” he commanded his men. “There are a number of chests like this, and the expedition will be a failure if we don’t find them. One chest vould not pay the expenses.”

Not until all the men were floundering and groping in the water, did Torres raise the lid. The Jefe stood transfixed. He could only gaze and mutter inarticulate mouthings.

“Now will you believe?” Torres queried. “It is beyond price. We are the richest two men in Panama, in South America, in the world. This is the Maya treasure. We heard of it when’ we were boys. Our fathers and our grandfathers dreamed of it. The Conquistadores failed to find it. And it is ours ours!”

And, while the two men, almost stupefied, stood and stared, one by one their followers crept out of the water, formed a silent semi-circle at their backs, and likewise stared. Neither did the Jefe and Torres know their men stood at their backs, nor did the men know of the Lost Souls that were creeping stealthily upon them from the rear. As it was, all were staring at the treasure with fascinated amazement when the attack was sprung.

Bows and arrows, at ten yards distance, are deadly, especially when due time is taken to make certain of aim. Two-thirds of the treasure-seekers went down simultaneously. Through Vicente, who had chanced to be standing directly behind Torres, no less than two spears and five arrows had perforated. The handful of survivors had barely time to seize their rifles and whirl, when the club attack was upon them. In this Rafael and Ignacio, two of the gendarmes who had been on the adventure to the Juchitan oil fields, almost immediately had their skulls cracked. And, as usual, the Lost Souls women saw to it that the wounded did not remain wounded long.

The end for Torres and the Jefe was but a matter of moments, when a loud roar from the mountain followed by a crashing avalanche of rock, created a diversion. The few Lost Souls that remained alive, darted back terror-stricken into the shelter of the bushes. The Jefe and Torres, who alone stood on their feet and breathed, cast their eyes up the cliff to where the smoke still issued from the new-made hole, and saw Henry Morgan and the Queen step into the sunshine on the lip of the cliff.

“You take the lady,” the Jefe snarled. “I shall get the Gringo Morgan if it’s the last act of what seems a life that isn’t going to be much longer.”

Both lifted their rifles and fired. Torres, never much at a shot, sent his bullet fairly centered into the Queen’s breast. But the Jefe, master marksman and possessor of many medals, made a clean miss of his target. The next instant, a bullet from Henry’s rifle struck his wrist and traveled up the forearm to the elbow, whence it escaped and passed on. And as his rifle clattered to the ground he knew that never again would that right arm, its bone pulped from wrist to elbow, have use for a rifle.

But Henry was not shooting well. Just emerged from twenty-four hours of darkness in the cave, not at once could his eyes adjust themselves to the blinding dazzle of the sun. His first shot had been lucky. His succeeding shots merely struck in the immediate neighbourhood of the Jefe and Torres as they turned and fled madly for the brush.

Ten minutes later, the wounded Jefe in the lead, Torres saw a woman of the Lost Souls spring out from behind a tree and brain him with a huge stone wielded in both her hands. Torres shot her first, then crossed himself with horror, and stumbled on. From behind arose distant calls of Henry and the Solano brothers in pursuit, and he remembered the vision of his end he had glimpsed but refused to see in the Mirror of the World and wondered if this end was near upon him. Yet it had not resembled this place of trees and ferns and jungle. From the glimpse he remembered nothing of vegetation only solid rock and blazing sun and bones of animals. Hope sprang up afresh at the thought. Perhaps that end was not for this day, maybe not for this year. Who knew? Twenty years might yet pass ere that end came.

Emerging from the jungle, he came upon a queer ridge of what looked like long disintegrated lava rock. Here he left no trail, and he proceeded carefully on beyond it through further jungle, believing once again in his star that would enable him to elude pursuit. His plan of escape took shape. He would find a safe hiding place until after dark. Then he would circle back to the lake and the whirl of waters. That gained, nothing and nobody could stop him. He had but to leap in. The subterranean journey had no terrors for him because he had done it before. And in his fancy he saw once more the pleasant picture of the Gualaca Eiver flashing under the open sky on its way to the sea. Besides, did he not carry with him the two great emeralds and two great rubies that had been the eyes of Chia and Hzatzl? Fortune enough, and vast good fortune, were they for any man. What if he had failed by the Maya Treasure to become the richest man in the world? He was satisfied. All he wanted now was darkness and one last dive into the heart of the mountain and through the heart of the mountain to the Gualaca flowing to the sea.

And just then, the assured vision of his escape so vividly filling his eyes that he failed to observe the way of his feet, he dived. Nor was it a dive into swirling waters. It was a head-foremost, dry-land dive down a slope of rock. So slippery was it that he continued to slide down, although he managed to turn around, with face and stomach to the surface, and to claw wildly up with hands and feet. Such effort merely slowed his descent, but could not stop it.

For a while, at the bottom, he lay breathless and dazed. When his senses came back to him, he became aware first of all of something unusual upon which his hand rested. He could have sworn that he felt teeth. At length, opening his eyes with a shudder and summoning his resolution, he dared to look at the object. And relief was immediate. Teeth they were, in an indubitable, weather-white jaw-bone; but they were pig’s teeth and the jaw was a pig’s jaw. Other bones lay about, on which his body rested, which, on examination, proved to be the bones of pigs and of smaller animals.

Where had he glimpsed such an arrangement of bones? He thought, and remembered the Queen’s great golden bowl. He looked up. Ah! Mother of God! The very place! He knew it at first sight, as he gazed up what was a funnel at the far spectacle of day. Fully two hundred feet above him was the rim of the funnel. The sides of hard, smooth rock sloped steeply in and down to him, and his eyes and judgment told him that no man born of woman could ever scale that slope.

The fancy that came to his mind caused him to spring to his feet in sudden panic and look hastily round about him. Only on a more colossal scale, the funnel in which he was trapped had reminded him of the funnel-pits dug in the sand by hunting spiders that lurked at the bottom for such prey that tumbled in upon them. And, his vivid fancy leaping, he had been frightened by the thought that some spider monster, as colossal as the funnel-pit, might possibly be lurking there to devour him. But no such denizen occurred. The bottom of the pit, circular in form, was a good ten feet across and carpeted, he knew not how deep, by a debris of small animals’ bones. Now for what had the Mayas of old time made so tremendous an excavation? he questioned; for. he was more than half-convinced that the funnel was no natural phenomenon.

Before nightfall he made sure, by a dozen attempts, that the funnel was unscalable. Between attempts, he crouched in the growing shadow of the descending sun and panted dry-lipped with heat and thirst. Tn’e place was a very furnace, and the juices of his body were wrung from him in prof use ‘perspiration. Throughout the night, between dozes, he vainly pondered the problem of escape. The only way out was up, nor could his mind devise any method of getting up. Also, he looked forward with terror to the’ coming of the day, for he knew that no man could survive a full ten hours of the baking heat that would be his. Ere the next nightfall the last drop of moisture would have evaporated from his body leaving him a withered and already half-sun-dried mummy.

With the coming of daylight his growing terror added wings to his thought, and he achieved a new and profoundly simple theory of escape. Since he could not climb up, and since he could not get out through the sides themselves, then the only possible remaining way was down. Fool that he was! He might have been working through the cool night hours, and now he must labour in the quickly increasing heat. He applied himself in an ecstasy of energy to digging down through the mass of crumbling bones. Of course, there was a way out. Else how did the funnel drain? Otherwise it would have been full or part full of water from the rains. Fool! And thrice times thrice a fool!

He dug down one side of the wall, flinging the rubbish into a mound against the opposite side. So desperately did he apply himself that he broke his finger-nails to the quick and deeper, while every finger-tip was lacerated to bleeding. But love of life was strong in him, and he knew it was a life-and-death race with the sun. As he went deeper, the rubbish became more compact, so that he used the muzzle of his rifle like a crowbar to loosen it, ere tossing it up in single and double handfuls.

By mid-forenoon, his senses beginning to reel in the heat, he made a discovery. Upon the wall which he had uncovered, he came upon the beginning of an inscription, evidently rudely scratched in the rock by the point of a knife. With renewed hope, his head and shoulders down in the hole, he dug and scratched for all the world like a dog, throwing the rubbish out and between his legs in true dog-fashion. Some of it fell clear, but most of it fell back and down upon him. Yet had he become too frantic to note the inefficiency of his effort.

At last the inscription was cleared, so that he was able to read:

Peter McGill, of Glasgow. On March 12, 1820, I escaped from the Pit of Hell by this passage by digging down and finding it.

A passage! The passage must be beneath the inscription! Torres now toiled in a fury. So dirt-soiled was he that he was like some huge, four-legged, earth-burrowing animal. The dirt got into his eyes, and, on occasion, into his nostrils and air passages so as to suffocate him and compel him to back up out of the hole and sneeze and cough his breathing apparatus clear.

Twice he fainted. But the sun, by then almost directly overhead, drove him on.

He found the upper rim of the passage. He did not dig down to the lower rim; for the moment the aperture was large enough to accommodate his lean shape, he writhed and squirmed into it and away from the destroying sun-rays. The cool and the dark soothed him, but his joy and the reaction from what he had undergone sent his pulse giddily up, so that for the third time he fainted.

Eecovered, mouthing with black and swollen lips a half-insane chant of gratefulness and thanksgiving, he crawled on along the passage. Perforce he crawled, because it was so low that a dwarf could not have stood erect in it. The place was a charnel house. Bones crunched and crumbled under his hands and knees, and he knew that his knees were being worn to the bone. At the end of a hundred feet he caught his first glimmering of light. But the nearer he approached freedom, the slower he progressed, for the final stages of exhaustion were coming upon him. He knew that it was not physical exhaustion, nor food exhaustion, but thirst exhaustion. Water, a few ounces of water, was all he needed to make him strong again. And there was no water.

But the light was growing stronger and nearer. He noted, toward the last, that the floor of the passage pitched down at an angle of fully thirty degrees. This made the way easier. Gravity drew him on, and helped every failing effort of him, toward the source of light. Very close to it, he encountered an increase in the deposit of bones. Yet they bothered him little, for they had become an old story, while he was too exhausted to mind them.

He did observe, with swimming eyes and increasing numbness of touch, that the passage was contracting both vertically and horizontally. Slanting downward at thirty degrees, it gave him an impression of a rat-trap, himself the rat, descending head foremost toward he knew not what. Even before he reached it, he apprehended that the slit of bright day that advertised the open world beyond was too narrow for the egress of his body. And his apprehension was verified. Crawling unconcernedly over a skeleton that the blaze of day showed him to be a man’s, he managed, by severely and painfully squeezing his ears flat back, to thrust his head through the slitted aperture. The sun beat down upon his head, while his eyes drank in the openness of the freedom of the world that the unyielding rock denied to the rest of his body.

Most maddening of all was a running stream not a hundred yards away, tree-fringed beyond, with lush meadowgrass leading down to it from his side. And in the treeshadowed water, knee-deep and drowsing, stood several cows of the dwarf breed peculiar to the Valley of Lost Souls. Occasionally they flicked their tails lazily at flies, or changed the distribution of their weight on their legs. He glared at them to see them drink, but they were evidently too sated with water. Fools! Why should they not drink, with all that wealth of water flowing idly by! They betrayed alertness, turning their heads toward the far bank and pricking tneir ears forward. Then, as a big antlered buck came out from among the trees to the water's edge, they flattened their ears back and shook their heads and pawed the water till he could hear the splashing. But the stag disdained their threats, lowered his head, and drank. This was too much for Torres, who emitted a maniacal scream which, had he been in his senses, he would not have recognised as proceeding from his own throat and larynx.

The stag sprang away. The cattle turned their heads in Torres' direction, drowsed, their eyes shut, and resumed the nicking of flies. With a violent effort, scarcely knowing that he had half-torn off his ears, he drew his head back through the slitted aperture and fainted on top of the skeleton.

Two hours later, though he did not know the passage of time, he regained consciousness, and found his own head cheek by jowl with the skull of the skeleton on which he lay. The descending sun was already shining into the narrow opening, and his gaze chanced upon a rusty knife. The point of it was worn and broken, and he established the connection. This was the knife that had scratched the inscription on the rock at the base of the funnel at the other end of the passage, and this skeleton was the bony framework of the man who had done the scratching. And Alvarez Torrez went immediately mad.

"Ah, Peter McGill, my enemy," he muttered. "Peter McGill of Glasgow who betrayed me to this end. This for you! And this! And this!"

So speaking, he drove the heavy knife into the fragile front of the skull. The dust of the bone which had once been the tabernacle of Peter McGill's brain arose in his nostrils and increased his frenzy. He attacked the skeleton with his hands, tearing at it, disrupting it, filling the pent space about him with flying bones. It was like a battle, in which he destroyed what was left of the mortal remains of the one time resident of Glasgow.

Once again Torres squeezed his head through the slit to gaze at the fading glory of the world. Like a rat in the trap caught by the neck in the trap of ancient Maya devising, he saw the bright world and day dim to darkness as his final consciousness drowned in the darkness of death.

But still the cattle stood in the water and drowsed and flicked at flies, and, later, the stag returned, disdainful of the cattle, to complete its interrupted drink.

CHAPTER 28

NOT for nothing had Regan been named by his associates, The Wolf of Wall Street! While usually no more than a conservative, large-scale player, ever SO’ often, like a periodical drinker, he had to go on a rampage of wild and daring stock-gambling. At least five times in his long career had he knocked the bottom out of the market or lifted the roof off, and each time to the tune of a personal gain of millions. He never went on a small rampage, and he never went too often.

He would let years of quiescence slip by, until suspicion of him was lulled asleep and his world deemed that the Wolf was at last grown old and peaceable. And then, like a thunderbolt, he would strike at the men and interests he wished to destroy. But, though the blow always fell like a thunderbolt, not like a thunderbolt was it in its inception. Long months, and even years, were spent in deviously preparing for the day and painstakingly maturing the plans and conditions for the battle.

Thus had it been in the outlining and working up of the impending Waterloo for Francis Morgan. Revenge lay back of it, but it was revenge against a dead man. Not Francis, but Francis’ father, was the one he struck against, although he struck through the living into the heart of the grave to accomplish it. Eight years he had waited and sought his chance ere old R.H.M.-Richard Henry Morgan-had died. But no chance had he found. He was, truly, the Wolf of Wall Street, but never by any luck had he found an opportunity against the Lion for to his death R.H.M. had been known as the Lion of Wall Street.

So, from father to son, always under a show of fair appearance, Regan had carried the feud over. Yet Regan’s very foundation on which he built for revenge was meretricious and wrongly conceived. True, eight years before R.H.M.’s death, he had tried to double-cross him and failed; but he never dreamed that E.H.M. had guessed. Yet E.H.M. had not only guessed but had ascertained beyond any shadow of doubt, and had promptly and cleverly doublecrossed his treacherous associate. Thus, had Regan known that E.H.M. knew of his perfidy, Regan would have taken his medicine without thought of revenge. As it was, believing that E.H.M. was as bad as himself, believing that E.H.M., out of meanness as mean as his own, without provocation or suspicion, had done this foul thing to him, he saw no way to balance the account save by ruining him, or, in lieu of him, by ruining his son.

And Regan had taken his time. At first Francis had left the financial game alone, content with letting his money remain safely in the safe investments into which it had been put by his father. Not until Francis had become for the first time active in undertaking Tampico Petroleum to the tune of millions of investment, with an assured many millions of ultimate returns, had Regan had the ghost of a chance to destroy him. But, the chance given, Regan had not wasted time, though his slow and thorough campaign had required many months to develop. Ere he was done, he came very close to knowing every share of whatever stock Francis carried on margin or owned outright.

It had really taken two years and more for Regan to prepare. In some of the corporations in which Francis owned heavily, Regan was himself a director and no inconsiderable arbiter of destiny. In Frisco Consolidated he was president. In New York, Vermont and Connecticut he was vice-president. From controlling one director in Northwestern Electric, he had played kitchen politics until he controlled the two-thirds majority. And so with all the rest, either directly, or indirectly through corporation and banking ramilications, he had his hand in the secret springs and levers of the financial and business mechanism which gave strength to Francis' fortune.

Yet no one of these was more than a bagatelle compared with the biggest thing of all Tampico Petroleum. In this, beyond a paltry twenty thousand shares bought on the open market, ‘Regan owned nothing, controlled nothing, though the time was growing ripe for him to sell and deal and juggle in inordinate quantities. Tampico Petroleum was practically Francis' private preserve. A number of his friends were, for them, deeply involved, Mrs. Carruthers even gravely so. She worried him, and was not even above pestering him over the telephone. There were others, like Johnny Pathmore, who never bothered him at all, and who, when they met, talked carelessly and optimistically about the condition of the market and financial things in general. All of which was harder to bear than Mrs. Carruthers' perpetual nervousness.

Northwestern Electric, thanks to Regan's machinations, had actually dropped thirty points and remained there. Those on the outside who thought they knew, regarded it as positively shaky. Then there was the little, old, solidas-the-rock-of-Gibraltar Frisco Consolidated. The nastiest of rumors were afloat, and the talk of a receivership was growing emphatic. Montana Lode was still sickly under Mulhaney's unflattering and unmodified report, and Weston, the great expert sent out by the English investors, had failed to report anything reassuring. For six months, Imperial Tungsten, earning nothing, had been put to disastrous expense in the great strike which seemed only just begun. Nor did anybody, save the several labor leaders who knew, dream that it was Regan's gold that was at the bottom of the affair.

The secrecy and the deadliness of the attack was what unnerved Bascom. All properties in which Francis was interested were being pressed down as if by a slow-moving glacier. There was nothing spectacular about the movement, merely a steady persistent decline that made Francis' large fortune shrink horribly. And, along with what he owned outright, what he bsld on margin suffered even greater shrinkage.

Then had come rumors of war. Ambassadors were receiving their passports right and left, and half the world seemed mobilizing. This was the moment, with the market shaken and panicky, and with the world powers delaying in declaring moratoriums, that Regan selected to strike. The time was ripe for a bear raid, and with him were associated half a dozen other big bears who tacitly accepted his leadership. But even they did not know the full extent of his plans, nor guess at the specific direction of them. They were in the raid for what they could make, and thought he was in it for the same reason, in their simple directness of pecuniary vision catching no glimpse of Francis Morgan nor of his ghostly father at whom the big blow was being struck.

Regan's rumor factory began working overtime, and the first to drop and the fastest to drop in the dropping market were the stocks of Francis, which had already done consider able dropping ere the bear market began. Yet Regan was careful to bring no pressure on Tampico Petroleum. Proudly it held up its head in the midst of the general slump, and eagerly Kegan waited for the moment of desperation when Francis would be forced to dump it on the market to cover his shrunken margins in other lines.

"Lord! Lord!"

Bascom held the side of his face in the palm of one hand and grimaced as if he had a jumping toothache.

"Lord! Lord!" he reiterated. "The market's gone to smash and Tampico Pet along with it. How she slumped! Who'd have dreamed it!"

Francis, puffing steadily away at a cigarette and quite oblivious that it was unlighted, sat with Bascom in the latter's private office.

"It looks like a fire-sale," he vouchsafed.

"That won't last longer than this time to-morrow morning then you'll be sold out, and me with you," his broker simplified, with a swift glance at the clock.

It marked twelve, as Francis' swiftly automatic glance verified.

"Dump in the rest of Tampico Pet," he said wearily. "That ought to hold back until to-morrow."

"Then what to-morrow?" bis broker demanded, "with the bottom out and everybody including the office boys selling short."

Francis shrugged his shoulders. "You know I've mortgaged-the house, Dreamwold, and the Adirondack Camp to the limit."

"Have you any friends?"

"At such a time!" Francis countered bitterly.

"Well, it's the very time," Bascom retorted. "Look here, Morgan. I know the set you ran with at college. There's Johnny Pathmore — "

"And he's up to his eyes already. When I smash he smashes. And Dave Donaldson will have to readjust his life to about one hundred and sixty a month. And as for Chris Westhouse, he'll have to take to the movies for a livelihood. He always was good at theatricals, and I happen to know he's got the ideal "film "face."

"There's Charley Tippery," Bascom suggested, though it was patent that he was hopeless about it.

Yes," Francis agreed with equal hopelessness. "There's only one thing the matter with him his father still lives."

"The old cuss never took a flyer in his life," Bascom supplemented. "There's never a time he can't put his hand on millions. And he still lives, worse luck."

"Charley could get him to do it, and would, except the one thing that's the matter with me."

"No securities left?" his broker queried.

Francis nodded.

Catch the old man parting with a dollar without due security."

Nevertheless, a few minutes later, hoping to find Charley Tippery in his office during the noon hour, Francis was sending in his card. Of all jewelers and gem merchants in New York, the Tippery establishment was the greatest. Not only that. It was esteemed the greatest in the world. More of the elder Tippery's money was invested in the great Diamond Corner, than even those in the know of most things knew of this particular thing.

The interview was as Francis had forecast. The old man still held tight reins on practically everything, and the son had little hope of winning his assistance.

"I know him," he told Francis. "And though I'm going to wrestle with him, don't pin an iota of faith on the outcome. I'll go to the mat with him, but that will be about all. The worst of it is that he has the ready cash, to say nothing of oodles and oodles of safe securities and United States bonds. But you see, Grandfather Tippery, when he was young and struggling and founding the business, once loaned a friend a thousand. He never got it back, and he never got over it. Nor did Father Tippery ever get over it either. The experience seared both of them. Why, father wouldn't lend a penny on the North Pole unless he got the Pole for security after having had it expertly appraised. And you haven't any security, you see. But I'll tell you what. I'll wrestle with the old man to-night after dinner. That's his most amiable mood of the day, And I'll hustle around on my own and see what I can do. Oh, I know a few hundred thousand won't mean anything, and I'll do my darnedest for some-thing big. Whatever happens, I'll be at your house at nine to-morrow — "

"Which will be my busy day," Francis smiled wanly, as they shook hands. "I'll be out of the house by eight."

"And I'll be there by eight then," Charley Tippery responded, again wringing his hand heartily. "And in the meantime I'll get busy. There are ideas already beginning to sprout. "

Another interview Francis had that afternoon. Arrived back at his broker's office, Bascom told him that Regan had called up and wanted to see Francis, saying that he had some interesting information for him.

"I'll run around right away," Francis said, reaching for his hat, while his face lighted up with hope. "He was an old friend of father's, and if anybody could pull me through, he could."

"Don't be too sure," Bascom shook his head, and paused reluctantly a moment before making confession. " I called him up just before you returned from Panama. I was very frank. I told him of your absence and of your perilous situation here, and oh, yes, flatly and flat out asked him if I could rely on him in case of need. And he baffled. You know anybody can baffle when asked a favor. That was all right. But I thought I sensed more. no, I won't dare to say enmity; but I will say that I was impressed. how shall I say? well, that he struck me as being particularly and peculiarly cold-blooded and noncommittal."

"Nonsense," Francis laughed. "He was too good a friend of my father's."

"Ever heard of the Conmopolitan Railways Merger?" Bascom queried with significant irrelevance.

Francis nodded promptly, then said:

"But that was before my time. I merely have heard of it, that's all. Shoot. Tell me about it. Give me the weight of your mind."

"Too long a story, but take this one word of advice. If you see Regan, don't put your cards on the table. Let him play first, and, if he offers, let him offer without solicitation from you. Of course, I may be all wrong, but it won't damage you to hold up your hand and get his play first."

At the end of another half hour, Francis was closeted with Regan, and the stress of his peril was such that he controlled his natural impulses, remembering Bascom's instruction, and was quite fairly nonchalant about the state of his affairs. He even bluffed.

"In pretty deep, eh?" was Regan's beginning.

"Oh, not so deep that my back-teeth are awash yet," Francis replied airily. "I can still breathe, and it will be a long time before I begin swallowing."

Regan did not immediately reply. Instead, pregnantly, he ran over the last few yards of the ticker tape.

"You're dumping Tampico Pet pretty heavily, just the same."

"And they're snapping it up," Francis came back, and for the first time, in a maze of wonderment, he considered the possibility of Bascom's intuition being right. "Sure, I've got them swallowing."

"Just the same, you'll note that Tampico Pet is tumbling at the same time it's being snapped up, which is a very curious phenomenon," Regan urged.

"In a bear market all sorts of curious phenomena occur," Francis bluffed with a mature show of wisdom. "And when they've swallowed enough of my dumpings they'll be ripe to roll on a barrel. Somebody will pay something to get my dumpings out of their system. I fancy they'll pay through the nose before I'm done with them."

"But you're all in, boy. I've been watching your fight, even before your return. Tampico Pet is your last."

Francis shook his head.

"I'd scarcely say that," he lied. "I've got assets my market enemies never dream of. I'm luring them on, that's all, just luring them on. Of course, Regan, I'm telling you this in confidence. You were my father's friend. Mine is going to be some clean up, and, if you'll take my tip, in this short market you start buying. You'll be sure to settle with the sellers long in the end."

"What are your other assets?"

Francis shrugged his shoulders.

"That's what they're going to find out when they're full up with my stuff."

"It's a bluff!" Regan admired explosively. "You've got the old man's nerve, all right. But you've got to show me it isn't bluff."

Regan waited, and Francis was suddenly inspired.

"It is," he muttered. "You've named it. I'm drowning-over my back-teeth now, and they're the highest out of the wash. But I won't drown if you will help me. All you've got to do is to remember my father and put out your hand to save his son. If you'll back me up, we'll make them all sick... "

And right there the Wolf of Wall Street showed his teeth. He pointed to Richard Henry Morgan's picture.

"Why do you think I kept that hanging on the wail all these years?" he demanded.

Francis nodded as if the one accepted explanation was their tried and ancient friendship.

"Guess again," Regan sneered grimly.

Francis shook his head in perplexity.

"So I shouldn't ever forget him," the Wolf went on.

"And never a waking moment have I forgotten him.

Remember the Conmopolitan Railways Merger? Well, old R.H.M. double-crossed me in that deal. And it was some double-cross, believe me. But he was too cunning ever to let me get a come-back on him. So there his picture has hung, and here I've sat and waited. And now the time has come."

“You mean?” Francis queried quietly.

“Just that,” Regan snarled. “I’v,e waited and worked for this day, and the day has come. I’ve got the whelp where I want him at any rate.” He glanced up maliciously at the picture. “And if that don’t make the old gent turn in his grave. “

Francis rose to his feet and regarded his enemy curiously. “No,” he said, as if in soliloquy, “it isn’t worth it.” “What isn’t worth what?” the other demanded with swift suspicion.

“Beating you up,” was the cool answer. “I could kill you with my hands in five minutes. You’re no Wolf. You’re just mere yellow dog, the part of you that isn’t plain skunk. They told me to expect this of you; but I didn’t believe, and I came to see. They were right. You were all that they said. Well, I must get along out of this. It smells like a den of foxes. It stinks.”

He paused with his hand on the door knob and looked back. He had not succeeded in making Regan lose his temper.

“And what are you going to do about it?” the latter jeered.

“If you’ll permit me to get my broker on your ‘phone maybe you’ll learn,” Francis replied.

“Go to it, my laddy buck,” Regan conceded, then, with a wave of suspicion, “I’ll get him for you myself.”

And, having ascertained that Bascom was really at the other end of the line, he turned the receiver over to Francis. “You were right,” the latter assured Bascom. “Regan’s all you said and worse. Go right on with your plan of campaign. We’ve got him where we want him, though the old fox won’t believe it for a moment. He thinks he’s going to strip me, clean me out.” Francis paused to think up the strongest way of carrying on his bluff, then continued. “I’ll tell you something you don’t know. He’s the one who manoauvred the raid from the beginning. So now you know who we’re going to bury.”

And, after a little more of similar talk, he hung up. “You see,” he explained, again from the door, “you were so crafty that we couldn’t make out who it was. Why hell, Regan, we were prepared to give a walloping to some unknown that had several times your strength. And now that it’s you, it’s easy. We were prepared to strain. But with you it will be a walkover. To-morrow, around this time, there’s going to be a funeral right Here in your office and you’re not going to be one of the mourners. You’re going to be the corpse and a not-nice looking financial corpse you'll be when we get done with you."

"The dead spit of E.H.M.," the Wolf grinned. "Lord, how he could pull off a bluff!"

"It's a pity he didn't bury you and save me all the trouble," was Francis' parting shot.

"And all the expense," Regan flung after him. "It's going to be pretty expensive for you, and there isn't going to be any funeral from this place."

"Well, to-morrow's the day," Francis delivered to Bascom, as they parted that evening. "This time tomorrow I'll be a perfectly nice scalped and skinned and sun-dried and smoke-cured specimen for Regan's private collection. But who'd have believed the oldA skunk had it in for me! I

never harmed him. On the contrary, I always considered him father's best friend. If Charley Tippery could only come through with some of the Tippery surplus coin. "

"Or if the United States would only declare a moratorium," Bascom hoped equally hopelessly.

And Regan, at that moment, was saying to his assembled agents and rumor-factory specialists:

"Sell! Sell! Sell all you've got and then sell short. I see no bottom to this market!"

And Francis, on his way up town, buying the last extra, scanned the five-inch-lettered head-line:

"I SEE NO BOTTOM TO THIS MARKET-THOMAS BEGAN."

But Francis was not at his house at eight next tmorning to meet Charley Tippery. It had been a night in which official Washington had not slept, and the night-wires had carried the news out over the land that the United States, though not at war, had declared its moratorium. Wakened out of his bed at seven by Bascom in person, who brought the news, Francis had accompanied him down town. The moratorium had given them hope, and there was much to do.

Charles Tippery, however, was not the first to arrive at the Biverside Drive palace. A few minutes before eight, Parker was very much disturbed and perturbed when Henry and Leoncia, much the worse for sunburn and travel-stain, brushed past the second butler who had opened the door.

"It's no use you're coming in this way," Parker assured them. "Mr. Morgan is not at home."

“Where’s he gone?” Henry demanded, shifting the suitcase he carried to the other hand. “We’ve got to see him pronto, and I’ll have you know that pronto means quick. And who in hell are you?”

“I am Mr. Morgan’s confidential valet,” Parker answered solemnly. “And who are you?”

“My name’s Morgan,” Henry answered shortly, looking about in quest of something, striding to the library, glancing in, and discovering the telephones. “Where’s Francis? With what number can I call him up?”

“Mr. Morgan left express instructions that nobody was to telephone him except on important business.”

“Well, my business is important. What’s the number?”

“Mr. Morgan is very busy to-day,” Parker reiterated stubbornly.

“He’s in a pretty bad way, eh?” Henry quizzed.

The valet’s face remained expressionless.

“Looks as though he was going to be cleaned out to-day, Parker’s face betrayed neither emotion nor intelligence.

“For a second time I tell you he is very busy. “ he began.

“Hell’s bells!” Henry interrupted. “It’s no secret. The market’s got him where the hair is short. Everybody knows that. A lot of it was in the morning papers. Now come across, Mr. Confidential Valet. I want his number. I’ve got important business with him myself.”

But Parker remained obdurate.

“What’s his lawyer’s name? Or the name of his agent? Or of any of his representatives?”

Parker shook his head.

“If you will tell me the nature of your business with him,” the valet essayed.

Henry dropped the suit-case and made as if about to leap upon the other and shake Francis’ number out of him. But Leoncia intervened.

“Tell him,” she said.

“Tell him!” Henry shouted, accepting her suggestion. “I’ll do better than that. I’ll show him. Here, come on, you.” He strode into the library, swung the suit-case on the reading table, and began opening it. “Listen to me, Mr. Confidential Valet. Our business is the real business. We’re going to save Francis Morgan. We’re going to pull him out of the hole. We’ve got millions for him, right here inside of this thing — ”

Parker, who had been looking on with cold, disapproving eyes, recoiled in alarm at the last words. Either the strange callers were lunatics, or cunning criminals. Even at that moment, while they held him here with their talk of millions, confederates might be ransacking the upper parts of the house. As for the suit-case, for all he knew it might be filled with dynamite.

"Here!"

With a quick reach Henry had caught him by the collar as he turned to flee. With his other hand, Henry lifted the cover, exposing a bushel of uncut gems. Parker showed plainly that he was overcorne, although Henry failed to guess the nature of his agitation.

"Thought I'd convince you," Henry exulted. "Now be good dog and give me his number."

"Be seated, sir. and madame," Parker murmured, with polite bows and a successful effort to control himself. "Be seated, please. I have left the private number in Mr. Morgan's bedroom, which he gave to me this morning when I helped him dress. I shall be gone but a moment to get it. In the meantime please be seated."

Once outside the library, Parker became a most active, clear-thinking person. Stationing the second footman at the front door, he placed the first one to watch at the library door. Several other servants he sent scouting into the upper regions on the chance of surprising possible confederates at their nefarious work. Himself he addressed, via the butler's telephone, to the nearest police station.

"Yes, sir," he repeated to the desk sergeant. "They are either a couple of lunatics or criminals. Send a patrol wagon at once, please, sir. Even now I do not know what horrible crimes are being committed under this roof... "

In the meantime, in response at the front door, the second footman, with visible relief, admitted Charley Tippery, clad in evening dress at that early hour, as a known and tried friend of the master. The first butler, with similar relief, to which he added sundry winks and warnings, admitted him into the library.

Expecting he knew not what nor whom, Charley Tippery advanced across the large room to the strange man and woman. Unlike Parker, their sunburn and travel-stain caught his eye, noi as insignia suspicious, but as tokens worthy of wider consideration than average New York accords its more or less average visitors. Leoncia's beauty was like a blow between the eyes, and he knew she was a lady. Henry's bronze, brazed upon features unmistakably reminiscent of Francis and of E.H.M., drew his admiration and respect.

"Good morning," he addressed Henry, although he subtly embraced Leoncia with his greeting. "Friends of Francis?"

"Oh, sir," Leoncia cried out. "We are more than friends. We are here to save him. I have read the morning papers. If only it weren't for the stupidity of the servants. "

And Charley Tippery was immediately unaware of any slightest doubt. He extended his hand to Henry.

"I am Charley Tippery," he said.

"And my name's Morgan, Henry Morgan," Henry met him warmly, like a drowning man clutching at a life preserver. "And this is Miss Solano the Senorita Solano, Mr. Tippery. In fact, Miss Solano is my sister."

"I came on the same errand," Charley Tippery announced, introductions over. "The saving of Francis, as I understand it, must consist of hard cash or of securities indisputably negotiable. I have brought with me what I have hustled all night to get, and what I am confident is not sufficient — "

"How much have you brought?" Henry asked bluntly.

"Eighteen hundred thousand — what have you brought?"

"Piffle," said Henry, pointing to the open suit-case, unaware that he talked to a three-generations' gem expert.

A quick examination of a dozen of the gems picked at random, and an even quicker eye-estimate of the quantity, put wonder and excitement into Charley Tippery's face.

"They're worth millions! millions!" he exclaimed. "What are you going to do with them?"

"Negotiate them, so as to help Francis out," Henry answered. "They're security for any amount, aren't they?"

"Close up the suit-case," Charley Tippery cried, "while I telephone! I want to catch my father before he leaves the house," he explained over his shoulder, while waiting for his switch. "It's only five minutes' run from here."

Just as he concluded the brief words with his father, Parker, followed by a police lieutenant and two policemen, entered.

"There's the gang, lieutenant arrest them," Parker said. "Oh, sir, I beg your pardon, Mr. Tippery. Not you, of course. Only the other two, lieutenant. I don’t know what the charge will be crazy, anyway, if not worse, which is more likely.”

“How do you do, Mr. Tippery,” the lieutenant greeted familiarly.

“You’ll arrest nobody, Lieutenant Burns,” Charley Tippery smiled to him. “You can send the wagon back to the station. I’ll square it with the Inspector. For you’re coming along with me, and this suit-case, and these suspicious characters, to my house. You’ll have to be bodyguard oh, not for me, but for this suit-case. There are millions in it, cold millions, hard millions, beautiful millions. When I open it before my father, you’ll see a sight given to few men in this world to see. And now, come on everybody. We’re wasting time.”

He made a grab at the suit-case simultaneously with Henry, and, as both their hands clutched it, Lieutenant Burns sprang to interfere.

“I fancy I’ll carry it until it’s negotiated,” Henry asserted.

“Surely, surely,” Charley Tippery conceded, “as long as we don’t lose any more precious time. It will take time to do the negotiating. Come on! Hustle!”

CHAPTER 29

HELPED tremendously by the moratorium, the sagging market had ceased sagging, and some stocks were even beginning to recover. This was true for practically every line save those lines in which Francis owned and which Regan was bearing. He continued bearing and making them reluctantly fall, and he noted with joy the huge blocks of Tampico Petroleum which were being dumped obviously by no other person than Francis.

"Now's the time," Regan informed his bear conspirators. "Play her coming and going. It's a double ruff. Remefmber the list I gave you. Sell these, and sell short. For them there is no bottom. As for all the rest, buy and buy now, and deliver all that you sold. You can't lose, you see, and by continuing to hammer the list you'll make a double killing."

"How about yourself?" one of his bear crowd queried.

"I've nothing to buy," came the answer. "That will show you how square I have been in my tip, and how confident I am. I haven't sold a share outside the list, so I have nothing to deliver. I am still selling short and hammering down the list, and the list only. There's my killing, and you can share in it by as much as you continue to sell short."

"There you are!" Bascom, in despair in his private office, cried to Francis at ten-thirty. "Here's the whole market rising, except your lines. Regan's out for blood. I never dreamed he could show such strength. We can't stand this. We're finished. We're smashed now you, me, all of us everything."

Never had Francis been cooler. Since all was lost, why worry? was his attitude; and, a mere layman in the game, he caught a glimpse of possibilities that were veiled to Bascom who too thoroughly knew too much about the game.

"Take it easy," Francis counseled, his new vision assuming form and substance with each tick of a second. "Let's have a smoke and talk it over for a few minutes."

Bascom made a gesture of infinite impatience.

"But wait," Francis urged. "Stop! Look! Listen! I'm finished, you say?"

His broker nodded.

"You're finished?"

Again the nod.

"Which means that we're busted, flat busted," Francis went on to the exposition of his new idea. "Now it is perfectly clear, then, to your mind and mine, that a man can never be worse than a complete, perfect, hundred-percent., entire, total bust."

"We're wasting valuable time," Bascom protested as he nodded affirmation.

"Not if we're busted as completely as you've agreed we are," smiled Francis. "Being thoroughly busted, time, sales, purchases, nothing can be of any value to us. Values have ceased, don't you see."

"Go on, what is it?" Bascom said, with the momentarily assumed patience of abject despair. "I'm busted higher than a kite now, and, as you say, they can't bust me any higher."

"Now you get the idea!" Francis jubilated. "You're a member of the Exchange. Then go ahead, sell or buy, do anything your and my merry hearts decide. We can't lose. Anything from zero always leaves zero. We've shot all we've got, and more. Let's shoot what we haven't got."

Bascom still struggled feebly to protest, but Francis beat him down with a final:

"Remember, anything from zero leaves zero."

And for the next hour, as in a nightmare, no longer a free agent, Bascom yielded to Francis' will in the maddest stock adventure of his life.

"Oh, well," Francis laughed at half-past eleven, "we might as well quit now. But remember, we're no worse off than we were an hour ago. We were zero then. We're zero now. You can hang up the auctioneer's flag any time now."

Bascom, heavily and wearily taking down the receiver, was about to transmit the orders that would stop the battle by acknowledgment of unconditional defeat, when the door opened and through it came the familiar ring of a pirate stave that made Francis flash his hand out in peremptory stoppage of his broker's arm.

"Stop!" Francis cried. "Listen!"

And they listened to the song preceding the singer:

"Back to back against the mainmast, Held at bay the entire crew."

As Henry swaggered in, carrying a huge and different suit-case, Francis joined with him in the stave.

"What's doing?" Bascom queried of Charley Tippery, who, still in evening dress, looked very jaded and worn from his exertions.

From his breast pocket he drew ancf passed over three certified checks that totaled eighteen hundred thousand dollars. Bascom shook his head sadly.

Too late,” he said. “That’s only a drop in the bucket. Put them back in your pocket. It would be only throwing them away.”

“But wait,” Charley Tippery cried, taking the suit-case from his singing companion and proceeding to open it. “Maybe that will help.”

“That” consisted of a great mass of orderly bundles of gold bonds and gilt edge securities.

“How much is it?” Bascmm gasped, his courage springing up like wildfire.

But Francis, overcome by the sight of such plethora of ammunition, ceased singing to gasp. And both he and Bascom gasped again when Henry drew from his inside pocket a bundle of a dozen certified checks. They could only stare at the prodigious sum, for each was written for a million dollars.

“And plenty more where that came from,” Henry announced airily. “All you have to do is say the word, Francis, and we’ll knock this bear gang to smithereens. Now suppose you get busy. The rumors are around everywhere that you’re gone and done for. Pitch in and show them, that’s all. Bust every last one of them that jumped you. Shake’m down to their gold watches and the fillings out of their teeth.”

“You found old Sir Henry’s treasure after all,” Francis congratulated.

“No,” Henry shook his head. “That represents part of the old Maya treasure about a third of it. We’ve got another third down with Enrico Solano, and the last third’s safe right here in the Jewelers and Traders’ National Bank. Say, I’ve got news for you when you’re ready to listen.”

And Francis was quickly ready. Bascom knew even better than he what was to be done, and was already giving his orders to his staff over the telephone buying orders of such prodigious size that all of Began’s fortune would not enable him to deliver what he had sold short. “Torres is dead,” Henry told him.

“Hurrah!” was Francis’ way of receiving it “Died like a rat in a trap. I saw his head sticking out. It wasn’t pretty. And the Jefe’s dead. And. and somebody else is dead. “

“Not Leoncia!” Francis cried out.

Henry shook his head.

"Some one of the Solanos old Enrico?"

"No; your wife, Mrs. Morgan. Torres shot her, deliberately shot her. I was beside her when she fell. Now hold on, I've got other news. Leoncia's right there in that other office, and she's waiting for you to come to her. Can't you wait till I'm through? I've got more news that will give you the right steer before you go in to her. Why, hell's bells, if I were a certain Chinaman that I know, I'd make you pay me a million for all the information I'm giving you for nothing."

"Shoot what is it?" Francis demanded impatiently.

"Good news, of course, unadulterated good news. Best news you ever heard. I now don't laugh, or knock my block off for the good news is that I've got a sister."

"What of it?" was Francis' brusque response. "I always knew you had sisters in England."

"But you don't get me," Henry dragged on. "This is a perfectly brand new sister, all grown up, and the most beautiful woman you ever laid eyes on."

"And what of it?" growled Francis. "That may be good news for you, but I don't see how it affects me."

"Ah, now we're coming to it," Henry grinned. "You're going to marry her. I give you my full permission. "

"Not if she were ten times your sister, nor if she were ten times as beautiful," Francis broke in. "The woman doesn't exist I'd marry."

"Just the same, Francis boy, you're going to marry this one. I know it. I feel it in my bones. I'd bet on it." "I'll bet you a thousand I don't."

"Aw, go on and make it a real bet," Henry drawled. "Any amount you want."

"Done, then, for a thousand and fifty dollars. Now go right into the office there and take a look at her."

"She's with Leoncia?"

"Nope; she's by herself."

"I thought you said Leoncia was in there."

"So I did, so I did. And so Leoncia is in there. And she isn't with another soul, and she's waiting to talk with you."

By this time Francis was growing peevish.

"What are you stringing me for?" he demanded. "I can't make head nor tale of your foolery. One moment it's your brand new sister in there, and the next moment it's your wife."

"Who said I ever had a wife?" Henry came back.

"I give up!" Francis cried. "I'm going on in and see Leoncia. I'll talk with you later on when you're back in your right mind."

He started for the door, but was stopped by Henry.

"Just a second more, Francis, and I'm done," he said. "I want to give you that steer. I am not married. There is only one woman waiting for you in there. That one woman is my sister. Also is she Leoncia."

It required a dazed half minute for Francis to get it clearly into his head. Again, and in a rush, he was starting for the door, when Henry stopped him.

"Do I win?" queried Henry.

But Francis shook him off, dashed through the door, and slammed it after him.

The Short Stories

LIST OF THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES

An Adventure in the Upper Sea
All Gold Cañon
Aloha Oe
Amateur Night
And 'Frisco Kid Came Back
The Apostate
God of His Fathers
At the Rainbow's End
Bald-Face
The Banks of the Sacramento
Bâtard
The Benefit of the Doubt
The Bones of Kahekili
Brown Wolf
Bunches of Knuckles
By the Turtles of Tasman
The Captain of the Susan Drew
Charley's Coup
Chased by the Trail
The Chinago
Chris Farrington, Able Seaman
Chun Ah Chun
Created He Them
A Curious Fragment
A Daughter of the Aurora
A Day's Lodging
The Death of Ligoun
Demetrios Contos
The Devil's Dice Box
The Devils of Fuatino
A Dream Image
The Dream of Debs

Dutch Courage
The End of the Chapter
The End of the Story
The Enemy of All the World
The Eternity of Forms
Even Unto Death
The Faith of Men
The Feathers of the Sun
Finis
Flush of Gold
A Flutter in Eggs
The “Francis Spaight”
“Frisco Kid’s” Story
The “Fuzziness” of Hoockla-Heen
A Goboto Night
The God of His Fathers
Goliah
Good-Bye, Jack!
The Great Interrogation
The Grilling of Loren Ellery
Grit of Women
The Handsome Cabin Boy
The Hanging of Cultus George
The Heathen
The Hobo and the Fairy
The House of Mapuhi
The House of Pride
The Hussy
A Hyperborean Brew
In a Far Country
In the Forest of the North
In the Time of Prince Charley
In Yeddo Bay
The Inevitable White Man
Jan, the Unrepentant
The Jokers of New Gibbon
Just Meat

The Kanaka Surf
Keesh, Son of Keesh
The King of Mazy May
The King of the Greeks
A Klondike Christmas
Koolau the Leper
The Law of Life
The League of the Old Men
The Leopard Man’s Story
A Lesson in Heraldry
Li-Wan, the Fair
Like Argus of the Ancient Times
A Little Account
The Little Man
Local Color
Lost Face
The Lost Poacher
Love of Life
The Madness of John Harned
The Mahatma’s Little Joke
Make Westing
The Man on the Other Bank.
The Man With the Gash
The Marriage to Lit-Lit
The Master of Mystery
Mauki
The Meat
The Men of Forty-Mile
The Mexican
The Minions of Midas
The Mistake of Creation
Moon-Face
Nam-Bok, the Unveracious
Negore, the Coward
The Night-Born
A Night’s Swim in Yeddo Bay
A Northland Miracle

A Nose For the King
O Haru
An Odyssey of the North
Old Baldy
An Old Soldier’s Story
On the Makaloa Mat
“One More Unfortunate”
The One Thousand Dozen
The Passing of Marcus O’Brien
The Pearls of Parlay
A Piece of Steak
The Plague Ship
Planchette
Pluck and Pertinacity
The Priestly Prerogative
The Princess
The Prodigal Father
The Proper “Girlie”
The Proud Goat of Aloysius Pankburn
The Race For Number Three
A Raid On the Oyster Pirates
The Red One
The Rejuvenation of Major Rathbone
A Relic of the Pliocene
Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadaki
Samuel
The Scorn of Women
The Sea Farmer
The Seed of Mccoy
Semper Idem
The Shadow and the Flash
The Sheriff of Kona
Shin-Bones
Shorty Dreams
The Sickness of Lone Chief
The Siege of the ‘Lancashire Queen’
Siwash

A Son of the Sun
The Sun of the Wolf
South of the Slot
The Stampede to Squaw Creek.
Story of a Typhoon
The Story of Jees Uck
The Story of Keesh
The Strange Experience of a Misogynist
The Strength of the Strong
The Sun Dog Trail
The Sunlanders
The Taste of the Meat
The Tears of Ah Kim
The Terrible Solomons
The Test: a Clondyke Wooing
Thanksgiving On Slav Creek
That Spot
Their Alcove
A Thousand Deaths
To Build a Fire (Early Version)
To Build a Fire (Later Version)
To Kill a Man
To Repel Boarders
To the Man On the Trail
Told in the Drooling Ward
Too Much Gold
The Town-Site of Tra-Lee
Trust
Two Gold Bricks
Under the Deck Awnings
The Unexpected
The Unmasking of a Cad
The Unparalleled Invasion
Up The Slide
War
The Water Baby
The Whale Tooth

When Alice Told Her Soul
When God Laughs
When the World Was Young
Where the Trail Forks
Which Make Men Remember
White and Yellow
The White Man’s Way
The White Silence
Who Believes in Ghosts!
Whose Business is To Live
A Wicked Woman
The Wife of a King
Winged Blackmail
The Wisdom of the Trail
The Wit of Porportuk
Wonder of Woman
Yah! Yah! Yah!
Yellow Handkerchief

An Adventure in the Upper Sea

I AM a retired captain of the upper sea. That is to say, when I was a younger man (which is not so long ago) I was an aeronaut and navigated that aerial ocean which is all around about us and above us. Naturally it is a hazardous profession, and naturally I have had many thrilling experiences, the most thrilling, or at least the most nerve-racking, being the one I am about to relate.

It happened before I went in for hydrogen gas balloons, all of varnished silk, doubled and lined, and all that, and fit for voyages of days instead of mere hours. The Little Nassau (named after the Great Nassau of many years back) was the balloon I was making ascents in at the time. It was a fair-sized, hot-air affair, of single thickness, good for an hour's flight or so and capable of attaining an altitude of a mile or more. It answered my purpose, for my act at the time was making half-mile parachute jumps at recreation parks and country fairs. I was in Oakland, a California town, filling a summer's engagement with a street railway company. The company owned a large park outside the city, and of course it was to its interest to provide attractions which would send the townspeople over its line when they went out to get a whiff of country air. My contract called for two ascensions weekly, and my act was an especially taking feature, for it was on my days that the largest crowds were drawn.

Before you can understand what happened, I must first explain a bit about the nature of the hot air balloon which is used for parachute jumping. If you have ever witnessed such a jump, you will remember that directly the parachute was cut loose the balloon turned upside down, emptied itself of its smoke and heated air, flattened out and fell straight down, beating the parachute to the ground. Thus there is no chasing a big deserted bag for miles and miles across the country, and much time, as well as trouble, is thereby saved. This maneuver is accomplished by attaching a weight, at the end of a long rope, to the top of the balloon. The aeronaut, with his parachute and trapeze, hangs to the bottom of the balloon, and, weighing more, keeps it right side down. But when he lets go, the weight attached to the top immediately drags the top down, and the bottom, which is the open mouth, goes up, the heated air pouring out. The weight used for this purpose on the Little Nassau was a bag of sand.

On the particular day I have in mind there was an unusually large crowd in attendance, and the police had their hands full keeping the people back. There was much pushing and shoving, and the ropes were bulging with the pressure of men, women and children. As I came down from the dressing room I noticed two girls outside the ropes, of about fourteen and sixteen, and inside the rope a youngster of eight or nine. They were holding him by the hands, and he was struggling, excitedly and half in laughter, to get away from them. I thought nothing of it at the time — just a bit of childish play, no more; and it was only in the light of after events that the scene was impressed vividly upon me.

"Keep them cleared out, George!" I called to my assistant. "We don't want any accidents."

"Ay," he answered, "that I will, Charley."

George Guppy had helped me in no end of ascents, and because of his coolness, judgment and absolute reliability I had come to trust my life in his hands with the utmost confidence. His business it was to overlook the inflating of the balloon, and to see that everything about the parachute was in perfect working order.

The Little Nassau was already filled and straining at the guys. The parachute lay flat along the ground and beyond it the trapeze. I tossed aside my overcoat, took my position, and gave the signal to let go. As you know, the first rush upward from the earth is very sudden, and this time the balloon, when it first caught the wind, heeled violently over and was longer than usual in righting. I looked down at the old familiar sight of the world rushing away from me. And there were the thousands of people, every face silently upturned. And the silence startled me, for, as crowds went, this was the time for them to catch their first breath and send up a roar of applause. But there was no hand-clapping, whistling, cheering-only silence. And instead, clear as a bell and distinct, without the slightest shake or quaver, came George's voice through the megaphone:

"Ride her down, Charley! Ride the balloon down!"

What had happened? I waved my hand to show that I had heard, and began to think. Had something gone wrong with the parachute? Why should I ride the balloon down instead of making the jump which thousands were waiting to see? What was the matter? And as I puzzled, I received another start. The earth was a thousand feet beneath, and yet I heard a child crying softly, and seemingly very close to hand. And though the Little Nassau was shooting skyward like a rocket, the crying did not grow fainter and fainter and die away. I confess I was almost on the edge of a funk, when, unconsciously following up the noise with my eyes, I looked above me and saw a boy astride the sandbag which was to bring the Little Nassau to earth. And it was the same little boy I had seen struggling with the two girls — his sisters, as I afterward learned.

There he was, astride the sandbag and holding on to the rope for dear life. A puff of wind heeled the balloon slightly, and he swung out into space for ten or a dozen feet, and back again, fetching up against the tight canvas with a thud which even shook me, thirty feet or more beneath. I thought to see him dashed loose, but he clung on and whimpered. They told me afterward, how, at the moment they were casting off the balloon, the little fellow had torn away from his sisters, ducked under the rope, and deliberately jumped astride the sandbag. It has always been a wonder to me that he was not jerked off in the first rush.

Well, I felt sick all over as I looked at him there, and I understood why the balloon had taken longer to right itself, and why George had called after me to ride her down. Should I cut loose with the parachute, the bag would at once turn upside down, empty itself, and begin its swift descent. The only hope lay in my riding her down and in the boy holding on. There was no possible way for me to reach him. No man could climb the slim, closed parachute; and even if a man could, and made the mouth of the balloon, what could he do? Straight out, and fifteen feet away, trailed the boy on his ticklish perch, and those fifteen feet were empty space.

I thought far more quickly than it takes to tell all this, and realized on the instant that the boy's attention must be called away from his terrible danger. Exercising all the self-control I possessed, and striving to make myself very calm, I said cheerily:

"Hello, up there, who are you?"

He looked down at me, choking back his tears and brightening up, but just then the balloon ran into a cross-current, turned half around and lay over. This set him swinging back and forth, and he fetched the canvas another bump. Then he began to cry again.

"Isn't it great?" I asked heartily, as though it was the most enjoyable thing in the world; and, without waiting for him to answer: "What's your name?"

“Tommy Dermott,” he answered.

“Glad to make your acquaintance, Tommy Dermott,” I went on. “But I’d like to know who said you could ride up with me?”

He laughed and said he just thought he’d ride up for the fun of it. And so we went on, I sick with fear for him, and cudgeling my brains to keep up the conversation. I knew that it was all I could do, and that his life depended upon my ability to keep his mind off his danger. I pointed out to him the great panorama spreading away to the horizon and four thousand feet beneath us. There lay San Francisco Bay like a great placid lake, the haze of smoke over the city, the Golden Gate, the ocean fog-rim beyond, and Mount Tamalpais over all, clear-cut and sharp against the sky. Directly below us I could see a buggy, apparently crawling, but I knew from experience that the men in it were lashing the horses on our trail.

But he grew tired of looking around, and I could see he was beginning to get frightened.

“How would you like to go in for the business?” I asked.

He cheered up at once and asked “Do you get good pay?”

But the Little Nassau, beginning to cool, had started on its long descent, and ran into counter currents which bobbed it roughly about. This swung the boy around pretty lively, smashing him into the bag once quite severely. His lip began to tremble at this, and he was crying again. I tried to joke and laugh, but it was no use. His pluck was oozing out, and at any moment I was prepared to see him go shooting past me.

I was in despair. Then, suddenly, I remembered how one fright could destroy another fright, and I frowned up at him and shouted sternly:

“You just hold on to that rope! If you don’t I’ll thrash you within an inch of your life when I get you down on the ground! Understand?”

“Ye-ye-yes, sir,” he whimpered, and I saw that the thing had worked. I was nearer to him than the earth, and he was more afraid of me than of falling.

“Why, you’ve got a snap up there on that soft bag,” I rattled on.

“Yes;” I assured him, “this bar down here is hard and narrow, and it hurts to sit on it.”

Then a thought struck him, and he forgot all about his aching fingers.

“When are you going to jump?” he asked. “That’s what I came up to see.”

I was sorry to disappoint him, but I wasn’t going to make any jump.

But he objected to that. “It said so in the papers,” he said.

“I don’t care,” I answered. “I’m feeling sort of lazy today, and I’m just going to ride down the balloon. It’s my balloon and I guess I can do as I please about it. And, anyway, we’re almost down now.”

And we were, too, and sinking fast. And right there and then that youngster began to argue with me as to whether it was right for me to disappoint the people, and to urge their claims upon me. And it was with a happy heart that I held up my end of it, justifying myself in a thousand different ways, till we shot over a grove of eucalyptus trees and dipped to meet the earth.

“Hold on tight!” I shouted, swinging down from the trapeze by my hands in order to make a landing on my feet.

We skimmed past a barn, missed a mesh of clothesline, frightened the barnyard chickens into a panic, and rose up again clear over a haystack-all this almost quicker than it takes to tell. Then we came down in an orchard, and when my feet had touched the ground I fetched up the balloon by a couple of turns of the trapeze around an apple tree.

I have had my balloon catch fire in mid air, I have hung on the cornice of a ten-story house, I have dropped like a bullet for six hundred feet when a parachute was slow in opening; but never have I felt so weak and faint and sick as when I staggered toward the unscratched boy and gripped him by the arm.

“Tommy Dermott,” I said, when I had got my nerves back somewhat. “Tommy Dermott, I’m going to lay you across my knee and give you the greatest thrashing a boy ever got in the world’s history.”

“No, you don’t,” he answered, squirming around. “You said you wouldn’t if I held on tight.”

“That’s all right,” I said, “but I’m going to, just the same. The fellows who go up in balloons are bad, unprincipled men, and I’m going to give you a lesson right now to make you stay away from them, and from balloons, too.”

And then I gave it to him, and if it wasn’t the greatest thrashing in the world, it was the greatest he ever got.

But it took all the grit out of me, left me nerve-broken, that experience. I canceled the engagement with the street railway company, and later on went in for gas. Gas is much the safer, anyway.

All Gold Cañon

It was the green heart of the cãnon, where the walls swerved back from the rigid plan and relieved their harshness of line by making a little sheltered nook and filling it to the brim with sweetness and roundness and softness. Here all things rested. Even the narrow stream ceased its turbulent down-rush long enough to form a quiet pool. Knee-deep in the water, with drooping head and half-shut eyes, drowsed a red-coated, many-antlered buck.

On one side, beginning at the very lip of the pool, was a tiny meadow, a cool, resilient surface of green that extended to the base of the frowning wall. Beyond the pool a gentle slope of earth ran up and up to meet the opposing wall. Fine grass covered the slope--grass that was spangled with flowers, with here and there patches of color, orange and purple and golden. Below, the cãnon was shut in. There was no view. The walls leaned together abruptly and the cãnon ended in a chaos of rocks, moss-covered and hidden by a green screen of vines and creepers and boughs of trees. Up the cãnon rose far hills and peaks, the big foot-hills, pine-covered and remote. And far beyond, like clouds upon the border of the sky, towered minarets of white, where the Sierra’s eternal snows flashed austerely the blazes of the sun.

There was no dust in the cãnon. The leaves and flowers were clean and virginal. The grass was young velvet. Over the pool three cottonwoods sent their snowy fluffs fluttering down the quiet air. On the slope the blossoms of the wine-wooded manzanita filled the air with springtime odors, while the leaves, wise with experience, were already beginning their vertical twist against the coming aridity of summer. In the open spaces on the slope, beyond the farthest shadow-reach of the manzanita, poised the mariposa lilies, like so many flights of jewelled moths suddenly arrested and on the verge of trembling into flight again. Here and there that woods harlequin, the madrone, permitting itself to be caught in the act of changing its pea-green trunk to madder-red, breathed its fragrance into the air from great clusters of waxen bells. Creamy white were these bells, shaped like lilies-of-the-valley, with the sweetness of perfume that is of the springtime.

There was not a sigh of wind. The air was drowsy with its weight of perfume. It was a sweetness that would have been cloying had the air been heavy and humid. But the air was sharp and thin. It was as starlight transmuted into atmosphere, shot through and warmed by sunshine, and flower-drenched with sweetness.

An occasional butterfly drifted in and out through the patches of light and shade. And from all about rose the low and sleepy hum of mountain bees--feasting Sybarites that jostled one another good-naturedly at the board, nor found time for rough discourtesy. So quietly did the little stream drip and ripple its way through the cãnon that it spoke only in faint and occasional gurgles. The voice of the stream was as a drowsy whisper, ever interrupted by dozings and silences, ever lifted again in the awakenings.

The motion of all things was a drifting in the heart of the cãnon. Sunshine an butterflies drifted in and out among the trees. The hum of the bees and the whisper of the stream were a drifting of sound. And the drifting sound and drifting color seemed to weave together in the making of a delicate and intangible fabric which was the spirit of the place. It was a spirit of peace that was not of death, but of smooth-pulsing life, of quietude that was not silence, of movement that was not action, of repose that was quick with existence without being violent with struggle and travail. The spirit of the place was the spirit of the peace of the living, somnolent with the easement and content of prosperity, and undisturbed by rumors of far wars.

The red-coated, many-antlered buck acknowledged the lordship of the spirit of the place and dozed knee-deep in the cool, shaded pool. There seemed no flies to vex him and he was languid with rest. Sometimes his ears moved when the stream awoke and whispered; but they moved lazily, with foreknowledge that it was merely the stream grown garrulous at discovery that it had slept.

But there came a time when the buck’s ears lifted and tensed with swift eagerness for sound. His head was turned down the cãnon. His sensitive, quivering nostrils scented the air. His eyes could not pierce the green screen through which the stream rippled away, but to his ears came the voice of a man. It was a steady, monotonous, singsong voice. Once the buck heard the harsh clash of metal upon rock. At the sound he snorted with a sudden start that jerked him through the air from water to meadow, and his feet sank into the young velvet, while he pricked his ears and again scented the air. Then he stole across the tiny meadow, pausing once and again to listen, and faded away out of the cãnon like a wraith, soft-footed and without sound.

The clash of steel-shod soles against the rocks began to be heard, and the man’s voice grew louder. It was raised in a sort of chant and became distinct with nearness, so that the words could be heard:

“Tu’n around an’ tu’n yo’ face
Untoe them sweet hills of grace
(D’ pow’rs of sin yo’ am scornin’!).
Look about an’ look aroun’,
Fling yo’ sin-pack on d’ groun’
(Yo’ will meet wid d’ Lord in d’ mornin’!).”

A sound of scrambling accompanied the song, and the spirit of the place fled away onthe heels of the red-coated buck. The green screen was burst asunder, and a man peered out at the meadow and the pool and the sloping side-hill. He was a deliberate sort of man. He took in the scene with one embracing glance, then ran his eyes over the details to verify the general impression. Then, and not until then, did he open his mouth in vivid and solemn approval:

“Smoke of life an’ snakes of purgatory! Will you just look at that! Wood an’ water an’ grass an’ a side-hill! A pocket-hunter’s delight an’ a cayuse’s paradise! Cool green for tired eyes! Pink pills for pale people ain’t in it. A secret pasture for prospectors and a resting-place for tired burros, by damn!”

He was a sandy-complexioned man in whose face geniality and humor seemed the salient characteristics. It was a mobile face, quick-changing to inward mood and thought. Thinking was in him a visible process. Ideas chased across his face like wind-flaws across the surface of a lake. His hair, sparse and unkempt of growth, was as indeterminate and colorless as his complexion. It would seem that all the color of his frame had gone into his eyes, for they were startlingly blue. Also, they were laughing and merry eyes, within them much of the naivete and wonder of the child; and yet, in an unassertive way, they contained much of calm self-reliance and strength of purpose founded upon self-experience and experience of the world.

From out the screen of vines and creepers he flung ahead of him a miner’s pick and shovel and gold-pan. Then he crawled out himself into the open. He was clad in faded overalls and black cotton shirt, with hobnailed brogans on his feet, and on his head a hat whose shapelessness and stains advertised the rough usage of wind and rain and sun and camp-smoke. He stood erect, seeing wide-eyed the secrecy of the scene and sensuously inhaling the warm, sweet breath of the cãnon-garden through nostrils that dilated and quivered with delight. His eyes narrowed to laughing slits of blue, his face wreathed itself in joy, and his mouth curled in a smile as he cried aloud:

“Jumping dandelions and happy hollyhocks, but that smells good to me! Talk about your attar o’ roses an’ cologne factories! They ain’t in it!”

He had the habit of soliloquy. His quick-changing facial expressions might tell every thought and mood, but the tongue, perforce, ran hard after, repeating, like a second Boswell.

The man lay down on the lip of the pool and drank long and deep of its water. “Tastes good to me,” he murmured, lifting his head and gazing across the pool at the side-hill, while he wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. The side-hill attracted his attention. Still lying on his stomach, he studied the hill formation long and carefully. It was a practised eye that travelled up the slope to the crumbling cãnon-wall and back and down again to the edge of the pool. He scrambled to his feet and favored the side-hill with a second survey.

“Looks good to me,” he concluded, picking up his pick and shovel and gold-pan.

He crossed the stream below the pool, stepping agilely from stone to stone. Where the side-hill touched the water he dug up a shovelful of dirt and put it into the gold-pan. He squatted down, holding the pan in his two hands, and partly immersing it in the stream. Then he imparted to the pan a deft circular motion that sent the water sluicing in and out through the dirt and gravel. The larger and the lighter particles worked to the surface, and these, by a skilful dipping movement of the pan, he spilled out and over the edge. Occasionally, to expedite matters, he rested the pan and with his fingers raked out the large pebbles and pieces of rock.

The contents of the pan diminished rapidly until only fine dirt and the smallest bits of gravel remained. At this stage he began to work very deliberately and carefully. It was fine washing, and he washed fine and finer, with a keen scrutiny and delicate and fastidious touch. At last the pan seemed empty of everything but water; but with a quick semicircular flirt that sent the water flying over the shallow rim into the stream, he disclosed a layer of black sand on the bottom of the pan. So thin was this layer that it was like a streak of paint. He examined it closely. In the midst of it was a tiny golden speck. He dribbled a little water in over the depressed edge of the pan. With a quick flirt he sent the water sluicing across the bottom, turning the grains of black sand over and over. A second tiny golden speck rewarded his effort.

The washing had now become very fine--fine beyond all need of ordinary placer-mining. He worked the black sand, a small portion at a time, up the shallow rim of the pan. Each small portion he examined sharply, so that his eyes saw every grain of it before he allowed it to slide over the edge and away. Jealously, bit by bit, he let the black sand slip away. A golden speck, no larger than a pin-point, appeared on the rim, and by his manipulation of the water it returned to the bottom of the pan. And in such fashion another speck was disclosed, and another. Great was his care of them. Like a shepherd he herded his flock of golden specks so that not one should be lost. At last, of the pan of dirt nothing remained but his golden herd. He counted it, and then, after all his labor, sent it flying out of the pan with one final swirl of water.

But his blue eyes were shining with desire as he rose to his feet. “Seven,” he muttered aloud, asserting the sum of the specks for which he had toiled so hard and which he had so wantonly thrown away. “Seven,” he repeated, with the emphasis of one trying to impress a number on his memory.

He stood still a long while, surveying the hillside. In his eyes was a curiosity, new-aroused and burning. There was an exultance about his bearing and a keenness like that of a hunting animal catching the fresh scent of game.

He moved down the stream a few steps and took a second panful of dirt.

Again came the careful washing, the jealous herding of the golden specks, and the wantonness with which he sent them flying into the stream when he had counted their number.

“Five,” he muttered, and repeated, “five.”

He could not forbear another survey of the hill before filling the pan farther down the stream. His golden herds diminished. “Four, three, two, two, one,” were his memory-tabulations as he moved down the stream. When but one speck of gold rewarded his washing, he stopped and built a fire of dry twigs. Into this he thrust the gold-pan and burned it till it was blue-black. He held up the pan and examined it critically. Then he nodded approbation. Against such a color-background he could defy the tiniest yellow speck to elude him.

Still moving down the stream, he panned again. A single speck was his reward. A third pan contained no gold at all. Not satisfied with this, he panned three times again, taking his shovels of dirt within a foot of one another. Each pan proved empty of gold, and the fact, instead of discouraging him, seemed to give him satisfaction. His elation increased with each barren washing, until he arose, exclaiming jubilantly:

"If it ain't the real thing, may God knock off my head with sour apples!"

Returning to where he had started operations, he began to pan up the stream. At first his golden herds increased--increased prodigiously. "Fourteen, eighteen, twenty-one, twenty-six," ran his memory tabulations. Just above the pool he struck his richest pan--thirty-five colors.

"Almost enough to save," he remarked regretfully as he allowed the water to sweep them away.

The sun climbed to the top of the sky. The man worked on. Pan by pan, he went up the stream, the tally of results steadily decreasing.

"It's just booful, the way it peters out," he exulted when a shovelful of dirt contained no more than a single speck of gold.

And when no specks at all were found in several pans, he straightened up and favored the hillside with a confident glance.

"Ah, ha! Mr. Pocket!" he cried out, as though to an auditor hidden somewhere above him beneath the surface of the slope. "Ah, ha! Mr. Pocket! I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin', an' I'm shorely gwine to get yer! You heah me, Mr. Pocket? I'm gwine to get yer as shore as punkins ain't cauliflowers!"

He turned and flung a measuring glance at the sun poised above him in the azure of the cloudless sky. Then he went down the cãnon, following the line of shovel-holes he had made in filling the pans. He crossed the stream below the pool and disappeared through the green screen. There was little opportunity for the spirit of the place to return with its quietude and repose, for the man's voice, raised in ragtime song, still dominated the cãnon with possession.

After a time, with a greater clashing of steel-shod feet on rock, he returned. The green screen was tremendously agitated. It surged back and forth in the throes of a struggle. There was a loud grating and clanging of metal. The man's voice leaped to a higher pitch and was sharp with imperativeness. A large body plunged and panted. There was a snapping and ripping and rending, and amid a shower of falling leaves a horse burst through the screen. On its back was a pack, and from this trailed broken vines and torn creepers. The animal gazed with astonished eyes at the scene into which it had been precipitated, then dropped its head to the grass and began contentedly to graze. A second horse scrambled into view, slipping once on the mossy rocks and regaining equilibrium when its hoofs sank into the yielding surface of the meadow. It was riderless, though on its back was a high-horned Mexican saddle, scarred and discolored by long usage.

The man brought up the rear. He threw off pack and saddle, with an eye to camp location, and gave the animals their freedom to graze. He unpacked his food and got out frying-pan and coffee-pot. He gathered an armful of dry wood, and with a few stones made a place for his fire.

“My!” he said, “but I’ve got an appetite. I could scoff iron-filings an’ horseshoe nails an’ thank you kindly, ma’am, for a second helpin’.”

He straightened up, and, while he reached for matches in the pocket of his overalls, his eyes travelled across the pool to the side-hill. His fingers had clutched the match-box, but they relaxed their hold and the hand came out empty. The man wavered perceptibly. He looked at his preparations for cooking and he looked at the hill.

“Guess I’ll take another whack at her,” he concluded, starting to cross the stream.

“They ain’t no sense in it, I know,” he mumbled apologetically. “But keepin’ grub back an hour ain’t goin’ to hurt none, I reckon.”

A few feet back from his first line of test-pans he started a second line. The sun dropped down the western sky, the shadows lengthened, but the man worked on. He began a third line of test-pans. He was cross-cutting the hillside, line by line, as he ascended. The centre of each line produced the richest pans, while the ends came where no colors showed in the pan. And as he ascended the hillside the lines grew perceptibly shorter. The regularity with which their length diminished served to indicate that somewhere up the slope the last line would be so short as to have scarcely length at all, and that beyond could come only a point. The design was growing into an inverted “V.” The converging sides of this “V” marked the boundaries of the gold-bearing dirt. The apex of the “V” was evidently the man’s goal. Often he ran his eye along the converging sides and on up the hill, trying to divine the apex, the point where the gold-bearing dirt must cease. Here resided “Mr. Pocket”--for so the man familiarly addressed the imaginary point above him on the slope, crying out:

“Come down out o’ that, Mr. Pocket! Be right smart an’ agreeable, an’ come down!”

“All right,” he would add later, in a voice resigned to determination. “All right, Mr. Pocket. It’s plain to me I got to come right up an’ snatch you out bald-headed. An’ I’ll do it! I’ll do it!” he would threaten still later.

Each pan he carried down to the water to wash, and as he went higher up the hill the pans grew richer, until he began to save the gold in an empty baking-powder can which he carried carelessly in his hip-pocket. So engrossed was he in his toil that he did not notice the long twilight of oncoming night. It was not until he tried vainly to see the gold colors in the bottom of the pan that he realized the passage of time. He straightened up abruptly. An expression of whimsical wonderment and awe overspread his face as he drawled:

“Gosh darn my buttons! if I didn’t plumb forget dinner!”

He stumbled across the stream in the darkness and lighted his long-delayed fire. Flapjacks and bacon and warmed-over beans constituted his supper. Then he smoked a pipe by the smouldering coals, listening to the night noises and watching the moonlight stream through the cãnon. After that he unrolled his bed, took off his heavy shoes, and pulled the blankets up to his chin. His face showed white in the moonlight, like the face of a corpse. But it was a corpse that knew its resurrection, for the man rose suddenly on one elbow and gazed across at his hillside.

“Good night, Mr. Pocket,” he called sleepily. “Good night.”

He slept through the early gray of morning until the direct rays of the sun smote his closed eyelids, when he awoke with a start and looked about him until he had established the continuity of his existence and identified his present self with the days previously lived.

To dress, he had merely to buckle on his shoes. He glanced at his fireplace and at his hillside, wavered, but fought down the temptation and started the fire.

“Keep yer shirt on, Bill; keep yer shirt on,” he admonished himself. “What’s the good of rushin’? No use in gettin’ all het up an’ sweaty. Mr. Pocket’ll wait for you. He ain’t a-runnin’ away before you can get yer breakfast. Now, what you want, Bill, is something fresh in yer bill o’ fare. So it’s up to you to go an’ get it.”

He cut a short pole at the water’s edge and drew from one of his pockets a bit of line and a draggled fly that had once been a royal coachman.

“Mebbe they’ll bite in the early morning,” he muttered, as he made his first cast into the pool. And a moment later he was gleefully crying: “What ‘d I tell you, eh? What ‘d I tell you?”

He had no reel, nor any inclination to waste time, and by main strength, and swiftly, he drew out of the water a flashing ten-inch trout. Three more, caught in rapid succession, furnished his breakfast. When he came to the stepping-stones on his way to his hillside, he was struck by a sudden thought, and paused.

“I’d just better take a hike down-stream a ways,” he said. “There’s no tellin’ what cuss may be snoopin’ around.”

But he crossed over on the stones, and with a “I really oughter take that hike,” the need of the precaution passed out of his mind and he fell to work.

At nightfall he straightened up. The small of his back was stiff from stooping toil, and as he put his hand behind him to soothe the protesting muscles, he said:

“Now what d’ye think of that, by damn? I clean forgot my dinner again! If I don’t watch out, I’ll sure be degeneratin’ into a two-meal-a-day crank.”

“Pockets is the damnedest things I ever see for makin’ a man absent-minded,” he communed that night, as he crawled into his blankets. Nor did he forget to call up the hillside, “Good night, Mr. Pocket! Good night!”

Rising with the sun, and snatching a hasty breakfast, he was early at work. A fever seemed to be growing in him, nor did the increasing richness of the test-pans allay this fever. There was a flush in his cheek other than that made by the heat of the sun, and he was oblivious to fatigue and the passage of time. When he filled a pan with dirt, he ran down the hill to wash it; nor could he forbear running up the hill again, panting and stumbling profanely, to refill the pan.

He was now a hundred yards from the water, and the inverted “V” was assuming definite proportions. The width of the pay-dirt steadily decreased, and the man extended in his mind’s eye the sides of the “V” to their meeting-place far up the hill. This was his goal, the apex of the “V,” and he panned many times to locate it.

“Just about two yards above that manzanita bush an’ a yard to the right,” he finally concluded.

Then the temptation seized him. “As plain as the nose on your face,” he said, as he abandoned his laborious cross-cutting and climbed to the indicated apex. He filled a pan and carried it down the hill to wash. It contained no trace of gold. He dug deep, and he dug shallow, filling and washing a dozen pans, and was unrewarded even by the tiniest golden speck. He was enraged at having yielded to the temptation, and cursed himself blasphemously and pridelessly. Then he went down the hill and took up the cross-cutting.

"Slow an' certain, Bill; slow an' certain," he crooned. "Short-cuts to fortune ain't in your line, an' it's about time you know it. Get wise, Bill; get wise. Slow an' certain's the only hand you can play; so go to it, an' keep to it, too."

As the cross-cuts decreased, showing that the sides of the "V" were converging, the depth of the "V" increased. The gold-trace was dipping into the hill. It was only at thirty inches beneath the surface that he could get colors in his pan. The dirt he found at twenty-five inches from the surface, and at thirty-five inches, yielded barren pans. At the base of the "V," by the water's edge, he had found the gold colors at the grass roots. The higher he went up the hill, the deeper the gold dipped. To dig a hole three feet deep in order to get one test-pan was a task of no mean magnitude; while between the man and the apex intervened an untold number of such holes to be dug. "An' there's no tellin' how much deeper it 'll pitch," he sighed, in a moment's pause, while his fingers soothed his aching back.

Feverish with desire, with aching back and stiffening muscles, with pick and shovel gouging and mauling the soft brown earth, the man toiled up the hill. Before him was the smooth slope, spangled with flowers and made sweet with their breath. Behind him was devastation. It looked like some terrible eruption breaking out on the smooth skin of the hill. His slow progress was like that of a slug, befouling beauty with a monstrous trail.

Though the dipping gold-trace increased the man's work, he found consolation in the increasing richness of the pans. Twenty cents, thirty cents, fifty cents, sixty cents, were the values of the gold found in the pans, and at nightfall he washed his banner pan, which gave him a dollar's worth of gold-dust from a shovelful of dirt.

"I'll just bet it's my luck to have some inquisitive cuss come buttin' in here on my pasture," he mumbled sleepily that night as he pulled the blankets up to his chin.

Suddenly he sat upright. "Bill!" he called sharply. "Now, listen to me, Bill; d'ye hear! It's up to you, to-morrow mornin', to mosey round an' see what you can see. Understand? To-morrow morning, an' don't you forget it!"

He yawned and glanced across at his side-hill. “Good night, Mr. Pocket,” he called.

In the morning he stole a march on the sun, for he had finished breakfast when its first rays caught him, and he was climbing the wall of the cãnon where it crumbled away and gave footing. From the outlook at the top he found himself in the midst of loneliness. As far as he could see, chain after chain of mountains heaved themselves into his vision. To the east his eyes, leaping the miles between range and range and between many ranges, brought up at last against the white-peaked Sierras — the main crest, where the backbone of the Western world reared itself against the sky. To the north and south he could see more distinctly the cross-systems that broke through the main trend of the sea of mountains. To the west the ranges fell away, one behind the other, diminishing and fading into the gentle foothills that, in turn, descended into the great valley which he could not see.

And in all that mighty sweep of earth he saw no sign of man nor of the handiwork of man — save only the torn bosom of the hillside at his feet. The man looked long and carefully. Once, far down his own cãnon, he thought he saw in the air a faint hint of smoke. He looked again and decided that it was the purple haze of the hills made dark by a convolution of the cãnon wall at its back.

“Hey, you, Mr. Pocket!” he called down into the cãnon. “Stand out from under! I’m a-comin’, Mr. Pocket! I’m a-comin’!”

The heavy brogans on the man’s feet made him appear clumsy-footed, but he swung down from the giddy height as lightly and airily as a mountain goat. A rock, turning under his foot on the edge of the precipice, did not disconcert him. He seemed to know the precise time required for the turn to culminate in disaster, and in the meantime he utilized the false footing itself for the momentary earth-contact necessary to carry him on into safety. Where the earth sloped so steeply that it was impossible to stand for a second upright, the man did not hesitate. His foot pressed the impossible surface for but a fraction of the fatal second and gave him the bound that carried him onward. Again, where even the fraction of a second’s footing was out of the question, he would swing his body past by a moment’s hand-grip on a jutting knob of rock, a crevice, or a precariously rooted shrub. At last, with a wild leap and yell, he exchanged the face of the wall for an earth-slide and finished the descent in the midst of several tons of sliding earth and gravel.

His first pan of the morning washed out over two dollars in coarse gold. It was from the centre of the “V.” To either side the diminution in the values of the pans was swift. His lines of cross-cutting holes were growing very short. The converging sides of the inverted “V” were only a few yards apart. Their meeting-point was only a few yards above him. But the pay-streak was dipping deeper and deeper into the earth. By early afternoon he was sinking the test-holes five feet before the pans could show the gold-trace.

For that matter, the gold-trace had become something more than a trace; it was a placer mine in itself, and the man resolved to come back after he had found the pocket and work over the ground. But the increasing richness of the pans began to worry him. By late afternoon the worth of the pans had grown to three and four dollars. The man scratched his head perplexedly and looked a few feet up the hill at the manzanita bush that marked approximately the apex of the “V.” He nodded his head and said oracularly:

“It’s one o’ two things, Bill; one o’ two things. Either Mr. Pocket’s spilled himself all out an’ down the hill, or else Mr. Pocket’s that damned rich you maybe won’t be able to carry him all away with you. And that ‘d be hell, wouldn’t it, now?” He chuckled at contemplation of so pleasant a dilemma.

Nightfall found him by the edge of the stream, his eyes wrestling with the gathering darkness over the washing of a five-dollar pan.

“Wisht I had an electric light to go on working,” he said.

He found sleep difficult that night. Many times he composed himself and closed his eyes for slumber to overtake him; but his blood pounded with too strong desire, and as many times his eyes opened and he murmured wearily, “Wisht it was sun-up.”

Sleep came to him in the end, but his eyes were open with the first paling of the stars, and the gray of dawn caught him with breakfast finished and climbing the hillside in the direction of the secret abiding-place of Mr. Pocket.

The first cross-cut the man made, there was space for only three holes, so narrow had become the pay-streak and so close was he to the fountainhead of the golden stream he had been following for four days.

“Be ca’m, Bill; be ca’m,” he admonished himself, as he broke ground for the final hole where the sides of the “V” had at last come together in a point.

“I’ve got the almighty cinch on you, Mr. Pocket, an’ you can’t lose me,” he said many times as he sank the hole deeper and deeper.

Four feet, five feet, six feet, he dug his way down into the earth. The digging grew harder. His pick grated on broken rock. He examined the rock.

“Rotten quartz,” was his conclusion as, with the shovel, he cleared the bottom of the hole of loose dirt. He attacked the crumbling quartz with the pick, bursting the disintegrating rock asunder with every stroke. He thrust his shovel into the loose mass. His eye caught a gleam of yellow. He dropped the shovel and squatted suddenly on his heels. As a farmer rubs the clinging earth from fresh-dug potatoes, so the man, a piece of rotten quartz held in both hands, rubbed the dirt away.

“Sufferin’ Sardanopolis!” he cried. “Lumps an’ chunks of it! Lumps an’ chunks of it!”

It was only half rock he held in his hand. The other half was virgin gold. He dropped it into his pan and examined another piece. Little yellow was to be seen, but with his strong fingers he crumbled the rotten quartz away till both hands were filled with glowing yellow. He rubbed the dirt away from fragment after fragment, tossing them into the gold-pan. It was a treasure-hole. So much had the quartz rotted away that there was less of it than there was of gold. Now and again he found a piece to which no rock clung — a piece that was all gold. A chunk, where the pick had laid open the heart of the gold, glittered like a handful of yellow jewels, and he cocked his head at it and slowly turned it around and over to observe the rich play of the light upon it.

“Talk about yer Too Much Gold diggin’s!” the man snorted contemptuously. “Why, this diggin’ ‘d make it look like thirty cents. This diggin’ is All Gold. An’ right here an’ now I name this yere cãnon ‘All Gold Cãnon,’ b’ gosh!”

Still squatting on his heels, he continued examining the fragments and tossing them into the pan. Suddenly there came to him a premonition of danger. It seemed a shadow had fallen upon him. But there was no shadow. His heart had given a great jump up into his throat and was choking him. Then his blood slowly chilled and he felt the sweat of his shirt cold against his flesh.

He did not spring up nor look around. He did not move. He was considering the nature of the premonition he had received, trying to locate the source of the mysterious force that had warned him, striving to sense the imperative presence of the unseen thing that threatened him. There is an aura of things hostile, made manifest by messengers too refined for the senses to know; and this aura he felt, but knew not how he felt it. His was the feeling as when a cloud passes over the sun. It seemed that between him and life had passed something dark and smothering and menacing; a gloom, as it were, that swallowed up life and made for death — his death.

Every force of his being impelled him to spring up and confront the unseen danger, but his soul dominated the panic, and he remained squatting on his heels, in his hands a chunk of gold. He did not dare to look around, but he knew by now that there was something behind him and above him. He made believe to be interested in the gold in his hand. He examined it critically, turned it over and over, and rubbed the dirt from it. And all the time he knew that something behind him was looking at the gold over his shoulder.

Still feigning interest in the chunk of gold in his hand, he listened intently and he heard the breathing of the thing behind him. His eyes searched the ground in front of him for a weapon, but they saw only the uprooted gold, worthless to him now in his extremity. There was his pick, a handy weapon on occasion; but this was not such an occasion. The man realized his predicament. He was in a narrow hole that was seven feet deep. His head did not come to the surface of the ground. He was in a trap.

He remained squatting on his heels. He was quite cool and collected; but his mind, considering every factor, showed him only his helplessness. He continued rubbing the dirt from the quartz fragments and throwing the gold into the pan. There was nothing else for him to do. Yet he knew that he would have to rise up, sooner or later, and face the danger that breathed at his back. The minutes passed, and with the passage of each minute he knew that by so much he was nearer the time when he must stand up, or else — and his wet shirt went cold against his flesh again at the thought — or else he might receive death as he stooped there over his treasure.

Still he squatted on his heels, rubbing dirt from gold and debating in just what manner he should rise up. He might rise up with a rush and claw his way out of the hole to meet whatever threatened on the even footing above ground. Or he might rise up slowly and carelessly, and feign casually to discover the thing that breathed at his back. His instinct and every fighting fibre of his body favored the mad, clawing rush to the surface. His intellect, and the craft thereof, favored the slow and cautious meeting with the thing that menaced and which he could not see. And while he debated, a loud, crashing noise burst on his ear. At the same instant he received a stunning blow on the left side of the back, and from the point of impact felt a rush of flame through his flesh. He sprang up in the air, but halfway to his feet collapsed. His body crumpled in like a leaf withered in sudden heat, and he came down, his chest across his pan of gold, his face in the dirt and rock, his legs tangled and twisted because of the restricted space at the bottom of the hole. His legs twitched convulsively several times. His body was shaken as with a mighty ague. There was a slow expansion of the lungs, accompanied by a deep sigh. Then the air was slowly, very slowly, exhaled, and his body as slowly flattened itself down into inertness.

Above, revolver in hand, a man was peering down over the edge of the hole. He peered for a long time at the prone and motionless body beneath him. After a while the stranger sat down on the edge of the hole so that he could see into it, and rested the revolver on his knee. Reaching his hand into a pocket, he drew out a wisp of brown paper. Into this he dropped a few crumbs of tobacco. The combination became a cigarette, brown and squat, with the ends turned in. Not once did he take his eyes from the body at the bottom of the hole. He lighted the cigarette and drew its smoke into his lungs with a caressing intake of the breath. He smoked slowly. Once the cigarette went out and he relighted it. And all the while he studied the body beneath him.

In the end he tossed the cigarette stub away and rose to his feet. He moved to the edge of the hole. Spanning it, a hand resting on each edge, and with the revolver still in the right hand, he muscled his body down into the hole. While his feet were yet a yard from the bottom he released his hands and dropped down.

At the instant his feet struck bottom he saw the pocket-miner’s arm leap out, and his own legs knew a swift, jerking grip that overthrew him. In the nature of the jump his revolver-hand was above his head. Swiftly as the grip had flashed about his legs, just as swiftly he brought the revolver down. He was still in the air, his fall in process of completion, when he pulled the trigger. The explosion was deafening in the confined space. The smoke filled the hole so that he could see nothing. He struck the bottom on his back, and like a cat’s the pocket-miner’s body was on top of him. Even as the miner’s body passed on top, the stranger crooked in his right arm to fire; and even in that instant the miner, with a quick thrust of elbow, struck his wrist. The muzzle was thrown up and the bullet thudded into the dirt of the side of the hole.

The next instant the stranger felt the miner’s hand grip his wrist. The struggle was now for the revolver. Each man strove to turn it against the other’s body. The smoke in the hole was clearing. The stranger, lying on his back, was beginning to see dimly. But suddenly he was blinded by a handful of dirt deliberately flung into his eyes by his antagonist. In that moment of shock his grip on the revolver was broken. In the next moment he felt a smashing darkness descend upon his brain, and in the midst of the darkness even the darkness ceased.

But the pocket-miner fired again and again, until the revolver was empty. Then he tossed it from him and, breathing heavily, sat down on the dead man’s legs.

The miner was sobbing and struggling for breath. “Measly skunk!” he panted; “a-campin’ on my trail an’ lettin’ me do the work, an’ then shootin’ me in the back!”

He was half crying from anger and exhaustion. He peered at the face of the dead man. It was sprinkled with loose dirt and gravel, and it was difficult to distinguish the features.

“Never laid eyes on him before,” the miner concluded his scrutiny. “Just a common an’ ordinary thief, damn him! An’ he shot me in the back! He shot me in the back!”

He opened his shirt and felt himself, front and back, on his left side.

“Went clean through, and no harm done!” he cried jubilantly. “I’ll bet he aimed all right all right; but he drew the gun over when he pulled the trigger — the cuss! But I fixed ‘m! Oh, I fixed ‘m!”

His fingers were investigating the bullet-hole in his side, and a shade of regret passed over his face. “It’s goin’ to be stiffer’n hell,” he said. “An’ it’s up to me to get mended an’ get out o’ here.”

He crawled out of the hole and went down the hill to his camp. Half an hour later he returned, leading his pack-horse. His open shirt disclosed the rude bandages with which he had dressed his wound. He was slow and awkward with his left-hand movements, but that did not prevent his using the arm.

The bight of the pack-rope under the dead man’s shoulders enabled him to heave the body out of the hole. Then he set to work gathering up his gold.

He worked steadily for several hours, pausing often to rest his stiffening shoulder and to exclaim:

"He shot me in the back, the measly skunk! He shot me in the back!"

When his treasure was quite cleaned up and wrapped securely into a number of blanket-covered parcels, he made an estimate of its value.

"Four hundred pounds, or I'm a Hottentot," he concluded. "Say two hundred in quartz an' dirt — that leaves two hundred pounds of gold. Bill! Wake up! Two hundred pounds of gold! Forty thousand dollars! An' it's yourn — all yourn!"

He scratched his head delightedly and his fingers blundered into an unfamiliar groove. They quested along it for several inches. It was a crease through his scalp where the second bullet had ploughed.

He walked angrily over to the dead man.

"You would, would you?" he bullied. "You would, eh? Well, fixed you good an' plenty, an' I'll give you decent burial, too. That's more'n you'd have done for me." He dragged the body to the edge of the hole and toppled it in. It struck the bottom with a dull crash, on its side, the face twisted up to the light. The miner peered down at it.

"An' you shot me in the back!" he said accusingly.

With pick and shovel he filled the hole. Then he loaded the gold on his horse. It was too great a load for the animal, and when he had gained his camp he transferred part of it to his saddle-horse. Even so, he was compelled to abandon a portion of his outfit — pick and shovel and gold-pan, extra food and cooking utensils, and divers odds and ends.

The sun was at the zenith when the man forced the horses at the screen of vines and creepers. To climb the huge boulders the animals were compelled to uprear and struggle blindly through the tangled mass of vegetation. Once the saddle-horse fell heavily and the man removed the pack to get the animal on its feet. After it started on its way again the man thrust his head out from among the leaves and peered up at the hillside.

"The measly skunk!" he said, and disappeared.

There was a ripping and tearing of vines and boughs. The trees surged back and forth, marking the passage of the animals through the midst of them. There was a clashing of steel-shod hoofs on stone, and now and again an oath or a sharp cry of command. Then the voice of the man was raised in song: —

"Tu'n around an' tu'n yo' face

Untoe them sweet hills of grace
(D’ pow’rs of sin yo’ am scornin’!).
Look about an’ look aroun’,
Fling yo’ sin-pack on d’ groun’
(Yo’ will meet wid d’ Lord in d’ mornin’!).”

The song grew faint and fainter, and through the silence crept back the spirit of the place. The stream once more drowsed and whispered; the hum of the mountain bees rose sleepily. Down through the perfume-weighted air fluttered the snowy fluffs of the cottonwoods. The butterflies drifted in and out among the trees, and over all blazed the quiet sunshine. Only remained the hoof-marks in the meadow and the torn hillside to mark the boisterous trail of the life that had broken the peace of the place and passed on.

Aloha Oe

NEVER are there such departures as from the dock at Honolulu. The great transport lay with steam up, ready to pull out. A thousand persons were on her decks; five thousand stood on the wharf. Up and down the long gangway passed native princes and princesses, sugar kings and the high officials of the Territory. Beyond, in long lines, kept in order by the native police, were the carriages and motor-cars of the Honolulu aristocracy. On the wharf the Royal Hawaiian Band played “Aloha Oe,” and when it finished, a stringed orchestra of native musicians on board the transport took up the same sobbing strains, the native woman singer’s voice rising birdlike above the instruments and the hubbub of departure. It was a silver reed, sounding its clear, unmistakable note in the great diapason of farewell.

Forward, on the lower deck, the rail was lined six deep with khaki-clad young boys, whose bronzed faces told of three years’ campaigning under the sun. But the farewell was not for them. Nor was it for the white-clad captain on the lofty bridge, remote as the stars, gazing down upon the tumult beneath him. Nor was the farewell for the young officers farther aft, returning from the Philippines, nor for the white-faced, climate-ravaged women by their sides. Just aft the gangway, on the promenade deck, stood a score of United States Senators with their wives and daughters--the Senatorial junketing party that for a month had been dined and wined, surfeited with statistics and dragged up volcanic hill and down lava dale to behold the glories and resources of Hawaii. It was for the junketing party that the transport had called in at Honolulu, and it was to the junketing party that Honolulu was saying good-bye.

The Senators were garlanded and bedecked with flowers. Senator Jeremy Sambrooke’s stout neck and portly bosom were burdened with a dozen wreaths. Out of this mass of bloom and blossom projected his head and the greater portion of his freshly sunburned and perspiring face. He thought the flowers an abomination, and as he looked out over the multitude on the wharf it was with a statistical eye that saw none of the beauty, but that peered into the labour power, the factories, the railroads, and the plantations that lay back of the multitude and which the multitude expressed. He saw resources and thought development, and he was too busy with dreams of material achievement and empire to notice his daughter at his side, talking with a young fellow in a natty summer suit and straw hat, whose eager eyes seemed only for her and never left her face. Had Senator Jeremy had eyes for his daughter, he would have seen that, in place of the young girl of fifteen he had brought to Hawaii a short month before, he was now taking away with him a woman.

Hawaii has a ripening climate, and Dorothy Sambrooke had been exposed to it under exceptionally ripening circumstances. Slender, pale, with blue eyes a trifle tired from poring over the pages of books and trying to muddle into an understanding of life--such she had been the month before. But now the eyes were warm instead of tired, the cheeks were touched with the sun, and the body gave the first hint and promise of swelling lines. During that month she had left books alone, for she had found greater joy in reading from the book of life. She had ridden horses, climbed volcanoes, and learned surf swimming. The tropics had entered into her blood, and she was aglow with the warmth and colour and sunshine. And for a month she had been in the company of a man--Stephen Knight, athlete, surf-board rider, a bronzed god of the sea who bitted the crashing breakers, leaped upon their backs, and rode them in to shore.

Dorothy Sambrooke was unaware of the change. Her consciousness was still that of a young girl, and she was surprised and troubled by Steve’s conduct in this hour of saying good-bye. She had looked upon him as her playfellow, and for the month he had been her playfellow; but now he was not parting like a playfellow. He talked excitedly and disconnectedly, or was silent, by fits and starts. Sometimes he did not hear what she was saying, or if he did, failed to respond in his wonted manner. She was perturbed by the way he looked at her. She had not known before that he had such blazing eyes. There was something in his eyes that was terrifying. She could not face it, and her own eyes continually drooped before it. Yet there was something alluring about it, as well, and she continually returned to catch a glimpse of that blazing, imperious, yearning something that she had never seen in human eyes before. And she was herself strangely bewildered and excited.

The transport’s huge whistle blew a deafening blast, and the flower-crowned multitude surged closer to the side of the dock. Dorothy Sambrooke’s fingers were pressed to her ears; and as she made a moue of distaste at the outrage of sound, she noticed again the imperious, yearning blaze in Steve’s eyes. He was not looking at her, but at her ears, delicately pink and transparent in the slanting rays of the afternoon sun. Curious and fascinated, she gazed at that strange something in his eyes until he saw that he had been caught. She saw his cheeks flush darkly and heard him utter inarticulately. He was embarrassed, and she was aware of embarrassment herself. Stewards were going about nervously begging shore-going persons to be gone. Steve put out his hand. When she felt the grip of the fingers that had gripped hers a thousand times on surf-boards and lava slopes, she heard the words of the song with a new understanding as they sobbed in the Hawaiian woman's silver throat:

"Ka halia ko aloha kai hiki mai,
Ke hone ae nei i ku'u manawa,
O oe no kan aloha
A loko e hana nei."

Steve had taught her air and words and meaning--so she had thought, till this instant; and in this instant of the last finger clasp and warm contact of palms she divined for the first time the real meaning of the song. She scarcely saw him go, nor could she note him on the crowded gangway, for she was deep in a memory maze, living over the four weeks just past, rereading events in the light of revelation.

When the Senatorial party had landed, Steve had been one of the committee of entertainment. It was he who had given them their first exhibition of surf riding, out at Waikiki Beach, paddling his narrow board seaward until he became a disappearing speck, and then, suddenly reappearing, rising like a sea-god from out of the welter of spume and churning white--rising swiftly higher and higher, shoulders and chest and loins and limbs, until he stood poised on the smoking crest of a mighty, mile-long billow, his feet buried in the flying foam, hurling beach-ward with the speed of an express train and stepping calmly ashore at their astounded feet. That had been her first glimpse of Steve. He had been the youngest man on the committee, a youth, himself, of twenty. He had not entertained by speechmaking, nor had he shone decoratively at receptions. It was in the breakers at Waikiki, in the wild cattle drive on Manna Kea, and in the breaking yard of the Haleakala Ranch that he had performed his share of the entertaining.

She had not cared for the interminable statistics and eternal speechmaking of the other members of the committee. Neither had Steve. And it was with Steve that she had stolen away from the open-air feast at

Hamakua, and from Abe Louisson, the coffee planter, who had talked coffee, coffee, nothing but coffee, for two mortal hours. It was then, as they rode among the tree ferns, that Steve had taught her the words of "Aloha Oe," the song that had been sung to the visiting Senators at every village, ranch, and plantation departure.

Steve and she had been much together from the first. He had been her playfellow. She had taken possession of him while her father had been occupied in taking possession of the statistics of the island territory. She was too gentle to tyrannize over her playfellow, yet she had ruled him abjectly, except when in canoe, or on horse or surf-board, at which times he had taken charge and she had rendered obedience. And now, with this last singing of the song, as the lines were cast off and the big transport began backing slowly out from the dock, she knew that Steve was something more to her than playfellow.

Five thousand voices were singing "Aloha Oe,"--"MY LOVE BE WITH YOU TILL WE MEET AGAIN,"--and in that first moment of known love she realized that she and Steve were being torn apart. When would they ever meet again? He had taught her those words himself. She remembered listening as he sang them over and over under the hau tree at Waikiki. Had it been prophecy? And she had admired his singing, had told him that he sang with such expression. She laughed aloud, hysterically, at the recollection. With such expression!--when he had been pouring his heart out in his voice. She knew now, and it was too late. Why had he not spoken? Then she realized that girls of her age did not marry. But girls of her age did marry--in Hawaii--was her instant thought. Hawaii had ripened her--Hawaii, where flesh is golden and where all women are ripe and sun-kissed.

Vainly she scanned the packed multitude on the dock. What had become of him? She felt she could pay any price for one more glimpse of him, and she almost hoped that some mortal sickness would strike the lonely captain on the bridge and delay departure. For the first time in her life she looked at her father with a calculating eye, and as she did she noted with newborn fear the lines of will and determination. It would be terrible to oppose him. And what chance would she have in such a struggle? But why had Steve not spoken? Now it was too late. Why had he not spoken under the hau tree at Waikiki?

And then, with a great sinking of the heart, it came to her that she knew why. What was it she had heard one day? Oh, yes, it was at Mrs. Stanton's tea, that afternoon when the ladies of the “Missionary Crowd” had entertained the ladies of the Senatorial party. It was Mrs. Hodgkins, the tall blonde woman, who had asked the question. The scene came back to her vividly--the broad lanai, the tropic flowers, the noiseless Asiatic attendants, the hum of the voices of the many women and the question Mrs. Hodgkins had asked in the group next to her. Mrs. Hodgkins had been away on the mainland for years, and was evidently inquiring after old island friends of her maiden days. “What has become of Susie Maydwell?” was the question she had asked. “Oh, we never see her any more; she married Willie Kupele,” another island woman answered. And Senator Behrend’s wife laughed and wanted to know why matrimony had affected Susie Maydwell’s friendships.

“Hapa-haole,” was the answer; “he was a half-caste, you know, and we of the Islands have to think about our children.”

Dorothy turned to her father, resolved to put it to the test.

“Papa, if Steve ever comes to the United States, mayn’t he come and see us some time?”

“Who? Steve?”

“Yes, Stephen Knight--you know him. You said good-bye to him not five minutes ago. Mayn’t he, if he happens to be in the United States some time, come and see us?”

“Certainly not,” Jeremy Sambrooke answered shortly. “Stephen Knight is a hapa-haole and you know what that means.”

“Oh,” Dorothy said faintly, while she felt a numb despair creep into her heart.

Steve was not a hapa-haole--she knew that; but she did not know that a quarter-strain of tropic sunshine streamed in his veins, and she knew that that was sufficient to put him outside the marriage pale. It was a strange world. There was the Honourable A. S. Cleghorn, who had married a dusky princess of the Kamehameha blood, yet men considered it an honour to know him, and the most exclusive women of the ultra-exclusive “Missionary Crowd” were to be seen at his afternoon teas. And there was Steve. No one had disapproved of his teaching her to ride a surf-board, nor of his leading her by the hand through the perilous places of the crater of Kilauea. He could have dinner with her and her father, dance with her, and be a member of the entertainment committee; but because there was tropic sunshine in his veins he could not marry her.

And he didn't show it. One had to be told to know. And he was so good-looking. The picture of him limned itself on her inner vision, and before she was aware she was pleasuring in the memory of the grace of his magnificent body, of his splendid shoulders, of the power in him that tossed her lightly on a horse, bore her safely through the thundering breakers, or towed her at the end of an alpenstock up the stern lava crest of the House of the Sun. There was something subtler and mysterious that she remembered, and that she was even then just beginning to understand--the aura of the male creature that is man, all man, masculine man. She came to herself with a shock of shame at the thoughts she had been thinking. Her cheeks were dyed with the hot blood which quickly receded and left them pale at the thought that she would never see him again. The stem of the transport was already out in the stream, and the promenade deck was passing abreast of the end of the dock.

"There's Steve now," her father said. "Wave good-bye to him, Dorothy."

Steve was looking up at her with eager eyes, and he saw in her face what he had not seen before. By the rush of gladness into his own face she knew that he knew. The air was throbbing with the song-

My love to you.
My love be with you till we meet again.

There was no need for speech to tell their story. About her, passengers were flinging their garlands to their friends on the dock. Steve held up his hands and his eyes pleaded. She slipped her own garland over her head, but it had become entangled in the string of Oriental pearls that Mervin, an elderly sugar king, had placed around her neck when he drove her and her father down to the steamer.

She fought with the pearls that clung to the flowers. The transport was moving steadily on. Steve was already beneath her. This was the moment. The next moment and he would be past. She sobbed, and Jeremy Sambrooke glanced at her inquiringly.

"Dorothy!" he cried sharply.

She deliberately snapped the string, and, amid a shower of pearls, the flowers fell to the waiting lover. She gazed at him until the tears blinded her and she buried her face on the shoulder of Jeremy Sambrooke, who forgot his beloved statistics in wonderment at girl babies that insisted on growing up. The crowd sang on, the song growing fainter in the distance, but still melting with the sensuous love-languor of Hawaii, the words biting into her heart like acid because of their untruth.

Aloha oe, Aloha oe, e ke onaona no ho ika lipo,
A fond embrace, ahoi ae au, until we meet again.

Amateur Night

THE elevator boy smiled knowingly to him self. When he took her up, he had noted the sparkle in her eyes, the color in her cheeks. His little cage had quite warmed with the glow of her repressed eagerness. And now, on the down trip, it was glacier-like. The sparkle and the color were gone. She was frowning, and what little he could see of her eyes was cold and steel-gray. Oh, he knew the symptoms, he did. He was an observer, and he knew it, too, and some day, when he was big enough, he was going to be a reporter, sure. And in the meantime he studied the procession of life as it streamed up and down eighteen sky-scraper floors in his elevator car. He slid the door open for her sympathetically and watched her trip determinedly out into the street.

There was a robustness in her carriage which came of the soil rather than of the city pavement. But it was a robustness in a finer than the wonted sense, a vigorous daintiness, it might be called, which gave an impression of virility with none of the womanly left out. It told of a heredity of seekers and fighters, of people that worked stoutly with head and hand, of ghosts that reached down out of the misty past and moulded and made her to be a doer of things.

But she was a little angry, and a great deal hurt. "I can guess what you would tell me," the editor had kindly but firmly interrupted her lengthy preamble in the long-looked-forward-to interview just ended. "And you have told me enough," he had gone on (heartlessly, she was sure, as she went over the conversation in its freshness). "You have done no newspaper work. You are undrilled, undisciplined, unhammered into shape. You have received a high-school education, and possibly topped it off with normal school or college. You have stood well in English. Your friends have all told you how cleverly you write, and how beautifully, and so forth and so forth. You think you can do newspaper work, and you want me to put you on. Well, I am sorry, but there are no openings. If you knew how crowded — "

"But if there are no openings," she had interrupted, in turn, "how did those who are in, get in? How am I to show that I am eligible to get in?"

"They made themselves indispensable," was the terse response. "Make yourself indispensable."

"But how can I, if I do not get the chance?"

“Make your chance.”

“But how?” she had insisted, at the same time privately deeming him a most unreasonable man.

“How? That is your business, not mine,” he said conclusively, rising in token that the interview was at an end. “I must inform you, my dear young lady, that there have been at least eighteen other aspiring young ladies here this week, and that I have not the time to tell each and every one of them how. The function I perform on this paper is hardly that of instructor in a school of journalism.”

She caught an outbound car, and ere she descended from it she had conned the conversation over and over again. “But how?” she repeated to herself, as she climbed the three flights of stairs to the rooms where she and her sister “bach’ed.” “But how?” And so she continued to put the interrogation, for the stubborn Scotch blood, though many times removed from Scottish soil, was still strong in her. And, further, there was need that she should learn how. Her sister Letty and she had come up from an interior town to the city to make their way in the world. John Wyman was land-poor. Disastrous business enterprises had burdened his acres and forced his two girls, Edna and Letty, into doing something for themselves. A year of school-teaching and of night-study of shorthand and typewriting had capitalized their city project and fitted them for the venture, which same venture was turning out anything but successful. The city seemed crowded with inexperienced stenographers and typewriters, and they had nothing but their own inexperience to offer. Edna’s secret ambition had been journalism; but she had planned a clerical position first, so that she might have time and space in which to determine where and on what line of journalism she would embark. But the clerical position had not been forthcoming, either for Letty or her, and day by day their little hoard dwindled, though the room rent remained normal and the stove consumed coal with undiminished voracity. And it was a slim little hoard by now.

“There’s Max Irwin,” Letty said, talking it over. “He’s a journalist with a national reputation. Go and see him, Ed. He knows how, and he should be able to tell you how.”

“But I don’t know him,” Edna objected.

“No more than you knew the editor you saw to-day.”

“Y-e-s,” (long and judicially), “but that’s different.”

“Not a bit different from the strange men and women you’ll interview when you’ve learned how,” Letty encouraged.

“I hadn’t looked at it in that light,” Edna conceded. “After all, where’s the difference between, interviewing Mr. Max Irwin for some paper, or interviewing Mr. Max Irwin for myself? It will be practice, too. I’ll go and look him up in the directory.”

“Letty, I know I can write if I get the chance,” she announced decisively a moment later. “I just FEEL that I have the feel of it, if you know what I mean.”

And Letty knew and nodded. “I wonder what he is like?” she asked softly.

“I’ll make it my business to find out,” Edna assured her; “and I’ll let you know inside forty-eight hours.”

Letty clapped her hands. “Good! That’s the newspaper spirit! Make it twenty-four hours and you are perfect!”

“ — and I am very sorry to trouble you,” she concluded the statement of her case to Max Irwin, famous war correspondent and veteran journalist.

“Not at all,” he answered, with a deprecatory wave of the hand. “If you don’t do your own talking, who’s to do it for you? Now I understand your predicament precisely. You want to get on the INTELLIGENCER, you want to get in at once, and you have had no previous experience. In the first place, then, have you any pull? There are a dozen men in the city, a line from whom would be an open-sesame. After that you would stand or fall by your own ability. There’s Senator Longbridge, for instance, and Claus Inskeep the street-car magnate, and Lane, and McChesney — ” He paused, with voice suspended.

“I am sure I know none of them,” she answered despondently.

“It’s not necessary. Do you know any one that knows them? or any one that knows any one else that knows them?”

Edna shook her head.

“Then we must think of something else,” he went on, cheerfully. “You’ll have to do something yourself. Let me see.”

He stopped and thought for a moment, with closed eyes and wrinkled forehead. She was watching him, studying him intently, when his blue eyes opened with a snap and his face suddenly brightened.

“I have it! But no, wait a minute.”

And for a minute it was his turn to study her. And study her he did, till she could feel her cheeks flushing under his gaze.

"You'll do, I think, though it remains to be seen," he said enigmatically. "It will show the stuff that's in you, besides, and it will be a better claim upon the INTELLIGENCER people than all the lines from all the senators and magnates in the world. The thing for you is to do Amateur Night at the Loops."

"I — I hardly understand," Edna said, for his suggestion conveyed no meaning to her. "What are the 'Loops'? and what is 'Amateur Night'?"

"I forgot you said you were from the interior. But so much the better, if you've only got the journalistic grip. It will be a first impression, and first impressions are always unbiased, unprejudiced, fresh, vivid. The Loops are out on the rim of the city, near the Park, — a place of diversion. There's a scenic railway, a water toboggan slide, a concert band, a theatre, wild animals, moving pictures, and so forth and so forth. The common people go there to look at the animals and enjoy themselves, and the other people go there to enjoy themselves by watching the common people enjoy themselves. A democratic, fresh-air-breathing, frolicking affair, that's what the Loops are.

"But the theatre is what concerns you. It's vaudeville. One turn follows another — jugglers, acrobats, rubber-jointed wonders, fire-dancers, coon-song artists, singers, players, female impersonators, sentimental soloists, and so forth and so forth. These people are professional vaudevillists. They make their living that way. Many are excellently paid. Some are free rovers, doing a turn wherever they can get an opening, at the Obermann, the Orpheus, the Alcatraz, the Louvre, and so forth and so forth. Others cover circuit pretty well all over the country. An interesting phase of life, and the pay is big enough to attract many aspirants.

"Now the management of the Loops, in its bid for popularity, instituted what is called 'Amateur Night'; that is to say, twice a week, after the professionals have done their turns, the stage is given over to the aspiring amateurs. The audience remains to criticise. The populace becomes the arbiter of art — or it thinks it does, which is the same thing; and it pays its money and is well pleased with itself, and Amateur Night is a paying proposition to the management.

"But the point of Amateur Night, and it is well to note it, is that these amateurs are not really amateurs. They are paid for doing their turn. At the best, they may be termed ‘professional amateurs.’ It stands to reason that the management could not get people to face a rampant audience for nothing, and on such occasions the audience certainly goes mad. It’s great fun — for the audience. But the thing for you to do, and it requires nerve, I assure you, is to go out, make arrangements for two turns, (Wednesday and Saturday nights, I believe), do your two turns, and write it up for the Sunday Intelligencer.”

“But — but,” she quavered, “I — I — ” and there was a suggestion of disappointment and tears in her voice.

“I see,” he said kindly. “You were expecting something else, something different, something better. We all do at first. But remember the admiral of the Queen’s Na-vee, who swept the floor and polished up the handle of the big front door. You must face the drudgery of apprenticeship or quit right now. What do you say?”

The abruptness with which he demanded her decision startled her. As she faltered, she could see a shade of disappointment beginning to darken his face.

“In a way it must be considered a test,” he added encouragingly. “A severe one, but so much the better. Now is the time. Are you game?”

“I’ll try,” she said faintly, at the same time making a note of the directness, abruptness, and haste of these city men with whom she was coming in contact.

“Good! Why, when I started in, I had the dreariest, deadliest details imaginable. And after that, for a weary time, I did the police and divorce courts. But it all came well in the end and did me good. You are luckier in making your start with Sunday work. It’s not particularly great. What of it? Do it. Show the stuff you’re made of, and you’ll get a call for better work--better class and better pay. Now you go out this afternoon to the Loops, and engage to do two turns.”

“But what kind of turns can I do?” Edna asked dubiously.

“Do? That’s easy. Can you sing? Never mind, don’t need to sing. Screech, do anything — that’s what you’re paid for, to afford amusement, to give bad art for the populace to howl down. And when you do your turn, take some one along for chaperon. Be afraid of no one. Talk up. Move about among the amateurs waiting their turn, pump them, study them, photograph them in your brain. Get the atmosphere, the color, strong color, lots of it. Dig right in with both hands, and get the essence of it, the spirit, the significance. What does it mean? Find out what it means. That's what you're there for. That's what the readers of the Sunday Intelligencer want to know.

"Be terse in style, vigorous of phrase, apt, concretely apt, in similitude. Avoid platitudes and commonplaces. Exercise selection. Seize upon things salient, eliminate the rest, and you have pictures. Paint those pictures in words and the Intelligencer will have you. Get hold of a few back numbers, and study the Sunday Intelligencer feature story. Tell it all in the opening paragraph as advertisement of contents, and in the contents tell it all over again. Then put a snapper at the end, so if they're crowded for space they can cut off your contents anywhere, reattach the snapper, and the story will still retain form. There, that's enough. Study the rest out for yourself."

They both rose to their feet, Edna quite carried away by his enthusiasm and his quick, jerky sentences, bristling with the things she wanted to know.

"And remember, Miss Wyman, if you're ambitious, that the aim and end of journalism is not the feature article. Avoid the rut. The feature is a trick. Master it, but don't let it master you. But master it you must; for if you can't learn to do a feature well, you can never expect to do anything better. In short, put your whole self into it, and yet, outside of it, above it, remain yourself, if you follow me. And now good luck to you."

They had reached the door and were shaking hands.

"And one thing more," he interrupted her thanks, "let me see your copy before you turn it in. I may be able to put you straight here and there."

Edna found the manager of the Loops a full-fleshed, heavy-jowled man, bushy of eyebrow and generally belligerent of aspect, with an absent-minded scowl on his face and a black cigar stuck in the midst thereof. Symes was his name, she had learned, Ernst Symes.

"Whatcher turn?" he demanded, ere half her brief application had left her lips.

"Sentimental soloist, soprano," she answered promptly, remembering Irwin's advice to talk up.

"Whatcher name?" Mr. Symes asked, scarcely deigning to glance at her.

She hesitated. So rapidly had she been rushed into the adventure that she had not considered the question of a name at all.

"Any name? Stage name?" he bellowed impatiently.

"Nan Bellayne," she invented on the spur of the moment. "B-e-l-l-a-y-n-e. Yes, that's it."

He scribbled it into a notebook. “All right. Take your turn Wednesday and Saturday.”

“How much do I get?” Edna demanded.

“Two-an’-a-half a turn. Two turns, five. Getcher pay first Monday after second turn.”

And without the simple courtesy of “Good day,” he turned his back on her and plunged into the newspaper he had been reading when she entered.

Edna came early on Wednesday evening, Letty with her, and in a telescope basket her costume — a simple affair. A plaid shawl borrowed from the washerwoman, a ragged scrubbing skirt borrowed from the charwoman, and a gray wig rented from a costumer for twenty-five cents a night, completed the outfit; for Edna had elected to be an old Irishwoman singing broken-heartedly after her wandering boy.

Though they had come early, she found everything in uproar. The main performance was under way, the orchestra was playing and the audience intermittently applauding. The infusion of the amateurs clogged the working of things behind the stage, crowded the passages, dressing rooms, and wings, and forced everybody into everybody else’s way. This was particularly distasteful to the professionals, who carried themselves as befitted those of a higher caste, and whose behavior toward the pariah amateurs was marked by hauteur and even brutality. And Edna, bullied and elbowed and shoved about, clinging desperately to her basket and seeking a dressing room, took note of it all.

A dressing room she finally found, jammed with three other amateur “ladies,” who were “making up” with much noise, high-pitched voices, and squabbling over a lone mirror. Her own make-up was so simple that it was quickly accomplished, and she left the trio of ladies holding an armed truce while they passed judgment upon her. Letty was close at her shoulder, and with patience and persistence they managed to get a nook in one of the wings which commanded a view of the stage.

A small, dark man, dapper and debonair, swallow-tailed and top-hatted, was waltzing about the stage with dainty, mincing steps, and in a thin little voice singing something or other about somebody or something evidently pathetic. As his waning voice neared the end of the lines, a large woman, crowned with an amazing wealth of blond hair, thrust rudely past Edna, trod heavily on her toes, and shoved her contemptuously to the side. “Bloomin’ hamateur!” she hissed as she went past, and the next instant she was on the stage, graciously bowing to the audience, while the small, dark man twirled extravagantly about on his tiptoes.

"Hello, girls!"

This greeting, drawled with an inimitable vocal caress in every syllable, close in her ear, caused Edna to give a startled little jump. A smooth-faced, moon-faced young man was smiling at her good-naturedly. His "make-up" was plainly that of the stock tramp of the stage, though the inevitable whiskers were lacking.

"Oh, it don't take a minute to slap'm on," he explained, divining the search in her eyes and waving in his hand the adornment in question. "They make a feller sweat," he explained further. And then, "What's yer turn?"

"Soprano — sentimental," she answered, trying to be offhand and at ease.

"Whata you doin' it for?" he demanded directly.

"For fun; what else?" she countered.

"I just sized you up for that as soon as I put eyes on you. You ain't graftin' for a paper, are you?"

"I never met but one editor in my life," she replied evasively, "and I, he — well, we didn't get on very well together."

"Hittin' 'm for a job?"

Edna nodded carelessly, though inwardly anxious and cudgelling her brains for something to turn the conversation.

"What'd he say?"

"That eighteen other girls had already been there that week."

"Gave you the icy mit, eh?" The moon-faced young man laughed and slapped his thighs. "You see, we're kind of suspicious. The Sunday papers 'd like to get Amateur Night done up brown in a nice little package, and the manager don't see it that way. Gets wild-eyed at the thought of it."

"And what's your turn?" she asked.

"Who? me? Oh, I'm doin' the tramp act tonight. I'm Charley Welsh, you know."

She felt that by the mention of his name he intended to convey to her complete enlightenment, but the best she could do was to say politely, "Oh, is that so?"

She wanted to laugh at the hurt disappointment which came into his face, but concealed her amusement.

"Come, now," he said brusquely, "you can't stand there and tell me you've never heard of Charley Welsh? Well, you must be young. Why, I'm an Only, the Only amateur at that. Sure, you must have seen me. I'm everywhere. I could be a professional, but I get more dough out of it by doin' the amateur."

"But what's an 'Only'?" she queried. "I want to learn."

"Sure," Charley Welsh said gallantly. "I'll put you wise. An 'Only' is a nonpareil, the feller that does one kind of a turn better'n any other feller. He's the Only, see?"

And Edna saw.

"To get a line on the biz," he continued, "throw yer lamps on me. I'm the Only all-round amateur. To-night I make a bluff at the tramp act. It's harder to bluff it than to really do it, but then it's acting, it's amateur, it's art. See? I do everything, from Sheeny monologue to team song and dance and Dutch comedian. Sure, I'm Charley Welsh, the Only Charley Welsh."

And in this fashion, while the thin, dark man and the large, blond woman warbled dulcetly out on the stage and the other professionals followed in their turns, did Charley Welsh put Edna wise, giving her much miscellaneous and superfluous information and much that she stored away for the Sunday Intelligencer.

"Well, tra la loo," he said suddenly. "There's his highness chasin' you up. Yer first on the bill. Never mind the row when you go on. Just finish yer turn like a lady."

It was at that moment that Edna felt her journalistic ambition departing from her, and was aware of an overmastering desire to be somewhere else. But the stage manager, like an ogre, barred her retreat. She could hear the opening bars of her song going up from the orchestra and the noises of the house dying away to the silence of anticipation.

"Go ahead," Letty whispered, pressing her hand; and from the other side came the peremptory "Don't flunk!" of Charley Welsh.

But her feet seemed rooted to the floor, and she leaned weakly against a shift scene. The orchestra was beginning over again, and a lone voice from the house piped with startling distinctness:

"Puzzle picture! Find Nannie!"

A roar of laughter greeted the sally, and Edna shrank back. But the strong hand of the manager descended on her shoulder, and with a quick, powerful shove propelled her out on to the stage. His hand and arm had flashed into full view, and the audience, grasping the situation, thundered its appreciation. The orchestra was drowned out by the terrible din, and Edna could see the bows scraping away across the violins, apparently without sound. It was impossible for her to begin in time, and as she patiently waited, arms akimbo and ears straining for the music, the house let loose again (a favorite trick, she afterward learned, of confusing the amateur by preventing him or her from hearing the orchestra).

But Edna was recovering her presence of mind. She became aware, pit to dome, of a vast sea of smiling and fun-distorted faces, of vast roars of laughter, rising wave on wave, and then her Scotch blood went cold and angry. The hard-working but silent orchestra gave her the cue, and, without making a sound, she began to move her lips, stretch forth her arms, and sway her body, as though she were really singing. The noise in the house redoubled in the attempt to drown her voice, but she serenely went on with her pantomime. This seemed to continue an interminable time, when the audience, tiring of its prank and in order to hear, suddenly stilled its clamor, and discovered the dumb show she had been making. For a moment all was silent, save for the orchestra, her lips moving on without a sound, and then the audience realized that it had been sold, and broke out afresh, this time with genuine applause in acknowledgment of her victory. She chose this as the happy moment for her exit, and with a bow and a backward retreat, she was off the stage in Letty's arms.

The worst was past, and for the rest of the evening she moved about among the amateurs and professionals, talking, listening, observing, finding out what it meant and taking mental notes of it all. Charley Welsh constituted himself her preceptor and guardian angel, and so well did he perform the self-allotted task that when it was all over she felt fully prepared to write her article. But the proposition had been to do two turns, and her native pluck forced her to live up to it. Also, in the course of the intervening days, she discovered fleeting impressions that required verification; so, on Saturday, she was back again, with her telescope basket and Letty.

The manager seemed looking for her, and she caught an expression of relief in his eyes when he first saw her. He hurried up, greeted her, and bowed with a respect ludicrously at variance with his previous ogre-like behavior. And as he bowed, across his shoulders she saw Charley Welsh deliberately wink.

But the surprise had just begun. The manager begged to be introduced to her sister, chatted entertainingly with the pair of them, and strove greatly and anxiously to be agreeable. He even went so far as to give Edna a dressing room to herself, to the unspeakable envy of the three other amateur ladies of previous acquaintance. Edna was nonplussed, and it was not till she met Charley Welsh in the passage that light was thrown on the mystery.

"Hello!" he greeted her. "On Easy Street, eh? Everything slidin' your way."

She smiled brightly.

"Thinks yer a female reporter, sure. I almost split when I saw'm layin' himself out sweet an' pleasin'. Honest, now, that ain't yer graft, is it?"

"I told you my experience with editors," she parried. "And honest now, it was honest, too."

But the Only Charley Welsh shook his head dubiously. "Not that I care a rap," he declared. "And if you are, just gimme a couple of lines of notice, the right kind, good ad, you know. And if yer not, why yer all right anyway. Yer not our class, that's straight."

After her turn, which she did this time with the nerve of an old campaigner, the manager returned to the charge; and after saying nice things and being generally nice himself, he came to the point.

"You'll treat us well, I hope," he said insinuatingly. "Do the right thing by us, and all that?"

"Oh," she answered innocently, "you couldn't persuade me to do another turn; I know I seemed to take and that you'd like to have me, but I really, really can't."

"You know what I mean," he said, with a touch of his old bulldozing manner.

"No, I really won't," she persisted. "Vaudeville's too — too wearing on the nerves, my nerves, at any rate."

Whereat he looked puzzled and doubtful, and forbore to press the point further.

But on Monday morning, when she came to his office to get her pay for the two turns, it was he who puzzled her.

"You surely must have mistaken me," he lied glibly. "I remember saying something about paying your car fare. We always do this, you know, but we never, never pay amateurs. That would take the life and sparkle out of the whole thing. No, Charley Welsh was stringing you. He gets paid nothing for his turns. No amateur gets paid. The idea is ridiculous. However, here's fifty cents. It will pay your sister's car fare also. And," — very suavely, —

”speaking for the Loops, permit me to thank you for the kind and successful contribution of your services.”

That afternoon, true to her promise to Max Irwin, she placed her typewritten copy into his hands. And while he ran over it, he nodded his head from time to time, and maintained a running fire of commendatory remarks: “Good! — that’s it! — that’s the stuff! — psychology’s all right! — the very idea! — you’ve caught it! — excellent! — missed it a bit here, but it’ll go — that’s vigorous! — strong! — vivid! — pictures! pictures! — excellent! — most excellent!”

And when he had run down to the bottom of the last page, holding out his hand: “My dear Miss Wyman, I congratulate you. I must say you have exceeded my expectations, which, to say the least, were large. You are a journalist, a natural journalist. You’ve got the grip, and you’re sure to get on. The Intelligencer will take it, without doubt, and take you too. They’ll have to take you. If they don’t, some of the other papers will get you.”

“But what’s this?” he queried, the next instant, his face going serious. “You’ve said nothing about receiving the pay for your turns, and that’s one of the points of the feature. I expressly mentioned it, if you’ll remember.”

“It will never do,” he said, shaking his head ominously, when she had explained. “You simply must collect that money somehow. Let me see. Let me think a moment.”

“Never mind, Mr. Irwin,” she said. “I’ve bothered you enough. Let me use your ‘phone, please, and I’ll try Mr. Ernst Symes again.”

He vacated his chair by the desk, and Edna took down the receiver.

“Charley Welsh is sick,” she began, when the connection had been made. “What? No I’m not Charley Welsh. Charley Welsh is sick, and his sister wants to know if she can come out this afternoon and draw his pay for him?”

“Tell Charley Welsh’s sister that Charley Welsh was out this morning, and drew his own pay,” came back the manager’s familiar tones, crisp with asperity.

“All right,” Edna went on. “And now Nan Bellayne wants to know if she and her sister can come out this afternoon and draw Nan Bellayne’s pay?”

“What’d he say? What’d he say?” Max Irwin cried excitedly, as she hung up.

“That Nan Bellayne was too much for him, and that she and her sister could come out and get her pay and the freedom of the Loops, to boot.”

“One thing, more,” he interrupted her thanks at the door, as on her previous visit. “Now that you’ve shown the stuff you’re made of, I should esteem it, ahem, a privilege to give you a line myself to the Intelligencer people.”

And ‘Frisco Kid Came Back

“HELLO ye stiffs! — got the makin’s? I got ter smoke so bad I can taste it. Say! it’s like t’ree squares a day an’ a hold me down, ter be wid yer onst more.

“Wot’v I been doin’ wid meself? an, w’ere did I snare me good togs? Well, it’s dis way. I wuz down in my luck — way down in G — way down under me uppers — Say! I wuz down dat far I fell clear troo’ an’ cum up on top on de udder side — way up in C. Say! yer wudn’t a knowed me!

“Dis is how de presto change happened. I struck a jay town on de C. B. and Q. jerk an’ got hoodooed. I battered a house fer me breakfas’ an’ bumpt up inter a red-headed woman. Say! I wuz dat rattled I fergot ter steal de soap. De nex’ house I slammed de gate at, dere wuz a cross-eyed man, an’ I didn’t spit in me hat. Dat done me all up. I was clean off me nut wid de hoodoo.

“After dat I cudn’t put me han’ ter nuthin’ widout gettin’ de gee hee. Nuthin’ went O. K. Bimeby, w’en I wuz mopin’ up de main-drag, I struck a guy fer de price, an’ he wuz a fly-cop an’ I got thirty days. Dat settled me. Me name wuz Mud. I wuz not in it. I wuz outen de movement.

“W’en I did me time I wuz goin’ ter give de burg de swift an’ elegant side sneak — but I didn’t. An’ dats how I fell clean troo’. Dere wuzn’t a freight along ‘till dark, so I chases meself around ter have a swim. Den I swiped a kid’s line an’ went ter fishin’. Dey wudn’t bite. I cudn’t ketch a cat. I cudn’t ketch nuthin’ ‘till an old Rube take a tumble to himself offen de end. He cum sailin’ by wid a horrible thirst on — he cudn’t get enuff. I trowed ‘m de line an’ snared ‘m de firs’ rattle outen de box.

“W’en I got ‘m landed, he sez, ‘Yer me saviour.’

“‘So yer tellin’ me,’ sez I.

“‘Yer an angel,’ sez he.

“‘Yer bet yer sweet life,’ sez I.

“‘I’ll reward ye,’ sez he.

“‘Now yer shoutin’,’ sez I.

“Say! dat old guy chases me home, an’ after he chewed de rag wid his ole woman — mebbe yer tinkin’ I’m tellin’ yer a fairy story — but may I never get der price again, if dey didn’t adopt me.

"I tole dem me tale of woe. Wot did I w'isper? I tole 'm how me ole man uster t'ump me ole woman w'en he got an edge on, an' I tole 'm how pious she wuz, an' how she uster tell me to be upright an' noble — an' how she kicked de buycket wid a broken heart, an' how de ole man kicked me out, an' how he swilled like 'r fish till he kicked de pig, too. Me little song wuz nuthin' but kick — 'fer tell yer de truth,' sez I, 'I wuz never growed up, I wuz kicked up. Dat's how I cum here — I wuz kicked here.'

"Den de ole girl took me in her arms an' sez, 'Me poor boy.' An' de ole boy blows his bandana fit ter kill, an' I makes de stage hit by cryin' meself. Say! dat brung down de house — we all blubbered.

"De old girl — say! she was a nice ole girl — she sez I wud never get kicked no more, an' de ole hoss, he sez he had enuff fer ter take care 'v me too. Dat's how I fell troo' me luck an' cum out on top.

"W'y didn't I hol' it down? Wot are yer givin' us? Wait till I give yer me spiel. It was no snap. see! Dey wuz too good fer me. Every time I'd get settled down ter tinkin' 'v de gang, he'd ask me wot de las' verse wuz, an' w'en I didn't know, he'd look dat hurt it 'd make me feel bad. I never cud listen, 'cept w'en he'd read about Joshua. Say! he wuz a scrapper fer yer life! Den I liked Samson, too. De barbers were on a strike w'ere he lived, an' he wuz stronger dan a locomotive. Parts wuz as good as Deadwood Dick an Nick Carter, an' w'en he cum to w'ere an ole bloke wuz dat long winded, he lived over nine hundred years. Say! it wuz out uv sight; but den dey wuz a whole lot 'v dem an' I got weary. An' w'en he'd read about dere sons, an' de sons of dem sons, an' de sons of dem sons, an' all de udder sons beside, I'd pound me ear an' snore.

"Den, I cudn't quit swearin', an' every time I'd rip a big 'n out, de old gal'd show de whites 'v her eyes an' say, 'Thomas!' long an' solem' an' reprovin' like.

"An' dey wud allus smell me breath ter see if I'd ben smokin'. An' dey wudn't let me eat wid me knife, nor spill de java out 'n me saucer. I cudn't never ketch on ter dere style. I was allus jabbin' me knife inter de butter dish, or fergettin' ter put de sugar spoon back in de bowl. Den I chewed out loud an' dat scraped on dere nerves. An' I'd allus fergit an' put de napkins in me pocket w'en I wuz done. Den dey made me sport me head piece straight on me nut, an' dey sed I swung me shoulders too much w'en I walked.

"Den I kep' gettin' inter scraps wid de kids on de block. Had to do somethin' fer excitement, see! One time I got a lot 'v dem on de back fence, an’ made ‘m sit in a row, wid each a chew of Star in his han’. W’en I guv de word dey all began ter chew. De kid dat chewed de longes’ wuz ter get a bird uv a kite I made fer de occasion. Say! yer outen seen dem kids. W’en I called time, dere wuzn’t one left on de fence. Yer’d t’ink de cholera ‘d struck de town de way all chased home, sick. Say! yer outen ben dere. Dere mudders waltzed over ter de house in flocks an’ pestered de life outen de ole girl. Dey sed I wuz corruptin’ de good morals uv dere sons, an’ dat I was a menace ter dere lives an’ property.

“I got inter lots uv scrapes like dat; but I allus jollied dem up an’ made it all right. Dey tried ter sen’ me ter school — Say! I got de G. B. de firs’ day. Dey never got tired — dey wuz allus tryin’ ter improve me. Dey wuz bound ter make a good boy outen me, an’ I wuz boun’ dey wudn’t.

“Bimeby I got homesick. I got ter t’inking of de road again — of de gang an’ de good ole times I had wid dem. Say! it’d make me heart jump w’en I’d hear an engine whistle, an’ I’d t’ink ‘v freights an’ passengers, an’ remember how I uster ketch de blind an’ shinny up ter de decks, or grab a gunnel an’ swing underneath. An’ I wuz jes’ dyin’ fer a game uv craps ‘r seven up. I made up me mind date de adoption scheme was N. G. One day I got ter rememberin’ de las’ mulligan I had. Yer knows de time — w’en Pittsburg Joe bummed de butcher-shops, an’ Chi Slim de bakeries, an’ de Montana Sports de groceries, an’ you an’ I swiped de chickens, w’ile Moulder Blackey got de beer, an’ Leary Joe made de fire, an’ Skysail Jack did de cookin’. Say! it made me mouth water ter t’ink uv it. I cudn’t stand it no longer, so I guv me adopted parents de ditch, an’ hit de road onst more.

“Ah! dere’s de greasy, old deck again. Don’t care ‘f I do. I’ll go yer jes’ onst fer luck. Cut fer deal — Jack High.”

The Apostate

“Now I wake me up to work;
I pray the Lord I may not shirk.
If I should die before the night,
I pray the Lord my work’s all right.”
Amen.

“If you don’t git up, Johnny, I won’t give you a bite to eat!”

The threat had no effect on the boy. He clung stubbornly to sleep, fighting for its oblivion as the dreamer fights for his dream. The boy’s hands loosely clenched themselves, and he made feeble, spasmodic blows at the air. These blows were intended for his mother, but she betrayed practised familiarity in avoiding them as she shook him roughly by the shoulder. “Lemme ‘lone!”

It was a cry that began, muffled, in the deeps of sleep, that swiftly rushed upward, like a wail, into passionate belligerence, and that died away and sank down into an inarticulate whine. It was a bestial cry, as of a soul in torment, filled with infinite protest and pain.

But she did not mind. She was a sad-eyed, tired-faced woman, and she had grown used to this task, which she repeated every day of her life. She got a grip on the bed-clothes and tried to strip them down; but the boy, ceasing his punching, clung to them desperately. In a huddle, at the foot of the bed, he still remained covered. Then she tried dragging the bedding to the floor. The boy opposed her. She braced herself. Hers was the superior weight, and the boy and bedding gave, the former instinctively following the latter in order to shelter against the chill of the room that bit into his body.

As he toppled on the edge of the bed it seemed that he must fall head-first to the floor. But consciousness fluttered up in him. He righted himself and for a moment perilously balanced. Then he struck the floor on his feet. On the instant his mother seized him by the shoulders and shook him. Again his fists struck out, this time with more force and directness. At the same time his eyes opened. She released him. He was awake.

“All right,” he mumbled.

She caught up the lamp and hurried out, leaving him in darkness.

“You’ll be docked,” she warned back to him.

He did not mind the darkness. When he had got into his clothes, he went out into the kitchen. His tread was very heavy for so thin and light a boy. His legs dragged with their own weight, which seemed unreasonable because they were such skinny legs. He drew a broken-bottomed chair to the table.

“Johnny!” his mother called sharply.

He arose as sharply from the chair, and, without a word, went to the sink. It was a greasy, filthy sink. A smell came up from the outlet. He took no notice of it. That a sink should smell was to him part of the natural order, just as it was a part of the natural order that the soap should be grimy with dish-water and hard to lather. Nor did he try very hard to make it lather. Several splashes of the cold water from the running faucet completed the function. He did not wash his teeth. For that matter he had never seen a tooth-brush, nor did he know that there existed beings in the world who were guilty of so great a foolishness as tooth washing.

“You might wash yourself wunst a day without bein’ told,” his mother complained.

She was holding a broken lid on the pot as she poured two cups of coffee. He made no remark, for this was a standing quarrel between them, and the one thing upon which his mother was hard as adamant. “Wunst” a day it was compulsory that he should wash his face. He dried himself on a greasy towel, damp and dirty and ragged, that left his face covered with shreds of lint.

“I wish we didn’t live so far away,” she said, as he sat down. “I try to do the best I can. You know that. But a dollar on the rent is such a savin’, an’ we’ve more room here. You know that.”

He scarcely followed her. He had heard it all before, many times. The range of her thought was limited, and she was ever harking back to the hardship worked upon them by living so far from the mills.

“A dollar means more grub,” he remarked sententiously. “I’d sooner do the walkin’ an’ git the grub.”

He ate hurriedly, half chewing the bread and washing the unmasticated chunks down with coffee. The hot and muddy liquid went by the name of coffee. Johnny thought it was coffee--and excellent coffee. That was one of the few of life’s illusions that remained to him. He had never drunk real coffee in his life.

In addition to the bread, there was a small piece of cold pork. His mother refilled his cup with coffee. As he was finishing the bread, he began to watch if more was forthcoming. She intercepted his questioning glance.

“Now, don’t be hoggish, Johnny,” was her comment. “You’ve had your share. Your brothers an’ sisters are smaller’n you.”

He did not answer the rebuke. He was not much of a talker. Also, he ceased his hungry glancing for more. He was uncomplaining, with a patience that was as terrible as the school in which it had been learned. He finished his coffee, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, and started to rise.

“Wait a second,” she said hastily. “I guess the loaf kin stand you another slice--a thin un.”

There was legerdemain in her actions. With all the seeming of cutting a slice from the loaf for him, she put loaf and slice back in the bread box and conveyed to him one of her own two slices. She believed she had deceived him, but he had noted her sleight-of-hand. Nevertheless, he took the bread shamelessly. He had a philosophy that his mother, what of her chronic sickliness, was not much of an eater anyway.

She saw that he was chewing the bread dry, and reached over and emptied her coffee cup into his.

“Don’t set good somehow on my stomach this morning,” she explained.

A distant whistle, prolonged and shrieking, brought both of them to their feet. She glanced at the tin alarm-clock on the shelf. The hands stood at half-past five. The rest of the factory world was just arousing from sleep. She drew a shawl about her shoulders, and on her head put a dingy hat, shapeless and ancient.

“We’ve got to run,” she said, turning the wick of the lamp and blowing down the chimney.

They groped their way out and down the stairs. It was clear and cold, and Johnny shivered at the first contact with the outside air. The stars had not yet begun to pale in the sky, and the city lay in blackness. Both Johnny and his mother shuffled their feet as they walked. There was no ambition in the leg muscles to swing the feet clear of the ground.

After fifteen silent minutes, his mother turned off to the right.

“Don’t be late,” was her final warning from out of the dark that was swallowing her up.

He made no response, steadily keeping on his way. In the factory quarter, doors were opening everywhere, and he was soon one of a multitude that pressed onward through the dark. As he entered the factory gate the whistle blew again. He glanced at the east. Across a ragged sky-line of housetops a pale light was beginning to creep. This much he saw of the day as he turned his back upon it and joined his work gang.

He took his place in one of many long rows of machines. Before him, above a bin filled with small bobbins, were large bobbins revolving rapidly. Upon these he wound the jute-twine of the small bobbins. The work was simple. All that was required was celerity. The small bobbins were emptied so rapidly, and there were so many large bobbins that did the emptying, that there were no idle moments.

He worked mechanically. When a small bobbin ran out, he used his left hand for a brake, stopping the large bobbin and at the same time, with thumb and forefinger, catching the flying end of twine. Also, at the same time, with his right hand, he caught up the loose twine-end of a small bobbin. These various acts with both hands were performed simultaneously and swiftly. Then there would come a flash of his hands as he looped the weaver's knot and released the bobbin. There was nothing difficult about weaver's knots. He once boasted he could tie them in his sleep. And for that matter, he sometimes did, toiling centuries long in a single night at tying an endless succession of weaver's knots.

Some of the boys shirked, wasting time and machinery by not replacing the small bobbins when they ran out. And there was an overseer to prevent this. He caught Johnny's neighbor at the trick, and boxed his ears.

"Look at Johnny there--why ain't you like him?" the overseer wrathfully demanded.

Johnny's bobbins were running full blast, but he did not thrill at the indirect praise. There had been a time . . . but that was long ago, very long ago. His apathetic face was expressionless as he listened to himself being held up as a shining example. He was the perfect worker. He knew that. He had been told so, often. It was a commonplace, and besides it didn't seem to mean anything to him any more. From the perfect worker he had evolved into the perfect machine. When his work went wrong, it was with him as with the machine, due to faulty material. It would have been as possible for a perfect nail-die to cut imperfect nails as for him to make a mistake.

And small wonder. There had never been a time when he had not been in intimate relationship with machines. Machinery had almost been bred into him, and at any rate he had been brought up on it. Twelve years before, there had been a small flutter of excitement in the loom room of this very mill. Johnny's mother had fainted. They stretched her out on the floor in the midst of the shrieking machines. A couple of elderly women were called from their looms. The foreman assisted. And in a few minutes there was one more soul in the loom room than had entered by the doors. It was Johnny, born with the pounding, crashing roar of the looms in his ears, drawing with his first breath the warm, moist air that was thick with flying lint. He had coughed that first day in order to rid his lungs of the lint; and for the same reason he had coughed ever since.

The boy alongside of Johnny whimpered and sniffed. The boy's face was convulsed with hatred for the overseer who kept a threatening eye on him from a distance; but every bobbin was running full. The boy yelled terrible oaths into the whirling bobbins before him; but the sound did not carry half a dozen feet, the roaring of the room holding it in and containing it like a wall.

Of all this Johnny took no notice. He had a way of accepting things. Besides, things grow monotonous by repetition, and this particular happening he had witnessed many times. It seemed to him as useless to oppose the overseer as to defy the will of a machine. Machines were made to go in certain ways and to perform certain tasks. It was the same with the overseer.

But at eleven o'clock there was excitement in the room. In an apparently occult way the excitement instantly permeated everywhere. The one-legged boy who worked on the other side of Johnny bobbed swiftly across the floor to a bin truck that stood empty. Into this he dived out of sight, crutch and all. The superintendent of the mill was coming along, accompanied by a young man. He was well dressed and wore a starched shirt--a gentleman, in Johnny's classification of men, and also, "the Inspector."

He looked sharply at the boys as he passed along. Sometimes he stopped and asked questions. When he did so, he was compelled to shout at the top of his lungs, at which moments his face was ludicrously contorted with the strain of making himself heard. His quick eye noted the empty machine alongside of Johnny's, but he said nothing. Johnny also caught his eye, and he stopped abruptly. He caught Johnny by the arm to draw him back a step from the machine; but with an exclamation of surprise he released the arm.

"Pretty skinny," the superintendent laughed anxiously.

"Pipe stems," was the answer. "Look at those legs. The boy's got the rickets--incipient, but he's got them. If epilepsy doesn't get him in the end, it will be because tuberculosis gets him first."

Johnny listened, but did not understand. Furthermore he was not interested in future ills. There was an immediate and more serious ill that threatened him in the form of the inspector.

"Now, my boy, I want you to tell me the truth," the inspector said, or shouted, bending close to the boy's ear to make him hear. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen," Johnny lied, and he lied with the full force of his lungs. So loudly did he lie that it started him off in a dry, hacking cough that lifted the lint which had been settling in his lungs all morning.

"Looks sixteen at least," said the superintendent.

"Or sixty," snapped the inspector.

"He's always looked that way."

"How long?" asked the inspector, quickly.

"For years. Never gets a bit older."

"Or younger, I dare say. I suppose he's worked here all those years?"

"Off and on--but that was before the new law was passed," the superintendent hastened to add. "Machine idle?" the inspector asked, pointing at the unoccupied machine beside Johnny's, in which the part-filled bobbins were flying like mad.

"Looks that way." The superintendent motioned the overseer to him and shouted in his ear and pointed at the machine. "Machine's idle," he reported back to the inspector.

They passed on, and Johnny returned to his work, relieved in that the ill had been averted. But the one-legged boy was not so fortunate. The sharp-eyed inspector haled him out at arm's length from the bin truck. His lips were quivering, and his face had all the expression of one upon whom was fallen profound and irremediable disaster. The overseer looked astounded, as though for the first time he had laid eyes on the boy, while the superintendent's face expressed shock and displeasure.

"I know him," the inspector said. "He's twelve years old. I've had him discharged from three factories inside the year. This makes the fourth."

He turned to the one-legged boy. “You promised me, word and honor, that you’d go to school.”

The one-legged boy burst into tears. “Please, Mr. Inspector, two babies died on us, and we’re awful poor.”

“What makes you cough that way?” the inspector demanded, as though charging him with crime.

And as in denial of guilt, the one-legged boy replied: “It ain’t nothin’. I jes’ caught a cold last week, Mr. Inspector, that’s all.”

In the end the one-legged boy went out of the room with the inspector, the latter accompanied by the anxious and protesting superintendent. After that monotony settled down again. The long morning and the longer afternoon wore away and the whistle blew for quitting time. Darkness had already fallen when Johnny passed out through the factory gate. In the interval the sun had made a golden ladder of the sky, flooded the world with its gracious warmth, and dropped down and disappeared in the west behind a ragged sky-line of housetops.

Supper was the family meal of the day--the one meal at which Johnny encountered his younger brothers and sisters. It partook of the nature of an encounter, to him, for he was very old, while they were distressingly young. He had no patience with their excessive and amazing juvenility. He did not understand it. His own childhood was too far behind him. He was like an old and irritable man, annoyed by the turbulence of their young spirits that was to him arrant silliness. He glowered silently over his food, finding compensation in the thought that they would soon have to go to work. That would take the edge off of them and make them sedate and dignified--like him. Thus it was, after the fashion of the human, that Johnny made of himself a yardstick with which to measure the universe.

During the meal, his mother explained in various ways and with infinite repetition that she was trying to do the best she could; so that it was with relief, the scant meal ended, that Johnny shoved back his chair and arose. He debated for a moment between bed and the front door, and finally went out the latter. He did not go far. He sat down on the stoop, his knees drawn up and his narrow shoulders drooping forward, his elbows on his knees and the palms of his hands supporting his chin. As he sat there, he did no thinking. He was just resting. So far as his mind was concerned, it was asleep. His brothers and sisters came out, and with other children played noisily about him. An electric globe on the corner lighted their frolics. He was peevish and irritable, that they knew; but the spirit of adventure lured them into teasing him. They joined hands before him, and, keeping time with their bodies, chanted in his face weird and uncomplimentary doggerel. At first he snarled curses at them--curses he had learned from the lips of various foremen. Finding this futile, and remembering his dignity, he relapsed into dogged silence.

His brother Will, next to him in age, having just passed his tenth birthday, was the ring-leader. Johnny did not possess particularly kindly feelings toward him. His life had early been embittered by continual giving over and giving way to Will. He had a definite feeling that Will was greatly in his debt and was ungrateful about it. In his own playtime, far back in the dim past, he had been robbed of a large part of that playtime by being compelled to take care of Will. Will was a baby then, and then, as now, their mother had spent her days in the mills. To Johnny had fallen the part of little father and little mother as well.

Will seemed to show the benefit of the giving over and the giving way. He was well-built, fairly rugged, as tall as his elder brother and even heavier. It was as though the life-blood of the one had been diverted into the other's veins. And in spirits it was the same. Johnny was jaded, worn out, without resilience, while his younger brother seemed bursting and spilling over with exuberance.

The mocking chant rose louder and louder. Will leaned closer as he danced, thrusting out his tongue. Johnny's left arm shot out and caught the other around the neck. At the same time he rapped his bony fist to the other's nose. It was a pathetically bony fist, but that it was sharp to hurt was evidenced by the squeal of pain it produced. The other children were uttering frightened cries, while Johnny's sister, Jennie, had dashed into the house.

He thrust Will from him, kicked him savagely on the shins, then reached for him and slammed him face downward in the dirt. Nor did he release him till the face had been rubbed into the dirt several times. Then the mother arrived, an anaemic whirlwind of solicitude and maternal wrath.

"Why can't he leave me alone?" was Johnny's reply to her upbraiding. "Can't he see I'm tired?"

"I'm as big as you," Will raged in her arms, his face a mess of tears, dirt, and blood. "I'm as big as you now, an' I'm goin' to git bigger. Then I'll lick you--see if I don't."

"You ought to be to work, seein' how big you are," Johnny snarled. "That's what's the matter with you. You ought to be to work. An' it's up to your ma to put you to work."

"But he's too young," she protested. "He's only a little boy."

"I was younger'n him when I started to work."

Johnny's mouth was open, further to express the sense of unfairness that he felt, but the mouth closed with a snap. He turned gloomily on his heel and stalked into the house and to bed. The door of his room was open to let in warmth from the kitchen. As he undressed in the semi-darkness he could hear his mother talking with a neighbor woman who had dropped in. His mother was crying, and her speech was punctuated with spiritless sniffles.

"I can't make out what's gittin' into Johnny," he could hear her say. "He didn't used to be this way. He was a patient little angel.

"An' he is a good boy," she hastened to defend. "He's worked faithful, an' he did go to work too young. But it wasn't my fault. I do the best I can, I'm sure."

Prolonged sniffling from the kitchen, and Johnny murmured to himself as his eyelids closed down, "You betcher life I've worked faithful."

The next morning he was torn bodily by his mother from the grip of sleep. Then came the meagre breakfast, the tramp through the dark, and the pale glimpse of day across the housetops as he turned his back on it and went in through the factory gate. It was another day, of all the days, and all the days were alike.

And yet there had been variety in his life--at the times he changed from one job to another, or was taken sick. When he was six, he was little mother and father to Will and the other children still younger. At seven he went into the mills--winding bobbins. When he was eight, he got work in another mill. His new job was marvellously easy. All he had to do was to sit down with a little stick in his hand and guide a stream of cloth that flowed past him. This stream of cloth came out of the maw of a machine, passed over a hot roller, and went on its way elsewhere. But he sat always in the one place, beyond the reach of daylight, a gas-jet flaring over him, himself part of the mechanism.

He was very happy at that job, in spite of the moist heat, for he was still young and in possession of dreams and illusions. And wonderful dreams he dreamed as he watched the streaming cloth streaming endlessly by. But there was no exercise about the work, no call upon his mind, and he dreamed less and less, while his mind grew torpid and drowsy. Nevertheless, he earned two dollars a week, and two dollars represented the difference between acute starvation and chronic underfeeding.

But when he was nine, he lost his job. Measles was the cause of it. After he recovered, he got work in a glass factory. The pay was better, and the work demanded skill. It was piece-work, and the more skilful he was, the bigger wages he earned. Here was incentive. And under this incentive he developed into a remarkable worker.

It was simple work, the tying of glass stoppers into small bottles. At his waist he carried a bundle of twine. He held the bottles between his knees so that he might work with both hands. Thus, in a sitting position and bending over his own knees, his narrow shoulders grew humped and his chest was contracted for ten hours each day. This was not good for the lungs, but he tied three hundred dozen bottles a day.

The superintendent was very proud of him, and brought visitors to look at him. In ten hours three hundred dozen bottles passed through his hands. This meant that he had attained machine-like perfection. All waste movements were eliminated. Every motion of his thin arms, every movement of a muscle in the thin fingers, was swift and accurate. He worked at high tension, and the result was that he grew nervous. At night his muscles twitched in his sleep, and in the daytime he could not relax and rest. He remained keyed up and his muscles continued to twitch. Also he grew sallow and his lint-cough grew worse. Then pneumonia laid hold of the feeble lungs within the contracted chest, and he lost his job in the glass-works. Now he had returned to the jute mills where he had first begun with winding bobbins. But promotion was waiting for him. He was a good worker. He would next go on the starcher, and later he would go into the loom room. There was nothing after that except increased efficiency.

The machinery ran faster than when he had first gone to work, and his mind ran slower. He no longer dreamed at all, though his earlier years had been full of dreaming. Once he had been in love. It was when he first began guiding the cloth over the hot roller, and it was with the daughter of the superintendent. She was much older than he, a young woman, and he had seen her at a distance only a paltry half-dozen times. But that made no difference. On the surface of the cloth stream that poured past him, he pictured radiant futures wherein he performed prodigies of toil, invented miraculous machines, won to the mastership of the mills, and in the end took her in his arms and kissed her soberly on the brow.

But that was all in the long ago, before he had grown too old and tired to love. Also, she had married and gone away, and his mind had gone to sleep. Yet it had been a wonderful experience, and he used often to look back upon it as other men and women look back upon the time they believed in fairies. He had never believed in fairies nor Santa Claus; but he had believed implicitly in the smiling future his imagination had wrought into the steaming cloth stream.

He had become a man very early in life. At seven, when he drew his first wages, began his adolescence. A certain feeling of independence crept up in him, and the relationship between him and his mother changed. Somehow, as an earner and breadwinner, doing his own work in the world, he was more like an equal with her. Manhood, full-blown manhood, had come when he was eleven, at which time he had gone to work on the night shift for six months. No child works on the night shift and remains a child.

There had been several great events in his life. One of these had been when his mother bought some California prunes. Two others had been the two times when she cooked custard. Those had been events. He remembered them kindly. And at that time his mother had told him of a blissful dish she would sometime make--“floating island,” she had called it, “better than custard.” For years he had looked forward to the day when he would sit down to the table with floating island before him, until at last he had relegated the idea of it to the limbo of unattainable ideals.

Once he found a silver quarter lying on the sidewalk. That, also, was a great event in his life, withal a tragic one. He knew his duty on the instant the silver flashed on his eyes, before even he had picked it up. At home, as usual, there was not enough to eat, and home he should have taken it as he did his wages every Saturday night. Right conduct in this case was obvious; but he never had any spending of his money, and he was suffering from candy hunger. He was ravenous for the sweets that only on red-letter days he had ever tasted in his life.

He did not attempt to deceive himself. He knew it was sin, and deliberately he sinned when he went on a fifteen-cent candy debauch. Ten cents he saved for a future orgy; but not being accustomed to the carrying of money, he lost the ten cents. This occurred at the time when he was suffering all the torments of conscience, and it was to him an act of divine retribution. He had a frightened sense of the closeness of an awful and wrathful God. God had seen, and God had been swift to punish, denying him even the full wages of sin.

In memory he always looked back upon that event as the one great criminal deed of his life, and at the recollection his conscience always awoke and gave him another twinge. It was the one skeleton in his closet. Also, being so made and circumstanced, he looked back upon the deed with regret. He was dissatisfied with the manner in which he had spent the quarter. He could have invested it better, and, out of his later knowledge of the quickness of God, he would have beaten God out by spending the whole quarter at one fell swoop. In retrospect he spent the quarter a thousand times, and each time to better advantage.

There was one other memory of the past, dim and faded, but stamped into his soul everlasting by the savage feet of his father. It was more like a nightmare than a remembered vision of a concrete thing--more like the race-memory of man that makes him fall in his sleep and that goes back to his arboreal ancestry.

This particular memory never came to Johnny in broad daylight when he was wide awake. It came at night, in bed, at the moment that his consciousness was sinking down and losing itself in sleep. It always aroused him to frightened wakefulness, and for the moment, in the first sickening start, it seemed to him that he lay crosswise on the foot of the bed. In the bed were the vague forms of his father and mother. He never saw what his father looked like. He had but one impression of his father, and that was that he had savage and pitiless feet.

His earlier memories lingered with him, but he had no late memories. All days were alike. Yesterday or last year were the same as a thousand years--or a minute. Nothing ever happened. There were no events to mark the march of time. Time did not march. It stood always still. It was only the whirling machines that moved, and they moved nowhere--in spite of the fact that they moved faster.

* * *

When he was fourteen, he went to work on the starcher. It was a colossal event. Something had at last happened that could be remembered beyond a night’s sleep or a week’s pay-day. It marked an era. It was a machine Olympiad, a thing to date from. “When I went to work on the starcher,” or, “after,” or “before I went to work on the starcher,” were sentences often on his lips.

He celebrated his sixteenth birthday by going into the loom room and taking a loom. Here was an incentive again, for it was piece-work. And he excelled, because the clay of him had been moulded by the mills into the perfect machine. At the end of three months he was running two looms, and, later, three and four.

At the end of his second year at the looms he was turning out more yards than any other weaver, and more than twice as much as some of the less skilful ones. And at home things beganto prosper as he approached the full stature of his earning power. Not, however, that his increased earnings were in excess of need. The children were growing up. They ate more. And they were going to school, and school-books cost money. And somehow, the faster he worked, the faster climbed the prices of things. Even the rent went up, though the house had fallen from bad to worse disrepair.

He had grown taller; but with his increased height he seemed leaner than ever. Also, he was more nervous. With the nervousness increased his peevishness and irritability. The children had learned by many bitter lessons to fight shy of him. His mother respected him for his earning power, but somehow her respect was tinctured with fear.

There was no joyousness in life for him. The procession of the days he never saw. The nights he slept away in twitching unconsciousness. The rest of the time he worked, and his consciousness was machine consciousness. Outside this his mind was a blank. He had no ideals, and but one illusion; namely, that he drank excellent coffee. He was a work-beast. He had no mental life whatever; yet deep down in the crypts of his mind, unknown to him, were being weighed and sifted every hour of his toil, every movement of his hands, every twitch of his muscles, and preparations were making for a future course of action that would amaze him and all his little world.

It was in the late spring that he came home from work one night aware of unusual tiredness. There was a keen expectancy in the air as he sat down to the table, but he did not notice. He went through the meal in moody silence, mechanically eating what was before him. The children um’d and ah’d and made smacking noises with their mouths. But he was deaf to them.

“D’ye know what you’re eatin’?” his mother demanded at last, desperately.

He looked vacantly at the dish before him, and vacantly at her.

“Floatin’ island,” she announced triumphantly.

“Oh,” he said.

“Floating island!” the children chorussed loudly.

“Oh,” he said. And after two or three mouthfuls, he added, “guess I ain’t hungry to-night.”

He dropped the spoon, shoved back his chair, and arose wearily from the table.

“An’ I guess I’ll go to bed.”

His feet dragged more heavily than usual as he crossed the kitchen floor. Undressing was a Titan’s task, a monstrous futility, and he wept weakly as he crawled into bed, one shoe still on. He was aware of a rising, swelling something inside his head that made his brain thick and fuzzy. His lean fingers felt as big as his wrist, while in the ends of them was a remoteness of sensation vague and fuzzy like his brain. The small of his back ached intolerably. All his bones ached. He ached everywhere. And in his head began the shrieking, pounding, crashing, roaring of a million looms. All space was filled with flying shuttles. They darted in and out, intricately, amongst the stars. He worked a thousand looms himself, and ever they speeded up, faster and faster, and his brain unwound, faster and faster, and became the thread that fed the thousand flying shuttles.

He did not go to work next morning. He was too busy weaving colossally on the thousand looms that ran inside his head. His mother went to work, but first she sent for the doctor. It was a severe attack of la grippe, he said. Jennie served as nurse and carried out his instructions.

It was a very severe attack, and it was a week before Johnny dressed and tottered feebly across the floor. Another week, the doctor said, and he would be fit to return to work. The foreman of the loom room visited him on Sunday afternoon, the first day of his convalescence. The best weaver in the room, the foreman told his mother. His job would be held for him. He could come back to work a week from Monday.

“Why don’t you thank ‘im, Johnny?” his mother asked anxiously.

“He’s ben that sick he ain’t himself yet,” she explained apologetically to the visitor.

Johnny sat hunched up and gazing steadfastly at the floor. He sat in the same position long after the foreman had gone. It was warm outdoors, and he sat on the stoop in the afternoon. Sometimes his lips moved. He seemed lost in endless calculations.

Next morning, after the day grew warm, he took his seat on the stoop. He had pencil and paper this time with which to continue his calculations, and he calculated painfully and amazingly.

"What comes after millions?" he asked at noon, when Will came home from school. "An' how d'ye work 'em?"

That afternoon finished his task. Each day, but without paper and pencil, he returned to the stoop. He was greatly absorbed in the one tree that grew across the street. He studied it for hours at a time, and was unusually interested when the wind swayed its branches and fluttered its leaves. Throughout the week he seemed lost in a great communion with himself. On Sunday, sitting on the stoop, he laughed aloud, several times, to the perturbation of his mother, who had not heard him laugh in years.

Next morning, in the early darkness, she came to his bed to rouse him. He had had his fill of sleep all week, and awoke easily. He made no struggle, nor did he attempt to hold on to the bedding when she stripped it from him. He lay quietly, and spoke quietly.

"It ain't no use, ma."

"You'll be late," she said, under the impression that he was still stupid with sleep.

"I'm awake, ma, an' I tell you it ain't no use. You might as well lemme alone. I ain't goin' to git up."

"But you'll lose your job!" she cried.

"I ain't goin' to git up," he repeated in a strange, passionless voice.

She did not go to work herself that morning. This was sickness beyond any sickness she had ever known. Fever and delirium she could understand; but this was insanity. She pulled the bedding up over him and sent Jennie for the doctor.

When that person arrived, Johnny was sleeping gently, and gently he awoke and allowed his pulse to be taken.

"Nothing the matter with him," the doctor reported. "Badly debilitated, that's all. Not much meat on his bones."

"He's always been that way," his mother volunteered.

"Now go 'way, ma, an' let me finish my snooze."

Johnny spoke sweetly and placidly, and sweetly and placidly he rolled over on his side and went to sleep.

At ten o'clock he awoke and dressed himself. He walked out into the kitchen, where he found his mother with a frightened expression on her face.

“I’m goin’ away, ma,” he announced, “an’ I jes’ want to say good-by.” She threw her apron over her head and sat down suddenly and wept. He waited patiently.

“I might a-known it,” she was sobbing.

“Where?” she finally asked, removing the apron from her head and gazing up at him with a stricken face in which there was little curiosity.

“I don’t know--anywhere.”

As he spoke, the tree across the street appeared with dazzling brightness on his inner vision. It seemed to lurk just under his eyelids, and he could see it whenever he wished.

“An’ your job?” she quavered.

“I ain’t never goin’ to work again.”

“My God, Johnny!” she wailed, “don’t say that!”

What he had said was blasphemy to her. As a mother who hears her child deny God, was Johnny’s mother shocked by his words.

“What’s got into you, anyway?” she demanded, with a lame attempt at imperativeness.

“Figures,” he answered. “Jes’ figures. I’ve ben doin’ a lot of figurin’ this week, an’ it’s most surprisin’.”

“I don’t see what that’s got to do with it,” she sniffled.

Johnny smiled patiently, and his mother was aware of a distinct shock at the persistent absence of his peevishness and irritability.

“I’ll show you,” he said. “I’m plum’ tired out. What makes me tired? Moves. I’ve ben movin’ ever since I was born. I’m tired of movin’, an’ I ain’t goin’ to move any more. Remember when I worked in the glass-house? I used to do three hundred dozen a day. Now I reckon I made about ten different moves to each bottle. That’s thirty-six thousan’ moves a day. Ten days, three hundred an’ sixty thousan’ moves a day. One month, one million an’ eighty thousan’ moves. Chuck out the eighty thousan’--“ he spoke with the complacent beneficence of a philanthropist--“chuck out the eighty thousan’, that leaves a million moves a month--twelve million moves a year.

“At the looms I’m movin’ twic’st as much. That makes twenty-five million moves a year, an’ it seems to me I’ve ben a movin’ that way ‘most a million years.

“Now this week I ain’t moved at all. I ain’t made one move in hours an’ hours. I tell you it was swell, jes’ settin’ there, hours an’ hours, an’ doin’ nothin’. I ain’t never ben happy before. I never had any time. I’ve ben movin’ all the time. That ain’t no way to be happy. An’ I ain’t goin’ to do it any more. I’m jes’ goin’ to set, an’ set, an’ rest, an’ rest, and then rest some more.”

“But what’s goin’ to come of Will an’ the children?” she asked despairingly.

“That’s it, `Will an’ the children,’“ he repeated.

But there was no bitterness in his voice. He had long known his mother’s ambition for the younger boy, but the thought of it no longer rankled. Nothing mattered any more. Not even that.

“I know, ma, what you’ve ben plannin’ for Will--keepin’ him in school to make a bookkeeper out of him. But it ain’t no use, I’ve quit. He’s got to go to work.”

“An’ after I have brung you up the way I have,” she wept, starting to cover her head with the apron and changing her mind.

“You never brung me up,” he answered with sad kindliness. “brung myself up, ma, an’ I brung up Will. He’s bigger’n me, an’ heavier, an’ taller. When I was a kid, I reckon I didn’t git enough to eat. When he come along an’ was a kid, I was workin’ an’ earnin’ grub for him too. But that’s done with. Will can go to work, same as me, or he can go to hell, I don’t care which. I’m tired. I’m goin’ now. Ain’t you goin’ to say good-by?”

She made no reply. The apron had gone over her head again, and she was crying. He paused a moment in the doorway.

“I’m sure I done the best I knew how,” she was sobbing.

He passed out of the house and down the street. A wan delight came into his face at the sight of the lone tree. “Jes’ ain’t goin’ to do nothin’,” he said to himself, half aloud, in a crooning tone. He glanced wistfully up at the sky, but the bright sun dazzled and blinded him.

It was a long walk he took, and he did not walk fast. It took him past the jute-mill. The muffled roar of the loom room came to his ears, and he smiled. It was a gentle, placid smile. He hated no one, not even the pounding, shrieking machines. There was no bitterness in him, nothing but an inordinate hunger for rest.

The houses and factories thinned out and the open spaces increased as he approached the country. At last the city was behind him, and he was walking down a leafy lane beside the railroad track. He did not walk like a man. He did not look like a man. He was a travesty of the human. It was a twisted and stunted and nameless piece of life that shambled like a sickly ape, arms loose-hanging, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested, grotesque and terrible.

He passed by a small railroad station and lay down in the grass under a tree. All afternoon he lay there. Sometimes he dozed, with muscles that twitched in his sleep. When awake, he lay without movement, watching the birds or looking up at the sky through the branches of the tree above him. Once or twice he laughed aloud, but without relevance to anything he had seen or felt.

After twilight had gone, in the first darkness of the night, a freight train rumbled into the station. When the engine was switching cars on to the side-track, Johnny crept along the side of the train. He pulled open the side-door of an empty box-car and awkwardly and laboriously climbed in. He closed the door. The engine whistled. Johnny was lying down, and in the darkness he smiled.

God of His Fathers

(First published in McClure’s Magazine, Vol. 17, May, 1901)

On every hand stretched the forest primeval, -- the home of noisy comedy and silent tragedy. Here the struggle for survival continued to wage with all its ancient brutality. Briton and Russian were still to overlap in the Land of the Rainbow’s End -- and this was the very heart of it -- nor had Yankee gold yet purchased its vast domain. The wolf-pack still clung to the flank of the cariboo-herd, singling out the weak and the big with calf, and pulling them down as remorselessly as were it a thousand, thousand generations into the past. The sparse aborigines still acknowledged the rule of their chiefs and medicine men, drove out bad spirits, burned their witches, fought their neighbors, and ate their enemies with a relish which spoke well of their bellies. But it was at the moment when the stone age was drawing to a close. Already, over unknown trails and chartless wildernesses, were the harbingers of the steel arriving, -- fairfaced, blue-eyed, indomitable men, incarnations of the unrest of their race. By accident or design, single-handed and in twos and threes, they came from no one knew whither, and fought, or died, or passed on, no one knew whence. The priests raged against them, the chiefs called forth their fighting men, and stone clashed with steel; but to little purpose. Like water seeping from some mighty reservoir, they trickled through the dark forests and mountain passes, threading the highways in bark canoes, or with their moccasined feet breaking trail for the wolf-dogs. They came of a great breed, and their mothers were many; but the fur-clad denizens of the Northland had this yet to learn. So many an unsung wanderer fought his last and died under the cold fire of the aurora, as did his brothers in burning sands and reeking jungles, and as they shall continue to do till in the fulness of time the destiny of their race be achieved.

It was near twelve. Along the northern horizon a rosy glow, fading to the west and deepening to the east, marked the unseen dip of the midnight sun. The gloaming and the dawn were so commingled that there was no night, -- simply a wedding of day with day, a scarcely perceptible blending of two circles of the sun. A kildee timidly chirped good-night; the full, rich throat of a robin proclaimed good-morrow. From an island on the breast of the Yukon a colony of wild fowl voiced its interminable wrongs, while a loon laughed mockingly back across a still stretch of river.

In the foreground, against the bank of a lazy eddy, birch- bark canoes were lined two and three deep. Ivory-bladed spears, bone-barbed arrows, buckskinthonged bows, and simple basket- woven traps bespoke the fact that in the muddy current of the river the salmon-run was on. In the background, from the tangle of skin tents and drying frames, rose the voices of the fisher folk. Bucks skylarked with bucks or flirted with the maidens, while the older squaws, shut out from this by virtue of having fulfilled the end of their existence in reproduction, gossiped as they braided rope from the green roots of trailing vines. At their feet their naked progeny played and squabbled, or rolled in the muck with the tawny wolf-dogs.

To one side of the encampment, and conspicuously apart from it, stood a second camp of two tents. But it was a white man's camp. If nothing else, the choice of position at least bore convincing evidence of this. In case of offence, it commanded the Indian quarters a hundred yards away; of defence, a rise to the ground and the cleared intervening space; and last, of defeat, the swift slope of a score of yards to the canoes below. From one of the tents came the petulant cry of a sick child and the crooning song of a mother. In the open, over the smouldering embers of a fire, two men held talk.

"Eh? I love the church like a good son. Bien! So great a love that my days have been spent in fleeing away from her, and my nights in dreaming dreams of reckoning. Look you!" The half- breed's voice rose to an angry snarl. "I am Red River born. My father was white -- as white as you. But you are Yankee, and he was British bred, and a gentleman's son. And my mother was the daughter of a chief, and was a man. Ay, and one had to look the second time to see what manner of blood ran in my veins; for I lived with the whites, and was one of them, and my father's heart beat in me. It happened there was a maiden -- white -- who looked on me with kind eyes. Her father had much land and many horses; also he was a big man among his people, and his blood was the blood of the French. He said the girl knew not her own mind, and talked overmuch with her, and became wroth that such things should be.

"But she knew her mind, for we came quick before the priest. And quicker had come her father, with lying words, false promises, know not what; so that the priest stiffened his neck and would not make us that we might live one with the other. As at the beginning it was the church which would not bless my birth, so now it was the church which refused me marriage and put the blood of men upon my hands. Bien! Thus have I cause to love the church. So I struck the priest on his woman's mouth, and we took swift horses, the girl and I, to Fort Pierre, where was a minister of good heart. But hot on our trail was her father, and brothers, and other men he had gathered to him. And we fought, our horses on the run, till I emptied three saddles and the rest drew off and went on to Fort Pierre. Then we took east, the girl and I, to the hills and forests, and we lived one with the other, and we were not married, -- the work of the good church which I love like a son.

"But mark you, for this is the strangeness of woman, the way of which no man may understand. One of the saddles I emptied was that of her father's, and the hoofs of those who came behind had pounded him into the earth. This we saw, the girl and I, and this I had forgot had she not remembered. And in the quiet of the evening, after the day's hunt were done, it came between us, and in the silence of the night when we lay beneath the stars and should have been one. It was there always. She never spoke, but it sat by our fire and held us ever apart. She tried to put it aside, but at such times it would rise up till I could read it in the look of her eyes, in the very intake of her breath.

"So in the end she bore me a child, a woman-child, and died. Then I went among my mother's people, that it might nurse at a warm breast and live. But my hands were wet with the blood of men, look you, because of the church, wet with the blood of men. And the Riders of the North came for me, but my mother's brother, who was then chief in his own right, hid me and gave me horses and food. And we went away, my woman-child and I, even to the Hudson Bay Country, where white men were few and the questions they asked not many. And I worked for the company as a hunter, as a guide, as a driver of dogs, till my woman- child was become a woman, tall, and slender, and fair to the eye. "You know the winter, long and lonely, breeding evil thoughts and bad deeds. The Chief Factor was a hard man, and bold. And he was not such that a woman would delight in looking upon. But he cast eyes upon my woman-child who was become a woman. Mother of God! he sent me away on a long trip with the dogs, that he might -you understand, he was a hard man and without heart. She was most white, and her soul was white, and a good woman, and -- well, she died.

“It was bitter cold the night of my return, and I had been away months, and the dogs were limping sore when I came to the fort. The Indians and breeds looked on me in silence, and I felt the fear of knew not what, but I said nothing till the dogs were fed and I had eaten as a man with work before him should. Then I spoke up, demanding the word, and they shrank from me, afraid of my anger and what I should do; but the story came out, the pitiful story, word for word and act for act, and they marvelled that I should be so quiet.

“When they had done I went to the Factor’s house, calmer than now in the telling of it. He had been afraid and called upon the breeds to help him; but they were not pleased with the deed, and had left him to lie on the bed he had made. So he had fled to the house of the priest. Thither I followed. But when I was come to that place, the priest stood in my way, and spoke soft words, and said a man in anger should go neither to the right nor left, but straight to God. I asked by the right of a father’s wrath that he give me past, but he said only over his body, and besought with me to pray. Look you, it was the church, always the church; for I passed over his body and sent the Factor to meet my woman-child before his god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men.

“Then was there hue and cry, for word was sent to the station below, and I came away. Through the Land of the Great Slave, down the Valley of the Mackenzie to the never-opening ice, over the White Rockies, past the Great Curve of the Yukon, even to this place did come. And from that day to this, yours is the first face of my father’s people I have looked upon. May it be the last! These people, which are my people, are a simple folk, and I have been raised to honor among them. My word is their law, and their priests but do my bidding, else would I not suffer them. When I speak for them I speak for myself. We ask to be let alone. We do not want your kind. If we permit you to sit by our fires, after you will come your church, your priests, and your gods. And know this, for each white man who comes to my village, him will I make deny his god. You are the first, and I give you grace. So it were well you go, and go quickly.”

“I am not responsible for my brothers,” the second man spoke up, filling his pipe in a meditative manner. Hay Stockard was at times as thoughtful of speech as he was wanton of action; but only at times.

“But I know your breed,” responded the other. “Your brothers are many, and it is you and yours who break the trail for them to follow. In time they shall come to possess the land, but not in my time. Already, have I heard, are they on the head-reaches of the Great River, and far away below are the Russians."

Hay Stockard lifted his head with a quick start. This was startling geographical information. The Hudson Bay post at Fort Yukon had other notions concerning the course of the river, believing it to flow into the Arctic.

"Then the Yukon empties into Bering Sea?" he asked.

"I do not know, but below there are Russians, many Russians. Which is neither here nor there. You may go on and see for yourself; you may go back to your brothers; but up the Koyukuk you shall not go while the priests and fighting men do my bidding. Thus do I command, I, Baptiste the Red, whose word is law and who am head man over this people."

"And should I not go down to the Russians, or back to my brothers?"

"Then shall you go swift-footed before your god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men."

The red sun shot up above the northern skyline, dripping and bloody. Baptiste the Red came to his feet, nodded curtly, and went back to his camp amid the crimson shadows and the singing of the robins.

Hay Stockard finished his pipe by the fire, picturing in smoke and coal the unknown upper reaches of the Koyukuk, the strange stream which ended here its arctic travels and merged its waters with the muddy Yukon flood. Somewhere up there, if the dying words of a shipwrecked sailorman who had made the fearful overland journey were to be believed, and if the vial of golden grains in his pouch attested to anything, -- somewhere up there, in that home of winter, stood the Treasure House of the North. And as keeper of the gate, Baptiste the Red, English half-breed and renegade, barred the way.

"Bah!" He kicked the embers apart and rose to his full height, arms lazily outstretched, facing the flushing north with careless soul.

Hay Stockard swore, harshly, in the rugged monosyllables of his mother tongue. His wife lifted her gaze from the pots and pans, and followed his in a keen scrutiny of the river. She was a woman of the Teslin Country, wise in the ways of her husband's vernacular when it grew intensive. From the slipping of a snowshoe thong to the forefront of sudden death, she could gauge occasion by the pitch and volume of his blasphemy. So she knew the present occasion merited attention. A long canoe, with paddles flashing back the rays of the westering sun, was crossing the current from above and urging in for the eddy. Hay Stockard watched it intently. Three men rose and dipped, rose and dipped, in rhythmical precision; but a red bandanna, wrapped about the head of one, caught and held his eye.

"Bill!" he called. "Oh, Bill!"

A shambling, loose-jointed giant rolled out of one of the tents, yawning and rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Then he sighted the strange canoe and was wide awake on the instant.

"By the jumping Methuselah! That damned sky-pilot!"

Hay Stockard nodded his head bitterly, half-reached for his rifle, then shrugged his shoulders.

"Pot-shot him," Bill suggested, "and settle the thing out of hand. He 'll spoil us sure if we don't." But the other declined this drastic measure and turned away, at the same time bidding the woman return to her work, and calling Bill back from the bank. The two Indians in the canoe moored it on the edge of the eddy, while its white occupant, conspicuous by his gorgeous head-gear, came up the bank.

"Like Paul of Tarsus, I give you greeting. Peace be unto you and grace before the Lord."

His advances were met sullenly, and without speech. "To you, Hay Stockard, blasphemer and Philistine, greeting. In your heart is the lust of Mammon, in your mind cunning devils, in your tent this woman whom you live with in adultery; yet of these divers sins, even here in the wilderness, I, Sturges Owen, apostle to the Lord, bid you to repent and cast from you your iniquities."

"Save your cant! Save your cant!" Hay Stockard broke in testily. "You 'll need all you 've got, and more, for Red Baptiste over yonder."

He waved his hand toward the Indian camp, where the half- breed was looking steadily across, striving to make out the new-comers. Sturges Owen, disseminator of light and apostle to the Lord, stepped to the edge of the steep and commanded his men to bring up the camp outfit. Stockard followed him.

"Look here," he demanded, plucking the missionary by the shoulder and twirling him about. "Do you value your hide?"

"My life is in the Lord's keeping, and I do but work in His vineyard," he replied solemnly.

"Oh, stow that! Are you looking for a job of martyrship?"

"If He so wills."

"Well, you 'll find it right here, but I 'm going to give you some advice first. Take it or leave it. If you stop here, you 'll be cut off in the midst of your labors. And not you alone, but your men, Bill, my wife -- "

"Who is a daughter of Belial and hearkeneth not to the true Gospel."

"And myself. Not only do you bring trouble upon yourself, but upon us. I was frozen in with you last winter, as you will well recollect, and I know you for a good man and a fool. If you think it your duty to strive with the heathen, well and good; but do exercise some wit in the way you go about it. This man, Red Baptiste, is no Indian. He comes of our common stock, is as bull-necked as I ever dared be, and as wild a fanatic the one way as you are the other. When you two come together, hell 'll be to pay, and I don't care to be mixed up in it. Understand? So take my advice and go away. If you go down- stream, you 'll fall in with the Russians. There 's bound to be Greek priests among them, and they 'll see you safe through to Bering Sea, -- that 's where the Yukon empties, -and from there it won't be hard to get back to civilization. Take my word for it and get out of here as fast as God 'll let you."

"He who carries the Lord in his heart and the Gospel in his hand hath no fear of the machinations of man or devil," the missionary answered stoutly. "I will see this man and wrestle with him. One backslider returned to the fold is a greater victory than a thousand heathen. He who is strong for evil can be as mighty for good, witness Saul when he journeyed up to Damascus to bring Christian captives to Jerusalem. And the voice of the Saviour came to him, crying, `Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And therewith Paul arrayed himself on the side of the Lord, and thereafter was most mighty in the saving of souls. And even as thou, Paul of Tarsus, even so do I work in the vineyard of the Lord, bearing trials and tribulations, scoffs and sneers, stripes and punishments, for His dear sake."

"Bring up the little bag with the tea and a kettle of water," he called the next instant to his boatmen; "not forgetting the haunch of cariboo and the mixing-pan." When his men, converts by his own hand, had gained the bank, the trio fell to their knees, hands and backs burdened with camp equipage, and offered up thanks for their passage through the wilderness and their safe arrival. Hay Stockard looked upon the function with sneering disapproval, the romance and solemnity of it lost to his matter-of-fact soul. Baptiste the Red, still gazing across, recognized the familiar postures, and remembered the girl who had shared his star-roofed couch in the hills and forests, and the womanchild who lay somewhere by bleak Hudson's Bay.

"Confound it, Baptiste, could n't think of it. Not for a moment. Grant that this man is a fool and of small use in the nature of things, but still, you know, I can't give him up."

Hay Stockard paused, striving to put into speech the rude ethics of his heart.

"He 's worried me, Baptiste, in the past and now, and caused me all manner of troubles; but can't you see, he 's my own breed -- white -- and -- and -why, I could n't buy my life with his, not if he was a nigger."

"So be it," Baptiste the Red made answer. "I have given you grace and choice. I shall come presently, with my priests and fighting men, and either shall I kill you, or you deny your god. Give up the priest to my pleasure, and you shall depart in peace. Otherwise your trail ends here. My people are against you to the babies. Even now have the children stolen away your canoes." He pointed down to the river. Naked boys had slipped down the water from the point above, cast loose the canoes, and by then had worked them into the current. When they had drifted out of rifle-shot they clambered over the sides and paddled ashore.

"Give me the priest, and you may have them back again. Come! Speak your mind, but without haste."

Stockard shook his head. His glance dropped to the woman of the Teslin Country with his boy at her breast, and he would have wavered had he not lifted his eyes to the men before him.

"I am not afraid," Sturges Owen spoke up. "The Lord bears me in his right hand, and alone am I ready to go into the camp of the unbeliever. It is not too late. Faith may move mountains. Even in the eleventh hour may I win his soul to the true righteousness."

"Trip the beggar up and make him fast," Bill whispered hoarsely in the ear of his leader, while the missionary kept the floor and wrestled with the heathen. "Make him hostage, and bore him if they get ugly."

"No," Stockard answered. "I gave him my word that he could speak with us unmolested. Rules of warfare, Bill; rules of warfare. He's been on the square, given us warning, and all that, and -- why, damn it, man, I can't break my word!"

"He 'll keep his, never fear."

"Don't doubt it, but I won't let a half-breed outdo me in fair dealing. Why not do what he wants, -- give him the missionary and be done with it?"

"N-no," Bill hesitated doubtfully.

"Shoe pinches, eh?"

Bill flushed a little and dropped the discussion. Baptiste the Red was still waiting the final decision. Stockard went up to him.

"It 's this way, Baptiste. I came to your village minded to go up the Koyukuk. I intended no wrong. My heart was clean of evil. It is still clean. Along comes this priest, as you call him. I did n't bring him here. He 'd have come whether I was here or not. But now that he is here, being of my people, I 've got to stand by him. And 'm going to. Further, it will be no child's play. When you have done, your village will be silent and empty, your people wasted as after a famine. True, we will be gone; likewise the pick of your fighting men -"

"But those who remain shall be in peace, nor shall the word of strange gods and the tongues of strange priests be buzzing in their ears."

Both men shrugged their shoulders and turned away, the half-breed going back to his own camp. The missionary called his two men to him, and they fell into prayer. Stockard and Bill attacked the few standing pines with their axes, felling them into convenient breastworks. The child had fallen asleep, so the woman placed it on a heap of furs and lent a hand in fortifying the camp. Three sides were thus defended, the steep declivity at the rear precluding attack from that direction. When these arrangements had been completed, the two men stalked into the open, clearing away, here and there, the scattered underbrush. From the opposing camp came the booming of war- drums and the voices of the priests stirring the people to anger.

"Worst of it is they 'll come in rushes," Bill complained as they walked back with shouldered axes.

"And wait till midnight, when the light gets dim for shooting."

"Can't start the ball a-rolling too early, then." Bill exchanged the axe for a rifle, and took a careful rest. One of the medicine-men, towering above his tribesmen, stood out distinctly. Bill drew a bead on him.

"All ready?" he asked.

Stockard opened the ammunition box, placed the woman where she could reload in safety, and gave the word. The medicine-man dropped. For a moment there was silence, then a wild howl went up and a flight of bone arrows fell short.

"I 'd like to take a look at the beggar," Bill remarked, throwing a fresh shell into place. "I 'll swear I drilled him clean between the eyes."

"Did n't work." Stockard shook his head gloomily. Baptiste had evidently quelled the more warlike of his followers, and instead of precipitating an attack in the bright light of day, the shot had caused a hasty exodus, the Indians drawing out of the village beyond the zone of fire.

In the full tide of his proselyting fervor, borne along by the hand of God, Sturges Owen would have ventured alone into the camp of the unbeliever, equally prepared for miracle or martyrdom; but in the waiting which ensued, the fever of conviction died away gradually, as the natural man asserted itself. Physical fear replaced spiritual hope; the love of life, the love of God. It was no new experience. He could feel his weakness coming on, and knew it of old time. He had struggled against it and been overcome by it before. He remembered when the other men had driven their paddles like mad in the van of a roaring ice-flood, how, at the critical moment, in a panic of worldly terror, he had dropped his paddle and besought wildly with his God for pity. And there were other times. The recollection was not pleasant. It brought shame to him that his spirit should be so weak and his flesh so strong. But the love of life! the love of life! He could not strip it from him. Because of it had his dim ancestors perpetuated their line; because of it was he destined to perpetuate his. His courage, if courage it might be called, was bred of fanaticism. The courage of Stockard and Bill was the adherence to deep- rooted ideals. Not that the love of life was less, but the love of race tradition more; not that they were unafraid to die, but that they were brave enough not to live at the price of shame.

The missionary rose, for the moment swayed by the mood of sacrifice. He half crawled over the barricade to proceed to the other camp, but sank back, a trembling mass, wailing: "As the spirit moves! As the spirit moves! Who am I that I should set aside the judgments of God? Before the foundations of the world were all things written in the book of life. Worm that I am, shall I erase the page or any portion thereof? As God wills, so shall the spirit move!"

Bill reached over, plucked him to his feet, and shook him, fiercely, silently. Then he dropped the bundle of quivering nerves and turned his attention to the two converts. But they showed little fright and a cheerful alacrity in preparing for the coming passage at arms.

Stockard, who had been talking in undertones with the Teslin woman, now turned to the missionary.

“Fetch him over here,” he commanded of Bill.

“Now,” he ordered, when Sturges Owen had been duly deposited before him, “make us man and wife, and be lively about it.” Then he added apologetically to Bill: “No telling how it ‘s to end, so I just thought I ‘d get my affairs straightened up.”

The woman obeyed the behest of her white lord. To her the ceremony was meaningless. By her lights she was his wife, and had been from the day they first foregathered. The converts served as witnesses. Bill stood over the missionary, prompting him when he stumbled. Stockard put the responses in the woman’s mouth, and when the time came, for want of better, ringed her finger with thumb and forefinger of his own.

“Kiss the bride!” Bill thundered, and Sturges Owen was too weak to disobey.

“Now baptize the child!”

“Neat and tidy,” Bill commented.

“Gathering the proper outfit for a new trail,” the father explained, taking the boy from the mother’s arms. “I was grub- staked, once, into the Cascades, and had everything in the kit except salt. Never shall forget it. And if the woman and the kid cross the divide to-night they might as well be prepared for potluck. A long shot, Bill, between ourselves, but nothing lost if it misses.”

A cup of water served the purpose, and the child was laid away in a secure corner of the barricade. The men built the fire, and the evening meal was cooked.

The sun hurried round to the north, sinking closer to the horizon. The heavens in that quarter grew red and bloody. The shadows lengthened, the light dimmed, and in the sombre recesses of the forest life slowly died away. Even the wild fowl in the river softened their raucous chatter and feigned the nightly farce of going to bed. Only the tribesmen increased their clamor, war-drums booming and voices raised in savage folk songs. But as the sun dipped they ceased their tumult. The rounded hush of midnight was complete. Stockard rose to his knees and peered over the logs. Once the child wailed in pain and disconcerted him. The mother bent over it, but it slept again. The silence was interminable, profound. Then, of a sudden, the robins burst into full-throated song. The night had passed.

A flood of dark figures boiled across the open. Arrows whistled and bowthongs sang. The shrill-tongued rifles answered back. A spear, and a mighty cast, transfixed the Teslin woman as she hovered above the child. A spent arrow, diving between the logs, lodged in the missionary's arm.

There was no stopping the rush. The middle distance was cumbered with bodies, but the rest surged on, breaking against and over the barricade like an ocean wave. Sturges Owen fled to the tent, while the men were swept from their feet, buried beneath the human tide. Hay Stockard alone regained the surface, flinging the tribesmen aside like yelping curs. He had managed to seize an axe. A dark hand grasped the child by a naked foot, and drew it from beneath its mother. At arm's length its puny body circled through the air, dashing to death against the logs. Stockard clove the man to the chin and fell to clearing space. The ring of savage faces closed in, raining upon him spear-thrusts and bonebarbed arrows. The sun shot up, and they swayed back and forth in the crimson shadows. Twice, with his axe blocked by too deep a blow, they rushed him; but each time he flung them clear. They fell underfoot and he trampled dead and dying, the way slippery with blood. And still the day brightened and the robins sang. Then they drew back from him in awe, and he leaned breathless upon his axe.

"Blood of my soul!" cried Baptiste the Red. "But thou art a man. Deny thy god, and thou shalt yet live."

Stockard swore his refusal, feebly but with grace.

"Behold! A woman!" Sturges Owen had been brought before the half-breed.

Beyond a scratch on the arm, he was uninjured, but his eyes roved about him in an ecstasy of fear. The heroic figure of the blasphemer, bristling with wounds and arrows, leaning defiantly upon his axe, indifferent, indomitable, superb, caught his wavering vision. And he felt a great envy of the man who could go down serenely to the dark gates of death. Surely Christ, and not he, Sturges Owen, had been moulded in such manner. And why not he? He felt dimly the curse of ancestry, the feebleness of spirit which had come down to him out of the past, and he felt an anger at the creative force, symbolize it as he would, which had formed him, its servant, so weakly. For even a stronger man, this anger and the stress of circumstance were sufficient to breed apostasy, and for Sturges Owen it was inevitable. In the fear of man’s anger he would dare the wrath of God. He had been raised up to serve the Lord only that he might be cast down. He had been given faith without the strength of faith; he had been given spirit without the power of spirit. It was unjust.

“Where now is thy god?” the half-breed demanded.

“I do not know.” He stood straight and rigid, like a child repeating a catechism.

“Hast thou then a god at all?” “I had.”

“And now?”

“No.”

Hay Stockard swept the blood from his eyes and laughed. The missionary looked at him curiously, as in a dream. A feeling of infinite distance came over him, as though of a great remove. In that which had transpired, and which was to transpire, he had no part. He was a spectator -- at a distance, yes, at a distance. The words of Baptiste came to him faintly: --

“Very good. See that this man go free, and that no harm befall him. Let him depart in peace. Give him a canoe and food. Set his face toward the Russians, that he may tell their priests of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there is no god.”

They led him to the edge of the steep, where they paused to witness the final tragedy. The half-breed turned to Hay Stockard.

“There is no god,” he prompted.

The man laughed in reply. One of the young men poised a war-spear for the cast.

“Hast thou a god?”

“Ay, the God of my fathers.”

He shifted the axe for a better grip. Baptiste the Red gave the sign, and the spear hurtled full against his breast. Sturges Owen saw the ivory head stand out beyond his back, saw the man sway, laughing, and snap the shaft short as he fell upon it. Then he went down to the river, that he might carry to the Russians the message of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there was no god.

At the Rainbow’s End

It was for two reasons that Montana Kid discarded his “chaps” and Mexican spurs, and shook the dust of the Idaho ranges from his feet. In the first place, the encroachments of a steady, sober, and sternly moral civilization had destroyed the primeval status of the western cattle ranges, and refined society turned the cold eye of disfavor upon him and his ilk. In the second place, in one of its cyclopean moments the race had arisen and shoved back its frontier several thousand miles. Thus, with unconscious foresight, did mature society make room for its adolescent members. True, the new territory was mostly barren; but its several hundred thousand square miles of frigidity at least gave breathing space to those who else would have suffocated at home.

Montana Kid was such a one. Heading for the sea-coast, with a haste several sheriff’s posses might possibly have explained, and with more nerve than coin of the realm, he succeeded in shipping from a Puget Sound port, and managed to survive the contingent miseries of steerage sea-sickness and steerage grub. He was rather sallow and drawn, but still his own indomitable self, when he landed on the Dyea beach one day in the spring of the year. Between the cost of dogs, grub, and outfits, and the customs exactions of the two clashing governments, it speedily penetrated to his understanding that the Northland was anything save a poor man’s Mecca. So he cast about him in search of quick harvests. Between the beach and the passes were scattered many thousands of passionate pilgrims. These pilgrims Montana Kid proceeded to farm. At first he dealt faro in a pine-board gambling shack; but disagreeable necessity forced him to drop a sudden period into a man’s life, and to move on up trail. Then he effected a corner in horseshoe nails, and they circulated at par with legal tender, four to the dollar, till an unexpected consignment of a hundred barrels or so broke the market and forced him to disgorge his stock at a loss. After that he located at Sheep Camp, organized the professional packers, and jumped the freight ten cents a pound in a single day. In token of their gratitude, the packers patronized his faro and roulette layouts and were mulcted cheerfully of their earnings. But his commercialism was of too lusty a growth to be long endured; so they rushed him one night, burned his shanty, divided the bank, and headed him up the trail with empty pockets.

Ill-luck was his running mate. He engaged with responsible parties to run whisky across the line by way of precarious and unknown trails, lost his Indian guides, and had the very first outfit confiscated by the Mounted Police. Numerous other misfortunes tended to make him bitter of heart and wanton of action, and he celebrated his arrival at Lake Bennett by terrorizing the camp for twenty straight hours. Then a miners' meeting took him in hand, and commanded him to make himself scarce. He had a wholesome respect for such assemblages, and he obeyed in such haste that he inadvertently removed himself at the tail-end of another man's dog team. This was equivalent to horse-stealing in a more mellow clime, so he hit only the high places across Bennett and down Tagish, and made his first camp a full hundred miles to the north.

Now it happened that the break of spring was at hand, and many of the principal citizens of Dawson were travelling south on the last ice. These he met and talked with, noted their names and possessions, and passed on. He had a good memory, also a fair imagination; nor was veracity one of his virtues.

II

Dawson, always eager for news, beheld Montana Kid's sled heading down the Yukon, and went out on the ice to meet him. No, he hadn't any newspapers; didn't know whether Durrant was hanged yet, nor who had won the Thanksgiving game; hadn't heard whether the United States and Spain had gone to fighting; didn't know who Dreyfus was; but O'Brien? Hadn't they heard? O'Brien, why, he was drowned in the White Horse; Sitka Charley the only one of the party who escaped. Joe Ladue? Both legs frozen and amputated at the Five Fingers. And Jack Dalton? Blown up on the "Sea Lion" with all hands. And Bettles? Wrecked on the "Carthagina," in Seymour Narrows,--twenty survivors out of three hundred. And Swiftwater Bill? Gone through the rotten ice of Lake LeBarge with six female members of the opera troupe he was convoying. Governor Walsh? Lost with all hands and eight sleds on the Thirty Mile. Devereaux? Who was Devereaux? Oh, the courier! Shot by Indians on Lake Marsh.

So it went. The word was passed along. Men shouldered in to ask after friends and partners, and in turn were shouldered out, too stunned for blasphemy. By the time Montana Kid gained the bank he was surrounded by several hundred fur-clad miners. When he passed the Barracks he was the centre of a procession. At the Opera House he was the nucleus of an excited mob, each member struggling for a chance to ask after some absent comrade. On every side he was being invited to drink. Never before had the Klondike thus opened its arms to a che-cha-qua. All Dawson was humming. Such a series of catastrophes had never occurred in its history. Every man of note who had gone south in the spring had been wiped out. The cabins vomited forth their occupants. Wild-eyed men hurried down from the creeks and gulches to seek out this man who had told a tale of such disaster. The Russian half-breed wife of Bettles sought the fireplace, inconsolable, and rocked back and forth, and ever and anon flung white wood-ashes upon her raven hair. The flag at the Barracks flopped dismally at half-mast. Dawson mourned its dead.

Why Montana Kid did this thing no man may know. Nor beyond the fact that the truth was not in him, can explanation be hazarded. But for five whole days he plunged the land in wailing and sorrow, and for five whole days he was the only man in the Klondike. The country gave him its best of bed and board. The saloons granted him the freedom of their bars. Men sought him continuously. The high officials bowed down to him for further information, and he was feasted at the Barracks by Constantine and his brother officers. And then, one day, Devereaux, the government courier, halted his tired dogs before the gold commissioner's office. Dead? Who said so? Give him a moose steak and he'd show them how dead he was. Why, Governor Walsh was in camp on the Little Salmon, and O'Brien coming in on the first water. Dead? Give him a moose steak and he'd show them.

And forthwith Dawson hummed. The Barracks' flag rose to the masthead, and Bettles' wife washed herself and put on clean raiment. The community subtly signified its desire that Montana Kid obliterate himself from the landscape. And Montana Kid obliterated; as usual, at the tail-end of some one else's dog team. Dawson rejoiced when he headed down the Yukon, and wished him godspeed to the ultimate destination of the case-hardened sinner. After that the owner of the dogs bestirred himself, made complaint to Constantine, and from him received the loan of a policeman.

III

With Circle City in prospect and the last ice crumbling under his runners, Montana Kid took advantage of the lengthening days and travelled his dogs late and early. Further, he had but little doubt that the owner of the dogs in question had taken his trail, and he wished to make American territory before the river broke. But by the afternoon of the third day it became evident that he had lost in his race with spring. The Yukon was growling and straining at its fetters. Long detours became necessary, for the trail had begun to fall through into the swift current beneath, while the ice, in constant unrest, was thundering apart in great gaping fissures. Through these and through countless airholes, the water began to sweep across the surface of the ice, and by the time he pulled into a woodchopper's cabin on the point of an island, the dogs were being rushed off their feet and were swimming more often than not. He was greeted sourly by the two residents, but he unharnessed and proceeded to cook up.

Donald and Davy were fair specimens of frontier inefficients. Canadian-born, city-bred Scots, in a foolish moment they had resigned their counting-house desks, drawn upon their savings, and gone Klondiking. And now they were feeling the rough edge of the country. Grubless, spiritless, with a lust for home in their hearts, they had been staked by the P. C. Company to cut wood for its steamers, with the promise at the end of a passage home. Disregarding the possibilities of the ice-run, they had fittingly demonstrated their inefficiency by their choice of the island on which they located. Montana Kid, though possessing little knowledge of the break-up of a great river, looked about him dubiously, and cast yearning glances at the distant bank where the towering bluffs promised immunity from all the ice of the Northland.

After feeding himself and dogs, he lighted his pipe and strolled out to get a better idea of the situation. The island, like all its river brethren, stood higher at the upper end, and it was here that Donald and Davy had built their cabin and piled many cords of wood. The far shore was a full mile away, while between the island and the near shore lay a back-channel perhaps a hundred yards across. At first sight of this, Montana Kid was tempted to take his dogs and escape to the mainland, but on closer inspection he discovered a rapid current flooding on top. Below, the river twisted sharply to the west, and in this turn its breast was studded by a maze of tiny islands.

"That's where she'll jam," he remarked to himself.

Half a dozen sleds, evidently bound up-stream to Dawson, were splashing through the chill water to the tail of the island. Travel on the river was passing from the precarious to the impossible, and it was nip and tuck with them till they gained the island and came up the path of the wood-choppers toward the cabin. One of them, snow-blind, towed helplessly at the rear of a sled. Husky young fellows they were, rough-garmented and trail-worn, yet Montana Kid had met the breed before and knew at once that it was not his kind.

“Hello! How’s things up Dawson-way?” queried the foremost, passing his eye over Donald and Davy and settling it upon the Kid.

A first meeting in the wilderness is not characterized by formality. The talk quickly became general, and the news of the Upper and Lower Countries was swapped equitably back and forth. But the little the newcomers had was soon over with, for they had wintered at Minook, a thousand miles below, where nothing was doing. Montana Kid, however, was fresh from Salt Water, and they annexed him while they pitched camp, swamping him with questions concerning the outside, from which they had been cut off for a twelvemonth.

A shrieking split, suddenly lifting itself above the general uproar on the river, drew everybody to the bank. The surface water had increased in depth, and the ice, assailed from above and below, was struggling to tear itself from the grip of the shores. Fissures reverberated into life before their eyes, and the air was filled with multitudinous crackling, crisp and sharp, like the sound that goes up on a clear day from the firing line.

From up the river two men were racing a dog team toward them on an uncovered stretch of ice. But even as they looked, the pair struck the water and began to flounder through. Behind, where their feet had sped the moment before, the ice broke up and turned turtle. Through this opening the river rushed out upon them to their waists, burying the sled and swinging the dogs off at right angles in a drowning tangle. But the men stopped their flight to give the animals a fighting chance, and they groped hurriedly in the cold confusion, slashing at the detaining traces with their sheath-knives. Then they fought their way to the bank through swirling water and grinding ice, where, foremost in leaping to the rescue among the jarring fragments, was the Kid.

“Why, blime me, if it ain’t Montana Kid!” exclaimed one of the men whom the Kid was just placing upon his feet at the top of the bank. He wore the scarlet tunic of the Mounted Police and jocularly raised his right hand in salute.

"Got a warrant for you, Kid," he continued, drawing a bedraggled paper from his breast pocket, "an' I 'ope as you'll come along peaceable."

Montana Kid looked at the chaotic river and shrugged his shoulders, and the policeman, following his glance, smiled.

"Where are the dogs?" his companion asked.

"Gentlemen," interrupted the policeman, "this 'ere mate o' mine is Jack Sutherland, owner of Twenty-Two Eldorado--"

"Not Sutherland of '92?" broke in the snow-blinded Minook man, groping feebly toward him.

"The same." Sutherland gripped his hand.

"And you?"

"Oh, I'm after your time, but I remember you in my freshman year,--you were doing P. G. work then. Boys," he called, turning half about, "this is Sutherland, Jack Sutherland, erstwhile full-back on the 'Varsity. Come up, you gold-chasers, and fall upon him! Sutherland, this is Greenwich,--played quarter two seasons back."

"Yes, I read of the game," Sutherland said, shaking hands. "And I remember that big run of yours for the first touchdown."

Greenwich flushed darkly under his tanned skin and awkwardly made room for another.

"And here's Matthews,--Berkeley man. And we've got some Eastern cracks knocking about, too. Come up, you Princeton men! Come up! This is Sutherland, Jack Sutherland!"

Then they fell upon him heavily, carried him into camp, and supplied him with dry clothes and numerous mugs of black tea.

Donald and Davy, overlooked, had retired to their nightly game of crib. Montana Kid followed them with the policeman.

"Here, get into some dry togs," he said, pulling them from out his scanty kit. "Guess you'll have to bunk with me, too."

"Well, I say, you're a good 'un," the policeman remarked as he pulled on the other man's socks. "Sorry I've got to take you back to Dawson, but I only 'ope they won't be 'ard on you."

"Not so fast." The Kid smiled curiously. "We ain't under way yet. When I go I'm going down river, and I guess the chances are you'll go along."

"Not if I know myself--"

"Come on outside, and I'll show you, then. These damn fools," thrusting a thumb over his shoulder at the two Scots, "played smash when they located here. Fill your pipe, first--this is pretty good plug--and enjoy yourself while you can. You haven't many smokes before you."

The policeman went with him wonderingly, while Donald and Davy dropped their cards and followed. The Minook men noticed Montana Kid pointing now up the river, now down, and came over.

"What's up?" Sutherland demanded.

"Nothing much." Nonchalance sat well upon the Kid. "Just a case of raising hell and putting a chunk under. See that bend down there? That's where she'll jam millions of tons of ice. Then she'll jam in the bends up above, millions of tons. Upper jam breaks first, lower jam holds, pouf!" He dramatically swept the island with his hand. "Millions of tons," he added reflectively.

"And what of the woodpiles?" Davy questioned.

The Kid repeated his sweeping gestures and Davy wailed, "The labor of months! It canna be! Na, na, lad, it canna be. I doot not it's a jowk. Ay, say that it is," he appealed.

But when the Kid laughed harshly and turned on his heel, Davy flung himself upon the piles and began frantically to toss the cordwood back from the bank.

"Lend a hand, Donald!" he cried. "Can ye no lend a hand? 'T is the labor of months and the passage home!"

Donald caught him by the arm and shook him, but he tore free. "Did ye no hear, man? Millions of tons, and the island shall be sweepit clean."

"Straighten yersel' up, man," said Donald. "It's a bit fashed ye are."

But Davy fell upon the cordwood. Donald stalked back to the cabin, buckled on his money belt and Davy's, and went out to the point of the island where the ground was highest and where a huge pine towered above its fellows.

The men before the cabin heard the ringing of his axe and smiled. Greenwich returned from across the island with the word that they were penned in. It was impossible to cross the back-channel. The blind Minook man began to sing, and the rest joined in with —

"Wonder if it's true? Does it seem so to you? Seems to me he's lying-Oh, I wonder if it's true?"

“It’s ay sinfu’,” Davy moaned, lifting his head and watching them dance in the slanting rays of the sun. “And my guid wood a’ going to waste.”

“Oh, I wonder if it’s true,” was flaunted back.

The noise of the river ceased suddenly. A strange calm wrapped about them. The ice had ripped from the shores and was floating higher on the surface of the river, which was rising. Up it came, swift and silent, for twenty feet, till the huge cakes rubbed softly against the crest of the bank. The tail of the island, being lower, was overrun. Then, without effort, the white flood started down-stream. But the sound increased with the momentum, and soon the whole island was shaking and quivering with the shock of the grinding bergs. Under pressure, the mighty cakes, weighing hundreds of tons, were shot into the air like peas. The frigid anarchy increased its riot, and the men had to shout into one another’s ears to be heard. Occasionally the racket from the back channel could be heard above the tumult. The island shuddered with the impact of an enormous cake which drove in squarely upon its point. It ripped a score of pines out by the roots, then swinging around and over, lifted its muddy base from the bottom of the river and bore down upon the cabin, slicing the bank and trees away like a gigantic knife. It seemed barely to graze the corner of the cabin, but the cribbed logs tilted up like matches, and the structure, like a toy house, fell backward in ruin.

“The labor of months! The labor of months, and the passage home!” Davy wailed, while Montana Kid and the policeman dragged him backward from the woodpiles.

“You’ll ‘ave plenty o’ hoppertunity all in good time for yer passage ‘ome,” the policeman growled, clouting him alongside the head and sending him flying into safety.

Donald, from the top of the pine, saw the devastating berg sweep away the cordwood and disappear down-stream. As though satisfied with this damage, the ice-flood quickly dropped to its old level and began to slacken its pace. The noise likewise eased down, and the others could hear Donald shouting from his eyrie to look down-stream. As forecast, the jam had come among the islands in the bend, and the ice was piling up in a great barrier which stretched from shore to shore. The river came to a standstill, and the water finding no outlet began to rise. It rushed up till the island was awash, the men splashing around up to their knees, and the dogs swimming to the ruins of the cabin. At this stage it abruptly became stationary, with no perceptible rise or fall.

Montana Kid shook his head. “It’s jammed above, and no more’s coming down.”

“And the gamble is, which jam will break first,” Sutherland added.

“Exactly,” the Kid affirmed. “If the upper jam breaks first, we haven’t a chance. Nothing will stand before it.”

The Minook men turned away in silence, but soon “Rumsky Ho” floated upon the quiet air, followed by “The Orange and the Black.” Room was made in the circle for Montana Kid and the policeman, and they quickly caught the ringing rhythm of the choruses as they drifted on from song to song.

“Oh, Donald, will ye no lend a hand?” Davy sobbed at the foot of the tree into which his comrade had climbed. “Oh, Donald, man, will ye no lend a hand?” he sobbed again, his hands bleeding from vain attempts to scale the slippery trunk.

But Donald had fixed his gaze up river, and now his voice rang out, vibrant with fear: —

“God Almichty, here she comes!”

Standing knee-deep in the icy water, the Minook men, with Montana Kid and the policeman, gripped hands and raised their voices in the terrible, “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” But the words were drowned in the advancing roar.

And to Donald was vouchsafed a sight such as no man may see and live. A great wall of white flung itself upon the island. Trees, dogs, men, were blotted out, as though the hand of God had wiped the face of nature clean. This much he saw, then swayed an instant longer in his lofty perch and hurtled far out into the frozen hell.

Bald-Face

London submitted this story to nearly a dozen periodicals before giving it to the Aegis. Bald-Face is a bear yarn about a side-hill grizzly whose down-hill-side legs are twice as long as the uphill-side legs.

"Talkin' of bear — "

The Klondike King paused meditatively, and the group on the hotel porch hitched their chairs up closer.

"Talkin' of bear," he went on, "now up in the Northern Country there are various kinds. On the Little Pelly, for instance, they come down that thick in the summer to feed on the salmon that you can't get an Indian or white man to go nigher than a day's journey to the place. And up in the Rampart Mountains there's a curious kind of bear called the 'side-hill grizzly.' That's because he's traveled on the side-hills ever since the Flood, and the two legs on the down-hill side are twice as long as the two on the up-hill. And he can out-run a jack rabbit when he gets steam up. Dangerous? Catch you? Bless you, no. All a man has to do is to circle down the hill and run the other way. You see, that throws mister bear's long legs up the hill and the short ones down. Yes, he's a mighty peculiar creature, but that wasn't what I started in to tell about.

"They've got another kind of bear up on the Yukon, and his legs are all right, too. He's called the bald-face grizzly, and he's jest as big as he is bad. It's only the fool white men that think of hunting him. Indiana got too much sense. But there's one thing about the bald-face that a man has to learn: he never gives the trail to mortal creature. If you see him comin', and you value your skin, you get out of his path. If you don't, there's bound to be trouble. If the bald-face met Jehovah Himself ! on the trail, he'd not give him an inch. 0, he's a selfish beggar, take my word for it. But I had to learn all this. Didn't know anything about bear when I went into the country, exceptin' when I was a youngster I'd seen a heap of cinnamons and that little black kind. And they was nothin' to be scared at.

"Well, after we'd got settled down on our claim, I went up on the hill lookin' for a likely piece of birch to make an ax-handle out of. But it was pretty hard to find the right kind, and I kept a-goin' and kept a-goin' for nigh on two hours. Wasn't in no hurry to make my choice, you see, for I was headin’ down to the Forks, where I was goin’ to borrow a log-bit from Old Joe Gee. When I started, I’d put a couple of sour-dough biscuits and some sow-belly in my pocket in case I might get hungry. And I’m tellin’ you that lunch came in right handy before I was done with it.

“Bime-by I hit upon the likeliest little birch saplin’, right in the middle of a clump of jack pine. Jest as I raised my hand-ax I happened to cast my eyes down the hill. There was a big bear comin’ up, swingin’ along on all fours, right in my direction. It was a bald-face, but little I knew then about such kind.

“‘Jest watch me scare him; I says to myself, and I stayed out of sight in the trees.

“Well, I waited till he was about a hundred feet off, then out I runs into the open.

“‘Oof! oof!’ I hollered at him, expectin’ to see him turn tail like chain lightning.

“Turn tail? He jest throwed up his head for one good look and came a comin’.

“‘Oof! oof!’ I hollered, louder’n ever. But he jest came a comin’.

“‘Consarn you!’ I says to myself, gettin’ mad. ‘I’ll make you jump the trail.’

“So I grabs my hat, and wavin’ and hollerin’ starts down the trail to meet him. A big sugar pine had gone down in a windfall and lay about breast high. I stops jest behind it, old bald-face comin’ all the time. It was jest then that fear came to me. I yelled like a Comanche Indian as he raised up to come over the log, and fired my hat full in his face. Then I lit out.

“Say! I rounded the end of that log and put down the hill at a two-twenty clip, old bald-face reachin’ for me at every jump. At the bottom was a broad, open flat, quarter of a mile to timber and full of nigger-heads. I knew if ever I slipped I was a goner, but I hit only the high places till you couldn’t a-seen my trail for smoke. And the old devil snortin’ along hot after me. Midway across, he reached for me, jest strikin’ the heel of my moccasin with his claw. Tell you I was doin’ some tall thinkin’ jest then. I knew he had the wind of me and I could never make the brush, so I pulled my little lunch out of my pocket and dropped it on the fly.

“Never looked back till I hit the timber, and then he was mouthing the biscuits in a way which wasn’t nice to see, considerin’ how close he’d been to me. I never slacked up. No, sir! Jest kept hittin’ the trail for all there was in me. But jest as I came around a bend, heelin' it right lively I tell you, what'd I see in middle of the trail before me, and comin' my way, but another bald-face!

"'Whoof!' he says when he spotted me, and he came a-runnin.'

"Instanter I was about and hittin' the back trail twice as fast as I'd come. The way this one was puffin' after me, I'd clean forgot all about the other bald-face. First thing I knew I seen him mosying along kind of easy, wonderin' most likely what had become of me, and if I tasted as good as my lunch. Say! when he seen me he looked real pleased. And then he came a-jumpin' for me.

"'Whoof!' he says.

"' Whoof !' says the one behind me.

"Bang I goes, slap off the trail sideways, a-plungin' and a-clawin through the brush like a wild man. By this time I was clean crazed; thought the whole country was full of bald-faces. Next thing I knows — whop, I comes up against something in a tangle of wild blackberry bushes. Then that something hits me a slap and closes in on me. Another bald-face! And then and there I knew I was gone for sure. But I made up to die game, and of all the rampin' and roarin' and rippin' and tearin' you ever see, that was the worst.

"'My God! 0 my wife!' it says. And I looked and it was a man I was hammering into kingdom come.

"'Thought you was a bear,' says I.

"He kind of caught his breath and looked at me. Then he says, 'Same here.'

"Seemed as though he'd been chased by a bald-face, too, and had hid in the blackberries. So that's how we mistook each other.

"But by that time the racket on the trail was something terrible, and we didn't wait to explain matters. That afternoon we got Joe Gee and some rifles and came back loaded for bear. Mebbe you won't believe me, but when we got to the spot, there was the two bald-faces lyin' dead. You see, when I jumped out, they came together, and each refused to give trail to the other. So they fought it out.

"Talkin' of bear. As I was sayin' —

The Banks of the Sacramento

"And it's blow, ye winds, heigh-ho,

For Cal-i-for-ni-o;

For there's plenty of gold so I've been told,

On the banks of the Sacramento!"

It was only a little boy, singing in a shrill treble the sea chantey which seamen sing the wide world over when they man the capstan bars and break the anchors out for "Frisco" port. It was only a little boy who had never seen the sea, but two hundred feet beneath him rolled the Sacramento. "Young" Jerry he was called, after "Old" Jerry, his father, from whom he had learned the song, as well as received his shock of bright-red hair, his blue, dancing eyes, and his fair and inevitably freckled skin.

For Old Jerry had been a sailor, and had followed the sea till middle life, haunted always by the words of the ringing chantey. Then one day he had sung the song in earnest, in an Asiatic port, swinging and thrilling round the capstan-circle with twenty others. And at San Francisco he turned his back upon his ship and upon the sea, and went to behold with his own eyes the banks of the Sacramento.

He beheld the gold, too, for he found employment at the Yellow Dream mine, and proved of utmost usefulness in rigging the great ore-cables across the river and two hundred feet above its surface.

After that he took charge of the cables and kept them in repair, and ran them and loved them, and became himself an indispensable fixture of the Yellow Dream mine. Then he loved pretty Margaret Kelly; but she had left him and Young Jerry, the latter barely toddling, to take up be, last long sleep in the little graveyard among the great sober pines.

Old Jerry never went back to the sea. He remained by his cables, and lavished upon them and Young Jerry all the love of his nature. When evil days came to the Yellow Dream, he still remained in the employ of the company as watchman over the all but abandoned property.

But this morning he was not visible. Young Jerry only was to be seen, sitting on the cabin step and singing the ancient chantey. He had cooked and eaten his breakfast all by himself, and had just come out to take a look at the world. Twenty feet before him stood the steel drum round which the endless cable worked. By the drum, snug and fast, was the ore-car. Following with his eyes the dizzy flight of the cables to the farther bank, he could see the other drum and the other car.

The contrivance was worked by gravity, the loaded car crossing the river by virtue of its own weight, and at the same time dragging the empty car back. The loaded car being emptied, and the empty car being loaded with more ore, the performance could be repeated-a performance which had been repeated tens of thousands of times since the day Old Jerry became the keeper of the cables.

Young Jerry broke off his song at the sound of approaching footsteps. A tall, blue-skirted man, a rifle across the hollow of his arm, came out from the gloom of the pine-trees. It was Hall, watchman of the Yellow Dragon mine, the cables of which spanned the Sacramento a mile farther up.

“Hello, younker!” was his greeting. “What you doin’ here by your lonesome?”

“Oh, bachin;” Jerry tried to answer unconcernedly, as if it were a very ordinary sort of thing. “Dad’s away, you see.”

“Where’s he gone?” the man asked.

“San Francisco. Went last night. His brother’s dead in the old country, and he’s gone down to see the lawyers. Won’t be back till tomorrow night.”

So spoke Jerry, and with pride, because of the responsibility which had fallen to him of keeping an eye on the property of the Yellow Dream, and the glorious adventure of living alone on the cliff above the river and of cooking his own meals.

Well, take care of yourself,” Hall said, “and don’t monkey with the cables. I’m goin’ to see if I can’t pick up a deer in the Cripple Cow Canon.”

“It’s goin’ to rain, I think,” Jerry said, with mature deliberation.

“And it’s little I mind a wettin’,” Hall laughed, as he strode away among the trees.

Jerry’s prediction concerning rain was more than fulfilled. By ten o’clock the pines were swaying and moaning, the cabin windows rattling, and the rain driving by in fierce squalls. At half past eleven he kindled a fire, and promptly at the stroke of twelve sat down to his dinner.

No out-of-doors for him that day, he decided, when he had washed the few dishes and put them neatly away; and he wondered how wet Hall was and whether he had succeeded in picking up a deer.

At one o'clock there came a knock at the door, and when he opened it a man and a woman staggered in on the breast of a great gust of wind. They were Mr. and Mrs. Spillane, ranchers, who lived in a lonely valley a dozen miles back from the river.

"Where's Hall?" was Spillane's opening speech, and he spoke sharply and quickly.

Jerry noted that he was nervous and abrupt in his movements, and that Mrs. Spillane seemed laboring under some strong anxiety. She was a thin, washed-out, worked-out woman, whose life of dreary and unending toil had stamped itself harshly upon her face. It was the same life that had bowed her husband's shoulders and gnarled his hands and turned his hair to a dry and dusty gray.

"He's gone hunting up Cripple Cow," Jerry answered. "Did you want to cross?"

The woman began to weep quietly, while Spillane dropped a troubled exclamation and strode to the window. Jerry joined him in gazing out to where the cables lost themselves in the thick downpour.

It was the custom of the backwoods people in that section of country to cross the Sacramento on the Yellow Dragon cable. For this service a small toll was charged, which tolls the Yellow Dragon Company applied to the payment of Hall's wages.

"We've got to get across, Jerry," Spillane said, at the same time jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of his wife. "Her father's hurt at the Clover Leaf. Powder explosion. Not expected to live. We just got word."

Jerry felt himself fluttering inwardly. He knew that Spillane wanted to cross on the Yellow Dream cable, and in the absence of his father he felt that he dared not assume such a responsibility, for the cable had never been used for passengers; in fact, had not been used at all for a long time.

"Maybe Hall will be back soon;" he said.

Spillane shook his head, and demanded, "Where's your father?"

"San Francisco," Jerry answered, briefly.

Spillane groaned, and fiercely drove his clenched fist into the palm of the other hand. His wife was crying more audibly, and Jerry could hear her murmuring, "And daddy's dyin', dyin'!"

The tears welled up in his own eyes, and he stood irresolute, not knowing what he should do. But the man decided for him.

“Look here, kid,” he said, with determination, “the wife and me are goin’ over on this here cable of yours! Will you run it for us?”

Jerry backed slightly away. He did it unconsciously, as if recoiling instinctively from something unwelcome.

“Better see if Hall’s back,” he suggested.

“And if he ain’t?”

Again Jerry hesitated.

“I’ll stand for the risk,” Spillane added. “Don’t you see, kid, we’ve simply got to cross!”

Jerry nodded his head reluctantly.

“And there ain’t no use waitin’ for Hall,” Spillane went on. “You know as well as me he ain’t back from Cripple Cow this time of day! So come along and let’s get started.”

No wonder that Mrs. Spillane seemed terrified as they helped her into the ore-car — so Jerry thought, as he gazed into the apparently fathomless gulf beneath her. For it was so filled with rain and cloud, hurtling and curling in the fierce blast, that the other shore, seven hundred feet away, was invisible, while the cliff at their feet dropped sheer down and lost itself in the swirling vapor. By all appearances it might be a mile to bottom instead of two hundred feet.

“All ready?” he asked.

“Let her go!” Spillane shouted, to make himself heard above the roar of the wind.

He had clambered in beside his wife, and was holding one of her hands in his.

Jerry looked upon this with disapproval. “You’ll need all your hands for holdin’ on, the way the wind’s yowlin’.”

The man and the woman shifted their hands accordingly, tightly gripping the sides of the car, and Jerry slowly and carefully released the brake. The drum began to revolve as the endless cable passed round it, and the car slid slowly out into the chasm, its trolley wheels rolling on the stationary cable overhead, to which it was suspended.

It was not the first time Jerry had worked the cable, but it was the first time he had done so away from the supervising eye of his father. By means of the brake he regulated the speed of the car. It needed regulating, for at times, caught by the stronger gusts of wind, it swayed violently back and forth; and once, just before it was swallowed up in a rain squall, it seemed about to spill out its human contents.

After that Jerry had no way of knowing where the car was except by means of the cable. This he watched keenly as it glided around the drum. “Three hundred feet,” he breathed to himself, as the cable markings went by, “three hundred and fifty, four hundred; four hundred and — ”

The cable had stopped. Jerry threw off the brake, but it did not move. He caught the cable with his hands and tried to start it by tugging smartly. Something had gone wrong. What? He could not guess; he could not see. Looking up, he could vaguely make out the empty car, which had been crossing from the opposite cliff at a speed equal to that of the loaded car. It was about two hundred and fifty feet away. That meant, he knew, that somewhere in the gray obscurity, two hundred feet above the river and two hundred and fifty feet from the other bank, Spillane and his wife were suspended and stationary.

Three times Jerry shouted with all the shrill force of his lungs, but no answering cry came out of the storm. It was impossible for him to hear them or to make himself heard. As he stood for a moment, thinking rapidly, the flying clouds seemed to thin and lift. He caught a brief glimpse of the swollen Sacramento beneath, and a briefer glimpse of the car and the man and woman. Then the clouds descended thicker than ever.

The boy examined the drum closely, and found nothing the matter with it. Evidently it was the drum on the other side that had gone wrong. He was appalled at thought of the man and woman out there in the midst of the storm, hanging over the abyss, rocking back and forth in the frail car and ignorant of what was taking place on shore. And he did not like to think of their hanging there while he went round by the Yellow Dragon cable to the other drum.

But he remembered a block and tackle in the tool-house, and ran and brought it. They were double blocks, and he murmured aloud, “A purchase of four,” as he made the tackle fast to the endless cable. Then he heaved upon it, heaved until it seemed that his arms were being drawn out from their sockets and that his shoulder muscles would be ripped asunder. Yet the cable did not budge. Nothing remained but to cross over to the other side.

He was already soaking wet, so he did not mind the rain as he ran over the trail to the Yellow Dragon. The storm was with him, and it was easy going, although there was no Hall at the other end of it to man the brake for him and regulate the speed of the car. This he did for himself, however, by means of a stout rope, which he passed, with a turn, round the stationary cable.

As the full force of the wind struck him in mid-air, swaying the cable and whistling and roaring past it, and rocking and careening the car, he appreciated more fully what must be the condition of mind of Spillane and his wife. And this appreciation gave strength to him, as, safely across, he fought his way up the other bank, in the teeth of the gale, to the Yellow Dream cable.

To his consternation, he found the drum in thorough working order. Everything was running smoothly at both ends. Where was the hitch? In the middle, without a doubt.

From this side, the car containing Spillane was only two hundred and fifty feet away. He could make out the man and woman through the whirling vapor, crouching in the bottom of the car and exposed to the pelting rain and the full fury of the wind. In a lull between the squalls he shouted to Spillane to examine the trolley of the car.

Spillane heard, for he saw him rise up cautiously on his knees, and with his hands go over both trolley-wheels. Then he turned his face toward the bank.

“She’s all right, kid!”

Jerry heard the words, faint and far, as from a remote distance. Then what was the matter? Nothing remained but the other and empty car, which he could not see, but which he knew to be there, somewhere in that terrible gulf two hundred feet beyond Spillane’s car.

His mind was made up on the instant. He was only fourteen years old, slightly and wirily built; but his life had been lived among the mountains, his father had taught him no small measure of “sailoring,” and he was not particularly afraid of heights.

In the tool-box by the drum he found an old monkey-wrench and a short bar of iron, also a coil of fairly new Manila rope. He looked in vain for a piece of board with which to rig a “boatswain’s chair.” There was nothing at hand but large planks, which he had no means of sawing, so he was compelled to do without the more comfortable form of saddle.

The saddle he rigged was very simple. With the rope he made merely a large loop round the stationary cable, to which hung the empty car. When he sat in the loop his hands could just reach the cable conveniently, and where the rope was likely to fray against the cable he lashed his coat, in lieu of the old sack he would have used had he been able to find one.

These preparations swiftly completed, he swung out over the chasm, sitting in the rope saddle and pulling himself along the cable by his hands. With him he carried the monkey-wrench and short iron bar and a few spare feet of rope. It was a slightly up-hill pull, but this he did not mind so much as the wind. When the furious gusts hurled him back and forth, sometimes half twisting him about, and he gazed down into the gray depths, he was aware that he was afraid. It was an old cable. What if it should break under his weight and the pressure of the wind?

It was fear he was experiencing, honest fear, and he knew that there was a "gone" feeling in the pit of his stomach, and a trembling of the knees which he could not quell.

But he held himself bravely to the task. The cable was old and worn, sharp pieces of wire projected from it, and his hands were cut and bleeding by the time he took his first rest, and held a shouted conversation with Spillane. The car was directly beneath him and only a few feet away, so he was able to explain the condition of affairs and his errand.

"Wish I could help you," Spillane shouted at him as he started on, "but the wife's gone all to pieces! Anyway, kid, take care of yourself! I got myself in this fix, but it's up to you to get me out!"

"Oh, I'll do it!" Jerry shouted back. "Tell Mrs. Spillane that she'll be ashore now in a jiffy!"

In the midst of pelting rain, which half-blinded him, swinging from side to side like a rapid and erratic pendulum, his torn hands paining him severely and his lungs panting from his exertions and panting from the very air which the wind sometimes blew into his mouth with strangling force, he finally arrived at the empty car.

A single glance showed him that he had not made the dangerous journey in vain. The front trolley-wheel, loose from long wear, had jumped the cable, and the cable was now jammed tightly between the wheel and the sheave-block.

One thing was clear — the wheel must be removed from the block. A second thing was equally clear — while the wheel was being removed the car would have to be fastened to the cable by the rope he had brought.

At the end of a quarter of an hour, beyond making the car secure, he had accomplished nothing. The key which bound the wheel on its axle was rusted and jammed. He hammered at it with one hand and held on the best he could with the other, but the wind persisted in swinging and twisting his body, and made his blows miss more often than not. Nine-tenths of the strength he expended was in trying to hold himself steady. For fear that he might drop the monkey-wrench he made it fast to his wrist with his handkerchief.

At the end of half an hour Jerry had hammered the key clear, but he could not draw it out. A dozen times it seemed that he must give up in despair, that all the danger and toil he had gone through were for nothing. Then an idea came to him, and he went through his pockets with feverish haste, and found what he sought — a ten-penny nail.

But for that nail, put in his pocket he knew not when or why, he would have had to make another trip over the cable and back. Thrusting the nail through the looped head of the key, he at last had a grip, and in no time the key was out.

Then came punching and prying with the iron bar to get the wheel itself free from where it was jammed by the cable against the side of the block. After that Jerry replaced the wheel, and by means of the rope, heaved up on the car till the trolley once more rested properly on the cable.

All this took time. More than an hour and a half had elapsed since his arrival at the empty car. And now, for the first time, he dropped out of his saddle and down into the car. He removed the detaining ropes, and the trolley-wheels began slowly to revolve. The car was moving, and he knew that somewhere beyond, although he could not see, the car of Spillane was likewise moving, and in the opposite direction.

There was no need for a brake, for his weight sufficiently counterbalanced the weight in the other car; and soon he saw the cliff rising out of the cloud depths and the old familiar drum going round and round.

Jerry climbed out and made the car securely fast. He did it deliberately and carefully, and then, quite unhero-like, he sank down by the drum, regardless of the pelting storm, and burst out sobbing.

There were many reasons why he sobbed — partly from the pain of his hands, which was excruciating; partly from exhaustion; partly from relief and release from the nerve-tension he had been under for so long; and in a large measure from thankfulness that the man and woman were saved.

They were not there to thank him; but somewhere beyond that howling, storm-driven gulf he knew they were hurrying over the trail toward the

Clover Leaf.

Jerry staggered to the cabin, and his hand left the white knob red with blood as he opened the door, but he took no notice of it.

He was too proudly contented with himself, for he was certain that he had done well, and he was honest enough to admit to himself that he had done well. But a small regret arose and persisted in his thoughts — if his father had only been there to see!

Bâtard

OR

DIABLE A DOG

Bâtard was a devil. This was recognized throughout the Northland. “Hell’s Spawn” he was called by many men, but his master, Black Leclère, chose for him the shameful name “Bâtard.” Now Black Leclère was also a devil, and the twain were well matched. There is a saying that when two devils come together, hell is to pay. This is to be expected, and this certainly was to be expected when Bâtard and Black Leclère came together. The first time they met, Bâtard was a part-grown puppy, lean and hungry, with bitter eyes; and they met with snap and snarl, and wicked looks, for Leclère’s upper lip had a wolfish way of lifting and showing the white, cruel teeth. And it lifted then, and his eyes glinted viciously, as he reached for Bâtard and dragged him out from the squirming litter. It was certain that they divined each other, for on the instant Bâtard had buried his puppy fangs in Leclère’s hand, and Leclère, thumb and finger, was coolly choking his young life out of him.

“Sacredam,” the Frenchman said softly, flirting the quick blood from his bitten hand and gazing down on the little puppy choking and gasping in the snow.

Leclère turned to John Hamlin, storekeeper of the Sixty Mile Post. “Dat fo’ w’at Ah lak heem. ‘Ow moch, eh, you, M’sieu’? ‘Ow moch? Ah buy heem, now; Ah buy heem queek.”

And because he hated him with an exceeding bitter hate, Leclère bought Bâtard and gave him his shameful name. And for five years the twain adventured across the Northland, from St. Michael’s and the Yukon delta to the head-reaches of the Pelly and even so far as the Peace River, Athabasca, and the Great Slave. And they acquired a reputation for uncompromising wickedness, the like of which never before attached itself to man and dog.

Bâtard did not know his father,--hence his name,--but, as John Hamlin knew, his father was a great gray timber wolf. But the mother of Bâtard, as he dimly remembered her, was snarling, bickering, obscene, husky, full-fronted and heavy-chested, with a malign eye, a cat-like grip on life, and a genius for trickery and evil. There was neither faith nor trust in her. Her treachery alone could be relied upon, and her wild-wood amours attested her general depravity. Much of evil and much of strength were there in these, Bâtard's progenitors, and, bone and flesh of their bone and flesh, he had inherited it all. And then came Black Leclère, to lay his heavy hand on the bit of pulsating puppy life, to press and prod and mould till it became a big bristling beast, acute in knavery, overspilling with hate, sinister, malignant, diabolical. With a proper master Bâtard might have made an ordinary, fairly efficient sled-dog. He never got the chance: Leclère but confirmed him in his congenital iniquity.

The history of Bâtard and Leclère is a history of war--of five cruel, relentless years, of which their first meeting is fit summary. To begin with, it was Leclère's fault, for he hated with understanding and intelligence, while the long-legged, ungainly puppy hated only blindly, instinctively, without reason or method. At first there were no refinements of cruelty (these were to come later), but simple beatings and crude brutalities. In one of these Bâtard had an ear injured. He never regained control of the riven muscles, and ever after the ear drooped limply down to keep keen the memory of his tormentor. And he never forgot.

His puppyhood was a period of foolish rebellion. He was always worsted, but he fought back because it was his nature to fight back. And he was unconquerable. Yelping shrilly from the pain of lash and club, he none the less contrived always to throw in the defiant snarl, the bitter vindictive menace of his soul which fetched without fail more blows and beatings. But his was his mother's tenacious grip on life. Nothing could kill him. He flourished under misfortune, grew fat with famine, and out of his terrible struggle for life developed a preternatural intelligence. His were the stealth and cunning of the husky, his mother, and the fierceness and valor of the wolf, his father.

Possibly it was because of his father that he never wailed. His puppy yelps passed with his lanky legs, so that he became grim and taciturn, quick to strike, slow to warn. He answered curse with snarl, and blow with snap, grinning the while his implacable hatred; but never again, under the extremest agony, did Leclère bring from him the cry of fear nor of pain. This unconquerableness but fanned Leclère's wrath and stirred him to greater deviltries.

Did Leclère give Bâtard half a fish and to his mates whole ones, Bâtard went forth to rob other dogs of their fish. Also he robbed caches and expressed himself in a thousand rogueries, till he became a terror to all dogs and masters of dogs. Did Leclère beat Bâtard and fondle Babette,--Babette who was not half the worker he was,--why, Bâtard threw her down in the snow and broke her hind leg in his heavy jaws, so that Leclère was forced to shoot her. Likewise, in bloody battles, Bâtard mastered all his team-mates, set them the law of trail and forage, and made them live to the law he set. In five years he heard but one kind word, received but one soft stroke of a hand, and then he did not know what manner of things they were. He leaped like the untamed thing he was, and his jaws were together in a flash. It was the missionary at Sunrise, a newcomer in the country, who spoke the kind word and gave the soft stroke of the hand. And for six months after, he wrote no letters home to the States, and the surgeon at McQuestion travelled two hundred miles on the ice to save him from blood-poisoning.

Men and dogs looked askance at Bâtard when he drifted into their camps and posts. The men greeted him with feet threateningly lifted for the kick, the dogs with bristling manes and bared fangs. Once a man did kick Bâtard, and Bâtard, with quick wolf snap, closed his jaws like a steel trap on the man's calf and crunched down to the bone. Whereat the man was determined to have his life, only Black Leclère, with ominous eyes and naked hunting-knife, stepped in between. The killing of Bâtard--ah, sacredam, that was a pleasure Leclère reserved for himself. Some day it would happen, or else--bah! who was to know? Anyway, the problem would be solved.

For they had become problems to each other. The very breath each drew was a challenge and a menace to the other. Their hate bound them together as love could never bind. Leclère was bent on the coming of the day when Bâtard should wilt in spirit and cringe and whimper at his feet. And Bâtard--Leclère knew what was in Bâtard's mind, and more than once had read it in Bâtard's eyes. And so clearly had he read, that when Bâtard was at his back, he made it a point to glance often over his shoulder.

Men marvelled when Leclère refused large money for the dog. "Some day you'll kill him and be out his price," said John Hamlin once, when Bâtard lay panting in the snow where Leclère had kicked him, and no one knew whether his ribs were broken, and no one dared look to see.

"Dat," said Leclère, dryly, "dat is my biz'ness, M'sieu'."

And the men marvelled that Bâtard did not run away. They did not understand. But Leclère understood. He was a man who lived much in the open, beyond the sound of human tongue, and he had learned the voices of wind and storm, the sigh of night, the whisper of dawn, the clash of day. In a dim way he could hear the green things growing, the running of the sap, the bursting of the bud. And he knew the subtle speech of the things that moved, of the rabbit in the snare, the moody raven beating the air with hollow wing, the baldface shuffling under the moon, the wolf like a gray shadow gliding betwixt the twilight and the dark. And to him Bâtard spoke clear and direct. Full well he understood why Bâtard did not run away, and he looked more often over his shoulder.

When in anger, Bâtard was not nice to look upon, and more than once had he leapt for Leclère's throat, to be stretched quivering and senseless in the snow, by the butt of the ever ready dogwhip. And so Bâtard learned to bide his time. When he reached his full strength and prime of youth, he thought the time had come. He was broad-chested, powerfully muscled, of far more than ordinary size, and his neck from head to shoulders was a mass of bristling hair--to all appearances a full-blooded wolf. Leclère was lying asleep in his furs when Bâtard deemed the time to be ripe. He crept upon him stealthily, head low to earth and lone ear laid back, with a feline softness of tread. Bâtard breathed gently, very gently, and not till he was close at hand did he raise his head. He paused for a moment, and looked at the bronzed bull throat, naked and knotty, and swelling to a deep and steady pulse. The slaver dripped down his fangs and slid off his tongue at the sight, and in that moment he remembered his drooping ear, his uncounted blows and prodigious wrongs, and without a sound sprang on the sleeping man.

Leclère awoke to the pang of the fangs in his throat, and, perfect animal that he was, he awoke clear-headed and with full comprehension. He closed on Bâtard's windpipe with both his hands, and rolled out of his furs to get his weight uppermost. But the thousands of Bâtard's ancestors had clung at the throats of unnumbered moose and caribou and dragged them down, and the wisdom of those ancestors was his. When Leclère's weight came on top of him, he drove his hind legs upward and in, and clawed down chest and abdomen, ripping and tearing through skin and muscle. And when he felt the man's body wince above him and lift, he worried and shook at the man's throat. His team-mates closed around in a snarling circle, and Bâtard, with failing breath and fading sense, knew that their jaws were hungry for him. But that did not matter--it was the man, the man above him, and he ripped and clawed, and shook and worried, to the last ounce of his strength. But Leclère choked him with both his hands, till Bâtard's chest heaved and writhed for the air denied, and his eyes glazed and set, and his jaws slowly loosened, and his tongue protruded black and swollen.

"Eh? Bon, you devil!" Leclère gurgled, mouth and throat clogged with his own blood, as he shoved the dizzy dog from him.

And then Leclère cursed the other dogs off as they fell upon Bâtard. They drew back into a wider circle, squatting alertly on their haunches and licking their chops, the hair on every neck bristling and erect.

Bâtard recovered quickly, and at sound of Leclère's voice, tottered to his feet and swayed weakly back and forth.

"A-h-ah! You beeg devil!" Leclère spluttered. "Ah fix you; Ah fix you plentee, by Gar!"

Bâtard, the air biting into his exhausted lungs like wine, flashed full into the man's face, his jaws missing and coming together with a metallic clip. They rolled over and over on the snow, Leclère striking madly with his fists. Then they separated, face to face, and circled back and forth before each other. Leclère could have drawn his knife. His rifle was at his feet. But the beast in him was up and raging. He would do the thing with his hands--and his teeth. Bâtard sprang in, but Leclère knocked him over with a blow of the fist, fell uponhim, and buried his teeth to the bone in the dog's shoulder.

It was a primordial setting and a primordial scene, such as might have been in the savage youth of the world. An open space in a dark forest, a ring of grinning wolf-dogs, and in the centre two beasts, locked in combat, snapping and snarling, raging madly about, panting, sobbing, cursing, straining, wild with passion, in a fury of murder, ripping and tearing and clawing in elemental brutishness.

But Leclère caught Bâtard behind the ear, with a blow from his fist, knocking him over, and, for the instant, stunning him. Then Leclère leaped upon him with his feet, and sprang up and down, striving to grind him into the earth. Both Bâtard's hind legs were broken ere Leclère ceased that he might catch breath.

"A-a-ah! A-a-ah!" he screamed, incapable of speech, shaking his fist, through sheer impotence of throat and larynx.

But Bâtard was indomitable. He lay there in a helpless welter, his lip feebly lifting and writhing to the snarl he had not the strength to utter. Leclère kicked him, and the tired jaws closed on the ankle, but could not break the skin. Then Leclère picked up the whip and proceeded almost to cut him to pieces, at each stroke of the lash crying: "Dis taim Ah break you! Eh? By Gar! Ah break you!"

In the end, exhausted, fainting from loss of blood, he crumpled up and fell by his victim, and when the wolf-dogs closed in to take their vengeance, with his last consciousness dragged his body on top Bâtard to shield him from their fangs.

This occurred not far from Sunrise, and the missionary, opening the door to Leclère a few hours later, was surprised to note the absence of Bâtard from the team. Nor did his surprise lessen when Leclère threw back the robes from the sled, gathered Bâtard into his arms, and staggered across the threshold. It happened that the surgeon of McQuestion, who was something of a gadabout, was up on a gossip, and between them they proceeded to repair Leclère.

"Merci, non," said he. "Do you fix firs' de dog. To die? Non. Eet is not good. Becos' heem Ah mus' yet break. Dat fo' w'at he mus' not die."

The surgeon called it a marvel, the missionary a miracle, that Leclère pulled through at all; and so weakened was he, that in the spring the fever got him, and he went on his back again. Bâtard had been in even worse plight, but his grip on life prevailed, and the bones of his hind legs knit, and his organs righted themselves, during the several weeks he lay strapped to the floor. And by the time Leclère, finally convalescent, sallow and shaky, took the sun by the cabin door, Bâtard had reasserted his supremacy among his kind, and brought not only his own team-mates but the missionary's dogs into subjection.

He moved never a muscle, nor twitched a hair, when, for the first time, Leclère tottered out on the missionary's arm, and sank down slowly and with infinite caution on the three-legged stool.

"Bon!--" he said. "Bon! De good sun!" And he stretched out his wasted hands and washed them in the warmth.

Then his gaze fell on the dog, and the old light blazed back in his eyes. He touched the missionary lightly on the arm. "Mon père, dat is one beeg devil, dat Bâtard. You will bring me one pistol, so, dat Ah drink de sun in peace."

And thenceforth for many days he sat in the sun before the cabin door. He never dozed, and the pistol lay always across his knees. Bâtard had a way, the first thing each day, of looking for the weapon in its wonted place. At sight of it he would lift his lip faintly in token that he understood, and Leclère would lift his own lip in an answering grin. One day the missionary took note of the trick.

"Bless me!" he said. "I really believe the brute comprehends."

Leclère laughed softly. "Look you, mon père. Dat w'at Ah now spik, to dat does he lissen."

As if in confirmation, Bâtard just perceptibly wriggled his lone ear up to catch the sound.

"Ah say 'keel.'"

Bâtard growled deep down in his throat, the hair bristled along his neck, and every muscle went tense and expectant.

"Ah lift de gun, so, like dat." And suiting action to word, he sighted the pistol at Bâtard.

Bâtard, with a single leap, sideways, landed around the corner of the cabin out of sight.

"Bless me!" he repeated at intervals.

Leclère grinned proudly.

"But why does he not run away?"

The Frenchman's shoulders went up in the racial shrug that means all things from total ignorance to infinite understanding.

"Then why do you not kill him?"

Again the shoulders went up.

"Mon père," he said after a pause, "de taim is not yet. He is one beeg devil. Some taim Ah break heem, so, an' so, all to leetle bits. Hey? Some taim. Bon!--"

A day came when Leclère gathered his dogs together and floated down in a bateau to Forty Mile, and on to the Porcupine, where he took a commission from the P. C. Company, and went exploring for the better part of a year. After that he poled up the Koyokuk to deserted Arctic City, and later came drifting back, from camp to camp, along the Yukon. And during the long months Bâtard was well lessoned. He learned many tortures, and, notably, the torture of hunger, the torture of thirst, the torture of fire, and, worst of all, the torture of music.

Like the rest of his kind, he did not enjoy music. It gave him exquisite anguish, racking him nerve by nerve, and ripping apart every fibre of his being. It made him howl, long and wolf-like, as when the wolves bay the stars on frosty nights. He could not help howling. It was his one weakness in the contest with Leclère, and it was his shame. Leclère, on the other hand, passionately loved music--as passionately as he loved strong drink. And when his soul clamored for expression, it usually uttered itself in one or the other of the two ways, and more usually in both ways. And when he had drunk, his brain a-lilt with unsung song and the devil in him aroused and rampant, his soul found its supreme utterance in torturing Bâtard.

"Now we will haf a leetle museek," he would say. "Eh? W'at you t'ink, Bâtard?"

It was only an old and battered harmonica, tenderly treasured and patiently repaired; but it was the best that money could buy, and out of its silver reeds he drew weird vagrant airs that men had never heard before. Then Bâtard, dumb of throat, with teeth tight clenched, would back away, inch by inch, to the farthest cabin corner. And Leclère, playing, playing, a stout club tucked under his arm, followed the animal up, inch by inch, step by step, till there was no further retreat.

At first Bâtard would crowd himself into the smallest possible space, grovelling close to the floor; but as the music came nearer and nearer, he was forced to uprear, his back jammed into the logs, his fore legs fanning the air as though to beat off the rippling waves of sound. He still kept his teeth together, but severe muscular contractions attacked his body, strange twitchings and jerkings, till he was all a-quiver and writhing in silent torment. As he lost control, his jaws spasmodically wrenched apart, and deep throaty vibrations issued forth, too low in the register of sound for human ear to catch. And then, nostrils distended, eyes dilated, hair bristling in helpless rage, arose the long wolf howl. It came with a slurring rush upward, swelling to a great heart-breaking burst of sound, and dying away in sadly cadenced woe--then the next rush upward, octave upon octave; the bursting heart; and the infinite sorrow and misery, fainting, fading, falling, and dying slowly away.

It was fit for hell. And Leclère, with fiendish ken, seemed to divine each particular nerve and heartstring, and with long wails and tremblings and sobbing minors to make it yield up its last shred of grief. It was frightful, and for twenty-four hours after, Bâtard was nervous and unstrung, starting at common sounds, tripping over his own shadow, but, withal, vicious and masterful with his team-mates. Nor did he show signs of a breaking spirit. Rather did he grow more grim and taciturn, biding his time with an inscrutable patience that began to puzzle and weigh upon Leclère. The dog would lie in the firelight, motionless, for hours, gazing straight before him at Leclère, and hating him with his bitter eyes.

Often the man felt that he had bucked against the very essence of life--the unconquerable essence that swept the hawk down out of the sky like a feathered thunderbolt, that drove the great gray goose across the zones, that hurled the spawning salmon through two thousand miles of boiling Yukon flood. At such times he felt impelled to express his own unconquerable essence; and with strong drink, wild music, and Bâtard, he indulged in vast orgies, wherein he pitted his puny strength in the face of things, and challenged all that was, and had been, and was yet to be.

“Dere is somet’ing dere,” he affirmed, when the rhythmed vagaries of his mind touched the secret chords of Bâtard’s being and brought forth the long lugubrious howl. “Ah pool eet out wid bot’ my han’s, so, an’ so. Ha! Ha! Eet is fonee! Eet is ver’ fonee! De priest chant, de womans pray, de mans swear, de leetle bird go peep-peep, Bâtard, heem go yow-yow--an’ eet is all de ver’ same t’ing. Ha! Ha!”

Father Gautier, a worthy priest, once reproved him with instances of concrete perdition. He never reproved him again.

“Eet may be so, mon père,” he made answer. “An’ Ah t’ink Ah go troo hell a-snappin’, lak de hemlock troo de fire. Eh, mon père?”

But all bad things come to an end as well as good, and so with Black Leclère. On the summer low water, in a poling boat, he left McDougall for Sunrise. He left McDougall in company with Timothy Brown, and arrived at Sunrise by himself. Further, it was known that they had quarrelled just previous to pulling out; for the Lizzie, a wheezy ten-ton sternwheeler,twenty-four hours behind, beat Leclère in by three days. And when he did get in, it was with a clean-drilled bullet-hole through his shoulder muscle, and a tale of ambush and murder.

A strike had been made at Sunrise, and things had changed considerably. With the infusion of several hundred gold-seekers, a deal of whiskey, and half a dozen equipped gamblers, the missionary had seen the page of his years of labor with the Indians wiped clean. When the squaws became preoccupied with cooking beans and keeping the fire going for the wifeless miners, and the bucks with swapping their warm furs for black bottles and broken timepieces, he took to his bed, said “bless me” several times, and departed to his final accounting in a rough-hewn, oblong box. Whereupon the gamblers moved their roulette and faro tables into the mission house, and the click of chips and clink of glasses went up from dawn till dark and to dawn again.

Now Timothy Brown was well beloved among these adventurers of the north. The one thing against him was his quick temper and ready fist,--a little thing, for which his kind heart and forgiving hand more than atoned. On the other hand, there was nothing to atone for Black Leclère. He was “black,” as more than one remembered deed bore witness, while he was as well hated as the other was beloved. So the men of Sunrise put an antiseptic dressing on his shoulder and haled him before Judge Lynch.

It was a simple affair. He had quarrelled with Timothy Brown at McDougall. With Timothy Brown he had left McDougall. Without Timothy Brown he had arrived at Sunrise. Considered in the light of his evilness, the unanimous conclusion was that he had killed Timothy Brown. On the other hand, Leclère acknowledged their facts, but challenged their conclusion, and gave his own explanation. Twenty miles out of Sunrise he and Timothy Brown were poling the boat along the rocky shore. From that shore two rifle-shots rang out. Timothy Brown pitched out of the boat and went down bubbling red, and that was the last of Timothy Brown. He, Leclère, pitched into the bottom of the boat with a stinging shoulder. He lay very quiet, peeping at the shore. After a time two Indians stuck up their heads and came out to the water’s edge, carrying between them a birch-bark canoe. As they launched it, Leclère let fly. He potted one, who went over the side after the manner of Timothy Brown. The other dropped into the bottom of the canoe, and then canoe and poling boat went down the stream in a drifting battle. After that they hung up on a split current, and the canoe passed on one side of an island, the poling boat on the other. That was the last of the canoe, and he came on into Sunrise. Yes, from the way the Indian in the canoe jumped, he was sure he had potted him. That was all.

This explanation was not deemed adequate. They gave him ten hours’ grace while the Lizzie steamed down to investigate. Ten hours later she came wheezing back to Sunrise. There had been nothing to investigate. No evidence had been found to back up his statements. They told him to make his will, for he possessed a fifty-thousand-dollar Sunrise claim, and they were a law-abiding as well as a law-giving breed.

Leclère shrugged his shoulders. “Bot one t’ing,” he said; “a leetle, w’at you call, favor--a leetle favor, dat is eet. I gif my feefty t’ousan’ dollair to de church. I gif my husky dog, Bâtard, to de devil. De leetle favor? Firs’ you hang heem, an’ den you hang me. Eet is good, eh?”

Good it was, they agreed, that Hell’s Spawn should break trail for his master across the last divide, and the court was adjourned down to the river bank, where a big spruce tree stood by itself. Slackwater Charley put a hangman’s knot in the end of a hauling-line, and the noose was slipped over Leclère’s head and pulled tight around his neck. His hands were tied behind his back, and he was assisted to the top of a cracker box. Then the running end of the line was passed over an overhanging branch, drawn taut, and made fast. To kick the box out from under would leave him dancing on the air.

“Now for the dog,” said Webster Shaw, sometime mining engineer. “You’ll have to rope him, Slackwater.”

Leclère grinned. Slackwater took a chew of tobacco, rove a running noose, and proceeded leisurely to coil a few turns in his hand. He paused once or twice to brush particularly offensive mosquitoes from off his face. Everybody was brushing mosquitoes, except Leclère, about whose head a small cloud was visible. Even Bâtard, lying full-stretched on the ground, with his fore paws rubbed the pests away from eyes and mouth.

But while Slackwater waited for Bâtard to lift his head, a faint call came down the quiet air, and a man was seen waving his arms and running across the flat from Sunrise. It was the storekeeper.

“C-call ‘er off, boys,” he panted, as he came in among them.

“Little Sandy and Bernadotte’s jes’ got in,” he explained with returning breath. “Landed down below an’ come up by the short cut. Got the Beaver with ‘m. Picked ‘m up in his canoe, stuck in a back channel, with a couple of bullet holes in ‘m. Other buck was Klok-Kutz, the one that knocked spots out of his squaw and dusted.”

“Eh? W’at Ah say? Eh?” Leclère cried exultantly. “Dat de one fo’ sure! Ah know. Ah spik true.”

“The thing to do is teach these damned Siwashes a little manners,” spoke Webster Shaw. “They’re getting fat and sassy, and we’ll have to bring them down a peg. Round in all the bucks and string up the Beaver for an object lesson. That’s the programme. Come on and let’s see what he’s got to say for himself.”

“Heh, M’sieu’!” Leclère called, as the crowd began to melt away through the twilight in the direction of Sunrise. “Ah lak ver’ moch to see de fon.”

“Oh, we’ll turn you loose when we come back,” Webster Shaw shouted over his shoulder. “In the meantime meditate on your sins and the ways of providence. It will do you good, so be grateful.”

As is the way with men who are accustomed to great hazards, whose nerves are healthy and trained to patience, so it was with Leclère, who settled himself to the long wait--which is to say that he reconciled his mind to it. There was no settling of the body, for the taut rope forced him to stand rigidly erect. The least relaxation of the leg muscles pressed the rough-fibred noose into his neck, while the upright position caused him much pain in his wounded shoulder. He projected his under lip and expelled his breath upward along his face to blow the mosquitoes away from his eyes. But the situation had its compensation. To be snatched from the maw of death was well worth a little bodily suffering, only it was unfortunate that he should miss the hanging of the Beaver.

And so he mused, till his eyes chanced to fall upon Bâtard, head between fore paws and stretched on the ground asleep. And then Leclère ceased to muse. He studied the animal closely, striving to sense if the sleep were real or feigned. Bâtard’s sides were heaving regularly, but Leclère felt that the breath came and went a shade too quickly; also he felt that there was a vigilance or alertness to every hair that belied unshackling sleep. He would have given his Sunrise claim to be assured that the dog was not awake, and once, when one of his joints cracked, he looked quickly and guiltily at Bâtard to see if he roused. He did not rouse then, but a few minutes later he got up slowly and lazily, stretched, and looked carefully about him.

“Sacredam,” said Leclère, under his breath.

Assured that no one was in sight or hearing, Bâtard sat down, curled his upper lip almost into a smile, looked up at Leclère, and licked his chops.

“Ah see my feenish,” the man said, and laughed sardonically aloud.

Bâtard came nearer, the useless ear wabbling, the good ear cocked forward with devilish comprehension. He thrust his head on one side quizzically, and advanced with mincing, playful steps. He rubbed his body gently against the box till it shook and shook again. Leclère teetered carefully to maintain his equilibrium.

"Bâtard," he said calmly, "look out. Ah keel you." Bâtard snarled at the word, and shook the box with greater force. Then he upreared, and with his fore paws threw his weight against it higher up. Leclère kicked out with one foot, but the rope bit into his neck and checked so abruptly as nearly to overbalance him.

"Hi, ya! Chook! Mush-on!--" he screamed.

Bâtard retreated, for twenty feet or so, with a fiendish levity in his bearing that Leclère could not mistake. He remembered the dog often breaking the scum of ice on the water hole, by lifting up and throwing his weight upon it; and, remembering, he understood what he now had in mind. Bâtard faced about and paused. He showed his white teeth in a grin, which Leclère answered; and then hurled his body through the air, in full charge, straight for the box.

Fifteen minutes later, Slackwater Charley and Webster Shaw, returning, caught a glimpse of a ghostly pendulum swinging back and forth in the dim light. As they hurriedly drew in closer, they made out the man's inert body, and a live thing that clung to it, and shook and worried, and gave to it the swaying motion.

"Hi, ya! Chook! you Spawn of Hell," yelled Webster Shaw.

But Bâtard glared at him, and snarled threateningly, without loosing his jaws.

Slackwater Charley got out his revolver, but his hand was shaking, as with a chill, and he fumbled.

"Here, you take it," he said, passing the weapon over.

Webster Shaw laughed shortly, drew a sight between the gleaming eyes, and pressed the trigger. Bâtard's body twitched with the shock, threshed the ground spasmodically for a moment, and went suddenly limp. But his teeth still held fast locked.

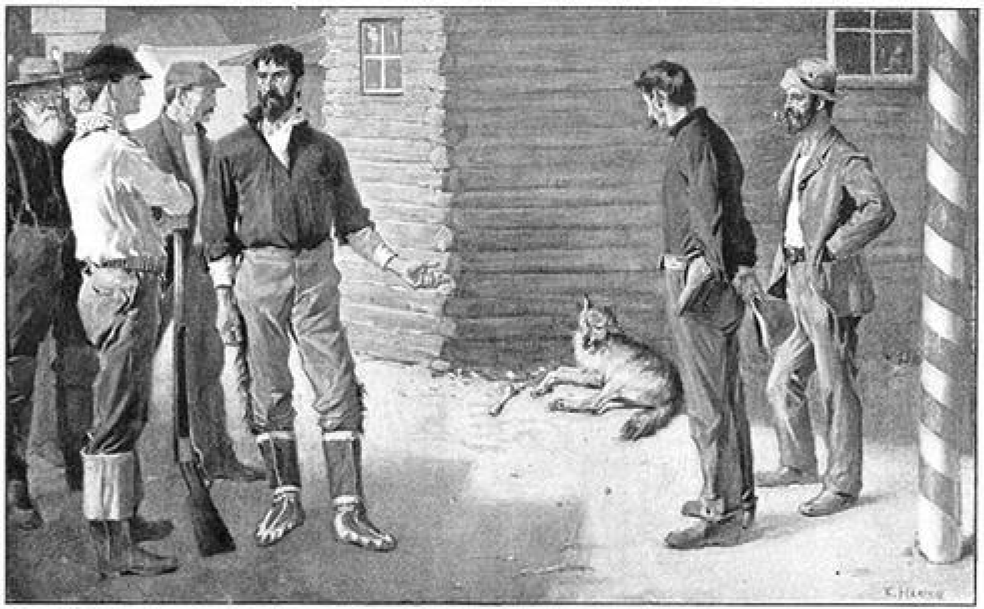

Drawn by E. Hering.

"'A LEETLE FAVOR. . . . FIRS' YOU HANG HEEM, AN' DEN YOU HANG ME.'"

The Benefit of the Doubt

Carter Watson, a current magazine under his arm, strolled slowly along, gazing about him curiously. Twenty years had elapsed since he had been on this particular street, and the changes were great and stupefying. This Western city of three hundred thousand souls had contained but thirty thousand, when, as a boy, he had been wont to ramble along its streets. In those days the street he was now on had been a quiet residence street in the respectable workingclass quarter. On this late afternoon he found that it had been submerged by a vast and vicious tenderloin. Chinese and Japanese shops and dens abounded, all confusedly intermingled with low white resorts and boozing dens. This quiet street of his youth had become the toughest quarter of the city.

He looked at his watch. It was half-past five. It was the slack time of the day in such a region, as he well knew, yet he was curious to see. In all his score of years of wandering and studying social conditions over the world, he had carried with him the memory of his old town as a sweet and wholesome place. The metamorphosis he now beheld was startling. He certainly must continue his stroll and glimpse the infamy to which his town had descended.

Another thing: Carter Watson had a keen social and civic consciousness. Independently wealthy, he had been loath to dissipate his energies in the pink teas and freak dinners of society, while actresses, race-horses, and kindred diversions had left him cold. He had the ethical bee in his bonnet and was a reformer of no mean pretension, though his work had been mainly in the line of contributions to the heavier reviews and quarterlies and to the publication over his name of brightly, cleverly written books on the working classes and the slum-dwellers. Among the twenty-seven to his credit occurred titles such as, “If Christ Came to New Orleans,” ” The Worked-out Worker,” “Tenement Reform in Berlin,” “The Rural Slums of England,” “The people of the East Side,” “Reform Versus Revolution,” “The University Settlement as a Hot Bed of Radicalism’ and “The Cave Man of Civilization.”

But Carter Watson was neither morbid nor fanatic. He did not lose his head over the horrors he encountered, studied, and exposed. No hair brained enthusiasm branded him. His humor saved him, as did his wide experience and his con. conservative philosophic temperament. Nor did he have any patience with lightning change reform theories. As he saw it, society would grow better only through the painfully slow and arduously painful processes of evolution. There were no short cuts, no sudden regenerations. The betterment of mankind must be worked out in agony and misery just as all past social betterments had been worked out.

But on this late summer afternoon, Carter Watson was curious. As he moved along he paused before a gaudy drinking place. The sign above read, “The Vendome.” There were two entrances. One evidently led to the bar. This he did not explore. The other was a narrow hallway. Passing through this he found himself in a huge room, filled with chair-encircled tables and quite deserted. In the dim light he made out a piano in the distance. Making a mental note that he would come back some time and study the class of persons that must sit and drink at those multitudinous tables, he proceeded to circumnavigate the room.

Now, at the rear, a short hallway led off to a small kitchen, and here, at a table, alone, sat Patsy Horan, proprietor of the Vendome, consuming a hasty supper ere the evening rush of business. Also, Patsy Horan was angry with the world. He had got out of the wrong side of bed that morning, and nothing had gone right all day. Had his barkeepers been asked, they would have described his mental condition as a grouch. But Carter Watson did not know this. As he passed the little hallway, Patsy Horan’s sullen eyes lighted on the magazine he carried under his arm. Patsy did not know Carter Watson, nor did he know that what he carried under his arm was a magazine. Patsy, out of the depths of his grouch, decided that this stranger was one of those pests who marred and scarred the walls of his back rooms by tacking up or pasting up advertisements. The color on the front cover of the magazine convinced him that it was such an advertisement. Thus the trouble began. Knife and fork in hand, Patsy leaped for Carter Watson.

“Out wid yeh!” Patsy bellowed. “I know yer game!”

Carter Watson was startled. The man had come upon him like the eruption of a jack-in-the-box.

“A defacin’ me walls,” cried Patsy, at the same time emitting a string of vivid and vile, rather than virile, epithets of opprobrium.

“If I have given any offense I did not mean to – “

But that was as far as the visitor got. Patsy interrupted.

“Get out wid yeh; yeh talk too much wid yer mouth,” quoted Patsy, emphasizing his remarks with flourishes of the knife and fork.

Carter Watson caught a quick vision of that eating-fork inserted uncomfortably between his ribs, knew that it would be rash to talk further with his mouth, and promptly turned to go. The sight of his meekly retreating back must have further enraged Patsy Horan, for that worthy, dropping the table implements, sprang upon him.

Patsy weighed one hundred and eighty pounds. So did Watson. In this they were equal. But Patsy was a rushing, rough-and-tumble saloon-fighter, while Watson was a boxer. In this the latter had the advantage, for Patsy came in wide open, swinging his right in a perilous sweep. All Watson had to do was to straight-left him and escape. But Watson had another advantage. His boxing, and his experience in the slums and ghettos of the world, had taught him restraint.

He pivoted on his feet, and, instead of striking, ducked the other’s swinging blow and went into a clinch. But Patsy, charging like a bull, had the momentum of his rush, while Watson, whirling to meet him, had no momentum. As a result, the pair of them went down, with all their three hundred and sixty pounds of weight, in a long crashing fall, Watson underneath. He lay with his head touching the rear wall of the large room. The street was a hundred and fifty feet away, and he did some quick thinking. His first thought was to avoid trouble. He had no wish to get into the papers of this, his childhood town, where many of his relatives and family friends still lived.

So it was that he locked his arms around the man on top of him, held him close, and waited for the help to come that must come in response to the crash of the fall. The help came – that is, six men ran in from the bar and formed about in a semi-circle.

”Take him off, fellows,” Watson said. “I haven’t struck him, and I don’t want any fight.”

But the semi-circle remained silent. Watson held on and waited. Patsy, after various vain efforts to inflict damage, made an overture.

“Leggo o’ me an’ I’ll get off o’ yeh,” said he.

Watson let go, but when Patsy scrambled to his feet he stood over his recumbent foe, ready to strike.

“Get up,” Patsy commanded.

His voice was stern and implacable, like the voice of God calling to judgment, and Watson knew there was no mercy there.

“Stand back and I’ll get up,” he countered.

“If yer a gentleman, get up,” quoth Patsy, his pale blue eyes aflame with wrath, his fist ready for a crushing blow.

At the same moment he drew his foot back to kick the other in the face. Watson blocked the kick with his crossed arms and sprang to his feet so quickly that he was in a clinch with his antagonist before the latter could strike. Holding him, Watson spoke to the onlookers:

“Take him away from me, fellows. You see I am not striking him. I don’t want to fight. I want to get out of here.”

The circle did not move nor speak. Its silence was ominous and sent a chill to Watson’s heart.

Patsy made an effort to throw him, which culminated in his putting Patsy on his back. Tearing loose from him, Watson sprang to his feet and made for the door. But the circle of men was interposed a wall. He noticed the white, pasty faces, the kind that never see the sun, and knew that the men who barred his way were the nightprowlers and preying beasts of the city jungle. By them he was thrust back upon the pursuing, bull-rushing Patsy.

Again it was a clinch, in which, in momentary safety, Watson appealed to the gang. And again his words fell on deaf ears. Then it was that he knew of many similar knew fear. For he had known of many similar situations, in low dens like this, when solitary men were man-handled, their ribs and features caved in, themselves beaten and kicked to death. And he knew, further, that if he were to escape he must neither strike his assailant nor any of the men who opposed him.

Yet in him was righteous indignation. Under no circumstances could seven to one be fair. Also, he was angry, and there stirred in him the fighting beast that is in all men. But he remembered his wife and children, his unfinished book, the ten thousand rolling acres of the up-country ranch he loved so well. He even saw in flashing visions the blue of the sky, the golden sun pouring down on his flower-spangled meadows, the lazy cattle knee-deep in the brooks, and the flash of trout in the riffles. Life was good-too good for him to risk it for a moment’s sway of the beast. In short, Carter Watson was cool and scared.

His opponent, locked by his masterly clinch, was striving to throw him. Again Watson put him on the floor, broke away, and was thrust back by the pasty-faced circle to duck Patsy's swinging right and effect another clinch. This happened many times. And Watson grew even cooler, while the baffled Patsy, unable to inflict punishment, raged wildly and more wildly. He took to batting with his head in the clinches. The first time, he landed his forehead flush on Watson's nose. After that, the latter, in the clinches, buried his face in Patsy's breast. But the enraged Patsy batted on, striking his own eye and nose and cheek on the top of the other's head. The more he was thus injured, the more and the harder did Patsy bat.

This one-sided contest continued for twelve or fifteen minutes. Watson never struck a blow, and strove only to escape. Sometimes, in the free moments, circling about among the tables as he tried to win the door, the pasty-faced men gripped his coat-tails and flung him back at the swinging right of the on-rushing Patsy. Time upon time, and times without end, he clinched and put Patsy on his back, each time first whirling him around and putting him down in the direction of the door and gaining toward that goal by the length of the fall.

In the end, hatless, disheveled, with streaming nose and one eye closed, Watson won to the sidewalk and into the arms of a policeman.

"Arrest that man," Watson panted.

"Hello, Patsy," said the policeman. "What's the mix-up?"

"Hello, Charley," was the answer. "This guy comes in – "

"Arrest that man, officer," Watson repeated.

"G'wan! Beat it!" said Patsy.

"Beat it!" added the policeman. "If you don't, I'll pull you in."

"Not unless you arrest that man. He has committed a violent and unprovoked assault on me."

"Is it so, Patsy?" was the officer's query.

"Nah. Lemme tell you, Charley, an' I got the witnesses to prove it, so help me God. I was settin' in me kitchen eatin' a bowl of soup, when this guy comes in an' gets gay wid me. I never seen him in me born days before. He was drunk – "

"Look at me, officer," protested the indignant sociologist. "Am I drunk?"

The officer looked at him with sullen, menacing eyes and nodded to Patsy to continue.

"This guy gets gay wid me. 'I'm Tim McGrath,' says he, 'an' I can do the like to you,' says he. 'Put up yer hands.' I smiles, an' wid that, biff biff, he lands me twice an' spills me soup. Look at me eye. I'm fair murdered."

"What are you going to do, officer?" Watson demanded.

"Go on, beat it," was the answer, "or I'll pull you sure."

The civic righteousness of Carter Watson flamed up.

"Mr. Officer, I protest – "

But at that moment the policeman grabbed his arm with a savage jerk that nearly overthrew him.

"Come on, you're pulled."

"Arrest him, too," Watson demanded.

"Nix on that play," was the reply.

"What did you assault him for, him a peacefully eatin' his soup?"

II

Carter Watson was genuinely angry. Not only had he been wantonly assaulted, badly battered, and arrested, but the morning papers without exception came out with lurid accounts of his drunken brawl with the proprietor of the notorious Vendome. Not one accurate or truthful line was published. Patsy Horan and his satellites described the battle in detail. The one incontestable thing was that Carter Watson had been drunk. Thrice he had been thrown out of the place and into the gutter, and thrice he had come back, breathing blood and fire and announcing that he was going to clean out the place. "EMINENT SOCIOLOGIST JAGGED AND JUGGED," was the first head-line he read, on the front page, accompanied by a large portrait of himself. Other headlines were: "CARTER WATSON ASPIRED TO CHAMPIONSHIP HONORS"; "CARTER WATSON GETS HIS"; "NOTED SOCIOLOGIST ATTEMPTS TO CLEAN OUT A TENDERLOIN CAFE"; and "CARTER WATSON KNOCKED OUT BY PATSY HORAN IN THREE ROUNDS."

At the police court, next morning, under bail, appeared Carter Watson to answer the complaint of the People Versus Carter Watson, for the latter's assault and battery on one Patsy Horan. But first, the Prosecuting Attorney, who was paid to prosecute all offenders against the People, drew him aside and talked with him privately.

"Why not let it drop!" said the Prosecuting Attorney. "I tell you what you do, Mr. Watson: Shake hands with Mr. Horan and make it up, and we'll drop the case right here. A word to the Judge, and the case against you will be dismissed."

"But I don't want it dismissed," was the answer. "Your office being what it is, you should be prosecuting me instead of asking me to make up with this – this fellow."

"Oh, I'll prosecute you all right," retorted the Prosecuting Attorney.

"Also you will have to prosecute this Patsy Horan," Watson advised; "for I shall now have him arrested for assault and battery."

"You'd better shake and make up," the Prosecuting Attorney repeated, and this time there was almost a threat in his voice.

The trials of both men were set for a week later, on the same morning, in Police Judge Witberg's court.

"You have no chance," Watson was told by an old friend of his boyhood, the retired manager of the biggest paper in the city. "Everybody knows you were beaten up by this man. His reputation is most unsavory. But it won't help you in the least. Both cases will be dismissed. This will be because you are you. Any ordinary man would be convicted."

"But I do not understand," objected the perplexed sociologist. "Without warning I was attacked by this man; and badly beaten. I did not strike a blow. I – "

"That has nothing to do with it," the other cut him off.

"Then what is there that has anything to do with it?"

"I'll tell you. You are now up against the local police and political machine. Who are you? You are not even a legal resident in this town. You live up in the country. You haven't a vote of your own here. Much less do you swing any votes. This dive proprietor swings a string of votes in his precincts – a mighty long string."

"Do you mean to tell me that this Judge Witberg will violate the sacredness of his office and oath by letting this brute off?" Watson demanded.

"Watch him," was the grim reply. "Oh, he'll do it nicely enough. He will give an extra-legal, extra-judicial decision, abounding in every word in the dictionary that stands for fairness and right."

"But there are the newspapers," Watson cried.

"They are not fighting the administration at present. They'll give it to you hard. You see what they have already done to you."

"Then these snips of boys on the police detail won't write the truth?"

"They will write something so near like the truth that the public will believe it. They write their stories under instruction, you know. They have their orders to twist and color, and there won't be much left of you when they get done. Better drop the whole thing right now. You are in bad."

“But the trials are set.”

“Give the word and they’ll drop them now. A man can’t fight a machine unless he has a machine behind him.”

III

But Carter Watson was stubborn. He was convinced that the machine would beat him, but all his days he had sought social experience, and this was certainly something new.

The morning of the trial the Prosecuting Attorney made another attempt to patch up the affair.

“If you feel that way, I should like to get a lawyer to prosecute the case,” said Watson.

“No, you don’t,” said the Prosecuting Attorney. “I am paid by the People to prosecute, and prosecute I will. But let me tell you. You have no chance. We shall lump both cases into one, and you watch out.”

Judge Witberg looked good to Watson. A fairly young man, short, comfortably stout, smooth-shaven and with an intelligent face, he seemed a very nice man indeed. This good impression was added to by the smiling lips and the wrinkles of laughter in the corners of his black eyes. Looking at him and studying him, Watson felt almost sure that his old friend’s prognostication was wrong.

But Watson was soon to learn. Patsy Horan and two of his satellites testified to a most colossal aggregation of perjuries. Watson could not have believed it possible without having experienced it. They denied the existence of the other four men. And of the two that testified, one claimed to have been in the kitchen, a witness to Watson’s unprovoked assault on Patsy, while the other, remaining in the bar, had witnessed Watson’s second and third rushes into the place as he attempted to annihilate the unoffending Patsy. The vile language ascribed to Watson was so voluminously and unspeakably vile, that he felt they were injuring their own case. It was so impossible that he should utter such things. But when they described the brutal blows he had rained on poor Patsy’s face, and the chair he demolished when he vainly attempted to kick Patsy, Watson waxed secretly hilarious and at the same time sad. The trial was a farce, but such lowness of life was depressing to contemplate when he considered the long upward climb humanity must make.

Watson could not recognize himself, nor could his worst enemy have recognized him, in the swashbuckling, rough-housing picture that was painted of him. But, as in all cases of complicated perjury, rifts and contradictions in the various stories appeared. The Judge somehow failed to notice them, while the Prosecuting Attorney and Patsy's attorney shied off from them gracefully. Watson had not bothered to get a lawyer for himself, and he was now glad that he had not.

Still, he retained a semblance of faith in Judge Witberg when he went himself on the stand and started to tell his story.

"I was strolling casually along the street, your Honor," Watson began, but was interrupted by the Judge.

"We are not here to consider your previous actions," bellowed Judge Witberg. "Who struck the first blow?"

"Your Honor," Watson pleaded, "I have no witnesses of the actual fray, and the truth of my story can only be brought out by telling the story fully – "

Again he was interrupted.

"We do not care to publish any magazines here," Judge Witberg roared, looking at him so fiercely and malevolently that Watson could scarcely bring himself to believe that this was same man he had studied a few minutes previously.

"Who struck the first blow?" Patsy's attorney asked.

The Prosecuting Attorney interposed, demanding to know which of the two cases lumped together was, and by what right Patsy's lawyer, at that stage of the proceedings, should take the witness. Patsy's attorney fought back. Judge Witberg interfered, professing no knowledge of any two cases being lumped together. All this had to be explained. Battle royal raged, terminating in both attorneys apologizing to the Court and to each other. And so it went, and to Watson it had the seeming of a group of pickpockets ruffling and bustling an honest man as they took his purse. The machine was working, that was all.

"Why did you enter this place of unsavory reputations?" was asked him.

"It has been my custom for many years, as a student of economics and sociology, to acquaint myself – "

But this was as far as Watson got.

"We want none of your ologies here," snarled Judge Witberg. "It is a plain question. Answer it plainly. Is it true or not true that you were drunk? That is the gist of the question."

When Watson attempted to tell how Patsy had injured his face in his attempts to bat with his head, Watson was openly scouted and flouted, and Judge Witberg again took him in hand.

“Are you aware of the solemnity of the oath you took to testify to nothing but the truth on this witness stand?” the Judge demanded. “This is a fairy story you are telling. It is not reasonable that a man would so injure himself, and continue to injure himself, by striking the soft and sensitive parts of his face against your head. You are a sensible man. It is unreasonable, is it not?”

“Men are unreasonable when they are angry,” Watson answered meekly.

Then it was that Judge Witberg was deeply outraged and righteously wrathful.

“What right have you to say that?” he cried. “It is gratuitous. It has no bearing on the case. You are here as a witness, sir, of events that have transpired. The Court does not wish to hear any expressions of opinion from you at all.”

“I but answered your question, your Honor,” Watson protested humbly.

“You did nothing of the sort,” was the next blast. “And let me warn you, sir, let me warn you, that you are laying yourself liable to contempt by such insolence. And I will have you know that we know how to observe the law and the rules of courtesy down here in this little courtroom. I am ashamed of you.”

And, while the next punctilious legal wrangle between the attorneys interrupted his tale of what happened in the Vendome, Carter Watson, without bitterness, amused and at the same time sad, saw rise before him the machine, large and small, that dominated his country, the unpunished and shameless grafts of a thousand cities perpetrated by the spidery and vermin-like creatures of the machines. Here it was before him, a courtroom and a judge, bowed down in subservience by the machine to a dive-keeper who swung a string of votes. Petty and sordid as it was, it was one face of the many-faced machine that loomed colossally, in every city and state, in a thousand guises overshadowing the land.

A familiar phrase rang in his ears: “It is to laugh.” At the height of the wrangle, he giggled, once, aloud, and earned a sullen frown from Judge Witberg. Worse, a myriad times, he decided, were these bullying lawyers and this bullying judge then the bucko mates in first quality hell-ships, who not only did their own bullying but protected themselves as well. These petty rapscallions, on the other hand, sought protection behind the majesty of the law. They struck, but no one was permitted to strike back, for behind them were the prison cells and the clubs of the stupid policemen – paid and professional fighters and beaters-up of men. Yet he was not bitter. The grossness and the sliminess of it was forgotten in the simple grotesqueness of it, and he had the saving sense of humor.

Nevertheless, hectored and heckled though he was, he managed in the end to give a simple, straightforward version of the affair, and, despite a belligerent cross-examination, his story was not shaken in any particular. Quite different it was from the perjuries that had shouted aloud from the perjuries of Patsy and his two witnesses.

Both Patsy's attorney and the Prosecuting Attorney rested their cases, letting everything go before the Court without argument. Watson protested against this, but was silenced when the Prosecuting Attorney told him that Public Prosecutor and knew his business.

"Patrick Horan has testified that he was in danger of his life and that he was compelled to defend himself," Judge Witberg's verdict began. "Mr. Watson has testified to the same thing. Each has sworn that the other struck the first blow; each has sworn that the other made an unprovoked assault on him. It is an axiom of the law that the defendant should be given the benefit of the doubt. A very reasonable doubt exists. Therefore, in the case of the People Versus Carter Watson the benefit of the doubt is given to said Carter Watson and he is herewith ordered discharged from custody. The same reasoning applies to the case of the People Versus Patrick Horan. He is given the benefit of the doubt and discharged from custody. My recommendation is that both defendants shake hands and make up."

In the afternoon papers the first headline that caught Watson's eye was: "CARTER WATSON ACQUITTED." In the second paper it was: "CARTER WATSON ESCAPES A FINE." But what capped everything was the one beginning: "CARTER WATSON A GOOD FELLOW." In the text he read how Judge Witberg had advised both fighters to shake hands, which they promptly did. Further, he read:

" 'Let's have a nip on it,' said Patsy Horan.

" 'Sure,' said Carter Watson.

"And, arm in arm, they ambled for the nearest saloon."

IV

Now, from the whole adventure, Watson carried away no bitterness. It was a social experience of a new order, and it led to the writing of another book, which he entitled, “POLICE COURT PROCEDURE: A Tentative Analysis.”

One summer morning a year later, on his ranch, he left his horse and himself clambered on through a miniature canyon to inspect some rock ferns he had planted the previous winter. Emerging from the upper end of the canyon, he came out on one of his flower-spangled meadows, a delightful isolated spot, screened from the world by low hills and clumps of trees. And here he found a man, evidently on a stroll from the summer hotel down at the little town a mile away. They met face to face and the recognition was mutual. It was Judge Witberg. Also, it was a clear case of trespass, for Watson had trespass signs upon his boundaries, though he never enforced them.

Judge Witberg held out his hand, which Watson refused to see.

“Politics is a dirty trade, isn’t it, Judge?” he remarked. “Oh, yes, I see your hand, but I don’t care to take it. The papers said I shook hands with Patsy Horan after the trial. You know I did not, but let me tell you that I’d a thousand times rather shake hands with him and his vile following of curs, than with you.”

Judge Witberg was painfully flustered, and as he hemmed and hawed and essayed to speak, Watson, looking at him, was struck by a sudden whim, and he determined on a grim and facetious antic.

“I should scarcely expect any animus from a man of your acquirements and knowledge of the world,” the Judge was saying.

“Animus?” Watson replied. “Certainly not. I haven’t such a thing in my nature. And to prove it, let me show you something curious, something you have never seen before.” Casting about him, Watson picked up a rough stone the size of his fist. “See this. Watch me.”

So saying, Carter Watson tapped himself a sharp blow on the cheek. The stone laid the flesh open to the bone and the blood spurted forth.

“The stone was too sharp,” he announced to the astounded police judge, who thought he had gone mad.

“I must bruise it a trifle. There is nothing like being realistic in such matters.”

Whereupon Carter Watson found a smooth stone and with it pounded his cheek nicely several times.

"Ah," he cooed. "That will turn beautifully green and black in a few hours. It will be most convincing."

"You are insane," Judge Witberg quavered.

"Don't use such vile language to me," said Watson. "You see my bruised and bleeding face? You did that, with that right hand of yours. You hit me twice – biff, biff. It is a brutal and unprovoked assault. I am in danger of my life. I must protect myself."

Judge Witberg backed away in alarm before the menacing fists of the other.

"If you strike me I'll have you arrested," Judge Witberg threatened.

"That is what I told Patsy," was the answer. "And do you know what he did when I told him that?"

"No."

"That!"

And at the same moment Watson's right fist landed flush on Judge Witberg's nose, putting that legal gentleman over on his back on the grass.

"Get up!" commanded Watson. "If you are a gentleman, get up – that's what Patsy told me, you know."

Judge Witberg declined to rise, and was dragged to his feet by the coat-collar, only to have one eye blacked and be put on his back again. After that it was a red Indian massacre. Judge Witberg was humanely and scientifically beaten up. His checks were boxed, his cars cuffed, and his face was rubbed in the turf. And all the time Watson exposited the way Patsy Horan had done it. Occasionally, and very carefully, the facetious sociologist administered a real bruising blow. Once, dragging the poor Judge to his feet, he deliberately bumped his own nose on the gentleman's head. The nose promptly bled.

"See that!" cried Watson, stepping back and deftly shedding his blood all down his own shirt front. "You did it. With your fist you did it. It is awful. I am fair murdered. I must again defend myself."

And once more Judge Witberg impacted his features on a fist and was sent to grass.

"I will have you arrested," he sobbed as he lay.

"That's what Patsy said."

"A brutal –-sniff, sniff, – and unprovoked – sniff, sniff– assault."

"That's what Patsy said."

“I will surely have you arrested.”

“Speaking slangily, not if I can beat you to it.”

And with that, Carter Watson departed down the canyon, mounted his horse, and rode to town.

An hour later, as Judge Witberg limped up the grounds to his hotel, he was arrested by a village constable on a charge of assault and battery preferred by Carter Watson.

V

“Your Honor,” Watson said next day to the village Justice, a well to do farmer and graduate, thirty years before, from a cow college, “since this Sol Witberg has seen fit to charge me with battery, following upon my charge of battery against him, I would suggest that both cases be lumped together. The testimony and the facts are the same in both cases.”

To this the Justice agreed, and the double case proceeded. Watson, as prosecuting witness, first took the stand and told his story.

“I was picking flowers,” he testified. “Picking flowers on my own land, never dreaming of danger. Suddenly this man rushed upon me from behind the trees. ‘I am the Dodo,’ he says, ‘and I can do you to a frazzle. Put up your hands.’ I smiled, but with that, biff, biff, he struck me, knocking me down and spilling my flowers. The language he used was frightful. It was an unprovoked and brutal assault. Look at my cheek. Look at my nose – I could not understand it. He must have been drunk. Before I recovered from my surprise he had administered this beating. I was in danger of my life and was compelled to defend himself. That is all, Your Honor, though I must say, in conclusion, that I cannot get over my perplexity. Why did he say he was the Dodo? Why did he so wantonly attack me?”

And thus was Sol Witberg given a liberal education in the art of perjury. Often, from his high seat, he had listened indulgently to police court perjuries in cooked-up cases; but for the first time perjury was directed against him, and he no longer sat above the court, with the bailiffs, the Policemen’s clubs, and the prison cells behind him.

“Your Honor,” he cried, “never have I heard such a pack of lies told by so bare-faced a liar – !’

Watson here sprang to his feet.

“Your Honor, I protest. It is for your Honor to decide truth or falsehood. The witness is on the stand to testify to actual events that have transpired.

His personal opinion upon things in general, and upon me, has no bearing on the case whatever."

The Justice scratched his head and waxed phlegmatically indignant.

"The point is well taken," he decided. "I am surprised at you, Mr. Witberg, claiming to be a judge and skilled in the practice of the law, and yet being guilty of such unlawyerlike conduct. Your manner, sir, and your methods, remind me of a shyster. This is a simple case of assault and battery. We are here to determine who struck the first blow, and we are not interested in your estimates of Mr. Watson's personal character. Proceed with your story."

Sol Witberg would have bitten his bruised and swollen lip in chagrin, had it not hurt so much. But he contained himself and told a simple, straightforward, truthful story.

"Your Honor," Watson said, "I would suggest that you ask him what he was doing on my premises."

"A very good question. What were you doing, sir, on Mr. Watson's premises?"

"I did not know they were his premises."

"It was a trespass, your Honor," Watson cried. "The warnings are posted conspicuously."

"I saw no warnings," said Sol Witberg.

"I have seen them myself," snapped the Justice. "They are very conspicuous. And I would warn you, sir, that if you palter with the truth in such little matters you may darken your more important statements with suspicion. Why did you strike Mr. Watson?"

"Your Honor, as I have testified, I did not strike a blow."

The Justice looked at Carter Watson's bruised and swollen visage, and turned to glare at Sol Witberg.

"Look at that man's cheek!" he thundered. "If you did not strike a blow how comes it that he is so disfigured and injured?"

"As I testified – "

"Be careful," the Justice warned.

"I will be careful, sir. I will say nothing but the truth. He struck himself with a rock. He struck himself with two different rocks."

"Does it stand to reason that a man, any man not a lunatic, would so injure himself, and continue to injure himself, by striking the soft and sensitive parts of his face with a stone?" Carter Watson demanded

"It sounds like a fairy story," was the Justice's comment.

"Mr. Witberg, had you been drinking?"

"No, sir."

"Do you never drink?"

"On occasion."

The Justice meditated on this answer with an air of astute profundity.

Watson took advantage of the opportunity to wink at Sol Witberg, but that much-abused gentleman saw nothing humorous in the situation.

"A very peculiar case, a very peculiar case," the Justice announced, as he began his verdict. "The evidence of the two parties is flatly contradictory. There are no witnesses outside the two principals. Each claims the other committed the assault, and I have no legal way of determining the truth. But I have my private opinion, Mr. Witberg, and I would recommend that henceforth you keep off of Mr. Watson's premises and keep away from this section of the country – "

"This is an outrage!" Sol Witberg blurted out.

"Sit down, sir!" was the Justice's thundered command. "If you interrupt the Court in this manner again, I shall fine you for contempt. And I warn you I shall fine you heavily – you, a judge yourself, who should be conversant with the courtesy and dignity of courts. I shall now give my verdict:

"It is a rule of law that the defendant shall be given the benefit of the doubt. As I have said, and I repeat, there is no legal way for me to determine who struck the first blow. Therefore, and much to my regret," – here he paused and glared at Sol Witberg – "in each of these cases I am compelled to give the defendant the benefit of the doubt. Gentlemen, you are both dismissed."

"Let us have a nip on it," Watson said to Witberg, as they left the courtroom; but that outraged person refused to lock arms and amble to the nearest saloon.

The Bones of Kahekili

From over the lofty Koolau Mountains, vagrant wisps of the trade wind drifted, faintly swaying the great, unwhipped banana leaves, rustling the palms, and fluttering and setting up a whispering among the lace-leaved algaroba trees. Only intermittently did the atmosphere so breathe--for breathing it was, the suspiring of the languid, Hawaiian afternoon. In the intervals between the soft breathings, the air grew heavy and balmy with the perfume of flowers and the exhalations of fat, living soil.

Of humans about the low bungalow-like house, there were many; but one only of them slept. The rest were on the tense tiptoes of silence. At the rear of the house a tiny babe piped up a thin blatting wail that the quickly thrust breast could not appease. The mother, a slender hapa-haole (half-white), clad in a loose-flowing holoku of white muslin, hastened away swiftly among the banana and papaia trees to remove the babe's noise by distance. Other women, hapa-haole and full native, watched her anxiously as she fled.

At the front of the house, on the grass, squatted a score of Hawaiians. Well-muscled, broad-shouldered, they were all strapping men. Brown-skinned, with luminous brown eyes and black, their features large and regular, they showed all the signs of being as good-natured, merry-hearted, and soft-tempered as the climate. To all of which a seeming contradiction was given by the ferociousness of their accoutrement. Into the tops of their rough leather leggings were thrust long knives, the handles projecting. On their heels were huge-rowelled Spanish spurs. They had the appearance of banditti, save for the incongruous wreaths of flowers and fragrant maile that encircled the crowns of their flopping cowboy hats. One of them, deliciously and roguishly handsome as a faun, with the eyes of a faun, wore a flaming double-hibiscus bloom coquettishly tucked over his ear. Above them, casting a shelter of shade from the sun, grew a wide-spreading canopy of Ponciana regia, itself a flame of blossoms, out of each of which sprang pom-poms of feathery stamens. From far off, muffled by distance, came the faint stamping of their tethered horses. The eyes of all were intently fixed upon the solitary sleeper who lay on his back on a lauhala mat a hundred feet away under the monkey-pod trees.

Large as were the Hawaiian cowboys, the sleeper was larger. Also, as his snow-white hair and beard attested, he was much older. The thickness of his wrist and the greatness of his fingers made authentic the mighty frame of him hidden under loose dungaree pants and cotton shirt, buttonless, open from midriff to Adam's apple, exposing a chest matted with a thatch of hair as white as that of his head and face. The depth and breadth of that chest, its resilience, and its relaxed and plastic muscles, tokened the knotty strength that still resided in him. Further, no bronze and beat of sun and wind availed to hide the testimony of his skin that he was all haole--a white man.

On his back, his great white beard, thrust skyward, untrimmed of barbers, stiffened and subsided with every breath, while with the outblow of every exhalation the white moustache erected perpendicularly like the quills of a porcupine and subsided with each intake. A young girl of fourteen, clad only in a single shift, or muumuu, herself a grand-daughter of the sleeper, crouched beside him and with a feathered fly-flapper brushed away the flies. In her face were depicted solicitude, and nervousness, and awe, as if she attended on a god.

And truly, Hardman Pool, the sleeping whiskery one, was to her, and to many and sundry, a god--a source of life, a source of food, a fount of wisdom, a giver of law, a smiling beneficence, a blackness of thunder and punishment--in short, a man-master whose record was fourteen living and adult sons and daughters, six great-grandchildren, and more grandchildren than could he in his most lucid moments enumerate.

Fifty-one years before, he had landed from an open boat at Laupahoehoe on the windward coast of Hawaii. The boat was the one surviving one of the whaler Black Prince of New Bedford. Himself New Bedford born, twenty years of age, by virtue of his driving strength and ability he had served as second mate on the lost whaleship. Coming to Honolulu and casting about for himself, he had first married Kalama Mamaiopili, next acted as pilot of Honolulu Harbour, after that started a saloon and boarding house, and, finally, on the death of Kalama's father, engaged in cattle ranching on the broad pasture lands she had inherited.

For over half a century he had lived with the Hawaiians, and it was conceded that he knew their language better than did most of them. By marrying Kalama, he had married not merely her land, but her own chief rank, and the fealty owed by the commoners to her by virtue of her genealogy was also accorded him. In addition, he possessed of himself all the natural attributes of chiefship: the gigantic stature, the fearlessness, the pride; and the high hot temper that could brook no impudence nor insult, that could be neither bullied nor awed by any utmost magnificence of power that walked on two legs, and that could compel service of lesser humans, not by any ignoble purchase by bargaining, but by an unspoken but expected condescending of largesse. He knew his Hawaiians from the outside and the in, knew them better than themselves, their Polynesian circumlocutions, faiths, customs, and mysteries.

And at seventy-one, after a morning in the saddle over the ranges that began at four o'clock, he lay under the monkey-pods in his customary and sacred siesta that no retainer dared to break, nor would dare permit any equal of the great one to break. Only to the King was such a right accorded, and, as the King had early learned, to break Hardman Pool's siesta was to gain awake a very irritable and grumpy Hardman Pool who would talk straight from the shoulder and say unpleasant but true things that no king would care to hear.

The sun blazed down. The horses stamped remotely. The fading trade-wind wisps sighed and rustled between longer intervals of quiescence. The perfume grew heavier. The woman brought back the babe, quiet again, to the rear of the house. The monkey-pods folded their leaves and swooned to a siesta of their own in the soft air above the sleeper. The girl, breathless as ever from the enormous solemnity of her task, still brushed the flies away; and the score of cowboys still intently and silently watched.

Hardman Pool awoke. The next out-breath, expected of the long rhythm, did not take place. Neither did the white, long moustache rise up. Instead, the cheeks, under the whiskers, puffed; the eyelids lifted, exposing blue eyes, choleric and fully and immediately conscious; the right hand went out to the half-smoked pipe beside him, while the left hand reached the matches.

“Get me my gin and milk,” he ordered, in Hawaiian, of the little maid, who had been startled into a tremble by his awaking.

He lighted the pipe, but gave no sign of awareness of the presence of his waiting retainers until the tumbler of gin and milk had been brought and drunk.

“Well?” he demanded abruptly, and in the pause, while twenty faces wreathed in smiles and twenty pairs of dark eyes glowed luminously with well-wishing pleasure, he wiped the lingering drops of gin and milk from his hairy lips. “What are you hanging around for? What do you want? Come over here.”

Twenty giants, most of them young, uprose and with a great clanking and jangling of spurs and spur-chains strode over to him. They grouped before him in a semicircle, trying bashfully to wedge their shoulders, one behind another’s, their faces a-grin and apologetic, and at the same time expressing a casual and unconscious democraticness. In truth, to them Hardman Pool was more than mere chief. He was elder brother, or father, or patriarch; and to all of them he was related, in one way or another, according to Hawaiian custom, through his wife and through the many marriages of his children and grandchildren. His slightest frown might perturb them, his anger terrify them, his command compel them to certain death; yet, on the other hand, not one of them would have dreamed of addressing him otherwise than intimately by his first name, which name, “Hardman,” was transmuted by their tongues into Kanaka Oolea.

At a nod from him, the semicircle seated itself on the manienie grass, and with further deprecatory smiles waited his pleasure.

“What do you want?” demanded, in Hawaiian, with a brusqueness and sternness they knew were put on.

They smiled more broadly, and deliciously squirmed their broad shoulders and great torsos with the appeasingness of so many wriggling puppies. Hardman Pool singled out one of them.

“Well, Iliiopoi, what do YOU want?”

“Ten dollars, Kanaka Oolea.”

“Ten dollars!” Pool cried, in apparent shock at mention of so vast a sum. “Does it mean you are going to take a second wife? Remember the missionary teaching. One wife at a time, Iliiopoi; one wife at a time. For he who entertains a plurality of wives will surely go to hell.”

Giggles and flashings of laughing eyes from all greeted the joke.

“No, Kanaka Oolea,” came the reply. “The devil knows I am hard put to get kow-kow for one wife and her several relations.”

“Kow-kow?” Pool repeated the Chinese-introduced word for food which the Hawaiians had come to substitute for their own paina. “Didn’t you boys get kow-kow here this noon?”

“Yes, Kanaka Oolea,” volunteered an old, withered native who had just joined the group from the direction of the house. “All of them had kow-kow in the kitchen, and plenty of it. They ate like lost horses brought down from the lava."

"And what do you want, Kumuhana?" Pool diverted to the old one, at the same time motioning to the little maid to flap flies from the other side of him.

"Twelve dollars," said Kumuhana. "I want to buy a Jackass and a second-hand saddle and bridle. I am growing too old for my legs to carry me in walking."

"You wait," his haole lord commanded. "I will talk with you about the matter, and about other things of importance, when I am finished with the rest and they are gone."

The withered old one nodded and proceeded to light his pipe.

"The kow-kow in the kitchen was good," Iliiopoi resumed, licking his lips. "The poi was one-finger, the pig fat, the salmon-belly unstinking, the fish of great freshness and plenty, though the opihis" (tiny, rock-clinging shell-fish) "had been salted and thereby made tough. Never should the opihis be salted. Often have I told you, Kanaka Oolea, that opihis should never be salted. I am full of good kow-kow. My belly is heavy with it. Yet is my heart not light of it because there is no kow-kow in my own house, where is my wife, who is the aunt of your fourth son's second wife, and where is my baby daughter, and my wife's old mother, and my wife's old mother's feeding child that is a cripple, and my wife's sister who lives likewise with us along with her three children, the father being dead of a wicked dropsy--"

"Will five dollars save all of you from funerals for a day or several?" Pool testily cut the tale short.

"Yes, Kanaka Oolea, and as well it will buy my wife a new comb and some tobacco for myself."

From a gold-sack drawn from the hip-pocket of his dungarees, Hardman Pool drew the gold piece and tossed it accurately into the waiting hand.

To a bachelor who wanted six dollars for new leggings, tobacco, and spurs, three dollars were given; the same to another who needed a hat; and to a third, who modestly asked for two dollars, four were given with a flowery-worded compliment anent his prowess in roping a recent wild bull from the mountains. They knew, as a rule, that he cut their requisitions in half, therefore they doubled the size of their requisitions. And Hardman Pool knew they doubled, and smiled to himself. It was his way, and, further, it was a very good way with his multitudinous relatives, and did not reduce his stature in their esteem.

"And you, Ahuhu?" he demanded of one whose name meant "poison-wood."

"And the price of a pair of dungarees," Ahuhu concluded his list of needs. "I have ridden much and hard after your cattle, Kanaka Oolea, and where my dungarees have pressed against the seat of the saddle there is no seat to my dungarees. It is not well that it be said that a Kanaka Oolea cowboy, who is also a cousin of Kanaka Oolea's wife's half-sister, should be shamed to be seen out of the saddle save that he walks backward from all that behold him."

"The price of a dozen pairs of dungarees be thine, Ahuhu," Hardman Pool beamed, tossing to him the necessary sum. "I am proud that my family shares my pride. Afterward, Ahuhu, out of the dozen dungarees you will give me one, else shall I be compelled to walk backward, my own and only dungarees being in like manner well worn and shameful."

And in laughter of love at their haole chief's final sally, all the sweet-child-minded and physically gorgeous company of them departed to their waiting horses, save the old withered one, Kumuhana, who had been bidden to wait.

For a full five minutes they sat in silence. Then Hardman Pool ordered the little maid to fetch a tumbler of gin and milk, which, when she brought it, he nodded her to hand to Kumuhana. The glass did not leave his lips until it was empty, whereon he gave a great audible out-breath of "A-a-ah," and smacked his lips.

"Much awa have I drunk in my time," he said reflectively. "Yet is the awa but a common man's drink, while the haole liquor is a drink for chiefs. The awa has not the liquor's hot willingness, its spur in the ribs of feeling, its biting alive of oneself that is very pleasant since it is pleasant to be alive."

Hardman Pool smiled, nodded agreement, and old Kumuhana continued.

"There is a warmingness to it. It warms the belly and the soul. It warms the heart. Even the soul and the heart grow cold when one is old."

"You ARE old," Pool conceded. "Almost as old as I."

Kumuhana shook his head and murmured. "Were I no older than you I would be as young as you."

"I am seventy-one," said Pool.

"I do not know ages that way," was the reply. "What happened when you were born?"

"Let me see," Pool calculated. "This is 1880. Subtract seventy-one, and it leaves nine. I was born in 1809, which is the year Keliimakai died, which is the year the Scotchman, Archibald Campbell, lived in Honolulu."

"Then am I truly older than you, Kanaka Oolea. I remember the Scotchman well, for I was playing among the grass houses of Honolulu at the time, and already riding a surf-board in the wahine" (woman) "surf at Waikiki. I can take you now to the spot where was the Scotchman's grass house. The Seaman's Mission stands now on the very ground. Yet do I know when I was born. Often my grandmother and my mother told me of it. I was born when Madame Pele" (the Fire Goddess or Volcano Goddess) "became angry with the people of Paiea because they sacrificed no fish to her from their fish-pool, and she sent down a flow of lava from Huulalai and filled up their pond. For ever was the fish-pond of Paiea filled up. That was when I was born."

"That was in 1801, when James Boyd was building ships for Kamehameha at Hilo," Pool cast back through the calendar; "which makes you seventy-nine, or eight years older than I. You are very old."

"Yes, Kanaka Oolea," muttered Kumuhana, pathetically attempting to swell his shrunken chest with pride.

"And you are very wise."

"Yes, Kanaka Oolea."

"And you know many of the secret things that are known only to old men."

"Yes, Kanaka Oolea."

"And then you know--" Hardman Pool broke off, the more effectively to impress and hypnotize the other ancient with the set stare of his pale-washed blue eyes. "They say the bones of Kahekili were taken from their hiding-place and lie to-day in the Royal Mausoleum. I have heard it whispered that you alone of all living men truly know."

"I know," was the proud answer. "I alone know."

"Well, do they lie there? Yes or no?"

"Kahekili was an alii" (high chief). "It is from this straight line that your wife Kalama came. She is an alii." The old retainer paused and pursed his lean lips in meditation. "I belong to her, as all my people before me belonged to her people before her. She only can command the great secrets of me. She is wise, too wise ever to command me to speak this secret. To you, O Kanaka Oolea, I do not answer yes, I do not answer no. This is a secret of the aliis that even the aliis do not know."

"Very good, Kumuhana," Hardman Pool commanded. "Yet do you forget that I am an alii, and that what my good Kalama does not dare ask, I command to ask. I can send for her, now, and tell her to command your answer. But such would be a foolishness unless you prove yourself doubly foolish. Tell me the secret, and she will never know. A woman's lips must pour out whatever flows in through her ears, being so made. I am a man, and man is differently made. As you well know, my lips suck tight on secrets as a squid sucks to the salty rock. If you will not tell me alone, then will you tell Kalama and me together, and her lips will talk, her lips will talk, so that the latest malahini will shortly know what, otherwise, you and I alone will know."

Long time Kumuhana sat on in silence, debating the argument and finding no way to evade the fact-logic of it.

"Great is your haole wisdom," he conceded at last.

"Yes? or no?" Hardman Pool drove home the point of his steel.

Kumuhana looked about him first, then slowly let his eyes come to rest on the fly-flapping maid.

"Go," Pool commanded her. "And come not back without you hear a clapping of my hands."

Hardman Pool spoke no further, even after the flapper had disappeared into the house; yet his face adamantly looked: "Yes or no?"

Again Kumuhana looked carefully about him, and up into the monkey-pod boughs as if to apprehend a lurking listener. His lips were very dry. With his tongue he moistened them repeatedly. Twice he essayed to speak, but was inarticulately husky. And finally, with bowed head, he whispered, so low and solemnly that Hardman Pool bent his own head to hear: "No."

Pool clapped his hands, and the little maid ran out of the house to him in tremulous, fluttery haste.

"Bring a milk and gin for old Kumuhana, here," Pool commanded; and, to Kumuhana: "Now tell me the whole story."

"Wait," was the answer. "Wait till the little wahine has come and gone."

And when the maid was gone, and the gin and milk had travelled the way predestined of gin and milk when mixed together, Hardman Pool waited without further urge for the story. Kumuhana pressed his hand to his chest and coughed hollowly at intervals, bidding for encouragement; but in the end, of himself, spoke out.

“It was a terrible thing in the old days when a great alii died. Kahekili was a great alii. He might have been king had he lived. Who can tell? I was a young man, not yet married. You know, Kanaka Oolea, when Kahekili died, and you can tell me how old I was. He died when Governor Boki ran the Blonde Hotel here in Honolulu. You have heard?”

“I was still on windward Hawaii,” Pool answered. “But I have heard. Boki made a distillery, and leased Manoa lands to grow sugar for it, and Kaahumanu, who was regent, cancelled the lease, rooted out the cane, and planted potatoes. And Boki was angry, and prepared to make war, and gathered his fighting men, with a dozen whaleship deserters and five brass six-pounders, out at Waikiki--“

“That was the very time Kahekili died,” Kumuhana broke in eagerly. “You are very wise. You know many things of the old days better than we old kanakas.”

“It was 1829,” Pool continued complacently. “You were twenty-eight years old, and I was twenty, just coming ashore in the open boat after the burning of the Black Prince.”

“I was twenty-eight,” Kumuhana resumed. “It sounds right. I remember well Boki’s brass guns at Waikiki. Kahekili died, too, at the time, at Waikiki. The people to this day believe his bones were taken to the Hale o Keawe” (mausoleum) “at Honaunau, in Kona--“

“And long afterward were brought to the Royal Mausoleum here in Honolulu,” Pool supplemented.

“Also, Kanaka Oolea, there are some who believe to this day that Queen Alice has them stored with the rest of her ancestral bones in the big jars in her taboo room. All are wrong. I know. The sacred bones of Kahekili are gone and for ever gone. They rest nowhere. They have ceased to be. And many kona winds have whitened the surf at Waikiki since the last man looked upon the last of Kahekili. I alone remain alive of those men. I am the last man, and I was not glad to be at the finish.

“For see! I was a young man, and my heart was white-hot lava for Malia, who was in Kahekili’s household. So was Anapuni’s heart white-hot for her, though the colour of his heart was black, as you shall see. We were at a drinking that night--Anapuni and I--the night that Kahekili died. Anapuni and I were only commoners, as were all of us kanakas and wahines who were at the drinking with the common sailors and whaleship men from before the mast. We were drinking on the mats by the beach at Waikiki, close to the old heiau" (temple) "that is not far from what is now the Wilders' beach place. I learned then and for ever what quantities of drink haole sailormen can stand. As for us kanakas, our heads were hot and light and rattly as dry gourds with the whisky and the rum.

"It was past midnight, I remember well, when I saw Malia, whom never had I seen at a drinking, come across the wet-hard sand of the beach. My brain burned like red cinders of hell as I looked upon Anapuni look upon her, he being nearest to her by being across from me in the drinking circle. Oh, I know it was whisky and rum and youth that made the heat of me; but there, in that moment, the mad mind of me resolved, if she spoke to him and yielded to dance with him first, that I would put both my hands around his throat and throw him down and under the wahine surf there beside us, and drown and choke out his life and the obstacle of him that stood between me and her. For know, that she had never decided between us, and it was because of him that she was not already and long since mine.

"She was a grand young woman with a body generous as that of a chiefess and more wonderful, as she came upon us, across the wet sand, in the shimmer of the moonlight. Even the haole sailormen made pause of silence, and with open mouths stared upon her. Her walk! I have heard you talk, O Kanaka Oolea, of the woman Helen who caused the war of Troy. I say of Malia that more men would have stormed the walls of hell for her than went against that old-time city of which it is your custom to talk over much and long when you have drunk too little milk and too much gin.

"Her walk! In the moonlight there, the soft glow-fire of the jelly-fishes in the surf like the kerosene-lamp footlights I have seen in the new haole theatre! It was not the walk of a girl, but a woman. She did not flutter forward like rippling wavelets on a reef-sheltered, placid beach. There was that in her manner of walk that was big and queenlike, like the motion of the forces of nature, like the rhythmic flow of lava down the slopes of Kau to the sea, like the movement of the huge orderly trade-wind seas, like the rise and fall of the four great tides of the year that may be like music in the eternal ear of God, being too slow of occurrence in time to make a tune for ordinary quick-pulsing, brief-living, swift-dying man.

"Anapuni was nearest. But she looked at me. Have you ever heard a call, Kanaka Oolea, that is without sound yet is louder than the conches of God?

So called she to me across that circle of the drinking. I half arose, for I was not yet full drunken; but Anapuni's arm caught her and drew her, and I sank back on my elbow and watched and raged. He was for making her sit beside him, and I waited. Did she sit, and, next, dance with him, I knew that ere morning Anapuni would be a dead man, choked and drowned by me in the shallow surf.

"Strange, is it not, Kanaka Oolea, all this heat called 'love'? Yet it is not strange. It must be so in the time of one's youth, else would mankind not go on."

"That is why the desire of woman must be greater than the desire of life," Pool concurred. "Else would there be neither men nor women."

"Yes," said Kumuhana. "But it is many a year now since the last of such heat has gone out of me. I remember it as one remembers an old sunrise--a thing that was. And so one grows old, and cold, and drinks gin, not for madness, but for warmth. And the milk is very nourishing.

"But Malia did not sit beside him. I remember her eyes were wild, her hair down and flying, as she bent over him and whispered in his ear. And her hair covered him about and hid him as she whispered, and the sight of it pounded my heart against my ribs and dizzied my head till scarcely could I half-see. And I willed myself with all the will of me that if, in short minutes, she did not come over to me, I would go across the circle and get her.

"It was one of the things never to be. You remember Chief Konukalani? Himself he strode up to the circle. His face was black with anger. He gripped Malia, not by the arm, but by the hair, and dragged her away behind him and was gone. Of that, even now, can I understand not the half. I, who was for slaying Anapuni because of her, raised neither hand nor voice of protest when Konukalani dragged her away by the hair--nor did Anapuni. Of course, we were common men, and he was a chief. That I know. But why should two common men, mad with desire of woman, with desire of woman stronger in them than desire of life, let any one chief, even the highest in the land, drag the woman away by the hair? Desiring her more than life, why should the two men fear to slay then and immediately the one chief? Here is something stronger than life, stronger than woman, but what is it? and why?"

"I will answer you," said Hardman Pool. "It is so because most men are fools, and therefore must be taken care of by the few men who are wise.

Such is the secret of chiefship. In all the world are chiefs over men. In all the world that has been have there ever been chiefs, who must say to the many fool men: ‘Do this; do not do that. Work, and work as we tell you or your bellies will remain empty and you will perish. Obey the laws we set you or you will be beasts and without place in the world. You would not have been, save for the chiefs before you who ordered and regulated for your fathers. No seed of you will come after you, except that we order and regulate for you now. You must be peace-abiding, and decent, and blow your noses. You must be early to bed of nights, and up early in the morning to work if you would heave beds to sleep in and not roost in trees like the silly fowls. This is the season for the yam-planting and you must plant now. We say now, to-day, and not picnicking and hulaing to-day and yam-planting to-morrow or some other day of the many careless days. You must not kill one another, and you must leave your neighbours’ wives alone. All this is life for you, because you think but one day at a time, while we, your chiefs, think for you all days and for days ahead.’“

“Like a cloud on the mountain-top that comes down and wraps about you and that you dimly see is a cloud, so is your wisdom to me, Kanaka Oolea,” Kumuhana murmured. “Yet is it sad that I should be born a common man and live all my days a common man.”

“That is because you were of yourself common,” Hardman Pool assured him. “When a man is born common, and is by nature uncommon, he rises up and overthrows the chiefs and makes himself chief over the chiefs. Why do you not run my ranch, with its many thousands of cattle, and shift the pastures by the rain-fall, and pick the bulls, and arrange the bargaining and the selling of the meat to the sailing ships and war vessels and the people who live in the Honolulu houses, and fight with lawyers, and help make laws, and even tell the King what is wise for him to do and what is dangerous? Why does not any man do this that I do? Any man of all the men who work for me, feed out of my hand, and let me do their thinking for them--me, who work harder than any of them, who eats no more than any of them, and who can sleep on no more than one lauhala mat at a time like any of them?”

“I am out of the cloud, Kanaka Oolea,” said Kumuhana, with a visible brightening of countenance. “More clearly do I see. All my long years have the aliis I was born under thought for me. Ever, when I was hungry, I came to them for food, as I come to your kitchen now. Many people eat in your kitchen, and the days of feasts when you slay fat steers for all of us are understandable. It is why I come to you this day, an old man whose labour of strength is not worth a shilling a week, and ask of you twelve dollars to buy a jackass and a second-hand saddle and bridle. It is why twice ten fool men of us, under these monkey-pods half an hour ago, asked of you a dollar or two, or four or five, or ten or twelve. We are the careless ones of the careless days who will not plant the yam in season if our alii does not compel us, who will not think one day for ourselves, and who, when we age to worthlessness, know that our alii will think kow-kow into our bellies and a grass thatch over our heads.

Hardman Pool bowed his appreciation, and urged:

“But the bones of Kahekili. The Chief Konukalani had just dragged away Malia by the hair of the head, and you and Anapuni sat on without protest in the circle of drinking. What was it Malia whispered in Anapuni’s ear, bending over him, her hair hiding the face of him?”

“That Kahekili was dead. That was what she whispered to Anapuni. That Kahekili was dead, just dead, and that the chiefs, ordering all within the house to remain within, were debating the disposal of the bones and meat of him before word of his death should get abroad. That the high priest Eoppo was deciding them, and that she had overheard no less than Anapuni and me chosen as the sacrifices to go the way of Kahekili and his bones and to care for him afterward and for ever in the shadowy other world.”

“The moepuu, the human sacrifice,” Pool commented. “Yet it was nine years since the coming of the missionaries.”

“And it was the year before their coming that the idols were cast down and the taboos broken,” Kumuhana added. “But the chiefs still practised the old ways, the custom of hunakele, and hid the bones of the aliis where no men should find them and make fish-hooks of their jaws or arrow heads of their long bones for the slaying of little mice in sport. Behold, O Kanaka Oolea!”

The old man thrust out his tongue; and, to Pool’s amazement, he saw the surface of that sensitive organ, from root to tip, tattooed in intricate designs.

“That was done after the missionaries came, several years afterward, when Keopuolani died. Also, did I knock out four of my front teeth, and half-circles did I burn over my body with blazing bark. And whoever ventured out-of-doors that night was slain by the chiefs. Nor could a light be shown in a house or a whisper of noise be made. Even dogs and hogs that made a noise were slain, nor all that night were the ships’ bells of the haoles in the harbour allowed to strike. It was a terrible thing in those days when an alii died.

“But the night that Kahekili died. We sat on in the drinking circle after Konukalani dragged Malia away by the hair. Some of the haole sailors grumbled; but they were few in the land in those days and the kanakas many. And never was Malia seen of men again. Konukalani alone knew the manner of her slaying, and he never told. And in after years what common men like Anapuni and me should dare to question him?

“Now she had told Anapuni before she was dragged away. But Anapuni’s heart was black. Me he did not tell. Worthy he was of the killing I had intended for him. There was a giant harpooner in the circle, whose singing was like the bellowing of bulls; and, gazing on him in amazement while he roared some song of the sea, when next I looked across the circle to Anapuni, Anapuni was gone. He had fled to the high mountains where he could hide with the bird-catchers a week of moons. This I learned afterward.

“I? I sat on, ashamed of my desire of woman that had not been so strong as my slave-obedience to a chief. And I drowned my shame in large drinks of rum and whisky, till the world went round and round, inside my head and out, and the Southern Cross danced a hula in the sky, and the Koolau Mountains bowed their lofty summits to Waikiki and the surf of Waikiki kissed them on their brows. And the giant harpooner was still roaring, his the last sounds in my ear, as I fell back on the lauhala mat, and was to all things for the time as one dead.

“When I awoke was at the faint first beginning of dawn. I was being kicked by a hard naked heel in the ribs. What of the enormousness of the drink I had consumed, the feelings aroused in me by the heel were not pleasant. The kanakas and wahines of the drinking were gone. I alone remained among the sleeping sailormen, the giant harpooner snoring like a whale, his head upon my feet.

“More heel-kicks, and I sat up and was sick. But the one who kicked was impatient, and demanded to know where was Anapuni. And I did not know, and was kicked, this time from both sides by two impatient men, because I did not know. Nor did I know that Kahekili was dead. Yet did I guess something serious was afoot, for the two men who kicked me were chiefs, and no common men crouched behind them to do their bidding. One was Aimoku, of Kaneche; the other Humuhumu, of Manoa.

"They commanded me to go with them, and they were not kind in their commanding; and as I uprose, the head of the giant harpooner was rolled off my feet, past the edge of the mat, into the sand. He grunted like a pig, his lips opened, and all of his tongue rolled out of his mouth into the sand. Nor did he draw it back. For the first time I knew how long was a man's tongue. The sight of the sand on it made me sick for the second time. It is a terrible thing, the next day after a night of drinking. I was afire, dry afire, all the inside of me like a burnt cinder, like aa lava, like the harpooner's tongue dry and gritty with sand. I bent for a half-drunk drinking coconut, but Aimoku kicked it out of my shaking fingers, and Humuhumu smote me with the heel of his hand on my neck.

"They walked before me, side by side, their faces solemn and black, and I walked at their heels. My mouth stank of the drink, and my head was sick with the stale fumes of it, and I would have cut off my right hand for a drink of water, one drink, a mouthful even. And, had I had it, I know it would have sizzled in my belly like water spilled on heated stones for the roasting. It is terrible, the next day after the drinking. All the life-time of many men who died young has passed by me since the last I was able to do such mad drinking of youth when youth knows not capacity and is undeterred.

"But as we went on, I began to know that some alii was dead. No kanakas lay asleep in the sand, nor stole home from their love-making; and no canoes were abroad after the early fish most catchable then inside the reef at the change of the tide. When we came, past the hoiau" (temple), "to where the Great Kamehameha used to haul out his brigs and schooners, I saw, under the canoe-sheds, that the mat-thatches of Kahekili's great double canoe had been taken off, and that even then, at low tide, many men were launching it down across the sand into the water. But all these men were chiefs. And, though my eyes swam, and the inside of my head went around and around, and the inside of my body was a cinder athirst, I guessed that the alii who was dead was Kahekili. For he was old, and most likely of the aliis to be dead."

"It was his death, as I have heard it, more than the intercession of Kekuanaoa, that spoiled Governor Boki's rebellion," Hardman Pool observed.

"It was Kahekili's death that spoiled it," Kumuhana confirmed. "All commoners, when the word slipped out that night of his death, fled into the shelter of the grass houses, nor lighted fire nor pipes, nor breathed loudly, being therein and thereby taboo from use for sacrifice. And all Governor Boki's commoners of fighting men, as well as the haole deserters from ships, so fled, so that the brass guns lay unserved and his handful of chiefs of themselves could do nothing.

"Aimoku and Humuhumu made me sit on the sand to the side from the launching of the great double-canoe. And when it was afloat all the chiefs were athirst, not being used to such toil; and I was told to climb the palms beside the canoe-sheds and throw down drink-coconuts. They drank and were refreshed, but me they refused to let drink.

"Then they bore Kahekili from his house to the canoe in a haole coffin, oiled and varnished and new. It had been made by a ship's carpenter, who thought he was making a boat that must not leak. It was very tight, and over where the face of Kahekili lay was nothing but thin glass. The chiefs had not screwed on the outside plank to cover the glass. Maybe they did not know the manner of haole coffins; but at any rate I was to be glad they did not know, as you shall see.

"'There is but one moepuu,' said the priest Eoppo, looking at me where I sat on the coffin in the bottom of the canoe. Already the chiefs were paddling out through the reef.

"'The other has run into hiding,' Aimoku answered. 'This one was all we could get.'

"And then I knew. I knew everything. I was to be sacrificed. Anapuni had been planned for the other sacrifice. That was what Malia had whispered to Anapuni at the drinking. And she had been dragged away before she could tell me. And in his blackness of heart he had not told me.

"'There should be two,' said Eoppo. 'It is the law.'

"Aimoku stopped paddling and looked back shoreward as if to return and get a second sacrifice. But several of the chiefs contended no, saying that all commoners were fled to the mountains or were lying taboo in their houses, and that it might take days before they could catch one. In the end Eoppo gave in, though he grumbled from time to time that the law required two moepuus.

"We paddled on, past Diamond Head and abreast of Koko Head, till we were in the midway of the Molokai Channel. There was quite a sea running, though the trade wind was blowing light. The chiefs rested from their paddles, save for the steersmen who kept the canoes bow-on to the wind and swell. And, ere they proceeded further in the matter, they opened more coconuts and drank.

"'I do not mind so much being the moepuu,' I said to Humuhumu; 'but I should like to have a drink before I am slain.' I got no drink. But I spoke true. I was too sick of the much whisky and rum to be afraid to die. At least my mouth would stink no more, nor my head ache, nor the inside of me be as dry-hot sand. Almost worst of all, I suffered at thought of the harpooner's tongue, as last I had seen it lying on the sand and covered with sand. O Kanaka Oolea, what animals young men are with the drink! Not until they have grown old, like you and me, do they control their wantonness of thirst and drink sparingly, like you and me."

"Because we have to," Hardman Pool rejoined. "Old stomachs are worn thin and tender, and we drink sparingly because we dare not drink more. We are wise, but the wisdom is bitter."

"The priest Eoppo sang a long mele about Kahekili's mother and his mother's mother, and all their mothers all the way back to the beginning of time," Kumuhana resumed. "And it seemed I must die of my sand-hot dryness ere he was done. And he called upon all the gods of the under world, the middle world and the over world, to care for and cherish the dead alii about to be consigned to them, and to carry out the curses--they were terrible curses--he laid upon all living men and men to live after who might tamper with the bones of Kahekili to use them in sport of vermin-slaying.

"Do you know, Kanaka Oolea, the priest talked a language largely different, and I know it was the priest language, the old language. Maui he did not name Maui, but Maui-Tiki-Tiki and Maui-Po-Tiki. And Hina, the goddess-mother of Maui, he named Ina. And Maui's god-father he named sometimes Akalana and sometimes Kanaloa. Strange how one about to die and very thirsty should remember such things! And I remember the priest named Hawaii as Vaii, and Lanai as Ngangai."

"Those were the Maori names," Hardman Pool explained, "and the Samoan and Tongan names, that the priests brought with them in their first voyages from the south in the long ago when they found Hawaii and settled to dwell upon it."

"Great is your wisdom, O Kanaka Oolea," the old man accorded solemnly. "Ku, our Supporter of the Heavens, the priest named Tu, and also

Ru; and La, our God of the Sun, he named Ra--“

“And Ra was a sun-god in Egypt in the long ago,” Pool interrupted with a sparkle of interest. “Truly, you Polynesians have travelled far in time and space since first you began. A far cry it is from Old Egypt, when Atlantis was still afloat, to Young Hawaii in the North Pacific. But proceed, Kumuhana. Do you remember anything also of what the priest Eoppo sang?”

“At the very end,” came the confirming nod, “though I was near dead myself, and nearer to die under the priest’s knife, he sang what I have remembered every word of. Listen! It was thus.”

And in quavering falsetto, with the customary broken-notes, the old man sang.

“A Maori death-chant unmistakable,” Pool exclaimed, “sung by an Hawaiian with a tattooed tongue! Repeat it once again, and I shall say it to you in English.”

And when it had been repeated, he spoke it slowly in English:

“But death is nothing new.
Death is and has been ever since old Maui died.
Then Pata-tai laughed loud
And woke the goblin-god,
Who severed him in two, and shut him in,
So dusk of eve came on.”

“And at the last,” Kumuhana resumed, “I was not slain. Eoppo, the killing knife in hand and ready to lift for the blow, did not lift. And I? How did I feel and think? Often, Kanaka Oolea, have I since laughed at the memory of it. I felt very thirsty. I did not want to die. I wanted a drink of water. I knew I was going to die, and I kept remembering the thousand waterfalls falling to waste down the pans” (precipices) “of the windward Koolau Mountains. I did not think of Anapuni. I was too thirsty. I did not think of Malia. I was too thirsty. But continually, inside my head, I saw the tongue of the harpooner, covered dry with sand, as I had last seen it, lying in the sand. My tongue was like that, too. And in the bottom of the canoe rolled about many drinking nuts. Yet I did not attempt to drink, for these were chiefs and I was a common man.

“‘No,’ said Eoppo, commanding the chiefs to throw overboard the coffin. ‘There are not two moepuus, therefore there shall be none.’

“‘Slay the one,’ the chiefs cried.

"But Eoppo shook his head, and said: 'We cannot send Kahekili on his way with only the tops of the taro.'

"'Half a fish is better than none,' Aimoku said the old saying.

"'Not at the burying of an alii,' was the priest's quick reply. 'It is the law. We cannot be niggard with Kahekili and cut his allotment of sacrifice in half.'

"So, for the moment, while the coffin went overside, I was not slain. And it was strange that I was glad immediately that I was to live. And I began to remember Malia, and to begin to plot a vengeance on Anapuni. And with the blood of life thus freshening in me, my thirst multiplied on itself tenfold and my tongue and mouth and throat seemed as sanded as the tongue of the harpooner. The coffin being overboard, I was sitting in the bottom of the canoe. A coconut rolled between my legs and I closed them on it. But as I picked it up in my hand, Aimoku smote my hand with the paddle-edge. Behold!"

He held up the hand, showing two fingers crooked from never having been set.

"I had no time to vex over my pain, for worse things were upon me. All the chiefs were crying out in horror. The coffin, head-end up, had not sunk. It bobbed up and down in the sea astern of us. And the canoe, without way on it, bow-on to sea and wind, was drifted down by sea and wind upon the coffin. And the glass of it was to us, so that we could see the face and head of Kahekili through the glass; and he grinned at us through the glass and seemed alive already in the other world and angry with us, and, with other-world power, about to wreak his anger upon us. Up and down he bobbed, and the canoe drifted closer upon him.

"'Kill him!' 'Bleed him!' 'Thrust to the heart of him!' These things the chiefs were crying out to Eoppo in their fear. 'Over with the taro tops!' 'Let the alii have the half of a fish!'

"Eoppo, priest though he was, was likewise afraid, and his reason weakened before the sight of Kahekili in his haole coffin that would not sink. He seized me by the hair, drew me to my feet, and lifted the knife to plunge to my heart. And there was no resistance in me. I knew again only that I was very thirsty, and before my swimming eyes, in mid-air and close up, dangled the sanded tongue of the harpooner.

"But before the knife could fall and drive in, the thing happened that saved me. Akai, half-brother to Governor Boki, as you will remember, was steersman of the canoe, and, therefore, in the stern, was nearest to the coffin and its dead that would not sink. He was wild with fear, and he thrust out with the point of his paddle to fend off the coffined alii that seemed bent to come on board. The point of the paddle struck the glass. The glass broke--“

“And the coffin immediately sank,” Hardman Pool broke in; “the air that floated it escaping through the broken glass.”

“The coffin immediately sank, being builded by the ship’s carpenter like a boat,” Kumuhana confirmed. “And I, who was a moepuu, became a man once more. And I lived, though I died a thousand deaths from thirst before we gained back to the beach at Waikiki.

“And so, O Kanaka Oolea, the bones of Kahekili do not lie in the Royal Mausoleum. They are at the bottom of Molokai Channel, if not, long since, they have become floating dust of slime, or, builded into the bodies of the coral creatures dead and gone, are builded into the coral reef itself. Of men I am the one living who saw the bones of Kahekili sink into the Molokai Channel.”

In the pause that followed, wherein Hardman Pool was deep sunk in meditation, Kumuhana licked his dry lips many times. At the last he broke silence:

“The twelve dollars, Kanaka Oolea, for the jackass and the second-hand saddle and bridle?”

“The twelve dollars would be thine,” Pool responded, passing to the ancient one six dollars and a half, “save that I have in my stable junk the very bridle and saddle for you which I shall give you. These six dollars and a half will buy you the perfectly suitable jackass of the pake” (Chinese) “at Kokako who told me only yesterday that such was the price.”

They sat on, Pool meditating, conning over and over to himself the Maori death-chant he had heard, and especially the line, “So dusk of eve came on,” finding in it an intense satisfaction of beauty; Kumuhana licking his lips and tokening that he waited for something more. At last he broke silence.

“I have talked long, O Kanaka Oolea. There is not the enduring moistness in my mouth that was when I was young. It seems that afresh upon me is the thirst that was mine when tormented by the visioned tongue of the harpooner. The gin and milk is very good, O Kanaka Oolea, for a tongue that is like the harpooner’s.”

A shadow of a smile flickered across Pool's face. He clapped his hands, and the little maid came running.

"Bring one glass of gin and milk for old Kumuhana," commanded Hardman Pool.

WAIKIKI, HONOLULU

June 28, 1916.

Brown Wolf

SHE had delayed, because of the dew-wet grass, in order to put on her overshoes, and when she emerged from the house found her waiting husband absorbed in the wonder of a bursting almond-bud. She sent a questing glance across the tall grass and in and out among the orchard trees.

"Where's Wolf?" she asked.

"He was here a moment ago." Walt Irvine drew himself away with a jerk from the metaphysics and poetry of the organic miracle of blossom, and surveyed the landscape. "He was running a rabbit the last I saw of him."

"Wolf! Wolf! Here Wolf!" she called, as they left the clearing and took the trail that led down through the waxen-belled manzanita jungle to the county road.

Irvine thrust between his lips the little finger of each hand and lent to her efforts a shrill whistling.

She covered her ears hastily and made a wry grimace.

"My! for a poet, delicately attuned and all the rest of it, you can make unlovely noises. My ear-drums are pierced. You outwhistle-"

"Orpheus."

"I was about to say a street-arab," she concluded severely.

"Poesy does not prevent one from being practical — at least it doesn't prevent ME. Mine is no futility of genius that can't sell gems to the magazines."

He assumed a mock extravagance, and went on:

"I am no attic singer, no ballroom warbler. And why? Because I am practical. Mine is no squalor of song that cannot transmute itself, with proper exchange value, into a flower-crowned cottage, a sweet mountain-meadow, a grove of red-woods, an orchard of thirty-seven trees, one long row of blackberries and two short rows of strawberries, to say nothing of a quarter of a mile of gurgling brook. I am a beauty-merchant, a trader in song, and I pursue utility, dear Madge. I sing a song, and thanks to the magazine editors I transmute my song into a waft of the west wind sighing through our redwoods, into a murmur of waters over mossy stones that sings back to me another song than the one I sang and yet the same song wonderfully — er — transmuted."

"O that all your song-transmutations were as successful!" she laughed.

"Name one that wasn't."

"Those two beautiful sonnets that you transmuted into the cow that was accounted the worst milker in the township."

"She was beautiful — " he began,

"But she didn't give milk," Madge interrupted.

"But she WAS beautiful, now, wasn't she?" he insisted.

"And here's where beauty and utility fall out," was her reply. "And there's the Wolf!"

From the thicket-covered hillside came a crashing of underbrush, and then, forty feet above them, on the edge of the sheer wall of rock, appeared a wolf's head and shoulders. His braced fore paws dislodged a pebble, and with sharp-pricked ears and peering eyes he watched the fall of the pebble till it struck at their feet. Then he transferred his gaze and with open mouth laughed down at them.

"You Wolf, you!" and "You blessed Wolf!" the man and woman called out to him.

The ears flattened back and down at the sound, and the head seemed to snuggle under the caress of an invisible hand.

They watched him scramble backward into the thicket, then proceeded on their way. Several minutes later, rounding a turn in the trail where the descent was less precipitous, he joined them in the midst of a miniature avalanche of pebbles and loose soil. He was not demonstrative. A pat and a rub around the ears from the man, and a more prolonged caressing from the woman, and he was away down the trail in front of them, gliding effortlessly over the ground in true wolf fashion.

In build and coat and brush he was a huge timber-wolf; but the lie was given to his wolfhood by his color and marking. There the dog unmistakably advertised itself. No wolf was ever colored like him. He was brown, deep brown, red-brown, an orgy of browns. Back and shoulders were a warm brown that paled on the sides and underneath to a yellow that was dingy because of the brown that lingered in it. The white of the throat and paws and the spots over the eyes was dirty because of the persistent and ineradicable brown, while the eyes themselves were twin topazes, golden and brown.

The man and woman loved the dog very much; perhaps this was because it had been such a task to win his love. It had been no easy matter when he first drifted in mysteriously out of nowhere to their little mountain cottage.

Footsore and famished, he had killed a rabbit under their very noses and under their very windows, and then crawled away and slept by the spring at the foot of the blackberry bushes. When Walt Irvine went down to inspect the intruder, he was snarled at for his pains, and Madge likewise was snarled at when she went down to present, as a peace-offering, a large pan of bread and milk.

A most unsociable dog he proved to be, resenting all their advances, refusing to let them lay hands on him, menacing them with bared fangs and bristling hair. Nevertheless he remained, sleeping and resting by the spring, and eating the food they gave him after they set it down at a safe distance and retreated. His wretched physical condition explained why he lingered; and when he had recuperated, after several days' sojourn, he disappeared.

And this would have been the end of him, so far as Irvine and his wife were concerned, had not Irvine at that particular time been called away into the northern part of the state. Riding along on the train, near to the line between California and Oregon, he chanced to look out of the window and saw his unsociable guest sliding along the wagon road, brown and wolfish, tired yet tireless, dust-covered and soiled with two hundred miles of travel.

Now Irvine was a man of impulse, a poet. He got off the train at the next station, bought a piece of meat at a butcher shop, and captured the vagrant on the outskirts of the town. The return trip was made in the baggage car, and so Wolf came a second time to the mountain cottage. Here he was tied up for a week and made love to by the man and woman. But it was very circumspect love-making. Remote and alien as a traveller from another planet, he snarled down their soft-spoken love-words. He never barked. In all the time they had him he was never known to bark.

To win him became a problem. Irvine liked problems. He had a metal plate made, on which was stamped: RETURN TO WALT IRVINE, GLEN ELLEN, SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA. This was riveted to a collar and strapped about the dog's neck. Then he was turned loose, and promptly he disappeared. A day later came a telegram from Mendocino County. In twenty hours he had made over a hundred miles to the north, and was still going when captured.

He came back by Wells Fargo Express, was tied up three days, and was loosed on the fourth and lost. This time he gained southern Oregon before he was caught and returned. Always, as soon as he received his liberty, he fled away, and always he fled north. He was possessed of an obsession that drove him north. The homing instinct, Irvine called it, after he had expended the selling price of a sonnet in getting the animal back from northern Oregon.

Another time the brown wanderer succeeded in traversing half the length of California, all of Oregon, and most of Washington, before he was picked up and returned "Collect." A remarkable thing was the speed with which he travelled. Fed up and rested, as soon as he was loosed he devoted all his energy to getting over the ground. On the first day's run he was known to cover as high as a hundred and fifty miles, and after that he would average a hundred miles a day until caught. He always arrived back lean and hungry and savage, and always departed fresh and vigorous, cleaving his way northward in response to some prompting of his being that no one could understand.

But at last, after a futile year of flight, he accepted the inevitable and elected to remain at the cottage where first he had killed the rabbit and slept by the spring. Even after that, a long time elapsed before the man and woman succeeded in patting him. It was a great victory, for they alone were allowed to put hands on him. He was fastidiously exclusive, and no guest at the cottage ever succeeded in making up to him. A low growl greeted such approach; if any one had the hardihood to come nearer, the lips lifted, the naked fangs appeared, and the growl became a snarl — a snarl so terrible and malignant that it awed the stoutest of them, as it likewise awed the farmers' dogs that knew ordinary dog-snarling, but had never seen wolf-snarling before.

He was without antecedents. His history began with Walt and Madge. He had come up from the south, but never a clew did they get of the owner from whom he had evidently fled. Mrs. Johnson, their nearest neighbor and the one who supplied them with milk, proclaimed him a Klondike dog. Her brother was burrowing for frozen pay-streaks in that far country, and so she constituted herself an authority on the subject.

But they did not dispute her. There were the tips of Wolf's ears, obviously so severely frozen at some time that they would never quite heal again. Besides, he looked like the photographs of the Alaskan dogs they saw published in magazines and newspapers. They often speculated over his past, and tried to conjure up (from what they had read and heard) what his northland life had been. That the northland still drew him, they knew; for at night they sometimes heard him crying softly; and when the north wind blew and the bite of frost was in the air, a great restlessness would come upon him and he would lift a mournful lament which they knew to be the long wolf-howl. Yet he never barked. No provocation was great enough to draw from him that canine cry.

Long discussion they had, during the time of winning him, as to whose dog he was. Each claimed him, and each proclaimed loudly any expression of affection made by him. But the man had the better of it at first, chiefly because he was a man. It was patent that Wolf had had no experience with women. He did not understand women. Madge's skirts were something he never quite accepted. The swish of them was enough to set him a-bristle with suspicion, and on a windy day she could not approach him at all.

On the other hand, it was Madge who fed him; also it was she who ruled the kitchen, and it was by her favor, and her favor alone, that he was permitted to come within that sacred precinct. It was because of these things that she bade fair to overcome the handicap of her garments. Then it was that Walt put forth special effort, making it a practice to have Wolf lie at his feet while he wrote, and, between petting and talking, losing much time from his work. Walt won in the end, and his victory was most probably due to the fact that he was a man, though Madge averred that they would have had another quarter of a mile of gurgling brook, and at least two west winds sighing through their redwoods, had Wait properly devoted his energies to song-transmutation and left Wolf alone to exercise a natural taste and an unbiassed judgment.

"It's about time I heard from those triolets", Walt said, after a silence of five minutes, during which they had swung steadily down the trail. "There'll be a check at the post-office, I know, and we'll transmute it into beautiful buckwheat flour, a gallon of maple syrup, and a new pair of overshoes for you."

"And into beautiful milk from Mrs. Johnson's beautiful cow," Madge added. "To-morrow's the first of the month, you know."

Walt scowled unconsciously; then his face brightened, and he clapped his hand to his breast pocket.

"Never mind. I have here a nice beautiful new cow, the best milker in California."

"When did you write it?" she demanded eagerly. Then, reproachfully, "And you never showed it to me."

"I saved it to read to you on the way to the post-office, in a spot remarkably like this one," he answered, indicating, with a wave of his hand, a dry log on which to sit.

A tiny stream flowed out of a dense fern-brake, slipped down a mossy-lipped stone, and ran across the path at their feet. From the valley arose the mellow song of meadow-larks, while about them, in and out, through sunshine and shadow, fluttered great yellow butterflies.

Up from below came another sound that broke in upon Walt reading softly from his manuscript. It was a crunching of heavy feet, punctuated now and again by the clattering of a displaced stone. As Walt finished and looked to his wife for approval, a man came into view around the turn of the trail. He was bare-headed and sweaty. With a handkerchief in one hand he mopped his face, while in the other hand he carried a new hat and a wilted starched collar which he had removed from his neck. He was a well-built man, and his muscles seemed on the point of bursting out of the painfully new and ready-made black clothes he wore.

"Warm day," Walt greeted him. Walt believed in country democracy, and never missed an opportunity to practise it.

The man paused and nodded.

"I guess I ain't used much to the warm," he vouchsafed half apologetically. "I'm more accustomed to zero weather."

"You don't find any of that in this country," Walt laughed.

"Should say not," the man answered. "An' I ain't here a-lookin' for it neither. I'm tryin' to find my sister. Mebbe you know where she lives. Her name's Johnson, Mrs. William Johnson."

"You're not her Klondike brother!" Madge cried, her eyes bright with interest, "about whom we've heard so much?"

"Yes'm, that's me," he answered modestly. "My name's Miller, Skiff Miller. I just thought I'd s'prise her."

"You are on the right track then. Only you've come by the foot-path." Madge stood up to direct him, pointing up the canyon a quarter of a mile. "You see that blasted redwood? Take the little trail turning off to the right. It's the short cut to her house. You can't miss it."

"Yes'm, thank you, ma'am," he said. He made tentative efforts to go, but seemed awkwardly rooted to the spot. He was gazing at her with an open admiration of which he was quite unconscious, and which was drowning, along with him, in the rising sea of embarrassment in which he floundered.

“We’d like to hear you tell about the Klondike,” Madge said. “Mayn’t we come over some day while you are at your sister’s? Or, better yet, won’t you come over and have dinner with us?”

“Yes’m, thank you, ma’am,” he mumbled mechanically. Then he caught himself up and added: “I ain’t stoppin’ long. I got to be pullin’ north again. I go out on to-night’s train. You see, I’ve got a mail contract with the government.”

When Madge had said that it was too bad, he made another futile effort to go. But he could not take his eyes from her face. He forgot his embarrassment in his admiration, and it was her turn to flush and feel uncomfortable.

It was at this juncture, when Walt had just decided it was time for him to be saying something to relieve the strain, that Wolf, who had been away nosing through the brush, trotted wolf-like into view.

Skiff Miller’s abstraction disappeared. The pretty woman before him passed out of his field of vision. He had eyes only for the dog, and a great wonder came into his face.

“Well, I’ll be damned!” he enunciated slowly and solemnly.

He sat down ponderingly on the log, leaving Madge standing. At the sound of his voice, Wolf’s ears had flattened down, then his mouth had opened in a laugh. He trotted slowly up to the stranger and first smelled his hands, then licked them with his tongue.

Skiff Miller patted the dog’s head, and slowly and solemnly repeated, “Well, I’ll be damned!”

“Excuse me, ma’am,” he said the next moment “I was just s’prised some, that was all.”

“We’re surprised, too,” she answered lightly. “We never saw Wolf make up to a stranger before.”

“Is that what you call him — Wolf?” the man asked.

Madge nodded. “But I can’t understand his friendliness toward you — unless it’s because you’re from the Klondike. He’s a Klondike dog, you know.”

“Yes’m,” Miller said absently. He lifted one of Wolf’s fore legs and examined the foot-pads, pressing them and denting them with his thumb. “Kind of SOFT,” he remarked. “He ain’t been on trail for a long time.”

“I say,” Walt broke in, “it is remarkable the way he lets you handle him.”

Skiff Miller arose, no longer awkward with admiration of Madge, and in a sharp, businesslike manner asked, “How long have you had him?”

But just then the dog, squirming and rubbing against the newcomer’s legs, opened his mouth and barked. It was an explosive bark, brief and joyous, but a bark.

“That’s a new one on me,” Skiff Miller remarked.

Walt and Madge stared at each other. The miracle had happened. Wolf had barked.

“It’s the first time he ever barked,” Madge said.

“First time I ever heard him, too,” Miller volunteered.

Madge smiled at him. The man was evidently a humorist.

“Of course,” she said, “since you have only seen him for five minutes.”

Skiff Miller looked at her sharply, seeking in her face the guile her words had led him to suspect.

“I thought you understood,” he said slowly. “I thought you’d tumbled to it from his makin’ up to me. He’s my dog. His name ain’t Wolf. It’s Brown.”

“Oh, Walt!” was Madge’s instinctive cry to her husband.

Walt was on the defensive at once.

“How do you know he’s your dog?” he demanded.

“Because he is,” was the reply.

“Mere assertion,” Walt said sharply.

In his slow and pondering way, Skiff Miller looked at him, then asked, with a nod of his head toward Madge:

“How d’you know she’s your wife? You just say, ‘Because she is,’ and I’ll say it’s mere assertion. The dog’s mine. I bred ‘m an’ raised ‘m, an’ I guess I ought to know. Look here. I’ll prove it to you.”

Skiff Miller turned to the dog. “Brown!” His voice rang out sharply, and at the sound the dog’s ears flattened down as to a caress. “Gee!” The dog made a swinging turn to the right. “Now mush-on!” And the dog ceased his swing abruptly and started straight ahead, halting obediently at command.

“I can do it with whistles”, Skiff Miller said proudly. “He was my lead dog.”

“But you are not going to take him away with you?” Madge asked tremulously.

The man nodded.

“Back into that awful Klondike world of suffering?”

He nodded and added: “Oh, it ain’t so bad as all that. Look at me. Pretty healthy specimen, ain’t I?”

“But the dogs! The terrible hardship, the heart-breaking toil, the starvation, the frost! Oh, I’ve read about it and I know.”

“I nearly ate him once, over on Little Fish River,” Miller volunteered grimly. “If I hadn’t got a moose that day was all that saved ‘m.”

“I’d have died first!” Madge cried.

“Things is different down here”, Miller explained. “You don’t have to eat dogs. You think different just about the time you’re all in. You’ve never ben all in, so you don’t know anything about it.”

“That’s the very point,” she argued warmly. “Dogs are not eaten in California. Why not leave him here? He is happy. He’ll never want for food — you know that. He’ll never suffer from cold and hardship. Here all is softness and gentleness. Neither the human nor nature is savage. He will never know a whip-lash again. And as for the weather — why, it never snows here.”

“But it’s all-fired hot in summer, beggin’ your pardon,” Skiff Miller laughed.

“But you do not answer,” Madge continued passionately. “What have you to offer him in that northland life?”

“Grub, when I’ve got it, and that’s most of the time,” came the answer.

“And the rest of the time?”

“No grub.”

“And the work?”

“Yes, plenty of work,” Miller blurted out impatiently. “Work without end, an’ famine, an’ frost, an all the rest of the miseries — that’s what he’ll get when he comes with me. But he likes it. He is used to it. He knows that life. He was born to it an’ brought up to it. An’ you don’t know anything about it. You don’t know what you’re talking about. That’s where the dog belongs, and that’s where he’ll be happiest.”

“The dog doesn’t go,” Walt announced in a determined voice. “So there is no need of further discussion.”

“What’s that?” Skiff Miller demanded, his brows lowering and an obstinate flush of blood reddening his forehead.

“I said the dog doesn’t go, and that settles it. I don’t believe he’s your dog. You may have seen him sometime. You may even sometime have driven him for his owner. But his obeying the ordinary driving commands of the Alaskan trail is no demonstration that he is yours. Any dog in Alaska would obey you as he obeyed. Besides, he is undoubtedly a valuable dog, as dogs go in Alaska, and that is sufficient explanation of your desire to get possession of him. Anyway, you've got to prove property."

Skiff Miller, cool and collected, the obstinate flush a trifle deeper on his forehead, his huge muscles bulging under the black cloth of his coat, carefully looked the poet up and down as though measuring the strength of his slenderness.

The Klondiker's face took on a contemptuous expression as he said finally, "I reckon there's nothin' in sight to prevent me takin' the dog right here an' now."

Walt's face reddened, and the striking-muscles of his arms and shoulders seemed to stiffen and grow tense. His wife fluttered apprehensively into the breach.

"Maybe Mr. Miller is right", she said. "I am afraid that he is. Wolf does seem to know him, and certainly he answers to the name of 'Brown.' He made friends with him instantly, and you know that's something he never did with anybody before. Besides, look at the way he barked. He was just bursting with joy Joy over what? Without doubt at finding Mr. Miller."

Walt's striking-muscles relaxed, and his shoulders seemed to droop with hopelessness.

"I guess you're right, Madge," he said. "Wolf isn't Wolf, but Brown, and he must belong to Mr. Miller."

"Perhaps Mr. Miller will sell him," she suggested. "We can buy him."

Skiff Miller shook his head, no longer belligerent, but kindly, quick to be generous in response to generousness.

"I had five dogs," he said, casting about for the easiest way to temper his refusal. "He was the leader. They was the crack team of Alaska. Nothin' could touch 'em. In 1898 I refused five thousand dollars for the bunch. Dogs was high, then, anyway; but that wasn't what made the fancy price. It was the team itself. Brown was the best in the team. That winter I refused twelve hundred for 'm. I didn't sell 'm then, an' I ain't a-sellin' 'm now. Besides, I think a mighty lot of that dog. I've ben lookin' for 'm for three years. It made me fair sick when I found he'd ben stole — not the value of him, but the — well, I liked 'm like hell, that's all, beggin' your pardon. I couldn't believe my eyes when I seen 'm just now. I thought I was dreamin'. It was too good to be true. Why, I was his wet-nurse. I put 'm to bed, snug every night. His mother died, and I brought ‘m up on condensed milk at two dollars a can when I couldn’t afford it in my own coffee. He never knew any mother but me. He used to suck my finger regular, the darn little cuss — that finger right there!”

And Skiff Miller, too overwrought for speech, held up a fore finger for them to see.

“That very finger,” he managed to articulate, as though it somehow clinched the proof of ownership and the bond of affection.

He was still gazing at his extended finger when Madge began to speak.

“But the dog,” she said. “You haven’t considered the dog.”

Skiff Miller looked puzzled.

“Have you thought about him?” she asked.

“Don’t know what you’re drivin’ at,” was the response.

“Maybe the dog has some choice in the matter,” Madge went on. “Maybe he has his likes and desires. You have not considered him. You give him no choice. It has never entered your mind that possibly he might prefer California to Alaska. You consider only what you like. You do with him as you would with a sack of potatoes or a bale of hay.”

This was a new way of looking at it, and Miller was visibly impressed as he debated it in his mind. Madge took advantage of his indecision.

“If you really love him, what would be happiness to him would be your happiness also,” she urged.

Skiff Miller continued to debate with himself, and Madge stole a glance of exultation to her husband, who looked back warm approval.

“What do you think?” the Klondiker suddenly demanded.

It was her turn to be puzzled. “What do you mean?” she asked.

“D’ye think he’d sooner stay in California?”

She nodded her head with positiveness. “I am sure of it.”

Skiff Miller again debated with himself, though this time aloud, at the same time running his gaze in a judicial way over the mooted animal.

“He was a good worker. He’s done a heap of work for me. He never loafed on me, an’ he was a joe-dandy at hammerin’ a raw team into shape. He’s got a head on him. He can do everything but talk. He knows what you say to him. Look at ‘m now. He knows we’re talkin’ about him.”

The dog was lying at Skiff Miller’s feet, head close down on paws, ears erect and listening, and eyes that were quick and eager to follow the sound of speech as it fell from the lips of first one and then the other.

"An' there's a lot of work in 'm yet. He's good for years to come. An' I do like him. I like him like hell."

Once or twice after that Skiff Miller opened his mouth and closed it again without speaking. Finally he said:

"I'll tell you what I'll do. Your remarks, ma'am, has some weight in them. The dog's worked hard, and maybe he's earned a soft berth an' has got a right to choose. Anyway, we'll leave it up to him. Whatever he says, goes. You people stay right here settin' down. I'll say good-by and walk off casual-like. If he wants to stay, he can stay. If he wants to come with me, let 'm come. I won't call 'm to come an' don't you call 'm to come back."

He looked with sudden suspicion at Madge, and added, "Only you must play fair. No persuadin' after my back is turned."

"We'll play fair," Madge began, but Skiff Miller broke in on her assurances.

"I know the ways of women," he announced. "Their hearts is soft. When their hearts is touched they're likely to stack the cards, look at the bottom of the deck, an' lie like the devil — beggin' your pardon, ma'am. I'm only discoursin' about women in general."

"I don't know how to thank you," Madge quavered.

"I don't see as you've got any call to thank me," he replied. "Brown ain't decided yet. Now you won't mind if I go away slow? It's no more'n fair, seein' I'll be out of sight inside a hundred yards." — Madge agreed, and added, "And I promise you faithfully that we won't do anything to influence him."

"Well, then, I might as well be gettin' along," Skiff Miller said in the ordinary tones of one departing.

At this change in his voice, Wolf lifted his head quickly, and still more quickly got to his feet when the man and woman shook hands. He sprang up on his hind legs, resting his fore paws on her hip and at the same time licking Skiff Miller's hand. When the latter shook hands with Walt, Wolf repeated his act, resting his weight on Walt and licking both men's hands.

"It ain't no picnic, I can tell you that," were the Klondiker's last words, as he turned and went slowly up the trail.

For the distance of twenty feet Wolf watched him go, himself all eagerness and expectancy, as though waiting for the man to turn and retrace his steps. Then, with a quick low whine, Wolf sprang after him, overtook him, caught his hand between his teeth with reluctant tenderness, and strove gently to make him pause.

Failing in this, Wolf raced back to where Walt Irvine sat, catching his coat-sleeve in his teeth and trying vainly to drag him after the retreating man.

Wolf's perturbation began to wax. He desired ubiquity. He wanted to be in two places at the same time, with the old master and the new, and steadily the distance between them was increasing. He sprang about excitedly, making short nervous leaps and twists, now toward one, now toward the other, in painful indecision, not knowing his own mind, desiring both and unable to choose, uttering quick sharp whines and beginning to pant.

He sat down abruptly on his haunches, thrusting his nose upward, the mouth opening and closing with jerking movements, each time opening wider. These jerking movements were in unison with the recurrent spasms that attacked the throat, each spasm severer and more intense than the preceding one. And in accord with jerks and spasms the larynx began to vibrate, at first silently, accompanied by the rush of air expelled from the lungs, then sounding a low, deep note, the lowest in the register of the human ear. All this was the nervous and muscular preliminary to howling.

But just as the howl was on the verge of bursting from the full throat, the wide-opened mouth was closed, the paroxysms ceased, and he looked long and steadily at the retreating man. Suddenly Wolf turned his head, and over his shoulder just as steadily regarded Walt. The appeal was unanswered. Not a word nor a sign did the dog receive, no suggestion and no clew as to what his conduct should be.

A glance ahead to where the old master was nearing the curve of the trail excited him again. He sprang to his feet with a whine, and then, struck by a new idea, turned his attention to Madge. Hitherto he had ignored her, but now, both masters failing him, she alone was left. He went over to her and snuggled his head in her lap, nudging her arm with his nose — an old trick of his when begging for favors. He backed away from her and began writhing and twisting playfully, curvetting and prancing, half rearing and striking his fore paws to the earth, struggling with all his body, from the wheedling eyes and flattening ears to the wagging tail, to express the thought that was in him and that was denied him utterance.

This, too, he soon abandoned. He was depressed by the coldness of these humans who had never been cold before. No response could he draw from them, no help could he get. They did not consider him. They were as dead.

He turned and silently gazed after the old master. Skiff Miller was rounding the curve. In a moment he would be gone from view. Yet he never turned his head, plodding straight onward, slowly and methodically, as though possessed of no interest in what was occurring behind his back.

And in this fashion he went out of view. Wolf waited for him to reappear. He waited a long minute, silently, quietly, without movement, as though turned to stone — withal stone quick with eagerness and desire. He barked once, and waited. Then he turned and trotted back to Walt Irvine. He sniffed his hand and dropped down heavily at his feet, watching the trail where it curved emptily from view.

The tiny stream slipping down the mossy-lipped stone seemed suddenly to increase the volume of its gurgling noise. Save for the meadow-larks, there was no other sound. The great yellow butterflies drifted silently through the sunshine and lost themselves in the drowsy shadows. Madge gazed triumphantly at her husband.

A few minutes later Wolf got upon his feet. Decision and deliberation marked his movements. He did not glance at the man and woman. His eyes were fixed up the trail. He had made up his mind. They knew it. And they knew, so far as they were concerned, that the ordeal had just begun.

He broke into a trot, and Madge's lips pursed, forming an avenue for the caressing sound that it was the will of her to send forth. But the caressing sound was not made. She was impelled to look at her husband, and she saw the sternness with which he watched her. The pursed lips relaxed, and she sighed inaudibly.

Wolf's trot broke into a run. Wider and wider were the leaps he made. Not once did he turn his head, his wolf's brush standing out straight behind him. He cut sharply across the curve of the trail and was gone.

Bunches of Knuckles

Arrangements quite extensive had been made for the celebration of Christmas on the yacht Samoset. Not having been in any civilized port for months, the stock of provisions boasted few delicacies; yet Minnie Duncan had managed to devise real feasts for cabin and forecastle.

“Listen, Boyd, she told her husband. “Here are the menus. For the cabin, raw bonita native style, turtle soup, omelette a la Samoset — ”

“What the dickens?” Boyd Duncan interrupted.

“Well, if you must know, I found a tin of mushrooms and a package of egg-powder which had fallen down behind the locker, and there are other things as well that will go into it. But don’t interrupt. Boiled yam, fried taro, alligator pear salad – there, you’ve got me all mixed, Then I found a last delectable half-pound of dried squid. There will be baked beans Mexican, if I can hammer it into Toyama’s head; also, baked papaia with Marquesan honey, and, lastly, a wonderful pie the secret of which Toyama refuses to divulge.”

“I wonder if it is possible to concoct a punch or a cocktail out of trade rum?” Duncan muttered gloomily.

“Oh! I forgot! Come with me.”

His wife caught his hand and led him through the small connecting door to her tiny stateroom. Still holding his hand, she fished in the depths of a hat-locker and brought forth a pint bottle of champagne.

“The dinner is complete!” he cried.

“Wait.”

She fished again, and was rewarded with a silver-mounted whisky flask. She held it to the light of a port-hole, and the liquor showed a quarter of the distance from the bottom.

“I’ve been saving it for weeks,” she explained. “And there’s enough for you and Captain Dettmar.”

“Two mighty small drinks,” Duncan complained.

“There would have been more, but I gave a drink to Lorenzo when he was sick.”

Duncan growled, “Might have given him rum,” facetiously.

“The nasty stuff! For a sick man? Don’t be greedy, Boyd. And I’m glad there isn’t any more, for Captain Dettmar’s sake. Drinking always makes him irritable. And now for the men's dinner. Soda crackers, sweet cakes, candy — "

"Substantial, I must say."

"Do hush. Rice, and curry, yam, taro, bonita, of course, a big cake Toyama is making, young pig — "

"Oh, I say," he protested.

"It is all right, Boyd. We'll be in Attu-Attu in three days. Besides, it's my pig. That old chief what-ever-his-name distinctly presented it to me. You saw him yourself. And then two tins of bullamacow. That's their dinner. And now about the presents. Shall we wait until tomorrow, or give them this evening?"

"Christmas Eve, by all means," was the man's judgment. "We'll call all hands at eight bells; I'll give them a tot of rum all around, and then you give the presents. Come on up on deck. It's stifling down here. I hope Lorenzo has better luck with the dynamo; without the fans there won't be much sleeping to-night if we're driven below."

They passed through the small main-cabin, climbed a steep companion ladder, and emerged on deck. The sun was setting, and the promise was for a clear tropic night. The Samoset, with fore-and main-sail winged out on either side, was slipping a lazy four-knots through the smooth sea. Through the engine-room skylight came a sound of hammering. They strolled aft to where Captain Dettmar, one foot on the rail, was oiling the gear of the patent log. At the wheel stood a tall South Sea Islander, clad in white undershirt and scarlet hip-cloth.

Boyd Duncan was an original. At least that was the belief of his friends. Of comfortable fortune, with no need to do anything but take his comfort, he elected to travel about the world in outlandish and most uncomfortable ways. Incidentally, he had ideas about coral-reefs, disagreed profoundly with Darwin on that subject, had voiced his opinion in several monographs and one book, and was now back at his hobby, cruising the South Seas in a tiny, thirty-ton yacht and studying reef-formations.

His wife, Minnie Duncan, was also declared an original, inasmuch as she joyfully shared his vagabond wanderings. Among other things, in the six exciting years of their marriage she had climbed Chimborazo with him, made a three-thousand-mile winter journey with dogs and sleds in Alaska, ridden a horse from Canada to Mexico, cruised the Mediterranean in a ten-ton yawl, and canoed from Germany to the Black Sea across the heart of

Europe. They were a royal pair of wanderlusters, he, big and broad-shouldered, she a small, brunette, and happy woman, whose one hundred and fifteen pounds were all grit and endurance, and withal, pleasing to look upon.

The Samoset had been a trading schooner, when Duncan bought her in San Francisco and made alterations. Her interior was wholly rebuilt, so that the hold became main-cabin and staterooms, while abaft amidships were installed engines, a dynamo, an ice machine, storage batteries, and, far in the stern, gasoline tanks. Necessarily, she carried a small crew. Boyd, Minnie, and Captain Dettmar were the only whites on board, though Lorenzo, the small and greasy engineer, laid a part claim to white, being a Portuguese half-caste. A Japanese served as cook, and a Chinese as cabin boy. Four white sailors had constituted the original crew for’ard, but one by one they had yielded to the charms of palm-waving South Sea isles and been replaced by islanders. Thus, one of the dusky sailors hailed from Easter Island, a second from the Carolines, a third from the Paumotus, while the fourth was a gigantic Samoan. At sea, Boyd Duncan, himself a navigator, stood a mate’s watch with Captain Dettmar, and both of them took a wheel or lookout occasionally. On a pinch, Minnie herself could take a wheel, and it was on pinches that she proved herself more dependable at steering than did the native sailors.

At eight bells, all hands assembled at the wheel, and Boyd Duncan appeared with a black bottle and a mug. The rum he served out himself, half a mug of it to each man. They gulped the stuff down with many facial expressions of delight, followed by loud lip-smackings of approval, though the liquor was raw enough and corrosive enough to burn their mucous membranes. All drank except Lee Goom, the abstemious cabin boy. This rite accomplished, they waited for the next, the present-giving. Generously molded on Polynesian lines, huge-bodied and heavy-muscled, they were nevertheless like so many children, laughing merrily at little things, their eager black eyes flashing in the lantern light as their big bodies swayed to the heave and roll of the ship.

Calling each by name, Minnie gave the presents out, accompanying each presentation with some happy remark that added to the glee. There were trade watches, clasp knives, amazing assortments of fish-hooks in packages, plug tobacco, matches, and gorgeous strips of cotton for loincloths all around. That Boyd Duncan was liked by them was evidenced by the roars of laughter with which they greeted his slightest joking allusion.

Captain Dettmar, white-faced, smiling only when his employer chanced to glance at him, leaned against the wheel-box, looking on. Twice, he left the group and went below, remaining there but a minute each time. Later, in the main cabin, when Lorenzo, Lee Goom and Toyama received their presents, he disappeared into his stateroom twice again. For of all times, the devil that slumbered in Captain Dettmar's soul chose this particular time of good cheer to awaken. Perhaps it was not entirely the devil's fault, for Captain Dettmar, privily cherishing a quart of whisky for many weeks, had selected Christmas Eve for broaching it.

It was still early in the evening – two bells had just gone – when Duncan and his wife stood by the cabin companionway, gazing to windward and canvassing the possibility of spreading their beds on deck. A small, dark blot of cloud, slowly forming on the horizon, carried the threat of a rain-squall, and it was this they were discussing when Captain Dettmar, coming from aft and about to go below, glanced at them with sudden suspicion. He paused, his face working spasmodically. Then he spoke:

"You are talking about me."

His voice was hoarse, and there was an excited vibration in it. Minnie Duncan started, then glanced at her husband's immobile face, took the cue, and remained silent.

"I say you were talking about me," Captain Dettmar repeated, this time with almost a snarl.

He did not lurch nor betray the liquor on him in any way save by the convulsive working of his face.

"Minnie, you'd better go down," Duncan said gently. "Tell Lee Goom we'll sleep below. It won't be long before that squall is drenching things."

She took the hint and left, delaying just long enough to give one anxious glance at the dim faces of the two men.

Duncan puffed at his cigar and waited till his wife's voice, in talk with the cabin-boy, came up through the open skylight.

"Well?" Duncan demanded in a low voice, but sharply.

"I said you were talking about me. I say it again. Oh, I haven't been blind. Day after day I've seen the two of you talking about me. Why don't you come out and say it to my face! I know you know. And I know your mind's made up to discharge me at Attu-Attu."

"I am sorry you are making such a mess of everything," was Duncan's quiet reply.

But Captain Dettmar's mind was set on trouble.

"You know you are going to discharge me. You think you are too good to associate with the likes of me – you and your wife."

"Kindly keep her out of this," Duncan warned. "What do you want?"

"I want to know what you are going to do!"

"Discharge you, after this, at Attu-Attu."

"You intended to, all along."

"On the contrary. It is your present conduct that compels me."

"You can't give me that sort of talk."

"I can't retain a captain who calls me a liar."

Captain Dettmar for the moment was taken aback. His face and lips worked, but he could say nothing. Duncan coolly pulled at his cigar and glanced aft at the rising cloud of squall.

"Lee Goom brought the mail aboard at Tahiti," Captain Dettmar began.

"We were hove short then and leaving. You didn't look at your letters until we were outside, and then it was too late. That's why you didn't discharge me at Tahiti. Oh, I know. I saw the long envelope when Lee Goom came over the side. It was from the Governor of California, printed on the corner for any one to see. You'd been working behind my back. Some beachcomber in Honolulu had whispered to you, and you'd written to the Governor to find out. And that was his answer Lee Goom carried out to you. Why didn't you come to me like a man! No, you must play underhand with me, knowing that this billet was the one chance for me to get on my feet again. And as soon as you read the Governor's letter your mind was made up to get rid of me. I've seen it on your face ever since for all these months.. I've seen the two of you, polite as hell to me all the time, and getting away in corners and talking about me and that affair in 'Frisco."

"Are you done?" Duncan asked, his voice low, and tense. "Quite done?"

Captain Dettmar made no answer.

"Then I'll tell you a few things. It was precisely because of that affair in 'Frisco that I did not discharge you in Tahiti. God knows you gave me sufficient provocation. I thought that if ever a man needed a chance to rehabilitate himself, you were that man. Had there been no black mark against you, I would have discharged you when I learned how you were robbing me."

Captain Dettmar showed surprise, started to interrupt, then changed his mind.

"There was that matter of the deck-calking, the bronze rudder-irons, the overhauling of the engine, the new spinnaker boom, the new davits, and the repairs to the whale-boat. You 0Kd the shipyard bill. It was four thousand one hundred and twenty-two francs. By the regular shipyard charges it ought not to have been a centime over twenty-five hundred francs-"

"If you take the word of those alongshore sharks against mine — ' the other began thickly.

"Save yourself the trouble of further lying," Duncan went on coldly. "I looked it up. I got Flaubin before the Governor himself, and the old rascal confessed to sixteen hundred overcharge. Said you'd stuck him up for it. Twelve hundred went to you, and his share was four hundred and the job. Don't interrupt. I've got his affidavit below. Then was when I would have put you ashore, except for the cloud you were under. You had to have this one chance or go clean to hell. I gave you the chance. And what have you got to say about it?"

"What did the Governor say?" Captain Dettmar demanded truculently.

"Which governor?"

"Of California. Did he lie to you like all the rest?"

"I'll tell you what he said. He said that you had been convicted on circumstantial evidence; that was why you had got life imprisonment instead of hanging; that you had always stoutly maintained your innocence; that you were the black sheep of the Maryland Dettmars; that they moved heaven and earth for your pardon; that your prison conduct was most exemplary; that he was prosecuting attorney at the time you were convicted; that after you had served seven years he yielded to your family's plea and pardoned you; and that in his own mind existed a doubt that you had killed McSweeny."

There was a pause, during which Duncan went on studying the rising squall, while Captain Dettmar's face worked terribly.

"Well, the Governor was wrong," he announced, with a short laugh. "I did kill McSweeny. I did get the watchman drunk that night. I beat McSweeny to death in his bunk. I used the iron belaying pin that appeared in the evidence. He never had a chance. I beat him to a jelly. Do you want the details?"

Duncan looked at him in the curious way one looks at any monstrosity, but made no reply.

“Oh, I’m not afraid to tell you,” Captain Dettmar blustered on. “There are no witnesses. Besides, I am a free man now. I am pardoned, and by God they can never put me back in that hole again. I broke McSweeny’s jaw with the first blow. He was lying on his back asleep. He said, ‘My God, Jim! My God!’ It was funny to see his broken jaw wabble as he said it. Then I smashed him …I say, do you want the rest of the details?”

“Is that all you have to say?” was the answer.

“Isn’t it enough?” Captain Dettmar retorted.

“It is enough.”

“What are you going to do about it?”

“Put you ashore at Attu-Attu.”

“And in the meantime?”

“In the meantime …” Duncan paused. An increase of weight in the wind rippled his hair. The stars overhead vanished, and the Samoset swung four points off her course in the careless steersman’s hands. “In the meantime throw your halyards down on deck and look to your wheel. I’ll call the men.”

The next moment the squall burst upon them. Captain Dettmar, springing aft, lifted the coiled mainsail halyards from their pins and threw them, ready to run, on the deck. The three islanders swarmed from the tiny forecastle, two of them leaping to the halyards and holding by a single turn, while the third fastened down the engineroom, companion and swung the ventilators around. Below, Lee Goom and Toyama were lowering skylight covers and screwing up deadeyes. Duncan pulled shut the cover of the companion scuttle, and held on, waiting, the first drops of rain pelting his face, while the Samoset leaped violently ahead, at the same time heeling first to starboard then to port as the gusty pressures caught her winged-out sails.

All waited. But there was no need to lower away on the run. The power went out of the wind, and the tropic rain poured a deluge over everything. Then it was, the danger past, and as the Kanakas began to coil the halyards back on the pins, that Boyd Duncan went below.

“All right,” he called in cheerily to his wife. “Only a puff.”

“And Captain Dettmar?” she queried.

“Has been drinking, that is all. I shall get rid of him at Attu-Attu.”

But before Duncan climbed into his bunk, he strapped around himself, against the skin and under his pajama coat, a heavy automatic pistol.

He fell asleep almost immediately, for his was the gift of perfect relaxation. He did things tensely, in the way savages do, but the instant the need passed he relaxed, mind and body. So it was that he slept, while the rain still poured on deck and the yacht plunged and rolled in the brief, sharp sea caused by the squall.

He awoke with a feeling of suffocation and heaviness. The electric fans had stopped, and the air was thick and stifling. Mentally cursing all Lorenzos and storage batteries, he heard his wife moving in the adjoining stateroom and pass out into the main cabin. Evidently heading for the fresher air on deck, he thought, and decided it was a good example to imitate. Putting on his slippers and tucking a pillow and a blanket under his arm, he followed her. As he was about to emerge from the companionway, the ship's clock in the cabin began to strike and he stopped to listen. Four bells sounded. It was two in the morning. From without came the creaking of the gaff-jaw against the mast. The Samoset rolled and righted on a sea, and in the light breeze her canvas gave forth a hollow thrum.

He was just putting his foot out on the damp deck when he heard his wife scream. It was a startled frightened scream that ended in a splash overside. He leaped out and ran aft. In the dim starlight he could make out her head and shoulders disappearing astern in the lazy wake.

"What was it?" Captain Dettmar, who was at the wheel, asked.

"Mrs. Duncan," was Duncan's reply, as he tore the life-buoy from its hook and flung it aft. "Jibe over to starboard and come up on the wind!" he commanded.

And then Boyd Duncan made a mistake. He dived overboard.

When he came up, he glimpsed the blue-light on the buoy, which had ignited automatically when it struck the water. He swam for it, and found Minnie had reached it first.

"Hello," he said. "Just trying to keep cool?"

"Oh, Boyd!" was her answer, and one wet hand reached out and touched his.

The blue light, through deterioration or damage, flickered out. As they lifted on the smooth crest of a wave, Duncan turned to look where the Samoset made a vague blur in the darkness. No lights showed, but there was noise of confusion. He could hear Captain Dettmar's shouting above the cries of the others.

"I must say he's taking his time," Duncan grumbled. "Why doesn't he jibe? There she goes now."

They could hear the rattle of the boom tackle blocks as the sail was eased across.

"That was the mainsail," he muttered. "Jibed to port when I told him starboard."

Again they lifted on a wave, and again and again, ere they could make out the distant green of the Samoset's starboard light. But instead of remaining stationary, in token that the yacht was coming toward them, it began moving across their field of vision. Duncan swore.

"What's the lubber holding over there for!" he demanded. "He's got his compass. He knows our bearing."

But the green light, which was all they could see, and which they could see only when they were on top of a wave, moved steadily away from them, withal it was working up to windward, and grew dim and dimmer. Duncan called out loudly and repeatedly, and each time, in the intervals, they could hear, very faintly, the voice of Captain Dettmar shouting orders.

"How can he hear me with such a racket?" Duncan complained.

"He's doing it so the crew won't hear you," was Minnie's answer.

There was something in the quiet way she said it that caught her husband's attention.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that he is not trying to pick us up," she went on in the same composed voice. "He threw me overboard."

"You are not making a mistake?"

"How could I? I was at the main rigging, looking to see if any more rain threatened. He must have left the wheel and crept behind me. I was holding on to a stay with one hand. He gripped my hand free from behind and threw me over. It's too bad you didn't know, or else you would have staid aboard."

Duncan groaned, but said nothing for several minutes. The green light changed the direction of its course.

"She's gone about," he announced. "You are right. He's deliberately working around us and to windward. Up wind they can never hear me. But here goes."

He called at minute intervals for a long time. The green light disappeared, being replaced by the red, showing that the yacht had gone about again.

"Minnie," he said finally, "it pains me to tell you, but you married a fool. Only a fool would have gone overboard as I did."

"What chance have we of being picked up …by some other vessel, I mean?" she asked.

"About one in ten thousand, or ten thousand million. Not a steamer route nor trade route crosses this stretch of ocean. And there aren't any whalers knocking about the South Seas. There might be a stray trading schooner running across from Tutuwanga. But I happen to know that island is visited only once a year. A chance in a million is ours."

"And we'll play that chance," she rejoined stoutly.

"You ARE a joy!" His hand lifted hers to his lips. "And Aunt Elizabeth always wondered what I saw in you. Of course we'll play that chance. And we'll win it, too. To happen otherwise would be unthinkable. Here goes."

He slipped the heavy pistol from his belt and let it sink into the sea. The belt, however, he retained.

"Now you get inside the buoy and get some sleep. Duck under."

She ducked obediently, and came up inside the floating circle. He fastened the straps for her, then, with the pistol belt, buckled himself across one shoulder to the outside of the buoy.

"We're good for all day to-morrow," he said. "Thank God the water's warm. It won't be a hardship for the first twenty-hour hours, anyway. And if we're not picked up by nightfall, we've just got to hang on for another day, that's all."

For half an hour they maintained silence, Duncan, his head resting on the arm that was on the buoy, seemed asleep.

"Boyd?" Minnie said softly.

"Thought you were asleep," he growled.

"Boyd, if we don't come through this — "

"Stow that!" he broke in ungallantly. "Of course we're coming through. There is isn't a doubt of it. Somewhere on this ocean is a ship that's heading right for us. You wait and see. Just the same I wish my brain were equipped with wireless. Now I'm going to sleep, if you don't."

But for once, sleep baffled him. An hour later he heard Minnie stir and knew she was awake.

"Say, do you know what I've been thinking!" she asked.

"No; what?"

"That I'll wish you a Merry Christmas."

"By George, I never thought of it. Of course it's Christmas Day. We'll have many more of them, too. And do you know what I've been thinking? What a confounded shame we're done out of our Christmas dinner. Wait till I lay hands on Dettmar. I'll take it out of him. And it won't be with an iron belaying pin either, Just two bunches of naked knuckles, that's all."

Despite his facetiousness, Boyd Duncan had little hope. He knew well enough the meaning of one chance in a million, and was calmly certain that his wife and he had entered upon their last few living hours – hours that were inevitably bound to be black and terrible with tragedy.

The tropic sun rose in a cloudless sky. Nothing was to be seen. The Samoset was beyond the sea-rim. As the sun rose higher, Duncan ripped his pajama trousers in halves and fashioned them into two rude turbans. Soaked in sea-water they offset the heat-rays.

"When I think of that dinner, I'm really angry," he complained, as he noted an anxious expression threatening to set on his wife's face. "And I want you to be with me when I settle with Dettmar. I've always been opposed to women witnessing scenes of blood, but this is different. It will be a beating."

"I hope I don't break my knuckles on him," he added, after a pause.

Midday came and went, and they floated on, the center of a narrow sea-circle. A gentle breath of the dying trade-wind fanned them, and they rose and fell monotonously on the smooth swells of a perfect summer sea. Once, a gunie spied them, and for half an hour circled about them with majestic sweeps. And, once, a huge rayfish, measuring a score of feet across the tips, passed within a few yards.

By sunset, Minnie began to rave, softly, babblingly, like a child. Duncan's face grew haggard as he watched and listened, while in his mind he revolved plans of how best to end the hours of agony that were. coining. And, so planning, as they rose on a larger swell than usual, he swept the circle of the sea with his eyes, and saw, what made him cry out.

"Minnie!" She did not answer, and he shouted her name again in her ear, with all the voice he could command. Her eyes opened, in them fluttered commingled consciousness and delirium. He slapped her hands and wrists till the sting of the blows roused her.

"There she is, the chance in a million!" he cried.

"A steamer at that, heading straight for us! By George, it's a cruiser! I have it — !the Annapolis, returning with those astronomers from Tutuwanga.

. . . .

United States Consul Lingford was a fussy, elderly gentleman, and in the two years of his service at Attu-Attu had never encountered so unprecedented a case as that laid before him by Boyd Duncan. The latter, with his wife, had been landed there by the Annapolis, which had promptly gone on with its cargo of astronomers to Fiji.

"It was cold-blooded, deliberate attempt to murder," said Consul Lingford. "The law shall take its course. I don't know how precisely to deal with this Captain Dettmar, but if he comes to Attu-Attu, depend upon it he shall be dealt with, he – ah – shall be dealt with. In the meantime, I shall read up the law. And now, won't you and your good lady stop for lunch!"

As Duncan accepted the invitation, Minnie, who had been glancing out of the window at the harbor, suddenly leaned forward and touched her husband's arm. He followed her gaze, and saw the Samoset, flag at half mast, rounding up and dropping anchor scarcely a hundred yards away.

"There's my boat now," Duncan said to the Consul. "And there's the launch over the side, and Captain Dettmar dropping into it. If I don't miss my guess, he's coming to report our deaths to you."

The launch landed on the white beach, and leaving Lorenzo tinkering with the engine, Captain Dettmar strode across the beach and up the path to the Consulate.

"Let him make his report," Duncan said. "We'll just step into this next room and listen."

And through the partly open door, he and his wife heard Captain Dettmar, with tears in his voice, describe the loss of his owners.

"I jibed over and went back across the very spot," he concluded. "There was not a sign of them. I called and called, but there was never an answer. I tacked back and forth and wore for two solid hours, then hove to till daybreak, and cruised back and forth all day, two men at the mastheads. It is terrible. I am heartbroken. Mr. Duncan was a splendid man, and I shall never…"

But he never completed the sentence, for at that moment his splendid employer strode out upon him, leaving Minnie standing in the doorway. Captain Dettmar's white face blanched even whiter.

"I did my best to pick you up, sir," he began.

Boyd Duncan's answer was couched in terms of bunched knuckles, two bunches of them, that landed right and left on Captain Dettmar's face.

Captain Dettmar staggered backward, recovered, and rushed with swinging arms at his employer, only to be met with a blow squarely between the eyes. This time the Captain went down, bearing the typewriter under him as he crashed to the floor.

"This is not permissible," Consul Lingford spluttered. "I beg of you, I beg of you, to desist."

"I'll pay the damages to office furniture," Duncan answered, and at the same time landing more bunched knuckles on the eyes and nose of Dettmar.

Consul Lingford bobbed around in the turmoil like a wet hen, while his office furniture went to ruin. Once, he caught Duncan by the arm, but was flung back, gasping, half-across the room. Another time he appealed to Minnie.

"Mrs. Duncan, won't you, please, please, restrain your husband?"

But she, white-faced and trembling, resolutely shook her head and watched the fray with all her eyes.

"It is outrageous," Consul Lingford cried, dodging the hurtling bodies of the two men. "It is an affront to the Government, to the United States Government. Nor will it be overlooked, I warn you. Oh, do pray desist, Mr. Duncan. You will kill the man. I beg of you. I beg, I beg…"

But the crash of a tall vase filled with crimson hibiscus blossoms left him speechless.

The time came when Captain Dettmar could no longer get up. He got as far as hands and knees, struggled vainly to rise further, then collapsed. Duncan stirred the groaning wreck with his foot.

"He's all right," he announced. "I've only given him what he has given many a sailor and worse."

"Great heavens, sir!" Consul Lingford exploded, staring horror-stricken at the man whom he had invited to lunch.

Duncan giggled involuntarily, then controlled himself.

"I apologize, Mr. Lingford, I most heartily apologize. I fear I was slightly carried away by my feelings."

Consul Lingford gulped and sawed the air speechlessly with his arms.

"Slightly, sir? Slightly?" he managed to articulate.

"Boyd," Minnie called softly from the doorway.

He turned and looked.

“You ARE a joy,” she said.

“And now, Mr. Lingford, I am done with him,” Duncan said. “I turn over what is left to you and the law.”

“That?” Consul Lingford queried, in accent of horror.

“That,” Boyd Duncan replied, looking ruefully at his battered knuckles.

By the Turtles of Tasman

I

Law, order, and restraint had carved Frederick Travers' face. It was the strong, firm face of one used to power and who had used power with wisdom and discretion. Clean living had made the healthy skin, and the lines graved in it were honest lines. Hard and devoted work had left its wholesome handiwork, that was all. Every feature of the man told the same story, from the clear blue of the eyes to the full head of hair, light brown, touched with grey, and smoothly parted and drawn straight across above the strong-domed forehead. He was a seriously groomed man, and the light summer business suit no more than befitted his alert years, while it did not shout aloud that its possessor was likewise the possessor of numerous millions of dollars and property.

For Frederick Travers hated ostentation. The machine that waited outside for him under the porte-cochère was sober black. It was the most expensive machine in the county, yet he did not care to flaunt its price or horse-power in a red flare across the landscape, which also was mostly his, from the sand dunes and the everlasting beat of the Pacific breakers, across the fat bottomlands and upland pastures, to the far summits clad with redwood forest and wreathed in fog and cloud.

A rustle of skirts caused him to look over his shoulder. Just the faintest hint of irritation showed in his manner. Not that his daughter was the object, however. Whatever it was, it seemed to lie on the desk before him.

"What is that outlandish name again?" she asked. "I know I shall never remember it. See, I've brought a pad to write it down."

Her voice was low and cool, and she was a tall, well-formed, clear-skinned young woman. In her voice and complacence she, too, showed the drill-marks of order and restraint.

Frederick Travers scanned the signature of one of two letters on the desk. "Bronislawa Plaskoweitzkaia Travers," he read; then spelled the difficult first portion, letter by letter, while his daughter wrote it down.

"Now, Mary," he added, "remember Tom was always harum scarum, and you must make allowances for this daughter of his. Her very name is--ah--disconcerting. I haven't seen him for years, and as for her...." A shrug epitomised his apprehension. He smiled with an effort at wit. "Just the same, they’re as much your family as mine. If he is my brother, he is your uncle. And if she’s my niece, you’re both cousins.”

Mary nodded. “Don’t worry, father. I’ll be nice to her, poor thing. What nationality was her mother?--to get such an awful name.”

“I don’t know. Russian, or Polish, or Spanish, or something. It was just like Tom. She was an actress or singer--I don’t remember. They met in Buenos Ayres. It was an elopement. Her husband--“

“Then she was already married!”

Mary’s dismay was unfeigned and spontaneous, and her father’s irritation grew more pronounced. He had not meant that. It had slipped out.

“There was a divorce afterward, of course. I never knew the details. Her mother died out in China--no; in Tasmania. It was in China that Tom--“ His lips shut with almost a snap. He was not going to make any more slips. Mary waited, then turned to the door, where she paused.

“I’ve given her the rooms over the rose court,” she said. “And I’m going now to take a last look.”

Frederick Travers turned back to the desk, as if to put the letters away, changed his mind, and slowly and ponderingly reread them.

“Dear Fred:

“It’s been a long time since I was so near to the old home, and I’d like to take a run up. Unfortunately, I played ducks and drakes with my Yucatan project--I think I wrote about it--and I’m broke as usual. Could you advance me funds for the run? I’d like to arrive first class. Polly is with me, you know. I wonder how you two will get along.

“Tom.

“P.S. If it doesn’t bother you too much, send it along next mail.”

“Dear Uncle Fred”:

the other letter ran, in what seemed to him a strange, foreign-taught, yet distinctly feminine hand.

“Dad doesn’t know I am writing this. He told me what he said to you. It is not true. He is coming home to die. He doesn’t know it, but I’ve talked with the doctors. And he’ll have to come home, for we have no money. We’re in a stuffy little boarding house, and it is not the place for Dad. He’s helped other persons all his life, and now is the time to help him. He didn’t play ducks and drakes in Yucatan. I was with him, and I know. He dropped all he had there, and he was robbed. He can’t play the business game against New Yorkers. That explains it all, and I am proud he can’t.

“He always laughs and says I’ll never be able to get along with you. But I don’t agree with him. Besides, I’ve never seen a really, truly blood relative in my life, and there’s your daughter. Think of it!--a real live cousin!

“In anticipation,

“Your niece,

“BRONISLAWA PLASKOWEITZKAIA TRAVERS.

“P.S. You’d better telegraph the money, or you won’t see Dad at all. He doesn’t know how sick he is, and if he meets any of his old friends he’ll be off and away on some wild goose chase. He’s beginning to talk Alaska. Says it will get the fever out of his bones. Please know that we must pay the boarding house, or else we’ll arrive without luggage.

“B.P.T.”

Frederick Travers opened the door of a large, built-in safe and methodically put the letters away in a compartment labelled “Thomas Travers.”

“Poor Tom! Poor Tom!” he sighed aloud.

II

The big motor car waited at the station, and Frederick Travers thrilled as he always thrilled to the distant locomotive whistle of the train plunging down the valley of Isaac Travers River. First of all westering white-men, had Isaac Travers gazed on that splendid valley, its salmon-laden waters, its rich bottoms, and its virgin forest slopes. Having seen, he had grasped and never let go. “Land-poor,” they had called him in the mid-settler period. But that had been in the days when the placers petered out, when there were no wagon roads nor tugs to draw in sailing vessels across the perilous bar, and when his lonely grist mill had been run under armed guards to keep the marauding Klamaths off while wheat was ground. Like father, like son, and what Isaac Travers had grasped, Frederick Travers had held. It had been the same tenacity of hold. Both had been far-visioned. Both had foreseen the transformation of the utter West, the coming of the railroad, and the building of the new empire on the Pacific shore.

Frederick Travers thrilled, too, at the locomotive whistle, because, more than any man's, it was his railroad. His father had died still striving to bring the railroad in across the mountains that averaged a hundred thousand dollars to the mile. He, Frederick, had brought it in. He had sat up nights over that railroad; bought newspapers, entered politics, and subsidised party machines; and he had made pilgrimages, more than once, at his own expense, to the railroad chiefs of the East. While all the county knew how many miles of his land were crossed by the right of way, none of the county guessed nor dreamed the number of his dollars which had gone into guaranties and railroad bonds. He had done much for his county, and the railroad was his last and greatest achievement, the capstone of the Travers' effort, the momentous and marvellous thing that had been brought about just yesterday. It had been running two years, and, highest proof of all of his judgment, dividends were in sight. And farther reaching reward was in sight. It was written in the books that the next Governor of California was to be spelled, Frederick A. Travers.

Twenty years had passed since he had seen his elder brother, and then it had been after a gap of ten years. He remembered that night well. Tom was the only man who dared run the bar in the dark, and that last time, between nightfall and the dawn, with a southeaster breezing up, he had sailed his schooner in and out again. There had been no warning of his coming--a clatter of hoofs at midnight, a lathered horse in the stable, and Tom had appeared, the salt of the sea on his face as his mother attested. An hour only he remained, and on a fresh horse was gone, while rain squalls rattled upon the windows and the rising wind moaned through the redwoods, the memory of his visit a whiff, sharp and strong, from the wild outer world. A week later, sea-hammered and bar-bound for that time, had arrived the revenue cutter Bear, and there had been a column of conjecture in the local paper, hints of a heavy landing of opium and of a vain quest for the mysterious schooner Halcyon. Only Fred and his mother, and the several house Indians, knew of the stiffened horse in the barn and of the devious way it was afterward smuggled back to the fishing village on the beach.

Despite those twenty years, it was the same old Tom Travers that alighted from the Pullman. To his brother's eyes, he did not look sick. Older he was of course. The Panama hat did not hide the grey hair, and though indefinably hinting of shrunkenness, the broad shoulders were still broad and erect. As for the young woman with him, Frederick Travers experienced an immediate shock of distaste. He felt it vitally, yet vaguely. It was a challenge and a mock, yet he could not name nor place the source of it. It might have been the dress, of tailored linen and foreign cut, the shirtwaist, with its daring stripe, the black wilfulness of the hair, or the flaunt of poppies on the large straw hat or it might have been the flash and colour of her--the black eyes and brows, the flame of rose in the cheeks, the white of the even teeth that showed too readily. "A spoiled child," was his thought, but he had no time to analyse, for his brother's hand was in his and he was making his niece's acquaintance.

There it was again. She flashed and talked like her colour, and she talked with her hands as well. He could not avoid noting the smallness of them. They were absurdly small, and his eyes went to her feet to make the same discovery. Quite oblivious of the curious crowd on the station platform, she had intercepted his attempt to lead to the motor car and had ranged the brothers side by side. Tom had been laughingly acquiescent, but his younger brother was ill at ease, too conscious of the many eyes of his townspeople. He knew only the old Puritan way. Family displays were for the privacy of the family, not for the public. He was glad she had not attempted to kiss him. It was remarkable she had not. Already he apprehended anything of her.

She embraced them and penetrated them with sun-warm eyes that seemed to see through them, and over them, and all about them.

"You're really brothers," she cried, her hands flashing with her eyes. "Anybody can see it. And yet there is a difference--I don't know. I can't explain."

In truth, with a tact that exceeded Frederick Travers' farthest disciplined forbearance, she did not dare explain. Her wide artist-eyes had seen and sensed the whole trenchant and essential difference. Alike they looked, of the unmistakable same stock, their features reminiscent of a common origin; and there resemblance ceased. Tom was three inches taller, and well-greyed was the long, Viking moustache. His was the same eagle-like nose as his brother's, save that it was more eagle-like, while the blue eyes were pronouncedly so. The lines of the face were deeper, the cheek-bones higher, the hollows larger, the weather-beat darker. It was a volcanic face. There had been fire there, and the fire still lingered. Around the corners of the eyes were more laughter-wrinkles and in the eyes themselves a promise of deadlier seriousness than the younger brother possessed. Frederick was bourgeois in his carriage, but in Tom's was a certain careless ease and distinction. It was the same pioneer blood of Isaac Travers in both men, but it had been retorted in widely different crucibles. Frederick represented the straight and expected line of descent. His brother expressed a vast and intangible something that was unknown in the Travers stock. And it was all this that the black-eyed girl saw and knew on the instant. All that had been inexplicable in the two men and their relationship cleared up in the moment she saw them side by side.

"Wake me up," Tom was saying. "I can't believe I arrived on a train. And the population? There were only four thousand thirty years ago."

"Sixty thousand now," was the other's answer. "And increasing by leaps and bounds. Want to spin around for a look at the city? There's plenty of time."

As they sped along the broad, well-paved streets, Tom persisted in his Rip Van Winkle pose. The waterfront perplexed him. Where he had once anchored his sloop in a dozen feet of water, he found solid land and railroad yards, with wharves and shipping still farther out.

"Hold on! Stop!" he cried, a few blocks on, looking up at a solid business block. "Where is this, Fred?"

"Fourth and Travers--don't you remember?"

Tom stood up and gazed around, trying to discern the anciently familiar configuration of the land under its clutter of buildings.

"I ... I think...." he began hesitantly. "No; by George, I'm sure of it. We used to hunt cottontails over that ground, and shoot blackbirds in the brush. And there, where the bank building is, was a pond." He turned to Polly. "I built my first raft there, and got my first taste of the sea."

"Heaven knows how many gallons of it," Frederick laughed, nodding to the chauffeur. "They rolled you on a barrel, I remember."

"Oh! More!" Polly cried, clapping her hands.

"There's the park," Frederick pointed out a little later, indicating a mass of virgin redwoods on the first dip of the bigger hills.

"Father shot three grizzlies there one afternoon," was Tom's remark.

"I presented forty acres of it to the city," Frederick went on. "Father bought the quarter section for a dollar an acre from Leroy."

Tom nodded, and the sparkle and flash in his eyes, like that of his daughter, were unlike anything that ever appeared in his brother's eyes.

"Yes," he affirmed, "Leroy, the negro squawman. I remember the time he carried you and me on his back to Alliance, the night the Indians burned the ranch. Father stayed behind and fought."

"But he couldn't save the grist mill. It was a serious setback to him."

"Just the same he nailed four Indians."

In Polly's eyes now appeared the flash and sparkle.

"An Indian-fighter!" she cried. "Tell me about him."

"Tell her about Travers Ferry," Tom said.

"That's a ferry on the Klamath River on the way to Orleans Bar and Siskiyou. There was great packing into the diggings in those days, and, among other things, father had made a location there. There was rich bench farming land, too. He built a suspension bridge--wove the cables on the spot with sailors and materials freighted in from the coast. It cost him twenty thousand dollars. The first day it was open, eight hundred mules crossed at a dollar a head, to say nothing of the toll for foot and horse. That night the river rose. The bridge was one hundred and forty feet above low water mark. Yet the freshet rose higher than that, and swept the bridge away. He'd have made a fortune there otherwise."

"That wasn't it at all," Tom blurted out impatiently. "It was at Travers Ferry that father and old Jacob Vance were caught by a war party of Mad River Indians. Old Jacob was killed right outside the door of the log cabin. Father dragged the body inside and stood the Indians off for a week. Father was some shot. He buried Jacob under the cabin floor."

"I still run the ferry," Frederick went on, "though there isn't so much travel as in the old days. I freight by wagon-road to the Reservation, and then mule-back on up the Klamath and clear in to the forks of Little Salmon. I have twelve stores on that chain now, a stage-line to the Reservation, and a hotel there. Quite a tourist trade is beginning to pick up."

And the girl, with curious brooding eyes, looked from brother to brother as they so differently voiced themselves and life.

"Ay, he was some man, father was," Tom murmured.

There was a drowsy note in his speech that drew a quick glance of anxiety from her. The machine had turned into the cemetery, and now halted before a substantial vault on the crest of the hill.

"I thought you'd like to see it," Frederick was saying. "I built that mausoleum myself, most of it with my own hands. Mother wanted it. The estate was dreadfully encumbered. The best bid I could get out of the contractors was eleven thousand. I did it myself for a little over eight."

"Must have worked nights," Tom murmured admiringly and more sleepily than before.

"I did, Tom, I did. Many a night by lantern-light. I was so busy. I was reconstructing the water works then--the artesian wells had failed--and mother's eyes were troubling her. You remember--cataract--I wrote you. She was too weak to travel, and I brought the specialists up from San Francisco. Oh, my hands were full. I was just winding up the disastrous affairs of the steamer line father had established to San Francisco, and I was keeping up the interest on mortgages to the tune of one hundred and eighty thousand dollars."

A soft stertorous breathing interrupted him. Tom, chin on chest, was asleep. Polly, with a significant look, caught her uncle's eye. Then her father, after an uneasy restless movement, lifted drowsy lids.

"Deuced warm day," he said with a bright apologetic laugh. "I've been actually asleep. Aren't we near home?"

Frederick nodded to the chauffeur, and the car rolled on.

III

The house that Frederick Travers had built when his prosperity came, was large and costly, sober and comfortable, and with no more pretence than was naturally attendant on the finest country home in the county. Its atmosphere was just the sort that he and his daughter would create. But in the days that followed his brother's home-coming, all this was changed. Gone was the subdued and ordered repose. Frederick was neither comfortable nor happy. There was an unwonted flurry of life and violation of sanctions and traditions. Meals were irregular and protracted, and there were midnight chafing-dish suppers and bursts of laughter at the most inappropriate hours.

Frederick was abstemious. A glass of wine at dinner was his wildest excess. Three cigars a day he permitted himself, and these he smoked either on the broad veranda or in the smoking room. What else was a smoking room for? Cigarettes he detested. Yet his brother was ever rolling thin, brown-paper cigarettes and smoking them wherever he might happen to be. A litter of tobacco crumbs was always to be found in the big easy chair he frequented and among the cushions of the window-seats. Then there were the cocktails. Brought up under the stern tutelage of Isaac and Eliza Travers, Frederick looked upon liquor in the house as an abomination. Ancient cities had been smitten by God's wrath for just such practices. Before lunch and dinner, Tom, aided and abetted by Polly, mixed an endless variety of drinks, she being particularly adept with strange swivel-stick concoctions learned at the ends of the earth. To Frederick, at such times, it seemed that his butler's pantry and dining room had been turned into bar-rooms. When he suggested this, under a facetious show, Tom proclaimed that when he made his pile he would build a liquor cabinet in every living room of his house.

And there were more young men at the house than formerly, and they helped in disposing of the cocktails. Frederick would have liked to account in that manner for their presence, but he knew better. His brother and his brother's daughter did what he and Mary had failed to do. They were the magnets. Youth and joy and laughter drew to them. The house was lively with young life. Ever, day and night, the motor cars honked up and down the gravelled drives. There were picnics and expeditions in the summer weather, moonlight sails on the bay, starts before dawn or home-comings at midnight, and often, of nights, the many bedrooms were filled as they had never been before. Tom must cover all his boyhood ramblings, catch trout again on Bull Creek, shoot quail over Walcott's Prairie, get a deer on Round Mountain. That deer was a cause of pain and shame to Frederick. What if it was closed season? Tom had triumphantly brought home the buck and gleefully called it sidehill-salmon when it was served and eaten at Frederick's own table.

They had clambakes at the head of the bay and musselbakes down by the roaring surf; and Tom told shamelessly of the Halcyon, and of the run of contraband, and asked Frederick before them all how he had managed to smuggle the horse back to the fishermen without discovery. All the young men were in the conspiracy with Polly to pamper Tom to his heart's desire. And Frederick heard the true inwardness of the killing of the deer; of its purchase from the overstocked Golden Gate Park; of its crated carriage by train, horse-team and mule-back to the fastnesses of Round Mountain; of Tom falling asleep beside the deer-run the first time it was driven by; of the pursuit by the young men, the jaded saddle horses, the scrambles and the falls, and the roping of it at Burnt Ranch Clearing; and, finally, of the triumphant culmination, when it was driven past a second time and Tom had dropped it at fifty yards. To Frederick there was a vague hurt in it all. When had such consideration been shown him?

There were days when Tom could not go out, postponements of outdoor frolics, when, still the centre, he sat and drowsed in the big chair, waking, at times, in that unexpected queer, bright way of his, to roll a cigarette and call for his ukulele--a sort of miniature guitar of Portuguese invention. Then, with strumming and tumtuming, the live cigarette laid aside to the imminent peril of polished wood, his full baritone would roll out in South Sea hulas and sprightly French and Spanish songs.

One, in particular, had pleased Frederick at first. The favourite song of a Tahitian king, Tom explained--the last of the Pomares, who had himself composed it and was wont to lie on his mats by the hour singing it. It consisted of the repetition of a few syllables. “E meu ru ru a vau,” it ran, and that was all of it, sung in a stately, endless, ever-varying chant, accompanied by solemn chords from the ukelele. Polly took great joy in teaching it to her uncle, but when, himself questing for some of this genial flood of life that bathed about his brother, Frederick essayed the song, he noted suppressed glee on the part of his listeners, which increased, through giggles and snickers, to a great outburst of laughter. To his disgust and dismay, he learned that the simple phrase he had repeated and repeated was nothing else than “I am so drunk.” He had been made a fool of. Over and over, solemnly and gloriously, he, Frederick Travers, had announced how drunk he was. After that, he slipped quietly out of the room whenever it was sung. Nor could Polly’s later explanation that the last word was “happy,” and not “drunk,” reconcile him; for she had been compelled to admit that the old king was a toper, and that he was always in his cups when he struck up the chant.

Frederick was constantly oppressed by the feeling of being out of it all. He was a social being, and he liked fun, even if it were of a more wholesome and dignified brand than that to which his brother was addicted. He could not understand why in the past the young people had voted his house a bore and come no more, save on state and formal occasions, until now, when they flocked to it and to his brother, but not to him. Nor could he like the way the young women petted his brother, and called him Tom, while it was intolerable to see them twist and pull his buccaneer moustache in mock punishment when his sometimes too-jolly banter sank home to them.

Such conduct was a profanation to the memory of Isaac and Eliza Travers. There was too much an air of revelry in the house. The long table was never shortened, while there was extra help in the kitchen. Breakfast extended from four until eleven, and the midnight suppers, entailing raids on the pantry and complaints from the servants, were a vexation to Frederick. The house had become a restaurant, a hotel, he sneered bitterly to himself; and there were times when he was sorely tempted to put his foot down and reassert the old ways. But somehow the ancient sorcery of his masterful brother was too strong upon him; and at times he gazed upon him with a sense almost of awe, groping to fathom the alchemy of charm, baffled by the strange lights and fires in his brother's eyes, and by the wisdom of far places and of wild nights and days written in his face. What was it? What lordly vision had the other glimpsed?--he, the irresponsible and careless one? Frederick remembered a line of an old song--"Along the shining ways he came." Why did his brother remind him of that line? Had he, who in boyhood had known no law, who in manhood had exalted himself above law, in truth found the shining ways?

There was an unfairness about it that perplexed Frederick, until he found solace in dwelling upon the failure Tom had made of life. Then it was, in quiet intervals, that he got some comfort and stiffened his own pride by showing Tom over the estate.

"You have done well, Fred," Tom would say. "You have done very well."

He said it often, and often he drowsed in the big smooth-running machine.

"Everything orderly and sanitary and spick and span--not a blade of grass out of place," was Polly's comment. "How do you ever manage it? I should not like to be a blade of grass on your land," she concluded, with a little shivery shudder.

"You have worked hard," Tom said.

"Yes, I have worked hard," Frederick affirmed. "It was worth it."

He was going to say more, but the strange flash in the girl's eyes brought him to an uncomfortable pause. He felt that she measured him, challenged him. For the first time his honourable career of building a county commonwealth had been questioned--and by a chit of a girl, the daughter of a wastrel, herself but a flighty, fly-away, foreign creature.

Conflict between them was inevitable. He had disliked her from the first moment of meeting. She did not have to speak. Her mere presence made him uncomfortable. He felt her unspoken disapproval, though there were times when she did not stop at that. Nor did she mince language. She spoke forthright, like a man, and as no man had ever dared to speak to him.

"I wonder if you ever miss what you've missed," she told him. "Did you ever, once in your life, turn yourself loose and rip things up by the roots? Did you ever once get drunk? Or smoke yourself black in the face? Or dance a hoe-down on the ten commandments? Or stand up on your hind legs and wink like a good fellow at God?"

"Isn't she a rare one!" Tom gurgled. "Her mother over again."

Outwardly smiling and calm, there was a chill of horror at Frederick's heart. It was incredible.

"I think it is the English," she continued, "who have a saying that a man has not lived until he has kissed his woman and struck his man. I wonder--confess up, now--if you ever struck a man."

"Have you?" he countered.

She nodded, an angry reminiscent flash in her eyes, and waited.

"No, I have never had that pleasure," he answered slowly. "I early learned control."

Later, irritated by his self-satisfied complacence and after listening to a recital of how he had cornered the Klamath salmon-packing, planted the first oysters on the bay and established that lucrative monopoly, and of how, after exhausting litigation and a campaign of years he had captured the water front of Williamsport and thereby won to control of the Lumber Combine, she returned to the charge.

"You seem to value life in terms of profit and loss," she said. "I wonder if you have ever known love."

The shaft went home. He had not kissed his woman. His marriage had been one of policy. It had saved the estate in the days when he had been almost beaten in the struggle to disencumber the vast holdings Isaac Travers' wide hands had grasped. The girl was a witch. She had probed an old wound and made it hurt again. He had never had time to love. He had worked hard. He had been president of the chamber of commerce, mayor of the city, state senator, but he had missed love. At chance moments he had come upon Polly, openly and shamelessly in her father's arms, and he had noted the warmth and tenderness in their eyes. Again he knew that he had missed love. Wanton as was the display, not even in private did he and Mary so behave. Normal, formal, and colourless, she was what was to be expected of a loveless marriage. He even puzzled to decide whether the feeling he felt for her was love. Was he himself loveless as well?

In the moment following Polly's remark, he was aware of a great emptiness. It seemed that his hands had grasped ashes, until, glancing into the other room, he saw Tom asleep in the big chair, very grey and aged and tired. He remembered all that he had done, all that he possessed. Well, what did Tom possess? What had Tom done?--save play ducks and drakes with life and wear it out until all that remained was that dimly flickering spark in a dying body.

What bothered Frederick in Polly was that she attracted him as well as repelled him. His own daughter had never interested him in that way. Mary moved along frictionless grooves, and to forecast her actions was so effortless that it was automatic. But Polly! many-hued, protean-natured, he never knew what she was going to do next.

"Keeps you guessing, eh?" Tom chuckled.

She was irresistible. She had her way with Frederick in ways that in Mary would have been impossible. She took liberties with him, cosened him or hurt him, and compelled always in him a sharp awareness of her existence.

Once, after one of their clashes, she devilled him at the piano, playing a mad damned thing that stirred and irritated him and set his pulse pounding wild and undisciplined fancies in the ordered chamber of his brain. The worst of it was she saw and knew just what she was doing. She was aware before he was, and she made him aware, her face turned to look at him, on her lips a mocking, contemplative smile that was almost a superior sneer. It was this that shocked him into consciousness of the orgy his imagination had been playing him. From the wall above her, the stiff portraits of Isaac and Eliza Travers looked down like reproachful spectres. Infuriated, he left the room. He had never dreamed such potencies resided in music. And then, and he remembered it with shame, he had stolen back outside to listen, and she had known, and once more she had devilled him.

When Mary asked him what he thought of Polly's playing, an unbidden contrast leaped to his mind. Mary's music reminded him of church. It was cold and bare as a Methodist meeting house. But Polly's was like the mad and lawless ceremonial of some heathen temple where incense arose and nautch girls writhed.

"She plays like a foreigner," he answered, pleased with the success and oppositeness of his evasion.

"She is an artist," Mary affirmed solemnly. "She is a genius. When does she ever practise? When did she ever practise? You know how I have. My best is like a five-finger exercise compared with the foolishest thing she ripples off. Her music tells me things--oh, things wonderful and unutterable. Mine tells me, 'one-two-three, one-two-three.' Oh, it is maddening! I work and work and get nowhere. It is unfair. Why should she be born that way, and not I?"

"Love," was Frederick's immediate and secret thought; but before he could dwell upon the conclusion, the unprecedented had happened and Mary was sobbing in a break-down of tears. He would have liked to take her in his arms, after Tom's fashion, but he did not know how. He tried, and found Mary as unschooled as himself. It resulted only in an embarrassed awkwardness for both of them.

The contrasting of the two girls was inevitable. Like father like daughter. Mary was no more than a pale camp-follower of a gorgeous, conquering general. Frederick's thrift had been sorely educated in the matter of clothes. He knew just how expensive Mary's clothes were, yet he could not blind himself to the fact that Polly's vagabond makeshifts, cheap and apparently haphazard, were always all right and far more successful. Her taste was unerring. Her ways with a shawl were inimitable. With a scarf she performed miracles.

"She just throws things together," Mary complained. "She doesn't even try. She can dress in fifteen minutes, and when she goes swimming she beats the boys out of the dressing rooms." Mary was honest and incredulous in her admiration. "I can't see how she does it. No one could dare those colours, but they look just right on her."

"She's always threatened that when I became finally flat broke she'd set up dressmaking and take care of both of us," Tom contributed.

Frederick, looking over the top of a newspaper, was witness to an illuminating scene; Mary, to his certain knowledge, had been primping for an hour ere she appeared.

"Oh! How lovely!" was Polly's ready appreciation. Her eyes and face glowed with honest pleasure, and her hands wove their delight in the air.

“But why not wear that bow so and thus?”

Her hands flashed to the task, and in a moment the miracle of taste and difference achieved by her touch was apparent even to Frederick.

Polly was like her father, generous to the point of absurdity with her meagre possessions. Mary admired a Spanish fan--a Mexican treasure that had come down from one of the grand ladies of the Court of the Emperor Maximilian. Polly’s delight flamed like wild-fire. Mary found herself the immediate owner of the fan, almost labouring under the fictitious impression that she had conferred an obligation by accepting it. Only a foreign woman could do such things, and Polly was guilty of similar gifts to all the young women. It was her way. It might be a lace handkerchief, a pink Paumotan pearl, or a comb of hawksbill turtle. It was all the same. Whatever their eyes rested on in joy was theirs. To women, as to men, she was irresistible.

“I don’t dare admire anything any more,” was Mary’s plaint. “If I do she always gives it to me.”

Frederick had never dreamed such a creature could exist. The women of his own race and place had never adumbrated such a possibility. He knew that whatever she did--her quick generosities, her hot enthusiasms or angers, her birdlike caressing ways--was unbelievably sincere. Her extravagant moods at the same time shocked and fascinated him. Her voice was as mercurial as her feelings. There were no even tones, and she talked with her hands. Yet, in her mouth, English was a new and beautiful language, softly limpid, with an audacity of phrase and tellingness of expression that conveyed subtleties and nuances as unambiguous and direct as they were unexpected from one of such childlikeness and simplicity. He woke up of nights and on his darkened eyelids saw bright memory-pictures of the backward turn of her vivid, laughing face.

IV

Like daughter like father. Tom, too, had been irresistible. All the world still called to him, and strange men came from time to time with its messages. Never had there been such visitors to the Travers home. Some came with the reminiscent roll of the sea in their gait. Others were black-browed ruffians; still others were fever-burnt and sallow; and about all of them was something bizarre and outlandish. Their talk was likewise bizarre and outlandish, of things to Frederick unguessed and undreamed, though he recognised the men for what they were--soldiers of fortune, adventurers, free lances of the world. But the big patent thing was the love and loyalty they bore their leader. They named him variously?--Black Tom, Blondine, Husky Travers, Malemute Tom, Swiftwater Tom--but most of all he was Captain Tom. Their projects and propositions were equally various, from the South Sea trader with the discovery of a new guano island and the Latin-American with a nascent revolution on his hands, on through Siberian gold chases and the prospecting of the placer benches of the upper Kuskokeem, to darker things that were mentioned only in whispers. And Captain Tom regretted the temporary indisposition that prevented immediate departure with them, and continued to sit and drowse more and more in the big chair. It was Polly, with a camaraderie distasteful to her uncle, who got these men aside and broke the news that Captain Tom would never go out on the shining ways again. But not all of them came with projects. Many made love-calls on their leader of old and unforgetable days, and Frederick sometimes was a witness to their meeting, and he marvelled anew at the mysterious charm in his brother that drew all men to him.

"By the turtles of Tasman!" cried one, "when I heard you was in California, Captain Tom, I just had to come and shake hands. I reckon you ain't forgot Tasman, eh?--nor the scrap at Thursday Island. Say--old Tasman was killed by his niggers only last year up German New Guinea way. Remember his cook-boy?--Ngani-Ngani? He was the ringleader. Tasman swore by him, but Ngani-Ngani hatcheted him just the same."

"Shake hands with Captain Carlsen, Fred," was Tom's introduction of his brother to another visitor. "He pulled me out of a tight place on the West Coast once. I'd have cashed in, Carlsen, if you hadn't happened along."

Captain Carlsen was a giant hulk of a man, with gimlet eyes of palest blue, a slash-scarred mouth that a blazing red beard could not quite hide, and a grip in his hand that made Frederick squirm.

A few minutes later, Tom had his brother aside.

"Say, Fred, do you think it will bother to advance me a thousand?"

"Of course," Frederick answered splendidly. "You know half of that I have is yours, Tom."

And when Captain Carlsen departed, Frederick was morally certain that the thousand dollars departed with him.

Small wonder Tom had made a failure of life--and come home to die. Frederick sat at his own orderly desk taking stock of the difference between him and his brother. Yes, and if it hadn't been for him, there would have been no home for Tom to die in.

Frederick cast back for solace through their joint history. It was he who had always been the mainstay, the dependable one. Tom had laughed and rollicked, played hooky from school, disobeyed Isaac's commandments. To the mountains or the sea, or in hot water with the neighbours and the town authorities--it was all the same; he was everywhere save where the dull plod of work obtained. And work was work in those backwoods days, and he, Frederick, had done the work. Early and late and all days he had been at it. He remembered the season when Isaac's wide plans had taken one of their smashes, when food had been scarce on the table of a man who owned a hundred thousand acres, when there had been no money to hire harvesters for the hay, and when Isaac would not let go his grip on a single one of his acres. He, Frederick, had pitched the hay, while Isaac mowed and raked. Tom had lain in bed and run up a doctor bill with a broken leg, gained by falling off the ridge-pole of the barn--which place was the last in the world to which any one would expect to go to pitch hay. About the only work Tom had ever done, it seemed to him, was to fetch in venison and bear-oil, to break colts, and to raise a din in the valley pastures and wooded canyons with his bear-hounds.

Tom was the elder, yet when Isaac died, the estate, with all its vast possibilities would have gone to ruin, had not he, Frederick, buckled down to it and put the burden on his back. Work! He remembered the enlargement of the town water-system--how he had manoeuvred and financed, persuaded small loans at ruinous interest, and laid pipe and made joints by lantern light while the workmen slept, and then been up ahead of them to outline and direct and rack his brains over the raising of the next week-end wages. For he had carried on old Isaac's policy. He would not let go. The future would vindicate.

And Tom!--with a bigger pack of bear dogs ranging the mountains and sleeping out a week at a time. Frederick remembered the final conference in the kitchen--Tom, and he, and Eliza Travers, who still cooked and baked and washed dishes on an estate that carried a hundred and eighty thousand dollars in mortgages.

“Don’t divide,” Eliza Travers had pleaded, resting her soap-flecked, parboiled arms. “Isaac was right. It will be worth millions. The country is opening up. We must all pull together.”

“I don’t want the estate,” Tom cried. “Let Frederick have it. What I want....”

He never completed the sentence, but all the vision of the world burned in his eyes.

“I can’t wait,” he went on. “You can have the millions when they come. In the meantime let me have ten thousand. I’ll sign off quitclaim to everything. And give me the old schooner, and some day I’ll be back with a pot of money to help you out.”

Frederick could see himself, in that far past day, throwing up his arms in horror and crying:

“Ten thousand!--when I’m strained to the breaking point to raise this quarter’s interest!”

“There’s the block of land next to the court house,” Tom had urged. “I know the bank has a standing offer for ten thousand.”

“But it will be worth a hundred thousand in ten years,” Frederick had objected.

“Call it so. Say I quitclaim everything for a hundred thousand. Sell it for ten and let me have it. It’s all I want, and I want it now. You can have the rest.”

And Tom had had his will as usual (the block had been mortgaged instead of sold), and sailed away in the old schooner, the benediction of the town upon his head, for he had carried away in his crew half the riff-raff of the beach.

The bones of the schooner had been left on the coast of Java. That had been when Eliza Travers was being operated on for her eyes, and Frederick had kept it from her until indubitable proof came that Tom was still alive.

Frederick went over to his files and drew out a drawer labelled “Thomas Travers.” In it were packets, methodically arranged. He went over the letters. They were from everywhere--China, Rangoon, Australia, South Africa, the Gold Coast, Patagonia, Armenia, Alaska. Briefly and infrequently written, they epitomised the wanderer’s life. Frederick ran over in his mind a few of the glimpsed highlights of Tom’s career. He had fought in some sort of foreign troubles in Armenia. He had been an officer in the Chinese army, and it was a certainty that the trade he later drove in the

China Seas was illicit. He had been caught running arms into Cuba. It seemed he had always been running something somewhere that it ought not to have been run. And he had never outgrown it. One letter, on crinkly tissue paper, showed that as late as the Japanese-Russian War he had been caught running coal into Port Arthur and been taken to the prize court at Sasebo, where his steamer was confiscated and he remained a prisoner until the end of the war.

Frederick smiled as he read a paragraph: “How do you prosper? Let me know any time a few thousands will help you.” He looked at the date, April 18, 1883, and opened another packet. “May 5th,” 1883, was the dated sheet he drew out. “Five thousand will put me on my feet again. If you can, and love me, send it along pronto--that’s Spanish for rush.”

He glanced again at the two dates. It was evident that somewhere between April 18th and May 5th Tom had come a cropper. With a smile, half bitter, Frederick skimmed on through the correspondence: “There’s a wreck on Midway Island. A fortune in it, salvage you know. Auction in two days. Cable me four thousand.” The last he examined, ran: “A deal I can swing with a little cash. It’s big, I tell you. It’s so big I don’t dare tell you.” He remembered that deal--a Latin-American revolution. He had sent the cash, and Tom had swung it, and himself as well, into a prison cell and a death sentence.

Tom had meant well, there was no denying that. And he had always religiously forwarded his I O U’s. Frederick musingly weighed the packet of them in his hand, as though to determine if any relation existed between the weight of paper and the sums of money represented on it.

He put the drawer back in the cabinet and passed out. Glancing in at the big chair he saw Polly just tiptoeing from the room. Tom’s head lay back, and his breathing was softly heavy, the sickness pronouncedly apparent on his relaxed face.

V

“I have worked hard,” Frederick explained to Polly that evening on the veranda, unaware that when a man explains it is a sign his situation is growing parlous. “I have done what came to my hand--how creditably it is for others to say. And I have been paid for it. I have taken care of others and taken care of myself. The doctors say they have never seen such a constitution in a man of my years. Why, almost half my life is yet before me, and we Travers are a long-lived stock. I took care of myself, you see, and I have myself to show for it. I was not a waster. I conserved my heart and my arteries, and yet there are few men who can boast having done as much work as I have done. Look at that hand. Steady, eh? It will be as steady twenty years from now. There is nothing in playing fast and loose with oneself."

And all the while Polly had been following the invidious comparison that lurked behind his words.

"You can write 'Honourable' before your name," she flashed up proudly. "But my father has been a king. He has lived. Have you lived? What have you got to show for it? Stocks and bonds, and houses and servants--pouf! Heart and arteries and a steady hand--is that all? Have you lived merely to live? Were you afraid to die? I'd rather sing one wild song and burst my heart with it, than live a thousand years watching my digestion and being afraid of the wet. When you are dust, my father will be ashes. That is the difference."

"But my dear child--" he began.

"What have you got to show for it?" she flamed on. "Listen!"

From within, through the open window, came the tinkling of Tom's ukulele and the rollicking lilt of his voice in an Hawaiian hula. It ended in a throbbing, primitive love-call from the sensuous tropic night that no one could mistake. There was a burst of young voices, and a clamour for more. Frederick did not speak. He had sensed something vague and significant.

Turning, he glanced through the window at Tom, flushed and royal, surrounded by the young men and women, under his Viking moustache lighting a cigarette from a match held to him by one of the girls. It abruptly struck Frederick that never had he lighted a cigar at a match held in a woman's hand.

"Doctor Tyler says he oughtn't to smoke--it only aggravates," he said; and it was all he could say.

As the fall of the year came on, a new type of men began to frequent the house. They proudly called themselves "sour-doughs," and they were arriving in San Francisco on the winter's furlough from the gold-diggings of Alaska. More and more of them came, and they pre-empted a large portion of one of the down-town hotels. Captain Tom was fading with the season, and almost lived in the big chair. He drowsed oftener and longer, but whenever he awoke he was surrounded by his court of young people, or there was some comrade waiting to sit and yarn about the old gold days and plan for the new gold days.

For Tom--Husky Travers, the Yukoners named him--never thought that the end approached. A temporary illness, he called it, the natural enfeeblement following upon a prolonged bout with Yucatan fever. In the spring he would be right and fit again. Cold weather was what he needed. His blood had been cooked. In the meantime it was a case of take it easy and make the most of the rest.

And no one undeceived him--not even the Yukoners, who smoked pipes and black cigars and chewed tobacco on Frederick's broad verandas until he felt like an intruder in his own house. There was no touch with them. They regarded him as a stranger to be tolerated. They came to see Tom. And their manner of seeing him was provocative of innocent envy pangs to Frederick. Day after day he watched them. He would see the Yukoners meet, perhaps one just leaving the sick room and one just going in. They would clasp hands, solemnly and silently, outside the door. The newcomer would question with his eyes, and the other would shake his head. And more than once Frederick noted the moisture in their eyes. Then the newcomer would enter and draw his chair up to Tom's, and with jovial voice proceed to plan the outfitting for the exploration of the upper Kuskokeem; for it was there Tom was bound in the spring. Dogs could be had at Larabee's--a clean breed, too, with no taint of the soft Southland strains. It was rough country, it was reported, but if sour-doughs couldn't make the traverse from Larabee's in forty days they'd like to see a chechako do it in sixty.

And so it went, until Frederick wondered, when he came to die, if there was one man in the county, much less in the adjoining county, who would come to him at his bedside.

Seated at his desk, through the open windows would drift whiffs of strong tobacco and rumbling voices, and he could not help catching snatches of what the Yukoners talked.

"D'ye recollect that Koyokuk rush in the early nineties?" he would hear one say. "Well, him an' me was pardners then, tradin' an' such. We had a dinky little steamboat, the Blatterbat. He named her that, an' it stuck. He was a caution. Well, sir, as I was sayin', him an' me loaded the little Blatterbat to the guards an' started up the Koyokuk, me firin' an' engineerin' an' him steerin', an' both of us deck-handin'. Once in a while we'd tie to the bank an' cut firewood. It was the fall, an' mush-ice was comin' down, an' everything gettin' ready for the freeze up. You see, we was north of the Arctic Circle then an' still headin' north. But they was two hundred miners in there needin' grub if they wintered, an' we had the grub.

"Well, sir, pretty soon they begun to pass us, driftin' down the river in canoes an' rafts. They was pullin' out. We kept track of them. When a hundred an' ninety-four had passed, we didn't see no reason for keepin' on. So we turned tail and started down. A cold snap had come, an' the water was fallin' fast, an' dang me if we didn't ground on a bar--up-stream side. The Blatterbat hung up solid. Couldn't budge her. 'It's a shame to waste all that grub,' says I, just as we was pullin' out in a canoe. 'Let's stay an' eat it,' says he. An' dang me if we didn't. We wintered right there on the Blatterbat, huntin' and tradin' with the Indians, an' when the river broke next year we brung down eight thousand dollars' worth of skins. Now a whole winter, just two of us, is goin' some. But never a cross word out of him. Best-tempered pardner I ever seen. But fight!"

"Huh!" came the other voice. "I remember the winter Oily Jones allowed he'd clean out Forty Mile. Only he didn't, for about the second yap he let off he ran afoul of Husky Travers. It was in the White Caribou. 'I'm a wolf!' yaps Jones. You know his style, a gun in his belt, fringes on his moccasins, and long hair down his back. 'I'm a wolf,' he yaps, 'an' this is my night to howl. Hear me, you long lean makeshift of a human critter?'--an' this to Husky Travers."

"Well?" the other voice queried, after a pause.

"In about a second an' a half Oily Jones was on the floor an' Husky on top askin' somebody kindly to pass him a butcher knife. What's he do but plumb hack off all of Oily Jones' long hair. 'Now howl, damn you, howl,' says Husky, gettin' up."

"He was a cool one, for a wild one," the first voice took up. "I seen him buck roulette in the Little Wolverine, drop nine thousand in two hours, borrow some more, win it back in fifteen minutes, buy the drinks, an' cash in--dang me, all in fifteen minutes."

One evening Tom was unusually brightly awake, and Frederick, joining the rapt young circle, sat and listened to his brother's serio-comic narrative of the night of wreck on the island of Blang; of the swim through the sharks where half the crew was lost; of the great pearl which Desay brought ashore with him; of the head-decorated palisade that surrounded the grass palace wherein dwelt the Malay queen with her royal consort, a shipwrecked Chinese Eurasian; of the intrigue for the pearl of Desay; of mad feasts and dances in the barbaric night, and quick dangers and sudden deaths; of the queen's love-making to Desay, of Desay's love-making to the queen's daughter, and of Desay, every joint crushed, still alive, staked out on the reef at low tide to be eaten by the sharks; of the coming of the plague; of the beating of tom-toms and the exorcising of the devil-devil doctors; of the flight over the man-trapped, wild-pig runs of the mountain bush-men; and of the final rescue by Tasman, he who was hatcheted only last year and whose head reposed in some Melanesian stronghold--and all breathing of the warmth and abandon and savagery of the burning islands of the sun.

And despite himself, Frederick sat entranced; and when all the tale was told, he was aware of a queer emptiness. He remembered back to his boyhood, when he had pored over the illustrations in the old-fashioned geography. He, too, had dreamed of amazing adventure in far places and desired to go out on the shining ways. And he had planned to go; yet he had known only work and duty. Perhaps that was the difference. Perhaps that was the secret of the strange wisdom in his brother's eyes. For the moment, faint and far, vicariously, he glimpsed the lordly vision his brother had seen. He remembered a sharp saying of Polly's. "You have missed romance. You traded it for dividends." She was right, and yet, not fair. He had wanted romance, but the work had been placed ready to his hand. He had toiled and moiled, day and night, and been faithful to his trust. Yet he had missed love and the world-living that was forever a-whisper in his brother. And what had Tom done to deserve it?--a wastrel and an idle singer of songs.

His place was high. He was going to be the next governor of California. But what man would come to him and lie to him out of love? The thought of all his property seemed to put a dry and gritty taste in his mouth. Property! Now that he looked at it, one thousand dollars was like any other thousand dollars; and one day (of his days) was like any other day. He had never made the pictures in the geography come true. He had not struck his man, nor lighted his cigar at a match held in a woman's hand. A man could sleep in only one bed at a time--Tom had said that. He shuddered as he strove to estimate how many beds he owned, how many blankets he had bought. And all the beds and blankets would not buy one man to come from the end of the earth, and grip his hand, and cry, "By the turtles of Tasman!"

Something of all this he told Polly, an undercurrent of complaint at the unfairness of things in his tale. And she had answered:

“It couldn’t have been otherwise. Father bought it. He never drove bargains. It was a royal thing, and he paid for it royally. You grudged the price, don’t you see. You saved your arteries and your money and kept your feet dry.”

VI

On an afternoon in the late fall all were gathered about the big chair and Captain Tom. Though he did not know it, he had drowsed the whole day through and only just awakened to call for his ukulele and light a cigarette at Polly’s hand. But the ukulele lay idle on his arm, and though the pine logs crackled in the huge fireplace he shivered and took note of the cold.

“It’s a good sign,” he said, unaware that the faintness of his voice drew the heads of his listeners closer. “The cold weather will be a tonic. It’s a hard job to work the tropics out of one’s blood. But I’m beginning to shape up now for the Kuskokeem. In the spring, Polly, we start with the dogs, and you’ll see the midnight sun. How your mother would have liked the trip. She was a game one. Forty sleeps with the dogs, and we’ll be shaking out yellow nuggets from the moss-roots. Larabee has some fine animals. I know the breed. They’re timber wolves, that’s what they are, big grey timber wolves, though they sport brown about one in a litter--isn’t that right, Bennington?”

“One in a litter, that’s just about the average,” Bennington, the Yukoner, replied promptly, but in a voice hoarsely unrecognisable.

“And you must never travel alone with them,” Captain Tom went on. “For if you fall down they’ll jump you. Larabee’s brutes only respect a man when he stands upright on his legs. When he goes down, he’s meat. I remember coming over the divide from Tanana to Circle City. That was before the Klondike strike. It was in ‘94 ... no, ‘95, and the bottom had dropped out of the thermometer. There was a young Canadian with the outfit. His name was it was ... a peculiar one ... wait a minute it will come to me....”

His voice ceased utterly, though his lips still moved. A look of unbelief and vast surprise dawned on his face. Followed a sharp, convulsive shudder. And in that moment, without warning, he saw Death. He looked clear-eyed and steady, as if pondering, then turned to Polly. His hand moved impotently, as if to reach hers, and when he found it, his fingers could not close. He gazed at her with a great smile that slowly faded. The eyes drooped as the life went out, and remained a face of quietude and repose. The ukulele clattered to the floor. One by one they went softly from the room, leaving Polly alone.

From the veranda, Frederick watched a man coming up the driveway. By the roll of the sea in his walk, Frederick could guess for whom the stranger came. The face was swarthy with sun and wrinkled with age that was given the lie by the briskness of his movements and the alertness in the keen black eyes. In the lobe of each ear was a tiny circlet of gold.

“How do you do, sir,” the man said, and it was patent that English was not the tongue he had learned at his mother’s knee. “How’s Captain Tom? They told me in the town that he was sick.”

“My brother is dead,” Frederick answered.

The stranger turned his head and gazed out over the park-like grounds and up to the distant redwood peaks, and Frederick noted that he swallowed with an effort.

“By the turtles of Tasman, he was a man,” he said, in a deep, changed voice.

“By the turtles of Tasman, he was a man,” Frederick repeated; nor did he stumble over the unaccustomed oath.

THE END.

The Captain of the Susan Drew

A SUNSET of gilt and blue and rose palpitated on the horizon. A tap-estry of misty rain, draping downward from indefinite clouds, obscured the eastern line of sea and sky. Midway between, slightly nearer to the rain, a painted rainbow reached almost to the zenith. So lofty was its arch that the ends seemed to curve inward to the ocean in a vain attempt to complete the perfect circle. Into this triumphal arch, toward the blue twilight beyond, sailed an open boat.

Nor did ever more strangely freighted boat float on the Pacific. In the sternsheets, on the weather side, a stupid-looking Norwegian sailor, in uniform of a quartermaster, steered with one hand while with the other he held the sheet of the spritsail. From a holster, belted about his waist, peeped the butt of a business-like revolver. His cap lay on his knees, removed for the sake of coolness; and his short flaxen hair was prodigiously ridged over a bruise of recent origin. Beside the sailor sat two women. The nearer one was comfortably stout and matronly, with large, dark eyes, full, direct, human. Her shoulders were protected against sunburn by a man's light overcoat. Because of the heat, this was open and unbuttoned, revealing the decolleté and rich materials of dinner dress. Jewels glinted in the hair, at the neck, and on the fingers. Beside her was a young woman of two-or three-and-twenty, likewise decolleté, sun-shielded by a strip of stained oilskin. Her eyes, as well as the straight, fine nose and the line of the red curve of the not too passionate mouth, advertised the closest relationship with the first woman. In the opposite sternsheet and on the ffst cross-seat, lolled three men in black trousers and dinner jackets. Their heads were protected by small squares of stained oilskin similar to that which lay across the young woman's shoulders. One, a young-ster of eighteen, wore an expression of desperate yearning; the second, half as old again, talked with the daughter; the third, middle-aged and complacent, devoted himself to the mother.

Amidships, on the bottom alongside the centerboard case, sat two dark-eyed women, as evidently maids as their nationality was respec-tively the one Spanish and the other Italian. On the other side of the centerboard, very straight-backed and erect, was an unmistakable English valet, with gaze always set on the middle-aged gentleman to anticipate any want or order.

For’ard of the centerboard and just aft the mast-step, crouched two hard-featured Chinese, both with broken heads swathed in bloody sweat-cloths, both clad in dungaree garments grimed and blackened with oil and coal dust.

When it is considered that hundreds of weary sea-leagues intervened between the open boat and the nearest land, the inappropriateness of costume of half of its occupants may be appreciated.

“Well, brother Willie, what would you rather have or go swim-ming!” teased the young woman.

“A cigarette, if Harrison weren’t such a pincher,” the youth answered bitterly.

“I ‘ve only four left,” Harrison said. “You ‘ve smoked the whole case. I’ve had only two.”

Temple Harrison was a joker. He winked privily at Patty Gifford, drew a curved silver case from his hip pocket, and carefully counted the four cigarettes. Willie Gifford watched with so ferocious infatuation that his sister cried out:

“B-r-r! Stop it! You make me shiver. You look positively cannibal-istic.”

“That’s all right for you,” was the brother’s retort. “You don’t know what tobacco means, or you ‘d look cannibalistic yourself. You will, anyway,” he concluded ominously, “after a couple of days more. I noticed you weren’t a bit shy of taking a bigger cup of water than the rest when Harrison passed it around. I wasn’t asleep.”

Patty flushed guiltily.

“It was only a sip,” she pleaded.

Harrison took out one cigarette, handed it over, and snapped the case shut.

“Blackmailer!” he hissed.

But Willie Gifford was oblivious. Already, with trembling fingers, he had lighted a match and was drawing the first inhalation deep into his lungs. On his face was a vacuous ecstasy.

“Everything will come out all right,” Mrs. Gifford was saying to Sedley Brown, who sat opposite her in the sternsheets.

“Certainly; after the miracle of last night, being saved by some passing ship is the merest bagatelle,” he agreed. “It was a miracle. I cannot understand now how our party remained intact and got away in the one boat. And if it hadn’t been for the purser, Peyton wouldn’t have been saved, nor your maids.”

“Nor would we, if it hadn’t been for dear brave Captain Ashley,” Mrs. Gifford took up. “It was he, and the first officer.”

“They were heroes,” Sedley Brown praised warmly. “But still, there could have been so few saved, I don’t see. . . . .”

“I don’t see why you don’t see, with you and mother the heaviest stockholders in the line,” Willie Gifford dashed in. “Why shouldn’t they have made a special effort? It was up to them.”

Temple Harrison smiled to himself. Between them, Mrs. Gifford and Sedley Brown owned the majority of the stock of the Asiatic Mail — the flourishing steamship line which old Silas Gifford had built for the purpose of feeding his railroad with through freight from China and Japan. Mrs. Gifford had married his son, Seth, and the stock at the same time.

“I am sure, Willie, we were given no unfair consideration,” Mrs. Gifford reproved. “Of course shipwrecks are attended by confusion and disorder, and strong measures are necessary to stay a panic. We were very fortunate, that is all.”

“I wasn’t asleep,” Willie replied. “And all I ‘ve got to say is it’s up to you to make the board of directors promote Captain Ashley to be Commodore — that is, if he ain’t dead and gone, which I guess he is.”

“As I was saying,” Mrs. Gifford addressed Sedley Brown, “the worst is past. It is scarcely a matter of hardship ere we shall be rescued. The weather is delightful, and the nights are not the slightest bit chilly. Depend upon it, Willie, Captain Ashley shall not be forgotten, nor the first officer and purser, nor — ” here she turned with a smile to the quartermaster — ”nor shall Gronwold go unrewarded.”

“A penny for your thoughts,” Patty challenged Harrison several minutes later. He startled and looked at her, shook off his absentmindedness with a laugh and declined the offer.

“For he had been revisioning the horrors of less than twenty-four hours before. It had happened at dinner. The crash of collision had come just as coffee was serving. Yes, there had been confusion and disorder, if so could be termed the madness of a thousand souls in the face of imminent death. He saw again the silk-gowned Chinese table stewards join in the jam at the foot of the stairway, where blows were already being struck and women and children trampled. He remembered, as his own party, led by Captain Ashley, worked its devious way up from deck to deck, seeing the white officers, engineers, and quartermasters buckling on their revolvers as they ran to their positions. Nor would he ever forget the eruption from the bowels of the great ship of the hundreds of Chinese stokers and trimmers, nor the half a thousand ter-rified steerage passengers — Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, coolies and land-creatures all stark mad and frantic in desire to live.

Not all the deaths would be due to drowning, he thought grimly, as he recollected the crack of revolvers and sharp barking of automatic pistols, the thuds of clubs and boat-stretchers on heads, and the grunts of men going down under the silent thrusts of sheath-knives.

Mrs. Gifford might believe what she wished to believe, but he, for one, was deeply grateful to his lucky star which made him a member of the only party of passengers that was shown any consideration. Con-sideration! He could still see the protesting English duke flung neck and crop from the boat deck to the raging steerage fighting up the ladders. And there was number four boat, launched by inexperienced hands, spilling its passengers into the sea and hanging perpendicularly in the davits. The white sailors who belonged to it and should have launched it had been impressed by Captain Ashley. Then there was the Ameri-can Consul-General to Siam — that was just before the electric lights went out — with wife, nurses, and children, shouting his official impor-tance in Captain Ashley’s face and being directed to number four boat hanging on end.

Yes, Captain Ashley surely deserved the commodoreship of the Asi-atic Mail — if he lived. But that he survived, Temple Harrison could not believe. He remembered the outburst of battle — advertisement that the boat deck had been carried — which came just as their boat was lower-ing away. Of its crew, only Gronwold, with a broken head, was in it. The rest did not slide down the falls, as was intended. Doubtlessly they had gone down before the rush of Asiatics, and so had Captain Ashley, though first he had cut the falls and shouted down to them to shove clear for their lives.

And they had, with a will, shoved clear. Harrison recalled how had pressed the end of an oar against the steel side of the Mingalia and afterward rowed insanely to the accompaniment of leaping bodies falling into the sea astern. And when well clear, he remembered how Gronwold had suddenly stood up and laid about with the heavy tiller overside, until

Patty made him desist. Mutely taking the rain of blows on their heads and clinging stedfastly to the gunwale, were the two Chi-nese stokers who now crouched for'ard by the mast. No; Willie Gifford had not been asleep. He, too, had

pressed an oar-blade against the Mingalia's side and rowed blisters into his soft hands. But Mrs. Gifford was right. There were several things it would be well to forget.

Charley’s Coup

Perhaps our most laughable exploit on the fish patrol, and at the same time our most dangerous one, was when we rounded in, at a single haul, an even score of wrathful fishermen. Charley called it a “coop,” having heard Neil Partington use the term; but I think he misunderstood the word, and thought it meant “coop,” to catch, to trap. The fishermen, however, coup or coop, must have called it a Waterloo, for it was the severest stroke ever dealt them by the fish patrol, while they had invited it by open and impudent defiance of the law.

During what is called the “open season” the fishermen might catch as many salmon as their luck allowed and their boats could hold. But there was one important restriction. From sun-down Saturday night to sun-up Monday morning, they were not permitted to set a net. This was a wise provision on the part of the Fish Commission, for it was necessary to give the spawning salmon some opportunity to ascend the river and lay their eggs. And this law, with only an occasional violation, had been obediently observed by the Greek fishermen who caught salmon for the canneries and the market.

One Sunday morning, Charley received a telephone call from a friend in Collinsville, who told him that the full force of fishermen was out with its nets. Charley and I jumped into our salmon boat and started for the scene of the trouble. With a light favoring wind at our back we went through the Carquinez Straits, crossed Suisun Bay, passed the Ship Island Light, and came upon the whole fleet at work.

But first let me describe the method by which they worked. The net used is what is known as a gill-net. It has a simple diamond-shaped mesh which measures at least seven and one-half inches between the knots. From five to seven and even eight hundred feet in length, these nets are only a few feet wide. They are not stationary, but float with the current, the upper edge supported on the surface by floats, the lower edge sunk by means of leaden weights,

This arrangement keeps the net upright in the current and effectually prevents all but the smaller fish from ascending the river. The salmon, swimming near the surface, as is their custom, run their heads through these meshes, and are prevented from going on through by their larger girth of body, and from going back because of their gills, which catch in the mesh. It requires two fishermen to set such a net,-one to row the boat, while the other, standing in the stern, carefully pays out the net. When it is all out, stretching directly across the stream, the men make their boat fast to one end of the net and drift along with it.

As we came upon the fleet of law-breaking fishermen, each boat two or three hundred yards from its neighbors, and boats and nets dotting the river as far as we could see, Charley said:

“I’ve only one regret, lad, and that is that I have’nt a thousand arms so as to be able to catch them all. As it is, we’ll only be able to catch one boat, for while we are tackling that one it will be up nets and away with the rest.”

As we drew closer, we observed none of the usual flurry and excitement which our appearance invariably produced. Instead, each boat lay quietly by its net, while the fishermen favored us with not the slightest attention.

“It’s curious,” Charley muttered. “Can it be they don’t recognize us?”

I said that it was impossible, and Charley agreed; yet there was a whole fleet, manned by men who knew us only too well, and who took no more notice of us than if we were a hay scow or a pleasure yacht.

This did not continue to be the case, however, for as we bore down upon the nearest net, the men to whom it belonged detached their boat and rowed slowly toward the shore. The rest of the boats showed no, sign of uneasiness.

“That’s funny,” was Charley’s remark. “But we can confiscate the net, at any rate.”

We lowered sail, picked up one end of the net, and began to heave it into the boat. But at the first heave we heard a bullet zip-zipping past us on the water, followed by the faint report of a rifle. The men who had rowed ashore were shooting at us. At the next heave a second bullet went zipping past, perilously near. Charley took a turn around a pin and sat down. There were no more shots. But as soon as he began to heave in, the shooting recommenced.

“That settles it,” he said, flinging the end of the net overboard. “You fellows want it worse than we do, and you can have it.”

We rowed over toward the next net, for Charley was intent on finding out whether or not we were face to face with an organized defiance. As we approached, the two fishermen proceeded to cast off from their net and row ashore, while the first two rowed back and made fast to the net we had abandoned. And at the second net we were greeted by rifle shots till we desisted and went on to the third, where the manoeuvre was again repeated.

Then we gave it up, completely routed, and hoisted sail and started on the long windward beat back to Benicia. A number of Sundays went by, on each of which the law was persistently violated. Yet, short of an armed force of soldiers, we could do nothing. The fishermen had hit upon a new idea and were using it for all it was worth, while there seemed no way by which we could get the better of them.

About this time Neil Partington happened along from the Lower Bay, where he had been for a number of weeks. With him was Nicholas, the Greek boy who had helped us in our raid on the oyster pirates, and the pair of them took a hand. We made our arrangements carefully. It was planned that while Charley and I tackled the nets, they were to be hidden ashore so as to ambush the fishermen who landed to shoot at us.

It was a pretty plan. Even Charley said it was. But we reckoned not half so well as the Greeks. They forestalled us by ambushing Neil and Nicholas and taking them prisoners, while, as of old, bullets whistled about our ears when Charley and I attempted to take possession of the nets. When we were again beaten off, Neil Partington and Nicholas were released. They were rather shamefaced when they put in an appearance, and Charley chaffed them unmercifully. But Neil chaffed back, demanding to know why Charley's imagination had not long since overcome the difficulty.

"Just you wait; the idea'll come all right," Charley promised.

"Most probably," Neil agreed. "But I'm afraid the salmon will be exterminated first, and then there will be no need for it when it does come."

Neil Partington, highly disgusted with his adventure, departed for the Lower Bay, taking Nicholas with him, and Charley and I were left to our own resources. This meant that the Sunday fishing would be left to itself, too, until such time as Charley's idea happened along. I puzzled my head a good deal to find out some way of checkmating the Greeks, as also did Charley, and we broached a thousand expedients which on discussion proved worthless.

The fishermen, on the other hand, were in high feather, and their boasts went up and down the river to add to our discomfiture. Among all classes of them we became aware of a growing insubordination. We were beaten, and they were losing respect for us. With the loss of respect, contempt began to arise. Charley began to be spoken of as the "olda woman," and I received my rating as the “pee-wee kid.” The situation was fast becoming unbearable, and we knew that we should have to deliver a stunning stroke at the Greeks in order to regain the old-time respect in which we had stood.

Then one morning the idea came. We were down on Steamboat Wharf, where the river steamers made their landings, and where we found a group of amused long-shoremen and loafers listening to the hard-luck tale of a sleepy-eyed young fellow in long sea-boots. He was a sort of amateur fisherman, he said, fishing for the local market of Berkeley. Now Berkeley was on the Lower Bay, thirty miles away. On the previous night, he said, he had set his net and dozed off to sleep in the bottom of the boat.

The next he knew it was morning, and he opened his eyes to find his boat rubbing softly against the piles of Steamboat Wharf at Benicia. Also he saw the river steamer Apache lying ahead of him, and a couple of deck-hands disentangling the shreds of his net from the paddle-wheel. In short, after he had gone to sleep, his fisherman’s riding light had gone out, and the Apache had run over his net. Though torn pretty well to pieces, the net in some way still remained foul, and he had had a thirty-mile tow out of his course.

Charley nudged me with his elbow. I grasped his thought on the instant, but objected:

“We can’t charter a steamboat.”

“Don’t intend to,” he rejoined. “But let’s run over to Turner’s Shipyard. I’ve something in my mind there that may be of use to us.”

And over we went to the shipyard, where Charley led the way to the Mary Rebecca, lying hauled out on the ways, where she was being cleaned and overhauled. She was a scow-schooner we both knew well, carrying a cargo of one hundred and forty tons and a spread of canvas greater than other schooner on the bay.

“How d’ye do, Ole,” Charley greeted a big blue-shirted Swede who was greasing the jaws of the main gaff with a piece of pork rind.

Ole grunted, puffed away at his pipe, and went on greasing. The captain of a bay schooner is supposed to work with his hands just as well as the men.

Ole Ericsen verified Charley’s conjecture that the Mary Rebecca, as soon as launched, would run up the San Joaquin River nearly to Stockton for a load of wheat. Then Charley made his proposition, and Ole Ericsen shook his head.

“Just a hook, one good-sized hook,” Charley pleaded.

“No, Ay tank not,” said Ole Ericsen. “Der Mary Rebecca yust hang up on efery mud-bank with that hook. Ay don’t want to lose der Mary Rebecca. She’s all Ay got.”

“No, no,” Charley hurried to explain. “We can put the end of the hook through the bottom from the outside, and fasten it on the inside with a nut. After it’s done its work, why, all we have to do is to go down into the hold, unscrew the nut, and out drops the hook. Then drive a wooden peg into the hole, and the Mary Rebecca will be all right again.”

Ole Ericsen was obstinate for a long time; but in the end, after we had had dinner with him, he was brought round to consent.

“Ay do it, by Yupiter!” he said, striking one huge fist into the palm of the other hand. “But yust hurry you up wid der hook. Der Mary Rebecca slides into der water to-night.”

It was Saturday, and Charley had need to hurry. We headed for the shipyard blacksmith shop, where, under Charley’s directions, a most generously curved book of heavy steel was made. Back we hastened to the Mary Rebecca. Aft of the great centre-board case, through what was properly her keel, a hole was bored. The end of the hook was inserted from the outside, and Charley, on the inside, screwed the nut on tightly. As it stood complete, the hook projected over a foot beneath the bottom of the schooner. Its curve was something like the curve of a sickle, but deeper.

In the late afternoon the Mary Rebecca was launched, and preparations were finished for the start up-river next morning. Charley and Ole intently studied the evening sky for signs of wind, for without a good breeze our project was doomed to failure. They agreed that there were all the signs of a stiff westerly wind-not the ordinary afternoon sea-breeze, but a half-gale, which even then was springing up.

Next morning found their predictions verified. The sun was shining brightly, but something more than a half-gale was shrieking up the Carquinez Straits, and the Mary Rebecca got under way with two reefs in her mainsail and one in her foresail. We found it quite rough in the Straits and in Suisun Bay; but as the water grew more land-locked it became calm, though without let-up in the wind.

Off Ship Island Light the reefs were shaken out, and at Charley’s suggestion a big fisherman’s staysail was made all ready for hoisting, and the maintopsail, bunched into a cap at the masthead, was overhauled so that it could be set on an instant’s notice.

We were tearing along, wing-and-wing, before the wind, foresail to starboard and mainsail to port, as we came upon the salmon fleet. There they were, boats and nets, as on that first Sunday when they had bested us, strung out evenly over the river as far as we could see. A narrow space on the right-hand side of the channel was left clear for steamboats, but the rest of the river was covered with the wide-stretching nets. The narrow space was our logical course, but Charley, at the wheel, steered the Mary Rebecca straight for the nets. This did not cause any alarm among the fishermen, because up-river sailing craft are always provided with "shoes" on the ends of their keels, which permit them to slip over the nets without fouling them.

"Now she takes it!" Charley cried, as we dashed across the middle of a line of floats which marked a net. At one end of this line was a small barrel buoy, at the other the two fishermen in their boat. Buoy and boat at once began to draw together, and the fishermen to cry out, as they were jerked after us. A couple of minutes later we hooked a second net, and then a third, and in this fashion we tore straight up through the centre of the fleet.

The consternation we spread among the fishermen was tremendous. As fast as we hooked a net the two ends of it, buoy and boat, came together as they dragged out astern; and so many buoys and boats, coming together at such breakneck speed, kept the fishermen on the jump to avoid smashing into one another. Also, they shouted at us like mad to heave to into the wind, for they took it as some drunken prank on the part of scow-sailors, little dreaming that we were the fish patrol.

The drag of a single net is very heavy, and Charley and Ole Ericsen decided that even in such a wind ten nets were all the Mary Rebecca could take along with her. So when we had hooked ten nets, with ten boats containing twenty men streaming along behind us, we veered to the left out of the fleet and headed toward Collinsville.

We were all jubilant. Charley was handling the wheel as though he were steering the winning yacht home in a race. The two sailors who made up the crew of the Mary Rebecca, were grinning and joking. Ole Ericsen was rubbing his huge hands in child-like glee.

"Ay tank you fish patrol fallers never ban so lucky as when you sail with Ole Ericsen," he was saying, when a rifle cracked sharply astern, and a bullet gouged along the newly painted cabin, glanced on a nail, and sang shrilly onward into space.

This was too much for Ole Ericsen. At sight of his beloved paintwork thus defaced, he jumped up and shook his fist at the fishermen; but a second bullet smashed into the cabin not six inches from his head, and he dropped down to the deck under cover of the rail.

All the fishermen had rifles, and they now opened a general fusillade. We were all driven to cover-even Charley, who was compelled to desert the wheel. Had it not been for the heavy drag of the nets, we would inevitably have broached to at the mercy of the enraged fishermen. But the nets, fastened to the bottom of the Mary Rebecca well aft, held her stern into the wind, and she continued to plough on, though somewhat erratically.

Charley, lying on the deck, could just manage to reach the lower spokes of the wheel; but while he could steer after a fashion, it was very awkward. Ole Ericsen bethought himself of a large piece of sheet steel in the empty hold.

It was in fact a plate from the side of the New Jersey, a steamer which had recently been wrecked outside the Golden Gate, and in the salving of which the Mary Rebecca had taken part.

Crawling carefully along the deck, the two sailors, Ole, and myself got the heavy plate on deck and aft, where we reared it as a shield between the wheel and the fishermen. The bullets whanged and banged against it till it rang like a bull’s-eye, but Charley grinned in its shelter, and coolly went on steering.

So we raced along, behind us a howling, screaming bedlam of wrathful Greeks, Collinsville ahead, and bullets spat-spatting all around us.

“Ole,” Charley said in a faint voice, “I don’t know what we’re going to do.”

Ole Ericsen, lying on his back close to the rail and grinning upward at the sky, turned over on his side and looked at him. “Ay tank we go into Collinsville yust der same,” he said.

“But we can’t stop,” Charley groaned. “I never thought of it, but we can’t stop.”

A look of consternation slowly overspread Ole Ericsen’s broad face. It was only too true. We had a hornet’s nest on our hands, and to stop at Collinsville would be to have it about our ears.

“Every man Jack of them has a gun,” one of the sailors remarked cheerfully.

“Yes, and a knife, too,” the other sailor added.

It was Ole Ericsen's turn to groan. "What for a Svaidish faller like me monkey with none of my biziness, I don't know," he soliloquized.

A bullet glanced on the stern and sang off to starboard like a spiteful bee. "There's nothing to do but plump the Mary Rebecca ashore and run for it," was the verdict of the first cheerful sailor.

"And leaf der Mary Rebecca?" Ole demanded, with unspeakable horror in his voice.

"Not unless you want to," was the response. "But I don't want to be within a thousand miles of her when those fellers come aboard"-indicating the bedlam of excited Greeks towing behind.

We were right in at Collinsville then, and went foaming by within biscuit-toss of the wharf.

"I only hope the wind holds out," Charley said, stealing a glance at our prisoners.

"What of der wind?" Ole demanded disconsolately. "Der river will not hold out, and then . . . and then . . ."

"It's head for tall timber, and the Greeks take the hindermost," adjudged the cheerful sailor, while Ole was stuttering over what would happen when we came to the end of the river.

We had now reached a dividing of the ways. To the left was the mouth of the Sacramento River, to the right the mouth of the San Joaquin. The cheerful sailor crept forward and jibed over the foresail as Charley put the helm to starboard and we swerved to the right into the San Joaquin. The wind, from which we had been running away on an even keel, now caught us on our beam, and the Mary Rebecca was pressed down on her port side as if she were about to capsize.

Still we dashed on, and still the fishermen dashed on behind. The value of their nets was greater than the fines they would have to pay for violating the fish laws; so to cast off from their nets and escape, which they could easily do, would profit them nothing. Further, they remained by their nets instinctively, as a sailor remains by his ship. And still further, the desire for vengeance was roused, and we could depend upon it that they would follow us to the ends of the earth, if we undertook to tow them that far.

The rifle-firing had ceased, and we looked astern to see what our prisoners were doing. The boats were strung along at unequal distances apart, and we saw the four nearest ones bunching together. This was done by the boat ahead trailing a small rope astern to the one behind. When this was caught, they would cast off from their net and heave in on the line till they were brought up to the boat in front. So great was the speed at which we were travelling, however, that this was very slow work. Sometimes the men would strain to their utmost and fail to get in an inch of the rope; at other times they came ahead more rapidly.

When the four boats were near enough together for a man to pass from one to another, one Greek from each of three got into the nearest boat to us, taking his rifle with him. This made five in the foremost boat, and it was plain that their intention was to board us. This they undertook to do, by main strength and sweat, running hand over hand the float-line of a net. And though it was slow, and they stopped frequently to rest, they gradually drew nearer.

Charley smiled at their efforts, and said, “Give her the topsail, Ole.”

The cap at the mainmast head was broken out, and sheet and downhaul pulled flat, amid a scattering rifle fire from the boats; and the Mary Rebecca lay over and sprang ahead faster than ever.

But the Greeks were undaunted. Unable, at the increased speed, to draw themselves nearer by means of their hands, they rigged from the blocks of their boat sail what sailors call a “watch-tackle.” One of them, held by the legs by his mates, would lean far over the bow and make the tackle fast to the float-line. Then they would heave in on the tackle till the blocks were together, when the manoeuvre would be repeated.

“Have to give her the staysail,” Charley said.

Ole Ericsen looked at the straining Mary Rebecca and shook his head. “It will take der masts out of her,” he said.

“And we’ll be taken out of her if you don’t,” Charley replied.

Ole shot an anxious glance at his masts, another at the boat load of armed Greeks, and consented.

The five men were in the bow of the boat-a bad place when a craft is towing. I was watching the behavior of their boat as the great fisherman’s staysail, far, far larger than the top-sail and used only in light breezes, was broken out. As the Mary Rebecca lurched forward with a tremendous jerk, the nose of the boat ducked down into the water, and the men tumbled over one another in a wild rush into the stern to save the boat from being dragged sheer under water.

“That settles them!” Charley remarked, though he was anxiously studying the behavior of the Mary Rebecca, which was being driven under far more canvas than she was rightly able to carry.

"Next stop is Antioch!" announced the cheerful sailor, after the manner of a railway conductor. "And next comes Merryweather!"

"Come here, quick," Charley said to me.

I crawled across the deck and stood upright beside him in the shelter of the sheet steel.

"Feel in my inside pocket," he commanded, "and get my notebook. That's right. Tear out a blank page and write what I tell you."

And this is what I wrote:

Telephone to Merryweather, to the sheriff, the constable, or the judge. Tell them we are coming and to turn out the town. Arm everybody. Have them down on the wharf to meet us or we are gone gooses.

Now make it good and fast to that marlin-spike, and stand by to toss it ashore."

I did as he directed. By then we were close to Antioch. The wind was shouting through our rigging, the Mary Rebecca was half over on her side and rushing ahead like an ocean greyhound. The seafaring folk of Antioch had seen us breaking out topsail and staysail, a most reckless performance in such weather, and had hurried to the wharf-ends in little groups to find out what was the matter.

Straight down the water front we boomed, Charley edging in till a man could almost leap ashore. When he gave the signal I tossed the marlinspike. It struck the planking of the wharf a resounding smash, bounced along fifteen or twenty feet, and was pounced upon by the amazed onlookers.

It all happened in a flash, for the next minute Antioch was behind and we were heeling it up the San Joaquin toward Merryweather, six miles away. The river straightened out here into its general easterly course, and we squared away before the wind, wing-and-wing once more, the foresail bellying out to starboard.

Ole Ericsen seemed sunk into a state of stolid despair. Charley and the two sailors were looking hopeful, as they had good reason to be. Merryweather was a coal-mining town, and, it being Sunday, it was reasonable to expect the men to be in town. Further, the coal-miners had never lost any love for the Greek fishermen, and were pretty certain to render us hearty assistance.

We strained our eyes for a glimpse of the town, and the first sight we caught of it gave us immense relief. The wharves were black with men. As we came closer, we could see them still arriving, stringing down the main street, guns in their hands and on the run. Charley glanced astern at the fishermen with a look of ownership in his eye which till then had been missing. The Greeks were plainly overawed by the display of armed strength and were putting their own rifles away.

We took in topsail and staysail, dropped the main peak, and as we got abreast of the principal wharf jibed the mainsail. The Mary Rebecca shot around into the wind, the captive fishermen describing a great arc behind her, and forged ahead till she lost way, when lines we're flung ashore and she was made fast. This was accomplished under a hurricane of cheers from the delighted miners.

Ole Ericsen heaved a great sigh. "Ay never tank Ay see my wife never again," he confessed.

"Why, we were never in any danger," said Charley.

Ole looked at him incredulously.

"Sure, I mean it," Charley went on. "All we had to do, any time, was to let go our end-as I am going to do now, so that those Greeks can untangle their nets."

He went below with a monkey-wrench, unscrewed the nut, and let the hook drop off. When the Greeks had hauled their nets into their boats and made everything shipshape, a posse of citizens took them off our hands and led them away to jail.

"Ay tank Ay ban a great big fool," said Ole Ericsen. But he changed his mind when the admiring townspeople crowded aboard to shake hands with him, and a couple of enterprising newspaper men took photographs of the Mary Rebecca and her captain.

Chased by the Trail

WALT first blinked his eyes in the light of day in a trading post on the Yukon River. Masters, his father, was one of those world missionaries who are known as “pioneers,” and who spend the years of their life in pushing outward the walls of civilization and in planting the wilderness. He had selected Alaska as his field of labor, and his wife had gone with him to that land of frost and cold.

Now, to be born to the moccasin and pack-strap is indeed a hard way of entering the world, but far harder it is to lose one’s mother while yet a child. This was Walt’s misfortune when he was fourteen years old.

He had, at different times, done deeds which few boys get the chance get the chance to do, and he had learned to take some pride in himself and to be unafraid. With most people pride goeth before a fall; but not so with Walt. His was a healthy belief in his own strength and fitness, and knowing his limitations, he was neither overweening nor presumptuous. He had learned to meet reverses with the stoicism of the Indian. Shame, to him, lay not in the failure to accomplish, but in the failure to strive. So, when he attempted to cross the Yukon between two ice-runs, and was chased by the trail, he was not cast down by his defeat.

The way of it was this. After passing the winter at his father’s claim on Mazy May, he came down to an island on the Yukon and went into camp. This was late in the spring, just before the breaking of the ice on the river. It was quite warm, and the days were growing marvelously long. Only the night before, when he was talking with Chilkoot Jim, the daylight had not faded and sent him off to bed till after ten o’clock. Even Chilkoot Jim, an Indian boy who was about Walt’s own age, was surprised at the rapidity with which summer was coming on. The snow had melted from all the southern hillsides and the level surfaces of the flats and islands; everywhere could be heard the trickling of water and the song of hidden rivulets; but somehow, under its three-foot ice-sheet, the Yukon delayed to heave its great length of three thousand miles and shake off the frosty fetters which bound it.

But it was evident that the time was fast approaching when it would again run free. Great fissures were splitting the ice in all directions, while the water was beginning to flood through them and over the top. On this morning a frightful rumbling brought the two boys hurriedly from their blankets. Standing on the bank, they soon discovered the cause. The Stewart River had broken loose and reared a great ice barrier, where it entered the Yukon, barely a mile above their island. While a great deal of the Stewart ice had been thus piled up, the remainder was now flowing under the Yukon ice, pounding and thumping at the solid surface above it as it passed onward toward the sea.

“To-day um break um,” Chilkoot Jim said, nodding his head. “Sure!”

“And then maybe two days for the ice to pass by,” Walt added, “and you and I’ll be starting for Dawson. It’s only seventy miles, and if the current runs five miles an hour and we paddle three, we ought to make it inside of ten hours. What do you think?”

“Sure!” Chilkoot Jim did not know much English, and this favorite word of his was made to do duty on all occasions.

After breakfast the boys got out the Peterborough canoe from its winter cache. It was an admirable sample of the boat-builder’s skill, an imported article brought from the first mail in six months into the Klondike. Walt, who happened to be in Dawson at the time had bought it for three hundred dollars’ worth of dust which he had mined on the Mazy May.

It had been a revelation, both to him and to Chilkoot Jim, for up to its advent they had been used to no other craft than the flimsy birchbark canoes of the Indians and the crude poling-boats of the whites. Jim, in fact, spent many a happy half-hour in silent admiration of its perfect lines.

“Um good. Sure!” Jim lifted his gaze from the dainty craft, expressing his delight in the same terms for the thousandth time. But glancing over Walt’s shoulder, he saw something on the river which startled him. “Look! See!” he cried.

A man had been racing a dog-team across the slushy surface for the shore, and had been cut off by the rising flood. As Walt whirled round to see, the ice behind the man burst into violent commotion, splitting and smashing into fragments which bobbed up and down and turned turtle like so many corks.

A gush of water followed, burying the sled and washing the dogs from their feet. Tangled in their harness and securely fastened to the heavy sled, they must drown in a few minutes unless rescued by the man. Bravely his manhood answered.

Floundering about with the drowning animals, nearly hip-deep in the icy flood, he cut and slashed with his sheath-knife at the traces. One by one the dogs struck out for shore, the first reaching safety ere the last was released. Then the master, abandoning the sled, followed them. It was a struggle in which little help could be given, and Walt and Chilkoot Jim could only, at the last, grasp his hands and drag him, half-fainting, up the bank.

First he sat down till he had recovered his breath; next he knocked the water from his ears like a boy who had just been swimming; and after that he whistled his dogs together to see whether they had all escaped. These things done, he turned his attention to the lads.

"I'm Muso," he said, "Pete Muso, and I'm looking for Charley Drake. His partner is dying down at Dawson, and they want him to come at once, as soon as the river breaks. He's got a cabin on this island, hasn't he?"

"Yes," Walt answered, "but he's over on the other side of the river, with a couple of other men, getting out a raft of logs for a grub-stake."

The stranger's disappointment was great. Exhausted by his weary journey, just escaped from sudden death, overcome by all he had undergone in carrying the message which was now useless, he looked dazed. The tears welled into his eyes, and his voice was choked with sobs as he repeated, aimlessly, "But his partner's dying. It's his partner, you know, and he wants to see him before he dies."

Walt and Jim knew that nothing could be done, and as aimlessly looked out on the hopeless river. No man could venture on it and live. On the other bank, and several miles up-stream, a thin column of smoke wavered to the sky. Charley Drake was cooking his dinner there; seventy miles below, his partner lay dying; yet no word of it could be sent.

But even as they looked, a change came over the river. There was a muffled rending and tearing, and, as if by magic, the surface water disappeared, while the great ice-sheet, reaching from shore to shore, and broken into all manner and sizes of cakes, floated silently up toward them. The ice which had been pounding along underneath had evidently grounded at some point lower down, and was now backing up the water like a mill-dam. This had broken the ice-sheet from the land and lifted it on top of the rising water.

"Um break up very quick," Chilkoot Jim said.

The Indian boy laughed. "Mebbe you get um in middle, mebbe not. All the same, the trail um go down-stream, and you go, too. Sure!" He glanced at Walt, that he might back him up in preventing this insane attempt.

"You're not going to try and make it across?" Walt queried.

"But you mustn't!" Walt protested. "It's certain death. The river'll break before you get half-way, and then what good'll your message be?"

But the stranger doggedly went on undressing, muttering in an undertone, "I want Charley Drake! Don't you understand? It's his partner, dying."

"Um sick man. Bimeby — " The Indian boy put a finger to his forehead and whirled his hand in quick circles, thus indicating the approach of brain fever. "Um work too hard, and um think too much, all the time think about sick man at Dawson. Very quick um head go round — so." And he feigned the bodily dizziness which is caused by a disordered brain.

By this time, undressed as if for a swim, Muso rose to his feet and started for the bank. Walt stepped in front, barring the way. He shot a glance at his comrade. Jim nodded that he understood and would stand by.

"Get out of my way, boy!" Muso commanded, roughly, trying to thrust him aside.

But Walt closed in, and with the aid of Jim succeeded in tripping him upon his back. He struggled weakly for a few moments, but was too wearied by his long journey to cope successfully with the two boys whose muscles were healthy and trail-hardened.

"Pack um into camp, roll um in plenty blanket, and I fix um good," Jim advised.

This was quickly accomplished, and the sufferer made as comfortable as possible. After he had been attended to, and Jim had utilized the medical lore picked up in the camps of his own people, they fed the stranger's dogs and cooked dinner. They said very little to each other, but each boy was thinking hard, and when they went out into the sunshine a few minutes later, their minds were intent on the same project.

The river had now risen twenty feet, the ice rubbing softly against the top of the bank. All noise had ceased. Countless millions of tons of ice and water were silently waiting the supreme moment, when all bonds would be broken and the mad rush to the sea would begin. Suddenly, without the slighted apparent effort, everything began to move downstream. The jam had broken.

Slowly at first, but faster and faster the frozen sea dashed past. The noise returned again, and the air trembled to a mighty churning and grinding. Huge blocks of ice were shot into the air by the pressure; others butted wildly into the bank; still others, swinging and pivoting, reached inshore and swept rows of pines away as easily as if they were so many matches.

In awe-stricken silence the boys watched the magnificent spectacle, and it was not until the ice had slackened its speed and fallen to its old level that Walt cried, “Look, Jim! Look at the trail going by!”

And in truth it was the trail going by — the trail upon which they had camped and traveled during all the preceding winter. Next winter they would journey with dogs and sleds over the same ground, but not on the same trail. That trail, the old trail, was passing away before their eyes.

Looking up-stream, they saw open water. No more ice was coming down, although vast quantities of it still remained on the upper reaches, jammed somewhere amid the maze of islands which covered the Yukon’s breast. As a matter of fact, there were several more jams yet to break, one after another, and to send down as many ice-runs. The next might come along in a few minutes; it might delay for hours. Perhaps there would be time to paddle across. Walt looked questioningly at his comrade.

“Sure!” Jim remarked, and without another word they carried the canoe down the bank. Each knew the danger of what they were about to attempt, but they wasted no speech over it. Wild life had taught them both that the need of things demanded effort and action, and that the tongue found its fit vocation at the camp-fire when the day’s work was done.

With dexterity born of long practice they launched the canoe, and were soon making it spring to each stroke of the paddles as they stemmed the muddy current. A steady procession of lagging ice-cakes, each thoroughly capable of crushing the Peterborough like an egg-shell, was drifting on the surface, and it required of the boys the utmost vigilance and skill to thread them safely.

Anxiously they watched the great bend above, down which at any moment might rush another ice-run. And as anxiously they watched the ice stranded against the bank and towering a score of feet above them. Cake was poised upon cake and piled in precarious confusion, while the boys had to hug the shore closely to avoid the swifter current of midstream. Now and again great heaps of this ice tottered and fell into the river, rolling and rumbling like distant thunder, and lashing the water into fair-sized tidal waves.

Several times they were nearly swamped, but saved themselves by quick work with the paddles. And all the time Charley Drake’s pillared camp smoke grew nearer and clearer. But it was still on the opposite shore, and they knew they must get higher up before they attempted to shoot across.

Entering the Stewart River, they paddled up a few hundred yards, shot across, and then continued up the right bank of the Yukon. Before long they came to the Bald-Face Bluffs — huge walls of rock which rose perpendicularly from the river. Here the current was swiftest inshore, forming the first serious obstacle encountered by the boys. Below the bluffs they rested from their exertions in a favorable eddy, and then, paddling their strongest, strove to dash past.

At first they gained, but in the swiftest place the current overpowered them. For a full sixty seconds they remained stationary, neither advancing nor receding, the grim cliff base within reach of their arms, their paddles dipping and lifting like clockwork, and the rough water dashing by in muddy haste. For a full sixty seconds, and then the canoe sheered in to the shore. To prevent instant destruction, they pressed their paddles against the rocks, sheered back into the stream, and were swept away. Regaining the eddy, they stopped for breath. A second time they attempted the passage; but just as they were almost past, a threatening ice-cake whirled down upon them on the angry tide, and they were forced to flee before it.

“Um stiff, I think yes,” Chilkoot Jim said, mopping the sweat from his face as they again rested in the eddy. “Next time um make um, sure.”

“We’ve got to. That’s all there is about it,” Walt answered, his teeth set and lips tight-drawn, for Pete Muso had set a bad example, and he was almost ready to cry from exhaustion and failure. A third time they darted out of the head of the eddy, plunged into the swirling waters, and worked a snail-like course ahead. Often they stood still for the space of many strokes, but whatever they gained they held, and they at last drew out into easier water far above. But every moment was precious. There was no telling when the Yukon would again become a scene of wild anarchy in which neither man nor any of his works could hope to endure. So they held steadily to their course till they had passed above Charley Drake’s camp by a quarter of a mile. The river was fully a mile wide at this point, and they had to reckon on being carried down by the swift current in crossing it.

Walt turned his head from his place in the bow. Jim nodded. Without further parley they headed the canoe out from the shore, at an angle of forty-five degrees against the current. They were on the last stretch now; the goal was in fair sight. Indeed, as they looked up from their toil to mark their progress, they could see Charley Drake and his two comrades come town to the edge of the river to watch them.

Five hundred yards; four hundred yards; the Peterborough cut the water like a blade of steel; the paddles were dipping, dipping, dipping in rapid rhythm — and then a warning shout from the bank sent a chill to their hearts. Round the great bend just above rolled a mighty wall of glistening white. Behind it, urging it on to lightning speed, were a million tons of long-pent water.

The right flank of the ice-run, unable to get cleanly round the bend, collided with the opposite shore, and even as they looked they saw the ice mountains rear toward the sky, rise, collapse, and rise again in glittering convulsions. The advancing roar filled the air so that Walt could not make himself heard; but he paused long enough to wave his paddle significantly in the direction of Dawson. Perhaps Charley Drake, seeing, might understand.

With two swift strokes they whirled the Peterborough down-stream. They must keep ahead of the rushing flood. It was impossible to make either bank tat that moment. Every ounce of their strength went into the paddles, and the frail canoe fairly rose and leaped ahead at each stroke. They said nothing. Each knew and had faith in the other, and they were too wise to waste their breath. The shore-line — trees, islands and the Stewart River — flew by at a bewildering rate, but they barely looked at it.

Occasionally Chilkoot Jim stole a glance behind him at the pursuing trail, and marked the fact that they held their own. Once he shaped a sharper course toward the bank, but found the trail was overtaking them, and gave it up.

Gradually they worked in to land, their failing strength warning them that it was soon or never. And at last, when they did draw up to the bank, they were confronted by the inhospitable barrier of the stranded shore-ice. Not a place could be found to land, and with safety virtually within arm's reach, they were forced to flee on down the stream. They passed a score of places, at each of which, had they had plenty of time, they could have clambered out; but behind pressed on the inexorable trail, and would not let them pause.

Half a mile of this work drew heavily upon their strength; and the trail came upon them nearer and nearer. Its sullen grind was in their ears, and its collisions against the bank made one continuous succession of terrifying crashes. Walt felt his heart thumping against his ribs and caught each breath in painful gasps. But worst of all was the constant demand upon his arms.

If he could only rest for the space of one stroke, he felt that the torture would be relieved; but no, it was dip and lift, dip and lift, till it seemed as if at each stroke he would surely die. But he knew that Chilkoot Jim was suffering likewise; and their lives depended each upon the other; and that it would be a blot upon his manhood should he fail or even miss a stroke.

They were very weary, but their faith was large, and if either felt afraid, it was not of the other, but of himself.

Flashing round a sharp point, they came upon their last chance for escape. An island lay close inshore, upon the nose of which the ice lay piled in a long slope. They drove the Peterborough half out of the water upon a shelving cake and leaped out. Then, dragging the canoe along, slipping and tripping and falling, but always getting nearer the top, they made their last mad scramble.

As they cleared the crest and fell within the shelter of the pines, a tremendous crash announced the arrival of the trail. One huge cake, shoved to the, shoved to the top of the rim-ice, balanced threateningly above them and then toppled forward.

With one jerk they flung themselves and the canoe from beneath, and again fell, breathless and panting for air. The thunder of the ice-run came dimly to their ears; but they did not care. It held no interest for them whatsoever. All they wished was simply to lie there, just as they had fallen, and enjoy the inaction of repose.

Two hours later, when the river once more ran open, they carried the Peterborough down to the water. But just before they launched it, Charley Drake and a comrade paddled up in another canoe.

“Well, you boys hardly deserve to have good folks out looking for you, the way you’ve behaved,” was his greeting. “What under the sun made you leave your tent and get chased by the trail? Eh? That’s what I’d like to know.”

It took but a minute to explain the real state of affairs, and but another to see Charley Drake hurrying along on his way to his sick partner at Dawson.

“Pretty close shave, that,” Walt Masters said, as they prepared to get aboard and paddle back to camp.

“Sure!” Chilkoot Jim replied, rubbing his stiffened biceps in a meditative fashion.

The Chinago

The coral waxes, the palm grows, but man departs.

- -Tahitian proverb

Ah Cho did not understand French. He sat in the crowded court room, very weary and bored, listening to the unceasing, explosive French that now one official and now another uttered. It was just so much gabble to Ah Cho, and he marvelled at the stupidity of the Frenchmen who took so long to find out the murderer of Chung Ga, and who did not find him at all. The five hundred coolies on the plantation knew that Ah San had done the killing, and here was Ah San not even arrested. It was true that all the coolies had agreed secretly not to testify against one another; but then, it was so simple, the Frenchmen should have been able to discover that Ah San was the man. They were very stupid, these Frenchmen.

Ah Cho had done nothing of which to be afraid. He had had no hand in the killing. It was true he had been present at it, and Schemmer, the overseer on the plantation, had rushed into the barracks immediately afterward and caught him there, along with four or five others; but what of that? Chung Ga had been stabbed only twice. It stood to reason that five or six men could not inflict two stab wounds. At the most, if a man had struck but once, only two men could have done it.

So it was that Ah Cho reasoned, when he, along with his four companions, had lied and blocked and obfuscated in their statements to the court concerning what had taken place. They had heard the sounds of the killing, and, like Schemmer, they had run to the spot. They had got there before Schemmer--that was all. True, Schemmer had testified that, attracted by the sound of quarrelling as he chanced to pass by, he had stood for at least five minutes outside; that then, when he entered, he found the prisoners already inside; and that they had not entered just before, because he had been standing by the one door to the barracks. But what of that? Ah Cho and his four fellow-prisoners had testified that Schemmer was mistaken. In the end they would be let go. They were all confident of that. Five men could not have their heads cut off for two stab wounds. Besides, no foreign devil had seen the killing. But these Frenchmen were so stupid. In China, as Ah Cho well knew, the magistrate would order all of them to the torture and learn the truth. The truth was very easy to learn under torture. But these Frenchmen did not torture--bigger fools they! Therefore they would never find out who killed Chung Ga.

But Ah Cho did not understand everything. The English Company that owned the plantation had imported into Tahiti, at great expense, the five hundred coolies. The stockholders were clamoring for dividends, and the Company had not yet paid any; wherefore the Company did not want its costly contract laborers to start the practice of killing one another. Also, there were the French, eager and willing to impose upon the Chinagos the virtues and excellences of French law. There was nothing like setting an example once in a while; and, besides, of what use was New Caledonia except to send men to live out their days in misery and pain in payment of the penalty for being frail and human?

Ah Cho did not understand all this. He sat in the court room and waited for the baffled judgment that would set him and his comrades free to go back to the plantation and work out the terms of their contracts. This judgment would soon be rendered. Proceedings were drawing to a close. He could see that. There was no more testifying, no more gabble of tongues. The French devils were tired, too, and evidently waiting for the judgment. And as he waited he remembered back in his life to the time when he had signed the contract and set sail in the ship for Tahiti. Times had been hard in his seacoast village, and when he indentured himself to labor for five years in the South Seas at fifty cents Mexican a day, he had thought himself fortunate. There were men in his village who toiled a whole year for ten dollars Mexican, and there were women who made nets all the year round for five dollars, while in the houses of shopkeepers there were maid-servants who received four dollars for a year of service. And here he was to receive fifty cents a day; for one day, only one day, he was to receive that princely sum! What if the work were hard? At the end of the five years he would return home--that was in the contract--and he would never have to work again. He would be a rich man for life, with a house of his own, a wife, and children growing up to venerate him. Yes, and back of the house he would have a small garden, a place of meditation and repose, with goldfish in a tiny lakelet, and wind bells tinkling in the several trees, and there would be a high wall all around so that his meditation and repose should be undisturbed. Well, he had worked out three of those five years. He was already a wealthy man (in his own country), through his earnings, and only two years more intervened between the cotton plantation on Tahiti and the meditation and repose that awaited him. But just now he was losing money because of the unfortunate accident of being present at the killing of Chung Ga. He had lain three weeks in prison, and for each day of those three weeks he had lost fifty cents. But now judgment would soon be given, and he would go back to work.

Ah Cho was twenty-two years old. He was happy and good-natured, and it was easy for him to smile. While his body was slim in the Asiatic way, his face was rotund. It was round, like the moon, and it irradiated a gentle complacence and a sweet kindliness of spirit that was unusual among his countrymen. Nor did his looks belie him. He never caused trouble, never took part in wrangling. He did not gamble. His soul was not harsh enough for the soul that must belong to a gambler. He was content with little things and simple pleasures. The hush and quiet in the cool of the day after the blazing toil in the cotton field was to him an infinite satisfaction. He could sit for hours gazing at a solitary flower and philosophizing about the mysteries and riddles of being. A blue heron on a tiny crescent of sandy beach, a silvery splatter of flying fish, or a sunset of pearl and rose across the lagoon, could entrance him to all forgetfulness of the procession of wearisome days and of the heavy lash of Schemmer.

Schemmer, Karl Schemmer, was a brute, a brutish brute. But he earned his salary. He got the last particle of strength out of the five hundred slaves; for slaves they were until their term of years was up. Schemmer worked hard to extract the strength from those five hundred sweating bodies and to transmute it into bales of fluffy cotton ready for export. His dominant, iron-clad, primeval brutishness was what enabled him to effect the transmutation. Also, he was assisted by a thick leather belt, three inches wide and a yard in length, with which he always rode and which, on occasion, could come down on the naked back of a stooping coolie with a report like a pistol-shot. These reports were frequent when Schemmer rode down the furrowed field.

Once, at the beginning of the first year of contract labor, he had killed a coolie with a single blow of his fist. He had not exactly crushed the man’s head like an egg-shell, but the blow had been sufficient to addle what was inside, and, after being sick for a week, the man had died. But the Chinese had not complained to the French devils that ruled over Tahiti. It was their own lookout. Schemmer was their problem. They must avoid his wrath as they avoided the venom of the centipedes that lurked in the grass or crept into the sleeping quarters on rainy nights. The Chinagos--such they were called by the indolent, brown-skinned island folk--saw to it that they did not displease Schemmer too greatly. This was equivalent to rendering up to him a full measure of efficient toil. That blow of Schemmer's fist had been worth thousands of dollars to the Company, and no trouble ever came of it to Schemmer.

The French, with no instinct for colonization, futile in their childish playgame of developing the resources of the island, were only too glad to see the English Company succeed. What matter of Schemmer and his redoubtable fist? The Chinago that died? Well, he was only a Chinago. Besides, he died of sunstroke, as the doctor's certificate attested. True, in all the history of Tahiti no one had ever died of sunstroke. But it was that, precisely that, which made the death of this Chinago unique. The doctor said as much in his report. He was very candid. Dividends must be paid, or else one more failure would be added to the long history of failure in Tahiti.

There was no understanding these white devils. Ah Cho pondered their inscrutableness as he sat in the court room waiting the judgment. There was no telling what went on at the back of their minds. He had seen a few of the white devils. They were all alike--the officers and sailors on the ship, the French officials, the several white men on the plantation, including Schemmer. Their minds all moved in mysterious ways there was no getting at. They grew angry without apparent cause, and their anger was always dangerous. They were like wild beasts at such times. They worried about little things, and on occasion could out-toil even a Chinago. They were not temperate as Chinagos were temperate; they were gluttons, eating prodigiously and drinking more prodigiously. A Chinago never knew when an act would please them or arouse a storm of wrath. A Chinago could never tell. What pleased one time, the very next time might provoke an outburst of anger. There was a curtain behind the eyes of the white devils that screened the backs of their minds from the Chinago's gaze. And then, on top of it all, was that terrible efficiency of the white devils, that ability to do things, to make things go, to work results, to bend to their wills all creeping, crawling things, and the powers of the very elements themselves. Yes, the white men were strange and wonderful, and they were devils. Look at Schemmer.

Ah Cho wondered why the judgment was so long in forming. Not a man on trial had laid hand on Chung Ga. Ah San alone had killed him. Ah San had done it, bending Chung Ga's head back with one hand by a grip of his queue, and with the other hand, from behind, reaching over and driving the knife into his body. Twice had he driven it in. There in the court room, with closed eyes, Ah Cho saw the killing acted over again--the squabble, the vile words bandied back and forth, the filth and insult flung upon venerable ancestors, the curses laid upon unbegotten generations, the leap of Ah San, the grip on the queue of Chung Ga, the knife that sank twice into his flesh, the bursting open of the door, the irruption of Schemmer, the dash for the door, the escape of Ah San, the flying belt of Schemmer that drove the rest into the corner, and the firing of the revolver as a signal that brought help to Schemmer. Ah Cho shivered as he lived it over. One blow of the belt had bruised his cheek, taking off some of the skin. Schemmer had pointed to the bruises when, on the witness-stand, he had identified Ah Cho. It was only just now that the marks had become no longer visible. That had been a blow. Half an inch nearer the centre and it would have taken out his eye. Then Ah Cho forgot the whole happening in a vision he caught of the garden of meditation and repose that would be his when he returned to his own land.

He sat with impassive face, while the magistrate rendered the judgment. Likewise were the faces of his four companions impassive. And they remained impassive when the interpreter explained that the five of them had been found guilty of the murder of Chung Ga, and that Ah Chow should have his head cut off, Ah Cho serve twenty years in prison in New Caledonia, Wong Li twelve years, and Ah Tong ten years. There was no use in getting excited about it. Even Ah Chow remained expressionless as a mummy, though it was his head that was to be cut off. The magistrate added a few words, and the interpreter explained that Ah Chow's face having been most severely bruised by Schemmer's strap had made his identification so positive that, since one man must die, he might as well be that man. Also, the fact that Ah Cho's face likewise had been severely bruised, conclusively proving his presence at the murder and his undoubted participation, had merited him the twenty years of penal servitude. And down to the ten years of Ah Tong, the proportioned reason for each sentence was explained. Let the Chinagos take the lesson to heart, the Court said finally, for they must learn that the law would be fulfilled in Tahiti though the heavens fell.

The five Chinagos were taken back to jail. They were not shocked nor grieved. The sentences being unexpected was quite what they were accustomed to in their dealings with the white devils. From them a Chinago rarely expected more than the unexpected. The heavy punishment for a crime they had not committed was no stranger than the countless strange things that white devils did. In the weeks that followed, Ah Cho often contemplated Ah Chow with mild curiosity. His head was to be cut off by the guillotine that was being erected on the plantation. For him there would be no declining years, no gardens of tranquillity. Ah Cho philosophized and speculated about life and death. As for himself, he was not perturbed. Twenty years were merely twenty years. By that much was his garden removed from him--that was all. He was young, and the patience of Asia was in his bones. He could wait those twenty years, and by that time the heats of his blood would be assuaged and he would be better fitted for that garden of calm delight. He thought of a name for it; he would call it The Garden of the Morning Calm. He was made happy all day by the thought, and he was inspired to devise a moral maxim on the virtue of patience, which maxim proved a great comfort, especially to Wong Li and Ah Tong. Ah Chow, however, did not care for the maxim. His head was to be separated from his body in so short a time that he had no need for patience to wait for that event. He smoked well, ate well, slept well, and did not worry about the slow passage of time.

Cruchot was a gendarme. He had seen twenty years of service in the colonies, from Nigeria and Senegal to the South Seas, and those twenty years had not perceptibly brightened his dull mind. He was as slow-witted and stupid as in his peasant days in the south of France. He knew discipline and fear of authority, and from God down to the sergeant of gendarmes the only difference to him was the measure of slavish obedience which he rendered. In point of fact, the sergeant bulked bigger in his mind than God, except on Sundays when God’s mouthpieces had their say. God was usually very remote, while the sergeant was ordinarily very close at hand.

Cruchot it was who received the order from the Chief Justice to the jailer commanding that functionary to deliver over to Cruchot the person of Ah Chow. Now, it happened that the Chief Justice had given a dinner the night before to the captain and officers of the French man-of-war. His hand was shaking when he wrote out the order, and his eyes were aching so dreadfully that he did not read over the order. It was only a Chinago’s life he was signing away, anyway. So he did not notice that he had omitted the final letter in Ah Chow's name. The order read "Ah Cho," and, when Cruchot presented the order, the jailer turned over to him the person of Ah Cho. Cruchot took that person beside him on the seat of a wagon, behind two mules, and drove away.

Ah Cho was glad to be out in the sunshine. He sat beside the gendarme and beamed. He beamed more ardently than ever when he noted the mules headed south toward Atimaono. Undoubtedly Schemmer had sent for him to be brought back. Schemmer wanted him to work. Very well, he would work well. Schemmer would never have cause to complain. It was a hot day. There had been a stoppage of the trades. The mules sweated, Cruchot sweated, and Ah Cho sweated. But it was Ah Cho that bore the heat with the least concern. He had toiled three years under that sun on the plantation. He beamed and beamed with such genial good nature that even Cruchot's heavy mind was stirred to wonderment.

"You are very funny," he said at last.

Ah Cho nodded and beamed more ardently. Unlike the magistrate, Cruchot spoke to him in the Kanaka tongue, and this, like all Chinagos and all foreign devils, Ah Cho understood.

"You laugh too much," Cruchot chided. "One's heart should be full of tears on a day like this."

"I am glad to get out of the jail."

"Is that all?" The gendarme shrugged his shoulders.

"Is it not enough?" was the retort.

"Then you are not glad to have your head cut off?"

Ah Cho looked at him in abrupt perplexity and said:

"Why, I am going back to Atimaono to work on the plantation for Schemmer. Are you not taking me to Atimaono?"

Cruchot stroked his long mustaches reflectively. "Well, well," he said finally, with a flick of the whip at the off mule, "so you don't know?"

"Know what?" Ah Cho was beginning to feel a vague alarm. "Won't Schemmer let me work for him any more?"

"Not after to-day." Cruchot laughed heartily. It was a good joke. "You see, you won't be able to work after to-day. A man with his head off can't work, eh?" He poked the Chinago in the ribs, and chuckled.

Ah Cho maintained silence while the mules trotted a hot mile. Then he spoke: "Is Schemmer going to cut off my head?"

Cruchot grinned as he nodded.

"It is a mistake," said Ah Cho, gravely. "I am not the Chinago that is to have his head cut off. I am Ah Cho. The honorable judge has determined that I am to stop twenty years in New Caledonia."

The gendarme laughed. It was a good joke, this funny Chinago trying to cheat the guillotine. The mules trotted through a cocoanut grove and for half a mile beside the sparkling sea before Ah Cho spoke again.

"I tell you I am not Ah Chow. The honorable judge did not say that my head was to go off."

"Don't be afraid," said Cruchot, with the philanthropic intention of making it easier for his prisoner. "It is not difficult to die that way." He snapped his fingers. "It is quick--like that. It is not like hanging on the end of a rope and kicking and making faces for five minutes. It is like killing a chicken with a hatchet. You cut its head off, that is all. And it is the same with a man. Pouf!--it is over. It doesn't hurt. You don't even think it hurts. You don't think. Your head is gone, so you cannot think. It is very good. That is the way I want to die--quick, ah, quick. You are lucky to die that way. You might get the leprosy and fall to pieces slowly, a finger at a time, and now and again a thumb, also the toes. I knew a man who was burned by hot water. It took him two days to die. You could hear him yelling a kilometre away. But you? Ah! so easy! Chck!--the knife cuts your neck like that. It is finished. The knife may even tickle. Who can say? Nobody who died that way ever came back to say."

He considered this last an excruciating joke, and permitted himself to be convulsed with laughter for half a minute. Part of his mirth was assumed, but he considered it his humane duty to cheer up the Chinago.

"But I tell you I am Ah Cho," the other persisted. "I don't want my head cut off."

Cruchot scowled. The Chinago was carrying the foolishness too far.

"I am not Ah Chow--" Ah Cho began. "That will do," the gendarme interrupted. He puffed up his cheeks and strove to appear fierce.

"I tell you I am not--" Ah Cho began again.

"Shut up!" bawled Cruchot.

After that they rode along in silence. It was twenty miles from Papeete to Atimaono, and over half the distance was covered by the time the Chinago again ventured into speech.

“I saw you in the court room, when the honorable judge sought after our guilt,” he began. “Very good. And do you remember that Ah Chow, whose head is to be cut off--do you remember that he--Ah Chow--was a tall man? Look at me.”

He stood up suddenly, and Cruchot saw that he was a short man. And just as suddenly Cruchot caught a glimpse of a memory picture of Ah Chow, and in that picture Ah Chow was tall. To the gendarme all Chinagos looked alike. One face was like another. But between tallness and shortness he could differentiate, and he knew that he had the wrong man beside him on the seat. He pulled up the mules abruptly, so that the pole shot ahead of them, elevating their collars.

“You see, it was a mistake,” said Ah Cho, smiling pleasantly.

But Cruchot was thinking. Already he regretted that he had stopped the wagon. He was unaware of the error of the Chief Justice, and he had no way of working it out; but he did know that he had been given this Chinago to take to Atimaono and that it was his duty to take him to Atimaono. What if he was the wrong man and they cut his head off? It was only a Chinago when all was said, and what was a Chinago, anyway? Besides, it might not be a mistake. He did not know what went on in the minds of his superiors. They knew their business best. Who was he to do their thinking for them? Once, in the long ago, he had attempted to think for them, and the sergeant had said: “Cruchot, you are a fool! The quicker you know that, the better you will get on. You are not to think; you are to obey and leave thinking to your betters.” He smarted under the recollection. Also, if he turned back to Papeete, he would delay the execution at Atimaono, and if he were wrong in turning back, he would get a reprimand from the sergeant who was waiting for the prisoner. And, furthermore, he would get a reprimand at Papeete as well.

He touched the mules with the whip and drove on. He looked at his watch. He would be half an hour late as it was, and the sergeant was bound to be angry. He put the mules into a faster trot. The more Ah Cho persisted in explaining the mistake, the more stubborn Cruchot became. The knowledge that he had the wrong man did not make his temper better. The knowledge that it was through no mistake of his confirmed him in the belief that the wrong he was doing was the right. And, rather than incur the displeasure of the sergeant, he would willingly have assisted a dozen wrong Chinagos to their doom.

As for Ah Cho, after the gendarme had struck him over the head with the butt of the whip and commanded him in a loud voice to shut up, there remained nothing for him to do but to shut up. The long ride continued in silence. Ah Cho pondered the strange ways of the foreign devils. There was no explaining them. What they were doing with him was of a piece with everything they did. First they found guilty five innocent men, and next they cut off the head of the man that even they, in their benighted ignorance, had deemed meritorious of no more than twenty years' imprisonment. And there was nothing he could do. He could only sit idly and take what these lords of life measured out to him. Once, he got in a panic, and the sweat upon his body turned cold; but he fought his way out of it. He endeavored to resign himself to his fate by remembering and repeating certain passages from the "Yin Chih Wen" ("The Tract of the Quiet Way"); but, instead, he kept seeing his dream-garden of meditation and repose. This bothered him, until he abandoned himself to the dream and sat in his garden listening to the tinkling of the wind-bells in the several trees. And lo! sitting thus, in the dream, he was able to remember and repeat the passages from "The Tract of the Quiet Way."

So the time passed nicely until Atimaono was reached and the mules trotted up to the foot of the scaffold, in the shade of which stood the impatient sergeant. Ah Cho was hurried up the ladder of the scaffold. Beneath him on one side he saw assembled all the coolies of the plantation. Schemmer had decided that the event would be a good object-lesson, and so had called in the coolies from the fields and compelled them to be present. As they caught sight of Ah Cho they gabbled among themselves in low voices. They saw the mistake; but they kept it to themselves. The inexplicable white devils had doubtlessly changed their minds. Instead of taking the life of one innocent man, they were taking the life of another innocent man. Ah Chow or Ah Cho--what did it matter which? They could never understand the white dogs any more than could the white dogs understand them. Ah Cho was going to have his head cut off, but they, when their two remaining years of servitude were up, were going back to China.

Schemmer had made the guillotine himself. He was a handy man, and though he had never seen a guillotine, the French officials had explained the principle to him. It was on his suggestion that they had ordered the execution to take place at Atimaono instead of at Papeete. The scene of the crime, Schemmer had argued, was the best possible place for the punishment, and, in addition, it would have a salutary influence upon the half-thousand Chinagos on the plantation. Schemmer had also volunteered to act as executioner, and in that capacity he was now on the scaffold, experimenting with the instrument he had made. A banana tree, of the size and consistency of a man's neck, lay under the guillotine. Ah Cho watched with fascinated eyes. The German, turning a small crank, hoisted the blade to the top of the little derrick he had rigged. A jerk on a stout piece of cord loosed the blade and it dropped with a flash, neatly severing the banana trunk.

"How does it work?" The sergeant, coming out on top the scaffold, had asked the question.

"Beautifully," was Schemmer's exultant answer. "Let me show you."

Again he turned the crank that hoisted the blade, jerked the cord, and sent the blade crashing down on the soft tree. But this time it went no more than two-thirds of the way through.

The sergeant scowled. "That will not serve," he said.

Schemmer wiped the sweat from his forehead. "What it needs is more weight," he announced. Walking up to the edge of the scaffold, he called his orders to the blacksmith for a twenty-five-pound piece of iron. As he stooped over to attach the iron to the broad top of the blade, Ah Cho glanced at the sergeant and saw his opportunity.

"The honorable judge said that Ah Chow was to have his head cut off," he began.

The sergeant nodded impatiently. He was thinking of the fifteen-mile ride before him that afternoon, to the windward side of the island, and of Berthe, the pretty half-caste daughter of Lafière, the pearl-trader, who was waiting for him at the end of it. "Well, I am not Ah Chow. I am Ah Cho. The honorable jailer has made a mistake. Ah Chow is a tall man, and you see I am short."

The sergeant looked at him hastily and saw the mistake. "Schemmer!" he called, imperatively. "Come here."

The German grunted, but remained bent over his task till the chunk of iron was lashed to his satisfaction. "Is your Chinago ready?" he demanded.

"Look at him," was the answer. "Is he the Chinago?"

Schemmer was surprised. He swore tersely for a few seconds, and looked regretfully across at the thing he had made with his own hands and which he was eager to see work. "Look here," he said finally, "we can't postpone this affair. I’ve lost three hours’ work already out of those five hundred Chinagos. I can’t afford to lose it all over again for the right man. Let’s put the performance through just the same. It is only a Chinago.”

The sergeant remembered the long ride before him, and the pearl-trader’s daughter, and debated with himself.

“They will blame it on Cruchot--if it is discovered,” the German urged. “But there’s little chance of its being discovered. Ah Chow won’t give it away, at any rate.”

“The blame won’t lie with Cruchot, anyway,” the sergeant said. “It must have been the jailer’s mistake.”

“Then let’s go on with it. They can’t blame us. Who can tell one Chinago from another? We can say that we merely carried out instructions with the Chinago that was turned over to us. Besides, really can’t take all those coolies a second time away from their labor.”

They spoke in French, and Ah Cho, who did not understand a word of it, nevertheless knew that they were determining his destiny. He knew, also, that the decision rested with the sergeant, and he hung upon that official’s lips.

“All right,” announced the sergeant. “Go ahead with it. He is only a Chinago.”

“I’m going to try it once more, just to make sure.” Schemmer moved the banana trunk forward under the knife, which he had hoisted to the top of the derrick.

Ah Cho tried to remember maxims from “The Tract of the Quiet Way.” “Live in concord,” came to him; but it was not applicable. He was not going to live. He was about to die. No, that would not do. “Forgive malice”--yes, but there was no malice to forgive. Schemmer and the rest were doing this thing without malice. It was to them merely a piece of work that had to be done, just as clearing the jungle, ditching the water, and planting cotton were pieces of work that had to be done. Schemmer jerked the cord, and Ah Cho forgot “The Tract of the Quiet Way.” The knife shot down with a thud, making a clean slice of the tree.

“Beautiful!” exclaimed the sergeant, pausing in the act of lighting a cigarette. “Beautiful, my friend.”

Schemmer was pleased at the praise.

“Come on, Ah Chow,” he said, in the Tahitian tongue.

“But I am not Ah Chow--“ Ah Cho began.

“Shut up!” was the answer. “If you open your mouth again, I’ll break your head.”

The overseer threatened him with a clenched fist, and he remained silent. What was the good of protesting? Those foreign devils always had their way. He allowed himself to be lashed to the vertical board that was the size of his body. Schemmer drew the buckles tight--so tight that the straps cut into his flesh and hurt. But he did not complain. The hurt would not last long. He felt the board tilting over in the air toward the horizontal, and closed his eyes. And in that moment he caught a last glimpse of his garden of meditation and repose. It seemed to him that he sat in the garden. A cool wind was blowing, and the bells in the several trees were tinkling softly. Also, birds were making sleepy noises, and from beyond the high wall came the subdued sound of village life.

Then he was aware that the board had come to rest, and from muscular pressures and tensions he knew that he was lying on his back. He opened his eyes. Straight above him he saw the suspended knife blazing in the sunshine. He saw the weight which had been added, and noted that one of Schemmer’s knots had slipped. Then he heard the sergeant’s voice in sharp command. Ah Cho closed his eyes hastily. He did not want to see that knife descend. But he felt it--for one great fleeting instant. And in that instant he remembered Cruchot and what Cruchot had said. But Cruchot was wrong. The knife did not tickle. That much he knew before he ceased to know.

Chris Farrington, Able Seaman

“If you vas in der old country ships, a liddle shaver like you vood pe only der boy, and you vood wait on der able seamen. Und ven der able seaman sing out, ‘Boy, der water-jug!’ you vood jump quick, like a shot, and bring der water-jug. Und ven der able seaman sing out, ‘Boy, my boots!’ you vood get der boots. Und you vood pe politeful, and say ‘Yessir’ and ‘No sir.’ But you pe in der American ship, and you t’ink you are so good as der able seamen. Chris, mine boy, I haf ben a sailorman for twenty-two years, and do you t’ink you are so good as me? I vas a sailorman pefore you vas borned, and I knot and reef and splice ven you play mit topstrings and fly kites.”

“But you are unfair, Emil!” cried Chris Farrington, his sensitive face flushed and hurt. He was a slender though strongly built young fellow of seventeen, with Yankee ancestry writ large all over him.

“Dere you go vonce again!” the Swedish sailor exploded. “My name is Mister Johansen, and a kid of a boy like you call me ‘Emil!’ It vas insulting, and comes pecause of der American ship!”

“But you call me ‘Chris!’“ the boy expostulated, reproachfully.

“But you vas a boy.”

“Who does a man’s work,” Chris retorted. “And because I do a man’s work I have as much right to call you by your first name as you me. We are all equals in this fo’castle, and you know it. When we signed for the voyage in San Francisco, we signed as sailors on the Sophie Sutherland and there was no difference made with any of us. Haven’t I always done my work? Did I ever shirk? Did you or any other man ever have to take a wheel for me? Or a lookout? Or go aloft?”

“Chris is right,” interrupted a young English sailor. “No man has had to do a tap of his work yet. He signed as good as any of us, and he’s shown himself as good — ”

“Better!” broke in a Nova Scotia man. “Better than some of us! When we struck the sealing-grounds he turned out to be next to the best boat-steerer aboard. Only French Louis, who’d been at it for years, could beat him. I’m only a boat-puller, and you’re only a boat-puller, too, Emil Johansen, for all your twenty-two years at sea. Why don’t you become a boat-steerer?”

“Too clumsy,” laughed the Englishman, “and too slow.”

“Little that counts, one way or the other,” joined in Dane Jurgensen, coming to the aid of his Scandinavian brother. “Emil is a man grown and an able seaman; the boy is neither.”

And so the argument raged back and forth, the Swedes, Norwegians and Danes, because of race kinship, taking the part of Johansen, and the English, Canadians and Americans taking the part of Chris. From an unprejudiced point of view, the right was on the side of Chris. As he had truly said, he did a man’s work, and the same work that any of them did. But they were prejudiced, and badly so, and out of the words which passed rose a standing quarrel which divided the forecastle into two parties.

The Sophie Sutherland was a seal-hunter, registered out of San Francisco, and engaged in hunting the furry sea-animals along the Japanese coast north to Bering Sea. The other vessels were two-masted schooners, but she was a three-master and the largest in the fleet. In fact, she was a full-rigged, three-topmast schooner, newly built.

Although Chris Farrington knew that justice was with him, and that he performed all his work faithfully and well, many a time, in secret thought, he longed for some pressing emergency to arise whereby he could demonstrate to the Scandinavian seamen that he also was an able seaman.

But one stormy night, by an accident for which he was in nowise accountable, in overhauling a spare anchor-chain he had all the fingers of his left hand badly crushed. And his hopes were likewise crushed, for it was impossible for him to continue hunting with the boats, and he was forced to stay idly aboard until his fingers should heal. Yet, although he little dreamed it, this very accident was to give him the long-looked-for opportunity.

One afternoon in the latter part of May the Sophie Sutherland rolled sluggishly in a breathless calm. The seals were abundant, the hunting good, and the boats were all away and out of sight. And with them was almost every man of the crew. Besides Chris, there remained only the captain, the sailing-master and the Chinese cook.

The captain was captain only by courtesy. He was an old man, past eighty, and blissfully ignorant of the sea and its ways; but he was the owner of the vessel, and hence the honorable title. Of course the sailing-master, who was really captain, was a thorough-going seaman. The mate, whose post was aboard, was out with the boats, having temporarily taken Chris’s place as boat-steerer.

When good weather and good sport came together, the boats were accustomed to range far and wide, and often did not return to the schooner until long after dark. But for all that it was a perfect hunting day, Chris noted a growing anxiety on the part of the sailing-master. He paced the deck nervously, and was constantly sweeping the horizon with his marine glasses. Not a boat was in sight. As sunset arrived, he even sent Chris aloft to the mizzen-topmast-head, but with no better luck. The boats could not possibly be back before midnight.

Since noon the barometer had been falling with startling rapidity, and all the signs were ripe for a great storm — how great, not even the sailing-master anticipated. He and Chris set to work to prepare for it. They put storm gaskets on the furled topsails, lowered and stowed the foresail and spanker and took in the two inner jibs. In the one remaining jib they put a single reef, and a single reef in the mainsail.

Night had fallen before they finished, and with the darkness came the storm. A low moan swept over the sea, and the wind struck the Sophie Sutherland flat. But she righted quickly, and with the sailing-master at the wheel, sheered her bow into within five points of the wind. Working as well as he could with his bandaged hand, and with the feeble aid of the Chinese cook, Chris went forward and backed the jib over the weather side. This with the flat mainsail left the schooner hove to.

“God help the boats! It’s no gale! It’s a typhoon!” the sailing-master shouted to Chris at eleven o’clock. “Too much canvas! Got to get two more reefs into that mainsail, and got to do it right away!” He glanced at the old captain, shivering in oilskins at the binnacle and holding on for dear life. “There’s only you and I, Chris — and the cook; but he’s next to worthless!”

In order to make the reef, it was necessary to lower the mainsail, and the removal of this after pressure was bound to make the schooner fall off before the wind and sea because of the forward pressure of the jib.

“Take the wheel!” the sailing-master directed. “And when I give the word, hard up with it! And when she’s square before it, steady her! And keep her there! We’ll heave to again as soon as I get the reefs in!”

Gripping the kicking spokes, Chris watched him and the reluctant cook go forward into the howling darkness. The Sophie Sutherland was plunging into the huge head-seas and wallowing tremendously, the tense steel stays and taut rigging humming like harp-strings to the wind. A buffeted cry came to his ears, and he felt the schooner’s bow paying off of its own accord. The mainsail was down!

He ran the wheel hard-over and kept anxious track of the changing direction of the wind on his face and of the heave of the vessel. This was the crucial moment. In performing the evolution she would have to pass broadside to the surge before she could get before it. The wind was blowing directly on his right cheek, when he felt the Sophie Sutherland lean over and begin to rise toward the sky — up — up — an infinite distance! Would she clear the crest of the gigantic wave?

Again by the feel of it, he could see nothing, he knew that a wall of water was rearing and curving far above him along the whole weather side. There was an instant’s calm as the liquid wall intervened and shut off the wind. The schooner righted, and for that instant seemed at perfect rest. Then she rolled to meet the descending rush.

Chris shouted to the captain to hold tight, and prepared himself for the shock. But the man did not live who could face it. An ocean of water smote Chris’s back and his clutch on the spokes was loosened as if it were a baby’s. Stunned, powerless, like a straw on the face of a torrent, he was swept onward he knew not whither. Missing the corner of the cabin, he was dashed forward along the poop runway a hundred feet or more, striking violently against the foot of the foremast. A second wave, crushing inboard, hurled him back the way he had come, and left him half-drowned where the poop steps should have been.

Bruised and bleeding, dimly conscious, he felt for the rail and dragged himself to his feet. Unless something could be done, he knew the last moment had come. As he faced the poop, the wind drove into his mouth with suffocating force. This brought him back to his senses with a start. The wind was blowing from dead aft! The schooner was out of the trough and before it! But the send of the sea was bound to breach her to again. Crawling up the runway, he managed to get to the wheel just in time to prevent this. The binnacle light was still burning. They were safe!

That is, he and the schooner were safe. As to the welfare of his three companions he could not say. Nor did he dare leave the wheel in order to find out, for it took every second of his undivided attention to keep the vessel to her course. The least fraction of carelessness and the heave of the sea under the quarter was liable to thrust her into the trough. So, a boy of one hundred and forty pounds, he clung to his herculean task of guiding the two hundred straining tons of fabric amid the chaos of the great storm forces.

Half an hour later, groaning and sobbing, the captain crawled to Chris's feet. All was lost, he whimpered. He was smitten unto death. The galley had gone by the board, the mainsail and running-gear, the cook, everything!

"Where's the sailing-master?" Chris demanded when he had caught his breath after steadying a wild lurch of the schooner. It was no child's play to steer a vessel under single-reefed jib before a typhoon.

"Clean up for'ard," the old man replied. "Jammed under the fo'c'slehead, but still breathing. Both his arms are broken, he says, and he doesn't know how many ribs. He's hurt bad."

"Well, he'll drown there the way she's shipping water through the hawse-pipes. Go for'ard!" Chris commanded, taking charge of things as a matter of course. "Tell him not to worry; that I'm at the wheel. Help him as much as you can, and make him help" — he stopped and ran the spokes to starboard as a tremendous billow rose under the stern and yawed the schooner to port — "and make him help himself for the rest. Unship the fo'castle hatch and get him down into a bunk. Then ship the hatch again."

The captain turned his aged face forward and wavered pitifully. The waist of the ship was full of water to the bulwarks. He had just come through it, and knew death lurked every inch of the way.

"Go!" Chris shouted, fiercely. And as the fear-stricken man started, "And take another look for the cook!"

Two hours later, almost dead from suffering, the captain returned. He had obeyed orders. The sailing-master was helpless, although safe in a bunk; the cook was gone. Chris sent the captain below to the cabin to change his clothes.

After interminable hours of toil, day broke cold and gray. Chris looked about him. The Sophie Sutherland was racing before the typhoon like a thing possessed. There was no rain, but the wind whipped the spray of the sea mast-high, obscuring everything except in the immediate neighborhood.

Two waves only could Chris see at a time — the one before and the one behind. So small and insignificant the schooner seemed on the long Pacific roll! Rushing up a maddening mountain, she would poise like a cockle-shell on the giddy summit, breathless and rolling, leap outward and down into the yawning chasm beneath, and bury herself in the smother of foam at the bottom. Then the recovery, another mountain, another sickening upward rush, another poise, and the downward crash. Abreast of him, to starboard, like a ghost of the storm, Chris saw the cook dashing apace with the schooner. Evidently, when washed overboard, he had grasped and become entangled in a trailing halyard.

For three hours more, along with this gruesome companion, Chris held the Sophie Sutherland before the wind and sea. He had long since forgotten his mangled fingers. The bandages had been torn away, and the cold, salt spray had eaten into the half-healed wounds until they were numb and no longer pained. But he was not cold. The terrific labor of steering forced the perspiration from every pore. Yet he was faint and weak with hunger and exhaustion, and hailed with delight the advent on deck of the captain, who fed him all of a pound of cake-chocolate. It strengthened him at once.

He ordered the captain to cut the halyard by which the cook's body was towing, and also to go forward and cut loose the jib-halyard and sheet. When he had done so, the jib fluttered a couple of moments like a handkerchief, then tore out of the bolt-ropes and vanished. The Sophie Sutherland was running under bare poles.

By noon the storm had spent itself, and by six in the evening the waves had died down sufficiently to let Chris leave the helm. It was almost hopeless to dream of the small boats weathering the typhoon, but there is always the chance in saving human life, and Chris at once applied himself to going back over the course along which he had fled. He managed to get a reef in one of the inner jibs and two reefs in the spanker, and then, with the aid of the watch-tackle, to hoist them to the stiff breeze that yet blew. And all through the night, tacking back and forth on the back track, he shook out canvas as fast as the wind would permit.

The injured sailing-master had turned delirious and between tending him and lending a hand with the ship, Chris kept the captain busy.

"Taught me more seamanship," as he afterward said, "than I'd learned on the whole voyage." But by daybreak the old man's feeble frame succumbed, and he fell off into exhausted sleep on the weather poop.

Chris, who could now lash the wheel, covered the tired man with blankets from below, and went fishing in the lazaretto for something to eat. But by the day following he found himself forced to give in, drowsing fitfully by the wheel and waking ever and anon to take a look at things.

On the afternoon of the third day he picked up a schooner, dismasted and battered. As he approached, close-hauled on the wind, he saw her decks crowded by an unusually large crew, and on sailing in closer, made out among others the faces of his missing comrades. And he was just in the nick of time, for they were fighting a losing fight at the pumps. An hour later they, with the crew of the sinking craft, were aboard the Sophie Sutherland.

Having wandered so far from their own vessel, they had taken refuge on the strange schooner just before the storm broke. She was a Canadian sealer on her first voyage, and as was now apparent, her last.

The captain of the Sophie Sutherland had a story to tell, also, and he told it well — so well, in fact, that when all hands were gathered together on deck during the dog-watch, Emil Johansen strode over to Chris and gripped him by the hand.

“Chris,” he said, so loudly that all could hear, “Chris, I gif in. You vas yoost so good a sailorman as I. You vas a bully boy and able seaman, and I pe proud for you!

“Und Chris! “ He turned as if he had forgotten something, and called back, “From dis time always you call me ‘Emil’ mitout der ‘Mister!”‘

Chun Ah Chun

There was nothing striking in the appearance of Chun Ah Chun. He was rather undersized, as Chinese go, and the Chinese narrow shoulders and spareness of flesh were his. The average tourist, casually glimpsing him on the streets of Honolulu, would have concluded that he was a good-natured little Chinese, probably the proprietor of a prosperous laundry or tailorshop. In so far as good nature and prosperity went, the judgment would be correct, though beneath the mark; for Ah Chun was as good-natured as he was prosperous, and of the latter no man knew a tithe the tale. It was well known that he was enormously wealthy, but in his case "enormous" was merely the symbol for the unknown.

Ah Chun had shrewd little eyes, black and beady and so very little that they were like gimlet-holes. But they were wide apart, and they sheltered under a forehead that was patently the forehead of a thinker. For Ah Chun had his problems, and had had them all his life. Not that he ever worried over them. He was essentially a philosopher, and whether as coolie, or multi-millionaire and master of many men, his poise of soul was the same. He lived always in the high equanimity of spiritual repose, undeterred by good fortune, unruffled by ill fortune. All things went well with him, whether they were blows from the overseer in the cane field or a slump in the price of sugar when he owned those cane fields himself. Thus, from the steadfast rock of his sure content he mastered problems such as are given to few men to consider, much less to a Chinese peasant.

He was precisely that--a Chinese peasant, born to labour in the fields all his days like a beast, but fated to escape from the fields like the prince in a fairy tale. Ah Chun did not remember his father, a small farmer in a district not far from Canton; nor did he remember much of his mother, who had died when he was six. But he did remember his respected uncle, Ah Kow, for him had he served as a slave from his sixth year to his twenty-fourth. It was then that he escaped by contracting himself as a coolie to labour for three years on the sugar plantations of Hawaii for fifty cents a day.

Ah Chun was observant. He perceived little details that not one man in a thousand ever noticed. Three years he worked in the field, at the end of which time he knew more about cane-growing than the overseers or even the superintendent, while the superintendent would have been astounded at the knowledge the weazened little coolie possessed of the reduction processes in the mill. But Ah Chun did not study only sugar processes. He studied to find out how men came to be owners of sugar mills and plantations. One judgment he achieved early, namely, that men did not become rich from the labour of their own hands. He knew, for he had laboured for a score of years himself. The men who grew rich did so from the labour of the hands of others. That man was richest who had the greatest number of his fellow creatures toiling for him.

So, when his term of contract was up, Ah Chun invested his savings in a small importing store, going into partnership with one, Ah Yung. The firm ultimately became the great one of “Ah Chun and Ah Yung,” which handled anything from India silks and ginseng to guano islands and blackbird brigs. In the meantime, Ah Chun hired out as cook. He was a good cook, and in three years he was the highest-paid chef in Honolulu. His career was assured, and he was a fool to abandon it, as Dantin, his employer, told him; but Ah Chun knew his own mind best, and for knowing it was called a triple-fool and given a present of fifty dollars over and above the wages due him.

The firm of Ah Chun and Ah Yung was prospering. There was no need for Ah Chun longer to be a cook. There were boom times in Hawaii. Sugar was being extensively planted, and labour was needed. Ah Chun saw the chance, and went into the labour-importing business. He brought thousands of Cantonese coolies into Hawaii, and his wealth began to grow. He made investments. His beady black eyes saw bargains where other men saw bankruptcy. He bought a fish-pond for a song, which later paid five hundred per cent and was the opening wedge by which he monopolized the fish market of Honolulu. He did not talk for publication, nor figure in politics, nor play at revolutions, but he forecast events more clearly and farther ahead than did the men who engineered them. In his mind’s eye he saw Honolulu a modern, electric-lighted city at a time when it straggled, unkempt and sand-tormented, over a barren reef of uplifted coral rock. So he bought land. He bought land from merchants who needed ready cash, from impecunious natives, from riotous traders’ sons, from widows and orphans and the lepers deported to Molokai; and, somehow, as the years went by, the pieces of land he had bought proved to be needed for warehouses, or coffee buildings, or hotels. He leased, and rented, sold and bought, and resold again.

But there were other things as well. He put his confidence and his money into Parkinson, the renegade captain whom nobody would trust. And Parkinson sailed away on mysterious voyages in the little Vega. Parkinson was taken care of until he died, and years afterward Honolulu was astonished when the news leaked out that the Drake and Acorn guano islands had been sold to the British Phosphate Trust for three-quarters of a million. Then there were the fat, lush days of King Kalakaua, when Ah Chun paid three hundred thousand dollars for the opium licence. If he paid a third of a million for the drug monopoly, the investment was nevertheless a good one, for the dividends bought him the Kalalau Plantation, which, in turn, paid him thirty per cent for seventeen years and was ultimately sold by him for a million and a half.

It was under the Kamehamehas, long before, that he had served his own country as Chinese Consul--a position that was not altogether unlucrative; and it was under Kamehameha IV that he changed his citizenship, becoming an Hawaiian subject in order to marry Stella Allendale, herself a subject of the brown-skinned king, though more of Anglo-Saxon blood ran in her veins than of Polynesian. In fact, the random breeds in her were so attenuated that they were valued at eighths and sixteenths. In the latter proportions was the blood of her great-grandmother, Paahao--the Princess Paahao, for she came of the royal line. Stella Allendale’s great-grandfather had been a Captain Blunt, an English adventurer who took service under Kamehameha I and was made a tabu chief himself. Her grandfather had been a New Bedford whaling captain, while through her own father had been introduced a remote blend of Italian and Portuguese which had been grafted upon his own English stock. Legally a Hawaiian, Ah Chun’s spouse was more of any one of three other nationalities.

And into this conglomerate of the races, Ah Chun introduced the Mongolian mixture. Thus, his children by Mrs. Ah Chun were one thirty-second Polynesian, one-sixteenth Italian, one sixteenth Portuguese, one-half Chinese, and eleven thirty-seconds English and American. It might well be that Ah Chun would have refrained from matrimony could he have foreseen the wonderful family that was to spring from this union. It was wonderful in many ways. First, there was its size. There were fifteen sons and daughters, mostly daughters. The sons had come first, three of them, and then had followed, in unswerving sequence, a round dozen of girls. The blend of the race was excellent. Not alone fruitful did it prove, for the progeny, without exception, was healthy and without blemish. But the most amazing thing about the family was its beauty. All the girls were beautiful--delicately, ethereally beautiful. Mamma Ah Chun's rotund lines seemed to modify papa Ah Chun's lean angles, so that the daughters were willowy without being lathy, round-muscled without being chubby. In every feature of every face were haunting reminiscences of Asia, all manipulated over and disguised by Old England, New England, and South of Europe. No observer, without information, would have guessed, the heavy Chinese strain in their veins; nor could any observer, after being informed, fail to note immediately the Chinese traces.

As beauties, the Ah Chun girls were something new. Nothing like them had been seen before. They resembled nothing so much as they resembled one another, and yet each girl was sharply individual. There was no mistaking one for another. On the other hand, Maud, who was blue-eyed and yellow-haired, would remind one instantly of Henrietta, an olive brunette with large, languishing dark eyes and hair that was blue-black. The hint of resemblance that ran through them all, reconciling every differentiation, was Ah Chun's contribution. He had furnished the groundwork upon which had been traced the blended patterns of the races. He had furnished the slim-boned Chinese frame, upon which had been builded the delicacies and subtleties of Saxon, Latin, and Polynesian flesh.

Mrs. Ah Chun had ideas of her own to which Ah Chun gave credence, though never permitting them expression when they conflicted with his own philosophic calm. She had been used all her life to living in European fashion. Very well. Ah Chun gave her a European mansion. Later, as his sons and daughters grew able to advise, he built a bungalow, a spacious, rambling affair, as unpretentious as it was magnificent. Also, as time went by, there arose a mountain house on Tantalus, to which the family could flee when the "sick wind" blew from the south. And at Waikiki he built a beach residence on an extensive site so well chosen that later on, when the United States government condemned it for fortification purposes, an immense sum accompanied the condemnation. In all his houses were billiard and smoking rooms and guest rooms galore, for Ah Chun's wonderful progeny was given to lavish entertainment. The furnishing was extravagantly simple. Kings' ransoms were expended without display--thanks to the educated tastes of the progeny.

Ah Chun had been liberal in the matter of education. “Never mind expense,” he had argued in the old days with Parkinson when that slack mariner could see no reason for making the Vega seaworthy; “you sail the schooner, I pay the bills.” And so with his sons and daughters. It had been for them to get the education and never mind the expense. Harold, the eldest-born, had gone to Harvard and Oxford; Albert and Charles had gone through Yale in the same classes. And the daughters, from the eldest down, had undergone their preparation at Mills Seminary in California and passed on to Vassar, Wellesley, or Bryn Mawr. Several, having so desired, had had the finishing touches put on in Europe. And from all the world Ah Chun’s sons and daughters returned to him to suggest and advise in the garnishment of the chaste magnificence of his residences. Ah Chun himself preferred the voluptuous glitter of Oriental display; but he was a philosopher, and he clearly saw that his children’s tastes were correct according to Western standards.

Of course, his children were not known as the Ah Chun children. As he had evolved from a coolie labourer to a multi-millionaire, so had his name evolved. Mamma Ah Chun had spelled it A’Chun, but her wiser offspring had elided the apostrophe and spelled it Achun. Ah Chun did not object. The spelling of his name interfered no whit with his comfort nor his philosophic calm. Besides, he was not proud. But when his children arose to the height of a starched shirt, a stiff collar, and a frock coat, they did interfere with his comfort and calm. Ah Chun would have none of it. He preferred the loose-flowing robes of China, and neither could they cajole nor bully him into making the change. They tried both courses, and in the latter one failed especially disastrously. They had not been to America for nothing. They had learned the virtues of the boycott as employed by organized labour, and he, their father, Chun Ah Chun, they boycotted in his own house, Mamma Achun aiding and abetting. But Ah Chun himself, while unversed in Western culture, was thoroughly conversant with Western labour conditions. An extensive employer of labour himself, he knew how to cope with its tactics. Promptly he imposed a lockout on his rebellious progeny and erring spouse. He discharged his scores of servants, locked up his stables, closed his houses, and went to live in the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, in which enterprise he happened to be the heaviest stockholder. The family fluttered distractedly on visits about with friends, while Ah Chun calmly managed his many affairs, smoked his long pipe with the tiny silver bowl, and pondered the problem of his wonderful progeny.

This problem did not disturb his calm. He knew in his philosopher's soul that when it was ripe he would solve it. In the meantime he enforced the lesson that complacent as he might be, he was nevertheless the absolute dictator of the Achun destinies. The family held out for a week, then returned, along with Ah Chun and the many servants, to occupy the bungalow once more. And thereafter no question was raised when Ah Chun elected to enter his brilliant drawing-room in blue silk robe, wadded slippers, and black silk skull-cap with red button peak, or when he chose to draw at his slender-stemmed silver-bowled pipe among the cigarette-and cigar-smoking officers and civilians on the broad verandas or in the smoking room.

Ah Chun occupied a unique position in Honolulu. Though he did not appear in society, he was eligible anywhere. Except among the Chinese merchants of the city, he never went out; but he received, and he always was the centre of his household and the head of his table. Himself peasant, born Chinese, he presided over an atmosphere of culture and refinement second to none in all the islands. Nor were there any in all the islands too proud to cross his threshold and enjoy his hospitality. First of all, the Achun bungalow was of irreproachable tone. Next, Ah Chun was a power. And finally, Ah Chun was a moral paragon and an honest business man. Despite the fact that business morality was higher than on the mainland, Ah Chun outshone the business men of Honolulu in the scrupulous rigidity of his honesty. It was a saying that his word was as good as his bond. His signature was never needed to bind him. He never broke his word. Twenty years after Hotchkiss, of Hotchkiss, Morterson Company, died, they found among mislaid papers a memorandum of a loan of thirty thousand dollars to Ah Chun. It had been incurred when Ah Chun was Privy Councillor to Kamehameha II. In the bustle and confusion of those heyday, money-making times, the affair had slipped Ah Chun's mind. There was no note, no legal claim against him, but he settled in full with the Hotchkiss' Estate, voluntarily paying a compound interest that dwarfed the principal. Likewise, when he verbally guaranteed the disastrous Kakiku Ditch Scheme, at a time when the least sanguine did not dream a guarantee necessary--"Signed his cheque for two hundred thousand without a quiver, gentlemen, without a quiver," was the report of the secretary of the defunct enterprise, who had been sent on the forlorn hope of finding out Ah Chun's intentions. And on top of the many similar actions that were true of his word, there was scarcely a man of repute in the islands that at one time or another had not experienced the helping financial hand of Ah Chun.

So it was that Honolulu watched his wonderful family grow up into a perplexing problem and secretly sympathized with him, for it was beyond any of them to imagine what he was going to do with it. But Ah Chun saw the problem more clearly than they. No one knew as he knew the extent to which he was an alien in his family. His own family did not guess it. He saw that there was no place for him amongst this marvellous seed of his loins, and he looked forward to his declining years and knew that he would grow more and more alien. He did not understand his children. Their conversation was of things that did not interest him and about which he knew nothing. The culture of the West had passed him by. He was Asiatic to the last fibre, which meant that he was heathen. Their Christianity was to him so much nonsense. But all this he would have ignored as extraneous and irrelevant, could he have but understood the young people themselves. When Maud, for instance, told him that the housekeeping bills for the month were thirty thousand--that he understood, as he understood Albert's request for five thousand with which to buy the schooner yacht Muriel and become a member of the Hawaiian Yacht Club. But it was their remoter, complicated desires and mental processes that obfuscated him. He was not slow in learning that the mind of each son and daughter was a secret labyrinth which he could never hope to tread. Always he came upon the wall that divides East from West. Their souls were inaccessible to him, and by the same token he knew that his soul was inaccessible to them.

Besides, as the years came upon him, he found himself harking back more and more to his own kind. The reeking smells of the Chinese quarter were spicy to him. He sniffed them with satisfaction as he passed along the street, for in his mind they carried him back to the narrow tortuous alleys of Canton swarming with life and movement. He regretted that he had cut off his queue to please Stella Allendale in the prenuptial days, and he seriously considered the advisability of shaving his crown and growing a new one. The dishes his highly paid chef concocted for him failed to tickle his reminiscent palate in the way that the weird messes did in the stuffy restaurant down in the Chinese quarter. He enjoyed vastly more a half-hour's smoke and chat with two or three Chinese chums, than to preside at the lavish and elegant dinners for which his bungalow was famed, where the pick of the Americans and Europeans sat at the long table, men and women on equality, the women with jewels that blazed in the subdued light against white necks and arms, the men in evening dress, and all chattering and laughing over topics and witticisms that, while they were not exactly Greek to him, did not interest him nor entertain.

But it was not merely his alienness and his growing desire to return to his Chinese flesh-pots that constituted the problem. There was also his wealth. He had looked forward to a placid old age. He had worked hard. His reward should have been peace and repose. But he knew that with his immense fortune peace and repose could not possibly be his. Already there were signs and omens. He had seen similar troubles before. There was his old employer, Dantin, whose children had wrested from him, by due process of law, the management of his property, having the Court appoint guardians to administer it for him. Ah Chun knew, and knew thoroughly well, that had Dantin been a poor man, it would have been found that he could quite rationally manage his own affairs. And old Dantin had had only three children and half a million, while he, Chun Ah Chun, had fifteen children and no one but himself knew how many millions.

"Our daughters are beautiful women," he said to his wife, one evening. "There are many young men. The house is always full of young men. My cigar bills are very heavy. Why are there no marriages?"

Mamma Achun shrugged her shoulders and waited.

"Women are women and men are men--it is strange there are no marriages. Perhaps the young men do not like our daughters."

"Ah, they like them well enough," Mamma Chun answered; "but you see, they cannot forget that you are your daughters' father."

"Yet you forgot who my father was," Ah Chun said gravely. "All you asked was for me to cut off my queue."

"The young men are more particular than I was, I fancy."

"What is the greatest thing in the world?" Ah Chun demanded with abrupt irrelevance.

Mamma Achun pondered for a moment, then replied: "God."

He nodded. "There are gods and gods. Some are paper, some are wood, some are bronze. I use a small one in the office for a paper-weight. In the Bishop Museum are many gods of coral rock and lava stone."

"But there is only one God," she announced decisively, stiffening her ample frame argumentatively.

Ah Chun noted the danger signal and sheered off.

"What is greater than God, then?" he asked. "I will tell you. It is money. In my time I have had dealings with Jews and Christians, Mohammedans and Buddhists, and with little black men from the Solomons and New Guinea who carried their god about them, wrapped in oiled paper. They possessed various gods, these men, but they all worshipped money. There is that Captain Higginson. He seems to like Henrietta."

"He will never marry her," retorted Mamma Achun. "He will be an admiral before he dies--"

"A rear-admiral," Ah Chun interpolated.

"Yes, I know. That is the way they retire."

"His family in the United States is a high one. They would not like it if he married . . . if he did not marry an American girl."

Ah Chun knocked the ashes out of his pipe, thoughtfully refilling the silver bowl with a tiny pleget of tobacco. He lighted it and smoked it out before he spoke.

"Henrietta is the oldest girl. The day she marries I will give her three hundred thousand dollars. That will fetch that Captain Higginson and his high family along with him. Let the word go out to him. I leave it to you."

And Ah Chun sat and smoked on, and in the curling smoke-wreaths he saw take shape the face and figure of Toy Shuey--Toy Shuey, the maid of all work in his uncle's house in the Cantonese village, whose work was never done and who received for a whole year's work one dollar. And he saw his youthful self arise in the curling smoke, his youthful self who had toiled eighteen years in his uncle's field for little more. And now he, Ah Chun, the peasant, dowered his daughter with three hundred thousand years of such toil. And she was but one daughter of a dozen. He was not elated at the thought. It struck him that it was a funny, whimsical world, and he chuckled aloud and startled Mamma Achun from a revery which he knew lay deep in the hidden crypts of her being where he had never penetrated.

But Ah Chun's word went forth, as a whisper, and Captain Higginson forgot his rear-admiralship and his high family and took to wife three hundred thousand dollars and a refined and cultured girl who was one thirty-second Polynesian, one-sixteenth Italian, one-sixteenth Portuguese, eleven thirty-seconds English and Yankee, and one-half Chinese.

Ah Chun's munificence had its effect. His daughters became suddenly eligible and desirable. Clara was the next, but when the Secretary of the Territory formally proposed for her, Ah Chun informed him that he must wait his turn, that Maud was the oldest and that she must be married first. It was shrewd policy. The whole family was made vitally interested in marrying off Maud, which it did in three months, to Ned Humphreys, the United States immigration commissioner. Both he and Maud complained, for the dowry was only two hundred thousand. Ah Chun explained that his initial generosity had been to break the ice, and that after that his daughters could not expect otherwise than to go more cheaply.

Clara followed Maud, and thereafter, for a space of two years; there was a continuous round of weddings in the bungalow. In the meantime Ah Chun had not been idle. Investment after investment was called in. He sold out his interests in a score of enterprises, and step by step, so as not to cause a slump in the market, he disposed of his large holdings in real estate. Toward the last he did precipitate a slump and sold at sacrifice. What caused this haste were the squalls he saw already rising above the horizon. By the time Lucille was married, echoes of bickerings and jealousies were already rumbling in his ears. The air was thick with schemes and counter-schemes to gain his favour and to prejudice him against one or another or all but one of his sons-in-law. All of which was not conducive to the peace and repose he had planned for his old age.

He hastened his efforts. For a long time he had been in correspondence with the chief banks in Shanghai and Macao. Every steamer for several years had carried away drafts drawn in favour of one, Chun Ah Chun, for deposit in those Far Eastern banks. The drafts now became heavier. His two youngest daughters were not yet married. He did not wait, but dowered them with a hundred thousand each, which sums lay in the Bank of Hawaii, drawing interest and awaiting their wedding day. Albert took over the business of the firm of Ah Chun and Ah Yung, Harold, the eldest, having elected to take a quarter of a million and go to England to live. Charles, the youngest, took a hundred thousand, a legal guardian, and a course in a Keeley institute. To Mamma Achun was given the bungalow, the mountain House on Tantalus, and a new seaside residence in place of the one Ah Chun sold to the government. Also, to Mamma Achun was given half a million in money well invested.

Ah Chun was now ready to crack the nut of the problem. One fine morning when the family was at breakfast--he had seen to it that all his sons-in-law and their wives were present--he announced that he was returning to his ancestral soil. In a neat little homily he explained that he had made ample provision for his family, and he laid down various maxims that he was sure, he said, would enable them to dwell together in peace and harmony. Also, he gave business advice to his sons-in-law, preached the virtues of temperate living and safe investments, and gave them the benefit of his encyclopedic knowledge of industrial and business conditions in Hawaii. Then he called for his carriage, and, in the company of the weeping Mamma Achun, was driven down to the Pacific Mail steamer, leaving behind him a panic in the bungalow. Captain Higginson clamoured wildly for an injunction. The daughters shed copious tears. One of their husbands, an ex-Federal judge, questioned Ah Chun's sanity, and hastened to the proper authorities to inquire into it. He returned with the information that Ah Chun had appeared before the commission the day before, demanded an examination, and passed with flying colours. There was nothing to be done, so they went down and said good-bye to the little old man, who waved farewell from the promenade deck as the big steamer poked her nose seaward through the coral reef.

But the little old man was not bound for Canton. He knew his own country too well, and the squeeze of the Mandarins, to venture into it with the tidy bulk of wealth that remained to him. He went to Macao. Now Ah Chun had long exercised the power of a king and he was as imperious as a king. When he landed at Macao and went into the office of the biggest European hotel to register, the clerk closed the book on him. Chinese were not permitted. Ah Chun called for the manager and was treated with contumely. He drove away, but in two hours he was back again. He called the clerk and manager in, gave them a month's salary, and discharged them. He had made himself the owner of the hotel; and in the finest suite he settled down during the many months the gorgeous palace in the suburbs was building for him. In the meantime, with the inevitable ability that was his, he increased the earnings of his big hotel from three per cent to thirty.

The troubles Ah Chun had flown began early. There were sons-in-law that made bad investments, others that played ducks and drakes with the Achun dowries. Ah Chun being out of it, they looked at Mamma Ah Chun and her half million, and, looking, engendered not the best of feeling toward one another. Lawyers waxed fat in the striving to ascertain the construction of trust deeds. Suits, cross-suits, and counter-suits cluttered the Hawaiian courts. Nor did the police courts escape. There were angry encounters in which harsh words and harsher blows were struck. There were such things as flower pots being thrown to add emphasis to winged words. And suits for libel arose that dragged their way through the courts and kept Honolulu agog with excitement over the revelations of the witnesses.

In his palace, surrounded by all dear delights of the Orient, Ah Chun smokes his placid pipe and listens to the turmoil overseas. By each mail steamer, in faultless English, typewritten on an American machine, a letter goes from Macao to Honolulu, in which, by admirable texts and precepts, Ah Chun advises his family to live in unity and harmony. As for himself, he is out of it all, and well content. He has won to peace and repose. At times he chuckles and rubs his hands, and his slant little black eyes twinkle merrily at the thought of the funny world. For out of all his living and philosophizing, that remains to him--the conviction that it is a very funny world.

Created He Them

SHE met him at the door.

"I did not think you would be so early."

"It is half past eight." He looked at his watch. "The train leaves a 9:12."

He was very businesslike, until he saw her lips tremble as she abruptly turned and led the way.

"It'll be all right, little woman," he said soothingly. "Doctor Bodineau's the man. He'll pull him through, you'll see."

They entered the living-room. His glance quested apprehensively about, then turned to her.

"Where's Al?"

She did not answer, but with a sudden impulse came close to him and stood motionless. She was a slender, dark-eyed woman, in whose face was stamped the strain and stress of living. But the fine lines and the haunted look in the eyes were not the handiwork of mere worry. He knew whose handiwork it was as he looked upon it, and she knew when she consulted her mirror.

"It's no use, Mary," he said. He put his hand on her shoulder. "We've tried everything. It's a wretched business, I know, but what else can we do? You've failed. Doctor Bodineau's all that's left."

"If I had another chance . . ." she began falteringly.

"We've threshed that all out," he answered harshly. "You've got to buck up, now. You know what conclusion we arrived at. You know you haven't the ghost of a hope in another chance."

She shook her head. "I know it. But it is terrible, the thought of his going away to fight it out alone."

"He won't be alone. There's Doctor Bodineau. And besides, it's a beautiful place."

She remained silent.

"It is the only thing," he said.

"It is the only thing," she repeated mechanically.

He looked at his watch. "Where's Al?"

"I'll send him."

When the door had closed behind her, he walked over to the window and looked out, drumming absently with his knuckles on the pane.

“Hello.”

He turned and responded to the greeting of the man who had just entered. There was a perceptible drag to the man’s feet as he walked across toward the window and paused irresolutely halfway.

“I’ve changed my mind, George,” he announced hurriedly and nervously. “I’m not going.”

He plucked at his sleeve, shuffled with his feet, dropped his eyes, and with a strong effort raised them again to confront the other.

George regarded him silently, his nostrils distending and his lean fingers unconsciously crooking like an eagle’s talons about to clutch.

In line and feature there was much of resemblance between the two men; and yet, in the strongest resemblances there was a radical difference. Theirs were the same black eyes, but those of the man at the window were sharp and straight looking, while those of the man in the middle of the room were cloudy and furtive. He could not face the other’s gaze, and continually and vainly struggled with himself to do so. The high cheek bones with the hollows beneath were the same, yet the texture of the hollows seemed different. The thin-lipped mouths were from the same mould, but George’s lips were firm and muscular, while Al’s were soft and loose--the lips of an ascetic turned voluptuary. There was also a sag at the corners. His flesh hinted of grossness, especially so in the eagle-like aquiline nose that must once have been the other’s, but that had lost the austerity the other’s still retained.

AI fought for steadiness in the middle of the floor. The silence bothered him. He had a feeling that he was about to begin swaying back and forth. He moistened his lips with his tongue.

“I’m going to stay,” he said desperately.

He dropped his eyes and plucked again at his sleeve.

“And you are only twenty-six years old,” George said at last. “You poor, feeble old man.” lilt.

“Don’t be so sure of that,” AI retorted, with a flash of belligerence.

“Do you remember when we swam that mile and a half across the channel?”

“Well, and what of it?” A sullen expression was creeping across Al’s face.

“And do you remember when we boxed in the barn after school?”

“I could take all you gave me.”

“All I gave you!” George’s voice rose momentarily to a higher pitch. “You licked me four afternoons out of five. You were twice as strong as I--three times as strong. And now I’d be afraid to land on you with a sofa cushion; you’d crumple up like a last year’s leaf. You’d die, you poor, miserable old man.”

“You needn’t abuse me just because I’ve changed my mind,” the other protested, the hint of a whine in his voice.

His wife entered, and he looked appeal to her; but the man at the window strode suddenly up to him and burst out:--

“You don’t know your own mind for two successive minutes! You haven’t any mind, you spineless, crawling worm!”

“You can’t make me angry.” Al smiled with cunning, and glanced triumphantly at his wife. “You can’t make me angry,” he repeated, as though the idea were thoroughly gratifying to him. “I know your game. It’s my stomach, I tell you. I can’t help it. Before God, I can’t! Isn’t it my stomach, Mary?”

She glanced at George and spoke composedly, though she hid a trembling hand in a fold of her skirt.

“Isn’t it time?” she asked softly.

Her husband turned upon her savagely. “I’m not going to go!” he cried. “That’s just what I’ve been telling . . . him. And I tell you again, all of you, I’m not going. You can’t bully me.” “Why, Al, dear, you said--“ she began.

“Never mind what I said!” he broke out. “I’ve said something else right now, and you’ve heard it, and that settles it.”

He walked across the room and threw himself with emphasis into a Morris chair. But the other man was swiftly upon him. The talon-like fingers gripped his shoulders, jerked him to his feet, and held him there.

“You’ve reached the limit, Al, and I want you to understand it. I’ve tried to treat you like . . . like my brother, but hereafter I shall treat you like the thing that you are. Do you understand?”

The anger in his voice was cold. The blaze in his eyes was cold. It was vastly more effective than any outburst, and Al cringed under it and under the clutching hand that was bruising his shoulder muscles.

“It is only because of me that you have this house, that you have the food you eat. Your position? Any other man would have been shown the door a year ago--two years ago. I have held you in it. Your salary has been charity. It has been paid out of my pocket. Mary . . . her dresses. . . that gown she has on is made over; she wears the discarded dresses of her sisters, of my wife. Charity--do you understand? Your children--they are wearing the discarded clothes of my children, of the children of my neighbors who think the clothes went to some orphan asylum. And it is an orphan asylum . . . or it soon will be."

He emphasized each point with an unconscious tightening of his grip on the shoulder. Al was squirming with the pain of it. The sweat was starting out on his forehead.

"Now listen well to me," his brother went on. "In three minutes you will tell me that you are going with me. If you don't, Mary and the children will be taken away from you--to-day.. You needn't ever come to the office. This house will be closed to you. And in six months I shall have the pleasure of burying you. You have three minutes to make up your mind."

Al made a strangling movement, and reached up with weak fingers to the clutching hand.

"My heart . . . let me go . . . you'll be the death of me," he gasped.

The hand thrust him down forcibly into the Morris chair and released him.

The clock on the mantle ticked loudly. George glanced at it, and at Mary. She was leaning against the table, unable to conceal her trembling. He became unpleasantly aware of the feeling of his brother's fingers on his hand. Quite unconsciously he wiped the back of the hand upon his coat. The clock ticked on in the silence. It seemed to George that the room reverberated with his voice. He could hear himself still speaking.

"I'll go," came from the Morris chair.

It was a weak and shaken voice, and it was a weak and shaken man that pulled himself out of the Morris chair. He started toward the door.

"Where are you going?" George demanded.

"Suit case," came the response. "Mary'll send the trunk later. I'll be back In a minute."

The door closed after him. A moment later, struck with sudden suspicion, George was opening the door. He glanced in. His brother stood at a sideboard, in one hand a decanter, in the other hand, bottom up and to his lips, a whiskey glass.

Across the glass Al saw that he was observed. It threw him into a panic. Hastily he tried to refill the glass and get it to his lips; but glass and decanter were sent smashing to the floor. He snarled. It was like the sound of a wild beast. But the grip on his shoulder subdued and frightened him. He was being propelled toward the door.

"The suit case," he gasped. "It's there . . . in that room. Let me get it."

"Where's the key?" his brother asked, when he had brought it.

"It isn't locked."

The next moment the suit case was spread open, and George's hand was searching the contents. From one side it brought out a bottle of whiskey, from the other side a flask. He snapped the case shut.

"Come on," he said. "If we miss one car, we miss that train."

He went out into the hallway, leaving Al with his wife. It was like a funeral, George thought, as he waited.

His brother's overcoat caught on the knob of the front door and delayed its closing long enough for Mary's first sob to come to their ears. George's lips were very thin and compressed as he went down the steps. In one hand he carried the suit case. With the other hand he held his brother's arm.

As they neared the corner, he heard the electric car a block away, and urged his brother on. Al was breathing hard. His feet dragged, and shuffled, and he held back.

"A hell of a brother you are," he panted.

For reply, he received a vicious jerk on his arm. It reminded him of his childhood when he was hurried along by some angry grown-up. And like a child, he had to be helped up the car step. He sank down on an outside seat, panting, sweating, overcome by the exertion. He followed George's eyes as the latter looked him up and down.

"A hell of a brother you are," was George's comment when he had finished the inspection.

Moisture welled into Al's eyes.

"It's my stomach," he said with self-pity.

"I don't wonder," was the retort. "Burnt out like the crater of a volcano. Fervent heat isn't a circumstance."

Thereafter they did not speak. When they arrived at the transfer point, George came to himself with a start. He smiled. With fixed gaze that did not see the houses that streamed across his field of vision, he had himself been sunk deep in self-pity. He helped his brother from the car, and looked up the intersecting street. The car they were to take was not in sight.

Al's eyes chanced upon the corner grocery and saloon across the way. At once he became restless. His hands passed beyond his control, and he yearned hungrily across the street to the door that swung open even as he looked and let in a happy pilgrim. And in that instant he saw the white-jacketed bar-tender against an array of glittering glass. Quite unconsciously he started to cross the street.

“Hold on.” George’s hand was on his arm.

“I want some whiskey,” he answered.

“You’ve already had some.”

“That was hours ago. Go on, George, let me have some. It’s the last day. Don’t shut off on me until we get there--God knows it will be soon enough.”

George glanced desperately up the street. The car was in sight.

“There isn’t time for a drink,” he said.

“I don’t want a drink. I want a bottle.” Al’s voice became wheedling. “Go on, George. It’s the last, the very last.”

“No.” The denial was as final as George’s thin lips could make it.

Al glanced at the approaching car. He sat down suddenly on the curbstone.

“What’s the matter?” his brother asked, with momentary alarm.

“Nothing. I want some whiskey. It’s my stomach.”

“Come on now, get up.”

George reached for him, but was anticipated, for his brother sprawled flat on the pavement, oblivious to the dirt and to the curious glances of the passers-by. The car was clanging its gong at the crossing, a block away.

“You’ll miss it,” Al grinned from the pavement. “And it will be your fault.”

George’s fists clenched tightly.

“For two cents I’d give you a thrashing.”

“And miss the car,” was the triumphant comment from the pavement.

George looked at the car. It was halfway down the block. He looked at his watch. He debated a second longer.

“All right,” he said. “I’ll get it. But you get on that car. If you miss it, I’ll break the bottle over your head.”

He dashed across the street and into the saloon. The car came in and stopped. There were no passengers to get off. Al dragged himself up the steps and sat down. He smiled as the conductor rang the bell and the car started. The swinging door of the saloon burst open. Clutching in his hand the suit case and a pint bottle of whiskey, George started in pursuit. The conductor, his hand on the bell cord, waited to see if it would be necessary to stop. It was not. George swung lightly aboard, sat down beside his brother, and passed him the bottle.

"You might have got a quart," Al said reproachfully.

He extracted the cork with a pocket corkscrew, and elevated the bottle.

"I'm sick . . . my stomach," he explained in apologetic tones to the passenger who sat next to him.

On the train they sat in the smoking-car. George felt that it was imperative. Also, having successfully caught the train, his heart softened. He felt more kindly toward his brother, and accused himself of unnecessary harshness. He strove to atone by talking about their mother, and sisters, and the little affairs and interests of the family. But Al was morose, and devoted himself to the bottle. As the time passed, his mouth hung looser and looser, while the rings under his eyes seemed to puff out and all his facial muscles to relax.

"It's my stomach," he said, once, when he finished the bottle and dropped it under the seat; but the swift hardening of his brother's face did not encourage further explanations.

The conveyance that met them at the station had all the dignity and luxuriousness of a private carriage. George's eyes were keen for the ear marks of the institution to which they were going, but his apprehensions were allayed from moment to moment. As they entered the wide gateway and rolled on through the spacious grounds, he felt sure that the institutional side of the place would not jar upon his brother. It was more like a summer hotel, or, better yet, a country club. And as they swept on through the spring sunshine, the songs of birds in his ears and in his nostrils the breath of flowers, George sighed for a week of rest in such a place, and before his eyes loomed the arid vista of summer in town and at the office. There was not room in his income for his brother and himself.

"Let us take a walk in the grounds," he suggested, after they had met Doctor Bodineau and inspected the quarters assigned to Al. "The carriage leaves for the station in half an hour, and we'll just have time."

"It's beautiful," he remarked a moment later. Under his feet was the velvet grass, the trees arched overhead, and he stood in mottled sunshine. "I wish I could stay for a month."

"I'll trade places with you," Al said quickly.

George laughed it off, but he felt a sinking of the heart.

"Look at that oak!" he cried. "And that woodpecker! Isn't he a beauty!"

"I don't like it here," he heard his brother mutter.

George's lips tightened in preparation for the struggle, but he said:--

"I'm going to send Mary and the children off to the mountains. She needs it, and so do they. And when you're in shape, I'll send you right on to join them. Then you can take your summer vacation before you come back to the office."

"I'm not going to stay in this damned hole, for all you talk about it," Al announced abruptly.

"Yes you are, and you're going to get your health and strength back again so that the look of you will put the color in Mary's cheeks where it used to be."

"I'm going back with you." Al's voice was firm. "I'm going to take the same train back. It's about time for that carriage, I guess."

"I haven't told you all my plans," George tried to go on, but Al cut him off.

"You might as well quit that. I don't want any of your soapy talking. You treat me like a child. I'm not a child. My mind's made up, and I'll show you how long it can stay made up. You needn't talk to me. I don't care a rap for what you're going to say."

A baleful light was in his eyes, and to his brother he seemed for all the world like a cornered rat, desperate and ready to fight. As George looked at him he remembered back to their childhood, and it came to him that at last was aroused in Al the same old stubborn strain that had enabled him, as a child, to stand against all force and persuasion.

George abandoned hope. He had lost. This creature was not human. The last fine instinct of the human had fled. It was a brute, sluggish and stolid, impossible to move--just the raw stuff of life, combative, rebellious, and indomitable. And as he contemplated his brother he felt in himself the rising up of a similar brute. He became suddenly aware that his fingers were tensing and crooking like a thug's, and he knew the desire to kill. And his reason, turned traitor at last, counselled that he should kill, that it was the only thing left for him to do.

He was aroused by a servant calling to him through the trees that the carriage was waiting. He answered. Then, looking straight before him, he discovered his brother. He had forgotten it was his brother. It had been only a thing the moment before. He began to talk, and as he talked the way became clear to him His reason had not turned traitor.

The brute in him had. merely orientated his reason

"You are no earthly good, Al," he said. "You know that. You've made Mary's life a hell You are a curse to your children And you have not made life exactly a paradise for the rest of us."

"There's no use your talking," Al interjected. "I'm not going to stay here."

"That's what I'm coming to," George continued. "You don't have stay here." (Al's face brightened, and he involuntarily made a movement, I meet, as though about to start toward the carriage.) "On the other hand, it is not necessary that you should return with me. There is another way."

George's hand went to his hip pocket and appeared with a revolver. It lay along his palm, the butt toward Al, and toward Al he extended it. At the same time, with his head, he indicated the near-by thicket.

"You can't bluff me," Al snarled.

"It is not a bluff, Al. Look at me. I mean it. And if you don't do it for yourself, I shall have to do it for you."

They faced each other, the proffered revolver still extended. Al debated for a moment, then his eyes blazed. With a quick movement he seized the revolver.

"My God! I'll do it," he said. "I'll show you what I've got in me."

George felt suddenly sick. He turned away. He did not see his brother enter the thicket, but he heard the passage of his body through the leaves and branches.

"Good-by, Al," he called.

"Good-by," came from the thicket.

George felt the sweat upon his forehead. He began mopping his face with his handkerchief. He heard, as from a remote distance, the voice of the servant again calling to him that the carriage was waiting. The woodpecker dropped down through the mottled sunshine and lighted on the trunk of a tree a dozen feet away. George felt that it was all a dream, and yet through it all he felt supreme justification. It was the right thing to do. It was the only thing.

His whole body gave a spasmodic start, as though the revolver had been fired. It was the voice of Al, close at his back.

"Here's your gun," Al said. "I'll stay."

The servant appeared among the trees, approaching rapidly and calling anxiously. George put the weapon in his pocket and caught both his brother’s hands in his own.

“God bless you, old man,” he murmured; “and”--with a final ueeze of the hands--“good luck!”

“I’m coming,” he called to the servant; and turned and ran through the trees toward the carriage.

A Curious Fragment

[The capitalist, or industrial oligarch, Roger Vanderwater, mentioned in the narrative, has been identified as the ninth in the line of the Vanderwaters that controlled for hundreds of years the cotton factories of the South. This Roger Vanderwater flourished in the last decades of the twentysixth century after Christ, which was the fifth century of the terrible industrial oligarchy that was reared upon the ruins of the early Republic.

From internal evidences we are convinced that the narrative which follows was not reduced to writing till the twenty-ninth century. Not only was it unlawful to write or print such matter during that period, but the working-class was so illiterate that only in rare instances were its members able to read and write. This was the dark reign of the overman, in whose speech the great mass of the people were characterized as the "herd animals." AII literacy was frowned upon and stamped out. From the statute books of the times may be instanced that black law that made it a capital offence for any man, no matter of what class, to teach even the alphabet to a member of the working-class. Such stringent limitation of education to the ruling class was necessary if that class was to continue to rule.

One result of the foregoing was the development of the professional story-tellers. These story-tellers were paid by the oligarchy, and the tales they told were legendary, mythical, romantic, and harmless. But the spirit of freedom never quite died out, and agitators, under the guise of storytellers, preached revolt to the slave class. That the following tale was banned by the oligarchs we have proof from the records of the criminal police court of Ashbury, wherein, on January 27, 2734, one John Tourney, found guilty of telling the tale in a boozing-ken of laborers, was sentenced to five years' penal servitude in the borax mines of the Arizona Desert.

— EDITOR'S NOTE.]

LISTEN, my brothers, and I will tell you a tale of an arm. It was the arm of Tom Dixon, and Tom Dixon was a weaver of the first class in a factory of that hell-hound and master, Roger Vanderwater. This factory was called "Hell's Bottom" . . . by the slaves who toiled in it, and I guess they ought to know; and it was situated in Kingsbury, at the other end of the town from Vanderwater's summer palace. You do not know where Kingsbury is? There are many things, my brothers, that you do not know, and it is sad. It is because you do not know that you are slaves. When I have told you this tale, I should like to form a class among you for the learning of written and printed speech. Our masters read and write and possess many books, and it is because of that that they are our masters, and live in palaces, and do not work. When the toilers learn to read and write,--all of them,--they will grow strong; then they will use their strength to break their bonds, and there will be no more masters and no more slaves.

Kingsbury, my brothers, is in the old State of Alabama. For three hundred years the Vanderwaters have owned Kingsbury and its slave pens and factories, and slave pens and factories in many other places and States. You have heard of the Vanderwaters,--who has not?--but let me tell you things you do not know about them. The first Vanderwater was a slave, even as you and I. Have you got that? He was a slave, and that was over three hundred years ago. His father was a machinist in the slave pen of Alexander Burrell, and his mother was a washerwoman in the same slave pen. There is no doubt about this. I am telling you truth. It is history. It is printed, every word of it, in the history books of our masters, which you cannot read because your masters will not permit you to learn to read. You can understand why they will not permit you to learn to read, when there are such things in the books. They know, and they are very wise. If you did read such things, you might be wanting in respect to your masters, which would be a dangerous thing . . . to your masters. But I know, for I can read, and I am telling you what I have read with my own eyes in the history books of our masters.

The first Vanderwater's name was not Vanderwater; it was Vange--Bill Vange, the son of Yergis Vange, the machinist, and Laura Carnly, the washerwoman. Young Bill Vange was strong. He might have remained with the slaves and led them to freedom; instead, however, he served the masters and was well rewarded. He began his service, when yet a small child, as a spy in his home slave pen. He is known to have informed on his own father for seditious utterance. This is fact. I have read it with my own eyes in the records. He was too good a slave for the slave pen. Alexander Burrell took him out, while yet a child, and he was taught to read and write. He was taught many things, and he was entered in the secret service of the government. Of course, he no longer wore the slave dress, except for disguise at such times when he sought to penetrate the secrets and plots of the slaves. It was he, when but eighteen years of age, who brought that great hero and comrade, Ralph Jacobus, to trial and execution in the electric chair. Of course, you have all heard the sacred name of Ralph Jacobus, but it is news to you that he was brought to his death by the first Vanderwater, whose name was Vange. I know. I have read it in the books. There are many interesting things like that in the books.

And after Ralph Jacobus died his shameful death, Bill Vange's name began the many changes it was to undergo. He was known as "Sly Vange" far and wide. He rose high in the secret service, and he was rewarded in grand ways, but still he was not a member of the master class. The men were willing that he should become so; it was the women of the master class who refused to have Sly Vange one of them. Sly Vange gave good service to the masters. He had been a slave himself, and he knew the ways of the slaves. There was no fooling him. In those days the slaves were braver than now, and they were always trying for their freedom. And Sly Vange was everywhere, in all their schemes and plans, bringing their schemes and plans to naught and their leaders to the electric chair. It was in 2255 that his name was next changed for him. It was in that year that the Great Mutiny took place. In that region west of the Rocky Mountains, seventeen millions of slaves strove bravely to overthrow their masters. Who knows, if Sly Vange had not lived, but that they would have succeeded? But Sly Vange was very much alive. The masters gave him supreme command of the situation. In eight months of fighting, one million and three hundred and fifty thousand slaves were killed. Vange, Bill Vange, Sly Vange, killed them, and he broke the Great Mutiny. And he was greatly rewarded, and so red were his hands with the blood of the slaves that thereafter he was called "Bloody Vange." You see, my brothers, what interesting things are to be found in the books when one can read them. And, take my word for it, there are many other things, even more interesting, in the books. And if you will but study with me, in a year's time you can read those books for yourselves--ay, in six months some of you will be able to read those books for yourselves.

Bloody Vange lived to a ripe old age, and always, to the last, was he received in the councils of the masters; but never was he made a master himself. He had first opened his eyes, you see, in a slave pen. But oh, he was well rewarded! He had a dozen palaces in which to live. He, who was no master, owned thousands of slaves. He had a great pleasure yacht upon the sea that was a floating palace, and he owned a whole island in the sea where toiled ten thousand slaves on his coffee plantations. But in his old age he was lonely, for he lived apart, hated by his brothers, the slaves, and looked down upon by those he had served and who refused to be his brothers. The masters looked down upon him because he had been born a slave. Enormously wealthy he died; but he died horribly, tormented by his conscience, regretting all he had done and the red stain on his name.

But with his children it was different. They had not been born in the slave pen, and by the special ruling of the Chief Oligarch of that time, John Morrison, they were elevated to the master class. And it was then that the name of Vange disappears from the page of history. It becomes Vanderwater, and Jason Vange, the son of Bloody Vange, becomes Jason Vanderwater, the founder of the Vanderwater line. But that was three hundred years ago, and the Vanderwaters of to-day forget their beginnings and imagine that somehow the clay of their bodies is different stuff from the clay in your body and mine and in the bodies of all slaves. And I ask you, Why should a slave become the master of another slave? And why should the son of a slave become the master of many slaves? I leave these questions for you to answer for yourselves, but do not forget that in the beginning the Vanderwaters were slaves.

And now, my brothers, I come back to the beginning of my tale to tell you of Tom Dixon's arm. Roger Vanderwater's factory in Kingsbury was rightly named "Hell's Bottom," but the men who toiled in it were men, as you shall see. Women toiled there, too, and children, little children. All that toiled there had the regular slave rights under the law, but only under the law, for they were deprived of many of their rights by the two overseers of Hell's Bottom, Joseph Clancy and Adolph Munster.

It is a long story, but I shall not tell all of it to you. I shall tell only about the arm. It happened that, according to the law, a portion of the starvation wage of the slaves was held back each month and put into a fund. This fund was for the purpose of helping such unfortunate fellow-workmen as happened to be injured by accidents or to be overtaken by sickness. As you know with yourselves, these funds are controlled by the overseers. It is the law, and so it was that the fund at Hell's Bottom was controlled by the two overseers of accursed memory.

Now, Clancy and Munster took this fund for their own use. When accidents happened to the workmen, their fellows, as was the custom, made grants from the fund; but the overseers refused to pay over the grants. What could the slaves do ? They had their rights under the law, but they had no access to the law. Those that complained to the overseers were punished. You know yourselves what form such punishment takes--the fines for faulty work that is not faulty; the overcharging of accounts in the Company's store; the vile treatment of one's women and children; and the allotment to bad machines whereon, work as one will, he starves.

Once, the slaves of Hell's Bottom protested to Vanderwater. It was the time of the year when he spent several months in Kingsbury. One of the slaves could write; it chanced that his mother could write, and she had secretly taught him as her mother had secretly taught her. So this slave wrote a round robin, wherein was contained their grievances, and all the slaves signed by mark. And, with proper stamps upon the envelope, the round robin was mailed to Roger Vanderwater. And Roger Vanderwater did nothing, save to turn the round robin over to the two overseers. Clancy and Munster were angered. They turned the guards loose at night on the slave pen. The guards were armed with pick handles. It is said that next day only half of the slaves were able to work in Hell's Bottom. They were well beaten. The slave who could write was so badly beaten that he lived only three months. But before he died, he wrote once more, to what purpose you shall hear.

Four or five weeks afterward, Tom Dixon, a slave, had his arm torn off by a belt in Hell's Bottom. His fellow-workmen, as usual, made a grant to him from the fund, and Clancy and Munster, as usual, refused to pay it over from the fund. The slave who could write, and who even then was dying, wrote anew a recital of their grievances. And this docu-ment was thrust into the hand of the arm that had been torn from Tom Dixon's body.

Now it chanced that Roger Vanderwater was Iying ill in his palace at the other end of Kingsbury--not the dire illness that strikes down you and me, brothers; just a bit of biliousness, mayhap, or no more than a bad headache because he had eaten too heartily or drunk too deeply. But it was enough for him, being tender and soft from careful rearing. Such men, packed in cotton wool all their lives, are exceeding tender and soft. Believe me, brothers, Roger Vanderwater felt as badly with his aching head, or thought he felt as badly, as Tom Dixon really felt with his arm torn out by the roots.

It happened that Roger Vanderwater was fond of scientific farming, and that on his farm, three miles outside of Kingsbury, he had managed to grow a new kind of strawberry. He was very proud of that new strawberry of his, and he would have been out to see and pick the first ripe ones, had it not been for his illness. Because of his illness he had ordered the old farm slave to bring in personally the first box of the berries. All this was learned from the gossip of a palace scullion, who slept each night in the slave pen. The overseer of the plantation should have brought in the berries, but he was on his back with a broken leg from trying to break a colt. The scullion brought the word in the night, and it was known that next day the berries would come in. And the men in the slave pen of Hell's Bottom, being men and not cowards, held a council.

The slave who could write, and who was sick and dying from the pick-handle beating, said he would carry Tom Dixon's arm; also, he said he must die anyway, and that it mattered nothing if he died a little sooner. So five slaves stole from the slave pen that night after the guards had made their last rounds. One of the slaves was the man who could write. They lay in the brush by the roadside until late in the morning, when the old farm slave came driving to town with the precious fruit for the master. What of the farm slave being old and rheumatic, and of the slave who could write being stiff and injured from his beating, they moved their bodies about when they walked, very much in the same fashion. The slave who could write put on the other's clothes, pulled the broad-brimmed hat over his eyes, climbed upon the seat of the wagon, and drove on to town. The old farm slave was kept tied all day in the bushes until evening, when the others loosed him and went back to the slave pen to take their punishment for having broken bounds.

In the meantime, Roger Vanderwater lay waiting for the berries in his wonderful bedroom--such wonders and such comforts were there that they would have blinded the eyes of you and me who have never seen such things. The slave who could write said afterward that it was like a glimpse of Paradise. And why not? The labor and the lives of ten thousand slaves had gone to the making of that bedchamber, while they themselves slept in vile lairs like wild beasts. The slave who could l write brought in the berries on a silver tray or platter--you see, Roger Vanderwater wanted to speak with him in person about the berries. The slave who could write tottered his dying body across the wonderful room and knelt by the couch of Vanderwater, holding out before him the tray. Large, green leaves covered the top of the tray, and these the body-servant alongside whisked away so that Vanderwater could see. And Roger Vanderwater, propped upon his elbow, saw. He saw the fresh, wonderful fruit lying there like precious jewels, and in the midst of it the arm of Tom Dixon as it had been torn from his body, wellwashed, of course, my brothers, and very white against the blood-red fruit. And also he saw, clutched in the stiff, dead fingers, the petition of his slaves who toiled in Hell's Bottom.

"Take and read," said the slave who could write. And even as the master took the petition, the body-servant, who till then had been motionless with surprise, struck with his fist the kneeling slave upon the mouth. The slave was dying anyway, and was very weak, and did not mind. He made no sound, and, having fallen over on his side, he lay there quietly, bleeding from the blow on the mouth. The physician, who had run for the palace guards, came back with them, and the slave was dragged upright upon his feet. But as they dragged him up, his hand clutched Tom Dixon's arm from where it had fallen on the floor.

"He shall be flung alive to the hounds!" the body-servant was crying in great wrath. "He shall be flung alive to the hounds!"

But Roger Vanderwater, forgetting his headache, still leaning on his elbow, commanded silence, and went on reading the petition. And while he read, there was silence, all standing upright, the wrathful body-servant, the physician, the palace guards, and in their midst the slave, bleeding at the mouth and still holding Tom Dixon's arm. And when Roger Vanderwater had done, he turned upon the slave, saying:--

"If in this paper there be one lie, you shall be sorry that you were ever born."

And the slave said, "I have been sorry all my life that I was born."

Roger Vanderwater looked at him closely, and the slave said:--

"You have done your worst to me. I am dying now. In a week I shall.

"What do you with that?" the master asked, pointing to the arm; and the slave made answer:--

"I take it back to the pen to give it burial. Tom Dixon was my friend. We worked beside each other at our looms."

There is little more to my tale, brothers. The slave and the arm were sent back in a cart to the pen. Nor were any of the slaves punished for what they had done. Instead, Roger Vanderwater made investigation and punished the two overseers, Joseph Clancy and Adolph Munster. Their freeholds were taken from them. They were branded, each upon the forehead, their right hands were cut off, and they were turned loose upon the highway to wander and beg until they died. And the fund was managed rightfully thereafter for a time--for a time, only, my brothers; for after Roger Vanderwater came his son, Albert, who was a cruel master and half mad.

Brothers, that slave who carried the arm into the presence of the master was my father. He was a brave man. And even as his mother secretly taught him to read, so did he teach me. Because he died shortly after from the pick-handle beating, Roger Vanderwater took me out of the slave pen and tried to make various better things out of me. I might have become an overseer in Hell's Bottom, but I chose to become a story-teller, wandering over the land and getting close to my brothers, the slaves, everywhere. And I tell you stories like this, secretly, know-ing that you will not betray me; for if you did, you know as well as I that my tongue will be torn out and that I shall tell stories no more. And my message is, brothers, that there is a good time coming, when all will be well in the world and there will be neither masters nor slaves. But first you must prepare for that good time by learning to read. There is power in the printed word. And here am I to teach you to read, and as well there are others to see that you get the books when I am gone along upon my way--the history books wherein you will learn about your masters, and learn to become strong even as they.

A Daughter of the Aurora

"You--what you call--lazy mans, you lazy mans would desire me to haf for wife. It is not good. Nevaire, no, nevaire, will lazy mans my hoosband be."

Thus Joy Molineau spoke her mind to Jack Harrington, even as she had spoken it, but more tritely and in his own tongue, to Louis Savoy the previous night.

"Listen, Joy--"

"No, no; why moos' I listen to lazy mans? It is vaire bad, you hang rount, make visitation to my cabin, and do nothing. How you get grub for the famine? Why haf not you the dust? Odder mans haf plentee."

"But I work hard, Joy. Never a day am I not on trail or up creek. Even now have I just come off. My dogs are yet tired. Other men have luck and find plenty of gold; but I--I have no luck."

"Ah! But when this mans with the wife which is Indian, this mans McCormack, when him discovaire the Klondike, you go not. Odder mans go; odder mans now rich."

"You know I was prospecting over on the head-reaches of the Tanana," Harrington protested, "and knew nothing of the Eldorado or Bonanza until it was too late."

"That is deeferent; only you are--what you call way off."

"What?"

"Way off. In the--yes--in the dark. It is nevaire too late. One vaire rich mine is there, on the creek which is Eldorado. The mans drive the stake and him go 'way. No odddr mans know what of him become. The mans, him which drive the stake, is nevaire no more. Sixty days no mans on that claim file the papaire. Then odder mans, plentee odder mans--what you call--jump that claim. Then they race, O so queek, like the wind, to file the papaire. Him be vaire rich. Him get grub for famine."

Harrington hid the major portion of his interest.

"When's the time up?" he asked. "What claim is it?"

"So I speak Louis Savoy last night," she continued, ignoring him. "Him I think the winnaire."

"Hang Louis Savoy!"

“So Louis Savoy speak in my cabin last night. Him say, ‘Joy, I am strong mans. I haf good dogs. I haf long wind. I will be winnaire. Then you will haf me for hoosband?’ And I say to him, I say--“

“What’d you say?”

“I say, ‘If Louis Savoy is winnaire, then will he haf me for wife.’“

“And if he don’t win?”

“Then Louis Savoy, him will not be--what you call--the father of my children.”

“And if I win?”

“You winnaire? Ha! ha! Nevaire!”

Exasperating as it was, Joy Molineau’s laughter was pretty to hear. Harrington did not mind it. He had long since been broken in. Besides, he was no exception. She had forced all her lovers to suffer in kind. And very enticing she was just then, her lips parted, her color heightened by the sharp kiss of the frost, her eyes vibrant with the lure which is the greatest of all lures and which may be seen nowhere save in woman’s eyes. Her sled-dogs clustered about her in hirsute masses, and the leader, Wolf Fang, laid his long snout softly in her lap.

“If I do win?” Harrington pressed.

She looked from dog to lover and back again.

“What you say, Wolf Fang? If him strong mans and file the papaire, shall we his wife become? Eh? What you say?”

Wolf Fang picked up his ears and growled at Harrington.

“It is vaire cold,” she suddenly added with feminine irrelevance, rising to her feet and straightening out the team.

Her lover looked on stolidly. She had kept him guessing from the first time they met, and patience had been joined unto his virtues.

“Hi! Wolf Fang!” she cried, springing upon the sled as it leaped into sudden motion. “Ai! Ya! Mush-on!”

From the corner of his eye Harrington watched her swinging down the trail to Forty Mile. Where the road forked and crossed the river to Fort Cudahy, she halted the dogs and turned about.

“O Mistaire Lazy Mans!” she called back. “Wolf Fang, him say yes--if you winnaire!”

But somehow, as such things will, it leaked out, and all Forty Mile, which had hitherto speculated on Joy Molineau’s choice between her two latest lovers, now hazarded bets and guesses as to which would win in the forthcoming race. The camp divided itself into two factions, and every effort was put forth in order that their respective favorites might be the first in at the finish. There was a scramble for the best dogs the country could afford, for dogs, and good ones, were essential, above all, to success. And it meant much to the victor. Besides the possession of a wife, the like of which had yet to be created, it stood for a mine worth a million at least.

That fall, when news came down of McCormack's discovery on Bonanza, all the Lower Country, Circle City and Forty Mile included, had stampeded up the Yukon,--at least all save those who, like Jack Harrington and Louis Savoy, were away prospecting in the west. Moose pastures and creeks were staked indiscriminately and promiscuously; and incidentally, one of the unlikeliest of creeks, Eldorado. Olaf Nelson laid claim to five hundred of its linear feet, duly posted his notice, and as duly disappeared. At that time the nearest recording office was in the police barracks at Fort Cudahy, just across the river from Forty Mile; but when it became bruited abroad that Eldorado Creek was a treasure-house, it was quickly discovered that Olaf Nelson had failed to make the down-Yukon trip to file upon his property. Men cast hungry eyes upon the ownerless claim, where they knew a thousand-thousand dollars waited but shovel and sluice-box. Yet they dared not touch it; for there was a law which permitted sixty days to lapse between the staking and the filing, during which time a claim was immune. The whole country knew of Olaf Nelson's disappearance, and scores of men made preparation for the jumping and for the consequent race to Fort Cudahy.

But competition at Forty Mile was limited. With the camp devoting its energies to the equipping either of Jack Harrington or Louis Savoy, no man was unwise enough to enter the contest single-handed. It was a stretch of a hundred miles to the Recorder's office, and it was planned that the two favorites should have four relays of dogs stationed along the trail. Naturally, the last relay was to be the crucial one, and for these twenty-five miles their respective partisans strove to obtain the strongest possible animals. So bitter did the factions wax, and so high did they bid, that dogs brought stiffer prices than ever before in the annals of the country. And, as it chanced, this scramble for dogs turned the public eye still more searchingly upon Joy Molineau. Not only was she the cause of it all, but she possessed the finest sled-dog from Chilkoot to Bering Sea. As wheel or leader, Wolf Fang had no equal. The man whose sled he led down the last stretch was bound to win. There could be no doubt of it. But the community had an innate sense of the fitness of things, and not once was Joy vexed by overtures for his use. And the factions drew consolation from the fact that if one man did not profit by him, neither should the other.

However, since man, in the individual or in the aggregate, has been so fashioned that he goes through life blissfully obtuse to the deeper subtleties of his womankind, so the men of Forty Mile failed to divine the inner deviltry of Joy Molineau. They confessed, afterward, that they had failed to appreciate this dark-eyed daughter of the aurora, whose father had traded furs in the country before ever they dreamed of invading it, and who had herself first opened eyes on the scintillant northern lights. Nay, accident of birth had not rendered her less the woman, nor had it limited her woman's understanding of men. They knew she played with them, but they did not know the wisdom of her play, its deepness and its deftness. They failed to see more than the exposed card, so that to the very last Forty Mile was in a state of pleasant obfuscation, and it was not until she cast her final trump that it came to reckon up the score.

Early in the week the camp turned out to start Jack Harrington and Louis Savoy on their way. They had taken a shrewd margin of time, for it was their wish to arrive at Olaf Nelson's claim some days previous to the expiration of its immunity, that they might rest themselves, and their dogs be fresh for the first relay. On the way up they found the men of Dawson already stationing spare dog teams along the trail, and it was manifest that little expense had been spared in view of the millions at stake.

A couple of days after the departure of their champions, Forty Mile began sending up their relays,--first to the seventy-five station, then to the fifty, and last to the twenty-five. The teams for the last stretch were magnificent, and so equally matched that the camp discussed their relative merits for a full hour at fifty below, before they were permitted to pull out. At the last moment Joy Molineau dashed in among them on her sled. She drew Lon McFane, who had charge of Harrington's team, to one side, and hardly had the first words left her lips when it was noticed that his lower jaw dropped with a celerity and emphasis suggestive of great things. He unhitched Wolf Fang from her sled, put him at the head of Harrington's team, and mushed the string of animals into the Yukon trail.

"Poor Louis Savoy!" men said; but Joy Molineau flashed her black eyes defiantly and drove back to her father's cabin.

Midnight drew near on Olaf Nelson's claim. A few hundred fur-clad men had preferred sixty below and the jumping, to the inducements of warm cabins and comfortable bunks. Several score of them had their notices prepared for posting and their dogs at hand. A bunch of Captain Constantine's mounted police had been ordered on duty that fair play might rule. The command had gone forth that no man should place a stake till the last second of the day had ticked itself into the past. In the northland such commands are equal to Jehovah's in the matter of potency; the dum-dum as rapid and effective as the thunderbolt. It was clear and cold. The aurora borealis painted palpitating color revels on the sky. Rosy waves of cold brilliancy swept across the zenith, while great coruscating bars of greenish white blotted out the stars, or a Titan's hand reared mighty arches above the Pole. And at this mighty display the wolf-dogs howled as had their ancestors of old time.

A bearskin-coated policeman stepped prominently to the fore, watch in hand. Men hurried among the dogs, rousing them to their feet, untangling their traces, straightening them out. The entries came to the mark, firmly gripping stakes and notices. They had gone over the boundaries of the claim so often that they could now have done it blindfolded. The policeman raised his hand. Casting off their superfluous furs and blankets, and with a final cinching of belts, they came to attention.

"Time!"

Sixty pairs of hands unmitted; as many pairs of moccasins gripped hard upon the snow.

"Go!"

They shot across the wide expanse, round the four sides, sticking notices at every corner, and down the middle where the two centre stakes were to be planted. Then they sprang for the sleds on the frozen bed of the creek. An anarchy of sound and motion broke out. Sled collided with sled, and dog-team fastened upon dog-team with bristling manes and screaming fangs. The narrow creek was glutted with the struggling mass. Lashes and butts of dog-whips were distributed impartially among men and brutes. And to make it of greater moment, each participant had a bunch of comrades intent on breaking him out of jam. But one by one, and by sheer strength, the sleds crept out and shot from sight in the darkness of the overhanging banks.

Jack Harrington had anticipated this crush and waited by his sled until it untangled. Louis Savoy, aware of his rival's greater wisdom in the matter of dog-driving, had followed his lead and also waited. The rout had passed beyond ear-shot when they took the trail, and it was not till they had travelled the ten miles or so down to Bonanza that they came upon it, speeding along in single file, but well bunched. There was little noise, and less chance of one passing another at that stage. The sleds, from runner to runner, measured sixteen inches, the trail eighteen; but the trail, packed down fully a foot by the traffic, was like a gutter. On either side spread the blanket of soft snow crystals. If a man turned into this in an endeavor to pass, his dogs would wallow perforce to their bellies and slow down to a snail's pace. So the men lay close to their leaping sleds and waited. No alteration in position occurred down the fifteen miles of Bonanza and Klondike to Dawson, where the Yukon was encountered. Here the first relays waited. But here, intent to kill their first teams, if necessary, Harrington and Savoy had had their fresh teams placed a couple of miles beyond those of the others. In the confusion of changing sleds they passed full half the bunch. Perhaps thirty men were still leading them when they shot on to the broad breast of the Yukon. Here was the tug. When the river froze in the fall, a mile of open water had been left between two mighty jams. This had but recently crusted, the current being swift, and now it was as level, hard, and slippery as a dance floor. The instant they struck this glare ice Harrington came to his knees, holding precariously on with one hand, his whip singing fiercely among his dogs and fearsome abjurations hurtling about their ears. The teams spread out on the smooth surface, each straining to the uttermost. But few men in the North could lift their dogs as did Jack Harrington. At once he began to pull ahead, and Louis Savoy, taking the pace, hung on desperately, his leaders running even with the tail of his rival's sled.

Midway on the glassy stretch their relays shot out from the bank. But Harrington did not slacken. Watching his chance when the new sled swung in close, he leaped across, shouting as he did so and jumping up the pace of his fresh dogs. The other driver fell off somehow. Savoy did likewise with his relay, and the abandoned teams, swerving to right and left, collided with the others and piled the ice with confusion. Harrington cut out the pace; Savoy hung on. As they neared the end of the glare ice, they swept abreast of the leading sled. When they shot into the narrow trail between the soft snowbanks, they led the race; and Dawson, watching by the light of the aurora, swore that it was neatly done.

When the frost grows lusty at sixty below, men cannot long remain without fire or excessive exercise, and live. So Harrington and Savoy now fell to the ancient custom of “ride and run.” Leaping from their sleds, tow-thongs in hand, they ran behind till the blood resumed its wonted channels and expelled the frost, then back to the sleds till the heat again ebbed away. Thus, riding and running, they covered the second and third relays. Several times, on smooth ice, Savoy spurted his dogs, and as often failed to gain past. Strung along for five miles in the rear, the remainder of the race strove to overtake them, but vainly, for to Louis Savoy alone was the glory given of keeping Jack Harrington’s killing pace.

As they swung into the seventy-five-mile station, Lon McFane dashed alongside; Wolf Fang in the lead caught Harrington’s eye, and he knew that the race was his. No team in the North could pass him on those last twenty-five miles. And when Savoy saw Wolf Fang heading his rival’s team, he knew that he was out of the running, and he cursed softly to himself, in the way woman is most frequently cursed. But he still clung to the other’s smoking trail, gambling on chance to the last. And as they churned along, the day breaking in the southeast, they marvelled in joy and sorrow at that which Joy Molineau had done.

Forty Mile had early crawled out of its sleeping furs and congregated near the edge of the trail. From this point it could view the up-Yukon course to its first bend several miles away. Here it could also see across the river to the finish at Fort Cudahy, where the Gold Recorder nervously awaited. Joy Molineau had taken her position several rods back from the trail, and under the circumstances, the rest of Forty Mile forbore interposing itself. So the space was clear between her and the slender line of the course. Fires had been built, and around these men wagered dust and dogs, the long odds on Wolf Fang.

“Here they come!” shrilled an Indian boy from the top of a pine.

Up the Yukon a black speck appeared against the snow, closely followed by a second. As these grew larger, more black specks manifested themselves, but at a goodly distance to the rear. Gradually they resolved themselves into dogs and sleds, and men lying flat upon them. “Wolf Fang leads,” a lieutenant of police whispered to Joy. She smiled her interest back.

“Ten to one on Harrington!” cried a Birch Creek King, dragging out his sack.

“The Queen, her pay you not mooch?” queried Joy.

The lieutenant shook his head.

“You have some dust, ah, how mooch?” she continued.

He exposed his sack. She gauged it with a rapid eye.

“Mebbe--say--two hundred, eh? Good. Now I give--what you call--the tip. Covaire the bet.” Joy smiled inscrutably. The lieutenant pondered. He glanced up the trail. The two men had risen to their knees and were lashing their dogs furiously, Harrington in the lead.

“Ten to one on Harrington!” bawled the Birch Creek King, flourishing his sack in the lieutenant’s face.

“Covaire the bet,” Joy prompted.

He obeyed, shrugging his shoulders in token that he yielded, not to the dictate of his reason, but to her charm. Joy nodded to reassure him.

All noise ceased. Men paused in the placing of bets.

Yawing and reeling and plunging, like luggers before the wind, the sleds swept wildly upon them. Though he still kept his leader up to the tail of Harrington’s sled, Louis Savoy’s face was without hope. Harrington’s mouth was set. He looked neither to the right nor to the left. His dogs were leaping in perfect rhythm, firm-footed, close to the trail, and Wolf Fang, head low and unseeing, whining softly, was leading his comrades magnificently.

Forty Mile stood breathless. Not a sound, save the roar of the runners and the voice of the whips.

Then the clear voice of Joy Molineau rose on the air. “Ai! Ya! Wolf Fang! Wolf Fang!”

Wolf Fang heard. He left the trail sharply, heading directly for his mistress. The team dashed after him, and the sled poised an instant on a single runner, then shot Harrington into the snow. Savoy was by like a flash. Harrington pulled to his feet and watched him skimming across the river to the Gold Recorder’s. He could not help hearing what was said.

“Ah, him do vaire well,” Joy Molineau was explaining to the lieutenant. “Him--what you call--set the pace. Yes, him set the pace vaire well.”

A Day’s Lodging

It was the gosh-dangdest stampede I ever seen. A thousand dog-teams hittin’ the ice. You couldn’t see ‘m fer smoke. Two white men an’ a Swede froze to death that night, an’ there was a dozen busted their lungs. But didn’t I see with my own eyes the bottom of the water-hole? It was yellow with gold like a mustard-plaster. That’s why I staked the Yukon for a minin’ claim. That’s what made the stampede. An’ then there was nothin’ to it. That’s what I said — NOTHIN’ to it. An’ I ain’t got over guessin’ yet.

— Narrative of Shorty.

JOHN MESSNER clung with mittened hand to the bucking gee-pole and held the sled in the trail. With the other mittened hand he rubbed his cheeks and nose. He rubbed his cheeks and nose every little while. In point of fact, he rarely ceased from rubbing them, and sometimes, as their numbness increased, he rubbed fiercely. His forehead was covered by the visor of his fur cap, the flaps of which went over his ears. The rest of his face was protected by a thick beard, golden-brown under its coating of frost.

Behind him churned a heavily loaded Yukon sled, and before him toiled a string of five dogs. The rope by which they dragged the sled rubbed against the side of Messner’s leg. When the dogs swung on a bend in the trail, he stepped over the rope. There were many bends, and he was compelled to step over it often. Sometimes he tripped on the rope, or stumbled, and at all times he was awkward, betraying a weariness so great that the sled now and again ran upon his heels.

When he came to a straight piece of trail, where the sled could get along for a moment without guidance, he let go the gee-pole and batted his right hand sharply upon the hard wood. He found it difficult to keep up the circulation in that hand. But while he pounded the one hand, he never ceased from rubbing his nose and cheeks with the other.

“It’s too cold to travel, anyway,” he said. He spoke aloud, after the manner of men who are much by themselves. “Only a fool would travel at such a temperature. If it isn’t eighty below, it’s because it’s seventy-nine.”

He pulled out his watch, and after some fumbling got it back into the breast pocket of his thick woollen jacket. Then he surveyed the heavens and ran his eye along the white sky-line to the south.

“Twelve o’clock,” he mumbled, “A clear sky, and no sun.”

He plodded on silently for ten minutes, and then, as though there had been no lapse in his speech, he added:

“And no ground covered, and it’s too cold to travel.”

Suddenly he yelled “Whoa!” at the dogs, and stopped. He seemed in a wild panic over his right hand, and proceeded to hammer it furiously against the gee-pole.

“You — poor — devils!” he addressed the dogs, which had dropped down heavily on the ice to rest. His was a broken, jerky utterance, caused by the violence with which he hammered his numb hand upon the wood. “What have you done anyway that a two-legged other animal should come along, break you to harness, curb all your natural proclivities, and make slave-beasts out of you?”

He rubbed his nose, not reflectively, but savagely, in order to drive the blood into it, and urged the dogs to their work again. He travelled on the frozen surface of a great river. Behind him it stretched away in a mighty curve of many miles, losing itself in a fantastic jumble of mountains, snow-covered and silent. Ahead of him the river split into many channels to accommodate the freight of islands it carried on its breast. These islands were silent and white. No animals nor humming insects broke the silence. No birds flew in the chill air. There was no sound of man, no mark of the handiwork of man. The world slept, and it was like the sleep of death.

John Messner seemed succumbing to the apathy of it all. The frost was benumbing his spirit. He plodded on with bowed head, unobservant, mechanically rubbing nose and cheeks, and batting his steering hand against the gee-pole in the straight trail-stretches.

But the dogs were observant, and suddenly they stopped, turning their heads and looking back at their master out of eyes that were wistful and questioning. Their eyelashes were frosted white, as were their muzzles, and they had all the seeming of decrepit old age, what of the frost-rime and exhaustion.

The man was about to urge them on, when he checked himself, roused up with an effort, and looked around. The dogs had stopped beside a water-hole, not a fissure, but a hole man-made, chopped laboriously with an axe through three and a half feet of ice. A thick skin of new ice showed that it had not been used for some time. Messner glanced about him. The dogs were already pointing the way, each wistful and hoary muzzle turned toward the dim snow@path that left the main river trail and climbed the bank of the island.

"All right, you sore-footed brutes," he said. "I'll investigate. You're not a bit more anxious to quit than I am."

He climbed the bank and disappeared. The dogs did not lie down, but on their feet eagerly waited his return. He came back to them, took a hauling-rope from the front of the sled, and put it around his shoulders. Then he GEE'D the dogs to the right and put them at the bank on the run. It was a stiff pull, but their weariness fell from them as they crouched low to the snow, whining with eagerness and gladness as they struggled upward to the last ounce of effort in their bodies. When a dog slipped or faltered, the one behind nipped his hind quarters. The man shouted encouragement and threats, and threw all his weight on the hauling-rope.

They cleared the bank with a rush, swung to the left, and dashed up to a small log cabin. It was a deserted cabin of a single room, eight feet by ten on the inside. Messner unharnessed the animals, unloaded his sled and took possession. The last chance wayfarer had left a supply of firewood. Messner set up his light sheet-iron stove and starred a fire. He put five sun-cured salmon into the oven to thaw out for the dogs, and from the water-hole filled his coffee-pot and cooking-pail.

While waiting for the water to boil, he held his face over the stove. The moisture from his breath had collected on his beard and frozen into a great mass of ice, and this he proceeded to thaw out. As it melted and dropped upon the stove it sizzled and rose about him in steam. He helped the process with his fingers, working loose small ice-chunks that fell rattling to the floor.

A wild outcry from the dogs without did not take him from his task. He heard the wolfish snarling and yelping of strange dogs and the sound of voices. A knock came on the door.

"Come in," Messner called, in a voice muffled because at the moment he was sucking loose a fragment of ice from its anchorage on his upper lip.

The door opened, and, gazing out of his cloud of steam, he saw a man and a woman pausing on the threshold.

"Come in," he said peremptorily, "and shut the door!"

Peering through the steam, he could make out but little of their personal appearance. The nose and cheek strap worn by the woman and the trail-wrappings about her head allowed only a pair of black eyes to be seen. The man was dark-eyed and smooth-shaven all except his mustache, which was so iced up as to hide his mouth.

"We just wanted to know if there is any other cabin around here," he said, at the same time glancing over the unfurnished state of the room. "We thought this cabin was empty."

"It isn't my cabin," Messner answered. "I just found it a few minutes ago. Come right in and camp. Plenty of room, and you won't need your stove. There's room for all."

At the sound of his voice the woman peered at him with quick curiousness.

"Get your things off," her companion said to her. "I'll unhitch and get the water so we can start cooking."

Messner took the thawed salmon outside and fed his dogs. He had to guard them against the second team of dogs, and when he had reentered the cabin the other man had unpacked the sled and fetched water. Messner's pot was boiling. He threw in the coffee, settled it with half a cup of cold water, and took the pot from the stove. He thawed some sour-dough biscuits in the oven, at the same time heating a pot of beans he had boiled the night before and that had ridden frozen on the sled all morning.

Removing his utensils from the stove, so as to give the newcomers a chance to cook, he proceeded to take his meal from the top of his grub-box, himself sitting on his bed-roll. Between mouthfuls he talked trail and dogs with the man, who, with head over the stove, was thawing the ice from his mustache. There were two bunks in the cabin, and into one of them, when he had cleared his lip, the stranger tossed his bed-roll.

"We'll sleep here," he said, "unless you prefer this bunk. You're the first comer and you have first choice, you know."

"That's all right," Messner answered. "One bunk's just as good as the other."

He spread his own bedding in the second bunk, and sat down on the edge. The stranger thrust a physician's small travelling case under his blankets at one end to serve for a pillow.

"Doctor?" Messner asked.

"Yes," came the answer, "but I assure you I didn't come into the Klondike to practise."

The woman busied herself with cooking, while the man sliced bacon and fired the stove. The light in the cabin was dim, filtering through in a small window made of onion-skin writing paper and oiled with bacon grease, so that John Messner could not make out very well what the woman looked like. Not that he tried. He seemed to have no interest in her. But she glanced curiously from time to time into the dark corner where he sat.

"Oh, it's a great life," the doctor proclaimed enthusiastically, pausing from sharpening his knife on the stovepipe. "What I like about it is the struggle, the endeavor with one's own hands, the primitiveness of it, the realness."

"The temperature is real enough," Messner laughed.

"Do you know how cold it actually is?" the doctor demanded.

The other shook his head.

"Well, I'll tell you. Seventy-four below zero by spirit thermometer on the sled."

"That's one hundred and six below freezing point — too cold for travelling, eh?"

"Practically suicide," was the doctor's verdict. "One exerts himself. He breathes heavily, taking into his lungs the frost itself. It chills his lungs, freezes the edges of the tissues. He gets a dry, hacking cough as the dead tissue sloughs away, and dies the following summer of pneumonia, wondering what it's all about. I'll stay in this cabin for a week, unless the thermometer rises at least to fifty below."

"I say, Tess," he said, the next moment, "don't you think that coffee's boiled long enough!"

At the sound of the woman's name, John Messner became suddenly alert. He looked at her quickly, while across his face shot a haunting expression, the ghost of some buried misery achieving swift resurrection. But the next moment, and by an effort of will, the ghost was laid again. His face was as placid as before, though he was still alert, dissatisfied with what the feeble light had shown him of the woman's face.

Automatically, her first act had been to set the coffee-pot back. It was not until she had done this that she glanced at Messner. But already he had composed himself. She saw only a man sitting on the edge of the bunk and incuriously studying the toes of his moccasins. But, as she turned casually to go about her cooking, he shot another swift look at her, and she, glancing as swiftly back, caught his look. He shifted on past her to the doctor, though the slightest smile curled his lip in appreciation of the way she had trapped him.

She drew a candle from the grub-box and lighted it. One look at her illuminated face was enough for Messner. In the small cabin the widest limit was only a matter of several steps, and the next moment she was alongside of him. She deliberately held the candle close to his face and stared at him out of eyes wide with fear and recognition. He smiled quietly back at her.

"What are you looking for, Tess?" the doctor called.

"Hairpins," she replied, passing on and rummaging in a clothes-bag on the bunk.

They served their meal on their grub-box, sitting on Messner's grub-box and facing him. He had stretched out on his bunk to rest, lying on his side, his head on his arm. In the close quarters it was as though the three were together at table.

"What part of the States do you come from?" Messner asked.

"San Francisco," answered the doctor. "I've been in here two years, though."

"I hail from California myself," was Messner's announcement.

The woman looked at him appealingly, but he smiled and went on:

"Berkeley, you know."

The other man was becoming interested.

"U. C.?" he asked.

"Yes, Class of '86."

"I meant faculty," the doctor explained. "You remind me of the type."

"Sorry to hear you say so," Messner smiled back. "I'd prefer being taken for a prospector or a dog-musher."

"I don't think he looks any more like a professor than you do a doctor," the woman broke in.

"Thank you," said Messner. Then, turning to her companion, "By the way, Doctor, what is your name, if I may ask?"

"Haythorne, if you'll take my word for it. I gave up cards with civilization."

"And Mrs. Haythorne," Messner smiled and bowed.

She flashed a look at him that was more anger than appeal.

Haythorne was about to ask the other's name. His mouth had opened to form the question when Messner cut him off.

"Come to think of it, Doctor, you may possibly be able to satisfy my curiosity. There was a sort of scandal in faculty circles some two or three years ago. The wife of one of the English professors — er, if you will pardon me, Mrs. Haythorne — disappeared with some San Francisco doctor, I understood, though his name does not just now come to my lips. Do you remember the incident?"

Haythorne nodded his head. "Made quite a stir at the time. His name was Womble — Graham Womble. He had a magnificent practice. I knew him somewhat."

"Well, what I was trying to get at was what had become of them. I was wondering if you had heard. They left no trace, hide nor hair."

"He covered his tracks cunningly." Haythorne cleared his throat. "There was rumor that they went to the South Seas — were lost on a trading schooner in a typhoon, or something like that."

"I never heard that," Messner said. "You remember the case, Mrs. Haythorne?"

"Perfectly," she answered, in a voice the control of which was in amazing contrast to the anger that blazed in the face she turned aside so that Haythorne might not see.

The latter was again on the verge of asking his name, when Messner remarked:

"This Dr. Womble, I've heard he was very handsome, and — er — quite a success, so to say, with the ladies."

"Well, if he was, he finished himself off by that affair," Haythorne grumbled.

"And the woman was a termagant — at least so I've been told. It was generally accepted in Berkeley that she made life — er — not exactly paradise for her husband."

"I never heard that," Haythorne rejoined. "In San Francisco the talk was all the other way."

"Woman sort of a martyr, eh? — crucified on the cross of matrimony?"

The doctor nodded. Messner's gray eyes were mildly curious as he went on:

"That was to be expected — two sides to the shield. Living in Berkeley I only got the one side. She was a great deal in San Francisco, it seems."

"Some coffee, please," Haythorne said.

The woman refilled his mug, at the same time breaking into light laughter.

"You're gossiping like a pair of beldames," she chided them.

"It's so interesting," Messner smiled at her, then returned to the doctor. "The husband seems then to have had a not very savory reputation in San Francisco?"

"On the contrary, he was a moral prig," Haythorne blurted out, with apparently undue warmth. "He was a little scholastic shrimp without a drop of red blood in his body."

"Did you know him?"

"Never laid eyes on him. I never knocked about in university circles."

"One side of the shield again," Messner said, with an air of weighing the matter judicially. While he did not amount to much, it is true — that is, physically — I'd hardly say he was as bad as all that. He did take an active interest in student athletics. And he had some talent. He once wrote a Nativity play that brought him quite a bit of local appreciation. I have heard, also, that he was slated for the head of the English department, only the affair happened and he resigned and went away. It quite broke his career, or so it seemed. At any rate, on our side the shield, it was considered a knock-out blow to him. It was thought he cared a great deal for his wife."

Haythorne, finishing his mug of coffee, grunted uninterestedly and lighted his pipe.

"It was fortunate they had no children," Messner continued.

But Haythorne, with a glance at the stove, pulled on his cap and mittens.

"I'm going out to get some wood," he said. "Then I can take off my moccasins and he comfortable."

The door slammed behind him. For a long minute there was silence. The man continued in the same position on the bed. The woman sat on the grub-box, facing him.

"What are you going to do?" she asked abruptly.

Messner looked at her with lazy indecision. "What do you think I ought to do? Nothing scenic, I hope. You see I am stiff and trail-sore, and this bunk is so restful."

She gnawed her lower lip and fumed dumbly.

"But — " she began vehemently, then clenched her hands and stopped.

"I hope you don't want me to kill Mr. — er — Haythorne," he said gently, almost pleadingly. "It would be most distressing, and, I assure you, really it is unnecessary."

"But you must do something," she cried.

“On the contrary, it is quite conceivable that I do not have to do anything.”

“You would stay here?”

He nodded.

She glanced desperately around the cabin and at the bed unrolled on the other bunk. “Night is coming on. You can’t stop here. You can’t! I tell you, you simply can’t!”

“Of course I can. I might remind you that I found this cabin first and that you are my guests.”

Again her eyes travelled around the room, and the terror in them leaped up at sight of the other bunk.

“Then we’ll have to go,” she announced decisively.

“Impossible. You have a dry, hacking cough — the sort Mr. — er — Haythorne so aptly described. You’ve already slightly chilled your lungs. Besides, he is a physician and knows. He would never permit it.”

“Then what are you going to do?” she demanded again, with a tense, quiet utterance that boded an outbreak.

Messner regarded her in a way that was almost paternal, what of the profundity of pity and patience with which he contrived to suffuse it.

“My dear Theresa, as I told you before, I don’t know. I really haven’t thought about it.”

“Oh! You drive me mad!” She sprang to her feet, wringing her hands in impotent wrath. “You never used to be this way.”

“I used to be all softness and gentleness,” he nodded concurrence. “Was that why you left me?”

“You are so different, so dreadfully calm. You frighten me. I feel you have something terrible planned all the while. But whatever you do, don’t do anything rash. Don’t get excited — ”

“I don’t get excited any more,” he interrupted. “Not since you went away.”

“You have improved — remarkably,” she retorted.

He smiled acknowledgment. “While I am thinking about what I shall do, I’ll tell you what you will have to do — tell Mr. — er — Haythorne who I am. It may make our stay in this cabin more — may I say, sociable?”

“Why have you followed me into this frightful country?” she asked irrelevantly.

“Don’t think I came here looking for you, Theresa. Your vanity shall not be tickled by any such misapprehension. Our meeting is wholly fortuitous. I broke with the life academic and I had to go somewhere. To be honest, I came into the Klondike because I thought it the place you were least liable to be in.”

There was a fumbling at the latch, then the door swung in and Haythorne entered with an armful of firewood. At the first warning, Theresa began casually to clear away the dishes. Haythorne went out again after more wood.

“Why didn’t you introduce us?” Messner queried.

“I’ll tell him,” she replied, with a toss of her head. “Don’t think I’m afraid.”

“I never knew you to be afraid, very much, of anything.”

“And I’m not afraid of confession, either,” she said, with softening face and voice.

“In your case, I fear, confession is exploitation by indirection, profit-making by ruse, self-aggrandizement at the expense of God.”

“Don’t be literary,” she pouted, with growing tenderness. “I never did like epigrammatic discussion. Besides, I’m not afraid to ask you to forgive me.”

“There is nothing to forgive, Theresa. I really should thank you. True, at first I suffered; and then, with all the graciousness of spring, it dawned upon me that I was happy, very happy. It was a most amazing discovery.”

“But what if I should return to you?” she asked.

“I should” (he looked at her whimsically), “be greatly perturbed.”

“I am your wife. You know you have never got a divorce.”

“I see,” he meditated. “I have been careless. It will be one of the first things I attend to.”

She came over to his side, resting her hand on his arm. “You don’t want me, John?” Her voice was soft and caressing, her hand rested like a lure. “If I told you I had made a mistake? If I told you that I was very unhappy? — and I am. And I did make a mistake.”

Fear began to grow on Messner. He felt himself wilting under the lightly laid hand. The situation was slipping away from him, all his beautiful calmness was going. She looked at him with melting eyes, and he, too, seemed all dew and melting. He felt himself on the edge of an abyss, powerless to withstand the force that was drawing him over.

"I am coming back to you, John. I am coming back to-day . . . now."

As in a nightmare, he strove under the hand. While she talked, he seemed to hear, rippling softly, the song of the Lorelei. It was as though, somewhere, a piano were playing and the actual notes were impinging on his ear-drums.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet, thrust her from him as her arms attempted to clasp him, and retreated backward to the door. He was in a panic.

"I'll do something desperate!" he cried.

"I warned you not to get excited." She laughed mockingly, and went about washing the dishes. "Nobody wants you. I was just playing with you. I am happier where I am."

But Messner did not believe. He remembered her facility in changing front. She had changed front now. It was exploitation by indirection. She was not happy with the other man. She had discovered her mistake. The flame of his ego flared up at the thought. She wanted to come back to him, which was the one thing he did not want. Unwittingly, his hand rattled the door-latch.

"Don't run away," she laughed. "I won't bite you."

"I am not running away," he replied with child-like defiance, at the same time pulling on his mittens. "I'm only going to get some water."

He gathered the empty pails and cooking pots together and opened the door. He looked back at her.

"Don't forget you're to tell Mr. — er — Haythorne who I am."

Messner broke the skin that had formed on the water-hole within the hour, and filled his pails. But he did not return immediately to the cabin. Leaving the pails standing in the trail, he walked up and down, rapidly, to keep from freezing, for the frost bit into the flesh like fire. His beard was white with his frozen breath when the perplexed and frowning brows relaxed and decision came into his face. He had made up his mind to his course of action, and his frigid lips and cheeks crackled into a chuckle over it. The pails were already skinned over with young ice when he picked them up and made for the cabin.

When he entered he found the other man waiting, standing near the stove, a certain stiff awkwardness and indecision in his manner. Messner set down his water-pails.

"Glad to meet you, Graham Womble," he said in conventional tones, as though acknowledging an introduction.

Messner did not offer his hand. Womble stirred uneasily, feeling for the other the hatred one is prone to feel for one he has wronged.

"And so you're the chap," Messner said in marvelling accents. "Well, well. You see, I really am glad to meet you. I have been — er — curious to know what Theresa found in you — where, I may say, the attraction lay. Well, well."

And he looked the other up and down as a man would look a horse up and down.

"I know how you must feel about me," Womble began.

"Don't mention it," Messner broke in with exaggerated cordiality of voice and manner. "Never mind that. What I want to know is how do you find her? Up to expectations? Has she worn well? Life been all a happy dream ever since?"

"Don't be silly," Theresa interjected.

"I can't help being natural," Messner complained.

"You can be expedient at the same time, and practical," Womble said sharply. "What we want to know is what are you going to do?"

Messner made a well-feigned gesture of helplessness. "I really don't know. It is one of those impossible situations against which there can be no provision."

"All three of us cannot remain the night in this cabin."

Messner nodded affirmation.

"Then somebody must get out."

"That also is incontrovertible," Messner agreed. "When three bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time, one must get out."

"And you're that one," Womble announced grimly. "It's a ten-mile pull to the next camp, but you can make it all right."

"And that's the first flaw in your reasoning," the other objected. "Why, necessarily, should I be the one to get out? I found this cabin first."

"But Tess can't get out," Womble explained. "Her lungs are already slightly chilled."

"I agree with you. She can't venture ten miles of frost. By all means she must remain."

"Then it is as I said," Womble announced with finality.

Messner cleared his throat. "Your lungs are all right, aren't they?"

"Yes, but what of it?"

Again the other cleared his throat and spoke with painstaking and judicial slowness. “Why, I may say, nothing of it, except, ah, according to your own reasoning, there is nothing to prevent your getting out, hitting the frost, so to speak, for a matter of ten miles. You can make it all right.”

Womble looked with quick suspicion at Theresa and caught in her eyes a glint of pleased surprise.

“Well?” he demanded of her.

She hesitated, and a surge of anger darkened his face. He turned upon Messner.

“Enough of this. You can’t stop here.”

“Yes, I can.”

“I won’t let you.” Womble squared his shoulders. “I’m running things.”

“I’ll stay anyway,” the other persisted.

“I’ll put you out.”

“I’ll come back.”

Womble stopped a moment to steady his voice and control himself. Then he spoke slowly, in a low, tense voice.

“Look here, Messner, if you refuse to get out, I’ll thrash you. This isn’t California. I’ll beat you to a jelly with my two fists.”

Messner shrugged his shoulders. “If you do, I’ll call a miners’ meeting and see you strung up to the nearest tree. As you said, this is not California. They’re a simple folk, these miners, and all I’ll have to do will be to show them the marks of the beating, tell them the truth about you, and present my claim for my wife.”

The woman attempted to speak, but Womble turned upon her fiercely.

“You keep out of this,” he cried.

In marked contrast was Messner’s “Please don’t intrude, Theresa.”

What of her anger and pent feelings, her lungs were irritated into the dry, hacking cough, and with blood-suffused face and one hand clenched against her chest, she waited for the paroxysm to pass.

Womble looked gloomily at her, noting her cough.

“Something must be done,” he said. “Yet her lungs can’t stand the exposure. She can’t travel till the temperature rises. And I’m not going to give her up.”

Messner hemmed, cleared his throat, and hemmed again, semi-apologetically, and said, “I need some money.”

Contempt showed instantly in Womble's face. At last, beneath him in vileness, had the other sunk himself.

"You've got a fat sack of dust," Messner went on. "I saw you unload it from the sled."

"How much do you want?" Womble demanded, with a contempt in his voice equal to that in his face.

"I made an estimate of the sack, and I — ah — should say it weighed about twenty pounds. What do you say we call it four thousand?"

"But it's all I've got, man!" Womble cried out.

"You've got her," the other said soothingly. "She must be worth it. Think what I'm giving up. Surely it is a reasonable price."

"All right." Womble rushed across the floor to the gold-sack. "Can't put this deal through too quick for me, you — you little worm!"

"Now, there you err," was the smiling rejoinder. "As a matter of ethics isn't the man who gives a bribe as bad as the man who takes a bribe? The receiver is as bad as the thief, you know; and you needn't console yourself with any fictitious moral superiority concerning this little deal."

"To hell with your ethics!" the other burst out. "Come here and watch the weighing of this dust. I might cheat you."

And the woman, leaning against the bunk, raging and impotent, watched herself weighed out in yellow dust and nuggets in the scales erected on the grub-box. The scales were small, making necessary many weighings, and Messner with precise care verified each weighing.

"There's too much silver in it," he remarked as he tied up the gold-sack. "I don't think it will run quite sixteen to the ounce. You got a trifle the better of me, Womble."

He handled the sack lovingly, and with due appreciation of its preciousness carried it out to his sled.

Returning, he gathered his pots and pans together, packed his grub-box, and rolled up his bed. When the sled was lashed and the complaining dogs harnessed, he returned into the cabin for his mittens.

"Good-by, Tess," he said, standing at the open door.

She turned on him, struggling for speech but too frantic to word the passion that burned in her.

"Good-by, Tess," he repeated gently.

"Beast!" she managed to articulate.

She turned and tottered to the bunk, flinging herself face down upon it, sobbing: “You beasts! You beasts!”

John Messner closed the door softly behind him, and, as he started the dogs, looked back at the cabin with a great relief in his face. At the bottom of the bank, beside the water-hole, he halted the sled. He worked the sack of gold out between the lashings and carried it to the water-hole. Already a new skin of ice had formed. This he broke with his fist. Untying the knotted mouth with his teeth, he emptied the contents of the sack into the water. The river was shallow at that point, and two feet beneath the surface he could see the bottom dull-yellow in the fading light. At the sight of it, he spat into the hole.

He started the dogs along the Yukon trail. Whining spiritlessly, they were reluctant to work. Clinging to the gee-pole with his right band and with his left rubbing cheeks and nose, he stumbled over the rope as the dogs swung on a bend.

“Mush-on, you poor, sore-footed brutes!” he cried. “That’s it, mush-on!”

The Death of Ligoun

Blood for blood, rank for rank.

— Thlinket Code.

“Hear now the death of Ligoun — ”

The speaker ceased, or rather suspended utterance, and gazed upon me with an eye of understanding. I held the bottle between our eyes and the fire, indicated with my thumb the depth of the draught, and shoved it over to him; for was he not Palitlum, the Drinker? Many tales had he told me, and long had I waited for this scriptless scribe to speak of the things concerning Ligoun; for he, of all men living, knew these things best.

He tilted back his head with a grunt that slid swiftly into a gurgle, and the shadow of a man’s torso, monstrous beneath a huge inverted bottle, wavered and danced on the frown of the cliff at our backs. Palitlum released his lips from the glass with a caressing suck and glanced regretfully up into the ghostly vault of the sky where played the wan white light of the summer borealis.

“It be strange,” he said; “cold like water and hot like fire. To the drinker it giveth strength, and from the drinker it taketh away strength. It maketh old men young, and young men old. To the man who is weary it leadeth him to get up and go onward, and to the man unweary it burdeneth him into sleep. My brother was possessed of the heart of a rabbit, yet did he drink of it, and forthwith slay four of his enemies. My father was like a great wolf, showing his teeth to all men, yet did he drink of it and was shot through the back, running swiftly away. It be most strange.”

“It is ‘Three Star,’ and a better than what they poison their bellies with down there,” I answered, sweeping my hand, as it were, over the yawning chasm of blackness and down to where the beach fires glinted far below — tiny jets of flame which gave proportion and reality to the night.

Palitlum sighed and shook his head. “Wherefore I am here with thee.”

And here he embraced the bottle and me in a look which told more eloquently than speech of his shameless thirst.

“Nay,” I said, snuggling the bottle in between my knees. “Speak now of Ligoun. Of the ‘Three Star’ we will hold speech hereafter.”

“There be plenty, and I am not wearied,” he pleaded brazenly. “But the feel of it on my lips, and I will speak great words of Ligoun and his last days.”

“From the drinker it taketh away strength,” I mocked, “and to the man unweary it burdeneth him into sleep.”

“Thou art wise,” he rejoined, without anger and pridelessly. “Like all of thy brothers, thou art wise. Waking or sleeping, the ‘Three Star’ be with thee, yet never have I known thee to drink overlong or overmuch. And the while you gather to you the gold that hides in our mountains and the fish that swim in our seas; and Palitlum, and the brothers of Palitlum, dig the gold for thee and net the fish, and are glad to be made glad when out of thy wisdom thou deemest it fit that the ‘Three Star’ should wet our lips.”

“I was minded to hear of Ligoun,” I said impatiently. “The night grows short, and we have a sore journey to-morrow.”

I yawned and made as though to rise, but Palitlum betrayed a quick anxiety, and with abruptness began: —

“It was Ligoun’s desire, in his old age, that peace should be among the tribes. As a young man he had been first of the fighting men and chief over the war-chiefs of the Islands and the Passes. All his days had been full of fighting. More marks he boasted of bone and lead and iron than any other man. Three wives he had, and for each wife two sons; and the sons, eldest born and last and all died by his side in battle. Restless as the bald-face, he ranged wide and far — north to Unalaska and the Shallow Sea; south to the Queen Charlottes, ay, even did he go with the Kakes, it is told, to far Puget Sound, and slay thy brothers in their sheltered houses.

“But, as I say, in his old age he looked for peace among the tribes. Not that he was become afraid, or overfond of the corner by the fire and the well-filled pot. For he slew with the shrewdness and blood-hunger of the fiercest, drew in his belly to famine with the youngest, and with the stoutest faced the bitter seas and stinging trail. But because of his many deeds, and in punishment, a warship carried him away, even to thy country, O Hair-Face and Boston Man; and the years were many ere he came back, and I was grown to something more than a boy and something less than a young man. And Ligoun, being childless in his old age, made much of me, and grown wise, gave me of his wisdom.

“‘It be good to fight, O Palitlum,’ said he. Nay, O Hair-Face, for I was unknown as Palitlum in those days, being called Olo, the Ever-Hungry. The drink was to come after. ‘It be good to fight,’ spoke Ligoun, ‘but it be foolish. In the Boston Man Country, as I saw with mine eyes, they are not given to fighting one with another, and they be strong. Wherefore, of their strength, they come against us of the Islands and Passes, and we are as camp smoke and sea mist before them. Wherefore I say it be good to fight, most good, but it be likewise foolish.’

“And because of this, though first always of the fighting men, Ligoun’s voice was loudest, ever, for peace. And when he was very old, being greatest of chiefs and richest of men, he gave a potlatch. Never was there such a potlatch. Five hundred canoes were lined against the river bank, and in each canoe there came not less than ten of men and women. Eight tribes were there; from the first and oldest man to the last and youngest babe were they there. And then there were men from far-distant tribes, great travellers and seekers who had heard of the potlatch of Ligoun. And for the length of seven days they filled their bellies with his meat and drink. Eight thousand blankets did he give to them, as I well know, for who but I kept the tally and apportioned according to degree and rank? And in the end Ligoun was a poor man; but his name was on all men’s lips, and other chiefs gritted their teeth in envy that he should be so great.

“And so, because there was weight to his words, he counselled peace; and he journeyed to every potlatch and feast and tribal gathering that he might counsel peace. And so it came that we journeyed together, Ligoun and I, to the great feast given by Niblack, who was chief over the river Indians of the Skoot, which is not far from the Stickeen. This was in the last days, and Ligoun was very old and very close to death. He coughed of cold weather and camp smoke, and often the red blood ran from out his mouth till we looked for him to die.

“‘Nay,’ he said once at such time; ‘it were better that I should die when the blood leaps to the knife, and there is a clash of steel and smell of powder, and men crying aloud what of the cold iron and quick lead.’ So, it be plain, O Hair-Face, that his heart was yet strong for battle.

“It is very far from the Chilcat to the Skoot, and we were many days in the canoes. And the while the men bent to the paddles, I sat at the feet of Ligoun and received the Law. Of small need for me to say the Law, O Hair-Face, for it be known to me that in this thou art well skilled. Yet do I speak of the Law of blood for blood, and rank for rank. Also did Ligoun go deeper into the matter, saying: —

"'But know this, O Olo, that there be little honor in the killing of a man less than thee. Kill always the man who is greater, and thy honor shall be according to his greatness. But if, of two men, thou killest the lesser, then is shame thine, for which the very squaws will lift their lips at thee. As I say, peace be good; but remember, O Olo, if kill thou must, that thou killest by the Law.'

"It is a way of the Thlinket-folk," Palitlum vouchsafed half apologetically.

And I remembered the gun-fighters and bad men of my own Western land, and was not perplexed at the way of the Thlinket-folk.

"In time," Palitlum continued, "we came to Chief Niblack and the Skoots. It was a feast great almost as the potlatch of Ligoun. There were we of the Chilcat, and the Sitkas, and the Stickeens who are neighbors to the Skoots, and the Wrangels and the Hoonahs. There were Sundowns and Tahkos from Port Houghton, and their neighbors the Awks from Douglass Channel; the Naass River people, and the Tongas from north of Dixon, and the Kakes who come from the island called Kupreanoff. Then there were Siwashes from Vancouver, Cassiars from the Gold Mountains, Teslin men, and even Sticks from the Yukon Country.

"It was a mighty gathering. But first of all, there was to be a meeting of the chiefs with Niblack, and a drowning of all enmities in quass. The Russians it was who showed us the way of making quass, for so my father told me, — my father, who got it from his father before him. But to this quass had Niblack added many things, such as sugar, flour, dried apples, and hops, so that it was a man's drink, strong and good. Not so good as 'Three Star,' O Hair-Face, yet good.

"This quass-feast was for the chiefs, and the chiefs only, and there was a score of them. But Ligoun being very old and very great, it was given that I walk with him that he might lean upon my shoulder and that I might ease him down when he took his seat and raise him up when he arose. At the door of Niblack's house, which was of logs and very big, each chief, as was the custom, laid down his spear or rifle and his knife. For as thou knowest, O Hair-Face, strong drink quickens, and old hates flame up, and head and hand are swift to act. But I noted that Ligoun had brought two knives, the one he left outside the door, the other slipped under his blanket, snug to the grip. The other chiefs did likewise, and I was troubled for what was to come.

"The chiefs were ranged, sitting, in a big circle about the room. I stood at Ligoun's elbow. In the middle was the barrel of quass, and by it a slave to serve the drink. First, Niblack made oration, with much show of friendship and many fine words. Then he gave a sign, and the slave dipped a gourd full of quass and passed it to Ligoun, as was fit, for his was the highest rank.

"Ligoun drank it, to the last drop, and I gave him my strength to get on his feet so that he, too, might make oration. He had kind speech for the many tribes, noted the greatness of Niblack to give such a feast, counselled for peace as was his custom, and at the end said that the quass was very good.

"Then Niblack drank, being next of rank to Ligoun, and after him one chief and another in degree and order. And each spoke friendly words and said that the quass was good, till all had drunk. Did I say all? Nay, not all, O Hair-Face. For last of them was one, a lean and catlike man, young of face, with a quick and daring eye, who drank darkly, and spat forth upon the ground, and spoke no word.

"To not say that the quass was good were insult; to spit forth upon the ground were worse than insult. And this very thing did he do. He was known for a chief over the Sticks of the Yukon, and further naught was known of him.

"As I say, it was an insult. But mark this, O Hair-Face: it was an insult, not to Niblack the feast-giver, but to the man chiefest of rank who sat among those of the circle. And that man was Ligoun. There was no sound. All eyes were upon him to see what he might do. He made no movement. His withered lips trembled not into speech; nor did a nostril quiver, nor an eyelid droop. But I saw that he looked wan and gray, as I have seen old men look of bitter mornings when famine pressed, and the women wailed and the children whimpered, and there was no meat nor sign of meat. And as the old men looked, so looked Ligoun.

"There was no sound. It were as a circle of the dead, but that each chief felt beneath his blanket to make sure, and that each chief glanced to his neighbor, right and left, with a measuring eye. I was a stripling; the things I had seen were few; yet I knew it to be the moment one meets but once in all a lifetime.

"The Stick rose up, with every eye upon him, and crossed the room till he stood before Ligoun.

"'I am Opitsah, the Knife,' he said.

"But Ligoun said naught, nor looked at him, but gazed unblinking at the ground.

"'You are Ligoun,' Opitsah said. 'You have killed many men. I am still alive.'

"And still Ligoun said naught, though he made the sign to me and with my strength arose and stood upright on his two feet. He was as an old pine, naked and gray, but still a-shoulder to the frost and storm. His eyes were unblinking, and as he had not heard Opitsah, so it seemed he did not see him.

"And Opitsah was mad with anger, and danced stiff-legged before him, as men do when they wish to give another shame. And Opitsah sang a song of his own greatness and the greatness of his people, filled with bad words for the Chilcats and for Ligoun. And as he danced and sang, Opitsah threw off his blanket and with his knife drew bright circles before the face of Ligoun. And the song he sang was the Song of the Knife.

"And there was no other sound, only the singing of Opitsah, and the circle of chiefs that were as dead, save that the flash of the knife seemed to draw smouldering fire from their eyes. And Ligoun, also, was very still. Yet did he know his death, and was unafraid. And the knife sang closer and yet closer to his face, but his eyes were unblinking and he swayed not to right or left, or this way or that.

"And Opitsah drove in the knife, so, twice on the forehead of Ligoun, and the red blood leaped after it. And then it was that Ligoun gave me the sign to bear up under him with my youth that he might walk. And he laughed with a great scorn, full in the face of Opitsah, the Knife. And he brushed Opitsah to the side, as one brushes to the side a low-hanging branch on the trail and passes on.

"And I knew and understood, for there was but shame in the killing of Opitsah before the faces of a score of greater chiefs. I remembered the Law, and knew Ligoun had it in mind to kill by the Law. And who, chiefest of rank but himself, was there but Niblack? And toward Niblack, leaning on my arm, he walked. And to his other arm, clinging and striking, was Opitsah, too small to soil with his blood the hands of so great a man. And though the knife of Opitsah bit in again and again, Ligoun noted it not, nor winced. And in this fashion we three went our way across the room, Niblack sitting in his blanket and fearful of our coming.

"And now old hates flamed up and forgotten grudges were remembered. Lamuk, a Kake, had had a brother drowned in the bad water of the Stickeen, and the Stickeens had not paid in blankets for their bad water, as was the custom to pay. So Lamuk drove straight with his long knife to the heart of Klok-Kutz the Stickeen. And Katchahook remembered a quarrel of the Naass River people with the Tongas of north of Dixon, and the chief of the Tongas he slew with a pistol which made much noise. And the blood-hunger gripped all the men who sat in the circle, and chief slew chief, or was slain, as chance might be. Also did they stab and shoot at Ligoun, for whoso killed him won great honor and would be unforgotten for the deed. And they were about him like wolves about a moose, only they were so many they were in their own way, and they slew one another to make room. And there was great confusion.

"But Ligoun went slowly, without haste, as though many years were yet before him. It seemed that he was certain he would make his kill, in his own way, ere they could slay him. And as I say, he went slowly, and knives bit into him, and he was red with blood. And though none sought after me, who was a mere stripling, yet did the knives find me, and the hot bullets burn me. And still Ligoun leaned his weight on my youth, and Opitsah struck at him, and we three went forward. And when we stood by Niblack, he was afraid, and covered his head with his blanket. The Skoots were ever cowards.

"And Goolzug and Kadishan, the one a fish-eater and the other a meat-killer, closed together for the honor of their tribes. And they raged madly about, and in their battling swung against the knees of Opitsah, who was overthrown and trampled upon. And a knife, singing through the air, smote Skulpin, of the Sitkas, in the throat, and he flung his arms out blindly, reeling, and dragged me down in his fall.

"And from the ground I beheld Ligoun bend over Niblack, and uncover the blanket from his head, and turn up his face to the light. And Ligoun was in no haste. Being blinded with his own blood, he swept it out of his eyes with the back of his hand, so he might see and be sure. And when he was sure that the upturned face was the face of Niblack, he drew the knife across his throat as one draws a knife across the throat of a trembling deer. And then Ligoun stood erect, singing his death-song and swaying gently to and fro. And Skulpin, who had dragged me down, shot with a pistol from where he lay, and Ligoun toppled and fell, as an old pine topples and falls in the teeth of the wind."

Palitlum ceased. His eyes, smouldering moodily, were bent upon the fire, and his cheek was dark with blood.

"And thou, Palitlum?" I demanded. "And thou?"

"I? I did remember the Law, and I slew Opitsah the Knife, which was well. And I drew Ligoun's own knife from the throat of Niblack, and slew Skulpin, who had dragged me down. For I was a stripling, and I could slay any man and it were honor. And further, Ligoun being dead, there was no need for my youth, and I laid about me with his knife, choosing the chiefest of rank that yet remained."

Palitlum fumbled under his shirt and drew forth a beaded sheath, and from the sheath, a knife. It was a knife home-wrought and crudely fashioned from a whip-saw file; a knife such as one may find possessed by old men in a hundred Alaskan villages.

"The knife of Ligoun?" I said, and Palitlum nodded.

"And for the knife of Ligoun," I said, "will I give thee ten bottles of 'Three Star.'"

But Palitlum looked at me slowly. "Hair-Face, I am weak as water, and easy as a woman. I have soiled my belly with quass, and hooch, and 'Three Star.' My eyes are blunted, my ears have lost their keenness, and my strength has gone into fat. And I am without honor in these days, and am called Palitlum, the Drinker. Yet honor was mine at the potlatch of Niblack, on the Skoot, and the memory of it, and the memory of Ligoun, be dear to me. Nay, didst thou turn the sea itself into 'Three Star' and say that it were all mine for the knife, yet would I keep the knife. I am Palitlum, the Drinker, but I was once Olo, the Ever-Hungry, who bore up Ligoun with his youth!"

"Thou art a great man, Palitlum," I said, "and I honor thee."

Palitlum reached out his hand.

"The 'Three Star' between thy knees be mine for the tale I have told," he said.

And as I looked on the frown of the cliff at our backs, I saw the shadow of a man's torso, monstrous beneath a huge inverted bottle.

Demetrios Contos

It must not be thought, from what I have told of the Greek fishermen, that they were altogether bad. Far from it. But they were rough men, gathered together in isolated communities and fighting with the elements for a livelihood. They lived far away from the law and its workings, did not understand it, and thought it tyranny. Especially did the fish laws seem tyrannical. And because of this, they looked upon the men of the fish patrol as their natural enemies.

We menaced their lives, or their living, which is the same thing, in many ways. We confiscated illegal traps and nets, the materials of which had cost them considerable sums and the making of which required weeks of labor. We prevented them from catching fish at many times and seasons, which was equivalent to preventing them from making as good a living as they might have made had we not been in existence. And when we captured them, they were brought into the courts of law, where heavy cash fines were collected from them. As a result, they hated us vindictively. As the dog is the natural enemy of the cat, the snake of man, so were we of the fish patrol the natural enemies of the fishermen.

But it is to show that they could act generously as well as hate bitterly that this story of Demetrios Contos is told. Demetrios Contos lived in Vallejo. Next to Big Alec, he was the largest, bravest, and most influential man among the Greeks. He had given us no trouble, and I doubt if he would ever have clashed with us had he not invested in a new salmon boat. This boat was the cause of all the trouble. He had had it built upon his own model, in which the lines of the general salmon boat were somewhat modified.

To his high elation he found his new boat very fast-in fact, faster than any other boat on the bay or rivers. Forthwith he grew proud and boastful: and, our raid with the Mary Rebecca on the Sunday salmon fishers having wrought fear in their hearts, he sent a challenge up to Benicia. One of the local fishermen conveyed it to us; it was to the effect that Demetrios Contos would sail up from Vallejo on the following Sunday, and in the plain sight of Benicia set his net and catch salmon, and that Charley Le Grant, patrolman, might come and get him if he could. Of course Charley and I had heard nothing of the new boat. Our own boat was pretty fast, and we were not afraid to have a brush with any other that happened along.

Sunday came. The challenge had been bruited abroad, and the fishermen and seafaring folk of Benicia turned out to a man, crowding Steamboat Wharf till it looked like the grand stand at a football match. Charley and I had been sceptical, but the fact of the crowd convinced us that there was something in Demetrios Contos's dare.

In the afternoon, when the sea-breeze had picked up in strength, his sail hove into view as he bowled along before the wind. He tacked a score of feet from the wharf, waved his hand theatrically, like a knight about to enter the lists, received a hearty cheer in return, and stood away into the Straits for a couple of hundred yards. Then he lowered sail, and, drifting the boat sidewise by means of the wind, proceeded to set his net. He did not set much of it, possibly fifty feet; yet Charley and I were thunderstruck at the man's effrontery. We did not know at the time, but we learned afterward, that the net he used was old and worthless. It could catch fish, true; but a catch of any size would have torn it to pieces.

Charley shook his head and said:

"I confess, it puzzles me. What if he has out only fifty feet? He could never get it in if we once started for him. And why does he come here anyway, flaunting his law-breaking in our faces? Right in our home town, too."

Charley's voice took on an aggrieved tone, and he continued for some minutes to inveigh against the brazenness of Demetrios Contos.

In the meantime, the man in question was lolling in the stern of his boat and watching the net floats. When a large fish is meshed in a gill-net, the floats by their agitation advertise the fact. And they evidently advertised it to Demetrios, for he pulled in about a dozen feet of net, and held aloft for a moment, before he flung it into the bottom of the boat, a big, glistening salmon. It was greeted by the audience on the wharf with round after round of cheers. This was more than Charley could stand.

"Come on, lad," he called to me; and we lost no time jumping into our salmon boat and getting up sail.

The crowd shouted warning to Demetrios, and as we darted out from the wharf we saw him slash his worthless net clear with a long knife. His sail was all ready to go up, and a moment later it fluttered in the sunshine. He ran aft, drew in the sheet, and filled on the long tack toward the Contra Costa Hills.

By this time we were not more than thirty feet astern. Charley was jubilant. He knew our boat was fast, and he knew, further, that in fine sailing few men were his equals. He was confident that we should surely catch Demetrios, and I shared his confidence. But somehow we did not seem to gain.

It was a pretty sailing breeze. We were gliding sleekly through the water, but Demetrios was slowly sliding away from us. And not only was he going faster, but he was eating into the wind a fraction of a point closer than we. This was sharply impressed upon us when he went about under the Contra Costa Hills and passed us on the other tack fully one hundred feet dead to windward.

“Whew!” Charley exclaimed. “Either that boat is a daisy, or we’ve got a five-gallon coal-oil can fast to our keel!”

It certainly looked it one way or the other. And by the time Demetrios made the Sonoma Hills, on the other side of the Straits, we were so hopelessly outdistanced that Charley told me to slack off the sheet, and we squared away for Benicia. The fishermen on Steamboat Wharf showered us with ridicule when we returned and tied up. Charley and I got out and walked away, feeling rather sheepish, for it is a sore stroke to one’s pride when he thinks he has a good boat and knows how to sail it, and another man comes along and beats him.

Charley mooned over it for a couple of days; then word was brought to us, as before, that on the next Sunday Demetrios Contos would repeat his performance. Charley roused himself. He had our boat out of the water, cleaned and repainted its bottom, made a trifling alteration about the centre-board, overhauled the running gear, and sat up nearly all of Saturday night sewing on a new and much larger sail. So large did he make it, in fact, that additional ballast was imperative, and we stowed away nearly five hundred extra pounds of old railroad iron in the bottom of the boat.

Sunday came, and with it came Demetrios Contos, to break the law defiantly in open day. Again we had the afternoon sea-breeze, and again Demetrios cut loose some forty or more feet of his rotten net, and got up sail and under way under our very noses. But he had anticipated Charley’s move, and his own sail peaked higher than ever, while a whole extra cloth had been added to the after leech.

It was nip and tuck across to the Contra Costa Hills, neither of us seeming to gain or to lose. But by the time we had made the return tack to the Sonoma Hills, we could see that, while we footed it at about equal speed, Demetrios had eaten into the wind the least bit more than we. Yet Charley was sailing our boat as finely and delicately as it was possible to sail it, and getting more out of it than he ever had before.

Of course, he could have drawn his revolver and fired at Demetrios; but we had long since found it contrary to our natures to shoot at a fleeing man guilty of only a petty offence. Also a sort of tacit agreement seemed to have been reached between the patrolmen and the fishermen. If we did not shoot while they ran away, they, in turn, did not fight if we once laid hands on them. Thus Demetrios Contos ran away from us, and we did no more than try our best to overtake him; and, in turn, if our boat proved faster than his, or was sailed better, he would, we knew, make no resistance when we caught up with him.

With our large sails and the healthy breeze romping up the Carquinez Straits, we found that our sailing was what is called “ticklish.” We had to be constantly on the alert to avoid a capsize, and while Charley steered I held the main-sheet in my hand with but a single turn round a pin, ready to let go at any moment. Demetrios, we could see, sailing his boat alone, had his hands full.

But it was a vain undertaking for us to attempt to catch him. Out of his inner consciousness he had evolved a boat that was better than ours. And though Charley sailed fully as well, if not the least bit better, the boat he sailed was not so good as the Greek’s.

“Slack away the sheet,” Charley commanded; and as our boat fell off before the wind, Demetrios’s mocking laugh floated down to us.

Charley shook his head, saying, “It’s no use. Demetrios has the better boat. If he tries his performance again, we must meet it with some new scheme.”

This time it was my imagination that came to the rescue.

“What’s the matter,” I suggested, on the Wednesday following, “with my chasing Demetrios in the boat next Sunday, while you wait for him on the wharf at Vallejo when he arrives?”

Charley considered it a moment and slapped his knee.

“A good idea! You’re beginning to use that head of yours. A credit to your teacher, I must say.”

“But you mustn’t chase him too far,” he went on, the next moment, “or he’ll head out into San Pablo Bay instead of running home to Vallejo, and there I’ll be, standing lonely on the wharf and waiting in vain for him to arrive.”

On Thursday Charley registered an objection to my plan.

“Everybody’ll know I’ve gone to Vallejo, and you can depend upon it that Demetrios will know, too. I’m afraid we’ll have to give up the idea.”

This objection was only too valid, and for the rest of the day I struggled under my disappointment. But that night a new way seemed to open to me, and in my eagerness I awoke Charley from a sound sleep.

“Well,” he grunted, “what’s the matter? House afire?”

“No,” I replied, “but my head is. Listen to this. On Sunday you and I will be around Benicia up to the very moment Demetrios’s sail heaves into sight. This will lull everybody’s suspicions. Then, when Demetrios’s sail does heave in sight, do you stroll leisurely away and up-town. All the fishermen will think you’re beaten and that you know you’re beaten.”

“So far, so good,” Charley commented, while I paused to catch breath.

“And very good indeed,” I continued proudly. “You stroll carelessly up-town, but when you’re once out of sight you leg it for all you’re worth for Dan Maloney’s. Take the little mare of his, and strike out on the country road for Vallejo. The road’s in fine condition, and you can make it in quicker time than Demetrios can beat all the way down against the wind.”

“And I’ll arrange right away for the mare, first thing in the morning,” Charley said, accepting the modified plan without hesitation.

“But, I say,” he said, a little later, this time waking me out of a sound sleep.

I could hear him chuckling in the dark.

“I say, lad, isn’t it rather a novelty for the fish patrol to be taking to horseback?”

“Imagination,” I answered. “It’s what you’re always preaching-‘keep thinking one thought ahead of the other fellow, and you’re bound to win out.’“

“He! he!” he chuckled. “And if one thought ahead, including a mare, doesn’t take the other fellow’s breath away this time, I’m not your humble servant, Charley Le Grant.”

“But can you manage the boat alone?” he asked, on Friday. “Remember, we’ve a ripping big sail on her.”

I argued my proficiency so well that he did not refer to the matter again till Saturday, when he suggested removing one whole cloth from the after leech. I guess it was the disappointment written on my face that made him desist; for I, also, had a pride in my boat-sailing abilities, and I was almost wild to get out alone with the big sail and go tearing down the Carquinez Straits in the wake of the flying Greek.

As usual, Sunday and Demetrios Contos arrived together. It had become the regular thing for the fishermen to assemble on Steamboat Wharf to greet his arrival and to laugh at our discomfiture. He lowered sail a couple of hundred yards out and set his customary fifty feet of rotten net.

"I suppose this nonsense will keep up as long as his old net holds out," Charley grumbled, with intention, in the hearing of several of the Greeks.

"Den I give-a heem my old-a net-a," one of them spoke up, promptly and maliciously, "I don't care," Charley answered. "I've got some old net myself he can have-if he'll come around and ask for it."

They all laughed at this, for they could afford to be sweet-tempered with a man so badly outwitted as Charley was.

"Well, so long, lad," Charley called to me a moment later. "I think I'll go up-town to Maloney's."

"Let me take the boat out?" I asked.

"If you want to," was his answer, as he turned on his heel and walked slowly away.

Demetrios pulled two large salmon out of his net, and I jumped into the boat. The fishermen crowded around in a spirit of fun, and when I started to get up sail overwhelmed me with all sorts of jocular advice. They even offered extravagant bets to one another that I would surely catch Demetrios, and two of them, styling themselves the committee of judges, gravely asked permission to come along with me to see how I did it.

But I was in no hurry. I waited to give Charley all the time I could, and I pretended dissatisfaction with the stretch of the sail and slightly shifted the small tackle by which the huge sprit forces up the peak. It was not until I was sure that Charley had reached Dan Maloney's and was on the little mare's back, that I cast off from the wharf and gave the big sail to the wind. A stout puff filled it and suddenly pressed the lee gunwale down till a couple of buckets of water came inboard. A little thing like this will happen to the best small-boat sailors, and yet, though I instantly let go the sheet and righted, I was cheered sarcastically, as though I had been guilty of a very awkward blunder.

When Demetrios saw only one person in the fish patrol boat, and that one a boy, he proceeded to play with me. Making a short tack out, with me not thirty feet behind, he returned, with his sheet a little free, to Steamboat Wharf. And there he made short tacks, and turned and twisted and ducked around, to the great delight of his sympathetic audience. I was right behind him all the time, and I dared to do whatever he did, even when he squared away before the wind and jibed his big sail over-a most dangerous trick with such a sail in such a wind.

He depended upon the brisk sea breeze and the strong ebb-tide, which together kicked up a nasty sea, to bring me to grief. But I was on my mettle, and never in all my life did I sail a boat better than on that day. I was keyed up to concert pitch, my brain was working smoothly and quickly, my hands never fumbled once, and it seemed that I almost divined the thousand little things which a small-boat sailor must be taking into consideration every second.

It was Demetrios who came to grief instead. Something went wrong with his centre-board, so that it jammed in the case and would not go all the way down. In a moment’s breathing space, which he had gained from me by a clever trick, I saw him working impatiently with the centre-board, trying to force it down. I gave him little time, and he was compelled quickly to return to the tiller and sheet.

The centre-board made him anxious. He gave over playing with me, and started on the long beat to Vallejo. To my joy, on the first long tack across, I found that I could eat into the wind just a little bit closer than he. Here was where another man in the boat would have been of value to him; for, with me but a few feet astern, he did not dare let go the tiller and run amidships to try to force down the centre-board.

Unable to hang on as close in the eye of the wind as formerly, he proceeded to slack his sheet a trifle and to ease off a bit, in order to outfoot me. This I permitted him to do till I had worked to windward, when I bore down upon him. As I drew close, he feinted at coming about. This led me to shoot into the wind to forestall him. But it was only a feint, cleverly executed, and he held back to his course while I hurried to make up lost ground.

He was undeniably smarter than I when it came to manoeuvring. Time after time I all but had him, and each time he tricked me and escaped. Besides, the wind was freshening, constantly, and each of us had his hands full to avoid capsizing. As for my boat, it could not have been kept afloat but for the extra ballast. I sat cocked over the weather gunwale, tiller in one hand and sheet in the other; and the sheet, with a single turn around a pin, I was very often forced to let go in the severer puffs. This allowed the sail to spill the wind, which was equivalent to taking off so much driving power, and of course I lost ground. My consolation was that Demetrios was as often compelled to do the same thing.

The strong ebb-tide, racing down the Straits in the teeth of the wind, caused an unusually heavy and spiteful sea, which dashed aboard continually. I was dripping wet, and even the sail was wet half-way up the after leech. Once I did succeed in outmanoeuvring Demetrios, so that my bow bumped into him amidships. Here was where I should have had another man. Before I could run forward and leap aboard, he shoved the boats apart with an oar, laughing mockingly in my face as he did so.

We were now at the mouth of the Straits, in a bad stretch of water. Here the Vallejo Straits and the Carquinez Straits rushed directly at each other. Through the first flowed all the water of Napa River and the great tide-lands; through the second flowed all the water of Suisun Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. And where such immense bodies of water, flowing swiftly, clashed together, a terrible tide-rip was produced. To make it worse, the wind howled up San Pablo Bay for fifteen miles and drove in a tremendous sea upon the tide-rip.

Conflicting currents tore about in all directions, colliding, forming whirlpools, sucks, and boils, and shooting up spitefully into hollow waves which fell aboard as often from leeward as from windward. And through it all, confused, driven into a madness of motion, thundered the great smoking seas from San Pablo Bay.

I was as wildly excited as the water. The boat was behaving splendidly, leaping and lurching through the welter like a race-horse. I could hardly contain myself with the joy of it. The huge sail, the howling wind, the driving seas, the plunging boat-I, a pygmy, a mere speck in the midst of it, was mastering the elemental strife, flying through it and over it, triumphant and victorious.

And just then, as I roared along like a conquering hero, the boat received a frightful smash and came instantly to a dead stop. I was flung forward and into the bottom. As I sprang up I caught a fleeting glimpse of a greenish, barnacle-covered object, and knew it at once for what it was, that terror of navigation, a sunken pile. No man may guard against such a thing. Water-logged and floating just beneath the surface, it was impossible to sight it in the troubled water in time to escape.

The whole bow of the boat must have been crushed in, for in a few seconds the boat was half full. Then a couple of seas filled it, and it sank straight down, dragged to bottom by the heavy ballast. So quickly did it all happen that I was entangled in the sail and drawn under. When I fought my way to the surface, suffocating, my lungs almost bursting, I could see nothing of the oars. They must have been swept away by the chaotic currents. I saw Demetrios Contos looking back from his boat, and heard the vindictive and mocking tones of his voice as he shouted exultantly. He held steadily on his course, leaving me to perish.

There was nothing to do but to swim for it, which, in that wild confusion, was at the best a matter of but a few moments. Holding my breath and working with my hands, I managed to get off my heavy sea-boots and my jacket. Yet there was very little breath I could catch to hold, and I swiftly discovered that it was not so much a matter of swimming as of breathing.

I was beaten and buffeted, smashed under by the great San Pablo whitecaps, and strangled by the hollow tide-rip waves which flung themselves into my eyes, nose, and mouth. Then the strange sucks would grip my legs and drag me under, to spout me up in some fierce boiling, where, even as I tried to catch my breath, a great whitecap would crash down upon my head.

It was impossible to survive any length of time. I was breathing more water than air, and drowning all the time. My senses began to leave me, my head to whirl around. I struggled on, spasmodically, instinctively, and was barely half conscious when I felt myself caught by the shoulders and hauled over the gunwale of a boat.

For some time I lay across a seat where I had been flung, face downward, and with the water running out of my mouth. After a while, still weak and faint, I turned around to see who was my rescuer. And there, in the stern, sheet in one hand and tiller in the other, grinning and nodding good-naturedly, sat Demetrios Contos. He had intended to leave me to drown,-he said so afterward,-but his better self had fought the battle, conquered, and sent him back to me.

"You all-a right?" he asked.

I managed to shape a "yes" on my lips, though I could not yet speak.

"You sail-a de boat verr-a good-a," he said. "So good-a as a man."

A compliment from Demetrios Contos was a compliment indeed, and I keenly appreciated it, though I could only nod my head in acknowledgment.

We held no more conversation, for I was busy recovering and he was busy with the boat. He ran in to the wharf at Vallejo, made the boat fast, and helped me out. Then it was, as we both stood on the wharf, that Charley stepped out from behind a net-rack and put his hand on Demetrios Contos's arm.

"He saved my life, Charley," I protested; "and I don't think he ought to be arrested."

A puzzled expression came into Charley's face, which cleared immediately after, in a way it had when he made up his mind.

"I can't help it, lad," he said kindly. "I can't go back on my duty, and it's plain duty to arrest him. To-day is Sunday; there are two salmon in his boat which he caught to-day. What else can I do?"

"But he saved my life," I persisted, unable to make any other argument.

Demetrios Contos's face went black with rage when he learned Charley's judgment. He had a sense of being unfairly treated. The better part of his nature had triumphed, he had performed a generous act and saved a helpless enemy, and in return the enemy was taking him to jail.

Charley and I were out of sorts with each other when we went back to Benicia. I stood for the spirit of the law and not the letter; but by the letter Charley made his stand. As far as he could see, there was nothing else for him to do. The law said distinctly that no salmon should be caught on Sunday. He was a patrolman, and it was his duty to enforce that law. That was all there was to it. He had done his duty, and his conscience was clear. Nevertheless, the whole thing seemed unjust to me, and I felt very sorry for Demetrios Contos.

Two days later we went down to Vallejo to the trial. I had to go along as a witness, and it was the most hateful task that I ever performed in my life when I testified on the witness stand to seeing Demetrios catch the two salmon Charley had captured him with.

Demetrios had engaged a lawyer, but his case was hopeless. The jury was out only fifteen minutes, and returned a verdict of guilty. The judge sentenced Demetrios to pay a fine of one hundred dollars or go to jail for fifty days.

Charley stepped up to the clerk of the court. “I want to pay that fine,” he said, at the same time placing five twenty-dollar gold pieces on the desk. “It-it was the only way out of it, lad,” he stammered, turning to me.

The moisture rushed into my eyes as I seized his hand. “I want to pay-“ I began.

“To pay your half?” he interrupted. “I certainly shall expect you to pay it.”

In the meantime Demetrios had been informed by his lawyer that his fee likewise had been paid by Charley.

Demetrios came over to shake Charley’s hand, and all his warm Southern blood flamed in his face. Then, not to be outdone in generosity, he insisted on paying his fine and lawyer’s fee himself, and flew half-way into a passion because Charley refused to let him.

More than anything else we ever did, I think, this action of Charley’s impressed upon the fishermen the deeper significance of the law. Also Charley was raised high in their esteem, while I came in for a little share of praise as a boy who knew how to sail a boat. Demetrios Contos not only never broke the law again, but he became a very good friend of ours, and on more than one occasion he ran up to Benicia to have a gossip with us.

The Devil's Dice Box

We worshipped at alien altars; we bowed our heads in the dust;
Our Law was might is the mightiest; our Creed was unholy lust;
Our Law and our Creed we followed — strange is the tale to tell —
For our Law and our Creed we followed into the pit of hell.
The Mammon Worshippers

NOT only do I know of these things from the finding of the manuscript, but I helped bury the Man who came out of the East; I knew the other men before they disappeared into the East; and I also know that they never came back. It occurred in the old days before the great discoveries on Bonanza and Eldorado, in the times we called the Clondyke the Reindeer River. There were about one hundred white men scattered through all that vast wilderness; perhaps a score of us, because of a great faith in the Upper Country, being in winter quarters where the Stuart River flows into the Yukon.

It was in April, when our grub was running short, that I trailed a wounded moose through many creeks and over many divides, camping on the track by night and hungering for the kill. On this day he headed for the north east, doubled, then broke for the Stuart River, crossing it fifty miles from its mouth. I found a dead Indian woman on the ice, a half-breed, and for all she must have suffered, still very beautiful. She had starved to death, for her squirrel-skin parka had been cut away, strip after strip, and the tops of her moccasins also showed the Indian manner of appeasing hunger. I looted her, and being in great pain through lack of food, continued after the moose, leaving the body to go down with the ice when the river broke. I found in the grub pouch a piece of partially chewed leather, a little over five pounds of large nuggets, and Ae birch-bark manuscript which is here printed. I purposely disguise the location of the place, for some day I shall go there myself, and come back very rich.

(here begins the story proper)

It is all so strange and horrible — I can hardly realize it, hardly realize that I am dying. And to die in the possession of boundless wealth, to die in the treasure chamber of the world, is the hardest part of it. And again, the strange fatality; is it merely a peculiar chain of circumstances? or is it a curse imposed by that First Man from over the mountains? 0 why this medley of bloodshed, murder, death? Can none escape the — but I must calm myself. Let me begin at the beginning. This Indian woman was once a Mission girl of the Coast, and she writes as I tell her. Perhaps after I am dead she may reach civilization and give my tale to the world.

In the beginning, there were seven of us, eight, counting the girl, located on the third island below the mouth of the Stuart. We were soldiers of fortune whom chance had thrown together, and little was known of each other’s antecedents. We had all been several years in the Yukon Basin, while our leader, Innuit Kid, had put in no less than seven and knew the country as few men ever did or ever will. The half-breed, Lucy, was his wife whom he had brought from Haine’s Mission on the Coast. Then there were the two Randolf brothers, claiming kinship with the famous Kentucky family of that name; two sailors who had adventured together the whole world over; and a young college graduate (Yale man, if I remember rightly) named Charley. We never knew him by any other, for he had evidently fled some scrape at home and desired to hide it. As for myself, the least said the better. Let it suffice that I had lost my partner in an ice-jam the preceding fall and then drifted into my present company.

It was in the short days of December that the first of the many things I shall speak of occurred. Night had just fallen, and we were smoking, yarning, and sewing moccasins, when the dogs set up a racket. Then we heard some one cursing and the sharp slash of a dog whip, followed by a knock at the door. Before we could open it, the Man from out of the East came in. His first words were ‘For Christ’s sake, a smoke!” Charley thrust a live pipe into his hand, and he fell to puffing with long sighs of satisfaction. Tall, dark-eyed and black-whiskered, with the muscular leanness habitual to one who travels the Long Trail, he was as graceful and handsome a man as ever delighted the eye of woman. I have often thought that this was the cause of the trouble which afterward came upon him. In answer to our question as to where he came from, he pointed toward the east and went on smoking and sighing. We scented a mystery; never before had we heard of a man coming out of tie east, nor had we ever dreamed of it being done in winter time. We male him comfortable, however, and as he stayed over several days to buy dogs for the trip to Dyea, we managed to get a few inklings to his history.

In the first place, we back-tripped his trail and found it led out of Stuart River; and in the second, he had brought over a hundred pounds of gold on his sled, every bit of it being large nuggets with an assay value of over eighteen dollars. These are the facts, the rest beingcaught from his lips and pieced together. In the summer of two years previous, in the company of two French-Canadian half-breeds, he canoed and portaged from Lake Athabasca to Great Slave Lake, and then down the Mackenzie to the sixty-fifth degree or in a line with Bear Lake There they waited till the first snow, when they abandoned the river and faced west into the Rockies. After a year's wandering in that unknown region, ever continuing westward, he had encountered the head-waters of the Stuart and journeyed down to the Yukon. He spoke incidentally of the loss of his two comrades, nor was he shy in the exhibition of his gold, frankly telling us that it was merely a sample of what he had discovered. Beyond this we could gain nothing, for he kept his lips resolutely sealed on his previous life. Still, disguise it as he would, there was a certain, vague smack of the man of the world about him which I could not fail to recognize.

Despite our solicitations, he prepared to set out on Christmas Day. He had just harnessed his dogs and was preparing to pull out, when a bunch of dog teams, fresh from the Coast, pulled in. We were at once struck by the similarity between him and the leader of the arrivals. Even before salutations could be exchanged, the explosion took place. The new arrival gave a start of surprise and covered our guest with his rile. The latter's sang froid was remarkable, for he smiled with a peculiar niockery of the lips and said, "Ah! brother mine." That was all; not another word passed between them; their understanding was too good for that.

The scene which followed would be highly improbable among ordinary people, but all things are possible to the men who face the dangers of the dreary Northland. It seemed like an appointment, long since made, to be kept at this time and place. Rifle in hand and back to back, each paced off fifty yards and faced about, while we drew out ofthe line of fire.

Never did Christmas Day look down on stranger scene. It was high noon, and the upper rim of the sun, barely showing above the southern horizon, cast a blood-red streak athwart the heavens. On either hand a sun dog blazed, while the air was filled with scintillating particles of frost. A great silence prevailed. The vast expanse of snow seemed a Sahara of monotonous white, broken only by the dark forms of the brothers. A moment they faced each other, then, as the new arrival counted the customary "One, two, three," rifles came to shoulders and began to speak. Such was the rapidity of our guest's fire, that for six shots he kept a shell constantly in the air and then went down, bored through the lungs. His opponent was more deliberate, firing but three. J But he had not escaped unscathed, for a bullet had cut his mitten string, a second had smashed a couple of ribs, while his right arm hung useless, the work of a third.

He staggered across the snow to his brother and gazed upon him with great satisfaction. We raised the stricken man to a sitting posture, and as he showed a desire to speak, his brother bent over him. We never knew what he whispered, but his look of mockery as his soul passed was a keynote to the stranger's sudden anger. He unsheathed his hunting-knife and would have stabbed the dying man, had not Innuit Kid dashed his fist into his face, knocking him backward into the snow. There was a slipping of mittens and a clicking of rifles among the newcomers, and the broil would have become general, had not the stranger gained his feet and stepped between. In response to his orders, the sleds were un-lashed, the loads shifted, and his wounds dressed. Then he was swathed in robes and tied to a sled. The whole thing had happened in less than five minutes — the stranger had arrived, killed our guest, and departed. Men think and act quickly in the Northland.

Stowing the body on the roof of the cabin so that the dogs could not get at it, we entered and held a council of war. The sailors emptied the; two fifty-pound sacks of nuggets on the table, and from this moment the Madness began to grow. Even Lucy, for all her impassive Indian nature, was so fascinated by the glittering heap that she could hardly cook dinner. After a few minutes of talk and conjecture, Innuit Kid returned with the information that the strangers had turned into the Stuart River. Confusion prevailed. Even the woman understood its import. Charley thanked all the heathen gods that men could not hide their trail in the Arctic, while Innuit Kid thumped the table and swore that he would be the first in at the kill.

Then came the planning and the question as to who should stay behind. Then the Madness broke out. Man after man swore roundly that he would not be left, while the quivering of Lucy's nostrils and the fact that she always followed her lord and master settled the matter for her. And there we sat, gazing on the yellow heap, thinking the strange things and dreaming the strange dreams that men always do, when this thirst of thirsts is on them.

We soon settled it by all hands going, and buckled down to the work of getting ready. Sleds were strengthened, harnesses and moccasins made and repaired, and every dog and every pound of dog-food to be obtained for love or money skirmished from White and Indian. So bust were we, that when we pulled out the following morning, we left a notice for the first comer to bury the man on the roof. And so the Madness grew; for when one fails to bury the dead at his door, he is indeed ready to be destroyed.

A brave sight we made with our eight sleds and five score dogs. While the ordinary team is from five to seven dogs, we had twelve to the sled. Still, though we did not have to go ahead and break trail for our dogs, we were three days in overtaking them. It was plain that they were traveling fast. Contrary to our expectations, however, there was no trouble when they discovered our pursuit — nay, they did not evince the slightest surprise when we overhauled them. We did not like this, and that night and for many nights we kept watch. Nor were we alone, for reconnoitering in the direction of their camp Abe Randolph discovered that they had taken similar precautions.

Though we knew they knew the location of the treasure, they did not know that we were ignorant of it. Each party knew that the other could not give it the slip, because the pursued always breaks a trail for the pursuer in an Arctic chase. It was like two racers, riding easily and waiting for the sprint at the finish to settle the matter. To an onlooker our race must have appeared ludicrous, for we alternated, day by day, in going to the fore and breaking trail. Yet this was the only understanding, for both parties maintained a rigid silence.

Such a contest would have been bearable under ordinary circumstances, but here food was too precious to lag by the wayside. How the dogs suffered; we were forced to stint them in their allowance, at the same time working them to the utmost. By the time we entered on the third hundred miles they began to play out; these we shot and fed to those which still kept their legs. The January days were very short, and at the best we could not knock out more than twenty miles, often not as much as ten. But the heavy work told on us, and at night we crawled into the snow and slept like dead men. How the leader of the other party stood it, I cannot imagine. Often we heard him cursing with the pain, when the sled he was lashed to jolted over rough ice. But his was an indomitable spirit. Not only did he stand it, but his ribs so knitted and healed that when the period of intense cold came, he began to leave the sled and walk. It was a case of have-to, though, else he would have frozen.

But we were all tired and worn, and one of our party began to break under the strain. It was not the girl. God bless her, for she was born and bred to the trail, but the Yale man. He finally became so weak that he could do nothing. Then we forced him onto the trail as soon as he had breakfasted, while we broke camp, lashed the sleds and harnessed thef dogs. We always overtook and passed him in a couple of hours, and long after we had pitched camp and eaten supper, he would come staggering in, nearly dead. Though also very tired, the other party was in fair condition, and perceiving our plight, cruelly though of course fairly, took advantage of it. They increased the hours of traveling; yet while we kept up, it was too much for Charley. They no longer waited for us tol take our turn in breaking trail, and gradually began to pull away from us. What could we do? We had lost so many dogs that we had already abandoned four of the sleds and every surplus article we possessed. Each man even carried his rifle and ammunition, when previously they had been packed on the sleds.

Slowly, though we never spoke or hinted of it, the question took shape. Were we to abandon Charley or the treasure? Three more days we forced him to the pace, but by the last day he no longer suffered. Though he still stumbled along on his snow shoes, he had lost consciousness, and laughed and cried and babbled about his people, his home, his childhood days. Once he regained consciousness long enough to realize how slender was his thread of life, and to beg us to shoot him. That night the other party traveled four hours after dark, and it exhausted Abe and John Randolph to drag him into camp. He could not eat and slept like a log where he fell, his moccasins scorching in the fire. Next morning they broke camp two hours earlier than usual, and wel found it impossible to get Charley up. His brain would rouse but his body could not respond. He was not sick, only exhausted. Rest was the only medicine for him, and we could not give it. We found four more of the dogs unfit for travel and had to shoot them, else we would have lashed him to a sled.

The sleds were loaded, the dogs were harnessed, but we waited and tried and tried in vain. As Old Sol dipped over the horizon at meridian, we rose to our feet. The moment had come. We looked into each other’s eyes coldly and without emotion. Lucy’s face, though her throat was silent, voiced an eloquent appeal. The Madness was on us; we could not yield. The snapping whips and lunging dogs roused him, and by the look on his face, we knew he understood. It was a piteous look — the look of a wounded doe or of a seal at the killing. So we left him because of the Madness, and small wonder that our gods forsook us as we forsook our comrade.

We took to the trail in silence, the first to break it being Lucy, who dropped back to the side of Innuit Kid and pleaded in low tones. He reluctantly consented to her taking the back trail. She was with us in a few minutes, but we noticed that the holster above the hip was empty. Then a shot rang out, and we knew that Charley had passed beyond the toil of the camps and trail.

They were so bent on losing us that they traveled far into the night — so far that we could not overtake them. The next day had a similar ending, and it was not till the evening of the third day that we pulled into their camp. As before, they showed no signs of surprise, though we could see that they eyed us pretty thoroughly and noted Charley's absence. With shame, we had noted the same; but by neither sign or word did one comrade show another his heart.

We were sorely tried by the work, by the inexorable morrow which constantly fled across the snow. Hard as it was to struggle on, still harder was it to struggle against the desire for rest. What would I not have given just to cease for one day from all action. How I envied my prosaic boyhood days — nay, I even envied Charley. Often I thought of blowing out my brains to get the peace I so hungered for. For the first time I understood the terrible significance of Longfellow's lines:

The sea is still and deep;
All things within its bosom sleep;
A single step and all is o'er;
A plunge, a bubble, and no more.

And during the long hours of toil, with the monotonous grind of ihe steel-shod sleds and the perpetual uplifting of the snow shoes, they were always in my thoughts. But the great lust, the Madness, kept me up and prevented me throwing my revolver away. Nor did I suffer alone, for we were all light-headed, babbling and staggering along like drunken men. All, except Innuit Kid and Lucy; their pluck was superhuman. Not only did they take their pain without sign, but at the labor of cooking, pitching and breaking camp, they did double duty.

The intense cold made it harder. For two weeks the thermometer had been ranging under fifty degrees below zero; for eight days it had been below sixty; and now it sank past seventy-four. At this temperature, our “painkiller” (our only and entire medicine chest) froze solid. How much colder it got we could not tell. Our faces were frozen a purplish-black and covered with great scabs, while we were in continual agony from our feet. Constant snow shoeing had developed large run-I ning sores on the soles. Our dogs were dropping fast. There were barely twenty left out of our five score. But it could not last forever, and one morning our quarry turned out of the river, taking a small tributary entering from the left. The chase was drawing to a close.

A day’s journey up this brought us to its forks, where we camped, a good watch being kept so they could not slip away from us in the dark. Dawn found us under way again. We were in the Rockies now, almost to the backbone, and the branch had become a gorge. We felt sure that the end was at hand, looked to our weapons, and made all arrangements for the final sprint. All day we fought our way through the cold and snow, and when nightfall and the end of the gorge appeared, we were sorely disappointed. But imagine our astonishment when the quarry strained at the divide, and with axes, began to cut steps in the hard snow for themselves and dogs. No sign of camping, so we figured that our goal must be very near.

We cleared the crest as the rising moon silvered the snow, and found ourselves on a large plateau, above which towered lofty peaks, dismal and repellent in their white splendor. Up to now the course had evidently been clear, but when the other party began to travel by compass, we swung abreast and feigned great interest in our own. So well did we play our game, that our opponents never knew our utter ignorance of the location of the treasure. It was a beautiful night, and the ghostly, Arctic silence enveloped us like a shroud. The cold was bitter, every breath cutting our lungs like a knife, while our faces were massed I with ice. And on all our misery, the stars looked down unpityingly — nay, exultantly, as they danced and leaped as they always do in the Great Cold.

Suddenly, in the very center of the plateau, their dogs were forced to a gallop. There was a general loosening of knives and pistols as we followed suit and swept along, still abreast. It was weird indeed, this last stretch of a mighty race — men, gold-thirsty, a thousand miles beyond the uttermost bounds of civilization, in the heart of the Northland wastes, running neck and neck for they knew not what. Of a sudden the dogs threw themselves back on their haunches. We were on the edge of a great hole, which seemed to sink to the heart of the tableland. Round, perhaps three hundred feet in diameter, it was a sheer thousand to bottom. The walls were everywhere perpendicular, save in one place on the opposite place, where erosion and successive slides had broken up the precipitous formation. It seemed like a great dice box, and to complete the illusion, at the bottom were five enormous cubes of stone.

Cursing, lashing, mushing the dogs, we skirted the dizzy edge at full gallop; nor paused, taking the steep descent like mad-men. Side by side, Innuit Kid and the stranger leader led, followed by both parties, men and dogs, confusedly mixed together. The sleds turned over and went down sideways, backwards and upside down, dragging after them the dogs, which had flown at each other's throats. We tried to escape the tangle but were swept off our feet and carried along. It was a veritable avalanche of life. In our pell-mell progress we dislodged great quantities of snow, on the breast of which we were carried along like a swimmer on the crest of a wave. We overtook and enveloped the two leaders in the common ruin, and naught could be heard above the roar of our transit, save a confused treble of snarling and cursing.

I cannot even now understand how we escaped total destruction; but escape we did, fetching up among the great blocks of stone on the bottom. Groaning from our wounds, we dragged each other out of the mess, disentangled the dogs, and counted losses. Two of their men had been badly crushed; one of our sailors had broken both legs; while half a dozen dogs had been torn to pieces in the fighting.

The moon had now passed beyond the rim of the pit and darkness was about us. We stumbled upon a small, single-roomed log cabin, and into this both gangs crowded. After a little delay in thawing the fat, a bacon-grease slush-lamp was lighted and we gazed about us. It was an ordinary cabin, with a rock fireplace and chinked with moss; but on a rough table was heaped a pile of nuggets, worth perhaps forty or fifty thousand dollars. As this was but a foretaste, we paid little attention to it. Underneath the table were fragments of a human skeleton, perchance that of the original discoverer. On top the gold we found numerous pieces of birch bark, covered with writing. It was in French, and one of the other party translated it aloud.

Over twenty years before, we learned, the writer, “sick unto death and deserted by his comrade,” had laid him down to die. He had wandered here from the Hudson Bay Company’s posts above Athabasca, and discovered the treasure. He described his theory of its deposit, and dwelt at great length on the cowardice and treachery of his partner, concluding by calling down a curse upon the gold in the name of all that was most holy and most diabolical. (I shudder now, as I think of those terrible words, and if ever a curse was efficacious, this one was.) Beneath it, another hand had dated ten years later and written:

Ha! Ha! Though his partner died, I am here, and by all the Saints it won’t work with me.

— Donald Ross.”

Another one took up the strain, evidently our unlucky December guest, for it was dated but three months back. It ran:

“Poor devil! he laughed before he was out of the woods. But he laughs best who laughs last. Ha! Ha! Ha!

— Griffith Benson.”

We all burst into laughter as the reading finished — partly hysterical, I’ll admit, but with a ring of derision, satisfaction, and blind egotism. Of course the others had succumbed to the potency of that First Man’s curse, but we knew it was different with us. Most truly were we mad.

The fireplace was soon roaring, supper cooked and eaten, the wounded men made comfortable, and the rest of us turned in. The cabin had been divided between the two gangs, each setting a watch through fear of treachery.

Morning brought with it the discovery of the mine — in short, the whole bottom of the pit was the mine. Bed-rock had been tapped inl several previous workings, and every one was rich, beyond our wildest dreams. Fine gold, coarse gold, nuggets — one could simply shovel it out. Panning and rocking was unnecessary; it had only to be picked up. Evidently in the cycles of the dim past, a great quartz ledge had reared itself for thousands of feet above the present hole; and by erosion, thel action of ice during the Glacial Period, or some other freak of nature, it had disintegrated and deposited its golden spoil. We could not even hazard a guess as to how the pit had been formed or what had comej of the debris, though we were sure of some subterranean outlet, else would it have been filled with water.

Gold there was, and in plenty for all, and I believe we would have soon reached an amicable division of it, had not Fate been against us. Both parties were at the tail end of their grub. We killed our dogs one by one, went on short rations, and searched the whole country round for game. Moose or cariboo, and all would have been well; but the best the hunting parties could do was to knock over an occasional partridge or snowshoe rabbit. The country seemed barren, and even this small game disappeared at last.

It was now straight dog. But the dogs were thin and the men hungry, so they did not go very far. We had still four left when the other party reached the end of its tether. For two days their hunters returned empty handed and food did not pass their mouths. Of course we could not whack up, and of course they could not starve peaceably. The outlook was dark indeed, and though no word was spoken, many the black scowl was cast between.

Affairs reached a crisis on the evening of the third day. After lengthy consultation in a corner, their leader left the cabin. There was a snarling among the remnant of the dogs, and the next instant he staggered in, dragging one of them by the scruff of the neck. Everything followed like a flash. Lucy sprang for the dog, but Innuit Kid caught her a back-handed sweep of the arm, hurling her into the corner. At the same instant the Frenchman threw his hunting-knife. Just as Innuit Kid clenched with the stranger, it whistled through the air, burying itself in his shoulder. The work was too close for rifles, but revolvers and knives played merrily. The golden table and the slush-lamp went crashing over, and by the deceptive firelight we fought like fiends. It was give and take, without mercy and without quarter; when opportunity permitted, a wounded adversary was always finished. Even the stricken, underfoot, used the overhand stab on the combatants above them, or gave each other the quietus. Two men clinched and rolled into the fireplace, from which arose the sickening smell of burning flesh. Nor was I idle, till I went underfoot and a great darkness came upon me.

I have heard of the Kilkenny Cats, but never did I dream of taking part in a similar combat. A week has passed since the battle, and I alone am left. In fact, I alone had life when Lucy overhauled the shambles. Grim is the irony of Fate; shortly after the battle she shot two moose, 50 she is in no danger of starving. But she is busy preparing a stock of “^eat, and I know that she will strike out as soon as I am dead. Heaven ^Ip her, for she faces what few men dare face. Should she succeed, of ^omsoever gets this I ask to treat her kindly, and if any of the treasure is obtained to give her a fair share. I would advise him, though, to shun this spot, for of a verity it is the pit of hell; but I know it is useless, for what can bid him pause when the thirst of thirsts is on him?

My time is near. Though I may wander, I behold the signs. Often I hear thunder of the rolling dice and see my comrades there at play. Soon I shall go to join them in the game. Should this chance the eyes of my people, I sign my name. Thus may they know my death, and that in sorrow for the wrong I did them, I met it.

The Devils of Fuatino

I

Of his many schooners, ketches and cutters that nosed about among the coral isles of the South Seas, David Grief loved most the Rattler--a yacht-like schooner of ninety tons with so swift a pair of heels that she had made herself famous, in the old days, opium-smuggling from San Diego to Puget Sound, raiding the seal-rookeries of Bering Sea, and running arms in the Far East. A stench and an abomination to government officials, she had been the joy of all sailormen, and the pride of the shipwrights who built her. Even now, after forty years of driving, she was still the same old Rattler, fore-reaching in the same marvellous manner that compelled sailors to see in order to believe and that punctuated many an angry discussion with words and blows on the beaches of all the ports from Valparaiso to Manila Bay.

On this night, close-hauled, her big mainsail preposterously flattened down, her luffs pulsing emptily on the lift of each smooth swell, she was sliding an easy four knots through the water on the veriest whisper of a breeze. For an hour David Grief had been leaning on the rail at the lee fore-rigging, gazing overside at the steady phosphorescence of her gait. The faint back-draught from the headsails fanned his cheek and chest with a wine of coolness, and he was in an ecstasy of appreciation of the schooner’s qualities.

“Eh!--She’s a beauty, Taute, a beauty,” he said to the Kanaka lookout, at the same time stroking the teak of the rail with an affectionate hand.

“Ay, skipper,” the Kanaka answered in the rich, big-chested tones of Polynesia. “Thirty years I know ships, but never like ‘this. On Raiatea we call her Fanauao.”

“The Dayborn,” Grief translated the love-phrase. “Who named her so?”

About to answer, Taute peered ahead with sudden intensity. Grief joined him in the gaze.

“Land,” said Taute.

“Yes; Fuatino,” Grief agreed, his eyes still fixed on the spot where the star-luminous horizon was gouged by a blot of blackness. “It’s all right. I’ll tell the captain."

The Rattler slid along until the loom of the island could be seen as well as sensed, until the sleepy roar of breakers and the blatting of goats could be heard, until the wind, off the land, was flower-drenched with perfume.

"If it wasn't a crevice, she could run the passage a night like this," Captain Glass remarked regretfully, as he watched the wheel lashed hard down by the steersman.

The Rattler, run off shore a mile, had been hove to to wait until daylight ere she attempted the perilous entrance to Fuatino. It was a perfect tropic night, with no hint of rain or squall. For'ard, wherever their tasks left them, the Raiatea sailors sank down to sleep on deck. Aft, the captain and mate and Grief spread their beds with similar languid unconcern. They lay on their blankets, smoking and murmuring sleepy conjectures about Mataara, the Queen of Fuatino, and about the love affair between her daughter, Naumoo, and Motuaro.

"They're certainly a romantic lot," Brown, the mate, said. "As romantic as we whites."

"As romantic as Pilsach," Grief laughed, "and that is going some. How long ago was it, Captain, that he jumped you?"

"Eleven years," Captain Glass grunted resentfully.

"Tell me about it," Brown pleaded. "They say he's never left Fuatino since. Is that right?"

"Right O," the captain rumbled. "He's in love with his wife--the little hussy! Stole him from me, and as good a sailorman as the trade has ever seen--if he is a Dutchman."

"German," Grief corrected.

"It's all the same," was the retort. "The sea was robbed of a good man that night he went ashore and Notutu took one look at him. I reckon they looked good to each other. Before you could say skat, she'd put a wreath of some kind of white flowers on his head, and in five minutes they were off down the beach, like a couple of kids, holding hands and laughing. I hope he's blown that big coral patch out of the channel. I always start a sheet or two of copper warping past."

"Go on with the story," Brown urged.

"That's all. He was finished right there. Got married that night. Never came on board again. I looked him up next day. Found him in a straw house in the bush, barelegged, a white savage, all mixed up with flowers and things and playing a guitar. Looked like a bally ass. Told me to send his things ashore. I told him I'd see him damned first. And that's all. You'll see her to-morrow. They've got three kiddies now--wonderful little rascals. I've a phonograph down below for him, and about a million records."

"And then you made him trader?" the mate inquired of Grief.

"What else could I do? Fuatino is a love island, and Filsach is a lover. He knows the native, too--one of the best traders I've got, or ever had. He's responsible. You'll see him to-morrow."

"Look here, young man," Captain Glass rumbled threateningly at his mate. "Are you romantic? Because if you are, on board you stay. Fuatino's the island of romantic insanity. Everybody's in love with somebody. They live on love. It's in the milk of the cocoa-nuts, or the air, or the sea. The history of the island for the last ten thousand years is nothing but love affairs. I know. I've talked with the old men. And if I catch you starting down the beach hand in hand--"

His sudden cessation caused both the other men to look at him. They followed his gaze, which passed across them to the main rigging, and saw what he saw, a brown hand and arm, muscular and wet, being joined from overside by a second brown hand and arm. A head followed, thatched with long elfin locks, and then a face, with roguish black eyes, lined with the marks of wildwood's laughter.

"My God!" Brown breathed. "It's a faun--a sea-faun."

"It's the Goat Man," said Glass.

"It is Mauriri," said Grief. "He is my own blood brother by sacred plight of native custom. His name is mine, and mine is his."

Broad brown shoulders and a magnificent chest rose above the rail, and, with what seemed effortless ease, the whole grand body followed over the rail and noiselessly trod the deck. Brown, who might have been other things than the mate of an island schooner, was enchanted. All that he had ever gleaned from the books proclaimed indubitably the faun-likeness of this visitant of the deep. "But a sad faun," was the young man's judgment, as the golden-brown woods god strode forward to where David Grief sat up with outstretched hand.

"David," said David Grief.

"Mauriri, Big Brother," said Mauriri.

And thereafter, in the custom of men who have pledged blood brotherhood, each called the other, not by the other's name, but by his own.

Also, they talked in the Polynesian tongue of Fuatino, and Brown could only sit and guess.

"A long swim to say talofa," Grief said, as the other sat and streamed water on the deck.

"Many days and nights have I watched for your coming, Big Brother," Mauriri replied. "I have sat on the Big Rock, where the dynamite is kept, of which I have been made keeper. I saw you come up to the entrance and run back into darkness. I knew you waited till morning, and I followed. Great trouble has come upon us. Mataara has cried these many days for your coming. She is an old woman, and Motauri is dead, and she is sad."

"Did he marry Naumoo?" Grief asked, after he had shaken his head and sighed by the custom.

"Yes. In the end they ran to live with the goats, till Mataara forgave, when they returned to live with her in the Big House. But he is now dead, and Naumoo soon will die. Great is our trouble, Big Brother. Tori is dead, and Tati-Tori, and Petoo, and Nari, and Pilsach, and others."

"Pilsach, too!" Grief exclaimed. "Has there been a sickness?"

"There has been much killing. Listen, Big Brother, Three weeks ago a strange schooner came. From the Big Rock I saw her topsails above the sea. She towed in with her boats, but they did not warp by the big patch, and she pounded many times. She is now on the beach, where they are strengthening the broken timbers. There are eight white men on board. They have women from some island far to the east. The women talk a language in many ways like ours, only different. But we can understand. They say they were stolen by the men on the schooner. We do not know, but they sing and dance and are happy."

"And the men?" Grief interrupted.

"They talk French. I know, for there was a mate on your schooner who talked French long ago. There are two chief men, and they do not look like the others. They have blue eyes like you, and they are devils. One is a bigger devil than the other. The other six are also devils. They do not pay us for our yams, and taro, and breadfruit. They take everything from us, and if we complain they kill us. Thus was killed Tori, and Tati-Tori, and Petoo, and others. We cannot fight, for we have no guns--only two or three old guns.

"They ill-treat our women. Thus was killed Motuaro, who made defence of Naumoo, whom they have now taken on board their schooner. It was because of this that Pilsach was killed. Him the chief of the two chief men, the Big Devil, shot once in his whaleboat, and twice when he tried to crawl up the sand of the beach. Pilsach was a brave man, and Notutu now sits in the house and cries without end. Many of the people are afraid, and have run to live with the goats. But there is not food for all in the high mountains. And the men will not go out and fish, and they work no more in the gardens because of the devils who take all they have. And we are ready to fight.

"Big Brother, we need guns, and much ammunition. I sent word before I swam out to you, and the men are waiting. The strange white men do not know you are come. Give me a boat, and the guns, and I will go back before the sun. And when you come to-morrow we will be ready for the word from you to kill the strange white men. They must be killed. Big Brother, you have ever been of the blood with us, and the men and women have prayed to many gods for your coming. And you are come."

"I will go in the boat with you," Grief said.

"No, Big Brother," was Mauriri's reply. "You must be with the schooner. The strange white men will fear the schooner, not us. We will have the guns, and they will not know. It is only when they see your schooner come that they will be alarmed. Send the young man there with the boat."

So it was that Brown, thrilling with all the romance and adventure he had read and guessed and never lived, took his place in the sternsheets of a whaleboat, loaded with rifles and cartridges, rowed by four Baiatea sailors, steered by a golden-brown, sea-swimming faun, and directed through the warm tropic darkness toward the half-mythical love island of Fuatino, which had been invaded by twentieth century pirates.

II

If a line be drawn between Jaluit, in the Marshall Group, and Bougainville, in the Solomons, and if this line be bisected at two degrees south of the equator by a line drawn from Ukuor, in the Carolines, the high island of Fuatino will be raised in that sun-washed stretch of lonely sea. Inhabited by a stock kindred to the Hawaiian, the Samoan, the Tahitian, and the Maori, Fuatino becomes the apex of the wedge driven by Polynesia far to the west and in between Melanesia and Micronesia. And it was Fuatino that David Grief raised next morning, two miles to the east and in direct line with the rising sun. The same whisper of a breeze held, and the Rattler slid through the smooth sea at a rate that would have been eminently proper for an island schooner had the breeze been thrice as strong.

Fuatino was nothing else than an ancient crater, thrust upward from the sea-bottom by some primordial cataclysm. The western portion, broken and crumbled to sea level, was the entrance to the crater itself, which constituted the harbour. Thus, Fuatino was like a rugged horseshoe, the heel pointing to the west. And into the opening at the heel the Rattler steered. Captain Glass, binoculars in hand and peering at the chart made by himself, which was spread on top the cabin, straightened up with an expression on his face that was half alarm, half resignation.

"It's coming," he said. "Fever. It wasn't due till to-morrow. It always hits me hard, Mr. Grief. In five minutes I'll be off my head. You'll have to con the schooner in. Boy! Get my bunk ready! Plenty of blankets! Fill that hot-water bottle! It's so calm, Mr. Grief, that I think you can pass the big patch without warping. Take the leading wind and shoot her. She's the only craft in the South Pacific that can do it, and I know you know the trick. You can scrape the Big Rock by just watching out for the main boom."

He had talked rapidly, almost like a drunken man, as his reeling brain battled with the rising shock of the malarial stroke. When he stumbled toward the companionway, his face was purpling and mottling as if attacked by some monstrous inflammation or decay. His eyes were setting in a glassy bulge, his hands shaking, his teeth clicking in the spasms of chill.

"Two hours to get the sweat," he chattered with a ghastly grin. "And a couple more and I'll be all right. I know the damned thing to the last minute it runs its course. Y-y-you t-t-take ch-ch-ch-ch----"

His voice faded away in a weak stutter as he collapsed down into the cabin and his employer took charge. The Rattler was just entering the passage. The heels of the horseshoe island were two huge mountains of rock a thousand feet high, each almost broken off from the mainland and connected with it by a low and narrow peninsula. Between the heels was a half-mile stretch, all but blocked by a reef of coral extending across from the south heel. The passage, which Captain Glass had called a crevice, twisted into this reef, curved directly to the north heel, and ran along the base of the perpendicular rock. At this point, with the main-boom almost grazing the rock on the port side, Grief, peering down on the starboard side, could see bottom less than two fathoms beneath and shoaling steeply. With a whaleboat towing for steerage and as a precaution against back-draughts from the cliff, and taking advantage of a fan of breeze, he shook the Rattler full into it and glided by the big coral patch without warping. As it was, he just scraped, but so softly as not to start the copper.

The harbour of Fuatino opened before him. It was a circular sheet of water, five miles in diameter, rimmed with white coral beaches, from which the verdure-clad slopes rose swiftly to the frowning crater walls. The crests of the walls were saw-toothed, volcanic peaks, capped and halo'd with captive trade-wind clouds. Every nook and crevice of the disintegrating lava gave foothold to creeping, climbing vines and trees--a green foam of vegetation. Thin streams of water, that were mere films of mist, swayed and undulated downward in sheer descents of hundreds of feet. And to complete the magic of the place, the warm, moist air was heavy with the perfume of the yellow-blossomed cassi.

Fanning along against light, vagrant airs, the Rattler worked in. Calling the whale-boat on board, Grief searched out the shore with his binoculars. There was no life. In the hot blaze of tropic sun the place slept. There was no sign of welcome. Up the beach, on the north shore, where the fringe of cocoanut palms concealed the village, he could see the black bows of the canoes in the canoe-houses. On the beach, on even keel, rested the strange schooner. Nothing moved on board of her or around her. Not until the beach lay fifty yards away did Grief let go the anchor in forty fathoms. Out in the middle, long years before, he had sounded three hundred fathoms without reaching bottom, which was to be expected of a healthy crater-pit like Fuatino. As the chain roared and surged through the hawse-pipe he noticed a number of native women, lusciously large as only those of Polynesia are, in flowing ahu's, flower-crowned, stream out on the deck of the schooner on the beach. Also, and what they did not see, he saw from the galley the squat figure of a man steal for'ard, drop to the sand, and dive into the green screen of bush.

While the sails were furled and gasketed, awnings stretched, and sheets and tackles coiled harbour fashion, David Grief paced the deck and looked vainly for a flutter of life elsewhere than on the strange schooner. Once, beyond any doubt, he heard the distant crack of a rifle in the direction of the Big Rock. There were no further shots, and he thought of it as some hunter shooting a wild goat.

At the end of another hour Captain Glass, under a mountain of blankets, had ceased shivering and was in the inferno of a profound sweat.

“I’ll be all right in half an hour,” he said weakly.

“Very well,” Grief answered. “The place is dead, and I’m going ashore to see Mataara and find out the situation.”

“It’s a tough bunch; keep your eyes open,” the captain warned him. “If you’re not back in an hour, send word off.”

Grief took the steering-sweep, and four of his Raiatea men bent to the oars. As they landed on the beach he looked curiously at the women under the schooner’s awning. He waved his hand tentatively, and they, after giggling, waved back.

“Talofa!” he called.

They understood the greeting, but replied, “Iorana,” and he knew they came from the Society Group.

“Huahine,” one of his sailors unhesitatingly named their island. Grief asked them whence they came, and with giggles and laughter they replied, “Huahine.”

“It looks like old Dupuy’s schooner,” Grief said, in Tahitian, speaking in a low voice. “Don’t look too hard. What do you think, eh? Isn’t it the Valetta?”

As the men climbed out and lifted the whale-boat slightly up the beach they stole careless glances at the vessel.

“It is the Valetta,” Taute said. “She carried her topmast away seven years ago. At Papeete they rigged a new one. It was ten feet shorter. That is the one.”

“Go over and talk with the women, you boys. You can almost see Huahine from Raiatea, and you’ll be sure to know some of them. Find out all you can. And if any of the white men show up, don’t start a row.”

An army of hermit crabs scuttled and rustled away before him as he advanced up the beach, but under the palms no pigs rooted and grunted. The cocoanuts lay where they had fallen, and at the copra-sheds there were no signs of curing. Industry and tidiness had vanished. Grass house after grass house he found deserted. Once he came upon an old man, blind, toothless, prodigiously wrinkled, who sat in the shade and babbled with fear when he spoke to him. It was as if the place had been struck with the plague, was Grief’s thought, as he finally approached the Big House. All was desolation and disarray. There were no flower-crowned men and maidens, no brown babies rolling in the shade of the avocado trees. In the doorway, crouched and rocking back and forth, sat Mataara, the old queen. She wept afresh at sight of him, divided between the tale of her woe and regret that no follower was left to dispense to him her hospitality.

"And so they have taken Naumoo," she finished. "Motauri is dead. My people have fled and are starving with the goats. And there is no one to open for you even a drinking cocoa-nut. O Brother, your white brothers be devils."

"They are no brothers of mine, Mataara," Grief consoled. "They are robbers and pigs, and I shall clean the island of them----"

He broke off to whirl half around, his hand flashing to his waist and back again, the big Colt's levelled at the figure of a man, bent double, that rushed at him from out of the trees. He did not pull the trigger, nor did the man pause till he had flung himself headlong at Grief's feet and begun to pour forth a stream of uncouth and awful noises. He recognized the creature as the one he had seen steal from the Valetta and dive into the bush; but not until he raised him up and watched the contortions of the hare-lipped mouth could he understand what he uttered.

"Save me, master, save me!" the man yammered, in English, though he was unmistakably a South Sea native. "I know you! Save me!"

And thereat he broke into a wild outpour of incoherence that did not cease until Grief seized him by the shoulders and shook him into silence.

"I know you," Grief said. "You were cook in the French Hotel at Papeete two years ago. Everybody called you 'Hare-Lip.'"

The man nodded violently.

"I am now cook of the Valetta," he spat and spluttered, his mouth writhing in a fearful struggle with its defect. "I know you. I saw you at the hotel. I saw you at Lavina's. I saw you on the Kittiwake. I saw you at the Mariposa wharf. You are Captain Grief, and you will save me. Those men are devils. They killed Captain Dupuy. Me they made kill half the crew. Two they shot from the cross-trees. The rest they shot in the water. I knew them all. They stole the girls from Huahine. They added to their strength with jail-men from Noumea. They robbed the traders in the New Hebrides. They killed the trader at Vanikori, and stole two women there. They----"

But Grief no longer heard. Through the trees, from the direction of the harbour, came a rattle of rifles, and he started on the run for the beach. Pirates from Tahiti and convicts from New Caledonia! A pretty bunch of desperadoes that even now was attacking his schooner. Hare-Lip followed, still spluttering and spitting his tale of the white devils' doings.

The rifle-firing ceased as abruptly as it had begun, but Grief ran on, perplexed by ominous conjectures, until, in a turn of the path, he encountered Mauriri running toward him from the beach.

"Big Brother," the Goat Man panted, "I was too late. They have taken your schooner. Come! For now they will seek for you."

He started back up the path away from the beach.

"Where is Brown?" Grief demanded.

"On the Big Rock. I will tell you afterward. Come now!"

"But my men in the whaleboat?"

Mauriri was in an agony of apprehension.

"They are with the women on the strange schooner. They will not be killed. I tell you true. The devils want sailors. But you they will kill. Listen!" From the water, in a cracked tenor voice, came a French hunting song. "They are landing on the beach. They have taken your schooner--that I saw. Come!"

III

Careless of his own life and skin, nevertheless David Grief was possessed of no false hardihood. He knew when to fight and when to run, and that this was the time for running he had no doubt. Up the path, past the old men sitting in the shade, past Mataara crouched in the doorway of the Big House, he followed at the heels of Mauriri. At his own heels, doglike, plodded Hare-Lip. From behind came the cries of the hunters, but the pace Mauriri led them was heartbreaking. The broad path narrowed, swung to the right, and pitched upward. The last grass house was left, and through high thickets of cassi and swarms of great golden wasps the way rose steeply until it became a goat-track. Pointing upward to a bare shoulder of volcanic rock, Mauriri indicated the trail across its face.

"Past that we are safe, Big Brother," he said. "The white devils never dare it, for there are rocks we roll down on their heads, and there is no other path. Always do they stop here and shoot when we cross the rock. Come!"

A quarter of an hour later they paused where the trail went naked on the face of the rock.

"Wait, and when you come, come quickly," Mauriri cautioned.

He sprang into the blaze of sunlight, and from below several rifles pumped rapidly. Bullets smacked about him, and puffs of stone-dust flew out, but he won safely across. Grief followed, and so near did one bullet come that the dust of its impact stung his cheek. Nor was Hare-Lip struck, though he essayed the passage more slowly.

For the rest of the day, on the greater heights, they lay in a lava glen where terraced taro and papaia grew. And here Grief made his plans and learned the fulness of the situation.

"It was ill luck," Mauriri said. "Of all nights this one night was selected by the white devils to go fishing. It was dark as we came through the passage. They were in boats and canoes. Always do they have their rifles with them. One Raiatea man they shot. Brown was very brave. We tried to get by to the top of the bay, but they headed us off, and we were driven in between the Big Rock and the village. We saved the guns and all the ammunition, but they got the boat. Thus they learned of your coming. Brown is now on this side of the Big Rock with the guns and the ammunition."

"But why didn't he go over the top of the Big Rock and give me warning as I came in from the sea?" Grief criticised.

"They knew not the way. Only the goats and I know the way. And this I forgot, for I crept through the bush to gain the water and swim to you. But the devils were in the bush shooting at Brown and the Raiatea men; and me they hunted till daylight, and through the morning they hunted me there in the low-lying land. Then you came in your schooner, and they watched till you went ashore, and I got away through the bush, but you were already ashore."

"You fired that shot?"

"Yes; to warn you. But they were wise and would not shoot back, and it was my last cartridge."

"Now you, Hare-Lip?" Grief said to the Valetta's cook.

His tale was long and painfully detailed. For a year he had been sailing out of Tahiti and through the Paumotus on the Valetta. Old Dupuy was owner and captain. On his last cruise he had shipped two strangers in Tahiti as mate and supercargo. Also, another stranger he carried to be his agent on Fanriki. Raoul Van Asveld and Carl Lepsius were the names of the mate and supercargo.

"They are brothers, I know, for I have heard them talk in the dark, on deck, when they thought no one listened," Hare-Lip explained.

The Valetta cruised through the Low Islands, picking up shell and pearls at Dupuy's stations. Frans Amundson, the third stranger, relieved Pierre Gollard at Fanriki. Pierre Gollard came on board to go back to Tahiti. The natives of Fanriki said he had a quart of pearls to turn over to Dupuy. The first night out from Fanriki there was shooting in the cabin. Then the bodies of Dupuy and Pierre Gollard were thrown overboard. The Tahitian sailors fled to the forecastle. For two days, with nothing to eat and the Valetta hove to, they remained below. Then Raoul Van Asveld put poison in the meal he made Hare-Lip cook and carry for'ard. Half the sailors died.

"He had a rifle pointed at me, master; what could I do?" Hare-Lip whimpered. "Of the rest, two went up the rigging and were shot. Fanriki was ten miles away. The others went overboard to swim. They were shot as they swam. I, only, lived, and the two devils; for me they wanted to cook for them. That day, with the breeze, they went back to Fanrika and took on Frans Amundson, for he was one of them."

Then followed Hare-Lip's nightmare experiences as the schooner wandered on the long reaches to the westward. He was the one living witness and knew they would have killed him had he not been the cook. At Noumea five convicts had joined them. Hare-Lip was never permitted ashore at any of the islands, and Grief was the first outsider to whom he had spoken.

"And now they will kill me," Hare-Lip spluttered, "for they will know I have told you. Yet am I not all a coward, and I will stay with you, master, and die with you."

The Goat Man shook his head and stood up.

"Lie here and rest," he said to Grief. "It will be a long swim to-night. As for this cook-man, I will take him now to the higher places where my brothers live with the goats."

IV

"It is well that you swim as a man should, Big Brother," Mauriri whispered.

From the lava glen they had descended to the head of the bay and taken to the water. They swam softly, without splash, Mauriri in the lead. The black walls of the crater rose about them till it seemed they swam on the bottom of a great bowl. Above was the sky of faintly luminous star-dust. Ahead they could see the light which marked the Rattler, and from her deck, softened by distance, came a gospel hymn played on the phonograph intended for Pilsach.

The two swimmers bore to the left, away from the captured schooner. Laughter and song followed on board after the hymn, then the phonograph started again. Grief grinned to himself at the appositeness of it as “Lead, Kindly Light,” floated out over the dark water.

“We must take the passage and land on the Big Rock,” Mauriri whispered. “The devils are holding the low land. Listen!”

Half a dozen rifle shots, at irregular intervals, attested that Brown still held the Rock and that the pirates had invested the narrow peninsula.

At the end of another hour they swam under the frowning loom of the Big Rock. Mauriri, feeling his way, led the landing in a crevice, up which for a hundred feet they climbed to a narrow ledge.

“Stay here,” said Mauriri. “I go to Brown. In the morning I shall return.”

“I will go with you, Brother,” Grief said.

Mauriri laughed in the darkness.

“Even you, Big Brother, cannot do this thing. I am the Goat Man, and I only, of all Fuatino, can go over the Big Rock in the night. Furthermore, it will be the first time that even I have done it. Put out your hand. You feel it? That is where Pilsach’s dynamite is kept. Lie close beside the wall and you may sleep without falling. I go now.”

And high above the sounding surf, on a narrow shelf beside a ton of dynamite, David Grief planned his campaign, then rested his cheek on his arm and slept.

In the morning, when Mauriri led him over the summit of the Big Rock, David Grief understood why he could not have done it in the night. Despite the accustomed nerve of a sailor for height and precarious clinging, he marvelled that he was able to do it in the broad light of day. There were places, always under minute direction of Mauriri, that he leaned forward, falling, across hundred-foot-deep crevices, until his outstretched hands struck a grip on the opposing wall and his legs could then be drawn across after. Once, there was a ten-foot leap, above half a thousand feet of yawning emptiness and down a fathom’s length to a meagre foothold. And he, despite his cool head, lost it another time on a shelf, a scant twelve inches wide, where all hand-holds seemed to fail him. And Mauriri, seeing him sway, swung his own body far out and over the gulf and passed him, at the same time striking him sharply on the back to brace his reeling brain. Then it was, and forever after, that he fully knew why Mauriri had been named the Goat Man.

V

The defence of the Big Rock had its good points and its defects. Impregnable to assault, two men could hold it against ten thousand. Also, it guarded the passage to open sea. The two schooners, Raoul Van Asveld, and his cutthroat following were bottled up. Grief, with the ton of dynamite, which he had removed higher up the rock, was master. This he demonstrated, one morning, when the schooners attempted to put to sea. The Valetta led, the whaleboat towing her manned by captured Fuatino men. Grief and the Goat Man peered straight down from a safe rock-shelter, three hundred feet above. Their rifles were beside them, also a glowing fire-stick and a big bundle of dynamite sticks with fuses and decanators attached. As the whaleboat came beneath, Mauriri shook his head.

"They are our brothers. We cannot shoot."

For'ard, on the Valetta, were several of Grief's own Raiatea sailors. Aft stood another at the wheel. The pirates were below, or on the other schooner, with the exception of one who stood, rifle in hand, amidships. For protection he held Naumoo, the Queen's daughter, close to him.

"That is the chief devil," Mauriri whispered, "and his eyes are blue like yours. He is a terrible man. See! He holds Naumoo that we may not shoot him."

A light air and a slight tide were making into the passage, and the schooner's progress was slow.

"Do you speak English?" Grief called down.

The man startled, half lifted his rifle to the perpendicular, and looked up. There was something quick and catlike in his movements, and in his burned blond face a fighting eagerness. It was the face of a killer.

"Yes," he answered. "What do you want?"

"Turn back, or I'll blow your schooner up," Grief warned. He blew on the fire-stick and whispered, "Tell Naumoo to break away from him and run aft."

From the Rattler, close astern, rifles cracked, and bullets spatted against the rock. Van Asveld laughed defiantly, and Mauriri called down in the native tongue to the woman. When directly beneath, Grief, watching, saw her jerk away from the man. On the instant Grief touched the fire-stick to the match-head in the split end of the short fuse, sprang into view on the face of the rock, and dropped the dynamite. Van Asveld had managed to catch the girl and was struggling with her. The Goat Man held a rifle on him and waited a chance. The dynamite struck the deck in a compact package, bounded, and rolled into the port scupper. Van Asveld saw it and hesitated, then he and the girl ran aft for their lives. The Goat Man fired, but splintered the corner of the galley. The spattering of bullets from the Rattler increased, and the two on the rock crouched low for shelter and waited. Mauriri tried to see what was happening below, but Grief held him back.

“The fuse was too long,” he said. “I’ll know better next time.”

It was half a minute before the explosion came. What happened afterward, for some little time, they could not tell, for the Rattler’s marksmen had got the range and were maintaining a steady fire. Once, fanned by a couple of bullets, Grief risked a peep. The Valetta, her port deck and rail torn away, was listing and sinking as she drifted back into the harbour. Climbing on board the Rattler were the men and the Huahine women who had been hidden in the Valetta’s cabin and who had swum for it under the protecting fire. The Fuatino men who had been towing in the whaleboat had cast off the line, dashed back through the passage, and were rowing wildly for the south shore.

From the shore of the peninsula the discharges of four rifles announced that Brown and his men had worked through the jungle to the beach and were taking a hand. The bullets ceased coming, and Grief and Mauriri joined in with their rifles. But they could do no damage, for the men of the Rattler were firing from the shelter of the deck-houses, while the wind and tide carried the schooner farther in.

There was no sign of the Valetta, which had sunk in the deep water of the crater.

Two things Raoul Van Asveld did that showed his keenness and coolness and that elicited Grief’s admiration. Under the Rattler’s rifle fire Raoul compelled the fleeing Fuatino men to come in and surrender. And at the same time, dispatching half his cutthroats in the Rattler’s boat, he threw them ashore and across the peninsula, preventing Brown from getting away to the main part of the island. And for the rest of the morning the intermittent shooting told to Grief how Brown was being driven in to the other side of the Big Rock. The situation was unchanged, with the exception of the loss of the Valetta.

VI

The defects of the position on the Big Rock were vital. There was neither food nor water. For several nights, accompanied by one of the Raiatea men, Mauriri swam to the head of the bay for supplies. Then came the night when lights flared on the water and shots were fired. After that the water-side of the Big Rock was invested as well.

“It’s a funny situation,” Brown remarked, who was getting all the adventure he had been led to believe resided in the South Seas. “We’ve got hold and can’t let go, and Raoul has hold and can’t let go. He can’t get away, and we’re liable to starve to death holding him.”

“If the rain came, the rock-basins would fill,” said Mauriri. It was their first twenty-four hours without water. “Big Brother, to-night you and I will get water. It is the work of strong men.”

That night, with cocoanut calabashes, each of quart capacity and tightly stoppered, he led Grief down to the water from the peninsula side of the Big Rock. They swam out not more than a hundred feet. Beyond, they could hear the occasional click of an oar or the knock of a paddle against a canoe, and sometimes they saw the flare of matches as the men in the guarding boats lighted cigarettes or pipes.

“Wait here,” whispered Mauriri, “and hold the calabashes.”

Turning over, he swam down. Grief, face downward, watched his phosphorescent track glimmer, and dim, and vanish. A long minute afterward Mauriri broke surface noiselessly at Grief’s side.

“Here! Drink!”

The calabash was full, and Grief drank sweet fresh water which had come up from the depths of the salt.

“It flows out from the land,” said Mauriri.

“On the bottom?”

“No. The bottom is as far below as the mountains are above. Fifty feet down it flows. Swim down until you feel its coolness.”

Several times filling and emptying his lungs in diver fashion, Grief turned over and went down through the water. Salt it was to his lips, and warm to his flesh; but at last, deep down, it perceptibly chilled and tasted brackish. Then, suddenly, his body entered the cold, subterranean stream. He removed the small stopper from the calabash, and, as the sweet water gurgled into it, he saw the phosphorescent glimmer of a big fish, like a sea ghost, drift sluggishly by.

Thereafter, holding the growing weight of the calabashes, he remained on the surface, while Mauriri took them down, one by one, and filled them.

“There are sharks,” Grief said, as they swam back to shore.

“Pooh!” was the answer. “They are fish sharks. We of Fuatino are brothers to the fish sharks.”

“But the tiger sharks? I have seen them here.”

“When they come, Big Brother, we will have no more water to drink--unless it rains.”

VII

A week later Mauriri and a Raiatea man swam back with empty calabashes. The tiger sharks had arrived in the harbour. The next day they thirsted on the Big Rock.

“We must take our chance,” said Grief. “Tonight I shall go after water with Mautau. Tomorrow night, Brother, you will go with Tehaa.”

Three quarts only did Grief get, when the tiger sharks appeared and drove them in. There were six of them on the Rock, and a pint a day, in the sweltering heat of the mid-tropics, is not sufficient moisture for a man’s body. The next night Mauriri and Tehaa returned with no water. And the day following Brown learned the full connotation of thirst, when the lips crack to bleeding, the mouth is coated with granular slime, and the swollen tongue finds the mouth too small for residence.

Grief swam out in the darkness with Mautau. Turn by turn, they went down through the salt, to the cool sweet stream, drinking their fill while the calabashes were filling. It was Mau-tau’s turn to descend with the last calabash, and Grief, peering down from the surface, saw the glimmer of sea-ghosts and all the phosphorescent display of the struggle. He swam back alone, but without relinquishing the precious burden of full calabashes.

Of food they had little. Nothing grew on the Rock, and its sides, covered with shellfish at sea level where the surf thundered in, were too precipitous for access. Here and there, where crevices permitted, a few rank shellfish and sea urchins were gleaned. Sometimes frigate birds and other sea birds were snared. Once, with a piece of frigate bird, they succeeded in hooking a shark. After that, with jealously guarded shark-meat for bait, they managed on occasion to catch more sharks.

But water remained their direst need. Mauriri prayed to the Goat God for rain. Taute prayed to the Missionary God, and his two fellow islanders, backsliding, invoked the deities of their old heathen days. Grief grinned and considered. But Brown, wild-eyed, with protruding blackened tongue, cursed. Especially he cursed the phonograph that in the cool twilights ground out gospel hymns from the deck of the Rattler. One hymn in particular, "Beyond the Smiling and the Weeping," drove him to madness. It seemed a favourite on board the schooner, for it was played most of all. Brown, hungry and thirsty, half out of his head from weakness and suffering, could lie among the rocks with equanimity and listen to the tinkling of ukuleles and guitars, and the hulas and himines of the Huahine women. But when the voices of the Trinity Choir floated over the water he was beside himself. One evening the cracked tenor took up the song with the machine:

"Beyond the smiling and the weeping, I shall be soon. Beyond the waking and the sleeping, Beyond the sowing and the reaping, I shall be soon, I shall be soon."

Then it was that Brown rose up. Again and again, blindly, he emptied his rifle at the schooner. Laughter floated up from the men and women, and from the peninsula came a splattering of return bullets; but the cracked tenor sang on, and Brown continued to fire, until the hymn was played out.

It was that night that Grief and Mauriri came back with but one calabash of water. A patch of skin six inches long was missing from Grief's shoulder in token of the scrape of the sandpaper hide of a shark whose dash he had eluded.

VIII

In the early morning of another day, before the sun-blaze had gained its full strength, came an offer of a parley from Raoul Van Asveld.

Brown brought the word in from the outpost among the rocks a hundred yards away. Grief was squatted over a small fire, broiling a strip of shark-flesh. The last twenty-four hours had been lucky. Seaweed and sea urchins had been gathered. Tehaa had caught a shark, and Mauriri had captured a fair-sized octopus at the base of the crevice where the dynamite was stored. Then, too, in the darkness they had made two successful swims for water before the tiger sharks had nosed them out.

"Said he'd like to come in and talk with you," Brown said. "But I know what the brute is after. Wants to see how near starved to death we are."

"Bring him in," Grief said.

"And then we will kill him," the Goat Man cried joyously.

Grief shook his head.

"But he is a killer of men, Big Brother, a beast and a devil," the Goat Man protested.

"He must not be killed, Brother. It is our way not to break our word."

"It is a foolish way."

"Still it is our way," Grief answered gravely, turning the strip of shark-meat over on the coals and noting the hungry sniff and look of Tehaa. "Don't do that, Tehaa, when the Big Devil comes. Look as if you and hunger were strangers. Here, cook those sea urchins, you, and you, Big Brother, cook the squid. We will have the Big Devil to feast with us. Spare nothing. Cook all."

And, still broiling meat, Grief arose as Raoul Van Asveld, followed by a large Irish terrier, strode into camp. Raoul did not make the mistake of holding out his hand.

"Hello!" he said. "I've heard of you."

"I wish I'd never heard of you," Grief answered.

"Same here," was the response. "At first, before I knew who it was, I thought I had to deal with an ordinary trading captain. That's why you've got me bottled up."

"And I am ashamed to say that I underrated you," Grief smiled. "I took you for a thieving beachcomber, and not for a really intelligent pirate and murderer. Hence, the loss of my schooner. Honours are even, I fancy, on that score."

Raoul flushed angrily under his sunburn, but he contained himself. His eyes roved over the supply of food and the full water-calabashes, though he concealed the incredulous surprise he felt. His was a tall, slender, well-knit figure, and Grief, studying him, estimated his character from his face. The eyes were keen and strong, but a bit too close together--not pinched, however, but just a trifle near to balance the broad forehead, the strong chin and jaw, and the cheekbones wide apart. Strength! His face was filled with it, and yet Grief sensed in it the intangible something the man lacked.

“We are both strong men,” Raoul said, with a bow. “We might have been fighting for empires a hundred years ago.”

It was Grief’s turn to bow.

“As it is, we are squalidly scrapping over the enforcement of the colonial laws of those empires whose destinies we might possibly have determined a hundred years ago.”

“It all comes to dust,” Raoul remarked sen-tentiously, sitting down. “Go ahead with your meal. Don’t let me interrupt.”

“Won’t you join us?” was Grief’s invitation.

The other looked at him with sharp steadiness, then accepted.

“I’m sticky with sweat,” he said. “Can I wash?”

Grief nodded and ordered Mauriri to bring a calabash. Raoul looked into the Goat Man’s eyes, but saw nothing save languid uninterest as the precious quart of water was wasted on the ground.

“The dog is thirsty,” Raoul said.

Grief nodded, and another calabash was presented to the animal.

Again Raoul searched the eyes of the natives and learned nothing.

“Sorry we have no coffee,” Grief apologized. “You’ll have to drink plain water. A calabash, Tehaa. Try some of this shark. There is squid to follow, and sea urchins and a seaweed salad. I’m sorry we haven’t any frigate bird. The boys were lazy yesterday, and did not try to catch any.”

With an appetite that would not have stopped at wire nails dipped in lard, Grief ate perfunctorily, and tossed the scraps to the dog.

“I’m afraid I haven’t got down to the primitive diet yet,” he sighed, as he sat back. “The tinned goods on the Rattler, now I could make a hearty meal off of them, but this muck----“ He took a half-pound strip of broiled shark and flung it to the dog. “I suppose I’ll come to it if you don’t surrender pretty soon.”

Raoul laughed unpleasantly.

“I came to offer terms,” he said pointedly.

Grief shook his head.

"There aren't any terms. I've got you where the hair is short, and I'm not going to let go."

"You think you can hold me in this hole!" Raoul cried.

"You'll never leave it alive, except in double irons." Grief surveyed his guest with an air of consideration. "I've handled your kind before. We've pretty well cleaned it out of the South Seas. But you are a--how shall I say?--a sort of an anachronism. You're a throwback, and we've got to get rid of you. Personally, I would advise you to go back to the schooner and blow your brains out. It is the only way to escape what you've got coming to you."

The parley, so far as Raoul was concerned, proved fruitless, and he went back into his own lines convinced that the men on the Big Rock could hold out for years, though he would have been swiftly unconvinced could he have observed Tehaa and the Raiateans, the moment his back was turned and he was out of sight, crawling over the rocks and sucking and crunching the scraps his dog had left uneaten.

IX

"We hunger now, Brother," Grief said, "but it is better than to hunger for many days to come. The Big Devil, after feasting and drinking good water with us in plenty, will not stay long in Fuatino. Even to-morrow may he try to leave. To-night you and I sleep over the top of the Rock, and Tehaa, who shoots well, will sleep with us if he can dare the Rock."

Tehaa, alone among the Raiateans, was cragsman enough to venture the perilous way, and dawn found him in a rock-barricaded nook, a hundred yards to the right of Grief and Mauriri.

The first warning was the firing of rifles from the peninsula, where Brown and his two Raiateans signalled the retreat and followed the besiegers through the jungle to the beach. From the eyrie on the face of the rock Grief could see nothing for another hour, when the Rattler appeared, making for the passage. As before, the captive Fuatino men towed in the whaleboat. Mauriri, under direction of Grief, called down instructions to them as they passed slowly beneath. By Grief's side lay several bundles of dynamite sticks, well-lashed together and with extremely short fuses.

The deck of the Rattler was populous. For'ard, rifle in hand, among the Raiatean sailors, stood a desperado whom Mauriri announced was Raoul's brother. Aft, by the helmsman, stood another. Attached to him, tied waist to waist, with slack, was Mataara, the old Queen. On the other side of the helmsman, his arm in a sling, was Captain Glass. Amidships, as before, was Raoul, and with him, lashed waist to waist, was Naumoo.

"Good morning, Mister David Grief," Raoul called up.

"And yet I warned you that only in double irons would you leave the island," Grief murmured down with a sad inflection.

"You can't kill all your people I have on board," was the answer.

The schooner, moving slowly, jerk by jerk, as the men pulled in the whaleboat, was almost directly beneath. The rowers, without ceasing, slacked on their oars, and were immediately threatened with the rifle of the man who stood for'ard.

"Throw, Big Brother!" Naumoo called up in the Fuatino tongue. "I am filled with sorrow and am willed to die. His knife is ready with which to cut the rope, but I shall hold him tight. Be not afraid, Big Brother. Throw, and throw straight, and good-bye."

Grief hesitated, then lowered the fire-stick which he had been blowing bright.

"Throw!" the Goat Man urged.

Still Grief hesitated.

"If they get to sea, Big Brother, Naumoo dies just the same. And there are all the others. What is her life against the many?"

"If you drop any dynamite, or fire a single shot, we'll kill all on board," Raoul cried up to them. "I've got you, David Grief. You can't kill these people, and I can. Shut up, you!"

This last was addressed to Naumoo, who was calling up in her native tongue and whom Raoul seized by the neck with one hand to choke to silence. In turn, she locked both arms about him and looked up beseechingly to Grief.

"Throw it, Mr. Grief, and be damned to them," Captain Glass rumbled in his deep voice. "They're bloody murderers, and the cabin's full of them."

The desperado who was fastened to the old Queen swung half about to menace Captain Glass with his rifle, when Tehaa, from his position farther along the Rock, pulled trigger on him. The rifle dropped from the man's hand, and on his face was an expression of intense surprise as his legs crumpled under him and he sank down on deck, dragging the Queen with him.

“Port! Hard a port!” Grief cried.

Captain Glass and the Kanaka whirled the wheel over, and the bow of the Rattler headed in for the Rock. Amidships Raoul still struggled with Naumoo. His brother ran from for’ard to his aid, being missed by the fusillade of quick shots from Tehaa and the Goat Man. As Raoul’s brother placed the muzzle of his rifle to Naumoo’s side Grief touched the fire-stick to the match-head in the split end of the fuse. Even as with both hands he tossed the big bundle of dynamite, the rifle went off, and Naumoo’s fall to the deck was simultaneous with the fall of the dynamite. This time the fuse was short enough. The explosion occurred at the instant the deck was reached, and that portion of the Rattler, along with Raoul, his brother, and Naumoo, forever disappeared.

The schooner’s side was shattered, and she began immediately to settle. For’ard, every Raiatean sailor dived overboard. Captain Glass met the first man springing up the com-panionway from the cabin, with a kick full in the face, but was overborne and trampled on by the rush. Following the desperadoes came the Huahine women, and as they went overboard, the Rattler sank on an even keel close to the base of the Rock. Her cross-trees still stuck out when she reached bottom.

Looking down, Grief could see all that occurred beneath the surface. He saw Mataara, a fathom deep, unfasten herself from the dead pirate and swim upward. As her head emerged she saw Captain Glass, who could not swim, sinking several yards away. The Queen, old woman that she was, but an islander, turned over, swam down to him, and held him up as she struck out for the unsubmerged cross-trees.

Five heads, blond and brown, were mingled with the dark heads of Polynesia that dotted the surface. Grief, rifle in hand, watched for a chance to shoot. The Goat Man, after a minute, was successful, and they saw the body of one man sink sluggishly. But to the Raiatean sailors, big and brawny, half fish, was the vengeance given. Swimming swiftly, they singled out the blond heads and the brown. Those from above watched the four surviving desperadoes, clutched and locked, dragged far down beneath and drowned like curs.

In ten minutes everything was over. The Huahine women, laughing and giggling, were holding on to the sides of the whaleboat which had done the towing. The Raiatean sailors, waiting for orders, were about the cross-tree to which Captain Glass and Mataara clung.

“The poor old Rattler,” Captain Glass lamented.

“Nothing of the sort,” Grief answered. “In a week we’ll have her raised, new timbers amidships, and we’ll be on our way.” And to the Queen, “How is it with you, Sister?”

“Naumoo is gone, and Motauri, Brother, but Fuatino is ours again. The day is young. Word shall be sent to all my people in the high places with the goats. And to-night, once again, and as never before, we shall feast and rejoice in the Big House.”

“She’s been needing new timbers abaft the beam there for years,” quoth Captain Glass. “But the chronometers will be out of commission for the rest of the cruise.”

THE END.

A Dream Image

"WHOOP! Rah! Rah! Rah! Get out of the way!" — A thunder of hoofs from behind, and she sprang to the roadside as the turbulent troop dashed by, and in an anarchy of dust and tumult, was lost round the next turn of the road. But in the passing, she had time to note the fierce beauty, the rugged manhood of each flying figure. "Always the same, reckless fools and madmen," she thought, as she heard them swing to the left at the cross-roads and take the giddy path by the cliffs at a killing lope. Now they stood out in bold relief as they scaled the frightful head of Point Pedro, and she counted six riders ere they turned its flank and were out of sight.

Yes, they were all there, each strapping, wayward son of Old Ralston — Old Ralston, who was as effeminate as any man possibly could be. Whence came this wild strain? And she pondered over the enigma which had so worried the countryside these many years. True, their beauty had come from the mother; but she had never evinced any signs of that savage unconventionality which had been theirs from the cradle. Helen was conversant with the ordinary history of the family. Old Ralston was a self-made man, who, from the drudgery of office boy and clerk, had become a merchant prince. Retiring from business at forty-five, he had married, purchased his beautiful country home, and settled down to become the progenitor of this marvelous race. What wild ancestral strains had been reborn in this wild progeny, she had often peculated on, and her thoughts had always strayed to a picturesque buccaneer of the Spanish Main. It was a pretty fancy, and about the only one she could harmonize with the subject.

And the boyhood of this ungovernable brood: That of the elder sons had come before her time; but like legends, the history of their doings had gone from mouth to mouth. As a little girl she remembered much of the younger boys, and particularly of the youngest, the seventh son. And she remembered now, with a merry smile, an incident of her childhood. How she, six years of age, had been exposed to the wicked wiles of this lad of eight. Meeting accidentally and for the first and last time, in his father's woods, where she had disobediently wandered, he stormed her heart so valiantly that she surrendered on the spot. There they plighted their troth and spent the afternoon in childish frolic. And when discovered by her people, they found a much-berumpled little maid, crowned with wild flowers and honeysuckle, goddesslike, smiling on young Guilbert's homage. And then the scene — how he threw one arm about her and doubled up his fist in angry menace. And the attack — how he struck John and kicked his shins, twice returning to the repulse; once, leaving an arm of his jacket in his captor's clutch and attacking her father so vigorously from behind, as to rip his broadcloth all up the back; and again, when the coachman held him, wriggling from out the jacket's remnants and striking him so as to quite blacken one I eye. And the retreat — how he crept from tree to tree, bellowing like a young bull in the rutting season. Then the incessant fusillade of clods and stones, and the spattering of mud he gave them as they recrossed the brook. And as they neared the house his attacks became so bold that they sought refuge in the hot-houses. HERE he smashed the glass and behaved so outrageously, that they were forced to gain the shelter of the roof-tree while the coachman was engaged in giving him a good trouncing. But nothing seemed to daunt the little savage, for all during tea he wandered round and round the house, howling in insatiable fury. Nor did he retreat till after having fruitlessly challenged every, male inmate, from her father to the gardener's boy, and then it was to escape from his father's servants, who had made a sally in force.

The boyhood of each had been very similar. After terrorizing the country till their sixteenth or eighteenth years, each had followed in the footsteps of the other, by running away. At first, this characteristic had sorely perplexed the father, but he soon grew to regard it as a childish ill, similar to mumps and measles; and when his last-born, Guilbert, at twenty had manifested none such symptoms, he was surprised and feared for the boy greatly. But Guilbert redeemed the family trait by disappearing while still in his nonage. A living refutation of wagging heads and muttered hints of bad endings, they all came back. And save the broadened polish of the world, they were in no wise changed. Always the same — generous, brave, impulsive; indomitable, wild and fiercely unconventional. But they only sought the home as a pleasant asylum, in which to rest a space from their many adventures, and it was rare coincidence to find the six together in their father's house. As a household, theirs seemed the reverse of a circle of world-weary wanderers, seeking seclusion from the rush of events. Every outside sport was theirs, and the countryside saw them continually, but the social side, never. Their stables and kennels were a sportman's delight; their gymnasium and training quarters a miniature duplicate of those found in the best colleges; and their boathouse the finest on Arunda Bay. Passionately fond, were they, of the water, and in Ralston's Cove, besides the litter of smaller craft, lay six trim yachts — the best productions of the most famous shipyards. And they were not bay craft, either, but outside schooners, the sum of whose voyages embraced the four quarters.

Yet the gossips, as the countryside, had forgotten Guilbert, the last to leave the nest. He seemed more like the dim recollection of a dream-image, merged in past obscurity. So long had his returning been delayed, that, though with an intuitive belief that it would happen, they no more expected him to appear than Christ himself to herald the Millenium. Of his wild doings there had at first been dreadful tidings; but so completely had he gone beyond the ken of rumor, that in the last several years nothing had been heard of him — of course by the countryside, for what the ostracised Ralstons knew was kept to themselves. But the impression prevailed that Guilbert was the worst, the wildest of the whole brood; that in him was the ripened maturity of every trait which had so served to make the Ralston name notorious. In truth, vague as the impression was, it was so strong, that he was never mentioned without a certain indefinable awe, such as is unconsciously used when men speak of things unusually sacred or terribly evil.

As she continued her stroll, she thought of these things. And as she paused at the cross-roads to drink in the beauty of the nestling bay, she burst into merry laughter, as for the moment she wandered in that magic glen with eight years old Guilbert. — This Guilbert, and she imagined the man he had evolved into; and herself, Helen Garthwaithe, Masters of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy, the college bred woman who had seen and understood the world. The juxtaposition, in thought, of a man such as he must have become, with a woman such as she felt herself to be, was indeed ludicrous.

However, all thought of the wild Ralston race vanished with the contusion of her stroll, when she found herself on the busy pier, pleasuring in the throb of life about her. But her interest lay in a yacht, which had just come to anchor on the channel's edge. Already a boat had been lowered and covered half the distance, springing gayly to each quick stroke of the oars. As it makes the landing, two flannel-clad men leap ashore, saluting and receiving her welcome. One, slender and boyish, with the first down of manhood sullying his rosy cheek, crushes her in a bearish hug — her brother, returning from his summer holidays to spend a short week or so at home before the opening of the college year. The other, broad-shouldered, not over handsome, but whose powerful face bore the stamp of intense intellectuality and whose eyes emitted the deep gaze of the thinker, took her hand with a subdued expression I of earnest regard. He was her brother's friend — not chum, but rather idol, at whose shrine he worshipped with the enthusiasm of youth. He was a marvel of learning, and could string behind his name many proud degrees of collegiate endowment, had played "full," pulled stroke on the 'Varsity, and broken more than one inter-collegiate record, and again; since entering the world, had well laid the foundation for a brilliant literary and scientific career — in short, was one of those bright, all-round men which the American universities have so well succeeded in turning out. By the analytical mind, such friendships are easily accounted for. But when the childish fondness of the one is reciprocated by the other to such an extent that he is willing to waste his vacations and spare moments upon him, even to going down to visit his people and to endure the usual inflictions of such rashness — well, the analytical mind searches for some hidden spring, while the unconsciously logical animal asks "What's the sister like?"

Having received the assurance of a late tea and the carriage's arrival within the hour, Albert descried a group of chums down the pier, and with the glaringly bald diplomacy of all brothers, was off and away. It was not the first time that he had thus displayed his nude tact, and the bareness of it would have been embarrassing, but that they merrily laughed at him and themselves and frankly accepted the situation.

Merged in easy conversation, they strolled down the pier. As they reached its end, his description of the trip was interrupted by the espial of a large schooner-yacht entering the bay, and they paused to admire her beautiful appearance. A gallant sight she was, as she scudded the channel swell. When well a-breast, spinnakers, balloon jib and water-sails came in on the run, and she luffed up, full and by, heading directly for the pier. A hum of admiration rose all a-down the jetty at the searnanship displayed in this manoeuver. On she came, a towering pyramid of snowy canvass above a leaping hull of ebon-black. Nearer and nearer — the yachtsmen began to show surprise and Stanton remarked that it were time she went about. Still on she came, devouring the intervening water at racehorse speed. The old salts began to murmur and in a panic, the crowd swayed back from the pier's end, leaving Stanton and Helen behind. Each had been in momentary expectancy that she would change her course, but her proximity now denied it. The crash seemed inevitable. Stanton threw an arm about Helen's waist to drag her back. But at that instant, clear as a bell, with the quick incisiveness of accustomed command, came the order "Hard-a-lee!"

Slapping and snarling, the three jib sheets were cast off; the topsail halyards let go and clewed up on the run by the down-hauls; and the mainsail backed over to windward with a weather tackle. They saw the bow sheer into the wind; but so close, that they crouched to avoid the overhanging bowsprit, which descried an aerial circle above them as it swept up, obedient to the helm.

Parallel with the pier and not a dozen feet away, glided the yacht, the cynosure of all eyes. The recklessness of the exploit and the perfection of its execution drew the praise from Stanton's lips, as they gazed upon the long sweep of the decks. Beautiful as was the picture, it served but as a background for the real picture. Lightly twirling the wheel part over and gazing at the astonished pier with a wickedly exasperating smile, stood a man of such attractive aspect that every eye was drawn to him. His excellent physique was shown off to advantage in an easy yachting costume. But it was in his face that attraction chiefly centered. Handsome were not strong, nor beautiful appropriate, in describing it: beauty would be the only adequate symbol. Nor was it exactly beauty, for while the features were strong and pleasantly regular, one felt that the charm was due more to the expression, or rather, reflex of the inner man — a reflex of intense, almost animal, masculinity. But this, in turn, was redeemed by a certain, indefinable something, a sort of higher dominance.

Helen beheld him with a troubled sense of familiarity. It seemed Ae dim recollection of a dream-image, merged in past obscurity. Her prominent position on the deserted pier end was rendered the more conspicuous, by the fact that Stanton's arm still unconsciously circled her waist. The yachtman's roving eye caught hers, and never before had a man's eyes so affected her, made her so cognizant of sex distinction. For an instant his bold eyes held hers, then dropped to her waist, returned; and with roguish audacity, he laughed full in her face. Keenly appreciating the embarrassing situation, she disengaged Stanton's arm. Half angry, half hurt, she felt the flush mounting to her face, and as he tossed his head in mock reproof and cast at her a teasing glance of interrogation, her eyes involuntarily dropped. The next moment, he had glided past, leaving her very uncomfortable, indeed. Down the pier slipped the schooner, while the stranger swept the onlookers with his audacious stare.

“All about!” he cried as he whirled the wheel hard down. The jib and fore-sheets were hauled flat and the yacht sprang away on the other tack.

“Now indeed will this theatrical stranger come to grief,” said Stanton. “They’ll be resting on the mud in a minute, for there’s but six men can take a boat her size across the Flats.”

“Now indeed will this theatrical stranger come to grief,” said Stanton. “They’ll be resting on the mud in a minute, for there’s but six menj can take a boat her size across the Flats.”

Nor can it be confessed that Helen felt at all sorry at this prophecy. It was soothing balm to her wounded conceit. But no — across the Flats ran a devious channel, bare of dolphins, buoys, or marks of any description. Thrice he threw the schooner into the wind, and once jibed all over, as he rounded the more difficult turns. Then on and away, straight for the Ralston boat-house. As he neared, the boat-house burst forth in a flame of bunting and roar of salute, while at the mast-head, the yacht I ran up the Ralston pennant.

“Guilbert, wild Guilbert has returned at last,” was the hum of surprise which traveled up and down the jetty.

She had stolen away from the noisy group about the campfire, for on this night she had lapsed into one of her moods and wished to be alone. She was tired of gregarious humanity and suffered from a stress of entertaining. Her brother’s vacation drew to a close, and for the past three days the brunt of hostess had fallen upon her in seeing to the accommodation and amusement of his friends. A score of lusty undergraduates they were — the Glee Club of his college. To-night, on this moonlight sail, their rough hilarity had jarred upon her, and when the wind dropped, she had hailed with delight the proposition to go ashore and build a campfire.

And so she strolled down the moonlit sands, communing with herself, dreaming strange dreams, and giving full rein to her restless ambition. In the dawning of her creative intellectuality, with the world before her and the field of action barely entered upon, was it strange that her talent throbbed within her to the pulse of unknown forces, to the rising fermentation of desires which bade her spring out into rushing humanity and invest with her individuality some of its shifting scenes, or to give the permanency of the terrestrial absolute to some of its transient formulas?

Mid the chaos of her thoughts and longings, she heard the strong voung voices rise on the windless air, as they sang the Pilgrim's Chorus. She paused to listen, only to lose herself in the embrace of her desires. Lone strayed in meditation, she again roused when the full, rich tones of Stanton's voice, invested with all the sweet sadness of Ah! che la morte!, held the calm night with their magic.

As she listened, to her surprise she heard, quite close, a tenor subduedly take up the strain. Startled, interested, she rounded the small bluff, and there, in sharp relief against the yellow stretch of sand and bathed in the silvery moonlight, beheld wild Guilbert Ralston. Bewildered, she came to a halt and watched him. As he sang, his face, raised full to the moon, seemed lighted with a bright glow, as of spirituality. And gazing, she endeavored to analyze: it was not the Saintlike, Christlike reflex of pure divinity — mortality, with all its strength and weakness, was too manifest — rather, it seemed, a soul, heir to fierce passions and the trammels of the flesh, bathing in the effulgence of a latent nobility. It seemed to symbolize in fiery lettering, I AM: I MIGHT BE. It was as a rebellious spirit, linked to the earth by its pride and weakness, and the phrase, "Lucifer, bright son of the morn," came into her thoughts, unsummoned.

The song ceased. The bright glow faded softly away, and his soul returned to earth and beheld her. Mortality usurped divinity: the god had flown, the man returned: and in his eyes shone the careless, open admiration of man.

He advanced to meet her, doffed his hat, and with bold assurance said, "As you have surreptitiously gazed upon the beauty of my abstraction, so let me gaze, frankly and openly, on yours." And gaze he did, till her eyes were wet with the mute protest of indignation.

"We have met before," he continued. "The other day on the pier, you know. Of course, no introduction; but then how delightfully informal." And he smiled so ingenuously, and with such an air of good fellowship, that her resentment was already half removed.

"And that was not the first time," she enigmatically replied.

"Ah, at a distance I suppose, where you had the advantage."

"No."

“Then who are you? You must be some forgotten friend of my boyhood.”

“You were a very small boy at the time, and you will, or rather should remember an instance in which you behaved abominably.”

“I’m afraid I can remember too many — which one were you concerned in?”

“Don’t you recollect the time you wrecked the hot-houses and our coachman gave you a thrashing?”

“Oh! Then you are Helen Garthwaithe, whom I wooed and won andl lost with such celerity. You cut me the very next day.”

“And you must confess you deserved it.”

“Yes, I suppose so. But think of the blight you cast on my budding genius. Why, I had commenced a poem to you, of most wonderful-versification, and I never touched it again. I found it yesterday, in overhauling some of my boyish traps. How time flies — it seems only the other day that I met that little maiden wandering in my father’s woods and to day — ’why I’ve taken great pleasure in reading your As the Heart Desires.”

“And how did you find it? I suppose you reached the generous masculine conclusion, that it was a pity women would insist going in for the Higher Education.”

“O no. I’ve become reconciled to it. And I found it very readable, though disagreeing with a number of the conclusions.”

“So little Guilbert has turned critic — it’s much easier than writing poems of wonderful versification, isn’t it? But I hope you’ll be as lenient as were my reviewers.”

“There’s the rub — simply because you were a woman, they handled you with gloves. Or — O I don’t know — perhaps they look at it differently than I do. It was admirably, and in the main, correctly handled; but as I said before, some of your conclusions were wrong. To appropriate a delightful phrase, you have not yet ‘solved the mystery of woman,’ and as to that of man, you’re lamentably ignorant.”

“And of course that statement puts you in the position of one who has. I’m afraid egotism — but there, we’ll not quarrel. And I do hope, Mr. Ralston, that we shall become good friends; though I’m afraid we shall see little of each other.”

“I am home to stay.”

“But — ”

"You are not going away?"

"No, but — "

"But what?"

"I can hardly express myself — "

"Oh! I see what you mean — our ostracisation. I suppose my brothers never attempted to redeem it. It does not hurt me. One sows the wind and must harvest the same. But I'd storm Olympus for desire's sake, and since I desire to know you better, I'll cultivate society. The doors will be opened, never fear."

"Then we shall — there! They are calling me, and if I don't come, they will. I am really glad to have met you, Mr. Ralston. Goodbye."

He took the extended hand, and then, as she fled down the beach, muttered "Gad! That's part of the mystery I'd like to solve!"

True to his word, Guilbert cultivated society — not that it was a new venture, but that here he had to face a long established and deep rooted prejudice. It was a society which had witnessed the birth, boyhood and manhood of himself and brothers, yet had never opened its doors to them. Furthermore, he and his had never attempted to propitiate it, but rather had taken pleasure in the estrangement, never missing a chance of displaying their disregard and contempt. But now things were changed, and Guilbert set about the conquest with an earnestness which brooked no defeat. Through his forceful personality, his charm of manner, his traveled polish and his knowledge of men and things, he soon became popular; and before long, no social function was complete without him. To him, it was a fascinating game, and even society felt the pleasant danger-thrill of contact with this social pariah. In fact, though fond mothers often looked askance, he became quite a lion. A clever conversationalist, familiar with the most diversified subjects, and with both a high intuitive and educated knowledge of human nature; small wonder that he pleased all and became one of the most favored.

They met often, and Helen beheld with dismay the increasing glamor of his presence. Many a stern self-analysis she gave herself; yet the problem was as perplexing as ever. At last she evolved the hoary axiom — human nature is not logical. Still, little satisfaction was to be gleaned from it. But one day a light broke in upon her. Summoning her soul to Judgement, she confessed that it was love — love that was not to be found within the narrow limits of reason — and strangest of all, that this absurd, illogical malady was hers.

In vain she endeavored to stem the tide; but she could not force her reason to reassert itself. The daring intrepidity of his race brooked no defense and hurried her on, till he had stormed her heart as valiantly as in that magic dell of long ago. The struggle was short but severe, and on the crumbling ruins of her philosophy, she realized that there was much to learn from the dual mystery of man and woman.

With the surrender, her alliance of the emotions with the concise particles of gray matter was dissevered, and conscious of loving and being loved, she wonderingly gazed on the broadening sweep of life. It seemed as though she had been translated to a new sphere, a delicious fairyland of reality. And she was appalled at the absurdity, the ludicrity of the ideals she had builded or the tenets she had held in her previ-| ous existence. Never had she idealized such a character as Guilbert's, I and constantly had she frowned upon the recognition of a double moral | standard. Dry logic and philosophy had fled before the glorious front of love — she no longer thought; she felt.

.--;)

Bright summer had fled, and lingering autumn prepared the sternj advent of winter. But the sun beat warm on the breathless air and the| land seemed to forget that the days of cold and gloom were so near| at hand.

|

She brought her horse to a walk, listening with vague pleasure to the I soft swish swish of the fallen leaves as he picked his steps on the narrow | path. With her trained physique, she thought nothing of forty miles | a-horse, and though appreciating the advantages of modern travel, thor-| oughly enjoyed it. The day before, she had taken the road around the| outlying spurs of Delarado and spent the night at Irving, at the home of | a college chum; but in returning, she had chosen the rough bridle-path^ across the mountain.

j

Lost in a reverie, she forgot the miles before her and let fall the| rein on Dick's neck. Tonight, Guilbert and she had decided the an-| nouncement was to be made; tonight, the die was to be irrevocably cast; I tonight, this heralding of her own happiness was to bring disappointment and sorrow to another. Stanton had written that he was coming down this day, not for long, perhaps to return immediately. And her, woman's heart knew why.

Suddenly she heard a childish laugh, and Dick stopped midway in a narrow turn, to lazily contemplate a little boy who blocked the way. His hands were manfully buried in jacket pockets, his face wreathed in the merry wonder of childhood.

“How beautiful!” she thought, for she worshipped at the shrine of young life unsullied, yet pregnant with the secrets of futurity.

//! wish you a good morning,” he said, doffing his hat with a rare, aint grace. “Don’t you like riding?” he continued. “I do — that is, I’’d like to, but papa thinks I’m not old enough — I’m not six yet, you know.”

“Yes,” she replied absently, studying his face and endeavoring to recall some familiar likeness.

“Yes, and when I’m six he’s going to give me a little pony.” And he drew himself up in the pride of prospective ownership.

“But are you not afraid to go so far in the woods, and all alone?”

“My papa is not afraid of anything and neither am I. You ought to see the lions and tigers he’s killed — and elephants too. And he says it’s wrong for a man to be afraid.”

“You are a stranger here, a city boy, I suppose?”

“O no, not a city boy,” he corrected. “I live in town, but you see, I often go to the country. Nana is only a little ways behind. May I ride back with you to meet her?”

Grasping his outstretched hands, she pulled him astride of Dick’s neck, facing her. Brushing back the wavy hair from his forehead, she looked into his black eyes and scanned the dark beauty of his face. And as she pondered with a vague sense of foreboding, he prattled on, telling her of his toys, his pets, but principally of his father, for whom he evidently had great admiration. He did not live with him but in town, and Nana sometimes brought him down to see him. He came on a horse too, with his big dog. “My father is a man,” he concluded proudly, “a man just like I want to be.”

“O the familiarity of that face!” she thought. It seemed the dim recollection of a dream-image, merged in past obscurity.

“Guilbert!” A woman’s voice rang out. “Guilbert! Come here you naughty boy! How can Nana find you?”

How it stung her! A frightful speculation assuming confirmation! But restraining herself — “And your name, my little man?”

“Guilbert, Guilbert Ralston.”

She could hardly keep the saddle; but the mother appearing, she returned the boy, uttered a few conventionalities, and was away at a wild gallop down the rail.

The crash had come. Her philosophy had dissolved before her great love; now that was gone and nothing but a void remained. She coul not think — only conjecture and fret. In short, now that the first pain was past, she had fallen into a mood of disgust, aimless and passive.

A sleepless night and a headache had been her portion, and now, events of yesterday seemed a half dream. Returning from her ride, she had barely gained her room when pounding hoofs on the drive-way announced Guilbert's arrival. Coming late, he had evidently learned of her presence from the woman and boy, and failed to overtake her in those swift twenty miles. But she had denied herself to him.

Today he had returned, but she kept to her room, pleading sickness. Besides, divining Stanton's mission, she was afraid to meet him. Like, wounded animal, she wanted to crawl away and suffer alone.

The afternoon was well along and the house quiet: evidently everybody had gone off. In an endeavor to escape herself, she would go down to the boat-house and take out her canoe. Slipping through the deserted house, she gained her wheel and was down the drive, barely escaping the ambushed Stanton who was lying in the hammock with his book. Down the grounds and into the road, she sped through the lengthening shadows.

"Helen!" And from the bushes by the wayside, sprang Guilbert.

"Helen!" in entreaty. But she was already beyond earshot.

But no, not safe. Few were the minutes before she heard the unmistakable sound of a loping horse. At the crest of the hill, just catching the first glimpse of the boat-house, she looked back down the long stretch of road. Guilbert had mounted a horse from the paddock, and hatless, sans bridle or saddle, guiding with his knees, he was riding like a Comanche Indian.

"Verily, for his desire would he storm Olympus," she thought, as she flew down the long grade. Nor could she deny a certain pleasurable thrill at this exhibition of his ardour. But she gained the boat-house and watched him go on down the beach.

The wind was strong and squally, already blowing half a gale. Soon she was out on the edge of the bar, breasting the tremendous seas and forgetting herself in the keen struggle. For an hour she beat back and forth in her frail craft, skimming the whitecaps which would hav swamped many a larger boat.

“Helen!” Peremptory — no longer entreating. He had seized some fisherman’s plunger on the beach and continued the chase.

The boat dashed past; so closely, that he dropped the tiller in a vain effort to catch her canoe. Her cockleshell handling in less room, she clacked off the two little sheets and headed for the boat-house. But he wore around, jibed over, and cut off her retreat.

It was contested skillfully on either side. Twice he blanketed her, and in the calm of his lea asked her to listen to him. Yet she refused. Again he took the wind from out her small sails and attempted to catch the canoe with a boat-hook. But she was out with her paddle and away, this time getting to windward to prevent the repetition of this manoeuver. With the certitude of fate, he beat up against the wind in her wake, edging her nearer to the breaking bar. Merciless, he forced her closer to the, danger.

Then the untamable spirit of her Teutonic ancestry flamed up — the dogged obstinacy, the fearlessness, the wild danger-love. The bar was a stretch of death, yet she would venture it. Drawing the canvass coverings about her body so that no water could enter the canoe, she shook her sails close into the wind and headed across. Perhaps that buccaneer ancestor, with the passion of burning ships and sacking cities for gold and maidens, animated Guilbert, for he also plunged into the threatening ruin.

Three great combers passed her before they broke, but the fourth could not be escaped. She was caught by the cap and hurled like a cork into the great hollow, buried in a smother of foam. Yet the canoe was staunch and righted without difficulty. The plunger met a similar sea and emerged with the cockpit half afloat. At last they shot out from the last great wave, into the long swell of open ocean.

But she heard the churn of the fore-shoe, the complaining after-leach, and the jerk of the sheet on the noisy traveler, as the plunger gradually drew near. Now the bow was abreast of her, and so close that she could have touched it with her paddle. She shot up into the wind; but the plunger luffed, followed her about, and blanketed her on the other tack. It poised above her on a great sea — for he had thrown the helm hard up in order to run her down. There was a crash of splintering wood and a rush of water, then a strong arm grasped her and she was drawn into the cockpit.

How happily the years had flown! — she gazed dreamily into the fire and her thoughts sped back to that wild night at sea. How, amid the howling elements, he crushed her to him and forced her to listen — laid his life bare, told her all, each mishap, every error. The mother, his wife, but dead. And the boy had found a second mother in her sister. So the darkness was dispelled, and for the third time and more tempestuously than ever, he had wooed and won her.

Though the countryside shook its head and muttered fearful prophecies, they had married, and strange to say, happiness had been her lot. As for Guilbert — I AM, BECAME I WAS: I MIGHT BE, BECAME I AM.

“Helen!”

She awoke to greet him, and the dream-image, merged in past obscurity, vanished — the realization, the reality remained.

The Dream of Debs

I awoke fully an hour before my customary time. This in itself was remarkable, and I lay very wide awake, pondering over it. Something was the matter, something was wrong — I knew not what. I was oppressed by a premonition of something terrible that had happened or was about to happen. But what was it? I strove to orient myself. I remembered that at the time of the Great Earthquake of 1906 many claimed they awakened some moments before the first shock and that during these moments they experienced strange feelings of dread. Was San Francisco again to be visited by earthquake?

I lay for a full minute, numbly expectant, but there occurred no reeling of walls nor shock and grind of falling masonry. All was quiet. That was it! The silence! No wonder I had been perturbed. The hum of the great live city was strangely absent. The surface cars passed along my street, at that time of day, on an average of one every three minutes; but in the ten succeeding minutes not a car passed. Perhaps it was a street-railway strike, was my thought; or perhaps there had been an accident and the power was shut off. But no, the silence was too profound. I heard no jar and rattle of waggon wheels, nor stamp of iron-shod hoofs straining up the steep cobble-stones.

Pressing the push-button beside my bed, I strove to hear the sound of the bell, though I well knew it was impossible for the sound to rise three stories to me even if the bell did ring. It rang all right, for a few minutes later Brown entered with the tray and morning paper. Though his features were impassive as ever, I noted a startled, apprehensive light in his eyes. I noted, also, that there was no cream on the tray.

“The Creamery did not deliver this morning,” he explained; “nor did the bakery.”

I glanced again at the tray. There were no fresh French rolls — only slices of stale graham bread from yesterday, the most detestable of bread so far as I was concerned.

“Nothing was delivered this morning, sir,” Brown started to explain apologetically; but I interrupted him.

“The paper?”

"Yes, sir, it was delivered, but it was the only thing, and it is the last time, too. There won't be any paper to-morrow. The paper says so. Can I send out and get you some condensed milk?"

I shook my head, accepted the coffee black, and spread open the paper. The headlines explained everything — explained too much, in fact, for the lengths of pessimism to which the journal went were ridiculous. A general strike, it said, had been called all over the United States; and most foreboding anxieties were expressed concerning the provisioning of the great cities.

I read on hastily, skimming much and remembering much of labour troubles in the past. For a generation the general strike had been the dream of organized labour, which dream had arisen originally in the mind of Debs, one of the great labour leaders of thirty years before. I recollected that in my young college-settlement days I had even written an article on the subject for one of the magazines and that I had entitled it "The Dream of Debs." And I must confess that I had treated the idea very cavalierly and academically as a dream and nothing more. Time and the world had rolled on, Gompers was gone, the American Federation of Labour was gone, and gone was Debs with all his wild revolutionary ideas; but the dream had persisted, and here it was at last realized in fact. But I laughed, as I read, at the journal's gloomy outlook. I knew better. I had seen organized labour worsted in too many conflicts. It would be a matter only of days when the thing would be settled. This was a national strike, and it wouldn't take the Government long to break it.

I threw the paper down and proceeded to dress. It would certainly be interesting to be out in the streets of San Francisco when not a wheel was turning and the whole city was taking an enforced vacation.

"I beg your pardon, sir," Brown said, as he handed me my cigar-case, "but Mr. Harmmed has asked to see you before you go out."

"Send him in right away," I answered.

Harmmed was the butler. When he entered I could see he was labouring under controlled excitement. He came at once to the point.

"What shall I do, sir? There will be needed provisions, and the delivery drivers are on strike. And the electricity is shut off — I guess they're on strike, too."

"Are the shops open?" I asked.

"Only the small ones, sir. The retail clerks are out, and the big ones can't open; but the owners and their families are running the little ones themselves."

"Then take the machine," I said, "and go the rounds and make your purchases. Buy plenty of everything you need or may need. Get a box of candles — no, get half-a-dozen boxes. And, when you're done, tell Harrison to bring the machine around to the club for me — not later than eleven."

Harmmed shook his head gravely. "Mr. Harrison has struck along with the Chauffeurs' Union, and I don't know how to run the machine myself."

"Oh, ho, he has, has he?" said. "Well, when next Mister Harrison happens around you tell him that he can look elsewhere for a position."

"Yes, sir."

"You don't happen to belong to a Butlers' Union, do you, Harmmed?"

"No, sir," was the answer. "And even if I did I'd not desert my employer in a crisis like this. No, sir, I would — "

"All right, thank you," I said. "Now you get ready to accompany me. I'll run the machine myself, and we'll lay in a stock of provisions to stand a siege."

It was a beautiful first of May, even as May days go. The sky was cloudless, there was no wind, and the air was warm — almost balmy. Many autos were out, but the owners were driving them themselves. The streets were crowded but quiet. The working class, dressed in its Sunday best, was out taking the air and observing the effects of the strike. It was all so unusual, and withal so peaceful, that I found myself enjoying it. My nerves were tingling with mild excitement. It was a sort of placid adventure. I passed Miss Chickering. She was at the helm of her little runabout. She swung around and came after me, catching me at the corner.

"Oh, Mr. Corf!'" she hailed. "Do you know where I can buy candles? I've been to a dozen shops, and they're all sold out. It's dreadfully awful, isn't it?"

But her sparkling eyes gave the lie to her words. Like the rest of us, she was enjoying it hugely. Quite an adventure it was, getting those candles. It was not until we went across the city and down into the working-class quarter south of Market Street that we found small corner groceries that had not yet sold out. Miss Chickering thought one box was sufficient, but I persuaded her into taking four. My car was large, and I laid in a dozen boxes. There was no telling what delays might arise in the settlement of the strike. Also, I filled the car with sacks of flour, baking-powder, tinned goods, and all the ordinary necessaries of life suggested by Harmmed, who fussed around and clucked over the purchases like an anxious old hen.

The remarkable thing, that first day of the strike, was that no one really apprehended anything serious. The announcement of organized labour in the morning papers that it was prepared to stay out a month or three months was laughed at. And yet that very first day we might have guessed as much from the fact that the working class took practically no part in the great rush to buy provisions. Of course not. For weeks and months, craftily and secretly, the whole working class had been laying in private stocks of provisions. That was why we were permitted to go down and buy out the little groceries in the working-class neighbourhoods.

It was not until I arrived at the club that afternoon that I began to feel the first alarm. Everything was in confusion. There were no olives for the cocktails, and the service was by hitches and jerks. Most of the men were angry, and all were worried. A babel of voices greeted me as I entered. General Folsom, nursing his capacious paunch in a window-seat in the smoking-room was defending himself against half-a-dozen excited gentlemen who were demanding that he should do something.

“What can I do more than I have done?” he was saying. “There are no orders from Washington. If you gentlemen will get a wire through I’ll do anything I am commanded to do. But I don’t see what can be done. The first thing I did this morning, as soon as I learned of the strike, was to order in the troops from the Presidio — three thousand of them. They’re guarding the banks, the Mint, the post office, and all the public buildings. There is no disorder whatever. The strikers are keeping the peace perfectly. You can’t expect me to shoot them down as they walk along the streets with wives and children all in their best bib and tucker.”

“I’d like to know what’s happening on Wall Street,” I heard Jimmy Wombold say as I passed along. I could imagine his anxiety, for I knew that he was deep in the big Consolidated-Western deal.

“Say, Corf,” Atkinson bustled up to me, “is your machine running?”

“Yes,” I answered, “but what’s the matter with your own?”

“Broken down, and the garages are all closed. And my wife’s somewhere around Truckee, I think, stalled on the overland. Can’t get a wire to her for love or money. She should have arrived this evening. She may be starving. Lend me your machine."

"Can't get it across the bay," Halstead spoke up. "The ferries aren't running. But I tell you what you can do. There's Rollinson — oh, Rollinson, come here a moment. Atkinson wants to get a machine across the bay. His wife is stuck on the overland at Truckee. Can't you bring the Lurlette across from Tiburon and carry the machine over for him?"

The Lurlette was a two-hundred-ton, ocean-going schooner-yacht.

Rollinson shook his head. "You couldn't get a longshoreman to land the machine on board, even if I could get the Lurlette over, which I can't, for the crew are members of the Coast Seamen's Union, and they're on strike along with the rest."

"But my wife may be starving," I could hear Atkinson wailing as I moved on.

At the other end of the smoking-room I ran into a group of men bunched excitedly and angrily around Bertie Messener. And Bertie was stirring them up and prodding them in his cool, cynical way. Bertie didn't care about the strike. He didn't care much about anything. He was blasé — at least in all the clean things of life; the nasty things had no attraction for him. He was worth twenty millions, all of it in safe investments, and he had never done a tap of productive work in his life — inherited it all from his father and two uncles. He had been everywhere, seen everything, and done everything but get married, and this last in the face of the grim and determined attack of a few hundred ambitious mammas. For years he had been the greatest catch, and as yet he had avoided being caught. He was disgracefully eligible. On top of his wealth he was young, handsome, and, as I said before, clean. He was a great athlete, a young blond god that did everything perfectly and admirably with the solitary exception of matrimony. And he didn't care about anything, had no ambitions, no passions, no desire to do the very things he did so much better than other men.

"This is sedition!" one man in the group was crying. Another called it revolt and revolution, and another called it anarchy.

"I can't see it," Bertie said. "I have been out in the streets all morning. Perfect order reigns. I never saw a more law-abiding populace. There's no use calling it names. It's not any of those things. It's just what it claims to be, a general strike, and it's your turn to play, gentlemen."

"And we'll play all right!" cried Garfield, one of the traction millionaires. "We'll show this dirt where its place is — the beasts! Wait till the Government takes a hand."

"But where is the Government?" Bertie interposed. "It might as well be at the bottom of the sea so far as you're concerned. You don't know what's happening at Washington. You don't know whether you've got a Government or not."

"Don't you worry about that," Garfield blurted out.

"I assure you I'm not worrying," Bertie smiled languidly. "But it seems to me it's what you fellows are doing. Look in the glass, Garfield."

Garfield did not look, but had he looked he would have seen a very excited gentleman with rumpled, iron-grey hair, a flushed face, mouth sullen and vindictive, and eyes wildly gleaming.

"It's not right, I tell you," little Hanover said; and from his tone I was sure that he had already said it a number of times.

"Now that's going too far, Hanover," Bertie replied. "You fellows make me tired. You're all open-shop men. You've eroded my eardrums with your endless gabble for the open shop and the right of a man to work. You've harangued along those lines for years. Labour is doing nothing wrong in going out on this general strike. It is violating no law of God nor man. Don't you talk, Hanover. You've been ringing the changes too long on the God-given right to work . . . or not to work; you can't escape the corollary. It's a dirty little sordid scrap, that's all the whole thing is. You've got labour down and gouged it, and now labour's got you down and is gouging you, that's all, and you're squealing."

Every man in the group broke out in indignant denials that labour had ever been gouged.

"No, sir!" Garfield was shouting. "We've done the best for labour. Instead of gouging it, we've given it a chance to live. We've made work for it. Where would labour be if it hadn't been for us?"

"A whole lot better off," Bertie sneered. "You've got labour down and gouged it every time you got a chance, and you went out of your way to make chances."

"No! No!" were the cries.

"There was the teamsters' strike, right here in San Francisco," Bertie went on imperturbably. "The Employers' Association precipitated that strike. You know that. And you know I know it, too, for I've sat in these very rooms and heard the inside talk and news of the fight. First you precipitated the strike, then you bought the Mayor and the Chief of Police and broke the strike. A pretty spectacle, you philanthropists getting the teamsters down and gouging them.

"Hold on, I'm not through with you. It's only last year that the labour ticket of Colorado elected a governor. He was never seated. You know why. You know how your brother philanthropists and capitalists of Colorado worked it. It was a case of getting labour down and gouging it. You kept the president of the South-western Amalgamated Association of Miners in jail for three years on trumped-up murder charges, and with him out of the way you broke up the association. That was gouging labour, you'll admit. The third time the graduated income tax was declared unconstitutional was a gouge. So was the eight-hour Bill you killed in the last Congress.

"And of all unmitigated immoral gouges, your destruction of the closed-shop principle was the limit. You know how it was done. You bought out Farburg, the last president of the old American Federation of Labour. He was your creature — or the creature of all the trusts and employers' associations, which is the same thing. You precipitated the big closed-shop strike. Farburg betrayed that strike. You won, and the old American Federation of Labour crumbled to pieces. You follows destroyed it, and by so doing undid yourselves; for right on top of it began the organization of the I.L.W. — the biggest and solidest organization of labour the United States has ever seen, and you are responsible for its existence and for the present general strike. You smashed all the old federations and drove labour into the I.L.W., and the I.L.W. called the general strike — still fighting for the closed shop. And then you have the effrontery to stand here face to face and tell me that you never got labour down and gouged it. Bah!"

This time there were no denials. Garfield broke out in self-defence —

"We've done nothing we were not compelled to do, if we were to win."

"I'm not saying anything about that," Bertie answered. "What I am complaining about is your squealing now that you're getting a taste of your own medicine. How many strikes have you won by starving labour into submission? Well, labour's worked out a scheme whereby to starve you into submission. It wants the closed shop, and, if it can get it by starving you, why, starve you shall."

"I notice that you have profited in the past by those very labour gouges you mention," insinuated Brentwood, one of the wiliest and most astute of our corporation lawyers. "The receiver is as bad as the thief," he sneered. "You had no hand in the gouging, but you took your whack out of the gouge."

"That is quite beside the question, Brentwood," Bertie drawled. "You're as bad as Hanover, intruding the moral element. I haven't said that anything is right or wrong. It's all a rotten game, I know; and my sole kick is that you fellows are squealing now that you're down and labour's taking a gouge out of you. Of course I've taken the profits from the gouging and, thanks to you, gentlemen, without having personally to do the dirty work. You did that for me — oh, believe me, not because I am more virtuous than you, but because my good father and his various brothers left me a lot of money with which to pay for the dirty work."

"If you mean to insinuate — " Brentwood began hotly.

"Hold on, don't get all-ruffled up," Bertie interposed insolently. "There's no use in playing hypocrites in this thieves' den. The high and lofty is all right for the newspapers, boys' clubs, and Sunday schools — that's part of the game; but for heaven's sake don't let's play it on one another. You know, and you know that I know just what jobbery was done in the building trades' strike last fall, who put up the money, who did the work, and who profited by it." (Brentwood flushed darkly.) "But we are all tarred with the same brush, and the best thing for us to do is to leave morality out of it. Again I repeat, play the game, play it to the last finish, but for goodness' sake don't squeal when you get hurt."

When I left the group Bertie was off on a new tack tormenting them with the more serious aspects of the situation, pointing out the shortage of supplies that was already making itself felt, and asking them what they were going to do about it. A little later I met him in the cloak-room, leaving, and gave him a lift home in my machine.

"It's a great stroke, this general strike," he said, as we bowled along through the crowded but orderly streets. "It's a smashing body-blow. Labour caught us napping and struck at our weakest place, the stomach. I'm going to get out of San Francisco, Corf. Take my advice and get out, too. Head for the country, anywhere. You'll have more chance. Buy up a stock of supplies and get into a tent or a cabin somewhere. Soon there'll be nothing but starvation in this city for such as we."

How correct Bertie Messener was I never dreamed. I decided that he was an alarmist. As for myself, I was content to remain and watch the fun. After I dropped him, instead of going directly home, I went on in a hunt for more food. To my surprise, I learned that the small groceries where I had bought in the morning were sold out. I extended my search to the Potrero, and by good luck managed to pick up another box of candles, two sacks of wheat flour, ten pounds of graham flour (which would do for the servants), a case of tinned corn, and two cases of tinned tomatoes. It did look as though there was going to be at least a temporary food shortage, and I hugged myself over the goodly stock of provisions I had laid in.

The next morning I had my coffee in bed as usual, and, more than the cream, I missed the daily paper. It was this absence of knowledge of what was going on in the world that I found the chief hardship. Down at the club there was little news. Rider had crossed from Oakland in his launch, and Halstead had been down to San Jose and back in his machine. They reported the same conditions in those places as in San Francisco. Everything was tied up by the strike. All grocery stocks had been bought out by the upper classes. And perfect order reigned. But what was happening over the rest of the country — in Chicago? New York? Washington? Most probably the same things that were happening with us, we concluded; but the fact that we did not know with absolute surety was irritating.

General Folsom had a bit of news. An attempt had been made to place army telegraphers in the telegraph offices, but the wires had been cut in every direction. This was, so far, the one unlawful act committed by labour, and that it was a concerted act he was fully convinced. He had communicated by wireless with the army post at Benicia, the telegraph lines were even then being patrolled by soldiers all the way to Sacramento. Once, for one short instant, they had got the Sacramento call, then the wires, somewhere, were cut again. General Folsom reasoned that similar attempts to open communication were being made by the authorities all the way across the continent, but he was non-committal as to whether or not he thought the attempt would succeed. What worried him was the wire-cutting; he could not but believe that it was an important part of the deep-laid labour conspiracy. Also, he regretted that the Government had not long since established its projected chain of wireless stations.

The days came and went, and for a while it was a humdrum time. Nothing happened. The edge of excitement had become blunted. The streets were not so crowded. The working class did not come uptown any more to see how we were taking the strike. And there were not so many automobiles running around. The repair-shops and garages were closed, and whenever a machine broke down it went out of commission. The clutch on mine broke, and neither love nor money could get it repaired. Like the rest, I was now walking. San Francisco lay dead, and we did not know what was happening over the rest of the country. But from the very fact that we did not know we could conclude only that the rest of the country lay as dead as San Francisco. From time to time the city was placarded with the proclamations of organized labour — these had been printed months before, and evidenced how thoroughly the I.L.W. had prepared for the strike. Every detail had been worked out long in advance. No violence had occurred as yet, with the exception of the shooting of a few wire-cutters by the soldiers, but the people of the slums were starving and growing ominously restless.

The business men, the millionaires, and the professional class held meetings and passed resolutions, but there was no way of making the proclamations public. They could not even get them printed. One result of these meetings, however, was that General Folsom was persuaded into taking military possession of the wholesale houses and of all the flour, grain, and food warehouses. It was high time, for suffering was becoming acute in the homes of the rich, and bread-lines were necessary. I knew that my servants were beginning to draw long faces, and it was amazing — the hole they made in my stock of provisions. In fact, as I afterward surmised, each servant was stealing from me and secreting a private stock of provisions for himself.

But with the formation of the bread-lines came new troubles. There was only so much of a food reserve in San Francisco, and at the best it could not last long. Organized labour, we knew, had its private supplies; nevertheless, the whole working class joined the bread-lines. As a result, the provisions General Folsom had taken possession of diminished with perilous rapidity. How were the soldiers to distinguish between a shabby middle-class man, a member of the I.L.W., or a slum dweller? The first and the last had to be fed, but the soldiers did not know all the I.L.W. men in the city, much less the wives and sons and daughters of the I.L.W. men. The employers helping, a few of the known union men were flung out of the bread-lines; but that amounted to nothing. To make matters worse, the Government tugs that had been hauling food from the army depots on Mare Island to Angel Island found no more food to haul. The soldiers now received their rations from the confiscated provisions, and they received them first.

The beginning of the end was in sight. Violence was beginning to show its face. Law and order were passing away, and passing away, I must confess, among the slum people and the upper classes. Organized labour still maintained perfect order. It could well afford to — it had plenty to eat. I remember the afternoon at the club when I caught Halstead and Brentwood whispering in a corner. They took me in on the venture. Brentwood's machine was still in running order, and they were going out cow-stealing. Halstead had a long butcher knife and a cleaver. We went out to the outskirts of the city. Here and there were cows grazing, but always they were guarded by their owners. We pursued our quest, following along the fringe of the city to the east, and on the hills near Hunter's Point we came upon a cow guarded by a little girl. There was also a young calf with the cow. We wasted no time on preliminaries. The little girl ran away screaming, while we slaughtered the cow. I omit the details, for they are not nice — we were unaccustomed to such work, and we bungled it.

But in the midst of it, working with the haste of fear, we heard cries, and we saw a number of men running toward us. We abandoned the spoils and took to our heels. To our surprise we were not pursued. Looking back, we saw the men hurriedly cutting up the cow. They had been on the same lay as ourselves. We argued that there was plenty for all, and ran back. The scene that followed beggars description. We fought and squabbled over the division like savages. Brentwood, I remember, was a perfect brute, snarling and snapping and threatening that murder would be done if we did not get our proper share.

And we were getting our share when there occurred a new irruption on the scene. This time it was the dreaded peace officers of the I.L.W. The little girl had brought them. They were armed with whips and clubs, and there were a score of them. The little girl danced up and down in anger, the tears streaming down her cheeks, crying: "Give it to 'em! Give it to 'em! That guy with the specs — he did it! Mash his face for him! Mash his face!" That guy with the specs was I, and I got my face mashed, too, though I had the presence of mind to take off my glasses at the first. My! but we did receive a trouncing as we scattered in all directions. Brentwood, Halstead, and I fled away for the machine. Brentwood's nose was bleeding, while Halstead's cheek was cut across with the scarlet slash of a black-snake whip.

And, lo, when the pursuit ceased and we had gained the machine, there, hiding behind it, was the frightened calf. Brentwood warned us to be cautious, and crept up on it like a wolf or tiger. Knife and cleaver had been left behind, but Brentwood still had his hands, and over and over on the ground he rolled with the poor little calf as he throttled it. We threw the carcass into the machine, covered it over with a robe, and started for home. But our misfortunes had only begun. We blew out a tyre. There was no way of fixing it, and twilight was coming on. We abandoned the machine, Brentwood pulling and staggering along in advance, the calf, covered by the robe, slung across his shoulders. We took turn about carrying that calf, and it nearly killed us. Also, we lost our way. And then, after hours of wandering and toil, we encountered a gang of hoodlums. They were not I.L.W. men, and I guess they were as hungry as we. At any rate, they got the calf and we got the thrashing. Brentwood raged like a madman the rest of the way home, and he looked like one, with his torn clothes, swollen nose, and blackened eyes.

There wasn't any more cow-stealing after that. General Folsom sent his troopers out and confiscated all the cows, and his troopers, aided by the militia, ate most of the meat. General Folsom was not to be blamed; it was his duty to maintain law and order, and he maintained it by means of the soldiers, wherefore he was compelled to feed them first of all.

It was about this time that the great panic occurred. The wealthy classes precipitated the flight, and then the slum people caught the contagion and stampeded wildly out of the city. General Folsom was pleased. It was estimated that at least 200,000 had deserted San Francisco, and by that much was his food problem solved. Well do I remember that day. In the morning I had eaten a crust of bread. Half of the afternoon I had stood in the bread-line; and after dark I returned home, tired and miserable, carrying a quart of rice and a slice of bacon. Brown met me at the door. His face was worn and terrified. All the servants had fled, he informed me. He alone remained. I was touched by his faithfulness and, when I learned that he had eaten nothing all day, I divided my food with him. We cooked half the rice and half the bacon, sharing it equally and reserving the other half for morning. I went to bed with my hunger, and tossed restlessly all night. In the morning I found Brown had deserted me, and, greater misfortune still, he had stolen what remained of the rice and bacon.

It was a gloomy handful of men that came together at the club that morning. There was no service at all. The last servant was gone. I noticed, too, that the silver was gone, and I learned where it had gone. The servants had not taken it, for the reason, I presume, that the club members got to it first. Their method of disposing of it was simple. Down south of Market Street, in the dwellings of the I.L.W., the housewives had given square meals in exchange for it. I went back to my house. Yes, my silver was gone — all but a massive pitcher. This I wrapped up and carried down south of Market Street.

I felt better after the meal, and returned to the club to learn if there was anything new in the situation. Hanover, Collins, and Dakon were just leaving. There was no one inside, they told me, and they invited me to come along with them. They were leaving the city, they said, on Dakon's horses, and there was a spare one for me. Dakon had four magnificent carriage horses that he wanted to save, and General Folsom had given him the tip that next morning all the horses that remained in the city were to be confiscated for food. There were not many horses left, for tens of thousands of them had been turned loose into the country when the hay and grain gave out during the first days. Birdall, I remember, who had great draying interests, had turned loose three hundred dray horses. At an average value of five hundred dollars, this had amounted to $150,000. He had hoped, at first, to recover most of the horses after the strike was over, but in the end he never recovered one of them. They were all eaten by the people that fled from San Francisco. For that matter, the killing of the army mules and horses for food had already begun.

Fortunately for Dakon, he had had a plentiful supply of hay and grain stored in his stable. We managed to raise four saddles, and we found the animals in good condition and spirited, withal unused to being ridden. I remembered the San Francisco of the great earthquake as we rode through the streets, but this San Francisco was vastly more pitiable. No cataclysm of nature had caused this, but, rather, the tyranny of the labour unions. We rode down past Union Square and through the theatre, hotel, and shopping districts. The streets were deserted. Here and there stood automobiles, abandoned where they had broken down or when the gasolene had given out. There was no sign of life, save for the occasional policemen and the soldiers guarding the banks and public buildings. Once we came upon an I.L.W. man pasting up the latest proclamation. We stopped to read. “We have maintained an orderly strike,” it ran; “and we shall maintain order to the end. The end will come when our demands are satisfied, and our demands will be satisfied when we have starved our employers into submission, as we ourselves in the past have often been starved into submission.”

“Messener’s very words,” Collins said. “And I, for one, am ready to submit, only they won’t give me a chance to submit. I haven’t had a full meal in an age. I wonder what horse-meat tastes like?”

We stopped to read another proclamation: “When we think our employers are ready to submit we shall open up the telegraphs and place the employers’ associations of the United States in communication. But only messages relating to peace terms shall be permitted over the wires.”

We rode on, crossed Market Street, and a little later were passing through the working-class district. Here the streets were not deserted. Leaning over the gates or standing in groups were the I.L.W. men. Happy, well-fed children were playing games, and stout housewives sat on the front steps gossiping. One and all cast amused glances at us. Little children ran after us, crying: “Hey, mister, ain’t you hungry?” And one woman, nursing a child at her breast, called to Dakon: “Say, Fatty, I’ll give you a meal for your skate — ham and potatoes, currant jelly, white bread, canned butter, and two cups of coffee.”

“Have you noticed, the last few days,” Hanover remarked to me, “that there’s not been a stray dog in the streets?”

I had noticed, but I had not thought about it before. It was high time to leave the unfortunate city. We at last managed to connect with the San Bruno Road, along which we headed south. I had a country place near Menlo, and it was our objective. But soon we began to discover that the country was worse off and far more dangerous than the city. There the soldiers and the I.L.W. kept order; but the country had been turned over to anarchy. Two hundred thousand people had fled from San Francisco, and we had countless evidences that their flight had been like that of an army of locusts.

They had swept everything clean. There had been robbery and fighting. Here and there we passed bodies by the roadside and saw the blackened ruins of farm-houses. The fences were down, and the crops had been trampled by the feet of a multitude. All the vegetable patches had been rooted up by the famished hordes. All the chickens and farm animals had been slaughtered. This was true of all the main roads that led out of San Francisco. Here and there, away from the roads, farmers had held their own with shotguns and revolvers, and were still holding their own. They warned us away and refused to parley with us. And all the destruction and violence had been done by the slum-dwellers and the upper classes. The I.L.W. men, with plentiful food supplies, remained quietly in their homes in the cities.

Early in the ride we received concrete proof of how desperate was the situation. To the right of us we heard cries and rifle-shots. Bullets whistled dangerously near. There was a crashing in the underbrush; then a magnificent black truck-horse broke across the road in front of us and was gone. We had barely time to notice that he was bleeding and lame. He was followed by three soldiers. The chase went on among the trees on the left. We could hear the soldiers calling to one another. A fourth soldier limped out upon the road from the right, sat down on a boulder, and mopped the sweat from his face.

"Militia," Dakon whispered. "Deserters."

The man grinned up at us and asked for a match. In reply to Dakon's "What's the word?" he informed us that the militiamen were deserting. "No grub," he explained. "They're feedin' it all to the regulars." We also learned from him that the military prisoners had been released from Alcatraz Island because they could no longer be fed.

I shall never forget the next sight we encountered. We came upon it abruptly around a turn of the road. Overhead arched the trees. The sunshine was filtering down through the branches. Butterflies were fluttering by, and from the fields came the song of larks. And there it stood, a powerful touring car. About it and in it lay a number of corpses. It told its own tale. Its occupants, fleeing from the city, had been attacked and dragged down by a gang of slum dwellers — hoodlums. The thing had occurred within twenty-four hours. Freshly opened meat and fruit tins explained the reason for the attack. Dakon examined the bodies.

"I thought so," he reported. "I've ridden in that car. It was Perriton — the whole family. We've got to watch out for ourselves from now on."

"But we have no food with which to invite attack," I objected.

Dakon pointed to the horse I rode, and I understood.

Early in the day Dakon's horse had cast a shoe. The delicate hoof had split, and by noon the animal was limping. Dakon refused to ride it farther, and refused to desert it. So, on his solicitation, we went on. He would lead the horse and join us at my place. That was the last we saw of him; nor did we ever learn his end.

By one o'clock we arrived at the town of Menlo, or, rather, at the site of Menlo, for it was in ruins. Corpses lay everywhere. The business part of the town, as well as part of the residences, had been gutted by fire. Here and there a residence still held out; but there was no getting near them. When we approached too closely we were fired upon. We met a woman who was poking about in the smoking ruins of her cottage. The first attack, she told us had been on the stores, and as she talked we could picture that raging, roaring, hungry mob flinging itself on the handful of townspeople. Millionaires and paupers had fought side by side for the food, and then fought with one another after they got it. The town of Palo Alto and Stanford University had been sacked in similar fashion, we learned. Ahead of us lay a desolate, wasted land; and we thought we were wise in turning off to my place. It lay three miles to the west, snuggling among the first rolling swells of the foothills.

But as we rode along we saw that the devastation was not confined to the main roads. The van of the flight had kept to the roads, sacking the small towns as it went; while those that followed had scattered out and swept the whole countryside like a great broom. My place was built of concrete, masonry, and tiles, and so had escaped being burned, but it was gutted clean. We found the gardener's body in the windmill, littered around with empty shot-gun shells. He had put up a good fight. But no trace could we find of the two Italian labourers, nor of the house-keeper and her husband. Not a live thing remained. The calves, the colts, all the fancy poultry and thoroughbred stock, everything, was gone. The kitchen and the fireplaces, where the mob had cooked, were a mess, while many camp-fires outside bore witness to the large number that had fed and spent the night. What they had not eaten they had carried away. There was not a bite for us.

We spent the rest of the night vainly waiting for Dakon, and in the morning, with our revolvers, fought off half-a-dozen marauders. Then we killed one of Dakon's horses, hiding for the future what meat we did not immediately eat. In the afternoon Collins went out for a walk, but failed to return. This was the last straw to Hanover. He was for flight there and then, and I had great difficulty in persuading him to wait for daylight. As for myself, I was convinced that the end of the general strike was near, and I was resolved to return to San Francisco. So, in the morning, we parted company, Hanover heading south, fifty pounds of horse-meat strapped to his saddle, while I, similarly loaded, headed north. Little Hanover pulled through all right, and to the end of his life he will persist, I know, in boring everybody with the narrative of his subsequent adventures.

I got as far as Belmont, on the main road back, when I was robbed of my horse-meat by three militiamen. There was no change in the situation, they said, except that it was going from bad to worse. The I.L.W. had plenty of provisions hidden away and could last out for months. I managed to get as far as Baden, when my horse was taken away from me by a dozen men. Two of them were San Francisco policemen, and the remainder were regular soldiers. This was ominous. The situation was certainly extreme when the regulars were beginning to desert. When I continued my way on foot, they already had the fire started, and the last of Dakon's horses lay slaughtered on the ground.

As luck would have it, I sprained my ankle, and succeeded in getting no farther than South San Francisco. I lay there that night in an out-house, shivering with the cold and at the same time burning with fever. Two days I lay there, too sick to move, and on the third, reeling and giddy, supporting myself on an extemporized crutch, I tottered on toward San Francisco. I was weak as well, for it was the third day since food had passed my lips. It was a day of nightmare and torment. As in a dream I passed hundreds of regular soldiers drifting along in the opposite direction, and many policemen, with their families, organized in large groups for mutual protection.

As I entered the city I remembered the workman's house at which I had traded the silver pitcher, and in that direction my hunger drove me. Twilight was falling when I came to the place. I passed around by the alleyway and crawled up the black steps, on which I collapsed. I managed to reach out with the crutch and knock on the door. Then I must have fainted, for I came to in the kitchen, my face wet with water, and whisky being poured down my throat. I choked and spluttered and tried to talk. I began saying something about not having any more silver pitchers, but that

I would make it up to them afterward if they would only give me something to eat. But the housewife interrupted me.

"Why, you poor man," she said, "haven't you heard? The strike was called off this afternoon. Of course we'll give you something to eat."

She bustled around, opening a tin of breakfast bacon and preparing to fry it.

"Let me have some now, please," I begged; and I ate the raw bacon on a slice of bread, while her husband explained that the demands of the I.L.W. had been granted. The wires had been opened up in the early afternoon, and everywhere the employers' associations had given in. There hadn't been any employers left in San Francisco, but General Folsom had spoken for them. The trains and steamers would start running in the morning, and so would everything else just as soon as system could be established.

And that was the end of the general strike. I never want to see another one. It was worse than a war. A general strike is a cruel and immoral thing, and the brain of man should be capable of running industry in a more rational way. Harrison is still my chauffeur. It was part of the conditions of the I.L.W. that all of its members should be reinstated in their old positions. Brown never came back, but the rest of the servants are with me. I hadn't the heart to discharge them — poor creatures, they were pretty hard-pressed when they deserted with the food and silver. And now I can't discharge them. They have all been unionized by the I.L.W. The tyranny of organized labour is getting beyond human endurance. Something must be done.

Dutch Courage

"JUST our luck!"

Gus Lafee finished wiping his hands and sullenly threw the towel upon the rocks. His attitude was one of deep dejection. The light seemed gone out of the day and the glory from the golden sun. Even the keen mountain air was devoid of relish, and the early morning no longer yielded its customary zest.

"Just our luck!" Gus repeated, this time avowedly for the edification of another young fellow who was busily engaged in sousing his head in the water of the lake.

"What are you grumbling about, anyway?" Hazard Van Dorn lifted a soap-rimmed face questioningly. His eyes were shut. "What's our luck?"

"Look there!" Gus threw a moody glance skyward. "Some duffer's got ahead of us. We've been scooped, that's all!"

Hazard opened his eyes, and caught a fleeting glimpse of a white flag waving arrogantly on the edge of a wall of rock nearly a mile above his head. Then his eyes closed with a snap, and his face wrinkled spasmodically. Gus threw him the towel, and uncommiseratingly watched him wipe out the offending soap. He felt too blue himself to take stock in trivialities.

Hazard groaned.

"Does it hurt-much?" Gus queried, coldly, without interest, as if it were no more than his duty to ask after the welfare of his comrade.

"I guess it does," responded the suffering one.

"Soap's pretty strong, eh?--Noticed it myself."

"'Tisn't the soap. It's-it's that!" He opened his reddened eyes and pointed toward the innocent white little flag. "That's what hurts."

Gus Lafee did not reply, but turned away to start the fire and begin cooking breakfast. His disappointment and grief were too deep for anything but silence, and Hazard, who felt likewise, never opened his mouth as he fed the horses, nor once laid his head against their arching necks or passed caressing fingers through their manes. The two boys were blind, also, to the manifold glories of Mirror Lake which reposed at their very feet. Nine times, had they chosen to move along its margin the short distance of a hundred yards, could they have seen the sunrise repeated; nine times, from behind as many successive peaks, could they have seen the great orb rear his blazing rim; and nine times, had they but looked into the waters of the lake, could they have seen the phenomena reflected faithfully and vividly. But all the Titanic grandeur of the scene was lost to them. They had been robbed of the chief pleasure of their trip to Yosemite Valley. They had been frustrated in their long-cherished design upon Half Dome , and hence were rendered disconsolate and blind to the beauties and the wonders of the place.

Half Dome rears its ice-scarred head fully five thousand feet above the level floor of Yosemite Valley. In the name itself of this great rock lies an accurate and complete description. Nothing more nor less is it than a cyclopean, rounded dome, split in half as cleanly as an apple that is divided by a knife. It is, perhaps, quite needless to state that but onehalf remains, hence its name, the other half having been carried away by the great ice-river in the stormy time of the Glacial Period. In that dim day one of those frigid rivers gouged a mighty channel from out the solid rock. This channel to-day is Yosemite Valley. But to return to the Half Dome. On its northeastern side, by circuitous trails and stiff climbing, one may gain the Saddle. Against the slope of the Dome the Saddle leans like a gigantic slab, and from the top of this slab, one thousand feet in length, curves the great circle to the summit of the Dome. A few degrees too steep for unaided climbing, these one thousand feet defied for years the adventurous spirits who fixed yearning eyes upon the crest above.

One day, a couple of clear-headed mountaineers had proceeded to insert iron eye-bolts into holes which they drilled into the rock every few feet apart. But when they found themselves three hundred feet above the Saddle, clinging like flies to the precarious wall with on either hand a yawning abyss, their nerves failed them and they abandoned the enterprise. So it remained for an indomitable Scotchman, one George Anderson, finally to achieve the feat. Beginning where they had left off, drilling and climbing for a week, he had at last set foot upon that awful summit and gazed down into the depths where Mirror Lake reposed, nearly a mile beneath.

In the years which followed, many bold men took advantage of the huge rope ladder which he had put in place; but one winter ladder, cables and all were carried away by the snow and ice. True, most of the eye-bolts, twisted and bent, remained. But few men had since essayed the hazardous undertaking, and of those few more than one gave up his life on the treacherous heights, and not one succeeded.

But Gus Lafee and Hazard Van Dorn had left the smiling valley-land of California and journeyed into the high Sierras, intent on the great adventure. And thus it was that their disappointment was deep and grievous when they awoke on this morning to receive the forestalling message of the little white flag.

"Camped at the foot of the Saddle last night and went up at the first peep of day," Hazard ventured, long after the silent breakfast had been tucked away and the dishes washed.

Gus nodded. It was not in the nature of things that a youth's spirits should long remain at low ebb, and his tongue was beginning to loosen.

"Guess he's down by now, lying in camp and feeling as big as Alexander," the other went on. "And I don't blame him, either; only I wish it were we."

"You can be sure he's down," Gus spoke up at last. "It's mighty warm on that naked rock with the sun beating down on it at this time of year. That was our plan, you know, to go up early and come down early. And any man, sensible enough to get to the top, is bound to have sense enough to do it before the rock gets hot and his hands sweaty."

"And you can be sure he didn't take his shoes with him." Hazard rolled over on his back and lazily regarded the speck of flag fluttering briskly on the sheer edge of the precipice. "Say!" He sat up with a start. "What's that?"

A metallic ray of light flashed out from the summit of Half Dome, then a second and a third. The heads of both boys were craned backward on the instant, agog with excitement.

"What a duffer!" Gus cried. "Why didn't he come down when it was cool?"

Hazard shook his head slowly, as if the question were too deep for immediate answer and they had better defer judgment.

The flashes continued, and as the boys soon noted, at irregular intervals of duration and disappearance. Now they were long, now short; and again they came and went with great rapidity, or ceased altogether for several moments at a time.

"I have it!" Hazard's face lighted up with the coming of understanding. "I have it! That fellow up there is trying to talk to us. He's flashing the sunlight down to us on a pocket-mirror--dot, dash; dot, dash; don't you see?"

The light also began to break in Gus's face. "Ah, I know! It's what they do in war-time--signaling. They call it heliographing, don't they? Same thing as telegraphing, only it's done without wires. And they use the same dots and dashes, too."

"Yes, the Morse alphabet. Wish I knew it."

"Same here. He surely must have something to say to us, or he wouldn't be kicking up all that rumpus."

Still the flashes came and went persistently, till Gus exclaimed: "That chap's in trouble, that's what's the matter with him! Most likely he's hurt himself or something or other."

"Go on!" Hazard scouted.

Gus got out the shotgun and fired both barrels three times in rapid succession. A perfect flutter of flashes came back before the echoes had ceased their antics. So unmistakable was the message that even doubting Hazard was convinced that the man who had forestalled them stood in some grave danger.

"Quick, Gus," he cried, "and pack! I'll see to the horses. Our trip hasn't come to nothing, after all. We've got to go right up Half Dome and rescue him. Where's the map? How do we get to the Saddle?"

"'Taking the horse-trail below the Vernal Falls,"' Gus read from the guide-book, "'one mile of brisk traveling brings the tourist to the world-famed Nevada Fall. Close by, rising up in all its pomp and glory, the Cap of Liberty stands guard-"

"Skip all that!" Hazard impatiently interrupted. "The trail's what we want. "

"Oh, here it is! 'Following the trail up the side of the fall will bring you to the forks. The left one leads to Little Yosemite Valley, Cloud's Rest, and other points."'

"Hold on; that'll do! I've got it on the map now," again interrupted Hazard. "From the Cloud's Rest trail a dotted line leads off to Half Dome. That shows the trail's abandoned. We'll have to look sharp to find it. It's a day's journey."

"And to think of all that traveling, when right here we're at the bottom of the Dome!" Gus complained, staring up wistfully at the goal.

"That's because this is Yosemite, and all the more reason for us to hurry. Come on! Be lively, now!"

Well used as they were to trail life, but few minutes sufficed to see the camp equipage on the backs of the packhorses and the boys in the saddle. In the late twilight of that evening they hobbled their animals in a tiny mountain meadow, and cooked coffee and bacon for themselves at the very base of the Saddle. Here, also, before they turned into their blankets, they found the camp of the unlucky stranger who was destined to spend the night on the naked roof of the Dome.

Dawn was brightening into day when the panting lads threw themselves down at the summit of the Saddle and began taking off their shoes. Looking down from the great height, they seemed perched upon the ridge-pole of the world, and even the snow-crowned Sierra peaks seemed beneath them. Directly below, on the one hand, lay Little Yosemite Valley, half a mile deep; on the other hand, Big Yosemite, a mile. Already the sun's rays were striking about the adventurers, but the darkness of night still shrouded the two great gulfs into which they peered. And above them, bathed in the full day, rose only the majestic curve of the Dome.

"What's that for?" Gus asked, pointing to a leather-shielded flask which Hazard was securely fastening in his shirt pocket.

"Dutch courage, of course," was the reply. "We'll need all our nerve in this undertaking, and a little bit more, and," he tapped the flask significantly, "here's the little bit more."

"Good idea," Gus commented.

How they had ever come possessed of this erroneous idea, it would be hard to discover; but they were young yet, and there remained for them many uncut pages of life. Believers, also, in the efficacy of whisky as a remedy for snake-bite, they had brought with them a fair supply of medicine-chest liquor. As yet they had not touched it.

"Have some before we start?" Hazard asked.

Gus looked into the gulf and shook his head. "Better wait till we get up higher and the climbing is more ticklish."

Some seventy feet above them projected the first eye-bolt. The winter accumulations of ice had twisted and bent it down till it did not stand more than a bare inch and a half above the rock--a most difficult object to lasso at such a distance. Time and again Hazard coiled his lariat in true cowboy fashion and made the cast, and time and again was he baffled by the elusive peg. Nor could Gus do better. Taking advantage of inequalities in the surface, they scrambled twenty feet up the Dome and found they could rest in a shallow crevice . The cleft side of the Dome was so near that they could look over its edge from the crevice and gaze down the smooth, vertical wall for nearly two thousand feet. It was yet too dark down below for them to see farther.

The peg was now fifty feet away, but the path they must cover to get to it was quite smooth, and ran at an inclination of nearly fifty degrees. It seemed impossible, in that intervening space, to find a resting-place. Either the climber must keep going up, or he must slide down; he could not stop. But just here rose the danger. The Dome was sphere-shaped, and if he should begin to slide, his course would be, not to the point from which he had started and where the Saddle would catch him, but off to the south toward Little Yosemite. This meant a plunge of half a mile.

“I’ll try it,” Gus said simply.

They knotted the two lariats together, so that they had over a hundred feet of rope between them; and then each boy tied an end to his waist.

“If I slide,” Gus cautioned, “come in on the slack and brace yourself. If you don’t, you’ll follow me, that’s all!”

“Ay, ay!” was the confident response. “Better take a nip before you start?”

Gus glanced at the proffered bottle. He knew himself and of what he was capable. “Wait till I make the peg and you join me. All ready?”

“Ay.”

He struck out like a cat, on all fours, clawing energetically as he urged his upward progress, his comrade paying out the rope carefully. At first his speed was good, but gradually it dwindled. Now he was fifteen feet from the peg, now ten, now eight-but going, oh, so slowly! Hazard, looking up from his crevice, felt a contempt for him and disappointment in him. It did look easy. Now Gus was five feet away, and after a painful effort, four feet. But when only a yard intervened, he came to a standstill-not exactly a standstill, for, like a squirrel in a wheel, he maintained his position on the face of the Dome by the most desperate clawing.

He had failed, that was evident. The question now was, how to save himself. With a sudden, catlike movement he whirled over on his back, caught his heel in a tiny, saucer-shaped depression and sat up. Then his courage failed him. Day had at last penetrated to the floor of the valley, and he was appalled at the frightful distance.

“Go ahead and make it!” Hazard ordered; but Gus merely shook his head.

“Then come down!”

Again he shook his head. This was his ordeal, to sit, nerveless and insecure, on the brink of the precipice. But Hazard, lying safely in his crevice, now had to face his own ordeal, but one of a different nature. When Gus began to slide-as he soon must-would he, Hazard, be able to take in the slack and then meet the shock as the other tautened the rope and darted toward the plunge? It seemed doubtful. And there he lay, apparently safe, but in reality harnessed to death. Then rose the temptation. Why not cast off the rope about his waist? He would be safe at all events. It was a simple way out of the difficulty. There was no need that two should perish. But it was impossible for such temptation to overcome his pride of race, and his own pride in himself and in his honor. So the rope remained about him.

“Come down!” he ordered; but Gus seemed to have become petrified.

“Come down,” he threatened, “or I’ll drag you down!” He pulled on the rope to show he was in earnest.

“Don’t you dare!” Gus articulated through his clenched teeth.

“Sure I will, if you don’t come!” Again he jerked the rope.

With a despairing gurgle Gus started, doing his best to work sideways from the plunge. Hazard, every sense on the alert, almost exulting in his perfect coolness, took in the slack with deft rapidity. Then, as the rope began to tighten, he braced himself. The shock drew him half out of the crevice; but he held firm and served as the center of the circle, while Gus, with the rope as a radius, described the circumference and ended up on the extreme southern edge of the Saddle. A few moments later Hazard was offering him the flask.

“Take some yourself,” Gus said.

“No; you. I don’t need it.”

“And I’m past needing it.” Evidently Gus was dubious of the bottle and its contents.

Hazard put it away in his pocket. “Are you game,” he asked, “or are you going to give it up?”

“Never!” Gus protested. “I am game. No Lafee ever showed the white feather yet. And if I did lose my grit up there, it was only for the moment-sort of like seasickness. I’m all right now, and I’m going to the top.”

“Good!” encouraged Hazard. “You lie in the crevice this time, and I’ll show you how easy it is.”

But Gus refused. He held that it was easier and safer for him to try again, arguing that it was less difficult for his one hundred and sixteen pounds to cling to the smooth rock than for Hazard's one hundred and sixty-five; also that it was easier for one hundred and sixty-five pounds to bring a sliding one hundred and sixteen to a stop than vice versa. And further, that he had the benefit of his previous experience. Hazard saw the justice of this, although it was with great reluctance that he gave in.

Success vindicated Gus's contention. The second time, just as it seemed as if his slide would be repeated, he made a last supreme effort and gripped the coveted peg. By means of the rope, Hazard quickly joined him. The next peg was nearly sixty feet away; but for nearly half that distance the base of some glacier in the forgotten past had ground a shallow furrow. Taking advantage of this, it was easy for Gus to lasso the eye-bolt. And it seemed, as was really the case, that the hardest part of the task was over. True, the curve steepened to nearly sixty degrees above them, but a comparatively unbroken line of eye-bolts, six feet apart, awaited the lads. They no longer had even to use the lasso. Standing on one peg it was child's play to throw the bight of the rope over the next and to draw themselves up to it.

A bronzed and bearded man met them at the top and gripped their hands in hearty fellowship.

"Talk about your Mont Blancs!" he exclaimed, pausing in the midst of greeting them to survey the mighty panorama. "But there's nothing on all the earth, nor over it, nor under it, to compare with this! " Then he recollected himself and thanked them for coming to his aid. No, he was not hurt or injured in any way. Simply because of his own carelessness, just as he had arrived at the top the previous day, he had dropped his climbing rope. Of course it was impossible to descend without it. Did they understand heliographing? No? That was strange! How did they

"Oh, we knew something was the matter," Gus interrupted, "from the way you flashed when we fired off the shotgun."

"Find it pretty cold last night without blankets?" Hazard queried.

"I should say so. I've hardly thawed out yet."

"Have some of this." Hazard shoved the flask over to him.

The stranger regarded him quite seriously for a moment, then said,

"My dear fellow, do you see that row of pegs? Since it is my honest intention to climb down them very shortly, I am forced to decline. No, I don't think I'll have any, though I thank you just the same."

Hazard glanced at Gus and then put the flask back in his pocket. But when they pulled the doubled rope through the last eye-bolt and set foot on the Saddle, he again drew out the bottle.

"Now that we're down, we don't need it," he remarked, pithily. "And I've about come to the conclusion that there isn't very much in Dutch courage, after all." He gazed up the great curve of the Dome. "Look at what we've done without it!"

Several seconds thereafter a party of tourists, gathered at the margin of Mirror Lake, were astounded at the unwonted phenomenon of a whisky flask descending upon them like a comet out of a clear sky; and all the way back to the hotel they marveled greatly at the wonders of nature, especially meteorites.

The End of the Chapter

"YOU'VE been beastly. You've taken no interest in anything, gone nowhere, done nothing — played the hermit. What's come over you, anyway? Hermitage, old man, is a synonym for hell."

"Why search so far?" Jack Lennon favored his interlocutor with an apathetic glance. "The world complies more precisely with the invoice. The world, dear chap, is the only original and simon-pure synonym for hell."

"Not so long as it holds one honest man or woman."

"Go on, Lennon prompted. "It's certainly invigorating to listen. The enthusiasms of youth, its unsullied ideals, were ever a pleasure to me. They come like the fresh winds of the sea, rampant with the large airs of unworldly wisdom — "

"And killing with their salt the dismal fungus which rots on the worldly wise."

"Good! It is a dismal fungus — rotten, noisome. Keep to your potent illusions. Like the chastity of woman, like the bloom on her cheek, they can never renew. Once brushed aside, they can but curse by recollection: memory becomes a blight, a blasted tablet to one's own iniquities. Ah, Golden Youth, thrice Golden Youth, trail thou thy clouds of glory elsewhere. I'm going home."

"I say, don't be in a rush. Let's wander around town and have a — a — dickens of a time. Come on, I'll cheer you up."

"Avoid the paths of dalliance, O Golden Youth; for with the primroses you gather, one by one; just so, one by one, do your bright-winged illusions slip away. You cannot eat your cake and keep it. I'm going home. Good-night."

"Blues, blacker than the hinges of Sheol!" the Golden Youth commended with himself as he watched Jack Lennon's back disappear through the swinging doors. "Ten thousand a year, and not an interest in life. And nothing the matter with him." There was an aggrieved pitch to his thought. "First thing I know I'll be called out of bed at an unseemly hour to identify some horrible cadaver at the morgue. See if I don't. Scare-heads in the morning papers. Shocking Event. Prominent Clubman. The Erstwhile Jolly Bohemian — ough!"

The Gilded Youth shivered and sought refuge from his imagination in the noise and clatter of the billiard-room.

Home! Jack Lennon mouthed the word with intense vindictiveness and loathing of spirit, Home! This bemirrored hotel, this gaudy palace — home. He rubbed shoulders with his gregarious species, and took the elevator through the many-floored, many roomed bee-hive to his own apartments.

“Ring up for a whiskey and soda,” he said to his brass-imaged serving man, “and then you can go.”

“Go?”

“Yes, go! To bed — anywhere. I won’t need you. In the morning, before you do anything else, you will find a couple of letters on my desk. Mail them. Understand? Before you do anything else.”

“Yes, sir.”

Left to himself, for a while he stood absently at the window, mooning down upon the scintillating street. Then, as though in sudden recollection of an appointment, he proceeded to make his toilet, scrupulously, if anything, with more than his customary care. When he shaved, it was with the greatest circumspection that he went over with his razor a second time. Even from the corruption of death do they draw their vigor, he thought; and Hawthorne’s auburn-haired woman in her secret sepulchre came to him with unpleasant vividness.

After manicuring his nails with fastidious consideration, and pinning a bud to the lapel of his coat, he wrote a couple of short notes at his desk, addressing, sealing, stamping them with the business-like precision of a clerk. It seemed as though many little things clamored for his attention, and that there should be nothing slovenly in the attention he afforded them. He paused in the act of drawing a black leather case from the desk drawer to light a cigar. The anodyne of the weed painted its pleasure in his eyes. Then he secured a current magazine from the reading stand, and in the company of the black leather case, stretched himself with a comfortable sigh on the sofa.

For while he read, consciously, receptively, so much so that he permitted the cigar to go out. He laid the periodical aside in order to relight it.

“The end of the chapter,” he murmured aloud, idly watching the fantastic smoke-wreathes ascend toward the frescoed ceiling.

And why not? Was not that the one prerogative granted to him and denied to God? And being granted, why should he not exercise it? Unbidden he had come; without summons he could go. Who should say him nay? An experiment, he remembered some one had said, a question put by man to nature, an endeavor to force from her the fecund mystery or the barren falsity of existence. And either way, he reasoned, there was little to lose and much to gain.

He smiled at his dialectical subtleties, and fell to watching the lengthing ash of his Havana. Then his thoughts flew to Claudio's panic terror and grewsome speculations on the aftermath of death: "Or to be worse than worst of those that lawless and uncertain thoughts imagine howling."

He laughed softly at the wanton vagaries of his mind, and returned to the smoke-wreathes. The humors of his imagination seized upon him, and he gave free rein, following its whimsicalities through the eddying draperies in much the manner of a bubble-blowing child. It gave zest to the game, to play thus on the giddy verge. The mood pleased him.

But suddenly, so swift that he failed to trace the nexus of his jostling fancies, the smoke resolved itself into white surf thundering on an ocean shore. The couch took unto itself the likeness of a yellow-sanded sea-beach. The golden-balled sun poised at the zenith, while far away, in the haze of the windless sea, melting into the mists of the sky-line, he could discern the dim canvas of a merchant-man.

He was interested. His curiosity was aroused. For a moment he tore himself away from his subjective self that he might identify the scene. Somewhere, sometime, it had been recorded on his brain, had been one of the countless factors in deepening the convolutions of his rugged gray matter. When? Where? Ah, the day he had dared Kitty to be a child again and go in wading! And did she dare? Yes; for he remembered their Predicament — how the wet sand clung to their feet when they came to resume the wool and leather gear of civilization; how they buried them in warm sand till the tiny particles were dried and brushed away; how they laughed, devoid of guile or convention. Jove! a day for the gods!

Where was Kitty? He returned to the thundering surf and the yellow beach. Holding his breath the while, he brushed the sand from one rose-tinted foot. How small it was! and soft! He caught himself covertly comparing it with his own. And he smiled at his grave deceit as he needlessly protracted the task. And the final inspection, in case one glittering grain remained — from the slender ankle, discreetly veiled by the corduroy-braided skirt, over the white-arched instep, down to the last pink wee toe. Jove!

His cigar was out. With the vision still strong upon him, he opened the black leather case and drew forth the world's modern asp — that which was to drop the last period at the chapter's end. He threw out the cylinder with an adroit twist of the wrist, assured himself of its contents, and jerked it into place again. But up there, among the vanishing smoke clouds, palpitated a foot, rose-tinted, white-arching. He laid the revolver on his breast and closed his eyes. It was still there, shimmering through his eyelids as though they were of gauze. A foot, replete with tender and bewitching memories. A foot, which had tripped lightly across his life's scroll and left no trace. Well, well, the confounded thing was pretty. He would wait until it was gone. His aesthetic sense revolted at doing the deed in so fair a presence. Yes, he would wait until it saw fit to go.

An hour later he came to his feet with sudden determination and looked at himself in the mirror. A facetious smile played upon his lips.

"Jack Lennon," he said, "you've been a fool, a gorgeous fool, and now you're going to bed to escape being a greater one."

One hand drew the bud from his coat lapel; with the other he aided the two notes in a precipitate descent from the writing desk to the paper basket.

As he drew the coverings to his chin and felt the cool contact of the sheets, he muttered: "The world? Not so long as one woman's foot twinkles above ground. For with each foot there goes a chapter, and there be many such feet."

The End of the Story

I

The table was of hand-hewn spruce boards, and the men who played whist had frequent difficulties in drawing home their tricks across the uneven surface. Though they sat in their undershirts, the sweat noduled and oozed on their faces; yet their feet, heavily moccasined and woollen-socked, tingled with the bite of the frost. Such was the difference of temperature in the small cabin between the floor level and a yard or more above it. The sheet-iron Yukon Stove roared red-hot, yet, eight feet away, on the meat-shelf, placed low and beside the door, lay chunks of solidly frozen moose and bacon. The door, a third of the way up from the bottom, was a thick rime. In the chinking between the logs at the back of the bunks the frost showed white and glistening. A window of oiled paper furnished light. The lower portion of the paper, on the inside, was coated an inch deep with the frozen moisture of the men's breath.

They played a momentous rubber of whist, for the pair that lost was to dig a fishing hole through the seven feet of ice and snow that covered the Yukon.

"It's mighty unusual, a cold snap like this in March," remarked the man who shuffled. "What would you call it, Bob?"

"Oh, fifty-five or sixty below — all of that. What do you make it, Doc?"

Doc turned his head and glanced at the lower part of the door with a measuring eye.

"Not a bit worse than fifty. If anything, slightly under — say forty-nine. See the ice on the door. It's just about the fifty mark, but you'll notice the upper edge is ragged. The time she went seventy the ice climbed a full four inches higher." He picked up his hand, and without ceasing from sorting called "Come in," to a knock on the door.

The man who entered was a big, broad-shouldered Swede, though his nationality was not discernible until he had removed his ear-flapped cap and thawed away the ice which had formed on beard and moustache and which served to mask his face. While engaged in this, the men at the table played out the hand.

"I hear one doctor faller stop this camp," the Swede said inquiringly, looking anxiously from face to face, his own face haggard and drawn from severe and long endured pain. "I come long way. North fork of the Whyo."

"I'm the doctor. What's the matter?"

In response, the man held up his left hand, the second finger of which was monstrously swollen. At the same time he began a rambling, disjointed history of the coming and growth of his affliction.

"Let me look at it," the doctor broke in impatiently. "Lay it on the table. There, like that."

Tenderly, as if it were a great boil, the man obeyed.

"Humph," the doctor grumbled. "A weeping sinew. And travelled a hundred miles to have it fixed. I'll fix it in a jiffy. You watch me, and next time you can do it yourself."

Without warning, squarely and at right angles, and savagely, the doctor brought the edge of his hand down on the swollen crooked finger. The man yelled with consternation and agony. It was more like the cry of a wild beast, and his face was a wild beast's as he was about to spring on the man who had perpetrated the joke.

"That's all right," the doctor placated sharply and authoritatively. "How do you feel? Better, eh? Of course. Next time you can do it yourself — Go on and deal, Strothers. I think we've got you."

Slow and ox-like, on the face of the Swede dawned relief and comprehension. The pang over, the finger felt better. The pain was gone. He examined the finger curiously, with wondering eyes, slowly crooking it back and forth. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a gold-sack.

"How much?"

The doctor shook his head impatiently. "Nothing. I'm not practising — Your play, Bob."

The Swede moved heavily on his feet, re-examined the finger, then turned an admiring gaze on the doctor.

"You are good man. What your name?"

"Linday, Doctor Linday," Strothers answered, as if solicitous to save his opponent from further irritation.

"The day's half done," Linday said to the Swede, at the end of the hand, while he shuffled. "Better rest over to-night. It's too cold for travelling. There's a spare bunk."

He was a slender brunette of a man, lean-cheeked, thin-lipped, and strong. The smooth-shaven face was a healthy sallow. All his movements were quick and precise. He did not fumble his cards. The eyes were black, direct, and piercing, with the trick of seeming to look beneath the surfaces of things. His hands, slender, fine and nervous, appeared made for delicate work, and to the most casual eye they conveyed an impression of strength.

"Our game," he announced, drawing in the last trick. "Now for the rub and who digs the fishing hole."

A knock at the door brought a quick exclamation from him.

"Seems we just can't finish this rubber," he complained, as the door opened. "What's the matter with you?" — this last to the stranger who entered.

The newcomer vainly strove to move his icebound jaws and jowls. That he had been on trail for long hours and days was patent. The skin across the cheekbones was black with repeated frost-bite. From nose to chin was a mass of solid ice perforated by the hole through which he breathed. Through this he had also spat tobacco juice, which had frozen, as it trickled, into an amber-coloured icicle, pointed like a Van Dyke beard.

He shook his head dumbly, grinned with his eyes, and drew near to the stove to thaw his mouth to speech. He assisted the process with his fingers, clawing off fragments of melting ice which rattled and sizzled on the stove.

"Nothing the matter with me," he finally announced. "But if they's a doctor in the outfit he's sure needed. They's a man up the Little Peco that's had a ruction with a panther, an' the way he's clawed is something scand'lous."

"How far up?" Doctor Linday demanded.

"A matter of a hundred miles."

"How long since?"

"I've ben three days comin' down."

"Bad?"

"Shoulder dislocated. Some ribs broke for sure. Right arm broke. An' clawed clean to the bone most all over but the face. We sewed up two or three bad places temporary, and tied arteries with twine."

"That settles it," Linday sneered. "Where were they?"

"Stomach."

"He's a sight by now."

"Not on your life. Washed clean with bug-killin' dope before we stitched. Only temporary anyway. Had nothin' but linen thread, but washed that, too."

"He's as good as dead," was Linday's judgment, as he angrily fingered the cards.

"Nope. That man ain't goin' to die. He knows I've come for a doctor, an' he'll make out to live until you get there. He won't let himself die. I know him."

"Christian Science and gangrene, eh?" came the sneer. "Well, I'm not practising. Nor can I see myself travelling a hundred miles at fifty below for a dead man."

"I can see you, an' for a man a long ways from dead."

Linday shook his head. "Sorry you had your trip for nothing. Better stop over for the night."

"Nope. We'll be pullin' out in ten minutes."

"What makes you so cocksure?" Linday demanded testily.

Then it was that Tom Daw made the speech of his life.

"Because he's just goin' on livin' till you get there, if it takes you a week to make up your mind. Besides, his wife's with him, not sheddin' a tear, or nothin', an' she's helpin' him live till you come. They think a almighty heap of each other, an' she's got a will like hisn. If he weakened, she'd just put her immortal soul into hisn an' make him live. Though he ain't weakenin' none, you can stack on that. I'll stack on it. I'll lay you three to one, in ounces, he's alive when you get there. I got a team of dawgs down the bank. You ought to allow to start in ten minutes, an' we ought to make it back in less'n three days because the trail's broke. I'm goin' down to the dawgs now, an' I'll look for you in ten minutes."

Tom Daw pulled down his earflaps, drew on his mittens, and passed out.

"Damn him!" Linday cried, glaring vindictively at the closed door.

II

That night, long after dark, with twenty-five miles behind them, Linday and Tom Daw went into camp. It was a simple but adequate affair: a fire built in the snow; alongside, their sleeping-furs spread in a single bed on a mat of spruce boughs; behind the bed an oblong of canvas stretched to refract the heat. Daw fed the dogs and chopped ice and firewood. Linday's cheeks burned with frost-bite as he squatted over the cooking. They ate heavily, smoked a pipe and talked while they dried their moccasins before the fire, and turned in to sleep the dead sleep of fatigue and health.

Morning found the unprecedented cold snap broken. Linday estimated the temperature at fifteen below and rising. Daw was worried. That day would see them in the canyon, he explained, and if the spring thaw set in the canyon would run open water. The walls of the canyon were hundreds to thousands of feet high. They could be climbed, but the going would be slow.

Camped well in the dark and forbidding gorge, over their pipe that evening they complained of the heat, and both agreed that the thermometer must be above zero — the first time in six months.

"Nobody ever heard tell of a panther this far north," Daw was saying. "Rocky called it a cougar. But I shot a-many of 'em down in Curry County, Oregon, where I come from, an' we called 'em panther. Anyway, it was a bigger cat than ever I seen. It was sure a monster cat. Now how'd it ever stray to such out of the way huntin' range? — that's the question."

Linday made no comment. He was nodding. Propped on sticks, his moccasins steamed unheeded and unturned. The dogs, curled in furry balls, slept in the snow. The crackle of an ember accentuated the profound of silence that reigned. He awoke with a start and gazed at Daw, who nodded and returned the gaze. Both listened. From far off came a vague disturbance that increased to a vast and sombre roaring. As it neared, ever-increasing, riding the mountain tops as well as the canyon depths, bowing the forest before it, bending the meagre, crevice-rooted pines on the walls of the gorge, they knew it for what it was. A wind, strong and warm, a balmy gale, drove past them, flinging a rocket-shower of sparks from the fire. The dogs, aroused, sat on their haunches, bleak noses pointed upward, and raised the long wolf howl.

"It's the Chinook," Daw said.

"It means the river trail, I suppose?"

"Sure thing. And ten miles of it is easier than one over the tops." Daw surveyed Linday for a long, considering minute. "We've just had fifteen hours of trail," he shouted above the wind, tentatively, and again waited. "Doc," he said finally, "are you game?"

For answer, Linday knocked out his pipe and began to pull on his damp moccasins. Between them, and in few minutes, bending to the force of the wind, the dogs were harnessed, camp broken, and the cooking outfit and unused sleeping furs lashed on the sled. Then, through the darkness, for a night of travel, they churned out on the trail Daw had broken nearly a week before. And all through the night the Chinook roared and they urged the weary dogs and spurred their own jaded muscles. Twelve hours of it they made, and stopped for breakfast after twenty-seven hours on trail.

"An hour's sleep," said Daw, when they had wolfed pounds of straight moose-meat fried with bacon.

Two hours he let his companion sleep, afraid himself to close his eyes. He occupied himself with making marks upon the soft-surfaced, shrinking snow. Visibly it shrank. In two hours the snow level sank three inches. From every side, faintly heard and near, under the voice of the spring wind, came the trickling of hidden waters. The Little Peco, strengthened by the multitudinous streamlets, rose against the manacles of winter, riving the ice with crashings and snappings.

Daw touched Linday on the shoulder; touched him again; shook, and shook violently.

"Doc," he murmured admiringly. "You can sure go some."

The weary black eyes, under heavy lids, acknowledged the compliment.

"But that ain't the question. Rocky is clawed something scand'lous. As I said before, I helped sew up his in'ards. Doc...." He shook the man, whose eyes had again closed. "I say, Doc! The question is: can you go some more? — hear me? I say, can you go some more?"

The weary dogs snapped and whimpered when kicked from their sleep. The going was slow, not more than two miles an hour, and the animals took every opportunity to lie down in the wet snow.

"Twenty miles of it, and we'll be through the gorge," Daw encouraged. "After that the ice can go to blazes, for we can take to the bank, and it's only ten more miles to camp. Why, Doc, we're almost there. And when you get Rocky fixed up, you can come down in a canoe in one day."

But the ice grew more uneasy under them, breaking loose from the shoreline and rising steadily inch by inch. In places where it still held to the shore, the water overran and they waded and slushed across. The Little Peco growled and muttered. Cracks and fissures were forming everywhere as they battled on for the miles that each one of which meant ten along the tops.

"Get on the sled, Doc, an' take a snooze," Daw invited.

The glare from the black eyes prevented him from repeating the suggestion.

As early as midday they received definite warning of the beginning of the end. Cakes of ice, borne downward in the rapid current, began to thunder beneath the ice on which they stood. The dogs whimpered anxiously and yearned for the bank.

“That means open water above,” Daw explained. “Pretty soon she’ll jam somewheres, an’ the river’ll raise a hundred feet in a hundred minutes. It’s us for the tops if we can find a way to climb out. Come on! Hit her up I! An’ just to think, the Yukon’ll stick solid for weeks.”

Unusually narrow at this point, the great walls of the canyon were too precipitous to scale. Daw and Linday had to keep on; and they kept on till the disaster happened. With a loud explosion, the ice broke asunder midway under the team. The two animals in the middle of the string went into the fissure, and the grip of the current on their bodies dragged the lead-dog backward and in. Swept downstream under the ice, these three bodies began to drag to the edge the two whining dogs that remained. The men held back frantically on the sled, but were slowly drawn along with it. It was all over in the space of seconds. Daw slashed the wheel-dog’s traces with his sheath-knife, and the animal whipped over the ice-edge and was gone. The ice on which they stood, broke into a large and pivoting cake that ground and splintered against the shore ice and rocks. Between them they got the sled ashore and up into a crevice in time to see the ice-cake up-edge, sink, and down-shelve from view.

Meat and sleeping furs were made into packs, and the sled was abandoned. Linday resented Daw’s taking the heavier pack, but Daw had his will.

“You got to work as soon as you get there. Come on.”

It was one in the afternoon when they started to climb. At eight that evening they cleared the rim and for half an hour lay where they had fallen. Then came the fire, a pot of coffee, and an enormous feed of moosemeat. But first Linday hefted the two packs, and found his own lighter by half.

“You’re an iron man, Daw,” he admired.

“Who? Me? Oh, pshaw! You ought to see Rocky. He’s made out of platinum, an’ armour plate, an’ pure gold, an’ all strong things. I’m mountaineer, but he plumb beats me out. Down in Curry County I used to ‘most kill the boys when we run bear. So when I hooks up with Rocky on our first hunt I had a mean idea to show ‘m a few. I let out the links good an’ generous, ‘most nigh keepin’ up with the dawgs, an’ along comes Rocky a-treadin’ on my heels. I knowed he couldn’t last that way, and I just laid down an’ did my dangdest. An’ there he was, at the end of another hour, a-treadin’ steady an’ regular on my heels. I was some huffed. ‘Mebbe you’d like to come to the front an’ show me how to travel,’ I says. ‘Sure,’ says he. An’ he done it! I stayed with ‘m, but let me tell you I was plumb tuckered by the time the bear tree’d.

“They ain’t no stoppin’ that man. He ain’t afraid of nothin’. Last fall, before the freeze-up, him an’ me was headin’ for camp about twilight. I was clean shot out — ptarmigan — an’ he had one cartridge left. An’ the dawgs tree’d a she grizzly. Small one. Only weighed about three hundred, but you know what grizzlies is. ‘Don’t do it,’ says I, when he ups with his rifle. ‘You only got that one shot, an’ it’s too dark to see the sights.’

“‘Climb a tree,’ says he. I didn’t climb no tree, but when that bear come down a-cussin’ among the dawgs, an’ only creased, I want to tell you I was sure hankerin’ for a tree. It was some ruction. Then things come on real bad. The bear slid down a hollow against a big log. Downside, that log was four feet up an’ down. Dawgs couldn’t get at bear that way. Upside was steep gravel, an’ the dawgs’d just naturally slide down into the bear. They was no jumpin’ back, an’ the bear was a-manglin’ ‘em fast as they come. All underbrush, gettin’ pretty dark, no cartridges, nothin’.

“What’s Rocky up an’ do? He goes downside of log, reaches over with his knife, an’ begins slashin’. But he can only reach bear’s rump, an’ dawgs bein’ ruined fast, one-two-three time. Rocky gets desperate. He don’t like to lose his dawgs. He jumps on top log, grabs bear by the slack of the rump, an’ heaves over back’ard right over top of that log. Down they go, kit an’ kaboodle, twenty feet, bear, dawgs, an’ Rocky, slidin’, cussin’, an’ scratchin’, ker-plump into ten feet of water in the bed of stream. They all swum out different ways. Nope, he didn’t get the bear, but he saved the dawgs. That’s Rocky. They’s no stoppin’ him when his mind’s set.”

It was at the next camp that Linday heard how Rocky had come to be injured.

“I’d ben up the draw, about a mile from the cabin, lookin’ for a piece of birch likely enough for an axe-handle. Comin’ back I heard the darndest goings-on where we had a bear trap set. Some trapper had left the trap in an old cache an’ Rocky’d fixed it up. But the goings-on. It was Rocky an’ his brother Harry. First I'd hear one yell and laugh, an' then the other, like it was some game. An' what do you think the fool game was? I've saw some pretty nervy cusses down in Curry County, but they beat all. They'd got a whoppin' big panther in the trap an' was takin' turns rappin' it on the nose with a light stick. But that wa'n't the point. I just come out of the brush in time to see Harry rap it. Then he chops six inches off the stick an' passes it to Rocky. You see, that stick was growin' shorter all the time. It ain't as easy as you think. The panther'd slack back an' hunch down an' spit, an' it was mighty lively in duckin' the stick. An' you never knowed when it'd jump. It was caught by the hind leg, which was curious, too, an' it had some slack I'm tellin' you.

"It was just a game of dare they was playin', an' the stick gettin' shorter an' shorter an' the panther madder 'n madder. Bimeby they wa'n't no stick left — only a nubbin, about four inches long, an' it was Rocky's turn. 'Better quit now,' says Harry. 'What for?' says Rocky. 'Because if you rap him again they won't be no stick left for me,' Harry answers. 'Then you'll quit an' I win,' says Rocky with a laugh, an' goes to it.

"An' I don't want to see anything like it again. That cat'd bunched back an' down till it had all of six feet slack in its body. An' Rocky's stick four inches long. The cat got him. You couldn't see one from t'other. No chance to shoot. It was Harry, in the end, that got his knife into the panther's jugular."

"If I'd known how he got it I'd never have come," was Linday's comment.

Daw nodded concurrence.

"That's what she said. She told me sure not to whisper how it happened."

"Is he crazy?" Linday demanded in his wrath.

"They're all crazy. Him an' his brother are all the time devilin' each other to tom-fool things. I seen them swim the riffle last fall, bad water an' mush-ice runnin' — on a dare. They ain't nothin' they won't tackle. An' she's 'most as bad. Not afraid some herself. She'll do anything Rocky'll let her. But he's almighty careful with her. Treats her like a queen. No camp-work or such for her. That's why another man an' me are hired on good wages. They've got slathers of money an' they're sure dippy on each other. 'Looks like good huntin',' says Rocky, when they struck that section last fall. 'Let's make a camp then,' says Harry. An' me all the time thinkin' they was lookin' for gold. Ain't ben a prospect pan washed the whole winter."

Linday's anger mounted. "I haven't any patience with fools. For two cents I'd turn back."

"No you wouldn't," Daw assured him confidently. "They ain't enough grub to turn back, an' we'll be there to-morrow. Just got to cross that last divide an' drop down to the cabin. An' they's a better reason. You're too far from home, an' I just naturally wouldn't let you turn back."

Exhausted as Linday was, the flash in his black eyes warned Daw that he had overreached himself. His hand went out.

"My mistake, Doc. Forget it. I reckon I'm gettin' some cranky what of losin' them dawgs."

III

Not one day, but three days later, the two men, after being snowed in on the summit by a spring blizzard, staggered up to a cabin that stood in a fat bottom beside the roaring Little Peco. Coming in from the bright sunshine to the dark cabin, Linday observed little of its occupants. He was no more than aware of two men and a woman. But he was not interested in them. He went directly to the bunk where lay the injured man. The latter was lying on his back, with eyes closed, and Linday noted the slender stencilling of the brows and the kinky silkiness of the brown hair. Thin and wan, the face seemed too small for the muscular neck, yet the delicate features, despite their waste, were firmly moulded.

"What dressings have you been using?" Linday asked of the woman.

"Corrosive, sublimate, regular solution," came the answer.

He glanced quickly at her, shot an even quicker glance at the face of the injured man, and stood erect. She breathed sharply, abruptly biting off the respiration with an effort of will. Linday turned to the men.

"You clear out — chop wood or something. Clear out."

One of them demurred.

"This is a serious case," Linday went on. "I want to talk to his wife."

"I'm his brother," said the other.

To him the woman looked, praying him with her eyes. He nodded reluctantly and turned toward the door.

"Me, too?" Daw queried from the bench where he had flung himself down.

"You, too."

Linday busied himself with a superficial examination of the patient while the cabin was emptying.

“So?” he said. “So that’s your Rex Strang.”

She dropped her eyes to the man in the bunk as if to reassure herself of his identity, and then in silence returned Linday’s gaze.

“Why don’t you speak?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “What is the use? You know it is Rex Strang.”

“Thank you. Though I might remind you that it is the first time I have ever seen him. Sit down.” He waved her to a stool, himself taking the bench. “I’m really about all in, you know. There’s no turnpike from the Yukon here.”

He drew a penknife and began extracting a thorn from his thumb.

“What are you going to do?” she asked, after a minute’s wait.

“Eat and rest up before I start back.”

“What are you going to do about....” She inclined her head toward the unconscious man.

“Nothing.”

She went over to the bunk and rested her fingers lightly on the tight-curled hair.

“You mean you will kill him,” she said slowly. “Kill him by doing nothing, for you can save him if you will.”

“Take it that way.” He considered a moment, and stated his thought with a harsh little laugh. “From time immemorial in this weary old world it has been a not uncommon custom so to dispose of wife-stealers.”

“You are unfair, Grant,” she answered gently. “You forget that I was willing and that I desired. I was a free agent. Rex never stole me. It was you who lost me. I went with him, willing and eager, with song on my lips. As well accuse me of stealing him. We went together.”

“A good way of looking at it,” Linday conceded. “I see you are as keen a thinker as ever, Madge. That must have bothered him.”

“A keen thinker can be a good lover — ”

“And not so foolish,” he broke in.

“Then you admit the wisdom of my course?”

He threw up his hands. “That’s the devil of it, talking with clever women. A man always forgets and traps himself. I wouldn’t wonder if you won him with a syllogism.”

Her reply was the hint of a smile in her straight-looking blue eyes and a seeming emanation of sex pride from all the physical being of her.

"No, I take that back, Madge. If you'd been a numbskull you'd have won him, or any one else, on your looks, and form, and carriage. I ought to know. I've been through that particular mill, and, the devil take me, I'm not through it yet."

His speech was quick and nervous and irritable, as it always was, and, as she knew, it was always candid. She took her cue from his last remark.

"Do you remember Lake Geneva?"

"I ought to. I was rather absurdly happy."

She nodded, and her eyes were luminous. "There is such a thing as old sake. Won't you, Grant, please, just remember back ... a little ... oh, so little ... of what we were to each other ... then?"

"Now you're taking advantage," he smiled, and returned to the attack on his thumb. He drew the thorn out, inspected it critically, then concluded. "No, thank you. I'm not playing the Good Samaritan."

"Yet you made this hard journey for an unknown man," she urged.

His impatience was sharply manifest. "Do you fancy I'd have moved a step had I known he was my wife's lover?"

"But you are here ... now. And there he lies. What are you going to do?"

"Nothing. Why should I? I am not at the man's service. He pilfered me."

She was about to speak, when a knock came on the door.

"Get out!" he shouted.

"If you want any assistance — "

"Get out! Get a bucket of water! Set it down outside!"

"You are going to....?" she began tremulously.

"Wash up."

She recoiled from the brutality, and her lips tightened.

"Listen, Grant," she said steadily. "I shall tell his brother. I know the Strang breed. If you can forget old sake, so can I. If you don't do something, he'll kill you. Why, even Tom Daw would if I asked."

"You should know me better than to threaten," he reproved gravely, then added, with a sneer: "Besides, I don't see how killing me will help your Rex Strang."

She gave a low gasp, closed her lips tightly, and watched his quick eyes take note of the trembling that had beset her.

"It's not hysteria, Grant," she cried hastily and anxiously, with clicking teeth. "You never saw me with hysteria. I've never had it. I don't know what it is, but I'll control it. I am merely beside myself. It's partly anger —

with you. And it’s apprehension and fear. I don’t want to lose him. I do love him, Grant. He is my king, my lover. And I have sat here beside him so many dreadful days now. Oh, Grant, please, please.”

“Just nerves,” he commented drily. “Stay with it. You can best it. If you were a man I’d say take a smoke.”

She went unsteadily back to the stool, where she watched him and fought for control. From the rough fireplace came the singing of a cricket. Outside two wolf-dogs bickered. The injured man’s chest rose and fell perceptibly under the fur robes. She saw a smile, not altogether pleasant, form on Linday’s lips.

“How much do you love him?” he asked.

Her breast filled and rose, and her eyes shone with a light unashamed and proud. He nodded in token that he was answered.

“Do you mind if I take a little time?” He stopped, casting about for the way to begin. “I remember reading a story — Herbert Shaw wrote it, I think. I want to tell you about it. There was a woman, young and beautiful; a man magnificent, a lover of beauty and a wanderer. I don’t know how much like your Rex Strang he was, but I fancy a sort of resemblance. Well, this man was a painter, a bohemian, a vagabond. He kissed — oh, several times and for several weeks — and rode away. She possessed for him what I thought you possessed for me ... at Lake Geneva. In ten years she wept the beauty out of her face. Some women turn yellow, you know, when grief upsets their natural juices.

“Now it happened that the man went blind, and ten years afterward, led as a child by the hand, he stumbled back to her. There was nothing left. He could no longer paint. And she was very happy, and glad he could not see her face. Remember, he worshipped beauty. And he continued to hold her in his arms and believe in her beauty. The memory of it was vivid in him. He never ceased to talk about it, and to lament that he could not behold it.

“One day he told her of five great pictures he wished to paint. If only his sight could be restored to paint them, he could write finis and be content. And then, no matter how, there came into her hands an elixir. Anointed on his eyes, the sight would surely and fully return.”

Linday shrugged his shoulders.

“You see her struggle. With sight, he could paint his five pictures. Also, he would leave her. Beauty was his religion. It was impossible that he could abide her ruined face. Five days she struggled. Then she anointed his eyes.”

Linday broke off and searched her with his eyes, the high lights focused sharply in the brilliant black.

“The question is, do you love Rex Strang as much as that?”

“And if I do?” she countered.

“Do you?”

“Yes.”

“You can sacrifice? You can give him up?”

Slow and reluctant was her “Yes.”

“And you will come with me?”

“Yes.” This time her voice was a whisper. “When he is well — yes.”

“You understand. It must be Lake Geneva over again. You will be my wife.”

She seemed to shrink and droop, but her head nodded.

“Very well.” He stood up briskly, went to his pack, and began unstrapping. “I shall need help. Bring his brother in. Bring them all in. Boiling water — let there be lots of it. I’ve brought bandages, but let me see what you have in that line. — Here, Daw, build up that fire and start boiling all the water you can. — Here you,” to the other man, “get that table out and under the window there. Clean it; scrub it; scald it. Clean, man, clean, as you never cleaned a thing before. You, Mrs. Strang, will be my helper. No sheets, I suppose. Well, we’ll manage somehow. — You’re his brother, sir. I’ll give the anæsthetic, but you must keep it going afterward. Now listen, while I instruct you. In the first place — but before that, can you take a pulse?...”

IV

Noted for his daring and success as a surgeon, through the days and weeks that followed Linday exceeded himself in daring and success. Never, because of the frightful mangling and breakage, and because of the long delay, had he encountered so terrible a case. But he had never had a healthier specimen of human wreck to work upon. Even then he would have failed, had it not been for the patient’s catlike vitality and almost uncanny physical and mental grip on life.

There were days of high temperature and delirium; days of heart-sinking when Strang’s pulse was barely perceptible; days when he lay conscious, eyes weary and drawn, the sweat of pain on his face. Linday was indefatigable, cruelly efficient, audacious and fortunate, daring hazard after hazard and winning. He was not content to make the man live. He devoted himself to the intricate and perilous problem of making him whole and strong again.

"He will be a cripple?" Madge queried.

"He will not merely walk and talk and be a limping caricature of his former self," Linday told her. "He shall run and leap, swim riffles, ride bears, fight panthers, and do all things to the top of his fool desire. And, I warn you, he will fascinate women just as of old. Will you like that? Are you content? Remember, you will not be with him."

"Go on, go on," she breathed. "Make him whole. Make him what he was."

More than once, whenever Strang's recuperation permitted, Linday put him under the anæsthetic and did terrible things, cutting and sewing, rewiring and connecting up the disrupted organism. Later, developed a hitch in the left arm. Strang could lift it so far, and no farther. Linday applied himself to the problem. It was a case of more wires, shrunken, twisted, disconnected. Again it was cut and switch and ease and disentangle. And all that saved Strang was his tremendous vitality and the health of his flesh.

"You will kill him," his brother complained. "Let him be. For God's sake let him be. A live and crippled man is better than a whole and dead one."

Linday flamed in wrath. "You get out! Out of this cabin with you till you can come back and say that I make him live. Pull — by God, man, you've got to pull with me with all your soul. Your brother's travelling a hairline razor-edge. Do you understand? A thought can topple him off. Now get out, and come back sweet and wholesome, convinced beyond all absoluteness that he will live and be what he was before you and he played the fool together. Get out, I say."

The brother, with clenched hands and threatening eyes, looked to Madge for counsel.

"Go, go, please," she begged. "He is right. I know he is right."

Another time, when Strang's condition seemed more promising, the brother said:

"Doc, you're a wonder, and all this time I've forgotten to ask your name."

"None of your damn business. Don't bother me. Get out."

The mangled right arm ceased from its healing, burst open again in a frightful wound.

"Necrosis," said Linday.

"That does settle it," groaned the brother.

"Shut up!" Linday snarled. "Get out! Take Daw with you. Take Bill, too. Get rabbits — alive — healthy ones. Trap them. Trap everywhere."

"How many?" the brother asked.

"Forty of them — four thousand — forty thousand — all you can get. You'll help me, Mrs. Strang. I'm going to dig into that arm and size up the damage. Get out, you fellows. You for the rabbits."

And he dug in, swiftly, unerringly, scraping away disintegrating bone, ascertaining the extent of the active decay.

"It never would have happened," he told Madge, "if he hadn't had so many other things needing vitality first. Even he didn't have vitality enough to go around. I was watching it, but I had to wait and chance it. That piece must go. He could manage without it, but rabbit-bone will make it what it was."

From the hundreds of rabbits brought in, he weeded out, rejected, selected, tested, selected and tested again, until he made his final choice. He used the last of his chloroform and achieved the bone-graft — living bone to living bone, living man and living rabbit immovable and indissolubly bandaged and bound together, their mutual processes uniting and reconstructing a perfect arm.

And through the whole trying period, especially as Strang mended, occurred passages of talk between Linday and Madge. Nor was he kind, nor she rebellious.

"It's a nuisance," he told her. "But the law is the law, and you'll need a divorce before we can marry again. What do you say? Shall we go to Lake Geneva?"

"As you will," she said.

And he, another time: "What the deuce did you see in him anyway? I know he had money. But you and I were managing to get along with some sort of comfort. My practice was averaging around forty thousand a year then — I went over the books afterward. Palaces and steam yachts were about all that was denied you."

"Perhaps you've explained it," she answered. "Perhaps you were too interested in your practice. Maybe you forgot me."

"Humph," he sneered. "And may not your Rex be too interested in panthers and short sticks?"

He continually girded her to explain what he chose to call her infatuation for the other man.

"There is no explanation," she replied. And, finally, she retorted, "No one can explain love, I least of all. I only knew love, the divine and irrefragable fact, that is all. There was once, at Fort Vancouver, a baron of the Hudson Bay Company who chided the resident Church of England parson. The dominie had written home to England complaining that the Company folk, from the head factor down, were addicted to Indian wives. 'Why didn't you explain the extenuating circumstances?' demanded the baron. Replied the dominie: 'A cow's tail grows downward. I do not attempt to explain why the cow's tail grows downward. I merely cite the fact.'"

"Damn clever women!" cried Linday, his eyes flashing his irritation.

"What brought you, of all places, into the Klondike?" she asked once.

"Too much money. No wife to spend it. Wanted a rest. Possibly overwork. I tried Colorado, but their telegrams followed me, and some of them did themselves. I went on to Seattle. Same thing. Ransom ran his wife out to me in a special train. There was no escaping it. Operation successful. Local newspapers got wind of it. You can imagine the rest. I had to hide, so I ran away to Klondike. And — well, Tom Daw found me playing whist in a cabin down on the Yukon."

Came the day when Strang's bed was carried out of doors and into the sunshine.

"Let me tell him now," she said to Linday.

"No; wait," he answered.

Later, Strang was able to sit up on the edge of the bed, able to walk his first giddy steps, supported on either side.

"Let me tell him now," she said.

"No. I'm making a complete job of this. I want no set-backs. There's a slight hitch still in that left arm. It's a little thing, but I am going to remake him as God made him. Tomorrow I've planned to get into that arm and take out the kink. It will mean a couple of days on his back. I'm sorry there's no more chloroform. He'll just have to bite his teeth on a spike and hang on. He can do it. He's got grit for a dozen men."

Summer came on. The snow disappeared, save on the far peaks of the Rockies to the east. The days lengthened till there was no darkness, the sun dipping at midnight, due north, for a few minutes beneath the horizon. Linday never let up on Strang. He studied his walk, his body movements, stripped him again and again and for the thousandth time made him flex all his muscles. Massage was given him without end, until Linday declared that Tom Daw, Bill, and the brother were properly qualified for Turkish bath and osteopathic hospital attendants. But Linday was not yet satisfied. He put Strang through his whole repertoire of physical feats, searching him the while for hidden weaknesses. He put him on his back again for a week, opened up his leg, played a deft trick or two with the smaller veins, scraped a spot of bone no larger than a coffee grain till naught but a surface of healthy pink remained to be sewed over with the living flesh.

“Let me tell him,” Madge begged.

“Not yet,” was the answer. “You will tell him only when I am ready.”

July passed, and August neared its end, when he ordered Strang out on trail to get a moose. Linday kept at his heels, watching him, studying him. He was slender, a cat in the strength of his muscles, and he walked as Linday had seen no man walk, effortlessly, with all his body, seeming to lift the legs with supple muscles clear to the shoulders. But it was without heaviness, so easy that it invested him with a peculiar grace, so easy that to the eye the speed was deceptive. It was the killing pace of which Tom Daw had complained. Linday toiled behind, sweating and panting; from time to time, when the ground favoured, making short runs to keep up. At the end of ten miles he called a halt and threw himself down on the moss.

“Enough!” he cried. “I can’t keep up with you.”

He mopped his heated face, and Strang sat down on a spruce log, smiling at the doctor, and, with the camaraderie of a pantheist, at all the landscape.

“Any twinges, or hurts, or aches, or hints of aches?” Linday demanded.

Strang shook his curly head and stretched his lithe body, living and joying in every fibre of it.

“You’ll do, Strang. For a winter or two you may expect to feel the cold and damp in the old wounds. But that will pass, and perhaps you may escape it altogether.”

“God, Doctor, you have performed miracles with me. I don’t know how to thank you. I don’t even know your name.”

“Which doesn’t matter. I’ve pulled you through, and that’s the main thing.”

“But it’s a name men must know out in the world,” Strang persisted. “I’ll wager I’d recognise it if I heard it.”

“I think you would,” was Linday’s answer. “But it’s beside the matter. I want one final test, and then I’m done with you. Over the divide at the head of this creek is a tributary of the Big Windy. Daw tells me that last year you went over, down to the middle fork, and back again, in three days. He said you nearly killed him, too. You are to wait here and camp to-night. I’ll send Daw along with the camp outfit. Then it’s up to you to go to the middle fork and back in the same time as last year.”

V

“Now,” Linday said to Madge. “You have an hour in which to pack. I’ll go and get the canoe ready. Bill’s bringing in the moose and won’t get back till dark. We’ll make my cabin to-day, and in a week we’ll be in Dawson.”

“I was in hope....” She broke off proudly.

“That I’d forego the fee?”

“Oh, a compact is a compact, but you needn’t have been so hateful in the collecting. You have not been fair. You have sent him away for three days, and robbed me of my last words to him.”

“Leave a letter.”

“I shall tell him all.”

“Anything less than all would be unfair to the three of us,” was Linday’s answer.

When he returned from the canoe, her outfit was packed, the letter written.

“Let me read it,” he said, “if you don’t mind.”

Her hesitation was momentary, then she passed it over.

“Pretty straight,” he said, when he had finished it. “Now, are you ready?”

He carried her pack down to the bank, and, kneeling, steadied the canoe with one hand while he extended the other to help her in. He watched her closely, but without a tremor she held out her hand to his and prepared to step on board.

“Wait,” he said. “One moment. You remember the story I told you of the elixir. I failed to tell you the end. And when she had anointed his eyes and was about to depart, it chanced she saw in the mirror that her beauty had been restored to her. And he opened his eyes, and cried out with joy at the sight of her beauty, and folded her in his arms.”

She waited, tense but controlled, for him to continue, a dawn of wonder faintly beginning to show in her face and eyes.

“You are very beautiful, Madge.” He paused, then added drily, “The rest is obvious. I fancy Rex Strang’s arms won’t remain long empty. Good-bye.”

“Grant....” she said, almost whispered, and in her voice was all the speech that needs not words for understanding.

He gave a nasty little laugh. “I just wanted to show you I wasn’t such a bad sort. Coals of fire, you know.”

“Grant....”

He stepped into the canoe and put out a slender, nervous hand.

“Good-bye,” he said.

She folded both her own hands about his.

“Dear, strong hand,” she murmured, and bent and kissed it.

He jerked it away, thrust the canoe out from the bank, dipped the paddle in the swift rush of the current, and entered the head of the riffle where the water poured glassily ere it burst into a white madness of foam.

The Enemy of All the World

It was Silas Bannerman who finally ran down that scientific wizard and arch-enemy of mankind, Emil Gluck. Gluck's confession, before he went to the electric chair, threw much light upon the series of mysterious events, many apparently unrelated, that so perturbed the world between the years 1933 and 1941. It was not until that remarkable document was made public that the world dreamed of there being any connection between the assassination of the King and Queen of Portugal and the murders of the New York City police officers. While the deeds of Emil Gluck were all that was abominable, we cannot but feel, to a certain extent, pity for the unfortunate, malformed, and maltreated genius. This side of his story has never been told before, and from his confession and from the great mass of evidence and the documents and records of the time we are able to construct a fairly accurate portrait of him, and to discern the factors and pressures that moulded him into the human monster he became and that drove him onward and downward along the fearful path he trod.

Emil Gluck was born in Syracuse, New York, in 1895. His father, Josephus Gluck, was a special policeman and night watchman, who, in the year 1900, died suddenly of pneumonia. The mother, a pretty, fragile creature, who, before her marriage, had been a milliner, grieved herself to death over the loss of her husband. This sensitiveness of the mother was the heritage that in the boy became morbid and horrible.

In 1901, the boy, Emil, then six years of age, went to live with his aunt, Mrs. Ann Bartell. She was his mother's sister, but in her breast was no kindly feeling for the sensitive, shrinking boy. Ann Bartell was a vain, shallow, and heartless woman. Also, she was cursed with poverty and burdened with a husband who was a lazy, erratic ne'er-do-well. Young Emil Gluck was not wanted, and Ann Bartell could be trusted to impress this fact sufficiently upon him. As an illustration of the treatment he received in that early, formative period, the following instance is given.

When he had been living in the Bartell home a little more than a year, he broke his leg. He sustained the injury through playing on the forbidden roof — as all boys have done and will continue to do to the end of time. The leg was broken in two places between the knee and thigh. Emil, helped by his frightened playmates, managed to drag himself to the front sidewalk, where he fainted. The children of the neighbourhood were afraid of the hard-featured shrew who presided over the Bartell house; but, summoning their resolution, they rang the bell and told Ann Bartell of the accident. She did not even look at the little lad who lay stricken on the sidewalk, but slammed the door and went back to her wash-tub. The time passed. A drizzle came on, and Emil Gluck, out of his faint, lay sobbing in the rain. The leg should have been set immediately. As it was, the inflammation rose rapidly and made a nasty case of it. At the end of two hours, the indignant women of the neighbourhood protested to Ann Bartell. This time she came out and looked at the lad. Also she kicked him in the side as he lay helpless at her feet, and she hysterically disowned him. He was not her child, she said, and recommended that the ambulance be called to take him to the city receiving hospital. Then she went back into the house.

It was a woman, Elizabeth Shepstone, who came along, learned the situation, and had the boy placed on a shutter. It was she who called the doctor, and who, brushing aside Ann Bartell, had the boy carried into the house. When the doctor arrived, Ann Bartell promptly warned him that she would not pay him for his services. For two months the little Emil lay in bed, the first month on his back without once being turned over; and he lay neglected and alone, save for the occasional visits of the unremunerated and over-worked physician. He had no toys, nothing with which to beguile the long and tedious hours. No kind word was spoken to him, no soothing hand laid upon his brow, no single touch or act of loving tenderness — naught but the reproaches and harshness of Ann Bartell, and the continually reiterated information that he was not wanted. And it can well be understood, in such environment, how there was generated in the lonely, neglected boy much of the bitterness and hostility for his kind that later was to express itself in deeds so frightful as to terrify the world.

It would seem strange that, from the hands of Ann Bartell, Emil Gluck should have received a college education; but the explanation is simple. Her ne’er-do-well husband, deserting her, made a strike in the Nevada goldfields, and returned to her a many-times millionaire. Ann Bartell hated the boy, and immediately she sent him to the Farristown Academy, a hundred miles away. Shy and sensitive, a lonely and misunderstood little soul, he was more lonely than ever at Farristown. He never came home, at vacation, and holidays, as the other boys did. Instead, he wandered about the deserted buildings and grounds, befriended and misunderstood by the servants and gardeners, reading much, it is remembered, spending his days in the fields or before the fire-place with his nose poked always in the pages of some book. It was at this time that he over-used his eyes and was compelled to take up the wearing of glasses, which same were so prominent in the photographs of him published in the newspapers in 1941.

He was a remarkable student. Application such as his would have taken him far; but he did not need application. A glance at a text meant mastery for him. The result was that he did an immense amount of collateral reading and acquired more in half a year than did the average student in half-a-dozen years. In 1909, barely fourteen years of age, he was ready — "more than ready" the headmaster of the academy said — to enter Yale or Harvard. His juvenility prevented him from entering those universities, and so, in 1909, we find him a freshman at historic Bowdoin College. In 1913 he graduated with highest honours, and immediately afterward followed Professor Bradlough to Berkeley, California. The one friend that Emil Gluck discovered in all his life was Professor Bradlough. The latter's weak lungs had led him to exchange Maine for California, the removal being facilitated by the offer of a professorship in the State University. Throughout the year 1914, Emil Gluck resided in Berkeley and took special scientific courses. Toward the end of that year two deaths changed his prospects and his relations with life. The death of Professor Bradlough took from him the one friend he was ever to know, and the death of Ann Bartell left him penniless. Hating the unfortunate lad to the last, she cut him off with one hundred dollars.

The following year, at twenty years of age, Emil Gluck was enrolled as an instructor of chemistry in the University of California. Here the years passed quietly; he faithfully performed the drudgery that brought him his salary, and, a student always, he took half-a-dozen degrees. He was, among other things, a Doctor of Sociology, of Philosophy, and of Science, though he was known to the world, in later days, only as Professor Gluck.

He was twenty-seven years old when he first sprang into prominence in the newspapers through the publication of his book, Sex and Progress. The book remains to-day a milestone in the history and philosophy of marriage. It is a heavy tome of over seven hundred pages, painfully careful and accurate, and startlingly original. It was a book for scientists, and not one calculated to make a stir. But Gluck, in the last chapter, using barely three lines for it, mentioned the hypothetical desirability of trial marriages. At once the newspapers seized these three lines, “played them up yellow,” as the slang was in those days, and set the whole world laughing at Emil Gluck, the bespectacled young professor of twenty-seven. Photographers snapped him, he was besieged by reporters, women’s clubs throughout the land passed resolutions condemning him and his immoral theories; and on the floor of the California Assembly, while discussing the state appropriation to the University, a motion demanding the expulsion of Gluck was made under threat of withholding the appropriation — of course, none of his persecutors had read the book; the twisted newspaper version of only three lines of it was enough for them. Here began Emil Gluck’s hatred for newspaper men. By them his serious and intrinsically valuable work of six years had been made a laughing-stock and a notoriety. To his dying day, and to their everlasting regret, he never forgave them.

It was the newspapers that were responsible for the next disaster that befell him. For the five years following the publication of his book he had remained silent, and silence for a lonely man is not good. One can conjecture sympathetically the awful solitude of Emil Gluck in that populous University; for he was without friends and without sympathy. His only recourse was books, and he went on reading and studying enormously. But in 1927 he accepted an invitation to appear before the Human Interest Society of Emeryville. He did not trust himself to speak, and as we write we have before us a copy of his learned paper. It is sober, scholarly, and scientific, and, it must also be added, conservative. But in one place he dealt with, and I quote his words, “the industrial and social revolution that is taking place in society.” A reporter present seized upon the word “revolution,” divorced it from the text, and wrote a garbled account that made Emil Gluck appear an anarchist. At once, “Professor Gluck, anarchist,” flamed over the wires and was appropriately “featured” in all the newspapers in the land.

He had attempted to reply to the previous newspaper attack, but now he remained silent. Bitterness had already corroded his soul. The University faculty appealed to him to defend himself, but he sullenly declined, even refusing to enter in defence a copy of his paper to save himself from expulsion. He refused to resign, and was discharged from the University faculty. It must be added that political pressure had been put upon the University Regents and the President.

Persecuted, maligned, and misunderstood, the forlorn and lonely man made no attempt at retaliation. All his life he had been sinned against, and all his life he had sinned against no one. But his cup of bitterness was not yet full to overflowing. Having lost his position, and being without any income, he had to find work. His first place was at the Union Iron Works, in San Francisco, where he proved a most able draughtsman. It was here that he obtained his firsthand knowledge of battleships and their construction. But the reporters discovered him and featured him in his new vocation. He immediately resigned and found another place; but after the reporters had driven him away from half-a-dozen positions, he steeled himself to brazen out the newspaper persecution. This occurred when he started his electroplating establishment — in Oakland, on Telegraph Avenue. It was a small shop, employing three men and two boys. Gluck himself worked long hours. Night after night, as Policeman Carew testified on the stand, he did not leave the shop till one and two in the morning. It was during this period that he perfected the improved ignition device for gas-engines, the royalties from which ultimately made him wealthy.

He started his electroplating establishment early in the spring of 1928, and it was in the same year that he formed the disastrous love attachment for Irene Tackley. Now it is not to be imagined that an extraordinary creature such as Emil Gluck could be any other than an extraordinary lover. In addition to his genius, his loneliness, and his morbidness, it must be taken into consideration that he knew nothing about women. Whatever tides of desire flooded his being, he was unschooled in the conventional expression of them; while his excessive timidity was bound to make his love-making unusual. Irene Tackley was a rather pretty young woman, but shallow and light-headed. At the time she worked in a small candy store across the street from Gluck’s shop. He used to come in and drink ice-cream sodas and lemon-squashes, and stare at her. It seems the girl did not care for him, and merely played with him. He was “queer,” she said; and at another time she called him a crank when describing how he sat at the counter and peered at her through his spectacles, blushing and stammering when she took notice of him, and often leaving the shop in precipitate confusion.

Gluck made her the most amazing presents — a silver tea-service, a diamond ring, a set of furs, opera-glasses, a ponderous History of the World in many volumes, and a motor-cycle all silver-plated in his own shop.

Enters now the girl's lover, putting his foot down, showing great anger, compelling her to return Gluck's strange assortment of presents. This man, William Sherbourne, was a gross and stolid creature, a heavy-jawed man of the working class who had become a successful building-contractor in a small way. Gluck did not understand. He tried to get an explanation, attempting to speak with the girl when she went home from work in the evening. She complained to Sherbourne, and one night he gave Gluck a beating. It was a very severe beating, for it is on the records of the Red Cross Emergency Hospital that Gluck was treated there that night and was unable to leave the hospital for a week.

Still Gluck did not understand. He continued to seek an explanation from the girl. In fear of Sherbourne, he applied to the Chief of Police for permission to carry a revolver, which permission was refused, the newspapers as usual playing it up sensationally. Then came the murder of Irene Tackley, six days before her contemplated marriage with Sherbourne. It was on a Saturday night. She had worked late in the candy store, departing after eleven o'clock with her week's wages in her purse. She rode on a San Pablo Avenue surface car to Thirty-fourth Street, where she alighted and started to walk the three blocks to her home. That was the last seen of her alive. Next morning she was found, strangled, in a vacant lot.

Emil Gluck was immediately arrested. Nothing that he could do could save him. He was convicted, not merely on circumstantial evidence, but on evidence "cooked up" by the Oakland police. There is no discussion but that a large portion of the evidence was manufactured. The testimony of Captain Shehan was the sheerest perjury, it being proved long afterward that on the night in question he had not only not been in the vicinity of the murder, but that he had been out of the city in a resort on the San Leandro Road. The unfortunate Gluck received life imprisonment in San Quentin, while the newspapers and the public held that it was a miscarriage of justice — that the death penalty should have been visited upon him.

Gluck entered San Quentin prison on April 17, 1929. He was then thirty-four years of age. And for three years and a half, much of the time in solitary confinement, he was left to meditate upon the injustice of man. It was during that period that his bitterness corroded home and he became a hater of all his kind. Three other things he did during the same period: he wrote his famous treatise, Human Morals, his remarkable brochure, The Criminal Sane, and he worked out his awful and monstrous scheme of revenge. It was an episode that had occurred in his electroplating establishment that suggested to him his unique weapon of revenge. As stated in his confession, he worked every detail out theoretically during his imprisonment, and was able, on his release, immediately to embark on his career of vengeance.

His release was sensational. Also it was miserably and criminally delayed by the soulless legal red tape then in vogue. On the night of February 1, 1932, Tim Haswell, a hold-up man, was shot during an attempted robbery by a citizen of Piedmont Heights. Tim Haswell lingered three days, during which time he not only confessed to the murder of Irene Tackley, but furnished conclusive proofs of the same. Bert Danniker, a convict dying of consumption in Folsom Prison, was implicated as accessory, and his confession followed. It is inconceivable to us of to-day — the bungling, dilatory processes of justice a generation ago. Emil Gluck was proved in February to be an innocent man, yet he was not released until the following October. For eight months, a greatly wronged man, he was compelled to undergo his unmerited punishment. This was not conducive to sweetness and light, and we can well imagine how he ate his soul with bitterness during those dreary eight months.

He came back to the world in the fall of 1932, as usual a "feature" topic in all the newspapers. The papers, instead of expressing heartfelt regret, continued their old sensational persecution. One paper did more — the San Francisco Intelligencer. John Hartwell, its editor, elaborated an ingenious theory that got around the confessions of the two criminals and went to show that Gluck was responsible, after all, for the murder of Irene Tackley. Hartwell died. And Sherbourne died too, while Policeman Phillipps was shot in the leg and discharged from the Oakland police force.

The murder of Hartwell was long a mystery. He was alone in his editorial office at the time. The reports of the revolver were heard by the office boy, who rushed in to find Hartwell expiring in his chair. What puzzled the police was the fact, not merely that he had been shot with his own revolver, but that the revolver had been exploded in the drawer of his desk. The bullets had torn through the front of the drawer and entered his body. The police scouted the theory of suicide, murder was dismissed as absurd, and the blame was thrown upon the Eureka Smokeless Cartridge Company. Spontaneous explosion was the police explanation, and the chemists of the cartridge company were well bullied at the inquest. But what the police did not know was that across the street, in the Mercer Building, Room 633, rented by Emil Gluck, had been occupied by Emil Gluck at the very moment Hartwell's revolver so mysteriously exploded.

At the time, no connection was made between Hartwell's death and the death of William Sherbourne. Sherbourne had continued to live in the home he had built for Irene Tackley, and one morning in January, 1933, he was found dead. Suicide was the verdict of the coroner's inquest, for he had been shot by his own revolver. The curious thing that happened that night was the shooting of Policeman Phillipps on the sidewalk in front of Sherbourne's house. The policeman crawled to a police telephone on the corner and rang up for an ambulance. He claimed that some one had shot him from behind in the leg. The leg in question was so badly shattered by three '38 calibre bullets that amputation was necessary. But when the police discovered that the damage had been done by his own revolver, a great laugh went up, and he was charged with having been drunk. In spite of his denial of having touched a drop, and of his persistent assertion that the revolver had been in his hip pocket and that he had not laid a finger to it, he was discharged from the force. Emil Gluck's confession, six years later, cleared the unfortunate policeman of disgrace, and he is alive to-day and in good health, the recipient of a handsome pension from the city.

Emil Gluck, having disposed of his immediate enemies, now sought a wider field, though his enmity for newspaper men and for the police remained always active. The royalties on his ignition device for gasolene-engines had mounted up while he lay in prison, and year by year the earning power of his invention increased. He was independent, able to travel wherever he willed over the earth and to glut his monstrous appetite for revenge. He had become a monomaniac and an anarchist — not a philosophic anarchist, merely, but a violent anarchist. Perhaps the word is misused, and he is better described as a nihilist, or an annihilist. It is known that he affiliated with none of the groups of terrorists. He operated wholly alone, but he created a thousandfold more terror and achieved a thousandfold more destruction than all the terrorist groups added together.

He signalized his departure from California by blowing up Fort Mason. In his confession he spoke of it as a little experiment — he was merely trying his hand. For eight years he wandered over the earth, a mysterious terror, destroying property to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars, and destroying countless lives. One good result of his awful deeds was the destruction he wrought among the terrorists themselves. Every time he did anything the terrorists in the vicinity were gathered in by the police dragnet, and many of them were executed. Seventeen were executed at Rome alone, following the assassination of the Italian King.

Perhaps the most world-amazing achievement of his was the assassination of the King and Queen of Portugal. It was their wedding day. All possible precautions had been taken against the terrorists, and the way from the cathedral, through Lisbon's streets, was double-banked with troops, while a squad of two hundred mounted troopers surrounded the carriage. Suddenly the amazing thing happened. The automatic rifles of the troopers began to go off, as well as the rifles, in the immediate vicinity, of the double-banked infantry. In the excitement the muzzles of the exploding rifles were turned in all directions. The slaughter was terrible — horses, troops, spectators, and the King and Queen, were riddled with bullets. To complicate the affair, in different parts of the crowd behind the foot-soldiers, two terrorists had bombs explode on their persons. These bombs they had intended to throw if they got the opportunity. But who was to know this? The frightful havoc wrought by the bursting bombs but added to the confusion; it was considered part of the general attack.

One puzzling thing that could not be explained away was the conduct of the troopers with their exploding rifles. It seemed impossible that they should be in the plot, yet there were the hundreds their flying bullets had slain, including the King and Queen. On the other hand, more baffling than ever was the fact that seventy per cent. of the troopers themselves had been killed or wounded. Some explained this on the ground that the loyal foot-soldiers, witnessing the attack on the royal carriage, had opened fire on the traitors. Yet not one bit of evidence to verify this could be drawn from the survivors, though many were put to the torture. They contended stubbornly that they had not discharged their rifles at all, but that their rifles had discharged themselves. They were laughed at by the chemists, who held that, while it was just barely probable that a single cartridge, charged with the new smokeless powder, might spontaneously explode, it was beyond all probability and possibility for all the cartridges in a given area, so charged, spontaneously to explode. And so, in the end, no explanation of the amazing occurrence was reached. The general opinion of the rest of the world was that the whole affair was a blind panic of the feverish Latins, precipitated, it was true, by the bursting of two terrorist bombs; and in this connection was recalled the laughable encounter of long years before between the Russian fleet and the English fishing boats.

And Emil Gluck chuckled and went his way. He knew. But how was the world to know? He had stumbled upon the secret in his old electroplating shop on Telegraph Avenue in the city of Oakland. It happened, at that time, that a wireless telegraph station was established by the Thurston Power Company close to his shop. In a short time his electroplating vat was put out of order. The vat-wiring had many bad joints, and, on investigation, Gluck discovered minute welds at the joints in the wiring. These, by lowering the resistance, had caused an excessive current to pass through the solution, "boiling" it and spoiling the work. But what had caused the welds? was the question in Gluck's mind. His reasoning was simple. Before the establishment of the wireless station, the vat had worked well. Not until after the establishment of the wireless station had the vat been ruined. Therefore the wireless station had been the cause. But how? He quickly answered the question. If an electric discharge was capable of operating a coherer across three thousand miles of ocean, then, certainly, the electric discharges from the wireless station four hundred feet away could produce coherer effects on the bad joints in the vat-wiring.

Gluck thought no more about it at the time. He merely re-wired his vat and went on electroplating. But afterwards, in prison, he remembered the incident, and like a flash there came into his mind the full significance of it. He saw in it the silent, secret weapon with which to revenge himself on the world. His great discovery, which died with him, was control over the direction and scope of the electric discharge. At the time, this was the unsolved problem of wireless telegraphy — as it still is to-day — but Emil Gluck, in his prison cell, mastered it. And, when he was released, he applied it. It was fairly simple, given the directing power that was his, to introduce a spark into the powder-magazines of a fort, a battleship, or a revolver. And not alone could he thus explode powder at a distance, but he could ignite conflagrations. The great Boston fire was started by him — quite by accident, however, as he stated in his confession, adding that it was a pleasing accident and that he had never had any reason to regret it.

It was Emil Gluck that caused the terrible German-American War, with the loss of 800,000 lives and the consumption of almost incalculable treasure. It will be remembered that in 1939, because of the Pickard incident, strained relations existed between the two countries. Germany, though aggrieved, was not anxious for war, and, as a peace token, sent the Crown Prince and seven battleships on a friendly visit to the United States. On the night of February 15, the seven warships lay at anchor in the Hudson opposite New York City. And on that night Emil Gluck, alone, with all his apparatus on board, was out in a launch. This launch, it was afterwards proved, was bought by him from the Ross Turner Company, while much of the apparatus he used that night had been purchased from the Columbia Electric Works. But this was not known at the time. All that was known was that the seven battleships blew up, one after another, at regular four-minute intervals. Ninety per cent. of the crews and officers, along with the Crown Prince, perished. Many years before, the American battleship Maine had been blown up in the harbour of Havana, and war with Spain had immediately followed — though there has always existed a reasonable doubt as to whether the explosion was due to conspiracy or accident. But accident could not explain the blowing up of the seven battleships on the Hudson at four-minute intervals. Germany believed that it had been done by a submarine, and immediately declared war. It was six months after Gluck's confession that she returned the Philippines and Hawaii to the United States.

In the meanwhile Emil Gluck, the malevolent wizard and arch-hater, travelled his whirlwind path of destruction. He left no traces. Scientifically thorough, he always cleaned up after himself. His method was to rent a room or a house, and secretly to install his apparatus — which apparatus, by the way, he so perfected and simplified that it occupied little space. After he had accomplished his purpose he carefully removed the apparatus. He bade fair to live out a long life of horrible crime.

The epidemic of shooting of New York City policemen was a remarkable affair. It became one of the horror mysteries of the time. In two short weeks over a hundred policemen were shot in the legs by their own revolvers. Inspector Jones did not solve the mystery, but it was his idea that finally outwitted Gluck. On his recommendation the policemen ceased carrying revolvers, and no more accidental shootings occurred.

It was in the early spring of 1940 that Gluck destroyed the Mare Island navy-yard. From a room in Vallejo he sent his electric discharges across the Vallejo Straits to Mare Island. He first played his flashes on the battleship Maryland. She lay at the dock of one of the mine-magazines. On her forward deck, on a huge temporary platform of timbers, were disposed over a hundred mines. These mines were for the defence of the Golden Gate. Any one of these mines was capable of destroying a dozen battleships, and there were over a hundred mines. The destruction was terrific, but it was only Gluck's overture. He played his flashes down the Mare Island shore, blowing up five torpedo boats, the torpedo station, and the great magazine at the eastern end of the island. Returning westward again, and scooping in occasional isolated magazines on the high ground back from the shore, he blew up three cruisers and the battleships Oregon, Delaware, New Hampshire, and Florida — the latter had just gone into dry-dock, and the magnificent dry-dock was destroyed along with her.

It was a frightful catastrophe, and a shiver of horror passed through the land. But it was nothing to what was to follow. In the late fall of that year Emil Gluck made a clean sweep of the Atlantic seaboard from Maine to Florida. Nothing escaped. Forts, mines, coast defences of all sorts, torpedo stations, magazines — everything went up. Three months afterward, in midwinter, he smote the north shore of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Greece in the same stupefying manner. A wail went up from the nations. It was clear that human agency was behind all this destruction, and it was equally clear, through Emil Gluck's impartiality, that the destruction was not the work of any particular nation. One thing was patent, namely, that whoever was the human behind it all, that human was a menace to the world. No nation was safe. There was no defence against this unknown and all-powerful foe. Warfare was futile — nay, not merely futile but itself the very essence of the peril. For a twelve-month the manufacture of powder ceased, and all soldiers and sailors were withdrawn from all fortifications and war vessels. And even a world-disarmament was seriously considered at the Convention of the Powers, held at The Hague at that time.

And then Silas Bannerman, a secret service agent of the United States, leaped into world-fame by arresting Emil Gluck. At first Bannerman was laughed at, but he had prepared his case well, and in a few weeks the most sceptical were convinced of Emil Gluck's guilt. The one thing, however, that Silas Bannerman never succeeded in explaining, even to his own satisfaction, was how first he came to connect Gluck with the atrocious crimes. It is true, Bannerman was in Vallejo, on secret government business, at the time of the destruction of Mare Island; and it is true that on the streets of Vallejo Emil Gluck was pointed out to him as a queer crank;

but no impression was made at the time. It was not until afterward, when on a vacation in the Rocky Mountains and when reading the first published reports of the destruction along the Atlantic Coast, that suddenly Bannerman thought of Emil Gluck. And on the instant there flashed into his mind the connection between Gluck and the destruction. It was only an hypothesis, but it was sufficient. The great thing was the conception of the hypothesis, in itself an act of unconscious cerebration — a thing as unaccountable as the flashing, for instance, into Newton's mind of the principle of gravitation.

The rest was easy. Where was Gluck at the time of the destruction along the Atlantic sea-board? was the question that formed in Bannerman's mind. By his own request he was put upon the case. In no time he ascertained that Gluck had himself been up and down the Atlantic Coast in the late fall of 1940. Also he ascertained that Gluck had been in New York City during the epidemic of the shooting of police officers. Where was Gluck now? was Bannerman's next query. And, as if in answer, came the wholesale destruction along the Mediterranean. Gluck had sailed for Europe a month before — Bannerman knew that. It was not necessary for Bannerman to go to Europe. By means of cable messages and the co-operation of the European secret services, he traced Gluck's course along the Mediterranean and found that in every instance it coincided with the blowing up of coast defences and ships. Also, he learned that Gluck had just sailed on the Green Star liner Plutonic for the United States.

The case was complete in Bannerman's mind, though in the interval of waiting he worked up the details. In this he was ably assisted by George Brown, an operator employed by the Wood's System of Wireless Telegraphy. When the Plutonic arrived off Sandy Hook she was boarded by Bannerman from a Government tug, and Emil Gluck was made a prisoner. The trial and the confession followed. In the confession Gluck professed regret only for one thing, namely, that he had taken his time. As he said, had he dreamed that he was ever to be discovered he would have worked more rapidly and accomplished a thousand times the destruction he did. His secret died with him, though it is now known that the French Government managed to get access to him and offered him a billion francs for his invention wherewith he was able to direct and closely to confine electric discharges. "What!" was Gluck's reply — "to sell to you that which would enable you to enslave and maltreat suffering Humanity?" And though the war departments of the nations have continued to experiment in their secret laboratories, they have so far failed to light upon the slightest trace of the secret. Emil Gluck was executed on December 4, 1941, and so died, at the age of forty-six, one of the world's most unfortunate geniuses, a man of tremendous intellect, but whose mighty powers, instead of making toward good, were so twisted and warped that he became the most amazing of criminals.

— Culled from Mr. A. G. Burnside's "Eccentricitics of Crime," by kind permission of the publishers, Messrs. Holiday and Whitsund.

The Eternity of Forms

A strange life has come to an end in the death of Mr. Sedley Crayden, of Crayden Hill.

Mild, harmless, he was the victim of a strange delusion that kept him pinned, night and day, in his chair for the last two years of his life. The mysterious death, or, rather, disappearance, of his elder brother, James Crayden, seems to have preyed upon his mind, for it was shortly after that event that his delusion began to manifest itself.

Mr. Crayden never vouchsafed any explanation of his strange conduct. There was nothing the matter with him physically; and, mentally, the alienists found him normal in every way save for his one remarkable idiosyncrasy. His remaining in his chair was purely voluntary, an act of his own will. And now he is dead, and the mystery remains unsolved.

— Extract from the Newton Courier-Times.

Briefly, I was Mr. Sedley Crayden's confidential servant and valet for the last eight months of his life. During that time he wrote a great deal in a manuscript that he kept always beside him, except when he drowsed or slept, at which times he invariably locked it in a desk drawer close to his hand.

I was curious to read what the old gentleman wrote, but he was too cautious and cunning. I never got a peep at the manuscript. If he were engaged upon it when I attended on him, he covered the top sheet with a large blotter. It was I who found him dead in his chair, and it was then that I took the liberty of abstracting the manuscript. I was very curious to read it, and I have no excuses to offer.

After retaining it in my secret possession for several years, and after ascertaining that Mr. Crayden left no surviving relatives, I have decided to make the nature of the manuscript known. It is very long, and I have omitted nearly all of it, giving only the more lucid fragments. It bears all the earmarks of a disordered mind, and various experiences are repeated over and over, while much is so vague and incoherent as to defy comprehension. Nevertheless, from reading it myself, I venture to predict that if an excavation is made in the main basement, somewhere in the vicinity of the foundation of the great chimney, a collection of bones will be found which should very closely resemble those which James Crayden once clothed in mortal flesh.

— Statement of Rudolph Heckler.

Here follows the excerpts from the manuscript, made and arranged by Rudolph Heckler:

I never killed my brother. Let this be my first word and my last. Why should I kill him? We lived together in unbroken harmony for twenty years. We were old men, and the fires and tempers of youth had long since burned out. We never disagreed even over the most trivial things. Never was there such amity as ours. We were scholars. We cared nothing for the outside world. Our companionship and our books were all-satisfying. Never were there such talks as we held. Many a night we have sat up till two and three in the morning, conversing, weighing opinions and judgments, referring to authorities — in short, we lived at high and friendly intellectual altitudes.

He disappeared. I suffered a great shock. Why should he have disappeared? Where could he have gone? It was very strange. I was stunned. They say I was very sick for weeks. It was brain fever. This was caused by his inexplicable disappearance. It was at the beginning of the experience I hope here to relate, that he disappeared.

How I have endeavoured to find him. I am not an excessively rich man, yet have I offered continually increasing rewards. I have advertised in all the papers, and sought the aid of all the detective bureaus. At the present moment, the rewards I have out aggregate over fifty thousand dollars.

They say he was murdered. They also say murder will out. Then I say, why does not his murder come out? Who did it? Where is he? Where is Jim? My Jim?

We were so happy together. He had a remarkable mind, a most remarkable mind, so firmly founded, so widely informed, so rigidly logical, that it was not at all strange that we agreed in all things. Dissension was unknown between us. Jim was the most truthful man I have ever met. In this, too, we were similar, as we were similar in our intellectual honesty. We never sacrificed truth to make a point. We had no points to make, we so thoroughly agreed. It is absurd to think that we could disagree on anything under the sun.

I wish he would come back. Why did he go? Who can ever explain it? I am lonely now, and depressed with grave forebodings — frightened by terrors that are of the mind and that put at naught all that my mind has ever conceived. Form is mutable. This is the last word of positive science. The dead do not come back. This is incontrovertible. The dead are dead, and that is the end of it, and of them. And yet I have had experiences here — here, in this very room, at this very desk, that — But wait. Let me put it down in black and white, in words simple and unmistakable. Let me ask some questions. Who mislays my pen? That is what I desire to know. Who uses up my ink so rapidly? Not I. And yet the ink goes.

The answer to these questions would settle all the enigmas of the universe. I know the answer. I am not a fool. And some day, if I am plagued too desperately, I shall give the answer myself. I shall give the name of him who mislays my pen and uses up my ink. It is so silly to think that I could use such a quantity of ink. The servant lies. I know.

I have got me a fountain pen. I have always disliked the device, but my old stub had to go. I burned it in the fireplace. The ink I keep under lock and key. I shall see if I cannot put a stop to these lies that are being written about me. And I have other plans. It is not true that I have recanted. I still believe that I live in a mechanical universe. It has not been proved otherwise to me, for all that I have peered over his shoulder and read his malicious statement to the contrary. He gives me credit for no less than average stupidity. He thinks I think he is real. How silly. I know he is a brain-figment, nothing more.

There are such things as hallucinations. Even as I looked over his shoulder and read, I knew that this was such a thing. If I were only well it would be interesting. All my life I have wanted to experience such phenomena. And now it has come to me. I shall make the most of it. What is imagination? It can make something where there is nothing. How can anything be something where there is nothing? How can anything be something and nothing at the same time? I leave it for the metaphysicians to ponder. I know better. No scholastics for me. This is a real world, and everything in it is real. What is not real, is not. Therefore he is not. Yet he tries to fool me into believing that he is ... when all the time I know he has no existence outside of my own brain cells.

I saw him to-day, seated at the desk, writing. It gave me quite a shock, because I had thought he was quite dispelled. Nevertheless, on looking steadily, I found that he was not there — the old familiar trick of the brain. I have dwelt too long on what has happened. I am becoming morbid, and my old indigestion is hinting and muttering. I shall take exercise. Each day I shall walk for two hours.

It is impossible. I cannot exercise. Each time I return from my walk, he is sitting in my chair at the desk. It grows more difficult to drive him away. It is my chair. Upon this I insist. It was his, but he is dead and it is no longer his. How one can be befooled by the phantoms of his own imagining! There is nothing real in this apparition. I know it. I am firmly grounded with my fifty years of study. The dead are dead.

And yet, explain one thing. To-day, before going for my walk, I carefully put the fountain pen in my pocket before leaving the room. I remember it distinctly. I looked at the clock at the time. It was twenty minutes past ten. Yet on my return there was the pen lying on the desk. Some one had been using it. There was very little ink left. I wish he would not write so much. It is disconcerting.

There was one thing upon which Jim and I were not quite agreed. He believed in the eternity of the forms of things. Therefore, entered in immediately the consequent belief in immortality, and all the other notions of the metaphysical philosophers. I had little patience with him in this. Painstakingly I have traced to him the evolution of his belief in the eternity of forms, showing him how it has arisen out of his early infatuation with logic and mathematics. Of course, from that warped, squinting, abstract view-point, it is very easy to believe in the eternity of forms.

I laughed at the unseen world. Only the real was real, I contended, and what one did not perceive, was not, could not be. I believed in a mechanical universe. Chemistry and physics explained everything. “Can no being be?” he demanded in reply. I said that his question was but the major promise of a fallacious Christian Science syllogism. Oh, believe me, I know my logic, too. But he was very stubborn. I never had any patience with philosophic idealists.

Once, I made to him my confession of faith. It was simple, brief, unanswerable. Even as I write it now I know that it is unanswerable. Here it is. I told him: “I assert, with Hobbes, that it is impossible to separate thought from matter that thinks. I assert, with Bacon, that all human understanding arises from the world of sensations. I assert, with Locke, that all human ideas are due to the functions of the senses. I assert, with Kant, the mechanical origin of the universe, and that creation is a natural and historical process. I assert, with Laplace, that there is no need of the hypothesis of a creator. And, finally, I assert, because of all the foregoing, that form is ephemeral. Form passes. Therefore we pass.”

I repeat, it was unanswerable. Yet did he answer with Paley's notorious fallacy of the watch. Also, he talked about radium, and all but asserted that the very existence of matter had been exploded by these later-day laboratory researches. It was childish. I had not dreamed he could be so immature.

How could one argue with such a man? I then asserted the reasonableness of all that is. To this he agreed, reserving, however, one exception. He looked at me, as he said it, in a way I could not mistake. The inference was obvious. That he should be guilty of so cheap a quip in the midst of a serious discussion, astounded me.

The eternity of forms. It is ridiculous. Yet is there a strange magic in the words. If it be true, then has he not ceased to exist. Then does he exist. This is impossible.

I have ceased exercising. As long as I remain in the room, the hallucination does not bother me. But when I return to the room after an absence, he is always there, sitting at the desk, writing. Yet I dare not confide in a physician. I must fight this out by myself.

He grows more importunate. To-day, consulting a book on the shelf, I turned and found him again in the chair. This is the first time he has dared do this in my presence. Nevertheless, by looking at him steadily and sternly for several minutes, I compelled him to vanish. This proves my contention. He does not exist. If he were an eternal form I could not make him vanish by a mere effort of my will.

This is getting damnable. To-day I gazed at him for an entire hour before I could make him leave. Yet it is so simple. What I see is a memory picture. For twenty years I was accustomed to seeing him there at the desk. The present phenomenon is merely a recrudescence of that memory picture — a picture which was impressed countless times on my consciousness.

I gave up to-day. He exhausted me, and still he would not go. I sat and watched him hour after hour. He takes no notice of me, but continually writes. I know what he writes, for I read it over his shoulder. It is not true. He is taking an unfair advantage.

Query: He is a product of my consciousness; is it possible, then, that entities may be created by consciousness?

We did not quarrel. To this day I do not know how it happened. Let me tell you. Then you will see. We sat up late that never-to-be-forgotten last night of his existence. It was the old, old discussion — the eternity of forms. How many hours and how many nights we had consumed over it!

On this night he had been particularly irritating, and all my nerves were screaming. He had been maintaining that the human soul was itself a form, an eternal form, and that the light within his brain would go on forever and always. I took up the poker.

"Suppose," I said, "I should strike you dead with this?"

"I would go on," he answered.

"As a conscious entity?" I demanded.

"Yes, as a conscious entity," was his reply. "I should go on, from plane to plane of higher existence, remembering my earth-life, you, this very argument — ay, and continuing the argument with you."

It was only argument. I swear it was only argument. I never lifted a hand. How could I? He was my brother, my elder brother, Jim.

I cannot remember. I was very exasperated. He had always been so obstinate in this metaphysical belief of his. The next I knew, he was lying on the hearth. Blood was running. It was terrible. He did not speak. He did not move. He must have fallen in a fit and struck his head. I noticed there was blood on the poker. In falling he must have struck upon it with his head. And yet I fail to see how this can be, for I held it in my hand all the time. I was still holding it in my hand as I looked at it.

It is an hallucination. That is a conclusion of common sense. I have watched the growth of it. At first it was only in the dimmest light that I could see him sitting in the chair. But as the time passed, and the hallucination, by repetition, strengthened, he was able to appear in the chair under the strongest lights. That is the explanation. It is quite satisfactory.

I shall never forget the first time I saw it. I had dined alone downstairs. I never drink wine, so that what happened was eminently normal. It was in the summer twilight that I returned to the study. I glanced at the desk. There he was, sitting. So natural was it, that before I knew I cried out "Jim!" Then I remembered all that had happened. Of course it was an hallucination. I knew that. I took the poker and went over to it. He did not move nor vanish. The poker cleaved through the non-existent substance of the thing and struck the back of the chair. Fabric of fancy, that is all it was. The mark is there on the chair now where the poker struck. I pause from my writing and turn and look at it — press the tips of my fingers into the indentation.

He did continue the argument. I stole up to-day and looked over his shoulder. He was writing the history of our discussion. It was the same old nonsense about the eternity of forms. But as I continued to read, he wrote down the practical test I had made with the poker. Now this is unfair and untrue. I made no test. In falling he struck his head on the poker.

Some day, somebody will find and read what he writes. This will be terrible. I am suspicious of the servant, who is always peeping and peering, trying to see what I write. I must do something. Every servant I have had is curious about what I write.

Fabric of fancy. That is all it is. There is no Jim who sits in the chair. I know that. Last night, when the house was asleep, I went down into the cellar and looked carefully at the soil around the chimney. It was untampered with. The dead do not rise up.

Yesterday morning, when I entered the study, there he was in the chair. When I had dispelled him, I sat in the chair myself all day. I had my meals brought to me. And thus I escaped the sight of him for many hours, for he appears only in the chair. I was weary, but I sat late, until eleven o'clock. Yet, when I stood up to go to bed, I looked around, and there he was. He had slipped into the chair on the instant. Being only fabric of fancy, all day he had resided in my brain. The moment it was unoccupied, he took up his residence in the chair. Are these his boasted higher planes of existence — his brother's brain and a chair? After all, was he not right? Has his eternal form become so attenuated as to be an hallucination? Are hallucinations real entities? Why not? There is food for thought here. Some day I shall come to a conclusion upon it.

He was very much disturbed to-day. He could not write, for I had made the servant carry the pen out of the room in his pocket But neither could I write.

The servant never sees him. This is strange. Have I developed a keener sight for the unseen? Or rather does it not prove the phantom to be what it is — a product of my own morbid consciousness?

He has stolen my pen again. Hallucinations cannot steal pens. This is unanswerable. And yet I cannot keep the pen always out of the room. I want to write myself.

I have had three different servants since my trouble came upon me, and not one has seen him. Is the verdict of their senses right? And is that of mine wrong? Nevertheless, the ink goes too rapidly. I fill my pen more often than is necessary. And furthermore, only to-day I found my pen out of order. I did not break it.

I have spoken to him many times, but he never answers. I sat and watched him all morning. Frequently he looked at me, and it was patent that he knew me.

By striking the side of my head violently with the heel of my hand, I can shake the vision of him out of my eyes. Then I can get into the chair; but I have learned that I must move very quickly in order to accomplish this. Often he fools me and is back again before I can sit down.

It is getting unbearable. He is a jack-in-the-box the way he pops into the chair. He does not assume form slowly. He pops. That is the only way to describe it. I cannot stand looking at him much more. That way lies madness, for it compels me almost to believe in the reality of what I know is not. Besides, hallucinations do not pop.

Thank God he only manifests himself in the chair. As long as I occupy the chair I am quit of him.

My device for dislodging him from the chair by striking my head, is failing. I have to hit much more violently, and I do not succeed perhaps more than once in a dozen trials. My head is quite sore where I have so repeatedly struck it. I must use the other hand.

My brother was right. There is an unseen world. Do I not see it? Am I not cursed with the seeing of it all the time? Call it a thought, an idea, anything you will, still it is there. It is unescapable. Thoughts are entities. We create with every act of thinking. I have created this phantom that sits in my chair and uses my ink. Because I have created him is no reason that he is any the less real. He is an idea; he is an entity: ergo, ideas are entities, and an entity is a reality.

Query: If a man, with the whole historical process behind him, can create an entity, a real thing, then is not the hypothesis of a Creator made substantial? If the stuff of life can create, then it is fair to assume that there can be a He who created the stuff of life. It is merely a difference of degree. I have not yet made a mountain nor a solar system, but I have made a something that sits in my chair. This being so, may I not some day be able to make a mountain or a solar system?

All his days, down to to-day, man has lived in a maze. He has never seen the light. I am convinced that I am beginning to see the light — not as my brother saw it, by stumbling upon it accidentally, but deliberately and rationally. My brother is dead. He has ceased. There is no doubt about it, for I have made another journey down into the cellar to see. The ground was untouched. I broke it myself to make sure, and I saw what made me sure. My brother has ceased, yet have I recreated him. This is not my old brother, yet it is something as nearly resembling him as I could fashion it. I am unlike other men. I am a god. I have created.

Whenever I leave the room to go to bed, I look back, and there is my brother sitting in the chair. And then I cannot sleep because of thinking of him sitting through all the long night-hours. And in the morning, when I open the study door, there he is, and I know he has sat there the night long.

I am becoming desperate from lack of sleep. I wish I could confide in a physician.

Blessed sleep! I have won to it at last. Let me tell you. Last night I was so worn that I found myself dozing in my chair. I rang for the servant and ordered him to bring blankets. I slept. All night was he banished from my thoughts as he was banished from my chair. I shall remain in it all day. It is a wonderful relief.

It is uncomfortable to sleep in a chair. But it is more uncomfortable to lie in bed, hour after hour, and not sleep, and to know that he is sitting there in the cold darkness.

It is no use. I shall never be able to sleep in a bed again. I have tried it now, numerous times, and every such night is a horror. If I could but only persuade him to go to bed! But no. He sits there, and sits there — I know he does — while I stare and stare up into the blackness and think and think, continually think, of him sitting there. I wish I had never heard of the eternity of forms.

The servants think I am crazy. That is but to be expected, and it is why I have never called in a physician.

I am resolved. Henceforth this hallucination ceases. From now on I shall remain in the chair. I shall never leave it. I shall remain in it night and day and always.

I have succeeded. For two weeks I have not seen him. Nor shall I ever see him again. I have at last attained the equanimity of mind necessary for philosophic thought. I wrote a complete chapter to-day.

It is very wearisome, sitting in a chair. The weeks pass, the months come and go, the seasons change, the servants replace each other, while I remain. I only remain. It is a strange life I lead, but at least I am at peace.

He comes no more. There is no eternity of forms. I have proved it. For nearly two years now, I have remained in this chair, and I have not seen him once. True, I was severely tried for a time. But it is clear that what I thought I saw was merely hallucination. He never was. Yet I do not leave the chair. I am afraid to leave the chair.

Even Unto Death

IT might have been due to mere coincidence, it might have been because there are undreamed-of bonds between the quick and the dead, and it might have been that Bat Morganston felt a blind consciousness of the future, when he turned suddenly to Frona Payne and asked, "Even unto death?"

Frona Payne was startled for the moment. Her shallow nature would not permit her to understand the strength of a strong man's love; such things had no place in her fickle standard. Yet she knew men well enough to repress her inclination to smile; so she looked up to him with her serious child's eyes, placing a hand on each brawny shoulder, and answered: "Even unto death, Bat, dear."

And as he crushed her to him, half doubting, he passionately cried, "If it should happen so, even in death I shall claim you, and no mortal man shall come between."

"How absurd," she thought as she freed herself and watched him untangling his dogs. And a handsome fellow he was as he waded among the fierce brutes, pulling here and shoving there, cuffing right and left, and dragging them over and under the frozen traces till the team stood clear. Nipped by the intense cold to a tender pink, his smooth-shaven face told a plain tale of strength and indomitability. His hair, falling about his shoulders in thick masses of silky brown, was probably more responsible for winning the woman's affections than all the rest of him put together. yet when men ran their eyes up and down his six foot two of brawn, they declared him a man, from his beaded moccasins to the crown of his wolf-skin cap. But then, they were men.

She kissed him once, twice and yet a third time, in her shy, trusting way; then he broke out the sled with the gee-pole, "mushed-up" the dogs as only a dog-driver can, and swung down the hill to the main river trail. The meridian sun, shouldering over the snowy summits to the south, turned the tiny frost-particles to scintillating gems, and through this dazzling gossamer Bat Morganston disappeared on his journey down the Yukon to Forty Mile. Down there he was accounted a king, in virtue of the rich dirt which was his after the dreary years he had spent in the darkness of the Artic circle. Dawson had no claims upon him. He did not own a foot of gravel in the district, nor was he smitten with its inhabitants — the Che-cha-quas that had rushed in like jackals and spoiled the good times when men were men and every man a brother. In fact, the only reason for his presence, and a most unstable one at that, was Frona. He had harnessed his dogs and run up on the ice to renew the pledged of the previous summer, and to plead for an early date. Well, they were to be married in June, and he was returning to the management of his miners with a light heart. June! — the clean-up promised to be rich; he would sell out; and then, the States, Paris, the world! Of course, he doubted — most men do when they leave a pretty woman behind; but ere he had reached Forty Mile he no longer mistrusted, and by the time he froze his lungs on a moose-hunt and died a month later, he had attained a state of blissful optimism.

Frona waved him good-bye, and also with a light heart, turned back to her father's cabin; but then, she had no doubts at all. They were to be married in June. That was all settled. And it was no unpleasant prospect. To tell the truth, she thought she would rather like it. Men thought a great deal of him, and it was a match not to be ashamed of. Besides, he was rich. People who should know said he could at any time clean up half a million, and if his American Creek interests turned out anywhere near as reported, he would be a second MacDonald. Now this meant a great deal, for MacDonald was the richest miner in the North, and the most conservative guessers varied by several millions in the appraisement of his wealth.

Now be it known that the sin Frona Payne committed was a sin of deed, not fact. There were no mail teams between Forty Mile and Dawson, and as Bat Morganston's mines were still a hundred miles into the frozen wilderness from Forty Mile, no news of his death came up the river. And since he had agreed to write only on the highly improbable contingency of a stray traveler passing his diggings, she thought nothing of his silence. To all intents, so far as she was concerned, he was alive. So the sin she committed was of a verity a sin of deed.

By no method may a woman's soul be analyzed, by no scales may a woman's motive be weighed; so no reason can be given for Frona Payne giving her heart and hand to Jack Crellin within three months of her farewell to Bat Morganston. True, Jack Crellin was a Circle City king, possessed of some of the choicest Birch Creek claims; but the men who had made the country did not rate him highly, and his only admirers were to be found among the sycophantic tenderfeet who generously helped him scatter his yellow dust. Perhaps it was the way he had about him, and perhaps it was the impulsive affinity of two shallow souls; but be it what it may, they agreed to marry each other in June, and to journey on down to Circle City and set up housekeeping after the primitive manner of the Northland.

The Yukon broke early, and soon after that important event, the river steamer, Cassiar, captained by her brother, was scheduled to sail. The Cassiar had the mingled honor and misfortune to be both the treasure ship and the hospital ship of the year. In her strong boxes she carried five millions of gold, in her staterooms ten score of crippled and diseased. And there were also Lower Country traders and kings, returning from their winter labors or pleasures at Dawson. Among these — a little anticipation of the event — were listed Mr. and Mrs. Jack Crellin. But when the sick and heart-weary lifted their voices to heaven at the cruel delay, and the gold shippers waxed clamorous, the Cassiar was forced to sail before her time, and Mr. and Mrs. Jack Crellin were yet man and maid.

“Never mind, Frona,” her brother said; “come aboard and I’ll take charge of you. Father Mahan takes passage at Forty Mile, and you’ll be snugly one before we say good-bye at Circle City.”

Plimsol marks, boiler inspectors and protesting boards of underwriters, not yet having penetrated the dismal dominions of the North, the Cassiar cast of her lines, with passengers, freight and chattels packed like badly assorted sardines. Wolf-dogs, whose work began and ceased with the snow, and who grew high-stomached with summer idleness, rioted over the steamer from stem to stern or killed each other on the slightest provocation. Stalwart Stick Indians of the Upper River regions lightened their heavy money pouches in brave endeavors to best the white man at his games of chance, or outraged their vitals with the whisky he sold at thirty dollars the bottle. There were squat Mongolian-featured Malemute and Innuit wanderers from the Great Delta two thousand miles away; not among the whites was the jangle of nationalities less pronounced. The nations of the world had sent their sons to the North, and the tongues they spoke were many. In short, the brother of Frona Payne commanded a floating Babel, commanded and guided it unerringly through uncharted wilderness upon the breast of a howling flood — for the mighty Yukon had raised its sullen voice and roared its anger from mountain rim to mountain rim. Nine months of snow was passing between its banks in as many days, and the journey of the sea was long.

At Forty Mile more passengers and freight were crowded aboard. Among the pilgrims was Father Mahan, and in the baggage was an unpainted pine box, corresponding in size to the conventional last tenement of man. The rush of life has little heed for death, so this box was piled precariously upon a pyramid of freight on the Cassiar's deck. But Bat Morganston, having lain till the moment of shipment in a comfortable ice cave, did not care. Nobody cared. There were no mourners, save a huge wolf-dog, to whom the taste of his master's lash was still sweet. He crept aboard unnoticed, and ere the lines were cast off had taken up his accustomed vigil on the heap of freight by his master's side. he was such a vicious brute, and had such a fearful way of baring his fangs that the other cannine passengers gave him a wide berth, choosing to leave him alone with his dead.

The cabins were crowded with the sick, so the marriage began on the stifling deck. It was near midnight, but the sun, red-disked and somber, slanted its oblique rays from juts above the northern sky-line. Frona Payne and Jack Crellin stood side by side. Father Mahan began the service. From aft came the sound of scuffling among half a dozen drunken gamblers; but in the main the human cargo had crowded about the center of interest. And also the dogs.

Still, all would have been well had not a Labrador dog sought a coign of vantage among the freight. He had traveled countless journeys, was a veteran of a dozen famines and a thousand fights, and knew not fear. The truculent front of the dog which guarded the pine box interested him. He drew in, his naked fangs shining like jeweled ivory. They closed with snap and snarl, the carelessly piled freight tottering beneath them.

At this moment Father Mahan blessed the two, which were now one, and Jack Crellin solemnly added, “Even unto death.”

“Even unto death,” Frona Payne repeated, and her mind leaped back to the other man who had spoken those words. For the instant she felt genuine sorrow and remorse for what she had done. And at that instant the dogs shut their jaws in the death grip, and the long pine box poised on the edge of its pyramid. her husband jerked her from beneath it as it fell, end on. There was a crash and splintering; the cover fell away; and Bat Morganston, on his feet, erect, just as in life, with the sun glinting on his silky brown locks, swept forward.

It happened very quickly. Some say that his lips parted in a fearful smile, that he flung his arms about Frona Payne and held her till they fell together to the deck. This would seem impossible, seeing that the man was dead; but there are those who swear that these things were done. However, Frona Payne shrieked terribly as they drew her from beneath the body of her jilted lover, nor did her shrieking cease till land was made at Circle City. And Bat Morganston's words were true, for today, if one should care to journey over to the hills which lie beyond Circle City, he will see, side by side, a cabin and a grave. In the one dwells Frona Payne; in the other Bat Morganston. They are waiting for each other till their fetters shall fall away and the Trump of Doom break the silence of the North.

The Faith of Men

TELL you what we'll do; we'll shake for it."

"That suits me," said the second man, turning, as he spoke, to the Indian that was mending snow-shoes in a corner of the cabin. "Here, you Billebedam, take a run down to Oleson's cabin like a good fellow, and tell him we want to borrow his dice box."

This sudden request in the midst of a council on wages of men, wood, and grub surprised Billebedam. Besides, it was early in the day, and he had never known white men of the calibre of Pentfield and Hutchinson to dice and play till the day's work was done. But his face was impassive as a Yukon Indian's should be, as he pulled on his mittens and went out the door.

Though eight o'clock, it was still dark outside, and the cabin was lighted by a tallow candle thrust into an empty whisky bottle. It stood on the pine-board table in the middle of a disarray of dirty tin dishes. Tallow from innumerable candles had dripped down the long neck of the bottle and hardened into a miniature glacier. The small room, which composed the entire cabin, was as badly littered as the table; while at one end, against the wall, were two bunks, one above the other, with the blankets turned down just as the two men had crawled out in the morning.

Lawrence Pentfield and Corry Hutchinson were millionaires, though they did not look it. There seemed nothing unusual about them, while they would have passed muster as fair specimens of lumbermen in any Michigan camp. But outside, in the darkness, where holes yawned in the ground, were many men engaged in windlassing muck and gravel and gold from the bottoms of the holes where other men received fifteen dollars per day for scraping it from off the bedrock. Each day thousands of dollars' worth of gold were scraped from bedrock and windlassed to the surface, and it all belonged to Pentfield and Hutchinson, who took their rank among the richest kings of Bonanza.

Pentfield broke the silence that followed on Billebedam's departure by heaping the dirty plates higher on the table and drumming a tattoo on the cleared space with his knuckles. Hutchinson snuffed the smoky candle and reflectively rubbed the soot from the wick between thumb and forefinger.

"By Jove, I wish we could both go out!" he abruptly exclaimed. "That would settle it all."

Pentfield looked at him darkly.

“If it weren’t for your cursed obstinacy, it’d be settled anyway. All you have to do is get up and go. I’ll look after things, and next year I can go out.”

“Why should I go? I’ve no one waiting for me--“

“Your people,” Pentfield broke in roughly.

“Like you have,” Hutchinson went on. “A girl, I mean, and you know it.”

Pentfield shrugged his shoulders gloomily. “She can wait, I guess.”

“But she’s been waiting two years now.”

“And another won’t age her beyond recognition.”

“That’d be three years. Think of it, old man, three years in this end of the earth, this falling-off place for the damned!” Hutchinson threw up his arm in an almost articulate groan.

He was several years younger than his partner, not more than twenty-six, and there was a certain wistfulness in his face that comes into the faces of men when they yearn vainly for the things they have been long denied. This same wistfulness was in Pentfield’s face, and the groan of it was articulate in the heave of his shoulders.

“I dreamed last night I was in Zinkand’s,” he said. “The music playing, glasses clinking, voices humming, women laughing, and I was ordering eggs--yes, sir, eggs, fried and boiled and poached and scrambled, and in all sorts of ways, and downing them as fast as they arrived.”

“I’d have ordered salads and green things,” Hutchinson criticized hungrily, “with a big, rare, Porterhouse, and young onions and radishes,--the kind your teeth sink into with a crunch.”

“I’d have followed the eggs with them, I guess, if I hadn’t awakened,” Pentfield replied.

He picked up a trail-scarred banjo from the floor and began to strum a few wandering notes. Hutchinson winced and breathed heavily.

“Quit it!” he burst out with sudden fury, as the other struck into a gaily lifting swing. “It drives me mad. I can’t stand it”

Pentfield tossed the banjo into a bunk and quoted:-

“Hear me babble what the weakest won’t confess-
I am Memory and Torment--I am Town!
I am all that ever went with evening dress!”

The other man winced where he sat and dropped his head forward on the table. Pentfield resumed the monotonous drumming with his knuckles. A loud snap from the door attracted his attention. The frost was creeping up the inside in a white sheet, and he began to hum:-

"The flocks are folded, boughs are bare,
The salmon takes the sea;
And oh, my fair, would I somewhere
Might house my heart with thee."

Silence fell and was not again broken till Billebedam arrived and threw the dice box on the table.

"Um much cold," he said. "Oleson um speak to me, um say um Yukon freeze last night."

"Hear that, old man!" Pentfield cried, slapping Hutchinson on the shoulder. "Whoever wins can be hitting the trail for God's country this time tomorrow morning!"

He picked up the box, briskly rattling the dice.

"What'll it be?"

"Straight poker dice," Hutchinson answered. "Go on and roll them out."

Pentfield swept the dishes from the table with a crash and rolled out the five dice. Both looked tragedy. The shake was without a pair and five-spot high.

"A stiff!" Pentfield groaned.

After much deliberating Pentfield picked up all the five dice and put them in the box.

"I'd shake to the five if I were you," Hutchinson suggested.

"No, you wouldn't, not when you see this," Pentfield replied, shaking out the dice.

Again they were without a pair, running this time in unbroken sequence from two to six.

"A second stiff!" he groaned. "No use your shaking, Corry. You can't lose."

The other man gathered up the dice without a word, rattled them, rolled them out on the table with a flourish, and saw that he had likewise shaken a six-high stiff.

"Tied you, anyway, but I'll have to do better than that," he said, gathering in four of them and shaking to the six. "And here's what beats you!"

But they rolled out deuce, tray, four, and five--a stiff still and no better nor worse than Pentfield's throw.

Hutchinson sighed.

“Couldn’t happen once in a million times,” said.

“Nor in a million lives,” Pentfield added, catching up the dice and quickly throwing them out. Three fives appeared, and, after much delay, he was rewarded by a fourth five on the second shake. Hutchinson seemed to have lost his last hope.

But three sixes turned up on his first shake. A great doubt rose in the other’s eyes, and hope returned into his. He had one more shake. Another six and he would go over the ice to salt water and the States.

He rattled the dice in the box, made as though to cast them, hesitated, and continued rattle them.

“Go on! Go on! Don’t take all night about it!” Pentfield cried sharply, bending his nails on the table, so tight was the clutch with which he strove to control himself.

The dice rolled forth, an upturned six meeting their eyes. Both men sat staring at it. There was a long silence. Hutchinson shot a covert glance at his partner, who, still more covertly, caught it, and pursed up his lips in an attempt to advertise his unconcern.

Hutchinson laughed as he got up on his feet. It was a nervous, apprehensive laugh. It was a case where it was more awkward to win than lose. He walked over to his partner, who whirled upon him fiercely:-

“Now you just shut up, Corry! I know all you’re going to say--that you’d rather stay in and let me go, and all that; so don’t say it. You’ve your own people in Detroit to see, and that’s enough. Besides, you can do for me the very thing I expected to do if I went out.”

“And that is--?”

Pentfield read the full question in his partner’s eyes, and answered:-

“Yes, that very thing. You can bring her in to me. The only difference will be a Dawson wedding instead of a San Franciscan one.”

“But, man alike!” Corry Hutchinson objected “how under the sun can I bring her in? We’re not exactly brother and sister, seeing that I have not even met her, and it wouldn’t be just the proper thing, you know, for us to travel together. Of course, it would be all right--you and I know that; but think of the looks of it, man!”

Pentfield swore under his breath, consigning the looks of it to a less frigid region than Alaska.

“Now, if you’ll just listen and not get astride that high horse of yours so blamed quick,” his partner went on, “you’ll see that the only fair thing under the circumstances is for me to let you go out this year. Next year is only a year away, and then I can take my fling."

Pentfield shook his head, though visibly swayed by the temptation.

"It won't do, Corry, old man. I appreciate your kindness and all that, but it won't do. I'd be ashamed every time I thought of you slaving away in here in my place."

A thought seemed suddenly to strike him. Burrowing into his bunk and disrupting it in his eagerness, he secured a writing-pad and pencil, and sitting down at the table, began to write with swiftness and certitude.

"Here," he said, thrusting the scrawled letter into his partner's hand. "You just deliver that and everything'll be all right."

Hutchinson ran his eye over it and laid it down.

"How do you know the brother will be willing to make that beastly trip in here?" he demanded.

"Oh, he'll do it for me--and for his sister," Pentfield replied. "You see, he's tenderfoot, and I wouldn't trust her with him alone. But with you along it will be an easy trip and a safe one. As soon as you get out, you'll go to her and prepare her. Then you can take your run east to your own people, and in the spring she and her brother'll be ready to start with you. You'll like her, I know, right from the jump; and from that, you'll know her as soon as you lay eyes on her."

So saying he opened the back of his watch and exposed a girl's photograph pasted on the inside of the case. Corry Hutchinson gazed at it with admiration welling up in his eyes.

"Mabel is her name," Pentfield went on. "And it's just as well you should know how to find the house. Soon as you strike 'Frisco, take a cab, and just say, 'Holmes's place, Myrdon Avenue'--I doubt if the Myrdon Avenue is necessary. The cabby'll know where Judge Holmes lives.

"And say," Pentfield continued, after a pause, "it won't be a bad idea for you to get me a few little things which a--er--"

"A married man should have in his business," Hutchinson blurted out with a grin.

Pentfield grinned back.

"Sure, napkins and tablecloths and sheets and pillowslips, and such things. And you might get a good set of china. You know it'll come hard for her to settle down to this sort of thing. You can freight them in by steamer around by Bering Sea. And, I say, what's the matter with a piano?"

Hutchinson seconded the idea heartily. His reluctance had vanished, and he was warming up to his mission.

"By Jove! Lawrence," he said at the conclusion of the council, as they both rose to their feet, "I'll bring back that girl of yours in style. I'll do the cooking and take care of the dogs, and all that brother'll have to do will be to see to her comfort and do for her whatever I've forgotten. And I'll forget damn little, I can tell you."

The next day Lawrence Pentfield shook hands with him for the last time and watched him, running with his dogs, disappear up the frozen Yukon on his way to salt water and the world. Pentfield went back to his Bonanza mine, which was many times more dreary than before, and faced resolutely into the long winter. There was work to be done, men to superintend, and operations to direct in burrowing after the erratic pay streak; but his heart was not in the work. Nor was his heart in any work till the tiered logs of a new cabin began to rise on the hill behind the mine. It was a grand cabin, warmly built and divided into three comfortable rooms. Each log was hand-hewed and squared--an expensive whim when the axemen received a daily wage of fifteen dollars; but to him nothing could be too costly for the home in which Mabel Holmes was to live.

So he went about with the building of the cabin, singing, "And oh, my fair, would I somewhere might house my heart with thee!" Also, he had a calendar pinned on the wall above the table, and his first act each morning was to check off the day and to count the days that were left ere his partner would come booming down the Yukon ice in the spring. Another whim of his was to permit no one to sleep in the new cabin on the hill. It must be as fresh for her occupancy as the square-hewed wood was fresh; and when it stood complete, he put a padlock on the door. No one entered save himself, and he was wont to spend long hours there, and to come forth with his face strangely radiant and in his eyes a glad, warm light.

In December he received a letter from Corry Hutchinson. He had just seen Mabel Holmes. She was all she ought to be, to be Lawrence Pentfield's wife, he wrote. He was enthusiastic, and his letter sent the blood tingling through Pentfield's veins. Other letters followed, one on the heels of another, and sometimes two or three together when the mail lumped up. And they were all in the same tenor. Corry had just come from Myrdon Avenue; Corry was just going to Myrdon Avenue; or Corry was at Myrdon

Avenue. And he lingered on and on in San Francisco, nor even mentioned his trip to Detroit.

Lawrence Pentfield began to think that his partner was a great deal in the company of Mabel Holmes for a fellow who was going east to see his people. He even caught himself worrying about it at times, though he would have worried more had he not known Mabel and Corry so well. Mabel's letters, on the other hand, had a great deal to say about Corry. Also, a thread of timidity that was near to disinclination ran through them concerning the trip in over the ice and the Dawson marriage. Pentfield wrote back heartily, laughing at her fears, which he took to be the mere physical ones of danger and hardship rather than those bred of maidenly reserve.

But the long winter and tedious wait, following upon the two previous long winters, were telling upon him. The superintendence of the men and the pursuit of the pay streak could not break the irk of the daily round, and the end of January found him making occasional trips to Dawson, where he could forget his identity for a space at the gambling tables. Because he could afford to lose, he won, and "Pentfield's luck" became a stock phrase among the faro players.

His luck ran with him till the second week in February. How much farther it might have run is conjectural; for, after one big game, he never played again.

It was in the Opera House that it occurred, and for an hour it had seemed that he could not place his money on a card without making the card a winner. In the lull at the end of a deal, while the game-keeper was shuffling the deck, Nick Inwood the owner of the game, remarked, apropos of nothing:-

"I say, Pentfield, I see that partner of yours has been cutting up monkey-shines on the outside."

"Trust Corry to have a good time," Pentfield had answered; "especially when he has earned it."

"Every man to his taste," Nick Inwood laughed; "but I should scarcely call getting married a good time."

"Corry married!" Pentfield cried, incredulous and yet surprised out of himself for the moment.

'Sure," Inwood said. "I saw it in the 'Frisco paper that came in over the ice this morning."

"Well, and who's the girl?" Pentfield demanded, somewhat with the air of patient fortitude with which one takes the bait of a catch and is aware at the time of the large laugh bound to follow at his expense.

Nick Inwood pulled the newspaper from his pocket and began looking it over, saying:-

"I haven't a remarkable memory for names, but it seems to me it's something like Mabel--Mabel--oh yes, here it--'Mabel Holmes, daughter of Judge Holmes,'--whoever he is."

Lawrence Pentfield never turned a hair, though he wondered how any man in the North could know her name. He glanced coolly from face to face to note any vagrant signs of the game that was being played upon him, but beyond a healthy curiosity the faces betrayed nothing. Then he turned to the gambler and said in cold, even tones:-

"Inwood, I've got an even five hundred here that says the print of what you have just said is not in that paper."

The gambler looked at him in quizzical surprise. "Go 'way, child. I don't want your money."

"I thought so," Pentfield sneered, returning to the game and laying a couple of bets.

Nick Inwood's face flushed, and, as though doubting his senses, he ran careful eyes over the print of a quarter of a column. Then be turned on Lawrence Pentfield.

"Look here, Pentfield," he said, in a quiet, nervous manner; "I can't allow that, you know."

"Allow what?" Pentfield demanded brutally.

"You implied that I lied."

"Nothing of the sort," came the reply. "I merely implied that you were trying to be clumsily witty."

"Make your bets, gentlemen," the dealer protested.

"But I tell you it's true," Nick Inwood insisted.

"And I have told you I've five hundred that says it's not in that paper," Pentfield answered, at the same time throwing a heavy sack of dust on the table.

"I am sorry to take your money," was the retort, as Inwood thrust the newspaper into Pentfield's hand.

Pentfield saw, though he could not quite bring himself to believe. Glancing through the headline, "Young Lochinvar came out of the North," and skimming the article until the names of Mabel Holmes and Corry Hutchinson, coupled together, leaped squarely before his eyes, he turned to the top of the page. It was a San Francisco paper.

“The money’s yours, Inwood,” he remarked, with a short laugh. “There’s no telling what that partner of mine will do when he gets started.”

Then he returned to the article and read it word for word, very slowly and very carefully. He could no longer doubt. Beyond dispute, Corry Hutchinson had married Mabel Holmes. “One of the Bonanza kings,” it described him, “a partner with Lawrence Pentfield (whom San Francisco society has not yet forgotten), and interested with that gentleman in other rich, Klondike properties.” Further, and at the end, he read, “It is whispered that Mr. and Mrs. Hutchinson will, after a brief trip east to Detroit, make their real honeymoon journey into the fascinating Klondike country.”

“I’ll be back again; keep my place for me,” Pentfield said, rising to his feet and taking his sack, which meantime had hit the blower and came back lighter by five hundred dollars.

He went down the street and bought a Seattle paper. It contained the same facts, though somewhat condensed. Corry and Mabel were indubitably married. Pentfield returned to the Opera House and resumed his seat in the game. He asked to have the limit removed.

“Trying to get action,” Nick Inwood laughed, as he nodded assent to the dealer. “I was going down to the A. C. store, but now I guess I’ll stay and watch you do your worst.”

This Lawrence Pentfield did at the end of two hours’ plunging, when the dealer bit the end off a fresh cigar and struck a match as he announced that the bank was broken. Pentfield cashed in for forty thousand, shook hands with Nick Inwood, and stated that it was the last time he would ever play at his game or at anybody’s else’s.

No one knew nor guessed that he had been hit, much less hit hard. There was no apparent change in his manner. For a week he went about his work much as he had always done, when he read an account of the marriage in a Portland paper. Then he called in a friend to take charge of his mine and departed up the Yukon behind his dogs. He held to the Salt Water trail till White River was reached, into which he turned. Five days later he came upon a hunting camp of the White River Indians. In the evening there was a feast, and he sat in honour beside the chief; and next morning he headed his dogs back toward the Yukon. But he no longer travelled alone. A young squaw fed his dogs for him that night and helped to pitch camp. She had been mauled by a bear in her childhood and suffered from a slight limp. Her name was Lashka, and she was diffident at first with the strange white man that had come out of the Unknown, married her with scarcely a look or word, and now was carrying her back with him into the Unknown.

But Lashka's was better fortune than falls to most Indian girls that mate with white men in the Northland. No sooner was Dawson reached than the barbaric marriage that had joined them was re-solemnized, in the white man's fashion, before a priest. From Dawson, which to her was all a marvel and a dream, she was taken directly to the Bonanza claim and installed in the square-hewed cabin on the hill.

The nine days' wonder that followed arose not so much out of the fact of the squaw whom Lawrence Pentfield had taken to bed and board as out of the ceremony that had legalized the tie. The properly sanctioned marriage was the one thing that passed the community's comprehension. But no one bothered Pentfield about it. So long as a man's vagaries did no special hurt to the community, the community let the man alone, nor was Pentfield barred from the cabins of men who possessed white wives. The marriage ceremony removed him from the status of squaw-man and placed him beyond moral reproach, though there were men that challenged his taste where women were concerned.

No more letters arrived from the outside. Six sledloads of mails had been lost at the Big Salmon. Besides, Pentfield knew that Corry and his bride must by that time have started in over the trail. They were even then on their honeymoon trip--the honeymoon trip he had dreamed of for himself through two dreary years. His lip curled with bitterness at the thought; but beyond being kinder to Lashka he gave no sign.

March had passed and April was nearing its end, when, one spring morning, Lashka asked permission to go down the creek several miles to Siwash Pete's cabin. Pete's wife, a Stewart River woman, had sent up word that something was wrong with her baby, and Lashka, who was preeminently a mother-woman and who held herself to be truly wise in the matter of infantile troubles, missed no opportunity of nursing the children of other women as yet more fortunate than she.

Pentfield harnessed his dogs, and with Lashka behind took the trail down the creek bed of Bonanza. Spring was in the air. The sharpness had gone out of the bite of the frost and though snow still covered the land, the murmur and trickling of water told that the iron grip of winter was relaxing. The bottom was dropping out of the trail, and here and there a new trail had been broken around open holes. At such a place, where there was not room for two sleds to pass, Pentfield heard the jingle of approaching bells and stopped his dogs.

A team of tired-looking dogs appeared around the narrow bend, followed by a heavily-loaded sled. At the gee-pole was a man who steered in a manner familiar to Pentfield, and behind the sled walked two women. His glance returned to the man at the gee-pole. It was Corry. Pentfield got on his feet and waited. He was glad that Lashka was with him. The meeting could not have come about better had it been planned, he thought. And as he waited he wondered what they would say, what they would be able to say. As for himself there was no need to say anything. The explaining was all on their side, and he was ready to listen to them.

As they drew in abreast, Corry recognized him and halted the dogs. With a "Hello, old man," he held out his hand.

Pentfield shook it, but without warmth or speech. By this time the two women had come up, and he noticed that the second one was Dora Holmes. He doffed his fur cap, the flaps of which were flying, shook hands with her, and turned toward Mabel. She swayed forward, splendid and radiant, but faltered before his outstretched hand. He had intended to say, "How do you do, Mrs. Hutchinson?"--but somehow, the Mrs. Hutchinson had choked him, and all he had managed to articulate was the "How do you do?"

There was all the constraint and awkwardness in the situation he could have wished. Mabel betrayed the agitation appropriate to her position, while Dora, evidently brought along as some sort of peacemaker, was saying:-

"Why, what is the matter, Lawrence?"

Before he could answer, Corry plucked him by the sleeve and drew him aside.

"See here, old man, what's this mean?" Corry demanded in a low tone, indicating Lashka with his eyes.

"I can hardly see, Corry, where you can have any concern in the matter," Pentfield answered mockingly.

But Corry drove straight to the point.

"What is that squaw doing on your sled? A nasty job you've given me to explain all this away. I only hope it can be explained away. Who is she? Whose squaw is she?"

Then Lawrence Pentfield delivered his stroke, and he delivered it with a certain calm elation of spirit that seemed somewhat to compensate for the wrong that had been done him.

"She is my squaw," he said; "Mrs. Pentfield, if you please."

Corry Hutchinson gasped, and Pentfield left him and returned to the two women. Mabel, with a worried expression on her face, seemed holding herself aloof. He turned to Dora and asked, quite genially, as though all the world was sunshine:-"How did you stand the trip, anyway? Have any trouble to sleep warm?"

"And, how did Mrs. Hutchinson stand it?" he asked next, his eyes on Mabel.

"Oh, you dear ninny!" Dora cried, throwing her arms around him and hugging him. "Then you saw it, too! I thought something was the matter, you were acting so strangely."

"I--I hardly understand," he stammered.

"It was corrected in next day's paper," Dora chattered on. "We did not dream you would see it. All the other papers had it correctly, and of course that one miserable paper was the very one you saw!"

"Wait a moment! What do you mean?" Pentfield demanded, a sudden fear at his heart, for he felt himself on the verge of a great gulf.

But Dora swept volubly on.

"Why, when it became known that Mabel and I were going to Klondike, EVERY OTHER WEEK said that when we were gone, it would be lovely on Myrdon Avenue, meaning, of course, lonely."

"Then--"

"I am Mrs. Hutchinson," Dora answered. "And you thought it was Mabel all the time--"

"Precisely the way of it," Pentfield replied slowly. "But I can see now. The reporter got the names mixed. The Seattle and Portland paper copied."

He stood silently for a minute. Mabel's face was turned toward him again, and he could see the glow of expectancy in it. Corry was deeply interested in the ragged toe of one of his moccasins, while Dora was stealing sidelong glances at the immobile face of Lashka sitting on the sled. Lawrence Pentfield stared straight out before him into a dreary future, through the grey vistas of which he saw himself riding on a sled behind running dogs with lame Lashka by his side.

Then he spoke, quite simply, looking Mabel in the eyes.

“I am very sorry. I did not dream it. I thought you had married Corry. That is Mrs. Pentfield sitting on the sled over there.”

Mabel Holmes turned weakly toward her sister, as though all the fatigue of her great journey had suddenly descended on her. Dora caught her around the waist. Corry Hutchinson was still occupied with his moccasins. Pentfield glanced quickly from face to face, then turned to his sled.

“Can’t stop here all day, with Pete’s baby waiting,” he said to Lashka.

The long whip-lash hissed out, the dogs sprang against the breast bands, and the sled lurched and jerked ahead.

“Oh, I say, Corry,” Pentfield called back, “you’d better occupy the old cabin. It’s not been used for some time. I’ve built a new one on the hill.”

The Feathers of the Sun

I

It was the island of Fitu-Iva — the last independent Polynesian stronghold in the South Seas. Three factors conduced to Fitu-Iva's independence. The first and second were its isolation and the warlikeness of its population. But these would not have saved it in the end had it not been for the fact that Japan, France, Great Britain, Germany, and the United States discovered its desirableness simultaneously. It was like gamins scrambling for a penny. They got in one another's way. The war vessels of the five Powers cluttered Fitu-Iva's one small harbour. There were rumours of war and threats of war. Over its morning toast all the world read columns about Fitu-Iva. As a Yankee blue jacket epitomized it at the time, they all got their feet in the trough at once.

So it was that Fitu-Iva escaped even a joint protectorate, and King Tulifau, otherwise Tui Tulifau, continued to dispense the high justice and the low in the frame-house palace built for him by a Sydney trader out of California redwood. Not only was Tui Tulifau every inch a king, but he was every second a king. When he had ruled fifty-eight years and five months, he was only fifty-eight years and three months old. That is to say, he had ruled over five million seconds more than he had breathed, having been crowned two months before he was born.

He was a kingly king, a royal figure of a man, standing six feet and a half, and, without being excessively fat, weighing three hundred and twenty pounds. But this was not unusual for Polynesian "chief stock." Sepeli, his queen, was six feet three inches and weighed two hundred and sixty, while her brother, Uiliami, who commanded the army in the intervals of resignation from the premiership, topped her by an inch and notched her an even half-hundredweight. Tui Tulifau was a merry soul, a great feaster and drinker. So were all his people merry souls, save in anger, when, on occasion, they could be guilty even of throwing dead pigs at those who made them wroth. Nevertheless, on occasion, they could fight like Maoris, as piratical sandalwood traders and Blackbirders in the old days learned to their cost.

II

Grief's schooner, the *Cantani*, had passed the Pillar Rocks at the entrance two hours before and crept up the harbour to the whispering flutters of a breeze that could not make up its mind to blow. It was a cool, starlight evening, and they lolled about the poop waiting till their snail's pace would bring them to the anchorage. Willie Smee, the supercargo, emerged from the cabin, conspicuous in his shore clothes. The mate glanced at his shirt, of the finest and whitest silk, and giggled significantly.

"Dance, to-night, I suppose?" Grief observed.

"No," said the mate. "It's Taitua. Willie's stuck on her."

"Catch me," the supercargo disclaimed.

"Then she's stuck on you, and it's all the same," the mate went on. "You won't be ashore half an hour before you'll have a flower behind your ear, a wreath on your head, and your arm around Taitua."

"Simple jealousy," Willie Smee sniffed. "You'd like to have her yourself, only you can't."

"I can't find shirts like that, that's why. I'll bet you half a crown you won't sail from Fitu-Iva with that shirt."

"And if Taitua doesn't get it, it's an even break Tui Tulifau does," Grief warned. "Better not let him spot that shirt, or it's all day with it."

"That's right," Captain Boig agreed, turning his head from watching the house lights on the shore. "Last voyage he fined one of my Kanakas out of a fancy belt and sheath-knife." He turned to the mate. "You can let go any time, Mr. Marsh. Don't give too much slack. There's no sign of wind, and in the morning we may shift opposite the copra-sheds."

A minute later the anchor rumbled down. The whaleboat, already hoisted out, lay alongside, and the shore-going party dropped into it. Save for the Kanakas, who were all bent for shore, only Grief and the supercargo were in the boat. At the head of the little coral-stone pier Willie Smee, with an apologetic gurgle, separated from his employer and disappeared down an avenue of palms. Grief turned in the opposite direction past the front of the old mission church. Here, among the graves on the beach, lightly clad in *ahu's* and *lava-lavas*, flower-crowned and garlanded, with great phosphorescent hibiscus blossoms in their hair, youths and maidens were dancing. Farther on, Grief passed the long, grass-built *himine* house, where a few score of the elders sat in long rows chanting the old hymns taught them by forgotten missionaries. He passed also the palace of Tui Tulifau, where, by the lights and sounds, he knew the customary revelry was going on. For of the happy South Sea isles, Fitu-Iva was the happiest. They feasted and frolicked at births and deaths, and the dead and the unborn were likewise feasted.

Grief held steadily along the Broom Road, which curved and twisted through a lush growth of flowers and fern-like algarobas. The warm air was rich with perfume, and overhead, outlined against the stars, were fruit-burdened mangoes, stately avocado trees, and slender-tufted palms. Every here and there were grass houses. Voices and laughter rippled through the darkness. Out on the water flickering lights and soft-voiced choruses marked the fishers returning from the reef.

At last Grief stepped aside from the road, stumbling over a pig that grunted indignantly. Looking through an open door, he saw a stout and elderly native sitting on a heap of mats a dozen deep. From time to time, automatically, he brushed his naked legs with a cocoa-nut-fibre fly-flicker. He wore glasses, and was reading methodically in what Grief knew to be an English Bible. For this was Ieremia, his trader, so named from the prophet Jeremiah.

Ieremia was lighter-skinned than the Fitu-Ivans, as was natural in a full-blooded Samoan. Educated by the missionaries, as lay teacher he had served their cause well over in the cannibal atolls to the westward. As a reward, he had been sent to the paradise of Fitu-Iva, where all were or had been good converts, to gather in the backsliders. Unfortunately, Ieremia had become too well educated. A stray volume of Darwin, a nagging wife, and a pretty Fitu-Ivan widow had driven him into the ranks of the backsliders. It was not a case of apostasy. The effect of Darwin had been one of intellectual fatigue. What was the use of trying to understand this vastly complicated and enigmatical world, especially when one was married to a nagging woman? As Ieremia slackened in his labours, the mission board threatened louder and louder to send him back to the atolls, while his wife's tongue grew correspondingly sharper. Tui Tulifau was a sympathetic monarch, whose queen, on occasions when he was particularly drunk, was known to beat him. For political reasons — the queen belonging to as royal stock as himself and her brother commanding the army — Tui Tulifau could not divorce her, but he could and did divorce Ieremia, who promptly took up with commercial life and the lady of his choice. As an independent trader he had failed, chiefly because of the disastrous patronage of Tui Tulifau. To refuse credit to that merry monarch was to invite confiscation; to grant him credit was certain bankruptcy. After a year's idleness on the beach, Ieremia had become David Grief's trader, and for a dozen years his service had been honourable and efficient, for Grief had proven the first man who successfully refused credit to the king or who collected when it had been accorded.

Ieremia looked gravely over the rims of his glasses when his employer entered, gravely marked the place in the Bible and set it aside, and gravely shook hands.

"I am glad you came in person," he said.

"How else could I come?" Grief laughed.

But Ieremia had no sense of humour, and he ignored the remark.

"The commercial situation on the island is damn bad," he said with great solemnity and an unctuous mouthing of the many-syllabled words. "My ledger account is shocking."

"Trade bad?"

"On the contrary. It has been excellent. The shelves are empty, exceedingly empty. But — — " His eyes glistened proudly. "But there are many goods remaining in the storehouse; I have kept it carefully locked."

"Been allowing Tui Tulifau too much credit?"

"On the contrary. There has been no credit at all. And every old account has been settled up."

"I don't follow you, Ieremia," Grief confessed. "What's the joke? — shelves empty, no credit, old accounts all square, storehouse carefully locked — what's the answer?"

Ieremia did not reply immediately. Reaching under the rear corner of the mats, he drew forth a large cash-box. Grief noted and wondered that it was not locked. The Samoan had always been fastidiously cautious in guarding cash. The box seemed filled with paper money. He skinned off the top note and passed it over.

"There is the answer."

Grief glanced at a fairly well executed banknote. "*The First Royal Bank of Fitu-Iva will pay to bearer on demand one pound sterling*," he read. In the centre was the smudged likeness of a native face. At the bottom was the signature of Tui Tulifau, and the signature of Fulualea, with the printed information appended, "*Chancellor of the Exchequer.*"

"Who the deuce is Fulualea?" Grief demanded. "It's Fijian, isn't it? — meaning the feathers of the sun?"

"Just so. It means the feathers of the sun. Thus does this base interloper caption himself. He has come up from Fiji to turn Fitu-Iva upside down — that is, commercially."

"Some one of those smart Levuka boys, I suppose?"

Ieremia shook his head sadly. "No, this low fellow is a white man and a scoundrel. He has taken a noble and high-sounding Fijian name and dragged it in the dirt to suit his nefarious purposes. He has made Tui Tulifau drunk. He has made him very drunk. He has kept him very drunk all the time. In return, he has been made Chancellor of the Exchequer and other things. He has issued this false paper and compelled the people to receive it. He has levied a store tax, a copra tax, and a tobacco tax. There are harbour dues and regulations, and other taxes. But the people are not taxed — only the traders. When the copra tax was levied, I lowered the purchasing price accordingly. Then the people began to grumble, and Feathers of the Sun passed a new law, setting the old price back and forbidding any man to lower it. Me he fined two pounds and five pigs, it being well known that I possessed five pigs. You will find them entered in the ledger. Hawkins, who is trader for the Fulcrum Company, was fined first pigs, then gin, and, because he continued to make loud conversation, the army came and burned his store. When I declined to sell, this Feathers of the Sun fined me once more and promised to burn the store if again I offended. So I sold all that was on the shelves, and there is the box full of worthless paper. I shall be chagrined if you pay me my salary in paper, but it would be just, no more than just. Now, what is to be done?"

Grief shrugged his shoulders. "I must first see this Feathers of the Sun and size up the situation."

"Then you must see him soon," Ieremia advised. "Else he will have an accumulation of many fines against you. Thus does he absorb all the coin of the realm. He has it all now, save what has been buried in the ground."

III

On his way back along the Broom Road, under the lighted lamps that marked the entrance to the palace grounds, Grief encountered a short, rotund gentleman, in unstarched ducks, smooth-shaven and of florid complexion, who was just emerging. Something about his tentative, saturated gait was familiar. Grief knew it on the instant. On the beaches of a dozen South Sea ports had he seen it before.

"Of all men, Cornelius Deasy!" he cried.

"If it ain't Grief himself, the old devil," was the return greeting, as they shook hands.

"If you'll come on board I've some choice smoky Irish," Grief invited.

Cornelius threw back his shoulders and stiffened.

"Nothing doin', Mr. Grief. 'Tis Fulualea I am now. No blarneyin' of old times for me. Also, and by the leave of his gracious Majesty King Tulifau, 'tis Chancellor of the Exchequer I am, an' Chief Justice I am, save in moments of royal sport when the king himself chooses to toy with the wheels of justice."

Grief whistled his amazement. "So you're Feathers of the Sun!"

"I prefer the native idiom," was the correction. "Fulualea, an' it please you. Not forgettin' old times, Mr. Grief, it sorrows the heart of me to break you the news. You'll have to pay your legitimate import duties same as any other trader with mind intent on robbin' the gentle Polynesian savage on coral isles implanted. — — Where was I? Ah! I remember. You've violated the regulations. With malice intent have you entered the port of Fitu-Iva after sunset without sidelights burnin'. Don't interrupt. With my own eyes did I see you. For which offence are you fined the sum of five pounds. Have you any gin? 'Tis a serious offence. Not lightly are the lives of the mariners of our commodious port to be risked for the savin' of a penny'orth of oil. Did I ask: have you any gin? Tis the harbour master that asks."

"You've taken a lot on your shoulders," Grief grinned.

"'Tis the white man's burden. These rapscallion traders have been puttin' it all over poor Tui Tulif, the best-hearted old monarch that ever sat a South Sea throne an' mopped grog-root from the imperial calabash. 'Tis I, Cornelius — Fulualea, rather — that am here to see justice done. Much as I dislike the doin' of it, as harbour master 'tis my duty to find you guilty of breach of quarantine."

"Quarantine?"

"'Tis the rulin' of the port doctor. No intercourse with the shore till the ship is passed. What dire calamity to the confidin' native if chicken pox or whoopin' cough was aboard of you! Who is there to protect the gentle, confidin' Polynesian? I, Fulualea, the Feathers of the Sun, on my high mission."

"Who in hell is the port doctor?" Grief queried.

"'Tis me, Fulualea. Your offence is serious. Consider yourself fined five cases of first-quality Holland gin."

Grief laughed heartily. "We'll compromise, Cornelius. Come aboard and have a drink."

The Feathers of the Sun waved the proffer aside grandly. "'Tis bribery. I'll have none of it — me faithful to my salt. And wherefore did you not present your ship's papers? As chief of the custom house you are fined five pounds and two more cases of gin."

"Look here, Cornelius. A joke's a joke, but this one has gone far enough. This is not Levuka. I've half a mind to pull your nose for you. You can't buck me."

The Feathers of the Sun retreated unsteadily and in alarm.

"Lay no violence on me," he threatened. "You're right. This is not Levuka. And by the same token, with Tui Tulifau and the royal army behind me, buck you is just the thing I can and will. You'll pay them fines promptly, or I'll confiscate your vessel. You're not the first. What does that Chink pearl-buyer, Peter Gee, do but slip into harbour, violatin' all regulations an' makin' rough house for the matter of a few paltry fines. No; he wouldn't pay 'em, and he's on the beach now thinkin' it over."

"You don't mean to say — — "

"Sure an' I do. In the high exercise of office I seized his schooner. A fifth of the loyal army is now in charge on board of her. She'll be sold this day week. Some ten tons of shell in the hold, and I'm wonderin' if I can trade it to you for gin. I can promise you a rare bargain. How much gin did you say you had?"

"Still more gin, eh?"

"An' why not? 'Tis a royal souse is Tui Tulifau. Sure it keeps my wits workin' overtime to supply him, he's that amazin' liberal with it. The whole gang of hanger-on chiefs is perpetually loaded to the guards. It's disgraceful. Are you goin' to pay them fines, Mr. Grief, or is it to harsher measures I'll be forced?"

Grief turned impatiently on his heel.

"Cornelius, you're drunk. Think it over and come to your senses. The old rollicking South Sea days are gone. You can't play tricks like that now."

“If you think you’re goin’ on board, Mr. Grief, I’ll save you the trouble. I know your kind, I foresaw your stiff-necked stubbornness. An’ it’s forestalled you are. ‘Tis on the beach you’ll find your crew. The vessel’s seized.”

Grief turned back on him in the half-belief still that he was joking. Fulualea again retreated in alarm. The form of a large man loomed beside him in the darkness.

“Is it you, Uiliami?” Fulualea crooned. “Here is another sea pirate. Stand by me with the strength of thy arm, O Herculean brother.”

“Greeting, Uiliami,” Grief said. “Since when has Fitu-Iva come to be run by a Levuka beachcomber? He says my schooner has been seized. Is it true?”

“It is true,” Uiliami boomed from his deep chest. “Have you any more silk shirts like Willie Smee’s? Tui Tulifau would like such a shirt. He has heard of it.”

“‘Tis all the same,” Fulualea interrupted. “Shirts or schooners, the king shall have them.”

“Rather high-handed, Cornelius,” Grief murmured. “It’s rank piracy. You seized my vessel without giving me a chance.”

“A chance is it? As we stood here, not five minutes gone, didn’t you refuse to pay your fines?”

“But she was already seized.”

“Sure, an’ why not? Didn’t I know you’d refuse? ‘Tis all fair, an’ no injustice done — Justice, the bright, particular star at whose shining altar Cornelius Deasy — or Fulualea, ‘tis the same thing — ever worships. Get thee gone, Mr. Trader, or I’ll set the palace guards on you. Uiliami, ‘tis a desperate character, this trader man. Call the guards.”

Uiliami blew the whistle suspended on his broad bare chest by a cord of cocoanut sennit. Grief reached out an angry hand for Cornelius, who titubated into safety behind Uiliami’s massive bulk. A dozen strapping Polynesians, not one under six feet, ran down the palace walk and ranged behind their commander.

“Get thee gone, Mr. Trader,” Cornelius ordered. “The interview is terminated. We’ll try your several cases in the mornin’. Appear promptly at the palace at ten o’clock to answer to the followin’ charges, to wit: breach of the peace; seditious and treasonable utterance; violent assault on the chief magistrate with intent to cut, wound, maim, an’ bruise; breach of quarantine; violation of harbour regulations; and gross breakage of custom house rules. In the mornin', fellow, in the mornin', justice shall be done while the breadfruit falls. And the Lord have mercy on your soul."

III

Before the hour set for the trial Grief, accompanied by Peter Gee, won access to Tui Tulifau. The king, surrounded by half a dozen chiefs, lay on mats under the shade of the avocados in the palace compound. Early as was the hour, palace maids were industriously serving squarefaces of gin. The king was glad to see his old friend Davida, and regretful that he had run foul of the new regulations. Beyond that he steadfastly avoided discussion of the matter in hand. All protests of the expropriated traders were washed away in proffers of gin. "Have a drink," was his invariable reply, though once he unbosomed himself enough to say that Feathers of the Sun was a wonderful man. Never had palace affairs been so prosperous. Never had there been so much money in the treasury, nor so much gin in circulation. "Well pleased am I with Fulualea," he concluded. "Have a drink."

"We've got to get out of this *pronto*," Grief whispered to Peter Gee a few minutes later, "or we'll be a pair of boiled owls. Also, I am to be tried for arson, or heresy, or leprosy, or something, in a few minutes, and I must control my wits."

As they withdrew from the royal presence, Grief caught a glimpse of Sepeli, the queen. She was peering out at her royal spouse and his fellow tipplers, and the frown on her face gave Grief his cue. Whatever was to be accomplished must be through her.

In another shady corner of the big compound Cornelius was holding court. He had been at it early, for when Grief arrived the case of Willie Smee was being settled. The entire royal army, save that portion in charge of the seized vessels, was in attendance.

"Let the defendant stand up," said Cornelius, "and receive the just and merciful sentence of the Court for licentious and disgraceful conduct unbecomin' a supercargo. The defendant says he has no money. Very well. The Court regrets it has no calaboose. In lieu thereof, and in view of the impoverished condition of the defendant, the Court fines said defendant one white silk shirt of the same kind, make and quality at present worn by defendant."

Cornelius nodded to several of the soldiers, who led the supercargo away behind an avocado tree. A minute later he emerged, minus the garment in question, and sat down beside Grief.

“What have you been up to?” Grief asked.

“Blessed if I know. What crimes have you committed?”

“Next case,” said Cornelius in his most extra-legal tones. “David Grief, defendant, stand up. The Court has considered the evidence in the case, or cases, and renders the following judgment, to wit: — Shut up!” he thundered at Grief, who had attempted to interrupt. “I tell you the evidence has been considered, deeply considered. It is no wish of the Court to lay additional hardship on the defendant, and the Court takes this opportunity to warn the defendant that he is liable for contempt. For open and wanton violation of harbour rules and regulations, breach of quarantine, and disregard of shipping laws, his schooner, the *Cantani*, is hereby declared confiscated to the Government of Fitu-Iva, to be sold at public auction, ten days from date, with all appurtenances, fittings, and cargo thereunto pertaining. For the personal crimes of the defendant, consisting of violent and turbulent conduct and notorious disregard of the laws of the realm, he is fined in the sum of one hundred pounds sterling and fifteen cases of gin. I will not ask you if you have anything to say. But will you pay? That is the question.”

Grief shook his head.

“In the meantime,” Cornelius went on, “consider yourself a prisoner at large. There is no calaboose in which to confine you. And finally, it has come to the knowledge of the Court, that at an early hour of this morning, the defendant did wilfully and deliberately send Kanakas in his employ out on the reef to catch fish for breakfast. This is distinctly an infringement of the rights of the fisherfolk of Fitu-Iva. Home industries must be protected. This conduct of the defendant is severely reprehended by the Court, and on any repetition of the offence the offender and offenders, all and sundry, shall be immediately put to hard labour on the improvement of the Broom Road. The court is dismissed.”

As they left the compound, Peter Gee nudged Grief to look where Tui Tulifau reclined on the mats. The supercargo’s shirt, stretched and bulged, already encased the royal fat.

IV

“The thing is clear,” said Peter Gee, at a conference in Ieremia’s house. “Deasy has about gathered in all the coin. In the meantime he keeps the king going on the gin he’s captured, on our vessels. As soon as he can maneuver it he’ll take the cash and skin out on your craft or mine.”

“He is a low fellow,” Ieremia declared, pausing in the polishing of his spectacles. “He is a scoundrel and a blackguard. He should be struck by a dead pig, by a particularly dead pig.”

“The very thing,” said Grief. “He shall be struck by a dead pig. Ieremia, I should not be surprised if you were the man to strike him with the dead pig. Be sure and select a particularly dead one. Tui Tulifau is down at the boat house broaching a case of my Scotch. I’m going up to the palace to work kitchen politics with the queen. In the meantime you get a few things on your shelves from the store-room. I’ll lend you some, Hawkins. And you, Peter, see the German store. Start in all of you, selling for paper. Remember, I’ll back the losses. If I’m not mistaken, in three days we’ll have a national council or a revolution. You, Ieremia, start messengers around the island to the fishers and farmers, everywhere, even to the mountain goat-hunters. Tell them to assemble at the palace three days from now.”

“But the soldiers,” Ieremia objected.

“I’ll take care of them. They haven’t been paid for two months. Besides, Uiliami is the queen’s brother. Don’t have too much on your shelves at a time. As soon as the soldiers show up with paper, stop selling.”

“Then will they burn the stores,” said Ieremia.

“Let them. King Tulifau will pay for it if they do.”

“Will he pay for my shirt?” Willie Smee demanded.

“That is purely a personal and private matter between you and Tui Tulifau,” Grief answered.

“It’s beginning to split up the back,” the supercargo lamented. “I noticed that much this morning when he hadn’t had it on ten minutes. It cost me thirty shillings and I only wore it once.”

“Where shall I get a dead pig?” Ieremia asked.

“Kill one, of course,” said Grief. “Kill a small one.”

“A small one is worth ten shillings.”

“Then enter it in your ledger under operating expenses.” Grief paused a moment. “If you want it particularly dead, it would be well to kill it at once.”

V

"You have spoken well, Davida," said Queen Sepeli. "This Fulualea has brought a madness with him, and Tui Tulifau is drowned in gin. If he does not grant the big council, I shall give him a beating. He is easy to beat when he is in drink."

She doubled up her fist, and such were her Amazonian proportions and the determination in her face that Grief knew the council would be called. So akin was the Fitu-Ivan tongue to the Samoan that he spoke it like a native.

"And you, Uiliami," he said, "have pointed out that the soldiers have demanded coin and refused the paper Fulualea has offered them. Tell them to take the paper and see that they be paid to-morrow."

"Why trouble?" Uiliami objected. "The king remains happily drunk. There is much money in the treasury. And I am content. In my house are two cases of gin and much goods from Hawkins's store."

"Excellent pig, O my brother!" Sepeli erupted. "Has not Davida spoken? Have you no ears? When the gin and the goods in your house are gone, and no more traders come with gin and goods, and Feathers of the Sun has run away to Levuka with all the cash money of Fitu-Iva, what then will you do? Cash money is silver and gold, but paper is only paper. I tell you the people are grumbling. There is no fish in the palace. Yams and sweet potatoes seem to have fled from the soil, for they come not. The mountain dwellers have sent no wild goat in a week. Though Feathers of the Sun compels the traders to buy copra at the old price, the people sell not, for they will have none of the paper money. Only to-day have I sent messengers to twenty houses. There are no eggs. Has Feathers of the Sun put a blight upon the hens? I do not know. All I know is that there are no eggs. Well it is that those who drink much eat little, else would there be a palace famine. Tell your soldiers to receive their pay. Let it be in his paper money."

"And remember," Grief warned, "though there be selling in the stores, when the soldiers come with their paper it will be refused. And in three days will be the council, and Feathers of the Sun will be as dead as a dead pig."

VI

The day of the council found the population of the island crowded into the capital. By canoe and whaleboat, on foot and donkey-back, the five thousand inhabitants of Fitu-Iva had trooped in. The three intervening days had had their share of excitement. At first there had been much selling from the sparse shelves of the traders. But when the soldiers appeared, their patronage was declined and they were told to go to Fulualea for coin. "Says it not so on the face of the paper," the traders demanded, "that for the asking the coin will be given in exchange?"

Only the strong authority of Uiliami had prevented the burning of the traders' houses. As it was, one of Grief's copra-sheds went up in smoke and was duly charged by Ieremia to the king's account. Ieremia himself had been abused and mocked, and his spectacles broken. The skin was off Willie Smee's knuckles. This had been caused by three boisterous soldiers who violently struck their jaws thereon in quick succession. Captain Boig was similarly injured. Peter Gee had come off undamaged, because it chanced that it was bread-baskets and not jaws that struck him on the fists.

Tui Tulifau, with Sepeli at his side and surrounded by his convivial chiefs, sat at the head of the council in the big compound. His right eye and jaw were swollen as if he too had engaged in assaulting somebody's fist. It was palace gossip that morning that Sepeli had administered a conjugal beating. At any rate, her spouse was sober, and his fat bulged spiritlessly through the rips in Willie Smee's silk shirt. His thirst was prodigious, and he was continually served with young drinking nuts. Outside the compound, held back by the army, was the mass of the common people. Only the lesser chiefs, village maids, village beaux, and talking men with their staffs of office were permitted inside. Cornelius Deasy, as befitted a high and favoured official, sat near to the right hand of the king. On the left of the queen, opposite Cornelius and surrounded by the white traders he was to represent, sat Ieremia. Bereft of his spectacles, he peered short-sightedly across at the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In turn, the talking man of the windward coast, the talking man of the leeward coast, and the talking man of the mountain villages, each backed by his group of lesser talking men and chiefs, arose and made oration. What they said was much the same. They grumbled about the paper money. Affairs were not prosperous. No more copra was being smoked. The people were suspicious. To such a pass had things come that all people wanted to pay their debts and no one wanted to be paid. Creditors made a practice of running away from debtors. The money was cheap. Prices were going up and commodities were getting scarce. It cost three times the ordinary price to buy a fowl, and then it was tough and like to die of old age if not immediately sold. The outlook was gloomy. There were signs and omens. There was a plague of rats in some districts. The crops were bad. The custard apples were small. The best-bearing avocado on the windward coast had mysteriously shed all its leaves. The taste had gone from the mangoes. The plantains were eaten by a worm. The fish had forsaken the ocean and vast numbers of tiger-sharks appeared. The wild goats had fled to inaccessible summits. The poi in the poi-pits had turned bitter. There were rumblings in the mountains, night-walking of spirits; a woman of Punta-Puna had been struck speechless, and a five-legged she-goat had been born in the village of Eiho. And that all was due to the strange money of Fulualea was the firm conviction of the elders in the village councils assembled.

Uiliami spoke for the army. His men were discontented and mutinous. Though by royal decree the traders were bidden accept the money, yet did they refuse it. He would not say, but it looked as if the strange money of Fulualea had something to do with it.

Ieremia, as talking man of the traders, next spoke. When he arose, it was noticeable that he stood with legs spraddled over a large grass basket. He dwelt upon the cloth of the traders, its variety and beauty and durability, which so exceeded the Fitu-Ivan wet-pounded tapa, fragile and coarse. No one wore tapa any more. Yet all had worn tapa, and nothing but tapa, before the traders came. There was the mosquito-netting, sold for a song, that the cleverest Fitu-Ivan net-weaver could not duplicate in a thousand years. He enlarged on the incomparable virtues of rifles, axes, and steel fishhooks, down through needles, thread and cotton fish-lines to white flour and kerosene oil.

He expounded at length, with firstlies and secondlies and all minor subdivisions of argument, on organization, and order, and civilization. He contended that the trader was the bearer of civilization, and that the trader must be protected in his trade else he would not come. Over to the westward were islands which would not protect the traders. What was the result? The traders would not come, and the people were like wild animals. They wore no clothes, no silk shirts (here he peered and blinked significantly at the king), and they ate one another.

The queer paper of the Feathers of the Sun was not money. The traders knew what money was, and they would not receive it. If Fitu-Iva persisted in trying to make them receive it they would go away and never come back. And then the Fitu-Ivans, who had forgotten how to make tapa, would run around naked and eat one another.

Much more he said, talking a solid hour, and always coming back to what their dire condition would be when the traders came no more. "And in that day," he perorated, "how will the Fitu-Ivan be known in the great world? *Kai-kanak** will men call him. '*Kiakanak! Kai-kanak!*"

* Man-eater.

Tui Tulifau spoke briefly. The case had been presented, he said, for the people, the army, and the traders. It was now time for Feathers of the Sun to present his side. It could not be denied that he had wrought wonders with his financial system. "Many times has he explained to me the working of his system," Tui Tulif au concluded. "It is very simple. And now he will explain it to you."

It was a conspiracy of the white traders, Cornelius contended. Ieremia was right so far as concerned the manifold blessings of white flour and kerosene oil. Fitu-Iva did not want to become *kai-kanak*. Fitu-Iva wanted civilization; it wanted more and more civilization. Now that was the very point, and they must follow him closely. Paper money was an earmark of higher civilization. That was why he, the Feathers of the Sun, had introduced it. And that was why the traders opposed it. They did not want to see Fitu-Iva civilized. Why did they come across the far ocean stretches with their goods to Fitu-Iva? He, the Feathers of the Sun, would tell them why, to their faces, in grand council assembled. In their own countries men were too civilized to let the traders make the immense profits that they made out of the Fitu-Ivans. If the Fitu-Ivans became properly civilized, the trade of the traders would be gone. In that day every Fitu-Ivan could become a trader if he pleased.

That was why the white traders fought the system of paper money, that he, the Feathers of the Sun, had brought. Why was he called the Feathers of the Sun? Because he was the Light-Bringer from the World Beyond the Sky. The paper money was the light. The robbing white traders could not flourish in the light. Therefore they fought the light.

He would prove it to the good people of Fitu-Iva, and he would prove it out of the mouths of his enemies. It was a well-known fact that all highly civilized countries had paper-money systems. He would ask Ieremia if this was not so.

Ieremia did not answer.

"You see," Cornelius went on, "he makes no answer. He cannot deny what is true. England, France, Germany, America, all the great *Papalangi* countries, have the paper-money system. It works. From century to century it works. I challenge you, Ieremia, as an honest man, as one who was once a zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard, I challenge you to deny that in the great *Papalangi* countries the system works."

Ieremia could not deny, and his fingers played nervously with the fastening of the basket on his knees.

"You see, it is as I have said," Cornelius continued. "Ieremia agrees that it is so. Therefore, I ask you, all good people of Fitu-Iva, if a system is good for the *Papalangi* countries, why is it not good for Fitu-Iva?"

"It is not the same!" Ieremia cried. "The paper of the Feathers of the Sun is different from the paper of the great countries."

That Cornelius had been prepared for this was evident. He held up a Fitu-Ivan note that was recognized by all.

"What is that?" he demanded.

"Paper, mere paper," was Ieremia's reply.

"And that?"

This time Cornelius held up a Bank of England note.

"It is the paper money of the English," he explained to the Council, at the same time extending it for Ieremia to examine. "Is it not true, Ieremia, that it is paper money of the English?"

Ieremia nodded reluctantly.

"You have said that the paper money of Fitu-Iva was paper, now how about this of the English? What is it?.... You must answer like a true man... All wait for your answer, Ieremia."

"It is — it is — — " the puzzled Ieremia began, then spluttered helplessly, the fallacy beyond his penetration.

"Paper, mere paper," Cornelius concluded for him, imitating his halting utterance.

Conviction sat on the faces of all. The king clapped his hands admiringly and murmured, "It is most clear, very clear."

"You see, he himself acknowledges it." Assured triumph was in Deasy's voice and bearing. "He knows of no difference. There is no difference. 'Tis the very image of money. ‘Tis money itself.”

In the meantime Grief was whispering in Ieremia’s ear, who nodded and began to speak.

“But it is well known to all the *Papalangi* that the English Government will pay coin money for the paper.”

Deasy’s victory was now absolute. He held aloft a Fitu-Ivan note.

“Is it not so written on this paper as well?”

Again Grief whispered.

“That Fitu-Iva will pay coin money?” asked Ieremia

“It is so written.”

A third time Grief prompted.

“On demand?” asked Ieremia.

“On demand,” Cornelius assured him.

“Then I demand coin money now,” said Ieremia, drawing a small package of notes from the pouch at his girdle.

Cornelius scanned the package with a quick, estimating eye.

“Very well,” he agreed. “I shall give you the coin money now. How much?”

“And we will see the system work,” the king proclaimed, partaking in his Chancellor’s triumph.

“You have heard! — He will give coin money now!” Ieremia cried in a loud voice to the assemblage.

At the same time he plunged both hands in the basket and drew forth many packages of Fitu-Ivan notes. It was noticed that a peculiar odour was adrift about the council.

“I have here,” Ieremia announced, “one thousand and twenty-eight pounds twelve shillings and sixpence. Here is a sack to put the coin money in.”

Cornelius recoiled. He had not expected such a sum, and everywhere about the council his uneasy eyes showed him chiefs and talking men drawing out bundles of notes. The army, its two months’ pay in its hands, pressed forward to the edge of the council, while behind it the populace, with more money, invaded the compound.

“‘Tis a run on the bank you’ve precipitated,” he said reproachfully to Grief.

“Here is the sack to put the coin money in,” Ieremia urged.

“It must be postponed,” Cornelius said desperately, “‘Tis not in banking hours.”

Ieremia flourished a package of money. “Nothing of banking hours is written here. It says on demand, and I now demand.”

“Let them come to-morrow, O Tui Tulifau,” Cornelius appealed to the king. “They shall be paid to-morrow.”

Tui Tulifau hesitated, but his spouse glared at him, her brawny arm tensing as the fist doubled into a redoubtable knot, Tui Tulifau tried to look away, but failed. He cleared his throat nervously.

“We will see the system work,” he decreed. “The people have come far.”

“‘Tis good money you’re asking me to pay out,” Deasy muttered in a low voice to the king.

Sepeli caught what he said, and grunted so savagely as to startle the king, who involuntarily shrank away from her.

“Forget not the pig,” Grief whispered to Ieremia, who immediately stood up.

With a sweeping gesture he stilled the babel of voices that was beginning to rise.

“It was an ancient and honourable custom of Fitu-Iva,” he said, “that when a man was proved a notorious evildoer his joints were broken with a club and he was staked out at low water to be fed upon alive by the sharks. Unfortunately, that day is past. Nevertheless another ancient and honourable custom remains with us. You all know what it is. When a man is a proven thief and liar he shall be struck with a dead pig.”

His right hand went into the basket, and, despite the lack of his spectacles, the dead pig that came into view landed accurately on Deasy’s neck. With such force was it thrown that the Chancellor, in his sitting position, toppled over sidewise. Before he could recover, Sepeli, with an agility unexpected of a woman who weighed two hundred and sixty pounds, had sprung across to him. One hand clutched his shirt collar, the other hand brandished the pig, and amid the vast uproar of a delighted kingdom she royally swatted him.

There remained nothing for Tui Tulifau but to put a good face on his favourite’s disgrace, and his mountainous fat lay back on the mats and shook in a gale of Gargantuan laughter.

When Sepeli dropped both pig and Chancellor, a talking man from the windward coast picked up the carcass. Cornelius was on his feet and running, when the pig caught him on the legs and tripped him. The people and the army, with shouts and laughter, joined in the sport.

Twist and dodge as he would, everywhere the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer was met or overtaken by the flying pig. He scuttled like a frightened rabbit in and out among the avocados and the palms. No hand was laid upon him, and his tormentors made way before him, but ever they pursued, and ever the pig flew as fast as hands could pick it up.

As the chase died away down the Broom Road, Grief led the traders to the royal treasury, and the day was well over ere the last Fitu-Ivan bank note had been redeemed with coin.

VII

Through the mellow cool of twilight a man paddled out from a clump of jungle to the *Cantani*. It was a leaky and abandoned dugout, and he paddled slowly, desisting from time to time in order to bale. The Kanaka sailors giggled gleefully as he came alongside and painfully drew himself over the rail. He was bedraggled and filthy, and seemed half-dazed.

“Could I speak a word with you, Mr. Grief?” he asked sadly and humbly.

“Sit to leeward and farther away,” Grief answered. “A little farther away. That’s better.”

Cornelius sat down on the rail and held his head in both his hands.

“’Tis right,” he said. “I’m as fragrant as a recent battlefield. My head aches to burstin’. My neck is fair broken. The teeth are loose in my jaws. There’s nests of hornets buzzin’ in my ears. My medulla oblongata is dislocated. I’ve been through earthquake and pestilence, and the heavens have rained pigs.” He paused with a sigh that ended in a groan. “’Tis a vision of terrible death. One that the poets never dreamed. To be eaten by rats, or boiled in oil, or pulled apart by wild horses — that would be unpleasant. But to be beaten to death with a dead pig!” He shuddered at the awfulness of it. “Sure it transcends the human imagination.”

Captain Boig sniffed audibly, moved his canvas chair farther to windward, and sat down again.

“I hear you’re runnin’ over to Yap, Mr. Grief,” Cornelius went on. “An’ two things I’m wantin’ to beg of you: a passage an’ the nip of the old smoky I refused the night you landed.”

Grief clapped his hands for the black steward and ordered soap and towels.

"Go for'ard, Cornelius, and take a scrub first," he said. "The boy will bring you a pair of dungarees and a shirt. And by the way, before you go, how was it we found more coin in the treasury than paper you had issued?"

"'Twas the stake of my own I'd brought with me for the adventure."

"We've decided to charge the demurrage and other expenses and loss to Tui Tulifau," Grief said. "So the balance we found will be turned over to you. But ten shillings must be deducted."

"For what?"

"Do you think dead pigs grow on trees? The sum of ten shillings for that pig is entered in the accounts."

Cornelius bowed his assent with a shudder.

"Sure it's grateful I am it wasn't a fifteen-shilling pig or a twenty-shilling one."

Finis

OR

Morganson’s Finish

It was the last of Morganson’s bacon. In all his life he had never pampered his stomach. In fact, his stomach had been a sort of negligible quantity that bothered him little, and about which he thought less. But now, in the long absence of wonted delights, the keen yearning of his stomach was tickled hugely by the sharp, salty bacon.

His face had a wistful, hungry expression. The cheeks were hollow, and the skin seemed stretched a trifle tightly across the cheek-bones. His pale blue eyes were troubled. There was that in them that showed the haunting imminence of something terrible. Doubt was in them, and anxiety and foreboding. The thin lips were thinner than they were made to be, and they seemed to hunger towards the polished frying-pan.

He sat back and drew forth a pipe. He looked into it with sharp scrutiny, and tapped it emptily on his open palm. He turned the hair-seal tobacco pouch inside out and dusted the lining, treasuring carefully each flake and mite of tobacco that his efforts gleaned. The result was scarce a thimbleful. He searched in his pockets, and brought forward, between thumb and forefinger, tiny pinches of rubbish. Here and there in this rubbish were crumbs of tobacco. These he segregated with microscopic care, though he occasionally permitted small particles of foreign substance to accompany the crumbs to the hoard in his palm. He even deliberately added small, semi-hard woolly fluffs, that had come originally from the coat lining, and that had lain for long months in the bottoms of the pockets.

At the end of fifteen minutes he had the pipe part filled. He lighted it from the camp fire, and sat forward on the blankets, toasting his moccasined feet and smoking parsimoniously. When the pipe was finished he sat on, brooding into the dying flame of the fire. Slowly the worry went out of his eyes and resolve came in. Out of the chaos of his fortunes he had finally achieved a way. But it was not a pretty way. His face had become stern and wolfish, and the thin lips were drawn very tightly.

With resolve came action. He pulled himself stiffly to his feet and proceeded to break camp. He packed the rolled blankets, the frying-pan, rifle, and axe on the sled, and passed a lashing around the load. Then he warmed his hands at the fire and pulled on his mittens. He was foot-sore, and limped noticeably as he took his place at the head of the sled. When he put the looped haul-rope over his shoulder, and leant his weight against it to start the sled, he winced. His flesh was galled by many days of contact with the haul-rope.

The trail led along the frozen breast of the Yukon. At the end of four hours he came around a bend and entered the town of Minto. It was perched on top of a high earth bank in the midst of a clearing, and consisted of a road house, a saloon, and several cabins. He left his sled at the door and entered the saloon.

"Enough for a drink?" he asked, laying an apparently empty gold sack upon the bar.

The barkeeper looked sharply at it and him, then set out a bottle and a glass.

"Never mind the dust," he said.

"Go on and take it," Morganson insisted.

The barkeeper held the sack mouth downward over the scales and shook it, and a few flakes of gold dust fell out. Morganson took the sack from him, turned it inside out, and dusted it carefully.

"I thought there was half-a-dollar in it," he said.

"Not quite," answered the other, "but near enough. I'll get it back with the down weight on the next comer."

Morganson shyly poured the whisky into the glass, partly filling it.

"Go on, make it a man's drink," the barkeeper encouraged.

Morganson tilted the bottle and filled the glass to the brim. He drank the liquor slowly, pleasuring in the fire of it that bit his tongue, sank hotly down his throat, and with warm, gentle caresses permeated his stomach.

"Scurvy, eh?" the barkeeper asked.

"A touch of it," he answered. "But I haven't begun to swell yet. Maybe I can get to Dyea and fresh vegetables, and beat it out."

"Kind of all in, I'd say," the other laughed sympathetically. "No dogs, no money, and the scurvy. I'd try spruce tea if I was you."

At the end of half-an-hour, Morganson said good-bye and left the saloon. He put his galled shoulder to the haul-rope and took the river-trail south. An hour later he halted. An inviting swale left the river and led off to the right at an acute angle. He left his sled and limped up the swale for half a mile. Between him and the river was three hundred yards of flat ground covered with cottonwoods. He crossed the cottonwoods to the bank of the Yukon. The trail went by just beneath, but he did not descend to it. South toward Selkirk he could see the trail widen its sunken length through the snow for over a mile. But to the north, in the direction of Minto, a tree-covered outjut in the bank a quarter of a mile away screened the trail from him.

He seemed satisfied with the view and returned to the sled the way he had come. He put the haul-rope over his shoulder and dragged the sled up the swale. The snow was unpacked and soft, and it was hard work. The runners clogged and stuck, and he was panting severely ere he had covered the half-mile. Night had come on by the time he had pitched his small tent, set up the sheet-iron stove, and chopped a supply of firewood. He had no candles, and contented himself with a pot of tea before crawling into his blankets.

In the morning, as soon as he got up, he drew on his mittens, pulled the flaps of his cap down over his ears, and crossed through the cottonwoods to the Yukon. He took his rifle with him. As before, he did not descend the bank. He watched the empty trail for an hour, beating his hands and stamping his feet to keep up the circulation, then returned to the tent for breakfast. There was little tea left in the canister — half a dozen drawings at most; but so meagre a pinch did he put in the teapot that he bade fair to extend the lifetime of the tea indefinitely. His entire food supply consisted of half-a-sack of flour and a part-full can of baking powder. He made biscuits, and ate them slowly, chewing each mouthful with infinite relish. When he had had three he called a halt. He debated a while, reached for another biscuit, then hesitated. He turned to the part sack of flour, lifted it, and judged its weight.

“I’m good for a couple of weeks,” he spoke aloud.

“Maybe three,” he added, as he put the biscuits away.

Again he drew on his mittens, pulled down his ear-flaps, took the rifle, and went out to his station on the river bank. He crouched in the snow, himself unseen, and watched. After a few minutes of inaction, the frost began to bite in, and he rested the rifle across his knees and beat his hands back and forth. Then the sting in his feet became intolerable, and he stepped back from the bank and tramped heavily up and down among the trees. But he did not tramp long at a time. Every several minutes he came to the edge of the bank and peered up and down the trail, as though by sheer will he could materialise the form of a man upon it. The short morning passed, though it had seemed century-long to him, and the trail remained empty.

It was easier in the afternoon, watching by the bank. The temperature rose, and soon the snow began to fall — dry and fine and crystalline. There was no wind, and it fell straight down, in quiet monotony. He crouched with eyes closed, his head upon his knees, keeping his watch upon the trail with his ears. But no whining of dogs, churning of sleds, nor cries of drivers broke the silence. With twilight he returned to the tent, cut a supply of firewood, ate two biscuits, and crawled into his blankets. He slept restlessly, tossing about and groaning; and at midnight he got up and ate another biscuit.

Each day grew colder. Four biscuits could not keep up the heat of his body, despite the quantities of hot spruce tea he drank, and he increased his allowance, morning and evening, to three biscuits. In the middle of the day he ate nothing, contenting himself with several cups of excessively weak real tea. This programme became routine. In the morning three biscuits, at noon real tea, and at night three biscuits. In between he drank spruce tea for his scurvy. He caught himself making larger biscuits, and after a severe struggle with himself went back to the old size.

On the fifth day the trail returned to life. To the south a dark object appeared, and grew larger. Morganson became alert. He worked his rifle, ejecting a loaded cartridge from the chamber, by the same action replacing it with another, and returning the ejected cartridge into the magazine. He lowered the trigger to half-cock, and drew on his mitten to keep the trigger-hand warm. As the dark object came nearer he made it out to be a man, without dogs or sled, travelling light. He grew nervous, cocked the trigger, then put it back to half-cock again. The man developed into an Indian, and Morganson, with a sigh of disappointment, dropped the rifle across his knees. The Indian went on past and disappeared towards Minto behind the out-jutting clump of trees.

But Morganson conceived an idea. He changed his crouching spot to a place where cottonwood limbs projected on either side of him. Into these with his axe he chopped two broad notches. Then in one of the notches he rested the barrel of his rifle and glanced along the sights. He covered the trail thoroughly in that direction. He turned about, rested the rifle in the other notch, and, looking along the sights, swept the trail to the clump of trees behind which it disappeared.

He never descended to the trail. A man travelling the trail could have no knowledge of his lurking presence on the bank above. The snow surface was unbroken. There was no place where his tracks left the main trail.

As the nights grew longer, his periods of daylight watching of the trail grew shorter. Once a sled went by with jingling bells in the darkness, and with sullen resentment he chewed his biscuits and listened to the sounds. Chance conspired against him. Faithfully he had watched the trail for ten days, suffering from the cold all the prolonged torment of the damned, and nothing had happened. Only an Indian, travelling light, had passed in. Now, in the night, when it was impossible for him to watch, men and dogs and a sled loaded with life, passed out, bound south to the sea and the sun and civilisation.

So it was that he conceived of the sled for which he waited. It was loaded with life, his life. His life was fading, fainting, gasping away in the tent in the snow. He was weak from lack of food, and could not travel of himself. But on the sled for which he waited were dogs that would drag him, food that would fan up the flame of his life, money that would furnish sea and sun and civilisation. Sea and sun and civilisation became terms interchangeable with life, his life, and they were loaded there on the sled for which he waited. The idea became an obsession, and he grew to think of himself as the rightful and deprived owner of the sled-load of life.

His flour was running short, and he went back to two biscuits in the morning and two biscuits at night. Because, of this his weakness increased and the cold bit in more savagely, and day by day he watched by the dead trail that would not live for him. At last the scurvy entered upon its next stage. The skin was unable longer to cast off the impurity of the blood, and the result was that the body began to swell. His ankles grew puffy, and the ache in them kept him awake long hours at night. Next, the swelling jumped to his knees, and the sum of his pain was more than doubled.

Then there came a cold snap. The temperature went down and down — forty, fifty, sixty degrees below zero. He had no thermometer, but this he knew by the signs and natural phenomena understood by all men in that country — the crackling of water thrown on the snow, the swift sharpness of the bite of the frost, and the rapidity with which his breath froze and coated the canvas walls and roof of the tent. Vainly he fought the cold and strove to maintain his watch on the bank. In his weak condition he was an easy prey, and the frost sank its teeth deep into him before he fled away to the tent and crouched by the fire. His nose and cheeks were frozen and turned black, and his left thumb had frozen inside the mitten. He concluded that he would escape with the loss of the first joint.

Then it was, beaten into the tent by the frost, that the trail, with monstrous irony, suddenly teemed with life. Three sleds went by the first day, and two the second. Once, during each day, he fought his way out to the bank only to succumb and retreat, and each of the two times, within half-an-hour after he retreated, a sled went by.

The cold snap broke, and he was able to remain by the bank once more, and the trail died again. For a week he crouched and watched, and never life stirred along it, not a soul passed in or out. He had cut down to one biscuit night and morning, and somehow he did not seem to notice it. Sometimes he marvelled at the way life remained in him. He never would have thought it possible to endure so much.

When the trail fluttered anew with life it was life with which he could not cope. A detachment of the North-West police went by, a score of them, with many sleds and dogs; and he cowered down on the bank above, and they were unaware of the menace of death that lurked in the form of a dying man beside the trail.

His frozen thumb gave him a great deal of trouble. While watching by the bank he got into the habit of taking his mitten off and thrusting the hand inside his shirt so as to rest the thumb in the warmth of his arm-pit. A mail carrier came over the trail, and Morganson let him pass. A mail carrier was an important person, and was sure to be missed immediately.

On the first day after his last flour had gone it snowed. It was always warm when the snow fell, and he sat out the whole eight hours of daylight on the bank, without movement, terribly hungry and terribly patient, for all the world like a monstrous spider waiting for its prey. But the prey did not come, and he hobbled back to the tent through the darkness, drank quarts of spruce tea and hot water, and went to bed.

The next morning circumstance eased its grip on him. As he started to come out of the tent he saw a huge bull-moose crossing the swale some four hundred yards away. Morganson felt a surge and bound of the blood in him, and then went unaccountably weak. A nausea overpowered him, and he was compelled to sit down a moment to recover. Then he reached for his rifle and took careful aim. The first shot was a hit: he knew it; but the moose turned and broke for the wooded hillside that came down to the swale. Morganson pumped bullets wildly among the trees and brush at the fleeing animal, until it dawned upon him that he was exhausting the ammunition he needed for the sled-load of life for which he waited.

He stopped shooting, and watched. He noted the direction of the animal’s flight, and, high up on the hillside in an opening among the trees, saw the trunk of a fallen pine. Continuing the moose’s flight in his mind he saw that it must pass the trunk. He resolved on one more shot, and in the empty air above the trunk he aimed and steadied his wavering rifle. The animal sprang into his field of vision, with lifted fore-legs as it took the leap. He pulled the trigger. With the explosion the moose seemed to somersault in the air. It crashed down to earth in the snow beyond and flurried the snow into dust.

Morganson dashed up the hillside — at least he started to dash up. The next he knew he was coming out of a faint and dragging himself to his feet. He went up more slowly, pausing from time to time to breathe and to steady his reeling senses. At last he crawled over the trunk. The moose lay before him. He sat down heavily upon the carcase and laughed. He buried his face in his mittened hands and laughed some more.

He shook the hysteria from him. He drew his hunting knife and worked as rapidly as his injured thumb and weakness would permit him. He did not stop to skin the moose, but quartered it with its hide on. It was a Klondike of meat.

When he had finished he selected a piece of meat weighing a hundred pounds, and started to drag it down to the tent. But the snow was soft, and it was too much for him. He exchanged it for a twenty-pound piece, and, with many pauses to rest, succeeded in getting it to the tent. He fried some of the meat, but ate sparingly. Then, and automatically, he went out to his crouching place on the bank. There were sled-tracks in the fresh snow on the trail. The sled-load of life had passed by while he had been cutting up the moose.

But he did not mind. He was glad that the sled had not passed before the coming of the moose. The moose had changed his plans. Its meat was worth fifty cents a pound, and he was but little more than three miles from Minto. He need no longer wait for the sled-load of life. The moose was the sled-load of life. He would sell it. He would buy a couple of dogs at Minto, some food and some tobacco, and the dogs would haul him south along the trail to the sea, the sun, and civilisation.

He felt hungry. The dull, monotonous ache of hunger had now become a sharp and insistent pang. He hobbled back to the tent and fried a slice of meat. After that he smoked two whole pipefuls of dried tea leaves. Then he fried another slice of moose. He was aware of an unwonted glow of strength, and went out and chopped some firewood. He followed that up with a slice of meat. Teased on by the food, his hunger grew into an inflammation. It became imperative every little while to fry a slice of meat. He tried smaller slices and found himself frying oftener.

In the middle of the day he thought of the wild animals that might eat his meat, and he climbed the hill, carrying along his axe, the haul rope, and a sled lashing. In his weak state the making of the cache and storing of the meat was an all-afternoon task. He cut young saplings, trimmed them, and tied them together into a tall scaffold. It was not so strong a cache as he would have desired to make, but he had done his best. To hoist the meat to the top was heart-breaking. The larger pieces defied him until he passed the rope over a limb above, and, with one end fast to a piece of meat, put all his weight on the other end.

Once in the tent, he proceeded to indulge in a prolonged and solitary orgy. He did not need friends. His stomach and he were company. Slice after slice and many slices of meat he fried and ate. He ate pounds of the meat. He brewed real tea, and brewed it strong. He brewed the last he had. It did not matter. On the morrow he would be buying tea in Minto. When it seemed he could eat no more, he smoked. He smoked all his stock of dried tea leaves. What of it? On the morrow he would be smoking tobacco. He knocked out his pipe, fried a final slice, and went to bed. He had eaten so much he seemed bursting, yet he got out of his blankets and had just one more mouthful of meat.

In the morning he awoke as from the sleep of death. In his ears were strange sounds. He did not know where he was, and looked about him stupidly until he caught sight of the frying-pan with the last piece of meat in it, partly eaten. Then he remembered all, and with a quick start turned his attention to the strange sounds. He sprang from the blankets with an oath. His scurvy-ravaged legs gave under him and he winced with the pain. He proceeded more slowly to put on his moccasins and leave the tent.

From the cache up the hillside arose a confused noise of snapping and snarling, punctuated by occasional short, sharp yelps. He increased his speed at much expense of pain, and cried loudly and threateningly. He saw the wolves hurrying away through the snow and underbrush, many of them, and he saw the scaffold down on the ground. The animals were heavy with the meat they had eaten, and they were content to slink away and leave the wreckage.

The way of the disaster was clear to him. The wolves had scented his cache. One of them had leapt from the trunk of the fallen tree to the top of the cache. He could see marks of the brute's paws in the snow that covered the trunk. He had not dreamt a wolf could leap so far. A second had followed the first, and a third and fourth, until the flimsy scaffold had gone down under their weight and movement.

His eyes were hard and savage for a moment as he contemplated the extent of the calamity; then the old look of patience returned into them, and he began to gather together the bones well picked and gnawed. There was marrow in them, he knew; and also, here and there, as he sifted the snow, he found scraps of meat that had escaped the maws of the brutes made careless by plenty.

He spent the rest of the morning dragging the wreckage of the moose down the hillside. In addition, he had at least ten pounds left of the chunk of meat he had dragged down the previous day.

"I'm good for weeks yet," was his comment as he surveyed the heap.

He had learnt how to starve and live. He cleaned his rifle and counted the cartridges that remained to him. There were seven. He loaded the weapon and hobbled out to his crouching-place on the bank. All day he watched the dead trail. He watched all the week, but no life passed over it.

Thanks to the meat he felt stronger, though his scurvy was worse and more painful. He now lived upon soup, drinking endless gallons of the thin product of the boiling of the moose bones. The soup grew thinner and thinner as he cracked the bones and boiled them over and over; but the hot water with the essence of the meat in it was good for him, and he was more vigorous than he had been previous to the shooting of the moose.

It was in the next week that a new factor entered into Morganson's life. He wanted to know the date. It became an obsession. He pondered and calculated, but his conclusions were rarely twice the same. The first thing in the morning and the last thing at night, and all day as well, watching by the trail, he worried about it. He awoke at night and lay awake for hours over the problem. To have known the date would have been of no value to him; but his curiosity grew until it equalled his hunger and his desire to live. Finally it mastered him, and he resolved to go to Minto and find out.

It was dark when he arrived at Minto, but this served him. No one saw him arrive. Besides, he knew he would have moonlight by which to return. He climbed the bank and pushed open the saloon door. The light dazzled him. The source of it was several candles, but he had been living for long in an unlighted tent. As his eyes adjusted themselves, he saw three men sitting around the stove. They were trail-travellers — he knew it at once; and since they had not passed in, they were evidently bound out. They would go by his tent next morning.

The barkeeper emitted a long and marvelling whistle.

“I thought you was dead,” he said.

“Why?” Morganson asked in a faltering voice.

He had become unused to talking, and he was not acquainted with the sound of his own voice. It seemed hoarse and strange.

“You’ve been dead for more’n two months, now,” the barkeeper explained. “You left here going south, and you never arrived at Selkirk. Where have you been?”

“Chopping wood for the steamboat company,” Morganson lied unsteadily.

He was still trying to become acquainted with his own voice. He hobbled across the floor and leant against the bar. He knew he must lie consistently; and while he maintained an appearance of careless indifference, his heart was beating and pounding furiously and irregularly, and he could not help looking hungrily at the three men by the stove. They were the possessors of life — his life.

“But where in hell you been keeping yourself all this time?” the barkeeper demanded.

“I located across the river,” he answered. “I’ve got a mighty big stack of wood chopped.”

The barkeeper nodded. His face beamed with understanding.

“I heard sounds of chopping several times,” he said. “So that was you, eh? Have a drink?”

Morganson clutched the bar tightly. A drink! He could have thrown his arms around the man’s legs and kissed his feet. He tried vainly to utter his acceptance; but the barkeeper had not waited and was already passing out the bottle.

“But what did you do for grub?” the latter asked. “You don’t look as if you could chop wood to keep yourself warm. You look terribly bad, friend.”

Morganson yearned towards the delayed bottle and gulped dryly.

“I did the chopping before the scurvy got bad,” he said. “Then I got a moose right at the start. I’ve been living high all right. It’s the scurvy that’s run me down.”

He filled the glass, and added, “But the spruce tea’s knocking it, I think.”

“Have another,” the barkeeper said.

The action of the two glasses of whisky on Morganson’s empty stomach and weak condition was rapid. The next he knew he was sitting by the stove on a box, and it seemed as though ages had passed. A tall, broad-shouldered, black-whiskered man was paying for drinks. Morganson’s swimming eyes saw him drawing a greenback from a fat roll, and Morganson’s swimming eyes cleared on the instant. They were hundred-dollar bills. It was life! His life! He felt an almost irresistible impulse to snatch the money and dash madly out into the night.

The black-whiskered man and one of his companions arose.

“Come on, Oleson,” the former said to the third one of the party, a fair-haired, ruddy-faced giant.

Oleson came to his feet, yawning and stretching.

“What are you going to bed so soon for?” the barkeeper asked plaintively. “It’s early yet.”

“Got to make Selkirk to-morrow,” said he of the black whiskers.

“On Christmas Day!” the barkeeper cried.

“The better the day the better the deed,” the other laughed.

As the three men passed out of the door it came dimly to Morganson that it was Christmas Eve. That was the date. That was what he had come to Minto for. But it was overshadowed now by the three men themselves, and the fat roll of hundred-dollar bills.

The door slammed.

“That’s Jack Thompson,” the barkeeper said. “Made two millions on Bonanza and Sulphur, and got more coming. I’m going to bed. Have another drink first.”

Morganson hesitated.

“A Christmas drink,” the other urged. “It’s all right. I’ll get it back when you sell your wood.”

Morganson mastered his drunkenness long enough to swallow the whisky, say good night, and get out on the trail. It was moonlight, and he hobbled along through the bright, silvery quiet, with a vision of life before him that took the form of a roll of hundred-dollar bills.

He awoke. It was dark, and he was in his blankets. He had gone to bed in his moccasins and mittens, with the flaps of his cap pulled down over his ears. He got up as quickly as his crippled condition would permit, and built the fire and boiled some water. As he put the spruce-twigs into the teapot he noted the first glimmer of the pale morning light. He caught up his rifle and hobbled in a panic out to the bank. As he crouched and waited, it came to him that he had forgotten to drink his spruce tea. The only other thought in his mind was the possibility of John Thompson changing his mind and not travelling Christmas Day.

Dawn broke and merged into day. It was cold and clear. Sixty below zero was Morganson’s estimate of the frost. Not a breath stirred the chill Arctic quiet. He sat up suddenly, his muscular tensity increasing the hurt of the scurvy. He had heard the far sound of a man’s voice and the faint whining of dogs. He began beating his hands back and forth against his sides. It was a serious matter to bare the trigger hand to sixty degrees below zero, and against that time he needed to develop all the warmth of which his flesh was capable.

They came into view around the outjutting clump of trees. To the fore was the third man whose name he had not learnt. Then came eight dogs drawing the sled. At the front of the sled, guiding it by the gee-pole, walked John Thompson. The rear was brought up by Oleson, the Swede. He was certainly a fine man, Morganson thought, as he looked at the bulk of him in his squirrel-skin parka. The men and dogs were silhouetted sharply against the white of the landscape. They had the seeming of two dimension, cardboard figures that worked mechanically.

Morganson rested his cocked rifle in the notch in the tree. He became abruptly aware that his fingers were cold, and discovered that his right hand was bare. He did not know that he had taken off the mitten. He slipped it on again hastily. The men and dogs drew closer, and he could see their breaths spouting into visibility in the cold air. When the first man was fifty yards away, Morganson slipped the mitten from his right hand. He placed the first finger on the trigger and aimed low. When he fired the first man whirled half around and went down on the trail.

In the instant of surprise, Morganson pulled the trigger on John Thompson — too low, for the latter staggered and sat down suddenly on the sled. Morganson raised his aim and fired again. John Thompson sank down backward along the top of the loaded sled.

Morganson turned his attention to Oleson. At the same time that he noted the latter running away towards Minto he noted that the dogs, coming to where the first man's body blocked the trail, had halted. Morganson fired at the fleeing man and missed, and Oleson swerved. He continued to swerve back and forth, while Morganson fired twice in rapid succession and missed both shots. Morganson stopped himself just as he was pulling the trigger again. He had fired six shots. Only one more cartridge remained, and it was in the chamber. It was imperative that he should not miss his last shot.

He held his fire and desperately studied Oleson's flight. The giant was grotesquely curving and twisting and running at top speed along the trail, the tail of his parka flapping smartly behind. Morganson trained his rifle on the man and with a swaying action followed his erratic flight. Morganson's finger was getting numb. He could scarcely feel the trigger. "God help me," he breathed a prayer aloud, and pulled the trigger. The running man pitched forward on his face, rebounded from the hard trail, and slid along, rolling over and over. He threshed for a moment with his arms and then lay quiet.

Morganson dropped his rifle (worthless now that the last cartridge was gone) and slid down the bank through the soft snow. Now that he had sprung the trap, concealment of his lurking-place was no longer necessary. He hobbled along the trail to the sled, his fingers making involuntary gripping and clutching movements inside the mittens.

The snarling of the dogs halted him. The leader, a heavy dog, half Newfoundland and half Hudson Bay, stood over the body of the man that lay on the trail, and menaced Morganson with bristling hair and bared fangs. The other seven dogs of the team were likewise bristling and snarling. Morganson approached tentatively, and the team surged towards him. He stopped again and talked to the animals, threatening and cajoling by turns. He noticed the face of the man under the leader's feet, and was surprised at how quickly it had turned white with the ebb of life and the entrance of the frost. John Thompson lay back along the top of the loaded sled, his head sunk in a space between two sacks and his chin tilted upwards, so that all Morganson could see was the black beard pointing skyward.

Finding it impossible to face the dogs Morganson stepped off the trail into the deep snow and floundered in a wide circle to the rear of the sled. Under the initiative of the leader, the team swung around in its tangled harness. Because of his crippled condition, Morganson could move only slowly. He saw the animals circling around on him and tried to retreat. He almost made it, but the big leader, with a savage lunge, sank its teeth into the calf of his leg. The flesh was slashed and torn, but Morganson managed to drag himself clear.

He cursed the brutes fiercely, but could not cow them. They replied with neck-bristling and snarling, and with quick lunges against their breastbands. He remembered Oleson, and turned his back upon them and went along the trail. He scarcely took notice of his lacerated leg. It was bleeding freely; the main artery had been torn, but he did not know it.

Especially remarkable to Morganson was the extreme pallor of the Swede, who the preceding night had been so ruddy-faced. Now his face was like white marble. What with his fair hair and lashes he looked like a carved statue rather than something that had been a man a few minutes before. Morganson pulled off his mittens and searched the body. There was no money-belt around the waist next to the skin, nor did he find a gold-sack. In a breast pocket he lit on a small wallet. With fingers that swiftly went numb with the frost, he hurried through the contents of the wallet. There were letters with foreign stamps and postmarks on them, and several receipts and memorandum accounts, and a letter of credit for eight hundred dollars. That was all. There was no money.

He made a movement to start back toward the sled, but found his foot rooted to the trail. He glanced down and saw that he stood in a fresh deposit of frozen red. There was red ice on his torn pants leg and on the moccasin beneath. With a quick effort he broke the frozen clutch of his blood and hobbled along the trail to the sled. The big leader that had bitten him began snarling and lunging, and was followed in this conduct by the whole team.

Morganson wept weakly for a space, and weakly swayed from one side to the other. Then he brushed away the frozen tears that gemmed his lashes. It was a joke. Malicious chance was having its laugh at him. Even John Thompson, with his heaven-aspiring whiskers, was laughing at him.

He prowled around the sled demented, at times weeping and pleading with the brutes for his life there on the sled, at other times raging impotently against them. Then calmness came upon him. He had been making a fool of himself. All he had to do was to go to the tent, get the axe, and return and brain the dogs. He'd show them.

In order to get to the tent he had to go wide of the sled and the savage animals. He stepped off the trail into the soft snow. Then he felt suddenly giddy and stood still. He was afraid to go on for fear he would fall down. He stood still for a long time, balancing himself on his crippled legs that were trembling violently from weakness. He looked down and saw the snow reddening at his feet. The blood flowed freely as ever. He had not thought the bite was so severe. He controlled his giddiness and stooped to examine the wound. The snow seemed rushing up to meet him, and he recoiled from it as from a blow. He had a panic fear that he might fall down, and after a struggle he managed to stand upright again. He was afraid of that snow that had rushed up to him.

Then the white glimmer turned black, and the next he knew he was awakening in the snow where he had fallen. He was no longer giddy. The cobwebs were gone. But he could not get up. There was no strength in his limbs. His body seemed lifeless. By a desperate effort he managed to roll over on his side. In this position he caught a glimpse of the sled and of John Thompson's black beard pointing skyward. Also he saw the lead dog licking the face of the man who lay on the trail. Morganson watched curiously. The dog was nervous and eager. Sometimes it uttered short, sharp yelps, as though to arouse the man, and surveyed him with ears cocked forward and wagging tail. At last it sat down, pointed its nose upward, and began to howl. Soon all the team was howling.

Now that he was down, Morganson was no longer afraid. He had a vision of himself being found dead in the snow, and for a while he wept in self-pity. But he was not afraid. The struggle had gone out of him. When he tried to open his eyes he found that the wet tears had frozen them shut. He did not try to brush the ice away. It did not matter. He had not dreamed death was so easy. He was even angry that he had struggled and suffered through so many weary weeks. He had been bullied and cheated by the fear of death. Death did not hurt. Every torment he had endured had been a torment of life. Life had defamed death. It was a cruel thing.

But his anger passed. The lies and frauds of life were of no consequence now that he was coming to his own. He became aware of drowsiness, and felt a sweet sleep stealing upon him, balmy with promises of easement and rest. He heard faintly the howling of the dogs, and had a fleeting thought that in the mastering of his flesh the frost no longer bit. Then the light and the thought ceased to pulse beneath the tear-gemmed eyelids, and with a tired sigh of comfort he sank into sleep.

Flush of Gold

LON McFANE was a bit grumpy, what of losing his tobacco pouch, or else he might have told me, before we got to it, something about the cabin at Surprise Lake. All day, turn and turn about, we had spelled each other at going to the fore and breaking trail for the dogs. It was heavy snowshoe work, and did not tend to make a man voluble, yet Lon McFane might have found breath enough at noon, when we stopped to boil coffee, with which to tell me. But he didn't. Surprise Lake? it was Surprise Cabin to me. I had never heard of it before. I confess I was a bit tired. I had been looking for Lon to stop and make camp any time for an hour; but I had too much pride to suggest making camp or to ask him his intentions; and yet he was my man, lured at a handsome wage to mush my dogs for me and to obey my commands. I guess I was a bit grumpy myself. He said nothing, and I was resolved to ask nothing, even if we tramped on all night.

We came upon the cabin abruptly. For a week of trail we had met no one, and, in my mind, there had been little likelihood of meeting any one for a week to come. And yet there it was, right before my eyes, a cabin, with a dim light in the window and smoke curling up from the chimney.

"Why didn't you tell me — " I began, but was interrupted by Lon, who muttered —

"Surprise Lake — it lies up a small feeder half a mile on. It's only a pond."

"Yes, but the cabin — who lives in it?"

"A woman," was the answer, and the next moment Lon had rapped on the door, and a woman's voice bade him enter.

"Have you seen Dave recently?" she asked.

"Nope," Lon answered carelessly. "I've been in the other direction, down Circle City way. Dave's up Dawson way, ain't he?"

The woman nodded, and Lon fell to unharnessing the dogs, while I unlashed the sled and carried the camp outfit into the cabin. The cabin was a large, one-room affair, and the woman was evidently alone in it. She pointed to the stove, where water was already boiling, and Lon set about the preparation of supper, while I opened the fish-bag and fed the dogs. I looked for Lon to introduce us, and was vexed that he did not, for they were evidently old friends.

"You are Lon McFane, aren't you?" I heard her ask him. "Why, I remember you now. The last time I saw you it was on a steamboat, wasn't it? I remember . . . "

Her speech seemed suddenly to be frozen by the spectacle of dread which, I knew, from the tenor I saw mounting in her eyes, must be on her inner vision. To my astonishment, Lon was affected by her words and manner. His face showed desperate, for all his voice sounded hearty and genial, as he said —

"The last time we met was at Dawson, Queen's Jubilee, or Birthday, or something — don't you remember? — the canoe races in the river, and the obstacle races down the main street?"

The terror faded out of her eyes and her whole body relaxed. "Oh, yes, I do remember," she said. "And you won one of the canoe races."

"How's Dave been makin' it lately? Strikin' it as rich as ever, I suppose?" Lon asked, with apparent irrelevance.

She smiled and nodded, and then, noticing that I had unlashed the bed roll, she indicated the end of the cabin where I might spread it. Her own bunk, I noticed, was made up at the opposite end.

"I thought it was Dave coming when I heard your dogs," she said.

After that she said nothing, contenting herself with watching Lon's cooking operations, and listening the while as for the sound of dogs along the trail. I lay back on the blankets and smoked and watched. Here was mystery; I could make that much out, but no more could I make out. Why in the deuce hadn't Lon given me the tip before we arrived? I looked at her face, unnoticed by her, and the longer I looked the harder it was to take my eyes away. It was a wonderfully beautiful face, unearthly, I may say, with a light in it or an expression or something "that was never on land or sea." Fear and terror had completely vanished, and it was a placidly beautiful face — if by "placid" one can characterize that intangible and occult something that I cannot say was a radiance or a light any more than I can say it was an expression.

Abruptly, as if for the first time, she became aware of my presence.

"Have you seen Dave recently?" she asked me. It was on the tip of my tongue to say "Dave who?" when Lon coughed in the smoke that arose from the sizzling bacon. The bacon might have caused that cough, but I took it as a hint and left my question unasked. "No, I haven't," I answered. "I'm new in this part of the country — "

"But you don't mean to say," she interrupted, "that you've never heard of Dave — of Big Dave Walsh?"

"You see," I apologised, "I'm new in the country. I've put in most of my time in the Lower Country, down Nome way."

"Tell him about Dave," she said to Lon.

Lon seemed put out, but he began in that hearty, genial manner that I had noticed before. It seemed a shade too hearty and genial, and it irritated me.

"Oh, Dave is a fine man," he said. "He's a man, every inch of him, and he stands six feet four in his socks. His word is as good as his bond. The man lies who ever says Dave told a lie, and that man will have to fight with me, too, as well — if there's anything left of him when Dave gets done with him. For Dave is a fighter. Oh, yes, he's a scrapper from way back. He got a grizzly with a '38 popgun. He got clawed some, but he knew what he was doin'. He went into the cave on purpose to get that grizzly. 'Fraid of nothing. Free an' easy with his money, or his last shirt an' match when out of money. Why, he drained Surprise Lake here in three weeks an' took out ninety thousand, didn't he?" She flushed and nodded her head proudly. Through his recital she had followed every word with keenest interest. "An' I must say," Lon went on, "that I was disappointed sore on not meeting Dave here to-night."

Lon served supper at one end of the table of whip-sawed spruce, and we fell to eating. A howling of the dogs took the woman to the door. She opened it an inch and listened.

"Where is Dave Walsh?" I asked, in an undertone.

"Dead," Lon answered. "In hell, maybe. I don't know. Shut up."

"But you just said that you expected to meet him here to-night," I challenged.

"Oh, shut up, can't you," was Lon's reply, in the same cautious undertone.

The woman had closed the door and was returning, and I sat and meditated upon the fact that this man who told me to shut up received from me a salary of two hundred and fifty dollars a month and his board.

Lon washed the dishes, while I smoked and watched the woman. She seemed more beautiful than ever — strangely and weirdly beautiful, it is true. After looking at her steadfastly for five minutes, I was compelled to come back to the real world and to glance at Lon McFane. This enabled me to know, without discussion, that the woman, too, was real. At first I had taken her for the wife of Dave Walsh; but if Dave Walsh were dead, as Lon had said, then she could be only his widow.

It was early to bed, for we faced a long day on the morrow; and as Lon crawled in beside me under the blankets, I ventured a question.

"That woman's crazy, isn't she?"

"Crazy as a loon," he answered.

And before I could formulate my next question, Lon McFane, I swear, was off to sleep. He always went to sleep that way — just crawled into the blankets, closed his eyes, and was off, a demure little heavy breathing rising on the air. Lon never snored.

And in the morning it was quick breakfast, feed the dogs, load the sled, and hit the trail. We said good-bye as we pulled out, and the woman stood in the doorway and watched us off. I carried the vision of her unearthly beauty away with me, just under my eyelids, and all I had to do, any time, was to close them and see her again. The way was unbroken, Surprise Lake being far off the travelled trails, and Lon and I took turn about at beating down the feathery snow with our big, webbed shoes so that the dogs could travel. "But you said you expected to meet Dave Walsh at the cabin," trembled on the tip of my tongue a score of times. I did not utter it. I could wait until we knocked off in the middle of the day. And when the middle of the day came, we went right on, for, as Lon explained, there was a camp of moose hunters at the forks of the Teelee, and we could make there by dark. But we didn't make there by dark, for Bright, the lead-dog, broke his shoulder-blade, and we lost an hour over him before we shot him. Then, crossing a timber jam on the frozen bed of the Teelee, the sled suffered a wrenching capsize, and it was a case of make camp and repair the runner. I cooked supper and fed the dogs while Lon made the repairs, and together we got in the night's supply of ice and firewood. Then we sat on our blankets, our moccasins steaming on upended sticks before the fire, and had our evening smoke.

"You didn't know her?" Lon queried suddenly. I shook my head.

"You noticed the colour of her hair and eyes and her complexion, well, that's where she got her name — she was like the first warm glow of a golden sunrise. She was called Flush of Gold. Ever heard of her?"

Somewhere I had a confused and misty remembrance of having heard the name, yet it meant nothing to me. "Flush of Gold," I repeated; "sounds like the name of a dance-house girl." Lon shook his head. "No, she was a good woman, at least in that sense, though she sinned greatly just the same."

"But why do you speak always of her in the past tense, as though she were dead?"

"Because of the darkness on her soul that is the same as the darkness of death. The Flush of Gold that I knew, that Dawson knew, and that Forty Mile knew before that, is dead. That dumb, lunatic creature we saw last night was not Flush of Gold."

"And Dave?" I queried.

"He built that cabin," Lon answered, "He built it for her . . . and for himself. He is dead. She is waiting for him there. She half believes he is not dead. But who can know the whim of a crazed mind? Maybe she wholly believes he is not dead. At any rate, she waits for him there in the cabin he built. Who would rouse the dead? Then who would rouse the living that are dead? Not I, and that is why I let on to expect to meet Dave Walsh there last night. I'll bet a stack that I'd a been more surprised than she if I HAD met him there last night."

"I do not understand," I said. "Begin at the beginning, as a white man should, and tell me the whole tale."

And Lon began. "Victor Chauvet was an old Frenchman — born in the south of France. He came to California in the days of gold. He was a pioneer. He found no gold, but, instead, became a maker of bottled sunshine — in short, a grape-grower and wine-maker. Also, he followed gold excitements. That is what brought him to Alaska in the early days, and over the Chilcoot and down the Yukon long before the Carmack strike. The old town site of Ten Mile was Chauvet's. He carried the first mail into Arctic City. He staked those coal-mines on the Porcupine a dozen years ago. He grubstaked Loftus into the Nippennuck Country. Now it happened that Victor Chauvet was a good Catholic, loving two things in this world, wine and woman. Wine of all kinds he loved, but of woman, only one, and she was the mother of Marie Chauvet."

Here I groaned aloud, having meditated beyond self-control over the fact that I paid this man two hundred and fifty dollars a month.

"What's the matter now?" he demanded.

"Matter?" I complained. "I thought you were telling the story of Flush of Gold. I don't want a biography of your old French wine-bibber."

Lon calmly lighted his pipe, took one good puff, then put the pipe aside. "And you asked me to begin at the beginning," he said.

"Yes," said I; "the beginning."

"And the beginning of Flush of Gold is the old French wine-bibber, for he was the father of Marie Chauvet, and Marie Chauvet was the Flush of Gold. What more do you want? Victor Chauvet never had much luck to speak of. He managed to live, and to get along, and to take good care of Marie, who resembled the one woman he had loved. He took very good care of her. Flush of Gold was the pet name he gave her. Flush of Gold Creek was named after her — Flush of Gold town site, too. The old man was great on town sites, only he never landed them.

"Now, honestly," Lon said, with one of his lightning changes, "you've seen her, what do you think of her — of her looks, I mean? How does she strike your beauty sense?"

"She is remarkably beautiful," I said. "I never saw anything like her in my life. In spite of the fact, last night, that I guessed she was mad, I could not keep my eyes off of her. It wasn't curiosity. It was wonder, sheer wonder, she was so strangely beautiful."

"She was more strangely beautiful before the darkness fell upon her," Lon said softly. "She was truly the Flush of Cold. She turned all men's hearts . . . and heads. She recalls, with an effort, that I once won a canoe race at Dawson — I, who once loved her, and was told by her of her love for me. It was her beauty that made all men love her. She'd 'a' got the apple from Paris, on application, and there wouldn't have been any Trojan War, and to top it off she'd have thrown Paris down. And now she lives in darkness, and she who was always fickle, for the first time is constant — and constant to a shade, to a dead man she does not realize is dead.

"And this is the way it was. You remember what I said last night of Dave Walsh — Big Dave Walsh? He was all that I said, and more, many times more. He came into this country in the late eighties — that's a pioneer for you. He was twenty years old then. He was a young bull. When he was twenty-five he could lift clear of the ground thirteen fifty-pound sacks of flour. At first, each fall of the year, famine drove him out. It was a lone land in those days. No river steamboats, no grub, nothing but salmon bellies and rabbit tracks. But after famine chased him out three years, he said he'd had enough of being chased; and the next year he stayed. He lived on straight meat when he was lucky enough to get it; he ate eleven dogs that winter;

but he stayed. And the next winter he stayed, and the next. He never did leave the country again. He was a bull, a great bull. He could kill the strongest man in the country with hard work. He could outpack a Chilcat Indian, he could outpaddle a Stick, and he could travel all day with wet feet when the thermometer registered fifty below zero, and that's going some, I tell you, for vitality. You'd freeze your feet at twenty-five below if you wet them and tried to keep on.

"Dave Walsh was a bull for strength. And yet he was soft and easy-natured. Anybody could do him, the latest short-horn in camp could lie his last dollar out of him. 'But it doesn't worry me,' he had a way of laughing off his softness; 'it doesn't keep me awake nights.' Now don't get the idea that he had no backbone. You remember about the bear he went after with the popgun. When it came to fighting Dave was the blamedest ever. He was the limit, if by that I may describe his unlimitedness when he got into action, he was easy and kind with the weak, but the strong had to give trail when he went by. And he was a man that men liked, which is the finest word of all, a man's man.

"Dave never took part in the big stampede to Dawson when Carmack made the Bonanza strike. You see, Dave was just then over on Mammon Creek strikin' it himself. He discovered Mammon Creek. Cleaned eighty-four thousand up that winter, and opened up the claim so that it promised a couple of hundred thousand for the next winter. Then, summer bein' on and the ground sloshy, he took a trip up the Yukon to Dawson to see what Carmack's strike looked like. And there he saw Flush of Gold. I remember the night. I shall always remember. It was something sudden, and it makes one shiver to think of a strong man with all the strength withered out of him by one glance from the soft eyes of a weak, blond, female creature like Flush of Gold. It was at her dad's cabin, old Victor Chauvet's. Some friend had brought Dave along to talk over town sites on Mammon Creek. But little talking did he do, and what he did was mostly gibberish. I tell you the sight of Flush of Gold had sent Dave clean daffy. Old Victor Chauvet insisted after Dave left that he had been drunk. And so he had. He was drunk, but Flush of Gold was the strong drink that made him so.

"That settled it, that first glimpse he caught of her. He did not start back down the Yukon in a week, as he had intended. He lingered on a month, two months, all summer. And we who had suffered understood, and wondered what the outcome would be. Undoubtedly, in our minds, it seemed that

Flush of Gold had met her master. And why not? There was romance sprinkled all over Dave Walsh. He was a Mammon King, he had made the Mammon Creek strike; he was an old sour dough, one of the oldest pioneers in the land — men turned to look at him when he went by, and said to one another in awed undertones, 'There goes Dave Walsh.' And why not? He stood six feet four; he had yellow hair himself that curled on his neck; and he was a bull — a yellow-maned bull just turned thirty-one.

"And Flush of Gold loved him, and, having danced him through a whole summer's courtship, at the end their engagement was made known. The fall of the year was at hand, Dave had to be back for the winter's work on Mammon Creek, and Flush of Gold refused to be married right away. Dave put Dusky Burns in charge of the Mammon Creek claim, and himself lingered on in Dawson. Little use. She wanted her freedom a while longer; she must have it, and she would not marry until next year. And so, on the first ice, Dave Walsh went alone down the Yukon behind his dogs, with the understanding that the marriage would take place when he arrived on the first steamboat of the next year.

Now Dave was as true as the Pole Star, and she was as false as a magnetic needle in a cargo of loadstone. Dave was as steady and solid as she was fickle and fly-away, and in some way Dave, who never doubted anybody, doubted her. It was the jealousy of his love, perhaps, and maybe it was the message ticked off from her soul to his; but at any rate Dave was worried by fear of her inconstancy. He was afraid to trust her till the next year, he had so to trust her, and he was pretty well beside himself. Some of it I got from old Victor Chauvet afterwards, and from all that I have pieced together I conclude that there was something of a scene before Dave pulled north with his dogs. He stood up before the old Frenchman, with Flush of Gold beside him, and announced that they were plighted to each other. He was very dramatic, with fire in his eyes, old Victor said. He talked something about 'until death do us part'; and old Victor especially remembered that at one place Dave took her by the shoulder with his great paw and almost shook her as he said: 'Even unto death are you mine, and I would rise from the grave to claim you.' Old Victor distinctly remembered those words 'Even unto death are you mine, and I would rise from the grave to claim you.' And he told me afterwards that Flush of Gold was pretty badly frightened, and that he afterwards took Dave to one side privately and told him that that wasn’t the way to hold Flush of Gold — that he must humour her and gentle her if he wanted to keep her.

“There is no discussion in my mind but that Flush of Gold was frightened. She was a savage herself in her treatment of men, while men had always treated her as a soft and tender and too utterly-utter something that must not be hurt. She didn’t know what harshness was. . . until Dave Walsh, standing his six feet four, a big bull, gripped her and pawed her and assured her that she was his until death, and then some. And besides, in Dawson, that winter, was a music-player — one of those macaroni-eating, greasy-tenor-Eye-talian-dago propositions — and Flush of Gold lost her heart to him. Maybe it was only fascination — I don’t know. Sometimes it seems to me that she really did love Dave Walsh. Perhaps it was because he had frightened her with that even-unto-death, rise-from-the-grave stunt of his that she in the end inclined to the dago music-player. But it is all guesswork, and the facts are, sufficient. He wasn’t a dago; he was a Russian count — this was straight; and he wasn’t a professional piano-player or anything of the sort. He played the violin and the piano, and he sang — sang well — but it was for his own pleasure and for the pleasure of those he sang for. He had money, too — and right here let me say that Flush of Gold never cared a rap for money. She was fickle, but she was never sordid.

“But to be getting along. She was plighted to Dave, and Dave was coming up on the first steamboat to get her — that was the summer of ‘98, and the first steamboat was to be expected the middle of June. And Flush of Gold was afraid to throw Dave down and face him afterwards. It was all planned suddenly. The Russian music-player, the Count, was her obedient slave. She planned it, I know. I learned as much from old Victor afterwards. The Count took his orders from her, and caught that first steamboat down. It was the Golden Rocket. And so did Flush of Gold catch it. And so did I. I was going to Circle City, and I was flabbergasted when I found Flush of Gold on board. I didn’t see her name down on the passenger list. She was with the Count fellow all the time, happy and smiling, and I noticed that the Count fellow was down on the list as having his wife along. There it was, stateroom, number, and all. The first I knew that he was married, only I didn’t see anything of the wife . . . unless Flush of Gold was so counted. I wondered if they’d got married ashore before starting. There’d been talk about them in Dawson, you see, and bets had been laid that the Count fellow had cut Dave out.

“I talked with the purser. He didn’t know anything more about it than I did; he didn’t know Flush of Gold, anyway, and besides, he was almost rushed to death. You know what a Yukon steamboat is, but you can’t guess what the Golden Rocket was when it left Dawson that June of 1898. She was a hummer. Being the first steamer out, she carried all the scurvy patients and hospital wrecks. Then she must have carried a couple of millions of Klondike dust and nuggets, to say nothing of a packed and jammed passenger list, deck passengers galore, and bucks and squaws and dogs without end. And she was loaded down to the guards with freight and baggage. There was a mountain of the same on the fore-lower-deck, and each little stop along the way added to it. I saw the box come aboard at Teelee Portage, and I knew it for what it was, though I little guessed the joker that was in it. And they piled it on top of everything else on the fore-lower-deck, and they didn’t pile it any too securely either. The mate expected to come back to it again, and then forgot about it. I thought at the time that there was something familiar about the big husky dog that climbed over the baggage and freight and lay down next to the box. And then we passed the Glendale, bound up for Dawson. As she saluted us, I thought of Dave on board of her and hurrying to Dawson to Flush of Gold. I turned and looked at her where she stood by the rail. Her eyes were bright, but she looked a bit frightened by the sight of the other steamer, and she was leaning closely to the Count fellow as for protection. She needn’t have leaned so safely against him, and I needn’t have been so sure of a disappointed Dave Walsh arriving at Dawson. For Dave Walsh wasn’t on the Glendale. There were a lot of things I didn’t know, but was soon to know — for instance, that the pair were not yet married. Inside half an hour preparations for the marriage took place. What of the sick men in the main cabin, and of the crowded condition of the Golden Rocket, the likeliest place for the ceremony was found forward, on the lower deck, in an open space next to the rail and gang-plank and shaded by the mountain of freight with the big box on top and the sleeping dog beside it. There was a missionary on board, getting off at Eagle City, which was the next step, so they had to use him quick. That’s what they’d planned to do, get married on the boat.

“But I’ve run ahead of the facts. The reason Dave Walsh wasn’t on the Glendale was because he was on the Golden Rocket. It was this way. After loiterin’ in Dawson on account of Flush of Gold, he went down to Mammon

Creek on the ice. And there he found Dusky Burns doing so well with the claim, there was no need for him to be around. So he put some grub on the sled, harnessed the dogs, took an Indian along, and pulled out for Surprise Lake. He always had a liking for that section. Maybe you don't know how the creek turned out to be a four-flusher; but the prospects were good at the time, and Dave proceeded to build his cabin and hers. That's the cabin we slept in. After he finished it, he went off on a moose hunt to the forks of the Teelee, takin' the Indian along.

"And this is what happened. Came on a cold snap. The juice went down forty, fifty, sixty below zero. I remember that snap — I was at Forty Mile; and I remember the very day. At eleven o'clock in the morning the spirit thermometer at the N. A. T. & T. Company's store went down to seventy-five below zero. And that morning, near the forks of the Teelee, Dave Walsh was out after moose with that blessed Indian of his. I got it all from the Indian afterwards — we made a trip over the ice together to Dyea. That morning Mr. Indian broke through the ice and wet himself to the waist. Of course he began to freeze right away. The proper thing was to build a fire. But Dave Walsh was a bull. It was only half a mile to camp, where a fire was already burning. What was the good of building another? He threw Mr. Indian over his shoulder — and ran with him — half a mile — with the thermometer at seventy-five below. You know what that means. Suicide. There's no other name for it. Why, that buck Indian weighed over two hundred himself, and Dave ran half a mile with him. Of course he froze his lungs. Must have frozen them near solid. It was a tomfool trick for any man to do. And anyway, after lingering horribly for several weeks, Dave Walsh died.

"The Indian didn't know what to do with the corpse. Ordinarily he'd have buried him and let it go at that. But he knew that Dave Walsh was a big man, worth lots of money, a hi-yu skookum chief. Likewise he'd seen the bodies of other hi-yu skookums carted around the country like they were worth something. So he decided to take Dave's body to Forty Mile, which was Dave's headquarters. You know how the ice is on the grass roots in this country — well, the Indian planted Dave under a foot of soil — in short, he put Dave on ice. Dave could have stayed there a thousand years and still been the same old Dave. You understand — just the same as a refrigerator. Then the Indian brings over a whipsaw from the cabin at Surprise Lake and makes lumber enough for the box. Also, waiting for the thaw, he goes out and shoots about ten thousand pounds of moose. This he keeps on ice, too. Came the thaw. The Teelee broke. He built a raft and loaded it with the meat, the big box with Dave inside, and Dave's team of dogs, and away they went down the Teelee.

"The raft got caught on a timber jam and hung up two days. It was scorching hot weather, and Mr. Indian nearly lost his moose meat. So when he got to Teelee Portage he figured a steamboat would get to Forty Mile quicker than his raft. He transferred his cargo, and there you are, fore-lower deck of the Golden Rocket, Flush of Gold being married, and Dave Walsh in his big box casting the shade for her. And there's one thing I clean forgot. No wonder I thought the husky dog that came aboard at Teelee Portage was familiar. It was Pee-lat, Dave Walsh's lead-dog and favourite — a terrible fighter, too. He was lying down beside the box.

"Flush of Gold caught sight of me, called me over, shook hands with me, and introduced me to the Count. She was beautiful. I was as mad for her then as ever. She smiled into my eyes and said I must sign as one of the witnesses. And there was no refusing her. She was ever a child, cruel as children are cruel. Also, she told me she was in possession of the only two bottles of champagne in Dawson — or that had been in Dawson the night before; and before I knew it I was scheduled to drink her and the Count's health. Everybody crowded round, the captain of the steamboat, very prominent, trying to ring in on the wine, I guess. It was a funny wedding. On the upper deck the hospital wrecks, with various feet in the grave, gathered and looked down to see. There were Indians all jammed in the circle, too, big bucks, and their squaws and kids, to say nothing of about twenty-five snarling wolf-dogs. The missionary lined the two of them up and started in with the service. And just then a dog-fight started, high up on the pile of freight — Pee-lat lying beside the big box, and a white-haired brute belonging to one of the Indians. The fight wasn't explosive at all. The brutes just snarled at each other from a distance — tapping at each other long-distance, you know, saying dast and dassent, dast and dassent. The noise was rather disturbing, but you could hear the missionary's voice above it.

"There was no particularly easy way of getting at the two dogs, except from the other side of the pile. But nobody was on that side--everybody watching the ceremony, you see. Even then everything might have been all right if the captain hadn't thrown a club at the dogs. That was what precipitated everything. As I say, if the captain hadn’t thrown that club, nothing might have happened.

“The missionary had just reached the point where he was saying ‘In sickness and in health,’ and ‘Till death us do part.’ And just then the captain threw the club. I saw the whole thing. It landed on Pee-lat, and at that instant the white brute jumped him. The club caused it. Their two bodies struck the box, and it began to slide, its lower end tilting down. It was a long oblong box, and it slid down slowly until it reached the perpendicular, when it came down on the run. The onlookers on that side the circle had time to get out from under. Flush of Gold and the Count, on the opposite side of the circle, were facing the box; the missionary had his back to it. The box must have fallen ten feet straight up and down, and it hit end on.

“Now mind you, not one of us knew that Dave Walsh was dead. We thought he was on the Glendale, bound for Dawson. The missionary had edged off to one side, and so Flush of Gold faced the box when it struck. It was like in a play. It couldn’t have been better planned. It struck on end, and on the right end; the whole front of the box came off; and out swept Dave Walsh on his feet, partly wrapped in a blanket, his yellow hair flying and showing bright in the sun. Right out of the box, on his feet, he swept upon Flush of Gold. She didn’t know he was dead, but it was unmistakable, after hanging up two days on a timber jam, that he was rising all right from the dead to claim her. Possibly that is what she thought. At any rate, the sight froze her. She couldn’t move. She just sort of wilted and watched Dave Walsh coming for her! And he got her. It looked almost as though he threw his arms around her, but whether or not this happened, down to the deck they went together. We had to drag Dave Walsh’s body clear before we could get hold of her. She was in a faint, but it would have been just as well if she had never come out of that faint; for when she did, she fell to screaming the way insane people do. She kept it up for hours, till she was exhausted. Oh, yes, she recovered. You saw her last night, and know how much recovered she is. She is not violent, it is true, but she lives in darkness. She believes that she is waiting for Dave Walsh, and so she waits in the cabin he built for her. She is no longer fickle. It is nine years now that she has been faithful to Dave Walsh, and the outlook is that she’ll be faithful to him to the end.”

Lon McFane pulled down the top of the blankets and prepared to crawl in.

“We have her grub hauled to her each year,” he added, “and in general keep an eye on her. Last night was the first time she ever recognized me, though.”

“Who are the we?” I asked.

“Oh,” was the answer, “the Count and old Victor Chauvet and me. Do you know, I think the Count is the one to be really sorry for. Dave Walsh never did know that she was false to him. And she does not suffer. Her darkness is merciful to her.”

I lay silently under the blankets for the space of a minute.

“Is the Count still in the country?” I asked.

But there was a gentle sound of heavy breathing, and I knew Lon McFane was asleep.

A Flutter in Eggs

IT was in the A. C. Company’s big store at Dawson, on a morning of crisp frost, that Lucille Arral beckoned Smoke Bellew over to the dry-goods counter. The clerk had gone on an expedition into the storerooms, and, despite the huge, red-hot stoves, Lucille had drawn on her mittens again.

Smoke obeyed her call with alacrity. The man did not exist in Dawson who would not have been flattered by the notice of Lucille Arral, the singing soubrette of the tiny stock company that performed nightly at the Palace Opera House.

“Things are dead,” she complained, with pretty petulance, as soon as they had shaken hands. “There hasn’t been a stampede for a week. That masked ball Skiff Mitchell was going to give us has been postponed. There’s no dust in circulation. There’s always standing-room now at the Opera House. And there hasn’t been a mail from the Outside for two whole weeks. In short, this burg has crawled into its cave and gone to sleep. We’ve got to do something. It needs livening--and you and I can do it. We can give it excitement if anybody can. I’ve broken with Wild Water, you know.”

Smoke caught two almost simultaneous visions. One was of Joy Gastell; the other was of himself, in the midst of a bleak snow-stretch, under a cold arctic moon, being pot-shotted with accurateness and dispatch by the aforesaid Wild Water. Smoke’s reluctance at raising excitement with the aid of Lucille Arral was too patent for her to miss.

“I’m not thinking what you are thinking at all, thank you,” she chided, with a laugh and a pout. “When I throw myself at your head you’ll have to have more eyes and better ones than you have now to see me.”

“Men have died of heart disease at the sudden announcement of good fortune,” he murmured in the unveracious gladness of relief.

“Liar,” she retorted graciously. “You were more scared to death than anything else. Now take it from me, Mr. Smoke Bellew, I’m not going to make love to you, and if you dare to make love to me, Wild Water will take care of your case. You know HIM. Besides, I--I haven’t really broken with him.”

“Go on with your puzzles,” he jeered. “Maybe I can start guessing what you’re driving at after a while.”

"There's no guessing, Smoke. I'll give it to you straight. Wild Water thinks I've broken with him, don't you see."

"Well, have you, or haven't you?"

"I haven't--there! But it's between you and me in confidence. He thinks I have. I made a noise like breaking with him, and he deserved it, too."

"Where do I come in, stalking-horse or fall-guy?"

"Neither. You make a pot of money, we put across the laugh on Wild Water and cheer Dawson up, and, best of all, and the reason for it all, he gets disciplined. He needs it. He's--well, the best way to put it is, he's too turbulent. Just because he's a big husky, because he owns more rich claims than he can keep count of--"

"And because he's engaged to the prettiest little woman in Alaska," Smoke interpolated.

"Yes, and because of that, too, thank you, is no reason for him to get riotous. He broke out last night again. Sowed the floor of the M. & M. with gold-dust. All of a thousand dollars. Just opened his poke and scattered it under the feet of the dancers. You've heard of it, of course."

"Yes; this morning. I'd like to be the sweeper in that establishment. But still I don't get you. Where do I come in?"

"Listen. He was too turbulent. I broke our engagement, and he's going around making a noise like a broken heart. Now we come to it. I like eggs."

"They're off!" Smoke cried in despair. "Which way? Which way?"

"Wait."

"But what have eggs and appetite got to do with it?" he demanded.

"Everything, if you'll only listen."

"Listening, listening," he chanted.

"Then for Heaven's sake listen. I like eggs. There's only a limited supply of eggs in Dawson."

"Sure. I know that, too. Slavovitch's restaurant has most of them. Ham and one egg, three dollars. Ham and two eggs, five dollars. That means two dollars an egg, retail. And only the swells and the Arrals and the Wild Waters can afford them."

"He likes eggs, too," she continued. "But that's not the point. I like them. I have breakfast every morning at eleven o'clock at Slavovitch's. I invariably eat two eggs." She paused impressively. "Suppose, just suppose, somebody corners eggs."

She waited, and Smoke regarded her with admiring eyes, while in his heart he backed with approval Wild Water's choice of her.

"You're not following," she said.

"Go on," he replied. "I give up. What's the answer?"

"Stupid! You know Wild Water. When he sees I'm languishing for eggs, and I know his mind like a book, and I know how to languish, what will he do?"

"You answer it. Go on."

"Why, he'll just start stampeding for the man that's got the corner in eggs. He'll buy the corner, no matter what it costs. Picture: I come into Slavovitch's at eleven o'clock. Wild Water will be at the next table. He'll make it his business to be there. 'Two eggs, shirred,' I'll say to the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Arral,' the waiter will say; 'they ain't no more eggs.' Then up speaks Wild Water, in that big bear voice of his, 'Waiter, six eggs, soft boiled.' And the waiter says, 'Yes, sir,' and the eggs are brought. Picture: Wild Water looks sideways at me, and I look like a particularly indignant icicle and summon the waiter. 'Sorry, Miss Arral,' he says, 'but them eggs is Mr. Wild Water's. You see, Miss, he owns 'em.' Picture: Wild Water, triumphant, doing his best to look unconscious while he eats his six eggs.

"Another picture: Slavovitch himself bringing two shirred eggs to me and saying, 'Compliments of Mr. Wild Water, Miss.' What can I do? What can I possibly do but smile at Wild Water, and then we make up, of course, and he'll consider it cheap if he has been compelled to pay ten dollars for each and every egg in the corner."

"Go on, go on," Smoke urged. "At what station do I climb onto the choo-choo cars, or at what water-tank do I get thrown off?"

"Ninny! You don't get thrown off. You ride the egg-train straight into the Union Depot. You make that corner in eggs. You start in immediately, to-day. You can buy every egg in Dawson for three dollars and sell out to Wild Water at almost any advance. And then, afterward, we'll let the inside history come out. The laugh will be on Wild Water. His turbulence will be some subdued. You and I share the glory of it. You make a pile of money. And Dawson wakes up with a grand ha! ha! Of course--if--if you think the speculation too risky, I'll put up the dust for the corner."

This last was too much for Smoke. Being only a mere mortal Western man, with queer obsessions about money and women, he declined with scorn the proffer of her dust.

“Hey! Shorty!” Smoke called across the main street to his partner, who was trudging along in his swift, slack-jointed way, a naked bottle with frozen contents conspicuously tucked under his arm. Smoke crossed over.

“Where have you been all morning? Been looking for you everywhere.”

“Up to Doc’s,” Shorty answered, holding out the bottle. “Something’s wrong with Sally. I seen last night, at feedin’-time, the hair on her tail an’ flanks was fallin’ out. The Doc says--“

“Never mind that,” Smoke broke in impatiently. “What I want--“

“What’s eatin’ you?” Shorty demanded in indignant astonishment. “An’ Sally gettin’ naked bald in this crimpy weather! I tell you that dog’s sick. Doc says--“

“Let Sally wait. Listen to me--“

“I tell you she can’t wait. It’s cruelty to animals. She’ll be frost-bit. What are you in such a fever about anyway? Has that Monte Cristo strike proved up?”

“I don’t know, Shorty. But I want you to do me a favor.”

“Sure,” Shorty said gallantly, immediately appeased and acquiescent. “What is it? Let her rip. Me for you.”

“I want you to buy eggs for me--“

“Sure, an’ Floridy water an’ talcum powder, if you say the word. An’ poor Sally sheddin’ something scand’lous! Look here, Smoke, if you want to go in for high livin’ you go an’ buy your own eggs. Beans an’ bacon’s good enough for me.”

“I am going to buy, but I want you to help me to buy. Now, shut up, Shorty. I’ve got the floor. You go right straight to Slavovitch’s. Pay as high as three dollars, but buy all he’s got.”

“Three dollars!” Shorty groaned. “An’ I heard tell only yesterday that he’s got all of seven hundred in stock! Twenty-one hundred dollars for hen-fruit! Say, Smoke, I tell you what. You run right up and see the Doc. He’ll tend to your case. An’ he’ll only charge you an ounce for the first prescription. So-long, I gotta to be pullin’ my freight.”

He started off, but Smoke caught his partner by the shoulder, arresting his progress and whirling him around.

“Smoke, I’d sure do anything for you,” Shorty protested earnestly. “If you had a cold in the head an’ was layin’ with both arms broke, I’d set by your bedside, day an’ night, an’ wipe your nose for you. But I’ll be everlastin'ly damned if I'll squander twenty-one hundred good iron dollars on hen-fruit for you or any other two-legged man."

"They're not your dollars, but mine, Shorty. It's a deal I have on. What I'm after is to corner every blessed egg in Dawson, in the Klondike, on the Yukon. You've got to help me out. I haven't the time to tell you of the inwardness of the deal. I will afterward, and let you go half on it if you want to. But the thing right now is to get the eggs. Now you hustle up to Slavovitch's and buy all he's got."

"But what'll I tell 'm? He'll sure know I ain't goin' to eat 'em."

"Tell him nothing. Money talks. He sells them cooked for two dollars. Offer him up to three for them uncooked. If he gets curious, tell him you're starting a chicken ranch. What I want is the eggs. And then keep on; nose out every egg in Dawson and buy it. Understand? Buy it! That little joint across the street from Slavovitch's has a few. Buy them. I'm going over to Klondike City. There's an old man there, with a bad leg, who's broke and who has six dozen. He's held them all winter for the rise, intending to get enough out of them to pay his passage back to Seattle. I'll see he gets his passage, and I'll get the eggs. Now hustle. And they say that little woman down beyond the sawmill who makes moccasins has a couple of dozen."

"All right, if you say so, Smoke. But Slavovitch seems the main squeeze. I'll just get an iron-bound option, black an' white, an' gather in the scatterin' first."

"All right. Hustle. And I'll tell you the scheme tonight."

But Shorty flourished the bottle. "I'm goin' to doctor up Sally first. The eggs can wait that long. If they ain't all eaten, they won't be eaten while I'm takin' care of a poor sick dog that's saved your life an' mine more 'n once."

Never was a market cornered more quickly. In three days every known egg in Dawson, with the exception of several dozen, was in the hands of Smoke and Shorty. Smoke had been more liberal in purchasing. He unblushingly pleaded guilty to having given the old man in Klondike City five dollars apiece for his seventy-two eggs. Shorty had bought most of the eggs, and he had driven bargains. He had given only two dollars an egg to the woman who made moccasins, and he prided himself that he had come off fairly well with Slavovitch, whose seven hundred and fifteen eggs he had bought at a flat rate of two dollars and a half. On the other hand, he grumbled because the little restaurant across the street had held him up for two dollars and seventy-five cents for a paltry hundred and thirty-four eggs.

The several dozen not yet gathered in were in the hands of two persons. One, with whom Shorty was dealing, was an Indian woman who lived in a cabin on the hill back of the hospital.

"I'll get her to-day," Shorty announced next morning. "You wash the dishes, Smoke. I'll be back in a jiffy, if I don't bust myself a-shovin' dust at her. Gimme a man to deal with every time. These blamed women--it's something sad the way they can hold out on a buyer. The only way to get 'em is sellin'. Why, you'd think them eggs of hern was solid nuggets."

In the afternoon, when Smoke returned to the cabin, he found Shorty squatted on the floor, rubbing ointment into Sally's tail, his countenance so expressionless that it was suspicious.

"What luck?" Shorty asked carelessly, after several minutes had passed.

"Nothing doing," Smoke answered. "How did you get on with the squaw?"

Shorty cocked his head triumphantly toward a tin pail of eggs on the table. "Seven dollars a clatter, though," he confessed, after another minute of silent rubbing.

"I offered ten dollars finally," Smoke said, "and then the fellow told me he'd already sold his eggs. Now that looks bad, Shorty. Somebody else is in the market. Those twenty-eight eggs are liable to cause us trouble. You see, the success of the corner consists in holding every last--"

He broke off to stare at his partner. A pronounced change was coming over Shorty--one of agitation masked by extreme deliberation. He closed the salve-box, wiped his hands slowly and thoroughly on Sally's furry coat, stood up, went over to the corner and looked at the thermometer, and came back again. He spoke in a low, toneless, and super-polite voice.

"Do you mind kindly just repeating over how many eggs you said the man didn't sell to you?" he asked.

"Twenty-eight."

"Hum," Shorty communed to himself, with a slight duck of the head of careless acknowledgment. Then he glanced with slumbering anger at the stove. "Smoke, we'll have to dig up a new stove. That fire-box is burned plumb into the oven so it blacks the biscuits."

"Let the fire-box alone," Smoke commanded, "and tell me what's the matter."

“Matter? An’ you want to know what’s the matter? Well, kindly please direct them handsome eyes of yourn at that there pail settin’ on the table. See it?”

Smoke nodded.

“Well, I want to tell you one thing, just one thing. They’s just exactly, preecisely, nor nothin’ more or anythin’ less’n twenty-eight eggs in the pail, an’ they cost, every danged last one of ‘em, just exactly seven great big round iron dollars a throw. If you stand in cryin’ need of any further items of information, I’m willin’ and free to impart.”

“Go on,” Smoke requested.

“Well, that geezer you was dickerin’ with is a big buck Indian. Am I right?”

Smoke nodded, and continued to nod to each question.

“He’s got one cheek half gone where a bald-face grizzly swatted him. Am I right? He’s a dog-trader--right, eh? His name is Scar-Face Jim. That’s so, ain’t it? D’ye get my drift?”

“You mean we’ve been bidding--?”

“Against each other. Sure thing. That squaw’s his wife, an’ they keep house on the hill back of the hospital. I could ‘a’ got them eggs for two a throw if you hadn’t butted in.”

“And so could I,” Smoke laughed, “if you’d kept out, blame you! But it doesn’t amount to anything. We know that we’ve got the corner. That’s the big thing.”

Shorty spent the next hour wrestling with a stub of a pencil on the margin of a three-year-old newspaper, and the more interminable and hieroglyphic grew his figures the more cheerful he became.

“There she stands,” he said at last. “Pretty? I guess yes. Lemme give you the totals. You an’ me has right now in our possession exactly nine hundred an’ seventy-three eggs. They cost us exactly two thousand, seven hundred an’ sixty dollars, reckonin’ dust at sixteen an ounce an’ not countin’ time. An’ now listen to me. If we stick up Wild Water for ten dollars a egg we stand to win, clean net an’ all to the good, just exactly six thousand nine hundred and seventy dollars. Now that’s a book-makin’ what is, if anybody should ride up on a dog-sled an’ ask you. An’ I’m in half on it! Put her there, Smoke. I’m that thankful I’m sure droolin’ gratitude. Book-makin’! Say, I’d sooner run with the chicks than the ponies any day.”

At eleven that night Smoke was routed from sound sleep by Shorty, whose fur parka exhaled an atmosphere of keen frost and whose hand was extremely cold in its contact with Smoke's cheek.

"What is it now?" Smoke grumbled. "Rest of Sally's hair fallen out?"

"Nope. But I just had to tell you the good news. I seen Slavovitch. Or Slavovitch seen me, I guess, because he started the seance. He says to me: 'Shorty, I want to speak to you about them eggs. I've kept it quiet. Nobody knows I sold 'em to you. But if you're speculatin', I can put you wise to a good thing.' An' he did, too, Smoke. Now what'd you guess that good thing is?"

"Go on. Name it."

"Well, maybe it sounds incredible, but that good thing was Wild Water Charley. He's lookin' to buy eggs. He goes around to Slavovitch an' offers him five dollars an egg, an' before he quits he's offerin' eight. An' Slavovitch ain't got no eggs. Last thing Wild Water says to Slavovitch is that he'll beat the head offen him if he ever finds out Slavovitch has eggs cached away somewheres. Slavovitch had to tell 'm he'd sold the eggs, but that the buyer was secret.

"Slavovitch says to let him say the word to Wild Water who's got the eggs. 'Shorty,' he says to me, 'Wild Water'll come a-runnin'. You can hold him up for eight dollars.' 'Eight dollars, your grandmother,' I says. 'He'll fall for ten before I'm done with him.' Anyway, I told Slavovitch I'd think it over and let him know in the mornin'. Of course we'll let 'm pass the word on to Wild Water. Am I right?"

"You certainly are, Shorty. First thing in the morning tip off Slavovitch. Have him tell Wild Water that you and I are partners in the deal."

Five minutes later Smoke was again aroused by Shorty.

"Say! Smoke! Oh, Smoke!"

"Yes?"

"Not a cent less than ten a throw. Do you get that?"

"Sure thing--all right," Smoke returned sleepily.

In the morning Smoke chanced upon Lucille Arral again at the dry-goods counter of the A. C. Store.

"It's working," he jubilated. "It's working. Wild Water's been around to Slavovitch, trying to buy or bully eggs out of him. And by this time Slavovitch has told him that Shorty and I own the corner."

Lucille Arral's eyes sparkled with delight. "I'm going to breakfast right now," she cried. "And I'll ask the waiter for eggs, and be so plaintive when there aren't any as to melt a heart of stone. And you know Wild Water's been around to Slavovitch, trying to buy the corner if it costs him one of his mines. I know him. And hold out for a stiff figure. Nothing less than ten dollars will satisfy me, and if you sell for anything less, Smoke, I'll never forgive you."

That noon, up in their cabin, Shorty placed on the table a pot of beans, a pot of coffee, a pan of sourdough biscuits, a tin of butter and a tin of condensed cream, a smoking platter of moose-meat and bacon, a plate of stewed dried peaches, and called: "Grub's ready. Take a slant at Sally first."

Smoke put aside the harness on which he was sewing, opened the door, and saw Sally and Bright spiritedly driving away a bunch of foraging sled-dogs that belonged to the next cabin. Also he saw something else that made him close the door hurriedly and dash to the stove. The frying-pan, still hot from the moose-meat and bacon, he put back on the front lid. Into the frying-pan he put a generous dab of butter, then reached for an egg, which he broke and dropped spluttering into the pan. As he reached for a second egg, Shorty gained his side and clutched his arm in an excited grip.

"Hey! What you doin'?" he demanded.

"Frying eggs," Smoke informed him, breaking the second one and throwing off Shorty's detaining hand. "What's the matter with your eyesight? Did you think I was combing my hair?"

"Don't you feel well?" Shorty queried anxiously, as Smoke broke a third egg and dexterously thrust him back with a stiff-arm jolt on the breast. "Or are you just plain loco? That's thirty dollars' worth of eggs already."

"And I'm going to make it sixty dollars' worth," was the answer, as Smoke broke the fourth. "Get out of the way, Shorty. Wild Water's coming up the hill, and he'll be here in five minutes."

Shorty sighed vastly with commingled comprehension and relief, and sat down at the table. By the time the expected knock came at the door, Smoke was facing him across the table, and, before each, was a plate containing three hot, fried eggs.

"Come in!" Smoke called.

Wild Water Charley, a strapping young giant just a fraction of an inch under six feet in height and carrying a clean weight of one hundred and ninety pounds, entered and shook hands.

“Set down an’ have a bite, Wild Water,” Shorty invited. “Smoke, fry him some eggs. I’ll bet he ain’t scoffed an egg in a coon’s age.”

Smoke broke three more eggs into the hot pan, and in several minutes placed them before his guest, who looked at them with so strange and strained an expression that Shorty confessed afterward his fear that Wild Water would slip them into his pocket and carry them away.

“Say, them swells down in the States ain’t got nothin’ over us in the matter of eats,” Shorty gloated. “Here’s you an’ me an’ Smoke gettin’ outside ninety dollars’ worth of eggs an’ not battin’ an eye.”

Wild Water stared at the rapidly disappearing eggs and seemed petrified.

“Pitch in an’ eat,” Smoke encouraged.

“They--they ain’t worth no ten dollars,” Wild Water said slowly.

Shorty accepted the challenge. “A thing’s worth what you can get for it, ain’t it?” he demanded.

“Yes, but--“

“But nothin’. I’m tellin’ you what we can get for ‘em. Ten a throw, just like that. We’re the egg trust, Smoke an’ me, an’ don’t you forget it. When we say ten a throw, ten a throw goes.” He mopped his plate with a biscuit. “I could almost eat a couple more,” he sighed, then helped himself to the beans.

“You can’t eat eggs like that,” Wild Water objected. “It--it ain’t right.”

“We just dote on eggs, Smoke an’ me,” was Shorty’s excuse.

Wild Water finished his own plate in a half-hearted way and gazed dubiously at the two comrades. “Say, you fellows can do me a great favor,” he began tentatively. “Sell me, or lend me, or give me, about a dozen of them eggs.”

“Sure,” Smoke answered. “I know what a yearning for eggs is myself. But we’re not so poor that we have to sell our hospitality. They’ll cost you nothing--“ Here a sharp kick under the table admonished him that Shorty was getting nervous. “A dozen, did you say, Wild Water?”

Wild Water nodded.

“Go ahead, Shorty,” Smoke went on. “Cook them up for him. I can sympathize. I’ve seen the time myself when I could eat a dozen, straight off the bat.”

But Wild Water laid a restraining hand on the eager Shorty as he explained. “I don’t mean cooked. I want them with the shells on.”

“So that you can carry ‘em away?”

"That's the idea."

"But that ain't hospitality," Shorty objected. "It's--it's tradin'."

Smoke nodded concurrence. "That's different, Wild Water. I thought you just wanted to eat them. You see, we went into this for a speculation."

The dangerous blue of Wild Water's eyes began to grow more dangerous. "I'll pay you for them," he said sharply. "How much?"

"Oh, not a dozen," Smoke replied. "We couldn't sell a dozen. We're not retailers; we're speculators. We can't break our own market. We've got a hard and fast corner, and when we sell out it's the whole corner or nothing."

"How many have you got, and how much do you want for them?"

"How many have we, Shorty?" Smoke inquired.

Shorty cleared his throat and performed mental arithmetic aloud. "Lemme see. Nine hundred an' seventy-three minus nine, that leaves nine hundred an' sixty-two. An' the whole shootin'-match, at ten a throw, will tote up just about nine thousand six hundred an' twenty iron dollars. Of course, Wild Water, we're playin' fair, an' it's money back for bad ones, though they ain't none. That's one thing I never seen in the Klondike--a bad egg. No man's fool enough to bring in a bad egg."

"That's fair," Smoke added. "Money back for the bad ones, Wild Water. And there's our proposition--nine thousand six hundred and twenty dollars for every egg in the Klondike."

"You might play them up to twenty a throw an' double your money," Shorty suggested.

Wild Water shook his head sadly and helped himself to the beans. "That would be too expensive, Shorty. I only want a few. I'll give you ten dollars for a couple of dozen. I'll give you twenty--but I can't buy 'em all."

"All or none," was Smoke's ultimatum.

"Look here, you two," Wild Water said in a burst of confidence. "I'll be perfectly honest with you, an' don't let it go any further. You know Miss Arral an' I was engaged. Well, she's broken everything off. You know it. Everybody knows it. It's for her I want them eggs."

"Huh!" Shorty jeered. "It's clear an' plain why you want 'em with the shells on. But I never thought it of you."

"Thought what?"

"It's low-down mean, that's what it is," Shorty rushed on, virtuously indignant. "I wouldn't wonder somebody filled you full of lead for it, an' you'd deserve it, too."

Wild Water began to flame toward the verge of one of his notorious Berserker rages. His hands clenched until the cheap fork in one of them began to bend, while his blue eyes flashed warning sparks. “Now look here, Shorty, just what do you mean? If you think anything underhanded--“

“I mean what I mean,” Shorty retorted doggedly, “an’ you bet your sweet life I don’t mean anything underhanded. Overhand’s the only way to do it. You can’t throw ‘em any other way.”

“Throw what?”

“Eggs, prunes, baseballs, anything. But Wild Water, you’re makin’ a mistake. They ain’t no crowd ever sat at the Opery House that’ll stand for it. Just because she’s a actress is no reason you can publicly lambaste her with hen-fruit.”

For the moment it seemed that Wild Water was going to burst or have apoplexy. He gulped down a mouthful of scalding coffee and slowly recovered himself.

“You’re in wrong, Shorty,” he said with cold deliberation. “I’m not going to throw eggs at her. Why, man,” he cried, with growing excitement, “I want to give them eggs to her, on a platter, shirred--that’s the way she likes ‘em.”

“I knowed I was wrong,” Shorty cried generously, “I knowed you couldn’t do a low-down trick like that.”

“That’s all right, Shorty,” Wild Water forgave him. “But let’s get down to business. You see why I want them eggs. I want ‘em bad.”

“Do you want ‘em ninety-six hundred an’ twenty dollars’ worth?” Shorty queried.

“It’s a hold-up, that’s what it is,” Wild Water declared irately.

“It’s business,” Smoke retorted. “You don’t think we’re peddling eggs for our health, do you?”

“Aw, listen to reason,” Wild Water pleaded. “I only want a couple of dozen. I’ll give you twenty apiece for ‘em. What do I want with all the rest of them eggs? I’ve went years in this country without eggs, an’ I guess I can keep on managin’ without ‘em somehow.”

“Don’t get het up about it,” Shorty counseled. “If you don’t want ‘em, that settles it. We ain’t a-forcin’ ‘em on you.”

“But I do want ‘em,” Wild Water complained.

“Then you know what they’ll cost you--ninety-six hundred an’ twenty dollars, an’ if my figurin’s wrong, I’ll treat.”

"But maybe they won't turn the trick," Wild Water objected. "Maybe Miss Arral's lost her taste for eggs by this time."

"I should say Miss Arral's worth the price of the eggs," Smoke put in quietly.

"Worth it!" Wild Water stood up in the heat of his eloquence. "She's worth a million dollars. She's worth all I've got. She's worth all the dust in the Klondike." He sat down, and went on in a calmer voice. "But that ain't no call for me to gamble ten thousand dollars on a breakfast for her. Now I've got a proposition. Lend me a couple of dozen of them eggs. I'll turn 'em over to Slavovitch. He'll feed 'em to her with my compliments. She ain't smiled to me for a hundred years. If them eggs gets a smile for me, I'll take the whole boiling off your hands."

"Will you sign a contract to that effect?" Smoke said quickly; for he knew that Lucille Arral had agreed to smile.

Wild Water gasped. "You're almighty swift with business up here on the hill," he said, with a hint of a snarl.

"We're only accepting your own proposition," Smoke answered.

"All right--bring on the paper--make it out, hard and fast," Wild Water cried in the anger of surrender.

Smoke immediately wrote out the document, wherein Wild Water agreed to take every egg delivered to him at ten dollars per egg, provided that the two dozen advanced to him brought about a reconciliation with Lucille Arral.

Wild Water paused, with uplifted pen, as he was about to sign. "Hold on," he said. "When I buy eggs I buy good eggs."

"They ain't a bad egg in the Klondike," Shorty snorted.

"Just the same, if I find one bad egg you've got to come back with the ten I paid for it."

"That's all right," Smoke placated. "It's only fair."

"An' every bad egg you come back with I'll eat," Shorty declared.

Smoke inserted the word "good" in the contract, and Wild Water sullenly signed, received the trial two dozen in a tin pail, pulled on his mittens, and opened the door.

"Good-by, you robbers," he growled back at them, and slammed the door.

Smoke was a witness to the play next morning in Slavovitch's. He sat, as Wild Water's guest, at the table adjoining Lucille Arral's. Almost to the letter, as she had forecast it, did the scene come off.

"Haven't you found any eggs yet?" she murmured plaintively to the waiter.

"No, ma'am," came the answer. "They say somebody's cornered every egg in Dawson. Mr. Slavovitch is trying to buy a few just especially for you. But the fellow that's got the corner won't let loose."

It was at this juncture that Wild Water beckoned the proprietor to him, and, with one hand on his shoulder, drew his head down. "Look here, Slavovitch," Wild Water whispered hoarsely, "I turned over a couple of dozen eggs to you last night. Where are they?"

"In the safe, all but that six I have all thawed and ready for you any time you sing out."

"I don't want 'em for myself," Wild Water breathed in a still lower voice. "Shir 'em up and present 'em to Miss Arral there."

"I'll attend to it personally myself," Slavovitch assured him.

"An' don't forget--compliments of me," Wild Water concluded, relaxing his detaining clutch on the proprietor's shoulder.

Pretty Lucille Arral was gazing forlornly at the strip of breakfast bacon and the tinned mashed potatoes on her plate when Slavovitch placed before her two shirred eggs.

"Compliments of Mr. Wild Water," they at the next table heard him say.

Smoke acknowledged to himself that it was a fine bit of acting--the quick, joyous flash in the face of her, the impulsive turn of the head, the spontaneous forerunner of a smile that was only checked by a superb self-control which resolutely drew her face back so that she could say something to the restaurant proprietor.

Smoke felt the kick of Wild Water's moccasined foot under the table.

"Will she eat 'em?--that's the question--will she eat 'em?" the latter whispered agonizingly.

And with sidelong glances they saw Lucille Arral hesitate, almost push the dish from her, then surrender to its lure.

"I'll take them eggs," Wild Water said to Smoke. "The contract holds. Did you see her? Did you see her! She almost smiled. I know her. It's all fixed. Two more eggs to-morrow an' she'll forgive an' make up. If she wasn't here I'd shake hands, Smoke, I'm that grateful. You ain't a robber; you're a philanthropist."

Smoke returned jubilantly up the hill to the cabin, only to find Shorty playing solitaire in black despair. Smoke had long since learned that whenever his partner got out the cards for solitaire it was a warning signal that the bottom had dropped out of the world.

"Go 'way, don't talk to me," was the first rebuff Smoke received.

But Shorty soon thawed into a freshet of speech.

"It's all off with the big Swede," he groaned. "The corner's busted. They'll be sellin' sherry an' egg in all the saloons to-morrow at a dollar a flip. They ain't no starvin' orphan child in Dawson that won't be wrappin' its tummy around eggs. What d'ye think I run into?--a geezer with three thousan' eggs--d'ye get me? Three thousan', an' just freighted in from Forty Mile."

"Fairy stories," Smoke doubted.

"Fairy hell! I seen them eggs. Gautereaux's his name--a whackin' big, blue-eyed French-Canadian husky. He asked for you first, then took me to the side and jabbed me straight to the heart. It was our cornerin' eggs that got him started. He knowed about them three thousan' at Forty Mile an' just went an' got 'em. 'Show 'em to me,' I says. An' he did. There was his dog-teams, an' a couple of Indian drivers, restin' down the bank where they'd just pulled in from Forty Mile. An' on the sleds was soap-boxes--teeny wooden soap-boxes.

"We took one out behind a ice-jam in the middle of the river an' busted it open. Eggs!--full of 'em, all packed in sawdust. Smoke, you an' me lose. We've been gamblin'. D'ye know what he had the gall to say to me?--that they was all ourn at ten dollars a egg. D'ye know what he was doin' when I left his cabin?--drawin' a sign of eggs for sale. Said he'd give us first choice, at ten a throw, till 2 P. M., an' after that, if we didn't come across, he'd bust the market higher'n a kite. Said he wasn't no business man, but that he knowed a good thing when he seen it--meanin' you an' me, as I took it."

"It's all right," Smoke said cheerfully. "Keep your shirt on an' let me think a moment. Quick action and team play is all that's needed. I'll get Wild Water here at two o'clock to take delivery of eggs. You buy that Gautereaux's eggs. Try and make a bargain. Even if you pay ten dollars apiece for them, Wild Water will take them off our hands at the same price. If you can get them cheaper, why, we make a profit as well. Now go to it. Have them here by not later than two o'clock. Borrow Colonel Bowie's dogs and take our team. Have them here by two sharp."

“Say, Smoke,” Shorty called, as his partner started down the hill. “Better take an umbrella. I wouldn’t be none surprised to see the weather rainin’ eggs before you get back.”

Smoke found Wild Water at the M. & M., and a stormy half-hour ensued.

“I warn you we’ve picked up some more eggs,” Smoke said, after Wild Water had agreed to bring his dust to the cabin at two o’clock and pay on delivery.

“You’re luckier at finding eggs than me,” Wild Water admitted. “Now, how many eggs have you got now?--an’ how much dust do I tote up the hill?”

Smoke consulted his notebook. “As it stands now, according to Shorty’s figures, we’ve three thousand nine hundred and sixty-two eggs. Multiply by ten--“

“Forty thousand dollars!” Wild Water bellowed. “You said there was only something like nine hundred eggs. It’s a stickup! I won’t stand for it!”

Smoke drew the contract from his pocket and pointed to the PAY ON DELIVERY. “No mention is made of the number of eggs to be delivered. You agreed to pay ten dollars for every egg we delivered to you. Well, we’ve got the eggs, and a signed contract is a signed contract. Honestly, though, Wild Water, we didn’t know about those other eggs until afterward. Then we had to buy them in order to make our corner good.”

For five long minutes, in choking silence, Wild Water fought a battle with himself, then reluctantly gave in.

“I’m in bad,” he said brokenly. “The landscape’s fair sproutin’ eggs. An’ the quicker I get out the better. There might come a landslide of ‘em. I’ll be there at two o’clock. But forty thousand dollars!”

“It’s only thirty-nine thousand six hundred an’ twenty,” Smoke corrected.

“It’ll weigh two hundred pounds,” Wild Water raved on. “I’ll have to freight it up with a dog-team.”

“We’ll lend you our teams to carry the eggs away,” Smoke volunteered.

“But where’ll I cache ‘em? Never mind. I’ll be there. But as long as I live I’ll never eat another egg. I’m full sick of ‘em.”

At half-past one, doubling the dog-teams for the steep pitch of the hill, Shorty arrived with Gautereaux’s eggs. “We dang near double our winnings,” Shorty told Smoke, as they piled the soap-boxes inside the cabin. “I holds ‘m down to eight dollars, an’ after he cussed loco in French he falls for it. Now that's two dollars clear profit to us for each egg, an' they're three thousan' of 'em. I paid 'm in full. Here's the receipt."

While Smoke got out the gold-scales and prepared for business, Shorty devoted himself to calculation.

"There's the figgers," he announced triumphantly. "We win twelve thousan' nine hundred an' seventy dollars. An' we don't do Wild Water no harm. He wins Miss Arral. Besides, he gets all them eggs. It's sure a bargain-counter all around. Nobody loses."

"Even Gautereaux's twenty-four thousand to the good," Smoke laughed, "minus, of course, what the eggs and the freighting cost him. And if Wild Water plays the corner, he may make a profit out of the eggs himself."

Promptly at two o'clock, Shorty, peeping, saw Wild Water coming up the hill. When he entered he was brisk and businesslike. He took off his big bearskin coat, hung it on a nail, and sat down at the table.

"Bring on them eggs, you pirates," he commenced. "An' after this day, if you know what's good for you, never mention eggs to me again."

They began on the miscellaneous assortment of the original corner, all three men counting. When two hundred had been reached, Wild Water suddenly cracked an egg on the edge of the table and opened it deftly with his thumbs.

"Hey! Hold on!" Shorty objected.

"It's my egg, ain't it?" Wild Water snarled. "I'm paying ten dollars for it, ain't I? But I ain't buying no pig in a poke. When I cough up ten bucks an egg I want to know what I'm gettin'."

"If you don't like it, I'll eat it," Shorty volunteered maliciously.

Wild Water looked and smelled and shook his head. "No, you don't, Shorty. That's a good egg. Gimme a pail. I'm goin' to eat it myself for supper."

Thrice again Wild Water cracked good eggs experimentally and put them in the pail beside him.

"Two more than you figgered, Shorty," he said at the end of the count. "Nine hundred an' sixty-four, not sixty-two."

"My mistake," Shorty acknowledged handsomely. "We'll throw 'em in for good measure."

"Guess you can afford to," Wild Water accepted grimly. "Pass the batch. Nine thousan' six hundred an' twenty dollars. I'll pay for it now. Write a receipt, Smoke."

“Why not count the rest,” Smoke suggested, “and pay all at once?”

Wild Water shook his head. “I’m no good at figgers. One batch at a time an’ no mistakes.”

Going to his fur coat, from each of the side pockets he drew forth two sacks of dust, so rotund and long that they resembled bologna sausages. When the first batch had been paid for, there remained in the gold-sacks not more than several hundred dollars.

A soap-box was carried to the table, and the count of the three thousand began. At the end of one hundred, Wild Water struck an egg sharply against the edge of the table. There was no crack. The resultant sound was like that of the striking of a sphere of solid marble.

“Frozen solid,” he remarked, striking more sharply.

He held the egg up, and they could see the shell powdered to minute fragments along the line of impact.

“Huh!” said Shorty. “It ought to be solid, seein’ it has just been freighted up from Forty Mile. It’ll take an ax to bust it.”

“Me for the ax,” said Wild Water.

Smoke brought the ax, and Wild Water, with the clever hand and eye of the woodsman, split the egg cleanly in half. The appearance of the egg’s interior was anything but satisfactory. Smoke felt a premonitory chill. Shorty was more valiant. He held one of the halves to his nose.

“Smells all right,” he said.

“But it looks all wrong,” Wild Water contended. “An’ how can it smell when the smell’s frozen along with the rest of it? Wait a minute.”

He put the two halves into a frying-pan and placed the latter on the front lid of the hot stove. Then the three men, with distended, questing nostrils, waited in silence. Slowly an unmistakable odor began to drift through the room. Wild Water forbore to speak, and Shorty remained dumb despite conviction.

“Throw it out,” Smoke cried, gasping.

“What’s the good?” asked Wild Water. “We’ve got to sample the rest.”

“Not in this cabin.” Smoke coughed and conquered a qualm. “Chop them open, and we can test by looking at them. Throw it out, Shorty--Throw it out! Phew! And leave the door open!”

Box after box was opened; egg after egg, chosen at random, was chopped in two; and every egg carried the same message of hopeless, irremediable decay.

"I won't ask you to eat 'em, Shorty," Wild Water jeered, "an' if you don't mind, I can't get outa here too quick. My contract called for GOOD eggs. If you'll loan me a sled an' team I'll haul them good ones away before they get contaminated."

Smoke helped in loading the sled. Shorty sat at the table, the cards laid before him for solitaire.

"Say, how long you been holdin' that corner?" was Wild Water's parting gibe.

Smoke made no reply, and, with one glance at his absorbed partner, proceeded to fling the soap boxes out into the snow.

"Say, Shorty, how much did you say you paid for that three thousand?" Smoke queried gently.

"Eight dollars. Go 'way. Don't talk to me. I can figger as well as you. We lose seventeen thousan' on the flutter, if anybody should ride up on a dog-sled an' ask you. I figgered that out while waitin' for the first egg to smell."

Smoke pondered a few minutes, then again broke silence. "Say, Shorty. Forty thousand dollars gold weighs two hundred pounds. Wild Water borrowed our sled and team to haul away his eggs. He came up the hill without a sled. Those two sacks of dust in his coat pockets weighed about twenty pounds each. The understanding was cash on delivery. He brought enough dust to pay for the good eggs. He never expected to pay for those three thousand. He knew they were bad. Now how did he know they were bad? What do you make of it, anyway?"

Shorty gathered the cards, started to shuffle a new deal, then paused. "Huh! That ain't nothin'. A child could answer it. We lose seventeen thousan'. Wild Water wins seventeen thousan'. Them eggs of Gautereaux's was Wild Water's all the time. Anything else you're curious to know?"

"Yes. Why in the name of common sense didn't you find out whether those eggs were good before you paid for them?"

"Just as easy as the first question. Wild Water swung the bunco game timed to seconds. I hadn't no time to examine them eggs. I had to hustle to get 'em here for delivery. An' now, Smoke, lemme ask you one civil question. What did you say was the party's name that put this egg corner idea into your head?"

Shorty had lost the sixteenth consecutive game of solitaire, and Smoke was casting about to begin the preparation of supper, when Colonel Bowie knocked at the door, handed Smoke a letter, and went on to his own cabin.

“Did you see his face?” Shorty raved. “He was almost bustin’ to keep it straight. It’s the big ha! ha! for you an’ me, Smoke. We won’t never dast show our faces again in Dawson.”

The letter was from Wild Water, and Smoke read it aloud:

Dear Smoke and Shorty: I write to ask, with compliments of the season, your presence at a supper to-night at Slavovitch’s joint. Miss Arral will be there and so will Gautereaux. Him and me was pardners down at Circle five years ago. He is all right and is going to be best man. About them eggs. They come into the country four years back. They was bad when they come in. They was bad when they left California. They always was bad. They stopped at Carluk one winter, and one winter at Nutlik, and last winter at Forty Mile, where they was sold for storage. And this winter I guess they stop at Dawson. Don’t keep them in a hot room. Lucille says to say you and her and me has sure made some excitement for Dawson. And I say the drinks is on you, and that goes.

Respectfully your friend,
W. W.

“Well? What have you got to say?” Smoke queried. “We accept the invitation, of course?”

“I got one thing to say,” Shorty answered. “An’ that is Wild Water won’t never suffer if he goes broke. He’s a good actor--a gosh-blamed good actor. An’ I got another thing to say: my figgers is all wrong. Wild Water wins seventeen thousan’ all right, but he wins more ‘n that. You an’ me has made him a present of every good egg in the Klondike--nine hundred an’ sixty-four of ‘em, two thrown in for good measure. An’ he was that ornery, mean cussed that he packed off the three opened ones in the pail. An’ I got a last thing to say. You an’ me is legitimate prospectors an’ practical gold-miners. But when it comes to fi-nance we’re sure the fattest suckers that ever fell for the get-rich-quick bunco. After this it’s you an’ me for the high rocks an’ tall timber, an’ if you ever mention eggs to me we dissolve pardnership there an’ then. Get me?”

The “Francis Spaight”

A TRUE TALE RETOLD

THE Francis Spaight was running before it solely under a mizzentopsail, when the thing happened. It was not due to carelessness so much as to the lack of discipline of the crew and to the fact that they were indifferent seamen at best. The man at the wheel in particular, a Limerick man, had had no experience with salt water beyond that of rafting timber on the Shannon between the Quebec vessels and the shore. He was afraid of the huge seas that rose out of the murk astern and bore down upon him, and he was more given to cowering away from their threatened impact than he was to meeting their blows with the wheel and checking the ship’s rush to broach to.

It was three in the morning when his unseamanlike conduct precipitated the catastrophe. At sight of a sea far larger than its fellows, he crouched down, releasing his hands from the spokes. The Francis Spaight sheered as her stern lifted on the sea, receiving the full fling of the cap on her quarter. The next instant she was in the trough, her leerail buried till the ocean was level with her hatch-combings, sea after sea breaking over her weather rail and sweeping what remained exposed of the deck with icy deluges.

The men were out of hand, helpless and hopeless, stupid in their bewilderment and fear, and resolute only in that they would not obey orders. Some wailed, others clung silently in the weather shrouds, and still others muttered prayers or shrieked vile imprecations; and neither captain nor mate could get them to bear a hand at the pumps or at setting patches of sails to bring the vessel up to the wind and sea. Inside the hour the ship was over on her beam ends, the lubberly cowards climbing up her side and hanging on in the rigging. When she went over, the mate was caught and drowned in the after-cabin, as were two sailors who had sought refuge in the forecastle.

The mate had been the ablest man on board, and the captain was now scarcely less helpless than his men. Beyond cursing them for their worthlessness, he did nothing; and it remained for a man named Mahoney, a Belfast man, and a boy, O’Brien, of Limerick, to cut away the fore and main masts. This they did at great risk on the perpendicular wall of the wreck, sending the mizzentopmast overside along in the general crash. The Francis Spaight righted, and it was well that she was lumber laden, else she would have sunk, for she was already waterlogged. The mainmast, still fast by the shrouds, beat like a thunderous sledge-hammer against the ship's side, every stroke bringing groans from the men.

Day dawned on the savage ocean, and in the cold gray light all that could be seen of the Francis Spaight emerging from the sea were the poop, the shattered mizzenmast, and a ragged line of bulwarks. It was midwinter in the North Atlantic, and the wretched men were half-dead from cold. But there was no place where they could find rest. Every sea breached clean over the wreck, washing away the salt incrustations from their bodies and depositing fresh incrustations. The cabin under the poop was awash to the knees, but here at least was shelter from the chill wind, and here the survivors congregated, standing upright, holding on by the cabin furnishings, and leaning against one another for support.

In vain Mahoney strove to get the men to take turns in watching aloft from the mizzenmast for any chance vessel. The icy gale was too much for them, and they preferred the shelter of the cabin. O'Brien, the boy, who was only fifteen, took turns with Mahoney on the freezing perch. It was the boy, at three in the afternoon, who called down that he had sighted a sail. This did bring them from the cabin, and they crowded the poop rail and weather mizzen shrouds as they watched the strange ship. But its course did not lie near, and when it disappeared below the skyline, they returned shivering to the cabin, not one offering to relieve the watch at the masthead.

By the end of the second day, Mahoney and O'Brien gave up their attempt, and thereafter the vessel drifted in the gale uncared for and without a lookout. There were thirteen alive, and for seventy-two hours they stood knee-deep in the sloshing water on the cabin floor, half-frozen, without food, and with but three bottles of wine shared among them. All food and fresh water were below, and there was no getting at such supplies in the water-logged condition of the wreck. As the days went by, no food whatever passed their lips. Fresh water, in small quantities, they were able to obtain by holding a cover of a tureen under the saddle of the mizzenmast. But the rain fell infrequently, and they were hard put. When it rained, they also soaked their handkerchiefs, squeezing them out into their mouths or into their shoes. As the wind and sea went down, they were even able to mop the exposed portions of the deck that were free from brine and so add to their water supply. But food they had none, and no way of getting it, though sea-birds flew repeatedly overhead.

In the calm weather that followed the gale, after having remained on their feet for ninety-six hours, they were able to find dry planks in the cabin on which to lie. But the long hours of standing in the salt water had caused sores to form on their legs. These sores were extremely painful. The slightest contact or scrape caused severe anguish, and in their weak condition and crowded situation they were continually hurting one another in this manner. Not a man could move about without being followed by volleys of abuse, curses, and groans. So great was their misery that the strong oppressed the weak, shoving them aside from the dry planks to shift for themselves in the cold and wet. The boy, O'Brien, was specially maltreated. Though there were three other boys, it was O'Brien who came in for most of the abuse. There was no explaining it, except on the ground that his was a stronger and more dominant spirit than those of the other boys, and that he stood up more for his rights, resenting the petty injustices that were meted out to all the boys by the men. Whenever O'Brien came near the men in search of a dry place to sleep, or merely moved about, he was kicked and cuffed away. In return, he cursed them for their selfish brutishness, and blows and kicks and curses were rained upon him. Miserable as were all of them, he was thus made far more miserable; and it was only the flame of life, unusually strong in him, that enabled him to endure.

As the days went by and they grew weaker, their peevishness and ill-temper increased, which, in turn, increased the ill-treatment and sufferings of O'Brien. By the sixteenth day all hands were far gone with hunger, and they stood together in small groups, talking in undertones and occasionally glancing at O'Brien. It was at high noon that the conference came to a head. The captain was the spokesman. All were collected on the poop.

"Men," the captain began, ``we have been a long time without food--two weeks and two days it is, though it seems more like two years and two months. We can't hang out much longer. It is beyond human nature to go on hanging out with nothing in our stomachs. There is a serious question to consider: whether it is better for all to die, or for one to die. We are standing with our feet in our graves. If one of us dies, the rest may live until a ship is sighted. What say you?"

Michael Behane, the man who had been at the wheel when the Francis Spaight broached to, called out that it was well. The others joined in the cry.

"Let it be one of the b'ys!" cried Sullivan, a Tarbert man, glancing at the same time significantly at O'Brien.

"It is my opinion," the captain went on, "that it will be a good deed for one of us to die for the rest."

"A good deed! A good deed!" the men interjected.

"And it is my opinion that 'tis best for one of the boys to die. They have no families to support, nor would they be considered so great a loss to their friends as those who have wives and children."

"'Tis right." "Very right." "Very fit it should be done," the men muttered one to another.

But the four boys cried out against the injustice of it.

``'Our lives is just as dear to us as the rest iv yez," O'Brien protested. "An' our famblies, too. As for wives an' childer, who is there savin' meself to care for me old mother that's a widow, as you know well, Michael Behane, that comes from Limerick? 'Tis not fair. Let the lots be drawn between all of us, men and b'ys."

Mahoney was the only man who spoke in favor of the boys, declaring that it was the fair thing for all to share alike. Sullivan and the captain insisted on the drawing of lots being confined to the boys. There were high words, in the midst of which Sullivan turned upon O'Brien, snarling:--

"'Twould be a good deed to put you out of the way. You deserve it. 'Twould be the right way to serve you, an' serve you we will."

He started toward O'Brien, with intent to lay hands on him and proceed at once with the killing, while several others likewise shuffled toward him and reached for him. He stumbled backwards to escape them, at the same time crying that he would submit to the drawing of the lots among the boys.

The captain prepared four sticks of different lengths and handed them to Sullivan.

"You're thinkin' the drawin'll not be fair," the latter sneered to O'Brien. "So it's yerself 'll do the drawin'."

To this O'Brien agreed. A handkerchief was tied over his eyes, blindfolding him, and he knelt down on the deck with his back to Sullivan.

"Whoever you name for the shortest stick'll die," the captain said.

Sullivan held up one of the sticks. The rest were concealed in his hand so that no one could see whether it was the short stick or not.

"An' whose stick will it be?" Sullivan demanded.

"For little Johnny Sheehan," O'Brien answered.

Sullivan laid the stick aside. Those who looked could not tell if it were the fatal one. Sullivan held up another stick.

"Whose will it be?"

"For George Burns," was the reply.

The stick was laid with the first one, and a third held up.

"An' whose is this wan?"

"For myself," said O'Brien.

With a quick movement, Sullivan threw the four sticks together. No one had seen.

"'Tis for yourself ye've drawn it," Sullivan announced.

"A good deed," several of the men muttered.

O'Brien was very quiet. He arose to his feet, took the bandage off, and looked around.

"Where is ut?" he demanded. "The short stick? The wan for me?"

The captain pointed to the four sticks Iying on the deck.

"How do you know the stick was mine?" O'Brien questioned. "Did you see ut, Johnny Sheehan?"

Johnny Sheehan, who was the youngest of the boys, did not answer.

"Did you see ut?" O'Brien next asked Mahoney.

"No, I didn't see ut."

The men were muttering and growling.

"'Twas a fair drawin'," Sullivan said. "Ye had yer chanct en' ye lost, that's all iv ut."

"A fair drawin'," the captain added. "Didn't I behold it myself ? The stick was yours, O'Brien, an' ye may as well get ready. Where's the cook? Gorman, come here. Fetch the tureen cover, some of ye. Gorman, do your duty like a man."

"But how'll I do it?" the cook demanded. He was a weak-eyed, weakchinned, indecisive man.

" 'Tis a damned murder!" O'Brien cried out.

"I'll have none of ut," Mahoney announced. "Not a bite shall pass me lips."

"Then 'tis yer share for better men than yerself," Sullivan sneered. "Go on with yer duty, cook."

" 'Tis not me duty, the killin' of b'ys," Gorman protested irresolutely.

"If yez don't make mate for us, we'll be makin' mate of yerself," Behane threatened. "Somebody must die, an' as well you as another."

Johnny Sheehan began to cry. O'Brien listened anxiously. His face was pale. His lips trembled, and at times his whole body shook.

"I signed on as cook," Gorman enounced. "An' cook I wud if galley there was. But I'll not lay me hand to murder. 'Tis not in the articles. I'm the cook--

"An' cook ye'll be for wan minute more only," Sullivan said grimly, at the same moment gripping the cook's head from behind and bending it back till the windpipe and jugular were stretched taut. "Where's yer knife, Mike? Pass it along."

At the touch of the steel, Gorman whimpered.

"I'll do ut, if yez'll hold the b'y."

The pitiable condition of the cook seemed in some fashion to nerve up O'Brien.

"It's all right, Gorman," he said. "Go on with ut. 'Tis meself knows yer not wantin' to do ut. It's all right, sir"--this to the captain, who had laid a hand heavily on his arm. "Ye won't have to hold me, sir. I'll stand still."

"Stop yer blitherin', an' go an' get the tureen cover,' Behane commanded Johnny Sheehan, at the same time dealing him a heavy cuff alongside the head.

The boy, who was scarcely more than a child, fetched the cover. He crawled and tottered along the deck, so weak was he from hunger. The tears still ran down his cheeks. Behane took the cover from him, at the same time administering another cuff.

O'Brien took off his coat and bared his right arm. His under lip still trembled, but he held a tight grip on himself. The captain's penknife was opened and passed to Gorman.

"Mahoney, tell me mother what happened to me, if ever ye get back," O'Brien requested.

Mahoney nodded.

" 'Tis black murder, black an' damned," he said. "The b'y's flesh'll do none iv yez anny good. Mark me words. Ye'll not profit by it none iv yez."

"Get ready," the captain ordered. "You, Sullivan, hold the cover--that's it--close up. Spill nothing. It's precious stuff."

Gorman made an effort. The knife was dull. He was weak. Besides, his hand was shaking so violently that he nearly dropped the knife. The three boys were crouched apart, in a huddle, crying and sobbing. With the exception of Mahoney, the men were gathered about the victim, craning their necks to see.

“Be a man, Gorman,” the captain cautioned.

The wretched cook was seized with a spasm of resolution, sawing back and forth with the blade on O’Brien’s wrist. The veins were severed. Sullivan held the tureen cover close underneath. The cut veins gaped wide, but no ruddy flood gushed forth. There was no blood at all. The veins were dry and empty. No one spoke. The grim and silent figures swayed in unison with each heave of the ship. Every eye was turned fixedly upon that inconceivable and monstrous thing, the dry veins of a creature that was alive.

“ ‘Tis a warnin’,” Mahoney cried. “Lave the b’y alone. Mark me words. His death’ll do none iv yez anny good.”

“Try at the elbow--the left elbow, ‘tis nearer the heart,” the captain said finally, in a dim and husky voice that was unlike his own.

“Give me the knife,” O’Brien said roughly, taking it out of the cook’s hand. “I can’t be lookin’ at ye puttin’ me to hurt.”

Quite coolly he cut the vein at the left elbow, but, like the cook, he failed to bring blood.

“This is all iv no use,” Sullivan said. “ ‘Tis better to put him out iv his misery by bleedin’ him at the throat.”

The strain had been too much for the lad.

“Don’t be coin’ ut,” he cried. “There’ll be no blood in me throat. Give me a little time. ‘Tis cold an’ weak I am. Be lettin’ me lay down an’ slape a bit. Then I’ll be warm an’ the blood’ll flow.”

“ ‘Tis no use,” Sullivan objected. “As if ye cud be slapin’ at a time like this. Ye’ll not slape, and ye’ll not warm up. Look at ye now. You’ve an ague.”

“I was sick at Limerick wan night,” O’Brien hurried on, ‘‘an’ the dochtor cudn’t bleed me. But after slapin’ a few hours an’ gettin’ warm in bed the blood came freely. It’s God’s truth I’m tellin’ yez. Don’t be murderin’ me!”

“His veins are open now,” the captain said. “ ‘Tis no use leavin’ him in his pain. Do it now en’ tee done with it.”

They started to reach for O’Brien, but he backed away.

“I’ll be the death iv yez!” he screamed. “Take yer hands off iv me, Sullivan! I’ll come back! I’ll haunt yez! Wakin’ or slapin’, I’ll haunt yez till you die!"

" 'Tis disgraceful!" yelled Behane. "If the short stick'd teen mine, I'd a-let me mates cut the head off iv me an' died happy."

Sullivan leaped in and caught the unhappy lad by the hair. The rest of the men followed. O'Brien kicked and struggled, snarling and snapping at the hands that clutched him from every side. Little Johnny Sheehan broke out into wild screaming, but the men took no notice of him. O'Brien was bent backward to the deck, the tureen cover under his neck. Gorman was shoved forward. Some one had thrust a large sheath-knife into his hand.

"Do yer duty! Do yer duty!" the men cried.

The cook bent over, but he caught the boy's eye and faltered.

"If ye don't, I'll kill ye with me own hands," Behane shouted.

From every side a torrent of abuse and threats poured in upon the cook. Still he hung back.

"Maybe there'll be more blood in his veins than O'Brien's," Sullivan suggested significantly.

Behane caught Gorman by the hair and twisted his head back, while Sullivan attempted to take possession of the sheath-knife. But Gorman clung to it desperately.

"Lave go, an' I'll do ut!" he screamed frantically. "Don't be cuttin' me throat! I'll do the deed! I'll do the deed!"

"See that you do it, then," the captain threatened him.

Gorman allowed himself to be shoved forward. He looked at the boy, closed his eyes, and muttered a prayer. Then, without opening his eyes, he did the deed that had been appointed him. O'Brien emitted a shriek that sank swiftly to a gurgling sob. The men held him till his struggles ceased, when he was laid upon the deck. They were eager and impatient, and with oaths and threats they urged Gorman to hurry with the preparation of the meal.

"Lave ut, you bloody butchers," Mahoney said quietly. "Lave ut, I tell yez. Ye'll not be needin' anny iv ut now. 'Tis as I said: ye'll not be profitin' by the lad's blood. Empty ut overside, Behane. Empty ut overside."

Behane, still holding the tureen cover in both his hands, glanced to windward. He walked to the rail and threw the cover and contents into the sea. A full-rigged ship was bearing down upon them a short mile away. So occupied had they been with the deed just committed, that none had had eyes for a lookout. All hands watched her coming on--the brightly coppered forefoot parting the water like a golden knife, the headsails flapping lazily and emptily at each downward surge, and the towering canvas tiers dipping and courtesying with each stately swing of the sea. No man spoke.

As she hove to, a cable length away, the captain of the Francis Spaight bestirred himself and ordered a tarpaulin to be thrown over O'Brien's corpse. A boat was lowered from the stranger's side and began to pull toward them. John Gorman laughed. He laughed softly at first, but he accompanied each stroke of the oars with spasmodically increasing glee. It was this maniacal laughter that greeted the rescue boat as it hauled alongside and the first officer clambered on board.

“Frisco Kid’s” Story

WHO am I? Why I’m de “Frisco Kid.” An wot do I do? I’m on de “road,” see! Say, youze ain’t got nothin’ agin me, have yer, mister? Cos if yer has, I’ll chase meself off, fer I’m pretty good at pacin’. No, you hasn’t? Well, den I guess it’s all square. Yer see I took yer fer a fly cop, an’ I’m onto meself fer a jigger w’en it comes to dem people.

Wot! A quarter? Dat’s very kind in yer, mister. Now I’se solid fer me bed an’ a bowl of java in de mornin’. Yer wants ter ast me a few questions? Den fire away. I’se yer red hot tamale.

A kid wid curley golden hair an’ fair complexshun, an’ ‘bout de size of me? Well, I guess I seed stacks like’m, but I never took pertic’lar notiss, dough if I spots’m, I’ll put yer on. W’en did he stray away, an’ wot’s his monica? I mean wot’s his name? Yer see we all travels by monicas on de road. Charley wuz his handle? Say! did he wear his hair middlin’ long like a girl’s an’ hail from Frisco? Den I guess I knowed’m onst. Say! if I tells yer all I knows about’m, yer won’t give me de cross hop, will yer? Didn’t he sport a little hoop — Hoop? — O’ I see yer a gentleman, an’ don’t talk like me and de people I travel wid. I mean a ring, a gold un, set wid little red rubies? — I guess dat’s wot yer calls’m. An’ a locket? Yes, I knows de locket too. It opens an’ shuts, an’ dere’s a little pitcher of a lady on one side an’ some hair, yaller hair like his, only diffrent, on de other. Do I know w’ere dey is? Yer jest bet I do — here dey is. I allus wore dem roun’ my neck since he — Say! Leave go! Don’t squeeze me arm like dat. Yer hurts, yer do, an’ wot der yer tink I am? A cheap guy?

Yer wants ter know w’ere he is? Den jes’ take it easy, an’ don’t get leary and grab me like dat again, an’ I’ll tell yer all I knows.

Yer see it wuz dis way. Las’ year ‘bout dis time, me’n and my pal, “Leary Joe,” come down to Sacramento to work de fair. Well, one hot day — an’ it wuz a scorcher — Leary Joe got to sloppin’ up on white line, an wuz orioide. Den I takes’m to bed, an’ not knowin’ wot to do wid meself, took a stroll. I wuz mopin’ down de main-drag, I mean de main street, w’en I bumped up gainst de kid wid de yaller hair. He was wid four er five hobos, an’ w’en I seed his good togs, an’ hoop an’ gold ticker, I tumbled to wot de gang wuz up to. So I t’ought I’d snare’m meself, an’ I up an’ sez, jest like we wuz ol’ fren’s, “Say, kid, w’ere yer ben all day? Come on; let’s go swimmin’.” Yer see, I tought I’d like ter get a finger in de pie meself.

I guess he didn’t kinder like de tuff looks of de crowd, an’ de swimmin’ got his eye, so he gives de push de shake and does de swift sneak. An’ yer ough’to seen de gang. Dey’d liked ter a chewed me up an’ pushed me nose in, only dey dassant, cos dey wer’ fraid of me pal, Leary Joe, fer he wuz de swiftest scrapper on de drag.

Well, we went swimmin’. On de way I found dat de kid’d run away from home an’ jest hit de road. So I ast ‘m if he wanted ter travel wid me an’ my pal! Leary Joe, cos if he did, we were willin’ an’ he said — Yes.” Somehow, I cudn’t tell why, I kinder took ter dat kid. He wuz so pritty an innisent like, jest as if he wuz a girl. An’ if I cussed, he’d kinder blush an’ wudn’t look at me fer a long while. An’ den I tumbled dat he had good people an’ wuzn’t ust to swearin’. An’ jest like yer, he wuz allus callin’ me down, cos he didn’t understand de words I talked, an’ den I’d cut de rag short an’ tell’m wot dey ment. But he wuz smart, I tell yer; yer didn’t have ter give ‘m de drop more’n onst to make ‘m tumble.

Well, we moped up above de railroad bridge an’ undrest on a san’bar w’ere a lot other road-kids, wot I knowed, wuz in swimmin’. Say! it wuz a sight ter see dat yaller-haired kid’s clo’s. Right down ter de skin dey wuz as fine as fine cud be. A good ‘eal better’n I ever wore.

At first, de road-kids, wuz fer guyin’ ‘m, but I blufft ‘m wid der stiff lip, an’ dey let up an’ wuz very kind ter ‘m. It wuz a picnic ter see dat kid. He wuz so funny an’ diffrent from de rest of de push. He wuz so innisent an’ trustin’ like. Why, he guv me his hoop ter wear fer ‘m, cos he wuz leary dat it’d slip off’n his finger in de water. An’ w’en he took his locket off’n his neck an’ put it in his pocket, curius like, I took it ter see wot it wuz like, an’ if it wuz snide. But it wuz eighteen K., an’ den I kep’ it, so de odder kids cudn’t swipe it.

Well, we had lots of joy, an’ so did de kid, dough he cudn’t swim a stroke. Bime’by we all cum out an’ lay on de sand in de sun ‘cept ‘m, an’ he said in, foolin’ ‘round in de shaller places. Pritty quick I got ter jokin’ wid ‘m, an’ I can see ‘m now wid his han’s claspt behind his head, an’ his pritty face all smiles an’ laffin’, an’ his yaller hair flyin’ ev’ry way, like a girl’s. He wuz walkin’ out backwards from de san’bar.

All of a sudden like, he struck a hole an’ went down. We wuz all in de water like a shot, but he never cum up any more. Yer see, he struck de undertow an' wuz sucked down. Well, bime'by we all got out an' sat in der san' kinder solem' like fer a long while. Yer see, it wuz hard ter see a poor innisent kid like dat get drownded, even dough we hadn't knowed 'm very long.

Pritty soon, after a while, de "Punk Kid" goes up an' takes de ticker, I mean watch, sayin' fer an excuse like, "Mine's broke." But he didn't need ter 'polygize, fer up goes de "Miget Kid" an' takes his coat, an' de "Cooley Kid" his shirt, an' so on, till dere wuz nothin' left but his kicks, I mean shoes, w'ich I took, coz mine wuz no good. Den we piles up our ole rags in place of his good 'uns, an' drest.

De "Orator Kid" went an' gave de coroner de tip, an' den run out of de office, so dey cudn't pinch 'm. An' w'en de coroner cum down, all drest up fine, an' took de clo's, he said kinder offhand like, w'en he saw de poor, mis'rable rags: "It's only a tramp kid, anyhow."

Well' t'ree days went by, an' den dey foun' de poor little kid way down de river, an' w'en he wuz at de morgue, I went an' took a look at 'm.

Wot? Yer say, why didn't I 'dentify 'm? Well, yer see it wuz dis way: "Leary Joe" an' me wuz goin' ter pull out nex' day, an' I didn't wanter be held fer de inquest, an' besides, dey might ast me some curius questions 'bout wot became of his good togs and jewelry.

Wot? Yu're not cryin', are yer, mister? Well, yu're de funniest guy I ever seen. O! I tumbles now. Yer wuz de kid's ole man. Den I'm sorry fer yer, an' here's my hand on it.

Wot? Five big cart-wheels! I'm much obliged, mister, an' I guess yu'd better keep de hoop an' locket, cos dey belongs ter yer anyways. Well, I must be sayin' "So long," cos here cums my pal Leary Joe, an' we're goin' out on dat freight over dere. Dere she whistles now, an' I must be movin'. Cum on, Leary Joe, an' take de second, she's nice an' clean, an' we can have a good snooze.

The “Fuzziness” of Hoockla-Heen

HOOCKLA-HEEN half-crouched, half-knelt in the tall, dank grass. Not a motion passed over him, yet he had been there a long, long hour. In his hands he held a slender bow, with bone-barbed arrow strung in place; and he would have seemed turned to stone had it not been for the look of eagle alertness in his face. In fact, he was never more alive than at that very moment. His nostrils gave him full report of the green and growing things, of the budded willows and quaking aspens down by the edge of the low bank, of the great red raspberries thickly studding the bushes at his back, and over to the right, a dozen paces away and well hidden, he knew there must be a clump of the bright-colored but poisonous snake-flower.

His senses told him many things. He felt the moisture of the grass creeping and soaking through his moosehide trousers and chilling his knees, and by its breath on his brow he knew that the light breeze was hauling slowly around in the pale wake of the moon. And of the low hum of sound which rose from the land, his ears distinguished each component part — the rustling of the leaves and grasses, the calls of birds and squirrels and wild fowl, and the myriad noises of a vast insect life.

But chief of all was one sound which made his face grow tense with expectancy. Just before him a tangle of sticks and poles, laid together in rude order, dammed the swampy stream and formed a shallow pond. Through a break in the dam the water gurgled noisily. That, however, was not the sound which held him. From above he heard the faint, sharp slap of some object upon the earth, followed by the plump of a body into water. Then silence settled down again, and he stared steadily at the break through which the water slipped away.

But as he waited a new sound disturbed him. From far below came the low whine of a dog, and once the crackle of a broken twig. And although he felt vexation at this, his face gave no sign, while he centered his whole consciousness in his one sense of hearing. From above there came a low splashing, nearer than before, and from below the crackle of another breaking twig, likewise nearer.

It was if these approaching sounds were running a race, and he wished the one from the water to win. And win it did, for a ripple broke the surface of the pond and a small log floated into the opening in the dam. Shoving it along, he could make out a large, ratlike head, with little, round ears laid back and nearly lost in hair.

Hoockla-Heen bent his bow noiselessly and waited. The animal pushed and shoved at the log, trying to block the opening. Failing in this, it crawled cautiously out on the dam, exposing three feet and more of body, covered with fur of heavy chestnut-brown. A crackle of twigs from below, and the animal rose suspiciously on its hind legs to listen. Then it was that Hoockla-Heen felt the thrill of achievement, the consciousness of having done and done well, as the arrow sped through the moonlight, singing its shrill song and transfixing the animal, which knew its end in the sound.

The boy, for Hoockla-Heen could boast but twelve years, sprang upright and called out joyously. A like call came from below and a tremendous crashing of underbrush answered him; and as he stooped and lifted the beaver by its broad, flat tail, another boy broke out of the bushes and waded to him through the grass.

“And hast thou got that old gray nose at last?” the newcomer questioned, excitedly.

“Aye,” Hoockla-Heen made answer, coldly, hiding his exultation under an impassive mask. “Aye, old gray nose, and small thanks to thee, Klanik, who flounder over the ground like a blind bull moose and make much noise.”

“I came softly,” the other boy replied, a little hurt by the censure.

“Yes, with a whining dog.”

“Broken Tooth would follow me, but I sent him back,” said Klanik. “Did you know,” he went on, eagerly, “that the tribe is to journey down to see these white men of the Yukon?”

Upon that, Hoockla-Heen danced gleefully up and down. Klanik joined hands with him, and they circled round and round till, in sheer excess of joy, the dance was turned into a wrestling bout, and they were panting and straining to the utmost. Klanik finally slipped on the beaver’s tail, and Hoockla-Heen, profiting by the advantage, forced him suddenly backward and pressed his shoulders into the soggy ground. Then they sprang to their feet, laughing, and started down the trail to camp with the burden of the beaver shared between them.

On the way Klanik told of what had taken place at the council. Kootznaloo, one of their bravest hunters, had wandered off the previous fall, and after a long absence had returned with incredible tales of the white men. He had gone down the White River farther than the tribe had ever ventured; he had gone to the great Yukon, and the wonderful city of Dawson. At the council he had spoken of the many furs the tribe possessed, of how highly furs were esteemed by the white men, and of his plan for the tribe to go down to Dawson and trade these furs for immense wealth in guns and blankets and scarlet cloths.

But Ya-Koo, the maker of medicine, had opposed him. As they all knew, he, too, had been among the white men once upon a time, and he could tell that the white men were very bad. This Kottznaloo denied; the white men were very good, he said, in token whereof had he not returned with a fine new gun?

So the discussion waged to and fro. Many who had never seen white men had agreed with Kootznaloo. Moreover, all of them were anxious to possess fine new guns like his. Hoockla-Heen's father, Kow-Whi, who was chief, had also declared in favor of Kootznaloo's project; and Ya-Koo, though he was medicine-man to the tribe, had been forced to give in. In two days, it had been decided, now that summer was come and the rivers running free, the whole tribe, men, women and children, would load their canoes and depart for the wonder city.

For some time after Klanik had finished telling of what occurred at the council the boys walked on in silence. The Klanik spoke again, gravely: "It is not to be believed that these white men are white, all over white — face, hands, everything."

"Aye," Hoockla-Heen answered, absently, "and their eyes are of the color of summer skies when there are no clouds."

Klanik looked at him curiously, for Klanik knew many strange things concerning Hoockla-Heen of which Hoockla-Heen himself was ignorant — things which Kow-Whi and Ya-Koo had commanded should never be spoken.

But Hoockla-Heen went on: "And their womenkind are fair and soft, and their hair is yellow, quite yellow, and often I remember —

He stopped suddenly and looked into the curious eyes of his chum.

"What dost thou remember?" Klanik queried, gently. "Thou hast never seen the white men and their womenkind."

"I remember — "

"Truly art thou Hoockla-Heen, the dreamer."

"Aye, I dream." Hoockla-Heen shook his head sadly. "Surely, I dream."

He put his hand before him as if to dispel some vision, and after that, till camp was reached, there was silence between them. But when Hoockla-Heen crept into his furs and pulled the bearskin over him, he could not close his eyes, and sleep was far from him. It was the old sickness, com-ta-nitch-i-wyan, come back to him again — the dream-sickness which he had thought outgrown. It was the sickness which, when a little boy, had made the children draw away from him in fear, and the tears come into the eyes of the squaws when they looked upon him. The dream-sickness — how it had made his childhood miserable!

Of course all men dreamed, and even the wolf-dogs; but they dreamed with their eyes shut, when they slept, and he had dreamed with eyes wide open, broad awake. And the men dreamed about things they knew, about hunting and fishing; but he had dreamed about things he did not know, and which nobody else knew. Haunting memories of things he could not express had come to him; and it seemed, if only he could think back, that all would be clear, only, try as he would, he could not think back.

At such times he felt very much as he did when he was sick of the river fever, and his head was dizzy, his eyes trembling and watery, and his fingers felt twice their natural size, strangely large and fuzzy. Ah, that was it, the very word — fuzzy! That was the way his head felt when he tried to think back.

Then, as he gradually outgrew and forgot it, the dream-sickness had left him. The medicine-man, Ya-Koo, had made public incantation over him, and besought the bad spirits to depart from him, and privately he told him to think back no more, lest misfortune should fall upon him. And he had obeyed, and the thing had gone from him. But now it had come back again. Was there ever such an unhappy boy? He clenched his hands passionately, and for hours stared blindly into the blackness above him.

Chief Kow-Whi’s canoe led the procession of the tribe, and with him were Hoockla-Heen and Klanik. All day they had been sweeping down the Yukon, rounding one great bend after another, but they had not landed. They passed one place early in the day where men, white men, were firing off their guns excitedly. Kootznaloo paddled alongside Kow-Whi’s canoe and explained that he thought it must be a custom of the white men, although he had never seen the like during the time he spent among them. But after a brief deliberation, not being sure that it was merely a custom, they decided not to venture in, but to run on to Dawson.

And all day Hoockla-Heen had had attacks of the dream-sickness; and when he had looked a long way off at the white men discharging their guns, he had suffered from an especially severe attack. The fuzziness had been almost overpowering. He was also worried by a feeling that something was going to happen — what he did not know.

He tried to tell Klanik about it, but Klanik had retorted, “Don’t be a baby; nothing’ll eat you.” After that he kept quiet, although he was sure that he was not afraid. Instead, he was very anxious that the thing should happen whatever it was.

At midday the flotilla swung along a series of mighty bluffs and rounded an abrupt turn. Here the Klondike emptied its swollen flood into the Yukon, and here, suddenly, without warning, Dawson burst upon their astonished eyes.

As far as they could see, from river rim to mountain side, was a sea of tents and cabins. And this sea of dwellings spilled over the river rim and down into the water, where the bank was lined for a mile and a half with boats — boats, three and four deep, and scows, dories, canoes and huge rafts, all heaped high with provisions and the possessions of men. The suddenness and the vastness of it took away the breath of the old chief, Kow-Whi, and he could only gaze in speechless wonder.

Hoockla-Heen was almost suffocating with fuzziness. He reached up hurriedly and held his head with both hands. Oh, if he could only understand! What did it all mean?

Klanik cried out sharply to him for missing stroke with his paddle, and with an effort of will he controlled himself. They drove in close to the shore and by the barracks, where were the Northwest mounted police and where the British banner floated.

Hoockla-Heen pointed to it and said, “That is a flag.”

“How dost thou know, dreamer?” Klanik demanded.

But Hoockla-Heen did not hear. They were drifting past a great barge loaded with huge animals, as large as a large moose. The sight frightened the women, and several of the canoes sheered out into the stream to give it a wide berth.

“And what manner of animal is that?” Klanik asked, mischievously.

“That is — ” Hoockla-Heen hesitated a moment, and then went on confidently, “That is a horse.”

“Truly, agreed Kootznaloo, whose canoe was alongside, “those be horses. I have seen them before, and they are harmless. But how dost thou know, O Hoockla-Heen?”

Hoockla-Heen shook his head and bent to his paddle as the canoes whirled in to a landing. When all had been made fast, they climbed the steep bank and came upon an open space among the houses. Flags were flying everywhere, but flags different from the one which floated over the barracks; and everywhere were men, firing guns and revolvers into the air and shouting like mad.

A great crowd filled the open space, and as the wide-eyed Indians took up their position on the outskirts the noise died away, and in the center, on a heap of lumber, a man rose and began to speak. Very often he pointed to a flag which flew above his head, and every little while he was interrupted by clappings of hands and great rolling shouts and volleys of gun-shots. At such times he would pause and drink water from a glass which stood on a box beside him.

“Oh! oh!” Hoockla-Heen cried, striving to clutch at the phantoms which were fluttering through his mind.

“Strange-looking boy, that, for an Indian,” remarked a man in a draggled mackinaw jacket, who now and then pulled out a writing-pad and took down notes.

Hoockla-Heen glanced quickly at him, although he did not understand what had been said; but as he looked at him the dream-sickness came over him violently.

The man’s companion, clad in a lieutenant’s uniform of the mounted police, took the cigar from his lips and exclaimed, “by Jove, he’s no — —”

But just then a red-headed boy touched a lighted punk to a string which braided together hundreds of small red tubes. These he threw to the ground. At once there was a tremendous flashing and spluttering and banging, and the Indians, Ya-Koo leading, surged backward in terror.

Hoockla-Heen alone stood his ground. A sudden lightness came upon him, as when the fog rises from the earth and all things shine clear and bright in the sun. The fuzziness had left him. “Firecrackers! he cried, dancing into the exploding mass. “Firecrackers! The Fourth of July! Hurrah! Hurrah!”

When the last cracker had gone off he came to himself, startled and blushing under his tanned skin. He looked timidly about him. His tribespeople had come back and were regarding him curiously. Kow-Whi, however, was looking straight before him, a sad expression on his face. But the lieutenant and the man who made notes had stepped up to him.

"What's your name?" the lieutenant demanded, seizing him by the arm.

"Jimmy," he answered, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Then the fuzzy sensation came back to him, and he fell to wondering why he had spoken that strange word. He did not know what the man had said. And what did Jimmy mean, anyway? Why had he spoken it?

"Jimmy what?" the lieutenant asked.

Hoockla-Heen shook his head. He did not understand the white man's speech. Besides, his tribespeople were pressing round him excitedly, and Ya-Koo was plucking at his sleeve for him to come away.

"How old are you?"

Again he shook his head, this time adding, "White River," as if it might help.

"Yes, um White River," Kottznaloo corroborated, glad of the chance to play interpreter. "Um White River, 'way up."

"White River, eh?" the lieutenant repeated, in sudden surprise. Then turning to his companion, "How old do you make him out, Dawes?"

Dawes considered, "Twelve or thirteen, I should judge."

The lieutenant pondered audibly: "Summer of '91 — winter of '92 — four years and eight make twelve — " He broke off suddenly, then cried out, "Dawes! Dawes! It's the kid, sure! Hold him! As you love me, hold him tight!"

Before Hoockla-Heen could realize what was happening, the lieutenant had jerked open his squirrel-skin shirt, the soft leather tearing down under his grasp. Ya-Koo tried to come between, but the lieutenant thrust him roughly back. There was a murmuring and a snarl from the tribespeople, a flashing of knives from the sheaths and a clicking of rusting guns. But Kow-Whi quieted them with a sharp word of command.

"Look at that! White, eh?" The lieutenant pointed at Hoockla-Heen's naked chest.

Dawes looked carefully and shook his head. "Pretty black, I should judge."

"Oh, that's the sun!" the lieutenant exclaimed, impatiently, at the same time ripping and tearing away at the shirt. "Under the arms, man! Under the arms, where it's untouched!"

"It is white!" Dawes cried, with sudden conviction. "What shall we do?"

"Do! I'll show you!" The lieutenant beckoned to the red-headed boy, who was looking on with huge interest. "Hey, you, boy! Run and fetch Jim McDermott. He's right over there in that bunch of men. I saw him not five minutes ago."

The red-headed boy darted off, and Hoockla-Heen watched him go, wondering at it all, and yet aware, that the thing which was to happen was happening.

Kootznaloo was jabbering excitedly to the lieutenant, who was nodding his head to every word and interjecting short, sharp questions.

"But I say, you know, I say, old man, what's up?" Dawes interrupted, pulling out his writing pad and poising his pencil.

"McDermott, Jim McDermott!" the lieutenant answered hastily. "Old-timer in the country. A bonanza king, worth a couple of millions at least. Used to be an agent for the P. C. C. Company. In '94 came in with his kid and a party from the west coast of Alaska. The wife was to come in the following year by the regular way. Unknown country. First white people to come over it, and the last. Frightful time. Nearly starved to death. In fact, two did. They, being the weakest, were the very ones left in charge of McDermott's boy while McDermott and the others pushed out after game. I heard him tell the story once, how, after three days, when he had got a moose and returned, he found the two men stiff and cold and the boy missing."

"The boy missing?" Dawes's pencil was suspended in mid-air.

"Yes, missing; and never a sign. The camp was close by the river, and McDermott figured that the boy must have crawled to the bank and fallen in. Seems now, though, that some Indian must have landed from a canoe, found the two dead men, and carried the living boy away with him. Of course McDermott never dreamed of such an outcome — but here he is now."

Hoockla-Heen followed the lieutenant's eyes, and saw a tall, dark-bearded man. And wonder! Oh, wonder! Clothed in flesh and blood, it was one of the phantoms of his dreams! He felt suddenly very light again, and the fuzziness went from him.

“Da-da!” he cried; “O da-da!” and flung himself into the man’s arms.

Then followed ten minutes of confusion, everybody explaining at once. Hoockla-Heen remembered nothing except that once or twice the man he had called “Da-da” stooped and kissed him, and that his clutch upon his hand kept growing tighter and tighter. Then the man said something to him and started to lead him away, still clutching his hand; but Hoockla-Heen did not understand, and stopped.

The man spoke to Kootznaloo, who said to Hoockla-Heen, “This man takes you to see a woman, white woman.”

“Ask him if her hair be yellow,” Hoockla-Heen commanded.

And when Kootznaloo had interpreted it, the man’s face grew bright with gladness, and he stooped and kissed Hoockla-Heen again and yet again.

Kow-Whi was standing apart, silent, his eyes fixed steadily before him, as if he saw nothing of what was taking place. There was a dignity and nobleness about his demeanor, and withal a sadness which the dullest could read.

Hoockla-Heen turned his head and then ran back to him, his eyes filling with tears. There he hesitated, in doubt, looking first to one man and then the other.

“Tell him, and them, that they will see the boy again,” McDermott ordered Kootznaloo to say. “And tell them that he shall always remember them, and they are welcome ever to a place by my fire and his. And further, that due reward, and great reward, shall be given.”

The thing had happened. It was all right to Hoockla-Heen that he should go up the hill holding this tall, dark-bearded man by the hand. For he knew he was going to see the woman, fair and soft, the woman he often remembered, whose hair was yellow.

A Goboto Night

I

At Goboto the traders come off their schooners and the planters drift in from far, wild coasts, and one and all they assume shoes, white duck trousers, and various other appearances of civilization. At Goboto mail is received, bills are paid, and newspapers, rarely more than five weeks old, are accessible; for the little island, belted with its coral reefs, affords safe anchorage, is the steamer port of call, and serves as the distributing point for the whole wide-scattered group.

Life at Goboto is heated, unhealthy, and lurid, and for its size it asserts the distinction of more cases of acute alcoholism than any other spot in the world. Guvutu, over in the Solomons, claims that it drinks between drinks. Goboto does not deny this. It merely states, in passing, that in the Goboton chronology no such interval of time is known. It also points out its import statistics, which show a far larger per capita consumption of spiritous liquors. Guvutu explains this on the basis that Goboto does a larger business and has more visitors. Goboto retorts that its resident population is smaller and that its visitors are thirstier. And the discussion goes on interminably, principally because of the fact that the disputants do not live long enough to settle it.

Goboto is not large. The island is only a quarter of a mile in diameter, and on it are situated an admiralty coal-shed (where a few tons of coal have lain untouched for twenty years), the barracks for a handful of black labourers, a big store and warehouse with sheet-iron roofs, and a bungalow inhabited by the manager and his two clerks. They are the white population. An average of one man out of the three is always to be found down with fever. The job at Goboto is a hard one. It is the policy of the company to treat its patrons well, as invading companies have found out, and it is the task of the manager and clerks to do the treating. Throughout the year traders and recruiters arrive from far, dry cruises, and planters from equally distant and dry shores, bringing with them magnificent thirsts. Goboto is the mecca of sprees, and when they have spread they go back to their schooners and plantations to recuperate.

Some of the less hardy require as much as six months between visits. But for the manager and his assistants there are no such intervals. They are on the spot, and week by week, blown in by monsoon or southeast trade, the schooners come to anchor, cargo'd with copra, ivory nuts, pearl-shell, hawksbill turtle, and thirst.

It is a very hard job at Goboto. That is why the pay is twice that on other stations, and that is why the company selects only courageous and intrepid men for this particular station. They last no more than a year or so, when the wreckage of them is shipped back to Australia, or the remains of them are buried in the sand across on the windward side of the islet. Johnny Bassett, almost the legendary hero of Goboto, broke all records. He was a remittance man with a remarkable constitution, and he lasted seven years. His dying request was duly observed by his clerks, who pickled him in a cask of trade-rum (paid for out of their own salaries) and shipped him back to his people in England. Nevertheless, at Goboto, they tried to be gentlemen. For that matter, though something was wrong with them, they were gentlemen, and had been gentlemen. That was why the great unwritten rule of Goboto was that visitors should put on pants and shoes. Breech-clouts, lava-lavas, and bare legs were not tolerated. When Captain Jensen, the wildest of the Blackbirders though descended from old New York Knickerbocker stock, surged in, clad in loin-cloth, undershirt, two belted revolvers and a sheath-knife, he was stopped at the beach. This was in the days of Johnny Bassett, ever a stickler in matters of etiquette. Captain Jensen stood up in the sternsheets of his whaleboat and denied the existence of pants on his schooner. Also, he affirmed his intention of coming ashore. They of Goboto nursed him back to health from a bullet-hole through his shoulder, and in addition handsomely begged his pardon, for no pants had they found on his schooner. And finally, on the first day he sat up, Johnny Bassett kindly but firmly assisted his guest into a pair of pants of his own. This was the great precedent. In all the succeeding years it had never been violated. White men and pants were undivorce-able. Only niggers ran naked. Pants constituted caste.

II

On this night things were, with one exception, in nowise different from any other night. Seven of them, with glimmering eyes and steady legs, had capped a day of Scotch with swivel-sticked cocktails and sat down to dinner. Jacketed, trousered, and shod, they were: Jerry McMurtrey, the manager; Eddy Little and Jack Andrews, clerks; Captain Stapler, of the recruiting ketch Merry; Darby Shryleton, planter from Tito-Ito; Peter Gee, a half-caste Chinese pearl-buyer who ranged from Ceylon to the Paumotus, and Alfred Deacon, a visitor who had stopped off from the last steamer. At first wine was served by the black servants to those that drank it, though all quickly shifted back to Scotch and soda, pickling their food as they ate it, ere it went into their calcined, pickled stomachs.

Over their coffee, they heard the rumble of an anchor-chain through a hawse-pipe, tokening the arrival of a vessel.

“It’s David Grief,” Peter Gee remarked.

“How do you know?” Deacon demanded truculently, and then went on to deny the half-caste’s knowledge. “You chaps put on a lot of side over a new chum. I’ve done some sailing myself, and this naming a craft when its sail is only a blur, or naming a man by the sound of his anchor--it’s--it’s unadulterated poppycock.”

Peter Gee was engaged in lighting a cigarette, and did not answer.

“Some of the niggers do amazing things that way,” McMurtrey interposed tactfully.

As with the others, this conduct of their visitor jarred on the manager. From the moment of Peter Gee’s arrival that afternoon Deacon had manifested a tendency to pick on him. He had disputed his statements and been generally rude.

“Maybe it’s because Peter’s got Chink blood in him,” had been Andrews’ hypothesis. “Deacon’s Australian, you know, and they’re daffy down there on colour.”

“I fancy that’s it,” McMurtrey had agreed. “But we can’t permit any bullying, especially of a man like Peter Gee, who’s whiter than most white men.”

In this the manager had been in nowise wrong. Peter Gee was that rare creature, a good as well as clever Eurasian. In fact, it was the stolid integrity of the Chinese blood that toned the recklessness and licentiousness of the English blood which had run in his father’s veins. Also, he was better educated than any man there, spoke better English as well as several other tongues, and knew and lived more of their own ideals of gentlemanness than they did themselves. And, finally, he was a gentle soul. Violence he deprecated, though he had killed men in his time. Turbulence he abhorred.

He always avoided it as he would the plague.

Captain Stapler stepped in to help McMurtrey:

"I remember, when I changed schooners and came into Altman, the niggers knew right off the bat it was me. I wasn't expected, either, much less to be in another craft. They told the trader it was me. He used the glasses, and wouldn't believe them. But they did know. Told me afterward they could see it sticking out all over the schooner that I was running her."

Deacon ignored him, and returned to the attack on the pearl-buyer.

"How do you know from the sound of the anchor that it was this whatever-you-called-him man?" he challenged.

"There are so many things that go to make up such a judgment," Peter Gee answered. "It's very hard to explain. It would require almost a text book."

"I thought so," Deacon sneered. "Explanation that doesn't explain is easy."

"Who's for bridge?" Eddy Little, the second clerk, interrupted, looking up expectantly and starting to shuffle. "You'll play, won't you, Peter?"

"If he does, he's a bluffer," Deacon cut back. "I'm getting tired of all this poppycock. Mr. Gee, you will favour me and put yourself in a better light if you tell how you know who that man was that just dropped anchor. After that I'll play you piquet."

"I'd prefer bridge," Peter answered. "As for the other thing, it's something like this: By the sound it was a small craft--no square-rigger. No whistle, no siren, was blown--again a small craft. It anchored close in--still again a small craft, for steamers and big ships must drop hook outside the middle shoal. Now the entrance is tortuous. There is no recruiting nor trading captain in the group who dares to run the passage after dark. Certainly no stranger would. There were two exceptions. The first was Margonville. But he was executed by the High Court at Fiji. Remains the other exception, David Grief. Night or day, in any weather, he runs the passage. This is well known to all. A possible factor, in case Grief were somewhere else, would be some young dare-devil of a skipper. In this connection, in the first place, I don't know of any, nor does anybody else. In the second place, David Grief is in these waters, cruising on the Gunga, which is shortly scheduled to leave here for Karo-Karo. I spoke to Grief, on the Gunga, in Sandfly Passage, day before yesterday. He was putting a trader ashore on a new station. He said he was going to call in at Babo, and then come on to Goboto. He has had ample time to get here. I have heard an anchor drop. Who else than David Grief can it be? Captain Donovan is skipper of the Gunga, and him I know too well to believe that he'd run in to Goboto after dark unless his owner were in charge. In a few minutes David Grief will enter through that door and say, 'In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks.' I'll wager fifty pounds he's the man that enters and that his words will be, 'In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks. '" Deacon was for the moment crushed. The sullen blood rose darkly in his face.

"Well, he's answered you," McMurtrey laughed genially. "And I'll back his bet myself for a couple of sovereigns."

"Bridge! Who's going to take a hand?" Eddy Little cried impatiently. "Come on, Peter!"

"The rest of you play," Deacon said. "He and I are going to play piquet."

"I'd prefer bridge," Peter Gee said mildly.

"Don't you play piquet?"

The pearl-buyer nodded.

"Then come on. Maybe I can show I know more about that than I do about anchors."

"Oh, I say----" McMurtrey began.

"You can play bridge," Deacon shut him off. "We prefer piquet."

Reluctantly, Peter Gee was bullied into a game that he knew would be unhappy.

"Only a rubber," he said, as he cut for deal.

"For how much?" Deacon asked.

Peter Gee shrugged his shoulders. "As you please."

"Hundred up--five pounds a game?"

Peter Gee agreed.

"With the lurch double, of course, ten pounds?"

"All right," said Peter Gee.

At another table four of the others sat in at bridge. Captain Stapler, who was no card-player, looked on and replenished the long glasses of Scotch that stood at each man's right hand. McMurtrey, with poorly concealed apprehension, followed as well as he could what went on at the piquet table. His fellow Englishmen as well were shocked by the behaviour of the Australian, and all were troubled by fear of some untoward act on his part.

That he was working up his animosity against the half-caste, and that the explosion might come any time, was apparent to all.

"I hope Peter loses," McMurtrey said in an undertone.

"Not if he has any luck," Andrews answered. "He's a wizard at piquet. I know by experience."

That Peter Gee was lucky was patent from the continual badgering of Deacon, who filled his glass frequently. He had lost the first game, and, from his remarks, was losing the second, when the door opened and David Grief entered.

"In Guvutu they merely drink between drinks," he remarked casually to the assembled company, ere he gripped the manager's hand. "Hello, Mac! Say, my skipper's down in the whaleboat. He's got a silk shirt, a tie, and tennis shoes, all complete, but he wants you to send a pair of pants down. Mine are too small, but yours will fit him. Hello, Eddy! How's that ngari-ngari? You up, Jock? The miracle has happened. No one down with fever, and no one remarkably drunk." He sighed, "I suppose the night is young yet. Hello, Peter! Did you catch that big squall an hour after you left us? We had to let go the second anchor."

While he was being introduced to Deacon, McMurtrey dispatched a house-boy with the pants, and when Captain Donovan came in it was as a white man should--at least in Goboto.

Deacon lost the second game, and an outburst heralded the fact. Peter Gee devoted himself to lighting a cigarette and keeping quiet.

"What?--are you quitting because you're ahead?" Deacon demanded.

Grief raised his eyebrows questioningly to McMurtrey, who frowned back his own disgust.

"It's the rubber," Peter Gee answered.

"It takes three games to make a rubber. It's my deal. Come on!"

Peter Gee acquiesced, and the third game was on.

"Young whelp--he needs a lacing," McMurtrey muttered to Grief. "Come on, let us quit, you chaps. I want to keep an eye on him. If he goes too far I'll throw him out on the beach, company instructions or no."

"Who is he?" Grief queried.

"A left-over from last steamer. Company's orders to treat him nice. He's looking to invest in a plantation. Has a ten-thousand-pound letter of credit with the company. He's got 'all-white Australia' on the brain. Thinks because his skin is white and because his father was once Attorney-General of the Commonwealth that he can be a cur. That's why he's picking on Peter, and you know Peter's the last man in the world to make trouble or incur trouble. Damn the company. I didn't engage to wet-nurse its infants with bank accounts. Come on, fill your glass, Grief. The man's a blighter, a blithering blighter."

"Maybe he's only young," Grief suggested.

"He can't contain his drink--that's clear." The manager glared his disgust and wrath. "If he raises a hand to Peter, so help me, I'll give him a licking myself, the little overgrown cad!"

The pearl-buyer pulled the pegs out of the cribbage board on which he was scoring and sat back. He had won the third game. He glanced across to Eddy Little, saying:

"I'm ready for the bridge, now."

"I wouldn't be a quitter," Deacon snarled.

"Oh, really, I'm tired of the game," Peter Gee assured him with his habitual quietness.

"Come on and be game," Deacon bullied. "One more. You can't take my money that way. I'm out fifteen pounds. Double or quits."

McMurtrey was about to interpose, but Grief restrained him with his eyes.

"If it positively is the last, all right," said Peter Gee, gathering up the cards. "It's my deal, I believe. As I understand it, this final is for fifteen pounds. Either you owe me thirty or we quit even?"

"That's it, chappie. Either we break even or I pay you thirty."

"Getting blooded, eh?" Grief remarked, drawing up a chair.

The other men stood or sat around the table, and Deacon played again in bad luck. That he was a good player was clear. The cards were merely running against him. That he could not take his ill luck with equanimity was equally clear. He was guilty of sharp, ugly curses, and he snapped and growled at the imperturbable half-caste. In the end Peter Gee counted out, while Deacon had not even made his fifty points. He glowered speechlessly at his opponent.

"Looks like a lurch," said Grief.

"Which is double," said Peter Gee.

"There's no need your telling me," Deacon snarled. "I've studied arithmetic. I owe you forty-five pounds. There, take it!"

The way in which he flung the nine five-pound notes on the table was an insult in itself. Peter Gee was even quieter, and flew no signals of resentment.

"You've got fool's luck, but you can't play cards, I can tell you that much," Deacon went on. "I could teach you cards."

The half-caste smiled and nodded acquiescence as he folded up the money.

"There's a little game called casino--I wonder if you ever heard of it?--a child's game."

"I've seen it played," the half-caste murmured gently.

"What's that?" snapped Deacon. "Maybe you think you can play it?"

"Oh, no, not for a moment. I'm afraid I haven't head enough for it."

"It's a bully game, casino," Grief broke in pleasantly. "I like it very much."

Deacon ignored him.

"I'll play you ten quid a game--thirty-one points out," was the challenge to Peter Gee. "And I'll show you how little you know about cards. Come on! Where's a full deck?"

"No, thanks," the half-caste answered. "They are waiting for me in order to make up a bridge set."

"Yes, come on," Eddy Little begged eagerly. "Come on, Peter, let's get started."

"Afraid of a little game like casino," Deacon girded. "Maybe the stakes are too high. I'll play you for pennies--or farthings, if you say so."

The man's conduct was a hurt and an affront to all of them. McMurtrey could stand it no longer.

"Now hold on, Deacon. He says he doesn't want to play. Let him alone."

Deacon turned raging upon his host; but before he could blurt out his abuse, Grief had stepped into the breach.

"I'd like to play casino with you," he said.

"What do you know about it?"

"Not much, but I'm willing to learn."

"Well, I'm not teaching for pennies to-night."

"Oh, that's all right," Grief answered. "I'll play for almost any sum--within reason, of course."

Deacon proceeded to dispose of this intruder with one stroke.

"I'll play you a hundred pounds a game, if that will do you any good."

Grief beamed his delight. “That will be all right, very right. Let us begin. Do you count sweeps?”

Deacon was taken aback. He had not expected a Goboton trader to be anything but crushed by such a proposition.

“Do you count sweeps?” Grief repeated.

Andrews had brought him a new deck, and he was throwing out the joker.

“Certainly not,” Deacon answered. “That’s a sissy game.”

“I’m glad,” Grief coincided. “I don’t like sissy games either.”

“You don’t, eh? Well, then, I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll play for five hundred pounds a game.”

Again Deacon was taken aback.

“I’m agreeable,” Grief said, beginning to shuffle. “Cards and spades go out first, of course, and then big and little casino, and the aces in the bridge order of value. Is that right?”

“You’re a lot of jokers down here,” Deacon laughed, but his laughter was strained. “How do I know you’ve got the money?”

“By the same token I know you’ve got it. Mac, how’s my credit with the company?”

“For all you want,” the manager answered.

“You personally guarantee that?” Deacon demanded.

“I certainly do,” McMurtrey said. “Depend upon it, the company will honour his paper up and past your letter of credit.”

“Low deals,” Grief said, placing the deck before Deacon on the table.

The latter hesitated in the midst of the cut and looked around with querulous misgiving at the faces of the others. The clerks and captains nodded.

“You’re all strangers to me,” Deacon complained. “How am I to know? Money on paper isn’t always the real thing.”

Then it was that Peter Gee, drawing a wallet from his pocket and borrowing a fountain pen from McMurtrey, went into action.

“I haven’t gone to buying yet,” the half-caste explained, “so the account is intact. I’ll just indorse it over to you, Grief. It’s for fifteen thousand. There, look at it.”

Deacon intercepted the letter of credit as it was being passed across the table. He read it slowly, then glanced up at McMurtrey.

“Is that right?”

“Yes. It’s just the same as your own, and just as good. The company’s paper is always good.”

Deacon cut the cards, won the deal, and gave them a thorough shuffle. But his luck was still against him, and he lost the game.

“Another game,” he said. “We didn’t say how many, and you can’t quit with me a loser. I want action.”

Grief shuffled and passed the cards for the cut.

“Let’s play for a thousand,” Deacon said, when he had lost the second game. And when the thousand had gone the way of the two five hundred bets he proposed to play for two thousand.

“That’s progression,” McMurtrey warned, and was rewarded by a glare from Deacon. But the manager was insistent. “You don’t have to play progression, Grief, unless you’re foolish.”

“Who’s playing this game?” Deacon flamed at his host; and then, to Grief: “I’ve lost two thousand to you. Will you play for two thousand?”

Grief nodded, the fourth game began, and Deacon won. The manifest unfairness of such betting was known to all of them. Though he had lost three games out of four, Deacon had lost no money. By the child’s device of doubling his wager with each loss, he was bound, with the first game he won, no matter how long delayed, to be even again.

He now evinced an unspoken desire to stop, but Grief passed the deck to be cut.

“What?” Deacon cried. “You want more?”

“Haven’t got anything yet,” Grief murmured whimsically, as he began the deal. “For the usual five hundred, I suppose?”

The shame of what he had done must have tingled in Deacon, for he answered, “No, we’ll play for a thousand. And say! Thirty-one points is too long. Why not twenty-one points out--if it isn’t too rapid for you?”

“That will make it a nice, quick, little game,” Grief agreed.

The former method of play was repeated. Deacon lost two games, doubled the stake, and was again even. But Grief was patient, though the thing occurred several times in the next hour’s play. Then happened what he was waiting for--a lengthening in the series of losing games for Deacon. The latter doubled to four thousand and lost, doubled to eight thousand and lost, and then proposed to double to sixteen thousand.

Grief shook his head. “You can’t do that, you know. You’re only ten thousand credit with the company.”

"You mean you won't give me action?" Deacon asked hoarsely. "You mean that with eight thousand of my money you're going to quit?"

Grief smiled and shook his head.

"It's robbery, plain robbery," Deacon went on. "You take my money and won't give me action."

"No, you're wrong. I'm perfectly willing to give you what action you've got coming to you. You've got two thousand pounds of action yet."

"Well, we'll play it," Deacon took him up. "You cut."

The game was played in silence, save for irritable remarks and curses from Deacon. Silently the onlookers filled and sipped their long Scotch glasses. Grief took no notice of his opponent's outbursts, but concentrated on the game. He was really playing cards, and there were fifty-two in the deck to be kept track of, and of which he did keep track. Two thirds of the way through the last deal he threw down his hand.

"Cards put me out," he said. "I have twenty-seven."

"If you've made a mistake," Deacon threatened, his face white and drawn.

"Then I shall have lost. Count them."

Grief passed over his stack of takings, and Deacon, with trembling fingers, verified the count. He half shoved his chair back from the table and emptied his glass. He looked about him at unsympathetic faces.

"I fancy I'll be catching the next steamer for Sydney," he said, and for the first time his speech was quiet and without bluster.

As Grief told them afterward: "Had he whined or raised a roar I wouldn't have given him that last chance. As it was, he took his medicine like a man, and I had to do it."

Deacon glanced at his watch, simulated a weary yawn, and started to rise.

"Wait," Grief said. "Do you want further action?"

The other sank down in his chair, strove to speak, but could not, licked his dry lips, and nodded his head.

"Captain Donovan here sails at daylight in the Gunga for Karo-Karo," Grief began with seeming irrelevance. "Karo-Karo is a ring of sand in the sea, with a few thousand cocoa-nut trees. Pandanus grows there, but they can't grow sweet potatoes nor taro. There aremabout eight hundred natives, a king and two prime ministers, and the last three named are the only ones who wear any clothes. It's a sort of God-forsaken little hole, and once a year I send a schooner up from Goboto. The drinking water is brackish, but old Tom Butler has survived on it for a dozen years. He's the only white man there, and he has a boat's crew of five Santa Cruz boys who would run away or kill him if they could. That is why they were sent there. They can't run away. He is always supplied with the hard cases from the plantations. There are no missionaries. Two native Samoan teachers were clubbed to death on the beach when they landed several years ago.

"Naturally, you are wondering what it is all about. But have patience. As I have said, Captain Donovan sails on the annual trip to Karo-Karo at daylight to-morrow. Tom Butler is old, and getting quite helpless. I've tried to retire him to Australia, but he says he wants to remain and die on Karo-Karo, and he will in the next year or so. He's a queer old codger. Now the time is due for me to send some white man up to take the work off his hands. I wonder how you'd like the job. You'd have to stay two years.

"Hold on! I've not finished. You've talked frequently of action this evening. There's no action in betting away what you've never sweated for. The money you've lost to me was left you by your father or some other relative who did the sweating. But two years of work as trader on Karo-Karo would mean something. I'll bet the ten thousand I've won from you against two years of your time. If you win, the money's yours. If you lose, you take the job at Karo-Karo and sail at daylight. Now that's what might be called real action. Will you play?"

Deacon could not speak. His throat lumped and he nodded his head as he reached for the cards.

"One thing more," Grief said. "I can do even better. If you lose, two years of your time are mine--naturally without wages. Nevertheless, I'll pay you wages. If your work is satisfactory, if you observe all instructions and rules, I'll pay you five thousand pounds a year for two years. The money will be deposited with the company, to be paid to you, with interest, when the time expires. Is that all right?"

"Too much so," Deacon stammered. "You are unfair to yourself. A trader only gets ten or fifteen pounds a month."

"Put it down to action, then," Grief said, with an air of dismissal. "And before we begin, I'll jot down several of the rules. These you will repeat aloud every morning during the two years--if you lose. They are for the good of your soul. When you have repeated them aloud seven hundred and thirty Karo-Karo mornings I am confident they will be in your memory to stay. Lend me your pen, Mac. Now, let's see----"

He wrote steadily and rapidly for some minutes, then proceeded to read the matter aloud:

"I must always remember that one man is as good as another, save and except when he thinks he is better.

"No matter how drunk I am I must not fail to be a gentleman. A gentleman is a man who is gentle. Note: It would be better not to get drunk.

"When I play a man's game with men, I must play like a man.

"A good curse, rightly used and rarely, is an efficient thing. Too many curses spoil the cursing. Note: A curse cannot change a card seguence nor cause the wind to blow.

"There is no license for a man to be less than a man. Ten thousand pounds cannot purchase such a license."

At the beginning of the reading Deacon's face had gone white with anger. Then had arisen, from neck to forehead, a slow and terrible flush that deepened to the end of the reading.

"There, that will be all," Grief said, as he folded the paper and tossed it to the centre of the table. "Are you still ready to play the game?"

"I deserve it," Deacon muttered brokenly. "I've been an ass. Mr. Gee, before I know whether I win or lose, I want to apologize. Maybe it was the whiskey, I don't know, but I'm an ass, a cad, a bounder--everything that's rotten."

He held out his hand, and the half-caste took it beamingly.

"I say, Grief," he blurted out, "the boy's all right. Call the whole thing off, and let's forget it in a final nightcap."

Grief showed signs of debating, but Deacon cried:

"No; I won't permit it. I'm not a quitter. If it's Karo-Karo, it's Karo-Karo. There's nothing more to it."

"Right," said Grief, as he began the shuffle. "If he's the right stuff to go to Karo-Karo, Karo-Karo won't do him any harm."

The game was close and hard. Three times they divided the deck between them and "cards" was not scored. At the beginning of the fifth and last deal, Deacon needed three points to go out, and Grief needed four. "Cards" alone would put Deacon out, and he played for "cards". He no longer muttered or cursed, and played his best game of the evening. Incidentally he gathered in the two black aces and the ace of hearts.

"I suppose you can name the four cards I hold," he challenged, as the last of the deal was exhausted and he picked up his hand.

Grief nodded.

"Then name them."

"The knave of spades, the deuce of spades, the tray of hearts, and the ace of diamonds," Grief answered.

Those behind Deacon and looking at his hand made no sign. Yet the naming had been correct.

"I fancy you play casino better than I," Deacon acknowledged. "I can name only three of yours, a knave, an ace, and big casino."

"Wrong. There aren't five aces in the deck. You've taken in three and you hold the fourth in your hand now."

"By Jove, you're right," Deacon admitted. "I did scoop in three. Anyway, I'll make 'cards' on you. That's all I need."

"I'll let you save little casino----" Grief paused to calculate. "Yes, and the ace as well, and still I'll make 'cards' and go out with big casino. Play."

"No 'cards' and I win!" Deacon exulted as the last of the hand was played. "I go out on little casino and the four aces. 'Big casino' and 'spades' only bring you to twenty."

Grief shook his head. "Some mistake, I'm afraid."

"No," Deacon declared positively. "I counted every card I took in. That's the one thing I was correct on. I've twenty-six, and you've twenty-six."

"Count again," Grief said.

Carefully and slowly, with trembling fingers, Deacon counted the cards he had taken. There were twenty-five. He reached over to the corner of the table, took up the rules Grief had written, folded them, and put them in his pocket. Then he emptied his glass, and stood up. Captain Donovan looked at his watch, yawned, and also arose.

"Going aboard, Captain?" Deacon asked.

"Yes," was the answer. "What time shall I send the whaleboat for you?"

"I'll go with you now. We'll pick up my luggage from the Billy as we go by, I was sailing on her for Babo in the morning."

Deacon shook hands all around, after receiving a final pledge of good luck on Karo-Karo.

"Does Tom Butler play cards?" he asked Grief.

"Solitaire," was the answer.

“Then I’ll teach him double solitaire.” Deacon turned toward the door, where Captain Donovan waited, and added with a sigh, “And I fancy he’ll skin me, too, if he plays like the rest of you island men.”

The God of His Fathers

On every hand stretched the forest primeval,--the home of noisy comedy and silent tragedy. Here the struggle for survival continued to wage with all its ancient brutality. Briton and Russian were still to overlap in the Land of the Rainbow's End--and this was the very heart of it--nor had Yankee gold yet purchased its vast domain. The wolf-pack still clung to the flank of the cariboo-herd, singling out the weak and the big with calf, and pulling them down as remorselessly as were it a thousand, thousand generations into the past. The sparse aborigines still acknowledged the rule of their chiefs and medicine men, drove out bad spirits, burned their witches, fought their neighbors, and ate their enemies with a relish which spoke well of their bellies. But it was at the moment when the stone age was drawing to a close. Already, over unknown trails and chartless wildernesses, were the harbingers of the steel arriving,--fair-faced, blue-eyed, indomitable men, incarnations of the unrest of their race. By accident or design, single-handed and in twos and threes, they came from no one knew whither, and fought, or died, or passed on, no one knew whence. The priests raged against them, the chiefs called forth their fighting men, and stone clashed with steel; but to little purpose. Like water seeping from some mighty reservoir, they trickled through the dark forests and mountain passes, threading the highways in bark canoes, or with their moccasined feet breaking trail for the wolf-dogs. They came of a great breed, and their mothers were many; but the fur-clad denizens of the Northland had this yet to learn. So many an unsung wanderer fought his last and died under the cold fire of the aurora, as did his brothers in burning sands and reeking jungles, and as they shall continue to do till in the fulness of time the destiny of their race be achieved.

It was near twelve. Along the northern horizon a rosy glow, fading to the west and deepening to the east, marked the unseen dip of the midnight sun. The gloaming and the dawn were so commingled that there was no night,--simply a wedding of day with day, a scarcely perceptible blending of two circles of the sun. A kildee timidly chirped good-night; the full, rich throat of a robin proclaimed good-morrow. From an island on the breast of the Yukon a colony of wild fowl voiced its interminable wrongs, while a loon laughed mockingly back across a still stretch of river.

In the foreground, against the bank of a lazy eddy, birch-bark canoes were lined two and three deep. Ivory-bladed spears, bone-barbed arrows, buckskin-thonged bows, and simple basket-woven traps bespoke the fact that in the muddy current of the river the salmon-run was on. In the background, from the tangle of skin tents and drying frames, rose the voices of the fisher folk. Bucks skylarked with bucks or flirted with the maidens, while the older squaws, shut out from this by virtue of having fulfilled the end of their existence in reproduction, gossiped as they braided rope from the green roots of trailing vines. At their feet their naked progeny played and squabbled, or rolled in the muck with the tawny wolf-dogs.

To one side of the encampment, and conspicuously apart from it, stood a second camp of two tents. But it was a white man's camp. If nothing else, the choice of position at least bore convincing evidence of this. In case of offence, it commanded the Indian quarters a hundred yards away; of defence, a rise to the ground and the cleared intervening space; and last, of defeat, the swift slope of a score of yards to the canoes below. From one of the tents came the petulant cry of a sick child and the crooning song of a mother. In the open, over the smouldering embers of a fire, two men held talk.

"Eh? I love the church like a good son. Bien! So great a love that my days have been spent in fleeing away from her, and my nights in dreaming dreams of reckoning. Look you!" The half-breed's voice rose to an angry snarl. "I am Red River born. My father was white--as white as you. But you are Yankee, and he was British bred, and a gentleman's son. And my mother was the daughter of a chief, and was a man. Ay, and one had to look the second time to see what manner of blood ran in my veins; for I lived with the whites, and was one of them, and my father's heart beat in me. It happened there was a maiden--white--who looked on me with kind eyes. Her father had much land and many horses; also he was a big man among his people, and his blood was the blood of the French. He said the girl knew not her own mind, and talked overmuch with her, and became wroth that such things should be.

"But she knew her mind, for we came quick before the priest. And quicker had come her father, with lying words, false promises, know not what; so that the priest stiffened his neck and would not make us that we might live one with the other. As at the beginning it was the church which would not bless my birth, so now it was the church which refused me marriage and put the blood of men upon my hands. Bien! Thus have I cause to love the church. So I struck the priest on his woman's mouth, and we took swift horses, the girl and I, to Fort Pierre, where was a minister of good heart. But hot on our trail was her father, and brothers, and other men he had gathered to him. And we fought, our horses on the run, till I emptied three saddles and the rest drew off and went on to Fort Pierre. Then we took east, the girl and I, to the hills and forests, and we lived one with the other, and we were not married,--the work of the good church which I love like a son.

"But mark you, for this is the strangeness of woman, the way of which no man may understand. One of the saddles I emptied was that of her father's, and the hoofs of those who came behind had pounded him into the earth. This we saw, the girl and I, and this I had forgot had she not remembered. And in the quiet of the evening, after the day's hunt were done, it came between us, and in the silence of the night when we lay beneath the stars and should have been one. It was there always. She never spoke, but it sat by our fire and held us ever apart. She tried to put it aside, but at such times it would rise up till I could read it in the look of her eyes, in the very intake of her breath.

"So in the end she bore me a child, a woman-child, and died. Then I went among my mother's people, that it might nurse at a warm breast and live. But my hands were wet with the blood of men, look you, because of the church, wet with the blood of men. And the Riders of the North came for me, but my mother's brother, who was then chief in his own right, hid me and gave me horses and food. And we went away, my woman-child and I, even to the Hudson Bay Country, where white men were few and the questions they asked not many. And I worked for the company as a hunter, as a guide, as a driver of dogs, till my woman-child was become a woman, tall, and slender, and fair to the eye. "You know the winter, long and lonely, breeding evil thoughts and bad deeds. The Chief Factor was a hard man, and bold. And he was not such that a woman would delight in looking upon. But he cast eyes upon my woman-child who was become a woman. Mother of God! he sent me away on a long trip with the dogs, that he might--you understand, he was a hard man and without heart. She was most white, and her soul was white, and a good woman, and--well, she died.

"It was bitter cold the night of my return, and I had been away months, and the dogs were limping sore when I came to the fort. The Indians and breeds looked on me in silence, and I felt the fear of knew not what, but I said nothing till the dogs were fed and I had eaten as a man with work before him should. Then I spoke up, demanding the word, and they shrank from me, afraid of my anger and what I should do; but the story came out, the pitiful story, word for word and act for act, and they marvelled that I should be so quiet.

"When they had done I went to the Factor's house, calmer than now in the telling of it. He had been afraid and called upon the breeds to help him; but they were not pleased with the deed, and had left him to lie on the bed he had made. So he had fled to the house of the priest. Thither I followed. But when I was come to that place, the priest stood in my way, and spoke soft words, and said a man in anger should go neither to the right nor left, but straight to God. I asked by the right of a father's wrath that he give me past, but he said only over his body, and besought with me to pray. Look you, it was the church, always the church; for I passed over his body and sent the Factor to meet my woman-child before his god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men.

"Then was there hue and cry, for word was sent to the station below, and I came away. Through the Land of the Great Slave, down the Valley of the Mackenzie to the never-opening ice, over the White Rockies, past the Great Curve of the Yukon, even to this place did come. And from that day to this, yours is the first face of my father's people I have looked upon. May it be the last! These people, which are my people, are a simple folk, and I have been raised to honor among them. My word is their law, and their priests but do my bidding, else would I not suffer them. When I speak for them I speak for myself. We ask to be let alone. We do not want your kind. If we permit you to sit by our fires, after you will come your church, your priests, and your gods. And know this, for each white man who comes to my village, him will I make deny his god. You are the first, and I give you grace. So it were well you go, and go quickly."

"I am not responsible for my brothers," the second man spoke up, filling his pipe in a meditative manner. Hay Stockard was at times as thoughtful of speech as he was wanton of action; but only at times.

"But I know your breed," responded the other. "Your brothers are many, and it is you and yours who break the trail for them to follow. In time they shall come to possess the land, but not in my time. Already, have I heard, are they on the head-reaches of the Great River, and far away below are the Russians."

Hay Stockard lifted his head with a quick start. This was startling geographical information. The Hudson Bay post at Fort Yukon had other notions concerning the course of the river, believing it to flow into the Arctic.

"Then the Yukon empties into Bering Sea?" he asked.

"I do not know, but below there are Russians, many Russians. Which is neither here nor there. You may go on and see for yourself; you may go back to your brothers; but up the Koyukuk you shall not go while the priests and fighting men do my bidding. Thus do I command, I, Baptiste the Red, whose word is law and who am head man over this people."

"And should I not go down to the Russians, or back to my brothers?"

"Then shall you go swift-footed before your god, which is a bad god, and the god of the white men."

The red sun shot up above the northern skyline, dripping and bloody. Baptiste the Red came to his feet, nodded curtly, and went back to his camp amid the crimson shadows and the singing of the robins.

Hay Stockard finished his pipe by the fire, picturing in smoke and coal the unknown upper reaches of the Koyukuk, the strange stream which ended here its arctic travels and merged its waters with the muddy Yukon flood. Somewhere up there, if the dying words of a shipwrecked sailorman who had made the fearful overland journey were to be believed, and if the vial of golden grains in his pouch attested to anything,--somewhere up there, in that home of winter, stood the Treasure House of the North. And as keeper of the gate, Baptiste the Red, English half-breed and renegade, barred the way.

"Bah!" He kicked the embers apart and rose to his full height, arms lazily outstretched, facing the flushing north with careless soul.

Hay Stockard swore, harshly, in the rugged monosyllables of his mother tongue. His wife lifted her gaze from the pots and pans, and followed his in a keen scrutiny of the river. She was a woman of the Teslin Country, wise in the ways of her husband's vernacular when it grew intensive. From the slipping of a snowshoe thong to the forefront of sudden death, she could gauge occasion by the pitch and volume of his blasphemy. So she knew the present occasion merited attention. A long canoe, with paddles flashing back the rays of the westering sun, was crossing the current from above and urging in for the eddy. Hay Stockard watched it intently. Three men rose and dipped, rose and dipped, in rhythmical precision; but a red bandanna, wrapped about the head of one, caught and held his eye.

"Bill!" he called. "Oh, Bill!"

A shambling, loose-jointed giant rolled out of one of the tents, yawning and rubbing the sleep from his eyes. Then he sighted the strange canoe and was wide awake on the instant.

"By the jumping Methuselah! That damned sky-pilot!"

Hay Stockard nodded his head bitterly, half-reached for his rifle, then shrugged his shoulders.

"Pot-shot him," Bill suggested, "and settle the thing out of hand. He 'll spoil us sure if we don't." But the other declined this drastic measure and turned away, at the same time bidding the woman return to her work, and calling Bill back from the bank. The two Indians in the canoe moored it on the edge of the eddy, while its white occupant, conspicuous by his gorgeous head-gear, came up the bank.

"Like Paul of Tarsus, I give you greeting. Peace be unto you and grace before the Lord."

His advances were met sullenly, and without speech. "To you, Hay Stockard, blasphemer and Philistine, greeting. In your heart is the lust of Mammon, in your mind cunning devils, in your tent this woman whom you live with in adultery; yet of these divers sins, even here in the wilderness, I, Sturges Owen, apostle to the Lord, bid you to repent and cast from you your iniquities."

"Save your cant! Save your cant!" Hay Stockard broke in testily. "You 'll need all you 've got, and more, for Red Baptiste over yonder."

He waved his hand toward the Indian camp, where the half-breed was looking steadily across, striving to make out the new-comers. Sturges Owen, disseminator of light and apostle to the Lord, stepped to the edge of the steep and commanded his men to bring up the camp outfit. Stockard followed him.

"Look here," he demanded, plucking the missionary by the shoulder and twirling him about. "Do you value your hide?"

"My life is in the Lord's keeping, and I do but work in His vineyard," he replied solemnly.

"Oh, stow that! Are you looking for a job of martyrship?"

"If He so wills."

"Well, you 'll find it right here, but I 'm going to give you some advice first. Take it or leave it. If you stop here, you 'll be cut off in the midst of your labors. And not you alone, but your men, Bill, my wife--"

"Who is a daughter of Belial and hearkeneth not to the true Gospel."

"And myself. Not only do you bring trouble upon yourself, but upon us. I was frozen in with you last winter, as you will well recollect, and I know you for a good man and a fool. If you think it your duty to strive with the heathen, well and good; but do exercise some wit in the way you go about it. This man, Red Baptiste, is no Indian. He comes of our common stock, is as bull-necked as I ever dared be, and as wild a fanatic the one way as you are the other. When you two come together, hell 'll be to pay, and I don't care to be mixed up in it. Understand? So take my advice and go away. If you go down-stream, you 'll fall in with the Russians. There 's bound to be Greek priests among them, and they 'll see you safe through to Bering Sea,--that 's where the Yukon empties,--and from there it won't be hard to get back to civilization. Take my word for it and get out of here as fast as God 'll let you."

"He who carries the Lord in his heart and the Gospel in his hand hath no fear of the machinations of man or devil," the missionary answered stoutly. "I will see this man and wrestle with him. One backslider returned to the fold is a greater victory than a thousand heathen. He who is strong for evil can be as mighty for good, witness Saul when he journeyed up to Damascus to bring Christian captives to Jerusalem. And the voice of the Saviour came to him, crying, `Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?' And therewith Paul arrayed himself on the side of the Lord, and thereafter was most mighty in the saving of souls. And even as thou, Paul of Tarsus, even so do I work in the vineyard of the Lord, bearing trials and tribulations, scoffs and sneers, stripes and punishments, for His dear sake."

"Bring up the little bag with the tea and a kettle of water," he called the next instant to his boatmen; "not forgetting the haunch of cariboo and the mixing-pan." When his men, converts by his own hand, had gained the bank, the trio fell to their knees, hands and backs burdened with camp equipage, and offered up thanks for their passage through the wilderness and their safe arrival. Hay Stockard looked upon the function with sneering disapproval, the romance and solemnity of it lost to his matter-of-fact soul. Baptiste the Red, still gazing across, recognized the familiar postures, and remembered the girl who had shared his star-roofed couch in the hills and forests, and the woman-child who lay somewhere by bleak Hudson's Bay.

"Confound it, Baptiste, couldn't think of it. Not for a moment. Grant that this man is a fool and of small use in the nature of things, but still, you know, I can't give him up."

Hay Stockard paused, striving to put into speech the rude ethics of his heart.

"He 's worried me, Baptiste, in the past and now, and caused me all manner of troubles; but can't you see, he 's my own breed--white--and--and--why, I couldn't buy my life with his, not if he was a nigger."

"So be it," Baptiste the Red made answer. "I have given you grace and choice. I shall come presently, with my priests and fighting men, and either shall I kill you, or you deny your god. Give up the priest to my pleasure, and you shall depart in peace. Otherwise your trail ends here. My people are against you to the babies. Even now have the children stolen away your canoes." He pointed down to the river. Naked boys had slipped down the water from the point above, cast loose the canoes, and by then had worked them into the current. When they had drifted out of rifle-shot they clambered over the sides and paddled ashore.

"Give me the priest, and you may have them back again. Come! Speak your mind, but without haste."

Stockard shook his head. His glance dropped to the woman of the Teslin Country with his boy at her breast, and he would have wavered had he not lifted his eyes to the men before him.

"I am not afraid," Sturges Owen spoke up. "The Lord bears me in his right hand, and alone am I ready to go into the camp of the unbeliever. It is not too late. Faith may move mountains. Even in the eleventh hour may I win his soul to the true righteousness."

"Trip the beggar up and make him fast," Bill whispered hoarsely in the ear of his leader, while the missionary kept the floor and wrestled with the heathen. "Make him hostage, and bore him if they get ugly."

"No," Stockard answered. "I gave him my word that he could speak with us unmolested. Rules of warfare, Bill; rules of warfare. He's been on the square, given us warning, and all that, and--why, damn it, man, I can't break my word!"

"He 'll keep his, never fear."

"Don't doubt it, but I won't let a half-breed outdo me in fair dealing. Why not do what he wants,--give him the missionary and be done with it?"

"N-no," Bill hesitated doubtfully.

"Shoe pinches, eh?"

Bill flushed a little and dropped the discussion. Baptiste the Red was still waiting the final decision. Stockard went up to him.

"It 's this way, Baptiste. I came to your village minded to go up the Koyukuk. I intended no wrong. My heart was clean of evil. It is still clean. Along comes this priest, as you call him. I didn't bring him here. He 'd have come whether I was here or not. But now that he is here, being of my people, I 've got to stand by him. And 'm going to. Further, it will be no child's play. When you have done, your village will be silent and empty, your people wasted as after a famine. True, we will be gone; likewise the pick of your fighting men--"

"But those who remain shall be in peace, nor shall the word of strange gods and the tongues of strange priests be buzzing in their ears."

Both men shrugged their shoulders and turned away, the half-breed going back to his own camp. The missionary called his two men to him, and they fell into prayer. Stockard and Bill attacked the few standing pines with their axes, felling them into convenient breastworks. The child had fallen asleep, so the woman placed it on a heap of furs and lent a hand in fortifying the camp. Three sides were thus defended, the steep declivity at the rear precluding attack from that direction. When these arrangements had been completed, the two men stalked into the open, clearing away, here and there, the scattered underbrush. From the opposing camp came the booming of war-drums and the voices of the priests stirring the people to anger.

"Worst of it is they 'll come in rushes," Bill complained as they walked back with shouldered axes.

"And wait till midnight, when the light gets dim for shooting."

"Can't start the ball a-rolling too early, then." Bill exchanged the axe for a rifle, and took a careful rest. One of the medicine-men, towering above his tribesmen, stood out distinctly. Bill drew a bead on him.

"All ready?" he asked.

Stockard opened the ammunition box, placed the woman where she could reload in safety, and gave the word. The medicine-man dropped. For a moment there was silence, then a wild howl went up and a flight of bone arrows fell short.

“I ‘d like to take a look at the beggar,” Bill remarked, throwing a fresh shell into place. “I ‘ll swear I drilled him clean between the eyes.”

“Didn’t work.” Stockard shook his head gloomily. Baptiste had evidently quelled the more warlike of his followers, and instead of precipitating an attack in the bright light of day, the shot had caused a hasty exodus, the Indians drawing out of the village beyond the zone of fire.

In the full tide of his proselyting fervor, borne along by the hand of God, Sturges Owen would have ventured alone into the camp of the unbeliever, equally prepared for miracle or martyrdom; but in the waiting which ensued, the fever of conviction died away gradually, as the natural man asserted itself. Physical fear replaced spiritual hope; the love of life, the love of God. It was no new experience. He could feel his weakness coming on, and knew it of old time. He had struggled against it and been overcome by it before. He remembered when the other men had driven their paddles like mad in the van of a roaring ice-flood, how, at the critical moment, in a panic of worldly terror, he had dropped his paddle and besought wildly with his God for pity. And there were other times. The recollection was not pleasant. It brought shame to him that his spirit should be so weak and his flesh so strong. But the love of life! the love of life! He could not strip it from him. Because of it had his dim ancestors perpetuated their line; because of it was he destined to perpetuate his. His courage, if courage it might be called, was bred of fanaticism. The courage of Stockard and Bill was the adherence to deep-rooted ideals. Not that the love of life was less, but the love of race tradition more; not that they were unafraid to die, but that they were brave enough not to live at the price of shame.

The missionary rose, for the moment swayed by the mood of sacrifice. He half crawled over the barricade to proceed to the other camp, but sank back, a trembling mass, wailing: “As the spirit moves! As the spirit moves! Who am I that I should set aside the judgments of God? Before the foundations of the world were all things written in the book of life. Worm that I am, shall I erase the page or any portion thereof? As God wills, so shall the spirit move!”

Bill reached over, plucked him to his feet, and shook him, fiercely, silently. Then he dropped the bundle of quivering nerves and turned his attention to the two converts. But they showed little fright and a cheerful alacrity in preparing for the coming passage at arms.

Stockard, who had been talking in undertones with the Teslin woman, now turned to the missionary.

"Fetch him over here," he commanded of Bill.

"Now," he ordered, when Sturges Owen had been duly deposited before him, "make us man and wife, and be lively about it." Then he added apologetically to Bill: "No telling how it 's to end, so I just thought I 'd get my affairs straightened up."

The woman obeyed the behest of her white lord. To her the ceremony was meaningless. By her lights she was his wife, and had been from the day they first foregathered. The converts served as witnesses. Bill stood over the missionary, prompting him when he stumbled. Stockard put the responses in the woman's mouth, and when the time came, for want of better, ringed her finger with thumb and forefinger of his own.

"Kiss the bride!" Bill thundered, and Sturges Owen was too weak to disobey.

"Now baptize the child!"

"Neat and tidy," Bill commented.

"Gathering the proper outfit for a new trail," the father explained, taking the boy from the mother's arms. "I was grub-staked, once, into the Cascades, and had everything in the kit except salt. Never shall forget it. And if the woman and the kid cross the divide to-night they might as well be prepared for pot-luck. A long shot, Bill, between ourselves, but nothing lost if it misses."

A cup of water served the purpose, and the child was laid away in a secure corner of the barricade. The men built the fire, and the evening meal was cooked.

The sun hurried round to the north, sinking closer to the horizon. The heavens in that quarter grew red and bloody. The shadows lengthened, the light dimmed, and in the sombre recesses of the forest life slowly died away. Even the wild fowl in the river softened their raucous chatter and feigned the nightly farce of going to bed. Only the tribesmen increased their clamor, war-drums booming and voices raised in savage folk songs. But as the sun dipped they ceased their tumult. The rounded hush of midnight was complete. Stockard rose to his knees and peered over the logs. Once the child wailed in pain and disconcerted him. The mother bent over it, but it slept again. The silence was interminable, profound. Then, of a sudden, the robins burst into full-throated song. The night had passed.

A flood of dark figures boiled across the open. Arrows whistled and bow-thongs sang. The shrill-tongued rifles answered back. A spear, and a mighty cast, transfixed the Teslin woman as she hovered above the child. A spent arrow, diving between the logs, lodged in the missionary's arm.

There was no stopping the rush. The middle distance was cumbered with bodies, but the rest surged on, breaking against and over the barricade like an ocean wave. Sturges Owen fled to the tent, while the men were swept from their feet, buried beneath the human tide. Hay Stockard alone regained the surface, flinging the tribesmen aside like yelping curs. He had managed to seize an axe. A dark hand grasped the child by a naked foot, and drew it from beneath its mother. At arm's length its puny body circled through the air, dashing to death against the logs. Stockard clove the man to the chin and fell to clearing space. The ring of savage faces closed in, raining upon him spear-thrusts and bone-barbed arrows. The sun shot up, and they swayed back and forth in the crimson shadows. Twice, with his axe blocked by too deep a blow, they rushed him; but each time he flung them clear. They fell underfoot and he trampled dead and dying, the way slippery with blood. And still the day brightened and the robins sang. Then they drew back from him in awe, and he leaned breathless upon his axe.

"Blood of my soul!" cried Baptiste the Red. "But thou art a man. Deny thy god, and thou shalt yet live."

Stockard swore his refusal, feebly but with grace.

"Behold! A woman!" Sturges Owen had been brought before the half-breed.

Beyond a scratch on the arm, he was uninjured, but his eyes roved about him in an ecstasy of fear. The heroic figure of the blasphemer, bristling with wounds and arrows, leaning defiantly upon his axe, indifferent, indomitable, superb, caught his wavering vision. And he felt a great envy of the man who could go down serenely to the dark gates of death. Surely Christ, and not he, Sturges Owen, had been moulded in such manner. And why not he? He felt dimly the curse of ancestry, the feebleness of spirit which had come down to him out of the past, and he felt an anger at the creative force, symbolize it as he would, which had formed him, its servant, so weakly. For even a stronger man, this anger and the stress of circumstance were sufficient to breed apostasy, and for Sturges Owen it was inevitable. In the fear of man's anger he would dare the wrath of God. He had been raised up to serve the Lord only that he might be cast down. He had been given faith without the strength of faith; he had been given spirit without the power of spirit. It was unjust.

“Where now is thy god?” the half-breed demanded.

“I do not know.” He stood straight and rigid, like a child repeating a catechism.

“Hast thou then a god at all?” “I had.”

“And now?”

“No.”

Hay Stockard swept the blood from his eyes and laughed. The missionary looked at him curiously, as in a dream. A feeling of infinite distance came over him, as though of a great remove. In that which had transpired, and which was to transpire, he had no part. He was a spectator--at a distance, yes, at a distance. The words of Baptiste came to him faintly:--

“Very good. See that this man go free, and that no harm befall him. Let him depart in peace. Give him a canoe and food. Set his face toward the Russians, that he may tell their priests of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there is no god.”

They led him to the edge of the steep, where they paused to witness the final tragedy. The half-breed turned to Hay Stockard.

“There is no god,” he prompted.

The man laughed in reply. One of the young men poised a war-spear for the cast.

“Hast thou a god?”

“Ay, the God of my fathers.”

He shifted the axe for a better grip. Baptiste the Red gave the sign, and the spear hurtled full against his breast. Sturges Owen saw the ivory head stand out beyond his back, saw the man sway, laughing, and snap the shaft short as he fell upon it. Then he went down to the river, that he might carry to the Russians the message of Baptiste the Red, in whose country there was no god.

Goliah

In 1924 — to be precise, on the morning of January 3 — the city of San Francisco awoke to read in one of its daily papers a curious letter, which had been received by Walter Bassett and which had evidently been written by some crank. Walter Bassett was the greatest captain of industry west of the Rockies, and was one of the small group that controlled the nation in everything but name. As such, he was the recipient of lucubrations from countless cranks; but this particular lucubration was so different from the average ruck of similar letters that, instead of putting it into the waste-basket, he had turned it over to a reporter. It was signed "Goliah,"' and the superscription gave his address as "Palgrave Island." The letter was as follows:?

"Mr. Walter Bassett,

DEAR SIR:

"I am inviting you, with nine of your fellow-captains of industry, to visit me here on my island for the purpose of considering plans for the reconstruction of society upon a more rational basis, Up to the present, social evolution has been a blind and aimless, blundering thing. The time has come for a change. Man has risen from the vitalized slime of the primeval sea to the mastery of matter; but he has not yet mastered society. Man is to-day as much the slave to his collective stupidity, as a hundred thousand generations ago he was a slave to matter.

"There are two theoretical methods whereby man may become the master of society, and make of society an intelligent and efficacious device for the pursuit and capture of happiness and laughter. The first theory advances the proposition that no government can be wiser or better than the people that compose that government; that reform and development must spring from the individual; that in so far as the individuals become wiser and better, by that much will their government become wiser and better; in short, that the majority of individuals must become wiser and better, before their government becomes wiser and better. The mob, the political convention, the abysmal brutality and stupid ignorance of all concourses of people, give the lie to this theory. In a mob the collective intelligence and mercy is that of the least intelligent and most brutal members that compose the mob. On the other hand, a thousand passengers will surrender themselves to the wisdom and discretion of the captain, when their ship is in a storm on the sea. In such matter, he is the wisest and most experienced among them.

"The second theory advances the proposition that the majority of the people are not pioneers, that they are weighted down by the inertia of the established; that the government that is representative of them represents only their feebleness, and futility, and brutishness; that this blind thing called government is not the serf of their wills, but that they are the serfs of it; in short, speaking always of the great mass, that they do not make government, but that government makes them, and that government is and has been a stupid and awful monster, misbegotten of the glimmerings of intelligence that come from the inertia-crushed mass.

"Personally, I incline to the second theory. Also, I am impatient., For a hundred thousand generations, from the first social groups of our savage forebears, government has remained a monster. To-day, the inertia-crushed mass has less laughter in it than ever before. In spite of man's mastery of matter, human suffering and misery and degradation mar the fair world.

"Wherefore I have decided to step in and become captain of this world-ship for a while. I have the intelligence and the wide vision of the skilled expert. Also, I have the power. I shall be obeyed. The men of all the world shall perform my bidding and make governments so that they shall become laughter-producers. These modelled governments I have in mind shall not make the people happy, wise, and noble by decree; but they shall give opportunity for the people to become happy, wise, and noble.

"I have spoken. I have invited you, and nine of your fellow captains, to confer with me. On March third the yacht Energon will sail from San Francisco. You are requested to be on board the night before. This is serious. The affairs of the world must be handled for a time by a strong hand. Mine is that strong hand. If you fail to obey my summons, you will die. Candidly, I do not expect that you will obey. But your death for failure to obey will cause obedience on the part of those I subsequently summon. You will have served a purpose. And please remember that I have no unscientific sentimentality about the value of human life. I carry always in the background of my consciousness the innumerable billions of lives that are to laugh and be happy in future aeons on the earth.

"Yours for the reconstruction of society, Goliah."

The publication of this letter did not cause even local amusement. Men might have smiled to themselves as they read it, but it was so palpably the handiwork of a crank that it did not merit discussion. Interest did not arouse till next morning. An Associated Press despatch to the Eastern states, followed by interviews by eager-nosed reporters, bad brought out the names of the other nine captains of industry who had received similar letters but who had not thought the matter of sufficient importance to be made public. But the interest aroused was mild, and it would have died out quickly had not Gabberton cartooned a chronic presidential aspirant as " Goliah." Then came the song that was sung hilariously from sea to sea, with the refrain, "Goliah will catch you if you don't watch out."

The weeks passed and the incident was forgotten. Walter Bassett had forgotten it likewise; but on the evening of February 22, he was called to the telephone by the Collector of the Port. "I just wanted to tell you," said the latter, "that the yacht Energon has arrived and gone to anchor in the stream off Pier Seven."

What happened that night Walter Bassett has never divulged. But it is known that he rode down in his auto to the water front, chartered one of Crowley's launches, and was put aboard the strange yacht. It is further known that when he, returned to the shore, three 'hours later, he immediately despatched a sheaf of telegrams to his nine fellow captains of industry who had received letters from Goliah. These telegrams were similarly worded, and read: "The yacht Energon has arrived. There is something in this. I advise you to come."

Bassett was laughed at for his pains. It was a huge laugh that went up (for his telegrams had been made public), and the popular song on Goliah revived and became more popular than ever. Goliah and Bassett were cartooned and lampooned unmercifully, the former, as the Old Man of the Sea, riding on the latter's neck. The laugh tittered and rippled through. clubs and social circles, was restrainedly merry in the editorial columns, and broke out in loud guffaws in the comic weeklies.. There was a serious side as well, and Bassett's sanity was gravely questioned by many, and especially by his business associates.

Bassett had ever been a short-tempered man, and after he sent the second sheaf of telegrams to his brother captains, and had been laughed at again, he remained silent. In this second sheaf, he had said: "Come, I implore you. As you value your life, come." He arranged all his business affairs for an absence, and on the night of March 2 went on board the Energon. The latter, properly cleared, sailed next morning. And next morning the newsboys in. every city and town were crying “Extra.”

In the slang of the day, Goliah had delivered the goods. The nine captains of industry who had failed to accept his invitation were dead. A sort of violent disintegration of the tissues was the report of the various autopsies held on the bodies of the slain millionnaires; yet the surgeons and physicians (the most highly skilled in the land had participated) would not venture the opinion that the men had been slain. Much less would they venture the conclusion, “at the hands of parties unknown.” It was all too mysterious. They were stunned. Their scientific credulity broke down. They had no warrant in the whole domain of science for believing that an anonymous person on Palgrave Island had murdered the poor gentlemen.

One thing was quickly learned, however; namely, that Palgrave Island was no myth. It was charted and well known to all navigators, lying on the line of 16o west longitude, right at its intersection by the tenth parallel north latitude, and only a few miles away from Diana Shoal. Like Midway and Fanning, Palgrave Island was isolated, volcanic and coral in formation. Furthermore, it was uninhabited. A survey ship, in 1887, had visited the place and reported the existence of several springs and of a good harbor that was very dangerous of approach. And, that was all that was known of the tiny speck of land that was soon to have focussed on it the awed attention of the world.

Goliah remained silent till March 24, On the morning of that day, the newspapers published his second letter, copies of which had been received by the ten chief politicians of the United States — ten leading men in the political world who were conventionally known as “statesmen.” The letter, with the same superscription as before, was as follows: ?

“DEAR SIR:

“I have spoken in no uncertain tone. I must be obeyed. You may consider this an invitation or a summons; but if you still wish to tread this earth and laugh, you will be aboard the yacht Energon, in San Francisco harbor, not later than the evening of April 5. It is my wish and my will that you confer with me here on Palgrave Island in the matter of reconstructing society upon some rational basis.

“Do not misunderstand me, when I tell you that I am one with a theory. I want to see that theory work, and therefore I call upon your cooperation. In this theory of mine, lives are but pawns; I deal with quantities of lives. I am after laughter, and those that stand in the way of laughter must perish. The game is big. There are fifteen hundred million human lives to-day on the planet. What is your single life against them — It is as naught, in my theory. And remember that mine is the power. Remember that I am a scientist, and that one life, or one million of lives, mean nothing to me as arrayed against the countless billions of billions of the lives of the generations to come. It is for their laughter that I seek to reconstruct society now; and against them your own meagre little life is a paltry thing indeed.

“Whoso has power can command his fellows. By virtue of that military device known as the phalanx, Alexander conquered his bit of the world. By virtue of that chemical device, gunpowder, Cortes with his several hundred cutthroats conquered the empire of the Montezumas. Now I am in possession of a device that is all my own. In the course of a century not more than half a dozen fundamental discoveries or inventions are made. I have made such an invention. The possession of it gives me the mastery of the world. I shall use this invention, not for commercial exploitation, but for the good of humanity. For that purpose I want help — willing agents, obedient hands; and I am strong enough to compel the service. I am taking the shortest way, though I am in no hurry. I shall not clutter my speed with haste.

“The incentive of material gain developed man from the savage to the semi-barbarian he is to-day. This incentive has been a useful device for the development of the human; but it has now fulfilled its function and is ready to be cast aside into the scrap-heap of rudimentary vestiges such as gills in the throat and belief in the divine right of kings. Of course you do not think so; but I do not see that that will prevent you from aiding me to fling the anachronism into the scrap-heap. For I tell you now that the time has come when mere food and shelter and similar sordid things shall be automatic, as free and easy and involuntary of access as the air. I shall make them automatic, what of my discovery and the power that discovery gives me. And with food and shelter automatic, the incentive of material gain passes away from the world forever. With food and shelter automatic, the higher incentives will universally obtain — the spiritual, aesthetic, and intellectual incentives that will tend to develop and make beautiful and noble body, mind, and spirit. Then all the world will be dominated by happiness and laughter. It will be the reign of universal laughter.

“Yours for that day, “GOLIAH.?

Still the world would not believe. The ten politicians were at Washington, so that they did not have the opportunity of being convinced that Bassett had had, and not one of them took the trouble to journey out to San Francisco to make the opportunity. As for Goliah, he was hailed by the newspapers as another Tom Lawson with a panacea; and there were specialists in mental disease who, by analysis of Goliah's letters, proved conclusively that he was a lunatic.

The yacht Energon arrived in the harbor of San Francisco on the afternoon of April 5, and Bassett came ashore. But the Energon did not sail next day, for not one of the ten summoned politicians had elected to make the journey to Palgrave Island. The newsboys, however, called "Extra" that day in all the cities. The ten politicians were dead. The yacht, lying peacefully at anchor in the harbor, became the centre of excited interest. She was surrounded by a flotilla of launches and rowboats, and many tugs and steamboats ran excursions to her. While the rabble was firmly kept off, the proper authorities and even reporters were permitted to board her. The mayor of San Francisco and the chief of police reported that nothing suspicious was to be seen upon her, and the port authorities announced that her papers were correct and in order in every detail. Many photographs and columns of descriptive matter were run in the newspapers.

The crew was reported to be composed principally of Scandinavians, — fair-haired, blue-eyed Swedes, Norwegians afflicted with the temperamental melancholy of their race, stolid Russian Finns, and a slight sprinkling of Americans and English. It was noted that there was nothing mercurial and flyaway about them. They seemed weighty men, oppressed by a sad and stolid bovine-sort of integrity. A sober seriousness and enormous certitude characterized all of them. They appeared men without nerves and without fear, as though upheld by. some overwhelming power or carried in the hollow of some superhuman hand. The captain, a sad-eyed, strong-featured American, was cartooned in the papers as "Gloomy Gus" (the pessimistic hero, of the comic supplement).

Some sea-captain recognized the Energon as the yacht Scud, once owned by Merrivale of the New York Yacht Club. With this clew it was soon ascertained that the Scud had disappeared several years before. The agent who sold her reported the purchaser to be merely another agent, a man he had seen neither before nor since. The yacht had been reconstructed at Duffey's Shipyard in New Jersey. The change in her name and registry occurred at that time and had been legally executed. Then the Energon had disappeared in the shroud of mystery.

In the meantime, Basset was going crazy-at least his friends and business associates said so. He kept away from, his vast business enterprises and said that he must hold his hands until the other masters of the world could join with him in the reconstruction of society — proof indubitable that Goliah's bee had entered his bonnet. To reporters he had little to say. He was not at liberty, he said, to relate what he had seen on Palgrave Island; but he could assure them that the matter was serious, the most serious thing that had ever happened. His final word was that the world was on the verge of a turnover, for good or ill he did not know, but, one way or the other, he was absolutely convinced that the turnover was coming. As for business, business could go hang. He had seen things, he had, and that was all there was to it.

There was a great telegraphing, during this period, between the local Federal officials and the state and war departments at Washington. A secret attempt was made late one afternoon to board the Energon and place the captain under arrest — the Attorney General having given the opinion that the captain could be held for the murder of the ten "statesmen." The government launch was seen to leave Meigg's Wharf and steer for the Energon, and that was the last ever seen of the launch and the men on board of it. The government tried to keep the affair hushed up, but the cat was slipped out of the bag by the families of the missing men and the papers were filled with monstrous versions of the affair.

The government now proceeded to extreme measures. The battleship Alaska was ordered to capture the strange yacht, or, failing that, to sink her. These were secret instructions; but thousands of eyes, from the water front and from the shipping in the harbor, witnessed what happened that afternoon. The battleship got under way and steamed slowly toward the Energon. At half a mile distant the battleship blew up — simply blew up, that was all, her shattered frame sinking to the bottom of the bay, a riff-raff of wreckage and a few survivors strewing the surface. Among the survivors was a young lieutenant who had had charge of the wireless on board the Alaska. The reporters got hold of him first, and he talked. No sooner had the Alaska got under way, he said, than a I message was received from the Energon. It was in the international code, and it was a warning to the 41aska to come no nearer than half a mile. He had sent the message, through the speaking tube, immediately to the captain. He did not know anything more, except that the Energon twice repeated the message and that five minutes afterward the explosion occurred. The captain of the Alaska had perished with his ship, and nothing more was to be learned.

The Energon, however, promptly hoisted anchor and cleared out to sea. A great clamor was raised by the papers; the government was charged with cowardice and vacillation in its dealings with a mere pleasure yacht and a lunatic who called himself "Goliah," and immediate and decisive action was demanded. Also, a great cry went up about the loss of life, especially the wanton killing of the ten "statesmen." Goliah promptly replied. In fact, so prompt was his reply that the experts in wireless telegraphy announced that, since it was impossible to send wireless messages so great a distance, Goliah was in their very midst and not on Palgrave Island. Goliah's letter was delivered to the Associated Press by a messenger boy who had been engaged on the street. The letter was as follows: ?

"What are a few paltry lives — In your insane wars you destroy millions of lives and think nothing of it. In your fratricidal commercial struggle you kill countless babes, women, and men, and you triumphantly call the shambles 'individualism.' I call it anarchy. I am going to put a stop to your wholesale destruction of human beings. I want laughter, not slaughter. Those of you who stand in the way of laughter will get slaughter.

"Your government is trying to delude you into believing that the destruction of the Alaska was an accident. Know here and now that it was by my orders that the Alaska was destroyed. In a few short months, all battleships on all seas will be destroyed or flung to the scrap-heap, and all nations shall disarm; fortresses shall be dismantled, armies disbanded, and warfare shall cease from the earth. Mine is the power. I am the will of God. The whole world shall be in vassalage to me, but it shall be a vassalage of peace.

"I am "GOLIAH."

"Blow Palgrave Island out of the water! " was the head-line retort of the newspapers. The government was of the same frame of mind, and the assembling of the fleets began. Walter Bassett broke out in ineffectual protest, but was swiftly silenced by the threat of a lunacy commission. Goliah remained silent. Against Palgrave Island five great fleets were hurled — the Asiatic Squadron, the South Pacific Squadron, the North Pacific Squadron, the Caribbean Squadron, and half of the North Atlantic Squadron, the two latter coming through the Panama Canal.

"I have the honor to report that we sighted Palgrave Island on the evening of April 29," ran the report of Captain Johnson, of the battleship North Dakota to the Secretary of the Navy. "The Asiatic Squadron was delayed and did not arrive until the morning of April 30. A council of the admirals was held, and it was decided to attack early, next morning. The destroyer, Swift VII, crept in, unmolested, and reported no warlike preparations on the island. It noted several small merchant steamers in the harbor, and the existence of a small village in a hopelessly exposed position that could be swept by our fire.

"It had been decided that all the vessels should rush in, scattered, upon the island, opening fire at three miles, and continuing to the edge of the reef, there to retain loose formation and engage. Palgrave Island repeatedly warned us, by wireless, in the international code, to keep outside the ten-mile limit; but no heed was paid to the warnings.

"The North Dakota did not take part in the movement of the morning of May 1. This was due to a slight accident of the preceding night that temporarily disabled our steering-gear. The morning of May 1 broke clear and calm. There was a slight breeze from the southwest that quickly died away. The North Dakota lay twelve miles off the island. At the signal the squadrons charged in upon the island, from all sides, at full speed. Our wireless receiver continued to tick off warnings from the island. The ten-mile limit was passed, and nothing happened. I watched through my glasses. At five, miles nothing happened; at four miles nothing happened; at three miles, the New York, in the lead on our side of the island, opened fire. She fired only one shot. Then she blew up. The rest of the vessels never fired a shot. They began to blow up, everywhere, before our eyes. Several swerved about and started back, but they failed to escape. The destroyer, Dart XXX, nearly made the ten-mile limit when she blew up. She was the last survivor. No harm came to the North Dakota, and that night, the steering-gear being repaired, I gave orders to sail for San Francisco."

To say that the United States was stunned is but to expose the inadequacy of language. The whole world was stunned. It confronted that blight of the human brain, the unprecedented. Human endeavor was a jest, a monstrous futility, when a lunatic on a lonely island, who owned a yacht and an exposed village, could destroy five of the proudest fleets of Christendom. And how had he done it? Nobody knew. The scientists lay down in the dust of the common road and wailed and gibbered. They did not know. Military experts committed suicide by scores. The mighty fabric of warfare they had fashioned was a gossamer veil rent asunder by a miserable lunatic. It was, too much for their sanity. Mere human reason could not withstand the shock. As the savage is crushed by the sleight-of-hand of the witch-doctor, so was the world crushed by the magic of Goliah. How did he do it — It was the awful face of the Unknown upon which the world gazed and by which it was frightened out of the memory of its proudest achievements.

But all the world was not stunned. There was the invariable exception — the Island Empire of Japan. Drunken with the wine of success deep-quaffed, without superstition and without faith in aught but its own ascendant star, laughing at the wreckage of science and mad with pride of race, it went forth upon the way of war. America’s fleets had been destroyed. From the battlements of heaven the multitudinous ancestral shades of Japan leaned down. The opportunity, God-given, had come. The Mikado was in truth a brother to the gods.

The war-monsters of Japan were loosed in mighty fleets. The Philippines were gathered in as a child gathers a nosegay. It took longer for the battleships to travel to Hawaii, to Panama, and to the Pacific Coast. The United States was panic-stricken, and there arose the powerful party of dishonorable peace. In the midst of the clamor the Energon arrived in San Francisco Bay and Goliah spoke once more. There was a little brush as the Energon came in, and a few explosions of magazines occurred along the war-tunnelled hills as the coast defences went to smash. Also, the blowing up of the submarine mines in the Golden Gate made a remarkably fine display. Goliah’s message to the people of San Francisco, dated as usual from Palgrave Island, was published in the papers. It ran: ?

“Peace? Peace be with you. You shall have peace. I have spoken to this purpose before. And give you me peace. Leave my yacht Energon alone. Commit one overt act against her and not one stone in San Francisco shall stand upon another.

“To-morrow let all good citizens g I o out upon the hills that slope down to the sea. Go with music and laughter and garlands. Make festival for the new age that is dawning. Be like children upon your hills, and witness the passing of war. Do not miss the opportunity. It is your last chance to behold what henceforth you will be compelled to seek in museums of antiquities.

“I promise you a merry day,

” GOLIAH.”

The madness of magic was in the air. With the people it was as if all their gods had crashed and the heavens still stood. Order and law had passed away from the universe; but the sun still shone, the wind still blew, the flowers still bloomed — that was the amazing thing about it. That water should continue to run downhill was a miracle. All the stabilities of the human mind and human achievement were crumbling. The one stable thing that remained was, Goliah, a madman on an island. And so it was that the whole population of San Francisco went forth next day in colossal frolic upon the hills that overlooked the sea. Brass bands and banners went forth, brewery wagons and Sunday-school picnics — all the strange heterogeneous groupings of swarming metropolitan life.

On the sea-rim rose the smoke from the funnels of a hundred hostile vessels of war, all converging upon the helpless, undefended, Golden Gate. And not all undefended, for out through the Golden Gate moved the Energon, a tiny toy of white, rolling like a straw in the stiff sea on the bar where a strong ebb-tide ran in the teeth of the summer sea-breeze. But the Japanese were cautious. Their thirty and forty-thousand-ton battleships slowed down half a dozen miles offshore and maneuvered in ponderous evolutions, while tiny scout-boats (lean, six-funneled destroyers) ran in, cutting blackly the flashing sea like so many sharks. But, compared with the Energon, they were leviathans. Compared with them, the Energon was as the sword of the archangel Michael, and they the forerunners of the hosts of hell.

But the flashing of the sword, the good people of San Francisco, gathered on her hills, never saw. Mysterious, invisible, it cleaved the air and smote the mightiest blows of combat the world had ever witnessed. The good people of San Francisco saw little and understood less. They saw only a million and a half of tons of brine-cleaving, thunder-flinging fabrics hurled skyward and smashed back in ruin to sink into the sea. It was all over in five minutes. Remained upon the wide expanse of sea only the Energon, rolling white and toy-like on the bar.

Goliah spoke to the Mikado and the Elder Statesmen. It was only an ordinary cable message, despatched from San Francisco by the captain of the Energon, but it was of sufficient moment to cause the immediate withdrawal of Japan from the Philippines and of her surviving fleets from the sea. Japan the sceptical was converted. She had felt the weight of Goliah’s arm. And meekly she obeyed when Goliah commanded her to dismantle her war vessels ,and to turn the metal into useful appliances for the arts of peace. In all the ports, navy-yards, machine-shops, and foundries of Japan tens of thousands of brown-skinned artisans converted the war-monsters into myriads of useful things, such as ploughshares (Goliah insisted on ploughshares), gasolene engines, bridge-trusses, telephone and telegraph wires, steel rails, locomotives, and rolling stock for railways. It was a world-penance for a world to see, and paltry indeed it made appear that earlier penance, barefooted in the snow, of an emperor to a pope for daring to squabble over temporal power.

Goliah's next summons was to the ten leading scientists of the United States. This time there was no hesitancy in obeying. The savants were ludicrously prompt, some of them waiting in San Francisco for weeks so as not to miss the scheduled sailing-date. They departed on the Energon on June 15; and while they Were on the sea, on the way to Palgrave Island, Goliah performed another spectacular feat. Germany and France were preparing to fly at each other's throats. Goliah commanded peace. They ignored the command, tacitly agreeing to fight it out on land where it seemed safer for the belligerently inclined. Goliah set the date of June 19 for the cessation of hostile preparations. Both countries mobilized their armies on June 18, and hurled them at the common frontier. And on June 19, Goliah struck. All generals, war-secretaries, and jingo-leaders in the two countries died on that day; and that day two vast armies, undirected, like strayed sheep, walked over each other's frontiers and fraternized. But the great German war lord had escaped — it was learned, afterward, by hiding in the huge safe where were stored the secret archives of his empire. And when he emerged he was a very penitent war lord, and like the Mikado of Japan he was set to work beating his sword-blades into ploughshares and pruning-hooks.

But in the escape of the German Emperor was discovered a great significance. The scientists of the world plucked up courage, got back their nerve. One thing was conclusively evident — Goliah's power was not magic. Law still reigned in the universe. Goliah's power had limitations, else had the German Emperor not escaped by secretly hiding in a steel safe. Many learned articles on the subject appeared in the magazines.

The ten scientists arrived back from Palgrave Island on July 6. Heavy platoons of police protected them from the reporters. No, they had not seen Goliah, they said in the one official interview that was vouchsafed; but they had talked with him, and they had seen things. They were not permitted to state definitely all that they had seen and heard, but they could say that the world was about to be revolutionized. Goliah was in the possession of a tremendous discovery that placed all the world at his mercy, and it was a good thing for the world that Goliah, was merciful. The ten scientists proceeded directly to Washington on a special train, where, for days, they were closeted with the heads of government, while the nation hung breathless on the outcome.

But the outcome was a long time in arriving. From Washington the President issued commands to the masters and leading figures of the nation. Everything was secret. Day by day deputations of bankers, railway lords, captains of industry, and Supreme Court justices arrived; and when they arrived they remained. The weeks dragged on, and then, on August 25, began the famous issuance of proclamations. Congress and the Senate cooperated with the President in this, while the Supreme Court justices gave their sanction and the money lords and the captains of industry agreed. War was declared upon the capitalist masters of the nation. Martial law was declared over, the whole United States. The supreme power was vested in the President.

In one day, child-labor in the whole country was abolished. It was done by decree, and the United States was prepared with its army to enforce its decrees. In the same day all women factory workers were dismissed to their homes, and all the sweatshops were closed. “But we cannot make profits!” wailed the petty capitalists. “Fools!” was the retort of Goliah. “As if the meaning of life were profits! Give up your businesses and your profit-mongering.” ” But there is nobody to buy our ,business!” they wailed. “Buy and sell-is that all. the meaning life has for you?” replied Goliah., “You have nothing to sell. Turn over your little cut-throating, anarchistic businesses to the government so that they may be rationally organized and operated.” And the next day, by decree, the government began taking possession of all factories, shops, mines, ships, railroads, and producing lands.

The nationalization of the means of production and distribution went on apace. Here and there’ were sceptical capitalists of moment. They were made prisoners and haled to Palgrave Island, and when they returned they always acquiesced in what the government was doing. A little later the journey to Palgrave Island became unnecessary. When objection was made, the reply of the officials was: — " Goliah has spoken" — which was another way of saying, "He must be obeyed."

The captains of industry became heads of departments. It was found that civil engineers, for instance, worked just as well in government employ as, before, they had worked in private employ. It was found that men of high executive ability could not violate their nature. They could not escape exercising their executive ability, any more than a crab could escape crawling or a bird could escape flying. And so it was that all the splendid force of the men who had previously worked for themselves was now put to work for the good of society. The half-dozen great railway chief's cooperated in the organizing of a national system of railways that was amazingly efficacious. Never again was there such a thing 'as a car shortage. These chiefs were not the Wall Street railway magnates, but they were the men who formerly had done the real work while in the employ of the Wall Street magnates.

Wall Street was dead. There was no more buying and selling and speculating. Nobody had anything to buy or sell. There was nothing in which to speculate. " Put the stock gamblers to work," said Goliah; give those that are young and that so desire, a chance to learn useful trades." "Put the drummers, and salesmen, and advertising agents, and real estate agents to work," said Goliah; and by hundreds of thousands the erstwhile useless middlemen and parasites went into useful occupations. The four hundred thousand idle gentlemen of the country who had lived upon incomes were likewise put to work. Then there were a lot of helpless men in high places who were cleared out, the remarkable thing about this being that they were cleared out by their own fellows. Of this class were the professional politicians, whose wisdom and power consisted of manipulating machine politics and of grafting, There was no longer any graft. Since there were no private interests to purchase special privileges, no bribes were offered to legislators, and legislators for the first time legislated for the people, The result was that men who were efficient, not in corruption, but in direction, found their way into the legislatures.

With this rational organization of society amazing results were brought about. The national day's work was eight hours, and yet production. increased. In spite of the great permanent improvements and of the immense amount of energy consumed in systematizing the competitive chaos of society, production doubled and tripled upon itself. The standard of living increased, and still consumption could not keep up with production. The maximum working age was decreased to fifty years, to forty-nine years, and to forty-eight years. The minimum working age went up from sixteen years to eighteen years. The eight-hour day became a seven-hour day, and in a few months the national working day was reduced to five hours.

In the meantime glimmerings were being caught, not of the identity of Goliah, but of how he had worked and prepared for his assuming control of the world. Little things leaked out, clews were followed up, apparently unrelated things were pieced together. Strange stories of blacks stolen from Africa were remembered, of Chinese and Japanese contract coolies who had mysteriously disappeared, of lonely South Sea Islands raided and their inhabitants carried away; stories of yachts and merchant steamers, mysteriously purchased, that had disappeared and the descriptions of which remotely tallied with the crafts that had carried the Orientals and Africans and islanders away. Where had Goliah got the sinews of war? was the question. And the surmised answer was: By exploiting these stolen laborers. It was they that lived in the exposed village on Palgrave Island. It was the product of their toil that had purchased the yachts and merchant steamers was, and Goliah continued to awe and rule the world.

One of the uses of Energon was in wireless telegraphy. It was by its means that Goliah was able to communicate with his agents all over the world. At that time the apparatus required by an agent was so clumsy that it could not be packed in anything less than a fair-sized steamer trunk. To-day, thanks to the improvements of Hendsoll, the perfected apparatus can be carried in a coat pocket.

It was in December, 1924, that Goliah sent out his famous “Christmas Letter,” part of the text of which, is here given: ?

“So far, while I have kept the rest of the nations from each other’s throats, I have devoted myself particularly to the United States. Now I have not given to the people of the United States a rational social organization. What I have done has been to compel them to make that organization themselves. There is more laughter in the United States these days, and there is more sense. Food and shelter are no longer obtained by the anarchistic methods of so-called individualism, but are now well nigh automatic. And the beauty of it is that the people of the United States, have achieved all this for themselves. I did not achieve it, for them. I repeat, they achieved it for themselves. All that I did was to put the fear of death in the hearts of the few that sat in the high places and obstructed the coming of rationality and laughter. The fear of death made those in the high places get out of the way, that was all, and gave the intelligence of man a chance to realize itself socially.

"In the year that is to come I shall devote myself to the rest of the world. I shall put the fear of death in the hearts of all that sit in the high places in all the nations. And they will do as they have done in the United States — get down out of the high places and give the intelligence of man a chance for social rationality. All the nations shall tread the path the United States is now on.

"And when all the nations are well along on that path, I shall have something else for them. But first they must travel that path for themselves. They must demonstrate that the intelligence of mankind to-day, with the mechanical energy now at its disposal, is capable of organizing society so that food and shelter be made automatic, labor be reduced to a three-hour day, and joy and laughter be made universal. And when that is accomplished, not by me but by the intelligence of mankind, then I shall make a present to the world of a new mechanical energy. This is my discovery. This Energon is nothing more nor less than the cosmic energy that resides in the solar rays. When it is harnessed by mankind it will do the work of the world. There will be no more multitudes of miners slaving out their lives in the bowels of the earth, no more sooty firemen and greasy engineers. All may dress in white, if they so will. The work of life will have become play and young and old will be the children of joy, and the business of living will become joy; and they will compete, one with another, in achieving ethical concepts and spiritual heights, in fashioning pictures and songs, and stories, in statecraft and beauty craft, in the sweat and the endeavor of the wrestler and the runner and the player of games — all will compete, not for sordid coin and base material reward, but for the joy that shall be theirs in the development and vigor of flesh and in the development and keenness of spirit. All will be joy-smiths, and their task shall be to beat out laughter from the ringing anvil of life.

"And now one word for the immediate future. On New Year's. Day all nations shall disarm, all fortresses and war-ships shall be dismantled, and all armies shall be disbanded.

"GOLIAH."

On New Year's Day all the world disarmed. The millions of soldiers and sailors and workmen in the standing armies, in the navies, and in the countless arsenals, machine-shops, and factories for the manufacture of war machinery, were dismissed to their homes. These many millions of men, as well as their costly war machinery, had hitherto been supported on the back of labor. They now went into useful occupations, and the released labor giant heaved a mighty sigh of relief. The policing of the world was left to the peace officers and was purely social, whereas war had been distinctly anti-social.

Ninety per cent of the crimes against society had, been crimes against private property. With the passing of private property, at least in the means of production, and with the organization of industry that gave every man a chance, the crimes against private property practically ceased. The police forces everywhere were reduced repeatedly and again and again. Nearly all occasional and habitual criminals ceased voluntarily from their depredations. There was no longer any 'need for them to commit crime. They merely changed with changing conditions. A smaller number of criminals was put into hospitals and cured. And the remnant of the hopelessly criminal and degenerate was segregated. And the courts in, all countries were likewise, decreased in number again and again. Ninety-five per cent of all civil cases had been squabbles over property, conflicts of, property-rights, lawsuits, contests of wills, breaches of contract, bankruptcies, etc. With the passing of private property, this ninety-five per cent of the cases that cluttered the courts also passed. The courts became shadows, attenuated ghosts, rudimentary vestiges of the anarchistic times that had preceded the coming of Goliah.

The year 1925 was a lively year in the world's history. Goliah ruled the world with a strong hand. Kings and emperors journeyed to Palgrave Island, saw the wonders of Energon, and went away, with the fear of death in their hearts, to abdicate thrones and crowns and hereditary licenses. When Goliah spoke to politicians (so-called "statesmen"), they obeyed . . . or died. He dictated universal reforms, dissolved refractory parliaments, and to the great conspiracy that was formed of mutinous money lords and captains of industry he sent his destroying angels. "The time is past for fooling," he told them. "You are anachronisms. You stand in the way of humanity. To the scrap-heap with you." To those that protested, and they were many, he said:

"This is no time for logomachy. You can argue for centuries. It is what you have done in the past. I have no, time for argument. Get out of the way."

With the exception of putting a stop to war, and of indicating the broad general plan, Goliah did nothing. By putting the fear of death into the hearts of those that sat in the high places and obstructed progress, Goliah made the opportunity for the unshackled intelligence of the best social thinkers of the world to exert itself. Goliah left all the multitudinous details of reconstruction to these social thinkers. He wanted them to prove that they were able to do it, and they proved it. It was due to their initiative that the white plague was stamped out from the world. It was due to them, and in spite of a deal of protesting from the sentimentalists', that all the extreme, hereditary inefficients were segregated and denied marriage.

Goliah had nothing whatever to do with the instituting Of the colleges of invention. This idea originated practically simultaneously in the minds of thousands of social thinkers. The time was ripe for the realization of the idea, and everywhere arose the splendid institutions of invention. For the first time the ingenuity of man was loosed upon the problem of simplifying life, instead of upon the making of money-earning devices. The affairs of life, such, as house-cleaning, dish and window-washing, dust-removing, and scrubbing and clothes-washing, and all the endless sordid and necessary details, were simplified by invention until they became automatic. We of to-day cannot realize the barbarously filthy and slavish lives of those that lived prior to 1925.

The international government of the world was another idea that sprang simultaneously into the minds of thousands. The successful realization of this idea was a surprise to many, but as a surprise it was nothing to that received by the mildly protestant sociologists and biologists when irrefutable facts exploded the doctrine of Malthus. With leisure and joy in the world; with an immensely (higher standard of living; and with the enormous spaciousness of opportunity for recreation, development, and pursuit of beauty and nobility and all the higher attributes, the birth-rate fell, and fell astoundingly. People ceased breeding like cattle. And better, than that, it was immediately noticeable that a higher average of children was being born. The doctrine of Malthus was knocked into a cocked hat — or flung to the scrap-heap, as Goliah would have put it.

All that Goliah had predicted that the intelligence of mankind could accomplish with the mechanical energy at its disposal, came to pass.

Human dissatisfaction practically disappeared. The elderly people were the great grumblers; but when they were honorably pensioned by society, as they passed the age limit for work, the great majority ceased grumbling. They found themselves better off in their idle old days under the new regime, enjoying vastly more pleasures and comforts than they had in their busy and toilsome youth under the old regime. The younger generation had easily adapted itself to the changed order, and the very young had never known anything else. The sum of human happiness had increased enormously. The world had become gay and sane Even the old fogies of professors of sociology, who had opposed with might and main the coming of the new regime, made no complaint. They were a score of times better remunerated than in the old days, and they were not worked nearly so hard. Besides, they were busy revising sociology and writing new text-books on the subject. Here and there, it is true, there were atavisms, men who yearned for the flesh-pots and cannibal-feasts of the old alleged “individualism,” creatures long of teeth and savage of claw who wanted to prey upon their fellow-men; but they were looked upon as diseased, and were treated in hospitals. A small remnant, however, proved incurable, and was confined in asylums and denied marriage. Thus there was no progeny to inherit their atavistic tendencies.

As the years went by, Goliah dropped out of the running of the world. There was nothing for him to run. The-world was running itself, and doing it smoothly and beautifully. In 1937, Goliah made his long-promised present of Energon to the world. He himself had devised a thousand ways in which the little giant should do the work of the world — all of which he made public at the same time. But instantly the colleges of invention seized upon Energon and utilized it in a hundred thousand additional ways. In fact, as Goliah confessed in his letter of March, 1938, the colleges of invention cleared up several puzzling features of Energon that had baffled him during the preceding years. With the introduction of the use of Energon the two-hour work-day was cut down almost to nothing. As Goliah had predicted, work indeed became play. And, so tremendous was man’s productive capacity, due to Energon and the rational social utilization of it, that the humblest citizen enjoyed leisure and time and opportunity for an immensely greater abundance of living than had the most favored under the old anarchistic system.

Nobody had ever seen Goliah, and all peoples began to clamor for their savior to appear. While the world did not minimize his discovery of Energon, it was decided that greater than that was his wide social vision. He was a superman, a scientific superman; and the curiosity of the world to see him had become well-nigh unbearable. It was in 1941, after much hesitancy on his part, that he finally emerged from Palgrave island. He arrived on June 6 in San Francisco, and for the first time, since his retirement to Palgrave Island, the world looked upon his face. And the world was disappointed. Its imagination had been touched. An heroic figure had been made out of Goliah. He was the man, or the demigod, rather, who bad turned the planet over. The deeds of Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon we're as the play of babes alongside his colossal achievements.

And ashore in San Francisco and through its streets stepped and rode a little old man, sixty-five years of age, well preserved, with a pink-and-white complexion and a bald spot on his head the size of an apple. He was short-sighted and wore spectacles. But when the spectacles were removed, his were quizzical blue eyes like a child's, filled with mild wonder at the world. Also his eyes had a way of twinkling, accompanied by a screwing up of the face, as if he laughed at the huge joke he had played upon the world, trapping it, in spite of itself, into happiness and laughter.

For a scientific superman and world tyrant, he had remarkable weaknesses. He loved sweets, and was inordinately fond of salted almonds and salted pecans, especially of the latter. He always carried a paper bag of them in his pocket, and he had a way of saying frequently that the chemism of his nature demanded such fare. Perhaps his most astonishing failing was cats. He had an ineradicable aversion to that-domestic animal. It will be remembered that he fainted dead away with sudden fright, while speaking in, Brotherhood Palace, when the janitor's cat walked out upon the stage and brushed against his legs.

But no sooner had he revealed himself to the world than he was identified. Old-time friends had no difficulty in recognizing him as Percival Stultz, the German-American who, in 1898, had worked in the Union Iron Works, and who, for two years at that time, had been secretary of Branch 369 of the International Brotherhood of Machinists. It was in 1901, then twenty-five years of age, that he had taken special scientific courses at the University of California, at the same time supporting himself by soliciting what was then known as "life insurance." His records as a student are preserved in the university museum, and they are unenviable. He is remembered by the professors he sat under chiefly for his absentmindedness. Undoubtedly, even then, he was catching glimpses of the wide visions that later were to be his.

His naming himself “Goliah” and shrouding himself in mystery was his little joke, he later explained. As Goliah, or any other thing like that, he said, he was able to touch the imagination of the world and turn it over; but as Percival Stultz, wearing side-whiskers and spectacles, and weighing one hundred and eighteen pounds, he would have been unable to turn over a pecan — “not even a salted pecan.”

But the world quickly got over its disappointment in his personal appearance and antecedents. It knew him and revered him as the master-mind of the ages; and it loved him for himself, for his quizzical shortsighted eyes and the inimitable way in which he screwed up his face when he laughed; it loved him for his simplicity and comradeship and warm humanness, and for his fondness for salted pecans and his aversion to cats. And to-day, in the wonder-city of Asgard, rises in awful beauty that monument to him that dwarfs the pyramids and all the monstrous blood-stained monuments of antiquity. And on that monument, as all know, is inscribed in imperishable bronze the prophecy and the fulfillment: “ALL WILL BE JOY-SMITHS, AND THEIR TASK SHALL BE TO BEAT OUT LAUGHTER FROM THE RINGING ANVIL OF LIFE.”

Good-Bye, Jack!

Hawaii is a queer place. Everything socially is what I may call topsy-turvy. Not but what things are correct. They are almost too much so. But still things are sort of upside down. The most ultra-exclusive set there is the "Missionary Crowd." It comes with rather a shock to learn that in Hawaii the obscure martyrdom-seeking missionary sits at the head of the table of the moneyed aristocracy. But it is true. The humble New Englanders who came out in the third decade of the nineteenth century, came for the lofty purpose of teaching the kanakas the true religion, the worship of the one only genuine and undeniable God. So well did they succeed in this, and also in civilizing the kanaka, that by the second or third generation he was practically extinct. This being the fruit of the seed of the Gospel, the fruit of the seed of the missionaries (the sons and the grandsons) was the possession of the islands themselves,--of the land, the ports, the town sites, and the sugar plantations: The missionary who came to give the bread of life remained to gobble up the whole heathen feast.

But that is not the Hawaiian queerness I started out to tell. Only one cannot speak of things Hawaiian without mentioning the missionaries. There is Jack Kersdale, the man I wanted to tell about; he came of missionary stock. That is, on his grandmother's side. His grandfather was old Benjamin Kersdale, a Yankee trader, who got his start for a million in the old days by selling cheap whiskey and square-face gin. There's another queer thing. The old missionaries and old traders were mortal enemies. You see, their interests conflicted. But their children made it up by intermarrying and dividing the island between them.

Life in Hawaii is a song. That's the way Stoddard put it in his "Hawaii Noi":-

"Thy life is music--Fate the notes prolong!
Each isle a stanza, and the whole a song."

And he was right. Flesh is golden there. The native women are sun-ripe Junos, the native men bronzed Apollos. They sing, and dance, and all are flower-bejewelled and flower-crowned. And, outside the rigid "Missionary Crowd," the white men yield to the climate and the sun, and no matter how busy they may be, are prone to dance and sing and wear flowers behind their ears and in their hair. Jack Kersdale was one of these fellows. He was one of the busiest men I ever met. He was a several-times millionaire. He was a sugar-king, a coffee planter, a rubber pioneer, a cattle rancher, and a promoter of three out of every four new enterprises launched in the islands. He was a society man, a club man, a yachtsman, a bachelor, and withal as handsome a man as was ever doted upon by mammas with marriageable daughters. Incidentally, he had finished his education at Yale, and his head was crammed fuller with vital statistics and scholarly information concerning Hawaii Nei than any other islander I ever encountered. He turned off an immense amount of work, and he sang and danced and put flowers in his hair as immensely as any of the idlers.

He had grit, and had fought two duels--both, political--when he was no more than a raw youth essaying his first adventures in politics. In fact, he played a most creditable and courageous part in the last revolution, when the native dynasty was overthrown; and he could not have been over sixteen at the time. I am pointing out that he was no coward, in order that you may appreciate what happens later on. I've seen him in the breaking yard at the Haleakala Ranch, conquering a four-year-old brute that for two years had defied the pick of Von Tempsky's cow-boys. And I must tell of one other thing. It was down in Kona,--or up, rather, for the Kona people scorn to live at less than a thousand feet elevation. We were all on the lanai of Doctor Goodhue's bungalow. I was talking with Dottie Fairchild when it happened. A big centipede--it was seven inches, for we measured it afterwards--fell from the rafters overhead squarely into her coiffure. I confess, the hideousness of it paralysed me. I couldn't move. My mind refused to work. There, within two feet of me, the ugly venomous devil was writhing in her hair. It threatened at any moment to fall down upon her exposed shoulders--we had just come out from dinner.

"What is it?" she asked, starting to raise her hand to her head.

"Don't!" I cried. "Don't!"

"But what is it?" she insisted, growing frightened by the fright she read in my eyes and on my stammering lips.

My exclamation attracted Kersdale's attention. He glanced our way carelessly, but in that glance took in everything. He came over to us, but without haste.

"Please don't move, Dottie," he said quietly.

He never hesitated, nor did he hurry and make a bungle of it.

"Allow me," he said.

And with one hand he caught her scarf and drew it tightly around her shoulders so that the centipede could not fall inside her bodice. With the other hand--the right--he reached into her hair, caught the repulsive abomination as near as he was able by the nape of the neck, and held it tightly between thumb and forefinger as he withdrew it from her hair. It was as horrible and heroic a sight as man could wish to see. It made my flesh crawl. The centipede, seven inches of squirming legs, writhed and twisted and dashed itself about his hand, the body twining around the fingers and the legs digging into the skin and scratching as the beast endeavoured to free itself. It bit him twice--I saw it--though he assured the ladies that he was not harmed as he dropped it upon the walk and stamped it into the gravel. But I saw him in the surgery five minutes afterwards, with Doctor Goodhue scarifying the wounds and injecting permanganate of potash. The next morning Kersdale’s arm was as big as a barrel, and it was three weeks before the swelling went down.

All of which has nothing to do with my story, but which I could not avoid giving in order to show that Jack Kersdale was anything but a coward. It was the cleanest exhibition of grit I have ever seen. He never turned a hair. The smile never left his lips. And he dived with thumb and forefinger into Dottie Fairchild’s hair as gaily as if it had been a box of salted almonds. Yet that was the man I was destined to see stricken with a fear a thousand times more hideous even than the fear that was mine when I saw that writhing abomination in Dottie Fairchild’s hair, dangling over her eyes and the trap of her bodice.

I was interested in leprosy, and upon that, as upon every other island subject, Kersdale had encyclopedic knowledge. In fact, leprosy was one of his hobbies. He was an ardent defender of the settlement at Molokai, where all the island lepers were segregated. There was much talk and feeling among the natives, fanned by the demagogues, concerning the cruelties of Molokai, where men and women, not alone banished from friends and family, were compelled to live in perpetual imprisonment until they died. There were no reprieves, no commutations of sentences. “Abandon hope” was written over the portal of Molokai.

“I tell you they are happy there,” Kersdale insisted. “And they are infinitely better off than their friends and relatives outside who have nothing the matter with them. The horrors of Molokai are all poppycock. I can take you through any hospital or any slum in any of the great cities of the world and show you a thousand times worse horrors. The living death! The creatures that once were men! Bosh! You ought to see those living deaths racing horses on the Fourth of July. Some of them own boats. One has a gasoline launch. They have nothing to do but have a good time. Food, shelter, clothes, medical attendance, everything, is theirs. They are the wards of the Territory. They have a much finer climate than Honolulu, and the scenery is magnificent. I shouldn't mind going down there myself for the rest of my days. It is a lovely spot."

So Kersdale on the joyous leper. He was not afraid of leprosy. He said so himself, and that there wasn't one chance in a million for him or any other white man to catch it, though he confessed afterward that one of his school chums, Alfred Starter, had contracted it, gone to Molokai, and there died.

"You know, in the old days," Kersdale explained, "there was no certain test for leprosy. Anything unusual or abnormal was sufficient to send a fellow to Molokai. The result was that dozens were sent there who were no more lepers than you or I. But they don't make that mistake now. The Board of Health tests are infallible. The funny thing is that when the test was discovered they immediately went down to Molokai and applied it, and they found a number who were not lepers. These were immediately deported. Happy to get away? They wailed harder at leaving the settlement than when they left Honolulu to go to it. Some refused to leave, and really had to be forced out. One of them even married a leper woman in the last stages and then wrote pathetic letters to the Board of Health, protesting against his expulsion on the ground that no one was so well able as he to take care of his poor old wife."

"What is this infallible test?" I demanded.

"The bacteriological test. There is no getting away from it. Doctor Hervey--he's our expert, you know--was the first man to apply it here. He is a wizard. He knows more about leprosy than any living man, and if a cure is ever discovered, he'll be that discoverer. As for the test, it is very simple. They have succeeded in isolating the bacillus leprae and studying it. They know it now when they see it. All they do is to snip a bit of skin from the suspect and subject it to the bacteriological test. A man without any visible symptoms may be chock full of the leprosy bacilli."

"Then you or I, for all we know," I suggested, "may be full of it now."

Kersdale shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Who can say? It takes seven years for it to incubate. If you have any doubts go and see Doctor Hervey. He'll just snip out a piece of your skin and let you know in a jiffy."

Later on he introduced me to Dr. Hervey, who loaded me down with Board of Health reports and pamphlets on the subject, and took me out to Kalihi, the Honolulu receiving station, where suspects were examined and confirmed lepers were held for deportation to Molokai. These deportations occurred about once a month, when, the last good-byes said, the lepers were marched on board the little steamer, the Noeau, and carried down to the settlement.

One afternoon, writing letters at the club, Jack Kersdale dropped in on me.

"Just the man I want to see," was his greeting. "I'll show you the saddest aspect of the whole situation--the lepers wailing as they depart for Molokai. The Noeau will be taking them on board in a few minutes. But let me warn you not to let your feelings be harrowed. Real as their grief is, they'd wail a whole sight harder a year hence if the Board of Health tried to take them away from Molokai. We've just time for a whiskey and soda. I've a carriage outside. It won't take us five minutes to get down to the wharf."

To the wharf we drove. Some forty sad wretches, amid their mats, blankets, and luggage of various sorts, were squatting on the stringer piece. The Noeau had just arrived and was making fast to a lighter that lay between her and the wharf. A Mr. McVeigh, the superintendent of the settlement, was overseeing the embarkation, and to him I was introduced, also to Dr. Georges, one of the Board of Health physicians whom I had already met at Kalihi. The lepers were a woebegone lot. The faces of the majority were hideous--too horrible for me to describe. But here and there I noticed fairly good-looking persons, with no apparent signs of the fell disease upon them. One, I noticed, a little white girl, not more than twelve, with blue eyes and golden hair. One cheek, however, showed the leprous bloat. On my remarking on the sadness of her alien situation among the brown-skinned afflicted ones, Doctor Georges replied:-

"Oh, I don't know. It's a happy day in her life. She comes from Kauai. Her father is a brute. And now that she has developed the disease she is going to join her mother at the settlement. Her mother was sent down three years ago--a very bad case."

"You can't always tell from appearances," Mr. McVeigh explained. That man there, that big chap, who looks the pink of condition, with nothing the matter with him, I happen to know has a perforating ulcer in his foot and another in his shoulder-blade. Then there are others--there, see that girl's hand, the one who is smoking the cigarette. See her twisted fingers. That's the anaesthetic form. It attacks the nerves. You could cut her fingers off with a dull knife, or rub them off on a nutmeg-grater, and she would not experience the slightest sensation."

"Yes, but that fine-looking woman, there," I persisted; "surely, surely, there can't be anything the matter with her. She is too glorious and gorgeous altogether."

"A sad case," Mr. McVeigh answered over his shoulder, already turning away to walk down the wharf with Kersdale.

She was a beautiful woman, and she was pure Polynesian. From my meagre knowledge of the race and its types I could not but conclude that she had descended from old chief stock. She could not have been more than twenty-three or four. Her lines and proportions were magnificent, and she was just beginning to show the amplitude of the women of her race.

"It was a blow to all of us," Dr. Georges volunteered. "She gave herself up voluntarily, too. No one suspected. But somehow she had contracted the disease. It broke us all up, I assure you. We've kept it out of the papers, though. Nobody but us and her family knows what has become of her. In fact, if you were to ask any man in Honolulu, he'd tell you it was his impression that she was somewhere in Europe. It was at her request that we've been so quiet about it. Poor girl, she has a lot of pride."

"But who is she?" I asked. "Certainly, from the way you talk about her, she must be somebody."

"Did you ever hear of Lucy Mokunui?" he asked.

"Lucy Mokunui?" I repeated, haunted by some familiar association. I shook my head. "It seems to me I've heard the name, but I've forgotten it."

"Never heard of Lucy Mokunui! The Hawaiian nightingale! I beg your pardon. Of course you are a malahini, {1} and could not be expected to know. Well, Lucy Mokunui was the best beloved of Honolulu--of all Hawaii, for that matter."

"You say WAS," I interrupted.

"And I mean it. She is finished." He shrugged his shoulders pityingly. "A dozen haoles--I beg your pardon, white men--have lost their hearts to her at one time or another. And I'm not counting in the ruck. The dozen I refer to were haoles of position and prominence."

"She could have married the son of the Chief Justice if she'd wanted to. You think she's beautiful, eh? But you should hear her sing. Finest native woman singer in Hawaii Nei. Her throat is pure silver and melted sunshine. We adored her. She toured America first with the Royal Hawaiian Band. After that she made two more trips on her own--concert work."

"Oh!" I cried. "I remember now. I heard her two years ago at the Boston Symphony. So that is she. I recognize her now."

I was oppressed by a heavy sadness. Life was a futile thing at best. A short two years and this magnificent creature, at the summit of her magnificent success, was one of the leper squad awaiting deportation to Molokai. Henley's lines came into my mind:-

"The poor old tramp explains his poor old ulcers;
Life is, I think, a blunder and a shame."

I recoiled from my own future. If this awful fate fell to Lucy Mokunui, what might my lot not be?--or anybody's lot? I was thoroughly aware that in life we are in the midst of death--but to be in the midst of living death, to die and not be dead, to be one of that draft of creatures that once were men, aye, and women, like Lucy Mokunui, the epitome of all Polynesian charms, an artist as well, and well beloved of men-. I am afraid I must have betrayed my perturbation, for Doctor Georges hastened to assure me that they were very happy down in the settlement.

It was all too inconceivably monstrous. I could not bear to look at her. A short distance away, behind a stretched rope guarded by a policeman, were the lepers' relatives and friends. They were not allowed to come near. There were no last embraces, no kisses of farewell. They called back and forth to one another--last messages, last words of love, last reiterated instructions. And those behind the rope looked with terrible intensity. It was the last time they would behold the faces of their loved ones, for they were the living dead, being carted away in the funeral ship to the graveyard of Molokai.

Doctor Georges gave the command, and the unhappy wretches dragged themselves to their feet and under their burdens of luggage began to stagger across the lighter and aboard the steamer. It was the funeral procession. At once the wailing started from those behind the rope. It was blood-curdling; it was heart-rending. I never heard such woe, and I hope never to again. Kersdale and McVeigh were still at the other end of the wharf, talking earnestly--politics, of course, for both were head-over-heels in that particular game. When Lucy Mokunui passed me, I stole a look at her. She WAS beautiful. She was beautiful by our standards, as well--one of those rare blossoms that occur but once in generations. And she, of all women, was doomed to Molokai. She straight on board, and aft on the open deck where the lepers huddled by the rail, wailing now, to their dear ones on shore.

The lines were cast off, and the Noeau began to move away from the wharf. The wailing increased. Such grief and despair! I was just resolving that never again would I be a witness to the sailing of the Noeau, when McVeigh and Kersdale returned. The latter's eyes were sparkling, and his lips could not quite hide the smile of delight that was his. Evidently the politics they had talked had been satisfactory. The rope had been flung aside, and the lamenting relatives now crowded the stringer piece on either side of us.

“That's her mother,” Doctor Georges whispered, indicating an old woman next to me, who was rocking back and forth and gazing at the steamer rail out of tear-blinded eyes. I noticed that Lucy Mokunui was also wailing. She stopped abruptly and gazed at Kersdale. Then she stretched forth her arms in that adorable, sensuous way that Olga Nethersole has of embracing an audience. And with arms outspread, she cried:

“Good-bye, Jack! Good-bye!”

He heard the cry, and looked. Never was a man overtaken by more crushing fear. He reeled on the stringer piece, his face went white to the roots of his hair, and he seemed to shrink and wither away inside his clothes. He threw up his hands and groaned, “My God! My God!” Then he controlled himself by a great effort.

“Good-bye, Lucy! Good-bye!” he called.

And he stood there on the wharf, waving his hands to her till the Noeau was clear away and the faces lining her after-rail were vague and indistinct.

“I thought you knew,” said McVeigh, who had been regarding him curiously. “You, of all men, should have known. I thought that was why you were here.”

“I know now,” Kersdale answered with immense gravity. “Where's the carriage?”

He walked rapidly--half-ran--to it. I had to half-run myself to keep up with him.

“Drive to Doctor Hervey’s,” he told the driver. “Drive as fast as you can.”

He sank down in a seat, panting and gasping. The pallor of his face had increased. His lips were compressed and the sweat was standing out on his forehead and upper lip. He seemed in some horrible agony.

“For God’s sake, Martin, make those horses go!” he broke out suddenly. “Lay the whip into them!--do you hear?--lay the whip into them!”

“They’ll break, sir,” the driver remonstrated.

“Let them break,” Kersdale answered. “I’ll pay your fine and square you with the police. Put it to them. That’s right. Faster! Faster!”

“And I never knew, I never knew,” he muttered, sinking back in the seat and with trembling hands wiping the sweat away.

The carriage was bouncing, swaying and lurching around corners at such a wild pace as to make conversation impossible. Besides, there was nothing to say. But I could hear him muttering over and over, “And I never knew. I never knew.”

The Great Interrogation

To say the least, Mrs. Sayther's career in Dawson was meteoric. She arrived in the spring, with dog sleds and French-Canadian voyageurs, blazed gloriously for a brief month, and departed up the river as soon as it was free of ice. Now womanless Dawson never quite understood this hurried departure, and the local Four Hundred felt aggrieved and lonely till the Nome strike was made and old sensations gave way to new. For it had delighted in Mrs. Sayther, and received her wide-armed. She was pretty, charming, and, moreover, a widow. And because of this she at once had at heel any number of Eldorado Kings, officials, and adventuring younger sons, whose ears were yearning for the frou-frou of a woman's skirts.

The mining engineers revered the memory of her husband, the late Colonel Sayther, while the syndicate and promoter representatives spoke awesomely of his deals and manipulations; for he was known down in the States as a great mining man, and as even a greater one in London. Why his widow, of all women, should have come into the country, was the great interrogation. But they were a practical breed, the men of the Northland, with a wholesome disregard for theories and a firm grip on facts. And to not a few of them Karen Sayther was a most essential fact. That she did not regard the matter in this light, is evidenced by the neatness and celerity with which refusal and proposal tallied off during her four weeks' stay. And with her vanished the fact, and only the interrogation remained.

To the solution, Chance vouchsafed one clew. Her last victim, Jack Coughran, having fruitlessly laid at her feet both his heart and a five-hundred-foot creek claim on Bonanza, celebrated the misfortune by walking all of a night with the gods. In the midwatch of this night he happened to rub shoulders with Pierre Fontaine, none other than head man of Karen Sayther's voyageurs. This rubbing of shoulders led to recognition and drinks, and ultimately involved both men in a common muddle of inebriety.

"Heh?" Pierre Fontaine later on gurgled thickly. "Vot for Madame Sayther mak visitation to thees country? More better you spik wit her. I know no t'ing 'tall, only all de tam her ask one man's name. 'Pierre,' her spik wit me; 'Pierre, you moos' find thees mans, and I gif you mooch--one thousand dollar you find thees mans.' Thees mans? Ah, oui. Thees man's name--vot you call--Daveed Payne. Oui, m'sieu, Daveed Payne. All de tam her spik das name. And all de tam I look rount vaire mooch, work lak hell, but no can find das dam mans, and no get one thousand dollar ‘tall. By dam!

“Heh? Ah, oui. One tam dose mens vot come from Circle City, dose mens know thees mans. Him Birch Creek, dey spik. And madame? Her say ‘Bon!’ and look happy lak anyt’ing. And her spik wit me. ‘Pierre,’ her spik, ‘harness de dogs. We go queek. We find thees mans I gif you one thousand dollar more.’ And I say, ‘Oui, queek! Allons, madame!’

“For sure, I t’ink, das two thousand dollar mine. Bully boy! Den more mens come from Circle City, and dey say no, das thees mans, Daveed Payne, come Dawson leel tam back. So madame and I go not ‘tall.

“Oui, m’sieu. Thees day madame spik. ‘Pierre,’ her spik, and gif me five hundred dollar, ‘go buy poling-boat. To-morrow we go up de river.’ Ah, oui, to-morrow, up de river, and das dam Sitka Charley mak me pay for de poling-boat five hundred dollar. Dam!”

Thus it was, when Jack Coughran unburdened himself next day, that Dawson fell to wondering who was this David Payne, and in what way his existence bore upon Karen Sayther’s. But that very day, as Pierre Fontaine had said, Mrs. Sayther and her barbaric crew of voyageurs towed up the east bank to Klondike City, shot across to the west bank to escape the bluffs, and disappeared amid the maze of islands to the south.

II

“Oui, madame, thees is de place. One, two, t’ree island below Stuart River. Thees is t’ree island.”

As he spoke, Pierre Fontaine drove his pole against the bank and held the stern of the boat against the current. This thrust the bow in, till a nimble breed climbed ashore with the painter and made fast.

“One leel tam, madame, I go look see.”

A chorus of dogs marked his disappearance over the edge of the bank, but a minute later he was back again.

“Oui, madame, thees is de cabin. I mak investigation. No can find mans at home. But him no go vaire far, vaire long, or him no leave dogs. Him come queek, you bet!”

“Help me out, Pierre. I’m tired all over from the boat. You might have made it softer, you know.”

From a nest of furs amidships, Karen Sayther rose to her full height of slender fairness. But if she looked lily-frail in her elemental environment, she was belied by the grip she put upon Pierre's hand, by the knotting of her woman's biceps as it took the weight of her body, by the splendid effort of her limbs as they held her out from the perpendicular bank while she made the ascent. Though shapely flesh clothed delicate frame, her body was a seat of strength.

Still, for all the careless ease with which she had made the landing, there was a warmer color than usual to her face, and a perceptibly extra beat to her heart. But then, also, it was with a certain reverent curiousness that she approached the cabin, while the Hush on her cheek showed a yet riper mellowness.

"Look, see!" Pierre pointed to the scattered chips by the woodpile. "Him fresh--two, t'ree day, no more."

Mrs. Sayther nodded. She tried to peer through the small window, but it was made of greased parchment which admitted light while it blocked vision. Failing this, she went round to the door, half lifted the rude latch to enter, but changed her mind and let it fall back into place. Then she suddenly dropped on one knee and kissed the rough-hewn threshold. If Pierre Fontaine saw, he gave no sign, and the memory in the time to come was never shared. But the next instant, one of the boatmen, placidly lighting his pipe, was startled by an unwonted harshness in his captain's voice.

"Hey! You! Le Goire! You mak'm soft more better," Pierre commanded. "Plenty bear-skin; plenty blanket. Dam!"

But the nest was soon after disrupted, and the major portion tossed up to the crest of the shore, where Mrs. Sayther lay down to wait in comfort.

Reclining on her side, she looked out and over the wide-stretching Yukon. Above the mountains which lay beyond the further shore, the sky was murky with the smoke of unseen forest fires, and through this the afternoon sun broke feebly, throwing a vague radiance to earth, and unreal shadows. To the sky-line of the four quarters--spruce-shrouded islands, dark waters, and ice-scarred rocky ridges--stretched the immaculate wilderness. No sign of human existence broke the solitude; no sound the stillness. The land seemed bound under the unreality of the unknown, wrapped in the brooding mystery of great spaces.

Perhaps it was this which made Mrs. Sayther nervous; for she changed her position constantly, now to look up the river, now down, or to scan the gloomy shores for the half-hidden mouths of back channels. After an hour or so the boatmen were sent ashore to pitch camp for the night, but Pierre remained with his mistress to watch.

"Ah! him come thees tam," he whispered, after a long silence, his gaze bent up the river to the head of the island.

A canoe, with a paddle flashing on either side, was slipping down the current. In the stern a man's form, and in the bow a woman's, swung rhythmically to the work. Mrs. Sayther had no eyes for the woman till the canoe drove in closer and her bizarre beauty peremptorily demanded notice. A close-fitting blouse of moose-skin, fantastically beaded, outlined faithfully the well-rounded lines of her body, while a silken kerchief, gay of color and picturesquely draped, partly covered great masses of blue-black hair. But it was the face, cast belike in copper bronze, which caught and held Mrs. Sayther's fleeting glance. Eyes, piercing and black and large, with a traditionary hint of obliqueness, looked forth from under clear-stencilled, clean-arching brows. Without suggesting cadaverousness, though high-boned and prominent, the cheeks fell away and met in a mouth, thin-lipped and softly strong. It was a face which advertised the dimmest trace of ancient Mongol blood, a reversion, after long centuries of wandering, to the parent stem. This effect was heightened by the delicately aquiline nose with its thin trembling nostrils, and by the general air of eagle wildness which seemed to characterize not only the face but the creature herself. She was, in fact, the Tartar type modified to idealization, and the tribe of Red Indian is lucky that breeds such a unique body once in a score of generations.

Dipping long strokes and strong, the girl, in concert with the man, suddenly whirled the tiny craft about against the current and brought it gently to the shore. Another instant and she stood at the top of the bank, heaving up by rope, hand under hand, a quarter of fresh-killed moose. Then the man followed her, and together, with a swift rush, they drew up the canoe. The dogs were in a whining mass about them, and as the girl stooped among them caressingly, the man's gaze fell upon Mrs. Sayther, who had arisen. He looked, brushed his eyes unconsciously as though his sight were deceiving him, and looked again.

"Karen," he said simply, coming forward and extending his hand, "I thought for the moment I was dreaming. I went snow-blind for a time, this spring, and since then my eyes have been playing tricks with me."

Mrs. Sayther, whose flush had deepened and whose heart was urging painfully, had been prepared for almost anything save this coolly extended hand; but she tactfully curbed herself and grasped it heartily with her own.

"You know, Dave, I threatened often to come, and I would have, too, only--only--"

"Only I didn't give the word." David Payne laughed and watched the Indian girl disappearing into the cabin.

"Oh, I understand, Dave, and had I been in your place I'd most probably have done the same. But I have come--now."

"Then come a little bit farther, into the cabin and get something to eat," he said genially, ignoring or missing the feminine suggestion of appeal in her voice. "And you must be tired too. Which way are you travelling? Up? Then you wintered in Dawson, or came in on the last ice. Your camp?" He glanced at the voyageurs circled about the fire in the open, and held back the door for her to enter.

"I came up on the ice from Circle City last winter," he continued, "and settled down here for a while. Am prospecting some on Henderson Creek, and if that fails, have been thinking of trying my hand this fall up the Stuart River."

"You aren't changed much, are you?" she asked irrelevantly, striving to throw the conversation upon a more personal basis.

"A little less flesh, perhaps, and a little more muscle. How did YOU mean?"

But she shrugged her shoulders and peered I through the dim light at the Indian girl, who had lighted the fire and was frying great chunks of moose meat, alternated with thin ribbons of bacon.

"Did you stop in Dawson long?" The man was whittling a stave of birchwood into a rude axe-handle, and asked the question without raising his head.

"Oh, a few days," she answered, following the girl with her eyes, and hardly hearing. "What were you saying? In Dawson? A month, in fact, and glad to get away. The arctic male is elemental, you know, and somewhat strenuous in his feelings."

"Bound to be when he gets right down to the soil. He leaves convention with the spring bed at borne. But you were wise in your choice of time for leaving. You'll be out of the country before mosquito season, which is a blessing your lack of experience will not permit you to appreciate."

"I suppose not. But tell me about yourself, about your life. What kind of neighbors have you? Or have you any?"

While she queried she watched the girl grinding coffee in the corner of a flower sack upon the hearthstone. With a steadiness and skill which predicated nerves as primitive as the method, she crushed the imprisoned berries with a heavy fragment of quartz. David Payne noted his visitor's gaze, and the shadow of a smile drifted over his lips.

"I did have some," he replied. "Missourian chaps, and a couple of Cornishmen, but they went down to Eldorado to work at wages for a grubstake."

Mrs. Sayther cast a look of speculative regard upon the girl. "But of course there are plenty of Indians about?"

"Every mother's son of them down to Dawson long ago. Not a native in the whole country, barring Winapie here, and she's a Koyokuk lass,--comes from a thousand miles or so down the river."

Mrs. Sayther felt suddenly faint; and though the smile of interest in no wise waned, the face of the man seemed to draw away to a telescopic distance, and the tiered logs of the cabin to whirl drunkenly about. But she was bidden draw up to the table, and during the meal discovered time and space in which to find herself. She talked little, and that principally about the land and weather, while the man wandered off into a long description of the difference between the shallow summer diggings of the Lower Country and the deep winter diggings of the Upper Country.

"You do not ask why I came north?" she asked. "Surely you know." They had moved back from the table, and David Payne had returned to his axe-handle. "Did you get my letter?"

"A last one? No, I don't think so. Most probably it's trailing around the Birch Creek Country or lying in some trader's shack on the Lower River. The way they run the mails in here is shameful. No order, no system, no--"

"Don't be wooden, Dave! Help me!" She spoke sharply now, with an assumption of authority which rested upon the past. "Why don't you ask me about myself? About those we knew in the old times? Have you no longer any interest in the world? Do you know that my husband is dead?"

"Indeed, I am sorry. How long--"

"David!" She was ready to cry with vexation, but the reproach she threw into her voice eased her.

"Did you get any of my letters? You must have got some of them, though you never answered."

"Well, I didn't get the last one, announcing, evidently, the death of your husband, and most likely others went astray; but I did get some. I--er--read them aloud to Winapie as a warning--that is, you know, to impress upon her the wickedness of her white sisters. And I--er--think she profited by it. Don't you?"

She disregarded the sting, and went on. "In the last letter, which you did not receive, I told, as you have guessed, of Colonel Sayther's death. That was a year ago. I also said that if you did not come out to me, I would go in to you. And as I had often promised, I came."

"I know of no promise."

"In the earlier letters?"

"Yes, you promised, but as I neither asked nor answered, it was unratified. So I do not know of any such promise. But I do know of another, which you, too, may remember. It was very long ago." He dropped the axe-handle to the floor and raised his head. "It was so very long ago, yet I remember it distinctly, the day, the time, every detail. We were in a rose garden, you and I,--your mother's rose garden. All things were budding, blossoming, and the sap of spring was in our blood. And I drew you over--it was the first--and kissed you full on the lips. Don't you remember?"

"Don't go over it, Dave, don't! I know every shameful line of it. How often have I wept! If you only knew how I have suffered--"

"You promised me then--ay, and a thousand times in the sweet days that followed. Each look of your eyes, each touch of your hand, each syllable that fell from your lips, was a promise. And then--how shall I say?--there came a man. He was old--old enough to have begotten you--and not nice to look upon, but as the world goes, clean. He had done no wrong, followed the letter of the law, was respectable. Further, and to the point, he possessed some several paltry mines,--a score; it does not matter: and he owned a few miles of lands, and engineered deals, and clipped coupons. He--"

"But there were other things," she interrupted, "I told you. Pressure--money matters--want--my people--trouble. You understood the whole sordid situation. I could not help it. It was not my will. I was sacrificed, or I sacrificed, have it as you wish. But, my God! Dave, I gave you up! You never did ME justice. Think what I have gone through!"

"It was not your will? Pressure? Under high heaven there was no thing to will you to this man's bed or that."

"But I cared for you all the time," she pleaded.

"I was unused to your way of measuring love. I am still unused. I do not understand."

"But now! now!"

"We were speaking of this man you saw fit to marry. What manner of man was he? Wherein did he charm your soul? What potent virtues were his? True, he had a golden grip,--an almighty golden grip. He knew the odds. He was versed in cent per cent. He had a narrow wit and excellent judgment of the viler parts, whereby he transferred this man's money to his pockets, and that man's money, and the next man's. And the law smiled. In that it did not condemn, our Christian ethics approved. By social measure he was not a bad man. But by your measure, Karen, by mine, by ours of the rose garden, what was he?"

"Remember, he is dead."

"The fact is not altered thereby. What was he? A great, gross, material creature, deaf to song, blind to beauty, dead to the spirit. He was fat with laziness, and flabby-cheeked, and the round of his belly witnessed his gluttony--"

"But he is dead. It is we who are now--now! now! Don't you hear? As you say, I have been inconstant. I have sinned. Good. But should not you, too, cry peccavi? If I have broken promises, have not you? Your love of the rose garden was of all time, or so you said. Where is it now?"

"It is here! now!" he cried, striking his breast passionately with clenched hand. "It has always been."

"And your love was a great love; there was none greater," she continued; "or so you said in the rose garden. Yet it is not fine enough, large enough, to forgive me here, crying now at your feet?"

The man hesitated. His mouth opened; words shaped vainly on his lips. She had forced him to bare his heart and speak truths which he had hidden from himself. And she was good to look upon, standing there in a glory of passion, calling back old associations and warmer life. He turned away his head that he might not see, but she passed around and fronted him.

"Look at me, Dave! Look at me! I am the same, after all. And so are you, if you would but see. We are not changed."

Her hand rested on his shoulder, and his had half-passed, roughly, about her, when the sharp crackle of a match startled him to himself. Winapie, alien to the scene, was lighting the slow wick of the slush lamp. She appeared to start out against a background of utter black, and the flame, flaring suddenly up, lighted her bronze beauty to royal gold.

"You see, it is impossible," he groaned, thrusting the fair-haired woman gently from him. "It is impossible," he repeated. "It is impossible."

"I am not a girl, Dave, with a girl's illusions," she said softly, though not daring to come back to him. "It is as a woman that I understand. Men are men. A common custom of the country. I am not shocked. I divined it from the first. But--ah!--it is only a marriage of the country--not a real marriage?"

"We do not ask such questions in Alaska," he interposed feebly.

"I know, but--"

"Well, then, it is only a marriage of the country--nothing else."

"And there are no children?"

"No."

"Nor--"

"No, no; nothing--but it is impossible."

"But it is not." She was at his side again, her hand touching lightly, caressingly, the sunburned back of his. "I know the custom of the land too well. Men do it every day. They do not care to remain here, shut out from the world, for all their days; so they give an order on the P. C. C. Company for a year's provisions, some money in hand, and the girl is content. By the end of that time, a man--" She shrugged her shoulders. "And so with the girl here. We will give her an order upon the company, not for a year, but for life. What was she when you found her? A raw, meat-eating savage; fish in summer, moose in winter, feasting in plenty, starving in famine. But for you that is what she would have remained. For your coming she was happier; for your going, surely, with a life of comparative splendor assured, she will be happier than if you had never been."

"No, no," he protested. "It is not right."

"Come, Dave, you must see. She is not your kind. There is no race affinity. She is an aborigine, sprung from the soil, yet close to the soil, and impossible to lift from the soil. Born savage, savage she will die. But we--you and I--the dominant, evolved race--the salt of the earth and the masters thereof! We are made for each other. The supreme call is of kind, and we are of kind. Reason and feeling dictate it. Your very instinct demands it. That you cannot deny. You cannot escape the generations behind you. Yours is an ancestry which has survived for a thousand centuries, and for a hundred thousand centuries, and your line must not stop here. It cannot. Your ancestry will not permit it. Instinct is stronger than the will. The race is mightier than you. Come, Dave, let us go. We are young yet, and life is good. Come."

Winapie, passing out of the cabin to feed the dogs, caught his attention and caused him to shake his head and weakly to reiterate. But the woman's hand slipped about his neck, and her cheek pressed to his. His bleak life rose up and smote him,--the vain struggle with pitiless forces; the dreary years of frost and famine; the harsh and jarring contact with elemental life; the aching void which mere animal existence could not fill. And there, seduction by his side, whispering of brighter, warmer lands, of music, light, and joy, called the old times back again. He visioned it unconsciously. Faces rushed in upon him; glimpses of forgotten scenes, memories of merry hours; strains of song and trills of laughter-

"Come, Dave, Come. I have for both. The way is soft." She looked about her at the bare furnishings of the cabin. "I have for both. The world is at our feet, and all joy is ours. Come! come!"

She was in his arms, trembling, and he held her tightly. He rose to his feet . . . But the snarling of hungry dogs, and the shrill cries of Winapie bringing about peace between the combatants, came muffled to his ear through the heavy logs. And another scene flashed before him. A struggle in the forest,--a bald-face grizzly, broken-legged, terrible; the snarling of the dogs and the shrill cries of Winapie as she urged them to the attack; himself in the midst of the crush, breathless, panting, striving to hold off red death; broken-backed, entrail-ripped dogs howling in impotent anguish and desecrating the snow; the virgin white running scarlet with the blood of man and beast; the bear, ferocious, irresistible, crunching, crunching down to the core of his life; and Winapie, at the last, in the thick of the frightful muddle, hair flying, eyes flashing, fury incarnate, passing the long hunting knife again and again--Sweat started to his forehead. He shook off the clinging woman and staggered back to the wall. And she, knowing that the moment had come, but unable to divine what was passing within him, felt all she had gained slipping away.

"Dave! Dave!" she cried. "I will not give you up! I will not give you up! If you do not wish to come, we will stay. I will stay with you. The world is less to me than are you. I will be a Northland wife to you. I will cook your food, feed your dogs, break trail for you, lift a paddle with you. I can do it. Believe me, I am strong."

Nor did he doubt it, looking upon her and holding her off from him; but his face had grown stern and gray, and the warmth had died out of his eyes.

"I will pay off Pierre and the boatmen, and let them go. And I will stay with you, priest or no priest, minister or no minister; go with you, now, anywhere! Dave! Dave! Listen to me! You say I did you wrong in the past--and I did--let me make up for it, let me atone. If I did not rightly measure love before, let me show that I can now."

She sank to the floor and threw her arms about his knees, sobbing. "And you DO care for me. You DO care for me. Think! The long years I have waited, suffered! You can never know!" He stooped and raised her to her feet.

"Listen," he commanded, opening the door and lifting her bodily outside. "It cannot be. We are not alone to be considered. You must go. I wish you a safe journey. You will find it tougher work when you get up by the Sixty Mile, but you have the best boatmen in the world, and will get through all right. Will you say good-by?"

Though she already had herself in hand, she looked at him hopelessly. "If--if--if Winapie should--" She quavered and stopped.

But he grasped the unspoken thought, and answered, "Yes." Then struck with the enormity of it, "It cannot be conceived. There is no likelihood. It must not be entertained."

"Kiss me," she whispered, her face lighting. Then she turned and went away.

"Break camp, Pierre," she said to the boatman, who alone had remained awake against her return. "We must be going."

By the firelight his sharp eyes scanned the woe in her face, but he received the extraordinary command as though it were the most usual thing in the world. "Oui, madame," he assented. "Which way? Dawson?"

"No," she answered, lightly enough; "up; out; Dyea."

Whereat he fell upon the sleeping voyageurs, kicking them, grunting, from their blankets, and buckling them down to the work, the while his voice, vibrant with action, shrilling through all the camp. In a trice Mrs. Sayther's tiny tent had been struck, pots and pans were being gathered up, blankets rolled, and the men staggering under the loads to the boat. Here, on the banks, Mrs. Sayther waited till the luggage was made ship-shape and her nest prepared.

“We line up to de head of de island,” Pierre explained to her while running out the long tow rope. “Den we tak to das back channel, where de water not queek, and I t’ink we mak good tam.”

A scuffling and pattering of feet in the last year’s dry grass caught his quick ear, and he turned his head. The Indian girl, circled by a bristling ring of wolf dogs, was coming toward them. Mrs. Sayther noted that the girl’s face, which had been apathetic throughout the scene in the cabin, had now quickened into blazing and wrathful life.

“What you do my man?” she demanded abruptly of Mrs. Sayther. “Him lay on bunk, and him look bad all the time. I say, ‘What the matter, Dave? You sick?’ But him no say nothing. After that him say, ‘Good girl Winapie, go way. I be all right bimeby.’ What you do my man, eh? I think you bad woman.”

Mrs. Sayther looked curiously at the barbarian woman who shared the life of this man, while she departed alone in the darkness of night.

“I think you bad woman,” Winapie repeated in the slow, methodical way of one who gropes for strange words in an alien tongue. “I think better you go way, no come no more. Eh? What you think? I have one man. I Indian girl. You ‘Merican woman. You good to see. You find plenty men. Your eyes blue like the sky. Your skin so white, so soft.”

Coolly she thrust out a brown forefinger and pressed the soft cheek of the other woman. And to the eternal credit of Karen Sayther, she never flinched. Pierre hesitated and half stepped forward; but she motioned him away, though her heart welled to him with secret gratitude. “It’s all right, Pierre,” she said. “Please go away.”

He stepped back respectfully out of earshot, where he stood grumbling to himself and measuring the distance in springs.

“Um white, um soft, like baby.” Winapie touched the other cheek and withdrew her hand. “Bimeby mosquito come. Skin get sore in spot; um swell, oh, so big; um hurt, oh, so much. Plenty mosquito; plenty spot. I think better you go now before mosquito come. This way,” pointing down the stream, “you go St. Michael’s; that way,” pointing up, “you go Dyea. Better you go Dyea. Good-by.”

And that which Mrs. Sayther then did, caused Pierre to marvel greatly. For she threw her arms around the Indian girl, kissed her, and burst into tears.

“Be good to him,” she cried. “Be good to him.”

Then she slipped half down the face of the bank, called back “Good-by,” and dropped into the boat amidships. Pierre followed her and cast off. He shoved the steering oar into place and gave the signal. Le Goire lifted an old French chanson; the men, like a row of ghosts in the dim starlight, bent their backs to the tow line; the steering oar cut the black current sharply, and the boat swept out into the night.

The Grilling of Loren Ellery

THE bon Dieu, in His inscrutable wisdom, had seen fit to place two women's souls within two fairly beautiful bodies, and to cause them to love each other dearly. He had likewise deemed it discretionary to create them sister and sister, that this affection might bloom rich and full, nor fall a prey to the deadly germs ordinarily sown in the course of feminine existence. Having done these things, it is eveident He rested from His labors, leaving these two creatures to whirl of chance.

Chance behaved sanely for a long while; but, having permitted them to gain womanhood in each other's companionship, it flung them apart by half the girth of a Western State, and caused them to dwell in separate places, one in a smoky metropolis by the seaboard, and one in a great valley where meridians were as common as pebbles in a gravel bank. Chance also brought many strange things into their lives, and last of all, a man. And this man came well recommended, with moral probity, business integrity, healthy bank books, unqualified letters of credit and introduction, and looks. He became great friends with Ernestine, who lived in the city by the sea, and thought he thought much of her. After they had come to know each other well, Lute, whom an imbecile ancestor had classified as Luella, and who lived in the valley, came on a visit to her sister Ernestine. And the man, who may be known as Loren Ellery, came to know her likewise.

"And what do you think of Lute?" Ernestine, who was the elder, asked one day, after her sister's visit had terminated in a climacteric of sisterly love, kisses, admonitions, and promises.

"Now, Erna," Ellery answered — he had long since taken unto himself this prerogative of address; "it's this way: Lute's a fine girl. There's no mistaking it. She is bright, good looking, with vim and go about her, and a glorious colour. But her brightness is of a different order from yours, as are her looks, her vivacity, her complexion. You understand. She's a pretty little witch and all that, but — " Here he threw the proper expression into his eyes and gazed upon his interlocutor just the correct number of instants to be thoroughly effective, and resumed: "But she could never be to me what you are. I like her, but in a different way from you. I admire her, but not as I admire you. I can respect her, and I might have loved her had you and I never met. As it is — "

Ernestine said “Oh!” afterward. and they both felt a high satisfaction with themselves, each other, and things in general and particular.

After some time Chance, with his accustomed arch manipulation of his human dice, tossed a man with a mine across Loren Ellery’s path. And according to the affinity which exists between men possessing natural capital and men possessing industrial capital, these two foregathered for cooperative exploitation and mutual benefit. In the course of the deal Loren Ellery, not desiring to be mulcted by the Western Gentile, hired a mining expert and went to investigate the pretensions of the hole in the ground. It so happened that the mine lay among the outjutting spurs of the mountains which fringed the rim of the valley where Lute lived and moved.

Naturally, society being limited, and travellers rare, she and Ellery met, and they saw much of each other. So pleasurable did he find her company that he dallied, day by day, and postponed the date of his return. And as he took liberties with time, so did his tongue with him, till he said to Lute things which he should not have said, and which he had said before.

“It’s something like this, Lute,” he said one day, as they drank iced tea on her long, shaded piazza and thus strove to adapt themselves more comfortably to their torrid environment. “It’s something like this, you see, now that sister of yours is a jolly nice girl, clever and all that. Not the slightest doubt in the world of it. She’s got looks and health, and complexion, and all that sort of stuff. You understand. She’s just the kind of a girl to carry most fellows away, fall in love with her on the jump, but — ” and here he expressed that “but” in a mild pantomine, rendered more effective by long practice, and went on: “But she never could be to me what you are. She is pretty, but so are you, and in a different way. She may appeal to most men, but not to me as you can. In short, I like your sister, but there is no similarity between that and my affection for you. I can admire her and respect her, and it might have been I could have loved her had I not met you. As it is — tell me, Lute dear, tell me you understand.”

As this repetition of stereotyped niceties is an infirmity from which all masculines suffer to greater or less extent, and which, in like measure, gives pleasure to all feminines, it can be considered no great evil; and evil things would not have resulted from it had not the bon Dieu made Lute’s a very confiding nature and Chance sent her down on another visit to the seaboard city.

In the meantime Ellery was prevented from changing the trend of events by catching the mining fever and going off to the outjutting spurs to explore more holes in the ground.

No matter how slightly and carefully some women lift the lids of their hearts in confidence, like the box of Pandora, the contents thereof are likely to fly out to the last little particle. Lute happened to be such a creature, and it also happened that Ernestine had acquired a certain knack necessary to draw from her her maiden secrets.

The night they remained awake, and talked so long, Lute's intentions were to divulge, oh, such a little bit of the case; but gradually, insensibly, she drifted on, giving notice to more and more, till suddenly Ernestine's ears caught the concantenation of familiar phrases, and her "What's that?" precipitated affairs. Then a reciprocal relation attached itself to their confidences, and they weighed and balanced their respective merits and demerits as interpreted by the protean-tongued Loren Ellery. After that, and the immediate pangs of chagrin and personal affront had passed, they laughed and fell asleep in each other's arms, as sisters should.

Loren Ellery unconcernedly staged and trailed it through the mountains, descending deep shafts and winding through deviously constructed man burrows, learning the ways of the Western man and his habitat, and adding to his vocabulary the nomenclature of the mines and the idiom of the frontier. And he had become quite Western himself, don't you know, and quite proud of his attainments and his mineral properties by the time of the fall of the year, when he returned to the city and betook himself to a certain residence and sent up his card. He had asked for Ernestine, but incidentally it so happened that Lute aided her sister in receiving him.

Conversation picked its sinuous thread through the unctuous nothings and polite inanities of impersonal small talk; Ellery contriving, in his subtle way, to convey to each that his interest had not dwindled, and all went well. Words flowed easily, naturally, without jar or premonition of coming discord.

"Ah, what a striking young man," Ellery murmured, in a lull, gazing admiringly upon a portrait suspended from the wall opposite him. "And may I ask whose it is?"

"My cousin George," Ernestine informed him; "the one in the navy I think I told you about."

"And is he not a handsome chap?" he continued.

"Indeed he is," authenticated Ernestine.

"Ah?"

"But not like his brother Herman," Lute chimed in.

"An extremely nice young man," Ernestine continued, "with a vim and go about him, and energy and manliness."

"Yes, I dare say," Ellery put in, absently, puzzling over the vague familiarity of the phrases.

"And yet so different from his brother," came back from Lute's side of the duet.

"Isn't it funny," from Ernestine; "he's just the kind of a man girls lose their hearts to, yet — "

"I could not love him as I would Herman," Lute interpolated, taking up her portion of the measure.

"How strange!" Ellery was beginning to fall a victim to decidedly definite suspicions.

"An estimable young man — "

"Whom I could like — "

"But not as I could his brother — "

"Whom I could admire — "

"But not as Herman — "

Ellery knew they were grilling him and smiled vacuously.

"Whom I can respect — "

"And might have loved — "

"Had I not met — "

"His brother Herman — "

"And who — why, Mr. Ellery," Ernestine broke off, as innocently as she did abruptly; "you are not going? And so soon?"

"Most charming time, I assure you," Ellery had glanced at his watch and risen to his feet, a barely discernible colour in his cheeks, but managing to hold himself in hand. "So nice to see you girls again, don't you know; but I must be moving on."

"But won't you stay just a moment and have some tea?" Ernestine made a half move to strike the bell.

"Really, I would like to, ever so much." He was methodically edging to the door the while he spoke. "Had no idea it was so late, time flew so; but I must meet a man with a prospectus — this mining, you know, is so deucedly distracting."

“Then good-bye, Mr. Ellery.” Ernestine’s larynx was delicately vibrant with disappointment as she finally extended her hand. “You must come again — ”

“And see our cousin George — ”

“And his brother Herman — ”

“He’s just as he is in his picture, and I know you will like him — ”

“But different from the way you will like his brother Herm — ”

But Loren Ellery, fearing an attack of primordial passion, fled incontinently down the stairs.

Grit of Women

A wolfish head, wistful-eyed and frost-rimed, thrust aside the tent-flaps.

"Hi! Chook! Siwash! Chook, you limb of Satan!" chorused the protesting inmates. Bettles rapped the dog sharply with a tin plate, and it withdrew hastily. Louis Savoy refastened the flaps, kicked a frying-pan over against the bottom, and warmed his hands. It was very cold without. Forty-eight hours gone, the spirit thermometer had burst at sixty-eight below, and since that time it had grown steadily and bitterly colder. There was no telling when the snap would end. And it is poor policy, unless the gods will it, to venture far from a stove at such times, or to increase the quantity of cold atmosphere one must breathe. Men sometimes do it, and sometimes they chill their lungs. This leads up to a dry, hacking cough, noticeably irritable when bacon is being fried. After that, somewhere along in the spring or summer, a hole is burned in the frozen muck. Into this a man's carcass is dumped, covered over with moss, and left with the assurance that it will rise on the crack of Doom, wholly and frigidly intact. For those of little faith, sceptical of material integration on that fateful day, no fitter country than the Klondike can be recommended to die in. But it is not to be inferred from this that it is a fit country for living purposes.

It was very cold without, but it was not over-warm within. The only article which might be designated furniture was the stove, and for this the men were frank in displaying their preference. Upon half of the floor pine boughs had been cast; above this were spread the sleeping-furs, beneath lay the winter's snowfall. The remainder of the floor was moccasin-packed snow, littered with pots and pans and the general impedimenta of an Arctic camp. The stove was red and roaring hot, but only a bare three feet away lay a block of ice, as sharp-edged and dry as when first quarried from the creek bottom. The pressure of the outside cold forced the inner heat upward. Just above the stove, where the pipe penetrated the roof, was a tiny circle of dry canvas; next, with the pipe always as centre, a circle of steaming canvas; next a damp and moisture-exuding ring; and finally, the rest of the tent, sidewalls and top, coated with a half-inch of dry, white, crystal-encrusted frost.

"Oh! OH! OH!" A young fellow, lying asleep in the furs, bearded and wan and weary, raised a moan of pain, and without waking increased the pitch and intensity of his anguish. His body half-lifted from the blankets, and quivered and shrank spasmodically, as though drawing away from a bed of nettles.

"Roll'm over!" ordered Bettles. "He's crampin'."

And thereat, with pitiless good-will, he was pitched upon and rolled and thumped and pounded by half-a-dozen willing comrades.

"Damn the trail," he muttered softly, as he threw off the robes and sat up. "I've run across country, played quarter three seasons hand-running, and hardened myself in all manner of ways; and then I pilgrim it into this God-forsaken land and find myself an effeminate Athenian without the simplest rudiments of manhood!" He hunched up to the fire and rolled a cigarette. "Oh, I'm not whining. I can take my medicine all right, all right; but I'm just decently ashamed of myself, that's all. Here I am, on top of a dirty thirty miles, as knocked up and stiff and sore as a pink-tea degenerate after a five-mile walk on a country turn-pike. Bah! It makes me sick! Got a match?" "Don't git the tantrums, youngster." Bettles passed over the required fire-stick and waxed patriarchal. "Ye've gotter 'low some for the breakin'-in. Sufferin' cracky! don't I recollect the first time I hit the trail! Stiff? I've seen the time it'd take me ten minutes to git my mouth from the waterhole an' come to my feet--every jint crackin' an' kickin' fit to kill. Cramp? In sech knots it'd take the camp half a day to untangle me. You're all right, for a cub, any ye've the true sperrit. Come this day year, you'll walk all us old bucks into the ground any time. An' best in your favor, you hain't got that streak of fat in your make-up which has sent many a husky man to the bosom of Abraham afore his right and proper time."

"Streak of fat?"

"Yep. Comes along of bulk. 'T ain't the big men as is the best when it comes to the trail."

"Never heard of it."

"Never heered of it, eh? Well, it's a dead straight, open-an'-shut fact, an' no gittin' round. Bulk's all well enough for a mighty big effort, but 'thout stayin' powers it ain't worth a continental whoop; an' stayin' powers an' bulk ain't runnin' mates. Takes the small, wiry fellows when it comes to gittin' right down an' hangin' on like a lean-jowled dog to a bone. Why, hell's fire, the big men they ain't in it!"

"By gar!" broke in Louis Savoy, "dat is no, vot you call, josh! I know one mans, so vaire beeg like ze buffalo. Wit him, on ze Sulphur Creek stampede, go one small mans, Lon McFane. You know dat Lon McFane, dat leetle Irisher wit ze red hair and ze grin. An’ dey walk an’ walk an’ walk, all ze day long an’ ze night long. And beeg mans, him become vaire tired, an’ lay down mooch in ze snow. And leetle mans keek beeg mans, an’ him cry like, vot you call--ah! vot you call ze kid. And leetle mans keek an’ keek an’ keek, an’ bime by, long time, long way, keek beeg mans into my cabin. Tree days ‘fore him crawl out my blankets. Nevaire I see beeg squaw like him. No nevaire. Him haf vot you call ze streak of fat. You bet.”

“But there was Axel Gunderson,” Prince spoke up. The great Scandinavian, with the tragic events which shadowed his passing, had made a deep mark on the mining engineer. “He lies up there, somewhere.” He swept his hand in the vague direction of the mysterious east.

“Biggest man that ever turned his heels to Salt Water, or run a moose down with sheer grit,” supplemented Bettles; “but he’s the prove-the-rule exception. Look at his woman, Unga,--tip the scales at a hundred an’ ten, clean meat an’ nary ounce to spare. She’d bank grit ‘gainst his for all there was in him, an’ see him, an’ go him better if it was possible. Nothing over the earth, or in it, or under it, she wouldn’t ‘a’ done.”

“But she loved him,” objected the engineer.

“‘T ain’t that. It--“

“Look you, brothers,” broke in Sitka Charley from his seat on the grub-box. “Ye have spoken of the streak of fat that runs in big men’s muscles, of the grit of women and the love, and ye have spoken fair; but I have in mind things which happened when the land was young and the fires of men apart as the stars. It was then I had concern with a big man, and a streak of fat, and a woman. And the woman was small; but her heart was greater than the beef-heart of the man, and she had grit. And we traveled a weary trail, even to the Salt Water, and the cold was bitter, the snow deep, the hunger great. And the woman’s love was a mighty love--no more can man say than this.”

He paused, and with the hatchet broke pieces of ice from the large chunk beside him. These he threw into the gold pan on the stove, where the drinking-water thawed. The men drew up closer, and he of the cramps sought greater comfort vainly for his stiffened body.

“Brothers, my blood is red with Siwash, but my heart is white. To the faults of my fathers I owe the one, to the virtues of my friends the other. A great truth came to me when I was yet a boy. I learned that to your kind and you was given the earth; that the Siwash could not withstand you, and like the caribou and the bear, must perish in the cold. So I came into the warm and sat among you, by your fires, and behold, I became one of you, I have seen much in my time. I have known strange things, and bucked big, on big trails, with men of many breeds. And because of these things, I measure deeds after your manner, and judge men, and think thoughts. Wherefore, when I speak harshly of one of your own kind, I know you will not take it amiss; and when I speak high of one of my father's people, you will not take it upon you to say, 'Sitka Charley is Siwash, and there is a crooked light in his eyes and small honor to his tongue.' Is it not so?"

Deep down in throat, the circle vouchsafed its assent.

"The woman was Passuk. I got her in fair trade from her people, who were of the Coast and whose Chilcat totem stood at the head of a salt arm of the sea. My heart did not go out to the woman, nor did I take stock of her looks. For she scarce took her eyes from the ground, and she was timid and afraid, as girls will be when cast into a stranger's arms whom they have never seen before. As I say, there was no place in my heart for her to creep, for I had a great journey in mind, and stood in need of one to feed my dogs and to lift a paddle with me through the long river days. One blanket would cover the twain; so I chose Passuk.

"Have I not said I was a servant to the Government? If not, it is well that ye know. So I was taken on a warship, sleds and dogs and evaporated foods, and with me came Passuk. And we went north, to the winter ice-rim of Bering Sea, where we were landed,--myself, and Passuk, and the dogs. I was also given moneys of the Government, for I was its servant, and charts of lands which the eyes of man had never dwelt upon, and messages. These messages were sealed, and protected shrewdly from the weather, and I was to deliver them to the whale-ships of the Arctic, ice-bound by the great Mackenzie. Never was there so great a river, forgetting only our own Yukon, the Mother of all Rivers.

"All of which is neither here nor there, for my story deals not with the whale-ships, nor the berg-bound winter I spent by the Mackenzie. Afterward, in the spring, when the days lengthened and there was a crust to the snow, we came south, Passuk and I, to the Country of the Yukon. A weary journey, but the sun pointed out the way of our feet. It was a naked land then, as I have said, and we worked up the current, with pole and paddle, till we came to Forty Mile. Good it was to see white faces once again, so we put into the bank. And that winter was a hard winter. The darkness and the cold drew down upon us, and with them the famine. To each man the agent of the Company gave forty pounds of flour and twenty of bacon. There were no beans. And, the dogs howled always, and there were flat bellies and deep-lined faces, and strong men became weak, and weak men died. There was also much scurvy.

"Then came we together in the store one night, and the empty shelves made us feel our own emptiness the more. We talked low, by the light of the fire, for the candles had been set aside for those who might yet gasp in the spring. Discussion was held, and it was said that a man must go forth to the Salt Water and tell to the world our misery. At this all eyes turned to me, for it was understood that I was a great traveler. 'It is seven hundred miles,' said I, 'to Haines Mission by the sea, and every inch of it snowshoe work. Give me the pick of your dogs and the best of your grub, and I will go. And with me shall go Passuk.'

"To this they were agreed. But there arose one, Long Jeff, a Yankee-man, big-boned and big-muscled. Also his talk was big. He, too, was a mighty traveler, he said, born to the snowshoe and bred up on buffalo milk. He would go with me, in case I fell by the trail, that he might carry the word on to the Mission. I was young, and I knew not Yankee-men. How was I to know that big talk betokened the streak of fat, or that Yankee-men who did great things kept their teeth together? So we took the pick of the dogs and the best of the grub, and struck the trail, we three,--Passuk, Long Jeff, and I.

"Well, ye have broken virgin snow, labored at the gee-pole, and are not unused to the packed river-jams; so I will talk little of the toil, save that on some days we made ten miles, and on others thirty, but more often ten. And the best of the grub was not good, while we went on stint from the start. Likewise the pick of the dogs was poor, and we were hard put to keep them on their legs. At the White River our three sleds became two sleds, and we had only come two hundred miles. But we lost nothing; the dogs that left the traces went into the bellies of those that remained.

"Not a greeting, not a curl of smoke, till we made Pelly. Here I had counted on grub; and here I had counted on leaving Long Jeff, who was whining and trail-sore. But the factor's lungs were wheezing, his eyes bright, his cache nigh empty; and he showed us the empty cache of the missionary, also his grave with the rocks piled high to keep off the dogs. There was a bunch of Indians there, but babies and old men there were none, and it was clear that few would see the spring.

“So we pulled on, light-stomached and heavy-hearted, with half a thousand miles of snow and silence between us and Haines Mission by the sea. The darkness was at its worst, and at midday the sun could not clear the sky-line to the south. But the ice-jams were smaller, the going better; so I pushed the dogs hard and traveled late and early. As I said at Forty Mile, every inch of it was snow-shoe work. And the shoes made great sores on our feet, which cracked and scabbed but would not heal. And every day these sores grew more grievous, till in the morning, when we girded on the shoes, Long Jeff cried like a child. I put him at the fore of the light sled to break trail, but he slipped off the shoes for comfort. Because of this the trail was not packed, his moccasins made great holes, and into these holes the dogs wallowed. The bones of the dogs were ready to break through their hides, and this was not good for them. So I spoke hard words to the man, and he promised, and broke his word. Then I beat him with the dog-whip, and after that the dogs wallowed no more. He was a child, what of the pain and the streak of fat.

“But Passuk. While the man lay by the fire and wept, she cooked, and in the morning helped lash the sleds, and in the evening to unlash them. And she saved the dogs. Ever was she to the fore, lifting the webbed shoes and making the way easy. Passuk--how shall I say?--I took it for granted that she should do these things, and thought no more about it. For my mind was busy with other matters, and besides, I was young in years and knew little of woman. It was only on looking back that I came to understand.

“And the man became worthless. The dogs had little strength in them, but he stole rides on the sled when he lagged behind. Passuk said she would take the one sled, so the man had nothing to do. In the morning I gave him his fair share of grub and started him on the trail alone. Then the woman and I broke camp, packed the sleds, and harnessed the dogs. By midday, when the sun mocked us, we would overtake the man, with the tears frozen on his cheeks, and pass him. In the night we made camp, set aside his fair share of grub, and spread his furs. Also we made a big fire, that he might see. And hours afterward he would come limping in, and eat his grub with moans and groans, and sleep. He was not sick, this man. He was only trail-sore and tired, and weak with hunger. But Passuk and I were trail-sore and tired, and weak with hunger; and we did all the work and he did none. But he had the streak of fat of which our brother Bettles has spoken. Further, we gave the man always his fair share of grub.

“Then one day we met two ghosts journeying through the Silence. They were a man and a boy, and they were white. The ice had opened on Lake Le Barge, and through it had gone their main outfit. One blanket each carried about his shoulders. At night they built a fire and crouched over it till morning. They had a little flour. This they stirred in warm water and drank. The man showed me eight cups of flour--all they had, and Pelly, stricken with famine, two hundred miles away. They said, also, that there was an Indian behind; that they had whacked fair, but that he could not keep up. I did not believe they had whacked fair, else would the Indian have kept up. But I could give them no grub. They strove to steal a dog--the fattest, which was very thin--but I shoved my pistol in their faces and told them begone. And they went away, like drunken men, through the Silence toward Pelly.

“I had three dogs now, and one sled, and the dogs were only bones and hair. When there is little wood, the fire burns low and the cabin grows cold. So with us. With little grub the frost bites sharp, and our faces were black and frozen till our own mothers would not have known us. And our feet were very sore. In the morning, when I hit the trail, I sweated to keep down the cry when the pain of the snowshoes smote me. Passuk never opened her lips, but stepped to the fore to break the way. The man howled.

“The Thirty Mile was swift, and the current ate away the ice from beneath, and there were many air-holes and cracks, and much open water. One day we came upon the man, resting, for he had gone ahead, as was his wont, in the morning. But between us was open water. This he had passed around by taking to the rim-ice where it was too narrow for a sled. So we found an ice-bridge. Passuk weighed little, and went first, with a long pole crosswise in her hands in chance she broke through. But she was light, and her shoes large, and she passed over. Then she called the dogs. But they had neither poles nor shoes, and they broke through and were swept under by the water. I held tight to the sled from behind, till the traces broke and the dogs went on down under the ice. There was little meat to them, but I had counted on them for a week’s grub, and they were gone.

“The next morning I divided all the grub, which was little, into three portions. And I told Long Jeff that he could keep up with us, or not, as he saw fit; for we were going to travel light and fast. But he raised his voice and cried over his sore feet and his troubles, and said harsh things against comradeship. Passuk’s feet were sore, and my feet were sore--ay, sorer than his, for we had worked with the dogs; also, we looked to see. Long Jeff swore he would die before he hit the trail again; so Passuk took a fur robe, and I a cooking pot and an axe, and we made ready to go. But she looked on the man's portion, and said, 'It is wrong to waste good food on a baby. He is better dead.' I shook my head and said no--that a comrade once was a comrade always. Then she spoke of the men of Forty Mile; that they were many men and good; and that they looked to me for grub in the spring. But when I still said no, she snatched the pistol from my belt, quick, and as our brother Bettles has spoken, Long Jeff went to the bosom of Abraham before his time. I chided Passuk for this; but she showed no sorrow, nor was she sorrowful. And in my heart I knew she was right."

Sitka Charley paused and threw pieces of ice into the gold pan on the stove. The men were silent, and their backs chilled to the sobbing cries of the dogs as they gave tongue to their misery in the outer cold.

"And day by day we passed in the snow the sleeping-places of the two ghosts--Passuk and I--and we knew we would be glad for such ere we made Salt Water. Then we came to the Indian, like another ghost, with his face set toward Pelly. They had not whacked up fair, the man and the boy, he said, and he had had no flour for three days. Each night he boiled pieces of his moccasins in a cup, and ate them. He did not have much moccasins left. And he was a Coast Indian, and told us these things through Passuk, who talked his tongue. He was a stranger in the Yukon, and he knew not the way, but his face was set to Pelly. How far was it? Two sleeps? ten? a hundred--he did not know, but he was going to Pelly. It was too far to turn back; he could only keep on.

"He did not ask for grub, for he could see we, too, were hard put. Passuk looked at the man, and at me, as though she were of two minds, like a mother partridge whose young are in trouble. So I turned to her and said, 'This man has been dealt unfair. Shall I give him of our grub a portion?' I saw her eyes light, as with quick pleasure; but she looked long at the man and at me, and her mouth drew close and hard, and she said, 'No. The Salt Water is afar off, and Death lies in wait. Better it is that he take this stranger man and let my man Charley pass.' So the man went away in the Silence toward Pelly. That night she wept. Never had I seen her weep before. Nor was it the smoke of the fire, for the wood was dry wood. So I marveled at her sorrow, and thought her woman's heart had grown soft at the darkness of the trail and the pain.

"Life is a strange thing. Much have I thought on it, and pondered long, yet daily the strangeness of it grows not less, but more. Why this longing for Life? It is a game which no man wins. To live is to toil hard, and to suffer sore, till Old Age creeps heavily upon us and we throw down our hands on the cold ashes of dead fires. It is hard to live. In pain the babe sucks his first breath, in pain the old man gasps his last, and all his days are full of trouble and sorrow; yet he goes down to the open arms of Death, stumbling, falling, with head turned backward, fighting to the last. And Death is kind. It is only Life, and the things of Life that hurt. Yet we love Life, and we hate Death. It is very strange.

"We spoke little, Passuk and I, in the days which came. In the night we lay in the snow like dead people, and in the morning we went on our way, walking like dead people. And all things were dead. There were no ptarmigan, no squirrels, no snowshoe rabbits,--nothing. The river made no sound beneath its white robes. The sap was frozen in the forest. And it became cold, as now; and in the night the stars drew near and large, and leaped and danced; and in the day the sun-dogs mocked us till we saw many suns, and all the air flashed and sparkled, and the snow was diamond dust. And there was no heat, no sound, only the bitter cold and the Silence. As I say, we walked like dead people, as in a dream, and we kept no count of time. Only our faces were set to Salt Water, our souls strained for Salt Water, and our feet carried us toward Salt Water. We camped by the Tahkeena, and knew it not. Our eyes looked upon the White Horse, but we saw it not. Our feet trod the portage of the Canyon, but they felt it not. We felt nothing. And we fell often by the way, but we fell, always, with our faces toward Salt Water.

"Our last grub went, and we had shared fair, Passuk and I, but she fell more often, and at Caribou Crossing her strength left her. And in the morning we lay beneath the one robe and did not take the trail. It was in my mind to stay there and meet Death hand-in-hand with Passuk; for I had grown old, and had learned the love of woman. Also, it was eighty miles to Haines Mission, and the great Chilcoot, far above the timber-line, reared his storm-swept head between. But Passuk spoke to me, low, with my ear against her lips that I might hear. And now, because she need not fear my anger, she spoke her heart, and told me of her love, and of many things which I did not understand.

“And she said: ‘You are my man, Charley, and I have been a good woman to you. And in all the days I have made your fire, and cooked your food, and fed your dogs, and lifted paddle or broken trail, I have not complained. Nor did I say that there was more warmth in the lodge of my father, or that there was more grub on the Chilcat. When you have spoken, I have listened. When you have ordered, I have obeyed. Is it not so, Charley?’

“And I said: ‘Ay, it is so.’

“And she said: ‘When first you came to the Chilcat, nor looked upon me, but bought me as a man buys a dog, and took me away, my heart was hard against you and filled with bitterness and fear. But that was long ago. For you were kind to me, Charley, as a good man is kind to his dog. Your heart was cold, and there was no room for me; yet you dealt me fair and your ways were just. And I was with you when you did bold deeds and led great ventures, and I measured you against the men of other breeds, and I saw you stood among them full of honor, and your word was wise, your tongue true. And I grew proud of you, till it came that you filled all my heart, and all my thought was of you. You were as the midsummer sun, when its golden trail runs in a circle and never leaves the sky. And whatever way I cast my eyes I beheld the sun. But your heart was ever cold, Charley, and there was no room.’

“And I said: ‘It is so. It was cold, and there was no room. But that is past. Now my heart is like the snowfall in the spring, when the sun has come back. There is a great thaw and a bending, a sound of running waters, and a budding and sprouting of green things. And there is drumming of partridges, and songs of robins, and great music, for the winter is broken, Passuk, and I have learned the love of woman.’

“She smiled and moved for me to draw her closer. And she said, ‘I am glad.’ After that she lay quiet for a long time, breathing softly, her head upon my breast. Then she whispered: ‘The trail ends here, and I am tired. But first I would speak of other things. In the long ago, when I was a girl on the Chilcat, I played alone among the skin bales of my father’s lodge; for the men were away on the hunt, and the women and boys were dragging in the meat. It was in the spring, and I was alone. A great brown bear, just awake from his winter’s sleep, hungry, his fur hanging to the bones in flaps of leanness, shoved his head within the lodge and said, “Oof!” My brother came running back with the first sled of meat. And he fought the bear with burning sticks from the fire, and the dogs in their harnesses, with the sled behind them, fell upon the bear. There was a great battle and much noise. They rolled in the fire, the skin bales were scattered, the lodge overthrown. But in the end the bear lay dead, with the fingers of my brother in his mouth and the marks of his claws upon my brother's face. Did you mark the Indian by the Pelly trail, his mitten which had no thumb, his hand which he warmed by our fire? He was my brother. And I said he should have no grub. And he went away in the Silence without grub.'

"This, my brothers, was the love of Passuk, who died in the snow, by the Caribou Crossing. It was a mighty love, for she denied her brother for the man who led her away on weary trails to a bitter end. And, further, such was this woman's love, she denied herself. Ere her eyes closed for the last time she took my hand and slipped it under her squirrel-skin parka to her waist. I felt there a well-filled pouch, and learned the secret of her lost strength. Day by day we had shared fair, to the last least bit; and day by day but half her share had she eaten. The other half had gone into the well-filled pouch.

"And she said: 'This is the end of the trail for Passuk; but your trail, Charley, leads on and on, over the great Chilcoot, down to Haines Mission and the sea. And it leads on and on, by the light of many suns, over unknown lands and strange waters, and it is full of years and honors and great glories. It leads you to the lodges of many women, and good women, but it will never lead you to a greater love than the love of Passuk.'

"And I knew the woman spoke true. But a madness came upon me, and I threw the well-filled pouch from me, and swore that my trail had reached an end, till her tired eyes grew soft with tears, and she said: 'Among men has Sitka Charley walked in honor, and ever has his word been true. Does he forget that honor now, and talk vain words by the Caribou Crossing? Does he remember no more the men of Forty Mile, who gave him of their grub the best, of their dogs the pick? Ever has Passuk been proud of her man. Let him lift himself up, gird on his snow-shoes, and begone, that she may still keep her pride.'

"And when she grew cold in my arms I arose, and sought out the well-filled pouch, and girt on my snowshoes, and staggered along the trail; for there was a weakness in my knees, and my head was dizzy, and in my ears there was a roaring, and a flashing of fire upon my eyes. The forgotten trails of boyhood came back to me. I sat by the full pots of the potlach feast, and raised my voice in song, and danced to the chanting of the men and maidens and the booming of the walrus drums. And Passuk held my hand and walked by my side. When I laid down to sleep, she waked me. When I stumbled and fell, she raised me. When I wandered in the deep snow, she led me back to the trail. And in this wise, like a man bereft of reason, who sees strange visions and whose thoughts are light with wine, I came to Haines Mission by the sea."

Sitka Charley threw back the tent-flaps. It was midday. To the south, just clearing the bleak Henderson Divide, poised the cold-disked sun. On either hand the sun-dogs blazed. The air was a gossamer of glittering frost. In the foreground, beside the trail, a wolf-dog, bristling with frost, thrust a long snout heavenward and mourned.

The Handsome Cabin Boy

"And the dapper young fellow was — "

"None other than the veiled woman, of course."

"O, pshaw!" I cried. "That's well enough for a Sunday newspaper, but in real life people are not so easily misled."

"Look at the authentic instances — women serving as soldiers, sailors, scouts — "

"Bosh!"

"Why, there's my little brother Bob, as clever an impersonator — "

"Bosh!"

"People are fooled every day and — "

"Stuff and nonsense," I said. "Any one but a ninny should penetrate such a make-up at a glance. I don't think much of a fellow who can't tell a man from a woman. Catch me napping that way."

"I'll catch you," cried Jack.

"I like that," was my reply.

"I'll wager I fool you within six months."

"Done! For how much?"

"The loser to foot a supper; the setting, ordering, and inviting of the same to be at the winner's discretion."

"Done!"

We shook hands, and the fellows crowded round with all sorts of advice and persiflage. Thus was the seed sown, out of which was to spring the never-to-be-forgotten romance of "The Handsome Cabin Boy."

The succeeding fortnight found me in solitary grandeur aboard my schooner yacht Falcon, bound for a short cruise to Honolulu. We had hardly sunk the Farralone Light, when my suspicions were aroused. From the cook to the sailing-master complaints began to pour in about the new cabin boy. They held he was willing enough, but worthless. At the last moment, Billy, the old boy, had left us in the lurch, and my agent, to whom all such matters were entrusted, had hastily procured the present incumbent.

As they said, he was willing enough, but — in short, he was ignorant of his duties and totally unfit for such a position. Yet he tried so hard that everybody was drawn toward him. And he was such a handsome lad. Dark-eyed, rosy-cheeked, with a delicate olive complexion and an exquisite oval

— small wonder that he recalled to my mind the bet with Jack Haliday. And then, for the slender lad of fifteen or sixteen that he appeared, there was a vague, insinuating fullness about the figure, which did not fail to corroborate my suspicions.

But I held my hush and awaited confirmation. This came sooner than I expected. The sailing-master and myself were on the poop, one noon, with our sextants, bent on shooting the sun. The lad came up the companionway with a pan of soot and ashes; he had just cleaned the cabin stove. Instead of going to the lee, he stepped to the weather rail and let fly the refuse. And fly it did — backwards, of course, and all over us.

Digging a handful out of his eyes, the sailing-master grabbed the young rascal by the arm. Now Nelson was a rough son of the sea, and had a mellifluous command of the vernacular which serves for emphasis to those who sail the same. He shook him up and down and cursed him with as virile a combination of English and Scandinavian oaths as was ever my luck to hear.

The boy lost his wits and began to cry. Picking up the pan, he started for the cabin, but just opposite me, reeled and toppled over. I caught him before he could fall, and — well, my arm had strayed in forbidden pastures too often to be mistaken now.

“Why, you’re a girl!” I cried.

The man at the wheel began to snicker, so I hurried her below to save her from confusion before the men. There she cried, and sobbed, and carried on, till I was almost as distracted myself, in my efforts to soothe her. At last she calmed down.

“O, sir,” she began, “I hope you won’t be angry with me. I — he — Mr. — ”

“It’s Jack Haliday’s doing, isn’t it?” I interrupted.

“Yes, sir.”

“Then you know all about the bet, and you’ll have to testify that I discovered your — er — identity.”

“Yes, sir, and he’ll be angry because I lost. Boo — hoo — oo — ”

“O, you did very well.” I thought she needed a little cheering. “The cook would never have discovered — say! how the deuce — you’ll have to change your — ”

It was indeed embarrassing for both of us. And that blundering cook had never tumbled! I called him into the cabin.

"Tell off that German deck boy to help you," I ordered. "And go to your room and pack up Miss — er — "

"E — E — Eastman," sobbed the disconsolate bundle on the floor.

"And pack up Miss Eastman's belongings. Take them to the spare stateroom, and make everything comfortable. I'll see you get extra pay for this trip. Go! Don't stand there all day!" I could not help laughing at his round-eyed wonder.

"I don't know what to do in the way of suitable clothes," I said, as she entered her new berth in the wake of a trim little sea-chest.

"That's all right, sir," she replied, between her sobs. "I b — brought some dresses along."

"Strike me blind!" cried the cook, as the door shut. "O, I beg your pardon, sir; but do you mean to tell me, sir, that he's a — a she? Think of it! — and me a married man! What'll my wife say?"

Though I tried to explain that there was no necessity of his wife knowing, he wandered away to the galley, more woe-begone, if anything, than the poor creature who had caused his distress. Still, I could sympathize with him, realizing as I did, my own false position, and knowing how the sailors must be haw-hawing among themselves.

Dinner was sent into her, and it was not till next morning that she showed herself. And then it was a demure little maid, for all her short brown locks. It seemed a pity they had been clipped for the sake of a paltry bet.

"What will your people say?" I asked, in the course of explanations. "Do they know?"

"My brother does. I came with his consent."

"Your brother's a scoundrel and ought to be horse-whipped. It's disgraceful, to say the least."

"How?"

This was a poser. How? I began to comprehend the mess Jack Haliday had got me into. How? What innocence!

"You must have been brought up in a convent," I said bluntly.

"Yes, sir; I went to the Sacred Heart until a year ago."

Worse and worse — it was no light responsibility thus thrust upon me. I finally wormed her story from her. She had lost her mother during her childhood, and her father, a small tradesman, had educated her at the Convent of the Sacred Heart. Things had gone from bad to worse with him, and when he died, she and her brother were left penniless. To curtail the story: they had become protégés of Haliday's. She had shown an aptitude for the stage, and Haliday encouraged her, prophesying that some day the metropolitan vaudeville would open its arms to a soubrette of no mean ability.

"And when he asked this favor of me," she concluded, "what could I do? Refuse, after all he had done for me?"

Well, the yacht took on new life. Strange how this chit of a child, this girl of sixteen, brightened things up! She became the idol of all hands and even Nelson apologized — first time the stubborn dog ever did such a thing, I'll wager. She could play the piano fairly well, and though her voice was not strong and had no register, her singing was sweet indeed.

When we arrived at Honolulu, I was for making arrangements to send her back by steamer; but the guileless creature would not hear of it, and looked so miserable when I insisted, that I gave in. Besides, nobody knew us. And she — why, she had no conception of evil, and to undeceive her was a task beyond my power. I supplied her with funds, and she soon had a stunning array of gowns and other female fripperies. Then we took in the concerts of the Hawaiian Band, made long drives into the country, and visited many places of interest and recreation. We had a delightful time; but the best of good things must end, and a month later found us off the Golden Gate. To-morrow we should be in San-Francisco.

To-morrow — I half sighed as I lighted a cigar, and glanced at her stateroom door. What were her dreams, I wondered. Then I thought of my long, lonely cruises. How bright this one had been! Life took on new possibilities, as I began to realize some of its hitherto unknown charms — charms which my benedict friends never ceased to dwell upon. How she had changed things! A neatly turned ankle on the cabin stairs, a twinkling slipper along the deck, a girl's light laughter, a song at twilight, a — in short, the ineffable something of a woman's presence. I was startled at the thought. Let me see: sixteen — twenty-six; nineteen — twenty-nine; no, that would be too long to wait, eighteen — twenty-eight — that's it. And not such a disparity after all. Two years! What would not two years do? Development, the rounding of that mind — aye, and that form, already so rich of promise. Two years, and then —

"Eight bells!"

The clamor of changing watch had destroyed the fairy pictures; so I tossed away my cigar and went to bed.

Jack Haliday and the whole crowd were at the club-house pier to meet us. Evidently, the lookout of the Merchants' Exchange had telegraphed our arrival off the Heads the previous night. They trooped aboard in a body, and I trembled for Miss Eastman. However, Clara, as I had come to call her, faced the ordeal bravely. The subdued expectancy and smothered giggles angered me. Jack Haliday opened the ball at once.

"I say, you know, about that supper — "

"What about it?" I asked sharply.

"Well, I've made all the plans, but I thought it better to submit them to you. You might make a few suggestions, you know."

"You've made all the plans!" I shouted. "I have an idea that the ordering of this supper belongs to me."

"Ha! ha! ha!" Everybody began to laugh.

"Hope you had a pleasant trip, Miss Eastman," he said, turning to her.

"O, I did," she assured him, though I could see her lips were trembling.

"How did you discover it?" he asked, addressing me.

"Why she fainted in my arms, and — "

"ho! ho! He! he! he!" the crowd fairly roared, and I beamed triumphantly on my discomfited opponent.

"Was he angry?" continued the imperturbable Haliday.

"No," Clara replied, "he was real nice. And when we got to Honolulu he wanted to send me home on the steamer, but I wouldn't let him. Then we had a gorgeous time — bought me candy and gloves, took me buggy riding, and — "

With this the crowd went mad. They slapped Jack on the shoulder, poked him in the ribs, and hugged each other in ecstasies of glee.

"Why, you ninny!" Jack cried. "That's my brother Bob."

"Impossible," I rejoined. "Why, when she fainted in my arms, I — "

At this juncture speech failed me, for the modest Miss Eastman turned a couple of back-flips, came up smiling, thrust a hand into her maidenly bosom and drew forth — heavens! — a couple of pneumatic cushions, the kind used by football players.

It were needless for me to tell how I led the stampede to the club-house; how the supper came off, with Bob Haliday at the head of the table; or how, to this day, the mere mention of "The Handsome Cabin Boy" arouses a certain choler which I can never hope to overcome.

The Hanging of Cultus George

THE way led steeply up through deep, powdery snow that was unmarred by sled-track or moccasin impression. Smoke, in the lead, pressed the fragile crystals down under his fat, short snow-shoes. The task required lungs and muscle, and he flung himself into it with all his strength. Behind, on the surface he packed, strained the string of six dogs, the steam-jets of their breathing attesting their labor and the lowness of the temperature. Between the wheel-dog and the sled toiled Shorty, his weight divided between the guiding gee-pole and the haul, for he was pulling with the dogs. Every half-hour he and Smoke exchanged places, for the snow-shoe work was even more arduous than that of the gee-pole.

The whole outfit was fresh and strong. It was merely hard work being efficiently done--the breaking of a midwinter trail across a divide. On this severe stretch, ten miles a day they called a decent stint. They kept in condition, but each night crawled well tired into their sleeping-furs. This was their sixth day out from the lively camp of Mucluc on the Yukon. In two days, with the loaded sled, they had covered the fifty miles of packed trail up Moose Creek. Then had come the struggle with the four feet of untouched snow that was really not snow, but frost-crystals, so lacking in cohesion that when kicked it flew with the thin hissing of granulated sugar. In three days they had wallowed thirty miles up Minnow Creek and across the series of low divides that separate the several creeks flowing south into Siwash River; and now they were breasting the big divide, past the Bald Buttes, where the way would lead them down Porcupine Creek to the middle reaches of Milk River. Higher up Milk River, it was fairly rumored, were deposits of copper. And this was their goal--a hill of pure copper, half a mile to the right and up the first creek after Milk River issued from a deep gorge to flow across a heavily timbered stretch of bottom. They would know it when they saw it. One-Eyed McCarthy had described it with sharp definiteness. It was impossible to miss it--unless McCarthy had lied.

Smoke was in the lead, and the small scattered spruce-trees were becoming scarcer and smaller, when he saw one, dead and bone-dry, that stood in their path. There was no need for speech. His glance to Shorty was acknowledged by a stentorian “Whoa!” The dogs stood in the traces till they saw Shorty begin to undo the sled-lashings and Smoke attack the dead spruce with an ax; whereupon the animals dropped in the snow and curled into balls, the bush of each tail curved to cover four padded feet and an ice-rimmed muzzle.

The men worked with the quickness of long practice. Gold-pan, coffee-pot, and cooking-pail were soon thawing the heaped frost-crystals into water. Smoke extracted a stick of beans from the sled. Already cooked, with a generous admixture of cubes of fat pork and bacon, the beans had been frozen into this portable immediacy. He chopped off chunks with an ax, as if it were so much firewood, and put them into the frying-pan to thaw. Solidly frozen sourdough biscuits were likewise placed to thaw. In twenty minutes from the time they halted, the meal was ready to eat.

“About forty below,” Shorty mumbled through a mouthful of beans. “Say--I hope it don’t get colder--or warmer, neither. It’s just right for trail breaking.”

Smoke did not answer. His own mouth full of beans, his jaws working, he had chanced to glance at the lead-dog, lying half a dozen feet away. That gray and frosty wolf was gazing at him with the infinite wistfulness and yearning that glimmers and hazes so often in the eyes of Northland dogs. Smoke knew it well, but never got over the unfathomable wonder of it. As if to shake off the hypnotism, he set down his plate and coffee-cup, went to the sled, and began opening the dried-fish sack.

“Hey!” Shorty expostulated. “What ‘r’ you doin’?”

“Breaking all law, custom, precedent, and trail usage,” Smoke replied. “I’m going to feed the dogs in the middle of the day--just this once. They’ve worked hard, and that last pull to the top of the divide is before them. Besides, Bright there has been talking to me, telling me all untellable things with those eyes of his.”

Shorty laughed skeptically. “Go on an’ spoil ‘em. Pretty soon you’ll be manicurin’ their nails. I’d recommend cold cream and electric massage--it’s great for sled-dogs. And sometimes a Turkish bath does ‘em fine.”

“I’ve never done it before,” Smoke defended. “And I won’t again. But this once I’m going to. It’s just a whim, I guess.”

“Oh, if it’s a hunch, go to it.” Shorty’s tones showed how immediately he had been mollified. “A man’s always got to follow his hunches.”

“It isn’t a hunch, Shorty. Bright just sort of got on my imagination for a couple of twists. He told me more in one minute with those eyes of his than I could read in the books in a thousand years. His eyes were acrawl with the secrets of life. They were just squirming and wriggling there. The trouble is I almost got them, and then I didn't. I'm no wiser than I was before, but I was near them." He paused and then added, "I can't tell you, but that dog's eyes were just spilling over with cues to what life is, and evolution, and star-dust, and cosmic sap, and all the rest--everything."

"Boiled down into simple American, you got a hunch," Shorty insisted.

Smoke finished tossing the dried salmon, one to each dog, and shook his head.

"I tell you yes," Shorty argued. "Smoke, it's a sure hunch. Something's goin' to happen before the day is out. You'll see. And them dried fish'll have a bearin'."

"You've got to show me," said Smoke.

"No, I ain't. The day'll take care of itself an' show you. Now listen to what I'm tellin' you. I got a hunch myself out of your hunch. I'll bet eleven ounces against three ornery toothpicks I'm right. When I get a hunch I ain't a-scared to ride it."

"You bet the toothpicks, and I'll bet the ounces," Smoke returned.

"Nope. That'd be plain robbery. I win. I know a hunch when it tickles me. Before the day's out somethin' 'll happen, an' them fish'll have a meanin'."

"Hell," said Smoke, dismissing the discussion contemptuously.

"An' it'll be hell," Shorty came back. "An' I'll take three more toothpicks with you on them same odds that it'll be sure-enough hell."

"Done," said Smoke.

"I win," Shorty exulted. "Chicken-feather toothpicks for mine."

An hour later they cleared the divide, dipped down past the Bald Buttes through a sharp elbow-canyon, and took the steep open slope that dropped into Porcupine Creek. Shorty, in the lead, stopped abruptly, and Smoke whoaed the dogs. Beneath them, coming up, was a procession of humans, scattered and draggled, a quarter of a mile long.

"They move like it was a funeral," Shorty noted.

"They've no dogs," said Smoke.

"Yep; there's a couple of men pullin' on a sled."

"See that fellow fall down? There's something the matter, Shorty, and there must be two hundred of them."

"Look at 'em stagger as if they was soused. There goes another."

"It's a whole tribe. There are children there."

“Smoke, I win,” Shorty proclaimed. “A hunch is a hunch, an’ you can’t beat it. There she comes. Look at her!--surgin’ up like a lot of corpses.”

The mass of Indians, at sight of the two men, had raised a weird cry of joy and accelerated its pace.

“They’re sure tolerable woozy,” commented Shorty. “See ‘em fallin’ down in lumps and bunches.”

“Look at the face of that first one,” Smoke said. “It’s starvation--that’s what’s the matter with them. They’ve eaten their dogs.”

“What’ll we do? Run for it?”

“And leave the sled and dogs?” Smoke demanded reproachfully.

“They’ll sure eat us if we don’t. They look hungry enough for it. Hello, old skeeziks. What’s wrong with you? Don’t look at that dog that way. No cookin’-pot for him--savvy?”

The forerunners were arriving and crowding about them, moaning and plainting in an unfamiliar jargon. To Smoke the picture was grotesque and horrible. It was famine unmistakable. Their faces, hollow-cheeked and skin-stretched, were so many death’s-heads. More and more arrived and crowded about, until Smoke and Shorty were hemmed in by the wild crew. Their ragged garments of skin and fur were cut and slashed away, and Smoke knew the reason for it when he saw a wizened child on a squaw’s back that sucked and chewed a strip of filthy fur. Another child he observed steadily masticating a leather thong.

“Keep off there!--keep back!” Shorty yelled, falling back on English after futile attempts with the little Indian he did know.

Bucks and squaws and children tottered and swayed on shaking legs and continued to surge in, their mad eyes swimming with weakness and burning with ravenous desire. A woman, moaning, staggered past Shorty and fell with spread and grasping arms on the sled. An old man followed her, panting and gasping, with trembling hands striving to cast off the sled lashings, and get at the grub-sacks beneath. A young man, with a naked knife, tried to rush in, but was flung back by Smoke. The whole mass pressed in upon them, and the fight was on.

At first Smoke and Shorty shoved and thrust and threw back. Then they used the butt of the dog-whip and their fists on the food-mad crowd. And all this against a background of moaning and wailing women and children. Here and there, in a dozen places, the sled-lashings were cut. Men crawled in on their bellies, regardless of a rain of kicks and blows, and tried to drag out the grub. These had to be picked up bodily and flung back. And such was their weakness that they fell continually, under the slightest pressures or shoves. Yet they made no attempt to injure the two men who defended the sled.

It was the utter weakness of the Indians that saved Smoke and Shorty from being overborne. In five minutes the wall of up-standing, on-struggling Indians had been changed to heaps of fallen ones that moaned and gibbered in the snow, and cried and sniveled as their staring, swimming eyes focused on the grub that meant life to them and that brought the slaver to their lips. And behind it all arose the wailing of the women and children.

“Shut up! Oh, shut up!” Shorty yelled, thrusting his fingers into his ears and breathing heavily from his exertions. “Ah, you would, would you!” was his cry as he lunged forward and kicked a knife from the hand of a man who, bellying through the snow, was trying to stab the lead-dog in the throat.

“This is terrible,” Smoke muttered.

“I’m all het up,” Shorty replied, returning from the rescue of Bright. “I’m real sweaty. An’ now what ‘r’ we goin’ to do with this ambulance outfit?”

Smoke shook his head, and then the problem was solved for him. An Indian crawled forward, his one eye fixed on Smoke instead of on the sled, and in it Smoke could see the struggle of sanity to assert itself. Shorty remembered having punched the other eye, which was already swollen shut. The Indian raised himself on his elbow and spoke.

“Me Carluk. Me good Siwash. Me savvy Boston man plenty. Me plenty hungry. All people plenty hungry. All people no savvy Boston man. Me savvy. Me eat grub now. All people eat grub now. We buy ‘m grub. Got ‘m plenty gold. No got ‘m grub. Summer, salmon no come Milk River. Winter, caribou no come. No grub. Me make ‘m talk all people. Me tell ‘em plenty Boston man come Yukon. Boston man have plenty grub. Boston man like ‘m gold. We take ‘m gold, go Yukon, Boston man give ‘m grub. Plenty gold. Me savvy Boston man like ‘m gold.”

He began fumbling with wasted fingers at the draw-string of a pouch he took from his belt.

“Too much make ‘m noise,” Shorty broke in distractedly. “You tell ‘m squaw, you tell ‘m papoose, shut ‘m up mouth.”

Carluk turned and addressed the wailing women. Other bucks, listening, raised their voices authoritatively, and slowly the squaws stilled, and quieted the children near to them. Carluk paused from fumbling the drawstring and held up his fingers many times.

"Him people make 'm die," he said.

And Smoke, following the count, knew that seventy-five of the tribe had starved to death.

"Me buy 'm grub," Carluk said, as he got the pouch open and drew out a large chunk of heavy metal. Others were following his example, and on every side appeared similar chunks. Shorty stared.

"Great Jeminey!" he cried. "Copper! Raw, red copper! An' they think it's gold!"

"Him gold," Carluk assured them confidently, his quick comprehension having caught the gist of Shorty's exclamation.

"And the poor devils banked everything on it," Smoke muttered. "Look at it. That chunk there weighs forty pounds. They've got hundreds of pounds of it, and they've carried it when they didn't have strength enough to drag themselves. Look here, Shorty. We've got to feed them."

"Huh! Sounds easy. But how about statistics? You an' me has a month's grub, which is six meals times thirty, which is one hundred an' eighty meals. Here's two hundred Indians, with real, full-grown appetites. How the blazes can we give 'm one meal even?"

"There's the dog-grub," Smoke answered. "A couple of hundred pounds of dried salmon ought to help out. We've got to do it. They've pinned their faith on the white man, you know."

"Sure, an' we can't throw 'm down," Shorty agreed. "An' we got two nasty jobs cut out for us, each just about twicet as nasty as the other. One of us has got to make a run of it to Mucluc an' raise a relief. The other has to stay here an' run the hospital an' most likely be eaten. Don't let it slip your noodle that we've been six days gettin' here; an' travelin' light, an' all played out, it can't be made back in less 'n three days."

For a minute Smoke pondered the miles of the way they had come, visioning the miles in terms of time measured by his capacity for exertion. "I can get there to-morrow night," he announced.

"All right," Shorty acquiesced cheerfully. "An' I'll stay an' be eaten."

"But I'm going to take one fish each for the dogs," Smoke explained, "and one meal for myself."

"An' you'll sure need it if you make Mucluc to-morrow night."

Smoke, through the medium of Carluk, stated the program. “Make fires, long fires, plenty fires,” he concluded. “Plenty Boston man stop Mucluc. Boston man much good. Boston man plenty grub. Five sleeps I come back plenty grub. This man, his name Shorty, very good friend of mine. He stop here. He big boss--savvy?”

Carluk nodded and interpreted.

“All grub stop here. Shorty, he give ‘m grub. He boss--savvy?”

Carluk interpreted, and nods and guttural cries of agreement proceeded from the men.

Smoke remained and managed until the full swing of the arrangement was under way. Those who were able, crawled or staggered in the collecting of firewood. Long, Indian fires were built that accommodated all. Shorty, aided by a dozen assistants, with a short club handy for the rapping of hungry knuckles, plunged into the cooking. The women devoted themselves to thawing snow in every utensil that could be mustered. First, a tiny piece of bacon was distributed all around, and, next, a spoonful of sugar to cloy the edge of their razor appetites. Soon, on a circle of fires drawn about Shorty, many pots of beans were boiling, and he, with a wrathful eye for what he called renigers, was frying and apportioning the thinnest of flapjacks.

“Me for the big cookin’,” was his farewell to Smoke. “You just keep a-hikin’. Trot all the way there an’ run all the way back. It’ll take you to-day an’ to-morrow to get there, and you can’t be back inside of three days more. To-morrow they’ll eat the last of the dog-fish, an’ then there’ll be nary a scrap for three days. You gotta keep a-comin’, Smoke. You gotta keep a-comin’.”

Though the sled was light, loaded only with six dried salmon, a couple of pounds of frozen beans and bacon, and a sleeping-robe, Smoke could not make speed. Instead of riding the sled and running the dogs, he was compelled to plod at the gee-pole. Also, a day of work had already been done, and the freshness and spring had gone out of the dogs and himself. The long arctic twilight was on when he cleared the divide and left the Bald Buttes behind.

Down the slope better time was accomplished, and often he was able to spring on the sled for short intervals and get an exhausting six-mile clip out of the animals. Darkness caught him and fooled him in a wide-valleyed, nameless creek. Here the creek wandered in broad horseshoe curves through the flats, and here, to save time, he began short-cutting the flats instead of keeping to the creek-bed. And black dark found him back on the creek-bed feeling for the trail. After an hour of futile searching, too wise to go farther astray, he built a fire, fed each dog half a fish, and divided his own ration in half. Rolled in his robe, ere quick sleep came he had solved the problem. The last big flat he had short-cut was the one that occurred at the forks of the creek. He had missed the trail by a mile. He was now on the main stream and below where his and Shorty's trail crossed the valley and climbed through a small feeder to the low divide on the other side.

At the first hint of daylight he got under way, breakfastless, and wallowed a mile upstream to pick up the trail. And breakfastless, man and dogs, without a halt, for eight hours held back transversely across the series of small creeks and low divides and down Minnow Creek. By four in the afternoon, with darkness fast-set about him, he emerged on the hard-packed, running trail of Moose Creek. Fifty miles of it would end the journey. He called a rest, built a fire, threw each dog its half-salmon, and thawed and ate his pound of beans. Then he sprang on the sled, yelled, "Mush!" and the dogs went out strongly against their breast-bands.

"Hit her up, you huskies!" he cried. "Mush on! Hit her up for grub! And no grub short of Mucluc! Dig in, you wolves! Dig in!"

Midnight had gone a quarter of an hour in the Annie Mine. The main room was comfortably crowded, while roaring stoves, combined with lack of ventilation, kept the big room unsanitarily warm. The click of chips and the boisterous play at the craps-table furnished a monotonous background of sound to the equally monotonous rumble of men's voices where they sat and stood about and talked in groups and twos and threes. The gold-weighers were busy at their scales, for dust was the circulating medium, and even a dollar drink of whiskey at the bar had to be paid for to the weighers.

The walls of the room were of tiered logs, the bark still on, and the chinking between the logs, plainly visible, was arctic moss. Through the open door that led to the dance-room came the rollicking strains of a Virginia reel, played by a piano and a fiddle. The drawing of Chinese lottery had just taken place, and the luckiest player, having cashed at the scales, was drinking up his winnings with half a dozen cronies. The faro-and roulette-tables were busy and quiet. The draw-poker and stud-poker tables, each with its circle of onlookers, were equally quiet. At another table, a serious, concentrated game of Black Jack was on. Only from the craps-table came noise, as the man who played rolled the dice, full sweep, down the green amphitheater of a table in pursuit of his elusive and long-delayed point. Ever he cried: “Oh! you Joe Cotton! Come a four! Come a Joe! Little Joe! Bring home the bacon, Joe! Joe, you Joe, you!”

Cultus George, a big strapping Circle City Indian, leaned distantly and dourly against the log wall. He was a civilized Indian, if living like a white man connotes civilization; and he was sorely offended, though the offense was of long standing. For years he had done a white man’s work, had done it alongside of white men, and often had done it better than they did. He wore the same pants they wore, the same hearty woolens and heavy shirts. He sported as good a watch as they, parted his short hair on the side, and ate the same food--bacon, beans, and flour; and yet he was denied their greatest diversion and reward; namely, whiskey. Cultus George was a money-earner. He had staked claims, and bought and sold claims. He had been grub-staked, and he had accorded grub-stakes. Just now he was a dog-musher and freighter, charging twenty-eight cents a pound for the winter haul from Sixty Mile to Mucluc--and for bacon thirty-three cents, as was the custom. His poke was fat with dust. He had the price of many drinks. Yet no barkeeper would serve him. Whiskey, the hottest, swiftest, completest gratifier of civilization, was not for him. Only by subterranean and cowardly and expensive ways could he get a drink. And he resented this invidious distinction, as he had resented it for years, deeply. And he was especially thirsty and resentful this night, while the white men he had so sedulously emulated he hated more bitterly than ever before. The white men would graciously permit him to lose his gold across their gaming-tables, but for neither love nor money could he obtain a drink across their bars. Wherefore he was very sober, and very logical, and logically sullen.

The Virginia reel in the dance-room wound to a wild close that interfered not with the three camp drunkards who snored under the piano. “All couples promenade to the bar!” was the caller’s last cry as the music stopped. And the couples were so promenading through the wide doorway into the main room--the men in furs and moccasins, the women in soft fluffy dresses, silk stockings, and dancing-slippers--when the double storm-doors were thrust open, and Smoke Bellew staggered wearily in.

Eyes centered on him, and silence began to fall. He tried to speak, pulled off his mittens (which fell dangling from their cords), and clawed at the frozen moisture of his breath which had formed in fifty miles of running.

He halted irresolutely, then went over and leaned his elbow on the end of the bar.

Only the man at the craps-table, without turning his head, continued to roll the dice and to cry: “Oh! you Joe! Come on, you Joe!” The gamekeeper’s gaze, fixed on Smoke, caught the player’s attention, and he, too, with suspended dice, turned and looked.

“What’s up, Smoke?” Matson, the owner of the Annie Mine, demanded.

With a last effort, Smoke clawed his mouth free. “I got some dogs out there--dead beat,” he said huskily. “Somebody go and take care of them, and I’ll tell you what’s the matter.”

In a dozen brief sentences, he outlined the situation. The craps-player, his money still lying on the table and his slippery Joe Cotton still uncaptured, had come over to Smoke, and was now the first to speak.

“We gotta do something. That’s straight. But what? You’ve had time to think. What’s your plan? Spit it out.”

“Sure,” Smoke assented. “Here’s what I’ve been thinking. We’ve got to hustle light sleds on the jump. Say a hundred pounds of grub on each sled. The driver’s outfit and dog-grub will fetch it up fifty more. But they can make time. Say we start five of these sleds pronto--best running teams, best mushers and trail-eaters. On the soft trail the sleds can take the lead turn about. They’ve got to start at once. At the best, by the time they can get there, all those Indians won’t have had a scrap to eat for three days. And then, as soon as we’ve got those sleds off we’ll have to follow up with heavy sleds. Figure it out yourself. Two pounds a day is the very least we can decently keep those Indians traveling on. That’s four hundred pounds a day, and, with the old people and the children, five days is the quickest time we can bring them into Mucluc. Now what are you going to do?”

“Take up a collection to buy all the grub,” said the craps-player.

“I’ll stand for the grub,” Smoke began impatiently.

“Nope,” the other interrupted. “This ain’t your treat. We’re all in. Fetch a wash-basin somebody. It won’t take a minute. An’ here’s a starter.”

He pulled a heavy gold-sack from his pocket, untied the mouth, and poured a stream of coarse dust and nuggets into the basin. A man beside him caught his hand up with a jerk and an oath, elevating the mouth of the sack so as to stop the run of the dust. To a casual eye, six or eight ounces had already run into the basin.

“Don’t be a hawg,” cried the second man. “You ain’t the only one with a poke. Gimme a chance at it.”

“Huh!” sneered the craps-player. “You’d think it was a stampede, you’re so goshdanged eager about it.”

Men crowded and jostled for the opportunity to contribute, and when they were satisfied, Smoke hefted the heavy basin with both hands and grinned.

“It will keep the whole tribe in grub for the rest of the winter,” he said. “Now for the dogs. Five light teams that have some run in them.”

A dozen teams were volunteered, and the camp, as a committee of the whole, bickered and debated, accepted and rejected.

“Huh! Your dray-horses!” Long Bill Haskell was told.

“They can pull,” he bristled with hurt pride.

“They sure can,” he was assured. “But they can’t make time for sour apples. They’ve got theirs cut out for them bringing up the heavy loads.”

As fast as a team was selected, its owner, with half a dozen aids, departed to harness up and get ready.

One team was rejected because it had come in tired that afternoon. One owner contributed his team, but apologetically exposed a bandaged ankle that prevented him from driving it. This team Smoke took, overriding the objection of the crowd that he was played out.

Long Bill Haskell pointed out that while Fat 0lsen’s team was a crackerjack, Fat Olsen himself was an elephant. Fat Olsen’s two hundred and forty pounds of heartiness was indignant. Tears of anger came into his eyes, and his Scandinavian explosions could not be stopped until he was given a place in the heavy division, the craps-player jumping at the chance to take out Olsen’s light team.

Five teams were accepted and were being harnessed and loaded, but only four drivers had satisfied the committee of the whole.

“There’s Cultus George,” some one cried. “He’s a trail-eater, and he’s fresh and rested.”

All eyes turned upon the Indian, but his face was expressionless, and he said nothing.

“You’ll take a team,” Smoke said to him.

Still the big Indian made no answer. As with an electric thrill, it ran through all of them that something untoward was impending. A restless shifting of the group took place, forming a circle in which Smoke and

Cultus George faced each other. And Smoke realized that by common consent he had been made the representative of his fellows in what was taking place, in what was to take place. Also, he was angered. It was beyond him that any human creature, a witness to the scramble of volunteers, should hang back. For another thing, in what followed, Smoke did not have Cultus George's point of view--did not dream that the Indian held back for any reason save the selfish, mercenary one.

"Of course you will take a team," Smoke said.

"How much?" Cultus George asked.

A snarl, spontaneous and general, grated in the throats and twisted the mouths of the miners. At the same moment, with clenched fists or fingers crooked to grip, they pressed in on the offender.

"Wait a bit, boys," Smoke cried. "Maybe he doesn't understand. Let me explain it to him. Look here, George. Don't you see, nobody is charging anything. They're giving everything to save two hundred Indians from starving to death." He paused, to let it sink home.

"How much?" said Cultus George.

"Wait, you fellows! Now listen, George. We don't want you to make any mistake. These starving people are your kind of people. They're another tribe, but they're Indians just the same. Now you've seen what the white men are doing--coughing up their dust, giving their dogs and sleds, falling over one another to hit the trail. Only the best men can go with the first sleds. Look at Fat Olsen there. He was ready to fight because they wouldn't let him go. You ought to be mighty proud because all men think you are a number-one musher. It isn't a case of how much, but how quick."

"How much?" said Cultus George.

"Kill him!" "Bust his head!" "Tar and feathers!" were several of the cries in the wild medley that went up, the spirit of philanthropy and good fellowship changed to brute savagery on the instant.

In the storm-center Cultus George stood imperturbable, while Smoke thrust back the fiercest and shouted:

"Wait! Who's running this?" The clamor died away. "Fetch a rope," he added quietly.

Cultus George shrugged his shoulders, his face twisting tensely in a sullen and incredulous grin. He knew this white-man breed. He had toiled on trail with it and eaten its flour and bacon and beans too long not to know it. It was a law-abiding breed. He knew that thoroughly. It always punished the man who broke the law. But he had broken no law. He knew its law. He had lived up to it. He had neither murdered, stolen, nor lied. There was nothing in the white man's law against charging a price and driving a bargain. They all charged a price and drove bargains. He was doing nothing more than that, and it was the thing they had taught him. Besides, if he wasn't good enough to drink with them, then he was not good enough to be charitable with them, nor to join them in any other of their foolish diversions.

Neither Smoke nor any man there glimpsed what lay in Cultus George's brain, behind his attitude and prompting his attitude. Though they did not know it, they were as beclouded as he in the matter of mutual understanding. To them, he was a selfish brute; to him, they were selfish brutes.

When the rope was brought, Long Bill Haskell, Fat Olsen, and the craps-player, with much awkwardness and angry haste, got the slip-noose around the Indian's neck and rove the rope over a rafter. At the other end of the dangling thing a dozen men tailed on, ready to hoist away.

Nor had Cultus George resisted. He knew it for what it was--bluff. The whites were strong on bluff. Was not draw-poker their favorite game? Did they not buy and sell and make all bargains with bluff? Yes; he had seen a white man do business with a look on his face of four aces and in his hand a busted straight.

"Wait," Smoke commanded. "Tie his hands. We don't want him climbing."

More bluff, Cultus George decided, and passively permitted his hands to be tied behind his back.

"Now it's your last chance, George," said Smoke. "Will you take out the team?"

"How much?" said Cultus George.

Astounded at himself that he should be able to do such a thing, and at the same time angered by the colossal selfishness of the Indian, Smoke gave the signal. Nor was Cultus George any less astounded when he felt the noose tighten with a jerk and swing him off the floor. His stolidity broke on the instant. On his face, in quick succession, appeared surprise, dismay, and pain.

Smoke watched anxiously. Having never been hanged himself, he felt a tyro at the business. The body struggled convulsively, the tied hands strove to burst the bonds, and from the throat came unpleasant noises of strangulation. Suddenly Smoke held up his hand.

“Slack away” he ordered.

Grumbling at the shortness of the punishment, the men on the rope lowered Cultus George to the floor. His eyes were bulging, and he was tottery on his feet, swaying from side to side and still making a fight with his hands. Smoke divined what was the matter, thrust violent fingers between the rope and the neck, and brought the noose slack with a jerk. With a great heave of the chest, Cultus George got his first breath.

“Will you take that team out?” Smoke demanded.

Cultus George did not answer. He was too busy breathing.

“Oh, we white men are hogs,” Smoke filled in the interval, resentful himself at the part he was compelled to play. “We’d sell our souls for gold, and all that; but once in a while we forget about it and turn loose and do something without a thought of how much there is in it. And when we do that, Cultus George, watch out. What we want to know now is: Are you going to take out that team?”

Cultus George debated with himself. He was no coward. Perhaps this was the extent of their bluff, and if he gave in now he was a fool. And while he debated, Smoke suffered from secret worry lest this stubborn aborigine would persist in being hanged.

“How much?” said Cultus George.

Smoke started to raise his hand for the signal.

“Me go,” Cultus George said very quickly, before the rope could tighten.

“An’ when that rescue expedition found me,” Shorty told it in the Annie Mine, “that ornery Cultus George was the first in, beatin’ Smoke’s sled by three hours, an’ don’t you forget it, Smoke comes in second at that. Just the same, it was about time, when I heard Cultus George a-yellin’ at his dogs from the top of the divide, for those blamed Siwashes had ate my moccasins, my mitts, the leather lacin’s, my knife-sheath, an’ some of ‘em was beginnin’ to look mighty hungry at me--me bein’ better nourished, you see.

“An’ Smoke? He was near dead. He hustled around a while, helpin’ to start a meal for them two hundred sufferin’ Siwashes; an’ then he fell asleep, settin’ on his haunches, thinkin’ he was feedin’ snow into a thawin’-pail. I fixed him my bed, an’ dang me if I didn’t have to help him into it, he was that give out. Sure I win the toothpicks. Didn’t them dogs just naturally need the six salmon Smoke fed ‘em at the noonin’?”

The Heathen

I MET him first in a hurricane; and though we had gone through the hurricane on the same schooner, it was not until the schooner had gone to pieces under us that I first laid eyes on him. Without doubt I had seen him with the rest of the kanaka crew on board, but I had not consciously been aware of his existence, for the Petite Jeanne was rather overcrowded. In addition to her eight or ten kanaka seamen, her white captain, mate, and supercargo, and her six cabin passengers, she sailed from Rangiroa with something like eighty-five deck passengers--Paumotans and Tahitians, men, women, and children each with a trade box, to say nothing of sleeping mats, blankets, and clothes bundles.

The pearling season in the Paumotus was over, and all hands were returning to Tahiti. The six of us cabin passengers were pearl buyers. Two were Americans, one was Ah Choon (the whitest Chinese I have ever known), one was a German, one was a Polish Jew, and I completed the half dozen.

It had been a prosperous season. Not one of us had cause for complaint, nor one of the eighty-five deck passengers either. All had done well, and all were looking forward to a rest-off and a good time in Papeete.

Of course, the Petite Jeanne was overloaded. She was only seventy tons, and she had no right to carry a tithe of the mob she had on board. Beneath her hatches she was crammed and jammed with pearl shell and copra. Even the trade room was packed full with shell. It was a miracle that the sailors could work her. There was no moving about the decks. They simply climbed back and forth along the rails.

In the night time they walked upon the sleepers, who carpeted the deck, I’ll swear, two deep. Oh! And there were pigs and chickens on deck, and sacks of yams, while every conceivable place was festooned with strings of drinking cocoanuts and bunches of bananas. On both sides, between the fore and main shrouds, guys had been stretched, just low enough for the foreboom to swing clear; and from each of these guys at least fifty bunches of bananas were suspended.

It promised to be a messy passage, even if we did make it in the two or three days that would have been required if the southeast trades had been blowing fresh. But they weren’t blowing fresh. After the first five hours the trade died away in a dozen or so gasping fans. The calm continued all that night and the next day--one of those glaring, glassy, calms, when the very thought of opening one's eyes to look at it is sufficient to cause a headache.

The second day a man died--an Easter Islander, one of the best divers that season in the lagoon. Smallpox--that is what it was; though how smallpox could come on board, when there had been no known cases ashore when we left Rangiroa, is beyond me. There it was, though--smallpox, a man dead, and three others down on their backs.

There was nothing to be done. We could not segregate the sick, nor could we care for them. We were packed like sardines. There was nothing to do but rot and die--that is, there was nothing to do after the night that followed the first death. On that night, the mate, the supercargo, the Polish Jew, and four native divers sneaked away in the large whale boat. They were never heard of again. In the morning the captain promptly scuttled the remaining boats, and there we were.

That day there were two deaths; the following day three; then it jumped to eight. It was curious to see how we took it. The natives, for instance, fell into a condition of dumb, stolid fear. The captain--Oudouse, his name was, a Frenchman--became very nervous and voluble. He actually got the twitches. He was a large fleshy man, weighing at least two hundred pounds, and he quickly became a faithful representation of a quivering jelly-mountain of fat.

The German, the two Americans, and myself bought up all the Scotch whiskey, and proceeded to stay drunk. The theory was beautiful--namely, if we kept ourselves soaked in alcohol, every smallpox germ that came into contact with us would immediately be scorched to a cinder. And the theory worked, though I must confess that neither Captain Oudouse nor Ah Choon were attacked by the disease either. The Frenchman did not drink at all, while Ah Choon restricted himself to one drink daily.

It was a pretty time. The sun, going into northern declination, was straight overhead. There was no wind, except for frequent squalls, which blew fiercely for from five minutes to half an hour, and wound up by deluging us with rain. After each squall, the awful sun would come out, drawing clouds of steam from the soaked decks.

The steam was not nice. It was the vapor of death, freighted with millions and millions of germs. We always took another drink when we saw it going up from the dead and dying, and usually we took two or three more drinks, mixing them exceptionally stiff. Also, we made it a rule to take an additional several each time they hove the dead over to the sharks that swarmed about us.

We had a week of it, and then the whiskey gave out. It is just as well, or I shouldn't be alive now. It took a sober man to pull through what followed, as you will agree when I mention the little fact that only two men did pull through. The other man was the heathen--at least, that was what I heard Captain Oudouse call him at the moment I first became aware of the heathen's existence. But to come back.

It was at the end of the week, with the whiskey gone, and the pearl buyers sober, that I happened to glance at the barometer that hung in the cabin companionway. Its normal register in the Paumotus was 29.90, and it was quite customary to see it vacillate between 29.85 and 30.00, or even 30.05; but to see it as I saw it, down to 29.62, was sufficient to sober the most drunken pearl buyer that ever incinerated smallpox microbes in Scotch whiskey.

I called Captain Oudouse's attention to it, only to be informed that he had watched it going down for several hours. There was little to do, but that little he did very well, considering the circumstances. He took off the light sails, shortened right down to storm canvas, spread life lines, and waited for the wind. His mistake lay in what he did after the wind came. He hove to on the port tack, which was the right thing to do south of the Equator, if--and there was the rub--if one were not in the direct path of the hurricane.

We were in the direct path. I could see that by the steady increase of the wind and the equally steady fall of the barometer. I wanted him to turn and run with the wind on the port quarter until the barometer ceased falling, and then to heave to. We argued till he was reduced to hysteria, but budge he would not. The worst of it was that I could not get the rest of the pearl buyers to back me up. Who was I, anyway, to know more about the sea and its ways than a properly qualified captain? was what was in their minds, I knew.

Of course, the sea rose with the wind frightfully; and I shall never forget the first three seas the Petite Jeanne shipped. She had fallen off, as vessels do at times when hove to, and the first sea made a clean breach. The life lines were only for the strong and well, and little good were they even for them when the women and children, the bananas and cocoanuts, the pigs and trade boxes, the sick and the dying, were swept along in a solid, screeching, groaning mass.

The second sea filled the Petite Jeanne's decks flush with the rails; and, as her stern sank down and her bow tossed skyward, all the miserable dunnage of life and luggage poured aft. It was a human torrent. They came head first, feet first, sidewise, rolling over and over, twisting, squirming, writhing, and crumpling up. Now and again one caught a grip on a stanchion or a rope; but the weight of the bodies behind tore such grips loose.

One man I noticed fetch up, head on and square on, with the starboard bitt. His head cracked like an egg. I saw what was coming, sprang on top of the cabin, and from there into the mainsail itself. Ah Choon and one of the Americans tried to follow me, but I was one jump ahead of them. The American was swept away and over the stern like a piece of chaff. Ah Choon caught a spoke of the wheel, and swung in behind it. But a strapping Raratonga vahine (woman)--she must have weighed two hundred and fifty--brought up against him, and got an arm around his neck. He clutched the kanaka steersman with his other hand; and just at that moment the schooner flung down to starboard.

The rush of bodies and sea that was coming along the port runway between the cabin and the rail turned abruptly and poured to starboard. Away they went--vahine, Ah Choon, and steersman; and I swear I saw Ah Choon grin at me with philosophic resignation as he cleared the rail and went under.

The third sea--the biggest of the three--did not do so much damage. By the time it arrived nearly everybody was in the rigging. On deck perhaps a dozen gasping, half-drowned, and half-stunned wretches were rolling about or attempting to crawl into safety. They went by the board, as did the wreckage of the two remaining boats. The other pearl buyers and myself, between seas, managed to get about fifteen women and children into the cabin, and battened down. Little good it did the poor creatures in the end.

Wind? Out of all my experience I could not have believed it possible for the wind to blow as it did. There is no describing it. How can one describe a nightmare? It was the same way with that wind. It tore the clothes off our bodies. I say tore them off, and I mean it. I am not asking you to believe it. I am merely telling something that I saw and felt. There are times when I do not believe it myself. I went through it, and that is enough. One could not face that wind and live. It was a monstrous thing, and the most monstrous thing about it was that it increased and continued to increase.

Imagine countless millions and billions of tons of sand. Imagine this sand tearing along at ninety, a hundred, a hundred and twenty, or any other number of miles per hour. Imagine, further, this sand to be invisible, impalpable, yet to retain all the weight and density of sand. Do all this, and you may get a vague inkling of what that wind was like.

Perhaps sand is not the right comparison. Consider it mud, invisible, impalpable, but heavy as mud. Nay, it goes beyond that. Consider every molecule of air to be a mudbank in itself. Then try to imagine the multitudinous impact of mudbanks. No; it is beyond me. Language may be adequate to express the ordinary conditions of life, but it cannot possibly express any of the conditions of so enormous a blast of wind. It would have been better had I stuck by my original intention of not attempting a description.

I will say this much: The sea, which had risen at first, was beaten down by that wind. ‘more: it seemed as if the whole ocean had been sucked up in the maw of the hurricane, and hurled on through that portion of space which previously had been occupied by the air.

Of course, our canvas had gone long before. But Captain Oudouse had on the Petite Jeanne something I had never before seen on a South Sea schooner--a sea anchor. It was a conical canvas bag, the mouth of which was kept open by a huge loop of iron. The sea anchor was bridled something like a kite, so that it bit into the water as a kite bites into the air, but with a difference. The sea anchor remained just under the surface of the ocean in a perpendicular position. A long line, in turn, connected it with the schooner. As a result, the Petite Jeanne rode bow on to the wind and to what sea there was.

The situation really would have been favorable had we not been in the path of the storm. True, the wind itself tore our canvas out of the gaskets, jerked out our topmasts, and made a raffle of our running gear, but still we would have come through nicely had we not been square in front of the advancing storm center. That was what fixed us. I was in a state of stunned, numbed, paralyzed collapse from enduring the impact of the wind, and I think I was just about ready to give up and die when the center smote us. The blow we received was an absolute lull. There was not a breath of air. The effect on one was sickening.

Remember that for hours we had been at terrific muscular tension, withstanding the awful pressure of that wind. And then, suddenly, the pressure was removed. I know that I felt as though I was about to expand, to fly apart in all directions. It seemed as if every atom composing my body was repelling every other atom and was on the verge of rushing off irresistibly into space. But that lasted only for a moment. Destruction was upon us.

In the absence of the wind and pressure the sea rose. It jumped, it leaped, it soared straight toward the clouds. Remember, from every point of the compass that inconceivable wind was blowing in toward the center of calm. The result was that the seas sprang up from every point of the compass. There was no wind to check them. They popped up like corks released from the bottom of a pail of water. There was no system to them, no stability. They were hollow, maniacal seas. They were eighty feet high at the least. They were not seas at all. They resembled no sea a man had ever seen.

They were splashes, monstrous splashes--that is all. Splashes that were eighty feet high. Eighty! They were more than eighty. They went over our mastheads. They were spouts, explosions. They were drunken. They fell anywhere, anyhow. They jostled one another; they collided. They rushed together and collapsed upon one another, or fell apart like a thousand waterfalls all at once. It was no ocean any man had ever dreamed of, that hurricane center. It was confusion thrice confounded. It was anarchy. It was a hell pit of sea water gone mad.

The Petite Jeanne? I don’t know. The heathen told me afterwards that he did not know. She was literally torn apart, ripped wide open, beaten into a pulp, smashed into kindling wood, annihilated. When I came to I was in the water, swimming automatically, though I was about two-thirds drowned. How I got there I had no recollection. I remembered seeing the Petite Jeanne fly to pieces at what must have been the instant that my own consciousness was buffeted out of me. But there I was, with nothing to do but make the best of it, and in that best there was little promise. The wind was blowing again, the sea was much smaller and more regular, and I knew that I had passed through the center. Fortunately, there were no sharks about. The hurricane had dissipated the ravenous horde that had surrounded the death ship and fed off the dead.

It was about midday when the Petite Jeanne went to pieces, and it must have been two hours afterwards when I picked up with one of her hatch covers. Thick rain was driving at the time; and it was the merest chance that flung me and the hatch cover together. A short length of line was trailing from the rope handle; and I knew that I was good for a day, at least, if the sharks did not return. Three hours later, possibly a little longer, sticking close to the cover, and with closed eyes, concentrating my whole soul upon the task of breathing in enough air to keep me going and at the same time of avoiding breathing in enough water to drown me, it seemed to me that I heard voices. The rain had ceased, and wind and sea were easing marvelously. Not twenty feet away from me, on another hatch cover were Captain Oudouse and the heathen. They were fighting over the possession of the cover--at least, the Frenchman was. "Paien noir!" I heard him scream, and at the same time I saw him kick the kanaka.

Now, Captain Oudouse had lost all his clothes, except his shoes, and they were heavy brogans. It was a cruel blow, for it caught the heathen on the mouth and the point of the chin, half stunning him. I looked for him to retaliate, but he contented himself with swimming about forlornly a safe ten feet away. Whenever a fling of the sea threw him closer, the Frenchman, hanging on with his hands, kicked out at him with both feet. Also, at the moment of delivering each kick, he called the kanaka a black heathen.

"For two centimes I'd come over there and drown you, you white beast!" I yelled.

The only reason I did not go was that I felt too tired. The very thought of the effort to swim over was nauseating. So I called to the kanaka to come to me, and proceeded to share the hatch cover with him. Otoo, he told me his name was (pronounced o-to-o); also, he told me that he was a native of Bora Bora, the most westerly of the Society Group. As I learned afterward, he had got the hatch cover first, and, after some time, encountering Captain Oudouse, had offered to share it with him, and had been kicked off for his pains.

And that was how Otoo and I first came together. He was no fighter. He was all sweetness and gentleness, a love creature, though he stood nearly six feet tall and was muscled like a gladiator. He was no fighter, but he was also no coward. He had the heart of a lion; and in the years that followed I have seen him run risks that I would never dream of taking. What I mean is that while he was no fighter, and while he always avoided precipitating a row, he never ran away from trouble when it started. And it was "Ware shoal!" when once Otoo went into action. I shall never forget what he did to

Bill King. It occurred in German Samoa. Bill King was hailed the champion heavyweight of the American Navy. He was a big brute of a man, a veritable gorilla, one of those hard-hitting, rough-housing chaps, and clever with his fists as well. He picked the quarrel, and he kicked Otoo twice and struck him once before Otoo felt it to be necessary to fight. I don’t think it lasted four minutes, at the end of which time Bill King was the unhappy possessor of four broken ribs, a broken forearm, and a dislocated shoulder blade. Otoo knew nothing of scientific boxing. He was merely a manhandler; and Bill King was something like three months in recovering from the bit of manhandling he received that afternoon on Apia beach.

But I am running ahead of my yarn. We shared the hatch cover between us. We took turn and turn about, one lying flat on the cover and resting, while the other, submerged to the neck, merely held on with his hands. For two days and nights, spell and spell, on the cover and in the water, we drifted over the ocean. Towards the last I was delirious most of the time; and there were times, too, when I heard Otoo babbling and raving in his native tongue. Our continuous immersion prevented us from dying of thirst, though the sea water and the sunshine gave us the prettiest imaginable combination of salt pickle and sunburn.

In the end, Otoo saved my life; for I came to lying on the beach twenty feet from the water, sheltered from the sun by a couple of cocoanut leaves. No one but Otoo could have dragged me there and stuck up the leaves for shade. He was lying beside me. I went off again; and the next time I came round, it was cool and starry night, and Otoo was pressing a drinking cocoanut to my lips.

We were the sole survivors of the Petite Jeanne. Captain Oudouse must have succumbed to exhaustion, for several days later his hatch cover drifted ashore without him. Otoo and I lived with the natives of the atoll for a week, when we were rescued by the French cruiser and taken to Tahiti. In the meantime, however, we had performed the ceremony of exchanging names. In the South Seas such a ceremony binds two men closer together than blood brothership. The initiative had been mine; and Otoo was rapturously delighted when I suggested it.

“It is well,” he said, in Tahitian. “For we have been mates together for two days on the lips of Death.”

“But death stuttered,” I smiled.

"It was a brave deed you did, master," he replied, "and Death was not vile enough to speak."

"Why do you 'master' me?" I demanded, with a show of hurt feelings. "We have exchanged names. To you I am Otoo. To me you are Charley. And between you and me, forever and forever, you shall be Charley, and I shall be Otoo. It is the way of the custom. And when we die, if it does happen that we live again somewhere beyond the stars and the sky, still shall you be Charley to me, and I Otoo to you."

"Yes, master," he answered, his eyes luminous and soft with joy.

"There you go!" I cried indignantly.

"What does it matter what my lips utter?" he argued. "They are only my lips. But I shall think Otoo always. Whenever I think of myself, I shall think of you. Whenever men call me by name, I shall think of you. And beyond the sky and beyond the stars, always and forever, you shall be Otoo to me. Is it well, master?"

I hid my smile, and answered that it was well.

We parted at Papeete. I remained ashore to recuperate; and he went on in a cutter to his own island, Bora Bora. Six weeks later he was back. I was surprised, for he had told me of his wife, and said that he was returning to her, and would give over sailing on far voyages.

"Where do you go, master?" he asked, after our first greetings.

I shrugged my shoulders. It was a hard question.

"All the world," was my answer--"all the world, all the sea, and all the islands that are in the sea."

"I will go with you," he said simply. "My wife is dead."

I never had a brother; but from what I have seen of other men's brothers, I doubt if any man ever had a brother that was to him what Otoo was to me. He was brother and father and mother as well. And this I know: I lived a straighter and better man because of Otoo. I cared little for other men, but I had to live straight in Otoo's eyes. Because of him I dared not tarnish myself. He made me his ideal, compounding me, I fear, chiefly out of his own love and worship and there were times when I stood close to the steep pitch of hell, and would have taken the plunge had not the thought of Otoo restrained me. His pride in me entered into me, until it became one of the major rules in my personal code to do nothing that would diminish that pride of his.

Naturally, I did not learn right away what his feelings were toward me. He never criticized, never censured; and slowly the exalted place I held in his eyes dawned upon me, and slowly I grew to comprehend the hurt I could inflict upon him by being anything less than my best.

For seventeen years we were together; for seventeen years he was at my shoulder, watching while I slept, nursing me through fever and wounds--ay, and receiving wounds in fighting for me. He signed on the same ships with me; and together we ranged the Pacific from Hawaii to Sydney Head, and from Torres Straits to the Galapagos. We blackbirded from the New Hebrides and the Line Islands over to the westward clear through the Louisades, New Britain, New Ireland, and New Hanover. We were wrecked three times--in the Gilberts, in the Santa Cruz group, and in the Fijis. And we traded and salved wherever a dollar promised in the way of pearl and pearl shell, copra, beche-de-mer, hawkbill turtle shell, and stranded wrecks.

It began in Papeete, immediately after his announcement that he was going with me over all the sea, and the islands in the midst thereof. There was a club in those days in Papeete, where the pearlers, traders, captains, and riffraff of South Sea adventurers forgathered. The play ran high, and the drink ran high; and I am very much afraid that I kept later hours than were becoming or proper. No matter what the hour was when I left the club, there was Otoo waiting to see me safely home.

At first I smiled; next I chided him. Then I told him flatly that I stood in need of no wet-nursing. After that I did not see him when I came out of the club. Quite by accident, a week or so later, I discovered that he still saw me home, lurking across the street among the shadows of the mango trees. What could I do? I know what I did do.

Insensibly I began to keep better hours. On wet and stormy nights, in the thick of the folly and the fun, the thought would persist in coming to me of Otoo keeping his dreary vigil under the dripping mangoes. Truly, he made a better man of me. Yet he was not strait-laced. And he knew nothing of common Christian morality. All the people on Bora Bora were Christians; but he was a heathen, the only unbeliever on the island, a gross materialist, who believed that when he died he was dead. He believed merely in fair play and square dealing. Petty meanness, in his code, was almost as serious as wanton homicide; and I do believe that he respected a murderer more than a man given to small practices.

Concerning me, personally, he objected to my doing anything that was hurtful to me. Gambling was all right. He was an ardent gambler himself. But late hours, he explained, were bad for one's health. He had seen men who did not take care of themselves die of fever. He was no teetotaler, and welcomed a stiff nip any time when it was wet work in the boats. On the other hand, he believed in liquor in moderation. He had seen many men killed or disgraced by square-face or Scotch.

Otoo had my welfare always at heart. He thought ahead for me, weighed my plans, and took a greater interest in them than I did myself. At first, when I was unaware of this interest of his in my affairs, he had to divine my intentions, as, for instance, at Papeete, when I contemplated going partners with a knavish fellow-countryman on a guano venture. I did not know he was a knave. Nor did any white man in Papeete. Neither did Otoo know, but he saw how thick we were getting, and found out for me, and without my asking him. Native sailors from the ends of the seas knock about on the beach in Tahiti; and Otoo, suspicious merely, went among them till he had gathered sufficient data to justify his suspicions. Oh, it was a nice history, that of Randolph Waters. I couldn't believe it when Otoo first narrated it; but when I sheeted it home to Waters he gave in without a murmur, and got away on the first steamer to Aukland.

At first, I am free to confess, I couldn't help resenting Otoo's poking his nose into my business. But I knew that he was wholly unselfish; and soon I had to acknowledge his wisdom and discretion. He had his eyes open always to my main chance, and he was both keen-sighted and far-sighted. In time he became my counselor, until he knew more of my business than I did myself. He really had my interest at heart more than I did. 'mine was the magnificent carelessness of youth, for I preferred romance to dollars, and adventure to a comfortable billet with all night in. So it was well that I had some one to look out for me. I know that if it had not been for Otoo, I should not be here today.

Of numerous instances, let me give one. I had had some experience in blackbirding before I went pearling in the Paumotus. Otoo and I were on the beach in Samoa--we really were on the beach and hard aground--when my chance came to go as recruiter on a blackbird brig. Otoo signed on before the mast; and for the next half-dozen years, in as many ships, we knocked about the wildest portions of Melanesia. Otoo saw to it that he always pulled stroke-oar in my boat. Our custom in recruiting labor was to land the recruiter on the beach. The covering boat always lay on its oars several hundred feet off shore, while the recruiter's boat, also lying on its oars, kept afloat on the edge of the beach. When I landed with my trade goods, leaving my steering sweep apeak, Otoo left his stroke position and came into the stern sheets, where a Winchester lay ready to hand under a flap of canvas. The boat's crew was also armed, the Sniders concealed under canvas flaps that ran the length of the gunwales.

While I was busy arguing and persuading the woolly-headed cannibals to come and labor on the Queensland plantations Otoo kept watch. And often and often his low voice warned me of suspicious actions and impending treachery. Sometimes it was the quick shot from his rifle, knocking a nigger over, that was the first warning I received. And in my rush to the boat his hand was always there to jerk me flying aboard. Once, I remember, on Santa Anna, the boat grounded just as the trouble began. The covering boat was dashing to our assistance, but the several score of savages would have wiped us out before it arrived. Otoo took a flying leap ashore, dug both hands into the trade goods, and scattered tobacco, beads, tomahawks, knives, and calicoes in all directions.

This was too much for the woolly-heads. While they scrambled for the treasures, the boat was shoved clear, and we were aboard and forty feet away. And I got thirty recruits off that very beach in the next four hours.

The particular instance I have in mind was on Malaita, the most savage island in the easterly Solomons. The natives had been remarkably friendly; and how were we to know that the whole village had been taking up a collection for over two years with which to buy a white man's head? The beggars are all head-hunters, and they especially esteem a white man's head. The fellow who captured the head would receive the whole collection. As I say, they appeared very friendly; and on this day I was fully a hundred yards down the beach from the boat. Otoo had cautioned me; and, as usual when I did not heed him, I came to grief.

The first I knew, a cloud of spears sailed out of the mangrove swamp at me. At least a dozen were sticking into me. I started to run, but tripped over one that was fast in my calf, and went down. The woolly-heads made a run for me, each with a long-handled, fantail tomahawk with which to hack off my head. They were so eager for the prize that they got in one another's way. In the confusion, I avoided several hacks by throwing myself right and left on the sand.

Then Otoo arrived--Otoo the manhandler. In some way he had got hold of a heavy war club, and at close quarters it was a far more efficient weapon than a rifle. He was right in the thick of them, so that they could not spear him, while their tomahawks seemed worse than useless. He was fighting for me, and he was in a true Berserker rage. The way he handled that club was amazing.

Their skulls squashed like overripe oranges. It was not until he had driven them back, picked me up in his arms, and started to run, that he received his first wounds. He arrived in the boat with four spear thrusts, got his Winchester, and with it got a man for every shot. Then we pulled aboard the schooner, and doctored up.

Seventeen years we were together. He made me. I should today be a supercargo, a recruiter, or a memory, if it had not been for him.

"You spend your money, and you go out and get more," he said one day. "It is easy to get money now. But when you get old, your money will be spent, and you will not be able to go out and get more. I know, master. I have studied the way of white men. On the beaches are many old men who were young once, and who could get money just like you. Now they are old, and they have nothing, and they wait about for the young men like you to come ashore and buy drinks for them.

"The black boy is a slave on the plantations. He gets twenty dollars a year. He works hard. The overseer does not work hard.

He rides a horse and watches the black boy work. He gets twelve hundred dollars a year. I am a sailor on the schooner. I get fifteen dollars a month. That is because I am a good sailor. I work hard. The captain has a double awning, and drinks beer out of long bottles. I have never seen him haul a rope or pull an oar. He gets one hundred and fifty dollars a month. I am a sailor. He is a navigator. 'master, I think it would be very good for you to know navigation."

Otoo spurred me on to it. He sailed with me as second mate on my first schooner, and he was far prouder of my command than I was myself. Later on it was:

"The captain is well paid, master; but the ship is in his keeping, and he is never free from the burden. It is the owner who is better paid--the owner who sits ashore with many servants and turns his money over."

"True, but a schooner costs five thousand dollars--an old schooner at that," I objected. "I should be an old man before I saved five thousand dollars.”

“There be short ways for white men to make money,” he went on, pointing ashore at the cocoanut-fringed beach.

We were in the Solomons at the time, picking up a cargo of ivory nuts along the east coast of Guadalcanar.

“Between this river mouth and the next it is two miles,” he said.

“The flat land runs far back. It is worth nothing now. Next year--who knows?--or the year after, men will pay much money for that land. The anchorage is good. Big steamers can lie close up. You can buy the land four miles deep from the old chief for ten thousand sticks of tobacco, ten bottles of square-face, and a Snider, which will cost you, maybe, one hundred dollars. Then you place the deed with the commissioner; and the next year, or the year after, you sell and become the owner of a ship.”

I followed his lead, and his words came true, though in three years, instead of two. Next came the grasslands deal on Guadalcanar--twenty thousand acres, on a governmental nine hundred and ninety-nine years’ lease at a nominal sum. I owned the lease for precisely ninety days, when I sold it to a company for half a fortune. Always it was Otoo who looked ahead and saw the opportunity. He was responsible for the salving of the Doncaster--bought in at auction for a hundred pounds, and clearing three thousand after every expense was paid. He led me into the Savaii plantation and the cocoa venture on Upolu.

We did not go seafaring so much as in the old days. I was too well off. I married, and my standard of living rose; but Otoo remained the same old-time Otoo, moving about the house or trailing through the office, his wooden pipe in his mouth, a shilling undershirt on his back, and a four-shilling lava-lava about his loins. I could not get him to spend money. There was no way of repaying him except with love, and God knows he got that in full measure from all of us. The children worshipped him; and if he had been spoilable, my wife would surely have been his undoing.

The children! He really was the one who showed them the way of their feet in the world practical. He began by teaching them to walk. He sat up with them when they were sick. One by one, when they were scarcely toddlers, he took them down to the lagoon, and made them into amphibians. He taught them more than I ever knew of the habits of fish and the ways of catching them. In the bush it was the same thing. At seven, Tom knew more woodcraft than I ever dreamed existed. At six, Mary went over the Sliding

Rock without a quiver, and I have seen strong men balk at that feat. And when Frank had just turned six he could bring up shillings from the bottom in three fathoms.

"My people in Bora Bora do not like heathen--they are all Christians; and I do not like Bora Bora Christians," he said one day, when I, with the idea of getting him to spend some of the money that was rightfully his, had been trying to persuade him to make a visit to his own island in one of our schooners--a special voyage which I had hoped to make a record breaker in the matter of prodigal expense.

I say one of our schooners, though legally at the time they belonged to me. I struggled long with him to enter into partnership.

"We have been partners from the day the Petite Jeanne went down," he said at last. "But if your heart so wishes, then shall we become partners by the law. I have no work to do, yet are my expenses large. I drink and eat and smoke in plenty--it costs much, I know. I do not pay for the playing of billiards, for I play on your table; but still the money goes. Fishing on the reef is only a rich man's pleasure. It is shocking, the cost of hooks and cotton line. Yes; it is necessary that we be partners by the law. I need the money. I shall get it from the head clerk in the office."

So the papers were made out and recorded. A year later I was compelled to complain.

"Charley," said I, "you are a wicked old fraud, a miserly skinflint, a miserable land crab. Behold, your share for the year in all our partnership has been thousands of dollars. The head clerk has given me this paper. It says that in the year you have drawn just eighty-seven dollars and twenty cents."

"Is there any owing me?" he asked anxiously.

"I tell you thousands and thousands," I answered.

His face brightened, as with an immense relief.

"It is well," he said. "See that the head clerk keeps good account of it. When I want it, I shall want it, and there must not be a cent missing.

"If there is,:" he added fiercely, after a pause, "it must come out of the clerk's wages."

And all the time, as I afterwards learned, his will, drawn up by Carruthers, and making me sole beneficiary, lay in the American consul's safe.

But the end came, as the end must come to all human associations.

It occurred in the Solomons, where our wildest work had been done in the wild young days, and where we were once more--principally on a holiday, incidentally to look after our holdings on Florida Island and to look over the pearling possibilities of the Mboli Pass. We were lying at Savo, having run in to trade for curios.

Now, Savo is alive with sharks. The custom of the woolly-heads of burying their dead in the sea did not tend to discourage the sharks from making the adjacent waters a hangout. It was my luck to be coming aboard in a tiny, overloaded, native canoe, when the thing capsized. There were four woolly-heads and myself in it, or rather, hanging to it. The schooner was a hundred yards away.

I was just hailing for a boat when one of the woolly-heads began to scream. Holding on to the end of the canoe, both he and that portion of the canoe were dragged under several times. Then he loosed his clutch and disappeared. A shark had got him.

The three remaining niggers tried to climb out of the water upon the bottom of the canoe. I yelled and cursed and struck at the nearest with my fist, but it was no use. They were in a blind funk. The canoe could barely have supported one of them. Under the three it upended and rolled sidewise, throwing them back into the water.

I abandoned the canoe and started to swim toward the schooner, expecting to be picked up by the boat before I got there. One of the niggers elected to come with me, and we swam along silently, side by side, now and again putting our faces into the water and peering about for sharks. The screams of the man who stayed by the canoe informed us that he was taken. I was peering into the water when I saw a big shark pass directly beneath me. He was fully sixteen feet in length. I saw the whole thing. He got the woolly-head by the middle, and away he went, the poor devil, head, shoulders, and arms out of the water all the time, screeching in a heart-rending way. He was carried along in this fashion for several hundred feet, when he was dragged beneath the surface.

I swam doggedly on, hoping that that was the last unattached shark. But there was another. Whether it was one that had attacked the natives earlier, or whether it was one that had made a good meal elsewhere, I do not know. At any rate, he was not in such haste as the others. I could not swim so rapidly now, for a large part of my effort was devoted to keeping track of him. I was watching him when he made his first attack. By good luck I got both hands on his nose, and, though his momentum nearly shoved me under, I managed to keep him off. He veered clear, and began circling about again. A second time I escaped him by the same manoeuvre. The third rush was a miss on both sides. He sheered at the moment my hands should have landed on his nose, but his sandpaper hide (I had on a sleeveless undershirt) scraped the skin off one arm from elbow to shoulder.

By this time I was played out, and gave up hope. The schooner was still two hundred feet away. My face was in the water, and I was watching him manoeuvre for another attempt, when I saw a brown body pass between us. It was Otoo.

“Swim for the schooner, master!” he said. And he spoke gayly, as though the affair was a mere lark. “I know sharks. The shark is my brother.”

I obeyed, swimming slowly on, while Otoo swam about me, keeping always between me and the shark, foiling his rushes and encouraging me.

“The davit tackle carried away, and they are rigging the falls,” he explained, a minute or so later, and then went under to head off another attack.

By the time the schooner was thirty feet away I was about done for. I could scarcely move. They were heaving lines at us from on board, but they continually fell short. The shark, finding that it was receiving no hurt, had become bolder. Several times it nearly got me, but each time Otoo was there just the moment before it was too late. Of course, Otoo could have saved himself any time. But he stuck by me.

“Good-by, Charley! I’m finished!” I just managed to gasp.

I knew that the end had come, and that the next moment I should throw up my hands and go down.

But Otoo laughed in my face, saying:

“I will show you a new trick. I will make that shark feel sick!”

He dropped in behind me, where the shark was preparing to come at me.

“A little more to the left!” he next called out. “There is a line there on the water. To the left, master--to the left!”

I changed my course and struck out blindly. I was by that time barely conscious. As my hand closed on the line I heard an exclamation from on board. I turned and looked. There was no sign of Otoo. The next instant he broke surface. Both hands were off at the wrist, the stumps spouting blood.

“Otoo!” he called softly. And I could see in his gaze the love that thrilled in his voice.

Then, and then only, at the very last of all our years, he called me by that name.

“Good-by, Otoo!” he called.

Then he was dragged under, and I was hauled aboard, where I fainted in the captain’s arms.

And so passed Otoo, who saved me and made me a man, and who saved me in the end. We met in the maw of a hurricane, and parted in the maw of a shark, with seventeen intervening years of comradeship, the like of which I dare to assert has never befallen two men, the one brown and the other white. If Jehovah be from His high place watching every sparrow fall, not least in His kingdom shall be Otoo, the one heathen of Bora Bora.

The Hobo and the Fairy

He lay on his back. So heavy was his sleep that the stamp of hoofs and cries of the drivers from the bridge that crossed the creek did not rouse him. Wagon after wagon, loaded high with grapes, passed the bridge on the way up the valley to the winery, and the coming of each wagon was like the explosion of sound and commotion in the lazy quiet of the afternoon.

But the man was undisturbed. His head had slipped from the folded newspaper, and the straggling, unkempt hair was matted with the foxtails and burrs of the dry grass on which it lay. He was not a pretty sight. His mouth was open, disclosing a gap in the upper row where several teeth at some time had been knocked out. He breathed stertorously, at times grunting and moaning with the pain of his sleep. Also, he was very restless, tossing his arms about, making jerky, half-convulsive movements, and at times rolling his head from side to side in the burrs. This restlessness seemed occasioned partly by some internal discomfort, and partly by the sun that streamed down on his face and by the flies that buzzed and lighted and crawled upon the nose and cheeks and eyelids. There was no other place for them to crawl, for the rest of the face was covered with matted beard, slightly grizzled, but greatly dirt-stained and weather-discolored.

The cheek-bones were blotched with the blood congested by the debauch that was evidently being slept off. This, too, accounted for the persistence with which the flies clustered around the mouth, lured by the alcohol-laden exhalations. He was a powerfully built man, thick-necked, broad-shouldered, with sinewy wrists and toil-distorted hands. Yet the distortion was not due to recent toil, nor were the callouses other than ancient that showed under the dirt of the one palm upturned. From time to time this hand clenched tightly and spasmodically into a fist, large, heavy-boned and wicked-looking.

The man lay in the dry grass of a tiny glade that ran down to the tree-fringed bank of the stream. On either side of the glade was a fence, of the old stake-and-rider type, though little of it was to be seen, so thickly was it overgrown by wild blackberry bushes, scrubby oaks and young madrono trees. In the rear, a gate through a low paling fence led to a snug, squat bungalow, built in the California Spanish style and seeming to have been compounded directly from the landscape of which it was so justly a part.

Neat and trim and modestly sweet was the bungalow, redolent of comfort and repose, telling with quiet certitude of some one that knew, and that had sought and found.

Through the gate and into the glade came as dainty a little maiden as ever stepped out of an illustration made especially to show how dainty little maidens may be. Eight years she might have been, and, possibly, a trifle more, or less. Her little waist and little black-stockinged calves showed how delicately fragile she was; but the fragility was of mould only. There was no hint of anemia in the clear, healthy complexion nor in the quick, tripping step. She was a little, delicious blond, with hair spun of gossamer gold and wide blue eyes that were but slightly veiled by the long lashes. Her expression was of sweetness and happiness; it belonged by right to any face that sheltered in the bungalow.

She carried a child's parasol, which she was careful not to tear against the scrubby branches and bramble bushes as she sought for wild poppies along the edge of the fence. They were late poppies, a third generation, which had been unable to resist the call of the warm October sun.

Having gathered along one fence, she turned to cross to the opposite fence. Midway in the glade she came upon the tramp. Her startle was merely a startle. There was no fear in it. She stood and looked long and curiously at the forbidding spectacle, and was about to turn back when the sleeper moved restlessly and rolled his hand among the burrs. She noted the sun on his face, and the buzzing flies; her face grew solicitous, and for a moment she debated with herself. Then she tiptoed to his side, interposed the parasol between him and the sun, and brushed away the flies. After a time, for greater ease, she sat down beside him.

An hour passed, during which she occasionally shifted the parasol from one tired hand to the other. At first the sleeper had been restless, but, shielded from the flies and the sun, his breathing became gentler and his movements ceased. Several times, however, he really frightened her. The first was the worst, coming abruptly and without warning. "Christ! How deep! How deep!" the man murmured from some profound of dream. The parasol was agitated; but the little girl controlled herself and continued her self-appointed ministrations.

Another time it was a gritting of teeth, as of some intolerable agony. So terribly did the teeth crunch and grind together that it seemed they must crush into fragments. A little later he suddenly stiffened out. The hands clenched and the face set with the savage resolution of the dream. The eyelids trembled from the shock of the fantasy, seemed about to open, but did not. Instead, the lips muttered:

"No; no! And once more no. I won't peach." The lips paused, then went on. "You might as well tie me up, warden, and cut me to pieces. That's all you can get outa me–blood. That's all any of you-uns has ever got outa me in this hole."

After this outburst the man slept gently on, while the little girl still held the parasol aloft and looked down with a great wonder at the frowsy, unkempt creature, trying to reconcile it with the little part of life that she knew. To her ears came the cries of men, the stamp of hoofs on the bridge, and the creak and groan of wagons heavy laden. It was a breathless California Indian summer day. Light fleeces of cloud drifted in the azure sky, but to the west heavy cloud banks threatened with rain. A bee droned lazily by. From farther thickets came the calls of quail, and from the fields the songs of meadow larks. And oblivious to it all slept Ross Shanklin–Ross Shanklin, the tramp and outcast, ex-convict 4379, the bitter and unbreakable one who had defied all keepers and survived all brutalities.

Texas-born, of the old pioneer stock that was always tough and stubborn, he had been unfortunate. At seventeen years of age he had been apprehended for horse stealing. Also, he had been convicted of stealing seven horses which he had not stolen, and he had been sentenced to fourteen years' imprisonment. This was severe under any circumstances, but with him it had been especially severe, because there had been no prior convictions against him. The sentiment of the people who believed him guilty had been that two years was adequate punishment for the youth, but the county attorney, paid according to the convictions he secured, had made seven charges against him and earned seven fees. Which goes to show that the county attorney valued twelve years of Ross Shanklin's life at less than a few dollars.

Young Ross Shanklin had toiled terribly in jail; he had escaped, more than once; and he had been caught and sent back to toil in other and various jails. He had been triced up and lashed till he fainted had been revived and lashed again. He had been in the dungeon ninety days at a time. He had experienced the torment of the straightjacket. He knew what the humming bird was. He had been farmed out as a chattel by the state to the contractors. He had been trailed through swamps by bloodhounds. Twice he had been shot. For six years on end he had cut a cord and a half of wood each day in a convict lumber camp. Sick or well, he had cut that cord and a half or paid for it under a whip-lash knotted and pickled.

And Ross Shanklin had not sweetened under the treatment. He had sneered, and raved, and defied. He had seen convicts, after the guards had manhandled them, crippled in body for life, or left to maunder in mind to the end of their days. He had seen convicts, even his own cell mate, goaded to murder by their keepers, go to the gallows reviling God. He had been in a break in which eleven of his kind were shot down. He had been through a mutiny, where, in the prison yard, with gatling guns trained upon them, three hundred convicts had been disciplined with pick handles wielded by brawny guards.

He had known every infamy of human cruelty, and through it all he had never been broken. He had resented and fought to the last, until, embittered and bestial, the day came when he was discharged. Five dollars were given him in payment for the years of his labor and the flower of his manhood. And he had worked little in the years that followed. Work he hated and despised. He tramped, begged and stole, lied or threatened as the case might warrant, and drank to besottedness whenever he got the chance.

The little girl was looking at him when he awoke. Like a wild animal, all of him was awake the instant he opened his eyes. The first he saw was the parasol, strangely obtruded between him and the sky. He did not start nor move, though his whole body seemed slightly to tense. His eyes followed down the parasol handle to the tight-clutched little fingers, and along the arm to the child’s face. Straight and unblinking he looked into her eyes, and she, returning the look, was chilled and frightened by his glittering eyes, cold and harsh, withal bloodshot, and with no hint in them of the warm humanness she had been accustomed to see and feel in human eyes. They were the true prison eyes–the eyes of a man who had learned to talk little, who had forgotten almost how to talk.

“Hello,” he said finally, making no effort to change his position. “What game are you up to!”

His voice was gruff and husky, and at first it had been harsh; but it had softened queerly in a feeble attempt at forgotten kindliness.

“How do you do?” she said. “I’m not playing. The sun was on your face, and mamma says one oughtn’t to sleep in the sun.”

The sweet clearness of her child's voice was pleasant to him, and he wondered why he had never noticed it in children's voices before. He sat up slowly and stared at her. He felt that he ought to say something, but speech with him was a reluctant thing.

"I hope you slept well," she said gravely.

"I sure did," he answered, never taking his eyes from her, amazed at the fairness and delicacy of her. "How long was you holdin' that contraption up over me?"

"O-oh," she debated with herself, "a long, long time. I thought you would never wake up."

"And I thought you was a fairy when I first seen you."

He felt elated at his contribution to the conversation.

"No, not a fairy," she smiled.

He thrilled in a strange, numb way at the immaculate whiteness of her small even teeth.

"I was just the good Samaritan," she added.

"I reckon I never heard of that party."

He was cudgelling his brains to keep the conversation going. Never having been at close quarters with a child since he was man-grown, he found it difficult.

"What a funny man not to know about the good Samaritan. Don't you remember? A certain man went down to Jericho—"

"I reckon I've been there," he interrupted.

"I knew you were a traveler!" she cried, clapping her hands. "Maybe you saw the exact spot."

"What spot?"

"Why, where he fell among thieves and was left half dead. And then the good Samaritan went to him, and bound up his wounds, and poured in oil and wine–was that olive oil, do you think?"

He shook his head slowly.

"I reckon you got me there. Olive oil is something the dagoes cooks with. I never heard of it for busted heads."

She considered his statement for a moment.

"Well," she announced, "we use olive oil in our cooking, so we must be dagoes. I never knew what they were before. I thought it was slang."

"And the Samaritan dumped oil on his head," the tramp muttered reminiscently. "Seems to me I recollect a sky pilot sayin' something about that old gent. D’ye know, I’ve been looking for him off ’n on all my life, and never scared up hide nor hair of him. They ain’t no more Samaritans.”

“Wasn’t I one!” she asked quickly.

He looked at her steadily, with a great curiosity and wonder. Her ear, by a movement exposed to the sun, was transparent. It seemed he could almost see through it. He was amazed at the delicacy of her coloring, at the blue of her eyes, at the dazzle of the sun-touched golden hair. And he was astounded by her fragility. It came to him that she was easily broken. His eye went quickly from his huge, gnarled paw to her tiny hand in which it seemed to him he could almost see the blood circulate. He knew the power in his muscles, and he knew the tricks and turns by which men use their bodies to ill-treat men. In fact, he knew little else, and his mind for the time ran in its customary channel. It was his way of measuring the beautiful strangeness of her. He calculated a grip, and not a strong one, that could grind her little fingers to pulp. He thought of fist blows he had given to men’s heads, and received on his own head, and felt that the least of them could shatter hers like an egg-shell. He scanned her little shoulders and slim waist, and knew in all certitude that with his two hands he could rend her to pieces.

“Wasn’t I one?” she insisted again.

He came back to himself with a shock–or away from himself, as the case happened. He was loath that the conversation should cease.

“What?” he answered. “Oh, yes; you bet you was a Samaritan, even if you didn’t have no olive oil.” He remembered what his mind had been dwelling on, and asked, “But ain’t you afraid?”

“Of ... of me?” he added lamely.

She laughed merrily.

“Mamma says never to be afraid of anything. She says that if you’re good, and you think good of other people, they’ll be good, too.”

“And you was thinkin’ good of me when you kept the sun off,” he marveled.

“But it’s hard to think good of bees and nasty crawly things,” she confessed.

“But there’s men that is nasty and crawly things,” he argued.

“Mamma says no. She says there’s good in everyone.

“I bet you she locks the house up tight at night just the same,” he proclaimed triumphantly.

"But she doesn't. Mamma isn't afraid of anything. That's why she lets me play out here alone when I want. Why, we had a robber once. Mamma got right up and found him. And what do you think! He was only a poor hungry man. And she got him plenty to eat from the pantry, and afterward she got him work to do."

Ross Shanklin was stunned. The vista shown him of human nature was unthinkable. It had been his lot to live in a world of suspicion and hatred, of evil-believing and evil-doing. It had been his experience, slouching along village streets at nightfall, to see little children, screaming with fear, run from him to their mothers. He had even seen grown women shrink aside from him as he passed along the sidewalk.

He was aroused by the girl clapping her hands as she cried out:

"I know what you are! You're an open air crank. That's why you were sleeping here in the grass."

He felt a grim desire to laugh, but repressed it.

"And that's what tramps are–open air cranks," she continued. "I often wondered. Mamma believes in the open air. I sleep on the porch at night. So does she. This is our land. You must have climbed the fence. Mamma lets me when I put on my climbers–they're bloomers, you know. But you ought to be told something. A person doesn't know when they snore because they're asleep. But you do worse than that. You grit your teeth. That's bad. Whenever you are going to sleep you must think to yourself, 'I won't grit my teeth, I won't grit my teeth,' over and over, just like that, and by and by you'll get out of the habit.

"All bad things are habits. And so are all good things. And it depends on us what kind our habits are going to be. I used to pucker my eyebrows–wrinkle them all up, but mamma said I must overcome that habit. She said that when my eyebrows were wrinkled it was an advertisement that my brain was wrinkled inside, and that it wasn't good to have wrinkles in the brain. And then she smoothed my eyebrows with her hand and said I must always think smooth– inside, and smooth outside. And do you know, it was easy. I haven't wrinkled my brows for ever so long. I've heard about filling teeth by thinking. But I don't believe that. Neither does mamma."

She paused rather out of breath. Nor did he speak. Her flow of talk had been too much for him. Also, sleeping drunkenly, with open mouth, had made him very thirsty. But, rather than lose one precious moment, he endured the torment of his scorching throat and mouth. He licked his dry lips and struggled for speech.

"What is your name?" he managed at last.

"Joan."

She looked her own question at him, and it was not necessary to voice it.

"Mine is Ross Shanklin," he volunteered, for the first time in forgotten years giving his real name.

"I suppose you've traveled a lot."

"I sure have, but not as much as I might have wanted to."

"Papa always wanted to travel, but he was too busy at the office. He never could get much time. He went to Europe once with mamma. That was before I was born. It takes money to travel."

Ross Shanklin did not know whether to agree with this statement or not.

"But it doesn't cost tramps much for expenses," she took the thought away from him. "Is that why you tramp?"

He nodded and licked his lips.

"Mamma says it's too bad that men must tramp to look for work. But there's lots of work now in the country. All the farmers in the valley are trying to get men. Have you been working?"

He shook his head, angry with himself that he should feel shame at the confession when his savage reasoning told him he was right in despising work. But this was followed by another thought. This beautiful little creature was some man's child. She was one of the rewards of work.

"I wish I had a little girl like you," he blurted out, stirred by a sudden consciousness of passion for paternity. "I'd work my hands off. I ... I'd do anything."

She considered his case with fitting gravity.

"Then you aren't married?"

"Nobody would have me."

"Yes, they would, if ..."

She did not turn up her nose, but she favored his dirt and rags with a look of disapprobation he could not mistake.

"Go on," he half-shouted. "Shoot it into me. If I was washed–if I wore good clothes–if I was respectable–if I had a job and worked regular–if I wasn't what I am."

To each statement she nodded.

“Well, I ain’t that kind,” he rushed on. “I’m no good. I’m a tramp. I don’t want to work, that’s what. And I like dirt.”

Her face was eloquent with reproach as she said, “Then you were only making believe when you wished you had a little girl like me?”

This left him speechless, for he knew, in all the depths of his new-found passion, that that was just what he did want.

With ready tact, noting his discomfort, she sought to change the subject.

“What do you think of God?” she asked. “I ain’t never met him. What do you think about him?”

His reply was evidently angry, and she was frank in her disapproval.

“You are very strange,” she said. “You get angry so easily. I never saw anybody before that got angry about God, or work, or being clean.”

“He never done anything for me,” he muttered resentfully. He cast back in quick review of the long years of toil in the convict camps and mines. “And work never done anything for me neither.”

An embarrassing silence fell.

He looked at her, numb and hungry with the stir of the father-love, sorry for his ill temper, puzzling his brain for something to say. She was looking off and away at the clouds, and he devoured her with his eyes. He reached out stealthily and rested one grimy hand on the very edge of her little dress. It seemed to him that she was the most wonderful thing in the world. The quail still called from the coverts, and the harvest sounds seemed abruptly to become very loud. A great loneliness oppressed him.

“I’m ... I’m no good,” he murmured huskily and repentantly.

But, beyond a glance from her blue eyes, she took no notice. The silence was more embarrassing than ever. He felt that he could give the world just to touch with his lips that hem of her dress where his hand rested. But he was afraid of frightening her. He fought to find something to say, licking his parched lips and vainly attempting to articulate something, anything.

“This ain’t Sonoma Valley,” he declared finally. “This is fairy land, and you’re a fairy. Mebbe I’m asleep and dreaming. I don’t know. You and me don’t know how to talk together, because, you see, you’re a fairy and don’t know nothing but good things, and I’m a man from the bad, wicked world.”

Having achieved this much, he was left gasping for ideas like a stranded fish.

“And you’re going to tell me about the bad, wicked world,” she cried, clapping her hands. “I’m just dying to know.”

He looked at her, startled, remembering the wreckage of womanhood he had encountered on the sunken ways of life. She was no fairy. She was flesh and blood, and the possibilities of wreckage were in her as they had been in him even when he lay at his mother's breast. And there was in her eagerness to know.

"Nope," he said lightly, "this man from the bad, wicked world ain't going to tell you nothing of the kind. He's going to tell you of the good things in that world. He's going to tell you how he loved hosses when he was a shaver, and about the first hoss he straddled, and the first hoss he owned. Hosses ain't like men. They're better. They're clean–clean all the way through and back again. And, little fairy, I want to tell you one thing–there sure ain't nothing in the world like when you're settin' a tired hoss at the end of a long day, and when you just speak, and that tired animal lifts under you willing and hustles along. Hosses! They're my long suit. I sure dote on hosses. Yep. I used to be a cowboy once."

She clapped her hands in the way that tore so delightfully to his heart, and her eyes were dancing, as she exclaimed:

"A Texas cowboy! I always wanted to see one! I heard papa say once that cowboys are bow-legged. Are you?"

"I sure was a Texas cowboy," he answered. "But it was a long time ago. And I'm sure bow-legged. You see, you can't ride much when you're young and soft without getting the legs bent some. Why, I was only a three-year-old when I begun. He was a three-year-old, too, fresh-broken. I led him up alongside the fence, dumb to the top rail, and dropped on. He was a pinto, and a real devil at bucking, but I could do anything with him. I reckon he knowed I was only a little shaver. Some hosses knows lots more 'n' you think."

For half an hour Ross Shanklin rambled on with his horse reminiscences, never unconscious for a moment of the supreme joy that was his through the touch of his hand on the hem of her dress. The sun dropped slowly into the cloud bank, the quail called more insistently, and empty wagon after empty wagon rumbled back across the bridge. Then came a woman's voice.

"Joan! Joan!" it called. "Where are you, dear?"

The little girl answered, and Ross Shanklin saw a woman, clad in a soft, clinging gown, come through the gate from the bungalow. She was a slender, graceful woman, and to his charmed eyes she seemed rather to float along than walk like ordinary flesh and blood.

“What have you been doing all afternoon?” the woman asked, as she came up.

“Talking, mamma,” the little girl replied. “I’ve had a very interesting time.”

Ross Shanklin scrambled to his feet and stood watchfully and awkwardly. The little girl took the mother’s hand, and she, in turn, looked at him frankly and pleasantly, with a recognition of his humanness that was a new thing to him. In his mind ran the thought: the woman who ain’t afraid. Not a hint was there of the timidity he was accustomed to seeing in women’s eyes. And he was quite aware, and never more so, of his bleary-eyed, forbidding appearance.

“How do you do?” she greeted him sweetly and naturally.

“How do you do, ma’am,” he responded, unpleasantly conscious of the huskiness and rawness of his voice.

“And did you have an interesting time, too!” she smiled.

“Yes, ma’am. I sure did. I was just telling your little girl about bosses.”

“He was a cowboy, once, mamma,” she cried.

The mother smiled her acknowledgment to him, and looked fondly down at the little girl. The thought that came into Ross Shanklin’s mind was the awfulness of the crime if any one should harm either of the wonderful pair. This was followed by the wish that some terrible danger should threaten, so that he could fight, as he well knew how, with all his strength and life, to defend them.

“You’ll have to come along, dear,” the mother said. “It’s growing late.” She looked at Ross Shanklin hesitantly. “Would you care to have something to eat?”

“No, ma’am, thanking you kindly just the same. I ... I ain’t hungry.”

“Then say good-bye, Joan,” she counselled.

“Good-bye.” The little girl held out her hand, and her eyes lighted roguishly. “Good-bye, Mr. Man from the bad, wicked world.”

To him, the touch of her hand as he pressed it in his was the capstone of the whole adventure.

“Good-bye, little fairy,” he mumbled. “I reckon I got to be pullin’ along.”

But he did not pull along. He stood staring after his vision until it vanished through the gate. The day seemed suddenly empty. He looked about him irresolutely, then climbed the fence, crossed the bridge, and slouched along the road. He was in a dream. He did not note his feet nor the way they led him. At times he stumbled in the dust-filled ruts.

A mile farther on, he aroused at the crossroads. Before him stood the saloon. He came to a stop and stared at it, licking his lips. He sank his hand into his pants pocket and fumbled a solitary dime. “God!” he muttered. “God!” Then, with dragging, reluctant feet, went on along the road.

He came to a big farm. He knew it must be big, because of the bigness of the house and the size and number of the barns and outbuildings. On the porch, in shirt sleeves, smoking a cigar, keen-eyed and middle-aged, was the farmer.

“What’s the chance for a job!” Ross Shanklin asked.

The keen eyes scarcely glanced at him.

“A dollar a day and grub,” was the answer.

Ross Shanklin swallowed and braced himself.

“I’ll pick grapes all right, or anything. But what’s the chance for a steady job? You’ve got a big ranch here. I know hosses. I was born on one. I can drive team, ride, plough, break, do anything that anybody ever done with hosses.”

The other looked him over with an appraising, incredulous eye.

“You don’t look it,” was the judgment.

“I know I don’t. Give me a chance. That’s all. I’ll prove it.”

The farmer considered, casting an anxious glance at the cloud bank into which the sun had sunk.

“I’m short a teamster, and I’ll give you the chance to make good. Go and get supper with the hands.”

Ross Shanklin’s voice was very husky, and he spoke with an effort.

“All right. I’ll make good. Where can I get a drink of water and wash up?”

The House of Mapuhi

Despite the heavy clumsiness of her lines, the Aorai handled easily in the light breeze, and her captain ran her well in before he hove to just outside the suck of the surf. The atoll of Hikueru lay low on the water, a circle of pounded coral sand a hundred yards wide, twenty miles in circumference, and from three to five feet above high-water mark. On the bottom of the huge and glassy lagoon was much pearl shell, and from the deck of the schooner, across the slender ring of the atoll, the divers could be seen at work. But the lagoon had no entrance for even a trading schooner. With a favoring breeze cutters could win in through the tortuous and shallow channel, but the schooners lay off and on outside and sent in their small boats.

The Aorai swung out a boat smartly, into which sprang half a dozen brown-skinned sailors clad only in scarlet loincloths. They took the oars, while in the stern sheets, at the steering sweep, stood a young man garbed in the tropic white that marks the European. The golden strain of Polynesia betrayed itself in the sun-gilt of his fair skin and cast up golden sheens and lights through the glimmering blue of his eyes. Raoul he was, Alexandre Raoul, youngest son of Marie Raoul, the wealthy quarter-caste, who owned and managed half a dozen trading schooners similar to the Aorai. Across an eddy just outside the entrance, and in and through and over a boiling tide-rip, the boat fought its way to the mirrored calm of the lagoon. Young Raoul leaped out upon the white sand and shook hands with a tall native. The man's chest and shoulders were magnificent, but the stump of a right arm, beyond the flesh of which the age-whitened bone projected several inches, attested the encounter with a shark that had put an end to his diving days and made him a fawner and an intriguer for small favors.

"Have you heard, Alec?" were his first words. "Mapuhi has found a pearl--such a pearl. Never was there one like it ever fished up in Hikueru, nor in all the Paumotus, nor in all the world. Buy it from him. He has it now. And remember that I told you first. He is a fool and you can get it cheap. Have you any tobacco?"

Straight up the beach to a shack under a pandanus tree Raoul headed. He was his mother's supercargo, and his business was to comb all the Paumotus for the wealth of copra, shell, and pearls that they yielded up.

He was a young supercargo, it was his second voyage in such capacity, and he suffered much secret worry from his lack of experience in pricing pearls. But when Mapuhi exposed the pearl to his sight he managed to suppress the startle it gave him, and to maintain a careless, commercial expression on his face. For the pearl had struck him a blow. It was large as a pigeon egg, a perfect sphere, of a whiteness that reflected opalescent lights from all colors about it. It was alive. Never had he seen anything like it. When Mapuhi dropped it into his hand he was surprised by the weight of it. That showed that it was a good pearl. He examined it closely, through a pocket magnifying glass. It was without flaw or blemish. The purity of it seemed almost to melt into the atmosphere out of his hand. In the shade it was softly luminous, gleaming like a tender moon. So translucently white was it, that when he dropped it into a glass of water he had difficulty in finding it. So straight and swiftly had it sunk to the bottom that he knew its weight was excellent.

"Well, what do you want for it?" he asked, with a fine assumption of nonchalance.

"I want--" Mapuhi began, and behind him, framing his own dark face, the dark faces of two women and a girl nodded concurrence in what he wanted. Their heads were bent forward, they were animated by a suppressed eagerness, their eyes flashed avariciously.

"I want a house," Mapuhi went on. "It must have a roof of galvanized iron and an octagon-drop-clock. It must be six fathoms long with a porch all around. A big room must be in the centre, with a round table in the middle of it and the octagon-drop-clock on the wall. There must be four bedrooms, two on each side of the big room, and in each bedroom must be an iron bed, two chairs, and a washstand. And back of the house must be a kitchen, a good kitchen, with pots and pans and a stove. And you must build the house on my island, which is Fakarava."

"Is that all?" Raoul asked incredulously.

"There must be a sewing machine," spoke up Tefara, Mapuhi's wife.

"Not forgetting the octagon-drop-clock," added Nauri, Mapuhi's mother.

"Yes, that is all," said Mapuhi.

Young Raoul laughed. He laughed long and heartily. But while he laughed he secretly performed problems in mental arithmetic. He had never built a house in his life, and his notions concerning house building were hazy. While he laughed, he calculated the cost of the voyage to Tahiti for materials, of the materials themselves, of the voyage back again to Fakarava, and the cost of landing the materials and of building the house. It would come to four thousand French dollars, allowing a margin for safety--four thousand French dollars were equivalent to twenty thousad francs. It was impossible. How was he to know the value of such a pearl? Twenty thousand francs was a lot of money--and of his mother's money at that.

"Mapuhi," he said, "you are a big fool. Set a money price."

But Mapuhi shook his head, and the three heads behind him shook with his.

"I want the house," he said. "It must be six fathoms long with a porch all around--"

"Yes, yes," Raoul interrupted. "I know all about your house, but it won't do. I'll give you a thousand Chili dollars."

The four heads chorused a silent negative.

"And a hundred Chili dollars in trade."

"I want the house," Mapuhi began.

"What good will the house do you?" Raoul demanded. "The first hurricane that comes along will wash it away. You ought to know.

Captain Raffy says it looks like a hurricane right now."

"Not on Fakarava," said Mapuhi. "The land is much higher there. On this island, yes. Any hurricane can sweep Hikueru. I will have the house on Fakarava. It must be six fathoms long with a porch all around--"

And Raoul listened again to the tale of the house. Several hours he spent in the endeavor to hammer the house obsession out of Mapuhi's mind; but Mapuhi's mother and wife, and Ngakura, Mapuhi's daughter, bolstered him in his resolve for the house. Through the open doorway, while he listened for the twentieth time to the detailed description of the house that was wanted, Raoul saw his schooner's second boat draw up on the beach. The sailors rested on the oars, advertising haste to be gone. The first mate of the Aorai sprang ashore, exchanged a word with the one-armed native, then hurried toward Raoul. The day grew suddenly dark, as a squall obscured the face of the sun. Across the lagoon Raoul could see approaching the ominous line of the puff of wind.

"Captain Raffy says you've got to get to hell outa here," was the mate's greeting. "If there's any shell, we've got to run the risk of picking it up later on--so he says. The barometer's dropped to twenty-nine-seventy."

The gust of wind struck the pandanus tree overhead and tore through the palms beyond, flinging half a dozen ripe cocoanuts with heavy thuds to the ground. Then came the rain out of the distance, advancing with the roar of a gale of wind and causing the water of the lagoon to smoke in driven windrows. The sharp rattle of the first drops was on the leaves when Raoul sprang to his feet.

“A thousand Chili dollars, cash down, Mapuhi,” he said. “And two hundred Chili dollars in trade.”

“I want a house--“ the other began.

“Mapuhi!” Raoul yelled, in order to make himself heard. “You are a fool!”

He flung out of the house, and, side by side with the mate, fought his way down the beach toward the boat. They could not see the boat. The tropic rain sheeted about them so that they could see only the beach under their feet and the spiteful little waves from the lagoon that snapped and bit at the sand. A figure appeared through the deluge. It was Huru-Huru, the man with the one arm.

“Did you get the pearl?” he yelled in Raoul’s ear.

“Mapuhi is a fool!” was the answering yell, and the next moment they were lost to each other in the descending water.

Half an hour later, Huru-Huru, watching from the seaward side of the atoll, saw the two boats hoisted in and the Aorai pointing her nose out to sea. And near her, just come in from the sea on the wings of the squall, he saw another schooner hove to and dropping a boat into the water. He knew her. It was the OROHENA, owned by Toriki, the half-caste trader, who served as his own supercargo and who doubtlessly was even then in the stern sheets of the boat. Huru-Huru chuckled. He knew that Mapuhi owed Toriki for trade goods advanced the year before.

The squall had passed. The hot sun was blazing down, and the lagoon was once more a mirror. But the air was sticky like mucilage, and the weight of it seemed to burden the lungs and make breathing difficult.

“Have you heard the news, Toriki?” Huru-Huru asked. “Mapuhi has found a pearl. Never was there a pearl like it ever fished up in Hikueru, nor anywhere in the Paumotus, nor anywhere in all the world. Mapuhi is a fool. Besides, he owes you money. Remember that I told you first. Have you any tobacco?”

And to the grass shack of Mapuhi went Toriki. He was a masterful man, withal a fairly stupid one. Carelessly he glanced at the wonderful pearl--glanced for a moment only; and carelessly he dropped it into his pocket.

“You are lucky,” he said. “It is a nice pearl. I will give you credit on the books.”

“I want a house,” Mapuhi began, in consternation. “It must be six fathoms--“

“Six fathoms your grandmother!” was the trader’s retort. “You want to pay up your debts, that’s what you want. You owed me twelve hundred dollars Chili. Very well; you owe them no longer. The amount is squared. Besides, I will give you credit for two hundred Chili. If, when I get to Tahiti, the pearl sells well, I will give you credit for another hundred--that will make three hundred. But mind, only if the pearl sells well. I may even lose money on it.”

Mapuhi folded his arms in sorrow and sat with bowed head. He had been robbed of his pearl. In place of the house, he had paid a debt. There was nothing to show for the pearl.

“You are a fool,” said Tefara.

“You are a fool,” said Nauri, his mother. “Why did you let the pearl into his hand?”

“What was I to do?” Mapuhi protested. “I owed him the money. He knew I had the pearl. You heard him yourself ask to see it. I had not told him. He knew. Somebody else told him. And I owed him the money.”

“Mapuhi is a fool,” mimicked Ngakura.

She was twelve years old and did not know any better. Mapuhi relieved his feelings by sending her reeling from a box on the ear; while Tefara and Nauri burst into tears and continued to upbraid him after the manner of women.

Huru-Huru, watching on the beach, saw a third schooner that he knew heave to outside the entrance and drop a boat. It was the Hira, well named, for she was owned by Levy, the German Jew, the greatest pearl buyer of them all, and, as was well known, Hira was the Tahitian god of fishermen and thieves.

“Have you heard the news?” Huru-Huru asked, as Levy, a fat man with massive asymmetrical features, stepped out upon the beach. “Mapuhi has found a pearl. There was never a pearl like it in Hikueru, in all the Paumotus, in all the world. Mapuhi is a fool. He has sold it to Toriki for fourteen hundred Chili--I listened outside and heard. Toriki is likewise a fool. You can buy it from him cheap. Remember that I told you first. Have you any tobacco?"

"Where is Toriki?"

"In the house of Captain Lynch, drinking absinthe. He has been there an hour."

And while Levy and Toriki drank absinthe and chaffered over the pearl, Huru-Huru listened and heard the stupendous price of twenty-five thousand francs agreed upon.

It was at this time that both the OROHENA and the Hira, running in close to the shore, began firing guns and signalling frantically. The three men stepped outside in time to see the two schooners go hastily about and head off shore, dropping mainsails and flying jibs on the run in the teeth of the squall that heeled them far over on the whitened water. Then the rain blotted them out.

"They'll be back after it's over," said Toriki. "We'd better be getting out of here."

"I reckon the glass has fallen some more," said Captain Lynch.

He was a white-bearded sea-captain, too old for service, who had learned that the only way to live on comfortable terms with his asthma was on Hikueru. He went inside to look at the barometer.

"Great God!" they heard him exclaim, and rushed in to join him at staring at a dial, which marked twenty-nine-twenty.

Again they came out, this time anxiously to consult sea and sky. The squall had cleared away, but the sky remained overcast. The two schooners, under all sail and joined by a third, could be seen making back. A veer in the wind induced them to slack off sheets, and five minutes afterward a sudden veer from the opposite quarter caught all three schooners aback, and those on shore could see the boom-tackles being slacked away or cast off on the jump. The sound of the surf was loud, hollow, and menacing, and a heavy swell was setting in. A terrible sheet of lightning burst before their eyes, illuminating the dark day, and the thunder rolled wildly about them.

Toriki and Levy broke into a run for their boats, the latter ambling along like a panic-stricken hippopotamus. As their two boats swept out the entrance, they passed the boat of the Aorai coming in. In the stern sheets, encouraging the rowers, was Raoul. Unable to shake the vision of the pearl from his mind, he was returning to accept Mapuhi's price of a house.

He landed on the beach in the midst of a driving thunder squall that was so dense that he collided with Huru-Huru before he saw him.

“Too late,” yelled Huru-Huru. “Mapuhi sold it to Toriki for fourteen hundred Chili, and Toriki sold it to Levy for twenty-five thousand francs. And Levy will sell it in France for a hundred thousand francs. Have you any tobacco?”

Raoul felt relieved. His troubles about the pearl were over. He need not worry any more, even if he had not got the pearl. But he did not believe Huru-Huru. Mapuhi might well have sold it for fourteen hundred Chili, but that Levy, who knew pearls, should have paid twenty-five thousand francs was too wide a stretch. Raoul decided to interview Captain Lynch on the subject, but when he arrived at that ancient mariner’s house, he found him looking wide-eyed at the barometer.

“What do you read it?” Captain Lynch asked anxiously, rubbing his spectables and staring again at the instrument.

“Twenty-nine-ten,” said Raoul. “I have never seen it so low before.”

“I should say not!” snorted the captain. “Fifty years boy and man on all the seas, and I’ve never seen it go down to that. Listen!”

They stood for a moment, while the surf rumbled and shook the house. Then they went outside. The squall had passed. They could see the Aorai lying becalmed a mile away and pitching and tossing madly in the tremendous seas that rolled in stately procession down out of the northeast and flung themselves furiously upon the coral shore. One of the sailors from the boat pointed at the mouth of the passage and shook his head. Raoul looked and saw a white anarchy of foam and surge.

“I guess I’ll stay with you tonight, Captain,” he said; then turned to the sailor and told him to haul the boat out and to find shelter for himself and fellows.

“Twenty-nine flat,” Captain Lynch reported, coming out from another look at the barometer, a chair in his hand.

He sat down and stared at the spectacle of the sea. The sun came out, increasing the sultriness of the day, while the dead calm still held. The seas continued to increase in magnitude.

“What makes that sea is what gets me,” Raoul muttered petulantly.

“There is no wind, yet look at it, look at that fellow there!”

Miles in length, carrying tens of thousands of tons in weight, its impact shook the frail atoll like an earthquake. Captain Lynch was startled.

“Gracious!” he bellowed, half rising from his chair, then sinking back.

“But there is no wind,” Raoul persisted. “I could understand it if there was wind along with it.”

“You’ll get the wind soon enough without worryin’ for it,” was the grim reply.

The two men sat on in silence. The sweat stood out on their skin in myriads of tiny drops that ran together, forming blotches of moisture, which, in turn, coalesced into rivulets that dripped to the ground. They panted for breath, the old man’s efforts being especially painful. A sea swept up the beach, licking around the trunks of the cocoanuts and subsiding almost at their feet.

“Way past high water mark,” Captain Lynch remarked; “and I’ve been here eleven years.” He looked at his watch. “It is three o’clock.”

A man and woman, at their heels a motley following of brats and curs, trailed disconsolately by. They came to a halt beyond the house, and, after much irresolution, sat down in the sand. A few minutes later another family trailed in from the opposite direction, the men and women carrying a heterogeneous assortment of possessions. And soon several hundred persons of all ages and sexes were congregated about the captain’s dwelling. He called to one new arrival, a woman with a nursing babe in her arms, and in answer received the information that her house had just been swept into the lagoon.

This was the highest spot of land in miles, and already, in many places on either hand, the great seas were making a clean breach of the slender ring of the atoll and surging into the lagoon. Twenty miles around stretched the ring of the atoll, and in no place was it more than fifty fathoms wide. It was the height of the diving season, and from all the islands around, even as far as Tahiti, the natives had gathered.

“There are twelve hundred men, women, and children here,” said Captain Lynch. “I wonder how many will be here tomorrow morning.”

“But why don’t it blow?--that’s what I want to know,” Raoul demanded.

“Don’t worry, young man, don’t worry; you’ll get your troubles fast enough.”

Even as Captain Lynch spoke, a great watery mass smote the atoll.

The sea water churned about them three inches deep under the chairs. A low wail of fear went up from the many women. The children, with clasped hands, stared at the immense rollers and cried piteously. Chickens and cats, wading perturbedly in the water, as by common consent, with flight and scramble took refuge on the roof of the captain's house. A Paumotan, with a litter of new-born puppies in a basket, climbed into a cocoanut tree and twenty feet above the ground made the basket fast. The mother floundered about in the water beneath, whining and yelping.

And still the sun shone brightly and the dead calm continued. They sat and watched the seas and the insane pitching of the Aorai. Captain Lynch gazed at the huge mountains of water sweeping in until he could gaze no more. He covered his face with his hands to shut out the sight; then went into the house.

"Twenty-eight-sixty," he said quietly when he returned.

In his arm was a coil of small rope. He cut it into two-fathom lengths, giving one to Raoul and, retaining one for himself, distributed the remainder among the women with the advice to pick out a tree and climb.

A light air began to blow out of the northeast, and the fan of it on his cheek seemed to cheer Raoul up. He could see the Aorai trimming her sheets and heading off shore, and he regretted that he was not on her. She would get away at any rate, but as for the atoll--A sea breached across, almost sweeping him off his feet, and he selected a tree. Then he remembered the barometer and ran back to the house. He encountered Captain Lynch on the same errand and together they went in.

"Twenty-eight-twenty," said the old mariner. "It's going to be fair hell around here--what was that?"

The air seemed filled with the rush of something. The house quivered and vibrated, and they heard the thrumming of a mighty note of sound. The windows rattled. Two panes crashed; a draught of wind tore in, striking them and making them stagger. The door opposite banged shut, shattering the latch. The white door knob crumbled in fragments to the floor. The room's walls bulged like a gas balloon in the process of sudden inflation. Then came a new sound like the rattle of musketry, as the spray from a sea struck the wall of the house. Captain Lyncyh looked at his watch. It was four o'clock. He put on a coat of pilot cloth, unhooked the barometer, and stowed it away in a capacious pocket. Again a sea struck the house, with a heavy thud, and the light building tilted, twisted, quarter around on its foundation, and sank down, its floor at an angle of ten degrees.

Raoul went out first. The wind caught him and whirled him away. He noted that it had hauled around to the east. With a great effort he threw himself on the sand, crouching and holding his own. Captain Lynch, driven like a wisp of straw, sprawled over him. Two of the Aorai's sailors, leaving a cocoanut tree to which they had been clinging, came to their aid, leaning against the wind at impossible angles and fighting and clawing every inch of the way.

The old man's joints were stiff and he could not climb, so the sailors, by means of short ends of rope tied together, hoisted him up the trunk, a few feet at a time, till they could make him fast, at the top of the tree, fifty feet from the ground. Raoul passed his length of rope around the base of an adjacent tree and stood looking on. The wind was frightful. He had never dreamed it could blow so hard. A sea breached across the atoll, wetting him to the knees ere it subsided into the lagoon. The sun had disappeared, and a lead-colored twilight settled down. A few drops of rain, driving horizontally, struck him. The impact was like that of leaden pellets. A splash of salt spray struck his face. It was like the slap of a man's hand. His cheeks stung, and involuntary tears of pain were in his smarting eyes. Several hundred natives had taken to the trees, and he could have laughed at the bunches of human fruit clustering in the tops. Then, being Tahitian-born, he doubled his body at the waist, clasped the trunk of his tree with his hands, pressed the soles of his feet against the near surface of the trunk, and began to walk up the tree. At the top he found two women, two children, and a man. One little girl clasped a housecat in her arms.

From his eyrie he waved his hand to Captain Lynch, and that doughty patriarch waved back. Raoul was appalled at the sky. It had approached much nearer--in fact, it seemed just over his head; and it had turned from lead to black. Many people were still on the ground grouped about the bases of the trees and holding on. Several such clusters were praying, and in one the Mormon missionary was exhorting. A weird sound, rhythmical, faint as the faintest chirp of a far cricket, enduring but for a moment, but in the moment suggesting to him vaguely the thought of heaven and celestial music, came to his ear. He glanced about him and saw, at the base of another tree, a large cluster of people holding on by ropes and by one another. He could see their faces working and their lips moving in unison. No sound came to him, but he knew that they were singing hymns.

Still the wind continued to blow harder. By no conscious process could he measure it, for it had long since passed beyond all his experience of wind; but he knew somehow, nevertheless, that it was blowing harder. Not far away a tree was uprooted, flinging its load of human beings to the ground. A sea washed across the strip of sand, and they were gone. Things were happening quickly. He saw a brown shoulder and a black head silhouetted against the churning white of the lagoon. The next instant that, too, had vanished. Other trees were going, falling and criss-crossing like matches. He was amazed at the power of the wind. His own tree was swaying perilously, one woman was wailing and clutching the little girl, who in turn still hung on to the cat.

The man, holding the other child, touched Raoul's arm and pointed. He looked and saw the Mormon church careering drunkenly a hundred feet away. It had been torn from its foundations, and wind and sea were heaving and shoving it toward the lagoon. A frightful wall of water caught it, tilted it, and flung it against half a dozen cocoanut trees. The bunches of human fruit fell like ripe cocoanuts. The subsiding wave showed them on the ground, some lying motionless, others squirming and writhing. They reminded him strangely of ants. He was not shocked. He had risen above horror. Quite as a matter of course he noted the succeeding wave sweep the sand clean of the human wreckage. A third wave, more colossal than any he had yet seen, hurled the church into the lagoon, where it floated off into the obscurity to leeward, half-submerged, reminding him for all the world of a Noah's ark.

He looked for Captain Lynch's house, and was surprised to find it gone. Things certainly were happening quickly. He noticed that many of the people in the trees that still held had descended to the ground. The wind had yet again increased. His own tree showed that. It no longer swayed or bent over and back. Instead, it remained practically stationary, curved in a rigid angle from the wind and merely vibrating. But the vibration was sickening. It was like that of a tuning-fork or the tongue of a jew's-harp. It was the rapidity of the vibration that made it so bad. Even though its roots held, it could not stand the strain for long. Something would have to break.

Ah, there was one that had gone. He had not seen it go, but there it stood, the remnant, broken off half-way up the trunk. One did not know what happened unless he saw it. The mere crashing of trees and wails of human despair occupied no place in that mighty volume of sound. He chanced to be looking in Captain Lynch's direction when it happened. He saw the trunk of the tree, half-way up, splinter and part without noise. The head of the tree, with three sailors of the Aorai and the old captain sailed off over the lagoon. It did not fall to the ground, but drove through the air like a piece of chaff. For a hundred yards he followed its flight, when it struck the water. He strained his eyes, and was sure that he saw Captain Lynch wave farewell.

The House of Pride

Percival Ford wondered why he had come. He did not dance. He did not care much for army people. Yet he knew them all--gliding and revolving there on the broad lanai of the Seaside, the officers in their fresh-starched uniforms of white, the civilians in white and black, and the women bare of shoulders and arms. After two years in Honolulu the Twentieth was departing to its new station in Alaska, and Percival Ford, as one of the big men of the Islands, could not help knowing the officers and their women.

But between knowing and liking was a vast gulf. The army women frightened him just a little. They were in ways quite different from the women he liked best--the elderly women, the spinsters and the bespectacled maidens, and the very serious women of all ages whom he met on church and library and kindergarten committees, who came meekly to him for contributions and advice. He ruled those women by virtue of his superior mentality, his great wealth, and the high place he occupied in the commercial baronage of Hawaii. And he was not afraid of them in the least. Sex, with them, was not obtrusive. Yes, that was it. There was in them something else, or more, than the assertive grossness of life. He was fastidious; he acknowledged that to himself; and these army women, with their bare shoulders and naked arms, their straight-looking eyes, their vitality and challenging femaleness, jarred upon his sensibilities.

Nor did he get on better with the army men, who took life lightly, drinking and smoking and swearing their way through life and asserting the essential grossness of flesh no less shamelessly than their women. He was always uncomfortable in the company of the army men. They seemed uncomfortable, too. And he felt, always, that they were laughing at him up their sleeves, or pitying him, or tolerating him. Then, too, they seemed, by mere contiguity, to emphasize a lack in him, to call attention to that in them which he did not possess and which he thanked God he did not possess. Faugh! They were like their women!

In fact, Percival Ford was no more a woman’s man than he was a man’s man. A glance at him told the reason. He had a good constitution, never was on intimate terms with sickness, nor even mild disorders; but he lacked vitality. His was a negative organism. No blood with a ferment in it could have nourished and shaped that long and narrow face, those thin lips, lean cheeks, and the small, sharp eyes. The thatch of hair, dust-coloured, straight and sparse, advertised the niggard soil, as did the nose, thin, delicately modelled, and just hinting the suggestion of a beak. His meagre blood had denied him much of life, and permitted him to be an extremist in one thing only, which thing was righteousness. Over right conduct he pondered and agonized, and that he should do right was as necessary to his nature as loving and being loved were necessary to commoner clay.

He was sitting under the algaroba trees between the lanai and the beach. His eyes wandered over the dancers and he turned his head away and gazed seaward across the mellow-sounding surf to the Southern Cross burning low on the horizon. He was irritated by the bare shoulders and arms of the women. If he had a daughter he would never permit it, never. But his hypothesis was the sheerest abstraction. The thought process had been accompanied by no inner vision of that daughter. He did not see a daughter with arms and shoulders. Instead, he smiled at the remote contingency of marriage. He was thirty-five, and, having had no personal experience of love, he looked upon it, not as mythical, but as bestial. Anybody could marry. The Japanese and Chinese coolies, toiling on the sugar plantations and in the rice-fields, married. They invariably married at the first opportunity. It was because they were so low in the scale of life. There was nothing else for them to do. They were like the army men and women. But for him there were other and higher things. He was different from them--from all of them. He was proud of how he happened to be. He had come of no petty love-match. He had come of lofty conception of duty and of devotion to a cause. His father had not married for love. Love was a madness that had never perturbed Isaac Ford. When he answered the call to go to the heathen with the message of life, he had had no thought and no desire for marriage. In this they were alike, his father and he. But the Board of Missions was economical. With New England thrift it weighed and measured and decided that married missionaries were less expensive per capita and more efficacious. So the Board commanded Isaac Ford to marry. Furthermore, it furnished him with a wife, another zealous soul with no thought of marriage, intent only on doing the Lord’s work among the heathen. They saw each other for the first time in Boston. The Board brought them together, arranged everything, and by the end of the week they were married and started on the long voyage around the Horn.

Percival Ford was proud that he had come of such a union. He had been born high, and he thought of himself as a spiritual aristocrat. And he was proud of his father. It was a passion with him. The erect, austere figure of Isaac Ford had burned itself upon his pride. On his desk was a miniature of that soldier of the Lord. In his bedroom hung the portrait of Isaac Ford, painted at the time when he had served under the Monarchy as prime minister. Not that Isaac Ford had coveted place and worldly wealth, but that, as prime minister, and, later, as banker, he had been of greater service to the missionary cause. The German crowd, and the English crowd, and all the rest of the trading crowd, had sneered at Isaac Ford as a commercial soul-saver; but he, his son, knew different. When the natives, emerging abruptly from their feudal system, with no conception of the nature and significance of property in land, were letting their broad acres slip through their fingers, it was Isaac Ford who had stepped in between the trading crowd and its prey and taken possession of fat, vast holdings. Small wonder the trading crowd did not like his memory. But he had never looked upon his enormous wealth as his own. He had considered himself God's steward. Out of the revenues he had built schools, and hospitals, and churches. Nor was it his fault that sugar, after the slump, had paid forty per cent; that the bank he founded had prospered into a railroad; and that, among other things, fifty thousand acres of Oahu pasture land, which he had bought for a dollar an acre, grew eight tons of sugar to the acre every eighteen months. No, in all truth, Isaac Ford was an heroic figure, fit, so Percival Ford thought privately, to stand beside the statue of Kamehameha I. in front of the Judiciary Building. Isaac Ford was gone, but he, his son, carried on the good work at least as inflexibly if not as masterfully.

He turned his eyes back to the lanai. What was the difference, he asked himself, between the shameless, grass-girdled hula dances and the decollete dances of the women of his own race? Was there an essential difference? or was it a matter of degree?

As he pondered the problem a hand rested on his shoulder.

“Hello, Ford, what are you doing here? Isn’t this a bit festive?”

“I try to be lenient, Dr. Kennedy, even as I look on,” Percival Ford answered gravely. “Won’t you sit down?”

Dr. Kennedy sat down, clapping his palms sharply. A white-clad Japanese servant answered swiftly.

Scotch and soda was Kennedy’s order; then, turning to the other, he said:-

"Of course, I don't ask you."

"But I will take something," Ford said firmly. The doctor's eyes showed surprise, and the servant waited. "Boy, a lemonade, please."

The doctor laughed at it heartily, as a joke on himself, and glanced at the musicians under the hau tree.

"Why, it's the Aloha Orchestra," he said. "I thought they were with the Hawaiian Hotel on Tuesday nights. Some rumpus, I guess."

His eyes paused for a moment, and dwelt upon the one who was playing a guitar and singing a Hawaiian song to the accompaniment of all the instruments.

His face became grave as he looked at the singer, and it was still grave as he turned it to his companion.

"Look here, Ford, isn't it time you let up on Joe Garland? I understand you are in opposition to the Promotion Committee's sending him to the States on this surf-board proposition, and I've been wanting to speak to you about it. I should have thought you'd be glad to get him out of the country. It would be a good way to end your persecution of him."

"Persecution?" Percival Ford's eyebrows lifted interrogatively.

"Call it by any name you please," Kennedy went on. "You've hounded that poor devil for years. It's not his fault. Even you will admit that."

"Not his fault?" Percival Ford's thin lips drew tightly together for the moment. "Joe Garland is dissolute and idle. He has always been a wastrel, a profligate."

"But that's no reason you should keep on after him the way you do. I've watched you from the beginning. The first thing you did when you returned from college and found him working on the plantation as outside luna was to fire him--you with your millions, and he with his sixty dollars a month."

"Not the first thing," Percival Ford said judicially, in a tone he was accustomed to use in committee meetings. "I gave him his warning. The superintendent said he was a capable luna. I had no objection to him on that ground. It was what he did outside working hours. He undid my work faster than I could build it up. Of what use were the Sunday schools, the night schools, and the sewing classes, when in the evenings there was Joe Garland with his infernal and eternal tum-tumming of guitar and ukulele, his strong drink, and his hula dancing? After I warned him, I came upon him--I shall never forget it--came upon him, down at the cabins. It was evening. I could hear the hula songs before I saw the scene. And when I did see it, there were the girls, shameless in the moonlight and dancing--the girls upon whom I had worked to teach clean living and right conduct. And there were three girls there, I remember, just graduated from the mission school. Of course I discharged Joe Garland. I know it was the same at Hilo. People said I went out of my way when I persuaded Mason and Fitch to discharge him. But it was the missionaries who requested me to do so. He was undoing their work by his reprehensible example."

"Afterwards, when he got on the railroad, your railroad, he was discharged without cause," Kennedy challenged.

"Not so," was the quick answer. "I had him into my private office and talked with him for half an hour."

"You discharged him for inefficiency?"

"For immoral living, if you please."

Dr. Kennedy laughed with a grating sound. "Who the devil gave it to you to be judge and jury? Does landlordism give you control of the immortal souls of those that toil for you? I have been your physician. Am I to expect tomorrow your ukase that I give up Scotch and soda or your patronage? Bah! Ford, you take life too seriously. Besides, when Joe got into that smuggling scrape (he wasn't in your employ, either), and he sent word to you, asked you to pay his fine, you left him to do his six months' hard labour on the reef. Don't forget, you left Joe Garland in the lurch that time. You threw him down, hard; and yet I remember the first day you came to school--we boarded, you were only a day scholar--you had to be initiated. Three times under in the swimming tank--you remember, it was the regular dose every new boy got. And you held back. You denied that you could swim. You were frightened, hysterical--"

"Yes, I know," Percival Ford said slowly. "I was frightened. And it was a lie, for I could swim . . . And I was frightened."

"And you remember who fought for you? who lied for you harder than you could lie, and swore he knew you couldn't swim? Who jumped into the tank and pulled you out after the first under and was nearly drowned for it by the other boys, who had discovered by that time that you COULD swim?"

"Of course I know," the other rejoined coldly. "But a generous act as a boy does not excuse a lifetime of wrong living."

"He has never done wrong to you?--personally and directly, I mean?"

“No,” was Percival Ford’s answer. “That is what makes my position impregnable. I have no personal spite against him. He is bad, that is all. His life is bad--“

“Which is another way of saying that he does not agree with you in the way life should be lived,” the doctor interrupted.

“Have it that way. It is immaterial. He is an idler--“

“With reason,” was the interruption, “considering the jobs out of which you have knocked him.”

“He is immoral--“

“Oh, hold on now, Ford. Don’t go harping on that. You are pure New England stock. Joe Garland is half Kanaka. Your blood is thin. His is warm. Life is one thing to you, another thing to him. He laughs and sings and dances through life, genial, unselfish, childlike, everybody’s friend. You go through life like a perambulating prayer-wheel, a friend of nobody but the righteous, and the righteous are those who agree with you as to what is right. And after all, who shall say? You live like an anchorite. Joe Garland lives like a good fellow. Who has extracted the most from life? We are paid to live, you know. When the wages are too meagre we throw up the job, which is the cause, believe me, of all rational suicide. Joe Garland would starve to death on the wages you get from life. You see, he is made differently. So would you starve on his wages, which are singing, and love--“

“Lust, if you will pardon me,” was the interruption.

Dr. Kennedy smiled.

“Love, to you, is a word of four letters and a definition which you have extracted from the dictionary. But love, real love, dewy and palpitant and tender, you do not know. If God made you and me, and men and women, believe me He made love, too. But to come back. It’s about time you quit hounding Joe Garland. It is not worthy of you, and it is cowardly. The thing for you to do is to reach out and lend him a hand.”

“Why I, any more than you?” the other demanded. “Why don’t you reach him a hand?”

“I have. I’m reaching him a hand now. I’m trying to get you not to down the Promotion Committee’s proposition of sending him away. I got him the job at Hilo with Mason and Fitch. I’ve got him half a dozen jobs, out of every one of which you drove him. But never mind that. Don’t forget one thing--and a little frankness won’t hurt you--it is not fair play to saddle another fault on Joe Garland; and you know that you, least of all, are the man to do it. Why, man, it's not good taste. It's positively indecent."

"Now I don't follow you," Percival Ford answered. "You're up in the air with some obscure scientific theory of heredity and personal irresponsibility. But how any theory can hold Joe Garland irresponsible for his wrongdoings and at the same time hold me personally responsible for them--more responsible than any one else, including Joe Garland--is beyond me."

"It's a matter of delicacy, I suppose, or of taste, that prevents you from following me," Dr. Kennedy snapped out. "It's all very well, for the sake of society, tacitly to ignore some things, but you do more than tacitly ignore."

"What is it, pray, that I tacitly ignore!"

Dr. Kennedy was angry. A deeper red than that of constitutional Scotch and soda suffused his face, as he answered:

"Your father's son."

"Now just what do you mean?"

"Damn it, man, you can't ask me to be plainer spoken than that. But if you will, all right--Isaac Ford's son--Joe Garland--your brother."

Percival Ford sat quietly, an annoyed and shocked expression on his face. Kennedy looked at him curiously, then, as the slow minutes dragged by, became embarrassed and frightened.

"My God!" he cried finally, "you don't mean to tell me that you didn't know!"

As in answer, Percival Ford's cheeks turned slowly grey.

"It's a ghastly joke," he said; "a ghastly joke."

The doctor had got himself in hand.

"Everybody knows it," he said. "I thought you knew it. And since you don't know it, it's time you did, and I'm glad of the chance of setting you straight. Joe Garland and you are brothers--half-brothers."

"It's a lie," Ford cried. "You don't mean it. Joe Garland's mother was Eliza Kunilio." (Dr. Kennedy nodded.) "I remember her well, with her duck pond and taro patch. His father was Joseph Garland, the beach-comber." (Dr. Kennedy shook his head.) "He died only two or three years ago. He used to get drunk. There's where Joe got his dissoluteness. There's the heredity for you."

"And nobody told you," Kennedy said wonderingly, after a pause.

"Dr. Kennedy, you have said something terrible, which I cannot allow to pass. You must either prove or, or . . . "

"Prove it yourself. Turn around and look at him. You've got him in profile. Look at his nose. That's Isaac Ford's. Yours is a thin edition of it. That's right. Look. The lines are fuller, but they are all there."

Percival Ford looked at the Kanaka half-breed who played under the hau tree, and it seemed, as by some illumination, that he was gazing on a wraith of himself. Feature after feature flashed up an unmistakable resemblance. Or, rather, it was he who was the wraith of that other full-muscled and generously moulded man. And his features, and that other man's features, were all reminiscent of Isaac Ford. And nobody had told him. Every line of Isaac Ford's face he knew. Miniatures, portraits, and photographs of his father were passing in review through his mind, and here and there, over and again, in the face before him, he caught resemblances and vague hints of likeness. It was devil's work that could reproduce the austere features of Isaac Ford in the loose and sensuous features before him. Once, the man turned, and for one flashing instant it seemed to Percival Ford that he saw his father, dead and gone, peering at him out of the face of Joe Garland.

"It's nothing at all," he could faintly hear Dr. Kennedy saying, "They were all mixed up in the old days. You know that. You've seen it all your life. Sailors married queens and begat princesses and all the rest of it. It was the usual thing in the Islands."

"But not with my father," Percival Ford interrupted.

"There> you are." Kennedy shrugged his shoulders. "Cosmic sap and smoke of life. Old Isaac Ford was straitlaced and all the rest, and I know there's no explaining it, least of all to himself. He understood it no more than you do. Smoke of life, that's all. And don't forget one thing, Ford. There was a dab of unruly blood in old Isaac Ford, and Joe Garland inherited it--all of it, smoke of life and cosmic sap; while you inherited all of old Isaac's ascetic blood. And just because your blood is cold, well-ordered, and well-disciplined, is no reason that you should frown upon Joe Garland. When Joe Garland undoes the work you do, remember that it is only old Isaac Ford on both sides, undoing with one hand what he does with the other. You are Isaac Ford's right hand, let us say; Joe Garland is his left hand."

Percival Ford made no answer, and in the silence Dr. Kennedy finished his forgotten Scotch and soda. From across the grounds an automobile hooted imperatively.

“There’s the machine,” Dr. Kennedy said, rising. “I’ve got to run. I’m sorry I’ve shaken you up, and at the same time I’m glad. And know one thing, Isaac Ford’s dab of unruly blood was remarkably small, and Joe Garland got it all. And one other thing. If your father’s left hand offend you, don’t smite it off. Besides, Joe is all right. Frankly, if I could choose between you and him to live with me on a desert isle, I’d choose Joe.”

Little bare-legged children ran about him, playing, on the grass; but Percival Ford did not see them. He was gazing steadily at the singer under the hau tree. He even changed his position once, to get closer. The clerk of the Seaside went by, limping with age and dragging his reluctant feet. He had lived forty years on the Islands. Percival Ford beckoned to him, and the clerk came respectfully, and wondering that he should be noticed by Percival Ford.

“John,” Ford said, “I want you to give me some information. Won’t you sit down?”

The clerk sat down awkwardly, stunned by the unexpected honour. He blinked at the other and mumbled, “Yes, sir, thank you.”

“John, who is Joe Garland?”

The clerk stared at him, blinked, cleared his throat, and said nothing.

“Go on,” Percival Ford commanded.

“Who is he?”

“You’re joking me, sir,” the other managed to articulate.

“I spoke to you seriously.”

The clerk recoiled from him.

“You don’t mean to say you don’t know?” he questioned, his question in itself the answer.

“I want to know.”

“Why, he’s--“ John broke off and looked about him helplessly. “Hadn’t you better ask somebody else? Everybody thought you knew. We always thought . . . “

“Yes, go ahead.”

“We always thought that that was why you had it in for him.”

Photographs and miniatures of Isaac Ford were trooping through his son’s brain, and ghosts of Isaac Ford seemed in the air about hint “I wish you good night, sir,” he could hear the clerk saying, and he saw him beginning to limp away.

“John,” he called abruptly.

John came back and stood near him, blinking and nervously moistening his lips.

“You haven’t told me yet, you know.”

“Oh, about Joe Garland?”

“Yes, about Joe Garland. Who is he?”

“He’s your brother, sir, if I say it who shouldn’t.”

<“Thank you, John. Good night.”

“And you didn’t know?” the old man queried, content to linger, now that the crucial point was past.

“Thank you, John. Good night,” was the response.

“Yes, sir, thank you, sir. I think it’s going to rain. Good night, sir.”

Out of the clear sky, filled only with stars and moonlight, fell a rain so fine and attenuated as to resemble a vapour spray. Nobody minded it; the children played on, running bare-legged over the grass and leaping into the sand; and in a few minutes it was gone. In the south-east, Diamond Head, a black blot, sharply defined, silhouetted its crater-form against the stars. At sleepy intervals the surf flung its foam across the sands to the grass, and far out could be seen the black specks of swimmers under the moon. The voices of the singers, singing a waltz, died away; and in the silence, from somewhere under the trees, arose the laugh of a woman that was a love-cry. It startled Percival Ford, and it reminded him of Dr. Kennedy’s phrase. Down by the outrigger canoes, where they lay hauled out on the sand, he saw men and women, Kanakas, reclining languorously, like lotus-eaters, the women in white holokus; and against one such holoku he saw the dark head of the steersman of the canoe resting upon the woman’s shoulder. Farther down, where the strip of sand widened at the entrance to the lagoon, he saw a man and woman walking side by side. As they drew near the light lanai, he saw the woman’s hand go down to her waist and disengage a girdling arm. And as they passed him, Percival Ford nodded to a captain he knew, and to a major’s daughter. Smoke of life, that was it, an ample phrase. And again, from under the dark algaroba tree arose the laugh of a woman that was a love-cry; and past his chair, on the way to bed, a bare-legged youngster was led by a chiding Japanese nurse-maid. The voices of the singers broke softly and meltingly into an Hawaiian love-song, and officers and women, with encircling arms, were gliding and whirling on the lanai; and once again the woman laughed under the algaroba trees.

And Percival Ford knew only disapproval of it all. He was irritated by the love-laugh of the woman, by the steersman with pillowed head on the white holoku, by the couples that walked on the beach, by the officers and women that danced, and by the voices of the singers singing of love, and his brother singing there with them under the hau tree. The woman that laughed especially irritated him. A curious train of thought was aroused. He was Isaac Ford's son, and what had happened with Isaac Ford might happen with him. He felt in his cheeks the faint heat of a blush at the thought, and experienced a poignant sense of shame. He was appalled by what was in his blood. It was like learning suddenly that his father had been a leper and that his own blood might bear the taint of that dread disease. Isaac Ford, the austere soldier of the Lord--the old hypocrite! What difference between him and any beach-comber? The house of pride that Percival Ford had builded was tumbling about his ears.

The hours passed, the army people laughed and danced, the native orchestra played on, and Percival Ford wrestled with the abrupt and overwhelming problem that had been thrust upon him. He prayed quietly, his elbow on the table, his head bowed upon his hand, with all the appearance of any tired onlooker. Between the dances the army men and women and the civilians fluttered up to him and buzzed conventionally, and when they went back to the lanai he took up his wrestling where he had left it off.

He began to patch together his shattered ideal of Isaac Ford, and for cement he used a cunning and subtle logic. It was of the sort that is compounded in the brain laboratories of egotists, and it worked. It was incontrovertible that his father had been made of finer clay than those about him; but still, old Isaac had been only in the process of becoming, while he, Percival Ford, had become. As proof of it, he rehabilitated his father and at the same time exalted himself. His lean little ego waxed to colossal proportions. He was great enough to forgive. He glowed at the thought of it. Isaac Ford had been great, but he was greater, for he could forgive Isaac Ford and even restore him to the holy place in his memory, though the place was not quite so holy as it had been. Also, he applauded Isaac Ford for having ignored the outcome of his one step aside. Very well, he, too, would ignore it.

The dance was breaking up. The orchestra had finished "Aloha Oe" and was preparing to go home. Percival Ford clapped his hands for the Japanese servant.

“You tell that man I want to see him,” he said, pointing out Joe Garland. “Tell him to come here, now.”

Joe Garland approached and halted respectfully several paces away, nervously fingering the guitar which he still carried. The other did not ask him to sit down.

“You are my brother,” he said.

“Why, everybody knows that,” was the reply, in tones of wonderment.

“Yes, so I understand,” Percival Ford said dryly. “But I did not know it till this evening.”

The half-brother waited uncomfortably in the silence that followed, during which Percival Ford coolly considered his next utterance.

“You remember that first time I came to school and the boys ducked me?” he asked. “Why did you take my part?”

The half-brother smiled bashfully.

“Because you knew?”

“Yes, that was why.”

“But I didn’t know,” Percival Ford said in the same dry fashion.

“Yes,” the other said.

Anothe silence fell. Servants were beginning to put out the lights on the lanai.

“You know . . . now,” the half-brother said simply.

Percival Ford frowned. Then he looked the other over with a considering eye.

“How much will you take to leave the Islands and never come back?” he demanded.

“And never come back?” Joe Garland faltered. “It is the only land I know. Other lands are cold. I do not know other lands. I have many friends here. In other lands there would not be one voice to say, ‘Aloha, Joe, my boy.’“

“I said never to come back,” Percival Ford reiterated. “The Alameda sails tomorrow for San Francisco.”

Joe Garland was bewildered.

“But why?” he asked. “You know now that we are brothers.”

“That is why,” was the retort. “As you said yourself, everybody knows. I will make it worth your while.”

All awkwardness and embarrassment disappeared from Joe Garland. Birth and station were bridged and reversed.

“You want me to go?” he demanded.

“I want you to go and never come back,” Percival Ford answered.

And in that moment, flashing and fleeting, it was given him to see his brother tower above him like a mountain, and to feel himself dwindle and dwarf to microscopic insignificance. But it is not well for one to see himself truly, nor can one so see himself for long and live; and only for that flashing moment did Percival Ford see himself and his brother in true perspective. The next moment he was mastered by his meagre and insatiable ego.

“As I said, I will make it worth your while. You will not suffer. I will pay you well.”

“All right,” Joe Garland said. “I’ll go.”

He started to turn away.

“Joe,” the other called. “You see my lawyer tomorrow morning. Five hundred down and two hundred a month as long as you stay away.”

“You are very kind,” Joe Garland answered softly. “You are too kind. And anyway, I guess I don’t want your money. I go tomorrow on the Alameda.”

He walked away, but did not say goodbye.

Percival Ford clapped his hands.

“Boy,” he said to the Japanese, “a lemonade.”

And over the lemonade he smiled long and contentedly to himself.

The Hussy

THERE are some stories that have to be true-the sort that cannot be fabricated by a ready fiction-reckoner. And by the same token there are some men with stories to tell who cannot be doubted. Such a man was Julian Jones. Although I doubt if the average reader of this will believe the story Julian Jones told me. Nevertheless I believe it. So thoroughly am I convinced of its verity that I am willing, nay, eager, to invest capital in the enterprise and embark personally on the adventure to a far land.

It was in the Australian Building at the Panama Pacific Exposition that I met him. I was standing before an exhibit of facsimiles of the record nuggets which had been discovered in the goldfields of the Antipodes. Knobbed, misshapen and massive, it was as difficult to believe that they were not real gold as it was to believe the accompanying statistics of their weights and values.

“That’s what those kangaroo-hunters call a nugget,” boomed over my shoulder directly at the largest of the specimens.

I turned and looked up into the dim blue eyes of Julian Jones. I looked up, for he stood something like six feet four inches in height. His hair, a wispy, sandy yellow, seemed as dimmed and faded as his eyes. It may have been the sun which had washed out his colouring; at least his face bore the evidence of a prodigious and ardent sun-burn which had long since faded to yellow. As his eyes turned from the exhibit and focussed on mine I noted a queer look in them as of one who vainly tries to recall some fact of supreme importance.

“What’s the matter with it as a nugget?” I demanded.

The remote, indwelling expression went out of his eyes as he boomed

“Why, its size.”

“It does seem large,” I admitted. “But there’s no doubt it’s authentic. The Australian Government would scarcely dare-“

“Large!” he interrupted, with a sniff and a sneer.

“Largest ever discovered-“ I started on.

“Ever discovered!” His dim eyes smouldered hotly as he proceeded. “Do you think that every lump of gold ever discovered has got into the newspapers and encyclopedias?”

“Well,” I replied judicially, “if there’s one that hasn’t, I don’t see how we’re to know about it. If a really big nugget, or nugget-finder, elects to blush unseen-“

“But it didn’t,” he broke in quickly. “I saw it with my own eyes, and, besides, I’m too tanned to blush anyway. I’m a railroad man and I’ve been in the tropics a lot. Why, I used to be the colour of mahogany-real old mahogany, and have been taken for a blue-eyed Spaniard more than once-“

It was my turn to interrupt, and I did.

“Was that nugget bigger than those in there, Mr.-er-?”

“Jones, Julian Jones is my name.”

He dug into an inner pocket and produced an envelope addressed to such a person, care of General Delivery, San Francisco; and I, in turn, presented him with my card.

“Pleased to know you, sir,” he said, extending his hand, his voice booming as if accustomed to loud noises or wide spaces. “Of course I’ve heard of you, seen your picture in the papers, and all that, and, though I say it that shouldn’t, I want to say that I didn’t care a rap about those articles you wrote on Mexico. You’re wrong, all wrong. You make the mistake of all Gringos in thinking a Mexican is a white man. He ain’t. None of them ain’t-Greasers, Spiggoties, Latin-Americans and all the rest of the cattle. Why, sir, they don’t think like we think, or reason, or act. Even their multiplication table is different. You think seven times seven is forty-nine; but not them. They work it out different. And white isn’t white to them, either. Let me give you an example. Buying coffee retail for house-keeping in one-pound or ten-pound lots-“

“How big was that nugget you referred to?” I queried firmly. “As big as the biggest of those?”

“Bigger,” he said quietly. “Bigger than the whole blamed exhibit of them put together, and then some.” He paused and regarded me with a steadfast gaze. “I don’t see no reason why I shouldn’t go into the matter with you. You’ve got a reputation a man ought to be able to trust, and I’ve read you’ve done some tall skylarking yourself in out-of-the-way places. I’ve been browsing around with an eye open for some one to go in with me on the proposition.”

“You can trust me,” I said.

And here I am, blazing out into print with the whole story just as he told it to me as we sat on a bench by the lagoon before the Palace of Fine Arts with the cries of the sea gulls in our ears. Well, he should have kept his appointment with me. But I anticipate.

As we started to leave the building and hunt for a seat, a small woman, possibly thirty years of age, with a washed-out complexion of the farmer's wife sort, darted up to him in a bird-like way, for all the world like the darting veering gulls over our heads and fastened herself to his arm with the accuracy and dispatch and inevitableness of a piece of machinery.

"There you go!" she shrilled. "A-trottin' right off and never givin' me a thought."

I was formally introduced to her. It was patent that she had never heard of me, and she surveyed me bleakly with shrewd black eyes, set close together and as beady and restless as a bird's.

"You ain't goin' to tell him about that hussy?" she complained.

"Well, now, Sarah, this is business, you see," he argued plaintively. "I've been lookin' for a likely man this long while, and now that he's shown up it seems to me I got a right to give him the hang of what happened."

The small woman made no reply, but set her thin lips in a needle-like line. She gazed straight before her at the Tower of Jewels with so austere an expression that no glint of refracted sunlight could soften it. We proceeded slowly to the lagoon, managed to obtain an unoccupied seat, and sat down with mutual sighs of relief as we released our weights from our tortured sightseeing feet.

"One does get so mortal weary," asserted the small woman, almost defiantly.

Two swans waddled up from the mirroring water and investigated us. When their suspicions of our niggardliness or lack of peanuts had been confirmed, Jones half-turned his back on his life-partner and gave me his story.

"Ever been in Ecuador? Then take my advice-and don't. Though I take that back, for you and me might be hitting it for there together if you can rustle up the faith in me and the backbone in yourself for the trip. Well, anyway, it ain't so many years ago that I came ambling in there on a rusty, foul-bottomed, tramp collier from Australia, forty-three days from land to land. Seven knots was her speed when everything favoured, and we'd had a two weeks' gale to the north'ard of New Zealand, and broke our engines down for two days off Pitcairn Island.

"I was no sailor on her. I'm a locomotive engineer. But I'd made friends with the skipper at Newcastle an' come along as his guest for as far as Guayaquil. You see, I'd heard wages was 'way up on the American railroad runnin' from that place over the Andes to Quito. Now Guayaquil-"

"Is a fever-hole," I interpolated.

Julian Jones nodded.

"Thomas Nast died there of it within a month after he landed.-He was our great American cartoonist," I added.

"Don't know him," Julian Jones said shortly. "But I do know he wasn't the first to pass out by a long shot. Why, look you the way I found it. The pilot grounds is sixty miles down the river. 'How's the fever?' said I to the pilot who came aboard in the early morning. 'See that Hamburg barque,' said he, pointing to a sizable ship at anchor. 'Captain and fourteen men dead of it already, and the cook and two men dying right now, and they're the last left of her.'

"And by jinks he told the truth. And right then they were dying forty a day in Guayaquil of Yellow Jack. But that was nothing, as I was to find out. Bubonic plague and small-pox were raging, while dysentery and pneumonia were reducing the population, and the railroad was raging worst of all. I mean that. For them that insisted in riding on it, it was more dangerous than all the other diseases put together.

"When we dropped anchor off Guayaquil half a dozen skippers from other steamers came on board to warn our skipper not to let any of his crew or officers go ashore except the ones he wanted to lose. A launch came off for me from Duran, which is on the other side of the river and is the terminal of the railroad. And it brought off a man that soared up the gangway three jumps at a time he was that eager to get aboard. When he hit the deck he hadn't time to speak to any of us. He just leaned out over the rail and shook his fist at Duran and shouted: 'I beat you to it! I beat you to it!'

"'Who'd you beat to it, friend?' I asked. 'The railroad,' he said, as he unbuckled the straps and took off a big '44 Colt's automatic from where he wore it handy on his left side under his coat, 'I staved as long as I agreed-three months-and it didn't get me. I was a conductor.'

"And that was the railroad I was to work for. All of which was nothing to what he told me in the next few minutes. The road ran from sea level at Duran up to twelve thousand feet on Chimborazo and down to ten thousand at Quito on the other side the range. And it was so dangerous that the trains didn't run nights. The through passengers had to get off and sleep in the towns at night while the train waited for daylight. And each train carried a guard of Ecuadoriano soldiers which was the most dangerous of all. They were supposed to protect the train crews, but whenever trouble started they unlimbered their rifles and joined the mob. You see, whenever a train wreck occurred, the first cry of the spiggoties was 'Kill the Gringos!' They always did that, and proceeded to kill the train crew and whatever chance Gringo passengers that'd escaped being killed in the accident. Which is their kind of arithmetic, which I told you a while back as being different from ours.

"Shucks! Before the day was out I was to find out for myself that that ex-conductor wasn't lying. It was over at Duran. I was to take my run on the first division out to Quito, for which place I was to start next morning-only one through train running every twenty-four hours. It was the afternoon of my first day, along about four o'clock, when the boilers of the GOVERNOR HANCOCK exploded and she sank in sixty feet of water alongside the dock. She was the big ferry boat that carried the railroad passengers across the river to Guayaquil. It was a bad accident, but it was the cause of worse that followed. By half-past four, big trainloads began to arrive. It was a feast day and they'd run an excursion up country but of Guayaquil, and this was the crowd coming back.

"And the crowd-there was five thousand of them-wanted to get ferried across, and the ferry was at the bottom of the river, which wasn't our fault. But by the Spiggoty arithmetic, it was. 'Kill the Gringos!' shouts one of them. And right there the beans were spilled. Most of us got away by the skin of our teeth. I raced on the heels of the Master Mechanic, carrying one of his babies for him, for the locomotives that was just pulling out. You see, way down there away from everywhere they just got to save their locomotives in times of trouble, because, without them, a railroad can't be run. Half a dozen American wives and as many children were crouching on the cab floors along with the rest of us when we pulled out; and the Ecuadoriano soldiers, who should have been protecting our lives and property, turned loose with their rifles and must have given us all of a thousand rounds before we got out of range.

"We camped up country and didn't come back to clean up until next day. It was some cleaning. Every flat-car, box-car, coach, asthmatic switch engine, and even hand-car that mob of Spiggoties had shoved off the dock into sixty feet of water on top of the GOVERNOR HANCOCK. They'd burnt the round house, set fire to the coal bunkers, and made a scandal of the repair shops. Oh, yes, and there were three of our fellows they'd got that we had to bury mighty quick. It's hot weather all the time down there."

Julian Jones came to a full pause and over his shoulder studied the straight-before-her gaze and forbidding expression of his wife's face.

"I ain't forgotten the nugget," he assured me.

"Nor the hussy," the little woman snapped, apparently at the mud-hens paddling on the surface of the lagoon.

"I've been travelling toward the nugget right along-"

"There was never no reason for you to stay in that dangerous country," his wife snapped in on him.

"Now, Sarah," he appealed. "I was working for you right along." And to me he explained: "The risk was big, but so was the pay. Some months I earned as high as five hundred gold. And here was Sarah waiting for me back in Nebraska-"

"An' us engaged two years," she complained to the Tower of Jewels.

"-What of the strike, and me being blacklisted, and getting typhoid down in Australia, and everything," he went on. "And luck was with me on that railroad. Why, I saw fellows fresh from the States pass out, some of them not a week on their first run. If the diseases and the railroad didn't get them, then it was the Spiggoties got them. But it just wasn't my fate, even that time I rode my engine down to the bottom of a forty-foot washout. I lost my fireman; and the conductor and the Superintendent of Rolling Stock (who happened to be running down to Duran to meet his bride) had their heads knifed off by the Spiggoties and paraded around on poles. But I lay snug as a bug under a couple of feet of tender coal, and they thought I'd headed for tall timber-lay there a day and a night till the excitement cooled down. Yes, I was lucky. The worst that happened to me was I caught a cold once, and another time had a carbuncle. But the other fellows! They died like flies, what of Yellow Jack, pneumonia, the Spiggoties, and the railroad. The trouble was I didn't have much chance to pal with them. No sooner'd I get some intimate with one of them he'd up and die-all but a fireman named Andrews, and he went loco for keeps.

"I made good on my job from the first, and lived in Quito in a 'dobe house with whacking big Spanish tiles on the roof that I'd rented. And I never had much trouble with the Spiggoties, what of letting them sneak free rides in the tender or on the cowcatcher. Me throw them off? Never! I took notice, when Jack Harris put off a bunch of them, that I attended his funeral MUY PRONTO-“

“Speak English,” the little woman beside him snapped.

“Sarah just can’t bear to tolerate me speaking Spanish,” he apologized. “It gets so on her nerves that I promised not to. Well, as I was saying, the goose hung high and everything was going hunky-dory, and I was piling up my wages to come north to Nebraska and marry Sarah, when I run on to Vahna-“

“The hussy!” Sarah hissed.

“Now, Sarah,” her towering giant of a husband begged, “I just got to mention her or I can’t tell about the nugget.-It was one night when I was taking a locomotive-no train-down to Amato, about thirty miles from Quito. Seth Manners was my fireman. I was breaking him in to engineer for himself, and I was letting him run the locomotive while I sat up in his seat meditating about Sarah here. I’d just got a letter from her, begging as usual for me to come home and hinting as usual about the dangers of an unmarried man like me running around loose in a country full of senoritas and fandangos. Lord! If she could only a-seen them. Positive frights, that’s what they are, their faces painted white as corpses and their lips red as-as some of the train wrecks I’ve helped clean up.

“It was a lovely April night, not a breath of wind, and a tremendous big moon shining right over the top of Chimborazo.-Some mountain that. The railroad skirted it twelve thousand feet above sea level, and the top of it ten thousand feet higher than that.

“Mebbe I was drowsing, with Seth running the engine; but he slammed on the brakes so sudden hard that I darn near went through the cab window.

“‘What the-‘ I started to yell, and ‘Holy hell,’ Seth says, as both of us looked at what was on the track. And I agreed with Seth entirely in his remark. It was an Indian girl-and take it from me, Indians ain’t Spiggoties by any manner of means. Seth had managed to fetch a stop within twenty feet of her, and us bowling down hill at that! But the girl. She-“

I saw the form of Mrs. Julian Jones stiffen, although she kept her gaze fixed balefully upon two mud-hens that were prowling along the lagoon shallows below us. “The hussy!” she hissed, once and implacably. Jones had stopped at the sound, but went on immediately.

"She was a tall girl, slim and slender, you know the kind, with black hair, remarkably long hanging, down loose behind her, as she stood there no more afraid than nothing, her arms spread out to stop the engine. She was wearing a slimpsy sort of garment wrapped around her that wasn't cloth but ocelot skins, soft and dappled, and silky. It was all she had on-"

"The hussy!" breathed Mrs. Jones.

But Mr. Jones went on, making believe that he was unaware of the interruption.

"'Hell of a way to stop a locomotive,' I complained at Seth, as I climbed down on to the right of way. I walked past our engine and up to the girl, and what do you think? Her eyes were shut tight. She was trembling that violent that you would see it by the moonlight. And she was barefoot, too.

"'What's the row?' I said, none too gentle. She gave a start, seemed to come out of her trance, and opened her eyes. Say! They were big and black and beautiful. Believe me, she was some looker-"

"The hussy!" At which hiss the two mud-hens veered away a few feet. But Jones was getting himself in hand, and didn't even blink.

"'What are you stopping this locomotive for?' I demanded in Spanish. Nary an answer. She stared at me, then at the snorting engine and then burst into tears, which you'll admit is uncommon behaviour for an Indian woman.

"'If you try to get rides that way,' I slung at her in Spiggoty Spanish (which they tell me is some different from regular Spanish), 'you'll be taking one smeared all over our cowcatcher and headlight, and it'll be up to my fireman to scrape you off.'

"My Spiggoty Spanish wasn't much to brag on, but I could see she understood, though she only shook her head and wouldn't speak. But great Moses, she was some looker-"

I glanced apprehensively at Mrs. Jones, who must have caught me out of the tail of her eye, for she muttered: "If she hadn't been do you think he'd a-taken her into his house to live?"

"Now hold on, Sarah," he protested. "That ain't fair. Besides, I'm telling this.-Next thing, Seth yells at me, 'Goin' to stay here all night?'

"'Come on,' I said to the girl, 'and climb on board. But next time you want a ride don't flag a locomotive between stations.' She followed along; but when I got to the step and turned to give her a lift-up, she wasn't there. I went forward again. Not a sign of her. Above and below was sheer cliff, and the track stretched ahead a hundred yards clear and empty. And then I spotted her, crouched down right against the cowcatcher, that close I'd almost stepped on her. If we'd started up, we'd have run over her in a second. It was all so nonsensical, I never could make out her actions. Maybe she was trying to suicide. I grabbed her by the wrist and jerked her none too gentle to her feet. And she came along all right. Women do know when a man means business."

I glanced from this Goliath to his little, bird-eyed spouse, and wondered if he had ever tried to mean business with her.

"Seth kicked at first, but I boosted her into the cab and made her sit up beside me-"

"And I suppose Seth was busy running the engine," Mrs. Jones observed.

"I was breaking him in, wasn't I?" Mr. Jones protested. "So we made the run into Amato. She'd never opened her mouth once, and no sooner'd the engine stopped than she'd jumped to the ground and was gone. Just like that. Not a thank you kindly. Nothing.

"But next morning when we came to pull out for Quito with a dozen flat cars loaded with rails, there she was in the cab waiting for us; and in the daylight I could see how much better a looker she was than the night before.

"'Huh! she's adopted you,' Seth grins. And it looked like it. She just stood there and looked at me-at us-like a loving hound dog that you love, that you've caught with a string of sausages inside of him, and that just knows you ain't going to lift a hand to him. 'Go chase yourself!' I told her PRONTO." (Mrs. Jones her proximity noticeable with a wince at the Spanish word.) "You see, Sarah, I'd no use for her, even at the start."

Mrs. Jones stiffened. Her lips moved soundlessly, but I knew to what syllables.

"And what made it hardest was Seth jeering at me. 'You can't shake her that way,' he said. 'You saved her life-' 'I didn't,' I said sharply; 'it was you.' 'But she thinks you did, which is the same thing,' he came back at me. 'And now she belongs to you. Custom of the country, as you ought to know.'"

"Heathenish," said Mrs. Jones, and though her steady gaze was set upon the Tower of Jewels I knew she was making no reference to its architecture.

"'She's come to do light housekeeping for you,' Seth grinned. I let him rave, though afterwards I kept him throwing in the coal too fast to work his mouth very much. Why, say, when I got to the spot where I picked her up, and stopped the train for her to get off, she just flopped down on her knees, got a hammerlock with her arms around my knees, and cried all over my shoes. What was I to do?"

With no perceptible movement that I was aware of, Mrs. Jones advertised her certitude of knowledge of what SHE would have done.

"And the moment we pulled into Quito, she did what she'd done before-vanished. Sarah never believes me when I say how relieved I felt to be quit of her. But it was not to be. I got to my 'dobe house and managed a cracking fine dinner my cook had ready for me. She was mostly Spiggoty and half Indian, and her name was Paloma.-Now, Sarah, haven't I told you she was older'n a grandmother, and looked more like a buzzard than a dove? Why, I couldn't bear to eat with her around where I could look at her. But she did make things comfortable, and she was some economical when it came to marketing.

"That afternoon, after a big long siesta, what'd I find in the kitchen, just as much at home as if she belonged there, but that blamed Indian girl. And old Paloma was squatting at the girl's feet and rubbing the girl's knees and legs like for rheumatism, which I knew the girl didn't have from the way I'd sized up the walk of her, and keeping time to the rubbing with a funny sort of gibberish chant. And I let loose right there and then. As Sarah knows, I never could a-bear women around the house-young, unmarried women, I mean. But it was no go! Old Paloma sided with the girl, and said if the girl went she went, too. Also, she called me more kinds of a fool than the English language has accommodation for. You'd like the Spanish lingo, Sarah, for expressing yourself in such ways, and you'd have liked old Paloma, too. She was a good woman, though she didn't have any teeth and her face could kill a strong man's appetite in the cradle.

"I gave in. I had to. Except for the excuse that she needed Vahna's help around the house (which she didn't at all), old Paloma never said why she stuck up for the girl. Anyway, Vahna was a quiet thing, never in the way. And she never gadded. Just sat in-doors jabbering with Paloma and helping with the chores. But I wasn't long in getting on to that she was afraid of something. She would look up, that anxious it hurt, whenever anybody called, like some of the boys to have a gas or a game of pedro. I tried to worm it out of Paloma what was worrying the girl, but all the old woman did was to look solemn and shake her head like all the devils in hell was liable to precipitate a visit on us.

"And then one day Vahna had a visitor. I'd just come in from a run and was passing the time of day with her-I had to be polite, even if she had butted in on me and come to live in my house for keeps-when I saw a queer expression come into her eyes. In the doorway stood an Indian boy. He looked like her, but was younger and slimmer. She took him into the kitchen and they must have had a great palaver, for he didn't leave until after dark. Inside the week he came back, but I missed him. When I got home, Paloma put a fat nugget of gold into my hand, which Vahna had sent him for. The blamed thing weighed all of two pounds and was worth more than five hundred dollars. She explained that Vahna wanted me to take it to pay for her keep. And I had to take it to keep peace in the house.

"Then, after a long time, came another visitor. We were sitting before the fire-"

"Him and the hussy," quoth Mrs. Jones.

"And Paloma," he added quickly.

"Him and his cook and his light housekeeper sitting by the fire," she amended.

"Oh, I admit Vahna did like me a whole heap," he asserted recklessly, then modified with a pang of caution: "A heap more than was good for her, seeing that I had no inclination her way.

"Well, as I was saying, she had another visitor. He was a lean, tall, white-headed old Indian, with a beak on him like an eagle. He walked right in without knocking. Vahna gave a little cry that was half like a yelp and half like a gasp, and flumped down on her knees before me, pleading to me with deer's eyes and to him with the eyes of a deer about to be killed that don't want to be killed. Then, for a minute that seemed as long as a life-time, she and the old fellow glared at each other. Paloma was the first to talk, in his own lingo, for he talked back to her. But great Moses, if he wasn't the high and mighty one! Paloma's old knees were shaking, and she cringed to him like a hound dog. And all this in my own house! I'd have thrown him out on his neck, only he was so old.

"If the things he said to Vahna were as terrible as the way he looked! Say! He just spit words at her! But Paloma kept whimpering and butting in, till something she said got across, because his face relaxed. He condescended to give me the once over and fired some question at Vahna. She hung her head, and looked foolish, and blushed, and then replied with a single word and a shake of the head. And with that he just naturally turned on his heel and beat it. I guess she'd said 'No.'

"For some time after that Vahna used to fluster up whenever she saw me. Then she took to the kitchen for a spell. But after a long time she began hanging around the big room again. She was still mighty shy, but she'd keep on following me about with those big eyes of hers-"

"The hussy!" I heard plainly. But Julian Jones and I were pretty well used to it by this time.

"I don't mind saying that I was getting some interested myself-oh, not in the way Sarah never lets up letting me know she thinks. That two-pound nugget was what had me going. If Vahna'd put me wise to where it came from, I could say good-bye to railroading and hit the high places for Nebraska and Sarah.

"And then the beans were spilled . . . by accident. Come a letter from Wisconsin. My Aunt Eliza 'd died and up and left me her big farm. I let out a whoop when I read it; but I could have canned my joy, for I was jobbed out of it by the courts and lawyers afterward-not a cent to me, and I'm still paying 'm in instalments.

"But I didn't know, then; and I prepared to pull back to God's country. Paloma got sore, and Vahna got the weeps. 'Don't go! Don't go!' That was her song. But I gave notice on my job, and wrote a letter to Sarah here-didn't I, Sarah?

"That night, sitting by the fire like at a funeral, Vahna really loosened up for the first time.

"'Don't go,' she says to me, with old Paloma nodding agreement with her. 'I'll show you where my brother got the nugget, if you don't go.' 'Too late,' said I. And I told her why.

"And told her about me waiting for you back in Nebraska," Mrs. Jones observed in cold, passionless tones.

"Now, Sarah, why should I hurt a poor Indian girl's feelings? Of course I didn't.

"Well, she and Paloma talked Indian some more, and then Vahna says: 'If you stay, I'll show you the biggest nugget that is the father of all other nuggets.' 'How big?' I asked. 'As big as me?' She laughed. 'Bigger than you,' she says, 'much, much bigger.' 'They don't grow that way,' I said. But she said she'd seen it and Paloma backed her up. Why, to listen to them you'd have thought there was millions in that one nugget. Paloma 'd never seen it herself, but she’d heard about it. A secret of the tribe which she couldn’t share, being only half Indian herself.”

Julian Jones paused and heaved a sigh.

“And they kept on insisting until I fell for-“

“The hussy,” said Mrs. Jones, pert as a bird, at the ready instant.

“‘No; for the nugget. What of Aunt Eliza’s farm I was rich enough to quit railroading, but not rich enough to turn my back on big money-and I just couldn’t help believing them two women. Gee! I could be another Vanderbilt, or J. P. Morgan. That’s the way I thought; and I started in to pump Vahna. But she wouldn’t give down. ‘You come along with me,’ she says. ‘We can be back here in a couple of weeks with all the gold the both of us can carry.’ ‘We’ll take a burro, or a pack-train of burros,’ was my suggestion. But nothing doing. And Paloma agreed with her. It was too dangerous. The Indians would catch us.

“The two of us pulled out when the nights were moonlight. We travelled only at night, and laid up in the days. Vahna wouldn’t let me light a fire, and I missed my coffee something fierce. We got up in the real high mountains of the main Andes, where the snow on one pass gave us some trouble; but the girl knew the trails, and, though we didn’t waste any time, we were a full week getting there. I know the general trend of our travel, because I carried a pocket compass; and the general trend is all I need to get there again, because of that peak. There’s no mistaking it. There ain’t another peak like it in the world. Now, I’m not telling you its particular shape, but when you and I head out for it from Quito I’ll take you straight to it.

“It’s no easy thing to climb, and the person doesn’t live that can climb it at night. We had to take the daylight to it, and didn’t reach the top till after sunset. Why, I could take hours and hours telling you about that last climb, which I won’t. The top was flat as a billiard table, about a quarter of an acre in size, and was almost clean of snow. Vahna told me that the great winds that usually blew, kept the snow off of it.

“We were winded, and I got mountain sickness so bad that I had to stretch out for a spell. Then, when the moon come up, I took a prowl around. It didn’t take long, and I didn’t catch a sight or a smell of anything that looked like gold. And when I asked Vahna, she only laughed and clapped her hands. Meantime my mountain sickness tuned up something fierce, and I sat down on a big rock to wait for it to ease down.

"'Come on, now,' I said, when I felt better. 'Stop your fooling and tell me where that nugget is.' 'It's nearer to you right now than I'll ever get,' she answered, her big eyes going sudden wistful. 'All you Gringos are alike. Gold is the love of your heart, and women don't count much.'

"I didn't say anything. That was no time to tell her about Sarah here. But Vahna seemed to shake off her depressed feelings, and began to laugh and tease again. 'How do you like it?' she asked. 'Like what?' 'The nugget you're sitting on.'

"I jumped up as though it was a red-hot stove. And all it was was a rock. I felt nay heart sink. Either she had gone clean loco or this was her idea of a joke. Wrong on both counts. She gave me the hatchet and told me to take a hack at the boulder, which I did, again and again, for yellow spots sprang up from under every blow. By the great Moses! it was gold! The whole blamed boulder!"

Jones rose suddenly to his full height and flung out his long arms, his face turned to the southern skies. The movement shot panic into the heart of a swan that had drawn nearer with amiably predatory designs. Its consequent abrupt retreat collided it with a stout old lady, who squealed and dropped her bag of peanuts. Jones sat down and resumed.

"Gold, I tell you, solid gold and that pure and soft that I chopped chips out of it. It had been coated with some sort of rain-proof paint or lacquer made out of asphalt or something. No wonder I'd taken it for a rock. It was ten feet long, all of five feet through, and tapering to both ends like an egg. Here. Take a look at this."

From his pocket he drew and opened a leather case, from which he took an object wrapped in tissue-paper. Unwrapping it, he dropped into my hand a chip of pure soft gold, the size of a ten-dollar gold-piece. I could make out the greyish substance on one side with which it had been painted.

"I chopped that from one end of the thing," Jones went on, replacing the chip in its paper and leather case. "And lucky I put it in my pocket. For right at my back came one loud word-more like a croak than a word, in my way of thinking. And there was that lean old fellow with the eagle beak that had dropped in on us one night. And there was about thirty Indians with him-all slim young fellows.

"Vahna'd flopped down and begun whimpering, but I told her, 'Get up and make friends with them for me.' 'No, no,' she cried. 'This is death. Good-bye, AMIGO-'"

Here Mrs. Jones winced, and her husband abruptly checked the particular flow of his narrative.

"'Then get up and fight along with me,' I said to her. And she did. She was some hellion, there on the top of the world, clawing and scratching tooth and nail-a regular she cat. And I wasn't idle, though all I had was that hatchet and my long arms. But they were too many for me, and there was no place for me to put my back against a wall. When I come to, minutes after they'd cracked me on the head-here, feel this."

Removing his hat, Julian Jones guided my finger tips through his thatch of sandy hair until they sank into an indentation. It was fully three inches long, and went into the bone itself of the skull.

"When I come to, there was Vahna spread-eagled on top of the nugget, and the old fellow with a beak jabbering away solemnly as if going through some sort of religious exercises. In his hand he had a stone knife-you know, a thin, sharp sliver of some obsidian-like stuff same as they make arrowheads out of. I couldn't lift a hand, being held down, and being too weak besides. And-well, anyway, that stone knife did for her, and me they didn't even do the honour of killing there on top their sacred peak. They chucked me off of it like so much carrion.

"And the buzzards didn't get me either. I can see the moonlight yet, shining on all those peaks of snow, as I went down. Why, sir, it was a five-hundred-foot fall, only I didn't make it. I went into a big snow-drift in a crevice. And when I come to (hours after I know, for it was full day when I next saw the sun), I found myself in a regular snow-cave or tunnel caused by the water from the melting snow running along the ledge. In fact, the stone above actually overhung just beyond where I first landed. A few feet more to the side, either way, and I'd almost be going yet. It was a straight miracle, that's what it was.

"But I paid for it. It was two years and over before I knew what happened. All I knew was that I was Julian Jones and that I'd been blacklisted in the big strike, and that I was married to Sarah here. I mean that. I didn't know anything in between, and when Sarah tried to talk about it, it gave me pains in the head. I mean my head was queer, and I knew it was queer.

"And then, sitting on the porch of her father's farmhouse back in Nebraska one moonlight evening, Sarah came out and put that gold chip into my hand. Seems she'd just found it in the torn lining of the trunk I'd brought back from Ecuador-I who for two years didn't even know I'd been to Ecuador, or Australia, or anything! Well, I just sat there looking at the chip in the moonlight, and turning it over and over and figuring what it was and where it'd come from, when all of a sudden there was a snap inside my head as if something had broken, and then I could see Vahna spread-eagled on that big nugget and the old fellow with the beak waving the stone knife, and . . . and everything. That is, everything that had happened from the time I first left Nebraska to when I crawled to the daylight out of the snow after they had chucked me off the mountain-top. But everything that'd happened after that I'd clean forgotten. When Sarah said I was her husband, I wouldn't listen to her. Took all her family and the preacher that'd married us to convince me.

"Later on I wrote to Seth Manners. The railroad hadn't killed him yet, and he pieced out a lot for me. I'll show you his letters. I've got them at the hotel. One day, he said, making his regular run, I crawled out on to the track. I didn't stand upright, I just crawled. He took me for a calf, or a big dog, at first. I wasn't anything human, he said, and I didn't know him or anything. As near as I can make out, it was ten days after the mountain-top to the time Seth picked me up. What I ate I don't know. Maybe I didn't eat. Then it was doctors at Quito, and Paloma nursing me (she must have packed that gold chip in my trunk), until they found out I was a man without a mind, and the railroad sent me back to Nebraska. At any rate, that's what Seth writes me. Of myself, I don't know. But Sarah here knows. She corresponded with the railroad before they shipped me and all that."

Mrs. Jones nodded affirmation of his words, sighed and evidenced unmistakable signs of eagerness to go.

"I ain't been able to work since," her husband continued. "And I ain't been able to figure out how to get back that big nugget. Sarah's got money of her own, and she won't let go a penny-"

"He won't get down to THAT country no more!" she broke forth.

"But, Sarah, Vahna's dead-you know that," Julian Jones protested.

"I don't know anything about anything," she answered decisively, "except that THAT country is no place for a married man."

Her lips snapped together, and she fixed an unseeing stare across to where the afternoon sun was beginning to glow into sunset. I gazed for a moment at her face, white, plump, tiny, and implacable, and gave her up.

“How do you account for such a mass of gold being there?” I queried of Julian Jones. “A solid-gold meteor that fell out of the sky?”

“Not for a moment.” He shook his head. “ It was carried there by the Indians.”

“Up a mountain like that-and such enormous weight and size!” I objected.

“Just as easy,” he smiled. “I used to be stumped by that proposition myself, after I got my memory back. Now how in Sam Hill-‘ I used to begin, and then spend hours figuring at it. And then when I got the answer I felt downright idiotic, it was that easy.” He paused, then announced: “They didn’t.”

“But you just-said they did.”

“They did and they didn’t,” was his enigmatic reply. “Of course they never carried that monster nugget up there. What they did was to carry up its contents.”

He waited until he saw enlightenment dawn in my face.

“And then of course melted all the gold, or welded it, or smelted it, all into one piece. You know the first Spaniards down there, under a leader named Pizarro, were a gang of robbers and cut-throats. They went through the country like the hoof-and-mouth disease, and killed the Indians off like cattle. You see, the Indians had lots of gold. Well, what the Spaniards didn’t get, the surviving Indians hid away in that one big chunk on top the mountain, and it’s been waiting there ever since for me-and for you, if you want to go in on it.”

And here, by the Lagoon of the Palace of Fine Arts, ended my acquaintance with Julian Jones. On my agreeing to finance the adventure, he promised to call on me at my hotel next morning with the letters of Seth Manners and the railroad, and conclude arrangements. But he did not call. That evening I telephoned his hotel and was informed by the clerk that Mr. Julian Jones and wife had departed in the early afternoon, with their baggage.

Can Mrs. Jones have rushed him back and hidden him away in Nebraska? I remember that as we said good-bye, there was that in her smile that recalled the vulpine complacency of Mona Lisa, the Wise.

A Hyperborean Brew

THOMAS Stevens's veracity may have been indeterminate as x, and his imagination the imagination of ordinary men increased to the nth power, but this, at least, must be said: never did he deliver himself of word nor deed that could be branded as a lie outright.... He may have played with probability, and verged on the extremest edge of possibility, but in his tales the machinery never creaked. That he knew the Northland like a book, not a soul can deny. That he was a great traveller, and had set foot on countless unknown trails, many evidences affirm. Outside of my own personal knowledge, I knew men that had met him everywhere, but principally on the confines of Nowhere. There was Johnson, the ex-Hudson Bay Company factor, who had housed him in a Labrador factory until his dogs rested up a bit, and he was able to strike out again. There was McMahon, agent for the Alaska Commercial Company, who had run across him in Dutch Harbor, and later on, among the outlying islands of the Aleutian group. It was indisputable that he had guided one of the earlier United States surveys, and history states positively that in a similar capacity he served the Western Union when it attempted to put through its trans-Alaskan and Siberian telegraph to Europe. Further, there was Joe Lamson, the whaling captain, who, when ice-bound off the mouth of the Mackenzie, had had him, come aboard after tobacco.

This last touch proves Thomas Stevens's identity conclusively. His quest for tobacco was perennial and untiring. Ere we became fairly acquainted, I learned to greet him with one hand, and pass the pouch with the other. But the night I met him in John O'Brien's Dawson saloon, his head was wreathed in a nimbus of fifty-cent cigar smoke, and instead of my pouch he demanded my sack. We were standing by a faro table, and forthwith he tossed it upon the "high card." "Fifty," he said, and the gamekeeper nodded. The "high card" turned, and he handed back my sack, called for a "tab," and drew me over to the scales, where the weigher nonchalantly cashed him out fifty dollars in dust.

"And now we'll drink," he said; and later, at the bar, when he lowered his glass: "Reminds me of a little brew I had up Tattarat way. No, you have no knowledge of the place, nor is it down on the charts. But it's up by the rim of the Arctic Sea, not so many hundred miles from the American line, and all of half a thousand God-forsaken souls live there, giving and taking in marriage, and starving and dying in-between-whiles. Explorers have overlooked them, and you will not find them in the census of 1890. A whale-ship was pinched there once, but the men, who had made shore over the ice, pulled out for the south and were never heard of.

"But it was a great brew we had, Moosu and I," he added a moment later, with just the slightest suspicion of a sigh.

I knew there were big deeds and wild doings behind that sigh, so I haled him into a corner, between a roulette outfit and a poker layout, and waited for his tongue to thaw.

"Had one objection to Moosu," he began, cocking his head meditatively--" one objection, and only one. He was an Indian from over on the edge of the Chippewyan country, but the trouble was, he'd picked up a smattering of the Scriptures. Been campmate a season with a renegade French Canadian who'd studied for the church. Moosu'd never seen applied Christianity, and his head was crammed with miracles, battles, and dispensations, and what not he didn't understand. Otherwise he was a good sort, and a handy man on trail or over a fire.

"We'd had a hard time together and were badly knocked out when we plumped upon Tattarat. Lost outfits and dogs crossing a divide in a fall blizzard, and our bellies clove to our backs and our clothes were in rags when we crawled into the village. They weren't much surprised at seeing us--because of the whalemen--and gave us the meanest shack in the village to live in, and the worst of their leavings to live on. What struck me at the time as strange was that they left us strictly alone. But Moosu explained it.

"'Shaman sick tumtum,' he said, meaning the shaman, or medicine man, was jealous, and had advised the people to have nothing to do with us. From the little he'd seen of the whalemen, he'd learned that mine was a stronger race, and a wiser; so he'd only behaved as shamans have always behaved the world over. And before I get done, you'll see how near right he was.

"'These people have a law,' said Moosu: 'Whoso eats of meat must hunt. We be awkward, you and I, O master, in the weapons of this country; nor can we string bows nor fling spears after the manner approved. Wherefore the shaman and Tummasook, who is chief, have put their heads together, and it has been decreed that we work with the women and children in dragging in the meat and tending the wants of the hunters.'

"'And this is very wrong,' I made to answer; 'for we be better men, Moosu, than these people who walk in darkness. Further, we should rest and grow strong, for the way south is long, and on that trail the weak cannot prosper.'

"'But we have nothing,' he objected, looking about him at the rotten timbers of the igloo, the stench of the ancient walrus meat that had been our supper disgusting his nostrils. 'And on this fare we cannot thrive. We have nothing save the bottle of "painkiller," which will not fill emptiness, so we must bend to the yoke of the unbeliever and become hewers of wood and drawers of water. And there be good things in this place, the which we may not have. Ah, master, never has my nose lied to me, and I have followed it to secret caches and among the fur-bales of the igloos. Good provender did these people extort from the poor whalemen, and this provender has wandered into few hands. The woman Ipsukuk, who dwelleth in the far end of the village next the igloo of the chief, possesseth much flour and sugar, and even have my eyes told me of molasses smeared on her face. And in the igloo of Tummasook, the chief, there be tea--have I not seen the old pig guzzling? And the shaman owneth a caddy of "Star" and two buckets of prime smoking. And what have we? Nothing! Nothing! Nothing!'

"But I was stunned by the word he brought of the tobacco, and made l no answer.

"And Moosu, what of his own desire, broke silence: 'And there be Tukeliketa, daughter of a big hunter and wealthy man. A likely girl. Indeed, a very nice girl.'

"I figured hard during the night while Moosu snored, for I could not bear the thought of the tobacco so near which I could not smoke. True, as he had said, we had nothing. But the way became clear to me, and in the morning I said to him: 'Go thou cunningly abroad, after thy fashion, and procure me some sort of bone, crooked like a gooseneck, and hollow. Also, walk humbly, but have eyes awake to the lay of pots and pans and cooking contrivances. And remember, mine is the white man's wisdom, and do what I have bid you, with sureness and despatch.'

"While he was away I placed the whale-oil cooking lamp in the middle of the igloo, and moved the mangy sleeping furs back that I might have room. Then I took apart his gun and put the barrel by handy, and afterward braided many wicks from the cotton that the women gather wild in the summer. When he came back, it was with the bone I had commanded, and with news that in the igloo of Tummasook there was a five-gallon kerosene can and a big copper kettle. So I said he had done well and we would tarry through the day. And when midnight was near I made harangue to him.

"'This chief, this Tummasook, hath a copper kettle, likewise a kero-sene can.' I put a rock, smooth and wave-washed, in Moosu's hand. 'The camp is hushed and the stars are winking. Go thou, creep into the chief's igloo softly, and smite him thus upon the belly, and hard. And let the meat and good grub of the days to come put strength into shine arm. There will be uproar and outcry, and the village will come hot afoot. But be thou unafraid. Veil thy movements and lose thy form in the obscurity of the night and the confusion of men. And when the woman Ipsukuk is anigh thee,--she who smeareth her face with molasses,--do thou smite her likewise, and whosoever else that possesseth flour and cometh to thy hand. Then do thou lift thy voice in pain and double up with clasped hands, and make outcry in token that thou, too, I hast felt the visitation of the night. And in this way shall we achieve honor and great possessions, and the caddy of "Star" and the prime smoking, and thy Tukeliketa, who is a likely maiden.'

"When he had departed on this errand, I bided patiently in the shack, and the tobacco seemed very near. Then there was a cry of affright in the night, that became an uproar and assailed the sky. I seized the 'painkiller' and ran forth. There was much noise, and a wailing among the women, and fear sat heavily on all. Tummasook and the woman Ipsukuk rolled on the ground in pain, and with them there were divers others, also Moosu. I thrust aside those that cluttered the way of my feet, and put the mouth of the bottle to Moosu's lips. And straight-way he became well and ceased his howling. Whereat there was a great clamor for the bottle from the others so stricken. But I made harangue, and ere they tasted and were made well I had mulcted Tummasook of his copper kettle and kerosene can, and the woman Ipsukuk of her sugar and molasses, and the other sick ones of goodly measures of flour. The shaman glowered wickedly at the people around my knees, though he poorly concealed the wonder that lay beneath. But I held my head high, and Moosu groaned beneath the loot as he followed my heels to the shack.

"There I set to work. In Tummasook's copper kettle I mixed three quarts of wheat flour with five of molasses, and to this I added of water I twenty quarts. Then I placed the kettle near the lamp, that it might sour in the warmth and grow strong. Moosu understood, and said my wisdom passed understanding and was greater than Solomon's, who he had heard was a wise man of old time. The kerosene can I set over the lamp, and to its nose I affixed a snout, and into the snout the bone that was like a gooseneck. I sent Moosu without to pound ice, while I connected the barrel of his gun with the gooseneck, and midway on the barrel I piled the ice he had pounded. And at the far end of the gun barrel, beyond the pan of ice, I placed a small iron pot. When the brew was strong enough (and it was two days ere it could stand on its own legs), I filled the kerosene can with it, and lighted the wicks I had braided.

"Now that all was ready, I spoke to Moosu. 'Go forth,' I said, 'to the chief men of the village, and give them greeting, and bid them come into my igloo and sleep the night away with me and the gods.'

"The brew was singing merrily when they began shoving aside the skin flap and crawling in, and I was heaping cracked ice on the gun barrel. Out of the priming hole at the far end, drip, drip, drip into the iron pot fell the liquor--hooch, you know. But they'd never seen the like, and giggled nervously when I made harangue about its virtues. As I talked I noted the jealousy in the shaman's eye, so when I had done, I placed him side by side with Tummasook and the woman Ipsukuk. Then I gave them to drink, and their eyes watered and their stomachs warmed, till from being afraid they reached greedily for more; and when I had them well started, I turned to the others. Tummasook made a brag about how he had once killed a polar bear, and in the vigor of his pantomime nearly slew his mother's brother. But nobody heeded. The woman Ipsukuk fell to weeping for a son lost long years agone in the ice, and the shaman made incantation and prophecy. So it went, and before morning they were all on the floor, sleeping soundly with the gods.

"The story tells itself, does it not? The news of the magic potion spread. It was too marvellous for utterance. Tongues could tell but a tithe of the miracles it performed. It eased pain, gave surcease to sorrow, brought back old memories, dead faces, and forgotten dreams. It was a fire that ate through all the blood, and, burning, burned not. It stoutened the heart, stiffened the back, and made men more than men. It revealed the future, and gave visions and prophecy. It brimmed with wisdom and unfolded secrets. There was no end of the things it could do, and soon there was a clamoring on all hands to sleep with the gods. They brought their warmest furs, their strongest dogs, their best meats; but I sold the hooch with discretion, and only those were favored that brought flour and molasses and sugar. And such stores poured in that I set Moosu to build a cache to hold them, for there was soon no space in the igloo. Ere three days had passed Tummasook had gone bankrupt. The shaman, who was never more than half drunk after the first night, watched me closely and hung on for the better part of the week. But before ten days were gone even the woman Ipsukuk exhausted her provisions, and went home weak and tottery.

"But Moosu complained. 'O master,' he said, 'we have laid by great wealth in molasses and sugar and flour, but our shack is yet mean, our clothes thin, and our sleeping furs mangy. There is a call of the belly for meat the stench of which offends not the stars, and for tea such as Tummasook guzzles, and there is a great yearning for the tobacco of Neewak, who is shaman and who plans to destroy us. I have flour until I am sick, and sugar and molasses without stint, yet is the heart of Moosu sore and his bed empty.'

"'Peace!' I answered, 'thou art weak of understanding and a fool. Walk softly and wait, and we will grasp it all. But grasp now, and we grasp little, and in the end it will be nothing. Thou art a child in the way of the white man's wisdom. Hold thy tongue and watch, and I will show you the way my brothers do overseas, and, so doing, gather to themselves the riches of the earth. It is what is called "business," and what cost thou know about business ?'

"But the next day he came in breathless. 'O master, a strange thing happeneth in the igloo of Neewak, the shaman; wherefore we are lost, and we have neither worn the warm furs nor tasted the good tobacco, what of your madness for the molasses and flour. Go thou and witness whilst I watch by the brew.'

"So I went to the igloo of Neewak. And behold, he had made his own still, fashioned cunningly after mine. And as he beheld me he could ill conceal his triumph. For he was a man of parts, and his sleep with the gods when in my igloo had not been sound.

"But I was not disturbed, for I knew what I knew, and when I returned to my own igloo, I descanted to Moosu and said: 'Happily the property right obtains amongst this people, who otherwise have been blessed with but few of the institutions of men. And because of this respect for property shall you and I wax fat, and, further, we shall introduce amongst them new institutions that other peoples have worked out through great travail and suffering.’

“But Moosu understood dimly, till the shaman came forth, with eyes Iflashing and a threatening note in his voice, and demanded to trade with Ime. ‘For look you,’ he cried, ‘there be of flour and molasses none in all Ithe village. The like have you gathered with a shrewd hand from my people, who have slept with your gods and who now have nothing save large heads, and weak knees, and a thirst for cold water that they cannot quench. This is not good, and my voice has power among them; so it were well that we trade, you and I, even as you have traded with them, for molasses and flour.’

“And I made answer: ‘This be good talk, and wisdom abideth in thy mouth. We will trade. For this much of flour and molasses givest thou me the caddy of “Star” and the two buckets of smoking.’

“And Moosu groaned, and when the trade was made and the shaman departed, he upbraided me: ‘Now, because of thy madness, are we, indeed, lost! Neewak maketh hooch on his own account, and when the ‘time is ripe, he will command the people to drink of no hooch but his hooch. And in this way are we undone, and our goods worthless, and ‘our igloo mean, and the bed of Moosu cold and empty!’

“And I answered: ‘By the body of the wolf, say I, thou art a fool, and thy fathers before thee, and thy children after thee, down to the last generation. Thy wisdom is worse than no wisdom and shine eyes blinded to business, of which I have spoken and whereof thou knowest nothing. Go, thou son of a thousand fools, and drink of the hooch that Neewak brews in his igloo, and thank thy gods that thou hast a white man’s wisdom to make soft the bed thou liest in. Go! and when thou hast drunken, return with the taste still on thy lips, that I may know.’

“And two days after, Neewak sent greeting and invitation to his igloo. Moosu went, but I sat alone, with the song of the still in my ears, and the air thick with the shaman’s tobacco; for trade was slack that night, and no one dropped in but Angeit, a young hunter that had faith in me. Later, Moosu came back, his speech thick with chuckling and his eyes wrinkling with laughter.

“‘Thou art a great man,’ he said. ‘Thou art a great man, O master, and because of thy greatness thou wilt not condemn Moosu, thy servant, who ofttimes doubts and cannot be made to understand.’

"'And wherefore now?' I demanded. 'Hast thou drunk overmuch? And are they sleeping sound in the igloo of Neewak, the shaman?'

"'Nay, they are angered and sore of body, and Chief Tummasook has thrust his thumbs in the throat of Neewak, and sworn by the bones of his ancestors to look upon his face no more. For behold! I went to the igloo, and the brew simmered and bubbled, and the steam journeyed through the gooseneck even as thy steam, and even as shine it became water where it met the ice, and dropped into the pot at the far end. And Neewak gave us to drink, and lo, it was not like shine, for there was no bite to the tongue nor tingling to the eyeballs, and of a truth it was water. So we drank, and we drank overmuch; yet did we sit with cold hearts and solemn. And Neewak was perplexed and a cloud came on his brow. And he took Tummasook and Ipsukuk alone of all the company and sat them apart, and bade them drink and drink and drink. And they drank and drank and drank, and yet sat solemn and cold, till Tummasook arose in wrath and demanded back the furs and the tea he had paid. And Ipsukuk raised her voice, thin and angry. And the company demanded back what they had given, and there was a great commotion.'

"'Does the son of a dog deem me a whale?' demanded Tummasook, shoving back the skin flap and standing erect, his face black and his brows angry.

"'Wherefore I am filled, like a fish-bladder, to bursting, till I can scarce walk, what of the weight within me? Lalah! I have drunken as never before, yet are my eyes clear, my knees strong, my hand steady.'

"'The shaman cannot send us to sleep with the gods,' the people complained, stringing in and joining us, 'and only in thy igloo may the thing be done.'

``'So I laughed to myself as I passed the hooch around and the guests made merry. For in the flour I had traded to Neewak I had mixed much soda that I had got from the woman Ipsukuk. So how could his brew ferment when the soda kept it sweet? Or his hooch be hooch when it would not sour?

"After that our wealth flowed in without let or hindrance. Furs we had without number, and the fancy work of the women, all of the chief's tea, and no end of meat. One day Moosu retold for my benefit, and sadly mangled, the story of Joseph in Egypt, but from it I got an idea, and soon I had half the tribe at work building me great meat caches. And of all they hunted I got the lion’s share and stored it away. Nor was Moosu idle. He made himself a pack of cards from birch bark, and taught Neewak the way to play seven-up. He also inveigled the father of Tukeliketa into the game. And one day he married the maiden, and the next day he moved into the shaman’s house, which was the finest in the village. The fall of Neewak was complete, for he lost all his possessions, his walrus-hide drums, his incantation tools--everything. And in the end he became a hewer of wood and drawer of water at the beck and call of Moosu. And Moosu--he set himself up as shaman, or high priest, Iand out of his garbled Scripture created new gods and made incantation before strange altars.

“And I was well pleased, for I thought it good that church and state go hand in hand, and I had certain plans of my own concerning the state. Events were shaping as I had foreseen. Good temper and smiling faces had vanished from the village. The people were morose and sullen. There were quarrels and fighting, and things were in an uproar night and day. Moosu’s cards were duplicated and the hunters fell to gambling among themselves. Tummasook beat his wife horribly, and his mother’s brother objected and smote him with a tusk of walrus till he cried aloud in the night and was shamed before the people. Also, amid such diversions no hunting was done, and famine fell upon the land. The nights were long and dark, and without meat no hooch could be bought; so they murmured against the chief. This I had played for, and when they were well and hungry, I summoned the whole village, made a great harangue, posed as patriarch, and fed the famishing. Moosu made harangue likewise, and because of this and the thing I had done I was made chief. Moosu, who had the ear of God and decreed his judgments, anointed me with whale blubber, and right blubberly he did it, not understanding the ceremony. And between us we interpreted to the people the new theory of the divine right of kings. There was hooch galore, and meat and feasting, and they took kindly to the new order.

“So you see, O man, I have sat in the high places, and worn the purple, and ruled populations. And I might yet be a king had the tobacco held out, or had Moosu been more fool and less knave. For he cast eyes upon Esanetuk, eldest daughter to Tummasook, and I objected.

“ ‘O brother,’ he explained, ‘thou hast seen fit to speak of introducing new institutions amongst this people, and I have listened to thy words and gained wisdom thereby. Thou rulest by the God-given right, and by the God-given right I marry.’

"I noted that he 'brothered' me, and was angry and put my foot down. But he fell back upon the people and made incantations for three days, in which all hands joined; and then, speaking with the voice of God, he decreed polygamy by divine fiat. But he was shrewd, for he limited the number of wives by a property qualification, and becausei of which he, above all men, was favored by his wealth. Nor could I fail to admire, though it was plain that power had turned his head, and he would not be satisfied till all the power and all the wealth rested in his own hands. So he became swollen with pride, forgot it was I that had placed him there, and made preparations to destroy me.

"But it was interesting, for the beggar was working out in his own way an evolution of primitive society. Now I, by virtue of the hooch monopoly, drew a revenue in which I no longer permitted him to share.I So he meditated for a while and evolved a system of ecclesiastical taxation. He laid tithes upon the people, harangued about fat firstlings and such things, and twisted whatever twisted texts he had ever heard to serve his purpose. Even this I bore in silence, but when he instituted what may be likened to a graduated income tax, I rebelled, and blindly, for this was what he worked for. Thereat, he appealed to the people, I and they, envious of my great wealth and well taxed themselves, up-held him. 'Why should we pay,' they asked, 'and not you? Does not I the voice of God speak through the lips of Moosu, the shaman?' So I yielded. But at the same time I raised the price of hooch, and lo, he was not a whit behind me in raising my taxes.

"Then there was open war. I made a play for Neewak and Tum-masook, because of the traditionary rights they possessed; but Moosu won out by creating a priesthood and giving them both high office. The problem of authority presented itself to him, and he worked it out as it has often been worked before. There was my mistake. I should have been made shaman, and he chief, but I saw it too late, and in the clash of spiritual and temporal power I was bound to be worsted. A controversy waged, but it quickly became one-sided. The people that he had anointed me, and it was clear to them that the source of my authority lay, not in me, but in Moosu. Only a few faithful ones clung to me, chief among whom Angeit was; while he headed the popular party and set whispers afloat that I had it in mind to overthrow him and set up my own gods, which were most unrighteous gods. And in this the clever rascal had anticipated me, for it was just what I had intended--forsake my kingship, you see, and fight spiritual with spiritual. So he frightened the people with the iniquities of my peculiar gods--especially the one he named 'Biz-e-Nass'--and nipped the scheme in the bud.

"Now, it happened that Kluktu, youngest daughter to Tummasook, had caught my fancy, and I likewise hers. So I made overtures, but the ex-chief refused bluntly--after I had paid the purchase price--and informed me that she was set aside for Moosu. This was too much, and I was half of a mind to go to his igloo and slay him with my naked hands; but I recollected that the tobacco was near gone, and went home laughing. The next day he made incantation, and distorted the miracle of the loaves and fishes till it became prophecy, and I, reading between the lines, saw that it was aimed at the wealth of meat stored in my caches. The people also read between the lines, and, as he did not urge them to go on the hunt, they remained at home, and few caribou or bear were brought in.

"But I had plans of my own, seeing that not only the tobacco but the flour and molasses were near gone. And further, I felt it my duty to prove the white man's wisdom and bring sore distress to Moosu, who had waxed high-stomached, what of the power I had given him. So that night I went to my meat caches and toiled mightily, and it was noted next day that all the dogs of the village were lazy. No one suspected, and I toiled thus every night, and the dogs grew fat and fatter, and the people lean and leaner. They grumbled and demanded the fulfilment of prophecy, but Moosu restrained them, waiting for their hunger to grow yet greater. Nor did he dream, to the very last, of the trick I had been playing on the empty caches.

"When all was ready, I sent Angeit, and the faithful ones whom I had fed privily, through the village to call assembly. And the tribe gathered on a great space of beaten snow before my door, with the meat caches towering stilt-legged in the rear. Moosu came also, standing on the inner edge of the circle opposite me, confident that I had some scheme afoot, and prepared at the first break to down me. But I arose, giving him salutation before all men.

"'O Moosu, thou blessed of God,' I began, 'doubtless thou hast wondered in that I have called this convocation together; and doubtless, because of my many foolishnesses, art thou prepared for rash sayings and rash doings. Not so. It has been said, that those the gods would destroy they first make mad. And I have been indeed mad. I have crossed thy will, and scoffed at thy authority, and done divers evil and wanton things. Wherefore, last night a vision was vouchsafed me, and I have seen the wickedness of my ways. And thou stoodst forth like a shining star, with brows aflame, and I knew in mine own heart thy greatness. I saw all things clearly. I knew that thou didst command the ear of God, and that when you spoke he listened. And I remembered that whatever of the good deeds that I had done, I had done through the grace of God, and the grace of Moosu.

"'Yes, my children,' I cried, turning to the people, 'whatever right I have done, and whatever good I have done, have been because of the counsel of Moosu. When I listened to him, affairs prospered; when I closed my ears, and acted according to my folly, things came to folly. By his advice it was that I laid my store of meat, and in time of darkness fed the famishing. By his grace it was that I was made chief. And what have I done with my chiefship? Let me tell you. I have done nothing. My head was turned with power, and I deemed myself greater than Moosu, and, behold, I have come to grief. My rule has been unwise, and the gods are angered. Lo, ye are pinched with famine, and the mothers are dry-breasted, and the little babies cry through the long nights. Nor do I, who have hardened my heart against Moosu, know what shall be done, nor in what manner of way grub shall be had.'

"At this there was nodding and laughing, and the people put their heads together and I knew they whispered of the loaves and fishes. I went on hastily. 'So I was made aware of my foolishness and of Moosu's wisdom; of my own unfitness and of Moosu's fitness. And because of this, being no longer mad, I make acknowledgment and rectify evil. I did cast unrighteous eyes upon Kluktu, and lo, she was sealed to Moosu. Yet is she mine, for did I not pay to Tummasook the goods of purchase? But I am well unworthy of her, and she shall go from the igloo of her father to the igloo of Moosu. Can the moon shine in the sunshine ? And further, Tummasook shall keep the goods of purchase, and she be a free gift to Moosu, whom God hath ordained her rightful lord.

"'And further yet, because I have used my wealth unwisely, and I to oppress ye, O my children, do I make gifts of the kerosene can to Moosu, and the gooseneck, and the gun barrel, and the copper kettle. Therefore, I can gather to me no more possessions, and when ye are athirst for hooch, he will quench ye and without robbery. For he is a great man, and God speaketh through his lips.

"'And yet further, my heart is softened, and I have repented me of my madness. I, who am a fool and a son of fools; I, who am the slave of the bad god Biz-e-Nass; I, who see thy empty bellies and know not wherewith to fill them--why shall I be chief, and sit above thee, and rule to shine own destruction ? Why should I do this, which is not good? But Moosu, who is shaman, and who is wise above men, is so made that he can rule with a soft hand and justly. And because of the things I have related do I make abdication and give my chiefship to Moosu, who alone knoweth how ye may be fed in this day when there be no meat in the land.'

"At this there was a great clapping of hands, and the people cried, 'Kloshe! Kloshe!' which means, 'good.' I had seen the wonder-worry in Moosu's eyes; for he could not understand, and was fearful of my white man's wisdom. I had met his wishes all along the line, and even antici-pated some; and standing there, selfshorn of all my power, he knew the time did not favor to stir the people against me.

"Before they could disperse I made announcement that while the still went to Moosu, whatever hooch I possessed went to the people. Moosu tried to protest at this, for never had we permitted more than a handful to be drunk at a time; but they cried, 'Kloshe! Kloshe!' and made festival before my door. And while they waxed uproarious without, as the liquor went to their heads, I held council within with Angeit and the faithful ones. I set them the tasks they were to do, and put into their mouths the words they were to say. Then I slipped away to a place back in the woods where I had two sleds, well loaded, with teams of dogs that were not overfed. Spring was at hand, you see, and there was a crust to the snow; so it was the best time to take the way south. Moreover, the tobacco was gone. There I waited, for I had nothing to fear. Did they bestir themselves on my trail, their dogs were too fat, and themselves too lean, to overtake me; also, I deemed their bestirring would be of an order for which I had made due preparation.

"First came a faithful one, running, and after him another. 'O master,' the first cried breathless, 'there be great confusion in the village, and no man knoweth his own mind, and they be of many minds. Everybody hath drunken overmuch, and some be stringing bows, and some be quarrelling one with another. Never was there such a trouble.'

"And the second one: 'And I did as thou biddest, O master, whispering shrewd words in thirsty ears, and raising memories of the things that were of old time. The woman Ipsukuk waileth her poverty and the wealth that no longer is hers. And Tummasook thinketh himself once again chief, and the people are hungry and rage up and down.'

"And a third one: 'And Neewak hath overthrown the altars of Moosu, and maketh incantation before the time-honored and ancient gods. And all the people remember the wealth that ran down their throats, and which they possess no more. And first, Esanetuk, who be sick tumtum, fought with Kluktu, and there was much noise. And next, being daughters of the one mother, did they fight with Tukeliketa. And after that did they three fall upon Moosu, like wind-squalls, from every hand, till he ran forth from the igloo, and the people mocked him. For a man who cannot command his womankind is a fool.'

"Then came Angeit: 'Great trouble hath befallen Moosu, O master, for I have whispered to advantage, till the people came to Moosu, saying they were hungry and demanding the fulfilment of prophecy. And there was a loud shout of "Itlwillie! Itlwillie!" (Meat.) So he cried peace to his womenfolk, who were overwrought with anger and with hooch, and led the tribe even to thy meat caches. And he bade the men open them and be fed. And lo, the caches were empty. There was no meat. They stood without sound, the people being frightened, and in the silence I lifted my voice. "O Moosu, where is the meat? That there was meat we know. Did we not hunt it and drag it in from the hunt? And it were a lie to say one man hath eaten it; yet have we seen nor hide nor hair. Where is the meat, O Moosu ? Thou hast the ear of God. Where is the meat?"

"'And the people cried, "Thou hast the ear of God. Where is the meat?" And they put their heads together and were afraid. Then I went among them, speaking fearsomely of the unknown things, of the dead that come and go like shadows and do evil deeds, till they cried aloud in terror and gathered all together, like little children afraid of the dark. Neewak made harangue, laying this evil that had come upon them at the door of Moosu. When he had done, there was a furious commotion, and they took spears in their hands, and tusks of walrus, and clubs, and stones from the beach. But Moosu ran away home, and because he had not drunken of hooch they could not catch him, and fell one over I another and made haste slowly. Even now they do howl without his igloo, and his womenfolk within, and what of the noise, he cannot make himself heard.'

"'O Angeit, thou hast done well,' I commended. 'Go now, taking this empty sled and the lean dogs, and ride fast to the igloo of Moosu; and before the people, who are drunken, are aware, throw him quick upon the sled and bring him to me.'

"I waited and gave good advice to the faithful ones till Angeit returned. Moosu was on the sled, and I saw by the fingermarks on his face that his womankind had done well by him. But he tumbled off and fell in the snow at my feet, crying: 'O master, thou wilt forgive Moosu, thy servant, for the wrong things he has done! Thou art a great man! Surely wilt thou forgive!'

"'Call me "brother," Moosu--call me "brother,"' I chided, lifting him to his feet with the toe of my moccasin. 'Wilt thou evermore obey?'

"'Yea, master,' he whimpered, 'evermore.'

"'Then dispose thy body, so, across the sled.' I shifted the dogwhip to my right hand. 'And direct thy face downward, toward the snow. And make haste, for we journey south this day.' And when he was well fixed I laid the lash upon him, reciting, at every stroke, the wrongs he had done me. 'This, for thy disobedience in general--whack! And this for thy disobedience in particular--whack!! whack! And this for Esanetuk! And this for thy soul's welfare! And this for the grace of thy authority! And this for Kluktu! And this for thy rights God-given! And this for thy fat firstlings! And this and this for thy income tax and thy loaves and fishes! And this for all thy disobedience! And this, finally, that thou mayest henceforth walk softly and with understanding! Now cease thy sniffling and get up! Gird on thy snowshoes and go to the fore and break trail for the dogs. Chook! Mush-on! Git!'"

Thomas Stevens smiled quietly to himself as he lighted his fifth cigar and sent curling smoke-rings ceilingward.

In a Far Country

WHEN a man journeys into a far country, he must be prepared to forget many of the things he has learned, and to acquire such customs as are inherent with existence in the new land; he must abandon the old ideals and the old gods, and oftentimes he must reverse the very codes by which his conduct has hitherto been shaped. To those who have the protean faculty of adaptability, the novelty of such change may even be a source of pleasure; but to those who happen to be hardened to the ruts in which they were created, the pressure of the altered environment is unbearable, and they chafe in body and in spirit under the new restrictions which they do not understand. This chafing is bound to act and react, producing divers evils and leading to various misfortunes. It were better for the man who cannot fit himself to the new groove to return to his own country; if he delay too long, he will surely die.

The man who turns his back upon the comforts of an elder civilization, to face the savage youth, the primordial simplicity of the North, may estimate success at an inverse ratio to the quantity and quality of his hopelessly fixed habits. He will soon discover, if he be a fit candidate, that the material habits are the less important. The exchange of such things as a dainty menu for rough fare, of the stiff leather shoe for the soft, shapeless moccasin, of the feather bed for a couch in the snow, is after all a very easy matter. But his pinch will come in learning properly to shape his mind's attitude toward all things, and especially toward his fellow man. For the courtesies of ordinary life, he must substitute unselfishness, forbearance, and tolerance. Thus, and thus only, can he gain that pearl of great price,--true comradeship. He must not say "Thank you;" he must mean it without opening his mouth, and prove it by responding in kind. In short, he must substitute the deed for the word, the spirit for the letter.

When the world rang with the tale of Arctic gold, and the lure of the North gripped the heartstrings of men, Carter Weatherbee threw up his snug clerkship, turned the half of his savings over to his wife, and with the remainder bought an outfit. There was no romance in his nature,--the bondage of commerce had crushed all that; he was simply tired of the ceaseless grind, and wished to risk great hazards in view of corresponding returns. Like many another fool, disdaining the old trails used by the

Northland pioneers for a score of years, he hurried to Edmonton in the spring of the year; and there, unluckily for his soul's welfare, he allied himself with a party of men.

There was nothing unusual about this party, except its plans. Even its goal, like that of all other parties, was the Klondike. But the route it had mapped out to attain that goal took away the breath of the hardiest native, born and bred to the vicissitudes of the Northwest. Even Jacques Baptiste, born of a Chippewa woman and a renegade voyageur (having raised his first whimpers in a deerskin lodge north of the sixty-fifth parallel, and had the same hushed by blissful sucks of raw tallow), was surprised. Though he sold his services to them and agreed to travel even to the never-opening ice, he shook his head ominously whenever his advice was asked.

Percy Cuthfert's evil star must have been in the ascendant, for he, too, joined this company of argonauts. He was an ordinary man, with a bank account as deep as his culture, which is saying a good deal. He had no reason to embark on such a venture,--no reason in the world, save that he suffered from an abnormal development of sentimentality. He mistook this for the true spirit of romance and adventure. Many another man has done the like, and made as fatal a mistake.

The first break-up of spring found the party following the ice-run of Elk River. It was an imposing fleet, for the outfit was large, and they were accompanied by a disreputable contingent of half-breed voyageurs with their women and children. Day in and day out, they labored with the bateaux and canoes, fought mosquitoes and other kindred pests, or sweated and swore at the portages. Severe toil like this lays a man naked to the very roots of his soul, and ere Lake Athabasca was lost in the south, each member of the party had hoisted his true colors.

The two shirks and chronic grumblers were Carter Weatherbee and Percy Cuthfert. The whole party complained less of its aches and pains than did either of them. Not once did they volunteer for the thousand and one petty duties of the camp. A bucket of water to be brought, an extra armful of wood to be chopped, the dishes to be washed and wiped, a search to be made through the outfit for some suddenly indispensable article,--and these two effete scions of civilization discovered sprains or blisters requiring instant attention. They were the first to turn in at night, with a score of tasks yet undone; the last to turn out in the morning, when the start should be in readiness before the breakfast was begun. They were the first to fall to at meal-time, the last to have a hand in the cooking; the first to dive for a slim delicacy, the last to discover they had added to their own another man's share. If they toiled at the oars, they slyly cut the water at each stroke and allowed the boat's momentum to float up the blade. They thought nobody noticed; but their comrades swore under their breaths and grew to hate them, while Jacques Baptiste sneered openly and damned them from morning till night. But Jacques Baptiste was no gentleman.

At the Great Slave, Hudson Bay dogs were purchased, and the fleet sank to the guards with its added burden of dried fish and pemmican. Then canoe and bateau answered to the swift current of the Mackenzie, and they plunged into the Great Barren Ground. Every likely-looking "feeder" was prospected, but the elusive "pay-dirt" danced ever to the north. At the Great Bear, overcome by the common dread of the Unknown Lands, their voyageurs began to desert, and Fort of Good Hope saw the last and bravest bending to the tow-lines as they bucked the current down which they had so treacherously glided. Jacques Baptiste alone remained. Had he not sworn to travel even to the never-opening ice?

The lying charts, compiled in main from hearsay, were now constantly consulted. And they felt the need of hurry, for the sun had already passed its northern solstice and was leading the winter south again. Skirting the shores of the bay, where the Mackenzie disembogues into the Arctic Ocean, they entered the mouth of the Little Peel River. Then began the arduous upstream toil, and the two Incapables fared worse than ever. Tow-line and pole, paddle and tump-line, rapids and portages,--such tortures served to give the one a deep digust for great hazards, and printed for the other a fiery text on the true romance of adventure. One day they waxed mutinous, and being vilely cursed by Jacques Baptiste, turned, as worms sometimes will. But the half-breed thrashed the twain, and sent them, bruised and bleeding, about their work. It was the first time either had been man-handled.

Abandoning their river craft at the head-waters of the Little Peel, they consumed the rest of the summer in the great portage over the Mackenzie watershed to the West Rat. This little stream fed the Porcupine, which in turn joined the Yukon where that mighty highway of the North countermarches on the Arctic Circle. But they had lost in the race with winter, and one day they tied their rafts to the thick eddy-ice and hurried their goods ashore. That night the river jammed and broke several times; the following morning it had fallen asleep for good.

“We can’t be more ‘n four hundred miles from the Yukon,” concluded Sloper, multiplying his thumb nails by the scale of the map. The council, in which the two Incapables had whined to excellent disadvantage, was drawing to a close. “Hudson Bay Post, long time ago. No use um now.” Jacques Baptiste’s father had made the trip for the Fur Company in the old days, incidentally marking the trail with a couple of frozen toes.

“Sufferin’ cracky!” cried another of the party. “No whites?”

“Nary white,” Sloper sententiously affirmed; “but it ‘s only five hundred more up the Yukon to Dawson. Call it a rough thousand from here.”

Weatherbee and Cuthfert groaned in chorus.

“How long ‘ll that take, Baptiste?”

The half-breed figured for a moment. “Workum like hell, no man play out, ten--twenty--forty--fifty days. Um babies come” (designating the Incapables), “no can tell. Mebbe when hell freeze over; mebbe not then.”

The manufacture of snowshoes and moccasins ceased. Somebody called the name of an absent member, who came out of an ancient cabin at the edge of the camp-fire and joined them. The cabin was one of the many mysteries which lurk in the vast recesses of the North. Built when and by whom, no man could tell. Two graves in the open, piled high with stones, perhaps contained the secret of those early wanderers. But whose hand had piled the stones?

The moment had come. Jacques Baptiste paused in the fitting of a harness and pinned the struggling dog in the snow. The cook made mute protest for delay, threw a handful of bacon into a noisy pot of beans, then came to attention. Sloper rose to his feet. His body was a ludicrous contrast to the healthy physiques of the Incapables. Yellow and weak, fleeing from a South American fever-hole, he had not broken his flight across the zones, and was still able to toil with men. His weight was probably ninety pounds, with the heavy hunting-knife thrown in, and his grizzled hair told of a prime which had ceased to be. The fresh young muscles of either Weatherbee or Cuthfert were equal to ten times the endeavor of his; yet he could walk them into the earth in a day’s journey. And all this day he had whipped his stronger comrades into venturing a thousand miles of the stiffest hardship man can conceive. He was the incarnation of the unrest of his race, and the old Teutonic stubbornness, dashed with the quick grasp and action of the Yankee, held the flesh in the bondage of the spirit.

"All those in favor of going on with the dogs as soon as the ice sets, say ay."

"Ay!" rang out eight voices,--voices destined to string a trail of oaths along many a hundred miles of pain.

"Contrary minded?"

"No!" For the first time the Incapables were united without some compromise of personal interests.

"And what are you going to do about it?" Weatherbee added belligerently.

"Majority rule! Majority rule!" clamored the rest of the party.

"I know the expedition is liable to fall through if you don't come," Sloper replied sweetly; "but I guess, if we try real hard, we can manage to do without you. What do you say, boys?"

The sentiment was cheered to the echo.

"But I say, you know," Cuthfert ventured apprehensively; "what 's a chap like me to do?"

"Ain't you coming with us?"

"No-o."

"Then do as you damn well please. We won't have nothing to say."

"Kind o' calkilate yuh might settle it with that canoodlin' pardner of yourn," suggested a heavy-going Westerner from the Dakotas, at the same time pointing out Weatherbee. "He 'll be shore to ask yuh what yur a-goin' to do when it comes to cookin' an' gatherin' the wood."

"Then we 'll consider it all arranged," concluded Sloper. "We 'll pull out to-morrow, if we camp within five miles,--just to get everything in running order and remember if we 've forgotten anything."

The sleds groaned by on their steel-shod runners, and the dogs strained low in the harnesses in which they were born to die. Jacques Baptiste paused by the side of Sloper to get a last glimpse of the cabin. The smoke curled up pathetically from the Yukon stove-pipe. The two Incapables were watching them from the doorway.

Sloper laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Jacques Baptiste, did you ever hear of the Kilkenny cats?"

The half-breed shook his head.

"Well, my friend and good comrade, the Kilkenny cats fought till neither hide, nor hair, nor yowl, was left. You understand?--till nothing was left. Very good. Now, these two men don't like work. They won't work. We know that. They ‘ll be all alone in that cabin all winter,--a mighty long, dark winter. Kilkenny cats,--well?”

The Frenchman in Baptiste shrugged his shoulders, but the Indian in him was silent. Nevertheless, it was an eloquent shrug, pregnant with prophecy.

Things prospered in the little cabin at first. The rough badinage of their comrades had made Weatherbee and Cuthfert conscious of the mutual responsibility which had devolved upon them; besides, there was not so much work after all for two healthy men. And the removal of the cruel whip-hand, or in other words the bulldozing half-breed, had brought with it a joyous reaction. At first, each strove to outdo the other, and they performed petty tasks with an unction which would have opened the eyes of their comrades who were now wearing out bodies and souls on the Long Trail.

All care was banished. The forest, which shouldered in upon them from three sides, was an inexhaustible woodyard. A few yards from their door slept the Porcupine, and a hole through its winter robe formed a bubbling spring of water, crystal clear and painfully cold. But they soon grew to find fault with even that. The hole would persist in freezing up, and thus gave them many a miserable hour of ice-chopping. The unknown builders of the cabin had extended the side-logs so as to support a cache at the rear. In this was stored the bulk of the party’s provisions. Food there was, without stint, for three times the men who were fated to live upon it. But the most of it was of the kind which built up brawn and sinew, but did not tickle the palate. True, there was sugar in plenty for two ordinary men; but these two were little else than children. They early discovered the virtues of hot water judiciously saturated with sugar, and they prodigally swam their flapjacks and soaked their crusts in the rich, white syrup. Then coffee and tea, and especially the dried fruits, made disastrous inroads upon it. The first words they had were over the sugar question. And it is a really serious thing when two men, wholly dependent upon each other for company, begin to quarrel.

Weatherbee loved to discourse blatantly on politics, while Cuthfert, who had been prone to clip his coupons and let the commonwealth jog on as best it might, either ignored the subject or delivered himself of startling epigrams. But the clerk was too obtuse to appreciate the clever shaping of thought, and this waste of ammunition irritated Cuthfert. He had been used to blinding people by his brilliancy, and it worked him quite a hardship, this loss of an audience. He felt personally aggrieved and unconsciously held his mutton-head companion responsible for it.

Save existence, they had nothing in common,--came in touch on no single point. Weatherbee was a clerk who had known naught but clerking all his life; Cuthfert was a master of arts, a dabbler in oils, and had written not a little. The one was a lower-class man who considered himself a gentleman, and the other was a gentleman who knew himself to be such. From this it may be remarked that a man can be a gentleman without possessing the first instinct of true comradeship. The clerk was as sensuous as the other was aesthetic, and his love adventures, told at great length and chiefly coined from his imagination, affected the supersensitive master of arts in the same way as so many whiffs of sewer gas. He deemed the clerk a filthy, uncultured brute, whose place was in the muck with the swine, and told him so; and he was reciprocally informed that he was a milk-and-water sissy and a cad. Weatherbee could not have defined "cad" for his life; but it satisfied its purpose, which after all seems the main point in life.

Weatherbee flatted every third note and sang such songs as "The Boston Burglar" and "The Handsome Cabin Boy," for hours at a time, while Cuthfert wept with rage, till he could stand it no longer and fled into the outer cold. But there was no escape. The intense frost could not be endured for long at a time, and the little cabin crowded them--beds, stove, table, and all--into a space of ten by twelve. The very presence of either became a personal affront to the other, and they lapsed into sullen silences which increased in length and strength as the days went by. Occasionally, the flash of an eye or the curl of a lip got the better of them, though they strove to wholly ignore each other during these mute periods. And a great wonder sprang up in the breast of each, as to how God had ever come to create the other.

With little to do, time became an intolerable burden to them. This naturally made them still lazier. They sank into a physical lethargy which there was no escaping, and which made them rebel at the performance of the smallest chore. One morning when it was his turn to cook the common breakfast, Weatherbee rolled out of his blankets, and to the snoring of his companion, lighted first the slush-lamp and then the fire. The kettles were frozen hard, and there was no water in the cabin with which to wash. But he did not mind that. Waiting for it to thaw, he sliced the bacon and plunged into the hateful task of bread-making. Cuthfert had been slyly watching through his half-closed lids. Consequently there was a scene, in which they fervently blessed each other, and agreed, thenceforth, that each do his own cooking. A week later, Cuthfert neglected his morning ablutions, but none the less complacently ate the meal which he had cooked. Weatherbee grinned. After that the foolish custom of washing passed out of their lives.

As the sugar-pile and other little luxuries dwindled, they began to be afraid they were not getting their proper shares, and in order that they might not be robbed, they fell to gorging themselves. The luxuries suffered in this gluttonous contest, as did also the men. In the absence of fresh vegetables and exercise, their blood became impoverished, and a loathsome, purplish rash crept over their bodies. Yet they refused to heed the warning. Next, their muscles and joints began to swell, the flesh turning black, while their mouths, gums, and lips took on the color of rich cream. Instead of being drawn together by their misery, each gloated over the other's symptoms as the scurvy took its course.

They lost all regard for personal appearance, and for that matter, common decency. The cabin became a pigpen, and never once were the beds made or fresh pine boughs laid underneath. Yet they could not keep to their blankets, as they would have wished; for the frost was inexorable, and the fire box consumed much fuel. The hair of their heads and faces grew long and shaggy, while their garments would have disgusted a ragpicker. But they did not care. They were sick, and there was no one to see; besides, it was very painful to move about.

To all this was added a new trouble,--the Fear of the North. This Fear was the joint child of the Great Cold and the Great Silence, and was born in the darkness of December, when the sun dipped below the southern horizon for good. It affected them according to their natures. Weatherbee fell prey to the grosser superstitions, and did his best to resurrect the spirits which slept in the forgotten graves. It was a fascinating thing, and in his dreams they came to him from out of the cold, and snuggled into his blankets, and told him of their toils and troubles ere theydied. He shrank away from the clammy contact as they drew closer and twined their frozen limbs about him, and when they whispered in his ear of things to come, the cabin rang with his frightened shrieks. Cuthfert did not understand,--for they no longer spoke,--and when thus awakened he invariably grabbed for his revolver. Then he would sit up in bed, shivering nervously, with the weapon trained on the unconscious dreamer. Cuthfert deemed the man going mad, and so came to fear for his life.

His own malady assumed a less concrete form. The mysterious artisan who had laid the cabin, log by log, had pegged a wind-vane to the ridge-pole. Cuthfert noticed it always pointed south, and one day, irritated by its steadfastness of purpose, he turned it toward the east. He watched eagerly, but never a breath came by to disturb it. Then he turned the vane to the north, swearing never again to touch it till the wind did blow. But the air frightened him with its unearthly calm, and he often rose in the middle of the night to see if the vane had veered,--ten degrees would have satisfied him. But no, it poised above him as unchangeable as fate. His imagination ran riot, till it became to him a fetich. Sometimes he followed the path it pointed across the dismal dominions, and allowed his soul to become saturated with the Fear. He dwelt upon the unseen and the unknown till the burden of eternity appeared to be crushing him. Everything in the Northland had that crushing effect,--the absence of life and motion; the darkness; the infinite peace of the brooding land; the ghastly silence, which made the echo of each heart-beat a sacrilege; the solemn forest which seemed to guard an awful, inexpressible something, which neither word nor thought could compass.

The world he had so recently left, with its busy nations and great enterprises, seemed very far away. Recollections occasionally obtruded,--recollections of marts and galleries and crowded thoroughfares, of evening dress and social functions, of good men and dear women he had known,--but they were dim memories of a life he had lived long centuries agone, on some other planet. This phantasm was the Reality. Standing beneath the wind-vane, his eyes fixed on the polar skies, he could not bring himself to realize that the Southland really existed, that at that very moment it was a-roar with life and action. There was no Southland, no men being born of women, no giving and taking in marriage. Beyond his bleak sky-line there stretched vast solitudes, and beyond these still vaster solitudes. There were no lands of sunshine, heavy with the perfume of flowers. Such things were only old dreams of paradise. The sunlands of the West and the spicelands of the East, the smiling Arcadias and blissful Islands of the Blest,--ha! ha! His laughter split the void and shocked him with its unwonted sound. There was no sun. This was the Universe, dead and cold and dark, and he its only citizen. Weatherbee? At such moments Weatherbee did not count. He was a

Caliban, a monstrous phantom, fettered to him for untold ages, the penalty of some forgotten crime.

He lived with Death among the dead, emasculated by the sense of his own insignificance, crushed by the passive mastery of the slumbering ages. The magnitude of all things appalled him. Everything partook of the superlative save himself,--the perfect cessation of wind and motion, the immensity of the snow-covered wilderness, the height of the sky and the depth of the silence. That wind-vane,--if it would only move. If a thunderbolt would fall, or the forest flare up in flame. The rolling up of the heavens as a scroll, the crash of Doom--anything, anything! But no, nothing moved; the Silence crowded in, and the Fear of the North laid icy fingers on his heart.

Once, like another Crusoe, by the edge of the river he came upon a track,--the faint tracery of a snowshoe rabbit on the delicate snow-crust. It was a revelation. There was life in the Northland. He would follow it, look upon it, gloat over it. He forgot his swollen muscles, plunging through the deep snow in an ecstasy of anticipation. The forest swallowed him up, and the brief midday twilight vanished; but he pursued his quest till exhausted nature asserted itself and laid him helpless in the snow. There he groaned and cursed his folly, and knew the track to be the fancy of his brain; and late that night he dragged himself into the cabin on hands and knees, his cheeks frozen and a strange numbness about his feet. Weatherbee grinned malevolently, but made no offer to help him. He thrust needles into his toes and thawed them out by the stove. A week later mortification set in.

But the clerk had his own troubles. The dead men came out of their graves more frequently now, and rarely left him, waking or sleeping. He grew to wait and dread their coming, never passing the twin cairns without a shudder. One night they came to him in his sleep and led him forth to an appointed task. Frightened into inarticulate horror, he awoke between the heaps of stones and fled wildly to the cabin. But he had lain there for some time, for his feet and cheeks were also frozen.

Sometimes he became frantic at their insistent presence, and danced about the cabin, cutting the empty air with an axe, and smashing everything within reach. During these ghostly encounters, Cuthfert huddled into his blankets and followed the madman about with a cocked revolver, ready to shoot him if he came too near. But, recovering from one of these spells, the clerk noticed the weapon trained upon him. His suspicions were aroused, and thenceforth he, too, lived in fear of his life. They watched each other closely after that, and faced about in startled fright whenever either passed behind the other's back. This apprehensiveness became a mania which controlled them even in their sleep. Through mutual fear they tacitly let the slush-lamp burn all night, and saw to a plentiful supply of bacon-grease before retiring. The slightest movement on the part of one was sufficient to arouse the other, and many a still watch their gazes countered as they shook beneath their blankets with fingers on the trigger-guards.

What with the Fear of the North, the mental strain, and the ravages of the disease, they lost all semblance of humanity, taking on the appearance of wild beasts, hunted and desperate. Their cheeks and noses, as an aftermath of the freezing, had turned black. Their frozen toes had begun to drop away at the first and second joints. Every movement brought pain, but the fire box was insatiable, wringing a ransom of torture from their miserable bodies. Day in, day out, it demanded its food,--a veritable pound of flesh,--and they dragged themselves into the forest to chop wood on their knees. Once, crawling thus in search of dry sticks, unknown to each other they entered a thicket from opposite sides. Suddenly, without warning, two peering death's-heads confronted each other. Suffering had so transformed them that recognition was impossible. They sprang to their feet, shrieking with terror, and dashed away on their mangled stumps; and falling at the cabin door, they clawed and scratched like demons till they discovered their mistake.

Occasionally they lapsed normal, and during one of these sane intervals, the chief bone of contention, the sugar, had been divided equally between them. They guarded their separate sacks, stored up in the cache, with jealous eyes; for there were but a few cupfuls left, and they were totally devoid of faith in each other. But one day Cuthfert made a mistake. Hardly able to move, sick with pain, with his head swimming and eyes blinded, he crept into the cache, sugar canister in hand, and mistook Weatherbee's sack for his own.

January had been born but a few days when this occurred. The sun had some time since passed its lowest southern declination, and at meridian now threw flaunting streaks of yellow light upon the northern sky. On the day following his mistake with the sugar-bag, Cuthfert found himself feeling better, both in body and in spirit. As noontime drew near and the day brightened, he dragged himself outside to feast on the evanescent glow, which was to him an earnest of the sun's future intentions. Weatherbee was also feeling somewhat better, and crawled out beside him. They propped themselves in the snow beneath the moveless wind-vane, and waited.

The stillness of death was about them. In other climes, when nature falls into such moods, there is a subdued air of expectancy, a waiting for some small voice to take up the broken strain. Not so in the North. The two men had lived seeming aeons in this ghostly peace. They could remember no song of the past; they could conjure no song of the future. This unearthly calm had always been,--the tranquil silence of eternity.

Their eyes were fixed upon the north. Unseen, behind their backs, behind the towering mountains to the south, the sun swept toward the zenith of another sky than theirs. Sole spectators of the mighty canvas, they watched the false dawn slowly grow. A faint flame began to glow and smoulder. It deepened in intensity, ringing the changes of reddish-yellow, purple, and saffron. So bright did it become that Cuthfert thought the sun must surely be behind it,--a miracle, the sun rising in the north! Suddenly, without warning and without fading, the canvas was swept clean. There was no color in the sky. The light had gone out of the day. They caught their breaths in half-sobs. But lo! the air was a-glint with particles of scintillating frost, and there, to the north, the wind-vane lay in vague outline on the snow. A shadow! A shadow! It was exactly midday. They jerked their heads hurriedly to the south. A golden rim peeped over the mountain's snowy shoulder, smiled upon them an instant, then dipped from sight again.

There were tears in their eyes as they sought each other. A strange softening came over them. They felt irresistibly drawn toward each other. The sun was coming back again. It would be with them to-morrow, and the next day, and the next. And it would stay longer every visit, and a time would come when it would ride their heaven day and night, never once dropping below the sky-line. There would be no night. The ice-locked winter would be broken; the winds would blow and the forests answer; the land would bathe in the blessed sunshine, and life renew. Hand in hand, they would quit this horrid dream and journey back to the Southland. They lurched blindly forward, and their hands met,--their poor maimed hands, swollen and distorted beneath their mittens.

But the promise was destined to remain unfulfilled. The Northland is the Northland, and men work out their souls by strange rules, which other men, who have not journeyed into far countries, cannot come to understand.

An hour later, Cuthfert put a pan of bread into the oven, and fell to speculating on what the surgeons could do with his feet when he got back. Home did not seem so very far away now. Weatherbee was rummaging in the cache. Of a sudden, he raised a whirlwind of blasphemy, which in turn ceased with startling abruptness. The other man had robbed his sugar-sack. Still, things might have happened differently, had not the two dead men come out from under the stones and hushed the hot words in his throat. They led him quite gently from the cache, which he forgot to close. That consummation was reached; that something they had whispered to him in his dreams was about to happen. They guided him gently, very gently, to the woodpile, where they put the axe in his hands. Then they helped him shove open the cabin door, and he felt sure they shut it after him,--at least he heard it slam and the latch fall sharply into place. And he knew they were waiting just without, waiting for him to do his task.

“Carter! I say, Carter!”

Percy Cuthfert was frightened at the look on the clerk’s face, and he made haste to put the table between them.

Carter Weatherbee followed, without haste and without enthusiasm. There was neither pity nor passion in his face, but rather the patient, stolid look of one who has certain work to do and goes about it methodically.

“I say, what ‘s the matter?”

The clerk dodged back, cutting off his retreat to the door, but never opening his mouth.

“I say, Carter, I say; let ‘s talk. There ‘s a good chap.”

The master of arts was thinking rapidly, now, shaping a skillful flank movement on the bed where his Smith & Wesson lay. Keeping his eyes on the madman, he rolled backward on the bunk, at the same time clutching the pistol.

“Carter!”

The powder flashed full in Weatherbee’s face, but he swung his weapon and leaped forward. The axe bit deeply at the base of the spine, and Percy Cuthfert felt all consciousness of his lower limbs leave him. Then the clerk fell heavily upon him, clutching him by the throat with feeble fingers. The sharp bite of the axe had caused Cuthfert to drop the pistol, and as his lungs panted for release, he fumbled aimlessly for it among the blankets. Then he remembered. He slid a hand up the clerk's belt to the sheath-knife; and they drew very close to each other in that last clinch.

Percy Cuthfert felt his strength leave him. The lower portion of his body was useless. The inert weight of Weatherbee crushed him,--crushed him and pinned him there like a bear under a trap. The cabin became filled with a familiar odor, and he knew the bread to be burning. Yet what did it matter? He would never need it. And there were all of six cupfuls of sugar in the cache,--if he had foreseen this he would not have been so saving the last several days. Would the wind-vane ever move? It might even be veering now. Why not? Had he not seen the sun to-day? He would go and see. No; it was impossible to move. He had not thought the clerk so heavy a man.

How quickly the cabin cooled! The fire must be out. The cold was forcing in. It must be below zero already, and the ice creeping up the inside of the door. He could not see it, but his past experience enabled him to gauge its progress by the cabin's temperature. The lower hinge must be white ere now. Would the tale of this ever reach the world? How would his friends take it? They would read it over their coffee, most likely, and talk it over at the clubs. He could see them very clearly. "Poor Old Cuthfert," they murmured; "not such a bad sort of a chap, after all." He smiled at their eulogies, and passed on in search of a Turkish bath. It was the same old crowd upon the streets. Strange, they did not notice his moosehide moccasins and tattered German socks! He would take a cab. And after the bath a shave would not be bad. No; he would eat first. Steak, and potatoes, and green things,--how fresh it all was! And what was that? Squares of honey, streaming liquid amber! But why did they bring so much? Ha! ha! he could never eat it all. Shine! Why certainly. He put his foot on the box. The bootblack looked curiously up at him, and he remembered his moosehide moccasins and went away hastily.

Hark! The wind-vane must be surely spinning. No; a mere singing in his ears. That was all,--a mere singing. The ice must have passed the latch by now. More likely the upper hinge was covered. Between the moss-chinked roof-poles, little points of frost began to appear. How slowly they grew! No; not so slowly. There was a new one, and there another. Two--three--four; they were coming too fast to count. There were two growing together. And there, a third had joined them. Why, there were no more spots. They had run together and formed a sheet.

Well, he would have company. If Gabriel ever broke the silence of the North, they would stand together, hand in hand, before the great White Throne. And God would judge them, God would judge them!

Then Percy Cuthfert closed his eyes and dropped off to sleep.

In the Forest of the North

A weary journey beyond the last scrub timber and straggling copses, into the heart of the Barrens where the niggard North is supposed to deny the Earth, are to be found great sweeps of forests and stretches of smiling land. But this the world is just beginning to know. The world's explorers have known it, from time to time, but hitherto they have never returned to tell the world.

The Barrens — well, they are the Barrens, the bad lands of the Arctic, the deserts of the Circle, the bleak and bitter home of the musk-ox and the lean plains wolf. So Avery Van Brunt found them, treeless and cheerless, sparsely clothed with moss and lichens, and altogether uninviting. At least so he found them till he penetrated to the white blank spaces on the map, and came upon undreamed-of rich spruce forests and unrecorded Eskimo tribes. It had been his intention, (and his bid for fame), to break up these white blank spaces and diversify them with the black markings of mountain-chains, sinks and basins, and sinuous river courses; and it was with added delight that he came to speculate upon the possibilities of timber belts and native villages.

Avery Van Brunt, or, in full distinction, Professor A. Van Brunt of the Geological Survey, was second in command of the expedition, and first in command of the sub-expedition which he had led on a side tour of some half a thousand miles up one of the branches of the Thelon and which he was now leading into one of his unrecorded villages. At his back plodded eight men, two of them French-Canadian voyageurs, and the remainder strapping Crees from Manitoba-way. He, alone, was full-blooded Saxon, and his blood was pounding fiercely through his veins to the traditions of his race. Clive and Hastings, Drake and Raleigh, Hengest and Horsa, walked with him. First of all men of his breed was he to enter this lone Northland village, and at the thought an exultancy came upon him, an exaltation, and his followers noted that his leg-weariness fell from him and that he insensibly quickened the pace.

The village emptied itself, and a motley crowd trooped out to meet him, men in the forefront, with bows and spears clutched menacingly, and women and children faltering timidly in the rear. Van Brunt lifted his right arm and made the universal peace sign, a sign which all peoples know, and the villagers answered in peace. But to his chagrin, a skin-clad man ran forward and thrust out his hand with a familiar "Hello." He was a bearded man, with cheeks and brow bronzed to copper-brown, and in him Van Brunt knew his kind.

"Who are you?" he asked, gripping the extended hand. "Andrée?"

"Who's Andrée?" the man asked back.

Van Brunt looked at him more sharply. "By George, you've been here some time."

"Five years," the man answered, a dim flicker of pride in his eyes. "But come on, let's talk."

"Let them camp alongside of me," he answered Van Brunt's glance at his party. "Old Tantlatch will take care of them. Come on."

He swung off in a long stride, Van Brunt following at his heels through the village. In irregular fashion, wherever the ground favored, the lodges of moose hide were pitched. Van Brunt ran his practised eye over them and calculated.

"Two hundred, not counting the young ones," he summed up.

The man nodded. "Pretty close to it. But here's where I live, out of the thick of it, you know — more privacy and all that. Sit down. I'll eat with you when your men get something cooked up. I've forgotten what tea tastes like.... Five years and never a taste or smell.... Any tobacco?... Ah, thanks, and a pipe? Good. Now for a fire-stick and we'll see if the weed has lost its cunning."

He scratched the match with the painstaking care of the woodsman, cherished its young flame as though there were never another in all the world, and drew in the first mouthful of smoke. This he retained meditatively for a time, and blew out through his pursed lips slowly and caressingly. Then his face seemed to soften as he leaned back, and a soft blur to film his eyes. He sighed heavily, happily, with immeasurable content, and then said suddenly:

"God! But that tastes good!"

Van Brunt nodded sympathetically. "Five years, you say?"

"Five years." The man sighed again. "And you, I presume, wish to know about it, being naturally curious, and this a sufficiently strange situation, and all that. But it's not much. I came in from Edmonton after musk-ox, and like Pike and the rest of them, had my mischances, only I lost my party and outfit. Starvation, hardship, the regular tale, you know, sole survivor and all that, till I crawled into Tantlatch's, here, on hand and knee."

"Five years," Van Brunt murmured retrospectively, as though turning things over in his mind.

"Five years on February last. I crossed the Great Slave early in May — "

"And you are ... Fairfax?" Van Brunt interjected.

The man nodded.

"Let me see ... John, I think it is, John Fairfax."

"How did you know?" Fairfax queried lazily, half-absorbed in curling smoke-spirals upward in the quiet air.

"The papers were full of it at the time. Prevanche — "

"Prevanche!" Fairfax sat up, suddenly alert. "He was lost in the Smoke Mountains."

"Yes, but he pulled through and came out."

Fairfax settled back again and resumed his smoke-spirals. "I am glad to hear it," he remarked reflectively. "Prevanche was a bully fellow if he did have ideas about head-straps, the beggar. And he pulled through? Well, I'm glad."

Five years ... the phrase drifted recurrently through Van Brunt's thought, and somehow the face of Emily Southwaithe seemed to rise up and take form before him. Five years ... A wedge of wild-fowl honked low overhead and at sight of the encampment veered swiftly to the north into the smouldering sun. Van Brunt could not follow them. He pulled out his watch. It was an hour past midnight. The northward clouds flushed bloodily, and rays of sombre-red shot southward, firing the gloomy woods with a lurid radiance. The air was in breathless calm, not a needle quivered, and the least sounds of the camp were distinct and clear as trumpet calls. The Crees and voyageurs felt the spirit of it and mumbled in dreamy undertones, and the cook unconsciously subdued the clatter of pot and pan. Somewhere a child was crying, and from the depths of the forest, like a silver thread, rose a woman's voice in mournful chant: "O-o-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ha-aa-a-a, O-o-o-o-o-o-a-ha-a-ha-a."

Van Brunt shivered and rubbed the backs of his hands briskly.

"And they gave me up for dead?" his companion asked slowly.

"Well, you never came back, so your friends — "

"Promptly forgot." Fairfax laughed harshly, defiantly.

"Why didn't you come out?"

"Partly disinclination, I suppose, and partly because of circumstances over which I had no control. You see, Tantlatch, here, was down with a broken leg when I made his acquaintance, — a nasty fracture, — and I set it for him and got him into shape. I stayed some time, getting my strength back. I was the first white man he had seen, and of course I seemed very wise and showed his people no end of things. Coached them up in military tactics, among other things, so that they conquered the four other tribal villages, (which you have not yet seen), and came to rule the land. And they naturally grew to think a good deal of me, so much so that when I was ready to go they wouldn't hear of it. Were most hospitable, in fact. Put a couple of guards over me and watched me day and night. And then Tantlatch offered me inducements, — in a sense, inducements, — so to say, and as it didn't matter much one way or the other, I reconciled myself to remaining."

"I knew your brother at Freiburg. I am Van Brunt."

Fairfax reached forward impulsively and shook his hand. "You were Billy's friend, eh? Poor Billy! He spoke of you often."

"Rum meeting place, though," he added, casting an embracing glance over the primordial landscape and listening for a moment to the woman's mournful notes. "Her man was clawed by a bear, and she's taking it hard."

"Beastly life!" Van Brunt grimaced his disgust. "I suppose, after five years of it, civilization will be sweet? What do you say?"

Fairfax's face took on a stolid expression. "Oh, I don't know. At least they're honest folk and live according to their lights. And then they are amazingly simple. No complexity about them, no thousand and one subtle ramifications to every single emotion they experience. They love, fear, hate, are angered, or made happy, in common, ordinary, and unmistakable terms. It may be a beastly life, but at least it is easy to live. No philandering, no dallying. If a woman likes you, she'll not be backward in telling you so. If she hates you, she'll tell you so, and then, if you feel inclined, you can beat her, but the thing is, she knows precisely what you mean, and you know precisely what she means. No mistakes, no misunderstandings. It has its charm, after civilization's fitful fever. Comprehend?"

"No, it's a pretty good life," he continued, after a pause; "good enough for me, and I intend to stay with it."

Van Brunt lowered his head in a musing manner, and an imperceptible smile played on his mouth. No philandering, no dallying, no misunderstanding. Fairfax also was taking it hard, he thought, just because Emily Southwaithe had been mistakenly clawed by a bear. And not a bad sort of a bear, either, was Carlton Southwaithe.

"But you are coming along with me," Van Brunt said deliberately.

"No, I'm not."

"Yes, you are."

"Life's too easy here, I tell you." Fairfax spoke with decision. "I understand everything, and I am understood. Summer and winter alternate like the sun flashing through the palings of a fence, the seasons are a blur of light and shade, and time slips by, and life slips by, and then ... a wailing in the forest, and the dark. Listen!"

He held up his hand, and the silver thread of the woman's sorrow rose through the silence and the calm. Fairfax joined in softly.

"O-o-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ha-aa-a-a, O-o-o-o-o-o-a-ha-a-ha-a," he sang. "Can't you hear it? Can't you see it? The women mourning? the funeral chant? my hair white-locked and patriarchal? my skins wrapped in rude splendor about me? my hunting-spear by my side? And who shall say it is not well?"

Van Brunt looked at him coolly. "Fairfax, you are a damned fool. Five years of this is enough to knock any man, and you are in an unhealthy, morbid condition. Further, Carlton Southwaithe is dead."

Van Brunt filled his pipe and lighted it, the while watching slyly and with almost professional interest. Fairfax's eyes flashed on the instant, his fists clenched, he half rose up, then his muscles relaxed and he seemed to brood. Michael, the cook, signalled that the meal was ready, but Van Brunt motioned back to delay. The silence hung heavy, and he fell to analyzing the forest scents, the odors of mould and rotting vegetation, the resiny smells of pine cones and needles, the aromatic savors of many camp-smokes. Twice Fairfax looked up, but said nothing, and then:

"And ... Emily ...?"

"Three years a widow; still a widow."

Another long silence settled down, to be broken by Fairfax finally with a naïve smile. "I guess you're right, Van Brunt. I'll go along."

"I knew you would." Van Brunt laid his hand on Fairfax's shoulder. "Of course, one cannot know, but I imagine — for one in her position — she has had offers — "

"When do you start?" Fairfax interrupted.

"After the men have had some sleep. Which reminds me, Michael is getting angry, so come and eat."

After supper, when the Crees and voyageurs had rolled into their blankets, snoring, the two men lingered by the dying fire. There was much to talk about, — wars and politics and explorations, the doings of men and the happening of things, mutual friends, marriages, deaths, — five years of history for which Fairfax clamored.

"So the Spanish fleet was bottled up in Santiago," Van Brunt was saying, when a young woman stepped lightly before him and stood by Fairfax's side. She looked swiftly into his face, then turned a troubled gaze upon Van Brunt.

"Chief Tantlatch's daughter, sort of princess," Fairfax explained, with an honest flush. "One of the inducements, in short, to make me stay. Thom, this is Van Brunt, friend of mine."

Van Brunt held out his hand, but the woman maintained a rigid repose quite in keeping with her general appearance. Not a line of her face softened, not a feature unbent. She looked him straight in the eyes, her own piercing, questioning, searching.

"Precious lot she understands," Fairfax laughed. "Her first introduction, you know. But as you were saying, with the Spanish fleet bottled up in Santiago?"

Thom crouched down by her husband's side, motionless as a bronze statue, only her eyes flashing from face to face in ceaseless search. And Avery Van Brunt, as he talked on and on, felt a nervousness under the dumb gaze. In the midst of his most graphic battle descriptions, he would become suddenly conscious of the black eyes burning into him, and would stumble and flounder till he could catch the gait and go again. Fairfax, hands clasped round knees, pipe out, absorbed, spurred him on when he lagged, and repictured the world he thought he had forgotten.

One hour passed, and two, and Fairfax rose reluctantly to his feet. "And Cronje was cornered, eh? Well, just wait a moment till I run over to Tantlatch. He'll be expecting you, and I'll arrange for you to see him after breakfast. That will be all right, won't it?"

He went off between the pines, and Van Brunt found himself staring into Thom's warm eyes. Five years, he mused, and she can't be more than twenty now. A most remarkable creature. Being Eskimo, she should have a little flat excuse for a nose, and lo, it is neither broad nor flat, but aquiline, with nostrils delicately and sensitively formed as any fine lady's of a whiter breed — the Indian strain somewhere, be assured, Avery Van Brunt. And, Avery Van Brunt, don't be nervous, she won't eat you; she's only a woman, and not a bad-looking one at that. Oriental rather than aborigine. Eyes large and fairly wide apart, with just the faintest hint of Mongol obliquity. Thom, you're an anomaly. You're out of place here among these Eskimos, even if your father is one. Where did your mother come from? or your grandmother? And Thom, my dear, you're a beauty, a frigid, frozen little beauty with Alaskan lava in your blood, and please don't look at me that way.

He laughed and stood up. Her insistent stare disconcerted him. A dog was prowling among the grub-sacks. He would drive it away and place them into safety against Fairfax's return. But Thom stretched out a detaining hand and stood up, facing him.

"You?" she said, in the Arctic tongue which differs little from Greenland to Point Barrow. "You?"

And the swift expression of her face demanded all for which "you" stood, his reason for existence, his presence there, his relation to her husband — everything.

"Brother," he answered in the same tongue, with a sweeping gesture to the south. "Brothers we be, your man and I."

She shook her head. "It is not good that you be here."

"After one sleep I go."

"And my man?" she demanded, with tremulous eagerness.

Van Brunt shrugged his shoulders. He was aware of a certain secret shame, of an impersonal sort of shame, and an anger against Fairfax. And he felt the warm blood in his face as he regarded the young savage. She was just a woman. That was all — a woman. The whole sordid story over again, over and over again, as old as Eve and young as the last new love-light.

"My man! My man! My man!" she was reiterating vehemently, her face passionately dark, and the ruthless tenderness of the Eternal Woman, the Mate-Woman, looking out at him from her eyes.

"Thom," he said gravely, in English, "you were born in the Northland forest, and you have eaten fish and meat, and fought with frost and famine, and lived simply all the days of your life. And there are many things, indeed not simple, which you do not know and cannot come to understand. You do not know what it is to long for the fleshpots afar, you cannot understand what it is to yearn for a fair woman's face. And the woman is fair, Thom, the woman is nobly fair. You have been woman to this man, and you have been your all, but your all is very little, very simple. Too little and too simple, and he is an alien man. Him you have never known, you can never know. It is so ordained. You held him in your arms, but you never held his heart, this man with his blurring seasons and his dreams of a barbaric end. Dreams and dream-dust, that is what he has been to you. You clutched at form and gripped shadow, gave yourself to a man and bedded with the wraith of a man. In such manner, of old, did the daughters of men whom the gods found fair. And, Thom, Thom, I should not like to be John Fairfax in the night-watches of the years to come, in the night-watches, when his eyes shall see, not the sun-gloried hair of the woman by his side, but the dark tresses of a mate forsaken in the forests of the North."

Though she did not understand, she had listened with intense attention, as though life hung on his speech. But she caught at her husband's name and cried out in Eskimo: —

"Yes! Yes! Fairfax! My man!"

"Poor little fool, how could he be your man?"

But she could not understand his English tongue, and deemed that she was being trifled with. The dumb, insensate anger of the Mate-Woman flamed in her face, and it almost seemed to the man as though she crouched panther-like for the spring.

He cursed softly to himself and watched the fire fade from her face and the soft luminous glow of the appealing woman spring up, of the appealing woman who foregoes strength and panoplies herself wisely in her weakness.

"He is my man," she said gently. "Never have I known other. It cannot be that I should ever know other. Nor can it be that he should go from me."

"Who has said he shall go from thee?" he demanded sharply, half in exasperation, half in impotence.

"It is for thee to say he shall not go from me," she answered softly, a half-sob in her throat.

Van Brunt kicked the embers of the fire savagely and sat down.

"It is for thee to say. He is my man. Before all women he is my man. Thou art big, thou art strong, and behold, I am very weak. See, I am at thy feet. It is for thee to deal with me. It is for thee."

"Get up!" He jerked her roughly erect and stood up himself. "Thou art a woman. Wherefore the dirt is no place for thee, nor the feet of any man."

"He is my man."

"Then Jesus forgive all men!" Van Brunt cried out passionately.

"He is my man," she repeated monotonously, beseechingly.

"He is my brother," he answered.

"My father is Chief Tantlatch. He is a power over five villages. I will see that the five villages be searched for thy choice of all maidens, that thou mayest stay here by thy brother, and dwell in comfort."

"After one sleep I go."

"And my man?"

"Thy man comes now. Behold!"

From among the gloomy spruces came the light carolling of Fairfax's voice.

As the day is quenched by a sea of fog, so his song smote the light out of her face. "It is the tongue of his own people," she said; "the tongue of his own people."

She turned, with the free movement of a lithe young animal, and made off into the forest.

"It's all fixed," Fairfax called as he came up. "His regal highness will receive you after breakfast."

"Have you told him?" Van Brunt asked.

"No. Nor shall I tell him till we're ready to pull out."

Van Brunt looked with moody affection over the sleeping forms of his men.

"I shall be glad when we are a hundred leagues upon our way," he said.

Thom raised the skin-flap of her father's lodge. Two men sat with him, and the three looked at her with swift interest. But her face betokened nothing as she entered and took seat quietly, without speech. Tantlatch drummed with his knuckles on a spear-heft across his knees, and gazed idly along the path of a sun-ray which pierced a lacing-hole and flung a glittering track across the murky atmosphere of the lodge. To his right, at his shoulder, crouched Chugungatte, the shaman. Both were old men, and the weariness of many years brooded in their eyes. But opposite them sat Keen, a young man and chief favorite in the tribe. He was quick and alert of movement, and his black eyes flashed from face to face in ceaseless scrutiny and challenge.

Silence reigned in the place. Now and again camp noises penetrated, and from the distance, faint and far, like the shadows of voices, came the wrangling of boys in thin shrill tones. A dog thrust his head into the entrance and blinked wolfishly at them for a space, the slaver dripping from his ivory-white fangs. After a time he growled tentatively, and then, awed by the immobility of the human figures, lowered his head and grovelled away backward. Tantlatch glanced apathetically at his daughter.

"And thy man, how is it with him and thee?"

"He sings strange songs," Thom made answer, "and there is a new look on his face."

"So? He hath spoken?"

"Nay, but there is a new look on his face, a new light in his eyes, and with the New-Comer he sits by the fire, and they talk and talk, and the talk is without end."

Chugungatte whispered in his master's ear, and Keen leaned forward from his hips.

"There be something calling him from afar," she went on, "and he seems to sit and listen, and to answer, singing, in his own people's tongue."

Again Chugungatte whispered and Keen leaned forward, and Thom held her speech till her father nodded his head that she might proceed.

"It be known to thee, O Tantlatch, that the wild goose and the swan and the little ringed duck be born here in the low-lying lands. It be known that they go away before the face of the frost to unknown places. And it be known, likewise, that always do they return when the sun is in the land and the waterways are free. Always do they return to where they were born, that new life may go forth. The land calls to them and they come. And now there is another land that calls, and it is calling to my man, — the land where he was born, — and he hath it in mind to answer the call. Yet is he my man. Before all women is he my man."

"Is it well, Tantlatch? Is it well?" Chugungatte demanded, with the hint of menace in his voice.

"Ay, it is well!" Keen cried boldly. "The land calls to its children, and all lands call their children home again. As the wild goose and the swan and the little ringed duck are called, so is called this Stranger Man who has lingered with us and who now must go. Also there be the call of kind. The goose mates with the goose, nor does the swan mate with the little ringed duck. It is not well that the swan should mate with the little ringed duck.

Nor is it well that stranger men should mate with the women of our villages. Wherefore I say the man should go, to his own kind, in his own land."

"He is my own man," Thom answered, "and he is a great man."

"Ay, he is a great man." Chugungatte lifted his head with a faint recrudescence of youthful vigor. "He is a great man, and he put strength in thy arm, O Tantlatch, and gave thee power, and made thy name to be feared in the land, to be feared and to be respected. He is very wise, and there be much profit in his wisdom. To him are we beholden for many things, — for the cunning in war and the secrets of the defence of a village and a rush in the forest, for the discussion in council and the undoing of enemies by word of mouth and the hard-sworn promise, for the gathering of game and the making of traps and the preserving of food, for the curing of sickness and mending of hurts of trail and fight. Thou, Tantlatch, wert a lame old man this day, were it not that the Stranger Man came into our midst and attended on thee. And ever, when in doubt on strange questions, have we gone to him, that out of his wisdom he might make things clear, and ever has he made things clear. And there be questions yet to arise, and needs upon his wisdom yet to come, and we cannot bear to let him go. It is not well that we should let him go."

Tantlatch continued to drum on the spear-haft, and gave no sign that he had heard. Thom studied his face in vain, and Chugungatte seemed to shrink together and droop down as the weight of years descended upon him again.

"No man makes my kill." Keen smote his breast a valorous blow. "I make my own kill. I am glad to live when I make my own kill. When I creep through the snow upon the great moose, I am glad. And when I draw the bow, so, with my full strength, and drive the arrow fierce and swift and to the heart, I am glad. And the meat of no man's kill tastes as sweet as the meat of my kill. I am glad to live, glad in my own cunning and strength, glad that I am a doer of things, a doer of things for myself. Of what other reason to live than that? Why should I live if I delight not in myself and the things I do? And it is because I delight and am glad that I go forth to hunt and fish, and it is because I go forth to hunt and fish that I grow cunning and strong. The man who stays in the lodge by the fire grows not cunning and strong. He is not made happy in the eating of my kill, nor is living to him a delight. He does not live. And so I say it is well this Stranger Man should go. His wisdom does not make us wise. If he be cunning, there is no need that we be cunning. If need arise, we go to him for his cunning. We eat the meat of his kill, and it tastes unsweet. We merit by his strength, and in it there is no delight. We do not live when he does our living for us. We grow fat and like women, and we are afraid to work, and we forget how to do things for ourselves. Let the man go, O Tantlatch, that we may be men! I am Keen, a man, and I make my own kill!"

Tantlatch turned a gaze upon him in which seemed the vacancy of eternity. Keen waited the decision expectantly; but the lips did not move, and the old chief turned toward his daughter.

"That which be given cannot be taken away," she burst forth. "I was but a girl when this Stranger Man, who is my man, came among us. And I knew not men, or the ways of men, and my heart was in the play of girls, when thou, Tantlatch, thou and none other, didst call me to thee and press me into the arms of the Stranger Man. Thou and none other, Tantlatch; and as thou didst give me to the man, so didst thou give the man to me. He is my man. In my arms has he slept, and from my arms he cannot be taken."

"It were well, O Tantlatch," Keen followed quickly, with a significant glance at Thom, "it were well to remember that that which be given cannot be taken away."

Chugungatte straightened up. "Out of thy youth, Keen, come the words of thy mouth. As for ourselves, O Tantlatch, we be old men and we understand. We, too, have looked into the eyes of women and felt our blood go hot with strange desires. But the years have chilled us, and we have learned the wisdom of the council, the shrewdness of the cool head and hand, and we know that the warm heart be over-warm and prone to rashness. We know that Keen found favor in thy eyes. We know that Thom was promised him in the old days when she was yet a child. And we know that the new days came, and the Stranger Man, and that out of our wisdom and desire for welfare was Thom lost to Keen and the promise broken."

The old shaman paused, and looked directly at the young man.

"And be it known that I, Chugungatte, did advise that the promise be broken."

"Nor have I taken other woman to my bed," Keen broke in. "And I have builded my own fire, and cooked my own food, and ground my teeth in my loneliness."

Chugungatte waved his hand that he had not finished. "I am an old man and I speak from understanding. It be good to be strong and grasp for power. It be better to forego power that good come out of it. In the old days I sat at thy shoulder, Tantlatch, and my voice was heard over all in the council, and my advice taken in affairs of moment. And I was strong and held power. Under Tantlatch I was the greatest man. Then came the Stranger Man, and I saw that he was cunning and wise and great. And in that he was wiser and greater than I, it was plain that greater profit should arise from him than from me. And I had thy ear, Tantlatch, and thou didst listen to my words, and the Stranger Man was given power and place and thy daughter, Thom. And the tribe prospered under the new laws in the new days, and so shall it continue to prosper with the Stranger Man in our midst. We be old men, we two, O Tantlatch, thou and I, and this be an affair of head, not heart. Hear my words, Tantlatch! Hear my words! The man remains!"

There was a long silence. The old chief pondered with the massive certitude of God, and Chugungatte seemed to wrap himself in the mists of a great antiquity. Keen looked with yearning upon the woman, and she, unnoting, held her eyes steadfastly upon her father's face. The wolf-dog shoved the flap aside again, and plucking courage at the quiet, wormed forward on his belly. He sniffed curiously at Thom's listless hand, cocked ears challengingly at Chugungatte, and hunched down upon his haunches before Tantlatch. The spear rattled to the ground, and the dog, with a frightened yell, sprang sideways, snapping in mid-air, and on the second leap cleared the entrance.

Tantlatch looked from face to face, pondering each one long and carefully. Then he raised his head, with rude royalty, and gave judgment in cold and even tones: "The man remains. Let the hunters be called together. Send a runner to the next village with word to bring on the fighting men. I shall not see the New-Comer. Do thou, Chugungatte, have talk with him. Tell him he may go at once, if he would go in peace. And if fight there be, kill, kill, kill, to the last man; but let my word go forth that no harm befall our man, — the man whom my daughter hath wedded. It is well."

Chugungatte rose and tottered out; Thom followed; but as Keen stooped to the entrance the voice of Tantlatch stopped him.

"Keen, it were well to hearken to my word. The man remains. Let no harm befall him."

Because of Fairfax's instructions in the art of war, the tribesmen did not hurl themselves forward boldly and with clamor. Instead, there was great restraint and self-control, and they were content to advance silently, creeping and crawling from shelter to shelter. By the river bank, and partly protected by a narrow open space, crouched the Crees and voyageurs. Their eyes could see nothing, and only in vague ways did their ears hear, but they felt the thrill of life which ran through the forest, the indistinct, indefinable movement of an advancing host.

"Damn them," Fairfax muttered. "They've never faced powder, but I taught them the trick."

Avery Van Brunt laughed, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and put it carefully away with the pouch, and loosened the hunting-knife in its sheath at his hip.

"Wait," he said. "We'll wither the face of the charge and break their hearts."

"They'll rush scattered if they remember my teaching."

"Let them. Magazine rifles were made to pump. We'll — good! First blood! Extra tobacco, Loon!"

Loon, a Cree, had spotted an exposed shoulder and with a stinging bullet apprised its owner of his discovery.

"If we can tease them into breaking forward," Fairfax muttered, — "if we can only tease them into breaking forward."

Van Brunt saw a head peer from behind a distant tree, and with a quick shot sent the man sprawling to the ground in a death struggle. Michael potted a third, and Fairfax and the rest took a hand, firing at every exposure and into each clump of agitated brush. In crossing one little swale out of cover, five of the tribesmen remained on their faces, and to the left, where the covering was sparse, a dozen men were struck. But they took the punishment with sullen steadiness, coming on cautiously, deliberately, without haste and without lagging.

Ten minutes later, when they were quite close, all movement was suspended, the advance ceased abruptly, and the quietness that followed was portentous, threatening. Only could be seen the green and gold of the woods, and undergrowth, shivering and trembling to the first faint puffs of the day-wind. The wan white morning sun mottled the earth with long shadows and streaks of light. A wounded man lifted his head and crawled painfully out of the swale, Michael following him with his rifle but forbearing to shoot. A whistle ran along the invisible line from left to right, and a flight of arrows arched through the air.

“Get ready,” Van Brunt commanded, a new metallic note in his voice. “Now!”

They broke cover simultaneously. The forest heaved into sudden life. A great yell went up, and the rifles barked back sharp defiance. Tribesmen knew their deaths in mid-leap, and as they fell, their brothers surged over them in a roaring, irresistible wave. In the forefront of the rush, hair flying and arms swinging free, flashing past the tree-trunks, and leaping the obstructing logs, came Thom. Fairfax sighted on her and almost pulled trigger ere he knew her.

“The woman! Don’t shoot!” he cried. “See! She is unarmed!”

The Crees never heard, nor Michael and his brother voyageur, nor Van Brunt, who was keeping one shell continuously in the air. But Thom bore straight on, unharmed, at the heels of a skin-clad hunter who had veered in before her from the side. Fairfax emptied his magazine into the men to right and left of her, and swung his rifle to meet the big hunter. But the man, seeming to recognize him, swerved suddenly aside and plunged his spear into the body of Michael. On the moment Thom had one arm passed around her husband’s neck, and twisting half about, with voice and gesture was splitting the mass of charging warriors. A score of men hurled past on either side, and Fairfax, for a brief instant’s space, stood looking upon her and her bronze beauty, thrilling, exulting, stirred to unknown deeps, visioning strange things, dreaming, immortally dreaming. Snatches and scraps of old-world philosophies and new-world ethics floated through his mind, and things wonderfully concrete and woefully incongruous — hunting scenes, stretches of sombre forest, vastnesses of silent snow, the glittering of ballroom lights, great galleries and lecture halls, a fleeting shimmer of glistening test-tubes, long rows of book-lined shelves, the throb of machinery and the roar of traffic, a fragment of forgotten song, faces of dear women and old chums, a lonely watercourse amid upstanding peaks, a shattered boat on a pebbly strand, quiet moonlit fields, fat vales, the smell of hay....

A hunter, struck between the eyes with a rifle-ball, pitched forward lifeless, and with the momentum of his charge slid along the ground. Fairfax came back to himself. His comrades, those that lived, had been swept far back among the trees beyond. He could hear the fierce “Hia!

Hia!” of the hunters as they closed in and cut and thrust with their weapons of bone and ivory. The cries of the stricken men smote him like blows. He knew the fight was over, the cause was lost, but all his race traditions and race loyalty impelled him into the welter that he might die at least with his kind.

“My man! My man!” Thom cried. “Thou art safe!”

He tried to struggle on, but her dead weight clogged his steps.

“There is no need! They are dead, and life be good!”

She held him close around the neck and twined her limbs about his till he tripped and stumbled, reeled violently to recover footing, tripped again, and fell backward to the ground. His head struck a jutting root, and he was half-stunned and could struggle but feebly. In the fall she had heard the feathered swish of an arrow darting past, and she covered his body with hers, as with a shield, her arms holding him tightly, her face and lips pressed upon his neck.

Then it was that Keen rose up from a tangled thicket a score of feet away. He looked about him with care. The fight had swept on and the cry of the last man was dying away. There was no one to see. He fitted an arrow to the string and glanced at the man and woman. Between her breast and arm the flesh of the man’s side showed white. Keen bent the bow and drew back the arrow to its head. Twice he did so, calmly and for certainty, and then drove the bone-barbed missile straight home to the white flesh, gleaming yet more white in the dark-armed, dark-breasted embrace.

In the Time of Prince Charley

"YOU say you love me better than life — I don't believe it."

It is impossible to put to paper the faint, very faint. Highland accent — an accent which never ceased to charm my ear; and long, afterward, often roused me from my sleep, playing the responsive chords of memory like mellow strains from some old song.

"Better than life? No, no, it cannot be."

"I would to God there were a test," I answered, pressing her closer, till, with a sudden impulse, she touched my neck with her lips. "You have but to ask, and I fulfill."

"Suppose, then, just suppose I ask you to be false to your duty?"

"Such would be asking more than life; 'twould be honor."

"But would you?" she persisted. Her warm breath faded from neck as she raised her head and gazed into my eyes.

"Love would not ask it."

"Suppose he were my father?"

Prince Charley her father! I smiled at the supposition, as I answered. "But you have no father. Still, I would not, could not. Now let me suppose. Suppose you were I, and I were you, and he my father." (I did not dare mention the prisoner's name, for she still thought him Roderick Mackenzie, the unfortunate merchant of Edinburgh.) "Suppose all this, and that I should ask of you such a favor?"

"Then would I say, 'Yours to ask; mine to fulfill.' O you men! Spendthrifts with vows and fine speeches! Yesterday you breathed the sweet phrases in some other lassie's ear; to-morrow — aye, to-morrow, you may deem them fit for the first snoodless maid you meet."

With glowing cheeks and flashing eyes, she sprang away and faced me. Her years in England and on the continent were flown, and the wild blood of her Highland ancestry sounded the charge. I could almost see the deadly claymore flashing above plaid and tartan, and hear the clangs of the gillies, charging with their chiefs, as I had seen and heard at Preston-Pans. For a moment Aline stood thus, then the fire eloquently melted to a luminous softness. Oh! the seductive abandon! At the instant I was so swayed that hell held no abyss too deep to venture. I had been so long in the field with drunken brawlers, an alien to the better parts of man or woman, that this clean, wholesome maid well-nigh carried me away. But I had gone through a hard school, untarnished, and though I loved her dearly, I could not besmirch my plume, even in giddy love-chatter — for such it was.

"O you men!" she went on. "You have passion and honor, but love, ah! love, — that is reserved for us. Passion and honor, our dearest hopes, our brightest dreams, are lost, all lost, when we love — no, not lost, but bent to do love's bidding. When we love, we give all — body and soul — all we possess or ever hope to possess. As Raleigh spread his cloak in the mire, so would I my body, that he, for whom my heart beats, might tread upon it and pass over, dry-shod. O Griffith — you — I — "

The high-strung creature broke down, bursting into a storm of tears on my shoulder. There she sobbed, till a knock from the inner chamber interrupted us. As I had dismissed Jeannie for the night, I must wait upon the prince myself; so I hastily kissed away her dear tears, and went to the door — and just in time, for I could hear my lieutenant's boots on the stairway.

It were meet that I here set down how I, Griffith Risingham, captain to our good king, George II, find myself protagonist (as my old tutor would say) in the scene just described — alternating between hysterical love rhapsodies and gaol duty; now wooing the daughter of a Highland wef, and again, tending the wants of my princely prisoner.

From '42 to '45 I had served on the Continent with the allied armies, now °t Germany and England, now of Holland, Austria and England. ur campaign in Flanders was brought to a close by the defeat of Fontenoy, when, because of the threatened French invasion and the Jacobin Prising in Scotland, King George summoned all his soldiers home.

Of a surety, three years of hard fighting merited a rest; but I was at once dispatched into Scotland with my troop, for the Highlands were aflame and Prince Charley was marching on Edinburgh. The very day I joined Cope came the miserable defeat of Preston-Pans, and my wearied troopers were scattered as chaff before the four winds of heaven. Whatever became of them I do not know, for I barely succeeded in collecting a remnant of five score.

Then came the retreat, then the advance, and the sun shone our arms at Culloden. Our soldiers fought like demons, and who Scottish line wavered and broke, they gave no quarter, lining the ways as far as Inverness with dead. From this slaughter I was deu, to the pursuit of the Pretender and the laying waste of the rebellious territory. With fire and sword we harried Prince Charley's steps, harking back to old scents from the false ones given us by the perfidious mountaineers. With thirty thousand pounds on his head, small wonder we failed to dally by the way.

By the middle of July, though my men were clamorous for hastened to join Campbell and Scot, who, with a thousand men, were rumored to have surrounded the prince. At the same time a little incident occurred, which was quickly noised abroad. A half score of my troopers, while beating up the desolate stretch of land known as the Braes of Glenmoriston, came upon a skulker whom they took to be the prince. In a trice they were speeding to Fort Augustus with his head, bent on receiving the thirty thousand pounds. In truth this poor devil was none other than Roderick Mackenzie, a strong Jacobin who was waiting a chance to escape overseas. In consequence of this report, the pursuit languished; and there were few, if any, of the men who had the Pretender surrounded, but believed him to be already taken. It was due to this and his good fortune, that he slipped past the English campfires and headed for the Braes of Glenmoriston, in the hope of meeting Lochiel.

It was thus, of a drizzly afternoon, I encountered him. And no pleasant sight he was when one thought of his proud lineage. Little did this barefooted, bewhiskered renegade, in dirty shirt and ragged plaid, resemble Charles Edward, heir-apparent to the worse than worti crown of James II. He was heavily armed — a gun in his hand and dirk and pistol at his belt — but misery and hardship had broken his spirit, and he gave no trouble; and for private reasons, he so comported self that my troopers never learned his identity, believing him Roderick Mackenzie. Nor was I anxious that they should, for I recollected the treachery of the knaves who had fled to Fort Augustus with their bootless trophy instead of coming to me.

Leaving the pursuit to go on unchecked, I withdrew with my royal prisoner to Colin na Gaugh, a miserable fishing village of several hundred souls, situated on the mainland opposite the Isle of Skye. It was my intention to wait here the coming of the king's ship, Balmoral, which expected at any moment; for the Highlands were still smoldering, and in this way I deemed it easier to bring my prisoner to England.

The fishers stolidly eyed our entry, and naught but sullen brows and smothered curses served to greet us. Though the prince was unknown to them, they guessed him to be some Jacobin refugee, and sympathized accordingly. But as I looked over my sturdy lads, weather-beaten and battle-scarred by a dozen continental campaigns, I was sure little trouble would be given us; besides, I half forgave the poor devils, for our flag had never gone among them save with fire and sword and the plundering of a licentious soldiery. Verily, they had just cause for bitterness.

For all its dog-hole hovels, the town did a fair coastwise, and as I afterward learned, overseas trade. A very fair hostelry was the result, and in this I purposed quartering, after allotting my men among the villagers.

It was here I met Aline. As we rode up, a crowd about the door of the inn and a hubbub of voices gave sign of some unusual happening. The innkeeper's face was flushed with anger, while the strident tones of his wife rose higher and higher; but they could not drown the sharp voice of a Lowland woman, who gave her as good as she sent. Right well they fought with their tongues, cutting and thrusting with rare vigor. Red with shame, Aline was vainly trying to draw her duenna away — for such was this Lowland female with acrid tongue. I could see they were strangers, evidently in trouble, so I called a gillie to my stirrup for an explanation. With the aid of the prince, who was better versed ln tne outlandish gibberish, I learned that they had but lately come into these parts; that they were without money, nobody knew them, and the landlord was putting them out.

I sprang from my saddle. Aline was a lady — a lout could see that — and in trouble. My troopers cleared the street, while I so settled with the knavish landlord that his knees were knocking with fright when I finally dismissed him. Aline and her duenna, a Mrs. Saunders, quickly reinstalled, and I was favored with the former's presence at the table. She was a frank, winning lass, and threw herself completely on my honor, telling me all the circumstances of her trouble and about herself.

Her father was a certain Lord Kilmarnock, who had died across seas, in exile for the part his clan had played in a previous uprising. The latter part of her childhood had been spent in England; then she had joined her father. It was plain their peregrinations to the various foreign courts had rounded her education and polished her manners; but nevertheless, these sat quaintly upon her — and charmingly so, for never had I yet seen her like.

Her brother, a mere boy, who had been wholly reared abroad, had drawn his sword for the Stuarts and crossed with Prince Charley at the commencement of the rebellion. Torn with suspense for his safety, and the knowledge that he must be fleeing for his life somewhere in this bleak wilderness, had decided her. Thus her adventures had begun. First, she had gone through the military prisons; then, convinced that he was still at large and most likely in the neighborhood of the prince, she had taken passage on a lugger up the east coast to the Isle of Skye. Disappointed here, she crossed the mainland in a fishing boat and penetrated the fastnesses of Lochiel's territory. She had met this great chieftain, and he had treated her most courteously, advising her to try in the direction of Colin na Gaugh. He himself was in hiding and powerless to aid her.

Crossing the pass of Ben-Moidart, her servant was killed, and she was robbed of everything, even to her father's brooch, by a band knaves whose description seemed to tally with my soldiers who had run away with Roderick Mackenzie's head. She had managed to make Colin na Gaugh, and as to her trouble with the innkeeper, had I not witnessed it myself. Through all these vicissitudes, the faithful Mrs. Saunders had accompanied her; and by this voluble female she had been preserved more than once. Aline had kinsmen in England who were bound to help her, she said, and to them I promised to take her, at the same time thanking the gods for the privilege. She had given up finding her brother, who had doubtless already crossed the water, or else was in hiding with the prince. It was apparent she had not seen the prince abroad, or if she had, had forgotten his face.

So this is how Prince Charley, Aline and Mrs. Saunders, my lieutenant and myself, came to take up our abode in the same inn, the which was destined to lead to strange complications.

But a word of Julian Ramsay, my lieutenant. We had been in harness nearly a year now, yet I had not really come to know him. He was of good stock, a gentleman, a good soldier, and brave, but — well, it seemed he had mistaken his calling. He was too stiff, too good, too gloomy, for a camp life. In him the church would have found a wonderful servant. Withal, he was a clever swordsman and a handsome fellow, just the sort to break women's hearts; but his taciturnity and habitual coldness seemed to belie all this. In short, while we made our plans and discussed all moves together, we were not what could be called brothers-in-arms.

I was a little fearful of Aline at first, and was at a loss how to proceed. Hers was such a queer, quaint blend of girlish innocence and of woman's knowledge of the world. But we soon fell into each other's ways, and a delightful tenderness began to mark our intercourse, — nay, we became very dear to each other, living only for the present, and shunning all thoughts of the future.

And the gods were propitious. Unexpectedly, Mrs. Saunders gave no trouble, having fallen into a deep study of the New Testament, from which she rarely emerged, save to thrill our blood with Calvinistic diatribes on the sins of the flesh and the woes of the spirit. As for the prince, he was a jolly good fellow, sympathizing with us in a fatherly way and playing the role of unfortunate merchant to perfection. Once, only, did we clash, and that, when he spoke of his good friend, Louis Quatorze, the advancement a soldier of my ability would gain in his service, and a possible fifty thousand pounds I might receive did I act with discretion. I am afraid I shut him up rather bluntly; but the next morning saw him more affable than ever, and he showed no sign of bearing me ill-will.

But Julian Ramsay bothered me not a little. He became sullen, his austerity increased, and he glowered blackly whenever he came upon Aline and myself together. Once I chanced upon him wrestling with the spirit; and the sight of the strong soldier, down on the floor, groaning wailing and raising his plaint to heaven, caused a strange fear to come over me. It is not good that a gentleman and a soldier to the king should take upon himself the work of the priest. Another time we had sharp words, for he took our inaction with a very ill grace, and was for heading the troop across the Highlands into England instead of waiting for the Balmoral.

One other thing I must mention, which occurred before the scene I have first described. One evening, returning from a visit to the rumored hiding place of Lochiel, I came upon Aline in conversation with stalwart-looking Highlander. I caught one fair sight of a bearded face and fierce black eyes. Before I could lay hands upon him he slipped away in the darkness, and though my troopers beat up the moor with care, they could get no sign of the knave.

I did not know what to think. At first I thought of treachery; but Aline frankly confessed, telling me the fellow had brought news of her brother from Lochiel, and that our appearance had frightened him away. On hearing this, I promised her, if she could get word to her brother, and if he came in, that I would do my best and was sure I could gain his pardon. I was safe in this, for I knew my high kinsman could command the power, and would, when I turned over my royal prisoner in England.

About the middle of September, word was brought by a fisherr of two French ships seen off Moidart, evidently waiting a chance to embark the prince. But so well had his identity been covered that I feared nothing, and several days later brought the Balmoral into harbor.

Since her outbreak, Aline had become more tender. Methinks she had grown sadder, too, though always had she a sweet smile and a loving word for me. I once found her in tears, and another time she wept upon my shoulder as though her heart were breaking. However, I attributed it to a girlish sentiment, which was natural, deeming her the sweeter for her pensiveness.

On the day we were to embark, news came that Lochiel was drawing to the coast in an attempt to get away on one of the French ships. He was said to have a large following, so I dispatched Ramsay with nearly the whole troop to intercept him, reserving but half a dozen men for the prince's guard.

Then Aline began to beg me not to go aboard till next morning, and so well did she plead for just one more quiet hour together, that I consented, having been informed by the captain of the Balmoral that the tide would not favor till high noon.

Early in the evening the innkeeper delivered a verbal message he had just received from a gillie belonging to Lochiel's clan. He said the messenger was a foolish, ignorant lad, so fearful of being carried away in the king's ship, that he had skurried off at once. The import was that Aline's brother, having received her word and resolved to come in, had fallen sick not over eight miles away, in the hut of one Dougald, a fisherman. She was overjoyed at the news, and I sent four of my lads to bring him in.

After a rubber of whist, the prince retired, leaving us to ourselves; and for a long while we sat in dreamy silence, pleasuring in the mere clasp of hands. Never before had I realized the sweet bliss of such a silence, and never again do I hope to enjoy the like. We heard the ship's bell strike again and again; but shortly after six bells, one of my remaining men stumbled up the stairway and knocked at the door. A beacon had been lighted on the great bluff back of Colin na Gaugh, and he had come to call my attention to it. It was a signal of some sort. As the disturbed times gave the smugglers the run of the coast, they were not to be thought of.

Perhaps half an hour later, I heard steps on the stairs. They could not have returned so soon, I thought; but before I could rise, Aline sprang into my arms in a frightened manner, almost as though she divined what was coming. I strove to put her aside, but she wound her arms about my neck. Even then I did not understand. It was the tread of many men. The door opened as I sprang to my feet, and I caught a glimpse of the black-bearded Highlander, of French uniforms, and the glint of candlelight on naked claymore and cutlass. I tried to tear Aline away, but she clung the closer, twining her limbs about mine and preventing me drawing my pistol.

"Don't hurt him!" she cried. "O don't hurt him!"

But I swore heavily, threw her against the table from where she still cried for them to not hurt me, and backed against the prince's door. The circle of steel drew closer. Though I saw no hope, I beat back the points fiercely, and would doubtless have left my body on the threshold had not the prince thrown open the door and laid me by the heels. Then the gang swept over me.

O don't, please don't hurt him!" cried Aline again.

Then somebody clouted me over the head with the flat of a cutlass, and I was dragged to one side.

I was not badly stunned, for when I opened my eyes, the prince-just leaving, with a French officer and a chieftain on either hand. I was still so dazed I could not gain my feet. And well I had cause to be, for there, in the black-beard's arms, lips to lips, nestled Aline. Only a second's space, then he put her down. She made as though to come to me, but he threw his arm about her waist and dragged her away.

The town was in an uproar, I could hear them beating to quarters on the Balmoral. Then came a roar of hoofs down the rocky street, the rattle of small-arms and clash of steel. Julian Ramsay had returned.

I staggered down the stairs into the inn-yard. In the bright moonlight I could see the last boat push off from the beach, and those on the shore raking them with a sharp fire. The Balmoral began to fire her six-pounders and lower her boats, but as far as we were concerned, the battle was over — over and lost!

"By the saints, you've done well! Where's Aline?"

Ramsay had come up, and the troopers were crowding round. I wiped away the blood which persisted in streaming into my eyes laughed, — aye, loud, and heartily, and bitterly. At another time I would have laid the flat of my sword across his priest's face for his insolence her, but now he could have wiped his bloody hands on her petticoat and I would still have laughed.

Half a score of prisoners, French sailors, and Lochiel’s Highland were brought before me.

“Turn them loose,” I ordered.

“But — ,” expostulated Ramsay.

“Turn them loose,” I repeated.

“You’ll reckon dear for this — .”

“By God! I’ll have you know I’m captain here!” I burst out, th “Pshaw! Ha! Ha! Ha!”

The soldiers were perplexed, and several on the outskirts begai snicker an accompaniment to my mirth. Then two of them brougM Aline. Her lover had evidently lost her in the fight.

“Turn her loose,” I commanded.

They saluted and fell back, leaving her alone in the center of’ circle with Ramsay and myself. I remember the scene perfectly; j pale face, Ramsay’s flushed with anger, the ring of soldiers, and especially one, engaged in cinching his arm above a great slash on the wrist. He had paused with the knot half drawn, one end of the kerchief between his teeth, his eyes fixed upon me with an amused, expectant look. The blood ran down his saddle and dripped, dripped, on the soggy dirt between his horse’s hoofs.

I was quite calm. The whole trick was clear now, from the innkeeper nutting her out of the house, to the bearded Highlander and the escape of Prince Charley. What would my high kinsman say? Thirty thousand pounds, a glorious chance for advancement, a sweetheart, honor — tricked of everything! Yet I was very calm, even curious of the outcome.

She stepped toward me, but I waved her back.

“Griffith — I — if I can explain — ”

“If you can explain!” I cried. “There shall come a day when Judas Iscariot shall explain away his thirty pieces of silver, and on that day, so may you your kisses. You told me once what you would do for a man’s sake. I was a fool. I deemed myself that man. So, you lay in my arms, breathed on me your caresses and your lies — pfaugh! you wanton!”

She took it quietly, but when my teeth cut that last, harsh word, she cried, “No! No! Not that!” and reeled softly, as about to fall.

Unwittingly, I stretched forth my arm to catch her, but Ramsay struck me back on the breast.

“Cur!” he said, meanwhile drawing her against him. “But lay your hand on her, and I will forget all things, save that you — ”

“Are your captain and a cur.” I was minded to pay him, but wished first my say. “Softly, softly, I pray you. So? Another lover? I wot not she wasted many hours on you; aye, perhaps my troopers, too. Hildgart! Come thou here.”

The huge fellow slipped from the saddle, strode awkwardly forward, and saluted with a foolish grin on his face.

“Knowest thou this woman? Hast listened to her devil-singing? Hast kissed light kisses from her lips? or rumpled her pretty hair with that bear’s paw of yours? Look closely, belike you may remember. No? trange, passing strange. Mayhap she overlooked you among so many braw lads. Begone, since thou dost not know her!”

So I had it in mind to say many bitter things and cut her harshly, for my heart was sore; but Ramsay hurled his cap in my face and bade me draw.

“As there is a God above, I am going to kill you, Griffith Risingham.”

So spoke Ramsay. He believed it; so did I. I fought carefully, drawing strange satisfaction from prolonging the game. There was nothing to live for. Death seemed even welcome. And he was a clever swordsman, taught in the Italian school. I had no hope, felt that I could not touch him.

The circle widened. Strive as I would, I failed to break his guard. Then I worked him round till the moon shone in his eyes; but he seemed not to mind it, as though sure of the outcome. Right carefully I watched his eyes, for I feared his Italian tricks. Then suddenly, piff! — his hand had not followed his eye, and I, misled, felt my ribs turn aside the steel. I knew I had met my master. It is the devil who can work hand eye apart.

Twice he pinked me sharply, and I grew weak, losing much blood. At last he worked me into the moonlight. I knew the end was at hand — a feint, a quick cross and engagement, then a twist, and the blade jerked from my hand. Up came his sword for the final pass. I caught a glimpse of Aline over his shoulder. She was praying. I noticed the trooper, with the knot half drawn and the kerchief still in his teeth.

But the gods loved me. His arm fell to his side; a stream of blood gushed from his mouth; and he sank down slowly, O so slowly. Then the circle began to fade away, to grow misty. The trooper drew the knot tight and doubled it. The show was over — the play-actors left the stage.

A year later found me in France on a secret mission. The real history of Prince Charley's escape had never become known, and the days I held him at Colin na Gaugh, he was popularly supposed to have spent in the romantic refuge called the "Cage." Nay, I am told that to-day this place is still pointed out by the Scottish guides. So be it. My high kinsman never knew, and one more blunder may be accredited to history. On my return, the king saw fit to reward me for my services.

Julian Ramsay still sleeps in the bleak fisher-village. As I afterward learned, his death was due to a ball through the lungs, received in a fight on the beach, just before our duel. Poor devil! I was harsh and unjust to him and her that night. If he had loved her, he had kept his secret well. But a bitter heart says bitter things. As for her — I had not seen her again. My surgeon drove her away from me, and the troopers put her out of the inn.

Ah! if I could only forget her! And forgive her? I had forgiven her all but one. As I held my allegiance to King George above love, above all things, just so had she been true to her father, to the cause he died for, and to Prince Charley. I could understand and forgive that, but — that black-bearded Highland lover! Ah, why could I not forget her? Why should I still dream of her, and hear her voice, and see her as in the old days?

So I picked my way along the dark street, forgetting my mission, musing over bygones. It was early evening, and Paris still hummed with life.

I could see ahead of me another pedestrian, — a gentleman and a soldier, if I mistook not his carriage. He walked idly, and I soon overtook him. One glance and we knew each other. It was the Highlander, though his beard was gone.

"Ha! comrade!" he cried gayly in English, holding forth his hand.

"Comrade? Nay; I owe you too much for that," I answered hotly. For I was wroth at this man, permitting, even for his prince, such liberty as he had to Aline.

"Not so," was his reply; "'tis I am debtor, and to something like thirty thousand pounds. You lost that. So? — but such is war. Yet had you gained the heart's desire, had you so willed."

"In your teeth, your cast off tinsel toys!" I cried. "Your heart's desires! In my country we do not bandy such things from man to man." (As I wished, this seemed to cut him for he started and looked at me sharply.) "In my country, we treat our toys more wholesomely; but you — if you are a man, draw!"

"Strange, strange; I had not thought of that," he mused, half aloud.

"Come," I sneered; "or must I put the poltroon's badge upon you?"

"Softly, softly; there is a new edict anent the duello, and Louis does not greatly favor foreign adventurers. Yet will I give you satisfaction; but first my affairs. On my honor, I meditate no wrong. Come with me, that I may say goodbye to one, near of kin. Then I will lead you to a quiet place, where all differences may be meetly settled."

I nodded curtly, and we set off. This Highlander, without the Highland brogue, was no coward. And Aline — was he leading me to her that he might say good-bye? At last we came to broader streets and entered an old-fashioned stone house.

Pausing before a door on the second landing, he said, "I must have a few words with my servant. My sister will entertain you till my return."

He pushed me in and closed the door. And there, bending over an embroidery frame, her face a little thinner, a little sadder than of yore, was Aline. I looked about, as though for a second person. was none.

What a fool I had been! Would she, could she ever forgive me?

An hour later he returned.

"Pardon my delay," he said, advancing to me. "We will now step into the courtyard. A very quiet place, I assure you, and — "

But the breach between the House of Stuart and the House of Hanover was forgotten in an embrace, such as is sometimes becoming between men.

In Yeddo Bay

SOMEWHERE along Theater Street he had lost it. He remembered being hustled somewhat roughly on the bridge over one of the canals that cross that busy thoroughfare. Possibly some slant-eyed, light-fingered pickpocket was even then enjoying the fifty-odd yen his purse had contained. And then again, he thought, he might have lost it himself, just lost it carelessly.

Hopelessly, and for the twentieth time, he searched in all his pockets for the missing purse. It was not there. His hand lingered in his empty hip-pocket, and he woefully regarded the voluble and vociferous restaurant-keeper, who insanely clamored: “Twenty-five sen! You pay now! Twenty-five sen!”

“But my purse!” the boy said. “I tell you I’ve lost it somewhere.”

Whereupon the restaurant-keeper lifted his arms indignantly and shrieked: “Twenty-five sen! Twenty-five sen! You pay now!”

Quite a crowd had collected, and it was growing embarrassing for Alf Davis.

It was so ridiculous and petty, Alf thought. Such a disturbance about nothing! And, decidedly, he must be doing something. Thoughts of diving wildly through that forest of legs, and of striking out at whomsoever opposed him, flashed through his mind; but, as though divining his purpose, one of the waiters, a short and chunky chap with an evil-looking cast in one eye, seized him by the arm.

“You pay now! You pay now! Twenty-five sen!” yelled the proprietor, hoarse with rage.

Alf was red in the face, too, from mortification; but he resolutely set out on another exploration. He had given up the purse, pinning his last hope on stray coins. In the little change-pocket of his coat he found a ten-sen piece and five-copper sen; and remembering having recently missed a ten-sen piece, he cut the seam of the pocket and resurrected the coin from the depths of the lining. Twenty-five sen he held in his hand, the sum required to pay for the supper he had eaten. He turned them over to the proprietor, who counted them, grew suddenly calm, and bowed obsequiously — in fact, the whole crowd bowed obsequiously and melted away.

Alf Davis was a young sailor, just turned sixteen, on board the Annie Mine, an American sailing-schooner, which had run into Yokohama to ship its season’s catch of skins to London. And in this, his second trip ashore, he was beginning to snatch his first puzzling glimpses of the Oriental mind. He laughed when the bowing and kotowing was over, and turned on his heel to confront another problem. How was he to get aboard ship? It was eleven o’clock at night, and there would be no ship’s boats ashore, while the outlook for hiring a native boatman, with nothing but empty pockets to draw upon, was not particularly inviting.

Keeping a sharp lookout for shipmates, he went down to the pier. At Yokohama there are no long lines of wharves. The shipping lies out at anchor, enabling a few hundred of the short-legged people to make a livelihood by carrying passengers to and from the shore.

A dozen sampan men and boys hailed Alf and offered their services. He selected the most favorable-looking one, an old and beneficent-appearing man with a withered leg. Alf stepped into his sampan and sat down. It was quite dark and he could not see what the old fellow was doing, though he evidently was doing nothing about shoving off and getting under way. At last he limped over and peered into Alf’s face.

“Ten sen,” he said.

“Yes, I know, ten sen,” Alf answered carelessly. “But hurry up. American schooner.”

“Ten sen. You pay now,” the old fellow insisted.

Alf felt himself grow hot all over at the hateful words “pay now.” “You take me to American schooner; then I pay,” he said.

But the man stood up patiently before him, held out his hand, and said, “Ten sen. You pay now.”

Alf tried to explain. He had no money. He had lost his purse. But he would pay. As soon as he got aboard the American schooner, then he would pay. No; he would not even go aboard the American schooner. He would call to his shipmates, and they would give the sampan man the ten sen first. After that he would go aboard. So it was all right, of course.

To all of which the beneficent-appearing old man replied: “You pay now. Ten sen.” And, to make matters worse, the other sampan men squatted on the pier steps, listening.

Alf, chagrined and angry, stood up to step ashore. But the old fellow laid a detaining hand on his sleeve. “You give shirt now. I take you ‘Merican schooner,” he proposed.

Then it was that all of Alf's American independence flamed up in his breast. The Anglo-Saxon has a born dislike of being imposed upon, and to Alf this was sheer robbery! Ten sen was equivalent to six American cents, while his shirt, which was of good quality and was new, had cost him two dollars.

He turned his back on the man without a word, and went out to the end of the pier, the crowd, laughing with great gusto, following at his heels. The majority of them were heavy-set, muscular fellows, and the July night being one of sweltering heat, they were clad in the least possible raiment. The water-people of any race are rough and turbulent, and it struck Alf that to be out at midnight on a pier-end with such a crowd of wharfmen, in a big Japanese city, was not as safe as it might be.

One burly fellow, with a shock of black hair and ferocious eyes, came up. The rest shoved in after him to take part in the discussion.

"Give me shoes," the man said. "Give me shoes now. I take you 'Merican schooner."

Alf shook his head, whereat the crowd clamored that he accept the proposal. Now the Anglo-Saxon is so constituted that to brow-beat or bully him is the last way under the sun of getting him to do any certain thing. He will dare willingly, but he will not permit himself to be driven. So this attempt of the boatmen to force Alf only aroused all the dogged stubbornness of his race. The same qualities were in him that are in men who lead forlorn hopes; and there, under the stars, on the lonely pier, encircled by the jostling and shouldering gang, he resolved that he would die rather than submit to the indignity of being robbed of a single stitch of clothing. Not value, but principle, was at stake.

Then somebody thrust roughly against him from behind. He whirled about with flashing eyes, and the circle involuntarily gave ground. But the crowd was growing more boisterous. Each and every article of clothing he had on was demanded by one or another, and these demands were shouted simultaneously at the tops of very healthy lungs.

Alf had long since ceased to say anything, but he knew that the situation was getting dangerous, and that the only thing left to him was to get away. His face was set doggedly, his eyes glinted like points of steel, and his body was firmly and confidently poised. This air of determination sufficiently impressed the boatmen to make them give way before him when he started to walk toward the shore-end of the pier. But they trooped along beside him and behind him, shouting and laughing more noisily than ever. One of the youngsters, about Alf's size and build, impudently snatched his cap from his head; but before he could put it on his own head, Alf struck out from the shoulder, and sent the fellow rolling on the stones.

The cap flew out of his hand and disappeared among the many legs. Alf did some quick thinking; his sailor pride would not permit him to leave the cap in their hands. He followed in the direction it had sped, and soon found it under the bare foot of a stalwart fellow, who kept his weight stolidly upon it. Alf tried to get the cap out by a sudden jerk, but failed. He shoved against the man's leg, but the man only grunted. It was challenge direct, and Alf accepted it. Like a flash one leg was behind the man and Alf had thrust strongly with his shoulder against the fellow's chest. Nothing could save the man from the fierce vigorousness of the trick, and he was hurled over and backward.

Next, the cap was on Alf's head and his fists were up before him. Then he whirled about to prevent attack from behind, and all those in that quarter fled precipitately. This was what he wanted. None remained between him and the shore end. The pier was narrow. Facing them and threatening with his fist those who attempted to pass him on either side, he continued his retreat. It was exciting work, walking backward and at the same time checking that surging mass of men. But the dark-skinned peoples, the world over, have learned to respect the white man's fist; and it was the battles fought by many sailors, more than his own warlike front, that gave Alf the victory.

Where the pier adjoins the shore was the station of the harbor police, and Alf backed into the electric-lighted office, very much to the amusement of the dapper lieutenant in charge. The sampan men, grown quiet and orderly, clustered like flies by the open door, through which they could see and hear what passed.

Alf explained his difficulty in few words, and demanded, as the privilege of a stranger in a strange land, that the lieutenant put him aboard in the police-boat. The lieutenant, in turn, who knew all the "rules and regulations" by heart, explained that the harbor police were not ferrymen, and that the police-boats had other functions to perform than that of transporting belated and penniless sailor-men to their ships. He also said he knew the sampan men to be natural-born robbers, but that so long as they robbed within the law he was powerless. It was their right to collect fares in advance, and who was he to command them to take a passenger and collect fare at the journey's end? Alf acknowledged the justice of his remarks, but suggested that while he could not command he might persuade. The lieutenant was willing to oblige, and went to the door, from where he delivered a speech to the crowd. But they, too, knew their rights, and, when the officer had finished, shouted in chorus their abominable "Ten sen! You pay now! You pay now!"

"You see, I can do nothing," said the lieutenant, who, by the way, spoke perfect English. "But I have warned them not to harm or molest you, so you will be safe, at least. The night is warm and half over. Lie down somewhere and to sleep. I would permit you to sleep here in the office, were it not against the rules and regulations."

Alf thanked him for his kindness and courtesy; but the sampan men had aroused all his pride of race and doggedness, and the problem could not be solved that way. To sleep out the night on the stones was an acknowledgment of defeat.

"The sampan men refuse to take me out?"

The lieutenant nodded.

"And you refuse to take me out?"

Again the lieutenant nodded.

"Well, then, it's not in the rules and regulations that you can prevent my taking myself out?"

The lieutenant was perplexed. "There is no boat," he said.

"That's not the question," Alf proclaimed hotly. "If I take myself out, everybody's satisfied and no harm done?"

"Yes; what you say is true," persisted the puzzled lieutenant. "But you cannot take yourself out."

"You just watch me," was the retort.

Down went Alf's cap on the office floor. Right and left he kicked off his low-cut shoes. Trousers and shirt followed.

"Remember," he said in ringing tones, "I, as a citizen of the United States, shall hold you, the city of Yokohama, and the government of Japan responsible for those clothes. Good night."

He plunged through the doorway, scattering the astounded boatmen to either side, and ran out on the pier. But they quickly recovered and ran after him, shouting with glee at the new phase the situation had taken on. It was a night long remembered among the water-folk of Yokohama town. Straight to the end Alf ran, and, without pause, dived off cleanly and neatly into the water. He struck out with a lusty, single-overhand stroke till curiosity prompted him to halt for a moment. Out of the darkness, from where the pier should be, voices were calling to him.

He turned on his back, floated, and listened.

“All right! All right!” he could distinguish from the babel. “No pay now; pay bime by! Come back! Come back now; pay bime by!”

“No, thank you;” he called back. “No pay at all. Good night.”

Then he faced about in order to locate the Annie Mine. She was fully a mile away, and in the darkness it was no easy task to get her bearings. First, he settled upon a blaze of lights which he knew nothing but a man-of-war could make. That must be the United States war-ship Lancaster. Somewhere to the left and beyond should be the Annie Mine. But to the left he made out three lights close together. That could not be the schooner. For the moment he was confused. He rolled over on his back and shut his eyes, striving to construct a mental picture of the harbor as he had seen it in daytime. With a snort of satisfaction he rolled back again. The three lights evidently belonged to the big English tramp steamer. Therefore the schooner must lie somewhere between the three lights and the Lancaster. He gazed long and steadily, and there, very dim and low, but at the point he expected, burned a single light — the anchorlight of the Annie Mine.

And it was a fine swim under the starshine. The air was warm as the water, and the water as warm as tepid milk. The good salt taste of it was in his mouth, the tingling of it along his limbs; and the steady beat of his heart, heavy and strong, made him glad for living.

But beyond being glorious the swim was uneventful. On the right hand he passed the many-lighted Lancaster, on the left hand the English tramp, and ere long the Annie Mine loomed large above him. He grasped the hanging rope-ladder and drew himself noiselessly on deck. There was no one in sight. He saw a light in the galley, and knew that the captain’s son, who kept the lonely anchorwatch, was making coffee. Alf went forward to the forecastle. The men were snoring in their bunks, and in that confined space the heat seemed to him insufferable. So he put on a thin cotton shirt and a pair of dungaree trousers, tucked blanket and pillow under his arm, and went up on deck and out on the forecastle-head.

Hardly had he begun to doze when he was roused by a boat coming alongside and hailing the anchor-watch. It was the police-boat, and to Alf it was given to enjoy the excited conversation that ensued. Yes, the captain’s son recognized the clothes. They belonged to Alf Davis, one of the seamen. What had happened? No; Alf Davis had not come aboard. He was ashore. He was not ashore? Then he must be drowned. Here both the lieutenant and the captain’s son talked at the same time, and Alf could make out nothing. Then he heard them come forward and rouse out the crew. The crew grumbled sleepily and said that Alf Davis was not in the forecastle; whereupon the captain’s son waxed indignant at the Yokohama police and their ways, and the lieutenant quoted rules and regulations in despairing accents.

Alf rose up from the forecastle-head and extended his hand, saying:

“I guess I’ll take those clothes. Thank you for bringing them aboard so promptly.”

“I don’t see why he couldn’t have brought you aboard inside of them,” said the captain’s son.

And the police lieutenant said nothing, though he turned the clothes over somewhat sheepishly to their rightful owner.

The next day, when Alf started to go ashore, he found himself surrounded by shouting and gesticulating, though very respectful, sampan men, all extraordinarily anxious to have him for a passenger. Nor did the one he selected say, “You pay now,” when he entered his boat. When Alf prepared to step out on to the pier, he offered the man the customary ten sen. But the man drew himself up and shook his head.

“You all right,” he said. “You no pay. You never no pay. You bully boy and all right.”

And for the rest of the Annie Mine’s stay in port, the sampan men refused money at Alf Davis’s hand. Out of admiration for his pluck and independence, they had given him the freedom of the harbor.

The Inevitable White Man

The black will never understand the white, nor the white the black, as long as black is black and white is white."

So said Captain Woodward. We sat in the parlor of Charley Roberts' pub in Apia, drinking long Abu Hameds compounded and shared with us by the aforesaid Charley Roberts, who claimed the recipe direct from Stevens, famous for having invented the Abu Hamed at a time when he was spurred on by Nile thirst--the Stevens who was responsible for "With Kitchener to Kartoun," and who passed out at the siege of Ladysmith.

Captain Woodward, short and squat, elderly, burned by forty years of tropic sun, and with the most beautiful liquid brown eyes I ever saw in a man, spoke from a vast experience. The crisscross of scars on his bald pate bespoke a tomahawk intimacy with the black, and of equal intimacy was the advertisement, front and rear, on the right side of his neck, where an arrow had at one time entered and been pulled clean through. As he explained, he had been in a hurry on that occasion--the arrow impeded his running--and he felt that he could not take the time to break off the head and pull out the shaft the way it had come in. At the present moment he was commander of the SAVAII, the big steamer that recruited labor from the westward for the German plantations on Samoa.

"Half the trouble is the stupidity of the whites," said Roberts, pausing to take a swig from his glass and to curse the Samoan bar-boy in affectionate terms. "If the white man would lay himself out a bit to understand the workings of the black man's mind, most of the messes would be avoided."

"I've seen a few who claimed they understood niggers," Captain Woodward retorted, "and I always took notice that they were the first to be kai-kai'd (eaten). Look at the missionaries in New Guinea and the New Hebrides--the martyr isle of Erromanga and all the rest. Look at the Austrian expedition that was cut to pieces in the Solomons, in the bush of Guadalcanar. And look at the traders themselves, with a score of years' experience, making their brag that no nigger would ever get them, and whose heads to this day are ornamenting the rafters of the canoe houses. There was old Johnny Simons--twenty-six years on the raw edges of Melanesia, swore he knew the niggers like a book and that they'd never do for him, and he passed out at Marovo Lagoon, New Georgia, had his head sawed off by a black Mary (woman) and an old nigger with only one leg, having left the other leg in the mouth of a shark while diving for dynamited fish. There was Billy Watts, horrible reputation as a nigger killer, a man to scare the devil. I remember lying at Cape Little, New Ireland you know, when the niggers stole half a case of trade-tobacco--cost him about three dollars and a half. In retaliation he turned out, shot six niggers, smashed up their war canoes and burned two villages. And it was at Cape Little, four years afterward, that he was jumped along with fifty Buku boys he had with him fishing bêche-de-mer. In five minutes they were all dead, with the exception of three boys who got away in a canoe. Don't talk to me about understanding the nigger. The white man's mission is to farm the world, and it's a big enough job cut out for him. What time has he got left to understand niggers anyway?"

"Just so," said Roberts. "And somehow it doesn't seem necessary, after all, to understand the niggers. In direct proportion to the white man's stupidity is his success in farming the world--"

"And putting the fear of God into the nigger's heart," Captain Woodward blurted out. "Perhaps you're right, Roberts. Perhaps it's his stupidity that makes him succeed, and surely one phase of his stupidity is his inability to understand the niggers. But there's one thing sure, the white has to run the niggers whether he understands them or not. It's inevitable. It's fate."

"And of course the white man is inevitable--it's the niggers' fate," Roberts broke in. "Tell the white man there's pearl shell in some lagoon infested by ten-thousand howling cannibals, and he'll head there all by his lonely, with half a dozen kanaka divers and a tin alarm clock for chronometer, all packed like sardines on a commodious, five-ton ketch. Whisper that there's a gold strike at the North Pole, and that same inevitable white-skinned creature will set out at once, armed with pick and shovel, a side of bacon, and the latest patent rocker--and what's more, he'll get there. Tip it off to him that there's diamonds on the red-hot ramparts of hell, and Mr. White Man will storm the ramparts and set old Satan himself to pick-and-shovel work. That's what comes of being stupid and inevitable."

"But I wonder what the black man must think of the--the inevitableness," I said.

Captain Woodward broke into quiet laughter. His eyes had a reminiscent gleam.

"I'm just wondering what the niggers of Malu thought and still must be thinking of the one inevitable white man we had on board when we visited them in the DUCHESS," he explained.

Roberts mixed three more Abu Hameds.

"That was twenty years ago. Saxtorph was his name. He was certainly the most stupid man I ever saw, but he was as inevitable as death. There was only one thing that chap could do, and that was shoot. I remember the first time I ran into him--right here in Apia, twenty years ago. That was before your time, Roberts. I was sleeping at Dutch Henry's hotel, down where the market is now. Ever heard of him? He made a tidy stake smuggling arms in to the rebels, sold out his hotel, and was killed in Sydney just six weeks afterward in a saloon row.

"But Saxtorph. One night I'd just got to sleep, when a couple of cats began to sing in the courtyard. It was out of bed and up window, water jug in hand. But just then I heard the window of the next room go up. Two shots were fired, and the window was closed. I fail to impress you with the celerity of the transaction. Ten seconds at the outside. Up went the window, bang bang went the revolver, and down went the window. Whoever it was, he had never stopped to see the effect of his shots. He knew. Do you follow me?--he KNEW. There was no more cat concert, and in the morning there lay the two offenders, stone dead. It was marvelous to me. It still is marvelous. First, it was starlight, and Saxtorph shot without drawing a bead; next, he shot so rapidly that the two reports were like a double report; and finally, he knew he had hit his marks without looking to see.

"Two days afterward he came on board to see me. I was mate, then, on the Duchess, a whacking big one-hundred-and fifty-ton schooner, a blackbirder. And let me tell you that blackbirders were blackbirders in those days. There weren't any government protection for US, either. It was rough work, give and take, if we were finished, and nothing said, and we ran niggers from every south sea island they didn't kick us off from. Well, Saxtorph came on board, John Saxtorph was the name he gave. He was a sandy little man, hair sandy, complexion sandy, and eyes sandy, too. Nothing striking about him. His soul was as neutral as his color scheme. He said he was strapped and wanted to ship on board. Would go cabin boy, cook, supercargo, or common sailor. Didn't know anything about any of the billets, but said that he was willing to learn. I didn't want him, but his shooting had so impressed me that I took him as common sailor, wages three pounds per month.

"He was willing to learn all right, I'll say that much. But he was constitutionally unable to learn anything. He could no more box the compass than I could mix drinks like Roberts here. And as for steering, he gave me my first gray hairs. I never dared risk him at the wheel when we were running in a big sea, while full-and-by and close-and-by were insoluble mysteries. Couldn't ever tell the difference between a sheet and a tackle, simply couldn't. The fore-throat-jig and the jib-jig were all one to him. Tell him to slack off the mainsheet, and before you know it, he'd drop the peak. He fell overboard three times, and he couldn't swim. But he was always cheerful, never seasick, and he was the most willing man I ever knew. He was an uncommunicative soul. Never talked about himself. His history, so far as we were concerned, began the day he signed on the DUCHESS. Where he learned to shoot, the stars alone can tell. He was a Yankee--that much we knew from the twang in his speech. And that was all we ever did know.

"And now we begin to get to the point. We had bad luck in the New Hebrides, only fourteen boys for five weeks, and we ran up before the southeast for the Solomons. 'malaita, then as now, was good recruiting ground, and we ran into Malu, on the northwestern corner. There's a shore reef and an outer reef, and a mighty nervous anchorage; but we made it all right and fired off our dynamite as a signal to the niggers to come down and be recruited. In three days we got not a boy. The niggers came off to us in their canoes by hundreds, but they only laughed when we showed them beads and calico and hatchets and talked of the delights of plantation work in Samoa.

"On the fourth day there came a change. Fifty-odd boys signed on and were billeted in the main-hold, with the freedom of the deck, of course. And of course, looking back, this wholesale signing on was suspicious, but at the time we thought some powerful chief had removed the ban against recruiting. The morning of the fifth day our two boats went ashore as usual--one to cover the other, you know, in case of trouble. And, as usual, the fifty niggers on board were on deck, loafing, talking, smoking, and sleeping. Saxtorph and myself, along with four other sailors, were all that were left on board. The two boats were manned with Gilbert Islanders. In the one were the captain, the supercargo, and the recruiter. In the other, which was the covering boat and which lay off shore a hundred yards, was the second mate. Both boats were well-armed, though trouble was little expected.

"Four of the sailors, including Saxtorph, were scraping the poop rail. The fifth sailor, rifle in hand, was standing guard by the water-tank just for'ard of the mainmast. I was for'ard, putting in the finishing licks on a new jaw for the fore-gaff. I was just reaching for my pipe where I had laid it down, when I heard a shot from shore. I straightened up to look. Something struck me on the back of the head, partially stunning me and knocking me to the deck. 'my first thought was that something had carried away aloft; but even as I went down, and before I struck the deck, I heard the devil's own tattoo of rifles from the boats, and twisting sidewise, I caught a glimpse of the sailor who was standing guard. Two big niggers were holding his arms, and a third nigger from behind was braining him with a tomahawk.

"I can see it now, the water-tank, the mainmast, the gang hanging on to him, the hatchet descending on the back of his head, and all under the blazing sunlight. I was fascinated by that growing vision of death. The tomahawk seemed to take a horribly long time to come down. I saw it land, and the man's legs give under him as he crumpled. The niggers held him up by sheer strength while he was hacked a couple of times more. Then I got two more hacks on the head and decided that I was dead. So did the brute that was hacking me. I was too helpless to move, and I lay there and watched them removing the sentry's head. I must say they did it slick enough. They were old hands at the business.

"The rifle firing from the boats had ceased, and I made no doubt that they were finished off and that the end had come to everything. It was only a matter of moments when they would return for my head. They were evidently taking the heads from the sailors aft. Heads are valuable on Malaita, especially white heads. They have the place of honor in the canoe houses of the salt-water natives. What particular decorative effect the bushmen get out of them I didn't know, but they prize them just as much as the salt-water crowd.

"I had a dim notion of escaping, and I crawled on hands and knees to the winch, where I managed to drag myself to my feet. From there I could look aft and see three heads on top the cabin--the heads of three sailors I had given orders to for months. The niggers saw me standing, and started for me. I reached for my revolver, and found they had taken it. I can't say that I was scared. I’ve been near to death several times, but it never seemed easier than right then. I was half-stunned, and nothing seemed to matter.

“The leading nigger had armed himself with a cleaver from the galley, and he grimaced like an ape as he prepared to slice me down. But the slice was never made. He went down on the deck all of a heap, and I saw the blood gush from his mouth. In a dim way I heard a rifle go off and continue to go off. Nigger after nigger went down. ‘my senses began to clear, and I noted that there was never a miss. Every time that the rifle went off a nigger dropped. I sat down on deck beside the winch and looked up. Perched in the crosstrees was Saxtorph. How he had managed it I can’t imagine, for he had carried up with him two Winchesters and I don’t know how many bandoliers of ammunition; and he was now doing the one only thing in this world that he was fitted to do.

“I’ve seen shooting and slaughter, but I never saw anything like that. I sat by the winch and watched the show. I was weak and faint, and it seemed to be all a dream. Bang, bang, bang, bang, went his rifle, and thud, thud, thud, thud, went the niggers to the deck. It was amazing to see them go down. After their first rush to get me, when about a dozen had dropped, they seemed paralyzed; but he never left off pumping his gun. By this time canoes and the two boats arrived from shore, armed with Sniders, and with Winchesters which they had captured in the boats. The fusillade they let loose on Saxtorph was tremendous. Luckily for him the niggers are only good at close range. They are not used to putting the gun to their shoulders. They wait until they are right on top of a man, and then they shoot from the hip. When his rifle got too hot, Saxtorph changed off. That had been his idea when he carried two rifles up with him.

“The astounding thing was the rapidity of his fire. Also, he never made a miss. If ever anything was inevitable, that man was. It was the swiftness of it that made the slaughter so appalling. The niggers did not have time to think. When they did manage to think, they went over the side in a rush, capsizing the canoes of course. Saxtorph never let up. The water was covered with them, and plump, plump, plump, he dropped his bullets into them. Not a single miss, and I could hear distinctly the thud of every bullet as it buried in human flesh.

“The niggers spread out and headed for the shore, swimming. The water was carpeted with bobbing heads, and I stood up, as in a dream, and watched it all--the bobbing heads and the heads that ceased to bob. Some of the long shots were magnificent. Only one man reached the beach, but as he stood up to wade ashore, Saxtorph got him. It was beautiful. And when a couple of niggers ran down to drag him out of the water, Saxtorph got them, too.

"I thought everything was over then, when I heard the rifle go off again. A nigger had come out of the cabin companion on the run for the rail and gone down in the middle of it. The cabin must have been full of them. I counted twenty. They came up one at a time and jumped for the rail. But they never got there. It reminded me of trapshooting. A black body would pop out of the companion, bang would go Saxtorph's rifle, and down would go the black body. Of course, those below did not know what was happening on deck, so they continued to pop out until the last one was finished off.

"Saxtorph waited a while to make sure, and then came down on deck. He and I were all that were left of the DUCHESS'S complement, and I was pretty well to the bad, while he was helpless now that the shooting was over. Under my direction he washed out my scalp wounds and sewed them up. A big drink of whiskey braced me to make an effort to get out. There was nothing else to do. All the rest were dead. We tried to get up sail, Saxtorph hoisting and I holding the turn. He was once more the stupid lubber. He couldn't hoist worth a cent, and when I fell in a faint, it looked all up with us.

"When I came to, Saxtorph was sitting helplessly on the rail, waiting to ask me what he should do. I told him to overhaul the wounded and see if there were any able to crawl. He gathered together six. One, I remember, had a broken leg; but Saxtorph said his arms were all right. I lay in the shade, brushing the flies off and directing operations, while Saxtorph bossed his hospital gang. I'll be blessed if he didn't make those poor niggers heave at every rope on the pin-rails before he found the halyards. One of them let go the rope in the midst of the hoisting and slipped down to the deck dead; but Saxtorph hammered the others and made them stick by the job. When the fore and main were up, I told him to knock the shackle out of the anchor chain and let her go. I had had myself helped aft to the wheel, where I was going to make a shift at steering. I can't guess how he did it, but instead of knocking the shackle out, down went the second anchor, and there we were doubly moored.

"In the end he managed to knock both shackles out and raise the staysail and jib, and the Duchess filled away for the entrance. Our decks were a spectacle. Dead and dying niggers were everywhere. They were wedged away some of them in the most inconceivable places. The cabin was full of them where they had crawled off the deck and cashed in. I put Saxtorph and his graveyard gang to work heaving them overside, and over they went, the living and the dead. The sharks had fat pickings that day. Of course our four murdered sailors went the same way. Their heads, however, we put in a sack with weights, so that by no chance should they drift on the beach and fall into the hands of the niggers.

"Our five prisoners I decided to use as crew, but they decided otherwise. They watched their opportunity and went over the side. Saxtorph got two in mid-air with his revolver, and would have shot the other three in the water if I hadn't stopped him. I was sick of the slaughter, you see, and besides, they'd helped work the schooner out. But it was mercy thrown away, for the sharks got the three of them.

"I had brain fever or something after we got clear of the land. Anyway, the DUCHESS lay hove to for three weeks, when I pulled myself together and we jogged on with her to Sydney. Anyway those niggers of Malu learned the everlasting lesson that it is not good to monkey with a white man. In their case, Saxtorph was certainly inevitable."

Charley Roberts emitted a long whistle and said:

"Well I should say so. But whatever became of Saxtorph?"

"He drifted into seal hunting and became a crackerjack. For six years he was high line of both the Victoria and San Francisco fleets. The seventh year his schooner was seized in Bering Sea by a Russian cruiser, and all hands, so the talk went, were slammed into the Siberian salt mines. At least I've never heard of him since."

"Farming the world," Roberts muttered. "Farming the world. Well here's to them. Somebody's got to do it--farm the world, I mean."

Captain Woodward rubbed the criss-crosses on his bald head.

"I've done my share of it," he said. "Forty years now. This will be my last trip. Then I'm going home to stay."

"I'll wager the wine you don't," Roberts challenged. "You'll die in the harness, not at home."

Captain Woodward promptly accepted the bet, but personally I think Charley Roberts has the best of it.

Jan, the Unrepentant

"For there's never a law of God or man Runs north of Fifty-three."

Jan rolled over, clawing and kicking. He was fighting hand and foot now, and he fought grimly, silently. Two of the three men who hung upon him, shouted directions to each other, and strove to curb the short, hairy devil who would not curb. The third man howled. His finger was between Jan's teeth.

"Quit yer tantrums, Jan, an' ease up!" panted Red Bill, getting a strangle-hold on Jan's neck. "Why on earth can't yeh hang decent and peaceable?"

But Jan kept his grip on the third man's finger, and squirmed over the floor of the tent, into the pots and pans.

"Youah no gentleman, suh," reproved Mr. Taylor, his body following his finger, and endeavoring to accommodate itself to every jerk of Jan's head. "You hev killed Mistah Gordon, as brave and honorable a gentleman as ever hit the trail aftah the dogs. Youah a murderah, suh, and without honah."

"An' yer no comrade," broke in Red Bill. "If you was, you'd hang 'thout rampin' around an' roarin'. Come on, Jan, there's a good fellow. Don't give us no more trouble. Jes' quit, an' we'll hang yeh neat and handy, an' be done with it."

"Steady, all!" Lawson, the sailorman, bawled. "Jam his head into the bean pot and batten down."

"But my fingah, suh," Mr. Taylor protested.

"Leggo with y'r finger, then! Always in the way!"

"But I can't, Mistah Lawson. It's in the critter's gullet, and nigh chewed off as 't is."

"Stand by for stays!" As Lawson gave the warning, Jan half lifted himself, and the struggling quartet floundered across the tent into a muddle of furs and blankets. In its passage it cleared the body of a man, who lay motionless, bleeding from a bullet-wound in the neck.

All this was because of the madness which had come upon Jan--the madness which comes upon a man who has stripped off the raw skin of earth and grovelled long in primal nakedness, and before whose eyes rises the fat vales of the homeland, and into whose nostrils steals the whiff of bay, and grass, and flower, and new-turned soil. Through five frigid years Jan had sown the seed. Stuart River, Forty Mile, Circle City, Koyokuk, Kotzebue, had marked his bleak and strenuous agriculture, and now it was Nome that bore the harvest,--not the Nome of golden beaches and ruby sands, but the Nome of ‘97, before Anvil City was located, or Eldorado District organized. John Gordon was a Yankee, and should have known better. But he passed the sharp word at a time when Jan’s blood-shot eyes blazed and his teeth gritted in torment. And because of this, there was a smell of saltpetre in the tent, and one lay quietly, while the other fought like a cornered rat, and refused to hang in the decent and peacable manner suggested by his comrades.

“If you will allow me, Mistah Lawson, befoah we go further in this rumpus, I would say it wah a good idea to pry this hyer varmint’s teeth apart. Neither will he bite off, nor will he let go. He has the wisdom of the sarpint, suh, the wisdom of the sarpint.”

“Lemme get the hatchet to him!” vociferated the sailor. “Lemme get the hatchet!” He shoved the steel edge close to Mr. Taylor’s finger and used the man’s teeth as a fulcrum. Jan held on and breathed through his nose, snorting like a grampus. “Steady, all! Now she takes it!”

“Thank you, suh; it is a powerful relief.” And Mr. Taylor proceeded to gather into his arms the victim’s wildly waving legs.

But Jan upreared in his Berserker rage; bleeding, frothing, cursing; five frozen years thawing into sudden hell. They swayed backward and forward, panted, sweated, like some cyclopean, many-legged monster rising from the lower deeps. The slush-lamp went over, drowned in its own fat, while the midday twilight scarce percolated through the dirty canvas of the tent.

“For the love of Gawd, Jan, get yer senses back!” pleaded Red Bill. “We ain’t goin’ to hurt yeh, ‘r kill yeh, ‘r anythin’ of that sort. Jes’ want to hang yeh, that’s all, an’ you a-messin’ round an’ rampagin’ somethin’ terrible. To think of travellin’ trail together an’ then bein’ treated this-a way. Wouldn’t ‘bleeved it of yeh, Jan!”

“He’s got too much steerage-way. Grab holt his legs, Taylor, and heave’m over!”

“Yes, suh, Mistah Lawson. Do you press youah weight above, after I give the word.” The Kentuckian groped about him in the murky darkness. “Now, suh, now is the accepted time!”

There was a great surge, and a quarter of a ton of human flesh tottered and crashed to its fall against the side-wall. Pegs drew and guy-ropes parted, and the tent, collapsing, wrapped the battle in its greasy folds.

"Yer only makin' it harder fer yerself," Red Bill continued, at the same time driving both his thumbs into a hairy throat, the possessor of which he had pinned down. "You've made nuisance enough a' ready, an' it'll take half the day to get things straightened when we've strung yeh up."

"I'll thank you to leave go, suh," spluttered Mr. Taylor.

Red Bill grunted and loosed his grip, and the twain crawled out into the open. At the same instant Jan kicked clear of the sailor, and took to his heels across the snow.

"Hi! you lazy devils! Buck! Bright! Sic'm! Pull 'm down!" sang out Lawson, lunging through the snow after the fleeing man. Buck and Bright, followed by the rest of the dogs, outstripped him and rapidly overhauled the murderer.

There was no reason that these men should do this; no reason for Jan to run away; no reason for them to attempt to prevent him. On the one hand stretched the barren snow-land; on the other, the frozen sea. With neither food nor shelter, he could not run far. All they had to do was to wait till he wandered back to the tent, as he inevitably must, when the frost and hunger laid hold of him. But these men did not stop to think. There was a certain taint of madness running in the veins of all of them. Besides, blood had been spilled, and upon them was the blood-lust, thick and hot. "Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord, and He saith it in temperate climes where the warm sun steals away the energies of men. But in the Northland they have discovered that prayer is only efficacious when backed by muscle, and they are accustomed to doing things for themselves. God is everywhere, they have heard, but he flings a shadow over the land for half the year that they may not find him; so they grope in darkness, and it is not to be wondered that they often doubt, and deem the Decalogue out of gear.

Jan ran blindly, reckoning not of the way of his feet, for he was mastered by the verb "to live." To live! To exist! Buck flashed gray through the air, but missed. The man struck madly at him, and stumbled. Then the white teeth of Bright closed on his mackinaw jacket, and he pitched into the snow. TO LIVE! TO EXIST! He fought wildly as ever, the centre of a tossing heap of men and dogs. His left hand gripped a wolf-dog by the scruff of the back, while the arm was passed around the neck of Lawson. Every struggle of the dog helped to throttle the hapless sailor. Jan's right hand was buried deep in the curling tendrils of Red Bill's shaggy head, and beneath all, Mr. Taylor lay pinned and helpless. It was a deadlock, for the strength of his madness was prodigious; but suddenly, without apparent reason, Jan loosed his various grips and rolled over quietly on his back. His adversaries drew away a little, dubious and disconcerted. Jan grinned viciously.

"Mine friends," he said, still grinning, "you haf asked me to be politeful, und now I am politeful. Vot piziness vood you do mit me?"

"That's right, Jan. Be ca'm," soothed Red Bill. "I knowed you'd come to yer senses afore long. Jes' be ca'm now, an' we'll do the trick with neatness and despatch."

"Vot piziness? Vot trick?"

"The hangin'. An' yeh oughter thank yer lucky stars for havin' a man what knows his business. I've did it afore now, more'n once, down in the States, an' I can do it to a T."

"Hang who? Me?"

"Yep."

"Ha! ha! Shust hear der man speak foolishness! Gif me a hand, Bill, und I vill get up und be hung." He crawled stiffly to his feet and looked about him. "Herr Gott! listen to der man! He vood hang me! Ho! ho! ho! I tank not! Yes, I tank not!"

"And I tank yes, you swab," Lawson spoke up mockingly, at the same time cutting a sled-lashing and coiling it up with ominous care. "Judge Lynch holds court this day."

"Von liddle while." Jan stepped back from the proffered noose. "I haf somedings to ask und to make der great proposition. Kentucky, you know about der Shudge Lynch?"

"Yes, suh. It is an institution of free men and of gentlemen, and it is an ole one and time-honored. Corruption may wear the robe of magistracy, suh, but Judge Lynch can always be relied upon to give justice without court fees. I repeat, suh, without court fees. Law may be bought and sold, but in this enlightened land justice is free as the air we breathe, strong as the licker we drink, prompt as--"

"Cut it short! Find out what the beggar wants," interrupted Lawson, spoiling the peroration.

"Vell, Kentucky, tell me dis: von man kill von odder man, Shudge Lynch hang dot man?"

"If the evidence is strong enough--yes, suh."

"An' the evidence in this here case is strong enough to hang a dozen men, Jan," broke in Red Bill.

“Nefer you mind, Bill. I talk mit you next. Now von anodder ding I ask Kentucky. If Shudge Lynch hang not der man, vot den?”

“If Judge Lynch does not hang the man, then the man goes free, and his hands are washed clean of blood. And further, suh, our great and glorious constitution has said, to wit: that no man may twice be placed in jeopardy of his life for one and the same crime, or words to that effect.”

“Unt dey can’t shoot him, or hit him mit a club over der head alongside, or do nodings more mit him?”

“No, suh.”

“Goot! You hear vot Kentucky speaks, all you noddleheads? Now I talk mit Bill. You know der piziness, Bill, und you hang me up brown, eh? Vot you say?”

“‘Betcher life, an’, Jan, if yeh don’t give no more trouble ye’ll be almighty proud of the job. I’m a connesoor.”

“You haf der great head, Bill, und know somedings or two. Und you know two und one makes tree--ain’t it?”

Bill nodded.

“Und when you haf two dings, you haf not tree dings--ain’t it? Now you follow mit me close und I show you. It takes tree dings to hang. First ding, you haf to haf der man. Goot! I am der man. Second ding, you haf to haf der rope. Lawson haf der rope. Goot! Und tird ding, you haf to haf someding to tie der rope to. Sling your eyes over der landscape und find der tird ding to tie der rope to? Eh? Vot you say?”

Mechanically they swept the ice and snow with their eyes. It was a homogeneous scene, devoid of contrasts or bold contours, dreary, desolate, and monotonous,--the ice-packed sea, the slow slope of the beach, the background of low-lying hills, and over all thrown the endless mantle of snow. “No trees, no bluffs, no cabins, no telegraph poles, nothin’,” moaned Red Bill; “nothin’ respectable enough nor big enough to swing the toes of a five-foot man clear o’ the ground. I give it up.” He looked yearningly at that portion of Jan’s anatomy which joins the head and shoulders. “Give it up,” he repeated sadly to Lawson. “Throw the rope down. Gawd never intended this here country for livin’ purposes, an’ that’s a cold frozen fact.”

Jan grinned triumphantly. “I tank I go mit der tent und haf a smoke.”

“Ostensiblee y’r correct, Bill, me son,” spoke up Lawson; “but y’r a dummy, and you can lay to that for another cold frozen fact. Takes a sea farmer to learn you landsmen things. Ever hear of a pair of shears? Then clap y'r eyes to this."

The sailor worked rapidly. From the pile of dunnage where they had pulled up the boat the preceding fall, he unearthed a pair of long oars. These he lashed together, at nearly right angles, close to the ends of the blades. Where the handles rested he kicked holes through the snow to the sand. At the point of intersection he attached two guy-ropes, making the end of one fast to a cake of beach-ice. The other guy he passed over to Red Bill. "Here, me son, lay holt o' that and run it out."

And to his horror, Jan saw his gallows rise in the air. "No! no!" he cried, recoiling and putting up his fists. "It is not goot! I vill not hang! Come, you noddleheads! I vill lick you, all together, von after der odder! I vill blay hell! I vill do eferydings! Und I vill die pefore I hang!"

The sailor permitted the two other men to clinch with the mad creature. They rolled and tossed about furiously, tearing up snow and tundra, their fierce struggle writing a tragedy of human passion on the white sheet spread by nature. And ever and anon a hand or foot of Jan emerged from the tangle, to be gripped by Lawson and lashed fast with rope-yarns. Pawing, clawing, blaspheming, he was conquered and bound, inch by inch, and drawn to where the inexorable shears lay like a pair of gigantic dividers on the snow. Red Bill adjusted the noose, placing the hangman's knot properly under the left ear. Mr. Taylor and Lawson tailed onto the running-guy, ready at the word to elevate the gallows. Bill lingered, contemplating his work with artistic appreciation.

"Herr Gott! Vood you look at it!"

The horror in Jan's voice caused the rest to desist. The fallen tent had uprisen, and in the gathering twilight it flapped ghostly arms about and titubated toward them drunkenly. But the next instant John Gordon found the opening and crawled forth.

"What the flaming--!" For the moment his voice died away in his throat as his eyes took in the tableau. "Hold on! I'm not dead!" he cried out, coming up to the group with stormy countenance.

"Allow me, Mistah Gordon, to congratulate you upon youah escape," Mr. Taylor ventured. "A close shave, suh, a powahful close shave."

"Congratulate hell! I might have been dead and rotten and no thanks to you, you--!" And thereat John Gordon delivered himself of a vigorous flood of English, terse, intensive, denunciative, and composed solely of expletives and adjectives.

"Simply creased me," he went on when he had eased himself sufficiently. "Ever crease cattle, Taylor?"

"Yes, suh, many a time down in God's country."

"Just so. That's what happened to me. Bullet just grazed the base of my skull at the top of the neck. Stunned me but no harm done." He turned to the bound man. "Get up, Jan. I'm going to lick you to a standstill or you're going to apologize. The rest of you lads stand clear."

"I tank not. Shust tie me loose und you see," replied Jan, the Unrepentant, the devil within him still unconquered. "Und after as I lick you, I take der rest of der noddleheads, von after der odder, altogedder!"

The Jokers of New Gibbon

I

I’m almost afraid to take you in to New Gibbon, David Grief said. It wasn’t until you and the British gave me a free hand and let the place alone that any results were accomplished.

Wallenstein, the German Resident Commissioner from Bougainville, poured himself a long Scotch and soda and smiled.

We take off our hats to you, Mr. Grief, he said in perfectly good English. What you have done on the devil island is a miracle. And we shall continue not to interfere. It is a devil island, and old Koho is the big chief devil of them all. We never could bring him to terms. He is a liar, and he is no fool. He is a black Napoleon, a head-hunting, man-eating Talleyrand. I remember six years ago, when I landed there in the British cruiser. The niggers cleared out for the bush, of course, but we found several who couldn’t get away. One was his latest wife. She had been hung up by one arm in the sun for two days and nights. We cut her down, but she died just the same. And staked out in the fresh running water, up to their necks, were three more women. All their bones were broken and their joints crushed. The process is supposed to make them tender for the eating. They were still alive. Their vitality was remarkable. One woman, the oldest, lingered nearly ten days. Well, that was a sample of Koho’s diet. No wonder he’s a wild beast. How you ever pacified him is our everlasting puzzlement.

I wouldn’t call him exactly pacified, Grief answered. Though he comes in once in a while and eats out of the hand.

That’s more than we accomplished with our cruisers. Neither the German nor the English ever laid eyes on him. You were the first.

No; McTavish was the first, Grief disclaimed.

Ah, yes, I remember him — the little, dried-up Scotchman. Wallenstein sipped his whiskey. He’s called the Trouble-mender, isn’t he?

Grief nodded.

And they say the screw you pay him is bigger than mine or the British Resident’s?

I’m afraid it is, Grief admitted. You see, and no offence, he’s really worth it. He spends his time wherever the trouble is. He is a wizard. He’s the one who got me my lodgment on New Gibbon. He’s down on Malaita now, starting a plantation for me.

The first?

There’s not even a trading station on all Malaita. The recruiters still use covering boats and carry the old barbed wire above their rails. There’s the plantation now. We’ll be in in half an hour. He handed the binoculars to his guest. Those are the boat-sheds to the left of the bungalow. Beyond are the barracks. And to the right are the copra-sheds. We dry quite a bit already. Old Koho’s getting civilized enough to make his people bring in the nuts. There’s the mouth of the stream where you found the three women softening.

The Wonder, wing-and-wing, was headed directly in for the anchorage. She rose and fell lazily over a glassy swell flawed here and there by catspaws from astern. It was the tail-end of the monsoon season, and the air was heavy and sticky with tropic moisture, the sky a florid, leaden muss of formless clouds. The rugged land was swathed with cloud-banks and squall wreaths, through which headlands and interior peaks thrust darkly. On one promontory a slant of sunshine blazed torridly, on another, scarcely a mile away, a squall was bursting in furious downpour of driving rain.

This was the dank, fat, savage island of New Gibbon, lying fifty miles to leeward of Choiseul. Geographically, it belonged to the Solomon Group. Politically, the dividing line of German and British influence cut it in half, hence the joint control by the two Resident Commissioners. In the case of New Gibbon, this control existed only on paper in the colonial offices of the two countries. There was no real control at all, and never had been. The bêche de met fishermen of the old days had passed it by. The sandalwood traders, after stern experiences, had given it up. The blackbirders had never succeeded in recruiting one labourer on the island, and, after the schooner Dorset had been cut off with all hands, they left the place severely alone. Later, a German company had attempted a cocoanut plantation, which was abandoned after several managers and a number of contract labourers had lost their heads. German cruisers and British cruisers had failed to get the savage blacks to listen to reason. Four times the missionary societies had essayed the peaceful conquest of the island, and four times, between sickness and massacre, they had been driven away. More cruisers, more pacifications, had followed, and followed fruitlessly. The cannibals had always retreated into the bush and laughed at the screaming shells. When the warships left it was an easy matter to rebuild the burned grass houses and set up the ovens in the old-fashioned way.

New Gibbon was a large island, fully one hundred and fifty miles long and half as broad. Its windward coast was iron-bound, without anchorages or inlets, and it was inhabited by scores of warring tribes — at least it had been, until Koho had arisen, like a Kamehameha, and, by force of arms and considerable statecraft, firmly welded the greater portion of the tribes into a confederation. His policy of permitting no intercourse with white men had been eminently right, so far as survival of his own people was concerned; and after the visit of the last cruiser he had had his own way until David Grief and McTavish the Troublemender landed on the deserted beach where once had stood the German bungalow and barracks and the various English mission-houses.

Followed wars, false peaces, and more wars. The wizened little Scotchman could make trouble as well as mend it, and, not content with holding the beach, he imported bushmen from Malaita and invaded the wild-pig runs of the interior jungle. He burned villages until Koho wearied of rebuilding them, and when he captured Koho’s eldest son he compelled a conference with the old chief. It was then that McTavish laid down the rate of head-exchange. For each head of his own people he promised to take ten of Koho’s. After Koho had learned that the Scotchman was a man of his word, the first true peace was made. In the meantime McTavish had built the bungalow and barracks, cleared the jungle-land along the beach, and laid out the plantation. After that he had gone on his way to mend trouble on the atoll of Tasman, where a plague of black measles had broken out and been ascribed to Grief’s plantation by the devil-devil doctors. Once, a year later, he had been called back again to straighten up New Gibbon; and Koho, after paying a forced fine of two hundred thousand cocoanuts, decided it was cheaper to keep the peace and sell the nuts. Also, the fires of his youth had burned down. He was getting old and limped of one leg where a Lee-Enfield bullet had perforated the calf.

II

I knew a chap in Hawaii, Grief said, superintendent of a sugar plantation, who used a hammer and a ten-penny nail.

They were sitting on the broad bungalow veranda, and watching Worth, the manager of New Gibbon, doctoring the sick squad. They were New Georgia boys, a dozen of them, and the one with the aching tooth had been put back to the last. Worth had just failed in his first attempt. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with one hand and waved the forceps with the other.

And broke more than one jaw, he asserted grimly.

Grief shook his head. Wallenstein smiled and elevated his brows.

He said not, at any rate, Grief qualified. He assured me, furthermore, that he always succeeded on the first trial.

I saw it done when I was second mate on a lime-juicer, Captain Ward spoke up. The old man used a caulking mallet and a steel marlin-spike. He took the tooth out with the first stroke, too, clean as a whistle.

Me for the forceps, Worth muttered grimly, inserting his own pair in the mouth of the black. As he pulled, the man groaned and rose in the air. Lend a hand, somebody, and hold him down, the manager appealed.

Grief and Wallenstein, on either side, gripped the black and held him. And he, in turn, struggled against them and clenched his teeth on the forceps. The group swayed back and forth. Such exertion, in the stagnant heat, brought the sweat out on all of them. The black sweated, too, but his was the sweat of excruciating pain. The chair on which he sat was overturned. Captain Ward paused in the act of pouring himself a drink, and called encouragement. Worth pleaded with his assistants to hang on, and hung on himself, twisting the tooth till it crackled and then attempting a straightaway pull.

Nor did any of them notice the little black man who limped up the steps and stood looking on. Koho was a conservative. His fathers before him had worn no clothes, and neither did he, not even a g-string. The many empty perforations in nose and lips and ears told of decorative passions long since dead. The holes on both ear-lobes had been torn out, but their size was attested by the strips of withered flesh that hung down and swept his shoulders. He cared now only for utility, and in one of the half dozen minor holes in his right ear he carried a short clay pipe. Around his waist was buckled a cheap trade-belt, and between the imitation leather and the naked skin was thrust the naked blade of a long knife. Suspended from the belt was his bamboo betel-nut and lime box. In his hand was a short-barrelled, large-bore Snider rifle. He was indescribably filthy, and here and there marred by scars, the worst being the one left by the Lee-Enfield bullet, which had withered the calf to half the size of its mate. His shrunken mouth showed that few teeth were left to serve him. Face and body were shrunken and withered, but his black, bead-like eyes, small and close together, were very bright, withal they were restless and querulous, and more like a monkey's than a man's.

He looked on, grinning like a shrewd little ape. His joy in the torment of the patient was natural, for the world he lived in was a world of pain. He had endured his share of it, and inflicted far more than his share on others. When the tooth parted from its locked hold in the jaw and the forceps raked across the other teeth and out of the mouth with a nerve-rasping sound, old Koho's eyes fairly sparkled, and he looked with glee at the poor black, collapsed on the veranda floor and groaning terribly as he held his head in both his hands.

I think he's going to faint, Grief said, bending over the victim. Captain Ward, give him a drink, please. You'd better take one yourself, Worth; you're shaking like a leaf.

And I think I'll take one, said Wallenstein, wiping the sweat from his face. His eye caught the shadow of Koho on the floor and followed it up to the old chief himself. Hello! who's this?

Hello, Koho! Grief said genially, though he knew better than to offer to shake hands.

It was one of Koho's tambos, given him by the devil-devil doctors when he was born, that never was his flesh to come in contact with the flesh of a white man. Worth and Captain Ward, of the Wonder, greeted Koho, but Worth frowned at sight of the Snider, for it was one of his tambos that no visiting bushman should carry a weapon on the plantation. Rifles had a nasty way of going off at the hip under such circumstances. The manager clapped his hands, and a black house-boy, recruited from San Cristobal, came running. At a sign from Worth, he took the rifle from the visitor's hand and carried it inside the bungalow.

Koho, Grief said, introducing the German Resident, this big fella marster belong Bougainville-my word, big fella marster too much.

Koho, remembering the visits of the various German cruisers, smiled with a light of unpleasant reminiscence in his eyes.

Don't shake hands with him, Wallenstein, Grief warned. Tambo, you know. Then to Koho, My word, you get 'm too much fat stop along you.

Bime by you marry along new fella Mary, eh?

Too old fella me, Koho answered, with a weary shake of the head. Me no like ‘m Mary. Me no like ‘m kai-kai (food). Close up me die along altogether. He stole a significant glance at Worth, whose head was tilted back to a long glass. Me like ‘m rum.

Grief shook his head.

Tambo along black fella.

He black fella no tambo, Koho retorted, nodding toward the groaning labourer.

He fella sick, Grief explained.

Me fella sick.

You fella big liar, Grief laughed. Rum tambo, all the time tambo. Now, Koho, we have big fella talk along this big fella marster.

And he and Wallenstein and the old chief sat down on the veranda to confer about affairs of state. Koho was complimented on the peace he had kept, and he, with many protestations of his aged decrepitude, swore peace again and everlasting. Then was discussed the matter of starting a German plantation twenty miles down the coast. The land, of course, was to be bought from Koho, and the price was arranged in terms of tobacco, knives, beads, pipes, hatchets, porpoise teeth and shell-money — in terms of everything except rum. While the talk went on, Koho, glancing through the window, could see Worth mixing medicines and placing bottles back in the medicine cupboard. Also, he saw the manager complete his labours by taking a drink of Scotch. Koho noted the bottle carefully. And, though he hung about for an hour after the conference was over, there was never a moment when some one or another was not in the room. When Grief and Worth sat down to a business talk, Koho gave it up.

Me go along schooner, he announced, then turned and limped out.

How are the mighty fallen, Grief laughed. To think that used to be Koho, the fiercest red-handed murderer in the Solomons, who defied all his life two of the greatest world powers. And now he’s going aboard to try and cadge Denby for a drink.

III

For the last time in his life the supercargo of the Wonder perpetrated a practical joke on a native. He was in the main cabin, checking off the list of goods being landed in the whaleboats, when Koho limped down the companionway and took a seat opposite him at the table.

Close up me die along altogether, was the burden of the old chief's plaint. All the delights of the flesh had forsaken him. Me no like 'm Mary. Me no like 'm kai-kai. Me too much sick fella. Me close up finish. A long, sad pause, in which his face expressed unutterable concern for his stomach, which he patted gingerly and with an assumption of pain. Belly belong me too much sick. Another pause, which was an invitation to Denby to make suggestions. Then followed a long, weary, final sigh, and a Me like 'm rum.

Denby laughed heartlessly. He had been cadged for drinks before by the old cannibal, and the sternest tambo Grief and McTavish had laid down was the one forbidding alcohol to the natives of New Gibbon.

The trouble was that Koho had acquired the taste. In his younger days he had learned the delights of drunkenness when he cut off the schooner Dorset, but unfortunately he had learned it along with all his tribesmen, and the supply had not held out long. Later, when he led his naked warriors down to the destruction of the German plantation, he was wiser, and he appropriated all the liquors for his sole use. The result had been a gorgeous mixed drunk, on a dozen different sorts of drink, ranging from beer doctored with quinine to absinthe and apricot brandy. The drunk had lasted for months, and it had left him with a thirst that would remain with him until he died. Predisposed toward alcohol, after the way of savages, all the chemistry of his flesh clamoured for it. This craving was to him expressed in terms of tingling and sensation, of maggots crawling warmly and deliciously in his brain, of good feeling, and well being, and high exultation. And in his barren old age, when women and feasting were a weariness, and when old hates had smouldered down, he desired more and more the revivifying fire that came liquid out of bottles — out of all sorts of bottles — for he remembered them well. He would sit in the sun for hours, occasionally drooling, in mournful contemplation of the great orgy which had been his when the German plantation was cleaned out.

Denby was sympathetic. He sought out the old chief's symptoms and offered him dyspeptic tablets from the medicine chest, pills, and a varied assortment of harmless tabloids and capsules. But Koho steadfastly declined. Once, when he cut the Dorset off, he had bitten through a capsule of quinine; in addition, two of his warriors had partaken of a white powder and laid down and died very violently in a very short time. No; he did not believe in drugs. But the liquids from bottles, the cool-flaming youth-givers and warm-glowing dream-makers. No wonder the white men valued them so highly and refused to dispense them.

Rum he good fella, he repeated over and over, plaintively and with the weary patience of age.

And then Denby made his mistake and played his joke. Stepping around behind Koho, he unlocked the medicine closet and took out a four-ounce bottle labelled essence of mustard. As he made believe to draw the cork and drink of the contents, in the mirror on the for-and bulkhead he glimpsed Koho, twisted half around, intently watching him. Denby smacked his lips and cleared his throat appreciatively as he replaced the bottle. Neglecting to relock the medicine closet, he returned to his chair, and, after a decent interval, went on deck. He stood beside the companionway and listened. After several moments the silence below was broken by a fearful, wheezing, propulsive, strangling cough. He smiled to himself and returned leisurely down the companionway. The bottle was back on the shelf where it belonged, and the old man sat in the same position. Denby marvelled at his iron control. Mouth and lips and tongue, and all sensitive membranes, were a blaze of fire. He gasped and nearly coughed several times, while involuntary tears brimmed in his eyes and ran down his cheeks. An ordinary man would have coughed and strangled for half an hour. But old Koho's face was grimly composed. It dawned on him that a trick had been played, and into his eyes came an expression of hatred and malignancy so primitive, so abysmal, that it sent the chills up and down Denby's spine. Koho arose proudly.

Me go along, he said. You sing out one fella boat stop along me.

IV

Having seen Grief and Worth start for a ride over the plantation, Wallenstein sat down in the big living-room and with gun-oil and old rags proceeded to take apart and clean his automatic pistol. On the table beside him stood the inevitable bottle of Scotch and numerous soda bottles. Another bottle, part full, chanced to stand there. It was also labelled Scotch, but its content was liniment which Worth had mixed for the horses and neglected to put away.

As Wallenstein worked, he glanced through the window and saw Koho coming up the compound path. He was limping very rapidly, but when he came along the veranda and entered the room his gait was slow and dignified. He sat down and watched the gun-cleaning. Though mouth and lips and tongue were afire, he gave no sign. At the end of five minutes he spoke.

Rum he good fella. Me like ‘m rum.

Wallenstein smiled and shook his head, and then it was that his perverse imp suggested what was to be his last joke on a native. The similarity of the two bottles was the real suggestion. He laid his pistol parts on the table and mixed himself a long drink. Standing as he did between Koho and the table, he interchanged the two bottles, drained his glass, made as if to search for something, and left the room. From outside he heard the surprised splutter and cough; but when he returned the old chief sat as before. The liniment in the bottle, however, was lower, and it still oscillated.

Koho stood up, clapped his hands, and, when the house-boy answered, signed that he desired his rifle. The boy fetched the weapon, and according to custom preceded the visitor down the pathway. Not until outside the gate did the boy turn the rifle over to its owner. Wallenstein, chuckling to himself, watched the old chief limp along the beach in the direction of the river.

A few minutes later, as he put his pistol together, Wallenstein heard the distant report of a gun. For the instant he thought of Koho, then dismissed the conjecture from his mind. Worth and Grief had taken shotguns with them, and it was probably one of their shots at a pigeon. Wallenstein lounged back in his chair, chuckled, twisted his yellow mustache, and dozed. He was aroused by the excited voice of Worth, crying out:

Ring the big fella bell! Ring plenty too much! Ring like hell!

Wallenstein gained the veranda in time to see the manager jump his horse over the low fence of the compound and dash down the beach after Grief, who was riding madly ahead. A loud crackling and smoke rising through the cocoanut trees told the story. The boat-houses and the barracks were on fire. The big plantation bell was ringing wildly as the German Resident ran down the beach, and he could see whaleboats hastily putting off from the schooner.

Barracks and boat-houses, grass-thatched and like tinder, were wrapped in flames. Grief emerged from the kitchen, carrying a naked black child by the leg. Its head was missing.

The cook's in there, he told Worth. Her head's gone, too. She was too heavy, and I had to clear out.

It was my fault, Wallenstein said. Old Koho did it. But I let him take a drink of Worth's horse liniment.

I guess he's headed for the bush, Worth said, springing astride his horse and starting. Oliver is down there by the river. Hope he didn't get him.

The manager galloped away through the trees. A few minutes later, as the charred wreck of the barracks crashed in, they heard him calling and followed. On the edge of the river bank they came upon him. He still sat on his horse, very white-faced, and gazed at something on the ground. It was the body of Oliver, the young assistant manager, though it was hard to realize it, for the head was gone. The black labourers, breathless from their run in from the fields, were now crowding around, and under Grief's direction they improvised a litter for the dead man.

Wallenstein was afflicted with paroxysms of true German sorrow and contrition. The tears were frankly in his eyes by the time he ceased from lamenting and began to swear. The wrath that flared up was as truly German as the oaths, and when he tried to seize Worth's shotgun a fleck of foam had appeared on his lips.

None of that, Grief commanded sternly. Straighten up, Wallenstein. Don't be a fool.

But are you going to let him escape? the German cried wildly.

He has escaped. The bush begins right here at the river. You can see where he waded across. He's in the wild-pig runs already. It would be like the needle in the haystack, and if we followed him some of his young men would get us. Besides, the runs are all man-trapped — you know, staked pits, poisoned thorns, and the rest. McTavish and his bushmen are the only fellows who can negotiate the runs, and three of his men were lost that way the last time. Come on back to the house. You'll hear the conches to-night, and the war-drums, and all merry hell break loose. They won't rush us, but keep all the boys close up to the house, Mr. Worth. Come on!

As they returned along the path they came upon a black who whimpered and cried vociferously.

Shut up mouth belong you! Worth shouted. What name you make 'm noise?

Him fella Koho finish along two fella bullamacow, the black answered, drawing a forefinger significantly across his throat.

He’s knifed the cows, Grief said. That means no more milk for some time for you, Worth. I’ll see about sending a couple up from Ugi.

Wallenstein proved inconsolable, until Denby, coming ashore, confessed to the dose of essence of mustard. Thereat the German Resident became even cheerful, though he twisted his yellow mustache up more fiercely and continued to curse the Solomons with oaths culled from four languages.

Next morning, visible from the masthead of the Wonder, the bush was alive with signal-smokes. From promontory to promontory, and back through the solid jungle, the smoke-pillars curled and puffed and talked. Remote villages on the higher peaks, beyond the farthest raids McTavish had ever driven, joined in the troubled conversation. From across the river persisted a bedlam of conches; while from everywhere, drifting for miles along the quiet air, came the deep, booming reverberations of the great war-drums — huge tree trunks, hollowed by fire and carved with tools of stone and shell.

You’re all right as long as you stay close, Grief told his manager. I’ve got to get along to Guvutu. They won’t come out in the open and attack you. Keep the work-gangs close. Stop the clearing till this blows over. They’ll get any detached gangs you send out. And, whatever you do, don’t be fooled into going into the bush after Koho. If you do, he’ll get you. All you’ve got to do is wait for McTavish. I’ll send him up with a bunch of his Malaita bushmen. He’s the only man who can go inside. Also, until he comes, I’ll leave Denby with you. You don’t mind, do you, Mr. Denby? I’ll send McTavish up with the Wanda, and you can go back on her and rejoin the Wonder. Captain Ward can manage without you for a trip.

It was just what I was going to volunteer, Denby answered. I never dreamed all this muss would be kicked up over a joke. You see, in a way I consider myself responsible for it.

So am I responsible, Wallenstein broke in.

But I started it, the supercargo urged.

Maybe you did, but I carried it along.

And Koho finished it, Grief said.

At any rate, I, too, shall remain, said the German.

I thought you were coming to Guvutu with me, Grief protested.

I was. But this is my jurisdiction, partly, and I have made a fool of myself in it completely. I shall remain and help get things straight again.

V

At Guvutu, Grief sent full instructions to McTavish by a recruiting ketch which was just starting for Malaita. Captain Ward sailed in the Wonder for the Santa Cruz Islands; and Grief, borrowing a whaleboat and a crew of black prisoners from the British Resident, crossed the channel to Guadalcanar, to examine the grass lands back of Penduffryn.

Three weeks later, with a free sheet and a lusty breeze, he threaded the coral patches and surged up the smooth water to Guvutu anchorage. The harbour was deserted, save for a small ketch which lay close in to the shore reef. Grief recognized it as the Wanda. She had evidently just got in by the Tulagi Passage, for her black crew was still at work furling the sails. As he rounded alongside, McTavish himself extended a hand to help him over the rail.

What's the matter? Grief asked. Haven't you started yet?

McTavish nodded. And got back. Everything's all right on board.

How's New Gibbon?

All there, the last I saw of it, barrin' a few inconsequential frills that a good eye could make out lacking from the landscape.

He was a cold flame of a man, small as Koho, and as dried up, with a mahogany complexion and small, expressionless blue eyes that were more like gimlet-points than the eyes of a Scotchman. Without fear, without enthusiasm, impervious to disease and climate and sentiment, he was lean and bitter and deadly as a snake. That his present sour look boded ill news, Grief was well aware.

Spit it out! he said. What's happened?

'Tis a thing severely to be condemned, a damned shame, this joking with heathen niggers, was the reply. Also, 'tis very expensive. Come below, Mr. Grief. You'll be better for the information with a long glass in your hand. After you.

How did you settle things? his employer demanded as soon as they were seated in the cabin.

The little Scotchman shook his head. There was nothing to settle. It all depends how you look at it. The other way would be to say it was settled, entirely settled, mind you, before I got there.

But the plantation, man? The plantation?

No plantation. All the years of our work have gone for naught.’Tis back where we started, where the missionaries started, where the Germans started — and where they finished. Not a stone stands on another at the landing pier. The houses are black ashes. Every tree is hacked down, and the wild pigs are rooting out the yams and sweet potatoes. Those boys from New Georgia, a fine bunch they were, five score of them, and they cost you a pretty penny. Not one is left to tell the tale.

He paused and began fumbling in a large locker under the companion-steps.

But Worth? And Denby? And Wallenstein?

That’s what I’m telling you. Take a look.

McTavish dragged out a sack made of rice matting and emptied its contents on the floor. David Grief pulled himself together with a jerk, for he found himself gazing fascinated at the heads of the three men he had left at New Gibbon. The yellow mustache of Wallenstein had lost its fierce curl and drooped and wilted on the upper lip.

I don’t know how it happened, the Scotchman’s voice went on drearily. But I surmise they went into the bush after the old devil.

And where is Koho? Grief asked.

Back in the bush and drunk as a lord. That’s how I was able to recover the heads. He was too drunk to stand. They lugged him on their backs out of the village when I rushed it. And if you’ll relieve me of the heads, I’ll be well obliged. He paused and sighed. I suppose they’ll have regular funerals over them and put them in the ground. But in my way of thinking they’d make excellent curios. Any respectable museum would pay a hundred quid apiece. Better have another drink. You’re looking a bit pale — There, put that down you, and if you’ll take my advice, Mr. Grief, I would say, set your face sternly against any joking with the niggers. It always makes trouble, and it is a very expensive divertissement.

Just Meat

He strolled to the corner and glanced up and down the intersecting street, but saw nothing save the oases of light shed by the street lamps at the successive crossings. Then he strolled back the way he had come. He was a shadow of a man sliding noiselessly and without undue movement through the semi-darkness. Also he was very alert, like a wild animal in the jungle, keenly perceptive and receptive. The movement of another in the darkness about him would need to have been more shadowy than he to have escaped him.

In addition to the running advertisement of the state of affairs carried to him by his senses, he had a subtler perception, a feel, of the atmosphere around him. He knew that the house in front of which he paused for a moment contained children. Yet by no willed effort of perception did he have this knowledge. For that matter, he was not even aware that he knew, so occult was the impression. Yet, did a moment arise in which action, in relation to that house, were imperative, he would have acted on the assumption that it contained children. He was not aware of all that he knew about the neighborhood.

In the same way, he knew not how, he knew that no danger threatened in the footfalls that came up the cross street. Before he saw the walker, he knew him for a belated pedestrian hurrying home. The walker came into view at the crossing and disappeared on up the street. The man that watched noted a light that flared up in the window of a house on the corner, and as it died down he knew it for an expiring match. This was conscious identification of familiar phenomena, and through his mind flitted the thought, “Wanted to know what time.” In another house one room was lighted. The light burned dimly and steadily and he had the feel that it was a sick-room.

He was especially interested in a house across the street in the middle of the block. To this house he paid most attention. No matter what way he looked, nor what way he walked, his looks and his steps always returned to it. Except for an open window above the porch, there was nothing unusual about the house. Nothing came in nor out. Nothing happened. There were no lighted windows, nor had lights appeared and disappeared in any of the windows. Yet it was the central point of his consideration. He rallied to it each time after a divination of the state of the neighborhood.

Despite his feel of things, he was not confident. He was supremely conscious of the precariousness of his situation. Though unperturbed by the footfalls of the chance pedestrian, he was as keyed up and sensitive and ready to be startled as any timorous deer. He was aware of the possibility of other intelligences prowling about in the darkness--intelligences similar to his own in movement, perception, and divination.

Far down the street he caught a glimpse of something that moved. And he knew it was no late home-goer, but menace and danger. He whistled twice to the house across the street, then faded away shadow-like to the corner and around the corner. Here he paused and looked about him carefully. Reassured, he peered back around the corner and studied the object that moved and that was coming nearer. He had divined aright. It was a policeman.

The man went down the cross street to the next corner, from the shelter of which he watched the corner he had just left. He saw the policeman pass by, going straight on up the street. He paralleled the policeman’s course, and from the next corner again watched him go by; then he returned the way he had come. He whistled once to the house across the street, and after a time whistled once again. There was reassurance in the whistle, just as there had been warning in the previous double whistle.

He saw a dark bulk outline itself on the roof of the porch and slowly descend a pillar. Then it came down the steps, passed through the small iron gate, and went down the sidewalk, taking on the form of a man. He that watched kept on his own side the street and moved on abreast to the corner, where he crossed over and joined the other. He was quite small alongside the man he accosted.

“How’d you make out, Matt?” he asked.

The other grunted indistinctly, and walked on in silence a few steps.

“I reckon I landed the goods,” he said.

Jim chuckled in the darkness, and waited for further information The blocks passed by under their feet, and he grew impatient.

“Well, how about them goods?” he asked. “What kind of a haul you make, anyway?”

“I was too busy to figger it out, but it’s fat. I can tell you that much Jim, it’s fat. I don’t cast to think how fat it is. Wait till we get to the room.”

Jim looked at him keenly under the street lamp of the next crossing and saw that his face was a trifle grim and that he carried his left arm peculiarly.

"What's the matter with your arm?" he demanded.

"The little cuss bit me. Hope I don't get hydrophoby. Folks gets hydrophoby from manbite sometimes, don't they?"

"Gave you a fight, eh ?" Jim asked encouragingly.

The other grunted.

"You're harder'n hell to get information from," Jim burst ou irritably. "Tell us about it. You ain't goin' to lose money just a-tellin' a guy."

"I guess I choked him some," came the answer. Then, by way of explanation, "He woke up on me."

"You did it neat. I never heard a sound."

"Jim," the other said with seriousness, "it's a hangin' matter. I fixed 'm. I had to. He woke up on me. You an' me's got to do some layin' low for a spell."

Jim gave a low whistle of comprehension.

"Did you hear me whistle?" he asked suddenly.

"Sure. I was all done. I was just comin' out."

"It was a bull. But he wasn't on a little bit. Went right by an' kept a-paddin' the hoof out a sight. Then I come back an' gave you the whitle. What made you take so long after that?"

"I was waitin' to make sure," Matt explained. "I was mighty glad when I heard you whistle again. It's hard work waitin'. I just sat there an' thought an' thought . . . oh, all kinds of things. It's remarkable what a fellow'll think about. And then there was a darn cat that kept movin' around the house an' botherin' me with its noises."

"An' it's fat!" Jim exclaimed irrelevantly and with joy.

"I'm sure tellin' you, Jim, it's fat. I'm plum' anxious for another look at 'em."

Unconsciously the two men quickened their pace. Yet they did not relax from their caution. Twice they changed their course in order to avoid policemen, and they made very sure that they were not obvious when they dived into the dark hallway of a cheap rooming house down town.

Not until they had gained their own room on the top floor did they scratch a match. While Jim lighted a lamp, Matt locked the door and throw the bolts into place. As he turned, he noticed that his partner was waiting expectantly. Matt smiled to himself at the other's eagerness.

"Them search-lights is all right," he said, drawing forth a small pocket electric lamp and examining it. " But we got to get a new battery. It's runnin' pretty weak. I thought once or twice it'd leave me in the dark. Funny arrangements in that house. I near got lost. His room was on the left, an' that fooled me some."

"I told you it was on the left," Jim interrupted.

"You told me it was on the right," Matt went on. "I guess I know what you told me, an' there's the map you drew."

Fumbling in his vest pocket, he drew out a folded slip of paper. As he unfolded it, Jim bent over and looked.

"I did make a mistake," he confessed.

"You sure did. It got me guessin' some for a while."

"But it don't matter now," Jim cried. "Let's see what you got."

"It does matter," Matt retorted. "It matters a lot . . . to me. I've got to run all the risk. I put my head in the trap while you stay on the street. You got to get on to yourself an' be more careful. All right, I'll show you."

He dipped loosely into his trousers pocket and brought out a handful of small diamonds. He spilled them out in a blazing stream on the greasy table. Jim let out a great oath.

"That's nothing," Matt said with triumphant complacence. "I ain't begun yet."

From one pocket after another he continued bringing forth the spoil. There were many diamonds wrapped in chamois skin that were larger than those in the first handful. From one pocket he brought out a handful of very small cut gems.

"Sun dust," he remarked, as he spilled them on the table in a space by themselves.

Jim examined them.

"Just the same, they retail for a couple of dollars each," he said. "Is that all?"

"Ain't it enough ?" the other demanded in an aggrieved tone.

"Sure it is," Jim answered with unqualified approval. "Better'n I expected. I wouldn't take a cent less than ten thousan' for the bunch."

"Ten thousan'," Matt sneered. "They're worth twic't that, an' I don't know anything about joolery, either. Look at that big boy!"

He picked it out from the sparkling heap and held it near to the lamp with the air of an expert, weighing and judging.

“Worth a thousan’ all by its lonely,” was Jim’s quicker judgment.

“A thousan’ your grandmother,” was Matt’s scornful rejoinder. “‘You couldn’t buy it for three.”

“Wake me up! I’m dreamin’!” The sparkle of the gems was in Jim’s eyes, and he began sorting out the larger diamonds and examining them. “We’re rich men, Matt--we’ll be regular swells.”

“It’ll take years to get rid of ‘em,” was Matt’s more practical thought.

“But think how we’ll live! Nothin’ to do but spend the money an go on gettin’ rid of ‘cm.”

Matt’s eyes were beginning to sparkle, though sombrely, as his phlegmatic nature woke up.

“I told you I didn’t cast think how fat it was,” he murmured in a low voice.

“What a killin’! What a killin’!” was the other’s more ecstatic utterance.

“I almost forgot,” Matt said, thrusting his hand into his inside coat pocket.

A string of large pearls emerged from wrappings of tissue paper and chamois skin. Jim scarcely glanced at them.

“They’re worth money,” he said, and returned to the diamonds.

A silence fell on the two men. Jim played with the gems, running them through his fingers, sorting them into piles, and spreading them out flat and wide. He was a slender, wizened man, nervous, irritable, high-strung, and anaemic--a typical child of the gutter, with unbeautiful twisted features, small-eyed, with face and mouth perpetually and feverishly hungry, brutish in a catlike way, stamped to the core with degeneracy.

Matt did not finger the diamonds. He sat with chin on hands and elbows on table, blinking heavily at the blazing array. He was in every way a contrast to the other. No city had bred him. He was heavy-muscled and hairy, gorilla-like in strength and aspect. For him there was no unseen world. His eyes were full and wide apart, and there seemed in them a certain bold brotherliness. They inspired confidence. But a closer inspection would have shown that his eyes were just a trifle too full, just a shade too wide apart. He exceeded, spilled over the limits of normality, and his features told lies about the man beneath.

“The bunch is worth fifty thousan’,” Jim remarked suddenly.

“A hundred thousan’,” Matt said.

The silence returned and endured a long time, to be broken again by him.

“What in hell was he coin’ with ‘em all at the house?--that’s what I want to know. I’d a-thought he’d kept ‘em in the safe down at the store.”

Matt had just been considering the vision of the throttled man as he had last looked upon him in the dim light of the electric lantern; but he did not start at the mention of him.

“There’s no tellin’,” he answered. “He might a-ben gettin’ ready to chuck his pardner. He might a-pulled out in the mornin’ for parts unknown, if we hadn’t happened along. I guess there’s just as many thieves among honest men as there is among thieves. You read about such things in the papers, Jim. Pardners is always knifin’ each other.”

A queer, nervous look came in the other’s eyes. Matt did not betray that he noted it, though he said:--

“What was you thinkin’ about, Jim?”

Jim was a trifle awkward for the moment.

“Nothin’,” he answered. “Only I was thinkin’ just how funny it was--all them jools at his house. What made you ask?”

“Nothin’. I was just wonderin’, that was all.”

The silence settled down, broken by an occasional low and nervous giggle on the part of Jim. He was overcome by the spread of gems. It was not that he felt their beauty. He was unaware that they were beautiful | in themselves. But in them his swift imagination visioned the joys of life they would buy, and all the desires and appetites of his diseased mind and sickly flesh were tickled by the promise they extended. He builded wondrous, orgy-haunted castles out of their brilliant fires, and was appalled at what he builded. Then it was that he giggled. It was all too impossible to be real. And yet there they blazed on the table before him, fanning the flame of the lust of him, and he giggled again.

“I guess we might as well count ‘em,” Matt said suddenly, tearing himself away from his own visions. “You watch me an’ see that it’s square, because you an’ me has got to be on the square, Jim. Understand?”

Jim did not like this, and betrayed it in his eyes, while Matt did not like what he saw in his partner’s eyes

.

“Understand?” Matt repeated, almost menancingly.

“Ain’t we always teen square?” the other replied, on the defensive, what of the treachery already whispering in him.

"It don't cost nothin', bein' square in hard times," Matt retorted. "It's bein' square in prosperity that counts. When we ain't got nothing we can't help bein' square. We're prosperous now, an' we've got to be business men--honest business men. Understand?"

"That's the talk for me," Jim approved, but deep down in the meagre soul of him,--and in spite of him,--wanton and lawless thoughts were stirring like chained beasts.

Matt stepped to the food shelf behind the two-burner kerosene cooking stove. He emptied the tea from a paper bag, and from a second bag emptied some red peppers. Returning to the table with the bags, he put into them the two sizes of small diamonds. Then he counted the large gems and wrapped them in their tissue paper and chamois skin.

"Hundred an' forty-seven good-sized ones," was his inventory "twenty real big ones; two big boys and one whopper; an' a couple of fistfuls of teeny ones an' dust."

He looked at Jim.

"Correct," was the response.

He wrote the count out on a slip of memorandum paper, and made a copy of it, giving one slip to his partner and retaining the other.

"Just for reference," he said.

Again he had recourse to the food shelf, where he emptied the sugar from a large paper bag. Into this he thrust the diamonds, large small, wrapped it up in a bandana handkerchief, and stowed it away under his pillow. Then he sat down on the edge of the bed and took off his shoes.

"An' you think they're worth a hundred thousan'?" Jim asked, pausing and looking up from the unlacing of his shoe.

"Sure," was the answer. "I seen a dance-house girl down in Arizona once, with some big sparklers on her. They wasn't real. She said if they was she wouldn't be dancin'. Said they'd be worth all of fifty thousan', an' she didn't have a dozen of 'em all told."

"Who'd work for a livin'?" Jim triumphantly demanded. "Pick an' shovel work!" he sneered. "Work like a dog all my life, an' save all my wages, an' I wouldn't have half as much as we got to-night."

"Dish washin's about your measure, an' you couldn't get more'n twenty a month an' board. Your figgers is 'way off, but your point is well taken. Let them that likes it, work. I rode range for thirty a month when I was young an' foolish. Well, I'm older, an' I ain't ridin' range."

He got into bed on one side. Jim put out the light and followed him in the other side.

‘How’s your arm feel ?” Jim queried amiably.

Such concern was unusual, and Matt noted it, and replied:--

‘I guess there’s no danger of hydrophoby. What made you ask?”

Jim felt in himself a guilty stir, and under his breath he cursed the other’s way of asking disagreeable questions; but aloud he answered:--

Nothin’, only you seemed scared of it at first. What are you goin’ to do with your share, Matt?”

Buy a cattle ranch in Arizona an’ set down an’ pay other men to ride range for me. There’s some several I’d like to see askin’ for a job from me, damn them! An’ now you shut your face, Jim. It’ll be some time before I buy that ranch. Just now I’m goin’ to sleep.”

But Jim lay long awake, nervous and twitching, rolling about restlessly and rolling himself wide awake every time he dozed. The diamonds still blazed under his eyelids, and the fire of them hurt. Matt, in spite of his heavy nature, slept lightly, like a wild animal alert in its sleep; and Jim noticed, every time he moved, that his partner’s body moved sufficiently to show that it had received the impression and that it was trembling on the verge of awakening. For that matter, Jim did not know whether or not, frequently, the other was awake. Once, quietly, betokening complete consciousness, Matt said to him: “Aw, go to sleep, Jim. Don’t worry about them jools. They’ll keep.” And Jim had thought that at that particular moment Matt had been surely asleep.

In the late morning Matt was awake with Jim’s first movement, and thereafter he awoke and dozed with him until midday, when they got up together and began dressing.

“I’m goin’ out to get a paper an’ some bread,” Matt said. “You boil the coffee.”

As Jim listened, unconsciously his gaze left Matt’s face and roved to the pillow, beneath which was the bundle wrapped in the bandana handkerchief. On the instant Matt’s face became like a wild beast’s.

“Look here, Jim,” he snarled. “You’ve got to play square. If you do me dirt, I’ll fix you. Understand? I’d eat you, Jim. You know that. I’d bite right into your throat an’ eat you like that much beefsteak.”

His sunburned skin was black with the surge of blood in it, and his tobacco-stained teeth were exposed by the snarling lips. Jim shivered and involuntarily cowered. There was death in the man he looked at. Only the night before that black-faced man had killed another with his hands, and it had not hurt his sleep. And in his own heart Jim was aware of a sneaking guilt, of a train of thought that merited all that was threatened.

Matt passed out, leaving him still shivering. Then a hatred twisted his own face, and he softly hurled savage curses at the door. He remembered the jewels, and hastened to the bed, feeling under the pillow for the bandana bundle. He crushed it with his fingers to make certain that it still contained the diamonds. Assured that Matt had not carried them away, he looked toward the kerosene stove with a guilty start. Then he hurriedly lighted it, filled the coffee-pot at the sink, and put it over the flame.

The coffee was boiling when Matt returned, and while the latter cut the bread and put a slice of butter on the table, Jim poured out the coffee. It was not until he sat down and had taken a few sips of the coffee, that Matt pulled out the morning paper from his pocket.

“We was way off,” he said. “I told you I didn’t dast figger out how fat it was. Look at that.”

He pointed to the head-lines on the first page.

“SWIFT NEMESIS ON BUJANNOFF’S TRACK,” they read.

“MURDERED IN HIS SLEEP AFTER ROBBING HIS PARTNER.”

“There you have it!” Matt cried. “He robbed his partner--robbed him like a dirty thief.”

“Half a million of jewels missin’,” Jim read aloud. He put the paper down and stared at Matt. “That’s what I told you,” the latter said. “What in hell do we know about jools? Half a million!--an’ the best I could figger it was a hundred thousan’. Go on an’ read the rest of it.”

They read on silently, their heads side by side, the untouched coffee growing cold; and ever and anon one or the other burst forth with some salient printed fact.

“I’d like to seen Metzner’s face when he opened the safe at the store this mornin’,” Jim gloated.

“He hit the high places right away for Bujannoff’s house,” Matt explained. “Go on an’ read.”

“Was to have sailed last night at ten on the Sajoda for the South Seas--steamship delayed by extra freight--“

“That’s why we caught ‘m in bed,” Matt interrupted. “It was just luck--like pickin’ a fifty-to-one winner.”

“Sajoda sailed at six this mornin’--“

He didn’t catch her,” Matt said. “I saw his alarm-clock was set at five. That’d given ‘m plenty of time . . . only I come along an’ put the kibosh on his time. Go on.”

“Adolph Metzner in despair--the famous Haythorne pearl necklace--magnificently assorted pearls--valued by experts at from fifty to seventy thousan’ dollars.”

Jim broke off to swear vilely and solemnly, concluding with, “Those damn oyster-eggs worth all that money!”

He licked his lips and added, “They was beauties an’ no mistake.”

“Big Brazilian gem,” he read on. “Eighty thousan’ dollars--many valuable gems of the first water--several thousan’ small diamonds well worth forty thousan’.”

“What you don’t know about jools is worth knowin’,” Matt smiled good-humoredly.

“Theory of the sleuths,” Jim read. “Thieves must have known--cleverly kept watch on Bujannoff’s actions--must have learned his plan and trailed him to his house with the fruits of his robbery--“

“Clever--hell!” Matt broke out. “That’s the way reputations is made. . .in the noospapers. How’d we know he was robbin’ his pardner?”

“Anyway, we’ve got the goods,” Jim grinned. “Let’s look at ‘em again.”

He assured himself that the door was locked and bolted, while Matt brought out the bundle in the bandana and opened it on the table.

“Ain’t they beauties, though!” Jim exclaimed at sight of the pearls; and for a time he had eyes only for them. “Accordin’ to the experts, worth from fifty to seventy thousan’ dollars.”

“An’ women like them things,” Matt commented. “An’ they’ll do everything to get ‘‘em--sell themselves, commit murder, anything.”

“Just like you an’ me.”

“Not on your life,” Matt retorted. “I’ll commit murder for ‘em, but nor their own sakes, but for sake of what they’ll get me. That’s the difference. Women want the jools for themselves, an’ I want the jools for the women an’ such things they’ll get me.”

“Lucky that men an’ women don’t want the same things,” Jim remarked.

“That’s what makes commerce,” Matt agreed; “people wantin’ different things.”

In the middle of the afternoon Jim went out to buy food. While he was gone, Matt cleared the table of the jewels, wrapping them up as before and putting them under the pillow. Then he lighted the kerosene stove and started to boil water for the coffee. A few minutes later Jim returned.

“Most surprising,” he remarked. “Streets, an’ stores, an’ people just like they always was. Nothin’ changed. An’ me walkin’ along through it all a millionnaire. Nobody looked at me an’ guessed it.”

Matt grunted unsympathetically. He had little comprehension of the lighter whims and fancies of his partner’s imagination.

“Did you get a porterhouse?” he demanded.

“Sure, en’ en inch thick. It’s a peach. Look at it.”

He unwrapped the steak and held it up for the other’s inspection. Then he made the coffee and set the table, while Matt fried the steak.

“Don’t put on too much of them red peppers,” Jim warned. “I ain’t used to your Mexican cookin’. You always season too hot.”

Matt grunted a laugh and went on with his cooking. Jim poured out the coffee, but first, into the nicked china cup, he emptied a powder he had carried in his vest pocket wrapped in a rice-paper. He had turned his back for the moment on his partner, but he did not dare to glance around at him. Matt placed a newspaper on the table, and on the newspaper set the hot frying-pan. He cut the steak in half, and served Jim and himself.

“Eat her while she’s hot,” he counselled, and with knife and fork set the example.

“She’s a dandy,” was Jim’s judgment, after his first mouthful. “But I tell you one thing straight. I’m never goin’ to visit you on that Arizona ranch, so you needn’t ask me.”

“What’s the matter now?” Matt asked.

“Hell’s the matter,” was the answer. “The Mexican cookin’ on your ranch’d be too much for me. If I’ve got hell a-comin’ in the next life, I’m not goin’ to torment my insides in this one. Damned peppers!”

He smiled, expelled his breath forcibly to cool his burning mouth, drank some coffee, and went on eating the steak.

“What do you think about the next life anyway, Matt?” he asked a little later, while secretly he wondered why the other had not yet touched his coffee.

“Ain’t no next life,” Matt answered, pausing from the steak to take his first sip of coffee. “Nor heaven nor hell, nor nothin’. You get all that’s comin' right here in this life."

"An' afterward?" Jim queried out of his morbid curiosity, for he knew that he looked upon a man that was soon to die. "An' afterward?" he repeated.

"Did you ever see a man two weeks dead?" the other asked.

Jim shook his head.

"Well, I have. He was like this beefsteak you an' me is eatin'. It was once steer cavortin' over the landscape. But now it's just meat. That's all, just meat. An' that's what you an' me an' all people come to--meat."

Matt gulped down the whole cup of coffee, and refilled the cup.

"Are you scared to die?" he asked.

Jim shook his head. "What's the use? I don't die anyway. I pass on an' live again--"

To go stealin', an' Iyin' an' snivellin' through another life, an' go on that way forever an' ever an' ever?" Matt sneered.

"Maybe I'll improve," Jim suggested hopefully. "Maybe stealin' won't be necessary in the life to come."

He ceased abruptly, and stared straight before him, a frightened expression on his face.

"What's the matter?" Matt demanded.

"Nothin'. I was just wonderin'"--Jim returned to himself with an effort--"about this dyin', that was all."

But he could not shake off the fright that had startled him. It was as if an unseen thing of gloom had passed him by, casting upon him the intangible shadow of its presence. He was aware of a feeling of foreboding. Something ominous was about to happen. Calamity hovered in the air. He gazed fixedly across the table at the other man. He could not understand. Was it that he had blundered and poisoned himself? No Matt had the nicked cup, and he had certainly put the poison in the nicked cup.

It was all his own imagination, was his next thought. It had played him tricks before. Fool! Of course it was. Of course something was about to happen, but it was about to happen to Matt. Had not Matt drunk the whole cup of coffee?

Jim brightened up and finished his steak, sopping bread in the gravy when the meat was gone.

"When I was a kid--" he began, but broke off abruptly.

Again the unseen thing of gloom had fluttered, and his being was vibrant with premonition of impending misfortune. He felt a disruptive influence at work in the flesh of him, and in all his muscles there was a seeming that they were about to begin to twitch. He sat back suddenly, and as suddenly leaned forward with his elbows on the table. A tremor ran dimly through the muscles of his body. It was like the first rustling of leaves before the oncoming of wind. He clenched his teeth. It came again, a spasmodic tensing of his muscles. He knew panic at the revolt within his being. His muscles no longer recognized his mastery over them. Again they spasmodically tensed, despite the will of him, for he had willed that they should not tense. This was revolution within himself, this was anarchy; and the terror of impotence rushed up in him as his flesh gripped and seemed to seize him in a clutch, chills running up and down his back and sweat starting on his brow. He glanced about the room, and all the details of it smote him with a strange sense of familiarity. It was as though he had just returned from a long journey. He looked across the table at his partner. Matt was watching him and smiling. An expression of horror spread over Jim's face.

"My God, Matt!" he screamed. "You ain't doped me?"

Matt smiled and continued to watch him. In the paroxysm that followed, Jim did not become unconscious. His muscles tensed and twitched and knotted, hurting him and crushing him in their savage grip. And in the midst of it all, it came to him that Matt was acting queerly. He was travelling the same road. The smile had gone from his face, and there was on it an intent expression, as if he were listening to some inner tale of himself and trying to divine the message. Matt got up and walked across the room and back again, then sat down.

"You did this, Jim," he said quietly.

"But I didn't think you'd try to fix me," Jim answered reproachfully.

"Oh, I fixed you all right," Matt said, with teeth close together and shivering body. "What did you give me?"

"Strychnine."

"Same as I gave you," Matt volunteered. "It's a hell of a mess, ain't it?"

"You're Iyin', Matt," Jim pleaded. "You ain't doped me, have you?"

"I sure did, Jim; an' I didn't overdose you, neither. I cooked it in as neat as you please in your half the porterhouse.--Hold on! Where're you goin'?"

Jim had made a dash for the door, and was throwing back the bolts. Matt sprang in between and shoved him away.

"Drug store," Jim panted. "Drug store."

"No you don't. You'll stay right here. There ain't goin' to be any runnin' out an' makin' a poison play on the street--not with all them jools reposin' under the pillow. Savve? Even if you didn't die, you'd be in the hands of the police with a whole lot of explanations comin'. Emeetics is the stuff for poison. I'm just as bad bit as you, an' I'm goin' to take a emetic. That's all they'd give you at a drug store, anyway."

He thrust Jim back into the middle of the room and shot the bolts into place. As he went across the floor to the food shelf, he passed one hand over his brow and flung off the beaded sweat. It spattered audibly on the floor. Jim watched agonizedly as Matt got the mustard-can and a cup and ran for the sink. He stirred a cupful of mustard and water and drank it down. Jim had followed him and was reaching with trembling hands for the empty cup. Again Matt shoved him away. As he mixed a second cupful, he demanded:--

"D'you think one cup'll do for me ? You can wait till I'm done."

Jim started to totter toward the door, but Matt checked him.

"If you monkey with that door, I'll twist your neck. Savve? You can take yours when I'm done. An' if it saves you, I'll twist your neck, anyway. You ain't got no chance, nowhow. I told you many times what you'd get if you did me dirt."

But you did me dirt, too," Jim articulated with an effort.

Matt was drinking the second cupful, and did not answer. The sweat had got into Jim's eyes, and he could scarcely see his way to the table, where he got a cup for himself. But Matt was mixing a third cupful, and, as before, thrust him away.

I told you to wait till I was done," Matt growled. "Get outa my way."

And Jim supported his twitching body by holding on to the sink, the while he yearned toward the yellowish concoction that stood for life. It was by sheer will that he stood and clung to the sink. His flesh strove to double him up and bring him to the floor. Matt drank the third cupful, and with difficulty managed to get to a chair and sit down. His first paroxysm was passing. The spasms that afflicted him were dying away. This good effect he ascribed to the mustard and water. He was safe, at any rate. He wiped the sweat from his face, and, in the interval of calm, found room for curiosity. He looked at his partner.

A spasm had shaken the mustard can out of Jim's hands, and the contents were spilled upon the floor. He stooped to scoop some of the mustard into the cup, and the succeeding spasm doubled him upon the floor. Matt smiled.

"Stay with it," he encouraged. "It's the stuff all right. It's fixed me up."

Jim heard him and turned toward him a stricken face, twisted with suffering and pleading. Spasm now followed spasm till he was in convulsions, rolling on the floor and yellowing his face and hair in mustard.

Matt laughed hoarsely at the sight, but the laugh broke midway. A tremor had run through his body. A new paroxysm was beginning. He arose and staggered across to the sink, where, with probing forefinger, he vainly strove to assist the action of the emetic. In the end, he clung to the sink as Jim had clung, filled with the horror of going down to the floor.

The other's paroxysm had passed, and he sat up, weak and fainting, too weak to rise, his forehead dripping, his lips flecked with a foam made yellow by the mustard in which he had rolled. He rubbed his eyes with his knuckles, and groans that were like whines came from his throat.

"What are you snifflin' about?" Matt demanded out of his agony. "All you got to do is die. An' when you die you're dead."

"I. . . ain't. . . snifflin' . . . it's. . . the. . . mustard. . . stingin' my . . . eyes," Jim panted with desperate slowness.

It was his last successful attempt at speech. Thereafter he babbled incoherently, pawing the air with shaking arms till a fresh convulsion stretched him on the floor.

Matt struggled back to the chair, and, doubled up on it, with his arms clasped about his knees, he fought with his disintegrating flesh. He came out of the convulsion cool and weak. He looked to see how it went with the other, and saw him lying motionless.

He tried to soliloquize, to be facetious, to have his last grim laugh at life, but his lips made only incoherent sounds. The thought came to him that the emetic had failed, and that nothing remained but the drugstore. He looked toward the door and drew himself to his feet. There he saved himself from falling by clutching the chair. Another paroxysm had begun. And in the midst of the paroxysm, with his body and all the parts of it flying apart and writhing and twisting back again into knots, he clung to the chair and shoved it before him across the floor. The last shreds of his will were leaving him when he gained the door. He turned the key and shot back one bolt. He fumbled for the second bolt, but failed. Then he leaned his weight against the door and slid down gently to the floor.

The Kanaka Surf

The tourist women, under the hau tree arbour that lines the Moana hotel beach, gasped when Lee Barton and his wife Ida emerged from the bath-house. And as the pair walked past them and down to the sand, they continued to gasp. Not that there was anything about Lee Barton provocative of gasps. The tourist women were not of the sort to gasp at sight of a mere man's swimming-suited body, no matter with what swelling splendour of line and muscle such body was invested. Nevertheless, trainers and conditioners of men would have drawn deep breaths of satisfaction at contemplation of the physical spectacle of him. But they would not have gasped in the way the women did, whose gasps were indicative of moral shock.

Ida Barton was the cause of their perturbation and disapproval. They disapproved, seriously so, at the first instant's glimpse of her. They thought--such ardent self-deceivers were they--that they were shocked by her swimming suit. But Freud has pointed out how persons, where sex is involved, are prone sincerely to substitute one thing for another thing, and to agonize over the substituted thing as strenuously as if it were the real thing.

Ida Barton's swimming suit was a very nice one, as women's suits go. Of thinnest of firm-woven black wool, with white trimmings and a white belt-line, it was high-throated, short-sleeved, and brief-skirted. Brief as was the skirt, the leg-tights were no less brief. Yet on the beach in front of the adjacent Outrigger Club, and entering and leaving the water, a score of women, not provoking gasping notice, were more daringly garbed. Their men's suits, as brief of leg-tights and skirts, fitted them as snugly, but were sleeveless after the way of men's suits, the arm-holes deeply low-cut and in-cut, and, by the exposed armpits, advertiseful that the wearers were accustomed to 1916 decollete.

So it was not Ida Barton's suit, although the women deceived themselves into thinking it was. It was, first of all, say her legs; or, first of all, say the totality of her, the sweet and brilliant jewel of her femininity bursting upon them. Dowager, matron, and maid, conserving their soft-fat muscles or protecting their hot-house complexions in the shade of the hau-tree arbour, felt the immediate challenge of her. She was menace as well, an affront of superiority in their own chosen and variously successful game of life.

But they did not say it. They did not permit themselves to think it. They thought it was the suit, and said so to one another, ignoring the twenty women more daringly clad but less perilously beautiful. Could one have winnowed out of the souls of these disapproving ones what lay at bottom of their condemnation of her suit, it would have been found to be the sex-jealous thought: THAT NO WOMAN, SO BEAUTIFUL AS THIS ONE, SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO SHOW HER BEAUTY. It was not fair to them. What chance had they in the conquering of males with so dangerous a rival in the foreground?

They were justified. As Stanley Patterson said to his wife, where the two of them lolled wet in the sand by the tiny fresh-water stream that the Bartons waded in order to gain the Outrigger Club beach:

“Lord god of models and marvels, behold them! My dear, did you ever see two such legs on one small woman! Look at the roundness and taperingness. They’re boy’s legs. I’ve seen featherweights go into the ring with legs like those. And they’re all-woman’s legs, too. Never mistake them in the world. The arc of the front line of that upper leg! And the balanced adequate fullness at the back! And the way the opposing curves slender in to the knee that IS a knee! Makes my fingers itch. Wish I had some clay right now.”

“It’s a true human knee,” his wife concurred, no less breathlessly; for, like her husband, she was a sculptor. “Look at the joint of it working under the skin. It’s got form, and blessedly is not covered by a bag of fat.” She paused to sigh, thinking of her own knees. “It’s correct, and beautiful, and dainty. Charm! If ever I beheld the charm of flesh, it is now. I wonder who she is.”

Stanley Patterson, gazing ardently, took up his half of the chorus.

“Notice that the round muscle-pads on the inner sides that make most women appear knock-kneed are missing. They’re boy’s legs, firm and sure--“

“And sweet woman’s legs, soft and round,” his wife hastened to balance. “And look, Stanley! See how she walks on the balls of her feet. It makes her seem light as swan’s down. Each step seems just a little above the earth, and each other step seems just a little higher above until you get the impression she is flying, or just about to rise and begin flying . . . “

So Stanley and Mrs. Patterson. But they were artists, with eyes therefore unlike the next batteries of human eyes Ida Barton was compelled to run, and that laired on the Outrigger lanais (verandas) and in the hau-tree shade of the closely adjoining seaside. The majority of the Outrigger audience was composed, not of tourist guests, but of club members and old-timers in Hawaii. And even the old-times women gasped.

"It's positively indecent," said Mrs. Hanley Black to her husband, herself a too-stout-in-the-middle matron of forty-five, who had been born in the Hawaiian islands, and who had never heard of Ostend.

Hanley Black surveyed his wife's criminal shapelessness and voluminousness of antediluvian, New-England swimming dress with a withering, contemplative eye. They had been married a sufficient number of years for him frankly to utter his judgment.

"That strange woman's suit makes your own look indecent. You appear as a creature shameful, under a grotesqueness of apparel striving to hide some secret awfulness."

"She carries her body like a Spanish dancer," Mrs. Patterson said to her husband, for the pair of them had waded the little stream in pursuit of the vision.

"By George, she does," Stanley Patterson concurred. "Reminds me of Estrellita. Torso just well enough forward, slender waist, not too lean in the stomach, and with muscles like some lad boxer's armouring that stomach to fearlessness. She has to have them to carry herself that way and to balance the back muscles. See that muscled curve of the back! It's Estrellita's."

"How tall would you say?" his wife queried.

"There she deceives," was the appraised answer. "She might be five-feet-one, or five-feet-three or four. It's that way she has of walking that you described as almost about to fly."

"Yes, that's it," Mrs. Patterson concurred. "It's her energy, her seemingness of being on tip toe with rising vitality."

Stanley Patterson considered for a space.

"That's it," he enounced. "She IS a little thing. I'll give her five-two in her stockings. And I'll weigh her a mere one hundred and ten, or eight, or fifteen at the outside."

"She won't weigh a hundred and ten," his wife declared with conviction.

"And with her clothes on, plus her carriage (which is builded of her vitality and will), I'll wager she'd never impress any one with her smallness.”

“I know her type,” his wife nodded. “You meet her out, and you have the sense that, while not exactly a fine large woman, she’s a whole lot larger than the average. And now, age?”

“I’ll give you best there,” he parried.

“She might be twenty-five, she might be twenty-eight . . . “

But Stanley Patterson had impolitely forgotten to listen.

“It’s not her legs alone,” he cried on enthusiastically. “It’s the all of her. Look at the delicacy of that forearm. And the swell of line to the shoulder. And that biceps! It’s alive. Dollars to drowned kittens she can flex a respectable knot of it . . . “

No woman, much less an Ida Barton, could have been unconscious of the effect she was producing along Waikiki Beach. Instead of making her happy in the small vanity way, it irritated her.

“The cats,” she laughed to her husband. “And to think I was born here an almost even third of a century ago! But they weren’t nasty then. Maybe because there weren’t any tourists. Why, Lee, I learned to swim right here on this beach in front of the Outrigger. We used to come out with daddy for vacations and for week-ends and sort of camp out in a grass house that stood right where the Outrigger ladies serve tea now. And centipedes fell out of the thatch on us, while we slept, and we all ate poi and opihis and raw aku, and nobody wore much of anything for the swimming and squidding, and there was no real road to town. I remember times of big rain when it was so flooded we had to go in by canoe, out through the reef and in by Honolulu Harbour.”

“Remember,” Lee Barton added, “it was just about that time that the youngster that became me arrived here for a few weeks’ stay on our way around. I must have seen you on the beach at that very time--one of the kiddies that swam like fishes. Why, merciful me, the women here were all riding cross-saddle, and that was long before the rest of the social female world outgrew its immodesty and came around to sitting simultaneously on both sides of a horse. I learned to swim on the beach here at that time myself. You and I may even have tried body-surfing on the same waves, or I may have splashed a handful of water into your mouth and been rewarded by your sticking out your tongue at me--“

Interrupted by an audible gasp of shock from a spinster-appearing female sunning herself hard by and angularly in the sand in a swimming suit monstrously unbeautiful, Lee Barton was aware of an involuntary and almost perceptible stiffening on the part of his wife.

"I smile with pleasure," he told her. "It serves only to make your valiant little shoulders the more valiant. It may make you self-conscious, but it likewise makes you absurdly self-confident."

For, be it known in advance, Lee Barton was a super-man and Ida Barton a super-woman--or at least they were personalities so designated by the cub book-reviewers, flat-floor men and women, and scholastically emasculated critics, who from across the dreary levels of their living can descry no glorious humans over-topping their horizons. These dreary folk, echoes of the dead past and importunate and self-elected pall-bearers for the present and future, proxy-livers of life and vicarious sensualists that they are in a eunuch sort of way, insist, since their own selves, environments, and narrow agitations of the quick are mediocre and commonplace, that no man or woman can rise above the mediocre and commonplace.

Lacking gloriousness in themselves, they deny gloriousness to all mankind; too cowardly for whimsy and derring-do, they assert whimsy and derring-do ceased at the very latest no later than the middle ages; flickering little tapers themselves, their feeble eyes are dazzled to unseeingness of the flaming conflagrations of other souls that illumine their skies. Possessing power in no greater quantity than is the just due of pygmies, they cannot conceive of power greater in others than in themselves. In those days there were giants; but, as their mouldy books tell them, the giants are long since passed, and only the bones of them remain. Never having seen the mountains, there are no mountains.

In the mud of their complacently perpetuated barnyard pond, they assert that no bright-browed, bright-apparelled shining figures can be outside of fairy books, old histories, and ancient superstitions. Never having seen the stars, they deny the stars. Never having glimpsed the shining ways nor the mortals that tread them, they deny the existence of the shinning ways as well as the existence of the high-bright mortals who adventure along the shining ways. The narrow pupils of their eyes the centre of the universe, they image the universe in terms of themselves, of their meagre personalities make pitiful yardsticks with which to measure the high-bright souls, saying: "Thus long are all souls, and no longer; it is impossible that there should exist greater-statured souls than we are, and our gods know that we are great of stature."

But all, or nearly all on the beach, forgave Ida Barton her suit and form when she took the water. A touch of her hand on her husband's arm, indication and challenge in her laughing face, and the two ran as one for half a dozen paces and leapt as one from the hard-wet sand of the beach, their bodies describing flat arches of flight ere the water was entered.

There are two surfs at Waikiki: the big, bearded man surf that roars far out beyond the diving-stage; the smaller, gentler, wahine, or woman, surf that breaks upon the shore itself. Here is a great shallowness, where one may wade a hundred or several hundred feet to get beyond depth. Yet, with a good surf on outside, the wahine surf can break three or four feet, so that, close in against the shore, the hard-sand bottom may be three feet or three inches under the welter of surface foam. To dive from the beach into this, to fly into the air off racing feet, turn in mid-flight so that heels are up and head is down, and, so to enter the water head-first, requires wisdom of waves, timing of waves, and a trained deftness in entering such unstable depths of water with pretty, unapprehensive, head-first cleavage, while at the same time making the shallowest possible of dives.

It is a sweet, and pretty, and daring trick, not learned in a day, nor learned at all without many a milder bump on the bottom or close shave of fractured skull or broken neck. Here, on the spot where the Bartons so beautifully dived, two days before a Stanford track athlete had broken his neck. His had been an error in timing the rise and subsidence of a wahine wave.

"A professional," Mrs. Hanley Black sneered to her husband at Ida Barton's feat.

"Some vaudeville tank girl," was one of the similar remarks with which the women in the shade complacently reassured one another--finding, by way of the weird mental processes of self-illusion, a great satisfaction in the money caste-distinction between one who worked for what she ate and themselves who did not work for what they ate.

It was a day of heavy surf on Waikiki. In the wahine surf it was boisterous enough for good swimmers. But out beyond, in the kanaka, or man, surf, no one ventured. Not that the score or more of young surf-riders loafing on the beach could not venture there, or were afraid to venture there; but because their biggest outrigger canoes would have been swamped, and their surf-boards would have been overwhelmed in the too-immense over-topple and down-fall of the thundering monsters. They themselves, most of them, could have swum, for man can swim through breakers which canoes and surf-boards cannot surmount; but to ride the backs of the waves, rise out of the foam to stand full length in the air above, and with heels winged with the swiftness of horses to fly shoreward, was what made sport for them and brought them out from Honolulu to Waikiki.

The captain of Number Nine canoe, himself a charter member of the Outrigger and a many-times medallist in long-distance swimming, had missed seeing the Bartons take the water, and first glimpsed them beyond the last festoon of bathers clinging to the life-lines. From then on, from his vantage of the upstairs lanai, he kept his eyes on them. When they continued out past the steel diving-stage where a few of the hardiest divers disported, he muttered vexedly under his breath “damned malahinis!”

Now malahini means new-comer, tender-foot; and, despite the prettiness of their stroke, he knew that none except malahinis would venture into the racing channel beyond the diving-stage. Hence the vexation of the captain of Number Nine. He descended to the beach, with a low word here and there picked a crew of the strongest surfers, and returned to the lanai with a pair of binoculars. Quite casually, the crew, six of them, carried Number Nine to the water’s edge, saw paddles and everything in order for a quick launching, and lolled about carelessly on the sand. They were guilty of not advertising that anything untoward was afoot, although they did steal glances up to their captain straining through the binoculars.

What made the channel was the fresh-water stream. Coral cannot abide fresh water. What made the channel race was the immense shoreward surf-fling of the sea. Unable to remain flung up on the beach, pounded ever back toward the beach by the perpetual shoreward rush of the kanaka surf, the up-piled water escaped to the sea by way of the channel and in the form of under-tow along the bottom under the breakers. Even in the channel the waves broke big, but not with the magnificent bigness of terror as to right and left. So it was that a canoe or a comparatively strong swimmer could dare the channel. But the swimmer must be a strong swimmer indeed, who could successfully buck the current in. Wherefore the captain of Number Nine continued his vigil and his muttered damnation of malahinis, disgustedly sure that these two malahinis would compel him to launch Number Nine and go after them when they found the current too strong to swim in against. As for himself, caught in their predicament, he would have veered to the left toward Diamond Head and come in on the shoreward fling of the kanaka surf. But then, he was no one other than himself, a bronze.

Hercules of twenty-two, the whitest blond man ever burned to mahogany brown by a sub-tropic sun, with body and lines and muscles very much resembling the wonderful ones of Duke Kahanamoku. In a hundred yards the world champion could invariably beat him a second flat; but over a distance of miles he could swim circles around the champion.

No one of the many hundreds on the beach, with the exception of till captain and his crew, knew that the Bartons had passed beyond the diving-stage. All who had watched them start to swim out had taken for granted that they had joined the others on the stage.

The captain suddenly sprang upon the railing of the lanai, held on to a pillar with one hand, and again picked up the two specks of heads through the glasses. His surprise was verified. The two fools had veered out of the channel toward Diamond Head, and were directly seaward of the kanaka surf. Worse, as he looked, they were starting to come in through the kanaka surf.

He glanced down quickly to the canoe, and even as he glanced, and as the apparently loafing members quietly arose and took their places by the canoe for the launching, he achieved judgment. Before the canoe could get abreast in the channel, all would be over with the man and woman. And, granted that it could get abreast of them, the moment it ventured into the kanaka surf it would be swamped, and a sorry chance would the strongest swimmer of them have of rescuing a person pounding to pulp on the bottom under the smashes of the great bearded ones.

The captain saw the first kanaka wave, large of itself, but small among its fellows, lift seaward behind the two speck-swimmers. Then he saw them strike a crawl-stroke, side by side, faces downward, full-lengths out-stretched on surface, their feet sculling like propellers and their arms flailing in rapid over-hand strokes, as they spurted speed to approximate the speed of the overtaking wave, so that, when overtaken, they would become part of the wave, and travel with it instead of being left behind it. Thus, if they were coolly skilled enough to ride outstretched on the surface and the forward face of the crest instead of being flung and crumpled or driven head-first to bottom, they would dash shoreward, not propelled by their own energy, but by the energy of the wave into which they had become incorporated.

And they did it! “SOME swimmers!” the captain of Number Nine made announcement to himself under his breath. He continued to gaze eagerly.

The best of swimmers could hold such a wave for several hundred feet. But could they? If they did, they would be a third of the way through the perils they had challenged. But, not unexpected by him, the woman failed first, her body not presenting the larger surfaces that her husband's did. At the end of seventy feet she was overwhelmed, being driven downward and out of sight by the tons of water in the over-topple. Her husband followed and both appeared swimming beyond the wave they had lost.

The captain saw the next wave first. "If they try to body-surf on that, good night," he muttered; for he knew the swimmer did not live who would tackle it. Beardless itself, it was father of all bearded ones, a mile long, rising up far out beyond where the others rose, towering its solid bulk higher and higher till it blotted out the horizon, and was a giant among its fellows ere its beard began to grow as it thinned its crest to the over-curl.

But it was evident that the man and woman knew big water. No racing stroke did they make in advance of the wave. The captain inwardly applauded as he saw them turn and face the wave and wait for it. It was a picture that of all on the beach he alone saw, wonderfully distinct and vivid in the magnification of the binoculars. The wall of the wave was truly a wall, mounting, ever mounting, and thinning, far up, to a transparency of the colours of the setting sun shooting athwart all the green and blue of it. The green thinned to lighter green that merged blue even as he looked. But it was a blue gem-brilliant with innumerable sparkle-points of rose and gold flashed through it by the sun. On and up, to the sprouting beard of growing crest, the colour orgy increased until it was a kaleidoscopic effervescence of transfusing rainbows.

Against the face of the wave showed the heads of the man and woman like two sheer specks. Specks they were, of the quick, adventuring among the blind elemental forces, daring the titanic buffets of the sea. The weight of the down-fall of that father of waves, even then imminent above their heads, could stun a man or break the fragile bones of a woman. The captain of Number Nine was unconscious that he was holding his breath. He was oblivious of the man. It was the woman. Did she lose her head or courage, or misplay her muscular part for a moment, she could be hurled a hundred feet by that giant buffet and left wrenched, helpless, and breathless to be pulped on the coral bottom and sucked out by the undertow to be battened on by the fish-sharks too cowardly to take their human meat alive.

Why didn't they dive deep, and with plenty of time, the captain wanted to know, instead of waiting till the last tick of safety and the first tick of peril were one? He saw the woman turn her head and laugh to the man, and his head turn in response. Above them, overhanging them, as they mounted the body of the wave, the beard, creaming white, then frothing into rose and gold, tossed upward into a spray of jewels. The crisp off-shore trade-wind caught the beard's fringes and blew them backward and upward yards and yards into the air. It was then, side by side, and six feet apart, that they dived straight under the over-curl even then disintegrating to chaos and falling. Like insects disappearing into the convolutions of some gorgeous gigantic orchid, so they disappeared, as beard and crest and spray and jewels, in many tons, crashed and thundered down just where they had disappeared the moment before, but where they were no longer.

Beyond the wave they had gone through, they finally showed, side by side, still six feet apart, swimming shoreward with a steady stroke until the next wave should make them body-surf it or face and pierce it. The captain of Number Nine waved his hand to his crew in dismissal, and sat down on the lanai railing, feeling vaguely tired and still watching the swimmers through his glasses.

"Whoever and whatever they are," he murmured, "they aren't malahinis. They simply can't be malahinis."

Not all days, and only on rare days, is the surf heavy at Waikiki; and, in the days that followed, Ida and Lee Barton, much in evidence on the beach and in the water, continued to arouse disparaging interest in the breasts of the tourist ladies, although the Outrigger captains ceased from worrying about them in the water. They would watch the pair swim out and disappear in the blue distance, and they might, or might not, chance to see them return hours afterward. The point was that the captains did not bother about their returning, because they knew they would return.

The reason for this was that they were not malahinis. They belonged. In other words, or, rather, in the potent Islands-word, they were kamaaina. Kamaaina men and women of forty remembered Lee Barton from their childhood days, when, in truth, he had been a malahini, though a very young specimen. Since that time, in the course of various long stays, he had earned the kamaaina distinction.

As for Ida Barton, young matrons of her own age (privily wondering how she managed to keep her figure) met her with arms around and hearty

Hawaiian kisses. Grandmothers must have her to tea and reminiscence in old gardens of forgotten houses which the tourist never sees. Less than a week after her arrival, the aged Queen Liliuokalani must send for her and chide her for neglect. And old men, on cool and balmy lanais, toothlessly maundered to her about Grandpa Captain Wilton, of before their time, but whose wild and lusty deeds and pranks, told them by their fathers, they remembered with gusto--Grandpa Captain Wilton, or David Wilton, or "All Hands" as the Hawaiians of that remote day had affectionately renamed him. All Hands, ex-Northwest trader, the godless, beach-combing, clipper-shipless and ship-wrecked skipper who had stood on the beach at Kailua and welcomed the very first of missionaries, off the brig Thaddeus, in the year 1820, and who, not many years later, made a scandalous runaway marriage with one of their daughters, quieted down and served the Kamehamehas long and conservatively as Minister of the Treasury and Chief of the Customs, and acted as intercessor and mediator between the missionaries on one side and the beach-combing crowd, the trading crowd, and the Hawaiian chiefs on the variously shifting other side.

Nor was Lee Barton neglected. In the midst of the dinners and lunches, the luaus (Hawaiian feasts) and poi-suppers, and swims and dances in aloha (love) to both of them, his time and inclination were claimed by the crowd of lively youngsters of old Kohala days who had come to know that they possessed digestions and various other internal functions, and who had settled down to somewhat of sedateness, who roistered less, and who played bridge much, and went to baseball often. Also, similarly oriented, was the old poker crowd of Lee Barton's younger days, which crowd played for more consistent stakes and limits, while it drank mineral water and orange juice and timed the final round of "Jacks" never later than midnight.

Appeared, through all the rout of entertainment, Sonny Grandison, Hawaii-born, Hawaii-prominent, who, despite his youthful forty-one years, had declined the proffered governorship of the Territory. Also, he had ducked Ida Barton in the surf at Waikiki a quarter of a century before, and, still earlier, vacationing on his father's great Lakanaii cattle ranch, had hair-raisingly initiated her, and various other tender tots of five to seven years of age, into his boys' band, "The Cannibal Head-Hunters" or "The Terrors of Lakanaii." Still farther, his Grandpa Grandison and her Grandpa Wilton had been business and political comrades in the old days.

Educated at Harvard, he had become for a time a world-wandering scientist and social favourite. After serving in the Philippines, he had accompanied various expeditions through Malaysia, South America, and Africa in the post of official entomologist. At forty-one he still retained his travelling commission from the Smithsonian Institution, while his friends insisted that he knew more about sugar "bugs" than the expert entomologists employed by him and his fellow sugar planters in the Experiment Station. Bulking large at home, he was the best-known representative of Hawaii abroad. It was the axiom among travelled Hawaii folk, that wherever over the world they might mention they were from Hawaii, the invariable first question asked of them was: "And do you know Sonny Grandison?"

In brief, he was a wealthy man's son who had made good. His father's million he inherited he had increased to ten millions, at the same time keeping up his father's benefactions and endowments and overshadowing them with his own.

But there was still more to him. A ten years' widower, without issue, he was the most eligible and most pathetically sought-after marriageable man in all Hawaii. A clean-and-strong-featured brunette, tall, slenderly graceful, with the lean runner's stomach, always fit as a fiddle, a distinguished figure in any group, the greying of hair over his temples (in juxtaposition to his young-textured skin and bright vital eyes) made him appear even more distinguished. Despite the social demands upon his time, and despite his many committee meetings, and meetings of boards of directors and political conferences, he yet found time and space to captain the Lakanaii polo team to more than occasional victory, and on his own island of Lakanaii vied with the Baldwins of Maui in the breeding and importing of polo ponies.

Given a markedly strong and vital man and woman, when a second equally markedly strong and vital man enters the scene, the peril of a markedly strong and vital triangle of tragedy becomes imminent. Indeed, such a triangle of tragedy may be described, in the terminology of the flat-floor folk, as "super" and "impossible." Perhaps, since within himself originated the desire and the daring, it was Sonny Grandison who first was conscious of the situation, although he had to be quick to anticipate the sensing intuition of a woman like Ida Barton. At any rate, and undebatable, the last of the three to attain awareness was Lee Barton, who promptly laughed away what was impossible to laugh away.

His first awareness, he quickly saw, was so belated that half his hosts and hostesses were already aware. Casting back, he realized that for some time any affair to which he and his wife were invited found Sonny Grandison likewise invited. Wherever the two had been, the three had been. To Kahuku or to Haleiwa, to Ahuimanu, or to Kaneohe for the coral gardens, or to Koko Head for a picnicking and a swimming, somehow it invariably happened that Ida rode in Sonny's car or that both rode in somebody's car. Dances, luaus, dinners, and outings were all one; the three of them were there.

Having become aware, Lee Barton could not fail to register Ida's note of happiness ever rising when in the same company with Sonny Grandison, and her willingness to ride in the same cars with him, to dance with him, or to sit out dances with him. Most convincing of all, was Sonny Grandison himself. Forty-one, strong, experienced, his face could no more conceal what he felt than could be concealed a lad of twenty's ordinary lad's love. Despite the control and restraint of forty years, he could no more mask his soul with his face than could Lee Barton, of equal years, fail to read that soul through so transparent a face. And often, to other women, talking, when the topic of Sonny came up, Lee Barton heard Ida express her fondness for Sonny, or her almost too-eloquent appreciation of his polo-playing, his work in the world, and his general all-rightness of achievement.

About Sonny's state of mind and heart Lee had no doubt. It was patent enough for the world to read. But how about Ida, his own dozen-years' wife of a glorious love-match? He knew that woman, ever the mysterious sex, was capable any time of unguessed mystery. Did her frank comradeliness with Grandison token merely frank comradeliness and childhood contacts continued and recrudesced into adult years? or did it hide, in woman's subtler and more secretive ways, a beat of heart and return of feeling that might even out-balance what Sonny's face advertised?

Lee Barton was not happy. A dozen years of utmost and post-nuptial possession of his wife had proved to him, so far as he was concerned, that she was his one woman in the world, and that the woman was unborn, much less unglimpsed, who could for a moment compete with her in his heart, his soul, and his brain. Impossible of existence was the woman who could lure him away from her, much less over-bid her in the myriad, continual satisfactions she rendered him.

Was this, then, he asked himself, the dreaded contingency of all fond Benedicts, to be her first “affair?” He tormented himself with the ever iterant query, and, to the astonishment of the reformed Kohala poker crowd of wise and middle-aged youngsters as well as to the reward of the keen scrutiny of the dinner-giving and dinner-attending women, he began to drink King William instead of orange juice, to bully up the poker limit, to drive of nights his own car more than rather recklessly over the Pali and Diamond Head roads, and, ere dinner or lunch or after, to take more than an average man’s due of old-fashioned cocktails and Scotch highs.

All the years of their marriage she had been ever complaisant toward him in his card-playing. This complaisance, to him, had become habitual. But now that doubt had arisen, it seemed to him that he noted an eagerness in her countenancing of his poker parties. Another point he could not avoid noting was that Sonny Grandison was missed by the poker and bridge crowds. He seemed to be too busy. Now where was Sonny, while he, Lee Barton, was playing? Surely not always at committee and boards of directors meetings. Lee Barton made sure of this. He easily learned that at such times Sonny was more than usually wherever Ida chanced to be--at dances, or dinners, or moonlight swimming parties, or, the very afternoon he had flatly pleaded rush of affairs as an excuse not to join Lee and Langhorne Jones and Jack Holstein in a bridge battle at the Pacific Club--that afternoon he had played bridge at Dora Niles’ home with three women, one of whom was Ida.

Returning, once, from an afternoon’s inspection of the great dry-dock building at Pearl Harbour, Lee Barton, driving his machine against time, in order to have time to dress for dinner, passed Sonny’s car; and Sonny’s one passenger, whom he was taking home, was Ida. One night, a week later, during which interval he had played no cards, he came home at eleven from a stag dinner at the University Club, just preceding Ida’s return from the Alstone poi supper and dance. And Sonny had driven her home. Major Fanklin and his wife had first been dropped off by them, they mentioned, at Fort Shafter, on the other side of town and miles away from the beach.

Lee Barton, after all mere human man, as a human man unfailingly meeting Sonny in all friendliness, suffered poignantly in secret. Not even Ida dreamed that he suffered; and she went her merry, careless, laughing way, secure in her own heart, although a trifle perplexed at her husband’s increase in number of pre-dinner cocktails.

Apparently, as always, she had access to almost all of him; but now she did not have access to his unguessable torment, nor to the long parallel columns of mental book-keeping running their totalling balances from moment to moment, day and night, in his brain. In one column were her undoubtable spontaneous expressions of her usual love and care for him, her many acts of comfort-serving and of advice-asking and advice-obeying. In another column, in which the items increasingly were entered, were her expressions and acts which he could not but classify as dubious. Were they what they seemed? Or were they of duplicity compounded, whether deliberately or unconsciously? The third column, longest of all, totalling most in human heart-appraisements, was filled with items relating directly or indirectly to her and Sonny Grandison. Lee Barton did not deliberately do this book-keeping. He could not help it. He would have liked to avoid it. But in his fairly ordered mind the items of entry, of themselves and quite beyond will on his part, took their places automatically in their respective columns.

In his distortion of vision, magnifying apparently trivial detail which half the time he felt he magnified, he had recourse to MacIlwaine, to whom he had once rendered a very considerable service. MacIlwaine was chief of detectives. "Is Sonny Grandison a womaning man?" Barton had demanded. MacIlwaine had said nothing. "Then he is a womaning man," had been Barton's declaration. And still the chief of detectives had said nothing.

Briefly afterward, ere he destroyed it as so much dynamite, Lee Barton went over the written report. Not bad, not really bad, was the summarization; but not too good after the death of his wife ten years before. That had been a love-match almost notorious in Honolulu society, because of the completeness of infatuation, not only before, but after marriage, and up to her tragic death when her horse fell with her a thousand feet off Nahiku Trail. And not for a long time afterward, MacIlwaine stated, had Grandison been guilty of interest in any woman. And whatever it was, it had been unvaryingly decent. Never a hint of gossip or scandal; and the entire community had come to accept that he was a one-woman man, and would never marry again. What small affairs MacIlwaine had jotted down he insisted that Sonny Grandison did not dream were known by another person outside the principals themselves.

Barton glanced hurriedly, almost shamedly, at the several names and incidents, and knew surprise ere he committed the document to the flames.

At any rate, Sonny had been most discreet. As he stared at the ashes, Barton pondered how much of his own younger life, from his bachelor days, resided in old MacIlwaine's keeping. Next, Barton found himself blushing, to himself, at himself. If MacIlwaine knew so much of the private lives of community figures, then had not he, her husband and protector and shielder, planted in MacIlwaine's brain a suspicion of Ida?

"Anything on your mind?" Lee asked his wife that evening, as he stood holding her wrap while she put the last touches to her dressing.

This was in line with their old and successful compact of frankness, and he wondered, while he waited her answer, why he had refrained so long from asking her.

"No," she smiled. "Nothing particular. Afterwards . . . perhaps . . . "

She became absorbed in gazing at herself in the mirror, while she dabbed some powder on her nose and dabbed it off again.

"You know my way, Lee," she added, after the pause. "It takes me time to gather things together in my own way--when there are things to gather; but when I do, you always get them. And often there's nothing in them after all, I find, and so you are saved the nuisance of them."

She held out her arms for him to place the wrap about her--her valiant little arms that were so wise and steel-like in battling with the breakers, and that yet were such just mere-woman's arms, round and warm and white, delicious as a woman's arms should be, with the canny muscles, masking under soft-roundness of contour and fine smooth skin, capable of being flexed at will by the will of her.

He pondered her, with a grievous hurt and yearning of appreciation--so delicate she seemed, so porcelain-fragile that a strong man could snap her in the crook of his arm.

"We must hurry!" she cried, as he lingered in the adjustment of the flimsy wrap over her flimsy-prettiness of gown. "We'll be late. And if it showers up Nuuanu, putting the curtains up will make us miss the second dance."

He made a note to observe with whom she danced that second dance, as she preceded him across the room to the door; while at the same time he pleasured his eye in what he had so often named to himself as the spirit-proud flesh-proud walk of her.

"You don't feel I'm neglecting you in my too-much poker?" he tried again, by indirection.

"Mercy, no! You know I just love you to have your card orgies. They're tonic for you. And you're so much nicer about them, so much more middle-aged. Why, it's almost years since you sat up later than one."

It did not shower up Nuuanu, and every overhead star was out in a clear trade-wind sky. In time at the Inchkeeps' for the second dance, Lee Barton observed that his wife danced it with Grandison--which, of itself, was nothing unusual, but which became immediately a registered item in Barton's mental books.

An hour later, depressed and restless, declining to make one of a bridge foursome in the library and escaping from a few young matrons, he strolled out into the generous grounds. Across the lawn, at the far edge, he came upon the hedge of night-blooming cereus. To each flower, opening after dark and fading, wilting, perishing with the dawn, this was its one night of life. The great, cream-white blooms, a foot in diameter and more, lily-like and wax-like, white beacons of attraction in the dark, penetrating and seducing the night with their perfume, were busy and beautiful with their brief glory of living.

But the way along the hedge was populous with humans, two by two, male and female, stealing out between the dances or strolling the dances out, while they talked in low soft voices and gazed upon the wonder of flower-love. From the lanai drifted the love-caressing strains of "Hanalei" sung by the singing boys. Vaguely Lee Barton remembered--perhaps it was from some Maupassant story--the abbe, obsessed by the theory that behind all things were the purposes of God and perplexed so to interpret the night, who discovered at the last that the night was ordained for love.

The unanimity of the night as betrayed by flowers and humans was a hurt to Barton. He circled back toward the house along a winding path that skirted within the edge of shadow of the monkey-pods and algaroba trees. In the obscurity, where his path curved away into the open again, he looked across a space of a few feet where, on another path in the shadow, stood a pair in each other's arms. The impassioned low tones of the man had caught his ear and drawn his eyes, and at the moment of his glance, aware of his presence, the voice ceased, and the two remained immobile, furtive, in each other's arms.

He continued his walk, sombred by the thought that in the gloom of the trees was the next progression from the openness of the sky over those who strolled the night-flower hedge. Oh, he knew the game when of old no shadow was too deep, no ruse of concealment too furtive, to veil a love moment. After all, humans were like flowers, he meditated. Under the radiance from the lighted lanai, ere entering the irritating movement of life again to which he belonged, he paused to stare, scarcely seeing, at a flaunt of display of scarlet double-hibiscus blooms. And abruptly all that he was suffering, all that he had just observed, from the night-blooming hedge and the two-by-two love-murmuring humans to the pair like thieves in each other's arms, crystallized into a parable of life enunciated by the day-blooming hibiscus upon which he gazed, now at the end of its day. Bursting into its bloom after the dawn, snow-white, warming to pink under the hours of sun, and quickening to scarlet with the dark from which its beauty and its being would never emerge, it seemed to him that it epitomized man's life and passion.

What further connotations he might have drawn he was never to know; for from behind, in the direction of the algarobas and monkey-pods, came Ida's unmistakable serene and merry laugh. He did not look, being too afraid of what he knew he would see, but retreated hastily, almost stumbling, up the steps to the lanai. Despite that he knew what he was to see, when he did turn his head and beheld his wife and Sonny, the pair he had seen thieving in the dark, he went suddenly dizzy, and paused, supporting himself with a hand against a pillar, and smiling vacuously at the grouped singing boys who were pulsing the sensuous night into richer sensuousness with their honi kaua wiki-wiki refrain.

The next moment he had wet his lips with his tongue, controlled his face and flesh, and was bantering with Mrs. Inchkeep. But he could not waste time, or he would have to encounter the pair he could hear coming up the steps behind him.

"I feel as if I had just crossed the Great Thirst," he told his hostess, "and that nothing less than a high-ball will preserve me."

She smiled permission and nodded toward the smoking lanai, where they found him talking sugar politics with the oldsters when the dance began to break up.

Quite a party of half a dozen machines were starting for Waikiki, and he found himself billeted to drive the Leslies and Burnstons home, though he did not fail to note that Ida sat in the driver's seat with Sonny in Sonny's car. Thus, she was home ahead of him and brushing her hair when he arrived. The parting of bed-going was usual, on the face of it, although he was almost rigid in his successful effort for casualness as he remembered whose lips had pressed hers last before his.

Was, then, woman the utterly unmoral creature as depicted by the German pessimists? he asked himself, as he tossed under his reading lamp, unable to sleep or read. At the end of an hour he was out of bed, and into his medicine case. Five grains of opium he took straight. An hour later, afraid of his thoughts and the prospect of a sleepless night, he took another grain. At one-hour intervals he twice repeated the grain dosage. But so slow was the action of the drug that dawn had broken ere his eyes closed.

At seven he was awake again, dry-mouthed, feeling stupid and drowsy, yet incapable of dozing off for more than several minutes at a time. He abandoned the idea of sleep, ate breakfast in bed, and devoted himself to the morning papers and the magazines. But the drug effect held, and he continued briefly to doze through his eating and reading. It was the same when he showered and dressed, and, though the drug had brought him little forgetfulness during the night, he felt grateful for the dreaming lethargy with which it possessed him through the morning.

It was when his wife arose, her serene and usual self, and came in to him, smiling and roguish, delectable in her kimono, that the whim-madness of the opium in his system seized upon him. When she had clearly and simply shown that she had nothing to tell him under their ancient compact of frankness, he began building his opium lie. Asked how he had slept, he replied:

“Miserably. Twice I was routed wide awake with cramps in my feet. I was almost too afraid to sleep again. But they didn’t come back, though my feet are sorer than blazes.”

“Last year you had them,” she reminded him.

“Maybe it’s going to become a seasonal affliction,” he smiled. “They’re not serious, but they’re horrible to wake up to. They won’t come again till to-night, if they come at all, but in the meantime I feel as if I had been bastinadoed.”

In the afternoon of the same day, Lee and Ida Barton made their shallow dive from the Outrigger beach, and went on, at a steady stroke, past the diving-stage to the big water beyond the Kanaka Surf. So quiet was the sea that when, after a couple of hours, they turned and lazily started shoreward through the Kanaka Surf they had it all to themselves. The breakers were not large enough to be exciting, and the last languid surf-boarders and canoeists had gone in to shore. Suddenly, Lee turned over on his back.

“What is it?” Ida called from twenty feet away.

“My foot--cramp,” he answered calmly, though the words were twisted out through clenched jaws of control.

The opium still had its dreamy way with him, and he was without excitement. He watched her swimming toward him with so steady and unperturbed a stroke that he admired her own self-control, although at the same time doubt stabbed him with the thought that it was because she cared so little for him, or, rather, so much immediately more for Grandison.

“Which foot?” she asked, as she dropped her legs down and began treading water beside him.

“The left one--ouch! Now it’s both of them.”

He doubled his knees, as if involuntarily raised his head and chest forward out of the water, and sank out of sight in the down-wash of a scarcely cresting breaker. Under no more than a brief several seconds, he emerged spluttering and stretched out on his back again.

Almost he grinned, although he managed to turn the grin into a pain-grimace, for his simulated cramp had become real. At least in one foot it had, and the muscles convulsed painfully.

“The right is the worst,” he muttered, as she evinced her intention of laying hands on his cramp and rubbing it out. “But you’d better keep away. I’ve had cramps before, and I know I’m liable to grab you if these get any worse.”

Instead, she laid her hands on the hard-knotted muscles, and began to rub and press and bend.

“Please,” he gritted through his teeth. “You must keep away. Just let me lie out here--I’ll bend the ankle and toe-joints in the opposite ways and make it pass. I’ve done it before and know how to work it.”

She released him, remaining close beside him and easily treading water, her eyes upon his face to judge the progress of his own attempt at remedy. But Lee Barton deliberately bent joints and tensed muscles in the directions that would increase the cramp. In his bout the preceding year with the affliction, he had learned, lying in bed and reading when seized, to relax and bend the cramps away without even disturbing his reading. But now he did the thing in reverse, intensifying the cramp, and, to his startled delight, causing it to leap into his right calf. He cried out with anguish, apparently lost control of himself, attempted to sit up, and was washed under by the next wave.

He came up, spluttered, spread-eagled on the surface, and had his knotted calf gripped by the strong fingers of both Ida's small hands.

"It's all right," she said, while she worked. "No cramp like this lasts very long."

"I didn't know it could be so savage," he groaned. "If only it doesn't go higher! It makes one feel so helpless."

He gripped the biceps of both her arms in a sudden spasm, attempting to climb out upon her as a drowning man might try to climb out on an oar and sinking her down under him. In the struggle under water, before he permitted her to wrench clear, her rubber cap was torn off, and her hairpins pulled out, so that she came up gasping for air and half-blinded by her wet-clinging hair. Also, he was certain he had surprised her into taking in a quantity of water.

"Keep away!" he warned, as he spread-eagled with acted desperateness.

But her fingers were deep into the honest pain-wrack of his calf, and in her he could observe no reluctance of fear.

"It's creeping up," he grunted through tight teeth, the grunt itself a half-controlled groan.

He stiffened his whole right leg, as with another spasm, hurting his real minor cramps, but flexing the muscles of his upper leg into the seeming hardness of cramp.

The opium still worked in his brain, so that he could play-act cruelly, while at the same time he appraised and appreciated her stress of control and will that showed in her drawn face, and the terror of death in her eyes, with beyond it and behind it, in her eyes and through her eyes, the something more of the spirit of courage, and higher thought, and resolution.

Still further, she did not enunciate so cheap a surrender as, "I'll die with you." Instead, provoking his admiration, she did say, quietly: "Relax. Sink until only your lips are out. I'll support your head. There must be a limit to cramp. No man ever died of cramp on land. Then in the water no strong swimmer should die of cramp. It's bound to reach its worst and pass. We're both strong swimmers and cool-headed--"

He distorted his face and deliberately dragged her under. But when they emerged, still beside him, supporting his head as she continued to tread water, she was saying:

"Relax. Take it easy. I'll hold your head up. Endure it. Live through it. Don't fight it. Make yourself slack--slack in your mind; and your body will slack. Yield. Remember how you taught me to yield to the undertow."

An unusually large breaker for so mild a surf curled overhead, and he climbed out on her again, sinking both of them under as the wave-crest over-fell and smashed down.

"Forgive me," he mumbled through pain clenched teeth, as they drew in their first air again. "And leave me." He spoke jerkily, with pain-filled pauses between his sentences. "There is no need for both of us to drown. I've got to go. It will be in my stomach, at any moment, and then I'll drag you under, and be unable to let go of you. Please, please, dear, keep away. One of us is enough. You've plenty to live for."

She looked at him in reproach so deep that the last vestige of the terror of death was gone from her eyes. It was as if she had said, and more than if she had said: "I have only you to live for."

Then Sonny did not count with her as much as he did!--was Barton's exultant conclusion. But he remembered her in Sonny's arms under the monkey-pods and determined on further cruelty. Besides, it was the lingering opium in him that suggested this cruelty. Since he had undertaken this acid test, urged the poppy juice, then let it be a real acid test.

He doubled up and went down, emerged, and apparently strove frantically to stretch out in the floating position. And she did not keep away from him.

"It's too much!" he groaned, almost screamed. "I'm losing my grip. I've got to go. You can't save me. Keep away and save yourself."

But she was to him, striving to float his mouth clear of the salt, saying: "It's all right. It's all right. The worst is right now. Just endure it a minute more, and it will begin to ease."

He screamed out, doubled, seized her, and took her down with him. And he nearly did drown her, so well did he play-act his own drowning. But never did she lose her head nor succumb to the fear of death so dreadfully imminent. Always, when she got her head out, she strove to support him while she panted and gasped encouragement in terms of: "Relax . . . Relax . . . Slack . . . Slack out . . . At any time . . . now . . . you'll pass . . . the worst . . . No matter how much it hurts . . . it will pass . . . You're easier now . . . aren't you?"

And then he would put her down again, going from bad to worse--in his ill-treatment of her; making her swallow pints of salt water, secure in the knowledge that it would not definitely hurt her. Sometimes they came up for brief emergences, for gasping seconds in the sunshine on the surface, and then were under again, dragged under by him, rolled and tumbled under by the curling breakers.

Although she struggled and tore herself from his grips, in the times he permitted her freedom she did not attempt to swim away from him, but, with fading strength and reeling consciousness, invariably came to him to try to save him. When it was enough, in his judgment, and more than enough, he grew quieter, left her released, and stretched out on the surface.

“A-a-h,” he sighed long, almost luxuriously, and spoke with pauses for breath. “It is passing. It seems like heaven. My dear, I’m water-logged, yet the mere absence of that frightful agony makes my present state sheerest bliss.”

She tried to gasp a reply, but could not.

“I’m all right,” he assured her. “Let us float and rest up. Stretch out, yourself, and get your wind back.”

And for half an hour, side by side, on their backs, they floated in the fairly placid Kanaka Surf. Ida Barton was the first to announce recovery by speaking first.

“And how do you feel now, man of mine?” she asked.

“I feel as if I’d been run over by a steam-roller,” he replied. “And you, poor darling?”

“I feel I’m the happiest woman in the world. I’m so happy I could almost cry, but I’m too happy even for that. You had me horribly frightened for a time. I thought I was to lose you.”

Lee Barton’s heart pounded up. Never a mention of losing herself. This, then, was love, and all real love, proved true--the great love that forgot self in the loved one.

“And I’m the proudest man in the world,” he told her; “because my wife is the bravest woman in the world.”

“Brave!” she repudiated. “I love you. I never knew how much, how really much, I loved you as when I was losing you. And now let’s work for shore. I want you all alone with me, your arms around me, while I tell you all you are to me and shall always be to me.”

In another half-hour, swimming strong and steadily, they landed on the beach and walked up the hard wet sand among the sand-loafers and sun-baskers.

“What were the two of you doing out there?” queried one of the Outrigger captains. “Cutting up?”

“Cutting up,” Ida Barton answered with a smile.

“We’re the village cut-ups, you know,” was Lee Barton’s assurance.

That evening, the evening’s engagement cancelled, found the two, in a big chair, in each other’s arms.

“Sonny sails to-morrow noon,” she announced casually and irrelevant to anything in the conversation. “He’s going out to the Malay Coast to inspect what’s been done with that lumber and rubber company of his.”

“First I’ve heard of his leaving us,” Lee managed to say, despite his surprise.

“I was the first to hear of it,” she added. “He told me only last night.”

“At the dance?”

She nodded.

“Rather sudden, wasn’t it?”

“Very sudden.” Ida withdrew herself from her husband’s arms and sat up. “And I want to talk to you about Sonny. I’ve never had a real secret from you before. I didn’t intend ever to tell you. But it came to me to-day, out in the Kanaka Surf, that if we passed out, it would be something left behind us unsaid.”

She paused, and Lee, half-anticipating what was coming, did nothing to help her, save to girdle and press her hand in his.

“Sonny rather lost his . . . his head over me,” she faltered. “Of course, you must have noticed it. And . . . and last night, he wanted me to run away with him. Which isn’t my confession at all . . . “

Still Lee Barton waited.

“My confession,” she resumed, “is that I wasn’t the least bit angry with him--only sorrowful and regretful. My confession is that I rather slightly, only rather more than slightly, lost my own head. That was why I was kind and gentle to him last night. I am no fool. I knew it was due. And--oh, I know, I’m just a feeble female of vanity compounded--I was proud to have such a man swept off his feet by me, by little me. I encouraged him. I have no excuse. Last night would not have happened had I not encouraged him. And I, and not he, was the sinner last night when he asked me. And I told him no, impossible, as you should know why without my repeating it to you. And I was maternal to him, very much maternal. I let him take me in his arms, let myself rest against him, and, for the first time because it was to be the for-ever last time, let him kiss me and let myself kiss him. You . . . I know you understand . . . it was his renunciation. And I didn't love Sonny. I don't love him. I have loved you, and you only, all the time."

She waited, and felt her husband's arm pass around her shoulder and under her own arm, and yielded to his drawing down of her to him.

"You did have me worried more than a bit," he admitted, "until I was afraid I was going to lose you. And . . . " He broke off in patent embarrassment, then gripped the idea courageously. "Oh, well, you know you're my one woman. Enough said."

She fumbled the match-box from his pocket and struck a match to enable him to light his long-extinct cigar.

"Well," he said, as the smoke curled about them, "knowing you as I know you, and ALL of you, all I can say is that I'm sorry for Sonny for what he's missed--awfully sorry for him, but equally glad for me. And . . . one other thing: five years hence I've something to tell you, something rich, something ridiculously rich, and all about me and the foolishness of me over you. Five years. Is it a date?"

"I shall keep it if it is fifty years," she sighed, as she nestled closer to him.

Keesh, Son of Keesh

"Thus will I give six blankets, warm and double; six files, large and hard; six Hudson Bay knives, keen-edged and long; two canoes, the work of Mogum, The Maker of Things; ten dogs, heavy-shouldered and strong in the harness; and three guns — the trigger of one be broken, but it is a good gun and can doubtless be mended."

Keesh paused and swept his eyes over the circle of intent faces. It was the time of the Great Fishing, and he was bidding to Gnob for Su-Su his daughter. The place was the St. George Mission by the Yukon, and the tribes had gathered for many a hundred miles. From north, south, east, and west they had come, even from Tozikakat and far Tana-naw.

"And further, O Gnob, thou art chief of the Tana-naw; and I, Keesh, the son of Keesh, am chief of the Thlunget. Wherefore, when my seed springs from the loins of thy daughter, there shall be a friendship between the tribes, a great friendship, and Tana-naw and Thlunget shall be brothers of the blood in the time to come. What I have said I will do, that will I do. And how is it with you, O Gnob, in this matter?"

Gnob nodded his head gravely, his gnarled and age-twisted face inscrutably masking the soul that dwelt behind. His narrow eyes burned like twin coals through their narrow slits, as he piped in a high-cracked voice, "But that is not all."

"What more?" Keesh demanded. "Have I not offered full measure? Was there ever yet a Tana-naw maiden who fetched so great a price? Then name her!"

An open snicker passed round the circle, and Keesh knew that he stood in shame before these people.

"Nay, nay, good Keesh, thou dost not understand." Gnob made a soft, stroking gesture. "The price is fair. It is a good price. Nor do I question the broken trigger. But that is not all. What of the man?"

"Ay, what of the man?" the circle snarled.

"It is said," Gnob's shrill voice piped, "it is said that Keesh does not walk in the way of his fathers. It is said that he has wandered into the dark, after strange gods, and that he is become afraid."

The face of Keesh went dark. "It is a lie!" he thundered. "Keesh is afraid of no man!"

"It is said," old Gnob piped on, "that he has harkened to the speech of the white man up at the Big House, and that he bends head to the white man's god, and, moreover, that blood is displeasing to the white man's god."

Keesh dropped his eyes, and his hands clenched passionately. The savage circle laughed derisively, and in the ear of Gnob whispered Madwan, the shaman, high-priest of the tribe and maker of medicine.

The shaman poked among the shadows on the rim of the firelight and roused up a slender young boy, whom he brought face to face with Keesh; and in the hand of Keesh he thrust a knife.

Gnob leaned forward. "Keesh! O Keesh! Darest thou to kill a man? Behold! This be Kitz-noo, a slave. Strike, O Keesh, strike with the strength of thy arm!"

The boy trembled and waited the stroke. Keesh looked at him, and thoughts of Mr. Brown's higher morality floated through his mind, and strong upon him was a vision of the leaping flames of Mr. Brown's particular brand of hell-fire. The knife fell to the ground, and the boy sighed and went out beyond the firelight with shaking knees. At the feet of Gnob sprawled a wolf-dog, which bared its gleaming teeth and prepared to spring after the boy. But the shaman ground his foot into the brute's body, and so doing, gave Gnob an idea.

"And then, O Keesh, what wouldst thou do, should a man do this thing to you?" — as he spoke, Gnob held a ribbon of salmon to White Fang, and when the animal attempted to take it, smote him sharply on the nose with a stick. "And afterward, O Keesh, wouldst thou do thus?" — White Fang was cringing back on his belly and fawning to the hand of Gnob.

"Listen!" — leaning on the arm of Madwan, Gnob had risen to his feet. "I am very old, and because I am very old I will tell thee things. Thy father, Keesh, was a mighty man. And he did love the song of the bowstring in battle, and these eyes have beheld him cast a spear till the head stood out beyond a man's body. But thou art unlike. Since thou left the Raven to worship the Wolf, thou art become afraid of blood, and thou makest thy people afraid. This is not good. For behold, when I was a boy, even as Kitz-noo there, there was no white man in all the land. But they came, one by one, these white men, till now they are many. And they are a restless breed, never content to rest by the fire with a full belly and let the morrow bring its own meat. A curse was laid upon them, it would seem, and they must work it out in toil and hardship."

Keesh was startled. A recollection of a hazy story told by Mr. Brown of one Adam, of old time, came to him, and it seemed that Mr. Brown had spoken true.

"So they lay hands upon all they behold, these white men, and they go everywhere and behold all things. And ever do more follow in their steps, so that if nothing be done they will come to possess all the land and there will be no room for the tribes of the Raven. Wherefore it is meet that we fight with them till none are left. Then will we hold the passes and the land, and perhaps our children and our children's children shall flourish and grow fat. There is a great struggle to come, when Wolf and Raven shall grapple; but Keesh will not fight, nor will he let his people fight. So it is not well that he should take to him my daughter. Thus have I spoken, I, Gnob, chief of the Tana-naw."

"But the white men are good and great," Keesh made answer. "The white men have taught us many things. The white men have given us blankets and knives and guns, such as we have never made and never could make. I remember in what manner we lived before they came. I was unborn then, but I have it from my father. When we went on the hunt we must creep so close to the moose that a spear-cast would cover the distance. To-day we use the white man's rifle, and farther away than can a child's cry be heard. We ate fish and meat and berries — there was nothing else to eat — and we ate without salt. How many be there among you who care to go back to the fish and meat without salt?"

It would have sunk home, had not Madwan leaped to his feet ere silence could come. "And first a question to thee, Keesh. The white man up at the Big House tells you that it is wrong to kill. Yet do we not know that the white men kill? Have we forgotten the great fight on the Koyokuk? or the great fight at Nuklukyeto, where three white men killed twenty of the Tozikakats? Do you think we no longer remember the three men of the Tana-naw that the white man Macklewrath killed? Tell me, O Keesh, why does the Shaman Brown teach you that it is wrong to fight, when all his brothers fight?"

"Nay, nay, there is no need to answer," Gnob piped, while Keesh struggled with the paradox. "It is very simple. The Good Man Brown would hold the Raven tight whilst his brothers pluck the feathers." He raised his voice. "But so long as there is one Tana-naw to strike a blow, or one maiden to bear a man-child, the Raven shall not be plucked!"

Gnob turned to a husky young man across the fire. “And what sayest thou, Makamuk, who art brother to Su-Su?”

Makamuk came to his feet. A long face-scar lifted his upper lip into a perpetual grin which belied the glowing ferocity of his eyes. “This day,” he began with cunning irrelevance, “I came by the Trader Macklewrath’s cabin. And in the door I saw a child laughing at the sun. And the child looked at me with the Trader Macklewrath’s eyes, and it was frightened. The mother ran to it and quieted it. The mother was Ziska, the Thlunget woman.”

A snarl of rage rose up and drowned his voice, which he stilled by turning dramatically upon Keesh with outstretched arm and accusing finger.

“So? You give your women away, you Thlunget, and come to the Tana-naw for more? But we have need of our women, Keesh; for we must breed men, many men, against the day when the Raven grapples with the Wolf.”

Through the storm of applause, Gnob’s voice shrilled clear. “And thou, Nossabok, who art her favorite brother?”

The young fellow was slender and graceful, with the strong aquiline nose and high brows of his type; but from some nervous affliction the lid of one eye drooped at odd times in a suggestive wink. Even as he arose it so drooped and rested a moment against his cheek. But it was not greeted with the accustomed laughter. Every face was grave. “I, too, passed by the Trader Macklewrath’s cabin,” he rippled in soft, girlish tones, wherein there was much of youth and much of his sister. “And I saw Indians with the sweat running into their eyes and their knees shaking with weariness — I say, I saw Indians groaning under the logs for the store which the Trader Macklewrath is to build. And with my eyes I saw them chopping wood to keep the Shaman Brown’s Big House warm through the frost of the long nights. This be squaw work. Never shall the Tana-naw do the like. We shall be blood brothers to men, not squaws; and the Thlunget be squaws.”

A deep silence fell, and all eyes centred on Keesh. He looked about him carefully, deliberately, full into the face of each grown man. “So,” he said passionlessly. And “So,” he repeated. Then turned on his heel without further word and passed out into the darkness.

Wading among sprawling babies and bristling wolf-dogs, he threaded the great camp, and on its outskirts came upon a woman at work by the light of a fire. With strings of bark stripped from the long roots of creeping vines, she was braiding rope for the Fishing. For some time, without speech, he watched her deft hands bringing law and order out of the unruly mass of curling fibres. She was good to look upon, swaying there to her task, strong-limbed, deep-chested, and with hips made for motherhood. And the bronze of her face was golden in the flickering light, her hair blue-black, her eyes jet.

"O Su-Su," he spoke finally, "thou hast looked upon me kindly in the days that have gone and in the days yet young — "

"I looked kindly upon thee for that thou wert chief of the Thlunget," she answered quickly, "and because thou wert big and strong."

"Ay — "

"But that was in the old days of the Fishing," she hastened to add, "before the Shaman Brown came and taught thee ill things and led thy feet on strange trails."

"But I would tell thee the — "

She held up one hand in a gesture which reminded him of her father. "Nay, I know already the speech that stirs in thy throat, O Keesh, and I make answer now. It so happeneth that the fish of the water and the beasts of the forest bring forth after their kind. And this is good. Likewise it happeneth to women. It is for them to bring forth their kind, and even the maiden, while she is yet a maiden, feels the pang of the birth, and the pain of the breast, and the small hands at the neck. And when such feeling is strong, then does each maiden look about her with secret eyes for the man — for the man who shall be fit to father her kind. So have I felt. So did I feel when I looked upon thee and found thee big and strong, a hunter and fighter of beasts and men, well able to win meat when I should eat for two, well able to keep danger afar off when my helplessness drew nigh. But that was before the day the Shaman Brown came into the land and taught thee — "

"But it is not right, Su-Su. I have it on good word — "

"It is not right to kill. I know what thou wouldst say. Then breed thou after thy kind, the kind that does not kill; but come not on such quest among the Tana-naw. For it is said in the time to come, that the Raven shall grapple with the Wolf. I do not know, for this be the affair of men; but I do know that it is for me to bring forth men against that time."

"Su-Su," Keesh broke in, "thou must hear me — "

"A man would beat me with a stick and make me hear," she sneered. "But thou ... here!" She thrust a bunch of bark into his hand. "I cannot give thee myself, but this, yes. It looks fittest in thy hands. It is squaw work, so braid away."

He flung it from him, the angry blood pounding a muddy path under his bronze.

"One thing more," she went on. "There be an old custom which thy father and mine were not strangers to. When a man falls in battle, his scalp is carried away in token. Very good. But thou, who have forsworn the Raven, must do more. Thou must bring me, not scalps, but heads, two heads, and then will I give thee, not bark, but a brave-beaded belt, and sheath, and long Russian knife. Then will I look kindly upon thee once again, and all will be well."

"So," the man pondered. "So." Then he turned and passed out through the light.

"Nay, O Keesh!" she called after him. "Not two heads, but three at least!"

But Keesh remained true to his conversion, lived uprightly, and made his tribespeople obey the gospel as propounded by the Rev. Jackson Brown. Through all the time of the Fishing he gave no heed to the Tana-naw, nor took notice of the sly things which were said, nor of the laughter of the women of the many tribes. After the Fishing, Gnob and his people, with great store of salmon, sun-dried and smoke-cured, departed for the Hunting on the head reaches of the Tana-naw. Keesh watched them go, but did not fail in his attendance at Mission service, where he prayed regularly and led the singing with his deep bass voice.

The Rev. Jackson Brown delighted in that deep bass voice, and because of his sterling qualities deemed him the most promising convert. Macklewrath doubted this. He did not believe in the efficacy of the conversion of the heathen, and he was not slow in speaking his mind. But Mr. Brown was a large man, in his way, and he argued it out with such convincingness, all of one long fall night, that the trader, driven from position after position, finally announced in desperation, "Knock out my brains with apples, Brown, if I don't become a convert myself, if Keesh holds fast, true blue, for two years!" Mr. Brown never lost an opportunity, so he clinched the matter on the spot with a virile hand-grip, and thenceforth the conduct of Keesh was to determine the ultimate abiding-place of Macklewrath's soul.

But there came news one day, after the winter's rime had settled down over the land sufficiently for travel. A Tana-naw man arrived at the St. George Mission in quest of ammunition and bringing information that Su-Su had set eyes on Nee-Koo, a nervy young hunter who had bid brilliantly for her by old Gnob's fire. It was at about this time that the Rev. Jackson Brown came upon Keesh by the wood-trail which leads down to the river. Keesh had his best dogs in the harness, and shoved under the sled-lashings was his largest and finest pair of snow-shoes.

"Where goest thou, O Keesh? Hunting?" Mr. Brown asked, falling into the Indian manner.

Keesh looked him steadily in the eyes for a full minute, then started up his dogs. Then again, turning his deliberate gaze upon the missionary, he answered, "No; I go to hell."

In an open space, striving to burrow into the snow as though for shelter from the appalling desolateness, huddled three dreary lodges. Ringed all about, a dozen paces away, was the sombre forest. Overhead there was no keen, blue sky of naked space, but a vague, misty curtain, pregnant with snow, which had drawn between. There was no wind, no sound, nothing but the snow and silence. Nor was there even the general stir of life about the camp; for the hunting party had run upon the flank of the caribou herd and the kill had been large. Thus, after the period of fasting had come the plenitude of feasting, and thus, in broad daylight, they slept heavily under their roofs of moosehide.

By a fire, before one of the lodges, five pairs of snow-shoes stood on end in their element, and by the fire sat Su-Su. The hood of her squirrel-skin parka was about her hair, and well drawn up around her throat; but her hands were unmittened and nimbly at work with needle and sinew, completing the last fantastic design on a belt of leather faced with bright scarlet cloth. A dog, somewhere at the rear of one of the lodges, raised a short, sharp bark, then ceased as abruptly as it had begun. Once, her father, in the lodge at her back, gurgled and grunted in his sleep. "Bad dreams," she smiled to herself. "He grows old, and that last joint was too much."

She placed the last bead, knotted the sinew, and replenished the fire. Then, after gazing long into the flames, she lifted her head to the harsh crunch-crunch of a moccasined foot against the flinty snow granules. Keesh was at her side, bending slightly forward to a load which he bore upon his back. This was wrapped loosely in a soft-tanned moosehide, and he dropped it carelessly into the snow and sat down. They looked at each other long and without speech.

“It is a far fetch, O Keesh,” she said at last, “a far fetch from St. George Mission by the Yukon.”

“Ay,” he made answer, absently, his eyes fixed keenly upon the belt and taking note of its girth. “But where is the knife?” he demanded.

“Here.” She drew it from inside her parka and flashed its naked length in the firelight. “It is a good knife.”

“Give it me!” he commanded.

“Nay, O Keesh,” she laughed. “It may be that thou wast not born to wear it.”

“Give it me!” he reiterated, without change of tone. “I was so born.”

But her eyes, glancing coquettishly past him to the moosehide, saw the snow about it slowly reddening. “It is blood, Keesh?” she asked.

“Ay, it is blood. But give me the belt and the long Russian knife.”

She felt suddenly afraid, but thrilled when he took the belt roughly from her, thrilled to the roughness. She looked at him softly, and was aware of a pain at the breast and of small hands clutching her throat.

“It was made for a smaller man,” he remarked grimly, drawing in his abdomen and clasping the buckle at the first hole.

Su-Su smiled, and her eyes were yet softer. Again she felt the soft hands at her throat. He was good to look upon, and the belt was indeed small, made for a smaller man; but what did it matter? She could make many belts.

“But the blood?” she asked, urged on by a hope new-born and growing. “The blood, Keesh? Is it ... are they ... heads?”

“Ay.”

“They must be very fresh, else would the blood be frozen.”

“Ay, it is not cold, and they be fresh, quite fresh.”

“Oh, Keesh!” Her face was warm and bright. “And for me?”

“Ay; for thee.”

He took hold of a corner of the hide, flirted it open, and rolled the heads out before her.

“Three,” he whispered savagely; “nay, four at least.”

But she sat transfixed. There they lay — the soft-featured Nee-Koo; the gnarled old face of Gnob; Makamuk, grinning at her with his lifted upper lip; and lastly, Nossabok, his eyelid, up to its old trick, drooped on his girlish cheek in a suggestive wink. There they lay, the firelight flashing upon and playing over them, and from each of them a widening circle dyed the snow to scarlet.

Thawed by the fire, the white crust gave way beneath the head of Gnob, which rolled over like a thing alive, spun around, and came to rest at her feet. But she did not move. Keesh, too, sat motionless, his eyes unblinking, centred steadfastly upon her.

Once, in the forest, an overburdened pine dropped its load of snow, and the echoes reverberated hollowly down the gorge; but neither stirred. The short day had been waning fast, and darkness was wrapping round the camp when White Fang trotted up toward the fire. He paused to reconnoitre, but not being driven back, came closer. His nose shot swiftly to the side, nostrils a-tremble and bristles rising along the spine; and straight and true, he followed the sudden scent to his master's head. He sniffed it gingerly at first and licked the forehead with his red lolling tongue. Then he sat abruptly down, pointed his nose up at the first faint star, and raised the long wolf-howl.

This brought Su-Su to herself. She glanced across at Keesh, who had unsheathed the Russian knife and was watching her intently. His face was firm and set, and in it she read the law. Slipping back the hood of her parka, she bared her neck and rose to her feet There she paused and took a long look about her, at the rimming forest, at the faint stars in the sky, at the camp, at the snow-shoes in the snow — a last long comprehensive look at life. A light breeze stirred her hair from the side, and for the space of one deep breath she turned her head and followed it around until she met it full-faced.

Then she thought of her children, ever to be unborn, and she walked over to Keesh and said, “I am ready.”

The King of Mazy May

A STORY OF THE KLONDIKE

WALT MASTERS is not a very large boy, but there is manliness in his make-up, and he himself, although he does not know a great deal that most boys know, knows much that other boys do not know. He has never seen a train of cars or an elevator in his life, and for that matter, he has never once looked upon a corn-field, a plow, a cow, or even a chicken. He has never had a pair of shoes on his feet, or gone to a picnic or a party, or talked to a girl. But he has seen the sun at midnight, watched the ice-jams on one of the mightiest of rivers, and played beneath the northern lights, the one white child in thousands of square miles of frozen widerness.

Walt has walked all the fourteen years of his life in sun-tanned, moose-hide moccasins, and he can go to the Indian camps and “talk big” with the men, and trade calico and beads with them for their precious furs. He can make bread without baking-powder, yeast or hops, shoot a moose at three hundred yards, and drive the wild wolf-dogs fifty miles a day on the packed trail.

Last of all, he has a good heart, and is not afraid of the darkness and loneliness, of man or beast or thing. His father is a good man, strong and brave, and Walt is growing up like him.

Walt was born a thousand miles or so down the Yukon, in a trading-post below the Ramparts. After his mother died, his father and he came on up the river, step by step, from camp to camp, till now they are settled down on the Mazy May Creek in the Klondike country. Last year they and several others had spent much toil and time on the Mazy May, and endured great hardships; the creek, in turn, was just beginning to show up its richness and to reward them for their heavy labor. But with the news of their discoveries, strange men began to come and go through the short days and long nights, and many unjust things they did to the men who had worked so long upon the creek.

Si Hartman had gone away on a moose-hunt, to return and find new stakes driven and his claim jumped. George Lukens and his brother had lost their claims in a like manner, having delayed too long on the way to

Dawson to record them. In short, it was an old story, and quite a number of the earnest, industrious prospectors had suffered similar losses.

But Walt Masters's father had recorded his claim at the start, so Walt had nothing to fear, now that his father had gone on a short trip up the White River prospecting for quartz. Walt was well able to stay by himself in the cabin, cook his three meals a day, and look after things. Not only did he look after his father's claim, but he had agreed to keep an eye on the adjoining one of Loren Hall, who had started for Dawson to record it.

Loren Hall was an old man, and he had no dogs, so he had to travel very slowly. After he had been gone some time, word came up the river that he had broken through the ice at Rosebud Creek, and frozen his feet so badly that he would not be able to travel for a couple of weeks. Then Walt Masters received the news that old Loren was nearly all right again, and about to move on afoot for Dawson, as fast as a weakened man could.

Walt was worried, however; the claim was liable to be jumped at any moment because of this delay, and a fresh stampede had started in on the Mazy May. He did not like the looks of the newcomers, and one day, when five of them came by with crack dog-teams and the lightest of camping outfits, he could see that they were prepared to make speed, and resolved to keep an eye on them. So he locked up the cabin and followed them, being at the same time careful to remain hidden.

He had not watched them long before he was sure that they were professional stampeders, bent on jumping all the claims in sight. Walt crept along the snow at the rim of the creek and saw them change many stakes, destroy old ones, and set up new ones.

In the afternoon, with Walt always trailing on their heels, they came back down on the creek, unharnessed their dogs, and went into camp within two claims of his cabin. When he saw them make preparations to cook, he hurried home to get something to eat himself, and then hurried back. He crept so close that he could hear them talking quite plainly, and by pushing the underbrush aside he could catch occasional glimpses of them. They had finished eating and were smoking around the fire.

“The creek is all right, boys,” a large, black-bearded man, evidently the leader, said, “and I think the best thing we can do is to pull out to-night. The dogs can follow the trail; besides, it's going to be moonlight. What say you?”

“But it’s going to be beastly cold,” objected one of the party. “It’s forty below zero now.”

“An’ sure, can’t ye keep warm by jumpin’ on the sleds an’ runnin’ after the dogs?” cried an Irishman. “An’ who wouldn’t? The creek as rich as a United States mint! Faith, it’s an ilegant chanst to be getting’ a run fer yer money! An’ if ye don’t run, it’s mebbe you’ll not get the money at all, at all.”

“That’s it,” said the leader. “If we can get to Dawson and record, we’re rich men; and there is no telling who’s been sneaking along in our tracks, watching us, and perhaps now off to give the alarm. The thing for us to do is to rest the dogs a bit, and then hit the trail as hard as we can. What do you say?”

Evidently the men had agreed with their leader, for Walt Masters could hear nothing but the rattle of the tin dishes which were being washed. Peering out cautiously, he could see the leader studying a piece of paper. Walt knew what it was at a glance — a list of all the unrecorded claims on Mazy May. Any man could get these lists by applying to the gold commissioner at Dawson.

“Thirty-two,” the leader said, lifting his face to the men. “Thirty-two isn’t recorded, and this is thirty-three. Come on; let’s take a look at it. I saw somebody working on it when we came up this morning.”

Three of the men went with him, leaving one to remain in camp. Walt crept carefully after them till they came to Loren Hall’s shaft. One of the men went down and built a fire on the bottom to thaw out the frozen gravel, while the others built another fire on the dump and melted water in a couple of gold-pans. This they poured into a piece of canvas stretched between two logs, used by Loren Hall in which to wash his gold.

In a short time a couple of buckets of dirt were sent up by the man in the shaft, and Walt could see the others grouped anxiously about their leader as he proceeded to wash it. When this was finished, they stared at the broad streak of black sand and yellow gold-grains on the bottom of the pan, and one of them called excitedly for the man who had remained in camp to come. Loren Hall had struck it rich, and his claim was not yet recorded. It was plain that they were going to jump it.

Walt lay in the snow, thinking rapidly. He was only a boy, but in the face of the threatened injustice against old lame Loren Hall he felt that he must do something. He waited and watched, with his mind made up, till he saw the men began to square up new stakes. Then he crawled away till out of hearing, and broke into a run for the camp of the stampeders. Walt's father had taken their own dogs with him prospecting, and the boy knew how impossible it was for him to undertake the seventy miles to Dawson without the aid of dogs.

Gaining the camp, he picked out, with an experienced eye, the easiest running sled and started to harness up the stampeders' dogs. There were three teams of six each, and from there he chose ten of the best. Realizing how necessary it was to have a good head-dog, he strove to discover a leader amongst them; but he had little time in which to do it, for he could hear the voices of the returning men. By the time the team was in shape and everything ready, the claim-jumpers came into sight in an open place not more than a hundred yards from the trail, which ran down the bed of the creek. They cried out to him, but he gave no heed, grabbing up one of their fur sleeping-robes which lay loosely in the snow, and leaping upon the sled.

"Mush! Hi! Mush on!" he cried to the animals, snapping the keen-lashed whip among them.

The dogs sprang against the yoke-straps, and the sled jerked under way so suddenly as to almost throw him off. Then it curved into the creek, poising perilously on one runner. He was almost breathless with suspense, when it finally righted with a bound and sprang ahead again. The creek bank was high and he could not see, although he could hear the cries of the men and knew they were running to cut him off. He did not dare to think what would happen if they caught him; he only clung to the sled, his heart beating wildly, and watched the snow-rim of the bank above him.

Suddenly, over this snow-rim came the flying body of the Irishman, who had leaped straight for the sled in a desperate attempt to capture it; but he was an instant too late. Striking on the very rear of it, he was thrown from his feet, backward, into the snow. Yet, with the quickness of a cat, he had clutched the end of the sled with one hand, turned over, and was dragging behind on his breast, swearing at the boy and threatening all kinds of terrible things if he did not stop the dogs; but Walt cracked him sharply across the knuckles with the butt of the dog-whip till he let go.

It was eight miles from Walt's claim to the Yukon — eight very crooked miles, for the creek wound back and forth like a snake, "tying knots in itself," as George Lukens said. And because it was so crooked, the dogs could not get up their best speed, while the sled ground heavily on its side against the curves, now to the right, now to the left.

Travellers who had come up and down the Mazy May on foot, with packs on their backs, had declined to go around all the bends, and instead had made short cuts across the narrow necks of creek bottom. Two of his pursuers had gone back to harness the remaining dogs, but the others took advantage of these short cuts, running on foot, and before he knew it they had almost overtaken him.

“Halt!” they cried after him. “Stop, or we’ll shoot!”

But Walt only yelled the harder at the dogs, and dashed round the bend with a couple of revolver bullets singing after him. At the next bend they had drawn up closer still, and the bullets struck uncomfortably near to him; but at this point the Mazy May straightened out and ran for half a mile as the crow flies. Here the dogs stretched out in their long wolf-swing, and the stampeders, quickly winded, slowed down and waited for their own sled to come up.

Looking over his shoulder, Walt reasoned that they had not given up the chase for good, and that they would soon be after him again. So he wrapped the fur robe about him to shut out the stinging air, and lay flat on the empty sled, encouraging the dogs, as he well knew how.

At last, twisting abruptly between two river islands, he came upon the might Yukon sweeping grandly to the north. He could not see from bank to bank, and in the quick-falling twilight it loomed a great white sea of frozen stillness. There was not a sound, save the breathing of the dogs, and the churn of the steel-shod sled.

No snow had fallen for several weeks, and the traffic ha packed the main-river trail till it was hard and glassy as glare ice. Over this the sled flew along, and the dogs kept the trail fairly well, although Walt quickly discovered that he had made a mistake in choosing the leader. As they were driven in single file, without reins, he had to guide them by his voice, and it was evident that the head-dog had never learned the meaning of “gee” and “haw.” He hugged the inside of the curves too closely, often forcing his comrades behind him into the soft snow, while several times he thus capsized the sled.

There was no wind, but the speed at which he travelled created a bitter blast, and with the thermometer down to forty below, this bit through fur and flesh to the very bones. Aware that if he remained constantly upon the sled he would freeze to death, and knowing the practice of Arctic travellers, Walt shortened up one of the lashing-thongs, and whenever he felt chilled, seized hold of it, jumped off, and ran behind till warmth was restored. Then he would climb on and rest till the process had to be repeated.

Looking back he could see the sled of his pursuers, drawn by eight dogs, rising and falling over the ice hummocks like a boat in a seaway. The Irishman and the black-bearded leader were with it, taking turns in running and riding.

Night fell, and in the blackness of the first hour or so, Walt toiled desperately with his dogs. On account of the poor lead-dog, they were constantly floundering off the beaten track into the soft snow, and the sled was as often riding on its side or top as it was in the proper way. This work and strain tried his strength sorely. Had he not been in such haste he could have avoided much of it, but he feared the stampeders would creep up in the darkness and overtake him. However, he could hear them occasionally yelling to their dogs, and knew from the sounds that they were coming up very slowly.

When the moon rose he was off Sixty Mile, and Dawson was only fifty miles away. He was almost exhausted, and breathed a sigh of relief as he climbed on the sled again. Looking back, he saw his enemies had crawled up within four hundred yards. At this space they remained, a black speck of motion on the white river-beast. Strive as they would, they could not shorten this distance, and strive as he would he could not increase it.

He had now discovered the proper lead-dog, and he knew he could easily run away from them if he could only change the bad leader for the good one. But this was impossible, for a moment’s delay, at the speed they were running, would bring the men behind upon him.

When he got off the mouth of Rosebud Creek, just as he was topping a rise, the ping of a bullet on the ice beside him, and the report of a gun, told him that they were this time shooting at him with a rifle. And form then on, as he cleared the summit of each ice-jam, he stretched flat on the leaping sled till the rifle-shot from the rear warned him that he was safe till the next ice-jam.

Now it is very hard to lie on a moving sled, jumping and plunging and yawing like a boat before the wind, and to shoot through the deceiving moonlight at an object four hundred yards away on another moving sled performing equally wild antics. So it is not to be wondered at that the black-bearded leader did not hit him.

After several hours of this, during which, perhaps, a score of bullets had struck about him, their ammunition began to give out and their fire slackened. They took greater care, and only whipped a shot at him at the most favorable opportunities. He was also beginning to leave them behind, the distance slowly increasing to six hundred yards.

Lifting clear on the crest of a great jam off Indian River, Walt Masters met his first accident. A bullet sang past his ears, and struck the bad lead-dog.

The poor brute plunged in a heap, with the rest of the team on top of him.

Like a flash, Walt was by the leader. Cutting the traces with his hunting knife, he dragged the dying animal to one side and straightened out the team.

He glanced back. The other sled was coming up like an express-train. With half the dogs still over their traces, he cried, “Mush on!” and leaped upon the sled just as the pursuing team dashed abreast of him.

The Irishman was just preparing to spring for him, — they were so sure they had him that they did not shoot, — when Walt turned fiercely upon them with his whip.

He struck at their faces, and men must save their faces with their hands. So there was not shooting just then. Before they could recover from the hot rain of blows, Walt reached out from his sled, catching their wheel-dog by the fore legs in midspring, and throwing him heavily. This brought the whole team into a snarl, capsizing the sled and tangling his enemies up beautifully.

Away Walt flew, the runners of his sled fairly screaming as they bounded over the frozen surface. And what had seemed an accident, proved to be a blessing in disguise. The proper lead-dog was now to the fore, and he stretched low to the trail and whined with joy as he jerked his comrades along.

By the time he reached Ainslie’s Creek, seventeen miles from Dawson, Walt had left his pursuers, a tiny speck, far behind. At Monte Cristo Island, he could no longer see them. And at Swede Creek, just as daylight was silvering the pines, he ran plump into the camp of old Loren Hall.

Almost as quick as it takes to tell it, Loren had his sleeping-furs rolled up, and had joined Walt on the sled. They permitted the dogs to travel more slowly, as there was no sign of the chase in the rear, and just as they pulled up at the gold commissioner's office in Dawson, Walt, who had kept his eyes open to the last, fell asleep.

And because of what Walt Masters did on this night, the men of the Yukon have become very proud of him, and always speak of him now as the King of Mazy May.

The King of the Greeks

Big Alec had never been captured by the fish patrol. It was his boast that no man could take him alive, and it was his history that of the many men who had tried to take him dead none had succeeded. It was also history that at least two patrolmen who had tried to take him dead had died themselves. Further, no man violated the fish laws more systematically and deliberately than Big Alec.

He was called “Big Alec” because of his gigantic stature. His height was six feet three inches, and he was correspondingly broad-shouldered and deep-chested. He was splendidly muscled and hard as steel, and there were innumerable stories in circulation among the fisher-folk concerning his prodigious strength. He was as bold and dominant of spirit as he was strong of body, and because of this he was widely known by another name, that of “The King of the Greeks.” The fishing population was largely composed of Greeks, and they looked up to him and obeyed him as their chief. And as their chief, he fought their fights for them, saw that they were protected, saved them from the law when they fell into its clutches, and made them stand by one another and himself in time of trouble.

In the old days, the fish patrol had attempted his capture many disastrous times and had finally given it over, so that when the word was out that he was coming to Benicia, I was most anxious to see him. But I did not have to hunt him up. In his usual bold way, the first thing he did on arriving was to hunt us up. Charley Le Grant and I at the time were under a patrol-man named Carmintel, and the three of us were on the Reindeer, preparing for a trip, when Big Alec stepped aboard. Carmintel evidently knew him, for they shook hands in recognition. Big Alec took no notice of Charley or me.

“I’ve come down to fish sturgeon a couple of months,” he said to Carmintel.

His eyes flashed with challenge as he spoke, and we noticed the patrolman’s eyes drop before him.

“That’s all right, Alec,” Carmintel said in a low voice. “I’ll not bother you. Come on into the cabin, and we’ll talk things over,” he added.

When they had gone inside and shut the doors after them, Charley winked with slow deliberation at me. But I was only a youngster, and new to men and the ways of some men, so I did not understand. Nor did Charley explain, though I felt there was something wrong about the business.

Leaving them to their conference, at Charley's suggestion we boarded our skiff and pulled over to the Old Steamboat Wharf, where Big Alec's ark was lying. An ark is a house-boat of small though comfortable dimensions, and is as necessary to the Upper Bay fisherman as are nets and boats. We were both curious to see Big Alec's ark, for history said that it had been the scene of more than one pitched battle, and that it was riddled with bullet-holes.

We found the holes (stopped with wooden plugs and painted over), but there were not so many as I had expected. Charley noted my look of disappointment, and laughed; and then to comfort me he gave an authentic account of one expedition which had descended upon Big Alec's floating home to capture him, alive preferably, dead if necessary. At the end of half a day's fighting, the patrolmen had drawn off in wrecked boats, with one of their number killed and three wounded. And when they returned next morning with reinforcements they found only the mooring-stakes of Big Alec's ark; the ark itself remained hidden for months in the fastnesses of the Suisun tules.

"But why was he not hanged for murder?" I demanded. "Surely the United States is powerful enough to bring such a man to justice."

"He gave himself up and stood trial," Charley answered. "It cost him fifty thousand dollars to win the case, which he did on technicalities and with the aid of the best lawyers in the state. Every Greek fisherman on the river contributed to the sum. Big Alec levied and collected the tax, for all the world like a king. The United States may be all-powerful, my lad, but the fact remains that Big Alec is a king inside the United States, with a country and subjects all his own."

"But what are you going to do about his fishing for sturgeon? He's bound to fish with a 'Chinese line.'"

Charley shrugged his shoulders. "We'll see what we will see," he said enigmatically.

Now a "Chinese line" is a cunning device invented by the people whose name it bears. By a simple system of floats, weights, and anchors, thousands of hooks, each on a separate leader, are suspended at a distance of from six inches to a foot above the bottom. The remarkable thing about such a line is the hook. It is barbless, and in place of the barb, the hook is filed long and tapering to a point as sharp as that of a needle. These hoods are only a few inches apart, and when several thousand of them are suspended just above the bottom, like a fringe, for a couple of hundred fathoms, they present a formidable obstacle to the fish that travel along the bottom.

Such a fish is the sturgeon, which goes rooting along like a pig, and indeed is often called “pig-fish.” Pricked by the first hook it touches, the sturgeon gives a startled leap and comes into contact with half a dozen more hooks. Then it threshes about wildly, until it receives hook after hook in its soft flesh; and the hooks, straining from many different angles, hold the luckless fish fast until it is drowned. Because no sturgeon can pass through a Chinese line, the device is called a trap in the fish laws; and because it bids fair to exterminate the sturgeon, it is branded by the fish laws as illegal. And such a line, we were confident, Big Alec intended setting, in open and flagrant violation of the law.

Several days passed after the visit of Big Alec, during which Charley and I kept a sharp watch on him. He towed his ark around the Solano Wharf and into the big bight at Turner’s Shipyard. The bight we knew to be good ground for sturgeon, and there we felt sure the King of the Greeks intended to begin operations. The tide circled like a mill-race in and out of this bight, and made it possible to raise, lower, or set a Chinese line only at slack water. So between the tides Charley and I made it a point for one or the other of us to keep a lookout from the Solano Wharf.

On the fourth day I was lying in the sun behind the stringer-piece of the wharf, when I saw a skiff leave the distant shore and pull out into the bight. In an instant the glasses were at my eyes and I was following every movement of the skiff. There were two men in it, and though it was a good mile away, I made out one of them to be Big Alec; and ere the skiff returned to shore I made out enough more to know that the Greek had set his line.

“Big Alec has a Chinese line out in the bight off Turner’s Shipyard,” Charley Le Grant said that afternoon to Carmintel.

A fleeting expression of annoyance passed over the patrolman’s face, and then he said, “Yes?” in an absent way, and that was all.

Charley bit his lip with suppressed anger and turned on his heel.

“Are you game, my lad?” he said to me later on in the evening, just as we finished washing down the Reindeer’s decks and were preparing to turn in.

A lump came up in my throat, and I could only nod my head.

"Well, then," and Charley's eyes glittered in a determined way, "we've got to capture Big Alec between us, you and I, and we've got to do it in spite of Carmintel. Will you lend a hand?"

"It's a hard proposition, but we can do it," he added after a pause.

"Of course we can," I supplemented enthusiastically.

And then he said, "Of course we can," and we shook hands on it and went to bed.

But it was no easy task we had set ourselves. In order to convict a man of illegal fishing, it was necessary to catch him in the act with all the evidence of the crime about him-the hooks, the lines, the fish, and the man himself. This meant that we must take Big Alec on the open water, where he could see us coming and prepare for us one of the warm receptions for which he was noted.

"There's no getting around it," Charley said one morning. "If we can only get alongside it's an even toss, and there's nothing left for us but to try and get alongside. Come on, lad."

We were in the Columbia River salmon boat, the one we had used against the Chinese shrimp-catchers. Slack water had come, and as we dropped around the end of the Solano Wharf we saw Big Alec at work, running his line and removing the fish.

"Change places," Charley commanded, "and steer just astern of him as though you're going into the shipyard."

I took the tiller, and Charley sat down on a thwart amidships, placing his revolver handily beside him.

"If he begins to shoot," he cautioned, "get down in the bottom and steer from there, so that nothing more than your hand will be exposed."

I nodded, and we kept silent after that, the boat slipping gently through the water and Big Alec growing nearer and nearer. We could see him quite plainly, gaffing the sturgeon and throwing them into the boat while his companion ran the line and cleared the hooks as he dropped them back into the water. Nevertheless, we were five hundred yards away when the big fisherman hailed us.

"Here! You! What do you want?" he shouted.

"Keep going," Charley whispered, "just as though you didn't hear him."

The next few moments were very anxious ones. The fisherman was studying us sharply, while we were gliding up on him every second.

"You keep off if you know what's good for you!" he called out suddenly, as though he had made up his mind as to who and what we were. "If you don't, I'll fix you!"

He brought a rifle to his shoulder and trained it on me.

"Now will you keep off?" he demanded.

I could hear Charley groan with disappointment. "Keep off," he whispered; "it's all up for this time."

I put up the tiller and eased the sheet, and the salmon boat ran off five or six points. Big Alec watched us till we were out of range, when he returned to his work.

"You'd better leave Big Alec alone," Carmintel said, rather sourly, to Charley that night.

"So he's been complaining to you, has he?" Charley said significantly.

Carmintel flushed painfully. "You'd better leave him alone, I tell you," he repeated. "He's a dangerous man, and it won't pay to fool with him."

"Yes," Charley answered softly; "I've heard that it pays better to leave him alone."

This was a direct thrust at Carmintel, and we could see by the expression of his face that it sank home. For it was common knowledge that Big Alec was as willing to bribe as to fight, and that of late years more than one patrolman had handled the fisherman's money.

"Do you mean to say-" Carmintel began, in a bullying tone.

But Charley cut him off shortly. "I mean to say nothing," he said. "You heard what I said, and if the cap fits, why-"

He shrugged his shoulders, and Carmintel glowered at him, speechless.

"What we want is imagination," Charley said to me one day, when we had attempted to creep upon Big Alec in the gray of dawn and had been shot at for our trouble.

And thereafter, and for many days, I cudgelled my brains trying to imagine some possible way by which two men, on an open stretch of water, could capture another who knew how to use a rifle and was never to be found without one. Regularly, every slack water, without slyness, boldly and openly in the broad day, Big Alec was to be seen running his line. And what made it particularly exasperating was the fact that every fisherman, from Benicia to Vallejo knew that he was successfully defying us. Carmintel also bothered us, for he kept us busy among the shad-fishers of San Pablo, so that we had little time to spare on the King of the Greeks. But

Charley's wife and children lived at Benicia, and we had made the place our headquarters, so that we always returned to it.

"I'll tell you what we can do," I said, after several fruitless weeks had passed; "we can wait some slack water till Big Alec has run his line and gone ashore with the fish, and then we can go out and capture the line. It will put him to time and expense to make another, and then we'll figure to capture that too. If we can't capture him, we can discourage him, you see."

Charley saw, and said it wasn't a bad idea. We watched our chance, and the next low-water slack, after Big Alec had removed the fish from the line and returned ashore, we went out in the salmon boat. We had the bearings of the line from shore marks, and we knew we would have no difficulty in locating it. The first of the flood tide was setting in, when we ran below where we thought the line was stretched and dropped over a fishing-boat anchor. Keeping a short rope to the anchor, so that it barely touched the bottom, we dragged it slowly along until it stuck and the boat fetched up hard and fast.

"We've got it," Charley cried. "Come on and lend a hand to get it in."

Together we hove up the rope till the anchor I came in sight with the sturgeon line caught across one of the flukes. Scores of the murderous-looking hooks flashed into sight as we cleared the anchor, and we had just started to run along the line to the end where we could begin to lift it, when a sharp thud in the boat startled us. We looked about, but saw nothing and returned to our work. An instant later there was a similar sharp thud and the gunwale splintered between Charley's body and mine.

"That's remarkably like a bullet, lad," he said reflectively. "And it's a long shot Big Alec's making."

"And he's using smokeless powder," he concluded, after an examination of the mile-distant shore. "That's why we can't hear the report."

I looked at the shore, but could see no sign of Big Alec, who was undoubtedly hidden in some rocky nook with us at his mercy. A third bullet struck the water, glanced, passed singing over our heads, and struck the water again beyond.

"I guess we'd better get out of this," Charley remarked coolly. "What do you think, lad?"

I thought so, too, and said we didn't want the line anyway. Whereupon we cast off and hoisted the spritsail. The bullets ceased at once, and we sailed away, unpleasantly confident that Big Alec was laughing at our discomfiture.

And more than that, the next day on the fishing wharf, where we were inspecting nets, he saw fit to laugh and sneer at us, and this before all the fishermen. Charley's face went black with anger; but beyond promising Big Alec that in the end he would surely land him behind the bars, he controlled himself and said nothing. The King of the Greeks made his boast that no fish patrol had ever taken him or ever could take him, and the fishermen cheered him and said it was true. They grew excited, and it looked like trouble for a while; but Big Alec asserted his kingship and quelled them.

Carmintel also laughed at Charley, and dropped sarcastic remarks, and made it hard for him. But Charley refused to be angered, though he told me in confidence that he intended to capture Big Alec if it took all the rest of his life to accomplish it.

"I don't know how I'll do it," he said, "but do it I will, as sure as I am Charley Le Grant. The idea will come to me at the right and proper time, never fear."

And at the right time it came, and most unexpectedly. Fully a month had passed, and we were constantly up and down the river, and down and up the bay, with no spare moments to devote to the particular fisherman who ran a Chinese line in the bight of Turner's Shipyard. We had called in at Selby's Smelter one afternoon, while on patrol work, when all unknown to us our opportunity happened along. It appeared in the guise of a helpless yacht loaded with seasick people, so we could hardly be expected to recognize it as the opportunity. It was a large sloop-yacht, and it was helpless inasmuch as the trade-wind was blowing half a gale and there were no capable sailors aboard.

From the wharf at Selby's we watched with careless interest the lubberly manoeuvre performed of bringing the yacht to anchor, and the equally lubberly manoeuvre of sending the small boat ashore. A very miserable-looking man in draggled ducks, after nearly swamping the boat in the heavy seas, passed us the painter and climbed out. He staggered about as though the wharf were rolling, and told us his troubles, which were the troubles of the yacht. The only rough-weather sailor aboard, the man on whom they all depended, had been called back to San Francisco by a telegram, and they had attempted to continue the cruise alone. The high wind and big seas of San Pablo Bay had been too much for them; all hands were sick, nobody knew anything or could do anything; and so they had run in to the smelter either to desert the yacht or to get somebody to bring it to Benicia. In short, did we know of any sailors who would bring the yacht into Benicia?

Charley looked at me. The Reindeer was lying in a snug place. We had nothing on hand in the way of patrol work till midnight. With the wind then blowing, we could sail the yacht into Benicia in a couple of hours, have several more hours ashore, and come back to the smelter on the evening train.

"All right, captain," Charley said to the disconsolate yachtsman, who smiled in sickly fashion at the title.

"I'm only the owner," he explained.

We rowed him aboard in much better style than he had come ashore, and saw for ourselves the helplessness of the passengers. There were a dozen men and women, and all of them too sick even to appear grateful at our coming. The yacht was rolling savagely, broad on, and no sooner had the owner's feet touched the deck than he collapsed and joined, the others. Not one was able to bear a hand, so Charley and I between us cleared the badly tangled running gear, got up sail, and hoisted anchor.

It was a rough trip, though a swift one. The Carquinez Straits were a welter of foam and smother, and we came through them wildly before the wind, the big mainsail alternately dipping and flinging its boom skyward as we tore along. But the people did not mind. They did not mind anything. Two or three, including the owner, sprawled in the cockpit, shuddering when the yacht lifted and raced and sank dizzily into the trough, and between-whiles regarding the shore with yearning eyes. The rest were huddled on the cabin floor among the cushions. Now and again some one groaned, but for the most part they were as limp as so many dead persons.

As the bight at Turner's Shipyard opened out, Charley edged into it to get the smoother water. Benicia was in view, and we were bowling along over comparatively easy water, when a speck of a boat danced up ahead of us, directly in our course. It was low-water slack. Charley and I looked at each other. No word was spoken, but at once the yacht began a most astonishing performance, veering and yawing as though the greenest of amateurs was at the wheel. It was a sight for sailormen to see. To all appearances, a runaway yacht was careering madly over the bight, and now and again yielding a little bit to control in a desperate effort to make Benicia.

The owner forgot his seasickness long enough to look anxious. The speck of a boat grew larger and larger, till we could see Big Alec and his partner, with a turn of the sturgeon line around a cleat, resting from their labor to laugh at us. Charley pulled his sou'wester over his eyes, and I followed his example, though I could not guess the idea he evidently had in mind and intended to carry into execution.

We came foaming down abreast of the skiff, so close that we could hear above the wind the voices of Big Alec and his mate as they shouted at us with all the scorn that professional watermen feel for amateurs, especially when amateurs are making fools of themselves.

We thundered on past the fishermen, and nothing had happened. Charley grinned at the disappointment he saw in my face, and then shouted:

"Stand by the main-sheet to jibe!"

He put the wheel hard over, and the yacht whirled around obediently. The main-sheet slacked and dipped, then shot over our heads after the boom and tautened with a crash on the traveller. The yacht heeled over almost on her beam ends, and a great wail went up from the seasick passengers as they swept across the cabin floor in a tangled mass and piled into a heap in the starboard bunks.

But there was no time for them. The yacht, completing the manoeuvre, headed into the wind with slatting canvas, and righted to an even keel. We were still plunging ahead, and directly in our path was the skiff. I saw Big Alec dive overboard and his mate leap for our bowsprit.

Then came the crash as we struck the boat, and a series of grinding bumps as it passed under our bottom.

"That fixes his rifle," I heard Charley mutter, as he sprang upon the deck to look for Big Alec somewhere astern.

The wind and sea quickly stopped our forward movement, and we began to drift backward over the spot where the skiff had been. Big Alec's black head and swarthy face popped up within arm's reach; and all unsuspecting and very angry with what he took to be the clumsiness of amateur sailors, he was hauled aboard. Also he was out of breath, for he had dived deep and stayed down long to escape our keel.

The next instant, to the perplexity and consternation of the owner, Charley was on top of Big Alec in the cockpit, and I was helping bind him with gaskets. The owner was dancing excitedly about and demanding an explanation, but by that time Big Alec's partner had crawled aft from the bowsprit and was peering apprehensively over the rail into the cockpit. Charley's arm shot around his neck and the man landed on his back beside Big Alec.

"More gaskets!" Charley shouted, and I made haste to supply them.

The wrecked skiff was rolling sluggishly a short distance to windward, and I trimmed the sheets while Charley took the wheel and steered for it.

"These two men are old offenders," he explained to the angry owner; "and they are most persistent violators of the fish and game laws. You have seen them caught in the act, and you may expect to be subpoenaed as witness for the state when the trial comes off."

As he spoke he rounded alongside the skiff. It had been torn from the line, a section of which was dragging to it. He hauled in forty or fifty feet with a young sturgeon still fast in a tangle of barbless hooks, slashed that much of the line free with his knife, and tossed it into the cockpit beside the prisoners.

"And there's the evidence, Exhibit A, for the people," Charley continued. "Look it over carefully so that you may identify it in the court-room with the time and place of capture."

And then, in triumph, with no more veering and yawing, we sailed into Benicia, the King of the Greeks bound hard and fast in the cockpit, and for the first time in his life a prisoner of the fish patrol.

A Klondike Christmas

Mouth of the Stuart River,
North West Territory,
December 25, 1897.

My dearest Mother:–
Here we are, all safe and sound, and snugly settled down in winter quarters.

Have received no letters yet, so you can imagine how we long to hear from home. We are in the shortest days of the year, and the sun no longer rises, even at twelve o'clock.

Uncle Hiram and Mr. Carter have gone to Dawson to record some placer claims and to get the mail, if there is any. They took the dogs and sled with them, as they had to travel on the ice. We did expect them home for Christmas dinner, but I guess George and I will have to eat alone.

I am to be cook, so you can be sure that we'll have a jolly dinner. We will begin with the staples first. There will be fried bacon, baked beans, bread raised from sour-dough, and —

He seemed perplexed, and after dubiously scratching his head a couple of times, laid down the pen. Once or twice, he tried to go on, but eventually gave it up, his face assuming a very disgusted expression. He was a robust young fellow of eighteen or nineteen, and the merry twinkle which lurked in his eyes gave the lie to his counterfeited displeasure.

It was a snug little cabin in which he sat. Built of unbarked logs, measuring not more than ten by twelve feet on the inside, and heated by a roaring Yukon-stove, it seemed more homelike to him than any house he had ever lived in, except — of course, always the one, real home.

Two bunks, table and stove, occupied two-thirds of the room, but every inch of space was utilized. Revolvers, rifles, hunting-knives, belts and clothes, hung from three of the walls in picturesque confusion; the remaining one being hidden by a set of shelves, which held all their cooking utensils. Though already eleven o'clock in the morning, a sort of twilight prevailed outside, while it would have been quite dark within, if it had not been for the slush-lamp. This was merely a shallow, tin cup, filled with bacon grease. A piece of cotton caulking served for a wick; the heat of the flame melting the grease as fast as required.

He leaned his elbows on the table and became absorbed in a deep scrutiny of the lamp. He was really not interested in it, and did not even know he was looking at it, so intent was he in trying to discover what else there could possibly be for dinner.

The door was thrown open at this moment, and a stalwart young fellow entered with a rush of cold air, kicking off his snow shoes at the threshold.

"'Bout time for dinner, isn't it?" he asked gruffly, as he took off his mittens. But his brother Clarence had just discovered that "bacon," "beans" and "bread" all began with "b," and did not reply. George's face was covered with ice, so he contented himself with holding it over the stove to thaw. The rattle of the icy chunks on the sheet-iron was getting monotonous, when Clarence deigned to reply by asking a question.

"What's 'b' stand for?"

"Bad, of course," was the prompt answer.

"Just what I thought," and he sighed with great solemnity.

"But how about the dinner? You're cook. It's time to begin. What have you been doing? Oh! Writing! Let's see."

His jaw fell when he got to "bacon, beans and bread," and he said; "It won't do to write home that that's all we've got for Christmas dinner. It would make them worry, you know. Say, haven't we some dried apples?

"Half a cup. Not enough for a pie."

"They'll swell, you ninny. Sit down and add apple pie to that list of yours. And say dumplings, too, while you're at it. We can make a stagger at them — put two pieces of apple in two lumps of dough and boil them. Never say die. We'll make them think we're living like princes when they read that."

Clarence did as directed, and then sat with such a look of query on his face as to make George nervous and doubtful.

"Pretty slim after all," he mused. "Let's see if we can't find something else — bread, flapjacks and — and — why flour-gravy, of course."

"We can bake, and boil, and fry the beans," Clarence suggested; "but what's to be done with the bacon except to fry it, I can't see."

"Why parboil it; that makes another course, nine altogether. How much more do you want, anyway?" And then to change the subject, "How cold do you think it is?"

Clarence critically studied the ice which had crept far up the cracks in the door, and then gave his judgment; "Past fifty."

“The spirit thermometer gives sixty-five, and it’s still falling.” George could not prevent an exultant ring in his voice, though if he had been asked why, he would not have known.

“And water freezes at thirty-two degrees above zero,” Clarence began to calculate. “That makes ninety-seven degrees of frost. Phew! Wouldn’t that open the eyes of the folks at home!”

So, like the two boys that they were, they temporarily forgot their monotonous fare in an exciting discussion of the whys and wherefores of cold. But when one is afflicted with a healthy appetite he can not escape from it very long at a time, and at twelve o’clock they set about cooking their slender meal.

George went into the cache for bacon, and begun to rummage about in odd places to see what he could find. Now the cache, or place where their food was stored to keep it away from the perpetually-hungry native dogs, was built onto the back of the cabin. Clarence heard the racket he was making, and when he began to cheer and cry out “Eureka! Eureka!” he ran out to see what had happened.

“Manna! brother mine! Manna! dropped from the clouds for the starving children of Israel!” he cried, waving a large can above his head. “Mock-turtle soup. Found it in the tool box,” he went on, as they carried it into the cabin.

True enough; it was a quart-can of specially prepared and very rich mock-turtle soup. They sang and danced and were as jubilant as though they had found a gold mine. Clarence added the item to the bill of fare in his letter, while George strove to divide it up into two items, or even more. He showed a special aptitude for this kind of work; but how many tempting dishes he would have finally succeeded in evolving out of it, shall never be known, for at that moment they heard a dog team pull up the river bank before the cabin.

The next instant the door opened, and two strangers came in. They were grotesque sights. Their heads were huge balls of ice, with little holes where their mouths should have been, through which they breathed. Unable to open their mouths or speak, they shook hands with the boys and headed for the stove. Clarence and George exchanged glances and watched their strange visitors curiously.

“Wal, it’s jes’ this way,” one of them began, as he shook the remaining chunks of ice from his whiskers; “me an’ my pard ha’ ben nigh on two months, now, over on the Mazy May, with nothin' to eat but straight meat. Nary flour, nary beans, nary bacon. So me an' him sorto' talked it over, an' figgered it out. At last I sez, 'Wot yeh say, Jim? Let's cross the divide an' strike some camp on the Yukon, an' git some civilized grub again? Git a reg'lar Christmas dinner? An' he sez 'I'll go yeh, by gum.' An' here we be. How air yeh off fer meat? Got a hundred pound or so, on the sled outside."

Just as Clarence and George were assuring him that he was heartily welcome, the other man tore away the last hindrance to his speech, and broke in; "Say, lads; yeh haint got a leetle bit o' bread yeh might spare. I'm thet hungry fer jes' a leetle bit — "

"Yeh jes' shet up, Jim!" cried his partner indignantly. "Ye'd make these kids think yeh might be starvin'. Haint yeh had all yeh wanted to eat?"

"Yes," was the gloomy reply; "but nothin' but straight meat."

However, Clarence put an end to the discussion by setting the table with sour-dough bread and cold bacon, having first made them promise not to spoil their appetites for the dinner. The poor fellows handled the heavy bread reverently, and went into ecstasies of delight over it. Then they went out, unharnessed the dogs, and brought some magnificent pieces of moose meat in with them. The boys' mouths watered at the sight, for they were longing for it just as much as the others longed for the bread.

"Porterhouse moose-steak," whispered George; "tenderloin, sirloin and round; liver and bacon; rib-roast of moose, moose stew and fried sweet breads. Hurry, Clarence, and add them to the bill of fare."

"Now don't bother me. I'm cook, and I'm going to boss this dinner, so you obey orders. Take a piece of that meat and go down to the cabin on the next island. They'd give most anything for it, so see that you make a good trade."

The hungry strangers sat on the bunk and watched proceedings with satisfied countenances, while Clarence mixed and kneaded the dough for a baking of bread. In a short time George returned, with one cup of dried apples and five prunes. Yet they were all disappointed at his failure to get sugar. But the dinner already promised to be such a grand affair that they could readily forego such trifling matter as sweets.

Just as Clarence was shortening the pie-dough with bacon grease, a second sled pulled up at the door, and another stranger entered. A vivid picture he made, as he stood for an instant in the doorway. Though his eyebrows and lashes were matted with ice, his face was clean-shaven, and hence, free from it. From his beaded moccasins to his great gauntleted mittens and wolf-skin cap from Siberia, every article of wearing apparel proclaimed him to be one of the “Eldorado Kings,” or millionaire mine-owners of Dawson.

He was a pleasant man to look at, though his heavy jaw and steel-blue eyes gave notice of a firm, indomitable will. About his waist was clasped a leather belt, in which reposed two large Colt’s revolvers and a hunting-knife, while in his hand, besides the usual dog whip, he carried a smokeless rifle of the largest bore and latest pattern. They wondered at this, for men in the Klondike rarely go armed, and then because of necessity.

His story was soon told. His own team of seven dogs, the finest in the country and for which he had recently refused five thousand dollars, had been stolen five days before. He had found the clue, and discovered that the thieves had started out of the country on the ice. He had borrowed a team of dogs from a friend and taken their trail.

They marvelled at his speed, for he had left Dawson at midnight, having traveled the seventy-five miles in twelve hours. He wished to rest the animals and take a few hours sleep, before going on with the chase. He was sure of overtaking them, he said, for they had foolishly started with an eighteen-inch sled, while the regular, trail Yukon-sleds were only sixteen inches wide. Thus, they had to break trail constantly for one of the runners, while his was already broken.

They recognized the party he was after, and assured him that he was certain to catch them in another twelve hours’ run. Then he was made welcome and invited to dinner. To their surprise, when he returned from unhitching and feeding his dogs he brought several pounds of sugar and two cans of condensed milk.

“Thought you fellows, up river here, would be out of luxuries,” he said, as he threw them upon the table; “and as I wanted to travel light, I brought them along, intending to trade for beans and flour whenever I got a chance. No, never mind thanks. I’m going to eat dinner with you. Call me when it’s ready.” And he climbed into one of the bunks, falling asleep a moment later.

“I say, Jim. Thet’s travelin’, aint it?” said the Man from Mazy May, with as much pride as though he had done it himself. “Seventy-five mile in twelve hours, an’ thet cold he wa’nt able to ride more’n half the time. Bet ye’d be petered clean out if yeh done the like o’ thet.”

“Maybe yeh think I can’t travel,” his partner replied. But before he could tell what a wonderful traveler he was, their dogs and the dogs of the new arrival started a fight, and had to be separated.

At last the dinner was ready, and just as they were calling the “Eldorado King,” Uncle Hiram and Mr. Carter arrived.

“Not an ounce of sugar or can of milk to be bought in Dawson,” he said. But his jaw dropped as he caught sight of the sugar and milk on the table, and he sheepishly held up a quart-can of strained honey as his contribution.

This addition necessitated a change in the bill of fare; so when they finally sat down, the first course of mock-turtle soup was followed by hot cakes and honey. While one after another the delicacies of “civilized grub,” as they called it, appeared, the eyes of the Men from Mazy May opened wider and wider, and speech seemed to fail them.

But one more surprise was in store for them. They heard a jingle of bells, and another ice-covered traveler entered and claimed their hospitality. The new-comer was an Associated Press reporter, on his way to Dawson from the United States. His first question was concerning the where-abouts of a Mr. Hiram Donaldson, “said to be camped on the Yukon near the mouth of the Stuart River.” On Uncle Hiram being pointed out to him, the reporter handed him a letter of introduction from the Mining Syndicate which he, Mr. Donaldson, was representing. Nor was this all. A fat package of letters was also passed over — the longed-looked-for letters from home.

“By gum! This do beat all,” said the Man from Mazy May, after a place had been made for the last arrival. But his partner had his mouth so full of apple dumpling that he could only roll his eyes in approval.

“I know what ‘b’ stands for.” whispered George across the table to Clarence.

“So do I. It stands for ‘Bully’ with a big ‘B’.”

Koolau the Leper

"Because we are sick they take away our liberty. We have obeyed the law. We have done no wrong. And yet they would put us in prison. Molokai is a prison. That you know. Niuli, there, his sister was sent to Molokai seven years ago. He has not seen her since. Nor will he ever see her. She must stay there until she dies. This is not her will. It is not Niuli's will. It is the will of the white men who rule the land. And who are these white men?

"We know. We have it from our fathers and our fathers' fathers. They came like lambs, speaking softly. Well might they speak softly, for we were many and strong, and all the islands were ours. As I say, they spoke softly. They were of two kinds. The one kind asked our permission, our gracious permission, to preach to us the word of God. The other kind asked our permission, our gracious permission, to trade with us. That was the beginning. Today all the islands are theirs, all the land, all the cattle--everything is theirs. They that preached the word of God and they that preached the word of Rum have fore-gathered and become great chiefs. They live like kings in houses of many rooms, with multitudes of servants to care for them. They who had nothing have everything, and if you, or I, or any Kanaka be hungry, they sneer and say, 'Well, why don't you work? There are the plantations.'

Koolau paused. He raised one hand, and with gnarled and twisted fingers lifted up the blazing wreath of hibiscus that crowned his black hair. The moonlight bathed the scene in silver. It was a night of peace, though those who sat about him and listened had all the seeming of battle-wrecks. Their faces were leonine. Here a space yawned in a face where should have been a nose, and there an arm-stump showed where a hand had rotted off. They were men and women beyond the pale, the thirty of them, for upon them had been placed the mark of the beast.

They sat, flower-garlanded, in the perfumed, luminous night, and their lips made uncouth noises and their throats rasped approval of Koolau's speech. They were creatures who once had been men and women. But they were men and women no longer. They were monsters--in face and form grotesque caricatures of everything human. They were hideously maimed and distorted, and had the seeming of creatures that had been racked in millenniums of hell. Their hands, when they possessed them, were like harpy claws. Their faces were the misfits and slips, crushed and bruised by some mad god at play in the machinery of life. Here and there were features which the mad god had smeared half away, and one woman wept scalding tears from twin pits of horror, where her eyes once had been. Some were in pain and groaned from their chests. Others coughed, making sounds like the tearing of tissue. Two were idiots, more like huge apes marred in the making, until even an ape were an angel. They mowed and gibbered in the moonlight, under crowns of drooping, golden blossoms. One, whose bloated ear-lobe flapped like a fan upon his shoulder, caught up a gorgeous flower of orange and scarlet and with it decorated the monstrous ear that flip-flapped with his every movement.

And over these things Koolau was king. And this was his kingdom,--a flower-throttled gorge, with beetling cliffs and crags, from which floated the blattings of wild goats. On three sides the grim walls rose, festooned in fantastic draperies of tropic vegetation and pierced by cave-entrances--the rocky lairs of Koolau's subjects. On the fourth side the earth fell away into a tremendous abyss, and, far below, could be seen the summits of lesser peaks and crags, at whose bases foamed and rumbled the Pacific surge. In fine weather a boat could land on the rocky beach that marked the entrance of Kalalau Valley, but the weather must be very fine. And a cool-headed mountaineer might climb from the beach to the head of Kalalau Valley, to this pocket among the peaks where Koolau ruled; but such a mountaineer must be very cool of head, and he must know the wild-goat trails as well. The marvel was that the mass of human wreckage that constituted Koolau's people should have been able to drag its helpless misery over the giddy goat-trails to this inaccessible spot.

"Brothers," Koolau began.

But one of the mowing, apelike travesties emitted a wild shriek of madness, and Koolau waited while the shrill cachination was tossed back and forth among the rocky walls and echoed distantly through the pulseless night.

"Brothers, is it not strange? Ours was the land, and behold, the land is not ours. What did these preachers of the word of God and the word of Rum give us for the land? Have you received one dollar, as much as one dollar, any one of you, for the land? Yet it is theirs, and in return they tell us we can go to work on the land, their land, and that what we produce by our toil shall be theirs. Yet in the old days we did not have to work. Also, when we are sick, they take away our freedom."

"Who brought the sickness, Koolau?" demanded Kiloliana, a lean and wiry man with a face so like a laughing faun's that one might expect to see the cloven hoofs under him. They were cloven, it was true, but the cleavages were great ulcers and livid putrefactions. Yet this was Kiloliana, the most daring climber of them all, the man who knew every goat-trail and who had led Koolau and his wretched followers into the recesses of Kalalau.

"Ay, well questioned," Koolau answered. "Because we would not work the miles of sugar-cane where once our horses pastured, they brought the Chinese slaves from overseas. And with them came the Chinese sickness--that which we suffer from and because of which they would imprison us on Molokai. We were born on Kauai. We have been to the other islands, some here and some there, to Oahu, to Maui, to Hawaii, to Honolulu. Yet always did we come back to Kauai. Why did we come back? There must be a reason. Because we love Kauai. We were born here. Here we have lived. And here shall we die--unless--unless--there be weak hearts amongst us. Such we do not want. They are fit for Molokai. And if there be such, let them not remain. Tomorrow the soldiers land on the shore. Let the weak hearts go down to them. They will be sent swiftly to Molokai. As for us, we shall stay and fight. But know that we will not die. We have rifles. You know the narrow trails where men must creep, one by one. I, alone, Koolau, who was once a cowboy on Niihau, can hold the trail against a thousand men. Here is Kapalei, who was once a judge over men and a man with honour, but who is now a hunted rat, like you and me. Hear him. He is wise."

Kapalei arose. Once he had been a judge. He had gone to college at Punahou. He had sat at meat with lords and chiefs and the high representatives of alien powers who protected the interests of traders and missionaries. Such had been Kapalei. But now, as Koolau had said, he was a hunted rat, a creature outside the law, sunk so deep in the mire of human horror that he was above the law as well as beneath it. His face was featureless, save for gaping orifices and for the lidless eyes that burned under hairless brows.

"Let> us not make trouble," he began. "We ask to be left alone. But if they do not leave us alone, then is the trouble theirs and the penalty. My fingers are gone, as you see." He held up his stumps of hands that all might see. "Yet have I the joint of one thumb left, and it can pull a trigger as firmly as did its lost neighbour in the old days. We love Kauai. Let us live here, or die here, but do not let us go to the prison of Molokai. The sickness is not ours. We have not sinned. The men who preached the word of God and the word of Rum brought the sickness with the coolie slaves who work the stolen land. I have been a judge. I know the law and the justice, and I say to you it is unjust to steal a man's land, to make that man sick with the Chinese sickness, and then to put that man in prison for life."

"Life is short, and the days are filled with pain," said Koolau. "Let us drink and dance and be happy as we can."

From one of the rocky lairs calabashes were produced and passed round. The calabashes were filled with the fierce distillation of the root of the ti-plant; and as the liquid fire coursed through them and mounted to their brains, they forgot that they had once been men and women, for they were men and women once more. The woman who wept scalding tears from open eye-pits was indeed a woman apulse with life as she plucked the strings of an ukulele and lifted her voice in a barbaric love-call such as might have come from the dark forest-depths of the primeval world. The air tingled with her cry, softly imperious and seductive. Upon a mat, timing his rhythm to the woman's song Kiloliana danced. It was unmistakable. Love danced in all his movements, and, next, dancing with him on the mat, was a woman whose heavy hips and generous breast gave the lie to her disease-corroded face. It was a dance of the living dead, for in their disintegrating bodies life still loved and longed. Ever the woman whose sightless eyes ran scalding tears chanted her love-cry, ever the dancers of love danced in the warm night, and ever the calabashes went around till in all their brains were maggots crawling of memory and desire. And with the woman on the mat danced a slender maid whose face was beautiful and unmarred, but whose twisted arms that rose and fell marked the disease's ravage. And the two idiots, gibbering and mouthing strange noises, danced apart, grotesque, fantastic, travestying love as they themselves had been travestied by life.

But the woman's love-cry broke midway, the calabashes were lowered, and the dancers ceased, as all gazed into the abyss above the sea, where a rocket flared like a wan phantom through the moonlit air.

"It is the soldiers," said Koolau. "Tomorrow there will be fighting. It is well to sleep and be prepared."

The lepers obeyed, crawling away to their lairs in the cliff, until only Koolau remained, sitting motionless in the moonlight, his rifle across his knees, as he gazed far down to the boats landing on the beach.

The far head of Kalalau Valley had been well chosen as a refuge. Except Kiloliana, who knew back-trails up the precipitous walls, no man could win to the gorge save by advancing across a knife-edged ridge. This passage was a hundred yards in length. At best, it was a scant twelve inches wide. On either side yawned the abyss. A slip, and to right or left the man would fall to his death. But once across he would find himself in an earthly paradise. A sea of vegetation laved the landscape, pouring its green billows from wall to wall, dripping from the cliff-lips in great vine-masses, and flinging a spray of ferns and air-plants in to the multitudinous crevices. During the many months of Koolau’s rule, he and his followers had fought with this vegetable sea. The choking jungle, with its riot of blossoms, had been driven back from the bananas, oranges, and mangoes that grew wild. In little clearings grew the wild arrowroot; on stone terraces, filled with soil scrapings, were the taro patches and the melons; and in every open space where the sunshine penetrated were papaia trees burdened with their golden fruit.

Koolau had been driven to this refuge from the lower valley by the beach. And if he were driven from it in turn, he knew of gorges among the jumbled peaks of the inner fastnesses where he could lead his subjects and live. And now he lay with his rifle beside him, peering down through a tangled screen of foliage at the soldiers on the beach. He noted that they had large guns with them, from which the sunshine flashed as from mirrors. The knife-edged passage lay directly before him. Crawling upward along the trail that led to it he could see tiny specks of men. He knew they were not the soldiers, but the police. When they failed, then the soldiers would enter the game.

He affectionately rubbed a twisted hand along his rifle barrel and made sure that the sights were clean. He had learned to shoot as a wild-cattle hunter on Niihau, and on that island his skill as a marksman was unforgotten. As the toiling specks of men grew nearer and larger, he estimated the range, judged the deflection of the wind that swept at right angles across the line of fire, and calculated the chances of overshooting marks that were so far below his level. But he did not shoot. Not until they reached the beginning of the passage did he make his presence known. He did not disclose himself, but spoke from the thicket.

“What do you want?” he demanded.

“We want Koolau, the leper,” answered the man who led the native police, himself a blue-eyed American.

“You must go back,” Koolau said.

He knew the man, a deputy sheriff, for it was by him that he had been harried out of Niihau, across Kauai, to Kalalau Valley, and out of the valley to the gorge.

“Who are you?” the sheriff asked.

“I am Koolau, the leper,” was the reply.

“Then come out. We want you. Dead or alive, there is a thousand dollars on your head. You cannot escape.”

Koolau laughed aloud in the thicket.

“Come out!” the sheriff commanded, and was answered by silence.

He conferred with the police, and Koolau saw that they were preparing to rush him.

“Koolau,” the sheriff called. “Koolau, I am coming across to get you.”

“Then look first and well about you at the sun and sea and sky, for it will be the last time you behold them.”

“That’s all right, Koolau,” the sheriff said soothingly. “I know you’re a dead shot. But you won’t shoot me. I have never done you any wrong.”

Koolau grunted in the thicket.

“I say, you know, I’ve never done you any wrong, have I?” the sheriff persisted.

“You do me wrong when you try to put me in prison,” was the reply. “And you do me wrong when you try for the thousand dollars on my head. If you will live, stay where you are.”

“I’ve got to come across and get you. I’m sorry. But it is my duty.”

“You will die before you get across.”

The sheriff was no coward. Yet was he undecided. He gazed into the gulf on either side and ran his eyes along the knife-edge he must travel. Then he made up his mind.

“Koolau,” he called.

But the thicket remained silent.

“Koolau, don’t shoot. I am coming.”

The sheriff turned, gave some orders to the police, then started on his perilous way. He advanced slowly. It was like walking a tight rope. He had nothing to lean upon but the air. The lava rock crumbled under his feet, and on either side the dislodged fragments pitched downward through the depths. The sun blazed upon him, and his face was wet with sweat. Still he advanced, until the halfway point was reached.

“Stop!” Koolau commanded from the thicket. “One more step and I shoot.”

The sheriff halted, swaying for balance as he stood poised above the void. His face was pale, but his eyes were determined. He licked his dry lips before he spoke.

“Koolau, you won’t shoot me. I know you won’t.”

He started once more. The bullet whirled him half about. On his face was an expression of querulous surprise as he reeled to the fall. He tried to save himself by throwing his body across the knife-edge; but at that moment he knew death. The next moment the knife-edge was vacant. Then came the rush, five policemen, in single file, with superb steadiness, running along the knife-edge. At the same instant the rest of the posse opened fire on the thicket. It was madness. Five times Koolau pulled the trigger, so rapidly that his shots constituted a rattle. Changing his position and crouching low under the bullets that were biting and singing through the bushes, he peered out. Four of the police had followed the sheriff. The fifth lay across the knife-edge still alive. On the farther side, no longer firing, were the surviving police. On the naked rock there was no hope for them. Before they could clamber down Koolau could have picked off the last man. But he did not fire, and, after a conference, one of them took off a white undershirt and waved it as a flag. Followed by another, he advanced along the knife-edge to their wounded comrade. Koolau gave no sign, but watched them slowly withdraw and become specks as they descended into the lower valley.

Two hours later, from another thicket, Koolau watched a body of police trying to make the ascent from the opposite side of the valley. He saw the wild goats flee before them as they climbed higher and higher, until he doubted his judgment and sent for Kiloliana, who crawled in beside him.

“No, there is no way,” said Kiloliana.

“The goats?” Koolau questioned.

"They come over from the next valley, but they cannot pass to this. There is no way. Those men are not wiser than goats. They may fall to their deaths. Let us watch."

"They are brave men," said Koolau. "Let us watch."

Side by side they lay among the morning-glories, with the yellow blossoms of the hau dropping upon them from overhead, watching the motes of men toil upward, till the thing happened, and three of them, slipping, rolling, sliding, dashed over a cliff-lip and fell sheer half a thousand feet.

Kiloliana chuckled.

"We will be bothered no more," he said.

"They have war guns," Koolau made answer. "The soldiers have not yet spoken."

In the drowsy afternoon, most of the lepers lay in their rock dens asleep. Koolau, his rifle on his knees, fresh-cleaned and ready, dozed in the entrance to his own den. The maid with the twisted arms lay below in the thicket and kept watch on the knife-edge passage. Suddenly Koolau was startled wide awake by the sound of an explosion on the beach. The next instant the atmosphere was incredibly rent asunder. The terrible sound frightened him. It was as if all the gods had caught the envelope of the sky in their hands and were ripping it apart as a woman rips apart a sheet of cotton cloth. But it was such an immense ripping, growing swiftly nearer. Koolau glanced up apprehensively, as if expecting to see the thing. Then high up on the cliff overhead the shell burst in a fountain of black smoke. The rock was shattered, the fragments falling to the foot of the cliff.

Koolau passed his hand across his sweaty brow. He was terribly shaken. He had had no experience with shell-fire, and this was more dreadful than anything he had imagined.

"One," said Kapahei, suddenly bethinking himself to keep count.

A second and a third shell flew screaming over the top of the wall, bursting beyond view. Kapahei methodically kept the count. The lepers crowded into the open space before the caves. At first they were frightened, but as the shells continued their flight overhead the leper folk became reassured and began to admire the spectacle.

The two idiots shrieked with delight, prancing wild antics as each air-tormenting shell went by. Koolau began to recover his confidence. No damage was being done. Evidently they could not aim such large missiles at such long range with the precision of a rifle.

But a change came over the situation. The shells began to fall short. One burst below in the thicket by the knife-edge. Koolau remembered the maid who lay there on watch, and ran down to see. The smoke was still rising from the bushes when he crawled in. He was astounded. The branches were splintered and broken. Where the girl had lain was a hole in the ground. The girl herself was in shattered fragments. The shell had burst right on her.

First peering out to make sure no soldiers were attempting the passage, Koolau started back on the run for the caves. All the time the shells were moaning, whining, screaming by, and the valley was rumbling and reverberating with the explosions. As he came in sight of the caves, he saw the two idiots cavorting about, clutching each other's hands with their stumps of fingers. Even as he ran, Koolau saw a spout of black smoke rise from the ground, near to the idiots. They were flung apart bodily by the explosion. One lay motionless, but the other was dragging himself by his hands toward the cave. His legs trailed out helplessly behind him, while the blood was pouring from his body. He seemed bathed in blood, and as he crawled he cried like a little dog. The rest of the lepers, with the exception of Kapahei, had fled into the caves.

"Seventeen," said Kapahei. "Eighteen," he added.

This last shell had fairly entered into one of the caves. The explosion caused the caves to empty. But from the particular cave no one emerged. Koolau crept in through the pungent, acrid smoke. Four bodies, frightfully mangled, lay about. One of them was the sightless woman whose tears till now had never ceased.

Outside, Koolau found his people in a panic and already beginning to climb the goat-trail that led out of the gorge and on among the jumbled heights and chasms. The wounded idiot, whining feebly and dragging himself along on the ground by his hands, was trying to follow. But at the first pitch of the wall his helplessness overcame him and he fell back.

"It would be better to kill him," said Koolau to Kapahei, who still sat in the same place.

"Twenty-two," Kapahei answered. "Yes, it would be a wise thing to kill him. Twenty-three--twenty-four."

The idiot whined sharply when he saw the rifle levelled at him. Koolau hesitated, then lowered the gun.

"It is a hard thing to do," he said.

"You are a fool, twenty-six, twenty-seven," said Kapahei. "Let me show you."

He arose, and with a heavy fragment of rock in his hand, approached the wounded thing. As he lifted his arm to strike, a shell burst full upon him, relieving him of the necessity of the act and at the same time putting an end to his count.

Koolau was alone in the gorge. He watched the last of his people drag their crippled bodies over the brow of the height and disappear. Then he turned and went down to the thicket where the maid had keen killed. The shell-fire still continued, but he remained; for far below he could see the soldiers climbing up. A shell burst twenty feet away. Flattening himself into the earth, he heard the rush of the fragments above his body. A shower of hau blossoms rained upon him. He lifted his head to peer down the trail, and sighed. He was very much afraid. Bullets from rifles would not have worried him, but this shell-fire was abominable. Each time a shell shrieked by he shivered and crouched; but each time he lifted his head again to watch the trail.

At last the shells ceased. This, he reasoned, was because the soldiers were drawing near. They crept along the trail in single file, and he tried to count them until he lost track. At any rate, there were a hundred or so of them--all come after Koolau the leper. He felt a fleeting prod of pride. With war guns and rifles, police and soldiers, they came for him, and he was only one man, a crippled wreck of a man at that. They offered a thousand dollars for him, dead or alive. In all his life he had never possessed that much money. The thought was a bitter one. Kapahei had been right. He, Koolau, had done no wrong. Because the haoles wanted labour with which to work the stolen land, they had brought in the Chinese coolies, and with them had come the sickness. And now, because he had caught the sickness, he was worth a thousand dollars--but not to himself. It was his worthless carcass, rotten with disease or dead from a bursting shell, that was worth all that money.

When the soldiers reached the knife-edged passage, he was prompted to warn them. But his gaze fell upon the body of the murdered maid, and he kept silent. When six had ventured on the knife-edge, he opened fire. Nor did he cease when the knife-edge was bare. He emptied his magazine, reloaded, and emptied it again. He kept on shooting. All his wrongs were blazing in his brain, and he was in a fury of vengeance. All down the goat-trail the soldiers were firing, and though they lay flat and sought to shelter themselves in the shallow inequalities of the surface, they were exposed marks to him. Bullets whistled and thudded about him, and an occasional ricochet sang sharply through the air. One bullet ploughed a crease through his scalp, and a second burned across his shoulder-blade without breaking the skin.

It was a massacre, in which one man did the killing. The soldiers began to retreat, helping along their wounded. As Koolau picked them off he became aware of the smell of burnt meat. He glanced about him at first, and then discovered that it was his own hands. The heat of the rifle was doing it. The leprosy had destroyed most of the nerves in his hands. Though his flesh burned and he smelled it, there was no sensation.

He lay in the thicket, smiling, until he remembered the war guns. Without doubt they would open upon him again, and this time upon the very thicket from which he had inflicted the danger. Scarcely had he changed his position to a nook behind a small shoulder of the wall where he had noted that no shells fell, than the bombardment recommenced. He counted the shells. Sixty more were thrown into the gorge before the war-guns ceased. The tiny area was pitted with their explosions, until it seemed impossible that any creature could have survived. So the soldiers thought, for, under the burning afternoon sun, they climbed the goat-trail again. And again the knife-edged passage was disputed, and again they fell back to the beach.

For two days longer Koolau held the passage, though the soldiers contented themselves with flinging shells into his retreat. Then Pahau, a leper boy, came to the top of the wall at the back of the gorge and shouted down to him that Kiloliana, hunting goats that they might eat, had been killed by a fall, and that the women were frightened and knew not what to do. Koolau called the boy down and left him with a spare gun with which to guard the passage. Koolau found his people disheartened. The majority of them were too helpless to forage food for themselves under such forbidding circumstances, and all were starving. He selected two women and a man who were not too far gone with the disease, and sent them back to the gorge to bring up food and mats. The rest he cheered and consoled until even the weakest took a hand in building rough shelters for themselves.

But those he had dispatched for food did not return, and he started back for the gorge. As he came out on the brow of the wall, half a dozen rifles cracked. A bullet tore through the fleshy part of his shoulder, and his cheek was cut by a sliver of rock where a second bullet smashed against the cliff. In the moment that this happened, and he leaped back, he saw that the gorge was alive with soldiers. His own people had betrayed him. The shell-fire had been too terrible, and they had preferred the prison of Molokai.

Koolau dropped back and unslung one of his heavy cartridge-belts. Lying among the rocks, he allowed the head and shoulders of the first soldier to rise clearly into view before pulling trigger. Twice this happened, and then, after some delay, in place of a head and shoulders a white flag was thrust above the edge of the wall.

“What do you want?” be demanded.

“I want you, if you are Koolau the leper,” came the answer.

Koolau forgot where he was, forgot everything, as he lay and marvelled at the strange persistence of these haoles who would have their will though the sky fell in. Aye, they would have their will over all men and all things, even though they died in getting it. He could not but admire them, too, what of that will in them that was stronger than life and that bent all things to their bidding. He was convinced of the hopelessness of his struggle. There was no gainsaying that terrible will of the haoles. Though he killed a thousand, yet would they rise like the sands of the sea and come upon him, ever more and more. They never knew when they were beaten. That was their fault and their virtue. It was where his own kind lacked. He could see, now, how the handful of the preachers of God and the preachers of Rum had conquered the land. It was because-

“Well, what have you got to say? Will you come with me?”

It was he voice of the invisible man under the white flag. There he was, like any haole, driving straight toward the end determined.

“Let us talk,” said Koolau.

The man’s head and shoulders arose, then his whole body. He was a smooth-faced, blue-eyed youngster of twenty-five, slender and natty in his captain’s uniform. He advanced until halted, then seated himself a dozen feet away.

“You are a brave man,” said Koolau wonderingly. “I could kill you like a fly.”

“No, you couldn’t,” was the answer.

“Why not?”

"Because you are a man, Koolau, though a bad one. I know your story. You kill fairly."

Koolau grunted, but was secretly pleased.

"What have you done with my people?" he demanded. "The boy, the two women, and the man?"

"They gave themselves up, as I have now come for you to do."

Koolau laughed incredulously.

"I am a free man," he announced. "I have done no wrong. All I ask is to be left alone. I have lived free, and I shall die free. I will never give myself up."

"Then your people are wiser than you," answered the young captain. "Look--they are coming now."

Koolau turned and watched the remnant of his band approach. Groaning and sighing, a ghastly procession, it dragged its wretchedness past. It was given to Koolau to taste a deeper bitterness, for they hurled imprecations and insults at him as they went by; and the panting hag who brought up the rear halted, and with skinny, harpy-claws extended, shaking her snarling death's head from side to side, she laid a curse upon him. One by one they dropped over the lip-edge and surrendered to the hiding soldiers.

"You can go now," said Koolau to the captain. "I will never give myself up. That is my last word. Good-bye."

The captain slipped over the cliff to his soldiers. The next moment, and without a flag of truce, he hoisted his hat on his scabbard, and Koolau's bullet tore through it. That afternoon they shelled him out from the beach, and as he retreated into the high inaccessible pockets beyond, the soldiers followed him.

For six weeks they hunted him from pocket to pocket, over the volcanic peaks and along the goat-trails. When he hid in the lantana jungle, they formed lines of beaters, and through lantana jungle and guava scrub they drove him like a rabbit. But ever he turned and doubled and eluded. There was no cornering him. When pressed too closely, his sure rifle held them back and they carried their wounded down the goat-trails to the beach. There were times when they did the shooting as his brown body showed for a moment through the underbrush. Once, five of them caught him on an exposed goat-trail between pockets. They emptied their rifles at him as he limped and climbed along his dizzy way. Afterwards they found bloodstains and knew that he was wounded. At the end of six weeks they gave up. The soldiers and police returned to Honolulu, and Kalalau Valley was left to him for his own, though head-hunters ventured after him from time to time and to their own undoing.

Two years later, and for the last time, Koolau crawled into a thicket and lay down among the ti-leaves and wild ginger blossoms. Free he had lived, and free he was dying. A slight drizzle of rain began to fall, and he drew a ragged blanket about the distorted wreck of his limbs. His body was covered with an oilskin coat. Across his chest he laid his Mauser rifle, lingering affectionately for a moment to wipe the dampness from the barrel. The hand with which he wiped had no fingers left upon it with which to pull the trigger.

He closed his eyes, for, from the weakness in his body and the fuzzy turmoil in his brain, he knew that his end was near. Like a wild animal he had crept into hiding to die. Half-conscious, aimless and wandering, he lived back in his life to his early manhood on Niihau. As life faded and the drip of the rain grew dim in his ears it seemed to him that he was once more in the thick of the horse-breaking, with raw colts rearing and bucking under him, his stirrups tied together beneath, or charging madly about the breaking corral and driving the helping cowboys over the rails. The next instant, and with seeming naturalness, he found himself pursuing the wild bulls of the upland pastures, roping them and leading them down to the valleys. Again the sweat and dust of the branding pen stung his eyes and bit his nostrils.

All his lusty, whole-bodied youth was his, until the sharp pangs of impending dissolution brought him back. He lifted his monstrous hands and gazed at them in wonder. But how? Why? Why should the wholeness of that wild youth of his change to this? Then he remembered, and once again, and for a moment, he was Koolau, the leper. His eyelids fluttered wearily down and the drip of the rain ceased in his ears. A prolonged trembling set up in his body. This, too, ceased. He half-lifted his head, but it fell back. Then his eyes opened, and did not close. His last thought was of his Mauser, and he pressed it against his chest with his folded, fingerless hands.

The Law of Life

OLD KOSKOOSH listened greedily. Though his sight had long since faded, his hearing was still acute, and the slightest sound penetrated to the glimmering intelligence which yet abode behind the withered forehead, but which no longer gazed forth upon the things of the world. Ah! that was Sit-cum-to-ha, shrilly anathematizing the dogs as she cuffed and beat them into the harnesses. Sit-cum-to-ha was his daughter's daughter, but she was too busy to waste a thought upon her broken grandfather, sitting alone there in the snow, forlorn and helpless. Camp must be broken. The long trail waited while the short day refused to linger. Life called her, and the duties of life, not death. And he was very close to death now.

The thought made the old man panicky for the moment, and he stretched forth a palsied hand which wandered tremblingly over the small heap of dry wood beside him. Reassured that it was indeed there, his hand returned to the shelter of his mangy furs, and he again fell to listening. The sulky crackling of half-frozen hides told him that the chief's moose-skin lodge had been struck, and even then was being rammed and jammed into portable compass. The chief was his son, stalwart and strong, head man of the tribesmen, and a mighty hunter. As the women toiled with the camp luggage, his voice rose, chiding them for their slowness. Old Koskoosh strained his ears. It was the last time he would hear that voice. There went Geehow's lodge! And Tusken's! Seven, eight, nine; only the shaman's could be still standing. There! They were at work upon it now. He could hear the shaman grunt as he piled it on the sled. A child whimpered, and a woman soothed it with soft, crooning gutturals. Little Koo-tee, the old man thought, a fretful child, and not overstrong. It would die soon, perhaps, and they would burn a hole through the frozen tundra and pile rocks above to keep the wolverines away. Well, what did it matter? A few years at best, and as many an empty belly as a full one. And in the end, Death waited, ever-hungry and hungriest of them all.

What was that? Oh, the men lashing the sleds and drawing tight the thongs. He listened, who would listen no more. The whip-lashes snarled and bit among the dogs. Hear them whine! How they hated the work and the trail! They were off! Sled after sled churned slowly away into the silence. They were gone. They had passed out of his life, and he faced the last bitter hour alone. No. The snow crunched beneath a moccasin; a man stood beside him; upon his head a hand rested gently. His son was good to do this thing. He remembered other old men whose sons had not waited after the tribe. But his son had. He wandered away into the past, till the young man's voice brought him back.

"Is it well with you?" he asked.

And the old man answered, "It is well."

"There be wood beside you," the younger man continued, "and the fire burns bright. The morning is gray, and the cold has broken. It will snow presently. Even now is it snowing."

"My voice is become like an old woman's."

"Ay, even now is it snowing."

"The tribesmen hurry. Their bales are heavy, and their bellies flat with lack of feasting. The trail is long and they travel fast. go now. It is well?"

"It is well. I am as a last year's leaf, clinging lightly to the stem. The first breath that blows, and I fall. My voice is become like an old woman's. My eyes no longer show me the way of my feet, and my feet are heavy, and I am tired. It is well."

He bowed his head in content till the last noise of the complaining snow had died away, and he knew his son was beyond recall. Then his hand crept out in haste to the wood. It alone stood between him and the eternity that yawned in upon him. At last the measure of his life was a handful of fagots. One by one they would go to feed the fire, and just so, step by step, death would creep upon him. When the last stick had surrendered up its heat, the frost would begin to gather strength. First his feet would yield, then his hands; and the numbness would travel, slowly, from the extremities to the body. His head would fall forward upon his knees, and he would rest. It was easy. All men must die.

He did not complain. It was the way of life, and it was just. He had been born close to the earth, close to the earth had he lived, and the law thereof was not new to him. It was the law of all flesh. Nature was not kindly to the flesh. She had no concern for that concrete thing called the individual. Her interest lay in the species, the race. This was the deepest abstraction old Koskoosh's barbaric mind was capable of, but he grasped it firmly. He saw it exemplified in all life. The rise of the sap, the bursting greenness of the willow bud, the fall of the yellow leaf--in this alone was told the whole history. But one task did Nature set the individual. Did he not perform it, he died. Did he perform it, it was all the same, he died. Nature did not care; there were plenty who were obedient, and it was only the obedience in this matter, not the obedient, which lived and lived always. The tribe of Koskoosh was very old. The old men he had known when a boy, had known old men before them. Therefore it was true that the tribe lived, that it stood for the obedience of all its members, way down into the forgotten past, whose very resting-places were unremembered. They did not count; they were episodes. They had passed away like clouds from a summer sky. He also was an episode, and would pass away. Nature did not care. To life she set one task, gave one law. To perpetuate was the task of life, its law was death. A maiden was a good creature to look upon, full-breasted and strong, with spring to her step and light in her eyes. But her task was yet before her. The light in her eyes brightened, her step quickened, she was now bold with the young men, now timid, and she gave them of her own unrest. And ever she grew fairer and yet fairer to look upon, till some hunter, able no longer to withhold himself, took her to his lodge to cook and toil for him and to become the mother of his children. And with the coming of her offspring her looks left her. Her limbs dragged and shuffled, her eyes dimmed and bleared, and only the little children found joy against the withered cheek of the old squaw by the fire. Her task was done. But a little while, on the first pinch of famine or the first long trail, and she would be left, even as he had been left, in the snow, with a little pile of wood. Such was the law. He placed a stick carefully upon the fire and resumed his meditations. It was the same everywhere, with all things. The mosquitoes vanished with the first frost. The little tree-squirrel crawled away to die. When age settled upon the rabbit it became slow and heavy, and could no longer outfoot its enemies. Even the big bald-face grew clumsy and blind and quarrelsome, in the end to be dragged down by a handful of yelping huskies. He remembered how he had abandoned his own father on an upper reach of the Klondike one winter, the winter before the missionary came with his talk-books and his box of medicines. Many a time had Koskoosh smacked his lips over the recollection of that box, though now his mouth refused to moisten. The “painkiller” had been especially good. But the missionary was a bother after all, for he brought no meat into the camp, and he ate heartily, and the hunters grumbled. But he chilled his lungs on the divide by the Mayo, and the dogs afterwards nosed the stones away and fought over his bones.

"through the long darkness the children wailed and died."

Koskoosh placed another stick on the fire and harked back deeper into the past. There was the time of the Great Famine, when the old men crouched empty-bellied to the fire, and let fall from their lips dim traditions of the ancient day when the Yukon ran wide open for three winters, and then lay frozen for three summers. He had lost his mother in that famine. In the summer the salmon run had failed, and the tribe looked forward to the winter and the coming of the caribou. Then the winter came, but with it there were no caribou. Never had the like been known, not even in the lives of the old men. But the caribou did not come, and it was the seventh year, and the rabbits had not replenished, and the dogs were naught but bundles of bones. And through the long darkness the children wailed and died, and the women, and the old men; and not one in ten of the tribe lived to meet the sun when it came back in the spring. That was a famine!

But he had seen times of plenty, too, when the meat spoiled on their hands, and the dogs were fat and worthless with overeating--times when they let the game go unkilled, and the women were fertile, and the lodges were cluttered with sprawling men-children and women-children. Then it was the men became high-stomached, and revived ancient quarrels, and crossed the divides to the south to kill the Pellys, and to the west that they might sit by the dead fires of the Tananas. He remembered, when a boy, during a time of plenty, when he saw a moose pulled down by the wolves. Zing-ha lay with him in the snow and watched--Zing-ha, who later became the craftiest of hunters, and who, in the end, fell through an air-hole on the Yukon. They found him, a month afterward, just as he had crawled halfway out and frozen stiff to the ice.

But the moose. Zing-ha and he had gone out that day to play at hunting after the manner of their fathers. On the bed of the creek they struck the fresh track of a moose, and with it the tracks of many wolves. "An old one," Zing-ha, who was quicker at reading the sign, said--"an old one who cannot keep up with the herd. The wolves have cut him out from his brothers, and they will never leave him." And it was so. It was their way. By day and by night, never resting, snarling on his heels, snapping at his nose, they would stay by him to the end. How Zing-ha and he felt the blood-lust quicken! The finish would be a sight to see!

Eager-footed, they took the trail, and even he, Koskoosh, slow of sight and an unversed tracker, could have followed it blind, it was so wide. Hot were they on the heels of the chase, reading the grim tragedy, fresh-written, at every step. Now they came to where the moose had made a stand. Thrice the length of a grown man's body, in every direction, had the snow been stamped about and uptossed. In the midst were the deep impressions of the splay-hoofed game, and all about, everywhere, were the lighter footmarks of the wolves. Some, while their brothers harried the kill, had lain to one side and rested. The full-stretched impress of their bodies in the snow was as perfect as though made the moment before. One wolf had been caught in a wild lunge of the maddened victim and trampled to death. A few bones, well picked, bore witness.

Again, they ceased the uplift of their snowshoes at a second stand. Here the great animal had fought desperately. Twice had he been dragged down, as the snow attested, and twice had he shaken his assailants clear and gained footing once more. He had done his task long since, but none the less was life dear to him. Zing-ha said it was a strange thing, a moose once down to get free again; but this one certainly had. The shaman would see signs and wonders in this when they told him.

And yet again, they come to where the moose had made to mount the bank and gain the timber. But his foes had laid on from behind, till he reared and fell back upon them, crushing two deep into the snow. It was plain the kill was at hand, for their brothers had left them untouched. Two more stands were hurried past, brief in time-length and very close together. The trail was red now, and the clean stride of the great beast had grown short and slovenly. Then they heard the first sounds of the battle--not the full-throated chorus of the chase, but the short, snappy bark which spoke of close quarters and teeth to flesh. Crawling up the wind, Zing-ha bellied it through the snow, and with him crept he, Koskoosh, who was to be chief of the tribesmen in the years to come. Together they shoved aside the under branches of a young spruce and peered forth. It was the end they saw.

The picture, like all of youth's impressions, was still strong with him, and his dim eyes watched the end played out as vividly as in that far-off time. Koskoosh marvelled at this, for in the days which followed, when he was a leader of men and a head of councillors, he had done great deeds and made his name a curse in the mouths of the Pellys, to say naught of the strange white man he had killed, knife to knife, in open fight.

For long he pondered on the days of his youth, till the fire died down and the frost bit deeper. He replenished it with two sticks this time, and gauged his grip on life by what remained. If Sit-cum-to-ha had only remembered her grandfather, and gathered a larger armful, his hours would have been longer. It would have been easy. But she was ever a careless child, and honored not her ancestors from the time the Beaver, son of the son of Zing-ha, first cast eyes upon her. Well, what mattered it? Had he not done likewise in his own quick youth? For a while he listened to the silence. Perhaps the heart of his son might soften, and he would come back with the dogs to take his old father on with the tribe to where the caribou ran thick and the fat hung heavy upon them.

He strained his ears, his restless brain for the moment stilled. Not a stir, nothing. He alone took breath in the midst of the great silence. It was very lonely. Hark! What was that? A chill passed over his body. The familiar, long-drawn howl broke the void, and it was close at hand. Then on his darkened eyes was projected the vision of the moose--the old bull moose--the torn flanks and bloody sides, the riddled mane, and the great branching horns, down low and tossing to the last. He saw the flashing forms of gray, the gleaming eyes, the lolling tongues, the slavered fangs. And he saw the inexorable circle close in till it became a dark point in the midst of the stamped snow.

A cold muzzle thrust against his cheek, and at its touch his soul leaped back to the present. His hand shot into the fire and dragged out a burning faggot. Overcome for the nonce by his hereditary fear of man, the brute retreated, raising a prolonged call to his brothers; and greedily they answered, till a ring of crouching, jaw-slobbered gray was stretched round about. The old man listened to the drawing in of this circle. He waved his brand wildly, and sniffs turned to snarls; but the panting brutes refused to scatter. Now one wormed his chest forward, dragging his haunches after, now a second, now a third; but never a one drew back. Why should he cling to life? he asked, and dropped the blazing stick into the snow. It sizzled and went out. The circle grunted uneasily, but held its own. Again he saw the last stand of the old bull moose, and Koskoosh dropped his head wearily upon his knees. What did it matter after all? Was it not the law of life?

The League of the Old Men

At the Barracks a man was being tried for his life. He was an old man, a native from the Whitefish River, which empties into the Yukon below Lake Le Barge. All Dawson was wrought up over the affair, and likewise the Yukon-dwellers for a thousand miles up and down. It has been the custom of the land-robbing and sea-robbing Anglo-Saxon to give the law to conquered peoples, and ofttimes this law is harsh. But in the case of Imber the law for once seemed inadequate and weak. In the mathematical nature of things, equity did not reside in the punishment to be accorded him. The punishment was a foregone conclusion, there could be no doubt of that; and though it was capital, Imber had but one life, while the tale against him was one of scores.

In fact, the blood of so many was upon his hands that the killings attributed to him did not permit of precise enumeration. Smoking a pipe by the trailside or lounging around the stove, men made rough estimates of the numbers that had perished at his hand. They had been whites, all of them, these poor murdered people, and they had been slain singly, in pairs, and in parties. And so purposeless and wanton had been these killings, that they had long been a mystery to the mounted police, even in the time of the captains, and later, when the creeks realized, and a governor came from the Dominion to make the land pay for its prosperity. But more mysterious still was the coming of Imber to Dawson to give himself up. It was in the late spring, when the Yukon was growling and writhing under its ice, that the old Indian climbed painfully up the bank from the river trail and stood blinking on the main street. Men who had witnessed his advent, noted that he was weak and tottery, and that he staggered over to a heap of cabin-logs and sat down. He sat there a full day, staring straight before him at the unceasing tide of white men that flooded past. Many a head jerked curiously to the side to meet his stare, and more than one remark was dropped anent the old Siwash with so strange a look upon his face. No end of men remembered afterward that they had been struck by his extraordinary figure, and forever afterward prided themselves upon their swift discernment of the unusual.

But it remained for Dickensen, Little Dickensen, to be the hero of the occasion. Little Dickensen had come into the land with great dreams and a pocketful of cash; but with the cash the dreams vanished, and to earn his passage back to the States he had accepted a clerical position with the brokerage firm of Holbrook and Mason. Across the street from the office of Holbrook and Mason was the heap of cabin-logs upon which Imber sat. Dickensen looked out of the window at him before he went to lunch; and when he came back from lunch he looked out of the window, and the old Siwash was still there.

Dickensen continued to look out of the window, and he, too, forever afterward prided himself upon his swiftness of discernment. He was a romantic little chap, and he likened the immobile old heathen to the genius of the Siwash race, gazing calm-eyed upon the hosts of the invading Saxon. The hours swept along, but Imber did not vary his posture, did not by a hair's-breadth move a muscle; and Dickensen remembered the man who once sat upright on a sled in the main street where men passed to and fro. They thought the man was resting, but later, when they touched him, they found him stiff and cold, frozen to death in the midst of the busy street. To undouble him, that he might fit into a coffin, they had been forced to lug him to a fire and thaw him out a bit. Dickensen shivered at the recollection.

Later on, Dickensen went out on the sidewalk to smoke a cigar and cool off; and a little later Emily Travis happened along. Emily Travis was dainty and delicate and rare, and whether in London or Klondike she gowned herself as befitted the daughter of a millionnaire mining engineer. Little Dickensen deposited his cigar on an outside window ledge where he could find it again, and lifted his hat.

They chatted for ten minutes or so, when Emily Travis, glancing past Dickensen's shoulder, gave a startled little scream. Dickensen turned about to see, and was startled, too. Imber had crossed the street and was standing there, a gaunt and hungry-looking shadow, his gaze riveted upon the girl.

"What do you want?" Little Dickensen demanded, tremulously plucky.

Imber grunted and stalked up to Emily Travis. He looked her over, keenly and carefully, every square inch of her. Especially did he appear interested in her silky brown hair, and in the color of her cheek, faintly sprayed and soft, like the downy bloom of a butterfly wing. He walked around her, surveying her with the calculating eye of a man who studies the lines upon which a horse or a boat is builded. In the course of his circuit the pink shell of her ear came between his eye and the westering sun, and he stopped to contemplate its rosy transparency. Then he returned to her face and looked long and intently into her blue eyes. He grunted and laid a hand on her arm midway between the shoulder and elbow. With his other hand he lifted her forearm and doubled it back. Disgust and wonder showed in his face, and he dropped her arm with a contemptuous grunt. Then he muttered a few guttural syllables, turned his back upon her, and addressed himself to Dickensen.

Dickensen could not understand his speech, and Emily Travis laughed. Imber turned from one to the other, frowning, but both shook their heads. He was about to go away, when she called out:

"Oh, Jimmy! Come here!"

Jimmy came from the other side of the street. He was a big, hulking Indian clad in approved white-man style, with an Eldorado king's sombrero on his head. He talked with Imber, haltingly, with throaty spasms. Jimmy was a Sitkan, possessed of no more than a passing knowledge of the interior dialects.

"Him Whitefish man," he said to Emily Travis. "Me savve um talk no very much. Him want to look see chief white man."

"The Governor," suggested Dickensen.

Jimmy talked some more with the Whitefish man, and his face went grave and puzzled.

"I t'ink um want Cap'n Alexander," he explained. "Him say um kill white man, white woman, white boy, plenty kill um white people. Him want to die."

"Insane, I guess," said Dickensen.

"What you call dat?" queried Jimmy.

Dickensen thrust a finger figuratively inside his head and imparted a rotary motion thereto.

"Mebbe so, mebbe so," said Jimmy, returning to Imber, who still demanded the chief man of the white men.

A mounted policeman (unmounted for Klondike service) joined the group and heard Imber's wish repeated. He was a stalwart young fellow, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, legs cleanly built and stretched wide apart, and tall though Imber was, he towered above him by half a head. His eyes were cool, and gray, and steady, and he carried himself with the peculiar confidence of power that is bred of blood and tradition. His splendid masculinity was emphasized by his excessive boyishness,--he was a mere lad,--and his smooth cheek promised a blush as willingly as the cheek of a maid.

Imber was drawn to him at once. The fire leaped into his eyes at sight of a sabre slash that scarred his cheek. He ran a withered hand down the young fellow's leg and caressed the swelling thew. He smote the broad chest with his knuckles, and pressed and prodded the thick muscle-pads that covered the shoulders like a cuirass. The group had been added to by curious passers-by--husky miners, mountaineers, and frontiersmen, sons of the long-legged and broad-shouldered generations. Imber glanced from one to another, then he spoke aloud in the Whitefish tongue.

"What did he say?" asked Dickensen.

"Him say um all the same one man, dat p'liceman," Jimmy interpreted.

Little Dickensen was little, and what of Miss Travis, he felt sorry for having asked the question. The policeman was sorry for him and stepped into the breach. "I fancy there may be something in his story. I'll take him up to the captain for examination. Tell him to come along with me, Jimmy."

Jimmy indulged in more throaty spasms, and Imber grunted and looked satisfied.

"But ask him what he said, Jimmy, and what he meant when he took hold of my arm."

So spoke Emily Travis, and Jimmy put the question and received the answer.

"Him say you no afraid," said Jimmy.

Emily Travis looked pleased.

"Him say you no skookum, no strong, all the same very soft like little baby. Him break you, in um two hands, to little pieces. Him t'ink much funny, very strange, how you can be mother of men so big, so strong, like dat p'liceman."

Emily Travers kept her eyes up and unfaltering, but her cheeks were sprayed with scarlet. Little Dickensen blushed and was quite embarrassed. The policeman's face blazed with his boy's blood.

"Come along, you," he said gruffly, setting his shoulder to the crowd and forcing a way.

Thus it was that Imber found his way to the Barracks, where he made full and voluntary confession, and from the precincts of which he never emerged.

Imber looked very tired. The fatigue of hopelessness and age was in his face. His shoulders drooped depressingly, and his eyes were lack-lustre. His mop of hair should have been white, but sun and weatherbeat had burned and bitten it so that it hung limp and lifeless and colorless. He took no interest in what went on around him. The courtroom was jammed with the men of the creeks and trails, and there was an ominous note in the rumble and grumble of their low-pitched voices, which came to his ears like the growl of the sea from deep caverns.

He sat close by a window, and his apathetic eyes rested now and again on the dreary scene without. The sky was overcast, and a gray drizzle was falling. It was flood-time on the Yukon. The ice was gone, and the river was up in the town. Back and forth on the main street, in canoes and poling-boats, passed the people that never rested. Often he saw these boats turn aside from the street and enter the flooded square that marked the Barracks' parade-ground. Sometimes they disappeared beneath him, and he heard them jar against the house-logs and their occupants scramble in through the window. After that came the slush of water against men's legs as they waded across the lower room and mounted the stairs. Then they appeared in the doorway, with doffed hats and dripping sea-boots, and added themselves to the waiting crowd.

And while they centred their looks on him, and in grim anticipation enjoyed the penalty he was to pay, Imber looked at them, and mused on their ways, and on their Law that never slept, but went on unceasing, in good times and bad, in flood and famine, through trouble and terror and death, and which would go on unceasing, it seemed to him, to the end of time. A man rapped sharply on a table, and the conversation droned away into silence. Imber looked at the man. He seemed one in authority, yet Imber divined the square-browed man who sat by a desk farther back to be the one chief over them all and over the man who had rapped. Another man by the same table uprose and began to read aloud from many fine sheets of paper. At the top of each sheet he cleared his throat, at the bottom moistened his fingers. Imber did not understand his speech, but the others did, and he knew that it made them angry. Sometimes it made them very angry, and once a man cursed him, in single syllables, stinging and tense, till a man at the table rapped him to silence.

For an interminable period the man read. His monotonous, sing-song utterance lured Imber to dreaming, and he was dreaming deeply when the man ceased. A voice spoke to him in his own Whitefish tongue, and he roused up, without surprise, to look upon the face of his sister's son, a young man who had wandered away years agone to make his dwelling with the whites.

"Thou dost not remember me," he said by way of greeting.

"Nay," Imber answered. "Thou art Howkan who went away. Thy mother be dead."

"She was an old woman," said Howkan.

But Imber did not hear, and Howkan, with hand upon his shoulder, roused him again.

"I shall speak to thee what the man has spoken, which is the tale of the troubles thou hast done and which thou hast told, O fool, to the Captain Alexander. And thou shalt understand and say if it be true talk or talk not true. It is so commanded."

Howkan had fallen among the mission folk and been taught by them to read and write. In his hands he held the many fine sheets from which the man had read aloud, and which had been taken down by a clerk when Imber first made confession, through the mouth of Jimmy, to Captain Alexander. Howkan began to read. Imber listened for a space, when a wonderment rose up in his face and he broke in abruptly.

"That be my talk, Howkan. Yet from thy lips it comes when thy ears have not heard."

Howkan smirked with self-appreciation. His hair was parted in the middle. "Nay, from the paper it comes, O Imber. Never have my ears heard. From the paper it comes, through my eyes, into my head, and out of my mouth to thee. Thus it comes."

"Thus it comes? It be there in the paper?" Imber's voice sank in whisperful awe as he crackled the sheets 'twixt thumb and finger and stared at the charactery scrawled thereon. "It be a great medicine, Howkan, and thou art a worker of wonders."

"It be nothing, it be nothing," the young man responded carelessly and pridefully. He read at hazard from the document: "In that year, before the break of the ice, came an old man, and a boy who was lame of one foot. These also did I kill, and the old man made much noise--"

"It be true," Imber interrupted breathlessly. "He made much noise and would not die for a long time. But how dost thou know, Howkan? The chief man of the white men told thee, mayhap? No one beheld me, and him alone have I told." Howkan shook his head with impatience. "Have I not told thee it be there in the paper, O fool?"

Imber stared hard at the ink-scrawled surface. "As the hunter looks upon the snow and says, Here but yesterday there passed a rabbit; and here by the willow scrub it stood and listened, and heard, and was afraid; and here it turned upon its trail; and here it went with great swiftness, leaping wide; and here, with greater swiftness and wider leapings, came a lynx; and here, where the claws cut deep into the snow, the lynx made a very great leap; and here it struck, with the rabbit under and rolling belly up; and here leads off the trail of the lynx alone, and there is no more rabbit,--as the hunter looks upon the markings of the snow and says thus and so and here, dost thou, too, look upon the paper and say thus and so and here be the things old Imber hath done?"

"Even so," said Howkan. "And now do thou listen, and keep thy woman's tongue between thy teeth till thou art called upon for speech."

Thereafter, and for a long time, Howkan read to him the confession, and Imber remained musing and silent. At the end, he said:

"It be my talk, and true talk, but I am grown old, Howkan, and forgotten things come back to me which were well for the head man there to know. First, there was the man who came over the Ice Mountains, with cunning traps made of iron, who sought the beaver of the Whitefish. Him I slew. And there were three men seeking gold on the Whitefish long ago. Them also I slew, and left them to the wolverines. And at the Five Fingers there was a man with a raft and much meat."

At the moments when Imber paused to remember, Howkan translated and a clerk reduced to writing. The courtroom listened stolidly to each unadorned little tragedy, till Imber told of a red-haired man whose eyes were crossed and whom he had killed with a remarkably long shot.

"Hell," said a man in the forefront of the onlookers. He said it soulfully and sorrowfully. He was red-haired. "Hell," he repeated. "That was my brother Bill." And at regular intervals throughout the session, his solemn "Hell" was heard in the courtroom; nor did his comrades check him, nor did the man at the table rap him to order.

Imber's head drooped once more, and his eyes went dull, as though a film rose up and covered them from the world. And he dreamed as only age can dream upon the colossal futility of youth.

Later, Howkan roused him again, saying: “Stand up, O Imber. It be commanded that thou tellest why you did these troubles, and slew these people, and at the end journeyed here seeking the Law.”

Imber rose feebly to his feet and swayed back and forth. He began to speak in a low and faintly rumbling voice, but Howkan interrupted him.

“This old man, he is damn crazy,” he said in English to the square-browed man. “His talk is foolish and like that of a child.”

“We will hear his talk which is like that of a child,” said the square-browed man. “And we will hear it, word for word, as he speaks it. Do you understand?”

Howkan understood, and Imber’s eyes flashed, for he had witnessed the play between his sister’s son and the man in authority. And then began the story, the epic of a bronze patriot which might well itself be wrought into bronze for the generations unborn. The crowd fell strangely silent, and the square-browed judge leaned head on hand and pondered his soul and the soul of his race. Only was heard the deep tones of Imber, rhythmically alternating with the shrill voice of the interpreter, and now and again, like the bell of the Lord, the wondering and meditative “Hell” of the red-haired man.

“I am Imber of the Whitefish people.” So ran the interpretation of Howkan, whose inherent barbarism gripped hold of him, and who lost his mission culture and veneered civilization as he caught the savage ring and rhythm of old Imber’s tale. “My father was Otsbaok, a strong man. The land was warm with sunshine and gladness when I was a boy. The people did not hunger after strange things, nor hearken to new voices, and the ways of their fathers were their ways. The women found favor in the eyes of the young men, and the young men looked upon them with content. Babes hung at the breasts of the women, and they were heavy-hipped with increase of the tribe. Men were men in those days. In peace and plenty, and in war and famine, they were men.

“At that time there was more fish in the water than now, and more meat in the forest. Our dogs were wolves, warm with thick hides and hard to the frost and storm. And as with our dogs so with us, for we were likewise hard to the frost and storm. And when the Pellys came into our land we slew them and were slain. For we were men, we Whitefish, and our fathers and our fathers’ fathers had fought against the Pellys and determined the bounds of the land.

"As I say, with our dogs, so with us. And one day came the first white man. He dragged himself, so, on hand and knee, in the snow. And his skin was stretched tight, and his bones were sharp beneath. Never was such a man, we thought, and we wondered of what strange tribe he was, and of its land. And he was weak, most weak, like a little child, so that we gave him a place by the fire, and warm furs to lie upon, and we gave him food as little children are given food.

"And with him was a dog, large as three of our dogs, and very weak. The hair of this dog was short, and not warm, and the tail was frozen so that the end fell off. And this strange dog we fed, and bedded by the fire, and fought from it our dogs, which else would have killed him. And what of the moose meat and the sun-dried salmon, the man and dog took strength to themselves; and what of the strength they became big and unafraid. And the man spoke loud words and laughed at the old men and young men, and looked boldly upon the maidens. And the dog fought with our dogs, and for all of his short hair and softness slew three of them in one day.

"When we asked the man concerning his people, he said,`I have many brothers,' and laughed in a way that was not good. And when he was in his full strength he went away, and with him went Noda, daughter to the chief. First, after that, was one of our bitches brought to pup. And never was there such a breed of dogs,--big-headed, thick-jawed, and short-haired, and helpless. Well do I remember my father, Otsbaok, a strong man. His face was black with anger at such helplessness, and he took a stone, so, and so, and there was no more helplessness. And two summers after that came Noda back to us with a man-child in the hollow of her arm.

"And that was the beginning. Came a second white man, with short-haired dogs, which he left behind him when he went. And with him went six of our strongest dogs, for which, in trade, he had given Koo-So-Tee, my mother's brother, a wonderful pistol that fired with great swiftness six times. And Koo-So-Tee was very big, what of the pistol, and laughed at our bows and arrows. `Woman's things,' he called them, and went forth against the bald-face grizzly, with the pistol in his hand. Now it be known that it is not good to hunt the bald-face with a pistol, but how were we to know? and how was Koo-So-Tee to know? So he went against the bald-face, very brave, and fired the pistol with great swiftness six times; and the bald-face but grunted and broke in his breast like it were an egg, and like honey from a bee's nest dripped the brains of Koo-So-Tee upon the ground. He was a good hunter, and there was no one to bring meat to his squaw and children. And we were bitter, and we said, `That which for the white men is well, is for us not well.' And this be true. There be many white men and fat, but their ways have made us few and lean.

"Came the third white man, with great wealth of all manner of wonderful foods and things. And twenty of our strongest dogs he took from us in trade. Also, what of presents and great promises, ten of our young hunters did he take with him on a journey which fared no man knew where. It is said they died in the snow of the Ice Mountains where man has never been, or in the Hills of Silence which are beyond the edge of the earth. Be that as it may, dogs and young hunters were seen never again by the Whitefish people.

"And more white men came with the years, and ever, with pay and presents, they led the young men away with them. And sometimes the young men came back with strange tales of dangers and toils in the lands beyond the Pellys, and sometimes they did not come back. And we said: `If they be unafraid of life, these white men, it is because they have many lives; but we be few by the Whitefish, and the young men shall go away no more.' But the young men did go away; and the young women went also; and we were very wroth.

"It be true, we ate flour, and salt pork, and drank tea which was a great delight; only, when we could not get tea, it was very bad and we became short of speech and quick of anger. So we grew to hunger for the things the white men brought in trade. Trade! trade! all the time was it trade! One winter we sold our meat for clocks that would not go, and watches with broken guts, and files worn smooth, and pistols without cartridges and worthless. And then came famine, and we were without meat, and two score died ere the break of spring.

"`Now are we grown weak,' we said; `and the Pellys will fall upon us, and our bounds be overthrown.' But as it fared with us, so had it fared with the Pellys, and they were too weak to come against us.

"My father, Otsbaok, a strong man, was now old and very wise. And he spoke to the chief, saying: `Behold, our dogs be worthless. No longer are they thick-furred and strong, and they die in the frost and harness. Let us go into the village and kill them, saving only the wolf ones, and these let us tie out in the night that they may mate with the wild wolves of the forest. Thus shall we have dogs warm and strong again.'

“And his word was harkened to, and we Whitefish became known for our dogs, which were the best in the land. But known we were not for ourselves. The best of our young men and women had gone away with the white men to wander on trail and river to far places. And the young women came back old and broken, as Noda had come, or they came not at all. And the young men came back to sit by our fires for a time, full of ill speech and rough ways, drinking evil drinks and gambling through long nights and days, with a great unrest always in their hearts, till the call of the white men came to them and they went away again to the unknown places. And they were without honor and respect, jeering the old-time customs and laughing in the faces of chief and shamans.

“As I say, we were become a weak breed, we Whitefish. We sold our warm skins and furs for tobacco and whiskey and thin cotton things that left us shivering in the cold. And the coughing sickness came upon us, and men and women coughed and sweated through the long nights, and the hunters on trail spat blood upon the snow. And now one, and now another, bled swiftly from the mouth and died. And the women bore few children, and those they bore were weak and given to sickness. And other sicknesses came to us from the white men, the like of which we had never known and could not understand. Smallpox, likewise measles, have I heard these sicknesses named, and we died of them as die the salmon in the still eddies when in the fall their eggs are spawned and there is no longer need for them to live.

“And yet, and here be the strangeness of it, the white men come as the breath of death; all their ways lead to death, their nostrils are filled with it; and yet they do not die. Theirs the whiskey, and tobacco, and short-haired dogs; theirs the many sicknesses, the smallpox and measles, the coughing and mouth-bleeding; theirs the white skin, and softness to the frost and storm; and theirs the pistols that shoot six times very swift and are worthless. And yet they grow fat on their many ills, and prosper, and lay a heavy hand over all the world and tread mightily upon its peoples. And their women, too, are soft as little babes, most breakable and never broken, the mothers of men. And out of all this softness, and sickness, and weakness, come strength, and power, and authority. They be gods, or devils, as the case may be. I do not know. What do I know, I, old Imber of the Whitefish? Only do I know that they are past understanding, these white men, far-wanderers and fighters over the earth that they be.

“As I say, the meat in the forest became less and less. It be true, the white man’s gun is most excellent and kills a long way off; but of what worth the gun, when there is no meat to kill? When I was a boy on the Whitefish there was moose on every hill, and each year came the caribou uncountable. But now the hunter may take the trail ten days and not one moose gladden his eyes, while the caribou uncountable come no more at all. Small worth the gun, I say, killing a long way off, when there be nothing to kill.

“And I, Imber, pondered upon these things, watching the while the Whitefish, and the Pellys, and all the tribes of the land, perishing as perished the meat of the forest. Long I pondered. I talked with the shamans and the old men who were wise. I went apart that the sounds of the village might not disturb me, and I ate no meat so that my belly should not press upon me and make me slow of eye and ear. I sat long and sleepless in the forest, wide-eyed for the sign, my ears patient and keen for the word that was to come. And I wandered alone in the blackness of night to the river bank, where was wind-moaning and sobbing of water, and where I sought wisdom from the ghosts of old shamans in the trees and dead and gone.

“And in the end, as in a vision, came to me the short-haired and detestable dogs, and the way seemed plain. By the wisdom of Otsbaok, my father and a strong man, had the blood of our own wolf-dogs been kept clean, wherefore had they remained warm of hide and strong in the harness. So I returned to my village and made oration to the men. `This be a tribe, these white men,’ I said. `A very large tribe, and doubtless there is no longer meat in their land, and they are come among us to make a new land for themselves. But they weaken us, and we die. They are a very hungry folk. Already has our meat gone from us, and it were well, if we would live, that we deal by them as we have dealt by their dogs.’

“And further oration I made, counselling fight. And the men of the Whitefish listened, and some said one thing, and some another, and some spoke of other and worthless things, and no man made brave talk of deeds and war. But while the young men were weak as water and afraid, watched that the old men sat silent, and that in their eyes fires came and went. And later, when forest and made more talk. And now we were agreed, and we remembered the good young days, and the free land, and thetimes of plenty, and the gladness and sunshine; and we called ourselves brothers, and swore great secrecy, and a mighty oath to cleanse the land of the evil breed that had come upon it. It be plain we were fools, but how were we to know, we old men of the Whitefish?

"And to hearten the others, I did the first deed. I kept guard upon the Yukon till the first canoe came down. In it were two white men, and when I stood upright upon the bank and raised my hand they changed their course and drove in to me. And as the man in the bow lifted his head, so, that he might know wherefore I wanted him, my arrow sang through the air straight to his throat, and he knew. The second man, who held paddle in the stern, had his rifle half to his shoulder when the first of my three spear-casts smote him.

"`These be the first,' I said, when the old men had gathered to me. `Later we will bind together all the old men of all the tribes, and after that the young men who remain strong, and the work will become easy.'

"And then the two dead white men we cast into the river. And of the canoe, which was a very good canoe, we made a fire, and a fire, also, of the things within the canoe. But first we looked at the things, and they were pouches of leather which we cut open with our knives. And inside these pouches were many papers, like that from which thou has read, O Howkan, with markings on them which we marvelled at and could not understand. Now, I am become wise, and I know them for the speech of men as thou hast told me."

A whisper and buzz went around the courtroom when Howkan finished interpreting the affair of the canoe, and one man's voice spoke up: "That was the lost '91 mail, Peter James and Delaney bringing it in and last spoken at Le Barge by Matthews going out." The clerk scratched steadily away, and another paragraph was added to the history of the North.

"There be little more," Imber went on slowly. "It be there on the paper, the things we did. We were old men, and we did not understand. Even I, Imber, do not now understand. Secretly we slew, and continued to slay, for with our years we were crafty and we had learned the swiftness of going without haste. When white men came among us with black looks and rough words, and took away six of the young men with irons binding them helpless, we knew we must slay wider and farther. And one by one we old men departed up river and down to the unknown lands. It was a brave thing. Old we were, and unafraid, but the fear of far places is a terrible fear to men who are old.

“So we slew, without haste and craftily. On the Chilcoot and in the Delta we slew, from the passes to the sea, wherever the white men camped or broke their trails. It be true, they died, but it was without worth. Ever did they come over the mountains, ever did they grow and grow, while we, being old, became less and less. I remember, by the Caribou Crossing, the camp of a white man. He was a very little white man, and three of the old men came upon him in his sleep. And the next day I came upon the four of them. The white man alone still breathed, and there was breath in him to curse me once and well before he died.

“And so it went, now one old man, and now another. Sometimes the word reached us long after of how they died, and sometimes it did not reach us. And the old men of the other tribes were weak and afraid, and would not join with us. As I say, one by one, till I alone was left. I am Imber, of the Whitefish people. My father was Otsbaok, a strong man. There are no Whitefish now. Of the old men I am the last. The young men and young women are gone away, some to live with the Pellys, some with the Salmons, and more with the white men. I am very old, and very tired, and it being vain fighting the Law, as thou sayest, Howkan, I am come seeking the Law.”

“O Imber, thou art indeed a fool,” said Howkan. But Imber was dreaming. The square-browed judge likewise dreamed, and all his race rose up before him in a mighty phantasmagoria--his steel-shod, mail-clad race, the lawgiver and world-maker among the families of men. He saw it dawn red-flickering across the dark forests and sullen seas; he saw it blaze, bloody and red, to full and triumphant noon; and down the shaded slope he saw the blood-red sands dropping into night. And through it all he observed the Law, pitiless and potent, ever unswerving and ever ordaining, greater than the motes of men who fulfilled it or were crushed by it, even as it was greater than he, his heart speaking for softness.

The Leopard Man’s Story

HE had a dreamy, far-away look in his eyes, and his sad, insistent voice, gentle-spoken as a maid’s, seemed the placid embodiment of some deep-seated melancholy. He was the Leopard Man, but he did not look it. His business in life, whereby he lived, was to appear in a cage of performing leopards before vast audiences, and to thrill those audiences by certain exhibitions of nerve for which his employers rewarded him on a scale commensurate with the thrills he produced.

As I say, he did not look it. He was narrow-hipped, narrow-shouldered, and anaemic, while he seemed not so much oppressed by gloom as by a sweet and gentle sadness, the weight of which was as sweetly and gently borne. For an hour I had been trying to get a story out of him, but he appeared to lack imagination. To him there was no romance in his gorgeous career, no deeds of daring, no thrills — nothing but a gray sameness and infinite boredom.

Lions? Oh, yes! he had fought with them. It was nothing. All you had to do was to stay sober. Anybody could whip a lion to a standstill with an ordinary stick. He had fought one for half an hour once. Just hit him on the nose every time he rushed, and when he got artful and rushed with his head down, why, the thing to do was to stick out your leg. When he grabbed at the leg you drew it back and hit hint on the nose again. That was all.

With the far-away look in his eyes and his soft flow of words he showed me his scars. There were many of them, and one recent one where a tigress had reached for his shoulder and gone down to the bone. I could see the neatly mended rents in the coat he had on. His right arm, from the elbow down, looked as though it had gone through a threshing machine, what of the ravage wrought by claws and fangs. But it was nothing, he said, only the old wounds bothered him somewhat when rainy weather came on.

Suddenly his face brightened with a recollection, for he was really as anxious to give me a story as I was to get it.

“I suppose you’ve heard of the lion-tamer who was hated by another man?” he asked.

He paused and looked pensively at a sick lion in the cage opposite.

“Got the toothache,” he explained. “Well, the lion-tamer’s big play to the audience was putting his head in a lion’s mouth. The man who hated him attended every performance in the hope sometime of seeing that lion crunch down. He followed the show about all over the country. The years went by and he grew old, and the lion-tamer grew old, and the lion grew old. And at last one day, sitting in a front seat, he saw what he had waited for. The lion crunched down, and there wasn't any need to call a doctor."

The Leopard Man glanced casually over his finger nails in a manner which would have been critical had it not been so sad.

"Now, that's what I call patience," he continued, "and it's my style. But it was not the style of a fellow I knew. He was a little, thin, sawed-off, sword-swallowing and juggling Frenchman. De Ville, he called himself, and he had a nice wife. She did trapeze work and used to dive from under the roof into a net, turning over once on the way as nice as you please.

"De Ville had a quick temper, as quick as his hand, and his hand was as quick as the paw of a tiger. One day, because the ring-master called him a frog-eater, or something like that and maybe a little worse, he shoved him against the soft pine background he used in his knife-throwing act, so quick the ring-master didn't have time to think, and there, before the audience, De Ville kept the air on fire with his knives, sinking them into the wood all around the ring-master so close that they passed through his clothes and most of them bit into his skin.

"The clowns had to pull the knives out to get him loose, for he was pinned fast. So the word went around to watch out for De Ville, and no one dared be more than barely civil to his wife. And she was a sly bit of baggage, too, only all hands were afraid of De Ville.

"But there was one man, Wallace, who was afraid of nothing. He was the lion-tamer, and he had the self-same trick of putting his head into the lion's mouth. He'd put it into the mouths of any of them, though he preferred Augustus, a big, good-natured beast who could always be depended upon.

"As I was saying, Wallace — 'King' Wallace we called him — was afraid of nothing alive or dead. He was a king and no mistake. I've seen him drunk, and on a wager go into the cage of a lion that'd turned nasty, and without a stick beat him to a finish. Just did it with his fist on the nose.

"Madame de Ville — "

At an uproar behind us the Leopard Man turned quietly around. It was a divided cage, and a monkey, poking through the bars and around the partition, had had its paw seized by a big gray wolf who was trying to pull it off by main strength. The arm seemed stretching out longer end longer like a thick elastic, and the unfortunate monkey's mates were raising a terrible din. No keeper was at hand, so the Leopard Man stepped over a couple of paces, dealt the wolf a sharp blow on the nose with the light cane he carried, and returned with a sadly apologetic smile to take up his unfinished sentence as though there had been no interruption.

" — looked at King Wallace and King Wallace looked at her, while De Ville looked black. We warned Wallace, but it was no use. He laughed at us, as he laughed at De Ville one day when he shoved De Ville's head into a bucket of paste because he wanted to fight.

"De Ville was in a pretty mess —-I helped to scrape him off; but he was cool as a cucumber and made no threats at all. But I saw a glitter in his eyes which I had seen often in the eyes of wild beasts, and I went out of my way to give Wallace a final warning. He laughed, but he did not look so much in Madame de Ville's direction after that.

"Several months passed by. Nothing had happened and I was beginning to think it all a scare over nothing. We were West by that time, showing in 'Frisco. It was during the afternoon performance, and the big tent was filled with women and children, when I went looking for Red Denny, the head canvas-man, who had walked off with my pocket-knife.

"Passing by one of the dressing tents I glanced in through a hole in the canvas to see if I could locate him. He wasn't there, but directly in front of me was King Wallace, in tights, waiting for his turn to go on with his cage of performing lions. He was watching with much amusement a quarrel between a couple of trapeze artists. All the rest of the people in the dressing tent were watching the same thing, with the exception of De Ville whom I noticed staring at Wallace with undisguised hatred. Wallace and the rest were all too busy following the quarrel to notice this or what followed.

"But I saw it through the hole in the canvas. De Ville drew his handkerchief from his pocket, made as though to mop the sweat from his face with it (it was a hot day), and at the same time walked past Wallace's back. The look troubled me at the time, for not only did I see hatred in it, but I saw triumph as well.

"'De Ville will bear watching,' I said to myself, and I really breathed easier when I saw him go out the entrance to the circus grounds and board an electric car for down town. A few minutes later I was in the big tent, where I had overhauled Red Denny. King Wallace was doing his turn and holding the audience spellbound. He was in a particularly vicious mood, and he kept the lions stirred up till they were all snarling, that is, all of them except old Augustus, and he was just too fat and lazy and old to get stirred up over anything.

"Finally Wallace cracked the old lion's knees with his whip and got him into position. Old Augustus, blinking good-naturedly, opened his mouth and in popped Wallace's head. Then the jaws came together, CRUNCH, just like that."

The Leopard Man smiled in a sweetly wistful fashion, and the far-away look came into his eyes.

"And that was the end of King Wallace," he went on in his sad, low voice. "After the excitement cooled down I watched my chance and bent over and smelled Wallace's head. Then I sneezed."

"It . . . it was . . .?" I queried with halting eagerness.

"Snuff — that De Ville dropped on his hair in the dressing tent. Old Augustus never meant to do it. He only sneezed."

A Lesson in Heraldry

SHE was such a demure little creature. Sobriety had marked her for his own, while her limpid blue eyes were twin founts of sincerity. And she was so fragile. On the street, the casual passerby turned for a second look, likening her to a little lost angel or an embryonic St. Cecelia. And well he might, so evanescent did she appear — a delicate dewdrop, ready to vanish with the first stray sunbeam. At school, she was a paragon, astonishing the instructors with her insatiable thirst for knowledge. Her playmates looked up to her with certain vague awe, suspending ruder sorts of play when she came among them; while the rowdiest boy, after five minutes in her presence, was reduced to a forced silence, verging very close to a condition of frozen idiocy.

And she was grown up, having drifted, years before her time, from the nursery to her mother's tea table. There she dabbled in the stereotyped conventionalities and unctious nothings, till her mother's feminine visitors were petrified at her precocity. The ordinary gossip and petty scandal of such circles were dropped on her appearance, the conversation leaping to the opposite extreme, and the atmosphere she radiated had a most wonderful effect on such visitors as happened to be of the masculine gender. Old General Wetherbee visibly trembeled whenever he took her hands in his, and stooping, gazed into her saintly eyes. Spiteful people intimated approaching palsy, but this must not be credited; for did he not yield to her gentle missionary efforts, and forswear and abjure, for all time, the solace of his Havana. And did he not keep his word, incidentally enduring the tortures of the damned?

In short, Mabel Armitage, for all her twelve years, was taken seriously and correspondingly stirred all who knew her. She seemed too delicate, too good, too angelic, for this world. She was an apotheosis of all that was best, a radiant, celestial creature — one who would have surprised no one, had she followed in the footsteps of Elijah and taken her rightful seat among the elect. Even Cap Drake, intimate with her from birth, believed this; which goes to show how little knowledge of our fellow beings may penetrate our understandings.

Her father was possessed of numerous minute wrinkles at the corner of either eye. It may have been because of this, and it might have been due to the innate perversity of things; but deep down in this innocent child's heart there lived a devil — a devil which sometimes issued forth, and under divers guises, perturbed men's souls greatly.

Now, Cap Drake was numbered among her most devoted subjects, serving as prime minister to her in a sort of unofficial way. He happened to be possessed of a vast erudition, and she ahd also constituted him he final court of appeal, referring to him they myriad debatable questions which constantly arose in her pursuit of knowledge. her brother Bobbie, who had appeared before this court at various times, seditiously and openly proclaimed collusion between the queen and the chief magistrate; others held that he but loyally bent to her imperial ukase; but be this as it may, one thing was certain — Cap Drake never had known to render a verdict which did not doubly fortify her position or throw her assailants into utter confusion. In thus conniving at her many victories, he often found himself hard put; he then had recourse to the most amazing sophistries, weaving a mesh of audacious fallacy which so paralyzed their understandings that they always capitualted on the spot.

But this really pardonable lapse from the straight and narrow path bred in Cap Drake a consequent infirmity. He grew able to tell the most astounding whoopers, with an unfaltering tongue, and a face which fairly shone with genial sincerity. All well and good, till one day, yielding to a traitorous impulse, he confided to the queen certain zoological wonders, yet unklnown to science, whose habitat was the unexplored jungle-land of Africa. Still well and good, had not the trusting Mabel proceeded to electrify both her class and teacher with the lurid tale. Its Munchausen-like simplicity and earnestness took them aback, and they pleaded for further information. Mabel keenly felt the atmosphere of suspended judgment, and vouched for the authority, though loyally withholding that authority's name; for she had begun to fear her faithful prime minister had imposed upon her. And when she went home that afternoon, sadder and wiser, it was with the laudable intention of bringing about, in some way, her erring servant's discomfiture.

Cap Drake came for an early tea, feeling very much at peace with himnself and the world in general. Looking into the library, he found Mabel deep in her composition book, and refrained from the customary quiz on the little happenings of the day, Later, at table, the converstaion turned upon national banners, and he found himself, as usual, officiating as the final court of appeal.

"But Mabel," Bobby blurted out, "you're wrong, way wrong. There's only one Union, isn't there? The American Union, you know, and that's why the Union Jack's an American flag."

"Isn't the Union Jack the flag of the English, Cappy?" Mabel appealed.

"Why yes, Mabel, it is. It stands for the United Kingdom, the Union, as Bobbie calls it, of England, Ireland, and Scotland. Yes, Mabel, you're right."

"And what do the stripes mean?" asked Mabel.

"The stripes? Let me see — . Now the stars stand for the number of states, don't they?" he was maneuvering for time, and inwardly wondering what they did mean.

Mabel acquiesced silently.

"And for every state that's added, another star is placed in the blue field."

Again Mabel nodded.

"And how many states are there?"

"Forty-four," she volunteered.

"No; forty-five," asserted Bobbie.

"Look here, Sis; there's Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont — "

Cap Drake withdrew from the controversy in haste, congratulating himself upon his cleverness; and during the rest of the tea he talked politics most assiduously with Mr. Armitage. Of course, there could be no interrupting, but Mable had found her cue, and an hour later she capture him with his cigar on the veranda.

"What do the stripes mean, Cappy?"

"The stripes? Oh, yes, we were talking about flags, weren't we? Which reminds me of the banner we captured on the Little Round Top. It was very amusing, and — "

And he proceeded to spin out wartime reminiscences till twilight came on, and they went within. Mabel was in no hurry, however, while he forgot it all in a rubber of cribbage. But the corner wrinkles of Mr. Armitage's eyes had become more manifest, and though Mabel did not know, he was taking huge interest in the proceedings. And the rubber could not last all evening.

"Cappy, what do the stripes mean?"

The deuce take it, that question again! Such a little thing — surely he had learned and forgotten it years ago. How annoying! And Mabel was such a hyper-sensitive little creature, with such an insatiable appetite for facts — why, she was liable to worry herself sick over it. Yet he must crawl out somehow. He cast a helpless glance in the direction of Mr. Armitage; but that gentleman was deeply engrossed in what was evidently a very amusing magazine article. Mrs. Armitage was busy resurrecting old favorites from amongst a great mass of sheet music.

"The stripes?"

Cap Drake gazed at her so absently and so long, that Mabel felt it incumbent upon her to repeat the question.

"Oh! now I remember!" he cried, his face brightening up hypocritically. "Flags, wasn't it? Come over on the sofa and I'll tell you all about it. It's a deep subject, a very deep subject." he shook his head profoundly. "In the old Roman Republic, before Christ, you know, the soldiers used to carry a handful of hay on the end of a pole. And before that, the soldier who slew Cyrus, the great Persian king, was highly honored when his comrades allowed him to carry a golden cock at the head of the army. Thus, you see, there were no real banners in those days, but — "

And in this wise, Cap Drake proceeded, mopping his perspiring forhead and racking his brain for more data upon the detestable subject. Mabel did not interrupt; but he saw her azure eyes fixed upon him in mute approach, and he could have sworn she was ready for tears.

"But, Cappy, the stripes?" she interjected, softly, once, and thereat he plunged into a description of the flags borne by the knights of William the Conqueror, as portrayed in the Bayeux tapestry. After exhausting that he took up the oriflamme of France, and from there to the fleurs-de-lis, regained his scattered wits by relating a long legend of the days of chivalry. As he described the blue imperial standard, with its yellow eagle and golden bees, he managed to get to his feet, and with the tricolor of the Revolution he gained the door.

"Why so early?" asked Mrs. Armitage. "I'll sing the 'Garden of Sleep' if you stay, and you know you'll forego anything for the sake of that."

"No, I'd rather not, thank you. A slight headache to-night, and — " He paused almost in terror as his eyes fell on Mable, and saw her lips beginning to form "The stripes, Cappy?" and he said good-night very abruptly and hurried down the hall. Instead of going to his room he stole to the library, where he did contract a headache in an hour of bootless rummaging. He discovered two atlases which contained color-symphonies of the flags of all nations, but not a line could he find on the subject in hand. A reference to the encyclopaedia developed the fact that the one volume which was sure to hold the secret, “Dan-Fra” was missing. Then he went to bed.

“Cappy! O Cappy!”

Mabel knelt before his door, having floated down the hallway more angel-like than ever in her snowy nightdress, her delicate face framed in an aureole of unbound gold. Mr. Armitage had ensconced himself in the curtained oriel at the head of the stairs.

It was a very timid little knock, and there was a pitiful quaver to her voice. Cap Drake groaned and sat up.

“Won’t you tell me what the stripes mean, Cappy? Oh, won’t you tell me, Cappy? I’ve tried ever so hard, but I can’t go to bed till I know.”

“The stripes?” — in muffled syllables from the further side of the door. “Hadn’t you better go back to bed?”

“Tell me, Cappy, and then I will. It bothers me so I can’t go to sleep till you tell me.”

“Well — er — really, I don’t know.” Having at last taken the bull by the horns he felt somewhat relieved. At least no more circumlocution was necessary.

“I’ll never believe it, Cappy: no, never!”

“Perhaps they have no meaning?”

“Yes they have. I know they have, and so do you. And you just won’t tell me, and I think you’re too mean for anything — there, now!”

“But, Mabel, I tell you I don’t know. I’d tell you if I did — you know I would but I honestly don’t. I’ll find out to-morrow for you. Now go downstairs, there’s a good girl.”

“O Cappy, don’t be cruel. I — I’m going to cry.”

Cap Drake bespoke his agony in certain intensive adjectives, unmentionable and shocking, save in the mouths of pious divines. But he smothered them deep down in his larynx and resolutely shut his lips. Then the heavy silence of the night settled down upon them, broken by disconsolate sobs and pathetic chokings from Mabel’s side of the door. There was also suppressed laughter from the direction of the oriel; but Cap Drake did not hear that.

A long silence.

He wonders if she has gone, and ventures “Good-night, Mabel.”

She responds with a miserable little wail.

He has recourse to more intensive adjectives, strikes a light and begins to dress.

He opened the door cautiously and saw at his feet the woeful little creature, in rumpled white, sobbing convulsively. There had been a great deal of the woman born into Cap Drake, and, though he was now jogging down the shadowy slope of life in single blessedness, it had never been stunted nor held back in its growth as is the case with most men similarly circumstanced. So he took her into his arms, in much the same way he had done a memorable twelve years agone, and carried her down-stairs to the nursery. And there he soothed her, and held her hand in his till midnight chimed and her honest blue eyes were veiled in slumber. The he softly kissed the saintly forehead and went upstairs, feeling somewhat soothed, yet deeming himself very much of a brute.

The next day when Mr. Lennon, the head bookkeeper, in response to Cap Drake's call stepped into the inner office, he expected nothing less than a consultation on an important business interest then at issue. A glance at his employer's clouded countenance convinced him that this was so.

"Mr. Lennon, do you happen to — a — "

Mr. Lennon shaped his austere features into their best judicial expression. It must, indeed, be important,

"Mr. Lennon, do you — I say, what do the stripes mean, any way?"

To his everlasting credit, the bookkeeper relaxed never a muscle, but, as he afterward confided to the copying clerk, "You could have knocked me over with a feather."

"The stripes, sir? I hardly understand." At the same time a haunting suspicion crossed his mind that it was one of those new-fangled business college notions introduced by his latest assistant.

"The stripes in the American flag?"

"Oh! Well, the stars mean — "

"Dash the stars! The stripes, man! the stripes!"

But whatever recollection — if recollection he ever had — was dissipated by his employer's purple forehead, and he respired in a relieved sort of way when he regained the cooler atmosphere of the counting-room. Then the first-assistant was called in, and finally, when the establishment was exhausted, the office boy was dispatched on a mission to Judge Parker's office, and the typewriter detailed to finish the morning, and if needs be, the day, in the reference department of the near-by library.

Cap Drake took a much earlier train home than was his wont on Saturday afternoons, armed with a huge bunch of violets, and the solution of that most momentous of problems — the significance of the stripes in the American banner. Mabel was not personally in evidence, but she apparently had just come in, for her school books lay upon the reading stand in the library. Among other things, he had taken it upon himself to be her literary mentor; so he at once buried himself in her composition book, pausing with a start at her most recent production. It was very interesting; he skimmed down the page without noticing her entry, and when the bunch of violets had fallen to the floor, read on regardless.

He gasped in an apoplectic manner as he turned the page and read: “The United States flag has silver stars on a blue field, and red stripes on a white ground. For every state a star is added. The number of stripes never change. There are thirteen stripes, counting the white ones, too. And there were thirteen original states — ”

He looked up and saw her for the first time. “When did you write this?” he asked.

Her blue eyes, with their usual expression of wondering innocence, never faltered. “Yesterday. Don’t you remember when you came into the library and saw how busy I was? And Miss Storrs said it was excellent, and made me read it out before all the class, and — ”

But Cap Drake never heard. He was at the telephone endeavoring to get the switch on Red 17.

“Anywhere to-night?” he asked her, while waiting on Central’s pleasure.

Mabel shook her head, her wide-eyed wonder deepening.

“Well, you’re going with me.”

“That’s all right,” he added. “I’ll fix it with your mother.”

“Red 17? — Yes — How are the box seats? — Yes — Two — yes; t, w, o, two — All right — thank you.”

Li-Wan, the Fair

“The sun sinks, Canim, and the heat of the day is gone!”

So called Li Wan to the man whose head was hidden beneath the squirrel-skin robe, but she called softly, as though divided between the duty of waking him and the fear of him awake. For she was afraid of this big husband of hers, who was like unto none of the men she had known. The moose-meat sizzled uneasily, and she moved the frying-pan to one side of the red embers. As she did so she glanced warily at the two Hudson Bay dogs dripping eager slaver from their scarlet tongues and following her every movement. They were huge, hairy fellows, crouched to leeward in the thin smoke-wake of the fire to escape the swarming myriads of mosquitoes. As Li Wan gazed down the steep to where the Klondike flung its swollen flood between the hills, one of the dogs bellied its way forward like a worm, and with a deft, catlike stroke of the paw dipped a chunk of hot meat out of the pan to the ground. But Li Wan caught him from out the tail of her eye, and he sprang back with a snap and a snarl as she rapped him over the nose with a stick of firewood.

“Nay, Olo,” she laughed, recovering the meat without removing her eye from him. “Thou art ever hungry, and for that thy nose leads thee into endless troubles.”

But the mate of Olo joined him, and together they defied the woman. The hair on their backs and shoulders bristled in recurrent waves of anger, and the thin lips writhed and lifted into ugly wrinkles, exposing the flesh-tearing fangs, cruel and menacing. Their very noses serrulated and shook in brute passion, and they snarled as the wolves snarl, with all the hatred and malignity of the breed impelling them to spring upon the woman and drag her down.

“And thou, too, Bash, fierce as thy master and never at peace with the hand that feeds thee! This is not thy quarrel, so that be thine! and that!”

As she cried, she drove at them with the firewood, but they avoided the blows and refused to retreat. They separated and approached her from either side, crouching low and snarling. Li Wan had struggled with the wolf-dog for mastery from the time she toddled among the skin-bales of the teepee, and she knew a crisis was at hand. Bash had halted, his muscles stiff and tense for the spring; Olo was yet creeping into striking distance.

Grasping two blazing sticks by the charred ends, she faced the brutes. The one held back, but Bash sprang, and she met him in mid-air with the flaming weapon. There were sharp yelps of pain and swift odors of burning hair and flesh as he rolled in the dirt and the woman ground the fiery embers into his mouth. Snapping wildly, he flung himself sidewise out of her reach and in a frenzy of fear scrambled for safety. Olo, on the other side, had begun his retreat, when Li Wan reminded him of her primacy by hurling a heavy stick of wood into his ribs. Then the pair retreated under a rain of firewood, and on the edge of the camp fell to licking their wounds and whimpering by turns and snarling.

Li Wan blew the ashes off the meat and sat down again. Her heart had not gone up a beat, and the incident was already old, for this was the routine of life. Canim had not stirred during the disorder, but instead had set up a lusty snoring.

"Come, Canim!" she called. "The heat of the day is gone, and the trail waits for our feet."

The squirrel-skin robe was agitated and cast aside by a brown arm. Then the man's eyelids fluttered and drooped again.

"His pack is heavy," she thought, "and he is tired with the work of the morning."

A mosquito stung her on the neck, and she daubed the unprotected spot with wet clay from a ball she had convenient to hand. All morning, toiling up the divide and enveloped in a cloud of the pests, the man and woman had plastered themselves with the sticky mud, which, drying in the sun, covered their faces with masks of clay. These masks, broken in divers places by the movement of the facial muscles, had constantly to be renewed, so that the deposit was irregular of depth and peculiar of aspect.

Li Wan shook Canim gently but with persistence till he roused and sat up. His first glance was to the sun, and after consulting the celestial timepiece he hunched over to the fire and fell-to ravenously on the meat. He was a large Indian fully six feet in height, deep-chested and heavy-muscled, and his eyes were keener and vested with greater mental vigor than the average of his kind. The lines of will had marked his face deeply, and this, coupled with a sternness and primitiveness, advertised a native indomitability, unswerving of purpose, and prone, when thwarted, to sullen cruelty.

"To-morrow, Li Wan, we shall feast." He sucked a marrow-bone clean and threw it to the dogs. "We shall have flapjacks fried in bacon grease, and sugar, which is more toothsome — ”

“Flapjacks?” she questioned, mouthing the word curiously.

“Ay,” Canim answered with superiority; “and I shall teach you new ways of cookery. Of these things I speak you are ignorant, and of many more things besides. You have lived your days in a little corner of the earth and know nothing. But I,” — he straightened himself and looked at her pridefully, — ”I am a great traveller, and have been all places, even among the white people, and I am versed in their ways, and in the ways of many peoples. I am not a tree, born to stand in one place always and know not what there be over the next hill; for I am Canim, the Canoe, made to go here and there and to journey and quest up and down the length and breadth of the world.”

She bowed her head humbly. “It is true. I have eaten fish and meat and berries all my days and lived in a little corner of the earth. Nor did I dream the world was so large until you stole me from my people and I cooked and carried for you on the endless trails.” She looked up at him suddenly. “Tell me, Canim, does this trail ever end?”

“Nay,” he answered. “My trail is like the world; it never ends. My trail is the world, and I have travelled it since the time my legs could carry me, and I shall travel it until I die. My father and my mother may be dead, but it is long since I looked upon them, and I do not care. My tribe is like your tribe. It stays in the one place — which is far from here, — but I care naught for my tribe, for I am Canim, the Canoe!”

“And must I, Li Wan, who am weary, travel always your trail until I die?”

“You, Li Wan, are my wife, and the wife travels the husband’s trail wheresoever it goes. It is the law. And were it not the law, yet would it be the law of Canim, who is lawgiver unto himself and his.”

She bowed her head again, for she knew no other law than that man was the master of woman.

“Be not in haste,” Canim cautioned her, as she began to strap the meagre camp outfit to her pack. “The sun is yet hot, and the trail leads down and the footing is good.”

She dropped her work obediently and resumed her seat.

Canim regarded her with speculative interest. “You do not squat on your hams like other women,” he remarked.

“No,” she answered. “It never came easy. It tires me, and I cannot take my rest that way.”

“And why is it your feet point not straight before you?”

“I do not know, save that they are unlike the feet of other women.”

A satisfied light crept into his eyes, but otherwise he gave no sign.

“Like other women, your hair is black; but have you ever noticed that it is soft and fine, softer and finer than the hair of other women?”

“I have noticed,” she answered shortly, for she was not pleased at such cold analysis of her sex-deficiencies.

“It is a year, now, since I took you from your people,” he went on, “and you are nigh as shy and afraid of me as when first I looked upon you. How does this thing be?”

Li Wan shook her head. “I am afraid of you, Canim, you are so big and strange. And further, before you looked upon me even, I was afraid of all the young men. I do not know ... I cannot say ... only it seemed, somehow, as though I should not be for them, as though ...”

“Ay,” he encouraged, impatient at her faltering.

“As though they were not my kind.”

“Not your kind?” he demanded slowly. “Then what is your kind?”

“I do not know, I ...” She shook her head in a bewildered manner. “I cannot put into words the way I felt. It was strangeness in me. I was unlike other maidens, who sought the young men slyly. I could not care for the young men that way. It would have been a great wrong, it seemed, and an ill deed.”

“What is the first thing you remember?” Canim asked with abrupt irrelevance.

“Pow-Wah-Kaan, my mother.”

“And naught else before Pow-Wah-Kaan?”

“Naught else.”

But Canim, holding her eyes with his, searched her secret soul and saw it waver.

“Think, and think hard, Li Wan!” he threatened.

She stammered, and her eyes were piteous and pleading, but his will dominated her and wrung from her lips the reluctant speech.

“But it was only dreams, Canim, ill dreams of childhood, shadows of things not real, visions such as the dogs, sleeping in the sun-warmth, behold and whine out against.”

“Tell me,” he commanded, “of the things before Pow-Wah-Kaan, your mother.”

"They are forgotten memories," she protested. "As a child I dreamed awake, with my eyes open to the day, and when I spoke of the strange things I saw I was laughed at, and the other children were afraid and drew away from me. And when I spoke of the things I saw to Pow-Wah-Kaan, she chided me and said they were evil; also she beat me. It was a sickness, I believe, like the falling-sickness that comes to old men; and in time I grew better and dreamed no more. And now ... I cannot remember" — she brought her hand in a confused manner to her forehead — "they are there, somewhere, but I cannot find them, only ..."

"Only," Canim repeated, holding her.

"Only one thing. But you will laugh at its foolishness, it is so unreal."

"Nay, Li Wan. Dreams are dreams. They may be memories of other lives we have lived. I was once a moose. I firmly believe I was once a moose, what of the things I have seen in dreams, and heard."

Strive as he would to hide it, a growing anxiety was manifest, but Li Wan, groping after the words with which to paint the picture, took no heed.

"I see a snow-tramped space among the trees," she began, "and across the snow the sign of a man where he has dragged himself heavily on hand and knee. And I see, too, the man in the snow, and it seems I am very close to him when I look. He is unlike real men, for he has hair on his face, much hair, and the hair of his face and head is yellow like the summer coat of the weasel. His eyes are closed, but they open and search about. They are blue like the sky, and look into mine and search no more. And his hand moves, slow, as from weakness, and I feel ..."

"Ay," Canim whispered hoarsely. "You feel — ?"

"No! no!" she cried in haste. "I feel nothing. Did I say 'feel'? I did not mean it. It could not be that I should mean it. I see, and I see only, and that is all I see — a man in the snow, with eyes like the sky, and hair like the weasel. I have seen it many times, and always it is the same — a man in the snow — "

"And do you see yourself?" he asked, leaning forward and regarding her intently. "Do you ever see yourself and the man in the snow?"

"Why should I see myself? Am I not real?"

His muscles relaxed and he sank back, an exultant satisfaction in his eyes which he turned from her so that she might not see.

"I will tell you, Li Wan," he spoke decisively; "you were a little bird in some life before, a little moose-bird, when you saw this thing, and the memory of it is with you yet. It is not strange. I was once a moose, and my father's father afterward became a bear — so said the shaman, and the shaman cannot lie. Thus, on the Trail of the Gods we pass from life to life, and the gods know only and understand. Dreams and the shadows of dreams be memories, nothing more, and the dog, whining asleep in the sun-warmth, doubtless sees and remembers things gone before. Bash, there, was a warrior once. I do firmly believe he was once a warrior."

Canim tossed a bone to the brute and got upon his feet. "Come, let us begone. The sun is yet hot, but it will get no cooler."

"And these white people, what are they like?" Li Wan made bold to ask.

"Like you and me," he answered, "only they are less dark of skin. You will be among them ere the day is dead."

Canim lashed the sleeping-robe to his one-hundred-and-fifty-pound pack, smeared his face with wet clay, and sat down to rest till Li Wan had finished loading the dogs. Olo cringed at sight of the club in her hand, and gave no trouble when the bundle of forty pounds and odd was strapped upon him. But Bash was aggrieved and truculent, and could not forbear to whimper and snarl as he was forced to receive the burden. He bristled his back and bared his teeth as she drew the straps tight, the while throwing all the malignancy of his nature into the glances shot at her sideways and backward. And Canim chuckled and said, "Did I not say he was once a very great warrior?"

"These furs will bring a price," he remarked as he adjusted his head-strap and lifted his pack clear of the ground. "A big price. The white men pay well for such goods, for they have no time to hunt and are soft to the cold. Soon shall we feast, Li Wan, as you have feasted never in all the lives you have lived before."

She grunted acknowledgment and gratitude for her lord's condescension, slipped into the harness, and bent forward to the load.

"The next time I am born, I would be born a white man," he added, and swung off down the trail which dived into the gorge at his feet.

The dogs followed close at his heels, and Li Wan brought up the rear. But her thoughts were far away, across the Ice Mountains to the east, to the little corner of the earth where her childhood had been lived. Ever as a child, she remembered, she had been looked upon as strange, as one with an affliction. Truly she had dreamed awake and been scolded and beaten for the remarkable visions she saw, till, after a time, she had outgrown them. But not utterly. Though they troubled her no more waking, they came to her in her sleep, grown woman that she was, and many a night of nightmare was hers, filled with fluttering shapes, vague and meaningless. The talk with Canim had excited her, and down all the twisted slant of the divide she harked back to the mocking fantasies of her dreams.

"Let us take breath," Canim said, when they had tapped midway the bed of the main creek.

He rested his pack on a jutting rock, slipped the head-strap, and sat down. Li Wan joined him, and the dogs sprawled panting on the ground beside them. At their feet rippled the glacial drip of the hills, but it was muddy and discolored, as if soiled by some commotion of the earth.

"Why is this?" Li Wan asked.

"Because of the white men who work in the ground. Listen!" He held up his hand, and they heard the ring of pick and shovel, and the sound of men's voices. "They are made mad by gold, and work without ceasing that they may find it. Gold? It is yellow and comes from the ground, and is considered of great value. It is also a measure of price."

But Li Wan's roving eyes had called her attention from him. A few yards below and partly screened by a clump of young spruce, the tiered logs of a cabin rose to meet its overhanging roof of dirt. A thrill ran through her, and all her dream-phantoms roused up and stirred about uneasily.

"Canim," she whispered in an agony of apprehension. "Canim, what is that?"

"The white man's teepee, in which he eats and sleeps."

She eyed it wistfully, grasping its virtues at a glance and thrilling again at the unaccountable sensations it aroused. "It must be very warm in time of frost," she said aloud, though she felt that she must make strange sounds with her lips.

She felt impelled to utter them, but did not, and the next instant Canim said, "It is called a cabin."

Her heart gave a great leap. The sounds! the very sounds! She looked about her in sudden awe. How should she know that strange word before ever she heard it? What could be the matter? And then with a shock, half of fear and half of delight, she realized that for the first time in her life there had been sanity and significance in the promptings of her dreams.

"Cabin" she repeated to herself. "Cabin." An incoherent flood of dream-stuff welled up and up till her head was dizzy and her heart seemed bursting. Shadows, and looming bulks of things, and unintelligible associations fluttered and whirled about, and she strove vainly with her consciousness to grasp and hold them. For she felt that there, in that welter of memories, was the key of the mystery; could she but grasp and hold it, all would be clear and plain —

O Canim! O Pow-Wah-Kaan! O shades and shadows, what was that?

She turned to Canim, speechless and trembling, the dream-stuff in mad, overwhelming riot. She was sick and fainting, and could only listen to the ravishing sounds which proceeded from the cabin in a wonderful rhythm.

“Hum, fiddle,” Canim vouchsafed.

But she did not hear him, for in the ecstasy she was experiencing, it seemed at last that all things were coming clear. Now! now! she thought. A sudden moisture swept into her eyes, and the tears trickled down her cheeks. The mystery was unlocking, but the faintness was overpowering her. If only she could hold herself long enough! If only — but the landscape bent and crumpled up, and the hills swayed back and forth across the sky as she sprang upright and screamed, “Daddy! Daddy!” Then the sun reeled, and darkness smote her, and she pitched forward limp and headlong among the rocks.

Canim looked to see if her neck had been broken by the heavy pack, grunted his satisfaction, and threw water upon her from the creek. She came to slowly, with choking sobs, and sat up.

“It is not good, the hot sun on the head,” he ventured.

And she answered, “No, it is not good, and the pack bore upon me hard.”

“We shall camp early, so that you may sleep long and win strength,” he said gently. “And if we go now, we shall be the quicker to bed.”

Li Wan said nothing, but tottered to her feet in obedience and stirred up the dogs. She took the swing of his pace mechanically, and followed him past the cabin, scarce daring to breathe. But no sounds issued forth, though the door was open and smoke curling upward from the sheet-iron stovepipe.

They came upon a man in the bend of the creek, white of skin and blue of eye, and for a moment Li Wan saw the other man in the snow. But she saw dimly, for she was weak and tired from what she had undergone. Still, she looked at him curiously, and stopped with Canim to watch him at his work. He was washing gravel in a large pan, with a circular, tilting movement; and as they looked, giving a deft flirt, he flashed up the yellow gold in a broad streak across the bottom of the pan.

“Very rich, this creek,” Canim told her, as they went on. “Sometime I will find such a creek, and then I shall be a big man.”

Cabins and men grew more plentiful, till they came to where the main portion of the creek was spread out before them. It was the scene of a vast devastation. Everywhere the earth was torn and rent as though by a Titan’s struggles. Where there were no upthrown mounds of gravel, great holes and trenches yawned, and chasms where the thick rime of the earth had been peeled to bed-rock. There was no worn channel for the creek, and its waters, dammed up, diverted, flying through the air on giddy flumes, trickling into sinks and low places, and raised by huge water-wheels, were used and used again a thousand times. The hills had been stripped of their trees, and their raw sides gored and perforated by great timber-slides and prospect holes. And over all, like a monstrous race of ants, was flung an army of men — mud-covered, dirty, dishevelled men, who crawled in and out of the holes of their digging, crept like big bugs along the flumes, and toiled and sweated at the gravel-heaps which they kept in constant unrest — men, as far as the eye could see, even to the rims of the hilltops, digging, tearing, and scouring the face of nature.

Li Wan was appalled at the tremendous upheaval. “Truly, these men are mad,” she said to Canim.

“Small wonder. The gold they dig after is a great thing,” he replied. “It is the greatest thing in the world.”

For hours they threaded the chaos of greed, Canim eagerly intent, Li Wan weak and listless. She knew she had been on the verge of disclosure, and she felt that she was still on the verge of disclosure, but the nervous strain she had undergone had tired her, and she passively waited for the thing, she knew not what, to happen. From every hand her senses snatched up and conveyed to her innumerable impressions, each of which became a dull excitation to her jaded imagination. Somewhere within her, responsive notes were answering to the things without, forgotten and undreamed-of correspondences were being renewed; and she was aware of it in an incurious way, and her soul was troubled, but she was not equal to the mental exultation necessary to transmute and understand. So she plodded wearily on at the heels of her lord, content to wait for that which she knew, somewhere, somehow, must happen.

After undergoing the mad bondage of man, the creek finally returned to its ancient ways, all soiled and smirched from its toil, and coiled lazily among the broad flats and timbered spaces where the valley widened to its mouth. Here the "pay" ran out, and men were loth to loiter with the lure yet beyond. And here, as Li Wan paused to prod Olo with her staff, she heard the mellow silver of a woman's laughter.

Before a cabin sat a woman, fair of skin and rosy as a child, dimpling with glee at the words of another woman in the doorway. But the woman who sat shook about her great masses of dark, wet hair which yielded up its dampness to the warm caresses of the sun.

For an instant Li Wan stood transfixed. Then she was aware of a blinding flash, and a snap, as though something gave way; and the woman before the cabin vanished, and the cabin and the tall spruce timber, and the jagged sky-line, and Li Wan saw another woman, in the shine of another sun, brushing great masses of black hair, and singing as she brushed. And Li Wan heard the words of the song, and understood, and was a child again. She was smitten with a vision, wherein all the troublesome dreams merged and became one, and shapes and shadows took up their accustomed round, and all was clear and plain and real. Many pictures jostled past, strange scenes, and trees, and flowers, and people; and she saw them and knew them all.

"When you were a little bird, a little moose-bird," Canim said, his eyes upon her and burning into her.

"When I was a little moose-bird," she whispered, so faint and low he scarcely heard. And she knew she lied, as she bent her head to the strap and took the swing of the trail.

And such was the strangeness of it, the real now became unreal. The mile tramp and the pitching of camp by the edge of the stream seemed like a passage in a nightmare. She cooked the meat, fed the dogs, and unlashed the packs as in a dream, and it was not until Canim began to sketch his next wandering that she became herself again.

"The Klondike runs into the Yukon," he was saying; "a mighty river, mightier than the Mackenzie, of which you know. So we go, you and I, down to Fort o' Yukon. With dogs, in time of winter, it is twenty sleeps. Then we follow the Yukon away into the west — one hundred sleeps, two hundred — I have never heard. It is very far. And then we come to the sea. You know nothing of the sea, so let me tell you. As the lake is to the island, so the sea is to the land; all the rivers run to it, and it is without end. I have seen it at Hudson Bay; I have yet to see it in Alaska. And then we may take a great canoe upon the sea, you and I, Li Wan, or we may follow the land into the south many a hundred sleeps. And after that I do not know, save that I am Canim, the Canoe, wanderer and far-journeyer over the earth!"

She sat and listened, and fear ate into her heart as she pondered over this plunge into the illimitable wilderness. "It is a weary way," was all she said, head bowed on knee in resignation.

Then it was a splendid thought came to her, and at the wonder of it she was all aglow. She went down to the stream and washed the dried clay from her face. When the ripples died away, she stared long at her mirrored features; but sun and weather-beat had done their work, and, what of roughness and bronze, her skin was not soft and dimpled as a child's. But the thought was still splendid and the glow unabated as she crept in beside her husband under the sleeping-robe.

She lay awake, staring up at the blue of the sky and waiting for Canim to sink into the first deep sleep. When this came about, she wormed slowly and carefully away, tucked the robe around him, and stood up. At her second step, Bash growled savagely. She whispered persuasively to him and glanced at the man. Canim was snoring profoundly. Then she turned, and with swift, noiseless feet sped up the back trail.

Mrs. Evelyn Van Wyck was just preparing for bed. Bored by the duties put upon her by society, her wealth, and widowed blessedness, she had journeyed into the Northland and gone to housekeeping in a cosey cabin on the edge of the diggings. Here, aided and abetted by her friend and companion, Myrtle Giddings, she played at living close to the soil, and cultivated the primitive with refined abandon.

She strove to get away from the generations of culture and parlor selection, and sought the earth-grip her ancestors had forfeited. Likewise she induced mental states which she fondly believed to approximate those of the stone-folk, and just now, as she put up her hair for the pillow, she was indulging her fancy with a palaeolithic wooing. The details consisted principally of cave-dwellings and cracked marrow-bones, intersprinkled with fierce carnivora, hairy mammoths, and combats with rude flaked knives of flint; but the sensations were delicious. And as Evelyn Van Wyck fled through the sombre forest aisles before the too arduous advances of her slant-browed, skin-clad wooer, the door of the cabin opened, without the courtesy of a knock, and a skin-clad woman, savage and primitive, came in.

"Mercy!"

With a leap that would have done credit to a cave-woman, Miss Giddings landed in safety behind the table. But Mrs. Van Wyck held her ground. She noticed that the intruder was laboring under a strong excitement, and cast a swift glance backward to assure herself that the way was clear to the bunk, where the big Colt's revolver lay beneath a pillow.

"Greeting, O Woman of the Wondrous Hair," said Li Wan.

But she said it in her own tongue, the tongue spoken in but a little corner of the earth, and the women did not understand.

"Shall I go for help?" Miss Giddings quavered.

"The poor creature is harmless, I think," Mrs. Van Wyck replied. "And just look at her skin-clothes, ragged and trail-worn and all that. They are certainly unique. I shall buy them for my collection. Get my sack, Myrtle, please, and set up the scales."

Li Wan followed the shaping of the lips, but the words were unintelligible, and then, and for the first time, she realized, in a moment of suspense and indecision, that there was no medium of communication between them.

And at the passion of her dumbness she cried out, with arms stretched wide apart, "O Woman, thou art sister of mine!"

The tears coursed down her cheeks as she yearned toward them, and the break in her voice carried the sorrow she could not utter. But Miss Giddings was trembling, and even Mrs. Van Wyck was disturbed.

"I would live as you live. Thy ways are my ways, and our ways be one. My husband is Canim, the Canoe, and he is big and strange, and I am afraid. His trail is all the world and never ends, and I am weary. My mother was like you, and her hair was as thine, and her eyes. And life was soft to me then, and the sun warm."

She knelt humbly, and bent her head at Mrs. Van Wyck's feet. But Mrs. Van Wyck drew away, frightened at her vehemence.

Li Wan stood up, panting for speech. Her dumb lips could not articulate her overmastering consciousness of kind.

"Trade? you trade?" Mrs. Van Wyck questioned, slipping, after the fashion of the superior peoples, into pigeon tongue.

She touched Li Wan's ragged skins to indicate her choice, and poured several hundreds of gold into the blower. She stirred the dust about and trickled its yellow lustre temptingly through her fingers. But Li Wan saw only the fingers, milk-white and shapely, tapering daintily to the rosy, jewel-like nails. She placed her own hand alongside, all work-worn and calloused, and wept.

Mrs. Van Wyck misunderstood. “Gold,” she encouraged. “Good gold! You trade? You changee for changee?” And she laid her hand again on Li Wan’s skin garments.

“How much? You sell? How much?” she persisted, running her hand against the way of the hair so that she might make sure of the sinew-thread seam.

But Li Wan was deaf as well, and the woman’s speech was without significance. Dismay at her failure sat upon her. How could she identify herself with these women? For she knew they were of the one breed, blood-sisters among men and the women of men. Her eyes roved wildly about the interior, taking in the soft draperies hanging around, the feminine garments, the oval mirror, and the dainty toilet accessories beneath. And the things haunted her, for she had seen like things before; and as she looked at them her lips involuntarily formed sounds which her throat trembled to utter. Then a thought flashed upon her, and she steadied herself. She must be calm. She must control herself, for there must be no misunderstanding this time, or else, — and she shook with a storm of suppressed tears and steadied herself again.

She put her hand on the table. “Table,” she clearly and distinctly enunciated. “Table,” she repeated.

She looked at Mrs. Van Wyck, who nodded approbation. Li Wan exulted, but brought her will to bear and held herself steady. “Stove” she went on. “Stove.”

And at every nod of Mrs. Van Wyck, Li Wan’s excitement mounted. Now stumbling and halting, and again in feverish haste, as the recrudescence of forgotten words was fast or slow, she moved about the cabin, naming article after article. And when she paused finally, it was in triumph, with body erect and head thrown back, expectant, waiting.

“Cat,” Mrs. Van Wyck, laughing, spelled out in kindergarten fashion. “I — see — the — cat — catch — the — rat.”

Li Wan nodded her head seriously. They were beginning to understand her at last, these women. The blood flushed darkly under her bronze at the thought, and she smiled and nodded her head still more vigorously.

Mrs. Van Wyck turned to her companion. “Received a smattering of mission education somewhere, I fancy, and has come to show it off.”

“Of course,” Miss Giddings tittered. “Little fool! We shall lose our sleep with her vanity.”

“All the same I want that jacket. If it is old, the workmanship is good — a most excellent specimen.” She returned to her visitor. “Changee for changee? You! Changee for changee? How much? Eh? How much, you?”

“Perhaps she’d prefer a dress or something,” Miss Giddings suggested.

Mrs. Van Wyck went up to Li Wan and made signs that she would exchange her wrapper for the jacket. And to further the transaction, she took Li Wan’s hand and placed it amid the lace and ribbons of the flowing bosom, and rubbed the fingers back and forth so they might feel the texture. But the jewelled butterfly which loosely held the fold in place was insecurely fastened, and the front of the gown slipped to the side, exposing a firm white breast, which had never known the lip-clasp of a child.

Mrs. Van Wyck coolly repaired the mischief; but Li Wan uttered a loud cry, and ripped and tore at her skin-shirt till her own breast showed firm and white as Evelyn Van Wyck’s. Murmuring inarticulately and making swift signs, she strove to establish the kinship.

“A half-breed,” Mrs. Van Wyck commented. “I thought so from her hair.”

Miss Giddings made a fastidious gesture. “Proud of her father’s white skin. It’s beastly! Do give her something, Evelyn, and make her go.”

But the other woman sighed. “Poor creature, I wish I could do something for her.”

A heavy foot crunched the gravel without. Then the cabin door swung wide, and Canim stalked in. Miss Giddings saw a vision of sudden death, and screamed; but Mrs. Van Wyck faced him composedly.

“What do you want?” she demanded.

“How do?” Canim answered suavely and directly, pointing at the same time to Li Wan. “Um my wife.”

He reached out for her, but she waved him back.

“Speak, Canim! Tell them that I am — ”

“Daughter of Pow-Wah-Kaan? Nay, of what is it to them that they should care? Better should I tell them thou art an ill wife, given to creeping from thy husband’s bed when sleep is heavy in his eyes.”

Again he reached out for her, but she fled away from him to Mrs. Van Wyck, at whose feet she made frenzied appeal, and whose knees she tried to clasp. But the lady stepped back and gave permission with her eyes to Canim. He gripped Li Wan under the shoulders and raised her to her feet.

She fought with him, in a madness of despair, till his chest was heaving with the exertion, and they had reeled about over half the room.

"Let me go, Canim," she sobbed.

But he twisted her wrist till she ceased to struggle. "The memories of the little moose-bird are overstrong and make trouble," he began.

"I know! I know!" she broke in. "I see the man in the snow, and as never before I see him crawl on hand and knee. And I, who am a little child, am carried on his back. And this is before Pow-Wah-Kaan and the time I came to live in a little corner of the earth."

"You know," he answered, forcing her toward the door; "but you will go with me down the Yukon and forget."

"Never shall I forget! So long as my skin is white shall I remember!" She clutched frantically at the door-post and looked a last appeal to Mrs. Evelyn Van Wyck.

"Then will I teach thee to forget, I, Canim, the Canoe!"

As he spoke he pulled her fingers clear and passed out with her upon the trail.

Like Argus of the Ancient Times

IT was the summer of 1897, and there was trouble in the Tarwater family. Grandfather Tarwater, after remaining properly subdued and crushed for a quiet decade, had broken out again. This time it was the Klondike fever. His first and one unvarying symptom of such attacks was song. One chant only he raised, though he remembered no more than the first stanza and but three lines of that. And the family knew his feet were itching and his brain was tingling with the old madness, when he lifted his hoarse-cracked voice, now falsetto-cracked, in:

Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this modern Greece,
Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum, tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece.

Ten years earlier he had lifted the chant, sung to the air of the "Doxology," when afflicted with the fever to go gold-mining in Patagonia. The multitudinous family had sat upon him, but had had a hard time doing it. When all else had failed to shake his resolution, they had applied lawyers to him, with the threat of getting out guardianship papers and of confining him in the state asylum for the insane-which was reasonable for a man who had, a quarter of a century before, speculated away all but ten meagre acres of a California principality, and who had displayed no better business acumen ever since.

The application of lawyers to John Tarwater was like the application of a mustard plaster. For, in his judgment, they were the gentry, more than any other, who had skinned him out of the broad Tarwater acres. So, at the time of his Patagonian fever, the very thought of so drastic a remedy was sufficient to cure him. He quickly demonstrated he was not crazy by shaking the fever from him and agreeing not to go to Patagonia.

Next, he demonstrated how crazy he really was, by deeding over to his family, unsolicited, the ten acres on Tarwater Flat, the house, barn, outbuildings, and water-rights. Also did he turn over the eight hundred dollars in bank that was the long-saved salvage of his wrecked fortune. But for this the family found no cause for committal to the asylum, since such committal would necessarily invalidate what he had done.

"Grandfather is sure peeved," said Mary, his oldest daughter, herself a grandmother, when her father quit smoking.

All he had retained for himself was a span of old horses, a mountain buckboard, and his one room in the crowded house. Further, having affirmed that he would be beholden to none of them, he got the contract to carry the United States mail, twice a week, from Kelterville up over Tarwater Mountain to Old Almaden-which was a sporadically worked quick-silver mine in the upland cattle country. With his old horses it took all his time to make the two weekly round trips. And for ten years, rain or shine, he had never missed a trip. Nor had he failed once to pay his week's board into Mary's hand. This board he had insisted on, in the convalescence from his Patagonian fever, and he had paid it strictly, though he had given up tobacco in order to be able to do it.

"Huh!" he confided to the ruined water wheel of the old Tarwater Mill, which he had built from the standing timber and which had ground wheat for the first settlers. "Huh! They'll never put me in the poor farm so long as I support myself. And without a penny to my name it ain't likely any lawyer fellows'll come snoopin' around after me."

And yet, precisely because of these highly rational acts, it was held that John Tarwater was mildly crazy!

The first time he had lifted the chant of "Like Argus of the Ancient Times," had been in 1849, when, twenty-two years' of age, violently attacked by the Californian fever, he had sold two hundred and forty Michigan acres, forty of it cleared, for the price of four yoke of oxen, and a wagon, and had started across the Plains.

"And we turned off at Fort Hall, where the Oregon emigration went north'ard, and swung south for Californy," was his way of concluding the narrative of that arduous journey. And Bill Ping and me used to rope grizzlies out of the underbrush of Cache Slough in the Sacramento Valley."

Years of freighting and mining had followed, and, with a stake gleaned from the Merced placers, he satisfied the land-hunger of his race and time by settling in Sonoma County.

During the ten years of carrying the mail across Tarwater Township, up Tarwater Valley, and over Tarwater Mountain, most all of which land had once been his, he had spent his time dreaming of winning back that land before he died. And now, his huge gaunt form more erect than it had been for years, with a glinting of blue fires in his small and close-set eyes, he was lifting his ancient chant again.

“There he goes now-listen to him,” said William Tarwater.

“Nobody at home,” laughed Harris Topping, day labourer, husband of Annie Tarwater, and father of her nine children.

The kitchen door opened to admit the old man, returning from feeding his horses. The song had ceased from his lips; but Mary was irritable from a burnt hand and a grandchild whose stomach refused to digest properly diluted cows’ milk.

“Now there ain’t no use you carryin’ on that way, father,” she tackled him. “The time’s past for you to cut and run for a place like the Klondike, and singing won’t buy you nothing.”

“Just the same,” he answered quietly. “I bet I could go to that Klondike place and pick up enough gold to buy back the Tarwater lands.”

“Old fool!” Annie contributed.

“You couldn’t buy them back for less’n three hundred thousand and then some,” was William’s effort at squelching him.

“Then I could pick up three hundred thousand, and then some, if I was only there,” the old man retorted placidly.

“Thank God you can’t walk there, or you’d be startin’, I know,” Mary cried. “Ocean travel costs money.”

“I used to have money,” her father said humbly.

“Well, you ain’t got any now-so forget it,” William advised. “Them times is past, like roping bear with Bill Ping. There ain’t no more bear.”

“Just the same-“

But Mary cut him off. Seizing the day’s paper from the kitchen table, she flourished it savagely under her aged progenitor’s nose.

“What do those Klondikers say? There it is in cold print. Only the young and robust can stand the Klondike. It’s worse than the north pole. And they’ve left their dead a-plenty there themselves. Look at their pictures. You’re forty years older ‘n the oldest of them.”

John Tarwater did look, but his eyes strayed to other photographs on the highly sensational front page.

“And look at the photys of them nuggets they brought down,” he said. “I know gold. Didn’t I gopher twenty thousand outa the Merced? And wouldn’t it a-ben a hundred thousand if that cloudburst hadn’t busted my wing-dam? Now if I was only in the Klondike-“

"Crazy as a loon," William sneered in open aside to the rest.

"A nice way to talk to your father," Old Man Tarwater censured mildly. "My father'd have walloped the tar out of me with a single-tree if I'd spoke to him that way."

"But you ARE crazy, father-" William began.

"Reckon you're right, son. And that's where my father wasn't crazy. He'd a-done it."

"The old man's been reading some of them magazine articles about men who succeeded after forty," Annie jibed.

"And why not, daughter?" he asked. "And why can't a man succeed after he's seventy? I was only seventy this year. And mebbe I could succeed if only I could get to the Klondike-"

"Which you ain't going to get to," Mary shut him off.

"Oh, well, then," he sighed, "seein's I ain't, I might just as well go to bed."

He stood up, tall, gaunt, great-boned and gnarled, a splendid ruin of a man. His ragged hair and whiskers were not grey but snowy white, as were the tufts of hair that stood out on the backs of his huge bony fingers. He moved toward the door, opened it, sighed, and paused with a backward look.

"Just the same," he murmured plaintively, "the bottoms of my feet is itching something terrible."

Long before the family stirred next morning, his horses fed and harnessed by lantern light, breakfast cooked and eaten by lamp fight, Old Man Tarwater was off and away down Tarwater Valley on the road to Kelterville. Two things were unusual about this usual trip which he had made a thousand and forty times since taking the mail contract. He did not drive to Kelterville, but turned off on the main road south to Santa Rosa. Even more remarkable than this was the paper-wrapped parcel between his feet. It contained his one decent black suit, which Mary had been long reluctant to see him wear any more, not because it was shabby, but because, as he guessed what was at the back of her mind, it was decent enough to bury him in.

And at Santa Rosa, in a second-hand clothes shop, he sold the suit outright for two dollars and a half. From the same obliging shopman he received four dollars for the wedding ring of his long-dead wife. The span of horses and the wagon he disposed of for seventy-five dollars, although twenty-five was all he received down in cash. Chancing to meet Alton Granger on the street, to whom never before had he mentioned the ten dollars loaned him in ‘74, he reminded Alton Granger of the little affair, and was promptly paid. Also, of all unbelievable men to be in funds, he so found the town drunkard for whom he had bought many a drink in the old and palmy days. And from him John Tarwater borrowed a dollar. Finally, he took the afternoon train to San Francisco.

A dozen days later, carrying a half-empty canvas sack of blankets and old clothes, he landed on the beach of Dyea in the thick of the great Klondike Rush. The beach was screaming bedlam. Ten thousand tons of outfit lay heaped and scattered, and twice ten thousand men struggled with it and clamoured about it. Freight, by Indian-back, over Chilcoot to Lake Linderman, had jumped from sixteen to thirty cents a pound, which latter was a rate of six hundred dollars a ton. And the sub-arctic winter gloomed near at hand. All knew it, and all knew that of the twenty thousand of them very few would get across the passes, leaving the rest to winter and wait for the late spring thaw.

Such the beach old John Tarwater stepped upon; and straight across the beach and up the trail toward Chilcoot he headed, cackling his ancient chant, a very Grandfather Argus himself, with no outfit worry in the world, for he did not possess any outfit. That night he slept on the flats, five miles above Dyea, at the head of canoe navigation. Here the Dyea River became a rushing mountain torrent, plunging out of a dark canyon from the glaciers that fed it far above.

And here, early next morning, he beheld a little man weighing no more than a hundred, staggering along a foot-log under all of a hundred pounds of flour strapped on his back. Also, he beheld the little man stumble off the log and fall face-downward in a quiet eddy where the water was two feet deep and proceed quietly to drown. It was no desire of his to take death so easily, but the flour on his back weighed as much as he and would not let him up.

“Thank you, old man,” he said to Tarwater, when the latter had dragged him up into the air and ashore.

While he unlaced his shoes and ran the water out, they had further talk. Next, he fished out a ten-dollar gold-piece and offered it to his rescuer.

Old Tarwater shook his head and shivered, for the ice-water had wet him to his knees.

“But I reckon I wouldn’t object to settin’ down to a friendly meal with you.”

“Ain’t had breakfast?” the little man, who was past forty and who had said his name was Anson, queried with a glance frankly curious.

“Nary bite,” John Tarwater answered.

“Where’s your outfit? Ahead?”

“Nary outfit.”

“Expect to buy your grub on the Inside?”

“Nary a dollar to buy it with, friend. Which ain’t so important as a warm bite of breakfast right now.”

In Anson’s camp, a quarter of a mile on, Tarwater found a slender, red-whiskered young man of thirty cursing over a fire of wet willow wood. Introduced as Charles, he transferred his scowl and wrath to Tarwater, who, genially oblivious, devoted himself to the fire, took advantage of the chill morning breeze to create a draught which the other had left stupidly blocked by stones, and soon developed less smoke and more flame. The third member of the party, Bill Wilson, or Big Bill as they called him, came in with a hundred-and-forty-pound pack; and what Tarwater esteemed to be a very rotten breakfast was dished out by Charles. The mush was half cooked and mostly burnt, the bacon was charred carbon, and the coffee was unspeakable.

Immediately the meal was wolfed down the three partners took their empty pack-straps and headed down trail to where the remainder of their outfit lay at the last camp a mile away. And old Tarwater became busy. He washed the dishes, foraged dry wood, mended a broken pack-strap, put an edge on the butcher-knife and camp-axe, and repacked the picks and shovels into a more carryable parcel.

What had impressed him during the brief breakfast was the sort of awe in which Anson and Big Bill stood of Charles. Once, during the morning, while Anson took a breathing spell after bringing in another hundred-pound pack, Tarwater delicately hinted his impression.

“You see, it’s this way,” Anson said. “We’ve divided our leadership. We’ve got specialities. Now I’m a carpenter. When we get to Lake Linderman, and the trees are chopped and whipsawed into planks, I’ll boss the building of the boat. Big Bill is a logger and miner. So he’ll boss getting out the logs and all mining operations. Most of our outfit’s ahead. We went broke paying the Indians to pack that much of it to the top of Chilcoot. Our last partner is up there with it, moving it along by himself down the other side. His name's Liverpool, and he's a sailor. So, when the boat's built, he's the boss of the outfit to navigate the lakes and rapids to Klondike.

"And Charles-this Mr. Crayton-what might his speciality be?" Tarwater asked.

"He's the business man. When it comes to business and organization he's boss."

"Hum," Tarwater pondered. "Very lucky to get such a bunch of specialities into one outfit."

"More than luck," Anson agreed. "It was all accident, too. Each of us started alone. We met on the steamer coming up from San Francisco, and formed the party.-Well, I got to be goin'. Charles is liable to get kicking because I ain't packin' my share' just the same, you can't expect a hundred-pound man to pack as much as a hundred-and-sixty-pounder."

"Stick around and cook us something for dinner," Charles, on his next load in and noting the effects of the old man's handiness, told Tarwater.

And Tarwater cooked a dinner that was a dinner, washed the dishes, had real pork and beans for supper, and bread baked in a frying-pan that was so delectable than the three partners nearly foundered themselves on it. Supper dishes washed, he cut shavings and kindling for a quick and certain breakfast fire, showed Anson a trick with foot-gear that was invaluable to any hiker, sang his "Like Argus of the Ancient Times," and told them of the great emigration across the Plains in Forty-nine.

"My goodness, the first cheerful and hearty-like camp since we hit the beach," Big Bill remarked as he knocked out his pipe and began pulling off his shoes for bed.

"Kind of made things easy, boys, eh?" Tarwater queried genially.

All nodded. "Well, then, I got a proposition, boys. You can take it or leave it, but just listen kindly to it. You're in a hurry to get in before the freeze-up. Half the time is wasted over the cooking by one of you that he might be puttin' in packin' outfit. If I do the cookin' for you, you all'll get on that much faster. Also, the cookin' 'll be better, and that'll make you pack better. And I can pack quite a bit myself in between times, quite a bit, yes, sir, quite a bit."

Big Bill and Anson were just beginning to nod their heads in agreement, when Charles stopped them.

"What do you expect of us in return?" he demanded of the old man.

“Oh, I leave it up to the boys.”

“That ain’t business,” Charles reprimanded sharply. “You made the proposition. Now finish it.”

“Well, it’s this way-“

“You expect us to feed you all winter, eh?” Charles interrupted.

“No, siree, I don’t. All I reckon is a passage to Klondike in your boat would be mighty square of you.”

“You haven’t an ounce of grub, old man. You’ll starve to death when you get there.”

“I’ve been feedin’ some long time pretty successful,” Old Tarwater replied, a whimsical light in his eyes. “I’m seventy, and ain’t starved to death never yet.”

“Will you sign a paper to the effect that you shift for yourself as soon as you get to Dawson?” the business one demanded.

“Oh, sure,” was the response.

Again Charles checked his two partners’ expressions of satisfaction with the arrangement.

“One other thing, old man. We’re a party of four, and we all have a vote on questions like this. Young Liverpool is ahead with the main outfit. He’s got a say so, and he isn’t here to say it.”

“What kind of a party might he be?” Tarwater inquired.

“He’s a rough-neck sailor, and he’s got a quick, bad temper.”

“Some turbulent,” Anson contributed.

“And the way he can cuss is simply God-awful,” Big Bill testified.

“But he’s square,” Big Bill added.

Anson nodded heartily to this appraisal.

“Well, boys,” Tarwater summed up, “I set out for Californy and I got there. And I’m going to get to Klondike. Ain’t a thing can stop me, ain’t a thing. I’m going to get three hundred thousand outa the ground, too. Ain’t a thing can stop me, ain’t a thing, because I just naturally need the money. I don’t mind a bad temper so long’s the boy is square. I’ll take my chance, an’ I’ll work along with you till we catch up with him. Then, if he says no to the proposition, I reckon I’ll lose. But somehow I just can’t see ‘m sayin’ no, because that’d mean too close up to freeze-up and too late for me to find another chance like this. And, as I’m sure going to get to Klondike, it’s just plumb impossible for him to say no.”

Old John Tarwater became a striking figure on a trail unusually replete with striking figures. With thousands of men, each back-tripping half a ton of outfit, retracing every mile of the trail twenty times, all came to know him and to hail him as “Father Christmas.” And, as he worked, ever he raised his chant with his age-falsetto voice. None of the three men he had joined could complain about his work. True, his joints were stiff-he admitted to a trifle of rheumatism. He moved slowly, and seemed to creak and crackle when he moved; but he kept on moving. Last into the blankets at night, he was first out in the morning, so that the other three had hot coffee before their one before-breakfast pack. And, between breakfast and dinner and between dinner and supper, he always managed to back-trip for several packs himself. Sixty pounds was the limit of his burden, however. He could manage seventy-five, but he could not keep it up. Once, he tried ninety, but collapsed on the trail and was seriously shaky for a couple of days afterward.

Work! On a trail where hard-working men learned for the first time what work was, no man worked harder in proportion to his strength than Old Tarwater. Driven desperately on by the near-thrust of winter, and lured madly on by the dream of gold, they worked to their last ounce of strength and fell by the way. Others, when failure made certain, blew out their brains. Some went mad, and still others, under the irk of the man-destroying strain, broke partnerships and dissolved life-time friendships with fellows just as good as themselves and just as strained and mad.

Work! Old Tarwater could shame them all, despite his creaking and crackling and the nasty hacking cough he had developed. Early and late, on trail or in camp beside the trail he was ever in evidence, ever busy at something, ever responsive to the hail of “Father Christmas.” Weary back-trippers would rest their packs on a log or rock alongside of where he rested his, and would say: “Sing us that song of yourn, dad, about Forty-Nine.” And, when he had wheezingly complied, they would arise under their loads, remark that it was real heartening, and hit the forward trail again.

“If ever a man worked his passage and earned it,” Big Bill confided to his two partners, “that man’s our old Skeezicks.”

“You bet,” Anson confirmed. “He’s a valuable addition to the party, and I, for one, ain’t at all disagreeable to the notion of making him a regular partner-“

“None of that!” Charles Crayton cut in. “When we get to Dawson we’re quit of him-that’s the agreement. We’d only have to bury him if we let him stay on with us. Besides, there’s going to be a famine, and every ounce of grub’ll count. Remember, we’re feeding him out of our own supply all the way in. And if we run short in the pinch next year, you’ll know the reason. Steamboats can’t get up grub to Dawson till the middle of June, and that’s nine months away.”

“Well, you put as much money and outfit in as the rest of us,” Big Bill conceded, “and you’ve a say according.”

“And I’m going to have my say,” Charles asserted with increasing irritability. “And it’s lucky for you with your fool sentiments that you’ve got somebody to think ahead for you, else you’d all starve to death. I tell you that famine’s coming. I’ve been studying the situation. Flour will be two dollars a pound, or ten, and no sellers. You mark my words.”

Across the rubble-covered flats, up the dark canyon to Sheep Camp, past the over-hanging and ever-threatening glaciers to the Scales, and from the Scales up the steep pitches of ice-scoured rock where packers climbed with hands and feet, Old Tarwater camp-cooked and packed and sang. He blew across Chilcoot Pass, above timberline, in the first swirl of autumn snow. Those below, without firewood, on the bitter rim of Crater Lake, heard from the driving obscurity above them a weird voice chanting:

“Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this modern Greece,
Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum, tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece.”

And out of the snow flurries they saw appear a tall, gaunt form, with whiskers of flying white that blended with the storm, bending under a sixty-pound pack of camp dunnage.

“Father Christmas!” was the hail. And then: “Three rousing cheers for Father Christmas!”

Two miles beyond Crater Lake lay Happy Camp-so named because here was found the uppermost fringe of the timber line, where men might warm themselves by fire again. Scarcely could it be called timber, for it was a dwarf rock-spruce that never raised its loftiest branches higher than a foot above the moss, and that twisted and grovelled like a pig-vegetable under the moss. Here, on the trail leading into Happy Camp, in the first sunshine of half a dozen days, Old Tarwater rested his pack against a huge boulder and caught his breath. Around this boulder the trail passed, laden men toiling slowly forward and men with empty pack-straps limping rapidly back for fresh loads. Twice Old Tarwater essayed to rise and go on, and each time, warned by his shakiness, sank back to recover more strength. From around the boulder he heard voices in greeting, recognized Charles Crayton's voice, and realized that at last they had met up with Young Liverpool. Quickly, Charles plunged into business, and Tarwater heard with great distinctness every word of Charles' unflattering description of him and the proposition to give him passage to Dawson.

"A dam fool proposition," was Liverpool's judgment, when Charles had concluded. "An old granddad of seventy! If he's on his last legs, why in hell did you hook up with him? If there's going to be a famine, and it looks like it, we need every ounce of grub for ourselves. We only out-fitted for four, not five."

"It's all right," Tarwater heard Charles assuring the other. "Don't get excited. The old codger agreed to leave the final decision to you when we caught up with you. All you've got to do is put your foot down and say no."

"You mean it's up to me to turn the old one down, after your encouraging him and taking advantage of his work clear from Dyea here?"

"It's a hard trail, Liverpool, and only the men that are hard will get through," Charles strove to palliate.

"And I'm to do the dirty work?" Liverpool complained, while Tarwater's heart sank.

"That's just about the size of it," Charles said. "You've got the deciding."

Then old Tarwater's heart uprose again as the air was rent by a cyclone of profanity, from the midst of which crackled sentences like:-"Dirty skunks! . . . See you in hell first! . . . My mind's made up! . . . Hell's fire and corruption! . . . The old codger goes down the Yukon with us, stack on that, my hearty! . . . Hard? You don't know what hard is unless I show you! . . . I'll bust the whole outfit to hell and gone if any of you try to side-track him! . . . Just try to side-track him, that is all, and you'll think the Day of Judgment and all God's blastingness has hit the camp in one chunk!"

Such was the invigoratingness of Liverpool's flow of speech that, quite without consciousness of effort, the old man arose easily under his load and strode on toward Happy Camp.

From Happy Camp to Long Lake, from Long Lake to Deep Lake, and from Deep Lake up over the enormous hog-back and down to Linderman, the man-killing race against winter kept on. Men broke their hearts and backs and wept beside the trail in sheer exhaustion. But winter never faltered. The fall gales blew, and amid bitter soaking rains and ever-increasing snow flurries, Tarwater and the party to which he was attached piled the last of their outfit on the beach.

There was no rest. Across the lake, a mile above a roaring torrent, they located a patch of spruce and built their saw-pit. Here, by hand, with an inadequate whipsaw, they sawed the spruce-trunks into lumber. They worked night and day. Thrice, on the night-shift, underneath in the saw-pit, Old Tarwater fainted. By day he cooked as well, and, in the betweenwhiles, helped Anson in the building of the boat beside the torrent as the green planks came down.

The days grew shorter. The wind shifted into the north and blew unending gales. In the mornings the weary men crawled from their blankets and in their socks thawed out their frozen shoes by the fire Tarwater always had burning for them. Ever arose the increasing tale of famine on the Inside. The last grub steamboats up from Bering Sea were stalled by low water at the beginning of the Yukon Flats hundreds of miles north of Dawson. In fact, they lay at the old Hudson Bay Company’s post at Fort Yukon inside the Arctic Circle. Flour in Dawson was up to two dollars a pound, but no one would sell. Bonanza and Eldorado Kings, with money to burn, were leaving for the Outside because they could buy no grub. Miners’ Committees were confiscating all grub and putting the population on strict rations. A man who held out an ounce of grub was shot like a dog. A score had been so executed already.

And, under a strain which had broken so many younger men, Old Tarwater began to break. His cough had become terrible, and had not his exhausted comrades slept like the dead, he would have kept them awake nights. Also, he began to take chills, so that he dressed up to go to bed. When he had finished so dressing, not a rag of garment remained in his clothes bag. All he possessed was on his back and swathed around his gaunt old form.

“Gee!” said Big Bill. “If he puts all he’s got on now, when it ain’t lower than twenty above, what’ll he do later on when it goes down to fifty and sixty below?”

They lined the rough-made boat down the mountain torrent, nearly losing it a dozen times, and rowed across the south end of Lake Linderman in the thick of a fall blizzard. Next morning they planned to load and start, squarely into the teeth of the north, on their perilous traverse of half a thousand miles of lakes and rapids and box canyons. But before he went to bed that night, Young Liverpool was out over the camp. He returned to find his whole party asleep. Rousing Tarwater, he talked with him in low tones.

"Listen, dad," he said.-"You've got a passage in our boat, and if ever a man earned a passage you have. But you know yourself you're pretty well along in years, and your health right now ain't exciting. If you go on with us you'll croak surer'n hell.-Now wait till I finish, dad. The price for a passage has jumped to five hundred dollars. I've been throwing my feet and I've hustled a passenger. He's an official of the Alaska Commercial and just has to get in. He's bid up to six hundred to go with me in our boat. Now the passage is yours. You sell it to him, poke the six hundred into your jeans, and pull South for California while the goin's good. You can be in Dyea in two days, and in California in a week more. What d'ye say?"

Tarwater coughed and shivered for a space, ere he could get freedom of breath for speech.

"Son," he said, "I just want to tell you one thing. I drove my four yoke of oxen across the Plains in Forty-nine and lost nary a one. I drove them plumb to Californy, and I freighted with them afterward out of Sutter's Fort to American Bar. Now I'm going to Klondike. Ain't nothing can stop me, ain't nothing at all. I'm going to ride that boat, with you at the steering sweep, clean to Klondike, and I'm going to shake three hundred thousand out of the moss-roots. That being so, it's contrary to reason and common sense for me to sell out my passage. But I thank you kindly, son, I thank you kindly."

The young sailor shot out his hand impulsively and gripped the old man's.

"By God, dad!" he cried. "You're sure going to go then. You're the real stuff." He looked with undisguised contempt across the sleepers to where Charles Crayton snored in his red beard. "They don't seem to make your kind any more, dad."

Into the north they fought their way, although old-timers, coming out, shook their heads and prophesied they would be frozen in on the lakes. That the freeze-up might come any day was patent, and delays of safety were no longer considered. For this reason, Liverpool decided to shoot the rapid stream connecting Linderman to Lake Bennett with the fully loaded boat. It was the custom to line the empty boats down and to portage the cargoes across. Even then many empty boats had been wrecked. But the time was past for such precaution.

"Climb out, dad," Liverpool commanded as he prepared to swing from the bank and enter the rapids.

Old Tarwater shook his white head.

"I'm sticking to the outfit," he declared. "It's the only way to get through. You see, son, I'm going to Klondike. If I stick by the boat, then the boat just naturally goes to Klondike, too. If I get out, then most likely you'll lose the boat."

"Well, there's no use in overloading," Charles announced, springing abruptly out on the bank as the boat cast off.

"Next time you wait for my orders!" Liverpool shouted ashore as the current gripped the boat. "And there won't be any more walking around rapids and losing time waiting to pick you up!"

What took them ten minutes by river, took Charles half an hour by land, and while they waited for him at the head of Lake Bennett they passed the time of day with several dilapidated old-timers on their way out. The famine news was graver than ever. The North-west Mounted Police, stationed at the foot of Lake Marsh where the gold-rushers entered Canadian territory, were refusing to let a man past who did not carry with him seven hundred pounds of grub. In Dawson City a thousand men, with dog-teams, were waiting the freeze-up to come out over the ice. The trading companies could not fill their grub-contracts, and partners were cutting the cards to see which should go and which should stay and work the claims.

"That settles it," Charles announced, when he learned of the action of the mounted police on the boundary. "Old Man, you might as well start back now."

"Climb aboard!" Liverpool commanded. "We're going to Klondike, and old dad is going along."

A shift of gale to the south gave them a fair wind down Lake Bennett, before which they ran under a huge sail made by Liverpool. The heavy weight of outfit gave such ballast that he cracked on as a daring sailor should when moments counted. A shift of four points into the south-west, coming just at the right time as they entered upon Caribou Crossing, drove them down that connecting link to lakes Tagish and Marsh. In stormy sunset and twilight-they made the dangerous crossing of Great Windy Arm, wherein they beheld two other boat-loads of gold-rushers capsize and drown.

Charles was for beaching for the night, but Liverpool held on, steering down Tagish by the sound of the surf on the shoals and by the occasional shore-fires that advertised wrecked or timid argonauts. At four in the morning, he aroused Charles. Old Tarwater, shiveringly awake, heard Liverpool order Crayton aft beside him at the steering-sweep, and also heard the one-sided conversation.

"Just listen, friend Charles, and keep your own mouth shut," Liverpool began. "I want you to get one thing into your head and keep it there: OLD DAD'S GOING BY THE POLICE. UNDERSTAND? HE'S GOING BY. When they examine our outfit, old dad's got a fifth share in it, savvee? That'll put us all 'way under what we ought to have, but we can bluff it through. Now get this, and get it hard: THERE AIN'T GOING TO BE ANY FALL-DOWN ON THIS BLUFF-"

"If you think I'd give away on the old codger-" Charles began indignantly.

"You thought that," Liverpool checked him, "because I never mentioned any such thing. Now-get me and get me hard: I don't care what you've been thinking. It's what you're going to think. We'll make the police post some time this afternoon, and we've got to get ready to pull the bluff without a hitch, and a word to the wise is plenty."

"If you think I've got it in my mind-" Charles began again.

"Look here," Liverpool shut him off. "I don't know what's in your mind. I don't want to know. I want you to know what's in my mind. If there's any slip-up, if old dad gets turned back by the police, I'm going to pick out the first quiet bit of landscape and take you ashore on it. And then I'm going to beat you up to the Queen's taste. Get me, and get me hard. It ain't going to be any half-way beating, but a real, two-legged, two-fisted, he-man beating. I don't expect I'll kill you, but I'll come damn near to half-killing you."

"But what can I do?" Charles almost whimpered.

"Just one thing," was Liverpool's final word. "You just pray. You pray so hard that old dad gets by the police that he does get by. That's all. Go back to your blankets."

Before they gained Lake Le Barge, the land was sheeted with snow that would not melt for half a year. Nor could they lay their boat at will against the bank, for the rim-ice was already forming. Inside the mouth of the river, just ere it entered Lake Le Barge, they found a hundred storm-bound boats of the argonauts. Out of the north, across the full sweep of the great lake, blew an unending snow gale. Three mornings they put out and fought it and the cresting seas it drove that turned to ice as they fell in-board. While the others broke their hearts at the oars, Old Tarwater managed to keep up just sufficient circulation to survive by chopping ice and throwing it overboard.

Each day for three days, beaten to helplessness, they turned tail on the battle and ran back into the sheltering river. By the fourth day, the hundred boats had increased to three hundred, and the two thousand argonauts on board knew that the great gale heralded the freeze-up of Le Barge. Beyond, the rapid rivers would continue to run for days, but unless they got beyond, and immediately, they were doomed to be frozen in for six months to come.

"This day we go through," Liverpool announced. "We turn back for nothing. And those of us that dies at the oars will live again and go on pulling."

And they went through, winning half the length of the lake by nightfall and pulling on through all the night hours as the wind went down, falling asleep at the oars and being rapped awake by Liverpool, toiling on through an age-long nightmare while the stars came out and the surface of the lake turned to the unruffledness of a sheet of paper and froze skin-ice that tinkled like broken glass as their oar-blades shattered it.

As day broke clear and cold, they entered the river, with behind them a sea of ice. Liverpool examined his aged passenger and found him helpless and almost gone. When he rounded the boat to against the rim-ice to build a fire and warm up Tarwater inside and out, Charles protested against such loss of time.

"This ain't business, so don't you come horning in," Liverpool informed him. "I'm running the boat trip. So you just climb out and chop firewood, and plenty of it. I'll take care of dad. You, Anson, make a fire on the bank. And you, Bill, set up the Yukon stove in the boat. Old dad ain't as young as the rest of us, and for the rest of this voyage he's going to have a fire on board to sit by."

All of which came to pass; and the boat, in the grip of the current, like a river steamer with smoke rising from the two joints of stove-pipe, grounded on shoals, hung up on split currents, and charged rapids and canyons, as it drove deeper into the Northland winter. The Big and Little Salmon rivers were throwing mush-ice into the main river as they passed, and, below the riffles, anchor-ice arose from the river bottom and coated the surface with crystal scum. Night and day the rim-ice grew, till, in quiet places, it extended out a hundred yards from shore. And Old Tarwater, with all his clothes on, sat by the stove and kept the fire going. Night and day, not daring to stop for fear of the imminent freeze-up, they dared to run, an increasing mushiness of ice running with them.

“What ho, old hearty?” Liverpool would call out at times.

“Cheer O,” Old Tarwater had learned to respond.

“What can I ever do for you, son, in payment?” Tarwater, stoking the fire, would sometimes ask Liverpool, beating now one released hand and now the other as he fought for circulation where he steered in the freezing stern-sheets.

“Just break out that regular song of yours, old Forty-Niner,” was the invariable reply.

And Tarwater would lift his voice in the cackling chant, as he lifted it at the end, when the boat swung in through driving cake-ice and moored to the Dawson City bank, and all waterfront Dawson pricked its ears to hear the triumphant paean:

Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this modern Greece,
Tum-tum, tum-tum, tum, tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece,

Charles did it, but he did it so discreetly that none of his party, least of all the sailor, ever learned of it. He saw two great open barges being filled up with men, and, on inquiry, learned that these were grubless ones being rounded up and sent down the Yukon by the Committee of Safety. The barges were to be towed by the last little steamboat in Dawson, and the hope was that Fort Yukon, where lay the stranded steamboats, would be gained before the river froze. At any rate, no matter what happened to them, Dawson would be relieved of their grub-consuming presence. So to the Committee of Safety Charles went, privily to drop a flea in its ear concerning Tarwater’s grubless, moneyless, and aged condition. Tarwater was one of the last gathered in, and when Young Liverpool returned to the boat, from the bank he saw the barges in a run of cake-ice, disappearing around the bend below Moose-hide Mountain.

Running in cake-ice all the way, and several times escaping jams in the Yukon Flats, the barges made their hundreds of miles of progress farther into the north and froze up cheek by jowl with the grub-fleet. Here, inside the Arctic Circle, Old Tarwater settled down to pass the long winter. Several hours' work a day, chopping firewood for the steamboat companies, sufficed to keep him in food. For the rest of the time there was nothing to do but hibernate in his log cabin.

Warmth, rest, and plenty to eat, cured his hacking cough and put him in as good physical condition as was possible for his advanced years. But, even before Christmas, the lack of fresh vegetables caused scurvy to break out, and disappointed adventurer after disappointed adventurer took to his bunk in abject surrender to this culminating misfortune. Not so Tarwater. Even before the first symptoms appeared on him, he was putting into practice his one prescription, namely, exercise. From the junk of the old trading post he resurrected a number of rusty traps, and from one of the steamboat captains he borrowed a rifle.

Thus equipped, he ceased from wood-chopping, and began to make more than a mere living. Nor was he downhearted when the scurvy broke out on his own body. Ever he ran his trap-lines and sang his ancient chant. Nor could the pessimist shake his surety of the three hundred thousand of Alaskan gold he as going to shake out of the moss-roots.

"But this ain't gold-country," they told him.

"Gold is where you find it, son, as I should know who was mining before you was born, 'way back in Forty-Nine," was his reply. "What was Bonanza Creek but a moose-pasture? No miner'd look at it; yet they washed five-hundred-dollar pans and took out fifty million dollars. Eldorado was just as bad. For all you know, right under this here cabin, or right over the next hill, is millions just waiting for a lucky one like me to come and shake it out."

At the end of January came his disaster. Some powerful animal that he decided was a bob-cat, managing to get caught in one of his smaller traps, dragged it away. A heavy snow-fall put a stop midway to his pursuit, losing the trail for him and losing himself. There were but several hours of daylight each day between the twenty hours of intervening darkness, and his efforts in the grey light and continually falling snow succeeded only in losing him more thoroughly. Fortunately, when winter snow falls in the Northland the thermometer invariably rises; so, instead of the customary forty and fifty and even sixty degrees below zero, the temperature remained fifteen below. Also, he was warmly clad and had a full matchbox. Further to mitigate his predicament, on the fifth day he killed a wounded moose that weighed over half a ton. Making his camp beside it on a spruce-bottom, he was prepared to last out the winter, unless a searching party found him or his scurvy grew worse.

But at the end of two weeks there had been no sign of search, while his scurvy had undeniably grown worse. Against his fire, banked from outer cold by a shelter-wall of spruce-boughs, he crouched long hours in sleep and long hours in waking. But the waking hours grew less, becoming semi-waking or half-dreaming hours as the process of hibernation worked their way with him. Slowly the sparkle point of consciousness and identity that was John Tarwater sank, deeper and deeper, into the profounds of his being that had been compounded ere man was man, and while he was becoming man, when he, first of all animals, regarded himself with an introspective eye and laid the beginnings of morality in foundations of nightmare peopled by the monsters of his own ethic-thwarted desires.

Like a man in fever, waking to intervals of consciousness, so Old Tarwater awoke, cooked his moose-meat, and fed the fire; but more and more time he spent in his torpor, unaware of what was day-dream and what was sleep-dream in the content of his unconsciousness. And here, in the unforgetable crypts of man's unwritten history, unthinkable and unrealizable, like passages of nightmare or impossible adventures of lunacy, he encountered the monsters created of man's first morality that ever since have vexed him into the spinning of fantasies to elude them or do battle with them.

In short, weighted by his seventy years, in the vast and silent loneliness of the North, Old Tarwater, as in the delirium of drug or anaesthetic, recovered within himself, the infantile mind of the child-man of the early world. It was in the dusk of Death's fluttery wings that Tarwater thus crouched, and, like his remote forebear, the child-man, went to myth-making, and sun-heroizing, himself hero-maker and the hero in quest of the immemorable treasure difficult of attainment.

Either must he attain the treasure-for so ran the inexorable logic of the shadow-land of the unconscious-or else sink into the all-devouring sea, the blackness eater of the light that swallowed to extinction the sun each night . . . the sun that arose ever in rebirth next morning in the east, and that had become to man man's first symbol of immortality through rebirth. All this, in the deeps of his unconsciousness (the shadowy western land of descending light), was the near dusk of Death down into which he slowly ebbed.

But how to escape this monster of the dark that from within him slowly swallowed him? Too deep-sunk was he to dream of escape or feel the prod of desire to escape. For him reality had ceased. Nor from within the darkened chamber of himself could reality recrudesce. His years were too heavy upon him, the debility of disease and the lethargy and torpor of the silence and the cold were too profound. Only from without could reality impact upon him and reawake within him an awareness of reality. Otherwise he would ooze down through the shadow-realm of the unconscious into the all-darkness of extinction.

But it came, the smash of reality from without, crashing upon his ear drums in a loud, explosive snort. For twenty days, in a temperature that had never risen above fifty below, no breath of wind had blown movement, no slightest sound had broken the silence. Like the smoker on the opium couch refocusing his eyes from the spacious walls of dream to the narrow confines of the mean little room, so Old Tarwater stared vague-eyed before him across his dying fire, at a huge moose that stared at him in startlement, dragging a wounded leg, manifesting all signs of extreme exhaustion; it, too, had been straying blindly in the shadow-land, and had wakened to reality only just ere it stepped into Tarwater's fire.

He feebly slipped the large fur mitten lined with thickness of wool from his right hand. Upon trial he found the trigger finger too numb for movement. Carefully, slowly, through long minutes, he worked the bare hand inside his blankets, up under his fur PARKA, through the chest openings of his shirts, and into the slightly warm hollow of his left arm-pit. Long minutes passed ere the finger could move, when, with equal slowness of caution, he gathered his rifle to his shoulder and drew bead upon the great animal across the fire.

At the shot, of the two shadow-wanderers, the one reeled downward to the dark and the other reeled upward to the light, swaying drunkenly on his scurvy-ravaged legs, shivering with nervousness and cold, rubbing swimming eyes with shaking fingers, and staring at the real world all about him that had returned to him with such sickening suddenness. He shook himself together, and realized that for long, how long he did not know, he had bedded in the arms of Death. He spat, with definite intention, heard the spittle crackle in the frost, and judged it must be below and far below sixty below. In truth, that day at Fort Yukon, the spirit thermometer registered seventy-five degrees below zero, which, since freezing-point is thirty-two above, was equivalent to one hundred and seven degrees of frost.

Slowly Tarwater's brain reasoned to action. Here, in the vast alone, dwelt Death. Here had come two wounded moose. With the clearing of the sky after the great cold came on, he had located his bearings, and he knew that both wounded moose had trailed to him from the east. Therefore, in the east, were men-whites or Indians he could not tell, but at any rate men who might stand by him in his need and help moor him to reality above the sea of dark.

He moved slowly, but he moved in reality, girding himself with rifle, ammunition, matches, and a pack of twenty pounds of moose-meat. Then, an Argus rejuvenated, albeit lame of both legs and tottery, he turned his back on the perilous west and limped into the sun-arising, re-birthing east. . . .

Days later-how many days later he was never to know-dreaming dreams and seeing visions, cackling his old gold-chant of Forty-Nine, like one drowning and swimming feebly to keep his consciousness above the engulfing dark, he came out upon the snow-slope to a canyon and saw below smoke rising and men who ceased from work to gaze at him. He tottered down the hill to them, still singing; and when he ceased from lack of breath they called him variously: Santa Claus, Old Christmas, Whiskers, the Last of the Mohicans, and Father Christmas. And when he stood among them he stood very still, without speech, while great tears welled out of his eyes. He cried silently, a long time, till, as if suddenly bethinking himself, he sat down in the snow with much creaking and crackling of his joints, and from this low vantage point toppled sidewise and fainted calmly and easily away.

In less than a week Old Tarwater was up and limping about the housework of the cabin, cooking and dish-washing for the five men of the creek. Genuine sourdoughs (pioneers) they were, tough and hard-bitten, who had been buried so deeply inside the Circle that they did not know there was a Klondike Strike. The news he brought them was their first word of it. They lived on an almost straight-meat diet of moose, caribou, and smoked salmon, eked out with wild berries and somewhat succulent wild roots they had stocked up with in the summer. They had forgotten the taste of coffee, made fire with a burning glass, carried live fire-sticks with them wherever they travelled, and in their pipes smoked dry leaves that bit the tongue and were pungent to the nostrils.

Three years before, they had prospected from the head-reaches of the Koyokuk northward and clear across to the mouth of the Mackenzie on the Arctic Ocean. Here, on the whaleships, they had beheld their last white men and equipped themselves with the last white man's grub, consisting principally of salt and smoking tobacco. Striking south and west on the long traverse to the junction of the Yukon and Porcupine at Fort Yukon, they had found gold on this creek and remained over to work the ground.

They hailed the advent of Tarwater with joy, never tired of listening to his tales of Forty-Nine, and rechristened him Old Hero. Also, with tea made from spruce needles, with concoctions brewed from the inner willow bark, and with sour and bitter roots and bulbs from the ground, they dosed his scurvy out of him, so that he ceased limping and began to lay on flesh over his bony framework. Further, they saw no reason at all why he should not gather a rich treasure of gold from the ground.

"Don't know about all of three hundred thousand," they told him one morning, at breakfast, ere they departed to their work, "but how'd a hundred thousand do, Old Hero? That's what we figure a claim is worth, the ground being badly spotted, and we've already staked your location notices."

"Well, boys," Old Tarwater answered, "and thanking you kindly, all I can say is that a hundred thousand will do nicely, and very nicely, for a starter. Of course, I ain't goin' to stop till I get the full three hundred thousand. That's what I come into the country for."

They laughed and applauded his ambition and reckoned they'd have to hunt a richer creek for him. And Old Hero reckoned that as the spring came on and he grew spryer, he'd have to get out and do a little snooping around himself.

"For all anybody knows," he said, pointing to a hillside across the creek bottom, "the moss under the snow there may be plumb rooted in nugget gold."

He said no more, but as the sun rose higher and the days grew longer and warmer, he gazed often across the creek at the definite bench-formation half way up the hill. And, one day, when the thaw was in full swing, he crossed the stream and climbed to the bench. Exposed patches of ground had already thawed an inch deep. On one such patch he stopped, gathered a bunch of moss in his big gnarled hands, and ripped it out by the roots. The sun smouldered on dully glistening yellow. He shook the handful of moss, and coarse nuggets, like gravel, fell to the ground. It was the Golden Fleece ready for the shearing.

Not entirely unremembered in Alaskan annals is the summer stampede of 1898 from Fort Yukon to the bench diggings of Tarwater Hill. And when Tarwater sold his holdings to the Bowdie interests for a sheer half-million and faced for California, he rode a mule over a new-cut trail, with convenient road houses along the way, clear to the steamboat landing at Fort Yukon.

At the first meal on the ocean-going steamship out of St. Michaels, a waiter, greyish-haired, pain-ravaged of face, scurvy-twisted of body, served him. Old Tarwater was compelled to look him over twice in order to make certain he was Charles Crayton.

“Got it bad, eh, son?” Tarwater queried.

“Just my luck,” the other complained, after recognition and greeting. “Only one of the party that the scurvy attacked. I’ve been through hell. The other three are all at work and healthy, getting grub-stake to prospect up White River this winter. Anson’s earning twenty-five a day at carpentering, Liverpool getting twenty logging for the saw-mill, and Big Bill’s getting forty a day as chief sawyer. I tried my best, and if it hadn’t been for scurvy . . .”

“Sure, son, you done your best, which ain’t much, you being naturally irritable and hard from too much business. Now I’ll tell you what. You ain’t fit to work crippled up this way. I’ll pay your passage with the captain in kind remembrance of the voyage you gave me, and you can lay up and take it easy the rest of the trip. And what are your circumstances when you land at San Francisco?”

Charles Crayton shrugged his shoulders.

“Tell you what,” Tarwater continued. “There’s work on the ranch for you till you can start business again.”

“I could manage your business for you-“ Charles began eagerly.

“No, siree,” Tarwater declared emphatically. “But there’s always post-holes to dig, and cordwood to chop, and the climate’s fine . . . “

Tarwater arrived home a true prodigal grandfather for whom the fatted calf was killed and ready. But first, ere he sat down at table, he must stroll out and around. And sons and daughters of his flesh and of the law needs must go with him fulsomely eating out of the gnarled old hand that had half a million to disburse. He led the way, and no opinion he slyly uttered was preposterous or impossible enough to draw dissent from his following. Pausing by the ruined water wheel which he had built from the standing timber, his face beamed as he gazed across the stretches of Tarwater Valley, and on and up the far heights to the summit of Tarwater Mountain-now all his again.

A thought came to him that made him avert his face and blow his nose in order to hide the twinkle in his eyes. Still attended by the entire family, he strolled on to the dilapidated barn. He picked up an age-weathered single-tree from the ground.

"William," he said. "Remember that little conversation we had just before I started to Klondike? Sure, William, you remember. You told me I was crazy. And I said my father'd have walloped the tar out of me with a single-tree if I'd spoke to him that way."

"Aw, but that was only foolin'," William temporized.

William was a grizzled man of forty-five, and his wife and grown sons stood in the group, curiously watching Grandfather Tarwater take off his coat and hand it to Mary to hold.

"William-come here," he commanded imperatively.

No matter how reluctantly, William came.

"Just a taste, William, son, of what my father give me often enough," Old Tarwater crooned, as he laid on his son's back and shoulders with the single-tree. "Observe, I ain't hitting you on the head. My father had a gosh-wollickin' temper and never drew the line at heads when he went after tar.-Don't jerk your elbows back that way! You're likely to get a crack on one by accident. And just tell me one thing, William, son: is there nary notion in your head that I'm crazy?"

"No!" William yelped out in pain, as he danced about. "You ain't crazy, father of course you ain't crazy!"

"You said it," Old Tarwater remarked sententiously, tossing the single-tree aside and starting to struggle into his coat.

"Now let's all go in and eat."

A Little Account

WITH SWITHIN HALL

I

With a last long scrutiny at the unbroken circle of the sea, David Grief swung out of the cross-trees and slowly and dejectedly descended the ratlines to the deck.

“Leu-Leu Atoll is sunk, Mr. Snow,” he said to the anxious-faced young mate. “If there is anything in navigation, the atoll is surely under the sea, for we’ve sailed clear over it twice — or the spot where it ought to be. It’s either that or the chronometer’s gone wrong, or I’ve forgotten my navigation.”

“It must be the chronometer, sir,” the mate reassured his owner. “You know I made separate sights and worked them up, and that they agreed with yours.”

“Yes,” Grief muttered, nodding glumly, “and where your Summer lines crossed, and mine, too, was the dead centre of Leu-Leu Atoll. It must be the chronometer — slipped a cog or something.”

He made a short pace to the rail and back, and cast a troubled eye at the Uncle Toby’s wake. The schooner, with a fairly strong breeze on her quarter, was logging nine or ten knots.

“Better bring her up on the wind, Mr. Snow. Put her under easy sail and let her work to windward on two-hour legs. It’s thickening up, and I don’t imagine we can get a star observation to-night; so we’ll just hold our weather position, get a latitude sight to-morrow, and run Leu-Leu down on her own latitude. That’s the way all the old navigators did.”

Broad of beam, heavily sparred, with high freeboard and bluff, Dutchy bow, the Uncle Toby was the slowest, tubbiest, safest, and most fool-proof schooner David Grief possessed. Her run was in the Banks and Santa Cruz groups and to the northwest among the several isolated atolls where his native traders collected copra, hawksbill turtle, and an occasional ton of pearl shell. Finding the skipper down with a particularly bad stroke of fever, Grief had relieved him and taken the Uncle Toby on her semi-annual run to the atolls. He had elected to make his first call at Leu-Leu, which lay farthest, and now found himself lost at sea with a chronometer that played tricks.

II

No stars showed that night, nor was the sun visible next day. A stuffy, sticky calm obtained, broken by big wind-squalls and heavy downpours. From fear of working too far to windward, the Uncle Toby was hove to, and four days and nights of cloud-hidden sky followed. Never did the sun appear, and on the several occasions that stars broke through they were too dim and fleeting for identification. By this time it was patent to the veriest tyro that the elements were preparing to break loose. Grief, coming on deck from consulting the barometer, which steadfastly remained at 29.90, encountered Jackie-Jackie, whose face was as brooding and troublous as the sky and air. Jackie-Jackie, a Tongan sailor of experience, served as a sort of bosun and semi-second mate over the mixed Kanaka crew.

“Big weather he come, I think,” he said. “I see him just the same before maybe five, six times.”

Grief nodded. “Hurricane weather, all right, Jackie-Jackie. Pretty soon barometer go down--bottom fall out.”

“Sure,” the Tongan concurred. “He goin’ to blow like hell.”

Ten minutes later Snow came on deck.

“She’s started,” he said; “29.85, going down and pumping at the same time. It’s stinking hot--don’t you notice it?” He brushed his forehead with his hands. “It’s sickening. I could lose my breakfast without trying.”

Jackie-Jackie grinned. “Just the same me. Everything inside walk about. Always this way before big blow. But *Uncle Toby* all right. He go through anything.”

“Better rig that storm-trysail on the main, and a storm-jib,” Grief said to the mate. “And put all the reefs into the working canvas before you furl down. No telling what we may need. Put on double gaskets while you’re about it.”

In another hour, the sultry oppressiveness steadily increasing and the stark calm still continuing, the barometer had fallen to 29.70. The mate, being young, lacked the patience of waiting for the portentous. He ceased his restless pacing, and waved his arms.

“If she’s going to come let her come!” he cried. “There’s no use shilly-shallying this way! Whatever the worst is, let us know it and have it! A pretty pickle--lost with a crazy chronometer and a hurricane that won’t blow!”

The cloud-mussed sky turned to a vague copper colour, and seemed to glow as the inside of a huge heated caldron. Nobody remained below. The native sailors formed in anxious groups amidships and for’ard, where they talked in low voices and gazed apprehensively at the ominous sky and the equally ominous sea that breathed in long, low, oily undulations.

“Looks like petroleum mixed with castor oil,” the mate grumbled, as he spat his disgust overside. “My mother used to dose me with messes like that when I was a kid. Lord, she’s getting black!”

The lurid coppery glow had vanished, and the sky thickened and lowered until the darkness was as that of a late twilight. David Grief, who well knew the hurricane rules, nevertheless reread the “Laws of Storms,” screwing his eyes in the faint light in order to see the print. There was nothing to be done save wait for the wind, so that he might know how he lay in relation to the fast-flying and deadly centre that from somewhere was approaching out of the gloom.

It was three in the afternoon, and the glass had sunk to 29:45, when the wind came. They could see it on the water, darkening the face of the sea, crisping tiny whitecaps as it rushed along. It was merely a stiff breeze, and the *Uncle Toby*, filling away under her storm canvas till the wind was abeam, sloshed along at a four-knot gait.

“No weight to that,” Snow sneered. “And after such grand preparation!”

“Pickaninny wind,” Jackie-Jackie agreed. “He grow big man pretty quick, you see.”

Grief ordered the foresail put on, retaining the reefs, and the *Uncle Toby* mended her pace in the rising breeze. The wind quickly grew to man’s size, but did not stop there. It merely blew hard, and harder, and kept on blowing harder, advertising each increase by lulls followed by fierce, freshening gusts. Ever it grew, until the *Uncle Toby’s* rail was more often pressed under than not, while her waist boiled with foaming water which the scuppers could not carry off. Grief studied the barometer, still steadily falling.

“The centre is to the southward,” he told Snow, “and we’re running across its path and into it. Now we’ll turn about and run the other way. That ought to bring the glass up. Take in the foresail--it’s more than she can carry already--and stand by to wear her around.”

The maneuver was accomplished, and through the gloom that was almost that of the first darkness of evening the *Uncle Toby* turned and raced madly north across the face of the storm.

“It’s nip and tuck,” Grief confided to the mate a couple of hours later. “The storm’s swinging a big curve--there’s no calculating that curve--and we may win across or the centre may catch us. Thank the Lord, the glass is holding its own. It all depends on how big the curve is. The sea’s too big for us to keep on. Heave her to! She’ll keep working along out anyway.”

“I thought I knew what wind was,” Snow shouted in his owner’s ear next morning. “This isn’t wind. It’s something unthinkable. It’s impossible. It must reach ninety or a hundred miles an hour in the gusts. That don’t mean anything. How could I ever tell it to anybody? I couldn’t. And look at that sea! I’ve run my Easting down, but I never saw anything like that.”

Day had come, and the sun should have been up an hour, yet the best it could produce was a sombre semi-twilight. The ocean was a stately procession of moving mountains. A third of a mile across yawned the valleys between the great waves. Their long slopes, shielded somewhat from the full fury of the wind, were broken by systems of smaller whitecapping waves, but from the high crests of the big waves themselves the wind tore the whitecaps in the forming. This spume drove masthead high, and higher, horizontally, above the surface of the sea.

“We’re through the worst,” was Grief’s judgment. “The glass is coming along all the time. The sea will get bigger as the wind eases down. I’m going to turn in. Watch for shifts in the wind. They’ll be sure to come. Call me at eight bells.”

By mid-afternoon, in a huge sea, with the wind after its last shift no more than a stiff breeze, the Tongan bosun sighted a schooner bottom up. The *Uncle Toby’s* drift took them across the bow and they could not make out the name; but before night they picked up with a small, round-bottom, double-ender boat, swamped but with white lettering visible on its bow. Through the binoculars, Gray made out: *Emily L No. 3*.

“A sealing schooner,” Grief said. “But what a sealer’s doing in these waters is beyond me.”

“Treasure-hunters, maybe?” Snow speculated. “The *Sophie Sutherland* and the *Herman* were sealers, you remember, chartered out of San

Francisco by the chaps with the maps who can always go right to the spot until they get there and don't."

III

After a giddy night of grand and lofty tumbling, in which, over a big and dying sea, without a breath of wind to steady her, the Uncle Toby rolled every person on board sick of soul, a light breeze sprang up and the reefs were shaken out. By midday, on a smooth ocean floor, the clouds thinned and cleared and sights of the sun were obtained. Two degrees and fifteen minutes south, the observation gave them. With a broken chronometer longitude was out of the question.

"We're anywhere within five hundred and a thousand miles along that latitude line," Grief remarked, as he and the mate bent over the chart.

"Leu-Leu is to the south'ard somewhere, and this section of ocean is all blank. There is neither an island nor a reef by which we can regulate the chronometer. The only thing to do--"

"Land ho, skipper!" the Tongan called down the companionway.

Grief took a quick glance at the empty blank of the chart, whistled his surprise, and sank back feebly in a chair.

"It gets me," he said. "There can't be land around here. We never drifted or ran like that. The whole voyage has been crazy. Will you kindly go up, Mr. Snow, and see what's ailing Jackie."

"It's land all right," the mate called down a minute afterward. "You can see it from the deck--tops of cocoanuts--an atoll of some sort. Maybe it's Leu-Leu after all."

Grief shook his head positively as he gazed at the fringe of palms, only the tops visible, apparently rising out of the sea.

"Haul up on the wind, Mr. Snow, close-and-by, and we'll take a look. We can just reach past to the south, and if it spreads off in that direction we'll hit the southwest corner."

Very near must palms be to be seen from the low deck of a schooner, and, slowly as the *Uncle Toby* sailed, she quickly raised the low land above the sea, while more palms increased the definition of the atoll circle.

"She's a beauty," the mate remarked. "A perfect circle.... Looks as if it might be eight or nine miles across.... Wonder if there's an entrance to the lagoon.... Who knows? Maybe it's a brand new find."

They coasted up the west side of the atoll, making short tacks in to the surf-pounded coral rock and out again. From the masthead, across the palm-fringe, a Kanaka announced the lagoon and a small island in the middle.

"I know what you're thinking," Grief said to his mate.

Snow, who had been muttering and shaking his head, looked up with quick and challenging incredulity.

"You're thinking the entrance will be on the northwest." Grief went on, as if reciting.

"Two cable lengths wide, marked on the north by three separated cocoanuts, and on the south by pandanus trees. Eight miles in diameter, a perfect circle, with an island in the dead centre."

"I *was* thinking that," Snow acknowledged.

"And there's the entrance opening up just where it ought to be----"

"And the three palms," Snow almost whispered, "and the pandanus trees. If there's a windmill on the island, it's it--Swithin Hall's island. But it can't be. Everybody's been looking for it for the last ten years."

"Hall played you a dirty trick once, didn't he?" Grief queried.

Snow nodded. "That's why I'm working for you. He broke me flat. It was downright robbery. I bought the wreck of the *Cascade*, down in Sydney, out of a first instalment of a legacy from home."

"She went on Christmas Island, didn't she?"

"Yes, full tilt, high and dry, in the night. They saved the passengers and mails. Then I bought a little island schooner, which took the rest of my money, and I had to wait the final payment by the executors to fit her out. What did Swithin Hall do--he was at Honolulu at the time--but make a straightaway run for Christmas Island. Neither right nor title did he have. When I got there, the hull and engines were all that was left of the *Cascade*. She had had a fair shipment of silk on board, too. And it wasn't even damaged. I got it afterward pretty straight from his supercargo. He cleared something like sixty thousand dollars."

Snow shrugged his shoulders and gazed bleakly at the smooth surface of the lagoon, where tiny wavelets danced in the afternoon sun.

"The wreck was mine. I bought her at public auction. I'd gambled big, and I'd lost. When I got back to Sydney, the crew, and some of the tradesmen who'd extended me credit, libelled the schooner. I pawned my watch and sextant, and shovelled coal one spell, and finally got a billet in the New Hebrides on a screw of eight pounds a month. Then I tried my luck as independent trader, went broke, took a mate's billet on a recruiter down to Tanna and over to Fiji, got a job as overseer on a German plantation back of Apia, and finally settled down on the *Uncle Toby*."

"Have you ever met Swithin Hall?"

Snow shook his head.

"Well, you're likely to meet him now. There's the windmill."

In the centre of the lagoon, as they emerged from the passage, they opened a small, densely wooded island, among the trees of which a large Dutch windmill showed plainly.

"Nobody at home from the looks of it," Grief said, "or you might have a chance to collect."

The mate's face set vindictively, and his fists clenched.

"Can't touch him legally. He's got too much money now. But I can take sixty thousand dollars' worth out of his hide. I hope he is at home."

"Then I hope he is, too," Grief said, with an appreciative smile. "You got the description of his island from Bau-Oti, I suppose?"

"Yes, as pretty well everybody else has. The trouble is that Bau-Oti can't give latitude or longitude. Says they sailed a long way from the Gilberts--that's all he knows. I wonder what became of him."

"I saw him a year ago on the beach at Tahiti. Said he was thinking about shipping for a cruise through the Paumotus. Well, here we are, getting close in. Heave the lead, Jackie-Jackie. Stand by to let go, Mr. Snow. According to Bau-Oti, anchorage three hundred yards off the west shore in nine fathoms, coral patches to the southeast. There are the patches. What do you get, Jackie?"

"Nine fadom."

"Let go, Mr. Snow."

The *Uncle Toby* swung to her chain, head-sails ran down, and the Kanaka crew sprang to fore and main-halyards and sheets.

IV

The whaleboat laid alongside the small, coral-stone landing-pier, and David Grief and his mate stepped ashore.

"You'd think the place deserted," Grief said, as they walked up a sanded path to the bungalow. "But I smell a smell that I've often smelled. Something doing, or my nose is a liar. The lagoon is carpeted with shell. They're rotting the meat out not a thousand miles away. Get that whiff?"

Like no bungalow in the tropics was this bungalow of Swithin Hall. Of mission architecture, when they had entered through the unlatched screen door they found decoration and furniture of the same mission style. The floor of the big living-room was covered with the finest Samoan mats. There were couches, window seats, cozy corners, and a billiard table. A sewing table, and a sewing-basket, spilling over with sheer linen in the French embroidery of which stuck a needle, tokened a woman's presence. By screen and veranda the blinding sunshine was subdued to a cool, dim radiance. The sheen of pearl push-buttons caught Grief's eye.

"Storage batteries, by George, run by the windmill!" he exclaimed as he pressed the buttons. "And concealed lighting!"

Hidden bowls glowed, and the room was filled with diffused golden light. Many shelves of books lined the walls. Grief fell to running over their titles. A fairly well-read man himself, for a sea-adventurer, he glimpsed a wide-ness of range and catholicity of taste that were beyond him. Old friends he met, and others that he had heard of but never read. There were complete sets of Tolstoy, Turgenieff, and Gorky; of Cooper and Mark Twain; of Hugo, and Zola, and Sue; and of Flaubert, De Maupassant, and Paul de Koch. He glanced curiously at the pages of Metchnikoff, Weininger, and Schopenhauer, and wonderingly at those of Ellis, Lydston, Krafft-Ebbing, and Forel. Woodruff's "Expansion of Races" was in his hands when Snow returned from further exploration of the house.

"Enamelled bath-tub, separate room for a shower, and a sitz-bath!" he exclaimed. "Fitted up for a king! And I reckon some of my money went to pay for it. The place must be occupied. I found fresh-opened butter and milk tins in the pantry, and fresh turtle-meat hanging up. I'm going to see what else I can find."

Grief, too, departed, through a door that led out of the opposite end of the living-room. He found himself in a self-evident woman's bedroom. Across it, he peered through a wire-mesh door into a screened and darkened sleeping porch. On a couch lay a woman asleep. In the soft light she seemed remarkably beautiful in a dark Spanish way. By her side, opened and face downward, a novel lay on a chair. From the colour in her cheeks, Grief concluded that she had not been long in the tropics. After the one glimpse he stole softly back, in time to see Snow entering the living-room through the other door. By the naked arm he was clutching an age-wrinkled black who grinned in fear and made signs of dumbness.

"I found him snoozing in a little kennel out back," the mate said. "He's the cook, I suppose. Can't get a word out of him. What did you find?"

"A sleeping princess. S-sh! There's somebody now."

"If it's Hall," Snow muttered, clenching his fist.

Grief shook his head. "No rough-house. There's a woman here. And if it is Hall, before we go I'll maneuver a chance for you to get action."

The door opened, and a large, heavily built man entered. In his belt was a heavy, long-barrelled Colt's. One quick, anxious look he gave them, then his face wreathed in a genial smile and his hand was extended.

"Welcome, strangers. But if you don't mind my asking, how, by all that's sacred, did you ever manage to find my island?"

"Because we were out of our course," Grief answered, shaking hands.

"My name's Hall, Swithin Hall," the other said, turning to shake Snow's hand. "And I don't mind telling you that you're the first visitors I've ever had."

"And this is your secret island that's had all the beaches talking for years?" Grief answered. "Well, I know the formula now for finding it."

"How's that?" Hall asked quickly.

"Smash your chronometer, get mixed up with a hurricane, and then keep your eyes open for cocoanuts rising out of the sea."

"And what is your name?" Hall asked, after he had laughed perfunctorily.

"Anstey--Phil Anstey," Grief answered promptly. "Bound on the *Uncle Toby* from the Gilberts to New Guinea, and trying to find my longitude. This is my mate, Mr. Gray, a better navigator than I, but who has lost his goat just the same to the chronometer."

Grief did not know his reason for lying, but he had felt the prompting and succumbed to it. He vaguely divined that something was wrong, but could not place his finger on it. Swithin Hall was a fat, round-faced man, with a laughing lip and laughter-wrinkles in the corners of his eyes. But Grief, in his early youth, had learned how deceptive this type could prove, as well as the deceptiveness of blue eyes that screened the surface with fun and hid what went on behind.

"What are you doing with my cook?--lost yours and trying to shanghai him?" Hall was saying. "You'd better let him go, if you're going to have any supper. My wife's here, and she'll be glad to meet you--dinner, she calls it, and calls me down for misnaming it, but I'm old fashioned. My folks always ate dinner in the middle of the day. Can't get over early training. Don't you want to wash up? I do. Look at me. I've been working like a dog--out with the diving crew--shell, you know. But of course you smelt it."

V

Snow pleaded charge of the schooner, and went on board. In addition to his repugnance at breaking salt with the man who had robbed him, it was necessary for him to impress the in-violableness of Grief's lies on the Kanaka crew. By eleven o'clock Grief came on board, to find his mate waiting up for him.

"There's something doing on Swithin Hall's island," Grief said, shaking his head. "I can't make out what it is, but I get the feel of it. What does Swithin Hall look like?"

Snow shook his head.

"That man ashore there never bought the books on the shelves," Grief declared with conviction. "Nor did he ever go in for concealed lighting. He's got a surface flow of suavity, but he's rough as a hoof-rasp underneath. He's an oily bluff. And the bunch he's got with him--Watson and Gorman their names are; they came in after you left--real sea-dogs, middle-aged, marred and battered, tough as rusty wrought-iron nails and twice as dangerous; real ugly customers, with guns in their belts, who don't strike me as just the right sort to be on such comradely terms with Swithin Hall. And the woman! She's a lady. I mean it. She knows a whole lot of South America, and of China, too. I'm sure she's Spanish, though her English is natural. She's travelled. We talked bull-fights. She's seen them in Guayaquil, in Mexico, in Seville. She knows a lot about sealskins.

"Now here's what bothers me. She knows music. I asked her if she played. And he's fixed that place up like a palace. That being so, why hasn't he a piano for her? Another thing: she's quick and lively and he watches her whenever she talks. He's on pins and needles, and continually breaking in and leading the conversation. Say, did you ever hear that Swithin Hall was married?"

"Bless me, I don't know," the mate replied. "Never entered my head to think about it."

"He introduced her as Mrs. Hall. And Watson and Gorman call him Hall. They're a precious pair, those two men. I don't understand it at all."

"What are you going to do about it?" Snow asked.

"Oh, hang around a while. There are some books ashore there I want to read. Suppose you send that topmast down in the morning and generally overhaul. We've been through a hurricane, you know. Set up the rigging while you're about it. Get things pretty well adrift, and take your time."

VI

The next day Grief's suspicions found further food. Ashore early, he strolled across the little island to the barracks occupied by the divers.

They were just boarding the boats when he arrived, and it struck him that for Kanakas they behaved more like chain-gang prisoners. The three white men were there, and Grief noted that each carried a rifle. Hall greeted him jovially enough, but Gorman and Watson scowled as they grunted curt good mornings.

A moment afterward one of the Kanakas, as he bent to place his oar, favoured Grief with a slow, deliberate wink. The man's face was familiar, one of the thousands of native sailors and divers he had encountered drifting about in the island trade.

"Don't tell them who I am," Grief said, in Tahitian. "Did you ever sail for me?"

The man's head nodded and his mouth opened, but before he could speak he was suppressed by a savage "Shut up!" from Watson, who was already in the sternsheets.

"I beg pardon," Grief said. "I ought to have known better."

"That's all right," Hall interposed. "The trouble is they're too much talk and not enough work. Have to be severe with them, or they wouldn't get enough shell to pay their grub."

Grief nodded sympathetically. "I know them. Got a crew of them myself--the lazy swine. Got to drive them like niggers to get a half-day's work out of them."

"What was you sayin' to him?" Gorman blurted in bluntly.

"I was asking how the shell was, and how deep they were diving."

"Thick," Hall took over the answering. "We're working now in about ten fathom. It's right out there, not a hundred yards off. Want to come along?"

Half the day Grief spent with the boats, and had lunch in the bungalow. In the afternoon he loafed, taking a siesta in the big living-room, reading some, and talking for half an hour with Mrs. Hall. After dinner, he played billiards with her husband. It chanced that Grief had never before encountered Swithin Hall, yet the latter's fame as an expert at billiards was the talk of the beaches from Levuka to Honolulu. But the man Grief played with this night proved most indifferent at the game. His wife showed herself far cleverer with the cue.

When he went on board the *Uncle Toby* Grief routed Jackie-Jackie out of bed. He described the location of the barracks, and told the Tongan to swim softly around and have talk with the Kanakas. In two hours Jackie-Jackie was back. He shook his head as he stood dripping before Grief.

"Very funny t'ing," he reported. "One white man stop all the time. He has big rifle. He lay in water and watch. Maybe twelve o'clock, other white man come and take rifle. First white man go to bed. Other man stop now with rifle. No good. Me cannot talk with Kanakas. Me come back."

"By George!" Grief said to Snow, after the Tongan had gone back to his bunk. "I smell something more than shell. Those three men are standing watches over their Kanakas. That man's no more Swithin Hall than I am."

Snow whistled from the impact of a new idea.

"I've got it!" he cried.

"And I'll name it," Grief retorted, "It's in your mind that the *Emily L.* was their schooner?"

"Just that. They're raising and rotting the shell, while she's gone for more divers, or provisions, or both."

"And I agree with you." Grief glanced at the cabin clock and evinced signs of bed-going. "He's a sailor. The three of them are. But they're not island men. They're new in these waters."

Again Snow whistled.

"And the *Emily L.* is lost with all hands," he said. "We know that. They're marooned here till Swithin Hall comes. Then he'll catch them with all the shell."

“Or they’ll take possession of his schooner.”

“Hope they do!” Snow muttered vindictively. “Somebody ought to rob him. Wish I was in their boots. I’d balance off that sixty thousand.”

VII

A week passed, during which time the *Uncle Toby* was ready for sea, while Grief managed to allay any suspicion of him by the shore crowd.

Even Gorman and Watson accepted him at his self-description. Throughout the week Grief begged and badgered them for the longitude of the island.

“You wouldn’t have me leave here lost,” he finally urged. “I can’t get a line on my chronometer without your longitude.”

Hall laughingly refused.

“You’re too good a navigator, Mr. Anstey, not to fetch New Guinea or some other high land.”

“And you’re too good a navigator, Mr. Hall,” Grief replied, “not to know that I can fetch your island any time by running down its latitude.”

On the last evening, ashore, as usual, to dinner, Grief got his first view of the pearls they had collected. Mrs. Hall, waxing enthusiastic, had asked her husband to bring forth the “pretties,” and had spent half an hour showing them to Grief. His delight in them was genuine, as well as was his surprise that they had made so rich a haul.

“The lagoon is virgin,” Hall explained. “You saw yourself that most of the shell is large and old. But it’s funny that we got most of the valuable pearls in one small patch in the course of a week. It was a little treasure house. Every oyster seemed filled--seed pearls by the quart, of course, but the perfect ones, most of that bunch there, came out of the small patch.”

Grief ran his eye over them and knew their value ranged from one hundred to a thousand dollars each, while the several selected large ones went far beyond.

“Oh, the pretties! the pretties!” Mrs. Hall cried, bending forward suddenly and kissing them.

A few minutes later she arose to say good-night.

“It’s good-bye,” Grief said, as he took her hand. “We sail at daylight.”

“So suddenly!” she cried, while Grief could not help seeing the quick light of satisfaction in her husband’s eyes.

“Yes,” Grief continued. “All the repairs are finished. I can’t get the longitude of your island out of your husband, though I’m still in hopes he’ll relent.”

Hall laughed and shook his head, and, as his wife left the room, proposed a last farewell nightcap. They sat over it, smoking and talking.

“What do you estimate they’re worth?” Grief asked, indicating the spread of pearls on the table. “I mean what the pearl-buyers would give you in open market?”

“Oh, seventy-five or eighty thousand,” Hall said carelessly.

“I’m afraid you’re underestimating. I know pearls a bit. Take that biggest one. It’s perfect. Not a cent less than five thousand dollars. Some multimillionaire will pay double that some day, when the dealers have taken their whack. And never minding the seed pearls, you’ve got quarts of baroques there. And baroques are coming into fashion. They’re picking up and doubling on themselves every year.”

Hall gave the trove of pearls a closer and longer scrutiny, estimating the different parcels and adding the sum aloud.

“You’re right,” he admitted. “They’re worth a hundred thousand right now.”

“And at what do you figure your working expenses?” Grief went on. “Your time, and your two men’s, and the divers’?”

“Five thousand would cover it.”

“Then they stand to net you ninety-five thousand?”

“Something like that. But why so curious?”

“Why, I was just trying----“ Grief paused and drained his glass. “Just trying to reach some sort of an equitable arrangement. Suppose I should give you and your people a passage to Sydney and the five thousand dollars--or, better, seven thousand five hundred. You’ve worked hard.”

Without commotion or muscular movement the other man became alert and tense. His round-faced geniality went out like the flame of a snuffed candle. No laughter clouded the surface of the eyes, and in their depths showed the hard, dangerous soul of the man. He spoke in a low, deliberate voice.

“Now just what in hell do you mean by that?”

Grief casually relighted his cigar.

"I don't know just how to begin," he said. "The situation is--er--is embarrassing for you. You see, I'm trying to be fair. As I say, you've worked hard. I don't want to confiscate the pearls. I want to pay you for your time and trouble, and expense."

Conviction, instantaneous and absolute, froze on the other's face.

"And I thought you were in Europe," he muttered. Hope flickered for a moment. "Look here, you're joking me. How do I know you're Swithin Hall?"

Grief shrugged his shoulders. "Such a joke would be in poor taste, after your hospitality. And it is equally in poor taste to have two Swithin Halls on the island."

"Since you're Swithin Hall, then who the deuce am I? Do you know that, too?"

"No," Grief answered airily. "But I'd like to know."

"Well, it's none of your business."

"I grant it. Your identity is beside the point. Besides, I know your schooner, and I can find out who you are from that."

"What's her name?"

"The *Emily L.*

"Correct. I'm Captain Raffy, owner and master."

"The seal-poacher? I've heard of you. What under the sun brought you down here on my preserves?"

"Needed the money. The seal herds are about finished."

"And the out-of-the-way places of the world are better policed, eh?"

"Pretty close to it. And now about this present scrape, Mr. Hall. I can put up a nasty fight. What are you going to do about it?"

"What I said. Even better. What's the *Emily L.* worth?"

"She's seen her day. Not above ten thousand, which would be robbery. Every time she's in a rough sea I'm afraid she'll jump her ballast through her planking."

"She has jumped it, Captain Raffy. I sighted her bottom-up after the blow. Suppose we say she was worth seven thousand five hundred. I'll pay over to you fifteen thousand and give you a passage. Don't move your hands from your lap." Grief stood up, went over to him, and took his revolver. "Just a necessary precaution, Captain. Now you'll go on board with me. I'll break the news to Mrs. Raffy afterward, and fetch her out to join you."

"You're behaving handsomely, Mr. Hall, I must say," Captain Raffy volunteered, as the whaleboat came alongside the *Uncle Toby*. "But watch out for Gorman and Watson. They're ugly customers. And, by the way, I don't like to mention it, but you've seen my wife. I've given her four or five pearls. Watson and Gorman were willing."

"Say no more, Captain. Say no more. They shall remain hers. Is that you, Mr. Snow? Here's a friend I want you to take charge of--Captain Raffy. I'm going ashore for his wife."

VIII

David Grief sat writing at the library table in the bungalow living-room. Outside, the first pale of dawn was showing. He had had a busy night. Mrs. Raffy had taken two hysterical hours to pack her and Captain Raffy's possessions. Gorman had been caught asleep, but Watson, standing guard over the divers, had shown fight. Matters did not reach the shooting stage, but it was only after it had been demonstrated to him that the game was up that he consented to join his companions on board. For temporary convenience, he and Gorman were shackled in the mate's room, Mrs. Raffy was confined in Grief's, and Captain Raffy made fast to the cabin table.

Grief finished the document and read over what he had written:

To Swithin Hall, for pearls taken from his lagoon (estimated)	$100,000
To Herbert Snow, paid in full for salvage from steamship Cascade in pearls (estimated)	$60,000
To Captain Raffy, salary and expenses for collecting pearls	7,500
To Captain Raffy, reimbursement for schooner Emily L., lost in hurricane	7,500
To Mrs. Raffy, for good will, five fair pearls (estimated)	1,100
To passage to Syndey, four persons, at $120.	480
To white lead for painting Swithin Hall's two whaleboats	9
To Swithin Hall, balance in pearls (estimated)	

which are to be found in drawer of library table 23,411
$100,000--$100,000

Grief signed and dated, paused, and added at the bottom:

P. S.--Still owing to Swithin Hall three books, borrowed from library: Hudson's "Law of Psychic Phenomena," Zola's "Paris," and Mahan's "Problem of Asia." These books, or full value, can be collected of said David Griefs Sydney office.

He shut off the electric light, picked up the bundle of books, carefully latched the front door, and went down to the waiting whaleboat.

The Little Man

"I WISHT you wasn't so set in your ways," Shorty demurred. "I'm sure scairt of that glacier. No man ought to tackle it by his lonely."

Smoke laughed cheerfully, and ran his eye up the glistening face of the tiny glacier that filled the head of the valley. "Here it is August already, and the days have been getting shorter for two months," he epitomized the situation. "You know quartz, and I don't. But I can bring up the grub, while you keep after that mother lode. So-long. I'll be back by to-morrow evening."

He turned and started.

"I got a hunch something's goin' to happen," Shorty pleaded after him.

But Smoke's reply was a bantering laugh. He held on down the little valley, occasionally wiping the sweat from his forehead, the while his feet crushed through ripe mountain raspberries and delicate ferns that grew beside patches of sun-sheltered ice.

In the early spring he and Shorty had come up the Stewart River and launched out into the amazing chaos of the region where Surprise Lake lay. And all of the spring and half of the summer had been consumed in futile wanderings, when, on the verge of turning back, they caught their first glimpse of the baffling, gold-bottomed sheet of water which had lured and fooled a generation of miners. Making their camp in the old cabin which Smoke had discovered on his previous visit, they had learned three things: first, heavy nugget gold was carpeted thickly on the lake bottom; next, the gold could be dived for in the shallower portions, but the temperature of the water was man-killing; and, finally, the draining of the lake was too stupendous a task for two men in the shorter half of a short summer. Undeterred, reasoning from the coarseness of the gold that it had not traveled far, they had set out in search of the mother lode. They had crossed the big glacier that frowned on the southern rim and devoted themselves to the puzzling maze of small valleys and canyons beyond, which, by most unmountainlike methods, drained, or had at one time drained, into the lake.

The valley Smoke was descending gradually widened after the fashion of any normal valley; but, at the lower end, it pinched narrowly between high precipitous walls and abruptly stopped in a cross wall. At the base of this, in a welter of broken rock, the streamlet disappeared, evidently finding its way out underground. Climbing the cross wall, from the top Smoke saw the lake beneath him. Unlike any mountain lake he had ever seen, it was not blue. Instead, its intense peacock-green tokened its shallowness. It was this shallowness that made its draining feasible. All about arose jumbled mountains, with ice-scarred peaks and crags, grotesquely shaped and grouped. All was topsyturvy and unsystematic--a Dore nightmare. So fantastic and impossible was it that it affected Smoke as more like a cosmic landscape-joke than a rational portion of earth’s surface. There were many glaciers in the canyons, most of them tiny, and, as he looked, one of the larger ones, on the north shore, calved amid thunders and splashings. Across the lake, seemingly not more than half a mile, but, as he well knew, five miles away, he could see the bunch of spruce-trees and the cabin. He looked again to make sure, and saw smoke clearly rising from the chimney. Somebody else had surprised themselves into finding Surprise Lake, was his conclusion, as he turned to climb the southern wall.

From the top of this he came down into a little valley, flower-floored and lazy with the hum of bees, that behaved quite as a reasonable valley should, in so far as it made legitimate entry on the lake. What was wrong with it was its length--scarcely a hundred yards; its head a straight up-and-down cliff of a thousand feet, over which a stream pitched itself in descending veils of mist.

And here he encountered more smoke, floating lazily upward in the warm sunshine beyond an outjut of rock. As he came around the corner he heard a light, metallic tap-tapping and a merry whistling that kept the beat. Then he saw the man, an upturned shoe between his knees, into the sole of which he was driving hob-spikes.

“Hello!” was the stranger’s greeting, and Smoke’s heart went out to the man in ready liking. “Just in time for a snack. There’s coffee in the pot, a couple of cold flapjacks, and some jerky.”

“I’ll go you if I lose,” was Smoke’s acceptance, as he sat down. “I’ve been rather skimped on the last several meals, but there’s oodles of grub over in the cabin.”

“Across the lake? That’s what I was heading for.”

“Seems Surprise Lake is becoming populous,” Smoke complained, emptying the coffee-pot.

“Go on, you’re joking, aren’t you?” the man said, astonishment painted on his face.

Smoke laughed. “That’s the way it takes everybody. You see those high ledges across there to the northwest? There’s where I first saw it. No warning. Just suddenly caught the view of the whole lake from there. I’d given up looking for it, too.

“Same here,” the other agreed. “I’d headed back and was expecting to fetch the Stewart last night, when out I popped in sight of the lake. If that’s it, where’s the Stewart? And where have I been all the time? And how did you come here? And what’s your name?”

“Bellew. Kit Bellew.”

“Oh! I know you.” The man’s eyes and face were bright with a joyous smile, and his hand flashed eagerly out to Smoke’s. “I’ve heard all about you.”

“Been reading police-court news, I see,” Smoke sparred modestly.

“Nope.” The man laughed and shook his head. “Merely recent Klondike history. I might have recognized you if you’d been shaved. I watched you putting it all over the gambling crowd when you were bucking roulette in the Elkhorn. My name’s Carson--Andy Carson; and I can’t begin to tell you how glad I am to meet up with you.”

He was a slender man, wiry with health, with quick black eyes and a magnetism of camaraderie.

“And this is Surprise Lake?” he murmured incredulously.

“It certainly is.”

“And its bottom’s buttered with gold?”

“Sure. There’s some of the churning.” Smoke dipped in his overalls pocket and brought forth half a dozen nuggets. “That’s the stuff. All you have to do is go down to bottom, blind if you want to, and pick up a handful. Then you’ve got to run half a mile to get up your circulation.”

“Well, gosh-dash my dingbats, if you haven’t beaten me to it,” Carson swore whimsically, but his disappointment was patent. “An’ I thought I’d scooped the whole caboodle. Anyway, I’ve had the fun of getting here.”

“Fun!” Smoke cried. “Why, if we can ever get our hands on all that bottom, we’ll make Rockefeller look like thirty cents.”

“But it’s yours,” was Carson’s objection.

“Nothing to it, my friend. You’ve got to realize that no gold deposit like it has been discovered in all the history of mining. It will take you and me and my partner and all the friends we’ve got to lay our hands on it. All Bonanza and Eldorado, dumped together, wouldn’t be richer than half an acre down here. The problem is to drain the lake. It will take millions. And there's only one thing I'm afraid of. There's so much of it that if we fail to control the output it will bring about the demonetization of gold."

"And you tell me--" Carson broke off, speechless and amazed.

"And glad to have you. It will take a year or two, with all the money we can raise, to drain the lake. It can be done. I've looked over the ground. But it will take every man in the country that's willing to work for wages. We'll need an army, and we need right now decent men in on the ground floor. Are you in?"

"Am I in? Don't I look it? I feel so much like a millionaire that I'm real timid about crossing that big glacier. Couldn't afford to break my neck now. Wish I had some more of those hob-spikes. I was just hammering the last in when you came along. How's yours? Let's see."

Smoke held up his foot.

"Worn smooth as a skating-rink!" Carson cried. "You've certainly been hiking some. Wait a minute, and I'll pull some of mine out for you."

But Smoke refused to listen. "Besides," he said, "I've got about forty feet of rope cached where we take the ice. My partner and I used it coming over. It will be a cinch."

It was a hard, hot climb. The sun blazed dazzlingly on the ice-surface, and with streaming pores they panted from the exertion. There were places, criss-crossed by countless fissures and crevasses, where an hour of dangerous toil advanced them no more than a hundred yards. At two in the afternoon, beside a pool of water bedded in the ice, Smoke called a halt.

"Let's tackle some of that jerky," he said. "I've been on short allowance, and my knees are shaking. Besides, we're across the worst. Three hundred yards will fetch us to the rocks, and it's easy going, except for a couple of nasty fissures and one bad one that heads us down toward the bulge. There's a weak ice-bridge there, but Shorty and I managed it."

Over the jerky, the two men got acquainted, and Andy Carson unbosomed himself of the story of his life. "I just knew I'd find Surprise Lake," he mumbled in the midst of mouthfuls. "I had to. I missed the French Hill Benches, the Big Skookum, and Monte Cristo, and then it was Surprise Lake or bust. And here I am. My wife knew I'd strike it. I've got faith enough, but hers knocks mine galleywest. She's a corker, a crackerjack--dead game, grit to her finger-ends, never-say-die, a fighter from the drop of the hat, the one woman for me, true blue and all the rest. Take a look at that."

He sprung open his watch, and on the inside cover Smoke saw the small, pasted photograph of a bright-haired woman, framed on either side by the laughing face of a child.

"Boys?" he queried.

"Boy and girl," Carson answered proudly. "He's a year and a half older." He sighed. "They might have been some grown, but we had to wait. You see, she was sick. Lungs. But she put up a fight. What'd we know about such stuff? I was clerking, railroad clerk, Chicago, when we got married. Her folks were tuberculous. Doctors didn't know much in those days. They said it was hereditary. All her family had it. Caught it from each other, only they never guessed it. Thought they were born with it. Fate. She and I lived with them the first couple of years. I wasn't afraid. No tuberculosis in my family. And I got it. That set me thinking. It was contagious. I caught it from breathing their air.

"We talked it over, she and I. Then I jumped the family doctor and consulted an up-to-date expert. He told me what I'd figured out for myself, and said Arizona was the place for us. We pulled up stakes and went down--no money, nothing. I got a job sheep-herding, and left her in town--a lung town. It was filled to spilling with lungers.

"Of course, living and sleeping in the clean open, I started right in to mend. I was away months at a time. Every time I came back, she was worse. She just couldn't pick up. But we were learning. I jerked her out of that town, and she went to sheep-herding with me. In four years, winter and summer, cold and heat, rain, snow, and frost, and all the rest, we never slept under a roof, and we were moving camp all the time. You ought to have seen the change--brown as berries, lean as Indians, tough as rawhide. When we figured we were cured, we pulled out for San Francisco. But we were too previous. By the second month we both had slight hemorrhages. We flew the coop back to Arizona and the sheep. Two years more of it. That fixed us. Perfect cure. All her family's dead. Wouldn't listen to us.

"Then we jumped cities for keeps. Knocked around on the Pacific coast and southern Oregon looked good to us. We settled in the Rogue River Valley--apples. There's a big future there, only nobody knows it. I got my land--on time, of course--for forty an acre. Ten years from now it'll be worth five hundred.

“We’ve done some almighty hustling. Takes money, and we hadn’t a cent to start with, you know--had to build a house and barn, get horses and plows, and all the rest. She taught school two years. Then the boy came. But we’ve got it. You ought to see those trees we planted--a hundred acres of them, almost mature now. But it’s all been outgo, and the mortgage working overtime. That’s why I’m here. She’d ‘a’ come along only for the kids and the trees. She’s handlin’ that end, and here I am, a gosh-danged expensive millionaire--in prospect.”

He looked happily across the sun-dazzle on the ice to the green water of the lake along the farther shore, took a final look at the photograph, and murmured:

“She’s some woman, that. She’s hung on. She just wouldn’t die, though she was pretty close to skin and bone all wrapped around a bit of fire when she went out with the sheep. Oh, she’s thin now. Never will be fat. But it’s the prettiest thinness I ever saw, and when I get back, and the trees begin to bear, and the kids get going to school, she and I are going to do Paris. I don’t think much of that burg, but she’s just hankered for it all her life.”

“Well, here’s the gold that will take you to Paris,” Smoke assured him. “All we’ve got to do is to get our hands on it.”

Carson nodded with glistening eyes. “Say--that farm of ours is the prettiest piece of orchard land on all the Pacific coast. Good climate, too. Our lungs will never get touched again there. Ex-lungers have to be almighty careful, you know. If you’re thinking of settling, well, just take a peep in at our valley before you settle, that’s all. And fishing! Say!--did you ever get a thirty-five-pound salmon on a six-ounce rod? Some fight, bo’, some fight!”

“I’m lighter than you by forty pounds,” Carson said. “Let me go first.”

They stood on the edge of the crevasse. It was enormous and ancient, fully a hundred feet across, with sloping, age-eaten sides instead of sharp-angled rims. At this one place it was bridged by a huge mass of pressure-hardened snow that was itself half ice. Even the bottom of this mass they could not see, much less the bottom of the crevasse. Crumbling and melting, the bridge threatened imminent collapse. There were signs where recent portions had broken away, and even as they studied it a mass of half a ton dislodged and fell.

“Looks pretty bad,” Carson admitted with an ominous head-shake. “And it looks much worse than if I wasn’t a millionaire.”

“But we’ve got to tackle it,” Smoke said. “We’re almost across. We can’t go back. We can’t camp here on the ice all night. And there’s no other way. Shorty and I explored for a mile up. It was in better shape, though, when we crossed.”

“It’s one at a time, and me first.” Carson took the part coil of rope from Smoke’s hand. “You’ll have to cast off. I’ll take the rope and the pick. Gimme your hand so I can slip down easy.”

Slowly and carefully he lowered himself the several feet to the bridge, where he stood, making final adjustments for the perilous traverse. On his back was his pack outfit. Around his neck, resting on his shoulders, he coiled the rope, one end of which was still fast to his waist.

“I’d give a mighty good part of my millions right now for a bridge-construction gang,” he said, but his cheery, whimsical smile belied the words. Also, he added, “It’s all right; I’m a cat.”

The pick, and the long stick he used as an alpenstock, he balanced horizontally after the manner of a rope-walker. He thrust one foot forward tentatively, drew it back, and steeled himself with a visible, physical effort.

“I wish I was flat broke,” he smiled up. “If ever I get out of being a millionaire this time, I’ll never be one again. It’s too uncomfortable.”

“It’s all right,” Smoke encouraged. “I’ve been over it before. Better let me try it first.”

“And you forty pounds to the worse,” the little man flashed back. “I’ll be all right in a minute. I’m all right now.” And this time the nerving-up process was instantaneous. “Well, here goes for Rogue River and the apples,” he said, as his foot went out, this time to rest carefully and lightly while the other foot was brought up and past. Very gently and circumspectly he continued on his way until two-thirds of the distance was covered. Here he stopped to examine a depression he must cross, at the bottom of which was a fresh crack. Smoke, watching, saw him glance to the side and down into the crevasse itself, and then begin a slight swaying.

“Keep your eyes up!” Smoke commanded sharply. “Now! Go on!”

The little man obeyed, nor faltered on the rest of the journey. The sun-eroded slope of the farther edge of the crevasse was slippery, but not steep, and he worked his way up to a narrow ledge, faced about, and sat down.

“Your turn,” he called across. “But just keep a-coming and don’t look down. That’s what got my goat. Just keep a-coming, that’s all. And get a move on. It’s almighty rotten.”

Balancing his own stick horizontally, Smoke essayed the passage. That the bridge was on its last legs was patent. He felt a jar under foot, a slight movement of the mass, and a heavier jar. This was followed by a single sharp crackle. Behind him he knew something was happening. If for no other reason, he knew it by the strained, tense face of Carson. From beneath, thin and faint, came the murmur of running water, and Smoke's eyes involuntarily wavered to a glimpse of the shimmering depths. He jerked them back to the way before him. Two-thirds over, he came to the depression. The sharp edges of the crack, but slightly touched by the sun, showed how recent it was. His foot was lifted to make the step across, when the crack began slowly widening, at the same time emitting numerous sharp snaps. He made the step quickly, increasing the stride of it, but the worn nails of his shoe skated on the farther slope of the depression. He fell on his face, and without pause slipped down and into the crack, his legs hanging clear, his chest supported by the stick which he had managed to twist crosswise as he fell.

His first sensation was the nausea caused by the sickening up-leap of his pulse; his first idea was of surprise that he had fallen no farther. Behind him was crackling and jar and movement to which the stick vibrated. From beneath, in the heart of the glacier, came the soft and hollow thunder of the dislodged masses striking bottom. And still the bridge, broken from its farthest support and ruptured in the middle, held, though the portion he had crossed tilted downward at a pitch of twenty degrees. He could see Carson, perched on his ledge, his feet braced against the melting surface, swiftly recoiling the rope from his shoulders to his hand.

"Wait!" he cried. "Don't move, or the whole shooting-match will come down."

He calculated the distance with a quick glance, took the bandana from his neck and tied it to the rope, and increased the length by a second bandana from his pocket. The rope, manufactured from sled-lashings and short lengths of plaited rawhide knotted together, was both light and strong. The first cast was lucky as well as deft, and Smoke's fingers clutched it. He evidenced a hand-over-hand intention of crawling out of the crack. But Carson, who had refastened the rope around his own waist, stopped him.

"Make it fast around yourself as well," he ordered.

"If I go I'll take you with me," Smoke objected.

The little man became very peremptory.

“You shut up,” he ordered. “The sound of your voice is enough to start the whole thing going.”

“If I ever start going--“ Smoke began.

“Shut up! You ain’t going to ever start going. Now do what I say. That’s right--under the shoulders. Make it fast. Now! Start! Get a move on, but easy as you go. I’ll take in the slack. You just keep a-coming. That’s it. Easy. Easy.”

Smoke was still a dozen feet away when the final collapse of the bridge began. Without noise, but in a jerky way, it crumbled to an increasing tilt.

“Quick!” Carson called, coiling in hand-over-hand on the slack of the rope which Smoke’s rush gave him.

When the crash came, Smoke’s fingers were clawing into the hard face of the wall of the crevasse, while his body dragged back with the falling bridge. Carson, sitting up, feet wide apart and braced, was heaving on the rope. This effort swung Smoke in to the side wall, but it jerked Carson out of his niche. Like a cat, he faced about, clawing wildly for a hold on the ice and slipping down. Beneath him, with forty feet of taut rope between them, Smoke was clawing just as wildly; and ere the thunder from below announced the arrival of the bridge, both men had come to rest. Carson had achieved this first, and the several pounds of pull he was able to put on the rope had helped bring Smoke to a stop.

Each lay in a shallow niche, but Smoke’s was so shallow that, tense with the strain of flattening and sticking, nevertheless he would have slid on had it not been for the slight assistance he took from the rope. He was on the verge of a bulge and could not see beneath him. Several minutes passed, in which they took stock of the situation and made rapid strides in learning the art of sticking to wet and slippery ice. The little man was the first to speak.

“Gee!” he said; and, a minute later, “If you can dig in for a moment and slack on the rope, I can turn over. Try it.”

Smoke made the effort, then rested on the rope again. “I can do it,” he said. “Tell me when you’re ready. And be quick.”

“About three feet down is holding for my heels,” Carson said. “It won’t take a moment. Are you ready?”

“Go on.”

It was hard work to slide down a yard, turn over and sit up; but it was even harder for Smoke to remain flattened and maintain a position that from instant to instant made a greater call upon his muscles. As it was, he could feel the almost perceptible beginning of the slip when the rope tightened and he looked up into his companion's face. Smoke noted the yellow pallor of sun-tan forsaken by the blood, and wondered what his own complexion was like. But when he saw Carson, with shaking fingers, fumble for his sheath-knife, he decided the end had come. The man was in a funk and was going to cut the rope.

"Don't m-mind m-m-me," the little man chattered. "I ain't scared. It's only my nerves, gosh-dang them. I'll b-b-be all right in a minute."

And Smoke watched him, doubled over, his shoulders between his knees, shivering and awkward, holding a slight tension on the rope with one hand while with the other he hacked and gouged holes for his heels in the ice.

"Carson," he breathed up to him, "you're some bear, some bear."

The answering grin was ghastly and pathetic. "I never could stand height," Carson confessed. "It always did get me. Do you mind if I stop a minute and clear my head? Then I'll make those heel-holds deeper so I can heave you up."

Smoke's heart warmed. "Look here, Carson. The thing for you to do is to cut the rope. You can never get me up, and there's no use both of us being lost. You can make it out with your knife."

"You shut up!" was the hurt retort. "Who's running this?"

And Smoke could not help but see that anger was a good restorative for the other's nerves. As for himself, it was the more nerve-racking strain, lying plastered against the ice with nothing to do but strive to stick on.

A groan and a quick cry of "Hold on!" warned him. With face pressed against the ice, he made a supreme sticking effort, felt the rope slacken, and knew Carson was slipping toward him. He did not dare look up until he felt the rope tighten and knew the other had again come to rest.

"Gee, that was a near go," Carson chattered. "I came down over a yard. Now you wait. I've got to dig new holds. If this danged ice wasn't so melty we'd be hunky-dory."

Holding the few pounds of strain necessary for Smoke with his left hand, the little man jabbed and chopped at the ice with his right. Ten minutes of this passed.

"Now, I'll tell you what I've done," Carson called down. "I've made heel-holds and hand-holes for you alongside of me. I'm going to heave the rope in slow and easy, and you just come along sticking an' not too fast. I'll tell you what, first of all. I'll take you on the rope and you worry out of that pack. Get me?"

Smoke nodded, and with infinite care unbuckled his pack-straps. With a wriggle of the shoulders he dislodged the pack, and Carson saw it slide over the bulge and out of sight.

"Now, I'm going to ditch mine," he called down. "You just take it easy and wait."

Five minutes later the upward struggle began. Smoke, after drying his hands on the insides of his arm-sleeves, clawed into the climb--bellied, and clung, and stuck, and plastered--sustained and helped by the pull of the rope. Alone, he could not have advanced. Despite his muscles, because of his forty pounds' handicap, he could not cling as did Carson. A third of the way up, where the pitch was steeper and the ice less eroded, he felt the strain on the rope decreasing. He moved slower and slower. Here was no place to stop and remain. His most desperate effort could not prevent the stop, and he could feel the down-slip beginning.

"I'm going," he called up.

"So am I," was the reply, gritted through Carson's teeth.

"Then cast loose."

Smoke felt the rope tauten in a futile effort, then the pace quickened, and as he went past his previous lodgment and over the bulge the last glimpse he caught of Carson he was turned over, with madly moving hands and feet striving to overcome the downward draw. To Smoke's surprise, as he went over the bulge, there was no sheer fall. The rope restrained him as he slid down a steeper pitch, which quickly eased until he came to a halt in another niche on the verge of another bulge. Carson was now out of sight, ensconced in the place previously occupied by Smoke.

"Gee!" he could hear Carson shiver. "Gee!"

An interval of quiet followed, and then Smoke could feel the rope agitated.

"What are you doing?" he called up.

"Making more hand-and foot-holds," came the trembling answer. "You just wait. I'll have you up here in a jiffy. Don't mind the way I talk. I'm just excited. But I'm all right. You wait and see."

"You're holding me by main strength," Smoke argued. "Soon or late, with the ice melting, you'll slip down after me. The thing for you to do is to cut loose. Hear me! There's no use both of us going. Get that? You're the biggest little man in creation, but you've done your best. You cut loose."

"You shut up. I'm going to make holes this time deep enough to haul up a span of horses."

"You've held me up long enough," Smoke urged. "Let me go."

"How many times have I held you up?" came the truculent query.

"Some several, and all of them too many. You've been coming down all the time."

"And I've been learning the game all the time. I'm going on holding you up until we get out of here. Savvy? When God made me a light-weight I guess he knew what he was about. Now, shut up. I'm busy."

Several silent minutes passed. Smoke could hear the metallic strike and hack of the knife and occasional driblets of ice slid over the bulge and came down to him. Thirsty, clinging on hand and foot, he caught the fragments in his mouth and melted them to water, which he swallowed.

He heard a gasp that slid into a groan of despair, and felt a slackening of the rope that made him claw. Immediately the rope tightened again. Straining his eyes in an upward look along the steep slope, he stared a moment, then saw the knife, point first, slide over the verge of the bulge and down upon him. He tucked his cheek to it, shrank from the pang of cut flesh, tucked more tightly, and felt the knife come to rest.

"I'm a slob," came the wail down the crevasse.

"Cheer up, I've got it," Smoke answered.

"Say! Wait! I've a lot of string in my pocket. I'll drop it down to you, and you send the knife up."

Smoke made no reply. He was battling with a sudden rush of thought.

"Hey! You! Here comes the string. Tell me when you've got it."

A small pocket-knife, weighted on the end of the string, slid down the ice. Smoke got it, opened the larger blade by a quick effort of his teeth and one hand, and made sure that the blade was sharp. Then he tied the sheath-knife to the end of the string.

"Haul away!" he called.

With strained eyes he saw the upward progress of the knife. But he saw more--a little man, afraid and indomitable, who shivered and chattered, whose head swam with giddiness, and who mastered his qualms and distresses and played a hero's part. Not since his meeting with Shorty had Smoke so quickly liked a man. Here was a proper meat-eater, eager with friendliness, generous to destruction, with a grit that shaking fear could not shake. Then, too, he considered the situation cold-bloodedly. There was no chance for two. Steadily, they were sliding into the heart of the glacier, and it was his greater weight that was dragging the little man down. The little man could stick like a fly. Alone, he could save himself.

"Bully for us!" came the voice from above, down and across the bulge of ice. "Now we'll get out of here in two shakes."

The awful struggle for good cheer and hope in Carson's voice decided Smoke.

"Listen to me," he said steadily, vainly striving to shake the vision of Joy Gastell's face from his brain. "I sent that knife up for you to get out with. Get that? I'm going to chop loose with the jack-knife. It's one or both of us. Get that?"

"Two or nothing," came the grim but shaky response. "If you'll hold on a minute--"

"I've held on for too long now. I'm not married. I have no adorable thin woman nor kids nor apple-trees waiting for me. Get me? Now, you hike up and out of that!"

"Wait! For God's sake, wait!" Carson screamed down. "You can't do that! Give me a chance to get you out. Be calm, old horse. We'll make the turn. You'll see. I'm going to dig holds that'll lift a house and barn."

Smoke made no reply. Slowly and gently, fascinated by the sight, he cut with the knife until one of the three strands popped and parted.

"What are you doing?" Carson cried desperately. "If you cut, I'll never forgive you--never. I tell you it's two or nothing. We're going to get out. Wait! For God's sake!"

And Smoke, staring at the parted strand, five inches before his eyes, knew fear in all its weakness. He did not want to die; he recoiled from the shimmering abyss beneath him, and his panic brain urged all the preposterous optimism of delay. It was fear that prompted him to compromise.

"All right," he called up. "I'll wait. Do your best. But I tell you, Carson, if we both start slipping again I'm going to cut."

"Huh! Forget it. When we start, old horse, we start up. I'm a porous plaster. I could stick here if it was twice as steep. I'm getting a sizable hole for one heel already. Now, you hush, and let me work."

The slow minutes passed. Smoke centered his soul on the dull hurt of a hang-nail on one of his fingers. He should have clipped it away that morning--it was hurting then--he decided; and he resolved, once clear of the crevasse, that it should immediately be clipped. Then, with short focus, he stared at the hang-nail and the finger with a new comprehension. In a minute, or a few minutes at best, that hang-nail, that finger, cunningly jointed and efficient, might be part of a mangled carcass at the bottom of the crevasse. Conscious of his fear, he hated himself. Bear-eaters were made of sterner stuff. In the anger of self-revolt he all but hacked at the rope with his knife. But fear made him draw back the hand and to stick himself again, trembling and sweating, to the slippery slope. To the fact that he was soaking wet by contact with the thawing ice he tried to attribute the cause of his shivering; but he knew, in the heart of him, that it was untrue.

A gasp and a groan and an abrupt slackening of the rope, warned him. He began to slip. The movement was very slow. The rope tightened loyally, but he continued to slip. Carson could not hold him, and was slipping with him. The digging toe of his farther-extended foot encountered vacancy, and he knew that it was over the straight-away fall. And he knew, too, that in another moment his falling body would jerk Carson's after it.

Blindly, desperately, all the vitality and life-love of him beaten down in a flashing instant by a shuddering perception of right and wrong, he brought the knife-edge across the rope, saw the strands part, felt himself slide more rapidly, and then fall.

What happened then, he did not know. He was not unconscious, but it happened too quickly, and it was unexpected. Instead of falling to his death, his feet almost immediately struck in water, and he sat violently down in water that splashed coolingly on his face. His first impression was that the crevasse was shallower than he had imagined and that he had safely fetched bottom. But of this he was quickly disabused. The opposite wall was a dozen feet away. He lay in a basin formed in an out-jut of the ice-wall by melting water that dribbled and trickled over the bulge above and fell sheer down a distance of a dozen feet. This had hollowed out the basin. Where he sat the water was two feet deep, and it was flush with the rim. He peered over the rim and looked down the narrow chasm hundreds of feet to the torrent that foamed along the bottom.

"Oh, why did you?" he heard a wail from above.

"Listen," he called up. "I'm perfectly safe, sitting in a pool of water up to my neck. And here's both our packs. I'm going to sit on them. There's room for a half-dozen here. If you slip, stick close and you'll land. In the meantime you hike up and get out. Go to the cabin. Somebody's there. I saw the smoke. Get a rope, or anything that will make rope, and come back and fish for me."

"Honest!" came Carson's incredulous voice.

"Cross my heart and hope to die. Now, get a hustle on, or I'll catch my death of cold."

Smoke kept himself warm by kicking a channel through the rim with the heel of his shoe. By the time he had drained off the last of the water, a faint call from Carson announced that he had reached the top.

After that Smoke occupied himself with drying his clothes. The late afternoon sun beat warmly in upon him, and he wrung out his garments and spread them about him. His match-case was water-proof, and he manipulated and dried sufficient tobacco and rice-paper to make cigarettes.

Two hours later, perched naked on the two packs and smoking, he heard a voice above that he could not fail to identify.

"Oh, Smoke! Smoke!"

"Hello, Joy Gastell!" he called back. "Where'd you drop from?"

"Are you hurt?"

"Not even any skin off!"

"Father's paying the rope down now. Do you see it?"

"Yes, and I've got it," he answered. "Now, wait a couple of minutes, please."

"What's the matter?" came her anxious query, after several minutes. "Oh, I know, you're hurt."

"No, I'm not. I'm dressing."

"Dressing?"

"Yes. I've been in swimming. Now! Ready? Hoist away!"

He sent up the two packs on the first trip, was consequently rebuked by Joy Gastell, and on the second trip came up himself.

Joy Gastell looked at him with glowing eyes, while her father and Carson were busy coiling the rope. "How could you cut loose in that splendid way?" she cried. "It was--it was glorious, that's all."

Smoke waved the compliment away with a deprecatory hand.

“I know all about it,” she persisted. “Carson told me. You sacrificed yourself to save him.”

“Nothing of the sort,” Smoke lied. “I could see that swimming-pool right under me all the time.”

Local Color

I DO not see why you should not turn this immense amount of unusual information to account,” I told him. “Unlike most men equipped with similar knowledge, YOU have expression. Your style is — ”

“Is sufficiently — er — journalese?” he interrupted suavely.

“Precisely! You could turn a pretty penny.”

But he interlocked his fingers meditatively, shrugged his shoulders, and dismissed the subject.

“I trave tried it. It does not pay.”

“It was paid for and published,” he added, after a pause. “And I was also honored with sixty days in the Hobo.”

“The Hobo?” I ventured.

“The Hobo — ” He fixed his eyes on my Spencer and ran along the titles while he cast his definition. “The Hobo, my dear fellow, is the name for that particular place of detention in city and county jails wherein are assembled tramps, drunks, beggars, and the riff-raff of petty offenders. The word itself is a pretty one, and it has a history. Hautbois — there’s the French of it. haut, meaning high, and bois, wood. In English it becomes hautboy, a wooden musical instrument of two-foot tone, I believe, played with a double reed, an oboe, in fact. You remember in ‘Henry IV’ —

“‘The case of a treble hautboy
Was a mansion for him, a court.’

From this to ho-boy is but a step, and for that matter the English used the terms interchangeably. But — and mark you, the leap paralyzes one — crossing the Western Ocean, in New York City, hautboy, or ho-boy, becomes the name by which the night-scavenger is known. In a way one understands its being born of the contempt for wandering players and musical fellows. But see the beauty of it! the burn and the brand! The night-scavenger, the pariah, the miserable, the despised, the man without caste! And in its next incarnation, consistently and logically, it attaches itself to the American outcast, namely, the tramp. Then, as others have mutilated its sense, the tramp mutilates its form, and ho-boy becomes exultantly hobo. Wherefore, the large stone and brick cells, lined with double and triple-tiered bunks, in which the Law is wont to incarcerate him, he calls the Hobo. Interesting, isn’t it?”

And I sat back and marvelled secretly at this encyclopaedic-minded man, this Leith Clay-Randolph, this common tramp who made himself at home in my den, charmed such friends as gathered at my small table, outshone me with his brilliance and his manners, spent my spending money, smoked my best cigars, and selected from my ties and studs with a cultivated and discriminating eye.

He absently walked over to the shelves and looked into Loria's "Economic Foundation of Society."

"I like to talk with you," he remarked. "You are not indifferently schooled. You've read the books, and your economic interpretation of history, as you choose to call it" (this with a sneer), "eminently fits you for an intellectual outlook on life. But your sociologic judgments are vitiated by your lack of practical knowledge. Now I, who know the books, pardon me, somewhat better than you, know life, too. I have lived it, naked, taken it up in both my hands and looked at it, and tasted it, the flesh and the blood of it, and, being purely an intellectual, I have been biased by neither passion nor prejudice. All of which is necessary for clear concepts, and all of which you lack. Ah! a really clever passage. Listen!"

And he read aloud to me in his remarkable style, paralleling the text with a running criticism and commentary, lucidly wording involved and lumbering periods, casting side and cross lights upon the subject, introducing points the author had blundered past and objections he had ignored, catching up lost ends, flinging a contrast into a paradox and reducing it to a coherent and succinctly stated truth — in short, flashing his luminous genius in a blaze of fire over pages erstwhile dull and heavy and lifeless.

It is long since that Leith Clay-Randolph (note the hyphenated surname) knocked at the back door of Idlewild and melted the heart of Gunda. Now Gunda was cold as her Norway hills, though in her least frigid moods she was capable of permitting especially nice-looking tramps to sit on the back stoop and devour lone crusts and forlorn and forsaken chops. But that a tatterdemalion out of the night should invade the sanctity of her kitchen-kingdom and delay dinner while she set a place for him in the warmest corner, was a matter of such moment that the Sunflower went to see. Ah, the Sunflower, of the soft heart and swift sympathy! Leith Clay-Randolph threw his glamour over her for fifteen long minutes, whilst I brooded with my cigar, and then she fluttered back with vague words and the suggestion of a cast-off suit I would never miss.

"Surely I shall never miss it," I said, and I had in mind the dark gray suit with the pockets draggled from the freightage of many books — books that had spoiled more than one day's fishing sport.

"I should advise you, however," I added, "to mend the pockets first."

But the Sunflower's face clouded. "N — o," she said, "the black one."

"The black one!" This explosively, incredulously. "I wear it quite often. I — I intended wearing it to-night."

"You have two better ones, and you know I never liked it, dear," the Sunflower hurried on. "Besides, it's shiny — "

"Shiny!"

"It — it soon will be, which is just the same, and the man is really estimable. He is nice and refined, and I am sure he — "

"Has seen better days."

"Yes, and the weather is raw and beastly, and his clothes are threadbare. And you have many suits — "

"Five," I corrected, "counting in the dark gray fishing outfit with the draggled pockets."

"And he has none, no home, nothing — "

"Not even a Sunflower," — putting my arm around her, — "wherefore he is deserving of all things. Give him the black suit, dear — nay, the best one, the very best one. Under high heaven for such lack there must be compensation!"

"You are a dear!" And the Sunflower moved to the door and looked back alluringly. "You are a perfect dear."

And this after seven years, I marvelled, till she was back again, timid and apologetic.

"I — I gave him one of your white shirts. He wore a cheap horrid cotton thing, and I knew it would look ridiculous. And then his shoes were so slipshod, I let him have a pair of yours, the old ones with the narrow caps — "

"Old ones!"

"Well, they pinched horribly, and you know they did."

It was ever thus the Sunflower vindicated things.

And so Leith Clay-Randolph came to Idlewild to stay, how long I did not dream. Nor did I dream how often he was to come, for he was like an erratic comet. Fresh he would arrive, and cleanly clad, from grand folk who were his friends as I was his friend, and again, weary and worn, he would creep up the brier-rose path from the Montanas or Mexico. And without a word, when his wanderlust gripped him, he was off and away into that great mysterious underworld he called "The Road."

"I could not bring myself to leave until I had thanked you, you of the open hand and heart," he said, on the night he donned my good black suit.

And I confess I was startled when I glanced over the top of my paper and saw a lofty-browed and eminently respectable-looking gentleman, boldly and carelessly at ease. The Sunflower was right. He must have known better days for the black suit and white shirt to have effected such a transformation. Involuntarily I rose to my feet, prompted to meet him on equal ground. And then it was that the Clay-Randolph glamour descended upon me. He slept at Idlewild that night, and the next night, and for many nights. And he was a man to love. The Son of Anak, otherwise Rufus the Blue-Eyed, and also plebeianly known as Tots, rioted with him from brier-rose path to farthest orchard, scalped him in the haymow with barbaric yells, and once, with pharisaic zeal, was near to crucifying him under the attic roof beams. The Sunflower would have loved him for the Son of Anak's sake, had she not loved him for his own. As for myself, let the Sunflower tell, in the times he elected to be gone, of how often I wondered when Leith would come back again, Leith the Lovable. Yet he was a man of whom we knew nothing. Beyond the fact that he was Kentucky-born, his past was a blank. He never spoke of it. And he was a man who prided himself upon his utter divorce of reason from emotion. To him the world spelled itself out in problems. I charged him once with being guilty of emotion when roaring round the den with the Son of Anak pickaback. Not so, he held. Could he not cuddle a sense-delight for the problem's sake?

He was elusive. A man who intermingled nameless argot with polysyllabic and technical terms, he would seem sometimes the veriest criminal, in speech, face, expression, everything; at other times the cultured and polished gentleman, and again, the philosopher and scientist. But there was something glimmering; there which I never caught — flashes of sincerity, of real feeling, I imagined, which were sped ere I could grasp; echoes of the man he once was, possibly, or hints of the man behind the mask. But the mask he never lifted, and the real man we never knew.

"But the sixty days with which you were rewarded for your journalism?" I asked. "Never mind Loria. Tell me."

"Well, if I must." He flung one knee over the other with a short laugh.

"In a town that shall be nameless," he began, "in fact, a city of fifty thousand, a fair and beautiful city wherein men slave for dollars and women for dress, an idea came to me. My front was prepossessing, as fronts go, and my pockets empty. I had in recollection a thought I once entertained of writing a reconciliation of Kant and Spencer. Not that they are reconcilable, of course, but the room offered for scientific satire — "

I waved my hand impatiently, and he broke off.

"I was just tracing my mental states for you, in order to show the genesis of the action," he explained. "However, the idea came. What was the matter with a tramp sketch for the daily press? The Irreconcilability of the Constable and the Tramp, for instance? So I hit the drag (the drag, my dear fellow, is merely the street), or the high places, if you will, for a newspaper office. The elevator whisked me into the sky, and Cerberus, in the guise of an anaemic office boy, guarded the door. Consumption, one could see it at a glance; nerve, Irish, colossal; tenacity, undoubted; dead inside the year.

"'Pale youth,' quoth I, 'I pray thee the way to the sanctum-sanctorum, to the Most High Cock-a-lorum.'

"He deigned to look at me, scornfully, with infinite weariness.

"'G'wan an' see the janitor. I don't know nothin' about the gas.'

"'Nay, my lily-white, the editor.'

"'Wich editor?' he snapped like a young bullterrier. 'Dramatic? Sportin'? Society? Sunday? Weekly? Daily? Telegraph? Local? News? Editorial? Wich?'

"Which, I did not know. 'The Editor,' I proclaimed stoutly. 'The only Editor.'

"'Aw, Spargo!' he sniffed.

"'Of course, Spargo,' I answered. 'Who else?'

"'Gimme yer card,' says he.

"'My what?'

"'Yer card — Say! Wot's yer business, anyway?'

"And the anaemic Cerberus sized me up with so insolent an eye that I reached over and took him out of his chair. I knocked on his meagre chest with my fore knuckle, and fetched forth a weak, gaspy cough; but he looked at me unflinchingly, much like a defiant sparrow held in the hand.

"'I am the census-taker Time,' I boomed in sepulchral tones. 'Beware lest I knock too loud.'

"'Oh, I don't know,' he sneered.

"Whereupon I rapped him smartly, and he choked and turned purplish.

"'Well, whatcher want?' he wheezed with returning breath.

"'I want Spargo, the only Spargo.'

"'Then leave go, an' I'll glide an' see.'

"'No you don't, my lily-white.' And I took a tighter grip on his collar. 'No bouncers in mine, understand! I'll go along.'"

Leith dreamily surveyed the long ash of his cigar and turned to me. "Do you know, Anak, you can't appreciate the joy of being the buffoon, playing the clown. You couldn't do it if you wished. Your pitiful little conventions and smug assumptions of decency would prevent. But simply to turn loose your soul to every whimsicality, to play the fool unafraid of any possible result, why, that requires a man other than a householder and law-respecting citizen.

"However, as I was saying, I saw the only Spargo. He was a big, beefy, red-faced personage, full-jowled and double-chinned, sweating at his desk in his shirt-sleeves. It was August, you know. He was talking into a telephone when I entered, or swearing rather, I should say, and the while studying me with his eyes. When he hung up, he turned to me expectantly.

"'You are a very busy man,' I said.

"He jerked a nod with his head, and waited.

"'And after all, is it worth it?' I went on. 'What does life mean that it should make you sweat? What justification do you find in sweat? Now look at me. I toil not, neither do I spin — '

"'Who are you? What are you?' he bellowed with a suddenness that was, well, rude, tearing the words out as a dog does a bone.

"'A very pertinent question, sir,' I acknowledged. 'First, I am a man; next, a down-trodden American citizen. I am cursed with neither profession, trade, nor expectations. Like Esau, I am pottageless. My residence is everywhere; the sky is my coverlet. I am one of the dispossessed, a sansculotte, a proletarian, or, in simpler phraseology addressed to your understanding, a tramp.'

"'What the hell — ?'

"'Nay, fair sir, a tramp, a man of devious ways and strange lodgements and multifarious — '

"'Quit it!' he shouted. 'What do you want?'

"'I want money.'

"He started and half reached for an open drawer where must have reposed a revolver, then bethought himself and growled, 'This is no bank.'

"'Nor have I checks to cash. But I have, sir, an idea, which, by your leave and kind assistance, I shall transmute into cash. In short, how does a tramp sketch, done by a tramp to the life, strike you? Are you open to it? Do your readers hunger for it? Do they crave after it? Can they be happy without it?'

"I thought for a moment that he would have apoplexy, but he quelled the unruly blood and said he liked my nerve. I thanked him and assured him I liked it myself. Then he offered me a cigar and said he thought he'd do business with me.

"'But mind you,' he said, when he had jabbed a bunch of copy paper into my hand and given me a pencil from his vest pocket, 'mind you, I won't stand for the high and flighty philosophical, and I perceive you have a tendency that way. Throw in the local color, wads of it, and a bit of sentiment perhaps, but no slumgullion about political economy nor social strata or such stuff. Make it concrete, to the point, with snap and go and life, crisp and crackling and interesting — tumble?'

"And I tumbled and borrowed a dollar.

"'Don't forget the local color!' he shouted after me through the door.

"And, Anak, it was the local color that did for me.

"The anaemic Cerberus grinned when I took the elevator. 'Got the bounce, eh?'

"'Nay, pale youth, so lily-white,' I chortled, waving the copy paper; 'not the bounce, but a detail. I'll be City Editor in three months, and then I'll make you jump.'

"And as the elevator stopped at the next floor down to take on a pair of maids, he strolled over to the shaft, and without frills or verbiage consigned me and my detail to perdition. But I liked him. He had pluck and was unafraid, and he knew, as well as I, that death clutched him close."

"But how could you, Leith," I cried, the picture of the consumptive lad strong before me, "how could you treat him so barbarously?"

Leith laughed dryly. "My dear fellow, how often must I explain to you your confusions? Orthodox sentiment and stereotyped emotion master you. And then your temperament! You are really incapable of rational judgments. Cerberus? Pshaw! A flash expiring, a mote of fading sparkle, a dim-pulsing and dying organism — pouf! a snap of the fingers, a puff of breath, what would you? A pawn in the game of life. Not even a problem. There is no problem in a stillborn babe, nor in a dead child. They never arrived. Nor did Cerberus. Now for a really pretty problem — ”

“But the local color?” I prodded him.

“That’s right,” he replied. “Keep me in the running. Well, I took my handful of copy paper down to the railroad yards (for local color), dangled my legs from a side-door Pullman, which is another name for a box-car, and ran off the stuff. Of course I made it clever and brilliant and all that, with my little unanswerable slings at the state and my social paradoxes, and withal made it concrete enough to dissatisfy the average citizen.

“From the tramp standpoint, the constabulary of the township was particularly rotten, and I proceeded to open the eyes of the good people. It is a proposition, mathematically demonstrable, that it costs the community more to arrest, convict, and confine its tramps in jail, than to send them as guests, for like periods of time, to the best hotel. And this I developed, giving the facts and figures, the constable fees and the mileage, and the court and jail expenses. Oh, it was convincing, and it was true; and I did it in a lightly humorous fashion which fetched the laugh and left the sting. The main objection to the system, I contended, was the defraudment and robbery of the tramp. The good money which the community paid out for him should enable him to riot in luxury instead of rotting in dungeons. I even drew the figures so fine as to permit him not only to live in the best hotel but to smoke two twenty-five-cent cigars and indulge in a ten-cent shine each day, and still not cost the taxpayers so much as they were accustomed to pay for his conviction and jail entertainment. And, as subsequent events proved, it made the taxpayers wince.

“One of the constables I drew to the life; nor did I forget a certain Sol Glenhart, as rotten a police judge as was to be found between the seas. And this I say out of a vast experience. While he was notorious in local trampdom, his civic sins were not only not unknown but a crying reproach to the townspeople. Of course I refrained from mentioning name or habitat, drawing the picture in an impersonal, composite sort of way, which none the less blinded no one to the faithfulness of the local color.

“Naturally, myself a tramp, the tenor of the article was a protest against the maltreatment of the tramp. Cutting the taxpayers to the pits of their purses threw them open to sentiment, and then in I tossed the sentiment, lumps and chunks of it. Trust me, it was excellently done, and the rhetoric--say I Just listen to the tail of my peroration:

"'So, as we go mooching along the drag, with a sharp lamp out for John Law, we cannot help remembering that we are beyond the pale; that our ways are not their ways; and that the ways of John Law with us are different from his ways with other men. Poor lost souls, wailing for a crust in the dark, we know full well our helplessness and ignominy. And well may we repeat after a stricken brother over-seas: "Our pride it is to know no spur of pride." Man has forgotten us; God has forgotten us; only are we remembered by the harpies of justice, who prey upon our distress and coin our sighs and tears into bright shining dollars.'

"Incidentally, my picture of Sol Glenhart, the police judge, was good. A striking likeness, and unmistakable, with phrases tripping along like this: 'This crook-nosed, gross-bodied harpy'; 'this civic sinner, this judicial highwayman'; 'possessing the morals of the Tenderloin and an honor which thieves' honor puts to shame'; 'who compounds criminality with shyster-sharks, and in atonement railroads the unfortunate and impecunious to rotting cells,' — and so forth and so forth, style sophomoric and devoid of the dignity and tone one would employ in a dissertation on 'Surplus Value,' or 'The Fallacies of Marxism,' but just the stuff the dear public likes.

"'Humph!' grunted Spargo when I put the copy in his fist. 'Swift gait you strike, my man.'

"I fixed a hypnotic eye on his vest pocket, and he passed out one of his superior cigars, which I burned while he ran through the stuff. Twice or thrice he looked over the top of the paper at me, searchingly, but said nothing till he had finished.

"'Where'd you work, you pencil-pusher?' he asked.

"'My maiden effort,' I simpered modestly, scraping one foot and faintly simulating embarrassment.

"'Maiden hell! What salary do you want?'

"'Nay, nay,' I answered. 'No salary in mine, thank you most to death. I am a free down-trodden American citizen, and no man shall say my time is his.'

"'Save John Law,' he chuckled.

"'Save John Law,' said I.

"'How did you know I was bucking the police department?' he demanded abruptly.

"'I didn't know, but I knew you were in training,' I answered. 'Yesterday morning a charitably inclined female presented me with three biscuits, a piece of cheese, and a funereal slab of chocolate cake, all wrapped in the current Clarion, wherein I noted an unholy glee because the Cowbell's candidate for chief of police had been turned down. Likewise I learned the municipal election was at hand, and put two and two together. Another mayor, and the right kind, means new police commissioners; new police commissioners means new chief of police; new chief of police means Cowbell's candidate; ergo, your turn to play.'

"He stood up, shook my hand, and emptied his plethoric vest pocket. I put them away and puffed on the old one.

"'You'll do,' he jubilated. 'This stuff' (patting my copy) 'is the first gun of the campaign. You'll touch off many another before we're done. I've been looking for you for years. Come on in on the editorial.'

"But I shook my head.

"'Come, now!' he admonished sharply. 'No shenanagan! The Cowbell must have you. It hungers for you, craves after you, won't be happy till it gets you. What say?'

"In short, he wrestled with me, but I was bricks, and at the end of half an hour the only Spargo gave it up.

"'Remember,' he said, 'any time you reconsider, I'm open. No matter where you are, wire me and I'll send the ducats to come on at once.'

"I thanked him, and asked the pay for my copy — dope, he called it.

"'Oh, regular routine,' he said. 'Get it the first Thursday after publication.'

"'Then I'll have to trouble you for a few scad until — '

"He looked at me and smiled. 'Better cough up, eh?'

"'Sure,' I said. 'Nobody to identify me, so make it cash.'

"And cash it was made, thirty plunks (a plunk is a dollar, my dear Anak), and I pulled my freight . . . eh? — oh, departed.

"'Pale youth,' I said to Cerberus, 'I am bounced.' (He grinned with pallid joy.) 'And in token of the sincere esteem I bear you, receive this little — ' (His eyes flushed and he threw up one hand, swiftly, to guard his head from the expected blow) — 'this little memento.'

"I had intended to slip a fiver into his hand, but for all his surprise, he was too quick for me.

"'Aw, keep yer dirt,' he snarled.

"'I like you still better,' I said, adding a second fiver. 'You grow perfect. But you must take it.'

"He backed away growling, but I caught him round the neck, roughed what little wind he had out of him, and left him doubled up with the two fives in his pocket. But hardly had the elevator started, when the two coins tinkled on the roof and fell down between the car and the shaft. As luck had it, the door was not closed, and I put out my hand and caught them. The elevator boy's eyes bulged.

"'It's a way I have,' I said, pocketing them.

"'Some bloke's dropped 'em down the shaft,' he whispered, awed by the circumstance.

"'It stands to reason,' said I.

"'I'll take charge of 'em,' he volunteered.

"'Nonsense!'

"'You'd better turn 'em over,' he threatened, 'or I stop the works.'

"'Pshaw!'

"And stop he did, between floors.

"'Young man,' I said, 'have you a mother?' (He looked serious, as though regretting his act! and further to impress him I rolled up my right sleeve with greatest care.) 'Are you prepared to die?' (I got a stealthy crouch on, and put a cat-foot forward.) 'But a minute, a brief minute, stands between you and eternity.' (Here I crooked my right hand into a claw and slid the other foot up.) 'Young man, young man,' I trumpeted, 'in thirty seconds I shall tear your heart dripping from your bosom and stoop to hear you shriek in hell.'

"It fetched him. He gave one whoop, the car shot down, and I was on the drag. You see, Anak, it's a habit I can't shake off of leaving vivid memories behind. No one ever forgets me.

"I had not got to the corner when I heard a familiar voice at my shoulder:

"'Hello, Cinders! Which way?'

"It was Chi Slim, who had been with me once when I was thrown off a freight in Jacksonville. 'Couldn't see 'em fer cinders,' he described it, and the monica stuck by me.... Monica? From monos. The tramp nickname.

"'Bound south,' I answered. 'And how's Slim?'

"'Bum. Bulls is horstile.'

"'Where's the push?'

"'At the hang-out. I'll put you wise.'

"'Who's the main guy?'

"'Me, and don't yer ferget it.'"

The lingo was rippling from Leith's lips, but perforce I stopped him. "Pray translate. Remember, I am a foreigner."

"Certainly," he answered cheerfully. "Slim is in poor luck. Bull means policeman. He tells me the bulls are hostile. I ask where the push is, the gang he travels with. By putting me wise he will direct me to where the gang is hanging out. The main guy is the leader. Slim claims that distinction.

"Slim and I hiked out to a neck of woods just beyond town, and there was the push, a score of husky hobos, charmingly located on the bank of a little purling stream.

"'Come on, you mugs!' Slim addressed them. 'Throw yer feet! Here's Cinders, an' we must do 'em proud.'

"All of which signifies that the hobos had better strike out and do some lively begging in order to get the wherewithal to celebrate my return to the fold after a year's separation. But I flashed my dough and Slim sent several of the younger men off to buy the booze. Take my word for it, Anak, it was a blow-out memorable in Trampdom to this day. It's amazing the quantity of booze thirty plunks will buy, and it is equally amazing the quantity of booze outside of which twenty stiffs will get. Beer and cheap wine made up the card, with alcohol thrown in for the blowed-in-the-glass stiffs. It was great — an orgy under the sky, a contest of beaker-men, a study in primitive beastliness. To me there is something fascinating in a drunken man, and were I a college president I should institute P.G. psychology courses in practical drunkenness. It would beat the books and compete with the laboratory.

"All of which is neither here nor there, for after sixteen hours of it, early next morning, the whole push was copped by an overwhelming array of constables and carted off to jail. After breakfast, about ten o'clock, we were lined upstairs into court, limp and spiritless, the twenty of us. And there, under his purple panoply, nose crooked like a Napoleonic eagle and eyes glittering and beady, sat Sol Glenhart.

"'John Ambrose!' the clerk called out, and Chi Slim, with the ease of long practice, stood up.

"'Vagrant, your Honor,' the bailiff volunteered, and his Honor, not deigning to look at the prisoner, snapped,'Ten days,' and Chi Slim sat down.

"And so it went, with the monotony of clockwork, fifteen seconds to the man, four men to the minute, the mugs bobbing up and down in turn like marionettes. The clerk called the name, the bailiff the offence, the judge the sentence, and the man sat down. That was all. Simple, eh? Superb!

"Chi Slim nudged me. 'Give'm a spiel, Cinders. You kin do it.'

"I shook my head.

"'G'wan,' he urged. 'Give 'm a ghost story The mugs'll take it all right. And you kin throw yer feet fer tobacco for us till we get out.'

"'L. C. Randolph!' the clerk called.

"I stood up, but a hitch came in the proceedings. The clerk whispered to the judge, and the bailiff smiled.

"'You are a newspaper man, I understand, Mr. Randolph?' his Honor remarked sweetly.

"It took me by surprise, for I had forgotten the Cowbell in the excitement of succeeding events, and I now saw myself on the edge of the pit I had digged.

"'That's yer graft. Work it,' Slim prompted.

"'It's all over but the shouting,' I groaned back, but Slim, unaware of the article, was puzzled.

"'Your Honor,' I answered, 'when I can get work, that is my occupation.'

"'You take quite an interest in local affairs, I see.' (Here his Honor took up the morning's Cowbell and ran his eye up and down a column I knew was mine.) 'Color is good,' he commented, an appreciative twinkle in his eyes; 'pictures excellent, characterized by broad, Sargent-like effects. Now this . . . this judge you have depicted . . . you, ah, draw from life, I presume?'

"'Rarely, your I Honor,' I answered. 'Composites, ideals, rather . . . er, types, I may say.'

"'But you have color, sir, unmistakable color,' he continued.

"'That is splashed on afterward,' I explained.

"'This judge, then, is not modelled from life, as one might be led to believe?'

"'No, your Honor.'

"'Ah, I see, merely a type of judicial wickedness?'

"'Nay, more, your Honor,' I said boldly, 'an ideal.'

"'Splashed with local color afterward? Ha! Good! And may I venture to ask how much you received for this bit of work?'

"'Thirty dollars, your Honor.'

"'Hum, good!' And his tone abruptly changed. 'Young man, local color is a bad thing. I find you guilty of it and sentence you to thirty days' imprisonment, or, at your pleasure, impose a fine of thirty dollars.'

"'Alas!' said I, 'I spent the thirty dollars in riotous living.'

"'And thirty days more for wasting your substance.'

"'Next case!' said his Honor to the clerk.

"Slim was stunned. 'Gee!' he whispered. 'Gee the push gets ten days and you get sixty. Gee!'"

Leith struck a match, lighted his dead cigar, and opened the book on his knees. "Returning to the original conversation, don't you find, Anak, that though Loria handles the bipartition of the revenues with scrupulous care, he yet omits one important factor, namely — "

"Yes," I said absently; "yes."

Lost Face

It was the end. Subienkow had travelled a long trail of bitterness and horror, homing like a dove for the capitals of Europe, and here, farther away than ever, in Russian America, the trail ceased. He sat in the snow, arms tied behind him, waiting the torture. He stared curiously before him at a huge Cossack, prone in the snow, moaning in his pain. The men had finished handling the giant and turned him over to the women. That they exceeded the fiendishness of the men, the man's cries attested.

Subienkow looked on, and shuddered. He was not afraid to die. He had carried his life too long in his hands, on that weary trail from Warsaw to Nulato, to shudder at mere dying. But he objected to the torture. It offended his soul. And this offence, in turn, was not due to the mere pain he must endure, but to the sorry spectacle the pain would make of him. He knew that he would pray, and beg, and entreat, even as Big Ivan and the others that had gone before. This would not be nice. To pass out bravely and cleanly, with a smile and a jest--ah! that would have been the way. But to lose control, to have his soul upset by the pangs of the flesh, to screech and gibber like an ape, to become the veriest beast--ah, that was what was so terrible.

There had been no chance to escape. From the beginning, when he dreamed the fiery dream of Poland's independence, he had become a puppet in the hands of Fate. From the beginning, at Warsaw, at St. Petersburg, in the Siberian mines, in Kamtchatka, on the crazy boats of the fur-thieves, Fate had been driving him to this end. Without doubt, in the foundations of the world was graved this end for him--for him, who was so fine and sensitive, whose nerves scarcely sheltered under his skin, who was a dreamer, and a poet, and an artist. Before he was dreamed of, it had been determined that the quivering bundle of sensitiveness that constituted him should be doomed to live in raw and howling savagery, and to die in this far land of night, in this dark place beyond the last boundaries of the world.

He sighed. So that thing before him was Big Ivan--Big Ivan the giant, the man without nerves, the man of iron, the Cossack turned freebooter of the seas, who was as phlegmatic as an ox, with a nervous system so low that what was pain to ordinary men was scarcely a tickle to him. Well, well, trust these Nulato Indians to find Big Ivan's nerves and trace them to the roots of his quivering soul. They were certainly doing it. It was inconceivable that a man could suffer so much and yet live. Big Ivan was paying for his low order of nerves. Already he had lasted twice as long as any of the others.

Subienkow felt that he could not stand the Cossack's sufferings much longer. Why didn't Ivan die? He would go mad if that screaming did not cease. But when it did cease, his turn would come. And there was Yakaga awaiting him, too, grinning at him even now in anticipation--Yakaga, whom only last week he had kicked out of the fort, and upon whose face he had laid the lash of his dog-whip. Yakaga would attend to him. Doubtlessly Yakaga was saving for him more refined tortures, more exquisite nerve-racking. Ah! that must have been a good one, from the way Ivan screamed. The squaws bending over him stepped back with laughter and clapping of hands. Subienkow saw the monstrous thing that had been perpetrated, and began to laugh hysterically. The Indians looked at him in wonderment that he should laugh. But Subienkow could not stop.

This would never do. He controlled himself, the spasmodic twitchings slowly dying away. He strove to think of other things, and began reading back in his own life. He remembered his mother and his father, and the little spotted pony, and the French tutor who had taught him dancing and sneaked him an old worn copy of Voltaire. Once more he saw Paris, and dreary London, and gay Vienna, and Rome. And once more he saw that wild group of youths who had dreamed, even as he, the dream of an independent Poland with a king of Poland on the throne at Warsaw. Ah, there it was that the long trail began. Well, he had lasted longest. One by one, beginning with the two executed at St. Petersburg, he took up the count of the passing of those brave spirits. Here one had been beaten to death by a jailer, and there, on that bloodstained highway of the exiles, where they had marched for endless months, beaten and maltreated by their Cossack guards, another had dropped by the way. Always it had been savagery--brutal, bestial savagery. They had died--of fever, in the mines, under the knout. The last two had died after the escape, in the battle with the Cossacks, and he alone had won to Kamtchatka with the stolen papers and the money of a traveller he had left lying in the snow.

It had been nothing but savagery. All the years, with his heart in studios, and theatres, and courts, he had been hemmed in by savagery. He had purchased his life with blood. Everybody had killed. He had killed that traveller for his passports. He had proved that he was a man of parts by duelling with two Russian officers on a single day. He had had to prove himself in order to win to a place among the fur-thieves. He had had to win to that place. Behind him lay the thousand-years-long road across all Siberia and Russia. He could not escape that way. The only way was ahead, across the dark and icy sea of Bering to Alaska. The way had led from savagery to deeper savagery. On the scurvy-rotten ships of the fur-thieves, out of food and out of water, buffeted by the interminable storms of that stormy sea, men had become animals. Thrice he had sailed east from Kamtchatka. And thrice, after all manner of hardship and suffering, the survivors had come back to Kamtchatka. There had been no outlet for escape, and he could not go back the way he had come, for the mines and the knout awaited him.

Again, the fourth and last time, he had sailed east. He had been with those who first found the fabled Seal Islands; but he had not returned with them to share the wealth of furs in the mad orgies of Kamtchatka. He had sworn never to go back. He knew that to win to those dear capitals of Europe he must go on. So he had changed ships and remained in the dark new land. His comrades were Slavonian hunters and Russian adventurers, Mongols and Tartars and Siberian aborigines; and through the savages of the new world they had cut a path of blood. They had massacred whole villages that refused to furnish the fur-tribute; and they, in turn, had been massacred by ships' companies. He, with one Finn, had been the sole survivor of such a company. They had spent a winter of solitude and starvation on a lonely Aleutian isle, and their rescue in the spring by another fur-ship had been one chance in a thousand.

But always the terrible savagery had hemmed him in. Passing from ship to ship, and ever refusing to return, he had come to the ship that explored south. All down the Alaska coast they had encountered nothing but hosts of savages. Every anchorage among the beetling islands or under the frowning cliffs of the mainland had meant a battle or a storm. Either the gales blew, threatening destruction, or the war canoes came off, manned by howling natives with the war-paint on their faces, who came to learn the bloody virtues of the sea-rovers' gunpowder. South, south they had coasted, clear to the myth-land of California. Here, it was said, were Spanish adventurers who had fought their way up from Mexico. He had had hopes of those Spanish adventurers. Escaping to them, the rest would have been easy--a year or two, what did it matter more or less--and he would win to Mexico, then a ship, and Europe would be his. But they had met no Spaniards. Only had they encountered the same impregnable wall of savagery. The denizens of the confines of the world, painted for war, had driven them back from the shores. At last, when one boat was cut off and every man killed, the commander had abandoned the quest and sailed back to the north.

The years had passed. He had served under Tebenkoff when Michaelovski Redoubt was built. He had spent two years in the Kuskokwim country. Two summers, in the month of June, he had managed to be at the head of Kotzebue Sound. Here, at this time, the tribes assembled for barter; here were to be found spotted deerskins from Siberia, ivory from the Diomedes, walrus skins from the shores of the Arctic, strange stone lamps, passing in trade from tribe to tribe, no one knew whence, and, once, a hunting-knife of English make; and here, Subienkow knew, was the school in which to learn geography. For he met Eskimos from Norton Sound, from King Island and St. Lawrence Island, from Cape Prince of Wales, and Point Barrow. Such places had other names, and their distances were measured in days.

It was a vast region these trading savages came from, and a vaster region from which, by repeated trade, their stone lamps and that steel knife had come. Subienkow bullied, and cajoled, and bribed. Every far-journeyer or strange tribesman was brought before him. Perils unaccountable and unthinkable were mentioned, as well as wild beasts, hostile tribes, impenetrable forests, and mighty mountain ranges; but always from beyond came the rumour and the tale of white-skinned men, blue of eye and fair of hair, who fought like devils and who sought always for furs. They were to the east--far, far to the east. No one had seen them. It was the word that had been passed along.

It was a hard school. One could not learn geography very well through the medium of strange dialects, from dark minds that mingled fact and fable and that measured distances by “sleeps” that varied according to the difficulty of the going. But at last came the whisper that gave Subienkow courage. In the east lay a great river where were these blue-eyed men. The river was called the Yukon. South of Michaelovski Redoubt emptied another great river which the Russians knew as the Kwikpak. These two rivers were one, ran the whisper.

Subienkow returned to Michaelovski. For a year he urged an expedition up the Kwikpak. Then arose Malakoff, the Russian half-breed, to lead the wildest and most ferocious of the hell's broth of mongrel adventurers who had crossed from Kamtchatka. Subienkow was his lieutenant. They threaded the mazes of the great delta of the Kwikpak, picked up the first low hills on the northern bank, and for half a thousand miles, in skin canoes loaded to the gunwales with trade-goods and ammunition, fought their way against the five-knot current of a river that ran from two to ten miles wide in a channel many fathoms deep. Malakoff decided to build the fort at Nulato. Subienkow urged to go farther. But he quickly reconciled himself to Nulato. The long winter was coming on. It would be better to wait. Early the following summer, when the ice was gone, he would disappear up the Kwikpak and work his way to the Hudson Bay Company's posts. Malakoff had never heard the whisper that the Kwikpak was the Yukon, and Subienkow did not tell him.

Came the building of the fort. It was enforced labour. The tiered walls of logs arose to the sighs and groans of the Nulato Indians. The lash was laid upon their backs, and it was the iron hand of the freebooters of the sea that laid on the lash. There were Indians that ran away, and when they were caught they were brought back and spread-eagled before the fort, where they and their tribe learned the efficacy of the knout. Two died under it; others were injured for life; and the rest took the lesson to heart and ran away no more. The snow was flying ere the fort was finished, and then it was the time for furs. A heavy tribute was laid upon the tribe. Blows and lashings continued, and that the tribute should be paid, the women and children were held as hostages and treated with the barbarity that only the fur-thieves knew.

Well, it had been a sowing of blood, and now was come the harvest. The fort was gone. In the light of its burning, half the fur-thieves had been cut down. The other half had passed under the torture. Only Subienkow remained, or Subienkow and Big Ivan, if that whimpering, moaning thing in the snow could be called Big Ivan. Subienkow caught Yakaga grinning at him. There was no gainsaying Yakaga. The mark of the lash was still on his face. After all, Subienkow could not blame him, but he disliked the thought of what Yakaga would do to him. He thought of appealing to Makamuk, the head-chief; but his judgment told him that such appeal was useless. Then, too, he thought of bursting his bonds and dying fighting. Such an end would be quick. But he could not break his bonds. Caribou thongs were stronger than he. Still devising, another thought came to him. He signed for

Makamuk, and that an interpreter who knew the coast dialect should be brought.

"Oh, Makamuk," he said, "I am not minded to die. I am a great man, and it were foolishness for me to die. In truth, I shall not die. I am not like these other carrion."

He looked at the moaning thing that had once been Big Ivan, and stirred it contemptuously with his toe.

"I am too wise to die. Behold, I have a great medicine. I alone know this medicine. Since I am not going to die, I shall exchange this medicine with you."

"What is this medicine?" Makamuk demanded.

"It is a strange medicine."

Subienkow debated with himself for a moment, as if loth to part with the secret.

"I will tell you. A little bit of this medicine rubbed on the skin makes the skin hard like a rock, hard like iron, so that no cutting weapon can cut it. The strongest blow of a cutting weapon is a vain thing against it. A bone knife becomes like a piece of mud; and it will turn the edge of the iron knives we have brought among you. What will you give me for the secret of the medicine?"

"I will give you your life," Makamuk made answer through the interpreter.

Subienkow laughed scornfully.

"And you shall be a slave in my house until you die."

The Pole laughed more scornfully.

"Untie my hands and feet and let us talk," he said.

The chief made the sign; and when he was loosed Subienkow rolled a cigarette and lighted it.

"This is foolish talk," said Makamuk. "There is no such medicine. It cannot be. A cutting edge is stronger than any medicine."

The chief was incredulous, and yet he wavered. He had seen too many deviltries of fur-thieves that worked. He could not wholly doubt.

"I will give you your life; but you shall not be a slave," he announced.

"More than that."

Subienkow played his game as coolly as if he were bartering for a foxskin.

"It is a very great medicine. It has saved my life many times. I want a sled and dogs, and six of your hunters to travel with me down the river and give me safety to one day's sleep from Michaelovski Redoubt."

"You must live here, and teach us all of your deviltries," was the reply.

Subienkow shrugged his shoulders and remained silent. He blew cigarette smoke out on the icy air, and curiously regarded what remained of the big Cossack.

"That scar!" Makamuk said suddenly, pointing to the Pole's neck, where a livid mark advertised the slash of a knife in a Kamtchatkan brawl. "The medicine is not good. The cutting edge was stronger than the medicine."

"It was a strong man that drove the stroke." (Subienkow considered.) "Stronger than you, stronger than your strongest hunter, stronger than he."

Again, with the toe of his moccasin, he touched the Cossack--a grisly spectacle, no longer conscious--yet in whose dismembered body the pain-racked life clung and was loth to go.

"Also, the medicine was weak. For at that place there were no berries of a certain kind, of which I see you have plenty in this country. The medicine here will be strong."

"I will let you go down river," said Makamuk; "and the sled and the dogs and the six hunters to give you safety shall be yours."

"You are slow," was the cool rejoinder. "You have committed an offence against my medicine in that you did not at once accept my terms. Behold, I now demand more. I want one hundred beaver skins." (Makamuk sneered.)

"I want one hundred pounds of dried fish." (Makamuk nodded, for fish were plentiful and cheap.) "I want two sleds--one for me and one for my furs and fish. And my rifle must be returned to me. If you do not like the price, in a little while the price will grow."

Yakaga whispered to the chief.

"But how can I know your medicine is true medicine?" Makamuk asked.

"It is very easy. First, I shall go into the woods--"

Again Yakaga whispered to Makamuk, who made a suspicious dissent.

"You can send twenty hunters with me," Subienkow went on. "You see, I must get the berries and the roots with which to make the medicine. Then, when you have brought the two sleds and loaded on them the fish and the beaver skins and the rifle, and when you have told off the six hunters who will go with me--then, when all is ready, I will rub the medicine on my neck, so, and lay my neck there on that log. Then can your strongest hunter take the axe and strike three times on my neck. You yourself can strike the three times."

Makamuk stood with gaping mouth, drinking in this latest and most wonderful magic of the fur-thieves.

"But first," the Pole added hastily, "between each blow I must put on fresh medicine. The axe is heavy and sharp, and I want no mistakes."

"All that you have asked shall be yours," Makamuk cried in a rush of acceptance. "Proceed to make your medicine."

Subienkow concealed his elation. He was playing a desperate game, and there must be no slips. He spoke arrogantly.

"You have been slow. My medicine is offended. To make the offence clean you must give me your daughter."

He pointed to the girl, an unwholesome creature, with a cast in one eye and a bristling wolf-tooth. Makamuk was angry, but the Pole remained imperturbable, rolling and lighting another cigarette.

"Make haste," he threatened. "If you are not quick, I shall demand yet more."

In the silence that followed, the dreary northland scene faded before him, and he saw once more his native land, and France, and, once, as he glanced at the wolf-toothed girl, he remembered another girl, a singer and a dancer, whom he had known when first as a youth he came to Paris.

"What do you want with the girl?" Makamuk asked.

"To go down the river with me." Subienkow glanced over her critically. "She will make a good wife, and it is an honour worthy of my medicine to be married to your blood."

Again he remembered the singer and dancer and hummed aloud a song she had taught him. He lived the old life over, but in a detached, impersonal sort of way, looking at the memory-pictures of his own life as if they were pictures in a book of anybody's life. The chief's voice, abruptly breaking the silence, startled him

"It shall be done," said Makamuk. "The girl shall go down the river with you. But be it understood that I myself strike the three blows with the axe on your neck."

"But each time I shall put on the medicine," Subienkow answered, with a show of ill-concealed anxiety.

"You shall put the medicine on between each blow. Here are the hunters who shall see you do not escape. Go into the forest and gather your medicine."

Makamuk had been convinced of the worth of the medicine by the Pole's rapacity. Surely nothing less than the greatest of medicines could enable a man in the shadow of death to stand up and drive an old-woman's bargain.

"Besides," whispered Yakaga, when the Pole, with his guard, had disappeared among the spruce trees, "when you have learned the medicine you can easily destroy him."

"But how can I destroy him?" Makamuk argued. "His medicine will not let me destroy him."

"There will be some part where he has not rubbed the medicine," was Yakaga's reply. "We will destroy him through that part. It may be his ears. Very well; we will thrust a spear in one ear and out the other. Or it may be his eyes. Surely the medicine will be much too strong to rub on his eyes."

The chief nodded. "You are wise, Yakaga. If he possesses no other devil-things, we will then destroy him."

Subienkow did not waste time in gathering the ingredients for his medicine, he selected whatsoever came to hand such as spruce needles, the inner bark of the willow, a strip of birch bark, and a quantity of moss-berries, which he made the hunters dig up for him from beneath the snow. A few frozen roots completed his supply, and he led the way back to camp.

Makamuk and Yakaga crouched beside him, noting the quantities and kinds of the ingredients he dropped into the pot of boiling water.

"You must be careful that the moss-berries go in first," he explained.

"And--oh, yes, one other thing--the finger of a man. Here, Yakaga, let me cut off your finger."

But Yakaga put his hands behind him and scowled.

"Just a small finger," Subienkow pleaded.

"Yakaga, give him your finger," Makamuk commanded.

"There be plenty of fingers lying around," Yakaga grunted, indicating the human wreckage in the snow of the score of persons who had been tortured to death.

"It must be the finger of a live man," the Pole objected.

"Then shall you have the finger of a live man." Yakaga strode over to the Cossack and sliced off a finger.

"He is not yet dead," he announced, flinging the bloody trophy in the snow at the Pole's feet. "Also, it is a good finger, because it is large."

Subienkow dropped it into the fire under the pot and began to sing. It was a French love-song that with great solemnity he sang into the brew.

“Without these words I utter into it, the medicine is worthless,” he explained. “The words are the chiefest strength of it. Behold, it is ready.”

“Name the words slowly, that I may know them,” Makamuk commanded.

“Not until after the test. When the axe flies back three times from my neck, then will I give you the secret of the words.”

“But if the medicine is not good medicine?” Makamuk queried anxiously.

Subienkow turned upon him wrathfully.

“My medicine is always good. However, if it is not good, then do by me as you have done to the others. Cut me up a bit at a time, even as you have cut him up.” He pointed to the Cossack. “The medicine is now cool. Thus, I rub it on my neck, saying this further medicine.”

With great gravity he slowly intoned a line of the “Marseillaise,” at the same time rubbing the villainous brew thoroughly into his neck.

An outcry interrupted his play-acting. The giant Cossack, with a last resurgence of his tremendous vitality, had arisen to his knees. Laughter and cries of surprise and applause arose from the Nulatos, as Big Ivan began flinging himself about in the snow with mighty spasms.

Subienkow was made sick by the sight, but he mastered his qualms and made believe to be angry.

“This will not do,” he said. “Finish him, and then we will make the test. Here, you, Yakaga, see that his noise ceases.”

While this was being done, Subienkow turned to Makamuk.

“And remember, you are to strike hard. This is not baby-work. Here, take the axe and strike the log, so that I can see you strike like a man.”

Makamuk obeyed, striking twice, precisely and with vigour, cutting out a large chip.

“It is well.” Subienkow looked about him at the circle of savage faces that somehow seemed to symbolize the wall of savagery that had hemmed him about ever since the Czar’s police had first arrested him in Warsaw. “Take your axe, Makamuk, and stand so. I shall lie down. When I raise my hand, strike, and strike with all your might. And be careful that no one stands behind you. The medicine is good, and the axe may bounce from off my neck and right out of your hands.”

He looked at the two sleds, with the dogs in harness, loaded with furs and fish. His rifle lay on top of the beaver skins. The six hunters who were to act as his guard stood by the sleds."

"Where is the girl?" the Pole demanded. "Bring her up to the sleds before the test goes on."

When this had been carried out, Subienkow lay down in the snow, resting his head on the log like a tired child about to sleep. He had lived so many dreary years that he was indeed tired.

"I laugh at you and your strength, O Makamuk," he said. "Strike, and strike hard."

He lifted his hand. Makamuk swung the axe, a broadaxe for the squaring of logs. The bright steel flashed through the frosty air, poised for a perceptible instant above Makamuk's head, then descended upon Subienkow's bare neck. Clear through flesh and bone it cut its way, biting deeply into the log beneath. The amazed savages saw the head bounce a yard away from the blood-spouting trunk.

There was a great bewilderment and silence, while slowly it began to dawn in their minds that there had been no medicine. The fur-thief had outwitted them. Alone, of all their prisoners, he had escaped the torture. That had been the stake for which he played. A great roar of laughter went up. Makamuk bowed his head in shame. The fur-thief had fooled him. He had lost face before all his people. Still they continued to roar out their laughter. Makamuk turned, and with bowed head stalked away. He knew that thenceforth he would be no longer known as Makamuk. He would be Lost Face; the record of his shame would be with him until he died; and whenever the tribes gathered in the spring for the salmon, or in the summer for the trading, the story would pass back and forth across the camp-fires of how the fur-thief died peaceably, at a single stroke, by the hand of Lost Face.

"Who was Lost Face?" he could hear, in anticipation, some insolent young buck demand, "Oh, Lost Face," would be the answer, "he who once was Makamuk in the days before he cut off the fur-thief's head."

The Lost Poacher

"But they won't take excuses. You're across the line, and that's enough. They'll take you. In you go, Siberia and the salt-mines. And as for Uncle Sam, why, what's he to know about it? Never a word will get back to the States. 'The Mary Thomas,' the papers will say, 'the Mary Thomas lost with all hands. Probably in a typhoon in the Japanese seas.' That's what the papers will say, and people, too. In you go, Siberia and the salt-mines. Dead to the world and kith and kin, though you live fifty years."

In such manner John Lewis, commonly known as the "sea-lawyer," settled the matter out of hand.

It was a serious moment in the forecastle of the Mary Thomas. No sooner had the watch below begun to talk the trouble over, than the watch on deck came down and joined them. As there was no wind, every hand could be spared with the exception of the man at the wheel, and he remained only for the sake of discipline. Even "Bub" Russell, the cabin-boy, had crept forward to hear what was going on.

However, it was a serious moment, as the grave faces of the sailors bore witness. For the three preceding months the Mary Thomas sealing schooner had hunted the seal pack along the coast of Japan and north to Bering Sea. Here, on the Asiatic side of the sea, they were forced to give over the chase, or rather, to go no farther; for beyond, the Russian cruisers patrolled forbidden ground, where the seals might breed in peace.

A week before she had fallen into a heavy fog accompanied by calm. Since then the fog-bank had not lifted, and the only wind had been light airs and catspaws. This in itself was not so bad, for the sealing schooners are never in a hurry so long as they are in the midst of the seals; but the trouble lay in the fact that the current at this point bore heavily to the north. Thus the Mary Thomas had unwittingly drifted across the line, and every hour she was penetrating, unwillingly, farther and farther into the dangerous waters where the Russian bear kept guard.

How far she had drifted no man knew. The sun had not been visible for a week, nor the stars, and the captain had been unable to take observations in order to determine his position. At any moment a cruiser might swoop down and hale the crew away to Siberia. The fate of other poaching seal-hunters was too well known to the men of the Mary Thomas, and there was cause for grave faces.

“Mine friends,” spoke up a German boat-steerer, “it vas a pad piziness. Shust as ve make a big catch, und all honest, somedings go wrong, und der Russians nab us, dake our skins and our schooner, und send us mit der anarchists to Siberia. Ach! a pretty pad piziness!”

“Yes, that’s where it hurts,” the sea lawyer went on. “Fifteen hundred skins in the salt piles, and all honest, a big pay-day coming to every man Jack of us, and then to be captured and lose it all! it’d be different if we’d been poaching, but it’s all honest work in open water.”

“But if we haven’t done anything wrong, they can’t do anything to us, can they?” Bub queried.

“It strikes me as ‘ow it ain’t the proper thing for a boy o’ your age shovin’ in when ‘is elders is talkin’,” protested an English sailor, from over the edge of his bunk.

“Oh, that’s all right, Jack,” answered the sea-lawyer. “He’s a perfect right to. Ain’t he just as liable to lose his wages as the rest of us?”

“Wouldn’t give thruppence for them!” Jack sniffed back. He had been planning to go home and see his family in Chelsea when he was paid Off, and he was now feeling rather blue over the highly possible loss, not only of his pay, but of his liberty.

“How are they to know?” the sea-lawyer asked in answer to Bub’s previous question. “Here we are in forbidden water. How do they know but what we came here of our own accord? Here we are, fifteen hundred skins in the hold. How do they know whether we got them in open water or in the closed sea? Don’t you see, Bub, the evidence is all against us. If you caught a man with his pockets full of apples like those which grow on your tree, and if you caught him in your tree besides, what’d you think if he told you he couldn’t help it, and had just been sort of blown there, and that anyway those apples came from some other tree — what’d you think, eh?”

Bub saw it clearly when put in that light, and shook his head despondently.

“You’d rather be dead than go to Siberia,” one of the boat-pullers said. “They put you into the salt-mines and work you till you die. Never see daylight again. Why, I’ve heard tell of one fellow that was chained to his mate, and that mate died. And they were both chained together! And if they send you to the quicksilver mines you get salivated. I'd rather be hung than salivated."

"Wot's salivated?" Jack asked, suddenly sitting up in his bunk at the hint of fresh misfortunes.

"Why, the quicksilver gets into your blood; I think that's the way. And your gums all swell like you had the scurvy, only worse, and your teeth get loose in your jaws. And big ulcers form, and then you die horrible. The strongest man can't last long a-mining quicksilver."

"A pad piziness," the boat-steerer reiterated, dolorously, in the silence which followed. "A pad piziness. I vish I was in Yokohama. Eh? Vot vas dot?"

The vessel had suddenly heeled over. The decks were aslant. A tin pannikin rolled down the inclined plane, rattling and banging. From above came the slapping of canvas and the quivering rat-tat-tat of the after leech of the loosely stretched foresail. Then the mate's voice sang down the hatch, "All hands on deck and make sail!"

Never had such summons been answered with more enthusiasm. The calm had broken. The wind had come which was to carry them south into safety. With a wild cheer all sprang on deck. Working with mad haste, they flung out topsails, flying jibs and stay-sails. As they worked, the fog-bank lifted and the black vault of heaven, bespangled with the old familiar stars, rushed into view. When all was ship-shape, the Mary Thomas was lying gallantly over on her side to a beam wind and plunging ahead due south.

"Steamer's lights ahead on the port bow, sir!" cried the lookout from his station on the forecastle-head. There was excitement in the man's voice.

The captain sent Bub below for his night-glasses. Everybody crowded to the lee-rail to gaze at the suspicious stranger, which already began to loom up vague and indistinct. In those unfrequented waters the chance was one in a thousand that it could be anything else than a Russian patrol. The captain was still anxiously gazing through the glasses, when a flash of flame left the stranger's side, followed by the loud report of a cannon. The worst fears were confirmed. It was a patrol, evidently firing across the bows of the Mary Thomas in order to make her heave to.

"Hard down with your helm!" the captain commanded the steersman, all the life gone out of his voice. Then to the crew, "Back over the jib and foresail! Run down the flying jib! Clew up the foretopsail! And aft here and swing on to the main-sheet!"

The Mary Thomas ran into the eye of the wind, lost headway, and fell to curtesying gravely to the long seas rolling up from the west.

The cruiser steamed a little nearer and lowered a boat. The sealers watched in heart-broken silence. They could see the white bulk of the boat as it was slacked away to the water, and its crew sliding aboard. They could hear the creaking of the davits and the commands of the officers. Then the boat sprang away under the impulse of the oars, and came toward them. The wind had been rising, and already the sea was too rough to permit the frail craft to lie alongside the tossing schooner; but watching their chance, and taking advantage of the boarding ropes thrown to them, an officer and a couple of men clambered aboard. The boat then sheered off into safety and lay to its oars, a young midshipman, sitting in the stern and holding the yoke-lines, in charge.

The officer, whose uniform disclosed his rank as that of second lieutenant in the Russian navy, went below with the captain of the Mary Thomas to look at the ship's papers. A few minutes later he emerged, and upon his sailors removing the hatch-covers, passed down into the hold with a lantern to inspect the salt piles. it was a goodly heap which confronted him — fifteen hundred fresh skins, the season's catch; and under the circumstances he could have had but one conclusion.

"I am very sorry," he said, in broken English to the sealing captain, when he again came on deck, "but it is my duty, in the name of the tsar, to seize your vessel as a poacher caught with fresh skins in the closed sea. The penalty, as you may know, is confiscation and imprisonment."

The captain of the Mary Thomas shrugged his shoulders in seeming indifference, and turned away. Although they may restrain all outward show, strong men, under unmerited misfortune, are sometimes very close to tears. just then the vision of his little California home, and of the wife and two yellow-haired boys, was strong upon him, and there was a strange, choking sensation in his throat, which made him afraid that if he attempted to speak he would sob instead.

And also there was upon him the duty he owed his men. No weakness before them, for he must be a tower of strength to sustain them in misfortune. He had already explained to the second lieutenant, and knew the hopelessness of the situation. As the sea-lawyer had said, the evidence was all against him. So he turned aft, and fell to pacing up and down the poop of the vessel over which he was no longer commander.

The Russian officer now took temporary charge. He ordered more of his men aboard, and had all the canvas clewed up and furled snugly away. While this was being done, the boat plied back and forth between the two vessels, passing a heavy hawser, which was made fast to the great towing-bitts on the schooner's forecastle-head. During all this work the sealers stood about in sullen groups. It was madness to think of resisting, with the guns of a man-of-war not a biscuit-toss away, — but they refused to lend a hand, preferring instead to maintain a gloomy silence.

Having accomplished his task, the lieutenant ordered all but four of his men back into the boat. Then the midshipman, a lad of sixteen, looking strangely mature and dignified in his uniform and sword, came aboard to take command of the captured sealer. just as the lieutenant prepared to depart, his eyes chanced to alight upon Bub. Without a word of warning, he seized him by the arm and dropped him over the rail into the waiting boat; and then, with a parting wave of his hand, he followed him.

It was only natural that Bub should be frightened at this unexpected happening. All the terrible stories he had heard of the Russians served to make him fear them, and now returned to his mind with double force. To be captured by them was bad enough, but to be carried off by them, away from his comrades, was a fate of which he had not dreamed.

"Be a good boy, Bub," the captain called to him, as the boat drew away from the Mary Thomas's side, "and tell the truth!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" he answered, bravely enough by all outward appearance. He felt a certain pride of race, and was ashamed to be a coward before these strange enemies, these wild Russian bears.

"Und be politeful!" the German boat-steerer added, his rough voice lifting across the water like a fog-horn.

Bub waved his hand in farewell, and his mates clustered along the rail as they answered with a cheering shout. He found room in the sternsheets, where he fell to regarding the lieutenant. He didn't look so wild or bearish, after all — very much like other men, Bub concluded, and the sailors were much the same as all other man-of-war's men he had ever known. Nevertheless, as his feet struck the steel deck of the cruiser, he felt as if he had entered the portals of a prison.

For a few minutes he was left unheeded. The sailors hoisted the boat up, and swung it in on the davits. Then great clouds of black smoke poured out of the funnels, and they were under way — to Siberia, Bub could not help but think. He saw the Mary Thomas swing abruptly into line as she took the pressure from the hawser, and her side-lights, red and green, rose and fell as she was towed through the sea.

Bub's eyes dimmed at the melancholy sight, but — but just then the lieutenant came to take him down to the commander, and he straightened up and set his lips firmly, as if this were a very commonplace affair and he were used to being sent to Siberia every day in the week. The cabin in which the commander sat was like a palace compared to the humble fittings of the Mary Thomas, and the commander himself, in gold lace and dignity, was a most august personage, quite unlike the simple man who navigated his schooner on the trail of the seal pack.

Bub now quickly learned why he had been brought aboard, and in the prolonged questioning which followed, told nothing but the plain truth. The truth was harmless; only a lie could have injured his cause. He did not know much, except that they had been sealing far to the south in open water, and that when the calm and fog came down upon them, being close to the line, they had drifted across. Again and again he insisted that they had not lowered a boat or shot a seal in the week they had been drifting about in the forbidden sea; but the commander chose to consider all that he said to be a tissue of falsehoods, and adopted a bullying tone in an effort to frighten the boy. He threatened and cajoled by turns, but failed in the slightest to shake Bub's statements, and at last ordered him out of his presence.

By some oversight, Bub was not put in anybody's charge, and wandered up on deck unobserved. Sometimes the sailors, in passing, bent curious glances upon him, but otherwise he was left strictly alone. Nor could he have attracted much attention, for he was small, the night dark, and the watch on deck intent on its own business. Stumbling over the strange decks, he made his way aft where he could look upon the side-lights of the Mary Thomas, following steadily in the rear.

For a long while he watched, and then lay down in the darkness close to where the hawser passed over the stern to the captured schooner. Once an officer came up and examined the straining rope to see if it were chafing, but Bub cowered away in the shadow undiscovered. This, however, gave him an idea which concerned the lives and liberties of twenty-two men, and which was to avert crushing sorrow from more than one happy home many thousand miles away.

In the first place, he reasoned, the crew were all guiltless of any crime, and yet were being carried relentlessly away to imprisonment in Siberia — a living death, he had heard, and he believed it implicitly. In the second place, he was a prisoner, hard and fast, with no chance of escape. In the third, it was possible for the twenty-two men on the Mary Thomas to escape. The only thing which bound them was a fourinch hawser. They dared not cut it at their end, for a watch was sure to be maintained upon it by their Russian captors; but at this end, ah! at his end

Bub did not stop to reason further. Wriggling close to the hawser, he opened his jack-knife and went to work. The blade was not very sharp, and he sawed away, rope-yarn by rope-yarn, the awful picture of the solitary Siberian exile he must endure growing clearer and more terrible at every stroke. Such a fate was bad enough to undergo with one's comrades, but to face it alone seemed frightful. And besides, the very act he was performing was sure to bring greater punishment upon him.

In the midst of such somber thoughts, he heard footsteps approaching. He wriggled away into the shadow. An officer stopped where he had been working, half-stooped to examine the hawser, then changed his mind and straightened up. For a few minutes he stood there, gazing at the lights of the captured schooner, and then went forward again.

Now was the time! Bub crept back and went on sawing. Now two parts were severed. Now three. But one remained. The tension upon this was so great that it readily yielded. Splash! The freed end went overboard. He lay quietly, his heart in his mouth, listening. No one on the cruiser but himself had heard.

He saw the red and green lights of the Mary Thomas grow dimmer and dimmer. Then a faint hallo came over the water from the Russian prize crew. Still nobody heard. The smoke continued to pour out of the cruiser's funnels, and her propellers throbbed as mightily as ever.

What was happening on the Mary Thomas? Bub could only surmise; but of one thing he was certain: his comrades would assert themselves and overpower the four sailors and the midshipman. A few minutes later he saw a small flash, and straining his ears heard the very faint report of a pistol. Then, A joy! both the red and green lights suddenly disappeared. The Mary Thomas was retaken!

Just as an officer came aft, Bub crept forward, and hid away in one of the boats. Not an instant too soon. The alarm was given. Loud voices rose in command. The cruiser altered her course. An electric search-light began to throw its white rays across the sea, here, there, everywhere; but in its flashing path no tossing schooner was revealed.

Bub went to sleep soon after that, nor did he wake till the gray of dawn. The engines were pulsing monotonously, and the water, splashing noisily, told him the decks were being washed down. One sweeping glance, and he saw that they were alone on the expanse of ocean. The Mary Thomas had escaped. As he lifted his head, a roar of laughter went up from the sailors. Even the officer, who ordered him taken below and locked up, could not quite conceal the laughter in his eyes. Bub thought often in the days of confinement which followed, that they were not very angry with him for what he had done.

He was not far from right. There is a certain innate nobility deep down in the hearts of all men, which forces them to admire a brave act, even if it is performed by an enemy. The Russians were in nowise different from other men. True, a boy had outwitted them; but they could not blame him, and they were sore puzzled as to what to do with him. It would never do to take a little mite like him in to represent all that remained of the lost poacher.

So, two weeks later, a United States man-of-war, steaming out of the Russian port of Vladivostok, was signaled by a Russian cruiser. A boat passed between the two ships, and a small boy dropped over the rail upon the deck of the American vessel. A week later he was put ashore at Hakodate, and after some telegraphing, his fare was paid on the railroad to Yokohama.

From the depot he hurried through the quaint Japanese streets to the harbor, and hired a sampan boatman to put him aboard a certain vessel whose familiar rigging had quickly caught his eye. Her gaskets were Off, her sails unfurled; she was just starting back to the United States. As he came closer, a crowd of sailors sprang upon the forecastle head, and the windlass-bars rose and fell as the anchor was torn from its muddy bottom.

“‘Yankee ship come down the ribber!’“ the sea-lawyer’s voice rolled out as he led the anchor song.

“‘Pull, my bully boys, pull!”‘ roared back the old familiar chorus, the men’s bodies lifting and bending to the rhythm.

Bub Russell paid the boatman and stepped on deck. The anchor was forgotten. A mighty cheer went up from the men, and almost before he could catch his breath he was on the shoulders of the captain, surrounded by his mates, and endeavoring to answer twenty questions to the second.

The next day a schooner hove to off a Japanese fishing village, sent ashore four sailors and a little midshipman, and sailed away. These men did not talk English, but they had money and quickly made their way to Yokohama. From that day the Japanese village folk never heard anything more about them, and they are still a much-talked-of mystery. As the Russian government never said anything about the incident, the United States is still ignorant of the whereabouts of the lost poacher, nor has she ever heard, officially, of the way in which some of her citizens "shanghaied" five subjects of the tsar. Even nations have secrets sometimes.

Love of Life

"This out of all will remain —
They have lived and have tossed:
So much of the game will be gain,
Though the gold of the dice has been lost."

THEY limped painfully down the bank, and once the foremost of the two men staggered among the rough-strewn rocks. They were tired and weak, and their faces had the drawn expression of patience which comes of hardship long endured. They were heavily burdened with blanket packs which were strapped to their shoulders. Head-straps, passing across the forehead, helped support these packs. Each man carried a rifle. They walked in a stooped posture, the shoulders well forward, the head still farther forward, the eyes bent upon the ground.

"I wish we had just about two of them cartridges that's layin' in that cache of ourn," said the second man.

His voice was utterly and drearily expressionless. He spoke without enthusiasm; and the first man, limping into the milky stream that foamed over the rocks, vouchsafed no reply.

The other man followed at his heels. They did not remove their foot-gear, though the water was icy cold--so cold that their ankles ached and their feet went numb. In places the water dashed against their knees, and both men staggered for footing.

The man who followed slipped on a smooth boulder, nearly fell, but recovered himself with a violent effort, at the same time uttering a sharp exclamation of pain. He seemed faint and dizzy and put out his free hand while he reeled, as though seeking support against the air. When he had steadied himself he stepped forward, but reeled again and nearly fell. Then he stood still and looked at the other man, who had never turned his head.

The man stood still for fully a minute, as though debating with himself. Then he called out:

"I say, Bill, I've sprained my ankle."

Bill staggered on through the milky water. He did not look around. The man watched him go, and though his face was expressionless as ever, his eyes were like the eyes of a wounded deer.

The other man limped up the farther bank and continued straight on without looking back. The man in the stream watched him. His lips trembled a little, so that the rough thatch of brown hair which covered them was visibly agitated. His tongue even strayed out to moisten them.

“Bill!” he cried out. It was the pleading cry of a strong man in distress, but Bill’s head did not turn. The man watched him go, limping grotesquely and lurching forward with stammering gait up the slow slope toward the soft sky-line of the low-lying hill. He watched him go till he passed over the crest and disappeared. Then he turned his gaze and slowly took in the circle of the world that remained to him now that Bill was gone.

Near the horizon the sun was smouldering dimly, almost obscured by formless mists and vapors, which gave an impression of mass and density without outline or tangibility. The man pulled out his watch, the while resting his weight on one leg. It was four o’clock, and as the season was near the last of July or first of August,--he did not know the precise date within a week or two,--he knew that the sun roughly marked the northwest. He looked to the south and knew that somewhere beyond those bleak hills lay the Great Bear Lake; also, he knew that in that direction the Arctic Circle cut its forbidding way across the Canadian Barrens. This stream in which he stood was a feeder to the Coppermine River, which in turn flowed north and emptied into Coronation Gulf and the Arctic Ocean. He had never been there, but he had seen it, once, on a Hudson Bay Company chart.

Again his gaze completed the circle of the world about him. It was not a heartening spectacle. Everywhere was soft sky-line. The hills were all low-lying. There were no trees, no shrubs, no grasses--naught but a tremendous and terrible desolation that sent fear swiftly dawning into his eyes.

“Bill!” he whispered, once and twice; “Bill!”

He cowered in the midst of the milky water, as though the vastness were pressing in upon him with overwhelming force, brutally crushing him with its complacent awfulness. He began to shake as with an ague-fit, till the gun fell from his hand with a splash. This served to rouse him. He fought with his fear and pulled himself together, groping in the water and recovering the weapon. He hitched his pack farther over on his left shoulder, so as to take a portion of its weight from off the injured ankle. Then he proceeded, slowly and carefully, wincing with pain, to the bank.

He did not stop. With a desperation that was madness, unmindful of the pain, he hurried up the slope to the crest of the hill over which his comrade had disappeared--more grotesque and comical by far than that limping, jerking comrade. But at the crest he saw a shallow valley, empty of life. He fought with his fear again, overcame it, hitched the pack still farther over on his left shoulder, and lurched on down the slope.

The bottom of the valley was soggy with water, which the thick moss held, spongelike, close to the surface. This water squirted out from under his feet at every step, and each time he lifted a foot the action culminated in a sucking sound as the wet moss reluctantly released its grip. He picked his way from muskeg to muskeg, and followed the other man's footsteps along and across the rocky ledges which thrust like islets through the sea of moss.

Though alone, he was not lost. Farther on he knew he would come to where dead spruce and fir, very small and weazened, bordered the shore of a little lake, the titchin-nichilie, in the tongue of the country, the "land of little sticks." And into that lake flowed a small stream, the water of which was not milky. There was rush-grass on that stream--this he remembered well--but no timber, and he would follow it till its first trickle ceased at a divide. He would cross this divide to the first trickle of another stream, flowing to the west, which he would follow until it emptied into the river Dease, and here he would find a cache under an upturned canoe and piled over with many rocks. And in this cache would be ammunition for his empty gun, fish-hooks and lines, a small net--all the utilities for the killing and snaring of food. Also, he would find flour,--not much,--a piece of bacon, and some beans.

Bill would be waiting for him there, and they would paddle away south down the Dease to the Great Bear Lake. And south across the lake they would go, ever south, till they gained the Mackenzie. And south, still south, they would go, while the winter raced vainly after them, and the ice formed in the eddies, and the days grew chill and crisp, south to some warm Hudson Bay Company post, where timber grew tall and generous and there was grub without end.

These were the thoughts of the man as he strove onward. But hard as he strove with his body, he strove equally hard with his mind, trying to think that Bill had not deserted him, that Bill would surely wait for him at the cache. He was compelled to think this thought, or else there would not be any use to strive, and he would have lain down and died. And as the dim ball of the sun sank slowly into the northwest he covered every inch--and many times--of his and Bill's flight south before the downcoming winter.

And he conned the grub of the cache and the grub of the Hudson Bay Company post over and over again. He had not eaten for two days; for a far longer time he had not had all he wanted to eat. Often he stooped and picked pale muskeg berries, put them into his mouth, and chewed and swallowed them. A muskeg berry is a bit of seed enclosed in a bit of water. In the mouth the water melts away and the seed chews sharp and bitter. The man knew there was no nourishment in the berries, but he chewed them patiently with a hope greater than knowledge and defying experience.

At nine o'clock he stubbed his toe on a rocky ledge, and from sheer weariness and weakness staggered and fell. He lay for some time, without movement, on his side. Then he slipped out of the pack-straps and clumsily dragged himself into a sitting posture. It was not yet dark, and in the lingering twilight he groped about among the rocks for shreds of dry moss. When he had gathered a heap he built a fire,--a smouldering, smudgy fire,--and put a tin pot of water on to boil.

He unwrapped his pack and the first thing he did was to count his matches. There were sixty-seven. He counted them three times to make sure. He divided them into several portions, wrapping them in oil paper, disposing of one bunch in his empty tobacco pouch, of another bunch in the inside band of his battered hat, of a third bunch under his shirt on the chest. This accomplished, a panic came upon him, and he unwrapped them all and counted them again. There were still sixty-seven.

He dried his wet foot-gear by the fire. The moccasins were in soggy shreds. The blanket socks were worn through in places, and his feet were raw and bleeding. His ankle was throbbing, and he gave it an examination. It had swollen to the size of his knee. He tore a long strip from one of his two blankets and bound the ankle tightly. He tore other strips and bound them about his feet to serve for both moccasins and socks. Then he drank the pot of water, steaming hot,wound his watch, and crawled between his blankets.

He slept like a dead man. The brief darkness around midnight came and went. The sun arose in the northeast--at least the day dawned in that quarter, for the sun was hidden by gray clouds.

At six o'clock he awoke, quietly lying on his back. He gazed straight up into the gray sky and knew that he was hungry. As he rolled over on his elbow he was startled by a loud snort, and saw a bull caribou regarding him with alert curiosity. The animal was not more than fifty feet away, and instantly into the man’s mind leaped the vision and the savor of a caribou steak sizzling and frying over a fire. Mechanically he reached for the empty gun, drew a bead, and pulled the trigger. The bull snorted and leaped away, his hoofs rattling and clattering as he fled across the ledges.

The man cursed and flung the empty gun from him. He groaned aloud as he started to drag himself to his feet. It was a slow and arduous task. His joints were like rusty hinges. They worked harshly in their sockets, with much friction, and each bending or unbending was accomplished only through a sheer exertion of will. When he finally gained his feet, another minute or so was consumed in straightening up, so that he could stand erect as a man should stand.

He crawled up a small knoll and surveyed the prospect. There were no trees, no bushes, nothing but a gray sea of moss scarcely diversified by gray rocks, gray lakelets, and gray streamlets. The sky was gray. There was no sun nor hint of sun. He had no idea of north, and he had forgotten the way he had come to this spot the night before. But he was not lost. He knew that. Soon he would come to the land of the little sticks. He felt that it lay off to the left somewhere, not far--possibly just over the next low hill.

He went back to put his pack into shape for travelling. He assured himself of the existence of his three separate parcels of matches, though he did not stop to count them. But he did linger, debating, over a squat moose-hide sack. It was not large. He could hide it under his two hands. He knew that it weighed fifteen pounds,--as much as all the rest of the pack,--and it worried him. He finally set it to one side and proceeded to roll the pack. He paused to gaze at the squat moose-hide sack. He picked it up hastily with a defiant glance about him, as though the desolation were trying to rob him of it; and when he rose to his feet to stagger on into the day, it was included in the pack on his back.

He bore away to the left, stopping now and again to eat muskeg berries. His ankle had stiffened, his limp was more pronounced, but the pain of it was as nothing compared with the pain of his stomach. The hunger pangs were sharp. They gnawed and gnawed until he could not keep his mind steady on the course he must pursue to gain the land of little sticks. The muskeg berries did not allay this gnawing, while they made his tongue and the roof of his mouth sore with their irritating bite.

He came upon a valley where rock ptarmigan rose on whirring wings from the ledges and muskegs. Ker--ker--ker was the cry they made. He threw stones at them, but could not hit them. He placed his pack on the ground and stalked them as a cat stalks a sparrow. The sharp rocks cut through his pants' legs till his knees left a trail of blood; but the hurt was lost in the hurt of his hunger. He squirmed over the wet moss, saturating his clothes and chilling his body; but he was not aware of it, so great was his fever for food. And always the ptarmigan rose, whirring, before him, till their ker--ker--ker became a mock to him, and he cursed them and cried aloud at them with their own cry.

Once he crawled upon one that must have been asleep. He did not see it till it shot up in his face from its rocky nook. He made a clutch as startled as was the rise of the ptarmigan, and there remained in his hand three tail-feathers. As he watched its flight he hated it, as though it had done him some terrible wrong. Then he returned and shouldered his pack.

As the day wore along he came into valleys or swales where game was more plentiful. A band of caribou passed by, twenty and odd animals, tantalizingly within rifle range. He felt a wild desire to run after them, a certitude that he could run them down. A black fox came toward him, carrying a ptarmigan in his mouth. The man shouted. It was a fearful cry, but the fox, leaping away in fright, did not drop the ptarmigan.

Late in the afternoon he followed a stream, milky with lime, which ran through sparse patches of rush-grass. Grasping these rushes firmly near the root, he pulled up what resembled a young onion-sprout no larger than a shingle-nail. It was tender, and his teeth sank into it with a crunch that promised deliciously of food. But its fibers were tough. It was composed of stringy filaments saturated with water, like the berries, and devoid of nourishment. He threw off his pack and went into the rush-grass on hands and knees, crunching and munching, like some bovine creature.

He was very weary and often wished to rest--to lie down and sleep; but he was continually driven on--not so much by his desire to gain the land of little sticks as by his hunger. He searched little ponds for frogs and dug up the earth with his nails for worms, though he knew in spite that neither frogs nor worms existed so far north.

He looked into every pool of water vainly, until, as the long twilight came on, he discovered a solitary fish, the size of a minnow, in such a pool. He plunged his arm in up to the shoulder, but it eluded him. He reached for it with both hands and stirred up the milky mud at the bottom. In his excitement he fell in, wetting himself to the waist. Then the water was too muddy to admit of his seeing the fish, and he was compelled to wait until the sediment had settled.

The pursuit was renewed, till the water was again muddied. But he could not wait. He unstrapped the tin bucket and began to bale the pool. He baled wildly at first, splashing himself and flinging the water so short a distance that it ran back into the pool. He worked more carefully, striving to be cool, though his heart was pounding against his chest and his hands were trembling. At the end of half an hour the pool was nearly dry. Not a cupful of water remained. And there was no fish. He found a hidden crevice among the stones through which it had escaped to the adjoining and larger pool--a pool which he could not empty in a night and a day. Had he known of the crevice, he could have closed it with a rock at the beginning and the fish would have been his.

Thus he thought, and crumpled up and sank down upon the wet earth. At first he cried softly to himself, then he cried loudly to the pitiless desolation that ringed him around; and for a long time after he was shaken by great dry sobs.

He built a fire and warmed himself by drinking quarts of hot water, and made camp on a rocky ledge in the same fashion he had the night before. The last thing he did was to see that his matches were dry and to wind his watch. The blankets were wet and clammy. His ankle pulsed with pain. But he knew only that he was hungry, and through his restless sleep he dreamed of feasts and banquets and of food served and spread in all imaginable ways.

He awoke chilled and sick. There was no sun. The gray of earth and sky had become deeper, more profound. A raw wind was blowing, and the first flurries of snow were whitening the hilltops. The air about him thickened and grew white while he made a fire and boiled more water. It was wet snow, half rain, and the flakes were large and soggy. At first they melted as soon as they came in contact with the earth, but ever more fell, covering the ground, putting out the fire, spoiling his supply of moss-fuel.

This was a signal for him to strap on his pack and stumble onward, he knew not where. He was not concerned with the land of little sticks, nor with Bill and the cache under the upturned canoe by the river Dease. He was mastered by the verb “to eat.” He was hunger-mad. He took no heed of the course he pursued, so long as that course led him through the swale bottoms. He felt his way through the wet snow to the watery muskeg berries, and went by feel as he pulled up the rush-grass by the roots. But it was tasteless stuff and did not satisfy. He found a weed that tasted sour and he ate all he could find of it, which was not much, for it was a creeping growth, easily hidden under the several inches of snow.

He had no fire that night, nor hot water, and crawled under his blanket to sleep the broken hunger-sleep. The snow turned into a cold rain. He awakened many times to feel it falling on his upturned face. Day came--a gray day and no sun. It had ceased raining. The keenness of his hunger had departed. Sensibility, as far as concerned the yearning for food, had been exhausted. There was a dull, heavy ache in his stomach, but it did not bother him so much. He was more rational, and once more he was chiefly interested in the land of little sticks and the cache by the river Dease.

He ripped the remnant of one of his blankets into strips and bound his bleeding feet. Also, he recinched the injured ankle and prepared himself for a day of travel. When he came to his pack, he paused long over the squat moose-hide sack, but in the end it went with him.

The snow had melted under the rain, and only the hilltops showed white. The sun came out, and he succeeded in locating the points of the compass, though he knew now that he was lost. Perhaps, in his previous days' wanderings, he had edged away too far to the left. He now bore off to the right to counteract the possible deviation from his true course.

Though the hunger pangs were no longer so exquisite, he realized that he was weak. He was compelled to pause for frequent rests, when he attacked the muskeg berries and rush-grass patches. His tongue felt dry and large, as though covered with a fine hairy growth, and it tasted bitter in his mouth. His heart gave him a great deal of trouble. When he had travelled a few minutes it would begin a remorseless thump, thump, thump, and then leap up and away in a painful flutter of beats that choked him and made him go faint and dizzy.

In the middle of the day he found two minnows in a large pool. It was impossible to bale it, but he was calmer now and managed to catch them in his tin bucket. They were no longer than his little finger, but he was not particularly hungry. The dull ache in his stomach had been growing duller and fainter. It seemed almost that his stomach was dozing. He ate the fish raw, masticating with painstaking care, for the eating was an act of pure reason. While he had no desire to eat, he knew that he must eat to live.

In the evening he caught three more minnows, eating two and saving the third for breakfast. The sun had dried stray shreds of moss, and he was able to warm himself with hot water. He had not covered more than ten miles that day; and the next day, travelling whenever his heart permitted him, he covered no more than five miles. But his stomach did not give him the slightest uneasiness. It had gone to sleep. He was in a strange country, too, and the caribou were growing more plentiful, also the wolves. Often their yelps drifted across the desolation, and once he saw three of them slinking away before his path.

Another night; and in the morning, being more rational, he untied the leather string that fastened the squat moose-hide sack. From its open mouth poured a yellow stream of coarse gold-dust and nuggets. He roughly divided the gold in halves, caching one half on a prominent ledge, wrapped in a piece of blanket, and returning the other half to the sack. He also began to use strips of the one remaining blanket for his feet. He still clung to his gun, for there were cartridges in that cache by the river Dease. This was a day of fog, and this day hunger awoke in him again. He was very weak and was afflicted with a giddiness which at times blinded him. It was no uncommon thing now for him to stumble and fall; and stumbling once, he fell squarely into a ptarmigan nest. There were four newly hatched chicks, a day old--little specks of pulsating life no more than a mouthful; and he ate them ravenously, thrusting them alive into his mouth and crunching them like egg-shells between his teeth. The mother ptarmigan beat about him with great outcry. He used his gun as a club with which to knock her over, but she dodged out of reach. He threw stones at her and with one chance shot broke a wing. Then she fluttered away, running, trailing the broken wing, with him in pursuit.

The little chicks had no more than whetted his appetite. He hopped and bobbed clumsily along on his injured ankle, throwing stones and screaming hoarsely at times; at other times hopping and bobbing silently along, picking himself up grimly and patiently when he fell, or rubbing his eyes with his hand when the giddiness threatened to overpower him.

The chase led him across swampy ground in the bottom of the valley, and he came upon footprints in the soggy moss. They were not his own--he could see that. They must be Bill’s. But he could not stop, for the mother ptarmigan was running on. He would catch her first, then he would return and investigate.

He exhausted the mother ptarmigan; but he exhausted himself. She lay panting on her side. He lay panting on his side, a dozen feet away, unable to crawl to her. And as he recovered she recovered, fluttering out of reach as his hungry hand went out to her. The chase was resumed. Night settled down and she escaped. He stumbled from weakness and pitched head foremost on his face, cutting his cheek, his pack upon his back. He did not move for a long while; then he rolled over on his side, wound his watch, and lay there until morning.

Another day of fog. Half of his last blanket had gone into foot-wrappings. He failed to pick up Bill's trail. It did not matter. His hunger was driving him too compellingly--only--only he wondered if Bill, too, were lost. By midday the irk of his pack became too oppressive. Again he divided the gold, this time merely spilling half of it on the ground. In the afternoon he threw the rest of it away, there remaining to him only the half-blanket, the tin bucket, and the rifle.

An hallucination began to trouble him. He felt confident that one cartridge remained to him. It was in the chamber of the rifle and he had overlooked it. On the other hand, he knew all the time that the chamber was empty. But the hallucination persisted. He fought it off for hours, then threw his rifle open and was confronted with emptiness. The disappointment was as bitter as though he had really expected to find the cartridge.

He plodded on for half an hour, when the hallucination arose again. Again he fought it, and still it persisted, till for very relief he opened his rifle to unconvince himself. At times his mind wandered farther afield, and he plodded on, a mere automaton, strange conceits and whimsicalities gnawing at his brain like worms. But these excursions out of the real were of brief duration, for ever the pangs of the hunger-bite called him back. He was jerked back abruptly once from such an excursion by a sight that caused him nearly to faint. He reeled and swayed, doddering like a drunken man to keep from falling. Before him stood a horse. A horse! He could not believe his eyes. A thick mist was in them, intershot with sparkling points of light. He rubbed his eyes savagely to clear his vision, and beheld, not a horse, but a great brown bear. The animal was studying him with bellicose curiosity.

The man had brought his gun halfway to his shoulder before he realized. He lowered it and drew his hunting-knife from its beaded sheath at his hip. Before him was meat and life.

He ran his thumb along the edge of his knife. It was sharp. The point was sharp. He would fling himself upon the bear and kill it. But his heart began its warning thump, thump, thump. Then followed the wild upward leap and tattoo of flutters, the pressing as of an iron band about his forehead, the creeping of the dizziness into his brain.

His desperate courage was evicted by a great surge of fear. In his weakness, what if the animal attacked him? He drew himself up to his most imposing stature, gripping the knife and staring hard at the bear. The bear advanced clumsily a couple of steps, reared up, and gave vent to a tentative growl. If the man ran, he would run after him; but the man did not run. He was animated now with the courage of fear. He, too, growled, savagely, terribly, voicing the fear that is to life germane and that lies twisted about life's deepest roots.

The bear edged away to one side, growling menacingly, himself appalled by this mysterious creature that appeared upright and unafraid. But the man did not move. He stood like a statue till the danger was past, when he yielded to a fit of trembling and sank down into the wet moss.

He pulled himself together and went on, afraid now in a new way. It was not the fear that he should die passively from lack of food, but that he should be destroyed violently before starvation had exhausted the last particle of the endeavor in him that made toward surviving. There were the wolves. Back and forth across the desolation drifted their howls, weaving the very air into a fabric of menace that was so tangible that he found himself, arms in the air, pressing it back from him as it might be the walls of a wind-blown tent.

Now and again the wolves, in packs of two and three, crossed his path. But they sheered clear of him. They were not in sufficient numbers, and besides they were hunting the caribou, which did not battle, while this strange creature that walked erect might scratch and bite.

In the late afternoon he came upon scattered bones where the wolves had made a kill. The débris had been a caribou calf an hour before, squawking and running and very much alive. He contemplated the bones, clean-picked and polished, pink with the cell-life in them which had not yet died. Could it possibly be that he might be that ere the day was done! Such was life, eh? A vain and fleeting thing. It was only life that pained. There was no hurt in death. To die was to sleep. It meant cessation, rest. Then why was he not content to die?

But he did not moralize long. He was squatting in the moss, a bone in his mouth, sucking at the shreds of life that still dyed it faintly pink. The sweet meaty taste, thin and elusive almost as a memory, maddened him. He closed his jaws on the bones and crunched. Sometimes it was the bone that broke, sometimes his teeth. Then he crushed the bones between rocks, pounded them to a pulp, and swallowed them. He pounded his fingers, too, in his haste, and yet found a moment in which to feel surprise at the fact that his fingers did not hurt much when caught under the descending rock.

Came frightful days of snow and rain. He did not know when he made camp, when he broke camp. He travelled in the night as much as in the day. He rested wherever he fell, crawled on whenever the dying life in him flickered up and burned less dimly. He, as a man, no longer strove. It was the life in him, unwilling to die, that drove him on. He did not suffer. His nerves had become blunted, numb, while his mind was filled with weird visions and delicious dreams.

But ever he sucked and chewed on the crushed bones of the caribou calf, the least remnants of which he had gathered up and carried with him. He crossed no more hills or divides, but automatically followed a large stream which flowed through a wide and shallow valley. He did not see this stream nor this valley. He saw nothing save visions. Soul and body walked or crawled side by side, yet apart, so slender was the thread that bound them.

He awoke in his right mind, lying on his back on a rocky ledge. The sun was shining bright and warm. Afar off he heard the squawking of caribou calves. He was aware of vague memories of rain and wind and snow, but whether he had been beaten by the storm for two days or two weeks he did not know.

For some time he lay without movement, the genial sunshine pouring upon him and saturating his miserable body with its warmth. A fine day, he thought. Perhaps he could manage to locate himself. By a painful effort he rolled over on his side. Below him flowed a wide and sluggish river. Its unfamiliarity puzzled him. Slowly he followed it with his eyes, winding in wide sweeps among the bleak, bare hills, bleaker and barer and lower-lying than any hills he had yet encountered. Slowly, deliberately, without excitement or more than the most casual interest, he followed the course of the strange stream toward the sky-line and saw it emptying into a bright and shining sea. He was still unexcited. Most unusual, he thought, a vision or a mirage--more likely a vision, a trick of his disordered mind. He was confirmed in this by sight of a ship lying at anchor in the midst of the shining sea. He closed his eyes for a while, then opened them. Strange how the vision persisted! Yet not strange. He knew there were no seas or ships in the heart of the barren lands, just as he had known there was no cartridge in the empty rifle.

He heard a snuffle behind him--a half-choking gasp or cough. Very slowly, because of his exceeding weakness and stiffness, he rolled over on his other side. He could see nothing near at hand, but he waited patiently. Again came the snuffle and cough, and outlined between two jagged rocks not a score of feet away he made out the gray head of a wolf. The sharp ears were not pricked so sharply as he had seen them on other wolves; the eyes were bleared and bloodshot, the head seemed to droop limply and forlornly. The animal blinked continually in the sunshine. It seemed sick. As he looked it snuffled and coughed again.

This, at least, was real, he thought, and turned on the other side so that he might see the reality of the world which had been veiled from him before by the vision. But the sea still shone in the distance and the ship was plainly discernible. Was it reality, after all? He closed his eyes for a long while and thought, and then it came to him. He had been making north by east, away from the Dease Divide and into the Coppermine Valley. This wide and sluggish river was the Coppermine. That shining sea was the Arctic Ocean. That ship was a whaler, strayed east, far east, from the mouth of the Mackenzie, and it was lying at anchor in Coronation Gulf. He remembered the Hudson Bay Company chart he had seen long ago, and it was all clear and reasonable to him.

He sat up and turned his attention to immediate affairs. He had worn through the blanket-wrappings, and his feet were shapeless lumps of raw meat. His last blanket was gone. Rifle and knife were both missing. He had lost his hat somewhere, with the bunch of matches in the band, but the matches against his chest were safe and dry inside the tobacco pouch and oil paper. He looked at his watch. It marked eleven o’clock and was still running. Evidently he had kept it wound.

He was calm and collected. Though extremely weak, he had no sensation of pain. He was not hungry. The thought of food was not even pleasant to him, and whatever he did was done by his reason alone. He ripped off his pants’ legs to the knees and bound them about his feet. Somehow he had succeeded in retaining the tin bucket. He would have some hot water before he began what he foresaw was to be a terrible journey to the ship.

His movements were slow. He shook as with a palsy. When he started to collect dry moss, he found he could not rise to his feet. He tried again and again, then contented himself with crawling about on hands and knees. Once he crawled near to the sick wolf. The animal dragged itself reluctantly out of his way, licking its chops with a tongue which seemed hardly to have the strength to curl. The man noticed that the tongue was not the customary healthy red. It was a yellowish brown and seemed coated with a rough and half-dry mucus.

After he had drunk a quart of hot water the man found he was able to stand, and even to walk as well as a dying man might be supposed to walk. Every minute or so he was compelled to rest. His steps were feeble and uncertain, just as the wolf's that trailed him were feeble and uncertain; and that night, when the shining sea was blotted out by blackness, he knew he was nearer to it by no more than four miles.

Throughout the night he heard the cough of the sick wolf, and now and then the squawking of the caribou calves. There was life all around him, but it was strong life, very much alive and well, and he knew the sick wolf clung to the sick man's trail in the hope that the man would die first. In the morning, on opening his eyes, he beheld it regarding him with a wistful and hungry stare. It stood crouched, with tail between its legs, like a miserable and woe-begone dog. It shivered in the chill morning wind, and grinned dispiritedly when the man spoke to it in a voice that achieved no more than a hoarse whisper.

The sun rose brightly, and all morning the man tottered and fell toward the ship on the shining sea. The weather was perfect. It was the brief Indian Summer of the high latitudes. It might last a week. To-morrow or next day it might be gone.

In the afternoon the man came upon a trail. It was of another man, who did not walk, but who dragged himself on all fours. The man thought it might be Bill, but he thought in a dull, uninterested way. He had no curiosity. In fact, sensation and emotion had left him. He was no longer susceptible to pain. Stomach and nerves had gone to sleep. Yet the life that was in him drove him on. He was very weary, but it refused to die. It was because it refused to die that he still ate muskeg berries and minnows, drank his hot water, and kept a wary eye on the sick wolf.

He followed the trail of the other man who dragged himself along, and soon came to the end of it--a few fresh-picked bones where the soggy moss was marked by the foot-pads of many wolves. He saw a squat moose-hide sack, mate to his own, which had been torn by sharp teeth. He picked it up, though its weight was almost too much for his feeble fingers. Bill had carried it to the last. Ha! ha! He would have the laugh on Bill. He would survive and carry it to the ship in the shining sea. His mirth was hoarse and ghastly, like a raven's croak, and the sick wolf joined him, howling lugubriously. The man ceased suddenly. How could he have the laugh on Bill if that were Bill; if those bones, so inky-white and clean, were Bill?

He turned away. Well, Bill had deserted him; but he would not take the gold, nor would he suck Bill's bones. Bill would have, though, had it been the other way around, he mused as he staggered on. He came to a pool of water. Stooping over in quest of minnows, he jerked his head back as though he had been stung. He had caught sight of his reflected face. So horrible was it that sensibility awoke long enough to be shocked. There were three minnows in the pool, which was too large to drain; and after several ineffectual attempts to catch them in the tin bucket he forbore. He was afraid, because of his great weakness, that he might fall in and drown. It was for this reason that he did not trust himself to the river astride one of the many drift-logs which lined its sand-spits.

That day he decreased the distance between him and the ship by three miles; the next day by two--for he was crawling now as Bill had crawled; and the end of the fifth day found the ship still seven miles away and him unable to make even a mile a day. Still the Indian Summer held on, and he continued to crawl and faint, turn and turn about; and ever the sick wolf coughed and wheezed at his heels. His knees had become raw meat like his feet, and though he padded them with the shirt from his back it was a red track he left behind him on the moss and stones. Once, glancing back, he saw the wolf licking hungrily his bleeding trail, and he saw sharply what his own end might be--unless--unless he could get the wolf. Then began as grim a tragedy of existence as was ever played--a sick man that crawled, a sick wolf that limped, two creatures dragging their dying carcasses across the desolation and hunting each other's lives.

Had it been a well wolf, it would not have mattered so much to the man; but the thought of going to feed the maw of that loathsome and all but dead thing was repugnant to him. He was finicky. His mind had begun to wander again, and to be perplexed by hallucinations, while his lucid intervals grew rarer and shorter.

He was awakened once from a faint by a wheeze close in his ear. The wolf leaped lamely back, losing its footing and falling in its weakness. It was ludicrous, but he was not amused. Nor was he even afraid. He was too far gone for that. But his mind was for the moment clear, and he lay and considered. The ship was no more than four miles away. He could see it quite distinctly when he rubbed the mists out of his eyes, and he could see the white sail of a small boat cutting the water of the shining sea. But he could never crawl those four miles. He knew that, and was very calm in the knowledge. He knew that he could not crawl half a mile. And yet he wanted to live. It was unreasonable that he should die after all he had undergone. Fate asked too much of him. And, dying, he declined to die. It was stark madness, perhaps, but in the very grip of Death he defied Death and refused to die.

He closed his eyes and composed himself with infinite precaution. He steeled himself to keep above the suffocating languor that lapped like a rising tide through all the wells of his being. It was very like a sea, this deadly languor, that rose and rose and drowned his consciousness bit by bit. Sometimes he was all but submerged, swimming through oblivion with a faltering stroke; and again, by some strange alchemy of soul, he would find another shred of will and strike out more strongly.

Without movement he lay on his back, and he could hear, slowly drawing near and nearer, the wheezing intake and output of the sick wolf’s breath. It drew closer, ever closer, through an infinitude of time, and he did not move. It was at his ear. The harsh dry tongue grated like sandpaper against his cheek. His hands shot out--or at least he willed them to shoot out. The fingers were curved like talons, but they closed on empty air. Swiftness and certitude require strength, and the man had not this strength.

The patience of the wolf was terrible. The man’s patience was no less terrible. For half a day he lay motionless, fighting off unconsciousness and waiting for the thing that was to feed upon him and upon which he wished to feed. Sometimes the languid sea rose over him and he dreamed long dreams; but ever through it all, waking and dreaming, he waited for the wheezing breath and the harsh caress of the tongue.

He did not hear the breath, and he slipped slowly from some dream to the feel of the tongue along his hand. He waited. The fangs pressed softly; the pressure increased; the wolf was exerting its last strength in an effort to sink teeth in the food for which it had waited so long. But the man had waited long, and the lacerated hand closed on the jaw. Slowly, while the wolf struggled feebly and the hand clutched feebly, the other hand crept across to a grip. Five minutes later the whole weight of the man's body was on top of the wolf. The hands had not sufficient strength to choke the wolf, but the face of the man was pressed close to the throat of the wolf and the mouth of the man was full of hair. At the end of half an hour the man was aware of a warm trickle in his throat. It was not pleasant. It was like molten lead being forced into his stomach, and it was forced by his will alone. Later the man rolled over on his back and slept.

There were some members of a scientific expedition on the whale-ship Bedford. From the deck they remarked a strange object on the shore. It was moving down the beach toward the water. They were unable to classify it, and, being scientific men, they climbed into the whale-boat alongside and went ashore to see. And they saw something that was alive but which could hardly be called a man. It was blind, unconscious. It squirmed along the ground like some monstrous worm. Most of its efforts were ineffectual, but it was persistent, and it writhed and twisted and went ahead perhaps a score of feet an hour.

Three weeks afterward the man lay in a bunk on the whale-ship Bedford, and with tears streaming down his wasted cheeks told who he was and what he had undergone. He also babbled incoherently of his mother, of sunny Southern California, and a home among the orange groves and flowers.

The days were not many after that when he sat at table with the scientific men and ship's officers. He gloated over the spectacle of so much food, watching it anxiously as it went into the mouths of others. With the disappearance of each mouthful an expression of deep regret came into his eyes. He was quite sane, yet he hated those men at meal-time. He was haunted by a fear that the food would not last. He inquired of the cook, the cabin-boy, the captain, concerning the food stores. They reassured him countless times; but he could not believe them, and pried cunningly about the lazarette to see with his own eyes.

It was noticed that the man was getting fat. He grew stouter with each day. The scientific men shook their heads and theorized. They limited the man at his meals, but still his girth increased and he swelled prodigiously under his shirt.

The sailors grinned. They knew. And when the scientific men set a watch on the man, they knew too. They saw him slouch for'ard after breakfast, and, like a mendicant, with outstretched palm, accost a sailor. The sailor grinned and passed him a fragment of sea biscuit. He clutched it avariciously, looked at it as a miser looks at gold, and thrust it into his shirt bosom. Similar were the donations from other grinning sailors. The scientific men were discreet. They let him alone. But they privily examined his bunk. It was lined with hardtack; the mattress was stuffed with hardtack; He was taking precautions against another possible famine--that was all. He would recover from it, the scientific men said; and he did, ere the Bedford's anchor rumbled down in San Francisco Bay.

The Madness of John Harned

I tell this for a fact. It happened in the bull-ring at Quito. I sat in the box with John Harned, and with Maria Valenzuela, and with Luis Cervallos. I saw it happen. I saw it all from first to last. I was on the steamer Ecuadore from Panama to Guayaquil. Maria Valenzuela is my cousin. I have known her always. She is very beautiful. I am a Spaniard – an Ecuadoriano, true, but I am descended from Pedro Patino, who was one of Pizarro's captains. They were brave men. They were heroes. Did not Pizarro lead three hundred and fifty Spanish cavaliers and four thousand Indians into the far Cordilleras in search of treasure? And did not all the four thousand Indians and three hundred of the brave cavaliers die on that vain quest? But Pedro Patino did not die. He it was that lived to found the family of the Patino. I am Ecuadoriano, true, but I am Spanish. I am Manuel de Jesus Patino. I own many haciendas, and ten thousand Indians are my slaves, though the law says they are free men who work by freedom of contract. The law is a funny thing. We Ecuadorianos laugh at it. It is our law. We make it for ourselves. I am Manuel de Jesus Patino. Remember that name. It will be written some day in history. There are revolutions in Ecuador. We call them elections. It is a good joke is it not — ?what you call a pun?

John Harned was an American. I met him first at the Tivoli hotel in Panama. He had much money – this I have heard. He was going to Lima, but he met Maria Valenzuela in the Tivoli hotel. Maria Valenzuela is my cousin, and she is beautiful. It is true, she is the most beautiful woman in Ecuador. But also is she most beautiful in every country – in Paris, in Madrid, in New York, in Vienna. Always do all men look at her, and John Harned looked long at her at Panama. He loved her, that I know for a fact. She was Ecuadoriano, true – but she was of all countries; she was of all the world. She spoke many languages. She sang – ah! like an artiste. Her smile – wonderful, divine. Her eyes – ah! have I not seen men look in her eyes? They were what you English call amazing. They were promises of paradise. Men drowned themselves in her eyes.

Maria Valenzuela was rich – richer than I, who am accounted very rich in Ecuador. But John Harned did not care for her money. He had a heart – a funny heart. He was a fool. He did not go to Lima. He left the steamer at Guayaquil and followed her to Quito. She was coming home from Europe and other places. I do not see what she found in him, but she liked him. This I know for a fact, else he would not have followed her to Quito. She asked him to come. Well do I remember the occasion. She said:

"Come to Quito and I will show you the bullfight – brave, clever, magnificent!" But he said: "I go to Lima, not Quito. Such is my passage engaged on the steamer."

"You travel for pleasure – no?" said Maria Valenzuela; and she looked at him as only Maria Valenzuela could look, her eyes warm with the promise.

And he came. No; he did not come for the bull-fight. He came because of what he had seen in her eyes. Women like Maria Valenzuela are born once in a hundred years. They are of no country and no time. They are what you call goddesses. Men fall down at their feet. They play with men and run them through their pretty fingers like sand. Cleopatra was such a woman they say; and so was Circe. She turned men into swine. Ha! ha! It is true – no?

It all came about because Maria Valenzuela said:

"You English people are – what shall I say — ?savage – no? You prize-fight. Two men each hit the other with their fists till their eyes are blinded and their noses are broken. Hideous! And the other men who look on cry out loudly and are made glad. It is barbarous – no?"

"But they are men," said John Harned; "and they prize-fight out of desire. No one makes them prize-fight. They do it because they desire it more than anything else in the world."

Maria Valenzuela – there was scorn in her smile as she said: "They kill each other often – is it not so? I have read it in the papers."

"But the bull," said John Harned.

"The bull is killed many times in the bull-fight, and the bull does not come into the the ring out of desire. It is not fair to the bull. He is compelled to fight. But the man in the prize-fight – no; he is not compelled."

"He is the more brute therefore," said Maria Valenzuela.

"He is savage. He is primitive. He is animal. He strikes with his paws like a bear from a cave, and he is ferocious. But the bull-fight – ah! You have not seen the bullfight – no? The toreador is clever. He must have skill. He is modern. He is romantic. He is only a man, soft and tender, and he faces the wild bull in conflict. And he kills with a sword, a slender sword, with one thrust, so, to the heart of the great beast. It is delicious. It makes the heart beat to behold – the small man, the great beast, the wide level sand, the thousands that look on without breath; the great beast rushes to the attack, the small man stands like a statue; he does not move, he is unafraid, and in his hand is the slender sword flashing like silver in the sun; nearer and nearer rushes the great beast with its sharp horns, the man does not move, and then – so – the sword flashes, the thrust is made, to the heart, to the hilt, the bull falls to the sand and is dead, and the man is unhurt. It is brave. It is magnificent! Ah — !I could love the toreador. But the man of the prize-fight – he is the brute, the human beast, the savage primitive, the maniac that receives many blows in his stupid face and rejoices. Come to Quito and I will show you the brave sport of men, the toreador and the bull."

But John Harned did not go to Quito for the bull-fight. He went because of Maria Valenzuela. He was a large man, more broad of shoulder than we Ecuadorianos, more tall, more heavy of limb and bone. True, he was larger of his own race. His eyes were blue, though I have seen them gray, and, sometimes, like cold steel. His features were large, too – not delicate like ours, and his jaw was very strong to look at. Also, his face was smooth-shaven like a priest's. Why should a man feel shame for the hair on his face? Did not God put it there? Yes, I believe in God – I am not a pagan like many of you English. God is good. He made me an Ecuadoriano with ten thousand slaves. And when I die I shall go to God. Yes, the priests are right.

But John Harned. He was a quiet man. He talked always in a low voice, and he never moved his hands when he talked. One would have thought his heart was a piece of ice; yet did he have a streak of warm in his blood, for he followed Maria Valenzuela to Quito. Also, and for all that he talked low without moving his hands, he was an animal, as you shall see – the beast primitive, the stupid, ferocious savage of the long ago that dressed in wild skins and lived in the caves along with the bears and wolves.

Luis Cervallos is my friend, the best of Ecuadorianos. He owns three cacao plantations at Naranjito and Chobo. At Milagro is his big sugar plantation. He has large haciendas at Ambato and Latacunga, and down the coast is he interested in oil-wells. Also has he spent much money in planting rubber along the Guayas. He is modern, like the Yankee; and, like the Yankee, full of business. He has much money, but it is in many ventures, and ever he needs more money for new ventures and for the old ones. He has been everywhere and seen everything. When he was a very young man he was in the Yankee military academy what you call West Point. There was trouble. He was made to resign. He does not like Americans. But he did like Maria Valenzuela, who was of his own country. Also, he needed her money for his ventures and for his gold mine in Eastern Ecuador where the painted Indians live. I was his friend. It was my desire that he should marry Maria Valenzuela. Further, much of my money had I invested in his ventures, more so in his gold mine which was very rich but which first required the expense of much money before it would yield forth its riches. If Luis Cervallos married Maria Valenzuela I should have more money very immediately.

But John Harned followed Maria Valenzuela to Quito, and it was quickly clear to us – to Luis Cervallos and me that she looked upon John Harned with great kindness. It is said that a woman will have her will, but this is a case not in point, for Maria Valenzuela did not have her will – at least not with John Harned. Perhaps it would all have happened as it did, even if Luis Cervallos and I had not sat in the box that day at the bull-ring in Quito. But this I know: we DID sit in the box that day. And I shall tell you what happened.

The four of us were in the one box, guests of Luis Cervallos. I was next to the Presidente's box. On the other side was the box of General Jose Eliceo Salazar. With him were Joaquiin Endara and Urcisino Castillo, both generals, and Colonel Jacinto Fierro and Captain Baltazar de Echeverria. Only Luis Cervallos had the position and the influence to get that box next to the Presidente. I know for a fact that the Presidente himself expressed the desire to the management that Luis Cervallos should have that box.

The band finished playing the national hymn of Ecuador. The procession of the toreadors was over. The Presidente nodded to begin. The bugles blew, and the bull dashed in – you know the way, excited, bewildered, the darts in its shoulder burning like fire, itself seeking madly whatever enemy to destroy. The toreadors hid behind their shelters and waited. Suddenly they appeared forth, the capadores, five of them, from every side, their colored capes flinging wide. The bull paused at sight of such a generosity of enemies, unable in his own mind to know which to attack. Then advanced one of the capadors alone to meet the bull. The bull was very angry. With its fore-legs it pawed the sand of the arena till the dust rose all about it. Then it charged, with lowered head, straight for the lone capador.

It is always of interest, the first charge of the first bull. After a time it is natural that one should grow tired, trifle, that the keenness should lose its edge. But that first charge of the first bull! John Harned was seeing it for the first time, and he could not escape the excitement – the sight of the man, armed only with a piece of cloth, and of the bull rushing upon him across the sand with sharp horns, widespreading.

"See!" cried Maria Valenzuela. "Is it not superb?"

John Harned nodded, but did not look at her. His eyes were sparkling, and they were only for the bull-ring. The capador stepped to the side, with a twirl of the cape eluding the bull and spreading the cape on his own shoulders.

"What do you think?" asked Maria Venzuela. "Is it not a – what-you-call – sporting proposition – no?"

"It is certainly," said John Harned. "It is very clever."

She clapped her hands with delight. They were little hands. The audience applauded. The bull turned and came back. Again the capadore eluded him, throwing the cape on his shoulders, and again the audience applauded. Three times did this happen. The capadore was very excellent. Then he retired, and the other capadore played with the bull. After that they placed the banderillos in the bull, in the shoulders, on each side of the back-bone, two at a time. Then stepped forward Ordonez, the chief matador, with the long sword and the scarlet cape. The bugles blew for the death. He is not so good as Matestini. Still he is good, and with one thrust he drove the sword to the heart, and the bull doubled his legs under him and lay down and died. It was a pretty thrust, clean and sure; and there was much applause, and many of the common people threw their hats into the ring. Maria Valenzuela clapped her hands with the rest, and John Harned, whose cold heart was not touched by the event, looked at her with curiosity.

"You like it?" he asked.

"Always," she said, still clapping her hands.

"From a little girl," said Luis Cervallos. "I remember her first fight. She was four years old. She sat with her mother, and just like now she clapped her hands. She is a proper Spanish woman.

"You have seen it," said Maria Valenzuela to John Harned, as they fastened the mules to the dead bull and dragged it out. "You have seen the bull-fight and you like it – no? What do you think?

"I think the bull had no chance," he said. "The bull was doomed from the first. The issue was not in doubt. Every one knew, before the bull entered the ring, that it was to die. To be a sporting proposition, the issue must be in doubt. It was one stupid bull who had never fought a man against five wise men who had fought many bulls. It would be possibly a little bit fair if it were one man against one bull."

"Or one man against five bulls," said Maria Valenzuela; and we all laughed, and Luis Ceryallos laughed loudest.

"Yes," said John Harned, "against five bulls, and the man, like the bulls, never in the bull ring before –; a man like yourself, Senor Crevallos."

"Yet we Spanish like the bull-fight," said Luis Cervallos; and I swear the devil was whispering then in his ear, telling him to do that which I shall relate.

"Then must it be a cultivated taste," John Harned made answer. "We kill bulls by the thousand every day in Chicago, yet no one cares to pay admittance to see."

"That is butchery," said I; "but this – ah, this is an art. It is delicate. It is fine. It is rare."

"Not always," said Luis Cervallos. "I have seen clumsy matadors, and I tell you it is not nice."

He shuddered, and his face betrayed such what-you-call disgust, that I knew, then, that the devil was whispering and that he was beginning to play a part.

"Senor Harned may be right," said Luis Cervallos. "It may not be fair to the bull. For is it not known to all of us that for twenty-four hours the bull is given no water, and that immediately before the fight he is permitted to drink his fill?"

"And he comes into the ring heavy with water?" said John Harned quickly; and I saw that his eyes were very gray and very sharp and very cold.

"It is necessary for the sport," said Luis Cervallos. "Would you have the bull so strong that he would kill the toreadors?"

"I would that he had a fighting chance," said John Harned, facing the ring to see the second bull come in.

It was not a good bull. It was frightened. It ran around the ring in search of a way to get out. The capadors stepped forth and flared their capes, but he refused to charge upon them.

"It is a stupid bull," said Maria Valenzuela.

"I beg pardon," said John Harned; "but it would seem to me a wise bull. He knows he must not fight man. See! He smells death there in the ring."

True. The bull, pausing where the last one had died, was smelling the wet sand and snorting. Again he ran around the ring, with raised head, looking at the faces of the thousands that hissed him, that threw orange-peel at him and called him names. But the smell of blood decided him, and he charged a capador, so without warning that the man just escaped. He dropped his cape and dodged into the shelter. The bull struck the wall of the ring with a crash. And John Harned said, in a quiet voice, as though he talked to himself:

"I will give one thousand sucres to the lazar-house of Quito if a bull kills a man this day."

"You like bulls?" said Maria Valenzuela with a smile.

"I like such men less," said John Harned. "A toreador is not a brave man. He surely cannot be a brave man. See, the bull's tongue is already out. He is tired and he has not yet begun."

"It is the water," said Luis Cervallos.

"Yes, it is the water," said John Harned. "Would it not be safer to hamstring the bull before he comes on?"

Maria Valenzuela was made angry by this sneer in John Harned's words. But Luis Cervallos smiled so that only I could see him, and then it broke upon my mind surely the game he was playing. He and I were to be banderilleros. The big American bull was there in the box with us. We were to stick the darts in him till he became angry, and then there might be no marriage with Maria Valenzuela. It was a good sport. And the spirit of bull-fighters was in our blood.

The bull was now angry and excited. The capadors had great game with him. He was very quick, and sometimes he turned with such sharpness that his hind legs lost their footing and he plowed the sand with his quarter. But he charged always the flung capes and committed no harm.

"He has no chance," said John Harned. "He is fighting wind."

"He thinks the cape is his enemy," explained Maria Valenzuela. "See how cleverly the capador deceives him."

"It is his nature to be deceived," said John Harned. "Wherefore he is doomed to fight wind. The toreadors know it, you know it, I know it – we all know from the first that he will fight wind. He only does not know it. It is his stupid beast-nature. He has no chance."

"It is very simple," said Luis Cervallos. "The bull shuts his eyes when he charges. Therefore — "

"The man steps, out of the way and the bull rushes by," Harned interrupted.

"Yes," said Luis Cervallos; "that is it. The bull shuts his eyes, and the man knows it."

"But cows do not shut their eyes," said John Harned. "I know a cow at home that is a Jersey and gives milk, that would whip the whole gang of them."

"But the toreadors do not fight cows," said I.

"They are afraid to fight cows," said John Harned.

"Yes," said Luis Cervallos, "they are afraid to fight cows. There would be no sport in killing toreadors."

"There would be some sport," said John Harned, "if a toreador were killed once in a while. When I become an old man, and mayhap a cripple, and should I need to make a living and be unable to do hard work, then would I become a bull-fighter. It is a light vocation for elderly gentlemen and pensioners."

"But see!" said Maria Valenzuela, as the bull charged bravely and the capador eluded it with a fling of his cape. "It requires skill so to avoid the beast."

"True," said John Harned. "But believe me, it requires a thousand times more skill to avoid the many and quick punches of a prize-fighter who keeps his eyes open and strikes with intelligence. Furthermore, this bull does not want to fight. Behold, he runs away."

It was not a good bull, for again it ran around the ring, seeking to find a way out.

"Yet these bulls are sometimes the most dangerous," said Luis Cervallos. "It can never be known what they will do next. They are wise. They are half cow. The bull-fighters never like them — .See! He has turned!"

Once again, baffled and made angry by the walls of the ring that would not let him out, the bull was attacking his enemies valiantly.

"His tongue is hanging out," said John Harned. "First, they fill him with water. Then they tire him out, one man and then another, persuading him to exhaust himself by fighting wind. While some tire him, others rest. But the bull they never let rest. Afterward, when he is quite tired and no longer quick, the matador sticks the sword into him."

The time had now come for the banderillos. Three times one of the fighters endeavored to place the darts, and three times did he fail. He but stung the bull and maddened it. The banderillos must go in, you know, two at a time, into the shoulders, on each side the backbone and close to it. If but one be placed, it is a failure. The crowd hissed and called for Ordonez. And then Ordonez did a great thing. Four times he stood forth, and four times, at the first attempt, he stuck in the banderillos, so that eight of them, well placed, stood out of the back of the bull at one time. The crowd went mad, and a rain of hats and money fell on the sand of the ring

And just then the bull charged unexpectedly one of the capadors. The man slipped and lost his head. The bull caught him – fortunately, between his wide horns. And while the audience watched, breathless and silent, John Harned stood up and yelled with gladness. Alone, in that hush of all of us, John Harned yelled. And he yelled for the bull. As you see yourself, John Harned wanted the man killed. His was a brutal heart. This bad conduct made those angry that sat in the box of General Salazar, and they cried out against John Harned. And Urcisino Castillo told him to his face that he was a dog of a Gringo and other things. Only it was in Spanish, and John Harned did not understand. He stood and yelled, perhaps for the time of ten seconds, when the bull was enticed into charging the other capadors and the man arose unhurt.

“The bull has no chance,” John Harned said with sadness as he sat down. “The man was uninjured. They fooled the bull away from him.” Then he turned to Maria Valenzuela and said: “I beg your pardon. I was excited.”

She smiled and in reproof tapped his arm with her fan.

“It is your first bull-fight,” she said. “After you have seen more you will not cry for the death of the man. You Americans, you see, are more brutal than we. It is because of your prize-fighting. We come only to see the bull killed.”

“But I would the bull had some chance,” he answered. “Doubtless, in time, I shall cease to be annoyed by the men who take advantage of the bull.”

The bugles blew for the death of the bull. Ordonez stood forth with the sword and the scarlet cloth. But the bull had changed again, and did not want to fight. Ordonez stamped his foot in the sand, and cried out, and waved the scarlet cloth. Then the bull charged, but without heart. There was no weight to the charge. It was a poor thrust. The sword struck a bone and bent. Ordonez took a fresh sword. The bull, again stung to fight, charged once more. Five times Ordonez essayed the thrust, and each time the sword went but part way in or struck bone. The sixth time, the sword went in to the hilt. But it was a bad thrust. The sword missed the heart and stuck out half a yard through the ribs on the opposite side. The audience hissed the matador. I glanced at John Harned. He sat silent, without movement; but I could see his teeth were set, and his hands were clenched tight on the railing of the box.

All fight was now out of the bull, and, though it was no vital thrust, he trotted lamely what of the sword that stuck through him, in one side and out the other. He ran away from the matador and the capadors, and circled the edge of the ring, looking up at the many faces.

"He is saying: 'For God's sake let me out of this; I don't want to fight,' " said John Harned.

That was all. He said no more, but sat and watched, though sometimes he looked sideways at Maria Valenzuela to see how she took it. She was angry with the matador. He was awkward, and she had desired a clever exhibition.

The bull was now very tired, and weak from loss of blood, though far from dying. He walked slowly around the wall of the ring, seeking a way out. He would not charge. He had had enough. But he must be killed. There is a place, in the neck of a bull behind the horns, where the cord of the spine is unprotected and where a short stab will immediately kill. Ordonez stepped in front of the bull and lowered his scarlet cloth to the ground. The bull would not charge. He stood still and smelled the cloth, lowering his head to do so. Ordonez stabbed between the horns at the spot in the neck. The bull jerked his head up. The stab had missed. Then the bull watched the sword. When Ordonez moved the cloth on the ground, the bull forgot the sword and lowered his head to smell the cloth. Again Ordonez stabbed, and again he failed. He tried many times. It was stupid. And John Harned said nothing. At last a stab went home, and the bull fell to the sand, dead immediately, and the mules were made fast and he was dragged out.

"The Gringos say it is a cruel sport – no?" said Luis Cervallos. "That it is not humane. That it is bad for the bull. No?"

"No," said John Harned. "The bull does not count for much. It is bad for those that look on. It is degrading to those that look on. It teaches them to delight in animal suffering. It is cowardly for five men to fight one stupid bull. Therefore those that look on learn to be cowards. The bull dies, but those that look on live and the lesson is learned. The bravery of men is not nourished by scenes of cowardice."

Maria Valenzuela said nothing. Neither did she look at him. But she heard every word and her cheeks were white with anger. She looked out across the ring and fanned herself, but I saw that her hand trembled. Nor did John Harned look at her. He went on as though she were not there. He, too, was angry, coldly angry.

“It is the cowardly sport of a cowardly people,” he said.

“Ah,” said Luis Cervallos softly, “you think you understand us.”

“I understand now the Spanish Inquisition,” said John Harned. “It must have been more delightful than bull-fighting.”

Luis Cervallos smiled but said nothing. He glanced at Maria Valenzuela, and knew that the bull-fight in the box was won. Never would she have further to do with the Gringo who spoke such words. But neither Luis Cervallos nor I was prepared for the outcome of the day. I fear we do not understand the Gringos. How were we to know that John Harned, who was so coldly angry, should go suddenly mad! But mad he did go, as you shall see. The bull did not count for much – he said so himself. Then why should the horse count for so much? That I cannot understand. The mind of John Harned lacked logic. That is the only explanation.

“It is not usual to have horses in the bull-ring at Quito,” said Luis Cervallos, looking up from the program. “In Spain they always have them. But to-day, by special permission we shall have them. When the next bull comes on there will be horses and picadors-you know, the men who carry lances and ride the horses.”

“The bull is doomed from the first,” said John Harned. “Are the horses then likewise doomed!”

“They are blindfolded so that they may not see the bull,” said Luis Cervallos. “I have seen many horses killed. It is a brave sight.”

“I have seen the bull slaughtered,” said John Harned “I will now see the horse slaughtered, so that I may understand more fully the fine points of this noble sport.”

“They are old horses,” said Luis Cervallos, “that are not good for anything else.”

“I see,” said John Harned.

The third bull came on, and soon against it were both capadors and picadors. One picador took his stand directly below us. I agree, it was a thin and aged horse he rode, a bag of bones covered with mangy hide.

“It is a marvel that the poor brute can hold up the weight of the rider,” said John Harned. “And now that the horse fights the bull, what weapons has it?”

“The horse does not fight the bull,” said Luis Cervallos.

“Oh,” said John Harned, “then is the horse there to be gored? That must be why it is blindfolded, so that it shall not see the bull coming to gore it.”

“Not quite so,” said I. “The lance of the picador is to keep the bull from goring the horse.”

“Then are horses rarely gored?” asked John Harned.

“No,” said Luis Cervallos. “I have seen, at Seville, eighteen horses killed in one day, and the people clamored for more horses.”

“Were they blindfolded like this horse?” asked John Harned.

“Yes,” said Luis Cervallos.

After that we talked no more, but watched the fight. And John Harned was going mad all the time, and we did not know. The bull refused to charge the horse. And the horse stood still, and because it could not see it did not know that the capadors were trying to make the bull charge upon it. The capadors teased the bull their capes, and when it charged them they ran toward the horse and into their shelters. At last the bull was angry, and it saw the horse before it.

“The horse does not know, the horse does not know,” John Harned whispered to himself, unaware that he voiced his thought aloud.

The bull charged, and of course the horse knew nothing till the picador failed and the horse found himself impaled on the bull’s horns from beneath. The bull was magnificently strong. The sight of its strength was splendid to see. It lifted the horse clear into the air; and as the horse fell to its side on on the ground the picador landed on his feet and escaped, while the capadors lured the bull away. The horse was emptied of its essential organs. Yet did it rise to its feet screaming. It was the scream of the horse that did it, that made John Harned completely mad; for he, too, started to rise to his feet, I heard him curse low and deep. He never took his eyes from the horse, which, screaming, strove to run, but fell down instead and rolled on its back so that all its four legs were kicking in the air. Then the bull charged it and gored it again and again until it was dead.

John Harned was now on his feet. His eyes were no longer cold like steel. They were blue flames. He looked at Maria Valenzuela, and she looked at him, and in his face was a great loathing. The moment of his madness was upon him. Everybody was looking, now that the horse was dead; and John Harned was a large man and easy to be seen.

"Sit down," said Luis Cervallos, "or you will make a fool of yourself."

John Harned replied nothing. He struck out his fist. He smote Luis Cervallos in the face so that he fell like a dead man across the chairs and did not rise again. He saw nothing of what followed. But I saw much. Urcisino Castillo, leaning forward from the next box, with his cane struck John Harned full across the face. And John Harned smote him with his fist so that in falling he overthrew General Salazar. John Harned was now in what-you-call Berserker rage – no? The beast primitive in him was loose and roaring – the beast primitive of the holes and caves of the long ago.

"You came for a bull-fight," I heard him say, "And by God I'll show you a man-fight!"

It was a fight. The soldiers guarding the Presidente's box leaped across, but from one of them he took a rifle and beat them on their heads with it. From the other box Colonel Jacinto Fierro was shooting at him with a revolver. The first shot killed a soldier. This I know for a fact. I saw it. But the second shot struck John Harned in the side. Whereupon he swore, and with a lunge drove the bayonet of his rifle into Colonel Jacinto Fierro's body. It was horrible to behold. The Americans and the English are a brutal race. They sneer at our bull-fighting, yet do they delight in the shedding of blood. More men were killed that day because of John Harned than were ever killed in all the history of the bull-ring of Quito, yes, and of Guayaquil and all Ecuador.

It was the scream of the horse that did it, yet why did not John Harned go mad when the bull was killed? A beast is a beast, be it bull or horse. John Harned was mad. There is no other explanation. He was blood-mad, a beast himself. I leave it to your judgment. Which is worse – the goring of the horse by the bull, or the goring of Colonel Jacinto Fierro by the bayonet in the hands of John Harned! And John Harned gored others with that bayonet. He was full of devils. He fought with many bullets in him, and he was hard to kill. And Maria Valenzuela was a brave woman. Unlike the other women, she did not cry out nor faint. She sat still in her box, gazing out across the bull-ring. Her face was white and she fanned herself, but she never looked around.

From all sides came the soldiers and officers and the common people bravely to subdue the mad Gringo. It is true – the cry went up from the crowd to kill all the Gringos. It is an old cry in Latin-American countries, what of the dislike for the Gringos and their uncouth ways. It is true, the cry went up. But the brave Ecuadorianos killed only John Harned, and first he killed seven of them. Besides, there were many hurt. I have seen many bull-fights, but never have I seen anything so abominable as the scene in the boxes when the fight was over. It was like a field of battle. The dead lay around everywhere, while the wounded sobbed and groaned and some of them died. One man, whom John Harned had thrust through the belly with the bayonet, clutched at himself with both his hands and screamed. I tell you for a fact it was more terrible than the screaming of a thousand horses.

No, Maria Valenzuela did not marry Luis Cervallos. I am sorry for that. He was my friend, and much of my money was invested in his ventures. It was five weeks before the surgeons took the bandages from his face. And there is a scar there to this day, on the cheek, under the eye. Yet John Harned struck him but once and struck him only with his naked fist. Maria Valenzuela is in Austria now. It is said she is to marry an Arch-Duke or some high nobleman. I do not know. I think she liked John Harned before he followed her to Quito to see the bull-fight. But why the horse? That is what I desire to know. Why should he watch the bull and say that it did not count, and then go immediately and most horribly mad because a horse screamed? There is no understanding the Gringos. They are barbarians.

The Mahatma’s Little Joke

“TO me, it seems strange that in this age of reason, when the supernatural is rejected by normal minds and the church hastens to harmonize its teachings with those of science, that a sect or coterie of thinkers — brilliant ones, too — should attempt to foist upon the world such fantastic infractions of natural law.”

“But Charley, they do no such thing. While miracles of the adepts may seem infractions to the uninitiated, they themselves do not endorse them as such. As the wonders of to day would have been miracles to a past age, so do the marvels they produce, appear to science in its present stage. They merely contend that their so-called miracles are but the manifestations of eternal laws, too subtle for the present day physicists to grasp, but which, through ultimate evolution, they will some day not only accept but demonstrate.”

“With all respect to our friend, I still hold that their propositions are absurd, and that hypothetical possibilities, such as yours, may be carried beyond the limits of legitimate scientific speculation. For instance, take Madame Blavatsky’s miracle of the plate. The set was of a peculiar make, no duplicates of which were to be found in all India. At a picnic lunch, having received an unforseen addition to their number, they are one dish short. She calls the adepts — at that moment in the Himalayas or Thibet — to her aid. They project an intense psychic force across oceans and continents to Germany, where, in the factory, are to be found the only duplicates. There, with successful ascendancy of mind over matter, they break the cohesion which holds the molecules of a certain plate together; disintergrate the molecules to atoms, till it becomes merely a force or the extremest refinement of matter; and bring these vaporous constituents of the plate to India. All this time, which is in the twinkling of an eye, the manipulators have remained in their mountain fastnesses. When the disembodied plate arrives at the picnic ground, it reintegrates; each molecule resumes its old position relative to all companion molecules; and deposits itself under the bushes, where it is the next instant discovered by one of the party. If that is not the wildest of poppy-cock, I leave it to our friend, who is certainly deep enough in theosophic lore, to set me aright.”

The person thus addressed, a middle-aged gentleman, whose face combined the brooding wisdom of the Sphynx and the mysterious solemnity of a Monte Cristo, replied:

"You are right and you are wrong: right, by the glasses through which you view the phenomena of the universe; wrong, because of the narrow limitations inherent with such lenses. You acknowledge the philosophical axiom, that the finite cannot contemplate the infinite? Then, as the finite evolves and increases its powers of reception and conception, the field of its contemplation widens; as witness the science of to day, which you have mentioned. Since this contemplative or conceptionate territory which the world at present enjoys is greater than that of the preceding century, may not the same difference be found between individuals existing contemporaneously? Thus, one hundred years ago, telegraphy was beyond practical conception; and thus, to day the disintegration and reintegration of form by psychic impulses, is beyond both yours and the popular conception. You consider it hypothetically irreasonable. But is your fiat absolute? Do you take upon yourself the infinite knowledge necessary to declare that such is infinitely impossible? Surely you would not be so egotistical. On this point, then, your only consistent attitude must be that of agnosticism — you do not know but would like to know. Do you follow me?"

"Yes," returned Charley, "but such a passive position, long continued, is not compatible with my positive temperament: I inevitably slip into the illogical ratiocinations of skepticism. If I were to receive demonstrations, proofs, occasionally, I would not lapse. But there's the rub — how am I to obtain them?"

"Perhaps I can aid you," replied the mysterious personage. "I have profoundly studied the tenents and natural philosophy of esoteric Buddhism; nay, though this be a secret, I have not only served my adeptship in that weird brotherhood, but have become a full-fledged mahatma. It is in my power to convince you, and I shall so do if you are willing. Shall I tear your astral form from its sublunary habitation and send it gasping through the empyrean? But these celestial peregrinations are tiresome rot after all — can you not think of something original?

"While I must confess that I never looked upon you in the light of a Heliobas the Second, I'll take your word for it. There is nothing I would like better than to leave this mundane sphere for a space; to gaze from afar, upon this clayey habitation of mine; to — but I have it — best of all! Jack, you remember that little wish you uttered, sailing home yesterday?"

"What wish? You know they are legion. Was it that castle of mine in Spain? Or the Duchess — fond creature of my imagination?"

"No, no. Come back to earth. Can't you recollect? Haydee and Dora, you and I?"

"Oh! the very thing!" Turning to the mahatma — "we may as well let you into our little secret: perhaps you can help us. Charley has a sister — an adorable creature — far prettier than her pretty name, Haydee, and as good as she is beautiful. I also have a sister, Dora, over whom Charley likewise raves. Charley and I like each other; but we love each other's sister. We are not bashful — er — that is, we don't know how exactly — ah — well, we don't know each other's sister as well as we should. Not that we are not well enough acquainted, but we don't know the right way to go at it — you comprehend. Now if I were Charley, that is, if Charley were to propose to his sister, he would understand her so well that he would know just how to do it. The same is true of me and my sister. So if Charley and I could change places for awhile, we could carry off things swimmingly, then change back again, and hail for the wedding day!"

"Ah! I see," interposed the mahatma. "What you would desire is that each proposes to the other's sister by proxy, the brother of the girl proposed to, to be the proxy. I believe that I cam arrange it. I have merely to separate your astral forms from your bodies; then to return them, each into the other's corporosity. Thus: the spirit personality of Jack shall inhabit and actuate the material personality of Charley and vice a versa. Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?" in chorus.

"To be translated."

The chums glanced at each other in surprise and trepidation, then burst into hearty laughter, while the mahatma regarded them with imperturbable expectancy. Their laughter died away and his solemnity begat a similar seriousness with them. Again he asked if they were ready, but this time received a skeptical affirmation.

The process was simple. Placing them side by side on a divan, he literally stared each in turn out of countenance, and incidentally, consciousness. What he then did was of a too esoteric nature to be revealed to the vulgar mind; but it was evident that he had succeeded, for with a smile of satisfaction he put on his gloves, took his hat and walking stick, and went down town, leaving them on deep slumber.

The shadows lengthened across the room and the afternoon had worn well along, before the stentorian breathing of the sleepers ceased. Awakening, they regarded each other with wondering eyes, each acutely susceptible to the fact that change had been accomplished.

“Who would have believed it,” cried Charley, “that we could so successfully swap souls!”

“That involves a doubt,” Jack replied, as he drew from his pocket and dubiously regarded a packet of pet cigarettes. “Which is the dominant factor? The body or the soul? If it is the latter, we have merely swapped bodies, and incidentally, clothes. By the way, take theses cigarettes and feel in my pockets, or rather, in the pockets of my agrments, which clothe my body, but which you now inhabit, and pass me my cigar case. I never could stand those coffin nails of yours.”

“Let’s trade the contents of our pockets at once.”

“No. I had not thought of it before, buut it would be absurd. Think of me appearing at my — I mean your house — and every body taking me to be you, with all my things in your pockets. And vice a versa: think of yourself at my house, and considered by my family as myself, with all of your belongings in my pockets — O pshaw! This commingling of the first and second persons is too puzzling to allow perspicuity of diction; but you see my point I hope.”

“O yes, I can grasp it quickly as an abstraction, but fail in lucidity were I to attempt a concrete analysis. It is like the process of assigning the quantities of X and Y when constructing an equation. Let’s see if we can make a formula — one easy to remember:

X Jack’s soul
Y Charley’s soul

A Jack’s body
B Charley’s body
Therefore X A Jack
and Y B Charley.
But Jack is now]] X A] A] B or X B
And Charley is]] Y B] B] A or Y A

“Do you now comprehend who and what you are, Jack?”

“O yes, and I’ll never forget it. I am X A B A. And you are — ”

“Y B A B.”

“Well, since we have settled our identities, let’s go home — here! that’s my hat!”

“No, it is not. Don’t you remember I am Y A and this is A’s hat, or your body’s hat, but your hat for you are X B and must take B’s hat.”

“Oh! I see.”

And they awkwardly exchanged chapeaux, and as awkwardly descended the stairs; for at first it was quite difficult to navigate each other’s bodies. Acquaintances who passed them on the street, thought that they were behaving rather strangely. For instance, Careleton, a friend of Charley’s but unacquainted with Jack, was surprised when Charley passed him with a stoney stare, while Jack affably nodded.

Make Westing

Whatever you do, make westing! make westing!

— Sailing directions for Cape Horn.

FOR seven weeks the Mary Rogers had been between 50° south in the Atlantic and 50° south in the Pacific, which meant that for seven weeks she had been struggling to round Cape Horn. For seven weeks she had been either in dirt, or close to dirt, save once, and then, following upon six days of excessive dirt, which she had ridden out under the shelter of the redoubtable Tierra del Fuego coast, she had almost gone ashore during a heavy swell in the dead calm that had suddenly fallen. For seven weeks she had wrestled with the Cape Horn graybeards, and in return been buffeted and smashed by them. She was a wooden ship, and her ceaseless straining had opened her seams, so that twice a day the watch took its turn at the pumps.

The Mary Rogers was strained, the crew was strained, and big Dan Cullen, master, was likewise strained. Perhaps he was strained most of all, for upon him rested the responsibility of that titanic struggle. He slept most of the time in his clothes, though he rarely slept. He haunted the deck at night, a great, burly, robust ghost, black with the sunburn of thirty years of sea and hairy as an orang-utan. He, in turn, was haunted by one thought of action, a sailing direction for the Horn: Whatever you do, make westing! make westing! It was an obsession. He thought of nothing else, except, at times, to blaspheme God for sending such bitter weather.

Make westing! He hugged the Horn, and a dozen times lay hove to with the iron Cape bearing east-by-north, or north-north-east, a score of miles away. And each time the eternal west wind smote him back and he made easting. He fought gale after gale, south to 64° inside the antarctic drift-ice, and pledged his immortal soul to the Powers of Darkness for a bit of westing, for a slant to take him around. And he made easting. In despair, he had tried to make the passage through the Straits of Le Maire. Halfway through, the wind hauled to the north'ard of northwest, the glass dropped to 28.88, and he turned and ran before a gale of cyclonic fury, missing, by a hair's-breadth, piling up the Mary Rogers on the black-toothed rocks. Twice he had made west to the Diego Ramirez Rocks, one of the times saved between two snow-squalls by sighting the gravestones of ships a quarter of a mile dead ahead.

Blow! Captain Dan Cullen instanced all his thirty years at sea to prove that never had it blown so before. The Mary Rogers was hove to at the time he gave the evidence, and, to clinch it, inside half an hour the Mary Rogers was hove down to the hatches. Her new maintopsail and brand new spencer were blown away like tissue paper; and five sails, furled and fast under double gaskets, were blown loose and stripped from the yards. And before morning the Mary Rogers was hove down twice again, and holes were knocked in her bulwarks to ease her decks from the weight of ocean that pressed her down.

On an average of once a week Captain Dan Cullen caught glimpses of the sun. Once, for ten minutes, the sun shone at midday, and ten minutes afterward a new gale was piping up, both watches were shortening sail, and all was buried in the obscurity of a driving snow-squall. For a fortnight, once, Captain Dan Cullen was without a meridian or a chronometer sight. Rarely did he know his position within half of a degree, except when in sight of land; for sun and stars remained hidden behind the sky, and it was so gloomy that even at the best the horizons were poor for accurate observations. A gray gloom shrouded the world. The clouds were gray; the great driving seas were leaden gray; the smoking crests were a gray churning; even the occasional albatrosses were gray, while the snow-flurries were not white, but gray, under the sombre pall of the heavens.

Life on board the Mary Rogers was gray,--gray and gloomy. The faces of the sailors were blue-gray; they were afflicted with sea-cuts and sea-boils, and suffered exquisitely. They were shadows of men. For seven weeks, in the forecastle or on deck, they had not known what it was to be dry. They had forgotten what it was to sleep out a watch, and all watches it was, “All hands on deck!” They caught snatches of agonized sleep, and they slept in their oilskins ready for the everlasting call. So weak and worn were they that it took both watches to do the work of one. That was why both watches were on deck so much of the time. And no shadow of a man could shirk duty. Nothing less than a broken leg could enable a man to knock off work; and there were two such, who had been mauled and pulped by the seas that broke aboard.

One other man who was the shadow of a man was George Dorety. He was the only passenger on board, a friend of the firm, and he had elected to make the voyage for his health. But seven weeks of Cape Horn had not bettered his health. He gasped and panted in his bunk through the long, heaving nights; and when on deck he was so bundled up for warmth that he resembled a peripatetic old-clothes shop. At midday, eating at the cabin table in a gloom so deep that the swinging sea-lamps burned always, he looked as blue-gray as the sickest, saddest man for'ard. Nor did gazing across the table at Captain Dan Cullen, have any cheering effect upon him. Captain Cullen chewed and scowled and kept silent. The scowls were for God, and with every chew he reiterated the sole thought of his existence, which was make westing. He was a big, hairy brute, and the sight of him was not stimulating to the other's appetite. He looked upon George Dorety as a Jonah, and told him so, once each meal, savagely transferring the scowl from God to the passenger and back again.

Nor did the mate prove a first aid to a languid appetite. Joshua Higgins by name, a seaman by profession and pull, but a pot-wolloper by capacity, he was a loose-jointed, sniffling creature, heartless and selfish and cowardly, without a soul, in fear of his life of Dan Cullen, and a bully over the sailors, who knew that behind the mate was Captain Cullen, the lawgiver and compeller, the driver and the destroyer, the incarnation of a dozen bucko mates. In that wild weather at the southern end of the earth, Joshua Higgins ceased washing. His grimy face usually robbed George Dorety of what little appetite he managed to accumulate. Ordinarily this lavatarial dereliction would have caught Captain Cullen's eye and vocabulary, but in the present his mind was filled with making westing, to the exclusion of all other things not contributory thereto. Whether the mate's face was clean or dirty had no bearing upon westing. Later on, when 50 degrees south in the Pacific had been reached, Joshua Higgins would wash his face very abruptly. In the meantime, at the cabin table, where gray twilight alternated with lamplight while the lamps were being filled, George Dorety sat between the two men, one a tiger and the other a hyena, and wondered why God had made them. The second mate, Matthew Turner, was a true sailor and a man, but George Dorety did not have the solace of his company, for he ate by himself, solitary, when they had finished.

On Saturday morning, July 24, George Dorety awoke to a feeling of life and headlong movement. On deck he found the Mary Rogers running off before a howling southeaster. Nothing was set but the lower topsails and the foresail. It was all she could stand, yet she was making fourteen knots, as Mr. Turner shouted in Dorety's ear when he came on deck. And it was all westing. She was going around the Horn at last . . . if the wind held. Mr. Turner looked happy. The end of the struggle was in sight. But Captain Cullen did not look happy. He scowled at Dorety in passing. Captain Cullen did not want God to know that he was pleased with that wind. He had a conception of a malicious God, and believed in his secret soul that if God knew it was a desirable wind, God would promptly efface it and send a snorter from the west. So he walked softly before God, smothering his joy down under scowls and muttered curses, and, so, fooling God, for God was the only thing in the universe of which Dan Cullen was afraid.

All Saturday and Saturday night the Mary Rogers raced her westing. Persistently she logged her fourteen knots, so that by Sunday morning she had covered three hundred and fifty miles. If the wind held, she would make around. If it failed. and the snorter came from anywhere between southwest and north, back the Mary Rogers would be hurled and be no better off than she had been seven weeks before. And on Sunday morning the wind was failing. The big sea was going down and running smooth. Both watches were on deck setting sail after sail as fast as the ship could stand it. And now Captain Cullen went around brazenly before God, smoking a big cigar, smiling jubilantly, as if the failing wind delighted him, while down underneath he was raging against God for taking the life out of the blessed wind. Make westing! So he would, if God would only leave him alone. Secretly, he pledged himself anew to the Powers of Darkness, if they would let him make westing. He pledged himself so easily because he did not believe in the Powers of Darkness. He really believed only in God, though he did not know it. And in his inverted theology God was really the Prince of Darkness. Captain Cullen was a devil-worshipper, but he called the devil by another name, that was all.

At midday, after calling eight bells, Captain Cullen ordered the royals on. The men went aloft faster than they had gone in weeks. Not alone were they nimble because of the westing, but a benignant sun was shining down and limbering their stiff bodies. George Dorety stood aft, near Captain Cullen, less bundled in clothes than usual, soaking in the grateful warmth as he watched the scene. Swiftly and abruptly the incident occurred. There was a cry from the foreroyal-yard of "Man overboard!" Somebody threw a life buoy over the side, and at the same instant the second mate’s voice came aft, ringing and peremptory:--

“Hard down your helm!”

The man at the wheel never moved a spoke. He knew better, for Captain Dan Cullen was standing alongside of him. He wanted to move a spoke, to move all the spokes, to grind the wheel down, hard down, for his comrade drowning in the sea. He glanced at Captain Dan Cullen, and Captain Dan Cullen gave no sign.

“Down! Hard down!” the second mate roared, as he sprang aft.

But he ceased springing and commanding, and stood still, when he saw Dan Cullen by the wheel. And big Dan Cullen puffed at his cigar and said nothing. Astern, and going astern fast, could be seen the sailor. He had caught the life buoy and was clinging to it. Nobody spoke. Nobody moved. The men aloft clung to the royal yards and watched with terror-stricken faces. And the Mary Rogers raced on, making her westing. A long, silent minute passed.

“Who was it?” Captain Cullen demanded.

“Mops, sir,” eagerly answered the sailor at the wheel.

Mops topped a wave astern and disappeared temporarily in the trough. It was a large wave, but it was no graybeard. A small boat could live easily in such a sea, and in such a sea the Mary Rogers could easily come to. But she could not come to and make westing at the same time.

For the first time in all his years, George Dorety was seeing a real drama of life and death--a sordid little drama in which the scales balanced an unknown sailor named Mops against a few miles of longitude. At first he had watched the man astern, but now he watched big Dan Cullen, hairy and black, vested with power of life and death, smoking a cigar.

Captain Dan Cullen smoked another long, silent minute. Then he removed the cigar from his mouth. He glanced aloft at the spars of the Mary Rogers, and overside at the sea.

“Sheet home the royals!” he cried.

Fifteen minutes later they sat at table, in the cabin, with food served before them. On one side of George Dorety sat Dan Cullen, the tiger, on the other side, Joshua Higgins, the hyena. Nobody spoke. On deck the men were sheeting home the skysails. George Dorety could hear their cries, while a persistent vision haunted him of a man called Mops, alive and well, clinging to a life buoy miles astern in that lonely ocean. He glanced at

Captain Cullen, and experienced a feeling of nausea, for the man was eating his food with relish, almost bolting it.

“Captain Cullen,” Dorety said, “you are in command of this ship, and it is not proper for me to comment now upon what you do. But I wish to say one thing. There is a hereafter, and yours will be a hot one.”

Captain Cullen did not even scowl. In his voice was regret as he said:--

“It was blowing a living gale. It was impossible to save the man.”

“He fell from the royal-yard,” Dorety cried hotly. “You were setting the royals at the time. Fifteen minutes afterward you were setting the skysails.”‘

“It was a living gale, wasn’t it, Mr. Higgins?” Captain Cullen said, turning to the mate.

“If you’d brought her to, it’d have taken the sticks out of her,” was the mate’s answer. “You did the proper thing, Captain Cullen. The man hadn’t a ghost of a show.”

George Dorety made no answer, and to the meal’s end no one spoke. After that, Dorety had his meals served in his stateroom. Captain Cullen scowled at him no longer, though no speech was exchanged between them, while the Mary Rogers sped north toward warmer latitudes. At the end of the week, Dan Cullen cornered Dorety on deck.

“What are you going to do when we get to ‘Frisco?” he demanded bluntly.

“I am going to swear out a warrant for your arrest,” Dorety answered quietly. “I am going to charge you with murder, and I am going to see you hanged for it.”

“You’re almighty sure of yourself,” Captain Cullen sneered, turning on his heel.

A second week passed, and one morning found George Dorety standing in the coach-house companionway at the for’ard end of the long poop, taking his first gaze around the deck. The Mary Rogers was reach-ing full-and-by, in a stiff breeze. Every sail was set and drawing, including the staysails. Captain Cullen strolled for’ard along the poop.

He strolled carelessly, glancing at the passenger out of the corner of his eye. Dorety was looking the other way, standing with head and shoulders outside the companionway, and only the back of his head was to be seen. Captain Cullen, with swift eye, embraced the mainstaysail-block and the head and estimated the distance. He glanced about him. Nobody was looking. Aft, Joshua Higgins, pacing up and down, had just turned his back and was going the other way. Captain Cullen bent over suddenly and cast the staysail-sheet off from its pin. The heavy block hurtled through the air, smashing Dorety's head like an egg-shell and hurtling on and back and forth as the staysail whipped and slatted in the wind. Joshua Higgins turned around to see what had carried away, and met the full blast of the vilest portion of Captain Cullen's profanity.

"I made the sheet fast myself," whimpered the mate in the first lull, "with an extra turn to make sure. I remember it distinctly."

"Made fast?" the Captain snarled back, for the benefit of the watch as it struggled to capture the flying sail before it tore to ribbons. "You couldn't make your grandmother fast, you useless hell's scullion. If you made that sheet fast with an extra turn, why in hell didn't it stay fast? That's what I want to know. Why in hell didn't it stay fast?"

The mate whined inarticulately.

"Oh, shut up!" was the final word of Captain Cullen.

Half an hour later he was as surprised as any when the body of George Dorety was found inside the companionway on the floor. In the afternoon, alone in his room, he doctored up the log.

"Ordinary seaman, Karl Brun," he wrote, "lost overboard from foreroyal-yard in a gale of wind. Was running at the time, and for the safety of the ship did not dare come up to the wind. Nor could a boat have lived in the sea that was running."

On another page, he wrote:--

"Had often warned Mr. Dorety about the danger he ran because of his carelessness on deck. I told him, once, that some day he would get his head knocked off by a block. A carelessly fastened mainstaysail sheet was the cause of the accident, which was deeply to be regretted because Mr. Dorety was a favorite with all of us."

Captain Dan Cullen read over his literary effort with admiration, blotted the page, and closed the log. He lighted a cigar and stared before him. He felt the Mary Rogers lift, and heel, and surge along, and knew that she was making nine knots. A smile of satisfaction slowly dawned on his black and hairy face. Well, anyway, he had made his westing and fooled God.

The Man on the Other Bank.

It was before Smoke Bellew staked the farcical town-site of Tra-Lee, made the historic corner of eggs that nearly broke Swiftwater Bill's bank account, or won the dog-team race down the Yukon for an even million dollars, that he and Shorty parted company on the Upper Klondike. Shorty's task was to return down the Klondike to Dawson to record some claims they had staked.

Smoke, with the dog-team, turned south. His quest was Surprise Lake and the mythical Two Cabins. His traverse was to cut the headwaters of the Indian River and cross the unknown region over the mountains to the Stewart River. Here, somewhere, rumour persisted, was Surprise Lake, surrounded by jagged mountains and glaciers, its bottom paved with raw gold. Old-timers, it was said, whose very names were forgotten in the frosts of earlier years, had dived into the icy waters of Surprise Lake and fetched lump-gold to the surface in both hands. At different times, parties of old-timers had penetrated the forbidding fastness and sampled the lake's golden bottom. But the water was too cold. Some died in the water, being pulled up dead. Others died later of consumption. And one who had gone down never did come up. All survivors had planned to return and drain the lake, yet none had ever gone back. Disaster always smote them. One man fell into an air-hole below Forty Mile; another was killed and eaten by his dogs; a third was crushed by a falling tree. And so the tale ran. Surprise Lake was a hoodoo; its location was unremembered; and the gold still paved its undrained bottom.

Two Cabins, no less mythical, was more definitely located. "Five sleeps," up the McQuestion River from the Stewart, stood two ancient cabins. So ancient were they that they must have been built before ever the first known gold-hunter had entered the Yukon Basin. Wandering moose-hunters, whom even Smoke had met and talked with, claimed to have found the two cabins in the old days, but to have sought vainly for the mine which those early adventurers must have worked.

"I wish you was goin' with me," Shorty said wistfully, at parting. "Just because you got the Indian bug ain't no reason for to go pokin' into trouble. They's no gettin' away from it, that's loco country you're bound for. The hoodoo's sure on it, from the first flip to the last call, judgin' from all you an' me has hearn tell about it."

"It's all right, Shorty," replied Smoke. "I'll make the round trip and be back in Dawson in six weeks. The Yukon trail is packed, and the first hundred miles or so of the Stewart ought to be packed. Old-timers from Henderson have told me a number of outfits went up last fall after the freeze-up. When I strike their trail I ought to hit her up forty or fifty miles a day. I'm likely to be back inside a month, once I get across."

"Yep, once you get acrost. But it's the gettin' acrost that worries me. Well, so long, Smoke. Keep your eyes open for that hoodoo, that's all. An' don't be ashamed to turn back if you don't kill any meat."

A week later, Smoke found himself among the jumbled ranges south of Indian River. On the divide from the Klondike he had abandoned the sled and packed his wolf-dogs. The six big huskies each carried fifty pounds, and on his own back was an equal burden. Through the soft snow he led the way, packing it down under his snow-shoes, and behind, in single file, toiled the dogs.

He loved the life, the deep arctic winter, the silent wilderness, the unending snow-surface unpressed by the foot of any man. About him towered icy peaks unnamed and uncharted. No hunter's camp-smoke, rising in the still air of the valleys, ever caught his eye. He, alone, moved through the brooding quiet of the untravelled wastes; nor was he oppressed by the solitude. He loved it all, the day's toil, the bickering wolf-dogs, the making of the camp in the long twilight, the leaping stars overhead, and the flaming pageant of the aurora borealis.

Especially he loved his camp at the end of the day, and in it he saw a picture which he ever yearned to paint and which he knew he would never forget--a beaten place in the snow, where burned his fire; his bed, a couple of rabbit-skin robes spread on fresh-chopped spruce-boughs; his shelter, a stretched strip of canvas that caught and threw back the heat of the fire; the blackened coffee-pot and pail resting on a length of log, the moccasins propped on sticks to dry, the snow-shoes up-ended in the snow; and across the fire the wolf-dogs snuggling to it for the warmth, wistful and eager, furry and frost-rimed, with bushy tails curled protectingly over their feet; and all about, pressed backward but a space, the wall of encircling darkness.

At such times San Francisco, The Billow, and O'Hara seemed very far away, lost in a remote past, shadows of dreams that had never happened. He found it hard to believe that he had known any other life than this of the wild, and harder still was it for him to reconcile himself to the fact that he had once dabbled and dawdled in the Bohemian drift of city life. Alone, with no one to talk to, he thought much, and deeply, and simply. He was appalled by the wastage of his city years, by the cheapness, now, of the philosophies of the schools and books, of the clever cynicism of the studio and editorial room, of the cant of the business men in their clubs. They knew neither food, nor sleep, nor health; nor could they ever possibly know the sting of real appetite, the goodly ache of fatigue, nor the rush of mad strong blood that bit like wine through all one's body as work was done.

And all the time this fine, wise, Spartan Northland had been here, and he had never known. What puzzled him was, that, with such intrinsic fitness, he had never heard the slightest calling whisper, had not himself gone forth to seek. But this, too, he solved in time.

"Look here, Yellow Face, I've got it clear!"

The dog addressed lifted first one forefoot and then the other with quick, appeasing movements, curled his bush of a tail about them again, and laughed across the fire.

"Herbert Spencer was nearly forty before he caught the vision of his greatest efficiency and desire. I'm none so slow. I didn't have to wait till I was thirty to catch mine. Right here is my efficiency and desire. Almost, Yellow Face, do I wish I had been born a wolf-boy and been brother all my days to you and yours."

For days he wandered through a chaos of canyons and divides which did not yield themselves to any rational topographical plan. It was as if they had been flung there by some cosmic joker. In vain he sought for a creek or feeder that flowed truly south toward the McQuestion and the Stewart. Then came a mountain storm that blew a blizzard across the riff-raff of high and shallow divides. Above timber-line, fireless, for two days, he struggled blindly to find lower levels. On the second day he came out upon the rim of an enormous palisade. So thickly drove the snow that he could not see the base of the wall, nor dared he attempt the descent. He rolled himself in his robes and huddled the dogs about him in the depths of a snow-drift, but did not permit himself to sleep.

In the morning, the storm spent, he crawled out to investigate. A quarter of a mile beneath him, beyond all mistake, lay a frozen, snow-covered lake.

About it, on every side, rose jagged peaks. It answered the description. Blindly, he had found Surprise Lake.

“Well named,” he muttered, an hour later, as he came out upon its margin. A clump of aged spruce was the only woods. On his way to it, he stumbled upon three graves, snow-buried, but marked by hand-hewn head-posts and undecipherable writing. On the edge of the woods was a small ramshackle cabin. He pulled the latch and entered. In a corner, on what had once been a bed of spruce-boughs, still wrapped in mangy furs that had rotted to fragments, lay a skeleton. The last visitor to Surprise Lake, was Smoke’s conclusion, as he picked up a lump of gold as large as his doubled fist. Beside the lump was a pepper-can filled with nuggets of the size of walnuts, rough-surfaced, showing no signs of wash.

So true had the tale run that Smoke accepted without question that the source of the gold was the lake’s bottom. Under many feet of ice and inaccessible, there was nothing to be done, and at midday, from the rim of the palisade, he took a farewell look back and down at his find.

“It’s all right, Mr. Lake,” he said. “You just keep right on staying there. I’m coming back to drain you--if that hoodoo doesn’t catch me. I don’t know how I got here, but I’ll know by the way I go out.”

In a little valley, beside a frozen stream and under beneficent spruce trees, he built a fire four days later. Somewhere in that white anarchy he had left behind him was Surprise Lake--somewhere, he knew not where; for a hundred hours of driftage and struggle through blinding, driving snow had concealed his course from him, and he knew not in what direction lay BEHIND. It was as if he had just emerged from a nightmare. He was not sure whether four days or a week had passed. He had slept with the dogs, fought across a forgotten number of shallow divides, followed the windings of weird canyons that ended in pockets, and twice had managed to make a fire and thaw out frozen moose-meat. And here he was, well-fed and well-camped. The storm had passed, and it had turned clear and cold. The lay of the land had again become rational. The creek he was on was natural in appearance, and tended as it should toward the southwest. But Surprise Lake was as lost to him as it had been to all its seekers in the past.

Half a day’s journey down the creek brought him to the valley of a larger stream which he decided was the McQuestion. Here he shot a moose, and once again each wolf-dog carried a full fifty-pound pack of meat. As he turned down the McQuestion, he came upon a sled-trail. The late snows had drifted over, but underneath, it was well packed by travel. His conclusion was that two camps had been established on the McQuestion, and that this was the connecting trail. Evidently, Two Cabins had been found, and it was the lower camp, so he headed down the stream.

It was forty below zero when he camped that night, and he fell asleep wondering who were the men who had rediscovered the Two Cabins, and if he would fetch it next day. At the first hint of dawn he was under way, easily following the half-obliterated trail and packing the recent snow with his webbed shoes so that the dogs should not wallow.

And then it came, the unexpected, leaping out upon him on a bend of the river. It seemed to him that he heard and felt simultaneously. The crack of the rifle came from the right, and the bullet, tearing through and across the shoulders of his drill parka and woollen coat, pivoted him half around with the shock of its impact. He staggered on his twisted snow-shoes to recover balance, and heard a second crack of the rifle. This time it was a clean miss. He did not wait for more, but plunged across the snow for the sheltering trees of the bank a hundred feet away. Again and again the rifle cracked, and he was unpleasantly aware of a trickle of warm moisture down his back.

He climbed the bank, the dogs floundering behind, and dodged in among the trees and brush. Slipping out of his snow-shoes, he wallowed forward at full length and peered cautiously out. Nothing was to be seen. Whoever had shot at him was lying quiet among the trees of the opposite bank.

“If something doesn’t happen pretty soon,” he muttered at the end of half an hour, “I’ll have to sneak away and build a fire or freeze my feet. Yellow Face, what’d you do, lying in the frost with circulation getting slack and a man trying to plug you?”

He crawled back a few yards, packed down the snow, danced a jig that sent the blood back into his feet, and managed to endure another half hour. Then, from down the river, he heard the unmistakable jingle of dog-bells. Peering out, he saw a sled round the bend. Only one man was with it, straining at the gee-pole and urging the dogs along. The effect on Smoke was one of shock, for it was the first human he had seen since he parted from Shorty three weeks before. His next thought was of the potential murderer concealed on the opposite bank.

Without exposing himself, Smoke whistled warningly. The man did not hear, and came on rapidly. Again, and more sharply, Smoke whistled. The man whoa'd his dogs, stopped, and had turned and faced Smoke when the rifle cracked. The instant afterwards, Smoke fired into the wood in the direction of the sound. The man on the river had been struck by the first shot. The shock of the high velocity bullet staggered him. He stumbled awkwardly to the sled, half-falling, and pulled a rifle out from under the lashings. As he strove to raise it to his shoulder, he crumpled at the waist and sank down slowly to a sitting posture on the sled. Then, abruptly, as the gun went off aimlessly, he pitched backward and across a corner of the sled-load, so that Smoke could see only his legs and stomach.

From below came more jingling bells. The man did not move. Around the bend swung three sleds, accompanied by half a dozen men. Smoke cried warningly, but they had seen the condition of the first sled, and they dashed on to it. No shots came from the other bank, and Smoke, calling his dogs to follow, emerged into the open. There were exclamations from the men, and two of them, flinging off the mittens of their right hands, levelled their rifles at him.

“Come on, you red-handed murderer, you,” one of them, a black-bearded man, commanded. “An' jest pitch that gun of yourn in the snow.”

Smoke hesitated, then dropped his rifle and came up to them.

“Go through him, Louis, an' take his weapons,” the black-bearded man ordered.

Louis was a French-Canadian voyageur, Smoke decided, as were four of the others. His search revealed only Smoke's hunting knife, which was appropriated.

“Now, what have you got to say for yourself, stranger, before I shoot you dead?” the black-bearded man demanded.

“That you're making a mistake if you think I killed that man,” Smoke answered.

A cry came from one of the voyageurs. He had quested along the trail and found Smoke's tracks where he had left it to take refuge on the bank. The man explained the nature of his find.

“What'd you kill Joe Kinade for?” he of the black beard asked.

“I tell you I didn't--“ Smoke began.

“Aw, what's the good of talkin'? We got you red-handed. Right up there's where you left the trail when you heard him comin'. You laid among the trees an' bushwhacked him. A short shot. You couldn't ‘a' missed. Pierre, go an' get that gun he dropped.”

"You might let me tell what happened," Smoke objected.

"You shut up," the man snarled at him. "I reckon your gun'll tell the story."

All the men examined Smoke's rifle, ejecting and counting the cartridges, and examining the barrel at muzzle and breech.

"One shot," Blackbeard concluded.

Pierre, with nostrils that quivered and distended like a deer's, sniffed at the breech.

"Him one fresh shot," he said.

"The bullet entered his back," Smoke said. "He was facing me when he was shot. You see, it came from the other bank."

Blackbeard considered this proposition for a scant second, and shook his head. "Nope. It won't do. Turn him around to face the other bank--that's how you whopped him in the back. Some of you boys run up an' down the trail, and see if you can see any tracks making for the other bank."

Their report was that on that side the snow was unbroken. Not even a snow-shoe rabbit had crossed it. Blackbeard, bending over the dead man, straightened up, with a woolly, furry wad in his hand. Shredding this, he found imbedded in the center the bullet which had perforated the body. Its nose was spread to the size of a half dollar, its butt-end, steel-jacketed, was undamaged. He compared it with a cartridge from Smoke's belt.

"That's plain enough evidence, stranger, to satisfy a blind man. It's soft-nosed an' steel-jacketed; yourn is soft-nosed and steel-jacketed. It's thirty-thirty; yourn is thirty-thirty. It's manufactured by the J. and T. Arms Company; yourn is manufactured by the J. and T. Arms Company. Now you come along, an' we'll go over to the bank an' see jest how you done it."

"I was bushwhacked myself," Smoke said. "Look at the hole in my parka."

While Blackbeard examined it, one of the voyageurs threw open the breech of the dead man's gun. It was patent to all that it had been fired once. The empty cartridge was still in the chamber.

"A damn shame poor Joe didn't get you," Blackbeard said bitterly. "But he did pretty well with a hole like that in him. Come on, you."

"Search the other bank first," Smoke urged.

"You shut up an' come on, an' let the facts do the talkin'."

They left the trail at the same spot he had, and followed it on up the bank and then in among the trees.

“Him dance that place keep him feet warm,” Louis pointed out. “That place him crawl on belly. That place him put one elbow w’en him shoot.”

“And by God there’s the empty cartridge he done it with!” was Blackbeard’s discovery. “Boys, there’s only one thing to do--“

“You might ask me how I came to fire that shot,” Smoke interrupted.

“An’ I might knock your teeth into your gullet if you butt in again. You can answer them questions later on. Now, boys, we’re decent an’ law-abidin’, an’ we got to handle this right an’ regular. How far do you reckon we’ve come, Pierre?”

“Twenty mile, I t’ink for sure.”

“All right. We’ll cache the outfit an’ run him an’ poor Joe back to Two Cabins. I reckon we’ve seen an’ can testify to what’ll stretch his neck.”

It was three hours after dark when the dead man, Smoke, and his captors arrived at Two Cabins. By the starlight, Smoke could make out a dozen or more recently built cabins snuggling about a larger and older cabin on a flat by the river bank. Thrust inside this older cabin, he found it tenanted by a young giant of a man, his wife, and an old blind man. The woman, whom her husband called “Lucy,” was herself a strapping creature of the frontier type. The old man, as Smoke learned afterwards, had been a trapper on the Stewart for years, and had gone finally blind the winter before. The camp of Two Cabins, he was also to learn, had been made the previous fall by a dozen men who arrived in half as many poling-boats loaded with provisions. Here they had found the blind trapper, on the site of Two Cabins, and about his cabin they had built their own. Later arrivals, mushing up the ice with dog teams, had tripled the population. There was plenty of meat in camp, and good low-pay dirt had been discovered and was being worked.

In five minutes, all the men of Two Cabins were jammed into the room. Smoke, shoved off into a corner, ignored and scowled at, his hands and feet tied with thongs of moose-hide, looked on. Thirty-eight men he counted, a wild and husky crew, all frontiersmen of the States or voyageurs from Upper Canada. His captors told the tale over and over, each the center of an excited and wrathful group. There were mutterings of: “Lynch him now! Why wait?” And, once, a big Irishman was restrained only by force from rushing upon the helpless prisoner and giving him a beating.

It was while counting the men that Smoke caught sight of a familiar face. It was Breck, the man whose boat Smoke had run through the rapids. He wondered why the other did not come and speak to him, but himself gave no sign of recognition. Later, when with shielded face Breck passed him a significant wink, Smoke understood.

Blackbeard, whom Smoke heard called Eli Harding, ended the discussion as to whether or not the prisoner should be immediately lynched.

"Hold on," Harding roared. "Keep your shirts on. That man belongs to me. I caught him an' I brought him here. D'ye think I brought him all the way here to be lynched? Not on your life. I could 'a' done that myself when I found him. I brought him here for a fair an' impartial trial, an' by God, a fair an' impartial trial he's goin' to get. He's tied up safe an' sound. Chuck him in a bunk till morning, an' we'll hold the trial right here."

Smoke woke up. A draught that possessed all the rigidity of an icicle was boring into the front of his shoulders as he lay on his side facing the wall. When he had been tied into the bunk there had been no such draught, and now the outside air, driving into the heated atmosphere of the cabin with the pressure of fifty below zero, was sufficient advertizement that some one from without had pulled away the moss-chinking between the logs. He squirmed as far as his bonds would permit, then craned his neck forward until his lips just managed to reach the crack.

"Who is it?" he whispered.

"Breck," came the almost inaudible answer. "Be careful you don't make a noise. I'm going to pass a knife in to you."

"No good," Smoke said. "I couldn't use it. My hands are tied behind me and made fast to the leg of the bunk. Besides, you couldn't get a knife through that crack. But something must be done. Those fellows are of a temper to hang me, and, of course, you know I didn't kill that man."

"It wasn't necessary to mention it, Smoke. And if you did you had your reasons. Which isn't the point at all. I want to get you out of this. It's a tough bunch of men here. You've seen them. They're shut off from the world, and they make and enforce their own law--by miner's meeting, you know. They handled two men already--both grub-thieves. One they hiked from camp without an ounce of grub and no matches. He made about forty miles and lasted a couple of days before he froze stiff. Two weeks ago they hiked the second man. They gave him his choice: no grub, or ten lashes for each day's ration. He stood for forty lashes before he fainted. And now they've got you, and every last one is convinced you killed Kinade."

"The man who killed Kinade shot at me, too. His bullet broke the skin on my shoulder. Get them to delay the trial till some one goes up and searches the bank where the murderer hid."

"No use. They take the evidence of Harding and the five Frenchmen with him. Besides, they haven't had a hanging yet, and they're keen for it. You see, things have been pretty monotonous. They haven't located anything big, and they got tired of hunting for Surprise Lake. They did some stampeding the first part of the winter, but they've got over that now. Scurvy is beginning to show up amongst them, too, and they're just ripe for excitement."

"And it looks like I'll furnish it," was Smoke's comment. "Say, Breck, how did you ever fall in with such a God-forsaken bunch?"

"After I got the claims at Squaw Creek opened up and some men to working, I came up here by way of the Stewart, hunting for Two Cabins. They'd beaten me to it, so I've been higher up the Stewart. Just got back yesterday out of grub."

"Find anything?"

"Nothing much. But I think I've got a hydraulic proposition that'll work big when the country's opened up. It's that, or a gold-dredger."

"Hold on," Smoke interrupted. "Wait a minute. Let me think."

He was very much aware of the snores of the sleepers as he pursued the idea that had flashed into his mind.

"Say, Breck, have they opened up the meat-packs my dogs carried?" he asked.

"A couple. I was watching. They put them in Harding's cache."

"Did they find anything?"

"Meat."

"Good. You've got to get into the brown-canvas pack that's patched with moose-hide. You'll find a few pounds of lumpy gold. You've never seen gold like it in the country, nor has anybody else. Here's what you've got to do. Listen."

A quarter of an hour later, fully instructed and complaining that his toes were freezing, Breck went away. Smoke, his own nose and one cheek frosted by proximity to the chink, rubbed them against the blankets for half an hour before the blaze and bite of the returning blood assured him of the safety of his flesh.

"My mind's made up right now. There ain't no doubt but what he killed Kinade. We heard the whole thing last night. What's the good of goin' over it again? I vote guilty."

In such fashion, Smoke's trial began. The speaker, a loose-jointed, hard-rock man from Colorado, manifested irritation and disgust when Harding set his suggestion aside, demanded the proceedings should be regular, and nominated one Shunk Wilson for judge and chairman of the meeting. The population of Two Cabins constituted the jury, though, after some discussion, the woman, Lucy, was denied the right to vote on Smoke's guilt or innocence.

While this was going on, Smoke, jammed into a corner on a bunk, overheard a whispered conversation between Breck and a miner.

"You haven't fifty pounds of flour you'll sell?" Breck queried.

"You ain't got the dust to pay the price I'm askin'," was the reply.

"I'll give you two hundred."

The man shook his head.

"Three hundred. Three-fifty."

At four hundred, the man nodded, and said, "Come on over to my cabin an' weigh out the dust."

The two squeezed their way to the door, and slipped out. After a few minutes Breck returned alone.

Harding was testifying, when Smoke saw the door shoved open slightly, and in the crack appear the face of the man who had sold the flour. He was grimacing and beckoning emphatically to some one inside, who arose from near the stove and started to work toward the door.

"Where are you goin', Sam?" Shunk Wilson demanded.

"I'll be back in a jiffy," Sam explained. "I jes' got to go."

Smoke was permitted to question the witnesses, and he was in the middle of the cross-examination of Harding when from without came the whining of dogs in harness, and the grind and churn of sled-runners. Somebody near the door peeped out.

"It's Sam an' his pardner an' a dog-team hell-bent down the trail for Stewart River," the man reported.

Nobody spoke for a long half-minute, but men glanced significantly at one another, and a general restlessness pervaded the packed room. Out of the corner of his eye, Smoke caught a glimpse of Breck, Lucy, and her husband whispering together.

“Come on, you,” Shunk Wilson said gruffly to Smoke. “Cut this questionin’ short. We know what you’re tryin’ to prove--that the other bank wa’n’t searched. The witness admits it. We admit it. It wa’n’t necessary. No tracks led to that bank. The snow wa’n’t broke.”

“There was a man on the other bank just the same,” Smoke insisted.

“That’s too thin for skatin’, young man. There ain’t many of us on the McQuestion, an’ we got every man accounted for.”

“Who was the man you hiked out of camp two weeks ago?” Smoke asked.

“Alonzo Miramar. He was a Mexican. What’s that grub-thief got to do with it?”

“Nothing, except that you haven’t accounted for HIM, Mr. Judge.”

“He went down the river, not up.”

“How do you know where he went?”

“Saw him start.”

“And that’s all you know of what became of him?”

“No, it ain’t, young man. I know, we all know, he had four days’ grub an’ no gun to shoot meat with. If he didn’t make the settlement on the Yukon he’d croaked long before this.”

“I suppose you’ve got all the guns in this part of the country accounted for, too,” Smoke observed pointedly.

Shunk Wilson was angry. “You’d think I was the prisoner the way you slam questions into me. Now then, come on with the next witness. Where’s French Louis?”

While French Louis was shoving forward, Lucy opened the door.

“Where you goin’?” Shunk Wilson shouted.

“I reckon I don’t have to stay,” she answered defiantly. “I ain’t got no vote, an’ besides, my cabin’s so jammed up I can’t breathe.”

In a few minutes her husband followed. The closing of the door was the first warning the judge received of it.

“Who was that?” he interrupted Pierre’s narrative to ask.

“Bill Peabody,” somebody spoke up. “Said he wanted to ask his wife something and was coming right back.”

Instead of Bill, it was Lucy who re-entered, took off her furs, and resumed her place by the stove.

“I reckon we don’t need to hear the rest of the witnesses,” was Shunk Wilson’s decision, when Pierre had finished. “We already know they only can testify to the same facts we've already heard. Say, Sorensen, you go an' bring Bill Peabody back. We'll be votin' a verdict pretty short. Now, stranger, you can get up an' say your say concernin' what happened. In the meantime, we'll just be savin' delay by passin' around the two rifles, the ammunition, an' the bullet that done the killin'."

Midway in his story of how he had arrived in that part of the country, and at the point in his narrative where he described his own ambush and how he had fled to the bank, Smoke was interrupted by the indignant Shunk Wilson.

"Young man, what sense is there in you testifyin' that way? You're just takin' up valuable time. Of course you got the right to lie to save your neck, but we ain't goin' to stand for such foolishness. The rifle, the ammunition, an' the bullet that killed Joe Kinade is against you. What's that? Open the door, somebody!"

The frost rushed in, taking form and substance in the heat of the room, while through the open door came the whining of dogs that decreased rapidly with distance.

"It's Sorensen an' Peabody," some one cried, "a-throwin' the whip into the dawgs an' headin' down river!"

"Now, what the hell--!" Shunk Wilson paused, with dropped jaw, and glared at Lucy. "I reckon you can explain, Mrs. Peabody."

She tossed her head and compressed her lips, and Shunk Wilson's wrathful and suspicious gaze passed on and rested on Breck.

"An' I reckon that newcomer you've been chinning with could explain if HE had a mind to."

Breck, now very uncomfortable, found all eyes centered on him.

"Sam was chewing the rag with him, too, before he hit out," some one said.

"Look here, Mr. Breck," Shunk Wilson continued. "You've been interruptin' proceedings, and you got to explain the meanin' of it. What was you chinnin' about?"

Breck cleared his throat timidly and replied. "I was just trying to buy some grub."

"What with?"

"Dust, of course."

"Where'd you get it?"

Breck did not answer.

“He’s been snoopin’ around up the Stewart,” a man volunteered. “I run across his camp a week ago when I was huntin’. An’ I want to tell you he was almighty secretious about it.”

“The dust didn’t come from there,” Breck said. “That’s only a low-grade hydraulic proposition.”

“Bring your poke here an’ let’s see your dust,” Wilson commanded.

“I tell you it didn’t come from there.”

“Let’s see it, just the same.”

Breck made as if to refuse, but all about him were menacing faces. Reluctantly, he fumbled in his coat pocket. In the act of drawing forth a pepper-can, it rattled against what was evidently a hard object.

“Fetch it all out!” Shunk Wilson thundered.

And out came the big nugget, fist-size, yellow as no gold any onlooker had ever seen. Shunk Wilson gasped. Half a dozen, catching one glimpse, made a break for the door. They reached it at the same moment, and, with cursing and scuffling, jammed and pivoted through. The judge emptied the contents of the pepper-can on the table, and the sight of the rough lump-gold sent half a dozen more toward the door.

“Where are you goin’?” Eli Harding asked, as Shunk started to follow.

“For my dogs, of course.”

“Ain’t you goin’ to hang him?”

“It’d take too much time right now. He’ll keep till we get back, so I reckon this court is adjourned. This ain’t no place for lingerin’.”

Harding hesitated. He glanced savagely at Smoke, saw Pierre beckoning to Louis from the doorway, took one last look at the lump-gold on the table, and decided.

“No use you tryin’ to get away,” he flung back over his shoulder. “Besides, I’m goin’ to borrow your dogs.”

“What is it?--another one of them blamed stampedes?” the old blind trapper asked in a queer and petulant falsetto, as the cries of men and dogs and the grind of the sleds swept the silence of the room.

“It sure is,” Lucy answered. “An’ I never seen gold like it. Feel that, old man.”

She put the big nugget in his hand. He was but slightly interested.

“It was a good fur-country,” he complained, “before them danged miners come in an’ scared back the game.”

The door opened, and Breck entered. “Well,” he said, “we four are all that are left in camp. It’s forty miles to the Stewart by the cut-off I broke, and the fastest of them can’t make the round trip in less than five or six days. But it’s time you pulled out, Smoke, just the same.”

Breck drew his hunting-knife across the other’s bonds, and glanced at the woman. “I hope you don’t object?” he said, with significant politeness.

“If there’s goin’ to be any shootin’,” the blind man broke out, “I wish somebody’d take me to another cabin first.”

“Go on, an’ don’t mind me,” Lucy answered. “If I ain’t good enough to hang a man, I ain’t good enough to hold him.”

Smoke stood up, rubbing his wrists where the thongs had impeded the circulation.

“I’ve got a pack all ready for you,” Breck said. “Ten days’ grub, blankets, matches, tobacco, an axe, and a rifle.”

“Go to it,” Lucy encouraged. “Hit the high places, stranger. Beat it as fast as God’ll let you.”

“I’m going to have a square meal before I start,” Smoke said. “And when I start it will be up the McQuestion, not down. I want you to go along with me, Breck. We’re going to search that other bank for the man that really did the killing.”

“If you’ll listen to me, you’ll head down for the Stewart and the Yukon,” Breck objected. “When this gang gets back from my low-grade hydraulic proposition, it will be seeing red.”

Smoke laughed and shook his head.

“I can’t jump this country, Breck. I’ve got interests here. I’ve got to stay and make good. I don’t care whether you believe me or not, but I’ve found Surprise Lake. That’s where that gold came from. Besides, they took my dogs, and I’ve got to wait to get them back. Also, I know what I’m about. There was a man hidden on that bank. He came pretty close to emptying his magazine at me.”

Half an hour afterward, with a big plate of moose-steak before him and a big mug of coffee at his lips, Smoke half-started up from his seat. He had heard the sounds first. Lucy threw open the door.

“Hello, Spike; hello, Methody,” she greeted the two frost-rimed men who were bending over the burden on their sled.

“We just come down from Upper Camp,” one said, as the pair staggered into the room with a fur-wrapped object which they handled with exceeding gentleness. “An’ this is what we found by the way. He’s all in, I guess.”

“Put him in the near bunk there,” Lucy said. She bent over and pulled back the furs, disclosing a face composed principally of large, staring, black eyes, and of skin, dark and scabbed by repeated frost-bite, tightly stretched across the bones.

“If it ain’t Alonzo!” she cried. “You pore, starved devil!”

“That’s the man on the other bank,” Smoke said in an undertone to Breck.

“We found it raidin’ a cache that Harding must ‘a’ made,” one of the men was explaining. “He was eatin’ raw flour an’ frozen bacon, an’ when we got ‘m he was cryin’ an’ squealin’ like a hawg. Look at him! He’s all starved, an’ most of him frozen. He’ll kick at any moment.”

Half an hour later, when the furs had been drawn over the face of the still form in the bunk, Smoke turned to Lucy. “If you don’t mind, Mrs. Peabody, I’ll have another whack at that steak. Make it thick and not so well done. I’m a meat-eater, I am.”

The Man With the Gash

Jacob Kent had suffered from cupidity all the days of his life. This, in turn, had engendered a chronic distrustfulness, and his mind and character had become so warped that he was a very disagreeable man to deal with. He was also a victim to somnambulic propensities, and very set in his ideas. He had been a weaver of cloth from the cradle, until the fever of Klondike had entered his blood and torn him away from his loom. His cabin stood midway between Sixty Mile Post and the Stuart River; and men who made it a custom to travel the trail to Dawson, likened him to a robber baron, perched in his fortress and exacting toll from the caravans that used his ill-kept roads. Since a certain amount of history was required in the construction of this figure, the less cultured wayfarers from Stuart River were prone to describe him after a still more primordial fashion, in which a command of strong adjectives was to be chiefly noted.

This cabin was not his, by the way, having been built several years previously by a couple of miners who had got out a raft of logs at that point for a grub-stake. They had been most hospitable lads, and, after they abandoned it, travelers who knew the route made it an object to arrive there at nightfall. It was very handy, saving them all the time and toil of pitching camp; and it was an unwritten rule that the last man left a neat pile of firewood for the next comer. Rarely a night passed but from half a dozen to a score of men crowded into its shelter. Jacob Kent noted these things, exercised squatter sovereignty, and moved in. Thenceforth, the weary travelers were mulcted a dollar per head for the privilege of sleeping on the floor, Jacob Kent weighing the dust and never failing to steal the down-weight. Besides, he so contrived that his transient guests chopped his wood for him and carried his water. This was rank piracy, but his victims were an easy-going breed, and while they detested him, they yet permitted him to flourish in his sins.

One afternoon in April he sat by his door,--for all the world like a predatory spider,--marvelling at the heat of the returning sun, and keeping an eye on the trail for prospective flies. The Yukon lay at his feet, a sea of ice, disappearing around two great bends to the north and south, and stretching an honest two miles from bank to bank. Over its rough breast ran the sled-trail, a slender sunken line, eighteen inches wide and two thousand miles in length, with more curses distributed to the linear foot than any other road in or out of all Christendom.

Jacob Kent was feeling particularly good that afternoon. The record had been broken the previous night, and he had sold his hospitality to no less than twenty-eight visitors. True, it had been quite uncomfortable, and four had snored beneath his bunk all night; but then it had added appreciable weight to the sack in which he kept his gold dust. That sack, with its glittering yellow treasure, was at once the chief delight and the chief bane of his existence. Heaven and hell lay within its slender mouth. In the nature of things, there being no privacy to his one-roomed dwelling, he was tortured by a constant fear of theft. It would be very easy for these bearded, desperate-looking strangers to make away with it. Often he dreamed that such was the case, and awoke in the grip of nightmare. A select number of these robbers haunted him through his dreams, and he came to know them quite well, especially the bronzed leader with the gash on his right cheek. This fellow was the most persistent of the lot, and, because of him, he had, in his waking moments, constructed several score of hiding-places in and about the cabin. After a concealment he would breathe freely again, perhaps for several nights, only to collar the Man with the Gash in the very act of unearthing the sack. Then, on awakening in the midst of the usual struggle, he would at once get up and transfer the bag to a new and more ingenious crypt. It was not that he was the direct victim of these phantasms; but he believed in omens and thought-transference, and he deemed these dream-robbers to be the astral projection of real personages who happened at those particular moments, no matter where they were in the flesh, to be harboring designs, in the spirit, upon his wealth. So he continued to bleed the unfortunates who crossed his threshold, and at the same time to add to his trouble with every ounce that went into the sack.

As he sat sunning himself, a thought came to Jacob Kent that brought him to his feet with a jerk. The pleasures of life had culminated in the continual weighing and reweighing of his dust; but a shadow had been thrown upon this pleasant avocation, which he had hitherto failed to brush aside. His gold-scales were quite small; in fact, their maximum was a pound and a half,--eighteen ounces,--while his hoard mounted up to something like three and a third times that. He had never been able to weigh it all at one operation, and hence considered himself to have been shut out from a new and most edifying coign of contemplation. Being denied this, half the pleasure of possession had been lost; nay, he felt that this miserable obstacle actually minimized the fact, as it did the strength, of possession. It was the solution of this problem flashing across his mind that had just brought him to his feet. He searched the trail carefully in either direction. There was nothing in sight, so he went inside.

In a few seconds he had the table cleared away and the scales set up. On one side he placed the stamped disks to the equivalent of fifteen ounces, and balanced it with dust on the other. Replacing the weights with dust, he then had thirty ounces precisely balanced. These, in turn, he placed together on one side and again balanced with more dust. By this time the gold was exhausted, and he was sweating liberally. He trembled with ecstasy, ravished beyond measure. Nevertheless he dusted the sack thoroughly, to the last least grain, till the balance was overcome and one side of the scales sank to the table. Equilibrium, however, was restored by the addition of a pennyweight and five grains to the opposite side. He stood, head thrown back, transfixed. The sack was empty, but the potentiality of the scales had become immeasurable. Upon them he could weigh any amount, from the tiniest grain to pounds upon pounds. Mammon laid hot fingers on his heart. The sun swung on its westering way till it flashed through the open doorway, full upon the yellow-burdened scales. The precious heaps, like the golden breasts of a bronze Cleopatra, flung back the light in a mellow glow. Time and space were not.

“Gawd blime me! but you ‘aye the makin’ of several quid there, ‘aven’t you?”

Jacob Kent wheeled about, at the same time reaching for his double-barrelled shot-gun, which stood handy. But when his eyes lit on the intruder’s face, he staggered back dizzily. It was the face of the man with the gash!

The man looked at him curiously.

“Oh, that’s all right,” he said, waving his hand deprecatingly. “You needn’t think as I’ll ‘arm you or your blasted dust.

“You’re a rum ‘un, you are,” he added reflectively, as he watched the sweat pouring from off Kent’s face and the quavering of his knees.

“W’y don’t you pipe up an’ say somethin’?” he went on, as the other struggled for breath. “Wot’s gone wrong o’ your gaff? Anythink the matter?”

"W--w--where'd you get it?" Kent at last managed to articulate, raising a shaking forefinger to the ghastly scar which seamed the other's cheek.

"Shipmate stove me down with a marlin-spike from the main-royal. An' now as you 'aye your figger'ead in trim, wot I want to know is, wot's it to you? That's wot I want to know--wot's it to you? Gawd blime me! do it 'urt you? Ain't it smug enough for the likes o' you? That's wot I want to know!"

"No, no," Kent answered, sinking upon a stool with a sickly grin. "I was just wondering."

"Did you ever see the like?" the other went on truculently.

"No."

"Ain't it a beute?"

"Yes." Kent nodded his head approvingly, intent on humoring this strange visitor, but wholly unprepared for the outburst which was to follow his effort to be agreeable.

"You blasted, bloomin', burgoo-eatin' son-of-a-sea-swab! Wot do you mean, a sayin' the most onsightly thing Gawd Almighty ever put on the face o' man is a beute? Wot do you mean, you--"

And thereat this fiery son of the sea broke off into a string of Oriental profanity, mingling gods and devils, lineages and men, metaphors and monsters, with so savage a virility that Jacob Kent was paralyzed. He shrank back, his arms lifted as though to ward off physical violence. So utterly unnerved was he that the other paused in the mid-swing of a gorgeous peroration and burst into thunderous laughter.

"The sun's knocked the bottom out o' the trail," said the Man with the Gash, between departing paroxysms of mirth. "An' I only 'ope as you'll appreciate the hoppertunity of consortin' with a man o' my mug. Get steam up in that fire-box o' your'n. I'm goin' to unrig the dogs an' grub 'em. An' don't be shy o' the wood, my lad; there's plenty more where that come from, and it's you've got the time to sling an axe. An' tote up a bucket o' water while you're about it. Lively! or I'll run you down, so 'elp me!"

Such a thing was unheard of. Jacob Kent was making the fire, chopping wood, packing water--doing menial tasks for a guest! When Jim Cardegee left Dawson, it was with his head filled with the iniquities of this roadside Shylock; and all along the trail his numerous victims had added to the sum of his crimes. Now, Jim Cardegee, with the sailor's love for a sailor's joke, had determined, when he pulled into the cabin, to bring its inmate down a peg or so. That he had succeeded beyond expectation he could not help but remark, though he was in the dark as to the part the gash on his cheek had played in it. But while he could not understand, he saw the terror it created, and resolved to exploit it as remorselessly as would any modern trader a choice bit of merchandise.

"Strike me blind, but you're a 'ustler," he said admiringly, his head cocked to one side, as his host bustled about. "You never 'ort to 'ave gone Klondiking. It's the keeper of a pub' you was laid out for. An' it's often as I 'ave 'eard the lads up an' down the river speak o' you, but I 'adn't no idea you was so jolly nice."

Jacob Kent experienced a tremendous yearning to try his shotgun on him, but the fascination of the gash was too potent. This was the real Man with the Gash, the man who had so often robbed him in the spirit. This, then, was the embodied entity of the being whose astral form had been projected into his dreams, the man who had so frequently harbored designs against his hoard; hence--there could be no other conclusion--this Man with the Gash had now come in the flesh to dispossess him. And that gash! He could no more keep his eyes from it than stop the beating of his heart. Try as he would, they wandered back to that one point as inevitably as the needle to the pole.

"Do it 'urt you?" Jim Cardegee thundered suddenly, looking up from the spreading of his blankets and encountering the rapt gaze of the other. "It strikes me as 'ow it 'ud be the proper thing for you to draw your jib, douse the glim, an' turn in, seein' as 'ow it worrits you. Jes' lay to that, you swab, or so 'elp me I'll take a pull on your peak-purchases!"

Kent was so nervous that it took three puffs to blow out the slush-lamp, and he crawled into his blankets without even removing his moccasins. The sailor was soon snoring lustily from his hard bed on the floor, but Kent lay staring up into the blackness, one hand on the shotgun, resolved not to close his eyes the whole night. He had not had an opportunity to secrete his five pounds of gold, and it lay in the ammunition box at the head of his bunk. But, try as he would, he at last dozed off with the weight of his dust heavy on his soul. Had he not inadvertently fallen asleep with his mind in such condition, the somnambulic demon would not have been invoked, nor would Jim Cardegee have gone mining next day with a dish-pan.

The fire fought a losing battle, and at last died away, while the frost penetrated the mossy chinks between the logs and chilled the inner atmosphere. The dogs outside ceased their howling, and, curled up in the snow, dreamed of salmon-stocked heavens where dog-drivers and kindred task-masters were not. Within, the sailor lay like a log, while his host tossed restlessly about, the victim of strange fantasies. As midnight drew near he suddenly threw off the blankets and got up. It was remarkable that he could do what he then did without ever striking a light. Perhaps it was because of the darkness that he kept his eyes shut, and perhaps it was for fear he would see the terrible gash on the cheek of his visitor; but, be this as it may, it is a fact that, unseeing, he opened his ammunition box, put a heavy charge into the muzzle of the shotgun without spilling a particle, rammed it down with double wads, and then put everything away and got back into bed.

Just as daylight laid its steel-gray fingers on the parchment window, Jacob Kent awoke. Turning on his elbow, he raised the lid and peered into the ammunition box. Whatever he saw, or whatever he did not see, exercised a very peculiar effect upon him, considering his neurotic temperament. He glanced at the sleeping man on the floor, let the lid down gently, and rolled over on his back. It was an unwonted calm that rested on his face. Not a muscle quivered. There was not the least sign of excitement or perturbation. He lay there a long while, thinking, and when he got up and began to move about, it was in a cool, collected manner, without noise and without hurry.

It happened that a heavy wooden peg had been driven into the ridge-pole just above Jim Cardegee's head. Jacob Kent, working softly, ran a piece of half-inch manila over it, bringing both ends to the ground. One end he tied about his waist, and in the other he rove a running noose. Then he cocked his shotgun and laid it within reach, by the side of numerous moose-hide thongs. By an effort of will he bore the sight of the scar, slipped the noose over the sleeper's head, and drew it taut by throwing back on his weight, at the same time seizing the gun and bringing it to bear.

Jim Cardegee awoke, choking, bewildered, staring down the twin wells of steel.

"Where is it?" Kent asked, at the same time slacking on the rope.

"You blasted--ugh--"

Kent merely threw back his weight, shutting off the other's wind.

"Bloomin'--Bur--ugh--"

"Where is it?" Kent repeated.

"Wot?" Cardegee asked, as soon as he had caught his breath.

"The gold-dust."

"Wot gold-dust?" the perplexed sailor demanded.

"You know well enough,--mine."

"Ain't seen nothink of it. Wot do ye take me for? A safe-deposit? Wot 'ave I got to do with it, any'ow?"

"Mebbe you know, and mebbe you don't know, but anyway, I'm going to stop your breath till you do know. And if you lift a hand, I'll blow your head off!"

"Vast heavin'!" Cardegee roared, as the rope tightened.

Kent eased away a moment, and the sailor, wriggling his neck as though from the pressure, managed to loosen the noose a bit and work it up so the point of contact was just under the chin.

"Well?" Kent questioned, expecting the disclosure.

But Cardegee grinned. "Go ahead with your 'angin', you bloomin' old pot-wolloper!"

Then, as the sailor had anticipated, the tragedy became a farce. Cardegee being the heavier of the two, Kent, throwing his body backward and down, could not lift him clear of the ground. Strain and strive to the uttermost, the sailor's feet still stuck to the floor and sustained a part of his weight. The remaining portion was supported by the point of contact just under his chin. Failing to swing him clear, Kent clung on, resolved to slowly throttle him or force him to tell what he had done with the hoard. But the Man with the Gash would not throttle. Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and at the end of that time, in despair, Kent let his prisoner down.

"Well," he remarked, wiping away the sweat, "if you won't hang you'll shoot. Some men wasn't born to be hanged, anyway."

"An' it's a pretty mess as you'll make o' this 'ere cabin floor." Cardegee was fighting for time. "Now, look 'ere, I'll tell you wot we do; we'll lay our 'eads 'longside an' reason together. You've lost some dust. You say as 'ow I know, an' I say as 'ow I don't. Let's get a hobservation an' shape a course--"

"Vast heavin'!" Kent dashed in, maliciously imitating the other's enunciation. "I'm going to shape all the courses of this shebang, and you observe; and if you do anything more, I'll bore you as sure as Moses!"

"For the sake of my mother--"

"Whom God have mercy upon if she loves you. Ah! Would you?" He frustrated a hostile move on the part of the other by pressing the cold muzzle against his forehead. “Lay quiet, now! If you lift as much as a hair, you’ll get it.”

It was rather an awkward task, with the trigger of the gun always within pulling distance of the finger; but Kent was a weaver, and in a few minutes had the sailor tied hand and foot. Then he dragged him without and laid him by the side of the cabin, where he could overlook the river and watch the sun climb to the meridian.

“Now I’ll give you till noon, and then--“

“Wot?”

“You’ll be hitting the brimstone trail. But if you speak up, I’ll keep you till the next bunch of mounted police come by.”

“Well, Gawd blime me, if this ain’t a go! ‘Ere I be, innercent as a lamb, an’ ‘ere you be, lost all o’ your top ‘amper an’ out o’ your reckonin’, run me foul an’ goin’ to rake me into ‘ell-fire. You bloomin’ old pirut! You--“

Jim Cardegee loosed the strings of his profanity and fairly outdid himself. Jacob Kent brought out a stool that he might enjoy it in comfort. Having exhausted all the possible combinations of his vocabulary, the sailor quieted down to hard thinking, his eyes constantly gauging the progress of the sun, which tore up the eastern slope of the heavens with unseemly haste. His dogs, surprised that they had not long since been put to harness, crowded around him. His helplessness appealed to the brutes. They felt that something was wrong, though they knew not what, and they crowded about, howling their mournful sympathy.

“Chook! Mush-on! you Siwashes!” he cried, attempting, in a vermicular way, to kick at them, and discovering himself to be tottering on the edge of a declivity. As soon as the animals had scattered, he devoted himself to the significance of that declivity which he felt to be there but could not see. Nor was he long in arriving at a correct conclusion. In the nature of things, he figured, man is lazy. He does no more than he has to. When he builds a cabin he must put dirt on the roof. From these premises it was logical that he should carry that dirt no further than was absolutely necessary. Therefore, he lay upon the edge of the hole from which the dirt had been taken to roof Jacob Kent’s cabin. This knowledge, properly utilized, might prolong things, he thought; and he then turned his attention to the moose-hide thongs which bound him. His hands were tied behind him, and pressing against the snow, they were wet with the contact. This moistening of the raw-hide he knew would tend to make it stretch, and, without apparent effort, he endeavored to stretch it more and more.

He watched the trail hungrily, and when in the direction of Sixty Mile a dark speck appeared for a moment against the white background of an ice-jam, he cast an anxious eye at the sun. It had climbed nearly to the zenith. Now and again he caught the black speck clearing the hills of ice and sinking into the intervening hollows; but he dared not permit himself more than the most cursory glances for fear of rousing his enemy's suspicion. Once, when Jacob Kent rose to his feet and searched the trail with care, Cardegee was frightened, but the dog-sled had struck a piece of trail running parallel with a jam, and remained out of sight till the danger was past.

"I'll see you 'ung for this," Cardegee threatened, attempting to draw the other's attention. "An' you'll rot in 'ell, jes' you see if you don't.

"I say," he cried, after another pause; "d'ye b'lieve in ghosts?" Kent's sudden start made him sure of his ground, and he went on: "Now a ghost 'as the right to 'aunt a man wot don't do wot he says; and you can't shuffle me off till eight bells--wot I mean is twelve o'clock--can you? 'Cos if you do, it'll 'appen as 'ow I'll 'aunt you. D'ye 'ear? A minute, a second too quick, an' I'll 'aunt you, so 'elp me, I will!"

Jacob Kent looked dubious, but declined to talk.

"'Ow's your chronometer? Wot's your longitude? 'Ow do you know as your time's correct?" Cardegee persisted, vainly hoping to beat his executioner out of a few minutes. "Is it Barrack's time you 'ave, or is it the Company time? 'Cos if you do it before the stroke o' the bell, I'll not rest. I give you fair warnin'. I'll come back. An' if you 'aven't the time, 'ow will you know? That's wot I want--'ow will you tell?"

"I'll send you off all right," Kent replied. "Got a sun-dial here."

"No good. Thirty-two degrees variation o' the needle."

"Stakes are all set."

"'Ow did you set 'em? Compass?"

"No; lined them up with the North Star."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

Cardegee groaned, then stole a glance at the trail. The sled was just clearing a rise, barely a mile away, and the dogs were in full lope, running lightly.

"'Ow close is the shadows to the line?"

Kent walked to the primitive timepiece and studied it. "Three inches," he announced, after a careful survey.

"Say, jes' sing out 'eight bells' afore you pull the gun, will you?"

Kent agreed, and they lapsed into silence. The thongs about Cardegee's wrists were slowly stretching, and he had begun to work them over his hands.

"Say, 'ow close is the shadows?"

"One inch."

The sailor wriggled slightly to assure himself that he would topple over at the right moment, and slipped the first turn over his hands.

"'Ow close?"

"Half an inch." Just then Kent heard the jarring churn of the runners and turned his eyes to the trail. The driver was lying flat on the sled and the dogs swinging down the straight stretch to the cabin. Kent whirled back, bringing his rifle to shoulder.

"It ain't eight bells yet!" Cardegee expostulated. "I'll 'aunt you, sure!"

Jacob Kent faltered. He was standing by the sun-dial, perhaps ten paces from his victim. The man on the sled must have seen that something unusual was taking place, for he had risen to his knees, his whip singing viciously among the dogs.

The shadows swept into line. Kent looked along the sights.

"Make ready!" he commanded solemnly. "Eight b-"

But just a fraction of a second too soon, Cardegee rolled backward into the hole. Kent held his fire and ran to the edge. Bang! The gun exploded full in the sailor's face as he rose to his feet. But no smoke came from the muzzle; instead, a sheet of flame burst from the side of the barrel near its butt, and Jacob Kent went down. The dogs dashed up the bank, dragging the sled over his body, and the driver sprang off as Jim Cardegee freed his hands and drew himself from the hole.

"Jim!" The new-comer recognized him. "What's the matter?"

"Wot's the matter? Oh, nothink at all. It jest 'appens as I do little things like this for my 'ealth. Wot's the matter, you bloomin' idjit? Wot's the matter, eh? Cast me loose or I'll show you wot! 'Urry up, or I'll 'olystone the decks with you!"

"Huh!" he added, as the other went to work with his sheath-knife. "Wot's the matter? I want to know. Jes' tell me that, will you, wot's the matter?

Hey?”

Kent was quite dead when they rolled him over. The gun, an old-fashioned, heavy-weighted muzzle-loader, lay near him. Steel and wood had parted company. Near the butt of the right-hand barrel, with lips pressed outward, gaped a fissure several inches in length. The sailor picked it up, curiously. A glittering stream of yellow dust ran out through the crack. The facts of the case dawned upon Jim Cardegee.

“Strike me standin’!” he roared; “‘ere’s a go! ‘Ere’s ‘is bloomin’ dust! Gawd blime me, an’ you, too, Charley, if you don’t run an’ get the dish-pan!”

The Marriage to Lit-Lit

When John Fox came into a country where whisky freezes solid and may be used as a paper-weight for a large part of the year, he came without the ideals and illusions that usually hamper the progress of more delicately nurtured adventurers. Born and reared on the frontier fringe of the United States, he took with him into Canada a primitive cast of mind, an elemental simplicity and grip on things, as it were, that insured him immediate success in his new career. From a mere servant of the Hudson Bay Company, driving a paddle with the voyageurs and carrying goods on his back across the portages, he swiftly rose to a Factorship and took charge of a trading post at Fort Angelus.

Here, because of his elemental simplicity, he took to himself a native wife, and, by reason of the connubial bliss that followed, he escaped the unrest and vain longings that curse the days of more fastidious men, spoil their work, and conquer them in the end. He lived contentedly, was at single purposes with the business he was set there to do, and achieved a brilliant record in the service of the Company. About this time his wife died, was claimed by her people, and buried with savage circumstance in a tin trunk in the top of a tree.

Two sons she had borne him, and when the Company promoted him, he journeyed with them still deeper into the vastness of the North-West Territory to a place called Sin Rock, where he took charge of a new post in a more important fur field. Here he spent several lonely and depressing months, eminently disgusted with the unprepossessing appearance of the Indian maidens, and greatly worried by his growing sons who stood in need of a mother's care. Then his eyes chanced upon Lit-lit.

"Lit-lit--well, she is Lit-lit," was the fashion in which he despairingly described her to his chief clerk, Alexander McLean.

McLean was too fresh from his Scottish upbringing--"not dry behind the ears yet," John Fox put it--to take to the marriage customs of the country. Nevertheless he was not averse to the Factor's imperilling his own immortal soul, and, especially, feeling an ominous attraction himself for Lit-lit, he was sombrely content to clinch his own soul's safety by seeing her married to the Factor.

Nor is it to be wondered that McLean's austere Scotch soul stood in danger of being thawed in the sunshine of Lit-lit's eyes. She was pretty, and slender, and willowy; without the massive face and temperamental stolidity of the average squaw. "Lit-lit," so called from her fashion, even as a child, of being fluttery, of darting about from place to place like a butterfly, of being inconsequent and merry, and of laughing as lightly as she darted and danced about.

Lit-lit was the daughter of Snettishane, a prominent chief in the tribe, by a half-breed mother, and to him the Factor fared casually one summer day to open negotiations of marriage. He sat with the chief in the smoke of a mosquito smudge before his lodge, and together they talked about everything under the sun, or, at least, everything that in the Northland is under the sun, with the sole exception of marriage. John Fox had come particularly to talk of marriage; Snettishane knew it, and John Fox knew he knew it, wherefore the subject was religiously avoided. This is alleged to be Indian subtlety. In reality it is transparent simplicity.

The hours slipped by, and Fox and Snettishane smoked interminable pipes, looking each other in the eyes with a guilelessness superbly histrionic. In the mid-afternoon McLean and his brother clerk, McTavish, strolled past, innocently uninterested, on their way to the river. When they strolled back again an hour later, Fox and Snettishane had attained to a ceremonious discussion of the condition and quality of the gunpowder and bacon which the Company was offering in trade. Meanwhile Lit-lit, divining the Factor's errand, had crept in under the rear wall of the lodge, and through the front flap was peeping out at the two logomachists by the mosquito smudge. She was flushed and happy-eyed, proud that no less a man than the Factor (who stood next to God in the Northland hierarchy) had singled her out, femininely curious to see at close range what manner of man he was. Sunglare on the ice, camp smoke, and weather beat had burned his face to a copper-brown, so that her father was as fair as he, while she was fairer. She was remotely glad of this, and more immediately glad that he was large and strong, though his great black beard half frightened her, it was so strange.

Being very young, she was unversed in the ways of men. Seventeen times she had seen the sun travel south and lose itself beyond the sky-line, and seventeen times she had seen it travel back again and ride the sky day and night till there was no night at all. And through these years she had been cherished jealously by Snettishane, who stood between her and all suitors, listening disdainfully to the young hunters as they bid for her hand, and turning them away as though she were beyond price. Snettishane was mercenary. Lit-lit was to him an investment. She represented so much capital, from which he expected to receive, not a certain definite interest, but an incalculable interest.

And having thus been reared in a manner as near to that of the nunnery as tribal conditions would permit, it was with a great and maidenly anxiety that she peeped out at the man who had surely come for her, at the husband who was to teach her all that was yet unlearned of life, at the masterful being whose word was to be her law, and who was to mete and bound her actions and comportment for the rest of her days.

But, peeping through the front flap of the lodge, flushed and thrilling at the strange destiny reaching out for her, she grew disappointed as the day wore along, and the Factor and her father still talked pompously of matters concerning other things and not pertaining to marriage things at all. As the sun sank lower and lower toward the north and midnight approached, the Factor began making unmistakable preparations for departure. As he turned to stride away Lit-lit's heart sank; but it rose again as he halted, half turning on one heel.

"Oh, by the way, Snettishane," he said, "I want a squaw to wash for me and mend my clothes."

Snettishane grunted and suggested Wanidani, who was an old woman and toothless.

"No, no," interposed the Factor. "What I want is a wife. I've been kind of thinking about it, and the thought just struck me that you might know of some one that would suit."

Snettishane looked interested, whereupon the Factor retraced his steps, casually and carelessly to linger and discuss this new and incidental topic.

"Kattou?" suggested Snettishane.

"She has but one eye," objected the Factor.

"Laska?"

"Her knees be wide apart when she stands upright. Kips, your biggest dog, can leap between her knees when she stands upright."

"Senatee?" went on the imperturbable Snettishane.

But John Fox feigned anger, crying: "What foolishness is this? Am I old, that thou shouldst mate me with old women? Am I toothless? lame of leg?

blind of eye? Or am I poor that no bright-eyed maiden may look with favour upon me? Behold! I am the Factor, both rich and great, a power in the land, whose speech makes men tremble and is obeyed!"

Snettishane was inwardly pleased, though his sphinx-like visage never relaxed. He was drawing the Factor, and making him break ground. Being a creature so elemental as to have room for but one idea at a time, Snettishane could pursue that one idea a greater distance than could John Fox. For John Fox, elemental as he was, was still complex enough to entertain several glimmering ideas at a time, which debarred him from pursuing the one as single-heartedly or as far as did the chief.

Snettishane calmly continued calling the roster of eligible maidens, which, name by name, as fast as uttered, were stamped ineligible by John Fox, with specified objections appended. Again he gave it up and started to return to the Fort. Snettishane watched him go, making no effort to stop him, but seeing him, in the end, stop himself.

"Come to think of it," the Factor remarked, "we both of us forgot Lit-lit. Now I wonder if she'll suit me?"

Snettishane met the suggestion with a mirthless face, behind the mask of which his soul grinned wide. It was a distinct victory. Had the Factor gone but one step farther, perforce Snettishane would himself have mentioned the name of Lit-lit, but--the Factor had not gone that one step farther.

The chief was non-committal concerning Lit-lit's suitability, till he drove the white man into taking the next step in order of procedure.

"Well," the Factor meditated aloud, "the only way to find out is to make a try of it." He raised his voice. "So I will give for Lit-lit ten blankets and three pounds of tobacco which is good tobacco."

Snettishane replied with a gesture which seemed to say that all the blankets and tobacco in all the world could not compensate him for the loss of Lit-lit and her manifold virtues. When pressed by the Factor to set a price, he coolly placed it at five hundred blankets, ten guns, fifty pounds of tobacco, twenty scarlet cloths, ten bottles of rum, a music-box, and lastly the good-will and best offices of the Factor, with a place by his fire.

The Factor apparently suffered a stroke of apoplexy, which stroke was successful in reducing the blankets to two hundred and in cutting out the place by the fire--an unheard-of condition in the marriages of white men with the daughters of the soil. In the end, after three hours more of chaffering, they came to an agreement. For Lit-lit Snettishane was to receive one hundred blankets, five pounds of tobacco, three guns, and a bottle of rum, goodwill and best offices included, which according to John Fox, was ten blankets and a gun more than she was worth. And as he went home through the wee sma' hours, the three-o'clock sun blazing in the due north-east, he was unpleasantly aware that Snettishane had bested him over the bargain.

Snettishane, tired and victorious, sought his bed, and discovered Lit-lit before she could escape from the lodge.

He grunted knowingly: "Thou hast seen. Thou has heard. Wherefore it be plain to thee thy father's very great wisdom and understanding. I have made for thee a great match. Heed my words and walk in the way of my words, go when I say go, come when I bid thee come, and we shall grow fat with the wealth of this big white man who is a fool according to his bigness."

The next day no trading was done at the store. The Factor opened whisky before breakfast, to the delight of McLean and McTavish, gave his dogs double rations, and wore his best moccasins. Outside the Fort preparations were under way for a POTLATCH. Potlatch means "a giving," and John Fox's intention was to signalize his marriage with Lit-lit by a potlatch as generous as she was good-looking. In the afternoon the whole tribe gathered to the feast. Men, women, children, and dogs gorged to repletion, nor was there one person, even among the chance visitors and stray hunters from other tribes, who failed to receive some token of the bridegroom's largess.

Lit-lit, tearfully shy and frightened, was bedecked by her bearded husband with a new calico dress, splendidly beaded moccasins, a gorgeous silk handkerchief over her raven hair, a purple scarf about her throat, brass ear-rings and finger-rings, and a whole pint of pinchbeck jewellery, including a Waterbury watch. Snettishane could scarce contain himself at the spectacle, but watching his chance drew her aside from the feast.

"Not this night, nor the next night," he began ponderously, "but in the nights to come, when I shall call like a raven by the river bank, it is for thee to rise up from thy big husband, who is a fool, and come to me.

"Nay, nay," he went on hastily, at sight of the dismay in her face at turning her back upon her wonderful new life. "For no sooner shall this happen than thy big husband, who is a fool, will come wailing to my lodge. Then it is for thee to wail likewise, claiming that this thing is not well, and that the other thing thou dost not like, and that to be the wife of the Factor is more than thou didst bargain for, only wilt thou be content with more blankets, and more tobacco, and more wealth of various sorts for thy poor old father, Snettishane. Remember well, when I call in the night, like a raven, from the river bank."

Lit-lit nodded; for to disobey her father was a peril she knew well; and, furthermore, it was a little thing he asked, a short separation from the Factor, who would know only greater gladness at having her back. She returned to the feast, and, midnight being well at hand, the Factor sought her out and led her away to the Fort amid joking and outcry, in which the squaws were especially conspicuous.

Lit-lit quickly found that married life with the head-man of a fort was even better than she had dreamed. No longer did she have to fetch wood and water and wait hand and foot upon cantankerous menfolk. For the first time in her life she could lie abed till breakfast was on the table. And what a bed!--clean and soft, and comfortable as no bed she had ever known. And such food! Flour, cooked into biscuits, hot-cakes and bread, three times a day and every day, and all one wanted! Such prodigality was hardly believable.

To add to her contentment, the Factor was cunningly kind. He had buried one wife, and he knew how to drive with a slack rein that went firm only on occasion, and then went very firm. "Lit-lit is boss of this place," he announced significantly at the table the morning after the wedding. "What she says goes. Understand?" And McLean and McTavish understood. Also, they knew that the Factor had a heavy hand.

But Lit-lit did not take advantage. Taking a leaf from the book of her husband, she at once assumed charge of his own growing sons, giving them added comforts and a measure of freedom like to that which he gave her. The two sons were loud in the praise of their new mother; McLean and McTavish lifted their voices; and the Factor bragged of the joys of matrimony till the story of her good behaviour and her husband's satisfaction became the property of all the dwellers in the Sin Rock district.

Whereupon Snettishane, with visions of his incalculable interest keeping him awake of nights, thought it time to bestir himself. On the tenth night of her wedded life Lit-lit was awakened by the croaking of a raven, and she knew that Snettishane was waiting for her by the river bank. In her great happiness she had forgotten her pact, and now it came back to her with behind it all the childish terror of her father. For a time she lay in fear and trembling, loath to go, afraid to stay. But in the end the Factor won the silent victory, and his kindness plus his great muscles and square jaw, nerved her to disregard Snettishane's call.

But in the morning she arose very much afraid, and went about her duties in momentary fear of her father's coming. As the day wore along, however, she began to recover her spirits. John Fox, soundly berating McLean and McTavish for some petty dereliction of duty, helped her to pluck up courage. She tried not to let him go out of her sight, and when she followed him into the huge cache and saw him twirling and tossing great bales around as though they were feather pillows, she felt strengthened in her disobedience to her father. Also (it was her first visit to the warehouse, and Sin Rock was the chief distributing point to several chains of lesser posts), she was astounded at the endlessness of the wealth there stored away.

This sight and the picture in her mind's eye of the bare lodge of Snettishane, put all doubts at rest. Yet she capped her conviction by a brief word with one of her step-sons. "White daddy good?" was what she asked, and the boy answered that his father was the best man he had ever known. That night the raven croaked again. On the night following the croaking was more persistent. It awoke the Factor, who tossed restlessly for a while. Then he said aloud, "Damn that raven," and Lit-lit laughed quietly under the blankets.

In the morning, bright and early, Snettishane put in an ominous appearance and was set to breakfast in the kitchen with Wanidani. He refused "squaw food," and a little later bearded his son-in-law in the store where the trading was done. Having learned, he said, that his daughter was such a jewel, he had come for more blankets, more tobacco, and more guns--especially more guns. He had certainly been cheated in her price, he held, and he had come for justice. But the Factor had neither blankets nor justice to spare. Whereupon he was informed that Snettishane had seen the missionary at Three Forks, who had notified him that such marriages were not made in heaven, and that it was his father's duty to demand his daughter back.

"I am good Christian man now," Snettishane concluded. "I want my Lit-lit to go to heaven."

The Factor's reply was short and to the point; for he directed his father-in-law to go to the heavenly antipodes, and by the scruff of the neck and the slack of the blanket propelled him on that trail as far as the door.

But Snettishane sneaked around and in by the kitchen, cornering Lit-lit in the great living-room of the Fort.

“Mayhap thou didst sleep over-sound last night when I called by the river bank,” he began, glowering darkly.

“Nay, I was awake and heard.” Her heart was beating as though it would choke her, but she went on steadily, “And the night before I was awake and heard, and yet again the night before.”

And thereat, out of her great happiness and out of the fear that it might be taken from her, she launched into an original and glowing address upon the status and rights of woman--the first new-woman lecture delivered north of Fifty-three.

But it fell on unheeding ears. Snettishane was still in the dark ages. As she paused for breath, he said threateningly, “To-night I shall call again like the raven.”

At this moment the Factor entered the room and again helped Snettishane on his way to the heavenly antipodes.

That night the raven croaked more persistently than ever. Lit-lit, who was a light sleeper, heard and smiled. John Fox tossed restlessly. Then he awoke and tossed about with greater restlessness. He grumbled and snorted, swore under his breath and over his breath, and finally flung out of bed. He groped his way to the great living-room, and from the rack took down a loaded shot-gun--loaded with bird-shot, left therein by the careless McTavish.

The Factor crept carefully out of the Fort and down to the river. The croaking had ceased, but he stretched out in the long grass and waited. The air seemed a chilly balm, and the earth, after the heat of the day, now and again breathed soothingly against him. The Factor, gathered into the rhythm of it all, dozed off, with his head upon his arm, and slept.

Fifty yards away, head resting on knees, and with his back to John Fox, Snettishane likewise slept, gently conquered by the quietude of the night. An hour slipped by and then he awoke, and, without lifting his head, set the night vibrating with the hoarse gutturals of the raven call.

The Factor roused, not with the abrupt start of civilized man, but with the swift and comprehensive glide from sleep to waking of the savage. In the night-light he made out a dark object in the midst of the grass and brought his gun to bear upon it. A second croak began to rise, and he pulled the trigger. The crickets ceased from their sing-song chant, the wildfowl from their squabbling, and the raven croak broke midmost and died away in gasping silence.

John Fox ran to the spot and reached for the thing he had killed, but his fingers closed on a coarse mop of hair and he turned Snettishane's face upward to the starlight. He knew how a shotgun scattered at fifty yards, and he knew that he had peppered Snettishane across the shoulders and in the small of the back. And Snettishane knew that he knew, but neither referred to it.

"What dost thou here?" the Factor demanded. "It were time old bones should be in bed."

But Snettishane was stately in spite of the bird-shot burning under his skin.

"Old bones will not sleep," he said solemnly. "I weep for my daughter, for my daughter Lit-lit, who liveth and who yet is dead, and who goeth without doubt to the white man's hell."

"Weep henceforth on the far bank, beyond ear-shot of the Fort," said John Fox, turning on his heel, "for the noise of thy weeping is exceeding great and will not let one sleep of nights."

"My heart is sore," Snettishane answered, "and my days and nights be black with sorrow."

"As the raven is black," said John Fox.

"As the raven is black," Snettishane said.

Never again was the voice of the raven heard by the river bank. Lit-lit grows matronly day by day and is very happy. Also, there are sisters to the sons of John Fox's first wife who lies buried in a tree. Old Snettishane is no longer a visitor at the Fort, and spends long hours raising a thin, aged voice against the filial ingratitude of children in general and of his daughter Lit-lit in particular. His declining years are embittered by the knowledge that he was cheated, and even John Fox has withdrawn the assertion that the price for Lit-lit was too much by ten blankets and a gun.

The Master of Mystery

There was complaint in the village. The women chattered together with shrill, high-pitched voices. The men were glum and doubtful of aspect, and the very dogs wandered dubiously about, alarmed in vague ways by the unrest of the camp, and ready to take to the woods on the first outbreak of trouble. The air was filled with suspicion. No man was sure of his neighbor, and each was conscious that he stood in like unsureness with his fellows. Even the children were oppressed and solemn, and little Di Ya, the cause of it all, had been soundly thrashed, first by Hooniah, his mother, and then by his father, Bawn, and was now whimpering and looking pessimistically out upon the world from the shelter of the big overturned canoe on the beach.

And to make the matter worse, Scundoo, the shaman, was in disgrace, and his known magic could not be called upon to seek out the evil-doer. Forsooth, a month gone, he had promised a fair south wind so that the tribe might journey to the potlatch at Tonkin, where Taku Jim was giving away the savings of twenty years; and when the day came, lo, a grievous north wind blew, and of the first three canoes to venture forth, one was swamped in the big seas, and two were pounded to pieces on the rocks, and a child was drowned. He had pulled the string of the wrong bag, he explained, — a mistake. But the people refused to listen; the offerings of meat and fish and fur ceased to come to his door; and he sulked within — so they thought, fasting in bitter penance; in reality, eating generously from his well-stored cache and meditating upon the fickleness of the mob.

The blankets of Hooniah were missing. They were good blankets, of most marvellous thickness and warmth, and her pride in them was greatened in that they had been come by so cheaply. Ty-Kwan, of the next village but one, was a fool to have so easily parted with them. But then, she did not know they were the blankets of the murdered Englishman, because of whose take-off the United States cutter nosed along the coast for a time, while its launches puffed and snorted among the secret inlets. And not knowing that Ty-Kwan had disposed of them in haste so that his own people might not have to render account to the Government, Hooniah's pride was unshaken. And because the women envied her, her pride was without end and boundless, till it filled the village and spilled over along the Alaskan shore from Dutch Harbor to St. Mary's. Her totem had become justly celebrated, and her name known on the lips of men wherever men fished and feasted, what of the blankets and their marvellous thickness and warmth. It was a most mysterious happening, the manner of their going.

"I but stretched them up in the sun by the side-wall of the house," Hooniah disclaimed for the thousandth time to her Thlinget sisters. "I but stretched them up and turned my back; for Di Ya, dough-thief and eater of raw flour that he is, with head into the big iron pot, overturned and stuck there, his legs waving like the branches of a forest tree in the wind. And I did but drag him out and twice knock his head against the door for riper understanding, and behold, the blankets were not!"

"The blankets were not!" the women repeated in awed whispers.

"A great loss," one added. A second, "Never were there such blankets." And a third, "We be sorry, Hooniah, for thy loss." Yet each woman of them was glad in her heart that the odious, dissension-breeding blankets were gone. "I but stretched them up in the sun," Hooniah began for the thousand and first time.

"Yea, yea," Bawn spoke up, wearied. "But there were no gossips in the village from other places. Wherefore it be plain that some of our own tribespeople have laid unlawful hand upon the blankets."

"How can that be, O Bawn?" the women chorussed indignantly. "Who should there be?"

"Then has there been witchcraft," Bawn continued stolidly enough, though he stole a sly glance at their faces.

"Witchcraft!" And at the dread word their voices hushed and each looked fearfully at each.

"Ay," Hooniah affirmed, the latent malignancy of her nature flashing into a moment's exultation. "And word has been sent to Klok-No-Ton, and strong paddles. Truly shall he be here with the afternoon tide."

The little groups broke up, and fear descended upon the village. Of all misfortune, witchcraft was the most appalling. With the intangible and unseen things only the shamans could cope, and neither man, woman, nor child could know, until the moment of ordeal, whether devils possessed their souls or not. And of all shamans, Klok-No-Ton, who dwelt in the next village, was the most terrible. None found more evil spirits than he, none visited his victims with more frightful tortures. Even had he found, once, a devil residing within the body of a three-months babe — a most obstinate devil which could only be driven out when the babe had lain for a week on thorns and briers. The body was thrown into the sea after that, but the waves tossed it back again and again as a curse upon the village, nor did it finally go away till two strong men were staked out at low tide and drowned.

And Hooniah had sent for this Klok-No-Ton. Better had it been if Scundoo, their own shaman, were undisgraced. For he had ever a gentler way, and he had been known to drive forth two devils from a man who afterward begat seven healthy children. But Klok-No-Ton! They shuddered with dire foreboding at thought of him, and each one felt himself the centre of accusing eyes, and looked accusingly upon his fellows — each one and all, save Sime, and Sime was a scoffer whose evil end was destined with a certitude his successes could not shake.

“Hoh! Hoh!” he laughed. “Devils and Klok-No-Ton! — than whom no greater devil can be found in Thlinket Land.”

“Thou fool! Even now he cometh with witcheries and sorceries; so beware thy tongue, lest evil befall thee and thy days be short in the land!”

So spoke La-lah, otherwise the Cheater, and Sime laughed scornfully.

“I am Sime, unused to fear, unafraid of the dark. I am a strong man, as my father before me, and my head is clear. Nor you nor I have seen with our eyes the unseen evil things — ”

“But Scundoo hath,” La-lah made answer. “And likewise Klok-No-Ton. This we know.”

“How dost thou know, son of a fool?” Sime thundered, the choleric blood darkening his thick bull neck.

“By the word of their mouths — even so.”

Sime snorted. “A shaman is only a man. May not his words be crooked, even as thine and mine? Bah! Bah! And once more, bah! And this for thy shamans and thy shamans’ devils! and this! and this!”

And snapping his fingers to right and left, Sime strode through the onlookers, who made over-zealous and fearsome way for him.

“A good fisher and strong hunter, but an evil man,” said one.

“Yet does he flourish,” speculated another.

“Wherefore be thou evil and flourish,” Sime retorted over his shoulder. “And were all evil, there would be no need for shamans. Bah! You children-afraid-of-the-dark!”

And when Klok-No-Ton arrived on the afternoon tide, Sime’s defiant laugh was unabated; nor did he forbear to make a joke when the shaman tripped on the sand in the landing. Klok-No-Ton looked at him sourly, and without greeting stalked straight through their midst to the house of Scundoo.

Of the meeting with Scundoo none of the tribespeople might know, for they clustered reverently in the distance and spoke in whispers while the masters of mystery were together.

"Greeting, O Scundoo!" Klok-No-Ton rumbled, wavering perceptibly from doubt of his reception.

He was a giant in stature, and towered massively above little Scundoo, whose thin voice floated upward like the faint far rasping of a cricket.

"Greeting, Klok-No-Ton," he returned. "The day is fair with thy coming."

"Yet it would seem ..." Klok-No-Ton hesitated.

"Yea, yea," the little shaman put in impatiently, "that I have fallen on ill days, else would I not stand in gratitude to you in that you do my work."

"It grieves me, friend Scundoo ..."

"Nay, I am made glad, Klok-No-Ton."

"But will I give thee half of that which be given me."

"Not so, good Klok-No-Ton," murmured Scundoo, with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "It is I who am thy slave, and my days shall be filled with desire to befriend thee."

"As I — "

"As thou now befriendest me."

"That being so, it is then a bad business, these blankets of the woman Hooniah?"

The big shaman blundered tentatively in his quest, and Scundoo smiled a wan, gray smile, for he was used to reading men, and all men seemed very small to him.

"Ever hast thou dealt in strong medicine," he said. "Doubtless the evil-doer will be briefly known to thee."

"Ay, briefly known when I set eyes upon him." Again Klok-No-Ton hesitated. "Have there been gossips from other places?" he asked.

Scundoo shook his head. "Behold! Is this not a most excellent mucluc?"

He held up the foot-covering of sealskin and walrus hide, and his visitor examined it with secret interest.

"It did come to me by a close-driven bargain."

Klok-No-Ton nodded attentively.

"I got it from the man La-lah. He is a remarkable man, and often have I thought ..."

"So?" Klok-No-Ton ventured impatiently.

"Often have I thought," Scundoo concluded, his voice falling as he came to a full pause. "It is a fair day, and thy medicine be strong, Klok-No-Ton."

Klok-No-Ton's face brightened. "Thou art a great man, Scundoo, a shaman of shamans. I go now. I shall remember thee always. And the man La-lah, as you say, is a remarkable man."

Scundoo smiled yet more wan and gray, closed the door on the heels of his departing visitor, and barred and double-barred it.

Sime was mending his canoe when Klok-No-Ton came down the beach, and he broke off from his work only long enough to ostentatiously load his rifle and place it near him.

The shaman noted the action and called out: "Let all the people come together on this spot! It is the word of Klok-No-Ton, devil-seeker and driver of devils!"

He had been minded to assemble them at Hooniah's house, but it was necessary that all should be present, and he was doubtful of Sime's obedience and did not wish trouble. Sime was a good man to let alone, his judgment ran, and withal, a bad one for the health of any shaman.

"Let the woman Hooniah be brought," Klok-No-Ton commanded, glaring ferociously about the circle and sending chills up and down the spines of those he looked upon.

Hooniah waddled forward, head bent and gaze averted.

"Where be thy blankets?"

"I but stretched them up in the sun, and behold, they were not!" she whined.

"So?"

"It was because of Di Ya."

"So?"

"Him have I beaten sore, and he shall yet be beaten, for that he brought trouble upon us who be poor people."

"The blankets!" Klok-No-Ton bellowed hoarsely, foreseeing her desire to lower the price to be paid. "The blankets, woman! Thy wealth is known."

"I but stretched them up in the sun," she sniffled, "and we be poor people and have nothing."

He stiffened suddenly, with a hideous distortion of the face, and Hooniah shrank back. But so swiftly did he spring forward, with in-turned eyeballs and loosened jaw, that she stumbled and fell down grovelling at his feet. He waved his arms about, wildly flagellating the air, his body writhing and twisting in torment. An epilepsy seemed to come upon him. A white froth flecked his lips, and his body was convulsed with shiverings and tremblings.

The women broke into a wailing chant, swaying backward and forward in abandonment, while one by one the men succumbed to the excitement till only Sime remained. He, perched upon his canoe, looked on in mockery; yet the ancestors whose seed he bore pressed heavily upon him, and he swore his strongest oaths that his courage might be cheered. Klok-No-Ton was horrible to behold. He had cast off his blanket and torn his clothes from him, so that he was quite naked, save for a girdle of eagle-claws about his thighs. Shrieking and yelling, his long black hair flying like a blot of night, he leaped frantically about the circle. A certain rude rhythm characterized his frenzy, and when all were under its sway, swinging their bodies in accord with his and venting their cries in unison, he sat bolt upright, with arm outstretched and long, talon-like finger extended. A low moaning, as of the dead, greeted this, and the people cowered with shaking knees as the dread finger passed them slowly by. For death went with it, and life remained with those who watched it go; and being rejected, they watched with eager intentness.

Finally, with a tremendous cry, the fateful finger rested upon La-lah. He shook like an aspen, seeing himself already dead, his household goods divided, and his widow married to his brother. He strove to speak, to deny, but his tongue clove to his mouth and his throat was sanded with an intolerable thirst. Klok-No-Ton seemed to half swoon away, now that his work was done; but he waited, with closed eyes, listening for the great blood-cry to go up — the great blood-cry, familiar to his ear from a thousand conjurations, when the tribespeople flung themselves like wolves upon the trembling victim. But only was there silence, then a low tittering, from nowhere in particular, which spread and spread until a vast laughter welled up to the sky.

“Wherefore?” he cried.

“Na! Na!” the people laughed. “Thy medicine be ill, O Klok-No-Ton!”

“It be known to all,” La-lah stuttered. “For eight weary months have I been gone afar with the Siwash sealers, and but this day am I come back to find the blankets of Hooniah gone ere I came!”

“It be true!” they cried with one accord. “The blankets of Hooniah were gone ere he came!”

“And thou shalt be paid nothing for thy medicine which is of no avail,” announced Hooniah, on her feet once more and smarting from a sense of ridiculousness.

But Klok-No-Ton saw only the face of Scundoo and its wan, gray smile, heard only the faint far cricket’s rasping. “I got it from the man La-lah, and often have I thought,” and, “It is a fair day and thy medicine be strong.”

He brushed by Hooniah, and the circle instinctively gave way for him to pass. Sime flung a jeer from the top of the canoe, the women snickered in his face, cries of derision rose in his wake, but he took no notice, pressing onward to the house of Scundoo. He hammered on the door, beat it with his fists, and howled vile imprecations. Yet there was no response, save that in the lulls Scundoo’s voice rose eerily in incantation. Klok-No-Ton raged about like a madman, but when he attempted to break in the door with a huge stone, murmurs arose from the men and women. And he, Klok-No-Ton, knew that he stood shorn of his strength and authority before an alien people. He saw a man stoop for a stone, and a second, and a bodily fear ran through him.

“Harm not Scundoo, who is a master!” a woman cried out.

“Better you return to your own village,” a man advised menacingly.

Klok-No-Ton turned on his heel and went down among them to the beach, a bitter rage at his heart, and in his head a just apprehension for his defenceless back. But no stones were cast. The children swarmed mockingly about his feet, and the air was wild with laughter and derision, but that was all. Yet he did not breathe freely until the canoe was well out upon the water, when he rose up and laid a futile curse upon the village and its people, not forgetting to particularly specify Scundoo who had made a mock of him.

Ashore there was a clamor for Scundoo, and the whole population crowded his door, entreating and imploring in confused babel till he came forth and raised his hand.

“In that ye are my children I pardon freely,” he said. “But never again. For the last time thy foolishness goes unpunished. That which ye wish shall be granted, and it be already known to me. This night, when the moon has gone behind the world to look upon the mighty dead, let all the people gather in the blackness before the house of Hooniah. Then shall the evil-doer stand forth and take his merited reward. I have spoken."

"It shall be death!" Bawn vociferated, "for that it hath brought worry upon us, and shame."

"So be it," Scundoo replied, and shut his door.

"Now shall all be made clear and plain, and content rest upon us once again," La-lah declaimed oracularly.

"Because of Scundoo, the little man," Sime sneered.

"Because of the medicine of Scundoo, the little man," La-lah corrected.

"Children of foolishness, these Thlinket people!" Sime smote his thigh a resounding blow. "It passeth understanding that grown women and strong men should get down in the dirt to dream-things and wonder tales."

"I am a travelled man," La-lah answered. "I have journeyed on the deep seas and seen signs and wonders, and I know that these things be so. I am La-lah — "

"The Cheater — "

"So called, but the Far-Journeyer right-named."

"I am not so great a traveller — " Sime began.

"Then hold thy tongue," Bawn cut in, and they separated in anger.

When the last silver moonlight had vanished beyond the world, Scundoo came among the people huddled about the house of Hooniah. He walked with a quick, alert step, and those who saw him in the light of Hooniah's slush-lamp noticed that he came empty-handed, without rattles, masks, or shaman's paraphernalia, save for a great sleepy raven carried under one arm.

"Is there wood gathered for a fire, so that all may see when the work be done?" he demanded.

"Yea," Bawn answered. "There be wood in plenty."

"Then let all listen, for my words be few. With me have I brought Jelchs, the Raven, diviner of mystery and seer of things. Him, in his blackness, shall I place under the big black pot of Hooniah, in the blackest corner of her house. The slush-lamp shall cease to burn, and all remain in outer darkness. It is very simple. One by one shall ye go into the house, lay hand upon the pot for the space of one long intake of the breath, and withdraw again. Doubtless Jelchs will make outcry when the hand of the evil-doer is nigh him. Or who knows but otherwise he may manifest his wisdom. Are ye ready?"

"We be ready," came the multi-voiced response.

"Then will I call the name aloud, each in his turn and hers, till all are called."

Thereat La-lah was first chosen, and he passed in at once. Every ear strained, and through the silence they could hear his footsteps creaking across the rickety floor. But that was all. Jelchs made no outcry, gave no sign. Bawn was next chosen, for it well might be that a man should steal his own blankets with intent to cast shame upon his neighbors. Hooniah followed, and other women and children, but without result.

"Sime!" Scundoo called out.

"Sime!" he repeated.

But Sime did not stir.

"Art thou afraid of the dark?" La-lah, his own integrity being proved, demanded fiercely.

Sime chuckled. "I laugh at it all, for it is a great foolishness. Yet will I go in, not in belief in wonders, but in token that I am unafraid."

And he passed in boldly, and came out still mocking.

"Some day shalt thou die with great suddenness," La-lah whispered, righteously indignant.

"I doubt not," the scoffer answered airily. "Few men of us die in our beds, what of the shamans and the deep sea."

When half the villagers had safely undergone the ordeal, the excitement, because of its repression, was painfully intense. When two-thirds had gone through, a young woman, close on her first child-bed, broke down and in nervous shrieks and laughter gave form to her terror.

Finally the turn came for the last of all to go in, and nothing had happened. And Di Ya was the last of all. It must surely be he. Hooniah let out a lament to the stars, while the rest drew back from the luckless lad. He was half-dead from fright, and his legs gave under him so that he staggered on the threshold and nearly fell. Scundoo shoved him inside and closed the door. A long time went by, during which could be heard only the boy's weeping. Then, very slowly, came the creak of his steps to the far corner, a pause, and the creaking of his return. The door opened and he came forth. Nothing had happened, and he was the last.

"Let the fire be lighted," Scundoo commanded.

The bright flames rushed upward, revealing faces yet marked with vanishing fear, but also clouded with doubt.

“Surely the thing has failed,” Hooniah whispered hoarsely.

“Yea,” Bawn answered complacently. “Scundoo groweth old, and we stand in need of a new shaman.”

“Where now is the wisdom of Jelchs?” Sime snickered in La-lah’s ear.

La-lah brushed his brow in a puzzled manner and said nothing.

Sime threw his chest out arrogantly and strutted up to the little shaman. “Hoh! Hoh! As I said, nothing has come of it!”

“So it would seem, so it would seem,” Scundoo answered meekly. “And it would seem strange to those unskilled in the affairs of mystery.”

“As thou?” Sime queried audaciously.

“Mayhap even as I.” Scundoo spoke quite softly, his eyelids drooping, slowly drooping, down, down, till his eyes were all but hidden. “So I am minded of another test. Let every man, woman, and child, now and at once, hold their hands well up above their heads!”

So unexpected was the order, and so imperatively was it given, that it was obeyed without question. Every hand was in the air.

“Let each look on the other’s hands, and let all look,” Scundoo commanded, “so that — ”

But a noise of laughter, which was more of wrath, drowned his voice. All eyes had come to rest upon Sime. Every hand but his was black with soot, and his was guiltless of the smirch of Hooniah’s pot.

A stone hurtled through the air and struck him on the cheek.

“It is a lie!” he yelled. “A lie! I know naught of Hooniah’s blankets!”

A second stone gashed his brow, a third whistled past his head, the great blood-cry went up, and everywhere were people groping on the ground for missiles. He staggered and half sank down.

“It was a joke! Only a joke!” he shrieked. “I but took them for a joke!”

“Where hast thou hidden them?” Scundoo’s shrill, sharp voice cut through the tumult like a knife.

“In the large skin-bale in my house, the one slung by the ridge-pole,” came the answer. “But it was a joke, I say, only — ”

Scundoo nodded his head, and the air went thick with flying stones. Sime’s wife was crying silently, her head upon her knees; but his little boy, with shrieks and laughter, was flinging stones with the rest.

Hooniah came waddling back with the precious blankets. Scundoo stopped her.

“We be poor people and have little,” she whimpered. “So be not hard upon us, O Scundoo.”

The people ceased from the quivering stone-pile they had builded, and looked on.

“Nay, it was never my way, good Hooniah,” Scundoo made answer, reaching for the blankets. “In token that I am not hard, these only shall I take.”

“Am I not wise, my children?” he demanded.

“Thou art indeed wise, O Scundoo!” they cried in one voice.

And he went away into the darkness, the blankets around him, and Jelchs nodding sleepily under his arm.

Mauki

He weighed one hundred and ten pounds. His hair was kinky and negroid, and he was black. He was peculiarly black. He was neither blue-black nor purple-black, but plum-black. His name was Mauki, and he was the son of a chief. He had three tambos. Tambo is Melanesian for taboo, and is first cousin to that Polynesian word. Mauki's three tambos were as follows: First, he must never shake hands with a woman, nor have a woman's hand touch him or any of his personal belongings; secondly, he must never eat clams nor any food from a fire in which clams had been cooked; thirdly, he must never touch a crocodile, nor travel in a canoe that carried any part of a crocodile even if as large as a tooth.

Of a different black were his teeeth, which were deep black, or, perhaps better, lamp-black. They had been made so in a single night, by his mother, who had compressed about them a powdered mineral which was dug from the landslide back of Port Adams. Port Adams is a salt-water village on Malaita, and Malaita is the most savage island in the Solomons--so savage that no traders or planters have yet gained a foothold on it; while, from the time of the earliest bêche-de-mer fishers and sandalwood traders down to the latest labor recruiters equipped with automatic rifles and gasolene engines, scores of white adventurers have been passed out by tomahawks and soft-nosed Snider bullets. So Malaita remains today, in the twentieth century, the stamping ground of the labor recruiters, who farm its coasts for laborers who engage and contract themselves to toil on the plantations of the neighboring and more civilized islands for a wage of thirty dollars a year. The natives of those neighboring and more civilized islands have themselves become too civilized to work on plantations.

Mauki's ears were pierced, not in one place, nor two places, but in a couple of dozen places. In one of the smaller holes he carried a clay pipe. The larger holes were too large for such use. The bowl of the pipe would have fallen through. In fact, in the largest hole in each ear he habitually wore round wooden plugs that were an even four inches in diameter. Roughly speaking, the circumference of said holes was twelve and one-half inches. Mauki was catholic in his tastes. In the various smaller holes he carried such things as empty rifle cartridges, horseshoe nails, copper screws, pieces of string, braids of sennit, strips of green leaf, and, in the cool of the day, scarlet hibiscus flowers. From which it will be seen that pockets were not necessary to his well-being. Besides, pockets were impossible, for his only wearing apparel consisted of a piece of calico several inches wide. A pocket knife he wore in his hair, the blade snapped down on a kinky lock. His most prized possession was the handle of a china cup, which he suspended from a ring of turtle-shell, which, in turn, was passed through the partition-cartilage of his nose.

But in spite of embellishments, Mauki had a nice face. It was really a pretty face, viewed by any standard, and for a Melanesian it was a remarkably good-looking face. Its one fault was its lack of strength. It was softly effeminate, almost girlish. The features were small, regular, and delicate. The chin was weak, and the mouth was weak. There was no strength nor character in the jaws, forehead, and nose. In the eyes only could be caught any hint of the unknown quantities that were so large a part of his make-up and that other persons could not understand. These unknown quantities were pluck, pertinacity, fearlessness, imagination, and cunning; and when they found expression in some consistent and striking action, those about him were astounded.

Mauki's father was chief over the village at Port Adams, and thus, by birth a salt-water man, Mauki was half amphibian. He knew the way of the fishes and oysters, and the reef was an open book to him. Canoes, also, he knew. He learned to swim when he was a year old. At seven years he could hold his breath a full minute and swim straight down to bottom through thirty feet of water. And at seven years he was stolen by the bushmen, who cannot even swim and who are afraid of salt water. Thereafter Mauki saw the sea only from a distance, through rifts in the jungle and from open spaces on the high mountain sides. He became the slave of old Fanfoa, head chief over a score of scattered bush-villages on the range-lips of Malaita, the smoke of which, on calm mornings, is about the only evidence the seafaring white men have of the teeming interior population. For the whites do not penetrate Malaita. They tried it once, in the days when the search was on for gold, but they always left their heads behind to grin from the smoky rafters of the bushmen's huts.

When Mauki was a young man of seventeen, Fanfoa got out of tobacco. He got dreadfully out of tobacco. It was hard times in all his villages. He had been guilty of a mistake. Suo was a harbor so small that a large schooner could not swing at anchor in it. It was surrounded by mangroves that overhung the deep water. It was a trap, and into the trap sailed two white men in a small ketch. They were after recruits, and they possessed much tobacco and trade goods, to say nothing of three rifles and plenty of ammunition. Now there were no salt-water men living at Suo, and it was there that the bushmen could come down to the sea. The ketch did a splendid traffic. It signed on twenty recruits the first day. Even old Fanfoa signed on. And that same day the score of new recruits chopped off the two white men's head, killed the boat's crew, and burned the ketch. Thereafter, and for three months, there was tobacco and trade goods in plenty and to spare in all the bush villages. Then came the man-of-war that threw shells for miles into the hills, frightening the people out of their villages and into the deeper bush. Next the man-of-war sent landing parties ashore. The villages were all burned, along with the tobacco and trade stuff.

The cocoanuts and bananas were chopped down, the taro gardens uprooted, and the pigs and chickens killed.

It taught Fanfoa a lesson, but in the meantime he was out of tobacco. Also, his young men were too frightened to sign on with the recruiting vessels. That was why Fanfoa ordered his slave, Mauki, to be carried down and signed on for half a case of tobacco advance, along with knives, axes, calico, and beads, which he would pay for with his toil on the plantations. Mauki was sorely frightened when they brought him on board the schooner. He was a lamb led to the slaughter. White men were ferocious creatures. They had to be, or else they would not make a practice of venturing along the Malaita coast and into all harbors, two on a schooner, when each schooner carried from fifteen to twenty blacks as boat's crew, and often as high as sixty or seventy black recruits. In addition to this, there was always the danger of the shore population, the sudden attack and the cutting off of the schooner and all hands. Truly, white men must be terrible. Besides, they were possessed of such devil-devils--rifles that shot very rapidly many times, things of iron and brass that made the schooners go when there was no wind, and boxes that talked and laughed just as men talked and laughed.

Ay, and he had heard of one white man whose particular devil-devil was so powerful that he could take out all his teeth and put them back at will.

Down into the cabin they took Mauki. On deck, the one white man kept guard with two revolvers in his belt. In the cabin the other white man sat with a book before him, in which he inscribed strange marks and lines. He looked at Mauki as though he had been a pig or a fowl, glanced under the hollows of his arms, and wrote in the book. Then he held out the writing stick and Mauki just barely touched it with his hand, in so doing pledging himself to toil for three years on the plantations of the Moongleam Soap

Company. It was not explained to him that the will of the ferocious white men would be used to enforce the pledge, and that, behind all, for the same use, was all the power and all the warships of Great Britain.

Other blacks there were on board, from unheard-of far places, and when the white man spoke to them, they tore the long feather from Mauki's hair, cut that same hair short, and wrapped about his waist a lava-lava of bright yellow calico.

After many days on the schooner, and after beholding more land and islands than he had ever dreamed of, he was landed on New Georgia, and put to work in the field clearing jungle and cutting cane grass. For the first time he knew what work was. Even as a slave to Fanfoa he had not worked like this. And he did not like work. It was up at dawn and in at dark, on two meals a day. And the food was tiresome. For weeks at a time they were given nothing but sweet potatoes to eat, and for weeks at a time it would be nothing but rice. He cut out the cocoanut from the shells day after day; and for long days and weeks he fed the fires that smoked the copra, till his eyes got sore and he was set to felling trees. He was a good axe-man, and later he was put in the bridge-building gang. Once, he was punished by being put in the road-building gang. At times he served as boat's crew in the whale boats, when they brought in copra from distant beaches or when the white men went out to dynamite fish.

Among other things he learned bêche-de-mer English, with which he could talk with all white men, and with all recruits who otherwise would have talked in a thousand different dialects. Also, he learned certain things about the white men, principally that they kept their word. If they told a boy he was going to receive a stick of tobacco, he got it. If they told a boy they would knock seven bells out of him if he did a certain thing, when he did that thing, seven bells invariably were knocked out of him. Mauki did not know what seven bells were, but they occurred in bêche-de-mer, and he imagined them to be the blood and teeth that sometimes accompanied the process of knocking out seven bells. One other thing he learned: no boy was struck or punished unless he did wrong. Even when the white men were drunk, as they were frequently, they never struck unless a rule had been broken.

Mauki did not like the plantation. He hated work, and he was the son of a chief. Furthermore, it was ten years since he had been stolen from Port Adams by Fanfoa, and he was homesick. He was even homesick for the slavery under Fanfoa. So he ran away. He struck back into the bush, with the idea of working southward to the beach and stealing a canoe in which to go home to Port Adams.

But the fever got him, and he was captured and brought back more dead than alive.

A second time he ran away, in the company of two Malaita boys. They got down the coast twenty miles, and were hidden in the hut of a Malaita freeman, who dwelt in that village. But in the dead of night two white men came, who were not afraid of all the village people and who knocked seven bells out of the three runaways, tied them like pigs, and tossed them into the whale boat. But the man in whose house they had hidden--seven times seven bells must have been knocked out of him from the way the hair, skin, and teeth flew, and he was discouraged for the rest of his natural life from harboring runaway laborers.

For a year Mauki toiled on. Then he was made a house-boy, and had good food and easy times, with light work in keeping the house clean and serving the white men with whiskey and beer at all hours of the day and most hours of the night. He liked it, but he liked Port Adams more. He had two years longer to serve, but two years were too long for him in the throes of homesickness. He had grown wiser with his year of service, and, being now a house-boy, he had opportunity. He had the cleaning of the rifles, and he knew where the key to the store room was hung. He planned to escape, and one night ten Malaita boys and one boy from San Cristoval sneaked from the barracks and dragged one of the whale boats down to the beach. It was Mauki who supplied the key that opened the padlock on the boat, and it was Mauki who equipped the boat with a dozen Winchesters, an immense amount of ammunition, a case of dynamite with detonators and fuse, and ten cases of tobacco.

The northwest monsoon was blowing, and they fled south in the night time, hiding by day on detached and uninhabited islets, or dragging their whale boat into the bush on the large islands. Thus they gained Guadalcanar, skirted halfway along it, and crossed the Indispensable Straits to Florida Island. It was here that they killed the San Cristoval boy, saving his head and cooking and eating the rest of him. The Malaita coast was only twenty miles away, but the last night a strong current and baffling winds prevented them from gaining across. Daylight found them still several miles from their goal. But daylight brought a cutter, in which were two white men, who were not afraid of eleven Malaita men armed with twelve rifles. Mauki and his companions were carried back to Tulagi, where lived the great white master of all the white men. And the great white master held a court, after which, one by one, the runaways were tied up and given twenty lashes each, and sentenced to a fine of fifteen dollars. They were sent back to New Georgia, where the white men knocked seven bells out of them all around and put them to work. But Mauki was no longer house-boy. He was put in the road-making gang. The fine of fifteen dollars had been paid by the white men from whom he had run away, and he was told that he would have to work it out, which meant six months' additional toil. Further, his share of the stolen tobacco earned him another year of toil.

Port Adams was now three years and a half away, so he stole a canoe one night, hid on the islets in Manning Straits, passed through the Straits, and began working along the eastern coast of Ysabel, only to be captured, two-thirds of the way along, by the white men on Meringe Lagoon. After a week, he escaped from them and took to the bush. There were no bush natives on Ysabel, only salt-water men, who were all Christians. The white men put up a reward of five-hundred sticks of tobacco, and every time Mauki ventured down to the sea to steal a canoe he was chased by the salt-water men. Four months of this passed, when, the reward having been raised to a thousand sticks, he was caught and sent back to New Georgia and the road-building gang. Now a thousand sticks are worth fifty dollars, and Mauki had to pay the reward himself, which required a year and eight months' labor. So Port Adams was now five years away.

His homesickness was greater than ever, and it did not appeal to him to settle down and be good, work out his four years, and go home. The next time, he was caught in the very act of running away. His case was brought before Mr. Haveby, the island manager of the Moongleam Soap Company, who adjudged him an incorrigible. The Company had plantations on the Santa Cruz Islands, hundreds of miles across the sea, and there it sent its Solomon Islands' incorrigibles. And there Mauki was sent, though he never arrived. The schooner stopped at Santa Anna, and in the night Mauki swam ashore, where he stole two rifles and a case of tobacco from the trader and got away in a canoe to Cristoval. Malaita was now to the north, fifty or sixty miles away. But when he attempted the passage, he was caught by a light gale and driven back to Santa Anna, where the trader clapped him in irons and held him against the return of the schooner from Santa Cruz. The two rifles the trader recovered, but the case of tobacco was charged up to Mauki at the rate of another year. The sum of years he now owed the Company was six.

On the way back to New Georgia, the schooner dropped anchor in Marau Sound, which lies at the southeastern extremity of Guadalcanar. Mauki swam ashore with handcuffs on his wrists and got away to the bush. The schooner went on, but the Moongleam trader ashore offered a thousand sticks, and to him Mauki was brought by the bushmen with a year and eight months tacked on to his account. Again, and before the schooner called in, he got away, this time in a whale boat accompanied by a case of the trader's tobacco. But a northwest gale wrecked him upon Ugi, where the Christian natives stole his tobacco and turned him over to the Moongleam trader who resided there. The tobacco the natives stole meant another year for him, and the tale was now eight years and a half.

"We'll send him to Lord Howe," said Mr. Haveby. "Bunster is there, and we'll let them settle it between them. It will be a case, I imagine, of Mauki getting Bunster, or Bunster getting Mauki, and good riddance in either event."

If one leaves Meringe Lagoon, on Ysabel, and steers a course due north, magnetic, at the end of one hundred and fifty miles he will lift the pounded coral beaches of Lord Howe above the sea. Lord Howe is a ring of land some one hundred and fifty miles in circumference, several hundred yards wide at its widest, and towering in places to a height of ten feet above sea level. Inside this ring of sand is a mighty lagoon studded with coral patches. Lord Howe belongs to the Solomons neither geographically nor ethnologically. It is an atoll, while the Solomons are high islands; and its people and language are Polynesian, while the inhabitants of the Solomons are Melanesian.

Lord Howe has been populated by the westward Polynesian drift which continues to this day, big outrigger canoes being washed upon its beaches by the southeast trade. That there has been a slight Melanesian drift in the period of the northwest monsoon, is also evident.

Nobody ever comes to Lord Howe, or Ontong-Java as it is sometimes called. Thomas Cook & Son do not sell tickets to it, and tourists do not dream of its existence. Not even a white missionary has landed on its shore. Its five thousand natives are as peaceable as they are primitive. Yet they were not always peaceable. The Sailing Directions speak of them as hostile and treacherous. But the men who compile the Sailing Directions have never heard of the change that was worked in the hearts of the inhabitants, who, not many years ago, cut off a big bark and killed all hands with the exception of the second mate. The survivor carried the news to his brothers. The captains of three trading schooners returned with him to Lord Howe. They sailed their vessels right into the lagoon and proceeded to preach the white man's gospel that only white men shall kill white men and that the lesser breeds must keep hands off. The schooners sailed up and down the lagoon, harrying and destroying. There was no escape from the narrow sand-circle, no bush to which to flee. The men were shot down at sight, and there was no avoiding being sighted. The villages were burned, the canoes smashed, the chickens and pigs killed, and the precious cocoanut trees chopped down. For a month this continued, when the schooner sailed away; but the fear of the white man had been seared into the souls of the islanders and never again were they rash enough to harm one.

Max Bunster was the one white man on Lord Howe, trading in the pay of the ubiquitous Moongleam Soap Company. And the Company billeted him on Lord Howe, because, next to getting rid of him, it was the most out-of-the-way place to be found. That the Company did not get rid of him was due to the difficulty of finding another man to take his place. He was a strapping big German, with something wrong in his brain. Semi-madness would be a charitable statement of his condition. He was a bully and a coward, and a thrice-bigger savage than any savage on the island.

Being a coward, his brutality was of the cowardly order. When he first went into the Company's employ, he was stationed on Savo. When a consumptive colonial was sent to take his place, he beat him up with his fists and sent him off a wreck in the schooner that brought him.

Mr. Haveby next selected a young Yorkshire giant to relieve Bunster. The Yorkshire man had a reputation as a bruiser and preferred fighting to eating. But Bunster wouldn't fight. He was a regular little lamb--for ten days, at the end of which time the Yorkshire man was prostrated by a combined attack of dysentery and fever. Then Bunster went for him, among other things getting him down and jumping on him a score or so of times. Afraid of what would happen when his victim recovered. Bunster fled away in a cutter to Guvutu, where he signalized himself by beating up a young Englishman already crippled by a Boer bullet through both hips.

Then it was that Mr. Haveby sent Bunster to Lord Howe, the falling-off place. He celebrated his landing by mopping up half a case of gin and by thrashing the elderly and wheezy mate of the schooner which had brought him. When the schooner departed, he called the kanakas down to the beach and challenged them to throw him in a wrestling bout, promising a case of tobacco to the one who succeeded. Three kanakas he threw, but was promptly thrown by a fourth, who, instead of receiving the tobacco, got a bullet through his lungs.

And so began Bunster's reign on Lord Howe. Three thousand people lived in the principal village; but it was deserted, even in broad day, when he passed through. Men, women, and children fled before him. Even the dogs and pigs got out of the way, while the king was not above hiding under a mat. The two prime ministers lived in terror of Bunster, who never discussed any moot subject, but struck out with his fists instead.

And to Lord Howe came Mauki, to toil for Bunster for eight long years and a half. There was no escaping from Lord Howe. For better or worse, Bunster and he were tied together. Bunster weighed two hundred pounds. Mauki weighed one hundred and ten. Bunster was a degenerate brute. But Mauki was a primitive savage. While both had wills and ways of their own.

Mauki had no idea of the sort of master he was to work for. He had had no warnings, and he had concluded as a matter of course that Bunster would be like other white men, a drinker of much whiskey, a ruler and a lawgiver who always kept his word and who never struck a boy undeserved. Bunster had the advantage. He knew all about Mauki, and gloated over the coming into possession of him. The last cook was suffering from a broken arm and a dislocated shoulder, so Bunster made Mauki cook and general house-boy.

And Mauki soon learned that there were white men and white men. On the very day the schooner departed he was ordered to buy a chicken from Samisee, the native Tongan missionary. But Samisee had sailed across the lagoon and would not be back for three days. Mauki returned with the information. He climbed the steep stairway (the house stood on piles twelve feet above the sand), and entered the living room to report. The trader demanded the chicken. Mauki opened his mouth to explain the missionary's absence. But Bunster did not care for explanations. He struck out with his fist. The blow caught Mauki on the mouth and lifted him into the air. Clear through the doorway he flew, across the narrow veranda, breaking the top railing, and down to the ground.

His lips were a contused, shapeless mass, and his mouth was full of blood and broken teeth.

“That’ll teach you that back talk don’t go with me,” the trader shouted, purple with rage, peering down at him over the broken railing.

Mauki had never met a white man like this, and he resolved to walk small and never offend. He saw the boat boys knocked about, and one of them put in irons for three days with nothing to eat for the crime of breaking a rowlock while pulling. Then, too, he heard the gossip of the village and learned why Bunster had taken a third wife--by force, as was well known. The first and second wives lay in the graveyard, under the white coral sand, with slabs of coral rock at head and feet. They had died, it was said, from beatings he had given them. The third wife was certainly ill-used, as Mauki could see for himself.

But there was no way by which to avoid offending the white man who seemed offended with life. When Mauki kept silent, he was struck and called a sullen brute. When he spoke, he was struck for giving back talk. When he was grave, Bunster accused him of plotting and gave him a thrashing in advance; and when he strove to be cheerful and to smile, he was charged with sneering at his lord and master and given a taste of stick. Bunster was a devil.

The village would have done for him, had it not remembered the lesson of the three schooners. It might have done for him anyway, if there had been a bush to which to flee. As it was, the murder of the white men, of any white man, would bring a man-of-war that would kill the offenders and chop down the precious cocoanut trees. Then there were the boat boys, with minds fully made up to drown him by accident at the first opportunity to capsize the cutter. Only Bunster saw to it that the boat did not capsize.

Mauki was of a different breed, and escape being impossible while Bunster lived, he was resolved to get the white man. The trouble was that he could never find a chance. Bunster was always on guard. Day and night his revolvers were ready to hand. He permitted nobody to pass behind his back, as Mauki learned after having been knocked down several times. Bunster knew that he had more to fear from the good-natured, even sweet-faced, Malaita boy than from the entire population of Lord Howe; and it gave added zest to the programme of torment he was carrying out. And Mauki walked small, accepted his punishments, and waited.

All other white men had respected his tambos, but not so Bunster.

Mauki's weekly allowance of tobacco was two sticks. Bunster passed them to his woman and ordered Mauki to receive them from her hand. But this could not be, and Mauki went without his tobacco. In the same way he was made to miss many a meal, and to go hungry many a day. He was ordered to make chowder out of the big clams that grew in the lagoon. This he could not do, for clams were tambo. Six times in succession he refused to touch the clams, and six times he was knocked senseless. Bunster knew that the boy would die first, but called his refusal mutiny, and would have killed him had there been another cook to take his place.

One of the trader's favorite tricks was to catch Mauki's kinky locks and bat his head against the wall. Another trick was to catch Mauki unawares and thrust the live end of a cigar against his flesh. This Bunster called vaccination, and Mauki was vaccinated a number of times a week. Once, in a rage, Bunster ripped the cup handle from Mauki's nose, tearing the hole clear out of the cartilage.

"Oh, what a mug!" was his comment, when he surveyed the damage he had wrought.

The skin of a shark is like sandpaper, but the skin of a ray fish is like a rasp. In the South Seas the natives use it as a wood file in smoothing down canoes and paddles. Bunster had a mitten made of ray fish skin. The first time he tried it on Mauki, with one sweep of the hand it fetched the skin off his back from neck to armpit. Bunster was delighted. He gave his wife a taste of the mitten, and tried it out thoroughly on the boat boys. The prime ministers came in for a stroke each, and they had to grin and take it for a joke.

"Laugh, damn you, laugh!" was the cue he gave.

Mauki came in for the largest share of the mitten. Never a day passed without a caress from it. There were times when the loss of so much cuticle kept him awake at night, and often the half-healed surface was raked raw afresh by the facetious Mr. Bunster. Mauki continued his patient wait, secure in the knowledge that sooner or later his time would come. And he knew just what he was going to do, down to the smallest detail, when the time did come.

One morning Bunster got up in a mood for knocking seven bells out of the universe. He began on Mauki, and wound up on Mauki, in the interval knocking down his wife and hammering all the boat boys. At breakfast he called the coffee slops and threw the scalding contents of the cup into Mauki’s face. By ten o’clock Bunster was shivering with ague, and half an hour later he was burning with fever. It was no ordinary attack. It quickly became pernicious, and developed into black-water fever. The days passed, and he grew weaker and weaker, never leaving his bed. Mauki waited and watched, the while his skin grew intact once more. He ordered the boys to beach the cutter, scrub her bottom, and give her a general overhauling. They thought the order emanated from Bunster, and they obeyed. But Bunster at the time was lying unconscious and giving no orders. This was Mauki’s chance, but still he waited.

When the worst was past, and Bunster lay convalescent and conscious, but weak as a baby, Mauki packed his few trinkets, including the china cup handle, into his trade box. Then he went over to the village and interviewed the king and his two prime ministers.

“This fella Bunster, him good fella you like too much?” he asked.

They explained in one voice that they liked the trader not at all. The ministers poured forth a recital of all the indignities and wrongs that had been heaped upon them. The king broke down and wept. Mauki interrupted rudely.

“You savve me--me big fella marster my country. You no like m this fella white marster. Me no like m. Plenty good you put hundred cocoanut, two hundred cocoanut, three hundred cocoanut along cutter. Him finish, you go sleep m good fella. Altogether kanaka sleep m good fella. Bime by big fella noise along house, you no savve hear m that fella noise. You altogether sleep strong fella too much.”

In like manner Mauki interviewed the boat boys. Then he ordered Bunster’s wife to return to her family house. Had she refused, he would have been in a quandary, for his tambo would not have permitted him to lay hands on her.

The house deserted, he entered the sleeping room, where the trader lay in a doze. Mauki first removed the revolvers, then placed the ray fish mitten on his hand. Bunster’s first warning was a stroke of the mitten that removed the skin the full length of his nose.

"Good fella, eh?" Mauki grinned, between two strokes, one of which swept the forehead bare and the other of which cleaned off one side of his face. "Laugh, damn you, laugh."

Mauki did his work throughly, and the kanakas, hiding in their houses, heard the "big fella noise" that Bunster made and continued to make for an hour or more.

When Mauki was done, he carried the boat compass and all the rifles and ammunition down to the cutter, which he proceeded to ballast with cases of tobacco. It was while engaged in this that a hideous, skinless thing came out of the house and ran screaming down the beach till it fell in the sand and mowed and gibbered under the scorching sun. Mauki looked toward it and hesitated. Then he went over and removed the head, which he wrapped in a mat and stowed in the stern locker of the cutter.

So soundly did the kanakas sleep through that long hot day that they did not see the cutter run out through the passage and head south, close-hauled on the southeast trade. Nor was the cutter ever sighted on that long tack to the shores of Ysabel, and during the tedious head-beat from there to Malaita. He landed at Port Adams with a wealth of rifles and tobacco such as no one man had ever possessed before. But he did not stop there. He had taken a white man's head, and only the bush could shelter him. So back he went to the bush villages, where he shot old Fanfoa and half a dozen of the chief men, and made himself the chief over all the villages. When his father died, Mauki's brother ruled in Port Adams, and joined together, salt-water men and bushmen, the resulting combination was the strongest of the ten score fighting tribes of Malaita.

More than his fear of the British government was Mauki's fear of the all-powerful Moongleam Soap Company; and one day a message came up to him in the bush, reminding him that he owed the Company eight and one-half years of labor. He sent back a favorable answer, and then appeared the inevitable white man, the captain of the schooner, the only white man during Mauki's reign, who ventured the bush and came out alive. This man not only came out, but he brought with him seven hundred and fifty dollars in gold sovereigns--the money price of eight years and a half of labor plus the cost price of certain rifles and cases of tobacco.

Mauki no longer weighs one hundred and ten pounds. His stomach is three times its former girth, and he has four wives. He has many other things--rifles and revolvers, the handle of a china cup, and an excellent collection of bushmen’s heads. But more precious than the entire collection is another head, perfectly dried and cured, with sandy hair and a yellowish beard, which is kept wrapped in the finest of fibre lava-lavas. When Mauki goes to war with villages beyond his realm, he invariably gets out this head, and alone in his grass palace, contemplates it long and solemnly. At such times the hush of death falls on the village, and not even a pickaninny dares make a noise. The head is esteemed the most powerful devil-devil on Malaita, and to the possession of it is ascribed all of Mauki’s

The Meat

I.

Half the time the wind blew a gale, and Smoke Bellew staggered against it along the beach. In the gray of dawn a dozen boats were being loaded with the precious outfits packed across Chilcoot. They were clumsy, home-made boats, put together by men who were not boat-builders, out of planks they had sawed by hand from green spruce trees. One boat, already loaded, was just starting, and Kit paused to watch.

The wind, which was fair down the lake, here blew in squarely on the beach, kicking up a nasty sea in the shallows. The men of the departing boat waded in high rubber boots as they shoved it out toward deeper water. Twice they did this. Clambering aboard and failing to row clear, the boat was swept back and grounded. Kit noticed that the spray on the sides of the boat quickly turned to ice. The third attempt was a partial success. The last two men to climb in were wet to their waists, but the boat was afloat. They struggled awkwardly at the heavy oars, and slowly worked off shore. Then they hoisted a sail made of blankets, had it carried away in a gust, and were swept a third time back on the freezing beach.

Kit grinned to himself and went on. This was what he must expect to encounter, for he, too, in his new role of gentleman's man, was to start from the beach in a similar boat that very day.

Everywhere men were at work, and at work desperately, for the closing down of winter was so imminent that it was a gamble whether or not they would get across the great chain of lakes before the freeze-up. Yet, when Kit arrived at the tent of Messrs Sprague and Stine, he did not find them stirring.

By a fire, under the shelter of a tarpaulin, squatted a short, thick man smoking a brown-paper cigarette.

"Hello," he said. "Are you Mister Sprague's new man?"

As Kit nodded, he thought he had noted a shade of emphasis on the mister and the man, and he was sure of a hint of a twinkle in the corner of the eye.

"Well, I'm Doc Stine's man," the other went on. "I'm five feet two inches long, and my name's Shorty, Jack Short for short, and sometimes known as

Johnny-on-the-Spot."

Kit put out his hand and shook.

"Were you raised on bear-meat?" he queried.

"Sure," was the answer; "though my first feedin' was buffalo-milk as near as I can remember. Sit down an' have some grub. The bosses ain't turned out yet."

And despite the one breakfast, Kit sat down under the tarpaulin and ate a second breakfast thrice as hearty. The heavy, purging toil of weeks had given him the stomach and appetite of a wolf. He could eat anything, in any quantity, and be unaware that he possessed a digestion. Shorty he found voluble and pessimistic, and from him he received surprising tips concerning their bosses, and ominous forecasts of the expedition. Thomas Stanley Sprague was a budding mining engineer and the son of a millionaire. Doctor Adolph Stine was also the son of a wealthy father. And, through their fathers, both had been backed by an investing syndicate in the Klondike adventure.

"Oh, they're sure made of money," Shorty expounded. "When they hit the beach at Dyea, freight was seventy cents, but no Indians. There was a party from Eastern Oregon, real miners, that'd managed to get a team of Indians together at seventy cents. Indians had the straps on the outfit, three thousand pounds of it, when along comes Sprague and Stine. They offered eighty cents and ninety, and at a dollar a pound the Indians jumped the contract and took off their straps. Sprague and Stine came through, though it cost them three thousand, and the Oregon bunch is still on the beach. They won't get through till next year.

"Oh, they are real hummers, your boss and mine, when it comes to sheddin' the mazuma an' never mindin' other folks' feelin's. What did they do when they hit Linderman? The carpenters was just putting in the last licks on a boat they'd contracted to a 'Frisco bunch for six hundred. Sprague and Stine slipped 'em an even thousand, and they jumped their contract. It's a good-lookin' boat, but it's jiggered the other bunch. They've got their outfit right here, but no boat. And they're stuck for next year.

"Have another cup of coffee, and take it from me that I wouldn't travel with no such outfit if I didn't want to get to Klondike so blamed bad. They ain't hearted right. They'd take the crape off the door of a house in mourning if they needed it in their business. Did you sign a contract?"

Kit shook his head.

"Then I'm sorry for you, pardner. They ain't no grub in the country, and they'll drop you cold as soon as they hit Dawson. Men are going to starve there this winter."

"They agreed--" Kit began.

"Verbal," Shorty snapped him short. "It's your say so against theirs, that's all. Well, anyway--what's your name, pardner?"

"Call me Smoke," said Kit.

"Well, Smoke, you'll have a run for your verbal contract just the same. This is a plain sample of what to expect. They can sure shed mazuma, but they can't work, or turn out of bed in the morning. We should have been loaded and started an hour ago. It's you an' me for the big work. Pretty soon you'll hear 'em shoutin' for their coffee--in bed, mind you, and they grown men. What d'ye know about boatin' on the water? I'm a cowman and a prospector, but I'm sure tender-footed on water, an' they don't know punkins. What d'ye know?"

"Search me," Kit answered, snuggling in closer under the tarpaulin as the snow whirled before a fiercer gust. "I haven't been on a small boat since a boy. But I guess we can learn."

A corner of the tarpaulin tore loose, and Shorty received a jet of driven snow down the back of his neck.

"Oh, we can learn all right," he muttered wrathfully. "Sure we can. A child can learn. But it's dollars to doughnuts we don't even get started to-day."

It was eight o'clock when the call for coffee came from the tent, and nearly nine before the two employers emerged.

"Hello," said Sprague, a rosy-cheeked, well-fed young man of twenty-five. "Time we made a start, Shorty. You and--" Here he glanced interrogatively at Kit. "I didn't quite catch your name last evening."

"Smoke."

"Well, Shorty, you and Mr Smoke had better begin loading the boat."

"Plain Smoke--cut out the Mister," Kit suggested.

Sprague nodded curtly and strolled away among the tents, to be followed by Doctor Stine, a slender, pallid young man.

Shorty looked significantly at his companion.

"Over a ton and a half of outfit, and they won't lend a hand. You'll see."

"I guess it's because we're paid to do the work," Kit answered cheerfully, "and we might as well buck in."

To move three thousand pounds on the shoulders a hundred yards was no slight task, and to do it in half a gale, slushing through the snow in heavy rubber boots, was exhausting. In addition, there was the taking down of the tent and the packing of small camp equipage. Then came the loading. As the boat settled, it had to be shoved farther and farther out, increasing the distance they had to wade. By two o'clock it had all been accomplished, and Kit, despite his two breakfasts, was weak with the faintness of hunger. His knees were shaking under him. Shorty, in similar predicament, foraged through the pots and pans, and drew forth a big pot of cold boiled beans in which were imbedded large chunks of bacon. There was only one spoon, a long-handled one, and they dipped, turn and turn about, into the pot. Kit was filled with an immense certitude that in all his life he had never tasted anything so good.

"Lord, man," he mumbled between chews, "I never knew what appetite was till I hit the trail."

Sprague and Stine arrived in the midst of this pleasant occupation.

"What's the delay?" Sprague complained. "Aren't we ever going to get started?"

Shorty dipped in turn, and passed the spoon to Kit. Nor did either speak till the pot was empty and the bottom scraped.

"Of course we ain't ben doin' nothing," Shorty said, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "We ain't ben doin' nothing at all. And of course you ain't had nothing to eat. It was sure careless of me."

"Yes, yes," Stine said quickly. "We ate at one of the tents--friends of ours."

"Thought so," Shorty grunted.

"But now that you're finished, let us get started," Sprague urged.

"There's the boat," said Shorty. "She's sure loaded. Now, just how might you be goin' about to get started?"

"By climbing aboard and shoving off. Come on."

They waded out, and the employers got on board, while Kit and Shorty shoved clear. When the waves lapped the tops of their boots they clambered in. The other two men were not prepared with the oars, and the boat swept back and grounded. Half a dozen times, with a great expenditure of energy, this was repeated.

Shorty sat down disconsolately on the gunwale, took a chew of tobacco, and questioned the universe, while Kit baled the boat and the other two exchanged unkind remarks.

"If you'll take my orders, I'll get her off," Sprague finally said.

The attempt was well intended, but before he could clamber on board he was wet to the waist.

"We've got to camp and build a fire," he said, as the boat grounded again. "I'm freezing."

"Don't be afraid of a wetting," Stine sneered. "Other men have gone off to-day wetter than you. Now I'm going to take her out."

This time it was he who got the wetting, and who announced with chattering teeth the need of a fire.

"A little splash like that," Sprague chattered spitefully. "We'll go on."

"Shorty, dig out my clothes-bag and make a fire," the other commanded.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," Sprague cried.

Shorty looked from one to the other, expectorated, but did not move.

"He's working for me, and I guess he obeys my orders," Stine retorted. "Shorty, take that bag ashore."

Shorty obeyed, and Sprague shivered in the boat. Kit, having received no orders, remained inactive, glad of the rest.

"A boat divided against itself won't float," he soliloquized.

"What's that?" Sprague snarled at him.

"Talking to myself--habit of mine," he answered.

His employer favoured him with a hard look, and sulked several minutes longer. Then he surrendered.

"Get out my bag, Smoke," he ordered, "and lend a hand with that fire. We won't get off till the morning now."

II.

Next day the gale still blew. Lake Linderman was no more than a narrow mountain gorge filled with water. Sweeping down from the mountains through this funnel, the wind was irregular, blowing great guns at times and at other times dwindling to a strong breeze.

"If you give me a shot at it, I think I can get her off," Kit said, when all was ready for the start.

"What do you know about it?" Stine snapped at him.

"Search me," Kit answered, and subsided.

It was the first time he had worked for wages in his life, but he was learning the discipline of it fast. Obediently and cheerfully he joined in various vain efforts to get clear of the beach.

"How would you go about it?" Sprague finally half-panted, half-whined at him.

"Sit down and get a good rest till a lull comes in the wind, and then buck in for all we're worth."

Simple as the idea was, he had been the first to evolve it; the first time it was applied it worked, and they hoisted a blanket to the mast and sped down the lake. Stine and Sprague immediately became cheerful. Shorty, despite his chronic pessimism, was always cheerful, and Kit was too interested to be otherwise. Sprague struggled with the steering sweep for a quarter of an hour, and then looked appealingly at Kit, who relieved him.

"My arms are fairly broken with the strain of it," Sprague muttered apologetically.

"You never ate bear-meat, did you?" Kit asked sympathetically.

"What the devil do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing; I was just wondering."

But behind his employer's back Kit caught the approving grin of Shorty, who had already caught the whim of his simile.

Kit steered the length of Linderman, displaying an aptitude that caused both young men of money and disinclination for work to name him boat-steerer. Shorty was no less pleased, and volunteered to continue cooking and leave the boat work to the other.

Between Linderman and Lake Bennet was a portage. The boat, lightly loaded, was lined down the small but violent connecting stream, and here Kit learned a vast deal more about boats and water. But when it came to packing the outfit, Stine and Sprague disappeared, and their men spent two days of back-breaking toil in getting the outfit across. And this was the history of many miserable days of the trip--Kit and Shorty working to exhaustion, while their masters toiled not and demanded to be waited upon.

But the iron-bound arctic winter continued to close down, and they were held back by numerous and avoidable delays. At Windy Arm, Stine arbitrarily dispossessed Kit of the steering-sweep and within the hour wrecked the boat on a wave-beaten lee shore. Two days were lost here in making repairs, and the morning of the fresh start, as they came down to embark, on stern and bow, in large letters, was charcoaled ‘The Chechaquo.’

Kit grinned at the appropriateness of the invidious word.

“Huh!” said Shorty, when accused by Stine. “I can sure read and spell, an’ I know that Chechaquo means tenderfoot, but my education never went high enough to learn me to spell a jaw-breaker like that.”

Both employers looked daggers at Kit, for the insult rankled; nor did he mention that the night before, Shorty had besought him for the spelling of that particular word.

“That’s ‘most as bad as your bear-meat slam at ‘em,” Shorty confided later.

Kit chuckled. Along with the continuous discovery of his own powers had come an ever-increasing disapproval of the two masters. It was not so much irritation, which was always present, as disgust. He had got his taste of the meat, and liked it; but they were teaching him how not to eat it. Privily, he thanked God that he was not made as they. He came to dislike them to a degree that bordered on hatred. Their malingering bothered him less than their helpless inefficiency. Somewhere in him, old Isaac Bellew and all the rest of the hardy Bellews were making good.

“Shorty,” he said one day, in the usual delay of getting started, “I could almost fetch them a rap over the head with an oar and bury them in the river.”

“Same here,” Shorty agreed. “They’re not meat-eaters. They’re fish-eaters, and they sure stink.”

III.

They came to the rapids, first, the Box Canyon, and, several miles below, the White Horse. The Box Canyon was adequately named. It was a box, a trap. Once in it, the only way out was through. On either side arose perpendicular walls of rock. The river narrowed to a fraction of its width, and roared through this gloomy passage in a madness of motion that heaped the water in the centre into a ridge fully eight feet higher than at the rocky sides. This ridge, in turn, was crested with stiff, upstanding waves that curled over, yet remained each in its unvarying place. The Canyon was well feared, for it had collected its toll of dead from the passing gold-rushers.

Tying to the bank above, where lay a score of other anxious boats, Kit and his companions went ahead on foot to investigate. They crept to the brink and gazed down at the swirl of water. Sprague drew back shuddering.

“My God!” he exclaimed. “A swimmer hasn’t a chance in that.”

Shorty touched Kit significantly with his elbow and said in an undertone:

“Cold feet. Dollars to doughnuts they don’t go through.”

Kit scarcely heard. From the beginning of the boat trip he had been learning the stubbornness and inconceivable viciousness of the elements, and this glimpse of what was below him acted as a challenge.

“We’ve got to ride that ridge,” he said. “If we get off of it we’ll hit the walls--“

“And never know what hit us,” was Shorty’s verdict. “Can you swim, Smoke?”

“I’d wish I couldn’t if anything went wrong in there.”

“That’s what I say,” a stranger, standing alongside and peering down into the Canyon, said mournfully. “And I wish I were through it.”

“I wouldn’t sell my chance to go through,” Kit answered.

He spoke honestly, but it was with the idea of heartening the man. He turned to go back to the boat.

“Are you going to tackle it?” the man asked.

Kit nodded.

“I wish I could get the courage to,” the other confessed. “I’ve been here for hours. The longer I look, the more afraid I am. I am not a boatman, and I have only my nephew with me, who is a young boy, and my wife. If you get through safely, will you run my boat through?”

Kit looked at Shorty, who delayed to answer.

“He’s got his wife with him,” Kit suggested. Nor had he mistaken his man.

“Sure,” Shorty affirmed. “It was just that I was stopping to think about. I knew there was some reason I ought to do it.”

Again they turned to go, but Sprague and Stine made no movement.

“Good luck, Smoke,” Sprague called to him. “I’ll--er--“ He hesitated. “I’ll just stay here and watch you.”

“We need three men in the boat, two at the oars and one at the steering sweep,” Kit said quietly.

Sprague looked at Stine.

“I’m damned if I do,” said that gentleman. “If you’re not afraid to stand here and look on, I’m not.”

“Who’s afraid?” Sprague demanded hotly.

Stine retorted in kind, and their two men left them in the thick of a squabble.

“We can do without them,” Kit said to Shorty. “You take the bow with a paddle, and I’ll handle the steering sweep. All you’ll have to do is just to keep her straight. Once we’re started, you won’t be able to hear me, so just keep on keeping straight.”

They cast off the boat and worked out to middle in the quickening current. From the Canyon came an ever-growing roar. The river sucked in to the entrance with the smoothness of molten glass, and here, as the darkening walls received them, Shorty took a chew of tobacco, and dipped his paddle. The boat leaped on the first crests of the ridge, and they were deafened by the uproar of wild water that reverberated from the narrow walls and multiplied itself. They were half-smothered with flying spray. At times Kit could not see his comrade at the bow. It was only a matter of two minutes, in which time they rode the ridge three-quarters of a mile, and emerged in safety and tied to the bank in the eddy below.

Shorty emptied his mouth of tobacco juice--he had forgotten to spit--and spoke.

“That was bear-meat,” he exulted, “the real bear-meat. Say, we want a few, didn’t we, Smoke, I don’t mind tellin’ you in confidence that before we started I was the gosh-dangdest scaredest man this side of the Rocky-Mountains. Now I’m a bear-eater. Come on an’ we’ll run that other boat through.”

Midway back, on foot, they encountered their employers, who had watched the passage from above.

“There comes the fish-eaters,” said Shorty. “Keep to win’ward.”

IV.

After running the strangers’ boat through, whose name proved to be Breck, Kit and Shorty met his wife, a slender, girlish woman whose blue eyes were moist with gratitude. Breck himself tried to hand Kit fifty dollars, and then attempted it on Shorty.

“Stranger,” was the latter’s rejection, “I come into this country to make money outa the ground an’ not outa my fellow critters.”

Breck rummaged in his boat and produced a demijohn of whiskey. Shorty’s hand half went out to it and stopped abruptly. He shook his head.

“There’s that blamed White Horse right below, an’ they say it’s worse than the Box. I reckon I don’t dast tackle any lightning.”

Several miles below they ran in to the bank, and all four walked down to look at the bad water. The river, which was a succession of rapids, was here deflected toward the right bank by a rocky reef. The whole body of water, rushing crookedly into the narrow passage, accelerated its speed frightfully, and was upflung unto huge waves, white and wrathful. This was the dread Mane of the White Horse, and here an even heavier toll of dead had been exacted. On one side of the Mane was a corkscrew curl-over and suck-under, and on the opposite side was the big whirlpool. To go through, the Mane itself must be ridden.

“This plum rips the strings outa the Box,” Shorty concluded.

As they watched, a boat took the head of the rapids above. It was a large boat, fully thirty feet long, laden with several tons of outfit and handled by six men. Before it reached the Mane it was plunging and leaping, at times almost hidden by the foam and spray.

Shorty shot a slow, sidelong glance at Kit, and said:

“She’s fair smoking, and she hasn’t hit the worst. They’ve hauled the oars in. There she takes it now. God! She’s gone! No; there she is!”

Big as the boat was, it had been buried from sight in the flying smother between crests. The next moment, in the thick of the Mane, the boat leaped up a crest and into view. To Kit’s amazement he saw the whole long bottom clearly outlined. The boat, for the fraction of an instant, was in the air, the men sitting idly in their places, all save one in the stern who stood at the steering sweep. Then came the downward plunge into the trough and a second disappearance. Three times the boat leaped and buried itself, then those on the bank saw its nose take the whirlpool as it slipped off the Mane. The steersman, vainly opposing with his full weight on the steering-gear, surrendered to the whirlpool and helped the boat to take the circle.

Three times it went around, each time so close to the rocks on which Kit and Shorty stood, that either could have leaped on board. The steersman, a man with a reddish beard of recent growth, waved his hand to them. The only way out of the whirlpool was by the Mane, and on the round the boat entered the Mane obliquely at its upper end. Possibly out of fear of the draw of the whirlpool, the steersman did not attempt to straighten out quickly enough. When he did, it was too late. Alternately in the air and buried, the boat angled the Mane and sucked into and down through the stiff wall of the corkscrew on the opposite side of the river. A hundred feet below, boxes and bales began to float up. Then appeared the bottom of the boat and the scattered heads of six men. Two managed to make the bank in the eddy below. The others were drawn under, and the general flotsam was lost to view, borne on by the swift current around the bend.

There was a long minute of silence. Shorty was the first to speak.

"Come on," he said. "We might as well tackle it. My feet'll get cold if I stay here any longer."

"We'll smoke some," Kit grinned at him.

"And you'll sure earn your name," was the rejoinder. Shorty turned to their employers. "Comin'?" he queried.

Perhaps the roar of the water prevented them from hearing the invitation.

Shorty and Kit tramped back through a foot of snow to the head of the rapids and cast off the boat. Kit was divided between two impressions: one, of the caliber of his comrade, which served as a spur to him; the other, likewise a spur, was the knowledge that old Isaac Bellew, and all the other Bellews, had done things like this in their westward march of empire. What they had done, he could do. It was the meat, the strong meat, and he knew, as never before, that it required strong men to eat such meat.

"You've sure got to keep the top of the ridge," Shorty shouted at him, the plug tobacco lifting to his mouth, as the boat quickened in the quickening current and took the head of the rapids.

Kit nodded, swayed his strength and weight tentatively on the steering oar, and headed the boat for the plunge.

Several minutes later, half-swamped and lying against the bank in the eddy below the White Horse, Shorty spat out a mouthful of tobacco juice and shook Kit's hand.

"Meat! Meat!" Shorty chanted. "We eat it raw! We eat it alive!"

At the top of the bank they met Breck. His wife stood at a little distance. Kit shook his hand.

"I'm afraid your boat can't make it," he said. "It is smaller than ours and a bit cranky."

The man pulled out a row of bills.

“I’ll give you each a hundred if you run it through.”

Kit looked out and up the tossing Mane of the White Horse. A long, gray twilight was falling, it was turning colder, and the landscape seemed taking on a savage bleakness.

“It ain’t that,” Shorty was saying. “We don’t want your money. Wouldn’t touch it nohow. But my pardner is the real meat with boats, and when he says yourn ain’t safe I reckon he knows what he’s talkin’ about.”

Kit nodded affirmation, and chanced to glance at Mrs Breck. Her eyes were fixed upon him, and he knew that if ever he had seen prayer in a woman’s eyes he was seeing it then. Shorty followed his gaze and saw what he saw. They looked at each other in confusion and did not speak. Moved by the common impulse, they nodded to each other and turned to the trail that led to the head of the rapids. They had not gone a hundred yards when they met Stine and Sprague coming down.

“Where are you going?” the latter demanded.

“To fetch that other boat through,” Shorty answered.

“No you’re not. It’s getting dark. You two are going to pitch camp.”

So huge was Kit’s disgust that he forebore to speak.

“He’s got his wife with him,” Shorty said.

“That’s his lookout,” Stine contributed.

“And Smoke’s and mine,” was Shorty’s retort.

“I forbid you,” Sprague said harshly. “Smoke, if you go another step I’ll discharge you.”

“And you, too, Shorty,” Stine added.

“And a hell of a pickle you’ll be in with us fired,” Shorty replied. “How’ll you get your blamed boat to Dawson? Who’ll serve you coffee in your blankets and manicure your finger-nails? Come on, Smoke. They don’t dast fire us. Besides, we’ve got agreements. It they fire us they’ve got to divvy up grub to last us through the winter.”

Barely had they shoved Breck’s boat out from the bank and caught the first rough water, when the waves began to lap aboard. They were small waves, but it was an earnest of what was to come. Shorty cast back a quizzical glance as he gnawed at his inevitable plug, and Kit felt a strange rush of warmth at his heart for this man who couldn’t swim and who couldn’t back out.

The rapids grew stiffer, and the spray began to fly. In the gathering darkness, Kit glimpsed the Mane and the crooked fling of the current into it.

He worked into this crooked current, and felt a glow of satisfaction as the boat hit the head of the Mane squarely in the middle. After that, in the smother, leaping and burying and swamping, he had no clear impression of anything save that he swung his weight on the steering oar and wished his uncle were there to see. They emerged, breathless, wet through, and filled with water almost to the gunwale. Lighter pieces of baggage and outfit were floating inside the boat. A few careful strokes on Shorty's part worked the boat into the draw of the eddy, and the eddy did the rest till the boat softly touched against the bank. Looking down from above was Mrs Breck. Her prayer had been answered, and the tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"You boys have simply got to take the money," Breck called down to them.

Shorty stood up, slipped, and sat down in the water, while the boat dipped one gunwale under and righted again.

"Damn the money," said Shorty. "Fetch out that whiskey. Now that it's over I'm getting cold feet, an' I'm sure likely to have a chill."

V.

In the morning, as usual, they were among the last of the boats to start. Breck, despite his boating inefficiency, and with only his wife and nephew for crew, had broken camp, loaded his boat, and pulled out at the first streak of day. But there was no hurry in Stine and Sprague, who seemed incapable of realizing that the freeze-up might come at any time. They malingered, got in the way, delayed, and doubted the work of Kit and Shorty.

"I'm sure losing my respect for God, seein' as he must a-made them two mistakes in human form," was the latter's blasphemous way of expressing his disgust.

"Well, you're the real goods at any rate," Kit grinned back at him. "It makes me respect God the more just to look at you."

"He was sure goin' some, eh?" was Shorty's fashion of overcoming the embarrassment of the compliment.

The trail by water crossed Lake Le Barge. Here was no fast current, but a tideless stretch of forty miles which must be rowed unless a fair wind blew. But the time for fair wind was past, and an icy gale blew in their teeth out of the north. This made a rough sea, against which it was almost impossible to pull the boat. Added to their troubles was driving snow; also, the freezing of the water on their oar-blades kept one man occupied in chopping it off with a hatchet. Compelled to take their turn at the oars, Sprague and Stine patently loafed. Kit had learned how to throw his weight on an oar, but he noted that his employers made a seeming of throwing their weights and that they dipped their oars at a cheating angle.

At the end of three hours, Sprague pulled his oar in and said they would run back into the mouth of the river for shelter. Stine seconded him, and the several hard-won miles were lost. A second day, and a third, the same fruitless attempt was made. In the river mouth, the continually arriving boats from White Horse made a flotilla of over two hundred. Each day forty or fifty arrived, and only two or three won to the north-west short of the lake and did not come back. Ice was now forming in the eddies, and connecting from eddy to eddy in thin lines around the points. The freeze-up was very imminent.

"We could make it if they had the souls of clams," Kit told Shorty, as they dried their moccasins by the fire on the evening of the third day. "We could have made it to-day if they hadn't turned back. Another hour's work would have fetched that west shore. They're--they're babes in the woods."

"Sure," Shorty agreed. He turned his moccasin to the flame and debated a moment. "Look here, Smoke. It's hundreds of miles to Dawson. If we don't want to freeze in here, we've got to do something. What d'ye say?"

Kit looked at him, and waited.

"We've got the immortal cinch on them two babes," Shorty expounded. "They can give orders an' shed mazuma, but, as you say, they're plum babes. If we're goin' to Dawson, we got to take charge of this here outfit."

They looked at each other.

"It's a go," said Kit, as his hand went out in ratification.

In the morning, long before daylight, Shorty issued his call.

"Come on!" he roared. "Tumble out, you sleepers! Here's your coffee! Kick in to it! We're goin' to make a start!"

Grumbling and complaining, Stine and Sprague were forced to get under way two hours earlier than ever before. If anything, the gale was stiffer, and in a short time every man's face was iced up, while the oars were heavy with ice. Three hours they struggled, and four, one man steering, one chopping ice, two toiling at the oars, and each taking his various turns. The north-west shore loomed nearer and nearer. The gale blew even harder, and at last Sprague pulled in his oar in token of surrender. Shorty sprang to it, though his relief had only begun.

“Chop ice,” he said, handing Sprague the hatchet.

“But what’s the use?” the other whined. “We can’t make it. We’re going to turn back.”

“We’re going on,” said Shorty. “Chop ice. An’ when you feel better you can spell me.”

It was heart-breaking toil, but they gained the shore, only to find it composed of surge-beaten rocks and cliffs, with no place to land.

“I told you so,” Sprague whimpered.

“You never peeped,” Shorty answered.

“We’re going back.”

Nobody spoke, and Kit held the boat into the seas as they skirted the forbidding shore. Sometimes they gained no more than a foot to the stroke, and there were times when two or three strokes no more than enabled them to hold their own. He did his best to hearten the two weaklings. He pointed out that the boats which had won to this shore had never come back. Perforce, he argued, they had found a shelter somewhere ahead. Another hour they laboured, and a second.

“If you fellows put into your oars some of that coffee you swig in your blankets, we’d make it,” was Shorty’s encouragement. “You’re just goin’ through the motions an’ not pullin’ a pound.”

A few minutes later Sprague drew in his oar.

“I’m finished,” he said, and there were tears in his voice.

“So are the rest of us,” Kit answered, himself ready to cry or to commit murder, so great was his exhaustion. “But we’re going on just the same.”

“We’re going back. Turn the boat around.”

“Shorty, if he won’t pull, take that oar yourself,” Kit commanded.

“Sure,” was the answer. “He can chop ice.”

But Sprague refused to give over the oar; Stine had ceased rowing, and the boat was drifting backward.

“Turn around, Smoke,” Sprague ordered.

And Kit, who never in his life had cursed any man, astonished himself.

“I’ll see you in hell, first,” he replied. “Take hold of that oar and pull.”

It is in moments of exhaustion that men lose all their reserves of civilization, and such a moment had come. Each man had reached the breaking-point. Sprague jerked off a mitten, drew his revolver, and turned it on his steersman. This was a new experience to Kit. He had never had a gun presented at him in his life. And now, to his surprise, it seemed to mean nothing at all. It was the most natural thing in the world.

“If you don’t put that gun up,” he said, “I’ll take it away and rap you over the knuckles with it.”

“If you don’t turn the boat around I’ll shoot you,” Sprague threatened.

Then Shorty took a hand. He ceased chopping ice and stood up behind Sprague.

“Go on an’ shoot,” said Shorty, wiggling the hatchet. “I’m just aching for a chance to brain you. Go on an’ start the festivities.”

“This is mutiny,” Stine broke in. “You were engaged to obey orders.”

Shorty turned on him.

“Oh, you’ll get yours as soon as I finish with your pardner, you little hog-wallopin’ snooper, you.”

“Sprague,” Kit said, “I’ll give you just thirty seconds to put away that gun and get that oar out.”

Sprague hesitated, gave a short hysterical laugh, put the revolver away and bent his back to the work.

For two hours more, inch by inch, they fought their way along the edge of the foaming rocks, until Kit feared he had made a mistake. And then, when on the verge of himself turning back, they came abreast of a narrow opening, not twenty feet wide, which led into a land-locked inclosure where the fiercest gusts scarcely flawed the surface. It was the haven gained by the boats of previous days. They landed on a shelving beach, and the two employers lay in collapse in the boat, while Kit and Shorty pitched the tent, built a fire, and started the cooking.

“What’s a hog-walloping snooper, Shorty?” Kit asked.

“Blamed if I know,” was the answer; “but he’s one just the same.”

The gale, which had been dying quickly, ceased at nightfall, and it came on clear and cold. A cup of coffee, set aside to cool and forgotten, a few minutes later was found coated with half an inch of ice. At eight o’clock, when Sprague and Stine, already rolled in their blankets, were sleeping the sleep of exhaustion, Kit came back from a look at the boat.

“It’s the freeze-up, Shorty,” he announced. “There’s a skin of ice over the whole pond already.”

“What are you going to do?”

“There’s only one thing. The lake of course freezes first. The rapid current of the river may keep it open for days. This time to-morrow any boat caught in Lake Le Barge remains there until next year.”

“You mean we got to get out to-night? Now?”

Kit nodded.

“Tumble out, you sleepers!” was Shorty’s answer, couched in a roar, as he began casting off the guy-ropes of the tent.

The other two awoke, groaning with the pain of stiffened muscles and the pain of rousing from exhausted sleep.

“What time is it?” Stine asked.

“Half-past eight.”

“It’s dark yet,” was the objection.

Shorty jerked out a couple of guy-ropes, and the tent began to sag.

“It’s not morning,” he said. “It’s evening. Come on. The lake’s freezin’. We got to get acrost.”

Stine sat up, his face bitter and wrathful.

“Let it freeze. We’re not going to stir.”

“All right,” said Shorty. “We’re goin’ on with the boat.”

“You were engaged--“

“To take you to Dawson,” Shorty caught him up. “Well, we’re takin’ you, ain’t we?”

He punctuated his query by bringing half the tent down on top of them.

They broke their way through the thin ice in the little harbour, and came out on the lake, where the water, heavy and glassy, froze on their oars with every stroke. The water soon became like mush, clogging the stroke of the oars and freezing in the air even as it dripped. Later the surface began to form a skin, and the boat proceeded slower and slower.

Often, afterwards, when Kit tried to remember that night and failed to bring up aught but nightmare recollections, he wondered what must have been the sufferings of Stine and Sprague. His one impression of himself was that he struggled through biting frost and intolerable exertion for a thousand years more or less.

Morning found them stationary. Stine complained of frosted fingers, and Sprague of his nose, while the pain in Kit’s cheeks and nose told him that he, too, had been touched. With each accretion of daylight they could see farther, and far as they could see was icy surface. The water of the lake was gone. A hundred yards away was the shore of the north end. Shorty insisted that it was the opening of the river and that he could see water. He and Kit alone were able to work, and with their oars they broke the ice and forced the boat along. And at the last gasp of their strength they made the suck of the rapid river. One look back showed them several boats which had fought through the night and were hopelessly frozen in; then they whirled around a bend in a current running six miles an hour.

VI.

Day by day they floated down the swift river, and day by day the shore-ice extended farther out. When they made camp at nightfall, they chopped a space in the ice in which to lay the boat, and carried the camp outfit hundreds of feet to shore. In the morning, they chopped the boat out through the new ice and caught the current. Shorty set up the sheet-iron stove in the boat, and over this Stine and Sprague hung through the long, drifting hours. They had surrendered, no longer gave orders, and their one desire was to gain Dawson. Shorty, pessimistic, indefatigable, and joyous, at frequent intervals roared out the three lines of the first four-line stanza of a song he had forgotten. The colder it got the oftener he sang:

“Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this Modern Greece;
Tum-tum, tum-tum; tum-tum, tum-tum,
To shear the Golden Fleece.”

As they passed the mouths of the Hootalinqua and the Big and Little Salmon, they found these streams throwing mush-ice into the main Yukon. This gathered about the boat and attached itself, and at night they found themselves compelled to chop the boat out of the current. In the morning they chopped the boat back into the current.

The last night ashore was spent between the mouths of the White River and the Stewart. At daylight they found the Yukon, half a mile wide, running white from ice-rimmed bank to ice-rimmed bank. Shorty cursed the universe with less geniality than usual, and looked at Kit.

“We’ll be the last boat this year to make Dawson,” Kit said.

“But they ain’t no water, Smoke.”

“Then we’ll ride the ice down. Come on.”

Futilely protesting, Sprague and Stine were bundled on board. For half an hour, with axes, Kit and Shorty struggled to cut a way into the swift but solid stream. When they did succeed in clearing the shore-ice, the floating ice forced the boat along the edge for a hundred yards, tearing away half of one gunwale and making a partial wreck of it. Then they caught the current at the lower end of the bend that flung off-shore. They proceeded to work farther toward the middle. The stream was no longer composed of mush-ice but of hard cakes. In between the cakes only was mush-ice, that froze solidly as they looked at it. Shoving with the oars against the cakes, sometimes climbing out on the cakes in order to force the boat along, after an hour they gained the middle. Five minutes after they ceased their exertions, the boat was frozen in. The whole river was coagulating as it ran. Cake froze to cake, until at last the boat was the centre of a cake seventy-five feet in diameter. Sometimes they floated sidewise, sometimes stern-first, while gravity tore asunder the forming fetters in the moving mass, only to be manacled by faster-forming ones. While the hours passed, Shorty stoked the stove, cooked meals, and chanted his war song.

Night came, and after many efforts, they gave up the attempt to force the boat to shore, and through the darkness they swept helplessly onward.

"What if we pass Dawson?" Shorty queried.

"We'll walk back," Kit answered, "if we're not crushed in a jam."

The sky was clear, and in the light of the cold leaping stars they caught occasional glimpses of the loom of mountains on either hand. At eleven o'clock, from below, came a dull, grinding roar. Their speed began to diminish, and cakes of ice to up-end and crash and smash about them. The river was jamming. One cake, forced upward, slid across their cake and carried one side of the boat away. It did not sink, for its own cake still upbore it, but in a whirl they saw dark water show for an instant within a foot of them. Then all movement ceased. At the end of half an hour the whole river picked itself up and began to move. This continued for an hour, when again it was brought to rest by a jam. Once again it started, running swiftly and savagely, with a great grinding. Then they saw lights ashore, and, when abreast, gravity and the Yukon surrendered, and the river ceased for six months.

On the shore at Dawson, curious ones gathered to watch the river freeze, heard from out of the darkness the war-song of Shorty:

"Like Argus of the ancient times,
We leave this Modern Greece;
Tum-tum, tum-tum; tum-tum, tum-tum,

To shear the Golden Fleece."

VII.

For three days Kit and Shorty laboured, carrying the ton and a half of outfit from the middle of the river to the log-cabin Stine and Sprague had bought on the hill overlooking Dawson. This work finished, in the warm cabin, as twilight was falling, Sprague motioned Kit to him. Outside the thermometer registered sixty-five below zero.

"Your full month isn't up, Smoke," Sprague said. "But here it is in full. I wish you luck."

"How about the agreement?" Kit asked. "You know there's a famine here. A man can't get work in the mines even, unless he has his own grub. You agreed--"

"I know of no agreement," Sprague interrupted. "Do you, Stine? We engaged you by the month. There's your pay. Will you sign the receipt?"

Kit's hands clenched, and for the moment he saw red. Both men shrank away from him. He had never struck a man in anger in his life, and he felt so certain of his ability to thrash Sprague that he could not bring himself to do it.

Shorty saw his trouble and interposed.

"Look here, Smoke, I ain't travelin' no more with a ornery outfit like this. Right here's where I sure jump it. You an' me stick together. Savve? Now, you take your blankets an' hike down to the Elkhorn. Wait for me. I'll settle up, collect what's comin', an' give them what's comin'. I ain't no good on the water, but my feet's on terry-fermy now an' I'm sure goin' to make smoke."

. . . . .

Half an hour afterwards Shorty appeared at the Elkhorn. From his bleeding knuckles and the skin off one cheek, it was evident that he had given Stine and Sprague what was coming.

"You ought to see that cabin," he chuckled, as they stood at the bar. "Rough-house ain't no name for it. Dollars to doughnuts nary one of 'em shows up on the street for a week. An' now it's all figgered out for you an' me. Grub's a dollar an' a half a pound. They ain't no work for wages without you have your own grub. Moose-meat's sellin' for two dollars a pound an' they ain't none. We got enough money for a month's grub an' ammunition, an’ we hike up the Klondike to the back country. If they ain’t no moose, we go an’ live with the Indians. But if we ain’t got five thousand pounds of meat six weeks from now, I’ll--I’ll sure go back an’ apologize to our bosses. Is it a go?”

Kit’s hand went out and they shook. Then he faltered.

“I don’t know anything about hunting,” he said.

Shorty lifted his glass.

“But you’re a sure meat-eater, an’ I’ll learn you.”

The Men of Forty-Mile

When Big Jim Belden ventured the apparently innocuous proposition that mush-ice was ‘rather pecooliar,’ he little dreamed of what it would lead to.

Neither did Lon McFane, when he affirmed that anchor-ice was even more so; nor did Bettles, as he instantly disagreed, declaring the very existence of such a form to be a bugaboo.

‘An’ ye’d be tellin’ me this,’ cried Lon, ‘after the years ye’ve spint in the land! An’ we atin’ out the same pot this many’s the day!’ ‘But the thing’s agin reasin,’ insisted Bettles.

‘Look you, water’s warmer than ice-‘ ‘An’ little the difference, once ye break through.’

‘Still it’s warmer, because it ain’t froze. An’ you say it freezes on the bottom?’ ‘Only the anchor-ice, David, only the anchor-ice. An’ have ye niver drifted along, the water clear as glass, whin suddin, belike a cloud over the sun, the mushy-ice comes bubblin’ up an’ up till from bank to bank an’ bind to bind it’s drapin’ the river like a first snowfall?’ ‘Unh, hunh! more’n once when I took a doze at the steering-oar. But it allus come out the nighest side-channel, an’ not bubblin’ up an’ up.’ ‘But with niver a wink at the helm?’

‘No; nor you. It’s agin reason. I’ll leave it to any man!’ Bettles appealed to the circle about the stove, but the fight was on between himself and Lon McFane.

‘Reason or no reason, it’s the truth I’m tellin’ ye. Last fall, a year gone, ‘twas Sitka Charley and meself saw the sight, droppin’ down the riffle ye’ll remember below Fort Reliance. An’ regular fall weather it was--the glint o’ the sun on the golden larch an’ the quakin’ aspens; an’ the glister of light on ivery ripple; an’ beyand, the winter an’ the blue haze of the North comin’ down hand in hand. It’s well ye know the same, with a fringe to the river an’ the ice formin’ thick in the eddies--an’ a snap an’ sparkle to the air, an’ ye a-feelin’ it through all yer blood, atakin’ new lease of life with ivery suck of it. ‘Tis then, me boy, the world grows small an’ the wandtherlust lays ye by the heels.

‘But it’s meself as wandthers. As I was sayin’, we a-paddlin’, with niver a sign of ice, barrin’ that by the eddies, when the Injun lifts his paddle an’ sings out, “Lon McFane!

Look ye below!” So have I heard, but niver thought to see! As ye know, Sitka Charley, like meself, niver drew first breath in the land; so the sight was new. Then we drifted, with a head over ayther side, peerin’ down through the sparkly water. For the world like the days I spint with the pearlers, watchin’ the coral banks a-growin’ the same as so many gardens under the sea.

There it was, the anchor-ice, clingin’ an’ clusterin’ to ivery rock, after the manner of the white coral.

‘But the best of the sight was to come. Just after clearin’ the tail of the riffle, the water turns quick the color of milk, an’ the top of it in wee circles, as when the graylin’ rise in the spring, or there’s a splatter of wet from the sky. ‘Twas the anchor-ice comin’ up. To the right, to the lift, as far as iver a man cud see, the water was covered with the same.

An’ like so much porridge it was, slickin’ along the bark of the canoe, stickin’ like glue to the paddles. It’s many’s the time I shot the self-same riffle before, and it’s many’s the time after, but niver a wink of the same have I seen. ‘Twas the sight of a lifetime.’ ‘Do tell!’ dryly commented Bettles. ‘D’ye think I’d b’lieve such a yarn? I’d ruther say the glister of light’d gone to your eyes, and the snap of the air to your tongue.’ “Twas me own eyes that beheld it, an’ if Sitka Charley was here, he’d be the lad to back me.’ ‘But facts is facts, an’ they ain’t no gettin’ round ‘em. It ain’t in the nature of things for the water furtherest away from the air to freeze first.’ ‘But me own eyes-‘ ‘Don’t git het up over it,’ admonished Bettles, as the quick Celtic anger began to mount.

‘Then yer not after belavin’ me?’ ‘Sence you’re so blamed forehanded about it, no; I’d b’lieve nature first, and facts.’

‘Is it the lie ye’d be givin’ me?’ threatened Lon. ‘Ye’d better be askin’ that Siwash wife of yours. I’ll lave it to her, for the truth I spake.’ Bettles flared up in sudden wrath. The Irishman had unwittingly wounded him; for his wife was the half-breed daughter of a Russian fur-trader, married to him in the Greek Mission of Nulato, a thousand miles or so down the Yukon, thus being of much higher caste than the common Siwash, or native, wife. It was a mere Northland nuance, which none but the Northland adventurer may understand.

‘I reckon you kin take it that way,’ was his deliberate affirmation.

The next instant Lon McFane had stretched him on the floor, the circle was broken up, and half a dozen men had stepped between.

Bettles came to his feet, wiping the blood from his mouth. ‘It hain’t new, this takin’ and payin’ of blows, and don’t you never think but that this will be squared.’ ‘An’ niver in me life did I take the lie from mortal man,’ was the retort courteous. ‘An’ it’s an avil day I’ll not be to hand, waitin’ an’ willin’ to help ye lift yer debts, barrin’ no manner of way.’

‘Still got that 38-55?’ Lon nodded.

‘But you’d better git a more likely caliber. Mine’ll rip holes through you the size of walnuts.’

‘Niver fear; it’s me own slugs smell their way with soft noses, an’ they’ll spread like flapjacks against the coming out beyand. An’ when’ll I have the pleasure of waitin’ on ye? The waterhole’s a strikin’ locality.’ ‘‘Tain’t bad. Jest be there in an hour, and you won’t set long on my coming.’ Both men mittened and left the Post, their ears closed to the remonstrances of their comrades. It was such a little thing; yet with such men, little things, nourished by quick tempers and stubborn natures, soon blossomed into big things.

Besides, the art of burning to bedrock still lay in the womb of the future, and the men of Forty-Mile, shut in by the long Arctic winter, grew high-stomached with overeating and enforced idleness, and became as irritable as do the bees in the fall of the year when the hives are overstocked with honey.

There was no law in the land. The mounted police was also a thing of the future. Each man measured an offense, and meted out the punishment inasmuch as it affected himself.

Rarely had combined action been necessary, and never in all the dreary history of the camp had the eighth article of the Decalogue been violated.

Big Jim Belden called an impromptu meeting. Scruff Mackenzie was placed as temporary chairman, and a messenger dispatched to solicit Father Roubeau’s good offices. Their position was paradoxical, and they knew it. By the right of might could they interfere to prevent the duel; yet such action, while in direct line with their wishes, went counter to their opinions. While their rough-hewn, obsolete ethics recognized the individual prerogative of wiping out blow with blow, they could not bear to think of two good comrades, such as Bettles and McFane, meeting in deadly battle. Deeming the man who would not fight on provocation a dastard, when brought to the test it seemed wrong that he should fight.

But a scurry of moccasins and loud cries, rounded off with a pistol-shot, interrupted the discussion. Then the storm-doors opened and Malemute Kid entered, a smoking Colt's in his hand, and a merry light in his eye.

'I got him.' He replaced the empty shell, and added, 'Your dog, Scruff.' 'Yellow Fang?'

Mackenzie asked.

'No; the lop-eared one.' 'The devil! Nothing the matter with him.' 'Come out and take a look.' 'That's all right after all. Buess he's got 'em, too. Yellow Fang came back this morning and took a chunk out of him, and came near to making a widower of me.

Made a rush for Zarinska, but she whisked her skirts in his face and escaped with the loss of the same and a good roll in the snow. Then he took to the woods again.

Hope he don't come back. Lost any yourself?' 'One--the best one of the pack--Shookum.

Started amuck this morning, but didn't get very far. Ran foul of Sitka Charley's team, and they scattered him all over the street. And now two of them are loose, and raging mad; so you see he got his work in. The dog census will be small in the spring if we don't do something.'

'And the man census, too.' 'How's that? Who's in trouble now?' 'Oh, Bettles and Lon McFane had an argument, and they'll be down by the waterhole in a few minutes to settle it.' The incident was repeated for his benefit, and Malemute Kid, accustomed to an obedience which his fellow men never failed to render, took charge of the affair. His quickly formulated plan was explained, and they promised to follow his lead implicitly.

'So you see,' he concluded, 'we do not actually take away their privilege of fighting; and yet I don't believe they'll fight when they see the beauty of the scheme. Life's a game and men the gamblers. They'll stake their whole pile on the one chance in a thousand.

Take away that one chance, and--they won't play.' He turned to the man in charge of the Post. 'Storekeeper, weight out three fathoms of your best half-inch manila.

'We'll establish a precedent which will last the men of Forty-Mile to the end of time,' he prophesied. Then he coiled the rope about his arm and led his followers out of doors, just in time to meet the principals.

'What danged right'd he to fetch my wife in?' thundered Bettles to the soothing overtures of a friend. ''Twa'n't called for,' he concluded decisively. ‘‘Twa’n’t called for,’ he reiterated again and again, pacing up and down and waiting for Lon McFane.

And Lon McFane--his face was hot and tongue rapid as he flaunted insurrection in the face of the Church. ‘Then, father,’ he cried, ‘it’s with an aisy heart I’ll roll in me flamy blankets, the broad of me back on a bed of coals. Niver shall it be said that Lon McFane took a lie ‘twixt the teeth without iver liftin’ a hand! An’ I’ll not ask a blessin’. The years have been wild, but it’s the heart was in the right place.’ ‘But it’s not the heart, Lon,’

interposed Father Roubeau; ‘It’s pride that bids you forth to slay your fellow man.’ ‘Yer Frinch,’ Lon replied. And then, turning to leave him, ‘An’ will ye say a mass if the luck is against me?’ But the priest smiled, thrust his moccasined feet to the fore, and went out upon the white breast of the silent river. A packed trail, the width of a sixteeninch sled, led out to the waterhole. On either side lay the deep, soft snow. The men trod in single file, without conversation; and the black-stoled priest in their midst gave to the function the solemn aspect of a funeral. It was a warm winter’s day for Forty-Mile--a day in which the sky, filled with heaviness, drew closer to the earth, and the mercury sought the unwonted level of twenty below. But there was no cheer in the warmth. There was little air in the upper strata, and the clouds hung motionless, giving sullen promise of an early snowfall. And the earth, unresponsive, made no preparation, content in its hibernation.

When the waterhole was reached, Bettles, having evidently reviewed the quarrel during the silent walk, burst out in a final ‘‘Twa’n’t called for,’ while Lon McFane kept grim silence. Indignation so choked him that he could not speak.

Yet deep down, whenever their own wrongs were not uppermost, both men wondered at their comrades. They had expected opposition, and this tacit acquiescence hurt them. It seemed more was due them from the men they had been so close with, and they felt a vague sense of wrong, rebelling at the thought of so many of their brothers coming out, as on a gala occasion, without one word of protest, to see them shoot each other down. It appeared their worth had diminished in the eyes of the community. The proceedings puzzled them.

‘Back to back, David. An’ will it be fifty paces to the man, or double the quantity?’

‘Fifty,’ was the sanguinary reply, grunted out, yet sharply cut.

But the new manila, not prominently displayed, but casually coiled about Malemute Kid's arm, caught the quick eye of the Irishman, and thrilled him with a suspicious fear.

'An' what are ye doin' with the rope?' 'Hurry up!' Malemute Kid glanced at his watch.

'I've a batch of bread in the cabin, and I don't want it to fall. Besides, my feet are getting cold.' The rest of the men manifested their impatience in various suggestive ways.

'But the rope, Kid' It's bran' new, an' sure yer bread's not that heavy it needs raisin' with the like of that?' Bettles by this time had faced around. Father Roubeau, the humor of the situation just dawning on him, hid a smile behind his mittened hand.

'No, Lon; this rope was made for a man.' Malemute Kid could be very impressive on occasion.

'What man?' Bettles was becoming aware of a personal interest.

'The other man.' 'An' which is the one ye'd mane by that?' 'Listen, Lon--and you, too, Bettles! We've been talking this little trouble of yours over, and we've come to one conclusion. We know we have no right to stop your fighting-' 'True for ye, me lad!' 'And we're not going to. But this much we can do, and shall do--make this the only duel in the history of Forty-Mile, set an example for every che-cha-qua that comes up or down the Yukon. The man who escapes killing shall be hanged to the nearest tree. Now, go ahead!'

Lon smiled dubiously, then his face lighted up. 'Pace her off, David--fifty paces, wheel, an' niver a cease firin' till a lad's down for good. 'Tis their hearts'll niver let them do the deed, an' it's well ye should know it for a true Yankee bluff.'

He started off with a pleased grin on his face, but Malemute Kid halted him.

'Lon! It's a long while since you first knew me?' 'Many's the day.' 'And you, Bettles?'

'Five year next June high water.' 'And have you once, in all that time, known me to break my word' Or heard of me breaking it?' Both men shook their heads, striving to fathom what lay beyond.

'Well, then, what do you think of a promise made by me?' 'As good as your bond,' from Bettles.

‘The thing to safely sling yer hopes of heaven by,’ promptly endorsed Lon McFane.

‘Listen! I, Malemute Kid, give you my word--and you know what that meansthat the man who is not shot stretches rope within ten minutes after the shooting.’ He stepped back as Pilate might have done after washing his hands.

A pause and a silence came over the men of Forty-Mile. The sky drew still closer, sending down a crystal flight of frost--little geometric designs, perfect, evanescent as a breath, yet destined to exist till the returning sun had covered half its northern journey.

Both men had led forlorn hopes in their time--led with a curse or a jest on their tongues, and in their souls an unswerving faith in the God of Chance. But that merciful deity had been shut out from the present deal. They studied the face of Malemute Kid, but they studied as one might the Sphinx. As the quiet minutes passed, a feeling that speech was incumbent on them began to grow. At last the howl of a wolf-dog cracked the silence from the direction of Forty-Mile. The weird sound swelled with all the pathos of a breaking heart, then died away in a long-drawn sob.

‘Well I be danged!’ Bettles turned up the collar of his mackinaw jacket and stared about him helplessly.

‘It’s a gloryus game yer runnin’, Kid,’ cried Lon McFane. ‘All the percentage of the house an’ niver a bit to the man that’s buckin’. The Devil himself’d niver tackle such a cinch--and damned if I do.’ There were chuckles, throttled in gurgling throats, and winks brushed away with the frost which rimed the eyelashes, as the men climbed the ice-notched bank and started across the street to the Post. But the long howl had drawn nearer, invested with a new note of menace. A woman screamed round the corner. There was a cry of, ‘Here he comes!’ Then an Indian boy, at the head of half a dozen frightened dogs, racing with death, dashed into the crowd. And behind came Yellow Fang, a bristle of hair and a flash of gray. Everybody but the Yankee fled.

The Indian boy had tripped and fallen. Bettles stopped long enough to grip him by the slack of his furs, then headed for a pile of cordwood already occupied by a number of his comrades. Yellow Fang, doubling after one of the dogs, came leaping back. The fleeing animal, free of the rabies, but crazed with fright, whipped Bettles off his feet and flashed on up the street. Malemute Kid took a flying shot at Yellow Fang. The mad dog whirled a half airspring, came down on his back, then, with a single leap, covered half the distance between himself and Bettles.

But the fatal spring was intercepted. Lon McFane leaped from the woodpile, countering him in midair. Over they rolled, Lon holding him by the throat at arm's length, blinking under the fetid slaver which sprayed his face. Then Bettles, revolver in hand and coolly waiting a chance, settled the combat.

''Twas a square game, Kid,' Lon remarked, rising to his feet and shaking the snow from out his sleeves; 'with a fair percentage to meself that bucked it.' That night, while Lon McFane sought the forgiving arms of the Church in the direction of Father Roubeau's cabin, Malemute Kid talked long to little purpose.

'But would you,' persisted Mackenzie, 'supposing they had fought?' 'Have I ever broken my word?' 'No; but that isn't the point. Answer the question. Would you?' Malemute Kid straightened up. 'Scruff, I've been asking myself that question ever since, and — '

'Well?' 'Well, as yet, I haven't found the answer.'

The Mexican

NOBODY knew his history--they of the Junta least of all. He was their "little mystery," their "big patriot," and in his way he worked as hard for the coming Mexican Revolution as did they. They were tardy in recognizing this, for not one of the Junta liked him. The day he first drifted into their crowded, busy rooms, they all suspected him of being a spy--one of the bought tools of the Diaz secret service. Too many of the comrades were in civil an military prisons scattered over the United States, and others of them, in irons, were even then being taken across the border to be lined up against adobe walls and shot.

At the first sight the boy did not impress them favorably. Boy he was, not more than eighteen and not over large for his years. He announced that he was Felipe Rivera, and that it was his wish to work for the Revolution. That was all--not a wasted word, no further explanation. He stood waiting. There was no smile on his lips, no geniality in his eyes. Big dashing Paulino Vera felt an inward shudder. Here was something forbidding, terrible, inscrutable. There was something venomous and snakelike in the boy's black eyes. They burned like cold fire, as with a vast, concentrated bitterness. He flashed them from the faces of the conspirators to the typewriter which little Mrs. Sethby was industriously operating. His eyes rested on hers but an instant--she had chanced to look up--and she, too, sensed the nameless something that made her pause. She was compelled to read back in order to regain the swing of the letter she was writing.

Paulino Vera looked questioningly at Arrellano and Ramos, and questioningly they looked back and to each other. The indecision of doubt brooded in their eyes. This slender boy was the Unknown, vested with all the menace of the Unknown. He was unrecognizable, something quite beyond the ken of honest, ordinary revolutionists whose fiercest hatred for Diaz and his tyranny after all was only that of honest and ordinary patriots. Here was something else, they knew not what. But Vera, always the most impulsive, the quickest to act, stepped into the breach.

"Very well," he said coldly. "You say you want to work for the Revolution. Take off your coat. Hang it over there. I will show you, come--where are the buckets and cloths. The floor is dirty. You will begin by scrubbing it, and by scrubbing the floors of the other rooms. The spittoons need to be cleaned. Then there are the windows."

"Is it for the Revolution?" the boy asked.

"It is for the Revolution," Vera answered.

Rivera looked cold suspicion at all of them, then proceeded to take off his coat.

"It is well," he said.

And nothing more. Day after day he came to his work--sweeping, scrubbing, cleaning. He emptied the ashes from the stoves, brought up the coal and kindling, and lighted the fires before the most energetic one of them was at his desk.

Ah, ha! So that was it--the hand of Diaz showing through! To sleep in the rooms of the Junta meant access to their secrets, to the lists of names, to the addresses of comrades down on Mexican soil. The request was denied, and Rivera never spoke of it again. He slept they knew not where, and ate they knew not where nor how. Once, Arrellano offered him a couple of dollars. Rivera declined the money with a shake of the head. When Vera joined in and tried to press it upon him, he said:

"I am working for the Revolution."

It takes money to raise a modern revolution. and always the Junta was pressed. The members starved and toiled, and the longest day was none too long, and yet there were times when it appeared as if the Revolution stood or fell on no more than the matter of a few dollars. Once, the first time, when the rent of the house was two months behind and the landlord was threatening dispossession, it was Felipe Rivera, the scrub-boy in the poor, cheap clothes, worn and threadbare, who laid sixty dollars in gold on May Sethby's desk. There were other times. Three hundred letters, clicked out on the busy typewriters (appeals for assistance, for sanctions from the organized labor groups, requests for square news deals to the editors of newspapers, protests against the high-handed treatment of revolutionists by the United States courts), lay unmailed, awaiting postage. Vera's watch had disappeared--the old-fashioned gold repeater that had been his father's. Likewise had gone the plain gold band from May Setbby's third finger. Things were desperate. Ramos and Arrellano pulled their long mustaches in despair. The letters must go off, and the Post Office allowed no credit to purchasers of stamps. Then it was that Rivera put on his hat and went out.

When he came back he laid a thousand two-cent stamps on May Sethby's desk.

"I wonder if it is the cursed gold of Diaz?" said Vera to the comrades.

They elevated their brows and could not decide. And Felipe Rivera, the scrubber for the Revolution, continued, as occasion arose, to lay down gold and silver for the Junta's use.

And still they could not bring themselves to like him. They did not know him. His ways were not theirs. He gave no confidences. He repelled all probing. Youth that he was, they could never nerve themselves to dare to question him.

"A great and lonely spirit, perhaps, I do not know, I do not know," Arrellano said helplessly.

"He is not human," said Ramos.

"His soul has been seared," said May Sethby. "Light and laughter have been burned out of him. He is like one dead, and yet he is fearfully alive."

"He has been through hell," said Vera. "No man could look like that who has not been through hell--and he is only a boy."

Yet they could not like him. He never talked, never inquired, never suggested. He would stand listening, expressionless, a thing dead, save for his eyes, coldly burning, while their talk of the Revolution ran high and warm. From face to face and speaker to speaker his eyes would turn, boring like gimlets of incandescent ice, disconcerting and perturbing.

"He is no spy," Vera confided to May Sethby. "He is a patriot--mark me, the greatest patriot of us all. I know it, I feel it, here in my heart and head I feel it. But him I know not at all."

"He has a bad temper," said May Sethby.

"I know," said Vera, with a shudder. "He has looked at me with those eyes of his. They do not love; they threaten; they are savage as a wild tiger's. I know, if I should prove unfaithful to the Cause, that he would kill me. He has no heart. He is pitiless as steel, keen and cold as frost. He is like moonshine in a winter night when a man freezes to death on some lonely mountain top. I am not afraid of Diaz and all his killers; but this boy, of him am I afraid. I tell you true. I am afraid. He is the breath of death."

Yet Vera it was who persuaded the others to give the first trust to Rivera. The line of communication between Los Angeles and Lower California had broken down. Three of the comrades had dug their own graves and been shot into them. Two more were United States prisoners in Los Angeles.

Juan Alvarado, the Federal commander, was a monster. All their plans did he checkmate. They could no longer gain access to the active revolutionists, and the incipient ones, in Lower California.

Young Rivera was given his instructions and dispatched south. When he returned, the line of communication was reestablished, and Juan Alvarado was dead. He had been found in bed, a knife hilt-deep in his breast. This had exceeded Rivera's instructions, but they of the Junta knew the times of his movements. They did not ask him. He said nothing. But they looked at one another and conjectured.

"I have told you," said Vera. "Diaz has more to fear from this youth than from any man. He is implacable. He is the hand of God."

The bad temper, mentioned by May Sethby, and sensed by them all, was evidenced by physical proofs. Now he appeared with a cut lip, a blackened cheek, or a swollen ear. It was patent that he brawled, somewhere in that outside world where he ate and slept, gained money, and moved in ways unknown to them. As the time passed, he had come to set type for the little revolutionary sheet they published weekly. There were occasions when he was unable to set type, when his knuckles were bruised and battered, when his thumbs were injured and helpless, when one arm or the other hung wearily at his side while his face was drawn with unspoken pain.

"A wastrel," said Arrellano.

"A frequenter of low places," said Ramos.

"But where does he get the money?" Vera demanded. "Only to-day, just now, have I learned that he paid the bill for white paper--one hundred and forty dollars."

"There are his absences," said May Sethby. "He never explains them."

"We should set a spy upon him," Ramos propounded.

"I should not care to be that spy," said Vera. "I fear you would never see me again, save to bury me. He has a terrible passion. Not even God would he permit to stand between him and the way of his passion."

"I feel like a child before him," Ramos confessed.

"To me he is power--he is the primitive, the wild wolf, the striking rattlesnake, the stinging centipede," said Arrellano.

"He is the Revolution incarnate," said Vera. "He is the flame and the spirit of it, the insatiable cry for vengeance that makes no cry but that slays noiselessly. He is a destroying angel in moving through the still watches of the night."

"I could weep over him," said May Sethby. "He knows nobody. He hates all people. Us he tolerates, for we are the way of his desire. He is alone. . . . lonely." Her voice broke in a half sob and there was dimness in her eyes.

Rivera's ways and times were truly mysterious. There were periods when they did not see him for a week at a time. Once, he was away a month. These occasions were always capped by his return, when, without advertisement or speech, he laid gold coins on May Sethby's desk. Again, for days and weeks, he spent all his time with the Junta. And yet again, for irregular periods, he would disappear through the heart of each day, from early morning until late afternoon. At such times he came early and remained late. Arrellano had found him at midnight, setting type with fresh swollen knuckles, or mayhap it was his lip, new-split, that still bled.

II

The time of the crisis approached. Whether or not the Revolution would be depended upon the Junta, and the Junta was hard-pressed. The need for money was greater than ever before, while money was harder to get. Patriots had given their last cent and now could give no more. Section gang laborers-fugitive peons from Mexico--were contributing half their scanty wages. But more than that was needed. The heart-breaking, conspiring, undermining toil of years approached fruition. The time was ripe. The Revolution hung on the balance. One shove more, one last heroic effort, and it would tremble across the scales to victory. They knew their Mexico. Once started, the Revolution would take care of itself. The whole Diaz machine would go down like a house of cards. The border was ready to rise. One Yankee, with a hundred I.W.W. men, waited the word to cross over the border and begin the conquest of Lower California. But he needed guns. And clear across to the Atlantic, the Junta in touch with them all and all of them needing guns, mere adventurers, soldiers of fortune, bandits, disgruntled American union men, socialists, anarchists, rough-necks, Mexican exiles, peons escaped from bondage, whipped miners from the bull-pens of Coeur d'Alene and Colorado who desired only the more vindictively to fight--all the flotsam and jetsam of wild spirits from the madly complicated modern world. And it was guns and ammunition, ammunition and guns--the unceasing and eternal cry.

Fling this heterogeneous, bankrupt, vindictive mass across the border, and the Revolution was on. The custom house, the northern ports of entry, would be captured. Diaz could not resist. He dared not throw the weight of his armies against them, for he must hold the south. And through the south the flame would spread despite. The people would rise. The defenses of city after city would crumple up. State after state would totter down. And at last, from every side, the victorious armies of the Revolution would close in on the City of Mexico itself, Diaz's last stronghold.

But the money. They had the men, impatient and urgent, who would use the guns. They knew the traders who would sell and deliver the guns. But to culture the Revolution thus far had exhausted the Junta. The last dollar had been spent, the last resource and the last starving patriot milked dry, and the great adventure still trembled on the scales. Guns and ammunition! The ragged battalions must be armed. But how? Ramos lamented his confiscated estates. Arrellano wailed the spendthriftness of his youth. May Sethby wondered if it would have been different had they of the Junta been more economical in the past.

"To think that the freedom of Mexico should stand or fall on a few paltry thousands of dollars," said Paulino Vera.

Despair was in all their faces. Jose Amarillo, their last hope, a recent convert, who had promised money, had been apprehended at his hacienda in Chihuahua and shot against his own stable wall. The news had just come through.

Rivera, on his knees, scrubbing, looked up, with suspended brush, his bare arms flecked with soapy, dirty water.

"Will five thousand do it?" he asked.

They looked their amazement. Vera nodded and swallowed. He could not speak, but he was on the instant invested with a vast faith.

"Order the guns," Rivera said, and thereupon was guilty of the longest flow of words they had ever heard him utter. "The time is short. In three weeks I shall bring you the five thousand. It is well. The weather will be warmer for those who fight. Also, it is the best I can do."

Vera fought his faith. It was incredible. Too many fond hopes had been shattered since he had begun to play the revolution game. He believed this threadbare scrubber of the Revolution, and yet he dared not believe.

"You are crazy," he said.

"In three weeks," said Rivera. "Order the guns."

He got up, rolled down his sleeves, and put on his coat.

"Order the guns," he said.

"I am going now."

III

After hurrying and scurrying, much telephoning and bad language, a night session was held in Kelly’s office. Kelly was rushed with business; also, he was unlucky. He had brought Danny Ward out from New York, arranged the fight for him with Billy Carthey, the date was three weeks away, and for two days now, carefully concealed from the sporting writers, Carthey had been lying up, badly injured. There was no one to take his place. Kelly had been burning the wires East to every eligible lightweight, but they were tied up with dates and contracts. And now hope had revived, though faintly.

“You’ve got a hell of a nerve,” Kelly addressed Rivera, after one look, as soon as they got together.

Hate that was malignant was in Rivera’s eyes, but his face remained impassive.

“I can lick Ward,” was all he said.

“How do you know? Ever see him fight?”

Rivera shook his head.

“He can beat you up with one hand and both eyes closed.”

Rivera shrugged his shoulders.

“Haven’t you got anything to say?” the fight promoter snarled.

“I can lick him.”

“Who’d you ever fight, anyway!” Michael Kelly demanded. Michael was the promotor’s brother, and ran the Yellowstone pool rooms where he made goodly sums on the fight game.

Rivera favored him with a bitter, unanswering stare.

The promoter’s secretary, a distinctively sporty young man, sneered audibly.

“Well, you know Roberts,” Kelly broke the hostile silence. “He ought to be here. I’ve sent for him. Sit down and wait, though from the looks of you, you haven’t got a chance. I can’t throw the public down with a bum fight. Ringside seats are selling at fifteen dollars, you know that.”

When Roberts arrived, it was patent that he was mildly drunk. He was a tall, lean, slack-jointed individual, and his walk, like his talk, was a smooth and languid drawl.

Kelly went straight to the point.

“Look here, Roberts, you’ve been bragging you discovered this little Mexican. You know Carthey’s broke his arm. Well, this little yellow streak has the gall to blow in to-day and say he'll take Carthey's place. What about it?"

"It's all right, Kelly," came the slow response. "He can put up a fight."

"I suppose you'll be sayin' next that he can lick Ward," Kelly snapped.

Roberts considered judicially.

"No, I won't say that. Ward's a top-notcher and a ring general. But he can't hashhouse Rivera in short order. I know Rivera. Nobody can get his goat. He ain't got a goat that I could ever discover. And he's a two-handed fighter. He can throw in the sleep-makers from any position."

"Never mind that. What kind of a show can he put up? You've been conditioning and training fighters all your life. I take off my hat to your judgment. Can he give the public a run for its money?"

"He sure can, and he'll worry Ward a mighty heap on top of it. You don't know that boy. I do. I discovered him. He ain't got a goat. He's a devil. He's a wizzy-wooz if anybody should ask you. He'll make Ward sit up with a show of local talent that'll make the rest of you sit up. I won't say he'll lick Ward, but he'll put up such a show that you'll all know he's a comer."

"All right." Kelly turned to his secretary. "Ring up Ward. I warned him to show up if I thought it worth while. He's right across at the Yellowstone, throwin' chests and doing the popular."

Kelly turned back to the conditioner. "Have a drink?"

Roberts sipped his highball and unburdened himself.

"Never told you how I discovered the little cuss. It was a couple of years ago he showed up out at the quarters. I was getting Prayne ready for his fight with Delaney. Prayne's wicked. He ain't got a tickle of mercy in his make-up. I chopped up his pardner's something cruel, and I couldn't find a willing boy that'd work with him. I'd noticed this little starved Mexican kid hanging around, and I was desperate. So I grabbed him, shoved on the gloves and put him in. He was tougher'n rawhide, but weak. And he didn't know the first letter in the alphabet of boxing. Prayne chopped him to ribbons. But he hung on for two sickening rounds, when he fainted. Starvation, that was all. Battered! You couldn't have recognized him. I gave him half a dollar and a square meal. You oughta seen him wolf it down. He hadn't had the end of a bite for a couple of days. That's the end of him, thinks I. But next day he showed up, stiff an' sore, ready for another half and a square meal. And he done better as time went by. Just a born fighter, and tough beyond belief. He hasn't a heart. He's a piece of ice. And he never talked eleven words in a string since I know him. He saws wood and does his work.”

“I’ve seen ‘m,” the secretary said. “He’s worked a lot for you.”

“All the big little fellows has tried out on him,” Roberts answered. “And he’s learned from ‘em. I’ve seen some of them he could lick. But his heart wasn’t in it. I reckoned he never liked the game. He seemed to act that way.”

“He’s been fighting some before the little clubs the last few months,” Kelly said.

“Sure. But I don’t know what struck ‘m. All of a sudden his heart got into it. He just went out like a streak and cleaned up all the little local fellows. Seemed to want the money, and he’s won a bit, though his clothes don’t look it. He’s peculiar. Nobody knows his business. Nobody knows how he spends his time. Even when he’s on the job, he plumb up and disappears most of each day soon as his work is done. Sometimes he just blows away for weeks at a time. But he don’t take advice. There’s a fortune in it for the fellow that gets the job of managin’ him, only he won’t consider it. And you watch him hold out for the cash money when you get down to terms.”

It was at this stage that Danny Ward arrived. Quite a party it was. His manager and trainer were with him, and he breezed in like a gusty draught of geniality, good-nature, and all-conqueringness. Greetings flew about, a joke here, a retort there, a smile or a laugh for everybody. Yet it was his way, and only partly sincere. He was a good actor, and he had found geniality a most valuable asset in the game of getting on in the world. But down underneath he was the deliberate, cold-blooded fighter and business man. The rest was a mask. Those who knew him or trafficked with him said that when it came to brass tacks he was Danny-on-the-Spot. He was invariably present at all business discussions, and it was urged by some that his manager was a blind whose only function was to serve as Danny’s mouth-piece.

Rivera’s way was different. Indian blood, as well as Spanish, was in his veins, and he sat back in a corner, silent, immobile, only his black eyes passing from face to face and noting everything.

“So that’s the guy,” Danny said, running an appraising eye over his proposed antagonist. “How de do, old chap.”

Rivera’s eyes burned venomously, but he made no sign of acknowledgment. He disliked all Gringos, but this Gringo he hated with an immediacy that was unusual even in him.

“Gawd!” Danny protested facetiously to the promoter. “You ain’t expectin’ me to fight a deef mute.” When the laughter subsided, he made another hit. “Los Angeles must be on the dink when this is the best you can scare up. What kindergarten did you get ‘m from?”

“He’s a good little boy, Danny, take it from me,” Roberts defended. “Not as easy as he looks.”

“And half the house is sold already,” Kelly pleaded. “You’ll have to take ‘m on, Danny. It is the best we can do.”

Danny ran another careless and unflattering glance over Rivera and sighed.

“I gotta be easy with ‘m, I guess. If only he don’t blow up.”

Roberts snorted.

“You gotta be careful,” Danny’s manager warned. “No taking chances with a dub that’s likely to sneak a lucky one across.”

“Oh, I’ll be careful all right, all right,” Danny smiled. “I’ll get in at the start an’ nurse ‘im along for the dear public’s sake. What d’ ye say to fifteen rounds, Kelly--an’ then the hay for him?”

“That’ll do,” was the answer. “As long as you make it realistic.”

“Then let’s get down to biz.” Danny paused and calculated. “Of course, sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts, same as with Carthey. But the split’ll be different. Eighty will just about suit me.” And to his manager, “That right?”

The manager nodded.

“Here, you, did you get that?” Kelly asked Rivera.

Rivera shook his head.

“Well, it is this way,” Kelly exposited. “The purse’ll be sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts. You’re a dub, and an unknown. You and Danny split, twenty per cent goin’ to you, an’ eighty to Danny. That’s fair, isn’t it, Roberts?”

“Very fair, Rivera,” Roberts agreed.

“You see, you ain’t got a reputation yet.”

“What will sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts be?” Rivera demanded.

“Oh, maybe five thousand, maybe as high as eight thousand,” Danny broke in to explain. “Something like that. Your share’ll come to something like a thousand or sixteen hundred. Pretty good for takin’ a licking from a guy with my reputation. What d’ ye say?”

Then Rivera took their breaths away. “Winner takes all,” he said with finality.

A dead silence prevailed.

“It’s like candy from a baby,” Danny’s manager proclaimed.

Danny shook his head.

“I’ve been in the game too long,” he explained.

“I’m not casting reflections on the referee, or the present company. I’m not sayin’ nothing about book-makers an’ frame-ups that sometimes happen. But what I do say is that it’s poor business for a fighter like me. I play safe. There’s no tellin’. Mebbe I break my arm, eh? Or some guy slips me a bunch of dope?” He shook his head solemnly. “Win or lose, eighty is my split. What d’ ye say, Mexican?”

Rivera shook his head.

Danny exploded. He was getting down to brass tacks now.

“Why, you dirty little greaser! I’ve a mind to knock your block off right now.”

Roberts drawled his body to interposition between hostilities.

“Winner takes all,” Rivera repeated sullenly.

“Why do you stand out that way?” Danny asked.

“I can lick you,” was the straight answer.

Danny half started to take off his coat. But, as his manager knew, it was a grand stand play. The coat did not come off, and Danny allowed himself to be placated by the group. Everybody sympathized with him. Rivera stood alone.

“Look here, you little fool,” Kelly took up the argument. “You’re nobody. We know what you ve been doing the last few months--putting away little local fighters. But Danny is class. His next fight after this will be for the championship. And you’re unknown. Nobody ever heard of you out of Los Angeles.”

“They will,” Rivera answered with a shrug, “after this fight.”

“You think for a second you can lick me?” Danny blurted in.

Rivera nodded.

“Oh, come; listen to reason,” Kelly pleaded. “Think of the advertising.”

“I want the money,” was Rivera’s answer.

“You couldn’t win from me in a thousand years,” Danny assured him.

“Then what are you holdin’ out for?” Rivera countered. “If the money’s that easy, why don’t you go after it?”

"I will, so help me!" Danny cried with abrupt conviction. "I'Il beat you to death in the ring, my boy--you monkeyin' with me this way. Make out the articles, Kelly. Winner take all. Play it up in the sportin' columns. Tell 'em it's a grudge fight. I'll show this fresh kid a few."

Kelly's secretary had begun to write, when Danny interrupted.

"Hold on!" He turned to Rivera.

"Weights?"

"Ringside," came the answer.

"Not on your life, Fresh Kid. If winner takes all, we weigh in at ten A.M."

"And winner takes all?" Rivera queried.

Danny nodded. That settled it. He would enter the ring in his full ripeness of strength.

"Weigh in at ten," Rivera said.

The secretary's pen went on scratching.

"It means five pounds," Roberts complained to Rivera.

"You've given too much away. You've thrown the fight right there. Danny'll lick you sure. He'll be as strong as a bull. You're a fool. You ain't got the chance of a dewdrop in hell."

Rivera's answer was a calculated look of hatred. Even this Gringo he despised, and him had he found the whitest Gringo of them all.

IV

Barely noticed was Rivera as he entered the ring. Only a very slight and very scattering ripple of half-hearted hand-clapping greeted him. The house did not believe in him. He was the lamb led to slaughter at the hands of the great Danny. Besides, the house was disappointed. It had expected a rushing battle between Danny Ward and Billy Carthey, and here it must put up with this poor little tyro. Still further, it had manifested its disapproval of the change by betting two, and even three, to one on Danny. And where a betting audience's money is, there is its heart.

The Mexican boy sat down in his corner and waited. The slow minutes lagged by. Danny was making him wait. It was an old trick, but ever it worked on the young, new fighters. They grew frightened, sitting thus and facing their own apprehensions and a callous, tobacco-smoking audience. But for once the trick failed. Roberts was right. Rivera had no goat. He, who was more delicately coordinated, more finely nerved and strung than any of them, had no nerves of this sort. The atmosphere of foredoomed defeat in his own corner had no effect on him. His handlers were Gringos and strangers. Also they were scrubs--the dirty driftage of the fight game, without honor, without efficiency. And they were chilled, as well, with certitude that theirs was the losing corner.

"Now you gotta be careful," Spider Hagerty warned him. Spider was his chief second. "Make it last as long as you can--them's my instructions from Kelly. If you don't, the papers'll call it another bum fight and give the game a bigger black eye in Los Angeles."

All of which was not encouraging. But Rivera took no notice. He despised prize fighting. It was the hated game of the hated Gringo. He had taken up with it, as a chopping block for others in the training quarters, solely because he was starving. The fact that he was marvelously made for it had meant nothing. He hated it. Not until he had come in to the Junta, had he fought for money, and he had found the money easy. Not first among the sons of men had he been to find himself successful at a despised vocation.

He did not analyze. He merely knew that he must win this fight. There could be no other outcome. For behind him, nerving him to this belief, were profounder forces than any the crowded house dreamed. Danny Ward fought for money, and for the easy ways of life that money would bring. But the things Rivera fought for burned in his brain--blazing and terrible visions, that, with eyes wide open, sitting lonely in the corner of the ring and waiting for his tricky antagonist, he saw as clearly as he had lived them.

He saw the white-walled, water-power factories of Rio Blanco. He saw the six thousand workers, starved and wan, and the little children, seven and eight years of age, who toiled long shifts for ten cents a day. He saw the perambulating corpses, the ghastly death's heads of men who labored in the dye-rooms. He remembered that he had heard his father call the dye-rooms the "suicide-holes," where a year was death. He saw the little patio, and his mother cooking and moiling at crude housekeeping and finding time to caress and love him. And his father he saw, large, big-moustached and deep-chested, kindly above all men, who loved all men and whose heart was so large that there was love to overflowing still left for the mother and the little muchacho playing in the corner of the patio. In those days his name had not been Felipe Rivera. It had been Fernandez, his father's and mother's name. Him had they called Juan. Later, he had changed it himself, for he had found the name of Fernandez hated by prefects of police, jefes politicos, and rurales.

Big, hearty Joaquin Fernandez! A large place he occupied in Rivera's visions. He had not understood at the time, but looking back he could understand. He could see him setting type in the little printery, or scribbling endless hasty, nervous lines on the much-cluttered desk. And he could see the strange evenings, when workmen, coming secretly in the dark like men who did ill deeds, met with his father and talked long hours where he, the muchacho, lay not always asleep in the corner.

As from a remote distance he could hear Spider Hagerty saying to him: "No layin' down at the start. Them's instructions. Take a beatin' and earn your dough."

Ten minutes had passed, and he still sat in his comer. There were no signs of Danny, who was evidently playing the trick to the limit.

But more visions burned before the eye of Rivera's memory. The strike, or, rather, the lockout, because the workers of Rio Blanco had helped their striking brothers of Puebla. The hunger, the expeditions in the hills for berries, the roots and herbs that all ate and that twisted and pained the stomachs of all of them. And then, the nightmare; the waste of ground before the company's store; the thousands of starving workers; General Rosalio Martinez and the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz, and the death-spitting rifles that seemed never to cease spitting, while the workers' wrongs were washed and washed again in their own blood. And that night! He saw the flat cars, piled high with the bodies of the slain, consigned to Vera Cruz, food for the sharks of the bay. Again he crawled over the grisly heaps, seeking and finding, stripped and mangled, his father and his mother. His mother he especially remembered--only her face projecting, her body burdened by the weight of dozens of bodies. Again the rifles of the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz cracked, and again he dropped to the ground and slunk away like some hunted coyote of the hills.

To his ears came a great roar, as of the sea, and he saw Danny Ward, leading his retinue of trainers and seconds, coming down the center aisle. The house was in wild uproar for the popular hero who was bound to win. Everybody proclaimed him. Everybody was for him. Even Rivera's own seconds warmed to something akin to cheerfulness when Danny ducked jauntily through the ropes and entered the ring. His face continually spread to an unending succession of smiles, and when Danny smiled he smiled in every feature, even to the laughter-wrinkles of the corners of the eyes and into the depths of the eyes themselves. Never was there so genial a fighter.

His face was a running advertisement of good feeling, of good fellowship. He knew everybody. He joked, and laughed, and greeted his friends through the ropes. Those farther away, unable to suppress their admiration, cried loudly: “Oh, you Danny!” It was a joyous ovation of affection that lasted a full five minutes.

Rivera was disregarded. For all that the audience noticed, he did not exist. Spider Lagerty’s bloated face bent down close to his.

“No gettin’ scared,” the Spider warned.

“An’ remember instructions. You gotta last. No layin’ down. If you lay down, we got instructions to beat you up in the dressing rooms. Savve? You just gotta fight.”

The house began to applaud. Danny was crossing the ring to him. Danny bent over, caught Rivera’s right hand in both his own and shook it with impulsive heartiness. Danny’s smile-wreathed face was close to his. The audience yelled its appreciation of Danny’s display of sporting spirit. He was greeting his opponent with the fondness of a brother. Danny’s lips moved, and the audience, interpreting the unheard words to be those of a kindly-natured sport, yelled again. Only Rivera heard the low words.

“You little Mexican rat,” hissed from between Danny’s gaily smiling lips, “I’ll fetch the yellow outa you.”

Rivera made no move. He did not rise. He merely hated with his eyes.

“Get up, you dog!” some man yelled through the ropes from behind.

The crowd began to hiss and boo him for his unsportsmanlike conduct, but he sat unmoved. Another great outburst of applause was Danny’s as he walked back across the ring.

When Danny stripped, there was ohs! and ahs! of delight. His body was perfect, alive with easy suppleness and health and strength. The skin was white as a woman’s, and as smooth. All grace, and resilience, and power resided therein. He had proved it in scores of battles. His photographs were in all the physical culture magazines.

A groan went up as Spider Hagerty peeled Rivera’s sweater over his head. His body seemed leaner, because of the swarthiness of the skin. He had muscles, but they made no display like his opponent’s. What the audience neglected to see was the deep chest. Nor could it guess the toughness of the fiber of the flesh, the instantaneousness of the cell explosions of the muscles, the fineness of the nerves that wired every part of him into a spendid fighting mechanism. All the audience saw was a brown-skinned boy of eighteen with what seemed the body of a boy. With Danny it was different. Danny was a man of twenty-four, and his body was a man's body. The contrast was still more striking as they stood together in the center of the ring receiving the referee's last instructions.

Rivera noticed Roberts sitting directly behind the newspaper men. He was drunker than usual, and his speech was correspondingly slower.

"Take it easy, Rivera," Roberts drawled.

"He can't kill you, remember that. He'll rush you at the go-off, but don't get rattled. You just cover up, and stall, and clinch. He can't hurt you much. Just make believe to yourself that he's choppin' out on you at the trainin' quarters."

Rivera made no sign that he had heard.

"Sullen little devil," Roberts muttered to the man next to him. "He always was that way."

But Rivera forgot to look his usual hatred. A vision of countless rifles blinded his eyes. Every face in the audience, far as he could see, to the high dollar-seats, was transformed into a rifle. And he saw the long Mexican border arid and sun-washed and aching, and along it he saw the ragged bands that delayed only for the guns.

Back in his corner he waited, standing up. His seconds had crawled out through the ropes, taking the canvas stool with them. Diagonally across the squared ring, Danny faced him. The gong struck, and the battle was on. The audience howled its delight. Never had it seen a battle open more convincingly. The papers were right. It was a grudge fight. Three-quarters of the distance Danny covered in the rush to get together, his intention to eat up the Mexican lad plainly advertised. He assailed with not one blow, nor two, nor a dozen. He was a gyroscope of blows, a whirlwind of destruction. Rivera was nowhere. He was overwhelmed, buried beneath avalanches of punches delivered from every angle and position by a past master in the art. He was overborne, swept back against the ropes, separated by the referee, and swept back against the ropes again.

It was not a fight. It was a slaughter, a massacre. Any audience, save a prize fighting one, would have exhausted its emotions in that first minute. Danny was certainly showing what he could do--a splendid exhibition. Such was the certainty of the audience, as well as its excitement and favoritism, that it failed to take notice that the Mexican still stayed on his feet. It forgot Rivera. It rarely saw him, so closely was he enveloped in Danny's man-eating attack. A minute of this went by, and two minutes. Then, in a separation, it caught a clear glimpse of the Mexican. His lip was cut, his nose was bleeding. As he turned and staggered into a clinch, the welts of oozing blood, from his contacts with the ropes, showed in red bars. across his back. But what the audience did not notice was that his chest was not heaving and that his eyes were coldly burning as ever. Too many aspiring champions, in the cruel welter of the training camps, had practiced this man-eating attack on him. He had learned to live through for a compensation of from half a dollar a go up to fifteen dollars a week--a hard school, and he was schooled hard.

Then happened the amazing thing. The whirling, blurring mix-up ceased suddenly. Rivera stood alone. Danny, the redoubtable Danny, lay on his back. His body quivered as consciousness strove to return to it. He had not staggered and sunk down, nor had he gone over in a long slumping fall. The right hook of Rivera had dropped him in midair with the abruptness of death. The referee shoved Rivera back with one hand, and stood over the fallen gladiator counting the seconds. It is the custom of prize-fighting audiences to cheer a clean knock-down blow. But this audience did not cheer. The thing had been too unexpected. It watched the toll of the seconds in tense silence, and through this silence the voice of Roberts rose exultantly:

“I told you he was a two-handed fighter!”

By the fifth second, Danny was rolling over on his face, and when seven was counted, he rested on one knee, ready to rise after the count of nine and before the count of ten. If his knee still touched the floor at “ten,” he was considered “down,” and also “out.” The instant his knee left the floor, he was considered “up,” and in that instant it was Rivera’s right to try and put him down again. Rivera took no chances. The moment that knee left the floor he would strike again. He circled around, but the referee circled in between, and Rivera knew that the seconds he counted were very slow. All Gringos were against him, even the referee.

At “nine” the referee gave Rivera a sharp thrust back. It was unfair, but it enabled Danny to rise, the smile back on his lips. Doubled partly over, with arms wrapped about face and abdomen, he cleverly stumbled into a clinch. By all the rules of the game the referee should have broken it, but he did not, and Danny clung on like a surf-battered barnacle and moment by moment recuperated. The last minute of the round was going fast. If he could live to the end, he would have a full minute in his corner to revive. And live to the end he did, smiling through all desperateness and extremity.

"The smile that won't come off!" somebody yelled, and the audience laughed loudly in its relief.

"The kick that Greaser's got is something God-awful," Danny gasped in his corner to his adviser while his handlers worked frantically over him.

The second and third rounds were tame. Danny, a tricky and consummate ring general, stalled and blocked and held on, devoting himself to recovering from that dazing first-round blow. In the fourth round he was himself again. Jarred and shaken, nevertheless his good condition had enabled him to regain his vigor. But he tried no man-eating tactics. The Mexican had proved a tartar. Instead, he brought to bear his best fighting powers. In tricks and skill and experience he was the master, and though he could land nothing vital, he proceeded scientifically to chop and wear down his opponent. He landed three blows to Rivera's one, but they were punishing blows only, and not deadly. It was the sum of many of them that constituted deadliness. He was respectful of this two-handed dub with the amazing short-arm kicks in both his fists.

In defense, Rivera developed a disconcerting straight-left. Again and again, attack after attack he straight-lefted away from him with accumulated damage to Danny's mouth and nose. But Danny was protean. That was why he was the coming champion. He could change from style to style of fighting at will. He now devoted himself to infighting. In this he was particularly wicked, and it enabled him to avoid the other's straight-left. Here he set the house wild repeatedly, capping it with a marvelous lockbreak and lift of an inside upper-cut that raised the Mexican in the air and dropped him to the mat. Rivera rested on one knee, making the most of the count, and in the soul of him he knew the referee was counting short seconds on him.

Again, in the seventh, Danny achieved the diabolical inside uppercut. He succeeded only in staggering Rivera, but, in the ensuing moment of defenseless helplessness, he smashed him with another blow through the ropes. Rivera's body bounced on the heads of the newspaper men below, and they boosted him back to the edge of the platform outside the ropes. Here he rested on one knee, while the referee raced off the seconds. Inside the ropes, through which he must duck to enter the ring, Danny waited for him. Nor did the referee intervene or thrust Danny back.

The house was beside itself with delight.

“Kill’m, Danny, kill’m!” was the cry.

Scores of voices took it up until it was like a war-chant of wolves.

Danny did his best, but Rivera, at the count of eight, instead of nine, came unexpectedly through the ropes and safely into a clinch. Now the referee worked, tearing him away so that he could be hit, giving Danny every advantage that an unfair referee can give.

But Rivera lived, and the daze cleared from his brain. It was all of a piece. They were the hated Gringos and they were all unfair. And in the worst of it visions continued to flash and sparkle in his brain--long lines of railroad track that simmered across the desert; rurales and American constables, prisons and calabooses; tramps at water tanks--all the squalid and painful panorama of his odyssey after Rio Blanca and the strike. And, resplendent and glorious, he saw the great, red Revolution sweeping across his land. The guns were there before him. Every hated face was a gun. It was for the guns he fought. He was the guns. He was the Revolution. He fought for all Mexico.

The audience began to grow incensed with Rivera. Why didn’t he take the licking that was appointed him? Of course he was going to be licked, but why should he be so obstinate about it? Very few were interested in him, and they were the certain, definite percentage of a gambling crowd that plays long shots. Believing Danny to be the winner, nevertheless they had put their money on the Mexican at four to ten and one to three. More than a trifle was up on the point of how many rounds Rivera could last. Wild money had appeared at the ringside proclaiming that he could not last seven rounds, or even six. The winners of this, now that their cash risk was happily settled, had joined in cheering on the favorite.

Rivera refused to be licked. Through the eighth round his opponent strove vainly to repeat the uppercut. In the ninth, Rivera stunned the house again. In the midst of a clinch he broke the lock with a quick, lithe movement, and in the narrow space between their bodies his right lifted from the waist. Danny went to the floor and took the safety of the count. The crowd was appalled. He was being bested at his own game. His famous right-uppercut had been worked back on him. Rivera made no attempt to catch him as he arose at “nine.” The referee was openly blocking that play, though he stood clear when the situation was reversed and it was Rivera who desired to rise.

Twice in the tenth, Rivera put through the right-uppercut, lifted from waist to opponent’s chin. Danny grew desperate. The smile never left his face, but he went back to his man-eating rushes. Whirlwind as he would, be could not damage Rivera, while Rivera through the blur and whirl, dropped him to the mat three times in succession. Danny did not recuperate so quickly now, and by the eleventh round he was in a serious way. But from then till the fourteenth he put up the gamest exhibition of his career. He stalled and blocked, fought parsimoniously, and strove to gather strength. Also, he fought as foully as a successful fighter knows how. Every trick and device he employed, butting in the clinches with the seeming of accident, pinioning Rivera’s glove between arm and body, heeling his glove on Rivera’s mouth to clog his breathing. Often, in the clinches, through his cut and smiling lips he snarled insults unspeakable and vile in Rivera’s ear. Everybody, from the referee to the house, was with Danny and was helping Danny. And they knew what he had in mind. Bested by this surprise-box of an unknown, he was pinning all on a single punch. He offered himself for punishment, fished, and feinted, and drew, for that one opening that would enable him to whip a blow through with all his strength and turn the tide. As another and greater fighter had done before him, he might do a right and left, to solar plexus and across the jaw. He could do it, for he was noted for the strength of punch that remained in his arms as long as he could keep his feet.

Rivera’s seconds were not half-caring for him in the intervals between rounds. Their towels made a showing, but drove little air into his panting lungs. Spider Hagerty talked advice to him, but Rivera knew it was wrong advice. Everybody was against him. He was surrounded by treachery. In the fourteenth round he put Danny down again, and himself stood resting, hands dropped at side, while the referee counted. In the other corner Rivera had been noting suspicious whisperings. He saw Michael Kelly make his way to Roberts and bend and whisper. Rivera’s ears were a cat’s, desert-trained, and he caught snatches of what was said. He wanted to hear more, and when his opponent arose he maneuvered the fight into a clinch over against the ropes.

“Got to,” he could hear Michael, while Roberts nodded. “Danny’s got to win--I stand to lose a mint--I’ve got a ton of money covered--my own. If he lasts the fifteenth I’m bust--the boy’ll mind you. Put something across.”

And thereafter Rivera saw no more visions. They were trying to job him. Once again he dropped Danny and stood resting, his hands at his slide. Roberts stood up.

“That settled him,” he said.

“Go to your corner.”

He spoke with authority, as he had often spoken to Rivera at the training quarters. But Rivera looked hatred at him and waited for Danny to rise. Back in his corner in the minute interval, Kelly, the promoter, came and talked to Rivera.

“Throw it, damn you,” he rasped in, a harsh low voice. “You gotta lay down, Rivera. Stick with me and I’ll make your future. I’ll let you lick Danny next time. But here’s where you lay down.”

Rivera showed with his eyes that he heard, but he made neither sign of assent nor dissent.

“Why don’t you speak?” Kelly demanded angrily.

“You lose, anyway,” Spider Hagerty supplemented. “The referee’ll take it away from you. Listen to Kelly, and lay down.”

“Lay down, kid,” Kelly pleaded, “and I’ll help you to the championship.”

Rivera did not answer.

“I will, so help me, kid.”

At the strike of the gong Rivera sensed something impending. The house did not. Whatever it was it was there inside the ring with him and very close. Danny’s earlier surety seemed returned to him. The confidence of his advance frightened Rivera. Some trick was about to be worked. Danny rushed, but Rivera refused the encounter. He side-stepped away into safety. What the other wanted was a clinch. It was in some way necessary to the trick. Rivera backed and circled away, yet he knew, sooner or later, the clinch and the trick would come. Desperately he resolved to draw it. He made as if to effect the clinch with Danny’s next rush. Instead, at the last instant, just as their bodies should have come together, Rivera darted nimbly back. And in the same instant Danny’s corner raised a cry of foul. Rivera had fooled them. The referee paused irresolutely. The decision that trembled on his lips was never uttered, for a shrill, boy’s voice from the gallery piped, “Raw work!”

Danny cursed Rivera openly, and forced him, while Rivera danced away. Also, Rivera made up his mind to strike no more blows at the body. In this he threw away half his chance of winning, but he knew if he was to win at all it was with the outfighting that remained to him. Given the least opportunity, they would lie a foul on him. Danny threw all caution to the winds. For two rounds he tore after and into the boy who dared not meet him at close quarters. Rivera was struck again and again; he took blows by the dozens to avoid the perilous clinch. During this supreme final rally of Danny's the audience rose to its feet and went mad. It did not understand. All it could see was that its favorite was winning, after all.

"Why don't you fight?" it demanded wrathfully of Rivera.

"You're yellow! You're yellow!" "Open up, you cur! Open up!" "Kill'm, Danny! Kill 'm!" "You sure got 'm! Kill 'm!"

In all the house, bar none, Rivera was the only cold man. By temperament and blood he was the hottest-passioned there; but he had gone through such vastly greater heats that this collective passion of ten thousand throats, rising surge on surge, was to his brain no more than the velvet cool of a summer twilight.

Into the seventeenth round Danny carried his rally. Rivera, under a heavy blow, drooped and sagged. His hands dropped helplessly as he reeled backward. Danny thought it was his chance. The boy was at, his mercy. Thus Rivera, feigning, caught him off his guard, lashing out a clean drive to the mouth. Danny went down. When he arose, Rivera felled him with a down-chop of the right on neck and jaw. Three times he repeated this. It was impossible for any referee to call these blows foul.

"Oh, Bill! Bill!" Kelly pleaded to the referee.

"I can't," that official lamented back. "He won't give me a chance."

Danny, battered and heroic, still kept coming up. Kelly and others near to the ring began to cry out to the police to stop it, though Danny's corner refused to throw in the towel. Rivera saw the fat police captain starting awkwardly to climb through the ropes, and was not sure what it meant. There were so many ways of cheating in this game of the Gringos. Danny, on his feet, tottered groggily and helplessly before him. The referee and the captain were both reaching for Rivera when he struck the last blow. There was no need to stop the fight, for Danny did not rise.

"Count!" Rivera cried hoarsely to the referee.

And when the count was finished, Danny's seconds gathered him up and carried him to his corner.

"Who wins?" Rivera demanded.

Reluctantly, the referee caught his gloved hand and held it aloft.

There were no congratulations for Rivera. He walked to his corner unattended, where his seconds had not yet placed his stool. He leaned backward on the ropes and looked his hatred at them, swept it on and about him till the whole ten thousand Gringos were included. His knees trembled under him, and he was sobbing from exhaustion. Before his eyes the hated faces swayed back and forth in the giddiness of nausea. Then he remembered they were the guns. The guns were his. The Revolution could go on.

The Minions of Midas

WADE ATSHELER is dead — dead by his own hand. To say that this was entirely unexpected by the small coterie which knew him, would be to say an untruth; and yet never once had we, his intimates, ever canvassed the idea. Rather had we been prepared for it in some incomprehensible subconscious way. Before the perpetration of the deed, its possibility is remotest from our thoughts; but when we did know that he was dead, it seemed, somehow, that we had understood and looked forward to it all the time. This, by retrospective analysis, we could easily explain by the fact of his great trouble. I use "great trouble" advisedly. Young, handsome, with an assured position as the right-hand man of Eben Hale, the great street-railway magnate, there could be no reason for him to complain of fortune's favors. Yet we had watched his smooth brow furrow and corrugate as under some carking care or devouring sorrow. We had watched his thick, black hair thin and silver as green grain under brazen skies and parching drought. Who can forget, in the midst of the hilarious scenes he toward the last sought with greater and greater avidity — who can forget, I say, the deep abstractions and black moods into which he fell? At such times, when the fun rippled and soared from height to height, suddenly, without rhyme or reason, his eyes would turn lacklustre, his brows knit, as with clenched hands and face overshot with spasms of mental pain he wrestled on the edge of the abyss with some unknown danger.

He never spoke of his trouble, nor were we indiscreet enough to ask. But it was just as well; for had we, and had he spoken, our help and strength could have availed nothing. When Eben Hale died, whose confidential secretary he was — nay, well-nigh adopted son and full business partner — he no longer came among us. Not, as I now know, that our company was distasteful to him, but because his trouble had so grown that he could not respond to our happiness nor find surcease with us. Why this should be so we could not at the time understand, for when Eben Hale's will was probated, the world learned that he was sole heir to his employer's many millions, and it was expressly stipulated that this great inheritance was given to him without qualification, hitch, or hindrance in the exercise thereof. Not a share of stock, not a penny of cash, was bequeathed to the dead man's relatives. As for his direct family, one astounding clause expressly stated that Wade Atsheler was to dispense to Eben Hale's wife and sons and daughters whatever moneys his judgement dictated, at whatever times he deemed advisable. Had there been any scandal in the dead man's family, or had his sons been wild or undutiful, then there might have been a glimmering of reason in this most unusual action; but Eben Hale's domestic happiness had been proverbial in the community, and one would have to travel far and wide to discover a cleaner, saner, wholesomer progeny of sons and daughters. While his wife — well, by those who knew her best she was endearingly termed "The Mother of the Gracchi." Needless to state, this inexplicable will was a nine day's wonder; but the expectant public was disappointed in that no contest was made.

It was only the other day that Eben Hale was laid away in his stately marble mausoleum. And now Wade Atsheler is dead. The news was printed in this morning's paper. I have just received through the mail a letter from him, posted, evidently, but a short hour before he hurled himself into eternity. This letter, which lies before me, is a narrative in his own handwriting, linking together numerous newspaper clippings and facsimiles of letters. The original correspondence, he has told me, is in the hands of the police. He has begged me, also, as a warning to society against a most frightful and diabolical danger which threatens its very existence, to make public the terrible series of tragedies in which he has been innocently concerned. I herewith append the text in full:

It was in August, 1899, just after my return from my summer vacation, that the blow fell. We did not know it at the time; we had not yet learned to school our minds to such awful possibilities. Mr. Hale opened the letter, read it, and tossed it upon my desk with a laugh. When I had looked it over, I also laughed, saying, "Some ghastly joke, Mr. Hale, and one in very poor taste." Find here, my dear John, an exact duplicate of the letter in question.

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M. August 17, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — We desire you to realize upon whatever portion of your vast holdings is necessary to obtain, IN CASH, twenty millions of dollars. This sum we require you to pay over to us, or to our agents. You will note we do not specify any given time, for it is not our wish to hurry you in this matter. You may even, if it be easier for you, pay us in ten, fifteen, or twenty instalments; but we will accept no single instalment of less than a million.

Believe us, dear Mr. Hale, when we say that we embark upon this course of action utterly devoid of animus. We are members of that intellectual proletariat, the increasing numbers of which mark in red lettering the last days of the nineteenth century. We have, from a thorough study of economics, decided to enter upon this business. It has many merits, chief among which may be noted that we can indulge in large and lucrative operations without capital. So far, we have been fairly successful, and we hope our dealings with you may be pleasant and satisfactory.

Pray attend while we explain our views more fully. At the base of the present system of society is to be found the property right. And this right of the individual to hold property is demonstrated, in the last analysis, to rest solely and wholly upon MIGHT. The mailed gentlemen of William the Conqueror divided and apportioned England amongst themselves with the naked sword. This, we are sure you will grant, is true of all feudal possessions. With the invention of steam and the Industrial Revolution there came into existence the Capitalist Class, in the modern sense of the word. These capitalists quickly towered above the ancient nobility. The captains of industry have virtually dispossessed the descendants of the captains of war. Mind, and not muscle, wins in to-day’s struggle for existence. But this state of affairs is none the less based upon might. The change has been qualitative. The old-time Feudal Baronage ravaged the world with fire and sword; the modern Money Baronage exploits the world by mastering and applying the world’s economic forces. Brain, and not brawn, endures; and those best fitted to survive are the intellectually and commercially powerful.

We, the M. of M., are not content to become wage slaves. The great trusts and business combinations (with which you have your rating) prevent us from rising to the place among you which our intellects qualify us to occupy. Why? Because we are without capital. We are of the unwashed, but with this difference: our brains are of the best, and we have no foolish ethical nor social scruples. As wage slaves, toiling early and late, and living abstemiously, we could not save in threescore years — nor in twenty times threescore years — a sum of money sufficient successfully to cope with the great aggregations of massed capital which now exist. Nevertheless, we have entered the arena. We now throw down the gage to the capital of the world. Whether it wishes to fight or not, it shall have to fight.

Mr. Hale, our interests dictate us to demand of you twenty millions of dollars. While we are considerate enough to give you reasonable time in which to carry out your share of the transaction, please do not delay too long. When you have agreed to our terms, insert a suitable notice in the agony column of the “Morning Blazer.” We shall then acquaint you with our plan for transferring the sum mentioned. You had better do this some time prior to October 1st. If you do not, in order to show that we are in earnest we shall on that date kill a man on East Thirty-ninth Street. He will be a workingman. This man you do not know; nor do we. You represent a force in modern society; we also represent a force — a new force. Without anger or malice, we have closed in battle. As you will readily discern, we are simply a business proposition. You are the upper, and we the nether, millstone; this man’s life shall be ground out between. You may save him if you agree to our conditions and act in time.

There was once a king cursed with a golden touch. His name we have taken to do duty as our official seal. Some day, to protect ourselves against competitors, we shall copyright it.

We beg to remain,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

I leave it to you, dear John, why should we not have laughed over such a preposterous communication? The idea, we could not but grant, was well conceived, but it was too grotesque to be taken seriously. Mr. Hale said he would preserve it as a literary curiosity, and shoved it away in a pigeonhole. Then we promptly forgot its existence. And as promptly, on the 1st of October, going over the morning mail, we read the following:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M., October 1, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Your victim has met his fate. An hour ago, on East Thirty-ninth Street, a workingman was thrust through the heart with a knife. Ere you read this his body will be lying at the Morgue. Go and look upon your handiwork.

On October 14th, in token of our earnestness in this matter, and in case you do not relent, we shall kill a policeman on or near the corner of Polk Street and Clermont Avenue.

Very cordially,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

Again Mr. Hale laughed. His mind was full of a prospective deal with a Chicago syndicate for the sale of all his street railways in that city, and so he went on dictating to the stenographer, never giving it a second thought.

But somehow, I know not why, a heavy depression fell upon me. What if it were not a joke, I asked myself, and turned involuntarily to the morning paper. There it was, as befitted an obscure person of the lower classes, a paltry half-dozen lines tucked away in a corner, next a patent medicine advertisement:

Shortly after five o'clock this morning, on East Thirty-ninth Street, a laborer named Pete Lascalle, while on his way to work, was stabbed to the heart by an unknown assailant, who escaped by running. The police have been unable to discover any motive for the murder.

"Impossible!" was Mr. Hale's rejoinder, when I had read the item aloud; but the incident evidently weighed upon his mind, for late in the afternoon, with many epithets denunciatory of his foolishness, he asked me to acquaint the police with the affair. I had the pleasure of being laughed at in the Inspector's private office, although I went away with the assurance that they would look into it and that the vicinity of Polk and Clermont would be doubly patrolled on the night mentioned. There it dropped, till the two weeks had sped by, when the following note came to us through the mail:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M. October 15, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Your second victim has fallen on schedule time. We are in no hurry; but to increase the pressure we shall henceforth kill weekly. To protect ourselves against police interference we shall hereafter inform you of the event but a little prior to or simultaneously with the deed. Trusting this finds you in good health,

We are,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

This time Mr. Hale took up the paper, and after a brief search, read to me this account:

A DASTARDLY CRIME

Joseph Donahue, assigned only last night to special patrol duty in the Eleventh Ward, at midnight was shot through the brain and instantly killed. The tragedy was enacted in the full glare of the street lights on the corner of Polk Street and Clermont Avenue. Our society is indeed unstable when the custodians of its peace are thus openly and wantonly shot down. The police have so far been unable to obtain the slightest clue.

Barely had he finished this when the police arrived — the Inspector himself and two of his keenest sleuths. Alarm sat upon their faces, and it was plain that they were seriously perturbed. Though the facts were so few and simple, we talked long, going over the affair again and again. When the Inspector went away, he confidently assured us that everything would soon be straightened out and the assassins run to earth. In the meantime he thought it well to detail guards for the protection of Mr. Hale and myself, and several more to be constantly on the vigil about the house and grounds. After the lapse of a week, at one o’clock in the afternoon, this telegram was received:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M. October 2I, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — We are sorry to note how completely you have misunderstood us. You have seen fit to surround yourself and household with armed guards, as though, forsooth, we were common criminals, apt to break in upon you and wrest away by force your twenty millions. Believe us, this is farthest from our intention.

You will readily comprehend, after a little sober thought, that your life is dear to us. Do not be afraid. We would not hurt you for the world. It is our policy to cherish you tenderly and protect you from all harm. Your death means nothing to us. If it did, rest assured that we would not hesitate a moment in destroying you. Think this over, Mr. Hale. When you have paid us our price, there will be need of retrenchment. Dismiss your guards now, and cut down your expenses.

Within minutes of the time you receive this a nurse-girl will have been choked to death in Brentwood Park. The body may be found in the shrubbery lining the path which leads off to the left from the band-stand.

Cordially yours,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

The next instant Mr. Hale was at the telephone, warning the Inspector of the impending murder. The Inspector excused himself in order to call up Police Sub-station F and despatch men to the scene. Fifteen minutes later he rang us up and informed us that the body had been discovered, yet warm, in the place indicated. That evening the papers teemed with glaring Jack-the-Strangler headlines, denouncing the brutality of the deed and complaining about the laxity of the police. We were also closeted with the Inspector, who begged us by all means to keep the affair secret. Success, he said, depended upon silence.

As you know, John, Mr. Hale was a man of iron. He refused to surrender. But, oh, John, it was terrible, nay, horrible — this awful something, this blind force in the dark. We could not fight, could not plan, could do nothing save hold our hands and wait. And week by week, as certain as the rising of the sun, came the notification and death of some person, man or woman, innocent of evil, but just as much killed by us as though we had done it with our own hands. A word from Mr. Hale and the slaughter would have ceased. But he hardened his heart and waited, the lines deepening, the mouth and eyes growing sterner and firmer, and the face aging with the hours. It is needless for me to speak of my own suffering during that frightful period. Find here the letters and telegrams of the M. of M., and the newspaper accounts, etc., of the various murders.

You will notice also the letters warning Mr. Hale of certain machinations of commercial enemies and secret manipulations of stock. The M. of M. seemed to have its hand on the inner pulse of the business and financial world. They possessed themselves of and forwarded to us information which our agents could not obtain. One timely note from them, at a critical moment in a certain deal, saved all of five millions to Mr. Hale. At another time they sent us a telegram which probably was the means of preventing an anarchist crank from taking my employer’s life. We captured the man on his arrival and turned him over to the police, who found upon him enough of a new and powerful explosive to sink a battleship.

We persisted. Mr. Hale was grit clear through. He disbursed at the rate of one hundred thousand per week for secret service. The aid of the Pinkertons and of countless private detective agencies was called in, and in addition to this thousands were upon our payroll. Our agents swarmed everywhere, in all guises, penetrating all classes of society. They grasped at a myriad clues; hundreds of suspects were jailed, and at various times thousands of suspicious persons were under surveillance, but nothing tangible came to light. With its communications the M. of M. continually changed its method of delivery. And every messenger they sent us was arrested forthwith. But these inevitably proved to be innocent individuals, while their descriptions of the persons who had employed them for the errand never tallied. On the last day of December we received this notification:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M., December 31, 1899.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Pursuant of our policy, with which we flatter ourselves you are already well versed, we beg to state that we shall give a passport from this Vale of Tears to Inspector Bying, with whom, because of our attentions, you have become so well acquainted. It is his custom to be in his private office at this hour. Even as you read this he breathes his last.

Cordially yours,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

I dropped the letter and sprang to the telephone. Great was my relief when I heard the Inspector's hearty voice. But, even as he spoke, his voice died away in the receiver to a gurgling sob, and I heard faintly the crash of a falling body. Then a strange voice hello'd me, sent me the regards of the M. of M., and broke the switch. Like a flash I called up the public office of the Central Police, telling them to go at once to the Inspector's aid in his private office. I then held the line, and a few minutes later received the intelligence that he had been found bathed in his own blood and breathing his last. There were no eyewitnesses, and no trace was discoverable of the murderer.

Whereupon Mr. Hale immediately increased his secret service till a quarter of a million flowed weekly from his coffers. He was determined to win out. His graduated rewards aggregated over ten millions. You have a fair idea of his resources and you can see in what manner he drew upon them. It was the principle, he affirmed, that he was fighting for, not the gold. And it must be admitted that his course proved the nobility of his motive. The police departments of all the great cities cooperated, and even the United States Government stepped in, and the affair became one of the highest questions of state. Certain contingent funds of the nation were devoted to the unearthing of the M. of M., and every government agent was on the alert. But all in vain. The Minions of Midas carried on their damnable work unhampered. They had their way and struck unerringly.

But while he fought to the last, Mr. Hale could not wash his hands of the blood with which they were dyed. Though not technically a murderer, though no jury of his peers would ever have convicted him, none the less the death of every individual was due to him. As I said before, a word from him and the slaughter would have ceased. But he refused to give that word. He insisted that the integrity of society was assailed; that he was not sufficiently a coward to desert his post; and that it was manifestly just that a few should be martyred for the ultimate welfare of the many. Nevertheless this blood was upon his head, and he sank into deeper and deeper gloom. I was likewise whelmed with the guilt of an accomplice. Babies were ruthlessly killed, children, aged men; and not only were these murders local, but they were distributed over the country. In the middle of February, one evening, as we sat in the library, there came a sharp knock at the door. On responding to it I found, Lying on the carpet of the corridor, the following missive:

OFFICE OF THE M. OF M., February 15, 1900.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — Does not your soul cry out upon the red harvest it is reaping? Perhaps we have been too abstract in conducting our business. Let us now be concrete. Miss Adelaide Laidlaw is a talented young woman, as good, we understand, as she is beautiful. She is the daughter of your old friend, Judge Laidlaw, and we happen to know that you carried her in your arms when she was an infant. She is your daughter's closest friend, and at present is visiting her. When your eyes have read thus far her visit will have terminated.

Very cordially,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

My God! did we not instantly realize the terrible import! We rushed through the dayrooms — she was not there — and on to her own apartments. The door was locked, but we crashed it down by hurling ourselves against it. There she lay, just as she had finished dressing for the opera, smothered with pillows torn from the couch, the flush of life yet on her flesh, the body still flexible and warm. Let me pass over the rest of this horror. You will surely remember, John, the newspaper accounts.

Late that night Mr. Hale summoned me to him, and before God did pledge me most solemnly to stand by him and not to compromise, even if all kith and kin were destroyed.

The next day I was surprised at his cheerfulness. I had thought he would be deeply shocked by this last tragedy — how deep I was soon to learn. All day he was light-hearted and high-spirited, as though at last he had found a way out of the frightful difficulty. The next morning we found him dead in his bed, a peaceful smile upon his careworn face — asphyxiation. Through the connivance of the police and the authorities, it was given out to the world as heart disease. We deemed it wise to withhold the truth; but little good has it done us, little good has anything done us.

Barely had I left that chamber of death, when — but too late — the following extraordinary letter was received:

OFFICE OF THE M. of M., February 17, 1900.

MR. EBEN HALE, Money Baron:

Dear Sir, — You will pardon our intrusion, we hope, so closely upon the sad event of day before yesterday; but what we wish to say may be of the utmost importance to you. It is in our mind that you may attempt to escape us. There is but one way, apparently, as you have ere this doubtless discovered. But we wish to inform you that even this one way is barred. You may die, but you die failing and acknowledging your failure. Note this: WE ARE PART AND PARCEL OF YOUR POSSESSIONS. WITH YOUR MILLIONS WE PASS DOWN TO YOUR HEIRS AND ASSIGNS FOREVER.

We are the inevitable. We are the culmination of industrial and social wrong;. We turn upon the society that has created us. We are the successful failures of the age, the scourges of a degraded civilization.

We are the creatures of a perverse social selection. We meet force with force. Only the strong shall endure. We believe in the survival of the fittest. You have crushed your wage slaves into the dirt and you have survived. The captains of war, at your command, have shot down like dogs your employees in a score of bloody strikes. By such means you have endured. We do not grumble at the result, for we acknowledge and have our being in the same natural law. And now the question has arisen: UNDER THE PRESENT SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, WHICH OF US SHALL SURVIVE? We believe we are the fittest. You believe you are the fittest. We leave the eventuality to time and law.

Cordially yours,

THE MINIONS OF MIDAS.

John, do you wonder now that I shunned pleasure and avoided friends? But why explain? Surely this narrative will make everything clear. Three weeks ago Adelaide Laidlaw died. Since then I have waited in hope and fear. Yesterday the will was probated and made public. Today I was notified that a woman of the middle class would be killed in Golden Gate Park, in faraway San Francisco. The despatches in to-night’s papers give the details of the brutal happening — details which correspond with those furnished me in advance.

It is useless. I cannot struggle against the inevitable. I have been faithful to Mr. Hale and have worked hard. Why my faithfulness should have been thus rewarded I cannot understand. Yet I cannot be false to my trust, nor break my word by compromising. Still, I have resolved that no more deaths shall be upon my head. I have willed the many millions I lately received to their rightful owners. Let the stalwart sons of Eben Hale work out their own salvation. Ere you read this I shall have passed on. The Minions of Midas are all-powerful. The police are impotent. I have learned from them that other millionnaires have been likewise mulcted or persecuted — how many is not known, for when one yields to the M. of M., his mouth is thenceforth sealed. Those who have not yielded are even now reaping their scarlet harvest. The grim game is being played out. The Federal Government can do nothing. I also understand that similar branch organizations have made their appearance in Europe. Society is shaken to its foundations. Principalities and powers are as brands ripe for the burning. Instead of the masses against the classes, it is a class against the classes. We, the guardians of human progress, are being singled out and struck down. Law and order have failed.

The officials have begged me to keep this secret. I have done so, but can do so no longer. It has become a question of public import, fraught with the direst consequences, and I shall do my duty before I leave this world by informing it of its peril. Do you, John, as my last request, make this public. Do not be frightened. The fate of humanity rests in your hand. Let the press strike off millions of copies; let the electric currents sweep it round the world; wherever men meet and speak, let them speak of it in fear and trembling. And then, when thoroughly aroused, let society arise in its might and cast out this abomination.

Yours, in long farewell,
WADE ATSHELER.

The Mistake of Creation

"Whoa!" Smoke yelled at the dogs, throwing his weight back on the gee-pole to bring the sled to a halt.

"What's eatin' you now?" Shorty complained. "They ain't no water under that footing."

"No; but look at that trail cutting out to the right," Smoke answered. "I thought nobody was wintering in this section."

The dogs, on the moment they stopped, dropped in the snow and began biting out the particles of ice from between their toes. This ice had been water five minutes before. The animals had broken through a skein of ice, snow-powdered, which had hidden the spring water that oozed out of the bank and pooled on top of the three-foot winter crust of Nordbeska River.

"First I heard of anybody up the Nordbeska," Shorty said, staring at the all but obliterated track covered by two feet of snow, that left the bed of the river at right angles and entered the mouth of a small stream flowing from the left. "Mebbe they're hunters and pulled their freight long ago."

Smoke, scooping the light snow away with mittened hands, paused to consider, scooped again, and again paused. "No," he decided. "There's been travel both ways, but the last travel was up that creek. Whoever they are, they're there now--certain. There's been no travel for weeks. Now what's been keeping them there all the time? That's what I want to know."

"And what I want to know is where we're going to camp to-night," Shorty said, staring disconsolately at the sky-line in the southwest, where the mid-afternoon twilight was darkening into night.

"Let's follow the track up the creek," was Smoke's suggestion. "There's plenty of dead timber. We can camp any time."

"Sure we can camp any time, but we got to travel most of the time if we ain't goin' to starve, an' we got to travel in the right direction."

"We're going to find something up that creek," Smoke went on.

"But look at the grub! Look at them dogs!" Shorty cried. "Look at--oh, hell, all right. You will have your will."

"It won't make the trip a day longer," Smoke urged. "Possibly no more than a mile longer."

"Men has died for as little as a mile," Shorty retorted, shaking his head with lugubrious resignation. "Come on for trouble. Get up, you poor sore-foots, you--get up! Haw! You Bright! Haw!”

The lead-dog obeyed, and the whole team strained weakly into the soft snow.

“Whoa!” Shorty yelled. “It’s pack trail.”

Smoke pulled his snow-shoes from under the sled-lashings, bound them to his moccasined feet, and went to the fore to press and pack the light surface for the dogs.

It was heavy work. Dogs and men had been for days on short rations, and few and limited were the reserves of energy they could call upon. Though they followed the creek bed, so pronounced was its fall that they toiled on a stiff and unrelenting up-grade. The high rocky walls quickly drew near together, so that their way led up the bottom of a narrow gorge. The long lingering twilight, blocked by the high mountains, was no more than semi-darkness.

“It’s a trap,” Shorty said. “The whole look of it is rotten. It’s a hole in the ground. It’s the stampin’-ground of trouble.”

Smoke made no reply, and for half an hour they toiled on in silence--a silence that was again broken by Shorty.

“She’s a-workin’,” he grumbled. “She’s sure a-workin’, an’ I’ll tell you if you’re minded to hear an’ listen.”

“Go on,” Smoke answered.

“Well, she tells me, plain an’ simple, that we ain’t never goin’ to get out of this hole in the ground in days an’ days. We’re goin’ to find trouble an’ be stuck in here a long time an’ then some.”

“Does she say anything about grub?” Smoke queried unsympathetically. “For we haven’t grub for days and days and days and then some.”

“Nope. Nary whisper about grub. I guess we’ll manage to make out. But I tell you one thing, Smoke, straight an’ flat. I’ll eat any dog in the team exceptin’ Bright. I got to draw the line on Bright. I just couldn’t scoff him.”

“Cheer up,” Smoke girded. “My hunch is working overtime. She tells me there’ll be no dogs eaten, and, whether it’s moose or caribou or quail on toast, we’ll all fatten up.”

Shorty snorted his unutterable disgust, and silence obtained for another quarter of an hour.

“There’s the beginning of your trouble,” Smoke said, halting on his snow-shoes and staring at an object that lay on one side of the old trail.

Shorty left the gee-pole and joined him, and together they gazed down on the body of a man beside the trail.

“Well fed,” said Smoke.

“Look at them lips,” said Shorty.

“Stiff as a poker,” said Smoke, lifting an arm, that, without moving, moved the whole body.

“Pick ‘m up an’ drop ‘m and he’d break to pieces,” was Shorty’s comment.

The man lay on his side, solidly frozen. From the fact that no snow powdered him, it was patent that he had lain there but a short time.

“There was a general fall of snow three days back,” said Shorty.

Smoke nodded, bending over the corpse, twisting it half up to face them, and pointing to a bullet wound in the temple. He glanced to the side and tilted his head at a revolver that lay on top of the snow.

A hundred yards farther on they came upon a second body that lay face downward in the trail. “Two things are pretty clear,” Smoke said. “They’re fat. That means no famine. They’ve not struck it rich, else they wouldn’t have committed suicide.”

“If they did,” Shorty objected.

“They certainly did. There are no tracks besides their own, and each is powder-burned.” Smoke dragged the corpse to one side and with the toe of his moccasin nosed a revolver out of the snow into which it had been pressed by the body. “That’s what did the work. I told you we’d find something.”

“From the looks of it we ain’t started yet. Now what’d two fat geezers want to kill theirselves for?”

“When we find that out we’ll have found the rest of your trouble,” Smoke answered. “Come on. It’s blowing dark.”

Quite dark it was when Smoke’s snow-shoe tripped him over a body. He fell across a sled, on which lay another body. And when he had dug the snow out of his neck and struck a match, he and Shorty glimpsed a third body, wrapped in blankets, lying beside a partially dug grave. Also, ere the match flickered out, they caught sight of half a dozen additional graves.

“B-r-r-r,” Shorty shivered. “Suicide Camp. All fed up. I reckon they’re all dead.”

“No--peep at that.” Smoke was looking farther along at a dim glimmer of light. “And there’s another light--and a third one there. Come on. Let’s hike.”

No more corpses delayed them, and in several minutes, over a hard-packed trail, they were in the camp.

“It’s a city,” Shorty whispered. “There must be twenty cabins. An’ not a dog. Ain’t that funny!”

“And that explains it,” Smoke whispered back excitedly. “It’s the Laura Sibley outfit. Don’t you remember? Came up the Yukon last fall on the Port Townsend Number Six. Went right by Dawson without stopping. The steamer must have landed them at the mouth of the creek.”

“Sure. I remember. They was Mormons.”

“No--vegetarians.” Smoke grinned in the darkness. “They won’t eat meat and they won’t work dogs.”

“It’s all the same. I knowed they was something funny about ‘em. Had the allwise steer to the yellow. That Laura Sibley was goin’ to take ‘em right to the spot where they’d all be millionaires.”

“Yes; she was their seeress--had visions and that sort of stuff. I thought they went up the Nordensjold.”

“Huh! Listen to that!”

Shorty’s hand in the darkness went out warningly to Smoke’s chest, and together they listened to a groan, deep and long drawn, that came from one of the cabins. Ere it could die away it was taken up by another cabin, and another--a vast suspiration of human misery. The effect was monstrous and nightmarish.

“B-r-r-r,” Shorty shivered. “It’s gettin’ me goin’. Let’s break in an’ find what’s eatin’ ‘em.”

Smoke knocked at a lighted cabin, and was followed in by Shorty in answer to the “Come in” of the voice they heard groaning. It was a simple log cabin, the walls moss-chinked, the earth floor covered with sawdust and shavings. The light was a kerosene-lamp, and they could make out four bunks, three of which were occupied by men who ceased from groaning in order to stare.

“What’s the matter?” Smoke demanded of one whose blankets could not hide his broad shoulders and massively muscled body, whose eyes were pain-racked and whose cheeks were hollow. “Smallpox? What is it?”

In reply, the man pointed at his mouth, spreading black and swollen lips in the effort; and Smoke recoiled at the sight.

“Scurvy,” he muttered to Shorty; and the man confirmed the diagnosis with a nod of the head.

“Plenty of grub?” Shorty asked.

“Yep,” was the answer from a man in another bunk. “Help yourself. There’s slathers of it. The cabin next on the other side is empty. Cache is right alongside. Wade into it.”

In every cabin they visited that night they found a similar situation. Scurvy had smitten the whole camp. A dozen women were in the party, though the two men did not see all of them. Originally there had been ninety-three men and women. But ten had died, and two had recently disappeared. Smoke told of finding the two, and expressed surprise that none had gone that short distance down the trail to find out for themselves. What particularly struck him and Shorty was the helplessness of these people. Their cabins were littered and dirty. The dishes stood unwashed on the rough plank tables. There was no mutual aid. A cabin’s troubles were its own troubles, and already they had ceased from the exertion of burying their dead.

“It’s almost weird,” Smoke confided to Shorty. “I’ve met shirkers and loafers, but I never met so many all at one time. You heard what they said. They’ve never done a tap. I’ll bet they haven’t washed their own faces. No wonder they got scurvy.”

“But vegetarians hadn’t ought to get scurvy,” Shorty contended. “It’s the salt-meat-eaters that’s supposed to fall for it. And they don’t eat meat, salt or fresh, raw or cooked, or any other way.”

Smoke shook his head. “I know. And it’s vegetable diet that cures scurvy. No drugs will do it. Vegetables, especially potatoes, are the only dope. But don’t forget one thing, Shorty: we are not up against a theory but a condition. The fact is these grass-eaters have all got scurvy.”

“Must be contagious.”

“No; that the doctors do know. Scurvy is not a germ disease. It can’t be caught. It’s generated. As near as I can get it, it’s due to an impoverished condition of the blood. Its cause is not something they’ve got, but something they haven’t got. A man gets scurvy for lack of certain chemicals in his blood, and those chemicals don’t come out of powders and bottles, but do come out of vegetables.”

“An’ these people eats nothin’ but grass,” Shorty groaned. “And they’ve got it up to their ears. That proves you’re all wrong, Smoke. You’re spielin’ a theory, but this condition sure knocks the spots outa your theory. Scurvy's catchin', an' that's why they've all got it, an' rotten bad at that. You an' me'll get it too, if we hang around this diggin'. B-r-r-r!--I can feel the bugs crawlin' into my system right now."

Smoke laughed skeptically, and knocked on a cabin door. "I suppose we'll find the same old thing," he said. "Come on. We've got to get a line on the situation."

"What do you want?" came a woman's sharp voice.

"We want to see you," Smoke answered.

"Who are you?"

"Two doctors from Dawson," Shorty blurted in, with a levity that brought a punch in the short ribs from Smoke's elbow.

"Don't want to see any doctors," the woman said, in tones crisp and staccato with pain and irritation. "Go away. Good night. We don't believe in doctors."

Smoke pulled the latch, shoved the door open, and entered, turning up the low-flamed kerosene-lamp so that he could see. In four bunks four women ceased from groaning and sighing to stare at the intruders. Two were young, thin-faced creatures, the third was an elderly and very stout woman, and the fourth, the one whom Smoke identified by her voice, was the thinnest, frailest specimen of the human race he had ever seen. As he quickly learned, she was Laura Sibley, the seeress and professional clairvoyant who had organized the expedition in Los Angeles and led it to this death-camp on the Nordbeska. The conversation that ensued was acrimonious. Laura Sibley did not believe in doctors. Also, to add to her purgatory, she had wellnigh ceased to believe in herself.

"Why didn't you send out for help?" Smoke asked, when she paused, breathless and exhausted, from her initial tirade. "There's a camp at Stewart River, and eighteen days' travel would fetch Dawson from here."

"Why didn't Amos Wentworth go?" she demanded, with a wrath that bordered on hysteria.

"Don't know the gentleman," Smoke countered. "What's he been doing?"

"Nothing. Except that he's the only one that hasn't caught the scurvy. And why hasn't he caught the scurvy? I'll tell you. No, I won't." The thin lips compressed so tightly that through the emaciated transparency of them Smoke was almost convinced he could see the teeth and the roots of the teeth. “And what would have been the use? Don’t I know? I’m not a fool. Our caches are filled with every kind of fruit juice and preserved vegetables. We are better situated than any other camp in Alaska to fight scurvy. There is no prepared vegetable, fruit, and nut food we haven’t, and in plenty.”

“She’s got you there, Smoke,” Shorty exulted. “And it’s a condition, not a theory. You say vegetables cures. Here’s the vegetables, and where’s the cure?”

“There’s no explanation I can see,” Smoke acknowledged. “Yet there is no camp in Alaska like this. I’ve seen scurvy--a sprinkling of cases here and there; but I never saw a whole camp with it, nor did I ever see such terrible cases. Which is neither here nor there, Shorty. We’ve got to do what we can for these people, but first we’ve got to make camp and take care of the dogs. We’ll see you in the morning, er--Mrs. Sibley.”

“MISS Sibley,” she bridled. “And now, young man, if you come fooling around this cabin with any doctor stuff I’ll fill you full of birdshot.”

“This divine seeress is a sweet one,” Smoke chuckled, as he and Shorty felt their way back through the darkness to the empty cabin next to the one they had first entered.

It was evident that two men had lived until recently in the cabin, and the partners wondered if they weren’t the two suicides down the trail. Together they overhauled the cache and found it filled with an undreamed-of variety of canned, powdered, dried, evaporated, condensed, and desiccated foods.

“What in the name of reason do they want to go and get scurvy for?” Shorty demanded, brandishing to the light packages of egg-powder and Italian mushrooms. “And look at that! And that!” He tossed out cans of tomatoes and corn and bottles of stuffed olives. “And the divine steeress got the scurvy, too. What d’ye make of it?”

“Seeress,” Smoke corrected.

“Steeress,” Shorty reiterated. “Didn’t she steer ‘em here to this hole in the ground?”

Next morning, after daylight, Smoke encountered a man carrying a heavy sled-load of firewood. He was a little man, clean-looking and spry, who walked briskly despite the load. Smoke experienced an immediate dislike.

“What’s the matter with you?” he asked.

“Nothing,” the little man answered.

“I know that,” Smoke said. “That’s why I asked you. You’re Amos Wentworth. Now why under the sun haven’t you the scurvy like all the rest?”

“Because I’ve exercised,” came the quick reply. “There wasn’t any need for any of them to get it if they’d only got out and done something. What did they do? Growled and kicked and grouched at the cold, the long nights, the hardships, the aches and pains and everything else. They loafed in their beds until they swelled up and couldn’t leave them, that’s all. Look at me. I’ve worked. Come into my cabin.”

Smoke followed him in.

“Squint around. Clean as a whistle, eh? You bet. Everything shipshape. I wouldn’t keep those chips and shavings on the floor except for the warmth, but they’re clean chips and shavings. You ought to see the floor in some of the shacks. Pig-pens. As for me, I haven’t eaten a meal off an unwashed dish. No, sir. It meant work, and I’ve worked, and I haven’t the scurvy. You can put that in your pipe and smoke it.”

“You’ve hit the nail on the head,” Smoke admitted. “But I see you’ve only one bunk. Why so unsociable?”

“Because I like to be. It’s easier to clean up for one than two, that’s why. The lazy blanket-loafers! Do you think that I could have stood one around? No wonder they got scurvy.”

It was very convincing, but Smoke could not rid himself of his dislike of the man.

“What’s Laura Sibley got it in for you for?” he asked abruptly.

Amos Wentworth shot a quick look at him. “She’s a crank,” was the reply. “So are we all cranks, for that matter. But Heaven save me from the crank that won’t wash the dishes that he eats off of, and that’s what this crowd of cranks are like.”

A few minutes later, Smoke was talking with Laura Sibley. Supported by a stick in either hand, she had paused in hobbling by his cabin.

“What have you got it in for Wentworth for?” he asked, apropos of nothing in the conversation and with a suddenness that caught her off her guard.

Her green eyes flashed bitterly, her emaciated face for the second was convulsed with rage, and her sore lips writhed on the verge of unconsidered speech. But only a splutter of gasping, unintelligible sounds issued forth, and then, by a terrible effort, she controlled herself.

"Because he's healthy," she panted. "Because he hasn't the scurvy. Because he is supremely selfish. Because he won't lift a hand to help anybody else. Because he'd let us rot and die, as he is letting us rot and die, without lifting a finger to fetch us a pail of water or a load of firewood. That's the kind of a brute he is. But let him beware! That's all. Let him beware!"

Still panting and gasping, she hobbled on her way, and five minutes afterward, coming out of the cabin to feed the dogs, Smoke saw her entering Amos Wentworth's cabin.

"Something rotten here, Shorty, something rotten," he said, shaking his head ominously, as his partner came to the door to empty a pan of dish-water.

"Sure," was the cheerful rejoinder. "An' you an' me'll be catchin' it yet. You'll see."

"I don't mean the scurvy."

"Oh, sure, if you mean the divine steeress. She'd rob a corpse. She's the hungriest-lookin' female I ever seen."

"Exercise has kept you and me in condition, Shorty. It's kept Wentworth in condition. You see what lack of exercise has done for the rest. Now it's up to us to prescribe exercise for these hospital wrecks. It will be your job to see that they get it. I appoint you chief nurse."

"What? Me?" Shorty shouted. "I resign."

"No, you don't. I'll be able assistant, because it isn't going to be any soft snap. We've got to make them hustle. First thing, they'll have to bury their dead. The strongest for the burial squad; then the next strongest on the firewood squad (they've been lying in their blankets to save wood); and so on down the line. And spruce-tea. Mustn't forget that. All the sour-doughs swear by it. These people have never even heard of it."

"We sure got ourn cut out for us," Shorty grinned. "First thing we know we'll be full of lead."

"And that's our first job," Smoke said. "Come on."

In the next hour, each of the twenty-odd cabins was raided. All ammunition and every rifle, shotgun, and revolver was confiscated.

"Come on, you invalids," was Shorty's method. "Shootin'-irons--fork 'em over. We need 'em."

"Who says so?" was the query at the first cabin.

“Two doctors from Dawson,” was Shorty’s answer. “An’ what they say goes. Come on. Shell out the ammunition, too.”

“What do you want them for?”

“To stand off a war-party of canned beef comin’ down the canyon. And I’m givin’ you fair warnin’ of a spruce-tea invasion. Come across.”

And this was only the beginning of the day. Men were persuaded, coaxed, bullied or dragged by main strength from their bunks and forced to dress. Smoke selected the mildest cases for the burial squad. Another squad was told off to supply the wood by which the graves were burned down into the frozen muck and gravel. Still another squad had to chop firewood and impartially supply every cabin. Those who were too weak for outdoor work were put to cleaning and scrubbing the cabins and washing clothes. One squad brought in many loads of spruce-boughs, and every stove was used for the brewing of spruce-tea.

But no matter what face Smoke and Shorty put on it, the situation was grim and serious. At least thirty fearful and impossible cases could not be taken from the beds, as the two men, with nausea and horror, learned; while one, a woman, died in Laura Sibley’s cabin. Yet strong measures were necessary.

“I don’t like to wallop a sick man,” Shorty explained, his fist doubled menacingly. “But I’d wallop his block off if it’d make him well. And what all you lazy bums needs is a wallopin’. Come on! Out of that an’ into them duds of yourn, double quick, or I’ll sure muss up the front of your face.”

All the gangs groaned, and sighed, and wept, the tears streaming and freezing down their cheeks as they toiled; and it was patent that their agony was real. The situation was desperate, and Smoke’s prescription was heroic.

When the work-gangs came in at noon, they found decently cooked dinners awaiting them, prepared by the weaker members of their cabins under the tutelage and drive of Smoke and Shorty.

“That’ll do,” Smoke said at three in the afternoon. “Knock off. Go to your bunks. You may be feeling rotten now, but you’ll be the better for it to-morrow. Of course it hurts to get well, but I’m going to get you well.”

“Too late,” Amos Wentworth sneered pallidly at Smoke’s efforts. “They ought to have started in that way last fall.”

“Come along with me,” Smoke answered. “Pick up those two pails. You’re not ailing.”

From cabin to cabin the three men went, dosing every man and woman with a full pint of spruce-tea. Nor was it easy.

"You might as well learn at the start that we mean business," Smoke stated to the first obdurate, who lay on his back, groaning through set teeth. "Stand by, Shorty." Smoke caught the patient by the nose and tapped the solar-plexus section so as to make the mouth gasp open. "Now, Shorty! Down she goes!"

And down it went, accompanied with unavoidable splutterings and stranglings.

"Next time you'll take it easier," Smoke assured the victim, reaching for the nose of the man in the adjoining bunk.

"I'd sooner take castor oil," was Shorty's private confidence, ere he downed his own portion. "Great jumpin' Methuselem!" was his entirely public proclamation the moment after he had swallowed the bitter dose. "It's a pint long, but hogshead strong."

"We're covering this spruce-tea route four times a day, and there are eighty of you to be dosed each time," Smoke informed Laura Sibley. "So we've no time to fool. Will you take it or must I hold your nose?" His thumb and forefinger hovered eloquently above her. "It's vegetable, so you needn't have any qualms."

"Qualms!" Shorty snorted. "No, sure, certainly not. It's the deliciousest dope!"

Laura Sibley hesitated. She gulped her apprehension.

"Well?" Smoke demanded peremptorily.

"I'll--I'll take it," she quavered. "Hurry up!"

That night, exhausted as by no hard day of trail, Smoke and Shorty crawled into their blankets.

"I'm fairly sick with it," Smoke confessed. "The way they suffer is awful. But exercise is the only remedy I can think of, and it must be given a thorough trial. I wish we had a sack of raw potatoes."

"Sparkins he can't wash no more dishes," Shorty said. "It hurts him so he sweats his pain. I seen him sweat it. I had to put him back in the bunk, he was that helpless."

"If only we had raw potatoes," Smoke went on. "The vital, essential something is missing from that prepared stuff. The life has been evaporated out of it."

"An' if that young fellow Jones in the Brownlow cabin don't croak before morning I miss my guess."

"For Heaven's sake be cheerful," Smoke chided.

"We got to bury him, ain't we?" came the indignant snort. "I tell you that boy's something awful--"

"Shut up," Smoke said.

And after several more indignant snorts, the heavy breathing of sleep arose from Shorty's bunk.

In the morning, not only was Jones dead, but one of the stronger men who had worked on the firewood squad was found to have hanged himself. A nightmare procession of days set in. For a week, steeling himself to the task, Smoke enforced the exercise and the spruce-tea. And one by one, and in twos and threes, he was compelled to knock off the workers. As he was learning, exercise was the last thing in the world for scurvy patients. The diminishing burial squad was kept steadily at work, and a surplus half-dozen graves were always burned down and waiting.

"You couldn't have selected a worse place for a camp," Smoke told Laura Sibley. "Look at it--at the bottom of a narrow gorge, running east and west. The noon sun doesn't rise above the top of the wall. You can't have had sunlight for several months."

"But how was I to know?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't see why not, if you could lead a hundred fools to a gold-mine."

She glared malevolently at him and hobbled on. Several minutes afterward, coming back from a trip to where a squad of groaning patients was gathering spruce-boughs, Smoke saw the seeress entering Amos Wentworth's cabin and followed after her. At the door he could hear her voice, whimpering and pleading.

"Just for me," she was begging, as Smoke entered. "I won't tell a soul."

Both glanced guiltily at the intruder, and Smoke was certain that he was on the edge of something, he knew not what, and he cursed himself for not having eavesdropped.

"Out with it," he commanded harshly. "What is it?"

"What is what?" Amos Wentworth asked sullenly. And Smoke could not name what was what.

Grimmer and grimmer grew the situation. In that dark hole of a canyon, where sunlight never penetrated, the horrible death list mounted up. Each day, in apprehension, Smoke and Shorty examined each other’s mouths for the whitening of the gums and mucous membranes--the invariable first symptom of the disease.

“I’ve quit,” Shorty announced one evening. “I’ve been thinkin’ it over, an’ I quit. I can make a go at slave-drivin’, but cripple-drivin’s too much for my stomach. They go from bad to worse. They ain’t twenty men I can drive to work. I told Jackson this afternoon he could take to his bunk. He was gettin’ ready to suicide. I could see it stickin’ out all over him. Exercise ain’t no good.”

“I’ve made up my mind to the same thing,” Smoke answered. “We’ll knock off all but about a dozen. They’ll have to lend a hand. We can relay them. And we’ll keep up the spruce-tea.”

“It ain’t no good.”

“I’m about ready to agree with that, too, but at any rate it doesn’t hurt them.”

“Another suicide,” was Shorty’s news the following morning. “That Phillips is the one. I seen it comin’ for days.”

“We’re up against the real thing,” Smoke groaned. “What would you suggest, Shorty?”

“Who? Me? I ain’t got no suggestions. The thing’s got to run its course.”

“But that means they’ll all die,” Smoke protested.

“Except Wentworth,” Shorty snarled; for he had quickly come to share his partner’s dislike for that individual.

The everlasting miracle of Wentworth’s immunity perplexed Smoke. Why should he alone not have developed scurvy? Why did Laura Sibley hate him, and at the same time whine and snivel and beg from him? What was it she begged from him and that he would not give?

On several occasions Smoke made it a point to drop into Wentworth’s cabin at meal-time. But one thing did he note that was suspicious, and that was Wentworth’s suspicion of him. Next he tried sounding out Laura Sibley.

“Raw potatoes would cure everybody here,” he remarked to the seeress. “I know it. I’ve seen it work before.”

The flare of conviction in her eyes, followed by bitterness and hatred, told him the scent was warm.

“Why didn’t you bring in a supply of fresh potatoes on the steamer?” he asked.

“We did. But coming up the river we sold them all out at a bargain at Fort Yukon. We had plenty of the evaporated kinds, and we knew they’d keep better. They wouldn’t even freeze.”

Smoke groaned. “And you sold them all?” he asked.

“Yes. How were we to know?”

“Now mightn’t there have been a couple of odd sacks left?--accidentally, you know, mislaid on the steamer?”

She shook her head, as he thought, a trifle belatedly, then added, “We never found any.”

“But mightn’t there?” he persisted.

“How do I know?” she rasped angrily. “I didn’t have charge of the commissary.”

“And Amos Wentworth did,” he jumped to the conclusion. “Very good. Now what is your private opinion--just between us two. Do you think Wentworth has any raw potatoes stored away somewhere?”

“No; certainly not. Why should he?”

“Why shouldn’t he?”

She shrugged her shoulders.

Struggle as he would with her, Smoke could not bring her to admit the possibility.

“Wentworth’s a swine,” was Shorty’s verdict, when Smoke told his suspicions.

“And so is Laura Sibley,” Smoke added. “She believes he has the potatoes, and is keeping it quiet, and trying to get him to share with her.”

“An’ he won’t come across, eh?” Shorty cursed frail human nature with one of his best flights, and caught his breath. “They both got their feet in the trough. May God rot them dead with scurvy for their reward, that’s all I got to say, except I’m goin’ right up now an’ knock Wentworth’s block off.”

But Smoke stood out for diplomacy. That night, when the camp groaned and slept, or groaned and did not sleep, he went to Wentworth’s unlighted cabin.

“Listen to me, Wentworth,” he said. “I’ve got a thousand dollars in dust right here in this sack. I’m a rich man in this country, and I can afford it. I think I’m getting touched. Put a raw potato in my hand and the dust is yours. Here, heft it.”

And Smoke thrilled when Amos Wentworth put out his hand in the darkness and hefted the gold. Smoke heard him fumble in the blankets, and then felt pressed into his hand, not the heavy gold-sack, but the unmistakable potato, the size of a hen's egg, warm from contact with the other's body.

Smoke did not wait till morning. He and Shorty were expecting at any time the deaths of their worst two cases, and to this cabin the partners went. Grated and mashed up in a cup, skin, and clinging specks of the earth, and all, was the thousand-dollar potato--a thick fluid, that they fed, several drops at a time, into the frightful orifices that had once been mouths. Shift by shift, through the long night, Smoke and Shorty relieved each other at administering the potato juice, rubbing it into the poor swollen gums where loose teeth rattled together and compelling the swallowing of every drop of the precious elixir.

By evening of the next day the change for the better in the two patients was miraculous and almost unbelievable. They were no longer the worst cases. In forty-eight hours, with the exhaustion of the potato, they were temporarily out of danger, though far from being cured.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Smoke said to Wentworth. "I've got holdings in this country, and my paper is good anywhere. I'll give you five hundred dollars a potato up to fifty thousand dollars' worth. That's one hundred potatoes."

"Was that all the dust you had?" Wentworth queried.

"Shorty and I scraped up all we had. But, straight, he and I are worth several millions between us."

"I haven't any potatoes," Wentworth said finally. "Wish I had. That potato I gave you was the only one. I'd been saving it all the winter for fear I'd get the scurvy. I only sold it so as to be able to buy a passage out of the country when the river opens."

Despite the cessation of potato-juice, the two treated cases continued to improve through the third day. The untreated cases went from bad to worse. On the fourth morning, three horrible corpses were buried. Shorty went through the ordeal, then turned to Smoke.

"You've tried your way. Now it's me for mine."

He headed straight for Wentworth's cabin. What occurred there, Shorty never told. He emerged with knuckles skinned and bruised, and not only did Wentworth's face bear all the marks of a bad beating, but for a long time he carried his head, twisted and sidling, on a stiff neck. This phenomenon was accounted for by a row of four finger-marks, black and blue, on one side of the windpipe and by a single black-and-blue mark on the other side.

Next, Smoke and Shorty together invaded Wentworth’s cabin, throwing him out in the snow while they turned the interior upside down. Laura Sibley hobbled in and frantically joined them in the search.

“You don’t get none, old girl, not if we find a ton,” Shorty assured her.

But she was no more disappointed than they. Though the very floor was dug up, they discovered nothing.

“I’m for roastin’ him over a slow fire an’ make ‘m cough up,” Shorty proposed earnestly.

Smoke shook his head reluctantly.

“It’s murder,” Shorty held on. “He’s murderin’ all them poor geezers just as much as if he knocked their brains out with an ax, only worse.”

Another day passed, during which they kept a steady watch on Wentworth’s movements. Several times, when he started out, water-bucket in hand, for the creek, they casually approached the cabin, and each time he hurried back without the water.

“They’re cached right there in his cabin,” Shorty said. “As sure as God made little apples, they are. But where? We sure overhauled it plenty.” He stood up and pulled on his mittens. “I’m goin’ to find ‘em, if I have to pull the blame shack down a log at a time.”

He glanced at Smoke, who, with an intent, absent face, had not heard him.

“What’s eatin’ you?” Shorty demanded wrathfully. “Don’t tell me you’ve gone an’ got the scurvy!”

“Just trying to remember something, Shorty.”

“What?”

“I don’t know. That’s the trouble. But it has a bearing, if only I could remember it.”

“Now you look here, Smoke; don’t you go an’ get bug-house,” Shorty pleaded. “Think of me! Let your think-slats rip. Come on an’ help me pull that shack down. I’d set her afire, if it wa’n’t for roastin’ them spuds.”

“That’s it!” Smoke exploded, as he sprang to his feet. “Just what I was trying to remember. Where’s that kerosene-can? I’m with you, Shorty. The potatoes are ours.”

“What’s the game?”

“Watch me, that’s all,” Smoke baffled. “I always told you, Shorty, that a deficient acquaintance with literature was a handicap, even in the Klondike. Now what we’re going to do came out of a book. I read it when I was a kid, and it will work. Come on.”

Several minutes later, under a pale-gleaming, greenish aurora borealis, the two men crept up to Amos Wentworth’s cabin. Carefully and noiselessly they poured kerosene over the logs, extra-drenching the door-frame and window-sash. Then the match was applied, and they watched the flaming oil gather headway. They drew back beyond the growing light and waited.

They saw Wentworth rush out, stare wildly at the conflagration, and plunge back into the cabin. Scarcely a minute elapsed when he emerged, this time slowly, half doubled over, his shoulders burdened by a sack heavy and unmistakable. Smoke and Shorty sprang at him like a pair of famished wolves. They hit him right and left, at the same instant. He crumpled down under the weight of the sack, which Smoke pressed over with his hands to make sure. Then he felt his knees clasped by Wentworth’s arms as the man turned a ghastly face upward.

“Give me a dozen, only a dozen--half a dozen--and you can have the rest,” he squalled. He bared his teeth and, with mad rage, half inclined his head to bite Smoke’s leg, then he changed his mind and fell to pleading. “Just half a dozen,” he wailed. “Just half a dozen. I was going to turn them over to you--to-morrow. Yes, to-morrow. That was my idea. They’re life! They’re life! Just half a dozen!”

“Where’s the other sack?” Smoke bluffed.

“I ate it up,” was the reply, unimpeachably honest. “That sack’s all that’s left. Give me a few. You can have the rest.”

“Ate ‘em up!” Shorty screamed. “A whole sack! An’ them geezers dyin’ for want of ‘em! This for you! An’ this! An’ this! An’ this! You swine! You hog!”

The first kick tore Wentworth away from his embrace of Smoke’s knees. The second kick turned him over in the snow. But Shorty went on kicking.

“Watch out for your toes,” was Smoke’s only interference.

“Sure; I’m usin’ the heel,” Shorty answered. “Watch me. I’ll cave his ribs in. I’ll kick his jaw off. Take that! An’ that! Wisht I could give you the boot instead of the moccasin. You swine!”

There was no sleep in camp that night. Hour after hour Smoke and Shorty went the rounds, doling the life-renewing potato-juice, a quarter of a spoonful at a dose, into the poor ruined mouths of the population. And through the following day, while one slept the other kept up the work.

There were no more deaths. The most awful cases began to mend with an immediacy that was startling. By the third day, men who had not been off their backs for weeks crawled out of their bunks and tottered around on crutches. And on that day, the sun, two months then on its journey into northern declination, peeped cheerfully over the crest of the canyon for the first time.

"Nary a potato," Shorty told the whining, begging Wentworth. "You ain't even touched with scurvy. You got outside a whole sack, an' you're loaded against scurvy for twenty years. Knowin' you, I've come to understand God. I always wondered why he let Satan live. Now I know. He let him live just as I let you live. But it's a cryin' shame, just the same."

"A word of advice," Smoke told Wentworth. "These men are getting well fast; Shorty and I are leaving in a week, and there will be nobody to protect you when these men go after you. There's the trail. Dawson's eighteen days' travel."

"Pull your freight, Amos," Shorty supplemented, "or what I done to you won't be a circumstance to what them convalescents'll do to you."

"Gentlemen, I beg of you, listen to me," Wentworth whined. "I'm a stranger in this country. I don't know its ways. I don't know the trail. Let me travel with you. I'll give you a thousand dollars if you'll let me travel with you."

"Sure," Smoke grinned maliciously. "If Shorty agrees."

"WHO? ME?" Shorty stiffened for a supreme effort. "I ain't nobody. Woodticks ain't got nothin' on me when it comes to humility. I'm a worm, a maggot, brother to the pollywog an' child of the blow-fly. I ain't afraid or ashamed of nothin' that creeps or crawls or stinks. But travel with that mistake of creation! Go 'way, man. I ain't proud, but you turn my stomach."

And Amos Wentworth went away, alone, dragging a sled loaded with provisions sufficient to last him to Dawson. A mile down the trail Shorty overhauled him.

"Come here to me," was Shorty's greeting. "Come across. Fork over. Cough up."

"I don't understand," Wentworth quavered, shivering from recollection of the two beatings, hand and foot, he had already received from Shorty.

“That thousand dollars, d’ ye understand that? That thousand dollars gold Smoke bought that measly potato with. Come through.”

And Amos Wentworth passed the gold-sack over.

“Hope a skunk bites you an’ you get howlin’ hydrophoby,” were the terms of Shorty’s farewell.

Moon-Face

A Story of Mortal Antipathy

John Claverhouse was a moon-faced man. You know the kind, cheek-bones wide apart, chin and forehead melting into the cheeks to complete the perfect round, and the nose, broad and pudgy, equidistant from the circumference, flattened against the very centre of the face like a dough-ball upon the ceiling. Perhaps that is why I hated him, for truly he had become an offense to my eyes, and I believed the earth to be cumbered with his presence. Perhaps my mother may have been superstitious of the moon and looked upon it over the wrong shoulder at the wrong time.

Be that as it may, I hated John Claverhouse. Not that he had done me what society would consider a wrong or an ill turn. Far from it. The evil was of a deeper, subtler sort; so elusive, so intangible, as to defy clear, definite analysis in words. We all experience such things at some period in our lives. For the first time we see a certain individual, one who the very instant before we did not dream existed; and yet, at the first moment of meeting, we say: “I do not like that man.” Why do we not like him? Ah, we do not know why; we know only that we do not. We have taken a dislike, that is all. And so I with John Claverhouse.

What right had such a man to be happy? Yet he was an optimist. He was always gleeful and laughing. All things were always all right, curse him! Ah how it grated on my soul that he should be so happy! Other men could laugh, and it did not bother me. I even used to laugh myself — before I met John Claverhouse.

But his laugh! It irritated me, maddened me, as nothing else under the sun could irritate or madden me. It haunted me, gripped hold of me, and would not let me go. It was a huge, Gargantuan laugh. Waking or sleeping it was always with me, whirring and jarring across my heart-strings like an enormous rasp. At break of day it came whooping across the fields to spoil my pleasant morning revery. Under the aching noonday glare, when the green things drooped and the birds withdrew to the depths of the forest, and all nature drowsed, his great “Ha! ha!” and “Ho! ho!” rose up to the sky and challenged the sun. And at black midnight, from the lonely cross-roads where he turned from town into his own place, came his plaguey cachinnations to rouse me from my sleep and make me writhe and clench my nails into my palms.

I went forth privily in the night-time, and turned his cattle into his fields, and in the morning heard his whooping laugh as he drove them out again. “It is nothing,” he said; “the poor, dumb beasties are not to be blamed for straying into fatter pastures.”

He had a dog he called “Mars,” a big, splendid brute, part deer-hound and part blood-hound, and resembling both. Mars was a great delight to him, and they were always together. But I bided my time, and one day, when opportunity was ripe, lured the animal away and settled for him with strychnine and beefsteak. It made positively no impression on John Claverhouse. His laugh was as hearty and frequent as ever, and his face as much like the full moon as it always had been.

Then I set fire to his haystacks and his barn. But the next morning, being Sunday, he went forth blithe and cheerful.

“Where are you going?” I asked him, as he went by the cross-roads.

“Trout,” he said, and his face beamed like a full moon. “I just dote on trout.”

Was there ever such an impossible man! His whole harvest had gone up in his haystacks and barn. It was uninsured, I knew. And yet, in the face of famine and the rigorous winter, he went out gayly in quest of a mess of trout, forsooth, because he “doted” on them! Had gloom but rested, no matter how lightly, on his brow, or had his bovine countenance grown long and serious and less like the moon, or had he removed that smile but once from off his face, I am sure I could have forgiven him for existing. But no. he grew only more cheerful under misfortune.

I insulted him. He looked at me in slow and smiling surprise.

“I fight you? Why?” he asked slowly. And then he laughed. “You are so funny! Ho! ho! You’ll be the death of me! He! he! he! Oh! Ho! ho! ho!

What would you? It was past endurance. By the blood of Judas, how I hated him! Then there was that name — Claverhouse! What a name! Wasn’t it absurd? Claverhouse! Merciful heaven, WHY Claverhouse? Again and again I asked myself that question. I should not have minded Smith, or Brown, or Jones — but CLAVERHOUSE! I leave it to you. Repeat it to yourself — Claverhouse. Just listen to the ridiculous sound of it — Claverhouse! Should a man live with such a name? I ask of you. “No,” you say. And “No” said I.

But I bethought me of his mortgage. What of his crops and barn destroyed, I knew he would be unable to meet it. So I got a shrewd, close-mouthed, tight-fisted money-lender to get the mortgage transferred to him. I did not appear but through this agent I forced the foreclosure, and but few days (no more, believe me, than the law allowed) were given John Claverhouse to remove his goods and chattels from the premises. Then I strolled down to see how he took it, for he had lived there upward of twenty years. But he met me with his saucer-eyes twinkling, and the light glowing and spreading in his face till it was as a full-risen moon.

“Ha! ha! ha!” he laughed. “The funniest tike, that youngster of mine! Did you ever hear the like? Let me tell you. He was down playing by the edge of the river when a piece of the bank caved in and splashed him. ‘O papa!’ he cried; ‘a great big puddle flewed up and hit me.’“

He stopped and waited for me to join him in his infernal glee.

“I don’t see any laugh in it,” I said shortly, and I know my face went sour.

He regarded me with wonderment, and then came the damnable light, glowing and spreading, as I have described it, till his face shone soft and warm, like the summer moon, and then the laugh — ”Ha! ha! That’s funny! You don’t see it, eh? He! he! Ho! ho! ho! He doesn’t see it! Why, look here. You know a puddle — ”

But I turned on my heel and left him. That was the last. I could stand it no longer. The thing must end right there, I thought, curse him! The earth should be quit of him. And as I went over the hill, I could hear his monstrous laugh reverberating against the sky.

Now, I pride myself on doing things neatly, and when I resolved to kill John Claverhouse I had it in mind to do so in such fashion that I should not look back upon it and feel ashamed. I hate bungling, and I hate brutality. To me there is something repugnant in merely striking a man with one’s naked fist — faugh! it is sickening! So, to shoot, or stab, or club John Claverhouse (oh, that name!) did not appeal to me. And not only was I impelled to do it neatly and artistically, but also in such manner that not the slightest possible suspicion could be directed against me.

To this end I bent my intellect, and, after a week of profound incubation, I hatched the scheme. Then I set to work. I bought a water spaniel bitch, five months old, and devoted my whole attention to her training. Had any one spied upon me, they would have remarked that this training consisted entirely of one thing — RETRIEVING. I taught the dog, which I called "Bellona," to fetch sticks I threw into the water, and not only to fetch, but to fetch at once, without mouthing or playing with them. The point was that she was to stop for nothing, but to deliver the stick in all haste. I made a practice of running away and leaving her to chase me, with the stick in her mouth, till she caught me. She was a bright animal, and took to the game with such eagerness that I was soon content.

After that, at the first casual opportunity, I presented Bellona to John Claverhouse. I knew what I was about, for I was aware of a little weakness of his, and of a little private sinning of which he was regularly and inveterately guilty.

"No," he said, when I placed the end of the rope in his hand. "No, you don't mean it." And his mouth opened wide and he grinned all over his damnable moon-face.

"I — I kind of thought, somehow, you didn't like me," he explained. "Wasn't it funny for me to make such a mistake?" And at the thought he held his sides with laughter.

"What is her name?" he managed to ask between paroxysms.

"Bellona," I said.

"He! he!" he tittered. "What a funny name."

I gritted my teeth, for his mirth put them on edge, and snapped out between them, "She was the wife of Mars, you know."

Then the light of the full moon began to suffuse his face, until he exploded with: "That was my other dog. Well, I guess she's a widow now. Oh! Ho! ho! E! he! he! Ho!" he whooped after me, and I turned and fled swiftly over the hill.

The week passed by, and on Saturday evening I said to him, "You go away Monday, don't you?"

He nodded his head and grinned.

"Then you won't have another chance to get a mess of those trout you just 'dote' on."

But he did not notice the sneer. "Oh, I don't know," he chuckled. "I'm going up to-morrow to try pretty hard."

Thus was assurance made doubly sure, and I went back to my house hugging myself with rapture.

Early next morning I saw him go by with a dip-net and gunnysack, and Bellona trotting at his heels. I knew where he was bound, and cut out by the back pasture and climbed through the underbrush to the top of the mountain. Keeping carefully out of sight, I followed the crest along for a couple of miles to a natural amphitheatre in the hills, where the little river raced down out of a gorge and stopped for breath in a large and placid rock-bound pool. That was the spot! I sat down on the croup of the mountain, where I could see all that occurred, and lighted my pipe.

Ere many minutes had passed, John Claverhouse came plodding up the bed of the stream. Bellona was ambling about him, and they were in high feather, her short, snappy barks mingling with his deeper chest-notes. Arrived at the pool, he threw down the dip-net and sack, and drew from his hip-pocket what looked like a large, fat candle. But I knew it to be a stick of “giant”; for such was his method of catching trout. He dynamited them. He attached the fuse by wrapping the “giant” tightly in a piece of cotton. Then he ignited the fuse and tossed the explosive into the pool.

Like a flash, Bellona was into the pool after it. I could have shrieked aloud for joy. Claverhouse yelled at her, but without avail. He pelted her with clods and rocks, but she swam steadily on till she got the stick of “giant” in her mouth, when she whirled about and headed for shore. Then, for the first time, he realized his danger, and started to run. As foreseen and planned by me, she made the bank and took out after him. Oh, I tell you, it was great! As I have said, the pool lay in a sort of amphitheatre. Above and below, the stream could be crossed on stepping-stones. And around and around, up and down and across the stones, raced Claverhouse and Bellona. I could never have believed that such an ungainly man could run so fast. But run he did, Bellona hot-footed after him, and gaining. And then, just as she caught up, he in full stride, and she leaping with nose at his knee, there was a sudden flash, a burst of smoke, a terrific detonation, and where man and dog had been the instant before there was naught to be seen but a big hole in the ground.

“Death from accident while engaged in illegal fishing.” That was the verdict of the coroner’s jury; and that is why I pride myself on the neat and artistic way in which I finished off John Claverhouse. There was no bungling, no brutality; nothing of which to be ashamed in the whole transaction, as I am sure you will agree. No more does his infernal laugh go echoing among the hills, and no more does his fat moon-face rise up to vex me. My days are peaceful now, and my night’s sleep deep.

Nam-Bok, the Unveracious

“A bidarka, is it not so? Look! a bidarka, and one man who drives clumsily with a paddle!”

Old Bask-Wah-Wan rose to her knees, trembling with weakness and eagerness, and gazed out over the sea.

“Nam-Bok was ever clumsy at the paddle,” she maundered reminiscently, shading the sun from her eyes and staring across the silver-spilled water. “Nam-Bok was ever clumsy. I remember....”

But the women and children laughed loudly, and there was a gentle mockery in their laughter, and her voice dwindled till her lips moved without sound.

Koogah lifted his grizzled head from his bone-carving and followed the path of her eyes. Except when wide yaws took it off its course, a bidarka was heading in for the beach. Its occupant was paddling with more strength than dexterity, and made his approach along the zigzag line of most resistance. Koogah’s head dropped to his work again, and on the ivory tusk between his knees he scratched the dorsal fin of a fish the like of which never swam in the sea.

“It is doubtless the man from the next village,” he said finally, “come to consult with me about the marking of things on bone. And the man is a clumsy man. He will never know how.”

“It is Nam-Bok,” old Bask-Wah-Wan repeated. “Should I not know my son?” she demanded shrilly. “I say, and I say again, it is Nam-Bok.”

“And so thou hast said these many summers,” one of the women chided softly. “Ever when the ice passed out of the sea hast thou sat and watched through the long day, saying at each chance canoe, ‘This is Nam-Bok.’ Nam-Bok is dead, O Bask-Wah-Wan, and the dead do not come back. It cannot be that the dead come back.”

“Nam-Bok!” the old woman cried, so loud and clear that the whole village was startled and looked at her.

She struggled to her feet and tottered down the sand. She stumbled over a baby lying in the sun, and the mother hushed its crying and hurled harsh words after the old woman, who took no notice. The children ran down the beach in advance of her, and as the man in the bidarka drew closer, nearly capsizing with one of his ill-directed strokes, the women followed. Koogah dropped his walrus tusk and went also, leaning heavily upon his staff, and after him loitered the men in twos and threes.

The bidarka turned broadside and the ripple of surf threatened to swamp it, only a naked boy ran into the water and pulled the bow high up on the sand. The man stood up and sent a questing glance along the line of villagers. A rainbow sweater, dirty and the worse for wear, clung loosely to his broad shoulders, and a red cotton handkerchief was knotted in sailor fashion about his throat. A fisherman's tam-o'-shanter on his close-clipped head, and dungaree trousers and heavy brogans, completed his outfit.

But he was none the less a striking personage to these simple fisherfolk of the great Yukon Delta, who, all their lives, had stared out on Bering Sea and in that time seen but two white men, — the census enumerator and a lost Jesuit priest. They were a poor people, with neither gold in the ground nor valuable furs in hand, so the whites had passed them afar. Also, the Yukon, through the thousands of years, had shoaled that portion of the sea with the detritus of Alaska till vessels grounded out of sight of land. So the sodden coast, with its long inside reaches and huge mud-land archipelagoes, was avoided by the ships of men, and the fisherfolk knew not that such things were.

Koogah, the Bone-Scratcher, retreated backward in sudden haste, tripping over his staff and falling to the ground. "Nam-Bok!" he cried, as he scrambled wildly for footing. "Nam-Bok, who was blown off to sea, come back!"

The men and women shrank away, and the children scuttled off between their legs. Only Opee-Kwan was brave, as befitted the head man of the village. He strode forward and gazed long and earnestly at the new-comer.

"It is Nam-Bok," he said at last, and at the conviction in his voice the women wailed apprehensively and drew farther away.

The lips of the stranger moved indecisively, and his brown throat writhed and wrestled with unspoken words.

"La la, it is Nam-Bok," Bask-Wah-Wan croaked, peering up into his face. "Ever did I say Nam-Bok would come back."

"Ay, it is Nam-Bok come back." This time it was Nam-Bok himself who spoke, putting a leg over the side of the bidarka and standing with one foot afloat and one ashore. Again his throat writhed and wrestled as he grappled after forgotten words. And when the words came forth they were strange of sound and a spluttering of the lips accompanied the gutturals. "Greeting, O brothers," he said, "brothers of old time before I went away with the off-shore wind."

He stepped out with both feet on the sand, and Opee-Kwan waved him back.

"Thou art dead, Nam-Bok," he said.

Nam-Bok laughed. "I am fat."

"Dead men are not fat," Opee-Kwan confessed. "Thou hast fared well, but it is strange. No man may mate with the off-shore wind and come back on the heels of the years."

"I have come back," Nam-Bok answered simply.

"Mayhap thou art a shadow, then, a passing shadow of the Nam-Bok that was. Shadows come back."

"I am hungry. Shadows do not eat."

But Opee-Kwan doubted, and brushed his hand across his brow in sore puzzlement. Nam-Bok was likewise puzzled, and as he looked up and down the line found no welcome in the eyes of the fisherfolk. The men and women whispered together. The children stole timidly back among their elders, and bristling dogs fawned up to him and sniffed suspiciously.

"I bore thee, Nam-Bok, and I gave thee suck when thou wast little," Bask-Wah-Wan whimpered, drawing closer; "and shadow though thou be, or no shadow, I will give thee to eat now."

Nam-Bok made to come to her, but a growl of fear and menace warned him back. He said something in a strange tongue which sounded like "Goddam," and added, "No shadow am I, but a man."

"Who may know concerning the things of mystery?" Opee-Kwan demanded, half of himself and half of his tribespeople. "We are, and in a breath we are not. If the man may become shadow, may not the shadow become man? Nam-Bok was, but is not. This we know, but we do not know if this be Nam-Bok or the shadow of Nam-Bok."

Nam-Bok cleared his throat and made answer. "In the old time long ago, thy father's father, Opee-Kwan, went away and came back on the heels of the years. Nor was a place by the fire denied him. It is said ..." He paused significantly, and they hung on his utterance. "It is said," he repeated, driving his point home with deliberation, "that Sipsip, his klooch, bore him two sons after he came back."

"But he had no doings with the off-shore wind," Opee-Kwan retorted. "He went away into the heart of the land, and it is in the nature of things that a man may go on and on into the land."

"And likewise the sea. But that is neither here nor there. It is said . . . that thy father's father told strange tales of the things he saw."

"Ay, strange tales he told."

"I, too, have strange tales to tell," Nam-Bok stated insidiously. And, as they wavered, "And presents likewise."

He pulled from the bidarka a shawl, marvellous of texture and color, and flung it about his mother's shoulders. The women voiced a collective sigh of admiration, and old Bask-Wah-Wan ruffled the gay material and patted it and crooned in childish joy.

"He has tales to tell," Koogah muttered. "And presents," a woman seconded.

And Opee-Kwan knew that his people were eager, and further, he was aware himself of an itching curiosity concerning those untold tales. "The fishing has been good," he said judiciously, "and we have oil in plenty. So come, Nam-Bok, let us feast."

Two of the men hoisted the bidarka on their shoulders and carried it up to the fire. Nam-Bok walked by the side of Opee-Kwan, and the villagers followed after, save those of the women who lingered a moment to lay caressing fingers on the shawl.

There was little talk while the feast went on, though many and curious were the glances stolen at the son of Bask-Wah-Wan. This embarrassed him — not because he was modest of spirit, however, but for the fact that the stench of the seal-oil had robbed him of his appetite, and that he keenly desired to conceal his feelings on the subject.

"Eat; thou art hungry," Opee-Kwan commanded, and Nam-Bok shut both his eyes and shoved his fist into the big pot of putrid fish.

"La la, be not ashamed. The seal were many this year, and strong men are ever hungry." And Bask-Wah-Wan sopped a particularly offensive chunk of salmon into the oil and passed it fondly and dripping to her son.

In despair, when premonitory symptoms warned him that his stomach was not so strong as of old, he filled his pipe and struck up a smoke. The people fed on noisily and watched. Few of them could boast of intimate acquaintance with the precious weed, though now and again small quantities and abominable qualities were obtained in trade from the Eskimos to the northward. Koogah, sitting next to him, indicated that he was not averse to taking a draw, and between two mouthfuls, with the oil thick on his lips, sucked away at the amber stem. And thereupon Nam-Bok held his stomach with a shaky hand and declined the proffered return. Koogah could keep the pipe, he said, for he had intended so to honor him from the first. And the people licked their fingers and approved of his liberality.

Opee-Kwan rose to his feet "And now, O Nam-Bok, the feast is ended, and we would listen concerning the strange things you have seen."

The fisherfolk applauded with their hands, and gathering about them their work, prepared to listen. The men were busy fashioning spears and carving on ivory, while the women scraped the fat from the hides of the hair seal and made them pliable or sewed muclucs with threads of sinew. Nam-Bok's eyes roved over the scene, but there was not the charm about it that his recollection had warranted him to expect. During the years of his wandering he had looked forward to just this scene, and now that it had come he was disappointed. It was a bare and meagre life, he deemed, and not to be compared to the one to which he had become used. Still, he would open their eyes a bit, and his own eyes sparkled at the thought.

"Brothers," he began, with the smug complacency of a man about to relate the big things he has done, "it was late summer of many summers back, with much such weather as this promises to be, when I went away. You all remember the day, when the gulls flew low, and the wind blew strong from the land, and I could not hold my bidarka against it. I tied the covering of the bidarka about me so that no water could get in, and all of the night I fought with the storm. And in the morning there was no land, — only the sea, — and the off-shore wind held me close in its arms and bore me along. Three such nights whitened into dawn and showed me no land, and the off-shore wind would not let me go.

"And when the fourth day came, I was as a madman. I could not dip my paddle for want of food; and my head went round and round, what of the thirst that was upon me. But the sea was no longer angry, and the soft south wind was blowing, and as I looked about me I saw a sight that made me think I was indeed mad."

Nam-Bok paused to pick away a sliver of salmon lodged between his teeth, and the men and women, with idle hands and heads craned forward, waited.

"It was a canoe, a big canoe. If all the canoes I have ever seen were made into one canoe, it would not be so large."

There were exclamations of doubt, and Koogah, whose years were many, shook his head.

"If each bidarka were as a grain of sand," Nam-Bok defiantly continued, "and if there were as many bidarkas as there be grains of sand in this beach, still would they not make so big a canoe as this I saw on the morning of the fourth day. It was a very big canoe, and it was called a schooner. I saw this thing of wonder, this great schooner, coming after me, and on it I saw men — "

"Hold, O Nam-Bok!" Opee-Kwan broke in. "What manner of men were they? — big men?"

"Nay, mere men like you and me."

"Did the big canoe come fast?"

"Ay."

"The sides were tall, the men short." Opee-Kwan stated the premises with conviction. "And did these men dip with long paddles?"

Nam-Bok grinned. "There were no paddles," he said.

Mouths remained open, and a long silence dropped down. Opee-Kwan borrowed Koogah's pipe for a couple of contemplative sucks. One of the younger women giggled nervously and drew upon herself angry eyes.

"There were no paddles?" Opee-Kwan asked softly, returning the pipe.

"The south wind was behind," Nam-Bok explained.

"But the wind-drift is slow."

"The schooner had wings — thus." He sketched a diagram of masts and sails in the sand, and the men crowded around and studied it. The wind was blowing briskly, and for more graphic elucidation he seized the corners of his mother's shawl and spread them out till it bellied like a sail. Bask-Wah-Wan scolded and struggled, but was blown down the beach for a score of feet and left breathless and stranded in a heap of driftwood. The men uttered sage grunts of comprehension, but Koogah suddenly tossed back his hoary head.

"Ho! Ho!" he laughed. "A foolish thing, this big canoe! A most foolish thing! The plaything of the wind! Wheresoever the wind goes, it goes too. No man who journeys therein may name the landing beach, for always he goes with the wind, and the wind goes everywhere, but no man knows where."

"It is so," Opee-Kwan supplemented gravely. "With the wind the going is easy, but against the wind a man striveth hard; and for that they had no paddles these men on the big canoe did not strive at all."

"Small need to strive," Nam-Bok cried angrily. "The schooner went likewise against the wind."

"And what said you made the sch — sch — schooner go?" Koogah asked, tripping craftily over the strange word.

"The wind," was the impatient response.

"Then the wind made the sch — sch — schooner go against the wind." Old Koogah dropped an open leer to Opee-Kwan, and, the laughter growing around him, continued: "The wind blows from the south and blows the schooner south. The wind blows against the wind. The wind blows one way and the other at the same time. It is very simple. We understand, Nam-Bok. We clearly understand."

"Thou art a fool!"

"Truth falls from thy lips," Koogah answered meekly. "I was over-long in understanding, and the thing was simple."

But Nam-Bok's face was dark, and he said rapid words which they had never heard before. Bone-scratching and skin-scraping were resumed, but he shut his lips tightly on the tongue that could not be believed.

"This sch — sch — schooner," Koogah imperturbably asked; "it was made of a big tree?"

"It was made of many trees," Nam-Bok snapped shortly. "It was very big."

He lapsed into sullen silence again, and Opee-Kwan nudged Koogah, who shook his head with slow amazement and murmured, "It is very strange."

Nam-bok took the bait. "That is nothing," he said airily; "you should see the steamer. As the grain of sand is to the bidarka, as the bidarka is to the schooner, so the schooner is to the steamer. Further, the steamer is made of iron. It is all iron."

"Nay, nay, Nam-Bok," cried the head man; "how can that be? Always iron goes to the bottom. For behold, I received an iron knife in trade from the head man of the next village, and yesterday the iron knife slipped from my fingers and went down, down, into the sea. To all things there be law. Never was there one thing outside the law. This we know. And, moreover, we know that things of a kind have the one law, and that all iron has the one law. So unsay thy words, Nam-Bok, that we may yet honor thee."

"It is so," Nam-Bok persisted. "The steamer is all iron and does not sink."

"Nay, nay; this cannot be."

"With my own eyes I saw it."

"It is not in the nature of things."

"But tell me, Nam-Bok," Koogah interrupted, for fear the tale would go no farther, "tell me the manner of these men in finding their way across the sea when there is no land by which to steer."

"The sun points out the path."

"But how?"

"At midday the head man of the schooner takes a thing through which his eye looks at the sun, and then he makes the sun climb down out of the sky to the edge of the earth."

"Now this be evil medicine!" cried Opee-Kwan, aghast at the sacrilege. The men held up their hands in horror, and the women moaned. "This be evil medicine. It is not good to misdirect the great sun which drives away the night and gives us the seal, the salmon, and warm weather."

"What if it be evil medicine?" Nam-Bok demanded truculently. "I, too, have looked through the thing at the sun and made the sun climb down out of the sky."

Those who were nearest drew away from him hurriedly, and a woman covered the face of a child at her breast so that his eye might not fall upon it.

"But on the morning of the fourth day, O Nam-Bok," Koogah suggested; "on the morning of the fourth day when the sch — sch — schooner came after thee?"

"I had little strength left in me and could not run away. So I was taken on board and water was poured down my throat and good food given me. Twice, my brothers, you have seen a white man. These men were all white and as many as have I fingers and toes. And when I saw they were full of kindness, I took heart, and I resolved to bring away with me report of all that I saw. And they taught me the work they did, and gave me good food and a place to sleep.

"And day after day we went over the sea, and each day the head man drew the sun down out of the sky and made it tell where we were. And when the waves were kind, we hunted the fur seal and I marvelled much, for always did they fling the meat and the fat away and save only the skin."

Opee-Kwan's mouth was twitching violently, and he was about to make denunciation of such waste when Koogah kicked him to be still.

"After a weary time, when the sun was gone and the bite of the frost come into the air, the head man pointed the nose of the schooner south. South and east we travelled for days upon days, with never the land in sight, and we were near to the village from which hailed the men — "

"How did they know they were near?" Opee-Kwan, unable to contain himself longer, demanded. "There was no land to see."

Nam-Bok glowered on him wrathfully. "Did I not say the head man brought the sun down out of the sky?"

Koogah interposed, and Nam-Bok went on.

"As I say, when we were near to that village a great storm blew up, and in the night we were helpless and knew not where we were — "

"Thou hast just said the head man knew — "

"Oh, peace, Opee-Kwan! Thou art a fool and cannot understand. As I say, we were helpless in the night, when I heard, above the roar of the storm, the sound of the sea on the beach. And next we struck with a mighty crash and I was in the water, swimming. It was a rock-bound coast, with one patch of beach in many miles, and the law was that I should dig my hands into the sand and draw myself clear of the surf. The other men must have pounded against the rocks, for none of them came ashore but the head man, and him I knew only by the ring on his finger.

"When day came, there being nothing of the schooner, I turned my face to the land and journeyed into it that I might get food and look upon the faces of the people. And when I came to a house I was taken in and given to eat, for I had learned their speech, and the white men are ever kindly. And it was a house bigger than all the houses built by us and our fathers before us."

"It was a mighty house," Koogah said, masking his unbelief with wonder.

"And many trees went into the making of such a house," Opee-Kwan added, taking the cue.

"That is nothing." Nam-Bok shrugged his shoulders in belittling fashion. "As our houses are to that house, so that house was to the houses I was yet to see."

"And they are not big men?"

"Nay; mere men like you and me," Nam-Bok answered. "I had cut a stick that I might walk in comfort, and remembering that I was to bring report to you, my brothers, I cut a notch in the stick for each person who lived in that house. And I stayed there many days, and worked, for which they gave me money — a thing of which you know nothing, but which is very good.

“And one day I departed from that place to go farther into the land. And as I walked I met many people, and I cut smaller notches in the stick, that there might be room for all. Then I came upon a strange thing. On the ground before me was a bar of iron, as big in thickness as my arm, and a long step away was another bar of iron — ”

“Then wert thou a rich man,” Opee-Kwan asserted; “for iron be worth more than anything else in the world. It would have made many knives.”

“Nay, it was not mine.”

“It was a find, and a find be lawful.”

“Not so; the white men had placed it there And further, these bars were so long that no man could carry them away — so long that as far as I could see there was no end to them.”

“Nam-Bok, that is very much iron,” Opee-Kwan cautioned.

“Ay, it was hard to believe with my own eyes upon it; but I could not gainsay my eyes. And as I looked I heard....” He turned abruptly upon the head man. “Opee-Kwan, thou hast heard the sea-lion bellow in his anger. Make it plain in thy mind of as many sea-lions as there be waves to the sea, and make it plain that all these sea-lions be made into one sea-lion, and as that one sea-lion would bellow so bellowed the thing I heard.”

The fisherfolk cried aloud in astonishment, and Opee-Kwan’s jaw lowered and remained lowered.

“And in the distance I saw a monster like unto a thousand whales. It was one-eyed, and vomited smoke, and it snorted with exceeding loudness. I was afraid and ran with shaking legs along the path between the bars. But it came with the speed of the wind, this monster, and I leaped the iron bars with its breath hot on my face. . . .”

Opee-Kwan gained control of his jaw again. “And — and then, O Nam-Bok?”

“Then it came by on the bars, and harmed me not; and when my legs could hold me up again it was gone from sight. And it is a very common thing in that country. Even the women and children are not afraid. Men make them to do work, these monsters.”

“As we make our dogs do work?” Koogah asked, with sceptic twinkle in his eye.

“Ay, as we make our dogs do work.”

“And how do they breed these — these things?” Opee-Kwan questioned.

“They breed not at all. Men fashion them cunningly of iron, and feed them with stone, and give them water to drink. The stone becomes fire, and the water becomes steam, and the steam of the water is the breath of their nostrils, and — ”

“There, there, O Nam-Bok,” Opee-Kwan interrupted. “Tell us of other wonders. We grow tired of this which we may not understand.”

“You do not understand?” Nam-Bok asked despairingly.

“Nay, we do not understand,” the men and women wailed back. “We cannot understand.”

Nam-Bok thought of a combined harvester, and of the machines wherein visions of living men were to be seen, and of the machines from which came the voices of men, and he knew his people could never understand.

“Dare I say I rode this iron monster through the land?” he asked bitterly.

Opee-Kwan threw up his hands, palms outward, in open incredulity. “Say on; say anything. We listen.”

“Then did I ride the iron monster, for which I gave money — ”

“Thou saidst it was fed with stone.”

“And likewise, thou fool, I said money was a thing of which you know nothing. As I say, I rode the monster through the land, and through many villages, until I came to a big village on a salt arm of the sea. And the houses shoved their roofs among the stars in the sky, and the clouds drifted by them, and everywhere was much smoke. And the roar of that village was like the roar of the sea in storm, and the people were so many that I flung away my stick and no longer remembered the notches upon it.”

“Hadst thou made small notches,” Koogah reproved, “thou mightst have brought report.”

Nam-Bok whirled upon him in anger. “Had I made small notches! Listen, Koogah, thou scratcher of bone! If I had made small notches, neither the stick, nor twenty sticks, could have borne them — nay, not all the driftwood of all the beaches between this village and the next. And if all of you, the women and children as well, were twenty times as many, and if you had twenty hands each, and in each hand a stick and a knife, still the notches could not be cut for the people I saw, so many were they and so fast did they come and go.”

“There cannot be so many people in all the world,” Opee-Kwan objected, for he was stunned and his mind could not grasp such magnitude of numbers.

“What dost thou know of all the world and how large it is?” Nam-Bok demanded.

“But there cannot be so many people in one place.”

“Who art thou to say what can be and what cannot be?”

“It stands to reason there cannot be so many people in one place. Their canoes would clutter the sea till there was no room. And they could empty the sea each day of its fish, and they would not all be fed.”

“So it would seem,” Nam-Bok made final answer; “yet it was so. With my own eyes I saw, and flung my stick away.” He yawned heavily and rose to his feet. “I have paddled far. The day has been long, and I am tired. Now I will sleep, and to-morrow we will have further talk upon the things I have seen.”

Bask-Wah-Wan, hobbling fearfully in advance, proud indeed, yet awed by her wonderful son, led him to her igloo and stowed him away among the greasy, ill-smelling furs. But the men lingered by the fire, and a council was held wherein was there much whispering and low-voiced discussion.

An hour passed, and a second, and Nam-Bok slept, and the talk went on. The evening sun dipped toward the northwest, and at eleven at night was nearly due north. Then it was that the head man and the bone-scratcher separated themselves from the council and aroused Nam-Bok. He blinked up into their faces and turned on his side to sleep again. Opee-Kwan gripped him by the arm and kindly but firmly shook his senses back into him.

“Come, Nam-Bok, arise!” he commanded. “It be time.”

“Another feast?” Nam-Bok cried. “Nay, I am not hungry. Go on with the eating and let me sleep.”

“Time to be gone!” Koogah thundered.

But Opee-Kwan spoke more softly. “Thou wast bidarka-mate with me when we were boys,” he said. “Together we first chased the seal and drew the salmon from the traps. And thou didst drag me back to life, Nam-Bok, when the sea closed over me and I was sucked down to the black rocks. Together we hungered and bore the chill of the frost, and together we crawled beneath the one fur and lay close to each other. And because of these things, and the kindness in which I stood to thee, it grieves me sore that thou shouldst return such a remarkable liar. We cannot understand, and our heads be dizzy with the things thou hast spoken. It is not good, and there has been much talk in the council. Wherefore we send thee away, that our heads may remain clear and strong and be not troubled by the unaccountable things."

"These things thou speakest of be shadows," Koogah took up the strain. "From the shadow-world thou hast brought them, and to the shadow-world thou must return them. Thy bidarka be ready, and the tribespeople wait. They may not sleep until thou art gone."

Nam-Bok was perplexed, but hearkened to the voice of the head man.

"If thou art Nam-Bok," Opee-Kwan was saying, "thou art a fearful and most wonderful liar; if thou art the shadow of Nam-Bok, then thou speakest of shadows, concerning which it is not good that living men have knowledge. This great village thou hast spoken of we deem the village of shadows. Therein flutter the souls of the dead; for the dead be many and the living few. The dead do not come back. Never have the dead come back — save thou with thy wonder-tales. It is not meet that the dead come back, and should we permit it, great trouble may be our portion."

Nam-Bok knew his people well and was aware that the voice of the council was supreme. So he allowed himself to be led down to the water's edge, where he was put aboard his bidarka and a paddle thrust into his hand. A stray wild-fowl honked somewhere to seaward, and the surf broke limply and hollowly on the sand. A dim twilight brooded over land and water, and in the north the sun smouldered, vague and troubled, and draped about with blood-red mists. The gulls were flying low. The off-shore wind blew keen and chill, and the black-massed clouds behind it gave promise of bitter weather.

"Out of the sea thou earnest," Opee-Kwan chanted oracularly, "and back into the sea thou goest. Thus is balance achieved and all things brought to law."

Bask-Wah-Wan limped to the froth-mark and cried, "I bless thee, Nam-Bok, for that thou remembered me."

But Koogah, shoving Nam-Bok clear of the beach, tore the shawl from her shoulders and flung it into the bidarka.

"It is cold in the long nights," she wailed; "and the frost is prone to nip old bones."

“The thing is a shadow,” the bone-scratcher answered, “and shadows cannot keep thee warm.”

Nam-Bok stood up that his voice might carry. “O Bask-Wah-Wan, mother that bore me!” he called. “Listen to the words of Nam-Bok, thy son. There be room in his bidarka for two, and he would that thou camest with him. For his journey is to where there are fish and oil in plenty. There the frost comes not, and life is easy, and the things of iron do the work of men. Wilt thou come, O Bask-Wah-Wan?”

She debated a moment, while the bidarka drifted swiftly from her, then raised her voice to a quavering treble. “I am old, Nam-Bok, and soon I shall pass down among the shadows. But I have no wish to go before my time. I am old, Nam-Bok, and I am afraid.”

A shaft of light shot across the dim-lit sea and wrapped boat and man in a splendor of red and gold. Then a hush fell upon the fisherfolk, and only was heard the moan of the off-shore wind and the cries of the gulls flying low in the air.

Negore, the Coward

HE had followed the trail of his fleeing people for eleven days, and his pursuit had been in itself a flight; for behind him he knew full well were the dreaded Russians, toiling through the swampy lowlands and over the steep divides, bent on no less than the extermination of all his people. He was travelling light. A rabbit-skin sleeping-robe, a muzzle-loading rifle, and a few pounds of sun-dried salmon constituted his outfit. He would have marvelled that a whole people-women and children and aged — could travel so swiftly, had he not known the terror that drove them on.

It was in the old days of the Russian occupancy of Alaska, when the nineteenth century had run but half its course, that Negore fled after his fleeing tribe and came upon it this summer night by the head waters of the Pee-lat. Though near the midnight hour, it was bright day as he passed through the weary camp. Many saw him, all knew him, but few and cold were the greetings he received.

“Negore, the Coward,” he heard Illiha, a young woman, laugh, and Sunne, his sister’s daughter, laughed with her.

Black anger ate at his heart; but he gave no sign, threading his way among the camp-fires until he came to one where sat an old man. A young woman was kneading with skilful fingers the tired muscles of his legs. He raised a sightless face and listened intently as Negore’s foot crackled a dead twig.

“Who comes?” he queried in a thin, tremulous voice.

“Negore,” said the young woman, scarcely looking up from her task.

Negore’s face was expressionless. For many minutes he stood and waited. The old man’s head had sunk back upon his chest. The young woman pressed and prodded the wasted muscles, resting her body on her knees, her bowed head hidden as in a cloud by her black wealth of hair. Negore watched the supple body, bending at the hips as a lynx’s body might bend, pliant as a young willow stalk, and, withal, strong as only youth is strong. He looked, and was aware of a great yearning, akin in sensation to physical hunger. At last he spoke, saying:

“Is there no greeting for Negore, who has been long gone and has but now come back?”

She looked up at him with cold eyes. The old man chuckled to himself after the manner of the old.

"Thou art my woman, Oona," Negore said, his tones dominant and conveying a hint of menace.

She arose with catlike ease and suddenness to her full height, her eyes flashing, her nostrils quivering like a deer's.

"I was thy woman to be, Negore, but thou art a coward; the daughter of Old Kinoos mates not with a coward!"

She silenced him with an imperious gesture as he strove to speak.

"Old Kinoos and I came among you from a strange land. Thy people took us in by their fires and made us warm, nor asked whence or why we wandered. It was their thought that Old Kinoos had lost the sight of his eyes from age; nor did Old Kinoos say otherwise, nor did I, his daughter. Old Kinoos is a brave man, but Old Kinoos was never a boaster. And now, when I tell thee of how his blindness came to be, thou wilt know, beyond question, that the daughter of Kinoos cannot mother the children of a coward such as thou art, Negore."

Again she silenced the speech that rushed up to his tongue.

"Know, Negore, if journey be added unto journey of all thy journeyings through this land, thou wouldst not come to the unknown Sitka on the Great Salt Sea. In that place there be many Russian folk, and their rule is harsh. And from Sitka, Old Kinoos, who was Young Kinoos in those days, fled away with me, a babe in his arms, along the islands in the midst of the sea. My mother dead tells the tale of his wrong; a Russian, dead with a spear through breast and back, tells the tale of the vengeance of Kinoos.

"But wherever we fled, and however far we fled, always did we find the hated Russian folk. Kinoos was unafraid, but the sight of them was a hurt to his eyes; so we fled on and on, through the seas and years, till we came to the Great Fog Sea, Negore, of which thou hast heard, but which thou hast never seen. We lived among many peoples, and I grew to be a woman; but Kinoos, growing old, took to him no other woman, nor did I take a man.

"At last we came to Pastolik, which is where the Yukon drowns itself in the Great Fog Sea. Here we lived long, on the rim of the sea, among a people by whom the Russians were well hated. But sometimes they came, these Russians, in great ships, and made the people of Pastolik show them the way through the islands uncountable of the many-mouthed Yukon. And sometimes the men they took to show them the way never came back, till the people became angry and planned a great plan.

"So, when there came a ship, Old Kinoos stepped forward and said he would show the way. He was an old man then, and his hair was white; but he was unafraid. And he was cunning, for he took the ship to where the sea sucks in to the land and the waves beat white on the mountain called Romanoff. The sea sucked the ship in to where the waves beat white, and it ground upon the rocks and broke open its sides. Then came all the people of Pastolik, (for this was the plan), with their war-spears, and arrows, and some few guns. But first the Russians put out the eyes of Old Kinoos that he might never show the way again, and then they fought, where the waves beat white, with the people of Pastolik.

"Now the head-man of these Russians was Ivan. He it was, with his two thumbs, who drove out the eyes of Kinoos. He it was who fought his way through the white water, with two men left of all his men, and went away along the rim of the Great Fog Sea into the north. Kinoos was wise. He could see no more and was helpless as a child. So he fled away from the sea, up the great, strange Yukon, even to Nulato, and I fled with him.

"This was the deed my father did, Kinoos, an old man. But how did the young man, Negore?"

Once again she silenced him.

"With my own eyes I saw, at Nulato, before the gates of the great fort, and but few days gone. I saw the Russian, Ivan, who thrust out my father's eyes, lay the lash of his dog-whip upon thee and beat thee like a dog. This I saw, and knew thee for a coward. But I saw thee not, that night, when all thy people-yea, even the boys not yet hunters — fell upon the Russians and slew them all."

"Not Ivan," said Negore, quietly. "Even now is he on our heels, and with him many Russians fresh up from the sea."

Oona made no effort to hide her surprise and chagrin that Ivan was not dead, but went on:

"In the day I saw thee a coward; in the night, when all men fought, even the boys not yet hunters, I saw thee not and knew thee doubly a coward."

"Thou art done? All done?" Negore asked.

She nodded her head and looked at him askance, as though astonished that he should have aught to say.

“Know then that Negore is no coward,” he said; and his speech was very low and quiet. “Know that when I was yet a boy I journeyed alone down to the place where the Yukon drowns itself in the Great Fog Sea. Even to Pastolik I journeyed, and even beyond, into the north, along the rim of the sea. This I did when I was a boy, and I was no coward. Nor was I coward when I journeyed, a young man and alone, up the Yukon farther than man had ever been, so far that I came to another folk, with white faces, who live in a great fort and talk speech other than that the Russians talk. Also have I killed the great bear of the Tanana country, where no one of my people hath ever been. And I have fought with the Nuklukyets, and the Kaltags, and the Sticks in far regions, even I, and alone. These deeds, whereof no man knows, I speak for myself. Let my people speak for me of things I have done which they know. They will not say Negore is a coward.”

He finished proudly, and proudly waited.

“These be things which happened before I came into the land,” she said, “and I know not of them. Only do I know what I know, and I know I saw thee lashed like a dog in the day; and in the night, when the great fort flamed red and the men killed and were killed, I saw thee not. Also, thy people do call thee Negore, the Coward. It is thy name now, Negore, the Coward.”

“It is not a good name,” Old Kinoos chuckled.

“Thou dost not understand, Kinoos,” Negore said gently. “But I shall make thee understand. Know that I was away on the hunt of the bear, with Kamo-tah, my mother’s son. And Kamo-tah fought with a great bear. We had no meat for three days, and Kamo-tah was not strong of arm nor swift of foot. And the great bear crushed him, so, till his bones cracked like dry sticks. Thus I found him, very sick and groaning upon the ground. And there was no meat, nor could I kill aught that the sick man might eat.

“So I said, ‘I will go to Nulato and bring thee food, also strong men to carry thee to camp.’ And Kamo-tah said, ‘Go thou to Nulato and get food, but say no word of what has befallen me. And when I have eaten, and am grown well and strong, I will kill this bear. Then will I return in honor to Nulato, and no man may laugh and say Kamo-tah was undone by a bear.’

“So I gave heed to my brother’s words; and when I was come to Nulato, and the Russian, Ivan, laid the lash of his dog-whip upon me, I knew I must not fight. For no man knew of Kamo-tah, sick and groaning and hungry;

and did I fight with Ivan, and die, then would my brother die, too. So it was, Oona, that thou sawest me beaten like a dog.

"Then I heard the talk of the shamans and chiefs that the Russians had brought strange sicknesses upon the people, and killed our men, and stolen our women, and that the land must be made clean. As I say, I heard the talk, and I knew it for good talk, and I knew that in the night the Russians were to be killed. But there was my brother, Kamo-tah, sick and groaning and with no meat; so I could not stay and fight with the men and the boys not yet hunters.

"And I took with me meat and fish, and the lash-marks of Ivan, and I found Kamo-tah no longer groaning, but dead. Then I went back to Nulato, and, behold, there was no Nulato-only ashes where the great fort had stood, and the bodies of many men. And I saw the Russians come up the Yukon in boats, fresh from the sea, many Russians; and I saw Ivan creep forth from where he lay hid and make talk with them. And the next day I saw Ivan lead them upon the trail of the tribe. Even now are they upon the trail, and I am here, Negore, but no coward."

"This is a tale I hear," said Oona, though her voice was gentler than before. "Kamo-tah is dead and cannot speak for thee, and I know only what I know, and I must know thee of my own eyes for no coward."

Negore made an impatient gesture.

"There be ways and ways," she added. "Art thou willing to do no less than what Old Kinoos hath done?"

He nodded his head, and waited.

"As thou hast said, they seek for us even now, these Russians. Show them the way, Negore, even as Old Kinoos showed them the way, so that they come, unprepared, to where we wait for them, in a passage up the rocks. Thou knowest the place, where the wall is broken and high. Then will we destroy them, even Ivan. When they cling like flies to the wall, and top is no less near than bottom, our men shall fall upon them from above and either side, with spears, and arrows, and guns. And the women and children, from above, shall loosen the great rocks and hurl them down upon them. It will be a great day, for the Russians will be killed, the land will be made clean, and Ivan, even Ivan who thrust out my father's eyes and laid the lash of his dog-whip upon thee, will be killed. Like a dog gone mad will he die, his breath crushed out of him beneath the rocks. And when the fighting begins, it is for thee, Negore, to crawl secretly away so that thou be not slain."

"Even so," he answered. "Negore will show them the way. And then?"

"And then I shall be thy woman, Negore's woman, the brave man's woman. And thou shalt hunt meat for me and Old Kinoos, and I shall cook thy food, and sew thee warm parkas and strong, and make thee moccasins after the way of my people, which is a better way than thy people's way. And as I say, I shall be thy woman, Negore, always thy woman. And I shall make thy life glad for thee, so that all thy days will be a song and laughter, and thou wilt know the woman Oona as unlike all other women, for she has journeyed far, and lived in strange places, and is wise in the ways of men and in the ways they may be made glad. And in thine old age will she still make thee glad, and thy memory of her in the days of thy strength will be sweet, for thou wilt know always that she was ease to thee, and peace, and rest, and that beyond all women to other men has she been woman to thee."

"Even so," said Negore, and the hunger for her ate at his heart, and his arms went out for her as a hungry man's arms might go out for food.

"When thou hast shown the way, Negore," she chided him; but her eyes were soft, and warm, and he knew she looked upon him as woman had never looked before.

"It is well", he said, turning resolutely on his heel. "I go now to make talk with the chiefs, so that they may know I am gone to show the Russians the way."

"Oh, Negore, my man! my man!" she said to herself, as she watched him go, but she said it so softly that even Old Kinoos did not hear, and his ears were over keen, what of his blindness.

Three days later, having with craft ill-concealed his hiding-place, Negore was dragged forth like a rat and brought before Ivan-"Ivan the Terrible" he was known by the men who marched at his back. Negore was armed with a miserable bone-barbed spear, and he kept his rabbit-skin robe wrapped closely about him, and though the day was warm he shivered as with an ague. He shook his head that he did not understand the speech Ivan put at him, and made that he was very weary and sick, and wished only to sit down and rest, pointing the while to his stomach in sign of his sickness, and shivering fiercely. But Ivan had with him a man from Pastolik who talked the speech of Negore, and many and vain were the questions they asked him concerning his tribe, till the man from Pastolik, who was called Karduk, said:

"It is the word of Ivan that thou shalt be lashed till thou diest if thou dost not speak. And know, strange brother, when I tell thee the word of Ivan is the law, that I am thy friend and no friend of Ivan. For I come not willingly from my country by the sea, and I desire greatly to live; wherefore I obey the will of my master-as thou wilt obey, strange brother, if thou art wise, and wouldst live."

"Nay, strange brother," Negore answered, "I know not the way my people are gone, for I was sick, and they fled so fast my legs gave out from under me, and I fell behind."

Negore waited while Karduk talked with Ivan. Then Negore saw the Russian's face go dark, and he saw the men step to either side of him, snapping the lashes of their whips. Whereupon he betrayed a great fright, and cried aloud that he was a sick man and knew nothing, but would tell what he knew. And to such purpose did he tell, that Ivan gave the word to his men to march, and on either side of Negore marched the men with the whips, that he might not run away. And when he made that he was weak of his sickness, and stumbled and walked not so fast as they walked, they laid their lashes upon him till he screamed with pain and discovered new strength. And when Karduk told him all would he well with him when they had overtaken his tribe, he asked, "And then may I rest and move not?"

Continually he asked, "And then may I rest and move not?"

And while he appeared very sick and looked about him with dull eyes, he noted the fighting strength of Ivan's men, and noted with satisfaction that Ivan did not recognize him as the man he had beaten before the gates of the fort. It was a strange following his dull eyes saw. There were Slavonian hunters, fair-skinned and mighty-muscled; short, squat Finns, with flat noses and round faces; Siberian half-breeds, whose noses were more like eagle-beaks; and lean, slant-eyed men, who bore in their veins the Mongol and Tartar blood as well as the blood of the Slav. Wild adventurers they were, forayers and destroyers from the far lands beyond the Sea of Bering, who blasted the new and unknown world with fire and sword and clutched greedily for its wealth of fur and hide. Negore looked upon them with satisfaction, and in his mind's eye he saw them crushed and lifeless at the passage up the rocks. And ever he saw, waiting for him at the passage up the rocks, the face and the form of Oona, and ever he heard her voice in his ears and felt the soft, warm glow of her eyes. But never did he forget to shiver, nor to stumble where the footing was rough, nor to cry aloud at the bite of the lash. Also, he was afraid of Karduk, for he knew him for no true man. His was a false eye, and an easy tongue — a tongue too easy, he judged, for the awkwardness of honest speech.

All that day they marched. And on the next, when Karduk asked him at command of Ivan, he said he doubted they would meet with his tribe till the morrow. But Ivan, who had once been shown the way by Old Kinoos, and had found that way to lead through the white water and a deadly fight, believed no more in anything. So when they came to a passage up the rocks, he halted his forty men, and through Karduk demanded if the way were clear.

Negore looked at it shortly and carelessly. It was a vast slide that broke the straight wall of a cliff, and was overrun with brush and creeping plants, where a score of tribes could have lain well hidden.

He shook his head. "Nay, there be nothing there," he said. "The way is clear."

Again Ivan spoke to Karduk, and Karduk said:

"Know, strange brother, if thy talk be not straight, and if thy people block the way and fall upon Ivan and his men, that thou shalt die, and at once."

"My talk is straight," Negore said. "The way is clear."

Still Ivan doubted, and ordered two of his Slavonian hunters to go up alone. Two other men he ordered to the side of Negore. They placed their guns against his breast and waited. All waited. And Negore knew, should one arrow fly, or one spear be flung, that his death would come upon him. The two Slavonian hunters toiled upward till they grew small and smaller, and when they reached the top and waved their hats that all was well, they were like black specks against the sky.

The guns were lowered from Negore's breast and Ivan gave the order for his men to go forward. Ivan was silent, lost in thought. For an hour he marched, as though puzzled, and then, through Karduk's mouth, he said to Negore:

"How didst thou know the way was clear when thou didst look so briefly upon it?"

Negore thought of the little birds he had seen perched among the rocks and upon the bushes, and smiled, it was so simple; but he shrugged his shoulders and made no answer. For he was thinking, likewise, of another passage up the rocks, to which they would soon come, and where the little birds would all be gone. And he was glad that Karduk came from the Great Fog Sea, where there were no trees or bushes, and where men learned water-craft instead of land-craft and wood-craft.

Three hours later, when the sun rode overhead, they came to another passage up the rocks, and Karduk said:

“Look with all thine eyes, strange brother, and see if the way be clear, for Ivan is not minded this time to wait while men go up before.”

Negore looked, and he looked with two men by his side, their guns resting against his breast. He saw that the little birds were all gone, and once he saw the glint of sunlight on a rifle-barrel. And he thought of Oona, and of her words: “And when the fighting begins, it is for thee, Negore, to crawl secretly away so that thou be not slain.”

He felt the two guns pressing on his breast. This was not the way she had planned. There would be no crawling secretly away. He would be the first to die when the fighting began. But he said, and his voice was steady, and he still feigned to see with dull eyes and to shiver from his sickness:

“The way is clear.”

And they started up, Ivan and his forty men from the far lands beyond the Sea of Bering. And there was Karduk, the man from Pastolik, and Negore, with the two guns always upon him. It was a long climb, and they could not go fast; but very fast to Negore they seemed to approach the midway point where top was no less near than bottom.

A gun cracked among the rocks to the right, and Negore heard the war-yell of all his tribe, and for an instant saw the rocks and bushes bristle alive with his kinfolk. Then he felt torn asunder by a burst of flame hot through his being, and as he fell he knew the sharp pangs of life as it wrenches at the flesh to be free.

But he gripped his life with a miser’s clutch and would not let it go. He still breathed the air, which bit his lungs with a painful sweetness; and dimly he saw and heard, with passing spells of blindness and deafness, the flashes of sight and sound again wherein he saw the hunters of Ivan falling to their deaths, and his own brothers fringing the carnage and filling the air with the tumult of their cries and weapons, and, far above, the women and children loosing the great rocks that leaped like things alive and thundered down.

The sun danced above him in the sky, the huge walls reeled and swung, and still he heard and saw dimly. And when the great Ivan fell across his legs, hurled there lifeless and crushed by a down-rushing rock, he remembered the blind eyes of Old Kinoos and was glad.

Then the sounds died down, and the rocks no longer thundered past, and he saw his tribespeople creeping close and closer, spearing the wounded as they came. And near to him he heard the scuffle of a mighty Slavonian hunter, loath to die, and, half uprisen, borne back and down by the thirsty spears.

Then he saw above him the face of Oona, and felt about him the arms of Oona; and for a moment the sun steadied and stood still, and the great walls were upright and moved not.

"Thou art a brave man, Negore," he heard her say in his ear; "thou art my man, Negore."

And in that moment he lived all the life of gladness of which she had told him, and the laughter and the song, and as the sun went out of the sky above him, as in his old age, he knew the memory of her was sweet. And as even the memories dimmed and died in the darkness that fell upon him, he knew in her arms the fulfilment of all the ease and rest she had promised him. And as black night wrapped around him, his head upon her breast, he felt a great peace steal about him, and he was aware of the hush of many twilights and the mystery of silence.

The Night-Born

It was in the old Alta-Inyo Club – a warm night for San Francisco – and through the open windows, hushed and far, came the brawl of the streets. The talk had led on from the Graft Prosecution and the latest signs that the town was to be run wide open, down through all the grotesque sordidness and rottenness of manhate and man-meanness, until the name of O'Brien was mentioned – O'Brien, the promising young pugilist who had been killed in the prize-ring the night before. At once the air had seemed to freshen. O'Brien had been a clean-living young man with ideals. He neither drank, smoked, nor swore, and his had been the body of a beautiful young god. He had even carried his prayer-book to the ringside. They found it in his coat pocket in the dressing-room…afterward.

Here was Youth, clean and wholesome, unsullied – the thing of glory and wonder for men to conjure with….. after it has been lost to them and they have turned middle-aged. And so well did we conjure, that Romance came and for an hour led us far from the man-city and its snarling roar. Bardwell, in a way, started it by quoting from Thoreau; but it was old Trefethan, bald-headed and dewlapped, who took up the quotation and for the hour to come was romance incarnate. At first we wondered how many Scotches he had consumed since dinner, but very soon all that was forgotten.

"It was in 1898 — I was thirty-five then," he said. "Yes, I know you are adding it up. You're right. I'm forty-seven now; look ten years more; and the doctors say – damn the doctors anyway!"

He lifted the long glass to his lips and sipped it slowly to soothe away his irritation.

"But I was young…once. I was young twelve years ago, and I had hair on top of my head, and my stomach was lean as a runner's, and the longest day was none too long for me. I was a husky back there in '98. You remember me, Milner. You knew me then. Wasn't I a pretty good bit of all right?"

Milner nodded and agreed. Like Trefethan, he was another mining engineer who had cleaned up a fortune in the Klondike.

"You certainly were, old man," Milner said. "I'll never forget when you cleaned out those lumberjacks in the M. & M. that night that little newspaper man started the row. Slavin was in the country at the time," — this to us — "and his manager wanted to get up a match with Trefethan."

"Well, look at me now," Trefethan commanded angrily. "That's what the Goldstead did to me – God knows how many millions, but nothing left in my soul….. nor in my veins. The good red blood is gone. I am a jellyfish, a huge, gross mass of oscillating protoplasm, a – a …"

But language failed him, and he drew solace from the long glass.

"Women looked at me then; and turned their heads to look a second time. Strange that I never married. But the girl. That's what I started to tell you about. I met her a thousand miles from anywhere, and then some. And she quoted to me those very words of Thoreau that Bardwell quoted a moment ago – the ones about the day-born gods and the night-born."

"It was after I had made my locations on Goldstead – and didn't know what a treasure-pot that that trip creek was going to prove – that I made that trip east over the Rockies, angling across to the Great Up North there the Rockies are something more than a back-bone. They are a boundary, a dividing line, a wall impregnable and unscalable. There is no intercourse across them, though, on occasion, from the early days, wandering trappers have crossed them, though more were lost by the way than ever came through. And that was precisely why I tackled the job. It was a traverse any man would be proud to make. I am prouder of it right now than anything else I have ever done.

"It is an unknown land. Great stretches of it have never been explored. There are big valleys there where the white man has never set foot, and Indian tribes as primitive as ten thousand years …almost, for they have had some contact with the whites. Parties of them come out once in a while to trade, and that is all. Even the Hudson Bay Company failed to find them and farm them.

"And now the girl. I was coming up a stream – you'd call it a river in California – uncharted – and unnamed. It was a noble valley, now shut in by high canyon walls, and again opening out into beautiful stretches, wide and long, with pasture shoulder-high in the bottoms, meadows dotted with flowers, and with clumps of timberspruce – virgin and magnificent. The dogs were packing on their backs, and were sore-footed and played out; while I was looking for any bunch of Indians to get sleds and drivers from and go on with the first snow. It was late fall, but the way those flowers persisted surprised me. I was supposed to be in sub-arctic America, and high up among the buttresses of the Rockies, and yet there was that everlasting spread of flowers. Some day the white settlers will be in there and growing wheat down all that valley.

"And then I lifted a smoke, and heard the barking of the dogs – Indian dogs – and came into camp. There must have been five hundred of them, proper Indians at that, and I could see by the jerking-frames that the fall hunting had been good. And then I met her – Lucy. That was her name. Sign language – that was all we could talk with, till they led me to a big fly – you know, half a tent, open on the one side where a campfire burned. It was all of moose-skins, this fly – moose-skins, smoke-cured, hand-rubbed, and golden-brown. Under it everything was neat and orderly as no Indian camp ever was. The bed was laid on fresh spruce boughs. There were furs galore, and on top of all was a robe of swanskins – white swan-skins – I have never seen anything like that robe. And on top of it, sitting cross-legged, was Lucy. She was nut-brown. I have called her a girl. But she was not. She was a woman, a nut-brown woman, an Amazon, a full-blooded, full-bodied woman, and royal ripe. And her eyes were blue.

"That's what took me off my feet – her eyes – blue, not China blue, but deep blue, like the sea and sky all melted into one, and very wise. More than that, they had laughter in them – warm laughter, sun-warm and human, very human, and …shall I say feminine? They were. They were a woman's eyes, a proper woman's eyes. You know what that means. Can I say more? Also, in those blue eyes were, at the same time, a wild unrest, a wistful yearning, and a repose, an absolute repose, a sort of all-wise and philosophical calm."

Trefethan broke off abruptly.

"You fellows think I am screwed. I'm not. This is only my fifth since dinner. I am dead sober. I am solemn. I sit here now side by side with my sacred youth. It is not I — 'old' Trefethan – that talks; it is my youth, and it is my youth that says those were the most wonderful eyes I have ever seen – so very calm, so very restless; so very wise, so very curious; so very old, so very young; so satisfied and yet yearning so wistfully. Boys, I can't describe them. When I have told you about her, you may know better for yourselves."

"She did not stand up. But she put out her hand."

"'Stranger,' she said, 'I'm real glad to see you.'

"I leave it to you – that sharp, frontier, Western tang of speech. Picture my sensations. It was a woman, a white woman, but that tang! It was amazing that it should be a white woman, here, beyond the last boundary of the world – but the tang. I tell you, it hurt. It was like the stab of a flatted note. And yet, let me tell you, that woman was a poet. You shall see."

"She dismissed the Indians. And, by Jove, they went. They took her orders and followed her blind. She was hi-yu skookam chief. She told the bucks to make a camp for me and to take care of my dogs. And they did, too. And they knew enough not to get away with as much as a moccasin-lace of my outfit. She was a regular She-Who-Must-Be-Obeyed, and I want to tell you it chilled me to the marrow, sent those little thrills Marathoning up and down my spinal column, meeting a white woman out there at the head of a tribe of savages a thousand miles the other side of No Man's Land.

"'Stranger," she said, 'I reckon you're sure the first white that ever set foot in this valley. Set down an' talk a spell, and then we'll have a bite to eat. Which way might you be comin'?'

"There it was, that tang again. But from now to the end of the yarn I want you to forget it. I tell you I forgot it, sitting there on the edge of that swan-skin robe and listening and looking at the most wonderful woman that ever stepped out of the pages of Thoreau or of any other man's book.

"I stayed on there a week. It was on her invitation. She promised to fit me out with dogs and sleds and with Indians that would put me across the best pass of the Rockies in five hundred miles. Her fly was pitched apart from the others, on the high bank by the river, and a couple of Indian girls did her cooking for her and the camp work. And so we talked and talked, while the first snow fell and continued to fall and make a surface for my sleds. And this was her story.

"She was frontier-born, of poor settlers, and you know what that means – work, work, always work, work in plenty and without end.

"'I never seen the glory of the world,' she said. 'I had no time. I knew it was right out there, anywhere, all around the cabin, but there was always the bread to set, the scrubbin' and the washin' and the work that was never done. I used to be plumb sick at times, jes' to get out into it all, especially in the spring when the songs of the birds drove me most clean crazy. I wanted to run out through the long pasture grass, wetting my legs with the dew of it, and to climb the rail fence, and keep on through the timber and up and up over the divide so as to get a look around. Oh, I had all kinds of hankerings – to follow up the canyon beds and slosh around from pool to pool, making friends with the water-dogs and the speckly trout; to peep on the sly and watch the squirrels and rabbits and small furry things and see what they was doing and learn the secrets of their ways. Seemed to me, if I had time, I could crawl among the flowers, and, if I was good and quiet, catch them whispering with themselves, telling all kinds of wise things that mere humans never know.'“

Trefethan paused to see that his glass had been refilled.

“Another time she said: ‘I wanted to run nights like a wild thing, just to run through the moonshine and under the stars, to run white and naked in the darkness that I knew must feel like cool velvet, and to run and run and keep on running. One evening, plumb tuckered out – it had been a dreadful hard hot day, and the bread wouldn't raise and the churning had gone wrong, and I was all irritated and jerky – well, that evening I made mention to dad of this wanting to run of mine. He looked at me curious-some and a bit scared. And then he gave me two pills to take. Said to go to bed and get a good sleep and I'd be all hunky-dory in the morning. So I never mentioned my hankerings to him, or any one any more.'

“The mountain home broke up – starved out, I imagine – and the family came to Seattle to live. There she worked in a factory – long hours, you know, and all the rest, deadly work. And after a year of that she became waitress in a cheap restaurant – hash-slinger, she called it. “She said to me once, ‘Romance I guess was what I wanted. But there wan't no romance floating around in dishpans and washtubs, or in factories and hash-joints.'

“When she was eighteen she married – a man who was going up to Juneau to start a restaurant. He had a few dollars saved, and appeared prosperous. She didn't love him – she was emphatic about that, but she was all tired out, and she wanted to get away from the unending drudgery. Besides, Juneau was in Alaska, and her yearning took the form of a desire to see that wonderland. But little she saw of it. He started the restaurant, a little cheap one, and she quickly learned what he had married her for..… to save paying wages. She came pretty close to running the joint and doing all the work from waiting to dishwashing. She cooked most of the time as well. And she had four years of it.

“Can't you picture her, this wild woods creature, quick with every old primitive instinct, yearning for the free open, and mowed up in a vile little hash-joint and toiling and moiling for four mortal years?

"'There was no meaning in anything,' she said. 'What was it all about! Why was I born! Was that all the meaning of life – just to work and work and be always tired — !to go to bed tired and to wake up tired, with every day like every other day unless it was harder?' She had heard talk of immortal life from the gospel sharps, she said, but she could not reckon that what she was doin' was a likely preparation for her immortality.

"But she still had her dreams, though more rarely. She had read a few books – what, it is pretty hard to imagine, Seaside Library novels most likely; yet they had been food for fancy. 'Sometimes,' she said, 'when I was that dizzy from the heat of the cooking that if I didn't take a breath of fresh air I'd faint, I'd stick my head out of the kitchen window, and close my eyes and see most wonderful things. All of a sudden I'd be traveling down a country road, and everything clean and quiet, no dust, no dirt; just streams ripplin' down sweet meadows, and lambs playing, breezes blowing the breath of flowers, and soft sunshine over everything; and lovely cows lazying knee-deep in quiet pools, and young girls bathing in a curve of stream all white and slim and natural – and I'd know I was in Arcady. I'd read about that country once, in a book. And maybe knights, all flashing in the sun, would come riding around a bend in the road, or a lady on a milk-white mare, and in the distance I could see the towers of a castle rising, or I just knew, on the next turn, that I'd come upon some palace, all white and airy and fairy-like, with fountains playing, and flowers all over everything, and peacocks on the lawn.…. and then I'd open my eyes, and the heat of the cooking range would strike on me, and I'd hear Jake sayin' — he was my husband – I'd hear Jake sayin', "Why ain't you served them beans? Think I can wait here all day!" Romance — !I reckon the nearest I ever come to it was when a drunken Armenian cook got the snakes and tried to cut my throat with a potato knife and I got my arm burned on the stove before I could lay him out with the potato stomper.

"'I wanted easy ways, and lovely things, and Romance and all that; but it just seemed I had no luck nohow and was only and expressly born for cooking and dishwashing. There was a wild crowd in Juneau them days, but I looked at the other women, and their way of life didn't excite me. I reckon I wanted to be clean. I don't know why; I just wanted to, I guess; and I reckoned I might as well die dishwashing as die their way."

Trefethan halted in his tale for a moment, completing to himself some thread of thought.

“And this is the woman I met up there in the Arctic, running a tribe of wild Indians and a few thousand square miles of hunting territory. And it happened, simply enough, though, for that matter, she might have lived and died among the pots and pans. But ‘Came the whisper, came the vision.’ That was all she needed, and she got it.

“‘I woke up one day,’ she said. ‘Just happened on it in a scrap of newspaper. I remember every word of it, and I can give it to you.’ And then she quoted Thoreau’s Cry of the Human:

“‘The young pines springing up, in the corn field from year to year are to me a refreshing fact. We talk of civilizing the Indian, but that is not the name for his improvement. By the wary independence and aloofness of his dim forest life he preserves his intercourse with his native gods and is admitted from time to time to a rare and peculiar society with nature. He has glances of starry recognition, to which our saloons are strangers. The steady illumination of his qenius, dim only because distant, is like the faint but satisfying light of the stars compared with the dazzling but ineffectual and short-lived blaze of candles. The Society Islanders had their day-born gods, but they were not supposed to be of equal antiquity with the.…. night-born gods.’

“That’s what she did, repeated it word for word, and I forgot the tang, for it was solemn, a declaration of religion – pagan, if you will; and clothed in the living garmenture of herself.

“‘And the rest of it was torn away,’ she added, a great emptiness in her voice. ‘It was only a scrap of newspaper. But that Thoreau was a wise man. I wish I knew more about him.’ She stopped a moment, and I swear her face was ineffably holy as she said, ‘I could have made him a good wife.’

“And then she went on. ‘I knew right away, as soon as I read that, what was the matter with me. I was a night-born. I, who had lived all my life with the day-born, was a night-born. That was why I had never been satisfied with cooking and dishwashing; that was why I had hankered to run naked in the moonlight. And I knew that this dirty little Juneau hash-joint was no place for me. And right there and then I said, “I quit.” I packed up my few rags of clothes, and started. Jake saw me and tried to stop me.

“‘What you doing?” he says.

"'Divorcin' you and me,' I says. 'I'm headin' for tall timber and where I belong.'"

"'No you don't," he says, reaching for me to stop me. "The cooking has got on your head. You listen to me talk before you up and do anything brash.'"

"'But I pulled a gun-a little Colt's forty-four – and says, "This does my talkin' for me.'"

"'And I left.'"

Trefethan emptied his glass and called for another.

"Boys, do you know what that girl did? She was twenty-two. She had spent her life over the dish-pan and she knew no more about the world than I do of the fourth dimension, or the fifth. All roads led to her desire. No; she didn't head for the dance-halls. On the Alaskan Pan-handle it is preferable to travel by water. She went down to the beach. An Indian canoe was starting for Dyea – you know the kind, carved out of a single tree, narrow and deep and sixty feet long. She gave them a couple of dollars and got on board.

"'Romance?' she told me. 'It was Romance from the jump. There were three families altogether in that canoe, and that crowded there wasn't room to turn around, with dogs and Indian babies sprawling over everything, and everybody dipping a paddle and making that canoe go.' And all around the great solemn mountains, and tangled drifts of clouds and sunshine. And oh, the silence! the great wonderful silence! And, once, the smoke of a hunter's camp, away off in the distance, trailing among the trees. It was like a picnic, a grand picnic, and I could see my dreams coming true, and I was ready for something to happen 'most any time. And it did.

"'And that first camp, on the island! And the boys spearing fish in the mouth of the creek, and the big deer one of the bucks shot just around the point. And there were flowers everywhere, and in back from the beach the grass was thick and lush and neck-high. And some of the girls went through this with me, and we climbed the hillside behind and picked berries and roots that tasted sour and were good to eat. And we came upon a big bear in the berries making his supper, and he said "Oof!" and ran away as scared as we were. And then the camp, and the camp smoke, and the smell of fresh venison cooking. It was beautiful. I was with the night-born at last, and I knew that was where I belonged. And for the first time in my life, it seemed to me, I went to bed happy that night, looking out under a corner of the canvas at the stars cut off black by a big shoulder of mountain, and listening to the night-noises, and knowing that the same thing would go on next day and forever and ever, for I wasn't going back. And I never did go back.'

"'Romance! I got it next day. We had to cross a big arm of the ocean – twelve or fifteen miles, at least; and it came on to blow when we were in the middle. That night I was along on shore, with one wolf-dog, and I was the only one left alive.'

"Picture it yourself," Trefethan broke off to say. "The canoe was wrecked and lost, and everybody pounded to death on the rocks except her. She went ashore hanging on to a dog's tail, escaping the rocks and washing up on a tiny beach, the only one in miles.

"'Lucky for me it was the mainland,' she said. 'So I headed right away back, through the woods and over the mountains and straight on anywhere. Seemed I was looking for something and knew I'd find it. I wasn't afraid. I was night-born, and the big timber couldn't kill me. And on the second day I found it. I came upon a small clearing and a tumbledown cabin. Nobody had been there for years and years. The roof had fallen in. Rotted blankets lay in the bunks, and pots and pans were on the stove. But that was not the most curious thing. Outside, along the edge of the trees, you can't guess what I found. The skeletons of eight horses, each tied to a tree. They had starved to death, I reckon, and left only little piles of bones scattered some here and there. And each horse had had a load on its back. There the loads lay, in among the bones – painted canvas sacks, and inside moosehide sacks, and inside the moosehide sacks – what do you think?'"

She stopped, reached under a comer of the bed among the spruce boughs, and pulled out a leather sack. She untied the mouth and ran out into my hand as pretty a stream of gold as I have ever seen – coarse gold, placer gold, some large dust, but mostly nuggets, and it was so fresh and rough that it scarcely showed signs of water-wash.

"'You say you're a mining engineer,' she said, 'and you know this country. Can you name a pay-creek that has the color of that gold!'

"I couldn't! There wasn't a trace of silver. It was almost pure, and I told her so.

"'You bet,' she said. 'I sell that for nineteen dollars an ounce. You can't get over seventeen for Eldorado gold, and Minook gold don't fetch quite eighteen. Well, that was what I found among the bones – eight horse-loads of it, one hundred and fifty pounds to the load.'

"'A quarter of a million dollars!' I cried out.

"'That's what I reckoned it roughly,' she answered. 'Talk about Romance! And me a slaving the way I had all the years, when as soon as I ventured out, inside three days, this was what happened. And what became of the men that mined all that gold? Often and often I wonder about it. They left their horses, loaded and tied, and just disappeared off the face of the earth, leaving neither hide nor hair behind them. I never heard tell of them. Nobody knows anything about them. Well, being the night-born, I reckon I was their rightful heir.'

Trefethan stopped to light a cigar.

"Do you know what that girl did? She cached the gold, saving out thirty pounds, which she carried back to the coast. Then she signaled a passing canoe, made her way to Pat Healy's trading post at Dyea, outfitted, and went over Chilcoot Pass. That was in '88 – eight years before the Klondike strike, and the Yukon was a howling wilderness. She was afraid of the bucks, but she took two young squaws with her, crossed the lakes, and went down the river and to all the early camps on the Lower Yukon. She wandered several years over that country and then on in to where I met her. Liked the looks of it, she said, seeing, in her own words, 'a big bull caribou knee-deep in purple iris on the valley-bottom.' She hooked up with the Indians, doctored them, gained their confidence, and gradually took them in charge. She had only left that country once, and then, with a bunch of the young bucks, she went over Chilcoot, cleaned up her gold-cache, and brought it back with her.

"'And here I be, stranger,' she concluded her yarn, 'and here's the most precious thing I own.'

"She pulled out a little pouch of buckskin, worn on her neck like a locket, and opened it. And inside, wrapped in oiled silk, yellowed with age and worn and thumbed, was the original scrap of newspaper containing the quotation from Thoreau.

"'And are you happy …satisfied?' I asked her. 'With a quarter of a million you wouldn't have to work down in the States. You must miss a lot.'

"'Not much,' she answered. 'I wouldn't swop places with any woman down in the States. These are my people; this is where I belong. But there are times – and in her eyes smoldered up that hungry yearning I've mentioned — 'there are times when I wish most awful bad for that Thoreau man to happen along.'

"'Why?' I asked.

"'So as I could marry him. I do get mighty lonesome at spells. I'm just a woman – a real woman. I've heard tell of the other kind of women that gallivanted off like me and did queer things – the sort that become soldiers in armies, and sailors on ships. But those women are queer themselves. They're more like men than women; they look like men and they don't have ordinary women's needs. They don't want love, nor little children in their arms and around their knees. I'm not that sort. I leave it to you, stranger. Do I look like a man?'

"She didn't. She was a woman, a beautiful, nut-brown woman, with a sturdy, health-rounded woman's body and with wonderful deep-blue woman's eyes.

"'Ain't I woman?' she demanded. 'I am. I'm 'most all woman, and then some. And the funny thing is, though I'm night-born in everything else, I'm not when it comes to mating. I reckon that kind likes its own kind best. That's the way it is with me, anyway, and has been all these years.'

"'You mean to tell me — ' I began.

"'Never,' she said, and her eyes looked into mine with the straightness of truth. 'I had one husband, only – him I call the Ox; and I reckon he's still down in Juneau running the hash-joint. Look him up, if you ever get back, and you'll find he's rightly named.'

"And look him up I did, two years afterward. He was all she said – solid and stolid, the Ox – shuffling around and waiting on the tables.

"'You need a wife to help you,' I said.

"'I had one once,' was his answer.

"'Widower?'

"'Yep. She went loco. She always said the heat of the cooking would get her, and it did. Pulled a gun on me one day and ran away with some Siwashes in a canoe. Caught a blow up the coast and all hands drowned.'"

Trefethan devoted himself to his glass and remained silent.

"But the girl?" Milner reminded him.

"You left your story just as it was getting interesting, tender. Did it?"

"It did," Trefethan replied. "As she said herself, she was savage in everything except mating, and then she wanted her own kind. She was very nice about it, but she was straight to the point. She wanted to marry me.

"'Stranger,' she said, 'I want you bad. You like this sort of life or you wouldn't be here trying to cross the Rockies in fall weather. It's a likely spot. You’ll find few likelier. Why not settle down! I’ll make you a good wife.’

“And then it was up to me. And she waited. I don’t mind confessing that I was sorely tempted. I was half in love with her as it was. You know I have never married. And I don’t mind adding, looking back over my life, that she is the only woman that ever affected me that way. But it was too preposterous, the whole thing, and I lied like a gentleman. I told her I was already married.

“‘Is your wife waiting for you?’ she asked.

“I said yes.

“‘And she loves you?’

“I said yes.

“And that was all. She never pressed her point…except once, and then she showed a bit of fire.

“‘All I’ve got to do,’ she said, ‘is to give the word, and you don’t get away from here. If I give the word, you stay on…But I ain’t going to give it. I wouldn’t want you if you didn’t want to be wanted…and if you didn’t want me.’

“She went ahead and outfitted me and started me on my way.

“‘It’s a darned shame, stranger,” she said, at parting. ‘I like your looks, and I like you. If you ever change your mind, come back.’

“Now there was one thing I wanted to do, and that was to kiss her good-bye, but I didn’t know how to go about it nor how she would take it — .I tell you I was half in love with her. But she settled it herself.

“‘Kiss me,’ she said. ‘Just something to go on and remember.’

“And we kissed, there in the snow, in that valley by the Rockies, and I left her standing by the trail and went on after my dogs. I was six weeks in crossing over the pass and coming down to the first post on Great Slave Lake.”

The brawl of the streets came up to us like a distant surf. A steward, moving noiselessly, brought fresh siphons. And in the silence Trefethan’s voice fell like a funeral bell:

“It would have been better had I stayed. Look at me.”

We saw his grizzled mustache, the bald spot on his head, the puff-sacks under his eyes, the sagging cheeks, the heavy dewlap, the general tiredness and staleness and fatness, all the collapse and ruin of a man who had once been strong but who had lived too easily and too well.

“It’s not too late, old man,” Bardwell said, almost in a whisper.

“By God! I wish I weren’t a coward!” was Trefethan’s answering cry. “I could go back to her. She’s there, now. I could shape up and live many a long year…with her…up there. To remain here is to commit suicide. But I am an old man – forty-seven – look at me. The trouble is,” he lifted his glass and glanced at it, “the trouble is that suicide of this sort is so easy. I am soft and tender. The thought of the long day’s travel with the dogs appalls me; the thought of the keen frost in the morning and of the frozen sled-lashings frightens me — ”

Automatically the glass was creeping toward his lips. With a swift surge of anger he made as if to crash it down upon the floor. Next came hesitancy and second thought. The glass moved upward to his lips and paused. He laughed harshly and bitterly, but his words were solemn:

“Well, here’s to the Night-Born. She WAS a wonder.”

A Night’s Swim in Yeddo Bay

“YES, a mighty nice set of people are them Japs, for all their being half civilized, which I deny, and say right here that for smartness, push and energy, learning, honesty, politeness and general good-naturedness, their like can’t be beat. And when it comes to comparing them to our people, for real moral goodness and purity, why, we ain’t in it.” And the speaker, a grizzled, old merchant seaman, drained his glass and set it down on the bar with a slam, as though inviting criticism or controversy. But none dared to oppose him. Good-humoredly glancing round on his little group of listeners, he called for another round of drinks.

“An enterprising people, they are,” he went on, leaning comfortably back against the bar and striking an attitude, without which, as his old chum, Bill Nandts, said, it was impossible for him to spin a yarn.

“They’re always longing to be, as they call it, Europeanized or Americanized. They’re only too quick to discard their old habits and way of doing things for the newer and more improved customs and methods of ours. Why, take the simple matter of dress, for instance. From the lowest beggar in the street to the highest dignitary in the land, they all want to be European in their dress. Pretty near all that can afford it dress like us, and sometimes those who can’t put themselves to pretty shifts in order to do so.

“Why, there isn’t a ship that leaves Yokohama but with a fo’ks’le full of slender, dilapidated wardrobes, the rest of which the Japs have obtained by shrewd trading and sharp tricks. Of course, the curio traders that come aboard while in port get more than a fair share of the spoils; but still, the ‘sam pan’ or boat men do a fair trade in that line.

“God pity the sailor who finds himself down on the pier without the necessary ‘ten sen’ to pay the boatmen’s hire out to his vessel. Unless he can find a shipmate, from whom to borrow the money, he will usually end in parting with his shirt or singlet, or some article of wearing apparel; for the rapacious ‘sam pan’ men just ache to dress like us, though thy can’t do it on the square. They tried that game on me once, but it did not succeed.

“It was my first trip to Yokohama, and I had been ashore half the night, carrying on as only a reckless young rat knows how. I had been up in ‘Bloodtown’, for that is what the low white quarter is called by the natives, because of the many drunken brawls and fights that occur there. Well, it was ‘do in Rome as Rome does’, and, of course, I had got mixed up in a couple of rows and street fights, for I was about half seas under, and did not care a snap for anything. Just about midnight I came wandering down to the little stone pier, or jetty, which was Yokohama’s only apology for the long line of docks to be met with in every seaport. In Yokohama, as you know, all the shipping lays out to anchor or to huge buoys; the work of loading and unloading being carried on by hundreds of lighters and thousands of low class Japanese laborers. I hear, however, that the Government has now erected a splendid steel pier, which cost a couple of million.

“But to return to my yarn. Along I came, taking in the whole street in a way that reminded me of the drunken fishermen, who, with thirty-two points in the compass, steered thirty more. My hat was gone; the sailor’s knot, with which I had tied the silk handkerchief round my neck, had been slipped and drawn tight against my windpipe, nearly choking me; my clothes were all dusty and awry, from where I had been rolling on the ground with two doughty ‘ricksha’ men and a policeman; and, in fact, I must have presented a most charming appearance as I came under the lights of the police station and custom-house.

“About a hundred paces farther on, I came to the stone steps where the ‘sam pans’ clustered, while their owners solicited custom, for all the world like our own cabmen and hotel runners down at the ferries when the overland passengers are due.

“I soon engaged an old codger, who seemed like those battered armors which one sees in museums and such places. He must have been at least sixty years old, and, with great height, he was as lean as a skeleton; while his whole body was nothing but a mass of wrinkles. Here and there, as the light from a brazier, charcoal fire, shone on his sunburned hide, I could see big black and white scars of all descriptions. He was the most battered old hulk one would wish to meet with, and his voice was in harmony with the rest of him. It was as thin and shrill and piping as a child’s, and it made me fidget as he bowed and ducked before me.

“Following him, I climbed aboard the ‘sam pan’, where I made the acquaintance of the rest of his crew. It was as startling a contrast as I ever saw. It was a little lump of a boy, not much larger than a good-sized chaw of tobacco. He was a precocious little youngster, with plump, well-formed body, and the bearing and assurance of a full-grown man. I proceeded to take a seat; but, what with my condition and the shaky, old concern, I came down all in a heap, as though I intended going through the bottom of the rickety craft.

"As I lay there, sprawling, I saw the little shaver glace sharply at me, and then jabber away to the old fellow, who, in turn, stared at me and paused in the very act of shoving the 'sam pan' off. I managed to gain my feet, and, irritated at the delay and my own clumsiness, I told them rather sharply to go ahead. They refused to do so. By this time the steps were crowded by the rough watermen, who were all laughing and jeering at me.

"I began to get angry at all this, and was about to shove off myself when the youngster came up to me and said very laconically, as he held out his had, 'Pay now'. At first I did not understand, so closely were the two words run together; but after he repeated his 'pay now' several times, to the great delight of the crowd, I comprehended. Of course, I had no objections as to when I paid; but, digging down into my pocket, I found I was broke. Then I carefully searched every pocket, and the result was the startling knowledge that I hadn't a 'sou markee' to my name.

"When this became apparent, the crowd on the steps fairly howled in their glee, as they chattered away and hurled whole strings of advice and admonitions to my triumphant 'sam pan' crew.

"The youngster, after sharply scanning me with his shrewd, black eyes, laid hold of my shirt, which was bran' new from the slop chest, and said, 'Gimme shirt'. To this request the crowd signified their approval by sundry had-clappings and with much laughter enjoyed my predicament.

"'Not by a long-shot', sez I, and, finding him obstinate, I climbed out on the pier, feeling pretty cheap.

"Well, I fooled around a long while; but not one of all the 'sam pan' men would take me out without being paid in advance. To my every appeal, they would answer, 'Gimme coat', 'Gimme shirt', and so on. I was very obstinate myself in those days and wouldn't give in.

"I remember getting up on a big block of hewn granite and delivering an impassioned harangue to the motley mob, who cheered and jeered me by turns, not understanding a word of my discourse. Bye and bye I fell off the stone on top of them, nearly mashing two or three.

"Then I wandered down to the police station, and made known my ridiculous plight to the lieutenant. He seemed a very affable, good-natured man, and he went out and addressed the 'sam pan' men in choice Japanese. But they still refused to take me unless I parted company with my coat or shirt, or some article of wearing apparel, worth ten times the necessary money.

“Well, to make a long story short, after puzzling my head a little, I decided to swim aboard. As quick as it takes to tell it, I stripped myself, and, telling the lieutenant to take care of my clothes, I started out the pier on the run, closely followed by the ‘sam pan’ men, who seemed to hugely enjoy the queer caper I cut. I started down the stone steps with the tread of a hero; but the tide was out, and slipping on the slimy ooze which covered them, I went heels over head, bumpety bump, all the way down to the bottom. I struck the water with a mighty splash, to the accompaniment of the hoarse shouts of the enthusiastic crowd.

“However, when I came to the surface, they all signified their willingness to take me aboard if I would return. But I was stubborn now. I waved them good-bye, and paddled away in the dark. I had no fear, for I could swim like a fish, and, as it was mid-summer, the water was quite warm. Besides, the freshening effect of the salty brine was rapidly clearing my muddled head.

“Far ahead of me our anchor light burned brightly, and, with a strong, steady stroke, I struck out. It was not much of a swim — hardly a mile — and I soon found myself alongside. Climbing silently on deck, unperceived by the anchor watch, who was no other than my old chum here, Bill Nandts, I made by way to the fo’ks’le. I took my blankets up on the fo’ks’le head, near the catheads, and laid down, for the fo’ks’le was too stifling for a comfortable sleep.

“Before I could close my eyes, I heard a boat come alongside and hail the anchor watch. Then quite a conversation followed, and some one climbed over the side and threw something down on the deck. This Bill Nandts examined. All of a sudden, he jumped to his feet, and exclaimed, ‘My God! They’re Charley’s’

“It was one of the harbor police boats, which had brought my clothes aboard and inquired about my safety. Of course, Bill hadn’t seen me, and, after rousing the fo’ks’le to find me, he made sure that I was drowned. The Captain, aroused by the noise, came on deck. After listening to the story, he ordered a boat over the side to search for me.

“Away both boats pulled, and I could hear Bill Nandts shouting again and again, ‘Charley! O Charley! Where are you?’

“After vainly hunting for me in the water, they inquired of all the ships, thinking that I might have swam aboard one of them in the dark. Before long the whole harbor was in an uproar. The hailing of the anchor watches roused the dogs, which many of the ships carried, and soon every dog in the harbor was baying vigorously. The noise was contagious and spread to the shore, where all their canine friends came in on the grand chorus. And the cocks began to crow and the chickens to cackle, as though the last day had come, while a general alarm of fire was turned in by a nervous watchman; and all Yokohama awoke, thinking the city was being burned down.

"The bay was now swarming with the 'sam pan' men, who lent their hoarse cries to swell the tumult. Lights were flashing hither and thither across the water. The police tug, having got up steam by this time, came out to see what was all the uproar was about, and but added to the general confusion. Then the Harbor Master, aroused by some over-zealous official, with a wild tale of disaster, came hurrying out in his six-oared gig. But the scene of excitement had spread so far that he could neither make head nor tail out of it.

"Suddenly he was run down and spilled into the water by the police boat, which was just then engaged in an exciting chase of a poor, bewildered fisherman, to whom, with startling intuition, they had attributed all the trouble. The frightened fisherman, now that he was saved by the accident, lost his head, and fouled the bowsprit of a Norwegian bark, near us, and capsized. Then a whole fleet of custom-house boats, thinking it was a preconcerted plan of the smugglers to land illicit goods during the excitement, came dashing across the harbor in all directions. And how they overhauled the frightened 'sam pans' and fishing craft with great fierceness, in the heroic discharge of their duty!

"And to cap the climax, the aged keepers of the two light ships, on either side of the narrow opening in the great breakwater, seeing the lights of a P. and O. steamer approaching, thought it was an invasion of the Chinese. So they hurriedly extinguished both lights, and the big passenger steamer ran aground in the darkness.

"The excitement was intense; but, after an hour's duration, it died away, and I fell asleep, hugging myself in glee at the great prank I had played.

"The next I knew I was being roughly awakened. Opening my eyes, I found the sun rising in the East. Bill Nandts was a-shaking me like mad, so happy as not to know whether to be angry with me or not. Of course, explanations followed, and it was a long time before I heard the last of it. And as for the 'sam pan' men — why, I had the freedom of the harbor. For, ever after, they refused to take money from me, though they would always set up a great jabbering and laughing whenever I hove in sight."

"Well, boys," said Bill Nandts when he concluded, "that's one on me. So come up, all hands, and drink to the health of Long Charley, the best old 'shell back' that ever sailed out of Frisco."

A Northland Miracle

John Thornton of The Call of the Wild is one of the main characters in this story.

THIS is a story of things that happened, which goes to show that there is an eternal core of goodness in the hearts of all men. Bertram Cornell was a bad man, and a failure. In a little English home overseas there had been sorrow unavailing and tears shed in vain for his earthly and spiritual welfare. He was bad, utterly bad. There could be no doubt of it. Thoughtless, careless and uncaring were mild terms with which to brand his weaknesses.

Even in his boyhood he had been strong only for evil. Kind words and pleadings had no effect on him, and he had been callous to the wet eyes of his mother and sisters and the sterner though no less kindly admonitions of his father. So it could hardly have been otherwise, when yet a very young man, that he fled hurriedly out of his home in England, carrying with him something which should have burdened his conscience had he but possessed one, and leaving behind a disgrace on his name for his people to bear. And so it was that those who had known him spoke of him in bitterness and sadness, until the memory of him was dimmed with time. Of what further evils he wrought there was never a whisper, and of his end no one ever heard. In his last hour he made recompense and wiped clean his tarnished page of life. But he did this thing in a far country, where news travels slowly and gets lost upon the way, and where men ofttimes die before they can tell how others died. But this was the way of it. Strong of body and uncaring, he had laughed at the great rough hand of the world and had always done, not what the world demanded, but whatever Bertram Cornell desired. And he had met harsh words with harsher, and stout blows with stouter. He had served as sailor on many seas, as sheepherder on the Australian ranges, as cowboy among the Dakota cattlemen, and as an enrolled private with the Mounted Police of the Northwest Territory. From this last post he had deserted on the discovery of gold in the Klondike and worked his way to the Alaskan coast. Here, because of his frontier experience, he speedily found place to fit into in a party of three other men.

This party was bound for the Klondike, but it had planned to abandon the beaten track and to go into the country over a new and untraveled route.

With a pack train of many horses (cayuses from the mountains of eastern Oregon), the four men struck east into the desolate wilderness which lies beyond Mount St. Elias, and then north through the upland region in which the headwaters of the White and Tanana rivers have their source. It was an unexplored domain, marked vaguely on the maps, which was yet to feel the foot of the first white man. So vast and dismal was it that even animal life was scarce, and the tiny Indian tribes few and far between. For days, sometimes, they rode through the silent forest of by the rims of lonely lakes and saw no living thing, heard no sound save the sighing of the wind and the sobbing of the waters. A great solemnity brooded over the land, and the quiet was so profound that they came to hush their voices and to waste few words in idle talk.

As they journeyed on they prospected for the hidden gold, groping in the chill pools of the torrents and panning dirt in the shadows of the mighty glaciers. Once they came upon a body of virgin copper, like a mountain, but they could only shrug their shoulders and pass on. Food for their horses was scarce, and quite often poisonous, and the patient animals died one by one on the strange trail their masters had led them to. Crossing a high divide, the party was overwhelmed by a sleety storm common to such elevations, and, when finally they struggled through to the warmer valley beneath, the last horse had been left behind.

But here, in the sheltered valley, John Thornton cleared back the moss and from the grassroots shook out glittering particles of yellow gold. Bertram Cornell was with him at the time, and that night the twain carried back to camp nuggets which weighed a thousand dollars in the scales. A stop was called, and at the end of a month the four men had mined a treasure far greater than they could carry. But their food supply had been steadily growing less and less, till one man could bend forward and bear it all on his back.

What with the bleak region and fall coming on, it was high time to be going along. Somewhere to the northeast they knew the Klondike lay and the country of the Yukon. How far they did not know, though they thought it could not be more than a hundred miles. So each took about five pounds of gold, or a thousand dollars, and the rest of the great treasure they cached safely against their return. And to return they intended just as soon as they could lay in more grub. Their ammunition having given out, they left their rifles with the gold, burdening themselves only with the camp equipage and the scant supply of food.

So sure were they that they would shortly reach the gold diggings, that they ate unsparingly of the provisions; so that on the tenth day they found but a few miserable pounds remaining. And still before them, in up-heaved earth-waves, range upon range, towered the great grim mountains. Then it was that doubt came, and fear settled upon the men, and Bill Hines began to ration out the food.

They no longer ate at midday, and morning and evening he divided the day's allowance into four meager portions. It was evenly shared, but it was very little — enough to keep soul and body together, but not enough to furnish the proper strength to healthy toiling men. Their faces grew wan and haggard, and day by day they covered less ground. Often the nausea of emptiness seized them, and their knees shook with weakness, and they reeled and fell. And always, when they had gasped and dragged themselves to the crest of a jagged mountain pass and eagerly looked beyond, another mountain confronted them. And always the brooding peace lay heavy over the land, and there was nothing but the loneliness and silence without end.

One by one, they threw away their blankets and spare clothes. They dropped their axes by the way, and the spare cooking utensils, and even the sacks of gold dust, until at last they staggered onward, half-naked, unburdened save for the pittance of grub that remained. This, Jan Jensen, the Dane, divided by weight into four parts so that the burden might be equally distributed. And each man, by the holy though unwritten and unspoken bonds of comradeship, held sacred that which he carried on his back. The small grub-packs were never opened except by the light of the campfire, where all could see and where just division was made.

Of bacon they possessed one three-pound chunk, which John Thornton carried in addition to a few cups of flour. This one piece they were saving for the very last, when the need would be greatest, and they resolutely refrained from touching it. But Bertram Cornell cast hungry eyes upon it and thought hungry thoughts. And in the night, while his comrades slept the sleep of exhaustion, he unstrapped John Thornton's pack and robbed it of the bacon; and all through the hours till dawn, taking care lest the unaccustomed quantity turn his stomach, he munched and chewed and swallowed it, bit by bit, till nothing at all of it was left.

On the day which followed he took good care to hide the new strength which had come to him of the night and, if anything, appeared weaker than the rest. It was a very hard day; John Thornton lagged behind and rested often; but by nightfall they had cleared another mountain and beheld the opening of a small river valley beneath, running to the eastward. To the eastward! There lay the Klondike and safety! A few more days, could they but manage to live through them, they would be among white men and grub-caches again.

But, huddled by the fire, the starving men looking greedily on, Bill Hines opened Thornton's pack to get some flour. In an instant each eye had noted the absence of the bacon. Thornton's eyes stared in horror, and Hines dropped the pack and sobbed aloud. But Jan Jensen drew his hunting knife and spoke. His voice was low and husky, almost a whisper, but each word fell slowly from his lips, and distinctly.

"My comrades, this is murder. This man has slept with us and shared with us in all fairness. When we divided all the grub by weight, each man carried on his back the lives of his comrades. And so did this man carry our lives on his back. It was a trust, a great trust, a sacred trust. He has not been true to it. Today, when he dropped behind, we thought he was weary. We were mistaken. Behold! He has eaten that which was ours, upon which our very lives were hanging. There is no other name for it than murder. For murder there is one punishment, and only one. Am I not right, my comrades?"

"Ay!" Bill Hines cried; but Bertram Cornell remained silent. He had not expected this.

Jan Jensen raised the long-bladed knife to strike, but Cornell gripped his wrist. "Let me speak," he demanded.

Thornton staggered slowly to his feet and said, "It is not right that I should die. I did not eat the bacon; nor could I have lost it. I know nothing about it. But I swear solemnly by the most high God that I have neither touched nor tasted the bacon!"

"If you were sneak enough to eat it, certainly you are sneak enough to lie about it now," Jensen charged, fingering the knife impatiently.

"Leave him alone, I tell you," threatened Cornell. "We don't know that he ate it. We know nothing about it. And I warn you, I won't stand by and see murder done. There is a chance that he is not guilty. Don't trifle with that chance. You dare not punish him on a chance."

The angry Dane sheathed the blade, but an hour later, when Thornton happened to speak to him, he turned his back. Bill Hines also refused to hold conversation with the wretched man, while Cornell, already ashamed for the good which had fluttered in him (the first in years), would have nothing to do with him.

The next morning Bill Hines lumped the little remaining food together and redivided it into four parts. From Thornton's portion he subtracted the equivalent of the bacon, which same he shared among the other three piles. This he did without a word; the act was too significant to need speech.

"And let him carry his own grub," Jensen growled. "If he wants to eat it all at once, he's welcome to."

What John Thornton suffered in the days which followed, only John Thornton knows. Not only did his comrades turn from him with abhorrent faces, but he was judged guilty of the blackest and most cowardly of crimes — that of treason. And further, eating less than they, he was forced to keep up with them or perish. Even then, when he had eaten his very last pinch, they had food left for two days. So he cut the leather tops from his moccasins and boiled them and ate them and during the day chewed the bark of willow-shoots till the pain of his swollen and inflamed mouth nearly drove him mad. And he dragged onward, staggering, falling, crawling, as often in delirium as not.

But the day came when the three other men fell back upon their moccasins and the green shoots of young trees. By this time they had followed the torrent down until it had become a small river, and they were counseling desperately the gathering of the drift-logs into a rickety raft. Then it was that they came unexpectedly upon an Indian village of a dozen lodges. But the Indians had never seen white men before and greeted them with a shower of arrows. "See! The river! Canoes!" Jensen cried. "We're saved if we can make them! We must make them!"

They ran, drunkenly, toward the bank, the howling tribesmen on their heels and gaining. Suddenly, from behind a tree to one side, a skin-clad warrior stepped forth. He poised his great ivory-pointed spear for a moment, then cast it with perfect aim. Singing and hurtling through the air, it drove full into John Thornton's hips. He wavered for a second, tripped and fell forward on his face. Hines and Jensen, running just behind him, swerved to the right and left and passed him on either side.

Then the miracle came to pass. The spirit of Goodness fluttered mightily in Bertram Cornell's breast. Without thought, obeying the inward prompting, he sprang forward on the instant and seized the fleeing men by the arms.

"Come back!" he cried hoarsely. "Carry Thornton to the canoes! I'll hold the Indians back until you shove clear!"

"Leave go!" the Dane screamed, fumbling for his knife. "I wouldn't touch the dog to save my life!"

"I stole the bacon. I ate the bacon. Now will you come back?" Cornell saw the doubt in their eyes. "As I hope for mercy at the Judgment Seat, I stole it." A flight of arrows fell about them like rain. "Hurry! I'll hold them back!"

In a trice they were staggering toward the canoes with the wounded man between them; but Bertram Cornell faced about and stood still. Surprised by this action, the Indians hesitated and halted, while Cornell, seeing that it was gaining time, made no motion. They discharged a shower of arrows at him. The bone-barbed missiles flew about him like hail.

Half a dozen arrows entered his chest and legs, and one pinned into his neck. But he yet stood upright and still as a carved statue. The warrior who flung the spear at Thornton approached him from the side, and they closed together in each other's arms. At this the rest of the tribesmen came down upon him in a flood of war.

As they cut and hacked, he heard Jan Jensen shouting from the water, and he knew that his comrades were safe. Then he fought the good fight, the first for a good cause in all his life, and the last. But when all was still, the Indians drew back in superstitious awe. With him lay their chief and six of their fellows.

Though he had lived without honor, thus he died, like a man, brave and repentant, and rectifying evil. Nor was his body dishonored. For that he fought greatly, and slew their own chieftain, they respected him and gave him a warrior's burial. And because they were a simple people, who had never seen white men, they were wont to speak of him, as the seasons passed, as "the strange god who came down out of the sky to die."

A Nose For the King

IN the morning calm of Korea, when its peace and tranquillity truly merited its ancient name, “Cho-sen,” there lived a politician by name Yi Chin Ho. He was a man of parts, and--who shall say?--perhaps in no wise worse than politicians the world over. But, unlike his brethren in other lands, Yi Chin Ho was in jail. Not that he had inadvertently diverted to himself public moneys, but that he had inadvertently diverted too much. Excess is to be deplored in all things, even in grafting, and Yi Chin Ho’s excess had brought him to most deplorable straits.

Ten thousand strings of cash he owed the government, and he lay in prison under sentence of death. There was one advantage to the situation--he had plenty of time in which to think. And he thought well. Then called he the jailer to him.

“Most worthy man, you see before you one most wretched,” he began. “Yet all will be well with me if you will but let me go free for one short hour this night. And all will be well with you, for I shall see to your advancement through the years, and you shall come at length to the directorship of all the prisons of Cho-sen.”

“How, now?” demanded the jailer. “What foolishness is this? One short hour, and you but waiting for your head to be chopped off! And I, with an aged and much-to-be-respected mother, not to say anything of a wife and several children of tender years! Out upon you for the scoundrel that you are!”

“From the Sacred City to the ends of all the Eight Coasts there is no place for me to hide,” Yi Chin Ho made reply. “I am a man of wisdom, but of what worth my wisdom here in prison? Were I free, well I know I could seek out and obtain the money wherewith to repay the government. I know of a nose that will save me from all my difficulties.”

“A nose!” cried the jailer.

“A nose,” said Yi Chin Ho. “A remarkable nose, if I may say so, a , most remarkable nose.”

The jailer threw up his hands despairingly. “Ah, what a wag you are, what a wag,” he laughed. “To think that that very admirable wit of yours must go the way of the chopping-block!”

And so saying, he turned and went away. But in the end, being a man soft of head and heart, when the night was well along he permitted Yi Chin Ho to go.

Straight he went to the Governor, catching him alone and arousing him from his sleep.

“Yi Chin Ho, or I’m no Governor!” cried the Governor. “What do you here who should be in prison waiting on the chopping-block?”

“I pray your excellency to listen to me,” said Yi Chin Ho, squatting on his hams by the bedside and lighting his pipe from the fire-box. “A dead man is without value. It is true, I am as a dead man, without value to the government, to your excellency, or to myself. But if, so to say, your excellency were to give me my freedom--“

“Impossible!” cried the Governor. “Besides, you are condemned to death.”

“Your excellency well knows that if I can repay the ten thousand strings of cash, the government will pardon me,’, Yi Chin Ho went on. “So, as I say, if your excellency were to give me my freedom for a few days, being a man of understanding, I should then repay the government and be in position to be of service to your excellency. I should be in position to be of very great service to your excellency.”

“Have you a plan whereby you hope to obtain this money?” asked I the Governor.

“I have,” said Yi Chin Ho.

“Then come with it to me to-morrow night; I would now sleep,” said the Governor, taking up his snore where it had been interrupted.

On the following night, having again obtained leave of absence from the jailer, Yi Chin Ho presented himself at the Governor’s bedside.

“Is it you, Yi Chin Ho?” asked the Governor. “And have you the plan?”

“It is I, your excellency,” answered Yi Chin Ho, “and the plan is here.”

“Speak,” commanded the Governor.

“The plan is here,” repeated Yi Chin Ho, “here in my hand.”

The Governor sat up and opened his eyes. Yi Chin Ho proffered in his hand a sheet of paper. The Governor held it to the light.

“Nothing but a nose,” said he.

“A bit pinched, so, and so, your excellency,” said Yi Chin Ho.

“Yes, a bit pinched here and there, as you say,” said the Governor.

"Withal it is an exceeding corpulent nose, thus, and so, all in one place, at the end," proceeded Yi Chin Ho. "Your excellency would seek far and wide and many a day for that nose and find it not."

"An unusual nose," admitted the Governor.

"There is a wart upon it," said Yi Chin Ho.

"A most unusual nose," said the Governor. "Never have I seen the like. But what do you with this nose, Yi Chin Ho?"

"I seek it whereby to repay the money to the government," said Yi Chin Ho. "I seek it to be of service to your excellency, and I seek it to save my own worthless head. Further, I seek your excellency's seal upon this picture of the nose."

And the Governor laughed and affixed the seal of state, and Yi Chin Ho departed. For a month and a day he travelled the King's Road which leads to the shore of the Eastern Sea; and there, one night, at the gate of the largest mansion of a wealthy city he knocked loudly for admittance.

"None other than the master of the house will I see," said he fiercely to the frightened servants. "I travel upon the King's business."

Straightway was he led to an inner room, where the master of the house was roused from his sleep and brought blinking before him.

"You are Pak Chung Chang, head man of this city," said Yi Chin Ho in tones that were all-accusing. "I am upon the King's business."

Pak Chung Chang trembled. Well he knew the King's business was ever a terrible business. His knees smote together, and he near fell to the floor.

"The hour is late," he quavered. "Were it not well to--"

"The King's business never waits!" thundered Yi Chin Ho. "Come apart with me, and swiftly. I have an affair of moment to discuss with you.

"It is the King's affair," he added with even greater fierceness; so that Pak Chung Chang's silver pipe dropped from his nerveless fingers and clattered on the floor.

"Know then," said Yi Chin Ho, when they had gone apart, "that the King is troubled with an affliction, a very terrible affliction. In that he failed to cure, the Court physician has had nothing else than his head chopped off. From all the Eight Provinces have the physicians come to wait upon the King. Wise consultation have they held, and they have decided that for a remedy for the King's affliction nothing else is required than a nose, a certain kind of nose, a very peculiar certain kind of nose.

"Then by none other was I summoned than his excellency the prime minister himself. He put a paper into my hand. Upon this paper was the very peculiar kind of nose drawn by the physicians of the Eight Provinces, with the seal of state upon it.

"'Go,' said his excellency the prime minister. 'Seek out this nose, for the King's affliction is sore. And wheresoever you find this nose upon the face of a man, strike it off forthright and bring it in all haste to the Court, for the King must be cured. Go, and come not back until your search is rewarded.'

"And so l departed upon my quest," said Yi Chin Ho. "I have sought out the remotest corners of the kingdom; I have travelled the Eight Highways, searched the Eight Provinces, and sailed the seas of the Eight Coasts. And here I am."

With a great flourish he drew a paper from his girdle, unrolled it with many snappings and cracklings, and thrust it before the face of Pak Chung Chang. Upon the paper was the picture of the nose.

Pak Chung Chang stared upon it with bulging eyes.

"Never have I beheld such a nose," he began.

"There is a wart upon it," said Yi Chin Ho.

"Never have I beheld--" Pak Chung Chang began again.

"Bring your father before me," Yi Chin Ho interrupted sternly.

"My ancient and very-much-to-be-respected ancestor sleeps," said Pak Chung Chang.

"Why dissemble?" demanded Yi Chin Ho. "You know it is your father's nose. Bring him before me that I may strike it off and be gone. Hurry, lest I make bad report of you."

"Mercy!" cried Pak Chung Chang, falling on his knees. "It is impossible! It is impossible! You cannot strike off my father's nose. He cannot go down without his nose to the grave. He will become a laughter and a byword, and all my days and nights will be filled with woe. O reflect! Report that you have seen no such nose in your travels. You, too, have a father."

Pak Chung Chang clasped Yi Chin Ho's knees and fell to weeping on his sandals.

"My heart softens strangely at your tears," said Yi Chin Ho. "I, too, know filial piety and regard. But--" He hesitated, then added, as though thinking aloud, "It is as much as my head is worth."

"How much is your head worth ?" asked Pak Chung Chang in a thin, small voice.

"A not remarkable head," said Yi Chin Ho. "An absurdly unremarkable head; but, such is my great foolishness, I value it at nothing less than one hundred thousand strings of cash."

"So be it," said Pak Chung Chang, rising to his feet.

"I shall need horses to carry the treasure," said Yi Chin Ho, "and men to guard it well as I journey through the mountains. There are robbers abroad in the land."

"There are robbers abroad in the land," said Pak Chung Chang, sadly. "But it shall be as you wish, so long as my ancient and very-much-to-be-respected ancestor's nose abide in its appointed place."

"Say nothing to any man of this occurrence," said Yi Chin Ho, "else will other and more loyal servants than I be sent to strike off your father's nose."

And so Yi Chin Ho departed on his way through the mountains, blithe of heart and gay of song as he listened to the jingling bells of his treasure-laden ponies.

There is little more to tell. Yi Chin Ho prospered through the years. By his efforts the jailer attained at length to the directorship of all the prisons of Cho-sen; the Governor ultimately betook himself to the Sacred City to be prime minister to the King, while Yi Chin Ho became the King's boon companion and sat at table with him to the end of a round, fat life. But Pak Chung Chang fell into a melancholy, and ever after he shook his head sadly, with tears in his eyes, whenever he regarded the expensive nose of his ancient and very-much-to-berespected ancestor.

O Haru

"'WHO is she?' What, chum, hast been sleeping? 'Tis O Haru — of all geishas, the best, the purest; of all dancers, the matchless, the gracefulest; of all women, the most divinely beautiful, the most alluring. 'Tis O Haru, the dream of the lotus, the equal of Fugi, and the glory of man. Truly hast thou squandered thy last years in America, else wouldst thou have known her, else seen her in our great festival processions, raised aloft on immense dashi and dancing to the admiring multitudes. Call thyself lucky; consider this tea house the shrine of your geisha-girl worship; thank the father that gave thee life that thou art here! Bless the illustrious Lord Sousouchi, who has thrice-blessed thee by bringing thee here! For 'tis O Haru, the spring, the glorious dancer, the heavenly beauty; peer unto none of all geishas and dancers!"

This, amid the hum of admiration and burst applause which succeeded O Haru's dance. The most illustrious, the most honorific, the Lord Sousouchi, had invited the great British nobleman to a supper with music, singers and dancers, so that he might gain an insight of Japanese pleasures. The most famous geishas, singers and players had been hired for the occasion, nor had his hand been sparing in aught that would diminish its charm and brilliancy. There were perhaps a dozen that partook of Sousouchi's hospitality and that now vied with each other in applauding O Haru.

The geishas or dancing-girls are the brightest, most intelligent and most accomplished of Japanese women. Chosen for their beauty they are educated from childhood. Not only are they trained in all the seductive graces of the dance and of personal attraction; but also in singing, music, and the intricate etiquette of serving and entertaining; nor are their minds neglected, for in wit, intelligence and repartee, they excell. In short, the whole aim of their education is to make them artistically fascinating. In class, they occupy much the same position as do our actresses, and though many are frail beauties that grace the tea house festivals, here and there will be found gems of the purest luster.

O Haru, as was the custom, now that her dance was finished, attended upon the Lord Sousouchi, and her quick wit, beauty, silvery laughter, and fascinating personality, set the guests a-throb with the pleasure of her presence. To the Occidental she could not but appeal, while to the Japanese, she was the ideal of beauty. Her figure, slender, long-waisted and narrow-hipped, was a marvel of willowy grace, rendered the more bewitching by the ease and charm of her carriage. Her bust was that of a maid's — no full suggestion of luscious charms beneath the soft fold of her kimono — rather the chaste slimness of virginity. Long, slender, beautifully curved, the neck was but a fitting pedestal for the shapely head, poised so delicately upon it. Her hair, long, straight, and glossy black, was combed back from the clear, high forehead — a wondrous dome to the exquisite oval of the face. High above the long, narrow eyes, arched the brows, seemingly stencilled, so extreme the delicacy of their lines. The nose, while not prominent, aquiline; and the mouth, small, approached lips, full and scarlet-red. Of a clear, ivory white, her complexion pled all innocence of the customary rouge, while in the cheek lay the faintest suggestion of color — color, which could mount to the heights of passion or sink to the imperceptibility of placidity. The expression, never the same, the shifting mirror of every mood, of every thought: now responsive to vivacious, light-hearted gayety; now reflecting the deeper, sterner emotions; now portraying all the true womanly depths of her nature. Truly was she "O Haru, the dream of the lotus, the equal of Fugi and the glory of man!"

The samisens strike up: the drumming girls cease. A group of geishas, clad in robes of scarlet and yellow, dance the pretty dance of maple leaves, shivering and shaking in the autumn wind. But the eyes and souls of the company are bent on O Haru, whose ravishing beauty and inimitable wit bind them her slaves, and even the senility of the Right Honorable Lord Sousouchi vanishes before her irresistible charms. Soon she leaves them to expatiate upon her wondrous self, while she retires to dress for her next dance, her last for the evening.

A burst of music and she appears, clad in the armor and complete war-panoply of the ancient samurai — the samurai of feudal Japan, whose whole duty was embraced within the single term, loyalty; loyalty, so pure, that wife, children, kindred, all human ties, even his gods must be, if needs, sacrificed for his master the diamiõ. It was one of her masterpieces, the interpretation of Oishi, the leader of the "Loyal Rõnins," plotting the revenge of his master's death. Oishi, who, that nothing may distract him from his contemplated vengeance, divorces his wife and sends his children away.

Full well she understood her past. Of samurai blood; the daughter of diamiõ's favorite, who had gone through the fiery ordeal of the shogunate;

who had seen the son of heaven come forth from his centuries of seclusion to hurl to earth the proud feudal nobility of old Japan; she was possessed, by heredity and tradition, of all the pride of her race. Fired by the wild rush of her father's blood, her slender form seemed to vibrate with intensity of Oishi's emotion, seemed to suffocate with the scorching heat of his passion. A hush of awe fell upon the company, as with martial tread and gesture she personified the oldtime hero. With superstitious reverence and bated breath they followed her in her wildly-graceful pantomime. Vanished the bright lights, the cheery tea house, the laughing geishas, as her audience followed her into the reality of old Japan. Through the depths of melancholy, grief and anguish, up the heights of stormy passion and soul-consuming thirst for vengeance, she led them — on — on — till, in a wild burst of rhythmic motion, the diamiõ is avenged and the consumation all but attained. Then the last scene, the dramatic climax, the hara-kiri. All hopes, all joys of life forgotten, Oishi follows his lord into the nether world. A flash of steel, the simulated death thrust in the abdomen, and the dance is over. No applause, glistening eyes and weeping geishas, and O Haru, with heaving breast and flashing eyes, overcome by the excess of her feeling, forgets to make due obeisance to the Lord Sousouchi, omits the customary sayonara and retires in a tumultuous flood of tears.

Home at last. O Haru sat in the soft halo of the andon, deep-sunk in dreamy reverie. But her thoughts were far away from tea house revels and her soul wandered in strange lands, with the image of one, Toyotomi. Toyotomi the brave, the venturesome; the love her girlhood, the desire of her womanhood.

Strange had been the mingling of their lives. Both of the samurai class, his father had prospered, hers had died, and she, an orphan, had gone into the possession of Saisdashai, the master of a geisha ya. There she had passed her childhood, spent in the cultivation of all the arts and graces of the accomplished geisha; there, in the first bloom of her maturity had she met Toyotomi; there, and in many the tea house he chose to frequent, had she learned to love him.

Peculiar had been their courtship: contrary to all tradition and custom. No fathers or mothers to choose for their children, for his also had journeyed on in quest of that silent Nirvana. Saisdashai opposed, as by law he could, her marriage, for she was his by the contract, his to hire out to the tea house patrons, and well he was paid for her marvelous dancing. But Toyotomi had been hot on the chase and one day — ah well she remembered — selling all his possessions, paid Saisdashai the last yen he could claim on her, and she found herself free — free to love and marry her lover.

But Toyotomi was ambitious. Penniless, he cared not for poverty, so they plighted their troth and she was left to her dancing, while he sailed over the sea to the white barbarians, promising to come back, rich and powerful, and marry her. What his fortune had been she knew not and save for short and infrequent letters, his wanderings were sealed to her. For a decade now, had she waited for him and saving her earnings, she recked not whether he returned rich or poor. She was rich, nay, wealthy — for was she not the most popular geisha, the people's idol, the noblemen's despair? And thanks to her lover, she had not to surrender her earnings to a geisha ya master, for she was free, independent. And though dangerous had been the path of her journey, had she not trod it unswervingly? The temptations of her position had been many, and often, most powerful; aye, and many were honorable and of the greatest inducement. There was Hakachio, the rich silk merchant, who had begged and pleaded with her to marry him; and Honondo the lieutentant, and Ueuado the diamiõ's son, and even Ogushi, the staid professor of the Royal College, who had been bewitched by her charms. Yet had she saved herself for Toyotomi, her girlish sweetheart, her woman's passion. Always had the lotus been her emblem, the symbol of purity. And glory of glories, he was returning at last: to morrow his steamer came in: to morrow she would take the train and journey down to Yokohama to meet him.

The sweet tears of joy bedimming her eye and moistening her cheek, she opened the camphorwood chest beside her and drew forth a parcel wrapped in many a fold of cotton. Undoing it she held before her an obi, a girdle of beautiful silk. The symbol of woman's betrothal; Toyotomi's symbol of her betrothal. Again she opened the chest, this time drawing forth two swords, the swords of her father the samurai. With the deep pride of race and the reverential love of her people she gazed long and earnestly upon them. How near it brought her to him, her father, whom she sometimes forgot for Toyotomi. Her father, the grim old warrior, the chivalrous captain, who had so long upheld his diamiõ's house with this long sword, and who, when all was lost had saved all with this short one, then sought oblivion through the honorable death by hara-kiri. In the heat of the lotus-time night, she slumbered before these, her most precious of relics, and in the morning, Hohna Asi, her hair-dresser, found her smiling with joy in her sleep.

O Toyotomi! Wild Toyotomi! Cruel Toyotomi! — A year had passed since his return, since their marriage; and what a year! What a marriage! What a return for her years of waiting, for her years of clinging to the lotus-flower emblem!

How handsome and noble he had looked, clad in his barbarian garments, when she met him on the pier at Yokohama. Truly she had thought that her fondest dreams were realized, that the world, in the highest sense of the word, had made a man of him. But alas! How changed! She had not understood then, had not comprehended the customs of the "foreign devils" among whom he had wandered. And he had come back with many of those fiend-begotten customs clinging to him.

Extravagance! It had affrighted her — such lavishness, such unwonted prodigality. She had known that in those far away lands, money was earned so easily; but till now she had not understood the ease with which it was spent. And Toyotomi — ah! he had learned how to spend it. To her economical soul, invested with all the saving Oriental traits of heredity, such extravagance was repulsive, crushing. Her fortune — with trusting faith and wifely obedience she had made it over to him. Ah! The crystallization of her years of labor — how he had spilled it like water! And now, in a year, nothing remained.

Many tricks had he gained in the "white devil" country and now he had become a professional wrestler. A wrestler to be proud of, and one who often made large money; but wrestler, the companion of roughs and jõrõs, the frequenter of low tea houses, and one who had abjured his native sak'e to take those expensive foreign liquors. And now she must go out and dance again, for he never brought a sen home.

O Toyotomi! So great was her love that all this was forgotten; but he was even worse. He had come back with the foreign standard of beauty, and to him she was no longer beautiful. She, the most beautiful of all geishas, the most beautiful of all Japanese women, the personified ideal of the Japanese standard, was no longer beautiful to Toyotomi, her old-time lover. He would come home drunken and surly and critcize her walk, her carriage, her narrow hips, her flat breast, slim face and slanting eyes; then rave in ecstasies of delight over the Occident beauties. Buddha! That such could be! That her Toyotomi could admire those fierce, masculine creatures, that strode, long-stepping, like men; that had great hips and humps like actual deformities. Those repulsive creaturs, with their large mouths, high noses, and eyes, deep-sunk in horrid sockets beneath fierce, heavy brows. Those creatures, so terrible, that when they looked on a Japanese baby it must burst into tears of fright. Those animals, who were loathsome, disgustingly mouthing themselves and their men — Toyotomi called it kissing and had tried to teach her. Ach! How could it be!

And even was he worse than all that: sometimes he had beaten her, and still worse, he loved that half-caste jõrõ from yoshiwari. That girl of the Japanese mother and the English father, whom he thought so bewitching, whom he loved for her resemblance to the "white devil" beauty.

And worst of all, had he not said to day "O Haru, go thou out to night and dance, else will I not only beat but divorce thee."

"O jizo! Jizo!" she moaned. "That such could be! That such could be!

The pleasurable stillness of the lazy lotus-time afternoon, pressed heavily against O Haru, as she said her prayers to her Shinto gods. But the gods gave no sign: no rest came to her, the young, almost boyish priest gazed curiously at her as she prostrated herself in her devotions. He knew her (who did not), the wonderful dancer, whose life had seemed such a joyous span; but of late she had come to the temple often and he wondered what might burden her. He drew near, and as her prayer ceased, blessed her and spoke soothing words. She was married? Yes. And prayed for children? No. For her ancestors? Yes, as she had always done. Then for what? But she burst into tears and would not answer.

The priest paused and his sensitive, intellectual face clouded in a moment's thought — she was brighter than most who prayed their in their childish sorrows; she was in trouble, suffered. Why not? Surely she could understand a few slight glimmerings of his esoteric knowledge. His face illumined with the divine compassion of Siddãrtha Guatama. He raised her and led her before the staue of the sitting Buddha: there, in simple language, he told her of the birth, the boyhood, the manhood of Guatama, afterward the Buddha; of his grief for the sorrow of the world; of his discovery of the great truth. Self, the mere clinging to life, was the evil: self was the illusion, whereby the soul endured the pain of countless incarnations: self was to be annihilated, and when destroyed, the soul passed to Nirvana. Nirvana, the highest attainable sphere, where peace and rest and bliss unuttered soothed the soul, weary from many migrations. Thus had the divine Buddha done, thus might she do — annihilate self and gain Nirvana. Then he blessed and left her soothed, soothed, but with too faint a glimmering of his secret wisdom.

She gazed on the sweet, mysterious face of the Buddha, brooding in ineffable calm above her. O the peace, the rest, the awful placidity of his face! And gazing, she repeated the words of the priest: self, the mere clinging to life was evil. Nirvana, the highest sphere where there was naught but rest and bliss unutterable.

Thrice the priest passed by and beheld her still kneeling, still contemplating the wondrous face of the Holy One. More than one curious devotee glanced at her and thrilled on beholding the peaceful expression of holy joy which lighted her face.

The fountain in the courtyard splashed dreamily; the shadows lengthened; the somber silence of the temple deepened: O Haru prostrated herself before the great-hearted Buddha, and rose, soothed and at rest with herself and all the world. She paused on the temple steps, and with her last few coppers, bought of the old woman all her caged sparrows. One by one, she gave them liberty, and with each breathed a prayer — a prayer to attain Nirvana.

“All hail to O Haru, the wandered, the lost one! For she has returned to her tea houses and dancing! All hail to O Haru, the lotus-flower beauty, the dreamy-bewitvhing, the ideally perfect! Blessed are we, her slaves, to behold her! Blessed are we that drink of her sweetness, her beauty! Blessed are we, happiest of mortals! For ‘tis O Haru, the wonderful dancer, come once again among us, her bondmen! ‘Tis O Haru, the joy and the pride of all mankind, the ruler of beasts, the conquerer of men! O Haru, the dream of rhythmical beauty, of fiery emotion, of terrible passion! O Haru, the wondrous, the queenly, the radiant; the gracefulest, sweetest and purest of dancers! Rejoice O my fellows! For she has returned, come among us! Rejoice! Rejoice! For ‘tis O Haru, the spring, the glorious dancer — peer unto none of all geishas and dancers!”

The enthusiasm was boundless. The news had gone abroad that this night she was to dance, and her admirers had flocked to her as they had never before. Triumphant had been her return, but with all the sweet modesty of her nature, not unmingled with a certain sad pride, she received their homage. To accomodate the throng, the whole tea house had been thrown into a single, pavilion-like room, and even then, the crush was suffocating.

She was simply superb, totally eclipsing her previous self. Never had she appeared so beautiful, so merry, so witty. In her moments of rest she kept them convulsed with her brilliant repartee and good-natured badinage. With each moment of the growing evening did she discover new graces, charms and glories. And now, in the ecstasies of worship, a hush of expectancy and awe fell upon the audience. She was to close with her favorite, Oishi, the “Loyal Rõnin.”

A wild burst of samisens and the rolling of tom-toms greet her appearance: the dance begins. Again the fierce and haughty samurai blood courses like fire through her veins: again she holds all with the magic sway of her personality: again she leads them with her into the illusory realities of old Japan. She surpassed herself in the force, the vividness, the emotion of her portrayal. With bold confidence she essayed flights hitherto undreamed of, playing the gamut of their feelings with the intrepidity of inspiration. Never before had the sentiment and the dramatic of her nature been so unified, so harmoniously one.

On — on — she led them into chaos of conflicting emotions: yet distinctly grew the picture of true ancient chivalry. Ever they beheld Oishi treading the mighty heights of his true manhood; casting aside all doubts and fears, all human ties; walking of a verity with the gods. Up — up — they forgot their baser selves, were raised to the sublimities of seemingly realized ideals. The climax approaches. But hush! A throb of emotion, intuitive, anticipatory, sways with an audible sob, the anguuished beholders.

O Haru, before the hara-kiri, undergoes a transfiguration. Her face illumines with angelic glory, with a brightness, too dazzling, almost, to gaze upon, she seems a being not of the world. The samisens wail in heart-breaking sorrow: the low crescendo roll of the finale commences: she kisses her father’s sword and the audience shudders expectantly. She is to follow her lord into the nether world, into the silent Nirvana. Her body sways in rhythmical undulations: her face is a-glow with heavenly rapture: she poises for the blow. Now — — the music rolls and crashes — swift, that deft, upward thrust — swift the mighty gush of blood —

And the sweet silence of the lotus-time night is rent with the sobbing agony of many voices:

“Woe! Woe! Woe! O Haru, the divine O Haru is no more!”

An Odyssey of the North

This story was London's first writing success, receiving him a cheque for $120 from The Atlantic Monthly in 1899.

THE sleds were singing their eternal lament to the creaking of the harnesses and the tinkling bells of the leaders; but the men and dogs were tired and made no sound. The trail was heavy with new-fallen snow, and they had come far, and the runners, burdened with flint-like quarters of frozen moose, clung tenaciously to the unpacked surface and held back with a stubbornness almost human. Darkness was coming on, but there was no camp to pitch that night. The snow fell gently through the pulseless air, not in flakes, but in tiny frost crystals of delicate design. It was very warm,--barely ten below zero,--and the men did not mind. Meyers and Bettles had raised their ear-flaps, while Malemute Kid had even taken off his mittens.

The dogs had been fagged out early in the afternoon, but they now began to show new vigor. Among the more astute there was a certain restlessness,--an impatience at the restraint of the traces, an indecisive quickness of movement, a sniffing of snouts and pricking of ears. These became incensed at their more phlegmatic brothers, urging them on with numerous sly nips on their hinder-quarters. Those, thus chidden, also contracted and helped spread the contagion. At last, the leader of the foremost sled uttered a sharp whine of satisfaction, crouching lower in the snow and throwing himself against the collar. The rest followed suit. There was an ingathering of back-bands, a tightening of traces; the sleds leaped forward, and the men clung to the gee-poles, violently accelerating the uplift of their feet that they might escape going under the runners. The weariness of the day fell from them, and they whooped encouragement to the dogs. The animals responded with joyous yelps. They were swinging through the gathering darkness at a rattling gallop.

“Gee! Gee!” the men cried, each in turn, as their sleds abruptly left the main-trail, heeling over on single runners like luggers on the wind.

Then came a hundred yards’ dash to the lighted parchment window, which told its own story of the home cabin, the roaring Yukon stove, and the steaming pots of tea. But the home cabin had been invaded. Three-score huskies chorused defiance, and as many furry forms precipitated themselves upon the dogs which drew the first sled. The door was flung open, and a man, clad in the scarlet tunic of the Northwest Police, waded knee-deep among the furious brutes, calmly and impartially dispensing soothing justice with the butt end of a dog-whip. After that, the men shook hands; and in this wise was Malemute Kid welcomed to his own cabin by a stranger.

Stanley Prince, who should have welcomed him, and who was responsible for the Yukon stove and hot tea aforementioned, was busy with his guests. There were a dozen or so of them, as nondescript a crowd as ever served the Queen in the enforcement of her laws or the delivery of her mails. They were of many breeds, but their common life had formed of them a certain type,--a lean and wiry type, with trail-hardened muscles, and sun-browned faces, and untroubled souls which gazed frankly forth, clear-eyed and steady. They drove the dogs of the Queen, wrought fear in the hearts of her enemies, ate of her meagre fare, and were happy. They had seen life, and done deeds, and lived romances; but they did not know it.

And they were very much at home. Two of them were sprawled upon Malemute Kid’s bunk, singing chansons which their French forbears sang in the days when first they entered the Northwest-land and mated with its Indian women. Bettles’ bunk had suffered a similar invasion, and three or four lusty voyageurs worked their toes among its blankets as they listened to the tale of one who had served on the boat brigade with Wolseley when he fought his way to Khartoum. And when he tired, a cowboy told of courts and kings and lords and ladies he had seen when Buffalo Bill toured the capitals of Europe. In a corner, two half-breeds, ancient comrades in a lost campaign, mended harnesses and talked of the days when the Northwest flamed with insurrection and Louis Reil was king.

Rough jests and rougher jokes went up and down, and great hazards by trail and river were spoken of in the light of commonplaces, only to be recalled by virtue of some grain of humor or ludicrous happening. Prince was led away by these uncrowned heroes who had seen history made, who regarded the great and the romantic as but the ordinary and the incidental in the routine of life. He passed his precious tobacco among them with lavish disregard, and rusty chains of reminiscence were loosened, and forgotten odysseys resurrected for his especial benefit.

When conversation dropped and the travelers filled the last pipes and unlashed their tight-rolled sleeping-furs, Prince fell back upon his comrade for further information.

"Well, you know what the cowboy is," Malemute Kid answered, beginning to unlace his moccasins; "and it's not hard to guess the British blood in his bed-partner. As for the rest, they're all children of the coureurs du bois, mingled with God knows how many other bloods. The two turning in by the door are the regulation `breeds' or bois brules. That lad with the worsted breech scarf--notice his eyebrows and the turn of his jaw--shows a Scotchman wept in his mother's smoky tepee. And that handsome-looking fellow putting the capote under his head is a French half-breed,--you heard him talking; he doesn't like the two Indians turning in next to him. You see, when the `breeds' rose under Reil the full-bloods kept the peace, and they've not lost much love for one another since."

"But I say, what's that glum-looking fellow by the stove? 'll swear he can't talk English. He hasn't opened his mouth all night."

"You 're wrong. He knows English well enough. Did you follow his eyes when he listened? I did. But he 's neither kith nor kin to the others. When they talked their own patois you could see he didn't understand. I 've been wondering myself what he is. Let's find out."

"Fire a couple of sticks into the stove!" Malemute Kid commanded, raising his voice and looking squarely at the man in question.

He obeyed at once.

"Had discipline knocked into him somewhere," Prince commented in a low tone. Malemute Kid nodded, took off his socks, and picked his way among the recumbent men to the stove. There he hung his damp footgear among a score or so of mates.

"When do you expect to get to Dawson?" he asked tentatively.

The man studied him a moment before replying. "They say seventy-five mile. So? Maybe two days."

The very slightest accent was perceptible, while there was no awkward hesitancy or groping for words.

"Been in the country before?"

"No."

"Northwest Territory?"

"Yes."

"Born there?"

“No.”

“Well, where the devil were you born? You ‘re none of these.” Malemute Kid swept his hand over the dog-drivers, even including the two policemen who had turned into Prince’s bunk. “Where did you come from? I’ve seen faces like yours before, though I can’t remember just where.”

“I know you,” he irrelevantly replied, at once turning the drift of Malemute Kid’s questions.

“Where? Ever see me?”

“No; your partner, him priest, Pastilik, long time ago. Him ask me if I see you, Malemute Kid. Him give me grub. I no stop long. You hear him speak ‘bout me?”

“Oh! you ‘re the fellow that traded the otter skins for the dogs?”

The man nodded, knocked out his pipe, and signified his disinclination for conversation by rolling up in his furs. Malemute Kid blew out the slush-lamp and crawled under the blankets with Prince.

“Well, what is he?”

“Don’t know — turned me off, somehow, and then shut up like a clam. But he ‘s a fellow to whet your curiosity. I’ve heard of him. All the Coast wondered about him eight years ago. Sort of mysterious, you know. He came down out of the North, in the dead of winter, many a thousand miles from here, skirting Bering Sea and traveling as though the devil were after him. No one ever learned where he came from, but he must have come far. He was badly travel-worn when he got food from the Swedish missionary on Golovin Bay and asked the way south. We heard of this afterward. Then he abandoned the shore-line, heading right across Norton Sound. Terrible weather, snowstorms and high winds, but he pulled through where a thousand other men would have died, missing St. Michael’s and making the land at Pastilik. He’d lost all but two dogs, and was nearly gone with starvation.

“He was so anxious to go on that Father Roubeau fitted him out with grub; but he couldn’t let him have any dogs, for he was only waiting my arrival to go on a trip himself. Mr. Ulysses knew too much to start on without animals, and fretted around for several days. He had on his sled a bunch of beautifully cured otter skins, sea-otters, you know, worth their weight in gold. There was also at Pastilik an old Shylock of a Russian trader, who had dogs to kill. Well, they didn’t dicker very long, but when the Strange One headed south again, it was in the rear of a spanking dog-team. Mr. Shylock, by the way, had the otter skins. I saw them, and they were magnificent. We figured it up and found the dogs brought him at least five hundred apiece. And it wasn't as if the Strange One didn't know the value of sea-otter; he was an Indian of some sort, and what little he talked showed he'd been among white men.

"After the ice passed out of the Sea, word came up from Nunivak Island that he'd gone in there for grub. Then he dropped from sight, and this is the first heard of him in eight years. Now where did he come from? and what was he doing there? and why did he come from there? He's Indian, he's been nobody knows where, and he's had discipline, which is unusual for an Indian. Another mystery of the North for you to solve, Prince."

"Thanks, awfully; but I've got too many on hand as it is," he replied.

Malemute Kid was already breathing heavily; but the young mining engineer gazed straight up through the thick darkness, waiting for the strange orgasm which stirred his blood to die away. And when he did sleep, his brain worked on, and for the nonce he, too, wandered through the white unknown, struggled with the dogs on endless trails, and saw men live, and toil, and die like men.

* * *

The next morning, hours before daylight, the dog-drivers and policemen pulled out for Dawson. But the powers that saw to her Majesty's interests, and ruled the destinies of her lesser creatures, gave the mailmen little rest; for a week later they appeared at Stuart River, heavily burdened with letters for Salt Water. However, their dogs had been replaced by fresh ones; but then, they were dogs.

The men had expected some sort of a lay-over in which to rest up; besides, this Klondike was a new section of the Northland, and they had wished to see a little something of the Golden City where dust flowed like water, and dance halls rang with never ending revelry. But they dried their socks and smoked their evening pipes with much the same gusto as on their former visit, though one or two bold spirits speculated on desertion and the possibility of crossing the unexplored Rockies to the east, and thence, by the Mackenzie Valley, of gaining their old stamping-grounds in the Chippewyan Country. Two or three even decided to return to their homes by that route when their terms of service had expired, and they began to lay plans forthwith, looking forward to the hazardous undertaking in much the same way a city-bred man would to a day's holiday in the woods.

He of the Otter Skins seemed very restless, though he took little interest in the discussion, and at last he drew Malemute Kid to one side and talked for some time in low tones. Prince cast curious eyes in their direction, and the mystery deepened when they put on caps and mittens, and went outside. When they returned, Malemute Kid placed his gold-scales on the table, weighed out the matter of sixty ounces, and transferred them to the Strange One's sack. Then the chief of the dog-drivers joined the conclave, and certain business was transacted with him. The next day the gang went on up river, but He of the Otter Skins took several pounds of grub and turned his steps back toward Dawson.

* * *

"Didn't know what to make of it," said Malemute Kid in response to Prince's queries; "but the poor beggar wanted to be quit of the service for some reason or other — at least it seemed a most important one to him, though he wouldn't let on what. You see, it's just like the army; he signed for two years, and the only way to get free was to buy himself out. He couldn't desert and then stay here, and he was just wild to remain in the country. Made up his mind when he got to Dawson, he said; but no one knew him, hadn't a cent, and I was the only one he'd spoken two words with. So he talked it over with the Lieutenant-Governor, and made arrangements in case he could get the money from me — loan, you know. Said he'd pay back in the year, and if I wanted, would put me onto something rich. Never 'd seen it, but knew it was rich.

"And talk! why, when he got me outside he was ready to weep. Begged and pleaded; gotdown in the snow to me till I hauled him out of it. Palavered around like a crazy man. Swore he's worked to this very end for years and years, and couldn't bear to be disappointed now. Asked him what end, but he wouldn't say. Said they might keep him on the other half of the trail and he wouldn't get to Dawson in two years, and then it would be too late. Never saw a man take on so in my life. And when I said I 'd let him have it, had to yank him out of the snow again. Told him to consider it in the light of a grub-stake. Think he'd have it? No, sir! Swore he 'd give me all he found, make me rich beyond the dreams of avarice, and all such stuff. Now a man who puts his life and time against a grub-stake ordinarily finds it hard enough to turn over half of what he finds. Something behind all this, Prince; just you make a note of it. We'll hear of him if he stays in thecountry"--

"And if he doesn't?"

"Then my good nature gets a shock, and I'm sixty some odd ounces out."

* * *

The cold weather had come on with the long nights, and the sun had begun to play his ancient game of peekaboo along the southern snow-line ere aught was heard of Malemute Kid's grub-stake. And then, one bleak morning in early January, a heavily laden dog-train pulled into his cabin below Stuart River. He of the Otter Skins was there, and with him walked a man such as the gods have almost forgotten how to fashion. Men never talked of luck and pluck and five-hundred-dollar dirt without bringing in the name of Axel Gunderson; nor could tales of nerve or strength or daring pass up and down the camp-fire without the summoning of his presence. And when the conversation flagged, it blazed anew at mention of the woman who shared his fortunes.

As has been noted, in the making of Axel Gunderson the gods had remembered their old-time cunning, and cast him after the manner of men who were born when the world was young. Full seven feet he towered in his picturesque costume which marked a king of Eldorado. His chest, neck, and limbs were those of a giant. To bear his three hundred pounds of bone and muscle, his snowshoes were greater by a generous yard than those of other men. Rough-hewn, with rugged brow and massive jaw and unflinching eyes of palest blue, his face told the tale of one who knew but the law of might. Of the yellow of ripe corn silk, his frost-incrusted hair swept like day across the night, and fell far down his coat of bear-skin. A vague tradition of the sea seemed to cling about him, as he swung down the narrow trail in advance of the dogs; and he brought the butt of his dog-whip against Malemute Kid's door as a Norse sea rover, on southern foray, might thunder for admittance at the castle gate. Prince bared his womanly arms and kneaded sour-dough bread, casting, as he did so, many a glance at the three guests,--three guests the like of which might never come under a man's roof in a lifetime. The Strange One, whom Malemute Kid had surnamed Ulysses, still fascinated him; but his interest chiefly gravitated between Axel Gunderson and Axel Gunderson's wife. She felt the day's journey, for she had softened in comfortable cabins during the many days since her husband mastered the wealth of frozen pay-streaks, and she was tired. She rested against his great breast like a slender flower against a wall, replying lazily to Malemute Kid's good-natured banter, and stirring Prince's blood strangely with an occasional sweep of her deep, dark eyes. For Prince was a man, and healthy, and had seen few women in many months. And she was older than he, and an Indian besides. But she was different from all native wives he had met: she had traveled,--had been in his country among others, he gathered from the conversation; and she knew most of the things the women of his own race knew, and much more that it was not in the nature of things for them to know. She could make a meal of sun-dried fish or a bed in the snow; yet she teased them with tantalizing details of many-course dinners, and caused strange internal dissensions to arise at the mention of various quondam dishes which they had well-nigh forgotten. She knew the ways of the moose, the bear, and the little blue fox, and of the wild amphibians of the Northern seas; she was skilled in the lore of the woods and the streams, and the tale writ by man and bird and beast upon the delicate snow crust was to her an open book; yet Prince caught the appreciative twinkle in her eye as she read the Rules of the Camp. These rules had been fathered by the Unquenchable Bettles at a time when his blood ran high, and were remarkable for the terse simplicity of their humor. Prince always turned them to the wall before the arrival of ladies; but who could suspect that this native wife--Well, it was too late now.

This, then, was the wife of Axel Gunderson, a woman whose name and fame had traveled with her husband's, hand in hand, through all the Northland. At table, Malemute Kid baited her with the assurance of an old friend, and Prince shook off the shyness of first acquaintance and joined in. But she held her own in the unequal contest, while her husband, slower in wit, ventured naught but applause. And he was very proud of her; his every look and action revealed the magnitude of the place she occupied in his life. He of the Otter Skins ate in silence, forgotten in the merry battle; and long ere the others were done he pushed back from the table and went out among the dogs. Yet all too soon his fellow travelers drew on their mittens and parkas, and followed him.

There had been no snow for many days, and the sleds slipped along the hard-packed Yukon trail as easily as if it had been glare ice. Ulysses led the first sled; with the second came Prince and Axel Gunderson's wife; while Malemute Kid and the yellow-haired giant brought up the third.

"It 's only a `hunch,' Kid," he said; "but I think it 's straight. He's never been there, but he tells a good story, and shows a map I heard of when I was in the Kootenay country, years ago. I'd like to have you go along; but he 's a strange one, and swore point-blank to throw it up if any one was brought in. But when I come back you ‘ll get first tip, and I’ll stake you next to me, and give you a half share in the town site besides.

“No! no!” he cried, as the other strove to interrupt. “I’m running this, and before I’m done it’ll need two heads. If it ‘s all right, why it’ll be a second Cripple Creek, man; do you hear?--a second Cripple Creek! It’s quartz, you know, not placer; and if we work it right we’ll corral the whole thing,--millions upon millions. I’ve heard of the place before, and so have you. We’ll build a town--thousands of workmen--good waterways--steamship lines--big carrying trade--light-draught steamers for head-reaches--survey a railroad, perhaps--sawmills--electric-light plant--do our own banking--commercial company--syndicate--Say! just you hold your hush till I get back!”

The sleds came to a halt where the trail crossed the mouth of Stuart River. An unbroken sea of frost, its wide expanse stretched away into the unknown east. The snowshoes were withdrawn from the lashings of the sleds. Axel Gunderson shook hands and stepped to the fore, his great webbed shoes sinking a fair half yard into the feathery surface and packing the snow so the dogs should not wallow. His wife fell in behind the last sled, betraying long practice in the art of handling the awkward footgear. The stillness was broken with cheery farewells; the dogs whined; and He of the Otter Skins talked with his whip to a recalcitrant wheeler.

An hour later, the train had taken on the likeness of a black pencil crawling in a long, straight line across a mighty sheet of foolscap.

One night, many weeks later, Malemute Kid and Prince fell to solving chess problems from the torn page of an ancient magazine. The Kid had just returned from his Bonanza properties, and was resting up preparatory to a long moose hunt. Prince too had been on creek and trail nearly all winter, and had grown hungry for a blissful week of cabin life.

“Interpose the black knight, and force the king. No, that won’t do. See, the next move”--

“Why advance the pawn two squares? Bound to take it in transit, and with the bishop out of the way”--

“But hold on! That leaves a hole, and”--

“No; it ‘s protected. Go ahead! You’ll see it works.”

It was very interesting. Somebody knocked at the door a second time before Malemute Kid said, “Come in.” The door swung open. Something staggered in. Prince caught one square look, and sprang to his feet. The horror in his eyes caused Malemute Kid to whirl about; and he too was startled, though he had seen bad things before. The thing tottered blindly toward them. Prince edged away till he reached the nail from which hung his Smith & Wesson.

“My God! what is it?” he whispered to Malemute Kid.

“Don’t know. Looks like a case of freezing and no grub,” replied the Kid, sliding away in the opposite direction. “Watch out! It may be mad,” he warned, coming back from closing the door.

The thing advanced to the table. The bright flame of the slush-lamp caught its eye. It was amused, and gave voice to eldritch cackles which betokened mirth. Then, suddenly, he--for it was a man--swayed back, with a hitch to his skin trousers, and began to sing a chanty, such as men lift when they swing around the capstan circle and the sea snorts in their ears:

Pull! my bully boys! Pull!
D’yeh want--to know de captain ru-uns her?
Pull! my bully boys! Pull!
Jon-a-than Jones ob South Caho-li-in-a,
Pull! my bully”--

He broke off abruptly, tottered with a wolfish snarl to the meat-shelf, and before they could intercept was tearing with his teeth at a chunk of raw bacon. The struggle was fierce between him and Malemute Kid; but his mad strength left him as suddenly as it had come, and he weakly surrendered the spoil. Between them they got him upon a stool, where he sprawled with half his body across the table. A small dose of whiskey strengthened him, so that he could dip a spoon into the sugar caddy which Malemute Kid placed before him. After his appetite had been somewhat cloyed, Prince, shuddering as he did so, passed him a mug of weak beef tea.

The creature’s eyes were alight with a sombre frenzy, which blazed and waned with every mouthful. There was very little skin to the face. The face, for that matter, sunken and emaciated, bore very little likeness to human countenance. Frost after frost had bitten deeply, each depositing its stratum of scab upon the half-healed scar that went before. This dry, hard surface was of a bloody-black color, serrated by grievous cracks wherein the raw red flesh peeped forth. His skin garments were dirty and in tatters, and the fur of one side was singed and burned away, showing where he had lain upon his fire.

Malemute Kid pointed to where the sun-tanned hide had been cut away, strip by strip,--the grim signature of famine.

“Who--are--you?” slowly and distinctly enunciated the Kid.

The man paid no heed.

“Where do you come from?”

“Yan-kee ship come down de ri-ib-er,” was the quavering response.

“Don’t doubt the beggar came down the river,” the Kid said, shaking him in an endeavor to start a more lucid flow of talk.

But the man shrieked at the contact, clapping a hand to his side in evident pain. He rose slowly to his feet, half leaning on the table.

“She laughed at me--so--with the hate in her eye; and she--would--not--come.”

His voice died away, and he was sinking back when Malemute Kid gripped him by the wrist, and shouted, “Who? Who would not come?”

“She, Unga. She laughed, and struck at me, so, and so. And then”--

“Yes?”

“And then”--

“And then what?”

“And then he lay very still, in the snow, a long time. He is--still in--the--snow.”

The two men looked at each other helplessly.

“Who is in the snow?”

“She, Unga. She looked at me with the hate in her eye, and then”--

“Yes, yes.”

“And then she took the knife, so; and once, twice--she was weak. I traveled very slow. And there is much gold in that place, very much gold.”

“Where is Unga?” For all Malemute Kid knew, she might be dying a mile away. He shook the man savagely, repeating again and again, “Where is Unga? Who is Unga?”

“She--is--in--the--snow.”

“Go on!” The Kid was pressing his wrist cruelly.

“So--I--would--be--in--the snow--but--I--had--debt--to--pay. It--was--heavy--I--had--a--debt--to--pay--a--debt--to--pay--I--had”--The faltering monosyllables ceased, as he fumbled in his pouch and drew forth a buckskin sack. “A--debt--to--pay--five--pounds--of--gold--grub--stake--Mal--e--mute--Kid--I”--The exhausted head dropped upon the table; nor could Malemute Kid rouse it again.

"It's Ulysses," he said quietly, tossing the bag of dust on the table. "Guess it's all day with Axel Gunderson and the woman. Come on, let 's get him between the blankets. He's Indian; he'll pull through, and tell a tale besides."

As they cut his garments from him, near his right breast could be seen two unhealed, hard-lipped knife thrusts.

* * *

"I will talk of the things which were, in my own way; but you will understand. I will begin at the beginning, and tell of myself and the woman, and, after that, of the man."

He of the Otter Skins drew over to the stove as do men who have been deprived of fire and are afraid the Promethean gift may vanish at any moment. Malemute Kid pricked up the slush-lamp, and placed it so its light might fall upon the face of the narrator. Prince slid his body over the edge of the bunk and joined them.

"I am Naass, a chief, and the son of a chief, born between a sunset and a rising, on the dark seas, in my father's oomiak. All of a night the men toiled at the paddles, and the women cast out the waves which threw in upon us, and we fought with the storm. The salt spray froze upon my mother's breast till her breath passed with the passing of the tide. But I,--I raised my voice with the wind and the storm, and lived.

"We dwelt in Akatan"--

"Where?" asked Malemute Kid.

"Akatan, which is in the Aleutians; Akatan, beyond Chignik, beyond Kardalak, beyond Unimak. As I say, we dwelt in Akatan, which lies in the midst of the sea on the edge of the world. We farmed the salt seas for the fish, the seal, and the otter; and our homes shouldered about one another on the rocky strip between the rim of the forest and the yellow beach where our kayaks lay. We were not many, and the world was very small. There were strange lands to the east,--islands like Akatan; so we thought all the world was islands, and did not mind. "I was different from my people. In the sands of the beach were the crooked timbers and wave-warped planks of a boat such as my people never built; and I remember on the point of the island which overlooked the ocean three ways there stood a pine tree which never grew there, smooth and straight and tall. It is said the two men came to that spot, turn about, through many days, and watched with the passing of the light. These two men came from out of the sea in the boat which lay in pieces on the beach. And they were white like you, and weak as the little children when the seal have gone away and the hunters come home empty. I know of these things from the old men and the old women, who got them from their fathers and mothers before them. These strange white men did not take kindly to our ways at first, but they grew strong, what of the fish and the oil, and fierce. And they built them each his own house, and took the pick of our women, and in time children came. Thus he was born who was to become the father of my father's father.

"As I said, I was different from my people, for I carried the strong, strange blood of this white man who came out of the sea. It is said we had other laws in the days before these men; but they were fierce and quarrelsome, and fought with our men till there were no more left who dared to fight. Then they made themselves chiefs, and took away our old laws and gave us new ones, insomuch that the man was the son of his father, and not his mother, as our way had been. They also ruled that the son, firstborn, should have all things which were his father's before him, and that the brothers and sisters should shift for themselves. And they gave us other laws. They showed us new ways in the catching of fish and the killing of bear which were thick in the woods; and they taught us to lay by bigger stores for the time of famine. And these things were good.

"But when they had become chiefs, and there were no more men to face their anger, they fought, these strange white men, each with the other. And the one whose blood I carry drove his seal spear the length of an arm through the other's body. Their children took up the fight, and their children's children; and there was great hatred between them, and black doings, even to my time, so that in each family but one lived to pass down the blood of them that went before. Of my blood I was alone; of the other man's there was but a girl, Unga, who lived with her mother. Her father and my father did not come back from the fishing one night; but afterward they washed up to the beach on the big tides, and they held very close to each other.

"The people wondered, because of the hatred between the houses, and the old men shook their heads and said the fight would go on when children were born to her and children to me. They told me this as a boy, till I came to believe, and to look upon Unga as a foe, who was to be the mother of children which were to fight with mine. I thought of these things day by day, and when I grew to a stripling I came to ask why this should be so. And they answered, ‘We do not know, but that in such way your fathers did.’ And I marveled that those which were to come should fight the battles of those that were gone, and in it I could see no right. But the people said it must be, and I was only a stripling.

“And they said I must hurry, that my blood might be the older and grow strong before hers. This was easy, for I was head man, and the people looked up to me because of the deeds and the laws of my fathers, and the wealth which was mine. Any maiden would come to me, but I found none to my liking. And the old men and the mothers of maidens told me to hurry, for even then were the hunters bidding high to the mother of Unga; and should her children grow strong before mine, mine would surely die.

“Nor did I find a maiden till one night coming back from the fishing. The sunlight was lying, so, low and full in the eyes, the wind free, and the kayaks racing with the white seas. Of a sudden the kayak of Unga came driving past me, and she looked upon me, so, with her black hair flying like a cloud of night and the spray wet on her cheek. As say, the sunlight was full in the eyes, and I was a stripling; but somehow it was all clear, and I knew it to be the call of kind to kind. As she whipped ahead she looked back within the space of two strokes,--looked as only the woman Unga could look,--and again I knew it as the call of kind. The people shouted as we ripped past the lazy oomiaks and left them far behind. But she was quick at the paddle, and my heart was like the belly of a sail, and I did not gain. The wind freshened, the sea whitened, and, leaping like the seals on the windward breech, we roared down the golden pathway of the sun.”

Naass was crouched half out of his stool, in the attitude of one driving a paddle, as he ran the race anew. Somewhere across the stove he beheld the tossing kayak and the flying hair of Unga. The voice of the wind was in his ears, and its salt beat fresh upon his nostrils.

“But she made the shore, and ran up the sand, laughing, to the house of her mother. And a great thought came to me that night,--a thought worthy of him that was chief over all the people of Akatan. So, when the moon was up, I went down to the house of her mother, and looked upon the goods of Yash-Noosh, which were piled by the door,--the goods of Yash-Noosh, a strong hunter who had it in mind to be the father of the children of Unga. Other young men had piled their goods there, and taken them away again; and each young man had made a pile greater than the one before.

"And I laughed to the moon and the stars, and went to my own house where my wealth was stored. And many trips I made, till my pile was greater by the fingers of one hand than the pile of Yash-Noosh. There were fish, dried in the sun and smoked; and forty hides of the hair seal, and half as many of the fur, and each hide was tied at the mouth and big-bellied with oil; and ten skins of bear which I killed in the woods when they came out in the spring. And there were beads and blankets and scarlet cloths, such as I got in trade from the people who lived to the east, and who got them in trade from the people who lived still beyond in the east. And I looked upon the pile of Yash-Noosh and laughed; for I was head man in Akatan, and my wealth was greater than the wealth of all my young men, and my fathers had done deeds, and given laws, and put their names for all time in the mouths of the people.

"So, when the morning came, I went down to the beach, casting out of the corner of my eye at the house of the mother of Unga. My offer yet stood untouched. And the women smiled, and said sly things one to the other. I wondered, for never had such a price been offered; and that night I added more to the pile, and put beside it a kayak of well-tanned skins which never yet had swam in the sea. But in the day it was yet there, open to the laughter of all men. The mother of Unga was crafty, and I grew angry at the shame in which I stood before my people. So that night I added till it became a great pile, and I hauled up my oomiak, which was of the value of twenty kayaks. And in the morning there was no pile.

"Then made I preparation for the wedding, and the people that lived even to the east came for the food of the feast and the potlach token. Unga was older than I by the age of four suns in the way we reckoned the years. I was only a stripling; but then I was a chief, and the son of a chief, and it did not matter.

"But a ship shoved her sails above the floor of the ocean, and grew larger with the breath of the wind. From her scuppers she ran clear water, and the men were in haste and worked hard at the pumps. On the bow stood a mighty man, watching the depth of the water and giving commands with a voice of thunder. His eyes were of the pale blue of the deep waters, and his head was maned like that of a sea lion. And his hair was yellow, like the straw of a southern harvest or the manila rope-yarns which sailormen plait.

"Of late years we had seen ships from afar, but this was the first to come to the beach of Akatan. The feast was broken, and the women and children fled to the houses, while we men strung our bows and waited with spears in hand. But when the ship's forefoot smelt the beach the strange men took no notice of us, being busy with their own work. With the falling of the tide they careened the schooner and patched a great hole in her bottom. So the women crept back, and the feast went on.

"When the tide rose, the sea wanderers kedged the schooner to deep water, and then came among us. They bore presents and were friendly; so I made room for them, and out of the largeness of my heart gave them tokens such as I gave all the guests; for it was my wedding day, and I was head man in Akatan. And he with the mane of the sea lion was there, so tall and strong that one looked to see the earth shake with the fall of his feet. He looked much and straight at Unga, with his arms folded, so, and stayed till the sun went away and the stars came out. Then he went down to his ship. After that I took Unga by the hand and led her to my own house. And there was singing and great laughter, and the women said sly things, after the manner of women at such times. But we did not care. Then the people left us alone and went home.

"The last noise had not died away, when the chief of the sea wanderers came in by the door. And he had with him black bottles, from which we drank and made merry. You see, I was only a stripling, and had lived all my days on the edge of the world. So my blood became as fire, and my heart as light as the froth that flies from the surf to the cliff. Unga sat silent among the skins in the corner, her eyes wide, for she seemed to fear. And he with the mane of the sea lion looked upon her straight and long. Then his men came in with bundles of goods, and he piled before me wealth such as was not in all Akatan. There were guns, both large and small, and powder and shot and shell, and bright axes and knives of steel, and cunning tools, and strange things the like of which I had never seen. When he showed me by sign that it was all mine, I thought him a great man to be so free; but, he showed me also that Unga was to go away with him in his ship. Do you understand?--that Unga was to go away with him in his ship. The blood of my fathers flamed hot on the sudden, and I made to drive him through with my spear. But the spirit of the bottles had stolen the life from my arm, and he took me by the neck, so, and knocked my head against the wall of the house. And I was made weak like a newborn child, and my legs would no more stand under me. Unga screamed, and she laid hold of the things of the house with her hands, till theyfell all about us as he dragged her to the door.

Then he took her in his great arms, and when she tore at his yellow hair laughed with a sound like that of the big bull seal in the rut.

"I crawled to the beach and called upon my people; but they were afraid. Only Yash-Noosh was a man, and they struck him on the head with an oar, till he lay with his face in the sand anddid not move. And they raised the sails to the sound of their songs, and the ship went away on the wind.

"The people said it was good, for there would be no more war of the bloods in Akatan; but I said never a word, waiting till the time of the full moon, when I put fish and oil in my kayak, and went away to the east. I saw many islands and many people, and I, who had lived on the edge, saw that the world was very large. I talked by signs; but they had not seen a schooner nor a man with the mane of a sea lion, and they pointed always to the east. And I slept in queer places, and ate odd things, and met strange faces. Many laughed, for they thought me light of head; but sometimes old men turned my face to the light and blessed me, and the eyes of the young women grew soft as they asked me of the strange ship, and Unga, and the men of the sea.

"And in this manner, through rough seas and great storms, came to Unalaska. There were two schooners there, but neither was the one I sought. So I passed on to the east, with the world growing ever larger, and in the Island of Unamok there was no word of the ship, nor in Kadiak, nor in Atognak. And so I came one day to a rocky land, where men dug great holes in the mountain. And there was a schooner, but not my schooner, and men loaded upon it the rocks which they dug. This thought childish, for all the world was made of rocks; but they gave me food and set me to work. When the schooner was deep in the water, the captain gave me money and told me to go; but I asked which way he went, and he pointed south. I made signs that I would go with him; and he laughed at first, but then, being short of men, took me to help work the ship. So I came to talk after their manner, and to heave on ropes, and to reef the stiff sails in sudden squalls, and to take my turn at the wheel. But it was not strange, for the blood of my fathers was the blood of the men of the sea.

"I had thought it an easy task to find him I sought, once I got among his own people; and when we raised the land one day, and passed between a gateway of the sea to a port, I looked for perhaps as many schooners as there were fingers to my hands. But the ships lay against the wharves for miles, packed like so many little fish; and when I went among them to ask for a man with the mane of a sea lion, they laughed, and answered me in the tongues of many peoples. And I found that they hailed from the uttermost parts of the earth.

"And I went into the city to look upon the face of every man. But they were like the cod when they run thick on the banks, and I could not count them. And the noise smote upon me till I could not hear, and my head was dizzy with much movement. So I went on and on, through the lands which sang in the warm sunshine; where the harvests lay rich on the plains; and where great cities were fat with men that lived like women, with false words in their mouths and their hearts black with the lust of gold. And all the while my people of Akatan hunted and fished, and were happy in the thought that the world was small.

"But the look in the eyes of Unga coming home from the fishing was with me always, and I knew I would find her when the time was met. She walked down quiet lanes in the dusk of the evening, or led me chases across the thick fields wet with the morning dew, and there was a promise in her eyes such as only the woman Unga could give.

"So I wandered through a thousand cities. Some were gentle and gave me food, and others laughed, and still others cursed; but I kept my tongue between my teeth, and went strange ways and saw strange sights. Sometimes, I, who was a chief and the son of a chief, toiled for men,--men rough of speech and hard as iron, who wrung gold from the sweat and sorrow of their fellow men. Yet no word did I get of my quest, till came back to the sea like a homing seal to the rookeries. But this was at another port, in another country which lay to the north. And there heard dim tales of the yellow-haired sea wanderer, and I learned that he was a hunter of seals, and that even then he was abroad on the ocean.

"So I shipped on a seal schooner with the lazy Siwashes, and followed his trackless trail to the north where the hunt was then warm. And we were away weary months, and spoke many of the fleet, and heard much of the wild doings of him I sought; but never once did we raise him above the sea. We went north, even to the Pribyloffs, and killed the seals in herds on the beach, and brought their warm bodies aboard till our scuppers ran grease and blood and no man could stand upon the deck. Then were we chased by a ship of slow steam, which fired upon us with great guns. But we put on sail till the sea was over our decks and washed them clean, and lost ourselves in a fog.

“It is said, at this time, while we fled with fear at our hearts, that the yellow-haired sea wanderer put into the Pribyloffs, right to the factory, and while the part of his men held the servants of the company, the rest loaded ten thousand green skins from the salt-houses. I say it is said, but I believe; for in the voyages made on the coast with never a meeting, the northern seas rang with his wildness and daring, till the three nations which have lands there sought him with their ships. And I heard of Unga, for the captains sang loud in her praise, and she was always with him. She had learned the ways of his people, they said, and was happy. But I knew better,--knew that her heart harked back to her own people by the yellow beach of Akatan.

“So, after a long time, I went back to the port which is by a gateway of the sea, and there I learned that he had gone across the girth of the great ocean to hunt for the seal to the east of the warm land which runs south from the Russian Seas. And I, who was become a sailorman, shipped with men of his own race, and went after him in the hunt of the seal. And there were few ships off that new land; but we hung on the flank of the seal pack and harried it north through all the spring of the year. And when the cows were heavy with pup and crossed the Russian line, our men grumbled and were afraid. For there was much fog, and every day men were lost in the boats. They would not work, so the captain turned the ship back toward the way it came. But I knew the yellow-haired sea wanderer was unafraid, and would hang by the pack, even to the Russian Isles, where few men go. So I took a boat, in the black of night, when the lookout dozed on the fok’slehead, and went alone to the warm, long land. And I journeyed south to meet the men by Yeddo Bay, who are wild and unafraid. And the Yoshiwara girls were small, and bright like steel, and good to look upon; but I could not stop, for I knew that Unga rolled on the tossing floor by the rookeries of the north.

“The men by Yeddo Bay had met from the ends of the earth, and had neither gods nor homes, sailing under the flag of the Japanese. And with them I went to the rich beaches of Copper Island, where our salt-piles became high with skins. And in that silent sea we saw no man till we were ready to come away. Then, one day, the fog lifted on the edge of a heavy wind, and there jammed down upon us a schooner, with close in her wake the cloudy funnels of a Russian man-of-war. We fled away on the beam of the wind, with the schooner jamming still closer and plunging ahead three feet to our two. And upon her poop was the man with the mane of the sea lion, pressing the rails under with the canvas and laughing in his strength of life. And Unga was there,--I knew her on the moment,--but he sent her below when the cannons began to talk across the sea. As I say, with three feet to our two, till we saw the rudder lift green at every jump,--and I swinging on to the wheel and cursing, with my back to the Russian shot. For we knew he had it in mind to run before us, that he might get away while we were caught. And they knocked our masts out of us till we dragged into the wind like a wounded gull; but he went on over the edge of the sky-line,--he and Unga.

"What could we? The fresh hides spoke for themselves. So they took us to a Russian port, and after that to a lone country, where they set us to work in the mines to dig salt. And some died, and--and some did not die."

Naass swept the blanket from his shoulders, disclosing the gnarled and twisted flesh, marked with the unmistakable striations of the knout. Prince hastily covered him, for it was not nice to look upon.

"We were there a weary time; and sometimes men got away to the south, but they always came back. So, when we who hailed from Yeddo Bay rose in the night and took the guns from the guards, we went to the north. And the land was very large, with plains, soggy with water, and great forests. And the cold came, with much snow on the ground, and no man knew the way. Weary months we journeyed through the endless forest,--I do not remember, now, for there was little food and often we lay down to die. But at last we came to the cold sea, and but three were left to look upon it. One had shipped from Yeddo as captain, and he knew in his head the lay of the great lands, and of the place where men may cross from one to the other on the ice. And he led us,--I do not know, it was so long,--till there were but two. When we came to that place we found five of the strange people which live in that country, and they had dogs and skins, and we were very poor. We fought in the snow till they died, and the captain died, and the dogs and skins were mine. Then I crossed on the ice, which was broken, and once drifted till a gale from the west put me upon the shore. And after that, Golovin Bay, Pastilik, and the priest. Then south, south, to the warm sunlands where first I wandered.

"But the sea was no longer fruitful, and those who went upon it after the seal went to little profit and great risk. The fleets scattered, and the captains and the men had no word of those I sought. So I turned away from the ocean which never rests, and went among the lands, where the trees, the houses, and the mountains sit always in one place and do not move. I journeyed far, and came to learn many things, even to the way of reading and writing from books. It was well I should do this, for it came upon me that Unga must know these things, and that some day, when the time was met--we--you understand, when the time was met.

"So I drifted, like those little fish which raise a sail to the wind, but cannot steer. But my eyes and my ears were open always, and went among men who traveled much, for I knew they had but to see those sought, to remember. At last there came a man, fresh from the mountains, with pieces of rock in which the free gold stood to the size of peas, and he had heard, he had met, he knew them. They were rich, he said, and lived in the place where they drew the gold from the ground.

"It was in a wild country, and very far away; but in time came to the camp, hidden between the mountains, where men worked night and day, out of the sight of the sun. Yet the time was not come. listened to the talk of the people. He had gone away,--they had gone away,--to England, it was said, in the matter of bringing men with much money together to form companies. I saw the house they had lived in; more like a palace, such as one sees in the old countries. In the nighttime I crept in through a window that I might see in what manner he treated her. I went from room to room, and in such way thought kings and queens must live, it was all so very good. And they all said he treated her like a queen, and many marveled as to what breed of woman she was; for there was other blood in her veins, and she was different from the women of Akatan, and no one knew her for what she was. Ay, she was a queen; but I was a chief, and the son of a chief, and had paid for her an untold price of skin and boat and bead.

"But why so many words? I was a sailorman, and knew the way of the ships on the seas. I followed to England, and then to other countries. Sometimes I heard of them by word of mouth, sometimes I read of them in the papers; yet never once could I come by them, for they had much money, and traveled fast, while I was a poor man. Then came trouble upon them, and their wealth slipped away, one day, like a curl of smoke. The papers were full of it at the time; but after that nothing was said, and I knew they had gone back where more gold could be got from the ground. "They had dropped out of the world, being now poor; and so wandered from camp to camp, even north to the Kootenay Country, where picked up the cold scent.

They had come and gone, some said this way, and some that, and still others that they had gone to the Country of the Yukon. And I went this way, and I went that, ever journeying from place to place, till it seemed I must grow weary of the world which was so large. But in the Kootenay I traveled a bad trail, and a long trail, with a `breed' of the Northwest, who saw fit to die when the famine pinched. He had been to the Yukon by an unknown way over the mountains, and when he knew his time was near gave me the map and the secret of a place where he swore by his gods there was much gold.

"After that all the world began to flock into the north. I was a poor man; I sold myself to be a driver of dogs. The rest you know. met him and her in Dawson. She did not know me, for I was only a stripling, and her life had been large, so she had no time to remember the one who had paid for her an untold price.

"So? You bought me from my term of service. I went back to bring things about in my own way; for I had waited long, and now that had my hand upon him was in no hurry. As I say, I had it in mind to do my own way; for I read back in my life, through all I had seen and suffered, and remembered the cold and hunger of the endless forest by the Russian Seas. As you know, I led him into the east,--him and Unga,--into the east where many have gone and few returned. I led them to the spot where the bones and the curses of men lie with the gold which they may not have.

"The way was long and the trail unpacked. Our dogs were many and ate much; nor could our sleds carry till the break of spring. We must come back before the river ran free. So here and there we cached grub, that our sleds might be lightened and there be no chance of famine on the back trip. At the McQuestion there were three men, and near them we built a cache, as also did we at the Mayo, where was a hunting-camp of a dozen Pellys which had crossed the divide from the south. After that, as we went on into the east, we saw no men; only the sleeping river, the moveless forest, and the White Silence of the North. As say, the way was long and the trail unpacked. Sometimes, in a day's toil, we made no more than eight miles, or ten, and at night we slept like dead men. And never once did they dream that I was Naass, head man of Akatan, the righter of wrongs.

"We now made smaller caches, and in the nighttime it was a small matter to go back on the trail we had broken, and change them in such way that one might deem the wolverines the thieves. Again, there be places where there is a fall to the river, and the water is unruly, and the ice makes above and is eaten away beneath. In such a spot the sled I drove broke through, and the dogs; and to him and Unga it was ill luck, but no more. And there was much grub on that sled, and the dogs the strongest. But he laughed, for he was strong of life, and gave the dogs that were left little grub till we cut them from the harnesses, one by one, and fed them to their mates. We would go home light, he said, traveling and eating from cache to cache, with neither dogs nor sleds; which was true, for our grub was very short, and the last dog died in the traces the night we came to the gold and the bones and the curses of men.

"To reach that place,--and the map spoke true,--in the heart of the great mountains, we cut ice steps against the wall of a divide. One looked for a valley beyond, but there was no valley; the snow spread away, level as the great harvest plains, and here and there about us mighty mountains shoved their white heads among the stars. And midway on that strange plain which should have been a valley, the earth and the snow fell away, straight down toward the heart of the world. Had we not been sailormen our heads would have swung round with the sight; but we stood on the dizzy edge that we might see a way to get down. And on one side, and one side only, the wall had fallen away till it was like the slope of the decks in a topsail breeze. I do not know why this thing should be so, but it was so. `It is the mouth of hell,' he said; `let us go down.' And we went down.

"And on the bottom there was a cabin, built by some man, of logs which he had cast down from above. It was a very old cabin; for men had died there alone at different times, and on pieces of birch bark which were there we read their last words and their curses. One had died of scurvy; another's partner had robbed him of his last grub and powder and stolen away; a third had been mauled by a bald-face grizzly; a fourth had hunted for game and starved,--and so it went, and they had been loath to leave the gold, and had died by the side of it in one way or another. And the worthless gold they had gathered yellowed the floor of the cabin like in a dream.

"But his soul was steady, and his head clear, this man I had led thus far. `We have nothing to eat,' he said, `and we will only look upon this gold, and see whence it comes and how much there be. Then we will go away quick, before it gets into our eyes and steals away our judgment. And in this way we may return in the end, with more grub, and possess it all.' So we looked upon the great vein, which cut the wall of the pit as a true vein should; and we measured it, and traced it from above and below, and drove the stakes of the claims and blazed the trees in token of our rights. Then, our knees shaking with lack of food, and a sickness in our bellies, and our hearts chugging close to our mouths, we climbed the mighty wall for the last time and turned our faces to the back trip.

"The last stretch we dragged Unga between us, and we fell often, but in the end we made the cache. And lo, there was no grub. It was well done, for he thought it the wolverines, and damned them and his gods in the one breath. But Unga was brave, and smiled, and put her hand in his, till I turned away that I might hold myself. `We will rest by the fire,' she said, `till morning, and we will gather strength from our moccasins.' So we cut the tops of our moccasins in strips, and boiled them half of the night, that we might chew them and swallow them. And in the morning we talked of our chance. The next cache was five days' journey; we could not make it. We must find game.

"`We will go forth and hunt,' he said.

" `Yes,' said I, `we will go forth and hunt.'

"And he ruled that Unga stay by the fire and save her strength. And we went forth, he in quest of the moose, and I to the cache I had changed. But I ate little, so they might not see in me much strength. And in the night he fell many times as he drew into camp. And I too made to suffer great weakness, stumbling over my snowshoes as though each step might be my last. And we gathered strength from our moccasins.

"He was a great man. His soul lifted his body to the last; nor did he cry aloud, save for the sake of Unga. On the second day followed him, that I might not miss the end. And he lay down to rest often. That night he was near gone; but in the morning he swore weakly and went forth again. He was like a drunken man, and I looked many times for him to give up; but his was the strength of the strong, and his soul the soul of a giant, for he lifted his body through all the weary day. And he shot two ptarmigan, but would not eat them. He needed no fire; they meant life; but his thought was for Unga, and he turned toward camp. He no longer walked, but crawled on hand and knee through the snow. I came to him, and read death in his eyes. Even then it was not too late to eat of the ptarmigan. He cast away his rifle, and carried the birds in his mouth like a dog. I walked by his side, upright. And he looked at me during the moments he rested, and wondered that I was so strong. I could see it, though he no longer spoke; and when his lips moved, they moved without sound. As I say, he was a great man, and my heart spoke for softness; but I read back in my life, and remembered the cold and hunger of the endless forest by the Russian Seas. Besides, Unga was mine, and I had paid for her an untold price of skin and boat and bead.

"And in this manner we came through the white forest, with the silence heavy upon us like a damp sea mist. And the ghosts of the past were in the air and all about us; and I saw the yellow beach of Akatan, and the kayaks racing home from the fishing, and the houses on the rim of the forest. And the men who had made themselves chiefs were there, the lawgivers whose blood I bore, and whose blood I had wedded in Unga. Ay, and Yash-Noosh walked with me, the wet sand in his hair, and his war spear, broken as he fell upon it, still in his hand. And I knew the time was met, and saw in the eyes of Unga the promise.

"As I say, we came thus through the forest, till the smell of the camp smoke was in our nostrils. And I bent above him, and tore the ptarmigan from his teeth. He turned on his side and rested, the wonder mounting in his eyes, and the hand which was under slipping slow toward the knife at his hip. But I took it from him, smiling close in his face. Even then he did not understand. So I made to drink from black bottles, and to build high upon the snow a pile of goods, and to live again the things which happened on the night of my marriage. I spoke no word, but he understood. Yet was he unafraid. There was a sneer to his lips, and cold anger, and he gathered new strength with the knowledge. It was not far, but the snow was deep, and he dragged himself very slow. Once, he lay so long, I turned him over and gazed into his eyes. And sometimes he looked forth, and sometimes death. And when I loosed him he struggled on again. In this way we came to the fire. Unga was at his side on the instant. His lips moved, without sound; then he pointed at me, that Unga might understand. And after that he lay in the snow, very still, for a long while. Even now is he there in the snow.

"I said no word till I had cooked the ptarmigan. Then I spoke to her, in her own tongue, which she had not heard in many years. She straightened herself, so, and her eyes were wonder-wide, and she asked who I was, and where I had learned that speech.

"`I am Naass,' I said.

" `You?' she said. `You?' And she crept close that she might look upon me.

"`Yes,' I answered; `I am Naass, head man of Akatan, the last of the blood, as you are the last of the blood.'

"And she laughed. By all the things I have seen and the deeds I have done, may I never hear such a laugh again. It put the chill to my soul, sitting there in the White Silence, alone with death and this woman who laughed.

"`Come!' I said, for I thought she wandered. `Eat of the food and let us be gone. It is a far fetch from here to Akatan.'

"But she shoved her face in his yellow mane, and laughed till it seemed the heavens must fall about our ears. I had thought she would be overjoyed at the sight of me, and eager to go back to the memory of old times; but this seemed a strange form to take.

"`Come!' I cried, taking her strong by the hand. `The way is long and dark. Let us hurry!'

"`Where?' she asked, sitting up, and ceasing from her strange mirth.

"`To Akatan,' I answered, intent on the light to grow on her face at the thought. But it became like his, with a sneer to the lips, and cold anger.

"`Yes,' she said; `we will go, hand in hand, to Akatan, you and I. And we will live in the dirty huts, and eat of the fish and oil, and bring forth a spawn,--a spawn to be proud of all the days of our life. We will forget the world and be happy, very happy. It is good, most good. Come! Let us hurry. Let us go back to Akatan.'

"And she ran her hand through his yellow hair, and smiled in a way which was not good. And there was no promise in her eyes.

"I sat silent, and marveled at the strangeness of woman. went back to the night when he dragged her from me, and she screamed and tore at his hair,--at his hair which now she played with and would not leave. Then I remembered the price and the long years of waiting; and gripped her close, and dragged her away as he had done. And she held back, even as on that night, and fought like a she-cat for its whelp. And when the fire was between us and the man, I loosed her, and she sat and listened. And I told her of all that lay between, of all that had happened me on strange seas, of all that I had done in strange lands; of my weary quest, and the hungry years, and the promise which had been mine from the first. Ay, I told all, even to what had passed that day between the man and me, and in the days yet young. And as spoke I saw the promise grow in her eyes, full and large like the break of dawn. And I read pity there, the tenderness of woman, the love, the heart and the soul of Unga. And I was a stripling again, for the look was the look of Unga as she ran up the beach, laughing, to the home of her mother. The stern unrest was gone, and the hunger, and the weary waiting. The time was met. I felt the call of her breast, and it seemed there I must pillow my head and forget. She opened her arms to me, and I came against her. Then, sudden, the hate flamed in her eye, her hand was at my hip. And once, twice, she passed the knife.

"`Dog!' she sneered, as she flung me into the snow. `Swine!' And then she laughed till the silence cracked, and went back to her dead.

"As I say, once she passed the knife, and twice; but she was weak with hunger, and it was not meant that I should die. Yet was minded to stay in that place, and to close my eyes in the last long sleep with those whose lives had crossed with mine and led my feet on unknown trails. But there lay a debt upon me which would not let me rest.

"And the way was long, the cold bitter, and there was little grub. The Pellys had found no moose, and had robbed my cache. And so had the three white men; but they lay thin and dead in their cabin as passed. After that I do not remember, till I came here, and found food and fire,--much fire."

As he finished, he crouched closely, even jealously, over the stove. For a long while the slush-lamp shadows played tragedies upon the wall.

"But Unga!" cried Prince, the vision still strong upon him.

"Unga? She would not eat of the ptarmigan. She lay with her arms about his neck, her face deep in his yellow hair. I drew the fire close, that she might not feel the frost; but she crept to the other side. And I built a fire there; yet it was little good, for she would not eat. And in this manner they still lie up there in the snow."

"And you?" asked Malemute Kid.

"I do not know; but Akatan is small, and I have little wish to go back and live on the edge of the world. Yet is there small use in life. I can go to Constantine, and he will put irons upon me, and one day they will tie a piece of rope, so, and I will sleep good. Yet--no; I do not know."

"But, Kid," protested Prince, "this is murder!"

"Hush!" commanded Malemute Kid. "There be things greater than our wisdom, beyond our justice. The right and the wrong of this we cannot say, and it is not for us to judge."

Naass drew yet closer to the fire. There was a great silence, and in each man's eyes many pictures came and went.

Old Baldy

"I DECLARE! so the deacon's goin' to try his hand on Old Baldy, eh?" Jim Wheeler chuckled gleefully at the news, and rubbed his hands. "Wall, mebbe somethin' 'll happen," he went on, "an mebbe it won't, but I sha'n't be a mite s'prised if Old Baldy comes out a-top."

"The deacon's got a right powerful will," Sim Grimes suggested dubiously. "An' so has Baldy — powerful'st will in the country, bar none. But critters is critters and — " And Grimes was just preparing to unload his mind of certain ideas concerning man's primacy in the physical world, when the other cut him short.

"Now jest look here, Sim Grimes! Have you ever hearn tell of one man what limbered up Old Baldy when Old Baldy wa'n't so minded? There's Tucker an' Smith an' Johnson, an' Olsen, an' Ordway an' Wellman — didn't the whole caboodle try their luck at breakin' Old Baldy's sperrit, an' didn't the whole caboodle give it up? Jest tell me this, Sim Grimes — did you ever in yer born days hear on one man or passel of men gittin' Old Baldy on his feet when he took it into his head to lay down?"

"Mebbe yer right," Sim Grimes assented mildly, then his old faith in Deacon Barnes returning, "But the deacon's got a right powerful will."

"But Deacon Barnes jined a Prevention of Cruelty to Animals society, didn't he?" Grimes nodded. "An he don't b'lieve in whippin' dumb brutes?"

"Nope."

"Then how in the land of Goshen kin he make Old Baldy git up when he ain't in the mood?"

"It's more'n I kin tell," Grimes answered, at the same time starting up his horses. But before he was out of earshot he turned and called back, "But the deacon's got a powerful will!"

The farmers of Selbyville had little use for Old Baldy, and less regard; yet he was one of the finest oxen in the county, and perhaps the largest in the state. A good worker and a splendid yoke-animal, a stranger might have wondered at the celerity with which his various owners rid themselves of him, after having been inveigled into buying him. The same stranger might have worked him a week before he discovered why, and again an hour would have sufficed to unearth the secret. Old Baldy had but one fault — he was stubborn. And he manifested this stubborness in but one way.

Whenever things did not exactly go to suit him, he simply lay down in his tracks, there and then, consulting neither his own nor his master’s convenience. And there he would stay. Nothing could move him. Force was useless; persuasion as bad. The heavens might roll up as a scroll, or the stars fall from their seats in the sky, but there Old Baldy would stay until of his own free will he decided to get up and move along. Never from the time yoke was first put upon him had a man succeeded in budging him against his will. it was asserted that he had caused more gray hairs to grow in the heads of the Selbyville farmers than all the mortgages of the past three generations. He always went absurdly cheap, and man after man had bought him in the fond hope of conquering him, and winning not only the approbation of his fellows, but a very good bargain. And man after man sold him for little or nothing, insanely happy at being rid of so much vexation of spirit.

“As stubborn as Old Baldy” became a figure of speech, the common property of the community. Fathers conjured obedience from their sons by its use; the schoolmaster employed it on his stiff-necked pupils; and even the minister, calling sinners to repentance, blanched the cheek of the most unregenerate with its brand. But in the language Deacon Barnes alone, it had no place. It was his wont to smile and chuckle when others made use of the phrase, till people remarked it would be a blessing if he only got the tough old ox once in his hands. And now, after Old Baldy had become thoroughly set in the iniquity of his ways, the deacon had bought him off Joe Westfield for a song. Selbyville looked forward to the struggle with great interest, and sly grins and open skepticism were the order of the day whenever the topic was mentioned. They knew the deacon had a will of iron, but they also knew Old Baldy; and their collective opinion was that the deacon, like everybody else who had tried their hand at it, was bound to get the worst of the bargain.

Deacon Barnes and Old Baldy were coming down the last furrow of the ten-acre patch back of the pasture. Five rods more of the plow and it would be ready for the harrow. Old Baldy had been behaving splendidly and the deacon was jubilant. Besides, Bob, his promising eldest-born, had just run half way across the pasture and shouted that dinner was ready and waiting.

“Comin’!” he shouted back, no more dreaming that he would fail to reach the end of the furrow than that the dinner call was the trumps of judgment. Just then Old Baldy stopped. The deacon looked surprised. Baldy sighed contently. “Get up!” he shouted, and Baldy, with a hurt expression on his bovine countenance, proceeded to lie down.

Deacon Barnes stepped around where he could look into his face, and talked nicely to him, with persuasion and pathos mixed; for he feared greatly for Old Baldy’s well being. Not that he intended whipping him brutally or anything like that, but — well, he was Deacon Barnes, with the ripened will of all the male Barnes that had gone before, and he hadn’t the slightest intention of being beaten by a stubborn old ox. So they just looked each other in the eyes, he talking midly and Baldy listening with complacent interest till Bob shouted a second time across the pasture that dinner was waiting.

“Look here, Baldy,” the deacon said, rising to his feet; “if you want to lay there so mighty bad, ‘tain’t in me to stop you. Only give you fair warnin’ — the sweets of life do cloy, and you kin git too much of a good thing. Layin’ down in the furrer ain’t what it’s cracked up to be, an’ you’ll git a-mighty sick on it before yer done with me.” Baldy gazed at him with stolid impudence, saying as plainly as though he spoke, “Well, what are you going to do about it?”

But the deacon never lost his temper. “I’m goin’ to git a bite to eat,” he went on, turning away; “an’ when I come back I’ll give you one more chance. But mark my words, Baldy, it’ll be yer last.”

At the table, Deacon Barnes, instead of being at all irritated, radiated even more geniality than was his wont, and this in the face of the fact that Mrs. Barnes had a mild attack of tantrums because he had kept dinner waiting. Afterwards, when he went out on the porch, he saw Jim Wheeler had pulled up his horses where he could look over the fence at the victorious Baldy. When he passed the house he waved his hand and smiled knowingly at the deacon, and went on to spread the news that the deacon and Old Baldy were “at it.”

But there was a certain unusual exhilaration in the deacon’s face and step as he led off to the barn with Bob following in his footsteps. There he proceeded to load up his eldest-born with numerous iron and wooden pegs and old pieces of chain and rope. Then, with his ax in hand, he headed across the pasture to the scene of mutiny. “Come! Git up, Baldy!” he commanded. “It’s high time we got this furrer finished.”

Baldy regarded him passively, with half-veiled, lazy eyes. “Reckon it be more comfortable where you are, eh? B’lieve in takin’ it easy, eh? All right.

You can't say Deacon Barnes is a hard master." As he talked, he worked, driving pegs all about the stubborn animal. Then from the pegs he stretched ropes and chains, passing them across Baldy till that worthy was hard and fast to mother earth — so hard and fast that it would have required a steam derrick to get him to his feet. "Jest enjoy yourself, Baldy," the deacon called, as he started away. "I'll come up to-morrer after breakfast an' see how you be."

True to his word, in the morning the deacon paid his promised visit. But Baldy was yet strong in his will, and he behaved sullenly as animals well know how. He even tried to let on that it was real nice lying out there with nothing to do, and that the deacon worried him with his chatter, and had better go away. But Deacon Barnes stayed a full quarter of an hour, talking pleasantly, with a cheery, whole-souled ring to his voice which vexed Baldy greatly.

In the evening, after supper, he made another visit, Old Baldy was feeling stiff and sore from lying in one position all day with the hot sun beating down upon him. He even betrayed anxiety and interest when he heard his master's steps approaching, and there was a certain softening and appeal in his eyes. But the deacon made out he didn't see it, and after talking nicely for a few minutes went home again. In the morning Baldy received another visit. By this time he was not only sore, but hungry and thirsty as well. He was no longer indifferent to his owner's presence, and he begged so eloquently with his eyes that the deacon was touched, but he hardened his heart and went back to the house again. He had made up his mind to do what all Selbyville during a number of years had failed to accomplish, and now that he had started he was going to do it thoroughly.

When he came out again after dinner, Baldy was abject in his humility. His pleading eyes followed his master about unceasingly, and once, when the deacon turned as though to go away, he actually groaned. "Sweets do cloy, eh?" Deacon Barnes said, coming back. "Even lyin' in the furrer is vanity and vexation, eh? Well, I guess we'll finish this furrer now. What d'you say Baldy? And after that you kin have somethin' to eat an' a couple o' buckets of water. Eh? What d'you say?"

It can never be known for a fact as to whether Baldy understood his master's words or not, but he showed by his actions that he thoroughly understood when the ropes and chains were loosened and removed. "Kind o’ cramped, eh?” the deacon remarked as he helped him to his feet. “Well, g’long now, le’s finish this furrer.”

Baldy finished that furrow, and after that there was never a furrow he commenced that he did not finish. And as for lying down — well, he manifested a new kind of stubborness. He couldn’t be persuaded or bullied into lying down. No sir, he wouldn’t have it. he’d finish the furrow first, and all the furrows all day long. He grew real stubborn when it came to lying down. But the deacon mind. And all Selbyville marveled, and a year afterward more than one farmer, including Jim Wheeler, was offering the deacon far more for Old Baldy than he had paid. But Deacon Barnes knew a bargain when he had got it, and he was just as stubborn in refusing to sell as Old Baldy was in refusing to lie down.

An Old Soldier’s Story

A real incident which occurred in the life of the writer’s father

THE times were strange then, and at the front was not the only place to have adventures. During the war, some of the most stirring scenes I took part in were right at home. You see that old Colt’s revolver which hangs by my sword? I carried it through my five years in the army, and more than once it helped me out of a bad scrape.

In ‘63 I went home on 30 days’ furlough to see my people, also to get recruits. I was quite successful, and by the time my furlough was up, had found between 25 and 30 men who were willing to enlist. There was one young man I had tried hard to get, and though he was willing, his father stubbornly refused to let him go. The only reason he had for refusing was that corn-husking was not yet over and his son Hiram was needed for the work. The only reason which finally caused him to give his consent was the bounty. They were offering a thousand dollars for every man who would join the army, and Hiram promised to turn every cent of it over to his father. So old Zack said he would agree if I would turn in and help with the husking.

My 30 days’ furlough was up, but I was young and thoughtless in those days, and paid no heed to it. I knew the other recruits wished to stay till after corn-husking, and besides, felt that nothing would be done to me when I came back to my regiment with 30 stalwart lads. So I pitched in, and in two weeks all Old Zack’s corn was husked and I was ready to start.

The tickets were bought, and the next morning we were ready to take the train at Rock Island for Quincy. There the men were to be sworn in and would receive their bounties, while our township would be credited with so many recruits. But in overstaying my furlough I had forgotten one thing — the provost marshal. These marshals were men who were looked down upon and despised worse than the dog-catchers. Their duty was to arrest deserters, and since their pay was $25 for every deserter captured, you can see they never let a chance slip. If they had only arrested real deserters, the people would not have dislike them so, but they were always bringing trouble upon good, honest soldiers whose only fault lay in being a little careless and staying too long at home. The provost marshal in our county was shrewd, brave as a lion, and as mean a man as one could meet in a whole day's travel. Only a short time before, Tommy Jingles had come home from my regiment and thoughtlessly over-stayed his furlough. On the third day, just as he was boarding the train at Rock Island to go back to the army, Davy McGregor captured him and sent him back under arrest. The $25 reward and the expenses were taken from poor Tommy's pay, and Tommy with never a thought of deserting. And this was not the only instance in which Davy McGregor had behaved so meanly.

But to return to my story. It was my last night at home, and I was dreaming of war and battles. I had been thrown forward with a cloud of skirmishers. The musketry was rattling about like hail, and we were storming the first outpost, when I heard a loud rap at the door and was awake on the instant. "Come out, Simon, I want you."

It was Davy's voice, and I well know what he wanted me for. I made no answer, however, and began to silently dress. His knocking soon roused the house, and by the time I was dressed my sister came slipping into the room. I told her in whispers that to do. She went to the door and talked with Davy, but would not open it. He became suspicious, and I could hear him creeping around the house so as to have an eye on the kitchen door. You see, he was certain I was in the house, and thought I would most likely come out that way. Kissing father and mother and sister, I asked them to say good-bye to the boys, and carefully opened the front door. It was moonlight, and Davy was, as I suspected, keeping watch at the rear of the house. With my shoes in my hand, taking advantage of every shadow and scarcely daring to breathe, I crawled to the barn. I saddled father's big black stallion, and when all was ready, came out of the barn like a cannon shot.

Davy ran to the road and halted me as I came up on the dead lope, my cocked Colt's in my hand. He blocked my path, ordering me to halt and flourishing his pistols. On I came straight at him, and would surely have run him down, had he not sprung aside, blazing right and left at me as I went by. I knew he would do this, and ducked to the off-side of my horse, but not quickly enough, for a burning pain told me where his first bullet had plowed across my scalp.

On and away, with Rock Island 28 miles before me, I dashed like the wind. Davy, always well mounted, was hot after me. But our horses were evenly matched. At first he took flying shots at me as we rounded the bends, but he soon gave that up. Mile after mile flew by, and I was just beginning to feel sure of escape, when I met with an accident. Dawn was breaking as I plunged into a stretch of woods where it was yet as black as night. The road was heavy at that place, and the horse's hoofs made no sound. Suddenly, out of the darkness and from the opposite direction, leaped a horse and rider. Too late to avoid the shock, our horses struck breast on. The strange steed and rider were hurled to the ground, while I was not badly hurt. But father's stallion was strong. He shook himself, groaned, and sprang away on the gallop.

Still he had been badly hurt, and I saw that he was losing his speed. Davy slowly overhauled me. Soon he was alongside, trying to seize my rein. He had emptied his pistols, so could not shoot. Again and again I drew a bead on him with my loaded Colt's, but he was a brave man, refusing to be frightened. I did not wish to shoot him, but I think I would have done it rather than have the disgrace of deserter put upon me. You see, instead of running away, I was trying to run back to the army — a funny thing for a real deserter to do. But I did not shoot, not intending to use my revolver unless I had to.

Then we galloped, side by side, for at least 10 or 12 miles. Little by little my horse gave out and the last mile he made, Davy had to hold his horse in to keep him from running away from me. Every time he tried to catch my bridle I struck at his hand with my heavy revolver, and he soon gave that up. I felt that the stallion could not last much longer, and know I must do something to escape unearned disgrace. Now I am and always was a mild man, full of pity for dumb animals, but necessity forced me to do what I did. I played a trick I had learned out west. It is called "creasing," and is often used on wild horses. They shoot them so the bullet just grazes the top of the neck. But it does not hurt the horse. It just stuns him and in a few minutes he is as good as ever.

Quick as a flash I leaned out of the saddle, placed the muzzle of my revolver on the nape of the neck of Davy's horse, and pulled the trigger. Down he went with a crash, throwing Davy over his head. Yet Davy was on his feet instantly, and my poor horse could barely keep away from him as he ran after me on foot.

I looked at my watch. I could catch the first train, and Rock Island was only five miles away. My horse could not make those five miles and I did not know what to do. Davy gave me the idea, however. Coming around a turn in the road, I barely missed running into a farmer's wagon going to town. Not 20 feet away was another, going in the same direction. Davy stopped the first one and began to cut the traces — this was the idea. I halted the second one, which was driven by a woman, and explained as I did likewise. And she was willing for she know all about the provost marshal. We finished and mounted at the same time, with myself 20 feet in the lead. Yet fortune seemed to favor him, for his hose was a little the better of the two. But he had neglected to cut the traces quite short though, and the horse, stepping upon them, was thrown.

This gave me several hundred feet, and I was still leading by several lengths when we entered Rock Island. How we startled the city! Down the main street we thundered, while the people, who all hated the provost marshal, cheered me on. We barely missed a dozen collisions, and galloped into the depot, where the train was just ready to start. I rode through the crowd as far as I dared; the dismounted and made a dash for the steps. You can guess how the people gave room for a wild hatless solder, flourishing a huge revolver.

Persevering Davy was right behind, and I had to face about and keep him off with my pistol. It was not loaded, but he did not know that. I backed away from him, threatening to pull the trigger if he laid hand on me. The crowd began to take my part, and to hoot and jeer the provost marshal. “Hurrah for the soldier!” they cried. “Down with the provost marshal!” “Shoot him, soldier, shoot him!” “Who arrested poor Tommy Jingles?” “Davy McGregor, the black-hearted provost.” “Hurrah for the boy in blue!”

So they kept it up, getting in his way and pushing and shoving him about. Then they became rough, and as I backed up the steps to the platform, they were stepping on his toes, pulling his coat-tails and twisting him about like a football. The conductor gave the signal, and with a last cheer from the crowd, the train pulled out for Quincy. There I met my recruits later in the day. And when I brought my sturdy lads into the regiment and told all about it, the colonel said, “Well done, Simon, and at this rate I think you have well earned a second leave of absence.”

On the Makaloa Mat

Unlike the women of most warm races, those of Hawaii age well and nobly. With no pretence of make-up or cunning concealment of time's inroads, the woman who sat under the hau tree might have been permitted as much as fifty years by a judge competent anywhere over the world save in Hawaii. Yet her children and her grandchildren, and Roscoe Scandwell who had been her husband for forty years, knew that she was sixty-four and would be sixty-five come the next twenty-second day of June. But she did not look it, despite the fact that she thrust reading glasses on her nose as she read her magazine and took them off when her gaze desired to wander in the direction of the half-dozen children playing on the lawn.

It was a noble situation — noble as the ancient hau tree, the size of a house, where she sat as if in a house, so spaciously and comfortably house-like was its shade furnished; noble as the lawn that stretched away landward its plush of green at an appraisement of two hundred dollars a front foot to a bungalow equally dignified, noble, and costly. Seaward, glimpsed through a fringe of hundred-foot coconut palms, was the ocean; beyond the reef a dark blue that grew indigo blue to the horizon, within the reef all the silken gamut of jade and emerald and tourmaline.

And this was but one house of the half-dozen houses belonging to Martha Scandwell. Her town-house, a few miles away in Honolulu, on Nuuanu Drive between the first and second "showers," was a palace. Hosts of guests had known the comfort and joy of her mountain house on Tantalus, and of her volcano house, her mauka (mountainward) house, and her makai (seaward) house on the big island of Hawaii. Yet this Waikiki house stressed no less than the rest in beauty, in dignity, and in expensiveness of upkeep. Two Japanese yard-boys were trimming hibiscus, a third was engaged expertly with the long hedge of night-blooming cereus that was shortly expectant of unfolding in its mysterious night-bloom. In immaculate ducks, a house Japanese brought out the tea-things, followed by a Japanese maid, pretty as a butterfly in the distinctive garb of her race, and fluttery as a butterfly to attend on her mistress. Another Japanese maid, an array of Turkish towels on her arm, crossed the lawn well to the right in the direction of the bath-houses, from which the children, in swimming suits, were beginning to emerge. Beyond, under the palms at the edge of the sea, two Chinese nursemaids, in their pretty native costume of white yee-shon and-straight-lined trousers, their black braids of hair down their backs, attended each on a baby in a perambulator.

And all these — servants, and nurses, and grandchildren — were Martha Scandwell's. So likewise was the colour of the skin of the grandchildren — the unmistakable Hawaiian colour, tinted beyond shadow of mistake by exposure to the Hawaiian sun. One-eighth and one-sixteenth Hawaiian were they, which meant that seven-eighths or fifteen-sixteenths white blood informed that skin yet failed to obliterate the modicum of golden tawny brown of Polynesia. But in this, again, only a trained observer would have known that the frolicking children were aught but pure-blooded white. Roscoe Scandwell, grandfather, was pure white; Martha three-quarters white; the many sons and daughters of them seven-eighths white; the grandchildren graded up to fifteen-sixteenths white, or, in the cases when their seven-eighths fathers and mothers had married seven-eighths, themselves fourteen-sixteenths or seven-eighths white. On both sides the stock was good, Roscoe straight descended from the New England Puritans, Martha no less straight descended from the royal chief-stocks of Hawaii whose genealogies were chanted in meles a thousand years before written speech was acquired.

In the distance a machine stopped and deposited a woman whose utmost years might have been guessed as sixty, who walked across the lawn as lightly as a well-cared-for woman of forty, and whose actual calendar age was sixty-eight. Martha rose from her seat to greet her, in the hearty Hawaiian way, arms about, lips on lips, faces eloquent and bodies no less eloquent with sincereness and frank excessiveness of emotion. And it was "Sister Bella," and "Sister Martha," back and forth, intermingled with almost incoherent inquiries about each other, and about Uncle This and Brother That and Aunt Some One Else, until, the first tremulousness of meeting over, eyes moist with tenderness of love, they sat gazing at each other across their teacups. Apparently, they had not seen nor embraced for years. In truth, two months marked the interval of their separation. And one was sixty-four, the other sixty-eight. But the thorough comprehension resided in the fact that in each of them one-fourth of them was the sun-warm, love-warm heart of Hawaii.

The children flooded about Aunt Bella like a rising tide and were capaciously hugged and kissed ere they departed with their nurses to the swimming beach.

"I thought I'd run out to the beach for several days — the trades had stopped blowing," Martha explained.

"You've been here two weeks already," Bella smiled fondly at her younger sister. "Brother Edward told me. He met me at the steamer and insisted on running me out first of all to see Louise and Dorothy and that first grandchild of his. He's as mad as a silly hatter about it."

"Mercy!" Martha exclaimed. "Two weeks! I had not thought it that long."

"Where's Annie? — and Margaret?" Bella asked.

Martha shrugged her voluminous shoulders with voluminous and forgiving affection for her wayward, matronly daughters who left their children in her care for the afternoon.

"Margaret's at a meeting of the Out-door Circle — they're planning the planting of trees and hibiscus all along both sides of Kalakaua Avenue," she said. "And Annie's wearing out eighty dollars' worth of tyres to collect seventy-five dollars for the British Red Cross--this is their tag day, you know."

"Roscoe must be very proud," Bella said, and observed the bright glow of pride that appeared in her sister's eyes. "I got the news in San Francisco of Ho-o-la-a's first dividend. Remember when I put a thousand in it at seventy-five cents for poor Abbie's children, and said I'd sell when it went to ten dollars?"

"And everybody laughed at you, and at anybody who bought a share," Martha nodded. "But Roscoe knew. It's selling to-day at twenty-four."

"I sold mine from the steamer by wireless — at twenty even," Bella continued. "And now Abbie's wildly dressmaking. She's going with May and Tootsie to Paris."

"And Carl?" Martha queried.

"Oh, he'll finish Yale all right — "

"Which he would have done anyway, and you know it," Martha charged, lapsing charmingly into twentieth-century slang.

Bella affirmed her guilt of intention of paying the way of her school friend's son through college, and added complacently:

"Just the same it was nicer to have Ho-o-la-a pay for it. In a way, you see, Roscoe is doing it, because it was his judgment I trusted to when I made the investment." She gazed slowly about her, her eyes taking in, not merely the beauty and comfort and repose of all they rested on, but the immensity of beauty and comfort and repose represented by them, scattered in similar oases all over the islands. She sighed pleasantly and observed: “All our husbands have done well by us with what we brought them.”

“And happily . . . “ Martha agreed, then suspended her utterance with suspicious abruptness.

“And happily, all of us, except Sister Bella,” Bella forgivingly completed the thought for her.

“It was too bad, that marriage,” Martha murmured, all softness of sympathy. “You were so young. Uncle Robert should never have made you.”

“I was only nineteen,” Bella nodded. “But it was not George Castner’s fault. And look what he, out of she grave, has done for me. Uncle Robert was wise. He knew George had the far-away vision of far ahead, the energy, and the steadiness. He saw, even then, and that’s fifty years ago, the value of the Nahala water-rights which nobody else valued then. They thought he was struggling to buy the cattle range. He struggled to buy the future of the water--and how well he succeeded you know. I’m almost ashamed to think of my income sometimes. No; whatever else, the unhappiness of our marriage was not due to George. I could have lived happily with him, I know, even to this day, had he lived.” She shook her head slowly. “No; it was not his fault. Nor anybody’s. Not even mine. If it was anybody’s fault — ” The wistful fondness of her smile took the sting out of what she was about to say. “If it was anybody’s fault it was Uncle John’s.”

“Uncle John’s!” Martha cried with sharp surprise. “If it had to be one or the other, I should have said Uncle Robert. But Uncle John!”

Bella smiled with slow positiveness.

“But it was Uncle Robert who made you marry George Castner,” her sister urged.

“That is true,” Bella nodded corroboration. “But it was not the matter of a husband, but of a horse. I wanted to borrow a horse from Uncle John, and Uncle John said yes. That is how it all happened.”

A silence fell, pregnant and cryptic, and, while the voices of the children and the soft mandatory protests of the Asiatic maids drew nearer from the beach, Martha Scandwell felt herself vibrant and tremulous with sudden resolve of daring. She waved the children away.

“Run along, dears, run along, Grandma and Aunt Bella want to talk.”

And as the shrill, sweet treble of child voices ebbed away across the lawn, Martha, with scrutiny of the heart, observed the sadness of the lines graven by secret woe for half a century in her sister's face. For nearly fifty years had she watched those lines. She steeled all the melting softness of the Hawaiian of her to break the half-century of silence.

"Bella," she said. "We never know. You never spoke. But we wondered, oh, often and often — "

"And never asked," Bella murmured gratefully.

"But I am asking now, at the last. This is our twilight. Listen to them! Sometimes it almost frightens me to think that they are grandchildren, my grandchildren — I, who only the other day, it would seem, was as heart-free, leg-free, care-free a girl as ever bestrode a horse, or swam in the big surf, or gathered opihis at low tide, or laughed at a dozen lovers. And here in our twilight let us forget everything save that I am your dear sister as you are mine."

The eyes of both were dewy moist. Bella palpably trembled to utterance.

"We thought it was George Castner," Martha went on; "and we could guess the details. He was a cold man. You were warm Hawaiian. He must have been cruel. Brother Walcott always insisted he must have beaten you — "

"No! No!" Bella broke in. "George Castner was never a brute, a beast. Almost have I wished, often, that he had been. He never laid hand on me. He never raised hand to me. He never raised his voice to me. Never — oh, can you believe it? — do, please, sister, believe it — did we have a high word nor a cross word. But that house of his, of ours, at Nahala, was grey. All the colour of it was grey and cool, and chill, while I was bright with all colours of sun, and earth, and blood, and birth. It was very cold, grey cold, with that cold grey husband of mine at Nahala. You know he was grey, Martha. Grey like those portraits of Emerson we used to see at school. His skin was grey. Sun and weather and all hours in the saddle could never tan it. And he was as grey inside as out.

"And I was only nineteen when Uncle Robert decided on the marriage. How was I to know? Uncle Robert talked to me. He pointed out how the wealth and property of Hawaii was already beginning to pass into the hands of the haoles" (whites). "The Hawaiian chiefs let their possessions slip away from them. The Hawaiian chiefesses, who married haoles, had their possessions, under the management of their haole husbands, increase prodigiously. He pointed back to the original Grandfather Roger Wilton, who had taken Grandmother Wilton's poor mauka lands and added to them and built up about them the Kilohana Ranch — "

"Even then it was second only to the Parker Ranch," Martha interrupted proudly.

" — And he told me that had our father, before he died, been as far-seeing as grandfather, half the then Parker holdings would have been added to Kilohana, making Kilohana first. And he said that never, for ever and ever, would beef be cheaper. And he said that the big future of Hawaii would be in sugar. That was fifty years ago, and he has been more than proved right. And he said that the young haole, George Castner, saw far, and would go far, and that there were many girls of us, and that the Kilohana lands ought by rights to go to the boys, and that if I married George my future was assured in the biggest way.

"I was only nineteen. Just back from the Royal Chief School — that was before our girls went to the States for their education. You were among the first, Sister Martha, who got their education on the mainland. And what did I know of love and lovers, much less of marriage? All women married. It was their business in life. Mother and grandmother, all the way back they had married. It was my business in life to marry George Castner. Uncle Robert said so in his wisdom, and I knew he was very wise. And I went to live with my husband in the grey house at Nahala.

"You remember it. No trees, only the rolling grass lands, the high mountains behind, the sea beneath, and the wind! — the Waimea and Nahala winds, we got them both, and the kona wind as well. Yet little would I have minded them, any more than we minded them at Kilohana, or than they minded them at Mana, had not Nahala itself been so grey, and husband George so grey. We were alone. He was managing Nahala for the Glenns, who had gone back to Scotland. Eighteen hundred a year, plus beef, horses, cowboy service, and the ranch house, was what he received — "

"It was a high salary in those days," Martha said.

"And for George Castner, and the service he gave, it was very cheap," Bella defended. "I lived with him for three years. There was never a morning that he was out of his bed later than half-past four. He was the soul of devotion to his employers. Honest to a penny in his accounts, he gave them full measure and more of his time and energy. Perhaps that was what helped make our life so grey. But listen, Martha. Out of his eighteen hundred, he laid aside sixteen hundred each year. Think of it! The two of us lived on two hundred a year. Luckily he did not drink or smoke. Also, we dressed out of it as well. I made my own dresses. You can imagine them. Outside of the cowboys who chored the firewood, I did the work. I cooked, and baked, and scrubbed — ”

“You who had never known anything but servants from the time you were born!” Martha pitied. “Never less than a regiment of them at Kilohana.”

“Oh, but it was the bare, naked, pinching meagreness of it!” Bella cried out. “How far I was compelled to make a pound of coffee go! A broom worn down to nothing before a new one was bought! And beef! Fresh beef and jerky, morning, noon, and night! And porridge! Never since have I eaten porridge or any breakfast food.”

She arose suddenly and walked a dozen steps away to gaze a moment with unseeing eyes at the colour-lavish reef while she composed herself. And she returned to her seat with the splendid, sure, gracious, high-breasted, noble-headed port of which no out-breeding can ever rob the Hawaiian woman. Very haole was Bella Castner, fair-skinned, fine-textured. Yet, as she returned, the high pose of head, the level-lidded gaze of her long brown eyes under royal arches of eyebrows, the softly set lines of her small mouth that fairly sang sweetness of kisses after sixty-eight years — all made her the very picture of a chiefess of old Hawaii full-bursting through her ampleness of haole blood. Taller she was than her sister Martha, if anything more queenly.

“You know we were notorious as poor feeders,” Bella laughed lightly enough. “It was many a mile on either side from Nahala to the next roof. Belated travellers, or storm-bound ones, would, on occasion, stop with us overnight. And you know the lavishness of the big ranches, then and now. How we were the laughing-stock! ‘What do we care!’ George would say. ‘They live to-day and now. Twenty years from now will be our turn, Bella. They will be where they are now, and they will eat out of our hand. We will be compelled to feed them, they will need to be fed, and we will feed them well; for we will be rich, Bella, so rich that I am afraid to tell you. But I know what I know, and you must have faith in me.’

“George was right. Twenty years afterward, though he did not live to see it, my income was a thousand a month. Goodness! I do not know what it is to-day. But I was only nineteen, and I would say to George: ‘Now! now! We live now. We may not be alive twenty years from now. I do want a new broom. And there is a third-rate coffee that is only two cents a pound more than the awful stuff we are using. Why couldn't I fry eggs in butter — now? I should dearly love at least one new tablecloth. Our linen! I'm ashamed to put a guest between the sheets, though heaven knows they dare come seldom enough.'

"'Be patient, Bella,' he would reply. 'In a little while, in only a few years, those that scorn to sit at our table now, or sleep between our sheets, will be proud of an invitation — those of them who will not be dead. You remember how Stevens passed out last year — free-living and easy, everybody's friend but his own. The Kohala crowd had to bury him, for he left nothing but debts. Watch the others going the same pace. There's your brother Hal. He can't keep it up and live five years, and he's breaking his uncles' hearts. And there's Prince Lilolilo. Dashes by me with half a hundred mounted, able-bodied, roystering kanakas in his train who would be better at hard work and looking after their future, for he will never be king of Hawaii. He will not live to be king of Hawaii.'

"George was right. Brother Hal died. So did Prince Lilolilo. But George was not all right. He, who neither drank nor smoked, who never wasted the weight of his arms in an embrace, nor the touch of his lips a second longer than the most perfunctory of kisses, who was invariably up before cockcrow and asleep ere the kerosene lamp had a tenth emptied itself, and who never thought to die, was dead even more quickly than Brother Hal and Prince Lilolilo.

"'Be patient, Bella,' Uncle Robert would say to me. 'George Castner is a coming man. I have chosen well for you. Your hardships now are the hardships on the way to the promised land. Not always will the Hawaiians rule in Hawaii. Just as they let their wealth slip out of their hands, so will their rule slip out of their hands. Political power and the land always go together. There will be great changes, revolutions no one knows how many nor of what sort, save that in the end the haole will possess the land and the rule. And in that day you may well be first lady of Hawaii, just as surely as George Castner will be ruler of Hawaii. It is written in the books. It is ever so where the haole conflicts with the easier races. I, your Uncle Robert, who am half-Hawaiian and half-haole, know whereof I speak. Be patient, Bella, be patient.'

"'Dear Bella,' Uncle John would say; and I knew his heart was tender for me. Thank God, he never told me to be patient. He knew. He was very wise. He was warm human, and, therefore, wiser than Uncle Robert and George Castner, who sought the thing, not the spirit, who kept records in ledgers rather than numbers of heart-beats breast to breast, who added columns of figures rather than remembered embraces and endearments of look and speech and touch. 'Dear Bella,' Uncle John would say. He knew. You have heard always how he was the lover of the Princess Naomi. He was a true lover. He loved but the once. After her death they said he was eccentric. He was. He was the one lover, once and always. Remember that taboo inner room of his at Kilohana that we entered only after his death and found it his shrine to her. 'Dear Bella,' it was all he ever said to me, but I knew he knew.

"And I was nineteen, and sun-warm Hawaiian in spite of my three-quarters haole blood, and I knew nothing save my girlhood splendours at Kilohana and my Honolulu education at the Royal Chief School, and my grey husband at Nahala with his grey preachments and practices of sobriety and thrift, and those two childless uncles of mine, the one with far, cold vision, the other the broken-hearted, for-ever-dreaming lover of a dead princess.

"Think of that grey house! I, who had known the ease and the delights and the ever-laughing joys of Kilohana, and of the Parkers at old Mana, and of Puuwaawaa! You remember. We did live in feudal spaciousness in those days. Would you, can you, believe it, Martha — at Nahala the only sewing machine I had was one of those the early missionaries brought, a tiny, crazy thing that one cranked around by hand!

"Robert and John had each given Husband George five thousand dollars at my marriage. But he had asked for it to be kept secret. Only the four of us knew. And while I sewed my cheap holokus on that crazy machine, he bought land with the money — the upper Nahala lands, you know — a bit at a time, each purchase a hard-driven bargain, his face the very face of poverty. To-day the Nahala Ditch alone pays me forty thousand a year.

"But was it worth it? I starved. If only once, madly, he had crushed me in his arms! If only once he could have lingered with me five minutes from his own business or from his fidelity to his employers! Sometimes I could have screamed, or showered the eternal bowl of hot porridge into his face, or smashed the sewing machine upon the floor and danced a hula on it, just to make him burst out and lose his temper and be human, be a brute, be a man of some sort instead of a grey, frozen demi-god."

Bella's tragic expression vanished, and she laughed outright in sheer genuineness of mirthful recollection.

"And when I was in such moods he would gravely look me over, gravely feel my pulse, examine my tongue, gravely dose me with castor oil, and gravely put me to bed early with hot stove-lids, and assure me that I'd feel better in the morning. Early to bed! Our wildest sitting up was nine o'clock. Eight o'clock was our regular bed-time. It saved kerosene. We did not eat dinner at Nahala — remember the great table at Kilohana where we did have dinner? But Husband George and I had supper. And then he would sit close to the lamp on one side the table and read old borrowed magazines for an hour, while I sat on the other side and darned his socks and underclothing. He always wore such cheap, shoddy stuff. And when he went to bed, I went to bed. No wastage of kerosene with only one to benefit by it. And he went to bed always the same way, winding up his watch, entering the day's weather in his diary, and taking off his shoes, right foot first invariably, left foot second, and placing them just so, side by side, on the floor, at the foot of the bed, on his side.

"He was the cleanest man I ever knew. He never wore the same undergarment a second time. I did the washing. He was so clean it hurt. He shaved twice a day. He used more water on his body than any kanaka. He did more work than any two haoles. And he saw the future of the Nahala water."

"And he made you wealthy, but did not make you happy," Martha observed.

Bella sighed and nodded.

"What is wealth after all, Sister Martha? My new Pierce-Arrow came down on the steamer with me. My third in two years. But oh, all the Pierce-Arrows and all the incomes in the world compared with a lover! — the one lover, the one mate, to be married to, to toil beside and suffer and joy beside, the one male man lover husband — "

Her voice trailed off, and the sisters sat in soft silence while an ancient crone, staff in hand, twisted, doubled, and shrunken under a hundred years of living, hobbled across the lawn to them. Her eyes, withered to scarcely more than peepholes, were sharp as a mongoose's, and at Bella's feet she first sank down, in pure Hawaiian mumbling and chanting a toothless mele of Bella and Bella's ancestry and adding to it an extemporized welcome back to Hawaii after her absence across the great sea to California. And while she chanted her mele, the old crone's shrewd fingers lomied or massaged Bella's silk-stockinged legs from ankle and calf to knee and thigh.

Both Bella's and Martha's eyes were luminous-moist, as the old retainer repeated the lomi and the mele to Martha, and as they talked with her in the ancient tongue and asked the immemorial questions about her health and age and great-great-grandchildren — she who had lomied them as babies in the great house at Kilohana, as her ancestresses had lomied their ancestresses back through the unnumbered generations. The brief duty visit over, Martha arose and accompanied her back to the bungalow, putting money into her hand, commanding proud and beautiful Japanese housemaids to wait upon the dilapidated aborigine with poi, which is compounded of the roots of the water lily, with iamaka, which is raw fish, and with pounded kukui nut and limu, which latter is seawood tender to the toothless, digestible and savoury. It was the old feudal tie, the faithfulness of the commoner to the chief, the responsibility of the chief to the commoner; and Martha, three-quarters haole with the Anglo-Saxon blood of New England, was four-quarters Hawaiian in her remembrance and observance of the well-nigh vanished customs of old days.

As she came back across the lawn to the hau tree, Bella's eyes dwelt upon the moving authenticity of her and of the blood of her, and embraced her and loved her. Shorter than Bella was Martha, a trifle, but the merest trifle, less queenly of port; but beautifully and generously proportioned, mellowed rather than dismantled by years, her Polynesian chiefess figure eloquent and glorious under the satisfying lines of a half-fitting, grandly sweeping, black-silk holoku trimmed with black lace more costly than a Paris gown.

And as both sisters resumed their talk, an observer would have noted the striking resemblance of their pure, straight profiles, of their broad cheek-bones, of their wide and lofty foreheads, of their iron-grey abundance of hair, of their sweet-lipped mouths set with the carriage of decades of assured and accomplished pride, and of their lovely slender eye-rows arched over equally lovely long brown eyes. The hands of both of them, little altered or defaced by age, were wonderful in their slender, tapering finger-tips, love-lomied and love-formed while they were babies by old

Hawaiian women like to the one even then eating poi and iamaka and limu in the house.

"I had a year of it," Bella resumed, "and, do you know, things were beginning to come right. I was beginning to draw to Husband George. Women are so made, I was such a woman at any rate. For he was good. He was just. All the old sterling Puritan virtues were his. I was coming to draw to him, to like him, almost, might I say, to love him. And had not Uncle John loaned me that horse, I know that I would have truly loved him and have lived ever happily with him — in a quiet sort of way, of course.

"You see, I knew nothing else, nothing different, nothing better in the way of men. I came gladly to look across the table at him while he read in the brief interval between supper and bed, gladly to listen for and to catch the beat of his horse's hoofs coming home at night from his endless riding over the ranch. And his scant praise was praise indeed, that made me tingle with happiness — yes, Sister Martha, I knew what it was to blush under his precise, just praise for the things I had done right or correctly.

"And all would have been well for the rest of our lives together, except that he had to take steamer to Honolulu. It was business. He was to be gone two weeks or longer, first, for the Glenns in ranch affairs, and next for himself, to arrange the purchase of still more of the upper Nahala lands. Do you know! he bought lots of the wilder and up-and-down lands, worthless for aught save water, and the very heart of the watershed, for as low as five and ten cents an acre. And he suggested I needed a change. I wanted to go with him to Honolulu. But, with an eye to expense, he decided Kilohana for me. Not only would it cost him nothing for me to visit at the old home, but he saved the price of the poor food I should have eaten had I remained alone at Nahala, which meant the purchase price of more Nahala acreage. And at Kilohana Uncle John said yes, and loaned me the horse.

"Oh, it was like heaven, getting back, those first several days. It was difficult to believe at first that there was so much food in all the world. The enormous wastage of the kitchen appalled me. I saw waste everywhere, so well trained had I been by Husband George. Why, out in the servants' quarters the aged relatives and most distant hangers-on of the servants fed better than George and I ever fed. You remember our Kilohana way, same as the Parker way, a bullock killed for every meal, fresh fish by runners from the ponds of Waipio and Kiholo, the best and rarest at all times of everything . . .

"And love, our family way of loving! You know what Uncle John was. And Brother Walcott was there, and Brother Edward, and all the younger sisters save you and Sally away at school. And Aunt Elizabeth, and Aunt Janet with her husband and all her children on a visit. It was arms around, and perpetual endearings, and all that I had missed for a weary twelvemonth. I was thirsty for it. I was like a survivor from the open boat falling down on the sand and lapping the fresh bubbling springs at the roots of the palms.

"And they came, riding up from Kawaihae, where they had landed from the royal yacht, the whole glorious cavalcade of them, two by two, flower-garlanded, young and happy, gay, on Parker Ranch horses, thirty of them in the party, a hundred Parker Ranch cowboys and as many more of their own retainers — a royal progress. It was Princess Lihue's progress, of course, she flaming and passing as we all knew with the dreadful tuberculosis; but with her were her nephews, Prince Lilolilo, hailed everywhere as the next king, and his brothers, Prince Kahekili and Prince Kamalau. And with the Princess was Ella Higginsworth, who rightly claimed higher chief blood lines through the Kauai descent than belonged to the reigning family, and Dora Niles, and Emily Lowcroft, and . . . oh, why enumerate them all! Ella Higginsworth and I had been room-mates at the Royal Chief School. And there was a great resting time for an hour — no luau, for the luau awaited them at the Parkers' — but beer and stronger drinks for the men, and lemonade, and oranges, and refreshing watermelon for the women.

"And it was arms around with Ella Higginsworth and me, and the Princess, who remembered me, and all the other girls and women, and Ella spoke to the Princess, and the Princess herself invited me to the progress, joining them at Mana whence they would depart two days later. And I was mad, mad with it all — I, from a twelvemonth of imprisonment at grey Nahala. And I was nineteen yet, just turning twenty within the week.

"Oh, I had not thought of what was to happen. So occupied was I with the women that I did not see Lilolilo, except at a distance, bulking large and tall above the other men. But I had never been on a progress. I had seen them entertained at Kilohana and Mana, but I had been too young to be invited along, and after that it had been school and marriage. I knew what it would be like — two weeks of paradise, and little enough for another twelve months at Nahala.

"And I asked Uncle John to lend me a horse, which meant three horses of course — one mounted cowboy and a pack horse to accompany me. No roads then. No automobiles. And the horse for myself! It was Hilo. You don't remember him. You were away at school then, and before you came home, the following year, he'd broken his back and his rider's neck wild-cattle-roping up Mauna Kea. You heard about it — that young American naval officer."

"Lieutenant Bowsfield," Martha nodded.

"But Hilo! I was the first woman on his back. He was a three-year-old, almost a four-year, and just broken. So black and in such a vigour of coat that the high lights on him clad him in shimmering silver. He was the biggest riding animal on the ranch, descended from the King's Sparklingdow with a range mare for dam, and roped wild only two weeks before. I never have seen so beautiful a horse. He had the round, deep-chested, big-hearted, well-coupled body of the ideal mountain pony, and his head and neck were true thoroughbred, slender, yet full, with lovely alert ears not too small to be vicious nor too large to be stubborn mulish. And his legs and feet were lovely too, unblemished, sure and firm, with long springy pasterns that made him a wonder of ease under the saddle."

"I remember hearing Prince Lilolilo tell Uncle John that you were the best woman rider in all Hawaii," Martha interrupted to say. "That was two years afterward when I was back from school and while you were still living at Nahala."

"Lilolilo said that!" Bella cried. Almost as with a blush, her long, brown eyes were illumined, as she bridged the years to her lover near half a century dead and dust. With the gentleness of modesty so innate in the women of Hawaii, she covered her spontaneous exposure of her heart with added panegyric of Hilo.

"Oh, when he ran with me up the long-grass slopes, and down the long-grass slopes, it was like hurdling in a dream, for he cleared the grass at every bound, leaping like a deer, a rabbit, or a fox-terrier — you know how they do. And cut up, and prance, and high life! He was a mount for a general, for a Napoleon or a Kitchener. And he had, not a wicked eye, but, oh, such a roguish eye, intelligent and looking as if it cherished a joke behind and wanted to laugh or to perpetrate it. And I asked Uncle John for Hilo. And Uncle John looked at me, and I looked at him; and, though he did not say it, I knew he was feeling 'Dear Bella,' and I knew, somewhere in his seeing of me, was all his vision of the Princess Naomi. And Uncle John said yes. That is how it happened.

"But he insisted that I should try Hilo out — myself, rather — at private rehearsal. He was a handful, a glorious handful. But not vicious, not malicious. He got away from me over and over again, but I never let him know. I was not afraid, and that helped me keep always a feel of him that prevented him from thinking that he was even a jump ahead of me.

"I have often wondered if Uncle John dreamed of what possibly might happen. I know I had no thought of it myself, that day I rode across and joined the Princess at Mana. Never was there such festal time. You know the grand way the old Parkers had of entertaining. The pig-sticking and wild-cattle-shooting, the horse-breaking and the branding. The servants' quarters overflowing. Parker cowboys in from everywhere. And all the girls from Waimea up, and the girls from Waipio, and Honokaa, and Paauilo — I can see them yet, sitting in long rows on top the stone walls of the breaking pen and making leis (flower garlands) Wfor their cowboy lovers. And the nights, the perfumed nights, the chanting of the meles and the dancing of the hulas, and the big Mana grounds with lovers everywhere strolling two by two under the trees.

"And the Prince . . . " Bella paused, and for a long minute her small fine teeth, still perfect, showed deep in her underlip as she sought and won control and sent her gaze vacantly out across the far blue horizon. As she relaxed, her eyes came back to her sister.

"He was a prince, Martha. You saw him at Kilohana before . . . after you came home from seminary. He filled the eyes of any woman, yes, and of any man. Twenty-five he was, in all-glorious ripeness of man, great and princely in body as he was great and princely in spirit. No matter how wild the fun, how reckless mad the sport, he never seemed to forget that he was royal, and that all his forebears had been high chiefs even to that first one they sang in the genealogies, who had navigated his double-canoes to Tahiti and Raiatea and back again. He was gracious, sweet, kindly comradely, all friendliness — and severe, and stern, and harsh, if he were crossed too grievously. It is hard to express what I mean. He was all man, man, man, and he was all prince, with a strain of the merry boy in him, and the iron in him that would have made him a good and strong king of Hawaii had he come to the throne.

"I can see him yet, as I saw him that first day and touched his hand and talked with him . . . few words and bashful, and anything but a year-long married woman to a grey haole at grey Nahala. Half a century ago it was, that meeting — you remember how our young men then dressed in white shoes and trousers, white silk shirts, with slashed around the middle the gorgeously colourful Spanish sashes — and for half a century that picture of him has not faded in my heart. He was the centre of a group on the lawn, and I was being brought by Ella Higginsworth to be presented. The Princess Lihue had just called some teasing chaff to her which had made her halt to respond and left me halted a pace in front of her.

"His glance chanced to light on me, alone there, perturbed, embarrassed. Oh, how I see him! — his head thrown back a little, with that high, bright, imperious, and utterly care-free poise that was so usual of him. Our eyes met. His head bent forward, or straightened to me, I don't know what happened. Did he command? Did I obey? I do not know. I know only that I was good to look upon, crowned with fragrant maile, clad in Princess Naomi's wonderful holoku loaned me by Uncle John from his taboo room; and I know that I advanced alone to him across the Mana lawn, and that he stepped forth from those about him to meet me half-way. We came to each other across the grass, unattended, as if we were coming to each other across our lives.

"Was I very beautiful, Sister Martha, when I was young? I do not know. I don't know. But in that moment, with all his beauty and truly royal-manness crossing to me and penetrating to the heart of me, I felt a sudden sense of beauty in myself — how shall I say? — as if in him and from him perfection were engendered and conjured within myself.

"No word was spoken. But, oh, I know I raised my face in frank answer to the thunder and trumpets of the message unspoken, and that, had it been death for that one look and that one moment I could not have refrained from the gift of myself that must have been in my face and eyes, in the very body of me that breathed so high.

"Was I beautiful, very beautiful, Martha, when I was nineteen, just turning into twenty?"

And Martha, three-score and four, looked upon Bella, three-score and eight, and nodded genuine affirmation, and to herself added the appreciation of the instant in what she beheld — Bella's neck, still full and shapely, longer than the ordinary Hawaiian woman's neck, a pillar that carried regally her high-cheeked, high-browed, high chiefess face and head; Bella's hair, high-piled, intact, sparkling the silver of the years, ringleted still and contrasting definitely and sharply with her clean, slim, black brows and deep brown eyes. And Martha's glance, in modest overwhelming of modesty by what she saw, dropped down the splendid breast of her and generously true lines of body to the feet, silken clad, high-heeled-slippered, small, plump, with an almost Spanish arch and faultlessness of instep.

"When one is young, the one young time!" Bella laughed. "Lilolilo was a prince. I came to know his every feature and their every phase . . . afterward, in our wonder days and nights by the singing waters, by the slumber-drowsy surfs, and on the mountain ways. I knew his fine, brave eyes, with their straight, black brows, the nose of him that was assuredly a Kamehameha nose, and the last, least, lovable curve of his mouth. There is no mouth more beautiful than the Hawaiian, Martha.

"And his body. He was a king of athletes, from his wicked, wayward hair to his ankles of bronzed steel. Just the other day I heard one of the Wilder grandsons referred to as 'The Prince of Harvard.' Mercy! What would they, what could they have called my Lilolilo could they have matched him against this Wilder lad and all his team at Harvard!"

Bella ceased and breathed deeply, the while she clasped her fine small hands in her ample silken lap. But her pink fairness blushed faintly through her skin and warmed her eyes as she relived her prince-days.

"Well — you have guessed?" Bella said, with defiant shrug of shoulders and a straight gaze into her sister's eyes. "We rode out from gay Mana and continued the gay progress — down the lava trails to Kiholo to the swimming and the fishing and the feasting and the sleeping in the warm sand under the palms; and up to Puuwaawaa, and more pig-sticking, and roping and driving, and wild mutton from the upper pasture-lands; and on through Kona, now mauka (mountainward), "now down to the King's palace at Kailua, and to the swimming at Keauhou, and to Kealakekua Bay, and Napoopoo and Honaunau. And everywhere the people turning out, in their hands gifts of flowers, and fruit, and fish, and pig, in their hearts love and song, their heads bowed in obeisance to the royal ones while their lips ejaculated exclamations of amazement or chanted meles of old and unforgotten days.

"What would you, Sister Martha? You know what we Hawaiians are. You know what we were half a hundred years ago. Lilolilo was wonderful. I was reckless. Lilolilo of himself could make any woman reckless. I was twice reckless, for I had cold, grey Nahala to spur me on. I knew. I had never a doubt. Never a hope. Divorces in those days were undreamed. The wife of George Castner could never be queen of Hawaii, even if Uncle Robert's prophesied revolutions were delayed, and if Lilolilo himself became king. But I never thought of the throne. What I wanted would have been the queendom of being Lilolilo's wife and mate. But I made no mistake. What was impossible was impossible, and I dreamed no false dream.

"It was the very atmosphere of love. And Lilolilo was a lover. I was for ever crowned with leis (wreaths) by him, and he had his runners bring me leis all the way from the rose-gardens of Mana — you remember them; fifty miles across the lava and the ranges, dewy fresh as the moment they were plucked, in their jewel-cases of banana bark; yard-long they were, the tiny pink buds like threaded beads of Neapolitan coral. And at the luaus (feasts) the for ever never-ending luaus, I must be seated on Lilolilo's Makaloa mat, the Prince's mat, his alone and taboo to any lesser mortal save by his own condescension and desire. And I must dip my fingers into his own pa wai holoi (finger-bowl) where scented flower petals floated in the warm water. Yes, and careless that all should see his extended favour, I must dip into his pa paakai for my pinches of red salt, and limu, and kukui nut and chili pepper; and into his ipu kai (fish sauce dish) of kou wood that the great Kamehameha himself had eaten from on many a similar progress. And it was the same for special delicacies that were for Lilolilo and the Princess alone — for his nelu, and the ake, and the palu, and the alaala. And his kahilis were waved over me, and his attendants were mine, and he was mine; and from my flower-crowned hair to my happy feet I was a woman loved."

Once again Bella's small teeth pressed into her underlip, as she gazed vacantly seaward and won control of herself and her memories.

"It was on, and on, through all Kona, and all Kau, from Hoopuloa and Kapua to Honuapo and Punaluu, a life-time of living compressed into two short weeks. A flower blooms but once. That was my time of bloom — Lilolilo beside me, myself on my wonderful Hilo, a queen, not of Hawaii, but of Lilolilo and Love. He said I was a bubble of colour and beauty on the black back of Leviathan; that I was a fragile dewdrop on the smoking crest of a lava flow; that I was a rainbow riding the thunder cloud . . . "

Bella paused for a moment.

"I shall tell you no more of what he said to me," she declared gravely; "save that the things he said were fire of love and essence of beauty, and that he composed hulas to me, and sang them to me, before all, of nights under the stars as we lay on our mats at the feasting; and I on the Makaloa mat of Lilolilo.

"And it was on to Kilauea — the dream so near its ending; and of course we tossed into the pit of sea-surging lava our offerings to Pele (Fire-Goddess) of maile leis and of fish and hard poi wrapped moist in the ti leaves. And we continued down through old Puna, and feasted and danced and sang at Kohoualea and Kamaili and Opihikao, and swam in the clear, sweet-water pools of Kalapana. And in the end came to Hilo by the sea.

"It was the end. We had never spoken. It was the end recognized and unmentioned. The yacht waited. We were days late. Honolulu called, and the news was that the King had gone particularly pupule (insane), that there were Catholic and Protestant missionary plottings, and that trouble with France was brewing. As they had landed at Kawaihae two weeks before with laughter and flowers and song, so they departed from Hilo. It was a merry parting, full of fun and frolic and a thousand last messages and reminders and jokes. The anchor was broken out to a song of farewell from Lilolilo's singing boys on the quarterdeck, while we, in the big canoes and whaleboats, saw the first breeze fill the vessel's sails and the distance begin to widen.

"Through all the confusion and excitement, Lilolilo, at the rail, who must say last farewells and quip last jokes to many, looked squarely down at me. On his head he wore my ilima lei, which I had made for him and placed there. And into the canoes, to the favoured ones, they on the yacht began tossing their many leis. I had no expectancy of hope . . . And yet I hoped, in a small wistful way that I know did not show in my face, which was as proud and merry as any there. But Lilolilo did what I knew he would do, what I had known from the first he would do. Still looking me squarely and honestly in the eyes, he took my beautiful ilima lei from his head and tore it across. I saw his lips shape, but not utter aloud, the single word pau (finish). Still looking at me, he broke both parts of the lei in two again and tossed the deliberate fragments, not to me, but down overside into the widening water. Pau. It was finished . . . "

For a long space Bella's vacant gaze rested on the sea horizon. Martha ventured no mere voice expression of the sympathy that moistened her own eyes.

"And I rode on that day, up the old bad trail along the Hamakua coast," Bella resumed, with a voice at first singularly dry and harsh. "That first day was not so hard. I was numb. I was too full with the wonder of all I had to forget to know that I had to forget it. I spent the night at Laupahoehoe. Do you know, I had expected a sleepless night. Instead, weary from the saddle, still numb, I slept the night through as if I had been dead.

"But the next day, in driving wind and drenching rain! How it blew and poured! The trail was really impassable. Again and again our horses went down. At fist the cowboy Uncle John had loaned me with the horses protested, then he followed stolidly in the rear, shaking his head, and, I know, muttering over and over that I was pupule. The pack horse was abandoned at Kukuihaele. We almost swam up Mud Lane in a river of mud. At Waimea the cowboy had to exchange for a fresh mount. But Hilo lasted through. From daybreak till midnight I was in the saddle, till Uncle John, at Kilohana, took me off my horse, in his arms, and carried me in, and routed the women from their beds to undress me and lomi me, while he plied me with hot toddies and drugged me to sleep and forgetfulness. I know I must have babbled and raved. Uncle John must have guessed. But never to another, nor even to me, did he ever breathe a whisper. Whatever he guessed he locked away in the taboo room of Naomi.

"I do have fleeting memories of some of that day, all a broken-hearted mad rage against fate — of my hair down and whipped wet and stinging about me in the driving rain; of endless tears of weeping contributed to the general deluge, of passionate outbursts and resentments against a world all twisted and wrong, of beatings of my hands upon my saddle pommel, of asperities to my Kilohana cowboy, of spurs into the ribs of poor magnificent Hilo, with a prayer on my lips, bursting out from my heart, that the spurs would so madden him as to make him rear and fall on me and crush my body for ever out of all beauty for man, or topple me off the trail and finish me at the foot of the palis (precipices), writing pau at the end of my name as final as the unuttered pau on Lilolilo's lips when he tore across my ilima lei and dropped it in the sea. . . .

"Husband George was delayed in Honolulu. When he came back to Nahala I was there waiting for him. And solemnly he embraced me, perfunctorily kissed my lips, gravely examined my tongue, decried my looks and state of health, and sent me to bed with hot stove-lids and a dosage of castor oil. Like entering into the machinery of a clock and becoming one of the cogs or wheels, inevitably and remorselessly turning around and around, so I entered back into the grey life of Nahala. Out of bed was Husband George at half after four every morning, and out of the house and astride his horse at five. There was the eternal porridge, and the horrible cheap coffee, and the fresh beef and jerky. I cooked, and baked, and scrubbed. I ground around the crazy hand sewing machine and made my cheap holokus. Night after night, through the endless centuries of two years more, I sat across the table from him until eight o'clock, mending his cheap socks and shoddy underwear, while he read the years' old borrowed magazines he was too thrifty to subscribe to. And then it was bed-time — kerosene must be economized — and he wound his watch, entered the weather in his diary, and took off his shoes, the right shoe first, and placed them, just so, side by side, at the foot of the bed on his side.

"But there was no more of my drawing to Husband George, as had been the promise ere the Princess Lihue invited me on the progress and Uncle John loaned me the horse. You see, Sister Martha, nothing would have happened had Uncle John refused me the horse. But I had known love, and I had known Lilolilo; and what chance, after that, had Husband George to win from me heart of esteem or affection? And for two years, at Nahala, I was a dead woman who somehow walked and talked, and baked and scrubbed, and mended socks and saved kerosene. The doctors said it was the shoddy underwear that did for him, pursuing as always the high-mountain Nahala waters in the drenching storms of midwinter.

"When he died, I was not sad. I had been sad too long already. Nor was I glad. Gladness had died at Hilo when Lilolilo dropped my ilima lei into the sea and my feet were never happy again. Lilolilo passed within a month after Husband George. I had never seen him since the parting at Hilo. La, la, suitors a many have I had since; but I was like Uncle John. Mating for me was but once. Uncle John had his Naomi room at Kilohana. I have had my Lilolilo room for fifty years in my heart. You are the first, Sister Martha, whom I have permitted to enter that room . . . "

A machine swung the circle of the drive, and from it, across the lawn, approached the husband of Martha. Erect, slender, grey-haired, of graceful military bearing, Roscoe Scandwell was a member of the “Big Five,” which, by the interlocking of interests, determined the destinies of all Hawaii. Himself pure haole, New England born, he kissed Bella first, arms around, full-hearty, in the Hawaiian way. His alert eye told him that there had been a woman talk, and, despite the signs of all generousness of emotion, that all was well and placid in the twilight wisdom that was theirs.

“Elsie and the younglings are coming — just got a wireless from their steamer,” he announced, after he had kissed his wife. “And they’ll be spending several days with us before they go on to Maui.”

“I was going to put you in the Rose Room, Sister Bella,” Martha Scandwell planned aloud. “But it will be better for her and the children and the nurses and everything there, so you shall have Queen Emma’s Room.”

“I had it last time, and I prefer it,” Bella said.

Roscoe Scandwell, himself well taught of Hawaiian love and love-ways, erect, slender, dignified, between the two nobly proportioned women, an arm around each of their sumptuous waists, proceeded with them toward the house.

WAIKIKI, HAWAII.

June 6, 1916

“One More Unfortunate”

AND this was the end of his art! He saw it all now, and his soul grew sick. The hope of his life lay dead. Clearly, vividly, the shame, the misery of it, burst upon him. He had dreamed his dream, and now must come the awakening — and what an awakening!

Again the curtain rose on the dirt, ill-lighted stage, and again, with trembling, wasted fingers, he turned the pages of the score and mechanically played the prelude. The second violin was atrocious; but its marvelous execution and phenomenal time caused him to smile a bitter smile. The trombone gave vent to excruciating agonies, and the drum persisted in bursting unexpectedly at the most inopportune places, while the piano played or not as it saw fit.

The music jarred upon him, but no less than his surroundings, now that the veil had been torn aside. The prelude finished, he had time to look about him. It was the last scene. A woman, in tawdry finery and indelicate dress, had approached the footlights, and in a strained, cracked voice, she was now attempting to sing, out of her register, a popular song. The pit of the house was filled with workmen, sailors, longshoremen, toughs, — the scum of the metropolis. Waiters hurried from table to table, dispensing drinks and soliciting patronage. The women in the boxes cast bold looks, and their painted faces but served to hide the care and worry of their fierce struggle for existence. The air was rent with oaths, conversation and laughter, that often drowned the singer’s voice, and brought into her face an anxious expression, for well she knew if the encore was not sufficiently loud, her services would be dispensed with — not at the end of the week, but at once.

A drunken sailor in the front row raved unceasingly, and his hoarse, meaningless babble kept fit accompaniment to the shrill treble of the singer. A couple of sturdy waiters toss him into the street; a fight in the back hardly attracts attention; and the woman concludes her song to the applause of one table — evidently friends — and leaves the stage to confront the irate manager.

Again the music strikes up, and the awakened enthusiast for the last time that evening leads his crazy orchestra. It was but the obscure work of some unknown composer, perhaps one like him who had dreamed his dream and awakened; but the beauty of it aroused his latent appreciation unconciously.

The discords of his companions became inaudible; the vile surroundings vanished, and the musician in thought returned to his childhood and lived his life again.

Once more he trod the familiar paths of his mountain home; his brothers and sisters were around him — the home circle, complete. His father — dear kind, old man, — with his wrinkled, weather-beaten face, told stories of the Indians, the plains, the war, in his homely language and crude manner. His mother, the younger children clustering round her, heard with maternal solicitude, their little happenings of the day, joyed with their toys, sorrowed with their sorrows. But he beheld with grief, the sharp lines drawn deep about eyes and mouth, that told of hidden worries. Alas! he had not understood their import in those days of long ago. Nor was he forgotten. Many a glance of pride, not unmixed with apprehension, she cast upon as he sat with chair close drawn to kitchen table, drawing music upon paper, as had Signa of yore.

The scenes changed rapidly. Now he crept into the little village church, and the preacher's daughter, a kindly spinster, stood near him as she practiced on the organ. Now he crept away, his little heart throbbing with ecstacies of delight, and sought the stream, the little stream, that dashed so turbulently down from the snowy peaks beyond. There he listened to its song, heard the wind sighing through the pines, and with the music of all animate nature ringing in his ears, returned to his humble house and was glad. Again, deep in that beloved book of Signa, he raised his wet eyes, and ambition trod with conquering step to fame, while the future, painted with fairy touch, was revealed through the bright vistas of success, and all seemed real to his childish imagination.

Now, tossing restlessly on his bed, he rose, and in the silence of the night, standing in the shadow of the great mountains and listening to the subdued, nocturnal song of nature, felt his genius pulse feverishly within him, and great longings and desires come over him.

What had become of that genius? Certainly the present was not genius. Where and how had he lost it? And he would not answer.

Now, his father in an idle moment made him a willow flute. What dear companions they were! — this flute and he. What shrill harmonies they produced, when of a holiday he fled the boyish sports and lost himself in the dark mazes of the forest! Now the preacher's daughter gives him his first lessons. Now he plays in the village church.

Oh, happy time! All day following the plow or working in the timber, how he looked forward to night, hurrying to the church, he played to himself and to the dark. Then those improvisations — the villagers all declared it wonderful that he could make such beautiful music; and one day, he remembered, the tourist who told him he had genius, but he was wasting it there. “The city was the place,” he said.

The city! The city! How it rang in his ears and haunted him in waking and sleeping! The city! The city! Yes, he must go to the city. There he could find teachers; there could be found satisfaction of his desires; there fame and fortune awaited him.

“Music! Music!” his soul cried out, and “The city! The city!” was echoed back.

But the city was far away. The time passed by, and he still worked on, hoarding a little store of money that slowly increased. He labored on, patient and uncomplaining, looking forward and planning. But at times the yearning would come so strongly upon him that he could hardly guide the plow, and the keen, bright share would swim and dance before his eye, and even the song of the lark fell flat on his ear.

The maidens cast shy glances at him, but he had no thought of marrying — that would mean adieu to music. So he did not marry, and the country-side wonderful till it grew accustomed to him, and the maidens wedded other and more fortunate swains.

At last the fateful day arrived. He bid good-bye to his mountain home, and, full of hope, turned away to the city. But the portals of success opened not at his knocking. Unknown, a wanderer, he found himself arrayed in the lists against talent, genius and power.

He struggled on. He found teachers — he could not afford the best — and devoted himself to study. He learned more of the world he had aspired to conquer, and found the ladder to fame a colossal structure, whose very shadow awed, and against whose base was crushed the throng that struggled for a footing. To his simple, rustic soul the grandeur was overwhelming, and he was startled at the magnitude of the task before him. But not disheartened, he devoted himself to its accomplishment. Many were the rebuffs he met with, and many a pang and heartache. He struggled on, though many were they who, by wealth and influence and sometimes merit, passed him in the race.

Yet the future brightened. He fought his way into the outer circles, where his unpretentious talent soon received recognition. He had performed on the violin in public several times, and in a small way became quite in demand at musicales and theatricals. The great Padrodini had even complimented him.

But his money growing less, he economized and did not eat so often. Then, through devotion to his music, he was careless and did not take sufficient precaution against wintry weather. One day he remained in bed. A long illness followed, and his money becoming exhausted, he was turned into the street when hardly well. He was too proud to seek assistance from his grand friends.

Oh! how scene after scene flashed before him — weird nightmares, horrid phantoms of cold, and want and sickness. Oh! the misery of it all! Tramping, wearily, those long, cold streets — not a friendly eye or kindly greeting — clothes tattered and torn, and the while tormented by his feverish genius, and filled with terrible longings for his lost music. But worst of all, like an availing mother holding a dying child to her dry breasts, he felt his art growing cold within him. Was it then that it died? he thought, as he remembered the terribly lethargy he finally sank into.

At last, after a weary, weary time, it brightened. Shivering one night outside a music hall to which he had been attracted by the bright lights, he was approached by an attaché of the place. The second violin had been taken suddenly ill; could he play? Ah! it was a haven of refuge to him! How eagerly he accepted! With what joy he felt a violin again quivering in response to his trembling touch! Did his art revive then? He wondered and thought not. No; it was the mechanic, not the soul, that had performed nightly in that ill-lighted hole, year after year.

And those years had not been happy. Often, at first, had the old-time longing come upon him; yet as often had he answered, “Some day.” But that some day never came. Ever, it danced before him, growing fainter and fainter, and ever his pursuit lagged by the wayside, till at last the quarry had been lost to view. To-night he had awakened. He saw and realized it all. He was old. Hope had fled. Grief and remorse clamored at his heart.

The second violin reached the end of the score and stopped. The leader played on. The drummer awakened and spasmodically drummed for a space. The piano threw in a few chords and running passages; then gave up in despair. But the leader played on. His eyes were closed. The violin gave voice to his anguish.

The hum of conversation died away and silence fell on all. The manager looked surprised. The waiters paused from their tasks. The women craned forward. The poised glass remained undrained, and pipe and cigrette went out.

Sad, quivering notes that grieved and sobbed and wept — tremulous, long-drawn strains of agony, that mourned and cried and wailed. Weeping sorrowing, lamenting, mourning, the musician played on, and the house was silent as though icy death had breathed upon them.

Tears of anguish and distress, sighs of remorse, regret, cries of pain and despair trembled on the palpitating air. A world of feeling, unutterable. All the misery of blighted hopes and withered joys. The woe of an expiring genius. A violin and a master, one. The wretchedness and affliction of a wasted life, crying out in its distress.

The music changed, growing weird and awful — tremulous strains, grewsome and terrible — thrilling notes, shrill sounds and piercing cries. Shaking, shuddering, shivering, quivering, the violin shrieked in terror and dismay. Moans, groans, screams — a vortex of emotions — dreadful, terrifying, frightful, wonderful.

A string broke, and with jangling discord the music ceased. The violin fell from the player's nerveless hand. A woman screamed and fainted in a box; others cried. Save this, the rest were silent — an appreciation more eloquent than the thunders of applause.

The musician staggered blindly out.

"He's old, and a little bit goes to his head, now," the waiters said.

The docks, just before dawn. A gloom-enshrouded form, that stands above the turbid tide and murmurs:

"The sea is still and deep;
All things within its bosom sleep;
A single step and all is o'er;
A plunge, a bubble and no more."
"A plunge, a bubble and no more."

The One Thousand Dozen

DAVID Rasmunsen was a hustler, and, like many a greater man, a man of the one idea. Wherefore, when the clarion call of the North rang on his ear, he conceived an adventure in eggs and bent all his energy to its achievement. He figured briefly and to the point, and the adventure became iridescent-hued, splendid. That eggs would sell at Dawson for five dollars a dozen was a safe working premise. Whence it was incontrovertible that one thousand dozen would bring, in the Golden Metropolis, five thousand dollars.

On the other hand, expense was to be considered, and he considered it well, for he was a careful man, keenly practical, with a hard head and a heart that imagination never warmed. At fifteen cents a dozen, the initial cost of his thousand dozen would be one hundred and fifty dollars, a mere bagatelle in face of the enormous profit. And suppose, just suppose, to be wildly extravagant for once, that transportation for himself and eggs should run up eight hundred and fifty more; he would still have four thousand clear cash and clean when the last egg was disposed of and the last dust had rippled into his sack.

“You see, Alma,”--he figured it over with his wife, the cosy dining room submerged in a sea of maps, government surveys, guidebooks, and Alaskan itineraries,--“you see, expenses don’t really begin till you make Dyea--fifty dollars’ll cover it with a first-class passage thrown in. Now from Dyea to Lake Linderman, Indian packers take your goods over for twelve cents a pound, twelve dollars a hundred, or one hundred and twenty dollars a thousand. Say I have fifteen hundred pounds, it’ll cost one hundred and eighty dollars--call it two hundred and be safe. I am creditably informed by a Klondiker just come out that I can buy a boat for three hundred. But the same man says I’m sure to get a couple of passengers for one hundred and fifty each, which will give me the boat for nothing, and, further, they can help me manage it. And . . . that’s all; I put my eggs ashore from the boat at Dawson. Now let me see how much is that?”

“Fifty dollars from San Francisco to Dyea, two hundred from Dyea to Linderman, passengers pay for the boat--two hundred and fifty all told,” she summed up swiftly.

“And a hundred for my clothes and personal outfit,” he went on happily; ``’that leaves a margin of five hundred for emergencies. And what possible emergencies can arise?”

Alma shrugged her shoulders and elevated her brows. If that vast Northland was capable of swallowing up a man and a thousand dozen eggs, surely there was room and to spare for whatever else he might happen to possess. So she thought, but she said nothing. She knew David Rasmunsen too well to say anything.

“Doubling the time because of chance delays, I should make the trip in two months. Think of it, Alma! Four thousand in two months! Beats the paltry hundred a month I’m getting now. Why, we’ll build further out where we’ll have more space, gas in every room, and a view, and the rent of the cottage’ll pay taxes, insurance, and water, and leave something over. And then there’s always the chance of my striking it and coming out a millionnaire. Now tell me, Alma, don’t you think I’m very moderate ?”

And Alma could hardly think otherwise. Besides, had not her own cousin,--though a remote and distant one to be sure, the black sheep, the harum-scarum, the ne’er-do-well,--had not he come down out of that weird North country with a hundred thousand in yellow dust, to say nothing of a half-ownership in the hole from which it came?

David Rasmunsen’s grocer was surprised when he found him weighing eggs in the scales at the end of the counter, and Rasmunsen himself was more surprised when he found that a dozen eggs weighed a pound and a half--fifteen hundred pounds for his thousand dozen! There would be no weight left for his clothes, blankets, and cooking utensils, to say nothing of the grub he must necessarily consume by the way. His calculations were all thrown out, and he was just proceeding to recast them when he hit upon the idea of weighing small eggs. “For whether they be large or small, a dozen eggs is a dozen eggs,” he observed sagely to himself; and a dozen small ones he found to weigh but a pound and a quarter. Thereat the city of San Francisco was overrun by anxious-eyed emissaries, and commission houses and dairy associations were startled by a sudden demand for eggs running not more than twenty ounces to the dozen.

Rasmunsen mortgaged the little cottage for a thousand dollars, arranged for his wife to make a prolonged stay among her own people, threw up his job, and started North. To keep within his schedule he compromised on a second-class passage, which, because of the rush, was worse than steerage;

and in the late summer, a pale and wabbly man, he disembarked with his eggs on the Dyea beach. But it did not take him long to recover his land legs and appetite. His first interview with the Chilkoot packers straightened him up and stiffened his backbone. Forty cents a pound they demanded for the twenty-eight-mile portage, and while he caught his breath and swallowed, the price went up to forty-three. Fifteen husky Indians put the straps on his packs at forty-five, but took them off at an offer of forty-seven from a Skaguay Croesus in dirty shirt and ragged overalls who had lost his horses on the White Pass Trail and was now making a last desperate drive at the country by way of Chilkoot.

But Rasmunsen was clean grit, and at fifty cents found takers, who, two days later, set his eggs down intact at Linderman. But fifty cents a pound is a thousand dollars a ton, and his fifteen hundred pounds had exhausted his emergency fund and left him stranded at the Tantalus point where each day he saw the fresh-whipsawed boats departing for Dawson. Further, a great anxiety brooded over the camp where the boats were built. Men worked frantically, early and late, at the height of their endurance, calking, nailing, and pitching in a frenzy of haste for which adequate explanation was not far to seek. Each day the snowline crept farther down the bleak, rock-shouldered peaks, and gale followed gale, with sleet and slush and snow, and in the eddies and quiet places young ice formed and thickened through the fleeting hours. And each morn, toil-stiffened men turned wan faces across the lake to see if the freeze-up had come. For the freeze-up heralded the death of their hope--the hope that they would be floating down the swift river ere navigation closed on the chain of lakes.

To harrow Rasmunsen's soul further, he discovered three competitors in the egg business. It was true that one, a little German, had gone broke and was himself forlornly back-tripping the last pack of the portage; but the other two had boats nearly completed and were daily supplicating the god of merchants and traders to stay the iron hand of winter for just another day. But the iron hand closed down over the land. Men were being frozen in the blizzard, which swept Chilkoot, and Rasmunsen frosted his toes ere he was aware. He found a chance to go passenger with his freight in a boat just shoving off through the rubble, but two hundred, hard cash, was required, and he had no money.

““Ay tank you yust wait one leedle w'ile,” said the Swedish boatbuilder, who had struck his Klondike right there and was wise enough to know itÄ”one leedle w’ile und I make you a tam fine skiff boat, sure Pete.”

With this unpledged word to go on, Rasmunsen hit the back trail to Crater Lake, where he fell in with two press correspondents whose tangled baggage was strewn from Stone House, over across the Pass, and as far as Happy Camp.

“Yes,” he said with consequence. “I’ve a thousand dozen eggs at Linderman, and my boat’s just about got the last seam calked. Consider myself in luck to get it. Boats are at a premium, you know, and none to be had.”

Whereupon and almost with bodily violence the correspondents clamored to go with him, fluttered greenbacks before his eyes, and spilled yellow twenties from hand to hand. He could not hear of it, but they overpersuaded him, and he reluctantly consented to take them at three hundred apiece. Also they pressed upon him the passage money in advance. And while they wrote to their respective journals concerning the good Samaritan with the thousand dozen eggs, the good Samaritan was hurrying back to the Swede at Linderman.

“Here, you! Gimme that boat!” was his salutation, his hand jingling the correspondents’ gold pieces and his eyes hungrily bent upon the finished craft.

The Swede regarded him stolidly and shook his head.

“How much is the other fellow paying? Three hundred? Well, here’s four. Take it.”

He tried to press it upon him, but the man backed away.

““Ay tank not. Ay say him get der skiff boat. You yust waitÄ”

“Here’s six hundred. Last call. Take it or leave it. Tell’m it’s a mistake.”

The Swede wavered. ““Ay tank yes,” he finally said, and the last Rasmunsen saw of him his vocabulary was going to wreck in a vain effort to explain the mistake to the other fellows.

The German slipped and broke his ankle on the steep hogback above Deep Lake, sold out his stock for a dollar a dozen, and with the proceeds hired Indian packers to carry him back to Dyea. But on the morning Rasmunsen shoved off with his correspondents, his two rivals followed suit.

“How many you got?” one of them, a lean little New Englander, called out.

“One thousand dozen,” Rasmunsen answered proudly.

“Huh! I’ll go you even stakes I beat you in with my eight hundred.”

The correspondents offered to lend him the money; but Rasmunsen declined, and the Yankee closed with the remaining rival, a brawny son of the sea and sailor of ships and things, who promised to show them all a wrinkle or two when it came to cracking on. And crack on he did, with a large tarpaulin squaresail which pressed the bow half under at every jump. He was the first to run out of Linderman, but, disdaining the portage, piled his loaded boat on the rocks in the boiling rapids. Rasmunsen and the Yankee, who likewise had two passengers, portaged across on their backs and then lined their empty boats down through the bad water to Bennett.

Bennett was a twenty-five-mile lake, narrow and deep, a funnel between the mountains through which storms ever romped. Rasmunsen camped on the sand-pit at its head, where were many men and boats bound north in the teeth of the Arctic winter. He awoke in the morning to find a piping gale from the south, which caught the chill from the whited peaks and glacial valleys and blew as cold as north wind ever blew. But it was fair, and he also found the Yankee staggering past the first bold headland with all sail set. Boat after boat was getting under way, and the correspondents fell to with enthusiasm.

"We'll catch him before Cariboo Crossing," they assured Rasmunsen, as they ran up the sail and the Alma took the first icy spray over her bow.

Now Rasmunsen all his life had been prone to cowardice on water, but he clung to the kicking steering-oar with set face and determined jaw. His thousand dozen were there in the boat before his eyes, safely secured beneath the correspondents' baggage, and somehow, before his eyes, were the little cottage and the mortgage for a thousand dollars.

It was bitter cold. Now and again he hauled in the steering-sweep and put out a fresh one while his passengers chopped the ice from the blade. Wherever the spray struck, it turned instantly to frost, and the dipping boom of the spritsail was quickly fringed with icicles. The Alma strained and hammered through the big seas till the seams and butts began to spread, but in lieu of bailing the correspondents chopped ice and flung it overboard. There was no let-up. The mad race with winter was on, and the boats tore along in a desperate string.

"W-w-we can't stop to save our souls!" one of the correspondents chattered, from cold, not fright.

"That's right! Keep her down the middle, old man!" the other encouraged.

Rasmunsen replied with an idiotic grin. The iron-bound shores were in a lather of foam, and even down the middle the only hope was to keep running away from the big seas. To lower sail was to be overtaken and swamped. Time and again they passed boats pounding among the rocks, and once they saw one on the edge of the breakers about to strike. A little craft behind them, with two men, jibed over and turned bottom up.

“Wow-watch out, old man!” cried he of the chattering teeth.

Rasmunsen grinned and tightened his aching grip on the sweep. Scores of times had the send of the sea caught the big square stern of the Alma and thrown her off from dead before it till the after leach of the spritsail fluttered hollowly, and each time, and only with all his strength, had he forced her back. His grin by then had become fixed, and it disturbed the correspondents to look at him.

They roared down past an isolated rock a hundred yards from shore. From its wave-drenched top a man shrieked wildly, for the instant cutting the storm with his voice. But the next instant the Alma was by, and the rock growing a black speck in the troubled froth.

“That settles the Yankee! Where’s the sailor?” shouted one of his passengers.

Rasmunsen shot a glance over his shoulder at a black squaresail. He had seen it leap up out of the gray to windward, and for an hour, off and on, had been watching it grow. The sailor had evidently repaired damages and was making up for lost time.

“Look at him come!”

Both passengers stopped chopping ice to watch. Twenty miles of Bennett were behind them--room and to spare for the sea to toss up its mountains toward the sky. Sinking and soaring like a storm god, the sailor drove by them. The huge sail seemed to grip the boat from the crests of the waves, to tear it bodily out of the water, and fling it crashing and smothering down into the yawning troughs.

“The sea’ll never catch him!”

“But he’ll r-r-run her nose under!”

Even as they spoke, the black tarpaulin swooped from sight behind a big comber. The next wave rolled over the spot, and the next, but the boat did not reappear. The Alma rushed by the place. A little riffraff of oars and boxes was seen. An arm thrust up and a shaggy head broke, surface a score of yards away. For a time there was silence. As the end of the lake came in sight, the waves began to leap aboard with such steady recurrence that the correspondents no longer chopped ice but flung the water out with buckets. Even this would not do, and, after a shouted conference with Rasmunsen, they attacked the baggage. Flour, bacon, beans, blankets, cooking stove, ropes, odds and ends, everything they could get hands on, flew overboard. The boat acknowledged it at once, taking less water and rising more buoyantly.

"That'll do!" Rasmunsen called sternly, as they applied themselves to the top layer of eggs.

"The in-hell it will!" answered the shivering one, savagely. With the exception of their notes, films, and cameras, they had sacrificed their outfit. He bent over, laid hold of an egg-box, and began to worry it out from under the lashing.

"Drop it! Drop it, I say!"

Rasmunsen had managed to draw his revolver, and with the crook of his arm over the sweep head was taking aim. The correspondent stood up on the thwart, balancing back and forth, his face twisted with menace and speechless anger.

"My God!"

So cried his brother correspondent, hurling himself, face downward, into the bottom of the boat. The Alma, under the divided attention of Rasmunsen, had been caught by a great mass of water and whirled around. The after leach hollowed, the sail emptied and jibed, and the boom, sweeping with terrific force across the boat, carried the angry correspondent overboard with a broken back. Mast and sail had gone over the side as well. A drenching sea followed, as the boat lost headway, and Rasmunsen sprang to the bailing bucket.

Several boats hurtled past them in the next half-hour,Äsmall boats, boats of their own size, boats afraid, unable to do aught but run madly on. Then a ten-ton barge, at imminent risk of destruction, lowered sail to windward and lumbered down upon them.

"Keep off! Keep off!" Rasmunsen screamed.

But his low gunwale ground against the heavy craft, and the remain-ing correspondent clambered aboard. Rasmunsen was over the eggs like a cat and in the bow of the Alma, striving with numb fingers to bend the hauling-lines together.

``'Come on! " a red-whiskered man yelled at him.

"I've a thousand dozen eggs here," he shouted back. "Gimme a tow! I'll pay you!"

"Come on! " they howled in chorus.

A big whitecap broke just beyond, washing over the barge and leaving the Alma half swamped. The men cast off, cursing him as they ran up their sail. Rasmunsen cursed back and fell to bailing. The mast and sail, like a sea anchor, still fast by the halyards, held the boat head on to wind and sea and gave him a chance to fight the water out. Three hours later, numbed, exhausted, blathering like a lunatic, but still bailing, he went ashore on an ice-strewn beach near Cariboo Crossing. Two men, a government courier and a half-breed voyageur, dragged him out of the surf, saved his cargo, and beached the Alma. They were paddling out of the country in a Peterborough, and gave him shelter for the night in their storm-bound camp. Next morning they de-parted, but he elected to stay by his eggs. And thereafter the name and fame of the man with the thousand dozen eggs began to spread through the land. Gold-seekers who made in before the freeze-up carried the news of his coming. Grizzled old-timers of Forty Mile and Circle City, sour doughs with leathern jaws and bean-calloused stomachs, called up dream memories of chickens and green things at mention of his name. Dyea and Skaguay took an interest in his being, and questioned his progress from every man who came over the passes, while Dawson--golden, omeletless Dawson--fretted and worried, and waylaid every chance arrival for word of him.

But of this, Rasmunsen knew nothing. The day after the wreck he patched up the Alma and pulled out. A cruel east wind blew in his teeth from Tagish, but he got the oars over the side and bucked manfully into it, though half the time he was drifting backward and chopping ice from the blades. According to the custom of the country, he was driven ashore at Windy Arm; three times on Tagish saw him swamped and beached; and Lake Marsh held him at the freeze-up. The Alma was crushed in the jamming of the floes, but the eggs were intact. These he back-tripped two miles across the ice to the shore, where he built a cache, which stood for years after and was pointed out by men who knew.

Half a thousand frozen miles stretched between him and Dawson, and the waterway was closed. But Rasmunsen, with a peculiar tense look in his face, struck back up the lakes on foot. What he suffered on that lone trip, with naught but a single blanket, an axe, and a handful of beans, is not given to ordinary mortals to know. Only the Arctic adventurer may understand. Suffice that he was caught in a blizzard on Chilkoot and left two of his toes with the surgeon at Sheep Camp. Yet he stood on his feet and washed dishes in the scullery of the Pawona to the Puget Sound, and from there passed coal on a P. S. boat to San Francisco. It was a haggard, unkempt man who limped across the shining office floor to raise a second mortgage from the bank people. His hollow cheeks betrayed themselves through the scraggly beard, and his eyes seemed to have retired into deep caverns where they burned with cold fires. His hands were grained from exposure and hard work, and the nails were rimmed with tight-packed dirt and coal dust. He spoke vaguely of eggs and ice-packs, winds and tides; but when they declined to let him have more than a second thousand, his talk became incoherent, concerning itself chiefly with the price of dogs and dog-food, and such things as snowshoes and moccasins and winter trails. They let him have fifteen hundred, which was more than the cottage warranted, and breathed easier when he scrawled his signature and passed out the door.

Two weeks later he went over Chilkoot with three dog sleds of five dogs each. One team he drove, the two Indians with him driving the others. At Lake Marsh they broke out the cache and loaded up. But there was no trail. He was the first in over the ice, and to him fell the task of packing the snow and hammering away through the rough river jams. Behind him he often observed a camp-fire smoke trickling thinly up through the quiet air, and he wondered why the people did not overtake him. For he was a stranger to the land and did not understand. Nor could he understand his Indians when they tried to explain. This they conceived to be a hardship, but when they balked and refused to break camp of mornings, he drove them to their work at pistol point.

When he slipped through an ice bridge near the White Horse and froze his foot, tender yet and oversensitive from the previous freezing, the Indians looked for him to lie up. But he sacrificed a blanket, and, with his foot incased in an enormous moccasin, big as a water-bucket, continued to take his regular turn with the front sled. Here was the cruelest work, and they respected him, though on the side they rapped their foreheads with their knuckles and significantly shook their heads. One night they tried to run away, but the zip-zip of his bullets in the snow brought them back, snarling but convinced. Whereupon, being only savage Chilkat men, they put their heads together to kill him; but he slept like a cat, and, waking or sleeping, the chance never came. Often they tried to tell him the import of the smoke wreath in the i rear, but he could not comprehend and grew suspicious of them. And when they sulked or shirked, he was quick to let drive at them between the eyes, and quick to cool their heated souls with sight of his ready revolver.

And so it went--with mutinous men, wild dogs, and a trail that broke the heart. He fought the men to stay with him, fought the dogs to keep them away from the eggs, fought the ice, the cold, and the pain of his foot, which would not heal. As fast as the young tissue renewed, it was bitten and seared by the frost, so that a running sore developed, into which he could almost shove his fist. In the mornings, when he first put his weight upon it, his head went dizzy, and he was near to fainting from the pain; but later on in the day it usually grew numb, to recommence when he crawled into his blankets and tried to sleep. Yet he, who had been a clerk and sat at a desk all his days, toiled till the Indians were exhausted, and even outworked the dogs. How hard he worked, how much he suffered, he did not know. Being a man of the one idea, now that the idea had come, it mastered him. In the foreground of his consciousness was Dawson, in the background his thousand dozen eggs, and midway between the two his ego fluttered, striving alway to draw them together to a glittering golden point. This golden point was the five thousand dollars, the consummation of the idea and the point of departure for whatever new idea might present itself. For the rest, he was a mere automaton. He was unaware of other things, seeing them as through a glass darkly, and giving them no thought. The work of his hands he did with machine-like wisdom; likewise the work of his head. So the look on his face grew very tense, till even the Indians were afraid of it, and marvelled at the strange white man who had made them slaves and forced them to toil with such foolishness.

Then came a snap on Lake Le Barge, when the cold of outer space smote the tip of the planet, and the frost ranged sixty and odd degrees below zero. Here, laboring with open mouth that he might breathe more freely, he chilled his lungs, and for the rest of the trip he was troubled with a dry, hacking cough, especially irritable in smoke of camp or under stress of undue exertion. On the Thirty Mile river he found much open water, spanned by precarious ice bridges and fringed with narrow rim ice, tricky and uncertain. The rim ice was impossible to reckon on, and he dared it without reckoning, falling back on his revolver when his drivers demurred.

But on the ice bridges, covered with snow though they were, precautions could be taken. These they crossed on their snowshoes, with long poles, held crosswise in their hands, to which to cling in case of accident. Once over, the dogs were called to follow. And on such a bridge, where the absence of the centre ice was masked by the snow, one of the Indians met his end. He went through as quickly and neatly as a knife through thin cream, and the current swept him from view down under the stream ice.

That night his mate fled away through the pale moonlight, Rasmunsen futilely puncturing the silence with his revolver--a thing that he handled with more celerity than cleverness. Thirty-six hours later the Indian made a police camp on the Big Salmon. “Um--um--um funny mans--what you call? Ätop um head all loose,” the interpreter explained to the puzzled captain. “Eh ? Yep, crazy, much crazy mans. Eggs, eggs, all a time eggs--savvy? Come bime-by.”

It was several days before Rasmunsen arrived, the three sleds lashed together, and all the dogs in a single team. It was awkward, and where the going was bad he was compelled to back-trip it sled by sled, though he managed most of the time, through herculean efforts, to bring all along on the one haul. He did not seem moved when the captain of police told him his man was hitting the high places for Dawson, and was by that time, probably, halfway between Selkirk and Stewart. Nor did he appear interested when informed that the police had broken the trail as far as Pelly; for he had attained to a fatalistic acceptance of all natural dispensations, good or ill. But when they told him that Dawson was in the bitter clutch of famine, he smiled, threw the harness on his dogs, and pulled out.

But it was at his next halt that the mystery of the smoke was explained. With the word at Big Salmon that the trail was broken to Pelly, there was no longer any need for the smoke wreath to linger in his wake; and Rasmunsen, crouching over his lonely fire, saw a motley string of sleds go by. First came the courier and the half-breed who had hauled him out from Bennett; then mail-carriers for Circle City, two sleds of them, and a mixed following of ingoing Klondikers. Dogs and men were fresh and fat, while Rasmunsen and his brutes were jaded and worn down to the skin and bone. They of the smoke wreath had travelled one day in three, resting and reserving their strength for thei dash to come when broken trail was met with; while each day he had plunged and floundered forward, breaking the spirit of his dogs and, robbing them of their mettle.

As for himself, he was unbreakable. They thanked him kindly for his efforts in their behalf, those fat, fresh men,--thanked him kindly, with broad grins and ribald laughter; and now, when he understood, he made no answer. Nor did he cherish silent bitterness. It was immaterial. The idea--the fact behind the idea--was not changed. Here he was and his thousand dozen; there was Dawson; the problem was unaltered.

At the Little Salmon, being short of dog food, the dogs got into his grub, and from there to Selkirk he lived on beans--coarse, brown beans, big beans, grossly nutritive, which griped his stomach and doubled him up at two-hour intervals. But the Factor at Selkirk had a notice on the door of the Post to the effect that no steamer had been up the Yukon for two years, and in consequence grub was beyond price. He offered to swap flour, however, at the rate of a cupful for each egg, but Ras-munsen shook his head and hit the trail. Below the Post he managed to buy frozen horse hide for the dogs, the horses having been slain by the Chilkat cattle men, and the scraps and offal preserved by the Indians. He tackled the hide himself, but the hair worked into the bean sores of his mouth, and was beyond endurance.

Here at Selkirk, he met the forerunners of the hungry exodus of Dawson, and from there on they crept over the trail, a dismal throng. “No grub!” was the song they sang. “No grub, and had to go.” “Every-body holding candles for a rise in the spring.” “Flour dollar’n a half a pound, and no sellers.”

“Eggs?” one of them answered. “Dollar apiece, but they ain’t none.” Rasmunsen made a rapid calculation. “Twelve thousand dollars,” he said aloud.

“Hey?” the man asked.

“Nothing,” he answered, and mushed the dogs along.

When he arrived at Stewart River, seventy miles from Dawson, five of his dogs were gone, and the remainder were falling in the traces. He, also, was in the traces, hauling with what little strength was left in him. Even then he was barely crawling along ten miles a day. His cheekbones and nose, frost-bitten again and again, were turned bloody-black and hideous. The thumb, which was separated from the fingers by the gee-pole, had likewise been nipped and gave him great pain. The monstrous moccasin still incased his foot, and strange pains were beginning to rack the leg. At Sixty Mile, the last beans, which he had been rationing for some time, were finished; yet he steadfastly refused to touch the eggs. He could not reconcile his mind to the legitimacy of it, and staggered and fell along the way to

Indian River. Here a fresh-killed moose and an open-handed old-timer gave him and his dogs new strength, and at Ainslie's he felt repaid for it all when a stampede, ripe from Dawson in five hours, was sure he could get a dollar and a quarter for every egg he possessed.

He came up the steep bank by the Dawson barracks with fluttering heart and shaking knees. The dogs were so weak that he was forced to rest them, and, waiting, he leaned limply against the gee-pole. A man, an eminently decorous-looking man, came sauntering by in a great bearskin coat. He glanced at Rasmunsen curiously, then stopped and ran a speculative eye over the dogs and the three lashed sleds.

"What you got?" he asked.

"Eggs," Rasmunsen answered huskily, hardly able to pitch his voice above a whisper.

"Eggs! Whoopee! Whoopee!" He sprang up into the air, gyrated madly, and finished with half a dozen war steps. "You don't say--all of 'em?"

"All of 'em."

"Say, you must be the Egg Man." He walked around and viewed Rasmunsen from the other side. "Come, now, ain't you the Egg Man?" Rasmunsen didn't know, but supposed he was, and the man sobered down a bit.

"What d'ye expect to get for'em?" he asked cautiously.

Rasmunsen became audacious. "Dollar'n a half," he said.

"Done ! " the man came back promptly. "Gimme a dozen."

"I--I mean a dollar'n a half apiece," Rasmunsen hesitatingly explained.

"Sure. I heard you. Make it two dozen. Here's the dust." The man pulled out a healthy gold sack the size of a small sausage and knocked it negligently against the gee-pole. Rasmunsen felt a strange trembling in the pit of his stomach, a tickling of the nostrils, and an almost overwhelming desire to sit down and cry. But a curious, wide-eyed crowd was beginning to collect, and man after man was calling out for eggs. He was without scales, but the man with the bearskin coat fetched a pair and obligingly weighed in the dust while Rasmunsen passed out the goods. Soon there was a pushing and shoving and shouldering, and a great clamor. Everybody wanted to buy and to be served first. And as the excitement grew, Rasmunsen cooled down. This would never do. There must be something behind the fact of their buying so eagerly. It would be wiser if he rested first and sized up the market. Perhaps eggs were worth two dollars apiece.

Anyway, whenever he wished to sell, he was sure of a dollar and a half. “Stop!” he cried, when a couple of hundred had been sold. “No more now. I’m played out. I’ve got to get a cabin, and then you can come and see me.”

A groan went up at this, but the man with the bearskin coat approved. Twenty-four of the frozen eggs went rattling in his capacious pockets and he didn’t care whether the rest of the town ate or not. Besides, he could see Rasmunsen was on his last legs.

“There’s a cabin right around the second corner from the Monte Carlo,” he told himÄ”the one with the sody-bottle window. It ain’t mine, but I’ve got charge of it. Rents for ten a day and cheap for the money. You move right in, and I’ll see you later. Don’t forget the sody-bottle window.”

“Tra-la-loo!” he called back a moment later. “I’m goin’ up the hill to eat eggs and dream of home.”

On his way to the cabin, Rasmunsen recollected he was hungry and bought a small supply of provisions at the N. A. T. & T. store--also a beefsteak at the butcher shop and dried salmon for the dogs. He found the cabin without difficulty and left the dogs in the harness while he started the fire and got the coffee under way.

“A dollar’n a half apiece--one thousand dozen--eighteen thousand dollars!” He kept muttering it to himself, over and over, as he went about his work.

As he flopped the steak into the frying-pan the door opened. He turned. It was the man with the bearskin coat. He seemed to come in with determination, as though bound on some explicit errand, but as he looked at Rasmunsen an expression of perplexity came into his face.

“I say--now I sayÄ” he began, then halted.

Rasmunsen wondered if he wanted the rent.

“I say, damn it, you know, them eggs is bad.”

Rasmunsen staggered. He felt as though some one had struck him an astounding blow between the eyes. The walls of the cabin reeled and tilted up. He put out his hand to steady himself and rested it on the stove. The sharp pain and the smell of the burning flesh brought him back to himself.

“I see,” he said slowly, fumbling in his pocket for the sack. “You want your money back.”

“It ain’t the money,” the man said, “but hadn’t you got any eggs--good ?”

Rasmunsen shook his head. “You’d better take the money.”

But the man refused and backed away. “I’ll come back,” he said, “when you’ve taken stock, and get what’s comin’.”

Rasmunsen rolled the chopping-block into the cabin and carried in the eggs. He went about it quite calmly. He took up the hand-axe, and, one by one, chopped the eggs in half. These halves he examined care-fully and let fall to the floor. At first he sampled from the different cases, then deliberately emptied one case at a time. The heap on the floor grew larger. The coffee boiled over and the smoke of the burning beefsteak filled the cabin. He chopped steadfastly and monotonously till the last case was finished.

Somebody knocked at the door, knocked again, and let himself in.

“What a mess!” he remarked, as he paused and surveyed the scene.

The severed eggs were beginning to thaw in the heat of the stove, and a miserable odor was growing stronger.

“Must a-happened on the steamer,” he suggested.

Rasmunsen looked at him long and blankly.

“I’m Murray, Big Jim Murray, everybody knows me,” the man volunteered. “I’m just hearin’ your eggs is rotten, and I’m offerin’ you two hundred for the batch. They ain’t good as salmon, but still they’re fair scoffin’s for dogs.”

Rasmunsen seemed turned to stone. He did not move. “You go to hell,” he said passionlessly.

“Now just consider. I pride myself it’s a decent price for a mess like that, and it’s better’n nothin’. Two hundred. What you say?”

``’You go to hell,” Rasmunsen repeated softly, “and get out of here.”

Murray gaped with a great awe, then went out carefully, backward, with his eyes fixed on the other’s face.

Rasmunsen followed him out and turned the dogs loose. He threw them all the salmon he had bought, and coiled a sled-lashing up in his hand. Then he reentered the cabin and drew the latch in after him. The smoke from the cindered steak made his eyes smart. He stood on the bunk, passed the lashing over the ridge-pole, and measured the swingoff with his eye. It did not seem to satisfy, for he put the stool on the bunk and climbed upon the stool. He drove a noose in the end of the lashing and slipped his head through. The other end he made fast. Then he kicked the stool out from under.

The Passing of Marcus O’Brien

“It is the judgment of this court that you vamose the camp . . . in the customary way, sir, in the customary way.”

Judge Marcus O’Brien was absent-minded, and Mucluc Charley nudged him in the ribs. Marcus O’Brien cleared his throat and went on-

“Weighing the gravity of the offence, sir, and the extenuating circumstances, it is the opinion of this court, and its verdict, that you be outfitted with three days’ grub. That will do, I think.”

Arizona Jack cast a bleak glance out over the Yukon. It was a swollen, chocolate flood, running a mile wide and nobody knew how deep. The earth-bank on which he stood was ordinarily a dozen feet above the water, but the river was now growling at the top of the bank, devouring, instant by instant, tiny portions of the top-standing soil. These portions went into the gaping mouths of the endless army of brown swirls and vanished away. Several inches more, and Red Cow would be flooded.

“It won’t do,” Arizona Jack said bitterly. “Three days’ grub ain’t enough.”

“There was Manchester,” Marcus O’Brien replied gravely. “He didn’t get any grub.”

“And they found his remains grounded on the Lower River an’ half eaten by huskies,” was Arizona Jack’s retort. “And his killin’ was without provocation. Joe Deeves never did nothin’, never warbled once, an’ jes’ because his stomach was out of order, Manchester ups an’ plugs him. You ain’t givin’ me a square deal, O’Brien, I tell you that straight. Give me a week’s grub, and I play even to win out. Three days’ grub, an’ I cash in.”

“What for did you kill Ferguson?” O’Brien demanded. “I haven’t any patience for these unprovoked killings. And they’ve got to stop. Red Cow’s none so populous. It’s a good camp, and there never used to be any killings. Now they’re epidemic. I’m sorry for you, Jack, but you’ve got to be made an example of. Ferguson didn’t provoke enough for a killing.”

“Provoke!” Arizona Jack snorted. “I tell you, O’Brien, you don’t savve. You ain’t got no artistic sensibilities. What for did I kill Ferguson? What for did Ferguson sing ‘Then I wisht I was a little bird’? That’s what I want to know. Answer me that. What for did he sing ‘little bird, little bird’? One little bird was enough. I could a-stood one little bird. But no, he must sing two little birds. I gave ‘m a chanst. I went to him almighty polite and requested him kindly to discard one little bird. I pleaded with him. There was witnesses that testified to that.

“An’ Ferguson was no jay-throated songster,” some one spoke up from the crowd.

O’Brien betrayed indecision.

“Ain’t a man got a right to his artistic feelin’s?” Arizona Jack demanded. “I gave Ferguson warnin’. It was violatin’ my own nature to go on listening to his little birds. Why, there’s music sharps that fine-strung an’ keyed-up they’d kill for heaps less’n I did. I’m willin’ to pay for havin’ artistic feelin’s. I can take my medicine an’ lick the spoon, but three days’ grub is drawin’ it a shade fine, that’s all, an’ I hereby register my kick. Go on with the funeral.”

O’Brien was still wavering. He glanced inquiringly at Mucluc Charley.

“I should say, Judge, that three days’ grub was a mite severe,” the latter suggested; “but you’re runnin’ the show. When we elected you judge of this here trial court, we agreed to abide by your decisions, an’ we’ve done it, too, b’gosh, an’ we’re goin’ to keep on doin’ it.”

“Mebbe I’ve been a trifle harsh, Jack,” O’Brien said apologetically--“I’m that worked up over those killings; an’ I’m willing to make it a week’s grub.” He cleared his throat magisterially and looked briskly about him. “And now we might as well get along and finish up the business. The boat’s ready. You go and get the grub, Leclaire. We’ll settle for it afterward.”

Arizona Jack looked grateful, and, muttering something about “damned little birds,” stepped aboard the open boat that rubbed restlessly against the bank. It was a large skiff, built of rough pine planks that had been sawed by hand from the standing timber of Lake Linderman, a few hundred miles above, at the foot of Chilcoot. In the boat were a pair of oars and Arizona Jack’s blankets. Leclaire brought the grub, tied up in a flour-sack, and put it on board. As he did so, he whispered--“I gave you good measure, Jack. You done it with provocation.”

“Cast her off!” Arizona Jack cried.

Somebody untied the painter and threw it in. The current gripped the boat and whirled it away. The murderer did not bother with the oars, contenting himself with sitting in the stern-sheets and rolling a cigarette. Completing it, he struck a match and lighted up. Those that watched on the bank could see the tiny puffs of smoke. They remained on the bank till the boat swung out of sight around the bend half a mile below. Justice had been done.

The denizens of Red Cow imposed the law and executed sentences without the delays that mark the softness of civilization. There was no law on the Yukon save what they made for themselves. They were compelled to make it for themselves. It was in an early day that Red Cow flourished on the Yukon--1887--and the Klondike and its populous stampedes lay in the unguessed future. The men of Red Cow did not even know whether their camp was situated in Alaska or in the North-west Territory, whether they drew breath under the stars and stripes or under the British flag. No surveyor had ever happened along to give them their latitude and longitude. Red Cow was situated somewhere along the Yukon, and that was sufficient for them. So far as flags were concerned, they were beyond all jurisdiction. So far as the law was concerned, they were in No-Man's land.

They made their own law, and it was very simple. The Yukon executed their decrees. Some two thousand miles below Red Cow the Yukon flowed into Bering Sea through a delta a hundred miles wide. Every mile of those two thousand miles was savage wilderness. It was true, where the Porcupine flowed into the Yukon inside the Arctic Circle there was a Hudson Bay Company trading post. But that was many hundreds of miles away. Also, it was rumoured that many hundreds of miles farther on there were missions. This last, however, was merely rumour; the men of Red Cow had never been there. They had entered the lone land by way of Chilcoot and the head-waters of the Yukon.

The men of Red Cow ignored all minor offences. To be drunk and disorderly and to use vulgar language were looked upon as natural and inalienable rights. The men of Red Cow were individualists, and recognized as sacred but two things, property and life. There were no women present to complicate their simple morality. There were only three log-cabins in Red Cow--the majority of the population of forty men living in tents or brush shacks; and there was no jail in which to confine malefactors, while the inhabitants were too busy digging gold or seeking gold to take a day off and build a jail. Besides, the paramount question of grub negatived such a procedure. Wherefore, when a man violated the rights of property or life, he was thrown into an open boat and started down the Yukon. The quantity of grub he received was proportioned to the gravity of the offence. Thus, a common thief might get as much as two weeks' grub; an uncommon thief might get no more than half of that. A murderer got no grub at all. A man found guilty of manslaughter would receive grub for from three days to a week. And Marcus O'Brien had been elected judge, and it was he who apportioned the grub. A man who broke the law took his chances. The Yukon swept him away, and he might or might not win to Bering Sea. A few days' grub gave him a fighting chance. No grub meant practically capital punishment, though there was a slim chance, all depending on the season of the year.

Having disposed of Arizona Jack and watched him out of sight, the population turned from the bank and went to work on its claims--all except Curly Jim, who ran the one faro layout in all the Northland and who speculated in prospect-holes on the sides. Two things happened that day that were momentous. In the late morning Marcus O'Brien struck it. He washed out a dollar, a dollar and a half, and two dollars, from three successive pans. He had found the streak. Curly Jim looked into the hole, washed a few pans himself, and offered O'Brien ten thousand dollars for all rights--five thousand in dust, and, in lieu of the other five thousand, a half interest in his faro layout. O'Brien refused the offer. He was there to make money out of the earth, he declared with heat, and not out of his fellow-men. And anyway, he didn't like faro. Besides, he appraised his strike at a whole lot more than ten thousand.

The second event of moment occurred in the afternoon, when Siskiyou Pearly ran his boat into the bank and tied up. He was fresh from the Outside, and had in his possession a four-months-old newspaper. Furthermore, he had half a dozen barrels of whisky, all consigned to Curly Jim. The men of Red Cow quit work. They sampled the whisky--at a dollar a drink, weighed out on Curly's scales; and they discussed the news. And all would have been well, had not Curly Jim conceived a nefarious scheme, which was, namely, first to get Marcus O'Brien drunk, and next, to buy his mine from him.

The first half of the scheme worked beautifully. It began in the early evening, and by nine o'clock O'Brien had reached the singing stage. He clung with one arm around Curly Jim's neck, and even essayed the late lamented Ferguson's song about the little birds. He considered he was quite safe in this, what of the fact that the only man in camp with artistic feelings was even then speeding down the Yukon on the breast of a five-mile current.

But the second half of the scheme failed to connect. No matter how much whisky was poured down his neck, O'Brien could not be brought to realize that it was his bounden and friendly duty to sell his claim. He hesitated, it is true, and trembled now and again on the verge of giving in. Inside his muddled head, however, he was chuckling to himself. He was up to Curly Jim's game, and liked the hands that were being dealt him. The whisky was good. It came out of one special barrel, and was about a dozen times better than that in the other five barrels.

Siskiyou Pearly was dispensing drinks in the bar-room to the remainder of the population of Red Cow, while O'Brien and Curly had out their business orgy in the kitchen. But there was nothing small about O'Brien. He went into the bar-room and returned with Mucluc Charley and Percy Leclaire.

"Business 'sociates of mine, business 'sociates," he announced, with a broad wink to them and a guileless grin to Curly. "Always trust their judgment, always trust 'em. They're all right. Give 'em some fire-water, Curly, an' le's talk it over."

This was ringing in; but Curly Jim, making a swift revaluation of the claim, and remembering that the last pan he washed had turned out seven dollars, decided that it was worth the extra whisky, even if it was selling in the other room at a dollar a drink.

"I'm not likely to consider," O'Brien was hiccoughing to his two friends in the course of explaining to them the question at issue. "Who? Me?--sell for ten thousand dollars! No indeed. I'll dig the gold myself, an' then I'm goin' down to God's country--Southern California--that's the place for me to end my declinin' days--an' then I'll start . . . as I said before, then I'll start . . . what did I say I was goin' to start?"

"Ostrich farm," Mucluc Charley volunteered.

"Sure, just what I'm goin' to start." O'Brien abruptly steadied himself and looked with awe at Mucluc Charley. "How did you know? Never said so. Jes' thought I said so. You're a min' reader, Charley. Le's have another."

Curly Jim filled the glasses and had the pleasure of seeing four dollars' worth of whisky disappear, one dollar's worth of which he punished himself--O'Brien insisted that he should drink as frequently as his guests.

"Better take the money now," Leclaire argued. "Take you two years to dig it out the hole, an' all that time you might be hatchin' teeny little baby ostriches an' pulling feathers out the big ones."

O’Brien considered the proposition and nodded approval. Curly Jim looked gratefully at Leclaire and refilled the glasses.

“Hold on there!” spluttered Mucluc Charley, whose tongue was beginning to wag loosely and trip over itself. “As your father confessor--there I go--as your brother--O hell!” He paused and collected himself for another start. “As your frien’--business frien’, I should say, I would suggest, rather--I would take the liberty, as it was, to mention--I mean, suggest, that there may be more ostriches . . . O hell!” He downed another glass, and went on more carefully. “What I’m drivin’ at is . . . what am I drivin’ at?” He smote the side of his head sharply half a dozen times with the heel of his palm to shake up his ideas. “I got it!” he cried jubilantly. “Supposen there’s slathers more’n ten thousand dollars in that hole!”

O’Brien, who apparently was all ready to close the bargain, switched about.

“Great!” he cried. “Splen’d idea. Never thought of it all by myself.” He took Mucluc Charley warmly by the hand. “Good frien’! Good ‘s’ciate!” He turned belligerently on Curly Jim. “Maybe hundred thousand dollars in that hole. You wouldn’t rob your old frien’, would you, Curly? Course you wouldn’t. I know you--better’n yourself, better’n yourself. Le’s have another: We’re good frien’s, all of us, I say, all of us.”

And so it went, and so went the whisky, and so went Curly Jim’s hopes up and down. Now Leclaire argued in favour of immediate sale, and almost won the reluctant O’Brien over, only to lose him to the more brilliant counter-argument of Mucluc Charley. And again, it was Mucluc Charley who presented convincing reasons for the sale and Percy Leclaire who held stubbornly back. A little later it was O’Brien himself who insisted on selling, while both friends, with tears and curses, strove to dissuade him. The more whiskey they downed, the more fertile of imagination they became. For one sober pro or con they found a score of drunken ones; and they convinced one another so readily that they were perpetually changing sides in the argument.

The time came when both Mucluc Charley and Leclaire were firmly set upon the sale, and they gleefully obliterated O’Brien’s objections as fast as he entered them. O’Brien grew desperate. He exhausted his last argument and sat speechless. He looked pleadingly at the friends who had deserted him. He kicked Mucluc Charley’s shins under the table, but that graceless hero immediately unfolded a new and most logical reason for the sale.

Curly Jim got pen and ink and paper and wrote out the bill of sale. O’Brien sat with pen poised in hand.

“Le’s have one more,” he pleaded. “One more before I sign away a hundred thousan’ dollars.”

Curly Jim filled the glasses triumphantly. O’Brien downed his drink and bent forward with wobbling pen to affix his signature. Before he had made more than a blot, he suddenly started up, impelled by the impact of an idea colliding with his consciousness. He stood upon his feet and swayed back and forth before them, reflecting in his startled eyes the thought process that was taking place behind. Then he reached his conclusion. A benevolent radiance suffused his countenance. He turned to the faro dealer, took his hand, and spoke solemnly.

“Curly, you’re my frien’. There’s my han’. Shake. Ol’ man, I won’t do it. Won’t sell. Won’t rob a frien’. No son-of-a-gun will ever have chance to say Marcus O’Brien robbed frien’ cause frien’ was drunk. You’re drunk, Curly, an’ I won’t rob you. Jes’ had thought--never thought it before--don’t know what the matter ‘ith me, but never thought it before. Suppose, jes’ suppose, Curly, my ol’ frien’, jes’ suppose there ain’t ten thousan’ in whole damn claim. You’d be robbed. No, sir; won’t do it. Marcus O’Brien makes money out of the groun’, not out of his frien’s.”

Percy Leclaire and Mucluc Charley drowned the faro dealer’s objections in applause for so noble a sentiment. They fell upon O’Brien from either side, their arms lovingly about his neck, their mouths so full of words they could not hear Curly’s offer to insert a clause in the document to the effect that if there weren’t ten thousand in the claim he would be given back the difference between yield and purchase price. The longer they talked the more maudlin and the more noble the discussion became. All sordid motives were banished. They were a trio of philanthropists striving to save Curly Jim from himself and his own philanthropy. They insisted that he was a philanthropist. They refused to accept for a moment that there could be found one ignoble thought in all the world. They crawled and climbed and scrambled over high ethical plateaux and ranges, or drowned themselves in metaphysical seas of sentimentality.

Curly Jim sweated and fumed and poured out the whisky. He found himself with a score of arguments on his hands, not one of which had anything to do with the gold-mine he wanted to buy. The longer they talked the farther away they got from that gold-mine, and at two in the morning

Curly Jim acknowledged himself beaten. One by one he led his helpless guests across the kitchen floor and thrust them outside. O'Brien came last, and the three, with arms locked for mutual aid, titubated gravely on the stoop.

"Good business man, Curly," O'Brien was saying. "Must say like your style--fine an' generous, free-handed hospital . . . hospital . . . hospitality. Credit to you. Nothin' base 'n graspin' in your make-up. As I was sayin'--"

But just then the faro dealer slammed the door.

The three laughed happily on the stoop. They laughed for a long time. Then Mucluc Charley essayed speech.

"Funny--laughed so hard--ain't what I want to say. My idea is . . . what wash it? Oh, got it! Funny how ideas slip. Elusive idea--chasin' elusive idea--great sport. Ever chase rabbits, Percy, my frien'? I had dog--great rabbit dog. Whash 'is name? Don't know name--never had no name--forget name--elusive name--chasin' elusive name--no, idea--elusive idea, but got it--what I want to say was--O hell!"

Thereafter there was silence for a long time. O'Brien slipped from their arms to a sitting posture on the stoop, where he slept gently. Mucluc Charley chased the elusive idea through all the nooks and crannies of his drowning consciousness. Leclaire hung fascinated upon the delayed utterance. Suddenly the other's hand smote him on the back.

"Got it!" Mucluc Charley cried in stentorian tones.

The shock of the jolt broke the continuity of Leclaire's mental process.

"How much to the pan?" he demanded.

"Pan nothin'!" Mucluc Charley was angry. "Idea--got it--got leg-hold--ran it down."

Leclaire's face took on a rapt, admiring expression, and again he hung upon the other's lips.

" . . . O hell!" said Mucluc Charley.

At this moment the kitchen door opened for an instant, and Curly Jim shouted, "Go home!"

"Funny," said Mucluc Charley. "Shame idea--very shame as mine. Le's go home."

They gathered O'Brien up between them and started. Mucluc Charley began aloud the pursuit of another idea. Leclaire followed the pursuit with enthusiasm. But O'Brien did not follow it. He neither heard, nor saw, nor knew anything. He was a mere wobbling automaton, supported affectionately and precariously by his two business associates.

They took the path down by the bank of the Yukon. Home did not lie that way, but the elusive idea did. Mucluc Charley giggled over the idea that he could not catch for the edification of Leclaire. They came to where Siskiyou Pearly's boat lay moored to the bank. The rope with which it was tied ran across the path to a pine stump. They tripped over it and went down, O'Brien underneath. A faint flash of consciousness lighted his brain. He felt the impact of bodies upon his and struck out madly for a moment with his fists. Then he went to sleep again. His gentle snore arose on the air, and Mucluc Charley began to giggle.

"New idea," he volunteered, "brand new idea. Jes' caught it--no trouble at all. Came right up an' I patted it on the head. It's mine. 'Brien's drunk--beashly drunk. Shame--damn shame--learn'm lesshon. Trash Pearly's boat. Put 'Brien in Pearly's boat. Casht off--let her go down Yukon. 'Brien wake up in mornin'. Current too strong--can't row boat 'gainst current--mush walk back. Come back madder 'n hatter. You an' me headin' for tall timber. Learn 'm lesshon jes' shame, learn 'm lesshon."

Siskiyou Pearly's boat was empty, save for a pair of oars. Its gunwale rubbed against the bank alongside of O'Brien. They rolled him over into it. Mucluc Charley cast off the painter, and Leclaire shoved the boat out into the current. Then, exhausted by their labours, they lay down on the bank and slept.

Next morning all Red Cow knew of the joke that had been played on Marcus O'Brien. There were some tall bets as to what would happen to the two perpetrators when the victim arrived back. In the afternoon a lookout was set, so that they would know when he was sighted. Everybody wanted to see him come in. But he didn't come, though they sat up till midnight. Nor did he come next day, nor the next. Red Cow never saw Marcus O'Brien again, and though many conjectures were entertained, no certain clue was ever gained to dispel the mystery of his passing.

Only Marcus O'Brien knew, and he never came back to tell. He awoke next morning in torment. His stomach had been calcined by the inordinate quantity of whisky he had drunk, and was a dry and raging furnace. His head ached all over, inside and out; and, worse than that, was the pain in his face. For six hours countless thousands of mosquitoes had fed upon him, and their ungrateful poison had swollen his face tremendously. It was only by a severe exertion of will that he was able to open narrow slits in his face through which he could peer. He happened to move his hands, and they hurt. He squinted at them, but failed to recognize them, so puffed were they by the mosquito virus. He was lost, or rather, his identity was lost to him. There was nothing familiar about him, which, by association of ideas, would cause to rise in his consciousness the continuity of his existence. He was divorced utterly from his past, for there was nothing about him to resurrect in his consciousness a memory of that past. Besides, he was so sick and miserable that he lacked energy and inclination to seek after who and what he was.

It was not until he discovered a crook in a little finger, caused by an unset breakage of years before, that he knew himself to be Marcus O'Brien. On the instant his past rushed into his consciousness. When he discovered a blood-blister under a thumb-nail, which he had received the previous week, his self-identification became doubly sure, and he knew that those unfamiliar hands belonged to Marcus O'Brien, or, just as much to the point, that Marcus O'Brien belonged to the hands. His first thought was that he was ill--that he had had river fever. It hurt him so much to open his eyes that he kept them closed. A small floating branch struck the boat a sharp rap. He thought it was some one knocking on the cabin door, and said, "Come in." He waited for a while, and then said testily, "Stay out, then, damn you." But just the same he wished they would come in and tell him about his illness.

But as he lay there, the past night began to reconstruct itself in his brain. He hadn't been sick at all, was his thought; he had merely been drunk, and it was time for him to get up and go to work. Work suggested his mine, and he remembered that he had refused ten thousand dollars for it. He sat up abruptly and squeezed open his eyes. He saw himself in a boat, floating on the swollen brown flood of the Yukon. The spruce-covered shores and islands were unfamiliar. He was stunned for a time. He couldn't make it out. He could remember the last night's orgy, but there was no connection between that and his present situation.

He closed his eyes and held his aching head in his hands. What had happened? Slowly the dreadful thought arose in his mind. He fought against it, strove to drive it away, but it persisted: he had killed somebody. That alone could explain why he was in an open boat drifting down the Yukon. The law of Red Cow that he had so long administered had now been administered to him. He had killed some one and been set adrift. But whom? He racked his aching brain for the answer, but all that came was a vague memory of bodies falling upon him and of striking out at them. Who were they? Maybe he had killed more than one. He reached to his belt. The knife was missing from its sheath. He had done it with that undoubtedly. But there must have been some reason for the killing. He opened his eyes and in a panic began to search about the boat. There was no grub, not an ounce of grub. He sat down with a groan. He had killed without provocation. The extreme rigour of the law had been visited upon him.

For half an hour he remained motionless, holding his aching head and trying to think. Then he cooled his stomach with a drink of water from overside and felt better. He stood up, and alone on the wide-stretching Yukon, with naught but the primeval wilderness to hear, he cursed strong drink. After that he tied up to a huge floating pine that was deeper sunk in the current than the boat and that consequently drifted faster. He washed his face and hands, sat down in the stern-sheets, and did some more thinking. It was late in June. It was two thousand miles to Bering Sea. The boat was averaging five miles an hour. There was no darkness in such high latitudes at that time of the year, and he could run the river every hour of the twenty-four. This would mean, daily, a hundred and twenty miles. Strike out the twenty for accidents, and there remained a hundred miles a day. In twenty days he would reach Bering Sea. And this would involve no expenditure of energy; the river did the work. He could lie down in the bottom of the boat and husband his strength.

For two days he ate nothing. Then, drifting into the Yukon Flats, he went ashore on the low-lying islands and gathered the eggs of wild geese and ducks. He had no matches, and ate the eggs raw. They were strong, but they kept him going. When he crossed the Arctic Circle, he found the Hudson Bay Company's post. The brigade had not yet arrived from the Mackenzie, and the post was completely out of grub. He was offered wild-duck eggs, but he informed them that he had a bushel of the same on the boat. He was also offered a drink of whisky, which he refused with an exhibition of violent repugnance. He got matches, however, and after that he cooked his eggs. Toward the mouth of the river head-winds delayed him, and he was twenty-four days on the egg diet. Unfortunately, while asleep he had drifted by both the missions of St. Paul and Holy Cross. And he could sincerely say, as he afterward did, that talk about missions on the Yukon was all humbug. There weren’t any missions, and he was the man to know.

Once on Bering Sea he exchanged the egg diet for seal diet, and he never could make up his mind which he liked least. In the fall of the year he was rescued by a United States revenue cutter, and the following winter he made quite a hit in San Francisco as a temperance lecturer. In this field he found his vocation. “Avoid the bottle” is his slogan and battle-cry. He manages subtly to convey the impression that in his own life a great disaster was wrought by the bottle. He has even mentioned the loss of a fortune that was caused by that hell-bait of the devil, but behind that incident his listeners feel the loom of some terrible and unguessed evil for which the bottle is responsible. He has made a success in his vocation, and has grown grey and respected in the crusade against strong drink. But on the Yukon the passing of Marcus O’Brien remains tradition. It is a mystery that ranks at par with the disappearance of Sir John Franklin.

The Pearls of Parlay

I

The Kanaka helmsman put the wheel down, and the Malahini slipped into the eye of the wind and righted to an even keel. Her headsails emptied, there was a rat-tat of reef-points and quick shifting of boom-tackles, and she was heeled over and filled away on the other tack. Though it was early morning and the wind brisk, the five white men who lounged on the poop-deck were scantily clad. David Grief, and his guest, Gregory Mulhall, an Englishman, were still in pajamas, their naked feet thrust into Chinese slippers. The captain and mate were in thin undershirts and unstarched duck pants, while the supercargo still held in his hands the undershirt he was reluctant to put on. The sweat stood out on his forehead, and he seemed to thrust his bare chest thirstily into the wind that did not cool.

"Pretty muggy, for a breeze like this," he complained.

"And what's it doing around in the west? That's what I want to know," was Grief's contribution to the general plaint.

"It won't last, and it ain't been there long," said Hermann, the Holland mate. "She is been chop around all night — five minutes here, ten minutes there, one hour somewhere other quarter."

"Something makin', something makin'," Captain Warfield croaked, spreading his bushy beard with the fingers of both hands and shoving the thatch of his chin into the breeze in a vain search for coolness. "Weather's been crazy for a fortnight. Haven't had the proper trades in three weeks. Everything's mixed up. Barometer was pumping at sunset last night, and it's pumping now, though the weather sharps say it don't mean anything. All the same, I've got a prejudice against seeing it pump. Gets on my nerves, sort of, you know. She was pumping that way the time we lost the Lancaster. I was only an apprentice, but I can remember that well enough. Brand new, four-masted steel ship; first voyage; broke the old man's heart. He'd been forty years in the company. Just faded way and died the next year."

Despite the wind and the early hour, the heat was suffocating. The wind whispered coolness, but did not deliver coolness. It might have blown off the Sahara, save for the extreme humidity with which it was laden. There was no fog nor mist, nor hint of fog or mist, yet the dimness of distance produced the impression. There were no defined clouds, yet so thickly were the heavens covered by a messy cloud-pall that the sun failed to shine through.

"Ready about!" Captain Warfield ordered with slow sharpness.

The brown, breech-clouted Kanaka sailors moved languidly but quickly to head-sheets and boom-tackles.

"Hard a-lee!"

The helmsman ran the spokes over with no hint of gentling, and the Malahini darted prettily into the wind and about.

"Jove! she's a witch!" was Mulhall's appreciation. "I didn't know you South Sea traders sailed yachts."

"She was a Gloucester fisherman originally," Grief explained, "and the Gloucester boats are all yachts when it comes to build, rig, and sailing."

"But you're heading right in — why don't you make it?" came the Englishman's criticism.

"Try it, Captain Warfield," Grief suggested. "Show him what a lagoon entrance is on a strong ebb."

"Close-and-by!" the captain ordered.

"Close-and-by," the Kanaka repeated, easing half a spoke.

The Malahini laid squarely into the narrow passage which was the lagoon entrance of a large, long, and narrow oval of an atoll. The atoll was shaped as if three atolls, in the course of building, had collided and coalesced and failed to rear the partition walls. Cocoanut palms grew in spots on the circle of sand, and there were many gaps where the sand was too low to the sea for cocoanuts, and through which could be seen the protected lagoon where the water lay flat like the ruffled surface of a mirror. Many square miles of water were in the irregular lagoon, all of which surged out on the ebb through the one narrow channel. So narrow was the channel, so large the outflow of water, that the passage was more-like the rapids of a river than the mere tidal entrance to an atoll. The water boiled and whirled and swirled and drove outward in a white foam of stiff, serrated waves. Each heave and blow on her bows of the upstanding waves of the current swung the Malahini off the straight lead and wedged her as with wedges of steel toward the side of the passage. Part way in she was, when her closeness to the coral edge compelled her to go about. On the opposite tack, broadside to the current, she swept seaward with the current's speed.

"Now's the time for that new and expensive engine of yours," Grief jeered good-naturedly.

That the engine was a sore point with Captain Warfield was patent. He had begged and badgered for it, until in the end Grief had given his consent.

"It will pay for itself yet," the captain retorted. "You wait and see. It beats insurance and you know the underwriters won't stand for insurance in the Paumotus."

Grief pointed to a small cutter beating up astern of them on the same course.

"I'll wager a five-franc piece the little Nuhiva beats us in."

"Sure," Captain Warfield agreed. "She's overpowered. We're like a liner alongside of her, and we've only got forty horsepower. She's got ten horse, and she's a little skimming dish. She could skate across the froth of hell, but just the same she can't buck this current. It's running ten knots right now."

And at the rate of ten knots, buffeted and jerkily rolled, the Malahini went out to sea with the tide.

"She'll slacken in half an hour — then we'll make headway," Captain Warfield said, with an irritation explained by his next words. "He has no right to call it Parlay. It's down on the admiralty charts, and the French charts, too, as Hikihoho. Bougainville discovered it and named it from the natives."

"What's the name matter?" the supercargo demanded, taking advantage of speech to pause with arms shoved into the sleeves of the undershirt. "There it is, right under our nose, and old Parlay is there with the pearls."

"Who see them pearl?" Hermann queried, looking from one to another.

"It's well known," was the supercargo's reply. He turned to the steersman: "Tai-Hotauri, what about old Parlay's pearls?"

The Kanaka, pleased and self-conscious, took and gave a spoke.

"My brother dive for Parlay three, four month, and he make much talk about pearl. Hikihoho very good place for pearl."

"And the pearl-buyers have never got him to part with a pearl," the captain broke in.

"And they say he had a hatful for Armande when he sailed for Tahiti," the supercargo carried on the tale. "That's fifteen years ago, and he's been adding to it ever since — stored the shell as well. Everybody's seen that — hundreds of tons of it. They say the lagoon's fished clean now. Maybe that's why he's announced the auction."

“If he really sells, this will be the biggest year’s output of pearls in the Paumotus,” Grief said.

“I say, now, look here!” Mulhall burst forth, harried by the humid heat as much as the rest of them. “What’s it all about? Who’s the old beachcomber anyway? What are all these pearls? Why so secretious about it?”

“Hikihoho belongs to old Parlay,” the supercargo answered. “He’s got a fortune in pearls, saved up for years and years, and he sent the word out weeks ago that he’d auction them off to the buyers to-morrow. See those schooners’ masts sticking up inside the lagoon?”

“Eight, so I see,” said Hermann.

“What are they doing in a dinky atoll like this?” the supercargo went on. “There isn’t a schooner-load of copra a year in the place. They’ve come for the auction. That’s why we’re here. That’s why the little Nuhiva’s bumping along astern there, though what she can buy is beyond me. Narii Herring — he’s an English Jew half-caste — owns and runs her, and his only assets are his nerve, his debts, and his whiskey bills. He’s a genius in such things. He owes so much that there isn’t a merchant in Papeete who isn’t interested in his welfare. They go out of their way to throw work in his way. They’ve got to, and a dandy stunt it is for Narii. Now I owe nobody. What’s the result? If I fell down in a fit on the beach they’d let me lie there and die. They wouldn’t lose anything. But Narii Herring? — what wouldn’t they do if he fell in a fit? Their best wouldn’t be too good for him. They’ve got too much money tied up in him to let him lie. They’d take him into their homes and hand-nurse him like a brother. Let me tell you, honesty in paying bills ain’t what it’s cracked up to be.”

“What’s this Narii chap got to do with it?” was the Englishman’s short-tempered demand. And, turning to Grief, he said, “What’s all this pearl nonsense? Begin at the beginning.”

“You’ll have to help me out,” Grief warned the others, as he began. “Old Parlay is a character. From what I’ve seen of him I believe he’s partly and mildly insane. Anyway, here’s the story: Parlay’s a full-blooded Frenchman. He told me once that he came from Paris. His accent is the true Parisian. He arrived down here in the old days. Went to trading and all the rest. That’s how he got in on Hikihoho. Came in trading when trading was the real thing. About a hundred miserable Paumotans lived on the island. He married the queen — native fashion. When she died, everything was his. Measles came through, and there weren’t more than a dozen survivors. He fed them, and worked them, and was king. Now before the queen died she gave birth to a girl. That's Armande. When she was three he sent her to the convent at Papeete. When she was seven or eight he sent her to France. You begin to glimpse the situation. The best and most aristocratic convent in France was none too good for the only daughter of a Paumotan island king and capitalist, and you know the old country French draw no colour line. She was educated like a princess, and she accepted herself in much the same way. Also, she thought she was all-white, and never dreamed of a bar sinister.

"Now comes the tragedy. The old man had always been cranky and erratic, and he'd played the despot on Hikihoho so long that he'd got the idea in his head that there was nothing wrong with the king — or the princess either. When Armande was eighteen he sent for her. He had slews and slathers of money, as Yankee Bill would say. He'd built the big house on Hikihoho, and a whacking fine bungalow in Papeete. She was to arrive on the mail boat from New Zealand, and he sailed in his schooner to meet her at Papeete. And he might have carried the situation off, despite the hens and bull-beasts of Papeete, if it hadn't been for the hurricane. That was the year, wasn't it, when Manu-Huhi was swept and eleven hundred drowned?"

The others nodded, and Captain Warfield said: "I was in the Magpie that blow, and we went ashore, all hands and the cook, Magpie and all, a quarter of a mile into the cocoanuts at the head of Taiohae Bay — and it a supposedly hurricane-proof harbour."

"Well," Grief continued, "old Parlay got caught in the same blow, and arrived in Papeete with his hatful of pearls three weeks too late. He'd had to jack up his schooner and build half a mile of ways before he could get her back into the sea.

"And in the meantime there was Armande at Papeete. Nobody called on her. She did, French fashion, make the initial calls on the Governor and the port doctor. They saw her, but neither of their hen-wives was at home to her nor returned the call. She was out of caste, without caste, though she had never dreamed it, and that was the gentle way they broke the information to her. There was a gay young lieutenant on the French cruiser. He lost his heart to her, but not his head. You can imagine the shock to this young woman, refined, beautiful, raised like an aristocrat, pampered with the best of old France that money could buy. And you can guess the end." He shrugged his shoulders. "There was a Japanese servant in the bungalow. He saw it. Said she did it with the proper spirit of the Samurai. Took a stiletto — no thrust, no drive, no wild rush for annihilation — took the stiletto, placed the point carefully against her heart, and with both hands, slowly and steadily, pressed home.

"Old Parlay arrived after that with his pearls. There was one single one of them, they say, worth sixty thousand francs. Peter Gee saw it, and has told me he offered that much for it. The old man went clean off for a while. They had him strait-jacketed in the Colonial Club two days — "

"His wife's uncle, an old Paumotan, cut him out of the jacket and turned him loose," the supercargo corroborated.

"And then old Parlay proceeded to eat things up," Grief went on. "Pumped three bullets into the scalawag of a lieutenant — "

"Who lay in sick bay for three months," Captain Warfield contributed.

"Flung a glass of wine in the Governor's face; fought a duel with the port doctor; beat up his native servants; wrecked the hospital; broke two ribs and the collarbone of a man nurse, and escaped; and went down to his schooner, a gun in each hand, daring the chief of police and all the gendarmes to arrest him, and sailed for Hikihoho. And they say he's never left the island since."

The supercargo nodded. "That was fifteen years ago, and he's never budged."

"And added to his pearls," said the captain. "He's a blithering old lunatic. Makes my flesh creep. He's a regular Finn."

"What's that?" Mulhall inquired.

"Bosses the weather — that's what the natives believe, at any rate. Ask Tai-Hotauri there. Hey, Tai-Hotauri ! what you think old Parlay do along weather?"

"Just the same one big weather devil," came the Kanaka's answer. "I know. He want big blow, he make big blow. He want no wind, no wind come."

"A regular old Warlock," said Mulhall.

"No good luck them pearl," Tai-Hotauri blurted out, rolling his head ominously. "He say he sell. Plenty schooner come. Then he make big hurricane, everybody finish, you see. All native men say so."

"It's hurricane season now," Captain Warfield laughed morosely. "They're not far wrong. It's making for something right now, and I'd feel better if the Malahini was a thousand miles away from here."

"He is a bit mad," Grief concluded. "I've tried to get his point of view. It's — well, it's mixed. For eighteen years he'd centred everything on Armande. Half the time he believes she's still alive, not yet come back from France. That's one of the reasons he held on to the pearls. And all the time he hates white men. He never forgets they killed her, though a great deal of the time he forgets she's dead. Hello! Where's your wind?"

The sails bellied emptily overhead, and Captain Warfield grunted his disgust. Intolerable as the heat had been, in the absence of wind it was almost overpowering. The sweat oozed out on all their faces, and now one, and again another, drew deep breaths, involuntarily questing for more air.

"Here she comes again — an eight point haul! Boom-tackles across! jump!"

The Kanakas sprang to the captain's orders, and for five minutes the schooner laid directly into the passage and even gained on the current. Again the breeze fell flat, then puffed from the old quarter, compelling a shift back of sheets and tackles.

"Here comes the Nuhiva," Grief said. "She's got her engine on. Look at her skim."

"All ready?" the captain asked the engineer, a Portuguese half-caste, whose head and shoulders protruded from the small hatch just for'ard of the cabin, and who wiped the sweat from his face with a bunch of greasy waste.

"Sure," he replied.

"Then let her go."

The engineer disappeared into his den, and a moment later the exhaust muffler coughed and spluttered overside. But the schooner could not hold her lead. The little cutter made three feet to her two and was quickly alongside and forging ahead. Only natives were on her deck, and the man steering waved his hand in derisive greeting and farewell.

"That's Narii Herring," Grief told Mulhall. "The big fellow at the wheel — the nerviest and most conscienceless scoundrel in the Paumotus."

Five minutes later a cry of joy from their own Kanakas centred all eyes on the Nuhiva. Her engine had broken down and they were overtaking her. The Malahini's sailors sprang into the rigging and jeered as they went by; the little cutter heeled over by the wind with a bone in her teeth, going backward on the tide.

"Some engine that of ours," Grief approved, as the lagoon opened before them and the course was changed across it to the anchorage.

Captain Warfield was visibly cheered, though he merely grunted, “It’ll pay for itself, never fear.”

The Malahini ran well into the centre of the little fleet ere she found swinging room to anchor.

“There’s Isaacs on the Dolly,” Grief observed, with a hand wave of greeting. “And Peter Gee’s on the Roberta. Couldn’t keep him away from a pearl sale like this. And there’s Francini on the Cactus. They’re all here, all the buyers. Old Parlay will surely get a price.”

“They haven’t repaired the engine yet,” Captain Warfield grumbled gleefully.

He was looking across the lagoon to where the Nuhiva’s sails showed through the sparse cocoanuts.

II

The house of Parlay was a big two-story frame affair, built of California lumber, with a galvanized iron roof. So disproportionate was it to the slender ring of the atoll that it showed out upon the sand-strip and above it like some monstrous excrescence. They of the *Malahini* paid the courtesy visit ashore immediately after anchoring. Other captains and buyers were in the big room examining the pearls that were to be auctioned next day. Paumotan servants, natives of Hikihoho, and relatives of the owner, moved about dispensing whiskey and absinthe. And through the curious company moved Parlay himself, cackling and sneering, the withered wreck of what had once been a tall and powerful man. His eyes were deep sunken and feverish, his cheeks fallen in and cavernous. The hair of his head seemed to have come out in patches, and his mustache and imperial had shed in the same lopsided way.

“Jove!” Mulhall muttered under his breath. “A long-legged Napoleon the Third, but burnt out, baked, and fire-crackled. And mangy! No wonder he crooks his head to one side. He’s got to keep the balance.”

“Goin’ to have a blow,” was the old man’s greeting to Grief. “You must think a lot of pearls to come a day like this.”

“They’re worth going to inferno for,” Grief laughed genially back, running his eyes over the surface of the table covered by the display.

"Other men have already made that journey for them," old Parlay cackled. "See this one!" He pointed to a large, perfect pearl the size of a small walnut that lay apart on a piece of chamois. "They offered me sixty thousand francs for it in Tahiti. They'll bid as much and more for it to-morrow, if they aren't blown away. Well, that pearl, it was found by my cousin, my cousin by marriage. He was a native, you see. Also, he was a thief. He hid it. It was mine. His cousin, who was also my cousin--we're all related here--killed him for it and fled away in a cutter to Noo-Nau. I pursued, but the chief of Noo-Nau had killed him for it before I got there. Oh, yes, there are many dead men represented on the table there. Have a drink, Captain. Your face is not familiar. You are new in the islands?"

"It's Captain Robinson of the *Roberta*," Grief said, introducing them.

In the meantime Mulhall had shaken hands with Peter Gee.

"I never fancied there were so many pearls in the world," Mulhall said.

"Nor have I ever seen so many together at one time," Peter Gee admitted.

"What ought they to be worth?"

"Fifty or sixty thousand pounds--and that's to us buyers. In Paris----" He shrugged his shoulders and lifted his eyebrows at the incommunicableness of the sum.

Mulhall wiped the sweat from his eyes. All were sweating profusely and breathing hard. There was no ice in the drink that was served, and whiskey and absinthe went down lukewarm.

"Yes, yes," Parlay was cackling. "Many dead men lie on the table there. I know those pearls, all of them. You see those three! Perfectly matched, aren't they? A diver from Easter Island got them for me inside a week. Next week a shark got him; took his arm off and blood poison did the business. And that big baroque there--nothing much--if I'm offered twenty francs for it to-morrow I'll be in luck; it came out of twenty-two fathoms of water. The man was from Raratonga. He broke all diving records. He got it out of twenty-two fathoms. I saw him. And he burst his lungs at the same time, or got the 'bends,' for he died in two hours. He died screaming. They could hear him for miles. He was the most powerful native I ever saw. Half a dozen of my divers have died of the bends. And more men will die, more men will die."

"Oh, hush your croaking, Parlay," chided one of the captains. "It ain't going to blow."

"If I was a strong man, I couldn't get up hook and get out fast enough," the old man retorted in the falsetto of age. "Not if I was a strong man with the taste for wine yet in my mouth. But not you. You'll all stay, I wouldn't advise you if I thought you'd go, You can't drive buzzards away from the carrion. Have another drink, my brave sailor-men. Well, well, what men will dare for a few little oyster drops! There they are, the beauties! Auction to-morrow, at ten sharp. Old Parlay's selling out, and the buzzards are gathering--old Parlay who was a stronger man in his day than any of them and who will see most of them dead yet."

"If he isn't a vile old beast!" the supercargo of the *Malahini* whispered to Peter Gee.

"What if she does blow?" said the captain of the *Dolly*. "Hikihoho's never been swept."

"The more reason she will be, then," Captain Warfield answered back. "I wouldn't trust her."

"Who's croaking now?" Grief reproved.

"I'd hate to lose that new engine before it paid for itself," Captain Warfield replied gloomily.

Parlay skipped with astonishing nimbleness across the crowded room to the barometer on the wall.

"Take a look, my brave sailormen!" he cried exultantly.

The man nearest read the glass. The sobering effect showed plainly on his face.

"It's dropped ten," was all he said, yet every face went anxious, and there was a look as if every man desired immediately to start for the door.

"Listen!" Parlay commanded.

In the silence the outer surf seemed to have become unusually loud. There was a great rumbling roar.

"A big sea is beginning to set," some one said; and there was a movement to the windows, where all gathered.

Through the sparse cocoanuts they gazed seaward. An orderly succession of huge smooth seas was rolling down upon the coral shore. For some minutes they gazed on the strange sight and talked in low voices, and in those few minutes it was manifest to all that the waves were increasing in size. It was uncanny, this rising sea in a dead calm, and their voices unconsciously sank lower. Old Parlay shocked them with his abrupt cackle.

"There is yet time to get away to sea, brave gentlemen. You can tow across the lagoon with your whaleboats."

"It's all right, old man," said Darling, the mate of the *Cactus*, a stalwart youngster of twenty-five. "The blow's to the southward and passing on. We'll not get a whiff of it."

An air of relief went through the room. Conversations were started, and the voices became louder. Several of the buyers even went back to the table to continue the examination of the pearls.

Parlay's shrill cackle rose higher.

"That's right," he encouraged. "If the world was coming to an end you'd go on buying."

"We'll buy these to-morrow just the same," Isaacs assured him.

"Then you'll be doing your buying in hell."

The chorus of incredulous laughter incensed the old man. He turned fiercely on Darling.

"Since when have children like you come to the knowledge of storms? And who is the man who has plotted the hurricane-courses of the Paumotus? What books will you find it in? I sailed the Paumotus before the oldest of you drew breath. I know. To the eastward the paths of the hurricanes are on so wide a circle they make a straight line. To the westward here they make a sharp curve. Remember your chart. How did it happen the hurricane of '91 swept Auri and Hiolau? The curve, my brave boy, the curve! In an hour, or two or three at most, will come the wind. Listen to that!"

A vast rumbling crash shook the coral foundations of the atoll. The house quivered to it. The native servants, with bottles of whiskey and absinthe in their hands, shrank together as if for protection and stared with fear through the windows at the mighty wash of the wave lapping far up the beach to the corner of a copra-shed.

Parlay looked at the barometer, giggled, and leered around at his guests. Captain War-field strode across to see.

"29:75," he read. "She's gone down five more. By God! the old devil's right. She's a-coming, and it's me, for one, for aboard."

"It's growing dark," Isaacs half whispered.

"Jove! it's like a stage," Mulhall said to Grief, looking at his watch. "Ten o'clock in the morning, and it's like twilight. Down go the lights for the tragedy. Where's the slow music!"

In answer, another rumbling crash shook the atoll and the house. Almost in a panic the company started for the door. In the dim light their sweaty faces appeared ghastly. Isaacs panted asthmatically in the suffocating heat.

“What’s your haste?” Parlay chuckled and girded at his departing guests. “A last drink, brave gentlemen.” No one noticed him. As they took the shell-bordered path to the beach he stuck his head out the door and called, “Don’t forget, gentlemen, at ten to-morrow old Parlay sells his pearls.”

III

On the beach a curious scene took place. Whaleboat after whaleboat was being hurriedly manned and shoved off. It had grown still darker. The stagnant calm continued, and the sand shook under their feet with each buffet of the sea on the outer shore. Narii Herring walked leisurely along the sand. He grinned at the very evident haste of the captains and buyers. With him were three of his Kanakas, and also Tai-Hotauri.

“Get into the boat and take an oar,” Captain Warfield ordered the latter.

Tai-Hotauri came over jauntily, while Narii Herring and his three Kanakas paused and looked on from forty feet away.

“I work no more for you, skipper,” Tai-Hotauri said insolently and loudly. But his face belied his words, for he was guilty of a prodigious wink. “Fire me, skipper,” he huskily whispered, with a second significant wink.

Captain Warfield took the cue and proceeded to do some acting himself. He raised his fist and his voice.

“Get into that boat,” he thundered, “or I’ll knock seven bells out of you!”

The Kanaka drew back truculently, and Grief stepped between to placate his captain.

“I go to work on the *Nuhiva*,” Tai-Hotauri said, rejoining the other group.

“Come back here!” the captain threatened.

“He’s a free man, skipper,” Narii Herring spoke up. “He’s sailed with me in the past, and he’s sailing again, that’s all.”

“Come on, we must get on board,” Grief urged. “Look how dark it’s getting.”

Captain Warfield gave in, but as the boat shoved off he stood up in the sternsheets and shook his fist ashore.

“I’ll settle with you yet, Narii,” he cried. “You’re the only skipper in the group that steals other men’s sailors,” He sat down, and in lowered voice queried: “Now what’s Tai-Hotauri up to? He’s on to something, but what is it?”

IV

As the boat came alongside the *Malahini*, Hermann’s anxious face greeted them over the rail.

“Bottom out fall from barometer,” he announced. “She’s goin’ to blow. I got starboard anchor overhaul.”

“Overhaul the big one, too,” Captain Warfield ordered, taking charge. “And here, some of you, hoist in this boat. Lower her down to the deck and lash her bottom up.”

Men were busy at work on the decks of all the schooners. There was a great clanking of chains being overhauled, and now one craft, and now another, hove in, veered, and dropped a second anchor. Like the *Malahini*, those that had third anchors were preparing to drop them when the wind showed what quarter it was to blow from.

The roar of the big surf continually grew though the lagoon lay in the mirror-like calm.

There was no sign of life where Parlay’s big house perched on the sand. Boat and copra-sheds and the sheds where the shell was stored were deserted.

“For two cents I’d up anchors and get out,” Grief said. “I’d do it anyway if it were open sea. But those chains of atolls to the north and east have us pocketed. We’ve a better chance right here. What do you think, Captain Warfield?”

“I agree with you, though a lagoon is no mill-pond for riding it out. I wonder where she’s going to start from? Hello! There goes one of Parlay’s copra-sheds.”

They could see the grass-thatched shed lift and collapse, while a froth of foam cleared the crest of the sand and ran down to the lagoon.

“Breached across!” Mulhall exclaimed. “That’s something for a starter. There she comes again!”

The wreck of the shed was now flung up and left on the sand-crest, A third wave buffeted it into fragments which washed down the slope toward the lagoon.

"If she blow I would as be cooler yet," Hermann grunted. "No longer can I breathe. It is damn hot. I am dry like a stove."

He chopped open a drinking cocoanut with his heavy sheath-knife and drained the contents. The rest of them followed his example, pausing once to watch one of Parlay's shell sheds go down in ruin. The barometer now registered 29:50.

"Must be pretty close to the centre of the area of low pressure," Grief remarked cheerfully. "I was never through the eye of a hurricane before. It will be an experience for you, too, Mulhall. From the speed the barometer's dropped, it's going to be a big one."

Captain Warfield groaned, and all eyes drew to him. He was looking through the glasses down the length of the lagoon to the southeast.

"There she comes," he said quietly.

They did not need glasses to see. A flying film, strangely marked, seemed drawing over the surface of the lagoon. Abreast of it, along the atoll, travelling with equal speed, was a stiff bending of the cocoanut palms and a blur of flying leaves. The front of the wind on the water was a solid, sharply defined strip of dark-coloured, wind-vexed water. In advance of this strip, like skirmishers, were flashes of windflaws. Behind this strip, a quarter of a mile in width, was a strip of what seemed glassy calm. Next came another dark strip of wind, and behind that the lagoon was all crisping, boiling whiteness.

"What is that calm streak?" Mulhall asked.

"Calm," Warfield answered.

"But it travels as fast as the wind," was the other's objection.

"It has to, or it would be overtaken and it wouldn't be any calm. It's a double-header, I saw a big squall like that off Savaii once. A regular double-header. Smash! it hit us, then it lulled to nothing, and smashed us a second time. Stand by and hold on! Here she is on top of us. Look at the *Roberta!*"

The Roberta, lying nearest to the wind at slack chains, was swept off broadside like a straw. Then her chains brought her up, bow on to the wind, with an astonishing jerk. Schooner after schooner, the *Malahini* with them, was now sweeping away with the first gust and fetching up on taut chains.

Mulhall and several of the Kanakas were taken off their feet when the *Malahini* jerked to her anchors.

And then there was no wind. The flying calm streak had reached them. Grief lighted a match, and the unshielded flame burned without flickering in the still air. A very dim twilight prevailed. The cloud-sky, lowering as it had been for hours, seemed now to have descended quite down upon the sea.

The Roberta tightened to her chains when the second head of the hurricane hit, as did schooner after schooner in swift succession. The sea, white with fury, boiled in tiny, spitting wavelets. The deck of the *Malahini* vibrated under the men's feet. The taut-stretched halyards beat a tattoo against the masts, and all the rigging, as if smote by some mighty hand, set up a wild thrumming. It was impossible to face the wind and breathe. Mulhall, crouching with the others behind the shelter of the cabin, discovered this, and his lungs were filled in an instant with so great a volume of driven air which he could not expel that he nearly strangled ere he could turn his head away.

"It's incredible," he gasped, but no one heard him.

Hermann and several Kanakas were crawling for'ard on hands and knees to let go the third anchor. Grief touched Captain Warfield and pointed to the *Roberta*. She was dragging down upon them. Warfield put his mouth to Grief's ear and shouted:

"We're dragging, too!"

Grief sprang to the wheel and put it hard over, veering the *Mahhini* to port. The third anchor took hold, and the *Roberta* went by, stern-first, a dozen yards away. They waved their hands to Peter Gee and Captain Robinson, who, with a number of sailors, were at work on the bow.

"He's knocking out the shackles!" Grief shouted. "Going to chance the passage! Got to! Anchors skating!"

"We're holding now!" came the answering shout. "There goes the *Cactus* down on the *Misi*. That settles them!"

The *Misi* had been holding, but the added windage of the *Cactus* was too much, and the entangled schooners slid away across the boiling white. Their men could be seen chopping and fighting to get them apart. The *Roberta*, cleared of her anchors, with a patch of tarpaulin set for'ard, was heading for the passage at the northwestern end of the lagoon. They saw her make it and drive out to sea. But the *Misi* and *Cactus*, unable to get clear of each other, went ashore on the atoll half a mile from the passage. The wind merely increased on itself and continued to increase. To face the full blast of it required all one's strength, and several minutes of crawling on deck against it tired a man to exhaustion. Hermann, with his Kanakas, plodded steadily, lashing and making secure, putting ever more gaskets on the sails. The wind ripped and tore their thin undershirts from their backs. They moved slowly, as if their bodies weighed tons, never releasing a hand-hold until another had been secured. Loose ends of rope stood out stiffly horizontal, and, when a whipping gave, the loose end frazzled and blew away.

Mulhall touched one and then another and pointed to the shore. The grass-sheds had disappeared, and Parlay's house rocked drunkenly, Because the wind blew lengthwise along the atoll, the house had been sheltered by the miles of cocoanut trees. But the big seas, breaking across from outside, were undermining it and hammering it to pieces. Already tilted down the slope of sand, its end was imminent. Here and there in the cocoanut trees people had lashed themselves. The trees did not sway or thresh about. Bent over rigidly from the wind, they remained in that position and vibrated monstrously. Underneath, across the sand, surged the white spume of the breakers. A big sea was likewise making down the length of the lagoon. It had plenty of room to kick up in the ten-mile stretch from the windward rim of the atoll, and all the schooners were bucking and plunging into it. The *Malahini* had begun shoving her bow and fo'c'sle head under the bigger ones, and at times her waist was filled rail-high with water.

"Now's the time for your engine!" Grief bellowed; and Captain Warfield, crawling over to where the engineer lay, shouted emphatic commands.

Under the engine, going full speed ahead, the *Malahini* behaved better. While she continued to ship seas over her bow, she was not jerked down so fiercely by her anchors. On the other hand, she was unable to get any slack in the chains. The best her forty horsepower could do was to ease the strain.

Still the wind increased. The little *Nuhiva*, lying abreast of the *Malahini* and closer in to the beach, her engine still unrepaired and her captain ashore, was having a bad time of it. She buried herself so frequently and so deeply that they wondered each time if she could clear herself of the water. At three in the afternoon buried by a second sea before she could free herself of the preceding one, she did not come up.

Mulhall looked at Grief.

"Burst in her hatches," was the bellowed answer.

Captain Warfield pointed to the *Winifred*, a little schooner plunging and burying outside of them, and shouted in Grief's ear. His voice came in patches of dim words, with intervals of silence when whisked away by the roaring wind.

"Rotten little tub... Anchors hold... But how she holds together... Old as the ark----"

An hour later Hermann pointed to her. Her for'ard bitts, foremast, and most of her bow were gone, having been jerked out of her by her anchors. She swung broadside, rolling in the trough and settling by the head, and in this plight was swept away to leeward.

Five vessels now remained, and of them the *Malahini* was the only one with an engine. Fearing either the *Nuhiva's* or the *Winifdred's* fate, two of them followed the *Roberta's* example, knocking out the chain-shackles and running for the passage. The *Dolly* was the first, but her tarpaulin was carried away, and she went to destruction on the lee-rim of the atoll near the *Misi* and the *Cactus*. Undeterred by this, the *Moana* let go and followed with the same result.

"Pretty good engine that, eh?" Captain Warfield yelled to his owner.

Grief put out his hand and shook. "She's paying for herself!" he yelled back. "The wind's shifting around to the southward, and we ought to lie easier!"

Slowly and steadily, but with ever-increasing velocity, the wind veered around to the south and the southwest, till the three schooners that were left pointed directly in toward the beach. The wreck of Parlay's house was picked up, hurled into the lagoon, and blown out upon them. Passing the *Malahini*, it crashed into the *Papara*, lying a quarter of a mile astern. There was wild work for'ard on her, and in a quarter of an hour the house went clear, but it had taken the *Papara's* foremast and bowsprit with it.

Inshore, on their port bow, lay the *Tahaa*, slim and yacht-like, but excessively oversparred. Her anchors still held, but her captain, finding no abatement in the wind, proceeded to reduce windage by chopping down his masts.

"Pretty good engine that," Grief congratulated his skipper, "It will save our sticks for us yet."

Captain Warfield shook his head dubiously.

The sea on the lagoon went swiftly down with the change of wind, but they were beginning to feel the heave and lift of the outer sea breaking across the atoll. There were not so many trees remaining. Some had been broken short off, others uprooted. One tree they saw snap off halfway up, three persons clinging to it, and whirl away by the wind into the lagoon. Two detached themselves from it and swam to the Tahaa. Not long after, just before darkness, they saw one jump overboard from that schooner's stern and strike out strongly for the Malahini through the white, spitting wavelets.

"It's Tai-Hotauri," was Grief's judgment. "Now we'll have the news."

The Kanaka caught the bobstay, climbed over the bow, and crawled aft. Time was given him to breathe, and then, behind the part shelter of the cabin, in broken snatches and largely by signs, he told his story.

"Narii... damn robber... He want steal... pearls... Kill Parlay... One man kill Parlay... No man know what man... Three Kanakas, Narii, me... Five beans... hat... Narii say one bean black... Nobody know... Kill Parlay... Narii damn liar... All beans black... Five black... Copra-shed dark... Every man get black bean... Big wind come... No chance... Everybody get up tree... No good luck them pearls... I tell you before... No good luck."

"Where's Parlay?" Grief shouted.

"Up tree... Three of his Kanakas same tree. Narii and one Kanaka'nother tree... My tree blow to hell, then I come on board."

"Where's the pearls?"

"Up tree along Parlay. Mebbe Narii get them pearl yet."

In the ear of one after another Grief passed on Tai-Hotauri's story. Captain Warfield was particularly incensed, and they could see him grinding his teeth.

Hermann went below and returned with a riding light, but the moment it was lifted above the level of the cabin wall the wind blew it out. He had better success with the binnacle lamp, which was lighted only after many collective attempts.

"A fine night of wind!" Grief yelled in Mulhall's ear. "And blowing harder all the time."

"How hard?"

"A hundred miles an hour... two hundred... I don't know... Harder than I've ever seen it."

The lagoon grew more and more troubled by the sea that swept across the atoll. Hundreds of leagues of ocean was being backed up by the hurricane, which more than overcame the lowering effect of the ebb tide. Immediately the tide began to rise the increase in the size of the seas was noticeable. Moon and wind were heaping the South Pacific on Hikihoho atoll.

Captain Warfield returned from one of his periodical trips to the engine room with the word that the engineer lay in a faint.

"Can't let that engine stop!" he concluded helplessly.

"All right!" Grief said, "Bring him on deck. I'll spell him."

The hatch to the engine room was battened down, access being gained through a narrow passage from the cabin. The heat and gas fumes were stifling. Grief took one hasty, comprehensive examination of the engine and the fittings of the tiny room, then blew out the oil-lamp. After that he worked in darkness, save for the glow from endless cigars which he went into the cabin to light. Even-tempered as he was, he soon began to give evidences of the strain of being pent in with a mechanical monster that toiled, and sobbed, and slubbered in the shouting dark. Naked to the waist, covered with grease and oil, bruised and skinned from being knocked about by the plunging, jumping vessel, his head swimming from the mixture of gas and air he was compelled to breathe, he laboured on hour after hour, in turns petting, blessing, nursing, and cursing the engine and all its parts. The ignition began to go bad. The feed grew worse. And worst of all, the cylinders began to heat. In a consultation held in the cabin the half-caste engineer begged and pleaded to stop the engine for half an hour in order to cool it and to attend to the water circulation. Captain Warfield was against any stopping. The half-caste swore that the engine would ruin itself and stop anyway and for good. Grief, with glaring eyes, greasy and battered, yelled and cursed them both down and issued commands. Mulhall, the supercargo, and Hermann were set to work in the cabin at double-straining and triple-straining the gasoline. A hole was chopped through the engine room floor, and a Kanaka heaved bilge-water over the cylinders, while Grief continued to souse running parts in oil.

"Didn't know you were a gasoline expert," Captain Warfield admired when Grief came into the cabin to catch a breath of little less impure air.

"I bathe in gasoline," he grated savagely through his teeth. "I eat it."

What other uses he might have found for it were never given, for at that moment all the men in the cabin, as well as the gasoline being strained, were smashed forward against the bulkhead as the *Malahini* took an abrupt, deep dive. For the space of several minutes, unable to gain their feet, they rolled back and forth and pounded and hammered from wall to wall. The schooner, swept by three big seas, creaked and groaned and quivered, and from the weight of water on her decks behaved logily. Grief crept to the engine, while Captain Warfield waited his chance to get through the companion-way and out on deck.

It was half an hour before he came back.

“Whaleboat’s gone!” he reported. “Galley’s gone! Everything gone except the deck and hatches! And if that engine hadn’t been going we’d be gone! Keep up the good work!”

By midnight the engineer’s lungs and head had been sufficiently cleared of gas fumes to let him relieve Grief, who went on deck to get his own head and lungs clear. He joined the others, who crouched behind the cabin, holding on with their hands and made doubly secure by rope-lashings. It was a complicated huddle, for it was the only place of refuge for the Kanakas. Some of them had accepted the skipper’s invitation into the cabin but had been driven out by the fumes. The *Malahini* was being plunged down and swept frequently, and what they breathed was air and spray and water commingled.

“Making heavy weather of it, Mulhall!” Grief shouted to his guest between immersions.

Mulhall, strangling and choking, could only nod. The scuppers could not carry off the burden of water on the schooner’s deck. She rolled it out and took it in over one rail and the other; and at times, nose thrown skyward, sitting down on her heel, she avalanched it aft. It surged along the poop gangways, poured over the top of the cabin, submerging and bruising those that clung on, and went out over the stern-rail.

Mulhall saw him first, and drew Grief’s attention. It was Narii Herring, crouching and holding on where the dim binnacle light shone upon him. He was quite naked, save for a belt and a bare-bladed knife thrust between it and the skin.

Captain Warfield untied his lashings and made his way over the bodies of the others. When his face became visible in the light from the binnacle it was working with anger. They could see him speak, but the wind tore the sound away. He would not put his lips to Narii’s ear. Instead, he pointed over the side. Narii Herring understood. His white teeth showed in an amused and sneering smile, and he stood up, a magnificent figure of a man.

“It’s murder!” Mulhall yelled to Grief.

“He’d have murdered Old Parlay!” Grief yelled back.

For the moment the poop was clear of water and the *Malahini* on an even keel. Narii made a bravado attempt to walk to the rail, but was flung down by the wind. Thereafter he crawled, disappearing in the darkness, though there was certitude in all of them that he had gone over the side. The Malahini dived deep, and when they emerged from the flood that swept aft, Grief got Mulhall's ear.

"Can't lose him! He's the Fish Man of Tahiti! He'll cross the lagoon and land on the other rim of the atoll if there's any atoll left!"

Five minutes afterward, in another submergence, a mess of bodies poured down on them over the top of the cabin. These they seized and held till the water cleared, when they carried them below and learned their identity. Old Parlay lay oh his back on the floor, with closed eyes and without movement. The other two were his Kanaka cousins. All three were naked and bloody. The arm of one Kanaka hung helpless and broken at his side. The other man bled freely from a hideous scalp wound.

"Narii did that?" Mulhall demanded.

Grief shook his head. "No; it's from being smashed along the deck and over the house!"

Something suddenly ceased, leaving them in dizzying uncertainty. For the moment it was hard to realize there was no wind. With the absolute abruptness of a sword slash, the wind had been chopped off. The schooner rolled and plunged, fetching up on her anchors with a crash which for the first time they could hear. Also, for the first time they could hear the water washing about on deck. The engineer threw off the propeller and eased the engine down.

"We're in the dead centre," Grief said. "Now for the shift. It will come as hard as ever." He looked at the barometer. "29:32," he read.

Not in a moment could he tone down the voice which for hours had battled against the wind, and so loudly did he speak that in the quiet it hurt the others' ears.

"All his ribs are smashed," the supercargo said, feeling along Parlay's side. "He's still breathing, but he's a goner."

Old Parlay groaned, moved one arm impotently, and opened his eyes. In them was the light of recognition.

"My brave gentlemen," he whispered haltingly. "Don't forget... the auction... at ten o'clock... in hell."

His eyes dropped shut and the lower jaw threatened to drop, but he mastered the qualms of dissolution long enough to omit one final, loud, derisive cackle.

Above and below pandemonium broke out.

The old familiar roar of the wind was with them. The *Malahini*, caught broadside, was pressed down almost on her beam ends as she swung the arc compelled by her anchors. They rounded her into the wind, where she jerked to an even keel. The propeller was thrown on, and the engine took up its work again.

“Northwest!” Captain Warfield shouted to Grief when he came on deck. “Hauled eight points like a shot!”

“Narii’ll never get across the lagoon now!” Grief observed.

“Then he’ll blow back to our side, worse luck!”

V

After the passing of the centre the barometer began to rise. Equally rapid was the fall of the wind. When it was no more than a howling gale, the engine lifted up in the air, parted its bed-plates with a last convulsive effort of its forty horsepower, and lay down on its side. A wash of water from the bilge sizzled over it and the steam arose in clouds. The engineer wailed his dismay, but Grief glanced over the wreck affectionately and went into the cabin to swab the grease off his chest and arms with bunches of cotton waste.

The sun was up and the gentlest of summer breezes blowing when he came on deck, after sewing up the scalp of one Kanaka and setting the other’s arm. The *Malahini* lay close in to the beach. For’ard, Hermann and the crew were heaving in and straightening out the tangle of anchors. The *Papara* and the *Tahaa* were gone, and Captain Warfield, through the glasses, was searching the opposite rim of the atoll.

“Not a stick left of them,” he said. “That’s what comes of not having engines. They must have dragged across before the big shift came.”

Ashore, where Parlay’s house had been, was no vestige of any house. For the space of three hundred yards, where the sea had breached, no tree or even stump was left. Here and there, farther along, stood an occasional palm, and there were numbers which had been snapped off above the ground. In the crown of one surviving palm Tai-Hotauri asserted he saw something move. There were no boats left to the *Malahini*, and they watched him swim ashore and climb the tree.

When he came back, they helped over the rail a young native girl of Parley's household. But first she passed up to them a battered basket. In it was a litter of blind kittens--all dead save one, that feebly mewed and staggered on awkward legs.

"Hello!" said Mulhall. "Who's that?"

Along the beach they saw a man walking. He moved casually, as if out for a morning stroll. Captain Warfield gritted his teeth. It was Narii Herring.

"Hello, skipper!" Narii called, when he was abreast of them. "Can I come aboard and get some breakfast?"

Captain Warfield's face and neck began to swell and turn purple. He tried to speak, but choked.

"For two cents--for two cents----" was all he could manage to articulate.

A Piece of Steak

WITH the last morsel of bread Tom King wiped his plate clean of the last particle of flour gravy and chewed the resulting mouthful in a slow and meditative way. When he arose from the table, he was oppressed by the feeling that he was distinctly hungry. Yet he alone had eaten. The two children in the other room had been sent early to bed in order that in sleep they might forget they had gone supperless. His wife had touched nothing, and had sat silently and watched him with solicitous eyes. She was a thin, worn woman of the working-class, though signs of an earlier prettiness were not wanting in her face. The flour for the gravy she had borrowed from the neighbor across the hall. The last two ha'pennies had gone to buy the bread.

He sat down by the window on a rickety chair that protested under his weight, and quite mechanically he put his pipe in his mouth and dipped into the side pocket of his coat. The absence of any tobacco made him aware of his action, and, with a scowl for his forgetfulness, he put the pipe away. His movements were slow, almost hulking, as though he were burdened by the heavy weight of his muscles. He was a solid-bodied, stolid-looking man, and his appearance did not suffer from being overprepossessing. His rough clothes were old and slouchy. The uppers of his shoes were too weak to carry the heavy resoling that was itself of no recent date. And his cotton shirt, a cheap, two-shilling affair, showed a frayed collar and ineradicable paint stains.

But it was Tom King's face that advertised him unmistakably for what he was. It was the face of a typical prize-fighter; of one who had put in long years of service in the squared ring and, by that means, developed and emphasized all the marks of the fighting beast. It was distinctly a lowering countenance, and, that no feature of it might escape notice, it was clean-shaven. The lips were shapeless, and constituted a mouth harsh to excess, that was like a gash in his face. The jaw was aggressive, brutal, heavy. The eyes, slow of movement and heavy-lidded, were almost expressionless under the shaggy, indrawn brows. Sheer animal that he was, the eyes were the most animal-like feature about him. They were sleepy, lion-like--the eyes of a fighting animal. The forehead slanted quickly back to the hair, which, clipped close, showed every bump of a villainous-looking head. A nose, twice broken and moulded variously by countless blows, and a cauliflower ear, permanently swollen and distorted to twice its size, completed his adornment, while the beard, fresh-shaven as it was, sprouted in the skin and gave the face a blue-black stain.

All together, it was the face of a man to be afraid of in a dark alley or lonely place. And yet Tom King was not a criminal, nor had he ever done anything criminal. Outside of brawls, common to his walk in life, he had harmed no one. Nor had he ever been known to pick a quarrel. He was a professional, and all the fighting brutishness of him was reserved for his professional appearances. Outside the ring he was slow-going, easy-natured, and, in his younger days, when money was flush, too open-handed for his own good. He bore no grudges and had few enemies. Fighting was a business with him. In the ring he struck to hurt, struck to maim, struck to destroy; but there was no animus in it. It was a plain business proposition. Audiences assembled and paid for the spectacle of men knocking each other out. The winner took the big end of the purse. When Tom King faced the Woolloomoolloo Gouger, twenty years before, he knew that the Gouger's jaw was only four months healed after having been broken in a Newcastle bout. And he had played for that jaw and broken it again in the ninth round, not because he bore the Gouger any ill-will, but because that was the surest way to put the Gouger out and win the big end of the purse. Nor had the Gouger borne him any ill-will for it. It was the game, and both knew the game and played it.

Tom King had never been a talker, and he sat by the window, morosely silent, staring at his hands. The veins stood out on the backs of the hands, large and swollen; and the knuckles, smashed and battered and malformed, testified to the use to which they had been put. He had never heard that a man's life was the life of his arteries, but well he knew the meaning of those big, upstanding veins. His heart had pumped too much blood through them at top pressure. They no longer did the work. He had stretched the elasticity out of them, and with their distention had passed his endurance. He tired easily now. No longer could he do a fast twenty rounds, hammer and tongs, fight, fight, fight, from gong to gong, with fierce rally on top of fierce rally, beaten to the ropes and in turn beating his opponent to the ropes, and rallying fiercest and fastest of all in that last, twentieth round, with the house on its feet and yelling, himself rushing, striking, ducking, raining showers of blows upon showers of blows and receiving showers of blows in return, and all the time the heart faithfully pumping the surging blood through the adequate veins. The veins, swollen at the time, had always shrunk down again, though not quite — each time, imperceptibly at first, remaining just a trifle larger than before. He stared at them and at his battered knuckles, and, for the moment, caught a vision of the youthful excellence of those hands before the first knuckle had been smashed on the head of Benny Jones, otherwise known as the Welsh Terror.

The impression of his hunger came back on him.

“Blimey, but couldn’t I go a piece of steak!” he muttered aloud, clenching his huge fists and spitting out a smothered oath.

“I tried both Burke’s an’ Sawley’s,” his wife said half apologetically.

“An’ they wouldn’t?” he demanded.

“Not a ha’penny. Burke said — “ She faltered.

“G’wan! Wot’d he say?”

“As how ‘e was thinkin’ Sandel ud do ye to-night, an’ as how yer score was comfortable big as it was.”

Tom King grunted, but did not reply. He was busy thinking of the bull terrier he had kept in his younger days to which he had fed steaks without end. Burke would have given him credit for a thousand steaks — then. But times had changed. Tom King was getting old; and old men, fighting before second-rate clubs, couldn’t expect to run bills of any size with the tradesmen.

He had got up in the morning with a longing for a piece of steak, and the longing had not abated. He had not had a fair training for this fight. It was a drought year in Australia, times were hard, and even the most irregular work was difficult to find. He had had no sparring partner, and his food had not been of the best nor always sufficient. He had done a few days’ navvy work when he could get it, and he had run around the Domain in the early mornings to get his legs in shape. But it was hard, training without a partner and with a wife and two kiddies that must be fed. Credit with the tradesmen had undergone very slight expansion when he was matched with Sandel. The secretary of the Gayety Club had advanced him three pounds — the loser’s end of the purse — and beyond that had refused to go. Now and again he had managed to borrow a few shillings from old pals, who would have lent more only that it was a drought year and they were hard put themselves. No — and there was no use in disguising the fact — his training had not been satisfactory. He should have had better food and no worries. Besides, when a man is forty, it is harder to get into condition than when he is twenty.

"What time is it, Lizzie?" he asked.

His wife went across the hall to inquire, and came back.

"Quarter before eight."

"They'll be startin' the first bout in a few minutes," he said. "Only a try-out. Then there's a four-round spar 'tween Dealer Wells an' Gridley, an' a ten-round go 'tween Starlight an' some sailor bloke. don't come on for over an hour."

At the end of another silent ten minutes, he rose to his feet.

"Truth is, Lizzie, I ain't had proper trainin'."

He reached for his hat and started for the door. He did not offer to kiss her — he never did on going out — but on this night she dared to kiss him, throwing her arms around him and compelling him to bend down to her face. She looked quite small against the massive bulk of the man.

"Good luck, Tom," she said. "You gotter do 'im."

"Ay, I gotter do 'im," he repeated. "That's all there is to it. I jus' gotter do 'im."

TomHe laughed with an attempt at heartiness, while she pressed more closely against him. Across her shoulders he looked around the bare room. It was all he had in the world, with the rent overdue, and her and the kiddies. And he was leaving it to go out into the night to get meat for his mate and cubs — not like a modern working-man going to his machine grind, but in the old, primitive, royal, animal way, by fighting for it. "I gotter do 'im," he repeated, this time a hint of desperation in his voice. "If it's a win, it's thirty quid — an' I can pay all that's owin', with a lump o' money left over. If it's a lose, I get naught — not even a penny for me to ride home on the tram. The secretary's give all that's comin' from a loser's end. Good-by, old woman. I'll come straight home if it's a win."

"An' I'll be waitin' up," she called to him along the hall.

It was full two miles to the Gayety, and as he walked along he remembered how in his palmy days — he had once been the heavyweight champion of New South Wales — he would have ridden in a cab to the fight, and how, most likely, some heavy backer would have paid for the cab and ridden with him. There were Tommy Burns and that Yankee nigger, Jack Johnson — they rode about in motor-cars. And he walked! And, as any man knew, a hard two miles was not the best preliminary to a fight. He was an old un, and the world did not wag well with old uns. He was good for nothing now except navvy work, and his broken nose and swollen ear were against him even in that. He found himself wishing that he had learned a trade. It would have been better in the long run. But no one had told him, and he knew, deep down in his heart, that he would not have listened if they had. It had been so easy. Big money — sharp, glorious fights — periods of rest and loafing in between — a following of eager flatterers, the slaps on the back, the shakes of the hand, the toffs glad to buy him a drink for the privilege of five minutes' talk — and the glory of it, the yelling houses, the whirlwind finish, the referee's "King wins!" and his name in the sporting columns next day.

Those had been times! But he realized now, in his slow, ruminating way, that it was the old uns he had been putting away. He was Youth, rising; and they were Age, sinking. No wonder it had been easy — they with their swollen veins and battered knuckles and weary in the bones of them from the long battles they had already fought. He remembered the time he put out old Stowsher Bill, at Rush-Cutters Bay, in the eighteenth round, and how old Bill had cried afterward in the dressing-room like a baby. Perhaps old Bill's rent had been overdue. Perhaps he'd had at home a missus an' a couple of kiddies. And perhaps Bill, that very day of the fight, had had a hungering for a piece of steak. Bill had fought game and taken incredible punishment. He could see now, after he had gone through the mill himself, that Stowsher Bill had fought for a bigger stake, that night twenty years ago, than had young Tom King, who had fought for glory and easy money. No wonder Stowsher Bill had cried afterward in the dressing-room.

Well, a man had only so many fights in him, to begin with. It was the iron law of the game. One man might have a hundred hard fights in him, another man only twenty; each, according to the make of him and the quality of his fibre, had a definite number, and, when he had fought them, he was done. Yes, he had had more fights in him than most of them, and he had had far more than his share of the hard, gruelling fights — the kind that worked the heart and lungs to bursting, that took the elastic out of the arteries and made hard knots of muscle out of Youth's sleek suppleness, that wore out nerve and stamina and made brain and bones weary from excess of effort and endurance overwrought. Yes, he had done better than all of them. There was none of his old fighting partners left. He was the last of the old guard. He had seen them all finished, and he had had a hand in finishing some of them.

They had tried him out against the old uns, and one after another he had put them away — laughing when, like old Stowsher Bill, they cried in the dressing-room. And now he was an old un, and they tried out the youngsters on him. There was that bloke, Sandel. He had come over from New Zealand with a record behind him. But nobody in Australia knew anything about him, so they put him up against old Tom King. If Sandel made a showing, he would be given better men to fight, with bigger purses to win; so it was to be depended upon that he would put up a fierce battle. He had everything to win by it — money and glory and career; and Tom King was the grizzled old chopping-block that guarded the highway to fame and fortune. And he had nothing to win except thirty quid, to pay to the landlord and the tradesmen. And, as Tom King thus ruminated, there came to his stolid vision the form of Youth, glorious Youth, rising exultant and invincible, supple of muscle and silken of skin, with heart and lungs that had never been tired and torn and that laughed at limitation of effort. Yes, Youth was the Nemesis. It destroyed the old uns and recked not that, in so doing, it destroyed itself. It enlarged its arteries and smashed its knuckles, and was in turn destroyed by Youth. For Youth was ever youthful. It was only Age that grew old.

At Castlereagh Street he turned to the left, and three blocks along came to the Gayety. A crowd of young larrikins hanging outside the door made respectful way for him, and he heard one say to another: “That’s ‘im! That’s Tom King!”

Inside, on the way to his dressing-room, he encountered the secretary, a keen-eyed, shrewd-faced young man, who shook his hand.

“How are you feelin’, Tom?” he asked.

“Fit as a fiddle,” King answered, though he knew that he lied, and that if he had a quid, he would give it right there for a good piece of steak.

When he emerged from the dressing-room, his seconds behind him, and came down the aisle to the squared ring in the centre of the hall, a burst of greeting and applause went up from the waiting crowd. He acknowledged salutations right and left, though few of the faces did he know. Most of them were the faces of kiddies unborn when he was winning his first laurels in the squared ring. He leaped lightly to the raised platform and ducked through the ropes to his corner, where he sat down on a folding stool. Jack

Ball, the referee, came over and shook his hand. Ball was a broken-down pugilist who for over ten years had not entered the ring as a principal. King was glad that he had him for referee. They were both old uns. If he should rough it with Sandel a bit beyond the rules, he knew Ball could be depended upon to pass it by.

Aspiring young heavyweights, one after another, were climbing into the ring and being presented to the audience by the referee. Also, he issued their challenges for them.

“Young Pronto,” Bill announced, “from North Sydney, challenges the winner for fifty pounds side bet.”

The audience applauded, and applauded again as Sandel himself sprang through the ropes and sat down in his corner. Tom King looked across the ring at him curiously, for in a few minutes they would be locked together in merciless combat, each trying with all the force of him to knock the other into unconsciousness. But little could he see, for Sandel, like himself, had trousers and sweater on over his ring costume. His face was strongly handsome, crowned with a curly mop of yellow hair, while his thick, muscular neck hinted at bodily magnificence.

Young Pronto went to one corner and then the other, shaking hands with the principals and dropping down out of the ring. The challenges went on. Ever Youth climbed through the ropes — Youth unknown, but insatiable — crying out to mankind that with strength and skill it would match issues with the winner. A few years before, in his own heyday of invincibleness, Tom King would have been amused and bored by these preliminaries. But now he sat fascinated, unable to shake the vision of Youth from his eyes. Always were these youngsters rising up in the boxing game, springing through the ropes and shouting their defiance; and always were the old uns going down before them. They climbed to success over the bodies of the old uns. And ever they came, more and more youngsters — Youth unquenchable and irresistible — and ever they put the old uns away, themselves becoming old uns and travelling the same downward path, while behind them, ever pressing on them, was Youth eternal — the new babies, grown lusty and dragging their elders down, with behind them more babies to the end of time — Youth that must have its will and that will never die.

King glanced over to the press box and nodded to Morgan, of the Sportsman, and Corbett, of the Referee. Then he held out his hands, while Sid Sullivan and Charley Bates, his seconds, slipped on his gloves and laced them tight, closely watched by one of Sandel's seconds, who first examined critically the tapes on King's knuckles. A second of his own was in Sandel's corner, performing a like office. Sandel's trousers were pulled off, and, as he stood up, his sweater was skinned off over his head. And Tom King, looking, saw Youth incarnate, deep-chested, heavy-thewed, with muscles that slipped and slid like live things under the white satin skin. The whole body was acrawl with life, and Tom King knew that it was a life that had never oozed its freshness out through the aching pores during the long fights wherein Youth paid its toll and departed not quite so young as when it entered.

The two men advanced to meet each other, and, as the gong sounded and the seconds clattered out of the ring with the folding stools, they shook hands and instantly took their fighting attitudes. And instantly, like a mechanism of steel and springs balanced on a hair trigger, Sandel was in and out and in again, landing a left to the eyes, a right to the ribs, ducking a counter, dancing lightly away and dancing menacingly back again. He was swift and clever. It was a dazzling exhibition. The house yelled its approbation. But King was not dazzled. He had fought too many fights and too many youngsters. He knew the blows for what they were — too quick and too deft to be dangerous. Evidently Sandel was going to rush things from the start. It was to be expected. It was the way of Youth, expending its splendor and excellence in wild insurgence and furious onslaught, overwhelming opposition with its own unlimited glory of strength and desire.

Sandel was in and out, here, there, and everywhere, light-footed and eager-hearted, a living wonder of white flesh and stinging muscle that wove itself into a dazzling fabric of attack, slipping and leaping like a flying shuttle from action to action through a thousand actions, all of them centred upon the destruction of Tom King, who stood between him and fortune. And Tom King patiently endured. He knew his business, and he knew Youth now that Youth was no longer his. There was nothing to do till the other lost some of his steam, was his thought, and he grinned to himself as he deliberately ducked so as to receive a heavy blow on the top of his head. It was a wicked thing to do, yet eminently fair according to the rules of the boxing game. A man was supposed to take care of his own knuckles, and, if he insisted on hitting an opponent on the top of the head, he did so at his own peril. King could have ducked lower and let the blow whiz harmlessly past, but he remembered his own early fights and how he smashed his first knuckle on the head of the Welsh Terror. He was but playing the game. That duck had accounted for one of Sandel's knuckles. Not that Sandel would mind it now. He would go on, superbly regardless, hitting as hard as ever throughout the fight. But later on, when the long ring battles had begun to tell, he would regret that knuckle and look back and remember how he smashed it on Tom King's head.

The first round was all Sandel's, and he had the house yelling with the rapidity of his whirlwind rushes. He overwhelmed King with avalanches of punches, and King did nothing. He never struck once, contenting himself with covering up, blocking and ducking and clinching to avoid punishment. He occasionally feinted, shook his head when the weight of a punch landed, and moved stolidly about, never leaping or springing or wasting an ounce of strength. Sandel must foam the froth of Youth away before discreet Age could dare to retaliate. All King's movements were slow and methodical, and his heavy-lidded, slow-moving eyes gave him the appearance of being half asleep or dazed. Yet they were eyes that saw everything, that had been trained to see everything through all his twenty years and odd in the ring. They were eyes that did not blink or waver before an impending blow, but that coolly saw and measured distance.

Seated in his corner for the minute's rest at the end of the round, he lay back with outstretched legs, his arms resting on the right angle of the ropes, his chest and abdomen heaving frankly and deeply as he gulped down the air driven by the towels of his seconds. He listened with closed eyes to the voices of the house, "Why don't yeh fight, Tom?" many were crying. "Yeh ain't afraid of 'im, are yeh?"

"Muscle-bound," he heard a man on a front seat comment. "He can't move quicker. Two to one on Sandel, in quids."

The gong struck and the two men advanced from their corners. Sandel came forward fully three-quarters of the distance, eager to begin again; but King was content to advance the shorter distance. It was in line with his policy of economy. He had not been well trained, and he had not had enough to eat, and every step counted. Besides, he had already walked two miles to the ringside. It was a repetition of the first round, with Sandel attacking like a whirlwind and with the audience indignantly demanding why King did not fight. Beyond feinting and several slowly delivered and ineffectual blows he did nothing save block and stall and clinch. Sandel wanted to make the pace fast, while King, out of his wisdom, refused to accommodate him. He grinned with a certain wistful pathos in his ring-battered countenance, and went on cherishing his strength with the jealousy of which only Age is capable. Sandel was Youth, and he threw his strength away with the munificent abandon of Youth. To King belonged the ring generalship, the wisdom bred of long, aching fights. He watched with cool eyes and head, moving slowly and waiting for Sandel's froth to foam away. To the majority of the onlookers it seemed as though King was hopelessly outclassed, and they voiced their opinion in offers of three to one on Sandel. But there were wise ones, a few, who knew King of old time, and who covered what they considered easy money.

The third round began as usual, one-sided, with Sandel doing all the leading and delivering all the punishment. A half-minute had passed when Sandel, overconfident, left an opening. King's eyes and right arm flashed in the same instant. It was his first real blow — a hook, with the twisted arch of the arm to make it rigid, and with all the weight of the half-pivoted body behind it. It was like a sleepy-seeming lion suddenly thrusting out a lightning paw. Sandel, caught on the side of the jaw, was felled like a bullock. The audience gasped and murmured awe-stricken applause. The man was not muscle-bound, after all, and he could drive a blow like a trip-hammer.

Sandel was shaken. He rolled over and attempted to rise, but the sharp yells from his seconds to take the count restrained him. He knelt on one knee, ready to rise, and waited, while the referee stood over him, counting the seconds loudly in his ear. At the ninth he rose in fighting attitude, and Tom King, facing him, knew regret that the blow had not been an inch nearer the point of the jaw. That would have been a knockout, and he could have carried the thirty quid home to the missus and the kiddies.

The round continued to the end of its three minutes, Sandel for the first time respectful of his opponent and King slow of movement and sleepy-eyed as ever. As the round neared its close, King, warned of the fact by sight of the seconds crouching outside ready for the spring in through the ropes, worked the fight around to his own corner. And when the gong struck, he sat down immediately on the waiting stool, while Sandel had to walk all the way across the diagonal of the square to his own corner. It was a little thing, but it was the sum of little things that counted. Sandel was compelled to walk that many more steps, to give up that much energy, and to lose a part of the precious minute of rest. At the beginning of every round King loafed slowly out from his corner, forcing his opponent to advance the greater distance. The end of every round found the fight maneuvred by King into his own corner so that he could immediately sit down.

Two more rounds went by, in which King was parsimonious of effort and Sandel prodigal. The latter's attempt to force a fast pace made King uncomfortable, for a fair percentage of the multitudinous blows showered upon him went home. Yet King persisted in his dogged slowness, despite the crying of the young hotheads for him to go in and fight. Again, in the sixth round, Sandel was careless, again Tom King's fearful right flashed out to the jaw, and again Sandel took the nine seconds count.

By the seventh round Sandel's pink of condition was gone, and he settled down to what he knew was to be the hardest fight in his experience. Tom King was an old un, but a better old un than he had ever encountered — an old un who never lost his head, who was remarkably able at defence, whose blows had the impact of a knotted club, and who had a knockout in either hand. Nevertheless, Tom King dared not hit often. He never forgot his battered knuckles, and knew that every hit must count if the knuckles were to last out the fight. As he sat in his corner, glancing across at his opponent, the thought came to him that the sum of his wisdom and Sandel's youth would constitute a world's champion heavyweight. But that was the trouble. Sandel would never become a world champion. He lacked the wisdom, and the only way for him to get it was to buy it with Youth; and when wisdom was his, Youth would have been spent in buying it.

King took every advantage he knew. He never missed an opportunity to clinch, and in effecting most of the clinches his shoulder drove stiffly into the other's ribs. In the philosophy of the ring a shoulder was as good as a punch so far as damage was concerned, and a great deal better so far as concerned expenditure of effort. Also, in the clinches King rested his weight on his opponent, and was loath to let go. This compelled the interference of the referee, who tore them apart, always assisted by Sandel, who had not yet learned to rest. He could not refrain from using those glorious flying arms and writhing muscles of his, and when the other rushed into a clinch, striking shoulder against ribs, and with head resting under Sandel's left arm, Sandel almost invariably swung his right behind his own back and into the projecting face. It was a clever stroke, much admired by the audience, but it was not dangerous, and was, therefore, just that much wasted strength. But

Sandel was tireless and unaware of limitations, and King grinned and doggedly endured.

Sandel developed a fierce right to the body, which made it appear that King was taking an enormous amount of punishment, and it was only the old ringsters who appreciated the deft touch of King's left glove to the other's biceps just before the impact of the blow. It was true, the blow landed each time; but each time it was robbed of its power by that touch on the biceps. In the ninth round, three times inside a minute, King's right hooked its twisted arch to the jaw; and three times Sandel's body, heavy as it was, was levelled to the mat. Each time he took the nine seconds allowed him and rose to his feet, shaken and jarred, but still strong. He had lost much of his speed, and he wasted less effort. He was fighting grimly; but he continued to draw upon his chief asset, which was Youth. King's chief asset was experience. As his vitality had dimmed and his vigor abated, he had replaced them with cunning, with wisdom born of the long fights and with a careful shepherding of strength. Not alone had he learned never to make a superfluous movement, but he had learned how to seduce an opponent into throwing his strength away. Again and again, by feint of foot and hand and body he continued to inveigle Sandel into leaping back, ducking, or countering. King rested, but he never permitted Sandel to rest. It was the strategy of Age.

Early in the tenth round King began stopping the other's rushes with straight lefts to the face, and Sandel, grown wary, responded by drawing the left, then by ducking it and delivering his right in a swinging hook to the side of the head. It was too high up to be vitally effective; but when first it landed, King knew the old, familiar descent of the black veil of unconsciousness across his mind. For the instant, or for the slightest fraction of an instant, rather, he ceased. In the one moment he saw his opponent ducking out of his field of vision and the background of white, watching faces; in the next moment he again saw his opponent and the background of faces. It was as if he had slept for a time and just opened his eyes again, and yet the interval of unconsciousness was so microscopically short that there had been no time for him to fall. The audience saw him totter and his knees give, and then saw him recover and tuck his chin deeper into the shelter of his left shoulder.

Several times Sandel repeated the blow, keeping King partially dazed, and then the latter worked out his defence, which was also a counter.

Feinting with his left he took a half-step backward, at the same time upper cutting with the whole strength of his right. So accurately was it timed that it landed squarely on Sandel's face in the full, downward sweep of the duck, and Sandel lifted in the air and curled backward, striking the mat on his head and shoulders. Twice King achieved this, then turned loose and hammered his opponent to the ropes. He gave Sandel no chance to rest or to set himself, but smashed blow in upon blow till the house rose to its feet and the air was filled with an unbroken roar of applause. But Sandel's strength and endurance were superb, and he continued to stay on his feet. A knockout seemed certain, and a captain of police, appalled at the dreadful punishment, arose by the ringside to stop the fight. The gong struck for the end of the round and Sandel staggered to his corner, protesting to the captain that he was sound and strong. To prove it, he threw two back air-springs, and the police captain gave in.

Tom King, leaning back in his corner and breathing hard, was disappointed. If the fight had been stopped, the referee, perforce, would have rendered him the decision and the purse would have been his. Unlike Sandel, he was not fighting for glory or career, but for thirty quid. And now Sandel would recuperate in the minute of rest.

Youth will be served — this saying flashed into King's mind, and he remembered the first time he had heard it, the night when he had put away Stowsher Bill. The toff who had bought him a drink after the fight and patted him on the shoulder had used those words. Youth will be served! The toff was right. And on that night in the long ago he had been Youth. To-night Youth sat in the opposite corner. As for himself, he had been fighting for half an hour now, and he was an old man. Had he fought like Sandel, he would not have lasted fifteen minutes. But the point was that he did not recuperate. Those upstanding arteries and that sorely tried heart would not enable him to gather strength in the intervals between the rounds. And he had not had sufficient strength in him to begin with. His legs were heavy under him and beginning to cramp. He should not have walked those two miles to the fight. And there was the steak which he had got up longing for that morning. A great and terrible hatred rose up in him for the butchers who had refused him credit. It was hard for an old man to go into a fight without enough to eat. And a piece of steak was such a little thing, a few pennies at best; yet it meant thirty quid to him.

With the gong that opened the eleventh round, Sandel rushed, making a show of freshness which he did not really possess. King knew it for what it was — a bluff as old as the game itself. He clinched to save himself, then, going free, allowed Sandel to get set. This was what King desired. He feinted with his left, drew the answering duck and swinging upward hook, then made the half-step backward, delivered the upper cut full to the face and crumpled Sandel over to the mat. After that he never let him rest, receiving punishment himself, but inflicting far more, smashing Sandel to the ropes, hooking and driving all manner of blows into him, tearing away from his clinches or punching him out of attempted clinches, and ever when Sandel would have fallen, catching him with one uplifting hand and with the other immediately smashing him into the ropes where he could not fall.

The house by this time had gone mad, and it was his house, nearly every voice yelling: “Go it, Tom!” “Get ‘im! Get ‘im!” “You’ve got ‘im, Tom! You’ve got ‘im!” It was to be a whirlwind finish, and that was what a ringside audience paid to see.

And Tom King, who for half an hour had conserved his strength, now expended it prodigally in the one great effort he knew he had in him. It was his one chance — now or not at all. His strength was waning fast, and his hope was that before the last of it ebbed out of him he would have beaten his opponent down for the count. And as he continued to strike and force, coolly estimating the weight of his blows and the quality of the damage wrought, he realized how hard a man Sandel was to knock out. Stamina and endurance were his to an extreme degree, and they were the virgin stamina and endurance of Youth. Sandel was certainly a coming man. He had it in him. Only out of such rugged fibre were successful fighters fashioned.

Sandel was reeling and staggering, but Tom King’s legs were cramping and his knuckles going back on him. Yet he steeled himself to strike the fierce blows, every one of which brought anguish to his tortured hands. Though now he was receiving practically no punishment, he was weakening as rapidly as the other. His blows went home, but there was no longer the weight behind them, and each blow was the result of a severe effort of will. His legs were like lead, and they dragged visibly under him; while Sandel’s backers, cheered by this symptom, began calling encouragement to their man.

King was spurred to a burst of effort. He delivered two blows in succession — a left, a trifle too high, to the solar plexus, and a right cross to the jaw. They were not heavy blows, yet so weak and dazed was Sandel that he went down and lay quivering. The referee stood over him, shouting the count of the fatal seconds in his ear. If before the tenth second was called, he did not rise, the fight was lost. The house stood in hushed silence. King rested on trembling legs. A mortal dizziness was upon him, and before his eyes the sea of faces sagged and swayed, while to his ears, as from a remote distance, came the count of the referee. Yet he looked upon the fight as his. It was impossible that a man so punished could rise.

Only Youth could rise, and Sandel rose. At the fourth second he rolled over on his face and groped blindly for the ropes. By the seventh second he had dragged himself to his knee, where he rested, his head rolling groggily on his shoulders. As the referee cried "Nine!" Sandel stood upright, in proper stalling position, his left arm wrapped about his face, his right wrapped about his stomach. Thus were his vital points guarded, while he lurched forward toward King in the hope of effecting a clinch and gaining more time.

At the instant Sandel arose, King was at him, but the two blows he delivered were muffled on the stalled arms. The next moment Sandel was in the clinch and holding on desperately while the referee strove to drag the two men apart. King helped to force himself free. He knew the rapidity with which Youth recovered, and he knew that Sandel was his if he could prevent that recovery. One stiff punch would do it. Sandel was his, indubitably his. He had outgeneralled him, outfought him, outpointed him. Sandel reeled out of the clinch, balanced on the hair line between defeat or survival. One good blow would topple him over and down and out. And Tom King, in a flash of bitterness, remembered the piece of steak and wished that he had it then behind that necessary punch he must deliver. He nerved himself for the blow, but it was not heavy enough nor swift enough. Sandel swayed, but did not fall, staggering back to the ropes and holding on. King staggered after him, and, with a pang like that of dissolution, delivered another blow. But his body had deserted him. All that was left of him was a fighting intelligence that was dimmed and clouded from exhaustion. The blow that was aimed for the jaw struck no higher than the shoulder. He had willed the blow higher, but the tired muscles had not been able to obey. And, from the impact of the blow, Tom King himself reeled back and nearly fell. Once again he strove. This time his punch missed altogether, and, from absolute weakness, he fell against Sandel and clinched, holding on to him to save himself from sinking to the floor.

King did not attempt to free himself. He had shot his bolt. He was gone. And Youth had been served. Even in the clinch he could feel Sandel growing stronger against him. When the referee thrust them apart, there, before his eyes, he saw Youth recuperate. From instant to instant Sandel grew stronger. His punches, weak and futile at first, became stiff and accurate. Tom King's bleared eyes saw the gloved fist driving at his jaw, and he willed to guard it by interposing his arm. He saw the danger, willed the act; but the arm was too heavy. It seemed burdened with a hundredweight of lead. It would not lift itself, and he strove to lift it with his soul. Then the gloved fist landed home. He experienced a sharp snap that was like an electric spark, and, simultaneously, the veil of blackness enveloped him.

When he opened his eyes again he was in his corner, and he heard the yelling of the audience like the roar of the surf at Bondi Beach. A wet sponge was being pressed against the base of his brain, and Sid Sullivan was blowing cold water in a refreshing spray over his face and chest. His gloves had already been removed, and Sandel, bending over him, was shaking his hand. He bore no ill-will toward the man who had put him out, and he returned the grip with a heartiness that made his battered knuckles protest. Then Sandel stepped to the centre of the ring and the audience hushed its pandemonium to hear him accept young Pronto's challenge and offer to increase the side bet to one hundred pounds. King looked on apathetically while his seconds mopped the streaming water from him, dried his face, and prepared him to leave the ring. He felt hungry. It was not the ordinary, gnawing kind, but a great faintness, a palpitation at the pit of the stomach that communicated itself to all his body. He remembered back into the fight to the moment when he had Sandel swaying and tottering on the hair-line balance of defeat. Ah, that piece of steak would have done it! He had lacked just that for the decisive blow, and he had lost. It was all because of the piece of steak.

His seconds were half-supporting him as they helped him through the ropes. He tore free from them, ducked through the ropes unaided, and leaped heavily to the floor, following on their heels as they forced a passage for him down the crowded centre aisle. Leaving the dressing-room for the street, in the entrance to the hall, some young fellow spoke to him.

“W’y didn’t yuh go in an’ get ‘im when yuh ‘ad ‘im?” the young fellow asked.

“Aw, go to hell!” said Tom King, and passed down the steps to the sidewalk.

The doors of the public house at the corner were swinging wide, and he saw the lights and the smiling barmaids, heard the many voices discussing the fight and the prosperous chink of money on the bar. Somebody called to him to have a drink. He hesitated perceptibly, then refused and went on his way.

TomHe had not a copper in his pocket, and the two-mile walk home seemed very long. He was certainly getting old. Crossing the Domain, he sat down suddenly on a bench, unnerved by the thought of the missus sitting up for him, waiting to learn the outcome of the fight. That was harder than any knockout, and it seemed almost impossible to face.

He felt weak and sore, and the pain of his smashed knuckles warned him that, even if he could find a job at navvy work, it would be a week before he could grip a pick handle or a shovel. The hunger palpitation at the pit of the stomach was sickening. His wretchedness overwhelmed him, and into his eyes came an unwonted moisture. He covered his face with his hands, and, as he cried, he remembered Stowsher Bill and how he had served him that night in the long ago. Poor old Stowsher Bill! He could understand now why Bill had cried in the dressing-room.

The Plague Ship

"WHAT'S this! What's this! Do you wish to kill the man? Such treatment is too heroic. Bah! An emetic of ipecacuanha, fifteen grains of powdered calomel and as many of quinine, and then castor oil! Why my dear madam, you know absolutely nothing about medicine!" and the speaker glared indignantly at her.

She flushed, half hurt, half angry, but smothering her feeling, replied, "What do you take the case to be? Typhus?"

"No. It's merely a bilious fever, made the more severe by this d — , I beg your pardon, this infernal weather."

"Bilious fever! Ha! Ha! Ha!" They had withdrawn from the side of the sufferer, and she burst forth into merry peals of laughter.

"Yes, madam, I repeat it. Bilious fever. Bilious fever! Do you hear? Bilious! Bilious! Bilious fever!"

"My dear sir, though I do not know you, from the wondrous knowledge you display I'll call you doctor. Then doctor, let me ask you if you have ever heard of black vomit, or, if that does not come within your technical nomenclature, yellow fever?"

"What symptoms does the man evince. Madam Know-It-All?"

"Miss Know-It-All, if you please. Languor, chilliness, muscular pains, headache, fa — "

"Precursors of any febrile attack. You evidently do — "

"Face flushed, eyes suffused then congested, nostrils and lips red, tongue scarlet, temperature 105, loss — "

"Loss of appetite, hot skin, thirst, nausea, restlessness, and delirium — all the usual accompaniments of any high fever — go on Miss — Miss — "

"Miss Know-It-All. But all these militant symptoms have ceased and he is now in a state of prostration and collapse. This, the stadium, is as you know the great characteristic of yellow fever."

"Collapse! Bah! Convalescence. The man is recovering but weak, and here I find you have given him ipecacuanha, calomel, quinine and castor oil. Where's the ship's doctor? I'll have you out of here!"

"As for the ship's doctor, he's sick too, with bilious fever I suppose. And for you, who are you, pray? Don't rest under the hallucination that you are still walking your hospital, wherever it may be. I am as competent as you;

nay, have a diploma as well as you: and as to this case, have had too much experience to be mistaken."

"Madam — A — A — Miss — I — I — I — I'll see the captain at once. You're a-a-a — don't know your business!" And in choleric wrath he left her in pursuit of the chief officer.

The steamer Caspar had left the West Coast, with a clean bill of health and in first class order, for San Francisco. But fortune had illy favored her and from the first day her voyage had been one of trials and tribulations. She had been fearfully overloaded with both cargo and passengers. So low did she float in the water that she seemed and behaved like a log. All buoyancy was lost: she was dead, plunging through instead of rising to the great seas she had met with. In this condition she had encountered a storm, broken her propeller shaft, and been blown hundreds of miles out of her course into the Pacific. The engineers had worked night and day but could effect no permanent repair. They would manage to run the engines a few hours, then their patches would give away and they would be forced to stop twice as long to again make ineffectual repairs. They were still far out of their course and even the captain did not know when they would get back. To make it worse, they had been blown into an unfrequented portion of the ocean, far from the beaten paths, and could look to no outside source for assistance.

There were 158 first class passengers and only berths for 95. Many of the ladies were forced to sleep on lounges and settees, while the gentlemen literally floored and walled the smoking saloon when bedtime came. While it was thus rather hard on the first class passengers, it was worse on the second, and in the steerage it was frightful. Some of second class berths were directly over the screw and so close to the Chinese quarters as to be rendered almost uninhabitable by the fumes of opium and otherwise abominable stenches. In the after-lower-deck, it was more like a cattle ship. Four Chinese, half a score of Negroes, and quadruple as many white people, the majority of which were seasick, were crowded into this hole. So far down was it, that there was no ventilation save through the ports, which more often were bolted down than otherwise.

And now, in the fierce tropic heat of midsummer, to cap their misery, fever had broken forth. While many were hasty in proclaiming it the terrible yellow jack, the more clear-headed, cognizant of their horrible condition, naturally attributed it to that. The ship's doctor, a too efficient and too poorly paid man, had been the first to come down, leaving the passengers and men to take care of themselves. Their endeavors had been spasmodic and erratic. A fifth of the crew were down and the rest were on the verge of mutiny, threatening to take to the boats. The firemen and stokers were as bad, no longer yielding subordination to their officers. The Chinese, while none were taken ill, continued to stolidly smoke their opium, turning a deaf ear to the protests of the passengers and the commands of the captain, which they knew could not be enforced. The first officer, in despair, had taken to whiskey and was now locked up in a fit of horrors, while the rest of the officers were nearly crazy in their impotency. The passengers were just beginning to awake to their danger; but as yet, save for the isolated efforts of the couple that quarreled over the diagnosis, had done nothing.

Doctor Chandler, who maintained it was bilious fever, had yet to meet his thirtieth birthday. He was returning from an expedition to Peru, on which he had been absent a year. Long retired, in fact, except for his hospital experience, he had never taken up a practice; for the same hand that educated him, had, on its demise, endowed him with an ample fortune. Possessed of a scientific worship for good sanitation — it was his hobby — to the absence of it he attributed, under various names, the sickness which had fallen on them.

Miss Appleton, while possessed of a diploma, had perhaps not as I much experience in hospitals, but of Southern origin, she had gone I through an epidemic of yellow fever in New Orleans and was familiar with all its symptoms. She was a woman not more than twenty-five, beautiful as the word goes, but owing more to a pleasant, forceful personality than to her physical charms. Traveling with her aunt, as soon as the disease had manifested itself, she deserted her to the attention of a maid and threw herself into the breach. And thus, just as she had attempted her first case, had she encountered Doctor Chandler, who had similarly awakened and who was in search of his first patient.

Several days had elapsed and things were going from bad to worse. At last, everybody had been forced to acknowledge that the disease was yellow fever, even Doctor Chandler, who had become very contrite and usually begged Miss Appleton’s pardon every other time they met. Though rather rash and headstrong, he was really a good fellow at heart, and soon the twain were on the best of footings. He was generous and self-sacrificing to a fault and devoted himself night and day to the struggle. Maud Appleton easily penetrated his brusque exterior and grew to understand and like him. Still, they occasionally quarreled over methods of treatment, nor, it must be confessed, was she always in the right.

In the meanwhile, the ship's doctor, several of the stewards and cooks, and quite a number of the passengers and crew had succumbed and been given hasty sea burial. The captain had caught the contagion and lay helpless in his stateroom, leaving only the second and third officers to manage the men whom every day saw the more unruly and boisterous. Save the two doctors and the dozen or so that had volunteered as assistants, the passengers were sunk in a state of lethargic horror. At first they had been panic stricken, but that had now subsided and they had become stolidly indifferent to the course of events. They recognized no ties except those of blood, and selfishly struggled for their individual creature-comforts — few, it must be acknowledged, they obtained, for each hour the discipline grew more lax and nothing could be obtained from the stewards and waiters without liberal tipping. In short, the plague ship had become a floating hell in which brute struggled with brute for survival.

Sick and giddy. Miss Appleton had staggered from out the fetid atmosphere below-decks, and now was leaning over the rail in a vain effort to catch some refreshing breeze. The Caspar lay in the trough of the sea idly rolling to the smooth swell. She had no steerage-way; the quartermaster had deserted the wheel; the engineers had given up the struggle; and despair had settled upon the ship. The heat was suffocating, and as Maud panted for breath she was approached by the indefatigable Doctor Chandler, who had new cause of quarrel concerning the treatment of one of her patients. But they quarreled good-naturedly now, more in pleasant badinage and sharp repartee. Amid all their misery, it had become their one source of pleasure — a contest of wit and skill, in which personality was lost in the keenness of professional zeal. Though their methods were quite diverse, he had lost as many patients as she, while in the number of recoveries she was one the better of him — the patient over which they had had their first dispute being now in the last stage of convalescence. This rankled the doctor, in a professional way, and did not in the least abate his faith in his treatment, while he ascribed her success to a phenomenonal streak of luck, which gave her the patients that would have recovered any way.

But while they enjoyed themselves in their merry dispute, affairs of moment were approaching a crisis. The crew had long before deserted their stuffy fore-castle and camped on deck beneath sails spread as awnings. Later they were joined by the stokers, oilers and firemen, who brought along their sea-bags and blankets. Here, in full view of the terrorized passengers, they played cards, fought, cursed God and man, and refused all duty. Too powerful to break, the officers were forced to send their meals to them and to pray that they would not take to the boats. For all their lawlessness, however, they maintained a crude organization and enforced their rules with terrible penalties. Whenever one fell sick, he was carried away to the fore-castle and attended upon by shifts appointed for that purpose. Only this morning, the remainder of the cooks, waiters and mess-boys had deserted and come forward to join them. As the crowd of them, carrying all the paraphernalia for an improvised camp, came marching along the deck, they had received am otherwise than cool reception.

"I say, lads, what the — — are we to do for cooks and mess-byes and grub?" queried one of the tars.

An instant sufficed for the mutineers to grasp the situation. Withj belaying pins and sheath-knives they drove the would be deserters, bag and baggage, back to their duty, incidentally breaking a few heads andj creating a momentary pandemonium. This incident had given the shifty second and third officers their cue, which they were soon to utilize with such disastrous consequence.

The mutineers quickly gave full intimation of their next procedure. They took possession of the boats; saw to it that they were seaworthy; and looting the hold, provisioned them. The passengers crowded the after-decks in a terror-stricken mass, while a few of the more clear-headed, grouped round the officers and placed themselves at their service. As the day proceeded, the panic grew: several mutineers they saw fall to the deck, overcome by the heat and the dread yellow jack. These were quickly carried away to the improvised hospital while their comrades worked the faster in completing their preparations.

Nor was this the only trouble which threatened. The three score Chinese between decks, who till now had manifested no discontent, were ripe for revolt. The contemplated desertion of the cooks and waiters had left them without food for twenty-four hours, and the officers had been forced to lock them in. Left to their fate, their yells and curses penetrated throughout the ship and at any moment they were expected to break forth. To add to the terror, the sick and dying, actuated by some subtle impulse, had broken out in loud cries and wailing.

It was at this moment that the officers put into execution the plan they had conceived. Why not turn these two destructive forces, which threatened them, against each other? The sailors were in just the mood for a fight, and as they never lost any love for their Asiatic brethren, it would not take much to precipitate one. The second officer argued that if they left the ship, those that remained would be at the mercy of the Chinese, and, since they were bound to take to the boats, it were best to be left behind in safety by cleaning the Chinese out. And again, he thought if the conflict were severe enough, the ranks of the mutineers would be so decimated, that he could conquer them with the help of the passengers, engineers, cooks and stewards.

Maud and Doctor Chandler had concluded their quarrel with the customary assurance of good comradeship and an agreement. Each was to choose a patient that had just come down and take exclusive control, brooking no interference and applying their own method in its extremity. As chance had it, they chose a pair which had just taken to their berths: a young Californian and his sister, returning from a visit to their father, an extensive mine-owner in Peru. She selected the young man, and he, the sister. Leaving the deck, they were elbowing their way among the passengers who had been sent below by the second officer. Amid the confusion on every side, as they entered the saloon, anarchy and hell broke forth.

The hub-bub which the Chinese incessantly maintained had ceased tor a space; but now, redoubled in fury, it arose, amid the crashing of heavy bodies and the splintering of wood. They heard the rapid revolver snots of the two engineers set to guard them, followed by terrible oaths anu ^neks of agony. Then the passageways were thronged and the yel-ow devils, inflamed with blood, were upon them. At this juncture, the door of the first officer’s stateroom flew open, and he sprang out, an awful sight to behold. He was evidently suffering the tortures of delirium tremens: his eyes were set and dilated; his gigantic body convulsed with nervous spasms; his mouth a mass of froth and blood. Throwing himself into the doorway, armed with nothing but a huge battle-axe (some curio of his), he held the fiends at bay. The fleeing passengers blocked the other exit while those that remained, beheld a wondrous struggle. Among the Chinese were some of the most redoubtable high-binders and hatchet-men of the coast — mercenary and trained fighters I for the societies to which they owed their allegiance. Unlike the average Chinese, they were not cowardly: murder and bloodshed was their profession.

His battle-axe described flaming circles of steel as it flew back and forth, hither and thither, on its mission of death. At first, the marauders had rushed to their certain fate; but now they drew back, leaving several of their number beneath his feet. Into the narrow passage they knew he dare not pursue for lack of space in which to wield his great weapon. Stepping to the fore, their leader prepared to finish the struggle. It seemed as though David had come forward to face Goliah. His appearance belied his reputation as the wonderful Ah Sen, the fiercest of all hatchet-men: slender and effeminate of form, his delicate face seemed more that of a smooth-faced boy or woman, than that of a notorious desperado. Seizing the proffered knives of his men, thrice he cast one, full at his opponent. They leaped from his hand like rays of glancing light, turning half way round in mid air and burying themselves in the first officer's breast. Yet he seemed not to feel them. Again he tried; but this time, aiming at the throat, it hurtled past still intent on its mission and sank between the shoulders of one of the ladies, struggling in the press at the other door. The highbinder, evincing not the slightest irritation at his failures, changed the method of attack. Seizing a hatchet, with the speed of the lightning, it pursued the path of its predecessors. Full on the forehead, it struck the giant, who swayed, tottered, sank to his knees: like a cat. Ah Sen followed his weapon to his fate. For one second the giant was endowed with the full vigor of his strength, and in that second, Ah Sen encountered him. There was no struggle. Rising to his feet and totally disregarding the knife which entered his side, he seized the slender-necked celestial by the head with both his hands — once — twice — his body whirled in giddying orbit round his head. There was a snap of bones and rending of flesh and Ah Sen sank to the floor, his neck wrung like a chicken's. The next instant he was joined by his antagonist, who fell beside him, literally hacked to pieces by a score of knives and hatchets.

In the meantime, the officers had been busy persuading the mutineers to do the one act of mercy before they left the ship. The celerity with which the contagion spread and its malignancy, had put them in a fright, terrible to behold in strong, fearless men. They had been loth to listen, doggedly proceeding with the work of launching the boats, all bent upon their departure, but when the noise of the combat reached them and they knew that the Chinese were up, they forsook their tasks, hastily armed themselves with cutlasses distributed by the first officer, and sprang to the rescue.

Dividing into two parties, after killing a few stragglers which they caught murdering and robbing the passengers, they hemmed the remainder in the great saloon. Here, aided by the firearms of the officers, a short but sanguinary conflict ensued, ending in the complete annihilation of the Asiatics.

Exhilarated by their success; their fiercest passions aroused by the battle and blood; all the brutishness of primeval man burst forth and the sailors were in the mood for any mischief. Bloodstained and panting, they grouped about the ringleader, who, qualified with all the attributes that go to make the sea-lawyer and popular demagogue, addressed them in a short but very trite speech:

"Ho! My lads! We've blasted the heathen and saved the ship — never say die says I — we've saved the passengers too — ain't it so? (Interruptions of "Aye, aye, that we have.") and in saving their bloody necks, we save their treasures too — what say ye? (An' where do we come off? Aye, that's the ticket!) Hold your jaw, Jack Gunderson: I'm coming to that. Yes, where do we get off? The company? (Ha! Ha! Ha! The skinflints! They'll pay us — see us with Davy Jones first!) Aye, my lads, that's not true enough: they'd see you in hell first, a-simmering like pork-chops in the galley. But here's the proposition: let the blasted passengers keep their bloomin' lives and us their treasure. What say ye, mates?" A burst of applause and cries of "A loot! A loot!" signified that it had been answered in the affirmative.

Charybdis had saved the passengers from Scylla to engulf them himself. It was not destruction, however, for quickly overcoming the officers and the remnant of their supporters, they assured the passengers of their good will and desire for suitable reward. The latter they at once I proceeded to appropriate.

The sailors fell to their work with a vengeance, and in the scenes I which followed, there was much mingling of the ludicrous and the tragic. Staterooms were ransacked, baggage of all descriptions turned upside down and inside out, and articles of wearing apparel appropri-1 ated; nor did they hesitate to personally despoil the passengers. Maud's I aunt, an old lady, yet vigorous in body, mind and invective, led two of I the tars, intent on her magnificent earrings, a merry chase. She finally sought refuge in the stateroom of the Senor Morella, an Honduras patriot, martial of aspect and afflicted with a wooden leg — a memento of his latest insurrection. He lay in his berth, dying, with his artificiall limb unstrapped but near him. Seizing this redoubtable weapon, she laid about her with such will and good purpose, as to down the robbers as fast as they stuck their heads inside. Quite a crowd ceased theiti looting to enjoy the fun. But the "old she-devil," as they delightfully termed her, held her own against all comers.

As usual, the men broke into the spirit room, and while some became good-natured and jolly, others became the more violent. Fearing injury to her aunt, Maud hurried forward to persuade her into giving up her jewels, accompanied, of course, by Chandler, as protector. He was quickly dispossessed of his gold repeater and diamond links — little incidents which he scarcely heeded, so intent was he on guarding Maud. She, however, failed in her mission, barely missing being brained by her somewhat confused and belligerent relative. Though frustrated as a peacemaker, she well succeeded in involving herself and protector in new troubles. One of the sailors, a big, hulking brute, rendered amorous by the too-frequent caress of certain plainly labeled bottles, threw his arm about her waist and drew her to him. Quick, full on the lips, he kissed her.

In that moment did the doctor become cognizant of a new sensatition — a sensation he knew to be different from any he would have felt, had it been a woman other than her. A swift shoulder-blow, and the man lay in a heap on the floor. The next instant he was on his feet, cursing and glowering malignantly at the doctor, who, in the heat of his anger, made as though to repeat the performance. To Maud, events followed like a flash: the fellow's cutlass hissed through the air; a comrade interposed another; the blow was broken but still fell upon Chandler's head; and when she beheld the rush of blood, she experienced a strangely-intense and solicitous anxiety for him.

"A breeze! A breeze! My hearties! Fair wind for Mexico!" came a cry from above. A second saw the mutineers on deck, springing into the boats which lay along side. The Caspar was deserted.

In the bloodstained cabin, amid the weeping and shrieking of women, the wailing of the fever-stricken, and the curses and groans of the dying combatants, Chandler, bathed in a baptism of blood, and Maud, flushed and fainting with what had transpired, sprang or rather tottered and fell into each other's arms. There, in that moment of horror, with all the hideousness of the present and terror of the future upon them, they confessed their newly-discovered and mutual love.

Many days had elapsed. Helpless, the Caspar drifted about with her cargo of misery and death. No help had come: none was expected, save through the safe arrival of the deserters in Mexico, which was merely problematic. In the absence of this disorderly element, the survivors had settled down to an orderly existence, systematized everything, isolated forward the fever patients, and were getting along far better than might have been expected from people in their condition. As a traveler in Yosemite loses all conception and appreciation of height and distance, so had they lost all horror of their situation. Continually facing death, they had come to fear it not; and great indeed must have been the occurrence which could have surprised them from out their placidity. They had not broken under the strain but merely accustomed themselves to it. In fact, they were progressing finely, and too much could not be attributed to the two doctors, who, while loving, still quarreled over methods.

Meanwhile, Maud and the doctor, while in no wise neglecting their other cases, devoted themselves night and day to the particular ones of the brother and sister. They had been very sick, but never, even in the worst of crises when the toss of a penny would have almost decided life or death, had the two physicians even dreamed of consulting each other. They had put into the fullest operation their favorite methods, and so strong was their professional rivalry, that they abided the result with far more anxiety than is usually the lot of the patient to receive from its physician. In fact, so extreme had the contest become, that they devoted all their spare time to the nursing, scarcely seeing each other, save to quarrel about the merits of their respective schools or to twit each other, as the case might be, on any bad signs which might have been manifested. Still it seemed as though the superiority of either was not to be thus exemplified, for neither patient had died, and both were now fairly convalescent. Never the less, each had been surprised at the zeal displayed by the other, and now, when all danger was past, all doubts vanished, their surprise grew as their zeal flagged not.

The days took their allotted course, slipping silently, imperceptibly, each into the other, while no new incidents or happenings arose to vary the monotony of their existence. In truth, the gods had smiled upon them in their distress. The Caspar encountered no storms while the fierceness of the epidemic began to abate. Perhaps, because everybody, with the miraculous exception of the two physicians, had been either killed or cured. Everything was on the mend: nothing was apprehended I except bad weather, and even in that the Caspar stood a fair show of remaining afloat. In case of storms, small sails had been prepared by which to heave to and ride them out. With the dwindled company and the great boilers, the engineers had no difficulty in maintaining the fresh water supply, while, as part of the cargo was composed of food, little was to be feared from starvation. Slowly the summer dragged on, but quickly the sick list grew smaller, till finally, amid great rejoicing and festivity, it had become totally negated and the ship thoroughly fumigated.

But while everything was so bright, Maud found herself tormented; by strange thoughts and discovered an inconsistent vein in her nature which she had never dreamed of. Again and again she summoned herself to judgement, but always to judge in vain, for in despair, she invariably threw the case out of court. Sometimes she came to herself and was appalled at the thoughts which had risen uncalled in her mind, at the visions she unconsciously contemplated. Her life became one tangled mesh of self-analytical whys and wherefores, its and musts, pros and cons. The more she endeavored to reason with herself the more entangled and confused she became. Cold memories of some possible past mistake caused her to often shudder, to avoid the present, and to fear the future which must be shaped by the impress of that possible wrong-doing. Still she could not find the heart to blame herself: she could only not understand.

As it fared with her, so fared it with Chandler. He also found himself involved in a sea of seeming self-inconsistency. But he behaved differently from Maud — she was a woman. His masculinity and choleric disposition asserted itself, and not only did he clearly see his past mistake, but he grew enraged and waxed indignant at himself, often cursing the son of his father with such sublime abstraction from self as to be truly startling. Still, in the obscurity of his mental vision, he could see so far and no farther. If he could have seen beyond, doubtless he would not have figuratively kicked himself so often, nor would his life had been tinged with savage melancholy which now gnawed at his heart-strings so unceasingly.

With these inward ills tormenting them, their intercourse with each other was not exactly that of fond lovers; and their very cognizance of this but increased the pitch of their misery. They constantly upbraided themselves after the many such unsatisfactory meetings, as being the causes of the same — nor was this the less severe, for each unselfishly and ignorantly pocketed all the blame, deeming the other to have the person injured. Under such circumstances, he became gloomy and irritable, while she well hid hers beneath a mask of gaiety and enthusiasm in all the little social events on shipboard. Very naturally, this diversity of mood drew them the farther apart.

And so, while the collective prospects of the little community went from good to better, their individual affairs traveled with unseemly haste from bad to worse. Logically, this stretching out to the extremes must reach an end sometime, and both, intuitively recognizing this, pondered expectantly over the outcome. To make matters worse, they no longer quarreled: this new state of affairs was imintained with the stiff awkwardness of self-consciousness, from which each suffered the more acutely, never suspecting the other to be in the same dilemma. So affairs rapidly approached a crisis, and one night, when the situation had become almost absolutely unbearable to both parties, the electric search-light of a man of war, sent out in quest of them vaguely foreshadowed to each a cessation of their troubles.

The passengers were crowding the weather rail of the Caspar, devouring the lights of the vessel in the offing and feasting their eyes upon its dim, bulky loom. Amid this scene of boisterous rejoicing, Maud felt strangely out of place. It jarred upon her — this gregarious mass which clustered like bees on every hand. She became aware of a longing for solitude. Yielding to the mood, she slipped away and climbed to the deserted bridge.

Similar had been the feeling of Chandler, and similar the action. He burned from one side as she did from the other. Face to face, with the glare of the search-light shining full upon them, they met, midway on the bridge. The next instant and they were in darkness. He had taken her hand, yet they spoke not as they gazed on the dancing lights, heard the merry scream of the boatswain's whistles upon the battleship, and dimly discerned a boat as it sprang to the man of warsman stroke. Nearer and nearer it came; but it was with a strange apathy that they watched it. The next moment and it would be alongside. Seemingly, they both resolved and spoke at the same time. What each said seemed to startle the other. Surprise, doubt, assurance, gratification, happiness, in turn were mutually delineated upon their countenances. What was said they only knew, but it was with light steps and joyous faces, all wreathed in smiles, that they joined their companions of the now-to-be-abandoned plague ship.

Extract from the San Francisco Daily Herald of six weeks later: —

At the Palace Hotel, the consummation of a happy romance, strangely connected with the ill-fated Caspar, is about to be attained. Miss Maud Appleton — I an M.D. by the way — of New Orleans, and Doctor Chandler of Boston — the two that rendered such effective service in overcoming the plague on the Caspar — are to marry respectively, Mr. Charles Waldworth, Stanford ‘93, and his sister, the charming Miss Waldworth, of local social note. It is whispered that Mr. and Miss Waldworth, while ill with the fever, were made test cases for a professional contest between the two M.D.s, and so strenuous and successful were their efforts, that the fruition is the happy dual marriage to be celebrated shortly. But more of this anon.

Planchette

IT is my right to know," the girl said.

Her voice was firm-fibred with determination. There was no hint of pleading in it, yet it was the determination that is reached through a long period of pleading. But in her case it had been pleading, not of speech, but of personality. Her lips had been ever mute, but her face and eyes, and the very attitude of her soul, had been for a long time eloquent with questioning. This the man had known, but he had never answered; and now she was demanding by the spoken word that he answer.

"It is my right," the girl repeated.

"I know it," he answered, desperately and helplessly.

She waited, in the silence which followed, her eyes fixed upon the light that filtered down through the lofty boughs and bathed the great redwood trunks in mellow warmth. This light, subdued and colored, seemed almost a radiation from the trunks themselves, so strongly did they saturate it with their hue. The girl saw without seeing, as she heard, without hearing, the deep gurgling of the stream far below on the canyon bottom.

She looked down at the man. "Well?" she asked, with the firmness which feigns belief that obedience will be forthcoming.

She was sitting upright, her back against a fallen tree-trunk, while he lay near to her, on his side, an elbow on the ground and the hand supporting his head.

"Dear, dear Lute," he murmured.

She shivered at the sound of his voice — not from repulsion, but from struggle against the fascination of its caressing gentleness. She had come to know well the lure of the man — the wealth of easement and rest that was promised by every caressing intonation of his voice, by the mere touch of hand on hand or the faint impact of his breath on neck or cheek. The man could not express himself by word nor look nor touch without weaving into the expression, subtly and occultly, the feeling as of a hand that passed and that in passing stroked softly and soothingly. Nor was this all-pervading caress a something that cloyed with too great sweetness; nor was it sickly sentimental; nor was it maudlin with love's madness. It was vigorous, compelling, masculine. For that matter, it was largely unconscious on the man’s part. He was only dimly aware of it. It was a part of him, the breath of his soul as it were, involuntary and unpremeditated.

But now, resolved and desperate, she steeled herself against him. He tried to face her, but her gray eyes looked out to him, steadily, from under cool, level brows, and he dropped his head upon her knee. Her hand strayed into his hair softly, and her face melted into solicitude and tenderness. But when he looked up again, her gray eyes were steady, her brows cool and level.

“What more can I tell you?” the man said. He raised his head and met her gaze. “I cannot marry you. I cannot marry any woman. I love you — you know that — better than my own life. I weigh you in the scales against all the dear things of living, and you outweigh everything. I would give everything to possess you, yet I may not. I cannot marry you. I can never marry you.”

Her lips were compressed with the effort of control. His head was sinking back to her knee, when she checked him.

“You are already married, Chris?”

“No! no!” he cried vehemently. “I have never been married. I want to marry only you, and I cannot!”

“Then — ”

“Don’t!” he interrupted. “Don’t ask me!”

“It is my right to know,” she repeated.

“I know it,” he again interrupted. “But I cannot tell you.”

“You have not considered me, Chris,” she went on gently.

“I know, I know,” he broke in.

“You cannot have considered me. You do not know what I have to bear from my people because of you.”

“I did not think they felt so very unkindly toward me,” he said bitterly.

“It is true. They can scarcely tolerate you. They do not show it to you, but they almost hate you. It is I who have had to bear all this. It was not always so, though. They liked you at first as . . . as I liked you. But that was four years ago. The time passed by — a year, two years; and then they began to turn against you. They are not to be blamed. You spoke no word. They felt that you were destroying my life. It is four years, now, and you have never once mentioned marriage to them. What were they to think? What they have thought, that you were destroying my life.”

As she talked, she continued to pass her fingers caressingly through his hair, sorrowful for the pain that she was inflicting.

"They did like you at first. Who can help liking you? You seem to draw affection from all living things, as the trees draw the moisture from the ground. It comes to you as it were your birthright. Aunt Mildred and Uncle Robert thought there was nobody like you. The sun rose and set in you. They thought I was the luckiest girl alive to win the love of a man like you. 'For it looks very much like it,' Uncle Robert used to say, wagging his head wickedly at me. Of course they liked you. Aunt Mildred used to sigh, and look across teasingly at Uncle, and say, 'When I think of Chris, it almost makes me wish I were younger myself.' And Uncle would answer, 'I don't blame you, my dear, not in the least.' And then the pair of them would beam upon me their congratulations that I had won the love of a man like you.

"And they knew I loved you as well. How could I hide it? — this great, wonderful thing that had entered into my life and swallowed up all my days! For four years, Chris, I have lived only for you. Every moment was yours. Waking, I loved you. Sleeping, I dreamed of you. Every act I have performed was shaped by you, by the thought of you. Even my thoughts were moulded by you, by the invisible presence of you. I had no end, petty or great, that you were not there for me."

"I had no idea of imposing such slavery," he muttered.

"You imposed nothing. You always let me have my own way. It was you who were the obedient slave. You did for me without offending me. You forestalled my wishes without the semblance of forestalling; them, so natural and inevitable was everything you did for me. I said, without offending me. You were no dancing puppet. You made no fuss. Don't you see? You did not seem to do things at all. Somehow they were always there, just done, as a matter of course.

"The slavery was love's slavery. It was just my love for you that made you swallow up all my days. You did not force yourself into my thoughts. You crept in, always, and you were there always — how much, you will never know.

"But as time went by, Aunt Mildred and Uncle grew to dislike you. They grew afraid. What was to become of me? You were destroying my life. My music? You know how my dream of it has dimmed away. That spring, when I first met you — I was twenty, and I was about to start for Germany. I was going to study hard. That was four years ago, and I am still here in California.

“I had other lovers. You drove them away — No! no! I don’t mean that. It was I that drove them away. What did I care for lovers, for anything, when you were near? But as I said, Aunt Mildred and Uncle grew afraid. There has been talk friends, busybodies, and all the rest. The time went by. You did not speak. I could only wonder, wonder. I knew you loved me. Much was said against you by Uncle at first, and then by Aunt Mildred. They were father and mother to me, you know. I could not defend you. Yet I was loyal to you. I refused to discuss you. I closed up. There was half-estrangement in my home — Uncle Robert with a face like an undertaker, and Aunt Mildred’s heart breaking. But what could I do, Chris? What could I do?”

The man, his head resting on her knee again, groaned, but made no other reply.

“Aunt Mildred was mother to me, yet I went to her no more with my confidences. My childhood’s book was closed. It was a sweet book, Chris. The tears come into my eyes sometimes when I think of it. But never mind that. Great happiness has been mine as well. I am glad I can talk frankly of my love for you. And the attaining of such frankness has been very sweet. I do love you, Chris. I love you . . . I cannot tell you how. You are everything to me, and more besides. You remember that Christmas tree of the children? — when we played blindman’s buff? and you caught me by the arm so, with such a clutching of fingers that I cried out with the hurt? I never told you, but the arm was badly bruised. And such sweet I got of it you could never guess. There, black and blue, was the imprint of your fingers — your fingers, Chris, your fingers. It was the touch of you made visible. It was there a week, and I kissed the marks — oh, so often! I hated to see them go; I wanted to rebruise the arm and make them linger. I was jealous of the returning white that drove the bruise away. Somehow, — oh! I cannot explain, but I loved you so!”

In the silence that fell, she continued her caressing of his hair, while she idly watched a great gray squirrel, boisterous and hilarious, as it scampered back and forth in a distant vista of the redwoods. A crimson-crested woodpecker, energetically drilling a fallen trunk, caught and transferred her gaze. The man did not lift his head. Rather, he crushed his face closer against her knee, while his heaving shoulders marked the hardness with which he breathed.

“You must tell me, Chris,” the girl said gently. “This mystery — it is killing me. I must know why we cannot be married. Are we always to be this way? — merely lovers, meeting often, it is true, and yet with the long absences between the meetings? Is it all the world holds for you and me, Chris? Are we never to be more to each other? Oh, it is good just to love, I know — you have made me madly happy; but one does get so hungry at times for something more! I want more and more of you, Chris. I want all of you. I want all our days to be together. I want all the companionship, the comradeship, which cannot be ours now, and which will be ours when we are married — " She caught her breath quickly. "But we are never to be married. I forgot. And you must tell me why."

The man raised his head and looked her in the eyes. It was a way he had with whomever he talked, of looking them in the eyes.

"I have considered you, Lute," he began doggedly. "I did consider you at the very first. I should never have gone on with it. I should have gone away. I knew it. And I considered you in the light of that knowledge, and yet . . . I did not go away. My God! what was I to do? I loved you. I could not go away. I could not help it. I stayed. I resolved, but I broke my resolves. I was like a drunkard. I was drunk of you. I was weak, I know. I failed. I could not go away. I tried. I went away — you will remember, though you did not know why. You know now. I went away, but I could not remain away. Knowing that we could never marry, I came back to you. I am here, now, with you. Send me away, Lute. I have not the strength to go myself."

"But why should you go away?" she asked. "Besides, I must know why, before I can send you away."

"Don't ask me."

"Tell me," she said, her voice tenderly imperative.

"Don't, Lute; don't force me," the man pleaded, and there was appeal in his eyes and voice.

"But you must tell me," she insisted. "It is justice you owe me."

The man wavered. "If I do . . ." he began. Then he ended with determination, "I should never be able to forgive myself. No, I cannot tell you. Don't try to compel me, Lute. You would be as sorry as I."

"If there is anything . . . if then are, obstacles . . . if this mystery does really prevent . . . " She was speaking slowly, with long pauses, seeking the more delicate ways of speech for the framing of her thought. "Chris, I do love you. I love you as deeply as it is possible for any woman to love, I am sure. If you were to say to me now 'Come,' I would go with you. I would follow wherever you led. I would be your page, as in the days of old when ladies went with their knights to far lands. You are my knight, Chris, and you can do no wrong. Your will is my wish. I was once afraid of the censure of the world. Now that you have come into my life I am no longer afraid. I would laugh at the world and its censure for your sake — for my sake too. I would laugh, for I should have you, and you are more to me than the good will and approval of the world. If you say ‘Come,’ I will — ”

“Don’t! Don’t!” he cried. “It is impossible! Marriage or not, I cannot even say ‘Come.’ I dare not. I’ll show you. I’ll tell you.”

He sat up beside her, the action stamped with resolve. He took her hand in his and held it closely. His lips moved to the verge of speech. The mystery trembled for utterance. The air was palpitant with its presence. As if it were an irrevocable decree, the girl steeled herself to hear. But the man paused, gazing straight out before him. She felt his hand relax in hers, and she pressed it sympathetically, encouragingly. But she felt the rigidity going out of his tensed body, and she knew that spirit and flesh were relaxing together. His resolution was ebbing. He would not speak — she knew it; and she knew, likewise, with the sureness of faith, that it was because he could not.

She gazed despairingly before her, a numb feeling at her heart, as though hope and happiness had died. She watched the sun flickering down through the warm-trunked redwoods. But she watched in a mechanical, absent way. She looked at the scene as from a long way off, without interest, herself an alien, no longer an intimate part of the earth and trees and flowers she loved so well.

So far removed did she seem, that she was aware of a curiosity, strangely impersonal, in what lay around her. Through a near vista she looked at a buckeye tree in full blossom as though her eyes encountered it for the first time. Her eyes paused and dwelt upon a yellow cluster of Diogenes’ lanterns that grew on the edge of an open space. It was the way of flowers always to give her quick pleasure-thrills, but no thrill was hers now. She pondered the flower slowly and thoughtfully, as a hasheesh-eater, heavy with the drug, might ponder some whim-flower that obtruded on his vision. In her ears was the voice of the stream — a hoarse-throated, sleepy old giant, muttering and mumbling his somnolent fancies. But her fancy was not in turn aroused, as was its wont; she knew the sound merely for water rushing over the rocks of the deep canyon-bottom, that and nothing more.

Her gaze wandered on beyond the Diogenes' lanterns into the open space. Knee-deep in the wild oats of the hillside grazed two horses, chestnut-sorrels the pair of them, perfectly matched, warm and golden in the sunshine, their spring-coats a sheen of high-lights shot through with color-flashes that glowed like fiery jewels. She recognized, almost with a shock, that one of them was hers, Dolly, the companion of her girlhood and womanhood, on whose neck she had sobbed her sorrows and sung her joys. A moistness welled into her eyes at the sight, and she came back from the remoteness of her mood, quick with passion and sorrow, to be part of the world again.

The man sank forward from the hips, relaxing entirely, and with a groan dropped his head on her knee. She leaned over him and pressed her lips softly and lingeringly to his hair.

"Come, let us go," she said, almost in a whisper.

She caught her breath in a half-sob, then tightened her lips as she rose. His face was white to ghastliness, so shaken was he by the struggle through which he had passed. They did not look at each other, but walked directly to the horses. She leaned against Dolly's neck while he tightened the girths. Then she gathered the reins in her hand and waited. He looked at her as he bent down, an appeal for forgiveness in his eyes; and in that moment her own eyes answered. Her foot rested in his hands, and from there she vaulted into the saddle. Without speaking, without further looking at each other, they turned the horses' heads and took the narrow trail that wound down through the sombre redwood aisles and across the open glades to the pasture-lands below. The trail became a cow-path, the cow-path became a wood-road, which later joined with a hay-road; and they rode down through the low-rolling, tawny California hills to where a set of bars let out on the county road which ran along the bottom of the valley. The girl sat her horse while the man dismounted and began taking down the bars.

"No — wait!" she cried, before he had touched the two lower bars.

She urged the mare forward a couple of strides, and then the animal lifted over the bars in a clean little jump. The man's eyes sparkled, and he clapped his hands.

"You beauty! you beauty!" the girl cried, leaning forward impulsively in the saddle and pressing her cheek to the mare's neck where it burned flame-color in the sun.

“Let’s trade horses for the ride in,” she suggested, when he had led his horse through and finished putting up the bars. “You’ve never sufficiently appreciated Dolly.”

“No, no,” he protested.

“You think she is too old, too sedate,” Lute insisted. “She’s only sixteen, and she can outrun nine colts out of ten. Only she never cuts up. She’s too steady, and you don’t approve of her — no, don’t deny it, sir. I know. And I know also that she can outrun your vaunted Washoe Ban. There! I challenge you! And furthermore, you may ride her yourself. You know what Ban can do; so you must ride Dolly and see for yourself what she can do.”

They proceeded to exchange the saddles on the horses, glad of the diversion and making the most of it.

“I’m glad I was born in California,” Lute remarked, as she swung astride of Ban. “It’s an outrage both to horse and woman to ride in a sidesaddle.”

“You look like a young Amazon,” the man said approvingly, his eyes passing tenderly over the girl as she swung the horse around.

“Are you ready?” she asked.

“All ready!”

“To the old mill,” she called, as the horses sprang forward. “That’s less than a mile.”

“To a finish?” he demanded.

She nodded, and the horses, feeling the urge of the reins, caught the spirit of the race. The dust rose in clouds behind as they tore along the level road. They swung around the bend, horses and riders tilted at sharp angles to the ground, and more than once the riders ducked low to escape the branches of outreaching and overhanging trees. They clattered over the small plank bridges, and thundered over the larger iron ones to an ominous clanking of loose rods.

They rode side by side, saving the animals for the rush at the finish, yet putting them at a pace that drew upon vitality and staying power. Curving around a clump of white oaks, the road straightened out before them for several hundred yards, at the end of which they could see the ruined mill.

“Now for it!” the girl cried.

She urged the horse by suddenly leaning forward with her body, at the same time, for an instant, letting the rein slack and touching the neck with her bridle hand. She began to draw away from the man.

“Touch her on the neck!” she cried to him.

With this, the mare pulled alongside and began gradually to pass the girl. Chris and Lute looked at each other for a moment, the mare still drawing ahead, so that Chris was compelled slowly to turn his head. The mill was a hundred yards away.

"Shall I give him the spurs?" Lute shouted.

The man nodded, and the girl drove the spurs in sharply and quickly, calling upon the horse for its utmost, but watched her own horse forge slowly ahead of her.

"Beaten by three lengths!" Lute beamed triumphantly, as they pulled into a walk. "Confess, sir, confess! You didn't think the old mare had it in her."

Lute leaned to the side and rested her hand for a moment on Dolly's wet neck.

"Ban's a sluggard alongside of her," Chris affirmed. "Dolly's all right, if she is in her Indian Summer."

Lute nodded approval. "That's a sweet way of putting it--Indian Summer. It just describes her. But she's not lazy. She has all the fire and none of the folly. She is very wise, what of her years."

"That accounts for it," Chris demurred. "Her folly passed with her youth. Many's the lively time she's given you."

"No," Lute answered. "I never knew her really to cut up. I think the only trouble she ever gave me was when I was training her to open gates. She was afraid when they swung back upon her — the animal's fear of the trap, perhaps. But she bravely got over it. And she never was vicious. She never bolted, nor bucked, nor cut up in all her life — never, not once."

The horses went on at a walk, still breathing heavily from their run. The road wound along the bottom of the valley, now and again crossing the stream. From either side rose the drowsy purr of mowing-machines, punctuated by occasional sharp cries of the men who were gathering the hay-crop. On the western side of the valley the hills rose green and dark, but the eastern side was already burned brown and tan by the sun.

"There is summer, here is spring," Lute said. "Oh, beautiful Sonoma Valley!"

Her eyes were glistening and her face was radiant with love of the land. Her gaze wandered on across orchard patches and sweeping vineyard stretches, seeking out the purple which seemed to hang like a dim smoke in the wrinkles of the hills and in the more distant canyon gorges. Far up, among the more rugged crests, where the steep slopes were covered with manzanita, she caught a glimpse of a clear space where the wild grass had not yet lost its green.

"Have you ever heard of the secret pasture?" she asked, her eyes still fixed on the remote green.

A snort of fear brought her eyes back to the man beside her. Dolly, upreared, with distended nostrils and wild eyes, was pawing the air madly with her fore legs. Chris threw himself forward against her neck to keep her from falling backward, and at the same time touched her with the spurs to compel her to drop her fore feet to the ground in order to obey the go-ahead impulse of the spurs.

"Why, Dolly, this is most remarkable," Lute began reprovingly.

But, to her surprise, the mare threw her head down, arched her back as she went up in the air, and, returning, struck the ground stiff-legged and bunched.

"A genuine buck!" Chris called out, and the next moment the mare was rising under him in a second buck.

Lute looked on, astounded at the unprecedented conduct of her mare, and admiring her lover's horsemanship. He was quite cool, and was himself evidently enjoying the performance. Again and again, half a dozen times, Dolly arched herself into the air and struck, stiffly bunched. Then she threw her head straight up and rose on her hind legs, pivoting about and striking with her fore feet. Lute whirled into safety the horse she was riding, and as she did so caught a glimpse of Dolly's eyes, with the look in them of blind brute madness, bulging until it seemed they must burst from her head. The faint pink in the white of the eyes was gone, replaced by a white that was like dull marble and that yet flashed as from some inner fire.

A faint cry of fear, suppressed in the instant of utterance, slipped past Lute's lips. One hind leg of the mare seemed to collapse, and for a moment the whole quivering body, upreared and perpendicular, swayed back and forth, and there was uncertainty as to whether it would fall forward or backward. The man, half-slipping sidewise from the saddle, so as to fall clear if the mare toppled backward, threw his weight to the front and alongside her neck. This overcame the dangerous teetering balance, and the mare struck the ground on her feet again.

But there was no let-up. Dolly straightened out so that the line of the face was almost a continuation of the line of the stretched neck; this position enabled her to master the bit, which she did by bolting straight ahead down the road.

For the first time Lute became really frightened. She spurred Washoe Ban in pursuit, but he could not hold his own with the mad mare, and dropped gradually behind. Lute saw Dolly check and rear in the air again, and caught up just as the mare made a second bolt. As Dolly dashed around a bend, she stopped suddenly, stiff-legged. Lute saw her lover torn out of the saddle, his thigh-grip broken by the sudden jerk. Though he had lost his seat, he had not been thrown, and as the mare dashed on Lute saw him clinging to the side of the horse, a hand in the mane and a leg across the saddle. With a quick cavort he regained his seat and proceeded to fight with the mare for control.

But Dolly swerved from the road and dashed down a grassy slope yellowed with innumerable mariposa lilies. An ancient fence at the bottom was no obstacle. She burst through as though it were filmy spider-web and disappeared in the underbrush. Lute followed unhesitatingly, putting Ban through the gap in the fence and plunging on into the thicket. She lay along his neck, closely, to escape the ripping and tearing of the trees and vines. She felt the horse drop down through leafy branches and into the cool gravel of a stream's bottom. From ahead came a splashing of water, and she caught a glimpse of Dolly, dashing up the small bank and into a clump of scrub-oaks, against the trunks of which she was trying to scrape off her rider.

Lute almost caught up amongst the trees, but was hopelessly outdistanced on the fallow field adjoining, across which the mare tore with a fine disregard for heavy ground and gopher-holes. When she turned at a sharp angle into the thicket-land beyond, Lute took the long diagonal, skirted the ticket, and reined in Ban at the other side. She had arrived first. From within the thicket she could hear a tremendous crashing of brush and branches. Then the mare burst through and into the open, falling to her knees, exhausted, on the soft earth. She arose and staggered forward, then came limply to a halt. She was in lather-sweat of fear, and stood trembling pitiably.

Chris was still on her back. His shirt was in ribbons. The backs of his hands were bruised and lacerated, while his face was streaming blood from a gash near the temple. Lute had controlled herself well, but now she was aware of a quick nausea and a trembling of weakness.

"Chris!" she said, so softly that it was almost a whisper. Then she sighed, "Thank God."

"Oh, I'm all right," he cried to her, putting into his voice all the heartiness he could command, which was not much, for he had himself been under no mean nervous strain.

He showed the reaction he was undergoing, when he swung down out of the saddle. He began with a brave muscular display as he lifted his leg over, but ended, on his feet, leaning against the limp Dolly for support. Lute flashed out of her saddle, and her arms were about him in an embrace of thankfulness.

"I know where there is a spring," she said, a moment later.

They left the horses standing untethered, and she led her lover into the cool recesses of the thicket to where crystal water bubbled from out the base of the mountain.

"What was that you said about Dolly's never cutting up?" he asked, when the blood had been stanched and his nerves and pulse-beats were normal again.

"I am stunned," Lute answered. "I cannot understand it. She never did anything like it in all her life. And all animals like you so — it's not because of that. Why, she is a child's horse. I was only a little girl when I first rode her, and to this day — "

"Well, this day she was everything but a child's horse," Chris broke in. "She was a devil. She tried to scrape me off against the trees, and to batter my brains out against the limbs. She tried all the lowest and narrowest places she could find. You should have seen her squeeze through. And did you see those bucks?"

Lute nodded.

"Regular bucking-bronco proposition."

"But what should she know about bucking?" Lute demanded. "She was never known to buck — never."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Some forgotten instinct, perhaps, long-lapsed and come to life again."

The girl rose to her feet determinedly. "I'm going to find out," she said.

They went back to the horses, where they subjected Dolly to a rigid examination that disclosed nothing. Hoofs, legs, bit, mouth, body — everything was as it should be. The saddle and saddle-cloth were innocent of bur or sticker; the back was smooth and unbroken. They searched for sign of snake-bite and sting of fly or insect, but found nothing.

“Whatever it was, it was subjective, that much is certain,” Chris said.

“Obsession,” Lute suggested.

They laughed together at the idea, for both were twentieth-century products, healthy-minded and normal, with souls that delighted in the butterfly-chase of ideals but that halted before the brink where superstition begins.

“An evil spirit,” Chris laughed; “but what evil have I done that I should be so punished?”

“You think too much of yourself, sir,” she rejoined. “It is more likely some evil, I don’t know what, that Dolly has done. You were a mere accident. I might have been on her back at the time, or Aunt Mildred, or anybody.”

As she talked, she took hold of the stirrup-strap and started to shorten it.

“What are you doing?” Chris demanded.

“I’m going to ride Dolly in.”

“No, you’re not,” he announced. “It would be bad discipline. After what has happened I am simply compelled to ride her in myself.”

But it was a very weak and very sick mare he rode, stumbling and halting, afflicted with nervous jerks and recurring muscular spasms — the aftermath of the tremendous orgasm through which she had passed.

“I feel like a book of verse and a hammock, after all that has happened,” Lute said, as they rode into camp.

It was a summer camp of city-tired people, pitched in a grove of towering redwoods through whose lofty boughs the sunshine trickled down, broken and subdued to soft light and cool shadow. Apart from the main camp were the kitchen and the servants’ tents; and midway between was the great dining hall, walled by the living redwood columns, where fresh whispers of air were always to be found, and where no canopy was needed to keep the sun away.

“Poor Dolly, she is really sick,” Lute said that evening, when they had returned from a last look at the mare. “But you weren’t hurt, Chris, and that’s enough for one small woman to be thankful for. I thought I knew, but I really did not know till to-day, how much you meant to me. I could hear only the plunging and struggle in the thicket. I could not see you, nor know how it went with you.”

“My thoughts were of you,” Chris answered, and felt the responsive pressure of the hand that rested on his arm.

She turned her face up to his and met his lips.

“Good night,” she said.

“Dear Lute, dear Lute,” he caressed her with his voice as she moved away among the shadows.

“Who’s going for the mail?” called a woman’s voice through the trees.

Lute closed the book from which they had been reading, and sighed.

“We weren’t going to ride to-day,” she said.

“Let me go,” Chris proposed. “You stay here. I’ll be down and back in no time.”

She shook her head.

“Who’s going for the mail?” the voice insisted.

“Where’s Martin?” Lute called, lifting; her voice in answer.

“I don’t know,” came the voice. “I think Robert took him along somewhere — horse-buying, or fishing, or I don’t know what. There’s really nobody left but Chris and you. Besides, it will give you an appetite for dinner. You’ve been lounging in the hammock all day. And Uncle Robert must have his newspaper.”

“All right, Aunty, we’re starting,” Lute called back, getting out of the hammock.

A few minutes later, in riding-clothes, they were saddling the horses. They rode out on to the county road, where blazed the afternoon sun, and turned toward Glen Ellen. The little town slept in the sun, and the somnolent storekeeper and postmaster scarcely kept his eyes open long enough to make up the packet of letters and newspapers.

An hour later Lute and Chris turned aside from the road and dipped along a cow-path down the high bank to water the horses, before going into camp.

“Dolly looks as though she’d forgotten all about yesterday,” Chris said, as they sat their horses knee-deep in the rushing water. “Look at her.”

The mare had raised her head and cocked her ears at the rustling of a quail in the thicket. Chris leaned over and rubbed around her ears. Dolly’s enjoyment was evident, and she drooped her head over against the shoulder of his own horse.

“Like a kitten,” was Lute’s comment.

“Yet I shall never be able wholly to trust her again,” Chris said. “Not after yesterday’s mad freak.”

“I have a feeling myself that you are safer on Ban,” Lute laughed. “It is strange. My trust in Dolly is as implicit as ever. I feel confident so far as I am concerned, but I should never care to see you on her back again. Now with Ban, my faith is still unshaken. Look at that neck! Isn’t he handsome! He’ll be as wise as Dolly when he is as old as she.”

“I feel the same way,” Chris laughed back. “Ban could never possibly betray me.”

They turned their horses out of the stream. Dolly stopped to brush a fly from her knee with her nose, and Ban urged past into the narrow way of the path. The space was too restricted to make him return, save with much trouble, and Chris allowed him to go on. Lute, riding behind, dwelt with her eyes upon her lover’s back, pleasuring in the lines of the bare neck and the sweep out to the muscular shoulders.

Suddenly she reined in her horse. She could do nothing but look, so brief was the duration of the happening. Beneath and above was the almost perpendicular bank. The path itself was barely wide enough for footing. Yet Washoe Ban, whirling and rearing at the same time, toppled for a moment in the air and fell backward off the path.

So unexpected and so quick was it, that the man was involved in the fall. There had been no time for him to throw himself to the path. He was falling ere he knew it, and he did the only thing possible — slipped the stirrups and threw his body into the air, to the side, and at the same time down. It was twelve feet to the rocks below. He maintained an upright position, his head up and his eyes fixed on the horse above him and falling upon him.

Chris struck like a cat, on his feet, on the instant making a leap to the side. The next instant Ban crashed down beside him. The animal struggled little, but sounded the terrible cry that horses sometimes sound when they have received mortal hurt. He had struck almost squarely on his back, and in that position he remained, his head twisted partly under, his hind legs relaxed and motionless, his fore legs futilely striking the air.

Chris looked up reassuringly.

“I am getting used to it,” Lute smiled down to him. “Of course I need not ask if you are hurt. Can I do anything?”

He smiled back and went over to the fallen beast, letting go the girths of the saddle and getting the head straightened out.

“I thought so,” he said, after a cursory examination. “I thought so at the time. Did you hear that sort of crunching snap?”

She shuddered.

"Well, that was the punctuation of life, the final period dropped at the end of Ban's usefulness." He started around to come up by the path. "I've been astride of Ban for the last time. Let us go home."

At the top of the bank Chris turned and looked down.

"Good-by, Washoe Ban!" he called out. "Good-by, old fellow."

The animal was struggling to lift its head. There were tears in Chris's eyes as he turned abruptly away, and tears In Lute's eyes as they met his. She was silent in her sympathy, though the pressure of her hand was firm in his as he walked beside her horse down the dusty road.

"It was done deliberately," Chris burst forth suddenly. "There was no warning. He deliberately flung himself over backward."

"There was no warning," Lute concurred. "I was looking. I saw him. He whirled and threw himself at the same time, just as if you had done it yourself, with a tremendous jerk and backward pull on the bit."

"It was not my hand, I swear it. I was not even thinking of him. He was going up with a fairly loose rein, as a matter of course."

"I should have seen it, had you done it," Lute said. "But it was all done before you had a chance to do anything. It was not your hand, not even your unconscious hand."

"Then it was some invisible hand, reaching out from I don't know where."

He looked up whimsically at the sky and smiled at the conceit.

Martin stepped forward to receive Dolly, when they came into the stable end of the grove, but his face expressed no surprise at sight of Chris coming in on foot. Chris lingered behind Lute for moment.

"Can you shoot a horse?" he asked.

The groom nodded, then added, "Yes, sir," with a second and deeper nod.

"How do you do it?"

"Draw a line from the eyes to the ears — I mean the opposite ears, sir. And where the lines cross — "

"That will do," Chris interrupted. "You know the watering place at: the second bend. You'll find Ban there with a broken back."

"Oh, here you are, sir. I have been looking for you everywhere since dinner. You are wanted immediately."

Chris tossed his cigar away, then went over and pressed his foot on its glowing; fire.

“You haven’t told anybody about it? — Ban?” he queried.

Lute shook her head. “They’ll learn soon enough. Martin will mention it to Uncle Robert tomorrow.”

“But don’t feel too bad about it,” she said, after a moment’s pause, slipping her hand into his.

“He was my colt,” he said. “Nobody has ridden him but you. I broke him myself. I knew him from the time he was born. I knew every bit of him, every trick, every caper, and I would have staked my life that it was impossible for him to do a thing like this. There was no warning, no fighting for the bit, no previous unruliness. I have been thinking it over. He didn’t fight for the bit, for that matter. He wasn’t unruly, nor disobedient. There wasn’t time. It was an impulse, and he acted upon it like lightning. I am astounded now at the swiftness with which it took place. Inside the first second we were over the edge and falling.

“It was deliberate — deliberate suicide. And attempted murder. It was a trap. I was the victim. He had me, and he threw himself over with me. Yet he did not hate me. He loved me . . . as much as it is possible for a horse to love. I am confounded. I cannot understand it any more than you can understand Dolly’s behavior yesterday.”

“But horses go insane, Chris,” Lute said. “You know that. It’s merely coincidence that two horses in two days should have spells under you.”

“That’s the only explanation,” he answered, starting off with her. “But why am I wanted urgently?”

“Planchette.”

“Oh, I remember. It will be a new experience to me. Somehow I missed it when it was all the rage long ago.”

“So did all of us,” Lute replied, “except Mrs. Grantly. It is her favorite phantom, it seems.”

“A weird little thing,” he remarked. “Bundle of nerves and black eyes. I’ll wager she doesn’t weigh ninety pounds, and most of that’s magnetism.”

“Positively uncanny . . . at times.” Lute shivered involuntarily. “She gives me the creeps.”

“Contact of the healthy with the morbid,” he explained dryly. “You will notice it is the healthy that always has the creeps. The morbid never has the creeps. It gives the. That’s its function. Where did you people pick her up, anyway?”

“I don’t know — yes, I do, too. Aunt Mildred met her in Boston, I think — oh, I don’t know. At any rate, Mrs. Grantly came to California, and of course had to visit Aunt Mildred. You know the open house we keep.

They halted where a passageway between two great redwood trunks gave entrance to the dining room. Above, through lacing boughs, could be seen the stars. Candles lighted the tree-columned space. About the table, examining the Planchette contrivance, were four persons. Chris’s gaze roved over them, and he was aware of a guilty sorrow-pang as he paused for a moment on Lute’s Aunt Mildred and Uncle Robert, mellow with ripe middle age and genial with the gentle buffets life had dealt them. He passed amusedly over the black-eyed, frail-bodied Mrs. Grantly, and halted on the fourth person, a portly, massive-headed man, whose gray temples belied the youthful solidity of his face.

“Who’s that?” Chris whispered.

“A Mr. Barton. The train was late. That’s why you didn’t see him at dinner. He’s only a capitalist — water-power-long-distance-electricity-transmitter, or something like that.”

“Doesn’t look as though he could give an ox points on imagination.”

“He can’t. He inherited his money. But he knows enough to hold on to it and hire other men’s brains. He is very conservative.”

“That is to be expected,” was Chris’s comment. His gaze went back to the man and woman who had been father and mother to the girl beside him. “Do you know,” he said, “it came to me with a shock yesterday when you told me that they had turned against me and that I was scarcely tolerated. I met them afterwards, last evening, guiltily, in fear and trembling — and to-day, too. And yet I could see no difference from of old.”

“Dear man,” Lute sighed. “Hospitality is as natural to them as the act of breathing. But it isn’t that, after all. It is all genuine in their dear hearts. No matter how severe the censure they put upon you when you are absent, the moment they are with you they soften and are all kindness and warmth. As soon as their eyes rest on you, affection and love come bubbling up. You are so made. Every animal likes you. All people like you. They can’t help it. You can’t help it. You are universally lovable, and the best of it is that you don’t know it. You don’t know it now. Even as I tell it to you, you don’t realize it, you won’t realize it — and that very incapacity to realize it is one of the reasons why you are so loved. You are incredulous now, and you shake your head; but I know, who am your slave, as all people know, for they likewise are your slaves.

"Why, in a minute we shall go in and join them. Mark the affection, almost maternal, that will well up in Aunt Mildred's eyes. Listen to the tones of Uncle Robert's voice when he says, 'Well, Chris, my boy?' Watch Mrs. Grantly melt, literally melt, like a dewdrop in the sun.

"Take Mr. Barton, there. You have never seen him before. Why, you will invite him out to smoke a cigar with you when the rest of us have gone to bed — you, a mere nobody, and he a man of many millions, a man of power, a man obtuse and stupid like the ox; and he will follow you about, smoking; the cigar, like a little dog, your little dog, trotting at your back. He will not know he is doing it, but he will be doing it just the same. Don't I know, Chris? Oh, I have watched you, watched you, so often, and loved you for it, and loved you again for it, because you were so delightfully and blindly unaware of what you were doing."

"I'm almost bursting with vanity from listening to you," he laughed, passing his arm around her and drawing her against him.

"Yes," she whispered, "and in this very moment, when you are laughing at all that I have said, you, the feel of you, your soul, — call it what you will, it is you, — is calling for all the love that is in me."

She leaned more closely against him, and sighed as with fatigue. He breathed a kiss into her hair and held her with firm tenderness.

Aunt Mildred stirred briskly and looked up from the Planchette board.

"Come, let us begin," she said. "It will soon grow chilly. Robert, where are those children?"

"Here we are," Lute called out, disengaging herself.

"Now for a bundle of creeps," Chris whispered, as they started in.

Lute's prophecy of the manner in which her lover would be received was realized. Mrs. Grantly, unreal, unhealthy, scintillant with frigid magnetism, warmed and melted as though of truth she were dew and he sun. Mr. Barton beamed broadly upon him, and was colossally gracious. Aunt Mildred greeted him with a glow of fondness and motherly kindness, while Uncle Robert genially and heartily demanded, "Well, Chris, my boy, and what of the riding?"

But Aunt Mildred drew her shawl more closely around her and hastened them to the business in hand. On the table was a sheet of paper. On the paper, rifling on three supports, was a small triangular board. Two of the supports were easily moving casters. The third support, placed at the apex of the triangle, was a lead pencil.

"Who's first?" Uncle Robert demanded.

There was a moment's hesitancy, then Aunt Mildred placed her hand on the board, and said: "Some one has always to be the fool for the delectation of the rest."

"Brave woman," applauded her husband. "Now, Mrs. Grantly, do your worst."

"I?" that lady queried. "I do nothing. The power, or whatever you care to think it, is outside of me, as it is outside of all of you. As to what that power is, I will not dare to say. There is such a power. I have had evidences of it. And you will undoubtedly have evidences of it. Now please be quiet, everybody. Touch the board very lightly, but firmly, Mrs. Story; but do nothing of your own volition."

Aunt Mildred nodded, and stood with her hand on Planchette; while the rest formed about her in a silent and expectant circle. But nothing happened. The minutes ticked away, and Planchette remained motionless.

"Be patient," Mrs. Grantly counselled. "Do not struggle against any influences you may feel working on you. But do not do anything yourself. The influence will take care of that. You will feel impelled to do things, and such impulses will be practically irresistible."

"I wish the influence would hurry up," Aunt Mildred protested at the end of five motionless minutes.

"Just a little longer, Mrs. Story, just a little longer," Mrs. Grantly said soothingly.

Suddenly Aunt Mildred's hand began to twitch into movement. A mild concern showed in her face as she observed the movement of her hand and heard the scratching of the pencil-point at the apex of Planchette.

For another five minutes this continued, when Aunt Mildred withdrew her hand with an effort, and said, with a nervous laugh:

"I don't know whether i did it myself or not. I do know that I was growing nervous, standing there like a psychic fool with all your solemn faces turned upon me."

"Hen-scratches," was Uncle Robert's judgement, when he looked over the paper upon which she had scrawled.

"Quite illegible," was Mrs. Grantly's dictum. "It does not resemble writing at all. The influences have not got to working yet. Do you try it, Mr.

Barton."

That gentleman stepped forward, ponderously willing to please, and placed his hand on the board. And for ten solid, stolid minutes he stood there, motionless, like a statue, the frozen personification of the commercial age. Uncle Robert's face began to work. He blinked, stiffened his mouth, uttered suppressed, throaty sounds, deep down; finally he snorted, lost his self-control, and broke out in a roar of laughter. All joined in this merriment, including Mrs. Grantly. Mr. Barton laughed with them, but he was vaguely nettled.

"You try it, Story," he said.

Uncle Robert, still laughing, and urged on by Lute and his wife, took the board. Suddenly his face sobered. His hand had begun to move, and the pencil could be heard scratching across the paper.

"By George!" he muttered. "That's curious. Look at it. I'm not doing it. I know I'm not doing it. look at that hand go! Just look at it!"

"Now, Robert, none of your ridiculousness," his wife warned him.

"I tell you I'm not doing it," he replied indignantly. "The force has got hold of me. Ask Mrs. Grantly. Tell her to make it stop, if you want it to stop. I can't stop it. By George! look at that flourish. I didn't do that. I never wrote a flourish in my life."

"Do try to be serious," Mrs. Grantly warned them. "An atmosphere of levity does not conduce to the best operation of Planchette."

"There, that will do, I guess," Uncle Robert said as he took his hand away. "Now let's see."

He bent over and adjusted his glasses. "It's handwriting at any rate, and that's better than the rest of you did. Here, Lute, your eyes are young."

"Oh, what flourishes!" Lute exclaimed, as she looked at the paper. "And look there, there are two different handwritings."

She began to read: "This is the first lecture. Concentrate on this sentence: 'I am a positive spirit and not negative to any condition.' Then follow with concentration on positive love. After that peace and harmony will vibrate through and around your body. Your soul — The other writing breaks right in. This is the way it goes: Bullfrog 95, Dixie 16, Golden Anchor 65, Gold Mountain 13, Jim Butler 70, Jumbo 75, North Star 42, Rescue 7, Black Butte 75, Brown Hope 16, Iron Top 3."

"Iron Top's pretty low," Mr. Barton murmured.

"Robert, you've been dabbling again!" Aunt Mildred cried accusingly.

"No, I've not," he denied. "I only read the quotations. But how the devil — I beg your pardon — they got there on that piece of paper I'd like to know."

"Your subconscious mind," Chris suggested. "You read the quotations in to-day's paper."

"No, I didn't; but last week I glanced over the column."

"A day or a year is all the same in the subconscious mind," said Mrs. Grantly. "The subconscious mind never forgets. But I am not saying that this is due to the subconscious mind. I refuse to state to what I think it is due."

"But how about that other stuff?" Uncle Robert demanded. "Sounds like what I'd think Christian Science ought to sound like."

"Or theosophy," Aunt Mildred volunteered. "Some message to a neophyte."

"Go on, read the rest," her husband commanded.

"This puts you in touch with the mightier spirits," Lute read. "You shall become one with us, and your name shall be 'Arya,' and you shall — Conqueror 20, Empire 12, Columbia Mountain 18, Midway 140 — and, and that is all. Oh, no! here's a last flourish, Arya, from Kandor — that must surely be the Mahatma."

"I'd like to have you explain that theosophy stuff on the basis of the subconscious mind, Chris," Uncle Robert challenged.

Chris shrugged his shoulders. "No explanation. You must have got a message intended for some one else."

"Lines were crossed, eh?" Uncle Robert chuckled. "Multiplex spiritual wireless telegraphy, I'd call it."

"It IS nonsense," Mrs. Grantly said. "I never knew Planchette to behave so outrageously. There are disturbing influences at work. I felt them from the first. Perhaps it is because you are all making too much fun of it. You are too hilarious."

"A certain befitting gravity should grace the occasion," Chris agreed, placing his hand on Planchette. "Let me try. And not one of you must laugh or giggle, or even think 'laugh' or 'giggle.' And if you dare to snort, even once, Uncle Robert, there is no telling what occult vengeance may be wreaked upon you."

"I'll be good," Uncle Robert rejoined. "But if I really must snort, may I silently slip away?"

Chris nodded. His hand had already begun to work. There had been no preliminary twitchings nor tentative essays at writing. At once his hand had started off, and Planchette was moving swiftly and smoothly across the paper.

"Look at him," Lute whispered to her aunt. "See how white he is."

Chris betrayed disturbance at the sound of her voice, and thereafter silence was maintained. Only could be heard the steady scratching of the pencil. Suddenly, as though it had been stung, he jerked his hand away. With a sigh and a yawn he stepped back from the table, then glanced with the curiosity of a newly awakened man at their faces.

"I think I wrote something," he said.

"I should say you did," Mrs. Grantly remarked with satisfaction, holding up the sheet of paper and glancing at it.

"Read it aloud," Uncle Robert said.

"Here it is, then. It begins with 'beware' written three times, and in much larger characters than the rest of the writing. BEWARE! BEWARE! BEWARE! Chris Dunbar, I intend to destroy you. I have already made two attempts upon your life, and failed. I shall yet succeed. So sure am I that I shall succeed that I dare to tell you. I do not need to tell you why. In your own heart you know. The wrong you are doing — And here it abruptly ends."

Mrs. Grantly laid the paper down on the table and looked at Chris, who had already become the centre of all eyes, and who was yawning as from an overpowering drowsiness.

"Quite a sanguinary turn, I should say," Uncle Robert remarked.

"I have already made two attempts upon your life," Mrs. Grantly read from the paper, which she was going over a second time.

"0n my life?" Chris demanded between yawns. "Why, my life hasn't been attempted even once. My! I am sleepy!"

"Ah, my boy, you are thinking of flesh-and-blood men," Uncle Robert laughed. "But this is a spirit. Your life has been attempted by unseen things. Most likely ghostly hands have tried to throttle you in your sleep."

"Oh, Chris!" Lute cried impulsively. "This afternoon! The hand you said must have seized your rein!"

"But I was joking," he objected.

"Nevertheless . . . " Lute left her thought unspoken.

Mrs. Grantly had become keen on the scent. “What was that about this afternoon? Was your life in danger?”

Chris’s drowsiness had disappeared. “I’m becoming interested myself,” he acknowledged. “We haven’t said anything about it. Ban broke his back this afternoon. He threw himself off the bank, and I ran the risk of being caught underneath.”

“I wonder, I wonder,” Mrs. Grantly communed aloud. “There is something in this. . . . It is a warning . . . Ah! You were hurt yesterday riding Miss Story’s horse! That makes the two attempts!”

She looked triumphantly at them. Planchette had been vindicated.

“Nonsense,” laughed Uncle Robert, but with a slight hint of irritation in his manner. “Such things do not happen these days. This is the twentieth century, my dear madam. The thing, at the very latest, smacks of mediaevalism.”

“I have had such wonderful tests with Planchette,” Mrs. Grantly began, then broke off suddenly to go to the table and place her hand on the board.

“Who are you?” she asked. “What is your name?”

The board immediately began to write. By this time all heads, with the exception of Mr. Barton’s, were bent over the table and following the pencil.

“It’s Dick,” Aunt Mildred cried, a note of the mildly hysterical in her voice.

Her husband straightened up, his face for the first time grave.

“It’s Dick’s signature,” he said. “I’d know his fist in a thousand.”

“‘Dick Curtis,’“ Mrs. Grantly read aloud. “Who is Dick Curtis?”

“By Jove, that’s remarkable!” Mr. Barton broke in. “The handwriting in both instances is the same. Clever, I should say, really clever,” he added admiringly.

“Let me see,” Uncle Robert demanded, taking the paper and examining it. “Yes, it is Dick’s handwriting.”

“But who is Dick?” Mrs. Grantly insisted. “Who is this Dick Curtis?”

“Dick Curtis, why, he was Captain Richard Curtis,” Uncle Robert answered.

“He was Lute’s father,” Aunt Mildred supplemented. “Lute took our name. She never saw him. He died when she was a few weeks old. He was my brother.”

"Remarkable, most remarkable." Mrs. Grantly was revolving the message in her mind. "There were two attempts on Mr. Dunbar's life. The subconscious mind cannot explain that, for none of us knew of the accident to-day."

"I knew," Chris answered, "and it was I that operated Planchette. The explanation is simple."

"But the handwriting," interposed Mr. Barton. "What you wrote and what Mrs. Grantly wrote are identical."

Chris bent over and compared the handwriting.

"Besides," Mrs. Grantly cried, "Mr. Story recognizes the handwriting."

She looked at him for verification.

He nodded his head. "Yes, it is Dick's fist. I'll swear to that."

But to Lute had come a visioning;. While the rest argued pro and con and the air was filled with phrases, — "psychic phenomena," "self-hypnotism," "residuum of unexplained truth," and "spiritism," — she was reviving mentally the girlhood pictures she had conjured of this soldier-father she had never seen. She possessed his sword, there were several old-fashioned daguerreotypes, there was much that had been said of him, stories told of him — and all this had constituted the material out of which she had builded him in her childhood fancy.

"There is the possibility of one mind unconsciously suggesting to another mind," Mrs. Grantly was saying; but through Lute's mind was trooping her father on his great roan war-horse. Now he was leading his men. She saw him on lonely scouts, or in the midst of the yelling, Indians at Salt Meadows, when of his command he returned with one man in ten. And in the picture she had of him, in the physical semblance she had made of him, was reflected his spiritual nature, reflected by her worshipful artistry in form and feature and expression — his bravery, his quick temper, his impulsive championship, his madness of wrath in a righteous cause, his warm generosity and swift forgiveness, and his chivalry that epitomized codes and ideals primitive as the days of knighthood. And first, last, and always, dominating all, she saw in the face of him the hot passion and quickness of deed that had earned for him the name "Fighting Dick Curtis."

"Let me put it to the test," she heard Mrs. Grantly saying;. "Let Miss Story try Planchette. There may be a further message."

"No, no, I beg of you," Aunt Mildred interposed. "It is too uncanny. It surely is wrong to tamper with the dead. Besides, I am nervous. Or, better, let me go to bed, leaving you to go on with your experiments. That will be the best way, and you can tell me in the morning." Mingled with the "Good-nights," were half-hearted protests from Mrs. Grantly, as Aunt Mildred withdrew.

"Robert can return," she called back, "as soon as he has seen me to my tent."

"It would be a shame to give it up now," Mrs. Grantly said. "There is no telling what we are on the verge of. Won't you try it, Miss Story?"

Lute obeyed, but when she placed her hand on the board she was conscious of a vague and nameless fear at this toying with the supernatural. She was twentieth-century, and the thing in essence, as her uncle had said, was mediaeval. Yet she could not shake off the instinctive fear that arose in her — man's inheritance from the wild and howling ages when his hairy, apelike prototype was afraid of the dark and personified the elements into things of fear.

But as the mysterious influence seized her hand and sent it meriting across the paper, all the unusual passed out of the situation and she was unaware of more than a feeble curiosity. For she was intent on another visioning — this time of her mother, who was also unremembered in the flesh. Not sharp and vivid like that of her father, but dim and nebulous was the picture she shaped of her mother — a saint's head in an aureole of sweetness and goodness and meekness, and withal, shot through with a hint of reposeful determination, of will, stubborn and unobtrusive, that in life had expressed itself mainly in resignation.

Lute's hand had ceased moving, and Mrs. Grantly was already reading the message that had been written.

"It is a different handwriting," she said. "A woman's hand. 'Martha,' it is signed. Who is Martha?"

Lute was not surprised. "It is my mother," she said simply. "What does she say?"

She had not been made sleepy, as Chris had; but the keen edge of her vitality had been blunted, and she was experiencing a sweet and pleasing lassitude. And while the message was being read, in her eyes persisted the vision of her mother.

"Dear child," Mrs. Grantly read, "do not mind him. He was ever quick of speech and rash. Be no niggard with your love. Love cannot hurt you. To deny love is to sin. Obey your heart and you can do no wrong. Obey worldly considerations, obey pride, obey those that prompt you against your heart's prompting, and you do sin. Do not mind your father. He is angry now, as was his way in the earth-life; but he will come to see the wisdom of my counsel, for this, too, was his way in the earth-life. Love, my child, and love well. — Martha."

"Let me see it," Lute cried, seizing the paper and devouring the handwriting with her eyes. She was thrilling with unexpressed love for the mother she had never seen, and this written speech from the grave seemed to give more tangibility to her having ever existed, than did the vision of her.

"This IS remarkable," Mrs. Grantly was reiterating. "There was never anything like it. Think of it, my dear, both your father and mother here with us tonight."

Lute shivered. The lassitude was gone, and she was her natural self again, vibrant with the instinctive fear of things unseen. And it was offensive to her mind that, real or illusion, the presence or the memorized existences of her father and mother should he touched by these two persons who were practically strangers — Mrs. Grantly, unhealthy and morbid, and Mr. Barton, stolid and stupid with a grossness both of the flesh and the spirit. And it further seemed a trespass that these strangers should thus enter into the intimacy between her and Chris.

She could hear the steps of her uncle approaching, and the situation flashed upon her, luminous and clear. She hurriedly folded the sheet of paper and thrust it into her bosom.

"Don't say anything to him about this second message, Mrs. Grantly, please, and Mr. Barton. Nor to Aunt Mildred. It would only cause them irritation and needless anxiety."

In her mind there was also the desire to protect her lover, for she knew that the strain of his present standing with her aunt and uncle would be added to, unconsciously in their minds, by the weird message of Planchette.

"And please don't let us have any more Planchette," Lute continued hastily. "Let us forget all the nonsense that has occurred."

"'Nonsense,' my dear child?" Mrs. Grantly was indignantly protesting when Uncle Robert strode into the circle.

"Hello!" he demanded. "What's being done?"

"Too late," Lute answered lightly. "No more stock quotations for you. Planchette is adjourned, and we're just winding up the discussion of the theory of it. Do you know how late it is?"

"Well, what did you do last night after we left?"

"Oh, took a stroll," Chris answered.

Lute's eyes were quizzical as she asked with a tentativeness that was palpably assumed, "With — a — with Mr. Barton?"

"Why, yes."

"And a smoke?"

"Yes; and now what's it all about?"

Lute broke into merry laughter. "Just as I told you that you would do. Am I not a prophet? But I knew before I saw you that my forecast had come true. I have just left Mr. Barton, and I knew he had walked with you last night, for he is vowing by all his fetishes and idols that you are a perfectly splendid young man. I could see it with my eyes shut. The Chris Dunbar glamour has fallen upon him. But I have not finished the catechism by any means. Where have you been all morning?"

"Where I am going to take you this afternoon."

"You plan well without knowing my wishes."

"I knew well what your wishes are. It is to see a horse I have found."

Her voice betrayed her delight, as she cried, "Oh, good!"

"He is a beauty," Chris said.

But her face had suddenly gone grave, and apprehension brooded in her eyes.

"He's called Comanche," Chris went on. "A beauty, a regular beauty, the perfect type of the Californian cow-pony. And his lines — why, what's the matter?"

Don't let us ride any more," Lute said, "at least for a while. Really, I think I am a tiny bit tired of it, too."

He was looking at her in astonishment, and she was bravely meeting his eyes.

"I see hearses and flowers for you," he began, "and a funeral oration; I see the end of the world, and the stars falling out of the sky, and the heavens rolling up as a scroll; I see the living and the dead gathered together for the final judgement, the sheep and the goats, the lambs and the rams and all the rest of it, the white-robed saints, the sound of golden harps, and the lost souls howling as they fall into the Pit — all this I see on the day that you, Lute Story, no longer care to ride a horse. A horse, Lute! a horse!"

"For a while, at least," she pleaded.

“Ridiculous!” he cried. “What’s the matter? Aren’t you well? — you who are always so abominably and adorably well!”

“No, it’s not that,” she answered. “I know it is ridiculous, Chris, I know it, but the doubt will arise. I cannot help it. You always say I am so sanely rooted to the earth and reality and all that, but — perhaps it’s superstition, I don’t know — but the whole occurrence, the messages of Planchette, the possibility of my father’s hand, I know not how, reaching, out to Ban’s rein and hurling him and you to death, the correspondence between my father’s statement that he has twice attempted your life and the fact that in the last two days your life has twice been endangered by horses--my father was a great horseman — all this, I say, causes the doubt to arise in my mind. What if there be something in it? I am not so sure. Science may be too dogmatic in its denial of the unseen. The forces of the unseen, of the spirit, may well be too subtle, too sublimated, for science to lay hold of, and recognize, and formulate. Don’t you see, Chris, that there is rationality in the very doubt? It may be a very small doubt — oh, so small; but I love you too much to run even that slight risk. Besides, I am a woman, and that should in itself fully account for my predisposition toward superstition.

“Yes, yes, I know, call it unreality. But I’ve heard you paradoxing upon the reality of the unreal — the reality of delusion to the mind that is sick. And so with me, if you will; it is delusion and unreal, but to me, constituted as I am, it is very real —-is real as a nightmare is real, in the throes of it, before one awakes.”

“The most logical argument for illogic I have ever heard,” Chris smiled. “It is a good gaming proposition, at any rate. You manage to embrace more chances in your philosophy than do I in mine. It reminds me of Sam — the gardener you had a couple of years ago. I overheard him and Martin arguing in the stable. You know what a bigoted atheist Martin is. Well, Martin had deluged Sam with floods of logic. Sam pondered awhile, and then he said, ‘Foh a fack, Mis’ Martin, you jis’ tawk like a house afire; but you ain’t got de show I has.’ ‘How’s that?’ Martin asked. ‘Well, you see, Mis’ Martin, you has one chance to mah two.’ ‘I don’t see it,’ Martin said. ‘Mis’ Martin, it’s dis way. You has jis’ de chance, lak you say, to become worms foh de fruitification of de cabbage garden. But I’s got de chance to lif’ mah voice to de glory of de Lawd as I go paddin’ dem golden streets — along ‘ith de chance to be jis’ worms along ‘ith you, Mis’ Martin.’“

"You refuse to take me seriously," Lute said, when she had laughed her appreciation.

"How can I take that Planchette rigmarole seriously?" he asked.

"You don't explain it — the handwriting of my father, which Uncle Robert recognized — oh, the whole thing, you don't explain it."

"I don't know all the mysteries of mind," Chris answered. "But I believe such phenomena will all yield to scientific explanation in the not distant future."

"Just the same, I have a sneaking desire to find out some more from Planchette," Lute confessed. "The board is still down in the dining room. We could try it now, you and I, and no one would know."

Chris caught her hand, crying: "Come on! It will be a lark."

Hand in hand they ran down the path to the tree-pillared room.

"The camp is deserted," Lute said, as she placed Planchette on the table. "Mrs. Grantly and Aunt Mildred are lying down, and Mr. Barton has gone off with Uncle Robert. There is nobody to disturb us." She placed her hand on the board. "Now begin."

For a few minutes nothing happened. Chris started to speak, but she hushed him to silence. The preliminary twitchings had appeared in her hand and arm. Then the pencil began to write. They read the message, word by word, as it was written:

There is wisdom greater than the wisdom of reason. Love proceeds not out of the dry-as-dust way of the mind. Love is of the heart, and is beyond all reason, and logic, and philosophy. Trust your own heart, my daughter. And if your heart bids you have faith in your lover, then laugh at the mind and its cold wisdom, and obey your heart, and have faith in your lover. — Martha.

"But that whole message is the dictate of your own heart," Chris cried. "Don't you see, Lute? The thought is your very own, and your subconscious mind has expressed it there on the paper."

"But there is one thing I don't see," she objected.

"And that?"

"Is the handwriting. Look at it. It does not resemble mine at all. It is mincing, it is old-fashioned, it is the old-fashioned feminine of a generation ago."

"But you don't mean to tell me that you really believe that this is a message from the dead?" he interrupted.

“I don’t know, Chris,” she wavered. “I am sure I don’t know.”

“It is absurd!” he cried. “These are cobwebs of fancy. When one dies, he is dead. He is dust. He goes to the worms, as Martin says. The dead? I laugh at the dead. They do not exist. They are not. I defy the powers of the grave, the men dead and dust and gone!

“And what have you to say to that?” he challenged, placing his hand on Planchette.

On the instant his hand began to write. Both were startled by the suddenness of it. The message was brief:

BEWARE! BEWARE! BEWARE!

He was distinctly sobered, but he laughed. “It is like a miracle play. Death we have, speaking to us from the grave. But Good Deeds, where art thou? And Kindred? and Joy? and Household Goods? and Friendship? and all the goodly company?”

But Lute did not share his bravado. Her fright showed itself in her face. She laid her trembling hand on his arm.

“Oh, Chris, let us stop. I am sorry we began it. Let us leave the quiet dead to their rest. It is wrong. It must be wrong. I confess I am affected by it. I cannot help it. As my body is trembling, so is my soul. This speech of the grave, this dead man reaching out from the mould of a generation to protect me from you. There is reason in it. There is the living mystery that prevents you from marrying me. Were my father alive, he would protect me from you. Dead, he still strives to protect me. His hands, his ghostly hands, are against your life!”

“Do be calm,” Chris said soothingly. “Listen to me. It is all a lark. We are playing with the subjective forces of our own being, with phenomena which science has not yet explained, that is all. Psychology is so young a science. The subconscious mind has just been discovered, one might say. It is all mystery as yet; the laws of it are yet to he formulated. This is simply unexplained phenomena. But that is no reason that we should immediately account for it by labelling it spiritism. As yet we do not know, that is all. As for Planchette — ”

He abruptly ceased, for at that moment, to enforce his remark, he had placed his hand on Planchette, and at that moment his hand had been seized, as by a paroxysm, and sent dashing, willy-nilly, across the paper, writing as the hand of an angry person would write.

"No, I don't care for any more of it," Lute said, when the message was completed. "It is like witnessing a fight between you and my father in the flesh. There is the savor in it of struggle and blows."

She pointed out a sentence that read: "You cannot escape me nor the just punishment that is yours!"

"Perhaps I visualize too vividly for my own comfort, for I can see his hands at your throat. I know that he is, as you say, dead and dust, but for all that, I can see him as a man that is alive and walks the earth; I see the anger in his face, the anger and the vengeance, and I see it all directed against you."

She crumpled up the scrawled sheets of paper, and put Planchette away.

"We won't bother with it any more," Chris said. "I didn't think it would affect you so strongly. But it's all subjective, I'm sure, with possibly a bit of suggestion thrown in--that and nothing more. And the whole strain of our situation has made conditions unusually favorable for striking phenomena."

"And about our situation," Lute said, as they went slowly up the path they had run down. " What we are to do, I don't know. Are we to go on, as we have gone on? What is best? Have you thought of anything?"

He debated for a few steps. "I have thought of telling your uncle and aunt."

"What you couldn't tell me?" she asked quickly.

"No," he answered slowly; "but just as much as I have told you. I have no right to tell them more than I have told you."

This time it was she that debated. "No, don't tell them," she said finally. "They wouldn't understand. I don't understand, for that matter, but I have faith in you, and in the nature of things they are not capable of this same Implicit faith. You raise up before me a mystery that prevents our marriage, and I believe you; but they could not believe you without doubts arising as to the wrong and ill-nature of the mystery. Besides, it would but make their anxieties greater."

"I should go away, I know I should go away," he said, half under his breath. "And I can. I am no weakling. Because I have failed to remain away once, is no reason that I shall fail again."

She caught her breath with a quick gasp. "It is like a bereavement to hear you speak of going away and remaining away. I should never see you again. It is too terrible. And do not reproach yourself for weakness. It is I who am to blame. It is I who prevented you from remaining away before, I know. I wanted you so. I want you so.

"There is nothing to be done, Chris, nothing to be done but to go on with it and let it work itself out somehow. That is one thing we are sure of: it will work out somehow."

"But it would be easier if I went away," he suggested.

"I am happier when you are here."

"The cruelty of circumstance," he muttered savagely.

"Go or stay — that will be part of the working out. But I do not want you to go, Chris; you know that. And now no more about it. Talk cannot mend it. Let us never mention it again — unless . . . unless some time, some wonderful, happy time, you can come to me and say: 'Lute, all is well with me. The mystery no longer binds me. I am free.' Until that time let us bury it, along with Planchette and all the rest, and make the most of the little that is given us.

"And now, to show you how prepared I am to make the most of that little, I am even ready to go with you this afternoon to see the horse — though I wish you wouldn't ride any more . . . for a few days, anyway, or for a week. What did you say was his name?"

"Comanche," he answered. "I know you will like him."

* * * * * * *

Chris lay on his back, his head propped by the bare jutting wall of stone, his gaze attentively directed across the canyon to the opposing tree-covered slope. There was a sound of crashing through underbrush, the ringing of steel-shod hoofs on stone, and an occasional and mossy descent of a dislodged boulder that bounded from the hill and fetched up with a final splash in the torrent that rushed over a wild chaos of rocks beneath him. Now and again he caught glimpses, framed in green foliage, of the golden brown of Lute's corduroy riding-habit and of the bay horse that moved beneath her.

She rode out into an open space where a loose earth-slide denied lodgement to trees and grass. She halted the horse at the brink of the slide and glanced down it with a measuring eye. Forty feet beneath, the slide terminated in a small, firm-surfaced terrace, the banked accumulation of fallen earth and gravel.

"It's a good test," she called across the canyon. "I'm going to put him down it."

The animal gingerly launched himself on the treacherous footing, irregularly losing and gaining his hind feet, keeping his fore legs stiff, and steadily and calmly, without panic or nervousness, extricating the fore feet as fast as they sank too deep into the sliding earth that surged along in a wave before him. When the firm footing at the bottom was reached, he strode out on the little terrace with a quickness and springiness of gait and with glintings of muscular fires that gave the lie to the calm deliberation of his movements on the slide.

"Bravo!" Chris shouted across the canyon, clapping his hands.

"The wisest-footed, clearest-headed horse I ever saw," Lute called back, as she turned the animal to the side and dropped down a broken slope of rubble and into the trees again.

Chris followed her by the sound of her progress, and by occasional glimpses where the foliage was more open, as she zigzagged down the steep and trailless descent. She emerged below him at the rugged rim of the torrent, dropped the horse down a three-foot wall, and halted to study the crossing.

Four feet out in the stream, a narrow ledge thrust above the surface of the water. Beyond the ledge boiled an angry pool. But to the left, from the ledge, and several feet lower, was a they bed of gravel. A giant boulder prevented direct access to the gravel bed. The only way to gain it was by first leaping to the ledge of rock. She studied it carefully, and the tightening of her bridle-arm advertised that she had made up her mind.

Chris, in his anxiety, had sat up to observe more closely what she meditated.

"Don't tackle it," he called.

"I have faith in Comanche," she called in return.

"He can't make that side-jump to the gravel," Chris warned. "He'll never keep his legs. He'll topple over into the pool. Not one horse in a thousand could do that stunt."

"And Comanche is that very horse," she answered. "Watch him."

She gave the animal his head, and he leaped cleanly and accurately to the ledge, striking with feet close together on the narrow space. On the instant he struck, Lute lightly touched his neck with the rein, impelling him to the left; and in that instant, tottering on the insecure footing, with front feet slipping over into the pool beyond, he lifted on his hind legs, with a half turn, sprang to the left, and dropped squarely down to the tiny gravel bed.

An easy jump brought him across the stream, and Lute angled him up the bank and halted before her lover.

"Well?" she asked.

"I am all tense," Chris answered. "I was holding my breath."

"Buy him, by all means," Lute said, dismounting. "He is a bargain. I could dare anything on him. I never in my life had such confidence in a horse's feet."

"His owner says that he has never been known to lose his feet, that it is impossible to get him down."

"Buy him, buy him at once," she counselled, "before the man changes his mind. If you don't, I shall. Oh, such feet! I feel such confidence in them that when I am on him I don't consider he has feet at all. And he's quick as a cat, and instantly obedient. Bridle-wise is no name for it! You could guide him with silken threads. Oh, I know I'm enthusiastic, but if you don't buy him, Chris. I shall. Remember, I've second refusal."

Chris smiled agreement as he changed the saddles. Meanwhile she compared the two horses.

"Of course he doesn't match Dolly the way Ban did," she concluded regretfully; "but his coat is splendid just the same. And think of the horse that is under the coat!"

Chris gave her a hand into the saddle, and followed her up the slope to the county road. She reined in suddenly, saying:

"We won't go straight back to camp."

"You forget dinner," he wanted.

"But I remember Comanche," she retorted. "We'll ride directly over to the ranch and buy him. Dinner will keep."

"But the cook won't," Chris laughed. "She's already threatened to leave, what of our late-comings."

"Even so," was the answer. "Aunt Mildred may have to get another cook, but at any rate we shall have got Comanche."

They turned the horses in the other direction, and took the climb of the Nun Canyon road that led over the divide and down into the Napa Valley. But the climb was hard, the going was slow. Sometimes they topped the bed of the torrent by hundreds of feet, and again they dipped down and crossed and recrossed it twenty times in twice as many rods. They rode through the deep shade of clean-bunked maples and towering redwoods, to emerge on open stretches of mountain shoulder where the earth lay dry and cracked under the sun.

On one such shoulder they emerged, where the road stretched level before them, for a quarter of a mile. On one side rose the huge bulk of the mountain. On the other side the steep wall of the canyon fell away in impossible slopes and sheer drops to the torrent at the bottom. It was an abyss of green beauty and shady depths, pierced by vagrant shafts of the sun and mottled here and there by the sun's broader blazes. The sound of rushing water ascended on the windless air, and there was a hum of mountain bees.

The horses broke into an easy lope. Chris rock on the outside, looking down into the great depths and pleasuring with his eyes in what he saw. Dissociating itself from the murmur of the bees, a murmur arose of falling water. It grew louder with every stride of the horses.

"Look!" he cried.

Lute leaned well out from her horse to see. Beneath them the water slid foaming down a smooth-faced rock to the lip, whence it leaped clear--a pulsating ribbon of white, a-breath with movement, ever falling and ever remaining, changing its substance but never its form, an aerial waterway as immaterial as gauze and as permanent as the hills, that spanned space and the free air from the lip of the rock to the tops of the trees far below, into whose green screen it disappeared to fall into a secret pool.

They had flashed past. The descending water became a distant murmur that merged again into the murmur of the bees and ceased. Swayed by a common impulse, they looked at each other.

"Oh, Chris, it is good to be alive . . . and to have you here by my side!"

He answered her by the warm light in his eyes.

All things tended to key them to an exquisite pitch — the movement of their bodies, at one with the moving bodies of the animals beneath them; the gently stimulated blood caressing the flesh through and through with the soft vigors of health; the warm air fanning their faces, flowing over the skin with balmy and tonic touch, permeating them and bathing them, subtly, with faint, sensuous delight; and the beauty of the world, more subtly still, flowing upon them and bathing them in the delight that is of the spirit and is personal and holy, that is inexpressible yet communicable by the flash of an eye and the dissolving of the veils of the soul.

So looked they at each other, the horses bounding beneath them, the spring of the world and the spring of their youth astir in their blood, the secret of being trembling in their eyes to the brink of disclosure, as if about to dispel, with one magic word, all the irks and riddles of existence.

The road curved before them, so that the upper reaches of the canyon could be seen, the distant bed of it towering high above their heads. They were rounding the curve, leaning toward the inside, gazing before them at the swift-growing picture. There was no sound of warning. She heard nothing, but even before the horse went down she experienced the feeling that the unison of the two leaping animals was broken. She turned her head, and so quickly that she saw Comanche fall. It was not a stumble nor a trip. He fell as though, abruptly, in midleap, he had died or been struck a stunning blow.

And in that moment she remembered Planchette; it seared her brain as a lightning-flash of all-embracing memory. Her horse was back on its haunches, the weight of her body on the reins; but her head was turned and her eyes were on the falling Comanche. He struck the road-bed squarely, with his legs loose and lifeless beneath him.

It all occurred in one of those age-long seconds that embrace an eternity of happening. There was a slight but perceptible rebound from the impact of Comanche's body with the earth. The violence with which he struck forced the air from his great lungs in an audible groan. His momentum swept him onward and over the edge. The weight of the rider on his neck turned him over head first as he pitched to the fall.

She was off her horse, she knew not how, and to the edge. Her lover was out of the saddle and clear of Comanche, though held to the animal by his right foot, which was caught in the stirrup. The slope was too steep for them to come to a stop. Earth and small stones, dislodged by their struggles, were rolling down with them and before them in a miniature avalanche. She stood very quietly, holding one hand against her heart and gazing down. But while she saw the real happening, in her eyes was also the vision of her father dealing the spectral blow that had smashed Comanche down in mid-leap and sent horse and rider hurtling over the edge.

Beneath horse and man the steep terminated in an up-and-down wall, from the base of which, in turn, a second slope ran down to a second wall. A third slope terminated in a final wall that based itself on the canyon-bed four hundred feet beneath the point where the girl stood and watched. She could see Chris vainly kicking his leg to free the foot from the trap of the stirrup. Comanche fetched up hard against an outputting point of rock. For a fraction of a second his fall was stopped, and in the slight interval the man managed to grip hold of a young shoot of manzanita. Lute saw him complete the grip with his other hand. Then Comanche's fall began again. She saw the stirrup-strap draw taut, then her lover's body and arms. The manzanita shoot yielded its roots, and horse and man plunged over the edge and out of sight.

They came into view on the next slope, together and rolling over and over, with sometimes the man under and sometimes the horse. Chris no longer struggled, and together they dashed over to the third slope. Near the edge of the final wall, Comanche lodged on a buttock of stone. He lay quietly, and near him, still attached to him by the stirrup, face downward, lay his rider.

"If only he will lie quietly," Lute breathed aloud, her mind at work on the means of rescue.

But she saw Comanche begin to struggle again, and clear on her vision, it seemed, was the spectral arm of her father clutching the reins and dragging the animal over. Comanche floundered across the hummock, the inert body following, and together, horse and man, they plunged from sight. They did not appear again. They had fetched bottom.

Lute looked about her. She stood alone on the world. Her lover was gone. There was naught to show of his existence, save the marks of Comanche's hoofs on the road and of his body where it had slid over the brink.

"Chris!" she called once, and twice; but she called hopelessly.

Out of the depths, on the windless air, arose only the murmur of bees and of running water

"Chris!" she called yet a third time, and sank slowly down in the dust of the road.

She felt the touch of Dolly's muzzle on her arm, and she leaned her head against the mare's neck and waited. She knew not why she waited, nor for what, only there seemed nothing else but waiting left for her to do.

Pluck and Pertinacity

TO P. T. Barnum is accorded the coinage of the term “stick-to-itiveness,” a strong synonym for “pertinacity.” Now he who possesses pertinacity must also possess pluck, another important element in the achievement of success. A man devoid of this cannot be pertinacious; his resolution melts away in the face of obstacles which require pluck to overcome.

The following story of unyielding adherence to purpose, performed under almost unthinkable hardships and dangers, is a true one, for I was personally aware of most the facts concerned. Some of the incidents, however, were given me by a surgeon travelling into the Yukon country with a detachment of the Northwest mounted police, and still others I obtained from the white trader in charge of the Sixty-Mile Post. The story is of a man who practically achieved the impossible in his hazardous ice-journey in the dead of an Artic winter. Happily, success crowned the effort.

In the fall of 1897, the cry of famine went up from the hungry town of Dawson. Faint-hearted miners turned their backs on the golden lure. Partners, with food for but one, drew straws to ascertain which should remain and which should go. Canadian citizens and American aliens appealed to their respective governments for aid.

In October, with the last water, which was composed chiefly of running ice, a hungry exodus went down the river to Fort Yukon. Then the price of dogs went up to three hundred dollars, and dog-food to a dollar per pound. Flour was not to be had at one hundred and fifty dollars per hundredweight. In November, with the first ice, another stampeded crowd hurried up the river to civilization and safety.

This scare, which so greatly diminished the number of empty mouths, was all that saved Dawson from a bitter winter. As it was, the gold-seekers managed to pinch through; but those that fled in the height of the panic carried a terrible tale with them to salt water. After that the winter settled down and all communication ceased.

For the many faces turned south on the dismal half-thousand miles of trail, there was one that held unerringly to the north. It belonged to a Dutchman, who knew little English and spoke less. His equipment was more meagre than that of those who passed him, and he was heading away from it. He had barely enough food to last himself and dog to Dawson. He had a dog — a bulldog, the short hair of which made it the worst possible choice of a sledge animal in that frosty land.

The refugees looked at his outfit and laughed. By eloquent signs — for misery speaks a common tongue — they explained the lack of food. When that did not startle him, they painted lurid pictures of starvation and death. But he always remained unperturbed. Then they ceased their grim mirth, and pleaded and entreated him to go back. But he invariably pressed on.

Why not? He had started to go to the Klondike, and certainly was going there. True, he had already tried the Stikine route and lost his outfit and three comrades in its treacherous waters; true, he had then gone to St. Michaels, only to get there when the Yukon had frozen and to escape on the last vessel before Bering Sea closed; true, his money was gone and he had but a few weeks' food, — all true, — but it was also true that he had left a wife and children down in the States, and he must send yellow dust of the north to them before another year had passed.

And yet again — the real stamp of the man — he had started to go to the Klondike, and he was going there. For the third time he had ventured it, this time over the dreaded Chilkoot Pass in midwinter.

After untold hardship, he arrived at the Big Salmon River, two hundred and fifty miles from the Chilkoot and an equal distance from Dawson. At that point he encountered a squad of the mounted police of the Northwest Territories. They had strict orders to allow no one to pass who did not possess a thousand pounds of provisions. As he had barely fifty pounds, he was turned back. One of the police, who understood his language, explained the terrible condition of affairs.

All others whom they had turned back had retraced their steps cheerfully. But this man was not made of such mettle. Twice nature had conspired to thwart him, when the trip was half completed, came man. However, he ostensibly started back. But that night he broke a trail through the deep snow and crossed the river, regaining the travelled trail far below the encampment.

The next heard of him was at Little Salmon River, when another detachment of police saw an exhausted man and a bulldog limping painfully down the river. They thought the upper camp had passed him on; so, without suspicion, they cordially invited him to their fire to rest and warm up, but he was afraid, and hobbled on.

The thermometer had gone down and then steadily remained at between fifty and sixty degrees below zero — equivalent to between eighty and ninety degrees of frost. The Dutchman had frozen one of his feet, but still pressed on. He passed fleeing men, young men, with frozen limbs or scurvy-rotted flesh — terrible wrecks of the country; but day by day, rigidly adhering to his object, he plodded into the north.

At Fort Selkirk he was forced to lay up, his frozen foot having become so bad that he could no longer travel. But he had been there only two days, when the surgeon from Big Salmon River arrived. He had sledded a hundred miles down the river with a government dog-team, to amputate the limbs of an unfortunate young man who had been trying to get out of the land. After that, the surgeon had gone on to Fort Selkirk, where he expected to wait till the incoming police picked him up.

He recognized the Dutchman and dressed his foot, the flesh of which had begun to slough away, leaving a raw and festered hole in the sole of the foot almost large enough to thrust one’s fist into. He happened to explain, by signs, that he was awaiting the coming of the police.

That was enough for the sufferer. The police were coming. They would send him back. He cut up a blanket and made a gigantic moccasin, folding thickness upon thickness till it was the size of a water-bucket. That night, he and his bulldog headed down river to Dawson, one hundred and seventy-five miles away.

The exquisite pain the man must have endured from the cold, the toil, the lack of food, and the injured foot, can only be conjectured. And it was not as if he had comrades, for he suffered alone, and ran the dangers of the ice-journey without hope of help in case of accident.

At Stuart River he was almost gone; but his persistence and indomitability seemed limitless. The fear that the police would capture him and send him back drove him on; and he was the kind of man that did not show the meaning of the word “failure.” As it was, the police, with their fine trail equipment of dogs and sleds, never did succeed in overtaking him.

At Sixty-Mile, it seemed the he must at last succumb, for the dog had finally become exhausted, as had also the supply of food. But the white trader at that point bought the dog for two hundred dollars and sufficient food to last the man into Dawson, then only fifty miles away.

Barely had he reached his goal when he was sawing wood at fifteen dollars a day, and slowly but surely curing his foot that he might go prospecting. It is no easy task to work all day in the open in such a frosty clime. But he worked steadily through the winter, while other men idled in their cabins and cursed their ill-luck and the country in general. Not only did he manage to earn subsistence, but he got himself a miner's outfit, and also sent out a snug portion of his earnings to the wife and children down in the States.

In the spring, while the majority of the gold-seekers were preparing to shake the dust of the country from their moccasins, he took part in the stampede to the French Hill benches. A little later, those that passed his claim might have seen a contented-looking man busily engaged in washing out a satisfactory amount of gold a day.

There can be no better way to conclude this narrative of unyielding adherence to purpose, than by stating that one of the first things he did was to hunt up the Sixty-Mile trader and buy back the bulldog that had been the comrade of his hardships and sufferings.

The Priestly Prerogative

This is the story of a man who did not appreciate his wife; also, of a woman who did him too great an honor when she gave herself to him. Incidentally, it concerns a Jesuit priest who had never been known to lie. He was an appurtenance, and a very necessary one, to the Yukon country; but the presence of the other two was merely accidental. They were specimens of the many strange waifs which ride the breast of a gold rush or come tailing along behind.

Edwin Bentham and Grace Bentham were waifs; they were also tailing along behind, for the Klondike rush of ‘97 had long since swept down the great river and subsided into the famine-stricken city of Dawson. When the Yukon shut up shop and went to sleep under a three-foot ice-sheet, this peripatetic couple found themselves at the Five Finger Rapids, with the City of Gold still a journey of many sleeps to the north.

Many cattle had been butchered at this place in the fall of the year, and the offal made a goodly heap. The three fellow-voyagers of Edwin Bentham and wife gazed upon this deposit, did a little mental arithmetic, caught a certain glimpse of a bonanza, and decided to remain. And all winter they sold sacks of bones and frozen hides to the famished dog-teams. It was a modest price they asked, a dollar a pound, just as it came. Six months later, when the sun came back and the Yukon awoke, they buckled on their heavy moneybelts and journeyed back to the Southland, where they yet live and lie mightily about the Klondike they never saw.

But Edwin Bentham--he was an indolent fellow, and had he not been possessed of a wife, would have gladly joined issued in the dog-meat speculation. As it was, she played upon his vanity, told him how great and strong he was, how a man such as he certainly was could overcome all obstacles and of a surety obtain the Golden Fleece. So he squared his jaw, sold his share in the bones and hides for a sled and one dog, and turned his snowshoes to the north. Needless to state, Grace Bentham’s snowshoes never allowed his tracks to grow cold. Nay, ere their tribulations had seen three days, it was the man who followed in the rear, and the woman who broke trail in advance. Of course, if anybody hove in sight, the position was instantly reversed. Thus did his manhood remain virgin to the travelers who passed like ghosts on the silent trail. There are such men in this world.

How such a man and such a woman came to take each other for better and for worse is unimportant to this narrative. These things are familiar to us all, and those people who do them, or even question them too closely, are apt to lose a beautiful faith which is known as Eternal Fitness.

Edwin Bentham was a boy, thrust by mischance into a man's body,--a boy who could complacently pluck a butterfly, wing from wing, or cower in abject terror before a lean, nervy fellow, not half his size. He was a selfish cry-baby, hidden behind a man's mustache and stature, and glossed over with a skin-deep veneer of culture and conventionality. Yes; he was a clubman and a society man,the sort that grace social functions and utter inanities with a charm and unction which is indescribable; the sort that talk big, and cry over a toothache; the sort that put more hell into a woman's life by marrying her than can the most graceless libertine that ever browsed in forbidden pastures. We meet these men every day, but we rarely know them for what they are. Second to marrying them, the best way to get this knowledge is to eat out of the same pot and crawl under the same blanket with them for-well, say a week; no greater margin is necessary.

To see Grace Bentham, was to see a slender, girlish creature; to know her, was to know a soul which dwarfed your own, yet retained all the elements of the eternal feminine. This was the woman who urged and encouraged her husband in his Northland quest, who broke trail for him when no one was looking, and cried in secret over her weakling woman's body.

So journeyed this strangely assorted couple down to old Fort Selkirk, then through fivescore miles of dismal wilderness to Stuart River. And when the short day left them, and the man lay down in the snow and blubbered, it was the woman who lashed him to the sled, bit her lips with the pain of her aching limbs, and helped the dog haul him to Malemute Kid's cabin. Malemute Kid was not at home, but Meyers, the German trader, cooked great moose-steaks and shook up a bed of fresh pine boughs. Lake, Langham, and Parker, were excited, and not unduly so when the cause was taken into account.

'Oh, Sandy! Say, can you tell a porterhouse from a round? Come out and lend us a hand, anyway!' This appeal emanated from the cache, where Langham was vainly struggling with divers quarters of frozen moose.

'Don't you budge from those dishes!' commanded Parker.

'I say, Sandy; there's a good fellow--just run down to the Missouri Camp and borrow some cinnamon,' begged Lake.

‘Oh! oh! hurry up! Why don’t-‘ But the crash of meat and boxes, in the cache, abruptly quenched this peremptory summons.

‘Come now, Sandy; it won’t take a minute to go down to the Missouri-‘

‘You leave him alone,’ interrupted Parker. ‘How am I to mix the biscuits if the table isn’t cleared off?’

Sandy paused in indecision, till suddenly the fact that he was Langham’s ‘man’ dawned upon him. Then he apologetically threw down the greasy dishcloth, and went to his master’s rescue.

These promising scions of wealthy progenitors had come to the Northland in search of laurels, with much money to burn, and a ‘man’ apiece. Luckily for their souls, the other two men were up the White River in search of a mythical quartzledge; so Sandy had to grin under the responsibility of three healthy masters, each of whom was possessed of peculiar cookery ideas. Twice that morning had a disruption of the whole camp been imminent, only averted by immense concessions from one or the other of these knights of the chafing-dish. But at last their mutual creation, a really dainty dinner, was completed.

Then they sat down to a three-cornered game of ‘cut-throat,’--a proceeding which did away with all casus belli for future hostilities, and permitted the victor to depart on a most important mission.

This fortune fell to Parker, who parted his hair in the middle, put on his mittens and bearskin cap, and stepped over to Malemute Kid’s cabin. And when he returned, it was in the company of Grace Bentham and Malemute Kid,--the former very sorry her husband could not share with her their hospitality, for he had gone up to look at the Henderson Creek mines, and the latter still a trifle stiff from breaking trail down the Stuart River.

Meyers had been asked, but had declined, being deeply engrossed in an experiment of raising bread from hops.

Well, they could do without the husband; but a woman--why they had not seen one all winter, and the presence of this one promised a new era in their lives.

They were college men and gentlemen, these three young fellows, yearning for the flesh-pots they had been so long denied. Probably Grace Bentham suffered from a similar hunger; at least, it meant much to her, the first bright hour in many weeks of darkness.

But that wonderful first course, which claimed the versatile Lake for its parent, had no sooner been served than there came a loud knock at the door.

‘Oh! Ah! Won’t you come in, Mr. Bentham?’ said Parker, who had stepped to see who the newcomer might be.

‘Is my wife here?’ gruffly responded that worthy.

‘Why, yes. We left word with Mr. Meyers.’ Parker was exerting his most dulcet tones, inwardly wondering what the deuce it all meant. ‘Won’t you come in? Expecting you at any moment, we reserved a place. And just in time for the first course, too.’ ‘Come in, Edwin, dear,’ chirped Grace Bentham from her seat at the table.

Parker naturally stood aside.

‘I want my wife,’ reiterated Bentham hoarsely, the intonation savoring disagreeably of ownership.

Parker gasped, was within an ace of driving his fist into the face of his boorish visitor, but held himself awkwardly in check. Everybody rose. Lake lost his head and caught himself on the verge of saying, ‘Must you go?’ Then began the farrago of leave-taking. ‘So nice of you-‘ ‘I am awfully sorry’ ‘By Jove! how things did brighten-‘ ‘Really now, you-‘

‘Thank you ever so much-‘ ‘Nice trip to Dawson-‘ etc., etc.

In this wise the lamb was helped into her jacket and led to the slaughter. Then the door slammed, and they gazed woefully upon the deserted table.

‘Damn!’ Langham had suffered disadvantages in his early training, and his oaths were weak and monotonous. ‘Damn!’ he repeated, vaguely conscious of the incompleteness and vainly struggling for a more virile term. It is a clever woman who can fill out the many weak places in an inefficient man, by her own indomitability, re-enforce his vacillating nature, infuse her ambitious soul into his, and spur him on to great achievements. And it is indeed a very clever and tactful woman who can do all this, and do it so subtly that the man receives all the credit and believes in his inmost heart that everything is due to him and him alone.

This is what Grace Bentham proceeded to do. Arriving in Dawson with a few pounds of flour and several letters of introduction, she at once applied herself to the task of pushing her big baby to the fore. It was she who melted the stony heart and wrung credit from the rude barbarian who presided over the destiny of the P. C. Company; yet it was Edwin Bentham to whom the concession was ostensibly granted. It was she who dragged her baby up and down creeks, over benches and divides, and on a dozen wild stampedes; yet everybody remarked what an energetic fellow that Bentham was. It was she who studied maps, and catechised miners, and hammered geography and locations into his hollow head, till everybody marveled at his broad grasp of the country and knowledge of its conditions. Of course, they said the wife was a brick, and only a few wise ones appreciated and pitied the brave little woman.

She did the work; he got the credit and reward. In the Northwest Territory a married woman cannot stake or record a creek, bench, or quartz claim; so Edwin Bentham went down to the Gold Commissioner and filed on Bench Claim 23, second tier, of French Hill. And when April came they were washing out a thousand dollars a day, with many, many such days in prospect.

At the base of French Hill lay Eldorado Creek, and on a creek claim stood the cabin of Clyde Wharton. At present he was not washing out a diurnal thousand dollars; but his dumps grew, shift by shift, and there would come a time when those dumps would pass through his sluice-boxes, depositing in the riffles, in the course of half a dozen days, several hundred thousand dollars. He often sat in that cabin, smoked his pipe, and dreamed beautiful little dreams,--dreams in which neither the dumps nor the half-ton of dust in the P. C. Company’s big safe, played a part.

And Grace Bentham, as she washed tin dishes in her hillside cabin, often glanced down into Eldorado Creek, and dreamed,--not of dumps nor dust, however. They met frequently, as the trail to the one claim crossed the other, and there is much to talk about in the Northland spring; but never once, by the light of an eye nor the slip of a tongue, did they speak their hearts.

This is as it was at first. But one day Edwin Bentham was brutal. All boys are thus; besides, being a French Hill king now, he began to think a great deal of himself and to forget all he owed to his wife. On this day, Wharton heard of it, and waylaid Grace Bentham, and talked wildly. This made her very happy, though she would not listen, and made him promise to not say such things again. Her hour had not come.

But the sun swept back on its northern journey, the black of midnight changed to the steely color of dawn, the snow slipped away, the water dashed again over the glacial drift, and the wash-up began. Day and night the yellow clay and scraped bedrock hurried through the swift sluices, yielding up its ransom to the strong men from the Southland.

And in that time of tumult came Grace Bentham’s hour.

To all of us such hours at some time come,--that is, to us who are not too phlegmatic.

Some people are good, not from inherent love of virtue, but from sheer laziness. But those of us who know weak moments may understand.

Edwin Bentham was weighing dust over the bar of the saloon at the Forks--altogether too much of his dust went over that pine board--when his wife came down the hill and slipped into Clyde Wharton's cabin. Wharton was not expecting her, but that did not alter the case. And much subsequent misery and idle waiting might have been avoided, had not Father Roubeau seen this and turned aside from the main creek trail. 'My child,-' 'Hold on, Father Roubeau! Though I'm not of your faith, I respect you; but you can't come in between this woman and me!' 'You know what you are doing?' 'Know! Were you God Almighty, ready to fling me into eternal fire, I'd bank my will against yours in this matter.' Wharton had placed Grace on a stool and stood belligerently before her.

'You sit down on that chair and keep quiet,' he continued, addressing the Jesuit. 'I'll take my innings now. You can have yours after.'

Father Roubeau bowed courteously and obeyed. He was an easy-going man and had learned to bide his time. Wharton pulled a stool alongside the woman's, smothering her hand in his.

'Then you do care for me, and will take me away?' Her face seemed to reflect the peace of this man, against whom she might draw close for shelter.

'Dear, don't you remember what I said before? Of course I-' 'But how can you?--the wash-up?' 'Do you think that worries? Anyway, I'll give the job to Father Roubeau, here.

I can trust him to safely bank the dust with the company.' 'To think of it!--I'll never see him again.' 'A blessing!' 'And to go--O, Clyde, I can't! I can't!' 'There, there; of course you can. just let me plan it.--You see, as soon as we get a few traps together, we'll start, and-' 'Suppose he comes back?' 'I'll break every-' 'No, no! No fighting, Clyde! Promise me that.' 'All right! I'll just tell the men to throw him off the claim. They've seen how he's treated you, and haven't much love for him.'

'You mustn't do that. You mustn't hurt him.' 'What then? Let him come right in here and take you away before my eyes?' 'No-o,' she half whispered, stroking his hand softly.

'Then let me run it, and don't worry. I'll see he doesn't get hurt. Precious lot he cared whether you got hurt or not! We won't go back to Dawson. I'll send word down for a couple of the boys to outfit and pole a boat up the

Yukon. We’ll cross the divide and raft down the Indian River to meet them. Then-‘ ‘And then?’ Her head was on his shoulder.

Their voices sank to softer cadences, each word a caress. The Jesuit fidgeted nervously.

‘And then?’ she repeated.

‘Why we’ll pole up, and up, and up, and portage the White Horse Rapids and the Box Canon.’ ‘Yes?’ ‘And the Sixty-Mile River; then the lakes, Chilcoot, Dyea, and Salt Water.’ ‘But, dear, I can’t pole a boat.’ ‘You little goose! I’ll get Sitka Charley; he knows all the good water and best camps, and he is the best traveler I ever met, if he is an Indian. All you’ll have to do, is to sit in the middle of the boat, and sing songs, and play Cleopatra, and fight--no, we’re in luck; too early for mosquitoes.’

‘And then, O my Antony?’ ‘And then a steamer, San Francisco, and the world! Never to come back to this cursed hole again. Think of it! The world, and ours to choose from! I’ll sell out. Why, we’re rich! The Waldworth Syndicate will give me half a million for what’s left in the ground, and I’ve got twice as much in the dumps and with the P. C.

Company. We’ll go to the Fair in Paris in 1900. We’ll go to Jerusalem, if you say so.

We’ll buy an Italian palace, and you can play Cleopatra to your heart’s content. No, you shall be Lucretia, Acte, or anybody your little heart sees fit to become. But you mustn’t, you really mustn’t-‘ ‘The wife of Caesar shall be above reproach.’ ‘Of course, but-‘ ‘But I won’t be your wife, will I, dear?’ ‘I didn’t mean that.’ ‘But you’ll love me just as much, and never even think--oh! I know you’ll be like other men; you’ll grow tired, and--and-‘

‘How can you? I-‘ ‘Promise me.’ ‘Yes, yes; I do promise.’ ‘You say it so easily, dear; but how do you know?--or I know? I have so little to give, yet it is so much, and all I have. O, Clyde! promise me you won’t?’

‘There, there! You musn’t begin to doubt already. Till death do us part, you know.’

‘Think! I once said that to--to him, and now?’ ‘And now, little sweetheart, you’re not to bother about such things any more.

Of course, I never, never will, and-‘ And for the first time, lips trembled against lips.

Father Roubeau had been watching the main trail through the window, but could stand the strain no longer.

He cleared his throat and turned around.

‘Your turn now, Father!’ Wharton’s face was flushed with the fire of his first embrace.

There was an exultant ring to his voice as he abdicated in the other’s favor. He had no doubt as to the result. Neither had Grace, for a smile played about her mouth as she faced the priest.

‘My child,’ he began, ‘my heart bleeds for you. It is a pretty dream, but it cannot be.’

‘And why, Father? I have said yes.’ ‘You knew not what you did. You did not think of the oath you took, before your God, to that man who is your husband. It remains for me to make you realize the sanctity of such a pledge.’ ‘And if I do realize, and yet refuse?’

‘Then God’

‘Which God? My husband has a God which I care not to worship. There must be many such.’ ‘Child! unsay those words! Ah! you do not mean them. I understand. I, too, have had such moments.’ For an instant he was back in his native France, and a wistful, sad-eyed face came as a mist between him and the woman before him.

‘Then, Father, has my God forsaken me? I am not wicked above women. My misery with him has been great. Why should it be greater? Why shall I not grasp at happiness? I cannot, will not, go back to him!’ ‘Rather is your God forsaken. Return. Throw your burden upon Him, and the darkness shall be lifted. O my child,-‘ ‘No; it is useless; I have made my bed and so shall I lie. I will go on. And if God punishes me, I shall bear it somehow. You do not understand. You are not a woman.’ ‘My mother was a woman.’

‘But-‘ ‘And Christ was born of a woman.’ She did not answer. A silence fell. Wharton pulled his mustache impatiently and kept an eye on the trail. Grace leaned her elbow on the table, her face set with resolve. The smile had died away. Father Roubeau shifted his ground.

‘You have children?’

‘At one time I wished--but now--no. And I am thankful.’ ‘And a mother?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘She loves you?’ ‘Yes.’ Her replies were whispers.

And a brother?--no matter, he is a man. But a sister?’ Her head drooped a quavering ‘Yes.’ ‘Younger? Very much?’ ‘Seven years.’ ‘And you have thought well about this matter? About them? About your mother? And your sister? She stands on the threshold of her woman’s life, and this wildness of yours may mean much to her. Could you go before her, look upon her fresh young face, hold her hand in yours, or touch your cheek to hers?'

To his words, her brain formed vivid images, till she cried out, 'Don't! don't!' and shrank away as do the wolf-dogs from the lash.

'But you must face all this; and better it is to do it now.' In his eyes, which she could not see, there was a great compassion, but his face, tense and quivering, showed no relenting.

She raised her head from the table, forced back the tears, struggled for control.

'I shall go away. They will never see me, and come to forget me. I shall be to them as dead. And--and I will go with Clyde--today.' It seemed final. Wharton stepped forward, but the priest waved him back.

'You have wished for children?' A silent 'Yes.' 'And prayed for them?' 'Often.' 'And have you thought, if you should have children?' Father Roubeau's eyes rested for a moment on the man by the window.

A quick light shot across her face. Then the full import dawned upon her. She raised her hand appealingly, but he went on.

'Can you picture an innocent babe in your arms,' A boy? The world is not so hard upon a girl. Why, your very breast would turn to gall! And you could be proud and happy of your boy, as you looked on other children?-' 'O, have pity! Hush!' 'A scapegoat-'

'Don't! don't! I will go back!' She was at his feet.

'A child to grow up with no thought of evil, and one day the world to fling a tender name in his face. A child to look back and curse you from whose loins he sprang!'

'O my God! my God!' She groveled on the floor. The priest sighed and raised her to her feet.

Wharton pressed forward, but she motioned him away.

'Don't come near me, Clyde! I am going back!' The tears were coursing pitifully down her face, but she made no effort to wipe them away.

'After all this? You cannot! I will not let you!' 'Don't touch me!' She shivered and drew back.

'I will! You are mine! Do you hear? You are mine!' Then he whirled upon the priest. 'O what a fool I was to ever let you wag your silly tongue! Thank your God you are not a common man, for I'd--but the priestly prerogative must be exercised, eh? Well, you have exercised it. Now get out of my house, or I’ll forget who and what you are!’ Father Roubeau bowed, took her hand, and started for the door. But Wharton cut them off.

‘Grace! You said you loved me?’ ‘I did.’ ‘And you do now?’ ‘I do.’ ‘Say it again.’

‘I do love you, Clyde; I do.’ ‘There, you priest!’ he cried. ‘You have heard it, and with those words on her lips you would send her back to live a lie and a hell with that man?’

But Father Roubeau whisked the woman into the inner room and closed the door. ‘No words!’ he whispered to Wharton, as he struck a casual posture on a stool. ‘Remember, for her sake,’ he added.

The room echoed to a rough knock at the door; the latch raised and Edwin Bentham stepped in.

‘Seen anything of my wife?’ he asked as soon as salutations had been exchanged.

Two heads nodded negatively.

‘I saw her tracks down from the cabin,’ he continued tentatively, ‘and they broke off, just opposite here, on the main trail.’ His listeners looked bored.

‘And I--I thought-‘

‘She was here!’ thundered Wharton.

The priest silenced him with a look. ‘Did you see her tracks leading up to this cabin, my son?’ Wily Father Roubeau--he had taken good care to obliterate them as he came up the same path an hour before.

‘I didn’t stop to look, I-‘ His eyes rested suspiciously on the door to the other room, then interrogated the priest. The latter shook his head; but the doubt seemed to linger.

Father Roubeau breathed a swift, silent prayer, and rose to his feet. ‘If you doubt me, why-‘ He made as though to open the door.

A priest could not lie. Edwin Bentham had heard this often, and believed it.

‘Of course not, Father,’ he interposed hurriedly. ‘I was only wondering where my wife had gone, and thought maybe--I guess she’s up at Mrs. Stanton’s on French Gulch. Nice weather, isn’t it? Heard the news? Flour’s gone down to forty dollars a hundred, and they say the che-cha-quas are flocking down the river in droves.

But I must be going; so good-by.’ The door slammed, and from the window they watched him take his quest up French Gulch. A few weeks later, just after the June high-water, two men shot a canoe into mid-stream and made fast to a derelict pine. This tightened the painter and jerked the frail craft along as would a tow-boat. Father Roubeau had been directed to leave the Upper Country and return to his swarthy children at Minook. The white men had come among them, and they were devoting too little time to fishing, and too much to a certain deity whose transient habitat was in countless black bottles.

Malemute Kid also had business in the Lower Country, so they journeyed together.

But one, in all the Northland, knew the man Paul Roubeau, and that man was Malemute Kid. Before him alone did the priest cast off the sacerdotal garb and stand naked. And why not? These two men knew each other. Had they not shared the last morsel of fish, the last pinch of tobacco, the last and inmost thought, on the barren stretches of Bering Sea, in the heartbreaking mazes of the Great Delta, on the terrible winter journey from Point Barrow to the Porcupine? Father Roubeau puffed heavily at his trail-worn pipe, and gazed on the reddisked sun, poised somberly on the edge of the northern horizon.

Malemute Kid wound up his watch. It was midnight.

‘Cheer up, old man!’ The Kid was evidently gathering up a broken thread.

‘God surely will forgive such a lie. Let me give you the word of a man who strikes a true note: If She have spoken a word, remember thy lips are sealed, And the brand of the Dog is upon him by whom is the secret revealed.

If there be trouble to Herward, and a lie of the blackest can clear, Lie, while thy lips can move or a man is alive to hear.’

Father Roubeau removed his pipe and reflected. ‘The man speaks true, but my soul is not vexed with that. The lie and the penance stand with God; but--but-‘

‘What then? Your hands are clean.’ ‘Not so. Kid, I have thought much, and yet the thing remains. I knew, and made her go back.’ The clear note of a robin rang out from the wooden bank, a partridge drummed the call in the distance, a moose lunged noisily in the eddy; but the twain smoked on in silence.

The Princess

A FIRE burned cheerfully in the jungle camp, and beside the fire lolled a cheerful-seeming though horrible-appearing man. This was a hobo jungle, pitched in a thin strip of woods that lay between a railroad embankment and the bank of a river. But no hobo was the man. So deep-sunk was he in the social abyss that a proper hobo would not sit by the same fire with him. A gay-cat, who is an ignorant new-comer on the “Road,” might sit with such as he, but only long enough to learn better. Even low down bindle-stiffs and stew-bums, after a once-over, would have passed this man by. A genuine hobo, a couple of punks, or a bunch of tender-yeared road-kids might have gone through his rags for any stray pennies or nickels and kicked him out into the darkness. Even an alki-stiff would have reckoned himself immeasurably superior.

For this man was that hybrid of tramp-land, an alki-stiff that has degenerated into a stew-bum, with so little self-respect that he will never “boil-up,” and with so little pride that he will eat out of a garbage can. He was truly horrible-appearing. He might have been sixty years of age; he might have been ninety. His garments might have been discarded by a rag-picker. Beside him, an unrolled bundle showed itself as consisting of a ragged overcoat and containing an empty and smoke-blackened tomato can, an empty and battered condensed milk can, some dog-meat partly wrapped in brown paper and evidently begged from some butcher-shop, a carrot that had been run over in the street by a wagon-wheel, three greenish-cankered and decayed potatoes, and a sugar-bun with a mouthful bitten from it and rescued from the gutter, as was made patent by the gutter-filth that still encrusted it.

A prodigious growth of whiskers, greyish-dirty and untrimmed for years, sprouted from his face. This hirsute growth should have been white, but the season was summer and it had not been exposed to a rain-shower for some time. What was visible of the face looked as if at some period it had stopped a hand-grenade. The nose was so variously malformed in its healed brokenness that there was no bridge, while one nostril, the size of a pea, opened downward, and the other, the size of a robin’s egg, tilted upward to the sky. One eye, of normal size, dim-brown and misty, bulged to the verge of popping out, and as if from senility wept copiously and continuously.

The other eye, scarcely larger than a squirrel's and as uncannily bright, twisted up obliquely into the hairy scar of a bone-crushed eyebrow. And he had but one arm.

Yet was he cheerful. On his face, in mild degree, was depicted sensuous pleasure as he lethargically scratched his ribs with his one hand. He pawed over his food-scraps, debated, then drew a twelve-ounce druggist bottle from his inside coat-pocket. The bottle was full of a colourless liquid, the contemplation of which made his little eye burn brighter and quickened his movements. Picking up the tomato can, he arose, went down the short path to the river, and returned with the can filled with not-nice river water. In the condensed milk can he mixed one part of water with two parts of fluid from the bottle. This colourless fluid was druggist's alcohol, and as such is known in tramp-land as "alki."

Slow footsteps, coming down the side of the railroad embankment, alarmed him ere he could drink. Placing the can carefully upon the ground between his legs, he covered it with his hat and waited anxiously whatever impended.

Out of the darkness emerged a man as filthy ragged as he. The new-comer, who might have been fifty, and might have been sixty, was grotesquely fat. He bulged everywhere. He was composed of bulges. His bulbous nose was the size and shape of a turnip. His eyelids bulged and his blue eyes bulged in competition with them. In many places the seams of his garments had parted across the bulges of body. His calves grew into his feet, for the broken elastic sides of his Congress gaiters were swelled full with the fat of him. One arm only he sported, from the shoulder of which was suspended a small and tattered bundle with the mud caked dry on the outer covering from the last place he had pitched his doss. He advanced with tentative caution, made sure of the harmlessness of the man beside the fire, and joined him.

"Hello, grandpa," the new-comer greeted, then paused to stare at the other's flaring, sky-open nostril. "Say, Whiskers, how'd ye keep the night dew out of that nose o' yourn?"

Whiskers growled an incoherence deep in his throat and spat into the fire in token that he was not pleased by the question.

"For the love of Mike," the fat man chuckled, "if you got caught out in a rainstorm without an umbrella you'd sure drown, wouldn't you?"

“Can it, Fatty, can it,” Whiskers muttered wearily. “They ain’t nothin’ new in that line of chatter. Even the bulls hand it out to me.”

“But you can still drink, I hope”; Fatty at the same time mollified and invited, with his one hand deftly pulling the slip-knots that fastened his bundle.

From within the bundle he brought to light a twelve-ounce bottle of alki. Footsteps coming down the embankment alarmed him, and he hid the bottle under his hat on the ground between his legs.

But the next comer proved to be not merely one of their own ilk, but likewise to have only one arm. So forbidding of aspect was he that greetings consisted of no more than grunts. Huge-boned, tall, gaunt to cadaverousness, his face a dirty death’s head, he was as repellent a nightmare of old age as ever Dore imagined. His toothless, thin-lipped mouth was a cruel and bitter slash under a great curved nose that almost met the chin and that was like a buzzard’s beak. His one hand, lean and crooked, was a talon. The beady grey eyes, unblinking and unwavering, were bitter as death, as bleak as absolute zero and as merciless. His presence was a chill, and Whiskers and Fatty instinctively drew together for protection against the unguessed threat of him. Watching his chance, privily, Whiskers snuggled a chunk of rock several pounds in weigh close to his hand if need for action should arise. Fatty duplicated the performance.

Then both sat licking their lips, guiltily embarrassed, while the unblinking eyes of the terrible one bored into them, now into one, now into another, and then down at the rock-chunks of their preparedness.

“Huh!” sneered the terrible one, with such dreadfulness of menace as to cause Whiskers and Fatty involuntarily to close their hands down on their cave-man’s weapons.

“Huh!” the other repeated, reaching his one talon into his side coat pocket with swift definiteness. “A hell of a chance you two cheap bums ‘d have with me.”

The talon emerged, clutching ready for action a six-pound iron quoit.

“We ain’t lookin’ for trouble, Slim,” Fatty quavered.

“Who in hell are you to call me ‘Slim’?” came the snarling answer.

“Me? I’m just Fatty, an’ seein’ ‘s I never seen you before-“

“An’ I suppose that’s Whiskers, there, with the gay an’ festive lamp tangoing into his eyebrow an’ the God-forgive-us nose joy-riding all over his mug?”

"It'll do, it'll do," Whiskers muttered uncomfortably. "One monica's as good as another, I find, at my time of life. And everybody hands it out to me anyway. And I need an umbrella when it rains to keep from getting drowned, an' all the rest of it."

"I ain't used to company-don't like it," Slim growled. "So if you guys want to stick around, mind your step, that's all, mind your step."

He fished from his pocket a cigar stump, self-evidently shot from the gutter, and prepared to put it in his mouth to chew. Then he changed his mind, glared at his companions savagely, and unrolled his bundle. Appeared in his hand a druggist's bottle of alki.

"Well," he snarled, "I suppose I gotta give you cheap skates a drink when I ain't got more'n enough for a good petrification for myself."

Almost a softening flicker of light was imminent in his withered face as he beheld the others proudly lift their hats and exhibit their own supplies.

"Here's some water for the mixin's," Whiskers said, proffering his tomato-can of river slush. "Stockyards just above," he added apologetically. "But they say-"

"Huh!" Slim snapped short, mixing the drink. "I've drunk worse'n stockyards in my time."

Yet when all was ready, cans of alki in their solitary hands, the three things that had once been men hesitated, as if of old habit, and next betrayed shame as if at self-exposure.

Whiskers was the first to brazen it.

"I've sat in at many a finer drinking," he bragged.

"With the pewter," Slim sneered.

"With the silver," Whiskers corrected.

Slim turned a scorching eye-interrogation on Fatty.

Fatty nodded.

"Beneath the salt," said Slim.

"Above it," came Fatty's correction. "I was born above it, and I've never travelled second class. First or steerage, but no intermediate in mine."

"Yourself?" Whiskers queried of Slim.

"In broken glass to the Queen, God bless her," Slim answered, solemnly, without snarl or sneer.

"In the pantry?" Fatty insinuated.

Simultaneously Slim reached for his quoit, and Whiskers and Fatty for their rocks.

"Now don't let's get feverish," Fatty said, dropping his own weapon. "We aren't scum. We're gentlemen. Let's drink like gentlemen."

"Let it be a real drinking," Whiskers approved.

"Let's get petrified," Slim agreed. "Many a distillery's flowed under the bridge since we were gentlemen; but let's forget the long road we've travelled since, and hit our doss in the good old fashion in which every gentleman went to bed when we were young."

"My father done it-did it," Fatty concurred and corrected, as old recollections exploded long-sealed brain-cells of connotation and correct usage.

The other two nodded a descent from similar fathers, and elevated their tin cans of alcohol.

By the time each had finished his own bottle and from his rags fished forth a second one, their brains were well-mellowed and a-glow, although they had not got around to telling their real names. But their English had improved. They spoke it correctly, while the argo of tramp-land ceased from their lips.

"It's my constitution," Whiskers was explaining. "Very few men could go through what I have and live to tell the tale. And I never took any care of myself. If what the moralists and the physiologists say were true, I'd have been dead long ago. And it's the same with you two. Look at us, at our advanced years, carousing as the young ones don't dare, sleeping out in the open on the ground, never sheltered from frost nor rain nor storm, never afraid of pneumonia or rheumatism that would put half the young ones on their backs in hospital."

He broke off to mix another drink, and Fatty took up the tale.

"And we've had our fun," he boasted, "and speaking of sweethearts and all," he cribbed from Kipling, "'We've rogued and we've ranged-'"

"'In our time,'" Slim completed the crib for him.

"I should say so, I should say so," Fatty confirmed. "And been loved by princesses-at least I have."

"Go on and tell us about it," Whiskers urged. "The night's young, and why shouldn't we remember back to the roofs of kings?"

Nothing loth, Fatty cleared his throat for the recital and cast about in his mind for the best way to begin.

"It must be known that I came of good family. Percival Delaney, let us say, yes, let us say Percival Delaney, was not unknown at Oxford once upon a time-not for scholarship, I am frank to admit; but the gay young dogs of that day, if any be yet alive, would remember him-“

“My people came over with the Conqueror,” Whiskers interrupted, extending his hand to Fatty’s in acknowledgment of the introduction.

“What name?” Fatty queried. “I did not seem quite to catch it.”

“Delarouse, Chauncey Delarouse. The name will serve as well as any.”

Both completed the handshake and glanced to Slim.

“Oh, well, while we’re about it . . . “ Fatty urged.

“Bruce Cadogan Cavendish,” Slim growled morosely. “Go on, Percival, with your princesses and the roofs of kings.”

“Oh, I was a rare young devil,” Percival obliged, “after I played ducks and drakes at home and sported out over the world. And I was some figure of a man before I lost my shape-polo, steeple-chasing, boxing. I won medals at buckjumping in Australia, and I held more than several swimming records from the quarter of a mile up. Women turned their heads to look when I went by. The women! God bless them!”

And Fatty, alias Percival Delaney, a grotesque of manhood, put his bulgy hand to his puffed lips and kissed audibly into the starry vault of the sky.

“And the Princess!” he resumed, with another kiss to the stars. “She was as fine a figure of a woman as I was a man, as high-spirited and courageous, as reckless and dare-devilish. Lord, Lord, in the water she was a mermaid, a sea-goddess. And when it came to blood, beside her I was parvenu. Her royal line traced back into the mists of antiquity.

“She was not a daughter of a fair-skinned folk. Tawny golden was she, with golden-brown eyes, and her hair that fell to her knees was blue-black and straight, with just the curly tendrilly tendency that gives to woman’s hair its charm. Oh, there were no kinks in it, any more than were there kinks in the hair of her entire genealogy. For she was Polynesian, glowing, golden, lovely and lovable, royal Polynesian.”

Again he paused to kiss his hand to the memory of her, and Slim, alias Bruce Cadogan Cavendish, took advantage to interject:

“Huh! Maybe you didn’t shine in scholarship, but at least you gleaned a vocabulary out of Oxford.”

“And in the South Seas garnered a better vocabulary from the lexicon of Love,” Percival was quick on the uptake.

“It was the island of Talofa,” he went on, “meaning love, the Isle of Love, and it was her island. Her father, the king, an old man, sat on his mats with paralysed knees and drank squareface gin all day and most of the night, out of grief, sheer grief. She, my princess, was the only issue, her brother having been lost in their double canoe in a hurricane while coming up from a voyage to Samoa. And among the Polynesians the royal women have equal right with the men to rule. In fact, they trace their genealogies always by the female line."

To this both Chauncey Delarouse and Bruce Cadogan Cavendish nodded prompt affirmation.

"Ah," said Percival, "I perceive you both know the South Seas, wherefore, without undue expenditure of verbiage on my part, I am assured that you will appreciate the charm of my princess, the Princess Tui-nui of Talofa, the Princess of the Isle of Love."

He kissed his hand to her, sipped from his condensed milk can a man-size drink of druggist's alcohol, and to her again kissed her hand.

"But she was coy, and ever she fluttered near to me but never near enough. When my arm went out to her to girdle her, presto, she was not there. I knew, as never before, nor since, the thousand dear and delightful anguishes of love frustrated but ever resilient and beckoned on by the very goddess of love."

"Some vocabulary," Bruce Cadogan Cavendish muttered in aside to Chauncey Delarouse. But Percival Delaney was not to be deterred. He kissed his pudgy hand aloft into the night and held warmly on.

"No fond agonies of rapture deferred that were not lavished upon me by my dear Princess, herself ever a luring delight of promise flitting just beyond my reach. Every sweet lover's inferno unguessed of by Dante she led me through. Ah! Those swooning tropic nights, under our palm trees, the distant surf a langourous murmur as from some vast sea shell of mystery, when she, my Princess, all but melted to my yearning, and with her laughter, that was as silver strings by buds and blossoms smitten, all but made lunacy of my lover's ardency.

"It was by my wrestling with the champions of Talofa that I first interested her. It was by my prowess at swimming that I awoke her. And it was by a certain swimming deed that I won from her more than coquettish smiles and shy timidities of feigned retreat.

"We were squidding that day, out on the reef-you know how, undoubtedly, diving down the face of the wall of the reef, five fathoms, ten fathoms, any depth within reason, and shoving our squid-sticks into the likely holes and crannies of the coral where squid might be lairing. With the squid-stick, bluntly sharp at both ends, perhaps a foot long, and held crosswise in the hand, the trick was to gouge any lazying squid until he closed his tentacles around fist, stick and arm.-Then you had him, and came to the surface with him, and hit him in the head which is in the centre of him, and peeled him off into the waiting canoe. . . . And to think I used to do that!"

Percival Delaney paused a moment, a glimmer of awe on his rotund face, as he contemplated the mighty picture of his youth.

"Why,I've pulled out a squid with tentacles eight feet long, and done it under fifty feet of water. I could stay down four minutes. I've gone down, with a coral-rock to sink me, in a hundred and ten feet to clear a fouled anchor. And I could back-dive with a once-over and go in feet-first from eighty feet above the surface-"

"Quit it, delete it, cease it," Chauncey Delarouse admonished testily. "Tell of the Princess. That's what makes old blood leap again. Almost can I see her. Was she wonderful?"

Percival Delaney kissed unutterable affirmation.

"I have said she was a mermaid. She was. I know she swam thirty-six hours before being rescued, after her schooner was capsized in a double-squall. I have seen her do ninety feet and bring up pearl shell in each hand. She was wonderful. As a woman she was ravishing, sublime. I have said she was a sea-goddess. She was. Oh, for a Phidias or a Praxiteles to have made the wonder of her body immortal!

"And that day, out for squid on the reef, I was almost sick for her. Mad-I know I was mad for her. We would step over the side from the big canoe, and swim down, side by side, into the delicious depths of cool and colour, and she would look at me, as we swam, and with her eyes tantalize me to further madness. And at last, down, far down, I lost myself and reached for her. She eluded me like the mermaid she was, and I saw the laughter on her face as she fled. She fled deeper, and I knew I had her for I was between her and the surface; but in the muck coral sand of the bottom she made a churning with her squid stick. It was the old trick to escape a shark. And she worked it on me, rolling the water so that I could not see her. And when I came up, she was there ahead of me, clinging to the side of the canoe and laughing.

“Almost I would not be denied. But not for nothing was she a princess. She rested her hand on my arm and compelled me to listen. We should play a game, she said, enter into a competition for which should get the more squid, the biggest squid, and the smallest squid. Since the wagers were kisses, you can well imagine I went down on the first next dive with soul aflame.

“I got no squid. Never again in all my life have I dived for squid. Perhaps we were five fathoms down and exploring the face of the reefwall for lurking places of our prey, when it happened. I had found a likely lair and just proved it empty, when I felt or sensed the nearness of something inimical. I turned. There it was, alongside of me, and no mere fish-shark. Fully a dozen feet in length, with the unmistakable phosphorescent cat’s eye gleaming like a drowning star, I knew it for what it was, a tiger shark.

“Not ten feet to the right, probing a coral fissure with her squid stick, was the Princess, and the tiger shark was heading directly for her. My totality of thought was precipitated to consciousness in a single all-embracing flash. The man-eater must be deflected from her, and what was I, except a mad lover who would gladly fight and die, or more gladly fight and live, for his beloved? Remember, she was the woman wonderful, and I was aflame for her.

“Knowing fully the peril of my act, I thrust the blunt-sharp end of my squid-stick into the side of the shark, much as one would attract a passing acquaintance with a thumb-nudge in the ribs. And the man-eater turned on me. You know the South Seas, and you know that the tiger shark, like the bald-face grizzly of Alaska, never gives trail. The combat, fathoms deep under the sea, was on-if by combat may be named such a one-sided struggle.

“The Princess unaware, caught her squid and rose to the surface. The man-eater rushed me. I fended him off with both hands on his nose above his thousand-toothed open mouth, so that he backed me against the sharp coral. The scars are there to this day. Whenever I tried to rise, he rushed me, and I could not remain down there indefinitely without air. Whenever he rushed me, I fended him off with my hands on his nose. And I would have escaped unharmed, except for the slip of my right hand. Into his mouth it went to the elbow. His jaws closed, just below the elbow. You know how a shark’s teeth are. Once in they cannot be released. They must go through to complete the bite, but they cannot go through heavy bone. So, from just below the elbow he stripped the bone clean to the articulation of the wrist-joint, where his teeth met and my good right hand became his for an appetizer.

"But while he was doing this, I drove the thumb of my left hand, to the hilt into his eye-orifice and popped out his eye. This did not stop him. The meat had maddened him. He pursued the gushing stump of my wrist. Half a dozen times I fended with my intact arm. Then he got the poor mangled arm again, closed down, and stripped the meat off the bone from the shoulder down to the elbow-joint, where his teeth met and he was free of his second mouthful of me. But, at the same time, with my good arm, I thumbed out his remaining eye."

Percival Delaney shrugged his shoulders, ere he resumed.

"From above, those in the canoe had beheld the entire happening and were loud in praise of my deed. To this day they still sing the song of me, and tell the tale of me. And the Princess." His pause was brief but significant. "The Princess married me. . . . Oh, well-a-day and lack-a-day, the whirligig of time and fortune, the topsyturviness of luck, the wooden shoe going up and the polished heel descending a French gunboat, a conquered island kingdom of Oceania, to-day ruled over by a peasant-born, unlettered, colonial gendarme, and . . . "

He completed the sentence and the tale by burying his face in the down-tilted mouth of the condensed milk can and by gurgling the corrosive drink down his throat in thirsty gulps.

After an appropriate pause, Chauncey Delarouse, otherwise Whiskers, took up the tale.

"Far be it from me to boast of no matter what place of birth I have descended from to sit here by this fire with such as . . . as chance along. I may say, however, that I, too, was once a considerable figure of a man. I may add that it was horses, plus parents too indulgent, that exiled me out over the world. I may still wonder to query: 'Are Dover's cliffs still white?'"

"Huh!" Bruce Cadogan Cavendish sneered. "Next you'll be asking: 'How fares the old Lord Warden?'"

"And I took every liberty, and vainly, with a constitution that was iron," Whiskers hurried on. "Here I am with my three score and ten behind me, and back on that long road have I buried many a youngster that was as rare and devilish as I, but who could not stand the pace. I knew the worst too young. And now I know the worst too old. But there was a time, alas all too short, when I knew, the best.

"I, too, kiss my hand to the Princess of my heart. She was truly a princess, Polynesian, a thousand miles and more away to the eastward and the south from Delaney's Isle of Love. The natives of all around that part of the South Seas called it the Jolly Island. Their own name, the name of the people who dwelt thereon, translates delicately and justly into 'The Island of Tranquil Laughter.' On the chart you will find the erroneous name given to it by the old navigators to be Manatomana. The seafaring gentry the round ocean around called it the Adamless Eden. And the missionaries for a time called it God's Witness-so great had been their success at converting the inhabitants. As for me, it was, and ever shall be, Paradise.

"It was MY Paradise, for it was there my Princess lived. John Asibeli Tungi was king. He was full-blooded native, descended out of the oldest and highest chief-stock that traced back to Manua which was the primeval sea home of the race. Also was he known as John the Apostate. He lived a long life and apostasized frequently. First converted by the Catholics, he threw down the idols, broke the tabus, cleaned out the native priests, executed a few of the recalcitrant ones, and sent all his subjects to church.

"Next he fell for the traders, who developed in him a champagne thirst, and he shipped off the Catholic priests to New Zealand. The great majority of his subjects always followed his lead, and, having no religion at all, ensued the time of the Great Licentiousness, when by all South Seas missionaries his island, in sermons, was spoken of as Babylon.

"But the traders ruined his digestion with too much champagne, and after several years he fell for the Gospel according to the Methodists, sent his people to church, and cleaned up the beach and the trading crowd so spick and span that he would not permit them to smoke a pipe out of doors on Sunday, and, fined one of the chief traders one hundred gold sovereigns for washing his schooner's decks on the Sabbath morn.

"That was the time of the Blue Laws, but perhaps it was too rigorous for King John. Off he packed the Methodists, one fine day, exiled several hundred of his people to Samoa for sticking to Methodism, and, of all things, invented a religion of his own, with himself the figure-head of worship. In this he was aided and abetted by a renegade Fijian. This lasted five years. Maybe he grew tired of being God, or maybe it was because the

Fijian decamped with the six thousand pounds in the royal treasury; but at any rate the Second Reformed Wesleyans got him, and his entire kingdom went Wesleyan. The pioneer Wesleyan missionary he actually made prime minister, and what he did to the trading crowd was a caution. Why, in the end, King John's kingdom was blacklisted and boycotted by the traders till the revenues diminished to zero, the people went bankrupt, and King John couldn't borrow a shilling from his most powerful chief.

"By this time he was getting old, and philosophic, and tolerant, and spiritually atavistic. He fired out the Second Reformed Wesleyans, called back the exiles from Samoa, invited in the traders, held a general love-feast, took the lid off, proclaimed religious liberty and high tariff, and as for himself went back to the worship of his ancestors, dug up the idols, reinstated a few octogenarian priests, and observed the tabus. All of which was lovely for the traders, and prosperity reigned. Of course, most of his subjects followed him back into heathen worship. Yet quite a sprinkling of Catholics, Methodists and Wesleyans remained true to their beliefs and managed to maintain a few squalid, one-horse churches. But King John didn't mind, any more than did he the high times of the traders along the beach. Everything went, so long as the taxes were paid. Even when his wife, Queen Mamare, elected to become a Baptist, and invited in a little, weazened, sweet-spirited, club-footed Baptist missionary, King John did not object. All he insisted on was that these wandering religions should be self-supporting and not feed a pennyworth's out of the royal coffers.

"And now the threads of my recital draw together in the paragon of female exquisiteness-my Princess."

Whiskers paused, placed carefully on the ground his half-full condensed milk can with which he had been absently toying, and kissed the fingers of his one hand audibly aloft.

"She was the daughter of Queen Mamare. She was the woman wonderful. Unlike the Diana type of Polynesian, she was almost ethereal. She WAS ethereal, sublimated by purity, as shy and modest as a violet, as fragile-slender as a lily, and her eyes, luminous and shrinking tender, were as asphodels on the sward of heaven. She was all flower, and fire, and dew. Hers was the sweetness of the mountain rose, the gentleness of the dove. And she was all of good as well as all of beauty, devout in her belief in her mother's worship, which was the worship introduced by Ebenezer Naismith, the Baptist missionary. But make no mistake. She was no mere sweet spirit ripe for the bosom of Abraham. All of exquisite deliciousness of woman was she. She was woman, all woman, to the last sensitive quivering atom of her-

"And I? I was a wastrel of the beach. The wildest was not so wild as I, the keenest not so keen, of all that wild, keen trading crowd. It was esteemed I played the stiffest hand of poker. I was the only living man, white, brown, or black, who dared run the Kuni-kuni Passage in the dark. And on a black night I have done it under reefs in a gale of wind. Well, anyway, I had a bad reputation on a beach where there were no good reputations. I was reckless, dangerous, stopped at nothing in fight or frolic; and the trading captains used to bring boiler-sheeted prodigies from the vilest holes of the South Pacific to try and drink me under the table. I remember one, a calcined Scotchman from the New Hebrides. It was a great drinking. He died of it, and we laded him aboard ship, pickled in a cask of trade rum, and sent him back to his own place. A sample, a fair sample, of the antic tricks we cut up on the beach of Manatomana.

"And of all unthinkable things, what did I up and do, one day, but look upon the Princess to find her good and to fall in love with her. It was the real thing. I was as mad as a March hare, and after that I got only madder. I reformed. Think of that! Think of what a slip of a woman can do to a busy, roving man!-By the Lord Harry, it's true. I reformed. I went to church. Hear me! I became converted. I cleared my soul before God and kept my hands-I had two then-off the ribald crew of the beach when it laughed at this, my latest antic, and wanted to know what was my game.

"I tell you I reformed, and gave myself in passion and sincerity to a religious experience that has made me tolerant of all religion ever since. I discharged my best captain for immorality. So did I my cook, and a better never boiled water in Manatomana. For the same reason I discharged my chief clerk. And for the first time in the history of trading my schooners to the westward carried Bibles in their stock. I built a little anchorite bungalow up town on a mango-lined street squarely alongside the little house occupied by Ebenezer Naismith. And I made him my pal and comrade, and found him a veritable honey pot of sweetnesses and goodnesses. And he was a man, through and through a man. And he died long after like a man, which I would like to tell you about, were the tale of it not so deservedly long.

"It was the Princess, more than the missionary, who was responsible for my expressing my faith in works, and especially in that crowning work, the New Church, Our Church, the Queen-mother's church.

"'Our poor church,' she said to me, one night after prayer-meeting. I had been converted only a fortnight. 'It is so small its congregation can never grow. And the roof leaks. And King John, my hard-hearted father, will not contribute a penny. Yet he has a big balance in the treasury. And Manatomana is not poor. Much money is made and squandered, I know. I hear the gossip of the wild ways of the beach. Less than a month ago you lost more in one night, gambling at cards, than the cost of the upkeep of our poor church for a year.'

"And I told her it was true, but that it was before I had seen the light. (I'd had an infernal run of bad luck.) I told her I had not tasted liquor since, nor turned a card. I told her that the roof would be repaired at once, by Christian carpenters selected by her from the congregation. But she was filled with the thought of a great revival that Ebenezer Naismith could preach-she was a dear saint-and she spoke of a great church, saying:

"'You are rich. You have many schooners, and traders in far islands, and I have heard of a great contract you have signed to recruit labour for the German plantations of Upolu. They say, next to Sweitzer, you are the richest trader here. I should love to see some use of all this money placed to the glory of God. It would be a noble thing to do, and I should be proud to know the man who would do it.'

"I told her that Ebenezer Naismith would preach the revival, and that I would build a church great enough in which to house it.

"'As big as the Catholic church?' she asked.

"This was the ruined cathedral, built at the time when the entire population was converted, and it was a large order; but I was afire with love, and I told her that the church I would build would be even bigger.

"'But it will take money,' I explained. 'And it takes time to make money.'

"'You have much,' she said. 'Some say you have more money than my father, the King.

"'I have more credit,' I explained. 'But you do not understand money. It takes money to have credit. So, with the money I have, and the credit I have, I will work to make more money and credit, and the church shall be built.'

"Work! I was a surprise to myself. It is an amazement, the amount of time a man finds on his hands after he's given up carousing, and gambling, and all the time-eating diversions of the beach. And I didn't waste a second of all my new-found time. Instead I worked it overtime. I did the work of half a dozen men. I became a driver. My captains made faster runs than ever and earned bigger bonuses, as did my supercargoes, who saw to it that my schooners did not loaf and dawdle along the way. And I saw to it that my supercargoes did see to it.

"And good! By the Lord Harry I was so good it hurt. My conscience got so expansive and fine-strung it lamed me across the shoulders to carry it around with me. Why, I even went back over my accounts and paid Sweitzer fifty quid I'd jiggered him out of in a deal in Fiji three years before. And I compounded the interest as well.

"Work! I planted sugar cane-the first commercial planting on Manatomana. I ran in cargoes of kinky-heads from Malaita, which is in the Solomons, till I had twelve hundred of the blackbirds putting in cane. And I sent a schooner clear to Hawaii to bring back a dismantled sugar mill and a German who said he knew the field-end of cane. And he did, and he charged me three hundred dollars screw a month, and I took hold of the mill-end. I installed the mill myself, with the help of several mechanics I brought up from Queensland.

"Of course there was a rival. His name was Motomoe. He was the very highest chief blood next to King John's. He was full native, a strapping, handsome man, with a glowering way of showing his dislikes. He certainly glowered at me when I began hanging around the palace. He went back in my history and circulated the blackest tales about me. The worst of it was that most of them were true. He even made a voyage to Apia to find things out-as if he couldn't find a plenty right there on the beach of Manatomana! And he sneered at my failing for religion, and at my going to prayer-meeting, and, most of all, at my sugar-planting. He challenged me to fight, and I kept off of him. He threatened me, and I learned in the nick of time of his plan to have me knocked on the head. You see, he wanted the Princess just as much as I did, and I wanted her more.

"She used to play the piano. So did I, once. But I never let her know after I'd heard her play the first time. And she thought her playing was wonderful, the dear, fond girl! You know the sort, the mechanical one-two-three tum-tum-tum school-girl stuff. And now I'll tell you something funnier. Her playing WAS wonderful to me. The gates of heaven opened to me when she played. I can see myself now, worn out and dog-tired after the long day, lying on the mats of the palace veranda and gazing upon her at the piano, myself in a perfect idiocy of bliss. Why, this idea she had of her fine playing was the one flaw in her deliciousness of perfection, and I loved her for it. It kind of brought her within my human reach. Why, when she played her one-two-three, tum-tum-tum, I was in the seventh heaven of bliss. My weariness fell from me. I loved her, and my love for her was clean as flame, clean as my love for God. And do you know, into my fond lover's fancy continually intruded the thought that God in most ways must look like her.

"-That's right, Bruce Cadogan Cavendish, sneer as you like. But I tell you that's love that I've been describing. That's all. It's love. It's the realest, purest, finest thing that can happen to a man. And I know what I'm talking about. It happened to me."

Whiskers, his beady squirrel's eye glittering from out his ruined eyebrow like a live coal in a jungle ambush, broke off long enough to down a sedative draught from his condensed milk can and to mix another.

"The cane," he resumed, wiping his prodigious mat of face hair with the back of his hand. "It matured in sixteen months in that climate, and I was ready, just ready and no more, with the mill for the grinding. Naturally, it did not all mature at once, but I had planted in such succession that I could grind for nine months steadily, while more was being planted and the ratoons were springing up.

"I had my troubles the first several days. If it wasn't one thing the matter with the mill, it was another. On the fourth day, Ferguson, my engineer, had to shut down several hours in order to remedy his own troubles. I was bothered by the feeder. After having the niggers (who had been feeding the cane) pour cream of lime on the rollers to keep everything sweet, I sent them out to join the cane-cutting squads. So I was all alone at that end, just as Ferguson started up the mill, just as I discovered what was the matter with the feed-rollers, and just as Motomoe strolled up.

"He stood there, in Norfolk jacket, pigskin puttees, and all the rest of the fashionable get-up out of a bandbox, sneering at me covered with filth and grease to the eyebrows and looking like a navvy. And, the rollers now white from the lime, I'd just seen what was wrong. The rollers were not in plumb. One side crushed the cane well, but the other side was too open. I shoved my fingers in on that side. The big, toothed cogs on the rollers did not touch my fingers. And yet, suddenly, they did. With the grip of ten thousand devils, my finger-tips were caught, drawn in, and pulped to-well, just pulp. And, like a slick of cane, I had started on my way. There was no stopping me. Ten thousand horses could not have pulled me back. There was nothing to stop me. Hand, arm, shoulder, head, and chest, down to the toes of me, I was doomed to feed through.

"It did hurt. It hurt so much it did not hurt me at all. Quite detached, almost may I say, I looked on my hand being ground up, knuckle by knuckle, joint by joint, the back of the hand, the wrist, the forearm, all in order slowly and inevitably feeding in. O engineer hoist by thine own petard! O sugar-maker crushed by thine own cane-crusher!

"Motomoe sprang forward involuntarily, and the sneer was chased from his face by an expression of solicitude. Then the beauty of the situation dawned on him, and he chuckled and grinned. No, I didn't expect anything of him. Hadn't he tried to knock me on the head? What could he do anyway? He didn't know anything about engines.

"I yelled at the top of my lungs to Ferguson to shut off the engine, but the roar of the machinery drowned my voice. And there I stood, up to the elbow and feeding right on in. Yes, it did hurt. There were some astonishing twinges when special nerves were shredded and dragged out by the roots. But I remember that I was surprised at the time that it did not hurt worse.

"Motomoe made a movement that attracted my attention. At the same time he growled out loud, as if he hated himself, 'I'm a fool.' What he had done was to pick up a cane-knife-you know the kind, as big as a machete and as heavy. And I was grateful to him in advance for putting me out of my misery. There wasn't any sense in slowly feeding in till my head was crushed, and already my arm was pulped half way from elbow to shoulder, and the pulping was going right on. So I was grateful, as I bent my head to the blow.

"'Get your head out of the way, you idiot!' he barked at me.

"And then I understood and obeyed. I was a big man, and he took two hacks to do it; but he hacked my arm off just outside the shoulder and dragged me back and laid me down on the cane.

"Yes, the sugar paid-enormously; and I built for the Princess the church of her saintly dream, and . . . she married me."

He partly assuaged his thirst, and uttered his final word.

"Alackaday! Shuttlecock and battle-dore. And this at, the end of it all, lined with boilerplate that even alcohol will not corrode and that only alcohol will tickle. Yet have I lived, and I kiss my hand to the dear dust of my Princess long asleep in the great mausoleum of King John that looks across the Vale of Manona to the alien flag that floats over the bungalow of the British Government House. . . "

Fatty pledged him sympathetically, and sympathetically drank out of his own small can. Bruce Cadogan Cavendish glared into the fire with implacable bitterness. He was a man who preferred to drink by himself. Across the thin lips that composed the cruel slash of his mouth played twitches of mockery that caught Fatty's eye. And Fatty, making sure first that his rock-chunk was within reach, challenged.

"Well, how about yourself, Bruce Cadogan Cavendish? It's your turn."

The other lifted bleak eyes that bored into Fatty's until he physically betrayed uncomfortableness.

"I've lived a hard life," Slim grated harshly. "What do I know about love passages?"

"No man of your build and make-up could have escaped them," Fatty wheedled.

"And what of it?" Slim snarled. "It's no reason for a gentleman to boast of amorous triumphs."

"Oh, go on, be a good fellow," Fatty urged. "The night's still young. We've still some drink left. Delarouse and I have contributed our share. It isn't often that three real ones like us get together for a telling. Surely you've got at least one adventure in love you aren't ashamed to tell about-"

Bruce Cadogan Cavendish pulled forth his iron quoit and seemed to debate whether or not he should brain the other. He sighed, and put back the quoit.

"Very well, if you will have it," he surrendered with manifest reluctance. "Like you two, I have had a remarkable constitution. And right now, speaking of armour-plate lining, I could drink the both of you down when you were at your prime. Like you two, my beginnings were far distant and different. That I am marked with the hall-mark of gentlehood there is no discussion . . . unless either of you care to discuss the matter now . . . "

His one hand slipped into his pocket and clutched the quoit. Neither of his auditors spoke nor betrayed any awareness of his menace.

"It occurred a thousand miles to the westward of Manatomana, on the island of Tagalag," he continued abruptly, with an air of saturnine disappointment in that there had been no discussion. "But first I must tell you of how I got to Tagalag. For reasons I shall not mention, by paths of descent I shall not describe, in the crown of my manhood and the prime of my devilishness in which Oxford renegades and racing younger sons had nothing on me, I found myself master and owner of a schooner so well known that she shall remain historically nameless. I was running blackbird labour from the west South Pacific and the Coral Sea to the plantations of Hawaii and the nitrate mines of Chili-"

"It was you who cleaned out the entire population of-" Fatty exploded, ere he could check his speech.

The one hand of Bruce Cadogan Cavendish flashed pocketward and flashed back with the quoit balanced ripe for business.

"Proceed," Fatty sighed. "I . . . I have quite forgotten what I was going to say."

"Beastly funny country over that way," the narrator drawled with perfect casualness. "You've read this Sea Wolf stuff-"

"You weren't the Sea Wolf," Whiskers broke in with involuntary positiveness.

"No, sir," was the snarling answer. "The Sea Wolf's dead, isn't he? And I'm still alive, aren't I?"

"Of course, of course," Whiskers conceded. "He suffocated head-first in the mud off a wharf in Victoria a couple of years back."

"As I was saying-and I don't like interruptions," Bruce Cadogan Cavendish proceeded, "it's a beastly funny country over that way. I was at Taki-Tiki, a low island that politically belongs to the Solomons, but that geologically doesn't at all, for the Solomons are high islands. Ethnographically it belongs to Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia, because all the breeds of the South Pacific have gravitated to it by canoe-drift and intricately, degeneratively, and amazingly interbred. The scum of the scrapings of the bottom of the human pit, biologically speaking, resides in Taka-Tiki. And I know the bottom and whereof I speak.

"It was a beastly funny time of it I had, diving out shell, fishing beche-de-mer, trading hoop-iron and hatchets for copra and ivory-nuts, running niggers and all the rest of it. Why, even in Fiji the Lotu was having a hard time of it and the chiefs still eating long-pig. To the westward it was fierce-funny little black kinky-heads, man-eaters the last Jack of them, and the jackpot fat and spilling over with wealth-“

“Jack-pots?” Fatty queried. At sight of an irritable movement, he added: “You see, I never got over to the West like Delarouse and you.”

“They’re all head-hunters. Heads are valuable, especially a white man’s head. They decorate the canoe-houses and devil-devil houses with them. Each village runs a jack-pot, and everybody antes. Whoever brings in a white man’s head takes the pot. If there aren’t openers for a long time, the pot grows to tremendous proportions. Beastly funny, isn’t it?

“I know. Didn’t a Holland mate die on me of blackwater? And didn’t I win a pot myself? It was this way. We were lying at Lango-lui at the time. I never let on, and arranged the affair with Johnny, my boat-steerer. He was a kinky-head himself from Port Moresby. He cut the dead mate’s head off and sneaked ashore in the might, while I whanged away with my rifle as if I were trying to get him. He opened the pot with the mate’s head, and got it, too. Of course, next day I sent in a landing boat, with two covering boats, and fetched him off with the loot.”

“How big was the pot?” Whiskers asked. “I heard of a pot at Orla worth eighty quid.”

“To commence with,” Slim answered, “there were forty fat pigs, each worth a fathom of prime shell-money, and shell-money worth a quid a fathom. That was two hundred dollars right there. There were ninety-eight fathoms of shell-money, which is pretty close to five hundred in itself. And there were twenty-two gold sovereigns. I split it four ways: one-fourth to Johnny, one-fourth to the ship, one-fourth to me as owner, and one-fourth to me as skipper. Johnny never complained. He’d never had so much wealth all at one time in his life. Besides, I gave him a couple of the mate’s old shirts. And I fancy the mate’s head is still there decorating the canoe-house.”

“Not exactly Christian burial of a Christian,” Whiskers observed.

“But a lucrative burial,” Slim retorted. “I had to feed the rest of the mate over-side to the sharks for nothing. Think of feeding an eight-hundred-dollar head along with it. It would have been criminal waste and stark lunacy.

“Well, anyway, it was all beastly funny, over there to the westward. And, without telling you the scrape I got into at Taki-Tiki, except that I sailed away with two hundred kinky-heads for Queensland labour, and for my manner of collecting them had two British ships of war combing the Pacific for me, I changed my course and ran to the westward thinking to dispose of the lot to the Spanish plantations on Bangar.

"Typhoon season. We caught it. The MERRY MIST was my schooner's name, and I had thought she was stoutly built until she hit that typhoon. I never saw such seas. They pounded that stout craft to pieces, literally so. The sticks were jerked out of her, deckhouses splintered to match-wood, rails ripped off, and, after the worst had passed, the covering boards began to go. We just managed to repair what was left of one boat and keep the schooner afloat only till the sea went down barely enough to get away. And we outfitted that boat in a hurry. The carpenter and I were the last, and we had to jump for it as he went down. There were only four of us-"

"Lost all the niggers?" Whiskers inquired.

"Some of them swam for some time," Slim replied. "But I don't fancy they made the land. We were ten days' in doing it. And we had a spanking breeze most of the way. And what do you think we had in the boat with us? Cases of square-face gin and cases of dynamite. Funny, wasn't it? Well, it got funnier later on. Oh, there was a small beaker of water, a little salt horse, and some salt-water-soaked sea biscuit-enough to keep us alive to Tagalag.

"Now Tagalag is the disappointingest island I've ever beheld. It shows up out of the sea so as you can make its fall twenty miles off. It is a volcano cone thrust up out of deep sea, with a segment of the crater wall broken out. This gives sea entrance to the crater itself, and makes a fine sheltered harbour. And that's all. Nothing lives there. The outside and the inside of the crater are too steep. At one place, inside, is a patch of about a thousand coconut palms. And that's all, as I said, saving a few insects. No four-legged thing, even a rat, inhabits the place. And it's funny, most awful funny, with all those coconuts, not even a coconut crab. The only meat-food living was schools of mullet in the harbour-fattest, finest, biggest mullet I ever laid eyes on.

"And the four of us landed on the little beach and set up housekeeping among the coconuts with a larder full of dynamite and square-face. Why don't you laugh? It's funny, I tell you. Try it some time.-Holland gin and straight coconut diet. I've never been able to look a confectioner's window in the face since. Now I'm not strong on religion like Chauncey Delarouse there, but I have some primitive ideas; and my concept of hell is an illimitable coconut plantation, stocked with cases of square-face and populated by ship-wrecked mariners. Funny? It must make the devil scream.

"You know, straight coconut is what the agriculturists call an unbalanced ration. It certainly unbalanced our digestions. We got so that whenever hunger took an extra bite at us, we took another drink of gin. After a couple of weeks of it, Olaf, a squarehead sailor, got an idea. It came when he was full of gin, and we, being in the same fix, just watched him shove a cap and short fuse into a stick of dynamite and stroll down toward the boat.

"It dawned on me that he was going to shoot fish if there were any about; but the sun was beastly hot, and I just reclined there and hoped he'd have luck.

"About half an hour after he disappeared we heard the explosion. But he didn't come back. We waited till the cool of sunset, and down on the beach found what had become of him. The boat was there all right, grounded by the prevailing breeze, but there was no Olaf. He would never have to eat coconut again. We went back, shakier than ever, and cracked another square-face.

"The next day the cook announced that he would rather take his chance with dynamite than continue trying to exist on coconut, and that, though he didn't know anything about dynamite, he knew a sight too much about coconut. So we bit the detonator down for him, shoved in a fuse, and picked him a good fire-stick, while he jolted up with a couple more stiff ones of gin.

"It was the same programme as the day before. After a while we heard the explosion and at twilight went down to the boat, from which we scraped enough of the cook for a funeral.

"The carpenter and I stuck it out two days more, then we drew straws for it and it was his turn. We parted with harsh words; for he wanted to take a square-face along to refresh himself by the way, while I was set against running any chance of wasting the gin. Besides, he had more than he could carry then, and he wobbled and staggered as he walked.

"Same thing, only there was a whole lot of him left for me to bury, because he'd prepared only half a stick. I managed to last it out till next day, when, after duly fortifying myself, I got sufficient courage to tackle the dynamite. I used only a third of a stick-you know, short fuse, with the end split so as to hold the head of a safety match. That's where I mended my predecessors' methods. Not using the match-head, they'd too-long fuses. Therefore, when they spotted a school of mullet; and lighted the fuse, they had to hold the dynamite till the fuse burned short before they threw it. If they threw it too soon, it wouldn't go off the instant it hit the water, while the splash of it would frighten the mullet away. Funny stuff dynamite. At any rate, I still maintain mine was the safer method.

"I picked up a school of mullet before I'd been rowing five minutes. Fine big fat ones they were, and I could smell them over the fire. When I stood up, fire-stick in one hand, dynamite stick in the other, my knees were knocking together. Maybe it was the gin, or the anxiousness, or the weakness and the hunger, and maybe it was the result of all of them, but at any rate I was all of a shake. Twice I failed to touch the fire-stick to the dynamite. Then I did, heard the match-head splutter, and let her go.

"Now I don't know what happened to the others, but I know what I did. I got turned about. Did you ever stem a strawberry and throw the strawberry away and pop the stem into your mouth? That's what I did. I threw the fire-stick into the water after the mullet and held on to the dynamite. And my arm went off with the stick when it went off. . . . "

Slim investigated the tomato-can for water to mix himself a drink, but found it empty. He stood up.

"Heigh ho," he yawned, and started down the path to the river.

In several minutes he was back. He mixed the due quantity of river slush with the alcohol, took a long, solitary drink, and stared with bitter moodiness into the fire.

"Yes, but . . . " Fatty suggested. "What happened then?"

"Oh," sad Slim. "Then the princess married me, of course."

"But you were the only person left, and there wasn't any princess . . . " Whiskers cried out abruptly, and then let his voice trail away to embarrassed silence.

Slim stared unblinkingly into the fire.

Percival Delaney and Chauncey Delarouse looked at each other. Quietly, in solemn silence, each with his one arm aided the one arm of the other in rolling and tying his bundle. And in silence, bundles slung on shoulders, they went away out of the circle of firelight. Not until they reached the top of the railroad embankment did they speak.

"No gentleman would have done it," said Whiskers.

"No gentleman would have done it," Fatty agreed.

Glen Ellen, California,
SEPTEMBER 26, 1916.

The Prodigal Father

I

Josiah Childs was ordinarily an ordinary-appearing, prosperous business man. He wore a sixty-dollar, business-man's suit, his shoes were comfortable and seemly and made from the current last, his tie, collars and cuffs were just what all prosperous business men wore, and an up-to-date, business-man's derby was his wildest adventure in head-gear. Oakland, California, is no sleepy country town, and Josiah Childs, as the leading grocer of a rushing Western metropolis of three hundred thousand, appropriately lived, acted, and dressed the part.

But on this morning, before the rush of custom began, his appearance at the store, while it did not cause a riot, was sufficiently startling to impair for half an hour the staff's working efficiency. He nodded pleasantly to the two delivery drivers loading their wagons for the first trip of the morning, and cast upward the inevitable, complacent glance at the sign that ran across the front of the building — CHILDS' CASH STORE. The lettering, not too large, was of dignified black and gold, suggestive of noble spices, aristocratic condiments, and everything of the best (which was no more than to be expected of a scale of prices ten per cent. higher than any other grocery in town). But what Josiah Childs did not see as he turned his back on the drivers and entered, was the helpless and mutual fall of surprise those two worthies perpetrated on each other's necks. They clung together for support.

"Did you catch the kicks, Bill?" one moaned.

"Did you pipe the head-piece?" Bill moaned back.

"Now if he was goin' to a masquerade ball...."

"Or attendin' a reunion of the Rough Riders...."

"Or goin' huntin' bear...."

"Or swearin' off his taxes...."

"Instead of goin' all the way to the effete East — Monkton says he's going clear to Boston...."

The two drivers held each other apart at arm's length, and fell limply together again.

For Josiah Childs' outfit was all their actions connotated. His hat was a light fawn, stiff-rimmed John B. Stetson, circled by a band of Mexican stamped leather. Over a blue flannel shirt, set off by a drooping Windsor tie, was a rough-and-ready coat of large-ribbed corduroy. Pants of the same material were thrust into high-laced shoes of the sort worn by surveyors, explorers, and linemen.

A clerk at a near counter almost petrified at sight of his employer's bizarre rig. Monkton, recently elevated to the managership, gasped, swallowed, and maintained his imperturbable attentiveness. The lady bookkeeper, glancing down from her glass eyrie on the inside balcony, took one look and buried her giggles in the day book. Josiah Childs saw most of all this, but he did not mind. He was starting on his vacation, and his head and heart were buzzing with plans and anticipations of the most adventurous vacation he had taken in ten years. Under his eyelids burned visions of East Falls, Connecticut, and of all the home scenes he had been born to and brought up in. Oakland, he was thoroughly aware, was more modern than East Falls, and the excitement caused by his garb was only to be expected. Undisturbed by the sensation he knew he was creating among his employés, he moved about, accompanied by his manager, making last suggestions, giving final instructions, and radiating fond, farewell glances at all the loved details of the business he had built out of nothing.

He had a right to be proud of Childs' Cash Store. Twelve years before he had landed in Oakland with fourteen dollars and forty-three cents. Cents did not circulate so far West, and after the fourteen dollars were gone, he continued to carry the three pennies in his pocket for a weary while. Later, when he had got a job clerking in a small grocery for eleven dollars a week, and had begun sending a small monthly postal order to one, Agatha Childs, East Falls, Connecticut, he invested the three coppers in postage stamps. Uncle Sam could not reject his own lawful coin of the realm.

Having spent all his life in cramped New England, where sharpness and shrewdness had been whetted to razor-edge on the harsh stone of meagre circumstance, he had found himself abruptly in the loose and free-and-easy West, where men thought in thousand-dollar bills and newsboys dropped dead at sight of copper cents. Josiah Childs bit like fresh acid into the new industrial and business conditions. He had vision. He saw so many ways of making money all at once, that at first his brain was in a whirl.

At the same time, being sane and conservative, he had resolutely avoided speculation. The solid and substantial called to him. Clerking at eleven dollars a week, he took note of the lost opportunities, of the openings for safe enterprise, of the countless leaks in the business. If, despite all this, the boss could make a good living, what couldn't he, Josiah Childs, do with his Connecticut training? It was like a bottle of wine to a thirsty hermit, this coming to the active, generous-spending West after thirty-five years in East Falls, the last fifteen of which had been spent in humdrum clerking in the humdrum East Falls general store. Josiah Childs' head buzzed with the easy possibilities he saw. But he did not lose his head. No detail was overlooked. He spent his spare hours in studying Oakland, its people, how they made their money, and why they spent it and where. He walked the central streets, watching the drift of the buying crowds, even counting them and compiling the statistics in various notebooks. He studied the general credit system of the trade, and the particular credit systems of the different districts. He could tell to a dot the average wage or salary earned by the householders of any locality, and he made it a point of thoroughness to know every locality from the waterfront slums to the aristocratic Lake Merritt and Piedmont sections, from West Oakland, where dwelt the railroad employés, to the semi-farmers of Fruitvale at the opposite end of the city.

Broadway, on the main street and in the very heart of the shopping district, where no grocer had ever been insane enough to dream of establishing a business, was his ultimate selection. But that required money, while he had to start from the smallest of beginnings. His first store was on lower Filbert, where lived the nail-workers. In half a year, three other little corner groceries went out of business while he was compelled to enlarge his premises. He understood the principle of large sales at small profits, of stable qualities of goods, and of a square deal. He had glimpsed, also, the secret of advertising. Each week he set forth one article that sold at a loss to him. This was not an advertised loss, but an absolute loss. His one clerk prophesied impending bankruptcy when butter, that cost Childs thirty cents, was sold for twenty-five cents, when twenty-two-cent coffee was passed across the counter at eighteen cents. The neighbourhood housewives came for these bargains and remained to buy other articles that sold at a profit. Moreover, the whole neighbourhood came quickly to know Josiah Childs, and the busy crowd of buyers in his store was an attraction in itself.

But Josiah Childs made no mistake. He knew the ultimate foundation on which his prosperity rested. He studied the nail works until he came to know as much about them as the managing directors. Before the first whisper had stirred abroad, he sold his store, and with a modest sum of ready cash went in search of a new location. Six months later the nail works closed down, and closed down forever.

His next store was established on Adeline Street, where lived a comfortable, salaried class. Here, his shelves carried a higher-grade and a more diversified stock. By the same old method, he drew his crowd. He established a delicatessen counter. He dealt directly with the farmers, so that his butter and eggs were not only always dependable but were a shade better than those sold by the finest groceries in the city. One of his specialties was Boston baked beans, and so popular did it become that the Twin Cabin Bakery paid him better than handsomely for the privilege of taking it over. He made time to study the farmers, the very apples they grew, and certain farmers he taught how properly to make cider. As a sideline, his New England apple cider proved his greatest success, and before long, after he had invaded San Francisco, Berkeley, and Alameda, he ran it as an independent business.

But always his eyes were fixed on Broadway. Only one other intermediate move did he make, which was to as near as he could get to the Ashland Park Tract, where every purchaser of land was legally pledged to put up no home that should cost less than four thousand dollars. After that came Broadway. A strange swirl had come in the tide of the crowd. The drift was to Washington Street, where real estate promptly soared while on Broadway it was as if the bottom had fallen out. One big store after another, as the leases expired, moved to Washington.

The crowd will come back, Josiah Childs said, but he said it to himself. He knew the crowd. Oakland was growing, and he knew why it was growing. Washington Street was too narrow to carry the increasing traffic. Along Broadway, in the physical nature of things, the electric cars, ever in greater numbers, would have to run. The realty dealers said that the crowd would never come back, while the leading merchants followed the crowd. And then it was, at a ridiculously low figure, that Josiah Childs got a long lease on a modern, Class A building on Broadway, with a buying option at a fixed price. It was the beginning of the end for Broadway, said the realty dealers, when a grocery was established in its erstwhile sacred midst. Later, when the crowd did come back, they said Josiah Childs was lucky. Also, they whispered among themselves that he had cleared at least fifty thousand on the transaction.

It was an entirely different store from his previous ones. There were no more bargains. Everything was of the superlative best, and superlative best prices were charged. He catered to the most expensive trade in town. Only those who could carelessly afford to pay ten per cent. more than anywhere else, patronised him, and so excellent was his service that they could not afford to go elsewhere. His horses and delivery wagons were more expensive and finer than any one else's in town. He paid his drivers, and clerks, and bookkeepers higher wages than any other store could dream of paying. As a result, he got more efficient men, and they rendered him and his patrons a more satisfying service. In short, to deal at Childs' Cash Store became almost the infallible index of social status.

To cap everything, came the great San Francisco earthquake and fire, which caused one hundred thousand people abruptly to come across the Bay and live in Oakland. Not least to profit from so extraordinary a boom, was Josiah Childs. And now, after twelve years' absence, he was departing on a visit to East Falls, Connecticut. In the twelve years he had not received a letter from Agatha, nor had he seen even a photograph of his and Agatha's boy.

Agatha and he had never got along together. Agatha was masterful. Agatha had a tongue. She was strong on old-fashioned morality. She was unlovely in her rectitude. Josiah never could quite make out how he had happened to marry her. She was two years his senior, and had long ranked as an old maid She had taught school, and was known by the young generation as the sternest disciplinarian in its experience. She had become set in her ways, and when she married it was merely an exchange of a number of pupils for one. Josiah had to stand the hectoring and nagging that thitherto had been distributed among many. As to how the marriage came about, his Uncle Isaac nearly hit it off one day when he said in confidence: "Josiah, when Agatha married you it was a case of marrying a struggling young man. I reckon you was overpowered. Or maybe you broke your leg and couldn't get away."

"Uncle Isaac," Josiah answered, "I didn't break my leg. I ran my dangdest, but she just plum run me down and out of breath."

"Strong in the wind, eh?" Uncle Isaac chuckled.

"We've ben married five years now," Josiah agreed, "and I've never known her to lose it."

"And never will," Uncle Isaac added.

This conversation had taken place in the last days, and so dismal an outlook proved too much for Josiah Childs. Meek he was, under Agatha's firm tuition, but he was very healthy, and his promise of life was too long for his patience. He was only thirty-three, and he came of a long-lived stock. Thirty-three more years with Agatha and Agatha's nagging was too hideous to contemplate. So, between a sunset and a rising, Josiah Childs disappeared from East Falls. And from that day, for twelve years, he had received no letter from her. Not that it was her fault. He had carefully avoided letting her have his address. His first postal money orders were sent to her from Oakland, but in the years that followed he had arranged his remittances so that they bore the scattered postmarks of most of the states west of the Rockies.

But twelve years, and the confidence born of deserved success, had softened his memories. After all, she was the mother of his boy, and it was incontestable that she had always meant well. Besides, he was not working so hard now, and he had more time to think of things besides his business. He wanted to see the boy, whom he had never seen and who had turned three before his father ever learned he was a father. Then, too, homesickness had begun to crawl in him. In a dozen years he had not seen snow, and he was always wondering if New England fruits and berries had not a finer tang than those of California. Through hazy vistas he saw the old New England life, and he wanted to see it again in the flesh before he died.

And, finally, there was duty. Agatha was his wife. He would bring her back with him to the West. He felt that he could stand it. He was a man, now, in the world of men. He ran things, instead of being run, and Agatha would quickly find it out. Nevertheless, he wanted Agatha to come to him for his own sake. So it was that he had put on his frontier rig. He would be the prodigal father, returning as penniless as when he left, and it would be up to her whether or not she killed the fatted calf. Empty of hand, and looking it, he would come back wondering if he could get his old job in the general store. Whatever followed would be Agatha's affair.

By the time he said good-bye to his staff and emerged on the sidewalk, five more of his delivery wagons were backed up and loading.

He ran his eye proudly over them, took a last fond glance at the black-and-gold letters, and signalled the electric car at the corner.

II

He ran up to East Falls from New York. In the Pullman smoker he became acquainted with several business men. The conversation, turning on the West, was quickly led by him. As president of the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, he was an authority. His words carried weight, and he knew what he was talking about, whether it was Asiatic trade, the Panama Canal, or the Japanese coolie question. It was very exhilarating, this stimulus of respectful attention accorded him by these prosperous Eastern men, and before he knew it he was at East Falls.

He was the only person who alighted, and the station was deserted. Nobody was there expecting anybody. The long twilight of a January evening was beginning, and the bite of the keen air made him suddenly conscious that his clothing was saturated with tobacco smoke. He shuddered involuntarily. Agatha did not tolerate tobacco. He half-moved to toss the fresh-lighted cigar away, then it was borne in upon him that this was the old East Falls atmosphere overpowering him, and he resolved to combat it, thrusting the cigar between his teeth and gripping it with the firmness of a dozen years of Western resolution.

A few steps brought him into the little main street. The chilly, stilted aspect of it shocked him. Everything seemed frosty and pinched, just as the cutting air did after the warm balminess of California. Only several persons, strangers to his recollection, were abroad, and they favoured him with incurious glances. They were wrapped in an uncongenial and frosty imperviousness. His first impression was surprise at his surprise. Through the wide perspective of twelve years of Western life, he had consistently and steadily discounted the size and importance of East Falls; but this was worse than all discounting. Things were more meagre than he had dreamed. The general store took his breath away. Countless myriads of times he had contrasted it with his own spacious emporium, but now he saw that in justice he had overdone it. He felt certain that it could not accommodate two of his delicatessen counters, and he knew that he could lose all of it in one of his storerooms.

He took the familiar turning to the right at the head of the street, and as he plodded along the slippery walk he decided that one of the first things he must do was to buy sealskin cap and gloves. The thought of sleighing cheered him for a moment, until, now on the outskirts of the village, he was sanitarily perturbed by the adjacency of dwelling houses and barns. Some were even connected. Cruel memories of bitter morning chores oppressed him. The thought of chapped hands and chilblains was almost terrifying, and his heart sank at sight of the double storm-windows, which he knew were solidly fastened and unraisable, while the small ventilating panes, the size of ladies' handkerchiefs, smote him with sensations of suffocation. Agatha'll like California, he thought, calling to his mind visions of roses in dazzling sunshine and the wealth of flowers that bloomed the twelve months round.

And then, quite illogically, the years were bridged and the whole leaden weight of East Falls descended upon him like a damp sea fog. He fought it from him, thrusting it off and aside by sentimental thoughts on the "honest snow," the "fine elms," the "sturdy New England spirit," and the "great homecoming." But at sight of Agatha's house he wilted. Before he knew it, with a recrudescent guilty pang, he had tossed the half-smoked cigar away and slackened his pace until his feet dragged in the old lifeless, East Falls manner. He tried to remember that he was the owner of Childs' Cash Store, accustomed to command, whose words were listened to with respect in the Employers' Association, and who wielded the gavel at the meetings of the Chamber of Commerce. He strove to conjure visions of the letters in black and gold, and of the string of delivery wagons backed up to the sidewalk. But Agatha's New England spirit was as sharp as the frost, and it travelled to him through solid house-walls and across the intervening hundred yards.

Then he became aware that despite his will he had thrown the cigar away. This brought him an awful vision. He saw himself going out in the frost to the woodshed to smoke. His memory of Agatha he found less softened by the lapse of years than it had been when three thousand miles intervened. It was unthinkable. No; he couldn't do it. He was too old, too used to smoking all over the house, to do the woodshed stunt now. And everything depended on how he began. He would put his foot down. He would smoke in the house that very night ... in the kitchen, he feebly amended. No, by George, he would smoke now. He would arrive smoking. Mentally imprecating the cold, he exposed his bare hands and lighted another cigar. His manhood seemed to flare up with the match. He would show her who was boss. Right from the drop of the hat he would show her.

Josiah Childs had been born in this house. And it was long before he was born that his father had built it. Across the low stone fence, Josiah could see the kitchen porch and door, the connected woodshed, and the several outbuildings. Fresh from the West, where everything was new and in constant flux, he was astonished at the lack of change. Everything was as it had always been. He could almost see himself, a boy, doing the chores. There, in the woodshed, how many cords of wood had he bucksawed and split! Well, thank the Lord, that was past.

The walk to the kitchen showed signs of recent snow-shovelling. That had been one of his tasks. He wondered who did it now, and suddenly remembered that his own son must be twelve. In another moment he would have knocked at the kitchen door, but the skreek of a bucksaw from the woodshed led him aside. He looked in and saw a boy hard at work. Evidently, this was his son. Impelled by the wave of warm emotion that swept over him, he all but rushed in upon the lad. He controlled himself with an effort.

"Father here?" he asked curtly, though from under the stiff brim of his John B. Stetson he studied the boy closely.

Sizable for his age, he thought. A mite spare in the ribs maybe, and that possibly due to rapid growth. But the face strong and pleasing and the eyes like Uncle Isaac's. When all was said, a darn good sample.

"No, sir," the boy answered, resting on the saw-buck.

"Where is he?"

"At sea," was the answer.

Josiah Childs felt a something very akin to relief and joy tingle through him. Agatha had married again — evidently a seafaring man. Next, came an ominous, creepy sensation. Agatha had committed bigamy. He remembered Enoch Arden, read aloud to the class by the teacher in the old schoolhouse, and began to think of himself as a hero. He would do the heroic. By George, he would. He would sneak away and get the first train for California. She would never know.

But there was Agatha's New England morality, and her New England conscience. She received a regular remittance. She knew he was alive. It was impossible that she could have done this thing. He groped wildly for a solution. Perhaps she had sold the old home, and this boy was somebody else's boy.

"What is your name?" Josiah asked.

"Johnnie," came the reply.

"Last name I mean?"

"Childs, Johnnie Childs."

"And your father's name? — first name?"

"Josiah Childs."

"And he's away at sea, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

This set Josiah wondering again.

"What kind of a man is he?"

"Oh, he's all right — a good provider, Mom says. And he is. He always sends his money home, and he works hard for it, too, Mom says. She says he always was a good worker, and he's better'n other men she ever saw. He don't smoke, or drink, or swear, or do anything he oughtn't. And he never did. He was always that way, Mom says, and she knew him all her life before ever they got married. He's a very kind man, and never hurts anybody's feelings. Mom says he's the most considerate man she ever knew."

Josiah's heart went weak. Agatha had done it after all — had taken a second husband when she knew her first was still alive. Well, he had learned charity in the West, and he could be charitable. He would go quietly away. Nobody would ever know. Though it was rather mean of her, the thought flashed through him, that she should go on cashing his remittances when she was married to so model and steady-working a seafaring husband who brought his wages home. He cudgelled his brains in an effort to remember such a man out of all the East Falls men he had known.

"What's he look like?"

"Don't know. Never saw him. He's at sea all the time. But I know how tall he is. Mom says I'm goin' to be bigger'n him, and he was five feet eleven. There's a picture of him in the album. His face is thin, and he has whiskers."

A great illumination came to Josiah. He was himself five feet eleven. He had worn whiskers, and his face had been thin in those days. And Johnnie had said his father's name was Josiah Childs. He, Josiah, was this model husband who neither smoked, swore, nor drank. He was this seafaring man whose memory had been so carefully shielded by Agatha's forgiving fiction. He warmed toward her. She must have changed mightily since he left. He glowed with penitence. Then his heart sank as he thought of trying to live up to this reputation Agatha had made for him. This boy with the trusting blue eyes would expect it of him. Well, he'd have to do it. Agatha had been almighty square with him. He hadn't thought she had it in her.

The resolve he might there and then have taken was doomed never to be, for he heard the kitchen door open to give vent to a woman's nagging, irritable voice.

"Johnnie! — you!" it cried.

How often had he heard it in the old days: "Josiah! — you!" A shiver went through him. Involuntarily, automatically, with a guilty start, he turned his hand back upward so that the cigar was hidden. He felt himself shrinking and shrivelling as she stepped out on the stoop. It was his unchanged wife, the same shrew wrinkles, with the same sour-drooping corners to the thin-lipped mouth. But there was more sourness, an added droop, the lips were thinner, and the shrew wrinkles were deeper. She swept Josiah with a hostile, withering stare.

"Do you think your father would stop work to talk to tramps?" she demanded of the boy, who visibly quailed, even as Josiah.

"I was only answering his questions," Johnnie pleaded doggedly but hopelessly. "He wanted to know — "

"And I suppose you told him," she snapped. "What business is it of his prying around? No, and he gets nothing to eat. As for you, get to work at once. I'll teach you, idling at your chores. Your father wa'n't like that. Can't I ever make you like him?"

Johnnie bent his back, and the bucksaw resumed its protesting skreek. Agatha surveyed Josiah sourly. It was patent she did not recognise him.

"You be off," she commanded harshly. "None of your snooping around here."

Josiah felt the numbness of paralysis creeping over him. He moistened his lips and tried to say something, but found himself bereft of speech.

"You be off, I say," she rasped in her high-keyed voice, "or I'll put the constable after you."

Josiah turned obediently. He heard the door slam as he went down the walk. As in a nightmare he opened the gate he had opened ten thousand times and stepped out on the sidewalk. He felt dazed. Surely it was a dream.

Very soon he would wake up with a sigh of relief. He rubbed his forehead and paused indecisively. The monotonous complaint of the bucksaw came to his ears. If that boy had any of the old Childs spirit in him, sooner or later he'd run away. Agatha was beyond the endurance of human flesh. She had not changed, unless for the worse, if such a thing were possible. That boy would surely run for it, maybe soon. Maybe now.

Josiah Childs straightened up and threw his shoulders back. The great-spirited West, with its daring and its carelessness of consequences when mere obstacles stand in the way of its desire, flamed up in him. He looked at his watch, remembered the time table, and spoke to himself, solemnly, aloud. It was an affirmation of faith:

"I don't care a hang about the law. That boy can't be crucified. I'll give her a double allowance, four times, anything, but he goes with me. She can follow on to California if she wants, but I'll draw up an agreement, in which what's what, and she'll sign it, and live up to it, by George, if she wants to stay. And she will," he added grimly. "She's got to have somebody to nag."

He opened the gate and strode back to the woodshed door. Johnnie looked up, but kept on sawing.

"What'd you like to do most of anything in the world?" Josiah demanded in a tense, low voice.

Johnnie hesitated, and almost stopped sawing. Josiah made signs for him to keep it up.

"Go to sea," Johnnie answered. "Along with my father."

Josiah felt himself trembling.

"Would you?" he asked eagerly.

"Would I!"

The look of joy on Johnnie's face decided everything.

"Come here, then. Listen. I'm your father. I'm Josiah Childs. Did you ever want to run away?"

Johnnie nodded emphatically.

"That's what I did," Josiah went on. "I ran away." He fumbled for his watch hurriedly. "We've just time to catch the train for California. I live there now. Maybe Agatha, your mother, will come along afterward. I'll tell you all about it on the train. Come on."

He gathered the half-frightened, half-trusting boy into his arms for a moment, then, hand in hand, they fled across the yard, out of the gate, and down the street. They heard the kitchen door open, and the last they heard was:

"Johnnie! — you! Why ain't you sawing? I'll attend to your case directly!"

The Proper “Girlie”

“GIRLIE” had always been a choice term of endearment with Ralph Ainslie. And it must be confessed he had applied it with great wisdom and discretion — from the little lady who swayed his destinies as a grammar school boy down to Maud. The list of the favored was quite a lengthy one, to be sure; but then a young heart and a roving love are necessarily correlative. Such is the nature of things, and who would alter it? But when the soft madness of the courtship of Maud fell upon him, the phrase had ripened to a fuller significance, and he had thought — at the time — that it would never again be transferred. In return, Maud had called him “Boyo.” Never had sweeter phrases been more sweetly mated. Girlie and Boyo! Well, the two were married and —

Ainslie idly crumbled his toast and gazed across the breakfast table at Maud, blue-eyed and matronly; but the woman’s face pictured on his mind’s retina at the moment was dark-eyed and rebellious. No wifely sedateness in this other, nor calm strength of control; but rather the waywardness of mutable desires, rough-shod imperiousness and strange moods. A creature slight of heart for loyalty, but great of soul for love; well he knew her.

Perhaps it was the unconscious radiation of his present mental attitude, or the sum of his attitudes through many days, that made Maud lonely on her side of the table. At least, she felt depressed and isolated, as if in some way the bonds that once so tightly bound them were undergoing an extraordinary expansion. She had expected that the fervid kisses that so sweetly punctuated their engagement period would change to the staid homage of tried affection, but not that they would become only a meaningless duty, the mere mechanical performance of a function. His whole demeanor had come to lack that subtle seriousness and enthusiasm the absence of which a woman is so quick to detect.

“What’s the matter, Maud?” he asked, presently, observing for the first time how wretchedly the breakfast had passed off, and actuated by a desire to make amends. “What’s the matter?” he repeated, noticing that her dreamy stare continued. “Anything wrong?”

“Ralph,” with feminine irrelevance, “you never call me Girlie any more.” Then, plaintively, “I’m only Maud now.”

"And it's an age since I've heard you say Boyo," he retorted.

He did not appreciate the hurt flush that suffused her cheek; no more did he know how hard had been her struggle to abandon his pet name after he had ceased his Girlie. For half the tragedies of the world are worked out in the silence of women's hearts — tragedies that blundering men may never know nor understand.

Her eyes grew misty, but otherwise she made no reply. Ainslie rose and went to her side.

"Oh, Ralph, I don't know — everything's wrong, all wrong!" she sobbed on his shoulder.

The scent of her hair was like a caress, but it did not recall the erstwhile pleasant memories that it should, for he frowned unobserved while he patted her shoulder soothingly.

"I have tried so hard to be good and true — to be Ralph's wife — " she raised her head bravely and looked him in the eyes — "but everything seems wrong. Something has come over us — between us. I had pictured everything so different after we were married, and now — I don't know, I — I cannot understand."

"There, there," he murmured, his face a study in surface masculine kindliness, "I'm afraid you are sick, just a little under the weather, you know. You're not quite yourself. A touch of fever, or cold, or something. I'll send up Dr. Jermyn on my way down town.

"Perhaps," he added, with wise forethought, as he kissed her at the door, "perhaps you need a little change of air or something. I think a little run or a week or so down to your mother's will do you good."

But she shook her head.

"Now the scenes begin," he muttered to himself as he boarded his car. "To-day comes the first, then to-morrow another — and they will continue to increase, quantitatively and qualitatively, till even a man's endurance can no longer stand them. Better put an end to the trouble now than to permit it to grow. I'll write Bertha at once and settle it out of hand."

It was with this laudable intention that he seated himself at his desk and invoked the epistolary demon. A peremptory call on the telephone interrupted him. It was an important deal, and Love must ever wait on Business.

"Poor little Maud! It's not her fault," he mused, as he stowed the half-finished missive away in a drawer; "only a queer concoction of Midsummer madness and my own brute selfishness. And it's Bertha who inoculated me, too."

Half-way down the elevator he had made up his mind to drop the whole thing by returning and destroying the letter; but at the bottom Business shoved Love aside, and he hurried on to meet the directors of the projected company.

By three o'clock the bookkeeper was wondering at Ralph Ainslie's prolonged absence. At half after Mrs. Ainslie tripped past into her husband's private office. She had thought it all out, after the delightful fashion of womankind, and reached the conclusion that she knew so very little of men, after all, and that whatever had happened was the result of her own morbid brooding; so she had come there to be nice to her wronged husband and be forgiven. She opened the door of his private office softly, confronted the blank emptiness of the room, and decided to wait.

Her thoughts went back to the golden days of their first housekeeping, when she had run down to the office so often of an afternoon that Ralph declared her a precious little nuisance, and secreted caramels and chocolates in his desk to encourage another visit. With a sentimental fondness and a vague half-pain she tiptoed across the room and drew open a drawer. The upturned sheet and the superscription, "Dear Girlie," caught her eye. She glanced hurriedly at the upper right-hand corner, taking it for some old forgotten letter to herself, and noted the date with happy surprise. In her delight she did not remark the addressed envelope that was lying half-concealed beneath it. She began to read:

DEAR GIRLIE:

I sometimes think we have not fully understood each other of late. I, at least, know that I may have seemed cold at times, when, in reality, I was perplexed with other things. I have been somewhat worried and not quite myself, for all of which I intend to make full atonement. I shall explain all soon.

Believe me, Girlie, that the love I give you is the true love of my heart. I am making all arrangements so that we may —

"Just his stupid business!" she exclaimed, her dimmed eyes, sparkling joyously. "And I'm sure more business made him break it off where he did. And it's all my own letter! And he called me Girlie!"

She pressed the scented sheet softly to her lips, just as Ralph Ainslie entered the room.

"Boyo!" she cried, making a little run toward him and throwing her arms around his neck. "You dear, good fellow! And I've been behaving like a little wretch, haven't I? With you worrying so much over your business, and never once complaining! No, no," she protested, as he made an involuntary gesture of remonstrance, "it's all true, Boyo, every bit of it. And I've been, oh, such a naughty girl!"

Her moist eyes and his shirt front had approached such dangerous proximity that he was permitted to grin his perplexity above her head, unseen. Somehow, the scent of her hair tangled with his thoughts to a purpose, and recalled the golden days that he had well-nigh thrust away. Dear patient, faithful Maud, still as trusting as the first time they had laid lips to lips! And she had mistaken the broken letter for her own! The pathos of blunder softened him and helped consign the other woman to oblivion.

"There, there, Girlie. It's nobody's fault in the world but my own. I've been working too hard, and — "

"But it's my fault. I insist!" she protested.

"Then I must punish you by — ahem! — "

"Something nice?" Then, recollecting the letter: "And what were we going to do when you finished making the arrangements?"

"Europe," he lied, laconically. "I say, Girlie," he added, hurriedly, catching a glimpse of the open drawer and beginning to lead the retreat to the door, "let's not go home, but have dinner down town — "

"And after that the theatre!" she cried. "Just like old times!"

"Just a minute, Girlie," he said, at the elevator shaft. "I've forgotten something."

He hurried back to the office, closing the door carefully behind him. Then he applied a vesta to the envelope that had Bertha Something-or-Other written across its face. He poked the ashes about in the grate and swore softly at something several times, but when he swore it was the dark-eyed woman who was in his thoughts.

The Proud Goat of Aloysius Pankburn

I

Quick eye that he had for the promise of adventure, prepared always for the unexpected to leap out at him from behind the nearest cocoanut tree, nevertheless David Grief received no warning when he laid eyes on Aloysius Pankburn. It was on the little steamer *Berthe*. Leaving his schooner to follow, Grief had taken passage for the short run across from Raiatea to Papeete. When he first saw Aloysius Pankburn, that somewhat fuddled gentleman was drinking a lonely cocktail at the tiny bar between decks next to the barber shop. And when Grief left the barber's hands half an hour later Aloysius Pankburn was still hanging over the bar still drinking by himself.

Now it is not good for man to drink alone, and Grief threw sharp scrutiny into his pass-ing glance. He saw a well-built young man of thirty, well-featured, well-dressed, and evidently, in the world's catalogue, a gentleman. But in the faint hint of slovenliness, in the shaking, eager hand that spilled the liquor, and in the nervous, vacillating eyes, Grief read the unmistakable marks of the chronic alcoholic.

After dinner he chanced upon Pankburn again. This time it was on deck, and the young man, clinging to the rail and peering into the distance at the dim forms of a man and woman in two steamer chairs drawn closely together, was crying, drunkenly. Grief noted that the man's arm was around the woman's waist. Aloysius Pankburn looked on and cried.

"Nothing to weep about," Grief said genially.

Pankburn looked at him, and gushed tears of profound self-pity.

"It's hard," he sobbed. "Hard. Hard. That man's my business manager. I employ him. I pay him a good screw. And that's how he earns it."

"In that case, why don't you put a stop to it?" Grief advised.

"I can't. She'd shut off my whiskey. She's my trained nurse."

"Fire *her*, then, and drink your head off."

"I can't. He's got all my money. If I did, he wouldn't give me sixpence to buy a drink with."

This woful possibility brought a fresh wash of tears. Grief was interested. Of all unique situations he could never have imagined such a one as this.

"They were engaged to take care of me," Pankburn was blubbering, "to keep me away from the drink. And that's the way they do it, lollygagging all about the ship and letting me drink myself to death. It isn't right, I tell you. It isn't right. They were sent along with me for the express purpose of not letting me drink, and they let me drink to swinishness as long as I leave them alone. If I complain they threaten not to let me have another drop. What can a poor devil do? My death will be on their heads, that's all. Come on down and join me."

He released his clutch on the rail, and would have fallen had Grief not caught his arm. He seemed to undergo a transformation, to stiffen physically, to thrust his chin forward aggressively, and to glint harshly in his eyes.

"I won't let them kill me. And they'll be sorry. I've offered them fifty thousand--later on, of course. They laughed. They don't know. But I know." He fumbled in his coat pocket and drew forth an object that flashed in the faint light. "They don't know the meaning of that. But I do." He looked at Grief with abrupt suspicion. "What do you make out of it, eh? What do you make out of it?"

David Grief caught a swift vision of an alcoholic degenerate putting a very loving young couple to death with a copper spike, for a copper spike was what he held in his hand, an evident old-fashioned ship-fastening.

"My mother thinks I'm up here to get cured of the booze habit. She doesn't know. I bribed the doctor to prescribe a voyage. When we get to Papeete my manager is going to charter a schooner and away we'll sail. But they don't dream. They think it's the booze. I know. I only know. Good night, sir. I'm going to bed--unless--er--you'll join me in a night cap. One last drink, you know."

II

In the week that followed at Papeete Grief caught numerous and bizarre glimpses of Aloysius Pankburn. So did everybody else in the little island capital; for neither the beach nor Lavina's boarding house had been so scandalized in years. In midday, bareheaded, clad only in swimming trunks, Aloysius Pankburn ran down the main street from Lavina's to the water front. He put on the gloves with a fireman from the *Berthe* in a scheduled four-round bout at the *Folies BergËres*, and was knocked out in the second round. He tried insanely to drown himself in a two-foot pool of water, dived drunkenly and splendidly from fifty feet up in the rigging of the *Mariposa* lying at the wharf, and chartered the cutter *Toerau* at more than her purchase price and was only saved by his manager's refusal financially to ratify the agreement. He bought out the old blind leper at the market, and sold breadfruit, plantains, and sweet potatoes at such cut-rates that the gendarmes were called out to break the rush of bargain-hunting natives. For that matter, three times the gendarmes arrested him for riotous behaviour, and three times his manager ceased from love-making long enough to pay the fines imposed by a needy colonial administration.

Then the *Mariposa* sailed for San Francisco, and in the bridal suite were the manager and the trained nurse, fresh-married. Before departing, the manager had thoughtfully bestowed eight five-pound banknotes on Aloysius, with the foreseen result that Aloysius awoke several days later to find himself broke and perilously near to delirium tremens. Lavina, famed for her good heart even among the driftage of South Pacific rogues and scamps, nursed him around and never let it filter into his returning intelligence that there was neither manager nor money to pay his board.

It was several evenings after this that David Grief, lounging under the after deck awning of the *Kittiwake* and idly scanning the meagre columns of the Papeete *Avant-Coureur*, sat suddenly up and almost rubbed his eyes. It was unbelievable, but there it was. The old South Seas Romance was not dead. He read:

> WANTED--To exchange a half interest in buried treasure,
> worth five million francs, for transportation for one to an
> unknown island in the Pacific and facilities for carrying
> away the loot. Ask for FOLLY, at Lavina's.

Grief looked at his watch. It was early yet, only eight o'clock.

"Mr. Carlsen," he called in the direction of a glowing pipe. "Get the crew for the whale-boat. I'm going ashore."

The husky voice of the Norwegian mate was raised for'ard, and half a dozen strapping Rapa Islanders ceased their singing and manned the boat.

"I came to see Folly, Mr. Folly, I imagine," David Grief told Lavina.

He noted the quick interest in her eyes as she turned her head and flung a command in native across two open rooms to the outstanding kitchen. A few minutes later a barefooted native girl padded in and shook her head.

Lavina's disappointment was evident.

"You're stopping aboard the *Kittiwake*, aren't you?" she said. "I'll tell him you called."

"Then it is a *he?*" Grief queried.

Lavina nodded.

"I hope you can do something for him, Captain Grief. I'm only a good-natured woman. I don't know. But he's a likable man, and he may be telling the truth; I don't know. You'll know. You're not a soft-hearted fool like me. Can't I mix you a cocktail?"

III

Back on board his schooner and dozing in a deck chair under a three-months-old magazine, David Grief was aroused by a sobbing, slubbering noise from overside. He opened his eyes. From the Chilian cruiser, a quarter of a mile away, came the stroke of eight bells. It was midnight. From overside came a splash and another slubbering noise. To him it seemed half amphibian, half the sounds of a man crying to himself and querulously chanting his sorrows to the general universe.

A jump took David Grief to the low rail. Beneath, centred about the slubbering noise, was an area of agitated phosphorescence. Leaning over, he locked his hand under the armpit of a man, and, with pull and heave and quick-changing grips, he drew on deck the naked form of Aloysius Pankburn.

"I didn't have a sou-markee," he complained. "I had to swim it, and I couldn't find your gangway. It was very miserable. Pardon me. If you have a towel to put about my middle, and a good stiff drink, I'll be more myself. I'm Mr. Folly, and you're the Captain Grief, I presume, who called on me when I was out. No, I'm not drunk. Nor am I cold. This isn't shivering. Lavina allowed me only two drinks to-day. I'm on the edge of the horrors, that's all, and I was beginning to see things when I couldn't find the gangway. If you'll take me below I'll be very grateful. You are the only one that answered my advertisement."

He was shaking pitiably in the warm night, and down in the cabin, before he got his towel, Grief saw to it that a half-tumbler of whiskey was in his hand.

"Now fire ahead," Grief said, when he had got his guest into a shirt and a pair of duck trousers. "What's this advertisement of yours? I'm listening."

Pankburn looked at the whiskey bottle, but Grief shook his head.

"All right, Captain, though I tell you on whatever is left of my honour that I am not drunk--not in the least. Also, what I shall tell you is true, and I shall tell it briefly, for it is clear to me that you are a man of affairs and action. Likewise, your chemistry is good. To you alcohol has never been a million maggots gnawing at every cell of you. You've never been to hell. I am there now. I am scorching. Now listen.

"My mother is alive. She is English. I was born in Australia. I was educated at York and Yale. I am a master of arts, a doctor of philosophy, and I am no good. Furthermore, I am an alcoholic. I have been an athlete. I used to swan-dive a hundred and ten feet in the clear. I hold several amateur records. I am a fish. I learned the crawl-stroke from the first of the Cavilles. I have done thirty miles in a rough sea. I have another record. I have punished more whiskey than any man of my years. I will steal sixpence from you for the price of a drink. Finally, I will tell you the truth.

"My father was an American--an Annapolis man. He was a midshipman in the War of the Rebellion. In '66 he was a lieutenant on the *Suwanee*. Her captain was Paul Shirley. In '66 the Suwanee coaled at an island in the Pacific which I do not care to mention, under a protectorate which did not exist then and which shall be nameless. Ashore, behind the bar of a public house, my father saw three copper spikes--ship's spikes."

David Grief smiled quietly.

"And now I can tell you the name of the coaling station and of the protectorate that came afterward," he said.

"And of the three spikes?" Pankburn asked with equal quietness. "Go ahead, for they are in my possession now."

"Certainly. They were behind German Oscar's bar at Peenoo-Peenee. Johnny Black brought them there from off his schooner the night he died. He was just back from a long cruise to the westward, fishing beche-de-mer and sandalwood trading. All the beach knows the tale."

Pankburn shook his head.

"Go on," he urged.

"It was before my time, of course," Grief explained. "I only tell what I've heard. Next came the Ecuadoran cruiser, of all directions, in from the westward, and bound home. Her officers recognized the spikes. Johnny

Black was dead. They got hold of his mate and logbook. Away to the westward went she. Six months after, again bound home, she dropped in at Peenoo-Peenee. She had failed, and the tale leaked out."

"When the revolutionists were marching on Guayaquil," Pankburn took it up, "the federal officers, believing a defence of the city hopeless, salted down the government treasure chest, something like a million dollars gold, but all in English coinage, and put it on board the American schooner *Flirt*. They were going to run at daylight. The American captain skinned out in the middle of the night. Go on."

"It's an old story," Grief resumed. "There was no other vessel in the harbour. The federal leaders couldn't run. They put their backs to the wall and held the city. Rohjas Salced, making a forced march from Quito, raised the siege. The revolution was broken, and the one ancient steamer that constituted the Ecuadoran navy was sent in pursuit of the *Flirt*. They caught her, between the Banks Group and the New Hebrides, hove to and flying distress signals. The captain had died the day before--blackwater fever."

"And the mate?" Pankburn challenged.

"The mate had been killed a week earlier by the natives on one of the Banks, when they sent a boat in for water. There were no navigators left. The men were put to the torture. It was beyond international law. They wanted to confess, but couldn't. They told of the three spikes in the trees on the beach, but where the island was they did not know. To the westward, far to the westward, was all they knew. The tale now goes two ways. One is that they all died under the torture. The other is that the survivors were swung at the yardarm. At any rate, the Ecuadoran cruiser went home without the treasure. Johnny Black brought the three spikes to Peenoo-Peenee, and left them at German Oscar's, but how and where he found them he never told."

Pankburn looked hard at the whiskey bottle.

"Just two fingers," he whimpered.

Grief considered, and poured a meagre drink. Pankburn's eyes sparkled, and he took new lease of life.

"And this is where I come in with the missing details," he said. "Johnny Black did tell. He told my father. Wrote him from Levuka, before he came on to die at Peenoo-Peenee. My father had saved his life one rough-house night in Valparaiso. A Chink pearler, out of Thursday Island, prospecting for new grounds to the north of New Guinea, traded for the three spikes with a nigger. Johnny Black bought them for copper weight. He didn't dream any more than the Chink, but coming back he stopped for hawksbill turtle at the very beach where you say the mate of the *Flirt* was killed. Only he wasn't killed. The Banks Islanders held him prisoner, and he was dying of necrosis of the jawbone, caused by an arrow wound in the fight on the beach. Before he died he told the yarn to Johnny Black. Johnny Black wrote my father from Levuka. He was at the end of his rope--cancer. My father, ten years afterward, when captain of the *Perry*, got the spikes from German Oscar. And from my father, last will and testament, you know, came the spikes and the data. I have the island, the latitude and longitude of the beach where the three spikes were nailed in the trees. The spikes are up at Lavina's now. The latitude and longitude are in my head. Now what do you think?"

"Fishy," was Grief's instant judgment. "Why didn't your father go and get it himself?"

"Didn't need it. An uncle died and left him a fortune. He retired from the navy, ran foul of an epidemic of trained nurses in Boston, and my mother got a divorce. Also, she fell heir to an income of something like thirty thousand dollars, and went to live in New Zealand. I was divided between them, half-time New Zealand, half-time United States, until my father's death last year. Now my mother has me altogether. He left me his money--oh, a couple of millions--but my mother has had guardians appointed on account of the drink. I'm worth all kinds of money, but I can't touch a penny save what is doled out to me. But the old man, who had got the tip on my drinking, left me the three spikes and the data thereunto pertaining. Did it through his lawyers, unknown to my mother; said it beat life insurance, and that if I had the backbone to go and get it I could drink my back teeth awash until I died. Millions in the hands of my guardians, slathers of shekels of my mother's that'll be mine if she beats me to the crematory, another million waiting to be dug up, and in the meantime I'm cadging on Lavina for two drinks a day. It's hell, isn't it?--when you consider my thirst."

"Where's the island?"

"It's a long way from here."

"Name it."

"Not on your life, Captain Grief. You're making an easy half-million out of this. You will sail under my directions, and when we're well to sea and on our way I'll tell you and not before."

Grief shrugged his shoulders, dismissing the subject.

"When I've given you another drink I'll send the boat ashore with you," he said.

Pankburn was taken aback. For at least five minutes he debated with himself, then licked his lips and surrendered.

"If you promise to go, I'll tell you now."

"Of course I'm willing to go. That's why I asked you. Name the island."

Pankburn looked at the bottle.

"I'll take that drink now, Captain."

"No you won't. That drink was for you if you went ashore. If you are going to tell me the island, you must do it in your sober senses."

"Francis Island, if you will have it. Bougainville named it Barbour Island."

"Off there all by its lonely in the Little Coral Sea," Grief said. "I know it. Lies between New Ireland and New Guinea. A rotten hole now, though it was all right when the *Flirt* drove in the spikes and the Chink pearler traded for them. The steamship *Castor*, recruiting labour for the Upolu plantations, was cut off there with all hands two years ago. I knew her captain well. The Germans sent a cruiser, shelled the bush, burned half a dozen villages, killed a couple of niggers and a lot of pigs, and--and that was all. The niggers always were bad there, but they turned really bad forty years ago. That was when they cut off a whaler. Let me see? What was her name?"

He stepped to the bookshelf, drew out the bulky "South Pacific Directory," and ran through its pages.

"Yes. Here it is. Francis, or Barbour," he skimmed. "Natives warlike and treacherous--Melanesian--cannibals. Whaleship *Western* cut off--that was her name. Shoals--points--anchorages--ah, Redscar, Owen Bay, Likikili Bay, that's more like it; deep indentation, mangrove swamps, good holding in nine fathoms when white scar in bluff bears west-southwest." Grief looked up. "That's your beach, Pankburn, I'll swear."

"Will you go?" the other demanded eagerly.

Grief nodded.

"It sounds good to me. Now if the story had been of a hundred millions, or some such crazy sum, I wouldn't look at it for a moment. We'll sail to-morrow, but under one consideration. You are to be absolutely under my orders."

His visitor nodded emphatically and joyously.

"And that means no drink."

"That's pretty hard," Pankburn whined.

"It's my terms. I'm enough of a doctor to see you don't come to harm. And you are to work--hard work, sailor's work. You'll stand regular watches and everything, though you eat and sleep aft with us."

"It's a go." Pankburn put out his hand to ratify the agreement. "If it doesn't kill me," he added.

David Grief poured a generous three-fingers into the tumbler and extended it.

"Then here's your last drink. Take it."

Pankburn's hand went halfway out. With a sudden spasm of resolution, he hesitated, threw back his shoulders, and straightened up his head.

"I guess I won't," he began, then, feebly surrendering to the gnaw of desire, he reached hastily for the glass, as if in fear that it would be withdrawn.

IV

It is a long traverse from Papeete in the Societies to the Little Coral Sea--from 100 west longitude to 150 east longitude--as the crow flies the equivalent to a voyage across the Atlantic. But the *Kittiwake* did not go as the crow flies. David Grief's numerous interests diverted her course many times. He stopped to take a look-in at uninhabited Rose Island with an eye to colonizing and planting cocoa-nuts. Next, he paid his respects to Tui Manua, of Eastern Samoa, and opened an intrigue for a share of the trade monopoly of that dying king's three islands. From Apia he carried several relief agents and a load of trade goods to the Gilberts. He peeped in at Ontong-Java Atoll, inspected his plantations on Ysabel, and purchased lands from the salt-water chiefs of northwestern Malaita. And all along this devious way he made a man of Aloysius Pankburn.

That thirster, though he lived aft, was compelled to do the work of a common sailor. And not only did he take his wheel and lookout, and heave on sheets and tackles, but the dirtiest and most arduous tasks were appointed him. Swung aloft in a bosun's chair, he scraped the masts and slushed down. Holystoning the deck or scrubbing it with fresh limes made his back ache and developed the wasted, flabby muscles. When the

Kittiwake lay at anchor and her copper bottom was scrubbed with cocoa-nut husks by the native crew, who dived and did it under water, Pankburn was sent down on his shift and as many times as any on the shift.

“Look at yourself,” Grief said. “You are twice the man you were when you came on board. You haven’t had one drink, you didn’t die, and the poison is pretty well worked out of you. It’s the work. It beats trained nurses and business managers. Here, if you’re thirsty. Clap your lips to this.”

With several deft strokes of his heavy-backed sheath-knife, Grief clipped a triangular piece of shell from the end of a husked drinking-cocoa-nut. The thin, cool liquid, slightly milky and effervescent, bubbled to the brim. With a bow, Pankburn took the natural cup, threw his head back, and held it back till the shell was empty. He drank many of these nuts each day. The black steward, a New Hebrides boy sixty years of age, and his assistant, a Lark Islander of eleven, saw to it that he was continually supplied.

Pankburn did not object to the hard work. He devoured work, never shirking and always beating the native sailors in jumping to obey a command. But his sufferings during the period of driving the alcohol out of his system were truly heroic. Even when the last shred of the poison was exuded, the desire, as an obsession, remained in his head. So it was, when, on his honour, he went ashore at Apia, that he attempted to put the public houses out of business by drinking up their stocks in trade. And so it was, at two in the morning, that David Grief found him in front of the Tivoli, out of which he had been disorderly thrown by Charley Roberts. Aloysius, as of old, was chanting his sorrows to the stars. Also, and more concretely, he was punctuating the rhythm with cobbles of coral stone, which he flung with amazing accuracy through Charley Roberts’s windows.

David Grief took him away, but not till next morning did he take him in hand. It was on the deck of the *Kittiwake*, and there was nothing kindergarten about it. Grief struck him, with bare knuckles, punched him and punished him--gave him the worst thrashing he had ever received.

“For the good of your soul, Pankburn,” was the way he emphasized his blows. “For the good of your mother. For the progeny that will come after. For the good of the world, and the universe, and the whole race of man yet to be. And now, to hammer the lesson home, we’ll do it all over again. That, for the good of your soul; and that, for your mother’s sake; and that, for the little children, undreamed of and unborn, whose mother you’ll love for their sakes, and for love's sake, in the lease of manhood that will be yours when I am done with you. Come on and take your medicine. I'm not done with you yet. I've only begun. There are many other reasons which I shall now proceed to expound." The brown sailors and the black stewards and cook looked on and grinned. Far from them was the questioning of any of the mysterious and incomprehensible ways of white men. As for Carlsen, the mate, he was grimly in accord with the treatment his employer was administering; while Albright, the supercargo, merely played with his mustache and smiled. They were men of the sea. They lived life in the rough. And alcohol, in themselves as well as in other men, was a problem they had learned to handle in ways not taught in doctors' schools.

"Boy! A bucket of fresh water and a towel," Grief ordered, when he had finished. "Two buckets and two towels," he added, as he surveyed his own hands.

"You're a pretty one," he said to Pankburn. "You've spoiled everything. I had the poison completely out of you. And now you are fairly reeking with it. We've got to begin all over again. Mr. Albright! You know that pile of old chain on the beach at the boat-landing. Find the owner, buy it, and fetch it on board. There must be a hundred and fifty fathoms of it. Pankburn! To-morrow morning you start in pounding the rust off of it. When you've done that, you'll sandpaper it. Then you'll paint it. And nothing else will you do till that chain is as smooth as new."

Aloysius Pankburn shook his head.

"I quit. Francis Island can go to hell for all of me. I'm done with your slave-driving. Kindly put me ashore at once. I'm a white man. You can't treat me this way."

"Mr. Carlsen, you will see that Mr. Pankburn remains on board."

"I'll have you broken for this!" Aloysius screamed. "You can't stop me."

"I can give you another licking," Grief answered. "And let me tell you one thing, you besotted whelp, I'll keep on licking you as long as my knuckles hold out or until you yearn to hammer chain rust. I've taken you in hand, and I'm going to make a man out of you if I have to kill you to do it. Now go below and change your clothes. Be ready to turn to with a hammer this afternoon. Mr. Albright, get that chain aboard pronto. Mr. Carlsen, send the boats ashore after it. Also, keep your eye on Pankburn. If he shows signs of keeling over or going into the shakes, give him a nip--a small one. He may need it after last night."

V

For the rest of the time the *Kittiwake* lay in Apia Aloysius Pankburn pounded chain rust. Ten hours a day he pounded. And on the long stretch across to the Gilberts he still pounded.

Then came the sandpapering. One hundred and fifty fathoms is nine hundred feet, and every link of all that length was smoothed and polished as no link ever was before. And when the last link had received its second coat of black paint, he declared himself.

“Come on with more dirty work,” he told Grief. “I’ll overhaul the other chains if you say so. And you needn’t worry about me any more. I’m not going to take another drop. I’m going to train up. You got my proud goat when you beat me, but let me tell you, you only got it temporarily. Train! I’m going to train till I’m as hard all the way through, and clean all the way through, as that chain is. And some day, Mister David Grief, somewhere, somehow, I’m going to be in such shape that I’ll lick you as you licked me. I’m going to pulp your face till your own niggers won’t know you.”

Grief was jubilant.

“Now you’re talking like a man,” he cried. “The only way you’ll ever lick me is to become a man. And then, maybe--“

He paused in the hope that the other would catch the suggestion. Aloysius groped for it, and, abruptly, something akin to illumination shone in his eyes.

“And then I won’t want to, you mean?”

Grief nodded.

“And that’s the curse of it,” Aloysius lamented. “I really believe I won’t want to. I see the point. But I’m going to go right on and shape myself up just the same.”

The warm, sunburn glow in Grief’s face seemed to grow warmer. His hand went out.

“Pankburn, I love you right now for that.”

Aloysius grasped the hand, and shook his head in sad sincerity.

“Grief,” he mourned, “you’ve got my goat, you’ve got my proud goat, and you’ve got it permanently, I’m afraid.”

VI

On a sultry tropic day, when the last flicker of the far southeast trade was fading out and the seasonal change for the northwest monsoon was coming on, the *Kittiwake* lifted above the sea-rim the jungle-clad coast of Francis Island.

Grief, with compass bearings and binoculars, identified the volcano that marked Redscar, ran past Owen Bay, and lost the last of the breeze at the entrance to Likikili Bay. With the two whaleboats out and towing, and with Carl-sen heaving the lead, the *Kittiwake* sluggishly entered a deep and narrow indentation. There were no beaches. The mangroves began at the water's edge, and behind them rose steep jungle, broken here and there by jagged peaks of rock. At the end of a mile, when the white scar on the bluff bore west-southwest, the lead vindicated the "Directory," and the anchor rumbled down in nine fathoms.

For the rest of that day and until the afternoon of the day following they remained on the *Kittiwake* and waited. No canoes appeared. There were no signs of human life. Save for the occasional splash of a fish or the screaming of cockatoos, there seemed no other life. Once, however, a huge butterfly, twelve inches from tip to tip, fluttered high over their mastheads and drifted across to the opposing jungle.

"There's no use in sending a boat in to be cut up," Grief said.

Pankburn was incredulous, and volunteered to go in alone, to swim it if he couldn't borrow the dingey.

"They haven't forgotten the German cruiser," Grief explained. "And I'll wager that bush is alive with men right now. What do you think, Mr. Carlsen?"

That veteran adventurer of the islands was emphatic in his agreement.

In the late afternoon of the second day Grief ordered a whaleboat into the water. He took his place in the bow, a live cigarette in his mouth and a short-fused stick of dynamite in his hand, for he was bent on shooting a mess of fish. Along the thwarts half a dozen Winchesters were placed. Albright, who took the steering-sweep, had a Mauser within reach of hand. They pulled in and along the green wall of vegetation. At times they rested on the oars in the midst of a profound silence.

"Two to one the bush is swarming with them--in quids," Albright whispered.

Pankburn listened a moment longer and took the bet. Five minutes later they sighted a school of mullet. The brown rowers held their oars. Grief touched the short fuse to his cigarette and threw the stick. So short was the fuse that the stick exploded in the instant after it struck the water. And in that same instant the bush exploded into life. There were wild yells of defiance, and black and naked bodies leaped forward like apes through the mangroves.

In the whaleboat every rifle was lifted. Then came the wait. A hundred blacks, some few armed with ancient Sniders, but the greater portion armed with tomahawks, fire-hardened spears, and bone-tipped arrows, clustered on the roots that rose out of the bay. No word was spoken. Each party watched the other across twenty feet of water. An old, one-eyed black, with a bristly face, rested a Snider on his hip, the muzzle directed at Albright, who, in turn, covered him back with the Mauser. A couple of minutes of this tableau endured. The stricken fish rose to the surface or struggled half-stunned in the clear depths.

“It’s all right, boys,” Grief said quietly. “Put down your guns and over the side with you. Mr. Albright, toss the tobacco to that one-eyed brute.”

While the Rapa men dived for the fish, Albright threw a bundle of trade tobacco ashore. The one-eyed man nodded his head and writhed his features in an attempt at amiability. Weapons were lowered, bows unbent, and arrows put back in their quivers.

“They know tobacco,” Grief announced, as they rowed back aboard. “We’ll have visitors. You’ll break out a case of tobacco, Mr. Albright, and a few trade-knives. There’s a canoe now.”

Old One-Eye, as befitted a chief and leader, paddled out alone, facing peril for the rest of the tribe. As Carlsen leaned over the rail to help the visitor up, he turned his head and remarked casually:

“They’ve dug up the money, Mr. Grief. The old beggar’s loaded with it.”

One-Eye floundered down on deck, grinning appeasingly and failing to hide the fear he had overcome but which still possessed him. He was lame of one leg, and this was accounted for by a terrible scar, inches deep, which ran down the thigh from hip to knee. No clothes he wore whatever, not even a string, but his nose, perforated in a dozen places and each perforation the setting for a carved spine of bone, bristled like a porcupine. Around his neck and hanging down on his dirty chest was a string of gold sovereigns. His ears were hung with silver half-crowns, and from the cartilage separating his nostrils depended a big English penny, tarnished and green, but unmistakable.

"Hold on, Grief," Pankburn said, with perfectly assumed carelessness. "You say they know only beads and tobacco. Very well. You follow my lead. They've found the treasure, and we've got to trade them out of it. Get the whole crew aside and lecture them that they are to be interested only in the pennies. Savve? Gold coins must be beneath contempt, and silver coins merely tolerated. Pennies are to be the only desirable things."

Pankburn took charge of the trading. For the penny in One-Eye's nose he gave ten sticks of tobacco. Since each stick cost David Grief a cent, the bargain was manifestly unfair. But for the half-crowns Pankburn gave only one stick each. The string of sovereigns he refused to consider. The more he refused, the more One-Eye insisted on a trade. At last, with an appearance of irritation and anger, and as a palpable concession, Pankburn gave two sticks for the string, which was composed of ten sovereigns.

"I take my hat off to you," Grief said to Pankburn that night at dinner. "The situation is patent. You've reversed the scale of value. They'll figure the pennies as priceless possessions and the sovereigns as beneath price. Result: they'll hang on to the pennies and force us to trade for sovereigns. Pankburn, I drink your health! Boy!--another cup of tea for Mr. Pankburn."

VII

Followed a golden week. From dawn till dark a row of canoes rested on their paddles two hundred feet away. This was the deadline. Rapa sailors, armed with rifles, maintained it. But one canoe at a time was permitted alongside, and but one black at a time was permitted to come over the rail. Here, under the awning, relieving one another in hourly shifts, the four white men carried on the trade. The rate of exchange was that established by Pankburn with One-Eye. Five sovereigns fetched a stick of tobacco; a hundred sovereigns, twenty sticks. Thus, a crafty-eyed cannibal would deposit on the table a thousand dollars in gold, and go back over the rail, hugely-satisfied, with forty cents' worth of tobacco in his hand.

"Hope we've got enough tobacco to hold out," Carlsen muttered dubiously, as another case was sawed in half.

Albright laughed.

“We’ve got fifty cases below,” he said, “and as I figure it, three cases buy a hundred thousand dollars. There was only a million dollars buried, so thirty cases ought to get it. Though, of course, we’ve got to allow a margin for the silver and the pennies. That Ecuadoran bunch must have salted down all the coin in sight.”

Very few pennies and shillings appeared, though Pankburn continually and anxiously inquired for them. Pennies were the one thing he seemed to desire, and he made his eyes flash covetously whenever one was produced. True to his theory, the savages concluded that the gold, being of slight value, must be disposed of first. A penny, worth fifty times as much as a sovereign, was something to retain and treasure. Doubtless, in their jungle-lairs, the wise old gray-beards put their heads together and agreed to raise the price on pennies when the worthless gold was all worked off. Who could tell? Mayhap the strange white men could be made to give even twenty sticks for a priceless copper.

By the end of the week the trade went slack. There was only the slightest dribble of gold. An occasional penny was reluctantly disposed of for ten sticks, while several thousand dollars in silver came in.

On the morning of the eighth day no trading was done. The gray-beards had matured their plan and were demanding twenty sticks for a penny, One-Eye delivered the new rate of exchange. The white men appeared to take it with great seriousness, for they stood together debating in low voices. Had One-Eye understood English he would have been enlightened.

“We’ve got just a little over eight hundred thousand, not counting the silver,” Grief said. “And that’s about all there is. The bush tribes behind have most probably got the other two hundred thousand. Return in three months, and the salt-water crowd will have traded back for it; also they will be out of tobacco by that time.”

“It would be a sin to buy pennies,” Albright grinned. “It goes against the thrifty grain of my trader’s soul.”

“There’s a whiff of land-breeze stirring,” Grief said, looking at Pankburn. “What do you say?”

Pankburn nodded.

“Very well.” Grief measured the faintness and irregularity of the wind against his cheek.

“Mr. Carlsen, heave short, and get off the gaskets. And stand by with the whaleboats to tow. This breeze is not dependable.”

He picked up a part case of tobacco, containing six or seven hundred sticks, put it in One-Eye's hands, and helped that bewildered savage over the rail. As the foresail went up the mast, a wail of consternation arose from the canoes lying along the dead-line. And as the anchor broke out and the *Kittiwake's* head paid off in the light breeze, old One-Eye, daring the rifles levelled on him, paddled alongside and made frantic signs of his tribe's willingness to trade pennies for ten sticks.

"Boy!--a drinking nut," Pankburn called.

"It's Sydney Heads for you," Grief said. "And then what?"

"I'm coming back with you for that two hundred thousand," Pankburn answered. "In the meantime I'm going to build an island schooner. Also, I'm going to call those guardians of mine before the court to show cause why my father's money should not be turned over to me. Show cause? I'll show them cause why it should."

He swelled his biceps proudly under the thin sleeve, reached for the two black stewards, and put them above his head like a pair of dumbbells.

"Come on! Swing out on that fore-boom-tackle!" Carlsen shouted from aft, where the mainsail was being winged out.

Pankburn dropped the stewards and raced for it, beating a Rapa sailor by two jumps to the hauling part.

The Race For Number Three

"HUH! Get on to the glad rags!"

Shorty surveyed his partner with simulated disapproval, and Smoke, vainly attempting to rub the wrinkles out of the pair of trousers he had just put on, was irritated.

"They sure fit you close for a second-hand buy," Shorty went on. "What was the tax?"

"One hundred and fifty for the suit," Smoke answered. "The man was nearly my own size. I thought it was remarkably reasonable. What are you kicking about?"

"Who? Me? Oh, nothin'. I was just thinkin' it was goin' some for a meat-eater that hit Dawson in an ice-jam, with no grub, one suit of underclothes, a pair of mangy moccasins, an' overalls that looked like they'd been through the wreck of the Hesperus. Pretty gay front, pardner. Pretty gay front. Say--?"

"What do you want now?" Smoke demanded testily.

"What's her name?"

"There isn't any her, my friend. I'm to have dinner at Colonel Bowie's, if you want to know. The trouble with you, Shorty, is you're envious because I'm going into high society and you're not invited."

"Ain't you some late?" Shorty queried with concern.

"What do you mean?"

"For dinner. They'll be eatin' supper when you get there."

Smoke was about to explain with crudely elaborate sarcasm when he caught the twinkle in the other's eye. He went on dressing, with fingers that had lost their deftness, tying a Windsor tie in a bow-knot at the throat of his soft cotton shirt.

"Wisht I hadn't sent all my starched shirts to the laundry," Shorty murmured sympathetically. "I might 'a' fitted you out."

By this time Smoke was straining at a pair of shoes. The woollen socks were too thick to go into them. He looked appealingly at Shorty, who shook his head.

"Nope. If I had thin ones I wouldn't lend 'em to you. Back to the moccasins, pardner. You'd sure freeze your toes in skimpy-fangled gear like that."

“I paid fifteen dollars for them, second hand,” Smoke lamented.

“I reckon they won’t be a man not in moccasins.”

“But there are to be women, Shorty. I’m going to sit down and eat with real live women--Mrs. Bowie, and several others, so the Colonel told me.”

“Well, moccasins won’t spoil their appetite none,” was Shorty’s comment. “Wonder what the Colonel wants with you?”

“I don’t know, unless he’s heard about my finding Surprise Lake. It will take a fortune to drain it, and the Guggenheims are out for investment.”

“Reckon that’s it. That’s right, stick to the moccasins. Gee! That coat is sure wrinkled, an’ it fits you a mite too swift. Just peck around at your vittles. If you eat hearty you’ll bust through. An’ if them women folks gets to droppin’ handkerchiefs, just let ‘em lay. Don’t do any pickin’ up. Whatever you do, don’t.”

As became a high-salaried expert and the representative of the great house of Guggenheim, Colonel Bowie lived in one of the most magnificent cabins in Dawson. Of squared logs, hand-hewn, it was two stories high, and of such extravagant proportions that it boasted a big living room that was used for a living room and for nothing else.

Here were big bear-skins on the rough board floor, and on the walls horns of moose and caribou. Here roared an open fireplace and a big wood-burning stove. And here Smoke met the social elect of Dawson--not the mere pick-handle millionaires, but the ultra-cream of a mining city whose population had been recruited from all the world--men like Warburton Jones, the explorer and writer; Captain Consadine of the Mounted Police; Haskell, Gold Commissioner of the Northwest Territory; and Baron Von Schroeder, an emperor’s favourite with an international duelling reputation.

And here, dazzling in evening gown, he met Joy Gastell, whom hitherto he had encountered only on trail, befurred and moccasined. At dinner he found himself beside her.

“I feel like a fish out of water,” he confessed. “All you folks are so real grand you know. Besides, I never dreamed such Oriental luxury existed in the Klondike. Look at Von Schroeder there. He’s actually got a dinner jacket, and Consadine’s got a starched shirt. I noticed he wore moccasins just the same. How do you like MY outfit?”

He moved his shoulders about as if preening himself for Joy’s approval.

“It looks as if you’d grown stout since you came over the Pass,” she laughed.

“Wrong. Guess again.”

“It’s somebody else’s.”

“You win. I bought it for a price from one of the clerks at the A. C. Company.”

“It’s a shame clerks are so narrow-shouldered,” she sympathized. “And you haven’t told me what you think of MY outfit.”

“I can’t,” he said. “I’m out of breath. I’ve been living on trail too long. This sort of thing comes to me with a shock, you know. I’d quite forgotten that women have arms and shoulders. To-morrow morning, like my friend Shorty, I’ll wake up and know it’s all a dream. Now, the last time I saw you on Squaw Creek--“

“I was just a squaw,” she broke in.

“I hadn’t intended to say that. I was remembering that it was on Squaw Creek that I discovered you had feet.”

“And I can never forget that you saved them for me,” she said. “I’ve been wanting to see you ever since to thank you--“ (He shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly). “And that’s why you are here to-night.”

“You asked the Colonel to invite me?”

“No! Mrs. Bowie. And I asked her to let me have you at table. And here’s my chance. Everybody’s talking. Listen, and don’t interrupt. You know Mono Creek?”

“Yes.”

“It has turned out rich--dreadfully rich. They estimate the claims as worth a million and more apiece. It was only located the other day.”

“I remember the stampede.”

“Well, the whole creek was staked to the sky-line, and all the feeders, too. And yet, right now, on the main creek, Number Three below Discovery is unrecorded. The creek was so far away from Dawson that the Commissioner allowed sixty days for recording after location. Every claim was recorded except Number Three below. It was staked by Cyrus Johnson. And that was all. Cyrus Johnson has disappeared. Whether he died, whether he went down river or up, nobody knows. Anyway, in six days, the time for recording will be up. Then the man who stakes it, and reaches Dawson first and records it, gets it.”

“A million dollars,” Smoke murmured.

“Gilchrist, who has the next claim below, has got six hundred dollars in a single pan off bedrock. He’s burned one hole down. And the claim on the other side is even richer. I know."

"But why doesn't everybody know?" Smoke queried skeptically.

"They're beginning to know. They kept it secret for a long time, and it is only now that it's coming out. Good dog-teams will be at a premium in another twenty-four hours. Now, you've got to get away as decently as you can as soon as dinner is over. I've arranged it. An Indian will come with a message for you. You read it, let on that you're very much put out, make your excuses, and get away."

"I--er--I fail to follow."

"Ninny!" she exclaimed in a half-whisper. "What you must do is to get out to-night and hustle dog-teams. I know of two. There's Hanson's team, seven big Hudson Bay dogs--he's holding them at four hundred each. That's top price to-night, but it won't be to-morrow. And Sitka Charley has eight Malemutes he's asking thirty-five hundred for. To-morrow he'll laugh at an offer of five thousand. Then you've got your own team of dogs. And you'll have to buy several more teams. That's your work to-night. Get the best. It's dogs as well as men that will win this race. It's a hundred and ten miles, and you'll have to relay as frequently as you can."

"Oh, I see, you want me to go in for it," Smoke drawled.

"If you haven't the money for the dogs, I'll--" She faltered, but before she could continue, Smoke was speaking.

"I can buy the dogs. But--er--aren't you afraid this is gambling?"

"After your exploits at roulette in the Elkhorn," she retorted, "I'm not afraid that you're afraid. It's a sporting proposition, if that's what you mean. A race for a million, and with some of the stiffest dog-mushers and travellers in the country entered against you. They haven't entered yet, but by this time to-morrow they will, and dogs will be worth what the richest man can afford to pay. Big Olaf is in town. He came up from Circle City last month. He is one of the most terrible dog-mushers in the country, and if he enters he will be your most dangerous man. Arizona Bill is another. He's been a professional freighter and mail-carrier for years. If he goes in, interest will be centered on him and Big Olaf."

"And you intend me to come along as a sort of dark horse."

"Exactly. And it will have its advantages. You will not be supposed to stand a show. After all, you know, you are still classed as a chechako. You haven't seen the four seasons go around. Nobody will take notice of you until you come into the home stretch in the lead."

"It's on the home stretch the dark horse is to show up its classy form, eh?"

She nodded, and continued earnestly: "Remember, I shall never forgive myself for the trick I played on the Squaw Creek stampede unless you win this Mono claim. And if any man can win this race against the old-timers, it's you."

It was the way she said it. He felt warm all over, and in his heart and head. He gave her a quick, searching look, involuntary and serious, and for the moment that her eyes met his steadily, ere they fell, it seemed to him that he read something of vaster import than the claim Cyrus Johnson had failed to record.

"I'll do it," he said. "I'll win it."

The glad light in her eyes seemed to promise a greater meed than all the gold in the Mono claim. He was aware of a movement of her hand in her lap next to his. Under the screen of the tablecloth he thrust his own hand across and met a firm grip of woman's fingers that sent another wave of warmth through him.

"What will Shorty say?" was the thought that flashed whimsically through his mind as he withdrew his hand. He glanced almost jealously at the faces of Von Schroeder and Jones, and wondered if they had not divined the remarkableness and deliciousness of this woman who sat beside him.

He was aroused by her voice, and realized that she had been speaking some moments.

"So you see, Arizona Bill is a white Indian," she was saying. "And Big Olaf is a bear wrestler, a king of the snows, a mighty savage. He can out-travel and out-endure an Indian, and he's never known any other life but that of the wild and the frost."

"Who's that?" Captain Consadine broke in from across the table.

"Big Olaf," she answered. "I was just telling Mr. Bellew what a traveller he is."

"You're right," the Captain's voice boomed. "Big Olaf is the greatest traveller in the Yukon. I'd back him against Old Nick himself for snow-bucking and ice-travel. He brought in the government dispatches in 1895, and he did it after two couriers were frozen on Chilkoot and the third drowned in the open water of Thirty Mile."

Smoke had travelled in a leisurely fashion up to Mono Creek, fearing to tire his dogs before the big race. Also, he had familiarized himself with every mile of the trail and located his relay camps. So many men had entered the race that the hundred and ten miles of its course was almost a continuous village. Relay camps were everywhere along the trail. Von Schroeder, who had gone in purely for the sport, had no less than eleven dog-teams--a fresh one for every ten miles. Arizona Bill had been forced to content himself with eight teams. Big Olaf had seven, which was the complement of Smoke. In addition, over two score of other men were in the running. Not every day, even in the golden north, was a million dollars the prize for a dog race. The country had been swept of dogs. No animal of speed and endurance escaped the fine-tooth comb that had raked the creeks and camps, and the prices of dogs had doubled and quadrupled in the course of the frantic speculation.

Number Three below Discovery was ten miles up Mono Creek from its mouth. The remaining hundred miles was to be run on the frozen breast of the Yukon. On Number Three itself were fifty tents and over three hundred dogs. The old stakes, blazed and scrawled sixty days before by Cyrus Johnson, still stood, and every man had gone over the boundaries of the claim again and again, for the race with the dogs was to be preceded by a foot and obstacle race. Each man had to relocate the claim for himself, and this meant that he must place two center-stakes and four corner-stakes and cross the creek twice, before he could start for Dawson with his dogs.

Furthermore, there were to be no “sooners.” Not until the stroke of midnight of Friday night was the claim open for relocation, and not until the stroke of midnight could a man plant a stake. This was the ruling of the Gold Commissioner at Dawson, and Captain Consadine had sent up a squad of mounted police to enforce it. Discussion had arisen about the difference between sun-time and police-time, but Consadine had sent forth his fiat that police-time went, and, further, that it was the watch of Lieutenant Pollock that went.

The Mono trail ran along the level creek-bed, and, less than two feet in width, was like a groove, walled on either side by the snowfall of months. The problem of how forty-odd sleds and three hundred dogs were to start in so narrow a course was in everybody’s mind.

“Huh!” said Shorty. “It’s goin’ to be the gosh-dangdest mix-up that ever was. I can’t see no way out, Smoke, except main strength an’ sweat an’ to plow through. If the whole creek was glare-ice they ain’t room for a dozen teams abreast. I got a hunch right now they’s goin’ to be a heap of scrappin’ before they get strung out. An' if any of it comes our way, you got to let me do the punchin'."

Smoke squared his shoulders and laughed non-committally.

"No, you don't!" his partner cried in alarm. "No matter what happens, you don't dast hit. You can't handle dogs a hundred miles with a busted knuckle, an' that's what'll happen if you land on somebody's jaw."

Smoke nodded his head. "You're right, Shorty. I couldn't risk the chance."

"An' just remember," Shorty went on, "that I got to do all the shovin' for them first ten miles, an' you got to take it easy as you can. I'll sure jerk you through to the Yukon. After that it's up to you an' the dogs. Say--what d'ye think Schroeder's scheme is? He's got his first team a quarter of a mile down the creek, an' he'll know it by a green lantern. But we got him skinned. Me for the red flare every time."

The day had been clear and cold, but a blanket of cloud formed across the face of the sky, and the night came on warm and dark, with the hint of snow impending. The thermometer registered fifteen below zero, and in the Klondike winter fifteen below is esteemed very warm.

At a few minutes before midnight, leaving Shorty with the dogs five hundred yards down the creek, Smoke joined the racers on Number Three. There were forty-five of them waiting the start for the thousand thousand dollars Cyrus Johnson had left lying in the frozen gravel. Each man carried six stakes and a heavy wooden mallet, and was clad in a smock-like parka of heavy cotton drill.

Lieutenant Pollock, in a big bearskin coat, looked at his watch by the light of a fire. It lacked a minute of midnight. "Make ready," he said, as he raised a revolver in his right hand and watched the second hand tick arutenant Pollock, in a big bearskin coat, looked at his watch by the light of a fire. It lacked a minute of midnight. "Make ready," he said, as he raised a revolver in his right hand and watched the second hand tick around.

Forty-five hoods were thrown back from the parkas. Forty-five pairs of hands unmittened, and forty-five pairs of moccasins pressed tensely into the packed snow. Also, forty-five stakes were thrust into the snow, and the same number of mallets lifted in the air.

The shot rang out, and the mallets fell. Cyrus Johnson's right to the million had expired. To prevent confusion, Lieutenant Pollock had insisted that the lower center-stake be driven first, next the south-eastern; and so on around the four sides, including the upper center-stake on the way.

Smoke drove in his stake and was away with the leading dozen. Fires had been lighted at the corners, and by each fire stood a policeman, list in hand, checking off the names of the runners. A man was supposed to call out his name and show his face. There was to be no staking by proxy while the real racer was off and away down the creek.

At the first corner, beside Smoke's stake, Von Schroeder placed his. The mallets struck at the same instant. As they hammered, more arrived from behind and with such impetuosity as to get in one another's way and cause jostling and shoving. Squirming through the press and calling his name to the policeman, Smoke saw the Baron, struck in collision by one of the rushers, hurled clean off his feet into the snow. But Smoke did not wait. Others were still ahead of him. By the light of the vanishing fire, he was certain that he saw the back, hugely looming, of Big Olaf, and at the southwestern corner Big Olaf and he drove their stakes side by side.

It was no light work, this preliminary obstacle race. The boundaries of the claim totalled nearly a mile, and most of it was over the uneven surface of a snow-covered, niggerhead flat. All about Smoke men tripped and fell, and several times he pitched forward himself, jarringly, on hands and knees. Once, Big Olaf fell so immediately in front of him as to bring him down on top.

The upper center-stake was driven by the edge of the bank, and down the bank the racers plunged, across the frozen creek-bed, and up the other side. Here, as Smoke clambered, a hand gripped his ankle and jerked him back. In the flickering light of a distant fire, it was impossible to see who had played the trick. But Arizona Bill, who had been treated similarly, rose to his feet and drove his fist with a crunch into the offender's face. Smoke saw and heard as he was scrambling to his feet, but before he could make another lunge for the bank a fist dropped him half-stunned into the snow. He staggered up, located the man, half-swung a hook for his jaw, then remembered Shorty's warning and refrained. The next moment, struck below the knees by a hurtling body, he went down again.

It was a foretaste of what would happen when the men reached their sleds. Men were pouring over the other bank and piling into the jam. They swarmed up the bank in bunches, and in bunches were dragged back by their impatient fellows. More blows were struck, curses rose from the panting chests of those who still had wind to spare, and Smoke, curiously visioning the face of Joy Gastell, hoped that the mallets would not be brought into play. Overthrown, trod upon, groping in the snow for his lost stakes, he at last crawled out of the crush and attacked the bank farther along. Others were doing this, and it was his luck to have many men in advance of him in the race for the northwestern corner.

Reaching the fourth corner, he tripped headlong and in the long sprawling fall lost his remaining stake. For five minutes he groped in the darkness before he found it, and all the time the panting runners were passing him. From the last corner to the creek he began overtaking men for whom the mile run had been too much. In the creek itself Bedlam had broken loose. A dozen sleds were piled up and overturned, and nearly a hundred dogs were locked in combat. Among them men struggled, tearing the tangled animals apart, or beating them apart with clubs. In the fleeting glimpse he caught of it, Smoke wondered if he had ever seen a Dore grotesquery to compare.

Leaping down the bank beyond the glutted passage, he gained the hard-footing of the sled-trail and made better time. Here, in packed harbors beside the narrow trail, sleds and men waited for runners that were still behind. From the rear came the whine and rush of dogs, and Smoke had barely time to leap aside into the deep snow. A sled tore past, and he made out the man kneeling and shouting madly. Scarcely was it by when it stopped with a crash of battle. The excited dogs of a harbored sled, resenting the passing animals, had got out of hand and sprung upon them.

Smoke plunged around and by. He could see the green lantern of Von Schroeder and, just below it, the red flare that marked his own team. Two men were guarding Schroeder's dogs, with short clubs interposed between them and the trail.

"Come on, you Smoke! Come on, you Smoke!" he could hear Shorty calling anxiously.

"Coming!" he gasped.

By the red flare, he could see the snow torn up and trampled, and from the way his partner breathed he knew a battle had been fought. He staggered to the sled, and, in a moment he was falling on it, Shorty's whip snapped as he yelled: "Mush! you devils! Mush!"

The dogs sprang into the breast-bands, and the sled jerked abruptly ahead. They were big animals--Hanson's prize team of Hudson Bays--and

Smoke had selected them for the first stage, which included the ten miles of Mono, the heavy going of the cut-off across the flat at the mouth, and the first ten miles of the Yukon stretch.

"How many are ahead?" he asked.

"You shut up an' save your wind," Shorty answered. "Hi! you brutes! Hit her up! Hit her up!"

He was running behind the sled, towing on a short rope. Smoke could not see him; nor could he see the sled on which he lay at full length. The fires had been left in the rear, and they were tearing through a wall of blackness as fast as the dogs could spring into it. This blackness was almost sticky, so nearly did it take on the seeming of substance.

Smoke felt the sled heel up on one runner as it rounded an invisible curve, and from ahead came the snarls of beasts and the oaths of men. This was known afterward as the Barnes-Slocum Jam. It was the teams of these two men which first collided, and into it, at full career, piled Smoke's seven big fighters. Scarcely more than semi-domesticated wolves, the excitement of that night on Mono Creek had sent every dog fighting mad. The Klondike dogs, driven without reins, cannot be stopped except by voice, so that there was no stopping this glut of struggle that heaped itself between the narrow rims of the creek. From behind, sled after sled hurled into the turmoil. Men who had their teams nearly extricated were overwhelmed by fresh avalanches of dogs--each animal well fed, well rested, and ripe for battle.

"It's knock down an' drag out an' plow through!" Shorty yelled in his partner's ear. "An' watch out for your knuckles! You drag dogs out an' let me do the punchin'!"

What happened in the next half hour Smoke never distinctly remembered. At the end he emerged exhausted, sobbing for breath, his jaw sore from a fist-blow, his shoulder aching from the bruise of a club, the blood running warmly down one leg from the rip of a dog's fangs, and both sleeves of his parka torn to shreds. As in a dream, while the battle still raged behind, he helped Shorty reharness the dogs. One, dying, they cut from the traces, and in the darkness they felt their way to the repair of the disrupted harness.

"Now you lie down an' get your wind back," Shorty commanded.

And through the darkness the dogs sped, with unabated strength, down Mono Creek, across the long cut-off, and to the Yukon. Here, at the junction with the main river-trail, somebody had lighted a fire, and here Shorty said good-bye. By the light of the fire, as the sled leaped behind the flying dogs, Smoke caught another of the unforgettable pictures of the Northland. It was of Shorty, swaying and sinking down limply in the snow, yelling his parting encouragement, one eye blackened and closed, knuckles bruised and broken, and one arm, ripped and fang-torn, gushing forth a steady stream of blood.

"How many ahead?" Smoke asked, as he dropped his tired Hudson Bays and sprang on the waiting sled at the first relay station.

"I counted eleven," the man called after him, for he was already away, behind the leaping dogs.

Fifteen miles they were to carry him on the next stage, which would fetch him to the mouth of White River. There were nine of them, but they composed his weakest team. The twenty-five miles between White River and Sixty Mile he had broken into two stages because of ice-jams, and here two of his heaviest, toughest teams were stationed.

He lay on the sled at full length, face-down, holding on with both hands. Whenever the dogs slacked from topmost speed he rose to his knees, and, yelling and urging, clinging precariously with one hand, threw his whip into them. Poor team that it was, he passed two sleds before White River was reached. Here, at the freeze-up, a jam had piled a barrier, allowing the open water, that formed for half a mile below, to freeze smoothly. This smooth stretch enabled the racers to make flying exchanges of sleds, and down all the course they had placed their relays below the jams.

Over the jam and out on to the smooth, Smoke tore along, calling loudly, "Billy! Billy!"

Billy heard and answered, and by the light of the many fires on the ice, Smoke saw a sled swing in from the side and come abreast. Its dogs were fresh and overhauled his. As the sleds swerved toward each other he leaped across, and Billy promptly rolled off.

"Where's Big Olaf?" Smoke cried.

"Leading!" Billy's voice answered; and the fires were left behind, and Smoke was again flying through the wall of blackness.

In the jams of that relay, where the way led across a chaos of up-ended ice-cakes, and where Smoke slipped off the forward end of the sled and with a haul-rope toiled behind the wheel-dog, he passed three sleds.

Accidents had happened, and he could hear the men cutting out dogs and mending harnesses.

Among the jams of the next short relay into Sixty Mile, he passed two more teams. And that he might know adequately what had happened to them, one of his own dogs wrenched a shoulder, was unable to keep up, and was dragged in the harness. Its teammates, angered, fell upon it with their fangs, and Smoke was forced to club them off with the heavy butt of his whip. As he cut the injured animal out, he heard the whining cries of dogs behind him and the voice of a man that was familiar. It was Von Schroeder. Smoke called a warning to prevent a rear-end collision, and the Baron, hawing his animals and swinging on the gee-pole, went by a dozen feet to the side. Yet so impenetrable was the blackness that Smoke heard him pass but never saw him.

On the smooth stretch of ice beside the trading-post at Sixty Mile, Smoke overtook two more sleds. All had just changed teams, and for five minutes they ran abreast, each man on his knees and pouring whip and voice into the maddened dogs. But Smoke had studied out that portion of the trail, and now marked the tall pine on the bank that showed faintly in the light of the many fires. Below that pine was not merely darkness, but an abrupt cessation of the smooth stretch. There the trail, he knew, narrowed to a single sled-width. Leaning out ahead, he caught the haul-rope and drew his leaping sled up to the wheel-dog. He caught the animal by the hind legs and threw it. With a snarl of rage it tried to slash him with its fangs, but was dragged on by the rest of the team. Its body proved an efficient brake, and the two other teams, still abreast, dashed ahead into the darkness for the narrow way.

Smoke heard the crash and uproar of their collision, released his wheeler, sprang to the gee-pole, and urged his team to the right into the soft snow where the straining animals wallowed to their necks. It was exhausting work, but he won by the tangled teams and gained the hard-packed trail beyond.

On the relay out of Sixty Mile, Smoke had next to his poorest team, and though the going was good, he had set it a short fifteen miles. Two more teams would bring him into Dawson and to the gold-recorder’s office, and Smoke had selected his best animals for the last two stretches. Sitka Charley himself waited with the eight Malemutes that would jerk Smoke along for twenty miles, and for the finish, with a fifteen-mile run, was his own team--the team he had had all winter and which had been with him in the search for Surprise Lake.

The two men he had left entangled at Sixty Mile failed to overtake him, and, on the other hand, his team failed to overtake any of the three that still led. His animals were willing, though they lacked stamina and speed, and little urging was needed to keep them jumping into it at their best. There was nothing for Smoke to do but to lie face downward and hold on. Now and again he would plunge out of the darkness into the circle of light about a blazing fire, catch a glimpse of furred men standing by harnessed and waiting dogs, and plunge into the darkness again. Mile after mile, with only the grind and jar of the runners in his ears, he sped on. Almost automatically he kept his place as the sled bumped ahead or half lifted and heeled on the swings and swerves of the bends. First one, and then another, without apparent rhyme or reason, three faces limned themselves on his consciousness: Joy Gastell's, laughing and audacious; Shorty's, battered and exhausted by the struggle down Mono Creek; and John Bellew's, seamed and rigid, as if cast in iron, so unrelenting was its severity. And sometimes Smoke wanted to shout aloud, to chant a paean of savage exultation, as he remembered the office of The Billow and the serial story of San Francisco which he had left unfinished, along with the other fripperies of those empty days.

The grey twilight of morning was breaking as he exchanged his weary dogs for the eight fresh Malemutes. Lighter animals than Hudson Bays, they were capable of greater speed, and they ran with the supple tirelessness of true wolves. Sitka Charley called out the order of the teams ahead. Big Olaf led, Arizona Bill was second, and Von Schroeder third. These were the three best men in the country. In fact, ere Smoke had left Dawson, the popular betting had placed them in that order. While they were racing for a million, at least half a million had been staked by others on the outcome of the race. No one had bet on Smoke, who, despite his several known exploits, was still accounted a chechako with much to learn.

As daylight strengthened, Smoke caught sight of a sled ahead, and, in half an hour, his own lead-dog was leaping at its tail. Not until the man turned his head to exchange greetings, did Smoke recognize him as Arizona Bill. Von Schroeder had evidently passed him. The trail, hard-packed, ran too narrowly through the soft snow, and for another half-hour Smoke was forced to stay in the rear. Then they topped an ice-jam and struck a smooth stretch below, where were a number of relay camps and where the snow was packed widely. On his knees, swinging his whip and yelling, Smoke drew abreast. He noted that Arizona Bill's right arm hung dead at his side, and that he was compelled to pour leather with his left hand. Awkward as it was, he had no hand left with which to hold on, and frequently he had to cease from the whip and clutch to save himself from falling off. Smoke remembered the scrimmage in the creek bed at Three Below Discovery, and understood. Shorty's advice had been sound.

"What's happened?" Smoke asked, as he began to pull ahead.

"I don't know," Arizona Bill answered. "I think I threw my shoulder out in the scrapping."

He dropped behind very slowly, though when the last relay station was in sight he was fully half a mile in the rear. Ahead, bunched together, Smoke could see Big Olaf and Von Schroeder. Again Smoke arose to his knees, and he lifted his jaded dogs into a burst of speed such as a man only can who has the proper instinct for dog-driving. He drew up close to the tail of Von Schroeder's sled, and in this order the three sleds dashed out on the smooth going below a jam, where many men and many dogs waited. Dawson was fifteen miles away.

Von Schroeder, with his ten-mile relays, had changed five miles back and would change five miles ahead. So he held on, keeping his dogs at full leap. Big Olaf and Smoke made flying changes, and their fresh teams immediately regained what had been lost to the Baron. Big Olaf led past, and Smoke followed into the narrow trail beyond.

"Still good, but not so good," Smoke paraphrased Spencer to himself.

Of Von Schroeder, now behind, he had no fear; but ahead was the greatest dog-driver in the country. To pass him seemed impossible. Again and again, many times, Smoke forced his leader to the other's sled-tail, and each time Big Olaf let out another link and drew away. Smoke contented himself with taking the pace, and hung on grimly. The race was not lost until one or the other won, and in fifteen miles many things could happen.

Three miles from Dawson something did happen. To Smoke's surprise, Big Olaf rose up and with oaths and leather proceeded to fetch out the last ounce of effort in his animals. It was a spurt that should have been reserved for the last hundred yards instead of being begun three miles from the finish. Sheer dog-killing that it was, Smoke followed. His own team was superb. No dogs on the Yukon had had harder work or were in better condition. Besides, Smoke had toiled with them, and eaten and bedded with them, and he knew each dog as an individual and how best to win in to the animal's intelligence and extract its last least shred of willingness.

They topped a small jam and struck the smooth going below. Big Olaf was barely fifty feet ahead. A sled shot out from the side and drew in toward him, and Smoke understood Big Olaf's terrific spurt. He had tried to gain a lead for the change. This fresh team that waited to jerk him down the home stretch had been a private surprise of his. Even the men who had backed him to win had had no knowledge of it.

Smoke strove desperately to pass during the exchange of sleds. Lifting his dogs to the effort, he ate up the intervening fifty feet. With urging and pouring of leather, he went to the side and on until his lead-dog was jumping abreast of Big Olaf's wheeler. On the other side, abreast, was the relay sled. At the speed they were going, Big Olaf did not dare try the flying leap. If he missed and fell off, Smoke would be in the lead and the race would be lost.

Big Olaf tried to spurt ahead, and he lifted his dogs magnificently, but Smoke's leader still continued to jump beside Big Olaf's wheeler. For half a mile the three sleds tore and bounced along side by side. The smooth stretch was nearing its end when Big Olaf took the chance. As the flying sleds swerved toward each other, he leaped, and the instant he struck he was on his knees, with whip and voice spurting the fresh team. The smooth stretch pinched out into the narrow trail, and he jumped his dogs ahead and into it with a lead of barely a yard.

A man was not beaten until he was beaten, was Smoke's conclusion, and drive no matter how, Big Olaf failed to shake him off. No team Smoke had driven that night could have stood such a killing pace and kept up with fresh dogs--no team save this one. Nevertheless, the pace WAS killing it, and as they began to round the bluff at Klondike City, he could feel the pitch of strength going out of his animals. Almost imperceptibly they lagged behind, and foot by foot Big Olaf drew away until he led by a score of yards.

A great cheer went up from the population of Klondike City assembled on the ice. Here the Klondike entered the Yukon, and half a mile away, across the Klondike, on the north bank, stood Dawson. An outburst of madder cheering arose, and Smoke caught a glimpse of a sled shooting out to him. He recognized the splendid animals that drew it. They were Joy

Gastell’s. And Joy Gastell drove them. The hood of her squirrel-skin parka was tossed back, revealing the cameo-like oval of her face outlined against her heavily-massed hair. Mittens had been discarded, and with bare hands she clung to whip and sled.

“Jump!” she cried, as her leader snarled at Smoke’s.

Smoke struck the sled behind her. It rocked violently from the impact of his body, but she was full up on her knees and swinging the whip.

“Hi! You! Mush on! Chook! Chook!” she was crying, and the dogs whined and yelped in eagerness of desire and effort to overtake Big Olaf.

And then, as the lead-dog caught the tail of Big Olaf’s sled, and yard by yard drew up abreast, the great crowd on the Dawson bank went mad. It WAS a great crowd, for the men had dropped their tools on all the creeks and come down to see the outcome of the race, and a dead heat at the end of a hundred and ten miles justified any madness.

“When you’re in the lead I’m going to drop off!” Joy cried out over her shoulder.

Smoke tried to protest.

“And watch out for the dip curve half way up the bank,” she warned.

Dog by dog, separated by half a dozen feet, the two teams were running abreast. Big Olaf, with whip and voice, held his own for a minute. Then, slowly, an inch at a time, Joy’s leader began to forge past.

“Get ready!” she cried to Smoke. “I’m going to leave you in a minute. Get the whip.”

And as he shifted his hand to clutch the whip, they heard Big Olaf roar a warning, but too late. His lead-dog, incensed at being passed, swerved in to the attack. His fangs struck Joy’s leader on the flank. The rival teams flew at one another’s throats. The sleds overran the fighting brutes and capsized. Smoke struggled to his feet and tried to lift Joy up. But she thrust him from her, crying: “Go!”

On foot, already fifty feet in advance, was Big Olaf, still intent on finishing the race. Smoke obeyed, and when the two men reached the foot of the Dawson bank, he was at the other’s heels. But up the bank Big Olaf lifted his body hugely, regaining a dozen feet.

Five blocks down the main street was the gold-recorder’s office. The street was packed as for the witnessing of a parade. Not so easily this time did Smoke gain to his giant rival, and when he did he was unable to pass. Side by side they ran along the narrow aisle between the solid walls of fur-clad, cheering men. Now one, now the other, with great convulsive jerks, gained an inch or so, only to lose it immediately after.

If the pace had been a killing one for their dogs, the one they now set themselves was no less so. But they were racing for a million dollars and greatest honour in Yukon Country. The only outside impression that came to Smoke on that last mad stretch was one of astonishment that there should be so many people in the Klondike. He had never seen them all at once before.

He felt himself involuntarily lag, and Big Olaf sprang a full stride in the lead. To Smoke it seemed that his heart would burst, while he had lost all consciousness of his legs. He knew they were flying under him, but he did not know how he continued to make them fly, nor how he put even greater pressure of will upon them and compelled them again to carry him to his giant competitor's side.

The open door of the Recorder's office appeared ahead of them. Both men made a final, futile spurt. Neither could draw away from the other, and side by side they hit the doorway, collided violently, and fell headlong on the office floor.

They sat up, but were too exhausted to rise. Big Olaf, the sweat pouring from him, breathing with tremendous, painful gasps, pawed the air and vainly tried to speak. Then he reached out his hand with unmistakable meaning; Smoke extended his, and they shook.

"It's a dead heat," Smoke could hear the Recorder saying, but it was as if in a dream, and the voice was very thin and very far away. "And all I can say is that you both win. You'll have to divide the claim between you. You're partners."

Their two arms pumped up and down as they ratified the decision. Big Olaf nodded his head with great emphasis, and spluttered. At last he got it out.

"You damn chechako," was what he said, but in the saying of it was admiration. "I don't know how you done it, but you did."

Outside, the great crowd was noisily massed, while the office was packing and jamming. Smoke and Big Olaf essayed to rise, and each helped the other to his feet. Smoke found his legs weak under him, and staggered drunkenly. Big Olaf tottered toward him.

"I'm sorry my dogs jumped yours."

"It couldn't be helped," Smoke panted back. "I heard you yell."

“Say,” Big Olaf went on with shining eyes. “That girl--one damn fine girl, eh?”

“One damn fine girl,” Smoke agreed.

A Raid On the Oyster Pirates

Of the fish patrolmen under whom we served at various times, Charley Le Grant and I were agreed, I think, that Neil Partington was the best. He was neither dishonest nor cowardly; and while he demanded strict obedience when we were under his orders, at the same time our relations were those of easy comradeship, and he permitted us a freedom to which we were ordinarily unaccustomed, as the present story will show.

Neil's family lived in Oakland, which is on the Lower Bay, not more than six miles across the water from San Francisco. One day, while scouting among the Chinese shrimp-catchers of Point Pedro, he received word that his wife was very ill; and within the hour the Reindeer was bowling along for Oakland, with a stiff northwest breeze astern. We ran up the Oakland Estuary and came to anchor, and in the days that followed, while Neil was ashore, we tightened up the Reindeer's rigging, overhauled the ballast, scraped down, and put the sloop into thorough shape.

This done, time hung heavy on our hands. Neil's wife was dangerously ill, and the outlook was a week's lie-over, awaiting the crisis. Charley and I roamed the docks, wondering what we should do, and so came upon the oyster fleet lying at the Oakland City Wharf. In the main they were trim, natty boats, made for speed and bad weather, and we sat down on the stringer-piece of the dock to study them.

"A good catch, I guess," Charley said, pointing to the heaps of oysters, assorted in three sizes, which lay upon their decks.

Pedlers were backing their wagons to the edge of the wharf, and from the bargaining and chaffering that went on, I managed to learn the selling price of the oysters.

"That boat must have at least two hundred dollars' worth aboard," I calculated. "I wonder how long it took to get the load?"

"Three or four days," Charley answered. "Not bad wages for two men-twenty-five dollars a day apiece."

The boat we were discussing, the Ghost, lay directly beneath us. Two men composed its crew. One was a squat, broad-shouldered fellow with remarkably long and gorilla-like arms, while the other was tall and well proportioned, with clear blue eyes and a mat of straight black hair. So unusual and striking was this combination of hair and eyes that Charley and I remained somewhat longer than we intended.

And it was well that we did. A stout, elderly man, with the dress and carriage of a successful merchant, came up and stood beside us, looking down upon the deck of the Ghost. He appeared angry, and the longer he looked the angrier he grew.

“Those are my oysters,” he said at last. “I know they are my oysters. You raided my beds last night and robbed me of them.”

The tall man and the short man on the Ghost looked up.

“Hello, Taft,” the short man said, with insolent familiarity. (Among the bayfarers he had gained the nickname of “The Centipede” on account of his long arms.) “Hello, Taft,” he repeated, with the same touch of insolence. “Wot ‘r you growling about now?”

“Those are my oysters-that’s what I said. You’ve stolen them from my beds.”

“Yer mighty wise, ain’t ye?” was the Centipede’s sneering reply. “S’pose you can tell your oysters wherever you see ‘em?”

“Now, in my experience,” broke in the tall man, “oysters is oysters wherever you find ‘em, an’ they’re pretty much alike all the Bay over, and the world over, too, for that matter. We’re not wantin’ to quarrel with you, Mr. Taft, but we jes’ wish you wouldn’t insinuate that them oysters is yours an’ that we’re thieves an’ robbers till you can prove the goods.”

“I know they’re mine; I’d stake my life on it!” Mr. Taft snorted.

“Prove it,” challenged the tall man, who we afterward learned was known as “The Porpoise” because of his wonderful swimming abilities.

Mr. Taft shrugged his shoulders helplessly. Of course he could not prove the oysters to be his, no matter how certain he might be.

“I’d give a thousand dollars to have you men behind the bars!” he cried. “I’ll give fifty dollars a head for your arrest and conviction, all of you!”

A roar of laughter went up from the different boats, for the rest of the pirates had been listening to the discussion.

“There’s more money in oysters,” the Porpoise remarked dryly.

Mr. Taft turned impatiently on his heel and walked away. From out of the corner of his eye, Charley noted the way he went. Several minutes later, when he had disappeared around a corner, Charley rose lazily to his feet. I followed him, and we sauntered off in the opposite direction to that taken by Mr. Taft.

"Come on! Lively!" Charley whispered, when we passed from the view of the oyster fleet.

Our course was changed at once, and we dodged around corners and raced up and down side-streets till Mr. Taft's generous form loomed up ahead of us.

"I'm going to interview him about that reward," Charley explained, as we rapidly over-hauled the oyster-bed owner. "Neil will be delayed here for a week, and you and I might as well be doing something in the meantime. What do you say?"

"Of course, of course," Mr. Taft said, when Charley had introduced himself and explained his errand. "Those thieves are robbing me of thousands of dollars every year, and I shall be glad to break them up at any price,-yes, sir, at any price. As I said, I'll give fifty dollars a head, and call it cheap at that. They've robbed my beds, torn down my signs, terrorized my watchmen, and last year killed one of them. Couldn't prove it. All done in the blackness of night. All I had was a dead watchman and no evidence. The detectives could do nothing. Nobody has been able to do anything with those men. We have never succeeded in arresting one of them. So I say, Mr.-What did you say your name was?"

"Le Grant," Charley answered.

"So I say, Mr. Le Grant, I am deeply obliged to you for the assistance you offer. And I shall be glad, most glad, sir, to co-operate with you in every way. My watchmen and boats are at your disposal. Come and see me at the San Francisco offices any time, or telephone at my expense. And don't be afraid of spending money. I'll foot your expenses, whatever they are, so long as they are within reason. The situation is growing desperate, and something must be done to determine whether I or that band of ruffians own those oyster beds."

"Now we'll see Neil," Charley said, when he had seen Mr. Taft upon his train to San Francisco.

Not only did Neil Partington interpose no obstacle to our adventure, but he proved to be of the greatest assistance. Charley and I knew nothing of the oyster industry, while his head was an encyclopaedia of facts concerning it. Also, within an hour or so, he was able to bring to us a Greek boy of seventeen or eighteen who knew thoroughly well the ins and outs of oyster piracy.

At this point I may as well explain that we of the fish patrol were free lances in a way. While Neil Partington, who was a patrolman proper, received a regular salary, Charley and I, being merely deputies, received only what we earned-that is to say, a certain percentage of the fines imposed on convicted violators of the fish laws. Also, any rewards that chanced our way were ours. We offered to share with Partington whatever we should get from Mr. Taft, but the patrolman would not hear of it. He was only too happy, he said, to do a good turn for us, who had done so many for him.

We held a long council of war, and mapped out the following line of action. Our faces were unfamiliar on the Lower Bay, but as the Reindeer was well known as a fish-patrol sloop, the Greek boy, whose name was Nicholas, and I were to sail some innocent-looking craft down to Asparagus Island and join the oyster pirates' fleet. Here, according to Nicholas's description of the beds and the manner of raiding, it was possible for us to catch the pirates in the act of stealing oysters, and at the same time to get them in our power. Charley was to be on the shore, with Mr. Taft's watchmen and a posse of constables, to help us at the right time.

"I know just the boat," Neil said, at the conclusion of the discussion, "a crazy old sloop that's lying over at Tiburon. You and Nicholas can go over by the ferry, charter it for a song, and sail direct for the beds."

"Good luck be with you, boys," he said at parting, two days later. "Remember, they are dangerous men, so be careful."

Nicholas and I succeeded in chartering the sloop very cheaply; and between laughs, while getting up sail, we agreed that she was even crazier and older than she had been described. She was a big, flat-bottomed, square-sterned craft, sloop-rigged, with a sprung mast, slack rigging, dilapidated sails, and rotten running-gear, clumsy to handle and uncertain in bringing about, and she smelled vilely of coal tar, with which strange stuff she had been smeared from stem to stern and from cabin-roof to centreboard. And to cap it all, Coal Tar Maggie was printed in great white letters the whole length of either side.

It was an uneventful though laughable run from Tiburon to Asparagus Island, where we arrived in the afternoon of the following day. The oyster pirates, a fleet of a dozen sloops, were lying at anchor on what was known as the "Deserted Beds." The Coal Tar Maggie came sloshing into their midst with a light breeze astern, and they crowded on deck to see us.

Nicholas and I had caught the spirit of the crazy craft, and we handled her in most lubberly fashion.

“Wot is it?” some one called.

“Name it ‘n’ ye kin have it!” called another.

“I swan naow, ef it ain’t the old Ark itself!” mimicked the Centipede from the deck of the Ghost.

“Hey! Ahoy there, clipper ship!” another wag shouted. “Wot’s yer port?”

We took no notice of the joking, but acted, after the manner of greenhorns, as though the Coal Tar Maggie required our undivided attention. I rounded her well to windward of the Ghost, and Nicholas ran for’ard to drop the anchor. To all appearances it was a bungle, the way the chain tangled and kept the anchor from reaching the bottom. And to all appearances Nicholas and I were terribly excited as we strove to clear it. At any rate, we quite deceived the pirates, who took huge delight in our predicament.

But the chain remained tangled, and amid all kinds of mocking advice we drifted down upon and fouled the Ghost, whose bowsprit poked square through our mainsail and ripped a hole in it as big as a barn door. The Centipede and the Porpoise doubled up on the cabin in paroxysms of laughter, and left us to get clear as best we could. This, with much unseaman-like performance, we succeeded in doing, and likewise in clearing the anchor-chain, of which we let out about three hundred feet. With only ten feet of water under us, this would permit the Coal Tar Maggie to swing in a circle six hundred feet in diameter, in which circle she would be able to foul at least half the fleet.

The oyster pirates lay snugly together at short hawsers, the weather being fine, and they protested loudly at our ignorance in putting out such an unwarranted length of anchor-chain. And not only did they protest, for they made us heave it in again, all but thirty feet.

Having sufficiently impressed them with our general lubberliness, Nicholas and I went below to congratulate ourselves and to cook supper. Hardly had we finished the meal and washed the dishes, when a skiff ground against the Coal Tar Maggie’s side, and heavy feet trampled on deck. Then the Centipede’s brutal face appeared in the companionway, and he descended into the cabin, followed by the Porpoise. Before they could seat themselves on a bunk, another skiff came alongside, and another, and another, till the whole fleet was represented by the gathering in the cabin.

“Where’d you swipe the old tub?” asked a squat and hairy man, with cruel eyes and Mexican features.

“Didn’t swipe it,” Nicholas answered, meeting them on their own ground and encouraging the idea that we had stolen the Coal Tar Maggie. “And if we did, what of it?”

“Well, I don’t admire your taste, that’s all,” sneered he of the Mexican features. “I’d rot on the beach first before I’d take a tub that couldn’t get out of its own way.”

“How were we to know till we tried her?” Nicholas asked, so innocently as to cause a laugh. “And how do you get the oysters?” he hurried on. “We want a load of them; that’s what we came for, a load of oysters.”

“What d’ye want ‘em for?” demanded the Porpoise.

“Oh, to give away to our friends, of course,” Nicholas retorted. “That’s what you do with yours, I suppose.”

This started another laugh, and as our visitors grew more genial we could see that they had not the slightest suspicion of our identity or purpose.

“Didn’t I see you on the dock in Oakland the other day?” the Centipede asked suddenly of me.

“Yep,” I answered boldly, taking the bull by the horns. “I was watching you fellows and figuring out whether we’d go oystering or not. It’s a pretty good business, I calculate, and so we’re going in for it. That is,” I hastened to add, “if you fellows don’t mind.”

“I’ll tell you one thing, which ain’t two things,” he replied, “and that is you’ll have to hump yerself an’ get a better boat. We won’t stand to be disgraced by any such box as this. Understand?”

“Sure,” I said. “Soon as we sell some oysters we’ll outfit in style.”

“And if you show yerself square an’ the right sort,” he went on, “why, you kin run with us. But if you don’t” (here his voice became stern and menacing), “why, it’ll be the sickest day of yer life. Understand?”

“Sure,” I said.

After that and more warning and advice of similar nature, the conversation became general, and we learned that the beds were to be raided that very night. As they got into their boats, after an hour’s stay, we were invited to join them in the raid with the assurance of “the more the merrier.”

“Did you notice that short, Mexican-looking chap?” Nicholas asked, when they had departed to their various sloops. “He’s Barchi, of the

Sporting Life Gang, and the fellow that came with him is Skilling. They're both out now on five thousand dollars' bail."

I had heard of the Sporting Life Gang before, a crowd of hoodlums and criminals that terrorized the lower quarters of Oakland, and two-thirds of which were usually to be found in state's prison for crimes that ranged from perjury and ballot-box stuffing to murder.

"They are not regular oyster pirates," Nicholas continued. "They've just come down for the lark and to make a few dollars. But we'll have to watch out for them."

We sat in the cockpit and discussed the details of our plan till eleven o'clock had passed, when we heard the rattle of an oar in a boat from the direction of the Ghost. We hauled up our own skiff, tossed in a few sacks, and rowed over. There we found all the skiffs assembling, it being the intention to raid the beds in a body.

To my surprise, I found barely a foot of water where we had dropped anchor in ten feet. It was the big June run-out of the full moon, and as the ebb had yet an hour and a half to run, I knew that our anchorage would be dry ground before slack water.

Mr. Taft's beds were three miles away, and for a long time we rowed silently in the wake of the other boats, once in a while grounding and our oar blades constantly striking bottom. At last we came upon soft mud covered with not more than two inches of water-not enough to float the boats. But the pirates at once were over the side, and by pushing and pulling on the flat-bottomed skiffs, we moved steadily along.

The full moon was partly obscured by high-flying clouds, but the pirates went their way with the familiarity born of long practice. After half a mile of the mud, we came upon a deep channel, up which we rowed, with dead oyster shoals looming high and dry on either side. At last we reached the picking grounds. Two men, on one of the shoals, hailed us and warned us off. But the Centipede, the Porpoise, Barchi, and Skilling took the lead, and followed by the rest of us, at least thirty men in half as many boats, rowed right up to the watchmen.

"You'd better slide outa this here," Barchi said threateningly, "or we'll fill you so full of holes you wouldn't float in molasses."

The watchmen wisely retreated before so overwhelming a force, and rowed their boat along the channel toward where the shore should be. Besides, it was in the plan for them to retreat.

We hauled the noses of the boats up on the shore side of a big shoal, and all hands, with sacks, spread out and began picking. Every now and again the clouds thinned before the face of the moon, and we could see the big oysters quite distinctly. In almost no time sacks were filled and carried back to the boats, where fresh ones were obtained. Nicholas and I returned often and anxiously to the boats with our little loads, but always found some one of the pirates coming or going.

“Never mind,” he said; “no hurry. As they pick farther and farther away, it will take too long to carry to the boats. Then they’ll stand the full sacks on end and pick them up when the tide comes in and the skiffs will float to them.”

Fully half an hour went by, and the tide had begun to flood, when this came to pass. Leaving the pirates at their work, we stole back to the boats. One by one, and noiselessly, we shoved them off and made them fast in an awkward flotilla. Just as we were shoving off the last skiff, our own, one of the men came upon us. It was Barchi. His quick eye took in the situation at a glance, and he sprang for us; but we went clear with a mighty shove, and he was left floundering in the water over his head. As soon as he got back to the shoal he raised his voice and gave the alarm.

We rowed with all our strength, but it was slow going with so many boats in tow. A pistol cracked from the shoal, a second, and a third; then a regular fusillade began. The bullets spat and spat all about us; but thick clouds had covered the moon, and in the dim darkness it was no more than random firing. It was only by chance that we could be hit.

“Wish we had a little steam launch,” I panted.

“I’d just as soon the moon stayed hidden,” Nicholas panted back.

It was slow work, but every stroke carried us farther away from the shoal and nearer the shore, till at last the shooting died down, and when the moon did come out we were too far away to be in danger. Not long afterward we answered a shoreward hail, and two Whitehall boats, each pulled by three pairs of oars, darted up to us. Charley’s welcome face bent over to us, and he gripped us by the hands while he cried, “Oh, you joys! You joys! Both of you!”

When the flotilla had been landed, Nicholas and I and a watchman rowed out in one of the Whitehalls, with Charley in the stern-sheets. Two other Whitehalls followed us, and as the moon now shone brightly, we easily made out the oyster pirates on their lonely shoal. As we drew closer, they fired a rattling volley from their revolvers, and we promptly retreated beyond range.

"Lot of time," Charley said. "The flood is setting in fast, and by the time it's up to their necks there won't be any fight left in them."

So we lay on our oars and waited for the tide to do its work. This was the predicament of the pirates: because of the big run-out, the tide was now rushing back like a mill-race, and it was impossible for the strongest swimmer in the world to make against it the three miles to the sloops. Between the pirates and the shore were we, precluding escape in that direction. On the other hand, the water was rising rapidly over the shoals, and it was only a question of a few hours when it would be over their heads.

It was beautifully calm, and in the brilliant white moonlight we watched them through our night glasses and told Charley of the voyage of the Coal Tar Maggie. One o'clock came, and two o'clock, and the pirates were clustering on the highest shoal, waist-deep in water.

"Now this illustrates the value of imagination," Charley was saying. "Taft has been trying for years to get them, but he went at it with bull strength and failed. Now we used our heads . . ."

Just then I heard a scarcely audible gurgle of water, and holding up my hand for silence, I turned and pointed to a ripple slowly widening out in a growing circle. It was not more than fifty feet from us. We kept perfectly quiet and waited. After a minute the water broke six feet away, and a black head and white shoulder showed in the moonlight. With a snort of surprise and of suddenly expelled breath, the head and shoulder went down.

We pulled ahead several strokes and drifted with the current. Four pairs of eyes searched the surface of the water, but never another ripple showed, and never another glimpse did we catch of the black head and white shoulder.

"It's the Porpoise," Nicholas said. "It would take broad daylight for us to catch him."

At a quarter to three the pirates gave their first sign of weakening. We heard cries for help, in the unmistakable voice of the Centipede, and this time, on rowing closer, we were not fired upon. The Centipede was in a truly perilous plight. Only the heads and shoulders of his fellow-marauders showed above the water as they braced themselves against the current, while his feet were off the bottom and they were supporting him.

“Now, lads,” Charley said briskly, “we have got you, and you can’t get away. If you cut up rough, we’ll have to leave you alone and the water will finish you. But if you’re good we’ll take you aboard, one man at a time, and you’ll all be saved. What do you say?”

“Ay,” they chorused hoarsely between their chattering teeth.

“Then one man at a time, and the short men first.”

The Centipede was the first to be pulled aboard, and he came willingly, though he objected when the constable put the handcuffs on him. Barchi was next hauled in, quite meek and resigned from his soaking. When we had ten in, our boat we drew back, and the second Whitehall was loaded. The third Whitehall received nine prisoners only-a catch of twenty-nine in all.

“You didn’t get the Porpoise,” the Centipede said exultantly, as though his escape materially diminished our success.

Charley laughed. “But we saw him just the same, a-snorting for shore like a puffing pig.”

It was a mild and shivering band of pirates that we marched up the beach to the oyster house. In answer to Charley’s knock, the door was flung open, and a pleasant wave of warm air rushed out upon us.

“You can dry your clothes here, lads, and get some hot coffee,” Charley announced, as they filed in.

And there, sitting ruefully by the fire, with a steaming mug in his hand, was the Porpoise. With one accord Nicholas and I looked at Charley. He laughed gleefully.

“That comes of imagination,” he said. “When you see a thing, you’ve got to see it all around, or what’s the good of seeing it at all? I saw the beach, so I left a couple of constables behind to keep an eye on it. That’s all.”

The Red One

THERE it was! The abrupt liberation of sound! As he timed it with his watch, Bassett likened it to the trump of an archangel. Walls of cities, he meditated, might well fall down before so vast and compelling a summons. For the thousandth time vainly he tried to analyse the tone-quality of that enormous peal that dominated the land far into the strong-holds of the surrounding tribes. The mountain gorge which was its source rang to the rising tide of it until it brimmed over and flooded earth and sky and air. With the wantonness of a sick man's fancy, he likened it to the mighty cry of some Titan of the Elder World vexed with misery or wrath. Higher and higher it arose, challenging and demanding in such profounds of volume that it seemed intended for ears beyond the narrow confines of the solar system. There was in it, too, the clamour of protest in that there were no ears to hear and comprehend its utterance.

- Such the sick man's fancy. Still he strove to analyse the sound. Sonorous as thunder was it, mellow as a golden bell, thin and sweet as a thrummed taut cord of silver-no; it was none of these, nor a blend of these. There were no words nor semblances in his vocabulary and experience with which to describe the totality of that sound.

Time passed. Minutes merged into quarters of hours, and quarters of hours into half-hours, and still the sound persisted, ever changing from its initial vocal impulse yet never receiving fresh impulse-fading, dimming, dying as enormously as it had sprung into being. It became a confusion of troubled mutterings and babblings and colossal whisperings. Slowly it withdrew, sob by sob, into whatever great bosom had birthed it, until it whimpered deadly whispers of wrath and as equally seductive whispers of delight, striving still to be heard, to convey some cosmic secret, some understanding of infinite import and value. It dwindled to a ghost of sound that had lost its menace and promise, and became a thing that pulsed on in the sick man's consciousness for minutes after it had ceased. When he could hear it no longer, Bassett glanced at his watch. An hour had elapsed ere that archangel's trump had subsided into tonal nothingness.

Was this, then, HIS dark tower?-Bassett pondered, remembering his Browning and gazing at his skeleton-like and fever-wasted hands. And the fancy made him smile-of Childe Roland bearing a slug-horn to his lips with an arm as feeble as his was. Was it months, or years, he asked himself, since he first heard that mysterious call on the beach at Ringmanu? To save himself he could not tell. The long sickness had been most long. In conscious count of time he knew of months, many of them; but he had no way of estimating the long intervals of delirium and stupor. And how fared Captain Bateman of the blackbirder NARI? he wondered; and had Captain Bateman's drunken mate died of delirium tremens yet?

From which vain speculations, Bassett turned idly to review all that had occurred since that day on the beach of Ringmanu when he first heard the sound and plunged into the jungle after it. Sagawa had protested. He could see him yet, his queer little monkeyish face eloquent with fear, his back burdened with specimen cases, in his hands Bassett's butterfly net and naturalist's shot-gun, as he quavered, in Beche-de-mer English: "Me fella too much fright along bush. Bad fella boy, too much stop'm along bush."

Bassett smiled sadly at the recollection. The little New Hanover boy had been frightened, but had proved faithful, following him without hesitancy into the bush in the quest after the source of the wonderful sound. No fire-hollowed tree-trunk, that, throbbing war through the jungle depths, had been Bassett's conclusion. Erroneous had been his next conclusion, namely, that the source or cause could not be more distant than an hour's walk, and that he would easily be back by mid-afternoon to be picked up by the NARI'S whale-boat.

"That big fella noise no good, all the same devil-devil," Sagawa had adjudged. And Sagawa had been right. Had he not had his head hacked off within the day? Bassett shuddered. Without doubt Sagawa had been eaten as well by the "bad fella boys too much" that stopped along the bush. He could see him, as he had last seen him, stripped of the shot-gun and all the naturalist's gear of his master, lying on the narrow trail where he had been decapitated barely the moment before. Yes, within a minute the thing had happened. Within a minute, looking back, Bassett had seen him trudging patiently along under his burdens. Then Bassett's own trouble had come upon him. He looked at the cruelly healed stumps of the first and second fingers of his left hand, then rubbed them softly into the indentation in the back of his skull. Quick as had been the flash of the long handled tomahawk, he had been quick enough to duck away his head and partially to deflect the stroke with his up-flung hand. Two fingers and a hasty scalp-wound had been the price he paid for his life. With one barrel of his ten-gauge shot-gun he had blown the life out of the bushman who had so nearly got him; with the other barrel he had peppered the bushmen bending over Sagawa, and had the pleasure of knowing that the major portion of the charge had gone into the one who leaped away with Sagawa's head. Everything had occurred in a flash. Only himself, the slain bushman, and what remained of Sagawa, were in the narrow, wild-pig run of a path. From the dark jungle on either side came no rustle of movement or sound of life. And he had suffered distinct and dreadful shock. For the first time in his life he had killed a human being, and he knew nausea as he contemplated the mess of his handiwork.

Then had begun the chase. He retreated up the pig-run before his hunters, who were between him and the beach. How many there were, he could not guess. There might have been one, or a hundred, for aught he saw of them. That some of them took to the trees and travelled along through the jungle roof he was certain; but at the most he never glimpsed more than an occasional flitting of shadows. No bow-strings twanged that he could hear; but every little while, whence discharged he knew not, tiny arrows whispered past him or struck tree-boles and fluttered to the ground beside him. They were bone-tipped and feather shafted, and the feathers, torn from the breasts of humming-birds, iridesced like jewels.

Once-and now, after the long lapse of time, he chuckled gleefully at the recollection-he had detected a shadow above him that came to instant rest as he turned his gaze upward. He could make out nothing, but, deciding to chance it, had fired at it a heavy charge of number five shot. Squalling like an infuriated cat, the shadow crashed down through tree-ferns and orchids and thudded upon the earth at his feet, and, still squalling its rage and pain, had sunk its human teeth into the ankle of his stout tramping boot. He, on the other hand, was not idle, and with his free foot had done what reduced the squalling to silence. So inured to savagery has Bassett since become, that he chuckled again with the glee of the recollection.

What a night had followed! Small wonder that he had accumulated such a virulence and variety of fevers, he thought, as he recalled that sleepless night of torment, when the throb of his wounds was as nothing compared with the myriad stings of the mosquitoes. There had been no escaping them, and he had not dared to light a fire. They had literally pumped his body full of poison, so that, with the coming of day, eyes swollen almost shut, he had stumbled blindly on, not caring much when his head should be hacked off and his carcass started on the way of Sagawa's to the cooking fire. Twenty-four hours had made a wreck of him-of mind as well as body. He had scarcely retained his wits at all, so maddened was he by the tremendous inoculation of poison he had received. Several times he fired his shot-gun with effect into the shadows that dogged him. Stinging day insects and gnats added to his torment, while his bloody wounds attracted hosts of loathsome flies that clung sluggishly to his flesh and had to be brushed off and crushed off.

Once, in that day, he heard again the wonderful sound, seemingly more distant, but rising imperiously above the nearer war-drums in the bush. Right there was where he had made his mistake. Thinking that he had passed beyond it and that, therefore, it was between him and the beach of Ringmanu, he had worked back toward it when in reality he was penetrating deeper and deeper into the mysterious heart of the unexplored island. That night, crawling in among the twisted roots of a banyan tree, he had slept from exhaustion while the mosquitoes had had their will of him.

Followed days and nights that were vague as nightmares in his memory. One clear vision he remembered was of suddenly finding himself in the midst of a bush village and watching the old men and children fleeing into the jungle. All had fled but one. From close at hand and above him, a whimpering as of some animal in pain and terror had startled him. And looking up he had seen her-a girl, or young woman rather, suspended by one arm in the cooking sun. Perhaps for days she had so hung. Her swollen, protruding tongue spoke as much. Still alive, she gazed at him with eyes of terror. Past help, he decided, as he noted the swellings of her legs which advertised that the joints had been crushed and the great bones broken. He resolved to shoot her, and there the vision terminated. He could not remember whether he had or not, any more than could he remember how he chanced to be in that village, or how he succeeded in getting away from it.

Many pictures, unrelated, came and went in Bassett's mind as he reviewed that period of his terrible wanderings. He remembered invading another village of a dozen houses and driving all before him with his shot-gun save, for one old man, too feeble to flee, who spat at him and whined and snarled as he dug open a ground-oven and from amid the hot stones dragged forth a roasted pig that steamed its essence deliciously through its green-leaf wrappings. It was at this place that a wantonness of savagery had seized upon him. Having feasted, ready to depart with a hind-quarter of the pig in his hand, he deliberately fired the grass thatch of a house with his burning glass.

But seared deepest of all in Bassett's brain, was the dank and noisome jungle. It actually stank with evil, and it was always twilight. Rarely did a shaft of sunlight penetrate its matted roof a hundred feet overhead. And beneath that roof was an aerial ooze of vegetation, a monstrous, parasitic dripping of decadent life-forms that rooted in death and lived on death. And through all this he drifted, ever pursued by the flitting shadows of the anthropophagi, themselves ghosts of evil that dared not face him in battle but that knew that, soon or late, they would feed on him. Bassett remembered that at the time, in lucid moments, he had likened himself to a wounded bull pursued by plains' coyotes too cowardly to battle with him for the meat of him, yet certain of the inevitable end of him when they would be full gorged. As the bull's horns and stamping hoofs kept off the coyotes, so his shot-gun kept off these Solomon Islanders, these twilight shades of bushmen of the island of Guadalcanal.

Came the day of the grass lands. Abruptly, as if cloven by the sword of God in the hand of God, the jungle terminated. The edge of it, perpendicular and as black as the infamy of it, was a hundred feet up and down. And, beginning at the edge of it, grew the grass-sweet, soft, tender, pasture grass that would have delighted the eyes and beasts of any husbandman and that extended, on and on, for leagues and leagues of velvet verdure, to the backbone of the great island, the towering mountain range flung up by some ancient earth-cataclysm, serrated and gullied but not yet erased by the erosive tropic rains. But the grass! He had crawled into it a dozen yards, buried his face in it, smelled it, and broken down in a fit of involuntary weeping.

And, while he wept, the wonderful sound had pealed forth-if by PEAL, he had often thought since, an adequate description could be given of the enunciation of so vast a sound melting sweet. Sweet it was, as no sound ever heard. Vast it was, of so mighty a resonance that it might have proceeded from some brazen-throated monster. And yet it called to him across that leagues-wide savannah, and was like a benediction to his long-suffering, pain racked spirit.

He remembered how he lay there in the grass, wet-cheeked but no longer sobbing, listening to the sound and wondering that he had been able to hear it on the beach of Ringmanu. Some freak of air pressures and air currents, he reflected, had made it possible for the sound to carry so far. Such conditions might not happen again in a thousand days or ten thousand days, but the one day it had happened had been the day he landed from the NARI for several hours' collecting. Especially had he been in quest of the famed jungle butterfly, a foot across from wing-tip to wing-tip, as velvet-dusky of lack of colour as was the gloom of the roof, of such lofty arboreal habits that it resorted only to the jungle roof and could be brought down only by a dose of shot. It was for this purpose that Sagawa had carried the ten-gauge shot-gun.

Two days and nights he had spent crawling across that belt of grass land. He had suffered much, but pursuit had ceased at the jungle-edge. And he would have died of thirst had not a heavy thunderstorm revived him on the second day.

And then had come Balatta. In the first shade, where the savannah yielded to the dense mountain jungle, he had collapsed to die. At first she had squealed with delight at sight of his helplessness, and was for beating his brain out with a stout forest branch. Perhaps it was his very utter helplessness that had appealed to her, and perhaps it was her human curiosity that made her refrain. At any rate, she had refrained, for he opened his eyes again under the impending blow, and saw her studying him intently. What especially struck her about him were his blue eyes and white skin. Coolly she had squatted on her hams, spat on his arm, and with her finger-tips scrubbed away the dirt of days and nights of muck and jungle that sullied the pristine whiteness of his skin.

And everything about her had struck him especially, although there was nothing conventional about her at all. He laughed weakly at the recollection, for she had been as innocent of garb as Eve before the fig-leaf adventure. Squat and lean at the same time, asymmetrically limbed, string-muscled as if with lengths of cordage, dirt-caked from infancy save for casual showers, she was as unbeautiful a prototype of woman as he, with a scientist's eye, had ever gazed upon. Her breasts advertised at the one time her maturity and youth; and, if by nothing else, her sex was advertised by the one article of finery with which she was adorned, namely a pig's tail, thrust though a hole in her left ear-lobe. So lately had the tail been severed, that its raw end still oozed blood that dried upon her shoulder like so much candle-droppings. And her face! A twisted and wizened complex of apish features, perforated by upturned, sky-open, Mongolian nostrils, by a mouth that sagged from a huge upper-lip and faded precipitately into a retreating chin, by peering querulous eyes that blinked as blink the eyes of denizens of monkey-cages.

Not even the water she brought him in a forest-leaf, and the ancient and half-putrid chunk of roast pig, could redeem in the slightest the grotesque hideousness of her. When he had eaten weakly for a space, he closed his eyes in order not to see her, although again and again she poked them open to peer at the blue of them. Then had come the sound. Nearer, much nearer, he knew it to be; and he knew equally well, despite the weary way he had come, that it was still many hours distant. The effect of it on her had been startling. She cringed under it, with averted face, moaning and chattering with fear. But after it had lived its full life of an hour, he closed his eyes and fell asleep with Balatta brushing the flies from him.

When he awoke it was night, and she was gone. But he was aware of renewed strength, and, by then too thoroughly inoculated by the mosquito poison to suffer further inflammation, he closed his eyes and slept an unbroken stretch till sun-up. A little later Balatta had returned, bringing with her a half-dozen women who, unbeautiful as they were, were patently not so unbeautiful as she. She evidenced by her conduct that she considered him her find, her property, and the pride she took in showing him off would have been ludicrous had his situation not been so desperate.

Later, after what had been to him a terrible journey of miles, when he collapsed in front of the devil-devil house in the shadow of the breadfruit tree, she had shown very lively ideas on the matter of retaining possession of him. Ngurn, whom Bassett was to know afterward as the devil-devil doctor, priest, or medicine man of the village, had wanted his head. Others of the grinning and chattering monkey-men, all as stark of clothes and bestial of appearance as Balatta, had wanted his body for the roasting oven. At that time he had not understood their language, if by LANGUAGE might be dignified the uncouth sounds they made to represent ideas. But Bassett had thoroughly understood the matter of debate, especially when the men pressed and prodded and felt of the flesh of him as if he were so much commodity in a butcher's stall.

Balatta had been losing the debate rapidly, when the accident happened. One of the men, curiously examining Bassett's shot-gun, managed to cock and pull a trigger. The recoil of the butt into the pit of the man's stomach had not been the most sanguinary result, for the charge of shot, at a distance of a yard, had blown the head of one of the debaters into nothingness.

Even Balatta joined the others in flight, and, ere they returned, his senses already reeling from the oncoming fever-attack, Bassett had regained possession of the gun. Whereupon, although his teeth chattered with the ague and his swimming eyes could scarcely see, he held on to his fading consciousness until he could intimidate the bushmen with the simple magics of compass, watch, burning glass, and matches. At the last, with due emphasis, of solemnity and awfulness, he had killed a young pig with his shot-gun and promptly fainted.

Bassett flexed his arm-muscles in quest of what possible strength might reside in such weakness, and dragged himself slowly and totteringly to his feet. He was shockingly emaciated; yet, during the various convalescences of the many months of his long sickness, he had never regained quite the same degree of strength as this time. What he feared was another relapse such as he had already frequently experienced. Without drugs, without even quinine, he had managed so far to live through a combination of the most pernicious and most malignant of malarial and black-water fevers. But could he continue to endure? Such was his everlasting query. For, like the genuine scientist he was, he would not be content to die until he had solved the secret of the sound.

Supported by a staff, he staggered the few steps to the devil-devil house where death and Ngurn reigned in gloom. Almost as infamously dark and evil-stinking as the jungle was the devil-devil house-in Bassett’s opinion. Yet therein was usually to be found his favourite crony and gossip, Ngurn, always willing for a yarn or a discussion, the while he sat in the ashes of death and in a slow smoke shrewdly revolved curing human heads suspended from the rafters. For, through the months’ interval of consciousness of his long sickness, Bassett had mastered the psychological simplicities and lingual difficulties of the language of the tribe of Ngurn and Balatta and Vngngn-the latter the addle-headed young chief who was ruled by Ngurn, and who, whispered intrigue had it, was the son of Ngurn.

“Will the Red One speak to-day?” Bassett asked, by this time so accustomed to the old man’s gruesome occupation as to take even an interest in the progress of the smoke-curing.

With the eye of an expert Ngurn examined the particular head he was at work upon.

“It will be ten days before I can say ‘finish,’“ he said. “Never has any man fixed heads like these.”

Bassett smiled inwardly at the old fellow’s reluctance to talk with him of the Red One. It had always been so. Never, by any chance, had Ngurn or any other member of the weird tribe divulged the slightest hint of any physical characteristic of the Red One. Physical the Red One must be, to emit the wonderful sound, and though it was called the Red One, Bassett could not be sure that red represented the colour of it. Red enough were the deeds and powers of it, from what abstract clues he had gleaned. Not alone, had Ngurn informed him, was the Red One more bestial powerful than the neighbour tribal gods, ever athirst for the red blood of living human sacrifices, but the neighbour gods themselves were sacrificed and tormented before him. He was the god of a dozen allied villages similar to this one, which was the central and commanding village of the federation. By virtue of the Red One many alien villages had been devastated and even wiped out, the prisoners sacrificed to the Red One. This was true to-day, and it extended back into old history carried down by word of mouth through the generations. When he, Ngurn, had been a young man, the tribes beyond the grass lands had made a war raid. In the counter raid, Ngurn and his fighting folk had made many prisoners. Of children alone over five score living had been bled white before the Red One, and many, many more men and women.

The Thunderer was another of Ngurn’s names for the mysterious deity. Also at times was he called The Loud Shouter, The God-Voiced, The Bird-Throated, The One with the Throat Sweet as the Throat of the Honey-Bird, The Sun Singer, and The Star-Born.

Why The Star-Born? In vain Bassett interrogated Ngurn. According to that old devil-devil doctor, the Red One had always been, just where he was at present, for ever singing and thundering his will over men. But Ngurn’s father, wrapped in decaying grass-matting and hanging even then over their heads among the smoky rafters of the devil-devil house, had held otherwise. That departed wise one had believed that the Red One came from out of the starry night, else why-so his argument had run-had the old and forgotten ones passed his name down as the Star-Born? Bassett could not but recognize something cogent in such argument. But Ngurn affirmed the long years of his long life, wherein he had gazed upon many starry nights, yet never had he found a star on grass land or in jungle depth-and he had looked for them. True, he had beheld shooting stars (this in reply to Bassett's contention); but likewise had he beheld the phosphorescence of fungoid growths and rotten meat and fireflies on dark nights, and the flames of wood-fires and of blazing candle-nuts; yet what were flame and blaze and glow when they had flamed and blazed and glowed? Answer: memories, memories only, of things which had ceased to be, like memories of matings accomplished, of feasts forgotten, of desires that were the ghosts of desires, flaring, flaming, burning, yet unrealized in achievement of easement and satisfaction. Where was the appetite of yesterday? the roasted flesh of the wild pig the hunter's arrow failed to slay? the maid, unwed and dead ere the young man knew her?

A memory was not a star, was Ngurn's contention. How could a memory be a star? Further, after all his long life he still observed the starry night-sky unaltered. Never had he noted the absence of a single star from its accustomed place. Besides, stars were fire, and the Red One was not fire-which last involuntary betrayal told Bassett nothing.

"Will the Red One speak to-morrow?" he queried.

Ngurn shrugged his shoulders as who should say.

"And the day after?-and the day after that?" Bassett persisted.

"I would like to have the curing of your head," Ngurn changed the subject. "It is different from any other head. No devil-devil has a head like it. Besides, I would cure it well. I would take months and months. The moons would come and the moons would go, and the smoke would be very slow, and I should myself gather the materials for the curing smoke. The skin would not wrinkle. It would be as smooth as your skin now."

He stood up, and from the dim rafters, grimed with the smoking of countless heads, where day was no more than a gloom, took down a matting-wrapped parcel and began to open it.

"It is a head like yours," he said, "but it is poorly cured."

Bassett had pricked up his ears at the suggestion that it was a white man's head; for he had long since come to accept that these jungle-dwellers, in the midmost centre of the great island, had never had intercourse with white men. Certainly he had found them without the almost universal beche-de-mer English of the west South Pacific. Nor had they knowledge of tobacco, nor of gunpowder. Their few precious knives, made from lengths of hoop-iron, and their few and more precious tomahawks from cheap trade hatchets, he had surmised they had captured in war from the bushmen of the jungle beyond the grass lands, and that they, in turn, had similarly gained them from the salt-water men who fringed the coral beaches of the shore and had contact with the occasional white men.

"The folk in the out beyond do not know how to cure heads," old Ngurn explained, as he drew forth from the filthy matting and placed in Bassett's hands an indubitable white man's head.

Ancient it was beyond question; white it was as the blond hair attested. He could have sworn it once belonged to an Englishman, and to an Englishman of long before by token of the heavy gold circlets still threaded in the withered ear-lobes.

"Now your head . . . " the devil-devil doctor began on his favourite topic.

"I'll tell you what," Bassett interrupted, struck by a new idea. "When I die I'll let you have my head to cure, if, first, you take me to look upon the Red One."

"I will have your head anyway when you are dead," Ngurn rejected the proposition. He added, with the brutal frankness of the savage: "Besides, you have not long to live. You are almost a dead man now. You will grow less strong. In not many months I shall have you here turning and turning in the smoke. It is pleasant, through the long afternoons, to turn the head of one you have known as well as I know you. And I shall talk to you and tell you the many secrets you want to know. Which will not matter, for you will be dead."

"Ngurn," Bassett threatened in sudden anger. "You know the Baby Thunder in the Iron that is mine." (This was in reference to his all-potent and all-awful shotgun.) "I can kill you any time, and then you will not get my head."

"Just the same, will Vngngn, or some one else of my folk get it," Ngurn complacently assured him. "And just the same will it turn here in the and turn devil-devil house in the smoke. The quicker you slay me with your Baby Thunder, the quicker will your head turn in the smoke."

And Bassett knew he was beaten in the discussion.

What was the Red One?-Bassett asked himself a thousand times in the succeeding week, while he seemed to grow stronger. What was the source of the wonderful sound? What was this Sun Singer, this Star-Born One, this mysterious deity, as bestial-conducted as the black and kinky-headed and monkey-like human beasts who worshipped it, and whose silver-sweet, bull-mouthed singing and commanding he had heard at the taboo distance for so long?

Ngurn had he failed to bribe with the inevitable curing of his head when he was dead. Vngngn, imbecile and chief that he was, was too imbecilic, too much under the sway of Ngurn, to be considered. Remained Balatta, who, from the time she found him and poked his blue eyes open to recrudescence of her grotesque female hideousness, had continued his adorer. Woman she was, and he had long known that the only way to win from her treason of her tribe was through the woman's heart of her.

Bassett was a fastidious man. He had never recovered from the initial horror caused by Balatta's female awfulness. Back in England, even at best the charm of woman, to him, had never been robust. Yet now, resolutely, as only a man can do who is capable of martyring himself for the cause of science, he proceeded to violate all the fineness and delicacy of his nature by making love to the unthinkably disgusting bushwoman.

He shuddered, but with averted face hid his grimaces and swallowed his gorge as he put his arm around her dirt-crusted shoulders and felt the contact of her rancidoily and kinky hair with his neck and chin. But he nearly screamed when she succumbed to that caress so at the very first of the courtship and mowed and gibbered and squealed little, queer, pig-like gurgly noises of delight. It was too much. And the next he did in the singular courtship was to take her down to the stream and give her a vigorous scrubbing.

From then on he devoted himself to her like a true swain as frequently and for as long at a time as his will could override his repugnance. But marriage, which she ardently suggested, with due observance of tribal custom, he balked at. Fortunately, taboo rule was strong in the tribe. Thus, Ngurn could never touch bone, or flesh, or hide of crocodile. This had been ordained at his birth. Vngngn was denied ever the touch of woman. Such pollution, did it chance to occur, could be purged only by the death of the offending female. It had happened once, since Bassett's arrival, when a girl of nine, running in play, stumbled and fell against the sacred chief. And the girl-child was seen no more. In whispers, Balatta told Bassett that she had been three days and nights in dying before the Red One. As for Balatta, the breadfruit was taboo to her. For which Bassett was thankful. The taboo might have been water.

For himself, he fabricated a special taboo. Only could he marry, he explained, when the Southern Cross rode highest in the sky. Knowing his astronomy, he thus gained a reprieve of nearly nine months; and he was confident that within that time he would either be dead or escaped to the coast with full knowledge of the Red One and of the source of the Red One's wonderful voice. At first he had fancied the Red One to be some colossal statue, like Memnon, rendered vocal under certain temperature conditions of sunlight. But when, after a war raid, a batch of prisoners was brought in and the sacrifice made at night, in the midst of rain, when the sun could play no part, the Red One had been more vocal than usual, Bassett discarded that hypothesis.

In company with Balatta, sometimes with men and parties of women, the freedom of the jungle was his for three quadrants of the compass. But the fourth quadrant, which contained the Red One's abiding place, was taboo. He made more thorough love to Balatta-also saw to it that she scrubbed herself more frequently. Eternal female she was, capable of any treason for the sake of love. And, though the sight of her was provocative of nausea and the contact of her provocative of despair, although he could not escape her awfulness in his dream-haunted nightmares of her, he nevertheless was aware of the cosmic verity of sex that animated her and that made her own life of less value than the happiness of her lover with whom she hoped to mate. Juliet or Balatta? Where was the intrinsic difference? The soft and tender product of ultra-civilization, or her bestial prototype of a hundred thousand years before her?-there was no difference.

Bassett was a scientist first, a humanist afterward. In the jungle-heart of Guadalcanal he put the affair to the test, as in the laboratory he would have put to the test any chemical reaction. He increased his feigned ardour for the bushwoman, at the same time increasing the imperiousness of his will of desire over her to be led to look upon the Red One face to face. It was the old story, he recognized, that the woman must pay, and it occurred when the two of them, one day, were catching the unclassified and unnamed little black fish, an inch long, half-eel and half-scaled, rotund with salmon-golden roe, that frequented the fresh water, and that were esteemed, raw and whole, fresh or putrid, a perfect delicacy. Prone in the muck of the decaying jungle-floor, Balatta threw herself, clutching his ankles with her hands kissing his feet and making slubbery noises that chilled his backbone up and down again. She begged him to kill her rather than exact this ultimate love-payment. She told him of the penalty of breaking the taboo of the Red One-a week of torture, living, the details of which she yammered out from her face in the mire until he realized that he was yet a tyro in knowledge of the frightfulness the human was capable of wreaking on the human.

Yet did Bassett insist on having his man's will satisfied, at the woman's risk, that he might solve the mystery of the Red One's singing, though she should die long and horribly and screaming. And Balatta, being mere woman, yielded. She led him into the forbidden quadrant. An abrupt mountain, shouldering in from the north to meet a similar intrusion from the south, tormented the stream in which they had fished into a deep and gloomy gorge. After a mile along the gorge, the way plunged sharply upward until they crossed a saddle of raw limestone which attracted his geologist's eye. Still climbing, although he paused often from sheer physical weakness, they scaled forest-clad heights until they emerged on a naked mesa or tableland. Bassett recognized the stuff of its composition as black volcanic sand, and knew that a pocket magnet could have captured a full load of the sharply angular grains he trod upon.

And then holding Balatta by the hand and leading her onward, he came to it-a tremendous pit, obviously artificial, in the heart of the plateau. Old history, the South Seas Sailing Directions, scores of remembered data and connotations swift and furious, surged through his brain. It was Mendana who had discovered the islands and named them Solomon's, believing that he had found that monarch's fabled mines. They had laughed at the old navigator's child-like credulity; and yet here stood himself, Bassett, on the rim of an excavation for all the world like the diamond pits of South Africa.

But no diamond this that he gazed down upon. Rather was it a pearl, with the depth of iridescence of a pearl; but of a size all pearls of earth and time, welded into one, could not have totalled; and of a colour undreamed of in any pearl, or of anything else, for that matter, for it was the colour of the Red One. And the Red One himself Bassett knew it to be on the instant. A perfect sphere, full two hundred feet in diameter, the top of it was a hundred feet below the level of the rim. He likened the colour quality of it to lacquer. Indeed, he took it to be some sort of lacquer, applied by man, but a lacquer too marvellously clever to have been manufactured by the bush-folk. Brighter than bright cherry-red, its richness of colour was as if it were red builded upon red. It glowed and iridesced in the sunlight as if gleaming up from underlay under underlay of red.

In vain Balatta strove to dissuade him from descending. She threw herself in the dirt; but, when he continued down the trail that spiralled the pit-wall, she followed, cringing and whimpering her terror. That the red sphere had been dug out as a precious thing, was patent. Considering the paucity of members of the federated twelve villages and their primitive tools and methods, Bassett knew that the toil of a myriad generations could scarcely have made that enormous excavation.

He found the pit bottom carpeted with human bones, among which, battered and defaced, lay village gods of wood and stone. Some, covered with obscene totemic figures and designs, were carved from solid tree trunks forty or fifty feet in length. He noted the absence of the shark and turtle gods, so common among the shore villages, and was amazed at the constant recurrence of the helmet motive. What did these jungle savages of the dark heart of Guadalcanal know of helmets? Had Mendana's men-at-arms worn helmets and penetrated here centuries before? And if not, then whence had the bush-folk caught the motive?

Advancing over the litter of gods and bones, Balatta whimpering at his heels, Bassett entered the shadow of the Red One and passed on under its gigantic overhang until he touched it with his finger-tips. No lacquer that. Nor was the surface smooth as it should have been in the case of lacquer. On the contrary, it was corrugated and pitted, with here and there patches that showed signs of heat and fusing. Also, the substance of it was metal, though unlike any metal, or combination of metals, he had ever known. As for the colour itself, he decided it to be no application. It was the intrinsic colour of the metal itself.

He moved his finger-tips, which up to that had merely rested, along the surface, and felt the whole gigantic sphere quicken and live and respond. It was incredible! So light a touch on so vast a mass! Yet did it quiver under the finger-tip caress in rhythmic vibrations that became whisperings and rustlings and mutterings of sound-but of sound so different; so elusively thin that it was shimmeringly sibilant; so mellow that it was maddening sweet, piping like an elfin horn, which last was just what Bassett decided would be like a peal from some bell of the gods reaching earthward from across space.

He looked at Balatta with swift questioning; but the voice of the Red One he had evoked had flung her face downward and moaning among the bones. He returned to contemplation of the prodigy. Hollow it was, and of no metal known on earth, was his conclusion. It was right-named by the ones of old-time as the Star-Born. Only from the stars could it have come, and no thing of chance was it. It was a creation of artifice and mind. Such perfection of form, such hollowness that it certainly possessed, could not be the result of mere fortuitousness. A child of intelligences, remote and unguessable, working corporally in metals, it indubitably was. He stared at it in amaze, his brain a racing wild-fire of hypotheses to account for this far-journeyer who had adventured the night of space, threaded the stars, and now rose before him and above him, exhumed by patient anthropophagi, pitted and lacquered by its fiery bath in two atmospheres.

But was the colour a lacquer of heat upon some familiar metal? Or was it an intrinsic quality of the metal itself? He thrust in the blue-point of his pocket-knife to test the constitution of the stuff. Instantly the entire sphere burst into a mighty whispering, sharp with protest, almost twanging goldenly, if a whisper could possibly be considered to twang, rising higher, sinking deeper, the two extremes of the registry of sound threatening to complete the circle and coalesce into the bull-mouthed thundering he had so often heard beyond the taboo distance.

Forgetful of safety, of his own life itself, entranced by the wonder of the unthinkable and unguessable thing, he raised his knife to strike heavily from a long stroke, but was prevented by Balatta. She upreared on her own knees in an agony of terror, clasping his knees and supplicating him to desist. In the intensity of her desire to impress him, she put her forearm between her teeth and sank them to the bone.

He scarcely observed her act, although he yielded automatically to his gentler instincts and withheld the knife-hack. To him, human life had dwarfed to microscopic proportions before this colossal portent of higher life from within the distances of the sidereal universe. As had she been a dog, he kicked the ugly little bushwoman to her feet and compelled her to start with him on an encirclement of the base. Part way around, he encountered horrors. Even, among the others, did he recognize the sun-shrivelled remnant of the nine-years girl who had accidentally broken Chief Vngngn’s personality taboo. And, among what was left of these that had passed, he encountered what was left of one who had not yet passed. Truly had the bush-folk named themselves into the name of the Red One, seeing in him their own image which they strove to placate and please with such red offerings.

Farther around, always treading the bones and images of humans and gods that constituted the floor of this ancient charnel-house of sacrifice, he came upon the device by which the Red One was made to send his call singing thunderingly across the jungle-belts and grass-lands to the far beach of Ringmanu. Simple and primitive was it as was the Red One's consummate artifice. A great king-post, half a hundred feet in length, seasoned by centuries of superstitious care, carven into dynasties of gods, each superimposed, each helmeted, each seated in the open mouth of a crocodile, was slung by ropes, twisted of climbing vegetable parasites, from the apex of a tripod of three great forest trunks, themselves carved into grinning and grotesque adumbrations of man's modern concepts of art and god. From the striker king-post, were suspended ropes of climbers to which men could apply their strength and direction. Like a battering ram, this king-post could be driven end-onward against the mighty red-iridescent sphere.

Here was where Ngurn officiated and functioned religiously for himself and the twelve tribes under him. Bassett laughed aloud, almost with madness, at the thought of this wonderful messenger, winged with intelligence across space, to fall into a bushman stronghold and be worshipped by ape-like, man-eating and head-hunting savages. It was as if God's World had fallen into the muck mire of the abyss underlying the bottom of hell; as if Jehovah's Commandments had been presented on carved stone to the monkeys of the monkey cage at the Zoo; as if the Sermon on the Mount had been preached in a roaring bedlam of lunatics.

The slow weeks passed. The nights, by election, Bassett spent on the ashen floor of the devil-devil house, beneath the ever-swinging, slow-curing heads. His reason for this was that it was taboo to the lesser sex of woman, and therefore, a refuge for him from Balatta, who grew more persecutingly and perilously loverly as the Southern Cross rode higher in the sky and marked the imminence of her nuptials. His days Bassett spent in a hammock swung under the shade of the great breadfruit tree before the devil-devil house. There were breaks in this programme, when, in the comas of his devastating fever-attacks, he lay for days and nights in the house of heads. Ever he struggled to combat the fever, to live, to continue to live, to grow strong and stronger against the day when he would be strong enough to dare the grass-lands and the belted jungle beyond, and win to the beach, and to some labour-recruiting, black-birding ketch or schooner, and on to civilization and the men of civilization, to whom he could give news of the message from other worlds that lay, darkly worshipped by beastmen, in the black heart of Guadalcanal's midmost centre.

On the other nights, lying late under the breadfruit tree, Bassett spent long hours watching the slow setting of the western stars beyond the black wall of jungle where it had been thrust back by the clearing for the village. Possessed of more than a cursory knowledge of astronomy, he took a sick man's pleasure in speculating as to the dwellers on the unseen worlds of those incredibly remote suns, to haunt whose houses of light, life came forth, a shy visitant, from the rayless crypts of matter. He could no more apprehend limits to time than bounds to space. No subversive radium speculations had shaken his steady scientific faith in the conservation of energy and the indestructibility of matter. Always and forever must there have been stars. And surely, in that cosmic ferment, all must be comparatively alike, comparatively of the same substance, or substances, save for the freaks of the ferment. All must obey, or compose, the same laws that ran without infraction through the entire experience of man. Therefore, he argued and agreed, must worlds and life be appanages to all the suns as they were appanages to the particular of his own solar system.

Even as he lay here, under the breadfruit tree, an intelligence that stared across the starry gulfs, so must all the universe be exposed to the ceaseless scrutiny of innumerable eyes, like his, though grantedly different, with behind them, by the same token, intelligences that questioned and sought the meaning and the construction of the whole. So reasoning, he felt his soul go forth in kinship with that august company, that multitude whose gaze was forever upon the arras of infinity.

Who were they, what were they, those far distant and superior ones who had bridged the sky with their gigantic, red-iridescent, heaven-singing message? Surely, and long since, had they, too, trod the path on which man had so recently, by the calendar of the cosmos, set his feet. And to be able to send a message across the pit of space, surely they had reached those heights to which man, in tears and travail and bloody sweat, in darkness and confusion of many counsels, was so slowly struggling. And what were they on their heights? Had they won Brotherhood? Or had they learned that the law of love imposed the penalty of weakness and decay? Was strife, life? Was the rule of all the universe the pitiless rule of natural selection? And, and most immediately and poignantly, were their far conclusions, their long-won wisdoms, shut even then in the huge, metallic heart of the Red One, waiting for the first earth-man to read? Of one thing he was certain: No drop of red dew shaken from the lion-mane of some sun in torment, was the sounding sphere. It was of design, not chance, and it contained the speech and wisdom of the stars.

What engines and elements and mastered forces, what lore and mysteries and destiny-controls, might be there! Undoubtedly, since so much could be enclosed in so little a thing as the foundation stone of a public building, this enormous sphere should contain vast histories, profounds of research achieved beyond man's wildest guesses, laws and formulae that, easily mastered, would make man's life on earth, individual and collective, spring up from its present mire to inconceivable heights of purity and power. It was Time's greatest gift to blindfold, insatiable, and sky-aspiring man. And to him, Bassett, had been vouchsafed the lordly fortune to be the first to receive this message from man's interstellar kin!

No white man, much less no outland man of the other bush-tribes, had gazed upon the Red One and lived. Such the law expounded by Ngurn to Bassett. There was such a thing as blood brotherhood. Bassett, in return, had often argued in the past. But Ngurn had stated solemnly no. Even the blood brotherhood was outside the favour of the Red One. Only a man born within the tribe could look upon the Red One and live. But now, his guilty secret known only to Balatta, whose fear of immolation before the Red One fast-sealed her lips, the situation was different. What he had to do was to recover from the abominable fevers that weakened him, and gain to civilization. Then would he lead an expedition back, and, although the entire population of Guadalcanal he destroyed, extract from the heart of the Red One the message of the world from other worlds.

But Bassett's relapses grew more frequent, his brief convalescences less and less vigorous, his periods of coma longer, until he came to know, beyond the last promptings of the optimism inherent in so tremendous a constitution as his own, that he would never live to cross the grass lands, perforate the perilous coast jungle, and reach the sea. He faded as the Southern Cross rose higher in the sky, till even Balatta knew that he would be dead ere the nuptial date determined by his taboo. Ngurn made pilgrimage personally and gathered the smoke materials for the curing of Bassett's head, and to him made proud announcement and exhibition of the artistic perfectness of his intention when Bassett should be dead. As for himself, Bassett was not shocked. Too long and too deeply had life ebbed down in him to bite him with fear of its impending extinction. He continued to persist, alternating periods of unconsciousness with periods of semi-consciousness, dreamy and unreal, in which he idly wondered whether he had ever truly beheld the Red One or whether it was a nightmare fancy of delirium.

Came the day when all mists and cob-webs dissolved, when he found his brain clear as a bell, and took just appraisement of his body’s weakness. Neither hand nor foot could he lift. So little control of his body did he have, that he was scarcely aware of possessing one. Lightly indeed his flesh sat upon his soul, and his soul, in its briefness of clarity, knew by its very clarity that the black of cessation was near. He knew the end was close; knew that in all truth he had with his eyes beheld the Red One, the messenger between the worlds; knew that he would never live to carry that message to the world-that message, for aught to the contrary, which might already have waited man’s hearing in the heart of Guadalcanal for ten thousand years. And Bassett stirred with resolve, calling Ngurn to him, out under the shade of the breadfruit tree, and with the old devil-devil doctor discussing the terms and arrangements of his last life effort, his final adventure in the quick of the flesh.

“I know the law, O Ngurn,” he concluded the matter. “Whoso is not of the folk may not look upon the Red One and live. I shall not live anyway. Your young men shall carry me before the face of the Red One, and I shall look upon him, and hear his voice, and thereupon die, under your hand, O Ngurn. Thus will the three things be satisfied: the law, my desire, and your quicker possession of my head for which all your preparations wait.”

To which Ngurn consented, adding:

“It is better so. A sick man who cannot get well is foolish to live on for so little a while. Also is it better for the living that he should go. You have been much in the way of late. Not but what it was good for me to talk to such a wise one. But for moons of days we have held little talk. Instead, you have taken up room in the house of heads, making noises like a dying pig, or talking much and loudly in your own language which I do not understand. This has been a confusion to me, for I like to think on the great things of the light and dark as I turn the heads in the smoke. Your much noise has thus been a disturbance to the long-learning and hatching of the final wisdom that will be mine before I die. As for you, upon whom the dark has already brooded, it is well that you die now. And I promise you, in the long days to come when I turn your head in the smoke, no man of the tribe shall come in to disturb us. And I will tell you many secrets, for I am an old man and very wise, and I shall be adding wisdom to wisdom as I turn your head in the smoke."

So a litter was made, and, borne on the shoulders of half a dozen of the men, Bassett departed on the last little adventure that was to cap the total adventure, for him, of living. With a body of which he was scarcely aware, for even the pain had been exhausted out of it, and with a bright clear brain that accommodated him to a quiet ecstasy of sheer lucidness of thought, he lay back on the lurching litter and watched the fading of the passing world, beholding for the last time the breadfruit tree before the devil-devil house, the dim day beneath the matted jungle roof, the gloomy gorge between the shouldering mountains, the saddle of raw limestone, and the mesa of black volcanic sand.

Down the spiral path of the pit they bore him, encircling the sheening, glowing Red One that seemed ever imminent to iridesce from colour and light into sweet singing and thunder. And over bones and logs of immolated men and gods they bore him, past the horrors of other immolated ones that yet lived, to the three-king-post tripod and the huge king-post striker.

Here Bassett, helped by Ngurn and Balatta, weakly sat up, swaying weakly from the hips, and with clear, unfaltering, all-seeing eyes gazed upon the Red One.

"Once, O Ngurn," he said, not taking his eyes from the sheening, vibrating surface whereon and wherein all the shades of cherry-red played unceasingly, ever a-quiver to change into sound, to become silken rustlings, silvery whisperings, golden thrummings of cords, velvet pipings of elfland, mellow distances of thunderings.

"I wait," Ngurn prompted after a long pause, the long-handled tomahawk unassumingly ready in his hand.

"Once, O Ngurn," Bassett repeated, "let the Red One speak so that I may see it speak as well as hear it. Then strike, thus, when I raise my hand; for, when I raise my hand, I shall drop my head forward and make place for the stroke at the base of my neck. But, O Ngurn, I, who am about to pass out of the light of day for ever, would like to pass with the wonder-voice of the Red One singing greatly in my ears."

“And I promise you that never will a head be so well cured as yours,” Ngurn assured him, at the same time signalling the tribesmen to man the propelling ropes suspended from the king-post striker. “Your head shall be my greatest piece of work in the curing of heads.”

Bassett smiled quietly to the old one’s conceit, as the great carved log, drawn back through two-score feet of space, was released. The next moment he was lost in ecstasy at the abrupt and thunderous liberation of sound. But such thunder! Mellow it was with preciousness of all sounding metals. Archangels spoke in it; it was magnificently beautiful before all other sounds; it was invested with the intelligence of supermen of planets of other suns; it was the voice of God, seducing and commanding to be heard. And-the everlasting miracle of that interstellar metal! Bassett, with his own eyes, saw colour and colours transform into sound till the whole visible surface of the vast sphere was a-crawl and titillant and vaporous with what he could not tell was colour or was sound. In that moment the interstices of matter were his, and the interfusings and intermating transfusings of matter and force.

Time passed. At the last Bassett was brought back from his ecstasy by an impatient movement of Ngurn. He had quite forgotten the old devil-devil one. A quick flash of fancy brought a husky chuckle into Bassett’s throat. His shot-gun lay beside him in the litter. All he had to do, muzzle to head, was to press the trigger and blow his head into nothingness.

But why cheat him? was Bassett’s next thought. Head-hunting, cannibal beast of a human that was as much ape as human, nevertheless Old Ngurn had, according to his lights, played squarer than square. Ngurn was in himself a forerunner of ethics and contract, of consideration, and gentleness in man. No, Bassett decided; it would be a ghastly pity and an act of dishonour to cheat the old fellow at the last. His head was Ngurn’s, and Ngurn’s head to cure it would be.

And Bassett, raising his hand in signal, bending forward his head as agreed so as to expose cleanly the articulation to his taut spinal cord, forgot Balatta, who was merely a woman, a woman merely and only and undesired. He knew, without seeing, when the razor-edged hatchet rose in the air behind him. And for that instant, ere the end, there fell upon Bassett the shadows of the Unknown, a sense of impending marvel of the rending of walls before the imaginable. Almost, when he knew the blow had started and just ere the edge of steel bit the flesh and nerves it seemed that he gazed upon the serene face of the Medusa, Truth-And, simultaneous with the bite of the steel on the onrush of the dark, in a flashing instant of fancy, he saw the vision of his head turning slowly, always turning, in the devil-devil house beside the breadfruit tree.

The Rejuvenation of Major Rathbone

"ALCHEMY was a magnificent dream, fascinating, impossible; but before it passed away there sprang from its loins a more marvelous child, none other than chemistry. More marvelous, because it substituted fact for fancy, and immensely widened man's realm of achievement. It has turned probability into possibility, and from the ideal it has fashioned the real. Do you follow me?"

Dover absently hunted for a match, at the same time regarding me with a heavy seriousness which instantly called to my mind Old Doc Frawley, our clinical lecturer of but a few years previous. I nodded assent, and he, having appropriately wreathed himself in smoke, went on with his discourse.

"Alchemy has taught us many things, while not a few of its visions have been realized by us in these latter days. The Elixir of Life was absurd, perpetual youth a rank negation of the very principle of life. But — "

Dover here paused with exasperating solemnity.

"But prolongation of life is too common an incident nowadays for any one to question. Not so very long ago, a 'generation' represented thirty-three years, the average duration of human existence. To-day, because of the rapid strides of medicine, sanitation, distribution, and so forth, a 'generation' is reckoned at thirty-four years. By the time of our great-grandchildren, it may have increased to forty years. Quien sabe? And again, we ourselves may see it actually doubled."

'Ah!" he cried, observing my start. "You see what I am driving at?"

"Yes," I replied. "But — "

"Never mind the 'buts,'" he burst in autocratically. "You ossified conservatives have always hung back at the coat-tails of science — "

"And as often saved it from breaking its neck," I retaliated.

"Just hold your horses a minute, and let me go on. What is life? Schopenhauer has defined it as the affirmation of the will to live, which is a philosophical absurdity, by the way, but with which we have no concern. Now, what is death? Simply the wearing out, the exhaustion, the breaking down, of the cells, tissues, nerves, bones and muscles of the human organism. Surgeons find great difficulty in knitting the broh bones of elderly people. Why? Because the bone, weakened, approaching the stage of dissolution, is no longer able to cast off the mineral deposits thrust in upon it by the natural functions of the body. And how easily such a bone is fractured! Yet, were it possible to remove the large deposits of phosphate, carbonate of soda, and so forth, the bone would regain the spring and rebound which it possessed in its youth.

"Merely apply this process, in varying measures, to the rest of the anatomy, and you have what? Simply the retardation of the system's break-up, the circumvention of old age, the banishment of senility, and the recapture of giddy youth. If science has prolonged the life of the generation by one year, is it not equally possible that it may prolong that of the individual by many?"

To turn back the dial of life, to reverse the hour-glass of Time and run its golden sands anew — the audacity of it fascinated me. What was to prevent? If one year, why not twenty? Forty?

Pshaw! I was just beginning to smile at my credulity when Dover pulled open the drawer beside him and brought to view a metal-stoppered vial. I confess to a sharp pang of disappointment as I gazed upon the very ordinary liquid it contained — a heavy, almost colorless fluid, with none of the brilliant iridescence one would so naturally expect of such a magic compound. He shook it lovingly, almost caressingly; but there was no manifestation of its occult properties. Then he pressed open a black leather case and nodded suggestively at the hypodermic syringe on its velvet bed. The Brown-Sequard Elixir and Koch's experiments with lymph darted across my mind. I smiled with cherry doubtfulness; but he, divining my thought, made haste to say, "No, they were on the right road, but missed it."

He opened an inner door of the laboratory and called "Hector! Come, old fellow, come on!"

Hector was a superannuated Newfoundland who had for years been utterly worthless for anything save lying around in people's way, and in this he was an admirable success. Conceive my astonishment when a heavy, burly animal rushed in like a whirlwind and upset things generally till finally quelled by his master. Dover looked eloquently at me, without speaking.

"But that — that isn't Hector!" I cried, doubting against doubt.

He turned up the under side of the animal's ear, and I saw two hard-lipped slits, mementoes of his wild young fighting days, when his master and I were mere lads ourselves. I remembered the wounds perfectly.

“Sixteen years old and as lively as a puppy.” Dover beamed triumphantly. “I’ve been experimenting on him for two months. Nobody knows as yet, but won’t they open their eyes when Hector runs abroad again! The plain matter of fact is I’ve given new lease of life with the lymph injection — same lymph as that used by earlier investigators, only they failed to clarify their compounds while I have succeeded. What is it? An animal derivative to stay and remove the effects of senility by acting upon the stagnated life-cells of any animal organism. Take the anatomical changes in Hector here, produced by infusion of the lymph compound; in the main they may be characterized as the expulsion from the bones of mineral deposits and an infiltration of the muscular tissues. Of course there are minor considerations; but these I have also overcome, not, however, without the unfortunate demise of several of my earlier animal subjects. I could not bring myself to work on Hector till failure had been eliminated from the problem. And now — ”

He rose to his feet and paced excitedly up and down. It was some time before he took up his uncompleted thought.

“And now I am prepared to administer this rejuvenator to humans. And I propose, first of all, to work on one who is very dear to me — ”

“Not — not — ?” I quavered.

Yes, Uncle Max. That’s why I have called in your assistance. I have found discovery capping discovery, till now the process of rejuvenation has become so accelerated that I am afraid of myself. Besides, Uncle Max is so very old that the greatest discretion is necessary. Such crucial ^nsformations in the whole organism of an age-weakened body can only be brought about by the most drastic methods, and there is great need to be careful. As I have said, I have grown afraid of myself, and need another mind to hold me in check. Do you understand? Will you help me?”

*

I have introduced the above conversation with my friend, Dover Wallingford, to show by what means I was led into one of the strangest scientific experiences of my life. Of the utterly unheard-of things that followed, the village has not yet ceased to talk upon and wonder. And as the village is unacquainted with the real facts in the case, it has been stirred to its profoundest depths by the untoward happenings. The excitement created was tremendous; three camp-meetings ran simultaneously and with marvelous success; there has been much talk of signs and portents, and not a few otherwise normal members of the community have proclaimed the advent of the latter-day miracles, and even yet their ears are patiently alert for the Trump of Doom, and their eyes lifted that they may witness the rolling up of the heavens as a scroll. As for Major Rathbone, otherwise Dover's Uncle Max, why he is looked upon by a certain portion of the village as a second Lazarus raised from the dead, as one who has almost seen God; while another portion of the village is equally set in its belief that he has entered into a league with Lucifer, and that some day he will disappear in a whirlwind of brimstone and hell-fire.

But be this as it may, I shall here state the facts as they really are. It is not my intention, however, to go into the details of the case, exccept as to the results regarding Major Rathbone. Several contingencies have arisen, which must be seen to before we electrify the sleepy old world with the working formula of our wonderful discovery.

Then we shall convene a synod of the nations, and the rejuvenation of mankind will be placed in the hands of competent boards of experts belonging to the several governments. And we here promise that it shall be as free as the air we breathe or the water we drink. Further, in view of our purely altruistic motives, we ask that our present secrecy be respected and not be made the object of invidious reflections by the world we intend befriending.

Now to work. I at once sent for my traps and took up my residence one of the suites adjoining Dover's laboratory. Major Rathbone, dazzled by the glittering promise of youth, yielded readily to our solicitations. To the world at large, he was lying sick unto death; but in reality he was waxing heartier and stronger with every day spent upon him. For three months we devoted ourselves to the task — a task fraught with constant danger, yet so absorbing that we hardly noted the flight of time. The color returned to the Major's pallid skin, the muscles filled out, and the wrinkles in part disappeared. He had been no mean athlete in his younger days, and having no organic weaknesses, his strength returned to him in a most miraculous manner. The snap and energy he gathered were surprising, and lusty youth so rioted in his blood that toward the last we were often hard put to restrain him. We who had started out to resuscitate a feeble old man, found upon our hands an impetuous young giant. The remarkable part of it was that his snow-white hair and beard remained unchanged. Try as we would, it resisted every effort. Further, the irascibility which had come with advancing years still remained. And this, allied with the natural stubbornness and truculency of his disposition, became a grievous burden to us.

Sometime in the early part of April, because of a red-tape tangle at the express office regarding a shipment of chemicals, both Dover and myself were forced to be away. We had given Michel, Dover's trusted man, the necessary instructions, so did not apprehend any trouble. But on our return he met us rather shame-facedly at the entrance to the grounds.

"He's gone!" he gasped. "He's gone!" he repeated again and again, in his distress. His right arm hung limp and nerveless at his side, and it required no little patience to finally come to an understanding.

"I told him it was the orders that he mustn't go out. But he bellered like a wild bull, and wanted to know whose orders. And when I told him, he said it was time I should know that he took orders from no man. And when I stood in his way he took me by the arm, so, and just squeezed tight. I'm afraid it's broken, sir. And then he called Hector and went off across the fields to the village."

"Oh, your arm's all right," Dover assured him after due examination. "Just crushed the biceps a little, be kind of stiff and sore for a couple of days, that's all." And then to me, "Come on; we've got to find him."

It was a simple matter to follow him to the village. As we came down the main street, a crowd before the post office attracted our attention, and though we arrived at the climax, we could easily divine what had gone before. A bulldog, belonging to a trio of mill-hands, had picked a quarrel with Hector; and as it had been impossible to balance the second puppyhood of Hector with a new set of teeth, it was patent that he had been at a miserable disadvantage in the fight that followed. It was evident that Major Rathbone had intervened in an endeavor to separate the animals, and that the roughs had resented this. Besides, he was such a harmless-looking old gentleman, with his snow-white hair and patriarchal aspect, that they anticipated having a little fun with him.

"Aw, g'wan," we could hear one of the burly fellows saying, at same time shoving the Major back as though he were a little boy.

He protested courteously that the dog was his; but they chose to regard him as a joke and refused to listen. The crowd was composed of a low breed of men, anyway, and they jammed in so closely to see th sport that we had hard work in cleaving a passage.

“Now, nibsy,” commanded the mill-hand who had shoved Major Rathbone back, “don’t yer think you’d better chase yerself home to yer mammy? This ain’t no manner o’ place fer leetle boys like you.”

The Major was a fighter from the word go. And just then he let go. Before one could count three it was over; a swing under the first rufffian’s ear, a half-jolt on the point of the second one’s chin, and a shrewd block, with fake swing and swift uppercut on the jugular of the third, stretched the three brutes in the muck of the street. The crowd drew back hastily before this ancient prodigy, and we could hear more than one fervently abjuring his eyes.

As he arose from drawing the dogs apart, there was a cheery twinkle in the Major’s eye which disconcerted us. We had approached him in the attitude of keepers recovering a patient: but his thorough sanity and perfect composure took us aback.

“Say,” he said jovially, “there’s a little place just round the corner here — best old rye — a-hem!” And he winked significantly as we linked arms like comrades and passed out through the petrified crowd.

From this moment our control was at an end. He always had be a masterful man, and from now on, he proceeded to demonstrate how capable he was of taking care of himself. His mysterious rejuvenation became, but would not remain, a nine days’ wonder, for it grew and grew from day to day. Morning after morning he could be seen tramping home for breakfast across the dewy fields, with a fair-fill game-bag and Dover’s shotgun. In previous years he had been a devoted horseman. One afternoon we returned from a trip to the city to find half the village hanging over the paddock fence. On closer inspection we discovered the Major breaking in one of the colts which had hitherto defied the stablemen. It was an edifying spectacle — his gray licks and venerable beard the sport of the wind as he dashed round and round on the maddened animal’s back. But conquer the brute he did, till a stable boy led it away, trembling and as abject as a kitten. Another time, taking what had now become his customary afternoon ride, his indomitable spirit was fired by a party of well-mounted young fellows, and he let out with his big black stallion till he gave them his dust all the way down the principal street of the drowsy town.

In short, he took up the reins of life where he had dropped them years before. He was a fiery conservative as regards politics, and the peculiarly distasteful state of affairs then prevailing enticed him again into the arena.

A crisis was approaching between the mill-owners and their workingmen, and a turbulent class of “agitators” had drifted into our midst. Not only did the Major oppose them openly, but he thrashed several of the more offensive leaders, nipped the strike in its incipiency, and in a most exciting campaign swept into the mayoralty. The closeness of the count but served to accentuate how bitter had been the struggle. And in the meantime he presided at indignant mass-meetings, and had the whole community shouting “Cuba Libre!” and almost ready to march to her deliverance.

In truth, he rioted about the country like a young Nimrod, and administered the affairs of the town with the wisdom of a Solon. He snorted like an old war-horse at opposition, and woe to them that ventured to stand up against him. Success only stimulated him to greater activity; but, while such activity would have been commendable in a younger man, in one of his advanced years it seemed so inconsistent and inappropriate that his friends and relatives were shocked beyond measure. Dover and I could but hold our hands in helplessness and watch the antics of our hoary marvel.

His fame, or as we chose to call it, his notoriety spread till there was talk in the district of running him for Congress in the coming elections. Sensational space-writers filled columns of Sunday editions with garbled accounts of his doings and of his tremendous vitality. These “yellow-journal” interviewers would have driven us to distraction with their insistent clamor, had not the Major himself taken the matter in hand. For awhile it was his custom to occasionally throw an odd one out of the house before breakfast, and invariably, when he returned home in the evening, to attend similarly to the wants of three or four. A pest of curiosity-mongers and learned professors descended upon our quiet neighborhood. Spectacled gentlemen, usually bald-headed and always urbane, came singly, in pairs, in committees and delegations to note the facts and phenomena of this most remarkable of cases. Mystic enthusiasts, long-haired and wild-eyed, and devotees of countless occult systems haunted our front and back doors, and trampled upon the flowers till the gardener threatened to throw up his position in despair. And I veritably believe a saving of ten per cent on the coal bill could have been compassed by the burning up of unsolicited correspondence.

And to cap the whole business, when the United States declared war against Spain, Major Rathbone at once resigned his mayorship and applied to the war department for a commission. In view of his civil war record and his present superb health, it was highly probable that his request would be granted.

"It seems that before we can foist this rejuvenator upon the world, we must also discover an antidote for it — a sort of emasculator to reduce the friskiness attendant upon the return to youth, you know."

We had sat down, though in seemingly hopeless despondency, to discuss the difficulty and to try and find some way out of it.

"You see," Dover went on, "after revivifying an aged person, that person passes wholly out of our power. We can impose no checks, nor in any way can we tone down whatever excess of youthful spontaneity we may have induced. I see, now, that great care must be exercised in the administration of our lymph — the greatest of care if we should wish to avoid all manner of absurdities in the conduct of the patient. But that isn't the question at issue. What are we to do with Uncle Max? I confess, beyond gaining delay through the War Office, that I am at the end of my tether."

For the nonce Dover was so helpless that I felt not a little elarior unfolding the plan I had been considering for some time.

"You spoke of antidotes," I began tentatively.

"Now, as we happen to know, there are antidotes and antidotes, and yet again are there antidotes, some as a remedy for this evil and for that. Should a babe drink a pint of kerosene, what antidote would you suggest?"

Dover shook his head.

"And since there is no antidote for such an emergency, do we assume that the babe must die? Not at all. We administer an emetic. But of course, an emetic is out of the question in the present case. But again, say for one suffering from uxoriousness, or for an hypochondriac, what remedy should be applied? Certainly, neither of the two I have mentioned will do. Now, for a man, melancholy-mad, what would you prescribe?"

"Change," he replied, instantly. "Something else to withdraw him from himself and his morbid brooding to give him new interest in life, to supply him with a reason for existence."

"Very good," I continued, jubilantly. "You will notice that you have prescribed an antidote, it is true, but instead of a physical or medicinal one, it is intangible and abstract. Now, can you give me a similar remedy for excessive spirits or strength?"

Dover looked puzzled and waited for me to go on.

"Do you remember a certain strong man of the name of Samson? also Delilah, the fair Philistine? Have you ever noted the significance of 'Beauty and the beast'? Do you not know that the strength of the strong has been wilted, dynasties been raised or demolished, and countless nations plunged into or rescued from civil strife, all because of the love of woman?"

"There's your antidote," I added modestly, as an afterthought.

"Oh!" His eyes flashed hopefully for an instant, but dismay returned as he shook his head sadly and said, "But the eligibles? There are none."

"Do you recollect a certain romance of the Major's when he was quite a young man, long before the war?"

"You mean Miss Deborah Furbush, your Aunt Debby?"

"Yes; my Aunt Debby. They quarreled, you know, and never made up — "

"Nor spoke to each other since — "

"O yes, they have. Ever since his rejuvenation he has called there regularly to pay his respects and ask for her health. Sort of gloats over her, you see. She's been bedridden a year now; have to carry her up and down stairs, and nothing the matter except simple old age."

"If she's strong enough," Dover hazarded.

"Strong enough!" I cried. "I tell you, man, it's genuine senility — nothing in the world to guard against but a very slight valvular weakness of the heart. What d'ye say? Get a couple of months' delay on his commission, and start in on Aunt Debby at once. What say, old man? What say?

Not only had I grown excited over this solution of our difficulty, but I had at last aroused his enthusiasm. Appreciating the need for haste, we at once gutted the laboratory of all essentials and took up our abode at my home, which, in turn, was just over the way from Aunt Debby's.

By this time we had the whole operation at the ends of our fingers, so were able to proceed with the utmost dispatch. But we were very sly about it, and Major Rathbone had not the slightest idea of what we were up to. A week from the time we began, the Furbush household was startled by Aunt Debby's rising to give her hand to the Major when he made his usual call. A fortnight later, from a coign of vantage in my windmill, we saw them strolling about the garden, and noted a certain new gallantry in the Major's carriage. And the rapidity with which Aunt Debby breasted the tide of Time was dizzying. She grew visibly younger, day by day, and the roses of youth returned to her cheek, giving her the most beautiful pink and pearl complexion imaginable.

Perhaps ten days after that, he drove up to the door and took her out driving. And how the village talked! Which was nothing to the way it gabbed, when, a month later, the Major’s interest in the war abated and he declined his commission. And when the superannuated lovers walked bravely to the altar and then went off on their honeymoon, it seemed that all tongues wagged till they could wag no more.

As I have said, this lymph is a wonderful discovery.

A Relic of the Pliocene

I wash my hands of him at the start. I cannot father his tales, nor will I be responsible for them. I make these preliminary reservations, observe, as a guard upon my own integrity. I possess a certain definite position in a small way, also a wife; and for the good name of the community that honours my existence with its approval, and for the sake of her posterity and mine, I cannot take the chances I once did, nor foster probabilities with the careless improvidence of youth. So, I repeat, I wash my hands of him, this Nimrod, this mighty hunter, this homely, blue-eyed, freckle-faced Thomas Stevens.

Having been honest to myself, and to whatever prospective olive branches my wife may be pleased to tender me, I can now afford to be generous. I shall not criticize the tales told me by Thomas Stevens, and, further, I shall withhold my judgment. If it be asked why, I can only add that judgment I have none. Long have I pondered, weighed, and balanced, but never have my conclusions been twice the same--forsooth! because Thomas Stevens is a greater man than I. If he have told truths, well and good; if untruths, still well and good. For who can prove? or who disprove? I eliminate myself from the proposition, while those of little faith may do as I have done--go find the same Thomas Stevens, and discuss to his face the various matters which, if fortune serve, I shall relate. As to where he may be found? The directions are simple: anywhere between 53 north latitude and the Pole, on the one hand; and, on the other, the likeliest hunting grounds that lie between the east coast of Siberia and farthermost Labrador. That he is there, somewhere, within that clearly defined territory, I pledge the word of an honourable man whose expectations entail straight speaking and right living.

Thomas Stevens may have toyed prodigiously with truth, but when we first met (it were well to mark this point), he wandered into my camp when I thought myself a thousand miles beyond the outermost post of civilization. At the sight of his human face, the first in weary months, I could have sprung forward and folded him in my arms (and I am not by any means a demonstrative man); but to him his visit seemed the most casual thing under the sun. He just strolled into the light of my camp, passed the time of day after the custom of men on beaten trails, threw my snowshoes the one way and a couple of dogs the other, and so made room for himself by the fire.

Said he'd just dropped in to borrow a pinch of soda and to see if I had any decent tobacco. He plucked forth an ancient pipe, loaded it with painstaking care, and, without as much as by your leave, whacked half the tobacco of my pouch into his. Yes, the stuff was fairly good. He sighed with the contentment of the just, and literally absorbed the smoke from the crisping yellow flakes, and it did my smoker's heart good to behold him.

Hunter? Trapper? Prospector? He shrugged his shoulders No; just sort of knocking round a bit. Had come up from the Great Slave some time since, and was thinking of trapsing over into the Yukon country. The factor of Koshim had spoken about the discoveries on the Klondike, and he was of a mind to run over for a peep. I noticed that he spoke of the Klondike in the archaic vernacular, calling it the Reindeer River--a conceited custom that the Old Timers employ against the CHECHAQUAS and all tenderfeet in general. But he did it so naively and as such a matter of course, that there was no sting, and I forgave him. He also had it in view, he said, before he crossed the divide into the Yukon, to make a little run up Fort o' Good Hope way.

Now Fort o' Good Hope is a far journey to the north, over and beyond the Circle, in a place where the feet of few men have trod; and when a nondescript ragamuffin comes in out of the night, from nowhere in particular, to sit by one's fire and discourse on such in terms of "trapsing" and "a little run," it is fair time to rouse up and shake off the dream. Wherefore I looked about me; saw the fly and, underneath, the pine boughs spread for the sleeping furs; saw the grub sacks, the camera, the frosty breaths of the dogs circling on the edge of the light; and, above, a great streamer of the aurora, bridging the zenith from south-east to north-west. I shivered. There is a magic in the Northland night, that steals in on one like fevers from malarial marshes. You are clutched and downed before you are aware. Then I looked to the snowshoes, lying prone and crossed where he had flung them. Also I had an eye to my tobacco pouch. Half, at least, of its goodly store had vamosed. That settled it. Fancy had not tricked me after all.

Crazed with suffering, I thought, looking steadfastly at the man--one of those wild stampeders, strayed far from his bearings and wandering like a lost soul through great vastnesses and unknown deeps. Oh, well, let his moods slip on, until, mayhap, he gathers his tangled wits together. Who knows?--the mere sound of a fellow-creature's voice may bring all straight again.

So I led him on in talk, and soon I marvelled, for he talked of game and the ways thereof. He had killed the Siberian wolf of westernmost Alaska, and the chamois in the secret Rockies. He averred he knew the haunts where the last buffalo still roamed; that he had hung on the flanks of the caribou when they ran by the hundred thousand, and slept in the Great Barrens on the musk-ox's winter trail.

And I shifted my judgment accordingly (the first revision, but by no account the last), and deemed him a monumental effigy of truth. Why it was I know not, but the spirit moved me to repeat a tale told to me by a man who had dwelt in the land too long to know better. It was of the great bear that hugs the steep slopes of St Elias, never descending to the levels of the gentler inclines. Now God so constituted this creature for its hillside habitat that the legs of one side are all of a foot longer than those of the other. This is mighty convenient, as will be reality admitted. So I hunted this rare beast in my own name, told it in the first person, present tense, painted the requisite locale, gave it the necessary garnishings and touches of verisimilitude, and looked to see the man stunned by the recital.

Not he. Had he doubted, I could have forgiven him. Had he objected, denying the dangers of such a hunt by virtue of the animal's inability to turn about and go the other way--had he done this, I say, I could have taken him by the hand for the true sportsman that he was. Not he. He sniffed, looked on me, and sniffed again; then gave my tobacco due praise, thrust one foot into my lap, and bade me examine the gear. It was a MUCLUC of the Innuit pattern, sewed together with sinew threads, and devoid of beads or furbelows. But it was the skin itself that was remarkable. In that it was all of half an inch thick, it reminded me of walrus-hide; but there the resemblance ceased, for no walrus ever bore so marvellous a growth of hair. On the side and ankles this hair was well-nigh worn away, what of friction with underbrush and snow; but around the top and down the more sheltered back it was coarse, dirty black, and very thick. I parted it with difficulty and looked beneath for the fine fur that is common with northern animals, but found it in this case to be absent. This, however, was compensated for by the length. Indeed, the tufts that had survived wear and tear measured all of seven or eight inches.

I looked up into the man’s face, and he pulled his foot down and asked, “Find hide like that on your St Elias bear?”

I shook my head. “Nor on any other creature of land or sea,” I answered candidly. The thickness of it, and the length of the hair, puzzled me.

“That,” he said, and said without the slightest hint of impressiveness, “that came from a mammoth.”

“Nonsense!” I exclaimed, for I could not forbear the protest of my unbelief. “The mammoth, my dear sir, long ago vanished from the earth. We know it once existed by the fossil remains that we have unearthed, and by a frozen carcase that the Siberian sun saw fit to melt from out the bosom of a glacier; but we also know that no living specimen exists. Our explorers--“

At this word he broke in impatiently. “Your explorers? Pish! A weakly breed. Let us hear no more of them. But tell me, O man, what you may know of the mammoth and his ways.”

Beyond contradiction, this was leading to a yarn; so I baited my hook by ransacking my memory for whatever data I possessed on the subject in hand. To begin with, I emphasized that the animal was prehistoric, and marshalled all my facts in support of this. I mentioned the Siberian sand-bars that abounded with ancient mammoth bones; spoke of the large quantities of fossil ivory purchased from the Innuits by the Alaska Commercial Company; and acknowledged having myself mined six-and eight-foot tusks from the pay gravel of the Klondike creeks. “All fossils,” I concluded, “found in the midst of debris deposited through countless ages.”

“I remember when I was a kid,” Thomas Stevens sniffed (he had a most confounded way of sniffing), “that I saw a petrified water-melon. Hence, though mistaken persons sometimes delude themselves into thinking that they are really raising or eating them, there are no such things as extant water-melons?”

“But the question of food,” I objected, ignoring his point, which was puerile and without bearing. “The soil must bring forth vegetable life in lavish abundance to support so monstrous creations. Nowhere in the North is the soil so prolific. Ergo, the mammoth cannot exist.”

“I pardon your ignorance concerning many matters of this Northland, for you are a young man and have travelled little; but, at the same time, I am inclined to agree with you on one thing. The mammoth no longer exists. How do I know? I killed the last one with my own right arm.”

Thus spake Nimrod, the mighty Hunter. I threw a stick of firewood at the dogs and bade them quit their unholy howling, and waited. Undoubtedly this liar of singular felicity would open his mouth and requite me for my St. Elias bear.

“It was this way,” he at last began, after the appropriate silence had intervened. “I was in camp one day--“

“Where?” I interrupted.

He waved his hand vaguely in the direction of the north-east, where stretched a TERRA INCOGNITA into which vastness few men have strayed and fewer emerged. “I was in camp one day with Klooch. Klooch was as handsome a little KAMOOKS as ever whined betwixt the traces or shoved nose into a camp kettle. Her father was a full-blood Malemute from Russian Pastilik on Bering Sea, and I bred her, and with understanding, out of a clean-legged bitch of the Hudson Bay stock. I tell you, O man, she was a corker combination. And now, on this day I have in mind, she was brought to pup through a pure wild wolf of the woods--grey, and long of limb, with big lungs and no end of staying powers. Say! Was there ever the like? It was a new breed of dog I had started, and I could look forward to big things.

“As I have said, she was brought neatly to pup, and safely delivered. I was squatting on my hams over the litter--seven sturdy, blind little beggars--when from behind came a bray of trumpets and crash of brass. There was a rush, like the wind-squall that kicks the heels of the rain, and I was midway to my feet when knocked flat on my face. At the same instant I heard Klooch sigh, very much as a man does when you’ve planted your fist in his belly. You can stake your sack I lay quiet, but I twisted my head around and saw a huge bulk swaying above me. Then the blue sky flashed into view and I got to my feet. A hairy mountain of flesh was just disappearing in the underbrush on the edge of the open. I caught a rear-end glimpse, with a stiff tail, as big in girth as my body, standing out straight behind. The next second only a tremendous hole remained in the thicket, though I could still hear the sounds as of a tornado dying quickly away, underbrush ripping and tearing, and trees snapping and crashing.

“I cast about for my rifle. It had been lying on the ground with the muzzle against a log; but now the stock was smashed, the barrel out of line, and the working-gear in a thousand bits. Then I looked for the slut, and--and what do you suppose?”

I shook my head.

"May my soul burn in a thousand hells if there was anything left of her! Klooch, the seven sturdy, blind little beggars--gone, all gone. Where she had stretched was a slimy, bloody depression in the soft earth, all of a yard in diameter, and around the edges a few scattered hairs."

I measured three feet on the snow, threw about it a circle, and glanced at Nimrod.

"The beast was thirty long and twenty high," he answered, "and its tusks scaled over six times three feet. I couldn't believe, myself, at the time, for all that it had just happened. But if my senses had played me, there was the broken gun and the hole in the brush. And there was--or, rather, there was not--Klooch and the pups. O man, it makes me hot all over now when I think of it Klooch! Another Eve! The mother of a new race! And a rampaging, ranting, old bull mammoth, like a second flood, wiping them, root and branch, off the face of the earth! Do you wonder that the blood-soaked earth cried out to high God? Or that I grabbed the hand-axe and took the trail?"

"The hand-axe?" I exclaimed, startled out of myself by the picture. "The hand-axe, and a big bull mammoth, thirty feet long, twenty feet--"

Nimrod joined me in my merriment, chuckling gleefully. "Wouldn't it kill you?" he cried. "Wasn't it a beaver's dream? Many's the time I've laughed about it since, but at the time it was no laughing matter, I was that danged mad, what of the gun and Klooch. Think of it, O man! A brand-new, unclassified, uncopyrighted breed, and wiped out before ever it opened its eyes or took out its intention papers! Well, so be it. Life's full of disappointments, and rightly so. Meat is best after a famine, and a bed soft after a hard trail.

"As I was saying, I took out after the beast with the hand-axe, and hung to its heels down the valley; but when he circled back toward the head, I was left winded at the lower end. Speaking of grub, I might as well stop long enough to explain a couple of points. Up thereabouts, in the midst of the mountains, is an almighty curious formation. There is no end of little valleys, each like the other much as peas in a pod, and all neatly tucked away with straight, rocky walls rising on all sides. And at the lower ends are always small openings where the drainage or glaciers must have broken out. The only way in is through these mouths, and they are all small, and some smaller than others. As to grub--you've slushed around on the rain-soaked islands of the Alaskan coast down Sitka way, most likely, seeing as you're a traveller. And you know how stuff grows there--big, and juicy, and jungly. Well, that’s the way it was with those valleys. Thick, rich soil, with ferns and grasses and such things in patches higher than your head. Rain three days out of four during the summer months; and food in them for a thousand mammoths, to say nothing of small game for man.

“But to get back. Down at the lower end of the valley I got winded and gave over. I began to speculate, for when my wind left me my dander got hotter and hotter, and I knew I’d never know peace of mind till I dined on roasted mammoth-foot. And I knew, also, that that stood for SKOOKUM MAMOOK PUKAPUK--excuse Chinook, I mean there was a big fight coming. Now the mouth of my valley was very narrow, and the walls steep. High up on one side was one of those big pivot rocks, or balancing rocks, as some call them, weighing all of a couple of hundred tons. Just the thing. I hit back for camp, keeping an eye open so the bull couldn’t slip past, and got my ammunition. It wasn’t worth anything with the rifle smashed; so I opened the shells, planted the powder under the rock, and touched it off with slow fuse. Wasn’t much of a charge, but the old boulder tilted up lazily and dropped down into place, with just space enough to let the creek drain nicely. Now I had him.”

“But how did you have him?” I queried. “Who ever heard of a man killing a mammoth with a hand-axe? And, for that matter, with anything else?”

“O man, have I not told you I was mad?” Nimrod replied, with a slight manifestation of sensitiveness. “Mad clean through, what of Klooch and the gun. Also, was I not a hunter? And was this not new and most unusual game? A hand-axe? Pish! I did not need it. Listen, and you shall hear of a hunt, such as might have happened in the youth of the world when cavemen rounded up the kill with hand-axe of stone. Such would have served me as well. Now is it not a fact that man can outwalk the dog or horse? That he can wear them out with the intelligence of his endurance?”

I nodded.

“Well?”

The light broke in on me, and I bade him continue.

“My valley was perhaps five miles around. The mouth was closed. There was no way to get out. A timid beast was that bull mammoth, and I had him at my mercy. I got on his heels again hollered like a fiend, pelted him with cobbles, and raced him around the valley three times before I knocked off for supper. Don’t you see? A race-course! A man and a mammoth! A hippodrome, with sun, moon, and stars to referee!

“It took me two months to do it, but I did it. And that’s no beaver dream. Round and round I ran him, me travelling on the inner circle, eating jerked meat and salmon berries on the run, and snatching winks of sleep between. Of course, he’d get desperate at times and turn. Then I’d head for soft ground where the creek spread out, and lay anathema upon him and his ancestry, and dare him to come on. But he was too wise to bog in a mud puddle. Once he pinned me in against the walls, and I crawled back into a deep crevice and waited. Whenever he felt for me with his trunk, I’d belt him with the hand-axe till he pulled out, shrieking fit to split my ear drums, he was that mad. He knew he had me and didn’t have me, and it near drove him wild. But he was no man’s fool. He knew he was safe as long as I stayed in the crevice, and he made up his mind to keep me there. And he was dead right, only he hadn’t figured on the commissary. There was neither grub nor water around that spot, so on the face of it he couldn’t keep up the siege. He’d stand before the opening for hours, keeping an eye on me and flapping mosquitoes away with his big blanket ears. Then the thirst would come on him and he’d ramp round and roar till the earth shook, calling me every name he could lay tongue to. This was to frighten me, of course; and when he thought I was sufficiently impressed, he’d back away softly and try to make a sneak for the creek. Sometimes I’d let him get almost there--only a couple of hundred yards away it was--when out I’d pop and back he’d come, lumbering along like the old landslide he was. After I’d done this a few times, and he’d figured it out, he changed his tactics. Grasped the time element, you see. Without a word of warning, away he’d go, tearing for the water like mad, scheming to get there and back before I ran away. Finally, after cursing me most horribly, he raised the siege and deliberately stalked off to the water-hole.

“That was the only time he penned me,--three days of it,--but after that the hippodrome never stopped. Round, and round, and round, like a six days’ go-as-I-please, for he never pleased. My clothes went to rags and tatters, but I never stopped to mend, till at last I ran naked as a son of earth, with nothing but the old hand-axe in one hand and a cobble in the other. In fact, I never stopped, save for peeps of sleep in the crannies and ledges of the cliffs. As for the bull, he got perceptibly thinner and thinner--must have lost several tons at least--and as nervous as a schoolmarm on the wrong side of matrimony. When I'd come up with him and yell, or lain him with a rock at long range, he'd jump like a skittish colt and tremble all over. Then he'd pull out on the run, tail and trunk waving stiff, head over one shoulder and wicked eyes blazing, and the way he'd swear at me was something dreadful. A most immoral beast he was, a murderer, and a blasphemer.

"But towards the end he quit all this, and fell to whimpering and crying like a baby. His spirit broke and he became a quivering jelly-mountain of misery. He'd get attacks of palpitation of the heart, and stagger around like a drunken man, and fall down and bark his shins. And then he'd cry, but always on the run. O man, the gods themselves would have wept with him, and you yourself or any other man. It was pitiful, and there was so I much of it, but I only hardened my heart and hit up the pace. At last I wore him clean out, and he lay down, broken-winded, broken-hearted, hungry, and thirsty. When I found he wouldn't budge, I hamstrung him, and spent the better part of the day wading into him with the hand-axe, he a-sniffing and sobbing till I worked in far enough to shut him off. Thirty feet long he was, and twenty high, and a man could sling a hammock between his tusks and sleep comfortably. Barring the fact that I had run most of the juices out of him, he was fair eating, and his four feet, alone, roasted whole, would have lasted a man a twelvemonth. I spent the winter there myself."

"And where is this valley?" I asked

He waved his hand in the direction of the north-east, and said: "Your tobacco is very good. I carry a fair share of it in my pouch, but I shall carry the recollection of it until I die. In token of my appreciation, and in return for the moccasins on your own feet, I will present to you these muclucs. They commemorate Klooch and the seven blind little beggars. They are also souvenirs of an unparalleled event in history, namely, the destruction of the oldest breed of animal on earth, and the youngest. And their chief virtue lies in that they will never wear out."

Having effected the exchange, he knocked the ashes from his pipe, gripped my hand good-night, and wandered off through the snow. Concerning this tale, for which I have already disclaimed responsibility, I would recommend those of little faith to make a visit to the Smithsonian Institute. If they bring the requisite credentials and do not come in vacation time, they will undoubtedly gain an audience with Professor Dolvidson. The muclucs are in his possession, and he will verify, not the manner in which they were obtained, but the material of which they are composed. When he states that they are made from the skin of the mammoth, the scientific world accepts his verdict. What more would you have?

Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadaki

"JOCK, you likee come see my house? — not far — you come see my wifee — come' chopee — chopee' — allesamee good 'chow.' "

Ah! the magic of those words! ("chopee chopee!") Food! Dinner! What a relish they conveyed to me, who was as hungry a sight-seer as had ever trod the by-ways and thoroughfares of Yokohama. All morning I had wandered from tea-house to temple, through bazaar and curio-shop, "up hill and down dale," till now I was as famished as the most voracious shark that ever cut the blue waters of the tropic sea with his ominous fin, while in search of a breakfast. In fact, I felt like a veritable man-eater, and this unexpected invitation of my jin-riki-sha man was most opportune. And, of course, I accepted.

Away he sped, gradually leaving the crowded streets and entering the poorer and more squalid portion of the native quarter. At last, turning, a hundred feet or so, into a narrow alley, he stopped before an insignificant little house, which he told me, with very evident pride, was his home.

The whole side of the main, or sitting-room, facing the alley, was open, to admit the cooler air from without. To my Occidental eye it seemed a very bare little room. The floor was covered with thin, unpadded mats of rice straw, on which, beside a little table eight inches high, with a half-hemstitched silk handkerchief stretched across it, lay a woman in sound slumber. It was his wife.

As she lay there, one could see, even from a Japanese standpoint, that she was not pretty; neither was she ugly. But the stern lines of care had left their vivid impress on the face, and even as she slept she seemed troubled, and a spasm of pain or worry for a moment contracted her relaxed features.

With a light and tender caress, Sakaicho roused her. At his touch she awoke and greeted him affectionately; but when she beheld me she became suddenly abashed, and retreated across the room. Then ensued a quick conversation, in which Sakaicho probably told her that I was the American who had so graciously patronized him during the past week.

Remembering her duties as a hostess, and full of gratitude for her husband's patron, with low salaam and blushing countenance, she invited me with a quick motion of her hand to a seat on the floor. Removing my shoes at the threshold, for that is one of the strictest rules of Japanese etiquette, I settled down, tailor fashion, in the middle of the room, opposite Sakaicho.

As his wife pushed the hilbachi and tabako-bon before us, and then retired, humbly, to the background, he made me acquainted with her name, which was Hona Asi. She was only twenty-seven, he said; but she looked at least forty. Toil and worry had stamped her naturally pretty face, and left it wrinkled and sallow.

This I noticed and pondered on, as with deft fingers I rolled the little pellets of fine-cut native tobacco, inserted them in the rectangularly-bent head of the slender pipe, and then ignited them, with a quick puff at the little coal of fire in the hilbachi. A couple of inhalations of the mild, sweet-flavored herb, emitted through the nostrils in true Japanese style, and the thimble-like bowl is emptied. Then, with a quick, sharp tap on the hilbachi, the ashes are expelled and the operation of filling and lighting repeated.

For five minutes we smoked in silence, when the hilbachi and the tabako-bon were removed, and Hona Asi placed before us two cups of weak green tea. As soon as emptied they were taken away, being replaced by a table five inches high and a foot and a half square, bravely lacquered in red and black.

According to Japanese custom, Hona Asi did not eat with us, but waited on the table as a true wife should. She removed the covering from a round wooden box, and with a wooden paddle ladled out two bowls of steaming rice, while Sakaicho uncovered the various bowls on the table and revealed a repast fit for the most fastidious epicure. The savory odors arising from different dishes whetted my appetite, and I was anxious to begin. There was bean soup, boiled fish, stewed leeks, pickles and soy, raw fish, thin sliced and eaten with radishes, kurage, a kind of jellyfish, and tea. The soup we drank like water; the rice we shoveled into our mouths like coals into a Newcastle collier; and the other dishes we both helped ourselves out of with the chopsticks, which by this time I could use quite dexterously. Several times during the meal we laid them aside long enough to sip warm saki (rice wine) from tiny lacquered cups.

By the time we concluded Hona Asi had brought from the little shop round the corner two glasses of ice cream, which she placed before us with a porcelain jar full of green plums, packed in salt. When we had done justice to this, we had resort to the inevitable hilbachi and tabako-bon, presumably to aid digestion.

As a rule, I had found the Japanese a shrewd, money-seeking race; but when, as a matter-of-course, I took out my purse to pay the reckoning, Sakaicho was insulted, while, in the background, Hona Asi threw up her hands deprecatingly, blushed, and nearly fainted with shame. They gave me to understand very emphatically that it was their treat, and I was forced to accept it, though I knew they could ill afford such extravagance.

Soon Sakaicho recovered his good humor. and I enticed him into talking of himself. In his queer broken English he told me of his youth; his struggles, and his hopes and ambitions. His boyhood had been spent as a peasant in the fields, on the sunny slopes of Fujihama; his youth and early manhood as porter and driver of hired jin-riki-shas in Tokio. With great economy he had saved from his slender earnings, till now, having removed to Yokohama, he owned his little home and two jin-riki-shas, one of which he rented out at fifteen cents a day. His wife, a true helpmeet, worked industriously at home hemstitching silk handkerchiefs; sometimes making as high as eighteen cents a day. And all this struggle was for his boy — his only child. He was now sending him to school, and soon, when he would own and rent out several jin-riki-shas, the boy would receive instruction in the higher branches, and mayhap, some day, he would be able to send him to America to complete his education. “Who knows?”

As he told me this his eyes sparkled and his face flushed with pardonable pride, while his whole being seemed ennobled with the loftiness of his aspirations and the depth of his love and self-sacrifice.

Tired of sight-seeing, I passed the afternoon with him, waiting for the boy’s return from school. At last he appeared; a sturdy, rollicking little chap of ten, who enjoyed, as his father said, fishing in the adjacent canal, though he never caught anything, and the water was not deep enough to drown him. Like his mother, the little fellow was very bashful in my presence; but, after a deal of persuasion, he condescended to shake hands with me. As he did so, I slipped a bright Mexican dollar into his sweaty little paw. Great was his delight in its possession, and he was most profuse in his thanks, salaaming low, again and again, as he cried in shrill, childish treble, “Arienti! Arienti!”

A week later, returning from a pleasant trip to Tokio and Fujihama, I missed Sakaicho from his accustomed stand, and so hired a strange jin-riki-sha man. It was my last day ashore, and, resolving to make the best of it, I hurried through the different sights I had not yet seen.

Late in the afternoon I found myself speeding out into the country for a passing glimpse of the native graveyard. Rounding a quick turn in the road, I espied a funeral cortege ahead. Hurrying my panting jin-riki-sha man forward, I soon overtook it. It was a double funeral, I perceived, by the two heavy chests of plain white wood, borne on the shoulders of several stalwart natives. A solitary mourner followed, and in the slender form and bowed head I recognized Sakaicho. But O! how changed! Aroused by my coming he slowly raised his listless head, and, with dull, apathetic glance, returned my greeting.

As we walked reverently in the rear, my strange jin-riki-sha man told me that a destructive fire had swept through Sakaicho's neighborhood, burning his house and suffocating his wife and child.

Presently the grave was reached, and priests from the buddhist temple near by chanted the requiem with solemn ceremony, while a group of idle natives curiously crowded round. With glassy eye, Sakaicho followed the movements of the priests, and, when the last clod had been thrown on, he erected a memorial stone to his loved ones. Then he turned away, to place among the mementos before his household God two little wooden tablets, marked with the name and date of birth and death of his wife and boy, while I returned in haste to my ship. And, though five thousand miles of heaving ocean now separate us, never will I forget Sakaicho and Hona Asi, nor the love they bore their son Hakadaki.

Samuel

Margaret Henan would have been a striking figure under any circumstances, but never more so than when I first chanced upon her, a sack of grain of fully a hundredweight on her shoulder, as she walked with sure though tottering stride from the cart-tail to the stable, pausing for an instant to gather strength at the foot of the steep steps that led to the grain-bin. There were four of these steps, and she went up them, a step at a time, slowly, unwaveringly, and with so dogged certitude that it never entered my mind that her strength could fail her and let that hundred-weight sack fall from the lean and withered frame that wellnigh doubled under it. For she was patently an old woman, and it was her age that made me linger by the cart and watch.

Six times she went between the cart and the stable, each time with a full sack on her back, and beyond passing the time of day with me she took no notice of my presence. Then, the cart empty, she fumbled for matches and lighted a short clay pipe, pressing down the burning surface of the tobacco with a calloused and apparently nerveless thumb. The hands were noteworthy. They were large-knuckled, sinewy and malformed by labour, rimed with callouses, the nails blunt and broken, and with here and there cuts and bruises, healed and healing, such as are common to the hands of hard-working men. On the back were huge, upstanding veins, eloquent of age and toil. Looking at them, it was hard to believe that they were the hands of the woman who had once been the belle of Island McGill. This last, of course, I learned later. At the time I knew neither her history nor her identity.

She wore heavy man's brogans. Her legs were stockingless, and I had noticed when she walked that her bare feet were thrust into the crinkly, iron-like shoes that sloshed about her lean ankles at every step. Her figure, shapeless and waistless, was garbed in a rough man's shirt and in a ragged flannel petticoat that had once been red. But it was her face, wrinkled, withered and weather-beaten, surrounded by an aureole of unkempt and straggling wisps of greyish hair, that caught and held me. Neither drifted hair nor serried wrinkles could hide the splendid dome of a forehead, high and broad without verging in the slightest on the abnormal.

The sunken cheeks and pinched nose told little of the quality of the life that flickered behind those clear blue eyes of hers. Despite the minutiae of wrinkle-work that somehow failed to weazen them, her eyes were clear as a girl's — clear, out-looking, and far-seeing, and with an open and unblinking steadfastness of gaze that was disconcerting. The remarkable thing was the distance between them. It is a lucky man or woman who has the width of an eye between, but with Margaret Henan the width between her eyes was fully that of an eye and a half. Yet so symmetrically moulded was her face that this remarkable feature produced no uncanny effect, and, for that matter, would have escaped the casual observer's notice. The mouth, shapeless and toothless, with down-turned corners and lips dry and parchment-like, nevertheless lacked the muscular slackness so usual with age. The lips might have been those of a mummy, save for that impression of rigid firmness they gave. Not that they were atrophied. On the contrary, they seemed tense and set with a muscular and spiritual determination. There, and in the eyes, was the secret of the certitude with which she carried the heavy sacks up the steep steps, with never a false step or overbalance, and emptied them in the grain-bin.

"You are an old woman to be working like this," I ventured.

She looked at me with that strange, unblinking gaze, and she thought and spoke with the slow deliberateness that characterized everything about her, as if well aware of an eternity that was hers and in which there was no need for haste. Again I was impressed by the enormous certitude of her. In this eternity that seemed so indubitably hers, there was time and to spare for safe-footing and stable equilibrium — for certitude, in short. No more in her spiritual life than in carrying the hundredweights of grain was there a possibility of a misstep or an overbalancing. The feeling produced in me was uncanny. Here was a human soul that, save for the most glimmering of contacts, was beyond the humanness of me. And the more I learned of Margaret Henan in the weeks that followed the more mysteriously remote she became. She was as alien as a far-journeyer from some other star, and no hint could she nor all the countryside give me of what forms of living, what heats of feeling, or rules of philosophic contemplation actuated her in all that she had been and was.

"I wull be suvunty-two come Guid Friday a fortnight," she said in reply to my question.

"But you are an old woman to be doing this man's work, and a strong man's work at that," I insisted.

Again she seemed to immerse herself in that atmosphere of contemplative eternity, and so strangely did it affect me that I should not have been surprised to have awaked a century or so later and found her just beginning to enunciate her reply —

"The work hoz tull be done, an' I am beholden tull no one."

"But have you no children, no family, relations?"

"Oh, aye, a-plenty o' them, but they no see fut tull be helpun' me."

She drew out her pipe for a moment, then added, with a nod of her head toward the house, "I luv' wuth meself."

I glanced at the house, straw-thatched and commodious, at the large stable, and at the large array of fields I knew must belong with the place.

"It is a big bit of land for you to farm by yourself."

"Oh, aye, a bug but, suvunty acres. Ut kept me old mon buzzy, along wuth a son an' a hired mon, tull say naught o' extra honds un the harvest an' a maid-servant un the house."

She clambered into the cart, gathered the reins in her hands, and quizzed me with her keen, shrewd eyes.

"Belike ye hail from over the watter — Ameruky, I'm meanun'?"

"Yes, I'm a Yankee," I answered.

"Ye wull no be findun' mony Island McGill folk stoppun' un Ameruky?"

"No; I don't remember ever meeting one, in the States."

She nodded her head.

"They are home-luvun' bodies, though I wull no be sayin' they are no fair-travelled. Yet they come home ot the last, them oz are no lost ot sea or kult by fevers an' such-like un foreign parts."

"Then your sons will have gone to sea and come home again?" I queried.

"Oh, aye, all savun' Samuel oz was drownded."

At the mention of Samuel I could have sworn to a strange light in her eyes, and it seemed to me, as by some telepathic flash, that I divined in her a tremendous wistfulness, an immense yearning. It seemed to me that here was the key to her inscrutableness, the clue that if followed properly would make all her strangeness plain. It came to me that here was a contact and that for the moment I was glimpsing into the soul of her. The question was tickling on my tongue, but she forestalled me.

She tchk'd to the horse, and with a "Guid day tull you, sir," drove off.

A simple, homely people are the folk of Island McGill, and I doubt if a more sober, thrifty, and industrious folk is to be found in all the world. Meeting them abroad — and to meet them abroad one must meet them on the sea, for a hybrid sea-faring and farmer breed are they — one would never take them to be Irish. Irish they claim to be, speaking of the North of Ireland with pride and sneering at their Scottish brothers; yet Scotch they undoubtedly are, transplanted Scotch of long ago, it is true, but none the less Scotch, with a thousand traits, to say nothing of their tricks of speech and woolly utterance, which nothing less than their Scotch clannishness could have preserved to this late day.

A narrow loch, scarcely half a mile wide, separates Island McGill from the mainland of Ireland; and, once across this loch, one finds himself in an entirely different country. The Scotch impression is strong, and the people, to commence with, are Presbyterians. When it is considered that there is no public-house in all the island and that seven thousand souls dwell therein, some idea may be gained of the temperateness of the community. Wedded to old ways, public opinion and the ministers are powerful influences, while fathers and mothers are revered and obeyed as in few other places in this modern world. Courting lasts never later than ten at night, and no girl walks out with her young man without her parents' knowledge and consent.

The young men go down to the sea and sow their wild oats in the wicked ports, returning periodically, between voyages, to live the old intensive morality, to court till ten o'clock, to sit under the minister each Sunday, and to listen at home to the same stern precepts that the elders preached to them from the time they were laddies. Much they learned of women in the ends of the earth, these seafaring sons, yet a canny wisdom was theirs and they never brought wives home with them. The one solitary exception to this had been the schoolmaster, who had been guilty of bringing a wife from half a mile the other side of the loch. For this he had never been forgiven, and he rested under a cloud for the remainder of his days. At his death the wife went back across the loch to her own people, and the blot on the escutcheon of Island McGill was erased. In the end the sailor-men married girls of their own homeland and settled down to become exemplars of all the virtues for which the island was noted.

Island McGill was without a history. She boasted none of the events that go to make history. There had never been any wearing of the green, any Fenian conspiracies, any land disturbances. There had been but one eviction, and that purely technical — a test case, and on advice of the tenant's lawyer. So Island McGill was without annals. History had passed her by. She paid her taxes, acknowledged her crowned rulers, and left the world alone; all she asked in return was that the world should leave her alone. The world was composed of two parts — Island McGill and the rest of it. And whatever was not Island McGill was outlandish and barbarian; and well she knew, for did not her seafaring sons bring home report of that world and its ungodly ways?

It was from the skipper of a Glasgow tramp, as passenger from Colombo to Rangoon, that I had first learned of the existence of Island McGill; and it was from him that I had carried the letter that gave me entrance to the house of Mrs. Ross, widow of a master mariner, with a daughter living with her and with two sons, master mariners themselves and out upon the sea. Mrs. Ross did not take in boarders, and it was Captain Ross's letter alone that had enabled me to get from her bed and board. In the evening, after my encounter with Margaret Henan, I questioned Mrs. Ross, and I knew on the instant that I had in truth stumbled upon mystery.

Like all Island McGill folk, as I was soon to discover, Mrs. Ross was at first averse to discussing Margaret Henan at all. Yet it was from her I learned that evening that Margaret Henan had once been one of the island belles. Herself the daughter of a well-to-do farmer, she had married Thomas Henan, equally well-to-do. Beyond the usual housewife's tasks she had never been accustomed to work. Unlike many of the island women, she had never lent a hand in the fields.

"But what of her children?" I asked.

"Two o' the sons, Jamie an' Timothy uz married an' be goun' tull sea. Thot bug house close tull the post office uz Jamie's. The daughters thot ha' no married be luvun' wuth them as dud marry. An' the rest be dead."

"The Samuels," Clara interpolated, with what I suspected was a giggle.

She was Mrs. Ross's daughter, a strapping young woman with handsome features and remarkably handsome black eyes.

"'Tuz naught to be smuckerun' ot," her mother reproved her.

"The Samuels?" I intervened. "I don't understand."

"Her four sons thot died."

"And were they all named Samuel?"

"Aye."

"Strange," I commented in the lagging silence.

“Very strange,” Mrs. Ross affirmed, proceeding stolidly with the knitting of the woollen singlet on her knees — one of the countless under-garments that she interminably knitted for her skipper sons.

“And it was only the Samuels that died?” I queried, in further attempt.

“The others luved,” was the answer. “A fine fomuly — no finer on the island. No better lods ever sailed out of Island McGill. The munuster held them up oz models tull pottern after. Nor was ever a whusper breathed again’ the girls.”

“But why is she left alone now in her old age?” I persisted. “Why don’t her own flesh and blood look after her? Why does she live alone? Don’t they ever go to see her or care for her?”

“Never a one un twenty years an’ more now. She fetched ut on tull herself. She drove them from the house just oz she drove old Tom Henan, thot was her husband, tull hus death.”

“Drink?” I ventured.

Mrs. Ross shook her head scornfully, as if drink was a weakness beneath the weakest of Island McGill.

A long pause followed, during which Mrs. Ross knitted stolidly on, only nodding permission when Clara’s young man, mate on one of the Shire Line sailing ships, came to walk out with her. I studied the half-dozen ostrich eggs, hanging in the corner against the wall like a cluster of some monstrous fruit. On each shell were painted precipitous and impossible seas through which full-rigged ships foamed with a lack of perspective only equalled by their sharp technical perfection. On the mantelpiece stood two large pearl shells, obviously a pair, intricately carved by the patient hands of New Caledonian convicts. In the centre of the mantel was a stuffed bird-of-paradise, while about the room were scattered gorgeous shells from the southern seas, delicate sprays of coral sprouting from barnacled pi-pi shells and cased in glass, assegais from South Africa, stone axes from New Guinea, huge Alaskan tobacco-pouches beaded with heraldic totem designs, a boomerang from Australia, divers ships in glass bottles, a cannibal kai-kai bowl from the Marquesas, and fragile cabinets from China and the Indies and inlaid with mother-of-pearl and precious woods.

I gazed at this varied trove brought home by sailor sons, and pondered the mystery of Margaret Henan, who had driven her husband to his death and been forsaken by all her kin. It was not the drink. Then what was it?

— some shocking cruelty? some amazing infidelity? or some fearful, old-world peasant-crime?

I broached my theories, but to all Mrs. Ross shook her head.

"Ut was no thot," she said. "Margaret was a guid wife an' a guid mother, an' I doubt she would harm a fly. She brought up her fomuly God-fearin' an' decent-minded. Her trouble was thot she took lunatic — turned eediot."

Mrs. Ross tapped significantly on her forehead to indicate a state of addlement.

"But I talked with her this afternoon," I objected, "and I found her a sensible woman — remarkably bright for one of her years."

"Aye, an' I'm grantun' all thot you say," she went on calmly. "But I am no referrun' tull thot. I am referrun' tull her wucked-headed an' vucious stubbornness. No more stubborn woman ever luv'd than Margaret Henan. Ut was all on account o' Samuel, which was the name o' her youngest an' they do say her favourut brother — hum oz died by hus own hond all through the munuster's mustake un no registerun' the new church ot Dublin. Ut was a lesson thot the name was musfortunate, but she would no take ut, an' there was talk when she called her first child Samuel — hum thot died o' the croup. An' wuth thot what does she do but call the next one Samuel, an' hum only three when he fell un tull the tub o' hot watter an' was plain cooked tull death. Ut all come, I tell you, o' her wucked-headed an' foolush stubbornness. For a Samuel she must hov; an' ut was the death of the four of her sons. After the first, dudna her own mother go down un the dirt tull her feet, a-beggun' an' pleadun' wuth her no tull name her next one Samuel? But she was no tull be turned from her purpose. Margaret Henan was always set on her ways, an' never more so thon on thot name Samuel.

"She was fair lunatuc on Samuel. Dudna her neighbours' an' all kuth an' kun savun' them thot luv'd un the house wuth her, get up an' walk out ot the christenun' of the second — hum thot was cooked? Thot they dud, an' ot the very moment the munuster asked what would the bairn's name be. 'Samuel,' says she; an' wuth thot they got up an' walked out an' left the house. An' ot the door dudna her Aunt Fannie, her mother's suster, turn an' say loud for all tull hear: 'What for wull she be wantun' tull murder the wee thing?' The munuster heard fine, an' dudna like ut, but, oz he told my Larry afterward, what could he do? Ut was the woman's wush, an' there was no law again' a mother callun' her child accordun' tull her wush.

"An' then was there no the third Samuel? An' when he was lost ot sea off the Cape, dudna she break all laws o' nature tull hov a fourth? She was forty-seven, I'm tellun' ye, an' she hod a child ot forty-seven. Thunk on ut! Ot forty-seven! Ut was fair scand'lous."

From Clara, next morning, I got the tale of Margaret Henan's favourite brother; and from here and there, in the week that followed, I pieced together the tragedy of Margaret Henan. Samuel Dundee had been the youngest of Margaret's four brothers, and, as Clara told me, she had well-nigh worshipped him. He was going to sea at the time, skipper of one of the sailing ships of the Bank Line, when he married Agnes Hewitt. She was described as a slender wisp of a girl, delicately featured and with a nervous organization of the supersensitive order. Theirs had been the first marriage in the "new" church, and after a two-weeks' honeymoon Samuel had kissed his bride good-bye and sailed in command of the Loughbank, a big four-masted barque.

And it was because of the "new" church that the minister's blunder occurred. Nor was it the blunder of the minister alone, as one of the elders later explained; for it was equally the blunder of the whole Presbytery of Coughleen, which included fifteen churches on Island McGill and the mainland. The old church, beyond repair, had been torn down and the new one built on the original foundation. Looking upon the foundation-stones as similar to a ship's keel, it never entered the minister's nor the Presbytery's head that the new church was legally any other than the old church.

"An' three couples was married the first week un the new church," Clara said. "First of all, Samuel Dundee an' Agnes Hewitt; the next day Albert Mahan an' Minnie Duncan; an' by the week-end Eddie Troy and Flo Mackintosh — all sailor-men, an' un sux weeks' time the last of them back tull their ships an' awa', an' no one o' them dreamin' of the wuckedness they'd been ot."

The Imp of the Perverse must have chuckled at the situation. All things favoured. The marriages had taken place in the first week of May, and it was not till three months later that the minister, as required by law, made his quarterly report to the civil authorities in Dublin. Promptly came back the announcement that his church had no legal existence, not being registered according to the law's demands. This was overcome by prompt registration; but the marriages were not to be so easily remedied. The three sailor husbands were away, and their wives, in short, were not their wives.

"But the munuster was no for alarmin' the bodies," said Clara. "He kept hus council an' bided hus time, waitun' for the lods tull be back from sea. Oz luck would have ut, he was away across the island tull a christenun' when Albert Mahan arrives home onexpected, hus shup just docked ot Dublin. Ut's nine o'clock ot night when the munuster, un hus sluppers an' dressun'-gown, gets the news. Up he jumps an' calls for horse an' saddle, an' awa' he goes like the wund for Albert Mahan's. Albert uz just goun' tull bed an' hoz one shoe off when the munuster arrives.

"'Come wuth me, the pair o' ye,' says he, breathless-like. 'What for, an' me dead weary an' goun' tull bed?' says Albert. 'Yull be lawful married,' says the munuster. Albert looks black an' says, 'Now, munuster, ye wull be jokun',' but tull humself, oz I've heard hum tell mony a time, he uz wonderun' thot the munuster should a-took tull whusky ot hus time o' life.

"'We be no married?' says Minnie. He shook his head. 'An' I om no Mussus Mahan?' 'No,' says he, 'ye are no Mussus Mahan. Ye are plain Muss Duncan.' 'But ye married 'us yoursel',' says she. 'I dud an' I dudna,' says he. An' wuth thot he tells them the whole upshot, an' Albert puts on hus shoe, an' they go wuth the munuster an' are married proper an' lawful, an' oz Albert Mahan says afterward mony's the time, ''Tus no every mon thot hoz two weddun' nights on Island McGill.'"

Six months later Eddie Troy came home and was promptly remarried. But Samuel Dundee was away on a three-years' voyage and his ship fell overdue. Further to complicate the situation, a baby boy, past two years old, was waiting for him in the arms of his wife. The months passed, and the wife grew thin with worrying. "Ut's no meself I'm thunkun' on," she is reported to have said many times, "but ut's the puir fatherless bairn. Uf aught happened tull Samuel where wull the bairn stond?"

Lloyd's posted the Loughbank as missing, and the owners ceased the monthly remittance of Samuel's half-pay to his wife. It was the question of the child's legitimacy that preyed on her mind, and, when all hope of Samuel's return was abandoned, she drowned herself and the child in the loch. And here enters the greater tragedy. The Loughbank was not lost. By a series of sea disasters and delays too interminable to relate, she had made one of those long, unsighted passages such as occur once or twice in half a century. How the Imp must have held both his sides! Back from the sea came Samuel, and when they broke the news to him something else broke somewhere in his heart or head. Next morning they found him where he had tried to kill himself across the grave of his wife and child. Never in the history of Island McGill was there so fearful a death-bed. He spat in the minister's face and reviled him, and died blaspheming so terribly that those that tended on him did so with averted gaze and trembling hands.

And, in the face of all this, Margaret Henan named her first child Samuel.

How account for the woman's stubbornness? Or was it a morbid obsession that demanded a child of hers should be named Samuel? Her third child was a girl, named after herself, and the fourth was a boy again. Despite the strokes of fate that had already bereft her, and despite the loss of friends and relatives, she persisted in her resolve to name the child after her brother. She was shunned at church by those who had grown up with her. Her mother, after a final appeal, left her house with the warning that if the child were so named she would never speak to her again. And though the old lady lived thirty-odd years longer she kept her word. The minister agreed to christen the child any name but Samuel, and every other minister on Island McGill refused to christen it by the name she had chosen. There was talk on the part of Margaret Henan of going to law at the time, but in the end she carried the child to Belfast and there had it christened Samuel.

And then nothing happened. The whole island was confuted. The boy grew and prospered. The schoolmaster never ceased averring that it was the brightest lad he had ever seen. Samuel had a splendid constitution, a tremendous grip on life. To everybody's amazement he escaped the usual run of childish afflictions. Measles, whooping-cough and mumps knew him not. He was armour-clad against germs, immune to all disease. Headaches and earaches were things unknown. "Never so much oz a boil or a pumple," as one of the old bodies told me, ever marred his healthy skin. He broke school records in scholarship and athletics, and whipped every boy of his size or years on Island McGill.

It was a triumph for Margaret Henan. This paragon was hers, and it bore the cherished name. With the one exception of her mother, friends and relatives drifted back and acknowledged that they had been mistaken; though there were old crones who still abided by their opinion and who shook their heads ominously over their cups of tea. The boy was too wonderful to last. There was no escaping the curse of the name his mother had wickedly laid upon him. The young generation joined Margaret Henan in laughing at them, but the old crones continued to shake their heads.

Other children followed. Margaret Henan's fifth was a boy, whom she called Jamie, and in rapid succession followed three girls, Alice, Sara, and Nora, the boy Timothy, and two more girls, Florence and Katie. Katie was the last and eleventh, and Margaret Henan, at thirty-five, ceased from her exertions. She had done well by Island McGill and the Queen. Nine healthy children were hers. All prospered. It seemed her ill-luck had shot its bolt with the deaths of her first two. Nine lived, and one of them was named Samuel.

Jamie elected to follow the sea, though it was not so much a matter of election as compulsion, for the eldest sons on Island McGill remained on the land, while all other sons went to the salt-ploughing. Timothy followed Jamie, and by the time the latter had got his first command, a steamer in the Bay trade out of Cardiff, Timothy was mate of a big sailing ship. Samuel, however, did not take kindly to the soil. The farmer's life had no attraction for him. His brothers went to sea, not out of desire, but because it was the only way for them to gain their bread; and he, who had no need to go, envied them when, returned from far voyages, they sat by the kitchen fire, and told their bold tales of the wonderlands beyond the sea-rim.

Samuel became a teacher, much to his father's disgust, and even took extra certificates, going to Belfast for his examinations. When the old master retired, Samuel took over his school. Secretly, however, he studied navigation, and it was Margaret's delight when he sat by the kitchen fire, and, despite their master's tickets, tangled up his brothers in the theoretics of their profession. Tom Henan alone was outraged when Samuel, school teacher, gentleman, and heir to the Henan farm, shipped to sea before the mast. Margaret had an abiding faith in her son's star, and whatever he did she was sure was for the best. Like everything else connected with his glorious personality, there had never been known so swift a rise as in the case of Samuel. Barely with two years' sea experience before the mast, he was taken from the forecastle and made a provisional second mate. This occurred in a fever port on the West Coast, and the committee of skippers that examined him agreed that he knew more of the science of navigation than they had remembered or forgotten. Two years later he sailed from Liverpool, mate of the Starry Grace, with both master's and extra-master's tickets in his possession. And then it happened — the thing the old crones had been shaking their heads over for years.

It was told me by Gavin McNab, bos'n of the Starry Grace at the time, himself an Island McGill man.

"Wull do I remember ut," he said. "We was runnin' our Eastun' down, an' makun' heavy weather of ut. Oz fine a sailor-mon oz ever walked was Samuel Henan. I remember the look of hum wull thot last marnun', a-watch-un' them bug seas curlun' up astern, an' a-watchun' the old girl an' seeun' how she took them — the skupper down below an' drunkun' for days. Ut was ot seven thot Henan brought her up on tull the wund, not darun' tull run longer on thot fearful sea. Ot eight, after havun' breakfast, he turns un, an' a half hour after up comes the skupper, bleary-eyed an' shaky an' holdun' on tull the companion. Ut was fair smokun', I om tellun' ye, an' there he stood, blunkun' an' noddun' an' talkun' tull humsel'. 'Keep off,' says he ot last tull the mon ot the wheel. 'My God!' says the second mate, standun' beside hum. The skupper never looks tull hum ot all, but keeps on mutterun" an' jabberun' tull humsel'. All of a suddent-like he straightens up an' throws hus head back, an' says: 'Put your wheel over, me mon — now domn ye! Are ye deef thot ye'll no be hearun' me?'

"Ut was a drunken mon's luck, for the Starry Grace wore off afore thot God-Almighty gale wuthout shuppun' a bucket o' watter, the second mate shoutun' orders an' the crew jumpun' like mod. An' wuth thot the skupper nods contented-like tull humself an' goes below after more whusky. Ut was plain murder o' the lives o' all of us, for ut was no the time for the buggest shup afloat tull be runnun'. Run? Never hov I seen the like! Ut was beyond all thunkun', an' me goun' tull sea, boy an' men, for forty year. I tell you ut was fair awesome.

"The face o' the second mate was white oz death, an' he stood ut alone for half an hour, when ut was too much for hum an' he went below an' called Samuel an' the third. Aye, a fine sailor-mon thot Samuel, but ut was too much for hum. He looked an' studied, and looked an' studied, but he could no see hus way. He durst na heave tull. She would ha' been sweeput o' all honds an' stucks an' everythung afore she could a-fetched up. There was naught tull do but keep on runnun'. An' uf ut worsened we were lost ony way, for soon or late that overtakun' sea was sure tull sweep us clear over poop an' all.

"Dud I say ut was a God-Almighty gale? Ut was worse nor thot. The devil himself must ha' hod a hond un the brewun' o' ut, ut was thot fearsome. I ha' looked on some sights, but I om no carun' tull look on the like o' thot again. No mon dared tull be un hus bunk. No, nor no mon on the decks. All honds of us stood on top the house an' held on an' watched. The three mates was on the poop, with two men ot the wheel, an' the only mon below was thot whusky-blighted captain snorun' drunk.

"An' then I see ut comun', a mile away, risun' above all the waves like an island un the sea — the buggest wave ever I looked upon. The three mates stood tulgether an' watched ut comun', a-prayun' like we thot she would no break un passun' us. But ut was no tull be. Ot the last, when she rose up like a mountain, curlun' above the stern an' blottun' out the sky, the mates scattered, the second an' third runnun' for the mizzen-shrouds an' climbun' up, but the first runnun' tull the wheel tull lend a hond. He was a brave men, thot Samuel Henan. He run straight un tull the face o' thot father o' all waves, no thunkun' on humself but thunkun' only o' the shup. The two men was lashed tull the wheel, but he would be ready tull hond un the case they was kult. An' then she took ut. We on the house could no see the poop for the thousand tons o' watter thot hod hut ut. Thot wave cleaned them out, took everythung along wuth ut — the two mates, climbun' up the mizzen-ruggun', Samuel Henan runnun' tull the wheel, the two men ot the wheel, aye, an' the wheel utself. We never saw aught o' them, for she broached tull what o' the wheel goun', an' two men o' us was drownded off the house, no tull mention the carpenter thot we pucked up ot the break o' the poop wuth every bone o' hus body broke tull he was like so much jelly."

And here enters the marvel of it, the miraculous wonder of that woman's heroic spirit. Margaret Henan was forty-seven when the news came home of the loss of Samuel; and it was not long after that the unbelievable rumour went around Island McGill. I say unbelievable. Island McGill would not believe. Doctor Hall pooh-pooh'd it. Everybody laughed at it as a good joke. They traced back the gossip to Sara Dack, servant to the Henans', and who alone lived with Margaret and her husband. But Sara Dack persisted in her assertion and was called a low-mouthed liar. One or two dared question Tom Henan himself, but beyond black looks and curses for their presumption they elicited nothing from him.

The rumour died down, and the island fell to discussing in all its ramifications the loss of the Grenoble in the China seas, with all her officers and half her crew born and married on Island McGill. But the rumour would not stay down. Sara Dack was louder in her assertions, the looks Tom Henan cast about him were blacker than ever, and Dr. Hall, after a visit to the Henan house, no longer pooh-pooh'd. Then Island McGill sat up, and there was a tremendous wagging of tongues. It was unnatural and ungodly. The like had never been heard. And when, as time passed, the truth of Sara Dack's utterances was manifest, the island folk decided, like the bos'n of the Starry Grace, that only the devil could have had a hand in so untoward a happening. And the infatuated woman, so Sara Dack reported, insisted that it would be a boy. "Eleven bairns ha' I borne," she said; "sux o' them lossies an' five o' them loddies. An' sunce there be balance un all thungs, so wull there be balance wuth me. Sux o' one an' half a dozen o' the other — there uz the balance, an' oz sure oz the sun rises un the marnun', thot sure wull ut be a boy."

And boy it was, and a prodigy. Dr. Hall raved about its unblemished perfection and massive strength, and wrote a brochure on it for the Dublin Medical Society as the most interesting case of the sort in his long career. When Sara Dack gave the babe's unbelievable weight, Island McGill refused to believe and once again called her liar. But when Doctor Hall attested that he had himself weighed it and seen it tip that very notch, Island McGill held its breath and accepted whatever report Sara Dack made of the infant's progress or appetite. And once again Margaret Henan carried a babe to Belfast and had it christened Samuel.

"Oz good oz gold ut was," said Sara Dack to me.

Sara, at the time I met her, was a buxom, phlegmatic spinster of sixty, equipped with an experience so tragic and unusual that though her tongue ran on for decades its output would still be of imperishable interest to her cronies.

"Oz good oz good," said Sara Dack. "Ut never fretted. Sut ut down un the sun by the hour an' never a sound ut would make oz long oz ut was no hungered! An' thot strong! The grup o' uts honds was like a mon's. I mind me, when ut was but hours old, ut grupped me so mighty thot I fetched a scream I was thot frightened. Ut was the punk o' health. Ut slept an' ate, an' grew. Ut never bothered. Never a night's sleep ut lost tull no one, nor ever a munut's, an' thot wuth cuttin' uts teeth an' all. An' Margaret would dandle ut on her knee an' ask was there ever so fine a loddie un the three Kungdoms.

"The way ut grew! Ut was un keepun' wuth the way ut ate. Ot a year ut was the size o' a bairn of two. Ut was slow tull walk an' talk. Exceptun' for gurgly noises un uts throat an' for creepun' on all fours, ut dudna monage much un the walkun' an' talkun' line. But thot was tull be expected from the way ut grew. Ut all went tull growun' strong an' healthy. An' even old Tom Henan cheered up ot the might of ut an' said was there ever the like o' ut un the three Kungdoms. Ut was Doctor Hall thot first suspicioned, I mind me well, though ut was luttle I dreamt what he was up tull ot the time. I seehum holdun' thungs' un fronto' luttle Sammy's eyes, an' a-makun' noises, loud an' soft, an' far an' near, un luttle Sammy's ears. An' then I see Doctor Hall go away, wrunklun' hus eyebrows an' shakun' hus head like the bairn was ailun'. But he was no ailun', oz I could swear tull, me a-seeun' hum eat an' grow. But Doctor Hall no said a word tull Margaret an' I was no for guessun' the why he was sore puzzled.

"I mind me when luttle Sammy first spoke. He was two years old an' the size of a child o five, though he could no monage the walkun' yet but went around on all fours, happy an' contented-like an' makun' no trouble oz long oz he was fed promptly, which was onusual often. I was hangun' the wash on the line ot the time when out he comes, on all fours, hus bug head waggun' tull an' fro an' blunkun' un the sun. An' then, suddent, he talked. I was thot took a-back I near died o' fright, an' fine I knew ut then, the shakun' o' Doctor Hall's head. Talked? Never a bairn on Island McGill talked so loud an' tull such purpose. There was no mustakun' ut. I stood there all tremblun' an' shakun'. Little Sammy was brayun'. I tell you, sir, he was brayun' like an ass — just like thot, — loud an' long an' cheerful tull ut seemed hus lungs ud crack.

"He was a eediot — a great, awful, monster eediot. Ut was after he talked thot Doctor Hall told Margaret, but she would no believe. Ut would all come right, she said. Ut was growun' too fast for aught else. Guv ut time, said she, an' we would see. But old Tom Henan knew, an' he never held up hus head again. He could no abide the thung, an' would no brung humsel' tull touch ut, though I om no denyun' he was fair fascinated by ut. Mony the time, I see hum watchun' of ut around a corner, lookun' ot ut tull hus eyes fair bulged wuth the horror; an' when ut brayed old Tom ud stuck hus fungers tull hus ears an' look thot miserable I could a-puttied hum.

"An' bray ut could! Ut was the only thung ut could do besides eat an' grow. Whenever ut was hungry ut brayed, an' there was no stoppun' ut save wuth food. An' always of a marnun', when first ut crawled tull the kutchen-door an' blunked out ot the sun, ut brayed. An' ut was brayun' that brought about uts end.

"I mind me well. Ut was three years old an' oz bug oz a led o' ten. Old Tom hed been goun' from bed tull worse, ploughun' up an' down the fields an' talkun' an' mutterun' tull humself. On the marnun' o' the day I mind me, he was suttun' on the bench outside the kutchen, a-futtun' the handle tull a puck-axe. Unbeknown, the monster eediot crawled tull the door an' brayed after hus fashion ot the sun. I see old Tom start up an' look. An' there was the monster eediot, waggun' uts bug head an' blunkun' an' brayun' like the great bug ass ut was. Ut was too much for Tom. Somethun' went wrong wuth hum suddent-like. He jumped tull hus feet an' fetched the puck-handle down on the monster eediot's head. An' he hut ut again an' again like ut was a mod dog an' hum afeard o' ut. An' he went straight tull the stable an' hung humsel' tull a rafter. An' I was no for stoppun' on after such-like, an' I went tull stay along wuth me suster thot was married tull John Martin an' comfortable-off."

I sat on the bench by the kitchen door and regarded Margaret Henan, while with her callous thumb she pressed down the live fire of her pipe and gazed out across the twilight-sombred fields. It was the very bench Tom Henan had sat upon that last sanguinary day of life. And Margaret sat in the doorway where the monster, blinking at the sun, had so often wagged its head and brayed. We had been talking for an hour, she with that slow certitude of eternity that so befitted her; and, for the life of me, I could lay no finger on the motives that ran through the tangled warp and woof of her. Was she a martyr to Truth? Did she have it in her to worship at so abstract a shrine? Had she conceived Abstract Truth to be the one high goal of human endeavour on that day of long ago when she named her first-born Samuel? Or was hers the stubborn obstinacy of the ox? the fixity of purpose of the balky horse? the stolidity of the self-willed peasant-mind? Was it whim or fancy? — the one streak of lunacy in what was otherwise an eminently rational mind? Or, reverting, was hers the spirit of a Bruno? Was she convinced of the intellectual rightness of the stand she had taken? Was hers a steady, enlightened opposition to superstition? or — and a subtler thought

— was she mastered by some vaster, profounder superstition, a fetish-worship of which the Alpha and the Omega was the cryptic Samuel?

“Wull ye be tellun’ me,” she said, “thot uf the second Samuel hod been named Larry thot he would no hov fell un the hot watter an’ drownded? Atween you an’ me, sir, an’ ye are untellugent-lookun’ tull the eye, would the name hov made ut onyways dufferent? Would the washun’ no be done thot day uf he hod been Larry or Michael? Would hot watter no be hot, an’ would hot watter no burn uf he hod hod ony other name but Samuel?”

I acknowledged the justice of her contention, and she went on.

“Do a wee but of a name change the plans o’ God? Do the world run by hut or muss, an’ be God a weak, shully-shallyun’ creature thot ud alter the fate an’ destiny o’ thungs because the worm Margaret Henan seen fut tull name her bairn Samuel? There be my son Jamie. He wull no sign a Rooshan-Funn un hus crew because o’ believun’ thot Rooshan-Funns do be monajun’ the wunds an’ hov the makun’ o’ bod weather. Wull you be thunkun’ so? Wull you be thunkun’ thot God thot makes the wunds tull blow wull bend Hus head from on high tull lussen tull the word o’ a greasy Rooshan-Funn un some dirty shup’s fo’c’sle?”

I said no, certainly not; but she was not to be set aside from pressing home the point of her argument.

“Then wull you be thunkun’ thot God thot directs the stars un their courses, an’ tull whose mighty foot the world uz but a footstool, wull you be thunkun’ thot He wull take a spite again’ Margaret Henan an’ send a bug wave off the Cape tull wash her son un tull eternity, all because she was for namun’ hum Samuel?”

“But why Samuel?” I asked.

“An’ thot I dinna know. I wantud ut so.”

“But why did you want it so?”

“An’ uz ut me thot would be answerun’ a such-like question? Be there ony mon luvun’ or dead thot can answer? Who can tell the why o’ like? My Jamie was fair daft on buttermilk, he would drunk ut tull, oz he said humself, hus back teeth was awash. But my Tumothy could no abide buttermilk. I like tull lussen tull the thunder growlun’ an’ roarun’, an’ rampajun’. My Katie could no abide the noise of ut, but must scream an’ flutter an’ go runnun’ for the mudmost o’ a feather-bed. Never yet hov I heard the answer tull the why o’ like, God alone hoz thot answer. You an’ me be mortal an’ we canna know. Enough for us tull know what we like an’ what we duslike. I like — thot uz the first word an' the last. An' behind thot like no men can go an' find the why o' ut. I like Samuel, an' I like ut well. Ut uz a sweet name, an' there be a rollun' wonder un the sound o' ut thot passes onderstandun'."

The twilight deepened, and in the silence I gazed upon that splendid dome of a forehead which time could not mar, at the width between the eyes, and at the eyes themselves — clear, out-looking, and wide-seeing. She rose to her feet with an air of dismissing me, saying —

"Ut wull be a dark walk home, an' there wull be more thon a sprunkle o' wet un the sky."

"Have you any regrets, Margaret Henan?" I asked, suddenly and without forethought.

She studied me a moment.

"Aye, thot I no ha' borne another son."

"And you would . . .?" I faltered.

"Aye, thot I would," she answered. "Ut would ha' been hus name."

I went down the dark road between the hawthorn hedges puzzling over the why of like, repeating Samuel to myself and aloud and listening to the rolling wonder in its sound that had charmed her soul and led her life in tragic places. Samuel! There was a rolling wonder in the sound. Aye, there was!

The Scorn of Women

Once Freda and Mrs. Eppingwell clashed.

Now Freda was a Greek girl and a dancer. At least she purported to be Greek; but this was doubted by many, for her classic face had over-much strength in it, and the tides of hell which rose in her eyes made at rare moments her ethnology the more dubious. To a few--men--this sight had been vouchsafed, and though long years may have passed, they have not forgotten, nor will they ever forget. She never talked of herself, so that it were well to let it go down that when in repose, expurgated, Greek she certainly was. Her furs were the most magnificent in all the country from Chilcoot to St. Michael's, and her name was common on the lips of men. But Mrs. Eppingwell was the wife of a captain; also a social constellation of the first magnitude, the path of her orbit marking the most select coterie in Dawson,--a coterie captioned by the profane as the "official clique." Sitka Charley had travelled trail with her once, when famine drew tight and a man's life was less than a cup of flour, and his judgment placed her above all women. Sitka Charley was an Indian; his criteria were primitive; but his word was flat, and his verdict a hall-mark in every camp under the circle.

These two women were man-conquering, man-subduing machines, each in her own way, and their ways were different. Mrs. Eppingwell ruled in her own house, and at the Barracks, where were younger sons galore, to say nothing of the chiefs of the police, the executive, and the judiciary. Freda ruled down in the town; but the men she ruled were the same who functioned socially at the Barracks or were fed tea and canned preserves at the hand of Mrs. Eppingwell in her hillside cabin of rough-hewn logs. Each knew the other existed; but their lives were apart as the Poles, and while they must have heard stray bits of news and were curious, they were never known to ask a question. And there would have been no trouble had not a free lance in the shape of the model-woman come into the land on the first ice, with a spanking dog-team and a cosmopolitan reputation. Loraine Lisznayi--alliterative, dramatic, and Hungarian--precipitated the strife, and because of her Mrs. Eppingwell left her hillside and invaded Freda's domain, and Freda likewise went up from the town to spread confusion and embarrassment at the Governor's ball.

All of which may be ancient history so far as the Klondike is concerned, but very few, even in Dawson, know the inner truth of the matter; nor beyond those few are there any fit to measure the wife of the captain or the Greek dancer. And that all are now permitted to understand, let honor be accorded Sitka Charley. From his lips fell the main facts in the screed herewith presented. It ill befits that Freda herself should have waxed confidential to a mere scribbler of words, or that Mrs. Eppingwell made mention of the things which happened. They may have spoken, but it is unlikely.

II

Floyd Vanderlip was a strong man, apparently. Hard work and hard grub had no terrors for him, as his early history in the country attested. In danger he was a lion, and when he held in check half a thousand starving men, as he once did, it was remarked that no cooler eye ever took the glint of sunshine on a rifle-sight. He had but one weakness, and even that, rising from out his strength, was of a negative sort. His parts were strong, but they lacked co-ordination. Now it happened that while his centre of amativeness was pronounced, it had lain mute and passive during the years he lived on moose and salmon and chased glowing Eldorados over chill divides. But when he finally blazed the corner-post and centre-stakes on one of the richest Klondike claims, it began to quicken; and when he took his place in society, a full-fledged Bonanza King, it awoke and took charge of him. He suddenly recollected a girl in the States, and it came to him quite forcibly, not only that she might be waiting for him, but that a wife was a very pleasant acquisition for a man who lived some several degrees north of 53. So he wrote an appropriate note, enclosed a letter of credit generous enough to cover all expenses, including trousseau and chaperon, and addressed it to one Flossie. Flossie? One could imagine the rest. However, after that he built a comfortable cabin on his claim, bought another in Dawson, and broke the news to his friends.

And just here is where the lack of co-ordination came into play. The waiting was tedious, and having been long denied, the amative element could not brook further delay. Flossie was coming; but Loraine Lisznayi was here. And not only was Loraine Lisznayi here, but her cosmopolitan reputation was somewhat the worse for wear, and she was not exactly so young as when she posed in the studios of artist queens and received at her door the cards of cardinals and princes. Also, her finances were unhealthy.

Having run the gamut in her time, she was now not averse to trying conclusions with a Bonanza King whose wealth was such that he could not guess it within six figures. Like a wise soldier casting about after years of service for a comfortable billet, she had come into the Northland to be married. So, one day, her eyes flashed up into Floyd Vanderlip's as he was buying table linen for Flossie in the P. C. Company's store, and the thing was settled out of hand.

When a man is free much may go unquestioned, which, should he be rash enough to cumber himself with domestic ties, society will instantly challenge. Thus it was with Floyd Vanderlip. Flossie was coming, and a low buzz went up when Loraine Lisznayi rode down the main street behind his wolf-dogs. She accompanied the lady reporter of the "Kansas City Star" when photographs were taken of his Bonanza properties, and watched the genesis of a six-column article. At that time they were dined royally in Flossie's cabin, on Flossie's table linen. Likewise there were comings and goings, and junketings, all perfectly proper, by the way, which caused the men to say sharp things and the women to be spiteful. Only Mrs. Eppingwell did not hear. The distant hum of wagging tongues rose faintly, but she was prone to believe good of people and to close her ears to evil; so she paid no heed.

Not so with Freda. She had no cause to love men, but, by some strange alchemy of her nature, her heart went out to women,--to women whom she had less cause to love. And her heart went out to Flossie, even then travelling the Long Trail and facing into the bitter North to meet a man who might not wait for her. A shrinking, clinging sort of a girl, Freda pictured her, with weak mouth and pretty pouting lips, blow-away sun-kissed hair, and eyes full of the merry shallows and the lesser joys of life. But she also pictured Flossie, face nose-strapped and frost-rimed, stumbling wearily behind the dogs. Wherefore she smiled, dancing one night, upon Floyd Vanderlip.

Few men are so constituted that they may receive the smile of Freda unmoved; nor among them can Floyd Vanderlip be accounted. The grace he had found with the model-woman had caused him to re-measure himself, and by the favor in which he now stood with the Greek dancer he felt himself doubly a man. There were unknown qualities and depths in him, evidently, which they perceived. He did not know exactly what those qualities and depths were, but he had a hazy idea that they were there somewhere, and of them was bred a great pride in himself. A man who could force two women such as these to look upon him a second time, was certainly a most remarkable man. Some day, when he had the time, he would sit down and analyze his strength; but now, just now, he would take what the gods had given him. And a thin little thought began to lift itself, and he fell to wondering whatever under the sun he had seen in Flossie, and to regret exceedingly that he had sent for her. Of course, Freda was out of the running. His dumps were the richest on Bonanza Creek, and they were many, while he was a man of responsibility and position. But Loraine Lisznayi--she was just the woman. Her life had been large; she could do the honors of his establishment and give tone to his dollars.

But Freda smiled, and continued to smile, till he came to spend much time with her. When she, too, rode down the street behind his wolf-dogs, the model-woman found food for thought, and the next time they were together dazzled him with her princes and cardinals and personal little anecdotes of courts and kings. She also showed him dainty missives, superscribed, “My dear Loraine,” and ended “Most affectionately yours,” and signed by the given name of a real live queen on a throne. And he marvelled in his heart that the great woman should deign to waste so much as a moment upon him. But she played him cleverly, making flattering contrasts and comparisons between him and the noble phantoms she drew mainly from her fancy, till he went away dizzy with self-delight and sorrowing for the world which had been denied him so long. Freda was a more masterful woman. If she flattered, no one knew it. Should she stoop, the stoop were unobserved. If a man felt she thought well of him, so subtly was the feeling conveyed that he could not for the life of him say why or how. So she tightened her grip upon Floyd Vanderlip and rode daily behind his dogs.

And just here is where the mistake occurred. The buzz rose loudly and more definitely, coupled now with the name of the dancer, and Mrs. Eppingwell heard. She, too, thought of Flossie lifting her moccasined feet through the endless hours, and Floyd Vanderlip was invited up the hillside to tea, and invited often. This quite took his breath away, and he became drunken with appreciation of himself. Never was man so maltreated. His soul had become a thing for which three women struggled, while a fourth was on the way to claim it. And three such women!

But Mrs. Eppingwell and the mistake she made. She spoke of the affair, tentatively, to Sitka Charley, who had sold dogs to the Greek girl. But no names were mentioned. The nearest approach to it was when Mrs. Eppingwell said, “This--er--horrid woman,” and Sitka Charley, with the model-woman strong in his thoughts, had echoed, “--er--horrid woman.” And he agreed with her, that it was a wicked thing for a woman to come between a man and the girl he was to marry. “A mere girl, Charley,” she said, “I am sure she is. And she is coming into a strange country without a friend when she gets here. We must do something.” Sitka Charley promised his help, and went away thinking what a wicked woman this Loraine Lisznayi must be, also what noble women Mrs. Eppingwell and Freda were to interest themselves in the welfare of the unknown Flossie.

Now Mrs. Eppingwell was open as the day. To Sitka Charley, who took her once past the Hills of Silence, belongs the glory of having memorialized her clear-searching eyes, her clear-ringing voice, and her utter downright frankness. Her lips had a way of stiffening to command, and she was used to coming straight to the point. Having taken Floyd Vanderlip’s measurement, she did not dare this with him; but she was not afraid to go down into the town to Freda. And down she went, in the bright light of day, to the house of the dancer. She was above silly tongues, as was her husband, the captain. She wished to see this woman and to speak with her, nor was she aware of any reason why she should not. So she stood in the snow at the Greek girl’s door, with the frost at sixty below, and parleyed with the waiting-maid for a full five minutes. She had also the pleasure of being turned away from that door, and of going back up the hill, wroth at heart for the indignity which had been put upon her. “Who was this woman that she should refuse to see her?” she asked herself. One would think it the other way around, and she herself but a dancing girl denied at the door of the wife of a captain. As it was, she knew, had Freda come up the hill to her,--no matter what the errand,--she would have made her welcome at her fire, and they would have sat there as two women, and talked, merely as two women. She had overstepped convention and lowered herself, but she had thought it different with the women down in the town. And she was ashamed that she had laid herself open to such dishonor, and her thoughts of Freda were unkind.

Not that Freda deserved this. Mrs. Eppingwell had descended to meet her who was without caste, while she, strong in the traditions of her own earlier status, had not permitted it. She could worship such a woman, and she would have asked no greater joy than to have had her into the cabin and sat with her, just sat with her, for an hour. But her respect for Mrs. Eppingwell, and her respect for herself, who was beyond respect, had prevented her doing that which she most desired. Though not quite recovered from the recent visit of Mrs. McFee, the wife of the minister, who had descended upon her in a whirlwind of exhortation and brimstone, she could not imagine what had prompted the present visit. She was not aware of any particular wrong she had done, and surely this woman who waited at the door was not concerned with the welfare of her soul. Why had she come? For all the curiosity she could not help but feel, she steeled herself in the pride of those who are without pride, and trembled in the inner room like a maid on the first caress of a lover. If Mrs. Eppingwell suffered going up the hill, she too suffered, lying face downward on the bed, dry-eyed, dry-mouthed, dumb.

Mrs. Eppingwell's knowledge of human nature was great. She aimed at universality. She had found it easy to step from the civilized and contemplate things from the barbaric aspect. She could comprehend certain primal and analogous characteristics in a hungry wolf-dog or a starving man, and predicate lines of action to be pursued by either under like conditions. To her, a woman was a woman, whether garbed in purple or the rags of the gutter; Freda was a woman. She would not have been surprised had she been taken into the dancer's cabin and encountered on common ground; nor surprised had she been taken in and flaunted in prideless arrogance. But to be treated as she had been treated, was unexpected and disappointing. Ergo, she had not caught Freda's point of view. And this was good. There are some points of view which cannot be gained save through much travail and personal crucifixion, and it were well for the world that its Mrs. Eppingwells should, in certain ways, fall short of universality. One cannot understand defilement without laying hands to pitch, which is very sticky, while there be plenty willing to undertake the experiment. All of which is of small concern, beyond the fact that it gave Mrs. Eppingwell ground for grievance, and bred for her a greater love in the Greek girl's heart.

III

And in this way things went along for a month,--Mrs. Eppingwell striving to withhold the man from the Greek dancer's blandishments against the time of Flossie's coming; Flossie lessening the miles each day on the dreary trail; Freda pitting her strength against the model-woman; the model-woman straining every nerve to land the prize; and the man moving through it all like a flying shuttle, very proud of himself, whom he believed to be a second Don Juan.

It was nobody's fault except the man's that Loraine Lisznayi at last landed him. The way of a man with a maid may be too wonderful to know, but the way of a woman with a man passeth all conception; whence the prophet were indeed unwise who would dare forecast Floyd Vanderlip's course twenty-four hours in advance. Perhaps the model-woman's attraction lay in that to the eye she was a handsome animal; perhaps she fascinated him with her old-world talk of palaces and princes; leastwise she dazzled him whose life had been worked out in uncultured roughness, and he at last agreed to her suggestion of a run down the river and a marriage at Forty Mile. In token of his intention he bought dogs from Sitka Charley,--more than one sled is necessary when a woman like Loraine Lisznayi takes to the trail, and then went up the creek to give orders for the superintendence of his Bonanza mines during his absence.

He had given it out, rather vaguely, that he needed the animals for sledding lumber from the mill to his sluices, and right here is where Sitka Charley demonstrated his fitness. He agreed to furnish dogs on a given date, but no sooner had Floyd Vanderlip turned his toes up-creek, than Charley hied himself away in perturbation to Loraine Lisznayi. Did she know where Mr. Vanderlip had gone? He had agreed to supply that gentleman with a big string of dogs by a certain time; but that shameless one, the German trader Meyers, had been buying up the brutes and skimped the market. It was very necessary he should see Mr. Vanderlip, because of the shameless one he would be all of a week behindhand in filling the contract. She did know where he had gone? Up-creek? Good! He would strike out after him at once and inform him of the unhappy delay. Did he understand her to say that Mr. Vanderlip needed the dogs on Friday night? that he must have them by that time? It was too bad, but it was the fault of the shameless one who had bid up the prices. They had jumped fifty dollars per head, and should he buy on the rising market he would lose by the contract. He wondered if Mr. Vanderlip would be willing to meet the advance. She knew he would? Being Mr. Vanderlip's friend, she would even meet the difference herself?

And he was to say nothing about it? She was kind to so look to his interests. Friday night, did she say? Good! The dogs would be on hand.

An hour later, Freda knew the elopement was to be pulled off on Friday night; also, that Floyd Vanderlip had gone up-creek, and her hands were tied. On Friday morning, Devereaux, the official courier, bearing despatches from the Governor, arrived over the ice. Besides the despatches, he brought news of Flossie. He had passed her camp at Sixty Mile; humans and dogs were in good condition; and she would doubtless be in on the morrow. Mrs. Eppingwell experienced a great relief on hearing this; Floyd Vanderlip was safe up-creek, and ere the Greek girl could again lay hands upon him, his bride would be on the ground. But that afternoon her big St. Bernard, valiantly defending her front stoop, was downed by a foraging party of trail-starved Malemutes. He was buried beneath the hirsute mass for about thirty seconds, when rescued by a couple of axes and as many stout men. Had he remained down two minutes, the chances were large that he would have been roughly apportioned and carried away in the respective bellies of the attacking party; but as it was, it was a mere case of neat and expeditious mangling. Sitka Charley came to repair the damages, especially a right fore-paw which had inadvertently been left a fraction of a second too long in some other dog's mouth. As he put on his mittens to go, the talk turned upon Flossie and in natural sequence passed on to the--"er horrid woman." Sitka Charley remarked incidentally that she intended jumping out down river that night with Floyd Vanderlip, and further ventured the information that accidents were very likely at that time of year.

So Mrs. Eppingwell's thoughts of Freda were unkinder than ever. She wrote a note, addressed it to the man in question, and intrusted it to a messenger who lay in wait at the mouth of Bonanza Creek. Another man, bearing a note from Freda, also waited at that strategic point. So it happened that Floyd Vanderlip, riding his sled merrily down with the last daylight, received the notes together. He tore Freda's across. No, he would not go to see her. There were greater things afoot that night. Besides, she was out of the running. But Mrs. Eppingwell! He would observe her last wish,--or rather, the last wish it would be possible for him to observe,--and meet her at the Governor's ball to hear what she had to say. From the tone of the writing it was evidently important; perhaps--He smiled fondly, but failed to shape the thought. Confound it all, what a lucky fellow he was with the women any way! Scattering her letter to the frost, he mushed the dogs into a swinging lope and headed for his cabin. It was to be a masquerade, and he had to dig up the costume used at the Opera House a couple of months before. Also, he had to shave and to eat. Thus it was that he, alone of all interested, was unaware of Flossie's proximity.

"Have them down to the water-hole off the hospital, at midnight, sharp. Don't fail me," he said to Sitka Charley, who dropped in with the advice that only one dog was lacking to fill the bill, and that that one would be forthcoming in an hour or so. "Here's the sack. There's the scales. Weigh out your own dust and don't bother me. I've got to get ready for the ball."

Sitka Charley weighed out his pay and departed, carrying with him a letter to Loraine Lisznayi, the contents of which he correctly imagined to refer to a meeting at the water-hole of the hospital, at midnight, sharp.

IV

Twice Freda sent messengers up to the Barracks, where the dance was in full swing, and as often they came back without answers. Then she did what only Freda could do--put on her furs, masked her face, and went up herself to the Governor's ball. Now there happened to be a custom--not an original one by any means--to which the official clique had long since become addicted. It was a very wise custom, for it furnished protection to the womankind of the officials and gave greater selectness to their revels. Whenever a masquerade was given, a committee was chosen, the sole function of which was to stand by the door and peep beneath each and every mask. Most men did not clamor to be placed upon this committee, while the very ones who least desired the honor were the ones whose services were most required. The chaplain was not well enough acquainted with the faces and places of the townspeople to know whom to admit and whom to turn away. In like condition were the several other worthy gentlemen who would have asked nothing better than to so serve. To fill the coveted place, Mrs. McFee would have risked her chance of salvation, and did, one night, when a certain trio passed in under her guns and muddled things considerably before their identity was discovered. Thereafter only the fit were chosen, and very ungracefully did they respond.

On this particular night Prince was at the door. Pressure had been brought to bear, and he had not yet recovered from amaze at his having consented to undertake a task which bid fair to lose him half his friends, merely for the sake of pleasing the other half. Three or four of the men he had refused were men whom he had known on creek and trail,--good comrades, but not exactly eligible for so select an affair. He was canvassing the expediency of resigning the post there and then, when a woman tripped in under the light. Freda! He could swear it by the furs, did he not know that poise of head so well. The last one to expect in all the world. He had given her better judgment than to thus venture the ignominy of refusal, or, if she passed, the scorn of women. He shook his head, without scrutiny; he knew her too well to be mistaken. But she pressed closer. She lifted the black silk ribbon and as quickly lowered it again. For one flashing, eternal second he looked upon her face. It was not for nothing, the saying which had arisen in the country, that Freda played with men as a child with bubbles. Not a word was spoken. Prince stepped aside, and a few moments later might have been seen resigning, with warm incoherence, the post to which he had been unfaithful.

A woman, flexible of form, slender, yet rhythmic of strength in every movement, now pausing with this group, now scanning that, urged a restless and devious course among the revellers. Men recognized the furs, and marvelled,--men who should have served upon the door committee; but they were not prone to speech. Not so with the women. They had better eyes for the lines of figure and tricks of carriage, and they knew this form to be one with which they were unfamiliar; likewise the furs. Mrs. McFee, emerging from the supper-room where all was in readiness, caught one flash of the blazing, questing eyes through the silken mask-slits, and received a start. She tried to recollect where she had seen the like, and a vivid picture was recalled of a certain proud and rebellious sinner whom she had once encountered on a fruitless errand for the Lord.

So it was that the good woman took the trail in hot and righteous wrath, a trail which brought her ultimately into the company of Mrs. Eppingwell and Floyd Vanderlip. Mrs. Eppingwell had just found the opportunity to talk with the man. She had determined, now that Flossie was so near at hand, to proceed directly to the point, and an incisive little ethical discourse was titillating on the end of her tongue, when the couple became three. She noted, and pleasurably, the faintly foreign accent of the “Beg pardon” with which the furred woman prefaced her immediate appropriation of Floyd Vanderlip; and she courteously bowed her permission for them to draw a little apart.

Then it was that Mrs. McFee’s righteous hand descended, and accompanying it in its descent was a black mask torn from a startled woman. A wonderful face and brilliant eyes were exposed to the quiet curiosity of those who looked that way, and they were everybody. Floyd Vanderlip was rather confused. The situation demanded instant action on the part of a man who was not beyond his depth, while he hardly knew where he was. He stared helplessly about him. Mrs. Eppingwell was perplexed. She could not comprehend. An explanation was forthcoming, somewhere, and Mrs. McFee was equal to it.

"Mrs. Eppingwell," and her Celtic voice rose shrilly, "it is with great pleasure I make you acquainted with Freda Moloof, Miss Freda Moloof, as I understand."

Freda involuntarily turned. With her own face bared, she felt as in a dream, naked, upon her turned the clothed features and gleaming eyes of the masked circle. It seemed, almost, as though a hungry wolf-pack girdled her, ready to drag her down. It might chance that some felt pity for her, she thought, and at the thought, hardened. She would by far prefer their scorn. Strong of heart was she, this woman, and though she had hunted the prey into the midst of the pack, Mrs. Eppingwell or no Mrs. Eppingwell, she could not forego the kill.

But here Mrs. Eppingwell did a strange thing. So this, at last, was Freda, she mused, the dancer and the destroyer of men; the woman from whose door she had been turned. And she, too, felt the imperious creature's nakedness as though it were her own. Perhaps it was this, her Saxon disinclination to meet a disadvantaged foe, perhaps, forsooth, that it might give her greater strength in the struggle for the man, and it might have been a little of both; but be that as it may, she did do this strange thing. When Mrs. McFee's thin voice, vibrant with malice, had raised, and Freda turned involuntarily, Mrs. Eppingwell also turned, removed her mask, and inclined her head in acknowledgment.

It was another flashing, eternal second, during which these two women regarded each other. The one, eyes blazing, meteoric; at bay, aggressive; suffering in advance and resenting in advance the scorn and ridicule and insult she had thrown herself open to; a beautiful, burning, bubbling lava cone of flesh and spirit. And the other, calm-eyed, cool-browed, serene; strong in her own integrity, with faith in herself, thoroughly at ease; dispassionate, imperturbable; a figure chiselled from some cold marble quarry. Whatever gulf there might exist, she recognized it not. No bridging, no descending; her attitude was that of perfect equality. She stood tranquilly on the ground of their common womanhood. And this maddened Freda. Not so, had she been of lesser breed; but her soul's plummet knew not the bottomless, and she could follow the other into the deeps of her deepest depths and read her aright. "Why do you not draw back your garment's hem?" she was fain to cry out, all in that flashing, dazzling second. "Spit upon me, revile me, and it were greater mercy than this!" She trembled. Her nostrils distended and quivered. But she drew herself in check, returned the inclination of head, and turned to the man.

"Come with me, Floyd," she said simply. "I want you now."

"What the--" he began explosively, and quit as suddenly, discreet enough to not round it off. Where the deuce had his wits gone, anyway? Was ever a man more foolishly placed? He gurgled deep down in his throat and high up in the roof of his mouth, heaved as one his big shoulders and his indecision, and glared appealingly at the two women.

"I beg pardon, just a moment, but may I speak first with Mr. Vanderlip?" Mrs. Eppingwell's voice, though flute-like and low, predicated will in its every cadence.

The man looked his gratitude. He, at least, was willing enough.

"I'm very sorry," from Freda. "There isn't time. He must come at once." The conventional phrases dropped easily from her lips, but she could not forbear to smile inwardly at their inadequacy and weakness. She would much rather have shrieked.

"But, Miss Moloof, who are you that you may possess yourself of Mr. Vanderlip and command his actions?"

Whereupon relief brightened his face, and the man beamed his approval. Trust Mrs. Eppingwell to drag him clear. Freda had met her match this time.

"I--I--" Freda hesitated, and then her feminine mind putting on its harness--"and who are you to ask this question?"

"I? I am Mrs. Eppingwell, and--"

"There!" the other broke in sharply. "You are the wife of a captain, who is therefore your husband. I am only a dancing girl. What do you with this man?"

"Such unprecedented behavior!" Mrs. McFee ruffled herself and cleared for action, but Mrs. Eppingwell shut her mouth with a look and developed a new attack.

"Since Miss Moloof appears to hold claims upon you, Mr. Vanderlip, and is in too great haste to grant me a few seconds of your time, I am forced to appeal directly to you. May I speak with you, alone, and now?"

Mrs. McFee's jaws brought together with a snap. That settled the disgraceful situation.

"Why, er--that is, certainly," the man stammered. "Of course, of course," growing more effusive at the prospect of deliverance.

Men are only gregarious vertebrates, domesticated and evolved, and the chances are large that it was because the Greek girl had in her time dealt with wilder masculine beasts of the human sort; for she turned upon the man with hell's tides aflood in her blazing eyes, much as a bespangled lady upon a lion which has suddenly imbibed the pernicious theory that he is a free agent. The beast in him fawned to the lash.

"That is to say, ah, afterward. To-morrow, Mrs. Eppingwell; yes, to-morrow. That is what I meant." He solaced himself with the fact, should he remain, that more embarrassment awaited. Also, he had an engagement which he must keep shortly, down by the water-hole off the hospital. Ye gods! he had never given Freda credit! Wasn't she magnificent!

"I'll thank you for my mask, Mrs. McFee."

That lady, for the nonce speechless, turned over the article in question.

"Good-night, Miss Moloof." Mrs. Eppingwell was royal even in defeat.

Freda reciprocated, though barely downing the impulse to clasp the other's knees and beg forgiveness,--no, not forgiveness, but something, she knew not what, but which she none the less greatly desired.

The man was for her taking his arm; but she had made her kill in the midst of the pack, and that which led kings to drag their vanquished at the chariot-tail, led her toward the door alone, Floyd Vanderlip close at heel and striving to re-establish his mental equilibrium.

V

It was bitter cold. As the trail wound, a quarter of a mile brought them to the dancer's cabin, by which time her moist breath had coated her face frostily, while his had massed his heavy mustache till conversation was painful. By the greenish light of the aurora borealis, the quicksilver showed itself frozen hard in the bulb of the thermometer which hung outside the door. A thousand dogs, in pitiful chorus, wailed their ancient wrongs and claimed mercy from the unheeding stars. Not a breath of air was moving. For them there was no shelter from the cold, no shrewd crawling to leeward in snug nooks. The frost was everywhere, and they lay in the open, ever and anon stretching their trail-stiffened muscles and lifting the long wolf-howl.

They did not talk at first, the man and the woman. While the maid helped Freda off with her wraps, Floyd Vanderlip replenished the fire; and by the time the maid had withdrawn to an inner room, his head over the stove, he was busily thawing out his burdened upper lip. After that he rolled a cigarette and watched her lazily through the fragrant eddies. She stole a glance at the clock. It lacked half an hour of midnight. How was she to hold him? Was he angry for that which she had done? What was his mood? What mood of hers could meet his best? Not that she doubted herself. No, no. Hold him she could, if need be at pistol point, till Sitka Charley's work was done, and Devereaux's too.

There were many ways, and with her knowledge of this her contempt for the man increased. As she leaned her head on her hand, a fleeting vision of her own girlhood, with its mournful climacteric and tragic ebb, was vouchsafed her, and for the moment she was minded to read him a lesson from it. God! it must be less than human brute who could not be held by such a tale, told as she could tell it, but--bah! He was not worth it, nor worth the pain to her. The candle was positioned just right, and even as she thought of these things sacredly shameful to her, he was pleasuring in the transparent pinkiness of her ear. She noted his eye, took the cue, and turned her head till the clean profile of the face was presented. Not the least was that profile among her virtues. She could not help the lines upon which she had been builded, and they were very good; but she had long since learned those lines, and though little they needed, was not above advantaging them to the best of her ability. The candle began to flicker. She could not do anything ungracefully, but that did not prevent her improving upon nature a bit, when she reached forth and deftly snuffed the red wick from the midst of the yellow flame. Again she rested head on hand, this time regarding the man thoughtfully, and any man is pleased when thus regarded by a pretty woman.

She was in little haste to begin. If dalliance were to his liking, it was to hers. To him it was very comfortable, soothing his lungs with nicotine and gazing upon her. It was snug and warm here, while down by the water-hole began a trail which he would soon be hitting through the chilly hours. He felt he ought to be angry with Freda for the scene she had created, but somehow he didn't feel a bit wrathful. Like as not there wouldn't have been any scene if it hadn't been for that McFee woman. If he were the Governor, he would put a poll tax of a hundred ounces a quarter upon her and her kind and all gospel sharks and sky pilots. And certainly Freda had behaved very ladylike, held her own with Mrs. Eppingwell besides. Never gave the girl credit for the grit. He looked lingeringly over her, coming back now and again to the eyes, behind the deep earnestness of which he could not guess lay concealed a deeper sneer. And, Jove, wasn't she well put up! Wonder why she looked at him so? Did she want to marry him, too? Like as not; but she wasn't the only one. Her looks were in her favor, weren't they? And young--younger than Loraine Lisznayi. She couldn't be more than twenty-three or four, twenty-five at most. And she'd never get stout. Anybody could guess that the first time. He couldn't say it of Loraine, though. She certainly had put on flesh since the day she served as model. Huh! once he got her on trail he'd take it off. Put her on the snowshoes to break ahead of the dogs. Never knew it to fail, yet. But his thought leaped ahead to the palace under the lazy Mediterranean sky--and how would it be with Loraine then? No frost, no trail, no famine now and again to cheer the monotony, and she getting older and piling it on with every sunrise. While this girl Freda--he sighed his unconscious regret that he had missed being born under the flag of the Turk, and came back to Alaska.

"Well?" Both hands of the clock pointed perpendicularly to midnight, and it was high time he was getting down to the water-hole.

"Oh!" Freda started, and she did it prettily, delighting him as his fellows have ever been delighted by their womankind. When a man is made to believe that a woman, looking upon him thoughtfully, has lost herself in meditation over him, that man needs be an extremely cold-blooded individual in order to trim his sheets, set a lookout, and steer clear.

"I was just wondering what you wanted to see me about," he explained, drawing his chair up to hers by the table.

"Floyd," she looked him steadily in the eyes, "I am tired of the whole business. I want to go away. I can't live it out here till the river breaks. If I try, I'll die. I am sure of it. I want to quit it all and go away, and I want to do it at once."

She laid her hand in mute appeal upon the back of his, which turned over and became a prison. Another one, he thought, just throwing herself at him. Guess it wouldn't hurt Loraine to cool her feet by the water-hole a little longer.

"Well?" This time from Freda, but softly and anxiously.

“I don’t know what to say,” he hastened to answer, adding to himself that it was coming along quicker than he had expected. “Nothing I’d like better, Freda. You know that well enough.” He pressed her hand, palm to palm. She nodded. Could she wonder that she despised the breed?

“But you see, I--I’m engaged. Of course you know that. And the girl’s coming into the country to marry me. Don’t know what was up with me when I asked her, but it was a long while back, and I was all-fired young--“

“I want to go away, out of the land, anywhere,” she went on, disregarding the obstacle he had reared up and apologized for. “I have been running over the men I know and reached the conclusion that--that--“

“I was the likeliest of the lot?”

She smiled her gratitude for his having saved her the embarrassment of confession. He drew her head against his shoulder with the free hand, and somehow the scent of her hair got into his nostrils. Then he discovered that a common pulse throbbed, throbbed, throbbed, where their palms were in contact. This phenomenon is easily comprehensible from a physiological standpoint, but to the man who makes the discovery for the first time, it is a most wonderful thing. Floyd Vanderlip had caressed more shovel-handles than women’s hands in his time, so this was an experience quite new and delightfully strange. And when Freda turned her head against his shoulder, her hair brushing his cheek till his eyes met hers, full and at close range, luminously soft, ay, and tender--why, whose fault was it that he lost his grip utterly? False to Flossie, why not to Loraine? Even if the women did keep bothering him, that was no reason he should make up his mind in a hurry. Why, he had slathers of money, and Freda was just the girl to grace it. A wife she’d make him for other men to envy. But go slow. He must be cautious.

“You don’t happen to care for palaces, do you?” he asked.

She shook her head.

“Well, I had a hankering after them myself, till I got to thinking, a while back, and I’ve about sized it up that one’d get fat living in palaces, and soft and lazy.”

“Yes, it’s nice for a time, but you soon grow tired of it, I imagine,” she hastened to reassure him. “The world is good, but life should be many-sided. Rough and knock about for a while, and then rest up somewhere. Off to the South Seas on a yacht, then a nibble of Paris; a winter in South America and a summer in Norway; a few months in England--“

"Good society?"

"Most certainly--the best; and then, heigho! for the dogs and sleds and the Hudson Bay Country. Change, you know. A strong man like you, full of vitality and go, could not possibly stand a palace for a year. It is all very well for effeminate men, but you weren't made for such a life. You are masculine, intensely masculine."

"Think so?"

"It does not require thinking. I know. Have you ever noticed that it was easy to make women care for you?"

His dubious innocence was superb.

"It is very easy. And why? Because you are masculine. You strike the deepest chords of a woman's heart. You are something to cling to,--big-muscled, strong, and brave. In short, because you are a man."

She shot a glance at the clock. It was half after the hour. She had given a margin of thirty minutes to Sitka Charley; and it did not matter, now, when Devereaux arrived. Her work was done. She lifted her head, laughed her genuine mirth, slipped her hand clear, and rising to her feet called the maid.

"Alice, help Mr. Vanderlip on with his parka. His mittens are on the sill by the stove."

The man could not understand.

"Let me thank you for your kindness, Floyd. Your time was invaluable to me, and it was indeed good of you. The turning to the left, as you leave the cabin, leads the quickest to the water-hole. Good-night. I am going to bed."

Floyd Vanderlip employed strong words to express his perplexity and disappointment. Alice did not like to hear men swear, so dropped his parka on the floor and tossed his mittens on top of it. Then he made a break for Freda, and she ruined her retreat to the inner room by tripping over the parka. He brought her up standing with a rude grip on the wrist. But she only laughed. She was not afraid of men. Had they not wrought their worst with her, and did she not still endure?

"Don't be rough," she said finally. "On second thought," here she looked at his detaining hand, "I've decided not to go to bed yet a while. Do sit down and be comfortable instead of ridiculous. Any questions?"

"Yes, my lady, and reckoning, too." He still kept his hold. "What do you know about the water-hole? What did you mean by--no, never mind. One question at a time."

“Oh, nothing much. Sitka Charley had an appointment there with somebody you may know, and not being anxious for a man of your known charm to be present, fell back upon me to kindly help him. That’s all. They’re off now, and a good half hour ago.”

“Where? Down river and without me? And he an Indian!”

“There’s no accounting for taste, you know, especially in a woman.”

“But how do I stand in this deal? I’ve lost four thousand dollars’ worth of dogs and a tidy bit of a woman, and nothing to show for it. Except you,” he added as an afterthought, “and cheap you are at the price.”

Freda shrugged her shoulders.

“You might as well get ready. I’m going out to borrow a couple of teams of dogs, and we’ll start in as many hours.”

“I am very sorry, but I’m going to bed.”

“You’ll pack if you know what’s good for you. Go to bed, or not, when I get my dogs outside, so help me, onto the sled you go. Mebbe you fooled with me, but I’ll just see your bluff and take you in earnest. Hear me?”

He closed on her wrist till it hurt, but on her lips a smile was growing, and she seemed to listen intently to some outside sound. There was a jingle of dog bells, and a man’s voice crying “Haw!” as a sled took the turning and drew up at the cabin.

“Now will you let me go to bed?”

As Freda spoke she threw open the door. Into the warm room rushed the frost, and on the threshold, garbed in trail-worn furs, knee-deep in the swirling vapor, against a background of flaming borealis, a woman hesitated. She removed her nose-trap and stood blinking blindly in the white candlelight. Floyd Vanderlip stumbled forward.

“Floyd!” she cried, relieved and glad, and met him with a tired bound.

What could he but kiss the armful of furs? And a pretty armful it was, nestling against him wearily, but happy.

“It was good of you,” spoke the armful, “to send Mr. Devereaux with fresh dogs after me, else I would not have been in till to-morrow.”

The man looked blankly across at Freda, then the light breaking in upon him, “And wasn’t it good of Devereaux to go?”

“Couldn’t wait a bit longer, could you, dear?” Flossie snuggled closer.

“Well, I was getting sort of impatient,” he confessed glibly, at the same time drawing her up till her feet left the floor, and getting outside the door.

That same night an inexplicable thing happened to the Reverend James Brown, missionary, who lived among the natives several miles down the Yukon and saw to it that the trails they trod led to the white man’s paradise. He was roused from his sleep by a strange Indian, who gave into his charge not only the soul but the body of a woman, and having done this drove quickly away. This woman was heavy, and handsome, and angry, and in her wrath unclean words fell from her mouth. This shocked the worthy man, but he was yet young and her presence would have been pernicious (in the simple eyes of his flock), had she not struck out on foot for Dawson with the first gray of dawn.

The shock to Dawson came many days later, when the summer had come and the population honored a certain royal lady at Windsor by lining the Yukon’s bank and watching Sitka Charley rise up with flashing paddle and drive the first canoe across the line. On this day of the races, Mrs. Eppingwell, who had learned and unlearned numerous things, saw Freda for the first time since the night of the ball. “Publicly, mind you,” as Mrs. McFee expressed it, “without regard or respect for the morals of the community,” she went up to the dancer and held out her hand. At first, it is remembered by those who saw, the girl shrank back, then words passed between the two, and Freda, great Freda, broke down and wept on the shoulder of the captain’s wife. It was not given to Dawson to know why Mrs. Eppingwell should crave forgiveness of a Greek dancing girl, but she did it publicly, and it was unseemly.

It were well not to forget Mrs. McFee. She took a cabin passage on the first steamer going out. She also took with her a theory which she had achieved in the silent watches of the long dark nights; and it is her conviction that the Northland is unregenerate because it is so cold there. Fear of hell-fire cannot be bred in an ice-box. This may appear dogmatic, but it is Mrs. McFee’s theory.

The Sea Farmer

"That wull be the doctor's launch," said Captain MacElrath.

The pilot grunted, while the skipper swept on with his glass from the launch to the strip of beach and to Kingston beyond, and then slowly across the entrance to Howth Head on the northern side.

"The tide's right, and we'll have you docked in two hours," the pilot vouchsafed, with an effort at cheeriness. "Ring's End Basin, is it?"

This time the skipper grunted.

"A dirty Dublin day."

Again the skipper grunted. He was weary with the night of wind in the Irish Channel behind him, the unbroken hours of which he had spent on the bridge. And he was weary with all the voyage behind him — two years and four months between home port and home port, eight hundred and fifty days by his log.

"Proper wunter weather," he answered, after a silence. "The town is undistinct. Ut wull be rainun' guid an' hearty for the day."

Captain MacElrath was a small man, just comfortably able to peep over the canvas dodger of the bridge. The pilot and third officer loomed above him, as did the man at the wheel, a bulky German, deserted from a warship, whom he had signed on in Rangoon. But his lack of inches made Captain MacElrath a no less able man. At least so the Company reckoned, and so would he have reckoned could he have had access to the carefully and minutely compiled record of him filed away in the office archives. But the Company had never given him a hint of its faith in him. It was not the way of the Company, for the Company went on the principle of never allowing an employee to think himself indispensable or even exceedingly useful; wherefore, while quick to censure, it never praised. What was Captain MacElrath, anyway, save a skipper, one skipper of the eighty-odd skippers that commanded the Company's eighty-odd freighters on all the highways and byways of the sea?

Beneath them, on the main deck, two Chinese stokers were carrying breakfast for'ard across the rusty iron plates that told their own grim story of weight and wash of sea. A sailor was taking down the life-line that stretched from the forecastle, past the hatches and cargo-winches, to the bridge-deck ladder.

“A rough voyage,” suggested the pilot.

“Aye, she was fair smokin’ ot times, but not thot I minded thot so much as the lossin’ of time. I hate like onythun’ tull loss time.”

So saying, Captain MacElrath turned and glanced aft, aloft and alow, and the pilot, following his gaze, saw the mute but convincing explanation of that loss of time. The smoke-stack, buff-coloured underneath, was white with salt, while the whistle-pipe glittered crystalline in the random sunlight that broke for the instant through a cloud-rift. The port lifeboat was missing, its iron davits, twisted and wrenched, testifying to the mightiness of the blow that had been struck the old Tryapsic. The starboard davits were also empty. The shattered wreck of the lifeboat they had held lay on the fiddley beside the smashed engine-room skylight, which was covered by a tarpaulin. Below, to star-board, on the bridge deck, the pilot saw the crushed mess-room door, roughly bulkheaded against the pounding seas. Abreast of it, on the smokestack guys, and being taken down by the bos’n and a sailor, hung the huge square of rope netting which had failed to break those seas of their force.

“Twice afore I mentioned thot door tull the owners,” said Captain MacElrath. “But they said ut would do. There was bug seas thot time. They was uncreditable bug. And thot buggest one dud the domage. Ut fair carried away the door an’ laid ut flat on the mess table an’ smashed out the chief’s room. He was a but sore about ut.”

“It must ’a’ been a big un,” the pilot remarked sympathetically.

“Aye, ut was thot. Thungs was lively for a but. Ut finished the mate. He was on the brudge wuth me, an’ I told hum tull take a look tull the wedges o’ number one hatch. She was takin’ watter freely an’ I was no sure o’ number one. I dudna like the look o’ ut, an’ I was fuggerin’ maybe tull heave to tull the marn, when she took ut over abaft the brudge. My word, she was a bug one. We got a but of ut ourselves on the brudge. I dudna miss the mate ot the first, what o’ routin’ out Chips an’ bulkheadun’ thot door an’ stretchun’ the tarpaulin over the sky-light. Then he was nowhere to be found. The men ot the wheel said as he seen hum goin’ down the lodder just afore she hut us. We looked for’ard, we looked tull hus room, aye looked tull the engine-room, an’ we looked along aft on the lower deck, and there he was, on both sides the cover to the steam-pipe runnun’ tull the after-wunches.”

The pilot ejaculated an oath of amazement and horror.

"Aye," the skipper went on wearily, "an' on both sides the steam-pipe uz well. I tell ye he was in two pieces, splut clean uz a herrin'. The sea must a-caught hum on the upper brudge deck, carried hum clean across the fiddley, an' banged hum head-on tull the pipe cover. It sheered through hum like so much butter, down atween the eyes, an' along the middle of hum, so that one leg an' arm was fast tull the one piece of hum, an' one leg an' arm fast tull the other piece of hum. I tull ye ut was fair grewsome. We putt hum together an' rolled hum in canvas uz we pulled hum out."

The pilot swore again.

"Oh, ut wasna onythun' tull greet about," Captain MacElrath assured him. "'Twas a guid ruddance. He was no a sailor, thot mate-fellow. He was only fut for a pugsty, an' a dom puir apology for thot same."

It is said that there are three kinds of Irish — Catholic, Protestant, and North-of-Ireland — and that the North-of-Ireland Irishman is a transplanted Scotchman. Captain MacElrath was a North-of-Ireland man, and, talking for much of the world like a Scotchman, nothing aroused his ire quicker than being mistaken for a Scotchman. Irish he stoutly was, and Irish he stoutly abided, though it was with a faint lip-lift of scorn that he mentioned mere South-of-Ireland men, or even Orange-men. Himself he was Presbyterian, while in his own community five men were all that ever mustered at a meeting in the Orange Men's Hall. His community was the Island McGill, where seven thousand of his kind lived in such amity and sobriety that in the whole island there was but one policeman and never a public-house at all.

Captain MacElrath did not like the sea, and had never liked it. He wrung his livelihood from it, and that was all the sea was, the place where he worked, as the mill, the shop, and the counting-house were the places where other men worked. Romance never sang to him her siren song, and Adventure had never shouted in his sluggish blood. He lacked imagination. The wonders of the deep were without significance to him. Tornadoes, hurricanes, waterspouts, and tidal waves were so many obstacles to the way of a ship on the sea and of a master on the bridge — they were that to him, and nothing more. He had seen, and yet not seen, the many marvels and wonders of far lands. Under his eyelids burned the brazen glories of the tropic seas, or ached the bitter gales of the North Atlantic or far South Pacific; but his memory of them was of mess-room doors stove in, of decks awash and hatches threatened, of undue coal consumption, of long passages, and of fresh paint-work spoiled by unexpected squalls of rain.

"I know my buzz'ness," was the way he often put it, and beyond his business was all that he did not know, all that he had seen with the mortal eyes of him and yet that he never dreamed existed. That he knew his business his owners were convinced, or at forty he would not have held command of the Tryapsic, three thousand tons net register, with a cargo capacity of nine thousand tons and valued at fifty-thousand pounds.

He had taken up seafaring through no love of it, but because it had been his destiny, because he had been the second son of his father instead of the first. Island McGill was only so large, and the land could support but a certain definite proportion of those that dwelt upon it. The balance, and a large balance it was, was driven to the sea to seek its bread. It had been so for generations. The eldest sons took the farms from their fathers; to the other sons remained the sea and its salt-ploughing. So it was that Donald MacElrath, farmer's son and farm-boy himself, had shifted from the soil he loved to the sea he hated and which it was his destiny to farm. And farmed it he had, for twenty years, shrewd, cool-headed, sober, industrious, and thrifty, rising from ship's boy and forecastle hand to mate and master of sailing-ships and thence into steam, second officer, first, and master, from small command to larger, and at last to the bridge of the old Tryapsic — old, to be sure, but worth her fifty thousand pounds and still able to bear up in all seas, and weather her nine thousand tons of freight.

From the bridge of the Tryapsic, the high place he had gained in the competition of men, he stared at Dublin harbour opening out, at the town obscured by the dark sky of the dreary wind-driven day, and at the tangled tracery of spars and rigging of the harbour shipping. Back from twice around the world he was, and from interminable junketings up and down on far stretches, home-coming to the wife he had not seen in eight-and-twenty months, and to the child he had never seen and that was already walking and talking. He saw the watch below of stokers and trimmers bobbing out of the forecastle doors like rabbits from a warren and making their way aft over the rusty deck to the mustering of the port doctor. They were Chinese, with expressionless, Sphinx-like faces, and they walked in peculiar shambling fashion, dragging their feet as if the clumsy brogans were too heavy for their lean shanks.

He saw them and he did not see them, as he passed his hand beneath his visored cap and scratched reflectively his mop of sandy hair. For the scene before him was but the background in his brain for the vision of peace that was his — a vision that was his often during long nights on the bridge when the old Tryapsic wallowed on the vexed ocean floor, her decks awash, her rigging thrumming in the gale gusts or snow squalls or driving tropic rain. And the vision he saw was of farm and farm-house and straw-thatched outbuildings, of children playing in the sun, and the good wife at the door, of lowing kine, and clucking fowls, and the stamp of horses in the stable, of his father's farm next to him, with, beyond, the woodless, rolling land and the hedged fields, neat and orderly, extending to the crest of the smooth, soft hills. It was his vision and his dream, his Romance and Adventure, the goal of all his effort, the high reward for the salt-ploughing and the long, long furrows he ran up and down the whole world around in his farming of the sea.

In simple taste and homely inclination this much-travelled map was more simple and homely than the veriest yokel. Seventy-one years his father was, and had never slept a night out of his own bed in his own house on Island McGill. That was the life ideal, so Captain MacElrath considered, and he was prone to marvel that any man, not under compulsion, should leave a farm to go to sea. To this much-travelled man the whole world was as familiar as the village to the cobbler sitting in his shop. To Captain MacElrath the world was a village. In his mind's eye he saw its streets a thousand leagues long, aye, and longer; turnings that doubled earth's stormiest headlands or were the way to quiet inland ponds; cross-roads, taken one way, that led to flower-lands and summer seas, and that led the other way to bitter, ceaseless gales and the perilous bergs of the great west wind drift. And the cities, bright with lights, were as shops on these long streets — shops where business was transacted, where bunkers were replenished, cargoes taken or shifted, and orders received from the owners in London town to go elsewhere and beyond, ever along the long sea-lanes, seeking new cargoes here, carrying new cargoes there, running freights wherever shillings and pence beckoned and underwriters did not forbid. But it was all a weariness to contemplate, and, save that he wrung from it his bread, it was without profit under the sun.

The last good-bye to the wife had been at Cardiff, twenty-eight months before, when he sailed for Valparaiso with coals — nine thousand tons and down to his marks. From Valparaiso he had gone to Australia, light, a matter of six thousand miles on end with a stormy passage and running short of bunker coal. Coals again to Oregon, seven thousand miles, and nigh as many more with general cargo for Japan and China. Thence to Java, loading sugar for Marseilles, and back along the Mediterranean to the Black Sea, and on to Baltimore, down to her marks with crome ore, buffeted by hurricanes, short again of bunker coal and calling at Bermuda to replenish. Then a time charter, Norfolk, Virginia, loading mysterious contraband coal and sailing for South Africa under orders of the mysterious German supercargo put on board by the charterers. On to Madagascar, steaming four knots by the supercargo's orders, and the suspicion forming that the Russian fleet might want the coal. Confusion and delays, long waits at sea, international complications, the whole world excited over the old Tryapsic and her cargo of contraband, and then on to Japan and the naval port of Sassebo. Back to Australia, another time charter and general merchandise picked up at Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, and carried on to Mauritius, Lourenço Marques, Durban, Algoa Bay, and Cape Town. To Ceylon for orders, and from Ceylon to Rangoon to load rice for Rio Janeiro. Thence to Buenos Aires and loading maize for the United Kingdom or the Continent, stopping at St. Vincent, to receive orders to proceed to Dublin. Two years and four months, eight hundred and fifty days by the log, steaming up and down the thousand-league-long sea-lanes and back again to Dublin town. And he was well aweary.

A little tug had laid hold of the Tryapsic, and with clang and clatter and shouted command, with engines half-ahead, slow-speed, or half-astern, the battered old sea-tramp was nudged and nosed and shouldered through the dock-gates into Ring's End Basin. Lines were flung ashore, fore and aft, and a 'midship spring got out. Already a small group of the happy shore-staying folk had clustered on the dock.

"Ring off," Captain MacElrath commanded in his slow thick voice; and the third officer worked the lever of the engine-room telegraph.

"Gangway out!" called the second officer; and when this was accomplished, "That will do."

It was the last task of all, gangway out. "That will do" was the dismissal. The voyage was ended, and the crew shambled eagerly forward across the rusty decks to where their sea-bags were packed and ready for the shore. The taste of the land was strong in the men's mouths, and strong it was in the skipper's mouth as he muttered a gruff good day to the departing pilot, and himself went down to his cabin. Up the gangway were trooping the customs officers, the surveyor, the agent's clerk, and the stevedores. Quick work disposed of these and cleared his cabin, the agent waiting to take him to the office.

"Dud ye send word tull the wife?" had been his greeting to the clerk.

"Yes, a telegram, as soon as you were reported."

"She'll likely be comin' down on the marnin' train," the skipper had soliloquized, and gone inside to change his clothes and wash.

He took a last glance about the room and at two photographs on the wall, one of the wife the other of an infant — the child he had never seen. He stepped out into the cabin, with its panelled walls of cedar and maple, and with its long table that seated ten, and at which he had eaten by himself through all the weary time. No laughter and clatter and wordy argument of the mess-room had been his. He had eaten silently, almost morosely, his silence emulated by the noiseless Asiatic who had served him. It came to him suddenly, the overwhelming realization of the loneliness of those two years and more. All his vexations and anxieties had been his own. He had shared them with no one. His two young officers were too young and flighty, the mate too stupid. There was no consulting with them. One tenant had shared the cabin with him, that tenant his responsibility. They had dined and supped together, walked the bridge together, and together they had bedded.

"Och!" he muttered to that grim companion, "I'm quit of you, an' wull quit . . . for a wee."

Ashore he passed the last of the seamen with their bags, and, at the agent's, with the usual delays, put through his ship business. When asked out by them to drink he took milk and soda.

"I am no teetotaler," he explained; "but for the life o' me I canna bide beer or whusky."

In the early afternoon, when he finished paying off his crew, he hurried to the private office where he had been told his wife was waiting.

His eyes were for her first, though the temptation was great to have more than a hurried glimpse of the child in the chair beside her. He held her off from him after the long embrace, and looked into her face long and steadily, drinking in every feature of it and wondering that he could mark no changes of time. A warm man, his wife thought him, though had the opinion of his officers been asked it would have been: a harsh man and a bitter one.

"Wull, Annie, how is ut wi' ye?" he queried, and drew her to him again.

And again he held her away from him, this wife of ten years and of whom he knew so little. She was almost a stranger — more a stranger than his Chinese steward, and certainly far more a stranger than his own officers whom he had seen every day, day and day, for eight hundred and fifty days. Married ten years, and in that time he had been with her nine weeks — scarcely a honeymoon. Each time home had been a getting acquainted again with her. It was the fate of the men who went out to the salt-ploughing. Little they knew of their wives and less of their children. There was his chief engineer — old, near-sighted MacPherson — who told the story of returning home to be locked out of his house by his four-year kiddie that never had laid eyes on him before.

"An' thus 'ull be the loddie," the skipper said, reaching out a hesitant hand to the child's cheek.

But the boy drew away from him, sheltering against the mother's side.

"Och!" she cried, "and he doesna know his own father."

"Nor I hum. Heaven knows I could no a-picked hum out of a crowd, though he'll be havin' your nose I'm thunkun'."

"An' your own eyes, Donald. Look ut them. He's your own father, laddie. Kiss hum like the little mon ye are."

But the child drew closer to her, his expression of fear and distrust growing stronger, and when the father attempted to take him in his arms he threatened to cry.

The skipper straightened up, and to conceal the pang at his heart he drew out his watch and looked at it.

"Ut's time to go, Annie," he said. "Thot train 'ull be startun'."

He was silent on the train at first, divided between watching the wife with the child going to sleep in her arms and looking out of the window at the tilled fields and green unforested hills vague and indistinct in the driving drizzle that had set in. They had the compartment to themselves. When the boy slept she laid him out on the seat and wrapped him warmly. And when the health of relatives and friends had been inquired after, and the gossip of Island McGill narrated, along with the weather and the price of land and crops, there was little left to talk about save themselves, and Captain MacElrath took up the tale brought home for the good wife from all his world's-end wandering. But it was not a tale of marvels he told, nor of beautiful flower-lands nor mysterious Eastern cities.

"What like is Java?" she asked once.

"Full o' fever. Half the crew down wuth ut an' luttle work. Ut was quinine an' quinine the whole blessed time. Each marnun' 'twas quinine an' gin for all hands on an empty stomach. An' they who was no sick made ut out to be hovun' ut bad uz the rest."

Another time she asked about Newcastle.

"Coals an' coal-dust — thot's all. No a nice sutty. I lost two Chinks there, stokers the both of them. An' the owners paid a fine tull the Government of a hundred pounds each for them. 'We regret tull note,' they wrut me — I got the letter tull Oregon — 'We regret tull note the loss o' two Chinese members o' yer crew ot Newcastle, an' we recommend greater carefulness un the future.' Greater carefulness! And I could no a-been more careful. The Chinks hod forty-five pounds each comun' tull them in wages, an' I was no a-thunkun' they 'ud run.

"But thot's their way — 'we regret tull note,' 'we beg tull advise,' 'we recommend,' 'we canna understand' — an' the like o' thot. Domned cargo tank! An' they would thunk I could drive her like a Lucania, an' wi'out burnun' coals. There was thot propeller. I was after them a guid while for ut. The old one was iron, thuck on the edges, an' we couldna make our speed. An' the new one was bronze — nine hundred pounds ut cost, an' then wantun' their returns out o' ut, an' me wuth a bod passage an' lossin' time every day. 'We regret tull note your long passage from Voloparaiso tull Sydney wuth an average daily run o' only one hundred an' suxty-seven. We hod expected better results wuth the new propeller. You should a-made an average daily run o' two hundred and suxteen.'

"An' me on a wunter passage, blowin' a luvin' gale half the time, wuth hurricane force in atweenwhiles, an' hove to sux days, wuth engines stopped an' bunker coal runnun' short, an' me wuth a mate thot stupid he could no pass a shup's light ot night wi'out callun' me tull the brudge. I wrut an' told 'em so. An' then: 'Our nautical adviser suggests you kept too far south,' an' 'We are lookun' for better results from thot propeller.' Nautical adviser! — shore pilot! Ut was the regular latitude for a wunter passage from Voloparaiso tull Sydney.

"An' when I come un tull Auckland short o' coal, after lettun' her druft sux days wuth the fires out tull save the coal, an' wuth only twenty tons in my bunkers, I was thunkun' o' the lossin' o' time an' the expense, an' tull save the owners I took her un an' out wi'out pilotage. Pilotage was no compulsory. An' un Yokohama, who should I meet but Captun Robinson o' the Dyapsic. We got a-talkun' about ports an' places down Australia-way, an' first thing he says: 'Speakun' o' Auckland — of course, Captun, you was never un Auckland?' 'Yus,' I says, 'I was un there very recent.' 'Oh, ho,' he says, very angry-like, 'so you was the smart Aleck thot fetched me thot letter from the owners: "We note item of fufteen pounds for pilotage ot Auckland. A shup o' ours was un tull Auckland recently an' uncurred no such charge. We beg tull advise you thot we conseeder thus pilotage an onnecessary expense which should no be uncurred un the future.'"

"But dud they say a word tull me for the fufteen pounds I saved tull them? No a word. They send a letter tull Captun Robinson for no savun' them the fufteen pounds, an' tull me: 'We note item of two guineas doctor's fee at Auckland for crew. Please explain thus onusual expunditure.' Ut was two o' the Chinks. I was thunkun' they hod beri-beri, an' thot was the why o' sendun' for the doctor. I buried the two of them ot sea not a week after. But ut was: 'Please explain thus onusual expunditure,' an' tull Captun Robinson, 'We beg tull advise you thot we conseeder thus pilotage an onnecessary expense.'

"Dudna I cable them from Newcastle, tellun' them the old tank was thot foul she needed dry-dock? Seven months out o' drydock, an' the West Coast the quickest place for foulun' un the world. But freights was up, an' they hod a charter o' coals for Portland. The Arrata, one o' the Woor Line, left port the same day uz us, bound for Portland, an' the old Tryapsic makun' sux knots, seven ot the best. An' ut was ot Comox, takun' un bunker coal, I got the letter from the owners. The boss humself hod signed ut, an' ot the bottom he wrut un hus own bond: 'The Arrata beat you by four an' a half days. Am dusappointed.' Dusappointed! When I had cabled them from Newcastle. When she drydocked ot Portland, there was whuskers on her a foot long, barnacles the size o' me fust, oysters like young sauce plates. Ut took them two days afterward tull clean the dock o' shells an' muck.

"An' there was the motter o' them fire-bars ot Newcastle. The firm ashore made them heavier than the engineer's speecifications, an' then forgot tull charge for the dufference. Ot the last moment, wuth me ashore gettun' me clearance, they come wuth the bill: 'Tull error on fire-bars, sux pounds.' They'd been tull the shup an' MacPherson hod O.K.'d ut. I said ut was strange an' would no pay. 'Then you are dootun' the chief engineer,' says they. 'I'm no dootun',' says I, 'but I canna see my way tull sign. Come wuth me tull the shup. The launch wull cost ye naught an' ut 'ull brung ye back. An' we wull see what MacPherson says.'

"But they would no come. Ot Portland I got the bill un a letter. I took no notice. Ot Hong-Kong I got a letter from the owners. The bill hod been sent tull them. I wrut them from Java explainun'. At Marseilles the owners wrut me: 'Tull extra work un engine-room, sux pounds. The engineer has O.K.'d ut, an' you have no O.K.'d ut. Are you dootun' the engineer's honesty?' I wrut an' told them I was no dootun' his honesty; thot the bill was for extra weight o' fire-bars; an' thot ut was O.K. Dud they pay ut? They no dud. They must unvestigate. An' some clerk un the office took sick, an' the bill was lost. An' there was more letters. I got letters from the owners an' the firm — 'Tull error on fire-bars, sux pounds' — ot Baltimore, ot Delagoa Bay, ot Moji, ot Rangoon, ot Rio, an' ot Montevuddio. Ut uz no settled yut. I tell ye, Annie, the owners are hard tull please."

He communed with himself for a moment, and then muttered indignantly: "Tull error on fire-bars, sux pounds."

"Hov ye heard of Jamie?" his wife asked in the pause.

Captain MacElrath shook his head.

"He was washed off the poop wuth three seamen."

"Whereabouts?"

"Off the Horn. 'Twas on the Thornsby."

"They would be runnun' homeward bound?"

"Aye," she nodded. "We only got the word three days gone. His wife is greetin' like tull die."

"A good lod, Jamie," he commented, "but a stiff one ot carryun' on. I mind me when we was mates together un the Abion. An' so Jamie's gone."

Again a pause fell, to be broken by the wife.

"An' ye will no a-heard o' the Bankshire? MacDougall lost her in Magellan Straits. 'Twas only yesterday ut was in the paper."

"A cruel place, them Magellan Straits," he said. "Dudna thot domned mate-fellow nigh putt me ashore twice on the one passage through? He was a eediot, a lunatuc. I wouldna have hum on the brudge a munut. Comun' tull Narrow Reach, thuck weather, wuth snow squalls, me un the chart-room, dudna I guv hum the changed course? ‘South-east-by-east,’ I told hum. ‘South-east-by-east, sir,’ says he. Fufteen munuts after I comes on tull the brudge. ‘Funny,’ says thot mate-fellow, ‘I’m no rememberun’ ony islands un the mouth o’ Narrow Reach. I took one look ot the islands an’ yells, ‘Putt your wheel hard a-starboard,’ tull the mon ot the wheel. An’ ye should a-seen the old Tryapsic turnun’ the sharpest circle she ever turned. I waited for the snow tull clear, an’ there was Narrow Reach, nice uz ye please, tull the east’ard an’ the islands un the mouth o’ False Bay tull the south’ard. ‘What course was ye steerun’?’ I says tull the mon ot the wheel. ‘South-by-east, sir,’ says he. I looked tull the mate-fellow. What could I say? I was thot wroth I could a-kult hum. Four points dufference. Five munuts more an’ the old Tryapsic would a-been funushed.

“An’ was ut no the same when we cleared the Straits tull the east’ard? Four hours would a-seen us guid an’ clear. I was forty hours then on the brudge. I guv the mate his course, an’ the bearun’ o’ the Askthar Light astern. ‘Don’t let her bear more tull the north’ard than west-by-north,’ I said tull hum, ’an’ ye wull be all right.’ An’ I went below an’ turned un. But I couldna sleep for worryun’. After forty hours on the brudge, what was four hours more? I thought. An’ for them four hours wull ye be lettun’ the mate loss her on ye? ‘No,’ I says to myself. An’ wuth thot I got up, hod a wash an’ a cup o’ coffee, an’ went tull the brudge. I took one look ot the bearun’ o’ Askthar Light. ’Twas nor’west-by-west, and the old Tryapsic down on the shoals. He was a eediot, thot mate-fellow. Ye could look overside an’ see the duscoloration of the watter. ’Twas a close call for the old Tryapsic I’m tellun’ ye. Twice un thirty hours he’d a-hod her ashore uf ut hod no been for me.”

Captain MacElrath fell to gazing at the sleeping child with mild wonder in his small blue eyes, and his wife sought to divert him from his woes.

“Ye remember Jummy MacCaul?” she asked. “Ye went tull school wuth hus two boys. Old Jummy MacCaul thot hoz the farm beyond Doctor Haythorn’s place.”

“Oh, aye, an’ what o’ hum? Uz he dead?”

“No, but he was after askun’ your father, when he sailed last time for Voloparaiso, uf ye’d been there afore. An’ when your father says no, then Jummy says, ‘An’ how wull he be knowun a’ tull find hus way?’ An’ with thot your father says: ‘Verry sumple ut uz, Jummy. Supposun’ you was goin' tull the mainland tull a mon who luved un Belfast. Belfast uz a bug sutty, Jummy, an' how would ye be findun' your way?' 'By way o' me tongue,' says Jummy; 'I'd be askun' the folk I met.' 'I told ye ut was sumple,' says your father. 'Ut's the very same way my Donald finds the road tull Voloparaiso. He asks every shup he meets upon the sea tull ot last he meets wuth a shup thot's been tull Voloparaiso, an' the captun o' thot shup tells hum the way.' An' Jummy scratches hus head an' says he understands an' thot ut's a very sumple motter after all."

The skipper chuckled at the joke, and his tired blue eyes were merry for the moment.

"He was a thun chap, thot mate-fellow, oz thun oz you an' me putt together," he remarked after a time, a slight twinkle in his eye of appreciation of the bull. But the twinkle quickly disappeared and the blue eyes took on a bleak and wintry look. "What dud he do ot Voloparaiso but land sux hundred fathom o' chain cable an' take never a receipt from the lighter-mon. I was gettun' my clearance ot the time. When we got tull sea, I found he hod no receipt for the cable.

"'An' ye no took a receipt for ut?' says I.

"'No,' says he. 'Wasna ut goin' direct tull the agents?'

"'How long ha' ye been goin' tull sea,' says I, 'not tull be knowin' the mate's duty uz tull deluver no cargo wuthout receipt for same? An' on the West Coast ot thot. What's tull stop the lighter-mon from stealun' a few lengths o' ut?'

"An' ut come out uz I said. Sux hundred hundred went over the side, but four hundred an' ninety-five was all the agents received. The lighter-mon swore ut was all he received from the mate — four hundred an' ninety-five fathom. I got a letter from the owners ot Portland. They no blamed the mate for ut, but me, an' me ashore ot the time on shup's buzz'ness. I could no be in the two places ot the one time. An' the letters from the owners an' the agents uz still comun' tull me.

"Thot mate-fellow was no a proper sailor, an' no a mon tull work for owners. Dudna he want tull break me wuth the Board of Trade for bein' below my marks? He said as much tull the bos'n. An' he told me tull my face homeward bound thot I'd been half an inch under my marks. 'Twas at Portland, loadun' cargo un fresh watter an' goin' tull Comox tull load bunker coal un salt watter. I tell ye, Annie, ut takes close fuggerin', an' I was half an inch under the load-line when the bunker coal was un. But I'm no tellun’ any other body but you. An’ thot mate-fellow untendun’ tull report me tull the Board o’ Trade, only for thot he saw fut tull be sliced un two pieces on the steam-pipe cover.

“He was a fool. After loadun’ ot Portland I hod tull take on suxty tons o’ coal tull last me tull Comox. The charges for lighterun’ was heavy, an’ no room ot the coal dock. A French barque was lyin’ alongside the dock an’ I spoke tull the captun, askun’ hum what he would charge when work for the day was done, tull haul clear for a couple o’ hours an’ let me un. ‘Twenty dollars,’ said he. Ut was savun’ money on lighters tull the owner, an’ I gave ut tull hum. An’ thot night, after dark, I hauled un an’ took on the coal. Then I started tull go out un the stream an’ drop anchor — under me own steam, of course.

“We hod tull go out stern first, an’ somethun’ went wrong wuth the reversun’ gear. Old MacPherson said he could work ut by hond, but very slow ot thot. An’ I said ‘All right.’ We started. The pilot was on board. The tide was ebbun’ stuffly, an’ right abreast an’ a but below was a shup lyin’ wuth a lighter on each side. I saw the shup’s ridun’ lights, but never a light on the lighters. Ut was close quarters to shuft a bug vessel onder steam, wuth MacPherson workun’ the reversun’ gear by hond. We hod to come close down upon the shup afore I could go ahead an’ clear o’ the shups on the dock-ends. An’ we struck the lighter stern-on, just uz I rung tull MacPherson half ahead.

“‘What was thot?’ says the pilot, when we struck the lighter.

“‘I dunna know,’ says I, ‘an’ I’m wonderun’.’

“The pilot was no keen, ye see, tull hus job. I went on tull a guid place an’ dropped anchor, an’ ut would all a-been well but for thot domned eediot mate.

“‘We smashed thot lighter,’ says he, comun’ up the lodder tull the brudge — an’ the pilot stondun’ there wuth his ears cocked tull hear.

“‘What lighter?’ says I.

“‘Thot lighter alongside the shup,’ says the mate.

“‘I dudna see no lighter,’ says I, and wuth thot I steps on hus fut guid an’ hard.

“After the pilot was gone I says tull the mate: ‘Uf you dunna know onythun’, old mon, for Heaven’s sake keep your mouth shut.’

“‘But ye dud smash thot lighter, dudn’t ye?’ says he.

"'Uf we dud,' says I, 'ut's no your buzz'ness tull be tellun' the pilot — though, mind ye, I'm no admuttun' there was ony lighter.'

"An' next marnun', just uz I'm after dressun', the steward says, 'A mon tull see ye, sir.' 'Fetch hum un,' says I. An' un he come. 'Sut down,' says I. An' he sot down.

"He was the owner of the lighter, an' when he hod told hus story, I says, 'I dudna see ony lighter.'

"'What, mon?' says he. 'No see a two-hundred-ton lighter, bug oz a house, alongside thot shup?'

"'I was goin' by the shup's lights,' says I, 'an' I dudna touch the shup, thot I know.'

"'But ye dud touch the lighter,' says he. 'Ye smashed her. There's a thousand dollars' domage done, an' I'll see ye pay for ut.'

'Look here, muster,' says I, 'when I'm shuftun' a shup ot night I follow the law, an' the law dustunctly says I must regulate me actions by the lights o' the shuppun'. Your lighter never hod no ridun' light, nor dud I look for ony lighter wuthout lights tull show ut.'

"'The mate says — ' he beguns.

"'Domn the mate,' says I. 'Dud your lighter hov a ridun' light?'

"'No, ut dud not,' says he, 'but ut was a clear night wuth the moon a-showun'.'

"'Ye seem tull know your buzz'ness,' says I. 'But let me tell ye thot I know my buzz'ness uz well, an' thot I'm no a-lookun' for lighters wuthout lights. Uf ye thunk ye hov a case, go ahead. The steward will show ye out. Guid day.'

"An' thot was the end o' ut. But ut wull show ye what a puir fellow thot mate was. I call ut a blessun' for all masters thot he was sliced un two on thot steam-pipe cover. He had a pull un the office an' thot was the why he was kept on."

"The Wekley farm wull soon be for sale, so the agents be tellun' me," his wife remarked, slyly watching what effect her announcement would have upon him.

His eyes flashed eagerly on the instant, and he straightened up as might a man about to engage in some agreeable task. It was the farm of his vision, adjoining his father's, and her own people farmed not a mile away.

"We wull be buyun' ut," he said, "though we wull be no tellun' a soul of ut ontul ut's bought an' the money paid down. I've savun' consuderable these days, though pickun's uz no what they used to be, an' we hov a tidy nest-egg laid by. I wull see the father an' hove the money ready tull hus hond, so uf I'm ot sea he can buy whenever the land offers."

He rubbed the frosted moisture from the inside of the window and peered out at the pouring rain, through which he could discern nothing.

"When I was a young men I used tull be afeard thot the owners would guv me the sack. Stull afeard I am of the sack. But once thot farm is mine I wull no be afeard ony longer. Ut's a puir job thus sea-farmun'. Me managin' un all seas an' weather an' perils o' the deep a shup worth fufty thousand pounds, wuth cargoes ot times worth fufty thousand more — a hundred thousand pounds, half a million dollars uz the Yankees say, an' me wuth all the responsubility gettun' a screw o' twenty pounds a month. What mon ashore, managin' a buz'ness worth a hundred thousand pounds wull be gettun' uz small a screw uz twenty pounds? An' wuth such masters uz a captun serves — the owners, the underwriters, an' the Board o' Trade, all pullun' an wantun' dufferent thungs — the owners wantun' quick passages an' domn the rusk, the underwriters wantun' safe passages an' domn the delay, an' the Board o' Trade wantun' cautious passages an' caution always meanun' delay. Three dufferent masters, an' all three able an' wullun' to break ye uf ye don't serve their dufferent wushes."

He felt the train slackening speed, and peered again through the misty window. He stood up, buttoned his overcoat, turned up the collar, and awkwardly gathered the child, still asleep, in his arms.

"I wull see the father," he said, "an' hov the money ready tull hus hond so uf I'm ot sea when the land offers he wull no muss the chance tull buy. An' then the owners can guv me the sack uz soon uz they like. Ut will be all night un, an' I wull be wuth you, Annie, an' the sea can go tull hell."

Happiness was in both their faces at the prospect, and for a moment both saw the same vision of peace. Annie leaned toward him, and as the train stopped they kissed each other across the sleeping child.

The Seed of Mccoy

THE Pyrenees, her iron sides pressed low in the water by her cargo of wheat, rolled sluggishly, and made it easy for the man who was climbing aboard from out a tiny outrigger canoe. As his eyes came level with the rail, so that he could see inboard, it seemed to him that he saw a dim, almost indiscernible haze. It was more like an illusion, like a blurring film that had spread abruptly over his eyes. He felt an inclination to brush it away, and the same instant he thought that he was growing old and that it was time to send to San Francisco for a pair of spectacles.

As he came over the rail he cast a glance aloft at the tall masts, and, next, at the pumps. They were not working. There seemed nothing the matter with the big ship, and he wondered why she had hoisted the signal of distress. He thought of his happy islanders, and hoped it was not disease. Perhaps the ship was short of water or provisions. He shook hands with the captain whose gaunt face and care-worn eyes made no secret of the trouble, whatever it was. At the same moment the newcomer was aware of a faint, indefinable smell. It seemed like that of burnt bread, but different.

He glanced curiously about him. Twenty feet away a weary-faced sailor was calking the deck. As his eyes lingered on the man, he saw suddenly arise from under his hands a faint spiral of haze that curled and twisted and was gone. By now he had reached the deck. His bare feet were pervaded by a dull warmth that quickly penetrated the thick calluses. He knew now the nature of the ship’s distress. His eyes roved swiftly forward, where the full crew of weary-faced sailors regarded him eagerly. The glance from his liquid brown eyes swept over them like a benediction, soothing them, rapping them about as in the mantle of a great peace. “How long has she been afire, Captain?” he asked in a voice so gentle and unperturbed that it was as the cooing of a dove.

At first the captain felt the peace and content of it stealing in upon him; then the consciousness of all that he had gone through and was going through smote him, and he was resentful. By what right did this ragged beachcomber, in dungaree trousers and a cotton shirt, suggest such a thing as peace and content to him and his overwrought, exhausted soul? The captain did not reason this; it was the unconscious process of emotion that caused his resentment.

“Fifteen days,” he answered shortly. “Who are you?”

“My name is McCoy,” came the answer in tones that breathed tenderness and compassion.

“I mean, are you the pilot?”

McCoy passed the benediction of his gaze over the tall, heavy-shouldered man with the haggard, unshaven face who had joined the captain.

“I am as much a pilot as anybody,” was McCoy’s answer. “We are all pilots here, Captain, and I know every inch of these waters.”

But the captain was impatient.

“What I want is some of the authorities. I want to talk with them, and blame quick.”

“Then I’ll do just as well.”

Again that insidious suggestion of peace, and his ship a raging furnace beneath his feet! The captain’s eyebrows lifted impatiently and nervously, and his fist clenched as if he were about to strike a blow with it.

“Who in hell are you?” he demanded.

“I am the chief magistrate,” was the reply in a voice that was still the softest and gentlest imaginable.

The tall, heavy-shouldered man broke out in a harsh laugh that was partly amusement, but mostly hysterical. Both he and the captain regarded McCoy with incredulity and amazement. That this barefooted beachcomber should possess such high-sounding dignity was inconceivable. His cotton shirt, unbuttoned, exposed a grizzled chest and the fact that there was no undershirt beneath.

A worn straw hat failed to hide the ragged gray hair. Halfway down his chest descended an untrimmed patriarchal beard. In any slop shop, two shillings would have outfitted him complete as he stood before them.

“Any relation to the McCoy of the Bounty?” the captain asked.

“He was my great-grandfather.”

“Oh,” the captain said, then bethought himself. ‘my name is Davenport, and this is my first mate, Mr. Konig.”

They shook hands.

“And now to business.” The captain spoke quickly, the urgency of a great haste pressing his speech. “We’ve been on fire for over two weeks. She’s ready to break all hell loose any moment. That’s why I held for Pitcairn. I want to beach her, or scuttle her, and save the hull.”

“Then you made a mistake, Captain, said McCoy. “You should have slacked away for Mangareva. There’s a beautiful beach there, in a lagoon where the water is like a mill pond.”

“But we’re here, ain’t we?” the first mate demanded. “That’s the point. We’re here, and we’ve got to do something.”

McCoy shook his head kindly.

“You can do nothing here. There is no beach. There isn’t even anchorage.”

“Gammon!” said the mate. “Gammon!” he repeated loudly, as the captain signaled him to be more soft spoken. “You can’t tell me that sort of stuff. Where d’ye keep your own boats, hey--your schooner, or cutter, or whatever you have? Hey? Answer me that.”

McCoy smiled as gently as he spoke. His smile was a caress, an embrace that surrounded the tired mate and sought to draw him into the quietude and rest of McCoy’s tranquil soul.

“We have no schooner or cutter,” he replied. “And we carry our canoes to the top of the cliff.”

“You’ve got to show me,” snorted the mate. “How d’ye get around to the other islands, heh? Tell me that.”

“We don’t get around. As governor of Pitcairn, I sometimes go. When I was younger, I was away a great deal--sometimes on the trading schooners, but mostly on the missionary brig. But she’s gone now, and we depend on passing vessels. Sometimes we have had as high as six calls in one year. At other times, a year, and even longer, has gone by without one passing ship. Yours is the first in seven months.”

“And you mean to tell me--“ the mate began.

But Captain Davenport interfered.

“Enough of this. We’re losing time. What is to be done, Mr. McCoy?”

The old man turned his brown eyes, sweet as a woman’s, shoreward, and both captain and mate followed his gaze around from the lonely rock of Pitcairn to the crew clustering forward and waiting anxiously for the announcement of a decision. ‘mcCoy did not hurry. He thought smoothly and slowly, step by step, with the certitude of a mind that was never vexed or outraged by life.

“The wind is light now,” he said finally. “There is a heavy current setting to the westward.”

“That’s what made us fetch to leeward,” the captain interrupted, desiring to vindicate his seamanship.

“Yes, that is what fetched you to leeward,” McCoy went on. “Well, you can’t work up against this current today. And if you did, there is no beach. Your ship will be a total loss.”

He paused, and captain and mate looked despair at each other.

“But I will tell you what you can do. The breeze will freshen tonight around midnight--see those tails of clouds and that thickness to windward, beyond the point there? That’s where she’ll come from, out of the southeast, hard. It is three hundred miles to Mangareva. Square away for it. There is a beautiful bed for your ship there.”

The mate shook his head.

“Come in to the cabin, and we’ll look at the chart,” said the captain.

McCoy found a stifling, poisonous atmosphere in the pent cabin. Stray waftures of invisible gases bit his eyes and made them sting. The deck was hotter, almost unbearably hot to his bare feet. The sweat poured out of his body. He looked almost with apprehension about him. This malignant, internal heat was astounding. It was a marvel that the cabin did not burst into flames. He had a feeling as if of being in a huge bake oven where the heat might at any moment increase tremendously and shrivel him up like a blade of grass.

As he lifted one foot and rubbed the hot sole against the leg of his trousers, the mate laughed in a savage, snarling fashion.

“The anteroom of hell,” he said. “Hell herself is right down there under your feet.”

“It’s hot!” McCoy cried involuntarily, mopping his face with a bandana handkerchief.

“Here’s Mangareva,” the captain said, bending over the table and pointing to a black speck in the midst of the white blankness of the chart. “And here, in between, is another island. Why not run for that?”

McCoy did not look at the chart.

“That’s Crescent Island,” he answered. “It is uninhabited, and it is only two or three feet above water. Lagoon, but no entrance. No, Mangareva is the nearest place for your purpose.”

“Mangareva it is, then,” said Captain Davenport, interrupting the mate’s growling objection. “Call the crew aft, Mr. Konig.”

The sailors obeyed, shuffling wearily along the deck and painfully endeavoring to make haste. Exhaustion was evident in every movement. The cook came out of his galley to hear, and the cabin boy hung about near him.

When Captain Davenport had explained the situation and announced his intention of running for Mangareva, an uproar broke out. Against a background of throaty rumbling arose inarticulate cries of rage, with here and there a distinct curse, or word, or phrase. A shrill Cockney voice soared and dominated for a moment, crying: “Gawd! After bein’ in ell for fifteen days--an’ now e wants us to sail this floatin’ ell to sea again?”

The captain could not control them, but McCoy’s gentle presence seemed to rebuke and calm them, and the muttering and cursing died away, until the full crew, save here and there an anxious face directed at the captain, yearned dumbly toward the green clad peaks and beetling coast of Pitcairn.

Soft as a spring zephyr was the voice of McCoy:

“Captain, I thought I heard some of them say they were starving.”

“Ay,” was the answer, “and so we are. I’ve had a sea biscuit and a spoonful of salmon in the last two days. We’re on whack. You see, when we discovered the fire, we battened down immediately to suffocate the fire. And then we found how little food there was in the pantry. But it was too late. We didn’t dare break out the lazarette. Hungry? I’m just as hungry as they are.”

He spoke to the men again, and again the throat rumbling and cursing arose, their faces convulsed and animal-like with rage. The second and third mates had joined the captain, standing behind him at the break of the poop. Their faces were set and expressionless; they seemed bored, more than anything else, by this mutiny of the crew. Captain Davenport glanced questioningly at his first mate, and that person merely shrugged his shoulders in token of his helplessness.

“You see,” the captain said to McCoy, “you can’t compel sailors to leave the safe land and go to sea on a burning vessel. She has been their floating coffin for over two weeks now. They are worked out, and starved out, and they’ve got enough of her. We’ll beat up for Pitcairn.”

But the wind was light, the Pyrenees’ bottom was foul, and she could not beat up against the strong westerly current. At the end of two hours she had lost three miles. The sailors worked eagerly, as if by main strength they could compel the PYRENEES against the adverse elements. But steadily, port tack and starboard tack, she sagged off to the westward. The captain paced restlessly up and down, pausing occasionally to survey the vagrant smoke wisps and to trace them back to the portions of the deck from which they sprang. The carpenter was engaged constantly in attempting to locate such places, and, when he succeeded, in calking them tighter and tighter.

"Well, what do you think?" the captain finally asked McCoy, who was watching the carpenter with all a child's interest and curiosity in his eyes.

McCoy looked shoreward, where the land was disappearing in the thickening haze.

"I think it would be better to square away for Mangareva. With that breeze that is coming, you'll be there tomorrow evening."

"But what if the fire breaks out? It is liable to do it any moment."

"Have your boats ready in the falls. The same breeze will carry your boats to Mangareva if the ship burns out from under."

Captain Davenport debated for a moment, and then McCoy heard the question he had not wanted to hear, but which he knew was surely coming.

"I have no chart of Mangareva. On the general chart it is only a fly speck. I would not know where to look for the entrance into the lagoon. Will you come along and pilot her in for me?"

McCoy's serenity was unbroken.

"Yes, Captain," he said, with the same quiet unconcern with which he would have accepted an invitation to dinner; "I'll go with you to Mangareva."

Again the crew was called aft, and the captain spoke to them from the break of the poop.

"We've tried to work her up, but you see how we've lost ground. She's setting off in a two-knot current. This gentleman is the Honorable McCoy, Chief Magistrate and Governor of Pitcairn Island. He will come along with us to Mangareva. So you see the situation is not so dangerous. He would not make such an offer if he thought he was going to lose his life. Besides, whatever risk there is, if he of his own free will come on board and take it, we can do no less. What do you say for Mangareva?"

This time there was no uproar. 'mcCoy's presence, the surety and calm that seemed to radiate from him, had had its effect. They conferred with one another in low voices. There was little urging. They were virtually unanimous, and they shoved the Cockney out as their spokesman. That worthy was overwhelmed with consciousness of the heroism of himself and his mates, and with flashing eyes he cried:

"By Gawd! If 'e will, we will!"

The crew mumbled its assent and started forward.

"One moment, Captain," McCoy said, as the other was turning to give orders to the mate. "I must go ashore first."

Mr. Konig was thunderstruck, staring at McCoy as if he were a madman.

"Go ashore!" the captain cried. "What for? It will take you three hours to get there in your canoe."

McCoy measured the distance of the land away, and nodded.

"Yes, it is six now. I won't get ashore till nine. The people cannot be assembled earlier than ten. As the breeze freshens up tonight, you can begin to work up against it, and pick me up at daylight tomorrow morning."

"In the name of reason and common sense," the captain burst forth, "what do you want to assemble the people for? Don't you realize that my ship is burning beneath me?"

McCoy was as placid as a summer sea, and the other's anger produced not the slightest ripple upon it.

"Yes, Captain," he cooed in his dove-like voice. "I do realize that your ship is burning. That is why I am going with you to Mangareva. But I must get permission to go with you. It is our custom. It is an important matter when the governor leaves the island. The people's interests are at stake, and so they have the right to vote their permission or refusal. But they will give it, I know that."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Then if you know they will give it, why bother with getting it? Think of the delay--a whole night."

"It is our custom," was the imperturbable reply. "Also, I am the governor, and I must make arrangements for the conduct of the island during my absence."

"But it is only a twenty-four hour run to Mangareva," the captain objected. "Suppose it took you six times that long to return to windward; that would bring you back by the end of a week."

McCoy smiled his large, benevolent smile.

"Very few vessels come to Pitcairn, and when they do, they are usually from San Francisco or from around the Horn. I shall be fortunate if I get back in six months. I may be away a year, and I may have to go to San Francisco in order to find a vessel that will bring me back. ‘my father once left Pitcairn to be gone three months, and two years passed before he could get back. Then, too, you are short of food. If you have to take to the boats, and the weather comes up bad, you may be days in reaching land. I can bring off two canoe loads of food in the morning. Dried bananas will be best. As the breeze freshens, you beat up against it. The nearer you are, the bigger loads I can bring off. Goodby.”

He held out his hand. The captain shook it, and was reluctant to let go. He seemed to cling to it as a drowning sailor clings to a life buoy.

“How do I know you will come back in the morning?” he asked.

“Yes, that’s it!” cried the mate. “How do we know but what he’s skinning out to save his own hide?”

McCoy did not speak. He looked at them sweetly and benignantly, and it seemed to them that they received a message from his tremendous certitude of soul.

The captain released his hand, and, with a last sweeping glance that embraced the crew in its benediction, McCoy went over the rail and descended into his canoe.

The wind freshened, and the Pyrenees, despite the foulness of her bottom, won half a dozen miles away from the westerly current. At daylight, with Pitcairn three miles to windward, Captain Davenport made out two canoes coming off to him. Again McCoy clambered up the side and dropped over the rail to the hot deck. He was followed by many packages of dried bananas, each package wrapped in dry leaves.

“Now, Captain,” he said, “swing the yards and drive for dear life. You see, I am no navigator,” he explained a few minutes later, as he stood by the captain aft, the latter with gaze wandering from aloft to overside as he estimated the Pyrenees’ speed. “You must fetch her to Mangareva. When you have picked up the land, then I will pilot her in. What do you think she is making?”

“Eleven,” Captain Davenport answered, with a final glance at the water rushing past.

“Eleven. Let me see, if she keeps up that gait, we’ll sight Mangareva between eight and nine o’clock tomorrow morning. I’ll have her on the beach by ten or by eleven at latest. And then your troubles will be all over.”

It almost seemed to the captain that the blissful moment had already arrived, such was the persuasive convincingness of McCoy.

Captain Davenport had been under the fearful strain of navigating his burning ship for over two weeks, and he was beginning to feel that he had had enough.

A heavier flaw of wind struck the back of his neck and whistled by his ears. He measured the weight of it, and looked quickly overside.

“The wind is making all the time,” he announced. “The old girl’s doing nearer twelve than eleven right now. If this keeps up, we’ll be shortening down tonight.”

All day the Pyrenees, carrying her load of living fire, tore across the foaming sea. By nightfall, royals and topgallantsails were in, and she flew on into the darkness, with great, crested seas roaring after her. The auspicious wind had had its effect, and fore and aft a visible brightening was apparent. In the second dog-watch some careless soul started a song, and by eight bells the whole crew was singing.

Captain Davenport had his blankets brought up and spread on top the house.

“I’ve forgotten what sleep is,” he explained to McCoy. “I’m all in. But give me a call at any time you think necessary.”

At three in the morning he was aroused by a gentle tugging at his arm. He sat up quickly, bracing himself against the skylight, stupid yet from his heavy sleep. The wind was thrumming its war song in the rigging, and a wild sea was buffeting the PYRENEES. Amidships she was wallowing first one rail under and then the other, flooding the waist more often than not. ‘mcCoy was shouting something he could not hear. He reached out, clutched the other by the shoulder, and drew him close so that his own ear was close to the other’s lips.

“It’s three o’clock,” came McCoy’s voice, still retaining its dovelike quality, but curiously muffled, as if from a long way off. “We’ve run two hundred and fifty. Crescent Island is only thirty miles away, somewhere there dead ahead. There’s no lights on it. If we keep running, we’ll pile up, and lose ourselves as well as the ship.”

“What d’ ye think--heave to?”

“Yes; heave to till daylight. It will only put us back four hours.”

So the Pyrenees, with her cargo of fire, was hove to, bitting the teeth of the gale and fighting and smashing the pounding seas. She was a shell, filled with a conflagration, and on the outside of the shell, clinging precariously, the little motes of men, by pull and haul, helped her in the battle.

"It is most unusual, this gale," McCoy told the captain, in the lee of the cabin. "By rights there should be no gale at this time of the year. But everything about the weather has been unusual. There has been a stoppage of the trades, and now it's howling right out of the trade quarter." He waved his hand into the darkness, as if his vision could dimly penetrate for hundreds of miles. "It is off to the westward. There is something big making off there somewhere--a hurricane or something. We're lucky to be so far to the eastward. But this is only a little blow," he added. "It can't last. I can tell you that much."

By daylight the gale had eased down to normal. But daylight revealed a new danger. It had come on thick. The sea was covered by a fog, or, rather, by a pearly mist that was fog-like in density, in so far as it obstructed vision, but that was no more than a film on the sea, for the sun shot it through and filled it with a glowing radiance.

The deck of the Pyrenees was making more smoke than on the preceding day, and the cheerfulness of officers and crew had vanished. In the lee of the galley the cabin boy could be heard whimpering. It was his first voyage, and the fear of death was at his heart. The captain wandered about like a lost soul, nervously chewing his mustache, scowling, unable to make up his mind what to do.

"What do you think?" he asked, pausing by the side of McCoy, who was making a breakfast off fried bananas and a mug of water.

McCoy finished the last banana, drained the mug, and looked slowly around. In his eyes was a smile of tenderness as he said:

"Well, Captain, we might as well drive as burn. Your decks are not going to hold out forever. They are hotter this morning. You haven't a pair of shoes I can wear? It is getting uncomfortable for my bare feet."

The Pyrenees shipped two heavy seas as she was swung off and put once more before it, and the first mate expressed a desire to have all that water down in the hold, if only it could be introduced without taking off the hatches. 'mcCoy ducked his head into the binnacle and watched the course set.

"I'd hold her up some more, Captain," he said. "She's been making drift when hove to."

"I've set it to a point higher already," was the answer. "Isn't that enough?"

"I'd make it two points, Captain. This bit of a blow kicked that westerly current ahead faster than you imagine."

Captain Davenport compromised on a point and a half, and then went aloft, accompanied by McCoy and the first mate, to keep a lookout for land. Sail had been made, so that the Pyrenees was doing ten knots. The following sea was dying down rapidly. There was no break in the pearly fog, and by ten o'clock Captain Davenport was growing nervous. All hands were at their stations, ready, at the first warning of land ahead, to spring like fiends to the task of bringing the Pyrenees up on the wind. That land ahead, a surf-washed outer reef, would be perilously close when it revealed itself in such a fog.

Another hour passed. The three watchers aloft stared intently into the pearly radiance."What if we miss Mangareva?" Captain Davenport asked abruptly.

McCoy, without shifting his gaze, answered softly:

"Why, let her drive, captain. That is all we can do. All the Paumotus are before us. We can drive for a thousand miles through reefs and atolls. We are bound to fetch up somewhere."

"Then drive it is." Captain Davenport evidenced his intention of descending to the deck. "We've missed Mangareva. God knows where the next land is. I wish I'd held her up that other half-point," he confessed a moment later. "This cursed current plays the devil with a navigator."

"The old navigators called the Paumotus the Dangerous Archipelago," McCoy said, when they had regained the poop. "This very current was partly responsible for that name."

"I was talking with a sailor chap in Sydney, once," said Mr. Konig. "He'd been trading in the Paumotus. He told me insurance was eighteen per cent. Is that right?"

McCoy smiled and nodded.

"Except that they don't insure," he explained. "The owners write off twenty per cent of the cost of their schooners each year."

"My God!" Captain Davenport groaned. "That makes the life of a schooner only five years!" He shook his head sadly, murmuring, "Bad waters! Bad waters!"

Again they went into the cabin to consult the big general chart; but the poisonous vapors drove them coughing and gasping on deck.

“Here is Moerenhout Island,” Captain Davenport pointed it out on the chart, which he had spread on the house. “It can’t be more than a hundred miles to leeward.”

“A hundred and ten.” ‘mcCoy shook his head doubtfully. “It might be done, but it is very difficult. I might beach her, and then again I might put her on the reef. A bad place, a very bad place.”

“We’ll take the chance,” was Captain Davenport’s decision, as he set about working out the course.

Sail was shortened early in the afternoon, to avoid running past in the night; and in the second dog-watch the crew manifested its regained cheerfulness. Land was so very near, and their troubles would be over in the morning.

But morning broke clear, with a blazing tropic sun. The southeast trade had swung around to the eastward, and was driving the PYRENEES through the water at an eight-knot clip. Captain Davenport worked up his dead reckoning, allowing generously for drift, and announced Moerenhout Island to be not more than ten miles off. The Pyrenees sailed the ten miles; she sailed ten miles more; and the lookouts at the three mastheads saw naught but the naked, sun-washed sea.

“But the land is there, I tell you,” Captain Davenport shouted to them from the poop.

McCoy smiled soothingly, but the captain glared about him like a madman, fetched his sextant, and took a chronometer sight.

“I knew I was right, he almost shouted, when he had worked up the observation. “Twenty-one, fifty-five, south; one-thirty-six, two, west. There you are. We’re eight miles to windward yet. What did you make it out, Mr. Konig?”

The first mate glanced at his own figures, and said in a low voice:

“Twenty-one, fifty-five all right; but my longitude’s one-thirty-six, forty-eight. That puts us considerably to leeward--“

But Captain Davenport ignored his figures with so contemptuous a silence as to make Mr. Konig grit his teeth and curse savagely under his breath.

“Keep her off,” the captain ordered the man at the wheel. “Three points--steady there, as she goes!”

Then he returned to his figures and worked them over. The sweat poured from his face. He chewed his mustache, his lips, and his pencil, staring at the figures as a man might at a ghost. Suddenly, with a fierce, muscular outburst, he crumpled the scribbled paper in his fist and crushed it under foot. ‘mr. Konig grinned vindictively and turned away, while Captain Davenport leaned against the cabin and for half an hour spoke no word, contenting himself with gazing to leeward with an expression of musing hopelessness on his face.

“Mr. McCoy,” he broke silence abruptly. “The chart indicates a group of islands, but not how many, off there to the north’ard, or nor’-nor’westward, about forty miles--the Acteon Islands. What about them?”

“There are four, all low,” McCoy answered. “First to the southeast is Matuerui--no people, no entrance to the lagoon. Then comes Tenarunga. There used to be about a dozen people there, but they may be all gone now. Anyway, there is no entrance for a ship--only a boat entrance, with a fathom of water. Vehauga and Teua-raro are the other two. No entrances, no people, very low. There is no bed for the Pyrenees in that group. She would be a total wreck.”

“Listen to that!” Captain Davenport was frantic. “No people! No entrances! What in the devil are islands good for?

“Well, then, he barked suddenly, like an excited terrier, “the chart gives a whole mess of islands off to the nor’west. What about them? What one has an entrance where I can lay my ship?”

McCoy calmly considered. He did not refer to the chart. All these islands, reefs, shoals, lagoons, entrances, and distances were marked on the chart of his memory. He knew them as the city dweller knows his buildings, streets, and alleys.

“Papakena and Vanavana are off there to the westward, or west-nor’westward a hundred miles and a bit more,” he said. “One is uninhabited, and I heard that the people on the other had gone off to Cadmus Island. Anyway, neither lagoon has an entrance. Ahunui is another hundred miles on to the nor’west. No entrance, no people.”

“Well, forty miles beyond them are two islands?” Captain Davenport queried, raising his head from the chart.

McCoy shook his head.

“Paros and Manuhungi--no entrances, no people. Nengo-Nengo is forty miles beyond them, in turn, and it has no people and no entrance. But there is Hao Island. It is just the place. The lagoon is thirty miles long and five miles wide. There are plenty of people. You can usually find water. And any ship in the world can go through the entrance."

He ceased and gazed solicitously at Captain Davenport, who, bending over the chart with a pair of dividers in hand, had just emitted a low groan.

"Is there any lagoon with an entrance anywhere nearer than Hao Island?" he asked.

"No, Captain; that is the nearest."

"Well, it's three hundred and forty miles." Captain Davenport was speaking very slowly, with decision. "I won't risk the responsibility of all these lives. I'll wreck her on the Acteons. And she's a good ship, too," he added regretfully, after altering the course, this time making more allowance than ever for the westerly current.

An hour later the sky was overcast. The southeast trade still held, but the ocean was a checker board of squalls.

"We'll be there by one o'clock," Captain Davenport announced confidently. "By two o'clock at the outside. 'mcCoy, you put her ashore on the one where the people are."

The sun did not appear again, nor, at one o'clock, was any land to be seen. Captain Davenport looked astern at the Pyrenees' canting wake.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "An easterly current? Look at that!"

Mr. Konig was incredulous. 'mcCoy was noncommittal, though he said that in the Paumotus there was no reason why it should not be an easterly current. A few minutes later a squall robbed the Pyrenees temporarily of all her wind, and she was left rolling heavily in the trough.

"Where's that deep lead? Over with it, you there!" Captain Davenport held the lead line and watched it sag off to the northeast. "There, look at that! Take hold of it for yourself."

McCoy and the mate tried it, and felt the line thrumming and vibrating savagely to the grip of the tidal stream.

"A four-knot current," said Mr. Konig.

"An easterly current instead of a westerly," said Captain "Davenport, glaring accusingly at McCoy, as if to cast the blame for it upon him.

"That is one of the reasons, Captain, for insurance being eighteen per cent in these waters," McCoy answered cheerfully. "You can never tell. The currents are always changing. There was a man who wrote books, I forget his name, in the yacht Casco.

He missed Takaroa by thirty miles and fetched Tikei, all because of the shifting currents. You are up to windward now, and you'd better keep off a few points."

"But how much has this current set me?" the captain demanded irately. "How am I to know how much to keep off?"

"I don't know, Captain," McCoy said with great gentleness. The wind returned, and the PYRENEES, her deck smoking and shimmering in the bright gray light, ran off dead to leeward. Then she worked back, port tack and starboard tack, crisscrossing her track, combing the sea for the Acteon Islands, which the masthead lookouts failed to sight.

Captain Davenport was beside himself. His rage took the form of sullen silence, and he spent the afternoon in pacing the poop or leaning against the weather shrouds. At nightfall, without even consulting McCoy, he squared away and headed into the northwest. Mr. Konig, surreptitiously consulting chart and binnacle, and McCoy, openly and innocently consulting the binnacle, knew that they were running for Hao Island. By midnight the squalls ceased, and the stars came out. Captain Davenport was cheered by the promise of a clear day.

"I'll get an observation in the morning," he told McCoy, "though what my latitude is, is a puzzler. But I'll use the Sumner method, and settle that. Do you know the Sumner line?"

And thereupon he explained it in detail to McCoy.

The day proved clear, the trade blew steadily out of the east, and the Pyrenees just as steadily logged her nine knots. Both the captain and mate worked out the position on a Sumner line, and agreed, and at noon agreed again, and verified the morning sights by the noon sights.

"Another twenty-four hours and we'll be there," Captain Davenport assured McCoy. :"It's a miracle the way the old girl's decks hold out. But they can't last. They can't last. Look at them smoke, more and more every day. Yet it was a tight deck to begin with, fresh-calked in Frisco. I was surprised when the fire first broke out and we battened down. Look at that!"

He broke off to gaze with dropped jaw at a spiral of smoke that coiled and twisted in the lee of the mizzenmast twenty feet above the deck.

"Now, how did that get there?" he demanded indignantly.

Beneath it there was no smoke. Crawling up from the deck, sheltered from the wind by the mast, by some freak it took form and visibility at that height. It writhed away from the mast, and for a moment overhung the captain like some threatening portent. The next moment the wind whisked it away, and the captain's jaw returned to place.

"As I was saying, when we first battened down, I was surprised. It was a tight deck, yet it leaked smoke like a sieve. And we've calked and calked ever since. There must be tremendous pressure underneath to drive so much smoke through."

That afternoon the sky became overcast again, and squally, drizzly weather set in. The wind shifted back and forth between southeast and northeast, and at midnight the Pyrenees was caught aback by a sharp squall from the southwest, from which point the wind continued to blow intermittently.

"We won't make Hao until ten or eleven," Captain Davenport complained at seven in the morning, when the fleeting promise of the sun had been erased by hazy cloud masses in the eastern sky. And the next moment he was plaintively demanding, "And what are the currents doing?"

Lookouts at the mastheads could report no land, and the day passed in drizzling calms and violent squalls. By nightfall a heavy sea began to make from the west. The barometer had fallen to 29.50. There was no wind, and still the ominous sea continued to increase. Soon the Pyrenees was rolling madly in the huge waves that marched in an unending procession from out of the darkness of the west. Sail was shortened as fast as both watches could work, and, when the tired crew had finished, its grumbling and complaining voices, peculiarly animal-like and menacing, could be heard in the darkness. Once the starboard watch was called aft to lash down and make secure, and the men openly advertised their sullenness and unwillingness. Every slow movement was a protest and a threat. The atmosphere was moist and sticky like mucilage, and in the absence of wind all hands seemed to pant and gasp for air. The sweat stood out on faces and bare arms, and Captain Davenport for one, his face more gaunt and care-worn than ever, and his eyes troubled and staring, was oppressed by a feeling of impending calamity.

"It's off to the westward," McCoy said encouragingly. "At worst, we'll be only on the edge of it."

But Captain Davenport refused to be comforted, and by the light of a lantern read up the chapter in his Epitome that related to the strategy of shipmasters in cyclonic storms. From somewhere amidships the silence was broken by a low whimpering from the cabin boy.

“Oh, shut up!” Captain Davenport yelled suddenly and with such force as to startle every man on board and to frighten the offender into a wild wail of terror.

“Mr. Konig,” the captain said in a voice that trembled with rage and nerves, “will you kindly step for’ard and stop that brat’s mouth with a deck mop?”

But it was McCoy who went forward, and in a few minutes had the boy comforted and asleep.

Shortly before daybreak the first breath of air began to move from out the southeast, increasing swiftly to a stiff and stiffer breeze. All hands were on deck waiting for what might be behind it. “We’re all right now, Captain,” said McCoy, standing close to his shoulder. “The hurricane is to the west’ard, and we are south of it. This breeze is the in-suck. It won’t blow any harder. You can begin to put sail on her.”

“But what’s the good? Where shall I sail? This is the second day without observations, and we should have sighted Hao Island yesterday morning. Which way does it bear, north, south, east, or what? Tell me that, and I’ll make sail in a jiffy.”

“I am no navigator, Captain,” McCoy said in his mild way.

“I used to think I was one,” was the retort, “before I got into these Paumotus.”

At midday the cry of “Breakers ahead!” was heard from the lookout. The Pyrenees was kept off, and sail after sail was loosed and sheeted home. The Pyrenees was sliding through the water and fighting a current that threatened to set her down upon the breakers. Officers and men were working like mad, cook and cabin boy, Captain Davenport himself, and McCoy all lending a hand. It was a close shave. It was a low shoal, a bleak and perilous place over which the seas broke unceasingly, where no man could live, and on which not even sea birds could rest. The PYRENEES was swept within a hundred yards of it before the wind carried her clear, and at this moment the panting crew, its work done, burst out in a torrent of curses upon the head of McCoy--of McCoy who had come on board, and proposed the run to Mangareva, and lured them all away from the safety of Pitcairn Island to certain destruction in this baffling and terrible stretch of sea. But McCoy’s tranquil soul was undisturbed. He smiled at them with simple and gracious benevolence, and, somehow, the exalted goodness of him seemed to penetrate to their dark and somber souls, shaming them, and from very shame stilling the curses vibrating in their throats.

"Bad waters! Bad waters!" Captain Davenport was murmuring as his ship forged clear; but he broke off abruptly to gaze at the shoal which should have been dead astern, but which was already on the PYRENEES' weather-quarter and working up rapidly to windward.

He sat down and buried his face in his hands. And the first mate saw, and McCoy saw, and the crew saw, what he had seen. South of the shoal an easterly current had set them down upon it; north of the shoal an equally swift westerly current had clutched the ship and was sweeping her away.

"I've heard of these Paumotus before," the captain groaned, lifting his blanched face from his hands. "Captain Moyendale told me about them after losing his ship on them. And I laughed at him behind his back. God forgive me, I laughed at him. What shoal is that?" he broke off, to ask McCoy.

"I don't know, Captain."

"Why don't you know?"

"Because I never saw it before, and because I have never heard of it. I do know that it is not charted. These waters have never been thoroughly surveyed."

"Then you don't know where we are?"

"No more than you do," McCoy said gently.

At four in the afternoon cocoanut trees were sighted, apparently growing out of the water. A little later the low land of an atoll was raised above the sea.

"I know where we are now, Captain." McCoy lowered the glasses from his eyes. "That's Resolution Island. We are forty miles beyond Hao Island, and the wind is in our teeth."

"Get ready to beach her then. Where's the entrance?" "There's only a canoe passage. But now that we know where we are, we can run for Barclay de Tolley. It is only one hundred and twenty miles from here, due nor'-nor'west. With this breeze we can be there by nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

Captain Davenport consulted the chart and debated with himself.

"If we wreck her here," McCoy added, "we'd have to make the run to Barclay de Tolley in the boats just the same."

The captain gave his orders, and once more the Pyrenees swung off for another run across the inhospitable sea.

And the middle of the next afternoon saw despair and mutiny on her smoking deck. The current had accelerated, the wind had slackened, and the Pyrenees had sagged off to the west. The lookout sighted Barclay de Tolley to the eastward, barely visible from the masthead, and vainly and for hours the PYRENEES tried to beat up to it. Ever, like a mirage, the cocoanut trees hovered on the horizon, visible only from the masthead. From the deck they were hidden by the bulge of the world.

Again Captain Davenport consulted McCoy and the chart. ‘makemo lay seventy-five miles to the southwest. Its lagoon was thirty miles long, and its entrance was excellent. When Captain Davenport gave his orders, the crew refused duty. They announced that they had had enough of hell fire under their feet. There was the land. What if the ship could not make it? They could make it in the boats. Let her burn, then. Their lives amounted to something to them. They had served faithfully the ship, now they were going to serve themselves.

They sprang to the boats, brushing the second and third mates out of the way, and proceeded to swing the boats out and to prepare to lower away. Captain Davenport and the first mate, revolvers in hand, were advancing to the break of the poop, when McCoy, who had climbed on top of the cabin, began to speak.

He spoke to the sailors, and at the first sound of his dovelike, cooing voice they paused to hear. He extended to them his own ineffable serenity and peace. His soft voice and simple thoughts flowed out to them in a magic stream, soothing them against their wills. Long forgotten things came back to them, and some remembered lullaby songs of childhood and the content and rest of the mother’s arm at the end of the day. There was no more trouble, no more danger, no more irk, in all the world. Everything was as it should be, and it was only a matter of course that they should turn their backs upon the land and put to sea once more with hell fire hot beneath their feet.

McCoy spoke simply; but it was not what he spoke. It was his personality that spoke more eloquently than any word he could utter. It was an alchemy of soul occultly subtile and profoundly deep--a mysterious emanation of the spirit, seductive, sweetly humble, and terribly imperious. It was illumination in the dark crypts of their souls, a compulsion of purity and gentleness vastly greater than that which resided in the shining, death-spitting revolvers of the officers.

The men wavered reluctantly where they stood, and those who had loosed the turns made them fast again. Then one, and then another, and then all of them, began to sidle awkwardly away.

McCoy's face was beaming with childlike pleasure as he descended from the top of the cabin. Thee was no trouble. For that matter there had been no trouble averted. There never had been any trouble, for there was no place for such in the blissful world in which he lived.

"You hypnotized em," Mr. Konig grinned at him, speaking in a low voice.

"Those boys are good," was the answer. "Their hearts are good. They have had a hard time, and they have worked hard, and they will work hard to the end."

Mr. Konig had not time to reply. His voice was ringing out orders, the sailors were springing to obey, and the PYRENEES was paying slowly off from the wind until her bow should point in the direction of Makemo.

The wind was very light, and after sundown almost ceased. It was insufferably warm, and fore and aft men sought vainly to sleep. The deck was too hot to lie upon, and poisonous vapors, oozing through the seams, crept like evil spirits over the ship, stealing into the nostrils and windpipes of the unwary and causing fits of sneezing and coughing. The stars blinked lazily in the dim vault overhead; and the full moon, rising in the east, touched with its light the myriads of wisps and threads and spidery films of smoke that intertwined and writhed and twisted along the deck, over the rails, and up the masts and shrouds.

"Tell me," Captain Davenport said, rubbing his smarting eyes, "what happened with that BOUNTY crowd after they reached Pitcairn? The account I read said they burnt the Bounty, and that they were not discovered until many years later. But what happened in the meantime? I've always been curious to know. They were men with their necks in the rope. There were some native men, too. And then there were women. That made it look like trouble right from the jump."

"There was trouble," McCoy answered. "They were bad men. They quarreled about the women right away. One of the mutineers, Williams, lost his wife. All the women were Tahitian women. His wife fell from the cliffs when hunting sea birds. Then he took the wife of one of the native men away from him. All the native men were made very angry by this, and they killed off nearly all the mutineers. Then the mutineers that escaped killed off all the native men. The women helped. And the natives killed each other. Everybody killed everybody. They were terrible men.

"Timiti was killed by two other natives while they were combing his hair in friendship. The white men had sent them to do it. Then the white men killed them. The wife of Tullaloo killed him in a cave because she wanted a white man for husband. They were very wicked. God had hidden His face from them. At the end of two years all the native men were murdered, and all the white men except four. They were Young, John Adams, McCoy, who was my great-grandfather, and Quintal. He was a very bad man, too. Once, just because his wife did not catch enough fish for him, he bit off her ear."

"They were a bad lot!" Mr. Konig exclaimed.

"Yes, they were very bad," McCoy agreed and went on serenely cooing of the blood and lust of his iniquitous ancestry. "My great-grandfather escaped murder in order to die by his own hand. He made a still and manufactured alcohol from the roots of the ti-plant. Quintal was his chum, and they got drunk together all the time. At last McCoy got delirium tremens, tied a rock to his neck, and jumped into the sea.

"Quintal's wife, the one whose ear he bit off, also got killed by falling from the cliffs. Then Quintal went to Young and demanded his wife, and went to Adams and demanded his wife. Adams and Young were afraid of Quintal. They knew he would kill them. So they killed him, the two of them together, with a hatchet. Then Young died. And that was about all the trouble they had."

"I should say so," Captain Davenport snorted. "There was nobody left to kill."

"You see, God had hidden His face," McCoy said.

By morning no more than a faint air was blowing from the eastward, and, unable to make appreciable southing by it, Captain Davenport hauled up full-and-by on the port track. He was afraid of that terrible westerly current which had cheated him out of so many ports of refuge. All day the calm continued, and all night, while the sailors, on a short ration of dried banana, were grumbling. Also, they were growing weak and complaining of stomach pains caused by the straight banana diet. All day the current swept the PYRENEES to the westward, while there was no wind to bear her south. In the middle of the first dogwatch, cocoanut trees were sighted due south, their tufted heads rising above the water and marking the low-lying atoll beneath.

"That is Taenga Island," McCoy said. "We need a breeze tonight, or else we'll miss Makemo."

"What's become of the southeast trade?" the captain demanded. "Why don't it blow? What's the matter?"

"It is the evaporation from the big lagoons--there are so many of them," McCoy explained. The evaporation upsets the whole system of trades. It even causes the wind to back up and blow gales from the southwest. This is the Dangerous Archipelago, Captain."

Captain Davenport faced the old man, opened his mouth, and was about to curse, but paused and refrained. 'mcCoy's presence was a rebuke to the blasphemies that stirred in his brain and trembled in his larynx. 'mcCoy's influence had been growing during the many days they had been together. Captain Davenport was an autocrat of the sea, fearing no man, never bridling his tongue, and now he found himself unable to curse in the presence of this old man with the feminine brown eyes and the voice of a dove. When he realized this, Captain Davenport experienced a distinct shock. This old man was merely the seed of McCoy, of McCoy of the BOUNTY, the mutineer fleeing from the hemp that waited him in England, the McCoy who was a power for evil in the early days of blood and lust and violent death on Pitcairn Island.

Captain Davenport was not religious, yet in that moment he felt a mad impulse to cast himself at the other's feet--and to say he knew not what. It was an emotion that so deeply stirred him, rather than a coherent thought, and he was aware in some vague way of his own unworthiness and smallness in the presence of this other man who possessed the simplicity of a child and the gentleness of a woman.

Of course he could not so humble himself before the eyes of his officers and men. And yet the anger that had prompted the blasphemy still raged in him. He suddenly smote the cabin with his clenched hand and cried:

"Look here, old man, I won't be beaten. These Paumotus have cheated and tricked me and made a fool of me. I refuse to be beaten. I am going to drive this ship, and drive and drive and drive clear through the Paumotus to China but what I find a bed for her. If every man deserts, I'll stay by her. I'll show the Paumotus. They can’t fool me. She’s a good girl, and I’ll stick by her as long as there’s a plank to stand on. You hear me?”

“And I’ll stay with you, Captain,” McCoy said.

During the night, light, baffling airs blew out of the south, and the frantic captain, with his cargo of fire, watched and measured his westward drift and went off by himself at times to curse softly so that McCoy should not hear.

Daylight showed more palms growing out of the water to the south.

“That’s the leeward point of Makemo,” McCoy said. “Katiu is only a few miles to the west. We may make that.”

But the current, sucking between the two islands, swept them to the northwest, and at one in the afternoon they saw the palms of Katiu rise above the sea and sink back into the sea again.

A few minutes later, just as the captain had discovered that a new current from the northeast had gripped the Pyrenees, the masthead lookouts raised cocoanut palms in the northwest.

“It is Raraka,” said McCoy. “We won’t make it without wind. The current is drawing us down to the southwest. But we must watch out. A few miles farther on a current flows north and turns in a circle to the northwest. This will sweep us away from Fakarava, and Fakarava is the place for the Pyrenees to find her bed.”

“They can sweep all they da--all they well please,” Captain Davenport remarked with heat. “We’ll find a bed for her somewhere just the same.” But the situation on the Pyrenees was reaching a culmination. The deck was so hot that it seemed an increase of a few degrees would cause it to burst into flames. In many places even the heavy-soled shoes of the men were no protection, and they were compelled to step lively to avoid scorching their feet. The smoke had increased and grown more acrid. Every man on board was suffering from inflamed eyes, and they coughed and strangled like a crew of tuberculosis patients. In the afternoon the boats were swung out and equipped. The last several packages of dried bananas were stored in them, as well as the instruments of the officers. Captain Davenport even put the chronometer into the longboat, fearing the blowing up of the deck at any moment.

All night this apprehension weighed heavily on all, and in the first morning light, with hollow eyes and ghastly faces, they stared at one another as if in surprise that the Pyrenees still held together and that they still were alive.

Walking rapidly at times, and even occasionally breaking into an undignified hop-skip-and-run, Captain Davenport inspected his ship's deck.

"It is a matter of hours now, if not of minutes," he announced on his return to the poop.

The cry of land came down from the masthead. From the deck the land was invisible, and McCoy went aloft, while the captain took advantage of the opportunity to curse some of the bitterness out of his heart. But the cursing was suddenly stopped by a dark line on the water which he sighted to the northeast. It was not a squall, but a regular breeze--the disrupted trade wind, eight points out of its direction but resuming business once more.

"Hold her up, Captain," McCoy said as soon as he reached the poop. "That's the easterly point of Fakarava, and we'll go in through the passage full-tilt, the wind abeam, and every sail drawing."

At the end of an hour, the cocoanut trees and the low-lying land were visible from the deck. The feeling that the end of the PYRENEES' resistance was imminent weighed heavily on everybody. Captain Davenport had the three boats lowered and dropped short astern, a man in each to keep them apart. The Pyrenees closely skirted the shore, the surf-whitened atoll a bare two cable lengths away.

And a minute later the land parted, exposing a narrow passage and the lagoon beyond, a great mirror, thirty miles in length and a third as broad.

"Now, Captain."

For the last time the yards of the Pyrenees swung around as she obeyed the wheel and headed into the passage. The turns had scarcely been made, and nothing had been coiled down, when the men and mates swept back to the poop in panic terror. Nothing had happened, yet they averred that something was going to happen. They could not tell why. They merely knew that it was about to happen. 'mcCoy started forward to take up his position on the bow in order to con the vessel in; but the captain gripped his arm and whirled him around.

"Do it from here," he said. "That deck's not safe. What's the matter?" he demanded the next instant. "We're standing still."

McCoy smiled.

"You are bucking a seven-knot current, Captain," he said. "That is the way the full ebb runs out of this passage."

At the end of another hour the Pyrenees had scarcely gained her length, but the wind freshened and she began to forge ahead.

"Better get into the boats, some of you," Captain Davenport commanded.

His voice was still ringing, and the men were just beginning to move in obedience, when the amidship deck of the Pyrenees, in a mass of flame and smoke, was flung upward into the sails and rigging, part of it remaining there and the rest falling into the sea. The wind being abeam, was what had saved the men crowded aft. They made a blind rush to gain the boats, but McCoy's voice, carrying its convincing message of vast calm and endless time, stopped them.

"Take it easy," he was saying. Everything is all right. Pass that boy down somebody, please."

The man at the wheel had forsaken it in a funk, and Captain Davenport had leaped and caught the spokes in time to prevent the ship from yawing in the current and going ashore.

"Better take charge of the boats," he said to Mr. Konig. "Tow one of them short, right under the quarter. . . . When I go over, it'll be on the jump."

Mr. Konig hesitated, then went over the rail and lowered himself into the boat.

"Keep her off half a point, Captain."

Captain Davenport gave a start. He had thought he had the ship to himself.

"Ay, ay; half a point it is," he answered.

Amidships the Pyrenees was an open flaming furnace, out of which poured an immense volume of smoke which rose high above the masts and completely hid the forward part of the ship. 'mcCoy, in the shelter of the mizzen-shrouds, continued his difficult task of conning the ship through the intricate channel. The fire was working aft along the deck from the seat of explosion, while the soaring tower of canvas on the mainmast went up and vanished in a sheet of flame. Forward, though they could not see them, they knew that the head-sails were still drawing.

"If only she don't burn all her canvas off before she makes inside,:" the captain groaned.

"She'll make it," McCoy assured him with supreme confidence. "There is plenty of time. She is bound to make it. And once inside, we'll put her before it; that will keep the smoke away from us and hold back the fire from working aft."

A tongue of flame sprang up the mizzen, reached hungrily for the lowest tier of canvas, missed it, and vanished. From aloft a burning shred of rope stuff fell square on the back of Captain Davenport’s neck. He acted with the celerity of one stung by a bee as he reached up and brushed the offending fire from his skin.

“How is she heading, Captain?”

“Nor’west by west.”

“Keep her west-nor-west.”

Captain Davenport put the wheel up and steadied her.

“West by north, Captain.”

“West by north she is.”

“And now west.”

Slowly, point by point, as she entered the lagoon, the PYRENEES described the circle that put her before the wind; and point by point, with all the calm certitude of a thousand years of time to spare, McCoy chanted the changing course.

“Another point, Captain.”

“A point it is.”

Captain Davenport whirled several spokes over, suddenly reversing and coming back one to check her.

“Steady.”

“Steady she is--right on it.”

Despite the fact that the wind was now astern, the heat was so intense that Captain Davenport was compelled to steal sidelong glances into the binnacle, letting go the wheel now with one hand, now with the other, to rub or shield his blistering cheeks.

McCoy’s beard was crinkling and shriveling and the smell of it, strong in the other’s nostrils, compelled him to look toward McCoy with sudden solicitude. Captain Davenport was letting go the spokes alternately with his hands in order to rub their blistering backs against his trousers. Every sail on the mizzenmast vanished in a rush of flame, compelling the two men to crouch and shield their faces.

“Now,” said McCoy, stealing a glance ahead at the low shore, “four points up, Captain, and let her drive.”

Shreds and patches of burning rope and canvas were falling about them and upon them. The tarry smoke from a smouldering piece of rope at the captain's feet set him off into a violent coughing fit, during which he still clung to the spokes.

The Pyrenees struck, her bow lifted and she ground ahead gently to a stop. A shower of burning fragments, dislodged by the shock, fell about them. The ship moved ahead again and struck a second time. She crushed the fragile coral under her keel, drove on, and struck a third time.

"Hard over," said McCoy. "Hard over?" he questioned gently, a minute later.

"She won't answer," was the reply.

"All right. She is swinging around." 'mcCoy peered over the side. "Soft, white sand. Couldn't ask better. A beautiful bed."

As the Pyrenees swung around her stern away from the wind, a fearful blast of smoke and flame poured aft. Captain Davenport deserted the wheel in blistering agony. He reached the painter of the boat that lay under the quarter, then looked for McCoy, who was standing aside to let him go down.

"You first," the captain cried, gripping him by the shoulder and almost throwing him over the rail. But the flame and smoke were too terrible, and he followed hard after McCoy, both men wriggling on the rope and sliding down into the boat together. A sailor in the bow, without waiting for orders, slashed the painter through with his sheath knife. The oars, poised in readiness, bit into the water, and the boat shot away.

"A beautiful bed, Captain," McCoy murmured, looking back.

"Ay, a beautiful bed, and all thanks to you," was the answer.

The three boats pulled away for the white beach of pounded coral, beyond which, on the edge of a cocoanut grove, could be seen a half dozen grass houses and a score or more of excited natives, gazing wide-eyed at the conflagration that had come to land.

The boats grounded and they stepped out on the white beach.

"And now," said McCoy, "I must see about getting back to Pitcairn."

Semper Idem

DOCTOR Bicknell was in a remarkably gracious mood. Through a minor accident, a slight bit of carelessness, that was all, a man who might have pulled through had died the preceding night. Though it had been only a sailorman, one of the innumerable unwashed, the steward of the receiving hospital had been on the anxious seat all the morning. It was not that the man had died that gave him discomfort, he knew the Doctor too well for that, but his distress lay in the fact that the operation had been done so well. One of the most delicate in surgery, it had been as successful as it was clever and audacious. All had then depended upon the treatment, the nurses, the steward. And the man had died. Nothing much, a bit of carelessness, yet enough to bring the professional wrath of Doctor Bicknell about his ears and to perturb the working of the staff and nurses for twenty-four hours to come.

But, as already stated, the Doctor was in a remarkably gracious mood. When informed by the steward, in fear and trembling, of the man’s unexpected take-off, his lips did not so much as form one syllable of censure; nay, they were so pursed that snatches of ragtime floated softly from them, to be broken only by a pleasant query after the health of the other’s eldest-born. The steward, deeming it impossible that he could have caught the gist of the case, repeated it.

“Yes, yes,” Doctor Bicknell said impatiently; “I understand. But how about Semper Idem? Is he ready to leave?”

“Yes. They’re helping him dress now,” the steward answered, passing on to the round of his duties, content that peace still reigned within the iodine-saturated walls.

It was Semper Idem’s recovery which had so fully compensated Doctor Bicknell for the loss of the sailorman. Lives were to him as nothing, the unpleasant but inevitable incidents of the profession, but cases, ah, cases were everything. People who knew him were prone to brand him a butcher, but his colleagues were at one in the belief that a bolder and yet I a more capable man never stood over the table. He was not an imaginative man. He did not possess, and hence had no tolerance for, emotion. His nature was accurate, precise, scientific. Men were to him no more than pawns, without individuality or personal value. But as cases it was different. The more broken a man was, the more precarious his grip on life, the greater his significance in the eyes of Doctor Bicknell. He would as readily forsake a poet laureate suffering from a common accident for a nameless, mangled vagrant who defied every law of life by refusing to die, as would a child forsake a Punch and Judy for a circus.

So it had been in the case of Semper Idem. The mystery of the man I had not appealed to him, nor had his silence and the veiled romance which the yellow reporters had so sensationally and so fruitlessly explotted in divers Sunday editions. But Semper Idem's throat had been cut. That was the point. That was where his interest had centred. Cut from ear to ear, and not one surgeon in a thousand to give a snap of the fingers for his chance of recovery. But, thanks to the swift municipal ambulance service and to Doctor Bicknell, he had been dragged back into the world he had sought to leave. The Doctor's co-workers had shaken their heads when the case was brought in. Impossible, they said. Throat, windpipe, jugular, all but actually severed, and the loss of blood frightful. As it was such a foregone conclusion, Doctor Bicknell had employed methods and done things which made them, even in their professional capacities, to shudder. And lo! the man had recovered.

So, on this morning that Semper Idem was to leave the hospital, hale and hearty, Doctor Bicknell's geniality was in nowise disturbed by the steward's report, and he proceeded cheerfully to bring order out of the chaos of a child's body which had been ground and crunched beneath the wheels of an electric car.

As many will remember, the case of Semper Idem aroused a vast deal of unseemly yet highly natural curiosity. He had been found in a slum lodging, with throat cut as aforementioned, and blood dripping down upon the inmates of the room below and disturbing their festivities. He had evidently done the deed standing, with head bowed forward that he might gaze his last upon a photograph which stood on the table propped against a candle-stick. It was this attitude which had made it possible for Doctor Bicknell to save him So terrific had been the sweep of the razor that had he had his head thrown back, as he should have done to have accomplished the act properly, with his neck stretched and the elastic vascular walls distended, he would have of a certainty well nigh decapitated himself.

At the hospital, during all the time he travelled the repugnant road back to life, not a word had left his lips. Nor could anything be learned of him by the sleuths detailed by the chief of police. Nobody knew him, nor had ever seen or heard of him before. He was strictly, uniquely of the present. His clothes and surroundings were those of the lowest laborer, his hands the hands of a gentleman. But not a shred of writing was discovered, nothing, save in one particular, which would serve to indicate his past or his position in life.

And that one particular was the photograph. If it were at all a likeness, the woman who gazed frankly out upon the onlooker from the card-mount must have been a striking creature indeed. It was an amateur production, for the detectives were baffled in that no professional photographers signature or studio was appended. Across a corner of the mount, in delicate feminine tracery, was written: “Semper idem; semper fdelis.” And she looked it. As many recollect, it was a face one could never forget. Clever half-tones, remarkably like, were published in all the leading papers at the time; but such procedure gave rise to nothing but the uncontrollable public curiosity and interminable copy to the space-writers.

For want of a better name, the rescued suicide was known to the hospital attendants, and to the world, as Semper Idem. And Semper Idem he remained. Reporters, detectives, and nurses gave him up in despair. Not one word could he be persuaded to utter; yet the flitting conscious light of his eyes showed that his ears heard and his brain grasped every question put to him.

But this mystery and romance played no part in Doctor Bicknell’s interest when he paused in the office to have a parting word with his patient. He, the Doctor, had performed a prodigy in the matter of this man, done what was virtually unprecedented in the annals of surgery. He did not care who or what the man was, and it was highly improbable that he should ever see him again; but, like the artist gazing upon a finished creation, he wished to look for the last time upon the work of his hand and brain.

Semper Idem still remained mute. He seemed anxious to be gone. Not a word could the Doctor extract from him, and little the Doctor cared. He examined the throat of the convalescent carefully, idling over the hideous scar with the lingering, half-caressing fondness of a parent. It was not a particularly pleasing sight. An angry line circled the throat,--for all the world as though the man had just escaped the hangman’s noose, and,--disappearing below the ear on either side, had the appearance of completing the fiery periphery at the nape of the neck.

Maintaining his dogged silence, yielding to the other's examination in much the manner of a leashed lion, Semper Idem betrayed only his desire to drop from out of the public eye.

"Well, I'll not keep you," Doctor Bicknell finally said, laying a hand on the man's shoulder and stealing a last glance at his own handiwork. "But let me give you a bit of advice. Next time you try it on, hold your chin up, so. Don't snuggle it down and butcher yourself like a cow. Neatness and despatch, you know. Neatness and despatch."

Semper Idem's eyes flashed in token that he heard, and a moment later the hospital door swung to on his heel.

It was a busy day for Doctor Bicknell, and the afternoon was well along when he lighted a cigar preparatory to leaving the table upon which it seemed the sufferers almost clamored to be laid. But the last one, an old rag-picker with a broken shoulder-blade, had been disposed of, and the first fragrant smoke wreaths had begun to curl about his head, when the gong of a hurrying ambulance came through the open window from the street, followed by the inevitable entry of the stretcher with its ghastly freight.

"Lay it on the table," the Doctor directed, turning for a moment to place his cigar in safety. "What is it?"

"Suicide--throat cut," responded one of the stretcher bearers "Down on Morgan Alley. Little hope, I think, sir. He's 'most gone."

"Eh? Well, I'll give him a look, anyway." He leaned over the man at the moment when the quick made its last faint flutter and succumbed.

"It's Semper Idem come back again," the steward said.

"Ay," replied Doctor Bicknell, "and gone again. No bungling this time. Properly done, upon my life, sir, properly done. Took my advice to the letter. I'm not required here. Take it along to the morgue."

Doctor Bicknell secured his cigar and relighted it. "That," he said between the puffs, looking at the steward, "that evens up for the one you lost last night. We're quits now."

The Shadow and the Flash

When I look back, I realize what a peculiar friendship it was. First, there was Lloyd Inwood, tall, slender, and finely knit, nervous and dark. And then Paul Tichlorne, tall, slender, and finely knit, nervous and blond. Each was the replica of the other in everything except color. Lloyd's eyes were black; Paul's were blue. Under stress of excitement, the blood coursed olive in the face of Lloyd, crimson in the face of Paul. But outside this matter of coloring they were as like as two peas. Both were high-strung, prone to excessive tension and endurance, and they lived at concert pitch.

But there was a trio involved in this remarkable friendship, and the third was short, and fat, and chunky, and lazy, and, loath to say, it was I. Paul and Lloyd seemed born to rivalry with each other, and I to be peacemaker between them. We grew up together, the three of us, and full often have I received the angry blows each intended for the other. They were always competing, striving to outdo each other, and when entered upon some such struggle there was no limit either to their endeavors or passions.

This intense spirit of rivalry obtained in their studies and their games. If Paul memorized one canto of "Marmion," Lloyd memorized two cantos, Paul came back with three, and Lloyd again with four, till each knew the whole poem by heart. I remember an incident that occurred at the swimming hole--an incident tragically significant of the life-struggle between them. The boys had a game of diving to the bottom of a ten-foot pool and holding on by submerged roots to see who could stay under the longest. Paul and Lloyd allowed themselves to be bantered into making the descent together. When I saw their faces, set and determined, disappear in the water as they sank swiftly down, I felt a foreboding of something dreadful. The moments sped, the ripples died away, the face of the pool grew placid and untroubled, and neither black nor golden head broke surface in quest of air. We above grew anxious. The longest record of the longest-winded boy had been exceeded, and still there was no sign. Air bubbles trickled slowly upward, showing that the breath had been expelled from their lungs, and after that the bubbles ceased to trickle upward. Each second became interminable, and, unable longer to endure the suspense, I plunged into the water.

I found them down at the bottom, clutching tight to the roots, their heads not a foot apart, their eyes wide open, each glaring fixedly at the other. They were suffering frightful torment, writhing and twisting in the pangs of voluntary suffocation; for neither would let go and acknowledge himself beaten. I tried to break Paul's hold on the root, but he resisted me fiercely. Then I lost my breath and came to the surface, badly scared. I quickly explained the situation, and half a dozen of us went down and by main strength tore them loose. By the time we got them out, both were unconscious, and it was only after much barrel-rolling and rubbing and pounding that they finally came to their senses. They would have drowned there, had no one rescued them.

When Paul Tichlorne entered college, he let it be generally understood that he was going in for the social sciences. Lloyd Inwood, entering at the same time, elected to take the same course. But Paul had had it secretly in mind all the time to study the natural sciences, specializing on chemistry, and at the last moment he switched over. Though Lloyd had already arranged his year's work and attended the first lectures, he at once followed Paul's lead and went in for the natural sciences and especially for chemistry. Their rivalry soon became a noted thing throughout the university. Each was a spur to the other, and they went into chemistry deeper than did ever students before--so deep, in fact, that ere they took their sheepskins they could have stumped any chemistry or "cow college" professor in the institution, save "old" Moss, head of the department, and even him they puzzled and edified more than once. Lloyd's discovery of the "death bacillus" of the sea toad, and his experiments on it with potassium cyanide, sent his name and that of his university ringing round the world; nor was Paul a whit behind when he succeeded in producing laboratory colloids exhibiting amoeba-like activities, and when he cast new light upon the processes of fertilization through his startling experiments with simple sodium chlorides and magnesium solutions on low forms of marine life.

It was in their undergraduate days, however, in the midst of their profoundest plunges into the mysteries of organic chemistry, that Doris Van Benschoten entered into their lives. Lloyd met her first, but within twenty-four hours Paul saw to it that he also made her acquaintance. Of course, they fell in love with her, and she became the only thing in life worth living for. They wooed her with equal ardor and fire, and so intense became their struggle for her that half the student-body took to wagering wildly on the result. Even “old” Moss, one day, after an astounding demonstration in his private laboratory by Paul, was guilty to the extent of a month’s salary of backing him to become the bridegroom of Doris Van Benschoten.

In the end she solved the problem in her own way, to everybody’s satisfaction except Paul’s and Lloyd’s. Getting them together, she said that she really could not choose between them because she loved them both equally well; and that, unfortunately, since polyandry was not permitted in the United States she would be compelled to forego the honor and happiness of marrying either of them. Each blamed the other for this lamentable outcome, and the bitterness between them grew more bitter.

But things came to a head enough. It was at my home, after they had taken their degrees and dropped out of the world’s sight, that the beginning of the end came to pass. Both were men of means, with little inclination and no necessity for professional life. My friendship and their mutual animosity were the two things that linked them in any way together. While they were very often at my place, they made it a fastidious point to avoid each other on such visits, though it was inevitable, under the circumstances, that they should come upon each other occasionally.

On the day I have in recollection, Paul Tichlorne had been mooning all morning in my study over a current scientific review. This left me free to my own affairs, and I was out among my roses when Lloyd Inwood arrived. Clipping and pruning and tacking the climbers on the porch, with my mouth full of nails, and Lloyd following me about and lending a hand now and again, we fell to discussing the mythical race of invisible people, that strange and vagrant people the traditions of which have come down to us. Lloyd warmed to the talk in his nervous, jerky fashion, and was soon interrogating the physical properties and possibilities of invisibility. A perfectly black object, he contended, would elude and defy the acutest vision.

“Color is a sensation,” he was saying. “It has no objective reality. Without light, we can see neither colors nor objects themselves. All objects are black in the dark, and in the dark it is impossible to see them. If no light strikes upon them, then no light is flung back from them to the eye, and so we have no vision-evidence of their being.”

“But we see black objects in daylight,” I objected.

“Very true,” he went on warmly. “And that is because they are not perfectly black. Were they perfectly black, absolutely black, as it were, we could not see them — ay, not in the blaze of a thousand suns could we see them! And so I say, with the right pigments, properly compounded, an absolutely black paint could be produced which would render invisible whatever it was applied to."

"It would be a remarkable discovery," I said non-committally, for the whole thing seemed too fantastic for aught but speculative purposes.

"Remarkable!" Lloyd slapped me on the shoulder. "I should say so. Why, old chap, to coat myself with such a paint would be to put the world at my feet. The secrets of kings and courts would be mine, the machinations of diplomats and politicians, the play of stock-gamblers, the plans of trusts and corporations. I could keep my hand on the inner pulse of things and become the greatest power in the world. And I — " He broke off shortly, then added, "Well, I have begun my experiments, and I don't mind telling you that I'm right in line for it."

A laugh from the doorway startled us. Paul Tichlorne was standing there, a smile of mockery on his lips.

"You forget, my dear Lloyd," he said.

"Forget what?"

"You forget," Paul went on--"ah, you forget the shadow."

I saw Lloyd's face drop, but he answered sneeringly, "I can carry a sunshade, you know." Then he turned suddenly and fiercely upon him. "Look here, Paul, you'll keep out of this if you know what's good for you."

A rupture seemed imminent, but Paul laughed good-naturedly. "I wouldn't lay fingers on your dirty pigments. Succeed beyond your most sanguine expectations, yet you will always fetch up against the shadow. You can't get away from it. Now I shall go on the very opposite tack. In the very nature of my proposition the shadow will be eliminated — "

"Transparency!" ejaculated Lloyd, instantly. "But it can't be achieved."

"Oh, no; of course not." And Paul shrugged his shoulders and strolled off down the briar-rose path.

This was the beginning of it. Both men attacked the problem with all the tremendous energy for which they were noted, and with a rancor and bitterness that made me tremble for the success of either. Each trusted me to the utmost, and in the long weeks of experimentation that followed I was made a party to both sides, listening to their theorizings and witnessing their demonstrations. Never, by word or sign, did I convey to either the slightest hint of the other's progress, and they respected me for the seal I put upon my lips.

Lloyd Inwood, after prolonged and unintermittent application, when the tension upon his mind and body became too great to bear, had a strange way of obtaining relief. He attended prize fights. It was at one of these brutal exhibitions, whither he had dragged me in order to tell his latest results, that his theory received striking confirmation.

"Do you see that red-whiskered man?" he asked, pointing across the ring to the fifth tier of seats on the opposite side. "And do you see the next man to him, the one in the white hat? Well, there is quite a gap between them, is there not?"

"Certainly," I answered. "They are a seat apart. The gap is the unoccupied seat."

He leaned over to me and spoke seriously. "Between the red-whiskered man and the white-hatted man sits Ben Wasson. You have heard me speak of him. He is the cleverest pugilist of his weight in the country. He is also a Caribbean negro, full-blooded, and the blackest in the United State;. He has on a black overcoat buttoned up. I saw him when he came in and took that seat. As soon as he sat down he disappeared. Watch closely; he may smile."

I was for crossing over to verify Lloyd's statement, but he restrained me. "Wait," he said.

I waited and watched, till the red-whiskered man turned his head as though addressing the unoccupied seat; and then, in that empty space, I saw the rolling whites of a pair of eyes and the white double-crescent of two rows of teeth, and for the instant I could make out a negro's face. But with the passing of the smile his visibility passed, and the chair seemed vacant as before.

"Were he perfectly black, you could sit alongside him and not see him," Lloyd said; and I confess the illustration was apt enough to make me well-nigh convinced.

I visited Lloyd's laboratory a number of times after that, and found him always deep in his search after the absolute black. His experiments covered all sorts Of pigments, such as lamp-blacks, tars, carbonized vegetable matters, soots of oils and fats, and the various carbonized animal substances.

"White light is composed of the seven primary colors," he argued to me. "But it is itself, of itself, invisible. Only by being reflected from objects do it and the objects become visible. But only that portion of it that is reflected becomes visible. For instance, here is a blue tobacco-box. The white light strikes against it, and, with one exception, all its component colors — violet, indigo, green, yellow, orange, and red--are absorbed. The one exception is blue. It is not absorbed, but reflected.Therefore the tobacco-box gives us a sensation of blueness. We do not see the other colors because they are absorbed. We see only the blue. For the same reason grass is green. The green waves of white light are thrown upon our eyes."

"When we paint our houses, we do not apply color to them," he said at another time. "What we do is to apply certain substances that have the property of absorbing from white light all the colors except those that we would have our houses appear. When a substance reflects all the colors to the eye, it seems to us white. When it absorbs all the colors, it is black. But, as I said before, we have as yet no perfect black. All the colors are not absorbed. The perfect black, guarding against high lights, will be utterly and absolutely invisible. Look at that, for example."

He pointed to the palette lying on his work-table. Different shades of black pigments were brushed on it. One, in particular, I could hardly see. It gave my eyes a blurring sensation, and I rubbed them and looked again.

"That," he said impressively, "is the blackest black you or any mortal man ever looked upon. But just you wait, and I'll have a black so black that no mortal man will be able to look upon it — and see it!"

On the other hand, I used to find Paul Tichlorne plunged as deeply into the study of light polarization, diffraction, and interference, single and double refraction, and all manner of strange organic compounds.

"Transparency: a state or quality of body which permits all rays of light to pass through," he defined for me. "That is what I am seeking. Lloyd blunders up against the shadow with his perfect opaqueness. But I escape it. A transparent body casts no shadow; neither does it reflect light-waves — that is, the perfectly transparent does not. So, avoiding high lights, not only will such a body cast no shadow, but, since it reflects no light, it will also be invisible."

We were standing by the window at another time. Paul was engaged in polishing a number of lenses, which were ranged along the sill. Suddenly, after a pause in the conversation, he said, "Oh! I've dropped a lens. Stick your head out, old man, and see where it went to."

Out I started to thrust my head, but a sharp blow on the forehead caused me to recoil. I rubbed my bruised brow and gazed with reproachful inquiry at Paul, who was laughing in gleeful, boyish fashion.

“Well?” he said.

“Well?” I echoed.

“Why don’t you investigate?” he demanded. And investigate I did. Before thrusting out my head, my senses, automatically active, had told me there was nothing there, that nothing intervened between me and out-of-doors, that the aperture of the window opening was utterly empty. I stretched forth my hand and felt a hard object, smooth and cool and flat, which my touch, out of its experience, told me to be glass. I looked again, but could see positively nothing.

“White quartzose sand,” Paul rattled off, “sodic carbonate, slaked lime, cutlet, manganese peroxide — there you have it, the finest French plate glass, made by the great St. Gobain Company, who made the finest plate glass in the world, and this is the finest piece they ever made. It cost a king’s ransom. But look at it I You can’t see it. You don’t know it’s there till you run your head against it.

“Eh, old boy! That’s merely an object-lesson — certain elements, in themselves opaque, yet so compounded as to give a resultant body which is transparent. But that is a matter of inorganic chemistry, you say. Very true. But I dare to assert, standing here on my two feet, that in the organic I can duplicate whatever occurs in the inorganic.

“Here!” He held a test-tube between me and the light, and I noted the cloudy or muddy liquid it contained. He emptied the contents of another test-tube into it, and almost instantly it became clear and sparkling.

“Or here!” With quick, nervous movements among his array of test-tubes, he turned a white solution to a wine color, and a light yellow solution to a dark brown. He dropped a piece of litmus paper into an acid, when it changed instantly to red, and on floating it in an alkali it turned as quickly to blue.

“The litmus paper is still the litmus paper,” he enunciated in the formal manner of the lecturer. “I have not changed it into something else. Then what did I do? I merely changed the arrangement of its molecules. Where, at first, it absorbed all colors from the light but red, its molecular structure was so changed that it absorbed red and all colors except blue. And so it goes, ad infinitum. Now, what I purpose to do is this.” He paused for a space. “I purpose to seek — ay, and to find--the proper reagents, which, acting upon the living organism, will bring about molecular changes analogous to those you have just witnessed. But these reagents, which I shall find, and for that matter, upon which I already have my hands, will not turn the living body to blue or red or black, but they will turn it to transparency. All light will pass through it. It will be invisible. It will cast no shadow.”

A few weeks later I went hunting with Paul. He had been promising me for some time that I should have the pleasure of shooting over a wonderful dog--the most wonderful dog, in fact, that ever man shot over, so he averred, and continued to aver till my curiosity was aroused. But on the morning in question I was disappointed, for there was no dog in evidence.

“Don’t see him about,” Paul remarked unconcernedly, and we set off across the fields.

I could not imagine, at the time, what was ailing me, but I had a feeling of some impending and deadly illness. My nerves were all awry, and, from the astounding tricks they played me, my senses seemed to have run riot. Strange sounds disturbed me. At times I heard the swish-swish of grass being shoved aside, and once the patter of feet across a patch of stony ground.

“Did you hear anything, Paul?” I asked once.

But he shook his head, and thrust his feet steadily forward.

While climbing a fence, I heard the low, eager whine of a dog, apparently from within a couple of feet of me; but on looking about me I saw nothing.

I dropped to the ground, limp and trembling.

“Paul,” I said, “we had better return to the house. I am afraid I am going to be sick.”

“Nonsense, old man,” he answered. “The sunshine has gone to your head like wine. You’ll be all right. It’s famous weather.”

But, passing along a narrow path through a clump of cottonwoods, some object brushed against my legs and I stumbled and nearly fell. I looked with sudden anxiety at Paul.

“What’s the matter?” he asked. “Tripping over your own feet?”

I kept my tongue between my teeth and plodded on, though sore perplexed and thoroughly satisfied that some acute and mysterious malady had attacked my nerves. So far my eyes had escaped; but, when we got to the open fields again, even my vision went back on me. Strange flashes of vari-colored, rainbow light began to appear and disappear on the path before me. Still, I managed to keep myself in hand, till the vari-colored lights persisted for a space of fully twenty seconds, dancing and flashing in continuous play. Then I sat down, weak and shaky.

"It's all up with me," I gasped, covering my eyes with my hands. "It has attacked my eyes. Paul, take me home."

But Paul laughed long and loud. "What did I tell you? — the most wonderful dog, eh? Well, what do you think?"

He turned partly from me and began to whistle. I heard the patter of feet, the panting of a heated animal, and the unmistakable yelp of a dog. Then Paul stooped down and apparently fondled the empty air.

"Here! Give me your fist."

And he rubbed my hand over the cold nose and jowls of a dog. A dog it certainly was, with the shape and the smooth, short coat of a pointer.

Suffice to say, I speedily recovered my spirits and control. Paul put a collar about the animal's neck and tied his handkerchief to its tail. And then was vouchsafed us the remarkable sight of an empty collar and a waving handkerchief cavorting over the fields. It was something to see that collar and handkerchief pin a bevy of quail in a clump of locusts and remain rigid and immovable till we had flushed the birds.

Now and again the dog emitted the vari-colored light-flashes I have mentioned. The one thing, Paul explained, which he had not anticipated and which he doubted could be overcome.

"They're a large family," he said, "these sun dogs, wind dogs, rainbows, halos, and parhelia. They are produced by refraction of light from mineral and ice crystals, from mist, rain, spray, and no end of things; and I am afraid they are the penalty I must pay for transparency. I escaped Lloyd's shadow only to fetch up against the rainbow flash."

A couple of days later, before the entrance to Paul's laboratory, I encountered a terrible stench. So overpowering was it that it was easy to discover the source: a mass of putrescent matter on the doorstep which in general outlines resembled a dog.

Paul was startled when he investigated my find. It was his invisible dog, or rather, what had been his invisible dog, for it was now plainly visible. It had been playing about but a few minutes before in all health and strength. Closer examination revealed that the skull had been crushed by some heavy blow. While it was strange that the animal should have been killed, the inexplicable thing was that it should so quickly decay.

"The reagents I injected into its system were harmless," Paul explained. "Yet they were powerful, and it appears that when death comes they force practically instantaneous disintegration. Remarkable! Most remarkable! Well, the only thing is not to die. They do not harm so long as one lives. But I do wonder who smashed in that dog's head."

Light, however, was thrown upon this when a frightened housemaid brought the news that Gaffer Bedshaw had that very morning, not more than an hour back, gone violently insane, and was strapped down at home, in the huntsman's lodge, where he raved of a battle with a ferocious and gigantic beast that he had encountered in the Tichlorne pasture. He claimed that the thing, whatever it was, was invisible, that with his own eyes he had seen that it was invisible; wherefore his tearful wife and daughters shook their heads, and wherefore he but waxed the more violent, and the gardener and the coachman tightened the straps by another hole.

Nor, while Paul Tichlorne was thus successfully mastering the problem of invisibility, was Lloyd Inwood a whit behind. I went over in answer to a message of his to come and see how he was getting on. Now his laboratory occupied an isolated situation in the midst of his vast grounds. It was built in a pleasant little glade, surrounded on all sides by a dense forest growth, and was to be gained by way of a winding and erratic path. But I have travelled that path so often as to know every foot of it, and conceive my surprise when I came upon the glade and found no laboratory. The quaint shed structure with its red sandstone chimney was not. Nor did it look as if it ever had been. There were no signs of ruin, no debris, nothing.

I started to walk across what had once been its site. "This," I said to myself, "should be where the step went up to the door." Barely were the words out of my mouth when I stubbed my toe on some obstacle, pitched forward, and butted my head into something that FELT very much like a door. I reached out my hand. It was a door. I found the knob and turned it. And at once, as the door swung inward on its hinges, the whole interior of the laboratory impinged upon my vision. Greeting Lloyd, I closed the door and backed up the path a few paces. I could see nothing of the building. Returning and opening the door, at once all the furniture and every detail of the interior were visible. It was indeed startling, the sudden transition from void to light and form and color.

"What do you think of it, eh?" Lloyd asked, wringing my hand. "I slapped a couple of coats of absolute black on the outside yesterday afternoon to see how it worked. How's your head? you bumped it pretty solidly, I imagine."

"Never mind that," he interrupted my congratulations. "I've something better for you to do."

While he talked he began to strip, and when he stood naked before me he thrust a pot and brush into my hand and said, "Here, give me a coat of this."

It was an oily, shellac-like stuff, which spread quickly and easily over the skin and dried immediately.

"Merely preliminary and precautionary," he explained when I had finished; "but now for the real stuff."

I picked up another pot he indicated, and glanced inside, but could see nothing.

"It's empty," I said.

"Stick your finger in it."

I obeyed, and was aware of a sensation of cool moistness. On withdrawing my hand I glanced at the forefinger, the one I had immersed, but it had disappeared. I moved and knew from the alternate tension and relaxation of the muscles that I moved it, but it defied my sense of sight. To all appearances I had been shorn of a finger; nor could I get any visual impression of it till I extended it under the skylight and saw its shadow plainly blotted on the floor.

Lloyd chuckled. "Now spread it on, and keep your eyes open."

I dipped the brush into the seemingly empty pot, and gave him a long stroke across his chest. With the passage of the brush the living flesh disappeared from beneath. I covered his right leg, and he was a one-legged man defying all laws of gravitation. And so, stroke by stroke, member by member, I painted Lloyd Inwood into nothingness. It was a creepy experience, and I was glad when naught remained in sight but his burning black eyes, poised apparently unsupported in mid-air.

"I have a refined and harmless solution for them," he said. "A fine spray with an air-brush, and presto! I am not."

This deftly accomplished, he said, "Now I shall move about, and do you tell me what sensations you experience."

"In the first place, I cannot see you," I said, and I could hear his gleeful laugh from the midst of the emptiness. "Of course," I continued, "you cannot escape your shadow, but that was to be expected. When you pass between my eye and an object, the object disappears, but so unusual and incomprehensible is its disappearance that it seems to me as though my eyes had blurred. When you move rapidly, I experience a bewildering succession of blurs. The blurring sensation makes my eyes ache and my brain tired."

"Have you any other warnings of my presence?" he asked.

"No, and yes," I answered. "When you are near me I have feelings similar to those produced by dank warehouses, gloomy crypts, and deep mines. And as sailors feel the loom of the land on dark nights, so I think I feel the loom of your body. But it is all very vague and intangible."

Long we talked that last morning in his laboratory; and when I turned to go, he put his unseen hand in mine with nervous grip, and said, "Now I shall conquer the world!" And I could not dare to tell him of Paul Tichlorne's equal success.

At home I found a note from Paul, asking me to come up immediately, and it was high noon when I came spinning up the driveway on my wheel. Paul called me from the tennis court, and I dismounted and went over. But the court was empty. As I stood there, gaping open-mouthed, a tennis ball struck me on the arm, and as I turned about, another whizzed past my ear. For aught I could see of my assailant, they came whirling at me from out of space, and right well was I peppered with them. But when the balls already flung at me began to come back for a second whack, I realized the situation. Seizing a racquet and keeping my eyes open, I quickly saw a rainbow flash appearing and disappearing and darting over the ground. I took out after it, and when I laid the racquet upon it for a half-dozen stout blows, Paul's voice rang out:

"Enough! Enough! Oh! Ouch! Stop! You're landing on my naked skin, you know! Ow! O-w-w! I'll be good! I'll be good! I only wanted you to see my metamorphosis," he said ruefully, and I imagined he was rubbing his hurts.

A few minutes later we were playing tennis — a handicap on my part, for I could have no knowledge of his position save when all the angles between himself, the sun, and me, were in proper conjunction. Then he flashed, and only then. But the flashes were more brilliant than the rainbow--purest blue, most delicate violet, brightest yellow, and all the intermediary shades, with the scintillant brilliancy of the diamond, dazzling, blinding, iridescent.

But in the midst of our play I felt a sudden cold chill, reminding me of deep mines and gloomy crypts, such a chill as I had experienced that very morning. The next moment, close to the net, I saw a ball rebound in mid-air and empty space, and at the same instant, a score of feet away, Paul Tichlorne emitted a rainbow flash. It could not be he from whom the ball had rebounded, and with sickening dread I realized that Lloyd Inwood had come upon the scene. To make sure, I looked for his shadow, and there it was, a shapeless blotch the girth of his body, (the sun was overhead), moving along the ground. I remembered his threat, and felt sure that all the long years of rivalry were about to culminate in uncanny battle.

I cried a warning to Paul, and heard a snarl as of a wild beast, and an answering snarl. I saw the dark blotch move swiftly across the court, and a brilliant burst of vari-colored light moving with equal swiftness to meet it; and then shadow and flash came together and there was the sound of unseen blows. The net went down before my frightened eyes. I sprang toward the fighters, crying:

"For God's sake!"

But their locked bodies smote against my knees, and I was overthrown.

"You keep out of this, old man!"! heard the voice of Lloyd Inwood from out of the emptiness. And then Paul's voice crying, "Yes, we've had enough of peacemaking!"

From the sound of their voices I knew they had separated. I could not locate Paul, and so approached the shadow that represented Lloyd. But from the other side came a stunning blow on the point of my jaw, and I heard Paul scream angrily, "Now will you keep away?"

Then they came together again, the impact of their blows, their groans and gasps, and the swift flashings and shadow-movings telling plainly of the deadliness of the struggle.

I shouted for help, and Gaffer Bedshaw came running into the court. I could see, as he approached, that he was looking at me strangely, but he collided with the combatants and was hurled headlong to the ground. With despairing shriek and a cry of "O Lord, I've got 'em!" he sprang to his feet and tore madly out of the court.

I could do nothing, so I sat up, fascinated and powerless, and watched the struggle. The noonday sun beat down with dazzling brightness on the naked tennis court. And it was naked. All I could see was the blotch of shadow and the rainbow flashes, the dust rising from the invisible feet, the earth tearing up from beneath the straining foot-grips, and the wire screen bulge once or twice as their bodies hurled against it. That was all, and after a time even that ceased. There were no more flashes, and the shadow had become long and stationary; and I remembered their set boyish faces when they clung to the roots in the deep coolness of the pool.

They found me an hour afterward. Some inkling of what had happened got to the servants and they quitted the Tichlorne service in a body. Gaffer Bedshaw never recovered from the second shock he received, and is confined in a madhouse, hopelessly incurable. The secrets of their marvellous discoveries died with Paul and Lloyd, both laboratories being destroyed by grief-stricken relatives. As for myself, I no longer care for chemical research, and science is a tabooed topic in my household. I have returned to my roses. Nature’s colors are good enough for me.

The Sheriff of Kona

"You cannot escape liking the climate," Cudworth said, in reply to my panegyric on the Kona coast. "I was a young fellow, just out of college, when I came here eighteen years ago. I never went back, except, of course, to visit. And I warn you, if you have some spot dear to you on earth, not to linger here too long, else you will find this dearer."

We had finished dinner, which had been served on the big lanai, the one with a northerly exposure, though exposure is indeed a misnomer in so delectable a climate.

The candles had been put out, and a slim, white-clad Japanese slipped like a ghost through the silvery moonlight, presented us with cigars, and faded away into the darkness of the bungalow. I looked through a screen of banana and lehua trees, and down across the guava scrub to the quiet sea a thousand feet beneath. For a week, ever since I had landed from the tiny coasting-steamer, I had been stopping with Cudworth, and during that time no wind had ruffled that unvexed sea. True, there had been breezes, but they were the gentlest zephyrs that ever blew through summer isles. They were not winds; they were sighs--long, balmy sighs of a world at rest.

"A lotus land," I said.

"Where each day is like every day, and every day is a paradise of days," he answered. "Nothing ever happens. It is not too hot. It is not too cold. It is always just right. Have you noticed how the land and the sea breathe turn and turn about?"

Indeed, I had noticed that delicious rhythmic, breathing. Each morning I had watched the sea-breeze begin at the shore and slowly extend seaward as it blew the mildest, softest whiff of ozone to the land. It played over the sea, just faintly darkening its surface, with here and there and everywhere long lanes of calm, shifting, changing, drifting, according to the capricious kisses of the breeze. And each evening I had watched the sea breath die away to heavenly calm, and heard the land breath softly make its way through the coffee trees and monkey-pods.

"It is a land of perpetual calm," I said. "Does it ever blow here?--ever really blow? You know what I mean."

Cudworth shook his head and pointed eastward.

"How can it blow, with a barrier like that to stop it?"

Far above towered the huge bulks of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa, seeming to blot out half the starry sky. Two miles and a half above our heads they reared their own heads, white with snow that the tropic sun had failed to melt.

“Thirty miles away, right now, I’ll wager, it is blowing forty miles an hour.”

I smiled incredulously.

Cudworth stepped to the lanai telephone. He called up, in succession, Waimea, Kohala, and Hamakua. Snatches of his conversation told me that the wind was blowing: “Rip-snorting and back-jumping, eh? . . . How long? . . . Only a week? . . . Hello, Abe, is that you? . . . Yes, yes . . . You WILL plant coffee on the Hamakua coast . . . Hang your wind-breaks! You should see MY trees.”

“Blowing a gale,” he said to me, turning from hanging up the receiver. “I always have to joke Abe on his coffee. He has five hundred acres, and he’s done marvels in wind-breaking, but how he keeps the roots in the ground is beyond me. Blow? It always blows on the Hamakua side. Kohala reports a schooner under double reefs beating up the channel between Hawaii and Maui, and making heavy weather of it.”

“It is hard to realize,” I said lamely. “Doesn’t a little whiff of it ever eddy around somehow, and get down here?”

“Not a whiff. Our land-breeze is absolutely of no kin, for it begins this side of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. You see, the land radiates its heat quicker than the sea, and so, at night, the land breathes over the sea. In the day the land becomes warmer than the sea, and the sea breathes over the land . . . Listen! Here comes the land-breath now, the mountain wind.”

I could hear it coming, rustling softly through the coffee trees, stirring the monkey-pods, and sighing through the sugar-cane. On the lanai the hush still reigned. Then it came, the first feel of the mountain wind, faintly balmy, fragrant and spicy, and cool, deliciously cool, a silken coolness, a wine-like coolness--cool as only the mountain wind of Kona can be cool.

“Do you wonder that I lost my heart to Kona eighteen years ago?” he demanded. “I could never leave it now. I think I should die. It would be terrible. There was another man who loved it, even as I. I think he loved it more, for he was born here on the Kona coast. He was a great man, my best friend, my more than brother. But he left it, and he did not die.”

“Love?” I queried. “A woman?”

Cudworth shook his head.

“Nor will he ever come back, though his heart will be here until he dies.”

He paused and gazed down upon the beachlights of Kailua. I smoked silently and waited.

>“He was already in love . . . with his wife. Also, he had three children, and he loved them. They are in Honolulu now. The boy is going to college.”

“Some rash act?” I questioned, after a time, impatiently.

He shook his head. “Neither guilty of anything criminal, nor charged with anything criminal. He was the Sheriff of Kona.”

“You choose to be paradoxical,” I said.

“I suppose it does sound that way,” he admitted, “and that is the perfect hell of it.”

He looked at me searchingly for a moment, and then abruptly took up the tale.

“He was a leper. No, he was not born with it--no one is born with it; it came upon him. This man--what does it matter? Lyte Gregory was his name. Every kamaina knows the story. He was straight American stock, but he was built like the chieftains of old Hawaii. He stood six feet three. His stripped weight was two hundred and twenty pounds, not an ounce of which was not clean muscle or bone. He was the strongest man I have ever seen. He was an athlete and a giant. He was a god. He was my friend. And his heart and his soul were as big and as fine as his body.

“I wonder what you would do if you saw your friend, your brother, on the slippery lip of a precipice, slipping, slipping, and you were able to do nothing. That was just it. I could do nothing. I saw it coming, and I could do nothing. My God, man, what could I do? There it was, malignant and incontestable, the mark of the thing on his brow. No one else saw it. It was because I loved him so, I do believe, that I alone saw it. I could not credit the testimony of my senses. It was too incredibly horrible. Yet there it was, on his brow, on his ears. I had seen it, the slight puff of the earlobes--oh, so imperceptibly slight. I watched it for months. Then, next, hoping against hope, the darkening of the skin above both eyebrows--oh, so faint, just like the dimmest touch of sunburn. I should have thought it sunburn but that there was a shine to it, such an invisible shine, like a little highlight seen for a moment and gone the next. I tried to believe it was sunburn, only I could not. I knew better. No one noticed it but me. No one ever noticed it except Stephen Kaluna, and I did not know that till afterward. But I saw it coming, the whole damnable, unnamable awfulness of it; but I refused to think about the future. I was afraid. I could not. And of nights I cried over it.

"He was my friend. We fished sharks on Niihau together. We hunted wild cattle on Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa. We broke horses and branded steers on the Carter Ranch. We hunted goats through Haleakala. He taught me diving and surfing until I was nearly as clever as he, and he was cleverer than the average Kanaka. I have seen him dive in fifteen fathoms, and he could stay down two minutes. He was an amphibian and a mountaineer. He could climb wherever a goat dared climb. He was afraid of nothing. He was on the wrecked Luga, and he swam thirty miles in thirty-six hours in a heavy sea. He could fight his way out through breaking combers that would batter you and me to a jelly. He was a great, glorious man-god. We went through the Revolution together. We were both romantic loyalists. He was shot twice and sentenced to death. But he was too great a man for the republicans to kill. He laughed at them. Later, they gave him honour and made him Sheriff of Kona. He was a simple man, a boy that never grew up. His was no intricate brain pattern. He had no twists nor quirks in his mental processes. He went straight to the point, and his points were always simple.

"And he was sanguine. Never have I known so confident a man, nor a man so satisfied and happy. He did not ask anything from life. There was nothing left to be desired. For him life had no arrears. He had been paid in full, cash down, and in advance. What more could he possibly desire than that magnificent body, that iron constitution, that immunity from all ordinary ills, and that lowly wholesomeness of soul? Physically he was perfect. He had never been sick in his life. He did not know what a headache was. When I was so afflicted he used to look at me in wonder, and make me laugh with his clumsy attempts at sympathy. He did not understand such a thing as a headache. He could not understand. Sanguine? No wonder. How could he be otherwise with that tremendous vitality and incredible health?

"Just to show you what faith he had in his glorious star, and, also, what sanction he had for that faith. He was a youngster at the time--I had just met him--when he went into a poker game at Wailuku. There was a big German in it, Schultz his name was, and he played a brutal, domineering game. He had had a run of luck as well, and he was quite insufferable, when Lyte Gregory dropped in and took a hand. The very first hand it was Schultz's blind. Lyte came in, as well as the others, and Schultz raised them out--all except Lyte. He did not like the German's tone, and he raised him back. Schultz raised in turn, and in turn Lyte raised Schultz. So they went, back and forth. The stakes were big. And do you know what Lyte held? A pair of kings and three little clubs. It wasn't poker. Lyte wasn't playing poker. He was playing his optimism. He didn't know what Schultz held, but he raised and raised until he made Schultz squeal, and Schultz held three aces all the time. Think of it! A man with a pair of kings compelling three aces to see before the draw!

"Well, Schultz called for two cards. Another German was dealing, Schultz's friend at that. Lyte knew then that he was up against three of a kind. Now what did he do? What would you have done? Drawn three cards and held up the kings, of course. Not Lyte. He was playing optimism. He threw the kings away, held up the three little clubs, and drew two cards. He never looked at them. He looked across at Schultz to bet, and Schultz did bet, big. Since he himself held three aces he knew he had Lyte, because he played Lyte for threes, and, necessarily, they would have to be smaller threes. Poor Schultz! He was perfectly correct under the premises. His mistake was that he thought Lyte was playing poker. They bet back and forth for five minutes, until Schultz's certainty began to ooze out. And all the time Lyte had never looked at his two cards, and Schultz knew it. I could see Schultz think, and revive, and splurge with his bets again. But the strain was too much for him."

"'Hold on, Gregory,' he said at last. 'I've got you beaten from the start. I don't want any of your money. I've got--'"

"'Never mind what you've got,' Lyte interrupted. 'You don't know what I've got. I guess I'll take a look.'"

"He looked, and raised the German a hundred dollars. Then they went at it again, back and forth and back and forth, until Schultz weakened and called, and laid down his three aces. Lyte faced his five cards. They were all black. He had drawn two more clubs. Do you know, he just about broke Schultz's nerve as a poker player. He never played in the same form again. He lacked confidence after that, and was a bit wobbly."

"'But how could you do it?' I asked Lyte afterwards. 'You knew he had you beaten when he drew two cards. Besides, you never looked at your own draw.'"

"'I didn't have to look,' was Lyte's answer. 'I knew they were two clubs all the time. They just had to be two clubs. Do you think I was going to let that big Dutchman beat me? It was impossible that he should beat me. It is not my way to be beaten. I just have to win. Why, I'd have been the most surprised man in this world if they hadn't been all clubs.'"

"That was Lyte's way, and maybe it will help you to appreciate his colossal optimism. As he put it he just had to succeed, to fare well, to prosper. And in that same incident, as in ten thousand others, he found his sanction. The thing was that he did succeed, did prosper. That was why he was afraid of nothing. Nothing could ever happen to him. He knew it, because nothing had ever happened to him. That time the Luga was lost and he swam thirty miles, he was in the water two whole nights and a day. And during all that terrible stretch of time he never lost hope once, never once doubted the outcome. He just knew he was going to make the land. He told me so himself, and I know it was the truth.

"Well, that is the kind of a man Lyte Gregory was. He was of a different race from ordinary, ailing mortals. He was a lordly being, untouched by common ills and misfortunes. Whatever he wanted he got. He won his wife--one of the Caruthers, a little beauty--from a dozen rivals. And she settled down and made him the finest wife in the world. He wanted a boy. He got it. He wanted a girl and another boy. He got them. And they were just right, without spot or blemish, with chests like little barrels, and with all the inheritance of his own health and strength.

"And then it happened. The mark of the beast was laid upon him. I watched it for a year. It broke my heart. But he did not know it, nor did anybody else guess it except that cursed hapa-haole, Stephen Kaluna. He knew it, but I did not know that he did. And--yes--Doc Strowbridge knew it. He was the federal physician, and he had developed the leper eye. You see, part of his business was to examine suspects and order them to the receiving station at Honolulu. And Stephen Kaluna had developed the leper eye. The disease ran strong in his family, and four or five of his relatives were already on Molokai.

"The trouble arose over Stephen Kaluna's sister. When she became suspect, and before Doc Strowbridge could get hold of her, her brother spirited her away to some hiding-place. Lyte was Sheriff of Kona, and it was his business to find her.

"We were all over at Hilo that night, in Ned Austin's. Stephen Kaluna was there when we came in, by himself, in his cups, and quarrelsome. Lyte was laughing over some joke--that huge, happy laugh of a giant boy.

Kaluna spat contemptuously on the floor. Lyte noticed, so did everybody; but he ignored the fellow. Kaluna was looking for trouble. He took it as a personal grudge that Lyte was trying to apprehend his sister. In half a dozen ways he advertised his displeasure at Lyte's presence, but Lyte ignored him. I imagined Lyte was a bit sorry for him, for the hardest duty of his office was the apprehension of lepers. It is not a nice thing to go in to a man's house and tear away a father, mother, or child, who has done no wrong, and to send such a one to perpetual banishment on Molokai. Of course, it is necessary as a protection to society, and Lyte, I do believe, would have been the first to apprehend his own father did he become suspect.

"Finally, Kaluna blurted out: 'Look here, Gregory, you think you're going to find Kalaniweo, but you're not.'

"Kalaniweo was his sister. Lyte glanced at him when his name was called, but he made no answer. Kaluna was furious. He was working himself up all the time.

"'I'll tell you one thing,' he shouted. 'You'll be on Molokai yourself before ever you get Kalaniweo there. I'll tell you what you are. You've no right to be in the company of honest men. You've made a terrible fuss talking about your duty, haven't you? You've sent many lepers to Molokai, and knowing all the time you belonged there yourself.'

"I'd seen Lyte angry more than once, but never quite so angry as at that moment. Leprosy with us, you know, is not a thing to jest about. He made one leap across the floor, dragging Kaluna out of his chair with a clutch on his neck. He shook him back and forth savagely, till you could hear the half-caste's teeth rattling.

"'What do you mean?' Lyte was demanding. 'Spit it out, man, or I'll choke it out of you!'

"You know, in the West there is a certain phrase that a man must smile while uttering. So with us of the islands, only our phrase is related to leprosy. No matter what Kaluna was, he was no coward. As soon as Lyte eased the grip on his throat he answered:-

"'I'll tell you what I mean. You are a leper yourself.'

Lyte suddenly flung the half-caste sideways into a chair, letting him down easily enough. Then Lyte broke out into honest, hearty laughter. But he laughed alone, and when he discovered it he looked around at our faces. I had reached his side and was trying to get him to come away, but he took no notice of me. He was gazing, fascinated, at Kaluna, who was brushing at his own throat in a flurried, nervous way, as if to brush off the contamination of the fingers that had clutched him. The action was unreasoned, genuine.

"Lyte looked around at us, slowly passing from face to face.

"'My God, fellows! My God!' he said.

"He did not speak it. It was more a hoarse whisper of fright and horror. It was fear that fluttered in his throat, and I don't think that ever in his life before he had known fear.

"Then his colossal optimism asserted itself, and he laughed again.

"'A good joke--whoever put it up,' he said. 'The drinks are on me. I had a scare for a moment. But, fellows, don't do it again, to anybody. It's too serious. I tell you I died a thousand deaths in that moment. I thought of my wife and the kids, and . . . '

"His voice broke, and the half-caste, still throat-brushing, drew his eyes. He was puzzled and worried.

"'John,'> he said, turning toward me.

"His> jovial, rotund voice rang in my ears. But I could not answer. I was swallowing hard at that moment, and besides, I knew my face didn't look just right.

"'John,' he called again, taking a step nearer.

"He called timidly, and of all nightmares of horrors the most frightful was to hear timidity in Lyte Gregory's voice.

"'John, John, what does it mean?' he went on, still more timidly. 'It's a joke, isn't it? John, here's my hand. If I were a leper would I offer you my hand? Am I a leper, John?'

"He held out his hand, and what in high heaven or hell did I care? He was my friend. I took his hand, though it cut me to the heart to see the way his face brightened.

"'It was only a joke, Lyte,' I said. 'We fixed it up on you. But you're right. It's too serious. We won't do it again.'

"He did not laugh this time. He smiled, as a man awakened from a bad dream and still oppressed by the substance of the dream.

"'All right, then,' he said. 'Don't do it again, and I'll stand for the drinks. But I may as well confess that you fellows had me going south for a moment. Look at the way I've been sweating.'

"He sighed and wiped the sweat from his forehead as he started to step toward the bar.

"'It is no joke,' Kaluna said abruptly. I looked murder at him, and I felt murder, too. But I dared not speak or strike. That would have precipitated the catastrophe which I somehow had a mad hope of still averting.

"'It is no joke,' Kaluna repeated. 'You are a leper, Lyte Gregory, and you've no right putting your hands on honest men's flesh--on the clean flesh of honest men.'

"Then Gregory flared up.

"'The joke has gone far enough! Quit it! Quit it, I say, Kaluna, or I'll give you a beating!'

"'You undergo a bacteriological examination,' Kaluna answered, 'and then you can beat me--to death, if you want to. Why, man, look at yourself there in the glass. You can see it. Anybody can see it. You're developing the lion face. See where the skin is darkened there over your eyes.

"Lyte peered and peered, and I saw his hands trembling.

"'I can see nothing,' he said finally, then turned on the hapa-haole. 'You have a black heart, Kaluna. And I am not ashamed to say that you have given me a scare that no man has a right to give another. I take you at your word. I am going to settle this thing now. I am going straight to Doc Strowbridge. And when I come back, watch out.'

"He never looked at us, but started for the door.

"'You wait here, John,' he said, waving me back from accompanying him.

"We stood around like a group of ghosts.

"'It is the truth,' Kaluna said. 'You could see it for yourselves.'

"They looked at me, and I nodded. Harry Burnley lifted his glass to his lips, but lowered it untasted. He spilled half of it over the bar. His lips were trembling like a child that is about to cry. Ned Austin made a clatter in the ice-chest. He wasn't looking for anything. I don't think he knew what he was doing. Nobody spoke. Harry Burnley's lips were trembling harder than ever. Suddenly, with a most horrible, malignant expression he drove his fist into Kaluna's face. He followed it up. We made no attempt to separate them. We didn't care if he killed the half-caste. It was a terrible beating. We weren't interested. I don't even remember when Burnley ceased and let the poor devil crawl away. We were all too dazed.

"Doc Strowbridge told me about it afterward. He was working late over a report when Lyte came into his office. Lyte had already recovered his optimism, and came swinging in, a trifle angry with Kaluna to be sure, but very certain of himself. ‘What could I do?’ Doc asked me. ‘I knew he had it. I had seen it coming on for months. I couldn’t answer him. I couldn’t say yes. I don’t mind telling you I broke down and cried. He pleaded for the bacteriological test. “Snip out a piece, Doc,” he said, over and over. “Snip out a piece of skin and make the test.”

“The way Doc Strowbridge cried must have convinced Lyte. The Claudine was leaving next morning for Honolulu. We caught him when he was going aboard. You see, he was headed for Honolulu to give himself up to the Board of Health. We could do nothing with him. He had sent too many to Molokai to hang back himself. We argued for Japan. But he wouldn’t hear of it. ‘I’ve got to take my medicine, fellows,’ was all he would say, and he said it over and over. He was obsessed with the idea.

“He wound up all his affairs from the Receiving Station at Honolulu, and went down to Molokai. He didn’t get on well there. The resident physician wrote us that he was a shadow of his old self. You see he was grieving about his wife and the kids. He knew we were taking care of them, but it hurt him just the same. After six months or so I went down to Molokai. I sat on one side a plate-glass window, and he on the other. We looked at each other through the glass and talked through what might be called a speaking tube. But it was hopeless. He had made up his mind to remain. Four mortal hours I argued. I was exhausted at the end. My steamer was whistling for me, too.

“But we couldn’t stand for it. Three months later we chartered the schooner Halcyon. She was an opium smuggler, and she sailed like a witch. Her master was a squarehead who would do anything for money, and we made a charter to China worth his while. He sailed from San Francisco, and a few days later we took out Landhouse’s sloop for a cruise. She was only a five-ton yacht, but we slammed her fifty miles to windward into the north-east trade. Seasick? I never suffered so in my life. Out of sight of land we picked up the Halcyon, and Burnley and I went aboard.

“We ran down to Molokai, arriving about eleven at night. The schooner hove to and we landed through the surf in a whale-boat at Kalawao--the place, you know, where Father Damien died. That squarehead was game. With a couple of revolvers strapped on him he came right along. The three of us crossed the peninsula to Kalaupapa, something like two miles. Just imagine hunting in the dead of night for a man in a settlement of over a thousand lepers. You see, if the alarm was given, it was all off with us. It was strange ground, and pitch dark. The leper's dogs came out and bayed at us, and we stumbled around till we got lost.

"The squarehead solved it. He led the way into the first detached house. We shut the door after us and struck a light. There were six lepers. We routed them up, and I talked in native. What I wanted was a kokua. A kokua is, literally, a helper, a native who is clean that lives in the settlement and is paid by the Board of Health to nurse the lepers, dress their sores, and such things. We stayed in the house to keep track of the inmates, while the squarehead led one of them off to find a kokua. He got him, and he brought him along at the point of his revolver. But the kokua was all right. While the squarehead guarded the house, Burnley and I were guided by the kokua to Lyte's house. He was all alone.

"'I thought you fellows would come,' Lyte said. 'Don't touch me, John. How's Ned, and Charley, and all the crowd? Never mind, tell me afterward. I am ready to go now. I've had nine months of it. Where's the boat?'

"We started back for the other house to pick up the squarehead. But the alarm had got out. Lights were showing in the houses, and doors were slamming. We had agreed that there was to be no shooting unless absolutely necessary, and when we were halted we went at it with our fists and the butts of our revolvers. I found myself tangled up with a big man. I couldn't keep him off me, though twice I smashed him fairly in the face with my fist. He grappled with me, and we went down, rolling and scrambling and struggling for grips. He was getting away with me, when some one came running up with a lantern. Then I saw his face. How shall I describe the horror of it. It was not a face--only wasted or wasting features--a living ravage, noseless, lipless, with one ear swollen and distorted, hanging down to the shoulder. I was frantic. In a clinch he hugged me close to him until that ear flapped in my face. Then I guess I went insane. It was too terrible. I began striking him with my revolver. How it happened I don't know, but just as I was getting clear he fastened upon me with his teeth. The whole side of my hand was in that lipless mouth. Then I struck him with the revolver butt squarely between the eyes, and his teeth relaxed."

Cudworth held his hand to me in the moonlight, and I could see the scars. It looked as if it had been mangled by a dog.

"Weren't you afraid?" I asked.

"I was. Seven years I waited. You know, it takes that long for the disease to incubate. Here in Kona I waited, and it did not come. But there was never a day of those seven years, and never a night, that I did not look out on . . . on all this . . . “ His voice broke as he swept his eyes from the moon-bathed sea beneath to the snowy summits above. “I could not bear to think of losing it, of never again beholding Kona. Seven years! I stayed clean. But that is why I am single. I was engaged. I could not dare to marry while I was in doubt. She did not understand. She went away to the States and married. I have never seen her since.

“Just at the moment I got clear of the leper policeman there was a rush and clatter of hoofs like a cavalry charge. It was the squarehead. He had been afraid of a rumpus and he had improved his time by making those blessed lepers he was guarding saddle up four horses. We were ready for him. Lyte had accounted for three kokuas, and between us we untangled Burnley from a couple more. The whole settlement was in an uproar by that time, and as we dashed away somebody opened upon us with a Winchester. It must have been Jack McVeigh, the superintendent of Molokai.

“That was a ride! Leper horses, leper saddles, leper bridles, pitch-black darkness, whistling bullets, and a road none of the best. And the squarehead’s horse was a mule, and he didn’t know how to ride, either. But we made the whaleboat, and as we shoved off through the surf we could hear the horses coming down the hill from Kalaupapa.

“You’re going to Shanghai. You look Lyte Gregory up. He is employed in a German firm there. Take him out to dinner. Open up wine. Give him everything of the best, but don’t let him pay for anything. Send the bill to me. His wife and the kids are in Honolulu, and he needs the money for them. I know. He sends most of his salary, and lives like an anchorite. And tell him about Kona. There’s where his heart is. Tell him all you can about Kona.”

Shin-Bones

They have gone down to the pit with their weapons of war, and they have laid their swords under their heads.

"It was a sad thing to see the old lady revert."

Prince Akuli shot an apprehensive glance sideward to where, under the shade of a kukui tree, an old wahine (Hawaiian woman) was just settling herself to begin on some work in hand.

"Yes," he nodded half-sadly to me, "in her last years Hiwilani went back to the old ways, and to the old beliefs — in secret, of course. And, believe me, she was some collector herself. You should have seen her bones. She had them all about her bedroom, in big jars, and they constituted most all her relatives, except a half-dozen or so that Kanau beat her out of by getting to them first. The way the pair of them used to quarrel about those bones was awe-inspiring. And it gave me the creeps, when I was a boy, to go into that big, for-ever-twilight room of hers, and know that in this jar was all that remained of my maternal grand-aunt, and that in that jar was my great-grandfather, and that in all the jars were the preserved bone-remnants of the shadowy dust of the ancestors whose seed had come down and been incorporated in the living, breathing me. Hiwilani had gone quite native at the last, sleeping on mats on the hard floor — she'd fired out of the room the great, royal, canopied four-poster that had been presented to her grandmother by Lord Byron, who was the cousin of the Don Juan Byron and came here in the frigate Blonde in 1825.

"She went back to all native, at the last, and I can see her yet, biting a bite out of the raw fish ere she tossed them to her women to eat. And she made them finish her poi, or whatever else she did not finish of herself. She — "

But he broke off abruptly, and by the sensitive dilation of his nostrils and by the expression of his mobile features I saw that he had read in the air and identified the odour that offended him.

"Deuce take it!" he cried to me. "It stinks to heaven. And I shall be doomed to wear it until we're rescued."

There was no mistaking the object of his abhorrence. The ancient crone was making a dearest-loved lei (wreath) of the fruit of the hala which is the screw-pine or pandanus of the South Pacific. She was cutting the many sections or nut-envelopes of the fruit into fluted bell-shapes preparatory to stringing them on the twisted and tough inner bark of the hau tree. It certainly smelled to heaven, but, to me, a malahini, the smell was wine-woody and fruit-juicy and not unpleasant.

Prince Akuli's limousine had broken an axle a quarter of a mile away, and he and I had sought shelter from the sun in this veritable bowery of a mountain home. Humble and grass-thatched was the house, but it stood in a treasure-garden of begonias that sprayed their delicate blooms a score of feet above our heads, that were like trees, with willowy trunks of trees as thick as a man's arm. Here we refreshed ourselves with drinking-coconuts, while a cowboy rode a dozen miles to the nearest telephone and summoned a machine from town. The town itself we could see, the Lakanaii metropolis of Olokona, a smudge of smoke on the shore-line, as we looked down across the miles of cane-fields, the billow-wreathed reef-lines, and the blue haze of ocean to where the island of Oahu shimmered like a dim opal on the horizon.

Maui is the Valley Isle of Hawaii, and Kauai the Garden Isle; but Lakanaii, lying abreast of Oahu, is recognized in the present, and was known of old and always, as the Jewel Isle of the group. Not the largest, nor merely the smallest, Lakanaii is conceded by all to be the wildest, the most wildly beautiful, and, in its size, the richest of all the islands. Its sugar tonnage per acre is the highest, its mountain beef-cattle the fattest, its rainfall the most generous without ever being disastrous. It resembles Kauai in that it is the first-formed and therefore the oldest island, so that it had had time sufficient to break down its lava rock into the richest soil, and to erode the canyons between the ancient craters until they are like Grand Canyons of the Colorado, with numberless waterfalls plunging thousands of feet in the sheer or dissipating into veils of vapour, and evanescing in mid-air to descend softly and invisibly through a mirage of rainbows, like so much dew or gentle shower, upon the abyss-floors.

Yet Lakanaii is easy to describe. But how can one describe Prince Akuli? To know him is to know all Lakanaii most thoroughly. In addition, one must know thoroughly a great deal of the rest of the world. In the first place, Prince Akuli has no recognized nor legal right to be called "Prince." Furthermore, "Akuli" means the "squid." So that Prince Squid could scarcely be the dignified title of the straight descendant of the oldest and highest aliis (high chiefs) of Hawaii — an old and exclusive stock, wherein, in the ancient way of the Egyptian Pharaohs, brothers and sisters had even wed on the throne for the reason that they could not marry beneath rank, that in all their known world there was none of higher rank, and that, at every hazard, the dynasty must be perpetuated.

I have heard Prince Akuli's singing historians (inherited from his father) chanting their interminable genealogies, by which they demonstrated that he was the highest alii in all Hawaii. Beginning with Wakea, who is their Adam, and with Papa, their Eve, through as many generations as there are letters in our alphabet they trace down to Nanakaoko, the first ancestor born in Hawaii and whose wife was Kahihiokalani. Later, but always highest, their generations split from the generations of Ua, who was the founder of the two distinct lines of the Kauai and Oahu kings.

In the eleventh century A.D., by the Lakanaii historians, at the time brothers and sisters mated because none existed to excel them, their rank received a boost of new blood of rank that was next to heaven's door. One Hoikemaha, steering by the stars and the ancient traditions, arrived in a great double-canoe from Samoa. He married a lesser alii of Lakanaii, and when his three sons were grown, returned with them to Samoa to bring back his own youngest brother. But with him he brought back Kumi, the son of Tui Manua, which latter's rank was highest in all Polynesia, and barely second to that of the demigods and gods. So the estimable seed of Kumi, eight centuries before, had entered into the aliis of Lakanaii, and been passed down by them in the undeviating line to reposit in Prince Akuli.

Him I first met, talking with an Oxford accent, in the officers' mess of the Black Watch in South Africa. This was just before that famous regiment was cut to pieces at Magersfontein. He had as much right to be in that mess as he had to his accent, for he was Oxford-educated and held the Queen's Commission. With him, as his guest, taking a look at the war, was Prince Cupid, so nicknamed, but the true prince of all Hawaii, including Lakanaii, whose real and legal title was Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaole, and who might have been the living King of Hawaii Nei had it not been for the haole (white man) Revolution and Annexation — this, despite the fact that Prince Cupid's alii genealogy was lesser to the heaven-boosted genealogy of Prince Akuli. For Prince Akuli might have been King of Lakanaii, and of all Hawaii, perhaps, had not his grandfather been soundly thrashed by the first and greatest of the Kamehamehas.

This had occurred in the year 1810, in the booming days of the sandalwood trade, and in the same year that the King of Kauai came in, and was good, and ate out of Kamehameha's hand. Prince Akuli's grandfather, in that year, had received his trouncing and subjugating because he was "old school." He had not imaged island empire in terms of gunpowder and haole gunners. Kamehameha, farther-visioned, had annexed the service of haoles, including such men as Isaac Davis, mate and sole survivor of the massacred crew of the schooner Fair American, and John Young, captured boatswain of the scow Eleanor. And Isaac Davis, and John Young, and others of their waywardly adventurous ilk, with six-pounder brass carronades from the captured Iphigenia and Fair American, had destroyed the war canoes and shattered the morale of the King of Lakanaii's land-fighters, receiving duly in return from Kamehameha, according to agreement: Isaac Davis, six hundred mature and fat hogs; John Young, five hundred of the same described pork on the hoof that was split.

And so, out of all incests and lusts of the primitive cultures and beast-man's gropings toward the stature of manhood, out of all red murders, and brute battlings, and matings with the younger brothers of the demigods, world-polished, Oxford-accented, twentieth century to the tick of the second, comes Prince Akuli, Prince Squid, pure-veined Polynesian, a living bridge across the thousand centuries, comrade, friend, and fellow-traveller out of his wrecked seven-thousand-dollar limousine, marooned with me in a begonia paradise fourteen hundred feet above the sea, and his island metropolis of Olokona, to tell me of his mother, who reverted in her old age to ancientness of religious concept and ancestor worship, and collected and surrounded herself with the charnel bones of those who had been her forerunners back in the darkness of time.

"King Kalakaua started this collecting fad, over on Oahu," Prince Akuli continued. "And his queen, Kapiolani, caught the fad from him. They collected everything — old makaloa mats, old tapas, old calabashes, old double-canoes, and idols which the priests had saved from the general destruction in 1819. I haven't seen a pearl-shell fish-hook in years, but I swear that Kalakaua accumulated ten thousand of them, to say nothing of human jaw-bone fish-hooks, and feather cloaks, and capes and helmets, and stone adzes, and poi-pounders of phallic design. When he and Kapiolani made their royal progresses around the islands, their hosts had to hide away their personal relics. For to the king, in theory, belongs all property of his people; and with Kalakaua, when it came to the old things, theory and practice were one.

"From him my father, Kanau, got the collecting bee in his bonnet, and Hiwilani was likewise infected. But father was modern to his finger-tips. He believed neither in the gods of the kahunas (priests) nor of the missionaries. He didn't believe in anything except sugar stocks, horse-breeding, and that his grandfather had been a fool in not collecting a few Isaac Davises and John Youngs and brass carronades before he went to war with Kamehameha. So he collected curios in the pure collector's spirit; but my mother took it seriously. That was why she went in for bones. I remember, too, she had an ugly old stone-idol she used to yammer to and crawl around on the floor before. It's in the Deacon Museum now. I sent it there after her death, and her collection of bones to the Royal Mausoleum in Olokona.

"I don't know whether you remember her father was Kaaukuu. Well, he was, and he was a giant. When they built the Mausoleum, his bones, nicely cleaned and preserved, were dug out of their hiding-place, and placed in the Mausoleum. Hiwilani had an old retainer, Ahuna. She stole the key from Kanau one night, and made Ahuna go and steal her father's bones out of the Mausoleum. I know. And he must have been a giant. She kept him in one of her big jars. One day, when I was a tidy size of a lad, and curious to know if Kaaukuu was as big as tradition had him, I fished his intact lower jaw out of the jar, and the wrappings, and tried it on. I stuck my head right through it, and it rested around my neck and on my shoulders like a horse collar. And every tooth was in the jaw, whiter than porcelain, without a cavity, the enamel unstained and unchipped. I got the walloping of my life for that offence, although she had to call old Ahuna in to help give it to me. But the incident served me well. It won her confidence in me that I was not afraid of the bones of the dead ones, and it won for me my Oxford education. As you shall see, if that car doesn't arrive first.

"Old Ahuna was one of the real old ones with the hall-mark on him and branded into him of faithful born-slave service. He knew more about my mother's family, and my father's, than did both of them put together. And he knew, what no living other knew, the burial-place of centuries, where were hid the bones of most of her ancestors and of Kanau's. Kanau couldn't worm it out of the old fellow, who looked upon Kanau as an apostate.

"Hiwilani struggled with the old codger for years. How she ever succeeded is beyond me. Of course, on the face of it, she was faithful to the old religion. This might have persuaded Ahuna to loosen up a little. Or she may have jolted fear into him; for she knew a lot of the line of chatter of the old Huni sorcerers, and she could make a noise like being on terms of utmost intimacy with Uli, who is the chiefest god of sorcery of all the sorcerers. She could skin the ordinary kahuna lapaau (medicine man) when it came to praying to Lonopuha and Koleamoku; read dreams and visions and signs and omens and indigestions to beat the band; make the practitioners under the medicine god, Maiola, look like thirty cents; pull off a pule hoe incantation that would make them dizzy; and she claimed to a practice of kahuna hoenoho, which is modern spiritism, second to none. I have myself seen her drink the wind, throw a fit, and prophesy. The aumakuas were brothers to her when she slipped offerings to them across the altars of the ruined heiaus with a line of prayer that was as unintelligible to me as it was hair-raising. And as for old Ahuna, she could make him get down on the floor and yammer and bite himself when she pulled the real mystery dope on him.

“Nevertheless, my private opinion is that it was the anaana stuff that got him. She snipped off a lock of his hair one day with a pair of manicure scissors. This lock of hair was what we call the maunu, meaning the bait. And she took jolly good care to let him know she had that bit of his hair. Then she tipped it off to him that she had buried it, and was deeply engaged each night in her offerings and incantations to Uli.”

“That was the regular praying-to-death?” I queried in the pause of Prince Akuli’s lighting his cigarette.

“Sure thing,” he nodded. “And Ahuna fell for it. First he tried to locate the hiding-place of the bait of his hair. Failing that, he hired a pahiuhiu sorcerer to find it for him. But Hiwilani queered that game by threatening to the sorcerer to practice apo leo on him, which is the art of permanently depriving a person of the power of speech without otherwise injuring him.

“Then it was that Ahuna began to pine away and get more like a corpse every day. In desperation he appealed to Kanau. I happened to be present. You have heard what sort of a man my father was.

“‘Pig!’ he called Ahuna. ‘Swine-brains! Stinking fish! Die and be done with it. You are a fool. It is all nonsense. There is nothing in anything. The drunken haole, Howard, can prove the missionaries wrong. Square-face gin proves Howard wrong. The doctors say he won’t last six months. Even square-face gin lies. Life is a liar, too. And here are hard times upon us, and a slump in sugar. Glanders has got into my brood mares. I wish I could lie down and sleep for a hundred years, and wake up to find sugar up a hundred points.'

"Father was something of a philosopher himself, with a bitter wit and a trick of spitting out staccato epigrams. He clapped his hands. 'Bring me a high-ball,' he commanded; 'no, bring me two high-balls.' Then he turned on Ahuna. 'Go and let yourself die, old heathen, survival of darkness, blight of the Pit that you are. But don't die on these premises. I desire merriment and laughter, and the sweet tickling of music, and the beauty of youthful motion, not the croaking of sick toads and googly-eyed corpses about me still afoot on their shaky legs. I'll be that way soon enough if I live long enough. And it will be my everlasting regret if I don't live long enough. Why in hell did I sink that last twenty thousand into Curtis's plantation? Howard warned me the slump was coming, but I thought it was the square-face making him lie. And Curtis has blown his brains out, and his head luna has run away with his daughter, and the sugar chemist has got typhoid, and everything's going to smash.'

"He clapped his hands for his servants, and commanded: 'Bring me my singing boys. And the hula dancers — plenty of them. And send for old Howard. Somebody's got to pay, and I'll shorten his six months of life by a month. But above all, music. Let there be music. It is stronger than drink, and quicker than opium.'

"He with his music druggery! It was his father, the old savage, who was entertained on board a French frigate, and for the first time heard an orchestra. When the little concert was over, the captain, to find which piece he liked best, asked which piece he'd like repeated. Well, when grandfather got done describing, what piece do you think it was?"

I gave up, while the Prince lighted a fresh cigarette.

"Why, it was the first one, of course. Not the real first one, but the tuning up that preceded it."

I nodded, with eyes and face mirthful of appreciation, and Prince Akuli, with another apprehensive glance at the old wahine and her half-made hala lei, returned to his tale of the bones of his ancestors.

"It was somewhere around this stage of the game that old Ahuna gave in to Hiwilani. He didn't exactly give in. He compromised. That's where I come in. If he would bring her the bones of her mother, and of her grandfather (who was the father of Kaaukuu, and who by tradition was rumoured to have been even bigger than his giant son, she would return to Ahuna the bait of his hair she was praying him to death with. He, on the other hand, stipulated that he was not to reveal to her the secret burial-place of all the alii of Lakanaii all the way back. Nevertheless, he was too old to dare the adventure alone, must be helped by some one who of necessity would come to know the secret, and I was that one. I was the highest alii, beside my father and mother, and they were no higher than I.

"So I came upon the scene, being summoned into the twilight room to confront those two dubious old ones who dealt with the dead. They were a pair — mother fat to despair of helplessness, Ahuna thin as a skeleton and as fragile. Of her one had the impression that if she lay down on her back she could not roll over without the aid of block-and-tackle; of Ahuna one's impression was that the tooth-pickedness of him would shatter to splinters if one bumped into him.

"And when they had broached the matter, there was more pilikia (trouble). My father's attitude stiffened my resolution. I refused to go on the bone-snatching expedition. I said I didn't care a whoop for the bones of all the aliis of my family and race. You see, I had just discovered Jules Verne, loaned me by old Howard, and was reading my head off. Bones? When there were North Poles, and Centres of Earths, and hairy comets to ride across space among the stars! Of course I didn't want to go on any bone-snatching expedition. I said my father was able-bodied, and he could go, splitting equally with her whatever bones he brought back. But she said he was only a blamed collector — or words to that effect, only stronger.

"'I know him,' she assured me. 'He'd bet his mother's bones on a horse-race or an ace-full.'

"I stood with fat her when it came to modern scepticism, and I told her the whole thing was rubbish. 'Bones?' I said. 'What are bones? Even field mice, and many rats, and cockroaches have bones, though the roaches wear their bones outside their meat instead of inside. The difference between man and other animals,' I told her, 'is not bones, but brain. Why, a bullock has bigger bones than a man, and more than one fish I've eaten has more bones, while a whale beats creation when it comes to bone.'

"It was frank talk, which is our Hawaiian way, as you have long since learned. In return, equally frank, she regretted she hadn't given me away as a feeding child when I was born. Next she bewailed that she had ever borne me. From that it was only a step to anaana me. She threatened me with it, and I did the bravest thing I have ever done. Old Howard had given me a knife of many blades, and corkscrews, and screw-drivers, and all sorts of contrivances, including a tiny pair of scissors. I proceeded to pare my finger-nails.

"'There,' I said, as I put the parings into her hand. 'Just to show you what I think of it. There's bait and to spare. Go on and anaana me if you can.'

"I have said it was brave. It was. I was only fifteen, and I had lived all my days in the thick of the mystery stuff, while my scepticism, very recently acquired, was only skin-deep. I could be a sceptic out in the open in the sunshine. But I was afraid of the dark. And in that twilight room, the bones of the dead all about me in the big jars, why, the old lady had me scared stiff. As we say to-day, she had my goat. Only I was brave and didn't let on. And I put my bluff across, for my mother flung the parings into my face and burst into tears. Tears in an elderly woman weighing three hundred and twenty pounds are scarcely impressive, and I hardened the brassiness of my bluff.

"She shifted her attack, and proceeded to talk with the dead. Nay, more, she summoned them there, and, though I was all ripe to see but couldn't, Ahuna saw the father of Kaaukuu in the corner and lay down on the floor and yammered. Just the same, although I almost saw the old giant, I didn't quite see him.

"'Let him talk for himself,' I said. But Hiwilani persisted in doing the talking for him, and in laying upon me his solemn injunction that I must go with Ahuna to the burial-place and bring back the bones desired by my mother. But I argued that if the dead ones could be invoked to kill living men by wasting sicknesses, and that if the dead ones could transport themselves from their burial-crypts into the corner of her room, I couldn't see why they shouldn't leave their bones behind them, there in her room and ready to be jarred, when they said good-bye and departed for the middle world, the over world, or the under world, or wherever they abided when they weren't paying social calls.

"Whereupon mother let loose on poor old Ahuna, or let loose upon him the ghost of Kaaukuu's father, supposed to be crouching there in the corner, who commanded Ahuna to divulge to her the burial-place. I tried to stiffen him up, telling him to let the old ghost divulge the secret himself, than whom nobody else knew it better, seeing that he had resided there upwards of a century. But Ahuna was old school. He possessed no iota of scepticism.

The more Hiwilani frightened him, the more he rolled on the floor and the louder he yammered.

"But when he began to bite himself, I gave in. I felt sorry for him; but, over and beyond that, I began to admire him. He was sterling stuff, even if he was a survival of darkness. Here, with the fear of mystery cruelly upon him, believing Hiwilani's dope implicitly, he was caught between two fidelities. She was his living alii, his alii kapo (sacred chiefess). He must be faithful to her, yet more faithful must he be to all the dead and gone aliis of her line who depended solely on him that their bones should not be disturbed.

"I gave in. But I, too, imposed stipulations. Steadfastly had my father, new school, refused to let me go to England for my education. That sugar was slumping was reason sufficient for him. Steadfastly had my mother, old school, refused, her heathen mind too dark to place any value on education, while it was shrewd enough to discern that education led to unbelief in all that was old. I wanted to study, to study science, the arts, philosophy, to study everything old Howard knew, which enabled him, on the edge of the grave, undauntedly to sneer at superstition, and to give me Jules Verne to read. He was an Oxford man before he went wild and wrong, and it was he who had set the Oxford bee buzzing in my noddle.

"In the end Ahuna and I, old school and new school leagued together, won out. Mother promised that she'd make father send me to England, even if she had to pester him into a prolonged drinking that would make his digestion go back on him. Also, Howard was to accompany me, so that I could decently bury him in England. He was a queer one, old Howard, an individual if there ever was one. Let me tell you a little story about him. It was when Kalakaua was starting on his trip around the world. You remember, when Armstrong, and Judd, and the drunken valet of a German baron accompanied him. Kalakaua made the proposition to Howard . . . "

But here the long-apprehended calamity fell upon Prince Akuli. The old wahine had finished her lei hala. Barefooted, with no adornment of femininity, clad in a shapeless shift of much-washed cotton, with age-withered face and labour-gnarled hands, she cringed before him and crooned a mele in his honour, and, still cringing, put the lei around his neck. It is true the hala smelled most freshly strong, yet was the act beautiful to me, and the old woman herself beautiful to me. My mind leapt into the Prince's narrative so that to Ahuna I could not help likening her.

Oh, truly, to be an alii in Hawaii, even in this second decade of the twentieth century, is no light thing. The alii, utterly of the new, must be kindly and kingly to those old ones absolutely of the old. Nor did the Prince without a kingdom, his loved island long since annexed by the United States and incorporated into a territory along with the rest of the Hawaiian Islands — nor did the Prince betray his repugnance for the odour of the hala. He bowed his head graciously; and his royal condescending words of pure Hawaiian I knew would make the old woman's heart warm until she died with remembrance of the wonderful occasion. The wry grimace he stole to me would not have been made had he felt any uncertainty of its escaping her.

"And so," Prince Akuli resumed, after the wahine had tottered away in an ecstasy, "Ahuna and I departed on our grave-robbing adventure. You know the Iron-bound Coast."

I nodded, knowing full well the spectacle of those lava leagues of weather coast, truly iron-bound so far as landing-places or anchorages were concerned, great forbidding cliff-walls thousands of feet in height, their summits wreathed in cloud and rain squall, their knees hammered by the trade-wind billows into spouting, spuming white, the air, from sea to rain-cloud, spanned by a myriad leaping waterfalls, provocative, in day or night, of countless sun and lunar rainbows. Valleys, so called, but fissures rather, slit the cyclopean walls here and there, and led away into a lofty and madly vertical back country, most of it inaccessible to the foot of man and trod only by the wild goat.

"Precious little you know of it," Prince Akuli retorted, in reply to my nod. "You've seen it only from the decks of steamers. There are valleys there, inhabited valleys, out of which there is no exit by land, and perilously accessible by canoe only on the selected days of two months in the year. When I was twenty-eight I was over there in one of them on a hunting trip. Bad weather, in the auspicious period, marooned us for three weeks. Then five of my party and myself swam for it out through the surf. Three of us made the canoes waiting for us. The other two were flung back on the sand, each with a broken arm. Save for us, the entire party remained there until the next year, ten months afterward. And one of them was Wilson, of Wilson & Wall, the Honolulu sugar factors. And he was engaged to be married.

"I've seen a goat, shot above by a hunter above, land at my feet a thousand yards underneath. Believe me, that landscape seemed to rain goats and rocks for ten minutes. One of my canoemen fell off the trail between the two little valleys of Aipio and Luno. He hit first fifteen hundred feet beneath us, and fetched up in a ledge three hundred feet farther down. We didn't bury him. We couldn't get to him, and flying machines had not yet been invented. His bones are there now, and, barring earthquake and volcano, will be there when the Trumps of Judgment sound.

"Goodness me! Only the other day, when our Promotion Committee, trying to compete with Honolulu for the tourist trade, called in the engineers to estimate what it would cost to build a scenic drive around the Iron-bound Coast, the lowest figures were a quarter of a million dollars a mile!

"And Ahuna and I, an old man and a young boy, started for that stern coast in a canoe paddled by old men! The youngest of them, the steersman, was over sixty, while the rest of them averaged seventy at the very least. There were eight of them, and we started in the night-time, so that none should see us go. Even these old ones, trusted all their lives, knew no more than the fringe of the secret. To the fringe, only, could they take us.

"And the fringe was — I don't mind telling that much — the fringe was Ponuloo Valley. We got there the third afternoon following. The old chaps weren't strong on the paddles. It was a funny expedition, into such wild waters, with now one and now another of our ancient-mariner crew collapsing and even fainting. One of them actually died on the second morning out. We buried him overside. It was positively uncanny, the heathen ceremonies those grey ones pulled off in burying their grey brother. And I was only fifteen, alii kapo over them by blood of heathenness and right of hereditary heathen rule, with a penchant for Jules Verne and shortly to sail for England for my education! So one learns. Small wonder my father was a philosopher, in his own lifetime spanning the history of man from human sacrifice and idol worship, through the religions of man's upward striving, to the Medusa of rank atheism at the end of it all. Small wonder that, like old Ecclesiastes, he found vanity in all things and surcease in sugar stocks, singing boys, and hula dancers."

Prince Akuli debated with his soul for an interval.

"Oh, well," he sighed, "I have done some spanning of time myself." He sniffed disgustedly of the odour of the hala lei that stifled him. "It stinks of the ancient." he vouchsafed. "I? I stink of the modern. My father was right.

The sweetest of all is sugar up a hundred points, or four aces in a poker game. If the Big War lasts another year, I shall clean up three-quarters of a million over a million. If peace breaks to-morrow, with the consequent slump, I could enumerate a hundred who will lose my direct bounty, and go into the old natives' homes my father and I long since endowed for them."

He clapped his hands, and the old wahine tottered toward him in an excitement of haste to serve. She cringed before him, as he drew pad and pencil from his breast pocket.

"Each month, old woman of our old race," he addressed her, "will you receive, by rural free delivery, a piece of written paper that you can exchange with any storekeeper anywhere for ten dollars gold. This shall be so for as long as you live. Behold! I write the record and the remembrance of it, here and now, with this pencil on this paper. And this is because you are of my race and service, and because you have honoured me this day with your mats to sit upon and your thrice-blessed and thrice-delicious lei hala."

He turned to me a weary and sceptical eye, saying:

"And if I die to-morrow, not alone will the lawyers contest my disposition of my property, but they will contest my benefactions and my pensions accorded, and the clarity of my mind.

"It was the right weather of the year; but even then, with our old weak ones at the paddles, we did not attempt the landing until we had assembled half the population of Ponuloo Valley down on the steep little beach. Then we counted our waves, selected the best one, and ran in on it. Of course, the canoe was swamped and the outrigger smashed, but the ones on shore dragged us up unharmed beyond the wash.

"Ahuna gave his orders. In the night-time all must remain within their houses, and the dogs be tied up and have their jaws bound so that there should be no barking. And in the night-time Ahuna and I stole out on our journey, no one knowing whether we went to the right or left or up the valley toward its head. We carried jerky, and hard poi and dried aku, and from the quantity of the food I knew we were to be gone several days. Such a trail! A Jacob's ladder to the sky, truly, for that first pali" (precipice), "almost straight up, was three thousand feet above the sea. And we did it in the dark!

"At the top, beyond the sight of the valley we had left, we slept until daylight on the hard rock in a hollow nook Ahuna knew, and that was so small that we were squeezed. And the old fellow, for fear that I might move in the heavy restlessness of lad’s sleep, lay on the outside with one arm resting across me. At daybreak, I saw why. Between us and the lip of the cliff scarcely a yard intervened. I crawled to the lip and looked, watching the abyss take on immensity in the growing light and trembling from the fear of height that was upon me. At last I made out the sea, over half a mile straight beneath. And we had done this thing in the dark!

“Down in the next valley, which was a very tiny one, we found evidence of the ancient population, but there were no people. The only way was the crazy foot-paths up and down the dizzy valley walls from valley to valley. But lean and aged as Ahuna was, he seemed untirable. In the second valley dwelt an old leper in hiding. He did not know me, and when Ahuna told him who I was, he grovelled at my feet, almost clasping them, and mumbled a mele of all my line out of a lipless mouth.

“The next valley proved to be the valley. It was long and so narrow that its floor had caught not sufficient space of soil to grow taro for a single person. Also, it had no beach, the stream that threaded it leaping a pali of several hundred feet down to the sea. It was a god-forsaken place of naked, eroded lava, to which only rarely could the scant vegetation find root-hold. For miles we followed up that winding fissure through the towering walls, far into the chaos of back country that lies behind the Iron-bound Coast. How far that valley penetrated I do not know, but, from the quantity of water in the stream, I judged it far. We did not go to the valley’s head. I could see Ahuna casting glances to all the peaks, and I knew he was taking bearings, known to him alone, from natural objects. When he halted at the last, it was with abrupt certainty. His bearings had crossed. He threw down the portion of food and outfit he had carried. It was the place. I looked on either hand at the hard, implacable walls, naked of vegetation, and could dream of no burial-place possible in such bare adamant.

“We ate, then stripped for work. Only did Ahuna permit me to retain my shoes. He stood beside me at the edge of a deep pool, likewise apparelled and prodigiously skinny.

“‘You will dive down into the pool at this spot,’ he said. ‘Search the rock with your hands as you descend, and, about a fathom and a half down, you will find a hole. Enter it, head-first, but going slowly, for the lava rock is sharp and may cut your head and body.’

"'And then?' I queried. 'You will find the hole growing larger,' was his answer. 'When you have gone all of eight fathoms along the passage, come up slowly, and you will find your head in the air, above water, in the dark. Wait there then for me. The water is very cold.'

"It didn't sound good to me. I was thinking, not of the cold water and the dark, but of the bones. 'You go first,' I said. But he claimed he could not. 'You are my alii, my prince,' he said. 'It is impossible that I should go before you into the sacred burial-place of your kingly ancestors.'

"But the prospect did not please. 'Just cut out this prince stuff,' I told him. 'It isn't what it's cracked up to be. You go first, and I'll never tell on you.' 'Not alone the living must we please,' he admonished, 'but, more so, the dead must we please. Nor can we lie to the dead.'

"We argued it out, and for half an hour it was stalemate. I wouldn't, and he simply couldn't. He tried to buck me up by appealing to my pride. He chanted the heroic deeds of my ancestors; and, I remember especially, he sang to me of Mokomoku, my great-grandfather and the gigantic father of the gigantic Kaaukuu, telling how thrice in battle Mokomoku leaped among his foes, seizing by the neck a warrior in either hand and knocking their heads together until they were dead. But this was not what decided me. I really felt sorry for old Ahuna, he was so beside himself for fear the expedition would come to naught. And I was coming to a great admiration for the old fellow, not least among the reasons being the fact of his lying down to sleep between me and the cliff-lip.

"So, with true alii-authority of command, saying, 'You will immediately follow after me,' I dived in. Everything he had said was correct. I found the entrance to the subterranean passage, swam carefully through it, cutting my shoulder once on the lava-sharp roof, and emerged in the darkness and air. But before I could count thirty, he broke water beside me, rested his hand on my arm to make sure of me, and directed me to swim ahead of him for the matter of a hundred feet or so. Then we touched bottom and climbed out on the rocks. And still no light, and I remember I was glad that our altitude was too high for centipedes.

"He had brought with him a coconut calabash, tightly stoppered, of whale-oil that must have been landed on Lahaina beach thirty years before. From his mouth he took a water-tight arrangement of a matchbox composed of two empty rifle-cartridges fitted snugly together. He lighted the wicking that floated on the oil, and I looked about, and knew disappointment. No burial-chamber was it, but merely a lava tube such as occurs on all the islands.

“He put the calabash of light into my hands and started me ahead of him on the way, which he assured me was long, but not too long. It was long, at least a mile in my sober judgment, though at the time it seemed five miles; and it ascended sharply. When Ahuna, at the last, stopped me, I knew we were close to our goal. He knelt on his lean old knees on the sharp lava rock, and clasped my knees with his skinny arms. My hand that was free of the calabash lamp he placed on his head. He chanted to me, with his old cracked, quavering voice, the line of my descent and my essential high alii-ness. And then he said:

“‘Tell neither Kanau nor Hiwilani aught of what you are about to behold. There is no sacredness in Kanau. His mind is filled with sugar and the breeding of horses. I do know that he sold a feather cloak his grandfather had worn to that English collector for eight thousand dollars, and the money he lost the next day betting on the polo game between Maui and Oahu. Hiwilani, your mother, is filled with sacredness. She is too much filled with sacredness. She grows old, and weak-headed, and she traffics over-much with sorceries.’

“‘No,’ I made answer. ‘I shall tell no one. If I did, then would I have to return to this place again. And I do not want ever to return to this place. I’ll try anything once. This I shall never try twice.’

“‘It is well,’ he said, and arose, falling behind so that I should enter first. Also, he said: ‘Your mother is old. I shall bring her, as promised, the bones of her mother and of her grandfather. These should content her until she dies; and then, if I die before her, it is you who must see to it that all the bones in her family collection are placed in the Royal Mausoleum.’

“I have given all the Islands’ museums the once-over,” Prince Akuli lapsed back into slang, “and I must say that the totality of the collections cannot touch what I saw in our Lakanaii burial-cave. Remember, and with reason and history, we trace back the highest and oldest genealogy in the Islands. Everything that I had ever dreamed or heard of, and much more that I had not, was there. The place was wonderful. Ahuna, sepulchrally muttering prayers and meles, moved about, lighting various whale-oil lamp-calabashes. They were all there, the Hawaiian race from the beginning of Hawaiian time. Bundles of bones and bundles of bones, all wrapped decently in tapa, until for all the world it was like the parcels-post department at a post office.

"And everything! Kahilis, which you may know developed out of the fly-flapper into symbols of royalty until they became larger than hearse-plumes with handles a fathom and a half and over two fathoms in length. And such handles! Of the wood of the kauila, inlaid with shell and ivory and bone with a cleverness that had died out among our artificers a century before. It was a centuries-old family attic. For the first time I saw things I had only heard of, such as the pahoas, fashioned of whale-teeth and suspended by braided human hair, and worn on the breast only by the highest of rank.

"There were tapes and mats of the rarest and oldest; capes and leis and helmets and cloaks, priceless all, except the too-ancient ones, of the feathers of the mamo, and of the iwi and the akakano and the o-o. I saw one of the mamo cloaks that was superior to that finest one in the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and that they value atbetween half a million and a million dollars. Goodness me, I thought at the time, it was lucky Kanau didn't know about it.

"Such a mess of things! Carved gourds and calabashes, shell-scrapers, nets of olona fibre, a junk of ié-ié baskets, and fish-hooks of every bone and spoon of shell. Musical instruments of the forgotten days — ukukes and nose flutes, and kiokios which are likewise played with one unstoppered nostril. Taboo poi bowls and finger bowls, left-handed adzes of the canoe gods, lava-cup lamps, stone mortars and pestles and poi-pounders. And adzes again, a myriad of them, beautiful ones, from an ounce in weight for the finer carving of idols to fifteen pounds for the felling of trees, and all with the sweetest handles I have ever beheld.

"There were the kaekeekes — you know, our ancient drums, hollowed sections of the coconut tree, covered one end with shark-skin. The first kaekeeke of all Hawaii Ahuna pointed out to me and told me the tale. It was manifestly most ancient. He was afraid to touch it for fear the age-rotted wood of it would crumble to dust, the ragged tatters of the shark-skin head of it still attached. 'This is the very oldest and father of all our kaekeekes,' Ahuna told me. 'Kila, the son of Moikeha, brought it back from far Raiatea in the South Pacific. And it was Kila's own son, Kahai, who made that same journey, and was gone ten years, and brought back with him from Tahiti the first breadfruit trees that sprouted and grew on Hawaiian soil.'

“And the bones and bones! The parcel-delivery array of them! Besides the small bundles of the long bones, there were full skeletons, tapa-wrapped, lying in one-man, and two-and three-man canoes of precious koa wood, with curved outriggers of wiliwili wood, and proper paddles to hand with the io-projection at the point simulating the continuance of the handle, as if, like a skewer, thrust through the flat length of the blade. And their war weapons were laid away by the sides of the lifeless bones that had wielded them — rusty old horse-pistols, derringers, pepper-boxes, five-barrelled fantastiques, Kentucky long riffles, muskets handled in trade by John Company and Hudson’s Bay, shark-tooth swords, wooden stabbing-knives, arrows and spears bone-headed of the fish and the pig and of man, and spears and arrows wooden-headed and fire-hardened.

“Ahuna put a spear in my hand, headed and pointed finely with the long shin-bone of a man, and told me the tale of it. But first he unwrapped the long bones, arms, and legs, of two parcels, the bones, under the wrappings, neatly tied like so many faggots. ‘This,’ said Ahuna, exhibiting the pitiful white contents of one parcel, ‘is Laulani. She was the wife of Akaiko, whose bones, now placed in your hands, much larger and male-like as you observe, held up the flesh of a large man, a three-hundred pounder seven-footer, three centuries agone. And this spear-head is made of the shin-bone of Keola, a mighty wrestler and runner of their own time and place. And he loved Laulani, and she fled with him. But in a forgotten battle on the sands of Kalini, Akaiko rushed the lines of the enemy, leading the charge that was successful, and seized upon Keola, his wife’s lover, and threw him to the ground, and sawed through his neck to the death with a shark-tooth knife. Thus, in the old days as always, did man combat for woman with man. And Laulani was beautiful; that Keola should be made into a spearhead for her! She was formed like a queen, and her body was a long bowl of sweetness, and her fingers lomi’d’ (massaged) ‘to slimness and smallness at her mother’s breast. For ten generations have we remembered her beauty. Your father’s singing boys to-day sing of her beauty in the hula that is named of her! This is Laulani, whom you hold in your hands.’

“And, Ahuna done, I could but gaze, with imagination at the one time sobered and fired. Old drunken Howard had lent me his Tennyson, and I had mooned long and often over the Idyls of the King. Here were the three, I thought — Arthur, and Launcelot, and Guinevere. This, then, I pondered, was the end of it all, of life and strife and striving and love, the weary spirits of these long-gone ones to be invoked by fat old women and mangy sorcerers, the bones of them to be esteemed of collectors and betted on horse-races and ace-fulls or to be sold for cash and invested in sugar stocks.

"For me it was illumination. I learned there in the burial-cave the great lesson. And to Ahuna I said: 'The spear headed with the long bone of Keola I shall take for my own. Never shall I sell it. I shall keep it always.'

"'And for what purpose?' he demanded. And I replied: 'That the contemplation of it may keep my hand sober and my feet on earth with the knowledge that few men are fortunate enough to have as much of a remnant of themselves as will compose a spearhead when they are three centuries dead.'

"And Ahuna bowed his head, and praised my wisdom of judgment. But at that moment the long-rotted olona-cord broke and the pitiful woman's bones of Laulani shed from my clasp and clattered on the rocky floor. One shin-bone, in some way deflected, fell under the dark shadow of a canoe-bow, and I made up my mind that it should be mine. So I hastened to help him in the picking up of the bones and the tying, so that he did not notice its absence.

"'This,' said Ahuna, introducing me to another of my ancestors, 'is your great-grandfather, Mokomoku, the father of Kaaukuu. Behold the size of his bones. He was a giant. I shall carry him, because of the long spear of Keola that will be difficult for you to carry away. And this is Lelemahoa, your grandmother, the mother of your mother, that you shall carry. And day grows short, and we must still swim up through the waters to the sun ere darkness hides the sun from the world.'

"But Ahuna, putting out the various calabashes of light by drowning the wicks in the whale-oil, did not observe me include the shinbone of Laulani with the bones of my grandmother."

The honk of the automobile, sent up from Olokona to rescue us, broke off the Prince's narrative. We said good-bye to the ancient and fresh-pensioned wahine, and departed. A half-mile on our way, Prince Akuli resumed.

"So Ahuna and I returned to Hiwilani, and to her happiness, lasting to her death the year following, two more of her ancestors abided about her in the jars of her twilight room. Also, she kept her compact and worried my father into sending me to England. I took old Howard along, and he perked up and confuted the doctors, so that it was three years before I buried him restored to the bosom of my family. Sometimes I think he was the most brilliant man

I have ever known. Not until my return from England did Ahuna die, the last custodian of our alii secrets. And at his death-bed he pledged me again never to reveal the location in that nameless valley, and never to go back myself.

"Much else I have forgotten to mention did I see there in the cave that one time. There were the bones of Kumi, the near demigod, son of Tui Manua of Samoa, who, in the long before, married into my line and heaven-boosted my genealogy. And the bones of my great-grandmother who had slept in the four-poster presented her by Lord Byron. And Ahuna hinted tradition that there was reason for that presentation, as well as for the historically known lingering of the Blonde in Olokona for so long. And I held her poor bones in my hands — bones once fleshed with sensate beauty, informed with sparkle and spirit, instinct with love and love-warmness of arms around and eyes and lips together, that had begat me in the end of the generations unborn. It was a good experience. I am modern, 'tis true. I believe in no mystery stuff of old time nor of the kahunas. And yet, I saw in that cave things which I dare not name to you, and which I, since old Ahuna died, alone of the living know. I have no children. With me my long line ceases. This is the twentieth century, and we stink of gasolene. Nevertheless these other and nameless things shall die with me. I shall never revisit the burial-place. Nor in all time to come will any man gaze upon it through living eyes unless the quakes of earth rend the mountains asunder and spew forth the secrets contained in the hearts of the mountains."

Prince Akuli ceased from speech. With welcome relief on his face, he removed the lei hala from his neck, and, with a sniff and a sigh, tossed it into concealment in the thick lantana by the side of the road.

"But the shin-bone of Laulani?" I queried softly.

He remained silent while a mile of pasture land fled by us and yielded to caneland.

"I have it now," he at last said. "And beside it is Keola, slain ere his time and made into a spear-head for love of the woman whose shin-bone abides near to him. To them, those poor pathetic bones, I owe more than to aught else. I became possessed of them in the period of my culminating adolescence. I know they changed the entire course of my life and trend of my mind. They gave to me a modesty and a humility in the world, from which my father's fortune has ever failed to seduce me.

"And often, when woman was nigh to winning to the empery of my mind over me, I sought Laulani's shin-bone. And often, when lusty manhood stung me into feeling over-proud and lusty, I consulted the spearhead remnant of Keola, one-time swift runner, and mighty wrestler and lover, and thief of the wife of a king. The contemplation of them has ever been of profound aid to me, and you might well say that I have founded my religion or practice of living upon them."

WAIKIKI, HONOLULU,
HAWAIIAN ISLANDS.
July 16, 1916.

Shorty Dreams

I

Funny you don’t gamble none,” Shorty said to Smoke one night in the Elkhorn. “Ain’t it in your blood?”

“It is,” Smoke answered. “But the statistics are in my head. I like an even break for my money.”

All about them, in the huge bar-room, arose the click and rattle and rumble of a dozen games, at which fur-clad, moccasined men tried their luck. Smoke waved his hand to include them all.

“Look at them,” he said. “It’s cold mathematics that they will lose more than they win to-night, that the big proportion is losing right now.”

“You’re sure strong on figgers,” Shorty murmured admiringly. “An’ in the main you’re right. But they’s such a thing as facts. An’ one fact is streaks of luck. They’s times when every geezer playin’ wins, as I know, for I’ve sat in in such games an’ saw more’n one bank busted. The only way to win at gamblin’ is wait for a hunch that you’ve got a lucky streak comin’ and then to play it to the roof.”

“It sounds simple,” Smoke criticized. “So simple I can’t see how men can lose.”

“The trouble is,” Shorty admitted, “that most men gets fooled on their hunches. On occasion I sure get fooled on mine. The thing is to try, an’ find out.”

Smoke shook his head.

“That’s a statistic, too, Shorty. Most men prove wrong on their hunches.”

“But don’t you ever get one of them streaky feelin’s that all you got to do is put your money down an’ pick a winner?”

Smoke laughed.

“I’m too scared of the percentage against me. But I’ll tell you what, Shorty. I’ll throw a dollar on the ‘high card’ right now and see if it will buy us a drink.”

Smoke was edging his way in to the faro table, when Shorty caught his arm.

“Hold on. I’m gettin’ one of them hunches now. You put that dollar on roulette.”

They went over to a roulette table near the bar.

“Wait till I give the word,” Shorty counselled.

“What number?” Smoke asked.

“Pick it yourself. But wait till I say let her go.”

“You don’t mean to say I’ve got an even chance on that table?” Smoke argued.

“As good as the next geezers.”

“But not as good as the bank’s.”

“Wait and see,” Shorty urged. “Now! Let her go!”

The game-keeper had just sent the little ivory ball whirling around the smooth rim above the revolving, many-slotted wheel. Smoke, at the lower end of the table, reached over a player, and blindly tossed the dollar. It slid along the smooth, green cloth and stopped fairly in the centre of ‘34.’

The ball came to rest, and the game-keeper announced, “Thirty-four wins!” He swept the table, and alongside of Smoke’s dollar, stacked thirty-five dollars. Smoke drew the money in, and Shorty slapped him on the shoulder.

“Now, that was the real goods of a hunch, Smoke! How’d I know it? There’s no tellin’. I just knew you’d win. Why, if that dollar of yourn’d fell on any other number it’d won just the same. When the hunch is right, you just can’t help winnin’.”

“Suppose it had come ‘double nought’?” Smoke queried, as they made their way to the bar.

“Then your dollar’d ben on ‘double nought,’“ was Shorty’s answer. “They’s no gettin’ away from it. A hunch is a hunch. Here’s how. Come on back to the table. I got a hunch, after pickin’ you for a winner, that I can pick some few numbers myself.”

“Are you playing a system?” Smoke asked, at the end of ten minutes, when his partner had dropped a hundred dollars.

Shorty shook his head indignantly, as he spread his chips out in the vicinities of ‘3,’ ‘11,’ and ‘17,’ and tossed a spare chip on the ‘green.’

“Hell is sure cluttered with geezers that played systems,” he exposited, as the keeper raked the table.

From idly watching, Smoke became fascinated, following closely every detail of the game from the whirling of the ball to the making and the paying of the bets. He made no plays, however, merely contenting himself with looking on. Yet so interested was he, that Shorty, announcing that he had had enough, with difficulty drew Smoke away from the table. The game-keeper returned Shorty the gold sack he had deposited as a credential for playing, and with it went a slip of paper on which was scribbled, “Out . . . 350 dollars.” Shorty carried the sack and the paper across the room and handed them to the weigher, who sat behind a large pair of gold-scales. Out of Shorty’s sack he weighed 350 dollars, which he poured into the coffer of the house.

“That hunch of yours was another one of those statistics,” Smoke jeered.

“I had to play it, didn’t I, in order to find out?” Shorty retorted. “I reckon I was crowdin’ some just on account of tryin’ to convince you they’s such a thing as hunches.”

“Never mind, Shorty,” Smoke laughed. “I’ve got a hunch right now--“

Shorty’s eyes sparkled as he cried eagerly: “What is it? Kick in an’ play it pronto.”

“It’s not that kind, Shorty. Now, what I’ve got is a hunch that some day I’ll work out a system that will beat the spots off that table.”

“System!” Shorty groaned, then surveyed his partner with a vast pity. “Smoke, listen to your side-kicker an’ leave system alone. Systems is sure losers. They ain’t no hunches in systems.”

“That’s why I like them,” Smoke answered. “A system is statistical. When you get the right system you can’t lose, and that’s the difference between it and a hunch. You never know when the right hunch is going wrong.”

“But I know a lot of systems that went wrong, an’ I never seen a system win.” Shorty paused and sighed. “Look here, Smoke, if you’re gettin’ cracked on systems this ain’t no place for you, an’ it’s about time we hit the trail again.”

II

During the several following weeks, the two partners played at cross purposes. Smoke was bent on spending his time watching the roulette game in the Elkhorn, while Shorty was equally bent on travelling trail. At last Smoke put his foot down when a stampede was proposed for two hundred miles down the Yukon.

“Look here, Shorty,” he said, “I’m not going. That trip will take ten days, and before that time I hope to have my system in proper working order. I could almost win with it now. What are you dragging me around the country this way for anyway?”

“Smoke, I got to take care of you,” was Shorty’s reply. “You’re getting nutty. I’d drag you stampedin’ to Jericho or the North Pole if I could keep you away from that table.”

“It’s all right, Shorty. But just remember I’ve reached full man-grown, meat-eating size. The only dragging you’ll do, will be dragging home the dust I’m going to win with that system of mine, and you’ll most likely have to do it with a dog-team.”

Shorty’s response was a groan.

“And I don’t want you to be bucking any games on your own,” Smoke went on. “We’re going to divide the winnings, and I’ll need all our money to get started. That system’s young yet, and it’s liable to trip me for a few falls before I get it lined up.”

III

At last, after long hours and days spent at watching the table, the night came when Smoke proclaimed he was ready, and Shorty, glum and pessimistic, with all the seeming of one attending a funeral, accompanied his partner to the Elkhorn. Smoke bought a stack of chips and stationed himself at the game-keeper’s end of the table. Again and again the ball was whirled and the other players won or lost, but Smoke did not venture a chip. Shorty waxed impatient.

“Buck in, buck in,” he urged. “Let’s get this funeral over. What’s the matter? Got cold feet?”

Smoke shook his head and waited. A dozen plays went by, and then, suddenly, he placed ten one-dollar chips on ‘26.’ The number won, and the keeper paid Smoke three hundred and fifty dollars. A dozen plays went by, twenty plays, and thirty, when Smoke placed ten dollars on ‘32.’ Again he received three hundred and fifty dollars.

“It’s a hunch.” Shorty whispered vociferously in his ear. “Ride it! Ride it!”

Half an hour went by, during which Smoke was inactive, then he placed ten dollars on ‘34’ and won.

“A hunch!” Shorty whispered.

“Nothing of the sort,” Smoke whispered back. “It’s the system. Isn’t she a dandy?”

“You can’t tell me,” Shorty contended. “Hunches comes in mighty funny ways. You might think it’s a system, but it ain’t. Systems is impossible. They can’t happen. It’s a sure hunch you’re playin’.”

Smoke now altered his play. He bet more frequently, with single chips, scattered here and there, and he lost more often than he won.

“Quit it,” Shorty advised. “Cash in. You’ve rung the bull’s eye three times, an’ you’re ahead a thousand. You can’t keep it up.”

At this moment the ball started whirling, and Smoke dropped ten chips on ‘26.’ The ball fell into the slot of ‘26,’ and the keeper again paid him three hundred and fifty dollars. “If you’re plum crazy an’ got the immortal cinch, bet’m the limit,” Shorty said. “Put down twenty-five next time.”

A quarter of an hour passed, during which Smoke won and lost on small scattering bets. Then, with the abruptness that characterized his big betting, he placed twenty-five dollars on the ‘double nought,’ and the keeper paid him eight hundred and seventy-five dollars.

“Wake me up, Smoke, I’m dreamin’,” Shorty moaned.

Smoke smiled, consulted his note-book, and became absorbed in calculation. He continually drew the note-book from his pocket, and from time to time jotted down figures.

A crowd had packed densely around the table, while the players themselves were attempting to cover the same numbers he covered. It was then that a change came over his play. Ten times in succession he placed ten dollars on ‘18’ and lost. At this stage he was deserted by the hardiest. He changed his number and won another three hundred and fifty dollars. Immediately the players were back with him, deserting again after a series of losing bets.

“Quit it, Smoke, quit it,” Shorty advised. “The longest string of hunches is only so long, an’ your string’s finished. No more bull’s-eyes for you.”

“I’m going to ring her once again before I cash in,” Smoke answered.

For a few minutes, with varying luck, he played scattering chips over the table, and then dropped twenty-five dollars on the ‘double nought.’

“I’ll take my slip now,” he said to the dealer, as he won.

“Oh, you don’t need to show it to me,” Shorty said, as they walked to the weigher. “I ben keepin’ track. You’re something like thirty-six hundred to the good. How near am I?”

“Thirty-six-thirty,” Smoke replied. “And now you’ve got to pack the dust home. That was the agreement.”

IV

Don’t crowd your luck,” Shorty pleaded with Smoke, the next night, in the cabin, as he evidenced preparations to return to the Elkhorn. “You played a mighty long string of hunches, but you played it out. If you go back you’ll sure drop all your winnings.”

“But I tell you it isn’t hunches, Shorty. It’s statistics. It’s a system. It can’t lose.”

“System be damned. They ain’t no such a thing as system. I made seventeen straight passes at a crap table once. Was it system? Nope. It was fool luck, only I had cold feet an’ didn’t dast let it ride. It it’d rid, instead of me drawin’ down after the third pass, I’d a won over thirty thousan’ on the original two-bit piece.”

“Just the same, Shorty, this is a real system.”

“Huh! You got to show me.”

“I did show you. Come on with me now and I’ll show you again.”

When they entered the Elkhorn, all eyes centred on Smoke, and those about the table made way for him as he took up his old place at the keeper’s end. His play was quite unlike that of the previous night. In the course of an hour and a half he made only four bets, but each bet was for twenty-five dollars, and each bet won. He cashed in thirty-five hundred dollars, and Shorty carried the dust home to the cabin.

“Now’s the time to jump the game,” Shorty advised, as he sat on the edge of his bunk and took off his moccasins. “You’re seven thousan’ ahead. A man’s a fool that’d crowd his luck harder.”

“Shorty, a man would be a blithering lunatic if he didn’t keep on backing a winning system like mine.”

“Smoke, you’re a sure bright boy. You’re college-learnt. You know more’n a minute than I could know in forty thousan’ years. But just the same you’re dead wrong when you call your luck a system. I’ve ben around some, an’ seen a few, an’ I tell you straight an’ confidential an’ all-assurin’, a system to beat a bankin’ game ain’t possible.”

“But I’m showing you this one. It’s a pipe.”

“No, you’re not, Smoke. It’s a pipe-dream. I’m asleep. Bime by I’ll wake up, an’ build the fire, an’ start breakfast.”

“Well, my unbelieving friend, there’s the dust. Heft it.”

So saying, Smoke tossed the bulging gold-sack upon his partner’s knees. It weighed thirty-five pounds, and Shorty was fully aware of the crush of its impact on his flesh.

“It’s real,” Smoke hammered his point home.

“Huh! I’ve saw some mighty real dreams in my time. In a dream all things is possible. In real life a system ain’t possible. Now, I ain’t never ben to college, but I’m plum justified in sizin’ up this gamblin’ orgy of ourn as a sure enough dream.”

“Hamilton’s ‘Law of Parsimony,’“ Smoke laughed.

“I ain’t never heard of the geezer, but his dope’s sure right. I’m dreamin’, Smoke, an’ you’re just snoopin’ around in my dream an’ tormentin’ me with system. If you love me, if you sure do love me, you’ll just yell, ‘Shorty! Wake up!’ An’ I’ll wake up an’ start breakfast.”

V

The third night of play, as Smoke laid his first bet, the game-keeper shoved fifteen dollars back to him.

“Ten’s all you can play,” he said. “The limit’s come down.”

“Gettin’ picayune,” Shorty sneered.

“No one has to play at this table that don’t want to,” the keeper retorted. “And I’m willing to say straight out in meeting that we’d sooner your pardner didn’t play at our table.”

“Scared of his system, eh?” Shorty challenged, as the keeper paid over three hundred and fifty dollars.

“I ain’t saying I believe in system, because I don’t. There never was a system that’d beat roulette or any percentage game. But just the same I’ve seen some queer strings of luck, and I ain’t going to let this bank go bust if I can help it.”

“Cold feet.”

“Gambling is just as much business, my friend, as any other business. We ain’t philanthropists.”

Night by night, Smoke continued to win. His method of play varied. Expert after expert, in the jam about the table, scribbled down his bets and numbers in vain attempts to work out his system. They complained of their inability to get a clew to start with, and swore that it was pure luck, though the most colossal streak of it they had ever seen.

It was Smoke's varied play that obfuscated them. Sometimes, consulting his note-book or engaging in long calculations, an hour elapsed without his staking a chip. At other times he would win three limit-bets and clean up a thousand dollars and odd in five or ten minutes. At still other times, his tactics would be to scatter single chips prodigally and amazingly over the table. This would continue for from ten to thirty minutes of play, when, abruptly, as the ball whirled through the last few of its circles, he would play the limit on column, colour, and number, and win all three. Once, to complete confusion in the minds of those that strove to divine his secret, he lost forty straight bets, each at the limit. But each night, play no matter how diversely, Shorty carried home thirty-five hundred dollars for him.

"It ain't no system," Shorty expounded at one of their bed-going discussions. "I follow you, an' follow you, but they ain't no figgerin' it out. You never play twice the same. All you do is pick winners when you want to, an' when you don't want to, you just on purpose don't."

"Maybe you're nearer right than you think, Shorty. I've just got to pick losers sometimes. It's part of the system."

"System--hell! I've talked with every gambler in town, an' the last one is agreed they ain't no such thing as system."

"Yet I'm showing them one all the time."

"Look here, Smoke." Shorty paused over the candle, in the act of blowing it out. "I'm real irritated. Maybe you think this is a candle. It ain't. An' this ain't me neither. I'm out on trail somewheres, in my blankets, lyin' on my back with my mouth open, an' dreamin' all this. That ain't you talkin', any more than this candle is a candle."

"It's funny, how I happen to be dreaming along with you then," Smoke persisted.

"No, it ain't. You're part of my dream, that's all. I've hearn many a man talk in my dreams. I want to tell you one thing, Smoke. I'm gettin' mangy an' mad. If this here dream keeps up much more I'm goin' to bite my veins an' howl."

VI

On the sixth night of play at the Elkhorn, the limit was reduced to five dollars.

"It's all right," Smoke assured the game-keeper. "I want thirty-five hundred to-night, as usual, and you only compel me to play longer. I've got to pick twice as many winners, that's all."

"Why don't you buck somebody else's table?" the keeper demanded wrathfully.

"Because I like this one." Smoke glanced over to the roaring stove only a few feet away. "Besides, there are no draughts here, and it is warm and comfortable."

On the ninth night, when Shorty had carried the dust home, he had a fit.

"I quit, Smoke, I quit," he began. "I know when I got enough. I ain't dreamin'. I'm wide awake. A system can't be, but you got one just the same. There's nothin' in the rule o' three. The almanac's clean out. The world's gone smash. There's nothin' regular an' uniform no more. The multiplication table's gone loco. Two is eight, nine is eleven, and two-times-six is eight hundred an' forty-six--an'--an' a half. Anything is everything, an' nothing's all, an' twice all is cold cream, milk-shakes, an' calico horses. You've got a system. Figgers beat the figgerin'. What ain't is, an' what isn't has to be. The sun rises in the west, the moon's a paystreak, the stars is canned corn-beef, scurvy's the blessin' of God, him that dies kicks again, rocks floats, water's gas, I ain't me, you're somebody else, an' mebbe we're twins if we ain't hashed-brown potatoes fried in verdigris. Wake me up! Somebody! Oh! Wake me up!"

VII

The next morning a visitor came to the cabin. Smoke knew him, Harvey Moran, the owner of all the games in the Tivoli. There was a note of appeal in his deep gruff voice as he plunged into his business.

"It's like this, Smoke," he began. "You've got us all guessing. I'm representing nine other game-owners and myself from all the saloons in town. We don't understand. We know that no system ever worked against roulette. All the mathematic sharps in the colleges have told us gamblers the same thing. They say that roulette itself is the system, the one and only system, and, therefore, that no system can beat it, for that would mean arithmetic has gone bug-house."

Shorty nodded his head violently.

"If a system can beat a system, then there's no such thing as system," the gambler went on. "In such a case anything could be possible--a thing could be in two different places at once, or two things could be in the same place that's only large enough for one at the same time."

"Well, you've seen me play," Smoke answered defiantly; "and if you think it's only a string of luck on my part, why worry?"

"That's the trouble. We can't help worrying. It's a system you've got, and all the time we know it can't be. I've watched you five nights now, and all I can make out is that you favour certain numbers and keep on winning. Now the ten of us game-owners have got together, and we want to make a friendly proposition. We'll put a roulette table in a back room of the Elkhorn, pool the bank against you, and have you buck us. It will be all quiet and private. Just you and Shorty and us. What do you say?"

"I think it's the other way around," Smoke answered. "It's up to you to come and see me. I'll be playing in the bar-room of the Elkhorn to-night. You can watch me there just as well."

VIII

That night, when Smoke took up his customary place at the table, the keeper shut down the game.

"The game's closed," he said. "Boss's orders."

But the assembled game-owners were not to be balked. In a few minutes they arranged a pool, each putting in a thousand, and took over the table.

"Come on and buck us," Harvey Moran challenged, as the keeper sent the ball on its first whirl around.

"Give me the twenty-five limit," Smoke suggested.

"Sure; go to it."

Smoke immediately placed twenty-five chips on the 'double nought,' and won.

Moran wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Go on," he said. "We got ten thousand in this bank."

At the end of an hour and a half, the ten thousand was Smoke's.

"The bank's bust," the keeper announced.

"Got enough?" Smoke asked.

The game-owners looked at one another. They were awed. They, the fatted proteges of the laws of chance, were undone. They were up against one who had more intimate access to those laws, or who had invoked higher and undreamed laws.

“We quit,” Moran said. “Ain’t that right, Burke?”

Big Burke, who owned the games in the M. and G. Saloon, nodded.

“The impossible has happened,” he said. “This Smoke here has got a system all right. If we let him go on we’ll all bust. All I can see, if we’re goin’ to keep our tables running, is to cut down the limit to a dollar, or to ten cents, or a cent. He won’t win much in a night with such stakes.”

All looked at Smoke. He shrugged his shoulders.

“In that case, gentlemen, I’ll have to hire a gang of men to play at all your tables. I can pay them ten dollars for a four-hour shift and make money.”

“Then we’ll shut down our tables,” Big Burke replied. “Unless--“ He hesitated and ran his eye over his fellows to see that they were with him. “Unless you’re willing to talk business. What will you sell the system for?”

“Thirty thousand dollars,” Smoke answered. “That’s a tax of three thousand apiece.”

They debated and nodded.

“And you’ll tell us your system?”

“Surely.”

“And you’ll promise not to play roulette in Dawson ever again?”

“No, sir,” Smoke said positively. “I’ll promise not to play this system again.”

“My God!” Moran exploded. “You haven’t got other systems, have you?”

“Hold on!” Shorty cried. “I want to talk to my pardner. Come over here, Smoke, on the side.”

Smoke followed into a quiet corner of the room, while hundreds of curious eyes centred on him and Shorty.

“Look here, Smoke,” Shorty whispered hoarsely. “Mebbe it ain’t a dream. In which case you’re sellin’ out almighty cheap. You’ve sure got the world by the slack of its pants. They’s millions in it. Shake it! Shake it hard!”

“But if it’s a dream?” Smoke queried softly.

“Then, for the sake of the dream an’ the love of Mike, stick them gamblers up good and plenty. What’s the good of dreamin’ if you can’t dream to the real right, dead sure, eternal finish?"

"Fortunately, this isn't a dream, Shorty."

"Then if you sell out for thirty thousan', I'll never forgive you."

"When I sell out for thirty thousand, you'll fall on my neck an' wake up to find out that you haven't been dreaming at all. This is no dream, Shorty. In about two minutes you'll see you have been wide awake all the time. Let me tell you that when I sell out it's because I've got to sell out."

Back at the table, Smoke informed the game-owners that his offer still held. They proffered him their paper to the extent of three thousand each.

"Hold out for the dust," Shorty cautioned.

"I was about to intimate that I'd take the money weighed out," Smoke said.

The owner of the Elkhorn cashed their paper, and Shorty took possession of the gold-dust.

"Now, I don't want to wake up," he chortled, as he hefted the various sacks. "Toted up, it's a seventy thousan' dream. It's be too blamed expensive to open my eyes, roll out of the blankets, an' start breakfast."

"What's your system?" Big Burke demanded. "We've paid for it, and we want it."

Smoke led the way to the table.

"Now, gentlemen, bear with me a moment. This isn't an ordinary system. It can scarcely be called legitimate, but its one great virtue is that it works. I've got my suspicious, but I'm not saying anything. You watch. Mr Keeper, be ready with the ball. Wait, I am going to pick '26.' Consider I've bet on it. Be ready, Mr Keeper--Now!"

The ball whirled around.

"You observe," Smoke went on, "that '9' was directly opposite."

The ball finished in '26.'

Big Burke swore deep in his chest, and all waited.

"For 'double nought' to win, '11' must be opposite. Try it yourself and see."

"But the system?" Moran demanded impatiently. "We know you can pick winning numbers, and we know what those numbers are; but how do you do it?"

"By observed sequences. By accident I chanced twice to notice the ball whirled when '9' was opposite. Both times '26' won. After that I saw it happen again. Then I looked for other sequences, and found them. 'Double nought' opposite fetches '32,' and '11' fetches 'double nought.' It doesn't always happen, but it USUALLY happens. You notice, I say 'usually.' As I said before, I have my suspicions, but I'm not saying anything."

Big Burke, with a sudden dawn of comprehension reached over, stopped the wheel, and examined it carefully. The heads of the nine other game-owners bent over and joined in the examination. Big Burke straightened up and cast a glance at the near-by stove.

"Hell," he said. "It wasn't any system at all. The table stood close to the fire, and the blamed wheel's warped. And we've been worked to a frazzle. No wonder he liked this table. He couldn't have bucked for sour apples at any other table."

Harvey Moran gave a great sigh of relief and wiped his forehead.

"Well, anyway," he said, "it's cheap at the price just to find out that it wasn't a system." His face began to work, and then he broke into laughter and slapped Smoke on the shoulder. "Smoke, you had us going for a while, and we patting ourselves on the back because you were letting our tables alone! Say, I've got some real fizz I'll open if all you'll come over to the Tivoli with me."

Later, back in the cabin, Shorty silently overhauled and hefted the various bulging gold-sacks. He finally piled them on the table, sat down on the edge of his bunk, and began taking off his moccasins.

"Seventy thousan'," he calculated. "It weighs three hundred and fifty pounds. And all out of a warped wheel an' a quick eye. Smoke, you eat'm raw, you eat'm alive, you work under water, you've given me the jim-jams; but just the same I know it's a dream. It's only in dreams that the good things comes true. I'm almighty unanxious to wake up. I hope I never wake up."

"Cheer up," Smoke answered. "You won't. There are a lot of philosophy sharps that think men are sleep-walkers. You're in good company."

Shorty got up, went to the table, selected the heaviest sack, and cuddled it in his arms as if it were a baby.

"I may be sleep-walkin'," he said, "but as you say, I'm sure in mighty good company."

The Sickness of Lone Chief

This is a tale that was told to me by two old men. We sat in the smoke of a mosquito-smudge, in the cool of the day, which was midnight; and ever and anon, throughout the telling, we smote lustily and with purpose at such of the winged pests as braved the smoke for a snack at our hides. To the right, beneath us, twenty feet down the crumbling bank, the Yukon gurgled lazily. To the left, on the rose-leaf rim of the low-lying hills, smouldered the sleepy sun, which saw no sleep that night nor was destined to see sleep for many nights to come.

The old men who sat with me and valorously slew mosquitoes were Lone Chief and Mutsak, erstwhile comrades in arms, and now withered repositories of tradition and ancient happening. They were the last of their generation and without honor among the younger set which had grown up on the farthest fringe of a mining civilization. Who cared for tradition in these days, when spirits could be evoked from black bottles, and black bottles could be evoked from the complaisant white men for a few hours' sweat or a mangy fur? Of what potency the fearful rites and masked mysteries of shamanism, when daily that living wonder, the steamboat, coughed and spluttered up and down the Yukon in defiance of all law, a veritable fire-breathing monster? And of what value was hereditary prestige, when he who now chopped the most wood, or best conned a stern-wheeler through the island mazes, attained the chiefest consideration of his fellows?

Of a truth, having lived too long, they had fallen on evil days, these two old men, Lone Chief and Mutsak, and in the new order they were without honor or place. So they waited drearily for death, and the while their hearts warmed to the strange white man who shared with them the torments of the mosquito-smudge and lent ready ear to their tales of old time before the steamboat came.

"So a girl was chosen for me," Lone Chief was saying. His voice, shrill and piping, ever and again dropped plummet-like into a hoarse and rattling bass, and, just as one became accustomed to it, soaring upward into the thin treble — alternate cricket chirpings and bullfrog croakings, as it were.

"So a girl was chosen for me," he was saying. "For my father, who was Kask-ta-ka, the Otter, was angered because I looked not with a needful eye upon women. He was an old man, and chief of his tribe. I was the last of his sons to be alive, and through me, only, could he look to see his blood go down among those to come after and as yet unborn. But know, O White Man, that I was very sick; and when neither the hunting nor the fishing delighted me, and by meat my belly was not made warm, how should I look with favor upon women? or prepare for the feast of marriage? or look forward to the prattle and troubles of little children?"

"Ay," Mutsak interrupted. "For had not Lone Chief fought in the arms of a great bear till his head was cracked and blood ran from out his ears?"

Lone Chief nodded vigorously. "Mutsak speaks true. In the time that followed, my head was well, and it was not well. For though the flesh healed and the sore went away, yet was I sick inside. When I walked, my legs shook under me, and when I looked at the light, my eyes became filled with tears. And when I opened my eyes, the world outside went around and around, and when I closed my eyes, my head inside went around and around, and all the things I had ever seen went around and around inside my head. And above my eyes there was a great pain, as though something heavy rested always upon me, or like a band that is drawn tight and gives much hurt. And speech was slow to me, and I waited long for each right word to come to my tongue. And when I waited not long, all manner of words crowded in, and my tongue spoke foolishness. I was very sick, and when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me — "

"Who was a young girl, and strong, my sister's child," Mutsak broke in. "Strong-hipped for children was Kasaan, and straight-legged and quick of foot. She made better moccasins than any of all the young girls, and the bark-rope she braided was the stoutest. And she had a smile in her eyes, and a laugh on her lips; and her temper was not hasty, nor was she unmindful that men give the law and women ever obey."

"As I say, I was very sick," Lone Chief went on. "And when my father, the Otter, brought the girl Kasaan before me, I said rather should they make me ready for burial than for marriage. Whereat the face of my father went black with anger, and he said that I should be served according to my wish, and that I who was yet alive should be made ready for death as one already dead — "

"Which be not the way of our people, O White Man," spoke up Mutsak. "For know that these things that were done to Lone Chief it was our custom to do only to dead men. But the Otter was very angry."

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "My father, the Otter, was a man short of speech and swift of deed. And he commanded the people to gather before the lodge wherein I lay. And when they were gathered, he commanded them to mourn for his son who was dead — "

"And before the lodge they sang the death-song — O-o-o-o-o-a-haa-ha-a-ich-klu-kuk-ich-klu-kuk," wailed Mutsak, in so excellent an imitation that all the tendrils of my spine crawled and curved in sympathy.

"And inside the lodge," continued Lone Chief, "my mother blackened her face with soot, and flung ashes upon her head, and mourned for me as one already dead; for so had my father commanded. So Okiakuta, my mother, mourned with much noise, and beat her breasts and tore her hair; and likewise Hooniak, my sister, and Seenatah, my mother's sister; and the noise they made caused a great ache in my head, and I felt that I would surely and immediately die.

"And the elders of the tribe gathered about me where I lay and discussed the journey my soul must take. One spoke of the thick and endless forests where lost souls wandered crying, and where I, too, might chance to wander and never see the end. And another spoke of the big rivers, rapid with bad water, where evil spirits shrieked and lifted up their formless arms to drag one down by the hair. For these rivers, all said together, a canoe must be provided me. And yet another spoke of the storms, such as no live man ever saw, when the stars rained down out of the sky, and the earth gaped wide in many cracks, and all the rivers in the heart of the earth rushed out and in. Whereupon they that sat by me flung up their arms and wailed loudly; and those outside heard, and wailed more loudly. And as to them I was as dead, so was I to my own mind dead. I did not know when, or how, yet did I know that I had surely died.

"And Okiakuta, my mother, laid beside me my squirrel-skin parka. Also she laid beside me my parka of caribou hide, and my rain coat of seal gut, and my wet-weather muclucs, that my soul should be warm and dry on its long journey. Further, there was mention made of a steep hill, thick with briers and devil's-club, and she fetched heavy moccasins to make the way easy for my feet.

"And when the elders spoke of the great beasts I should have to slay, the young men laid beside me my strongest bow and straightest arrows, my throwing-stick, my spear and knife. And when the elders spoke of the darkness and silence of the great spaces my soul must wander through, my mother wailed yet more loudly and flung yet more ashes upon her head.

"And the girl, Kasaan, crept in, very timid and quiet, and dropped a little bag upon the things for my journey. And in the little bag, I knew, were the flint and steel and the well-dried tinder for the fires my soul must build. And the blankets were chosen which were to be wrapped around me. Also were the slaves selected that were to be killed that my soul might have company. There were seven of these slaves, for my father was rich and powerful, and it was fit that I, his son, should have proper burial. These slaves we had got in war from the Mukumuks, who live down the Yukon. On the morrow, Skolka, the shaman, would kill them, one by one, so that their souls should go questing with mine through the Unknown. Among other things, they would carry my canoe till we came to the big river, rapid with bad water. And there being no room, and their work being done, they would come no farther, but remain and howl forever in the dark and endless forest.

"And as I looked on my fine warm clothes, and my blankets and weapons of war, and as I thought of the seven slaves to be slain, I felt proud of my burial and knew that I must be the envy of many men. And all the while my father, the Otter, sat silent and black. And all that day and night the people sang my death-song and beat the drums, till it seemed that I had surely died a thousand times.

"But in the morning my father arose and made talk. He had been a fighting man all his days, he said, as the people knew. Also the people knew that it were a greater honor to die fighting in battle than on the soft skins by the fire. And since I was to die anyway, it were well that I should go against the Mukumuks and be slain. Thus would I attain honor and chieftainship in the final abode of the dead, and thus would honor remain to my father, who was the Otter. Wherefore he gave command that a war party be made ready to go down the river. And that when we came upon the Mukumuks I was to go forth alone from my party, giving semblance of battle, and so be slain."

"Nay, but hear, O White Man!" cried Mutsak, unable longer to contain himself. "Skolka, the shaman, whispered long that night in the ear of the Otter, and it was his doing that Lone Chief should be sent forth to die. For the Otter being old, and Lone Chief the last of his sons, Skolka had it in mind to become chief himself over the people. And when the people had made great noise for a day and a night and Lone Chief was yet alive, Skolka was become afraid that he would not die. So it was the counsel of Skolka, with fine words of honor and deeds, that spoke through the mouth of the Otter.

"Ay," replied Lone Chief. "Well did I know it was the doing of Skolka, but I was unmindful, being very sick. I had no heart for anger, nor belly for stout words, and I cared little, one way or the other, only I cared to die and have done with it all. So, O White Man, the war party was made ready. No tried fighters were there, nor elders, crafty and wise — naught but five score of young men who had seen little fighting. And all the village gathered together above the bank of the river to see us depart. And we departed amid great rejoicing and the singing of my praises. Even thou, O White Man, wouldst rejoice at sight of a young man going forth to battle, even though doomed to die.

"So we went forth, the five score young men, and Mutsak came also, for he was likewise young and untried. And by command of my father, the Otter, my canoe was lashed on either side to the canoe of Mutsak and the canoe of Kannakut. Thus was my strength saved me from the work of the paddles, so that, for all of my sickness, I might make a brave show at the end. And thus we went down the river.

"Nor will I weary thee with the tale of the journey, which was not long. And not far above the village of the Mukumuks we came upon two of their fighting men in canoes, that fled at the sight of us. And then, according to the command of my father, my canoe was cast loose and I was left to drift down all alone. Also, according to his command, were the young men to see me die, so that they might return and tell the manner of my death. Upon this, my father, the Otter, and Skolka, the shaman, had been very clear, with stern promises of punishment in case they were not obeyed.

"I dipped my paddle and shouted words of scorn after the fleeing warriors. And the vile things I shouted made them turn their heads in anger, when they beheld that the young men held back, and that I came on alone. Whereupon, when they had made a safe distance, the two warriors drew their canoes somewhat apart and waited side by side for me to come between. And I came between, spear in hand, and singing the war-song of my people. Each flung a spear, but I bent my body, and the spears whistled over me, and I was unhurt. Then, and we were all together, we three, I cast my spear at the one to the right, and it drove into his throat and he pitched backward into the water.

“Great was my surprise thereat, for I had killed a man. I turned to the one on the left and drove strong with my paddle, to meet Death face to face; but the man’s second spear, which was his last, but bit into the flesh of my shoulder. Then was I upon him, making no cast, but pressing the point into his breast and working it through him with both my hands. And while I worked, pressing with all my strength, he smote me upon my head, once and twice, with the broad of his paddle.

“Even as the point of the spear sprang out beyond his back, he smote me upon the head. There was a flash, as of bright light, and inside my head I felt something give, with a snap — just like that, with a snap. And the weight that pressed above my eyes so long was lifted, and the band that bound my brows so tight was broken. And a great gladness came upon me, and my heart sang with joy.

“This be death, I thought; wherefore I thought that death was very good. And then I saw the two empty canoes, and I knew that I was not dead, but well again. The blows of the man upon my head had made me well. I knew that I had killed, and the taste of the blood made me fierce, and I drove my paddle into the breast of the Yukon and urged my canoe toward the village of the Mukumuks. The young men behind me gave a great cry. I looked over my shoulder and saw the water foaming white from their paddles — ”

“Ay, it foamed white from our paddles,” said Mutsak. “For we remembered the command of the Otter, and of Skolka, that we behold with our own eyes the manner of Lone Chief’s death. A young man of the Mukumuks, on his way to a salmon trap, beheld the coming of Lone Chief, and of the five score men behind him. And the young man fled in his canoe, straight for the village, that alarm might be given and preparation made. But Lone Chief hurried after him, and we hurried after Lone Chief to behold the manner of his death. Only, in the face of the village, as the young man leaped to the shore, Lone Chief rose up in his canoe and made a mighty cast. And the spear entered the body of the young man above the hips, and the young man fell upon his face.

“Whereupon Lone Chief leaped up the bank war-club in hand and a great war-cry on his lips, and dashed into the village. The first man he met was Itwilie, chief over the Mukumuks, and him Lone Chief smote upon the head with his war-club, so that he fell dead upon the ground. And for fear we might not behold the manner of his death, we too, the five score young men, leaped to the shore and followed Lone Chief into the village. Only the

Mukumuks did not understand, and thought we had come to fight; so their bow-thongs sang and their arrows whistled among us. Whereat we forgot our errand, and fell upon them with our spears and clubs; and they being unprepared, there was great slaughter — ”

“With my own hands I slew their shaman,” proclaimed Lone Chief, his withered face a-work with memory of that old-time day. “With my own hands I slew him, who was a greater shaman than Skolka, our own shaman. And each time I faced a man, I thought, ‘Now cometh Death; and each time I slew the man, and Death came not. It seemed the breath of life was strong in my nostrils and I could not die — ”

“And we followed Lone Chief the length of the village and back again,” continued Mutsak. “Like a pack of wolves we followed him, back and forth, and here and there, till there were no more Mukumuks left to fight. Then we gathered together five score men-slaves, and double as many women, and countless children, and we set fire and burned all the houses and lodges, and departed. And that was the last of the Mukumuks.”

“And that was the last of the Mukumuks,” Lone Chief repeated exultantly. “And when we came to our own village, the people were amazed at our burden of wealth and slaves, and in that I was still alive they were more amazed. And my father, the Otter, came trembling with gladness at the things I had done. For he was an old man, and I the last of his sons. And all the tried fighting men came, and the crafty and wise, till all the people were gathered together. And then I arose, and with a voice like thunder, commanded Skolka, the shaman, to stand forth — ”

“Ay, O White Man,” exclaimed Mutsak. “With a voice like thunder, that made the people shake at the knees and become afraid.”

“And when Skolka had stood forth,” Lone Chief went on, “I said that I was not minded to die. Also, I said it were not well that disappointment come to the evil spirits that wait beyond the grave. Wherefore I deemed it fit that the soul of Skolka fare forth into the Unknown, where doubtless it would howl forever in the dark and endless forest. And then I slew him, as he stood there, in the face of all the people. Even I, Lone Chief, with my own hands, slew Skolka, the shaman, in the face of all the people. And when a murmuring arose, I cried aloud — ”

“With a voice like thunder,” prompted Mutsak.

“Ay, with a voice like thunder I cried aloud: ‘Behold, O ye people! I am Lone Chief, slayer of Skolka, the false shaman! Alone among men, have I passed down through the gateway of Death and returned again. Mine eyes have looked upon the unseen things. Mine ears have heard the unspoken words. Greater am I than Skolka, the shaman. Greater than all shamans am I. Likewise am I a greater chief than my father, the Otter. All his days did he fight with the Mukumuks, and lo, in one day have I destroyed them all. As with the breathing of a breath have I destroyed them. Wherefore, my father, the Otter, being old, and Skolka, the shaman, being dead, I shall be both chief and shaman. Henceforth shall I be both chief and shaman to you, O my people. And if any man dispute my word, let that man stand forth!'

"I waited, but no man stood forth. Then I cried: 'Hoh! I have tasted blood! Now bring meat, for I am hungry. Break open the caches, tear down the fish-racks, and let the feast be big. Let there be merriment, and songs, not of burial, but marriage. And last of all, let the girl Kasaan be brought. The girl Kasaan, who is to be the mother of the children of Lone Chief!'

"And at my words, and because that he was very old, my father, the Otter, wept like a woman, and put his arms about my knees. And from that day I was both chief and shaman. And great honor was mine, and all men yielded me obedience."

"Until the steamboat came," Mutsak prompted.

"Ay," said Lone Chief. "Until the steamboat came."

The Siege of the ‘Lancashire Queen’

Possibly our most exasperating experience on the fish patrol was when Charley Le Grant and I laid a two weeks’ siege to a big four-masted English ship. Before we had finished with the affair, it became a pretty mathematical problem, and it was by the merest chance that we came into possession of the instrument that brought it to a successful termination.

After our raid on the oyster pirates we had returned to Oakland, where two more weeks passed before Neil Partington’s wife was out of danger and on the highroad to recovery. So it was after an absence of a month, all told, that we turned the Reindeer’s nose toward Benicia. When the cat’s away the mice will play, and in these four weeks the fishermen had become very bold in violating the law. When we passed Point Pedro we noticed many signs of activity among the shrimp-catchers, and, well into San Pablo Bay, we observed a widely scattered fleet of Upper Bay fishing-boats hastily pulling in their nets and getting up sail.

This was suspicious enough to warrant investigation, and the first and only boat we succeeded in boarding proved to have an illegal net. The law permitted no smaller mesh for catching shad than one that measured seven and one-half inches inside the knots, while the mesh of this particular net measured only three inches. It was a flagrant breach of the rules, and the two fishermen were forthwith put under arrest. Neil Partington took one of them with him to help manage the Reindeer, while Charley and I went on ahead with the other in the captured boat.

But the shad fleet had headed over toward the Petaluma shore in wild flight, and for the rest of the run through San Pablo Bay we saw no more fishermen at all. Our prisoner, a bronzed and bearded Greek, sat sullenly on his net while we sailed his craft. It was a new Columbia River salmon boat, evidently on its first trip, and it handled splendidly. Even when Charley praised it, our prisoner refused to speak or to notice us, and we soon gave him up as a most unsociable fellow.

We ran up the Carquinez Straits and edged into the bight at Turner’s Shipyard for smoother water. Here were lying several English steel sailing ships, waiting for the wheat harvest; and here, most unexpectedly, in the precise place where we had captured Big Alec, we came upon two Italians in a skiff that was loaded with a complete “Chinese” sturgeon line. The surprise was mutual, and we were on top of them before either they or we were aware. Charley had barely time to luff into the wind and run up to them. I ran forward and tossed them a line with orders to make it fast. One of the Italians took a turn with it over a cleat, while I hastened to lower our big spritsail. This accomplished, the salmon boat dropped astern, dragging heavily on the skiff.

Charley came forward to board the prize, but when I proceeded to haul alongside by means of the line, the Italians cast it off. We at once began drifting to leeward, while they got out two pairs of oars and rowed their light craft directly into the wind. This manoeuvre for the moment disconcerted us, for in our large and heavily loaded boat we could not hope to catch them with the oars. But our prisoner came unexpectedly to our aid. His black eyes were flashing eagerly, and his face was flushed with suppressed excitement, as he dropped the centre-board, sprang forward with a single leap, and put up the sail.

"I've always heard that Greeks don't like Italians," Charley laughed, as he ran aft to the tiller.

And never in my experience have I seen a man so anxious for the capture of another as was our prisoner in the chase that followed. His eyes fairly snapped, and his nostrils quivered and dilated in a most extraordinary way. Charley steered while he tended the sheet; and though Charley was as quick and alert as a cat, the Greek could hardly control his impatience.

The Italians were cut off from the shore, which was fully a mile away at its nearest point. Did they attempt to make it, we could haul after them with the wind abeam, and overtake them before they had covered an eighth of the distance. But they were too wise to attempt it, contenting themselves with rowing lustily to windward along the starboard side of a big ship, the Lancashire Queen. But beyond the ship lay an open stretch of fully two miles to the shore in that direction. This, also, they dared not attempt, for we were bound to catch them before they could cover it. So, when they reached the bow of the Lancashire Queen, nothing remained but to pass around and row down her port side toward the stern, which meant rowing to leeward and giving us the advantage.

We in the salmon boat, sailing close on the wind, tacked about and crossed the ship's bow. Then Charley put up the tiller and headed down the port side of the ship, the Greek letting out the sheet and grinning with delight. The Italians were already half-way down the ship's length; but the stiff breeze at our back drove us after them far faster than they could row. Closer and closer we came, and I, lying down forward, was just reaching out to grasp the skiff, when it ducked under the great stern of the Lancashire Queen.

The chase was virtually where it had begun. The Italians were rowing up the starboard side of the ship, and we were hauled close on the wind and slowly edging out from the ship as we worked to windward. Then they darted around her bow and began the row down her port side, and we tacked about, crossed her bow, and went plunging down the wind hot after them. And again, just as I was reaching for the skiff, it ducked under the ship's stern and out of danger. And so it went, around and around, the skiff each time just barely ducking into safety.

By this time the ship's crew had become aware of what was taking place, and we could see their heads in a long row as they looked at us over the bulwarks. Each time we missed the skiff at the stern, they set up a wild cheer and dashed across to the other side of the Lancashire Queen to see the chase to wind-ward. They showered us and the Italians with jokes and advice, and made our Greek so angry that at least once on each circuit he raised his fist and shook it at them in a rage. They came to look for this, and at each display greeted it with uproarious mirth.

"Wot a circus!" cried one.

"Tork about yer marine hippodromes,-if this ain't one, I'd like to know!" affirmed another.

"Six-days-go-as-yer-please," announced a third. "Who says the dagoes won't win?"

On the next tack to windward the Greek offered to change places with Charley.

"Let-a me sail-a de boat," he demanded. "I fix-a them, I catch-a them, sure."

This was a stroke at Charley's professional pride, for pride himself he did upon his boat-sailing abilities; but he yielded the tiller to the prisoner and took his place at the sheet. Three times again we made the circuit, and the Greek found that he could get no more speed out of the salmon boat than Charley had.

"Better give it up," one of the sailors advised from above.

The Greek scowled ferociously and shook his fist in his customary fashion. In the meanwhile my mind had not been idle, and I had finally evolved an idea.

“Keep going, Charley, one time more,” I said.

And as we laid out on the next tack to wind-ward, I bent a piece of line to a small grappling hook I had seen lying in the bail-hole. The end of the line I made fast to the ring-bolt in the bow, and with the hook out of sight I waited for the next opportunity to use it. Once more they made their leeward pull down the port side of the Lancashire Queen, and once more we churned down after them before the wind. Nearer and nearer we drew, and I was making believe to reach for them as before. The stern of the skiff was not six feet away, and they were laughing at me derisively as they ducked under the ship’s stern. At that instant I suddenly arose and threw the grappling iron. It caught fairly and squarely on the rail of the skiff, which was jerked backward out of safety as the rope tautened and the salmon boat ploughed on.

A groan went up from the row of sailors above, which quickly changed to a cheer as one of the Italians whipped out a long sheath-knife and cut the rope. But we had drawn them out of safety, and Charley, from his place in the stern-sheets, reached over and clutched the stern of the skiff. The whole thing happened in a second of time, for the first Italian was cutting the rope and Charley was clutching the skiff when the second Italian dealt him a rap over the head with an oar, Charley released his hold and collapsed, stunned, into the bottom of the salmon boat, and the Italians bent to their oars and escaped back under the ship’s stern.

The Greek took both tiller and sheet and continued the chase around the Lancashire Queen, while I attended to Charley, on whose head a nasty lump was rapidly rising. Our sailor audience was wild with delight, and to a man encouraged the fleeing Italians. Charley sat up, with one hand on his head, and gazed about him sheepishly.

“It will never do to let them escape now,” he said, at the same time drawing his revolver.

On our next circuit, he threatened the Italians with the weapon; but they rowed on stolidly, keeping splendid stroke and utterly disregarding him.

“If you don’t stop, I’ll shoot,” Charley said menacingly.

But this had no effect, nor were they to be frightened into surrendering even when he fired several shots dangerously close to them. It was too much to expect him to shoot unarmed men, and this they knew as well as we did; so they continued to pull doggedly round and round the ship.

“We’ll run them down, then!” Charley exclaimed. “We’ll wear them out and wind them!”

So the chase continued. Twenty times more we ran them around the Lancashire Queen, and at last we could see that even their iron muscles were giving out. They were nearly exhausted, and it was only a matter of a few more circuits, when the game took on a new feature. On the row to windward they always gained on us, so that they were half-way down the ship’s side on the row to leeward when we were passing the bow. But this last time, as we passed the bow, we saw them escaping up the ship’s gangway, which had been suddenly lowered. It was an organized move on the part of the sailors, evidently countenanced by the captain; for by the time we arrived where the gangway had been, it was being hoisted up, and the skiff, slung in the ship’s davits, was likewise flying aloft out of reach.

The parley that followed with the captain was short and snappy. He absolutely forbade us to board the Lancashire Queen, and as absolutely refused to give up the two men. By this time Charley was as enraged as the Greek. Not only had he been foiled in a long and ridiculous chase, but he had been knocked senseless into the bottom of his boat by the men who had escaped him.

“Knock off my head with little apples,” he declared emphatically, striking the fist of one hand into the palm of the other, “if those two men ever escape me! I’ll stay here to get them if it takes the rest of my natural life, and if I don’t get them, then I promise you I’ll live unnaturally long or until I do get them, or my name’s not Charley Le Grant!”

And then began the siege of the Lancashire Queen, a siege memorable in the annals of both fishermen and fish patrol. When the Reindeer came along, after a fruitless pursuit of the shad fleet, Charley instructed Neil Partington to send out his own salmon boat, with blankets, provisions, and a fisherman’s charcoal stove. By sunset this exchange of boats was made, and we said good-by to our Greek, who perforce had to go into Benicia and be locked up for his own violation of the law. After supper, Charley and I kept alternate four-hour watches till day-light. The fishermen made no attempt to escape that night, though the ship sent out a boat for scouting purposes to find if the coast were clear.

By the next day we saw that a steady siege was in order, and we perfected our plans with an eye to our own comfort. A dock, known as the Solano Wharf, which ran out from the Benicia shore, helped us in this. It happened that the Lancashire Queen, the shore at Turner's Shipyard, and the Solano Wharf were the corners of a big equilateral triangle. From ship to shore, the side of the triangle along which the Italians had to escape, was a distance equal to that from the Solano Wharf to the shore, the side of the triangle along which we had to travel to get to the shore before the Italians. But as we could sail much faster than they could row, we could permit them to travel about half their side of the triangle before we darted out along our side. If we allowed them to get more than half-way, they were certain to beat us to shore; while if we started before they were half-way, they were equally certain to beat us back to the ship.

We found that an imaginary line, drawn from the end of the wharf to a windmill farther along the shore, cut precisely in half the line of the triangle along which the Italians must escape to reach the land. This line made it easy for us to determine how far to let them run away before we bestirred ourselves in pursuit. Day after day we would watch them through our glasses as they rowed leisurely along toward the half-way point; and as they drew close into line with the windmill, we would leap into the boat and get up sail. At sight of our preparation, they would turn and row slowly back to the Lancashire Queen, secure in the knowledge that we could not overtake them.

To guard against calms-when our salmon boat would be useless-we also had in readiness a light rowing skiff equipped with spoon-oars. But at such times, when the wind failed us, we were forced to row out from the wharf as soon as they rowed from the ship. In the night-time, on the other hand, we were compelled to patrol the immediate vicinity of the ship; which we did, Charley and I standing four-hour watches turn and turn about. The Italians, however, preferred the daytime in which to escape, and so our long night vigils were without result.

“What makes me mad,” said Charley, “is our being kept from our honest beds while those rascally lawbreakers are sleeping soundly every night. But much good may it do them,” he threatened. “I'll keep them on that ship till the captain charges them board, as sure as a sturgeon's not a catfish!”

It was a tantalizing problem that confronted us. As long as we were vigilant, they could not escape; and as long as they were careful, we would be unable to catch them. Charley cudgelled his brains continually, but for once his imagination failed him. It was a problem apparently without other solution than that of patience. It was a waiting game, and whichever waited the longer was bound to win. To add to our irritation, friends of the Italians established a code of signals with them from the shore, so that we never dared relax the siege for a moment. And besides this, there were always one or two suspicious-looking fishermen hanging around the Solano Wharf and keeping watch on our actions. We could do nothing but “grin and bear it,” as Charley said, while it took up all our time and prevented us from doing other work.

The days went by, and there was no change in the situation. Not that no attempts were made to change it. One night friends from the shore came out in a skiff and attempted to confuse us while the two Italians escaped. That they did not succeed was due to the lack of a little oil on the ship’s davits. For we were drawn back from the pursuit of the strange boat by the creaking of the davits, and arrived at the Lancashire Queen just as the Italians were lowering their skiff. Another night, fully half a dozen skiffs rowed around us in the darkness, but we held on like a leech to the side of the ship and frustrated their plan till they grew angry and showered us with abuse. Charley laughed to himself in the bottom of the boat.

“It’s a good sign, lad,” he said to me. “When men begin to abuse, make sure they’re losing patience; and shortly after they lose patience, they lose their heads. Mark my words, if we only hold out, they’ll get careless some fine day, and then we’ll get them.”

But they did not grow careless, and Charley confessed that this was one of the times when all signs failed. Their patience seemed equal to ours, and the second week of the siege dragged monotonously along. Then Charley’s lagging imagination quickened sufficiently to suggest a ruse. Peter Boyelen, a new patrolman and one unknown to the fisher-folk, happened to arrive in Benicia and we took him into our plan. We were as secret as possible about it, but in some unfathomable way the friends ashore got word to the beleaguered Italians to keep their eyes open.

On the night we were to put our ruse into effect, Charley and I took up our usual station in our rowing skiff alongside the Lancashire Queen. After it was thoroughly dark, Peter Boyelen came out in a crazy duck boat, the kind you can pick up and carry away under one arm. When we heard him coming along, paddling noisily, we slipped away a short distance into the darkness, and rested on our oars. Opposite the gangway, having jovially hailed the anchor-watch of the Lancashire Queen and asked the direction of the Scottish Chiefs, another wheat ship, he awkwardly capsized himself.

The man who was standing the anchor-watch ran down the gangway and hauled him out of the water. This was what he wanted, to get aboard the ship; and the next thing he expected was to be taken on deck and then below to warm up and dry out. But the captain inhospitably kept him perched on the lowest gang-way step, shivering miserably and with his feet dangling in the water, till we, out of very pity, rowed in from the darkness and took him off. The jokes and gibes of the awakened crew sounded anything but sweet in our ears, and even the two Italians climbed up on the rail and laughed down at us long and maliciously.

"That's all right," Charley said in a low voice, which I only could hear. "I'm mighty glad it's not us that's laughing first. We'll save our laugh to the end, eh, lad?"

He clapped a hand on my shoulder as he finished, but it seemed to me that there was more determination than hope in his voice.

It would have been possible for us to secure the aid of United States marshals and board the English ship, backed by Government authority. But the instructions of the Fish Commission were to the effect that the patrolmen should avoid complications, and this one, did we call on the higher powers, might well end in a pretty international tangle.

The second week of the siege drew to its close, and there was no sign of change in the situation. On the morning of the fourteenth day the change came, and it came in a guise as unexpected and startling to us as it was to the men we were striving to capture.

Charley and I, after our customary night vigil by the side of the Lancashire Queen, rowed into the Solana Wharf.

"Hello!" cried Charley, in surprise. "In the name of reason and common sense, what is that? Of all unmannerly craft did you ever see the like?"

Well might he exclaim, for there, tied up to the dock, lay the strangest looking launch I had ever seen. Not that it could be called a launch, either, but it seemed to resemble a launch more than any other kind of boat. It was seventy feet long, but so narrow was it, and so bare of superstructure, that it appeared much smaller than it really was. It was built wholly of steel, and was painted black. Three smokestacks, a good distance apart and raking well aft, arose in single file amidships; while the bow, long and lean and sharp as a knife, plainly advertised that the boat was made for speed. Passing under the stern, we read Streak, painted in small white letters.

Charley and I were consumed with curiosity. In a few minutes we were on board and talking with an engineer who was watching the sunrise from the deck. He was quite willing to satisfy our curiosity, and in a few minutes we learned that the Streak had come in after dark from San Francisco; that this was what might be called the trial trip; and that she was the property of Silas Tate, a young mining millionaire of California, whose fad was high-speed yachts. There was some talk about turbine engines, direct application of steam, and the absence of pistons, rods, and cranks,-all of which was beyond me, for I was familiar only with sailing craft; but I did understand the last words of the engineer.

"Four thousand horse-power and forty-five miles an hour, though you wouldn't think it," he concluded proudly.

"Say it again, man! Say it again!" Charley exclaimed in an excited voice.

"Four thousand horse-power and forty-five miles an hour," the engineer repeated, grinning good-naturedly.

"Where's the owner?" was Charley's next question. "Is there any way I can speak to him?"

The engineer shook his head. "No, I'm afraid not. He's asleep, you see."

At that moment a young man in blue uniform came on deck farther aft and stood regarding the sunrise.

"There he is, that's him, that's Mr. Tate," said the engineer.

Charley walked aft and spoke to him, and while he talked earnestly the young man listened with an amused expression on his face. He must have inquired about the depth of water close in to the shore at Turner's Shipyard, for I could see Charley making gestures and explaining. A few minutes later he came back in high glee.

"Come on lad," he said. "On to the dock with you. We've got them!"

It was our good fortune to leave the Streak when we did, for a little later one of the spy fishermen appeared. Charley and I took up our accustomed places, on the stringer-piece, a little ahead of the Streak and over our own boat, where we could comfortably watch the Lancashire Queen. Nothing occurred till about nine o'clock, when we saw the two Italians leave the ship and pull along their side of the triangle toward the shore. Charley looked as unconcerned as could be, but before they had covered a quarter of the distance, he whispered to me:

"Forty-five miles an hour . . . nothing can save them . . . they are ours!"

Slowly the two men rowed along till they were nearly in line with the windmill. This was the point where we always jumped into our salmon boat and got up the sail, and the two men, evidently expecting it, seemed surprised when we gave no sign.

When they were directly in line with the windmill, as near to the shore as to the ship, and nearer the shore than we had ever allowed them before, they grew suspicious. We followed them through the glasses, and saw them standing up in the skiff and trying to find out what we were doing. The spy fisherman, sitting beside us on the stringer-piece was likewise puzzled. He could not understand our inactivity. The men in the skiff rowed nearer the shore, but stood up again and scanned it, as if they thought we might be in hiding there. But a man came out on the beach and waved a handkerchief to indicate that the coast was clear. That settled them. They bent to the oars to make a dash for it. Still Charley waited. Not until they had covered three-quarters of the distance from the Lancashire Queen, which left them hardly more than a quarter of a mile to gain the shore, did Charley slap me on the shoulder and cry:

"They're ours! They're ours!"

We ran the few steps to the side of the Streak and jumped aboard. Stern and bow lines were cast off in a jiffy. The Streak shot ahead and away from the wharf. The spy fisherman we had left behind on the stringer-piece pulled out a revolver and fired five shots into the air in rapid succession. The men in the skiff gave instant heed to the warning, for we could see them pulling away like mad.

But if they pulled like mad, I wonder how our progress can be described? We fairly flew. So frightful was the speed with which we displaced the water, that a wave rose up on either side our bow and foamed aft in a series of three stiff, up-standing waves, while astern a great crested billow pursued us hungrily, as though at each moment it would fall aboard and destroy us. The Streak was pulsing and vibrating and roaring like a thing alive. The wind of our progress was like a gale-a forty-five-mile gale. We could not face it and draw breath without choking and strangling. It blew the smoke straight back from the mouths of the smoke-stacks at a direct right angle to the perpendicular. In fact, we were travelling as fast as an express train. "We just streaked it," was the way Charley told it afterward, and I think his description comes nearer than any I can give.

As for the Italians in the skiff-hardly had we started, it seemed to me, when we were on top of them. Naturally, we had to slow down long before we got to them; but even then we shot past like a whirlwind and were compelled to circle back between them and the shore. They had rowed steadily, rising from the thwarts at every stroke, up to the moment we passed them, when they recognized Charley and me. That took the last bit of fight out of them. They hauled in their oars, and sullenly submitted to arrest.

“Well, Charley,” Neil Partington said, as we discussed it on the wharf afterward, “I fail to see where your boasted imagination came into play this time.”

But Charley was true to his hobby. “Imagination?” he demanded, pointing to the Streak. “Look at that! just look at it! If the invention of that isn’t imagination, I should like to know what is.”

“Of course,” he added, “it’s the other fellow’s imagination, but it did the work all the same.”

Siwash

“If I was a man--“ Her words were in themselves indecisive, but the withering contempt which flashed from her black eyes was not lost upon the men-folk in the tent.

Tommy, the English sailor, squirmed, but chivalrous old Dick Humphries, Cornish fisherman and erstwhile American salmon capitalist, beamed upon her benevolently as ever. He bore women too large a portion of his rough heart to mind them, as he said, when they were in the doldrums, or when their limited vision would not permit them to see all around a thing. So they said nothing, these two men who had taken the half-frozen woman into their tent three days back, and who had warmed her, and fed her, and rescued her goods from the Indian packers. This latter had necessitated the payment of numerous dollars, to say nothing of a demonstration in force--Dick Humphries squinting along the sights of a Winchester while Tommy apportioned their wages among them at his own appraisement. It had been a little thing in itself, but it meant much to a woman playing a desperate single-hand in the equally desperate Klondike rush of ‘97. Men were occupied with their own pressing needs, nor did they approve of women playing, single-handed, the odds of the arctic winter. “If I was a man, I know what I would do.” Thus reiterated Molly, she of the flashing eyes, and therein spoke the cumulative grit of five American-born generations.

In the succeeding silence, Tommy thrust a pan of biscuits into the Yukon stove and piled on fresh fuel. A reddish flood pounded along under his sun-tanned skin, and as he stooped, the skin of his neck was scarlet. Dick palmed a three-cornered sail needle through a set of broken pack straps, his good nature in nowise disturbed by the feminine cataclysm which was threatening to burst in the storm-beaten tent.

“And if you was a man?” he asked, his voice vibrant with kindness. The three-cornered needle jammed in the damp leather, and he suspended work for the moment.

“I’d be a man. I’d put the straps on my back and light out. I wouldn’t lay in camp here, with the Yukon like to freeze most any day, and the goods not half over the portage. And you--you are men, and you sit here, holding your hands, afraid of a little wind and wet. I tell you straight, Yankee-men are made of different stuff. They'd be hitting the trail for Dawson if they had to wade through hell-fire. And you, you--I wish I was a man."

"I'm very glad, my dear, that you're not." Dick Humphries threw the bight of the sail twine over the point of the needle and drew it clear with a couple of deft turns and a jerk.

A snort of the gale dealt the tent a broad-handed slap as it hurtled past, and the sleet rat-tat-tatted with snappy spite against the thin canvas. The smoke, smothered in its exit, drove back through the fire-box door, carrying with it the pungent odor of green spruce.

"Good Gawd! Why can't a woman listen to reason?" Tommy lifted his head from the denser depths and turned upon her a pair of smoke-outraged eyes.

"And why can't a man show his manhood?"

Tommy sprang to his feet with an oath which would have shocked a woman of lesser heart, ripped loose the sturdy reef-knots and flung back the flaps of the tent.

The trio peered out. It was not a heartening spectacle. A few water-soaked tents formed the miserable foreground, from which the streaming ground sloped to a foaming gorge. Down this ramped a mountain torrent. Here and there, dwarf spruce, rooting and grovelling in the shallow alluvium, marked the proximity of the timber line. Beyond, on the opposing slope, the vague outlines of a glacier loomed dead-white through the driving rain. Even as they looked, its massive front crumbled into the valley, on the breast of some subterranean vomit, and it lifted its hoarse thunder above the screeching voice of the storm. Involuntarily, Molly shrank back.

"Look, woman! Look with all your eyes! Three miles in the teeth of the gale to Crater Lake, across two glaciers, along the slippery rim-rock, knee-deep in a howling river! Look, I say, you Yankee woman! Look! There's your Yankee-men!" Tommy pointed a passionate hand in the direction of the struggling tents. "Yankees, the last mother's son of them. Are they on trail? Is there one of them with the straps to his back? And you would teach us men our work? Look, I say!"

Another tremendous section of the glacier rumbled earthward. The wind whipped in at the open doorway, bulging out the sides of the tent till it swayed like a huge bladder at its guy ropes. The smoke swirled about them, and the sleet drove sharply into their flesh. Tommy pulled the flaps together hastily, and returned to his tearful task at the fire-box. Dick Humphries threw the mended pack straps into a corner and lighted his pipe. Even Molly was for the moment persuaded.

"There's my clothes," she half-whimpered, the feminine for the moment prevailing. "They're right at the top of the cache, and they'll be ruined! I tell you, ruined!"

"There, there," Dick interposed, when the last quavering syllable had wailed itself out. "Don't let that worry you, little woman. I'm old enough to be your father's brother, and I've a daughter older than you, and I'll tog you out in fripperies when we get to Dawson if it takes my last dollar."

"When we get to Dawson!" The scorn had come back to her throat with a sudden surge. "You'll rot on the way, first. You'll drown in a mudhole. You--you--Britishers!"

The last word, explosive, intensive, had strained the limits of her vituperation. If that would not stir these men, what could? Tommy's neck ran red again, but he kept his tongue between his teeth. Dick's eyes mellowed. He had the advantage over Tommy, for he had once had a white woman for a wife.

The blood of five American-born generations is, under certain circumstances, an uncomfortable heritage; and among these circumstances might be enumerated that of being quartered with next of kin. These men were Britons. On sea and land her ancestry and the generations thereof had thrashed them and theirs. On sea and land they would continue to do so. The traditions of her race clamored for vindication. She was but a woman of the present, but in her bubbled the whole mighty past. It was not alone Molly Travis who pulled on gum boots, mackintosh, and straps; for the phantom hands of ten thousand forbears drew tight the buckles, just so as they squared her jaw and set her eyes with determination. She, Molly Travis, intended to shame these Britishers; they, the innumerable shades, were asserting the dominance of the common race.

The men-folk did not interfere. Once Dick suggested that she take his oilskins, as her mackintosh was worth no more than paper in such a storm. But she sniffed her independence so sharply that he communed with his pipe till she tied the flaps on the outside and slushed away on the flooded trail.

"Think she'll make it?" Dick's face belied the indifference of his voice.

"Make it? If she stands the pressure till she gets to the cache, what of the cold and misery, she'll be stark, raving mad. Stand it? She'll be dumb-crazed. You know it yourself, Dick. You've wind-jammed round the Horn. You know what it is to lay out on a topsail yard in the thick of it, bucking sleet and snow and frozen canvas till you're ready to just let go and cry like a baby. Clothes? She won't be able to tell a bundle of skirts from a gold pan or a tea-kettle."

"Kind of think we were wrong in letting her go, then?"

"Not a bit of it. So help me, Dick, she'd 'a' made this tent a hell for the rest of the trip if we hadn't. Trouble with her she's got too much spirit. This'll tone it down a bit."

"Yes," Dick admitted, "she's too ambitious. But then Molly's all right. A cussed little fool to tackle a trip like this, but a plucky sight better than those pick-me-up-and-carry-me kind of women. She's the stock that carried you and me, Tommy, and you've got to make allowance for the spirit. Takes a woman to breed a man. You can't suck manhood from the dugs of a creature whose only claim to womanhood is her petticoats. Takes a she-cat, not a cow, to mother a tiger."

"And when they're unreasonable we've got to put up with it, eh?"

"The proposition. A sharp sheath-knife cuts deeper on a slip than a dull one; but that's no reason for to hack the edge off over a capstan bar."

"All right, if you say so, but when it comes to woman, I guess I'll take mine with a little less edge."

"What do you know about it?" Dick demanded.

"Some." Tommy reached over for a pair of Molly's wet stockings and stretched them across his knees to dry.

Dick, eying him querulously, went fishing in her hand satchel, then hitched up to the front of the stove with divers articles of damp clothing spread likewise to the heat.

"Thought you said you never were married?" he asked.

"Did I? No more was I--that is--yes, by Gawd! I was. And as good a woman as ever cooked grub for a man."

"Slipped her moorings?" Dick symbolized infinity with a wave of his hand.

"Ay."

"Childbirth," he added, after a moment's pause.

The beans bubbled rowdily on the front lid, and he pushed the pot back to a cooler surface. After that he investigated the biscuits, tested them with a splinter of wood, and placed them aside under cover of a damp cloth. Dick, after the manner of his kind, stifled his interest and waited silently. “A different woman to Molly. Siwash.”

Dick nodded his understanding.

“Not so proud and wilful, but stick by a fellow through thick and thin. Sling a paddle with the next and starve as contentedly as Job. Go for’ard when the sloop’s nose was more often under than not, and take in sail like a man. Went prospecting once, up Teslin way, past Surprise Lake and the Little Yellow-Head. Grub gave out, and we ate the dogs. Dogs gave out, and we ate harnesses, moccasins, and furs. Never a whimper; never a pick-me-up-and-carry-me. Before we went she said look out for grub, but when it happened, never a I-told-you-so. ‘Never mind, Tommy,’ she’d say, day after day, that weak she could bare lift a snow-shoe and her feet raw with the work. ‘Never mind. I’d sooner be flat-bellied of hunger and be your woman, Tommy, than have a potlach every day and be Chief George’s klooch.’ George was chief of the Chilcoots, you know, and wanted her bad.

“Great days, those. Was a likely chap myself when I struck the coast. Jumped a whaler, the Pole Star, at Unalaska, and worked my way down to Sitka on an otter hunter. Picked up with Happy Jack there--know him?”

“Had charge of my traps for me,” Dick answered, “down on the Columbia. Pretty wild, wasn’t he, with a warm place in his heart for whiskey and women?”

“The very chap. Went trading with him for a couple of seasons--hooch, and blankets, and such stuff. Then got a sloop of my own, and not to cut him out, came down Juneau way. That’s where I met Killisnoo; I called her Tilly for short. Met her at a squaw dance down on the beach. Chief George had finished the year’s trade with the Sticks over the Passes, and was down from Dyea with half his tribe. No end of Siwashes at the dance, and I the only white. No one knew me, barring a few of the bucks I’d met over Sitka way, but I’d got most of their histories from Happy Jack.

“Everybody talking Chinook, not guessing that I could spit it better than most; and principally two girls who’d run away from Haine’s Mission up the Lynn Canal. They were trim creatures, good to the eye, and I kind of thought of casting that way; but they were fresh as fresh-caught cod. Too much edge, you see. Being a new-comer, they started to twist me, not knowing I gathered in every word of Chinook they uttered.

"I never let on, but set to dancing with Tilly, and the more we danced the more our hearts warmed to each other. 'Looking for a woman,' one of the girls says, and the other tosses her head and answers, 'Small chance he'll get one when the women are looking for men.' And the bucks and squaws standing around began to grin and giggle and repeat what had been said. 'Quite a pretty boy,' says the first one. I'll not deny I was rather smooth-faced and youngish, but I'd been a man amongst men many's the day, and it rankled me. 'Dancing with Chief George's girl,' pipes the second. 'First thing George'll give him the flat of a paddle and send him about his business.' Chief George had been looking pretty black up to now, but at this he laughed and slapped his knees. He was a husky beggar and would have used the paddle too.

"'Who's the girls?' I asked Tilly, as we went ripping down the centre in a reel. And as soon as she told me their names I remembered all about them from Happy Jack. Had their pedigree down fine--several things he'd told me that not even their own tribe knew. But I held my hush, and went on courting Tilly, they a-casting sharp remarks and everybody roaring. 'Bide a wee, Tommy,' I says to myself; 'bide a wee.'

"And bide I did, till the dance was ripe to break up, and Chief George had brought a paddle all ready for me. Everybody was on the lookout for mischief when we stopped; but I marched, easy as you please, slap into the thick of them. The Mission girls cut me up something clever, and for all I was angry I had to set my teeth to keep from laughing. I turned upon them suddenly.

"'Are you done?' I asked.

"You should have seen them when they heard me spitting Chinook. Then I broke loose. I told them all about themselves, and their people before them; their fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers--everybody, everything. Each mean trick they'd played; every scrape they'd got into; every shame that'd fallen them. And I burned them without fear or favor. All hands crowded round. Never had they heard a white man sling their lingo as I did. Everybody was laughing save the Mission girls. Even Chief George forgot the paddle, or at least he was swallowing too much respect to dare to use it.

"But the girls. 'Oh, don't, Tommy,' they cried, the tears running down their cheeks. 'Please don't. We'll be good. Sure, Tommy, sure.' But I knew them well, and I scorched them on every tender spot. Nor did I slack away till they came down on their knees, begging and pleading with me to keep quiet. Then I shot a glance at Chief George; but he did not know whether to have at me or not, and passed it off by laughing hollowly.

"So be. When I passed the parting with Tilly that night I gave her the word that I was going to be around for a week or so, and that I wanted to see more of her. Not thick-skinned, her kind, when it came to showing like and dislike, and she looked her pleasure for the honest girl she was. Ay, a striking lass, and I didn't wonder that Chief George was taken with her.

"Everything my way. Took the wind from his sails on the first leg. I was for getting her aboard and sailing down Wrangel way till it blew over, leaving him to whistle; but I wasn't to get her that easy. Seems she was living with an uncle of hers--guardian, the way such things go--and seems he was nigh to shuffling off with consumption or some sort of lung trouble. He was good and bad by turns, and she wouldn't leave him till it was over with. Went up to the tepee just before I left, to speculate on how long it'd be; but the old beggar had promised her to Chief George, and when he clapped eyes on me his anger brought on a hemorrhage.

"'Come and take me, Tommy,' she says when we bid good-by on the beach. 'Ay,' I answers; 'when you give the word.' And I kissed her, white-man-fashion and lover-fashion, till she was all of a tremble like a quaking aspen, and I was so beside myself I'd half a mind to go up and give the uncle a lift over the divide.

"So I went down Wrangel way, past St. Mary's and even to the Queen Charlottes, trading, running whiskey, turning the sloop to most anything. Winter was on, stiff and crisp, and I was back to Juneau, when the word came. 'Come,' the beggar says who brought the news. 'Killisnoo say, "Come now."' 'What's the row?' I asks. 'Chief George,' says he. 'Potlach. Killisnoo, makum klooch.'

"Ay, it was bitter--the Taku howling down out of the north, the salt water freezing quick as it struck the deck, and the old sloop and I hammering into the teeth of it for a hundred miles to Dyea. Had a Douglass Islander for crew when I started, but midway up he was washed over from the bows. Jibed all over and crossed the course three times, but never a sign of him."

"Doubled up with the cold most likely," Dick suggested, putting a pause into the narrative while he hung one of Molly's skirts up to dry, "and went down like a pot of lead."

“My idea. So I finished the course alone, half-dead when I made Dyea in the dark of the evening. The tide favored, and I ran the sloop plump to the bank, in the shelter of the river. Couldn’t go an inch further, for the fresh water was frozen solid. Halyards and blocks were that iced up I didn’t dare lower mainsail or jib. First I broached a pint of the cargo raw, and then, leaving all standing, ready for the start, and with a blanket around me, headed across the flat to the camp. No mistaking, it was a grand layout. The Chilcats had come in a body--dogs, babies, and canoes--to say nothing of the Dog-Ears, the Little Salmons, and the Missions. Full half a thousand of them to celebrate Tilly’s wedding, and never a white man in a score of miles.

“Nobody took note of me, the blanket over my head and hiding my face, and I waded knee deep through the dogs and youngsters till I was well up to the front. The show was being pulled off in a big open place among the trees, with great fires burning and the snow moccasin-packed as hard as Portland cement. Next me was Tilly, beaded and scarlet-clothed galore, and against her Chief George and his head men. The shaman was being helped out by the big medicines from the other tribes, and it shivered my spine up and down, the deviltries they cut. I caught myself wondering if the folks in Liverpool could only see me now; and I thought of yellow-haired Gussie, whose brother I licked after my first voyage, just because he was not for having a sailor-man courting his sister. And with Gussie in my eyes I looked at Tilly. A rum old world, thinks I, with man a-stepping in trails the mother little dreamed of when he lay at suck.

“So be. When the noise was loudest, walrus hides booming and priests a-singing, I says, ‘Are you ready?’ Gawd! Not a start, not a shot of the eyes my way, not the twitch of a muscle. ‘I knew,’ she answers, slow and steady as a calm spring tide. ‘Where?’ ‘The high bank at the edge of the ice,’ I whispers back. ‘Jump out when I give the word.’

“Did I say there was no end of huskies? Well, there was no end. Here, there, everywhere, they were scattered about,--tame wolves and nothing less. When the strain runs thin they breed them in the bush with the wild, and they’re bitter fighters. Right at the toe of my moccasin lay a big brute, and by the heel another. I doubled the first one’s tail, quick, till it snapped in my grip. As his jaws clipped together where my hand should have been, I threw the second one by the scruff straight into his mouth. ‘Go!’ I cried to Tilly.

"You know how they fight. In the wink of an eye there was a raging hundred of them, top and bottom, ripping and tearing each other, kids and squaws tumbling which way, and the camp gone wild. Tilly'd slipped away, so I followed. But when I looked over my shoulder at the skirt of the crowd, the devil laid me by the heart, and I dropped the blanket and went back.

"By then the dogs'd been knocked apart and the crowd was untangling itself. Nobody was in proper place, so they didn't note that Tilly'd gone. 'Hello,' I says, gripping Chief George by the hand. 'May your potlach-smoke rise often, and the Sticks bring many furs with the spring.'

"Lord love me, Dick, but he was joyed to see me,--him with the upper hand and wedding Tilly. Chance to puff big over me. The tale that I was hot after her had spread through the camps, and my presence did him proud. All hands knew me, without my blanket, and set to grinning and giggling. It was rich, but I made it richer by playing unbeknowing.

"'What's the row?' I asks. 'Who's getting married now?'

"'Chief George,' the shaman says, ducking his reverence to him.

"'Thought he had two klooches.'

"'Him takum more,--three,' with another duck.

"'Oh!' And I turned away as though it didn't interest me.

"But this wouldn't do, and everybody begins singing out, 'Killisnoo! Killisnoo!'

"'Killisnoo what?' I asked.

"'Killisnoo, klooch, Chief George,' they blathered. 'Killisnoo, klooch.'

"I jumped and looked at Chief George. He nodded his head and threw out his chest.

"She'll be no klooch of yours,' I says solemnly. 'No klooch of yours,' I repeats, while his face went black and his hand began dropping to his hunting-knife.

"'Look!' I cries, striking an attitude. 'Big Medicine. You watch my smoke.'

"I pulled off my mittens, rolled back my sleeves, and made half-a-dozen passes in the air.

"'Killisnoo!' I shouts. 'Killisnoo! Killisnoo!'

"I was making medicine, and they began to scare. Every eye was on me; no time to find out that Tilly wasn't there. Then I called Killisnoo three times again, and waited; and three times more. All for mystery and to make them nervous. Chief George couldn't guess what I was up to, and wanted to put a stop to the foolery; but the shamans said to wait, and that they'd see me and go me one better, or words to that effect. Besides, he was a superstitious cuss, and I fancy a bit afraid of the white man's magic.

"Then I called Killisnoo, long and soft like the howl of a wolf, till the women were all a-tremble and the bucks looking serious.

"'Look!' I sprang for'ard, pointing my finger into a bunch of squaws--easier to deceive women than men, you know. 'Look!' And I raised it aloft as though following the flight of a bird. Up, up, straight overhead, making to follow it with my eyes till it disappeared in the sky.

"'Killisnoo,' I said, looking at Chief George and pointing upward again. 'Killisnoo.'

"So help me, Dick, the gammon worked. Half of them, at least, saw Tilly disappear in the air. They'd drunk my whiskey at Juneau and seen stranger sights, I'll warrant. Why should I not do this thing, I, who sold bad spirits corked in bottles? Some of the women shrieked. Everybody fell to whispering in bunches. I folded my arms and held my head high, and they drew further away from me. The time was ripe to go. 'Grab him,' Chief George cries. Three or four of them came at me, but I whirled, quick, made a couple of passes like to send them after Tilly, and pointed up. Touch me? Not for the kingdoms of the earth. Chief George harangued them, but he couldn't get them to lift a leg. Then he made to take me himself; but I repeated the mummery and his grit went out through his fingers.

"'Let your shamans work wonders the like of which I have done this night,' I says. 'Let them call Killisnoo down out of the sky whither I have sent her.' But the priests knew their limits. 'May your klooches bear you sons as the spawn of the salmon,' I says, turning to go; 'and may your totem pole stand long in the land, and the smoke of your camp rise always.'

"But if the beggars could have seen me hitting the high places for the sloop as soon as I was clear of them, they'd thought my own medicine had got after me. Tilly'd kept warm by chopping the ice away, and was all ready to cast off. Gawd! how we ran before it, the Taku howling after us and the freezing seas sweeping over at every clip. With everything battened down, me a-steering and Tilly chopping ice, we held on half the night, till I plumped the sloop ashore on Porcupine Island, and we shivered it out on the beach; blankets wet, and Tilly drying the matches on her breast.

"So I think I know something about it. Seven years, Dick, man and wife, in rough sailing and smooth. And then she died, in the heart of the winter, died in childbirth, up there on the Chilcat Station. She held my hand to the last, the ice creeping up inside the door and spreading thick on the gut of the window. Outside, the lone howl of the wolf and the Silence; inside, death and the Silence. You've never heard the Silence yet, Dick, and Gawd grant you don't ever have to hear it when you sit by the side of death. Hear it? Ay, till the breath whistles like a siren, and the heart booms, booms, booms, like the surf on the shore.

"Siwash, Dick, but a woman. White, Dick, white, clear through. Towards the last she says, 'Keep my feather bed, Tommy, keep it always.' And I agreed. Then she opened her eyes, full with the pain. 'I've been a good woman to you, Tommy, and because of that I want you to promise--to promise'--the words seemed to stick in her throat--'that when you marry, the woman be white. No more Siwash, Tommy. I know. Plenty white women down to Juneau now. I know. Your people call you "squaw-man," your women turn their heads to the one side on the street, and you do not go to their cabins like other men. Why? Your wife Siwash. Is it not so? And this is not good. Wherefore I die. Promise me. Kiss me in token of your promise.'

"I kissed her, and she dozed off, whispering, 'It is good.' At the end, that near gone my ear was at her lips, she roused for the last time. 'Remember, Tommy; remember my feather bed.' Then she died, in childbirth, up there on the Chilcat Station."

The tent heeled over and half flattened before the gale. Dick refilled his pipe, while Tommy drew the tea and set it aside against Molly's return.

And she of the flashing eyes and Yankee blood? Blinded, falling, crawling on hand and knee, the wind thrust back in her throat by the wind, she was heading for the tent. On her shoulders a bulky pack caught the full fury of the storm. She plucked feebly at the knotted flaps, but it was Tommy and Dick who cast them loose. Then she set her soul for the last effort, staggered in, and fell exhausted on the floor.

Tommy unbuckled the straps and took the pack from her. As he lifted it there was a clanging of pots and pans. Dick, pouring out a mug of whiskey, paused long enough to pass the wink across her body. Tommy winked back. His lips pursed the monosyllable, "clothes," but Dick shook his head reprovingly. "Here, little woman," he said, after she had drunk the whiskey and straightened up a bit.

“Here’s some dry togs. Climb into them. We’re going out to extra-peg the tent. After that, give us the call, and we’ll come in and have dinner. Sing out when you’re ready.”

“So help me, Dick, that’s knocked the edge off her for the rest of this trip,” Tommy spluttered as they crouched to the lee of the tent.

“But it’s the edge is her saving grace.” Dick replied, ducking his head to a volley of sleet that drove around a corner of the canvas. “The edge that you and I’ve got, Tommy, and the edge of our mothers before us.”

A Son of the Sun

I

The Willi-Waw lay in the passage between the shore-reef and the outer-reef. From the latter came the low murmur of a lazy surf, but the sheltered stretch of water, not more than a hundred yards across to the white beach of pounded coral sand, was of glass-like smoothness. Narrow as was the passage, and anchored as she was in the shoalest place that gave room to swing, the Willi-Waw's chain rode up-and-down a clean hundred feet. Its course could be traced over the bottom of living coral. Like some monstrous snake, the rusty chain's slack wandered over the ocean floor, crossing and recrossing itself several times and fetching up finally at the idle anchor. Big rock-cod, dun and mottled, played warily in and out of the coral. Other fish, grotesque of form and colour, were brazenly indifferent, even when a big fish-shark drifted sluggishly along and sent the rock-cod scuttling for their favourite crevices.

On deck, for'ard, a dozen blacks pottered clumsily at scraping the teak rail. They were as inexpert at their work as so many monkeys. In fact they looked very much like monkeys of some enlarged and prehistoric type. Their eyes had in them the querulous plaintiveness of the monkey, their faces were even less symmetrical than the monkey's, and, hairless of body, they were far more ungarmented than any monkey, for clothes they had none. Decorated they were as no monkey ever was. In holes in their ears they carried short clay pipes, rings of turtle shell, huge plugs of wood, rusty wire nails, and empty rifle cartridges. The calibre of a Winchester rifle was the smallest hole an ear bore; some of the largest holes were inches in diameter, and any single ear averaged from three to half a dozen holes. Spikes and bodkins of polished bone or petrified shell were thrust through their noses. On the chest of one hung a white door-knob, on the chest of another the handle of a china cup, on the chest of a third the brass cog-wheel of an alarm clock. They chattered in queer, falsetto voices, and, combined, did no more work than a single white sailor.

Aft, under an awning, were two white men. Each was clad in a sixpenny undershirt and wrapped about the loins with a strip of cloth. Belted about the middle of each was a revolver and tobacco pouch. The sweat stood out on their skin in myriads of globules. Here and there the globules coalesced in tiny streams that dripped to the heated deck and almost immediately evaporated. The lean, dark-eyed man wiped his fingers wet with a stinging stream from his forehead and flung it from him with a weary curse. Wearily, and without hope, he gazed seaward across the outer-reef, and at the tops of the palms along the beach.

"Eight o'clock, an' hell don't get hot till noon," he complained. "Wisht to God for a breeze. Ain't we never goin' to get away?"

The other man, a slender German of five and twenty, with the massive forehead of a scholar and the tumble-home chin of a degenerate, did not trouble to reply. He was busy emptying powdered quinine into a cigarette paper. Rolling what was approximately fifty grains of the drug into a tight wad, he tossed it into his mouth and gulped it down without the aid of water.

"Wisht I had some whiskey," the first man panted, after a fifteenminute interval of silence.

Another equal period elapsed ere the German enounced, relevant of nothing:

"I'm rotten with fever. I'm going to quit you, Griffiths, when we get to Sydney. No more tropics for me. I ought to known better when I signed on with you."

"You ain't been much of a mate," Griffiths replied, too hot himself to speak heatedly. "When the beach at Guvutu heard Ifd shipped you, they all laughed. 'What? Jacobsen?' they said. 'You can't hide a square face of trade gin or sulphuric acid that he won't smell out!' You've certainly lived up to your reputation. I ain't had a drink for a fortnight, what of your snoopin' my supply."

"If the fever was as rotten in you as me, you'd understand," the mate whimpered.

"I ain't kickin'," Griffiths answered. "I only wisht God'd send me a drink, or a breeze of wind, or something. I'm ripe for my next chill to-morrow."

The mate proffered him the quinine. Rolling a fifty-grain dose, he popped the wad into his mouth and swallowed it dry.

"God! God!" he moaned. "I dream of a land somewheres where they ain't no quinine. Damned stuff of hell! I've scoffed tons of it in my time."

Again he quested seaward for signs of wind. The usual trade-wind clouds were absent, and the sun, still low in its climb to meridian, turned all the sky to heated brass. One seemed to see as well as feel this heat, and Griffiths sought vain relief by gazing shoreward. The white beach was a searing ache to his eyeballs. The palm trees, absolutely still, outlined flatly against the unrefreshing green of the packed jungle, seemed so much cardboard scenery. The little black boys, playing naked in the dazzle of sand and sun, were an affront and a hurt to the sun-sick man. He felt a sort of relief when one, running, tripped and fell on all-fours in the tepid sea-water.

An exclamation from the blacks for'ard sent both men glancing seaward. Around the near point of land, a quarter of a mile away and skirting the reef, a long black canoe paddled into sight.

"Gooma boys from the next bight," was the mate's verdict.

One of the blacks came aft, treading the hot deck with the unconcern of one whose bare feet felt no heat. This, too, was a hurt to Griffiths, and he closed his eyes. But the next moment they were open wide.

"White fella marster stop along Gooma boy, the black said.

Both men were on their feet and gazing at the canoe. Aft could be seen the unmistakable sombrero of a white man. Quick alarm showed itself on the face of the mate.

"It's Grief," he said.

Griffiths satisfied himself by a long look, then ripped out a wrathful oath.

" What's he doing up here?" he demanded . . . of the mate, of the aching sea and sky, of the merciless blaze of sun, and of the whole superheated and implacable universe with which his fate was entangled.

The mate began to chuckle.

I told you you couldn't get away with it," he said.

But Griffiths was not listening.

"With all his money, coming around like a rent collector," he chanted his outrage, almost in an ecstasy of anger. "He's loaded with money, he's stuffed with money, he's busting with money. I know for a fact he sold his Yringa plantations for three hundred thousand pounds. Bell told me so himself last time we were drunk at Guvutu. Worth millions and millions, and Shylocking me for what he wouldn't light his pipe with." He whirled on the mate. "Of course you told me so. Go on and say it, and keep on saying it. Now just what was it you did tell me so?"

"I told you you didn't know him, if you thought you could clear the Solomons without paying him. That man Grief is a devil, but he's straight. I know. I told you he'd throw a thousand quid away for the fun of it, and for sixpence fight like a shark for a rusty tin. I tell you I know. Didn't he give his Balakula to the Queensland Mission when they lost their Evening Star on San Cristobal? — and the Balakula worth three thousand pounds if she was worth a penny? And didn't he beat up Strothers till he lay abed a fortnight, all because of a difference of two pound ten in the account, and because Strothers got fresh and tried to make the gouge go through?"

"God strike me blind!" Griffiths cried in impotency of rage.

The mate went on with his exposition.

"I tell you only a straight man can buck a straight man like him, and the man's never hit the Solomons that could do it. Men like you and me can't buck him. We're too rotten, too rotten all the way through. You've got plenty more than twelve hundred quid below. Pay him, and get it over with."

But Griffiths gritted his teeth and drew his thin lips tightly across them.

"I'll buck him," he muttered — more to himself and the brazen ball of sun than to the mate. He turned and half started to go below, then turned back again. "Look here, Jacobsen. He won't be here for quarter of an hour. Are you with me? Will you stand by me?"

"Of course I'll stand by you. I've drunk all your whiskey, haven't I? What are you going to do?"

"I'm not going to kill him if I can help it. But I'm not going to pay. Take that flat."

Jacobsen shrugged his shoulders in calm acquiescence to fate, and Griffiths stepped to the companionway and went below.

II

Jacobsen watched the canoe across the low reef as it came abreast and passed on to the entrance of the passage. Griffiths, with ink-marks on right thumb and forefinger, returned on deck Fifteen minutes later the canoe came alongside. The man with the sombrero stood up.

"Hello, Griffiths!" he said. "Hello, Jacobsen!" With his hand on the rail he turned to his dusky crew. "You fella boy stop along canoe altogether."

As he swung over the rail and stepped on deck a hint of catlike litheness showed in the apparently heavy body. Like the other two, he was scantily clad. The cheap undershirt and white loin-cloth did not serve to hide the well put up body. Heavy muscled he was, but he was not lumped and hummocked by muscles. They were softly rounded, and, when they did move, slid softly and silkily under the smooth, tanned skin. Ardent suns had likewise tanned his face till it was swarthy as a Spaniard's. The yellow mustache appeared incongruous in the midst of such swarthiness, while the clear blue of the eyes produced a feeling of shock on the beholder. It was difficult to realize that the skin of this man had once been fair.

"Where did you blow in from?" Griffiths asked, as they shook hands. "I thought you were over in the Santa Cruz."

"I was," the newcomer answered. "But we made a quick passage. The *Wonder's* just around in the bight at Gooma, waiting for wind. Some of the bushmen reported a ketch here, and I just dropped around to see. Well, how goes it?"

"Nothing much. Copra sheds mostly empty, and not half a dozen tons of ivory nuts. The women all got rotten with fever and quit, and the men can't chase them back into the swamps. They're a sick crowd. I'd ask you to have a drink, but the mate finished off my last bottle. I wisht to God for a breeze of wind."

Grief, glancing with keen carelessness from one to the other, laughed.

"I'm glad the calm held," he said. "It enabled me to get around to see you. My supercargo dug up that little note of yours, and I brought it along."

The mate edged politely away, leaving his skipper to face his trouble.

"I'm sorry, Grief, damned sorry," Griffiths said, "but I ain't got it. You'll have to give me a little more time."

Grief leaned up against the companionway, surprise and pain depicted on his face.

"It does beat hell," he communed, "how men learn to lie in the Solomons. The truth's not in them. Now take Captain Jensen. I'd sworn by his truthfulness. Why, he told me only five days ago--do you want to know what he told me?"

Griffiths licked his lips.

"Go on."

"Why, he told me that you'd sold out--sold out everything, cleaned up, and was pulling out for the New Hebrides."

“He’s a damned liar!” Griffiths cried hotly.

Grief nodded.

“I should say so. He even had the nerve to tell me that he’d bought two of your stations from you--Mauri and Kahula. Said he paid you seventeen hundred gold sovereigns, lock, stock and barrel, good will, trade-goods, credit, and copra.”

Griffiths’s eyes narrowed and glinted. The action was involuntary, and Grief noted it with a lazy sweep of his eyes.

“And Parsons, your trader at Hickimavi, told me that the Fulcrum Company had bought that station from you. Now what did he want to lie for?”

Griffiths, overwrought by sun and sickness, exploded. All his bitterness of spirit rose up in his face and twisted his mouth into a snarl.

“Look here, Grief, what’s the good of playing with me that way? You know, and I know you know. Let it go at that. I *have* sold out, and I *am* getting away. And what are you going to do about it?”

Grief shrugged his shoulders, and no hint of resolve shadowed itself in his own face. His expression was as of one in a quandary.

“There’s no law here,” Griffiths pressed home his advantage. “Tulagi is a hundred and fifty miles away. I’ve got my clearance papers, and I’m on my own boat. There’s nothing to stop me from sailing. You’ve got no right to stop me just because I owe you a little money. And by God! you can’t stop me. Put that in your pipe.”

The look of pained surprise on Grief’s face deepened.

“You mean you’re going to cheat me out of that twelve hundred, Griffiths?”

“That’s just about the size of it, old man. And calling hard names won’t help any. There’s the wind coming. You’d better get overside before I pull out, or I’ll tow your canoe under.”

“Really, Griffiths, you sound almost right. I can’t stop you.” Grief fumbled in the pouch that hung on his revolver-belt and pulled out a crumpled official-looking paper. “But maybe this will stop you. And it’s something for *your* pipe. Smoke up.”

“What is it?”

“An admiralty warrant. Running to the New Hebrides won’t save you. It can be served anywhere.”

Griffiths hesitated and swallowed, when he had finished glancing at the document. With knit brows he pondered this new phase of the situation. Then, abruptly, as he looked up, his face relaxed into all frankness.

"You were cleverer than I thought, old man," he said. "You've got me hip and thigh. I ought to have known better than to try and beat you. Jacobsen told me I couldn't, and I wouldn't listen to him. But he was right, and so are you. I've got the money below. Come on down and we'll settle."

He started to go down, then stepped aside to let his visitor precede him, at the same time glancing seaward to where the dark flaw of wind was quickening the water.

"Heave short," he told the mate. "Get up sail and stand ready to break out."

As Grief sat down on the edge of the mate's bunk, close against and facing the tiny table, he noticed the butt of a revolver just projecting from under the pillow. On the table, which hung on hinges from the for'ard bulkhead, were pen and ink, also a battered log-book.

"Oh, I don't mind being caught in a dirty trick," Griffiths was saying defiantly. "I've been in the tropics too long. I'm a sick man, a damn sick man. And the whiskey, and the sun, and the fever have made me sick in morals, too. Nothing's too mean and low for me now, and I can understand why the niggers eat each other, and take heads, and such things. I could do it myself. So I call trying to do you out of that small account a pretty mild trick. Wisht I could offer you a drink."

Grief made no reply, and the other busied himself in attempting to unlock a large and much-dented cash-box. From on deck came falsetto cries and the creak and rattle of blocks as the black crew swung up mainsail and driver. Grief watched a large cockroach crawling over the greasy paintwork. Griffiths, with an oath of irritation, carried the cash-box to the companion-steps for better light. Here, on his feet, and bending over the box, his back to his visitor, his hands shot out to the rifle that stood beside the steps, and at the same moment he whirled about.

"Now don't you move a muscle," he commanded.

Grief smiled, elevated his eyebrows quizzically, and obeyed. His left hand rested on the bunk beside him; his right hand lay on the table.

His revolver hung on his right hip in plain sight. But in his mind was recollection of the other revolver under the pillow.

“Huh!” Griffiths sneered. “You’ve got everybody in the Solomons hypnotized, but let me tell you you ain’t got me. Now I’m going to throw you off my vessel, along with your admiralty warrant, but first you’ve got to do something. Lift up that log-book.”

The other glanced curiously at the log-book, but did not move.

“I tell you I’m a sick man, Grief; and I’d as soon shoot you as smash a cockroach. Lift up that log-book, I say.”

Sick he did look, his lean face working nervously with the rage that possessed him. Grief lifted the book and set it aside. Beneath lay a written sheet of tablet paper.

“Read it,” Griffiths commanded. “Read it aloud.”

Grief obeyed; but while he read, the fingers of his left hand began an infinitely slow and patient crawl toward the butt of the weapon under the pillow.

“On board the ketch Willi-Waw, Bombi Bight, Island of Anna, Solomon Islands,” he read. “Know all men by these presents that I do hereby sign off and release in full, for due value received, all debts whatsoever owing to me by Harrison J. Griffiths, who has this day paid to me twelve hundred pounds sterling.”

“With that receipt in my hands,” Griffiths grinned, “your admiralty warrant’s not worth the paper it’s written on. Sign it.”

“It won’t do any good, Griffiths,” Grief said. “A document signed under compulsion won’t hold before the law.”

“In that case, what objection have you to signing it then?”

“Oh, none at all, only that I might save you heaps of trouble by not signing it.”

Grief’s fingers had gained the revolver, and, while he talked, with his right hand he played with the pen and with his left began slowly and imperceptibly drawing the weapon to his side. As his hand finally closed upon it, second finger on trigger and forefinger laid past the cylinder and along the barrel, he wondered what luck he would have at left-handed snap-shooting.

“Don’t consider me,” Griffiths gibed. “And just remember Jacobsen will testify that he saw me pay the money over. Now sign, sign in full, at the bottom, David Grief, and date it.”

From on deck came the jar of sheet-blocks and the rat-tat-tat of the reef-points against the canvas. In the cabin they could feel the *Willi-Waw* heel, swing into the wind, and right. David Grief still hesitated. From for’ard came the jerking rattle of headsail halyards through the sheaves. The little vessel heeled, and through the cabin walls came the gurgle and wash of water.

“Get a move on!” Griffiths cried. “The anchor’s out.”

The muzzle of the rifle, four feet away, was bearing directly on him, when Grief resolved to act. The rifle wavered as Griffiths kept his balance in the uncertain puffs of the first of the wind. Grief took advantage of the wavering, made as if to sign the paper, and at the same instant, like a cat, exploded into swift and intricate action. As he ducked low and leaped forward with his body, his left hand flashed from under the screen of the table, and so accurately-timed was the single stiff pull on the self-cocking trigger that the cartridge discharged as the muzzle came forward. Not a whit behind was Griffiths. The muzzle of his weapon dropped to meet the ducking body, and, shot at snap direction, rifle and revolver went off simultaneously.

Grief felt the sting and sear of a bullet across the skin of his shoulder, and knew that his own shot had missed. His forward rush carried him to Griffiths before another shot could be fired, both of whose arms, still holding the rifle, he locked with a low tackle about the body. He shoved the revolver muzzle, still in his left hand, deep into the other’s abdomen. Under the press of his anger and the sting of his abraded skin, Grief’s finger was lifting the hammer, when the wave of anger passed and he recollected himself. Down the companion-way came indignant cries from the Gooma boys in his canoe.

Everything was happening in seconds. There was apparently no pause in his actions as he gathered Griffiths in his arms and carried him up the steep steps in a sweeping rush. Out into the blinding glare of sunshine he came. A black stood grinning at the wheel, and the *Willi-Waw*, heeled over from the wind, was foaming along. Rapidly dropping astern was his Gooma canoe. Grief turned his head. From amidships, revolver in hand, the mate was springing toward him. With two jumps, still holding the helpless Griffiths, Grief leaped to the rail and overboard.

Both men were grappled together as they went down; but Grief, with a quick updraw of his knees to the other’s chest, broke the grip and forced him down. With both feet on Griffiths’s shoulder, he forced him still deeper, at the same time driving himself to the surface. Scarcely had his head broken into the sunshine when two splashes of water, in quick succession and within a foot of his face, advertised that Jacobsen knew how to handle a revolver. There was a chance for no third shot, for Grief, filling his lungs with air, sank down. Under water he struck out, nor did he come up till he saw the canoe and the bubbling paddles overhead. As he climbed aboard, the *Willi-Waw* went into the wind to come about.

"Washee-washee!" Grief cried to his boys. "You fella make-um beach quick fella time!"

In all shamelessness, he turned his back on the battle and ran for cover. The *Willi-Waw*, compelled to deaden way in order to pick up its captain, gave Grief his chance for a lead. The canoe struck the beach full-tilt, with every paddle driving, and they leaped out and ran across the sand for the trees. But before they gained the shelter, three times the sand kicked into puffs ahead of them. Then they dove into the green safety of the jungle.

Grief watched the *Willi-Waw* haul up close, go out the passage, then slack its sheets as it headed south with the wind abeam. As it went out of sight past the point he could see the topsail being broken out. One of the Gooma boys, a black, nearly fifty years of age, hideously marred and scarred by skin diseases and old wounds, looked up into his face and grinned.

"My word," the boy commented, "that fella skipper too much cross along you."

Grief laughed, and led the way back across the sand to the canoe.

III

How many millions David Grief was worth no man in the Solomons knew, for his holdings and ventures were everywhere in the great South Pacific. From Samoa to New Guinea and even to the north of the Line his plantations were scattered. He possessed pearling concessions in the Paumotus. Though his name did not appear, he was in truth the German company that traded in the French Marquesas. His trading stations were in strings in all the groups, and his vessels that operated them were many. He owned atolls so remote and tiny that his smallest schooners and ketches visited the solitary agents but once a year.

In Sydney, on Castlereagh Street, his offices occupied three floors. But he was rarely in those offices. He preferred always to be on the go amongst the islands, nosing out new investments, inspecting and shaking up old ones, and rubbing shoulders with fun and adventure in a thousand strange guises. He bought the wreck of the great steamship *Gavonne* for a song, and in salving it achieved the impossible and cleaned up a quarter of a million. In the Louisiades he planted the first commercial rubber, and in Bora-Bora he ripped out the South Sea cotton and put the jolly islanders at the work of planting cacao. It was he who took the deserted island of Lallu-Ka, colonized it with Polynesians from the Ontong-Java Atoll, and planted four thousand acres to cocoanuts. And it was he who reconciled the warring chief-stocks of Tahiti and swung the great deal of the phosphate island of Hikihu.

His own vessels recruited his contract labour. They brought Santa Cruz boys to the New Hebrides, New Hebrides boys to the Banks, and the head-hunting cannibals of Malaita to the plantations of New Georgia. From Tonga to the Gilberts and on to the far Louisiades his recruiters combed the islands for labour. His keels plowed all ocean stretches. He owned three steamers on regular island runs, though he rarely elected to travel in them, preferring the wilder and more primitive way of wind and sail.

At least forty years of age, he looked no more than thirty. Yet beachcombers remembered his advent among the islands a score of years before, at which time the yellow mustache was already budding silkily on his lip. Unlike other white men in the tropics, he was there because he liked it. His protective skin pigmentation was excellent. He had been born to the sun. One he was in ten thousand in the matter of sun-resistance. The invisible and high-velocity light waves failed to bore into him. Other white men were pervious. The sun drove through their skins, ripping and smashing tissues and nerves, till they became sick in mind and body, tossed most of the Decalogue overboard, descended to beastliness, drank themselves into quick graves, or survived so savagely that war vessels were sometimes sent to curb their license.

But David Grief was a true son of the sun, and he flourished in all its ways. He merely became browner with the passing of the years, though in the brown was the hint of golden tint that glows in the skin of the Polynesian. Yet his blue eyes retained their blue, his mustache its yellow, and the lines of his face were those which had persisted through the centuries in his English race. English he was in blood, yet those that thought they knew contended he was at least American born. Unlike them, he had not come out to the South Seas seeking hearth and saddle of his own. In fact, he had brought hearth and saddle with him. His advent had been in the Paumotus. He arrived on board a tiny schooner yacht, master and owner, a youth questing romance and adventure along the sun-washed path of the tropics. He also arrived in a hurricane, the giant waves of which deposited him and yacht and all in the thick of a cocoanut grove three hundred yards beyond the surf. Six months later he was rescued by a pearling cutter. But the sun had got into his blood. At Tahiti, instead of taking a steamer home, he bought a schooner, outfitted her with trade-goods and divers, and went for a cruise through the Dangerous Archipelago.

As the golden tint burned into his face it poured molten out of the ends of his fingers. His was the golden touch, but he played the game, not for the gold, but for the game's sake. It was a man's game, the rough contacts and fierce give and take of the adventurers of his own blood and of half the bloods of Europe and the rest of the world, and it was a good game; but over and beyond was his love of all the other things that go to make up a South Seas rover's life--the smell of the reef; the infinite exquisiteness of the shoals of living coral in the mirror-surfaced lagoons; the crashing sunrises of raw colours spread with lawless cunning; the palm-tufted islets set in turquoise deeps; the tonic wine of the trade-winds; the heave and send of the orderly, crested seas; the moving deck beneath his feet, the straining canvas overhead; the flower-garlanded, golden-glowing men and maids of Polynesia, half-children and half-gods; and even the howling savages of Melanesia, head-hunters and man-eaters, half-devil and all beast.

And so, favoured child of the sun, out of munificence of energy and sheer joy of living, he, the man of many millions, forbore on his far way to play the game with Harrison J. Griffiths for a paltry sum. It was his whim, his desire, his expression of self and of the sun-warmth that poured through him. It was fun, a joke, a problem, a bit of play on which life was lightly hazarded for the joy of the playing.

IV

The early morning found the *Wonder* laying close-hauled along the coast of Guadalcanal She moved lazily through the water under the dying breath of the land breeze. To the east, heavy masses of clouds promised a renewal of the southeast trades, accompanied by sharp puffs and rain squalls. Ahead, laying along the coast on the same course as the *Wonder*, and being slowly overtaken, was a small ketch. It was not the *Willi-Waw*, however, and Captain Ward, on the *Wonder*, putting down his glasses, named it the *Kauri*.

Grief, just on deck from below, sighed regretfully.

"If it had only been the *Willi-Waw*" he said.

"You do hate to be beaten," Denby, the supercargo, remarked sympathetically.

"I certainly do." Grief paused and laughed with genuine mirth. "It's my firm conviction that Griffiths is a rogue, and that he treated me quite scurvily yesterday. 'Sign,' he says, 'sign in full, at the bottom, and date it,' And Jacobsen, the little rat, stood in with him. It was rank piracy, the days of Bully Hayes all over again."

"If you weren't my employer, Mr. Grief, I'd like to give you a piece of my mind," Captain Ward broke in.

"Go on and spit it out," Grief encouraged.

"Well, then--" The captain hesitated and cleared his throat. "With all the money you've got, only a fool would take the risk you did with those two curs. What do you do it for?"

"Honestly, I don't know, Captain. I just want to, I suppose. And can you give any better reason for anything you do?"

"You'll get your bally head shot off some fine day," Captain Ward growled in answer, as he stepped to the binnacle and took the bearing of a peak which had just thrust its head through the clouds that covered Guadalcanar.

The land breeze strengthened in a last effort, and the *Wonder*, slipping swiftly through the water, ranged alongside the *Kauri* and began to go by. Greetings flew back and forth, then David Grief called out:

"Seen anything of the *Willi-Waw*?"

The captain, slouch-hatted and barelegged, with a rolling twist hitched the faded blue *lava-lava* tighter around his waist and spat tobacco juice overside.

"Sure," he answered. "Griffiths lay at Savo last night, taking on pigs and yams and filling his water-tanks. Looked like he was going for a long cruise, but he said no. Why? Did you want to see him?"

"Yes; but if you see him first don't tell him you've seen me."

The captain nodded and considered, and walked for’ard on his own deck to keep abreast of the faster vessel.

“Say!” he called. “Jacobsen told me they were coming down this afternoon to Gabera. Said they were going to lay there to-night and take on sweet potatoes.”

“Gabera has the only leading lights in the Solomons,” Grief said, when his schooner had drawn well ahead. “Is that right, Captain Ward?”

The captain nodded.

“And the little bight just around the point on this side, it’s a rotten anchorage, isn’t it?”

“No anchorage. All coral patches and shoals, and a bad surf. That’s where the *Molly* went to pieces three years ago.”

Grief stared straight before him with lustreless eyes for a full minute, as if summoning some vision to his inner sight. Then the corners of his eyes wrinkled and the ends of his yellow mustache lifted in a smile.

“We’ll anchor at Gabera,” he said. “And run in close to the little bight this side. I want you to drop me in a whaleboat as you go by. Also, give me six boys, and serve out rifles. I’ll be back on board before morning.”

The captain’s face took on an expression of suspicion, which swiftly slid into one of reproach.

“Oh, just a little fun, skipper,” Grief protested with the apologetic air of a schoolboy caught in mischief by an elder.

Captain Ward grunted, but Denby was all alertness.

“I’d like to go along, Mr. Grief,” he said.

Grief nodded consent.

“Bring some axes and bush-knives,” he said. “And, oh, by the way, a couple of bright lanterns. See they’ve got oil in them.”

V

An hour before sunset the *Wonder* tore by the little bight. The wind had freshened, and a lively sea was beginning to make. The shoals toward the beach were already white with the churn of water, while those farther out as yet showed no more sign than of discoloured water. As the schooner went into the wind and backed her jib and staysail the whaleboat was swung out. Into it leaped six breech-clouted Santa Cruz boys, each armed with a rifle.

Denby, carrying the lanterns, dropped into the stern-sheets. Grief, following, paused on the rail.

"Pray for a dark night, skipper," he pleaded.

"You'll get it," Captain Ward answered. "There's no moon anyway, and there won't be any sky. She'll be a bit squally, too."

The forecast sent a radiance into Grief's face, making more pronounced the golden tint of his sunburn. He leaped down beside the supercargo.

"Cast off!" Captain Ward ordered. "Draw the headsails! Put your wheel over! There! Steady! Take that course!"

The *Wonder* filled away and ran on around the point for Gabera, while the whaleboat, pulling six oars and steered by Grief, headed for the beach. With superb boatmanship he threaded the narrow, tortuous channel which no craft larger than a whaleboat could negotiate, until the shoals and patches showed seaward and they grounded on the quiet, rippling beach.

The next hour was filled with work. Moving about among the wild cocoanuts and jungle brush, Grief selected the trees.

"Chop this fella tree; chop that fella tree," he told his blacks. "No chop that other fella," he said, with a shake of head.

In the end, a wedge-shaped segment of jungle was cleared. Near to the beach remained one long palm. At the apex of the wedge stood another. Darkness was falling as the lanterns were lighted, carried up the two trees, and made fast.

"That outer lantern is too high." David Grief studied it critically. "Put it down about ten feet, Denby."

VI

The *Willi-Waw* was tearing through the water with a bone in her teeth, for the breath of the passing squall was still strong. The blacks were swinging up the big mainsail, which had been lowered on the run when the puff was at its height. Jacobsen, superintending the operation, ordered them to throw the halyards down on deck and stand by, then went for'ard on the lee-bow and joined Griffiths. Both men stared with wide-strained eyes at the blank wall of darkness through which they were flying, their ears tense for the sound of surf on the invisible shore. It was by this sound that they were for the moment steering.

The wind fell lighter, the scud of clouds thinned and broke, and in the dim glimmer of starlight loomed the jungle-clad coast. Ahead, and well on the lee-bow, appeared a jagged rock-point. Both men strained to it.

"Amboy Point," Griffiths announced. "Plenty of water close up. Take the wheel, Jacobsen, till we set a course. Get a move on!"

Running aft, barefooted and barelegged, the rainwater dripping from his scant clothing, the mate displaced the black at the wheel.

"How's she heading?" Griffiths called.

"South-a-half-west!"

"Let her come up south-by-west! Got it?"

"Right on it!"

Griffiths considered the changed relation of Amboy Point to the *Willi-Waw*'s course.

"And a-half-west!" he cried.

"And a-half-west!" came the answer. "Right on it!"

"Steady! That'll do!"

"Steady she is!" Jacobsen turned the wheel over to the savage. "You steer good fella, savve?" he warned. "No good fella, I knock your damn black head off."

Again he went for'ard and joined the other, and again the cloud-scud thickened, the star-glimmer vanished, and the wind rose and screamed in another squall.

"Watch that mainsail!" Griffiths yelled in the mate's ear, at the same time studying the ketch's behaviour.

Over she pressed, and lee-rail under, while he measured the weight of the wind and quested its easement. The tepid sea-water, with here and there tiny globules of phosphorescence, washed about his ankles and knees. The wind screamed a higher note, and every shroud and stay sharply chorused an answer as the *Willi-Waw* pressed farther over and down.

"Down mainsail!" Griffiths yelled, springing to the peak-halyards, thrusting away the black who held on, and casting off the turn.

Jacobsen, at the throat-halyards, was performing the like office. The big sail rattled down, and the blacks, with shouts and yells, threw themselves on the battling canvas. The mate, finding one skulking in the darkness, flung his bunched knuckles into the creature's face and drove him to his work.

The squall held at its high pitch, and under her small canvas the *Willi-Waw* still foamed along. Again the two men stood for'ard and vainly watched in the horizontal drive of rain.

"We're all right," Griffiths said. "This rain won't last. We can hold this course till we pick up the lights. Anchor in thirteen fathoms. You'd better overhaul forty-five on a night like this. After that get the gaskets on the mainsail. We won't need it."

Half an hour afterward his weary eyes were rewarded by a glimpse of two lights.

"There they are, Jacobsen. I'll take the wheel. Run down the fore-staysail and stand by to let go. Make the niggers jump."

Aft, the spokes of the wheel in his hands, Griffiths held the course till the two lights came in line, when he abruptly altered and headed directly in for them. He heard the tumble and roar of the surf, but decided it was farther away--as it should be, at Gabera.

He heard the frightened cry of the mate, and was grinding the wheel down with all his might, when the *Willi-Waw* struck. At the same instant her mainmast crashed over the bow. Five wild minutes followed. All hands held on while the hull upheaved and smashed down on the brittle coral and the warm seas swept over them. Grinding and crunching, the *Willi-Waw* worked itself clear over the shoal patch and came solidly to rest in the comparatively smooth and shallow channel beyond.

Griffiths sat down on the edge of the cabin, head bowed on chest, in silent wrath and bitterness. Once he lifted his face to glare at the two white lights, one above the other and perfectly in line.

"There they are," he said. "And this isn't Gabera. Then what the hell is it?"

Though the surf still roared and across the shoal flung its spray and upper wash over them, the wind died down and the stars came out. Shoreward came the sound of oars.

"What have you had?--an earthquake?" Griffiths called out. "The bottom's all changed. I've anchored here a hundred times in thirteen fathoms. Is that you, Wilson?"

A whaleboat came alongside, and a man climbed over the rail. In the faint light Griffiths found an automatic Colt's thrust into his face, and, looking up, saw David Grief.

"No, you never anchored here before," Grief laughed. "Gabera's just around the point, where I'll be as soon as I've collected that little sum of twelve hundred pounds. We won’t bother for the receipt. I’ve your note here, and I’ll just return it.”

“You did this!” Griffiths cried, springing to his feet in a sudden gust of rage. “You faked those leading lights! You’ve wrecked me, and by--“

“Steady! Steady!” Grief’s voice was cool and menacing. “I’ll trouble you for that twelve hundred, please.”

To Griffiths, a vast impotence seemed to descend upon him. He was overwhelmed by a profound disgust--disgust for the sunlands and the sun-sickness, for the futility of all his endeavour, for this blue-eyed, golden-tinted, superior man who defeated him on all his ways.

“Jacobsen,” he said, “will you open the cash-box and pay this--this bloodsucker--twelve hundred pounds?”

The Sun of the Wolf

MAN rarely places a proper valuation upon his womankind, at least not until deprived of them. He has no conception of the subtle atmosphere exhaled by the sex feminine, so long as he bathes in it; but let it be withdrawn, and an ever-growing void begins to manifest itself in his existence, and he becomes hungry, in a vague sort of way, for a something so indefinite that he cannot characterize it. If his comrades have no more experience than himself, they will shake their heads dubiously and dose him with strong physic. But the hunger will continue and become stronger; he will lose interest in the things of his everyday life and wax morbid; and one day, when the emptiness has become unbearable, a revelation will dawn upon him.

In the Yukon country, when this comes to pass, the man usually provisions a poling boat, if it is summer, and if winter, harnesses his dogs, and heads for the Southland. A few months later, supposing him to be possessed of a faith in the country, he returns with a wife to share with him in that faith, and incidentally in his hardships. This but serves to show the innate selfishness of man. It also brings us to the trouble of `Scruff' Mackenzie, which occurred in the old days, before the country was stampeded and staked by a tidal-wave of the che-cha-quas, and when the Klondike's only claim to notice was its salmon fisheries.

`Scruff' Mackenzie bore the earmarks of a frontier birth and a frontier life. His face was stamped with twenty-five years of incessant struggle with Nature in her wildest moods,--the last two, the wildest and hardest of all, having been spent in groping for the gold which lies in the shadow of the Arctic Circle. When the yearning sickness came upon him, he was not surprised, for he was a practical man and had seen other men thus stricken. But he showed no sign of his malady, save that he worked harder. All summer he fought mosquitoes and washed the sure-thing bars of the Stuart River for a double grubstake. Then he floated a raft of houselogs down the Yukon to Forty Mile, and put together as comfortable a cabin as any the camp could boast of. In fact, it showed such cozy promise that many men elected to be his partner and to come and live with him. But he crushed their aspirations with rough speech, peculiar for its strength and brevity, and bought a double supply of grub from the trading-post.

As has been noted, `Scruff' Mackenzie was a practical man. If he wanted a thing he usually got it, but in doing so, went no farther out of his way than was necessary. Though a son of toil and hardship, he was averse to a journey of six hundred miles on the ice, a second of two thousand miles on the ocean, and still a third thousand miles or so to his last stamping-grounds,--all in the mere quest of a wife. Life was too short. So he rounded up his dogs, lashed a curious freight to his sled, and faced across the divide whose westward slopes were drained by the head-reaches of the Tanana.

He was a sturdy traveler, and his wolf-dogs could work harder and travel farther on less grub than any other team in the Yukon. Three weeks later he strode into a hunting-camp of the Upper Tanana Sticks. They marveled at his temerity; for they had a bad name and had been known to kill white men for as trifling a thing as a sharp ax or a broken rifle. But he went among them single-handed, his bearing being a delicious composite of humility, familiarity, sang-froid, and insolence. It required a deft hand and deep knowledge of the barbaric mind effectually to handle such diverse weapons; but he was a past-master in the art, knowing when to conciliate and when to threaten with Jove-like wrath.

He first made obeisance to the Chief Thling-Tinneh, presenting him with a couple of pounds of black tea and tobacco, and thereby winning his most cordial regard. Then he mingled with the men and maidens, and that night gave a potlach. The snow was beaten down in the form of an oblong, perhaps a hundred feet in length and quarter as many across. Down the center a long fire was built, while either side was carpeted with spruce boughs. The lodges were forsaken, and the fivescore or so members of the tribe gave tongue to their folk-chants in honor of their guest.

`Scruff' Mackenzie's two years had taught him the not many hundred words of their vocabulary, and he had likewise conquered their deep gutturals, their Japanese idioms, constructions, and honorific and agglutinative particles. So he made oration after their manner, satisfying their instinctive poetry-love with crude flights of eloquence and metaphorical contortions. After Thling-Tinneh and the Shaman had responded in kind, he made trifling presents to the menfolk, joined in their singing, and proved an expert in their fifty-two-stick gambling game.

And they smoked his tobacco and were pleased. But among the younger men there was a defiant attitude, a spirit of braggadocio, easily understood by the raw insinuations of the toothless squaws and the giggling of the maidens. They had known few white men, `Sons of the Wolf,' but from those few they had learned strange lessons.

Nor had `Scruff' Mackenzie, for all his seeming carelessness, failed to note these phenomena. In truth, rolled in his sleeping-furs, he thought it all over, thought seriously, and emptied many pipes in mapping out a campaign. One maiden only had caught his fancy,--none other than Zarinska, daughter to the chief. In features, form, and poise, answering more nearly to the white man's type of beauty, she was almost an anomaly among her tribal sisters. He would possess her, make her his wife, and name her--ah, he would name her Gertrude! Having thus decided, he rolled over on his side and dropped off to sleep, a true son of his all-conquering race, a Samson among the Philistines.

It was slow work and a stiff game; but `Scruff' Mackenzie maneuvered cunningly, with an unconcern which served to puzzle the Sticks. He took great care to impress the men that he was a sure shot and a mighty hunter, and the camp rang with his plaudits when he brought down a moose at six hundred yards. Of a night he visited in Chief Thling-Tinneh's lodge of moose and cariboo skins, talking big and dispensing tobacco with a lavish hand. Nor did he fail to likewise honor the Shaman; for he realized the medicine-man's influence with his people, and was anxious to make of him an ally. But that worthy was high and mighty, refused to be propitiated, and was unerringly marked down as a prospective enemy.

Though no opening presented for an interview with Zarinska, Mackenzie stole many a glance to her, giving fair warning of his intent. And well she knew, yet coquettishly surrounded herself with a ring of women whenever the men were away and he had a chance. But he was in no hurry; besides, he knew she could not help but think of him, and a few days of such thought would only better his suit.

At last, one night, when he deemed the time to be ripe, he abruptly left the chief's smoky dwelling and hastened to a neighboring lodge. As usual, she sat with squaws and maidens about her, all engaged in sewing moccasins and beadwork. They laughed at his entrance, and badinage, which linked Zarinska to him, ran high. But one after the other they were unceremoniously bundled into the outer snow, whence they hurried to spread the tale through all the camp.

His cause was well pleaded, in her tongue, for she did not know his, and at the end of two hours he rose to go.

`So Zarinska will come to the White Man's lodge? Good! I go now to have talk with thy father, for he may not be so minded. And I will give him many tokens; but he must not ask too much. If he say no? Good! Zarinska shall yet come to the White Man's lodge.'

He had already lifted the skin flap to depart, when a low exclamation brought him back to the girl's side. She brought herself to her knees on the bearskin mat, her face aglow with true Eve-light, and shyly unbuckled his heavy belt. He looked down, perplexed, suspicious, his ears alert for the slightest sound without. But her next move disarmed his doubt, and he smiled with pleasure. She took from her sewing bag a moosehide sheath, brave with bright beadwork, fantastically designed. She drew his great hunting-knife, gazed reverently along the keen edge, half tempted to try it with her thumb, and shot it into place in its new home. Then she slipped the sheath along the belt to its customary resting-place, just above the hip.

For all the world, it was like a scene of olden time,--a lady and her knight. Mackenzie drew her up full height and swept her red lips with his moustache,--the, to her, foreign caress of the Wolf. It was a meeting of the stone age and the steel; but she was none the less a woman, as her crimson cheeks and the luminous softness of her eyes attested.

There was a thrill of excitement in the air as `Scruff' Mackenzie, a bulky bundle under his arm, threw open the flap of Thling-Tinneh's tent. Children were running about in the open, dragging dry wood to the scene of the potlach, a babble of women's voices was growing in intensity, the young men were consulting in sullen groups, while from the Shaman's lodge rose the eerie sounds of an incantation.

The chief was alone with his blear-eyed wife, but a glance sufficed to tell Mackenzie that the news was already told. So he plunged at once into the business, shifting the beaded sheath prominently to the fore as advertisement of the betrothal.

`O Thling-Tinneh, mighty chief of the Sticks And the land of the Tanana, ruler of the salmon and the bear, the moose and the cariboo! The White Man is before thee with a great purpose. Many moons has his lodge been empty, and he is lonely. And his heart has eaten itself in silence, and grown hungry for a woman to sit beside him in his lodge, to meet him from the hunt with warm fire and good food. He has heard strange things, the patter of baby moccasins and the sound of children's voices. And one night a vision came upon him, and he beheld the Raven, who is thy father, the great

Raven, who is the father of all the Sticks. And the Raven spake to the lonely White Man, saying: “Bind thou thy moccasins upon thee, and gird thy snow-shoes on, and lash thy sled with food for many sleeps and fine tokens for the Chief Thling-Tinneh. For thou shalt turn thy face to where the midspring sun is wont to sink below the land and journey to this great chief’s hunting-grounds. There thou shalt make big presents, and Thling-Tinneh, who is my son, shall become to thee as a father. In his lodge there is a maiden into whom I breathed the breath of life for thee. This maiden shalt thou take to wife.”

`O Chief, thus spake the great Raven; thus do I lay many presents at thy feet; thus am I come to take thy daughter!’

The old man drew his furs about him with crude consciousness of royalty, but delayed reply while a youngster crept in, delivered a quick message to appear before the council, and was gone.

`O White Man, whom we have named Moose-Killer, also known as the Wolf, and the Son of the Wolf! We know thou comest of a mighty race; we are proud to have thee our potlach-guest; but the king-salmon does not mate with the dog-salmon, nor the Raven with the Wolf.’

`Not so!’ cried Mackenzie. `The daughters of the Raven have I met in the camps of the Wolf,--the squaw of Mortimer, the squaw of Tregidgo, the squaw of Barnaby, who came two ice-runs back, and I have heard of other squaws, though my eyes beheld them not.’

`Son, your words are true; but it were evil mating, like the water with the sand, like the snow-flake with the sun. But met you one Mason and his squaw’ No? He came ten ice-runs ago,--the first of all the Wolves. And with him there was a mighty man, straight as a willow-shoot, and tall; strong as the bald-faced grizzly, with a heart like the full summer moon; his — ’

`Oh!’ interrupted Mackenzie, recognizing the well-known Northland figure, `Malemute Kid!’

`The same,--a mighty man. But saw you aught of the squaw? She was full sister to Zarinska.’

`Nay, Chief; but I have heard. Mason--far, far to the north, a spruce-tree, heavy with years, crushed out his life beneath. But his love was great, and he had much gold. With this, and her boy, she journeyed countless sleeps toward the winter’s noonday sun, and there she yet lives,--no biting frost, no snow, no summer’s midnight sun, no winter’s noonday night.’

A second messenger interrupted with imperative summons from the council. As Mackenzie threw him into the snow, he caught a glimpse of the swaying forms before the council-fire, heard the deep basses of the men in rhythmic chant, and knew the Shaman was fanning the anger of his people. Time pressed. He turned upon the chief.

`Come! I wish thy child. And now, see! Here are tobacco, tea, many cups of sugar, warm blankets, handkerchiefs, both good and large; and here, a true rifle, with many bullets and much powder.'

`Nay,' replied the old man, struggling against the great wealth spread before him. `Even now are my people come together. They will not have this marriage.'

`But thou art chief.'

`Yet do my young men rage because the Wolves have taken their maidens so that they may not marry.'

`Listen, O Thling-Tinneh! Ere the night has passed into the day, the Wolf shall face his dogs to the Mountains of the East and fare forth to the Country of the Yukon. And Zarinska shall break trail for his dogs.'

`And ere the night has gained its middle, my young men may fling to the dogs the flesh of the Wolf, and his bones be scattered in the snow till the springtime lay them bare.'

It was threat and counter-threat. Mackenzie's bronzed face flushed darkly. He raised his voice. The old squaw, who till now had sat an impassive spectator, made to creep by him for the door. The song of the men broke suddenly and there was a hubbub of many voices as he whirled the old woman roughly to her couch of skins.

`Again I cry--listen, O Thling-Tinneh! The Wolf dies with teeth fast-locked, and with him there shall sleep ten of thy strongest men,-men who are needed, for the hunting is not begun, and the fishing is not many moons away. And again, of what profit should I die? I know the custom of thy people; thy share of my wealth shall be very small. Grant me thy child, and it shall all be thine. And yet again, my brothers will come, and they are many, and their maws are never filled; and the daughters of the Raven shall bear children in the lodges of the Wolf. My people are greater than thy people. It is destiny. Grant, and all this wealth is thine.'

Moccasins were crunching the snow without. Mackenzie threw his rifle to cock, and loosened the twin Colts in his belt.

`Grant, O Chief!'

`And yet will my people say no.'

`Grant, and the wealth is thine. Then shall I deal with thy people after.'

`The Wolf will have it so. I will take his tokens,--but I would warn him.'

Mackenzie passed over the goods, taking care to clog the rifle's ejector, and capping the bargain with a kaleidoscopic silk kerchief. The Shaman and half a dozen young braves entered, but he shouldered boldly among them and passed out.

`Pack!' was his laconic greeting to Zarinska as he passed her lodge and hurried to harness his dogs. A few minutes later he swept into the council at the head of the team, the woman by his side. He took his place at the upper end of the oblong, by the side of the chief. To his left, a step to the rear, he stationed Zarinska,--her proper place. Besides, the time was ripe for mischief, and there was need to guard his back.

On either side, the men crouched to the fire, their voices lifted in a folk-chant out of the forgotten past. Full of strange, halting cadences and haunting recurrences, it was not beautiful. `Fearful' may inadequately express it. At the lower end, under the eye of the Shaman, danced half a score of women. Stern were his reproofs of those who did not wholly abandon themselves to the ecstasy of the rite. Half hidden in their heavy masses of raven hair, all dishevelled and falling to their waists, they slowly swayed to and fro, their forms rippling to an ever-changing rhythm.

It was a weird scene; an anachronism. To the south, the nineteenth century was reeling off the few years of its last decade; here flourished man primeval, a shade removed from the prehistoric cave-dweller, forgotten fragment of the Elder World. The tawny wolf-dogs sat between their skin-clad masters or fought for room, the firelight cast backward from their red eyes and dripping fangs. The woods, in ghostly shroud, slept on unheeding. The White Silence, for the moment driven to the rimming forest, seemed ever crushing inward; the stars danced with great leaps, as is their wont in the time of the Great Cold; while the Spirits of the Pole trailed their robes of glory athwart the heavens.

`Scruff' Mackenzie dimly realized the wild grandeur of the setting as his eyes ranged down the fur-fringed sides in quest of missing faces. They rested for a moment on a newborn babe, suckling at its mother's naked breast. It was forty below,--seven and odd degrees of frost. He thought of the tender women of his own race and smiled grimly. Yet from the loins of some such tender woman had he sprung with a kingly inheritance,--an inheritance which gave to him and his dominance over the land and sea, over the animals and the peoples of all the zones. Single-handed against fivescore, girt by the Arctic winter, far from his own, he felt the prompting of his heritage, the desire to possess, the wild danger--love, the thrill of battle, the power to conquer or to die.

The singing and the dancing ceased, and the Shaman flared up in rude eloquence. Through the sinuosities of their vast mythology, he worked cunningly upon the credulity of his people. The case was strong. Opposing the creative principles as embodied in the Crow and the Raven, he stigmatized Mackenzie as the Wolf, the fighting and the destructive principle. Not only was the combat of these forces spiritual, but men fought, each to his totem. They were the children of Jelchs, the Raven, the Promethean fire-bringer; Mackenzie was the child of the Wolf, or in other words, the Devil. For them to bring a truce to this perpetual warfare, to marry their daughters to the arch-enemy, were treason and blasphemy of the highest order. No phrase was harsh nor figure vile enough in branding Mackenzie as a sneaking interloper and emissary of Satan. There was a subdued, savage roar in the deep chests of his listeners as he took the swing of his peroration.

`Aye, my brothers, Jelchs is all-powerful! Did he not bring heaven-borne fire that we might be warm? Did he not draw the sun, moon, and stars, from their holes that we might see? Did he not teach us that we might fight the Spirits of Famine and of Frost? But now Jelchs is angry with his children, and they are grown to a handful, and he will not help. For they have forgotten him, and done evil things, and trod bad trails, and taken his enemies into their lodges to sit by their fires. And the Raven is sorrowful at the wickedness of his children; but when they shall rise up and show they have come back, he will come out of the darkness to aid them. O brothers! the Fire-Bringer has whispered messages to thy Shaman; the same shall ye hear. Let the young men take the young women to their lodges; let them fly at the throat of the Wolf; let them be undying in their enmity! Then shall their women become fruitful and they shall multiply into a mighty people! And the Raven shall lead great tribes of their fathers and their fathers' fathers from out of the North; and they shall beat back the Wolves till they are as last year's campfires; and they shall again come to rule over all the land! 'Tis the message of Jelchs, the Raven.'

This foreshadowing of the Messiah’s coming brought a hoarse howl from the Sticks as they leaped to their feet. Mackenzie slipped the thumbs of his mittens and waited. There was a clamor for the `Fox,’ not to be stilled till one of the young men stepped forward to speak.

`Brothers! The Shaman has spoken wisely. The Wolves have taken our women, and our men are childless. We are grown to a handful. The Wolves have taken our warm furs and given for them evil spirits which dwell in bottles, and clothes which come not from the beaver or the lynx, but are made from the grass. And they are not warm, and our men die of strange sicknesses. I, the Fox, have taken no woman to wife; and why? Twice have the maidens which pleased me gone to the camps of the Wolf. Even now have I laid by skins of the beaver, of the moose, of the cariboo, that I might win favor in the eyes of Thling-Tinneh, that I might marry Zarinska, his daughter. Even now are her snow-shoes bound to her feet, ready to break trail for the dogs of the Wolf. Nor do I speak for myself alone. As I have done, so has the Bear. He, too, had fain been the father of her children, and many skins has he cured thereto. I speak for all the young men who know not wives. The Wolves are ever hungry. Always do they take the choice meat at the killing. To the Ravens are left the leavings.

`There is Gugkla,’ he cried, brutally pointing out one of the women, who was a cripple. `Her legs are bent like the ribs of a birch canoe. She cannot gather wood nor carry the meat of the hunters. Did the Wolves choose her?’

`Ai! ai!’ vociferated his tribesmen.

`There is Moyri, whose eyes are crossed by the Evil Spirit. Even the babes are affrighted when they gaze upon her, and it is said the bald-face gives her the trail. Was she chosen?’

Again the cruel applause rang out.

`And there sits Pischet. She does not hearken to my words. Never has she heard the cry of the chit-chat, the voice of her husband, the babble of her child. She lives in the White Silence. Cared the Wolves aught for her? No! Theirs is the choice of the kill; ours is the leavings.

`Brothers, it shall not be! No more shall the Wolves slink among our campfires. The time is come.’

A great streamer of fire, the aurora borealis, purple, green, and yellow, shot across the zenith, bridging horizon to horizon. With head thrown back and arms extended, he swayed to his climax.

`Behold! The spirits of our fathers have arisen and great deeds are afoot this night!'

He stepped back, and another young man somewhat diffidently came forward, pushed on by his comrades. He towered a full head above them, his broad chest defiantly bared to the frost. He swung tentatively from one foot to the other. Words halted upon his tongue, and he was ill at ease. His face was horrible to look upon, for it had at one time been half torn away by some terrific blow. At last he struck his breast with his clenched fist, drawing sound as from a drum, and his voice rumbled forth as does the surf from an ocean cavern.

`I am the Bear,--the Silver-Tip and the Son of the Silver-Tip! When my voice was yet as a girl's, I slew the lynx, the moose, and the cariboo; when it whistled like the wolverines from under a cache, I crossed the Mountains of the South and slew three of the White Rivers; when it became as the roar of the Chinook, I met the bald-faced grizzly, but gave no trail.'

At this he paused, his hand significantly sweeping across his hideous scars.

`I am not as the Fox. My tongue is frozen like the river. I cannot make great talk. My words are few. The Fox says great deeds are afoot this night. Good! Talk flows from his tongue like the freshets of the spring, but he is chary of deeds. This night shall I do battle with the Wolf. I shall slay him, and Zarinska shall sit by my fire. The Bear has spoken.'

Though pandemonium raged about him, `Scruff' Mackenzie held his ground. Aware how useless was the rifle at close quarters, he slipped both holsters to the fore, ready for action, and drew his mittens till his hands were barely shielded by the elbow gauntlets. He knew there was no hope in attack en masse, but true to his boast, was prepared to die with teeth fast-locked. But the Bear restrained his comrades, beating back the more impetuous with his terrible fist. As the tumult began to die away, Mackenzie shot a glance in the direction of Zarinska. It was a superb picture. She was leaning forward on her snow-shoes, lips apart and nostrils quivering, like a tigress about to spring. Her great black eyes were fixed upon her tribesmen, in fear and defiance. So extreme the tension, she had forgotten to breathe. With one hand pressed spasmodically against her breast and the other as tightly gripped about the dog-whip, she was as turned to stone. Even as he looked, relief came to her. Her muscles loosened; with a heavy sigh she settled back, giving him a look of more than love--of worship.

Thling-Tinneh was trying to speak, but his people drowned his voice. Then Mackenzie strode forward. The Fox opened his mouth to a piercing yell, but so savagely did Mackenzie whirl upon him that he shrank back, his larynx all agurgle with suppressed sound. His discomfiture was greeted with roars of laughter, and served to soothe his fellows to a listening mood.

`Brothers! The White Man, whom ye have chosen to call the Wolf, came among you with fair words. He was not like the Innuit; he spoke not lies. He came as a friend, as one who would be a brother. But your men have had their say, and the time for soft words is past. First, I will tell you that the Shaman has an evil tongue and is a false prophet, that the messages he spake are not those of the Fire-Bringer. His ears are locked to the voice of the Raven, and out of his own head he weaves cunning fancies, and he has made fools of you. He has no power. When the dogs were killed and eaten, and your stomachs were heavy with untanned hide and strips of moccasins; when the old men died, and the old women died, and the babes at the dry dugs of the mothers died; when the land was dark, and ye perished as do the salmon in the fall; aye, when the famine was upon you, did the Shaman bring reward to your hunters? did the Shaman put meat in your bellies? Again I say, the Shaman is without power. Thus I spit upon his face!'

Though taken aback by the sacrilege, there was no uproar. Some of the women were even frightened, but among the men there was an uplifting, as though in preparation or anticipation of the miracle. All eyes were turned upon the two central figures. The priest realized the crucial moment, felt his power tottering, opened his mouth in denunciation, but fled backward before the truculent advance, upraised fist, and flashing eyes, of Mackenzie. He sneered and resumed.

Was I stricken dead? Did the lightning burn me? Did the stars fall from the sky and crush me? Pish! I have done with the dog. Now will I tell you of my people, who are the mightiest of all the peoples, who rule in all the lands. At first we hunt as I hunt, alone. After that we hunt in packs; and at last, like the cariboo-run, we sweep across all the land. Those whom we take into our lodges live; those who will not come die. Zarinska is a comely maiden, full and strong, fit to become the mother of Wolves. Though I die, such shall she become; for my brothers are many, and they will follow the scent of my dogs. Listen to the Law of the Wolf: Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf, the forfeit shall ten of his people pay. In many lands has the price been paid; in many lands shall it yet be paid.

`Now will I deal with the Fox and the Bear. It seems they have cast eyes upon the maiden. So? Behold, I have bought her! Thling-Tinneh leans upon the rifle; the goods of purchase are by his fire. Yet will I be fair to the young men. To the Fox, whose tongue is dry with many words, will I give of tobacco five long plugs. Thus will his mouth be wetted that he may make much noise in the council. But to the Bear, of whom I am well proud, will I give of blankets two; of flour, twenty cups; of tobacco, double that of the Fox; and if he fare with me over the Mountains of the East, then will I give him a rifle, mate to Thling-Tinneh's. If not? Good! The Wolf is weary of speech. Yet once again will he say the Law: Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf, the forfeit shall ten of his people pay.'

Mackenzie smiled as he stepped back to his old position, but at heart he was full of trouble. The night was yet dark. The girl came to his side, and he listened closely as she told of the Bear's battle-tricks with the knife.

The decision was for war. In a trice, scores of moccasins were widening the space of beaten snow by the fire. There was much chatter about the seeming defeat of the Shaman; some averred he had but withheld his power, while others conned past events and agreed with the Wolf. The Bear came to the center of the battle-ground, a long naked hunting-knife of Russian make in his hand. The Fox called attention to Mackenzie's revolvers; so he stripped his belt, buckling it about Zarinska, into whose hands he also entrusted his rifle. She shook her head that she could not shoot,--small chance had a woman to handle such precious things.

`Then, if danger come by my back, cry aloud, "My husband!" No; thus, "My husband!"'

He laughed as she repeated it, pinched her cheek, and reentered the circle. Not only in reach and stature had the Bear the advantage of him, but his blade was longer by a good two inches. `Scruff' Mackenzie had looked into the eyes of men before, and he knew it was a man who stood against him; yet he quickened to the glint of light on the steel, to the dominant pulse of his race.

Time and again he was forced to the edge of the fire or the deep snow, and time and again, with the foot tactics of the pugilist, he worked back to the center. Not a voice was lifted in encouragement, while his antagonist was heartened with applause, suggestions, and warnings. But his teeth only shut the tighter as the knives clashed together, and he thrust or eluded with a coolness born of conscious strength. At first he felt compassion for his enemy; but this fled before the primal instinct of life, which in turn gave way to the lust of slaughter. The ten thousand years of culture fell from him, and he was a cave-dweller, doing battle for his female.

Twice he pricked the Bear, getting away unscathed; but the third time caught, and to save himself, free hands closed on fighting hands, and they came together. Then did he realize the tremendous strength of his opponent. His muscles were knotted in painful lumps, and cords and tendons threatened to snap with the strain; yet nearer and nearer came the Russian steel. He tried to break away, but only weakened himself. The fur-clad circle closed in, certain of and anxious to see the final stroke. But with wrestler's trick, swinging partly to the side, he struck at his adversary with his head. Involuntarily the Bear leaned back, disturbing his center of gravity. Simultaneous with this, Mackenzie tripped properly and threw his whole weight forward, hurling him clear through the circle into the deep snow. The Bear floundered out and came back full tilt.

`O my husband!' Zarinska's voice rang out, vibrant with danger.

To the twang of a bow-string, Mackenzie swept low to the ground, and a bone-barbed arrow passed over him into the breast of the Bear, whose momentum carried him over his crouching foe. The next instant Mackenzie was up and about. The bear lay motionless, but across the fire was the Shaman, drawing a second arrow.

Mackenzie's knife leaped short in the air. He caught the heavy blade by the point. There was a flash of light as it spanned the fire. Then the Shaman, the hilt alone appearing without his throat, swayed and pitched forward into the glowing embers.

Click! Click!--the Fox had possessed himself of Thling-Tinneh's rifle and was vainly trying to throw a shell into place. But he dropped it at the sound of Mackenzie's laughter.

`So the Fox has not learned the way of the plaything? He is yet a woman. Come! Bring it, that I may show thee!'

The Fox hesitated.

`Come, I say!'

He slouched forward like a beaten cur.

`Thus, and thus; so the thing is done.' A shell flew into place and the trigger was at cock as Mackenzie brought it to shoulder.

`The Fox has said great deeds were afoot this night, and he spoke true. There have been great deeds, yet least among them were those of the Fox.

Is he still intent to take Zarinska to his lodge? Is he minded to tread the trail already broken by the Shaman and the Bear? No? Good!'

Mackenzie turned contemptuously and drew his knife from the priest's throat.

`Are any of the young men so minded? If so, the Wolf will take them by two and three till none are left. No? Good! Thling-Tinneh, I now give thee this rifle a second time. If, in the days to come, thou shouldst journey to the Country of the Yukon, know thou that there shall always be a place and much food by the fire of the Wolf. The night is now passing into the day. I go, but I may come again. And for the last time, remember the Law of the Wolf!'

He was supernatural in their sight as he rejoined Zarinska. She took her place at the head of the team, and the dogs swung into motion. A few moments later they were swallowed up by the ghostly forest. Till now Mackenzie had waited; he slipped into his snow-shoes to follow.

`Has the Wolf forgotten the five long plugs?'

Mackenzie turned upon the Fox angrily; then the humor of it struck him.

`I will give thee one short plug.'

`As the Wolf sees fit,' meekly responded the Fox, stretching out his hand.

South of the Slot

OLD San Francisco, which is the San Francisco of only the other day, the day before the Earthquake, was divided midway by the Slot. The Slot was an iron crack that ran along the center of Market street, and from the Slot arose the burr of the ceaseless, endless cable that was hitched at will to the cars it dragged up and down. In truth, there were two slots, but in the quick grammar of the West time was saved by calling them, and much more that they stood for, “The Slot.” North of the Slot were the theaters, hotels, and shopping district, the banks and the staid, respectable business houses. South of the Slot were the factories, slums, laundries, machine-shops, boiler works, and the abodes of the working class.

The Slot was the metaphor that expressed the class cleavage of Society, and no man crossed this metaphor, back and forth, more successfully than Freddie Drummond. He made a practice of living in both worlds, and in both worlds he lived signally well. Freddie Drummond was a professor in the Sociology Department of the University of California, and it was as a professor of sociology that he first crossed over the Slot, lived for six months in the great labor-ghetto, and wrote “The Unskilled Laborer” — a book that was hailed everywhere as an able contribution to the literature of progress, and as a splendid reply to the literature of discontent. Politically and economically it was nothing if not orthodox. Presidents of great railway systems bought whole editions of it to give to their employees. The Manufacturers’ Association alone distributed fifty thousand copies of it. In a way, it was almost as immoral as the far-famed and notorious “Message to Garcia,” while in its pernicious preachment of thrift and content it ran “Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch” a close second.

At first, Freddie Drummond found it monstrously difficult to get along among the working people. He was not used to their ways, and they certainly were not used to his. They were suspicious. He had no antecedents. He could talk of no previous jobs. His hands were soft. His extraordinary politeness was ominous. His first idea of the role he would play was that of a free and independent American who chose to work with his hands and no explanations given. But it wouldn’t do, as he quickly discovered. At the beginning they accepted him, very provisionally, as a freak. A little later, as he began to know his way about better, he insensibly drifted into the role that would work — namely, he was a man who had seen better days, very much better days, but who was down in his luck, though, to be sure, only temporarily.

He learned many things, and generalized much and often erroneously, all of which can be found in the pages of "The Unskilled Laborer." He saved himself, however, after the sane and conservative manner of his kind, by labeling his generalizations as "tentative." One of his first experiences was in the great Wilmax Cannery, where he was put on piece-work making small packing cases. A box factory supplied the parts, and all Freddie Drummond had to do was to fit the parts into a form and drive in the wire nails with a light hammer.

It was not skilled labor, but it was piece-work. The ordinary laborers in the cannery got a dollar and a half per day. Freddie Drummond found the other men on the same job with him jogging along and earning a dollar and seventy-five cents a day. By the third day he was able to earn the same. But he was ambitious. He did not care to jog along and, being unusually able and fit, on the fourth day earned two dollars. The next day, having keyed himself up to an exhausting high-tension, he earned two dollars and a half. His fellow workers favored him with scowls and black looks, and made remarks, slangily witty and which he did not understand, about sucking up to the boss and pace-making and holding her down when the rains set in. He was astonished at their malingering on piece-work, generalized about the inherent laziness of the unskilled laborer, and proceeded next day to hammer out three dollars' worth of boxes.

And that night, coming out of the cannery, he was interviewed by his fellow workmen, who were very angry and incoherently slangy. He failed to comprehend the motive behind their action. The action itself was strenuous. When he refused to ease down his pace and bleated about freedom of contract, independent Americanism, and the dignity of toil, they proceeded to spoil his pace-making ability. It was a fierce battle, for Drummond was a large man and an athlete, but the crowd finally jumped on his ribs, walked on his face, and stamped on his fingers, so that it was only after lying in bed for a week that he was able to get up and look for another job. All of which is duly narrated in that first book of his, in the chapter entitled "The Tyranny of Labor."

A little later, in another department of the Wilmax Cannery, lumping as a fruit-distributor among the women, he essayed to carry two boxes of fruit at a time, and was promptly reproached by the other fruit-lumpers. It was palpable malingering; but he was there, he decided, not to change conditions, but to observe. So he lumped one box thereafter, and so well did he study the art of shirking that he wrote a special chapter on it, with the last several paragraphs devoted to tentative generalizations.

In those six months he worked at many jobs and developed into a very good imitation of a genuine worker. He was a natural linguist, and he kept notebooks, making a scientific study of the workers' slang or argot, until he could talk quite intelligibly. This language also enabled him more intimately to follow their mental processes, and thereby to gather much data for a projected chapter in some future book which he planned to entitle "Synthesis of Working-Class Psychology."

Before he arose to the surface from that first plunge into the underworld he discovered that he was a good actor and demonstrated the plasticity of his nature. He was himself astonished at his own fluidity. Once having mastered the language and conquered numerous fastidious qualms, he found that he could flow into any nook of working-class life and fit it so snugly as to feel comfortably at home. As he said, in the preface to his second book, "The Toiler," he endeavored really to know the working people, and the only possible way to achieve this was to work beside them, eat their food, sleep in their beds, be amused with their amusements, think their thoughts, and feel their feelings.

He was not a deep thinker. He had no faith in new theories. All his norms and criteria were conventional. His Thesis, on the French Revolution, was noteworthy in college annals, not merely for its painstaking and voluminous accuracy, but for the fact that it was the dryest, deadest, most formal, and most orthodox screed ever written on the subject. He was a very reserved man, and his natural inhibition was large in quantity and steel-like in quality. He had but few friends. He was too undemonstrative, too frigid. He had no vices, nor had anyone ever discovered any temptations. Tobacco he detested, beer he abhorred, and he was never known to drink anything stronger than an occasional light wine at dinner.

When a freshman he had been baptized "Ice-Box" by his warmer-blooded fellows. As a member of the faculty he was known as "Cold-Storage." He had but one grief, and that was "Freddie." He had earned it when he played full-back on the `Varsity eleven', and his formal soul had never succeeded in living it down. "Freddie" he would ever be, except officially, and through nightmare vistas he looked into a future when his world would speak of him as “Old Freddie.”

For he was very young to be a Doctor of Sociology, only twenty-seven, and he looked younger. In appearance and atmosphere he was a strapping big college man, smooth-faced and easy-mannered, clean and simple and wholesome, with a known record of being a splendid athlete and an implied vast possession of cold culture of the inhibited sort. He never talked shop out of class and committee rooms, except later on, when his books showered him with distasteful public notice and he yielded to the extent of reading occasional papers before certain literary and economic societies. He did everything right — too right; and in dress and comportment was inevitably correct. Not that he was a dandy. Far from it. He was a college man, in dress and carriage as like as a pea to the type that of late years is being so generously turned out of our institutions of higher learning. His handshake was satisfyingly strong and stiff. His blue eyes were coldly blue and convincingly sincere. His voice, firm and masculine, clean and crisp of enunciation, was pleasant to the ear. The one drawback to Freddie Drummond was his inhibition. He never unbent. In his football days, the higher the tension of the game, the cooler he grew. He was noted as a boxer, but he was regarded as an automaton, with the inhuman precision of a machine judging distance and timing blows, guarding, blocking, and stalling. He was rarely punished himself, while he rarely punished an opponent. He was too clever and too controlled to permit himself to put a pound more weight into a punch than he intended. With him it was a matter of exercise. It kept him fit.

As time went by, Freddie Drummond found himself more frequently crossing the Slot and losing himself in South of Market. His summer and winter holidays were spent there, and, whether it was a week or a week-end, he found the time spent there to be valuable and enjoyable. And there was so much material to be gathered. His third book, “Mass and Master,” became a text-book in the American universities; and almost before he knew it, he was at work on a fourth one, “The Fallacy of the Inefficient.”

Somewhere in his make-up there was a strange twist or quirk. Perhaps it was a recoil from his environment and training, or from the tempered seed of his ancestors, who had been bookmen generation preceding generation; but at any rate, he found enjoyment in being down in the working-class world. In his own world he was “Cold-Storage,” but down below he was

"Big" Bill Totts, who could drink and smoke, and slang and fight, and be an all-around favorite. Everybody liked Bill, and more than one working girl made love to him. At first he had been merely a good actor, but as time went on, simulation became second nature. He no longer played a part, and he loved sausages, sausages and bacon, than which, in his own proper sphere, there was nothing more loathsome in the way of food.

From doing the thing for the need's sake, he came to doing the thing for the thing's sake. He found himself regretting as the time drew near for him to go back to his lecture-room and his inhibition. And he often found himself waiting with anticipation for the dreamy time to pass when he could cross the Slot and cut loose and play the devil. He was not wicked, but as "Big" Bill Totts he did a myriad things that Freddie Drummond would never have been permitted to do. Moreover, Freddie Drummond never would have wanted to do them. That was the strangest part of his discovery. Freddie Drummond and Bill Totts were two totally different creatures. The desires and tastes and impulses of each ran counter to the other's. Bill Totts could shirk at a job with clear conscience, while Freddie Drummond condemned shirking as vicious, criminal, and un-American, and devoted whole chapters to condemnation of the vice. Freddie Drummond did not care for dancing, but Bill Totts never missed the nights at the various dancing clubs, such as The Magnolia, The Western Star, and The Elite; while he won a massive silver cup, standing thirty inches high, for being the best-sustained character at the Butchers and Meat Workers' annual grand masked ball. And Bill Totts liked the girls and the girls liked him, while Freddie Drummond enjoyed playing the ascetic in this particular, was open in his opposition to equal suffrage, and cynically bitter in his secret condemnation of coeducation.

Freddie Drummond changed his manners with his dress, and without effort. When he entered the obscure little room used for his transformation scenes, he carried himself just a bit too stiffly. He was too erect, his shoulders were an inch too far back, while his face was grave, almost harsh, and practically expressionless. But when he emerged in Bill Totts's clothes he was another creature. Bill Totts did not slouch, but somehow his whole form limbered up and became graceful. The very sound of the voice was changed, and the laugh was loud and hearty, while loose speech and an occasional oath were as a matter of course on his lips. Also, Bill Totts was a trifle inclined to later hours, and at times, in saloons, to be good-naturedly bellicose with other workmen. Then, too, at Sunday picnics or when coming home from the show, either arm betrayed a practiced familiarity in stealing around girls' waists, while he displayed a wit keen and delightful in the flirtatious badinage that was expected of a good fellow in his class.

So thoroughly was Bill Totts himself, so thoroughly a workman, a genuine denizen of South of the Slot, that he was as class-conscious as the average of his kind, and his hatred for a scab even exceeded that of the average loyal union man. During the Water Front Strike, Freddie Drummond was somehow able to stand apart from the unique combination, and, coldly critical, watch Bill Totts hilariously slug scab long-shoremen. For Bill Totts was a dues-paying member of the Longshoremen Union and had a right to be indignant with the usurpers of his job. "Big" Bill Totts was so very big, and so very able, that it was "Big" Bill to the front when trouble was brewing. From acting outraged feelings, Freddie Drummond, in the role of his other self, came to experience genuine outrage, and it was only when he returned to the classic atmosphere of the university that he was able, sanely and conservatively, to generalize upon his underworld experiences and put them down on paper as a trained sociologist should. That Bill Totts lacked the perspective to raise him above class-consciousness, Freddie Drummond clearly saw. But Bill Totts could not see it. When he saw a scab taking his job away, he saw red at the same time, and little else did he see. It was Freddie Drummond, irreproachably clothed and comported, seated at his study desk or facing his class in "Sociology 17," who saw Bill Totts, and all around Bill Totts, and all around the whole scab and union-labor problem and its relation to the economic welfare of the United States in the struggle for the world market. Bill Totts really wasn't able to see beyond the next meal and the prize-fight the following night at the Gaiety Athletic Club.

It was while gathering material for "Women and Work" that Freddie received his first warning of the danger he was in. He was too successful at living in both worlds. This strange dualism he had developed was after all very unstable, and, as he sat in his study and meditated, he saw that it could not endure. It was really a transition stage, and if he persisted he saw that he would inevitably have to drop one world or the other. He could not continue in both. And as he looked at the row of volumes that graced the upper shelf of his revolving book-case, his volumes, beginning with his Thesis and ending with "Women and Work," he decided that that was the world he would hold to and stick by. Bill Totts had served his purpose, but he had become a too dangerous accomplice. Bill Totts would have to cease.

Freddie Drummond's fright was due to Mary Condon, President of the International Glove Workers' Union No. 974. He had seen her, first, from the spectators' gallery, at the annual convention of the Northwest Federation of Labor, and he had seen her through Bill Totts' eyes, and that individual had been most favorably impressed by her. She was not Freddie Drummond's sort at all. What if she were a royal-bodied woman, graceful and sinewy as a panther, with amazing black eyes that could fill with fire or laughter-love, as the mood might dictate? He detested women with a too exuberant vitality and a lack of . . . well, of inhibition. Freddie Drummond accepted the doctrine of evolution because it was quite universally accepted by college men, and he flatly believed that man had climbed up the ladder of life out of the weltering muck and mess of lower and monstrous organic things. But he was a trifle ashamed of this genealogy, and preferred not to think of it. Wherefore, probably, he practiced his iron inhibition and preached it to others, and preferred women of his own type, who could shake free of this bestial and regrettable ancestral line and by discipline and control emphasize the wideness of the gulf that separated them from what their dim forbears had been.

Bill Totts had none of these considerations. He had liked Mary Condon from the moment his eyes first rested on her in the convention hall, and he had made it a point, then and there, to find out who she was. The next time he met her, and quite by accident, was when he was driving an express wagon for Pat Morrissey. It was in a lodging house in Mission Street, where he had been called to take a trunk into storage. The landlady's daughter had called him and led him to the little bedroom, the occupant of which, a glove-maker, had just been removed to hospital. But Bill did not know this. He stooped, up-ended the trunk, which was a large one, got it on his shoulder, and struggled to his feet with his back toward the open door. At that moment he heard a woman's voice.

"Belong to the union?" was the question asked.

"Aw, what's it to you?" he retorted. "Run along now, an' git outa my way. I wanta turn round."

The next he knew, big as he was, he was whirled half around and sent reeling backward, the trunk overbalancing him, till he fetched up with a crash against the wall. He started to swear, but at the same instant found himself looking into Mary Condon's flashing, angry eyes.

"Of course I b'long to the union," he said. "I was only kiddin' you."

"Where's your card?" she demanded in business-like tones.

"In my pocket. But I can't git it out now. This trunk's too damn heavy. Come on down to the wagon an' I'll show it to you."

"Put that trunk down," was the command.

"What for? I got a card, I'm tellin' you."

"Put it down, that's all. No scab's going to handle that trunk. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, you big coward, scabbing on honest men. Why don't you join the union and be a man?"

Mary Condon's color had left her face, and it was apparent that she was in a rage.

"To think of a big man like you turning traitor to his class. I suppose you're aching to join the militia for a chance to shoot down union drivers the next strike. You may belong to the militia already, for that matter. You're the sort — "

"Hold on, now, that's too much!" Bill dropped the trunk to the floor with a bang, straightened up, and thrust his hand into his inside coat pocket. "I told you I was only kiddin'. There, look at that."

It was a union card properly enough.

"All right, take it along," Mary Condon said. "And the next time don't kid."

Her face relaxed as she noticed the ease with which he got the big trunk to his shoulder, and her eyes glowed as they glanced over the graceful massiveness of the man. But Bill did not see that. He was too busy with the trunk.

The next time he saw Mary Condon was during the Laundry Strike. The Laundry Workers, but recently organized, were green at the business, and had petitioned Mary Condon to engineer the strike. Freddie Drummond had had an inkling of what was coming, and had sent Bill Totts to join the union and investigate. Bill's job was in the wash-room, and the men had been called out first, that morning, in order to stiffen the courage of the girls; and Bill chanced to be near the door to the mangle-room when Mary Condon started to enter. The superintendent, who was both large and stout, barred her way. He wasn't going to have his girls called out, and he'd teach her a lesson to mind her own business. And as Mary tried to squeeze past him he thrust her back with a fat hand on her shoulder. She glanced around and saw Bill.

"Here you, Mr. Totts," she called. "Lend a hand. I want to get in."

Bill experienced a startle of warm surprise. She had remembered his name from his union card. The next moment the superintendent had been plucked from the doorway raving about rights under the law, and the girls were deserting their machines. During the rest of that short and successful strike, Bill constituted himself Mary Condon's henchman and messenger, and when it was over returned to the University to be Freddie Drummond and to wonder what Bill Totts could see in such a woman.

Freddie Drummond was entirely safe, but Bill had fallen in love. There was no getting away from the fact of it, and it was this fact that had given Freddie Drummond his warning. Well, he had done his work, and his adventures could cease. There was no need for him to cross the Slot again. All but the last three chapters of his latest, "Labor Tactics and Strategy," was finished, and he had sufficient material on hand adequately to supply those chapters.

Another conclusion he arrived at, was that in order to sheet-anchor himself as Freddie Drummond, closer ties and relations in his own social nook were necessary. It was time that he was married, anyway, and he was fully aware that if Freddie Drummond didn't get married, Bill Totts assuredly would, and the complications were too awful to contemplate. And so, enters Catherine Van Vorst. She was a college woman herself, and her father, the one wealthy member of the faculty, was the head of the Philosophy Department as well. It would be a wise marriage from every standpoint, Freddie Drummond concluded when the engagement was consummated and announced. In appearance cold and reserved, aristocratic and wholesomely conservative, Catherine Van Vorst, though warm in her way, possessed an inhibition equal to Drummond's.

All seemed well with him, but Freddie Drummond could not quite shake off the call of the underworld, the lure of the free and open, of the unhampered, irresponsible life South of the Slot. As the time of his marriage approached, he felt that he had indeed sowed wild oats, and he felt, moreover, what a good thing it would be if he could have but one wild fling more, play the good fellow and the wastrel one last time, ere he settled down to gray lecture-rooms and sober matrimony. And, further to tempt him, the very last chapter of "Labor Tactics and Strategy" remained unwritten for lack of a trifle more of essential data which he had neglected to gather.

So Freddie Drummond went down for the last time as Bill Totts, got his data, and, unfortunately, encountered Mary Condon. Once more installed in his study, it was not a pleasant thing to look back upon. It made his warning doubly imperative. Bill Totts had behaved abominably. Not only had he met Mary Condon at the Central Labor Council, but he had stopped in at a chop-house with her, on the way home, and treated her to oysters. And before they parted at her door, his arms had been about her, and he had kissed her on the lips and kissed her repeatedly. And her last words in his ear, words uttered softly with a catchy sob in the throat that was nothing more nor less than a love cry, were “Bill . . . dear, dear Bill.”

Freddie Drummond shuddered at the recollection. He saw the pit yawning for him. He was not by nature a polygamist, and he was appalled at the possibilities of the situation. It would have to be put an end to, and it would end in one only of two ways: either he must become wholly Bill Totts and be married to Mary Condon, or he must remain wholly Freddie Drummond and be married to Catherine Van Vorst. Otherwise, his conduct would be beneath contempt and horrible.

In the several months that followed, San Francisco was torn with labor strife. The unions and the employers’ associations had locked horns with a determination that looked as if they intended to settle the matter, one way or the other, for all time. But Freddie Drummond corrected proofs, lectured classes, and did not budge. He devoted himself to Catherine Van Vorst, and day by day found more to respect and admire in her — nay, even to love in her. The Street Car Strike tempted him, but not so severely as he would have expected; and the great Meat Strike came on and left him cold. The ghost of Bill Totts had been successfully laid, and Freddie Drummond with rejuvenescent zeal tackled a brochure, long-planned, on the topic of “diminishing returns.”

The wedding was two weeks off, when, one afternoon, in San Francisco, Catherine Van Vorst picked him up and whisked him away to see a Boys’ Club, recently instituted by the settlement workers with whom she was interested. It was her brother’s machine, but they were alone with the exception of the chauffeur. At the junction with Kearny Street, Market and Geary Streets intersect like the sides of a sharp-angled letter “V.” They, in the auto, were coming down Market with the intention of negotiating the sharp apex and going up Geary. But they did not know what was coming down Geary, timed by fate to meet them at the apex. While aware from the papers that the Meat Strike was on and that it was an exceedingly bitter one, all thought of it at that moment was farthest from Freddie Drummond's mind. Was he not seated beside Catherine? And, besides, he was carefully expositing to her his views on settlement work — views that Bill Totts' adventures had played a part in formulating.

Coming down Geary Street were six meat wagons. Beside each scab driver sat a policeman. Front and rear, and along each side of this procession, marched a protecting escort of one hundred police. Behind the police rear guard, at a respectful distance, was an orderly but vociferous mob, several blocks in length, that congested the street from sidewalk to sidewalk. The Beef Trust was making an effort to supply the hotels, and, incidentally, to begin the breaking of the strike. The St. Francis had already been supplied, at a cost of many broken windows and broken heads, and the expedition was marching to the relief of the Palace Hotel.

All unwitting, Drummond sat beside Catherine, talking settlement work, as the auto, honking methodically and dodging traffic, swung in a wide curve to get around the apex. A big coal wagon, loaded with lump coal and drawn by four huge horses, just debouching from Kearny Street as though to turn down Market, blocked their way. The driver of the wagon seemed undecided, and the chauffeur, running slow but disregarding some shouted warning from the crossing policemen, swerved the auto to the left, violating the traffic rules, in order to pass in front of the wagon.

At that moment Freddie Drummond discontinued his conversation. Nor did he resume it again, for the situation was developing with the rapidity of a transformation scene. He heard the roar of the mob at the rear, and caught a glimpse of the helmeted police and the lurching meat wagons. At the same moment, laying on his whip and standing up to his task, the coal driver rushed horses and wagon squarely in front of the advancing procession, pulled the horses up sharply, and put on the big brake. Then he made his lines fast to the brake-handle and sat down with the air of one who had stopped to stay. The auto had been brought to a stop, too, by his big panting leaders which had jammed against it.

Before the chauffeur could back clear, an old Irishman, driving a rickety express wagon and lashing his one horse to a gallop, had locked wheels with the auto. Drummond recognized both horse and wagon, for he had driven them often himself. The Irishman was Pat Morrissey. On the other side a brewery wagon was locking with the coal wagon, and an east-bound Kearny-Street car, wildly clanging its gong, the motorman shouting defiance at the crossing policeman, was dashing forward to complete the blockade. And wagon after wagon was locking and blocking and adding to the confusion. The meat wagons halted. The police were trapped. The roar at the rear increased as the mob came on to the attack, while the vanguard of the police charged the obstructing wagons.

“We’re in for it,” Drummond remarked coolly to Catherine.

“Yes,” she nodded, with equal coolness. “What savages they are.”

His admiration for her doubled on itself. She was indeed his sort. He would have been satisfied with her even if she had screamed and clung to him, but this — this was magnificent. She sat in that storm center as calmly as if it had been no more than a block of carriages at the opera.

The police were struggling to clear a passage. The driver of the coal wagon, a big man in shirt sleeves, lighted a pipe and sat smoking. He glanced down complacently at a captain of police who was raving and cursing at him, and his only acknowledgment was a shrug of the shoulders. From the rear arose the rat-tat-tat of clubs on heads and a pandemonium of cursing, yelling, and shouting. A violent accession of noise proclaimed that the mob had broken through and was dragging a scab from a wagon. The police captain reinforced from his vanguard, and the mob at the rear was repelled. Meanwhile, window after window in the high office building on the right had been opened, and the class-conscious clerks were raining a shower of office furniture down on the heads of police and scabs. Waste-baskets, ink-bottles, paper-weights, typewriters — anything and everything that came to hand was filling the air.

A policeman, under orders from his captain, clambered to the lofty seat of the coal wagon to arrest the driver. And the driver, rising leisurely and peacefully to meet him, suddenly crumpled him in his arms and threw him down on top of the captain. The driver was a young giant, and when he climbed on top his load and poised a lump of coal in both hands, a policeman, who was just scaling the wagon from the side, let go and dropped back to earth. The captain ordered half a dozen of his men to take the wagon. The teamster, scrambling over the load from side to side, beat them down with huge lumps of coal.

The crowd on the sidewalks and the teamsters on the locked wagons roared encouragement and their own delight. The motorman, smashing helmets with his controller bar, was beaten into insensibility and dragged from his platform. The captain of police, beside himself at the repulse of his men, led the next assault on the coal wagon. A score of police were swarming up the tall-sided fortress. But the teamster multiplied himself. At times there were six or eight policemen rolling on the pavement and under the wagon. Engaged in repulsing an attack on the rear end of his fortress, the teamster turned about to see the captain just in the act of stepping on to the seat from the front end. He was still in the air and in most unstable equilibrium, when the teamster hurled a thirty-pound lump of coal. It caught the captain fairly on the chest, and he went over backward, striking on a wheeler's back, tumbling on to the ground, and jamming against the rear wheel of the auto.

Catherine thought he was dead, but he picked himself up and charged back. She reached out her gloved hand and patted the flank of the snorting, quivering horse. But Drummond did not notice the action. He had eyes for nothing save the battle of the coal wagon, while somewhere in his complicated psychology, one Bill Totts was heaving and straining in an effort to come to life. Drummond believed in law and order and the maintenance of the established, but this riotous savage within him would have none of it. Then, if ever, did Freddie Drummond call upon his iron inhibition to save him. But it is written that the house divided against itself must fall. And Freddie Drummond found that he had divided all the will and force of him with Bill Totts, and between them the entity that constituted the pair of them was being wrenched in twain.

Freddie Drummond sat in the auto, quite composed, alongside Catherine Van Vorst; but looking out of Freddie Drummond's eyes was Bill Totts, and somewhere behind those eyes, battling for the control of their mutual body, were Freddie Drummond, the sane and conservative sociologist, and Bill Totts, the class-conscious and bellicose union workingman. It was Bill Totts, looking out of those eyes, who saw the inevitable end of the battle on the coal wagon. He saw a policeman gain the top of the load, a second, and a third. They lurched clumsily on the loose footing, but their long riot-clubs were out and winging. One blow caught the teamster on the head. A second he dodged, receiving it on the shoulder. For him the game was plainly up. He dashed in suddenly, clutched two policemen in his arms, and hurled himself a prisoner to the pavement, his hold never relaxing on his two captors.

Catherine Van Vorst was sick and faint at sight of the blood and brutal fighting. But her qualms were vanquished by the sensational and most unexpected happening that followed. The man beside her emitted an unearthly and uncultured yell and rose to his feet. She saw him spring over the front seat, leap to the broad rump of the wheeler, and from there gain the wagon. His onslaught was like a whirlwind. Before the bewildered officer on top the load could guess the errand of this conventionally clad but excited-seeming gentleman, he was the recipient of a punch that arched him back through the air to the pavement. A kick in the face led an ascending policeman to follow his example. A rush of three more gained the top and locked with Bill Totts in a gigantic clinch, during which his scalp was opened up by a club, and coat, vest, and half his starched shirt were torn from him. But the three policemen were flung wide and far, and Bill Totts, raining down lumps of coal, held the fort.

The captain led gallantly to the attack, but was bowled over by a chunk of coal that burst on his head in black baptism. The need of the police was to break the blockade in front before the mob could break in at the rear, and Bill Totts' need was to hold the wagon till the mob did break through. So the battle of the coal went on.

The crowd had recognized its champion. "Big" Bill, as usual, had come to the front, and Catherine Van Vorst was bewildered by the cries of "Bill! O you Bill!" that arose on every hand. Pat Morrissey, on his wagon seat, was jumping and screaming in an ecstasy, "Eat 'em, Bill! Eat 'em! Eat 'em alive!" From the sidewalk she heard a woman's voice cry out, "Look out, Bill — front end!" Bill took the warning and with well-directed coal cleaned the front end of the wagon of assailants. Catherine Van Vorst turned her head and saw on the curb of the sidewalk a woman with vivid coloring and flashing black eyes who was staring with all her soul at the man who had been Freddie Drummond a few minutes before.

The windows of the office building became vociferous with applause. A fresh shower of office chairs and filing cabinets descended. The mob had broken through on one side the line of wagons, and was advancing, each segregated policeman the center of a fighting group. The scabs were torn from their seats, the traces of the horses cut, and the frightened animals put in flight. Many policemen crawled under the coal wagon for safety, while the loose horses, with here and there a policeman on their backs or struggling at their heads to hold them, surged across the sidewalk opposite the jam and broke into Market Street.

Catherine Van Vorst heard the woman's voice calling in warning. She was back on the curb again, and crying out:

"Beat it, Bill! Now's your time! Beat it!"

The police for the moment had been swept away. Bill Totts leaped to the pavement and made his way to the woman on the sidewalk. Catherine Van Vorst saw her throw her arms around him and kiss him on the lips; and Catherine Van Vorst watched him curiously as he went on down the sidewalk, one arm around the woman, both talking and laughing, and he with a volubility and abandon she could never have dreamed possible.

The police were back again and clearing the jam while waiting for reinforcements and new drivers and horses. The mob had done its work and was scattering, and Catherine Van Vorst, still watching, could see the man she had known as Freddie Drummond. He towered a head above the crowd. His arm was still about the woman. And she in the motorcar, watching, saw the pair cross Market Street, cross the Slot, and disappear down Third Street into the labor ghetto.

The Stampede to Squaw Creek.

Two months after Smoke Bellew and Shorty went after moose for a grub-stake, they were back in the Elkhorn saloon at Dawson. The hunting was done, the meat hauled in and sold for two dollars and a half a pound, and between them they possessed three thousand dollars in gold dust and a good team of dogs. They had played in luck. Despite the fact that the gold-rush had driven the game a hundred miles or more into the mountains, they had, within half that distance, bagged four moose in a narrow canyon.

The mystery of the strayed animals was no greater than the luck of their killers, for within the day four famished Indian families, reporting no game in three days' journey back, camped beside them. Meat was traded for starving dogs, and after a week of feeding, Smoke and Shorty harnessed the animals and began freighting the meat to the eager Dawson market.

The problem of the two men now was to turn their gold-dust into food. The current price for flour and beans was a dollar and a half a pound, but the difficulty was to find a seller. Dawson was in the throes of famine. Hundreds of men, with money but no food, had been compelled to leave the country. Many had gone down the river on the last water, and many more, with barely enough food to last, had walked the six hundred miles over the ice to Dyea.

Smoke met Shorty in the warm saloon, and found the latter jubilant.

"Life ain't no punkins without whiskey an' sweetenin'," was Shorty's greeting, as he pulled lumps of ice from his thawing moustache and flung them rattling on the floor. "An' I sure just got eighteen pounds of that same sweetenin'. The geezer only charged three dollars a pound for it. What luck did you have?"

"I, too, have not been idle," Smoke answered with pride. "I bought fifty pounds of flour. And there's a man up on Adam Creek who says he'll let me have fifty pounds more to-morrow."

"Great! We'll sure live till the river opens. Say, Smoke, them dogs of ourn is the goods. A dog-buyer offered me two hundred apiece for the five of them. I told him nothin' doin'. They sure took on class when they got meat to get outside of; but it goes against the grain, feedin' dog-critters on grub that's worth two an' a half a pound. Come on an' have a drink. I just got to celebrate them eighteen pounds of sweetenin'."

Several minutes later, as he weighed in on the gold-scales for the drinks, he gave a start of recollection.

"I plum forgot that man I was to meet in the Tivoli. He's got some spoiled bacon he'll sell for a dollar an' a half a pound. We can feed it to the dogs an' save a dollar a day on each's board-bill. So long."

"So long," said Smoke. "I'm goin' to the cabin an' turn in."

Hardly had Shorty left the place, when a fur-clad man entered through the double storm-doors. His face lighted at sight of Smoke, who recognized him as Breck, the man whose boat they had run through the Box Canyon and White Horse Rapids.

"I heard you were in town," Breck said hurriedly, as they shook hands. "Been looking for you for half an hour. Come outside, I want to talk with you."

Smoke looked regretfully at the roaring, red-hot stove.

"Won't this do?"

"No; it's important. Come outside."

As they emerged, Smoke drew off one mitten, lighted a match, and glanced at the thermometer that hung beside the door. He remittened his naked hand hastily as if the frost had burned him. Overhead arched the flaming aurora borealis, while from all Dawson arose the mournful howling of thousands of wolf-dogs.

"What did it say?" Breck asked.

"Sixty below." Kit spat experimentally, and the spittle crackled in the air. "And the thermometer is certainly working. It's falling all the time. An hour ago it was only fifty-two. Don't tell me it's a stampede."

"It is," Breck whispered back cautiously, casting anxious eyes about in fear of some other listener. "You know Squaw Creek? — empties in on the other side of the Yukon thirty miles up?"

"Nothing doing there," was Smoke's judgment. "It was prospected years ago."

"So were all the other rich creeks. Listen! It's big. Only eight to twenty feet to bedrock. There won't be a claim that don't run to half a million. It's a dead secret. Two or three of my close friends let me in on it. I told my wife right away that I was going to find you before I started. Now, so long. My pack's hidden down the bank. In fact, when they told me, they made me promise not to pull out until Dawson was asleep. You know what it means if you're seen with a stampeding outfit. Get your partner and follow. You ought to stake fourth or fifth claim from Discovery. Don’t forget — Squaw Creek. It’s the third after you pass Swede Creek.”

When Smoke entered the little cabin on the hillside back of Dawson, he heard a heavy familiar breathing.

“Aw, go to bed,” Shorty mumbled, as Smoke shook his shoulder. “I’m not on the night shift,” was his next remark, as the rousing hand became more vigorous. “Tell your troubles to the barkeeper.”

“Kick into your clothes,” Smoke said. “We’ve got to stake a couple of claims.”

Shorty sat up and started to explode, but Smoke’s hand covered his mouth.

“Ssh!” Smoke warned. “It’s a big strike. Don’t wake the neighborhood. Dawson’s asleep.”

“Huh! You got to show me. Nobody tells anybody about a strike, of course not. But ain’t it plum amazin’ the way everybody hits the trail just the same?”

“Squaw Creek,” Smoke whispered. “It’s right. Breck gave me the tip. Shallow bedrock. Gold from the grass-roots down. Come on. We’ll sling a couple of light packs together and pull out.”

Shorty’s eyes closed as he lapsed back into sleep. The next moment his blankets were swept off him.

“If you don’t want them, I do,” Smoke explained.

Shorty followed the blankets and began to dress.

“Goin’ to take the dogs?” he asked.

“No. The trail up the creek is sure to be unbroken, and we can make better time without them.”

“Then I’ll throw ‘em a meal, which’ll have to last ‘em till we get back. Be sure you take some birch-bark and a candle.”

Shorty opened the door, felt the bite of the cold, and shrank back to pull down his ear-flaps and mitten his hands.

Five minutes later he returned, sharply rubbing his nose.

“Smoke, I’m sure opposed to makin’ this stampede. It’s colder than the hinges of hell a thousand years before the first fire was lighted. Besides, it’s Friday the thirteenth, an’ we’re goin’ to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”

With small stampeding-packs on their backs, they closed the door behind them and started down the hill. The display of the aurora borealis had ceased, and only the stars leaped in the great cold and by their uncertain light made traps for the feet. Shorty floundered off a turn of the trail into deep snow, and raised his voice in blessing of the date of the week and month and year.

“Can’t you keep still?” Smoke chided. “Leave the almanac alone. You’ll have all Dawson awake and after us.”

“Huh! See the light in that cabin? An’ in that one over there? An’ hear that door slam? Oh, sure Dawson’s asleep. Them lights? Just buryin’ their dead. They ain’t stampedin’, betcher life they ain’t.”

By the time they reached the foot of the hill and were fairly in Dawson, lights were springing up in the cabins, doors were slamming, and from behind came the sound of many moccasins on the hard-packed snow. Again Shorty delivered himself.

“But it beats hell the amount of mourners there is.”

They passed a man who stood by the path and was calling anxiously in a low voice: “Oh, Charley; get a move on.”

“See that pack on his back, Smoke? The graveyard’s sure a long ways off when the mourners got to pack their blankets.”

By the time they reached the main street a hundred men were in line behind them, and while they sought in the deceptive starlight for the trail that dipped down the bank to the river, more men could be heard arriving. Shorty slipped and shot down the thirty-foot chute into the soft snow. Smoke followed, knocking him over as he was rising to his feet.

“I found it first,” he gurgled, taking off his mittens to shake the snow out of the gauntlets.

The next moment they were scrambling wildly out of the way of the hurtling bodies of those that followed. At the time of the freeze-up, a jam had occurred at this point, and cakes of ice were up-ended in snow-covered confusion. After several hard falls, Smoke drew out his candle and lighted it. Those in the rear hailed it with acclaim. In the windless air it burned easily, and he led the way more quickly.

“It’s a sure stampede,” Shorty decided. “Or might all them be sleep-walkers?”

“We’re at the head of the procession at any rate,” was Smoke’s answer.

“Oh, I don’t know. Mebbe that’s a firefly ahead there. Mebbe they’re all fireflies — that one, an’ that one. Look at ‘em! Believe me, they is a whole string of processions ahead.”

It was a mile across the jams to the west bank of the Yukon, and candles flickered the full length of the twisting trail. Behind them, clear to the top of the bank they had descended, were more candles.

"Say, Smoke, this ain't no stampede. It's a exode-us. They must be a thousand men ahead of us an' ten thousand behind. Now, you listen to your uncle. My medicine's good. When I get a hunch it's sure right. An' we're in wrong on this stampede. Let's turn back an' hit the sleep."

"You'd better save your breath if you intend to keep up," Smoke retorted gruffly.

"Huh! My legs is short, but I slog along slack at the knees an' don't worry my muscles none, an' I can sure walk every piker here off the ice."

And Smoke knew he was right, for he had long since learned his comrade's phenomenal walking powers.

"I've been holding back to give you a chance," Smoke jeered.

"An' I'm plum troddin' on your heels. If you can't do better, let me go ahead and set pace."

Smoke quickened, and was soon at the rear of the nearest bunch of stampeders.

"Hike along, you, Smoke," the other urged. "Walk over them unburied dead. This ain't no funeral. Hit the frost like you was goin' somewheres."

Smoke counted eight men and two women in this party, and before the way across the jam-ice was won, he and Shorty had passed another party twenty strong. Within a few feet of the west bank, the trail swerved to the south, emerging from the jam upon smooth ice. The ice, however, was buried under several feet of fine snow. Through this the sled-trail ran, a narrow ribbon of packed footing barely two feet in width. On either side one sank to his knees and deeper in the snow. The stampeders they overtook were reluctant to give way, and often Smoke and Shorty had to plunge into the deep snow and by supreme efforts flounder past.

Shorty was irrepressible and pessimistic. When the stampeders resented being passed, he retorted in kind.

"What's your hurry?" one of them asked.

"What's yours?" he answered. "A stampede come down from Indian River yesterday afternoon an' beat you to it. They ain't no claims left."

"That being so, I repeat, what's your hurry?"

"WHO? Me? I ain't no stampeder. I'm workin' for the government. I'm on official business. I'm just traipsin' along to take the census of Squaw

Creek.”

To another, who hailed him with: “Where away, little one? Do you really expect to stake a claim?” Shorty answered:

“Me? I’m the discoverer of Squaw Creek. I’m just comin’ back from recordin’ so as to see no blamed chechako jumps my claim.”

The average pace of the stampeders on the smooth going was three miles and a half an hour. Smoke and Shorty were doing four and a half, though sometimes they broke into short runs and went faster.

“I’m going to travel your feet clean off, Shorty,” Smoke challenged.

“Huh! I can hike along on the stumps an’ wear the heels off your moccasins. Though it ain’t no use. I’ve been figgerin’. Creek claims is five hundred feet. Call ‘em ten to the mile. They’s a thousand stampeders ahead of us, an’ that creek ain’t no hundred miles long. Somebody’s goin’ to get left, an’ it makes a noise like you an’ me.”

Before replying, Smoke let out an unexpected link that threw Shorty half a dozen feet in the rear. “If you saved your breath and kept up, we’d cut down a few of that thousand,” he chided.

“Who? Me? If you’d get outa the way I’d show you a pace what is.”

Smoke laughed, and let out another link. The whole aspect of the adventure had changed. Through his brain was running a phrase of the mad philosopher — ”the transvaluation of values.” In truth, he was less interested in staking a fortune than in beating Shorty. After all, he concluded, it wasn’t the reward of the game but the playing of it that counted. Mind, and muscle, and stamina, and soul, were challenged in a contest with this Shorty, a man who had never opened the books, and who did not know grand opera from rag-time, nor an epic from a chilblain.

“Shorty, I’ve got you skinned to death. I’ve reconstructed every cell in my body since I hit the beach at Dyea. My flesh is as stringy as whipcords, and as bitter and mean as the bite of a rattlesnake. A few months ago I’d have patted myself on the back to write such words, but I couldn’t have written them. I had to live them first, and now that I’m living them there’s no need to write them. I’m the real, bitter, stinging goods, and no scrub of a mountaineer can put anything over on me without getting it back compound. Now, you go ahead and set pace for half an hour. Do your worst, and when you’re all in I’ll go ahead and give you half an hour of the real worst.”

“Huh!” Shorty sneered genially. “An’ him not dry behind the ears yet. Get outa the way an’ let your father show you some goin’.”

Half-hour by half-hour they alternated in setting pace. Nor did they talk much. Their exertions kept them warm, though their breath froze on their faces from lips to chin. So intense was the cold that they almost continually rubbed their noses and cheeks with their mittens. A few minutes’ cessation from this allowed the flesh to grow numb, and then most vigorous rubbing was required to produce the burning prickle of returning circulation.

Often they thought they had reached the lead, but always they overtook more stampeders who had started before them. Occasionally, groups of men attempted to swing in behind to their pace, but invariably they were discouraged after a mile or two and disappeared in the darkness to the rear.

“We’ve been out on trail all winter,” was Shorty’s comment. “An’ them geezers, soft from layin’ around their cabins, has the nerve to think they can keep our stride. Now, if they was real sour-doughs it’d be different. If there’s one thing a sour-dough can do it’s sure walk.”

Once, Smoke lighted a match and glanced at his watch. He never repeated it, for so quick was the bite of the frost on his bared hands that half an hour passed before they were again comfortable.

“Four o’clock,” he said, as he pulled on his mittens, “and we’ve already passed three hundred.”

“Three hundred and thirty-eight,” Shorty corrected. “I been keepin’ count. Get outa the way, stranger. Let somebody stampede that knows how to stampede.”

The latter was addressed to a man, evidently exhausted, who could no more than stumble along and who blocked the trail. This, and one other, were the only played-out men they encountered, for they were very near to the head of the stampede. Nor did they learn till afterwards the horrors of that night. Exhausted men sat down to rest by the way and failed to get up again. Seven were frozen to death, while scores of amputations of toes, feet, and fingers were performed in the Dawson hospitals on the survivors. For the stampede to Squaw Creek occurred on the coldest night of the year. Before morning, the spirit thermometers at Dawson registered seventy degrees below zero. The men composing the stampede, with few exceptions, were new-comers in the country who did not know the way of the cold.

The other played-out man they found a few minutes later, revealed by a streamer of aurora borealis that shot like a searchlight from horizon to zenith. He was sitting on a piece of ice beside the trail.

"Hop along, sister Mary," Shorty gaily greeted him. "Keep movin'. If you sit there you'll freeze stiff."

The man made no response, and they stopped to investigate.

"Stiff as a poker," was Shorty's verdict. "If you tumbled him over he'd break."

"See if he's breathing," Smoke said, as, with bared hand, he sought through furs and woollens for the man's heart.

Shorty lifted one ear-flap and bent to the iced lips. "Nary breathe," he reported.

"Nor heart-beat," said Smoke.

He mittened his hand and beat it violently for a minute before exposing it to the frost to strike a match. It was an old man, incontestably dead. In the moment of illumination, they saw a long grey beard, massed with ice to the nose, cheeks that were white with frost, and closed eyes with frost-rimmed lashes frozen together. Then the match went out.

"Come on," Shorty said, rubbing his ear. "We can't do nothin' for the old geezer. An' I've sure frosted my ear. Now all the blamed skin'll peel off, and it'll be sore for a week."

A few minutes later, when a flaming ribbon spilled pulsating fire over the heavens, they saw on the ice a quarter of a mile ahead two forms. Beyond, for a mile, nothing moved.

"They're leading the procession," Smoke said, as darkness fell again. "Come on, let's get them."

At the end of half an hour, not yet having overtaken the two in front, Shorty broke into a run.

"If we catch 'em we'll never pass 'em," he panted. "Lord, what a pace they're hittin'. Dollars to doughnuts they're no chechakos. They're the real sour-dough variety, you can stack on that."

Smoke was leading when they finally caught up, and he was glad to ease to a walk at their heels. Almost immediately he got the impression that the one nearer him was a woman. How this impression came, he could not tell. Hooded and furred, the dark form was as any form; yet there was a haunting sense of familiarity about it. He waited for the next flame of the aurora, and by its light saw the smallness of the moccasined feet. But he saw more —

the walk, and knew it for the unmistakable walk he had once resolved never to forget.

"She's a sure goer," Shorty confided hoarsely. "I'll bet it's an Indian."

"How do you do, Miss Gastell?" Smoke addressed her.

"How do you do," she answered, with a turn of the head and a quick glance. "It's too dark to see. Who are you?"

"Smoke."

She laughed in the frost, and he was certain it was the prettiest laughter he had ever heard. "And have you married and raised all those children you were telling me about?" Before he could retort, she went on. "How many chechakos are there behind?"

"Several thousand, I imagine. We passed over three hundred. And they weren't wasting any time."

"It's the old story," she said bitterly. "The new-comers get in on the rich creeks, and the old-timers, who dared and suffered and made this country, get nothing. Old-timers made this discovery on Squaw Creek — how it leaked out is the mystery — and they sent word up to all the old-timers on Sea Lion. But it's ten miles farther than Dawson, and when they arrive they'll find the creek staked to the skyline by the Dawson chechakos. It isn't right, it isn't fair, such perversity of luck."

"It is too bad," Smoke sympathized. "But I'm hanged if I know what you're going to do about it. First come, first served, you know."

"I wish I could do something," she flashed back at him. "I'd like to see them all freeze on the trail, or have everything terrible happen to them, so long as the Sea Lion stampede arrived first."

"You've certainly got it in for us hard," he laughed.

"It isn't that," she said quickly. "Man by man, I know the crowd from Sea Lion, and they are men. They starved in this country in the old days, and they worked like giants to develop it. I went through the hard times on the Koyukuk with them when I was a little girl. And I was with them in the Birch Creek famine, and in the Forty Mile famine. They are heroes, and they deserve some reward, and yet here are thousands of green softlings who haven't earned the right to stake anything, miles and miles ahead of them. And now, if you'll forgive my tirade, I'll save my breath, for I don't know when you and all the rest may try to pass dad and me."

No further talk passed between Joy and Smoke for an hour or so, though he noticed that for a time she and her father talked in low tones.

“I know ‘em now,” Shorty told Smoke. “He’s old Louis Gastell, an’ the real goods. That must be his kid. He come into this country so long ago they ain’t nobody can recollect, an’ he brought the girl with him, she only a baby. Him an’ Beetles was tradin’ partners an’ they ran the first dinkey little steamboat up the Koyukuk.”

“I don’t think we’ll try to pass them,” Smoke said. “We’re at the head of the stampede, and there are only four of us.”

Shorty agreed, and another hour of silence followed, during which they swung steadily along. At seven o’clock, the blackness was broken by a last display of the aurora borealis, which showed to the west a broad opening between snow-clad mountains.

“Squaw Creek!” Joy exclaimed.

“Goin’ some,” Shorty exulted. “We oughtn’t to been there for another half hour to the least, accordin’ to my reckonin’. I must ‘a’ been spreadin’ my legs.”

It was at this point that the Dyea trail, baffled by ice-jams, swerved abruptly across the Yukon to the east bank. And here they must leave the hard-packed, main-travelled trail, mount the jams, and follow a dim trail, but slightly packed, that hovered the west bank.

Louis Gastell, leading, slipped in the darkness on the rough ice, and sat up, holding his ankle in both his hands. He struggled to his feet and went on, but at a slower pace and with a perceptible limp. After a few minutes he abruptly halted.

“It’s no use,” he said to his daughter. “I’ve sprained a tendon. You go ahead and stake for me as well as yourself.”

“Can’t we do something?” Smoke asked solicitously.

Louis Gastell shook his head. “She can stake two claims as well as one. I’ll crawl over to the bank, start a fire, and bandage my ankle. I’ll be all right. Go on, Joy. Stake ours above the Discovery claim; it’s richer higher up.”

“Here’s some birch bark,” Smoke said, dividing his supply equally. “We’ll take care of your daughter.”

Louis Gastell laughed harshly. “Thank you just the same,” he said. “But she can take care of herself. Follow her and watch her.”

“Do you mind if I lead?” she asked Smoke, as she headed on. “I know this country better than you.”

“Lead on,” Smoke answered gallantly, “though I agree with you it’s a darned shame all us chechakos are going to beat that Sea Lion bunch to it. Isn’t there some way to shake them?”

She shook her head. “We can’t hide our trail, and they’ll follow it like sheep.”

After a quarter of a mile, she turned sharply to the west. Smoke noticed that they were going through unpacked snow, but neither he nor Shorty observed that the dim trail they had been on still led south. Had they witnessed the subsequent procedure of Louis Gastell, the history of the Klondike would have been written differently; for they would have seen that old-timer, no longer limping, running with his nose to the trail like a hound, following them. Also, they would have seen him trample and widen the turn to the fresh trail they had made to the west. And, finally, they would have seen him keep on the old dim trail that still led south.

A trail did run up the creek, but so slight was it that they continually lost it in the darkness. After a quarter of an hour, Joy Gastell was willing to drop into the rear and let the two men take turns in breaking a way through the snow. This slowness of the leaders enabled the whole stampede to catch up, and when daylight came, at nine o’clock, as far back as they could see was an unbroken line of men. Joy’s dark eyes sparkled at the sight.

“How long since we started up the creek?” she asked.

“Fully two hours,” Smoke answered.

“And two hours back make four,” she laughed. “The stampede from Sea Lion is saved.”

A faint suspicion crossed Smoke’s mind, and he stopped and confronted her.

“I don’t understand,” he said.

“You don’t? Then I’ll tell you. This is Norway Creek. Squaw Creek is the next to the south.”

Smoke was for the moment, speechless.

“You did it on purpose?” Shorty demanded.

“I did it to give the old-timers a chance.” She laughed mockingly. The men grinned at each other and finally joined her. “I’d lay you across my knee an’ give you a wallopin’, if women folk wasn’t so scarce in this country,” Shorty assured her.

“Your father didn’t sprain a tendon, but waited till we were out of sight and then went on?” Smoke asked.

She nodded.

“And you were the decoy?”

Again she nodded, and this time Smoke’s laughter rang out clear and true. It was the spontaneous laughter of a frankly beaten man.

“Why don’t you get angry with me?” she queried ruefully. “Or — or wallop me?”

“Well, we might as well be starting back,” Shorty urged. “My feet’s gettin’ cold standin’ here.”

Smoke shook his head. “That would mean four hours lost. We must be eight miles up this creek now, and from the look ahead Norway is making a long swing south. We’ll follow it, then cross over the divide somehow, and tap Squaw Creek somewhere above Discovery.” He looked at Joy. “Won’t you come along with us? I told your father we’d look after you.”

“I — ” She hesitated. “I think I shall, if you don’t mind.” She was looking straight at him, and her face was no longer defiant and mocking. “Really, Mr. Smoke, you make me almost sorry for what I have done. But somebody had to save the old-timers.”

“It strikes me that stampeding is at best a sporting proposition.”

“And it strikes me you two are very game about it,” she went on, then added with the shadow of a sigh: “What a pity you are not old-timers!”

For two hours more they kept to the frozen creek-bed of Norway, then turned into a narrow and rugged tributary that flowed from the south. At midday they began the ascent of the divide itself. Behind them, looking down and back, they could see the long line of stampeders breaking up. Here and there, in scores of places, thin smoke-columns advertised the making of camps.

As for themselves, the going was hard. They wallowed through snow to their waists, and were compelled to stop every few yards to breathe. Shorty was the first to call a halt.

“We been hittin’ the trail for over twelve hours,” he said. “Smoke, I’m plum willin’ to say I’m good an’ tired. An’ so are you. An’ I’m free to shout that I can sure hang on to this here pasear like a starvin’ Indian to a hunk of bear-meat. But this poor girl here can’t keep her legs no time if she don’t get something in her stomach. Here’s where we build a fire. What d’ye say?”

So quickly, so deftly and methodically, did they go about making a temporary camp, that Joy, watching with jealous eyes, admitted to herself that the old-timers could not do it better. Spruce boughs, with a spread blanket on top, gave a foundation for rest and cooking operations. But they kept away from the heat of the fire until noses and cheeks had been rubbed cruelly.

Smoke spat in the air, and the resultant crackle was so immediate and loud that he shook his head. “I give it up,” he said. “I’ve never seen cold like this.”

“One winter on the Koyukuk it went to eighty-six below,” Joy answered. “It’s at least seventy or seventy-five right now, and I know I’ve frosted my cheeks. They’re burning like fire.”

On the steep slope of the divide there was no ice, so snow, as fine and hard and crystalline as granulated sugar, was poured into the gold-pan by the bushel until enough water was melted for the coffee. Smoke fried bacon and thawed biscuits. Shorty kept the fuel supplied and tended the fire, and Joy set the simple table composed of two plates, two cups, two spoons, a tin of mixed salt and pepper, and a tin of sugar. When it came to eating, she and Smoke shared one set between them. They ate out of the same plate and drank from the same cup.

It was nearly two in the afternoon when they cleared the crest of the divide and began dropping down a feeder of Squaw Creek. Earlier in the winter some moose-hunter had made a trail up the canyon — that is, in going up and down he had stepped always in his previous tracks. As a result, in the midst of soft snow, and veiled under later snow falls, was a line of irregular hummocks. If one’s foot missed a hummock, he plunged down through unpacked snow and usually to a fall. Also, the moose-hunter had been an exceptionally long-legged individual. Joy, who was eager now that the two men should stake, and fearing that they were slackening their pace on account of her evident weariness, insisted on taking her turn in the lead. The speed and manner in which she negotiated the precarious footing called out Shorty’s unqualified approval.

“Look at her!” he cried. “She’s the real goods an’ the red meat. Look at them moccasins swing along. No high-heels there. She uses the legs God gave her. She’s the right squaw for any bear-hunter.”

She flashed back a smile of acknowledgment that included Smoke. He caught a feeling of chumminess, though at the same time he was bitingly aware that it was very much of a woman who embraced him in that comradely smile.

Looking back, as they came to the bank of Squaw Creek, they could see the stampede, strung out irregularly, struggling along the descent of the divide.

They slipped down the bank to the creek bed. The stream, frozen solidly to bottom, was from twenty to thirty feet wide and ran between six-and eight-foot earth banks of alluvial wash. No recent feet had disturbed the snow that lay upon its ice, and they knew they were above the Discovery claim and the last stakes of the Sea Lion stampeders.

“Look out for springs,” Joy warned, as Smoke led the way down the creek. “At seventy below you’ll lose your feet if you break through.”

These springs, common to most Klondike streams, never cease at the lowest temperatures. The water flows out from the banks and lies in pools which are cuddled from the cold by later surface-freezings and snow falls. Thus, a man, stepping on dry snow, might break through half an inch of ice-skin and find himself up to the knees in water. In five minutes, unless able to remove the wet gear, the loss of one’s foot was the penalty.

Though only three in the afternoon, the long grey twilight of the Arctic had settled down. They watched for a blazed tree on either bank, which would show the center-stake of the last claim located. Joy, impulsively eager, was the first to find it. She darted ahead of Smoke, crying: “Somebody’s been here! See the snow! Look for the blaze! There it is! See that spruce!”

She sank suddenly to her waist in the snow.

“Now I’ve done it,” she said woefully. Then she cried: “Don’t come near me! I’ll wade out.”

Step by step, each time breaking through the thin skin of ice concealed under the dry snow, she forced her way to solid footing. Smoke did not wait, but sprang to the bank, where dry and seasoned twigs and sticks, lodged amongst the brush by spring freshets, waited the match. By the time she reached his side, the first flames and flickers of an assured fire were rising.

“Sit down!” he commanded.

She obediently sat down in the snow. He slipped his pack from his back, and spread a blanket for her feet.

From above came the voices of the stampeders who followed them.

“Let Shorty stake,” she urged.

“Go on, Shorty,” Smoke said, as he attacked her moccasins, already stiff with ice. “Pace off a thousand feet and place the two center-stakes. We can fix the corner-stakes afterwards.”

With his knife Smoke cut away the lacings and leather of the moccasins. So stiff were they with ice that they snapped and crackled under the hacking and sawing. The Siwash socks and heavy woollen stockings were sheaths of ice. It was as if her feet and calves were encased in corrugated iron.

“How are your feet?” he asked, as he worked.

“Pretty numb. I can’t move nor feel my toes. But it will be all right. The fire is burning beautifully. Watch out you don’t freeze your own hands. They must be numb now from the way you’re fumbling.”

He slipped his mittens on, and for nearly a minute smashed the open hands savagely against his sides. When he felt the blood-prickles, he pulled off the mittens and ripped and tore and sawed and hacked at the frozen garments. The white skin of one foot appeared, then that of the other, to be exposed to the bite of seventy below zero, which is the equivalent of one hundred and two below freezing.

Then came the rubbing with snow, carried on with an intensity of cruel fierceness, till she squirmed and shrank and moved her toes, and joyously complained of the hurt.

He half-dragged her, and she half-lifted herself, nearer to the fire. He placed her feet on the blanket close to the flesh-saving flames.

“You’ll have to take care of them for a while,” he said.

She could now safely remove her mittens and manipulate her own feet, with the wisdom of the initiated, being watchful that the heat of the fire was absorbed slowly. While she did this, he attacked his hands. The snow did not melt nor moisten. Its light crystals were like so much sand. Slowly the stings and pangs of circulation came back into the chilled flesh. Then he tended the fire, unstrapped the light pack from her back, and got out a complete change of foot-gear.

Shorty returned along the creek bed and climbed the bank to them. “I sure staked a full thousan’ feet,” he proclaimed. “Number twenty-seven an’ number twenty-eight, though I’d only got the upper stake of twenty-seven, when I met the first geezer of the bunch behind. He just straight declared I wasn’t goin’ to stake twenty-eight. An’ I told him — ”

“Yes, yes,” Joy cried. “What did you tell him?”

“Well, I told him straight that if he didn’t back up plum five hundred feet I’d sure punch his frozen nose into ice-cream an’ chocolate eclaires. He backed up, an’ I’ve got in the center-stakes of two full an’ honest five-hundred-foot creek claims. He staked next, and I guess by now the bunch has Squaw Creek located to head-waters an’ down the other side. Ourn is safe. It’s too dark to see now, but we can put out the corner-stakes in the mornin’.”

When they awoke, they found a change had taken place during the night. So warm was it, that Shorty and Smoke, still in their mutual blankets, estimated the temperature at no more than twenty below. The cold snap had broken. On top of their blankets lay six inches of frost crystals.

“Good morning! how are your feet?” was Smoke’s greeting across the ashes of the fire to where Joy Gastell, carefully shaking aside the snow, was sitting up in her sleeping-furs.

Shorty built the fire and quarried ice from the creek, while Smoke cooked breakfast. Daylight came on as they finished the meal.

“You go an’ fix them corner-stakes, Smoke,” Shorty said. “There’s gravel under where I chopped ice for the coffee, an’ I’m goin’ to melt water and wash a pan of that same gravel for luck.”

Smoke departed, axe in hand, to blaze the stakes. Starting from the down-stream center-stake of ‘twenty-seven,’ he headed at right angles across the narrow valley towards its rim. He proceeded methodically, almost automatically, for his mind was alive with recollections of the night before. He felt, somehow, that he had won to empery over the delicate lines and firm muscles of those feet and ankles he had rubbed with snow, and this empery seemed to extend to the rest and all of this woman of his kind. In dim and fiery ways a feeling of possession mastered him. It seemed that all that was necessary was for him to walk up to this Joy Gastell, take her hand in his, and say “Come.”

It was in this mood that he discovered something that made him forget empery over the white feet of woman. At the valley rim he blazed no corner-stake. He did not reach the valley rim, but, instead, he found himself confronted by another stream. He lined up with his eye a blasted willow tree and a big and recognizable spruce. He returned to the stream where were the center-stakes. He followed the bed of the creek around a wide horseshoe bend through the flat and found that the two creeks were the same creek. Next, he floundered twice through the snow from valley rim to valley rim, running the first line from the lower stake of ‘twenty-seven,’ the second from the upper stake of ‘twenty-eight,’ and he found that THE UPPER STAKE OF THE LATTER WAS LOWER THAN THE LOWER STAKE OF THE FORMER. In the gray twilight and half-darkness Shorty had located their two claims on the horseshoe.

Smoke plodded back to the little camp. Shorty, at the end of washing a pan of gravel, exploded at sight of him.

“We got it!” Shorty cried, holding out the pan. “Look at it! A nasty mess of gold. Two hundred right there if it’s a cent. She runs rich from the top of the wash-gravel. I’ve churned around placers some, but I never got butter like what’s in this pan.”

Smoke cast an incurious glance at the coarse gold, poured himself a cup of coffee at the fire, and sat down. Joy sensed something wrong and looked at him with eagerly solicitous eyes. Shorty, however, was disgruntled by his partner’s lack of delight in the discovery.

“Why don’t you kick in an’ get excited?” he demanded. “We got our pile right here, unless you’re stickin’ up your nose at two-hundred-dollar pans.”

Smoke took a swallow of coffee before replying. “Shorty, why are our two claims here like the Panama Canal?”

“What’s the answer?”

“Well, the eastern entrance of the Panama Canal is west of the western entrance, that’s all.”

“Go on,” Shorty said. “I ain’t seen the joke yet.”

“In short, Shorty, you staked our two claims on a big horseshoe bend.”

Shorty set the gold pan down in the snow and stood up. “Go on,” he repeated.

“The upper stake of ‘twenty-eight’ is ten feet below the lower stake of ‘twenty-seven.’“

“You mean we ain’t got nothin’, Smoke?”

“Worse than that; we’ve got ten feet less than nothing.”

Shorty departed down the bank on the run. Five minutes later he returned. In response to Joy’s look, he nodded. Without speech, he went over to a log and sat down to gaze steadily at the snow in front of his moccasins.

“We might as well break camp and start back for Dawson,” Smoke said, beginning to fold the blankets.

“I am sorry, Smoke,” Joy said. “It’s all my fault.”

“It’s all right,” he answered. “All in the day’s work, you know.”

“But it’s my fault, wholly mine,” she persisted. “Dad’s staked for me down near Discovery, I know. I’ll give you my claim.”

He shook his head.

“Shorty,” she pleaded.

Shorty shook his head and began to laugh. It was a colossal laugh. Chuckles and muffled explosions yielded to hearty roars.

“It ain’t hysterics,” he explained. “I sure get powerful amused at times, an’ this is one of them.”

His gaze chanced to fall on the gold-pan. He walked over and gravely kicked it, scattering the gold over the landscape.

“It ain’t ourn,” he said. “It belongs to the geezer I backed up five hundred feet last night. An’ what gets me is four hundred an’ ninety of them feet was to the good — his good. Come on, Smoke. Let’s start the hike to Dawson. Though if you’re hankerin’ to kill me I won’t lift a finger to prevent.”

Story of a Typhoon

OFF THE COAST OF JAPAN

This is the first article London wrote for publication, winning first prize in a contest for local authors run by the San Francisco Call.

It was four bells in the morning watch. We had just finished breakfast when the order came forward for the watch on deck to stand by to heave her to and all hands stand by the boats.

"Port! hard a port!" cried our sailing-master. "Clew up the topsails! Let the flying jib run down! Back the jib over to windward and run down the foresail!" And so was our schooner Sophie Sutherland hove to off the Japan coast, near Cape Jerimo, on April 10, 1893.

Then came moments of bustle and confusion. There were eighteen men to man the six boats. Some were hooking on the falls, others casting off the lashings; boat-steerers appeared with boat-compasses and water-breakers, and boat-pullers with the lunch boxes. Hunters were staggering under two or three shotguns, a rifle and heavy ammunition box, all of which were soon stowed away with their oilskins and mittens in the boats.

The sailing-master gave his last orders, and away we went, pulling three pairs of oars to gain our positions. We were in the weather boat, and so had a longer pull than the others. The first, second, and third lee boats soon had all sail set and were running off to the southward and westward with the wind beam, while the schooner was running off to leeward of them, so that in case of accident the boats would have fair wind home.

It was a glorious morning, but our boat-steerer shook his head ominously as he glanced at the rising sun and prophetically muttered: "Red sun in the morning, sailor take warning." The sun had an angry look, and a few light, fleecy "nigger-heads" in that quarter seemed abashed and frightened and soon disappeared.

Away off to the northward Cape Jerimo reared its black, forbidding head like some huge monster rising from the deep. The winter's snow, not yet entirely dissipated by the sun, covered it in patches of glistening white, over which the light wind swept on its way out to sea. Huge gulls rose slowly, fluttering their wings in the light breeze and striking their webbed feet on the surface of the water for over half a mile before they could leave it. Hardly had the patter, patter died away when a flock of sea quail rose, and with whistling wings flew away to windward, where members of a large band of whales were disporting themselves, their blowings sounding like the exhaust of steam engines. The harsh, discordant cries of a sea-parrot grated unpleasantly on the ear, and set half a dozen alert in a small band of seals that were ahead of us. Away they went, breaching and jumping entirely out of water. A sea-gull with slow, deliberate flight and long, majestic curves circled round us, and as a reminder of home a little English sparrow perched impudently on the fo'castle head, and, cocking his head on one side, chirped merrily. The boats were soon among the seals, and the bang! bang! of the guns could be heard from down to leeward.

The wind was slowly rising, and by three o'clock as, with a dozen seals in our boat, we were deliberating whether to go on or turn back, the recall flag was run up at the schooner's mizzen--a sure sign that with the rising wind the barometer was falling and that our sailingmaster was getting anxious for the welfare of the boats.

Away we went before the wind with a single reef in our sail. With clenched teeth sat the boat-steerer, grasping the steering oar firmly with both hands, his restless eyes on the alert--a glance at the schooner ahead, as we rose on a sea, another at the mainsheet, and then one astern where the dark ripple of the wind on the water told him of a coming puff or a large white-cap that threatened to overwhelm us. The waves were holding high carnival, performing the strangest antics, as with wild glee they danced along in fierce pursuit-now up, now down, here, there, and everywhere, until some great sea of liquid green with its milk-white crest of foam rose from the ocean's throbbing bosom and drove the others from view. But only for a moment, for again under new forms they reappeared. In the sun's path they wandered, where every ripple, great or small, every little spit or spray looked like molten silver, where the water lost its dark green color and became a dazzling, silvery flood, only to vanish and become a wild waste of sullen turbulence, each dark foreboding sea rising and breaking, then rolling on again. The dash, the sparkle, the silvery light soon vanished with the sun, which became obscured by black clouds that were rolling swiftly in from the west, northwest; apt heralds of the coming storm.

We soon reached the schooner and found ourselves the last aboard. In a few minutes the seals were skinned, boats and decks washed, and we were down below by the roaring fo’castle fire, with a wash, change of clothes, and a hot, substantial supper before us. Sail had been put on the schooner, as we had a run of seventy-five miles to make to the southward before morning, so as to get in the midst of the seals, out of which we had strayed during the last two days’ hunting.

We had the first watch from eight to midnight. The wind was soon blowing half a gale, and our sailing-master expected little sleep that night as he paced up and down the poop. The topsails were soon clewed up and made fast, then the flying jib run down and furled. Quite a sea was rolling by this time, occasionally breaking over the decks, flooding them and threatening to smash the boats. At six bells we were ordered to turn them over and put on storm lashings. This occupied us till eight bells, when we were relieved by the mid-watch. I was the last to go below, doing so just as the watch on deck was furling the spanker. Below all were asleep except our green hand, the “bricklayer,” who was dying of consumption. The wildly dancing movements of the sea lamp cast a pale, flickering light through the fo’castle and turned to golden honey the drops of water on the yellow oilskins. In all the corners dark shadows seemed to come and go, while up in the eyes of her, beyond the pall bits, descending from deck to deck, where they seemed to lurk like some dragon at the cavern’s mouth, it was dark as Erebus. Now and again, the light seemed to penetrate for a moment as the schooner rolled heavier than usual, only to recede, leaving it darker and blacker than before. The roar of the wind through the rigging came to the ear muffled like the distant rumble of a train crossing a trestle or the surf on the beach, while the loud crash of the seas on her weather bow seemed almost to rend the beams and planking asunder as it resounded through the fo’castle. The creaking and groaning of the timbers, stanchions, and bulkheads, as the strain the vessel was undergoing was felt, served to drown the groans of the dying man as he tossed uneasily in his bunk. The working of the foremast against the deck beams caused a shower of flaky powder to fall, and sent another sound mingling with the tumultous storm. Small cascades of water streamed from the pall bits from the fo’castle head above, and, joining issue with the streams from the wet oilskins, ran along the floor and disappeared aft into the main hold.

At two bells in the middle watch-that is, in land parlance one o'clock in the morning-the order was roared out on the fo'castle: "All hands on deck and shorten sail!"

Then the sleepy sailors tumbled out of their bunk and into their clothes, oil-skins, and sea-boots and up on deck. 'Tis when that order comes on cold, blustering nights that "Jack" grimly mutters: "Who would not sell a farm and go to sea?"

It was on deck that the force of the wind could be fully appreciated, especially after leaving the stifling fo'castle. It seemed to stand up against you like a wall, making it almost impossible to move on the heaving decks or to breathe as the fierce gusts came dashing by. The schooner was hove to under jib, foresail, and mainsail. We proceeded to lower the foresail and make it fast. The night was dark, greatly impeding our labor. Still, though not a star or the moon could pierce the black masses of storm clouds that obscured the sky as they swept along before the gale, nature aided us in a measure, A soft light emanated from the movement of the ocean. Each mighty sea, all phosphorescent and glowing with the tiny lights of myriads of animalculae, threatened to overwhelm us with a deluge of fire. Higher and higher, thinner and thinner, the crest grew as it began to curve and overtop preparatory to breaking, until with a roar it fell over the bulwarks, a mass of soft glowing light and tons of water which sent the sailors sprawling in all directions and left in each nook and cranny little specks of light that glowed and trembled till the next sea washed them away, depositing new ones in their places. Sometimes several seas following each other with great rapidity and thundering down on our decks filled them full to the bulwarks, but soon they were discharged through the lee scuppers.

To reef the mainsail we were forced to run off before the gale under the single reefed jib. By the time we had finished the wind had forced up such a tremendous sea that it was impossible to heave her to. Away we flew on the wings of the storm through the muck and flying spray. A wind sheer to starboard, then another to port as the enormous seas struck the schooner astern and nearly broached her to. As day broke we took in the jib, leaving not a sail unfurled. Since we had begun scudding she had ceased to take the seas over her bow, but amidships they broke fast and furious. It was a dry storm in the matter of rain, but the force of the wind filled the air with fine spray, which flew as high as the crosstrees and cut the face like a knife, making it impossible to see over a hundred yards ahead. The sea was a dark lead color as with long, slow, majestic roll it was heaped up by the wind into liquid mountains of foam. The wild antics of the schooner were sickening as she forged along. She would almost stop, as though climbing a mountain, then rapidly rolling to right and left as she gained the summit of a huge sea, she steadied herself and paused for a moment as though affrighted at the yawning precipice before her. Like an avalanche, she shot forward and down as the sea astern struck her with the force of a thousand battering rams, burying her bow to the catheads in the milky foam at the bottom that came on deck in all directions-forward, astern, to right and left, through the hawse-pipes and over the rail.

The wind began to drop, and by ten o'clock we were talking of heaving her to. We passed a ship, two schooners, and a four-masted barkentine under the smallest of canvas, and at eleven o'clock, running up the spanker and jib, we hove her to, and in another hour we were beating back again against the aftersea under full sail to regain the sealing ground away to the westward.

Below, a couple of men were sewing the "bricklayer's" body in canvas preparatory to the sea burial. And so with the storm passed away the "bricklayer's" soul.

The Story of Jees Uck

There have been renunciations and renunciations. But, in its essence, renunciation is ever the same. And the paradox of it is, that men and women forego the dearest thing in the world for something dearer. It was never otherwise. Thus it was when Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. The firstlings and the fat thereof were to him the dearest things in the world; yet he gave them over that he might be on good terms with God. So it was with Abraham when he prepared to offer up his son Isaac on a stone. Isaac was very dear to him; but God, in incomprehensible ways, was yet dearer. It may be that Abraham feared the Lord. But whether that be true or not it has since been determined by a few billion people that he loved the Lord and desired to serve him.

And since it has been determined that love is service, and since to renounce is to serve, then Jees Uck, who was merely a woman of a swart-skinned breed, loved with a great love. She was unversed in history, having learned to read only the signs of weather and of game; so she had never heard of Abel nor of Abraham; nor, having escaped the good sisters at Holy Cross, had she been told the story of Ruth, the Moabitess, who renounced her very God for the sake of a stranger woman from a strange land. Jees Uck had learned only one way of renouncing, and that was with a club as the dynamic factor, in much the same manner as a dog is made to renounce a stolen marrow-bone. Yet, when the time came, she proved herself capable of rising to the height of the fair-faced royal races and of renouncing in right regal fashion.

So this is the story of Jees Uck, which is also the story of Neil Bonner, and Kitty Bonner, and a couple of Neil Bonner's progeny. Jees Uck was of a swart-skinned breed, it is true, but she was not an Indian; nor was she an Eskimo; nor even an Innuit. Going backward into mouth tradition, there appears the figure of one Skolkz, a Toyaat Indian of the Yukon, who journeyed down in his youth to the Great Delta where dwell the Innuits, and where he foregathered with a woman remembered as Olillie. Now the woman Olillie had been bred from an Eskimo mother by an Innuit man. And from Skolkz and Olillie came Halie, who was one-half Toyaat Indian, one-quarter Innuit, and one-quarter Eskimo. And Halie was the grandmother of Jees Uck.

Now Halie, in whom three stocks had been bastardized, who cherished no prejudice against further admixture, mated with a Russian fur trader called Shpack, also known in his time as the Big Fat. Shpack is herein classed Russian for lack of a more adequate term; for Shpack's father, a Slavonic convict from the Lower Provinces, had escaped from the quicksilver mines into Northern Siberia, where he knew Zimba, who was a woman of the Deer People and who became the mother of Shpack, who became the grandfather of Jees Uck.

Now had not Shpack been captured in his boyhood by the Sea People, who fringe the rim of the Arctic Sea with their misery, he would not have become the grandfather of Jees Uck and there would be no story at all. But he WAS captured by the Sea People, from whom he escaped to Kamchatka, and thence, on a Norwegian whale-ship, to the Baltic. Not long after that he turned up in St. Petersburg, and the years were not many till he went drifting east over the same weary road his father had measured with blood and groans a half-century before. But Shpack was a free man, in the employ of the great Russian Fur Company. And in that employ he fared farther and farther east, until he crossed Bering Sea into Russian America; and at Pastolik, which is hard by the Great Delta of the Yukon, became the husband of Halie, who was the grandmother of Jees Uck. Out of this union came the woman-child, Tukesan.

Shpack, under the orders of the Company, made a canoe voyage of a few hundred miles up the Yukon to the post of Nulato. With him he took Halie and the babe Tukesan. This was in 1850, and in 1850 it was that the river Indians fell upon Nulato and wiped it from the face of the earth. And that was the end of Shpack and Halie. On that terrible night Tukesan disappeared. To this day the Toyaats aver they had no hand in the trouble; but, be that as it may, the fact remains that the babe Tukesan grew up among them.

Tukesan was married successively to two Toyaat brothers, to both of whom she was barren. Because of this, other women shook their heads, and no third Toyaat man could be found to dare matrimony with the childless widow. But at this time, many hundred miles above, at Fort Yukon, was a man, Spike O'Brien. Fort Yukon was a Hudson Bay Company post, and Spike O'Brien one of the Company's servants. He was a good servant, but he achieved an opinion that the service was bad, and in the course of time vindicated that opinion by deserting. It was a year's journey, by the chain of posts, back to York Factory on Hudson's Bay. Further, being Company posts, he knew he could not evade the Company's clutches. Nothing retained but to go down the Yukon. It was true no white man had ever gone down the Yukon, and no white man knew whether the Yukon emptied into the Arctic Ocean or Bering Sea; but Spike O'Brien was a Celt, and the promise of danger was a lure he had ever followed.

A few weeks later, somewhat battered, rather famished, and about dead with river-fever, he drove the nose of his canoe into the earth bank by the village of the Toyaats and promptly fainted away. While getting his strength back, in the weeks that followed, he looked upon Tukesan and found her good. Like the father of Shpack, who lived to a ripe old age among the Siberian Deer People, Spike O'Brien might have left his aged bones with the Toyaats. But romance gripped his heart-strings and would not let him stay. As he had journeyed from York Factory to Fort Yukon, so, first among men, might he journey from Fort Yukon to the sea and win the honour of being the first man to make the North-West Passage by land. So he departed down the river, won the honour, and was unannaled and unsung. In after years he ran a sailors' boarding-house in San Francisco, where he became esteemed a most remarkable liar by virtue of the gospel truths he told. But a child was born to Tukesan, who had been childless. And this child was Jees Uck. Her lineage has been traced at length to show that she was neither Indian, nor Eskimo, nor Innuit, nor much of anything else; also to show what waifs of the generations we are, all of us, and the strange meanderings of the seed from which we spring.

What with the vagrant blood in her and the heritage compounded of many races, Jees Uck developed a wonderful young beauty. Bizarre, perhaps, it was, and Oriental enough to puzzle any passing ethnologist. A lithe and slender grace characterized her. Beyond a quickened lilt to the imagination, the contribution of the Celt was in no wise apparent. It might possibly have put the warm blood under her skin, which made her face less swart and her body fairer; but that, in turn, might have come from Shpack, the Big Fat, who inherited the colour of his Slavonic father. And, finally, she had great, blazing black eyes--the half-caste eye, round, full-orbed, and sensuous, which marks the collision of the dark races with the light. Also, the white blood in her, combined with her knowledge that it was in her, made her, in a way, ambitious. Otherwise by upbringing and in outlook on life, she was wholly and utterly a Toyaat Indian.

One winter, when she was a young woman, Neil Bonner came into her life. But he came into her life, as he had come into the country, somewhat reluctantly. In fact, it was very much against his will, coming into the country. Between a father who clipped coupons and cultivated roses, and a mother who loved the social round, Neil Bonner had gone rather wild. He was not vicious, but a man with meat in his belly and without work in the world has to expend his energy somehow, and Neil Bonner was such a man. And he expended his energy in such a fashion and to such extent that when the inevitable climax came, his father, Neil Bonner, senior, crawled out of his roses in a panic and looked on his son with a wondering eye. Then he hied himself away to a crony of kindred pursuits, with whom he was wont to confer over coupons and roses, and between the two the destiny of young Neil Bonner was made manifest. He must go away, on probation, to live down his harmless follies in order that he might live up to their own excellent standard.

This determined upon, and young Neil a little repentant and a great deal ashamed, the rest was easy. The cronies were heavy stockholders in the P. C. Company. The P. C. Company owned fleets of river-steamers and ocean-going craft, and, in addition to farming the sea, exploited a hundred thousand square miles or so of the land that, on the maps of geographers, usually occupies the white spaces. So the P. C. Company sent young Neil Bonner north, where the white spaces are, to do its work and to learn to be good like his father. “Five years of simplicity, close to the soil and far from temptation, will make a man of him,” said old Neil Bonner, and forthwith crawled back among his roses. Young Neil set his jaw, pitched his chin at the proper angle, and went to work. As an underling he did his work well and gained the commendation of his superiors. Not that he delighted in the work, but that it was the one thing that prevented him from going mad.

The first year he wished he was dead. The second year he cursed God. The third year he was divided between the two emotions, and in the confusion quarrelled with a man in authority. He had the best of the quarrel, though the man in authority had the last word,--a word that sent Neil Bonner into an exile that made his old billet appear as paradise. But he went without a whimper, for the North had succeeded in making him into a man.

Here and there, on the white spaces on the map, little circlets like the letter “o” are to be found, and, appended to these circlets, on one side or the other, are names such as “Fort Hamilton,” “Yanana Station,” “Twenty

Mile," thus leading one to imagine that the white spaces are plentifully besprinkled with towns and villages. But it is a vain imagining. Twenty Mile, which is very like the rest of the posts, is a log building the size of a corner grocery with rooms to let up-stairs. A long-legged cache on stilts may be found in the back yard; also a couple of outhouses. The back yard is unfenced, and extends to the skyline and an unascertainable bit beyond. There are no other houses in sight, though the Toyaats sometimes pitch a winter camp a mile or two down the Yukon. And this is Twenty Mile, one tentacle of the many-tentacled P. C. Company. Here the agent, with an assistant, barters with the Indians for their furs, and does an erratic trade on a gold-dust basis with the wandering miners. Here, also, the agent and his assistant yearn all winter for the spring, and when the spring comes, camp blasphemously on the roof while the Yukon washes out the establishment. And here, also, in the fourth year of his sojourn in the land, came Neil Bonner to take charge.

He had displaced no agent; for the man that previously ran the post had made away with himself; "because of the rigours of the place," said the assistant, who still remained; though the Toyaats, by their fires, had another version. The assistant was a shrunken-shouldered, hollow-chested man, with a cadaverous face and cavernous cheeks that his sparse black beard could not hide. He coughed much, as though consumption gripped his lungs, while his eyes had that mad, fevered light common to consumptives in the last stage. Pentley was his name--Amos Pentley--and Bonner did not like him, though he felt a pity for the forlorn and hopeless devil. They did not get along together, these two men who, of all men, should have been on good terms in the face of the cold and silence and darkness of the long winter.

In the end, Bonner concluded that Amos was partly demented, and left him alone, doing all the work himself except the cooking. Even then, Amos had nothing but bitter looks and an undisguised hatred for him. This was a great loss to Bonner; for the smiling face of one of his own kind, the cheery word, the sympathy of comradeship shared with misfortune--these things meant much; and the winter was yet young when he began to realize the added reasons, with such an assistant, that the previous agent had found to impel his own hand against his life.

It was very lonely at Twenty Mile. The bleak vastness stretched away on every side to the horizon. The snow, which was really frost, flung its mantle over the land and buried everything in the silence of death. For days it was clear and cold, the thermometer steadily recording forty to fifty degrees below zero. Then a change came over the face of things. What little moisture had oozed into the atmosphere gathered into dull grey, formless clouds; it became quite warm, the thermometer rising to twenty below; and the moisture fell out of the sky in hard frost-granules that hissed like dry sugar or driving sand when kicked underfoot. After that it became clear and cold again, until enough moisture had gathered to blanket the earth from the cold of outer space. That was all. Nothing happened. No storms, no churning waters and threshing forests, nothing but the machine-like precipitation of accumulated moisture. Possibly the most notable thing that occurred through the weary weeks was the gliding of the temperature up to the unprecedented height of fifteen below. To atone for this, outer space smote the earth with its cold till the mercury froze and the spirit thermometer remained more than seventy below for a fortnight, when it burst. There was no telling how much colder it was after that. Another occurrence, monotonous in its regularity, was the lengthening of the nights, till day became a mere blink of light between the darkness.

Neil Bonner was a social animal. The very follies for which he was doing penance had been bred of his excessive sociability. And here, in the fourth year of his exile, he found himself in company--which were to travesty the word--with a morose and speechless creature in whose sombre eyes smouldered a hatred as bitter as it was unwarranted. And Bonner, to whom speech and fellowship were as the breath of life, went about as a ghost might go, tantalized by the gregarious revelries of some former life. In the day his lips were compressed, his face stern; but in the night he clenched his hands, rolled about in his blankets, and cried aloud like a little child. And he would remember a certain man in authority and curse him through the long hours. Also, he cursed God. But God understands. He cannot find it in his heart to blame weak mortals who blaspheme in Alaska.

And here, to the post of Twenty Mile, came Jees Uck, to trade for flour and bacon, and beads, and bright scarlet cloths for her fancy work. And further, and unwittingly, she came to the post of Twenty Mile to make a lonely man more lonely, make him reach out empty arms in his sleep. For Neil Bonner was only a man. When she first came into the store, he looked at her long, as a thirsty man may look at a flowing well. And she, with the heritage bequeathed her by Spike O’Brien, imagined daringly and smiled up into his eyes, not as the swart-skinned peoples should smile at the royal races, but as a woman smiles at a man. The thing was inevitable; only, he did not see it, and fought against her as fiercely and passionately as he was drawn towards her. And she? She was Jees Uck, by upbringing wholly and utterly a Toyaat Indian woman.

She came often to the post to trade. And often she sat by the big wood stove and chatted in broken English with Neil Bonner. And he came to look for her coming; and on the days she did not come he was worried and restless. Sometimes he stopped to think, and then she was met coldly, with a resolve that perplexed and piqued her, and which, she was convinced, was not sincere. But more often he did not dare to think, and then all went well and there were smiles and laughter. And Amos Pentley, gasping like a stranded catfish, his hollow cough a-reek with the grave, looked upon it all and grinned. He, who loved life, could not live, and it rankled his soul that others should be able to live. Wherefore he hated Bonner, who was so very much alive and into whose eyes sprang joy at the sight of Jees Uck. As for Amos, the very thought of the girl was sufficient to send his blood pounding up into a hemorrhage.

Jees Uck, whose mind was simple, who thought elementally and was unused to weighing life in its subtler quantities, read Amos Pentley like a book. She warned Bonner, openly and bluntly, in few words; but the complexities of higher existence confused the situation to him, and he laughed at her evident anxiety. To him, Amos was a poor, miserable devil, tottering desperately into the grave. And Bonner, who had suffered much, found it easy to forgive greatly.

But one morning, during a bitter snap, he got up from the breakfast-table and went into the store. Jees Uck was already there, rosy from the trail, to buy a sack of flour. A few minutes later, he was out in the snow lashing the flour on her sled. As he bent over he noticed a stiffness in his neck and felt a premonition of impending physical misfortune. And as he put the last half-hitch into the lashing and attempted to straighten up, a quick spasm seized him and he sank into the snow. Tense and quivering, head jerked back, limbs extended, back arched and mouth twisted and distorted, he appeared as though being racked limb from limb. Without cry or sound, Jees Uck was in the snow beside him; but he clutched both her wrists spasmodically, and as long as the convulsion endured she was helpless. In a few moments the spasm relaxed and he was left weak and fainting, his forehead beaded with sweat, and his lips flecked with foam.

"Quick!" he muttered, in a strange, hoarse voice. "Quick! Inside!"

He started to crawl on hands and knees, but she raised him up, and, supported by her young arm, he made faster progress. As he entered the store the spasm seized him again, and his body writhed irresistibly away from her and rolled and curled on the floor. Amos Pentley came and looked on with curious eyes.

"Oh, Amos!" she cried in an agony of apprehension and helplessness, "him die, you think?" But Amos shrugged his shoulders and continued to look on.

Bonner's body went slack, the tense muscles easing down and an expression of relief coming into his face. "Quick!" he gritted between his teeth, his mouth twisting with the on-coming of the next spasm and with his effort to control it. "Quick, Jees Uck! The medicine! Never mind! Drag me!"

She knew where the medicine-chest stood, at the rear of the room beyond the stove, and thither, by the legs, she dragged the struggling man. As the spasm passed he began, very faint and very sick, to overhaul the chest. He had seen dogs die exhibiting symptoms similar to his own, and he knew what should be done. He held up a vial of chloral hydrate, but his fingers were too weak and nerveless to draw the cork. This Jees Uck did for him, while he was plunged into another convulsion. As he came out of it he found the open bottle proffered him, and looked into the great black eyes of the woman and read what men have always read in the Mate-woman's eyes. Taking a full dose of the stuff, he sank back until another spasm had passed. Then he raised himself limply on his elbow.

"Listen, Jees Uck!" he said very slowly, as though aware of the necessity for haste and yet afraid to hasten. "Do what I say. Stay by my side, but do not touch me. I must be very quiet, but you must not go away." His jaw began to set and his face to quiver and distort with the fore-running pangs, but he gulped and struggled to master them. "Do not got away. And do not let Amos go away. Understand! Amos must stay right here."

She nodded her head, and he passed off into the first of many convulsions, which gradually diminished in force and frequency. Jees Uck hung over him remembering his injunction and not daring to touch him. Once Amos grew restless and made as though to go into the kitchen; but a quick blaze from her eyes quelled him, and after that, save for his laboured breathing and charnel cough, he was very quiet.

Bonner slept. The blink of light that marked the day disappeared. Amos, followed about by the woman's eyes, lighted the kerosene lamps. Evening came on. Through the north window the heavens were emblazoned with an auroral display, which flamed and flared and died down into blackness. Some time after that, Neil Bonner roused. First he looked to see that Amos was still there, then smiled at Jees Uck and pulled himself up. Every muscle was stiff and sore, and he smiled ruefully, pressing and prodding himself as if to ascertain the extent of the ravage. Then his face went stern and businesslike.

"Jees Uck," he said, "take a candle. Go into the kitchen. There is food on the table--biscuits and beans and bacon; also, coffee in the pot on the stove. Bring it here on the counter. Also, bring tumblers and water and whisky, which you will find on the top shelf of the locker. Do not forget the whisky."

Having swallowed a stiff glass of the whisky, he went carefully through the medicine chest, now and again putting aside, with definite purpose, certain bottles and vials. Then he set to work on the food, attempting a crude analysis. He had not been unused to the laboratory in his college days and was possessed of sufficient imagination to achieve results with his limited materials. The condition of tetanus, which had marked his paroxysms, simplified matters, and he made but one test. The coffee yielded nothing; nor did the beans. To the biscuits he devoted the utmost care. Amos, who knew nothing of chemistry, looked on with steady curiosity. But Jees Uck, who had boundless faith in the white man's wisdom, and especially in Neil Bonner's wisdom, and who not only knew nothing but knew that she knew nothing watched his face rather than his hands.

Step by step he eliminated possibilities, until he came to the final test. He was using a thin medicine vial for a tube, and this he held between him and the light, watching the slow precipitation of a salt through the solution contained in the tube. He said nothing, but he saw what he had expected to see. And Jees Uck, her eyes riveted on his face, saw something too,--something that made her spring like a tigress upon Amos, and with splendid suppleness and strength bend his body back across her knee. Her knife was out of its sheaf and uplifted, glinting in the lamplight. Amos was snarling; but Bonner intervened ere the blade could fall.

"That's a good girl, Jees Uck. But never mind. Let him go!"

She dropped the man obediently, though with protest writ large on her face; and his body thudded to the floor. Bonner nudged him with his moccasined foot.

"Get up, Amos!" he commanded. "You've got to pack an outfit yet to-night and hit the trail."

"You don't mean to say--" Amos blurted savagely.

"I mean to say that you tried to kill me," Neil went on in cold, even tones. "I mean to say that you killed Birdsall, for all the Company believes he killed himself. You used strychnine in my case. God knows with what you fixed him. Now I can't hang you. You're too near dead as it is. But Twenty Mile is too small for the pair of us, and you've got to mush. It's two hundred miles to Holy Cross. You can make it if you're careful not to over-exert. I'll give you grub, a sled, and three dogs. You'll be as safe as if you were in jail, for you can't get out of the country. And I'll give you one chance. You're almost dead. Very well. I shall send no word to the Company until the spring. In the meantime, the thing for you to do is to die. Now MUSH!"

"You go to bed!" Jees Uck insisted, when Amos had churned away into the night towards Holy Cross. "You sick man yet, Neil."

"And you're a good girl, Jees Uck," he answered. "And here's my hand on it. But you must go home."

"You don't like me," she said simply.

He smiled, helped her on with her PARKA, and led her to the door. "Only too well, Jees Uck," he said softly; "only too well."

After that the pall of the Arctic night fell deeper and blacker on the land. Neil Bonner discovered that he had failed to put proper valuation upon even the sullen face of the murderous and death-stricken Amos. It became very lonely at Twenty Mile. "For the love of God, Prentiss, send me a man," he wrote to the agent at Fort Hamilton, three hundred miles up river. Six weeks later the Indian messenger brought back a reply. It was characteristic: "Hell. Both feet frozen. Need him myself--Prentiss."

To make matters worse, most of the Toyaats were in the back country on the flanks of a caribou herd, and Jees Uck was with them. Removing to a distance seemed to bring her closer than ever, and Neil Bonner found himself picturing her, day by day, in camp and on trail. It is not good to be alone. Often he went out of the quiet store, bare-headed and frantic, and shook his fist at the blink of day that came over the southern sky-line. And on still, cold nights he left his bed and stumbled into the frost, where he assaulted the silence at the top of his lungs, as though it were some tangible, sentiment thing that he might arouse; or he shouted at the sleeping dogs till they howled and howled again. One shaggy brute he brought into the post, playing that it was the new man sent by Prentiss. He strove to make it sleep decently under blankets at nights and to sit at table and eat as a man should; but the beast, mere domesticated wolf that it was, rebelled, and sought out dark corners and snarled and bit him in the leg, and was finally beaten and driven forth.

Then the trick of personification seized upon Neil Bonner and mastered him. All the forces of his environment metamorphosed into living, breathing entities and came to live with him. He recreated the primitive pantheon; reared an altar to the sun and burned candle fat and bacon grease thereon; and in the unfenced yard, by the long-legged cache, made a frost devil, which he was wont to make faces at and mock when the mercury oozed down into the bulb. All this in play, of course. He said it to himself that it was in play, and repeated it over and over to make sure, unaware that madness is ever prone to express itself in make-believe and play.

One midwinter day, Father Champreau, a Jesuit missionary, pulled into Twenty Mile. Bonner fell upon him and dragged him into the post, and clung to him and wept, until the priest wept with him from sheer compassion. Then Bonner became madly hilarious and made lavish entertainment, swearing valiantly that his guest should not depart. But Father Champreau was pressing to Salt Water on urgent business for his order, and pulled out next morning, with Bonner's blood threatened on his head.

And the threat was in a fair way toward realization, when the Toyaats returned from their long hunt to the winter camp. They had many furs, and there was much trading and stir at Twenty Mile. Also, Jees Uck came to buy beads and scarlet cloths and things, and Bonner began to find himself again. He fought for a week against her. Then the end came one night when she rose to leave. She had not forgotten her repulse, and the pride that drove Spike O'Brien on to complete the North-West Passage by land was her pride.

"I go now," she said; "good-night, Neil."

But he came up behind her. "Nay, it is not well," he said.

And as she turned her face toward his with a sudden joyful flash, he bent forward, slowly and gravely, as it were a sacred thing, and kissed her on the lips. The Toyaats had never taught her the meaning of a kiss upon the lips, but she understood and was glad.

With the coming of Jees Uck, at once things brightened up. She was regal in her happiness, a source of unending delight. The elemental workings of her mind and her naive little ways made an immense sum of pleasurable surprise to the over-civilized man that had stooped to catch her up. Not alone was she solace to his loneliness, but her primitiveness rejuvenated his jaded mind. It was as though, after long wandering, he had returned to pillow his head in the lap of Mother Earth. In short, in Jees Uck he found the youth of the world--the youth and the strength and the joy.

And to fill the full round of his need, and that they might not see overmuch of each other, there arrived at Twenty Mile one Sandy MacPherson, as companionable a man as ever whistled along the trail or raised a ballad by a camp-fire. A Jesuit priest had run into his camp, a couple of hundred miles up the Yukon, in the nick of time to say a last word over the body of Sandy’s partner. And on departing, the priest had said, “My son, you will be lonely now.” And Sandy had bowed his head brokenly. “At Twenty Mile,” the priest added, “there is a lonely man. You have need of each other, my son.”

So it was that Sandy became a welcome third at the post, brother to the man and woman that resided there. He took Bonner moose-hunting and wolf-trapping; and, in return, Bonner resurrected a battered and way-worn volume and made him friends with Shakespeare, till Sandy declaimed iambic pentameters to his sled-dogs whenever they waxed mutinous. And of the long evenings they played cribbage and talked and disagreed about the universe, the while Jees Uck rocked matronly in an easy-chair and darned their moccasins and socks.

Spring came. The sun shot up out of the south. The land exchanged its austere robes for the garb of a smiling wanton. Everywhere light laughed and life invited. The days stretched out their balmy length and the nights passed from blinks of darkness to no darkness at all. The river bared its bosom, and snorting steamboats challenged the wilderness. There were stir and bustle, new faces, and fresh facts. An assistant arrived at Twenty Mile, and Sandy MacPherson wandered off with a bunch of prospectors to invade the Koyokuk country. And there were newspapers and magazines and letters for Neil Bonner. And Jees Uck looked on in worriment, for she knew his kindred talked with him across the world.

Without much shock, it came to him that his father was dead. There was a sweet letter of forgiveness, dictated in his last hours. There were official letters from the Company, graciously ordering him to turn the post over to the assistant and permitting him to depart at his earliest pleasure. A long, legal affair from the lawyers informed him of interminable lists of stocks and bonds, real estate, rents, and chattels that were his by his father's will. And a dainty bit of stationery, sealed and monogramed, implored dear Neil's return to his heart-broken and loving mother.

Neil Bonner did some swift thinking, and when the Yukon Belle coughed in to the bank on her way down to Bering Sea, he departed--departed with the ancient lie of quick return young and blithe on his lips.

"I'll come back, dear Jees Uck, before the first snow flies," he promised her, between the last kisses at the gang-plank.

And not only did he promise, but, like the majority of men under the same circumstances, he really meant it. To John Thompson, the new agent, he gave orders for the extension of unlimited credit to his wife, Jees Uck. Also, with his last look from the deck of the Yukon Belle, he saw a dozen men at work rearing the logs that were to make the most comfortable house along a thousand miles of river front--the house of Jees Uck, and likewise the house of Neil Bonner--ere the first flurry of snow. For he fully and fondly meant to come back. Jees Uck was dear to him, and, further, a golden future awaited the north. With his father's money he intended to verify that future. An ambitious dream allured him. With his four years of experience, and aided by the friendly cooperation of the P. C. Company, he would return to become the Rhodes of Alaska. And he would return, fast as steam could drive, as soon as he had put into shape the affairs of his father, whom he had never known, and comforted his mother, whom he had forgotten.

There was much ado when Neil Bonner came back from the Arctic. The fires were lighted and the fleshpots slung, and he took of it all and called it good. Not only was he bronzed and creased, but he was a new man under his skin, with a grip on things and a seriousness and control. His old companions were amazed when he declined to hit up the pace in the good old way, while his father's crony rubbed hands gleefully, and became an authority upon the reclamation of wayward and idle youth.

For four years Neil Bonner's mind had lain fallow. Little that was new had been added to it, but it had undergone a process of selection. It had, so to say, been purged of the trivial and superfluous. He had lived quick years, down in the world; and, up in the wilds, time had been given him to organize the confused mass of his experiences. His superficial standards had been flung to the winds and new standards erected on deeper and broader generalizations. Concerning civilization, he had gone away with one set of values, had returned with another set of values. Aided, also, by the earth smells in his nostrils and the earth sights in his eyes, he laid hold of the inner significance of civilization, beholding with clear vision its futilities and powers. It was a simple little philosophy he evolved. Clean living was the way to grace. Duty performed was sanctification. One must live clean and do his duty in order that he might work. Work was salvation. And to work toward life abundant, and more abundant, was to be in line with the scheme of things and the will of God.

Primarily, he was of the city. And his fresh earth grip and virile conception of humanity gave him a finer sense of civilization and endeared civilization to him. Day by day the people of the city clung closer to him and the world loomed more colossal. And, day by day, Alaska grew more remote and less real. And then he met Kitty Sharon--a woman of his own flesh and blood and kind; a woman who put her hand into his hand and drew him to her, till he forgot the day and hour and the time of the year the first snow flies on the Yukon.

Jees Uck moved into her grand log-house and dreamed away three golden summer months. Then came the autumn, post-haste before the down rush of winter. The air grew thin and sharp, the days thin and short. The river ran sluggishly, and skin ice formed in the quiet eddies. All migratory life departed south, and silence fell upon the land. The first snow flurries came, and the last homing steamboat bucked desperately into the running mush ice. Then came the hard ice, solid cakes and sheets, till the Yukon ran level with its banks. And when all this ceased the river stood still and the blinking days lost themselves in the darkness.

John Thompson, the new agent, laughed; but Jees Uck had faith in the mischances of sea and river. Neil Bonner might be frozen in anywhere between Chilkoot Pass and St. Michael's, for the last travellers of the year are always caught by the ice, when they exchange boat for sled and dash on through the long hours behind the flying dogs.

But no flying dogs came up the trail, nor down the trail, to Twenty Mile. And John Thompson told Jees Uck, with a certain gladness ill concealed, that Bonner would never come back again. Also, and brutally, he suggested his own eligibility. Jees Uck laughed in his face and went back to her grand log-house. But when midwinter came, when hope dies down and life is at its lowest ebb, Jees Uck found she had no credit at the store. This was Thompson's doing, and he rubbed his hands, and walked up and down, and came to his door and looked up at Jees Uck's house and waited. And he continued to wait. She sold her dog-team to a party of miners and paid cash for her food. And when Thompson refused to honour even her coin, Toyaat Indians made her purchases, and sledded them up to her house in the dark.

In February the first post came in over the ice, and John Thompson read in the society column of a five-months-old paper of the marriage of Neil Bonner and Kitty Sharon. Jees Uck held the door ajar and him outside while he imparted the information; and, when he had done, laughed pridefully and did not believe. In March, and all alone, she gave birth to a man-child, a brave bit of new life at which she marvelled. And at that hour, a year later, Neil Bonner sat by another bed, marvelling at another bit of new life that had fared into the world.

The snow went off the ground and the ice broke out of the Yukon. The sun journeyed north, and journeyed south again; and, the money from the being spent, Jees Uck went back to her own people. Oche Ish, a shrewd hunter, proposed to kill the meat for her and her babe, and catch the salmon, if she would marry him. And Imego and Hah Yo and Wy Nooch, husky young hunters all, made similar proposals. But she elected to live alone and seek her own meat and fish. She sewed moccasins and PARKAS and mittens--warm, serviceable things, and pleasing to the eye, withal, what of the ornamental hair-tufts and bead-work. These she sold to the miners, who were drifting faster into the land each year. And not only did she win food that was good and plentiful, but she laid money by, and one day took passage on the Yukon Belle down the river.

At St. Michael's she washed dishes in the kitchen of the post. The servants of the Company wondered at the remarkable woman with the remarkable child, though they asked no questions and she vouchsafed nothing. But just before Bering Sea closed in for the year, she bought a passage south on a strayed sealing schooner. That winter she cooked for Captain Markheim's household at Unalaska, and in the spring continued south to Sitka on a whisky sloop. Later on appeared at Metlakahtla, which is near to St. Mary's on the end of the Pan-Handle, where she worked in the cannery through the salmon season. When autumn came and the Siwash fishermen prepared to return to Puget Sound, she embarked with a couple of families in a big cedar canoe; and with them she threaded the hazardous chaos of the Alaskan and Canadian coasts, till the Straits of Juan de Fuca were passed and she led her boy by the hand up the hard pave of Seattle.

There she met Sandy MacPherson, on a windy corner, very much surprised and, when he had heard her story, very wroth--not so wroth as he might have been, had he known of Kitty Sharon; but of her Jees Uck breathed not a word, for she had never believed. Sandy, who read commonplace and sordid desertion into the circumstance, strove to dissuade her from her trip to San Francisco, where Neil Bonner was supposed to live when he was at home. And, having striven, he made her comfortable, bought her tickets and saw her off, the while smiling in her face and muttering "dam-shame" into his beard.

With roar and rumble, through daylight and dark, swaying and lurching between the dawns, soaring into the winter snows and sinking to summer valleys, skirting depths, leaping chasms, piercing mountains, Jees Uck and her boy were hurled south. But she had no fear of the iron stallion; nor was she stunned by this masterful civilization of Neil Bonner's people. It seemed, rather, that she saw with greater clearness the wonder that a man of such godlike race had held her in his arms. The screaming medley of San Francisco, with its restless shipping, belching factories, and thundering traffic, did not confuse her; instead, she comprehended swiftly the pitiful sordidness of Twenty Mile and the skin-lodged Toyaat village. And she looked down at the boy that clutched her hand and wondered that she had borne him by such a man.

She paid the hack-driver five pieces and went up the stone steps of Neil Bonner's front door. A slant-eyed Japanese parleyed with her for a fruitless space, then led her inside and disappeared. She remained in the hall, which to her simply fancy seemed to be the guest-room--the show-place wherein were arrayed all the household treasures with the frank purpose of parade and dazzlement. The walls and ceiling were of oiled and panelled redwood. The floor was more glassy than glare-ice, and she sought standing place on one of the great skins that gave a sense of security to the polished surface. A huge fireplace--an extravagant fireplace, she deemed it--yawned in the farther wall. A flood of light, mellowed by stained glass, fell across the room, and from the far end came the white gleam of a marble figure.

This much she saw, and more, when the slant-eyed servant led the way past another room--of which she caught a fleeting glance--and into a third, both of which dimmed the brave show of the entrance hall. And to her eyes the great house seemed to hold out the promise of endless similar rooms. There was such length and breadth to them, and the ceilings were so far away! For the first time since her advent into the white man's civilization, a feeling of awe laid hold of her. Neil, her Neil, lived in this house, breathed the air of it, and lay down at night and slept! It was beautiful, all this that she saw, and it pleased her; but she felt, also, the wisdom and mastery behind. It was the concrete expression of power in terms of beauty, and it was the power that she unerringly divined.

And then came a woman, queenly tall, crowned with a glory of hair that was like a golden sun. She seemed to come toward Jees Uck as a ripple of music across still water; her sweeping garment itself a song, her body playing rhythmically beneath. Jees Uck herself was a man compeller. There were Oche Ish and Imego and Hah Yo and Wy Nooch, to say nothing of Neil Bonner and John Thompson and other white men that had looked upon her and felt her power. But she gazed upon the wide blue eyes and rose-white skin of this woman that advanced to meet her, and she measured her with woman's eyes looking through man's eyes; and as a man compeller she felt herself diminish and grow insignificant before this radiant and flashing creature.

"You wish to see my husband?" the woman asked; and Jees Uck gasped at the liquid silver of a voice that had never sounded harsh cries at snarling wolf-dogs, nor moulded itself to a guttural speech, nor toughened in storm and frost and camp smoke.

"No," Jees Uck answered slowly and gropingly, in order that she might do justice to her English. "I come to see Neil Bonner."

"He is my husband," the woman laughed.

Then it was true! John Thompson had not lied that bleak February day, when she laughed pridefully and shut the door in his face. As once she had thrown Amos Pentley across her knee and ripped her knife into the air, so now she felt impelled to spring upon this woman and bear her back and down, and tear the life out of her fair body. But Jees Uck was thinking quickly and gave no sign, and Kitty Bonner little dreamed how intimately she had for an instant been related with sudden death.

Jees Uck nodded her head that she understood, and Kitty Bonner explained that Neil was expected at any moment. Then they sat down on ridiculously comfortable chairs, and Kitty sought to entertain her strange visitor, and Jees Uck strove to help her.

“You knew my husband in the North?” Kitty asked, once.

“Sure. I wash um clothes,” Jees Uck had answered, her English abruptly beginning to grow atrocious.

“And this is your boy? I have a little girl.”

Kitty caused her daughter to be brought, and while the children, after their manner, struck an acquaintance, the mothers indulged in the talk of mothers and drank tea from cups so fragile that Jees Uck feared lest hers should crumble to pieces beneath her fingers. Never had she seen such cups, so delicate and dainty. In her mind she compared them with the woman who poured the tea, and there uprose in contrast the gourds and pannikins of the Toyaat village and the clumsy mugs of Twenty Mile, to which she likened herself. And in such fashion and such terms the problem presented itself. She was beaten. There was a woman other than herself better fitted to bear and upbring Neil Bonner’s children. Just as his people exceeded her people, so did his womankind exceed her. They were the man compellers, as their men were the world compellers. She looked at the rose-white tenderness of Kitty Bonner’s skin and remembered the sun-beat on her own face. Likewise she looked from brown hand to white--the one, work-worn and hardened by whip-handle and paddle, the other as guiltless of toil and soft as a newborn babe’s. And, for all the obvious softness and apparent weakness, Jees Uck looked into the blue eyes and saw the mastery she had seen in Neil Bonner’s eyes and in the eyes of Neil Bonner’s people.

“Why, it’s Jees Uck!” Neil Bonner said, when he entered. He said it calmly, with even a ring of joyful cordiality, coming over to her and shaking both her hands, but looking into her eyes with a worry in his own that she understood.

“Hello, Neil!” she said. “You look much good.”

“Fine, fine, Jees Uck,” he answered heartily, though secretly studying Kitty for some sign of what had passed between the two. Yet he knew his wife too well to expect, even though the worst had passed, such a sign.

"Well, I can't say how glad I am to see you," he went on. "What's happened? Did you strike a mine? And when did you get in?"

"Oo-a, I get in to-day," she replied, her voice instinctively seeking its guttural parts. "I no strike it, Neil. You known Cap'n Markheim, Unalaska? I cook, his house, long time. No spend money. Bime-by, plenty. Pretty good, I think, go down and see White Man's Land. Very fine, White Man's Land, very fine," she added. Her English puzzled him, for Sandy and he had sought, constantly, to better her speech, and she had proved an apt pupil. Now it seemed that she had sunk back into her race. Her face was guileless, stolidly guileless, giving no cue. Kitty's untroubled brow likewise baffled him. What had happened? How much had been said? and how much guessed?

While he wrestled with these questions and while Jees Uck wrestled with her problem--never had he looked so wonderful and great--a silence fell.

"To think that you knew my husband in Alaska!" Kitty said softly.

Knew him! Jees Uck could not forbear a glance at the boy she had borne him, and his eyes followed hers mechanically to the window where played the two children. An iron hand seemed to tighten across his forehead. His knees went weak and his heart leaped up and pounded like a fist against his breast. His boy! He had never dreamed it!

Little Kitty Bonner, fairylike in gauzy lawn, with pinkest of cheeks and bluest of dancing eyes, arms outstretched and lips puckered in invitation, was striving to kiss the boy. And the boy, lean and lithe, sunbeaten and browned, skin-clad and in hair-fringed and hair-tufted MUCLUCS that showed the wear of the sea and rough work, coolly withstood her advances, his body straight and stiff with the peculiar erectness common to children of savage people. A stranger in a strange land, unabashed and unafraid, he appeared more like an untamed animal, silent and watchful, his black eyes flashing from face to face, quiet so long as quiet endured, but prepared to spring and fight and tear and scratch for life, at the first sign of danger.

The contrast between boy and girl was striking, but not pitiful. There was too much strength in the boy for that, waif that he was of the generations of Shpack, Spike O'Brien, and Bonner. In his features, clean cut as a cameo and almost classic in their severity, there were the power and achievement of his father, and his grandfather, and the one known as the Big Fat, who was captured by the Sea people and escaped to Kamchatka.

Neil Bonner fought his emotion down, swallowed it down, and choked over it, though his face smiled with good-humour and the joy with which one meets a friend.

“Your boy, eh, Jees Uck?” he said. And then turning to Kitty: “Handsome fellow! He’ll do something with those two hands of his in this our world.”

Kitty nodded concurrence. “What is your name?” she asked.

The young savage flashed his quick eyes upon her and dwelt over her for a space, seeking out, as it were, the motive beneath the question.

“Neil,” he answered deliberately when the scrutiny had satisfied him.

“Injun talk,” Jees Uck interposed, glibly manufacturing languages on the spur of the moment. “Him Injun talk, NEE-AL all the same ‘cracker.’ Him baby, him like cracker; him cry for cracker. Him say, ‘NEE-AL, NEE-AL,’ all time him say, ‘NEE-AL.’ Then I say that um name. So um name all time Nee-al.”

Never did sound more blessed fall upon Neil Bonner’s ear than that lie from Jees Uck’s lips. It was the cue, and he knew there was reason for Kitty’s untroubled brow.

“And his father?” Kitty asked. “He must be a fine man.”

“Oo-a, yes,” was the reply. “Um father fine man. Sure!”

“Did you know him, Neil?” queried Kitty.

“Know him? Most intimately,” Neil answered, and harked back to dreary Twenty Mile and the man alone in the silence with his thoughts.

And here might well end the story of Jees Uck but for the crown she put upon her renunciation. When she returned to the North to dwell in her grand log-house, John Thompson found that the P. C. Company could make a shift somehow to carry on its business without his aid. Also, the new agent and the succeeding agents received instructions that the woman Jees Uck should be given whatsoever goods and grub she desired, in whatsoever quantities she ordered, and that no charge should be placed upon the books. Further, the Company paid yearly to the woman Jees Uck a pension of five thousand dollars.

When he had attained suitable age, Father Champreau laid hands upon the boy, and the time was not long when Jees Uck received letters regularly from the Jesuit college in Maryland. Later on these letters came from Italy, and still later from France. And in the end there returned to Alaska one Father Neil, a man mighty for good in the land, who loved his mother and who ultimately went into a wider field and rose to high authority in the order.

Jees Uck was a young woman when she went back into the North, and men still looked upon her and yearned. But she lived straight, and no breath was ever raised save in commendation. She stayed for a while with the good sisters at Holy Cross, where she learned to read and write and became versed in practical medicine and surgery. After that she returned to her grand log-house and gathered about her the young girls of the Toyaat village, to show them the way of their feet in the world. It is neither Protestant nor Catholic, this school in the house built by Neil Bonner for Jees Uck, his wife; but the missionaries of all the sects look upon it with equal favour. The latchstring is always out, and tired prospectors and trail-weary men turn aside from the flowing river or frozen trail to rest there for a space and be warm by her fire. And, down in the States, Kitty Bonner is pleased at the interest her husband takes in Alaskan education and the large sums he devotes to that purpose; and, though she often smiles and chaffs, deep down and secretly she is but the prouder of him.

The Story of Keesh

KEESH lived long ago on the rim of the polar sea, was head man of his village through many and prosperous years, and died full of honors with his name on the lips of men. So long ago did he live that only the old men remember his name, his name and the tale, which they got from the old men before them, and which the old men to come will tell to their children and their children's children down to the end of time. And the winter darkness, when the north gales make their long sweep across the ice-pack, and the air is filled with flying white, and no man may venture forth, is the chosen time for the telling of how Keesh, from the poorest IGLOO in the village, rose to power and place over them all.

He was a bright boy, so the tale runs, healthy and strong, and he had seen thirteen suns, in their way of reckoning time. For each winter the sun leaves the land in darkness, and the next year a new sun returns so that they may be warm again and look upon one another's faces. The father of Keesh had been a very brave man, but he had met his death in a time of famine, when he sought to save the lives of his people by taking the life of a great polar bear. In his eagerness he came to close grapples with the bear, and his bones were crushed; but the bear had much meat on him and the people were saved. Keesh was his only son, and after that Keesh lived alone with his mother. But the people are prone to forget, and they forgot the deed of his father; and he being but a boy, and his mother only a woman, they, too, were swiftly forgotten, and ere long came to live in the meanest of all the IGLOOS.

It was at a council, one night, in the big IGLOO of Klosh-Kwan, the chief, that Keesh showed the blood that ran in his veins and the manhood that stiffened his back. With the dignity of an elder, he rose to his feet, and waited for silence amid the babble of voices.

"It is true that meat be apportioned me and mine," he said. "But it is ofttimes old and tough, this meat, and, moreover, it has an unusual quantity of bones."

The hunters, grizzled and gray, and lusty and young, were aghast. The like had never been known before. A child, that talked like a grown man, and said harsh things to their very faces!

But steadily and with seriousness, Keesh went on. “For that I know my father, Bok, was a great hunter, I speak these words. It is said that Bok brought home more meat than any of the two best hunters, that with his own hands he attended to the division of it, that with his own eyes he saw to it that the least old woman and the last old man received fair share.”

“Na! Na!” the men cried. “Put the child out!” “Send him off to bed!” “He is no man that he should talk to men and graybeards!”

He waited calmly till the uproar died down.

“Thou hast a wife, Ugh-Gluk,” he said, “and for her dost thou speak. And thou, too, Massuk, a mother also, and for them dost thou speak. My mother has no one, save me; wherefore I speak. As I say, though Bok be dead because he hunted over-keenly, it is just that I, who am his son, and that Ikeega, who is my mother and was his wife, should have meat in plenty so long as there be meat in plenty in the tribe. I, Keesh, the son of Bok, have spoken.”

He sat down, his ears keenly alert to the flood of protest and indignation his words had created.

“That a boy should speak in council!” old Ugh-Gluk was mumbling.

“Shall the babes in arms tell us men the things we shall do?” Massuk demanded in a loud voice. “Am I a man that I should be made a mock by every child that cries for meat?”

The anger boiled a white heat. They ordered him to bed, threatened that he should have no meat at all, and promised him sore beatings for his presumption. Keesh’s eyes began to flash, and the blood to pound darkly under his skin. In the midst of the abuse he sprang to his feet.

“Hear me, ye men!” he cried. “Never shall I speak in the council again, never again till the men come to me and say, ‘It is well, Keesh, that thou shouldst speak, it is well and it is our wish.’ Take this now, ye men, for my last word. Bok, my father, was a great hunter. I, too, his son, shall go and hunt the meat that I eat. And be it known, now, that the division of that which I kill shall be fair. And no widow nor weak one shall cry in the night because there is no meat, when the strong men are groaning in great pain for that they have eaten overmuch. And in the days to come there shall be shame upon the strong men who have eaten overmuch. I, Keesh, have said it!”

Jeers and scornful laughter followed him out of the IGLOO, but his jaw was set and he went his way, looking neither to right nor left.

The next day he went forth along the shore-line where the ice and the land met together. Those who saw him go noted that he carried his bow, with a goodly supply of bone-barbed arrows, and that across his shoulder was his father's big hunting-spear. And there was laughter, and much talk, at the event. It was an unprecedented occurrence. Never did boys of his tender age go forth to hunt, much less to hunt alone. Also were there shaking of heads and prophetic mutterings, and the women looked pityingly at Ikeega, and her face was grave and sad.

"He will be back ere long," they said cheeringly.

"Let him go; it will teach him a lesson," the hunters said. "And he will come back shortly, and he will be meek and soft of speech in the days to follow."

But a day passed, and a second, and on the third a wild gale blew, and there was no Keesh. Ikeega tore her hair and put soot of the seal-oil on her face in token of her grief; and the women assailed the men with bitter words in that they had mistreated the boy and sent him to his death; and the men made no answer, preparing to go in search of the body when the storm abated.

Early next morning, however, Keesh strode into the village. But he came not shamefacedly. Across his shoulders he bore a burden of fresh-killed meat. And there was importance in his step and arrogance in his speech.

"Go, ye men, with the dogs and sledges, and take my trail for the better part of a day's travel," he said. There is much meat on the ice — a she-bear and two half-grown cubs."

Ikeega was overcome with joy, but he received her demonstrations in manlike fashion, saying: "Come, Ikeega, let us eat. And after that I shall sleep, for I am weary."

And he passed into their IGLOO and ate profoundly, and after that slept for twenty running hours.

There was much doubt at first, much doubt and discussion. The killing of a polar bear is very dangerous, but thrice dangerous is it, and three times thrice, to kill a mother bear with her cubs. The men could not bring themselves to believe that the boy Keesh, single-handed, had accomplished so great a marvel. But the women spoke of the fresh-killed meat he had brought on his back, and this was an overwhelming argument against their unbelief. So they finally departed, grumbling greatly that in all probability, if the thing were so, he had neglected to cut up the carcasses. Now in the north it is very necessary that this should be done as soon as a kill is made. If not, the meat freezes so solidly as to turn the edge of the sharpest knife, and a three-hundred-pound bear, frozen stiff, is no easy thing to put upon a sled and haul over the rough ice. But arrived at the spot, they found not only the kill, which they had doubted, but that Keesh had quartered the beasts in true hunter fashion, and removed the entrails.

Thus began the mystery of Keesh, a mystery that deepened and deepened with the passing of the days. His very next trip he killed a young bear, nearly full-grown, and on the trip following, a large male bear and his mate. He was ordinarily gone from three to four days, though it was nothing unusual for him to stay away a week at a time on the ice-field. Always he declined company on these expeditions, and the people marvelled. "How does he do it?" they demanded of one another. "Never does he take a dog with him, and dogs are of such great help, too."

"Why dost thou hunt only bear?" Klosh-Kwan once ventured to ask him.

And Keesh made fitting answer. "It is well known that there is more meat on the bear," he said.

But there was also talk of witchcraft in the village. "He hunts with evil spirits," some of the people contended, "wherefore his hunting is rewarded. How else can it be, save that he hunts with evil spirits?"

"Mayhap they be not evil, but good, these spirits," others said. "It is known that his father was a mighty hunter. May not his father hunt with him so that he may attain excellence and patience and understanding? Who knows?"

None the less, his success continued, and the less skilful hunters were often kept busy hauling in his meat. And in the division of it he was just. As his father had done before him, he saw to it that the least old woman and the last old man received a fair portion, keeping no more for himself than his needs required. And because of this, and of his merit as a hunter, he was looked upon with respect, and even awe; and there was talk of making him chief after old Klosh-Kwan. Because of the things he had done, they looked for him to appear again in the council, but he never came, and they were ashamed to ask.

"I am minded to build me an IGLOO," he said one day to Klosh-Kwan and a number of the hunters. "It shall be a large IGLOO, wherein Ikeega and I can dwell in comfort."

"Ay," they nodded gravely.

“But I have no time. My business is hunting, and it takes all my time. So it is but just that the men and women of the village who eat my meat should build me my IGLOO.”

And the IGLOO was built accordingly, on a generous scale which exceeded even the dwelling of Klosh-Kwan. Keesh and his mother moved into it, and it was the first prosperity she had enjoyed since the death of Bok. Nor was material prosperity alone hers, for, because of her wonderful son and the position he had given her, she came to he looked upon as the first woman in all the village; and the women were given to visiting her, to asking her advice, and to quoting her wisdom when arguments arose among themselves or with the men.

But it was the mystery of Keesh’s marvellous hunting that took chief place in all their minds. And one day Ugh-Gluk taxed him with witchcraft to his face.

“It is charged,” Ugh-Gluk said ominously, “that thou dealest with evil spirits, wherefore thy hunting is rewarded.”

“Is not the meat good?” Keesh made answer. “Has one in the village yet to fall sick from the eating of it? How dost thou know that witchcraft be concerned? Or dost thou guess, in the dark, merely because of the envy that consumes thee?”

And Ugh-Gluk withdrew discomfited, the women laughing at him as he walked away. But in the council one night, after long deliberation, it was determined to put spies on his track when he went forth to hunt, so that his methods might be learned. So, on his next trip, Bim and Bawn, two young men, and of hunters the craftiest, followed after him, taking care not to be seen. After five days they returned, their eyes bulging and their tongues a-tremble to tell what they had seen. The council was hastily called in Klosh-Kwan’s dwelling, and Bim took up the tale.

“Brothers! As commanded, we journeyed on the trail of Keesh, and cunningly we journeyed, so that he might not know. And midway of the first day he picked up with a great he-bear. It was a very great bear.”

“None greater,” Bawn corroborated, and went on himself. “Yet was the bear not inclined to fight, for he turned away and made off slowly over the ice. This we saw from the rocks of the shore, and the bear came toward us, and after him came Keesh, very much unafraid. And he shouted harsh words after the bear, and waved his arms about, and made much noise.

Then did the bear grow angry, and rise up on his hind legs, and growl. But Keesh walked right up to the bear."

"Ay," Bim continued the story. "Right up to the bear Keesh walked. And the bear took after him, and Keesh ran away. But as he ran he dropped a little round ball on the ice. And the bear stopped and smelled of it, then swallowed it up. And Keesh continued to run away and drop little round balls, and the bear continued to swallow them up."

Exclamations and cries of doubt were being made, and Ugh-Gluk expressed open unbelief.

"With our own eyes we saw it," Bim affirmed.

And Bawn — "Ay, with our own eyes. And this continued until the bear stood suddenly upright and cried aloud in pain, and thrashed his fore paws madly about. And Keesh continued to make off over the ice to a safe distance. But the bear gave him no notice, being occupied with the misfortune the little round balls had wrought within him."

"Ay, within him," Bim interrupted. "For he did claw at himself, and leap about over the ice like a playful puppy, save from the way he growled and squealed it was plain it was not play but pain. Never did I see such a sight!"

"Nay, never was such a sight seen," Bawn took up the strain. "And furthermore, it was such a large bear."

"Witchcraft," Ugh-Gluk suggested.

"I know not," Bawn replied. "I tell only of what my eyes beheld. And after a while the bear grew weak and tired, for he was very heavy and he had jumped about with exceeding violence, and he went off along the shore-ice, shaking his head slowly from side to side and sitting down ever and again to squeal and cry. And Keesh followed after the bear, and we followed after Keesh, and for that day and three days more we followed. The bear grew weak, and never ceased crying from his pain."

"It was a charm!" Ugh-Gluk exclaimed. "Surely it was a charm!"

"It may well be."

And Bim relieved Bawn. "The bear wandered, now this way and now that, doubling back and forth and crossing his trail in circles, so that at the end he was near where Keesh had first come upon him. By this time he was quite sick, the bear, and could crawl no farther, so Keesh came up close and speared him to death."

"And then?" Klosh-Kwan demanded.

"Then we left Keesh skinning the bear, and came running that the news of the killing might be told."

And in the afternoon of that day the women hauled in the meat of the bear while the men sat in council assembled. When Keesh arrived a messenger was sent to him, bidding him come to the council. But he sent reply, saying that he was hungry and tired; also that his IGLOO was large and comfortable and could hold many men.

And curiosity was so strong on the men that the whole council, Klosh-Kwan to the fore, rose up and went to the IGLOO of Keesh. He was eating, but he received them with respect and seated them according to their rank. Ikeega was proud and embarrassed by turns, but Keesh was quite composed.

Klosh-Kwan recited the information brought by Bim and Bawn, and at its close said in a stern voice: "So explanation is wanted, O Keesh, of thy manner of hunting. Is there witchcraft in it?"

Keesh looked up and smiled. "Nay, O Klosh-Kwan. It is not for a boy to know aught of witches, and of witches I know nothing. I have but devised a means whereby I may kill the ice-bear with ease, that is all. It be headcraft, not witchcraft."

"And may any man?"

"Any man."

There was a long silence. The men looked in one another's faces, and Keesh went on eating.

"And . . . and . . . and wilt thou tell us, O Keesh?" Klosh-Kwan finally asked in a tremulous voice.

"Yea, I will tell thee." Keesh finished sucking a marrow-bone and rose to his feet. "It is quite simple. Behold!"

He picked up a thin strip of whalebone and showed it to them. The ends were sharp as needle-points. The strip he coiled carefully, till it disappeared in his hand. Then, suddenly releasing it, it sprang straight again. He picked up a piece of blubber.

"So," he said, "one takes a small chunk of blubber, thus, and thus makes it hollow. Then into the hollow goes the whalebone, so, tightly coiled, and another piece of blubber is fitted over the whale-bone. After that it is put outside where it freezes into a little round ball. The bear swallows the little round ball, the blubber melts, the whalebone with its sharp ends stands out straight, the bear gets sick, and when the bear is very sick, why, you kill him with a spear. It is quite simple."

And Ugh-Gluk said "Oh!" and Klosh-Kwan said "Ah!" And each said something after his own manner, and all understood.

And this is the story of Keesh, who lived long ago on the rim of the polar sea. Because he exercised headcraft and not witchcraft, he rose from the meanest IGLOO to be head man of his village, and through all the years that he lived, it is related, his tribe was prosperous, and neither widow nor weak one cried aloud in the night because there was no meat.

The Strange Experience of a Misogynist

"CONFOUND it all! But these minds of ours are curious fabrics!"

I had awakened, and remembering my dream, burst into the exclamation just recorded. It was a curious dream, seemingly without meaning, yet striking from a psychological standpoint, through the vividness of its realism and the fantastic juxtaposition of thoughts and scenes I previously experienced. The first part of it was a medley of incoherency and misty vagueness, too dim to recollect, but the conclusion was pictured in my mind's eye so perfectly, that it seemed as though the original were still before me: a little maid singing the same little song upon some metropolitan vaudeville stage. And these were the words she sang, with great seeming significance, to me in my dream:

"Reuben, Reuben, I've been thinking what a good
thing it would be,
If the women were transported, far beyond the
northern sea."

She sang it over and over again — more like a vocal fugue — ever discovering new charms of melody, new graces of expression. As she sang, strange foreboding impressions came to me, and her roguish face, enticing it is true, exasperated me.

"Begone!" I had cried. "Go to your far northern sea and leave me in peace!"

As I thus abjured her, her face became sad, compassionate; she held out her arms, beseechingly; then vanished from my dream. But in her place there was — ah! God! — the personification of one of my wildest dreams, the one woman who in all history had interested me. Grand, imperial, the mistress of kings, the friend of philosophy and art, she stood there — before me — so close I could have touched her — and just as I had always imaged her. She smiled upon me with careless abandon; then her beautiful face grew solemn and thoughtful, as, superbly tragic and with infinite pathos, she murmured, "After me, the deluge."

She too had gone: I was awake. Deeply I pondered on the incident. As an active member of our psychological society, I kept a terse record of my dreams, in fact, had made such a modest study of them that never was I at loss for the clew to their causation. But the present one baffled me. True, years ago I had seen and heard the little Quakeress in a vaudeville show: and as truly, had I, in my student days, romanticised upon that wondrous, divinely-feminine figure, whose powerful personality had left its impress so strongly on the pages of history. But I had not recollected either in years; I had not deviated from my regular habits; I had gone to bed at my usual hour; and I could think of nothing outside my customary bill of fare which I had partaken of. In short, the little occurrence was inexplicable.

Soon, however, other sensations came over me as I acknowledged the futility of my efforts, tossed the covers back, and sprang out of bed. Something was wrong, evidently out of place — I unconsciously recognized this, but no effort of analytical reasoning could substantiate the verdict of my intuition. Bright rays of sunlight danced hither and thither; through the partially raised window, the perfume of flowers was wafted to me; the bustling life of the awakening city saluted my ears — ”Ah! I have it now! Where are the sparrows?” I cried.

They were silent. No squabbling on the walks, no fierce battles on my window ledge, no chattering and scolding and noise incessant, nothing to tell me of their presence. Yet the spring was but fairly dawning and it was in the hey-day of mating time. How often, of late, had they wakened me with their mimic warfare, their martial contests, their boisterous wooing of their females! And how often had I prodigally burned a quarter-hour, watching and studying, this, the most important epoch of their lives! But they were gone: this trite demonstration of the laws of natural and sexual selection had seemingly been withdrawn from nature’s bill-boards. With an unusual feeling of strangeness, I completed my dressing, only to discover new cause for thought, new whys and wherefores. I had asked to be called at six sharp, and here it was seven-thirty. It was evident that I had missed my train, so canceling the engagement with a slight manifestation of irritation, I whistled down the speaking-tube for my customary kettle of hot water. No reply. I listened: the house was as silent as a tomb: apparently, no one was stirring. Strange thoughts flashed to my mind. Visions of bloody horrors, burglars, thugs, hidden mysteries, murder, and what not, rose before me. This was a very strange, an unprecedented occurrence. I decided to investigate.

But first, a word for myself. I am a young fellow of twenty-eight or thirty; comfortably, though not more than so, endowed with the world’s goods; and alone upon the face of the earth, save for some distant, very distant relatives. The further to satisfy my modest but somewhat expensive tastes, I devote an occasional hour to literary drudgery — but a drudgery which permits me to be wholly my own master, little caring whether school keeps or not. It is now some two years or more that I have resided at my present quarters, which, for various reasons, are very satisfactory. The house, a cosy, two-story suburban residence, is the possession of a nice widow-lady, who, with her three spinster daughters, manages to eke out a comfortable livelihood from a small annuity and the sums they receive from me every quarter. I am the sole lodger, in fact, boarder too, though I more often dine down town or at the club. My feminine friends unite in calling me the “crusty young bachelor” and my jovial, bohemian comrades, “the misogynist.” Why I have been given these respective apellations, I can readily understand; but how I have earned them I cannot conceive. I am not a woman-hater, as you may by this time have supposed me to be, far from it. Still, I must confess, I am not a woman-lover. Yet in this case I see no reason why the absence of the positive should imply the presence of the negative. I have never loved nor loved in vain, have never experienced anything which should condition me as I am — perhaps I was born that way. In short, while I do not like woman, I do not dislike her; but with such an object of neutral tints, I neither go out of my way to cultivate nor to avoid. “Confound it! How that quaint, little song rings in my ears!”

“If the women were transported, far beyond the
northern sea.”

Mentally cursing the composer, I descended the stairs. No sign of life: the kitchen just as it was left last evening. It was evident that they were still a-bed. Filled with gloomy forebodings, I first knocked, then successively forced the doors to the three chambers. Each was deserted. The beds had all been slept in; but I noted with surprise, the presence of the garments, shoes, etc., which had been discarded on disrobing the previous evening. So accustomed was I to every dress in the household, that I ransacked the wardrobes, closets, and chests of drawers. Nothing was missing and I smiled to myself as I pictured their flight, clad in nothing but their sleeping robes. Imagine my consternation when I discovered in each bed, the night-dresses of their respective occupants. “Shameful!” I thought; but at the same time, I found myself entertaining a malicious desire to have been a witness of the event, to have beheld the three attenuated spinsters and their ebom-pointed mother, fleeing like veritable Eves — whither, I knew not.

A myriad hypotheses suggested themselves but I could entertain none of them. I had never suspected my sedate landlady nor her sober daughters of any wildness, and this very unconventional procedure took me quite a-back. Perhaps something serious had occurred? I would lock up the house and inform the chief of police.

On the front steps I found the morning paper, still as tightly rolled up as when it left the carrier's hand. "What's this? Phew!" These were the staring headlines which met my astonished eye:

A world catastrophe!!!

The scientific world astounded!!!

The femininity of the earth is no more!!!

All peoples have felt the heavy hand of horror!!!

The confutation of all religion, science and philosophy!!!

A universal wail of sorrow!!!

Special session of congress!!!

And much more which I dashed through to get to the pith of the matter. Impossible as it seemed and more like a gigantic hoax, here it is, in substance:

Some time last night, it had been generally agreed upon as midnight, in some mysterious, unaccountable way, every woman, the whole world over, had suddenly disappeared. There had been no warning: there had been no remains. It was total annihilation or total translation. Very graphic was the description of a great state ball in Berlin. A thousand couples were whirling in giddy waltz when twelve o'clock struck. A shudder, like the flapping of a great sail, was heard, and a thousand astonished men were rooted to the floor, speechless, each clasping the empty costume of his partner of the previous moment. Thus it had happened everywhere: none were spared, not even the female babes in the cradle. Nor had the shock been less severe among the rest of the animal king¬dom. The male gender of all species remained, but the female had vanished. ("Ah," I mused, "that accounts for the sparrows.")

I hastily skimmed the account. This dreadful holocaust had put all the world aghast. Science was speechless as was also philosophy. Religion, while, on the whole, dumbfounded, among several sects there was whispering of the fulfillment of prophecy. There was no accounting for it. The immutability of natural law, the towering fabric of philosophic speculation, the dizzy atheistical negation of all supernaturalism, the adamantine division, between the knowable and the unknowable, of agnosticism; these, all these, and every system of thought and mode of action, had been overthrown, confuted by this one fell blow. A blow, so light, that the sleeper awakened not in the passing.

I could hardly trust my senses. Was I dreaming? Had the editors or the printers gone mad? Or was it nothing but a gigantic American sell? With my mind awhirl, I was just preparing for the acceptation of the latter when I suddenly paused at the gate, remembering my deserted house and the sparrows. Hardly daring to think, I hurried down the street. At the corner, I stumbled into an excited group, evidently discussing the situation.

They were local acquaintances so I did not hesitate to join them. I was amused, however, at their appearance. Their attires indicated hasty and indiscriminate dressing. Shoes were dirty, cravats missing or all awry, clothes unbrushed — in short, a general air of seediness was the most conspicuous feature. And there, I could have sworn to it, was old Dottlyboy, the precisest and neatest man of the neighborhood, without his face washed.

“Oh! It’s terrible! I can hardly collect myself. What’s going to become of us? The cook has gone, too, and I haven’t had my breakfast. I don’t see why she couldn’t have stayed. O my! O my! And at my time of life too!” Thus chattered the old gentleman who lived across the way from me, mumbling and chewing his words as though his mouth were full of hot mush — he had forgotten his false teeth.

“Is it true,” I asked, “that woman is no more?”

“It is true,” they gasped in solemn chorus.

“Hurrah! Hurrah!” I shouted. But evincing no sign of jubilancy, I looked at them, then asked “Why don’t you rejoice? Come, give a hearty three times three and a tiger with me. Now — hip — hip — ”

But just then I was so violently kicked from behind that other emotions claimed my attention. I whirled about with the intention of planting my deadly right in the most vulnerable portion of my assailant’s anatomy, when — thwack! — old Dottlyboy’s cane descended on my pericranium with periculous energy. I had a hazy impression of being suffocated in a cloud of invective, buffets, kicks and blows; of being tossed about in the bowels of a gregarious maelstrom; and of being vomited forth, a disintegrated mass, to recline in the contumely of the gutter.

“It is a very evident fact,” I murmured as I retired to the house to change my garments, “that they feel their loss deeply. I wonder what this most reminds me of — a freshman rush, a bargain counter crush, or a scrimmage on the gridiron?"

As I prepared myself anew to sally forth, I pondered deeply upon the perversity of human nature. Day after day, I had been the companion of one or more of the group, which had so viciously assailed me, in the rides to and from the city; hour after hour, I had listened to these suburbanites' complaints against womankind; yet here — and here — and here (I was feeling my bruises) are the convincing proofs of their inconsistency. Resolving to be more prudent in my demeanor and to hide my joy beneath a show of deepest melancholy, I was soon aboard a down-town car.

So ingrained was the habit, that I found myself glancing up with an air of guilty apprehension every time the car stopped to take on ladies. Each time, I resumed my paper, breathing a sigh of relief, for among them there were never any ladies. I think it was the first time I had ever come down on such a late car without injuring my personal feelings, by relinquishing my seat, in order to satisfy the highly impersonal one which conventionality demanded of me and designated as courtesy. There were no charming creatures to hang pathetically onto the straps or to gaze beseechingly at me in a usually successful endeavor to soften my marble heart.

The streets were full of people, all discussing the one topic, while in front of the great papers, thousands were grouped, awaiting with bated breaths, the advent of every bulletin. One thing surprised me greatly: without exception, every window contained cards which informed the public that men or boys were wanted. For once, labor was at a premium and jobs at a discount. It was remarkable, the airs which the laborers now put on. It had not taken them long to grasp the situation. Proud disdain and stony indifference had taken the place of their whining and begging. "What an expansion of the currency," I thought.

Especially were the employment agencies crowded — not by applicants for positions but by prospective employers. The celerity with which wages rose was startling, particularly in those branches of labor hitherto wholly carried on by women. By mid day the almost utter futility of endeavoring to obtain men, willing to cook, make beds and wash dishes, for anything less than fabulous salaries was manifest. As a result, everybody decided to patronize the restaurants. The crush, everywhere, for meals, was frightful — so terrible that I resolved to do my own cooking at home. Of course, not for long, for so many would now enter upon this lucrative business, that a few days would see everything on its original footing.

A week soon passed, during which the newspapers were filled with fierce controversies and the whole industrial system pulsating with unprecedented vigor. Never had there been such a boom before. Everything was running full blast. A reduction of the population by one-half was equal to a doubling of the currency. There was one point in this stimulus, however, which the world had evidently forgotten to reckon on. That, while the productive facilities had all been revived, the consumptive facilities had been reduced fifty per cent. Thus, there would be extraordinary activity in trade, and, since there was a greater demand than supply of labor, wages would rise; but following the wages, there would come a rise in all prices. At first, labor, being in the ascendancy, would buy liberally of all necessaries and many of the luxuries which it had hitherto been denied; but when prices reached their proportionate ratio with wages, labor would be unable to buy a bit more than in the days before the great catastrophe. The outcome was obvious to any dabbler in the "dismal science," though neither I nor the world realized or comprehended that outcome.

One day, about two weeks after the occurrence of the wonderful event, I went down to call on Charley Eggleston, a young artist friend of mine. On the way, I dropped into my barber's for a shave. Imagine my surprise on finding a shopful of customers and an alarming dearth of barbers. While waiting his appearance, I looked over my companions and was astonished at the general picture of slouchiness which they presented. Horrors! I glanced in the mirror and beheld myself with soiled shirt, collars and cuffs, two waistcoat buttons missing, four day's growth of beard, a dirty handkerchief in my hand, the knees of my trousers bagged and the creases of the same most conspicuous by their absence, my — but why relate it all — I was as slouchy as any of them. Just then the barber arrived on the scene. I had always looked upon him as a sober, industrious man, devoted to the welfare of his family; but in he came, as drunk as a boiled owl, and ordered us all out of his shop. I remonstrated with him, though to no effect, for he informed us that he was going to close up shop. His assistants were all drunk or lost and it was impossible for him to do the work single handed.

"And besides," he concluded, "What's the good of working anyway? What can I do with my money after I've earned it?"

So he turned us out, bag and baggage, forgot to lock the door, and returned to finish his carousal.

Though Charley was a very neat fellow, careful of his appearance and a ladies' man, I knew him too well to be ashamed to visit him in my present guise. At the same time I decided to postpone contemplated visits on my lawyer and publisher. My journey, drawing me thither, I happened to pass by the publishing house. The place was closed and there was a sign informing the public that Walker & Sons had retired from business. Glancing curiously about me, I was surprised at the number of "To Let" signs on every hand. Across the street, two men were putting up the shutters to their shops and on looking down the street, I observed several others occupied in like manner. At this juncture I unexpectedly met my lawyer. He was in a hurry, but paused long enough to tell me he had given up his practice and was going out of town, and that he had placed my papers and everything relating to me in his possession, in a safe-deposit vault at my banker's. He explained his course by informing me that he had enough to live on, so there was no use in earning more. Continuing my journey, I finally arrived at Eggleston's rooms, marveling, as I did so, at the amount of drunkenness I had witnessed on the streets.

As I entered the hallway I met Charley. He was dressed so carelessly that I felt quite relieved on the score of my own appearance.

"Hello, old man!" he cried. "Haven't seen you for an age. I was just going out, but — "

"Going out!" I stood aghast. Charley Eggleston, the immaculate, the ladies' man, the dressiest man about town, going out on the street in such a guise!

Understanding my surprise, he said "O what's the difference. No one to see me anyway, you know. But come in — it was nothing pressing — and have a chat."

His apartments were just as bad: the confusion and disorder was indescribable. It was also evident that he had been neglecting his painting, and on chiding him about it, he said "What's the use? I can't go on with it. First my model and then my muse deserted me. Besides, what does it matter whether — by the way, how are you getting along with that new poem of yours? You read me the first four stanzas — have you it finished?"

"I — I — but — — " I looked at him in dismay. Those four stanzas, lonely in their solitude, still lay upon my desk — since they were not selfprocreative, they had neither multiplied nor replenished my thought. “But you see, Charley, I must acknowledge that — that — — ”

Here we both burst into laughter, confessed our sins, and agreed that in some unaccountable way we had lost incentive. Having become aware of our own condition, we hit upon the idea of visiting our different chums to note how they were progressing, and we promised ourselves a very enjoyable evening.

Finding it impossible to obtain a cab, we resolved to walk. What a different scene the streets presented to that of a few short weeks ago! Everybody was disconsolate and gloomy, the stores nearly all closed, and the theatres deserted. Everything seemed going the wrong way. I noticed particularly, from a study of their faces, that everybody was suffering from dyspepsia. The absence of good cooking was beginning to tell. There was no laughter nor manifestations of good nature; but wrangling and fighting had become the order of the day, due, I surmised, among other things, to the loss of their stomachs. While excessive drinking had become quite common among all classes, it was especially noticeable among the workingmen. Nor was that all. Their demeanor was greatly changed. Dissatisfaction was the prevailing expression of their faces, while they carried themselves with an air of independence and were insolent and insulting to those of the upper classes they chanced to encounter. After some strolling I became aware that the little courtesy, previously to be found on our thoroughfares, had entirely disappeared. Selfishness had become the ruling passion. As I scrutinized the faces of all I met, I was surprised at the hardness and bullishness of their expression: all the higher, nobler attributes seemed lo have been eliminated. Not only were the sidewalks thronged by the natives, but the rural population had evidently deserted the country to come to town. With an old farmer, enquiring his way, we had quite a chat. He seemed to mourn, above all, the loss of “Maria,” who had worked shoulder to shoulder with him for “well-nigh thirty year.” First his hired men had quit work; then his boys had gone off to the city; and, since there was no one dependent upon him, he could not see why he was not entitled to a vacation too. So here he was, out to have a good time, spending his savings of years in pursuance thereof. But above all, in the crowds that surged about me, the most prominent feature was the woeful absence of buttons.

An hour later found us seated at the hospitable board of Trombley, “the connoiseur” (not in art, however, but in gourmandizing) his chums called him. His chef, whom he had been paying an extravagant salary, had left him; but he was an adept in cookery, conversant with all the mysteries of the chafing-dish. Many were the lamentations he made as i he served us, and many the apologies, too. At our earnest solicitation he had made some of his charming butter-cakes, and as we “fell to,” with haunting recollections of our own cuisine, he watched us with an anxious air.

“There, there, man!” he suddenly exclaimed.

Charley was thunderstruck. He was in the act of helping himself to a liberal supply of honey when thus admonished. Trombley saw that our mutual surprise demanded an explanation, so he gave it.

“Do you know that that is most likely the last honey which will ever pass your lips? It cost me just exactly twenty dollars and it was the last pint in the market. Haven’t you heard that the honey-bees have ceased producing?”

“Ceased producing!” in chorus.

“Yes, alas! It is true. In every hive, when the queen was found to be missing, confusion and anarchy ensued. They first turned to and ate all the honey, then separated, and are now scattered from Dan to Ber-Sheba. In the absence of authority and a guiding hand, each bee shifted for itself, and it is said that the country is almost uninhabitable, so ferocious have they become. It is certain that none can survive the winter.”

The next person we visited was Prescott, an old college chum, whom we had never lost sight of and who had devoted himself to the cause of temperance. Repeated ringings of his bell having elicited no response, and hearing the sound of singing, we ventured within. Tracing the voice, we arrived at the kitchen. There, surrounded by a startling array of bottles, in a slatternly dressing-gown and singing with maudlin gravity a temperance hymn, was Prescott, terrifically drunk. He evidently did not recognize us, though our reception was a warm one, for he took pot shots at us with a Smith & Wesson, as we tumbled over each other in the haste of our exit.

On recovering our equanimity, we decided to next visit George Curtis, a bright young fellow, with a future before him we were certain. As his place was some distance away, we took the shortest cuts possible. Just as we were emerging from a very dark street we heard a voice, subdued but with great dramatic intensity, soliloquizing, “ ‘To be or not to be, that is the question. Whether to — ’“ But at that moment our footsteps aroused the person, who whirled about, pointed a pistol at us and cried “Hands up!”

We hastily complied. As the man stepped closer to rob us, Charley exclaimed “Good God! It’s Haskins!”

Haskins was a well known and quite successful actor and an old-time bohemian crony of ours. The recognition was mutual and explanations followed. Haskins had always lived up to the last cent of his salary, and when the great catastrophe had burst, was playing, but penniless. His forte being in comedy and extravaganza, the chief attraction of which lay in the feminine charms displayed, he was at once thrown out of em¬ployment. Since then he had done nothing and now he was famishing. To night he had resolved to carve his way to at least a full stomach.

“Why didn’t you seek work?” I asked.

“Do I look like a laborer?” was his Yankee reply.

“But good gracious! Think of the disgrace!”

“There is no disgrace,” he rejoined. “My father’s dead: my mother, sisters, wife, all gone. I am disgraced in no body’s eyes I care for, and as for yourselves, you’ll be doing as bad before the month is out.

“But business is business,” he concluded. “I have resolved to become a shining light in my new profession. So hands up! It’s best to get the hand in by beginning on one’s friends.”

And he began with such vigor that when he bid us good night, every valuable we had with us had been transferred to his possession. Several times we were thus halted before we arrived at Curtis’ house. It seemed as though everybody was taking to the highway as a means of obtaining an easy livelihood. If it went on at this rate, we soon would be reduced to the condition of the Scilly Islanders, who lived comfortably by taking in each other’s washing.

If Curtis were at home, he was certainly in oblivion — drunk or otherwise for our repeated knocks availed nothing. Remembering our experience with Prescott, we were very cautious this time, keeping a sharp lookout for spring-guns and man traps. We ransacked the first floor and were thoroughly overhauling the second when we discovered him. Unseen, through an open door, we gazed upon the peculiar scene presented to us. In immaculate evening dress, patent leathers, gloves, etc., complete, attired as though for a wedding, he stood before a large table, contemplatively regarding a strange assortment of articles. There was a case of champagne, one of port, another of bourbon, several bottles of absinthe, a hypodermic syringe, a complete opium-smoker’s outfit, and many other drugs and paraphernalia for like purposes. George himself was terribly changed. His naturally slender face was quite attenuated and of extreme pallor; his eyes were dilated and intensely bright; while beneath them lay great, concentric circles of scarlet and black. He seemed lost in the depths of a thought which embraced the articles before him. We crept silently away and down the stairs, then returned, noisily stumbling over every third one, swearing like troopers, and making the greatest possible racket. He turned to greet us, shook hands cordially and gayly plunged into the thought which was uppermost in his mind.

"Just in time for my wedding! No (as we glanced at the general miscellany), don't think I'm starting a harem — I'm only deliberating on my choice. I'm a monogamous man, you know. But now that you fellows are here, I want you to stand up with me — but, I had forgotten, I must first indicate my preference. Come, help me to choose. Now what do you say to this?" As he raised a bottle of bourbon aloft and sang:

"Here's to the good old whiskey, drink it down!
Here's to the good old whiskey, drink it down!
Here's to the good old whiskey,
For it makes you feel so frisky,
Drink it down! Drink it down! Drink it down!"

"Horrible!" I cried.

"Ah, perhaps you don't like it. We'll pass on to the next. Here we have absinthe, the genuine extrait d'absinthe of happy France. It is composed, I am informed, of the flowering tops of wormwood, of angelica and sweet flag root, the dittany leaves of Crete, of star-anise fruit and many other aromatics, macerated in the purest of alcohol. What a charming bride! What an exquisite, emerald light flashes forth from its translucent depths! What joys unutterable to the fond lover who satiates desire, discovers bliss in the circumambiency of such a mistress! Think of the pleas — "

"George, you must stop this! At once! Be a man!" I commanded. But he rattled gayly on.

"Truly, comrade, I agree with you. It is not wholly to my taste. Surely, a more charming bride awaits me. Perhaps this is she. Hasheesh, the simplest and most enticing of maidens — the leaves and the flowers of the hemp plant, graciously mingled in due proportion with butter-fat. How simple, but how fascinating! Yet she is but an immature child when compared with this, a glorious woman. One kiss, and she fills your veins with liquid fire, which through your being, boils and bubbles, sizzles, froths and foams, effervescing with tremendous throbs of maddening pleasure. One kiss, and she takes your hand, leads you up inaccessible heights, away from the world and its sorrows — up — up — till you walk with the immortals, sip golden nectar from chalices all-divine, till in the arms of Morpheus, sweet child of Somnus, you dream, and dream, and dream — a bliss ineffable!

"Yet," he seemed to pause and reflect, "such graces are too vigorous for me. More calm and peaceful must my mistress be. One, to lead me to that Lethean plunge through enervating, placid, drowsy joys; one, to steal away my senses with insidious stealth; one, to love me so that I loose my thought unaware, to kiss me from dull, brooding care into sweet forgetfulness. And here I find her — the soul of the poppy, the radiant spirit of mercy, the ministering angel of man. Sweet, sweet, the soft embrace of thine arms! Sweet, sweet — far more than sweet — divine the wondrous pleasure of communion with thee! Two mistresses have I wooed, and won, and lost. Wooing and winning, on thy soft bosom wilt I slumber through the lapse of ages, through countless cycles of time, through all eternity. Though virgin still, hast thou three daughters — divine fruition of an immaculate conception. Thus, as on thy chaste breast I sleep, forgetful, wilt these three graces — Morphia, Codeia, Narcotin — watch over us; thus, deep in somnolent languor, wilt they guard our dreams and lull us to soft melancholy; thus, as we journey down the shadowy slopes of time, wilt they shroud us in oblivion's winding sheet. Come, dear maiden of the Orient, forget thy mountain home of Akkisar, and in forgetting, bring forgetfulness to me. One caress, and my troubles flee me; one kiss from thy pale-red lips, and my senses sway and leave me; one benediction, and in thy mercy I cease to be; once mine, I am no more. O ye gods! — No more — No more — No more."

His voice died slowly away. We were silent. What could we do? As we stood helplessly by, his mood changed, he was himself again.

"Dear friends, bear with me: my affliction, as you know, is great. What may seem the raving of a madman is but the dreary monody of a soul, crying out from amid the ashes of dead joys, lost hopes, vanished ideals. As you well know, I have wooed, won and lost two mistresses — why not a third? First, the fair daughter of Mnemosyne; my success, barely inchoate, was brought to a glorious dawn by my second; the third, which I wed tonight, becomes their requeiscat in pace. You remember my music; how I devoted myself to it; how well I mastered it; my successes, small though they were; the beginnings of recognition, of homage: but you will remember that there was a something lacking, a something to stir hearts of adamant; to kindle as with fire the emotions; to wring the heart-strings; to tear the gasping soul from its habitation of clay; to send it hurtling through the glories of empyreal bliss. My technique was superb — the equal of the greatest masters — but the power of soul-stirring, of soul-translation lay not there. In a dimly conscious way I understood the vacancy, the absence of the inspiration, and I awaited it, trusting faithfully in my intuitive foresight. The moment came; the time was ripe; I had mastered all save that; and that I awaited to master me. The dawn burst; an angel's hand swept with responsive touch the harmonies of my genius. As yet strangers, did my talent and my genius meet. I burst into song — and why not? — the void was filled — I loved — before high Heaven, aye, and the utter¬most depths of Hell, I loved. The world embraced me; her riches, her glory, her every treasure were cast at my feet; and sublimer still, the sublimest of all, I was loved. Then did I soar to higher and yet higher levels; my power became absolute; my genius, transcendant. But amid the dizzy thunders of a world's applause, I essayed grander and still grander flights, ever beholding with bated breath my guiding light, my polestar, my Alice. O Alice! It was all for you, all through you, all by you! Then came the marriage — but a night intervened — a few short hours before the great consummation of my life. O God! The morning never broke! — Unending night in a vale of sorrow and tears! As a fiery meteor dashing athwart the sky, for a moment dazzling the dreamer before it is gone, so flashed she across my life, and in passing, struck the grandest symphonies of my soul. But the hand is wanting, the singer dumb, the strings broken. Think of it; conjure it; give rein to the wildest flights of fantastic imagination — from out the ghastly, unknown wastes of space, of the universe, some supreme force, some hell-bound, conscious power, seized and drew my Alice from me; forsooth! To glut the idle whim or empty vagary of some celestial monster. They say that thus was lost all women: to me, there was lost but Alice: but to the world was lost incentive. Woman, the one great inciting force of man is gone. The one gauge of man's morality, of man's ideality, of man's nobility, is gone. O mourn, ye sons of earth! Cry out in blackest despair! The past is dead: there is no future. Ye fall — down — down — down — to brutishness, to corruption, to death. Yield to your prurient desires; satiate your passions in wild debauchery; forget that ye are men. It is the panacea, the only one, to remove you from your miseries. Sin! Sin! Sin! Sin and be unexcelled by Hell itself! Heed me, ye sons of woman! The afflatus of inspiration is upon me. Steep thyselves in the ephemeral somnolency of vice. To morrow you are no more. There is no future — woman is gone. Thy tremendous civilization, thy knowledge, thy culture of ten times ten thousand years is crumbling on the verge — disintegration, primeval chaos awaits it, and you, and all. I see brute struggling with brute, and these brutes are men. Down into the oblivion of night I behold the towering fabric of man's achievements, the giddy pinnacles of his creation, the miraculous productions of his finite will, sink in a sea of blood. Evanescent are the glories of his enterprise. Loose the dogs of war! Tear the throat and rend the flesh! Kill! Maim! Destroy! Tumult, anarchy and chaos shall reign, and amid the horrors of such reign, shall vanish the modicum of man's nobility — the remnant of that which was lost with womankind. A space of internecine strife, then all is over. The earth will traverse the heavens as of yore; the sun, moon, stars and constellations will go their accustomed rounds; the universe will seem not susceptible to the change: but on the earth, man, bird, beast and insect; all sentient and insensate life; all organic structure and superstructure; will cease to be!"

We were dumbfounded, awed to quiescence. Apparently unconscious of our presence, he lighted a tiny alcohol lamp and prepared his opium and pipe. When the sickening smoke had well filled the apartment, we glided out, unwelcome guests from the marriage feast. We were moody, weighed down, not only with the horror of what had been, but with a horror of what was to be. We had seen enough so parted at the corner. The cars had ceased running and I was forced to wearily tramp home through the silent city — silent, save for the many deeds of violence and cries for help which came to my eyes and saluted my ears. Murder and robbery stalked abroad, and I was thankful when my home was reached. But I could not sleep: a weird phantasmagoria of anticipatory events haunted me as I tossed restlessly about. The impression left by Curtis was not too easily forgotten. Somewhere towards morning, the house was invaded by burglars; but I was indifferent and told them to help themselves. I began to feel, though not clearly, that in some way, both my position and the position of all men, were analogous with that of Curtis.

The sun was slipping from view in the west; the air was balmy and gracious; all nature seemed at peace: but silently, exhausted and in the extreme throes of hunger, my comrade and I trudged along the deserted road.

Hush! We heard a fall of hoofs and sprang into the bushes. Grasping our bludgeons firmly, desperation nerving us to action, we awaited the traveler’s approach. Round a turn in the road he came, leading a heavily loaded horse. He was an aged man, with a fringe of white hair crowning the once oval but now fearfully emaciated face, the nose of which too distinctly proclaimed the Semitic type. Nearer and nearer he came; but for his gray hairs I felt no veneration, no mercy.

Suddenly, just as he came opposite our place of concealment, we sprang upon him. He made as though to draw a pistol, but I struck him sharply on the head, stretching him in the dust. Then we unloaded the horse. The burden was heavy and our hearts rejoiced as with trembling fingers we drew our knives and cut the many wrappings. O the bitter disappointment! Out rolled rubies, pearls, diamonds, the choicest of gems, and gold without end. In our rage we kicked the prostrate form and trampled the treasure into the dust. Recovering consciousness, the old man scrambled to his feet and on beholding the wanton dissipation of his wealth, burst into wild lamentations, calling upon the Father of Israel to smite the Gentile and repossess him of his goods. At first, in half-insane jocosity, I joined him, shrieking that portion of the Merchant of Venice where Shylock bewails the loss of his ducats and his daughter. But the old scoundrel’s howling transcended mine, so I struck him roughly on the mouth and bade him cease his racket.

We asked him if he had any food, but swearing by all the prophets that he had none, he resumed the (to him) pleasant task of tearing his hair and his soul in his anguish. However we were hungry and heeded him not. A few minutes sufficed to build a fire, kill the animal and enable us to partake of a succulent repast of roast-horse. The Jew, heart-broken, refusing to join us, busied himself in rescuing his scattered treasures. Once, in the failing light, he uttered an exclamation of joy and hurried to the fire, the better to examine a handful of gems he had just resurrected. As he bent to the flame, his eyes glowing with the fierce fire of avarice, I glanced into his hand and beheld the cause of his joy. Among twenty jewels of more than ordinary value, reposed a brilliant of superbest lustre. Paugh! It was disgusting. I struck his hand maladroitly and scattered the diamonds to the four winds. The result was unexpected and sanguinary. Uttering an unearthly cry of blended rage and sorrow, he sprang upon me, seemingly endowed with supernatural vigor; but I blanketed him before he could use his revolver. My comrade hastened to my aid and as the three of us struggled together, received a ball through the brain. A minute and all was over, however, and even after the Jew was dead, I struck him again and again with in¬human delight. But as I stood gloatingly over the corpse, a revulsion of feeling overcame me: I staggered, fell by the fire, and in thought journeyed over the past several weeks.

And what weeks they had been! Most truly had the vaticinations of Curtis been fulfilled! And why not? Though I had discovered it, alas! Too late, woman, the one incentive, was lost. The world had not been prone to realize it at first; but now, moribund, in the last stages of extinction, the truth was all-apparent.

At first, as I have described, interest lagged and man had begun to titillate his desires with liquor; but the spirit grew and things went from bad to worse. Labor, after the first kiss of prosperity, finding itself reduced to its previous state of hand-to-mouth existence, rebelled. There were no longer any ties of wives and little ones, so the men became insulting and riotous in their demands for more wages and less hours. The toiling capitalists, discovering that they also had no families to labor for, became indifferent and replied to the strikes of their employes with lockouts. Life nor property were no longer held sacred and a reign °f pillage and slaughter ensued. To intensify the horror of such conditions, the degraded criminal classes, emerging from their slums, holes and dens, flew at the throat of the society which had so often and so bitterly given them the lash. And even the convicts in all the penitentiaries, revolted; succeeding often in gaining their liberty. The police forces became paralyzed and finally dissolved. However, for a space, the regular army (the National Guard having long since disbanded) checked the inevitable tide of events. The people, having degenerated to all the brutishness of primitive man, drank and fought with equal ferocity. In consequence, the great centers of trade, and even all cities and towns, became stagnated, and the country no longer sent it products thither.

With starvation in the metropolises, a wild stampede followed, and the country was inundated with starving, frantic hordes, by whom, the agriculturists were despoiled and destroyed. All production ceased and anarchy was inaugurated. The complex superstructure of government was shattered, and the gregarious manifestation of the genus homo descended to the tribal unit — a unit, of course, in which the tie of family played no part. The men collected about their more valiant comrades, whose great physical and mental brutality enabled them to predominate. By these bands, the world was ravaged, plundered and destroyed. Art, science, culture, religion, tottered and fell into complete dissolution. In short, the reign of Hell on Earth had been instituted.

Borne away on the crest of a human tidal wave, I had been carried into the suburban districts, where I had since eked out a miserable and perilous existence. My sufferings and terrors had been frightful. I felt myself rapidly descending to the brute, but in my chaotic environment could do nothing to stay my fall. My treatment of the old Jew to night, clearly illustrates the completeness with which all my higher attributes had been annihilated. There lay no nuance between me and a hungry lion in an African wilderness. And yet, such was the inevitable result of the loss of womankind.

Death, in its most horrible forms, had become my constant companion. And strange were the struggles of the departing spirits! Worn out by suffering and hardship, men saw mirages — not of banquets, but of women. I remember one brute, with whom I had fought over the possession of half a measure of corn, and whom I was forced to kill. As I ate hurriedly, for fear of being discovered and dispossessed, he rose to his feet, crying aloud the name of his wife. With the death-sweat on his brow and the rattle in his throat, he thought he beheld her. He tried to grasp the phantom of his distorted vision: it evaded, retreated: he advanced. Though dying, the vision gave him strength and he pursued it across the dry stubble, to throw up his arms and fall a corpse in the center of the field.

And of late, I found a similar hallucination overcoming my reason. It came upon me at the most unexpected moments and places. It darted across my line of vision; danced on the path before me; and in my dreams, overwhelmed me with caresses or soothed my weary soul with the ineffable calm of a woman’s presence. In the battle of Norfolk, where ten thousand starving men captured the last commissariat of the expiring government, it well-nigh caused my death. The victory was virtually ours, for the beseiged, in an endeavor to save themselves, had begun to cast the provisions amongst us. In the wild scramble I captured a great ham and escaped to the adjacent woods. Here I was overtaken by a marauder, who, quarreling with me over the booty, precipitated a terrible struggle. Just as I had him at my mercy and was about to give him the quietus, the apparition intervened. Dazzled, bewildered, I suspended the blow. The next I knew, I came to consciousness, grievously wounded, to discover the absence of both my antagonist and the ham. That was the first manifestation but since then they have grown more frequent. Ah! There she is now — O Laura, Laura, my lost — like a flash she is gone again. How strange it is that I should be thus haunted! — I, the "crusty bachelor," the "misogynist"! And as for Laura: before she was taken from the earth she was no more to me than any of my chums or boon companions. We liked each other — a sort of Platonic affection, I thought. But now, too late, I discover that I loved her — O Laura, my heart's desire, fill thou this aching void! Summon me, draw me to you! Release me these bonds of clay that I may escape my degradation, and with you find peace and joy! Kill — !"

Hark! Voices: the footsteps of men. A band of hungry beasts of prey are upon me. I must escape them. Seizing a leg of the butchered horse, the greatest possible treasure to me, I sprang into the bushes and fled through the night, followed by the frantic shouts of joy which heralded the discovery of my commissary.

What a dreary solitude I had ventured into! So lately seething with the hurly burly of metropolitan life, how deserted had it become! Leaving aside the mere absence of its inhabitants, the city was the shadow of its former self. Fire had so ravaged it that for blocks at a time, I walked amid nothing except chimneys, which, springing from blackened ruins, towered heavenward — ghastly indices of the wrath of God. The streets were filled with trucks, wagons, carriages, baggage — all the debris of a universal and panic-stricken flight. Everywhere, putrid corpses obstructed the way, filling the air with noisome stenches, and rendering my progress all but unendurable. Still I staggered on, in the last stages of physical and mental exhaustion. I was so weak that I had frequently to pause and rest; while my mind seemed wavering on its foundations; all things appearing to me as in a half dream. At times I mumbled and chattered aloud like a mad man: at others, I seemed to realize my condition and endeavored to rein in my fleeting senses. How or why I had wandered thither, I could not tell, for the past few days were blurred and confused to my recollection — more like a hideous nightmare than actual events.

At last I reached my home, and to my surprise found the house, untouched by fire, still standing. Upon the piazza I encountered a great dog — the first life since entering the city. How my stomach stirred at the sight! My hunter's instinct rose paramount: I had found my supper. I discovered my task to be the easier, for he had evidently narrowly escaped becoming some one else's supper. As he faced me, his hair bristling and his teeth showing, I saw that his back was broken and that he dragged his hind quarters on the ground. I drew my knife and opened the attack. But just as I closed in, my weakness asserted itself: nearly, swooning, I grasped at the pillars for support and at this moment he darted past. Making a vain effort to intercept him, I was sent sprawling down the stairs. Crying weak tears of disappointment as I saw my supper disappear around the corner, I entered the house and laboriously ascended to my room. Falling into a chair by the window, I dozed off to sleep, attended by the beatific vision of Laura.

Hush! What was that? Clasping in my arms that radiant angel, I was awakened by a furious noise at my window. The sparrows! Impossible ! I looked about me: the night was gone, and there, on my window ledge, a miniature battle for the possession of a twittering female was going on. Beyond a slight feeling of bewilderment, I was my old self again. A second's thought convinced me of the whole truth. Seized by a mighty resolve, I snatched my hat, cane and gloves, and went down the stairs three at a time. In the lower hallway I ran against my landlady. Such unwonted conduct for a person as dignified as I, so astonished her that she did something she had never done before — asked me what the matter was and where I was going.

"'Going?'" I cried. "Why I'm off to propose to Laura." And I threw my arms about the good, old soul and kissed her square on the mouth.

The Strength of the Strong

“Parables don’t lie, but liars will parable.” — Lip-King.

Old Long-Beard paused in his narrative, licked his greasy fingers, and wiped them on his naked sides where his one piece of ragged bearskin failed to cover him. Crouched around him, on their hams, were three young men, his grandsons, Deer-Runner, Yellow-Head, and Afraid-of-the-Dark. In appearance they were much the same. Skins of wild animals partly covered them. They were lean and meagre of build, narrow-hipped and crooked-legged, and at the same time deep-chested, with heavy arms and enormous hands. There was much hair on their chests and shoulders, and on the outsides of their arms and legs. Their heads were matted with uncut hair, long locks of which often strayed before their eyes, beady and black and glittering like the eyes of birds. They were narrow between the eyes and broad between the cheeks, while their lower jaws were projecting and massive.

It was a night of clear starlight, and below them, stretching away remotely, lay range on range of forest-covered hills. In the distance the heavens were red from the glow of a volcano. At their backs yawned the black mouth of a cave, out of which, from time to time, blew draughty gusts of wind. Immediately in front of them blazed a fire. At one side, partly devoured, lay the carcass of a bear, with about it, at a respectable distance, several large dogs, shaggy and wolf-like. Beside each man lay his bow and arrows and a huge club. In the cave-mouth a number of rude spears leaned against the rock.

“So that was how we moved from the cave to the tree,” old Long-Beard spoke up.

They laughed boisterously, like big children, at recollection of a previous story his words called up. Long-Beard laughed, too, the five-inch bodkin of bone, thrust midway through the cartilage of his nose, leaping and dancing and adding to his ferocious appearance. He did not exactly say the words recorded, but he made animal-like sounds with his mouth that meant the same thing.

"And that is the first I remember of the Sea Valley," Long-Beard went on. "We were a very foolish crowd. We did not know the secret of strength. For, behold, each family lived by itself, and took care of itself. There were thirty families, but we got no strength from one another. We were in fear of each other all the time. No one ever paid visits. In the top of our tree we built a grass house, and on the platform outside was a pile of rocks, which were for the heads of any that might chance to try to visit us. Also, we had our spears and arrows. We never walked under the trees of the other families, either. My brother did, once, under old Boo-oogh's tree, and he got his head broken and that was the end of him.

"Old Boo-oogh was very strong. It was said he could pull a grown man's head right off. I never heard of him doing it, because no man would give him a chance. Father wouldn't. One day, when father was down on the beach, Boo-oogh took after mother. She couldn't run fast, for the day before she had got her leg clawed by a bear when she was up on the mountain gathering berries. So Boo-oogh caught her and carried her up into his tree. Father never got her back. He was afraid. Old Boo-oogh made faces at him.

"But father did not mind. Strong-Arm was another strong man. He was one of the best fishermen. But one day, climbing after sea-gull eggs, he had a fall from the cliff. He was never strong after that. He coughed a great deal, and his shoulders drew near to each other. So father took Strong-Arm's wife. When he came around and coughed under our tree, father laughed at him and threw rocks at him. It was our way in those days. We did not know how to add strength together and become strong."

"Would a brother take a brother's wife?" Deer-Runner demanded.

"Yes, if he had gone to live in another tree by himself."

"But we do not do such things now," Afraid-of-the-Dark objected.

"It is because I have taught your fathers better." Long-Beard thrust his hairy paw into the bear meat and drew out a handful of suet, which he sucked with a meditative air. Again he wiped his hands on his naked sides and went on. "What I am telling you happened in the long ago, before we knew any better."

"You must have been fools not to know better," was Deer-Runner's comment, Yellow-Head grunting approval.

"So we were, but we became bigger fools, as you shall see. Still, we did learn better, and this was the way of it. We Fish-Eaters had not learned to add our strength until our strength was the strength of all of us. But the Meat-Eaters, who lived across the divide in the Big Valley, stood together, hunted together, fished together, and fought together. One day they came into our valley. Each family of us got into its own cave and tree. There were only ten Meat-Eaters, but they fought together, and we fought, each family by itself."

Long-Beard counted long and perplexedly on his fingers.

"There were sixty men of us," was what he managed to say with fingers and lips combined. "And we were very strong, only we did not know it. So we watched the ten men attack Boo-oogh's tree. He made a good fight, but he had no chance. We looked on. When some of the Meat-Eaters tried to climb the tree, Boo-oogh had to show himself in order to drop stones on their heads, whereupon the other Meat-Eaters, who were waiting for that very thing, shot him full of arrows. And that was the end of Boo-oogh.

"Next, the Meat-Eaters got One-Eye and his family in his cave. They built a fire in the mouth and smoked him out, like we smoked out the bear there to-day. Then they went after Six-Fingers, up his tree, and, while they were killing him and his grown son, the rest of us ran away. They caught some of our women, and killed two old men who could not run fast and several children. The women they carried away with them to the Big Valley.

"After that the rest of us crept back, and, somehow, perhaps because we were in fear and felt the need for one another, we talked the thing over. It was our first council — our first real council. And in that council we formed our first tribe. For we had learned the lesson. Of the ten Meat-Eaters, each man had had the strength of ten, for the ten had fought as one man. They had added their strength together. But of the thirty families and the sixty men of us, we had had the strength of but one man, for each had fought alone.

"It was a great talk we had, and it was hard talk, for we did not have the words then as now with which to talk. The Bug made some of the words long afterward, and so did others of us make words from time to time. But in the end we agreed to add our strength together and to be as one man when the Meat-Eaters came over the divide to steal our women. And that was the tribe.

"We set two men on the divide, one for the day and one for the night, to watch if the Meat-Eaters came. These were the eyes of the tribe. Then, also, day and night, there were to be ten men awake with their clubs and spears and arrows in their hands, ready to fight. Before, when a man went after fish, or clams, or gull-eggs, he carried his weapons with him, and half the time he was getting food and half the time watching for fear some other man would get him. Now that was all changed. The men went out without their weapons and spent all their time getting food. Likewise, when the women went into the mountains after roots and berries, five of the ten men went with them to guard them. While all the time, day and night, the eyes of the tribe watched from the top of the divide.

"But troubles came. As usual, it was about the women. Men without wives wanted other men's wives, and there was much fighting between men, and now and again one got his head smashed or a spear through his body. While one of the watchers was on top of the divide, another man stole his wife, and he came down to fight. Then the other watcher was in fear that some one would take his wife, and he came down likewise. Also, there was trouble among the ten men who carried always their weapons, and they fought five against five, till some ran away down the coast and the others ran after them.

"So it was that the tribe was left without eyes or guards. We had not the strength of sixty. We had no strength at all. So we held a council and made our first laws. I was but a cub at the time, but I remember. We said that, in order to be strong, we must not fight one another, and we made a law that when a man killed another him would the tribe kill. We made another law that whoso stole another man's wife him would the tribe kill. We said that whatever man had too great strength, and by that strength hurt his brothers in the tribe, him would we kill that his strength might hurt no more. For, if we let his strength hurt, the brothers would become afraid and the tribe would fall apart, and we would be as weak as when the Meat-Eaters first came upon us and killed Boo-oogh.

"Knuckle-Bone was a strong man, a very strong man, and he knew not law. He knew only his own strength, and in the fullness thereof he went forth and took the wife of Three-Clams. Three-Clams tried to fight, but Knuckle-Bone clubbed out his brains. Yet had Knuckle-Bone forgotten that all the men of us had added our strength to keep the law among us, and him we killed, at the foot of his tree, and hung his body on a branch as a warning that the law was stronger than any man. For we were the law, all of us, and no man was greater than the law.

“Then there were other troubles, for know, O Deer-Runner, and Yellow-Head, and Afraid-of-the-Dark, that it is not easy to make a tribe. There were many things, little things, that it was a great trouble to call all the men together to have a council about. We were having councils morning, noon, and night, and in the middle of the night. We could find little time to go out and get food, because of the councils, for there was always some little thing to be settled, such as naming two new watchers to take the place of the old ones on the hill, or naming how much food should fall to the share of the men who kept their weapons always in their hands and got no food for themselves.

“We stood in need of a chief man to do these things, who would be the voice of the council, and who would account to the council for the things he did. So we named Fith-Fith the chief man. He was a strong man, too, and very cunning, and when he was angry he made noises just like that, fith-fith, like a wild-cat.

“The ten men who guarded the tribe were set to work making a wall of stones across the narrow part of the valley. The women and large children helped, as did other men, until the wall was strong. After that, all the families came down out of their caves and trees and built grass houses behind the shelter of the wall. These houses were large and much better than the caves and trees, and everybody had a better time of it because the men had added their strength together and become a tribe. Because of the wall and the guards and the watchers, there was more time to hunt and fish and pick roots and berries; there was more food, and better food, and no one went hungry. And Three-Legs, so named because his legs had been smashed when a boy and who walked with a stick — Three-Legs got the seed of the wild corn and planted it in the ground in the valley near his house. Also, he tried planting fat roots and other things he found in the mountain valleys.

“Because of the safety in the Sea Valley, which was because of the wall and the watchers and the guards, and because there was food in plenty for all without having to fight for it, many families came in from the coast valleys on both sides and from the high back mountains where they had lived more like wild animals than men. And it was not long before the Sea Valley filled up, and in it were countless families. But, before this happened, the land, which had been free to all and belonged to all, was divided up. Three-Legs began it when he planted corn. But most of us did not care about the land. We thought the marking of the boundaries with fences of stone was a foolishness. We had plenty to eat, and what more did we want? I remember that my father and I built stone fences for Three-Legs and were given corn in return.

“So only a few got all the land, and Three-Legs got most of it. Also, others that had taken land gave it to the few that held on, being paid in return with corn and fat roots, and bear-skins, and fishes which the farmers got from the fishermen in exchange for corn. And, the first thing we knew, all the land was gone.

“It was about this time that Fith-Fith died and Dog-Tooth, his son, was made chief. He demanded to be made chief anyway, because his father had been chief before him. Also, he looked upon himself as a greater chief than his father. He was a good chief at first, and worked hard, so that the council had less and less to do. Then arose a new voice in the Sea Valley. It was Twisted-Lip. We had never thought much of him, until he began to talk with the spirits of the dead. Later we called him Big-Fat, because he ate over-much, and did no work, and grew round and large. One day Big-Fat told us that the secrets of the dead were his, and that he was the voice of God. He became great friends with Dog-Tooth, who commanded that we should build Big-Fat a grass house. And Big-Fat put taboos all around this house and kept God inside.

“More and more Dog-Tooth became greater than the council, and when the council grumbled and said it would name a new chief, Big-Fat spoke with the voice of God and said no. Also, Three-Legs and the others who held the land stood behind Dog-Tooth. Moreover, the strongest man in the council was Sea-Lion, and him the land-owners gave land to secretly, along with many bearskins and baskets of corn. So Sea-Lion said that Big-Fat’s voice was truly the voice of God and must be obeyed. And soon afterward Sea-Lion was named the voice of Dog-Tooth and did most of his talking for him.

“Then there was Little-Belly, a little man, so thin in the middle that he looked as if he had never had enough to eat. Inside the mouth of the river, after the sand-bar had combed the strength of the breakers, he built a big fish-trap. No man had ever seen or dreamed a fish-trap before. He worked weeks on it, with his son and his wife, while the rest of us laughed at their labours. But, when it was done, the first day he caught more fish in it than could the whole tribe in a week, whereat there was great rejoicing. There was only one other place in the river for a fish-trap, but, when my father and I and a dozen other men started to make a very large trap, the guards came from the big grass-house we had built for Dog-Tooth. And the guards poked us with their spears and told us begone, because Little-Belly was going to build a trap there himself on the word of Sea-Lion, who was the voice of Dog-Tooth.

"There was much grumbling, and my father called a council. But, when he rose to speak, him the Sea-Lion thrust through the throat with a spear and he died. And Dog-Tooth and Little-Belly, and Three-Legs and all that held land said it was good. And Big-Fat said it was the will of God. And after that all men were afraid to stand up in the council, and there was no more council.

"Another man, Pig-Jaw, began to keep goats. He had heard about it as among the Meat-Eaters, and it was not long before he had many flocks. Other men, who had no land and no fish-traps, and who else would have gone hungry, were glad to work for Pig-Jaw, caring for his goats, guarding them from wild dogs and tigers, and driving them to the feeding pastures in the mountains. In return, Pig-Jaw gave them goat-meat to eat and goat-skins to wear, and sometimes they traded the goat-meat for fish and corn and fat roots.

"It was this time that money came to be. Sea-Lion was the man who first thought of it, and he talked it over with Dog-Tooth and Big-Fat. You see, these three were the ones that got a share of everything in the Sea Valley. One basket out of every three of corn was theirs, one fish out of every three, one goat out of every three. In return, they fed the guards and the watchers, and kept the rest for themselves. Sometimes, when a big haul of fish was made they did not know what to do with all their share. So Sea-Lion set the women to making money out of shell — little round pieces, with a hole in each one, and all made smooth and fine. These were strung on strings, and the strings were called money.

"Each string was of the value of thirty fish, or forty fish, but the women, who made a string a day, were given two fish each. The fish came out of the shares of Dog-Tooth, Big-Fat, and Sea-Lion, which they three did not eat. So all the money belonged to them. Then they told Three-Legs and the other land-owners that they would take their share of corn and roots in money, Little-Belly that they would take their share of fish in money, Pig-Jaw that they would take their share of goats and cheese in money. Thus, a man who had nothing, worked for one who had, and was paid in money. With this money he bought corn, and fish, and meat, and cheese. And Three-Legs and all owners of things paid Dog-Tooth and Sea-Lion and Big-Fat their share in money. And they paid the guards and watchers in money, and the guards and watchers bought their food with the money. And, because money was cheap, Dog-Tooth made many more men into guards. And, because money was cheap to make, a number of men began to make money out of shell themselves. But the guards stuck spears in them and shot them full of arrows, because they were trying to break up the tribe. It was bad to break up the tribe, for then the Meat-Eaters would come over the divide and kill them all.

"Big-Fat was the voice of God, but he took Broken-Rib and made him into a priest, so that he became the voice of Big-Fat and did most of his talking for him. And both had other men to be servants to them. So, also, did Little-Belly and Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw have other men to lie in the sun about their grass houses and carry messages for them and give commands. And more and more were men taken away from work, so that those that were left worked harder than ever before. It seemed that men desired to do no work and strove to seek out other ways whereby men should work for them. Crooked-Eyes found such a way. He made the first fire-brew out of corn. And thereafter he worked no more, for he talked secretly with Dog-Tooth and Big-Fat and the other masters, and it was agreed that he should be the only one to make fire-brew. But Crooked-Eyes did no work himself. Men made the brew for him, and he paid them in money. Then he sold the fire-brew for money, and all men bought. And many strings of money did he give Dog-Tooth and Sea-Lion and all of them.

"Big-Fat and Broken-Rib stood by Dog-Tooth when he took his second wife, and his third wife. They said Dog-Tooth was different from other men and second only to God that Big-Fat kept in his taboo house, and Dog-Tooth said so, too, and wanted to know who were they to grumble about how many wives he took. Dog-Tooth had a big canoe made, and, many more men he took from work, who did nothing and lay in the sun, save only when Dog-Tooth went in the canoe, when they paddled for him. And he made Tiger-Face head man over all the guards, so that Tiger-Face became his right arm, and when he did not like a man Tiger-Face killed that man for him. And Tiger-Face, also, made another man to be his right arm, and to give commands, and to kill for him.

"But this was the strange thing: as the days went by we who were left worked harder and harder, and yet did we get less and less to eat."

"But what of the goats and the corn and the fat roots and the fish-trap?" spoke up Afraid-of-the-Dark, "what of all this? Was there not more food to be gained by man's work?"

"It is so," Long-Beard agreed. "Three men on the fish-trap got more fish than the whole tribe before there was a fish-trap. But have I not said we were fools? The more food we were able to get, the less food did we have to eat."

"But was it not plain that the many men who did not work ate it all up?" Yellow-Head demanded.

Long-Beard nodded his head sadly.

"Dog-Tooth's dogs were stuffed with meat, and the men who lay in the sun and did no work were rolling in fat, and, at the same time, there were little children crying themselves to sleep with hunger biting them with every wail."

Deer-Runner was spurred by the recital of famine to tear out a chunk of bear-meat and broil it on a stick over the coals. This he devoured with smacking lips, while Long-Beard went on:

"When we grumbled Big-Fat arose, and with the voice of God said that God had chosen the wise men to own the land and the goats and the fish-trap, and the fire-brew, and that without these wise men we would all be animals, as in the days when we lived in trees.

"And there arose one who became a singer of songs for the king. Him they called the Bug, because he was small and ungainly of face and limb and excelled not in work or deed. He loved the fattest marrow bones, the choicest fish, the milk warm from the goats, the first corn that was ripe, and the snug place by the fire. And thus, becoming singer of songs to the king, he found a way to do nothing and be fat. And when the people grumbled more and more, and some threw stones at the king's grass house, the Bug sang a song of how good it was to be a Fish-Eater. In his song he told that the Fish-Eaters were the chosen of God and the finest men God had made. He sang of the Meat-Eaters as pigs and crows, and sang how fine and good it was for the Fish-Eaters to fight and die doing God's work, which was the killing of Meat-Eaters. The words of his song were like fire in us, and we clamoured to be led against the Meat-Eaters. And we forgot that we were hungry, and why we had grumbled, and were glad to be led by Tiger-Face over the divide, where we killed many Meat-Eaters and were content.

"But things were no better in the Sea Valley. The only way to get food was to work for Three-Legs or Little-Belly or Pig-Jaw; for there was no land that a man might plant with corn for himself. And often there were more men than Three-Legs and the others had work for. So these men went hungry, and so did their wives and children and their old mothers. Tiger-Face said they could become guards if they wanted to, and many of them did, and thereafter they did no work except to poke spears in the men who did work and who grumbled at feeding so many idlers.

"And when we grumbled, ever the Bug sang new songs. He said that Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw and the rest were strong men, and that that was why they had so much. He said that we should be glad to have strong men with us, else would we perish of our own worthlessness and the Meat-Eaters. Therefore, we should be glad to let such strong men have all they could lay hands on. And Big-Fat and Pig-Jaw and Tiger-Face and all the rest said it was true.

"'All right,' said Long-Fang, 'then will I, too, be a strong man.' And he got himself corn, and began to make fire-brew and sell it for strings of money. And, when Crooked-Eyes complained, Long-Fang said that he was himself a strong man, and that if Crooked-Eyes made any more noise he would bash his brains out for him. Whereat Crooked-Eyes was afraid and went and talked with Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw. And all three went and talked to Dog-Tooth. And Dog-Tooth spoke to Sea-Lion, and Sea-Lion sent a runner with a message to Tiger-Face. And Tiger-Face sent his guards, who burned Long-Fang's house along with the fire-brew he had made. Also, they killed him and all his family. And Big-Fat said it was good, and the Bug sang another song about how good it was to observe the law, and what a fine land the Sea Valley was, and how every man who loved the Sea Valley should go forth and kill the bad Meat-Eaters. And again his song was as fire to us, and we forgot to grumble.

"It was very strange. When Little-Belly caught too many fish, so that it took a great many to sell for a little money, he threw many of the fish back into the sea, so that more money would be paid for what was left. And Three-Legs often let many large fields lie idle so as to get more money for his corn. And the women, making so much money out of shell that much money was needed to buy with, Dog-Tooth stopped the making of money. And the women had no work, so they took the places of the men. I worked on the fish-trap, getting a string of money every five days. But my sister now did my work, getting a string of money for every ten days. The women worked cheaper, and there was less food, and Tiger-Face said we should become guards. Only I could not become a guard because I was lame of one leg and Tiger-Face would not have me. And there were many like me. We were broken men and only fit to beg for work or to take care of the babies while the women worked."

Yellow-Head, too, was made hungry by the recital and broiled a piece of bear-meat on the coals.

"But why didn't you rise up, all of you, and kill Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw and Big-Fat and the rest and get enough to eat?" Afraid-in-the-Dark demanded.

"Because we could not understand," Long-Beard answered. "There was too much to think about, and, also, there were the guards sticking spears into us, and Big-Fat talking about God, and the Bug singing new songs. And when any man did think right, and said so, Tiger-Face and the guards got him, and he was tied out to the rocks at low tide so that the rising waters drowned him.

"It was a strange thing — the money. It was like the Bug's songs. It seemed all right, but it wasn't, and we were slow to understand. Dog-Tooth began to gather the money in. He put it in a big pile, in a grass house, with guards to watch it day and night. And the more money he piled in the house the dearer money became, so that a man worked a longer time for a string of money than before. Then, too, there was always talk of war with the Meat-Eaters, and Dog-Tooth and Tiger-Face filled many houses with corn, and dried fish, and smoked goat-meat, and cheese. And with the food, piled there in mountains the people had not enough to eat. But what did it matter? Whenever the people grumbled too loudly the Bug sang a new song, and Big-Fat said it was God's word that we should kill Meat-Eaters, and Tiger-Face led us over the divide to kill and be killed. I was not good enough to be a guard and lie fat in the sun, but, when we made war, Tiger-Face was glad to take me along. And when we had eaten, all the food stored in the houses we stopped fighting and went back to work to pile up more food."

"Then were you all crazy," commented Deer-Runner.

“Then were we indeed all crazy,” Long-Beard agreed. “It was strange, all of it. There was Split-Nose. He said everything was wrong. He said it was true that we grew strong by adding our strength together. And he said that, when we first formed the tribe, it was right that the men whose strength hurt the tribe should be shorn of their strength — men who bashed their brothers’ heads and stole their brothers’ wives. And now, he said, the tribe was not getting stronger, but was getting weaker, because there were men with another kind of strength that were hurting the tribe — men who had the strength of the land, like Three-Legs; who had the strength of the fish-trap, like Little-Belly; who had the strength of all the goat-meat, like Pig-Jaw. The thing to do, Split-Nose said, was to shear these men of their evil strength; to make them go to work, all of them, and to let no man eat who did not work.

“And the Bug sang another song about men like Split-Nose, who wanted to go back, and live in trees.

“Yet Split-Nose said no; that he did not want to go back, but ahead; that they grew strong only as they added their strength together; and that, if the Fish-Eaters would add their strength to the Meat-Eaters, there would be no more fighting and no more watchers and no more guards, and that, with all men working, there would be so much food that each man would have to work not more than two hours a day.

“Then the Bug sang again, and he sang that Split-Nose was lazy, and he sang also the ‘Song of the Bees.’ It was a strange song, and those who listened were made mad, as from the drinking of strong fire-brew. The song was of a swarm of bees, and of a robber wasp who had come in to live with the bees and who was stealing all their honey. The wasp was lazy and told them there was no need to work; also, he told them to make friends with the bears, who were not honey-stealers but only very good friends. And the Bug sang in crooked words, so that those who listened knew that the swarm was the Sea Valley tribe, that the bears were the Meat-Eaters, and that the lazy wasp was Split-Nose. And when the Bug sang that the bees listened to the wasp till the swarm was near to perishing, the people growled and snarled, and when the Bug sang that at last the good bees arose and stung the wasp to death, the people picked up stones from the ground and stoned Split-Nose to death till there was naught to be seen of him but the heap of stones they had flung on top of him. And there were many poor people who worked long and hard and had not enough to eat that helped throw the stones on Split-Nose.

“And, after the death of Split-Nose, there was but one other man that dared rise up and speak his mind, and that man was Hair-Face. ‘Where is the strength of the strong?’ he asked. ‘We are the strong, all of us, and we are stronger than Dog-Tooth and Tiger-Face and Three-Legs and Pig-Jaw and all the rest who do nothing and eat much and weaken us by the hurt of their strength which is bad strength. Men who are slaves are not strong. If the man who first found the virtue and use of fire had used his strength we would have been his slaves, as we are the slaves to-day of Little-Belly, who found the virtue and use of the fish-trap; and of the men who found the virtue and use of the land, and the goats, and the fire-brew. Before, we lived in trees, my brothers, and no man was safe. But we fight no more with one another. We have added our strength together. Then let us fight no more with the Meat-Eaters. Let us add our strength and their strength together. Then will we be indeed strong. And then we will go out together, the Fish-Eaters and the Meat-Eaters, and we will kill the tigers and the lions and the wolves and the wild dogs, and we will pasture our goats on all the hill-sides and plant our corn and fat roots in all the high mountain valleys. In that day we will be so strong that all the wild animals will flee before us and perish. And nothing will withstand us, for the strength of each man will be the strength of all men in the world.’

“So said Hair-Face, and they killed him, because, they said, he was a wild man and wanted to go back and live in a tree. It was very strange. Whenever a man arose and wanted to go forward all those that stood still said he went backward and should be killed. And the poor people helped stone him, and were fools. We were all fools, except those who were fat and did no work. The fools were called wise, and the wise were stoned. Men who worked did not get enough to eat, and the men who did not work ate too much.

“And the tribe went on losing strength. The children were weak and sickly. And, because we ate not enough, strange sicknesses came among us and we died like flies. And then the Meat-Eaters came upon us. We had followed Tiger-Face too often over the divide and killed them. And now they came to repay in blood. We were too weak and sick to man the big wall. And they killed us, all of us, except some of the women, which they took away with them. The Bug and I escaped, and I hid in the wildest places, and became a hunter of meat and went hungry no more. I stole a wife from the Meat-Eaters, and went to live in the caves of the high mountains where they could not find me. And we had three sons, and each son stole a wife from the Meat-Eaters. And the rest you know, for are you not the sons of my sons?"

"But the Bug?" queried Deer-Runner. "What became of him?"

"He went to live with the Meat-Eaters and to be a singer of songs to the king. He is an old man now, but he sings the same old songs; and, when a man rises up to go forward, he sings that that man is walking backward to live in a tree."

Long-Beard dipped into the bear-carcass and sucked with toothless gums at a fist of suet.

"Some day," he said, wiping his hands on his sides, "all the fools will be dead and then all live men will go forward. The strength of the strong will be theirs, and they will add their strength together, so that, of all the men in the world, not one will fight with another. There will be no guards nor watchers on the walls. And all the hunting animals will be killed, and, as Hair-Face said, all the hill-sides will be pastured with goats and all the high mountain valleys will be planted with corn and fat roots. And all men will be brothers, and no man will lie idle in the sun and be fed by his fellows. And all that will come to pass in the time when the fools are dead, and when there will be no more singers to stand still and sing the 'Song of the Bees.' Bees are not men."

The Sun Dog Trail

SITKA CHARLEY smoked his pipe and gazed thoughtfully at the POLICE GAZETTE illustration on the wall. For half an hour he had been steadily regarding it, and for half an hour I had been slyly watching him. Something was going on in that mind of his, and, whatever it was, I knew it was well worth knowing. He had lived life, and seen things, and performed that prodigy of prodigies, namely, the turning of his back upon his own people, and, in so far as it was possible for an Indian, becoming a white man even in his mental processes. As he phrased it himself, he had come into the warm, sat among us, by our fires, and become one of us. He had never learned to read nor write, but his vocabulary was remarkable, and more remarkable still was the completeness with which he had assumed the white man's point of view, the white man's attitude toward things.

We had struck this deserted cabin after a hard day on trail. The dogs had been fed, the supper dishes washed, the beds made, and we were now enjoying that most delicious hour that comes each day, and but once each day, on the Alaskan trail, the hour when nothing intervenes between the tired body and bed save the smoking of the evening pipe. Some former denizen of the cabin had decorated its walls with illustrations torn from magazines and newspapers, and it was these illustrations that had held Sitka Charley's attention from the moment of our arrival two hours before. He had studied them intently, ranging from one to another and back again, and I could see that there was uncertainty in his mind, and bepuzzlement.

"Well?" I finally broke the silence.

He took the pipe from his mouth and said simply, "I do not understand."

He smoked on again, and again removed the pipe, using it to point at the POLICE GAZETTE illustration.

"That picture — what does it mean? I do not understand."

I looked at the picture. A man, with a preposterously wicked face, his right hand pressed dramatically to his heart, was falling backward to the floor. Confronting him, with a face that was a composite of destroying angel and Adonis, was a man holding a smoking revolver.

"One man is killing the other man," I said, aware of a distinct bepuzzlement of my own and of failure to explain.

"Why?" asked Sitka Charley.

“I do not know,” I confessed.

“That picture is all end,” he said. “It has no beginning.”

“It is life,” I said.

“Life has beginning,” he objected.

I was silenced for the moment, while his eyes wandered on to an adjoining decoration, a photographic reproduction of somebody’s “Leda and the Swan.”

“That picture,” he said, “has no beginning. It has no end. I do not understand pictures.”

“Look at that picture,” I commanded, pointing to a third decoration. “It means something. Tell me what it means to you.”

He studied it for several minutes.

“The little girl is sick,” he said finally. “That is the doctor looking at her. They have been up all night — see, the oil is low in the lamp, the first morning light is coming in at the window. It is a great sickness; maybe she will die, that is why the doctor looks so hard. That is the mother. It is a great sickness, because the mother’s head is on the table and she is crying.”

“How do you know she is crying?” I interrupted. “You cannot see her face. Perhaps she is asleep.”

Sitka Charley looked at me in swift surprise, then back at the picture. It was evident that he had not reasoned the impression.

“Perhaps she is asleep,” he repeated. He studied it closely. “No, she is not asleep. The shoulders show that she is not asleep. I have seen the shoulders of a woman who cried. The mother is crying. It is a very great sickness.”

“And now you understand the picture,” I cried.

He shook his head, and asked, “The little girl — does it die?”

It was my turn for silence.

“Does it die?” he reiterated. “You are a painter-man. Maybe you know.”

“No, I do not know,” I confessed.

“It is not life,” he delivered himself dogmatically. “In life little girl die or get well. Something happen in life. In picture nothing happen. No, I do not understand pictures.”

His disappointment was patent. It was his desire to understand all things that white men understand, and here, in this matter, he failed. I felt, also, that there was challenge in his attitude. He was bent upon compelling me to show him the wisdom of pictures. Besides, he had remarkable powers of visualization. I had long since learned this. He visualized everything. He saw life in pictures, felt life in pictures, generalized life in pictures; and yet he did not understand pictures when seen through other men's eyes and expressed by those men with color and line upon canvas.

"Pictures are bits of life," I said. "We paint life as we see it. For instance, Charley, you are coming along the trail. It is night. You see a cabin. The window is lighted. You look through the window for one second, or for two seconds, you see something, and you go on your way. You saw maybe a man writing a letter. You saw something without beginning or end. Nothing happened. Yet it was a bit of life you saw. You remember it afterward. It is like a picture in your memory. The window is the frame of the picture."

I could see that he was interested, and I knew that as I spoke he had looked through the window and seen the man writing the letter.

"There is a picture you have painted that I understand," he said. "It is a true picture. It has much meaning. It is in your cabin at Dawson. It is a faro table. There are men playing. It is a large game. The limit is off."

"How do you know the limit is off?" I broke in excitedly, for here was where my work could be tried out on an unbiassed judge who knew life only, and not art, and who was a sheer master of reality. Also, I was very proud of that particular piece of work. I had named it "The Last Turn," and I believed it to be one of the best things I had ever done.

"There are no chips on the table", Sitka Charley explained. "The men are playing with markers. That means the roof is the limit. One man play yellow markers — maybe one yellow marker worth one thousand dollars, maybe two thousand dollars. One man play red markers. Maybe they are worth five hundred dollars, maybe one thousand dollars. It is a very big game. Everybody play very high, up to the roof. How do I know? You make the dealer with blood little bit warm in face." (I was delighted.) "The lookout, you make him lean forward in his chair. Why he lean forward? Why his face very much quiet? Why his eyes very much bright? Why dealer warm with blood a little bit in the face? Why all men very quiet?-the man with yellow markers? the man with white markers? the man with red markers? Why nobody talk? Because very much money. Because last turn."

"How do you know it is the last turn?" I asked.

"The king is coppered, the seven is played open," he answered. "Nobody bet on other cards. Other cards all gone. Everybody one mind. Everybody play king to lose, seven to win. Maybe bank lose twenty thousand dollars, maybe bank win. Yes, that picture I understand."

"Yet you do not know the end!" I cried triumphantly. "It is the last turn, but the cards are not yet turned. In the picture they will never be turned. Nobody will ever know who wins nor who loses."

"And the men will sit there and never talk," he said, wonder and awe growing in his face. "And the lookout will lean forward, and the blood will be warm in the face of the dealer. It is a strange thing. Always will they sit there, always; and the cards will never be turned."

"It is a picture," I said. "It is life. You have seen things like it yourself."

He looked at me and pondered, then said, very slowly: "No, as you say, there is no end to it. Nobody will ever know the end. Yet is it a true thing. I have seen it. It is life."

For a long time he smoked on in silence, weighing the pictorial wisdom of the white man and verifying it by the facts of life. He nodded his head several times, and grunted once or twice. Then he knocked the ashes from his pipe, carefully refilled it, and after a thoughtful pause, lighted it again.

"Then have I, too, seen many pictures of life," he began; "pictures not painted, but seen with the eyes. I have looked at them like through the window at the man writing the letter. I have seen many pieces of life, without beginning, without end, without understanding."

With a sudden change of position he turned his eyes full upon me and regarded me thoughtfully.

"Look you," he said; "you are a painter-man. How would you paint this which I saw, a picture without beginning, the ending of which I do not understand, a piece of life with the northern lights for a candle and Alaska for a frame."

"It is a large canvas," I murmured.

But he ignored me, for the picture he had in mind was before his eyes and he was seeing it.

"There are many names for this picture," he said. "But in the picture there are many sun-dogs, and it comes into my mind to call it 'The Sun-Dog Trail.' It was a long time ago, seven years ago, the fall of '97, when I saw the woman first time. At Lake Linderman I had one canoe, very good Peterborough canoe. I came over Chilcoot Pass with two thousand letters for Dawson. I was letter carrier. Everybody rush to Klondike at that time. Many people on trail. Many people chop down trees and make boats. Last water, snow in the air, snow on the ground, ice on the lake, on the river ice in the eddies. Every day more snow, more ice. Maybe one day, maybe three days, maybe six days, any day maybe freeze-up come, then no more water, all ice, everybody walk, Dawson six hundred miles, long time walk. Boat go very quick. Everybody want to go boat. Everybody say, ‘Charley, two hundred dollars you take me in canoe,’ ‘Charley, three hundred dollars,’ ‘Charley, four hundred dollars.’ I say no, all the time I say no. I am letter carrier.

“In morning I get to Lake Linderman. I walk all night and am much tired. I cook breakfast, I eat, then I sleep on the beach three hours. I wake up. It is ten o’clock. Snow is falling. There is wind, much wind that blows fair. Also, there is a woman who sits in the snow alongside. She is white woman, she is young, very pretty, maybe she is twenty years old, maybe twenty-five years old. She look at me. I look at her. She is very tired. She is no dance-woman. I see that right away. She is good woman, and she is very tired.

“‘You are Sitka Charley,’ she says. I get up quick and roll blankets so snow does not get inside. ‘I go to Dawson,’ she says. ‘I go in your canoe — how much?’

“I do not want anybody in my canoe. I do not like to say no. So I say, ‘One thousand dollars.’ Just for fun I say it, so woman cannot come with me, much better than say no. She look at me very hard, then she says, ‘When you start?’ I say right away. Then she says all right, she will give me one thousand dollars.

“What can I say? I do not want the woman, yet have I given my word that for one thousand dollars she can come. I am surprised. Maybe she make fun, too, so I say, ‘Let me see thousand dollars.’ And that woman, that young woman, all alone on the trail, there in the snow, she take out one thousand dollars, in greenbacks, and she put them in my hand. I look at money, I look at her. What can I say? I say, ‘No, my canoe very small. There is no room for outfit.’ She laugh. She says, ‘I am great traveller. This is my outfit.’ She kick one small pack in the snow. It is two fur robes, canvas outside, some woman’s clothes inside. I pick it up. Maybe thirty-five pounds. I am surprised. She take it away from me. She says, ‘Come, let us start.’ She carries pack into canoe. What can I say? I put my blankets into canoe. We start.

“And that is the way I saw the woman first time. The wind was fair. I put up small sail. The canoe went very fast, it flew like a bird over the high waves. The woman was much afraid. ‘What for you come Klondike much afraid?’ I ask. She laugh at me, a hard laugh, but she is still much afraid.

Also is she very tired. I run canoe through rapids to Lake Bennett. Water very bad, and woman cry out because she is afraid. We go down Lake Bennett, snow, ice, wind like a gale, but woman is very tired and go to sleep.

"That night we make camp at Windy Arm. Woman sit by fire and eat supper. I look at her. She is pretty. She fix hair. There is much hair, and it is brown, also sometimes it is like gold in the firelight, when she turn her head, so, and flashes come from it like golden fire. The eyes are large and brown, sometimes warm like a candle behind a curtain, sometimes very hard and bright like broken ice when sun shines upon it. When she smile — how can I say? — when she smile I know white man like to kiss her, just like that, when she smile. She never do hard work. Her hands are soft, like baby's hand. She is soft all over, like baby. She is not thin, but round like baby; her arm, her leg, her muscles, all soft and round like baby. Her waist is small, and when she stand up, when she walk, or move her head or arm, it is — I do not know the word — but it is nice to look at, like — maybe I say she is built on lines like the lines of a good canoe, just like that, and when she move she is like the movement of the good canoe sliding through still water or leaping through water when it is white and fast and angry. It is very good to see.

"Why does she come into Klondike, all alone, with plenty of money? I do not know. Next day I ask her. She laugh and says: 'Sitka Charley, that is none of your business. I give you one thousand dollars take me to Dawson. That only is your business.' Next day after that I ask her what is her name. She laugh, then she says, 'Mary Jones, that is my name.' I do not know her name, but I know all the time that Mary Jones is not her name.

"It is very cold in canoe, and because of cold sometimes she not feel good. Sometimes she feel good and she sing. Her voice is like a silver bell, and I feel good all over like when I go into church at Holy Cross Mission, and when she sing I feel strong and paddle like hell. Then she laugh and says, 'You think we get to Dawson before freeze-up, Charley?' Sometimes she sit in canoe and is thinking far away, her eyes like that, all empty. She does not see Sitka Charley, nor the ice, nor the snow. She is far away. Very often she is like that, thinking far away. Sometimes, when she is thinking far away, her face is not good to see. It looks like a face that is angry, like the face of one man when he want to kill another man.

“Last day to Dawson very bad. Shore-ice in all the eddies, mush-ice in the stream. I cannot paddle. The canoe freeze to ice. I cannot get to shore. There is much danger. All the time we go down Yukon in the ice. That night there is much noise of ice. Then ice stop, canoe stop, everything stop. ‘Let us go to shore,’ the woman says. I say no, better wait. By and by, everything start down-stream again. There is much snow. I cannot see. At eleven o’clock at night, everything stop. At one o’clock everything start again. At three o’clock everything stop. Canoe is smashed like eggshell, but is on top of ice and cannot sink. I hear dogs howling. We wait. We sleep. By and by morning come. There is no more snow. It is the freeze-up, and there is Dawson. Canoe smash and stop right at Dawson. Sitka Charley has come in with two thousand letters on very last water.

“The woman rent a cabin on the hill, and for one week I see her no more. Then, one day, she come to me. ‘Charley,’ she says, ‘how do you like to work for me? You drive dogs, make camp, travel with me.’ I say that I make too much money carrying letters. She says, ‘Charley, I will pay you more money.’ I tell her that pick-and-shovel man get fifteen dollars a day in the mines. She says, ‘That is four hundred and fifty dollars a month.’ And I say, ‘Sitka Charley is no pick-and-shovel man.’ Then she says, ‘I understand, Charley. I will give you seven hundred and fifty dollars each month.’ It is a good price, and I go to work for her. I buy for her dogs and sled. We travel up Klondike, up Bonanza and Eldorado, over to Indian River, to Sulphur Creek, to Dominion, back across divide to Gold Bottom and to Too Much Gold, and back to Dawson. All the time she look for something, I do not know what. I am puzzled. ‘What thing you look for?’ I ask. She laugh. ‘You look for gold?’ I ask. She laugh. Then she says, ‘That is none of your business, Charley.’ And after that I never ask any more.

“She has a small revolver which she carries in her belt. Sometimes, on trail, she makes practice with revolver. I laugh. ‘What for you laugh, Charley?’ she ask. ‘What for you play with that?’ I say. ‘It is no good. It is too small. It is for a child, a little plaything.’ When we get back to Dawson she ask me to buy good revolver for her. I buy a Colt’s 44. It is very heavy, but she carry it in her belt all the time.

“At Dawson comes the man. Which way he come I do not know. Only do I know he is CHECHA-QUO — what you call tenderfoot. His hands are soft, just like hers. He never do hard work. He is soft all over. At first I think maybe he is her husband. But he is too young. Also, they make two beds at night. He is maybe twenty years old. His eyes blue, his hair yellow, he has a little mustache which is yellow. His name is John Jones. Maybe he is her brother. I do not know. I ask questions no more. Only I think his name not John Jones. Other people call him Mr. Girvan. I do not think that is his name. I do not think her name is Miss Girvan, which other people call her. I think nobody know their names.

"One night I am asleep at Dawson. He wake me up. He says, 'Get the dogs ready; we start.' No more do I ask questions, so I get the dogs ready and we start. We go down the Yukon. It is night-time, it is November, and it is very cold — sixty-five below. She is soft. He is soft. The cold bites. They get tired. They cry under their breaths to themselves. By and by I say better we stop and make camp. But they say that they will go on. Three times I say better to make camp and rest, but each time they say they will go on. After that I say nothing. All the time, day after day, is it that way. They are very soft. They get stiff and sore. They do not understand moccasins, and their feet hurt very much. They limp, they stagger like drunken people, they cry under their breaths; and all the time they say, 'On! on! We will go on!'

"They are like crazy people. All the time do they go on, and on. Why do they go on? I do not know. Only do they go on. What are they after? I do not know. They are not after gold. There is no stampede. Besides, they spend plenty of money. But I ask questions no more. I, too, go on and on, because I am strong on the trail and because I am greatly paid.

"We make Circle City. That for which they look is not there. I think now that we will rest, and rest the dogs. But we do not rest, not for one day do we rest. 'Come,' says the woman to the man, 'let us go on.' And we go on. We leave the Yukon. We cross the divide to the west and swing down into the Tanana Country. There are new diggings there. But that for which they look is not there, and we take the back trail to Circle City.

"It is a hard journey. December is most gone. The days are short. It is very cold. One morning it is seventy below zero. 'Better that we don't travel to-day,' I say, 'else will the frost be unwarmed in the breathing and bite all the edges of our lungs. After that we will have bad cough, and maybe next spring will come pneumonia.' But they are CHECHA-QUO. They do not understand the trail. They are like dead people they are so tired, but they say, 'Let us go on.' We go on. The frost bites their lungs, and they get the dry cough. They cough till the tears run down their cheeks. When bacon is frying they must run away from the fire and cough half an hour in the snow. They freeze their cheeks a little bit, so that the skin turns black and is very sore. Also, the man freezes his thumb till the end is like to come off, and he must wear a large thumb on his mitten to keep it warm. And sometimes, when the frost bites hard and the thumb is very cold, he must take off the mitten and put the hand between his legs next to the skin, so that the thumb may get warm again.

"We limp into Circle City, and even I, Sitka Charley, am tired. It is Christmas Eve. I dance, drink, make a good time, for to-morrow is Christmas Day and we will rest. But no. It is five o'clock in the morning — Christmas morning. I am two hours asleep. The man stand by my bed. 'Come, Charley,' he says, 'harness the dogs. We start.'

"Have I not said that I ask questions no more? They pay me seven hundred and fifty dollars each month. They are my masters. I am their man. If they say, 'Charley, come, let us start for hell,' I will harness the dogs, and snap the whip, and start for hell. So I harness the dogs, and we start down the Yukon. Where do we go? They do not say. Only do they say, 'On! on! We will go on!'

"They are very weary. They have travelled many hundreds of miles, and they do not understand the way of the trail. Besides, their cough is very bad — the dry cough that makes strong men swear and weak men cry. But they go on. Every day they go on. Never do they rest the dogs. Always do they buy new dogs. At every camp, at every post, at every Indian village, do they cut out the tired dogs and put in fresh dogs. They have much money, money without end, and like water they spend it. They are crazy? Sometimes I think so, for there is a devil in them that drives them on and on, always on. What is it that they try to find? It is not gold. Never do they dig in the ground. I think a long time. Then I think it is a man they try to find. But what man? Never do we see the man. Yet are they like wolves on the trail of the kill. But they are funny wolves, soft wolves, baby wolves who do not understand the way of the trail. They cry aloud in their sleep at night. In their sleep they moan and groan with the pain of their weariness. And in the day, as they stagger along the trail, they cry under their breaths. They are funny wolves.

"We pass Fort Yukon. We pass Fort Hamilton. We pass Minook. January has come and nearly gone. The days are very short. At nine o'clock comes daylight. At three o'clock comes night. And it is cold. And even I, Sitka Charley, am tired. Will we go on forever this way without end? I do not know. But always do I look along the trail for that which they try to find. There are few people on the trail. Sometimes we travel one hundred miles and never see a sign of life. It is very quiet. There is no sound. Sometimes it snows, and we are like wandering ghosts. Sometimes it is clear, and at midday the sun looks at us for a moment over the hills to the south. The northern lights flame in the sky, and the sun-dogs dance, and the air is filled with frost-dust.

"I am Sitka Charley, a strong man. I was born on the trail, and all my days have I lived on the trail. And yet have these two baby wolves made me very tired. I am lean, like a starved cat, and I am glad of my bed at night, and in the morning am I greatly weary. Yet ever are we hitting the trail in the dark before daylight, and still on the trail does the dark after nightfall find us. These two baby wolves! If I am lean like a starved cat, they are lean like cats that have never eaten and have died. Their eyes are sunk deep in their heads, bright sometimes as with fever, dim and cloudy sometimes like the eyes of the dead. Their cheeks are hollow like caves in a cliff. Also are their cheeks black and raw from many freezings. Sometimes it is the woman in the morning who says, 'I cannot get up. I cannot move. Let me die.' And it is the man who stands beside her and says, 'Come, let us go on.' And they go on. And sometimes it is the man who cannot get up, and the woman says, 'Come, let us go on.' But the one thing they do, and always do, is to go on. Always do they go on.

"Sometimes, at the trading posts, the man and woman get letters. I do not know what is in the letters. But it is the scent that they follow, these letters themselves are the scent. One time an Indian gives them a letter. I talk with him privately. He says it is a man with one eye who gives him the letter, a man who travels fast down the Yukon. That is all. But I know that the baby wolves are after the man with the one eye.

"It is February, and we have travelled fifteen hundred miles. We are getting near Bering Sea, and there are storms and blizzards. The going is hard. We come to Anvig. I do not know, but I think sure they get a letter at Anvig, for they are much excited, and they say, 'Come, hurry, let us go on.' But I say we must buy grub, and they say we must travel light and fast. Also, they say that we can get grub at Charley McKeon's cabin. Then do I know that they take the big cut-off, for it is there that Charley McKeon lives where the Black Rock stands by the trail.

“Before we start, I talk maybe two minutes with the priest at Anvig. Yes, there is a man with one eye who has gone by and who travels fast. And I know that for which they look is the man with the one eye. We leave Anvig with little grub, and travel light and fast. There are three fresh dogs bought in Anvig, and we travel very fast. The man and woman are like mad. We start earlier in the morning, we travel later at night. I look sometimes to see them die, these two baby wolves, but they will not die. They go on and on. When the dry cough take hold of them hard, they hold their hands against their stomach and double up in the snow, and cough, and cough, and cough. They cannot walk, they cannot talk. Maybe for ten minutes they cough, maybe for half an hour, and then they straighten up, the tears from the coughing frozen on their faces, and the words they say are, ‘Come, let us go on.’

“Even I, Sitka Charley, am greatly weary, and I think seven hundred and fifty dollars is a cheap price for the labor I do. We take the big cut-off, and the trail is fresh. The baby wolves have their noses down to the trail, and they say, ‘Hurry!’ All the time do they say, ‘Hurry! Faster! Faster!’ It is hard on the dogs. We have not much food and we cannot give them enough to eat, and they grow weak. Also, they must work hard. The woman has true sorrow for them, and often, because of them, the tears are in her eyes. But the devil in her that drives her on will not let her stop and rest the dogs.

“And then we come upon the man with the one eye. He is in the snow by the trail, and his leg is broken. Because of the leg he has made a poor camp, and has been lying on his blankets for three days and keeping a fire going. When we find him he is swearing. He swears like hell. Never have I heard a man swear like that man. I am glad. Now that they have found that for which they look, we will have rest. But the woman says, ‘Let us start. Hurry!’

“I am surprised. But the man with the one eye says, ‘Never mind me. Give me your grub. You will get more grub at McKeon’s cabin to-morrow. Send McKeon back for me. But do you go on.’ Here is another wolf, an old wolf, and he, too, thinks but the one thought, to go on. So we give him our grub, which is not much, and we chop wood for his fire, and we take his strongest dogs and go on. We left the man with one eye there in the snow, and he died there in the snow, for McKeon never went back for him. And who that man was, and why he came to be there, I do not know. But I think he was greatly paid by the man and the woman, like me, to do their work for them.

"That day and that night we had nothing to eat, and all next day we travelled fast, and we were weak with hunger. Then we came to the Black Rock, which rose five hundred feet above the trail. It was at the end of the day. Darkness was coming, and we could not find the cabin of McKeon. We slept hungry, and in the morning looked for the cabin. It was not there, which was a strange thing, for everybody knew that McKeon lived in a cabin at Black Rock. We were near to the coast, where the wind blows hard and there is much snow. Everywhere there were small hills of snow where the wind had piled it up. I have a thought, and I dig in one and another of the hills of snow. Soon I find the walls of the cabin, and I dig down to the door. I go inside. McKeon is dead. Maybe two or three weeks he is dead. A sickness had come upon him so that he could not leave the cabin. The wind and the snow had covered the cabin. He had eaten his grub and died. I looked for his cache, but there was no grub in it.

"'Let us go on,' said the woman. Her eyes were hungry, and her hand was upon her heart, as with the hurt of something inside. She bent back and forth like a tree in the wind as she stood there. 'Yes, let us go on,' said the man. His voice was hollow, like the KLONK of an old raven, and he was hunger-mad. His eyes were like live coals of fire, and as his body rocked to and fro, so rocked his soul inside. And I, too, said, 'Let us go on.' For that one thought, laid upon me like a lash for every mile of fifteen hundred miles, had burned itself into my soul, and I think that I, too, was mad. Besides, we could only go on, for there was no grub. And we went on, giving no thought to the man with the one eye in the snow.

"There is little travel on the big cut-off. Sometimes two or three months and nobody goes by. The snow had covered the trail, and there was no sign that men had ever come or gone that way. All day the wind blew and the snow fell, and all day we travelled, while our stomachs gnawed their desire and our bodies grew weaker with every step they took. Then the woman began to fall. Then the man. I did not fall, but my feet were heavy and I caught my toes and stumbled many times.

"That night is the end of February. I kill three ptarmigan with the woman's revolver, and we are made somewhat strong again. But the dogs have nothing to eat. They try to eat their harness, which is of leather and walrus-hide, and I must fight them off with a club and hang all the harness in a tree. And all night they howl and fight around that tree. But we do not mind. We sleep like dead people, and in the morning get up like dead people out of their graves and go on along the trail.

"That morning is the 1st of March, and on that morning I see the first sign of that after which the baby wolves are in search. It is clear weather, and cold. The sun stay longer in the sky, and there are sun-dogs flashing on either side, and the air is bright with frost-dust. The snow falls no more upon the trail, and I see the fresh sign of dogs and sled. There is one man with that outfit, and I see in the snow that he is not strong. He, too, has not enough to eat. The young wolves see the fresh sign, too, and they are much excited. 'Hurry!' they say. All the time they say, 'Hurry! Faster, Charley, faster!'

"We make hurry very slow. All the time the man and the woman fall down. When they try to ride on sled the dogs are too weak, and the dogs fall down. Besides, it is so cold that if they ride on the sled they will freeze. It is very easy for a hungry man to freeze. When the woman fall down, the man help her up. Sometimes the woman help the man up. By and by both fall down and cannot get up, and I must help them up all the time, else they will not get up and will die there in the snow. This is very hard work, for I am greatly weary, and as well I must drive the dogs, and the man and woman are very heavy with no strength in their bodies. So, by and by, I, too, fall down in the snow, and there is no one to help me up. I must get up by myself. And always do I get up by myself, and help them up, and make the dogs go on.

"That night I get one ptarmigan, and we are very hungry. And that night the man says to me, 'What time start to-morrow, Charley?' It is like the voice of a ghost. I say, 'All the time you make start at five o'clock.' 'To-morrow,' he says, 'we will start at three o'clock.' I laugh in great bitterness, and I say, 'You are dead man.' And he says, 'To-morrow we will start at three o'clock.'

"And we start at three o'clock, for I am their man, and that which they say is to be done, I do. It is clear and cold, and there is no wind. When daylight comes we can see a long way off. And it is very quiet. We can hear no sound but the beat of our hearts, and in the silence that is a very loud sound. We are like sleep-walkers, and we walk in dreams until we fall down; and then we know we must get up, and we see the trail once more and bear the beating of our hearts. Sometimes, when I am walking in dreams this way, I have strange thoughts. Why does Sitka Charley live? I ask myself. Why does Sitka Charley work hard, and go hungry, and have all this pain? For seven hundred and fifty dollars a month, I make the answer, and I know it is a foolish answer. Also is it a true answer. And after that never again do I care for money. For that day a large wisdom came to me. There was a great light, and I saw clear, and I knew that it was not for money that a man must live, but for a happiness that no man can give, or buy, or sell, and that is beyond all value of all money in the world.

"In the morning we come upon the last-night camp of the man who is before us. It is a poor camp, the kind a man makes who is hungry and without strength. On the snow there are pieces of blanket and of canvas, and I know what has happened. His dogs have eaten their harness, and he has made new harness out of his blankets. The man and woman stare hard at what is to be seen, and as I look at them my back feels the chill as of a cold wind against the skin. Their eyes are toil-mad and hunger-mad, and burn like fire deep in their heads. Their faces are like the faces of people who have died of hunger, and their cheeks are black with the dead flesh of many freezings. 'Let us go on,' says the man. But the woman coughs and falls in the snow. It is the dry cough where the frost has bitten the lungs. For a long time she coughs, then like a woman crawling out of her grave she crawls to her feet. The tears are ice upon her cheeks, and her breath makes a noise as it comes and goes, and she says, 'Let us go on.'

"We go on. And we walk in dreams through the silence. And every time we walk is a dream and we are without pain; and every time we fall down is an awakening, and we see the snow and the mountains and the fresh trail of the man who is before us, and we know all our pain again. We come to where we can see a long way over the snow, and that for which they look is before them. A mile away there are black spots upon the snow. The black spots move. My eyes are dim, and I must stiffen my soul to see. And I see one man with dogs and a sled. The baby wolves see, too. They can no longer talk, but they whisper, 'On, on. Let us hurry!'

"And they fall down, but they go on. The man who is before us, his blanket harness breaks often, and he must stop and mend it. Our harness is good, for I have hung it in trees each night. At eleven o'clock the man is half a mile away. At one o'clock he is a quarter of a mile away. He is very weak. We see him fall down many times in the snow. One of his dogs can no longer travel, and he cuts it out of the harness. But he does not kill it. I kill it with the axe as I go by, as I kill one of my dogs which loses its legs and can travel no more.

"Now we are three hundred yards away. We go very slow. Maybe in two, three hours we go one mile. We do not walk. All the time we fall down. We stand up and stagger two steps, maybe three steps, then we fall down again. And all the time I must help up the man and woman. Sometimes they rise to their knees and fall forward, maybe four or five times before they can get to their feet again and stagger two or three steps and fall. But always do they fall forward. Standing or kneeling, always do they fall forward, gaining on the trail each time by the length of their bodies.

"Sometimes they crawl on hands and knees like animals that live in the forest. We go like snails, like snails that are dying we go so slow. And yet we go faster than the man who is before us. For he, too, falls all the time, and there is no Sitka Charley to lift him up. Now he is two hundred yards away. After a long time he is one hundred yards away.

"It is a funny sight. I want to laugh out loud, Ha! ha! just like that, it is so funny. It is a race of dead men and dead dogs. It is like in a dream when you have a nightmare and run away very fast for your life and go very slow. The man who is with me is mad. The woman is mad. I am mad. All the world is mad, and I want to laugh, it is so funny.

"The stranger-man who is before us leaves his dogs behind and goes on alone across the snow. After a long time we come to the dogs. They lie helpless in the snow, their harness of blanket and canvas on them, the sled behind them, and as we pass them they whine to us and cry like babies that are hungry.

"Then we, too, leave our dogs and go on alone across the snow. The man and the woman are nearly gone, and they moan and groan and sob, but they go on. I, too, go on. I have but one thought. It is to come up to the stranger-man. Then it is that I shall rest, and not until then shall I rest, and it seems that I must lie down and sleep for a thousand years, I am so tired.

"The stranger-man is fifty yards away, all alone in the white snow. He falls and crawls, staggers, and falls and crawls again. He is like an animal that is sore wounded and trying to run from the hunter. By and by he crawls on hands and knees. He no longer stands up. And the man and woman no longer stand up. They, too, crawl after him on hands and knees. But I stand up. Sometimes I fall, but always do I stand up again.

“It is a strange thing to see. All about is the snow and the silence, and through it crawl the man and the woman, and the stranger-man who goes before. On either side the sun are sun-dogs, so that there are three suns in the sky. The frost-dust is like the dust of diamonds, and all the air is filled with it. Now the woman coughs, and lies still in the snow until the fit has passed, when she crawls on again. Now the man looks ahead, and he is blear-eyed as with old age and must rub his eyes so that he can see the stranger-man. And now the stranger-man looks back over his shoulder. And Sitka Charley, standing upright, maybe falls down and stands upright again.

“After a long time the stranger-man crawls no more. He stands slowly upon his feet and rocks back and forth. Also does he take off one mitten and wait with revolver in his hand, rocking back and forth as he waits. His face is skin and bones and frozen black. It is a hungry face. The eyes are deep-sunk in his head, and the lips are snarling. The man and woman, too, get upon their feet and they go toward him very slowly. And all about is the snow and the silence. And in the sky are three suns, and all the air is flashing with the dust of diamonds.

“And thus it was that I, Sitka Charley, saw the baby wolves make their kill. No word is spoken. Only does the stranger-man snarl with his hungry face. Also does he rock to and fro, his shoulders drooping, his knees bent, and his legs wide apart so that he does not fall down. The man and the woman stop maybe fifty feet away. Their legs, too, are wide apart so that they do not fall down, and their bodies rock to and fro. The stranger-man is very weak. His arm shakes, so that when he shoots at the man his bullet strikes in the snow. The man cannot take off his mitten. The stranger-man shoots at him again, and this time the bullet goes by in the air. Then the man takes the mitten in his teeth and pulls it off. But his hand is frozen and he cannot hold the revolver, and it fails in the snow. I look at the woman. Her mitten is off, and the big Colt’s revolver is in her hand. Three times she shoot, quick, just like that. The hungry face of the stranger-man is still snarling as he falls forward into the snow.

“They do not look at the dead man. ‘Let us go on,’ they say. And we go on. But now that they have found that for which they look, they are like dead. The last strength has gone out of them. They can stand no more upon their feet. They will not crawl, but desire only to close their eyes and sleep. I see not far away a place for camp. I kick them. I have my dog-whip, and I give them the lash of it. They cry aloud, but they must crawl. And they do crawl to the place for camp. I build fire so that they will not freeze. Then I go back for sled. Also, I kill the dogs of the stranger-man so that we may have food and not die. I put the man and woman in blankets and they sleep. Sometimes I wake them and give them little bit of food. They are not awake, but they take the food. The woman sleep one day and a half. Then she wake up and go to sleep again. The man sleep two days and wake up and go to sleep again. After that we go down to the coast at St. Michaels. And when the ice goes out of Bering Sea, the man and woman go away on a steamship. But first they pay me my seven hundred and fifty dollars a month. Also, they make me a present of one thousand dollars. And that was the year that Sitka Charley gave much money to the Mission at Holy Cross."

"But why did they kill the man?" I asked.

Sitka Charley delayed reply until he had lighted his pipe. He glanced at the POLICE GAZETTE illustration and nodded his head at it familiarly. Then he said, speaking slowly and ponderingly:

"I have thought much. I do not know. It is something that happened. It is a picture I remember. It is like looking in at the window and seeing the man writing a letter. They came into my life and they went out of my life, and the picture is as I have said, without beginning, the end without understanding."

"You have painted many pictures in the telling," I said.

"Ay," he nodded his head. "But they were without beginning and without end."

"The last picture of all had an end," I said.

"Ay," he answered. "But what end?"

"It was a piece of life," I said.

"Ay," he answered. "It was a piece of life."

The Sunlanders

Mandell is an obscure village on the rim of the polar sea. It is not large, and the people are peaceable, more peaceable even than those of the adjacent tribes. There are few men in Mandell, and many women; wherefore a wholesome and necessary polygamy is in practice; the women bear children with ardor, and the birth of a man-child is hailed with acclamation. Then there is Aab-Waak, whose head rests always on one shoulder, as though at some time the neck had become very tired and refused forevermore its wonted duty.

The cause of all these things, — the peaceableness, and the polygamy, and the tired neck of Aab-Waak, — goes back among the years to the time when the schooner Search dropped anchor in Mandell Bay, and when Tyee, chief man of the tribe, conceived a scheme of sudden wealth. To this day the story of things that happened is remembered and spoken of with bated breath by the people of Mandell, who are cousins to the Hungry Folk who live in the west. Children draw closer when the tale is told, and marvel sagely to themselves at the madness of those who might have been their forebears had they not provoked the Sunlanders and come to bitter ends.

It began to happen when six men came ashore from the Search, with heavy outfits, as though they had come to stay, and quartered themselves in Neegah's igloo. Not but that they paid well in flour and sugar for the lodging, but Neegah was aggrieved because Mesahchie, his daughter, elected to cast her fortunes and seek food and blanket with Bill-Man, who was leader of the party of white men.

"She is worth a price," Neegah complained to the gathering by the council-fire, when the six white men were asleep. "She is worth a price, for we have more men than women, and the men be bidding high. The hunter Ounenk offered me a kayak, new-made, and a gun which he got in trade from the Hungry Folk. This was I offered, and behold, now she is gone and I have nothing!"

"I, too, did bid for Mesahchie," grumbled a voice, in tones not altogether joyless, and Peelo shoved his broad-cheeked, jovial face for a moment into the light.

"Thou, too," Neegah affirmed. "And there were others. Why is there such a restlessness upon the Sunlanders?" he demanded petulantly. "Why do they not stay at home? The Snow People do not wander to the lands of the Sunlanders."

"Better were it to ask why they come," cried a voice from the darkness, and Aab-Waak pushed his way to the front.

"Ay! Why they come!" clamored many voices, and Aab-Waak waved his hand for silence.

"Men do not dig in the ground for nothing," he began. "And I have it in mind of the Whale People, who are likewise Sunlanders, and who lost their ship in the ice. You all remember the Whale People, who came to us in their broken boats, and who went away into the south with dogs and sleds when the frost arrived and snow covered the land. And you remember, while they waited for the frost, that one man of them dug in the ground, and then two men and three, and then all men of them, with great excitement and much disturbance. What they dug out of the ground we do not know, for they drove us away so we could not see. But afterward, when they were gone, we looked and found nothing. Yet there be much ground and they did not dig it all."

"Ay, Aab-Waak! Ay!" cried the people in admiration.

"Wherefore I have it in mind," he concluded, "that one Sunlander tells another, and that these Sunlanders have been so told and are come to dig in the ground."

"But how can it be that Bill-Man speaks our tongue?" demanded a little weazened old hunter, — "Bill-Man, upon whom never before our eyes have rested?"

"Bill-Man has been other times in the Snow Lands," Aab-Waak answered, "else would he not speak the speech of the Bear People, which is like the speech of the Hungry Folk, which is very like the speech of the Mandells. For there have been many Sunlanders among the Bear People, few among the Hungry Folk, and none at all among the Mandells, save the Whale People and those who sleep now in the igloo of Neegah."

"Their sugar is very good," Neegah commented, "and their flour."

"They have great wealth," Ounenk added. "Yesterday I was to their ship, and beheld most cunning tools of iron, and knives, and guns, and flour, and sugar, and strange foods without end."

"It is so, brothers!" Tyee stood up and exulted inwardly at the respect and silence his people accorded him. "They be very rich, these Sunlanders. Also, they be fools. For behold! They come among us boldly, blindly, and without thought for all of their great wealth. Even now they snore, and we are many and unafraid."

"Mayhap they, too, are unafraid, being great fighters," the weazened little old hunter objected.

But Tyee scowled upon him. "Nay, it would not seem so. They live to the south, under the path of the sun, and are soft as their dogs are soft. You remember the dog of the Whale People? Our dogs ate him the second day, for he was soft and could not fight. The sun is warm and life easy in the Sun Lands, and the men are as women, and the women as children."

Heads nodded in approval, and the women craned their necks to listen.

"It is said they are good to their women, who do little work," tittered Likeeta, a broad-hipped, healthy young woman, daughter to Tyee himself.

"Thou wouldst follow the feet of Mesahchie, eh?" he cried angrily. Then he turned swiftly to the tribesmen. "Look you, brothers, this is the way of the Sunlanders! They have eyes for our women, and take them one by one. As Mesahchie has gone, cheating Neegah of her price, so will Likeeta go, so will they all go, and we be cheated. I have talked with a hunter from the Bear People, and I know. There be Hungry Folk among us; let them speak if my words be true."

The six hunters of the Hungry Folk attested the truth and fell each to telling his neighbor of the Sunlanders and their ways. There were mutterings from the younger men, who had wives to seek, and from the older men, who had daughters to fetch prices, and a low hum of rage rose higher and clearer.

"They are very rich, and have cunning tools of iron, and knives, and guns without end," Tyee suggested craftily, his dream of sudden wealth beginning to take shape.

"I shall take the gun of Bill-Man for myself," Aab-Waak suddenly proclaimed.

"Nay, it shall be mine!" shouted Neegah; "for there is the price of Mesahchie to be reckoned."

"Peace! O brothers!" Tyee swept the assembly with his hands. "Let the women and children go to their igloos. This is the talk of men; let it be for the ears of men."

"There be guns in plenty for all," he said when the women had unwillingly withdrawn. "I doubt not there will be two guns for each man, without thought of the flour and sugar and other things. And it is easy. The six Sunlanders in Neegah’s igloo will we kill to-night while they sleep. To-morrow will we go in peace to the ship to trade, and there, when the time favors, kill all their brothers. And to-morrow night there shall be feasting and merriment and division of wealth. And the least man shall possess more than did ever the greatest before. Is it wise, that which I have spoken, brothers?”

A low growl of approval answered him, and preparation for the attack was begun. The six Hungry Folk, as became members of a wealthier tribe, were armed with rifles and plenteously supplied with ammunition. But it was only here and there that a Mandell possessed a gun, many of which were broken, and there was a general slackness of powder and shells. This poverty of war weapons, however, was relieved by myriads of bone-headed arrows and casting-spears for work at a distance, and for close quarters steel knives of Russian and Yankee make.

“Let there be no noise,” Tyee finally instructed; “but be there many on every side of the igloo, and close, so that the Sunlanders may not break through. Then do you, Neegah, with six of the young men behind, crawl in to where they sleep. Take no guns, which be prone to go off at unexpected times, but put the strength of your arms into the knives.”

“And be it understood that no harm befall Mesahchie, who is worth a price,” Neegah whispered hoarsely.

Flat upon the ground, the small army concentred on the igloo, and behind, deliciously expectant, crouched many women and children, come out to witness the murder. The brief August night was passing, and in the gray of dawn could be dimly discerned the creeping forms of Neegah and the young men. Without pause, on hands and knees, they entered the long passageway and disappeared. Tyee rose up and rubbed his hands. All was going well. Head after head in the big circle lifted and waited. Each man pictured the scene according to his nature — the sleeping men, the plunge of the knives, and the sudden death in the dark.

A loud hail, in the voice of a Sunlander, rent the silence, and a shot rang out. Then an uproar broke loose inside the igloo. Without premeditation, the circle swept forward into the passageway. On the inside, half a dozen repeating rifles began to chatter, and the Mandells, jammed in the confined space, were powerless. Those at the front strove madly to retreat from the fire-spitting guns in their very faces, and those in the rear pressed as madly forward to the attack. The bullets from the big 45:90’s drove through half a dozen men at a shot, and the passageway, gorged with surging, helpless men, became a shambles. The rifles, pumped without aim into the mass, withered it away like a machine gun, and against that steady stream of death no man could advance.

"Never was there the like!" panted one of the Hungry Folk. "I did but look in, and the dead were piled like seals on the ice after a killing!"

"Did I not say, mayhap, they were fighters?" cackled the weazened old hunter.

"It was to be expected," Aab-Waak answered stoutly. "We fought in a trap of our making."

"O ye fools!" Tyee chided. "Ye sons of fools! It was not planned, this thing ye have done. To Neegah and the six young men only was it given to go inside. My cunning is superior to the cunning of the Sunlanders, but ye take away its edge, and rob me of its strength, and make it worse than no cunning at all!"

No one made reply, and all eyes centred on the igloo, which loomed vague and monstrous against the clear northeast sky. Through a hole in the roof the smoke from the rifles curled slowly upward in the pulseless air, and now and again a wounded man crawled painfully through the gray.

"Let each ask of his neighbor for Neegah and the six young men," Tyee commanded.

And after a time the answer came back, "Neegah and the six young men are not."

"And many more are not!" wailed a woman to the rear.

"The more wealth for those who are left," Tyee grimly consoled. Then, turning to Aab-Waak, he said: "Go thou, and gather together many sealskins filled with oil. Let the hunters empty them on the outside wood of the igloo and of the passage. And let them put fire to it ere the Sunlanders make holes in the igloo for their guns."

Even as he spoke a hole appeared in the dirt plastered between the logs, a rifle muzzle protruded, and one of the Hungry Folk clapped hand to his side and leaped in the air. A second shot, through the lungs, brought him to the ground. Tyee and the rest scattered to either side, out of direct range, and Aab-Waak hastened the men forward with the skins of oil. Avoiding the loopholes, which were making on every side of the igloo, they emptied the skins on the dry drift-logs brought down by the Mandell River from the tree-lands to the south. Ounenk ran forward with a blazing brand, and the flames leaped upward. Many minutes passed, without sign, and they held their weapons ready as the fire gained headway.

Tyee rubbed his hands gleefully as the dry structure burned and crackled. “Now we have them, brothers! In the trap!”

“And no one may gainsay me the gun of Bill-Man,” Aab-Waak announced.

“Save Bill-Man,” squeaked the old hunter. “For behold, he cometh now!”

Covered with a singed and blackened blanket, the big white man leaped out of the blazing entrance, and on his heels, likewise shielded, came Mesahchie, and the five other Sunlanders. The Hungry Folk tried to check the rush with an ill-directed volley, while the Mandells hurled in a cloud of spears and arrows. But the Sunlanders cast their flaming blankets from them as they ran, and it was seen that each bore on his shoulders a small pack of ammunition. Of all their possessions, they had chosen to save that. Running swiftly and with purpose, they broke the circle and headed directly for the great cliff, which towered blackly in the brightening day a half-mile to the rear of the village.

But Tyee knelt on one knee and lined the sights of his rifle on the rearmost Sunlander. A great shout went up when he pulled the trigger and the man fell forward, struggled partly up, and fell again. Without regard for the rain of arrows, another Sunlander ran back, bent over him, and lifted him across his shoulders. But the Mandell spearmen were crowding up into closer range, and a strong cast transfixed the wounded man. He cried out and became swiftly limp as his comrade lowered him to the ground. In the meanwhile, Bill-Man and the three others had made a stand and were driving a leaden hail into the advancing spearmen. The fifth Sunlander bent over his stricken fellow, felt the heart, and then coolly cut the straps of the pack and stood up with the ammunition and extra gun.

“Now is he a fool!” cried Tyee, leaping high, as he ran forward, to clear the squirming body of one of the Hungry Folk.

His own rifle was clogged so that he could not use it, and he called out for some one to spear the Sunlander, who had turned and was running for safety under the protecting fire. The little old hunter poised his spear on the throwing-stick, swept his arm back as he ran, and delivered the cast.

“By the body of the Wolf, say I, it was a good throw!” Tyee praised, as the fleeing man pitched forward, the spear standing upright between his shoulders and swaying slowly forward and back.

The little weazened old man coughed and sat down. A streak of red showed on his lips and welled into a thick stream. He coughed again, and a strange whistling came and went with his breath.

"They, too, are unafraid, being great fighters," he wheezed, pawing aimlessly with his hands. "And behold! Bill-Man comes now!"

Tyee glanced up. Four Mandells and one of the Hungry Folk had rushed upon the fallen man and were spearing him from his knees back to the earth. In the twinkling of an eye, Tyee saw four of them cut down by the bullets of the Sunlanders. The fifth, as yet unhurt, seized the two rifles, but as he stood up to make off he was whirled almost completely around by the impact of a bullet in the arm, steadied by a second, and overthrown by the shock of a third. A moment later and Bill-Man was on the spot, cutting the pack-straps and picking up the guns.

This Tyee saw, and his own people falling as they straggled forward, and he was aware of a quick doubt, and resolved to lie where he was and see more. For some unaccountable reason, Mesahchie was running back to Bill-Man; but before she could reach him, Tyee saw Peelo run out and throw arms about her. He essayed to sling her across his shoulder, but she grappled with him, tearing and scratching at his face. Then she tripped him, and the pair fell heavily. When they regained their feet, Peelo had shifted his grip so that one arm was passed under her chin, the wrist pressing into her throat and strangling her. He buried his face in her breast, taking the blows of her hands on his thick mat of hair, and began slowly to force her off the field. Then it was, retreating with the weapons of his fallen comrades, that Bill-Man came upon them. As Mesahchie saw him, she twirled the victim around and held him steady. Bill-Man swung the rifle in his right hand, and hardly easing his stride, delivered the blow. Tyee saw Peelo drive to the earth as smote by a falling star, and the Sunlander and Neegah's daughter fleeing side by side.

A bunch of Mandells, led by one of the Hungry Folk, made a futile rush which melted away into the earth before the scorching fire.

Tyee caught his breath and murmured, "Like the young frost in the morning sun."

"As I say, they are great fighters," the old hunter whispered weakly, far gone in hemorrhage. "I know. I have heard. They be sea-robbers and hunters of seals; and they shoot quick and true, for it is their way of life and the work of their hands."

"Like the young frost in the morning sun," Tyee repeated, crouching for shelter behind the dying man and peering at intervals about him.

It was no longer a fight, for no Mandell man dared venture forward, and as it was, they were too close to the Sunlanders to go back. Three tried it, scattering and scurrying like rabbits; but one came down with a broken leg, another was shot through the body, and the third, twisting and dodging, fell on the edge of the village. So the tribesmen crouched in the hollow places and burrowed into the dirt in the open, while the Sunlanders' bullets searched the plain.

"Move not," Tyee pleaded, as Aab-Waak came worming over the ground to him. "Move not, good Aab-Waak, else you bring death upon us."

"Death sits upon many," Aab-Waak laughed; "wherefore, as you say, there will be much wealth in division. My father breathes fast and short behind the big rock yon, and beyond, twisted like in a knot, lieth my brother. But their share shall be my share, and it is well."

"As you say, good Aab-Waak, and as I have said; but before division must come that which we may divide, and the Sunlanders be not yet dead."

A bullet glanced from a rock before them, and singing shrilly, rose low over their heads on its second flight. Tyee ducked and shivered, but Aab-Waak grinned and sought vainly to follow it with his eyes.

"So swiftly they go, one may not see them," he observed.

"But many be dead of us," Tyee went on.

"And many be left," was the reply. "And they hug close to the earth, for they have become wise in the fashion of righting. Further, they are angered. Moreover, when we have killed the Sunlanders on the ship, there will remain but four on the land. These may take long to kill, but in the end it will happen."

"How may we go down to the ship when we cannot go this way or that?" Tyee questioned.

"It is a bad place where lie Bill-Man and his brothers," Aab-Waak explained. "We may come upon them from every side, which is not good. So they aim to get their backs against the cliff and wait until their brothers of the ship come to give them aid."

"Never shall they come from the ship, their brothers! I have said it."

Tyee was gathering courage again, and when the Sunlanders verified the prediction by retreating to the cliff, he was light-hearted as ever.

“There be only three of us!” complained one of the Hungry Folk as they came together for council.

“Therefore, instead of two, shall you have four guns each,” was Tyee’s rejoinder.

“We did good fighting.”

“Ay; and if it should happen that two of you be left, then will you have six guns each. Therefore, fight well.”

“And if there be none of them left?” Aab-Waak whispered slyly.

“Then will we have the guns, you and I,” Tyee whispered back.

However, to propitiate the Hungry Folk, he made one of them leader of the ship expedition. This party comprised fully two-thirds of the tribesmen, and departed for the coast, a dozen miles away, laden with skins and things to trade. The remaining men were disposed in a large half-circle about the breastwork which Bill-Man and his Sunlanders had begun to throw up. Tyee was quick to note the virtues of things, and at once set his men to digging shallow trenches.

“The time will go before they are aware,” he explained to Aab-Waak; “and their minds being busy, they will not think overmuch of the dead that are, nor gather trouble to themselves. And in the dark of night they may creep closer, so that when the Sunlanders look forth in the morning light they will find us very near.”

In the midday heat the men ceased from their work and made a meal of dried fish and seal oil which the women brought up. There was some clamor for the food of the Sunlanders in the igloo of Neegah, but Tyee refused to divide it until the return of the ship party. Speculations upon the outcome became rife, but in the midst of it a dull boom drifted up over the land from the sea. The keen-eyed ones made out a dense cloud of smoke, which quickly disappeared, and which they averred was directly over the ship of the Sunlanders. Tyee was of the opinion that it was a big gun. Aab-Waak did not know, but thought it might be a signal of some sort. Anyway, he said, it was time something happened.

Five or six hours afterward a solitary man was descried coming across the wide flat from the sea, and the women and children poured out upon him in a body. It was Ounenk, naked, winded, and wounded. The blood still trickled down his face from a gash on the forehead. His left arm, frightfully mangled, hung helpless at his side. But most significant of all, there was a wild gleam in his eyes which betokened the women knew not what.

"Where be Peshack?" an old squaw queried sharply.

"And Olitlie?" "And Polak?" "And Mah-Kook?" the voices took up the cry.

But he said nothing, brushing his way through the clamorous mass and directing his staggering steps toward Tyee. The old squaw raised the wail, and one by one the women joined her as they swung in behind. The men crawled out of their trenches and ran back to gather about Tyee, and it was noticed that the Sunlanders climbed upon their barricade to see.

Ounenk halted, swept the blood from his eyes, and looked about. He strove to speak, but his dry lips were glued together. Likeeta fetched him water, and he grunted and drank again.

"Was it a fight?" Tyee demanded finally, — "a good fight?"

"Ho! ho! ho!" So suddenly and so fiercely did Ounenk laugh that every voice hushed. "Never was there such a fight! So I say, I, Ounenk, fighter beforetime of beasts and men. And ere I forget, let me speak fat words and wise. By fighting will the Sunlanders teach us Mandell Folk how to fight. And if we fight long enough, we shall be great fighters, even as the Sunlanders, or else we shall be — dead. Ho! ho! ho! It was a fight!"

"Where be thy brothers?" Tyee shook him till he shrieked from the pain of his hurts.

Ounenk sobered. "My brothers? They are not."

"And Pome-Lee?" cried one of the two Hungry Folk; "Pome-Lee, the son of my mother?"

"Pome-Lee is not," Ounenk answered in a monotonous voice.

"And the Sunlanders?" from Aab-Waak.

"The Sunlanders are not."

"Then the ship of the Sunlanders, and the wealth and guns and things?" Tyee demanded.

"Neither the ship of the Sunlanders, nor the wealth and guns and things," was the unvarying response. "All are not. Nothing is. I only am."

"And thou art a fool."

"It may be so," Ounenk answered, unruffled.

"I have seen that which would well make me a fool."

Tyee held his tongue, and all waited till it should please Ounenk to tell the story in his own way.

"We took no guns, O Tyee," he at last began; "no guns, my brothers — only knives and hunting bows and spears. And in twos and threes, in our kayaks, we came to the ship. They were glad to see us, the Sunlanders, and we spread our skins and they brought out their articles of trade, and everything was well. And Pome-Lee waited — waited till the sun was well overhead and they sat at meat, when he gave the cry and we fell upon them. Never was there such a fight, and never such fighters. Half did we kill in the quickness of surprise, but the half that was left became as devils, and they multiplied themselves, and everywhere they fought like devils. Three put their backs against the mast of the ship, and we ringed them with our dead before they died. And some got guns and shot with both eyes wide open, and very quick and sure. And one got a big gun, from which at one time he shot many small bullets. And so, behold!"

Ounenk pointed to his ear, neatly pierced by a buckshot.

"But I, Ounenk, drove my spear through his back from behind. And in such fashion, one way and another, did we kill them all — all save the head man. And him we were about, many of us, and he was alone, when he made a great cry and broke through us, five or six dragging upon him, and ran down inside the ship. And then, when the wealth of the ship was ours, and only the head man down below whom we would kill presently, why then there was a sound as of all the guns in the world — a mighty sound! And like a bird I rose up in the air, and the living Mandell Folk, and the dead Sunlanders, the little kayaks, the big ship, the guns, the wealth — everything rose up in the air. So I say, I, Ounenk, who tell the tale, am the only one left."

A great silence fell upon the assemblage. Tyee looked at Aab-Waak with awe-struck eyes, but forbore to speak. Even the women were too stunned to wail the dead.

Ounenk looked about him with pride. "I, only, am left," he repeated.

But at that instant a rifle cracked from Bill-Man's barricade, and there was a sharp spat and thud on the chest of Ounenk. He swayed backward and came forward again, a look of startled surprise on his face. He gasped, and his lips writhed in a grim smile. There was a shrinking together of the shoulders and a bending of the knees. He shook himself, as might a drowsing man, and straightened up. But the shrinking and bending began again, and he sank down slowly, quite slowly, to the ground.

It was a clean mile from the pit of the Sunlanders, and death had spanned it. A great cry of rage went up, and in it there was much of blood-vengeance, much of the unreasoned ferocity of the brute. Tyee and Aab-

Waak tried to hold the Mandell Folk back, were thrust aside, and could only turn and watch the mad charge. But no shots came from the Sunlanders, and ere half the distance was covered, many, affrighted by the mysterious silence of the pit, halted and waited. The wilder spirits bore on, and when they had cut the remaining distance in half, the pit still showed no sign of life. At two hundred yards they slowed down and bunched; at one hundred, they stopped, a score of them, suspicious, and conferred together.

Then a wreath of smoke crowned the barricade, and they scattered like a handful of pebbles thrown at random. Four went down, and four more, and they continued swiftly to fall, one and two at a time, till but one remained, and he in full flight with death singing about his ears. It was Nok, a young hunter, long-legged and tall, and he ran as never before. He skimmed across the naked open like a bird, and soared and sailed and curved from side to side. The rifles in the pit rang out in solid volley; they flut-flut-flut-flutted in ragged sequence; and still Nok rose and dipped and rose again unharmed. There was a lull in the firing, as though the Sunlanders had given over, and Nok curved less and less in his flight till he darted straight forward at every leap. And then, as he leaped cleanly and well, one lone rifle barked from the pit, and he doubled up in mid-air, struck the ground in a ball, and like a ball bounced from the impact, and came down in a broken heap.

“Who so swift as the swift-winged lead?” Aab-Waak pondered.

Tyee grunted and turned away. The incident was closed and there was more pressing matter at hand. One Hungry Man and forty fighters, some of them hurt, remained; and there were four Sunlanders yet to reckon with.

“We will keep them in their hole by the cliff,” he said, “and when famine has gripped them hard we will slay them like children.”

“But of what matter to fight?” queried Oloof, one of the younger men. “The wealth of the Sunlanders is not; only remains that in the igloo of Neegah, a paltry quantity — ”

He broke off hastily as the air by his ear split sharply to the passage of a bullet.

Tyee laughed scornfully. “Let that be thy answer. What else may we do with this mad breed of Sunlanders which will not die?”

“What a thing is foolishness!” Oloof protested, his ears furtively alert for the coming of other bullets. “It is not right that they should fight so, these Sunlanders. Why will they not die easily? They are fools not to know that they are dead men, and they give us much trouble.”

“We fought before for great wealth; we fight now that we may live,” Aab-Waak summed up succinctly.

That night there was a clash in the trenches, and shots exchanged. And in the morning the igloo of Neegah was found empty of the Sunlanders’ possessions. These they themselves had taken, for the signs of their trail were visible to the sun. Oloof climbed to the brow of the cliff to hurl great stones down into the pit, but the cliff overhung, and he hurled down abuse and insult instead, and promised bitter torture to them in the end. Bill-Man mocked him back in the tongue of the Bear Folk, and Tyee, lifting his head from a trench to see, had his shoulder scratched deeply by a bullet.

And in the dreary days that followed, and in the wild nights when they pushed the trenches closer, there was much discussion as to the wisdom of letting the Sunlanders go. But of this they were afraid, and the women raised a cry always at the thought This much they had seen of the Sunlanders; they cared to see no more. All the time the whistle and blub-blub of bullets filled the air, and all the time the death-list grew. In the golden sunrise came the faint, far crack of a rifle, and a stricken woman would throw up her hands on the distant edge of the village; in the noonday heat, men in the trenches heard the shrill sing-song and knew their deaths; or in the gray afterglow of evening, the dirt kicked up in puffs by the winking fires. And through the nights the long “Wah-hoo-ha-a wah-hoo-ha-a!” of mourning women held dolorous sway.

As Tyee had promised, in the end famine gripped the Sunlanders. And once, when an early fall gale blew, one of them crawled through the darkness past the trenches and stole many dried fish.

But he could not get back with them, and the sun found him vainly hiding in the village. So he fought the great fight by himself, and in a narrow ring of Mandell Folk shot four with his revolver, and ere they could lay hands on him for the torture, turned it on himself and died.

This threw a gloom upon the people. Oloof put the question, “If one man die so hard, how hard will die the three who yet are left?”

Then Mesahchie stood up on the barricade and called in by name three dogs which had wandered close, — meat and life, — which set back the day of reckoning and put despair in the hearts of the Mandell Folk. And on the head of Mesahchie were showered the curses of a generation.

The days dragged by. The sun hurried south, the nights grew long and longer, and there was a touch of frost in the air. And still the Sunlanders held the pit. Hearts were breaking under the unending strain, and Tyee thought hard and deep. Then he sent forth word that all the skins and hides of all the tribe be collected. These he had made into huge cylindrical bales, and behind each bale he placed a man.

When the word was given the brief day was almost spent, and it was slow work and tedious, rolling the big bales forward foot by foot The bullets of the Sunlanders blub-blubbed and thudded against them, but could not go through, and the men howled their delight But the dark was at hand, and Tyee, secure of success, called the bales back to the trenches.

In the morning, in the face of an unearthly silence from the pit, the real advance began. At first with large intervals between, the bales slowly converged as the circle drew in. At a hundred yards they were quite close together, so that Tyee's order to halt was passed along in whispers. The pit showed no sign of life. They watched long and sharply, but nothing stirred. The advance was taken up and the manoeuvre repeated at fifty yards. Still no sign nor sound. Tyee shook his head, and even Aab-Waak was dubious. But the order was given to go on, and go on they did, till bale touched bale and a solid rampart of skin and hide bowed out from the cliff about the pit and back to the cliff again.

Tyee looked back and saw the women and children clustering blackly in the deserted trenches. He looked ahead at the silent pit. The men were wriggling nervously, and he ordered every second bale forward. This double line advanced till bale touched bale as before. Then Aab-Waak, of his own will, pushed one bale forward alone. When it touched the barricade, he waited a long while. After that he tossed unresponsive rocks over into the pit, and finally, with great care, stood up and peered in. A carpet of empty cartridges, a few white-picked dog bones, and a soggy place where water dripped from a crevice, met his eyes. That was all. The Sunlanders were gone.

There were murmurings of witchcraft, vague complaints, dark looks which foreshadowed to Tyee dread things which yet might come to pass, and he breathed easier when Aab-Waak took up the trail along the base of the cliff.

"The cave!" Tyee cried. "They foresaw my wisdom of the skin-bales and fled away into the cave!"

The cliff was honey-combed with a labyrinth of subterranean passages which found vent in an opening midway between the pit and where the trench tapped the wall. Thither, and with many exclamations, the tribesmen followed Aab-Waak, and, arrived, they saw plainly where the Sunlanders had climbed to the mouth, twenty and odd feet above.

"Now the thing is done," Tyee said, rubbing his hands. "Let word go forth that rejoicing be made, for they are in the trap now, these Sunlanders, in the trap. The young men shall climb up, and the mouth of the cave be filled with stones, so that Bill-Man and his brothers and Mesahchie shall by famine be pinched to shadows and die cursing in the silence and dark."

Cries of delight and relief greeted this, and Howgah, the last of the Hungry Folk, swarmed up the steep slant and drew himself, crouching, upon the lip of the opening. But as he crouched, a muffled report rushed forth, and as he clung desperately to the slippery edge, a second. His grip loosed with reluctant weakness, and he pitched down at the feet of Tyee, quivered for a moment like some monstrous jelly, and was still.

"How should I know they were great fighters and unafraid?" Tyee demanded, spurred to defence by recollection of the dark looks and vague complaints.

"We were many and happy," one of the men stated baldly. Another fingered his spear with a prurient hand.

But Oloof cried them cease. "Give ear, my brothers! There be another way! As a boy I chanced upon it playing along the steep. It is hidden by the rocks, and there is no reason that a man should go there; wherefore it is secret, and no man knows. It is very small, and you crawl on your belly a long way, and then you are in the cave. To-night we will so crawl, without noise, on our bellies, and come upon the Sunlanders from behind. And to-morrow we will be at peace, and never again will we quarrel with the Sunlanders in the years to come."

"Never again!" chorussed the weary men. "Never again!" And Tyee joined with them.

That night, with the memory of their dead in their hearts, and in their hands stones and spears and knives, the horde of women and children collected about the known mouth of the cave. Down the twenty and odd precarious feet to the ground no Sunlander could hope to pass and live. In the village remained only the wounded men, while every able man — and there were thirty of them — followed Oloof to the secret opening. A hundred feet of broken ledges and insecurely heaped rocks were between it and the earth, and because of the rocks, which might be displaced by the touch of hand or foot, but one man climbed at a time. Oloof went up first, called softly for the next to come on, and disappeared inside. A man followed, a second, and a third, and so on, till only Tyee remained. He received the call of the last man, but a quick doubt assailed him and he stayed to ponder. Half an hour later he swung up to the opening and peered in. He could feel the narrowness of the passage, and the darkness before him took on solidity. The fear of the walled-in earth chilled him and he could not venture. All the men who had died, from Neegah the first of the Mandells, to Howgah the last of the Hungry Folk, came and sat with him, but he chose the terror of their company rather than face the horror which he felt to lurk in the thick blackness. He had been sitting long when something soft and cold fluttered lightly on his cheek, and he knew the first winter's snow was falling. The dim dawn came, and after that the bright day, when he heard a low guttural sobbing, which came and went at intervals along the passage and which drew closer each time and more distinct He slipped over the edge, dropped his feet to the first ledge, and waited.

That which sobbed made slow progress, but at last, after many halts, it reached him, and he was sure no Sunlander made the noise. So he reached a hand inside, and where there should have been a head felt the shoulders of a man uplifted on bent arms. The head he found later, not erect, but hanging straight down so that the crown rested on the floor of the passage.

"Is it you, Tyee?" the head said. "For it is I, Aab-Waak, who am helpless and broken as a rough-flung spear. My head is in the dirt, and I may not climb down unaided."

Tyee clambered in, dragged him up with his back against the wall, but the head hung down on the chest and sobbed and wailed.

"Ai-oo-o, ai-oo-o!" it went "Oloof forgot, for Mesahchie likewise knew the secret and showed the Sunlanders, else they would not have waited at the end of the narrow way. Wherefore, I am a broken man, and helpless — ai-oo-o, ai-oo-o!"

"And did they die, the cursed Sunlanders, at the end of the narrow way?" Tyee demanded.

"How should I know they waited?" Aab-Waak gurgled. "For my brothers had gone before, many of them, and there was no sound of struggle. How should I know why there should be no sound of struggle? And ere I knew, two hands were about my neck so that I could not cry out and warn my brothers yet to come. And then there were two hands more on my head, and two more on my feet. In this fashion the three Sunlanders had me. And while the hands held my head in the one place, the hands on my feet swung my body around, and as we wring the neck of a duck in the marsh, so my week was wrung.

“But it was not given that I should die,” he went on, a remnant of pride yet glimmering. “I, only, am left. Oloof and the rest lie on their backs in a row, and their faces turn this way and that, and the faces of some be underneath where the backs of their heads should be. It is not good to look upon; for when life returned to me I saw them all by the light of a torch which the Sunlanders left, and I had been laid with them in the row.”

“So? So?” Tyee mused, too stunned for speech.

He started suddenly, and shivered, for the voice of Bill-Man shot out at him from the passage.

“It is well,” it said. “I look for the man who crawls with the broken neck, and lo, do I find Tyee. Throw down thy gun, Tyee, so that I may hear it strike among the rocks.”

Tyee obeyed passively, and Bill-Man crawled forward into the light. Tyee looked at him curiously. He was gaunt and worn and dirty, and his eyes burned like twin coals in their cavernous sockets.

“I am hungry, Tyee,” he said. “Very hungry.”

“And I am dirt at thy feet,” Tyee responded.

“Thy word is my law. Further, I commanded my people not to withstand thee. I counselled — ”

But Bill-Man had turned and was calling back into the passage. “Hey! Charley! Jim! Fetch the woman along and come on!”

“We go now to eat,” he said, when his comrades and Mesahchie had joined him.

Tyee rubbed his hands deprecatingly. “We have little, but it is thine.”

“After that we go south on the snow,” Bill-Man continued.

“May you go without hardship and the trail be easy.”

“It is a long way. We will need dogs and food — much!”

“Thine the pick of our dogs and the food they may carry.”

Bill-Man slipped over the edge of the opening and prepared to descend. “But we come again, Tyee. We come again, and our days shall be long in the land.”

And so they departed into the trackless south, Bill-Man, his brothers, and Mesahchie. And when the next year came, the Search Number Two rode at anchor in Mandell Bay. The few Mandell men, who survived because their wounds had prevented their crawling into the cave, went to work at the best of the Sunlanders and dug in the ground. They hunt and fish no more, but receive a daily wage, with which they buy flour, sugar, calico, and such things which the Search Number Two brings on her yearly trip from the Sunlands.

And this mine is worked in secret, as many Northland mines have been worked; and no white man outside the Company, which is Bill-Man, Jim, and Charley, knows the whereabouts of Mandell on the rim of the polar sea. Aab-Waak still carries his head on one shoulder, is become an oracle, and preaches peace to the younger generation, for which he receives a pension from the Company. Tyee is foreman of the mine. But he has achieved a new theory concerning the Sunlanders.

“They that live under the path of the sun are not soft,” he says, smoking his pipe and watching the day-shift take itself off and the night-shift go on. “For the sun enters into their blood and burns them with a great fire till they are filled with lusts and passions. They burn always, so that they may not know when they are beaten. Further, there is an unrest in them, which is a devil, and they are flung out over the earth to toil and suffer and fight without end. I know. I am Tyee.”

The Taste of the Meat

I.

In the beginning he was Christopher Bellew. By the time he was at college he had become Chris Bellew. Later, in the Bohemian crowd of San Francisco, he was called Kit Bellew. And in the end he was known by no other name than Smoke Bellew. And this history of the evolution of his name is the history of his evolution. Nor would it have happened had he not had a fond mother and an iron uncle, and had he not received a letter from Gillet Bellamy.

"I have just seen a copy of the Billow," Gillet wrote from Paris. "Of course O'Hara will succeed with it. But he's missing some plays." (Here followed details in the improvement of the budding society weekly.) "Go down and see him. Let him think they're your own suggestions. Don't let him know they're from me. If he does, he'll make me Paris correspondent, which I can't afford, because I'm getting real money for my stuff from the big magazines. Above all, don't forget to make him fire that dub who's doing the musical and art criticism. Another thing, San Francisco has always had a literature of her own. But she hasn't any now. Tell him to kick around and get some gink to turn out a live serial, and to put into it the real romance and glamour and colour of San Francisco."

And down to the office of the Billow went Kit Bellew faithfully to instruct. O'Hara listened. O'Hara debated. O'Hara agreed. O'Hara fired the dub who wrote criticism. Further, O'Hara had a way with him--the very way that was feared by Gillet in distant Paris. When O'Hara wanted anything, no friend could deny him. He was sweetly and compellingly irresistible. Before Kit Bellew could escape from the office he had become an associate editor, had agreed to write weekly columns of criticism till some decent pen was found, and had pledged himself to write a weekly instalment of ten thousand words on the San Francisco serial--and all this without pay. The Billow wasn't paying yet, O'Hara explained; and just as convincingly had he exposited that there was only one man in San Francisco capable of writing the serial, and that man Kit Bellew.

"Oh, Lord, I'm the gink!" Kit had groaned to himself afterwards on the narrow stairway.

And thereat had begun his servitude to O’Hara and the insatiable columns of the Billow. Week after week he held down an office chair, stood off creditors, wrangled with printers, and turned out twenty-five thousand words of all sorts weekly. Nor did his labours lighten. The Billow was ambitious. It went in for illustration. The processes were expensive. It never had any money to pay Kit Bellew, and by the same token it was unable to pay for any additions to the office staff.

“This is what comes of being a good fellow,” Kit grumbled one day.

“Thank God for good fellows then,” O’Hara cried, with tears in his eyes as he gripped Kit’s hand. “You’re all that’s saved me, Kit. But for you I’d have gone bust. Just a little longer, old man, and things will be easier.”

“Never,” was Kit’s plaint. “I see my fate clearly. I shall be here always.”

A little later he thought he saw his way out. Watching his chance, in O’Hara’s presence, he fell over a chair. A few minutes afterwards he bumped into the corner of the desk, and, with fumbling fingers, capsized a paste pot.

“Out late?” O’Hara queried.

Kit brushed his eyes with his hands and peered about him anxiously before replying.

“No, it’s not that. It’s my eyes. They seem to be going back on me, that’s all.”

For several days he continued to fall over and bump into the office furniture. But O’Hara’s heart was not softened.

“I tell you what, Kit,” he said one day, “you’ve got to see an oculist. There’s Doctor Hassdapple. He’s a crackerjack. And it won’t cost you anything. We can get it for advertizing. I’ll see him myself.”

And, true to his word, he dispatched Kit to the oculist.

“There’s nothing the matter with your eyes,” was the doctor’s verdict, after a lengthy examination. “In fact, your eyes are magnificent--a pair in a million.”

“Don’t tell O’Hara,” Kit pleaded. “And give me a pair of black glasses.”

The result of this was that O’Hara sympathized and talked glowingly of the time when the Billow would be on its feet.

Luckily for Kit Bellew, he had his own income. Small it was, compared with some, yet it was large enough to enable him to belong to several clubs and maintain a studio in the Latin Quarter. In point of fact, since his associate editorship, his expenses had decreased prodigiously. He had no time to spend money. He never saw the studio any more, nor entertained the local Bohemians with his famous chafing-dish suppers. Yet he was always broke, for the Billow, in perennial distress, absorbed his cash as well as his brains. There were the illustrators who periodically refused to illustrate, the printers who periodically refused to print, and the office boy who frequently refused to officiate. At such times O'Hara looked at Kit, and Kit did the rest.

When the steamship Excelsior arrived from Alaska, bringing the news of the Klondike strike that set the country mad, Kit made a purely frivolous proposition.

"Look here, O'Hara," he said. "This gold rush is going to be big-the days of '49 over again. Suppose I cover it for the Billow? I'll pay my own expenses."

O'Hara shook his head.

"Can't spare you from the office, Kit. Then there's that serial. Besides, I saw Jackson not an hour ago. He's starting for the Klondike to-morrow, and he's agreed to send a weekly letter and photos. I wouldn't let him get away till he promised. And the beauty of it is, that it doesn't cost us anything."

The next Kit heard of the Klondike was when he dropped into the club that afternoon, and, in an alcove off the library, encountered his uncle.

"Hello, avuncular relative," Kit greeted, sliding into a leather chair and spreading out his legs. "Won't you join me?"

He ordered a cocktail, but the uncle contented himself with the thin native claret he invariably drank. He glanced with irritated disapproval at the cocktail, and on to his nephew's face. Kit saw a lecture gathering.

"I've only a minute," he announced hastily. "I've got to run and take in that Keith exhibition at Ellery's and do half a column on it."

"What's the matter with you?" the other demanded. "You're pale. You're a wreck."

Kit's only answer was a groan.

"I'll have the pleasure of burying you, I can see that."

Kit shook his head sadly.

"No destroying worm, thank you. Cremation for mine."

John Bellew came of the old hard and hardy stock that had crossed the plains by ox-team in the fifties, and in him was this same hardness and the hardness of a childhood spent in the conquering of a new land.

"You're not living right, Christopher. I'm ashamed of you."

"Primrose path, eh?" Kit chuckled.

The older man shrugged his shoulders.

"Shake not your gory locks at me, avuncular. I wish it were the primrose path. But that's all cut out. I have no time."

"Then what in-?"

"Overwork."

John Bellew laughed harshly and incredulously.

"Honest?"

Again came the laughter.

"Men are the products of their environment," Kit proclaimed, pointing at the other's glass. "Your mirth is thin and bitter as your drink."

"Overwork!" was the sneer. "You never earned a cent in your life."

"You bet I have--only I never got it. I'm earning five hundred a week right now, and doing four men's work."

"Pictures that won't sell? Or--er--fancy work of some sort? Can you swim?"

"I used to."

"Sit a horse?"

"I have essayed that adventure."

John Bellew snorted his disgust.

"I'm glad your father didn't live to see you in all the glory of your gracelessness," he said. "Your father was a man, every inch of him. Do you get it? A Man. I think he'd have whaled all this musical and artistic tomfoolery out of you."

"Alas! these degenerate days," Kit sighed.

"I could understand it, and tolerate it," the other went on savagely, "if you succeeded at it. You've never earned a cent in your life, nor done a tap of man's work."

"Etchings, and pictures, and fans," Kit contributed unsoothingly.

"You're a dabbler and a failure. What pictures have you painted? Dinky water-colours and nightmare posters. You've never had one exhibited, even here in San Francisco-"

"Ah, you forget. There is one in the jinks room of this very club."

"A gross cartoon. Music? Your dear fool of a mother spent hundreds on lessons. You've dabbled and failed. You've never even earned a five-dollar piece by accompanying some one at a concert. Your songs?--rag-time rot that's never printed and that's sung only by a pack of fake Bohemians."

"I had a book published once--those sonnets, you remember," Kit interposed meekly.

"What did it cost you?"

"Only a couple of hundred."

"Any other achievements?"

"I had a forest play acted at the summer jinks."

"What did you get for it?"

"Glory."

"And you used to swim, and you have essayed to sit a horse!" John Bellew set his glass down with unnecessary violence. "What earthly good are you anyway? You were well put up, yet even at university you didn't play football. You didn't row. You didn't-"

"I boxed and fenced--some."

"When did you last box?"

"Not since; but I was considered an excellent judge of time and distance, only I was--er-"

"Go on."

"Considered desultory."

"Lazy, you mean."

"I always imagined it was an euphemism."

"My father, sir, your grandfather, old Isaac Bellew, killed a man with a blow of his fist when he was sixty-nine years old."

"The man?"

"No, your--you graceless scamp! But you'll never kill a mosquito at sixty-nine."

"The times have changed, oh, my avuncular. They send men to state prisons for homicide now."

"Your father rode one hundred and eighty-five miles, without sleeping, and killed three horses."

"Had he lived to-day, he'd have snored over the course in a Pullman."

The older man was on the verge of choking with wrath, but swallowed it down and managed to articulate:

"How old are you?"

"I have reason to believe-"

"I know. Twenty-seven. You finished college at twenty-two. You've dabbled and played and frilled for five years. Before God and man, of what use are you? When I was your age I had one suit of underclothes. I was riding with the cattle in Colusa. I was hard as rocks, and I could sleep on a rock. I lived on jerked beef and bear-meat. I am a better man physically right now than you are. You weigh about one hundred and sixty-five. I can throw you right now, or thrash you with my fists."

"It doesn't take a physical prodigy to mop up cocktails or pink tea," Kit murmured deprecatingly. "Don't you see, my avuncular, the times have changed. Besides, I wasn't brought up right. My dear fool of a mother-"

John Bellew started angrily.

"-As you described her, was too good to me; kept me in cotton wool and all the rest. Now, if when I was a youngster I had taken some of those intensely masculine vacations you go in for--I wonder why you didn't invite me sometimes? You took Hal and Robbie all over the Sierras and on that Mexico trip."

"I guess you were too Lord Fauntleroyish."

"Your fault, avuncular, and my dear--er--mother's. How was I to know the hard? I was only a chee-ild. What was there left but etchings and pictures and fans? Was it my fault that I never had to sweat?"

The older man looked at his nephew with unconcealed disgust. He had no patience with levity from the lips of softness.

"Well, I'm going to take another one of those what-you-call masculine vacations. Suppose I asked you to come along?"

"Rather belated, I must say. Where is it?"

"Hal and Robert are going in to Klondike, and I'm going to see them across the Pass and down to the Lakes, then return-"

He got no further, for the young man had sprung forward and gripped his hand.

"My preserver!"

John Bellew was immediately suspicious. He had not dreamed the invitation would be accepted.

"You don't mean it," he said.

"When do we start?"

"It will be a hard trip. You'll be in the way."

"No, I won't. I'll work. I've learned to work since I went on the Billow."

"Each man has to take a year's supplies in with him. There'll be such a jam the Indian packers won't be able to handle it. Hal and Robert will have to pack their outfits across themselves. That's what I'm going along for--to help them pack. It you come you'll have to do the same."

“Watch me.”

“You can’t pack,” was the objection.

“When do we start?”

“To-morrow.”

“You needn’t take it to yourself that your lecture on the hard has done it,” Kit said, at parting. “I just had to get away, somewhere, anywhere, from O’Hara.”

“Who is O’Hara? A Jap?”

“No; he’s an Irishman, and a slave-driver, and my best friend. He’s the editor and proprietor and all-around big squeeze of the Billow. What he says goes. He can make ghosts walk.”

That night Kit Bellew wrote a note to O’Hara.

“It’s only a several weeks’ vacation,” he explained. “You’ll have to get some gink to dope out instalments for that serial. Sorry, old man, but my health demands it. I’ll kick in twice as hard when I get back.”

II.

Kit Bellew landed through the madness of the Dyea beach, congested with thousand-pound outfits of thousands of men. This immense mass of luggage and food, flung ashore in mountains by the steamers, was beginning slowly to dribble up the Dyea valley and across Chilcoot. It was a portage of twenty-eight miles, and could be accomplished only on the backs of men. Despite the fact that the Indian packers had jumped the freight from eight cents a pound to forty, they were swamped with the work, and it was plain that winter would catch the major portion of the outfits on the wrong side of the divide.

Tenderest of the tender-feet was Kit. Like many hundreds of others he carried a big revolver swung on a cartridge-belt. Of this, his uncle, filled with memories of old lawless days, was likewise guilty. But Kit Bellew was romantic. He was fascinated by the froth and sparkle of the gold rush, and viewed its life and movement with an artist’s eye. He did not take it seriously. As he said on the steamer, it was not his funeral. He was merely on a vacation, and intended to peep over the top of the pass for a ‘look see’ and then to return.

Leaving his party on the sand to wait for the putting ashore of the freight, he strolled up the beach toward the old trading post. He did not swagger, though he noticed that many of the be-revolvered individuals did. A strapping, six-foot Indian passed him, carrying an unusually large pack. Kit swung in behind, admiring the splendid calves of the man, and the grace and ease with which he moved along under his burden. The Indian dropped his pack on the scales in front of the post, and Kit joined the group of admiring gold-rushers who surrounded him. The pack weighed one hundred and twenty pounds, which fact was uttered back and forth in tones of awe. It was going some, Kit decided, and he wondered if he could lift such a weight, much less walk off with it.

"Going to Lake Linderman with it, old man?" he asked.

The Indian, swelling with pride, grunted an affirmative.

"How much you make that one pack?"

"Fifty dollar."

Here Kit slid out of the conversation. A young woman, standing in the doorway, had caught his eye. Unlike other women landing from the steamers, she was neither short-skirted nor bloomer-clad. She was dressed as any woman travelling anywhere would be dressed. What struck him was the justness of her being there, a feeling that somehow she belonged. Moreover, she was young and pretty. The bright beauty and colour of her oval face held him, and he looked over-long--looked till she resented, and her own eyes, long-lashed and dark, met his in cool survey.

From his face they travelled in evident amusement down to the big revolver at his thigh. Then her eyes came back to his, and in them was amused contempt. It struck him like a blow. She turned to the man beside her and indicated Kit. The man glanced him over with the same amused contempt.

"Chechaquo," the girl said.

The man, who looked like a tramp in his cheap overalls and dilapidated woollen jacket, grinned dryly, and Kit felt withered though he knew not why. But anyway she was an unusually pretty girl, he decided, as the two moved off. He noted the way of her walk, and recorded the judgment that he would recognize it after the lapse of a thousand years.

"Did you see that man with the girl?" Kit's neighbour asked him excitedly. "Know who he is?"

Kit shook his head.

"Cariboo Charley. He was just pointed out to me. He struck it big on Klondike. Old timer. Been on the Yukon a dozen years. He's just come out."

“What’s chechaquo mean?” Kit asked.

“You’re one; I’m one,” was the answer.

“Maybe I am, but you’ve got to search me. What does it mean?”

“Tender-foot.”

On his way back to the beach Kit turned the phrase over and over. It rankled to be called tender-foot by a slender chit of a woman.

Going into a corner among the heaps of freight, his mind still filled with the vision of the Indian with the redoubtable pack, Kit essayed to learn his own strength. He picked out a sack of flour which he knew weighed an even hundred pounds. He stepped astride of it, reached down, and strove to get it on his shoulder. His first conclusion was that one hundred pounds was the real heavy. His next was that his back was weak. His third was an oath, and it occurred at the end of five futile minutes, when he collapsed on top of the burden with which he was wrestling. He mopped his forehead, and across a heap of grub-sacks saw John Bellew gazing at him, wintry amusement in his eyes.

“God!” proclaimed that apostle of the hard. “Out of our loins has come a race of weaklings. When I was sixteen I toyed with things like that.”

“You forget, avuncular,” Kit retorted, “that I wasn’t raised on bear-meat.”

“And I’ll toy with it when I’m sixty.”

“You’ve got to show me.”

John Bellew did. He was forty-eight, but he bent over the sack, applied a tentative, shifting grip that balanced it, and, with a quick heave, stood erect, the somersaulted sack of flour on his shoulder.

“Knack, my boy, knack--and a spine.”

Kit took off his hat reverently.

“You’re a wonder, avuncular, a shining wonder. D’ye think I can learn the knack?”

John Bellew shrugged his shoulders.

“You’ll be hitting the back trail before we get started.”

“Never you fear,” Kit groaned. “There’s O’Hara, the roaring lion, down there. I’m not going back till I have to.”

III.

Kit’s first pack was a success. Up to Finnegan’s Crossing they had managed to get Indians to carry the twenty-five hundred-pound outfit. From that point their own backs must do the work. They planned to move forward at the rate of a mile a day. It looked easy--on paper. Since John Bellew was to stay in camp and do the cooking, he would be unable to make more than an occasional pack; so, to each of the three young men fell the task of carrying eight hundred pounds one mile each day. If they made fifty-pound packs, it meant a daily walk of sixteen miles loaded and of fifteen miles light--"Because we don't back-trip the last time," Kit explained the pleasant discovery; eighty-pound packs meant nineteen miles travel each day; and hundred-pound packs meant only fifteen miles.

"I don't like walking," said Kit. "Therefore I shall carry one hundred pounds." He caught the grin of incredulity on his uncle's face, and added hastily: "Of course I shall work up to it. A fellow's got to learn the ropes and tricks. I'll start with fifty."

He did, and ambled gaily along the trail. He dropped the sack at the next camp-site and ambled back. It was easier than he had thought. But two miles had rubbed off the velvet of his strength and exposed the underlying softness. His second pack was sixty-five pounds. It was more difficult, and he no longer ambled. Several times, following the custom of all packers, he sat down on the ground, resting the pack behind him on a rock or stump. With the third pack he became bold. He fastened the straps to a ninety-fivepound sack of beans and started. At the end of a hundred yards he felt that he must collapse. He sat down and mopped his face.

"Short hauls and short rests," he muttered. "That's the trick."

Sometimes he did not make a hundred yards, and each time he struggled to his feet for another short haul the pack became undeniably heavier. He panted for breath, and the sweat streamed from him. Before he had covered a quarter of a mile he stripped off his woollen shirt and hung it on a tree. A little later he discarded his hat. At the end of half a mile he decided he was finished. He had never exerted himself so in his life, and he knew that he was finished. As he sat and panted, his gaze fell upon the big revolver and the heavy cartridge-belt.

"Ten pounds of junk," he sneered, as he unbuckled it.

He did not bother to hang it on a tree, but flung it into the underbush. And as the steady tide of packers flowed by him, up trail and down, he noted that the other tender-feet were beginning to shed their shooting irons.

His short hauls decreased. At times a hundred feet was all he could stagger, and then the ominous pounding of his heart against his eardrums and the sickening totteriness of his knees compelled him to rest. And his rests grew longer. But his mind was busy. It was a twenty-eight mile portage, which represented as many days, and this, by all accounts, was the easiest part of it. "Wait till you get to Chilcoot," others told him as they rested and talked, "where you climb with hands and feet."

"They ain't going to be no Chilcoot," was his answer. "Not for me. Long before that I'll be at peace in my little couch beneath the moss."

A slip, and a violent wrenching effort at recovery, frightened him. He felt that everything inside him had been torn asunder.

"If ever I fall down with this on my back I'm a goner," he told another packer.

"That's nothing," came the answer. "Wait till you hit the Canyon. You'll have to cross a raging torrent on a sixty-foot pine tree. No guide ropes, nothing, and the water boiling at the sag of the log to your knees. If you fall with a pack on your back, there's no getting out of the straps. You just stay there and drown."

"Sounds good to me," he retorted; and out of the depths of his exhaustion he almost half meant it.

"They drown three or four a day there," the man assured him. "I helped fish a German out there. He had four thousand in greenbacks on him."

"Cheerful, I must say," said Kit, battling his way to his feet and tottering on.

He and the sack of beans became a perambulating tragedy. It reminded him of the old man of the sea who sat on Sinbad's neck. And this was one of those intensely masculine vacations, he meditated. Compared with it, the servitude to O'Hara was sweet. Again and again he was nearly seduced by the thought of abandoning the sack of beans in the brush and of sneaking around the camp to the beach and catching a steamer for civilization.

But he didn't. Somewhere in him was the strain of the hard, and he repeated over and over to himself that what other men could do, he could. It became a nightmare chant, and he gibbered it to those that passed him on the trail. At other times, resting, he watched and envied the stolid, mule-footed Indians that plodded by under heavier packs. They never seemed to rest, but went on and on with a steadiness and certitude that was to him appalling.

He sat and cursed--he had no breath for it when under way--and fought the temptation to sneak back to San Francisco. Before the mile pack was ended he ceased cursing and took to crying. The tears were tears of exhaustion and of disgust with self. If ever a man was a wreck, he was. As the end of the pack came in sight, he strained himself in desperation, gained the camp-site, and pitched forward on his face, the beans on his back. It did not kill him, but he lay for fifteen minutes before he could summon sufficient shreds of strength to release himself from the straps. Then he became deathly sick, and was so found by Robbie, who had similar troubles of his own. It was this sickness of Robbie that braced him up.

"What other men can do, we can do," Kit told him, though down in his heart he wondered whether or not he was bluffing.

IV.

"And I am twenty-seven years old and a man," he privately assured himself many times in the days that followed. There was need for it. At the end of a week, though he had succeeded in moving his eight hundred pounds forward a mile a day, he had lost fifteen pounds of his own weight. His face was lean and haggard. All resilience had gone out of his body and mind. He no longer walked, but plodded. And on the back-trips, travelling light, his feet dragged almost as much as when he was loaded.

He had become a work animal. He fell asleep over his food, and his sleep was heavy and beastly, save when he was aroused, screaming with agony, by the cramps in his legs. Every part of him ached. He tramped on raw blisters, yet this was even easier than the fearful bruising his feet received on the water-rounded rocks of the Dyea Flats, across which the trail led for two miles. These two miles represented thirty-eight miles of travelling. He washed his face once a day. His nails, torn and broken and afflicted with hangnails, were never cleaned. His shoulders and chest, galled by the pack-straps, made him think, and for the first time with understanding, of the horses he had seen on city streets.

One ordeal that nearly destroyed him at first had been the food. The extraordinary amount of work demanded extraordinary stoking, and his stomach was unaccustomed to great quantities of bacon and of the coarse, highly poisonous brown beans. As a result, his stomach went back on him, and for several days the pain and irritation of it and of starvation nearly broke him down. And then came the day of joy when he could eat like a ravenous animal, and, wolf-eyed, ask for more.

When they had moved the outfit across the foot-logs at the mouth of the Canyon, they made a change in their plans. Word had come across the Pass that at Lake Linderman the last available trees for building boats were being cut. The two cousins, with tools, whipsaw, blankets, and grub on their backs, went on, leaving Kit and his uncle to hustle along the outfit. John Bellew now shared the cooking with Kit, and both packed shoulder to shoulder. Time was flying, and on the peaks the first snow was falling. To be caught on the wrong side of the Pass meant a delay of nearly a year. The older man put his iron back under a hundred pounds. Kit was shocked, but he gritted his teeth and fastened his own straps to a hundred pounds. It hurt, but he had learned the knack, and his body, purged of all softness and fat, was beginning to harden up with lean and bitter muscle. Also, he observed and devised. He took note of the head-straps worn by the Indians, and manufactured one for himself, which he used in addition to the shoulder-straps. It made things easier, so that he began the practice of piling any light, cumbersome piece of luggage on top. Thus, he was soon able to bend along with a hundred pounds in the straps, fifteen or twenty more lying loosely on top the pack and against his neck, an axe or a pair of oars in one hand, and in the other the nested cooking-pails of the camp.

But work as they would, the toil increased. The trail grew more rugged; their packs grew heavier; and each day saw the snow-line dropping down the mountains, while freight jumped to sixty cents. No word came from the cousins beyond, so they knew they must be at work chopping down the standing trees, and whipsawing them into boat-planks. John Bellew grew anxious. Capturing a bunch of Indians back-tripping from Lake Linderman, he persuaded them to put their straps on the outfit. They charged thirty cents a pound to carry it to the summit of Chilcoot, and it nearly broke him. As it was, some four hundred pounds of clothes-bags and camp outfit was not handled. He remained behind to move it along, dispatching Kit with the Indians. At the summit Kit was to remain, slowly moving his ton until overtaken by the four hundred pounds with which his uncle guaranteed to catch him.

V.

Kit plodded along the trail with his Indian packers. In recognition of the fact that it was to be a long pack, straight to the top of Chilcoot, his own load was only eighty pounds. The Indians plodded under their loads, but it was a quicker gait than he had practised. Yet he felt no apprehension, and by now had come to deem himself almost the equal of an Indian.

At the end of a quarter of a mile he desired to rest. But the Indians kept on. He stayed with them, and kept his place in the line. At the half mile he was convinced that he was incapable of another step, yet he gritted his teeth, kept his place, and at the end of the mile was amazed that he was still alive. Then, in some strange way, came the thing called second wind, and the next mile was almost easier than the first. The third mile nearly killed him, and, though half delirious with pain and fatigue, he never whimpered. And then, when he felt he must surely faint, came the rest. Instead of sitting in the straps, as was the custom of the white packers, the Indians slipped out of the shoulder-and headstraps and lay at ease, talking and smoking. A full half hour passed before they made another start. To Kit's surprise he found himself a fresh man, and 'long hauls and long rests' became his newest motto.

The pitch of Chilcoot was all he had heard of it, and many were the occasions when he climbed with hands as well as feet. But when he reached the crest of the divide in the thick of a driving snowsquall, it was in the company of his Indians, and his secret pride was that he had come through with them and never squealed and never lagged. To be almost as good as an Indian was a new ambition to cherish.

When he had paid off the Indians and seen them depart, a stormy darkness was falling, and he was left alone, a thousand feet above timber line, on the back-bone of a mountain. Wet to the waist, famished and exhausted, he would have given a year's income for a fire and a cup of coffee. Instead, he ate half a dozen cold flapjacks and crawled into the folds of the partly unrolled tent. As he dozed off he had time only for one fleeting thought, and he grinned with vicious pleasure at the picture of John Bellew in the days to follow, masculinely back-tripping his four hundred pounds up Chilcoot. As for himself, even though burdened with two thousand pounds, he was bound down the hill.

In the morning, stiff from his labours and numb with the frost, he rolled out of the canvas, ate a couple of pounds of uncooked bacon, buckled the straps on a hundred pounds, and went down the rocky way. Several hundred yards beneath, the trail led across a small glacier and down to Crater Lake. Other men packed across the glacier. All that day he dropped his packs at the glacier’s upper edge, and, by virtue of the shortness of the pack, he put his straps on one hundred and fifty pounds each load. His astonishment at being able to do it never abated. For two dollars he bought from an Indian three leathery sea-biscuits, and out of these, and a huge quantity of raw bacon, made several meals. Unwashed, unwarmed, his clothing wet with sweat, he slept another night in the canvas.

In the early morning he spread a tarpaulin on the ice, loaded it with three-quarters of a ton, and started to pull. Where the pitch of the glacier accelerated, his load likewise accelerated, overran him, scooped him in on top, and ran away with him.

A hundred packers, bending under their loads, stopped to watch him. He yelled frantic warnings, and those in his path stumbled and staggered clear. Below, on the lower edge of the glacier, was pitched a small tent, which seemed leaping toward him, so rapidly did it grow larger. He left the beaten track where the packers’ trail swerved to the left, and struck a patch of fresh snow. This arose about him in frosty smoke, while it reduced his speed. He saw the tent the instant he struck it, carrying away the corner guys, bursting in the front flaps, and fetching up inside, still on top of the tarpaulin and in the midst of his grub-sacks. The tent rocked drunkenly, and in the frosty vapour he found himself face to face with a startled young woman who was sitting up in her blankets--the very one who had called him chechaquo at Dyea.

“Did you see my smoke?” he queried cheerfully.

She regarded him with disapproval.

“Talk about your magic carpets!” he went on.

“Do you mind removing that sack from my foot?” she said coldly.

He looked, and lifted his weight quickly.

“It wasn’t a sack. It was my elbow. Pardon me.”

The information did not perturb her, and her coolness was a challenge.

“It was a mercy you did not overturn the stove,” she said.

He followed her glance and saw a sheet-iron stove and a coffee-pot, attended by a young squaw. He sniffed the coffee and looked back to the girl.

“I’m a chechaquo,” he said.

Her bored expression told him that he was stating the obvious. But he was unabashed.

“I’ve shed my shooting-irons,” he added.

Then she recognized him, and her eyes lighted.

“I never thought you’d get this far,” she informed him.

Again, and greedily, he sniffed the air.

“As I live, coffee!” He turned and directly addressed her. “I’ll give you my little finger--cut it right off now; I’ll do anything; I’ll be your slave for a year and a day or any other odd time, if you’ll give me a cup out of that pot.”

And over the coffee he gave his name and learned hers--Joy Gastell. Also, he learned that she was an old-timer in the country. She had been born in a trading post on the Great Slave, and as a child had crossed the Rockies with her father and come down to the Yukon. She was going in, she said, with her father, who had been delayed by business in Seattle, and who had then been wrecked on the ill-fated Chanter and carried back to Puget Sound by the rescuing steamer.

In view of the fact that she was still in her blankets, he did not make it a long conversation, and, heroically declining a second cup of coffee, he removed himself and his quarter of a ton of baggage from her tent. Further, he took several conclusions away with him: she had a fetching name and fetching eyes; could not be more than twenty, or twenty-one or-two; her father must be French; she had a will of her own and temperament to burn; and she had been educated elsewhere than on the frontier.

VI.

Over the ice-scoured rocks, and above the timber-line, the trail ran around Crater Lake and gained the rocky defile that led toward Happy Camp and the first scrub pines. To pack his heavy outfit around would take days of heart-breaking toil. On the lake was a canvas boat employed in freighting. Two trips with it, in two hours, would see him and his ton across. But he was broke, and the ferryman charged forty dollars a ton.

“You’ve got a gold-mine, my friend, in that dinky boat,” Kit said to the ferryman. “Do you want another gold-mine?”

“Show me,” was the answer.

“I’ll sell it to you for the price of ferrying my outfit. It’s an idea, not patented, and you can jump the deal as soon as I tell you it. Are you game?”

The ferryman said he was, and Kit liked his looks.

“Very well. You see that glacier. Take a pick-axe and wade into it. In a day you can have a decent groove from top to bottom. See the point? The Chilcoot and Crater Lake Consolidated Chute Corporation, Limited. You can charge fifty cents a hundred, get a hundred tons a day, and have no work to do but collect the coin.”

Two hours later, Kit’s ton was across the lake, and he had gained three days on himself. And when John Bellew overtook him, he was well along toward Deep Lake, another volcanic pit filled with glacial water.

VII.

The last pack, from Long Lake to Linderman, was three miles, and the trail, if trail it could be called, rose up over a thousand-foot hogback, dropped down a scramble of slippery rocks, and crossed a wide stretch of swamp. John Bellew remonstrated when he saw Kit arise with a hundred pounds in the straps and pick up a fifty-pound sack of flour and place it on top of the pack against the back of his neck.

“Come on, you chunk of the hard,” Kit retorted. “Kick in on your bear-meat fodder and your one suit of underclothes.”

But John Bellew shook his head.

“I’m afraid I’m getting old, Christopher.”

“You’re only forty-eight. Do you realize that my grandfather, sir, your father, old Isaac Bellew, killed a man with his fist when he was sixty-nine years old?”

John Bellew grinned and swallowed his medicine.

“Avuncular, I want to tell you something important. I was raised a Lord Fauntleroy, but I can outpack you, outwalk you, put you on your back, or lick you with my fists right now.”

John Bellew thrust out his hand and spoke solemnly.

“Christopher, my boy, I believe you can do it. I believe you can do it with that pack on your back at the same time. You’ve made good, boy, though it’s too unthinkable to believe.”

Kit made the round trip of the last pack four times a day, which is to say that he daily covered twenty-four miles of mountain climbing, twelve miles of it under one hundred and fifty pounds. He was proud, hard, and tired, but in splendid physical condition. He ate and slept as he had never eaten and slept in his life, and as the end of the work came in sight, he was almost half sorry.

One problem bothered him. He had learned that he could fall with a hundredweight on his back and survive; but he was confident, if he fell with that additional fifty pounds across the back of his neck, that it would break it clean. Each trail through the swamp was quickly churned bottomless by the thousands of packers, who were compelled continually to make new trails. It was while pioneering such a new trail, that he solved the problem of the extra fifty.

The soft, lush surface gave way under him; he floundered, and pitched forward on his face. The fifty pounds crushed his face in the mud and went clear without snapping his neck. With the remaining hundred pounds on his back, he arose on hands and knees. But he got no farther. One arm sank to the shoulder, pillowing his cheek in the slush. As he drew this arm clear, the other sank to the shoulder. In this position it was impossible to slip the straps, and the hundredweight on his back would not let him rise. On hands and knees, sinking first one arm and then the other, he made an effort to crawl to where the small sack of flour had fallen. But he exhausted himself without advancing, and so churned and broke the grass surface, that a tiny pool of water began to form in perilous proximity to his mouth and nose.

He tried to throw himself on his back with the pack underneath, but this resulted in sinking both arms to the shoulders and gave him a foretaste of drowning. With exquisite patience, he slowly withdrew one sucking arm and then the other and rested them flat on the surface for the support of his chin. Then he began to call for help. After a time he heard the sound of feet sucking through the mud as some one advanced from behind.

“Lend a hand, friend,” he said. “Throw out a life-line or something.”

It was a woman’s voice that answered, and he recognized it.

“If you’ll unbuckle the straps I can get up.”

The hundred pounds rolled into the mud with a soggy noise, and he slowly gained his feet.

“A pretty predicament,” Miss Gastell laughed, at sight of his mudcovered face.

“Not at all,” he replied airily. “My favourite physical exercise stunt. Try it some time. It’s great for the pectoral muscles and the spine.”

He wiped his face, flinging the slush from his hand with a snappy jerk.

“Oh!” she cried in recognition. “It’s Mr--ah--Mr Smoke Bellew.”

"I thank you gravely for your timely rescue and for that name," he answered. "I have been doubly baptized. Henceforth I shall insist always on being called Smoke Bellew. It is a strong name, and not without significance."

He paused, and then voice and expression became suddenly fierce.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" he demanded. "I'm going back to the States. I am going to get married. I am going to raise a large family of children. And then, as the evening shadows fall, I shall gather those children about me and relate the sufferings and hardships I endured on the Chilcoot Trail. And if they don't cry--I repeat, if they don't cry, I'll lambaste the stuffing out of them."

VIII.

The arctic winter came down apace. Snow that had come to stay lay six inches on the ground, and the ice was forming in quiet ponds, despite the fierce gales that blew. It was in the late afternoon, during a lull in such a gale, that Kit and John Bellew helped the cousins load the boat and watched it disappear down the lake in a snow-squall.

"And now a night's sleep and an early start in the morning," said John Bellew. "If we aren't storm-bound at the summit we'll make Dyea to-morrow night, and if we have luck in catching a steamer we'll be in San Francisco in a week."

"Enjoyed your vacation?" Kit asked absently.

Their camp for that last night at Linderman was a melancholy remnant. Everything of use, including the tent, had been taken by the cousins. A tattered tarpaulin, stretched as a wind-break, partially sheltered them from the driving snow. Supper they cooked on an open fire in a couple of battered and discarded camp utensils. All that was left them were their blankets, and food for several meals.

From the moment of the departure of the boat, Kit had become absent and restless. His uncle noticed his condition, and attributed it to the fact that the end of the hard toil had come. Only once during supper did Kit speak.

"Avuncular," he said, relevant of nothing, "after this, I wish you'd call me Smoke. I've made some smoke on this trail, haven't I?"

A few minutes later he wandered away in the direction of the village of tents that sheltered the gold-rushers who were still packing or building their boats. He was gone several hours, and when he returned and slipped into his blankets John Bellew was asleep.

In the darkness of a gale-driven morning, Kit crawled out, built a fire in his stocking feet, by which he thawed out his frozen shoes, then boiled coffee and fried bacon. It was a chilly, miserable meal. As soon as finished, they strapped their blankets. As John Bellew turned to lead the way toward the Chilcoot Trail, Kit held out his hand.

"Good-bye, avuncular," he said.

John Bellew looked at him and swore in his surprise.

"Don't forget my name's Smoke," Kit chided.

"But what are you going to do?"

Kit waved his hand in a general direction northward over the stormlashed lake.

"What's the good of turning back after getting this far?" he asked. "Besides, I've got my taste of meat, and I like it. I'm going on."

"You're broke," protested John Bellew. "You have no outfit."

"I've got a job. Behold your nephew, Christopher Smoke Bellew! He's got a job at a hundred and fifty per month and grub. He's going down to Dawson with a couple of dudes and another gentleman's man--camp-cook, boatman, and general all-around hustler. And O'Hara and the Billow can go to hell. Good-bye."

But John Bellew was dazed, and could only mutter:

"I don't understand."

"They say the baldface grizzlies are thick in the Yukon Basin," Kit explained. "Well, I've got only one suit of underclothes, and I'm going after the bear-meat, that's all."

The Tears of Ah Kim

There was a great noise and racket, but no scandal, in Honolulu's Chinatown. Those within hearing distance merely shrugged their shoulders and smiled tolerantly at the disturbance as an affair of accustomed usualness. "What is it?" asked Chin Mo, down with a sharp pleurisy, of his wife, who had paused for a second at the open window to listen.

"Only Ah Kim," was her reply. "His mother is beating him again."

The fracas was taking place in the garden, behind the living rooms that were at the back of the store that fronted on the street with the proud sign above: AH KIM COMPANY, GENERAL MERCHANDISE. The garden was a miniature domain, twenty feet square, that somehow cunningly seduced the eye into a sense and seeming of illimitable vastness. There were forests of dwarf pines and oaks, centuries old yet two or three feet in height, and imported at enormous care and expense. A tiny bridge, a pace across, arched over a miniature river that flowed with rapids and cataracts from a miniature lake stocked with myriad-finned, orange-miracled goldfish that in proportion to the lake and landscape were whales. On every side the many windows of the several-storied shack-buildings looked down. In the centre of the garden, on the narrow gravelled walk close beside the lake Ah Kim was noisily receiving his beating.

No Chinese lad of tender and beatable years was Ah Kim. His was the store of Ah Kim Company, and his was the achievement of building it up through the long years from the shoestring of savings of a contract coolie labourer to a bank account in four figures and a credit that was gilt edged. An even half-century of summers and winters had passed over his head, and, in the passing, fattened him comfortably and snugly. Short of stature, his full front was as rotund as a water-melon seed. His face was moon-faced. His garb was dignified and silken, and his black-silk skull-cap with the red button atop, now, alas! fallen on the ground, was the skull-cap worn by the successful and dignified merchants of his race.

But his appearance, in this moment of the present, was anything but dignified. Dodging and ducking under a rain of blows from a bamboo cane, he was crouched over in a half-doubled posture. When he was rapped on the knuckles and elbows, with which he shielded his face and head, his winces were genuine and involuntary. From the many surrounding windows the neighbourhood looked down with placid enjoyment.

And she who wielded the stick so shrewdly from long practice! Seventy-four years old, she looked every minute of her time. Her thin legs were encased in straight-lined pants of linen stiff-textured and shiny-black. Her scraggly grey hair was drawn unrelentingly and flatly back from a narrow, unrelenting forehead. Eyebrows she had none, having long since shed them. Her eyes, of pin-hole tininess, were blackest black. She was shockingly cadaverous. Her shrivelled forearm, exposed by the loose sleeve, possessed no more of muscle than several taut bowstrings stretched across meagre bone under yellow, parchment-like skin. Along this mummy arm jade bracelets shot up and down and clashed with every blow.

“Ah!” she cried out, rhythmically accenting her blows in series of three to each shrill observation. “I forbade you to talk to Li Faa. To-day you stopped on the street with her. Not an hour ago. Half an hour by the clock you talked.--What is that?”

“It was the thrice-accursed telephone,” Ah Kim muttered, while she suspended the stick to catch what he said. “Mrs. Chang Lucy told you. I know she did. I saw her see me. I shall have the telephone taken out. It is of the devil.”

“It is a device of all the devils,” Mrs. Tai Fu agreed, taking a fresh grip on the stick. “Yet shall the telephone remain. I like to talk with Mrs. Chang Lucy over the telephone.”

“She has the eyes of ten thousand cats,” quoth Ah Kim, ducking and receiving the stick stinging on his knuckles. “And the tongues of ten thousand toads,” he supplemented ere his next duck.

“She is an impudent-faced and evil-mannered hussy,” Mrs. Tai Fu accented.

“Mrs. Chang Lucy was ever that,” Ah Kim murmured like the dutiful son he was.

“I speak of Li Faa,” his mother corrected with stick emphasis. “She is only half Chinese, as you know. Her mother was a shameless kanaka. She wears skirts like the degraded haole women--also corsets, as I have seen for myself. Where are her children? Yet has she buried two husbands.”

“The one was drowned, the other kicked by a horse,” Ah Kim qualified.

“A year of her, unworthy son of a noble father, and you would gladly be going out to get drowned or be kicked by a horse.”

Subdued chucklings and laughter from the window audience applauded her point.

"You buried two husbands yourself, revered mother," Ah Kim was stung to retort.

"I had the good taste not to marry a third. Besides, my two husbands died honourably in their beds. They were not kicked by horses nor drowned at sea. What business is it of our neighbours that you should inform them I have had two husbands, or ten, or none? You have made a scandal of me, before all our neighbours, and for that I shall now give you a real beating."

Ah Kim endured the staccato rain of blows, and said when his mother paused, breathless and weary:

"Always have I insisted and pleaded, honourable mother, that you beat me in the house, with the windows and doors closed tight, and not in the open street or the garden open behind the house.

"You have called this unthinkable Li Faa the Silvery Moon Blossom," Mrs. Tai Fu rejoined, quite illogically and femininely, but with utmost success in so far as she deflected her son from continuance of the thrust he had so swiftly driven home.

"Mrs. Chang Lucy told you," he charged.

"I was told over the telephone," his mother evaded. "I do not know all voices that speak to me over that contrivance of all the devils."

Strangely, Ah Kim made no effort to run away from his mother, which he could easily have done. She, on the other hand, found fresh cause for more stick blows.

"Ah! Stubborn one! Why do you not cry? Mule that shameth its ancestors! Never have I made you cry. From the time you were a little boy I have never made you cry. Answer me! Why do you not cry?"

Weak and breathless from her exertions, she dropped the stick and panted and shook as if with a nervous palsy.

"I do not know, except that it is my way," Ah Kim replied, gazing solicitously at his mother. "I shall bring you a chair now, and you will sit down and rest and feel better."

But she flung away from him with a snort and tottered agedly across the garden into the house. Meanwhile recovering his skull-cap and smoothing his disordered attire, Ah Kim rubbed his hurts and gazed after her with eyes of devotion. He even smiled, and almost might it appear that he had enjoyed the beating.

Ah Kim had been so beaten ever since he was a boy, when he lived on the high banks of the eleventh cataract of the Yangtse river. Here his father had been born and toiled all his days from young manhood as a towing coolie. When he died, Ah Kim, in his own young manhood, took up the same honourable profession. Farther back than all remembered annals of the family, had the males of it been towing coolies. At the time of Christ his direct ancestors had been doing the same thing, meeting the precisely similarly modelled junks below the white water at the foot of the canyon, bending the half-mile of rope to each junk, and, according to size, tailing on from a hundred to two hundred coolies of them and by sheer, two-legged man-power, bowed forward and down till their hands touched the ground and their faces were sometimes within a foot of it, dragging the junk up through the white water to the head of the canyon.

Apparently, down all the intervening centuries, the payment of the trade had not picked up. His father, his father's father, and himself, Ah Kim, had received the same invariable remuneration--per junk one-fourteenth of a cent, at the rate he had since learned money was valued in Hawaii. On long lucky summer days when the waters were easy, the junks many, the hours of daylight sixteen, sixteen hours of such heroic toil would earn over a cent. But in a whole year a towing coolie did not earn more than a dollar and a half. People could and did live on such an income. There were women servants who received a yearly wage of a dollar. The net-makers of Ti Wi earned between a dollar and two dollars a year. They lived on such wages, or, at least, they did not die on them. But for the towing coolies there were pickings, which were what made the profession honourable and the guild a close and hereditary corporation or labour union. One junk in five that was dragged up through the rapids or lowered down was wrecked. One junk in every ten was a total loss. The coolies of the towing guild knew the freaks and whims of the currents, and grappled, and raked, and netted a wet harvest from the river. They of the guild were looked up to by lesser coolies, for they could afford to drink brick tea and eat number four rice every day.

And Ah Kim had been contented and proud, until, one bitter spring day of driving sleet and hail, he dragged ashore a drowning Cantonese sailor. It was this wanderer, thawing out by his fire, who first named the magic name Hawaii to him. He had himself never been to that labourer's paradise, said the sailor; but many Chinese had gone there from Canton, and he had heard the talk of their letters written back. In Hawaii was never frost nor famine. The very pigs, never fed, were ever fat of the generous offal disdained by man. A Cantonese or Yangtse family could live on the waste of an Hawaii coolie. And wages! In gold dollars, ten a month, or, in trade dollars, two a month, was what the contract Chinese coolie received from the white-devil sugar kings. In a year the coolie received the prodigious sum of two hundred and forty trade dollars--more than a hundred times what a coolie, toiling ten times as hard, received on the eleventh cataract of the Yangtse. In short, all things considered, an Hawaii coolie was one hundred times better off, and, when the amount of labour was estimated, a thousand times better off. In addition was the wonderful climate.

When Ah Kim was twenty-four, despite his mother's pleadings and beatings, he resigned from the ancient and honourable guild of the eleventh cataract towing coolies, left his mother to go into a boss coolie's household as a servant for a dollar a year, and an annual dress to cost not less than thirty cents, and himself departed down the Yangtse to the great sea. Many were his adventures and severe his toils and hardships ere, as a salt-sea junk-sailor, he won to Canton. When he was twenty-six he signed five years of his life and labour away to the Hawaii sugar kings and departed, one of eight hundred contract coolies, for that far island land, on a festering steamer run by a crazy captain and drunken officers and rejected of Lloyds.

Honourable, among labourers, had Ah Kim's rating been as a towing coolie. In Hawaii, receiving a hundred times more pay, he found himself looked down upon as the lowest of the low--a plantation coolie, than which could be nothing lower. But a coolie whose ancestors had towed junks up the eleventh cataract of the Yangtse since before the birth of Christ inevitably inherits one character in large degree, namely, the character of patience. This patience was Ah Kim's. At the end of five years, his compulsory servitude over, thin as ever in body, in bank account he lacked just ten trade dollars of possessing a thousand trade dollars.

On this sum he could have gone back to the Yangtse and retired for life a really wealthy man. He would have possessed a larger sum, had he not, on occasion, conservatively played che fa and fan tan, and had he not, for a twelve-month, toiled among the centipedes and scorpions of the stifling cane-fields in the semi-dream of a continuous opium debauch. Why he had not toiled the whole five years under the spell of opium was the expensiveness of the habit. He had had no moral scruples. The drug had cost too much.

But Ah Kim did not return to China. He had observed the business life of Hawaii and developed a vaulting ambition. For six months, in order to learn business and English at the bottom, he clerked in the plantation store. At the end of this time he knew more about that particular store than did ever plantation manager know about any plantation store. When he resigned his position he was receiving forty gold a month, or eighty trade, and he was beginning to put on flesh. Also, his attitude toward mere contract coolies had become distinctively aristocratic. The manager offered to raise him to sixty fold, which, by the year, would constitute a fabulous fourteen hundred and forty trade, or seven hundred times his annual earning on the Yangtse as a two-legged horse at one-fourteenth of a gold cent per junk.

Instead of accepting, Ah Kim departed to Honolulu, and in the big general merchandise store of Fong & Chow Fong began at the bottom for fifteen gold per month. He worked a year and a half, and resigned when he was thirty-three, despite the seventy-five gold per month his Chinese employers were paying him. Then it was that he put up his own sign: AH KIM COMPANY, GENERAL MERCHANDISE. Also, better fed, there was about his less meagre figure a foreshadowing of the melon-seed rotundity that was to attach to him in future years.

With the years he prospered increasingly, so that, when he was thirty-six, the promise of his figure was fulfilling rapidly, and, himself a member of the exclusive and powerful Hai Gum Tong, and of the Chinese Merchants' Association, he was accustomed to sitting as host at dinners that cost him as much as thirty years of towing on the eleventh cataract would have earned him. Two things he missed: a wife, and his mother to lay the stick on him as of yore.

When he was thirty-seven he consulted his bank balance. It stood him three thousand gold. For twenty-five hundred down and an easy mortgage he could buy the three-story shack-building, and the ground in fee simple on which it stood. But to do this, left only five hundred for a wife. Fu Yee Po had a marriageable, properly small-footed daughter whom he was willing to import from China, and sell to him for eight hundred gold, plus the costs of importation. Further, Fu Yee Po was even willing to take five hundred down and the remainder on note at 6 per cent.

Ah Kim, thirty-seven years of age, fat and a bachelor, really did want a wife, especially a small-footed wife; for, China born and reared, the immemorial small-footed female had been deeply impressed into his fantasy of woman. But more, even more and far more than a small-footed wife, did he want his mother and his mother's delectable beatings. So he declined Fu Yee Po's easy terms, and at much less cost imported his own mother from servant in a boss coolie's house at a yearly wage of a dollar and a thirty-cent dress to be mistress of his Honolulu three-story shack building with two household servants, three clerks, and a porter of all work under her, to say nothing of ten thousand dollars' worth of dress goods on the shelves that ranged from the cheapest cotton crepes to the most expensive hand-embroidered silks. For be it known that even in that early day Ah Kim's emporium was beginning to cater to the tourist trade from the States.

For thirteen years Ah Kim had lived tolerably happily with his mother, and by her been methodically beaten for causes just or unjust, real or fancied; and at the end of it all he knew as strongly as ever the ache of his heart and head for a wife, and of his loins for sons to live after him, and carry on the dynasty of Ah Kim Company. Such the dream that has ever vexed men, from those early ones who first usurped a hunting right, monopolized a sandbar for a fish-trap, or stormed a village and put the males thereof to the sword. Kings, millionaires, and Chinese merchants of Honolulu have this in common, despite that they may praise God for having made them differently and in self-likable images.

And the ideal of woman that Ah Kim at fifty ached for had changed from his ideal at thirty-seven. No small-footed wife did he want now, but a free, natural, out-stepping normal-footed woman that, somehow, appeared to him in his day dreams and haunted his night visions in the form of Li Faa, the Silvery Moon Blossom. What if she were twice widowed, the daughter of a kanaka mother, the wearer of white-devil skirts and corsets and high-heeled slippers! He wanted her. It seemed it was written that she should be joint ancestor with him of the line that would continue the ownership and management through the generations, of Ah Kim Company, General Merchandise.

"I will have no half-pake daughter-in-law," his mother often reiterated to Ah Kim, pake being the Hawaiian word for Chinese. "All pake must my daughter-in-law be, even as you, my son, and as I, your mother. And she must wear trousers, my son, as all the women of our family before her. No woman, in she-devil skirts and corsets, can pay due reverence to our ancestors. Corsets and reverence do not go together. Such a one is this shameless Li Faa. She is impudent and independent, and will be neither obedient to her husband nor her husband's mother. This brazen-faced Li Faa would believe herself the source of life and the first ancestor, recognizing no ancestors before her. She laughs at our joss-sticks, and paper prayers, and family gods, as I have been well told--"

"Mrs. Chang Lucy," Ah Kim groaned.

"Not alone Mrs. Chang Lucy, O son. I have inquired. At least a dozen have heard her say of our joss house that it is all monkey foolishness. The words are hers--she, who eats raw fish, raw squid, and baked dog. Ours is the foolishness of monkeys. Yet would she marry you, a monkey, because of your store that is a palace and of the wealth that makes you a great man. And she would put shame on me, and on your father before you long honourably dead."

And there was no discussing the matter. As things were, Ah Kim knew his mother was right. Not for nothing had Li Faa been born forty years before of a Chinese father, renegade to all tradition, and of a kanaka mother whose immediate forebears had broken the taboos, cast down their own Polynesian gods, and weak-heartedly listened to the preaching about the remote and unimageable god of the Christian missionaries. Li Faa, educated, who could read and write English and Hawaiian and a fair measure of Chinese, claimed to believe in nothing, although in her secret heart she feared the kahunas (Hawaiian witch-doctors), who she was certain could charm away ill luck or pray one to death. Li Faa would never come into Ah Kim's house, as he thoroughly knew, and kow-tow to his mother and be slave to her in the immemorial Chinese way. Li Faa, from the Chinese angle, was a new woman, a feminist, who rode horseback astride, disported immodestly garbed at Waikiki on the surf-boards, and at more than one luau (feast) had been known to dance the hula with the worst and in excess of the worst, to the scandalous delight of all.

Ah Kim himself, a generation younger than his mother, had been bitten by the acid of modernity. The old order held, in so far as he still felt in his subtlest crypts of being the dusty hand of the past resting on him, residing in him; yet he subscribed to heavy policies of fire and life insurance, acted as treasurer for the local Chinese revolutionises that were for turning the

Celestial Empire into a republic, contributed to the funds of the Hawaii-born Chinese baseball nine that excelled the Yankee nines at their own game, talked theosophy with Katso Suguri, the Japanese Buddhist and silk importer, fell for police graft, played and paid his insidious share in the democratic politics of annexed Hawaii, and was thinking of buying an automobile. Ah Kim never dared bare himself to himself and thrash out and winnow out how much of the old he had ceased to believe in. His mother was of the old, yet he revered her and was happy under her bamboo stick. Li Faa, the Silvery Moon Blossom, was of the new, yet he could never be quite completely happy without her.

For he loved Li Faa. Moon-faced, rotund as a water-melon seed, canny business man, wise with half a century of living--nevertheless Ah Kim became an artist when he thought of her. He thought of her in poems of names, as woman transmuted into flower-terms of beauty and philosophic abstractions of achievement and easement. She was, to him, and alone to him of all men in the world, his Plum Blossom, his Tranquillity of Woman, his Flower of Serenity, his Moon Lily, and his Perfect Rest. And as he murmured these love endearments of namings, it seemed to him that in them were the ripplings of running waters, the tinklings of silver wind-bells, and the scents of the oleander and the jasmine. She was his poem of woman, a lyric delight, a three-dimensions of flesh and spirit delicious, a fate and a good fortune written, ere the first man and woman were, by the gods whose whim had been to make all men and women for sorrow and for joy.

But his mother put into his hand the ink-brush and placed under it, on the table, the writing tablet.

“Paint,” said she, “the ideograph of TO MARRY.”

He obeyed, scarcely wondering, with the deft artistry of his race and training painting the symbolic hieroglyphic.

“Resolve it,” commanded his mother.

Ah Kim looked at her, curious, willing to please, unaware of the drift of her intent.

“Of what is it composed?” she persisted. “What are the three originals, the sum of which is it: to marry, marriage, the coming together and wedding of a man and a woman? Paint them, paint them apart, the three originals, unrelated, so that we may know how the wise men of old wisely built up the ideograph of to marry.”

And Ah Kim, obeying and painting, saw that what he had painted were three picture-signs--the picture-signs of a hand, an ear, and a woman.

“Name them,” said his mother; and he named them.

“It is true,” said she. “It is a great tale. It is the stuff of the painted pictures of marriage. Such marriage was in the beginning; such shall it always be in my house. The hand of the man takes the woman’s ear, and by it leads her away to his house, where she is to be obedient to him and to his mother. I was taken by the ear, so, by your long honourably dead father. I have looked at your hand. It is not like his hand. Also have I looked at the ear of Li Faa. Never will you lead her by the ear. She has not that kind of an ear. I shall live a long time yet, and I will be mistress in my son’s house, after our ancient way, until I die.”

“But she is my revered ancestress,” Ah Kim explained to Li Faa.

He was timidly unhappy; for Li Faa, having ascertained that Mrs. Tai Fu was at the temple of the Chinese AEsculapius making a food offering of dried duck and prayers for her declining health, had taken advantage of the opportunity to call upon him in his store.

Li Faa pursed her insolent, unpainted lips into the form of a half-opened rosebud, and replied:

“That will do for China. I do not know China. This is Hawaii, and in Hawaii the customs of all foreigners change.”

“She is nevertheless my ancestress,” Ah Kim protested, “the mother who gave me birth, whether I am in China or Hawaii, O Silvery Moon Blossom that I want for wife.”

“I have had two husbands,” Li Faa stated placidly. “One was a pake, one was a Portuguese. I learned much from both. Also am I educated. I have been to High School, and I have played the piano in public. And I learned from my two husbands much. The pake makes the best husband. Never again will I marry anything but a pake. But he must not take me by the ear--“

“How do you know of that?” he broke in suspiciously.

“Mrs. Chang Lucy,” was the reply. “Mrs. Chang Lucy tells me everything that your mother tells her, and your mother tells her much. So let me tell you that mine is not that kind of an ear.”

“Which is what my honoured mother has told me,” Ah Kim groaned.

“Which is what your honoured mother told Mrs. Chang Lucy, which is what Mrs. Chang Lucy told me,” Li Faa completed equably. “And I now tell you, O Third Husband To Be, that the man is not born who will lead me by the ear. It is not the way in Hawaii. I will go only hand in hand with my man, side by side, fifty-fifty as is the haole slang just now. My Portuguese husband thought different. He tried to beat me. I landed him three times in the police court and each time he worked out his sentence on the reef. After that he got drowned."

"My mother has been my mother for fifty years," Ah Kim declared stoutly.

"And for fifty years has she beaten you," Li Faa giggled. "How my father used to laugh at Yap Ten Shin! Like you, Yap Ten Shin had been born in China, and had brought the China customs with him. His old father was for ever beating him with a stick. He loved his father. But his father beat him harder than ever when he became a missionary pake. Every time he went to the missionary services, his father beat him. And every time the missionary heard of it he was harsh in his language to Yap Ten Shin for allowing his father to beat him. And my father laughed and laughed, for my father was a very liberal pake, who had changed his customs quicker than most foreigners. And all the trouble was because Yap Ten Shin had a loving heart. He loved his honourable father. He loved the God of Love of the Christian missionary. But in the end, in me, he found the greatest love of all, which is the love of woman. In me he forgot his love for his father and his love for the loving Christ.

"And he offered my father six hundred gold, for me--the price was small because my feet were not small. But I was half kanaka. I said that I was not a slave-woman, and that I would be sold to no man. My high-school teacher was a haole old maid who said love of woman was so beyond price that it must never be sold. Perhaps that is why she was an old maid. She was not beautiful. She could not give herself away. My kanaka mother said it was not the kanaka way to sell their daughters for a money price. They gave their daughters for love, and she would listen to reason if Yap Ten Shin provided luaus in quantity and quality. My pake father, as I have told you, was liberal. He asked me if I wanted Yap Ten Shin for my husband. And I said yes; and freely, of myself, I went to him. He it was who was kicked by a horse; but he was a very good husband before he was kicked by the horse.

"As for you, Ah Kim, you shall always be honourable and lovable for me, and some day, when it is not necessary for you to take me by the ear, I shall marry you and come here and be with you always, and you will be the happiest pake in all Hawaii; for I have had two husbands, and gone to high school, and am most wise in making a husband happy. But that will be when your mother has ceased to beat you. Mrs. Chang Lucy tells me that she beats you very hard."

"She does," Ah Kim affirmed. "Behold! He thrust back his loose sleeves, exposing to the elbow his smooth and cherubic forearms. They were mantled with black and blue marks that advertised the weight and number of blows so shielded from his head and face.

"But she has never made me cry," Ah Kim disclaimed hastily. "Never, from the time I was a little boy, has she made me cry."

"So Mrs. Chang Lucy says," Li Faa observed. "She says that your honourable mother often complains to her that she has never made you cry."

A sibilant warning from one of his clerks was too late. Having regained the house by way of the back alley, Mrs. Tai Fu emerged right upon them from out of the living apartments. Never had Ah Kim seen his mother's eyes so blazing furious. She ignored Li Faa, as she screamed at him:

"Now will I make you cry. As never before shall I beat you until you do cry."

"Then let us go into the back rooms, honourable mother," Ah Kim suggested. "We will close the windows and the doors, and there may you beat me."

"No. Here shall you be beaten before all the world and this shameless woman who would, with her own hand, take you by the ear and call such sacrilege marriage! Stay, shameless woman."

"I am going to stay anyway," said Li Faa. She favoured the clerks with a truculent stare. "And I'd like to see anything less than the police put me out of here."

"You will never be my daughter-in-law," Mrs. Tai Fu snapped.

Li Faa nodded her head in agreement.

"But just the same," she added, "shall your son be my third husband."

"You mean when I am dead?" the old mother screamed.

"The sun rises each morning," Li Faa said enigmatically. "All my life have I seen it rise--"

"You are forty, and you wear corsets."

"But I do not dye my hair--that will come later," Li Faa calmly retorted. "As to my age, you are right. I shall be forty-one next Kamehameha Day. For forty years I have seen the sun rise. My father was an old man. Before he died he told me that he had observed no difference in the rising of the sun since when he was a little boy. The world is round. Confucius did not know that, but you will find it in all the geography books. The world is round. Ever it turns over on itself, over and over and around and around. And the times and seasons of weather and life turn with it. What is, has been before. What has been, will be again. The time of the breadfruit and the mango ever recurs, and man and woman repeat themselves. The robins nest, and in the springtime the plovers come from the north. Every spring is followed by another spring. The coconut palm rises into the air, ripens its fruit, and departs. But always are there more coconut palms. This is not all my own smart talk. Much of it my father told me. Proceed, honourable Mrs. Tai Fu, and beat your son who is my Third Husband To Be. But I shall laugh. I warn you I shall laugh."

Ah Kim dropped down on his knees so as to give his mother every advantage. And while she rained blows upon him with the bamboo stick, Li Faa smiled and giggled, and finally burst into laughter.

"Harder, O honourable Mrs. Tai Fu!" Li Faa urged between paroxysms of mirth.

Mrs. Tai Fu did her best, which was notably weak, until she observed what made her drop the stick by her side in amazement. Ah Kim was crying. Down both cheeks great round tears were coursing. Li Faa was amazed. So were the gaping clerks. Most amazed of all was Ah Kim, yet he could not help himself; and, although no further blows fell, he cried steadily on.

"But why did you cry?" Li Faa demanded often of Ah Kim. "It was so perfectly foolish a thing to do. She was not even hurting you."

"Wait until we are married," was Ah Kim's invariable reply, "and then, O Moon Lily, will I tell you."

Two years later, one afternoon, more like a water-melon seed in configuration than ever, Ah Kim returned home from a meeting of the Chinese Protective Association, to find his mother dead on her couch. Narrower and more unrelenting than ever were the forehead and the brushed-back hair. But on her face was a withered smile. The gods had been kind. She had passed without pain.

He telephoned first of all to Li Faa's number but did not find her until he called up Mrs. Chang Lucy. The news given, the marriage was dated ahead with ten times the brevity of the old-line Chinese custom. And if there be anything analogous to a bridesmaid in a Chinese wedding, Mrs. Chang Lucy was just that.

"Why," Li Faa asked Ah Kim when alone with him on their wedding night, "why did you cry when your mother beat you that day in the store? You were so foolish. She was not even hurting you."

"That is why I cried," answered Ah Kim.

Li Faa looked up at him without understanding.

"I cried," he explained, "because I suddenly knew that my mother was nearing her end. There was no weight, no hurt, in her blows. I cried because I knew SHE NO LONGER HAD STRENGTH ENOUGH TO HURT ME. That is why I cried, my Flower of Serenity, my Perfect Rest. That is the only reason why I cried."

WAIKIKI, HONOLULU.

June 16, 1916.

The Terrible Solomons

There is no gainsaying that the Solomons are a hard-bitten bunch of islands. On the other hand, there are worse places in the world. But to the new chum who has no constitutional understanding of men and life in the rough, the Solomons may indeed prove terrible.

It is true that fever and dysentery are perpetually on the walk-about, that loathsome skin diseases abound, that the air is saturated with a poison that bites into every pore, cut, or abrasion and plants malignant ulcers, and that many strong men who escape dying there return as wrecks to their own countries. It is also true that the natives of the Solomons are a wild lot, with a hearty appetite for human flesh and a fad for collecting human heads. Their highest instinct of sportsmanship is to catch a man with his back turned and to smite him a cunning blow with a tomahawk that severs the spinal column at the base of the brain. It is equally true that on some islands, such as Malaita, the profit and loss account of social intercourse is calculated in homicides. Heads are a medium of exchange, and white heads are extremely valuable. Very often a dozen villages make a jack-pot, which they fatten moon by moon, against the time when some brave warrior presents a white man's head, fresh and gory, and claims the pot.

All the foregoing is quite true, and yet there are white men who have lived in the Solomons a score of years and who feel homesick when they go away from them. A man needs only to be careful--and lucky--to live a long time in the Solomons; but he must also be of the right sort. He must have the hallmark of the inevitable white man stamped upon his soul. He must be inevitable. He must have a certain grand carelessness of odds, a certain colossal self-satisfaction, and a racial egotism that convinces him that one white is better than a thousand niggers every day in the week, and that on Sunday he is able to clean out two thousand niggers. For such are the things that have made the white man inevitable. Oh, and one other thing--the white man who wishes to be inevitable, must not merely despise the lesser breeds and think a lot of himself; he must also fail to be too long on imagination. He must not understand too well the instincts, customs, and mental processes of the blacks, the yellows, and the browns; for it is not in such fashion that the white race has tramped its royal road around the world.

Bertie Arkwright was not inevitable. He was too sensitive, too finely strung, and he possessed too much imagination. The world was too much with him. He projected himself too quiveringly into his environment. Therefore, the last place in the world for him to come was the Solomons. He did not come, expecting to stay. A five weeks' stop-over between steamers, he decided, would satisfy the call of the primitive he felt thrumming the strings of his being. At least, so he told the lady tourists on the Makembo, though in different terms; and they worshipped him as a hero, for they were lady tourists and they would know only the safety of the steamer's deck as she threaded her way through the Solomons.

There was another man on board, of whom the ladies took no notice. He was a little shriveled wisp of a man, with a withered skin the color of mahogany. His name on the passenger list does not matter, but his other name, Captain Malu, was a name for niggers to conjure with, and to scare naughty pickaninnies to righteousness from New Hanover to the New Hebrides. He had farmed savages and savagery, and from fever and hardship, the crack of Sniders and the lash of the overseers, had wrested five millions of money in the form of beche-de-mer, sandalwood, pearl-shell and turtle-shell, ivory nuts and copra, grasslands, trading stations, and plantations. Captain Malu's little finger, which was broken, had more inevitableness in it than Bertie Arkwright's whole carcass. But then, the lady tourists had nothing by which to judge save appearances, and Bertie certainly was a fine-looking man.

Bertie talked with Captain Malu in the smoking room, confiding to him his intention of seeing life red and bleeding in the Solomons. Captain Malu agreed that the intention was ambitious and honorable. It was not until several days later that he became interested in Bertie, when that young adventurer insisted on showing him an automatic 44-caliber pistol. Bertie explained the mechanism and demonstrated by slipping a loaded magazine up the hollow butt.

"It is so simple," he said. He shot the outer barrel back along the inner one. "That loads it and cocks it, you see. And then all I have to do is pull the trigger, eight times, as fast as I can quiver my finger. See that safety clutch. That's what I like about it. It is safe. It is positively fool-proof." He slipped out the magazine. "You see how safe it is."

As he held it in his hand, the muzzle came in line with Captain Malu's stomach. Captain Malu's blue eyes looked at it unswervingly.

“Would you mind pointing it in some other direction?” he asked.

“It’s perfectly safe,” Bertie assured him. “I withdrew the magazine. It’s not loaded now, you know.”

“A gun is always loaded.”

“But this one isn’t.”

“Turn it away just the same.”

Captain Malu’s voice was flat and metallic and low, but his eyes never left the muzzle until the line of it was drawn past him and away from him.

“I’ll bet a fiver it isn’t loaded,” Bertie proposed warmly.

The other shook his head.

“Then I’ll show you.”

Bertie started to put the muzzle to his own temple with the evident intention of pulling the trigger.

“Just a second,” Captain Malu said quietly, reaching out his hand. “Let me look at it.”

He pointed it seaward and pulled the trigger. A heavy explosion followed, instantaneous with the sharp click of the mechanism that flipped a hot and smoking cartridge sidewise along the deck.

Bertie’s jaw dropped in amazement.

“I slipped the barrel back once, didn’t I?” he explained. It was silly of me, I must say.”

He giggled flabbily, and sat down in a steamer chair. The blood had ebbed from his face, exposing dark circles under his eyes. His hands were trembling and unable to guide the shaking cigarette to his lips. The world was too much with him, and he saw himself with dripping brains prone upon the deck

“Really,” he said, “. . . really.”

“It’s a pretty weapon,” said Captain Malu, returning the automatic to him.

The Commissioner was on board the Makembo, returning from Sydney, and by his permission a stop was made at Ugi to land a missionary. And at Ugi lay the ketch Arla, Captain Hansen, skipper. Now the Arla was one of many vessels owned by Captain Malu, and it was at his suggestion and by his invitation that Bertie went aboard the Arla as guest for a four days’ recruiting cruise on the coast of Malaita. Thereafter the Arla would drop him at Reminge Plantation (also owned by Captain Malu), where Bertie could remain for a week, and then be sent over to Tulagi, the seat of government, where he would become the Commissioner's guest. Captain Malu was responsible for two other suggestions, which given, he disappears from this narrative. One was to Captain Hansen, the other to Mr. Harriwell, manager of Reminge Plantation. Both suggestions were similar in tenor, namely, to give Mr. Bertram Arkwright an insight into the rawness and redness of life in the Solomons. Also, it is whispered that Captain Malu mentioned that a case of Scotch would be coincidental with any particularly gorgeous insight Mr. Arkwright might receive. . . . .

"Yes, Swartz always was too pig-headed. You see, he took four of his boat's crew to Tulagi to be flogged--officially, you know--then started back with them in the whaleboat. It was pretty squally, and the boat capsized just outside. Swartz was the only one drowned. Of course, it was an accident."

"Was it? Really?" Bertie asked, only half-interested, staring hard at the black man at the wheel.

Ugi had dropped astern, and the Arla was sliding along through a summer sea toward the wooded ranges of Malaita. The helmsman who so attracted Bertie's eyes sported a ten penny nail, stuck skewerwise through his nose. About his neck was a string of pants buttons. Thrust through holes in his ears were a can opener, the broken handle of a toothbrush, a clay pipe, the brass wheel of an alarm clock, and several Winchester rifle cartridges.

On his chest, suspended from around his neck hung the half of a china plate. Some forty similarly appareled blacks lay about the deck, fifteen of which were boat's crew, the remainder being fresh labor recruits.

"Of course it was an accident," spoke up the Arla's mate, Jacobs, a slender, dark-eyed man who looked more a professor than a sailor. "Johnny Bedip nearly had the same kind of accident. He was bringing back several from a flogging, when they capsized him. But he knew how to swim as well as they, and two of them were drowned. He used a boat stretcher and a revolver. Of course it was an accident."

"Quite common, them accidents," remarked the skipper. "You see that man at the wheel, Mr. Arkwright? He's a man eater. Six months ago, he and the rest of the boat's crew drowned the then captain of the Arla. They did it on deck, sir, right aft there by the mizzen-traveler."

"The deck was in a shocking state," said the mate.

"Do I understand--?" Bertie began.

"Yes, just that," said Captain Hansen. "It was an accidental drowning."

"But on deck--?"

“Just so. I don’t mind telling you, in confidence, of course, that they used an axe.”

“This present crew of yours?”

Captain Hansen nodded.

“The other skipper always was too careless,” explained the mate. He but just turned his back, when they let him have it.”

“We haven’t any show down here,” was the skipper’s complaint. “The government protects a nigger against a white every time. You can’t shoot first. You’ve got to give the nigger first shot, or else the government calls it murder and you go to Fiji. That’s why there’s so many drowning accidents.”

Dinner was called, and Bertie and the skipper went below, leaving the mate to watch on deck.

“Keep an eye out for that black devil, Auiki,” was the skipper’s parting caution. “I haven’t liked his looks for several days.”

“Right O,” said the mate.

Dinner was part way along, and the skipper was in the middle of his story of the cutting out of the Scottish Chiefs.

“Yes,” he was saying, “she was the finest vessel on the coast. But when she missed stays, and before ever she hit the reef, the canoes started for her. There were five white men, a crew of twenty Santa Cruz boys and Samoans, and only the supercargo escaped. Besides, there were sixty recruits. They were all kai-kai’d. Kai-kai?--oh, I beg your pardon. I mean they were eaten. Then there was the James Edwards, a dandy-rigged--“

But at that moment there was a sharp oath from the mate on deck and a chorus of savage cries. A revolver went off three times, and then was heard a loud splash. Captain Hansen had sprung up the companionway on the instant, and Bertie’s eyes had been fascinated by a glimpse of him drawing his revolver as he sprang.

Bertie went up more circumspectly, hesitating before he put his head above the companionway slide. But nothing happened. The mate was shaking with excitement, his revolver in his hand. Once he startled, and half-jumped around, as if danger threatened his back.

“One of the natives fell overboard,” he was saying, in a queer tense voice. “He couldn’t swim.”

“Who was it?” the skipper demanded.

“Auiki,” was the answer.

"But I say, you know, I heard shots," Bertie said, in trembling eagerness, for he scented adventure, and adventure that was happily over with.

The mate whirled upon him, snarling:

"It"s a damned lie. There ain't been a shot fired. The nigger fell overboard."

Captain Hansen regarded Bertie with unblinking, lack-luster eyes.

"I--I thought--" Bertie was beginning.

"Shots?" said Captain Hansen, dreamily. "Shots? Did you hear any shots, Mr. Jacobs?"

"Not a shot," replied Mr. Jacobs.

The skipper looked at his guest triumphantly, and said:

"Evidently an accident. Let us go down, Mr. Arkwright, and finish dinner."

Bertie slept that night in the captain's cabin, a tiny stateroom off the main cabin. The for'ard bulkhead was decorated with a stand of rifles. Over the bunk were three more rifles. Under the bunk was a big drawer, which, when he pulled it out, he found filled with ammunition, dynamite, and several boxes of detonators. He elected to take the settee on the opposite side. Lying conspicuously on the small table, was the Arla's log. Bertie did not know that it had been especially prepared for the occasion by Captain Malu, and he read therein how on September 21, two boat's crew had fallen overboard and been drowned. Bertie read between the lines and knew better. He read how the Arla's whale boat had been bushwhacked at Su'u and had lost three men; of how the skipper discovered the cook stewing human flesh on the galley fire--flesh purchased by the boat's crew ashore in Fui; of how an accidental discharge of dynamite, while signaling, had killed another boat's crew; of night attacks; ports fled from between the dawns; attacks by bushmen in mangrove swamps and by fleets of salt-water men in the larger passages. One item that occurred with monotonous frequency was death by dysentery. He noticed with alarm that two white men had so died--guests, like himself, on the Arla.

"I say, you know," Bertie said next day to Captain Hansen. "I've been glancing through your log."

The skipper displayed quick vexation that the log had been left lying about.

"And all that dysentery, you know, that's all rot, just like the accidental drownings," Bertie continued. "What does dysentery really stand for?"

The skipper openly admired his guest’s acumen, stiffened himself to make indignant denial, then gracefully surrendered.

“You see, it’s like this, Mr. Arkwright. These islands have got a bad enough name as it is. It’s getting harder every day to sign on white men. Suppose a man is killed. The company has to pay through the nose for another man to take the job. But if the man merely dies of sickness, it’s all right. The new chums don’t mind disease. What they draw the line at is being murdered. I thought the skipper of the Arla had died of dysentery when I took his billet. Then it was too late. I’d signed the contract.”

“Besides,” said Mr. Jacobs, “there’s altogether too many accidental drownings anyway. It don’t look right. It’s the fault of the government. A white man hasn’t a chance to defend himself from the niggers.”

“Yes, look at the Princess and that Yankee mate,” the skipper took up the tale. “She carried five white men besides a government agent. The captain, the agent, and the supercargo were ashore in the two boats. They were killed to the last man. The mate and boson, with about fifteen of the crew--Samoans and Tongans--were on board. A crowd of niggers came off from shore. First thing the mate knew, the boson and the crew were killed in the first rush. The mate grabbed three cartridge belts and two Winchesters and skinned up to the cross-trees. He was the sole survivor, and you can’t blame him for being mad. He pumped one rifle till it got so hot he couldn’t hold it, then he pumped the other. The deck was black with niggers. He cleaned them out. He dropped them as they went over the rail, and he dropped them as fast as they picked up their paddles. Then they jumped into the water and started to swim for it, and being mad, he got half a dozen more. And what did he get for it?”

“Seven years in Fiji,” snapped the mate.

“The government said he wasn’t justified in shooting after they’d taken to the water,” the skipper explained.

“And that’s why they die of dysentery nowadays,” the mate added.

“Just fancy,” said Bertie, as he felt a longing for the cruise to be over.

Later on in the day he interviewed the black who had been pointed out to him as a cannibal. This fellow’s name was Sumasai. He had spent three years on a Queensland plantation. He had been to Samoa, and Fiji, and Sydney; and as a boat’s crew had been on recruiting schooners through New Britain, New Ireland, New Guinea, and the Admiralties. Also, he was a wag, and he had taken a line on his skipper’s conduct. Yes, he had eaten many men. How many? He could not remember the tally. Yes, white men, too; they were very good, unless they were sick. He had once eaten a sick one.

"My word!" he cried, at the recollection. "Me sick plenty along him. 'my belly walk about too much."

Bertie shuddered, and asked about heads. Yes, Sumasai had several hidden ashore, in good condition, sun-dried, and smoke-cured. One was of the captain of a schooner. It had long whiskers. He would sell it for two quid. Black men's heads he would sell for one quid. He had some pickaninny heads, in poor condition, that he would let go for ten bob.

Five minutes afterward, Bertie found himself sitting on the companionway-slide alongside a black with a horrible skin disease. He sheered off, and on inquiry was told that it was leprosy. He hurried below and washed himself with antiseptic soap. He took many antiseptic washes in the course of the day, for every native on board was afflicted with malignant ulcers of one sort or another.

As the Arla drew in to an anchorage in the midst of mangrove swamps, a double row of barbed wire was stretched around above her rail. That looked like business, and when Bertie saw the shore canoes alongside, armed with spears, bows and arrows, and Sniders, he wished more earnestly than ever that the cruise was over.

That evening the natives were slow in leaving the ship at sundown. A number of them checked the mate when he ordered them ashore. "Never mind, I'll fix them," said Captain Hansen, diving below.

When he cam back, he showed Bertie a stick of dynamite attached to a fish hook. Now it happens that a paper-wrapped bottle of chlorodyne with a piece of harmless fuse projecting can fool anybody. It fooled Bertie, and it fooled the natives. When Captain Hansen lighted the fuse and hooked the fish hook into the tail end of a native's loin cloth, that native was smitten with so an ardent a desire for the shore that he forgot to shed the loin cloth. He started for'ard, the fuse sizzling and spluttering at his rear, the natives in his path taking headers over the barbed wire at every jump. Bertie was horror-stricken. So was Captain Hansen. He had forgotten his twenty-five recruits, on each of which he had paid thirty shillings advance. They went over the side along with the shore-dwelling folk and followed by him who trailed the sizzling chlorodyne bottle.

Bertie did not see the bottle go off; but the mate opportunely discharging a stick of real dynamite aft where it would harm nobody, Bertie would have sworn in any admiralty court to a nigger blown to flinders. The flight of the twenty-five recruits had actually cost the Arla forty pounds, and, since they had taken to the bush, there was no hope of recovering them. The skipper and his mate proceeded to drown their sorrow in cold tea.

The cold tea was in whiskey bottles, so Bertie did not know it was cold tea they were mopping up. All he knew was that the two men got very drunk and argued eloquently and at length as to whether the exploded nigger should be reported as a case of dysentery or as an accidental drowning. When they snored off to sleep, he was the only white man left, and he kept a perilous watch till dawn, in fear of an attack from shore and an uprising of the crew.

Three more days the Arla spent on the coast, and three more nights the skipper and the mate drank overfondly of cold tea, leaving Bertie to keep the watch. They knew he could be depended upon, while he was equally certain that if he lived, he would report their drunken conduct to Captain Malu. Then the Arla dropped anchor at Reminge Plantation, on Guadalcanar, and Bertie landed on the beach with a sigh of relief and shook hands with the manager. ‘Mr. Harriwell was ready for him.

“Now you mustn’t be alarmed if some of our fellows seem downcast,” Mr. Harriwell said, having drawn him aside in confidence. “There’s been talk of an outbreak, and two or three suspicious signs I’m willing to admit, but personally I think it’s all poppycock.”

“How--how many blacks have you on the plantation?” Bertie asked, with a sinking heart.

“We’re working four hundred just now,” replied Mr. Harriwell, cheerfully; but the three of us, with you, of course, and the skipper and mate of the Arla, can handle them all right.”

Bertie turned to meet one McTavish, the storekeeper, who scarcely acknowledged the introduction, such was his eagerness to present his resignation.

“It being that I’m a married man, Mr. Harriwell, I can’t very well afford to remain on longer. Trouble is working up, as plain as the nose on your face. The niggers are going to break out, and there’ll be another Hohono horror here.”

"What's a Hohono horror?" Bertie asked, after the storekeeper had been persuaded to remain until the end of the month.

"Oh, he means Hohono Plantation, on Ysabel," said the manager. "The niggers killed the five white men ashore, captured the schooner, killed the captain and mate, and escaped in a body to Malaita. But I always said they were careless on Hohono. They won't catch us napping here. Come along, Mr. Arkwright, and see our view from the veranda."

Bertie was too busy wondering how he could get away to Tulagi to the Commissioner's house, to see much of the view. He was still wondering, when a rifle exploded very near to him, behind his back. At the same moment his arm was nearly dislocated, so eagerly did Mr. Harriwell drag him indoors.

"I say, old man, that was a close shave," said the manager, pawing him over to see if he had been hit. "I can't tell you how sorry I am. But it was broad daylight, and I never dreamed."

Bertie was beginning to turn pale.

"They got the other manager that way," McTavish vouchsafed. "And a dashed fine chap he was. Blew his brains out all over the veranda. You noticed that dark stain there between the steps and the door?"

Bertie was ripe for the cocktail which Mr. Harriwell pitched in and compounded for him; but before he could drink it, a man in riding trousers and puttees entered.

"What's the matter now?" the manager asked, after one look at the newcomer's face. "Is the river up again?"

"River be blowed--it's the niggers. Stepped out of the cane grass, not a dozen feet away, and whopped at me. It was a Snider, and he shot from the hip. Now what I want to know is where'd he get that Snider?--Oh, I beg pardon. Glad to know you, Mr. Arkwright."

"Mr. Brown is my assistant," explained Mr. Harriwell. "And now let's have that drink."

"But where'd he get that Snider?" Mr. Brown insisted. "I always objected to keeping those guns on the premises."

"They're still there," Mr. Harriwell said, with a show of heat.

Mr. Brown smiled incredulously.

"Come along and see," said the manager.

Bertie joined the procession into the office, where Mr. Harriwell pointed triumphantly at a big packing case in a dusty corner.

“Well, then where did the beggar get that Snider?” harped Mr. Brown.

But just then McTavish lifted the packing case. The manager started, then tore off the lid. The case was empty. They gazed at one another in horrified silence. Harriwell drooped wearily.

Then McVeigh cursed.

“What I contended all along--the house-boys are not to be trusted.”

“It does look serious,” Harriwell admitted, “but we’ll come through it all right. What the sanguinary niggers need is a shaking up. Will you gentlemen please bring your rifles to dinner, and will you, Mr. Brown, kindly prepare forty or fifty sticks of dynamite. ‘make the fuses good and short. We’ll give them a lesson. And now, gentlemen, dinner is served.”

One thing that Bertie detested was rice and curry, so it happened that he alone partook of an inviting omelet. He had quite finished his plate, when Harriwell helped himself to the omelet. One mouthful he tasted, then spat out vociferously.

“That’s the second time,” McTavish announced ominously.

Harriwell was still hawking and spitting.

“Second time, what?” Bertie quavered.

“Poison,” was the answer. “That cook will be hanged yet.”

“That’s the way the bookkeeper went out at Cape March,” Brown spoke up. “Died horribly. They said on the Jessie that they heard him screaming three miles away.”

“I’ll put the cook in irons,” sputtered Harriwell. “Fortunately we discovered it in time.”

Bertie sat paralyzed. There was no color in his face. He attempted to speak, but only an inarticulate gurgle resulted. All eyed him anxiously.

“Don’t say it, don’t say it,” McTavish cried in a tense voice.

“Yes, I ate it, plenty of it, a whole plateful!” Bertie cried explosively, like a diver suddenly regaining breath.

The awful silence continued half a minute longer, and he read his fate in their eyes.

“Maybe it wasn’t poison after all,” said Harriwell, dismally.

“Call in the cook,” said Brown.

In came the cook, a grinning black boy, nose-spiked and ear-plugged.

“Here, you, Wi-wi, what name that?” Harriwell bellowed, pointing accusingly at the omelet.

Wi-wi was very naturally frightened and embarrassed.

“Him good fella kai-kai,” he murmured apologetically.

“Make him eat it,” suggested McTavish. “That’s a proper test.”

Harriwell filled a spoon with the stuff and jumped for the cook, who fled in panic.

“That settles it,” was Brown’s solemn pronouncement. “He won’t eat it.”

“Mr. Brown, will you please go and put the irons on him?” Harriwell turned cheerfully to Bertie. “It’s all right, old man, the Commissioner will deal with him, and if you die, depend upon it, he will be hanged.”

“Don’t think the government’ll do it,” objected McTavish.

“But gentlemen, gentlemen,” Bertie cried. “In the meantime think of me.”

Harriwell shrugged his shoulders pityingly.

“Sorry, old man, but it’s a native poison, and there are no known antidotes for native poisons. Try and compose yourself and if--“

Two sharp reports of a rifle from without, interrupted the discourse, and Brown, entering, reloaded his rifle and sat down to table.

“The cook’s dead,” he said. “Fever. A rather sudden attack.”

“I was just telling Mr. Arkwright that there are no antidotes for native poisons--“

“Except gin,” said Brown.

Harriwell called himself an absent-minded idiot and rushed for the gin bottle.

“Neat, man, neat,” he warned Bertie, who gulped down a tumbler two-thirds full of the raw spirits, and coughed and choked from the angry bite of it till the tears ran down his cheeks.

Harriwell took his pulse and temperature, made a show of looking out for him, and doubted that the omelet had been poisoned. Brown and McTavish also doubted; but Bertie discerned an insincere ring in their voices. His appetite had left him, and he took his own pulse stealthily under the table. There was no question but what it was increasing, but he failed to ascribe it to the gin he had taken. ‘mcTavish, rifle in hand, went out on the veranda to reconnoiter.

“They’re massing up at the cook-house,” was his report. “And they’ve no end of Sniders. ‘my idea is to sneak around on the other side and take them in flank. Strike the first blow, you know. Will you come along, Brown?”

Harriwell ate on steadily, while Bertie discovered that his pulse had leaped up five beats. Nevertheless, he could not help jumping when the rifles began to go off. Above the scattering of Sniders could be heard the pumping of Brown's and McTavish's Winchesters--all against a background of demoniacal screeching and yelling.

"They've got them on the run," Harriwell remarked, as voices and gunshots faded away in the distance.

Scarcely were Brown and McTavish back at the table when the latter reconnoitered.

"They've got dynamite," he said.

"Then let's charge them with dynamite," Harriwell proposed.

Thrusting half a dozen sticks each into their pockets and equipping themselves with lighted cigars, they started for the door. And just then it happened. They blamed McTavish for it afterward, and he admitted that the charge had been a trifle excessive. But at any rate it went off under the house, which lifted up cornerwise and settled back on its foundations. Half the china on the table was shattered, while the eight-day clock stopped. Yelling for vengeance, the three men rushed out into the night, and the bombardment began.

When they returned, there was no Bertie. He had dragged himself away to the office, barricaded himself in, and sunk upon the floor in a gin-soaked nightmare, wherein he died a thousand deaths while the valorous fight went on around him. In the morning, sick and headachey from the gin, he crawled out to find the sun still in the sky and God presumable in heaven, for his hosts were alive and uninjured.

Harriwell pressed him to stay on longer, but Bertie insisted on sailing immediately on the Arla for Tulagi, where, until the following steamer day, he stuck close by the Commissioner's house. There were lady tourists on the outgoing steamer, and Bertie was again a hero, while Captain Malu, as usual, passed unnoticed. But Captain Malu sent back from Sydney two cases of the best Scotch whiskey on the market, for he was not able to make up his mind as to whether it was Captain Hansen or Mr Harriwell who had given Bertie Arkwright the more gorgeous insight into life in the Solomons.

The Test: a Clondyke Wooing

THE air throbbed with the confused uproar of many sounds — swinging, waltz-time music; the clicking of chips; the sharp clattering of the roulette ball; the clear-cut decisions of the game keepers; noisy gaiety and laughter; and above, under, all about, the deep hum of conversation. Candles and kerosene lamps looked down upon the scene. The floor was alive with the flying feet of the be-moccasined dancers, while at the tables clustered the gamblers, intent on the golden chase. In groups, the men of the creeks and camps and trails, talked of past deeds and planned new enterprises. Unkempt; clad in mackinaw, furs and muclucs; with the worn, tired faces of those who are brothers of toil and hardship; they unbent their stiffened tongues and talked and lived the old times over once again, ere, with the dogs, they faced the trail on the morrow. The long bar was crowded by those who sought to ease their thirst, or found temporary oblivion from the heavy labor of their meager lives.

The music struck up a lively “two-step”; but it was too cultivated for the dancers, only one couple taking the floor. A moment they became the cynosure of all eyes; conversation lulled, then rose again to a drowsy hum — they had been recognized — Lucille, and Jack Harrington, the Mastadon King. A fine pair they were to look at — Lucille, as pretty and charming a woman as ever graced a mining camp; Jack Harrington, strong and handsome, the owner of the richest claim on Mastadon. She — well she was Lucille, and for her past, such things are forgiven and forgotten in Dawson. And he was, as everybody said, a jolly good fellow, who had greater luck and could play a violin better than any man in the country.

They talked as they danced — talked of many things; of royalties and Gold Commissioners, the price of dogs and grub, of mines and miners; for they did not know each other and this was all they had in common. But given two healthy beings with time on their hands for mutual intercourse, you can safely trust to Chance for the finding of something in common — nay, something uncommonly in common. Ere the music ceased, the germ was sown.

“So you play the violin,” she said. “O, teach me how! Above all, I love it. Won’t you teach me?”

And this is how it began.

Three weeks later:

Past midnight, the dancing and gambling at its height, as Lucille and Jack enter, finishing a conversation begun the cold northern lights.

“And you are sure?” he asks.

“O Jack, I do love you for yourself, and I don’t care whether you’re broke or can count your ounces by the thousand. I know my feelings.”

It slips trippingly from your tongue and feelings are easily mistaken. Can you prove it?”

“Prove it? How can I? I wish it were so, but it can’t be done.”

“O yes it can.”

“Can?”

“Come.”

Then did a comet flash athwart the Dawson sky. Limits were removed and the tables crowded by the miners, intent on seeing the high play. The last turn at the faro table, and he plays the queen to win and “coppers” the deuce for an even thousand apiece, with another thousand on the high card. The deuce follows the queen and the three bets are lost. The onlookers are breathless with admiration. In fifteen minutes the whole town knows that “Lucky” Jack Harrington has broken loose, and comes to see. The test has begun.

Ever, as he ventures the markers he repeats his question, and as often she reiterates her reply. At the end of an hour he is fifteen thousand to the bad; still the play is not fast enough for him. He sends for the chairman of the committee, appointed by the miners to aid several score of unfortunates, who had lost their all in the “great fire.” Laconic the conversation:

“There’s ten thousand behind the bar for you, on one consideration.”

“And that — ”

“Is that you weigh it out and take it away at once.”

“Done.”

Father B — — is summoned and the scene repeated; this time twenty-five thousand for the hospital. And the town voices one conclusion: either “Lucky” Jack Harrington is drunk or has gone clean daft.

“I’ve sold my mine and this is the last of it,” he says to Lucille as he scatters a final handful of dust under the feet of the dancers. “What do you think of me now?”

“Jack! Jack! the test is hard! I had thought we could do so much, that we could have gone away and forgotten all this — I hate it so! But you should know that I cannot change. I would do anything, endure anything for your sake. Thank God! you've done your worst and I'm not altered."

"Would you cleave unto me and follow me to the ends of the earth, in misery, toil and hardship?"

"Why jangle words? Can a woman do more? I have told you: you have tried me. Is there aught under the sun a woman won't do when she truly loves?"

"But would you?"

"If you will have it so, yes. Like the squaw, it is my duty to follow my lord and master — aye, and my pleasure."

Old Sol, attended by twin sun dogs, has just cleared the southern horizon at meridian, and pauses for a peep at the Northern Eldorado. Before he can slip behind the mountain over which he rose, he catches a glimpse of a scene, which all Dawson has turned out to behold. Two heavily laden sleds and an Indian dog driver, wait where the throng is densest, before the Opera House. A passage is forced through the onlookers and he is joined by Jack and Lucille.

Cold, the morning; dreary, the scene; crude, the environment: but withal, magnificent, the picture. Filled with scintillating frost particles, the air is a sparkling, silvery sheen, a fairy gossamer. The mighty Yukon, the towering peaks, the far-reaching forest; monotonously white and sphinx-like in their brooding calm, sleep on the bosom of the awful Artic silence. In garments of leather and fur, toil-worn and hardy, their eyes slumbering with latent action and power, the gold-seekers group like heroes of the Elder World. And there, in their midst, a veritable King of the Northland — "Lucky" Jack Harrington. From his wolverine cap to his Innuit muclucs, he stood a MAN amongst MEN. And she, in buckskin and furs and beaded moccasins, with her rosy cheeks and laughing eyes, was truly a dainty, Artic princess.

The air is filled with goodbyes and good wishes. The whips snap spitefully; the wolf-dogs lunge in the traces with the quick, impatient whine of their wild progenitors; and the steel-shod sleds crunch into the river trail. Some one in the crowd sings

"And Ruth clave unto her — "

And Dawson wondered over "Lucky" Jack Harrington's latest freak, and would be wondering yet, had it not forgot it all that night in a wild stampede to Swede Creek.

For a month, now, entirely isolated on the head waters of the Clondyke, had they lived in a rough cabin of Jack's building. Meager had been their fare — bacon, beans and flour, with an occasional moose steak. Meager had been their lives, shorn of all but the barest necessaries. And for a woman, bright, accomplished, and who has known so much better, to settle down to the coarse, dreary round of housekeeping in such a camp, windowless and cheerless, with its tin plates and pine bough bed and guttering slush-lamp, it was indeed hard. Lucille stood it, however, because she was with the man of her choosing; though little did she see of him, for he was in the forest or over the mountains from morning till night.

But she was a woman in whom the emotions were important factors of her existence, and when they mounted the throne of her reason they ruled with a rod of steel. Finely strung, sensitive, delicate, with the sensuous soul of the artist, loving the rhythmic pulse of harmony and responding to its loftiest flights; small wonder she took pleasure in the violin during his constant absences. And small wonder in the long evenings when he could be induced to play, that she sat as one entranced. Nor was it the instinctive delight of the untutored animal that bade her best. She was more like a thirsty soul, wandered afar in the desert and harking back to the founts and springs of its childhood.

But of her love for the music, Jack thought strange things, and a certain, unconscious jealousy, grained and distorted his conclusions. So, on this night of nights, he played as one possessed. He excelled himself, venturing difficult flights, half in bitterness, half in pleasure born of the consciousness that he was soon to know. Clever at improvisation, he at last essayed one, that soared to heights and sank to depths, hitherto unattainable. And in the voluptuous harmony he enticed and lost, not only her, but himself.

The tremulous, long-drawn strains, saddened to a minor of gentle runs and soft, melancholy cords. For a space, the air thrilled with the pathos of the theme; then the finale begun. The adagio changed to allegretto, to allegro, from allegro to velocissimo. Shaking, shuddering, shivering, quivering, the violin shrieked its passion, bursting into one final vortex of emotions.

A string broke: a jangling discord died away: they looked at each other across the beloved instrument. Without, a wolf-dog howled mournfully: the slush-lamp guttered gloomily. All else was silent. Into her eyes he gazed as though he would lay bare her soul.

“For myself, or the music?” he asked. And with one fierce stroke the violin crashed into fragments.

An early April morning — there is a low hum of life, a subdued murmur of running waters, a vague feeling of preparation, in the air. Spring, that bursts into an instant miracle of bloom and life and action, has crept in insidiously and unawares. Yesterday, the ghastly silence of winter weighed upon us; to-day we have a strange sensation of unrest, an unconscious expectancy; and to-morrow there is a crashing and rending of fetters, and the full-grown Spring breaks upon us like a marvelous vision.

All Dawson awoke and drank the exhilarating tonic of the air; felt the premonition of things to come; and wandered up and down the main street through the very joy of living. And not among the least, was its interest in the dog-teams, ready to commence their long journey to “salt water,” to the Outside. Again the hearty grip and good luck blessing; again the whips snapped, the dogs howled, and the sleds churned into the river trail; and for the last time, Jack and Lucille turned their backs on the Golden City.

As usual, Dawson was excited, and several of her most respected citizens so far forgot themselves as to baptize the departing travelers with rice — rice, worth a dollar a pound and only purchasable in small quantities.

A few comments were made.

“‘Lucky’ Jack Harrington stands pat,” quoth one of the gambling fraternity.

“Why shouldn’t he?” said another. “He’s a good hand at the game. Who’d have thought he owned a mile of Dominion all the time, and it as rich as Eldorado?”

“They say he bought it up for a song when it wasn’t worth the recording fee.”

“I say, boys, he may have an Eldorado in Dominion, but we know he’s got a Bonanza in Lucille.”

“Bet you the ice breaks before he makes Chilkoot!”

“Even it don’t!”

“Who’ll give me odds?”

“Two to one it does!”

And herewith, all Dawson fell to gambling on the race “Lucky” Jack Harrington was running with the Spring.

Thanksgiving On Slav Creek

SHE woke up with a start. Her husband was speaking in a low voice, insistently.

“Come,” he added. “Get up. Get up, Nella. Quick. Get up.”

“But I don’t want to get up,” she objected, striving vainly to lapse back into the comfortable drowse.

“But I say you must. And don’t make any noise, but come along. Hurry! Oh, do hurry! Our fortune’s made if you will only hurry!”

Nella Tichborne was now wide awake, what with the suppressed excitement in his whispers, and she thrust her feet out with a shiver upon the cold cabin floor.

“What is it?” she asked, petulantly. “What is it?”

“‘Ssh!” he sibilated. “Don’t make a noise. Mum’s the word. Dress at once.”

“But what is it?”

“Be quiet, if you love me, and dress.”

“Now, George, I won’t move an inch until you tell me.” She capped the ultimatum by sitting back on the edge of the bunk.

The man groaned. “Oh, the time, the precious time, you’re losing! Didn’t I tell you our fortune was made? Do hurry! It’s a tip. Nobody knows. A secret. There’s a stampede on. ‘Ssh! Put on warm clothes. It’s the coldest yet. The frost is sixty-five below. I’m going to call Ikeesh. She would like to be in on it, I know. And oh, Nella — ”

“Yes?”

“Do be quick.”

He stepped across to the other end of the cabin where a blanket partitioned the room into two, and called Ikeesh. The Indian woman was already awake. Her husband was up on his Bonanza claim, though this was her cabin, in which she was entertaining George Tichborne and Nella.

“What um matter, Tichborne?” she asked. “Um Nella sick?”

“No, no. Stampede. Rich creek. Plenty gold. Hurry up and dress.”

“What um time?”

“Twelve o’clock. Midnight. Don’t make any noise.”

Five minutes later the cabin door opened and they passed out.

“‘Ssh!” he cautioned.

“Oh, George! Have you got the fryin-pan?”

“Yes.”

“And the gold-pan? And the axe?”

“Yes, yes, Nella. And did you remember the baking-powder?”

They crunched rapidly through the snow, down the hill into sleeping Dawson. Light stampeding packs were on their backs, containing a fur robe each, and the barest necessaries for a camp in the polar frost. But Dawson was not sleeping, after all. Cabin windows were flashing into light, and ever and anon the mumble of voices drifted to them through the darkness. The dogs were beginning to howl and the doors to slam. By the time they reached the Barracks the whole town was aroar behind them. Here the trail dropped abruptly over the bank and crossed the packed ice of the Yukon to the farther shore.

George Tichborne swore softly and to himself; but aloud: “It’s leaked out somehow, and everybody’s in it. Sure to be a big stampede now. But hurry up; they’re all behind us, and we’ll make it yet!”

“George!” A frightened wail punctured the still air and died away as Nella slipped on the icy footing and shot down the twenty-foot embankment into the pit of darkness beneath.

“Nella! Nella! Where are you?” He was falling over the great ice-blocks and groping his way to her as best he could. “Are you hurt? Where are you?”

“All right! Coming!” she answered, cheerily. “Only the snow’s all down my back and melting. Brrr!”

Hardly were the trio reunited when two black forms plumped into their midst from above. These were followed by others, some arriving decorously, but the majority scorning conventional locomotion and peregrinating along on every other portion of their anatomies but their feet. They also had stampeding packs on their backs and a great haste in their hearts.

“Where’s the trail?” the cry went up. And thereat all fell to seeking for the path across the river.

At last George Tichborne found it, and, with Nella and Ikeesh, led the way. But in the darkness they lost it repeatedly, slipping, stumbling, and falling over the wildly piled ice. Finally, in desparation, he lighted a candle, and as there was not a breath of wind, the way was easier. Nella looked back at the fifty spampeders behind and laughed half-hysterically. Her husband gritted his teeth and plunged savagely on.

“At least we’re at the head of the bunch, the very first,” he whispered to her, as they swung south on the smoother trail which ran along under the shadow of the bluffs.

But just then a flaming ribbon rose athwart the sky, spilling pulsating fire over the face of the night. The trail ahead lighted up, and as far as they could see it was cumbered with shadowy forms, all toiling in the one direction. And now those behind began to pass them, one by one, straining mightily with the endeavor.

“Oh, Nella! Hurry!” He seized her hand and strove to drag her along. “It’s the one chance we’ve been waiting for so long. Think of it if we fail!”

“Oh! Oh!” She gasped and tottered. “We will never make it! No, never!”

There was a sharp pain in her side, and she was dizzy with the unwonted speed. Ikeesh grunted encouragement and took her other hand. But none the less the vague forms from the rear continued steadily to overtake and pass them.

Hours which were as centuries passed. The night seemed without end to Nella. Gradually her conciousness seemed to leave her, her whole soul narrowing down to the one mechanical function of walking. Ever lifting, ever falling, and ever lifting anon, her limbs seemed to have become great pendulums of time. And before and behind glimmered two eternities, ever lifting, ever falling, she pulsed in vast rhythmical movement. She was no longer Nella Tichborne, a woman, but a rhythm — that was all, a rhythm. Sometimes the voices of Ikeesh and her husband came to her faintly; but in her semiconscious condition she really did not hear. To-morow there would be no record of the sounds; for rhythm is not receptive to sound. The stars paled and dimmed, but she did heed; the aurora-borealis shrouded its fires, and the darkness which is of the dawn fell upon the earth, but she did not know.

But ere the darkness fell, Ikeesh drew up to Tichborne and pointed to the loom of the mountains above the west shore of the river.

“Um Swede Creek?” she asked, laconically, pointing whither the trail led.

“No.” he replied. “Slav Creek.”

“Um no Slav Creek. Slav Creek — ” She turned and pointed into the darkness five degrees to the south. “Um Slav Creek.”

He came suddenly to a stop. Nella persisted in walking on, heedless of his outcries, till he ran after her and forced her to stop. She was obedient, but as a rhythm she no longer existed. The two eternities, which it was her task to hold apart, had rushed together, and she was not. She wandered off to the old home down in the States, and sat under the great trees, and joyed in the warm sunshine — the old home, the old mortgaged home, which had driven them poleward after the yellow gold! The old home which it was their one aim to redeem! But she forgot all this, and laughed, and babbled, and poured the sunshine back and forth from hand to hand. How warm it was! Was there ever the like?

Tichborne conferred with Ikeesh. She stolidly reiterated that Slav Creek lay farther to the south that he believed.

"Somebody went astray in the dark," he exulted, "and the rest followed his trail like sheep. Come on! Come on! We'll be in at the finish yet, and ahead of no end of those that passed us!"

He cut across a five-mile flat into the southwest, and two hours later, with gray dawn creeping over the landscape, entered the wood-hidden mouth of Slav Creek. The fresh signs of the stampede were so many and so various that he knew Ikeesh had spoken true, though he feared that the mistake had occurred too late in the night to have led enough on the wild-goose chase up Swede Creek.

"Oh, Nella," he called to his wife, stumbling blindly at his heels, "it's all right. We are sure to get a claim. Day has come. Look about you. This is Slav Creek, and behold, the day is Thanksgiving day!"

She turned a blank face upon him. "Yes, the mortgage shall be lifted, principal and interest, I promise you — George and I both promise you. Even now, to-morrow, do we go north to lift the mortgage."

Tichborne glanced helplessly st Ikeesh.

"Um much tired," she commented, dryly. "But um be all right bime-by. Bime-by make camp, um be all right."

They hastened on for five miles more, when they came to the first white-blazed trees and fresh-planted stakes of the newly located claims. Hour after hour they travelled up the frozen bed of the creek, and still, stake to stake, the claims stretched in an unbroken line. Even the man and the Indian woman grew weary and panted. Ikeesh kept a jealousy eye on Nella's face, and now and again, when it turned white, rubbed with snow the tip of the nose and stretched skin of the cheek-bones. They passed many men — the successful ones — rolled in their furs by the side of the trail, or cooking and warming themselves over crackling fires of dry spruce. At eleven o'clock the sun rose in the southeast; but though there was no warmth in its rays, it gave a cheerier aspect to things.

"How much farther do the stakes run?" Tichborne asked of a man limping down the trail.

"I staked 179," the man answered, stopping to pound the aching muscles of his legs. "But there were about ten more behind me; so I guess they've run it up to 189."

"And this is 107," Tichborne calculated aloud. "Five-hundred-foot claims — ten to the mile — about eight miles yet, eh?"

"Reckon you've about hit it on the head," the other assured him. "But you'd better hurry. Half the stampede went wrong up Swede Creek — that's the next one to this — but they're onto themselves now, and crossing the divide and tapping Slav Creek in the hundred-and-eighties.

"But they're having a terrible time," he shouted back as he went on his way. "I met the first one that succeeded in crossing over. He said the trail was lined with people tee-totally played out, and that he knew himself of five frozen to death on the divide."

Frozen to death! The phrase served to rouse Nella from her maze of memory visions. Her glimmering senses came back to her, and she opened her eyes with a start. The interminable night was gone — spent where or how she could not say — and day broke upon her with a blinding flash. She looked about. Everything was strange and unreal. Both her companions were limping pitifully, and she was aware of a great dull pain in her own limbs. Her husband turned his head, and she saw his face and beard a mass of bristling ice. Ikeesh's mouth was likewise matted with frost, and her brows and lashes long and white. And Nella felt the weight on her own lashes, and the difficulty of drawing them apart from each other whenever she closed her eyes. The doubly excessive demand of the toil and the frost had burned up all the fuel of her body, and she felt cold and faint with hunger. This latter she found worse than the agony of the overused muscles; for a quivering nausea came upon her, and her knees trembled and knocked together with weakness.

Occasionally Tichborne made excursions to one side or the other in search of the claimstakes, which were not always posted in the creekbed. At such times Nellas dropped down to rest, but Ikeesh dragged her afoot again, and shook her, and struck her harsh blows upon her body. For Ikeesh knew the way of the cold, and that a five-minute rest without fire meant death. So Nella had lapses and cruel awakenings till the whole thing seemed a hideous nightmare. Sometimes the trees became gibbering shades, and Slav Creek turned to an Inferno, with her husband as Virgil, and leading her from circle to circle of the damned. But at other times, when she was dimly conscious, the memory of the old home was strong upon her, and the mortgage nerved her on.

A long, long time afterward — ages afterward, it seemed — she heard George cry aloud joyfully, and looking at him as though from a great distance, she saw him slashing the bark from a standing tree, and writing on the white surface with a lead-pencil. At last! She sank down into the snow, but Ikeesh struck her a stinging blow across the mouth. Nella came back angrily to her feet, but Ikeesh pushed her away and set her to work gathering dry wood.

Again came a long lapse, during which she toiled mechanically and unknowing; and when she next found herself she was in the furs by a big fire, and Ikeesh was stirring a batter of flour and water and boiling coffee. To her surprise, Nella felt much better after the rest, and was able to look about her. George ran up with a gold-pan of gravel which he had got from the creek bottom through an air-hole, and warmed his hands by the fire. When he had panned it out he brought the prospect over to her. The streak of black sand on the bottom was specked with yellow grains of glistening gold, and there were several small nuggets besides. He leaped up and down and about like a boy, for all his weary body.

“We’ve struck it at last, Nella!” he cried. “The home is safe! If that is a surface indication, what must it be on bed-rock?”

“Tell you what — ”

They turned their heads, startled. A man had crawled up to the fire unobserved in their excitement.

“Tell you what,” he glowed, “it’s the richest creek in Alaska and the Northwest. Sure! He sat down uninvited, and tried to unfasten his ice-bound moccasins. “Say, I broke through the ice up here a piece and wet my feet. I kind of think they’re freezing.”

Ikeesh stopped from her cooking, and Tichborne lending a hand, they cut off the newcomer’s moccasins and socks and rubbed his white feet till the glow of life returned.

“Tell you what,” the sufferer went on, unconcernedly, while they worked over him, “judging from indications, you people are located on the richest run of the creek. Sure! But I got in on it; you betcher life I did! Got lost on Swede Creek, too, and hit across the divide. Say! No end of frozen men on the trail. But I got in on it, tell you what!”

“A true Thanksgiving, Nella.”

George Tichborne passed her a tin plate of flapjacks swimming in bacon grease and a great mug of piping black coffee. She seized his hand impulsively and pressed it, and her eyes grew luminously soft. . . .

“Tell you what — ” she heard the newcomer begin; but a vision of the old home, warm in the sunshine, came into her eyes, and she dropped off to sleep without hearing “what.”

That Spot

I DON'T think much of Stephen Mackaye any more, though I used to swear by him. I know that in those days I loved him more than my own brother. If ever I meet Stephen Mackaye again, I shall not be responsible for my actions. It passes beyond me that a man with whom I shared food and blanket, and with whom I mushed over the Chilcoot Trail, should turn out the way he did. I always sized Steve up as a square man, a kindly comrade, without an iota of anything vindictive or malicious in his nature. I shall never trust my judgment in men again. Why, I nursed that man through typhoid fever; we starved together on the headwaters of the Stewart; and he saved my life on the Little Salmon. And now, after the years we were together, all I can say of Stephen Mackaye is that he is the meanest man I ever knew.

We started for the Klondike in the fall rush of 1897, and we started too late to get over Chilcoot Pass before the freeze-up. We packed our outfit on our backs part way over, when the snow began to fly, and then we had to buy dogs in order to sled it the rest of the way. That was how we came to get that Spot. Dogs were high, and we paid one hundred and ten dollars for him. He looked worth it. I say looked, because he was one of the finest-appearing dogs I ever saw. He weighed sixty pounds, and he had all the lines of a good sled animal. We never could make out his breed. He wasn't husky, nor Malemute, nor Hudson Bay; he looked like all of them and he didn't look like any of them; and on top of it all he had some of the white man's dog in him, for on one side, in the thick of the mixed yellow-brown-red-and-dirty-white that was his prevailing color, there was a spot of coal-black as big as a water-bucket. That was why we called him Spot.

He was a good looker all right. When he was in condition his muscles stood out in bunches all over him. And he was the strongest-looking brute I ever saw in Alaska, also the most intelligent-looking. To run your eyes over him, you'd think he could outpull three dogs of his own weight. Maybe he could, but I never saw it. His intelligence didn't run that way. He could steal and forage to perfection; he had an instinct that was positively grewsome for divining when work was to be done and for making a sneak accordingly; and for getting lost and not staying lost he was nothing short of inspired.

But when it came to work, the way that intelligence dribbled out of him and left him a mere clot of wobbling, stupid jelly would make your heart bleed.

There are times when I think it wasn't stupidity. Maybe, like some men I know, he was too wise to work. I shouldn't wonder if he put it all over us with that intelligence of his. Maybe he figured it all out and decided that a licking now and again and no work was a whole lot better than work all the time and no licking. He was intelligent enough for such a computation. I tell you, I've sat and looked into that dog's eyes till the shivers ran up and down my spine and the marrow crawled like yeast, what of the intelligence I saw shining out. I can't express myself about that intelligence. It is beyond mere words. I saw it, that's all. At times it was like gazing into a human soul, to look into his eyes; and what I saw there frightened me and started all sorts of ideas in my own mind of reincarnation and all the rest. I tell you I sensed something big in that brute's eyes; there was a message there, but I wasn't big enough myself to catch it. Whatever it was (I know I'm making a fool of myself) — whatever it was, it baffled me. I can't give an inkling of what I saw in that brute's eyes; it wasn't light, it wasn't color; it was something that moved, away back, when the eyes themselves weren't moving. And I guess I didn't see it move, either; I only sensed that it moved. It was an expression, — that's what it was, — and I got an impression of it. No; it was different from a mere expression; it was more than that. I don't know what it was, but it gave me a feeling of kinship just the same. Oh, no, not sentimental kinship. It was, rather, a kinship of equality. Those eyes never pleaded like a deer's eyes. They challenged. No, it wasn't defiance. It was just a calm assumption of equality. And I don't think it was deliberate. My belief is that it was unconscious on his part. It was there because it was there, and it couldn't help shining out. No, I don't mean shine. It didn't shine; it moved. I know I'm talking rot, but if you'd looked into that animal's eyes the way I have, you'd understand Steve was affected the same way I was. Why, I tried to kill that Spot once — he was no good for anything; and I fell down on it. I led him out into the brush, and he came along slow and unwilling. He knew what was going on. I stopped in a likely place, put my foot on the rope, and pulled my big Colt's. And that dog sat down and looked at me. I tell you he didn't plead. He just looked. And I saw all kinds of incomprehensible things moving, yes, moving, in those eyes of his. I didn't really see them move; I thought I saw them, for, as I said before, I guess I only sensed them. And I want to tell you right now that it got beyond me. It was like killing a man, a conscious, brave man who looked calmly into your gun as much as to say, “Who’s afraid?” Then, too, the message seemed so near that, instead of pulling the trigger quick, I stopped to see if I could catch the message. There it was, right before me, glimmering all around in those eyes of his. And then it was too late. I got scared. I was trembly all over, and my stomach generated a nervous palpitation that made me seasick. I just sat down and looked at that dog, and he looked at me, till I thought I was going crazy. Do you want to know what I did? I threw down the gun and ran back to camp with the fear of God in my heart. Steve laughed at me. But I notice that Steve led Spot into the woods, a week later, for the same purpose, and that Steve came back alone, and a little later Spot drifted back, too.

At any rate, Spot wouldn’t work. We paid a hundred and ten dollars for him from the bottom of our sack, and he wouldn’t work. He wouldn’t even tighten the traces. Steve spoke to him the first time we put him in harness, and he sort of shivered, that was all. Not an ounce on the traces. He just stood still and wobbled, like so much jelly. Steve touched him with the whip. He yelped, but not an ounce. Steve touched him again, a bit harder, and he howled — the regular long wolf howl. Then Steve got mad and gave him half a dozen, and I came on the run from the tent.

I told Steve he was brutal with the animal, and we had some words — the first we’d ever had. He threw the whip down in the snow and walked away mad. I picked it up and went to it. That Spot trembled and wobbled and cowered before ever I swung the lash, and with the first bite of it he howled like a lost soul. Next he lay down in the snow. I started the rest of the dogs, and they dragged him along while I threw the whip into him. He rolled over on his back and bumped along, his four legs waving in the air, himself howling as though he was going through a sausage machine. Steve came back and laughed at me, and I apologized for what I’d said.

There was no getting any work out of that Spot; and to make up for it, he was the biggest pig-glutton of a dog I ever saw. On top of that, he was the cleverest thief. There was no circumventing him. Many a breakfast we went without our bacon because Spot had been there first. And it was because of him that we nearly starved to death up the Stewart. He figured out the way to break into our meat-cache, and what he didn’t eat, the rest of the team did. But he was impartial. He stole from everybody. He was a restless dog, always very busy snooping around or going somewhere. And there was never a camp within five miles that he didn't raid. The worst of it was that they always came back on us to pay his board bill, which was just, being the law of the land; but it was mighty hard on us, especially that first winter on the Chilcoot, when we were busted, paying for whole hams and sides of bacon that we never ate. He could fight, too, that Spot. He could do everything but work. He never pulled a pound, but he was the boss of the whole team. The way he made those dogs stand around was an education. He bullied them, and there was always one or more of them fresh-marked with his fangs. But he was more than a bully. He wasn't afraid of anything that walked on four legs; and I've seen him march, single-handed, into a strange team, without any provocation whatever, and put the kibosh on the whole outfit. Did I say he could eat? I caught him eating the whip once. That's straight. He started in at the lash, and when I caught him he was down to the handle, and still going.

But he was a good looker. At the end of the first week we sold him for seventy-five dollars to the Mounted Police. They had experienced dog-drivers, and we knew that by the time he'd covered the six hundred I miles to Dawson he'd be a good sled-dog. I say we knew, for we were just getting acquainted with that Spot. A little later we were not brash enough to know anything where he was concerned. A week later we woke up in the morning to the dangdest dog-fight we'd ever heard. It was that Spot come back and knocking the team into shape. We ate a pretty depressing breakfast, I can tell you; but cheered up two hours afterward when we sold him to an official courier, bound in to Dawson with government despatches. That Spot was only three days in coming back, and, as usual, celebrated his arrival with a rough-house.

We spent the winter and spring, after our own outfit was across the pass, freighting other people's outfits; and we made a fat stake. Also, we made money out of Spot. If we sold him once, we sold him twenty times. He always came back, and no one asked for their money. We didn't want the money. We'd have paid handsomely for any one to take him off our hands for keeps. We had to get rid of him, and we couldn't give him away, for that would have been suspicious. But he was such a fine looker that we never had any difficulty in selling him. "Unbroke," we'd say, and they'd pay any old price for him. We sold him as low as twenty-five dollars, and once we got a hundred and fifty for him. That particular party returned him in person, refused to take his money back, and the way he abused us was something awful. He said it was cheap at the price to tell us what he thought of us; and we felt he was so justified that we never talked back. But to this day I've never quite regained all the old self-respect that was mine before that man talked to me.

When the ice cleared out of the lakes and river, we put our outfit in a Lake Bennett boat and started for Dawson. We had a good team of dogs, and of course we piled them on top the outfit. That Spot was along — there was no losing him; and a dozen times, the first day, he knocked one or another of the dogs overboard in the course of fighting with them. It was close quarters, and he didn't like being crowded.

"What that dog needs is space," Steve said the second day. "Let's maroon him."

We did, running the boat in at Caribou Crossing for him to jump ashore. Two of the other dogs, good dogs, followed him; and we lost two whole days trying to find them. We never saw those two dogs again; but the quietness and relief we enjoyed made us decide, like the man who refused his hundred and fifty, that it was cheap at the price. For the first time in months Steve and I laughed and whistled and sang. We were as happy as clams. The dark days were over. The nightmare had been lifted. That Spot was gone.

Three weeks later, one morning, Steve and I were standing on the river-bank at Dawson. A small boat was just arriving from Lake Bennett. I saw Steve give a start, and heard him say something that was not nice and that was not under his breath. Then I looked; and there, in the bow of the boat, with ears pricked up, sat Spot. Steve and I sneaked immediately, like beaten curs, like cowards, like absconders from justice. It was this last that the lieutenant of police thought when he saw us sneaking. He surmised that there were law-officers in the boat who were after us. He didn't wait to find out, but kept us in sight, and in the M. & M. saloon got us in a corner. We had a merry time explaining, for we refused to go back to the boat and meet Spot; and finally he held us under guard of another policeman while he went to the boat. After we got clear of him, we started for the cabin, and when we arrived, there was that Spot sitting on the stoop waiting for us. Now how did he know we lived there? There were forty thousand people in Dawson that summer, and how did he savve our cabin out of all the cabins? How did he know we were in Dawson, anyway? I leave it to you. But don't forget what I have said about his intelligence and that immortal something I have seen glimmering in his eyes.

There was no getting rid of him any more. There were too many people in Dawson who had bought him up on Chilcoot, and the story got around. Half a dozen times we put him on board steamboats going down the Yukon; but he merely went ashore at the first landing and trotted back up the bank. We couldn't sell him, we couldn't kill him (both Steve and I had tried), and nobody else was able to kill him. He bore a charmed life. I've seen him go down in a dog-fight on the main street with fifty dogs on top of him, and when they were separated, he'd appear on all his four legs, unharmed, while two of the dogs that had been on top of him would be lying dead.

I saw him steal a chunk of moose-meat from Major Dinwiddie's cache so heavy that he could just keep one jump ahead of Mrs. Dinwiddie's squaw cook, who was after him with an axe. As he went up the hill, after the squaw gave up, Major Dinwiddie himself came out and pumped his Winchester into the landscape. He emptied his magazine twice, and never touched that Spot. Then a policeman came along and arrested him for discharging firearms inside the city limits. Major Dinwiddie paid his fine, and Steve and I paid him for the moose-meat at the rate of a dollar a pound, bones and all. That was what he paid for it. Meat was high that year.

I am only telling what I saw with my own eyes. And now I'll tell you something, also. I saw that Spot fall through a water-hole. The ice was three and a half feet thick, and the current sucked him under like a straw. Three hundred yards below was the big water-hole used by the hospital. Spot crawled out of the hospital water-hole, licked off the water, bit out the ice that had formed between his toes, trotted up the bank, and whipped a big Newfoundland belonging to the Gold Commissioner.

In the fall of 1898, Steve and I poled up the Yukon on the last water, bound for Stewart River. We took the dogs along, all except Spot. We figured we'd been feeding him long enough. He'd cost us more time and trouble and money and grub than we'd got by selling him on the Chilcoot — especially grub. So Steve and I tied him down in the cabin and pulled our freight. We camped that night at the mouth of Indian River, and Steve and I were pretty facetious over having shaken him. Steve was a funny cuss, and I was just sitting up in the blankets and laughing when a tornado hit camp. The way that Spot walked into those dogs and gave them what-for was hair-raising. Now how did he get loose? It's up to you. I haven't any theory. And how did he get across the Klondike River? That's another lacer. And anyway, how did he know we had gone up the Yukon? You see, we went by water, and he couldn't smell our tracks. Steve and I began to get superstitious about that dog. He got on our nerves, too; and, between you and me, we were just a mite afraid of him.

The freeze-up came on when we were at the mouth of Henderson Creek, and we traded him off for two sacks of flour to an outfit that was bound up White River after copper. Now that whole outfit was lost. Never trace nor hide nor hair of men, dogs, sleds, or anything was ever found. They dropped clean out of sight. It became one of the mysteries of the country. Steve and I plugged away up the Stewart, and six weeks afterward that Spot crawled into camp. He was a perambulating skeleton, and could just drag along; but he got there. And what I want to know is who told him we were up the Stewart? We could have gone a thousand other places. How did he know? You tell me, and I'll tell you.

No losing him. At the Mayo he started a row with an Indian dog. The buck who owned the dog took a swing at Spot with an axe, missed him, and killed his own dog. Talk about magic and turning bullets aside — I, for one, consider it a blamed sight harder to turn an axe aside with a big buck at the other end of it. And I saw him do it with my own eyes. That buck didn't want to kill his own dog. You've got to show me.

I told you about Spot breaking into our meat-cache. It was nearly the death of us. There wasn't any more meat to be killed, and meat was all we had to live on. The moose had gone back several hundred miles and the Indians with them. There we were. Spring was on, and we had to wait for the river to break. We got pretty thin before we decided to eat the dogs, and we decided to eat Spot first. Do you know what that dog did? He sneaked. Now how did he know our minds were made up to eat him? We sat up nights laying for him, but he never came back, and we ate the other dogs. We ate the whole team.

And now for the sequel. You know what it is when a big river breaks up and a few billion tons of ice go out, jamming and milling and grinding. Just in the thick of it, when the Stewart went out, rumbling and roaring, we sighted Spot out in the middle. He'd got caught as he was trying to cross up above somewhere. Steve and I yelled and shouted and ran up and down the bank, tossing our hats in the air. Sometimes we'd stop and hug each other, we were that boisterous, for we saw Spot's finish. He didn't have a chance in a million. He didn't have any chance at all. After the ice-run, we got into a canoe and paddled down to the Yukon, and down the Yukon to Dawson, stopping to feed up for a week at the cabins at the mouth of Henderson Creek. And as we came in to the bank at Dawson, there sat that Spot, waiting for us, his ears pricked up, his tail wagging, his mouth smiling, extending a hearty welcome to us. Now how did he get out of that ice? How did he know we were coming to Dawson, to the very hour and minute, to be out there on the bank waiting for us?

The more I think of that Spot, the more I am convinced that there are things in this world that go beyond science. On no scientific grounds can that Spot be explained. It's psychic phenomena, or mysticism, or something of that sort, I guess, with a lot of Theosophy thrown in. The Klondike is a good country. I might have been there yet, and become a millionnaire, if it hadn't been for Spot. He got on my nerves. I stood him for two years all together, and then I guess my stamina broke. It was the summer of 1899 when I pulled out. I didn't say anything to Steve. I just sneaked. But I fixed it up all right. I wrote Steve a note, and enclosed a package of "rough-on-rats," telling him what to do with it. I was worn down to skin and bone by that Spot, and I was that nervous that I'd jump and look around when there wasn't anybody within hailing distance. But it was astonishing the way I recuperated when I got quit of him. I got back twenty pounds before I arrived in San Francisco, and by the time I'd crossed the ferry to Oakland I was my old self again, so that even my wife looked in vain for any change in me.

Steve wrote to me once, and his letter seemed irritated. He took it kind of hard because I'd left him with Spot. Also, he said he'd used the "rough-on-rats," per directions, and that there was nothing doing. A year went by. I was back in the office and prospering in all ways — even getting a bit fat. And then Steve arrived. He didn't look me up. I read his name in the steamer list, and wondered why. But I didn't wonder long. I got up one morning and found that Spot chained to the gate-post and holding up the milkman. Steve went north to Seattle, I learned, that very morning. I didn't put on any more weight. My wife made me buy him a collar and tag, and within an hour he showed his gratitude by killing her pet Persian cat. There is no getting rid of that Spot. He will be with me until I die, for he'll never die. My appetite is not so good since he arrived, and my wife says I am looking peaked. Last night that Spot got into Mr. Harvey's hen-house

(Harvey is my next door neighbor) and killed nineteen of his fancy-bred chickens. I shall have to pay for them. My neighbors on the other side quarrelled with my wife and then moved out. Spot was the cause of it. And that is why I am disappointed in Stephen Mackaye. I had no idea he was so mean a man.

Their Alcove

HE crumpled each dainty note with a steadfastness of purpose that surprised him. He had not thought it would be so easy. In fact, he felt a sort of passive elation as he laid them carefully upon the hearth, side by side and in intermingled tiers. He began to take a curious pleasure in the task, and his habitual neatness asserted itself till the pile began to assume architectural proportions. How like a pedestal, he mused. He regarded it critically. One little missive — her latest and last — protested with the lusty strength of youth at such untimely incineration. It bulged forth distressingly, ruining the lines of the parallelogram. A few gentle pokes and it subsided among its fellows.

How like a shrine, an altar, it was; and he, apostate to the gentle Hymen, officiating as high priest. The fancy pleased him; there was a hint of poesy about it. After all, this was the better way. He was glad she had been so sensible about it. Paugh! this giddy return of trinkets and tokens! What right had she to her letters, or he to his? A senseless custom at best. And how readily she had acquiesced when he mentioned it! He confessed to a momentary pang at this; he had expected some show of sentiment, of womanly weakness; but no, she had merely nodded her head and smiled. Why, it was very plain that she had grown tired. Of course, she had not said as much to him, but it was clear, even clearer now that it was over. And it was to be admitted he had behaved splendidly; even she must acknowledge that. If aught were said it was he who must bear it. How the fellows would cod him! And at teas and numerous other feminine functions sly whispers and little giggles and significant nods — well, he was a man, and he could bear it.

He was glad that he had done this, for in no way could there be reproach, while there was much to admire about his conduct. In after-years it would endear him to her, and her memory of him could not but be sweet. Certainly she would marry, and perhaps the thought of all this would come to her some day and she would know what she had lost. He would take up his work with new vigor, and with the ripening years his name would be respected, admired and often on the lips of men; and then he would go to her and they should be friends, merely friends; she would see all that was best in him — those sterling qualities he knew she did now now appreciate

— and she would perhaps feel sorrow that things had not been different. The thought of the regret that would be hers when she saw into what manner of man time and his efforts had wrought him bore to him a sweet satisfaction. But as in his reverie he saw himself in the days to come, when time should have white-lined his hair and brought him fame, looking down upon her and speaking calmly, he knew that he would not have had his life shaped otherwise. Yet, withal, it was sweet to feel that perhaps the years that would give to her another for husband would leave with her also regret.

He made little journeys between the fireplace and various portions of the room. How vacant the wall seemed! He must get something to replace it, he thought, as he knelt before the alter he had reared and placed up it a photograph — her photograph. And before it he laid a glove, once white, but now soiled with much carriage in coat breast-pocket. How foolish he had been! Then he added a lock of hair, nut-brown and curly, to the sacrifice; and beside it a withered bunch of violets. Why, once he would have staked his hopes of heaven on those fragile tokens; and now — and now he touched a vesta to the altar’s base, humming as he did so, “Love like ours can never die.”

He drew up his lounging-chair and settled back comfortably. He felt a boyish curiousness as to the behavior of the different articles, and which would succumb first to the destroyer. The tiny flame mounted and spread till a diminutive conflagration roared at his feet. The violets burst into brilliant evanescence, their stems lingering like fine-spun filaments of steel, tense and quivering with heat. The glove glowed somberly against the bright background of flaming paper; while the photograph, like the tower of a lordly castle, sent aloft black columns of smoke, then tottered, swayed for a moment indecisively, and crashed into the fiery embers beneath. Slowly the glow of life went out of the sunken pyre as light leaves a drying eye; soon the little nothings — yesterday they were everythings — that to him had been pledges upon the future for his happiness were only a dead heap of black and gray ash shivering on the hearth.

It was all over. He was free now, free as the wind. A short month past he would have deemed it impossible to break the gyves so easily. Yet emancipation — he would have called it banishment then — had come without effort, without that strange orgasm of the blood, that fiery tumult of the emotions one would so naturally expect.

Over the charred fetters he could sit there and think of her calmly; there was not an extra beat to his pulse; he was perfectly normal. Well, it showed on the face of how transitory had been the fancy.

Yes, it was fancy; mere fancy — that was the word. It could not have been genuine love, else the separation of their paths of life could have brought to him but one emotion — a sense of agonizing loss. But he felt no loss; he was as easy in mind now that she had gone out of his life as he had been in the old days before she had made entry into it. And now he was free; free to go back to the old life, the old ways. It was early yet. The several little arrangements attendant on departure had been seen to, and the train was not scheduled till midnight. He would dine down town and look up some of the fellows for old sake's sake.

Free, free as the wind! There was an exhilaration to the phrase. It obtruded itself among his thoughts like some pleasant refrain. He had never been in sympathy with the simple little word, he thought, as he came down the steps, never understood its strength before. And she? No doubt she was pleased at the termination, and could already look back pleasantly upon the episode. That was all it was, an episode. And she would marry, as a matter of course, and be happy ever after.

He wondered what the husband might be like, and tried to pick him from all the eligibles he could think of. But he could conjure no harmonious union; now their tastes ran counter, now their temperaments; perhaps the lucky fellow still lay in the lap of the future. Yes, lucky fellow! There was no denying she was a nice girl; and yet "nice" did not rightfully convey the sense of her choiceness. It told but half the tale. Certainly there was room for improvement in the vernacular.

He followed his many-mirrored fancy though endless turnings, and before he knew it came to himself at the entrance of the "Grotto." He pulled out his watch. It was absurd to eat at such an hour, but he was hungry and went in. He fell to planning for his new life; but the waiter, pausing for his order, reminded him of the day they had dined there — the day when the volunteers marched through the streets and the city went dizzy with enthusiastic patriotism. He realized the trend of his mind with a start. He must put her away. That was past and done with. It was an episode. He must concern himself with the days to come, and in them she had no place. But a woman's laughter floated across from the other side and wove itself into his fancy as her laughter. How happy they had been that day! What silly nonsense they had prattled in the burlesque seriousness; and then how they had laughed at the graver things, the austerities of life! What a thoroughly wholesome creature she was, meeting mood with mood in a way which was not given to man women!

He remembered a thousand and one little incidents — trivial events, so unimportant at the time, but now fair mile-stones to look back upon. It began to dawn upon him how large a place she had filled in his life. For the time he had lived his days in here, and now — to-morrow? The future loomed before him like a blank wall. He had no wish to contemplate it. There were the fellows — but the fellows would not understand. The old equality could never be the same. He felt so much broader, stronger than they. She had led his feet in paths they little dreamed of, and, through her, life had taken upon itself a significance which they might never come to know. The secret of woman! He had caught glimmerings of it, he knew there was yet more for him to learn; but they — they were deep in outer darkness. Could he go back to them, and forget all this? What would he do to-morrow, and the next day, and the next? The emptiness of the immediate future pressed against him. He must remodel his life, look about him, get some new interest into it.

After all, he did not care to eat. It was too early. He strayed up the street in an absent fashion. A sudden distaste for the fellows came upon him. He would not look them up. He wished it were train-time, and knew already the promised dullness of the night. He felt strangely solitary among the shop-people hurrying home from their work. Any other evening he would have gone to her. What was she doing now? The vision of the tea-table came to him vividly, and with it her sweet face and her mother's, and the paneled roses which hung opposite his accustomed seat just over her head. He remembered the smallest details; even the napkin-rings were in his mind as perfectly as had he designed them himself. And there were to be no more such evenings! Well, he was a man; she would see that he could stand it. He glanced up to the library clock. Yes, it was just tea-time. Now, he was not sentimental; he drew back from such nonsense and thanked his gods frequently that he had escaped such affectation of exquisite feeling. It was only that he was going away, and the familiar atmosphere of the books appealed to him. He entered the library. At this hour, save for the noiseless attendants and certain weird creatures that infest such places, it was deserted. He passed by the shelves, whose transient occupants came and went unceasingly. In the upper galleries they rarely left their peaceful abode, and were consulted at infrequent periods by musty antiquarians and eager, hungry-looking collectors of worthless facts and figures. In those alcoves pale-faced students were wont to study, and, it must be confessed, sometimes to doze over the weary text.

Turn after turn he ascended the spiral staircase, fine-ribbed, of steel, like a gigantic cork-screw. At last he came to "their" alcove, and drew a stool to its farthest recess. The lights had not yet been turned on and the day was growing dim. Yes, "their" alcove! He remembered the days when he had coached her there through the Elizabethan period, and the time they lost themselves among the metaphysical subtleties of "Alastor." "Their" alcove — why, all the habitues of the library acknowledged their ownership; and he smiled at the recollection of the young student they had found there one day, and his embarrassment, conscious of having trespassed, and his apologetic manner has he glided away. And their post-office, too! And parcels delivery! He nodded knowingly at a short, fat volume sandwiched between two ponderous tomes on an upper shelf. Come to think of it, the letter, the last letter, must be there yet. He had left it there that morning before — before it all happened. Of course, she would never come for it now. Should he take it? He had his own ideas on such things, but this was an unlooked-for contingency. Was it his or hers? Should it lie there until resurrected on some problematic cleaning-day by an attendant, who perhaps would remember the romance of the alcove when it was "theirs?" He debated the question with great seriousness. No, he was not sentimental.

Somebody paused on the gallery — a woman — then entered. He felt irritated at the intrusion. He barely noticed her. She would go away soon, he hoped, and leave him alone. She reached hesitatingly toward the short, fat volume. This was desecration, he thought; and how had others come to know the secret of "their" alcove? She turned in his direction, kissing the letter as she did so. In the failing light he noticed in her sweet eyes a moistness he had never seen before. He cried her name softly and sprang toward her.

The soft-footed attendant forgot to turn on the light before "their" alcove. Later, when a long-haired, elderly gentleman asked for Mechan's Mirror of Alchemy he informed him that it was out. The "Mirror of Alchemy" was the short, fat volume.

A Thousand Deaths

I HAD been in the water about an hour, and cold, exhausted, with a terrible cramp in my right calf, it seemed as though my hour had come. Fruitlessly struggling against the strong ebb tide, I had beheld the maddening procession of the water-front lights slip by, but now I gave up attempting to breast the stream and contended myself with the bitter thoughts of a wasted career, now drawing to a close.

It had been my luck to come of good, English stock, but of parents whose account with the bankers far exceeded their knowledge of child-nature and the rearing of children. While born with a silver spoon in my mouth, the blessed atmosphere of the home circle was to me unknown. My father, a very learned man and a celebrated antiquarian, gave no thought to his family, being constantly lost in the abstractions of his study; while my mother, noted far more for her good looks than her good sense, sated herself with the adulation of the society in which she was perpetually plunged. I went through the regular school and college routine of a boy of the English bourgeoisie, and as the years brought me increasing strength and passions, my parents suddenly became aware that I was possessed of an immortal soul, and endeavoured to draw the curb. But it was too late; I perpetrated the wildest and most audacious folly, and was disowned by my people, ostracised by the society I had so long outraged, and with the thousand pounds my father gave me, with the declaration that he would neither see me again nor give me more, I took a first-class passage to Australia.

Since then my life had been one long peregrination--from the Orient to the Occident, from the Arctic to the Antarctic--to find myself at last, an able seaman at thirty, in the full vigour of my manhood, drowning in San Francisco bay because of a disastrously successful attempt to desert my ship.

My right leg was drawn up by the cramp, and I was suffering the keenest agony. A slight breeze stirred up a choppy sea, which washed into my mouth and down my throat, nor could I prevent it. Though I still contrived to keep afloat, it was merely mechanical, for I was rapidly becoming unconscious. I have a dim recollection of drifting past the sea-wall, and of catching a glimpse of an upriver steamer’s starboard light; then everything became a blank.

I heard the low hum of insect life, and felt the balmy air of a spring morning fanning my cheek. Gradually it assumed a rhythmic flow, to whose soft pulsations my body seemed to respond. I floated on the gentle bosom of a summer's sea, rising and falling with dreamy pleasure on each crooning wave. But the pulsations grew stronger; the humming, louder; the waves, larger, fiercer--I was dashed about on a stormy sea. A great agony fastened upon me. Brilliant, intermittent sparks of light flashed athwart my inner consciousness; in my ears there was the sound of many waters; then a sudden snapping of an intangible something, and I awoke.

The scene, of which I was protagonist, was a curious one. A glance sufficed to inform me that I lay on the cabin floor of some gentleman's yacht, in a most uncomfortable posture. On either side, grasping my arms and working them up and down like pump handles, were two peculiarly clad, dark-skinned creatures. Though conversant with most aboriginal types, I could not conjecture their nationality. Some attachment had been fastened about my head, which connected my respiratory organs with the machine I shall next describe. My nostrils, however, had been closed, forcing me to breathe through my mouth. Foreshortened by the obliquity of my line of vision, I beheld two tubes, similar to small hosing but of different composition, which emerged from my mouth and went off at an acute angle from each other. The first came to an abrupt termination and lay on the floor beside me; the second traversed the floor in numerous coils, connecting with the apparatus I have promised to describe.

In the days before my life had become tangential, I had dabbled not a little in science, and, conversant with the appurtenances and general paraphernalia of the laboratory, I appreciated the machine I now beheld. It was composed chiefly of glass, the construction being of that crude sort which is employed for experimentative purposes. A vessel of water was surrounded by an air chamber, to which was fixed a vertical tube, surmounted by a globe. In the centre of this was a vacuum gauge. The water in the tube moved upwards and downwards, creating alternate inhalations and exhalations, which were in turn communicated to me through the hose. With this, and the aid of the men who pumped my arms, so vigorously, had the process of breathing been artificially carried on, my chest rising and falling and my lungs expanding and contracting, till nature could be persuaded to again take up her wonted labour.

As I opened my eyes the appliance about my head, nostrils and mouth was removed. Draining a stiff three fingers of brandy, I staggered to my feet to thank my preserver, and confronted--my father. But long years of fellowship with danger had taught me self-control, and I waited to see if he would recognise me. Not so; he saw in me no more than a runaway sailor and treated me accordingly.

Leaving me to the care of the blackies, he fell to revising the notes he had made on my resuscitation. As I ate of the handsome fare served up to me, confusion began on deck, and from the chanteys of the sailors and the rattling of blocks and tackles I surmised that we were getting under way. What a lark! Off on a cruise with my recluse father into the wide Pacific! Little did I realise, as I laughed to myself, which side the joke was to be on. Aye, had I known, I would have plunged overboard and welcomed the dirty fo'c'sle from which I had just escaped.

I was not allowed on deck till we had sunk the Farallones and the last pilot boat. I appreciated this forethought on the part of my father and made it a point to thank him heartily, in my bluff seaman's manner. I could not suspect that he had his own ends in view, in thus keeping my presence secret to all save the crew. He told me briefly of my rescue by his sailors, assuring me that the obligation was on his side, as my appearance had been most opportune. He had constructed the apparatus for the vindication of a theory concerning certain biological phenomena, and had been waiting for an opportunity to use it.

"You have proved it beyond all doubt," he said; then added with a sigh, "But only in the small matter of drowning." But, to take a reef in my yarn--he offered me an advance of two pounds on my previous wages to sail with him, and this I considered handsome, for he really did not need me. Contrary to my expectations, I did not join the sailor' mess, for'ard, being assigned to a comfortable stateroom and eating at the captain's table. He had perceived that I was no common sailor, and I resolved to take this chance for reinstating myself in his good graces. I wove a fictitious past to account for my education and present position, and did my best to come in touch with him. I was not long in disclosing a predilection for scientific pursuits, nor he in appreciating my aptitude. I became his assistant, with a corresponding increase in wages, and before long, as he grew confidential and expounded his theories, I was as enthusiastic as himself.

The days flew quickly by, for I was deeply interested in my new studies, passing my waking hours in his well-stocked library, or listening to his plans and aiding him in his laboratory work. But we were forced to forego many enticing experiments, a rolling ship not being exactly the proper place for delicate or intricate work. He promised me, however, many delightful hours in the magnificent laboratory for which we were bound. He had taken possession of an uncharted South Sea island, as he said, and turned it into a scientific paradise.

We had not been on the island long, before I discovered to horrible mare's nest I had fallen into. But before I describe the strange things which came to pass, I must briefly outline the causes which culminated in as startling an experience as ever fell to the lot of man.

Late in life, my father had abandoned the musty charms of antiquity and succumbed to the more fascinating ones embraced under the general head of biology. Having been thoroughly grounded during his youth in the fundamentals, he rapidly explored all the higher branches as far as the scientific world had gone, and found himself on the no man's land of the unknowable. It was his intention to pre-empt some of this unclaimed territory, and it was at this stage of his investigations that we had been thrown together. Having a good brain, though I say it myself, I had mastered his speculations and methods of reasoning, becoming almost as mad as himself. But I should not say this. The marvellous results we afterwards obtained can only go to prove his sanity. I can but say that he was the most abnormal specimen of cold-blooded cruelty I have ever seen.

After having penetrated the dual mysteries of physiology and psychology, his thought had led him to the verge of a great field, for which, the better to explore, he began studies in higher organic chemistry, pathology, toxicology and other sciences and sub-sciences rendered kindred as accessories to his speculative hypotheses. Starting from the proposition that the direct cause of the temporary and permanent arrest of vitality was due to the coagulation of certain elements and compounds in the protoplasm, he had isolated and subjected these various substances to innumerable experiments. Since the temporary arrest of vitality in an organism brought coma, and a permanent arrest death, he held that by artificial means this coagulation of the protoplasm could be retarded, prevented, and even overcome in the extreme states of solidification. Or, to do away with the technical nomenclature, he argued that death, when not violent and in which none of the organs had suffered injury, was merely suspended vitality; and that, in such instances, life could be induced to resume its functions by the use of proper methods. This, then, was his idea: To discover the method--and by practical experimentation prove the possibility--of renewing vitality in a structure from which life had seemingly fled. Of course, he recognised the futility of such endeavour after decomposition had set in; he must have organisms which but the moment, the hour, or the day before, had been quick with life. With me, in a crude way, he had proved this theory. I was really drowned, really dead, when picked from the water of San Francisco bay--but the vital spark had been renewed by means of his aerotherapeutical apparatus, as he called it.

Now to his dark purpose concerning me. He first showed me how completely I was in his power. He had sent the yacht away for a year, retaining only his two blackies, who were utterly devoted to him. He then made an exhaustive review of his theory and outlined the method of proof he had adopted, concluding with the startling announcement that I was to be his subject.

I had faced death and weighed my chances in many a desperate venture, but never in one of this nature. I can swear I am no coward, yet this proposition of journeying back and forth across the borderland of death put the yellow fear upon me. I asked for time, which he granted, at the same time assuring me that but the one course was open--I must submit. Escape from the Island was out of the question; escape by suicide was not to be entertained, though really preferable to what it seemed I must undergo; my only hope was to destroy my captors. But this latter was frustrated through the precautions taken by my father. I was subjected to a constant surveillance, even in my sleep being guarded by one or the other of the blacks.

Having pleaded in vain, I announced and proved that I was his son. It was my last card, and I had played all my hopes upon it. But he was inexorable; he was not a father but a scientific machine. I wonder yet have it ever came to pass that he married my mother or begat me, for there was not the slightest grain of emotion in his make-up. Reason was all in all to him, nor could he understand such things as love or sympathy in others, except as petty weaknesses which should be overcome. So he informed me that in the beginning he had given me life, and who had better right to take it away than he? Such, he said, was not his desire, however; he merely wished to borrow it occasionally, promising to return it punctually at the appointed time. Of course, there was a liability of mishaps, but I could do no more than take the chances, since the affairs of men were full of such.

The better to insure success, he wished me to be in the best possible condition, so I was dieted and trained like a great athlete before a decisive contest. What could I do? If I had to undergo the peril, it were best to be in good shape. In my intervals of relaxation he allowed me to assist in the arranging of the apparatus and in the various subsidiary experiments. The interest I took in all such operations can be imagined. I mastered the work as thoroughly as he, and often had the pleasure of seeing some of my suggestions or alterations put into effect. After such events I would smile grimly, conscious of officiating at my own funeral.

He began by inaugurating a series of experiments in toxicology. When all was ready, I was killed by a stiff dose of strychnine and allowed to lie dead for some twenty hours. During that period my body was dead, absolutely dead. All respiration and circulation ceased; but the frightful part of it was, that while the protoplasmic coagulation proceeded, I retained consciousness and was enabled to study it in all its ghastly details.

The apparatus to bring me back to life was an air-tight chamber, fitted to receive my body. The mechanism was simple — a few valves, a rotary shaft and crank, and an electric motor. When in operation, the interior atmosphere was alternately condenses and rarefied, thus communicating to my lungs an artificial respiration without the agency of the hosing previously used. Though my body was inert, and, for all I knew, in the first stages of decomposition, I was cognizant of everything that transpired. I knew when they placed me in the chamber, and though all my senses were quiescent, I was aware of hypodermic injections of a compound to react upon the coagulatory process. Then the chamber was closed and the machinery started. My anxiety was terrible; but the circulation became gradually restored, the different organs began to carry on their respective functions, and in an hour's time I was eating a hearty dinner.

It cannot be said that I participated in this series, nor in the subsequent ones, with much verve; but after two ineffectual attempts of escape, I began to take quite an interest. Besides, I was becoming accustomed. My father was beside himself at his success, and as the months rolled by his speculations took wilder and yet wilder flights. We ranged through the three great classes of poisons, the neurotics, the gaseous and the irritants, but carefully avoided some of the mineral irritants and passed the whole group of corrosives. During the poison regime I became quite accustomed to dying, and had but one mishap to shake my growing confidence. Scarifying a number of lesser blood vessels in my arm, he introduced a minute quantity of that most frightful of poisons, the arrow poison, or curare. I lost consciousness at the start, quickly followed by the cessation of respiration and circulation, and so far had the solidification of the protoplasm advanced, that he gave up all hope. But at the last moment he applied a discovery he had been working upon, receiving such encouragement as to redouble his efforts.

In a glass vacuum, similar but not exactly like a Crookes' tube, was placed a magnetic field. When penetrated by polarised light, it gave no phenomena of phosphorescence nor the rectilinear projection of atoms, but emitted non-luminous rays, similar to the X ray. While the X ray could reveal opaque objects hidden in dense mediums, this was possessed of far subtler penetration. By this he photographed my body, and found on the negative an infinite number of blurred shadows, due to the chemical and electric motions still going on. This was an infallible proof that the rigor mortis in which I lay was not genuine; that is, those mysterious forces, those delicate bonds which held my soul to my body, were still in action. The resultants of all other poisons were unapparent, save those of mercurial compounds, which usually left me languid for several days.

Another series of delightful experiments was with electricity. We verified Tesla's assertion that high currents were utterly harmless by passing 100,000 volts through my body. As this didnot affect me, the current was reduced to 2,500, and I was quickly electrocuted. This time he ventured so far as to allow me to remain dead, or in a state of suspended vitality, for three days. It took four hours to bring me back.

Once, he superinduced lockjaw; but the agony of dying was so great that I positively refused to undergo similar experiments. The easiest deaths were by asphyxiation, such as drowning, strangling, and suffocation by gas; while those by morphine, opium, cocaine and chloroform, were not at all hard.

Another time, after being suffocated, he kept me in cold storage for three months, not permitting me to freeze or decay. This was without my knowledge, and I was in a great fright on discovering the lapse of time. I became afraid of what he might do with me when I lay dead, my alarm being increased by the predilection he was beginning to betray towards vivisection. The last time I was resurrected, I discovered that he had been tampering with my breast. Though he had carefully dressed and sewed the incisions up, they were so severe that I had to take to my bed for some time. It was during this convalescence that I evolved the plan by which I ultimately escaped.

While feigning unbounded enthusiasm in the work, I asked and received a vacation from my moribund occupation. During this period I devoted myself to laboratory work, while he was too deep in the vivisection of the many animals captured by the blacks to take notice of my work.

It was on these two propositions that I constructed my theory: First, electrolysis, or the decomposition of water into its constituent gases by means of electricity; and, second, by the hypothetical existence of a force, the converse of gravitation, which Astor has named “apergy”. Terrestrial attraction, for instance, merely draws objects together but does not combine them; hence, apergy is merely repulsion. Now, atomic or molecular attraction not only draws objects together but integrates them; and it was the converse of this, or a disintegrative force, which I wished to not only discover and produce, but to direct at will. Thus, the molecules of hydrogen and oxygen reacting on each other, separate and create new molecules, containing both elements and forming water. Electrolysis causes these molecules to split up and resume their original condition, producing the two gases separately. The force I wished to find must not only do this with two, but with all elements, no matter in what compounds they exist. If I could then entice my father within its radius, he would be instantly disintegrated and sent flying to the four quarters, a mass of isolated elements.

It must not be understood that this force, which I finally came to control, annihilated matter; it merely annihilated form. Nor, as I soon discovered, had it any effect on inorganic structure; but to all organic form it was absolutely fatal. This partiality puzzled me at first, though had I stopped to think deeper I would have seen through it. Since the number of atoms in organic molecules is far greater than in the most complex mineral molecules, organic compounds are characterised by their instability and the ease with which they are split up by physical forces and chemical reagents.

By two powerful batteries, connected with magnets constructed specially for this purpose, two tremendous forces were projected. Considered apart from each other, they were perfectly harmless; but they accomplished their purpose by focusing at an invisible point in mid-air. After practically demonstrating its success, besides narrowly escaping being blown into nothingness, I laid my trap. Concealing the magnets, so that their force made the whole space of my chamber doorway a field of death, and placing by my couch a button by which I could throw on the current from the storage batteries, I climbed into bed.

The blackies still guarded my sleeping quarters, one relieving the other at midnight. I turned on the current as soon as the first man arrived. Hardly had I begun to doze, when I was aroused by a sharp, metallic tinkle. There, on the mid-threshold, lay the collar of Dan, my father's St. Bernard. My keeper ran to pick it up. He disappeared like a gust of wind, his clothes falling to the floor in a heap. There was a slight wiff of ozone in the air, but since the principal gaseous components of his body were hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, which are equally colourless and odourless, there was no other manifestation of his departure. Yet when I shut off the current and removed the garments, I found a deposit of carbon in the form of animal charcoal; also other powders, the isolated, solid elements of his organism, such as sulphur, potassium and iron. Resetting the trap, I crawled back to bed. At midnight I got up and removed the remains of the second black, and then slept peacefully till morning.

I was awakened by the strident voice of my father, who was calling to me from across the laboratory. I laughed to myself. There had been no one to call him and he had overslept. I could hear him as he approached my room with the intention of rousing me, and so I sat up in bed, the better to observe his translation--perhaps apotheosis were a better term. He paused a moment at the threshold, then took the fatal step. Puff! It was like the wind sighing among the pines. He was gone. His clothes fell in a fantastic heap on the floor. Besides ozone, I noticed the faint, garlic-like odour of phosphorus. A little pile of elementary solids lay among his garments. That was all. The wide world lay before me. My captors were no more.

To Build a Fire (Early Version)

First published in Youth's Companion, 1902

For land travel or seafaring, the world over, a companion is usually considered desirable. In the Klondike, as Tom Vincent found out, such a companion is absolutely essential. But he found it out, not by precept, but through bitter experience.

"Never travel alone," is a precept of the north. He had heard it many times and laughed; for he was a strapping young fellow, big-boned and big-muscled, with faith in himself and in the strength of his head and hands.

It was on a bleak January day when the experience came that taught him respect for the frost, and for the wisdom of the men who had battled with it.

He had left Calumet Camp on the Yukon with a light pack on his back, to go up Paul Creek to the divide between it and Cherry Creek, where his party was prospecting and hunting moose.

The frost was sixty-degrees below zero, and be had thirty miles of lonely trail to cover, but he did not mind. In fact, be enjoyed it, swinging along through the silence, his blood pounding warmly through veins, and his mind carefree and happy. For he and his comrades were certain they had struck "pay" up there on the Cherry Creek Divide; and, further, he was returning to them from Dawson with cheery home letters from the States.

At seven o'clock, when he turned the heels of his moccasins toward Calumet Camp, it was still black night. And when day broke at half past nine he had made the four-mile cut-off across the flats and was six miles up Paul Creek. The trail, which had seen little travel, followed the bed of the creek, and there was no possibility of his getting lost. He had gone to Dawson by way of Cherry Creek and Indian River, so Paul Creek was new and strange. By half past eleven he was at the forks, which bad been described to him, and he knew he had covered fifteen miles, half the distance. He knew that in the nature of things the trail was bound to grow worse from there on, and thought that, considering the good time he had made, he merited lunch. Casting off his pack and taking a seat on a fallen tree, he unmittened his right hand, reached inside his shirt next to the skin, and fished out a couple of biscuits sandwiched with sliced bacon and wrapped in a handkerchief--the only way they could be carried without freezing solid.

He had barely chewed the first mouthful when his numbing fingers warned him to put his mitten on again. This he did, not without surprise at the bitter swiftness with which the frost bit in. Undoubtedly it was the coldest snap he had ever experienced, he thought.

He spat upon the snow,--a favorite northland trick,--and the sharp crackle of the instantly congealed spittle startled him. The spirit thermometer at Calumet had registered sixty below when he left, but he was certain it had grown much colder, how much colder he could not imagine.

Half of the first biscuit was yet untouched, but he could feel himself beginning to chill--a thing most unusual for him. This would never do, he decided, and slipping the packstraps across his shoulders, he leaped to his feet and ran briskly up the trail.

A few minutes of this made him warm again, and he settled down to a steady stride, munching the biscuits as be went along. The moisture that exhaled with his breath crusted his lips and mustache with pendent ice and formed a miniature glacier on his chin. Now and again sensation forsook his nose and cheeks, and he rubbed them till they burned with the returning blood.

Most men wore nose-straps; his partners did, but he had scorned such “feminine contraptions,” and till now had never felt the need of them. Now he did feel the need, for he was rubbing constantly.

Nevertheless he was aware of a thrill of joy, of exultation. He was doing something, achieving something, mastering the elements. Once he laughed aloud in sheer strength of life, and with his clenched fist defied the frost. He was its master. What he did he did in spite of it. It could not stop him. He was going on to the Cherry Creek Divide.

Strong as were the elements, he was stronger. At such times animals crawled away into their holes and remained in hiding. But he did not hide. He was out in it, facing it, fighting it. He was a man, a master of things.

In such fashion, rejoicing proudly, he tramped on. After an hour he rounded a bend, where the creek ran close to the mountainside, and came upon one of the most insignificant-appearing but most formidable dangers in northern travel.

The creek itself was frozen solid to its rocky bottom, but from the mountain came the outflow of several springs. These springs never froze, and the only effect of the severest cold snaps was to lessen their discharge. Protected from the frost by the blanket of snow, the water of these springs seeped down into the creek and, on top of the creek ice, formed shallow pools.

The surface of these pools, in turn, took on a skin of ice which grew thicker and thicker, until the water overran, and so formed a second ice-skinned pool above the first.

Thus at the bottom was the solid creek ice, then probably six to eight inches of water, then the thin ice-skin, then another six inches of water and another ice-skin. And on top of this last skin was about an inch of recent snow to make the trap complete.

To Tom Vincent's eye the unbroken snow surface gave no warning of the lurking danger. As the crust was thicker at the edge, he was well toward the middle before he broke through.

In itself it was a very insignificant mishap,--a man does not drown in twelve inches of water,--but in its consequences as serious an accident as could possibly befall him.

At the instant he broke through he felt the cold water strike his feet and ankles, and with half a dozen lunges he made the bank. He was quite cool and collected. The thing to do, and the only thing to do, was to build a fire. For another precept of the north runs: Travel with wet socks down to twenty below zero; after that build a fire. And it was three times twenty below and colder, and he knew it.

He knew, further, that great care must be exercised; that with failure at the first attempt, the chance was made greater for failure at the second attempt. In short, he knew that there must be no failure. The moment before a strong, exulting man, boastful of his mastery of the elements, he was now fighting for his life against those same elements--such was the difference caused by the injection of a quart of water into a northland traveller's calculations.

In a clump of pines on the rim of the bank the spring high-water had lodged many twigs and small branches. Thoroughly dried by the summer sun, they now waited the match.

It is impossible to build a fire with heavy Alaskan mittens on one's hands, so Vincent bared his, gathered a sufficient number of twigs, and knocking the snow from them, knelt down to kindle his fire. From an inside pocket he drew out his matches and a strip of thin birch bark. The matches were of the Klondike kind, sulphur matches, one hundred in a bunch.

He noticed how quickly his fingers had chilled as he separated one match from the bunch and scratched it on his trousers. The birch bark, like the dryest of paper, burst into bright flame. This be carefully fed with the smallest twigs and finest debris, cherishing the flame with the utmost care. It did not do to hurry things, as he well knew, and although his fingers were now quite stiff, he did not hurry.

After the first quick, biting sensation of cold, his feet had ached with a heavy, dull ache and were rapidly growing numb. But the fire, although a very young one, was now a success; he knew that a little snow, briskly rubbed, would speedily cure his feet.

But at the moment he was adding the first thick twigs to the fire a grievous thing happened. The pine boughs above his head were burdened with a four months snowfall, and so finely adjusted were the burdens that his slight movement in collecting the twigs had been sufficient to disturb the balance.

The snow from the topmost bough was the first to fall, striking and dislodging the snow on the boughs beneath. And all this snow, accumulating as it fell, smote Tom Vincent’s head and shoulders and blotted out his fire.

He still kept his presence of mind, for be knew how great his danger was. He started at once to rebuild the fire, but his fingers were now so numb that he could not bend them, and he was forced to pick up each twig and splinter between the tips of the fingers of either hand.

When he came to the match he encountered great difficulty in separating one from the bunch. This he succeeded in managing, however, and also, by great effort, in clutching the match between his thumb and forefinger. But in scratching it, he dropped it in the snow and could not pick it up again.

He stood up, desperate. He could not feel even his weight on his feet, although the ankles were aching painfully. Putting on his mittens, he stepped to one side, so that the snow would not fall upon the new fire he was to build, and beat his hands violently against a tree-trunk.

This enabled him to separate and strike a second match and to set fire to the remaining fragment of birch bark. But his body had now begun to chill and he was shivering, so that when be tried to add the first twigs his hand shook and the tiny flame was quenched.

The frost had beaten him. His hands were worthless. But he had the foresight to drop the bunch of matches into his wide-mouthed outside pocket before he slipped on his mittens in despair , and started to run up the trail. One cannot run the frost out of wet feet at sixty below and colder, however, as he quickly discovered.

He came round a sharp turn of the creek to where he could look ahead for a mile. But there was no help, no sign of help, only the white trees and the white hills, and the quiet cold and the brazen silence! If only he had a comrade whose feet were not freezing, he thought, only such a comrade to start the fire that could save him!

Then his eyes chanced upon another high-water lodgment of twigs and branches. If he could strike a match, all might yet be well. With stiff fingers which he could not bend, he got out a bunch of matches, but found it impossible to separate them.

He sat down and awkwardly shuffled the bunch about on his knees, until he got it resting on his palm with the sulphur ends projecting, somewhat in the manner the blade of a hunting-knife would project when clutched in the fist.

But his fingers stood straight out. They could not clutch. This he overcame by pressing the wrist of the other hand against them, and so forcing them down upon the bunch. Time and again, holding thus by both bands, he scratched the bunch on his leg and finally ignited it. But the flame burned into the flesh of his hand, and he involuntarily relaxed his hold. The bunch fell into the snow, and while he tried vainly to pick it up, sizzled and went out.

Again he ran, by this time badly frightened. His feet were utterly devoid of sensation. He stubbed his toes once on a buried log, but beyond pitching him into the snow and wrenching his back, it gave him no feelings.

He recollected being told of a camp of moose-hunters somewhere above the forks of Paul Creek. He must be somewhere near it, he thought, and if he could find it be yet might be saved. Five minutes later he came upon it, lone and deserted, with drifted snow sprinkled inside the pine-bough shelter in which the hunters had slept. He sank down, sobbing. All was over, and in an hour at best, in that terrific temperature, he would be an icy corpse.

But the love of life was strong in him, and he sprang again to his feet. He was thinking quickly. What if the matches did burn his hands? Burned hands were better than dead hands. No hands at all were better than death.

He floundered along the trail until be came upon another high-water lodgment. There were twigs and branches, leaves and grasses, all dry and waiting the fire.

Again he sat down and shuffled the bunch of matches on his knees, got it into place on his palm, with the wrist of his other hand forced the nerveless fingers down against the bunch, and with the wrist kept them there. At the second scratch the bunch caught fire, and he knew that if he could stand the pain he was saved. He choked with the sulphur fumes, and the blue flame licked the flesh of his hands.

At first he could not feel it, but it burned quickly in through the frosted surface. The odor of the burning flesh--his flesh--was strong in his nostrils. He writhed about in his torment, yet held on. He set his teeth and swayed back and forth, until the clear white flame of the burning match shot up, and he had applied that flame to the leaves and grasses.

An anxious five minutes followed, but the fire gained steadily. Then he set to work to save himself. Heroic measures were necessary, such was his extremity, and he took them.

Alternately rubbing his hands with snow and thrusting them into the flames, and now and again beating them against the hard trees, he restored their circulation sufficiently for them to be of use to him. With his hunting-knife he slashed the straps from his pack, unrolled his blanket, and got out dry socks and footgear.

Then he cut away his moccasins and bared his feet. But while he had taken liberties with his hands, he kept his feet fairly away from the fire and rubbed them with snow. He rubbed till his bands grew numb, when he would cover his feet with the blanket, warm his hands by the fire, and return to the rubbing.

For three hours he worked, till the worst effects of the freezing had been counteracted. All that night he stayed by the fire, and it was late the next day when he limped pitifully into the camp on the Cherry Creek Divide.

In a month's time he was able to be about on his feet, although the toes were destined always after that to be very sensitive to frost. But the scars on his hands he knows he will carry to the grave. And--"Never travel alone!" he now lays down the precept of the North.

To Build a Fire (Later Version)

Day had broken cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth bank, where a dim and little-traveled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun or hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the skyline and dip immediately from view.

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hairline that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hairline was the trail — the main trail — that led south five hundred miles to the Chilkoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on the Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this — the mysterious, far-reaching hairline trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all — made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a cheechako, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold, and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, earflaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below, spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below — how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be into camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, traveling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheekbones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheekbones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for traveling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man, as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystaled breath. The man's red beard and moustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobacco chewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer at Sixty Mile he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek bed. The furrow of the old sled trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly, he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to; and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheekbones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheekbones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose strap of the sort Bud wore in the cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.

Empty as the man's mind was of thought, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek, he knew, was frozen clear to the bottom — no creek could contain water in that arctic winter — but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top of the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts[5] of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote[6] them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but instead struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulfur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it was cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his firewood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the earflaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space whence this cold came. On the other hand, there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whiplash and of harsh and menacing throat sounds that threatened the whiplash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to it with the sound of whiplashes, and the dog swung in at the man’s heels and followed after.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his moustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o’clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his footgear. This was imperative at that low temperature — he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry firewood — sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last year’s grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire — that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for a half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulfur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire, he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet footgear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the advice of the old-timer on Sulfur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-timers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger ends.

All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron half-way to the knees; and the mocassin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numbed fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath-knife.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree — an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a trail-mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail-mate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready.

Such were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind, he made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open; where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next, he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high-water flotsam. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fire gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire-provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch-bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it and kept calm. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and threshed his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. He did this sitting down, and he stood up to do it; and all the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf-brush of a tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf-ears pricked forward intently as it watched the man. And the man as he beat and threshed with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy as he regarded the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first far-away signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch-bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet; and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side the bunch, he closed them — that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were drawn, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch-bark. But the burning brimstone went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically. The match fell into the snow and went out.

The old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm-muscles not being frozen enabled him to press the hand-heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulphur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch-bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch-bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire-provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer and crawled inside the carcass, and so was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such way before. Something was the matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger, — it knew not what danger but somewhere, somehow, in its brain arose an apprehension of the man. It flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, and its restless, hunching movements and the liftings and shiftings of its forefeet became more pronounced but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke peremptorily, with the sound of whiplashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the lingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his sheath-knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began threshing his arms back and forth, beating the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in the hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek-bed along the old, dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly, as he ploughed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again — the banks of the creek, the old timber-jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him facing him curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off — such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anæsthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

"You were right, old hoss; you were right," the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later, the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food-providers and fire-providers.

To Kill a Man

Though dim night-lights burned, she moved familiarly through the big rooms and wide halls, seeking vainly the half-finished book of verse she had mislaid and only now remembered. When she turned on the lights in the drawing-room, she disclosed herself clad in a sweeping negligee gown of soft rose-colored stuff, throat and shoulders smothered in lace. Her rings were still on her fingers, her massed yellow hair had not yet been taken down. She was delicately, gracefully beautiful, with slender, oval face, red lips, a faint color in the cheeks, and blue eyes of the chameleon sort that at will stare wide with the innocence of childhood, go hard and gray and brilliantly cold, or flame up in hot wilfulness and mastery.

She turned the lights off and passed out and down the hall toward the morning room. At the entrance she paused and listened. From farther on had come, not a noise, but an impression of movement. She could have sworn she had not heard anything, yet something had been different. The atmosphere of night quietude had been disturbed. She wondered what servant could be prowling about. Not the butler, who was nosion. torious for retiring early save on special occasion. Nor could it be her maid, whom she had permitted to go that evening.

Passing on to the dining-room, she found the door closed. Why she opened it and went on in, she did not know, except for the feeling that the disturbing factor, whatever it might be, was there. The room was in darkness, and she felt her way to the button and pressed. As the blaze of light flashed on, she stepped back and cried out. It was a mere “Oh!” and it was not loud.

Facing her, alongside the button, flat against the wall, was a man. In his hand, pointed toward her, was a revolver. She noticed, even in the shock of seeing him, that the weapon was black and exceedingly long-barreled. She knew black and exceedingly long it for what it was, a Colt’s. He was a medium-sized man, roughly clad, brown-eyed, and swarthy with sunburn. He seemed very cool. There was no wabble to the revolver and it was directed toward her stomach, not from an outstretched arm, but from the hip, against which the forearm rested.

“Oh,” she said. “I beg your pardon. You startled me. What do you want?”

“I reckon I want to get out,” he answered, with a humorous twitch to the lips. “I’ve kind of lost my way in this here shebang, and if you’ll kindly show me the door I’ll cause no trouble and sure vamoose.”

“But what are you doing here?” she demanded, her voice touched with the sharpness of one used to authority.

“Plain robbing, Miss, that’s all. I came snooping around to see what I could gather up. I thought you wan’t to home, seein’ as I saw you pull out with your old man in an auto. I reckon that must a ben your pa, and you’re Miss Setliffe.”

Mrs. Setliffe saw his mistake, appreciated the naive compliment, and decided not to undeceive him.

“How do you know I am Miss Setliffe?” she asked.

“This is old Setliffe’s house, ain’t it?”

She nodded.

“I didn’t know he had a daughter, but I reckon you must be her. And now, if it ain’t botherin’ you too much, I’d sure be obliged if you’d show me the way out.”

“But why should I? You are a robber, a burglar.”

“If I wan’t an ornery shorthorn at the business, I’d be accumulatin’ them rings on your fingers instead of being polite,” he retorted.

“I come to make a raise outa old Setliffe, and not to be robbing women-folks. If you get outa the way, I reckon I can find my own way out.”

Mrs. Setliffe was a keen woman, and she felt that from such a man there was little to fear. That he was not a typical criminal, she was certain. From his speech she knew he was not of the cities, and she seemed to sense the wider, homelier air of large spaces.

“Suppose I screamed?” she queried curiously. “Suppose I made an outcry for help? You couldn’t shoot me? …a woman?”

She noted the fleeting bafflement in his brown eyes. He answered slowly and thoughtfully, as if working out a difficult problem. “I reckon, then, I’d have to choke you and maul you some bad.”

“A woman?”

“I’d sure have to,” he answered, and she saw his mouth set grimly.

“You’re only a soft woman, but you see, Miss, I can’t afford to go to jail. No, Miss, I sure can’t. There’s a friend of mine waitin’ for me out West. He’s in a hole, and I’ve got to help him out.” The mouth shaped even more grimly. “I guess I could choke you without hurting you much to speak of.”

Her eyes took on a baby stare of innocent incredulity as she watched him.

"I never met a burglar before," she assured him, "and I can't begin to tell you how interested I am."

"I'm not a burglar, Miss. Not a real one," he hastened to add as she looked her amused unbelief. "It looks like it, me being here in your house. But it's the first time I ever tackled such a job. I needed the money bad. Besides, I kind of look on it like collecting what's coming to me."

"I don't understand," she smiled encouragingly. "You came here to rob, and to rob is to take what is not yours."

"Yes, and no, in this here particular case. But I reckon I'd better be going now."

He started for the door of the dining-room, but she interposed, and a very beautiful obstacle she made of herself. His left hand went out as if to grip her, then hesitated. He was patently awed by her soft womanhood.

"There!" she cried triumphantly. "I knew you wouldn't."

The man was embarrassed.

"I ain't never manhandled a woman yet," he explained, "and it don't come easy. But I sure will, if you set to screaming."

"Won't you stay a few minutes and talk?" she urged. "I'm so interested. I should like to hear you explain how burglary is collecting what is coming to you."

He looked at her admiringly.

"I always thought women-folks were scairt of robbers," he confessed. "But you don't seem none."

She laughed gaily.

"There are robbers and robbers, you know. I am not afraid of you, because I am confident you are not the sort of creature that would harm a woman. Come, talk with me a while. Nobody will disturb us. I am all alone. My – father caught the night train to New York. The servants are all asleep. I should like to give you something to eat – women always prepare midnight suppers for the burglars they catch, at least they do in the magazine stories. But I don't know where to find the food. Perhaps you will have something to drink?"

He hesitated, and did not reply; but she could see the admiration for her growing in his eyes.

"You're not afraid?" she queried. "I won't poison you, I promise. I'll drink with you to show you it is all right."

“You sure are a surprise package of all right,” he declared, for the first time lowering the weapon and letting it hang at his side. “No one don’t need to tell me ever again that women-folks in cities is afraid. You ain’t much – just a little soft pretty thing. But you’ve sure got the spunk. And you’re trustful on top of it. There ain’t many women, or men either. who’d treat a man with a gun the way you’re treating me.”

She smiled her pleasure in the compliment, and her face, was very earnest as she said:

“That is because I like your appearance. You are too decent-looking a man to be a robber. You oughtn’t to do such things. If you are in bad luck you should go to work. Come, put away that nasty revolver and let us talk it over. The thing for you to do is to work.”

“Not in this burg,” he commented bitterly. “I’ve walked two inches off the bottom of my legs trying to find a job. Honest, I was a fine large man once…before I started looking for a job.”

The merry laughter with which she greeted his sally obviously pleased him, and she was quick to note and take advantage of it. She moved directly away from the door and toward the sideboard.

“Come, you must tell me all about it while I get that drink for you. What will it be? Whisky?”

“Yes, ma’am,” he said, as he followed her, though he still carried the big revolver at his side, and though he glanced reluctantly at the unguarded open door.

She filled a glass for him at the sideboard.

“I promised to drink with you,” she said hesitatingly. “But I don’t like whisky. I …I prefer sherry.”

She lifted the sherry bottle tentatively for his consent.

“Sure,” he answered, with a nod. “Whisky’s a man’s drink. I never like to see women at it. Wine’s more their stuff.”

She raised her glass to his, her eyes meltingly sympathetic.

“Here’s to finding you a good position — ”

But she broke off at sight of the expression of surprised disgust on his face. The glass, barely touched, was removed from his wry lips.

“What is the matter!” she asked anxiously. “Don’t you like it? Have I made a mistake?”

“It’s sure funny whisky. Tastes like it got burned and smoked in the making.”

"Oh! How silly of me! I gave you Scotch. Of course you are accustomed to rye. Let me change it."

She was almost solicitiously maternal, as she replaced the glass with another and sought and found the proper bottle.

"Better?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am. No smoke in it. It's sure the real good stuff. I ain't had a drink in a week. Kind of slick, that; oily, you know; not made in a chemical factory."

"You are a drinking man?" It was half a question, half a challenge.

"No, ma'am, not to speak of. I HAVE rared up and ripsnorted at spells, but most unfrequent. But there is times when a good stiff jolt lands on the right spot kerchunk, and this is sure one of them. And now, thanking you for your kindness, ma'am, I'll just be a pulling along."

But Mrs. Setliffe did not want to lose her burglar. She was too poised a woman to possess much romance, but there was a thrill about the present situation that delighted her. Besides, she knew there was no danger. The man, despite his jaw and the steady brown eyes, was eminently tractable. Also, farther back in her consciousness glimmered the thought of an audience of admiring friends. It was too bad not to have that audience.

"You haven't explained how burglary, in your case, is merely collecting what is your own," she said. "Come, sit down, and tell me about it here at the table."

She maneuvered for her own seat, and placed him across the corner from her. His alertness had not deserted him, as she noted, and his eyes roved sharply about, returning always with smoldering admiration to hers, but never resting long. And she noted likewise that while she spoke he was intent on listening for other sounds than those of her voice. Nor had he relinquished the revolver, which lay at the corner of the table between them, the butt close to his right hand.

But he was in a new habitat which he did not know. This man from the West, cunning in woodcraft and plainscraft, with eyes and ears open, tense and suspicious, did not know that under the table, close to her foot, was the push button of an electric bell. He had never heard of such a contrivance, and his keenness and wariness went for naught.

"It's like this, Miss," he began, in response to her urging. "Old Setliffe done me up in a little deal once. It was raw, but it worked. Anything will work full and legal when it's got few hundred million behind it. I'm not squealin', and I ain't taking a slam at your pa. He don't know me from Adam, and I reckon he don't know he done me outa anything. He's too big, thinking and dealing in millions, to ever hear of a small potato like me. He's an operator. He's got all kinds of experts thinking and planning and working for him, some of them, I hear, getting more cash salary than the President of the United States. I'm only one of thousands that have been done up by your pa, that's all.

"You see, ma'am, I had a little hole in the ground – a dinky, hydraulic, one-horse outfit of a mine. And when the Setliffe crowd shook down Idaho, and reorganized the smelter trust, and roped in the rest of the landscape, and put through the big hydraulic scheme at Twin Pines, why I sure got squeezed. I never had a run for my money. I was scratched off the card before the first heat. And so, to-night, being broke and my friend needing me bad, I just dropped around to make a raise outa your pa. Seeing as I needed it, it kinda was coming to me."

"Granting all that you say is so," she said, "nevertheless it does not make house-breaking any the less house-breaking. You couldn't make such a defense in a court of law."

"I know that," he confessed meekly. "What's right ain't always legal. And that's why I am so uncomfortable a-settin' here and talking with you. Not that I ain't enjoying your company – I sure do enjoy it – but I just can't afford to be caught. I know what they'd do to me in this here city. There was a young fellow that got fifty years only last week for holding a man up on the street for two dollars and eighty-five cents. I read about it in the paper. When times is hard and they ain't no work, men get desperate. And then the other men who've got something to be robbed of get desperate, too, and they just sure soak it to the other fellows. If I got caught, I reckon I wouldn't get a mite less than ten years. That's why I'm hankering to be on my way."

"No; wait." She lifted a detaining hand, at the same time removing her foot from the bell, which she had been pressing intermittently. "You haven't told me your name yet."

He hesitated.

"Call me Dave."

"Then …Dave," she laughed with pretty confusion. "Something must be done for you. You are a young man, and you are just at the beginning of a bad start. If you begin by attempting to collect what you think is coming to you, later on you will be collecting what you are perfectly sure isn't coming to you. And you know what the end will be. Instead of this, we must find something honorable for you to do."

"I need the money, and I need it now," he replied doggedly. "It's not for myself, but for that friend I told you about. He's in a peck of trouble, and he's got to get his lift now or not at all."

"I can find you a position," she said quickly. "And – yes, the very thing — !I'll lend you the money you want to send to your friend. This you can pay back out of your salary."

"About three hundred would do," he said slowly. "Three hundred would pull him through. I'd work my fingers off for a year for that, and my keep, and a few cents to buy Bull Durham with."

"Ah! You smoke! I never thought of it."

Her hand went out over the revolver toward his hand, as she pointed to the tell-tale yellow stain on his fingers. At the same time her eyes measured the nearness of her own hand and of his to the weapon. She ached to grip it in one swift movement. She was sure she could do it, and yet she was not sure; and so it was that she refrained as she withdrew her hand.

"Won't you smoke?" she invited.

"I'm 'most dying to."

"Then do so. I don't mind. I really like it – cigarettes, I mean."

With his left band he dipped into his side pocket, brought out a loose wheat-straw paper and shifted it to his right hand close by the revolver. Again he dipped, transferring to the paper a pinch of brown, flaky tobacco. Then he proceeded, both hands just over the revolver, to roll the cigarette.

"From the way you hover close to that nasty weapon, you seem to be afraid of me," she challenged.

"Not exactly afraid of you, ma'am, but, under the circumstances, just a mite timid."

"But I've not been afraid of you."

"You've got nothing to lose."

"My life," she retorted.

"That's right," he acknowledged promptly, "and you ain't been scairt of me. Mebbe I am over anxious."

"I wouldn't cause you any harm."

Even as she spoke, her slipper felt for the bell and pressed it. At the same time her eyes were earnest with a plea of honesty.

"You are a judge of men. I know it. And of women. Surely, when I am trying to persuade you from a criminal life and to get you honest work to do ….?"

He was immediately contrite.

"I sure beg your pardon, ma'am," he said. "I reckon my nervousness ain't complimentary."

As he spoke, he drew his right hand from the table, and after lighting the cigarette, dropped it by his side.

"Thank you for your confidence," she breathed softly, resolutely keeping her eyes from measuring the distance to the revolver, and keeping her foot pressed firmly on the bell.

"About that three hundred," he began. "I can telegraph it West to-night. And I'll agree to work a year for it and my keep."

"You will earn more than that. I can promise seventy-five dollars a month at the least. Do you know horses?"

His face lighted up and his eyes sparkled.

"Then go to work for me – or for my father, rather, though I engage all the servants. I need a second coachman — "

"And wear a uniform?" he interrupted sharply, the sneer of the free-born West in his voice and on his lips.

She smiled tolerantly.

"Evidently that won't do. Let me think. Yes. Can you break and handle colts?"

He nodded.

"We have a stock farm, and there's room for just such a man as you. Will you take it?"

"Will I, ma'am?" His voice was rich with gratitude and enthusiasm. "Show me to it. I'll dig right in to-morrow. And I can sure promise you one thing, ma'am. You'll never be sorry for lending Hughie Luke a hand in his trouble — "

"I thought you said to call you Dave," she chided forgivingly.

"I did, ma'am. I did. And I sure beg your pardon. It was just plain bluff. My real name is Hughie Luke. And if you'll give me the address of that stock farm of yours, and the railroad fare, I head for it first thing in the morning."

Throughout the conversation she had never relaxed her attempts on the bell. She had pressed it in every alarming way – three shorts and a long, two and a long, and five. She had tried long series of shorts, and, once, she had held the button down for a solid three minutes. And she had been divided between objurgation of the stupid, heavy-sleeping butler and doubt if the bell were in order.

"I am so glad," she said; "so glad that you are willing. There won't be much to arrange. But you will first have to trust me while I go upstairs for my purse."

She saw the doubt flicker momentarily in his eyes, and added hastily, "But you see I am trusting you with the three hundred dollars."

"I believe you, ma'am," he came back gallantly. "Though I just can't help this nervousness."

"Shall I go and get it?"

But before she could receive consent, a slight muffled jar from the distance came to her ear. She knew it for the swing-door of the butler's pantry. But so slight was it – more a faint vibration than a sound – that she would not have heard had not her ears been keyed and listening for it. Yet the man had heard. He was startled in his composed way.

"What was that?" he demanded.

For answer, her left hand flashed out to the revolver and brought it back. She had had the start of him, and she needed it, for the next instant his hand leaped up from his side, clutching emptiness where the revolver had been.

"Sit down!" she commanded sharply, in a voice new to him. "Don't move. Keep your hands on the table."

She had taken a lesson from him. Instead of holding the heavy weapon extended, the butt of it and her forearm rested on the table, the muzzle pointed, not at his head, but his chest. And he, looking coolly and obeying her commands, knew there was no chance of the kick-up of the recoil producing a miss. Also, he saw that the revolver did not wabble, nor the hand shake, and he was thoroughly conversant with the size of hole the soft-nosed bullets could make. He had eyes, not for her, but for the hammer, which had risen under the pressure of her forefinger on the trigger.

"I reckon I'd best warn you that that there trigger-pull is filed dreadful fine. Don't press too hard, or I'll have a hole in me the size of a walnut."

She slacked the hammer partly down.

"That's better," he commented. "You'd best put it down all the way. You see how easy it works. If you want to, a quick light pull will jiffy her up and back and make a pretty mess all over your nice floor."

A door opened behind him, and he heard somebody enter the room. But he did not turn his bead. He was looking at her, and he found it the face of another woman – hard, cold, pitiless yet brilliant in its beauty. The eyes, too, were hard, though blazing with a cold light.

"Thomas," she commanded, "go to the telephone and call the police. Why were you so long in answering?"

"I came as soon as I heard the bell, madam," was the answer.

The robber never took his eyes from hers, nor did she from his, but at mention of the bell she noticed that his eyes were puzzled for the moment.

"Beg your pardon," said the butler from behind, "but wouldn't it be better for me to get a weapon and arouse the servants?"

"No; ring for the police. I can hold this man. Go and do it – quickly."

The butler slippered out of the room, and the man and the woman sat on, gazing into each other's eyes. To her it was an experience keen with enjoyment, and in her mind was the gossip of her crowd, and she saw notes in the society weeklies of the beautiful young Mrs. Setliffe capturing an armed robber single-handed. It would create a sensation, she was sure.

"When you get that sentence you mentioned," she said coldly, "you will have time to meditate upon what a fool you have been, taking other persons' property and threatening women with revolvers. You will have time to learn your lesson thoroughly. Now tell the truth. You haven't any friend in trouble. All that you told me was lies."

He did not reply. Though his eyes were upon her, they seemed blank. In truth, for the instant she was veiled to him, and what he saw was the wide sunwashed spaces of the West, where men and women were bigger than the rotten denizens, as he had encountered them, of the thrice rotten cities of the East.

"Go on. Why don't you speak? Why don't you lie some more? Why don't you beg to be let off?"

"I might," he answered, licking his dry lips. "I might ask to be let off if …"

"If what?" she demanded peremptorily, as he paused.

"I was trying to think of a word you reminded me of. As I was saying, I might if you was a decent woman."

Her face paled.

"Be careful," she warned.

"You don't dast kill me," he sneered. "The world's a pretty low down place to have a thing like you prowling around in it, but it ain't so plumb low down, I reckon, as to let you put a hole in me. You're sure bad, but the trouble with you is that you're weak in your badness. It ain't much to kill a man, but you ain't got it in you. There's where you lose out."

"Be careful of what you say," she repeated. "Or else, I warn you, it will go hard with you. It can be seen to whether your sentence is light or heavy."

"Something's the matter with God," he remarked irrelevantly, "to be letting you around loose. It's clean beyond me what he's up to, playing such-like tricks on poor humanity. Now if I was God — "

His further opinion was interrupted by the entrance of the butler.

"Something is wrong with the telephone, madam," he announced. "The wires are crossed or something, because I can't get Central."

"Go and call one of the servants," she ordered. "Send him out for an officer, and then return here."

Again the pair was left alone.

"Will you kindly answer one question, ma'am?" the man said. "That servant fellow said something about a bell. I watched you like a cat, and you sure rung no bell."

"It was under the table, you poor fool. I pressed it with my foot."

"Thank you, ma'am. I reckoned I'd seen your kind before, and now I sure know I have. I spoke to you true and trusting, and all the time you was lying like hell to me."

She laughed mockingly.

"Go on. Say what you wish. It is very interesting."

"You made eyes at me, looking soft and kind, playing up all the time the fact that you wore skirts instead of pants – and all the time with your foot on the bell under the table. Well, there's some consolation. I'd sooner be poor Hughie Luke, doing his ten years, than be in your skin. Ma'am, hell is full of women like you."

There was silence for a space, in which the man, never taking his eyes from her, studying her, was making up his mind.

"Go on," she urged. "Say something."

"Yes, ma'am, I'll say something. I'll sure say something. Do you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to get right up from this chair and walk out that door. I'd take the gun from you, only you might turn foolish and let it go off. You can have the gun. It's a good one. As I was saying, I am going right out that door. And you ain't going to pull that gun off either. It takes guts to shoot a man, and you sure ain't got them. Now get ready and see if you can pull that trigger. I ain't going to harm you. I'm going out that door, and I'm starting."

Keeping his eyes fixed on her, he pushed back the chair and slowly stood erect. The hammer rose halfway. She watched it. So did he.

"Pull harder," he advised. "It ain't half up yet. Go on and pull it and kill a man. That's what I said, kill a man, spatter his brains out on the floor, or slap a hole into him the size of your. fist. That's what killing a man means."

The hammer lowered jerkily but gently. The man turned his back and walked slowly to the door. She swung the revolver around so that it bore on his back. Twice again the hammer came up halfway and was reluctantly eased down.

At the door the man turned for a moment before passing on. A sneer was on his lips. He spoke to her in a low voice, almost drawling, but in it was the quintessence of all loathing, as he called her a name unspeakable and vile.

To Repel Boarders

“No; honest, now, Bob, I’m sure I was born too late. The twentieth century’s no place for me. If I’d had my way — ”

“You’d have been born in the sixteenth,” I broke in, laughing, “with Drake and Hawkins and Raleigh and the rest of the sea-kings.”

“You’re right!” Paul affirmed. He rolled over upon his back on the little after-deck, with a long sigh of dissatisfaction.

It was a little past midnight, and, with the wind nearly astern, we were running down Lower San Francisco Bay to Bay Farm Island. Paul Fairfax and I went to the same school, lived next door to each other, and “chummed it” together. By saving money, by earning more, and by each of us foregoing a bicycle on his birthday, we had collected the purchase price of the Mist, a beamy twenty-eight-footer, sloop-rigged, with baby topsail and centerboard. Paul’s father was a yachtsman himself, and he had conducted the business for us, poking around, overhauling, sticking his penknife into the timbers, and testing the planks with the greatest care. In fact, it was on his schooner, the Whim, that Paul and I had picked up what we knew about boat-sailing, and now that the Mist was ours, we were hard at work adding to our knowledge.

The Mist, being broad of beam, was comfortable and roomy. A man could stand upright in the cabin, and what with the stove, cooking utensils, and bunks, we were good for trips in her of a week at a time. And we were just starting out on the first of such trips, and it was because it was the first trip that we were sailing by night. Early in the evening we had beaten out from Oakland, and we were now off the mouth of Alameda Creek, a large salt-water estuary which fills and empties San Leandro Bay.

“Men lived in those days,” Paul said, so suddenly as to startle me from my own thoughts. “In the days of the sea-kings, I mean,” he explained.

I said “Oh!” sympathetically, and began to whistle “Captain Kidd.”

“Now, I’ve my ideas about things,” Paul went on. “They talk about romance and adventure and all that, but I say romance and adventure are dead. We’re too civilized. We don’t have adventures in the twentieth century. We go to the circus — ”

“But — ” I strove to interrupt, though he would not listen to me.

"You look here, Bob," he said. "In all the time you and I've gone together what adventures have we had? True, we were out in the hills once, and didn't get back till late at night, and we were good and hungry, but we weren't even lost. We knew where we were all the time. It was only a case of walk. What I mean is, we've never had to fight for our lives. Understand? We've never had a pistol fired at us, or a cannon, or a sword waving over our heads, or — or anything. . . .

"You'd better slack away three or four feet of that main-sheet," he said in a hopeless sort of way, as though it did not matter much anyway. "The wind's still veering around.

"Why, in the old times the sea was one constant glorious adventure," he continued. "A boy left school and became a midshipman, and in a few weeks was cruising after Spanish galleons or locking yard-arms with a French privateer, or — lots of things."

"Well — there are adventures today," I objected.

But Paul went on as though I had not spoken:

"And today we go from school to high school, and from high school to college, and then we go into the office or become doctors and things, and the only adventures we know about are the ones we read in books. Why, just as sure as I'm sitting here on the stern of the sloop Mist, just so sure am I that we wouldn't know what to do if a real adventure came along. Now, would we?"

"Oh, I don't know," I answered non-committally.

"Well, you wouldn't be a coward, would you?" he demanded.

I was sure I wouldn't and said so.

"But you don't have to be a coward to lose your head, do you?"

I agreed that brave men might get excited.

"Well, then," Paul summed up, with a note of regret in his voice, "the chances are that we'd spoil the adventure. So it's a shame, and that's all I can say about it."

"The adventure hasn't come yet," I answered, not caring to see him down in the mouth over nothing. You see, Paul was a peculiar fellow in some things, and I knew him pretty well. He read a good deal, and had a quick imagination, and once in a while he'd get into moods like this one. So I said, "The adventure hasn't come yet, so there's no use worrying about its being spoiled. For all we know, it might turn out splendidly."

Paul didn’t say anything for some time, and I was thinking he was out of the mood, when he spoke up suddenly:

“Just imagine, Bob Kellogg, as we’re sailing along now, just as we are, and never mind what for, that a boat should bear down upon us with armed men in it, what would you do to repel boarders? Think you could rise to it?”

“What would you do?” I asked pointedly. “Remember, we haven’t even a single shotgun aboard.”

“You would surrender, then?” he demanded angrily. “But suppose they were going to kill you?”

“I’m not saying what I’d do,” I answered stiffly, beginning to get a little angry myself. “I’m asking what you’d do, without weapons of any sort?”

“I’d find something,” he replied — rather shortly, I thought.

I began to chuckle. “Then the adventure wouldn’t be spoiled, would it? And you’ve been talking rubbish.”

Paul struck a match, looked at his watch, and remarked that it was nearly one o’clock — a way he had when the argument went against him. Besides, this was the nearest we ever came to quarreling now, though our share of squabbles had fallen to us in the earlier days of our friendship. I had just seen a little white light ahead when Paul spoke again.

“Anchor-light,” he said. “Funny place for people to drop the hook. It may be a scow-schooner with a dinky astern, so you’d better go wide.”

I eased the Mist several points, and, the wind puffing up, we went plowing along at a pretty fair speed, passing the light so wide that we could not make out what manner of craft it marked. Suddenly the Mist slacked up in a slow and easy way, as though running upon soft mud. We were both startled. The wind was blowing stronger than ever, and yet we were almost at a standstill.

“Mud-flat out here? Never heard of such a thing!”

So Paul exclaimed with a snort of unbelief, and, seizing an oar, shoved it down over the side. And straight down it went till the water wet his hand. There was no bottom! Then we were dumbfounded. The wind was whistling by, and still the Mist was moving ahead at a snail’s pace. There seemed something dead about her, and it was all I could do at the tiller to keep her from swinging up into the wind.

“Listen!” I laid my hand on Paul’s arm. We could hear the sound of rowlocks, and saw the little white light bobbing up and down and now very close to us. “There’s your armed boat,” I whispered in fun. “Beat the crew to quarters and stand by to repel boarders!”

We both laughed, and were still laughing when a wild scream of rage came out of the darkness, and the approaching boat shot under our stern. By the light of the lantern it carried we could see the two men in it distinctly. They were foreign-looking fellows with sun-bronzed faces, and with knitted tam-o’-shanters perched seaman fashion on their heads. Bright-colored woolen sashes were around their waists, and long sea-boots covered their legs. I remember yet the cold chill which passed along my backbone as I noted the tiny gold ear-rings in the ears of one. For all the world they were like pirates stepped out of the pages of romance. And, to make the picture complete, their faces were distorted with anger, and each flourished a long knife. They were both shouting, in high-pitched voices, some foreign jargon we could not understand.

One of them, the smaller of the two, and if anything the more vicious-looking, put his hands on the rail of the Mist and started to come aboard. Quick as a flash Paul placed the end of the oar against the man’s chest and shoved him back into his boat. He fell in a heap, but scrambled to his feet, waving the knife and shrieking:

“You break-a my net-a! You break-a my net-a!”

And he held forth in the jargon again, his companion joining him, and both preparing to make another dash to come aboard the Mist.

“They’re Italian fishermen,” I cried, the facts of the case breaking in upon me. “We’ve run over their smelt-net, and it’s slipped along the keel and fouled our rudder. We’re anchored to it.”

“Yes, and they’re murderous chaps, too,” Paul said, sparring at them with the oar to make them keep their distance.

“Say, you fellows!” he called to them. “Give us a chance and we’ll get it clear for you! We didn’t know your net was there. We didn’t mean to do it, you know!”

“You won’t lose anything!” I added. “We’ll pay the damages!”

But they could not understand what we were saying, or did not care to understand.

“You break-a my net-a! You break-a my net-a!” the smaller man, the one with the ear-rings, screamed back, making furious gestures. “I fix-a you! You-a see, I fix-a you!”

This time, when Paul thrust him back, he seized the oar in his hands, and his companion jumped aboard. I put my back against the tiller, and no sooner had he landed, and before he had caught his balance, than I met him with another oar, and he fell heavily backward into the boat. It was getting serious, and when he arose and caught my oar, and I realized his strength, I confess that I felt a goodly tinge of fear. But though he was stronger than I, instead of dragging me overboard when he wrenched on the oar, he merely pulled his boat in closer; and when I shoved, the boat was forced away. Besides, the knife, still in his right hand, made him awkward and somewhat counterbalanced the advantage his superior strength gave him. Paul and his enemy were in the same situation — a sort of deadlock, which continued for several seconds, but which could not last. Several times I shouted that we would pay for whatever damage their net had suffered, but my words seemed to be without effect.

Then my man began to tuck the oar under his arm, and to come up along it, slowly, hand over hand. The small man did the same with Paul. Moment by moment they came closer and closer, and we knew that the end was only a question of time.

"Hard up, Bob!" Paul called softly to me.

I gave him a quick glance, and caught an instant's glimpse of what I took to be a very pale face and a very set jaw.

"Oh, Bob," he pleaded, "hard up your helm! Hard up your helm, Bob!"

And his meaning dawned upon me. Still holding to my end of the oar, I shoved the tiller over with my back, and even bent my body to keep it over. As it was the Mist was nearly dead before the wind, and this maneuver was bound to force her to jibe her main-sail from one side to the other. I could tell by the "feel" when the wind spilled out of the canvas and the boom tilted up. Paul's man had now gained a footing on the little deck, and my man was just scrambling up.

"Look out!" I shouted to Paul. "Here she comes!"

Both he and I let go the oars and tumbled into the cockpit. The next instant the big boom and the heavy blocks swept over our heads, the main-sheet whipping past like a great coiling snake and the Mist heeling over with a violent jar. Both men had jumped for it, but in some way he little man either got his knife-hand jammed or fell upon it, for the first sight we caught of him, he was standing in his boat, his bleeding fingers clasped close between his knees and his face all twisted with pain and helpless rage.

“Now’s our chance!” Paul whispered. “Over with you!”

And on either side of the rudder we lowered ourselves into the water, pressing the net down with our feet, till, with a jerk, it went clear. Then it was up and in, Paul at the main-sheet and I at the tiller, the Mist plunging ahead with freedom in her motion, and the little white light astern growing small and smaller.

“Now that you’ve had your adventure, do you feel any better?” I remember asking when we had changed our clothes and were sitting dry and comfortable again in the cockpit.

“Well, if I don’t have the nightmare for a week to come” — Paul paused and puckered his brows in judicial fashion — ”it will be because I can’t sleep, that’s one thing sure!”

To the Man On the Trail

"Dump it in."

"But I say, Kid, isn't that going it a little too strong? Whiskey and alcohol's bad enough; but when it comes to brandy and pepper-sauce and" —

"Dump it in. Who's making this punch, anyway?" And Malemute Kid smiled benignantly through the clouds of steam. "By the time you've been in this country as long as I have, my son, and lived on rabbit-tracks and salmon-belly, you'll learn that Christmas comes only once per annum. And a Christmas without punch is sinking a hole to bedrock with nary a pay-streak."

"Stack up on that fer a high card," approved Big Jim Belden, who had come down from his claim on Mazy May to spend Christmas, and who, as every one knew, had been living the two months past on straight moose-meat. "Hain't fergot the hooch we-uns made on the Tanana, hev yeh?"

"Well, I guess yes. Boys, it would have done your hearts good to see that whole tribe fighting drunk — and all because of a glorious ferment of sugar and sour dough. That was before your time," Malemute Kid said as he turned to Stanley Prince, a young mining expert who had been in two years. "No white women in the country then, and Mason wanted to get married. Ruth's father was chief of the Tananas, and objected, like the rest of the tribe. Stiff? Why, I used my last pound of sugar; finest work in that line I ever did in my life. You should have seen the chase, down the river and across the portage."

"But the squaw?" asked Louis Savoy, the tall French-Canadian, becoming interested; for he had heard of this wild deed, when at Forty Mile the preceding winter.

Then Malemute Kid, who was a born raconteur, told the unvarnished tale of the Northland Lochinvar. More than one rough adventurer of the North felt his heartstrings draw closer, and experienced vague yearnings for the sunnier pastures of the Southland, where life promised something more than a barren struggle with cold and death.

"We struck the Yukon just behind the first ice-run," he concluded, "and the tribe only a quarter of an hour behind. But that saved us; for the second run broke the jam above and shut them out. When they finally got into

Nuklukyeto, the whole Post was ready for them. And as to the foregathering, ask Father Roubeau here: he performed the ceremony."

The Jesuit took the pipe from his lips, but could only express his gratification with patriarchal smiles, while Protestant and Catholic vigorously applauded.

"By gar!" ejaculated Louis Savoy, who seemed overcome by the romance of it. "La petite squaw; mon Mason brav. By gar!" Then, as the first tin cups of punch went round, Bettles the Unquenchable sprang to his feet and struck up his favorite drinking song:

"There's Henry Ward Beecher
And Sunday-school teachers,
All drink of the sassafras root;
But you bet all the same,
If it had its right name,
It's the juice of the forbidden fruit."

"O the juice of the forbidden fruit,"

roared out the Bacchanalian chorus, —

"O the juice of the forbidden fruit;
But you bet all the same,
If it had its right name,
It's the juice of the forbidden fruit."

Malemute Kid's frightful concoction did its work; the men of the camps and trails unbent in its genial glow, and jest and song and tales of past adventure went round the board. Aliens from a dozen lands, they toasted each and all. It was the Englishman, Prince, who pledged "Uncle Sam, the precocious infant of the New World;" the Yankee, Bettles, who drank to "The Queen, God bless her;" and together, Savoy and Meyers, the German trader, clanged their cups to Alsace and Lorraine.

Then Malemute Kid arose, cup in hand, and glanced at the greased-paper window, where the frost stood full three inches thick. "A health to the man on trail this night; may his grub hold out; may his dogs keep their legs; may his matches never miss fire."

Crack! Crack! — they heard the familiar music of the dogwhip, the whining howl of the Malemutes, and the crunch of a sled as it drew up to the cabin. Conversation languished while they waited the issue.

"An old-timer; cares for his dogs and then himself," whispered Malemute Kid to Prince, as they listened to the snapping jaws and the wolfish snarls and yelps of pain which proclaimed to their practiced ears that the stranger was beating back their dogs while he fed his own.

Then came the expected knock, sharp and confident, and the stranger entered. Dazzled by the light, he hesitated a moment at the door, giving to all a chance for scrutiny. He was a striking personage, and a most picturesque one, in his Arctic dress of wool and fur. Standing six foot two or three, with proportionate breadth of shoulders and depth of chest, his smooth-shaven face nipped by the cold to a gleaming pink, his long lashes and eyebrows white with ice, and the ear and neck flaps of his great wolf skin cap loosely raised, he seemed, of a verity, the Frost King, just stepped in out of the night. Clasped outside his mackinaw jacket, a beaded belt held two large Colt's revolvers and a hunting-knife, while he carried, in addition to the inevitable dog whip, a smokeless rifle of the largest bore and latest pattern. As he came forward, for all his step was firm and elastic, they could see that fatigue bore heavily upon him.

An awkward silence had fallen, but his hearty "What cheer, my lads?" put them quickly at ease, and the next instant Malemute Kid and he had gripped hands. Though they had never met, each had heard of the other, and the recognition was mutual. A sweeping introduction and a mug of punch were forced upon him before he could explain his errand.

"How long since that basket-sled, with three men and eight dogs, passed?" he asked.

"An even two days ahead. Are you after them?"

"Yes; my team. Run them off under my very nose, the cusses. I've gained two days on them already, — pick them up on the next run."

"Reckon they'll show spunk?" asked Belden, in order to keep up the conversation, for Malemute Kid already had the coffee-pot on and was busily frying bacon and moose-meat.

The stranger significantly tapped his revolvers.

"When 'd yeh leave Dawson?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"Last night?" — as a matter of course.

"To-day."

A murmur of surprise passed round the circle. And well it might; for it was just midnight, and seventy-five miles of rough river trail was not to be sneered at for a twelve hours' run.

The talk soon became impersonal, however, harking back to the trails of childhood. As the young stranger ate of the rude fare, Malemute Kid attentively studied his face. Nor was he long in deciding that it was fair, honest, and open, and that he liked it. Still youthful, the lines had been firmly traced by toil and hardship. Though genial in conversation, and mild when at rest, the blue eyes gave promise of the hard steel-glitter which comes when called into action, especially against odds. The heavy jaw and square-cut chin demonstrated rugged pertinacity and indomitability. Nor, though the attributes of the lion were there, was there wanting the certain softness, the hint of womanliness, which bespoke the emotional nature.

“So thet’s how me an’ the ol’ woman got spliced,” said Belden, concluding the exciting tale of his courtship.” `Here we be, dad, ‘sez she. `An’ may yeh be damned,’ sez he to her, an’ then to me,`Jim, yeh — yeh git outen them good duds o’ yourn; I want a right peart slice o’ thet forty acre ploughed ‘fore dinner.’ An’ then he turns on her an’ sez, `An’ yeh, Sal; yeh sail inter them dishes.’ An’ then he sort o’ sniffled an’ kissed her. An’ I was thet happy, — but he seen me an’ roars out, `Yeh, Jim!’ An’ yeh bet I dusted fer the barn.”

“Any kids waiting for you back in the States?” asked the stranger.

“Nope; Sal died ‘fore any come. Thet’s why I’m here.” Belden abstractedly began to light his pipe, which had failed to go out, and then brightened up with, “How ‘bout yerself, stranger, — married man?”

For reply, he opened his watch, slipped it from the thong which served for a chain, and passed it over. Belden pricked up the slush-lamp, surveyed the inside of the case critically, and swearing admiringly to himself, handed it over to Louis Savoy. With numerous “By gars!” he finally surrendered it to Prince, and they noticed that his hands trembled and his eyes took on a peculiar softness. And so it passed from horny hand to horny hand — the pasted photograph of a woman, the clinging kind that such men fancy, with a babe at the breast. Those who had not yet seen the wonder were keen with curiosity; those who had, became silent and retrospective. They could face the pinch of famine, the grip of scurvy, or the quick death by field or flood; but the pictured semblance of a stranger woman and child made women and children of them all.

“Never have seen the youngster yet, — he ‘s a boy, she says, and two years old,” said the stranger as he received the treasure back. A lingering moment he gazed upon it, then snapped the case and turned away, but not quick enough to hide the restrained rush of tears.

Malemute Kid led him to a bunk and bade him turn in.

“Call me at four, sharp. Don’t fail me,” were his last words, and a moment later he was breathing in the heaviness of exhausted sleep.

“By Jove! he’s a plucky chap,” commented Prince. “Three hours’ sleep after seventy-five miles with the dogs, and then the trail again. Who is he, Kid?”

“Jack Westondale. Been in going on three years, with nothing but the name of working like a horse, and any amount of bad luck to his credit. I never knew him, but Sitka Charley told me about him.”

“It seems hard that a man with a sweet young wife like his should be putting in his years in this God-forsaken hole, where every year counts two on the outside.”

“The trouble with him is clean grit and stubbornness. He ‘s cleaned up twice with a stake, but lost it both times.”

Here the conversation was broken off by an uproar from Bettles, for the effect had begun to wear away. And soon the bleak years of monotonous grub and deadening toil were being forgotten in rough merriment. Malemute Kid alone seemed unable to lose himself, and cast many an anxious look at his watch. Once he put on his mittens and beaver-skin cap, and leaving the cabin, fell to rummaging about in the cache.

Nor could he wait the hour designated; for he was fifteen minutes ahead of time in rousing his guest. The young giant had stiffened badly, and brisk rubbing was necessary to bring him to his feet. He tottered painfully out of the cabin, to find his dogs harnessed and everything ready for the start. The company wished him good luck and a short chase, while Father Roubeau, hurriedly blessing him, led the stampede for the cabin; and small wonder, for it is not good to face seventy-four degrees below zero with naked ears and hands.

Malemute Kid saw him to the main trail, and there, gripping his hand heartily, gave him advice.

“You’ll find a hundred pounds of salmon-eggs on the sled,” he said. “The dogs will go as far on that as with one hundred and fifty of fish, and you can’t get dog-food at Pelly, as you probably expected.” The stranger started, and his eyes flashed, but he did not interrupt. “You can’t get an ounce of food for dog or man till you reach Five Fingers, and that ‘s a stiff two hundred miles. Watch out for open water on the Thirty Mile River, and be sure you take the big cut-off above Le Barge."

"How did you know it? Surely the news can't be ahead of me already?"

"I don't know it; and what's more, I don't want to know it. But you never owned that team you're chasing. Sitka Charley sold it to them last spring. But he sized you up to me as square once, and believe him. I've seen your face; I like it. And I've seen — why, damn you, hit the high places for salt water and that wife of yours, and" — Here the Kid unmittened and jerked out his sack.

"No; I don't need it," and the tears froze on his cheeks as he convulsively gripped Malemute Kid's hand.

"Then don't spare the dogs; cut them out of the traces as fast as they drop; buy them, and think they 're cheap at ten dollars a pound. You can get them at Five Fingers, Little Salmon, and the Hootalinqua. And watch out for wet feet," was his parting advice. "Keep a-traveling up to twenty-five, but if it gets below that, build a fire and change your socks."

Fifteen minutes had barely elapsed when the jingle of bells announced new arrivals. The door opened, and a mounted policeman of the Northwest Territory entered, followed by two half-breed dog-drivers. Like Westondale, they were heavily armed and showed signs of fatigue. The half-breeds had been born to the trail, and bore it easily; but the young policeman was badly exhausted. Still, the dogged obstinacy of his race held him to the pace he had set, and would hold him till he dropped in his tracks.

"When did Westondale pull out?" he asked. "He stopped here, didn't he?" This was supererogatory, for the tracks told their own tale too well.

Malemute Kid had caught Belden's eye, and he, scenting the wind, replied evasively, "A right part while back."

"Come, my man; speak up," the policeman admonished.

"Yeh seem to want him right smart. Hez he ben gittin' cantankerous down Dawson way?"

"Held up Harry McFarland's for forty thousand; exchanged it at the P. C. store for a check on Seattle; and who's to stop the cashing of it if we don't overtake him? When did he pull out?"

Every eye suppressed its excitement, for Malemute Kid had given the cue, and the young officer encountered wooden faces on every hand.

Striding over to Prince, he put the question to him. Though it hurt him, gazing into the frank, earnest face of his fellow countryman, he replied inconsequentially on the state of the trail.

Then he espied Father Roubeau, who could not lie. “A quarter of an hour ago,” the priest answered; “but he had four hours’ rest for himself and dogs.”

“Fifteen minutes’ start, and he’s fresh! My God!” The poor fellow staggered back, half fainting from exhaustion and disappointment, murmuring something about the run from Dawson in ten hours and the dogs being played out.

Malemute Kid forced a mug of punch upon him; then he turned for the door, ordering the dog-drivers to follow. But the warmth and promise of rest were too tempting, and they objected strenuously. The Kid was conversant with their French patois, and followed it anxiously.

They swore that the dogs were gone up; that Siwash and Babette would have to be shot before the first mile was covered; that the rest were almost as bad; and that it would be better for all hands to rest up.

“Lend me five dogs?” he asked, turning to Malemute Kid.

But the Kid shook his head.

“I’ll sign a check on Captain Constantine for five thousand, — here’s my papers, — I’m authorized to draw at my own discretion.”

Again the silent refusal.

“Then I’ll requisition them in the name of the Queen.”

Smiling incredulously, the Kid glanced at his well-stocked arsenal, and the Englishman, realizing his impotency, turned for the door. But the dog-drivers still objecting, he whirled upon them fiercely, calling them women and curs. The swart face of the older half-breed flushed angrily, as he drew himself up and promised in good, round terms that he would travel his leader off his legs, and would then be delighted to plant him in the snow.

The young officer — and it required his whole will — walked steadily to the door, exhibiting a freshness he did not possess. But they all knew and appreciated his proud effort; nor could he veil the twinges of agony that shot across his face. Covered with frost, the dogs were curled up in the snow, and it was almost impossible to get them to their feet. The poor brutes whined under the stinging lash, for the dog-drivers were angry and cruel; nor till Babette, the leader, was cut from the traces, could they break out the sled and get under way.

“A dirty scoundrel and a liar!” “By gar! him no good!” “A thief!” “Worse than an Indian!” It was evident that they were angry — first, at the way they had been deceived; and second, at the outraged ethics of the Northland, where honesty, above all, was man's prime jewel. "An' we gave the cuss a hand, after knowin' what he'd did." All eyes were turned accusingly upon Malemute Kid, who rose from the corner where he had been making Babette comfortable, and silently emptied the bowl for a final round of punch.

"It's a cold night, boys, — a bitter cold night," was the irrelevant commencement of his defense. "You've all traveled trail, and know what that stands for. Don't jump a dog when he's down. You've only heard one side. A whiter man than Jack Westondale never ate from the same pot nor stretched blanket with you or me. Last fall he gave his whole clean-up, forty thousand, to Joe Castrell, to buy in on Dominion. To-day he'd be a millionaire. But while he stayed behind at Circle City, taking care of his partner with the scurvy, what does Castrell do? Goes into McFarland's, jumps the limit, and drops the whole sack. Found him dead in the snow the next day. And poor Jack laying his plans to go out this winter to his wife and the boy he's never seen. You'll notice he took exactly what his partner lost, — forty thousand. Well, he's gone out; and what are you going to do about it?"

The Kid glanced round the circle of his judges, noted the softening of their faces, then raised his mug aloft. "So a health to the man on trail this night; may his grub hold out; may his dogs keep their legs; may his matches never miss fire. God prosper him; good luck go with him; and — "

"Confusion to the Mounted Police!" interpolated Bettles, to the crash of the empty cups.

Told in the Drooling Ward

Me? I'm not a drooler. I'm the assistant. I don't know what Miss Jones or Miss Kelsey could do without me. There are fifty-five low-grade droolers in this ward, and how could they ever all be fed if I wasn't around? I like to feed droolers. They don't make trouble. They can't. Something's wrong with most of their legs and arms, and they can't talk. They're very low-grade. I can walk, and talk, and do things. You must be careful with the droolers and not feed them too fast. Then they choke. Miss Jones says I'm an expert. When a new nurse comes I show her how to do it. It's funny watching a new nurse try to feed them. She goes at it so slow and careful that supper time would be around before she finished shoving down their breakfast. Then I show her, because I'm an expert. Dr. Dalrymple says I am, and he ought to know. A drooler can eat twice as fast if you know how to make him.

My name's Tom. I'm twenty-eight years old. Everybody knows me in the institution. This is an institution, you know. It belongs to the State of California and is run by politics. I know. I've been here a long time. Everybody trusts me. I run errands all over the place, when I'm not busy with the droolers. I like droolers. It makes me think how lucky I am that I ain't a drooler.

I like it here in the Home. I don't like the outside. I know. I've been around a bit, and run away, and adopted. Me for the Home, and for the drooling ward best of all. I don't look like a drooler, do I? You can tell the difference soon as you look at me. I'm an assistant, expert assistant. That's going some for a feeb. Feeb? Oh, that's feeble-minded. I thought you knew. We're all feebs in here.

But I'm a high-grade feeb. Dr. Dalrymple says I'm too smart to be in the Home, but I never let on. It's a pretty good place. And don't throw fits like lots of the feebs. You see that house up there through the trees. The high-grade epilecs all live in it by themselves. They're stuck up because they ain't just ordinary feebs. They call it the club house, and they say they're just as good as anybody outside, only they're sick. I don't like them much. They laugh at me, when they ain't busy throwing fits. But I don't care. I never have to be scared about falling down and busting my head. Sometimes they run around in circles trying to find a place to sit down quick, only they don't. Low-grade epilecs are disgusting, and high-grade epilecs put on airs. I'm glad I ain't an epilec. There ain't anything to them. They just talk big, that's all.

Miss Kelsey says I talk too much. But I talk sense, and that's more than the other feebs do. Dr. Dalrymple says I have the gift of language. I know it. You ought to hear me talk when I'm by myself, or when I've got a drooler to listen. Sometimes I think I'd like to be a politician, only it's too much trouble. They're all great talkers; that's how they hold their jobs.

Nobody's crazy in this institution. They're just feeble in their minds. Let me tell you something funny. There's about a dozen high-grade girls that set the tables in the big dining room. Sometimes when they're done ahead of time, they all sit down in chairs in a circle and talk. I sneak up to the door and listen, and I nearly die to keep from laughing. Do you want to know what they talk? It's like this. They don't say a word for a long time. And then one says, "Thank God I'm not feeble-minded." And all the rest nod their heads and look pleased. And then nobody says anything for a time. After which the next girl in the circle says, "Thank God I'm not feeble-minded," and they nod their heads all over again. And it goes on around the circle, and they never say anything else. Now they're real feebs, ain't they? I leave it to you. I'm not that kind of a feeb, thank God.

Sometimes I don't think I'm a feeb at all. I play in the band and read music. We're all supposed to be feebs in the band except the leader. He's crazy. We know it, but we never talk about it except amongst ourselves. His job is politics, too, and we don't want him to lose it. I play the drum. They can't get along without me in this institution. I was sick once, so I know. It's a wonder the drooling ward didn't break down while I was in hospital.

I could get out of here if I wanted to. I'm not so feeble as some might think. But I don't let on. I have too good a time. Besides, everything would run down if I went away. I'm afraid some time they'll find out I'm not a feeb and send me out into the world to earn my own living. I know the world, and I don't like it. The Home is fine enough for me.

You see how I grin sometimes. I can't help that. But I can put it on a lot. I'm not bad, though. I look at myself in the glass. My mouth is funny, I know that, and it lops down, and my teeth are bad. You can tell a feeb anywhere by looking at his mouth and teeth. But that doesn't prove I'm a feeb. It's just because I'm lucky that I look like one.

I know a lot. If I told you all I know, you'd be surprised. But when I don't want to know, or when they want me to do something don't want to do, I just let my mouth lop down and laugh and make foolish noises. I watch the foolish noises made by the low-grades, and I can fool anybody. And I know a lot of foolish noises. Miss Kelsey called me a fool the other day. She was very angry, and that was where I fooled her.

Miss Kelsey asked me once why I don't write a book about feebs. I was telling her what was the matter with little Albert. He's a drooler, you know, and I can always tell the way he twists his left eye what's the matter with him. So I was explaining it to Miss Kelsey, and, because she didn't know, it made her mad. But some day, mebbe, I'll write that book. Only it's so much trouble. Besides, I'd sooner talk.

Do you know what a micro is? It's the kind with the little heads no bigger than your fist. They're usually droolers, and they live a long time. The hydros don't drool. They have the big heads, and they're smarter. But they never grow up. They always die. I never look at one without thinking he's going to die. Sometimes, when I'm feeling lazy, or the nurse is mad at me, I wish I was a drooler with nothing to do and somebody to feed me. But I guess I'd sooner talk and be what I am.

Only yesterday Doctor Dalrymple said to me, "Tom," he said, "just don't know what I'd do without you." And he ought to know, seeing as he's had the bossing of a thousand feebs for going on two years. Dr. Whatcomb was before him. They get appointed, you know. It's politics. I've seen a whole lot of doctors here in my time. I was here before any of them. I've been in this institution twenty-five years. No, I've got no complaints. The institution couldn't be run better.

It's a snap to be a high-grade feeb. Just look at Doctor Dalrymple. He has troubles. He holds his job by politics. You bet we high-graders talk politics. We know all about it, and it's bad. An institution like this oughtn't to be run on politics. Look at Doctor Dalrymple. He's been here two years and learned a lot. Then politics will come along and throw him out and send a new doctor who don't know anything about feebs.

I've been acquainted with just thousands of nurses in my time. Some of them are nice. But they come and go. Most of the women get married. Sometimes I think I'd like to get married. I spoke to Dr. Whatcomb about it once, but he told me he was very sorry, because feebs ain't allowed to get married. I've been in love. She was a nurse. won't tell you her name. She had blue eyes, and yellow hair, and a kind voice, and she liked me. She told me so. And she always told me to be a good boy. And I was, too, until afterward, and then I ran away. You see, she went off and got married, and she didn't tell me about it.

I guess being married ain't what it's cracked up to be. Dr. Anglin and his wife used to fight. I've seen them. And once I heard her call him a feeb. Now nobody has a right to call anybody a feeb that ain't. Dr. Anglin got awful mad when she called him that. But he didn't last long. Politics drove him out, and Doctor Mandeville came. He didn't have a wife. I heard him talking one time with the engineer. The engineer and his wife fought like cats and dogs, and that day Doctor Mandeville told him he was damn glad he wasn't tied to no petticoats. A petticoat is a skirt. I knew what he meant, if I was a feeb. But never let on. You hear lots when you don't let on.

I've seen a lot in my time. Once I was adopted, and went away on the railroad over forty miles to live with a man named Peter Bopp and his wife. They had a ranch. Doctor Anglin said I was strong and bright, and I said I was, too. That was because I wanted to be adopted. And Peter Bopp said he'd give me a good home, and the lawyers fixed up the papers.

But I soon made up my mind that a ranch was no place for me. Mrs. Bopp was scared to death of me and wouldn't let me sleep in the house. They fixed up the woodshed and made me sleep there. I had to get up at four o'clock and feed the horses, and milk cows, and carry the milk to the neighbours. They called it chores, but it kept me going all day. I chopped wood, and cleaned chicken houses, and weeded vegetables, and did most everything on the place. I never had any fun. I hadn't no time.

Let me tell you one thing. I'd sooner feed mush and milk to feebs than milk cows with the frost on the ground. Mrs. Bopp was scared to let me play with her children. And I was scared, too. They used to make faces at me when nobody was looking, and call me "Looney." Everybody called me Looney Tom. And the other boys in the neighbourhood threw rocks at me. You never see anything like that in the Home here. The feebs are better behaved.

Mrs. Bopp used to pinch me and pull my hair when she thought was too slow, and I only made foolish noises and went slower. She said I'd be the death of her some day. I left the boards off the old well in the pasture, and the pretty new calf fell in and got drowned. Then Peter Bopp said he was going to give me a licking. He did, too. He took a strap halter and went at me. It was awful. I'd never had a licking in my life. They don't do such things in the Home, which is why I say the Home is the place for me.

I know the law, and I knew he had no right to lick me with a strap halter. That was being cruel, and the guardianship papers said he mustn't be cruel. I didn't say anything. I just waited, which shows you what kind of a feeb I am. I waited a long time, and got slower, and made more foolish noises; but he wouldn't send me back to the Home, which was what I wanted. But one day, it was the first of the month, Mrs. Brown gave me three dollars, which was for her milk bill with Peter Bopp. That was in the morning. When I brought the milk in the evening I was to bring back the receipt. But I didn't. I just walked down to the station, bought a ticket like any one, and rode on the train back to the Home. That's the kind of a feeb I am.

Doctor Anglin was gone then, and Doctor Mandeville had his place. I walked right into his office. He didn't know me. "Hello," he said, "this ain't visiting day." "I ain't a visitor," I said. "I'm Tom. I belong here." Then he whistled and showed he was surprised. I told him all about it, and showed him the marks of the strap halter, and he got madder and madder all the time and said he'd attend to Mr. Peter Bopp's case.

And mebbe you think some of them little droolers weren't glad to see me.

I walked right into the ward. There was a new nurse feeding little Albert. "Hold on," I said. "That ain't the way. Don't you see how he's twisting that left eye? Let me show you." Mebbe she thought was a new doctor, for she just gave me the spoon, and I guess I filled little Albert up with the most comfortable meal he'd had since I went away. Droolers ain't bad when you understand them. I heard Miss Jones tell Miss Kelsey once that I had an amazing gift in handling droolers.

Some day, mebbe, I'm going to talk with Doctor Dalrymple and get him to give me a declaration that I ain't a feeb. Then I'll get him to make me a real assistant in the drooling ward, with forty dollars a month and my board. And then I'll marry Miss Jones and live right on here. And if she won't have me, I'll marry Miss Kelsey or some other nurse. There's lots of them that want to get married. And I won't care if my wife gets mad and calls me a feeb. What's the good? And I guess when one's learned to put up with droolers a wife won't be much worse.

I didn't tell you about when I ran away. I hadn't no idea of such a thing, and it was Charley and Joe who put me up to it. They're high-grade epilecs, you know. I'd been up to Doctor Wilson's office with a message, and was going back to the drooling ward, when I saw Charley and Joe hiding around the corner of the gymnasium and making motions to me. I went over to them.

"Hello," Joe said. "How's droolers?"

"Fine," I said. "Had any fits lately?"

That made them mad, and I was going on, when Joe said, "We're running away. Come on."

"What for?" I said.

"We're going up over the top of the mountain," Joe said.

"And find a gold mine," said Charley. "We don't have fits any more. We're cured."

"All right," I said. And we sneaked around back of the gymnasium and in among the trees. Mebbe we walked along about ten minutes, when I stopped.

"What's the matter?" said Joe.

"Wait," I said. "I got to go back."

"What for?" said Joe.

And I said, "To get little Albert."

And they said I couldn't, and got mad. But I didn't care. I knew they'd wait. You see, I've been here twenty-five years, and I know the back trails that lead up the mountain, and Charley and Joe didn't know those trails. That's why they wanted me to come.

So I went back and got little Albert. He can't walk, or talk, or do anything except drool, and I had to carry him in my arms. We went on past the last hayfield, which was as far as I'd ever gone. Then the woods and brush got so thick, and me not finding any more trail, we followed the cow-path down to a big creek and crawled through the fence which showed where the Home land stopped.

We climbed up the big hill on the other side of the creek. It was all big trees, and no brush, but it was so steep and slippery with dead leaves we could hardly walk. By and by we came to a real bad place. It was forty feet across, and if you slipped you'd fall a thousand feet, or mebbe a hundred. Anyway, you wouldn't fall--just slide. I went across first, carrying little Albert. Joe came next. But Charley got scared right in the middle and sat down.

"I'm going to have a fit," he said.

"No, you're not," said Joe. "Because if you was you wouldn't 'a' sat down. You take all your fits standing."

"This is a different kind of a fit," said Charley, beginning to cry.

He shook and shook, but just because he wanted to he couldn't scare up the least kind of a fit.

Joe got mad and used awful language. But that didn't help none. So I talked soft and kind to Charley. That's the way to handle feebs. If you get mad, they get worse. I know. I'm that way myself. That's why I was almost the death of Mrs. Bopp. She got mad.

It was getting along in the afternoon, and I knew we had to be on our way, so I said to Joe:

"Here, stop your cussing and hold Albert. I'll go back and get him."

And I did, too; but he was so scared and dizzy he crawled along on hands and knees while I helped him. When I got him across and took Albert back in my arms, I heard somebody laugh and looked down. And there was a man and woman on horseback looking up at us. He had a gun on his saddle, and it was her who was laughing.

"Who in hell's that?" said Joe, getting scared. "Somebody to catch us?"

"Shut up your cussing," I said to him. "That is the man who owns this ranch and writes books."

"How do you do, Mr. Endicott," I said down to him.

"Hello," he said. "What are you doing here?"

"We're running away," I said.

And he said, "Good luck. But be sure and get back before dark."

"But this is a real running away," I said.

And then both he and his wife laughed.

"All right," he said. "Good luck just the same. But watch out the bears and mountain lions don't get you when it gets dark."

Then they rode away laughing, pleasant like; but I wished he hadn't said that about the bears and mountain lions.

After we got around the hill, I found a trail, and we went much faster. Charley didn't have any more signs of fits, and began laughing and talking about gold mines. The trouble was with little Albert. He was almost as big as me. You see, all the time I'd been calling him little Albert, he'd been growing up. He was so heavy I couldn't keep up with Joe and Charley. I was all out of breath. So I told them they'd have to take turns in carrying him, which they said they wouldn't. Then I said I'd leave them and they'd get lost, and the mountain lions and bears would eat them. Charley looked like he was going to have a fit right there, and Joe said, "Give him to me." And after that we carried him in turn.

We kept right on up that mountain. I don't think there was any gold mine, but we might 'a' got to the top and found it, if we hadn't lost the trail, and if it hadn't got dark, and if little Albert hadn't tired us all out carrying him. Lots of feebs are scared of the dark, and Joe said he was going to have a fit right there. Only he didn't. I never saw such an unlucky boy. He never could throw a fit when he wanted to. Some of the feebs can throw fits as quick as a wink.

By and by it got real black, and we were hungry, and we didn't have no fire. You see, they don't let feebs carry matches, and all we could do was just shiver. And we'd never thought about being hungry. You see, feebs always have their food ready for them, and that's why it's better to be a feeb than earning your living in the world.

And worse than everything was the quiet. There was only one thing worse, and it was the noises. There was all kinds of noises every once in a while, with quiet spells in between. I reckon they were rabbits, but they made noises in the brush like wild animals--you know, rustle rustle, thump, bump, crackle crackle, just like that. First Charley got a fit, a real one, and Joe threw a terrible one. I don't mind fits in the Home with everybody around. But out in the woods on a dark night is different. You listen to me, and never go hunting gold mines with epilecs, even if they are high-grade.

I never had such an awful night. When Joe and Charley weren't throwing fits they were making believe, and in the darkness the shivers from the cold which I couldn't see seemed like fits, too. And I shivered so hard I thought I was getting fits myself. And little Albert, with nothing to eat, just drooled and drooled. I never seen him as bad as that before. Why, he twisted that left eye of his until it ought to have dropped out. I couldn't see it, but I could tell from the movements he made. And Joe just lay and cussed and cussed, and Charley cried and wished he was back in the Home.

We didn't die, and next morning we went right back the way we'd come. And little Albert got awful heavy. Doctor Wilson was mad as could be, and said I was the worst feeb in the institution, along with Joe and Charley. But Miss Striker, who was a nurse in the drooling ward then, just put her arms around me and cried, she was that happy I'd got back. I thought right there that mebbe I'd marry her. But only a month afterward she got married to the plumber that came up from the city to fix the gutter-pipes of the new hospital. And little Albert never twisted his eye for two days, it was that tired.

Next time I run away I'm going right over that mountain. But I ain't going to take epilecs along. They ain't never cured, and when they get scared or excited they throw fits to beat the band. But I'll take little Albert. Somehow I can't get along without him. And, anyway, I ain't going to run away. The drooling ward's a better snap than gold mines, and I hear there's a new nurse coming. Besides, little Albert's bigger than I am now, and I could never carry him over a mountain. And he's growing bigger every day. It's astonishing.

Too Much Gold

This being a story--and a truer one than it may appear--of a mining country, it is quite to be expected that it will be a hard-luck story. But that depends on the point of view. Hard luck is a mild way of terming it so far as Kink Mitchell and Hootchinoo Bill are concerned; and that they have a decided opinion on the subject is a matter of common knowledge in the Yukon country.

It was in the fall of 1896 that the two partners came down to the east bank of the Yukon, and drew a Peterborough canoe from a moss-covered cache. They were not particularly pleasant-looking objects. A summer's prospecting, filled to repletion with hardship and rather empty of grub, had left their clothes in tatters and themselves worn and cadaverous. A nimbus of mosquitoes buzzed about each man's head. Their faces were coated with blue clay. Each carried a lump of this damp clay, and, whenever it dried and fell from their faces, more was daubed on in its place. There was a querulous plaint in their voices, an irritability of movement and gesture, that told of broken sleep and a losing struggle with the little winged pests.

"Them skeeters'll be the death of me yet," Kink Mitchell whimpered, as the canoe felt the current on her nose, and leaped out from the bank

"Cheer up, cheer up. We're about done," Hootchinoo Bill answered, with an attempted heartiness in his funereal tones that was ghastly. "We'll be in Forty Mile in forty minutes, and then--cursed little devil!"

One hand left his paddle and landed on the back of his neck with a sharp slap. He put a fresh daub of clay on the injured part, swearing sulphurously the while. Kink Mitchell was not in the least amused. He merely improved the opportunity by putting a thicker coating of clay on his own neck.

They crossed the Yukon to its west bank, shot down-stream with easy stroke, and at the end of forty minutes swung in close to the left around the tail of an island. Forty Mile spread itself suddenly before them. Both men straightened their backs and gazed at the sight. They gazed long and carefully, drifting with the current, in their faces an expression of mingled surprise and consternation slowly gathering. Not a thread of smoke was rising from the hundreds of log-cabins. There was no sound of axes biting sharply into wood, of hammering and sawing. Neither dogs nor men loitered before the big store. No steamboats lay at the bank, no canoes, nor scows, nor poling-boats. The river was as bare of craft as the town was of life.

"Kind of looks like Gabriel's tooted his little horn, and you an' me has turned up missing," remarked Hootchinoo Bill.

His remark was casual, as though there was nothing unusual about the occurrence. Kink Mitchell's reply was just as casual as though he, too, were unaware of any strange perturbation of spirit.

"Looks as they was all Baptists, then, and took the boats to go by water," was his contribution.

"My ol' dad was a Baptist," Hootchinoo Bill supplemented. "An' he always did hold it was forty thousand miles nearer that way."

This was the end of their levity. They ran the canoe in and climbed the high earth bank. A feeling of awe descended upon them as they walked the deserted streets. The sunlight streamed placidly over the town. A gentle wind tapped the halyards against the flagpole before the closed doors of the Caledonia Dance Hall. Mosquitoes buzzed, robins sang, and moose birds tripped hungrily among the cabins; but there was no human life nor sign of human life.

"I'm just dyin' for a drink," Hootchinoo Bill said and unconsciously his voice sank to a hoarse whisper.

His partner nodded his head, loth to hear his own voice break the stillness. They trudged on in uneasy silence till surprised by an open door. Above this door, and stretching the width of the building, a rude sign announced the same as the "Monte Carlo." But beside the door, hat over eyes, chair tilted back, a man sat sunning himself. He was an old man. Beard and hair were long and white and patriarchal.

"If it ain't ol' Jim Cummings, turned up like us, too late for Resurrection!" said Kink Mitchell.

"Most like he didn't hear Gabriel tootin'," was Hootchinoo Bill's suggestion.

"Hello, Jim! Wake up!" he shouted.

The old man unlimbered lamely, blinking his eyes and murmuring automatically: "What'll ye have, gents? What'll ye have?"

They followed him inside and ranged up against the long bar where of yore a half-dozen nimble bar-keepers found little time to loaf. The great room, ordinarily aroar with life, was still and gloomy as a tomb. There was no rattling of chips, no whirring of ivory balls. Roulette and faro tables were like gravestones under their canvas covers. No women's voices drifted merrily from the dance-room behind. Ol' Jim Cummings wiped a glass with palsied hands, and Kink Mitchell scrawled his initials on the dust-covered bar.

"Where's the girls?" Hootchinoo Bill shouted, with affected geniality.

"Gone," was the ancient bar-keeper's reply, in a voice thin and aged as himself, and as unsteady as his hand.

"Where's Bidwell and Barlow?"

"Gone."

"And Sweetwater Charley?"

"Gone."

"And his sister?"

"Gone too."

"Your daughter Sally, then, and her little kid?"

"Gone, all gone." The old man shook his head sadly, rummaging in an absent way among the dusty bottles.

"Great Sardanapolis! Where?" Kink Mitchell exploded, unable longer to restrain himself. "You don't say you've had the plague?"

"Why, ain't you heerd?" The old man chuckled quietly. "They-all's gone to Dawson."

"What-like is that?" Bill demanded. "A creek? or a bar? or a place?"

"Ain't never heered of Dawson, eh?" The old man chuckled exasperatingly. "Why, Dawson's a town, a city, bigger'n Forty Mile. Yes, sir, bigger'n Forty Mile."

"I've ben in this land seven year," Bill announced emphatically, "an' I make free to say I never heard tell of the burg before. Hold on! Let's have some more of that whisky. Your information's flabbergasted me, that it has. Now just whereabouts is this Dawson-place you was a-mentionin'?"

"On the big flat jest below the mouth of Klondike," ol' Jim answered. "But where has you-all ben this summer?"

"Never you mind where we-all's ben," was Kink Mitchell's testy reply. "We-all's ben where the skeeters is that thick you've got to throw a stick into the air so as to see the sun and tell the time of day. Ain't I right, Bill?"

"Right you are," said Bill. "But speakin' of this Dawson-place how like did it happen to be, Jim?"

"Ounce to the pan on a creek called Bonanza, an' they ain't got to bed-rock yet."

"Who struck it?"

"Carmack."

At mention of the discoverer's name the partners stared at each other disgustedly. Then they winked with great solemnity.

"Siwash George," sniffed Hootchinoo Bill.

"That squaw-man," sneered Kink Mitchell.

"I wouldn't put on my moccasins to stampede after anything he'd ever find," said Bill.

"Same here," announced his partner. "A cuss that's too plumb lazy to fish his own salmon. That's why he took up with the Indians. S'pose that black brother-in-law of his,--lemme see, Skookum Jim, eh?--s'pose he's in on it?"

The old bar-keeper nodded. "Sure, an' what's more, all Forty Mile, exceptin' me an' a few cripples."

"And drunks," added Kink Mitchell.

"No-sir-ee!" the old man shouted emphatically.

"I bet you the drinks Honkins ain't in on it!" Hootchinoo Bill cried with certitude.

Ol' Jim's face lighted up. "I takes you, Bill, an' you loses."

"However did that ol' soak budge out of Forty Mile?" Mitchell demanded.

"The ties him down an' throws him in the bottom of a polin'-boat," ol' Jim explained. "Come right in here, they did, an' takes him out of that there chair there in the corner, an' three more drunks they finds under the pianny. I tell you-alls the whole camp hits up the Yukon for Dawson jes' like Sam Scratch was after them,--wimmen, children, babes in arms, the whole shebang. Bidwell comes to me an' sez, sez he, 'Jim, I wants you to keep tab on the Monte Carlo. I'm goin'.'

"'Where's Barlow?' sez I. 'Gone,' sez he, 'an' I'm a-followin' with a load of whisky.' An' with that, never waitin' for me to decline, he makes a run for his boat an' away he goes, polin' up river like mad. So here I be, an' these is the first drinks I've passed out in three days."

The partners looked at each other.

"Gosh darn my buttoms!" said Hootchinoo Bill. "Seems likes you and me, Kink, is the kind of folks always caught out with forks when it rains soup."

"Wouldn't it take the saleratus out your dough, now?" said Kink Mitchell. "A stampede of tin-horns, drunks, an' loafers."

“An’ squaw-men,” added Bill. “Not a genooine miner in the whole caboodle.”

“Genooine miners like you an’ me, Kink,” he went on academically, “is all out an’ sweatin’ hard over Birch Creek way. Not a genooine miner in this whole crazy Dawson outfit, and I say right here, not a step do I budge for any Carmack strike. I’ve got to see the colour of the dust first.”

“Same here,” Mitchell agreed. “Let’s have another drink.”

Having wet this resolution, they beached the canoe, transferred its contents to their cabin, and cooked dinner. But as the afternoon wore along they grew restive. They were men used to the silence of the great wilderness, but this gravelike silence of a town worried them. They caught themselves listening for familiar sounds--“waitin’ for something to make a noise which ain’t goin’ to make a noise,” as Bill put it. They strolled through the deserted streets to the Monte Carlo for more drinks, and wandered along the river bank to the steamer landing, where only water gurgled as the eddy filled and emptied, and an occasional salmon leapt flashing into the sun.

They sat down in the shade in front of the store and talked with the consumptive storekeeper, whose liability to hemorrhage accounted for his presence. Bill and Kink told him how they intended loafing in their cabin and resting up after the hard summer’s work. They told him, with a certain insistence, that was half appeal for belief, half challenge for contradiction, how much they were going to enjoy their idleness. But the storekeeper was uninterested. He switched the conversation back to the strike on Klondike, and they could not keep him away from it. He could think of nothing else, talk of nothing else, till Hootchinoo Bill rose up in anger and disgust.

“Gosh darn Dawson, say I!” he cried.

“Same here,” said Kink Mitchell, with a brightening face. “One’d think something was doin’ up there, ‘stead of bein’ a mere stampede of greenhorns an’ tinhorns.”

But a boat came into view from downstream. It was long and slim. It hugged the bank closely, and its three occupants, standing upright, propelled it against the stiff current by means of long poles.

“Circle City outfit,” said the storekeeper. “I was lookin’ for ‘em along by afternoon. Forty Mile had the start of them by a hundred and seventy miles. But gee! they ain’t losin’ any time!”

‘We’ll just sit here quiet-like and watch ‘em string by,” Bill said complacently.

As he spoke, another boat appeared in sight, followed after a brief interval by two others. By this time the first boat was abreast of the men on the bank. Its occupants did not cease poling while greetings were exchanged, and, though its progress was slow, a half-hour saw it out of sight up river.

Still they came from below, boat after boat, in endless procession. The uneasiness of Bill and Kink increased. They stole speculative, tentative glances at each other, and when their eyes met looked away in embarrassment. Finally, however, their eyes met and neither looked away.

Kink opened his mouth to speak, but words failed him and his mouth remained open while he continued to gaze at his partner.

“Just what I was thinken’, Kink,” said Bill.

They grinned sheepishly at each other, and by tacit consent started to walk away. Their pace quickened, and by the time they arrived at their cabin they were on the run.

“Can’t lose no time with all that multitude a-rushin’ by,” Kink spluttered, as he jabbed the sour-dough can into the beanpot with one hand and with the other gathered in the frying-pan and coffee-pot.

“Should say not,” gasped Bill, his head and shoulders buried in a clothes-sack wherein were stored winter socks and underwear. “I say, Kink, don’t forget the saleratus on the corner shelf back of the stove.”

Half-an-hour later they were launching the canoe and loading up, while the storekeeper made jocular remarks about poor, weak mortals and the contagiousness of “stampedin’ fever.” But when Bill and Kink thrust their long poles to bottom and started the canoe against the current, he called after them:-

“Well, so-long and good luck! And don’t forget to blaze a stake or two for me!”

They nodded their heads vigorously and felt sorry for the poor wretch who remained perforce behind.

* * * * *

Kink and Bill were sweating hard. According to the revised Northland Scripture, the stampede is to the swift, the blazing of stakes to the strong, and the Crown in royalties, gathers to itself the fulness thereof. Kink and Bill were both swift and strong. They took the soggy trail at a long, swinging gait that broke the hearts of a couple of tender-feet who tried to keep up with them. Behind, strung out between them and Dawson (where the boats were discarded and land travel began), was the vanguard of the Circle City outfit. In the race from Forty Mile the partners had passed every boat, winning from the leading boat by a length in the Dawson eddy, and leaving its occupants sadly behind the moment their feet struck the trail.

"Huh! couldn't see us for smoke," Hootchinoo Bill chuckled, flirting the stinging sweat from his brow and glancing swiftly back along the way they had come.

Three men emerged from where the trail broke through the trees. Two followed close at their heels, and then a man and a woman shot into view.

"Come on, you Kink! Hit her up! Hit her up!"

Bill quickened his pace. Mitchell glanced back in more leisurely fashion.

"I declare if they ain't lopin'!"

"And here's one that's loped himself out," said Bill, pointing to the side of the trail.

A man was lying on his back panting in the culminating stages of violent exhaustion. His face was ghastly, his eyes bloodshot and glazed, for all the world like a dying man.

"CHECHAQUO!" Kink Mitchell grunted, and it was the grunt of the old "sour dough" for the green-horn, for the man who outfitted with "self-risin'" flour and used baking-powder in his biscuits.

The partners, true to the old-timer custom, had intended to stake down-stream from the strike, but when they saw claim 81 BELOW blazed on a tree,--which meant fully eight miles below Discovery,--they changed their minds. The eight miles were covered in less than two hours. It was a killing pace, over so rough trail, and they passed scores of exhausted men that had fallen by the wayside.

At Discovery little was to be learned of the upper creek. Cormack's Indian brother-in-law, Skookum Jim, had a hazy notion that the creek was staked as high as the 30's; but when Kink and Bill looked at the corner-stakes of 79 ABOVE, they threw their stampeding packs off their backs and sat down to smoke. All their efforts had been vain. Bonanza was staked from mouth to source,--"out of sight and across the next divide." Bill complained that night as they fried their bacon and boiled their coffee over Cormack's fire at Discovery.

"Try that pup," Carmack suggested next morning.

"That pup" was a broad creek that flowed into Bonanza at 7 ABOVE. The partners received his advice with the magnificent contempt of the sour dough for a squaw-man, and, instead, spent the day on Adam's Creek, another and more likely-looking tributary of Bonanza. But it was the old story over again--staked to the sky-line.

For threes days Carmack repeated his advice, and for three days they received it contemptuously. But on the fourth day, there being nowhere else to go, they went up "that pup." They knew that it was practically unstaked, but they had no intention of staking. The trip was made more for the purpose of giving vent to their ill-humour than for anything else. They had become quite cynical, sceptical. They jeered and scoffed at everything, and insulted every chechaquo they met along the way.

At No. 23 the stakes ceased. The remainder of the creek was open for location.

"Moose pasture," sneered Kink Mitchell.

But Bill gravely paced off five hundred feet up the creek and blazed the corner-stakes. He had picked up the bottom of a candle-box, and on the smooth side he wrote the notice for his centre-stake:-

THIS MOOSE PASTURE IS RESERVED FOR THE
SWEDES AND CHECHAQUOS.
- BILL RADER.

Kink read it over with approval, saying:-

"As them's my sentiments, I reckon I might as well subscribe."

So the name of Charles Mitchell was added to the notice; and many an old sour dough's face relaxed that day at sight of the handiwork of a kindred spirit.

"How's the pup?" Carmack inquired when they strolled back into camp.

"To hell with pups!" was Hootchinoo Bill's reply. "Me and Kink's goin' a-lookin' for Too Much Gold when we get rested up."

Too Much Gold was the fabled creek of which all sour doughs dreamed, whereof it was said the gold was so thick that, in order to wash it, gravel must first be shovelled into the sluice-boxes. But the several days' rest, preliminary to the quest for Too Much Gold, brought a slight change in their plan, inasmuch as it brought one Ans Handerson, a Swede.

Ans Handerson had been working for wages all summer at Miller Creek over on the Sixty Mile, and, the summer done, had strayed up Bonanza like many another waif helplessly adrift on the gold tides that swept willy-nilly across the land. He was tall and lanky. His arms were long, like prehistoric man's, and his hands were like soup-plates, twisted and gnarled, and big-knuckled from toil. He was slow of utterance and movement, and his eyes, pale blue as his hair was pale yellow, seemed filled with an immortal dreaming, the stuff of which no man knew, and himself least of all. Perhaps this appearance of immortal dreaming was due to a supreme and vacuous innocence. At any rate, this was the valuation men of ordinary clay put upon him, and there was nothing extraordinary about the composition of Hootchinoo Bill and Kink Mitchell.

The partners had spent a day of visiting and gossip, and in the evening met in the temporary quarters of the Monte Carlo--a large tent were stampeders rested their weary bones and bad whisky sold at a dollar a drink. Since the only money in circulation was dust, and since the house took the "down-weight" on the scales, a drink cost something more than a dollar. Bill and Kink were not drinking, principally for the reason that their one and common sack was not strong enough to stand many excursions to the scales.

"Say, Bill, I've got a chechaquo on the string for a sack of flour," Mitchell announced jubilantly.

Bill looked interested and pleased. Grub as scarce, and they were not over-plentifully supplied for the quest after Too Much Gold.

"Flour's worth a dollar a pound," he answered. "How like do you calculate to get your finger on it?"

"Trade 'm a half-interest in that claim of ourn," Kink answered.

"What claim?" Bill was surprised. Then he remembered the reservation he had staked off for the Swedes, and said, "Oh!"

"I wouldn't be so clost about it, though," he added. "Give 'm the whole thing while you're about it, in a right free-handed way."

Bill shook his head. "If I did, he'd get clean scairt and prance off. I'm lettin' on as how the ground is believed to be valuable, an' that we're lettin' go half just because we're monstrous short on grub. After the dicker we can make him a present of the whole shebang."

"If somebody ain't disregarded our notice," Bill objected, though he was plainly pleased at the prospect of exchanging the claim for a sack of flour.

"She ain't jumped," Kink assured him. "It's No. 24, and it stands. The chechaquos took it serious, and they begun stakin' where you left off.

Staked clean over the divide, too. I was gassin' with one of them which has just got in with cramps in his legs."

It was then, and for the first time, that they heard the slow and groping utterance of Ans Handerson.

"Ay like the looks," he was saying to the bar-keeper. "Ay tank Ay gat a claim."

The partners winked at each other, and a few minutes later a surprised and grateful Swede was drinking bad whisky with two hard-hearted strangers. But he was as hard-headed as they were hard-hearted. The sack made frequent journeys to the scales, followed solicitously each time by Kink Mitchell's eyes, and still Ans Handerson did not loosen up. In his pale blue eyes, as in summer seas, immortal dreams swam up and burned, but the swimming and the burning were due to the tales of gold and prospect pans he heard, rather than to the whisky he slid so easily down his throat.

The partners were in despair, though they appeared boisterous and jovial of speech and action.

"Don't mind me, my friend," Hootchinoo Bill hiccoughed, his hand upon Ans Handerson's shoulder. "Have another drink. We're just celebratin' Kink's birthday here. This is my pardner, Kink, Kink Mitchell. An' what might your name be?"

This learned, his hand descended resoundingly on Kink's back, and Kink simulated clumsy self-consciousness in that he was for the time being the centre of the rejoicing, while Ans Handerson looked pleased and asked them to have a drink with him. It was the first and last time he treated, until the play changed and his canny soul was roused to unwonted prodigality. But he paid for the liquor from a fairly healthy-looking sack. "Not less 'n eight hundred in it," calculated the lynx-eyed Kink; and on the strength of it he took the first opportunity of a privy conversation with Bidwell, proprietor of the bad whisky and the tent.

"Here's my sack, Bidwell," Kink said, with the intimacy and surety of one old-timer to another. "Just weigh fifty dollars into it for a day or so more or less, and we'll be yours truly, Bill an' me."

Thereafter the journeys of the sack to the scales were more frequent, and the celebration of Kink's natal day waxed hilarious. He even essayed to sing the old-timer's classic, "The Juice of the Forbidden Fruit," but broke down and drowned his embarrassment in another round of drinks. Even Bidwell honoured him with a round or two on the house; and he and Bill were decently drunk by the time Ans Handerson's eyelids began to droop and his tongue gave promise of loosening.

Bill grew affectionate, then confidential. He told his troubles and hard luck to the bar-keeper and the world in general, and to Ans Handerson in particular. He required no histrionic powers to act the part. The bad whisky attended to that. He worked himself into a great sorrow for himself and Bill, and his tears were sincere when he told how he and his partner were thinking of selling a half-interest in good ground just because they were short of grub. Even Kink listened and believed.

Ans Handerson's eyes were shining unholily as he asked, "How much you tank you take?"

Bill and Kink did not hear him, and he was compelled to repeat his query. They appeared reluctant. He grew keener. And he swayed back and forward, holding on to the bar and listened with all his ears while they conferred together on one side, and wrangled as to whether they should or not, and disagreed in stage whispers over the price they should set.

"Two hundred and--hic!--fifty," Bill finally announced, "but we reckon as we won't sell."

"Which is monstrous wise if I might chip in my little say," seconded Bidwell.

"Yes, indeedy," added Kink. "We ain't in no charity business a-disgorgin' free an' generous to Swedes an' white men."

"Ay tank we haf another drink," hiccoughed Ans Handerson, craftily changing the subject against a more propitious time.

And thereafter, to bring about that propitious time, his own sack began to see-saw between his hip pocket and the scales. Bill and Kink were coy, but they finally yielded to his blandishments. Whereupon he grew shy and drew Bidwell to one side. He staggered exceedingly, and held on to Bidwell for support as he asked-

"They ban all right, them men, you tank so?"

"Sure," Bidwell answered heartily. "Known 'em for years. Old sour doughs. When they sell a claim, they sell a claim. They ain't no air-dealers."

"Ay tank Ay buy," Ans Handerson announced, tottering back to the two men.

But by now he was dreaming deeply, and he proclaimed he would have the whole claim or nothing. This was the cause of great pain to Hootchinoo Bill. He orated grandly against the “hawgishness” of chechaquos and Swedes, albeit he dozed between periods, his voice dying away to a gurgle, and his head sinking forward on his breast. But whenever roused by a nudge from Kink or Bidwell, he never failed to explode another volley of abuse and insult.

Ans Handerson was calm under it all. Each insult added to the value of the claim. Such unamiable reluctance to sell advertised but one thing to him, and he was aware of a great relief when Hootchinoo Bill sank snoring to the floor, and he was free to turn his attention to his less intractable partner.

Kink Mitchell was persuadable, though a poor mathematician. He wept dolefully, but was willing to sell a half-interest for two hundred and fifty dollars or the whole claim for seven hundred and fifty. Ans Handerson and Bidwell laboured to clear away his erroneous ideas concerning fractions, but their labour was vain. He spilled tears and regrets all over the bar and on their shoulders, which tears, however, did not wash away his opinion, that if one half was worth two hundred and fifty, two halves were worth three times as much.

In the end,--and even Bidwell retained no more than hazy recollections of how the night terminated,--a bill of sale was drawn up, wherein Bill Rader and Charles Mitchell yielded up all right and title to the claim known as 24 ELDORADO, the same being the name the creek had received from some optimistic chechaquo.

When Kink had signed, it took the united efforts of the three to arouse Bill. Pen in hand, he swayed long over the document; and, each time he rocked back and forth, in Ans Handerson’s eyes flashed and faded a wondrous golden vision. When the precious signature was at last appended and the dust paid over, he breathed a great sigh, and sank to sleep under a table, where he dreamed immortally until morning.

But the day was chill and grey. He felt bad. His first act, unconscious and automatic, was to feel for his sack. Its lightness startled him. Then, slowly, memories of the night thronged into his brain. Rough voices disturbed him. He opened his eyes and peered out from under the table. A couple of early risers, or, rather, men who had been out on trail all night, were vociferating their opinions concerning the utter and loathsome worthlessness of

Eldorado Creek. He grew frightened, felt in his pocket, and found the deed to 24 ELDORADO.

Ten minutes later Hootchinoo Bill and Kink Mitchell were roused from their blankets by a wild-eyed Swede that strove to force upon them an ink-scrawled and very blotty piece of paper.

“Ay tank Ay take my money back,” he gibbered. “Ay tank Ay take my money back.”

Tears were in his eyes and throat. They ran down his cheeks as he knelt before them and pleaded and implored. But Bill and Kink did not laugh. They might have been harder hearted.

“First time I ever hear a man squeal over a minin’ deal,” Bill said. “An’ I make free to say ‘tis too onusual for me to savvy.”

“Same here,” Kink Mitchell remarked. “Minin’ deals is like horse-tradin’.”

They were honest in their wonderment. They could not conceive of themselves raising a wail over a business transaction, so they could not understand it in another man.

“The poor, ornery chechaquo,” murmured Hootchinoo Bill, as they watched the sorrowing Swede disappear up the trail.

“But this ain’t Too Much Gold,” Kink Mitchell said cheerfully.

And ere the day was out they purchased flour and bacon at exorbitant prices with Ans Handerson’s dust and crossed over the divide in the direction of the creeks that lie between Klondike and Indian River.

Three months later they came back over the divide in the midst of a snow-storm and dropped down the trail to 24 ELDORADO. It merely chanced that the trail led them that way. They were not looking for the claim. Nor could they see much through the driving white till they set foot upon the claim itself. And then the air lightened, and they beheld a dump, capped by a windlass that a man was turning. They saw him draw a bucket of gravel from the hole and tilt it on the edge of the dump. Likewise they saw another, man, strangely familiar, filling a pan with the fresh gravel. His hands were large; his hair wets pale yellow. But before they reached him, he turned with the pan and fled toward a cabin. He wore no hat, and the snow falling down his neck accounted for his haste. Bill and Kink ran after him, and came upon him in the cabin, kneeling by the stove and washing the pan of gravel in a tub of water.

He was too deeply engaged to notice more than that somebody had entered the cabin. They stood at his shoulder and looked on. He imparted to the pan a deft circular motion, pausing once or twice to rake out the larger particles of gravel with his fingers. The water was muddy, and, with the pan buried in it, they could see nothing of its contents. Suddenly he lifted the pan clear and sent the water out of it with a flirt. A mass of yellow, like butter in a churn, showed across the bottom.

Hootchinoo Bill swallowed. Never in his life had he dreamed of so rich a test-pan.

"Kind of thick, my friend," he said huskily. "How much might you reckon that-all to be?"

Ans Handerson did not look up as he replied, "Ay tank fafty ounces."

"You must be scrumptious rich, then, eh?"

Still Ans Handerson kept his head down, absorbed in putting in the fine touches which wash out the last particles of dross, though he answered, "Ay tank Ay ban wort' five hundred t'ousand dollar."

"Gosh!" said Hootchinoo Bill, and he said it reverently.

"Yes, Bill, gosh!" said Kink Mitchell; and they went out softly and closed the door.

The Town-Site of Tra-Lee

SMOKE and Shorty encountered each other, going in opposite directions, at the corner where stood the Elkhorn saloon. The former's face wore a pleased expression, and he was walking briskly. Shorty, on the other hand, was slouching along in a depressed and indeterminate fashion.

"Whither away?" Smoke challenged gaily.

"Danged if I know," came the disconsolate answer. "Wisht I did. They ain't nothin' to take me anywheres. I've set two hours in the deadest game of draw--nothing excitin', no hands, an' broke even. Played a rubber of cribbage with Skiff Mitchell for the drinks, an' now I'm that languid for somethin' doin' that I'm perambulatin' the streets on the chance of seein' a dogfight, or a argument, or somethin'."

"I've got something better on hand," Smoke answered. "That's why I was looking for you. Come on along."

"Now?"

"Sure."

"Where to?"

"Across the river to make a call on old Dwight Sanderson."

"Never heard of him," Shorty said dejectedly. "An' never heard of no one living across the river anyway. What's he want to live there for? Ain't he got no sense?"

"He's got something to sell," Smoke laughed.

"Dogs? A gold-mine? Tobacco? Rubber boots?"

Smoke shook his head to each question. "Come along on and find out, because I'm going to buy it from him on a spec, and if you want you can come in half."

"Don't tell me it's eggs!" Shorty cried, his face twisted into an expression of facetious and sarcastic alarm.

"Come on along," Smoke told him. "And I'll give you ten guesses while we're crossing the ice."

They dipped down the high bank at the foot of the street and came out upon the ice-covered Yukon. Three-quarters of a mile away, directly opposite, the other bank of the stream uprose in precipitous bluffs hundreds of feet in height. Toward these bluffs, winding and twisting in and out among broken and upthrown blocks of ice, ran a slightly traveled trail.

Shorty trudged at Smoke's heels, beguiling the time with guesses at what Dwight Sanderson had to sell.

"Reindeer? Copper-mine or brick-yard? That's one guess. Bear-skins, or any kind of skins? Lottery tickets? A potato-ranch?"

"Getting near it," Smoke encouraged. "And better than that."

"Two potato-ranches? A cheese-factory? A moss-farm?"

"That's not so bad, Shorty. It's not a thousand miles away."

"A quarry?"

"That's as near as the moss-farm and the potato-ranch."

"Hold on. Let me think. I got one guess comin'." Ten silent minutes passed. "Say, Smoke, I ain't goin' to use that last guess. When this thing you're buyin' sounds like a potato-ranch, a moss-farm, and a stone-quarry, I quit. An' I don't go in on the deal till I see it an' size it up. What is it?"

"Well, you'll see the cards on the table soon enough. Kindly cast your eyes up there. Do you see the smoke from that cabin? That's where Dwight Sanderson lives. He's holding down a town-site location."

"What else is he holdin' down?"

"That's all," Smoke laughed. "Except rheumatism. I hear he's been suffering from it."

"Say!" Shorty's hand flashed out and with an abrupt shoulder grip brought his comrade to a halt. "You ain't telling me you're buyin' a town-site at this fallin'-off place?"

"That's your tenth guess, and you win. Come on."

"But wait a moment," Shorty pleaded. "Look at it--nothin' but bluffs an' slides, all up-and-down. Where could the town stand?"

"Search me."

"Then you ain't buyin' it for a town?"

"But Dwight Sanderson's selling it for a town," Smoke baffled. "Come on. We've got to climb this slide."

The slide was steep, and a narrow trail zigzagged up it on a formidable Jacob's ladder. Shorty moaned and groaned over the sharp corners and the steep pitches.

"Think of a town-site here. They ain't a flat space big enough for a postage-stamp. An' it's the wrong side of the river. All the freightin' goes the other way. Look at Dawson there. Room to spread for forty thousand more people. Say, Smoke. You're a meat-eater. I know that. An' I know you ain’t buyin’ it for a town. Then what in Heaven’s name are you buyin’ it for?”

“To sell, of course.”

“But other folks ain’t as crazy as old man Sanderson an’ you.”

“Maybe not in the same way, Shorty. Now I’m going to take this town-site, break it up in parcels, and sell it to a lot of sane people who live over in Dawson.”

“Huh! All Dawson’s still laughing at you an’ me an’ them eggs. You want to make ‘em laugh some more, hey?”

“I certainly do.”

“But it’s too danged expensive, Smoke. I helped you make ‘em laugh on the eggs, an’ my share of the laugh cost me nearly nine thousan’ dollars.”

“All right. You don’t have to come in on this. The profits will be all mine, but you’ve got to help me just the same.”

“Oh, I’ll help all right. An’ they can laugh at me some more. But nary a ounce do I drop this time.

“What’s old Sanderson holdin’ it at? A couple of hundred?”

“Ten thousand. I ought to get it for five.”

“Wisht I was a minister,” Shorty breathed fervently.

“What for?”

“So I could preach the gosh-dangdest, eloquentest sermon on a text you may have hearn--to wit: a fool an’ his money.”

“Come in,” they heard Dwight Sanderson yell irritably, when they knocked at his door, and they entered to find him squatted by a stone fireplace and pounding coffee wrapped in a piece of flour-sacking.

“What d’ye want?” he demanded harshly, emptying the pounded coffee into the coffee-pot that stood on the coals near the front of the fireplace.

“To talk business,” Smoke answered. “You’ve a town-site located here, I understand. What do you want for it?”

“Ten thousand dollars,” came the answer. “And now that I’ve told you, you can laugh, and get out. There’s the door. Good-by.”

“But I don’t want to laugh. I know plenty of funnier things to do than to climb up this cliff of yours. I want to buy your town-site.”

“You do, eh? Well, I’m glad to hear sense.” Sanderson came over and sat down facing his visitors, his hands resting on the table and his eyes cocking apprehensively toward the coffee-pot. “I’ve told you my price, and I ain’t ashamed to tell you again--ten thousand. And you can laugh or buy, it's all one to me."

To show his indifference he drummed with his knobby knuckles on the table and stared at the coffee-pot. A minute later he began to hum a monotonous "Tra-la-loo, tra-la-lee, tra-la-lee, tra-la-loo."

"Now look here, Mr. Sanderson," said Smoke. "This town-site isn't worth ten thousand. If it was worth that much it would be worth a hundred thousand just as easily. If it isn't worth a hundred thousand--and you know it isn't--then it isn't worth ten cents."

Sanderson drummed with his knuckles and hummed, "Tra-la-loo, tra-la-lee," until the coffee-pot boiled over. Settling it with a part cup of cold water, and placing it to one side of the warm hearth, he resumed his seat. "How much will you offer?" he asked of Smoke.

"Five thousand."

Shorty groaned.

Again came an interval of drumming and of tra-loo-ing and tra-lee-ing.

"You ain't no fool," Sanderson announced to Smoke. "You said if it wasn't worth a hundred thousand it wasn't worth ten cents. Yet you offer five thousand for it. Then it IS worth a hundred thousand."

"You can't make twenty cents out of it," Smoke replied heatedly. "Not if you stayed here till you rot."

"I'll make it out of you."

"No, you won't."

"Then I reckon I'll stay an' rot," Sanderson answered with an air of finality.

He took no further notice of his guests, and went about his culinary tasks as if he were alone. When he had warmed over a pot of beans and a slab of sour-dough bread, he set the table for one and proceeded to eat.

"No, thank you," Shorty murmured. "We ain't a bit hungry. We et just before we come."

"Let's see your papers," Smoke said at last. Sanderson fumbled under the head of his bunk and tossed out a package of documents. "It's all tight and right," he said. "That long one there, with the big seals, come all the way from Ottawa. Nothing territorial about that. The national Canadian government cinches me in the possession of this town-site."

"How many lots you sold in the two years you've had it?" Shorty queried.

"None of your business," Sanderson answered sourly. There ain't no law against a man living alone on his town-site if he wants to."

"I'll give you five thousand," Smoke said. Sanderson shook his head.

"I don't know which is the craziest," Shorty lamented. "Come outside a minute, Smoke. I want to whisper to you."

Reluctantly Smoke yielded to his partner's persuasions.

"Ain't it never entered your head," Shorty said, as they stood in the snow outside the door, "that they's miles an' miles of cliffs on both sides of this fool town-site that don't belong to nobody an' that you can have for the locatin' and stakin'?"

"They won't do," Smoke answered.

"Why won't they?"

"It makes you wonder, with all those miles and miles, why I'm buying this particular spot, doesn't it?"

"It sure does," Shorty agreed.

"And that's the very point," Smoke went on triumphantly. "If it makes you wonder, it will make others wonder. And when they wonder they'll come a-running. By your own wondering you prove it's sound psychology. Now, Shorty, listen to me; I'm going to hand Dawson a package that will knock the spots out of the egg-laugh. Come on inside."

"Hello," said Sanderson, as they re-entered. "I thought I'd seen the last of you."

"Now what is your lowest figure?" Smoke asked.

"Twenty thousand."

"I'll give you ten thousand."

"All right, I'll sell at that figure. It's all I wanted in the first place. But when will you pay the dust over?"

"To-morrow, at the Northwest Bank. But there are two other things I want for that ten thousand. In the first place, when you receive your money you pull down the river to Forty Mile and stay there the rest of the winter."

"That's easy. What else?"

"I'm going to pay you twenty-five thousand, and you rebate me fifteen of it."

"I'm agreeable." Sanderson turned to Shorty. "Folks said I was a fool when I come over here an' town-sited," he jeered. "Well, I'm a ten thousand dollar fool, ain't I?"

“The Klondike’s sure full of fools,” was all Shorty could retort, “an’ when they’s so many of ‘em some has to be lucky, don’t they?”

Next morning the legal transfer of Dwight Sanderson’s town-site was made--“henceforth to be known as the town-site of Tra-Lee,” Smoke incorporated in the deed. Also, at the Northwest Bank, twenty-five thousand of Smoke’s gold was weighed out by the cashier, while half a dozen casual onlookers noted the weighing, the amount, and the recipient.

In a mining-camp all men are suspicious. Any untoward act of any man is likely to be the cue to a secret gold strike, whether the untoward act be no more than a hunting trip for moose or a stroll after dark to observe the aurora borealis. And when it became known that so prominent a figure as Smoke Bellew had paid twenty-five thousand dollars to old Dwight Sanderson, Dawson wanted to know what he had paid it for. What had Dwight Sanderson, starving on his abandoned town-site, ever owned that was worth twenty-five thousand? In lieu of an answer, Dawson was justified in keeping Smoke in feverish contemplation.

By mid-afternoon it was common knowledge that several score of men had made up light stampeding-packs and cached them in the convenient saloons along Main Street. Wherever Smoke moved, he was the observed of many eyes. And as proof that he was taken seriously, not one man of the many of his acquaintance had the effrontery to ask him about his deal with Dwight Sanderson. On the other hand, no one mentioned eggs to Smoke. Shorty was under similar surveillance and delicacy of friendliness.

“Makes me feel like I’d killed somebody, or had smallpox, the way they watch me an’ seem afraid to speak,” Shorty confessed, when he chanced to meet Smoke in front of the Elkhorn. “Look at Bill Saltman there acrost the way--just dyin’ to look, an’ keepin’ his eyes down the street all the time. Wouldn’t think he’d knowed you an’ me existed, to look at him. But I bet you the drinks, Smoke, if you an’ me flop around the corner quick, like we was goin’ somewheres, an’ then turn back from around the next corner, that we run into him a-hikin’ hell-bent.”

They tried the trick, and, doubling back around the second corner, encountered Saltman swinging a long trail-stride in pursuit.

“Hello, Bill,” Smoke greeted. “Which way?”

“Hello. Just a-strollin’,” Saltman answered, “just a-strollin’. Weather’s fine, ain’t it?”

“Huh!” Shorty jeered. “If you call that strollin’, what might you walk real fast at?”

When Shorty fed the dogs that evening, he was keenly conscious that from the encircling darkness a dozen pairs of eyes were boring in upon him. And when he stick-tied the dogs, instead of letting them forage free through the night, he knew that he had administered another jolt to the nervousness of Dawson.

According to program, Smoke ate supper downtown and then proceeded to enjoy himself. Wherever he appeared, he was the center of interest, and he purposely made the rounds. Saloons filled up after his entrance and emptied following upon his departure. If he bought a stack of chips at a sleepy roulette-table, inside five minutes a dozen players were around him. He avenged himself, in a small way, on Lucille Arral, by getting up and sauntering out of the Opera House just as she came on to sing her most popular song. In three minutes two-thirds of her audience had vanished after him.

At one in the morning he walked along an unusually populous Main Street and took the turning that led up the hill to his cabin. And when he paused on the ascent, he could hear behind him the crunch of moccasins in the snow.

For an hour the cabin was in darkness, then he lighted a candle, and, after a delay sufficient for a man to dress in, he and Shorty opened the door and began harnessing the dogs. As the light from the cabin flared out upon them and their work, a soft whistle went up from not far away. This whistle was repeated down the hill.

“Listen to it,” Smoke chuckled. “They’ve relayed on us and are passing the word down to town. I’ll bet you there are forty men right now rolling out of their blankets and climbing into their pants.”

“Ain’t folks fools,” Shorty giggled back. “Say, Smoke, they ain’t nothin’ in hard graft. A geezer that’d work his hands these days is a--well, a geezer. The world’s sure bustin’ full an’ dribblin’ over the edges with fools a-honin’ to be separated from their dust. An’ before we start down the hill I want to announce, if you’re still agreeable, that I come in half on this deal.”

The sled was lightly loaded with a sleeping-and a grub-outfit. A small coil of steel cable protruded inconspicuously from underneath a grub-sack, while a crowbar lay half hidden along the bottom of the sled next to the lashings.

Shorty fondled the cable with a swift-passing mitten, and gave a last affectionate touch to the crowbar. “Huh!” he whispered. “I’d sure do some tall thinking myself if I seen them objects on a sled on a dark night.”

They drove the dogs down the hill with cautious silence, and when, emerged on the flat, they turned the team north along Main Street toward the sawmill and directly away from the business part of town, they observed even greater caution. They had seen no one, yet when this change of direction was initiated, out of the dim starlit darkness behind arose a whistle. Past the sawmill and the hospital, at lively speed, they went for a quarter of a mile. Then they turned about and headed back over the ground they had just covered. At the end of the first hundred yards they barely missed colliding with five men racing along at a quick dog-trot. All were slightly stooped to the weight of stampeding-packs. One of them stopped Smoke’s lead-dog, and the rest clustered around.

“Seen a sled goin’ the other way?” was asked.

“Nope,” Smoke answered. “Is that you, Bill?”

“Well, I’ll be danged!” Bill Saltman ejaculated in honest surprise. “If it ain’t Smoke!”

“What are you doing out this time of night?” Smoke inquired. “Strolling?”

Before Bill Saltman could make reply, two running men joined the group. These were followed by several more, while the crunch of feet on the snow heralded the imminent arrival of many others.

“Who are your friends?” Smoke asked. “Where’s the stampede?”

Saltman, lighting his pipe, which was impossible for him to enjoy with lungs panting from the run, did not reply. The ruse of the match was too obviously for the purpose of seeing the sled to be misunderstood, and Smoke noted every pair of eyes focus on the coil of cable and the crowbar. Then the match went out.

“Just heard a rumor, that’s all, just a rumor,” Saltman mumbled with ponderous secretiveness.

“You might let Shorty and me in on it,” Smoke urged.

Somebody snickered sarcastically in the background.

“Where are YOU bound?” Saltman demanded.

“And who are you?” Smoke countered. “Committee of safety?”

“Just interested, just interested,” Saltman said.

"You bet your sweet life we're interested," another voice spoke up out of the darkness.

"Say," Shorty put in, "I wonder who's feelin' the foolishest?"

Everybody laughed nervously.

"Come on, Shorty; we'll be getting along," Smoke said, mushing the dogs.

The crowd formed in behind and followed.

"Say, ain't you-all made a mistake?" Shorty gibed. "When we met you you was goin', an' now you're comin' without bein' anywheres. Have you lost your tag?"

"You go to the devil," was Saltman's courtesy. "We go and come just as we danged feel like. We don't travel with tags."

And the sled, with Smoke in the lead and Shorty at the pole, went on down Main Street escorted by three score men, each of whom, on his back, bore a stampeding-pack. It was three in the morning, and only the all-night rounders saw the procession and were able to tell Dawson about it next day.

Half an hour later, the hill was climbed and the dogs unharnessed at the cabin door, the sixty stampeders grimly attendant.

"Good-night, fellows," Smoke called, as he closed the door.

In five minutes the candle was put out, but before half an hour had passed Smoke and Shorty emerged softly, and without lights began harnessing the dogs.

"Hello, Smoke!" Saltman said, stepping near enough for them to see the loom of his form.

"Can't shake you, Bill, I see," Smoke replied cheerfully. "Where're your friends?"

"Gone to have a drink. They left me to keep an eye on you, and keep it I will. What's in the wind anyway, Smoke? You can't shake us, so you might as well let us in. We're all your friends. You know that."

"There are times when you can let your friends in," Smoke evaded, "and times when you can't. And, Bill, this is one of the times when we can't. You'd better go to bed. Good-night."

"Ain't goin' to be no good-night, Smoke. You don't know us. We're woodticks."

Smoke sighed. "Well, Bill, if you WILL have your will, I guess you'll have to have it. Come on, Shorty, we can't fool around any longer."

Saltman emitted a shrill whistle as the sled started, and swung in behind. From down the hill and across the flat came the answering whistles of the relays. Shorty was at the gee-pole, and Smoke and Saltman walked side by side.

"Look here, Bill," Smoke said. "I'll make you a proposition. Do you want to come in alone on this?"

Saltman did not hesitate. "An' throw the gang down? No, sir. We'll all come in."

"You first, then," Smoke exclaimed, lurching into a clinch and tipping the other into deep snow beside the trail.

Shorty hawed the dogs and swung the team to the south on the trail that led among the scattered cabins on the rolling slopes to the rear of Dawson. Smoke and Saltman, locked together, rolled in the snow. Smoke considered himself in gilt-edged condition, but Saltman outweighed him by fifty pounds of clean, trail-hardened muscle and repeatedly mastered him. Time and time again he got Smoke on his back, and Smoke lay complacently and rested. But each time Saltman attempted to get off him and get away, Smoke reached out a detaining, tripping hand that brought about a new clinch and wrestle.

"You can go some," Saltman acknowledged, panting at the end of ten minutes, as he sat astride Smoke's chest. "But I down you every time."

"And I hold you every time," Smoke panted back. "That's what I'm here for, just to hold you. Where do you think Shorty's getting to all this time?"

Saltman made a wild effort to go clear, and all but succeeded. Smoke gripped his ankle and threw him in a headlong tumble. From down the hill came anxious questioning whistles. Saltman sat up and whistled a shrill answer, and was grappled by Smoke, who rolled him face upward and sat astride his chest, his knees resting on Saltman's biceps, his hands on Saltman's shoulders and holding him down. And in this position the stampeders found them. Smoke laughed and got up.

"Well, good-night, fellows," he said, and started down the hill, with sixty exasperated and grimly determined stampeders at his heels.

He turned north past the sawmill and the hospital and took the river trail along the precipitous bluffs at the base of Moosehide Mountain. Circling the Indian village, he held on to the mouth of Moose Creek, then turned and faced his pursuers.

"You make me tired," he said, with a good imitation of a snarl.

“Hope we ain’t a-forcin’ you,” Saltman murmured politely.

“Oh, no, not at all,” Smoke snarled with an even better imitation, as he passed among them on the back-trail to Dawson. Twice he attempted to cross the trailless icejams of the river, still resolutely followed, and both times he gave up and returned to the Dawson shore. Straight down Main Street he trudged, crossing the ice of Klondike River to Klondike City and again retracing to Dawson. At eight o’clock, as gray dawn began to show, he led his weary gang to Slavovitch’s restaurant, where tables were at a premium for breakfast.

“Good-night fellows,” he said, as he paid his reckoning.

And again he said good-night, as he took the climb of the hill. In the clear light of day they did not follow him, contenting themselves with watching him up the hill to his cabin.

For two days Smoke lingered about town, continually under vigilant espionage. Shorty, with the sled and dogs, had disappeared. Neither travelers up and down the Yukon, nor from Bonanza, Eldorado, nor the Klondike, had seen him. Remained only Smoke, who, soon or late, was certain to try to connect with his missing partner; and upon Smoke everybody’s attention was centered. On the second night he did not leave his cabin, putting out the lamp at nine in the evening and setting the alarm for two next morning. The watch outside heard the alarm go off, so that when, half an hour later, he emerged from the cabin, he found waiting for him a band, not of sixty men, but of at least three hundred. A flaming aurora borealis lighted the scene, and, thus hugely escorted, he walked down to town and entered the Elkhorn. The place was immediately packed and jammed by an anxious and irritated multitude that bought drinks, and for four weary hours watched Smoke play cribbage with his old friend Breck. Shortly after six in the morning, with an expression on his face of commingled hatred and gloom, seeing no one, recognizing no one, Smoke left the Elkhorn and went up Main Street, behind him the three hundred, formed in disorderly ranks, chanting: “Hay-foot! Straw-foot! Hep! Hep! Hep!”

“Good-night, fellows,” he said bitterly, at the edge of the Yukon bank where the winter trail dipped down. “I’m going to get breakfast and then go to bed.”

The three hundred shouted that they were with him, and followed him out upon the frozen river on the direct path he took for Tra-Lee. At seven in the morning he led his stampeding cohort up the zigzag trail, across the face of the slide, that led to Dwight Sanderson's cabin. The light of a candle showed through the parchment-paper window, and smoke curled from the chimney. Shorty threw open the door.

"Come on in, Smoke," he greeted. "Breakfast's ready. Who-all are your friends?"

Smoke turned about on the threshold. "Well, good-night, you fellows. Hope you enjoyed your pasear!"

"Hold on a moment, Smoke," Bill Saltman cried, his voice keen with disappointment. "Want to talk with you a moment."

"Fire away," Smoke answered genially.

"What'd you pay old Sanderson twenty-five thousan' for? Will you answer that?"

"Bill, you give me a pain," was Smoke's reply. "I came over here for a country residence, so to say, and here are you and a gang trying to cross-examine me when I'm looking for peace an' quietness an' breakfast. What's a country residence good for, except for peace and quietness?"

"You ain't answered the question," Bill Saltman came back with rigid logic.

"And I'm not going to, Bill. That affair is peculiarly a personal affair between Dwight Sanderson and me. Any other question?"

"How about that crowbar an' steel cable then, what you had on your sled the other night?"

"It's none of your blessed and ruddy business, Bill. Though if Shorty here wants to tell you about it, he can."

"Sure!" Shorty cried, springing eagerly into the breach. His mouth opened, then he faltered and turned to his partner. "Smoke, confidentially, just between you an' me, I don't think it IS any of their darn business. Come on in. The life's gettin' boiled outa that coffee."

The door closed and the three hundred sagged into forlorn and grumbling groups.

"Say, Saltman," one man said, "I thought you was goin' to lead us to it."

"Not on your life," Saltman answered crustily. "I said Smoke would lead us to it."

"An' this is it?"

"You know as much about it as me, an' we all know Smoke's got something salted down somewheres. Or else for what did he pay Sanderson the twenty-five thousand? Not for this mangy town-site, that's sure an' certain."

A chorus of cries affirmed Saltman's judgment.

"Well, what are we goin' to do now?" someone queried dolefully.

"Me for one for breakfast," Wild Water Charley said cheerfully. "You led us up a blind alley this time, Bill."

"I tell you I didn't," Saltman objected. "Smoke led us. An' just the same, what about them twenty-five thousand?"

At half-past eight, when daylight had grown strong, Shorty carefully opened the door and peered out. "Shucks," he exclaimed. "They-all's hiked back to Dawson. I thought they was goin' to camp here."

"Don't worry; they'll come sneaking back," Smoke reassured him. "If I don't miss my guess you'll see half Dawson over here before we're done with it. Now jump in and lend me a hand. We've got work to do."

"Aw, for Heaven's sake put me on," Shorty complained, when, at the end of an hour, he surveyed the result of their toil--a windlass in the corner of the cabin, with an endless rope that ran around double logrollers.

Smoke turned it with a minimum of effort, and the rope slipped and creaked. "Now, Shorty, you go outside and tell me what it sounds like."

Shorty, listening at the closed door, heard all the sounds of a windlass hoisting a load, and caught himself unconsciously attempting to estimate the depth of shaft out of which this load was being hoisted. Next came a pause, and in his mind's eye he saw the bucket swinging short to the windlass. Then he heard the quick lower-away and the dull sound as of the bucket coming to abrupt rest on the edge of the shaft. He threw open the door, beaming.

"I got you," he cried. "I almost fell for it myself. What next?"

The next was the dragging into the cabin of a dozen sled-loads of rock. And through an exceedingly busy day there were many other nexts.

"Now you run the dogs over to Dawson this evening," Smoke instructed, when supper was finished. "Leave them with Breck. He'll take care of them. They'll be watching what you do, so get Breck to go to the A. C. Company and buy up all the blasting-powder--there's only several hundred pounds in stock. And have Breck order half a dozen hard-rock drills from the blacksmith. Breck's a quartz-man, and he'll give the blacksmith a rough idea of what he wants made. And give Breck these location descriptions, so that he can record them at the gold commissioner's to-morrow. And finally, at ten o'clock, you be on Main Street listening. Mind you, I don't want them to be too loud. Dawson must just hear them and no more than hear them. I'll let off three, of different quantities, and you note which is more nearly the right thing."

At ten that night Shorty, strolling down Main Street, aware of many curious eyes, his ears keyed tensely, heard a faint and distant explosion. Thirty seconds later there was a second, sufficiently loud to attract the attention of others on the street. Then came a third, so violent that it rattled the windows and brought the inhabitants into the street.

"Shook 'em up beautiful," Shorty proclaimed breathlessly, an hour afterward, when he arrived at the cabin on Tra-Lee. He gripped Smoke's hand. "You should a-saw 'em. Ever kick over a ant-hole? Dawson's just like that. Main Street was crawlin' an' hummin' when I pulled my freight. You won't see Tra-Lee to-morrow for folks. An' if they ain't some a-sneakin' acrost right now I don't know minin' nature, that's all."

Smoke grinned, stepped to the fake windlass, and gave it a couple of creaking turns. Shorty pulled out the moss-chinking from between the logs so as to make peep-holes on every side of the cabin. Then he blew out the candle.

"Now," he whispered at the end of half an hour.

Smoke turned the windlass slowly, paused after several minutes, caught up a galvanized bucket filled with earth and struck it with slide and scrape and grind against the heap of rocks they had hauled in. Then he lighted a cigarette, shielding the flame of the match in his hands.

"They's three of 'em," Shorty whispered. "You oughta saw 'em. Say, when you made that bucket-dump noise they was fair quiverin'. They's one at the window now tryin' to peek in."

Smoke glowed his cigarette, and glanced at his watch.

"We've got to do this thing regularly," he breathed. "We'll haul up a bucket every fifteen minutes. And in the meantime--"

Through triple thicknesses of sacking, he struck a cold-chisel on the face of a rock.

"Beautiful, beautiful," Shorty moaned with delight. He crept over noiselessly from the peep-hole. "They've got their heads together, an' I can almost see 'em talkin'."

And from then until four in the morning, at fifteen-minute intervals, the seeming of a bucket was hoisted on the windlass that creaked and ran around on itself and hoisted nothing. Then their visitors departed, and Smoke and Shorty went to bed.

After daylight, Shorty examined the moccasin-marks. “Big Bill Saltman was one of them,” he concluded. “Look at the size of it.”

Smoke looked out over the river. “Get ready for visitors. There are two crossing the ice now.”

“Huh! Wait till Breck files that string of claims at nine o’clock. There’ll be two thousand crossing over.”

“And every mother’s son of them yammering ‘mother-lode,’“ Smoke laughed. “‘The source of the Klondike placers found at last.’“

Shorty, who had clambered to the top of a steep shoulder of rock, gazed with the eye of a connoisseur at the strip they had staked.

“It sure looks like a true fissure vein,” he said. “A expert could almost trace the lines of it under the snow. It’d fool anybody. The slide fills the front of it an’ see them outcrops? Look like the real thing, only they ain’t.”

When the two men, crossing the river, climbed the zigzag trail up the slide, they found a closed cabin. Bill Saltman, who led the way, went softly to the door, listened, then beckoned Wild Water Charley up to him. From inside came the creak and whine of a windlass bearing a heavy load. They waited at the final pause, then heard the lower-away and the impact of a bucket on rock. Four times, in the next hour, they heard the thing repeated. Then Wild Water knocked on the door. From inside came low furtive noises, then silences, and more furtive noises, and at the end of five minutes Smoke, breathing heavily, opened the door an inch and peered out. They saw on his face and shirt powdered rock-fragments. His greeting was suspiciously genial.

“Wait a minute,” he added, “and I’ll be with you.”

Pulling on his mittens, he slipped through the door and confronted the visitors outside in the snow. Their quick eyes noted his shirt, across the shoulders, discolored and powdery, and the knees of his overalls that showed signs of dirt brushed hastily but not quite thoroughly away.

“Rather early for a call,” he observed. “What brings you across the river? Going hunting?”

“We’re on, Smoke,” Wild Water said confidentially. “An’ you’d just as well come through. You’ve got something here.”

“If you’re looking for eggs--“ Smoke began.

“Aw, forget it. We mean business.”

“You mean you want to buy lots, eh?” Smoke rattled on swiftly. “There’s some dandy building sites here. But, you see, we can’t sell yet. We haven’t had the town surveyed. Come around next week, Wild Water, and for peace and quietness, I’ll show you something swell, if you’re anxious to live over here. Next week, sure, it will be surveyed. Good-by. Sorry I can’t ask you inside, but Shorty--well, you know him. He’s peculiar. He says he came over for peace and quietness, and he’s asleep now. I wouldn’t wake him for the world.”

As Smoke talked he shook their hands warmly in farewell. Still talking and shaking their hands, he stepped inside and closed the door.

They looked at each other and nodded significantly.

“See the knees of his pants?” Saltman whispered hoarsely.

“Sure. An’ his shoulders. He’s been bumpin’ an’ crawlin’ around in a shaft.” As Wild Water talked, his eyes wandered up the snow-covered ravine until they were halted by something that brought a whistle to his lips. “Just cast your eyes up there, Bill. See where I’m pointing? If that ain’t a prospect-hole! An’ follow it out to both sides--you can see where they tramped in the snow. If it ain’t rim-rock on both sides I don’t know what rim-rock is. It’s a fissure vein, all right.”

“An’ look at the size of it!” Saltman cried. “They’ve got something here, you bet.”

“An’ run your eyes down the slide there--see them bluffs standin’ out an’ slopin’ in. The whole slide’s in the mouth of the vein as well.”

“And just keep a-lookin’ on, out on the ice there, on the trail,” Saltman directed. “Looks like most of Dawson, don’t it?”

Wild Water took one glance and saw the trail black with men clear to the far Dawson bank, down which the same unbroken string of men was pouring.

“Well, I’m goin’ to get a look-in at that prospect-hole before they get here,” he said, turning and starting swiftly up the ravine.

But the cabin door opened, and the two occupants stepped out.

“Hey!” Smoke called. “Where are you going?”

“To pick out a lot,” Wild Water called back. “Look at the river. All Dawson’s stampeding to buy lots, an’ we’re going to beat ‘em to it for the choice. That’s right, ain’t it, Bill?”

“Sure thing,” Saltman corroborated. “This has the makin’s of a Jim-dandy suburb, an’ it sure looks like it’ll be some popular.”

“Well, we’re not selling lots over in that section where you’re heading,” Smoke answered. “Over to the right there, and back on top of the bluffs are the lots. This section, running from the river and over the tops, is reserved. So come on back.”

“That’s the spot we’ve gone and selected,” Saltman argued.

“But there’s nothing doing, I tell you,” Smoke said sharply.

“Any objections to our strolling, then?” Saltman persisted.

“Decidedly. Your strolling is getting monotonous. Come on back out of that.”

“I just reckon we’ll stroll anyways,” Saltman replied stubbornly. “Come on, Wild Water.”

“I warn you, you are trespassing,” was Smoke’s final word.

“Nope, just strollin’,” Saltman gaily retorted, turning his back and starting on.

“Hey! Stop in your tracks, Bill, or I’ll sure bore you!” Shorty thundered, drawing and leveling two Colt’s forty-fours. “Step another step in your steps an’ I let eleven holes through your danged ornery carcass. Get that?”

Saltman stopped, perplexed.

“He sure got me,” Shorty mumbled to Smoke. “But if he goes on I’m up against it hard. I can’t shoot. What’ll I do?”

“Look here, Shorty, listen to reason,” Saltman begged.

“Come here to me an’ we’ll talk reason,” was Shorty’s retort.

And they were still talking reason when the head of the stampede emerged from the zigzag trail and came upon them.

“You can’t call a man a trespasser when he’s on a town-site lookin’ to buy lots,” Wild Water was arguing, and Shorty was objecting: “But they’s private property in town-sites, an’ that there strip is private property, that’s all. I tell you again, it ain’t for sale.”

“Now we’ve got to swing this thing on the jump,” Smoke muttered to Shorty. “If they ever get out of hand--“

“You’ve sure got your nerve, if you think you can hold them,” Shorty muttered back. “They’s two thousan’ of ‘em an’ more a-comin’. They’ll break this line any minute.”

The line ran along the near rim of the ravine, and Shorty had formed it by halting the first arrivals when they got that far in their invasion. In the crowd were half a dozen Northwest policemen and a lieutenant. With the latter Smoke conferred in undertones.

“They’re still piling out of Dawson,” he said, “and before long there will be five thousand here. The danger is if they start jumping claims. When you figure there are only five claims, it means a thousand men to a claim, and four thousand out of the five will try to jump the nearest claim. It can’t be done, and if it ever starts, there’ll be more dead men here than in the whole history of Alaska. Besides, those five claims were recorded this morning and can’t be jumped. In short, claim-jumping mustn’t start.”

“Right-o,” said the lieutenant. “I’ll get my men together and station them. We can’t have any trouble here, and we won’t have. But you’d better get up and talk to them.”

“There must be some mistake, fellows,” Smoke began in a loud voice. “We’re not ready to sell lots. The streets are not surveyed yet. But next week we shall have the grand opening sale.”

He was interrupted by an outburst of impatience and indignation.

“We don’t want lots,” a young miner cried out. “We don’t want what’s on top of the ground. We’ve come for what’s under the ground.”

“We don’t know what we’ve got under the ground,” Smoke answered. “But we do know we’ve got a fine town-site on top of it.”

“Sure,” Shorty added. “Grand for scenery an’ solitude. Folks lovin’ solitude come a-flockin’ here by thousands. Most popular solitude on the Yukon.”

Again the impatient cries arose, and Saltman, who had been talking with the later comers, came to the front.

“We’re here to stake claims,” he opened. “We know what you’ve did--filed a string of five quartz claims on end, and there they are over there running across the town-site on the line of the slide and the canyon. Only you misplayed. Two of them entries is fake. Who is Seth Bierce? No one ever heard of him. You filed a claim this mornin’ in his name. An’ you filed a claim in the name of Harry Maxwell. Now Harry Maxwell ain’t in the country. He’s down in Seattle. Went out last fall. Them two claims is open to relocation.”

“Suppose I have his power of attorney?” Smoke queried.

“You ain’t,” Saltman answered. “An’ if you have you got to show it. Anyway, here’s where we relocate. Come on, fellows.”

Saltman, stepping across the dead-line, had turned to encourage a following, when the police lieutenant’s voice rang out and stopped the forward surge of the great mass.

"Hold on there! You can't do that, you know!"

"Can't, eh?" said Bill Saltman. "The law says a fake location can be relocated, don't it?"

"Thet's right, Bill! Stay with it!" the crowd cheered from the safe side of the line.

"It's the law, ain't it?" Saltman demanded truculently of the lieutenant.

"It may be the law," came the steady answer. "But I can't and won't allow a mob of five thousand men to attempt to jump two claims. It would be a dangerous riot, and we're here to see there is no riot. Here, now, on this spot, the Northwest police constitute the law. The next man who crosses that line will be shot. You, Bill Saltman, step back across it."

Saltman obeyed reluctantly. But an ominous restlessness became apparent in the mass of men, irregularly packed and scattered as it was over a landscape that was mostly up-and-down.

"Heavens," the lieutenant whispered to Smoke. "Look at them like flies on the edge of the cliff there. Any disorder in that mass would force hundreds of them over."

Smoke shuddered and got up. "I'm willing to play fair, fellows. If you insist on town lots, I'll sell them to you, one hundred apiece, and you can raffle locations when the survey is made." With raised hand he stilled the movement of disgust. "Don't move, anybody. If you do, there'll be hundreds of you shoved over the bluff. The situation is dangerous."

"Just the same, you can't hog it," a voice went up. "We don't want lots. We want to relocate."

"But there are only two disputed claims," Smoke argued. "When they're relocated where will the rest of you be?"

He mopped his forehead with his shirt-sleeve, and another voice cried out:

"Let us all in, share and share alike!"

Nor did those who roared their approbation dream that the suggestion had been made by a man primed to make it when he saw Smoke mop his forehead.

"Take your feet out of the trough an' pool the town-site," the man went on. "Pool the mineral rights with the town-site, too."

"But there isn't anything in the mineral rights, I tell you," Smoke objected.

"Then pool them with the rest. We'll take our chances on it."

“Fellows, you’re forcing me,” Smoke said. “I wish you’d stayed on your side of the river.”

But wavering indecision was so manifest that with a mighty roar the crowd swept him on to agreement. Saltman and others in the front rank demurred.

“Bill Saltman, here, and Wild Water don’t want you all in,” Smoke informed the crowd. “Who’s hogging it now?”

And thereat Saltman and Wild Water became profoundly unpopular.

“Now how are we going to do it?” Smoke asked. “Shorty and I ought to keep control. We discovered this town-site.”

“That’s right!” many cried. “A square deal!” “It’s only fair!”

“Three-fifths to us,” Smoke suggested, “and you fellows come in for two-fifths. And you’ve got to pay for your shares.”

“Ten cents on the dollar!” was a cry. “And non-assessable!”

“And the president of the company to come around personally and pay you your dividends on a silver platter,” Smoke sneered. “No, sir. You fellows have got to be reasonable. Ten cents on the dollar will help start things. You buy two-fifths of the stock, hundred dollars par, at ten dollars. That’s the best I can do. And if you don’t like it, just start jumping the claims. I can’t stand more than a two-fifths gouge.”

“No big capitalization!” a voice called, and it was this voice that crystallized the collective mind of the crowd into consent.

“There’s about five thousand of you, which will make five thousand shares,” Smoke worked the problem aloud. “And five thousand is two-fifths of twelve thousand, five hundred. Therefore The Tra-Lee Town-Site Company is capitalized for one million two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, there being twelve thousand, five hundred shares, hundred par, you fellows buying five thousand of them at ten dollars apiece. And I don’t care a whoop whether you accept it or not. And I call you all to witness that you’re forcing me against my will.”

With the assurance of the crowd that they had caught him with the goods on him, in the shape of the two fake locations, a committee was formed and the rough organization of the Tra-Lee Town-Site Company effected. Scorning the proposal of delivering the shares next day in Dawson, and scorning it because of the objection that the portion of Dawson that had not engaged in the stampede would ring in for shares, the committee, by a fire on the ice at the foot of the slide, issued a receipt to each stampeder in return for ten dollars in dust duly weighed on two dozen gold-scales which were obtained from Dawson.

By twilight the work was accomplished and Tra-Lee was deserted, save for Smoke and Shorty, who ate supper in the cabin and chuckled at the list of shareholders, four thousand eight hundred and seventy-four strong, and at the gold-sacks, which they knew contained approximately forty-eight thousand seven hundred and forty dollars.

"But you ain't swung it yet," Shorty objected.

"He'll be here," Smoke asserted with conviction. "He's a born gambler, and when Breck whispers the tip to him not even heart disease would stop him."

Within the hour came a knock at the door, and Wild Water entered, followed by Bill Saltman. Their eyes swept the cabin eagerly, coming to rest on the windlass elaborately concealed by blankets.

"But suppose I did want to vote twelve hundred shares," Wild Water was arguing half an hour later. "With the other five thousand sold to-day it'd make only sixty-two hundred shares. That'd leave you and Shorty with sixty-three hundred. You'd still control."

"But what d' you want with all that of a town-site?" Shorty queried.

"You can answer that better 'n me," Wild Water replied. "An' between you an' me," his gaze drifted over the blanket-draped windlass, "it's a pretty good-looking town-site."

"But Bill wants some," Smoke said grudgingly, "and we simply won't part with more than five hundred shares."

"How much you got to invest?" Wild Water asked Saltman.

"Oh, say five thousand. It was all I could scare up."

"Wild Water," Smoke went on, in the same grudging, complaining voice, "if I didn't know you so well, I wouldn't sell you a single besotted share. And, anyway, Shorty and I won't part with more than five hundred, and they'll cost you fifty dollars apiece. That's the last word, and if you don't like it, good-night. Bill can take a hundred and you can have the other four hundred."

Next day Dawson began its laugh. It started early in the morning, just after daylight, when Smoke went to the bulletin-board outside the A. C. Company store and tacked up a notice. Men gathered and were reading and snickering over his shoulder ere he had driven the last tack. Soon the bulletin-board was crowded by hundreds who could not get near enough to read. Then a reader was appointed by acclamation, and thereafter, throughout the day, many men were acclaimed to read in loud voice the notice Smoke Bellew had nailed up. And there were numbers of men who stood in the snow and heard it read several times in order to memorize the succulent items that appeared in the following order:

The Tra-Lee Town-Site Company keeps its accounts on the wall. This is its first account and its last.

Any shareholder who objects to donating ten dollars to the Dawson General Hospital may obtain his ten dollars on personal application to Wild Water Charley, or, failing that, will absolutely obtain it on application to Smoke Bellew.

MONEYS RECEIVED AND DISBURSED

From 4874 shares at $10.00...............................$48,740.00 To Dwight Sanderson for Town-Site of Tra-Lee.............10,000.00 To incidental expenses, to wit: powder, drills,

windlass, gold commissioner's office, etc............1,000.00

To Dawson General Hospital...............................37,740.00

- ---------

Total..$48,740.00

From Bill Saltman, for 100 shares privately

purchased at $50.00...............................$ 5,000.00

From Wild Water Charley, for 400 shares privately

purchased at $50.00................................20,000.00

To Bill Saltman, in recognition of services as

volunteer stampede promoter..........................5,000.00

To Dawson General Hospital................................3,000.00 To Smoke Bellew and Jack Short, balance in full on

egg deal and morally owing..........................17,000.00

- ---------

Total..$25,000.00

Shares remaining to account for 7126. These shares, held by Smoke Bellew and Jack Short, value nil, may be obtained gratis, for the asking, by any and all residents of Dawson desiring change of domicile to the peace and solitude of the town of Tra-Lee.

(Note: Peace and solitude always and perpetually guaranteed in town of Tra-Lee)

(Signed) SMOKE BELLEW, President.

(Signed) JACK SHORT, Secretary.

Trust

All lines had been cast off, and the Seattle No. 4 was pulling slowly out from the shore. Her decks were piled high with freight and baggage, and swarmed with a heterogeneous company of Indians, dogs, and dog-mushers, prospectors, traders, and homeward-bound gold-seekers. A goodly portion of Dawson was lined up on the bank, saying good-bye. As the gang-plank came in and the steamer nosed into the stream, the clamour of farewell became deafening. Also, in that eleventh moment, everybody began to remember final farewell messages and to shout them back and forth across the widening stretch of water. Louis Bondell, curling his yellow moustache with one hand and languidly waving the other hand to his friends on shore, suddenly remembered something and sprang to the rail.

"Oh, Fred!" he bawled. "Oh, Fred!

The "Fred" desired thrust a strapping pair of shoulders through the forefront of the crowd on the bank and tried to catch Louis Bondell's message. The latter grew red in the face with vain vociferation. Still the water widened between steamboat and shore.

"Hey, you, Captain Scott!" he yelled at the pilot-house. "Stop the boat!"

The gongs clanged, and the big stern wheel reversed, then stopped. All hands on steamboat and on bank took advantage of this respite to exchange final, new, and imperative farewells. More futile than ever was Louis Bondell's effort to make himself heard. The Seattle No. 4 lost way and drifted down-stream, and Captain Scott had to go ahead and reverse a second time. His head disappeared inside the pilot-house, coming into view a moment later behind a big megaphone.

Now Captain Scott had a remarkable voice, and the "Shut up!" he launched at the crowd on deck and on shore could have been heard at the top of Moosehide Mountain and as far as Klondike City. This official remonstrance from the pilot-house spread a film of silence over the tumult.

"Now, what do you want to say?" Captain Scott demanded.

"Tell Fred Churchill--he's on the bank there--tell him to go to Macdonald. It's in his safe--a small gripsack of mine. Tell him to get it and bring it out when he comes."

In the silence Captain Scott bellowed the message ashore through the megaphone

“You, Fred Churchill, go to Macdonald--in his safe--small gripsack--belongs to Louis Bondell--important! Bring it out when you come! Got it!”

Churchill waved his hand in token that he had got it. In truth, had Macdonald, half a mile away, opened his window, he’d have got it, too. The tumult of farewell rose again, the gongs clanged, and the Seattle No. 4 went ahead, swung out into the stream, turned on her heel, and headed down the Yukon, Bondell and Churchill waving farewell and mutual affection to the last.

That was in midsummer. In the fall of the year, the W. H. Willis started up the Yukon with two hundred homeward-bound pilgrims on board. Among them was Churchill. In his state-room, in the middle of a clothes-bag, was Louis Bondell’s grip. It was a small, stout leather affair, and its weight of forty pounds always made Churchill nervous when he wandered too far from it. The man in the adjoining state-room had a treasure of gold-dust hidden similarly in a clothes-bag, and the pair of them ultimately arranged to stand watch and watch. While one went down to eat, the other kept an eye on the two state-room doors. When Churchill wanted to take a hand at whist, the other man mounted guard, and when the other man wanted to relax his soul, Churchill read four-months’ old newspapers on a camp stool between the two doors.

There were signs of an early winter, and the question that was discussed from dawn till dark, and far into the dark, was whether they would get out before the freeze-up or be compelled to abandon the steamboat and tramp out over the ice. There were irritating delays. Twice the engines broke down and had to be tinkered up, and each time there were snow flurries to warn them of the imminence of winter. Nine times the W. H. Willis essayed to ascend the Five-Finger Rapids with her impaired machinery, and when she succeeded, she was four days behind her very liberal schedule. The question that then arose was whether or not the steamboat Flora would wait for her above the Box Canon. The stretch of water between the head of the Box Canon and the foot of the White Horse Rapids was unnavigable for steamboats, and passengers were transhipped at that point, walking around the rapids from one steamboat to the other. There were no telephones in the country, hence no way of informing the waiting Flora that the Willis was four days late, but coming.

When the W. H. Willis pulled into White Horse, it was learned that the Flora had waited three days over the limit, and had departed only a few hours before. Also, it was learned that she would tie up at Tagish Post till nine o'clock, Sunday morning. It was then four o'clock, Saturday afternoon. The pilgrims called a meeting. On board was a large Peterborough canoe, consigned to the police post at the head of Lake Bennett. They agreed to be responsible for it and to deliver it. Next, they called for volunteers. Two men were needed to make a race for the Flora. A score of men volunteered on the instant. Among them was Churchill, such being his nature that he volunteered before he thought of Bondell's gripsack. When this thought came to him, he began to hope that he would not be selected; but a man who had made a name as captain of a college football eleven, as a president of an athletic club, as a dog-musher and a stampeder in the Yukon, and, moreover, who possessed such shoulders as he, had no right to avoid the honour. It was thrust upon him and upon a gigantic German, Nick Antonsen.

While a crowd of the pilgrims, the canoe on their shoulders, started on a trot over the portage, Churchill ran to his state-room. He turned the contents of the clothes-bag on the floor and caught up the grip, with the intention of entrusting it to the man next door. Then the thought smote him that it was not his grip, and that he had no right to let it out of his possession. So he dashed ashore with it and ran up the portage changing it often from one hand to the other, and wondering if it really did not weigh more than forty pounds.

It was half-past four in the afternoon when the two men started. The current of the Thirty Mile River was so strong that rarely could they use the paddles. It was out on one bank with a tow-line over the shoulders, stumbling over the rocks, forcing a way through the underbrush, slipping at times and falling into the water, wading often up to the knees and waist; and then, when an insurmountable bluff was encountered, it was into the canoe, out paddles, and a wild and losing dash across the current to the other bank, in paddles, over the side, and out tow-line again. It was exhausting work. Antonsen toiled like the giant he was, uncomplaining, persistent, but driven to his utmost by the powerful body and indomitable brain of Churchill. They never paused for rest. It was go, go, and keep on going. A crisp wind blew down the river, freezing their hands and making it imperative, from time to time, to beat the blood back into the numbed fingers.

As night came on, they were compelled to trust to luck. They fell repeatedly on the untravelled banks and tore their clothing to sheds in the underbrush they could not see. Both men were badly scratched and bleeding. A dozen times, in their wild dashes from bank to bank, they struck snags and were capsized. The first time this happened, Churchill dived and groped in three feet of water for the gripsack. He lost half an hour in recovering it, and after that it was carried securely lashed to the canoe. As long as the canoe floated it was safe. Antonsen jeered at the grip, and toward morning began to curse it; but Churchill vouchsafed no explanations.

Their delays and mischances were endless. On one swift bend, around which poured a healthy young rapid, they lost two hours, making a score of attempts and capsizing twice. At this point, on both banks, were precipitous bluffs, rising out of deep water, and along which they could neither tow nor pole, while they could not gain with the paddles against the current. At each attempt they strained to the utmost with the paddles, and each time, with heads nigh to bursting from the effort, they were played out and swept back. They succeeded finally by an accident. In the swiftest current, near the end of another failure, a freak of the current sheered the canoe out of Churchill's control and flung it against the bluff. Churchill made a blind leap at the bluff and landed in a crevice. Holding on with one hand, he held the swamped canoe with the other till Antonsen dragged himself out of the water. Then they pulled the canoe out and rested. A fresh start at this crucial point took them by. They landed on the bank above and plunged immediately ashore and into the brush with the tow-line.

Daylight found them far below Tagish Post. At nine o'clock Sunday morning they could hear the Flora whistling her departure. And when, at ten o'clock, they dragged themselves in to the Post, they could barely see the Flora's smoke far to the southward. It was a pair of worn-out tatterdemalions that Captain Jones of the Mounted Police welcomed and fed, and he afterward averred that they possessed two of the most tremendous appetites he had ever observed. They lay down and slept in their wet rags by the stove. At the end of two hours Churchill got up, carried Bondell's grip, which he had used for a pillow, down to the canoe, kicked Antonsen awake, and started in pursuit of the Flora.

"There's no telling what might happen--machinery break down, or something," was his reply to Captain Jones's expostulations. "I'm going to catch that steamer and send her back for the boys."

Tagish Lake was white with a fall gale that blew in their teeth. Big, swinging seas rushed upon the canoe, compelling one man to bale and leaving one man to paddle. Headway could not be made. They ran along the shallow shore and went overboard, one man ahead on the tow-line, the other shoving on the canoe. They fought the gale up to their waists in the icy water, often up to their necks, often over their heads and buried by the big, crested waves. There was no rest, never a moment's pause from the cheerless, heart-breaking battle. That night, at the head of Tagish Lake, in the thick of a driving snow-squall, they overhauled the Flora. Antonsen fell on board, lay where he had fallen, and snored. Churchill looked like a wild man. His clothes barely clung to him. His face was iced up and swollen from the protracted effort of twenty-four hours, while his hands were so swollen that he could not close the fingers. As for his feet, it was an agony to stand upon them.

The captain of the Flora was loth to go back to White Horse. Churchill was persistent and imperative; the captain was stubborn. He pointed out finally that nothing was to be gained by going back, because the only ocean steamer at Dyea, the Athenian, was to sail on Tuesday morning, and that he could not make the back trip to White Horse and bring up the stranded pilgrims in time to make the connection.

"What time does the Athenian sail?" Churchill demanded.

"Seven o'clock, Tuesday morning."

"All right," Churchill said, at the same time kicking a tattoo on the ribs of the snoring Antonsen. "You go back to White Home. We'll go ahead and hold the Athenian."

Antonsen, stupid with sleep, not yet clothed in his waking mind, was bundled into the canoe, and did not realize what had happened till he was drenched with the icy spray of a big sea, and heard Churchill snarling at him through the darkness:-

"Paddle, can't you! Do you want to be swamped?"

Daylight found them at Caribou Crossing, the wind dying down, and Antonsen too far gone to dip a paddle. Churchill grounded the canoe on a quiet beach, where they slept. He took the precaution of twisting his arm under the weight of his head. Every few minutes the pain of the pent circulation aroused him, whereupon he would look at his watch and twist the other arm under his head. At the end of two hours he fought with

Antonsen to rouse him. Then they started. Lake Bennett, thirty miles in length, was like a millpond; but, half way across, a gale from the south smote them and turned the water white. Hour after hour they repeated the struggle on Tagish, over the side, pulling and shoving on the canoe, up to their waists and necks, and over their heads, in the icy water; toward the last the good-natured giant played completely out. Churchill drove him mercilessly; but when he pitched forward and bade fair to drown in three feet of water, the other dragged him into the canoe. After that, Churchill fought on alone, arriving at the police post at the head of Bennett in the early afternoon. He tried to help Antonsen out of the canoe, but failed. He listened to the exhausted man's heavy breathing, and envied him when he thought of what he himself had yet to undergo. Antonsen could lie there and sleep; but he, behind time, must go on over mighty Chilcoot and down to the sea. The real struggle lay before him, and he almost regretted the strength that resided in his frame because of the torment it could inflict upon that frame.

Churchill pulled the canoe up on the beach, seized Bondell's grip, and started on a limping dog-trot for the police post.

"There's a canoe down there, consigned to you from Dawson," he hurled at the officer who answered his knock. "And there's a man in it pretty near dead. Nothing serious; only played out. Take care of him. I've got to rush. Good-bye. Want to catch the Athenian."

A mile portage connected Lake Bennett and Lake Linderman, and his last words he flung back after him as he resumed the trot. It was a very painful trot, but he clenched his teeth and kept on, forgetting his pain most of the time in the fervent heat with which he regarded the gripsack. It was a severe handicap. He swung it from one hand to the other, and back again. He tucked it under his arm. He threw one hand over the opposite shoulder, and the bag bumped and pounded on his back as he ran along. He could scarcely hold it in his bruised and swollen fingers, and several times he dropped it. Once, in changing from one hand to the other, it escaped his clutch and fell in front of him, tripped him up, and threw him violently to the ground.

At the far end of the portage he bought an old set of pack-straps for a dollar, and in them he swung the grip. Also, he chartered a launch to run him the six miles to the upper end of Lake Linderman, where he arrived at four in the afternoon. The Athenian was to sail from Dyea next morning at seven. Dyea was twenty-eight miles away, and between towered Chilcoot.

He sat down to adjust his foot-gear for the long climb, and woke up. He had dozed the instant he sat down, though he had not slept thirty seconds. He was afraid his next doze might be longer, so he finished fixing his foot-gear standing up. Even then he was overpowered for a fleeting moment. He experienced the flash of unconsciousness; becoming aware of it, in mid-air, as his relaxed body was sinking to the ground and as he caught himself together, he stiffened his muscles with a spasmodic wrench, and escaped the fall. The sudden jerk back to consciousness left him sick and trembling. He beat his head with the heel of his hand, knocking wakefulness into the numbed brain.

Jack Burns's pack-train was starting back light for Crater Lake, and Churchill was invited to a mule. Burns wanted to put the gripsack on another animal, but Churchill held on to it, carrying it on his saddle-pommel. But he dozed, and the grip persisted in dropping off the pommel, one side or the other, each time wakening him with a sickening start. Then, in the early darkness, Churchill's mule brushed him against a projecting branch that laid his cheek open. To cap it, the mule blundered off the trail and fell, throwing rider and gripsack out upon the rocks. After that, Churchill walked, or stumbled rather, over the apology for a trail, leading the mule. Stray and awful odours, drifting from each side of the trail, told of the horses that had died in the rush for gold. But he did not mind. He was too sleepy. By the time Long Lake was reached, however, he had recovered from his sleepiness; and at Deep Lake he resigned the gripsack to Burns. But thereafter, by the light of the dim stars, he kept his eyes on Burns. There were not going to be any accidents with that bag.

At Crater Lake, the pack-train went into camp, and Churchill, slinging the grip on his back, started the steep climb for the summit. For the first time, on that precipitous wall, he realized how tired he was. He crept and crawled like a crab, burdened by the weight of his limbs. A distinct and painful effort of will was required each time he lifted a foot. An hallucination came to him that he was shod with lead, like a deep-sea diver, and it was all he could do to resist the desire to reach down and feel the lead. As for Bondell's gripsack, it was inconceivable that forty pounds could weigh so much. It pressed him down like a mountain, and he looked back with unbelief to the year before, when he had climbed that same pass with a hundred and fifty pounds on his back. If those loads had weighed a hundred and fifty pounds, then Bondell's grip weighed five hundred.

The first rise of the divide from Crater Lake was across a small glacier. Here was a well-defined trail. But above the glacier, which was also above timber-line, was naught but a chaos of naked rock and enormous boulders. There was no way of seeing the trail in the darkness, and he blundered on, paying thrice the ordinary exertion for all that he accomplished. He won the summit in the thick of howling wind and driving snow, providentially stumbling upon a small, deserted tent, into which he crawled. There he found and bolted some ancient fried potatoes and half a dozen raw eggs.

When the snow ceased and the wind eased down, he began the almost impossible descent. There was no trail, and he stumbled and blundered, often finding himself, at the last moment, on the edge of rocky walls and steep slopes the depth of which he had no way of judging. Part way down, the stars clouded over again, and in the consequent obscurity he slipped and rolled and slid for a hundred feet, landing bruised and bleeding on the bottom of a large shallow hole. From all about him arose the stench of dead horses. The hole was handy to the trail, and the packers had made a practice of tumbling into it their broken and dying animals. The stench overpowered him, making him deadly sick, and as in a nightmare he scrambled out. Half-way up, he recollected Bondell’s gripsack. It had fallen into the hole with him; the pack-strap had evidently broken, and he had forgotten it. Back he went into the pestilential charnel-pit, where he crawled around on hands and knees and groped for half an hour. Altogether he encountered and counted seventeen dead horses (and one horse still alive that he shot with his revolver) before he found Bondell’s grip. Looking back upon a life that had not been without valour and achievement, he unhesitatingly declared to himself that this return after the grip was the most heroic act he had ever performed. So heroic was it that he was twice on the verge of fainting before he crawled out of the hole.

By the time he had descended to the Scales, the steep pitch of Chilcoot was past, and the way became easier. Not that it was an easy way, however, in the best of places; but it became a really possible trail, along which he could have made good time if he had not been worn out, if he had had light with which to pick his steps, and if it had not been for Bondell’s gripsack. To him, in his exhausted condition, it was the last straw. Having barely strength to carry himself along, the additional weight of the grip was sufficient to throw him nearly every time he tripped or stumbled. And when he escaped tripping, branches reached out in the darkness, hooked the grip between his shoulders, and held him back.

His mind was made up that if he missed the Athenian it would be the fault of the gripsack. In fact, only two things remained in his consciousness--Bondell's grip and the steamer. He knew only those two things, and they became identified, in a way, with some stern mission upon which he had journeyed and toiled for centuries. He walked and struggled on as in a dream. As part of the dream was his arrival at Sheep Camp. He stumbled into a saloon, slid his shoulders out of the straps, and started to deposit the grip at his feet. But it slipped from his fingers and struck the floor with a heavy thud that was not unnoticed by two men who were just leaving. Churchill drank a glass of whisky, told the barkeeper to call him in ten minutes, and sat down, his feet on the grip, his head on his knees.

So badly did his misused body stiffen, that when he was called it required another ten minutes and a second glass of whisky to unbend his joints and limber up the muscles.

"Hey not that way!" the barkeeper shouted, and then went after him and started him through the darkness toward Canyon City. Some little husk of inner consciousness told Churchill that the direction was right, and, still as in a dream, he took the canon trail. He did not know what warned him, but after what seemed several centuries of travelling, he sensed danger and drew his revolver. Still in the dream, he saw two men step out and heard them halt him. His revolver went off four times, and he saw the flashes and heard the explosions of their revolvers. Also, he was aware that he had been hit in the thigh. He saw one man go down, and, as the other came for him, he smashed him a straight blow with the heavy revolver full in the face. Then he turned and ran. He came from the dream shortly afterward, to find himself plunging down the trail at a limping lope. His first thought was for the gripsack. It was still on his back. He was convinced that what had happened was a dream till he felt for his revolver and found it gone. Next he became aware of a sharp stinging of his thigh, and after investigating, he found his hand warm with blood. It was a superficial wound, but it was incontestable. He became wider awake, and kept up the lumbering run to Canyon City.

He found a man, with a team of horses and a wagon, who got out of bed and harnessed up for twenty dollars. Churchill crawled in on the wagon-bed and slept, the gripsack still on his back. It was a rough ride, over water-washed boulders down the Dyea Valley; but he roused only when the wagon hit the highest places. Any altitude of his body above the wagon-bed of less than a foot did not faze him. The last mile was smooth going, and he slept soundly.

He came to in the grey dawn, the driver shaking him savagely and howling into his ear that the Athenian was gone. Churchill looked blankly at the deserted harbour.

“There’s a smoke over at Skaguay,” the man said.

Churchill’s eyes were too swollen to see that far, but he said: “It’s she. Get me a boat.”

The driver was obliging and found a skiff, and a man to row it for ten dollars, payment in advance. Churchill paid, and was helped into the skiff. It was beyond him to get in by himself. It was six miles to Skaguay, and he had a blissful thought of sleeping those six miles. But the man did not know how to row, and Churchill took the oars and toiled for a few more centuries. He never knew six longer and more excruciating miles. A snappy little breeze blew up the inlet and held him back. He had a gone feeling at the pit of the stomach, and suffered from faintness and numbness. At his command, the man took the baler and threw salt water into his face.

The Athenian’s anchor was up-and-down when they came alongside, and Churchill was at the end of his last remnant of strength.

“Stop her! Stop her!” he shouted hoarsely.

“Important message! Stop her!”

Then he dropped his chin on his chest and slept. When half a dozen men started to carry him up the gang-plank, he awoke, reached for the grip, and clung to it like a drowning man.

On deck he became a centre of horror and curiosity. The clothing in which he had left White Horse was represented by a few rags, and he was as frayed as his clothing. He had travelled for fifty-five hours at the top notch of endurance. He had slept six hours in that time, and he was twenty pounds lighter than when he started. Face and hands and body were scratched and bruised, and he could scarcely see. He tried to stand up, but failed, sprawling out on the deck, hanging on to the gripsack, and delivering his message.

“Now, put me to bed,” he finished; “I’ll eat when I wake up.”

They did him honour, carrying him down in his rags and dirt and depositing him and Bondell’s grip in the bridal chamber, which was the biggest and most luxurious state-room in the ship. Twice he slept the clock around, and he had bathed and shaved and eaten and was leaning over the rail smoking a cigar when the two hundred pilgrims from White Horse came alongside.

By the time the Athenian arrived in Seattle, Churchill had fully recuperated, and he went ashore with Bondell's grip in his hand. He felt proud of that grip. To him it stood for achievement and integrity and trust. "I've delivered the goods," was the way he expressed these various high terms to himself. It was early in the evening, and he went straight to Bondell's home. Louis Bondell was glad to see him, shaking hands with both hands at the same time and dragging him into the house.

"Oh, thanks, old man; it was good of you to bring it out," Bondell said when he received the gripsack.

He tossed it carelessly upon a couch, and Churchill noted with an appreciative eye the rebound of its weight from the springs. Bondell was volleying him with questions.

"How did you make out? How're the boys? What became of Bill Smithers? Is Del Bishop still with Pierce? Did he sell my dogs? How did Sulphur Bottom show up? You're looking fine. What steamer did you come out on?"

To all of which Churchill gave answer, till half an hour had gone by and the first lull in the conversation had arrived.

"Hadn't you better take a look at it?" he suggested, nodding his head at the gripsack

"Oh, it's all right," Bondell answered. "Did Mitchell's dump turn out as much as he expected?"

"I think you'd better look at it," Churchill insisted. "When I deliver a thing, I want to be satisfied that it's all right. There's always the chance that somebody might have got into it when I was asleep, or something."

"It's nothing important, old man," Bondell answered, with a laugh.

"Nothing important," Churchill echoed in a faint, small voice. Then he spoke with decision: "Louis, what's in that bag? I want to know."

Louis looked at him curiously, then left the room and returned with a bunch of keys. He inserted his hand and drew out a heavy Colt's revolver. Next came out a few boxes of ammunition for the revolver and several boxes of Winchester cartridges.

Churchill took the gripsack and looked into it. Then he turned it upside down and shook it gently.

“The gun’s all rusted,” Bondell said. “Must have been out in the rain.”

“Yes,” Churchill answered. “Too bad it got wet. I guess I was a bit careless.”

He got up and went outside. Ten minutes later Louis Bondell went out and found him on the steps, sitting down, elbows on knees and chin on hands, gazing steadfastly out into the darkness.

Two Gold Bricks

THE heavy portiers were rudely thrust aside and a young man of twenty-two or thereabout flung, himself into the apartment to the evident astonishment of its inmate, who paused long enough in the act of lighting a cigarette to burn his fingers with the paper-lighter. “Ye gods! preserve us from the faddist!” he cried, dramatically elevating his arms heavenward as though invoking the protection of his divine friends, and then collapsing into the comfortable embrace of the nearest easy-chair.

His audience, having recovered his equanimity at the expense of a muffed curse upon all stage-struck friends, shoved the smoking stand at him. For a space they yielded to the soothing caress of the weed, then proceeded to an elucidation.

“Well, Ollie, old man, out with it. What’s the rub?” interrogated he of the burned fingers. Has your tailor taken to dunning on a wheel? Have your auburn lovelocks come into demand? or are they trying to enlist your sympathies in that artistic crusade among the unaesthetical denizens of Mott and Mulberry streets.”

“No. It’s not so bad as that; but what do you think they’ve been up to?”

“What? which? who? the aesthetics or the nonaesthetics?”

“I mean the crowd.”

“Oh, Archie and his friends. What have they been doing? Nothing serious I hope; and yet, they always were a serious crowd.”

It’s not serious. Oh, no; and still it concerns a very serious subject. Ha! ha! ha! you’d never guess! He! he! he! you’d — Ho! ho! ho!”

“Confound you and your paradoxes! Not serious — concerns a serious subject; a serious crowd, a foll’s laughter — fine material for an epigram. By Jove, if I don’t think it up.”

“Mercy, Oh, Damon, I pray you. A truce to your epigrams. I plead an arrest of judgment till I explain.”

“Proceed, I may be lenient.”

“You know I intended going down to Cape Weola for canvas-back and had made arrangements to start today. I packed up, expressed my traps, and said goodby all around, only to find the hunting-party had fallen through. Finding my pleasure nipped in the bud and because I had nothing to do, I became virtuous and made a long-delayed call upon that long-suffering maiden aunt of mine, in Brooklyn. Nice old girl! I tried not to be bored, and made the acquaintance of her two Persian cats, to say nothing of an angular female, who called and spent the afternoon in discussing equal suffrage and all that rot. What with that and the tea, I returned with a very bad headache and a very good intention of going early to bed.

"However, I thought I would drop in and see Archie — nice brother, archie — and entice him into making a call upon the long-suffering maiden aunt aforesaid. Archie was out, and tired of waiting I made myself comfortable in his boudoir — it's a real boudoir, you know — and fell asleep. I've no idea how long I was there, but suddenly I was awakened by the popping of corks and by conversation in his studio. 'Archie and a lot of his cronies,' I thought. 'Evidently they don't know I'm here.'

"They were as serious as usual. That melancholy rascal! Le Blanche, whose 'Bridge of Sighs,' and 'The Requital' you'll remember at the exhibition, was there, as was also Schomberg, his twin brother of personified misery. They were discussing the death of Willis '89 — used to chum with Archie and that crowd. The conversation turned to monuments, headstones, and epitaphs, and became quite interesting, I can assure you.

"That idiot, Fessler, opened the ball by deploring the conventional inconsistency with which our moderns remember the dead by the inscriptions they place on their headstones; and Schomberg quoted Shakespeare, revised; 'The good that men do lives' — etc., while Le Blanche favored them with the following from Byron, which I happened to know:

"'When some proud son of man returns to earth,
Unknown to glory but upheld by birth,
The Sculptor's art exhausts the pomp of woe,
And storied urns record who sests [sic] below;
When all is done, upon the tomb is seen,
Not what he was, but what he should have been.'"

"Finally, that band of morbid-minded pessimists took up funeral sermons and unmercifully berated our pious divines for their hypocrisy in the perpetration of the same. They decided that the custom was all wrong and a blot upon our cultured civilization. In the first place, they decided it was impossible to obtain anything but flattery when a man was paid to preach the sermon; in the second place, that it should be delivered by one who was conversant with the whole life of the deceased; and in the third place that, if he were an enemy he could not be induced to officiate, if a friend he would be certain to flatter. They at last reached the conclusion that all funeral sermons were snares and deceits, and since the only one who could properly officiate and tell the brutal, naked truth, would be the person being buried, it were better to abolish the wicked and immoral custom.

"Here the subject would have been dropped but for that brother of mine, who thought it would be 'so original, you know, for a man to make his own funeral oration.' Then he was ably supplemented by Moore, who enthusiastically cried out 'Why not?'

"It dawned upon them all — why not — the phonograph. Then and there they organized into a 'Voice from the Beyond,' or 'Every Man His Own Minister,' society. They gave it some Greek name and this is my free rendition of it. They elected their officers, swore ironclad oaths to tell all the mean little things and mean big things they had done during their lifetime, and promised to criticize unsparingly each other's faults and vices. After a voluntary assessment had been levied to procure a phonograph and the necessary paraphernalia they adjourned. They expect to have all their sermons in by this day week, and Archie is to take charge of them. He is to put them in that little safe you'll remember stands in a corner of his studio.

"While the crowd was departing I slipped Out by another door, and here lam."

"Like the girl that you are, come to tell me the secret while yet warm. But, Ollie, it seems to me as though there is more in it than you have told. I have a scheme."

"A scheme?"

"Yes, we will give an entertainment in your parlors. You know we have been running too big a margin, and I, for one, am rather short. This quarter's was all gone before I received it, and what I shall do till next quarter is an enigma. You are in just as bad a fix, too, so we'll give an entertainment."

"An entertainment?"

"Yes, and clear a cool ten hundred apiece."

"Whew! Ten hundred! Why I could square up and go on swimmingly! But, Damon, how are you going to do it?"

"Give an entertainment."

"Now don't talk in riddles. Come, explain."

And Damon explained while Ollie went into ecstasies of delight. Late that night, Ollie departed, and during the next ten days many were the consultations he held with Damon regarding the scheme.

Ten nights later, Ollie's parlors are all ablaze and perhaps threescore and ten male guests are assembled, for this is the night of the entertainment. Damon and Ollie are all bustling and important, and why not? Is not Professor Armstrong engaged this evening at a hundred dollars? Has not one of Edison's assistants come all the way from New Jersey with expenses paid and another hundred? And is there not the phonograph specialist? to say nothing of Crooke's tubes, electrical apparatus, kinetoscopes, and phonographs? Indeed, is it not to be a veritable treat to those lovers of popular science that have received invitations?

By nine, Ollie introduces Professor Armstrong, who took up Roentgen's discovery and applied it in many curious and instructive experiments. The kinetoscope man then engrossed their attention with thrilling scenes of life, and was followed by Edison's assistant, who presented illustrated demonstrations of several of the "wizard's" marvelous inventions.

In the meanwhile Damon drew Ollie aside and asked: "Is Archie's crowd all here?"

"Yes, all except Staunton. He has received the telegram and by this time is speeding across Connecticut."

"Good! But I'm sorry we had to get rid of him. Won't he be angry when he finds it out?"

"Won't he though."

To conclude the very enjoyable evening in experimental science, the phonograph specialist was introduced. After a few introductory remarks,in which, incidentally, the possibility of the voice of the dead coming back, was mentioned, he proceeded to arrange his apparatus. Taking one from a number of cylinders and inserting it in the phonograph, he applied the electric current and the delicate machinery was in motion.

A voice — Staunton's voice — in solemn tones, was heard, preaching a funeral sermon. The members of the "Voice from the Beyond" society looked inquiringly at each other, then in turn, perplexed, indignant, and amused. Staunton's rich, deep voice ground out of the machine, sternly moralizing in a manner demoralizing to the audience. How he criticized his own vices and trivialities! He had been weighed by himself in the balance and found wanting. Then he turned on his friends and upbraided them unsparingly for their follies. It was rich! Titters and suppressed giggles turned into continued roars of laughter, and when the phonograph ceased, after a bestowal of fatherly advice and solemn benedictions all round and a requiescat in pace, the audience went fairly wild.

The specialist was inserting another cylinder and the members of the "Voice from the Beyond" society were doing some hard thinking. There were hasty reviews of sermons preached recently into phonographic receivers, and many imparted secrets — secrets to be made known only after death — were remembered. They became alarmed. They knew not whose turn was next and they were all convinced that it was a scurvy trick.

Again the phonograph was started; but when Archie's voice was heard, soaring in the eloquent lights of his funeral oration, the members of the "Voice from the Beyond" society sprang to the little platform, stopped the machinery, and took possession of the cylinders. Ollie postulated; Damon feigned indignation. Finally, amid much confusion and many questions, Damon dismissed the audience, which soon departed, with the exception of the "Voice from the Beyond" society, which remained to talk it over and to take summary vengeance.

Ollie was cool, determined, dramatic — he would have made a model villain. He demanded two hundred and fifty dollars for the return of each of the cylinders. They refused. Why should they pay? Were they not in possession of the cylinders? Then Ollie talked vaguely of duplicate cylinders, which might find their way into the nickle-in-the-slot [sic] machines; of funeral orations going abroad from every street and public place in New York; of the possibility of disposing of these same duplicates among friends of the late deceased; and ominously hinted of many things decidedly worse.

"I say, Damon, we've squared up the Doldrums' racket, with interest, haven't we?"

"Didn't we though. By the way, Ollie, how much is ten times two hundred and fifty, minus five hundred, divided by two?"

"Ten hundred! By Jove! You're a brick, Damon, in planning."

"So are you, Ollie, in execution."

"Then we're both bricks, good gold bricks, worth ten hundred apiece."

Under the Deck Awnings

"Can any man – a gentleman, I mean – call a woman a pig?"

The little man flung this challenge forth to the whole group, then leaned back in his deck chair, sipping lemonade with an air commingled of certitude and watchful belligerence. Nobody made answer. They were used to the little man and his sudden passions and high elevations.

"I repeat, it was in my presence that he said a certain lady, whom none of you knows, was a pig. He did not say swine. He grossly said that she was a pig. And I hold that no man who is a man could possibly make such a remark about any woman."

Dr. Dawson puffed stolidly at his black pipe. Matthews, with knees hunched up and clasped by his arms, was absorbed in the flight of a gunie. Sweet, finishing his Scotch and soda, was questing about with his eyes for a deck steward.

"I ask you, Mr. Treloar, can any man call any woman a pig?"

Treloar, who happened to be sitting next to him, was startled by the abruptness of the attack, and wondered what grounds he had ever given the little man to believe that he could call a woman a pig.

"I should say," he began his hesitant answer, "that it – er – depends on the – er – the lady."

The little man was aghast.

"You mean …?" he quavered.

"That I have seen female humans who were as bad as pigs – and worse."

There was a long pained silence. The little man seemed withered by the coarse brutality of the reply. In his face was unutterable hurt and woe.

"You have told of a man who made a not nice remark and you have classified him," Treloar said in cold, even tones. "I shall now tell you about a woman – I beg your pardon – a lady, and when I have finished I shall ask you to classify her. Miss Caruthers I shall call her, principally for the reason that it is not her name. It was on a P. & 0. boat, and it occurred neither more nor less than several years ago.

"Miss Caruthers was charming. No; that is not the word. She was amazing. She was a young woman, and a lady. Her father was a certain high official whose name, if I mentioned it, would be immediately recognized by all of you. She was with her mother and two maids at the time, going out to join the old gentleman wherever you like to wish in the East.

"She, and pardon me for repeating, was amazing. It is the one adequate word. Even the most minor adjectives applicable to her are bound to be sheer superlatives. There was nothing she could not do better than any woman and than most men. Sing, play – bah — !as some rhetorician once said of old Nap, competition fled from her. Swim! She could have made a fortune and a name as a public performer. She was one of those rare women who can strip off all the frills of dress, and in simple swimming suit be more satisfying beautiful. Dress! She was an artist.

"But her swimming. Physically, she was the perfect woman – you know what I mean, not in the gross, muscular way of acrobats, but in all the delicacy of line and fragility of frame and texture. And combined with this, strength. How she could do it was the marvel. You know the wonder of a woman's arm – the fore arm, I mean; the sweet fading away from rounded biceps and hint of muscle, down through small elbow and firm soft swell to the wrist, small, unthinkably small and round and strong. This was hers. And yet, to see her swimming the sharp quick English overhand stroke, and getting somewhere with it, too, was – well, I understand anatomy and athletics and such things, and yet it was a mystery to me how she could do it.

"She could stay under water for two minutes. I have timed her. No man on board, except Dennitson, could capture as many coins as she with a single dive. On the forward main-deck was a big canvas tank with six feet of sea-water. We used to toss small coins into it. I have seen her dive from the bridge deck – no mean feat in itself – into that six-feet of water, and fetch up no less than forty-seven coins, scattered willy-nilly over the whole bottom of the tank. Dennitson, a quiet young Englishman, never exceeded her in this, though he made it a point always to tie her score.

"She was a sea-woman, true. But she was a land-woman, a horsewoman – a — she was the universal woman. To see her, all softness of soft dress, surrounded by half a dozen eager men, languidly careless of them all or flashing brightness and wit on them and at them and through them, one would fancy she was good for nothing else in the world. At such moments I have compelled myself to remember her score of forty-seven coins from the bottom of the swimming tank. But that was she, the everlasting, wonder of a woman who did all things well.

“She fascinated every betrousered human around her. She had me – and I don’t mind confessing it – she bad me to heel along with the rest. Young puppies and old gray dogs who ought to have known better – oh, they all came up and crawled around her skirts and whined and fawned when she whistled. They were all guilty, from young Ardmore, a pink cherub of nineteen outward bound for some clerkship in the Consular Service, to old Captain Bentley, grizzled and sea-worn, and as emotional, to look at, as a Chinese joss. There was a nice middle-aged chap, Perkins, I believe, who forgot his wife was on board until Miss Caruthers sent him to the right about and back where he belonged.

“Men were wax in her hands. She melted them, or softly molded them, or incinerated them, as she pleased. There wasn’t a steward, even, grand and remote as she was, who, at her bidding, would have hesitated to souse the Old Man himself with a plate of soup. You have all seen such women – a sort of world’s desire to all men. As a man-conqueror she was supreme. She was a whip-lash, a sting and a flame, an electric spark. Oh, believe me, at times there were flashes of will that scorched through her beauty and seduction and smote a victim into blank and shivering idiocy and fear.

“And don’t fail to mark, in the light of what is to come, that she was a prideful woman. Pride of race, pride of caste, pride of sex, pride of power – she had it all, a pride strange and wilful and terrible.

“She ran the ship, she ran the voyage, she ran everything, and she ran Dennitson. That he had outdistanced the pack even the least wise of us admitted. That she liked him, and that this feeling was growing, there was not a doubt. I am certain that she looked on him with kinder eyes than she had ever looked with on man before. We still worshiped, and were always hanging about waiting to be whistled up, though we knew that Dennitson was laps and laps ahead of us. What might have happened we shall never know, for we came to Colombo and something else happened.

“You know Colombo, and how the native boys dive for coins in the shark-infested bay. Of course, it is only among the ground sharks and fish sharks that they venture. It is almost uncanny the way they know sharks and can sense the presence of a real killer – a tiger shark, for instance, or a gray nurse strayed up from Australian waters. Let such a shark appear, and, long before the passengers can guess, every mother’s son of them is out of the water in a wild scramble for safety.

“It was after tiffin, and Miss Caruthers was holding her usual court under the deck-awnings. Old Captain Bentley had just been whistled up, and had granted her what he never granted before…nor since – permission for the boys to come up on the promenade deck. You see, Miss Caruthers was a swimmer, and she was interested. She took up a collection of all our small change, and herself tossed it overside, singly and in handfuls, arranging the terms of the contests, chiding a miss, giving extra rewards to clever wins, in short, managing the whole exhibition.

“She was especially keen on their jumping. You know, jumping feet-first from a height, it is very difficult to hold the body perpendicularly while in the air. The center of gravity of the male body is high, and the tendency is to overtopple. But the little beggars employed a method which she declared was new to her and which she desired to learn. Leaping from the davits of the boat-deck above, they plunged downward, their faces and shoulders bowed forward, looking at the water. And only at the last moment did they abruptly straighten up and enter the water erect and true.

“It was a pretty sight. Their diving was not so good, though there was one of them who was excellent at it, as he was in all the other stunts. Some white man must have taught him, for he made the proper swan dive and did it as beautifully as I have ever seen it. You know, headfirst into the water, from a great height, the problem is to enter the water at the perfect angle. Miss the angle and it means at the least a twisted back and injury for life. Also, it has meant death for many a bungler. But this boy could do it – seventy feet I know he cleared in one dive from the rigging – clenched hands on chest, head thrown back, sailing more like a bird, upward and out, and out and down, body flat on the air so that if it struck the surface in that position it would be split in half like a herring. But the moment before the water is reached, the head drops forward, the hands go out and lock the arms in an arch in advance of the head, and the body curves gracefully downward and enters the water just right.

“This the boy did, again and again, to the delight of all of us, but particularly of Miss Caruthers. He could not have been a moment over twelve or thirteen, yet he was by far the cleverest of the gang. He was the favorite of his crowd, and its leader. Though there were a number older than he, they acknowledged his chieftaincy. He was a beautiful boy, a lithe young god in breathing bronze, eyes wide apart, intelligent and daring, a bubble, a mote, a beautiful flash and sparkle of life. You have seen.

wonderful glorious creatures – animals, anything, a leopard, a horse-restless, eager, too much alive ever to be still, silken of muscle, each slightest movement a benediction of grace, every action wild, untrammeled, and over all spilling out that intense vitality, that sheen and luster of living light. The boy had it. Life poured out of him almost in an effulgence. His skin glowed with it. It burned in his eyes. I swear I could almost hear it crackle from him. Looking at him, it was as if a whiff of ozone came to one's nostrils – so fresh and young was he, so resplendent with health, so wildly wild.

"This was the boy. And it was he who gave the alarm in the midst of the sport. The boys made a dash of it for the gangway platform, swimming the fastest strokes they knew, pellmell, floundering and splashing, fright in their faces, clambering out with jumps and surges, any way to get out, lending one another a hand to safety, till all were strung along the gangway and peering down into the water.

" 'What is the matter?' asked Miss Caruthers.

" 'A shark, I fancy,' Captain Bentley answered. 'Lucky little beggars that he didn't get one of them.'

" 'Are they afraid of sharks?' she asked.

" 'Aren't you?' he asked back.

She shuddered, looked overside at the water, and made a moue.

" 'Not for the world would I venture where a shark might be,' she said, and shuddered again. 'They are horrible! Horrible!'

"The boys came up on the promenade deck, clustering close to the rail and worshiping Miss Caruthers who had flung them such a wealth of backsheesh. The performance being over, Captain Bentley motioned to them to clear out. But she stopped him.

" 'One moment, please, Captain. I have always understood that the natives are not afraid of sharks.'

"She beckoned the boy of the swan dive nearer to her, and signed to him to dive over again. He shook his head, and along with all his crew behind him laughed as if it were a good joke.

" 'Shark,' he volunteered, pointing to the water.

" 'No,' she said. 'There is no shark.'

"But he nodded his head positively, and the boys behind him nodded with equal positiveness.

“ ‘No, no, no,’ she cried. And then to us, ‘Who’ll lend me a half-crown and a sovereign!’

“Immediately the half dozen of us were presenting her with crowns and sovereigns, and she accepted the two coins from young Ardmore.

“She held up the half-crown for the boys to see. But there was no eager rush to the rail preparatory to leaping. They stood there grinning sheepishly. She offered the coin to each one individually, and each, as his turn came, rubbed his foot against his calf, shook his head, and grinned. Then she tossed the half-crown overboard. With wistful, regretful faces they watched its silver flight through the air, but not one moved to follow it.

“ ‘Don’t do it with the sovereign,’ Dennitson said to her in a low voice.

“She took no notice, but held up the gold coin before the eyes of the boy of the swan dive.

“ ‘Don’t,’ said Captain Bentley. ‘I wouldn’t throw a sick cat overside with a shark around.’

“But she laughed, bent on her purpose, and continued to dazzle the boy.

“ ‘Don’t tempt him,’ Dennitson urged. ‘It is a fortune to him, and he might go over after it.’

“ ‘Wouldn’t YOU?’ she flared at him. ‘If I threw it?’

This last more softly.

Dennitson shook his head.

“ ‘Your price is high,’ she said. ‘For how many sovereigns would you go?’

“ ‘There are not enough coined to get me overside,’ was his answer.

“She debated a moment, the boy forgotten in her tilt with Dennitson.

“ ‘For me?’ she said very softly.

“ ‘To save your life – yes. But not otherwise.’

“She turned back to the boy. Again she held the coin before his eyes, dazzling him with the vastness of its value. Then she made as to toss it out, and, involuntarily, he made a half-movement toward the rail, but was checked by sharp cries of reproof from his companions. There was anger in their voices as well.

“ ‘I know it is only fooling,’ Dennitson said. ‘Carry it as far as you like, but for heaven’s sake don’t throw it.’

“Whether it was that strange wilfulness of hers, or whether she doubted the boy could be persuaded, there is no telling. It was unexpected to all of us. Out from the shade of the awning the coin flashed golden in the blaze of sunshine and fell toward the sea in a glittering arch. Before a hand could stay him, the boy was over the rail and curving beautifully downward after the coin. Both were in the air at the same time. It was a pretty sight. The sovereign cut the water sharply, and at the very spot, almost at the same instant, with scarcely a splash, the boy entered.

"From the quicker-eyed black boys watching, came an exclamation. We were all at the railing. Don't tell me it is necessary for a shark to turn on its back. That one did not. In the clear water, from the height we were above it, we saw everything. The shark was a big brute, and with one drive he cut the boy squarely in half.

"There was a murmur or something from among us – who made it I did not know; it might have been I. And then there was silence. Miss Caruthers was the first to speak. Her face was deathly white.

" 'I never dreamed,' she said, and laughed a short, hysterical laugh.

All her pride was at work to give her control. She turned weakly toward Dennitson, and then, on from one to another of us. In her eyes was a terrible sickness, and her lips were trembling. We were brutes – oh, I know it, now that I look back upon it. But we did nothing.

" 'Mr. Dennitson,' she said, 'Tom, won't you take me below!'

"He never changed the direction of his gaze, which was the bleakest I have ever seen in a man's face, nor did he move an eyelid. He took a cigarette from his case and lighted it. Captain Bentley made a nasty sound in his throat and spat overboard. That was all; that and the silence.

"She turned away and started to walk firmly down the deck. Twenty feet away, she swayed and thrust a hand against the wall to save herself. And so she went on, supporting herself against the cabins and walking very slowly." Treloar ceased. He turned his head and favored the little man with a look of cold inquiry.

"Well," he said finally. "Classify her."

The little man gulped and swallowed.

"I have nothing to say," he said. "I have nothing whatever to say."

The Unexpected

IT is a simple matter to see the obvious, to do the expected. The tendency of the individual life is to be static rather than dynamic, and this tendency is made into a propulsion by civilization, where the obvious only is seen, and the unexpected rarely happens. When the unexpected does happen, however, and when it is of sufficiently grave import, the unfit perish. They do not see what is not obvious, are unable to do the unexpected, are incapable of adjusting their well-grooved lives to other and strange grooves. In short, when they come to the end of their own groove, they die.

On the other hand, there are those that make toward survival, the fit individuals who escape from the rule of the obvious and the expected and adjust their lives to no matter what strange grooves they may stray into, or into which they may be forced. Such an individual was Edith Whittlesey. She was born in a rural district of England, where life proceeds by rule of thumb and the unexpected is so very unexpected that when it happens it is looked upon as an immorality. She went into service early, and while yet a young woman, by rule-of-thumb progression, she became a lady’s maid.

The effect of civilization is to impose human law upon environment until it becomes machine-like in its regularity. The objectionable is eliminated, the inevitable is foreseen. One is not even made wet by the rain nor cold by the frost; while death, instead of stalking about grewsome and accidental, becomes a prearranged pageant, moving along a well-oiled groove to the family vault, where the hinges are kept from rusting and the dust from the air is swept continually away.

Such was the environment of Edith Whittlesey. Nothing happened. It could scarcely be called a happening, when, at the age of twenty-five, she accompanied her mistress on a bit of travel to the United States. The groove merely changed its direction. It was still the same groove and well oiled. It was a groove that bridged the Atlantic with uneventfulness, so that the ship was not a ship in the midst of the sea, but a capacious, many-corridored hotel that moved swiftly and placidly, crushing the waves into submission with its colossal bulk until the sea was a mill-pond, monotonous with quietude. And at the other side the groove continued on over the land-a well-disposed, respectable groove that supplied hotels at every stopping-place, and hotels on wheels between the stopping-places.

In Chicago, while her mistress saw one side of social life, Edith Whittlesey saw another side; and when she left her lady’s service and became Edith Nelson, she betrayed, perhaps faintly, her ability to grapple with the unexpected and to master it. Hans Nelson, immigrant, Swede by birth and carpenter by occupation, had in him that Teutonic unrest that drives the race ever westward on its great adventure. He was a large-muscled, stolid sort of a man, in whom little imagination was coupled with immense initiative, and who possessed, withal, loyalty and affection as sturdy as his own strength.

“When I have worked hard and saved me some money, I will go to Colorado,” he had told Edith on the day after their wedding. A year later they were in Colorado, where Hans Nelson saw his first mining and caught the mining-fever himself. His prospecting led him through the Dakotas, Idaho, and eastern Oregon, and on into the mountains of British Columbia. In camp and on trail, Edith Nelson was always with him, sharing his luck, his hardship, and his toil. The short step of the house-reared woman she exchanged for the long stride of the mountaineer. She learned to look upon danger clear-eyed and with understanding, losing forever that panic fear which is bred of ignorance and which afflicts the city-reared, making them as silly as silly horses, so that they await fate in frozen horror instead of grappling with it, or stampede in blind self-destroying terror which clutters the way with their crushed carcasses.

Edith Nelson met the unexpected at every turn of the trail, and she trained her vision so that she saw in the landscape, not the obvious, but the concealed. She, who had never cooked in her life, learned to make bread without the mediation of hops, yeast, or baking-powder, and to bake bread, top and bottom, in a frying-pan before an open fire. And when the last cup of flour was gone and the last rind of bacon, she was able to rise to the occasion, and of moccasins and the softer-tanned bits of leather in the outfit to make a grub-stake substitute that somehow held a man’s soul in his body and enabled him to stagger on. She learned to pack a horse as well as a man,-a task to break the heart and the pride of any city-dweller, and she knew how to throw the hitch best suited for any particular kind of pack. Also, she could build a fire of wet wood in a downpour of rain and not lose her temper. In short, in all its guises she mastered the unexpected. But the Great Unexpected was yet to come into her life and put its test upon her.

The gold-seeking tide was flooding northward into Alaska, and it was inevitable that Hans Nelson and his wife should he caught up by the stream and swept toward the Klondike. The fall of 1897 found them at Dyea, but without the money to carry an outfit across Chilcoot Pass and float it down to Dawson. So Hans Nelson worked at his trade that winter and helped rear the mushroom outfitting-town of Skaguay.

He was on the edge of things, and throughout the winter he heard all Alaska calling to him. Latuya Bay called loudest, so that the summer of 1898 found him and his wife threading the mazes of the broken coast-line in seventy-foot Siwash canoes. With them were Indians, also three other men. The Indians landed them and their supplies in a lonely bight of land a hundred miles or so beyond Latuya Bay, and returned to Skaguay; but the three other men remained, for they were members of the organized party. Each had put an equal share of capital into the outfitting, and the profits were to he divided equally. In that Edith Nelson undertook to cook for the outfit, a man’s share was to be her portion.

First, spruce trees were cut down and a three-room cabin constructed. To keep this cabin was Edith Nelson’s task. The task of the men was to search for gold, which they did; and to find gold, which they likewise did. It was not a startling find, merely a low-pay placer where long hours of severe toil earned each man between fifteen and twenty dollars a day. The brief Alaskan summer protracted itself beyond its usual length, and they took advantage of the opportunity, delaying their return to Skaguay to the last moment. And then it was too late. Arrangements had been made to accompany the several dozen local Indians on their fall trading trip down the coast. The Siwashes had waited on the white people until the eleventh hour, and then departed. There was no course left the party but to wait for chance transportation. In the meantime the claim was cleaned up and firewood stocked in.

The Indian summer had dreamed on and on, and then, suddenly, with the sharpness of bugles, winter came. It came in a single night, and the miners awoke to howling wind, driving snow, and freezing water. Storm followed storm, and between the storms there was the silence, broken only by the boom of the surf on the desolate shore, where the salt spray rimmed the beach with frozen white.

All went well in the cabin. Their gold-dust had weighed up something like eight thousand dollars, and they could not but be contented. The men made snowshoes, hunted fresh meat for the larder, and in the long evenings played endless games of whist and pedro. Now that the mining had ceased, Edith Nelson turned over the fire-building and the dish-washing to the men, while she darned their socks and mended their clothes.

There was no grumbling, no bickering, nor petty quarrelling in the little cabin, and they often congratulated one another on the general happiness of the party. Hans Nelson was stolid and easy-going, while Edith had long before won his unbounded admiration by her capacity for getting on with people. Harkey, a long, lank Texan, was unusually friendly for one with a saturnine disposition, and, as long as his theory that gold grew was not challenged, was quite companionable. The fourth member of the party, Michael Dennin, contributed his Irish wit to the gayety of the cabin. He was a large, powerful man, prone to sudden rushes of anger over little things, and of unfailing good-humor under the stress and strain of big things. The fifth and last member, Dutchy, was the willing butt of the party. He even went out of his way to raise a laugh at his own expense in order to keep things cheerful. His deliberate aim in life seemed to be that of a maker of laughter. No serious quarrel had ever vexed the serenity of the party; and, now that each had sixteen hundred dollars to show for a short summer's work, there reigned the well-fed, contented spirit of prosperity.

And then the unexpected happened. They had just sat down to the breakfast table. Though it was already eight o'clock (late breakfasts had followed naturally upon cessation of the steady work at mining) a candle in the neck of a bottle lighted the meal. Edith and Hans sat at each end of the table. On one side, with their backs to the door, sat Harkey and Dutchy. The place on the other side was vacant. Dennin had not yet come in.

Hans Nelson looked at the empty chair, shook his head slowly, and, with a ponderous attempt at humor, said: "Always is he first at the grub. It is very strange. Maybe he is sick."

"Where is Michael?" Edith asked.

"Got up a little ahead of us and went outside," Harkey answered.

Dutchy's face beamed mischievously. He pretended knowledge of Dennin's absence, and affected a mysterious air, while they clamored for information. Edith, after a peep into the men's bunk-room, returned to the table. Hans looked at her, and she shook her head.

"He was never late at meal-time before," she remarked.

“I cannot understand,” said Hans. “Always has he the great appetite like the horse.”

“It is too bad,” Dutchy said, with a sad shake of his head.

They were beginning to make merry over their comrade’s absence.

“It is a great pity!” Dutchy volunteered.

“What?” they demanded in chorus.

“Poor Michael,” was the mournful reply.

“Well, what’s wrong with Michael?” Harkey asked.

“He is not hungry no more,” wailed Dutchy. “He has lost der appetite. He do not like der grub.”

“Not from the way he pitches into it up to his ears,” remarked Harkey.

“He does dot shust to be politeful to Mrs. Nelson,” was Dutchy’s quick retort. “I know, I know, and it is too pad. Why is he not here? Pecause he haf gone out. Why haf he gone out? For der defelopment of der appetite. How does he defelop der appetite? He walks barefoots in der snow. Ach! don’t I know? It is der way der rich peoples chases after der appetite when it is no more and is running away. Michael haf sixteen hundred dollars. He is rich peoples. He haf no appetite. Derefore, pecause, he is chasing der appetite. Shust you open der door und you will see his barefoots in der snow. No, you will not see der appetite. Dot is shust his trouble. When he sees der appetite he will catch it und come to preak-fast.”

They burst into loud laughter at Dutchy’s nonsense. The sound had scarcely died away when the door opened and Dennin came in. All turned to look at him. He was carrying a shot-gun. Even as they looked, he lifted it to his shoulder and fired twice. At the first shot Dutchy sank upon the table, overturning his mug of coffee, his yellow mop of hair dabbling in his plate of mush. His forehead, which pressed upon the near edge of the plate, tilted the plate up against his hair at an angle of forty-five degrees. Harkey was in the air, in his spring to his feet, at the second shot, and he pitched face down upon the floor, his “My God!” gurgling and dying in his throat.

It was the unexpected. Hans and Edith were stunned. They sat at the table with bodies tense, their eyes fixed in a fascinated gaze upon the murderer. Dimly they saw him through the smoke of the powder, and in the silence nothing was to be heard save the drip-drip of Dutchy’s spilled coffee on the floor. Dennin threw open the breech of the shot-gun, ejecting the empty shells. Holding the gun with one hand, he reached with the other into his pocket for fresh shells.

He was thrusting the shells into the gun when Edith Nelson was aroused to action. It was patent that he intended to kill Hans and her. For a space of possibly three seconds of time she had been dazed and paralysed by the horrible and inconceivable form in which the unexpected had made its appearance. Then she rose to it and grappled with it. She grappled with it concretely, making a cat-like leap for the murderer and gripping his neck-cloth with both her hands. The impact of her body sent him stumbling backward several steps. He tried to shake her loose and still retain his hold on the gun. This was awkward, for her firm-fleshed body had become a cat's. She threw herself to one side, and with her grip at his throat nearly jerked him to the floor. He straightened himself and whirled swiftly. Still faithful to her hold, her body followed the circle of his whirl so that her feet left the floor, and she swung through the air fastened to his throat by her hands. The whirl culminated in a collision with a chair, and the man and woman crashed to the floor in a wild struggling fall that extended itself across half the length of the room.

Hans Nelson was half a second behind his wife in rising to the unexpected. His nerve processed and mental processes were slower than hers. His was the grosser organism, and it had taken him half a second longer to perceive, and determine, and proceed to do. She had already flown at Dennin and gripped his throat, when Hans sprang to his feet. But her coolness was not his. He was in a blind fury, a Berserker rage. At the instant he sprang from his chair his mouth opened and there issued forth a sound that was half roar, half bellow. The whirl of the two bodies had already started, and still roaring, or bellowing, he pursued this whirl down the room, overtaking it when it fell to the floor.

Hans hurled himself upon the prostrate man, striking madly with his fists. They were sledge-like blows, and when Edith felt Dennin's body relax she loosed her grip and rolled clear. She lay on the floor, panting and watching. The fury of blows continued to rain down. Dennin did not seem to mind the blows. He did not even move. Then it dawned upon her that he was unconscious. She cried out to Hans to stop. She cried out again. But he paid no heed to her voice. She caught him by the arm, but her clinging to it merely impeded his effort.

It was no reasoned impulse that stirred her to do what she then did. Nor was it a sense of pity, nor obedience to the "Thou shalt not" of religion. Rather was it some sense of law, an ethic of her race and early environment, that compelled her to interpose her body between her husband and the helpless murderer. It was not until Hans knew he was striking his wife that he ceased. He allowed himself to be shoved away by her in much the same way that a ferocious but obedient dog allows itself to be shoved away by its master. The analogy went even farther. Deep in his throat, in an animal-like way, Hans's rage still rumbled, and several times he made as though to spring back upon his prey and was only prevented by the woman's swiftly interposed body.

Back and farther back Edith shoved her husband. She had never seen him in such a condition, and she was more frightened of him than she had been of Dennin in the thick of the struggle. She could not believe that this raging beast was her Hans, and with a shock she became suddenly aware of a shrinking, instinctive fear that he might snap her hand in his teeth like any wild animal. For some seconds, unwilling to hurt her, yet dogged in his desire to return to the attack, Hans dodged back and forth. But she resolutely dodged with him, until the first glimmerings of reason returned and he gave over.

Both crawled to their feet. Hans staggered back against the wall, where he leaned, his face working, in his throat the deep and continuous rumble that died away with the seconds and at last ceased. The time for the reaction had come. Edith stood in the middle of the floor, wringing her hands, panting and gasping, her whole body trembling violently.

Hans looked at nothing, but Edith's eyes wandered wildly from detail to detail of what had taken place. Dennin lay without movement. The overturned chair, hurled onward in the mad whirl, lay near him. Partly under him lay the shot-gun, still broken open at the breech. Spilling out of his right hand were the two cartridges which he had failed to put into the gun and which he had clutched until consciousness left him. Harkey lay on the floor, face downward, where he had fallen; while Dutchy rested forward on the table, his yellow mop of hair buried in his mush-plate, the plate itself still tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees. This tilted plate fascinated her. Why did it not fall down? It was ridiculous. It was not in the nature of things for a mush-plate to up-end itself on the table, even if a man or so had been killed.

She glanced back at Dennin, but her eyes returned to the tilted plate. It was so ridiculous! She felt a hysterical impulse to laugh. Then she noticed the silence, and forgot the plate in a desire for something to happen. The monotonous drip of the coffee from the table to the floor merely emphasized the silence. Why did not Hans do something? say something? She looked at him and was about to speak, when she discovered that her tongue refused its wonted duty. There was a peculiar ache in her throat, and her mouth was dry and furry. She could only look at Hans, who, in turn, looked at her.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a sharp, metallic clang. She screamed, jerking her eyes back to the table. The plate had fallen down. Hans sighed as though awakening from sleep. The clang of the plate had aroused them to life in a new world. The cabin epitomized the new world in which they must thenceforth live and move. The old cabin was gone forever. The horizon of life was totally new and unfamiliar. The unexpected had swept its wizardry over the face of things, changing the perspective, juggling values, and shuffling the real and the unreal into perplexing confusion.

“My God, Hans!” was Edith’s first speech.

He did not answer, but stared at her with horror. Slowly his eyes wandered over the room, for the first time taking in its details. Then he put on his cap and started for the door.

“Where are you going?” Edith demanded, in an agony of apprehension.

His hand was on the door-knob, and he half turned as he answered, “To dig some graves.”

“Don’t leave me, Hans, with — “ her eyes swept the room — “with this.”

“The graves must be dug sometime,” he said.

“But you do not know how many,” she objected desperately. She noted his indecision, and added, “Besides, I’ll go with you and help.”

Hans stepped back to the table and mechanically snuffed the candle. Then between them they made the examination. Both Harkey and Dutchy were dead — frightfully dead, because of the close range of the shot-gun. Hans refused to go near Dennin, and Edith was forced to conduct this portion of the investigation by herself.

“He isn’t dead,” she called to Hans.

He walked over and looked down at the murderer.

“What did you say?” Edith demanded, having caught the rumble of inarticulate speech in her husband’s throat.

“I said it was a damn shame that he isn’t dead,” came the reply.

Edith was bending over the body.

“Leave him alone,” Hans commanded harshly, in a strange voice.

She looked at him in sudden alarm. He had picked up the shot-gun dropped by Dennin and was thrusting in the shells.

“What are you going to do?” she cried, rising swiftly from her bending position.

Hans did not answer, but she saw the shot-gun going to his shoulder. She grasped the muzzle with her hand and threw it up.

“Leave me alone!” he cried hoarsely.

He tried to jerk the weapon away from her, but she came in closer and clung to him.

“Hans! Hans! Wake up!” she cried. “Don’t be crazy!”

“He killed Dutchy and Harkey!” was her husband’s reply; “and I am going to kill him.”

“But that is wrong,” she objected. “There is the law.”

He sneered his incredulity of the law’s potency in such a region, but he merely iterated, dispassionately, doggedly, “He killed Dutchy and Harkey.”

Long she argued it with him, but the argument was one-sided, for he contented himself with repeating again and again, “He killed Dutchy and Harkey.” But she could not escape from her childhood training nor from the blood that was in her. The heritage of law was hers, and right conduct, to her, was the fulfilment of the law. She could see no other righteous course to pursue. Hans’s taking the law in his own hands was no more justifiable than Dennin’s deed. Two wrongs did not make a right, she contended, and there was only one way to punish Dennin, and that was the legal way arranged by society. At last Hans gave in to her.

“All right,” he said. “Have it your own way. And to-morrow or next day look to see him kill you and me.”

She shook her head and held out her hand for the shot-gun. He started to hand it to her, then hesitated.

“Better let me shoot him,” he pleaded.

Again she shook her head, and again he started to pass her the gun, when the door opened, and an Indian, without knocking, came in. A blast of wind and flurry of snow came in with him. They turned and faced him, Hans still holding the shot-gun. The intruder took in the scene without a quiver. His eyes embraced the dead and wounded in a sweeping glance. No surprise showed in his face, not even curiosity. Harkey lay at his feet, but he took no notice of him. So far as he was concerned, Harkey’s body did not exist.

“Much wind,” the Indian remarked by way of salutation. “All well? Very well?”

Hans, still grasping the gun, felt sure that the Indian attributed to him the mangled corpses. He glanced appealingly at his wife.

“Good morning, Negook,” she said, her voice betraying her effort. “No, not very well. Much trouble.”

“Good-by, I go now, much hurry”, the Indian said, and without semblance of haste, with great deliberation stepping clear of a red pool on the floor, he opened the door and went out.

The man and woman looked at each other.

“He thinks we did it,” Hans gasped, “that I did it.”

Edith was silent for a space. Then she said, briefly, in a businesslike way:

“Never mind what he thinks. That will come after. At present we have two graves to dig. But first of all, we’ve got to tie up Dennin so he can’t escape.”

Hans refused to touch Dennin, but Edith lashed him securely, hand and foot. Then she and Hans went out into the snow. The ground was frozen. It was impervious to a blow of the pick. They first gathered wood, then scraped the snow away and on the frozen surface built a fire. When the fire had burned for an hour, several inches of dirt had thawed. This they shovelled out, and then built a fresh fire. Their descent into the earth progressed at the rate of two or three inches an hour.

It was hard and bitter work. The flurrying snow did not permit the fire to burn any too well, while the wind cut through their clothes and chilled their bodies. They held but little conversation. The wind interfered with speech. Beyond wondering at what could have been Dennin’s motive, they remained silent, oppressed by the horror of the tragedy. At one o’clock, looking toward the cabin, Hans announced that he was hungry.

“No, not now, Hans,” Edith answered. “I couldn’t go back alone into that cabin the way it is, and cook a meal.”

At two o’clock Hans volunteered to go with her; but she held him to his work, and four o’clock found the two graves completed. They were shallow, not more than two feet deep, but they would serve the purpose. Night had fallen. Hans got the sled, and the two dead men were dragged through the darkness and storm to their frozen sepulchre. The funeral procession was anything but a pageant. The sled sank deep into the drifted snow and pulled hard. The man and the woman had eaten nothing since the previous day, and were weak from hunger and exhaustion. They had not the strength to resist the wind, and at times its buffets hurled them off their feet. On several occasions the sled was overturned, and they were compelled to reload it with its sombre freight. The last hundred feet to the graves was up a steep slope, and this they took on all fours, like sled-dogs, making legs of their arms and thrusting their hands into the snow. Even so, they were twice dragged backward by the weight of the sled, and slid and fell down the hill, the living and the dead, the haul-ropes and the sled, in ghastly entanglement.

"To-morrow I will put up head-boards with their names," Hans said, when the graves were filled in.

Edith was sobbing. A few broken sentences had been all she was capable of in the way of a funeral service, and now her husband was compelled to half-carry her back to the cabin.

Dennin was conscious. He had rolled over and over on the floor in vain efforts to free himself. He watched Hans and Edith with glittering eyes, but made no attempt to speak. Hans still refused to touch the murderer, and sullenly watched Edith drag him across the floor to the men's bunk-room. But try as she would, she could not lift him from the floor into his bunk.

"Better let me shoot him, and we'll have no more trouble," Hans said in final appeal.

Edith shook her head and bent again to her task. To her surprise the body rose easily, and she knew Hans had relented and was helping her. Then came the cleansing of the kitchen. But the floor still shrieked the tragedy, until Hans planed the surface of the stained wood away and with the shavings made a fire in the stove.

The days came and went. There was much of darkness and silence, broken only by the storms and the thunder on the beach of the freezing surf. Hans was obedient to Edith's slightest order. All his splendid initiative had vanished. She had elected to deal with Dennin in her way, and so he left the whole matter in her hands.

The murderer was a constant menace. At all times there was the chance that he might free himself from his bonds, and they were compelled to guard him day and night. The man or the woman sat always beside him, holding the loaded shot-gun. At first, Edith tried eight-hour watches, but the continuous strain was too great, and afterwards she and Hans relieved each other every four hours. As they had to sleep, and as the watches extended through the night, their whole waking time was expended in guarding Dennin. They had barely time left over for the preparation of meals and the getting of firewood.

Since Negook's inopportune visit, the Indians had avoided the cabin. Edith sent Hans to their cabins to get them to take Dennin down the coast in a canoe to the nearest white settlement or trading post, but the errand was fruitless. Then Edith went herself and interviewed Negook. He was head man of the little village, keenly aware of his responsibility, and he elucidated his policy thoroughly in few words.

"It is white man's trouble", he said, "not Siwash trouble. My people help you, then will it be Siwash trouble too. When white man's trouble and Siwash trouble come together and make a trouble, it is a great trouble, beyond understanding and without end. Trouble no good. My people do no wrong. What for they help you and have trouble?"

So Edith Nelson went back to the terrible cabin with its endless alternating four-hour watches. Sometimes, when it was her turn and she sat by the prisoner, the loaded shot-gun in her lap, her eyes would close and she would doze. Always she aroused with a start, snatching up the gun and swiftly looking at him. These were distinct nervous shocks, and their effect was not good on her. Such was her fear of the man, that even though she were wide awake, if he moved under the bedclothes she could not repress the start and the quick reach for the gun.

She was preparing herself for a nervous break-down, and she knew it. First came a fluttering of the eyeballs, so that she was compelled to close her eyes for relief. A little later the eyelids were afflicted by a nervous twitching that she could not control. To add to the strain, she could not forget the tragedy. She remained as close to the horror as on the first morning when the unexpected stalked into the cabin and took possession. In her daily ministrations upon the prisoner she was forced to grit her teeth and steel herself, body and spirit.

Hans was affected differently. He became obsessed by the idea that it was his duty to kill Dennin; and whenever he waited upon the bound man or watched by him, Edith was troubled by the fear that Hans would add another red entry to the cabin's record. Always he cursed Dennin savagely and handled him roughly. Hans tried to conceal his homicidal mania, and he would say to his wife: "By and by you will want me to kill him, and then I will not kill him. It would make me sick." But more than once, stealing into the room, when it was her watch off, she would catch the two men glaring ferociously at each other, wild animals the pair of them, in Hans's face the lust to kill, in Dennin's the fierceness and savagery of the cornered rat. "Hans!" she would cry, "wake up!" and he would come to a recollection of himself, startled and shamefaced and unrepentant.

So Hans became another factor in the problem the unexpected had given Edith Nelson to solve. At first it had been merely a question of right conduct in dealing with Dennin, and right conduct, as she conceived it, lay in keeping him a prisoner until he could be turned over for trial before a proper tribunal. But now entered Hans, and she saw that his sanity and his salvation were involved. Nor was she long in discovering that her own strength and endurance had become part of the problem. She was breaking down under the strain. Her left arm had developed involuntary jerkings and twitchings. She spilled her food from her spoon, and could place no reliance in her afflicted arm. She judged it to be a form of St. Vitus's dance, and she feared the extent to which its ravages might go. What if she broke down? And the vision she had of the possible future, when the cabin might contain only Dennin and Hans, was an added horror.

After the third day, Dennin had begun to talk. His first question had been, "What are you going to do with me?" And this question he repeated daily and many times a day. And always Edith replied that he would assuredly be dealt with according to law. In turn, she put a daily question to him,-"Why did you do it?" To this he never replied. Also, he received the question with out-bursts of anger, raging and straining at the rawhide that bound him and threatening her with what he would do when he got loose, which he said he was sure to do sooner or later. At such times she cocked both triggers of the gun, prepared to meet him with leaden death if he should burst loose, herself trembling and palpitating and dizzy from the tension and shock.

But in time Dennin grew more tractable. It seemed to her that he was growing weary of his unchanging recumbent position. He began to beg and plead to be released. He made wild promises. He would do them no harm. He would himself go down the coast and give himself up to the officers of the law. He would give them his share of the gold. He would go away into the heart of the wilderness, and never again appear in civilization. He would take his own life if she would only free him. His pleadings usually culminated in involuntary raving, until it seemed to her that he was passing into a fit; but always she shook her head and denied him the freedom for which he worked himself into a passion.

But the weeks went by, and he continued to grow more tractable. And through it all the weariness was asserting itself more and more. “I am so tired, so tired,” he would murmur, rolling his head back and forth on the pillow like a peevish child. At a little later period he began to make impassioned pleas for death, to beg her to kill him, to beg Hans to put him our of his misery so that he might at least rest comfortably.

The situation was fast becoming impossible. Edith’s nervousness was increasing, and she knew her break-down might come any time. She could not even get her proper rest, for she was haunted by the fear that Hans would yield to his mania and kill Dennin while she slept. Though January had already come, months would have to elapse before any trading schooner was even likely to put into the bay. Also, they had not expected to winter in the cabin, and the food was running low; nor could Hans add to the supply by hunting. They were chained to the cabin by the necessity of guarding their prisoner.

Something must be done, and she knew it. She forced herself to go back into a reconsideration of the problem. She could not shake off the legacy of her race, the law that was of her blood and that had been trained into her. She knew that whatever she did she must do according to the law, and in the long hours of watching, the shot-gun on her knees, the murderer restless beside her and the storms thundering without, she made original sociological researches and worked out for herself the evolution of the law. It came to her that the law was nothing more than the judgment and the will of any group of people. It mattered not how large was the group of people. There were little groups, she reasoned, like Switzerland, and there were big groups like the United States. Also, she reasoned, it did not matter how small was the group of people. There might be only ten thousand people in a country, yet their collective judgment and will would be the law of that country. Why, then, could not one thousand people constitute such a group? she asked herself. And if one thousand, why not one hundred? Why not fifty? Why not five? Why not — two?

She was frightened at her own conclusion, and she talked it over with Hans. At first he could not comprehend, and then, when he did, he added convincing evidence. He spoke of miners’ meetings, where all the men of a locality came together and made the law and executed the law. There might be only ten or fifteen men altogether, he said, but the will of the majority became the law for the whole ten or fifteen, and whoever violated that will was punished.

Edith saw her way clear at last. Dennin must hang. Hans agreed with her. Between them they constituted the majority of this particular group. It was the group-will that Dennin should be hanged. In the execution of this will Edith strove earnestly to observe the customary forms, but the group was so small that Hans and she had to serve as witnesses, as jury, and as judges-also as executioners. She formally charged Michael Dennin with the murder of Dutchy and Harkey, and the prisoner lay in his bunk and listened to the testimony, first of Hans, and then of Edith. He refused to plead guilty or not guilty, and remained silent when she asked him if he had anything to say in his own defence. She and Hans, without leaving their seats, brought in the jury's verdict of guilty. Then, as judge, she imposed the sentence. Her voice shook, her eyelids twitched, her left arm jerked, but she carried it out.

"Michael Dennin, in three days' time you are to be hanged by the neck until you are dead."

Such was the sentence. The man breathed an unconscious sigh of relief, then laughed defiantly, and said, "Thin I'm thinkin' the damn bunk won't be achin' me back anny more, an' that's a consolation."

With the passing of the sentence a feeling of relief seemed to communicate itself to all of them. Especially was it noticeable in Dennin. All sullenness and defiance disappeared, and he talked sociably with his captors, and even with flashes of his old-time wit. Also, he found great satisfaction in Edith's reading to him from the Bible. She read from the New Testament, and he took keen interest in the prodigal son and the thief on the cross.

On the day preceding that set for the execution, when Edith asked her usual question, "Why did you do it?" Dennin answered, "'Tis very simple. I was thinkin' — "

But she hushed him abruptly, asked him to wait, and hurried to Hans's bedside. It was his watch off, and he came out of his sleep, rubbing his eyes and grumbling.

"Go," she told him, "and bring up Negook and one other Indian. Michael's going to confess. Make them come. Take the rifle along and bring them up at the point of it if you have to."

Half an hour later Negook and his uncle, Hadikwan, were ushered into the death chamber. They came unwillingly, Hans with his rifle herding them along.

“Negook,” Edith said, “there is to be no trouble for you and your people. Only is it for you to sit and do nothing but listen and understand.”

Thus did Michael Dennin, under sentence of death, make public confession of his crime. As he talked, Edith wrote his story down, while the Indians listened, and Hans guarded the door for fear the witnesses might bolt.

He had not been home to the old country for fifteen years, Dennin explained, and it had always been his intention to return with plenty of money and make his old mother comfortable for the rest of her days.

“An’ how was I to be doin’ it on sixteen hundred?” he demanded. “What I was after wantin’ was all the goold, the whole eight thousan’. Thin I cud go back in style. What ud be aisier, thinks I to myself, than to kill all iv yez, report it at Skaguay for an Indian-killin’, an’ thin pull out for Ireland? An’ so I started in to kill all iv yez, but, as Harkey was fond of sayin’, I cut out too large a chunk an’ fell down on the swallowin’ iv it. An’ that’s me confession. I did me duty to the devil, an’ now, God willin’, I’ll do me duty to God.”

“Negook and Hadikwan, you have heard the white man’s words,” Edith said to the Indians. “His words are here on this paper, and it is for you to make a sign, thus, on the paper, so that white men to come after will know that you have heard.”

The two Siwashes put crosses opposite their signatures, received a summons to appear on the morrow with all their tribe for a further witnessing of things, and were allowed to go.

Dennin’s hands were released long enough for him to sign the document. Then a silence fell in the room. Hans was restless, and Edith felt uncomfortable. Dennin lay on his back, staring straight up at the moss-chinked roof.

“An’ now I’ll do me duty to God,” he murmured. He turned his head toward Edith. “Read to me,” he said, “from the book;” then added, with a glint of playfulness, “Mayhap ‘twill help me to forget the bunk.”

The day of the execution broke clear and cold. The thermometer was down to twenty-five below zero, and a chill wind was blowing which drove the frost through clothes and flesh to the bones. For the first time in many weeks Dennin stood upon his feet. His muscles had remained inactive so long, and he was so out of practice in maintaining an erect position, that he could scarcely stand.

He reeled back and forth, staggered, and clutched hold of Edith with his bound hands for support.

“Sure, an’ it’s dizzy I am,” he laughed weakly.

A moment later he said, “An’ it’s glad I am that it’s over with. That damn bunk would iv been the death iv me, I know.”

When Edith put his fur cap on his head and proceeded to pull the flaps down over his ears, he laughed and said:

“What are you doin’ that for?”

“It’s freezing cold outside”, she answered.

“An’ in tin minutes’ time what’ll matter a frozen ear or so to poor Michael Dennin?” he asked.

She had nerved herself for the last culminating ordeal, and his remark was like a blow to her self-possession. So far, everything had seemed phantom-like, as in a dream, but the brutal truth of what he had said shocked her eyes wide open to the reality of what was taking place. Nor was her distress unnoticed by the Irishman.

“I’m sorry to be troublin’ you with me foolish spache,” he said regretfully. “I mint nothin’ by it. ‘Tis a great day for Michael Dennin, an’ he’s as gay as a lark.”

He broke out in a merry whistle, which quickly became lugubrious and ceased.

“I’m wishin’ there was a priest,” he said wistfully; then added swiftly, “But Michael Dennin’s too old a campaigner to miss the luxuries when he hits the trail.”

He was so very weak and unused to walking that when the door opened and he passed outside, the wind nearly carried him off his feet. Edith and Hans walked on either side of him and supported him, the while he cracked jokes and tried to keep them cheerful, breaking off, once, long enough to arrange the forwarding of his share of the gold to his mother in Ireland.

They climbed a slight hill and came out into an open space among the trees. Here, circled solemnly about a barrel that stood on end in the snow, were Negook and Hadikwan, and all the Siwashes down to the babies and the dogs, come to see the way of the white man’s law. Near by was an open grave which Hans had burned into the frozen earth.

Dennin cast a practical eye over the preparations, noting the grave, the barrel, the thickness of the rope, and the diameter of the limb over which the rope was passed.

“Sure, an’ I couldn’t iv done better meself, Hans, if it’d been for you.”

He laughed loudly at his own sally, but Hans’s face was frozen into a sullen ghastliness that nothing less than the trump of doom could have broken. Also, Hans was feeling very sick. He had not realized the enormousness of the task of putting a fellow-man out of the world. Edith, on the other hand, had realized; but the realization did not make the task any easier. She was filled with doubt as to whether she could hold herself together long enough to finish it. She felt incessant impulses to scream, to shriek, to collapse into the snow, to put her hands over her eyes and turn and run blindly away, into the forest, anywhere, away. It was only by a supreme effort of soul that she was able to keep upright and go on and do what she had to do. And in the midst of it all she was grateful to Dennin for the way he helped her.

“Lind me a hand,” he said to Hans, with whose assistance he managed to mount the barrel.

He bent over so that Edith could adjust the rope about his neck. Then he stood upright while Hans drew the rope taut across the overhead branch.

“Michael Dennin, have you anything to say?” Edith asked in a clear voice that shook in spite of her.

Dennin shuffled his feet on the barrel, looked down bashfully like a man making his maiden speech, and cleared his throat.

“I’m glad it’s over with,” he said. “You’ve treated me like a Christian, an’ I’m thankin’ you hearty for your kindness.”

“Then may God receive you, a repentant sinner,” she said.

“Ay,” he answered, his deep voice as a response to her thin one, “may God receive me, a repentant sinner.”

“Good-by, Michael,” she cried, and her voice sounded desperate.

She threw her weight against the barrel, but it did not overturn.

“Hans! Quick! Help me!” she cried faintly.

She could feel her last strength going, and the barrel resisted her. Hans hurried to her, and the barrel went out from under Michael Dennin.

She turned her back, thrusting her fingers into her ears. Then she began to laugh, harshly, sharply, metallically; and Hans was shocked as he had not been shocked through the whole tragedy. Edith Nelson’s break-down had come. Even in her hysteria she knew it, and she was glad that she had been able to hold up under the strain until everything had been accomplished. She reeled toward Hans.

“Take me to the cabin, Hans,” she managed to articulate.

“And let me rest,” she added. “Just let me rest, and rest, and rest.”

With Hans’s arm around her, supporting her weight and directing her helpless steps, she went off across the snow. But the Indians remained solemnly to watch the working of the white man’s law that compelled a man to dance upon the air.

The Unmasking of a Cad

THERE are gentlemen and gentlemen, and yet again are there gentlemen. Somewhere in this rather incoherent category Percy Hilborn held a footing. Like many another, he possessed a certain veneer of good manners and conventional conduct, which passed for the real thing among those who knew him best. Now those who knew him best knew him least — a paradox, but none the less a truth. This veneer was as impenetrable as ten-inch armour-plate to such friends, whom, because of shekels or position, he wished to retain. But to those who knew him not, whether from caprice or definite purpose, he was not at all adverse to showing another side of his nature, which, to say the least, was the ungentlemanly side.

The reason for this might have been found in the fact that acquired characteristics do not receive the stamp of heredity in one generation — his father was a self-made man, and had taught himself rigidly to conventionalise; and it might have been found in the fact that his mother had impressed upon his youthful mind the code of polite procedure in a way which made it appear an unpleasant duty — a mask, highly distasteful, but which must perforce be donned under certain conditions. Be this as it may, Percy Hilborn was a cad, a plain, unadulterated cad — but nobody knew it.

He was accounted of good family, made an excellent appearance, and was considered one of the most delightful of the younger set. Moreover, he was engaged, engaged to a very nice young girl, whose refinement was something more than skin-deep. Maud Brammane was sweetly womanly and all that, but there was also about her a certain broad wholesomeness, a thorough normality, which added to the not slight charms nature had invested her with. She had learned not to carp unmercifully at a pecadillo on the one hand, and forgive a great wrong on the other; and she had also learned to discriminate between petty infractions and gross enormities. She also held ideals. “A gentleman,” she once said to him, “is above all a man; and he is cast in such a mold that he never, no matter where he finds himself or what may arise, forgets his manhood.” Upon this there had really been a perceptible straightening of his back and thrusting forward of his breastbone, as he took it upon himself as a choice exponent of this particular breed of men.

At another time she had said, “I cannot understand, nor can I have any regard for a person that would wittingly wound or hurt the sensibilities of another whose only offense is their inoffensiveness.” And he echoed the sentiment so nobly that she thought him a very superior young man indeed. There was her brother Hallam, she went on. He was more a gentleman of the old school, of which one hears so much and sees so little. Why, she remembered on the visit she had made during the previous winter, the uniform courtesy he extended, from the guest at his board down to his humblest working man. Yes, he was a brother well to be proud of. He was coming north soon, she said, and she was sure they would get along well together. There was so much alike in them, so much they would find in common. Percy Hilborn exhibited the proper show of interest in his future brother-in-law, and was equally sure they would get along splendidly.

“I tell you, Hay, I sometimes think she’s altogether too good for me,” he said one night to the friend of his bosom, as they entered one of the choicest cafes in town. That last cocktail had given to his tongue the necessary lucidity, and for the nonce his elementary frankness asserted itself. The various contradictory segments of his nature were in just the mood to vindicate their existence.

Because it was one of those enticing summer nights, when to remain indoors was to experience a foretaste of the tomb, the cafe was crowded. Half the city seemed to have come abroad, and thereby gained an uncompromisable appetite. The lynx-eyed ushers were hard put to discover accommodation for the throng, and theatres were not out yet.

“Yes,” Percy Hilborn added complacently, “I do think I’m a lucky dog. And she’s not one of those foolishly good kind, either — sensible, practical, everyday sort of girl.”

Hay smiled with some cheery cynicism. He could well afford to look quizzically down from his freedom upon the pre-benedictal condition of his friend. “Aw, go on!” he said. “They all get that way, they do. Just a little soft something, a wisp of hair, a pair of eyes, and a bunch of millinery, and away they go, clean daft. Can’t understand it myself. Why, look at me! Don’t catch me in any such nonsense. A year from now you’ll be coming around telling me what a fool you were, and how much you envy me. Maybe you think I don’t know — sort of spring sickness, that’s what it is.”

And thereupon Percy Hilborn proceeded to descant fluently upon the preeminent advisability of a young man taking such a step, upon the sanity of his conduct, and last, but not least, the felicity of his choice and the infinite virtues of Maud Brammane.

And in the midst of this descantation, an usher seated another gentleman and lady — strangers — at their table. Hay heaved a sigh of relief at the interruption. But Percy Hilborn glowered blackly at the offending usher. The question of the right or wrong of it never entered his head. It simply did not suit him to have his conversation thus broken in upon. Such intrusion was not to be tolerated. As has been noted before, his elementary frankness, natural self, was at the surface, and he at once made up his mind to get rid of these people who had been innocently quartered upon his privacy.

The usher had gone away, so he transferred his scowl to them. But they took little heed, being busy with their own affairs; in fact, it might be said they did not even notice him, much less his black looks. But his boorishness was not to be conquered so easily as that. He could not very well ask them to get up and go away; but he could talk, and within him there was a devil to act as prompter.

He chose an objectionable subject, and proceeded to embellish it with the necessary slang and rough expressions. Oh, no! he did not swear or do anything of that sort. He simply exceeded the bounds of good taste. But he raised his voice pointedly to advertise his intention, though he refrained from looking in their direction.

At first his victims were unheeding, but in the end they could not fail to comprehend. Nor did he mince words, now that his caddishness had come to the top. Though the lady was greatly perturbed she gave no hint of it, preferring rather to raise her voice a little and talk with greater vivacity to her escort. And that gentleman followed her cue, not being particularly desirous for a brawl in a public place. Their order had come, and they hurried through it. The theatre crowd was arriving by then, and they could not move to another table. So they talked fast, and asked for their check before they were half through.

Percy Hilborn glanced exultantly at Hay. His victims were preparing to leave. Yet apparently there was no unseemly haste in their manner of departure, no pained surprise in their eyes nor indignant flush to their cheeks. A look of placid contentment shone in their faces, as if their experience at the table had been of the pleasantest. They simply ignored the boorishness of the young man who was actually driving them away. They were victorious in their defeat.

But at this moment, just as they had risen to go, and just as triumph was perching upon Percy Hilborn’s helm, in came another theatre party. Miss Brammane, and her sister and mother, and several mutual friends, went to make up the group which approached their table. Greetings began to pass all around. Percy Hilborn felt a sudden sinking sickness come upon him. Miss Brammane was speaking. What was she saying? No! Impossible!

But this is what Miss Brammane was saying: “Hallman, this is Mr. Hilborn — Percy, you know, and — ”

And therein was the mingling of all the materials for a very pretty tableau.

The Unparalleled Invasion

It was in the year 1976 that the trouble between the world and China reached its culmination. It was because of this that the celebration of the Second Centennial of American Liberty was deferred. Many other plans of the nations of the earth were twisted and tangled and postponed for the same reason. The world awoke rather abruptly to its danger; but for over seventy years, unperceived, affairs had been shaping toward this very end.

The year 1904 logically marks the beginning of the development that, seventy years later, was to bring consternation to the whole world. The Japanese-Russian War took place in 1904, and the historians of the time gravely noted it down that that event marked the entrance of Japan into the comity of nations. What it really did mark was the awakening of China. This awakening, long expected, had finally been given up. The Western nations had tried to arouse China, and they had failed. Out of their native optimism and race-egotism they had therefore concluded that the task was impossible, that China would never awaken.

What they had failed to take into account was this: that between them and China was no common psychological speech. Their thought-processes were radically dissimilar. There was no intimate vocabulary. The Western mind penetrated the Chinese mind but a short distance when it found itself in a fathomless maze. The Chinese mind penetrated the Western mind an equally short distance when it fetched up against a blank, incomprehensible wall. It was all a matter of language. There was no way to communicate Western ideas to the Chinese mind. China remained asleep. The material achievement and progress of the West was a closed book to her; nor could the West open the book. Back and deep down on the tie-ribs of consciousness, in the mind, say, of the English-speaking race, was a capacity to thrill to short, Saxon words; back and deep down on the tie-ribs of consciousness of the Chinese mind was a capacity to thrill to its own hieroglyphics; but the Chinese mind could not thrill to short, Saxon words; nor could the English-speaking mind thrill to hieroglyphics. The fabrics of their minds were woven from totally different stuffs. They were mental aliens. And so it was that Western material achievement and progress made no dent on the rounded sleep of China.

Came Japan and her victory over Russia in 1904. Now the Japanese race was the freak and paradox among Eastern peoples. In some strange way Japan was receptive to all the West had to offer. Japan swiftly assimilated the Western ideas, and digested them, and so capably applied them that she suddenly burst forth, full-panoplied, a world-power. There is no explaining this peculiar openness of Japan to the alien culture of the West. As well might be explained any biological sport in the animal kingdom.

Having decisively thrashed the great Russian Empire, Japan promptly set about dreaming a colossal dream of empire for herself. Korea she had made into a granary and a colony; treaty privileges and vulpine diplomacy gave her the monopoly of Manchuria. But Japan was not satisfied. She turned her eyes upon China. There lay a vast territory, and in that territory were the hugest deposits in the world of iron and coal — the backbone of industrial civilization. Given natural resources, the other great factor in industry is labour. In that territory was a population of 400,000,000 souls — one quarter of the then total population of the earth. Furthermore, the Chinese were excellent workers, while their fatalistic philosophy (or religion) and their stolid nervous organization constituted them splendid soldiers — if they were properly managed. Needless to say, Japan was prepared to furnish that management.

But best of all, from the standpoint of Japan, the Chinese was a kindred race. The baffling enigma of the Chinese character to the West was no baffling enigma to the Japanese. The Japanese understood as we could never school ourselves or hope to understand. Their mental processes were the same. The Japanese thought with the same thought-symbols as did the Chinese, and they thought in the same peculiar grooves. Into the Chinese mind the Japanese went on where we were balked by the obstacle of incomprehension. They took the turning which we could not perceive, twisted around the obstacle, and were out of sight in the ramifications of the Chinese mind where we could not follow. They were brothers. Long ago one had borrowed the other's written language, and, untold generations before that, they had diverged from the common Mongol stock. There had been changes, differentiations brought about by diverse conditions and infusions of other blood; but down at the bottom of their beings, twisted into the fibres of them, was a heritage in common, a sameness in kind that time had not obliterated.

And so Japan took upon herself the management of China. In the years immediately following the war with Russia, her agents swarmed over the Chinese Empire. A thousand miles beyond the last mission station toiled her engineers and spies, clad as coolies, under the guise of itinerant merchants or proselytizing Buddhist priests, noting down the horse-power of every waterfall, the likely sites for factories, the heights of mountains and passes, the strategic advantages and weaknesses, the wealth of the farming valleys, the number of bullocks in a district or the number of labourers that could be collected by forced levies. Never was there such a census, and it could have been taken by no other people than the dogged, patient, patriotic Japanese.

But in a short time secrecy was thrown to the winds. Japan's officers reorganized the Chinese army; her drill sergeants made the mediaeval warriors over into twentieth century soldiers, accustomed to all the modern machinery of war and with a higher average of marksmanship than the soldiers of any Western nation. The engineers of Japan deepened and widened the intricate system of canals, built factories and foundries, netted the empire with telegraphs and telephones, and inaugurated the era of railroad-building. It was these same protagonists of machine-civilization that discovered the great oil deposits of Chunsan, the iron mountains of Whang-Sing, the copper ranges of Chinchi, and they sank the gas wells of Wow-Wee, that most marvellous reservoir of natural gas in all the world.

In China's councils of empire were the Japanese emissaries. In the ears of the statesmen whispered the Japanese statesmen. The political reconstruction of the Empire was due to them. They evicted the scholar class, which was violently reactionary, and put into office progressive officials. And in every town and city of the Empire newspapers were started. Of course, Japanese editors ran the policy of these papers, which policy they got direct from Tokio. It was these papers that educated and made progressive the great mass of the population.

China was at last awake. Where the West had failed, Japan succeeded. She had transmuted Western culture and achievement into terms that were intelligible to the Chinese understanding. Japan herself, when she so suddenly awakened, had astounded the world. But at the time she was only forty millions strong. China's awakening, with her four hundred millions and the scientific advance of the world, was frightfully astounding. She was the colossus of the nations, and swiftly her voice was heard in no uncertain tones in the affairs and councils of the nations. Japan egged her on, and the proud Western peoples listened with respectful ears.

China's swift and remarkable rise was due, perhaps more than to anything else, to the superlative quality of her labour. The Chinese was the perfect type of industry. He had always been that. For sheer ability to work no worker in the world could compare with him. Work was the breath of his nostrils. It was to him what wandering and fighting in far lands and spiritual adventure had been to other peoples. Liberty, to him, epitomized itself in access to the means of toil. To till the soil and labour interminably was all he asked of life and the powers that be. And the awakening of China had given its vast population not merely free and unlimited access to the means of toil, but access to the highest and most scientific machine-means of toil.

China rejuvenescent! It was but a step to China rampant. She discovered a new pride in herself and a will of her own. She began to chafe under the guidance of Japan, but she did not chafe long. On Japan's advice, in the beginning, she had expelled from the Empire all Western missionaries, engineers, drill sergeants, merchants, and teachers. She now began to expel the similar representatives of Japan. The latter's advisory statesmen were showered with honours and decorations, and sent home. The West had awakened Japan, and, as Japan had then requited the West, Japan was not requited by China. Japan was thanked for her kindly aid and flung out bag and baggage by her gigantic protégé. The Western nations chuckled. Japan's rainbow dream had gone glimmering. She grew angry. China laughed at her. The blood and the swords of the Samurai would out, and Japan rashly went to war. This occurred in 1922, and in seven bloody months Manchuria, Korea, and Formosa were taken away from her and she was hurled back, bankrupt, to stifle in her tiny, crowded islands. Exit Japan from the world drama. Thereafter she devoted herself to art, and her task became to please the world greatly with her creations of wonder and beauty.

Contrary to expectation, China did not prove warlike. She had no Napoleonic dream, and was content to devote herself to the arts of peace. After a time of disquiet, the idea was accepted that China was to be feared, not in war, but in commerce. It will be seen that the real danger was not apprehended. China went on consummating her machine-civilization. Instead of a large standing army, she developed an immensely larger and splendidly efficient militia. Her navy was so small that it was the laughing stock of the world; nor did she attempt to strengthen her navy. The treaty ports of the world were never entered by her visiting battleships.

The real danger lay in the fecundity of her loins, and it was in 1970 that the first cry of alarm was raised. For some time all territories adjacent to China had been grumbling at Chinese immigration; but now it suddenly came home to the world that China's population was 500,000,000. She had increased by a hundred millions since her awakening. Burchaldter called attention to the fact that there were more Chinese in existence than white-skinned people. He performed a simple sum in arithmetic. He added together the populations of the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, England, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, European Russia, and all Scandinavia. The result was 495,000,000. And the population of China overtopped this tremendous total by 5,000,000. Burchaldter's figures went round the world, and the world shivered.

For many centuries China's population had been constant. Her territory had been saturated with population; that is to say, her territory, with the primitive method of production, had supported the maximum limit of population. But when she awoke and inaugurated the machine-civilization, her productive power had been enormously increased. Thus, on the same territory, she was able to support a far larger population. At once the birth rate began to rise and the death rate to fall. Before, when population pressed against the means of subsistence, the excess population had been swept away by famine. But now, thanks to the machine-civilization, China's means of subsistence had been enormously extended, and there were no famines; her population followed on the heels of the increase in the means of subsistence.

During this time of transition and development of power, China had entertained no dreams of conquest. The Chinese was not an imperial race. It was industrious, thrifty, and peace-loving. War was looked upon as an unpleasant but necessary task that at times must be performed. And so, while the Western races had squabbled and fought, and world-adventured against one another, China had calmly gone on working at her machines and growing. Now she was spilling over the boundaries of her Empire — that was all, just spilling over into the adjacent territories with all the certainty and terrifying slow momentum of a glacier.

Following upon the alarm raised by Burchaldter's figures, in 1970 France made a long-threatened stand. French Indo-China had been overrun, filled up, by Chinese immigrants. France called a halt. The Chinese wave flowed on. France assembled a force of a hundred thousand on the boundary between her unfortunate colony and China, and China sent down an army of militia-soldiers a million strong. Behind came the wives and sons and daughters and relatives, with their personal household luggage, in a second army. The French force was brushed aside like a fly. The Chinese militia-soldiers, along with their families, over five millions all told, coolly took possession of French Indo-China and settled down to stay for a few thousand years.

Outraged France was in arms. She hurled fleet after fleet against the coast of China, and nearly bankrupted herself by the effort. China had no navy. She withdrew like a turtle into her shell. For a year the French fleets blockaded the coast and bombarded exposed towns and villages. China did not mind. She did not depend upon the rest of the world for anything. She calmly kept out of range of the French guns and went on working. France wept and wailed, wrung her impotent hands and appealed to the dumfounded nations. Then she landed a punitive expedition to march to Peking. It was two hundred and fifty thousand strong, and it was the flower of France. It landed without opposition and marched into the interior. And that was the last ever seen of it. The line of communication was snapped on the second day. Not a survivor came back to tell what had happened. It had been swallowed up in China's cavernous maw, that was all.

In the five years that followed, China's expansion, in all land directions, went on apace. Siam was made part of the Empire, and, in spite of all that England could do, Burma and the Malay Peninsula were overrun; while all along the long south boundary of Siberia, Russia was pressed severely by China's advancing hordes. The process was simple. First came the Chinese immigration (or, rather, it was already there, having come there slowly and insidiously during the previous years). Next came the clash of arms and the brushing away of all opposition by a monster army of militia-soldiers, followed by their families and household baggage. And finally came their settling down as colonists in the conquered territory. Never was there so strange and effective a method of world conquest.

Napal and Bhutan were overrun, and the whole northern boundary of India pressed against by this fearful tide of life. To the west, Bokhara, and, even to the south and west, Afghanistan, were swallowed up. Persia, Turkestan, and all Central Asia felt the pressure of the flood. It was at this time that Burchaldter revised his figures. He had been mistaken. China's population must be seven hundred millions, eight hundred millions, nobody knew how many millions, but at any rate it would soon be a billion. There were two Chinese for every white-skinned human in the world, Burchaldter announced, and the world trembled. China's increase must have begun immediately, in 1904. It was remembered that since that date there had not been a single famine. At 5,000,000 a year increase, her total increase in the intervening seventy years must be 350,000,000. But who was to know? It might be more. Who was to know anything of this strange new menace of the twentieth century — China, old China, rejuvenescent, fruitful, and militant!

The Convention of 1975 was called at Philadelphia. All the Western nations, and some few of the Eastern, were represented. Nothing was accomplished. There was talk of all countries putting bounties on children to increase the birth rate, but it was laughed to scorn by the arithmeticians, who pointed out that China was too far in the lead in that direction. No feasible way of coping with China was suggested. China was appealed to and threatened by the United Powers, and that was all the Convention of Philadelphia came to; and the Convention and the Powers were laughed at by China. Li Tang Fwung, the power behind the Dragon Throne, deigned to reply.

"What does China care for the comity of nations?" said Li Tang Fwung. "We are the most ancient, honourable, and royal of races. We have our own destiny to accomplish. It is unpleasant that our destiny does not tally with the destiny of the rest of the world, but what would you? You have talked windily about the royal races and the heritage of the earth, and we can only reply that that remains to be seen. You cannot invade us. Never mind about your navies. Don't shout. We know our navy is small. You see we use it for police purposes. We do not care for the sea. Our strength is in our population, which will soon be a billion. Thanks to you, we are equipped with all modern war-machinery. Send your navies. We will not notice them. Send your punitive expeditions, but first remember France. To land half a million soldiers on our shores would strain the resources of any of you. And our thousand millions would swallow them down in a mouthful. Send a million; send five millions, and we will swallow them down just as readily. Pouf! A mere nothing, a meagre morsel. Destroy, as you have threatened, you United States, the ten million coolies we have forced upon your shores — why, the amount scarcely equals half of our excess birth rate for a year."

So spoke Li Tang Fwung. The world was nonplussed, helpless, terrified. Truly had he spoken. There was no combating China's amazing birth rate. If her population was a billion, and was increasing twenty millions a year, in twenty-five years it would be a billion and a half — equal to the total population of the world in 1904. And nothing could be done. There was no way to dam up the over-spilling monstrous flood of life. War was futile. China laughed at a blockade of her coasts. She welcomed invasion. In her capacious maw was room for all the hosts of earth that could be hurled at her. And in the meantime her flood of yellow life poured out and on over Asia. China laughed and read in their magazines the learned lucubrations of the distracted Western scholars.

But there was one scholar China failed to reckon on — Jacobus Laningdale. Not that he was a scholar, except in the widest sense. Primarily, Jacobus Laningdale was a scientist, and, up to that time, a very obscure scientist, a professor employed in the laboratories of the Health Office of New York City. Jacobus Laningdale's head was very like any other head, but in that head was evolved an idea. Also, in that head was the wisdom to keep that idea secret. He did not write an article for the magazines. Instead, he asked for a vacation. On September 19, 1975, he arrived in Washington. It was evening, but he proceeded straight to the White House, for he had already arranged an audience with the President. He was closeted with President Moyer for three hours. What passed between them was not learned by the rest of the world until long after; in fact, at that time the world was not interested in Jacobus Laningdale. Next day the President called in his Cabinet. Jacobus Laningdale was present. The proceedings were kept secret. But that very afternoon Rufus Cowdery, Secretary of State, left Washington, and early the following morning sailed for England. The secret that he carried began to spread, but it spread only among the heads of Governments. Possibly half-a-dozen men in a nation were entrusted with the idea that had formed in Jacobus Laningdale's head. Following the spread of the secret, sprang up great activity in all the dockyards, arsenals, and navy-yards. The people of France and Austria became suspicious, but so sincere were their Governments' calls for confidence that they acquiesced in the unknown project that was afoot.

This was the time of the Great Truce. All countries pledged themselves solemnly not to go to war with any other country. The first definite action was the gradual mobilization of the armies of Russia, Germany, Austria, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. Then began the eastward movement. All railroads into Asia were glutted with troop trains. China was the objective, that was all that was known. A little later began the great sea movement. Expeditions of warships were launched from all countries. Fleet followed fleet, and all proceeded to the coast of China. The nations cleaned out their navy-yards. They sent their revenue cutters and dispatch boots and lighthouse tenders, and they sent their last antiquated cruisers and battleships. Not content with this, they impressed the merchant marine. The statistics show that 58,640 merchant steamers, equipped with searchlights and rapid-fire guns, were despatched by the various nations to China.

And China smiled and waited. On her land side, along her boundaries, were millions of the warriors of Europe. She mobilized five times as many millions of her militia and awaited the invasion. On her sea coasts she did the same. But China was puzzled. After all this enormous preparation, there was no invasion. She could not understand. Along the great Siberian frontier all was quiet. Along her coasts the towns and villages were not even shelled. Never, in the history of the world, had there been so mighty a gathering of war fleets. The fleets of all the world were there, and day and night millions of tons of battleships ploughed the brine of her coasts, and nothing happened. Nothing was attempted. Did they think to make her emerge from her shell? China smiled. Did they think to tire her out, or starve her out? China smiled again.

But on May 1, 1976, had the reader been in the imperial city of Peking, with its then population of eleven millions, he would have witnessed a curious sight. He would have seen the streets filled with the chattering yellow populace, every queued head tilted back, every slant eye turned skyward. And high up in the blue he would have beheld a tiny dot of black, which, because of its orderly evolutions, he would have identified as an airship. From this airship, as it curved its flight back and forth over the city, fell missiles — strange, harmless missiles, tubes of fragile glass that shattered into thousands of fragments on the streets and house-tops. But there was nothing deadly about these tubes of glass. Nothing happened. There were no explosions. It is true, three Chinese were killed by the tubes dropping on their heads from so enormous a height; but what were three Chinese against an excess birth rate of twenty millions? One tube struck perpendicularly in a fish-pond in a garden and was not broken. It was dragged ashore by the master of the house. He did not dare to open it, but, accompanied by his friends, and surrounded by an ever-increasing crowd, he carried the mysterious tube to the magistrate of the district. The latter was a brave man. With all eyes upon him, he shattered the tube with a blow from his brass-bowled pipe. Nothing happened. Of those who were very near, one or two thought they saw some mosquitoes fly out. That was all. The crowd set up a great laugh and dispersed.

As Peking was bombarded by glass tubes, so was all China. The tiny airships, dispatched from the warships, contained but two men each, and over all cities, towns, and villages they wheeled and curved, one man directing the ship, the other man throwing over the glass tubes.

Had the reader again been in Peking, six weeks later, he would have looked in vain for the eleven million inhabitants. Some few of them he would have found, a few hundred thousand, perhaps, their carcasses festering in the houses and in the deserted streets, and piled high on the abandoned death-waggons. But for the rest he would have had to seek along the highways and byways of the Empire. And not all would he have found fleeing from plague-stricken Peking, for behind them, by hundreds of thousands of unburied corpses by the wayside, he could have marked their flight. And as it was with Peking, so it was with all the cities, towns, and villages of the Empire. The plague smote them all. Nor was it one plague, nor two plagues; it was a score of plagues. Every virulent form of infectious death stalked through the land. Too late the Chinese government apprehended the meaning of the colossal preparations, the marshalling of the world-hosts, the flights of the tin airships, and the rain of the tubes of glass. The proclamations of the government were vain. They could not stop the eleven million plague-stricken wretches, fleeing from the one city of Peking to spread disease through all the land. The physicians and health officers died at their posts; and death, the all-conqueror, rode over the decrees of the Emperor and Li Tang Fwung. It rode over them as well, for Li Tang Fwung died in the second week, and the Emperor, hidden away in the Summer Palace, died in the fourth week.

Had there been one plague, China might have coped with it. But from a score of plagues no creature was immune. The man who escaped smallpox went down before scarlet fever. The man who was immune to yellow fever was carried away by cholera; and if he were immune to that, too, the Black Death, which was the bubonic plague, swept him away. For it was these bacteria, and germs, and microbes, and bacilli, cultured in the laboratories of the West, that had come down upon China in the rain of glass.

All organization vanished. The government crumbled away. Decrees and proclamations were useless when the men who made them and signed them one moment were dead the next. Nor could the maddened millions, spurred on to flight by death, pause to heed anything. They fled from the cities to infect the country, and wherever they fled they carried the plagues with them. The hot summer was on — Jacobus Laningdale had selected the time shrewdly — and the plague festered everywhere. Much is conjectured of what occurred, and much has been learned from the stories of the few survivors. The wretched creatures stormed across the Empire in many-millioned flight. The vast armies China had collected on her frontiers melted away. The farms were ravaged for food, and no more crops were planted, while the crops already in were left unattended and never came to harvest. The most remarkable thing, perhaps, was the flights. Many millions engaged in them, charging to the bounds of the Empire to be met and turned back by the gigantic armies of the West. The slaughter of the mad hosts on the boundaries was stupendous. Time and again the guarding line was drawn back twenty or thirty miles to escape the contagion of the multitudinous dead.

Once the plague broke through and seized upon the German and Austrian soldiers who were guarding the borders of Turkestan. Preparations had been made for such a happening, and though sixty thousand soldiers of Europe were carried off, the international corps of physicians isolated the contagion and dammed it back. It was during this struggle that it was suggested that a new plague-germ had originated, that in some way or other a sort of hybridization between plague-germs had taken place, producing a new and frightfully virulent germ. First suspected by Vomberg, who became infected with it and died, it was later isolated and studied by Stevens, Hazenfelt, Norman, and Landers.

Such was the unparalleled invasion of China. For that billion of people there was no hope. Pent in their vast and festering charnel-house, all organization and cohesion lost, they could do naught but die. They could not escape. As they were flung back from their land frontiers, so were they flung back from the sea. Seventy-five thousand vessels patrolled the coasts. By day their smoking funnels dimmed the sea-rim, and by night their flashing searchlights ploughed the dark and harrowed it for the tiniest escaping junk. The attempts of the immense fleets of junks were pitiful. Not one ever got by the guarding sea-hounds. Modern war-machinery held back the disorganized mass of China, while the plagues did the work.

But old War was made a thing of laughter. Naught remained to him but patrol duty. China had laughed at war, and war she was getting, but it was ultra-modern war, twentieth century war, the war of the scientist and the laboratory, the war of Jacobus Laningdale. Hundred-ton guns were toys compared with the micro-organic projectiles hurled from the laboratories, the messengers of death, the destroying angels that stalked through the empire of a billion souls.

During all the summer and fall of 1976 China was an inferno. There was no eluding the microscopic projectiles that sought out the remotest hiding-places. The hundreds of millions of dead remained unburied and the germs multiplied themselves, and, toward the last, millions died daily of starvation. Besides, starvation weakened the victims and destroyed their natural defences against the plagues. Cannibalism, murder, and madness reigned. And so perished China.

Not until the following February, in the coldest weather, were the first expeditions made. These expeditions were small, composed of scientists and bodies of troops; but they entered China from every side. In spite of the most elaborate precautions against infection, numbers of soldiers and a few of the physicians were stricken. But the exploration went bravely on. They found China devastated, a howling wilderness through which wandered bands of wild dogs and desperate bandits who had survived. All survivors were put to death wherever found. And then began the great task, the sanitation of China. Five years and hundreds of millions of treasure were consumed, and then the world moved in — not in zones, as was the idea of Baron Albrecht, but heterogeneously, according to the democratic American programme. It was a vast and happy intermingling of nationalities that settled down in China in 1982 and the years that followed — a tremendous and successful experiment in cross-fertilization. We know to-day the splendid mechanical, intellectual, and art output that followed.

It was in 1987, the Great Truce having been dissolved, that the ancient quarrel between France and Germany over Alsace-Lorraine recrudesced.

The war-cloud grew dark and threatening in April, and on April 17 the Convention of Copenhagen was called. The representatives of the nations of the world, being present, all nations solemnly pledged themselves never to use against one another the laboratory methods of warfare they had employed in the invasion of China.

Up The Slide

WHEN Clay Dilham left the tent to get a sled-load of fire-wood, he expected to be back in half an hour. So he told Swanson, who was cooking the dinner. Swanson and he belonged to different outfits, located about twenty miles apart on the Stuart River; but they had become traveling partners on a trip down the Yukon to Dawson to get the mail.

Swanson had laughed when Clay said he would be back in half an hour. It stood to reason, Swanson said, that good, dry fire-wood could not be found so close to Dawson; that whatever fire-wood there was originally had long since been gathered in; that fire-wood would not be selling at forty dollars a cord if any man could go out and get a sled-load and be back in the time Clay expected to make it.

Then it was Clay's turn to laugh as he sprang on the sled and mushed the dogs onto the river-trail. For, coming up from the Siwash village the previous day, he had noticed a small dead pine in an out-of-the-way place which had defied discovery by eyes less sharp than his. And his eyes were both young and sharp, for his seventeenth birthday was just cleared.

A swift ten minutes over the ice brought him to the place, and figuring ten minutes to get the tree and ten minutes to return made him certain that Swanson's dinner would not wait.

Just below Dawson, and rising out of the Yukon itself, towered the great Moosehide Mountain, so named by Lieutenant Schwatka long ere the Klondike became famous. On the river side the mountain was scarred and gullied and gored; and it was up one of these gores or gullies that Clay had seen the tree.

Halting his dogs beneath, on the river ice, he looked up, and after some searching rediscovered it. Being dead, its weather-beaten gray so blended with the gray of rock that a thousand men could pass by and never notice it. Taking root in a cranny, it had grown up, exhausted its bit of soil, and perished. Beneath it the wall fell sheer away for a hundred feet to the river. All one had to do was to sink an ax into the dry trunk a dozen times and it would fall to the ice, and most probably smash conveniently to pieces. This Clay had figured on when confidently limiting the trip to half an hour.

He studied the cliff thoroughly before attempting it. So far as he was concerned, the longest way round was the shortest way to the tree. Twenty feet of nearly perpendicular climbing would bring him to where a slide sloped more gently in. By making a long zigzag across the face of this slide and back again, he would arrive at the pine.

Fastening his ax across his shoulders so that it would not interfere with his movements, he clawed up the broken rock, hand and foot, like a cat, till the twenty feet were cleared, and he could draw breath on the edge of the slide.

The slide was steep and its snow-covered surface slippery. Further, the heel-less, walrus-hide soles of his muclucs were polished by much ice travel, and by his second step he realized how little he could depend upon them for clinging purposes. A slip at that point meant a plunge over the edge and a twenty-foot fall to the ice. A hundred feet farther along, and a slip would mean a fifty-foot fall.

He thrust his mittened hand through the snow to the earth to steady himself, and went on. But he was forced to exercise such care that the first zigzag consumed five minutes. Then, returning across the face of the slide toward the pine, he met with a new difficulty. The slope steepened considerably, so that little snow collected, while bent flat beneath this thin covering were long, dry last-year’s grasses.

The surface they presented was glassy as that of his muclucs, and when both surfaces came together his feet shot out and he fell on his face, sliding downward, and convulsively clutching for something to stay himself.

This he succeeded in doing, though he lay quiet for a couple of minutes to get back his nerve. He would have taken off his muclucs and gone at it in his socks, only the cold was thirty below zero, and at such temperature his feet would quickly freeze. So he went on, and after ten minutes of risky work made the safe and solid rock where stood the pine.

A few strokes of the ax felled it into the chasm, and peeping over the edge, he indulged in a laugh at the startled dogs. They were on the verge of bolting when he called aloud to them, soothingly, and they were reassured.

Then he turned about for the back trip. Going down, he knew, was even more dangerous than coming up, but how dangerous he did not realize till he had slipped half a dozen times, and each time saved himself by what appeared to him a miracle, Time and again he ventured upon the slide, and time and again he was balked when he came to the grasses.

He sat down and looked at the treacherous snow-covered slope. It was manifestly impossible for him to make it with a whole body, and he did not wish to arrive at the bottom shattered like the pine-tree.

But while he sat inactive the frost was stealing in on him, and the quick chilling of his body warned him that he could not delay. He must be doing something to keep his blood circulating. If he could not get down by going down, there only remained to him to get down by going up. It was a Herculean task, but it was the only way out of the predicament.

From where he was he could not see the top of the cliff, but he reasoned that the gully in which lay the slide must give inward more and more as it approached the top. From what little he could see, the gully displayed this tendency; and he noticed, also, that the slide extended for many hundreds of feet upward, and that where it ended the rock was well broken up and favorable for climbing. Here and there, at several wide intervals, small masses of rock projected through the snow of the slide itself, giving sufficient stability to the enterprise to encourage him.

So, instead of taking the zigzag which led downward, he made a new one leading upward and crossing the slide at an angle of thirty degrees. The grasses gave him much trouble, and made him long for soft-tanned moosehide moccasins which could make his feet cling like a second pair of hands.

He soon found that thrusting his mittened hands through the snow and clutching the grass-roots was uncertain and unsafe. His mittens were too thick for him to be sure of his grip, so he took them off. But this brought with it new trouble. When he held on to a bunch of roots the snow, coming in contact with his bare warm hand, was melted, so that his hands and the wristbands of his woolen shirt were dripping with water. This the frost was quick to attack, and his fingers were numbed and made worthless.

Then he was forced to seek good footing where he could stand erect unsupported, to put on his mittens, and to thrash his hands against his sides until the heat came back into them.

This constant numbing of his fingers made his progress very slow; but the zigzag came to an end, finally, where the side of the slide was buttressed by perpendicular rock, and he turned back and upward again. As he climbed higher and higher, he found that the slide was wedge-shaped, its rocky buttresses pinching it away as it neared its upper end. Each step increased the depth which seemed to yawn for him.

While beating his hands against his sides he turned and looked down the long slippery slope, and figured, in case he slipped, that he would be flying with the speed of an express-train ere he took the final plunge into the icy bed of the Yukon.

He passed the first outcropping rock, and the second, and at the end of an hour found himself above the third and fully five hundred feet above the river. And here, with the end nearly two hundred feet above him, the pitch of the slide was increasing.

Each step became more difficult and perilous, and he was faint from exertion and from lack of Swanson's dinner. Three or four times he slipped slightly and recovered himself; but, growing careless from exhaustion and the long tension on his nerves, he tried to continue with too great haste, and was rewarded by a double slip of each foot, which tore loose and started him down the slope.

On account of the steepness there was little snow; but what little there was, was displaced by his body, so that he became the nucleus of a young avalanche. He clawed desparately with his hands, but there was little to cling to, and he sped downward faster and faster.

The first and second outcroppings were below him, but he knew that the first was almost out of line, and pinned his hope on the second. Yet the first was just enough in line to catch one of his feet and to whirl him over and head downward on his back.

The shock of this was severe in itself, and the fine snow enveloped him in a blinding, maddening cloud; but he was thinking quickly and clearly of what would happen if he brought up head first against the second outcropping. He twisted himself over on his stomach, thrust both hands out to one side, and pressed them heavily against the flying surface.

This had the effect of a brake, drawing his head and shoulders to the side. In this position he rolled over and over a couple of times, and then, with a quick jerk at the right moment, he got his body the rest of the way round.

And none too soon, for the next moment his feet drove into the outcropping, his legs doubled up, and the wind was driven from his stomach with the abruptness of the stop.

There was much snow down his neck and up his sleeves. At once and with unconcern he shook this out, only to discoverm when he looked up to where he must climb again, that he had lost his nerve. He was shaking as if with a palsy, and sick and faint from a frightful nausea.

Fully ten minutes passed by ere he could master these sensations and summon sufficient strength for the weary climb. His legs hurt him and he was limping, and he was conscious of a sore place in his back, where he had fallen on the ax.

In an hour he had regained the point of his tumble, and was contemplating the slide, which so suddenly steepened. It was plain to him that he could not go up with hands and feet alone, and he was beginning to lose his nerve again when he remembered the ax.

Reaching upward the distance of a step, he brushed away the snow, and in the frozen gravel and crumbled rock of the slide chopped a shallow resting-place for his foot. Then he came up a step, reached forward, and repeated the manoever, And so, step by step, foot-hole by foot-hole, a tiny speck of toiling life poised like a fly on the mighty face of Moosehide Mountain, he fought his upward way.

Twilight was beginning to fall when he gained the ehad of the slide and drew himself into the rocky bottom of the gully. At this point the shoulder of the mountain began to bend back toward the crest, and in addition to its being less steep, the rocks afforded better hand-hold and foot-hold. The worst was over, and the best yet to come!

The gully opened out into a miniature basin, in which a floor of soil had been deposited, out of which, in turn, a tiny grove of pines had sprung. The trees were all dead, dry and seasoned, having long since exhausted the thin skin of earth.

Clay ran his experienced eye over the timber, and estimated that it would chop up into fifty cords at least. Beyond, the gully closed in and became barren rock again. On every hand was barren rock, so the wonder was small that the trees had escaped the eyes of men. They were only to be discovered as he had discovered them — by climbimg after them.

He continued the ascent, and the white moon greeted him when he came out upon the crest of Moosehide Mountain. At his feet, a thousand feet below, sparkled the lights of Dawson.

But the descent on that side was precipitate and dangerous in the uncertain moonshine, and he elected to go down the mountain by its gentler northern flank. In a couple of hours he reached the Yukon at the Siwash village, and took the river-trail back to where he had left the dogs. There he found Swanson, with a fire going, waiting for him to come down.

And though Swanson had a hearty laugh at his expense, nevertheless, a week or so later, in Dawson, there were fifty cords of wood sold at forty dollars a cord, and it was he and Swanson who sold them.

War

He was a young man, not more than twenty-four or five, and he might have sat his horse with the careless grace of his youth had he not been so catlike and tense. His black eyes roved everywhere, catching the movements of twigs and branches where small birds hopped, questing ever onward through the changing vistas of trees and brush, and returning always to the clumps of undergrowth on either side. And as he watched, so did he listen, though he rode on in silence, save for the boom of heavy guns from far to the west. This had been sounding monotonously in his ears for hours, and only its cessation could have aroused his notice. For he had business closer to hand. Across his saddle-bow was balanced a carbine.

So tensely was he strung, that a bunch of quail, exploding into flight from under his horse's nose, startled him to such an extent that automatically, instantly, he had reined in and fetched the carbine halfway to his shoulder. He grinned sheepishly, recovered himself, and rode on. So tense was he, so bent upon the work he had to do, that the sweat stung his eyes unwiped, and unheeded rolled down his nose and spattered his saddle pommel. The band of his cavalryman's hat was fresh-stained with sweat. The roan horse under him was likewise wet. It was high noon of a breathless day of heat. Even the birds and squirrels did not dare the sun, but sheltered in shady hiding places among the trees.

Man and horse were littered with leaves and dusted with yellow pollen, for the open was ventured no more than was compulsory. They kept to the brush and trees, and invariably the man halted and peered out before crossing a dry glade or naked stretch of upland pasturage. He worked always to the north, though his way was devious, and it was from the north that he seemed most to apprehend that for which he was looking. He was no coward, but his courage was only that of the average civilized man, and he was looking to live, not die.

Up a small hillside he followed a cowpath through such dense scrub that he was forced to dismount and lead his horse. But when the path swung around to the west, he abandoned it and headed to the north again along the oak-covered top of the ridge.

The ridge ended in a steep descent-so steep that he zigzagged back and forth across the face of the slope, sliding and stumbling among the dead leaves and matted vines and keeping a watchful eye on the horse above that threatened to fall down upon him. The sweat ran from him, and the pollen-dust, settling pungently in mouth and nostrils, increased his thirst. Try as he would, nevertheless the descent was noisy, and frequently he stopped, panting in the dry heat and listening for any warning from beneath.

At the bottom he came out on a flat, so densely forested that he could not make out its extent. Here the character of the woods changed, and he was able to remount. Instead of the twisted hillside oaks, tall straight trees, big-trunked and prosperous, rose from the damp fat soil. Only here and there were thickets, easily avoided, while he encountered winding, park-like glades where the cattle had pastured in the days before war had run them off.

His progress was more rapid now, as he came down into the valley, and at the end of half an hour he halted at an ancient rail fence on the edge of a clearing. He did not like the openness of it, yet his path lay across to the fringe of trees that marked the banks of the stream. It was a mere quarter of a mile across that open, but the thought of venturing out in it was repugnant. A rifle, a score of them, a thousand, might lurk in that fringe by the stream.

Twice he essayed to start, and twice he paused. He was appalled by his own loneliness. The pulse of war that beat from the West suggested the companionship of battling thousands; here was naught but silence, and himself, and possible death-dealing bullets from a myriad ambushes. And yet his task was to find what he feared to find. He must on, and on, till somewhere, some time, he encountered another man, or other men, from the other side, scouting, as he was scouting, to make report, as he must make report, of having come in touch.

Changing his mind, he skirted inside the woods for a distance, and again peeped forth. This time, in the middle of the clearing, he saw a small farmhouse. There were no signs of life. No smoke curled from the chimney, not a barnyard fowl clucked and strutted. The kitchen door stood open, and he gazed so long and hard into the black aperture that it seemed almost that a farmer’s wife must emerge at any moment.

He licked the pollen and dust from his dry lips, stiffened himself, mind and body, and rode out into the blazing sunshine. Nothing stirred. He went on past the house, and approached the wall of trees and bushes by the river’s bank. One thought persisted maddeningly. It was of the crash into his body of a high-velocity bullet. It made him feel very fragile and defenseless, and he crouched lower in the saddle.

Tethering his horse in the edge of the wood, he continued a hundred yards on foot till he came to the stream. Twenty feet wide it was, without perceptible current, cool and inviting, and he was very thirsty. But he waited inside his screen of leafage, his eyes fixed on the screen on the opposite side. To make the wait endurable, he sat down, his carbine resting on his knees. The minutes passed, and slowly his tenseness relaxed. At last he decided there was no danger; but just as he prepared to part the bushes and bend down to the water, a movement among the opposite bushes caught his eye.

It might be a bird. But he waited. Again there was an agitation of the bushes, and then, so suddenly that it almost startled a cry from him, the bushes parted and a face peered out. It was a face covered with several weeks' growth of ginger-colored beard. The eyes were blue and wide apart, with laughter-wrinkles in the comers that showed despite the tired and anxious expression of the whole face.

All this he could see with microscopic clearness, for the distance was no more than twenty feet. And all this he saw in such brief time, that he saw it as he lifted his carbine to his shoulder. He glanced along the sights, and knew that he was gazing upon a man who was as good as dead. It was impossible to miss at such point blank range.

But he did not shoot. Slowly he lowered the carbine and watched. A hand, clutching a water-bottle, became visible and the ginger beard bent downward to fill the bottle. He could hear the gurgle of the water. Then arm and bottle and ginger beard disappeared behind the closing bushes. A long time he waited, when, with thirst unslaked, he crept back to his horse, rode slowly across the sun-washed clearing, and passed into the shelter of the woods beyond.

II

Another day, hot and breathless. A deserted farmhouse, large, with many outbuildings and an orchard, standing in a clearing. From the Woods, on a roan horse, carbine across pommel, rode the young man with the quick black eyes. He breathed with relief as he gained the house. That a fight had taken place here earlier in the season was evident. Clips and empty cartridges, tarnished with verdigris, lay on the ground, which, while wet, had been torn up by the hoofs of horses. Hard by the kitchen garden were graves, tagged and numbered. From the oak tree by the kitchen door, in tattered, weatherbeaten garments, hung the bodies of two men. The faces, shriveled and defaced, bore no likeness to the faces of men. The roan horse snorted beneath them, and the rider caressed and soothed it and tied it farther away.

Entering the house, he found the interior a wreck. He trod on empty cartridges as he walked from room to room to reconnoiter from the windows. Men had camped and slept everywhere, and on the floor of one room he came upon stains unmistakable where the wounded had been laid down.

Again outside, he led the horse around behind the barn and invaded the orchard. A dozen trees were burdened with ripe apples. He filled his pockets, eating while he picked. Then a thought came to him, and he glanced at the sun, calculating the time of his return to camp. He pulled off his shirt, tying the sleeves and making a bag. This he proceeded to fill with apples.

As he was about to mount his horse, the animal suddenly pricked up its ears. The man, too, listened, and heard, faintly, the thud of hoofs on soft earth. He crept to the corner of the barn and peered out. A dozen mounted men, strung out loosely, approaching from the opposite side of the clearing, were only a matter of a hundred yards or so away. They rode on to the house. Some dismounted, while others remained in the saddle as an earnest that their stay would be short. They seemed to be holding a council, for he could hear them talking excitedly in the detested tongue of the alien invader. The time passed, but they seemed unable to reach a decision. He put the carbine away in its boot, mounted, and waited impatiently, balancing the shirt of apples on the pommel.

He heard footsteps approaching, and drove his spurs so fiercely into the roan as to force a surprised groan from the animal as it leaped forward. At the comer of the barn he saw the intruder, a mere boy of nineteen or twenty for all of his uniform jump back to escape being run down. At the same moment the roan swerved and its rider caught a glimpse of the aroused men by the house. Some were springing from their horses, and he could see the rifles going to their shoulders. He passed the kitchen door and the dried corpses swinging in the shade, compelling his foes to run around the front of the house. A rifle cracked, and a second, but he was going fast, leaning forward, low in the saddle, one hand clutching the shirt of apples, the other guiding the horse.

The top bar of the fence was four feet high, but he knew his roan and leaped it at full career to the accompaniment of several scattered shots. Eight hundred yards straight away were the woods, and the roan was covering the distance with mighty strides. Every man was now firing. pumping their guns so rapidly that he no longer heard individual shots. A bullet went through his hat, but he was unaware, though he did know when another tore through the apples on the pommel. And he winced and ducked even lower when a third bullet, fired low, struck a stone between his horse's legs and ricochetted off through the air, buzzing and humming like some incredible insect.

The shots died down as the magazines were emptied, until, quickly, there was no more shooting. The young man was elated. Through that astonishing fusillade he had come unscathed. He glanced back. Yes, they had emptied their magazines. He could see several reloading. Others were running back behind the house for their horses. As he looked, two already mounted, came back into view around the comer, riding hard. And at the same moment, he saw the man with the unmistakable ginger beard kneel down on the ground, level his gun, and coolly take his time for the long shot.

The young man threw his spurs into the horse, crouched very low, and swerved in his flight in order to distract the other's aim. And still the shot did not come. With each jump of the horse, the woods sprang nearer. They were only two hundred yards away and still the shot was delayed.

And then he heard it, the last thing he was to hear, for he was dead ere he hit the ground in the long crashing fall from the saddle. And they, watching at the house, saw him fall, saw his body bounce when it struck the earth, and saw the burst of red-cheeked apples that rolled about him. They laughed at the unexpected eruption of apples, and clapped their hands in applause of the long shot by the man with the ginger beard.

The Water Baby

I lent a weary ear to old Kohokumu's interminable chanting of the deeds and adventures of Maui, the Promethean demigod of Polynesia who fished up dry land from ocean depths with hooks made fast to heaven, who lifted up the sky whereunder previously men had gone on all fours, not having space to stand erect, and who made the sun with its sixteen snared legs stand still and agree thereafter to traverse the sky more slowly — the sun being evidently a trade-unionist and believing in the six-hour day, while Maui stood for the open shop and the twelve-hour day.

"Now this," said Kohokumu, "is from Queen Liliuokalani's own family mele:

" 'Maui became restless and fought the sun
With a noose that he laid.
And winter won the sun,
And summer was won by Maui. . . .' "

Born in the Islands myself, I know the Hawaiian myths better than this old fisherman, although I possessed not his memorization that enabled him to recite them endless hours.

"And you believe all this?" I demanded in the sweet Hawaiian tongue.

"It was a long time ago," he pondered. "I never saw Maui with my own eyes. But all our old men from all the way back tell us these things, as I, an old man, tell them to my sons and grandsons, who will tell them to their sons and grandsons all the way ahead to come."

"You believe," I persisted, "that whopper of Maui roping the sun like a wild steer, and that other whopper of heaving up the sky from off the earth?"

"I am of little worth, and am not wise, O Lakana," my fisherman made answer. "Yet have I read the Hawaiian bible the missionaries translated to us, and there have I read that your Big Man of the Beginning made the earth and sky and sun and moon and stars, and all manner of animals from horses to cockroaches and from centipedes and mosquitoes to sea lice and jellyfish, and man and woman and everything, and all in six days. Why, Maui didn't do anything like that much. He didn't make anything. He just put things in order, that was all, and it took him a long, long time to make the improvements. And anyway, it is much easier and more reasonable to believe the little whopper than the big whopper."

And what could I reply? He had me on the matter of reasonableness. Besides, my head ached. And the funny thing, as admitted to myself, was that evolution teaches in no uncertain voice that man did run on all fours ere he came to walk upright, that astronomy states flatly that the speed of the revolution of the earth on its axis has diminished steadily, thus increasing the length of day, and that the seismologists accept that all the islands of Hawaii were elevated from the ocean floor by volcanic action.

Fortunately, I saw a bamboo pole, floating on the surface several hundred feet away, suddenly up-end and start a very devil's dance. This was a diversion from the profitless discussion, and Kohokumu and I dipped our paddles and raced the little outrigger canoe to the dancing pole. Kohokumu caught the line that was fast to the butt of the pole and underhanded it in until a two-foot ukikiki, battling fiercely to the end, flashed its wet silver in the sun and began beating a tattoo on the inside bottom of the canoe. Kohokumu picked up a squirming, slimy squid, with his teeth bit a chunk of live bait out of it, attached the bait to the hook, and dropped line and sinker overside. The stick floated flat on the surface of the water, and the canoe drifted slowly away. With a survey of the crescent composed of a score of such sticks all lying flat, Kohokumu wiped his hands on his naked sides and lifted the wearisome and centuries-old chant of Kuali:

" 'Oh, the great fishhook of Maui!
Manai-i-ka-lani — "made fast to the heavens"!
An earth-twisted cord ties the hook,
Engulfed from lofty Kauiki!
Its bait the red-billed Alae,
The bird to Hina sacred!
It sinks far down to Hawaii,
Struggling and in pain dying!
Caught is the land beneath the water,
Floated up, up to the surface,
But Hina hid a wing of the bird
And broke the land beneath the water!
Below was the bait snatched away
And eaten at once by the fishes,
The Ulua of the deep muddy places!' "

His aged voice was hoarse and scratchy from the drinking of too much swipes at a funeral the night before, nothing of which contributed to make me less irritable. My head ached. The sun glare on the water made my eyes ache, while I was suffering more than half a touch of mal de mer from the antic conduct of the outrigger on the blobby sea. The air was stagnant. In the lee of Waihee, between the white beach and the reef, no whisper of breeze eased the still sultriness. I really think was too miserable to summon the resolution to give up the fishing and go in to shore.

Lying back with closed eyes, I lost count of time. I even forgot that Kohokumu was chanting till reminded of it by his ceasing. An exclamation made me bare my eyes to the stab of the sun. He was gazing down through the water glass.

“It’s a big one,” he said, passing me the device and slipping overside feetfirst into the water.

He went under without splash and ripple, turned over, and swam down. I followed his progress through the water glass, which is merely an oblong box a couple of feet long, open at the top, the bottom sealed water-tight with a sheet of ordinary glass.

Now Kohokumu was a bore, and I was squeamishly out of sorts with him for his volubleness, but I could not help admiring him as watched him go down. Past seventy years of age, lean as a spear, and shriveled like a mummy, he was doing what few young athletes of my race would do or could do. It was forty feet to bottom. There, partly exposed but mostly hidden under the bulge of a coral lump, I could discern his objective. His keen eyes had caught the projecting tentacle of a squid. Even as he swam, the tentacle was lazily withdrawn, so that there was no sign of the creature. But the brief exposure of the portion of one tentacle had advertised its owner as a squid of size.

The pressure at a depth of forty feet is no joke for a young man, yet it did not seem to inconvenience this oldster. I am certain it never crossed his mind to be inconvenienced. Unarmed, bare of body save for a brief malo or loin cloth, he was undeterred by the formidable creature that constituted his prey. I saw him steady himself with his right hand on the coral lump, and thrust his left arm into the hole to the shoulder. Half a minute elapsed, during which time he seemed to be groping and rooting around with his left hand. Then tentacle after tentacle, myriad-suckered and wildly waving, emerged. Laying hold of his arm, they writhed and coiled about his flesh like so many snakes. With a heave and a jerk appeared the entire squid, a proper devilfish or octopus.

But the old man was in no hurry for his natural element, the air above the water. There, forty feet beneath, wrapped about by an octopus that measured nine feet across from tentacle tip to tentacle tip and that could well drown the stoutest swimmer, he cooly and casually did the one thing that gave to him his empery over the monster. He shoved his lean, hawklike face into the very center of the slimy, squirming mass, and with his several ancient fangs bit into the heart and the life of the matter. This accomplished, he came upward slowly, as a swimmer should who is changing atmospheres from the depths. Alongside the canoe, still in the water and peeling off the grisly clinging thing, the incorrigible old sinner burst into the pule of triumph which had been chanted by countless squid-catching generations before him:

"O Kanaloa of the taboo nights!
Stand upright on the solid floor!
Stand upon the floor where lies the squid!
Stand up to take the squid of the deep sea!
Rise up, O Kanaloa!
Stir up! Stir up! Let the squid awake!
Let the squid that lies flat awake! Let the squid that lies spread out. . . .'"

I closed my eyes and ears, not offering to lend him a hand, secure in the knowledge that he could climb back unaided into the unstable craft without the slightest risk of upsetting it.

"A very fine squid," he crooned. "It is a wahine squid. shall now sing to you the song of the cowrie shell, the red cowrie shell that we used as a bait for the squid — "

"You were disgraceful last night at the funeral," I headed him off. "I heard all about it. You made much noise. You sang till everybody was deaf. You insulted the son of the widow. You drank swipes like a pig. Swipes are not good for your extreme age. Some day you will wake up dead. You ought to be a wreck to-day — "

"Ha!" he chuckled. "And you, who drank no swipes, who was a babe unborn when I was already an old man, who went to bed last night with the sun and the chickens — this day you are a wreck. Explain me that. My ears are as thirsty to listen as was my throat thirsty last night. And here to-day, behold, I am, as that Englishman who came here in his yacht used to say, I am in fine form, in devilish fine form."

"I give you up," I retorted, shrugging my shoulders. "Only one thing is clear, and that is that the devil doesn't want you. Report of your singing has gone before you."

"No," he pondered the idea carefully. "It is not that. The devil will be glad for my coming, for I have some very fine songs for him, and scandals and old gossips of the high aliis that will make him scratch his sides. So let me explain to you the secret of my birth. The Sea is my mother. I was born in a double canoe, during a Kona gale, in the channel of Kahoolawe. From her, the Sea, my mother, I received my strength. Whenever I return to her arms, as for a breast clasp, as have returned this day, I grow strong again and immediately. She, to me, is the milk giver, the life source — "

"Shades of Antaeus!" thought I.

"Some day," old Kohokumu rambled on, "when I am really old, shall be reported of men as drowned in the sea. This will be an idle thought of men. In truth, I shall have returned into the arms of my mother, there to rest under the heart of her breast until the second birth of me, when I shall emerge into the sun a flashing youth of splendor like Maui himself when he was golden young."

"A queer religion," I commented.

"When I was younger I muddled my poor head over queerer religions," old Kohokumu retorted. "But listen, O Young Wise One, to my elderly wisdom. This I know: as I grow old I seek less for the truth from without me, and find more of the truth from within me. Why have thought this thought of my return to my mother and of my rebirth from my mother into the sun? You do not know. I do not know, save that, without whisper of man's voice or printed word, without prompting from otherwhere, this thought has arisen from within me, from the deeps of me that are as deep as the sea. I am not a god. I do not make things. Therefore I have not made this thought. I do not know its father or its mother. It is of old time before me, and therefore it is true. Man does not make truth. Man, if he be not blind, only recognizes truth when he sees it. Is this thought that I have thought a dream?"

"Perhaps it is you that are a dream," I laughed. "And that and sky and sea and the iron-hard land are dreams, all dreams."

“I have often thought that,” he assured me soberly. “It may well be so. Last night I dreamed I was a lark bird, a beautiful singing lark of the sky like the larks on the upland pastures of Haleakala. And I flew up, up toward the sun, singing, singing, as old Kohokumu never sang. I tell you now that I dreamed I was a lark bird singing in the sky. But may not I, the real I, be the lark bird? And may not the telling of it be the dream that I, the lark bird, am dreaming now? Who are you to tell me aye or no? Dare you tell me I am not a lark bird asleep and dreaming that I am old Kohokumu?”

I shrugged my shoulders, and he continued triumphantly.

“And how do you know but what you are old Maui himself asleep and dreaming that you are John Lakana talking with me in a canoe? And may you not awake, old Maui yourself, and scratch your sides and say that you had a funny dream in which you dreamed you were a haole?”

“I don’t know,” I admitted. “Besides, you wouldn’t believe me.”

“There is much more in dreams than we know,” he assured me with great solemnity. “Dreams go deep, all the way down, maybe to before the beginning. May not old Maui have only dreamed he pulled Hawaii up from the bottom of the sea? Then would this Hawaii land be a dream, and you and I and the squid there only parts of Maui’s dream? And the lark bird, too?”

He sighed and let his head sink on his breast.

“And I worry my old head about the secrets undiscoverable,” he resumed, “until I grow tired and want to forget, and so I drink swipes, and go fishing, and sing old songs, and dream I am a lark bird singing in the sky. I like that best of all, and often I dream it when I have drunk much swipes — ”

In great dejection of mood he peered down into the lagoon through the water glass.

“There will be no more bites for a while,” he announced. “The fish sharks are prowling around, and we shall have to wait until they are gone. And so that the time shall not be heavy, I will sing you the canoe-hauling song to Lono. You remember:

“ ‘Give to me the trunk of the tree, O Lono!
Give me the tree’s main root, O Lono!
Give me the ear of the tree, O Lono! — ’ “

“For the love of mercy, don’t sing!” I cut him short. “I’ve got a headache, and your singing hurts. You may be in devilish fine form to-day, but your throat is rotten. I'd rather you talked about dreams, or told me whoppers."

"It is too bad that you are sick, and you so young," he conceded cheerily. "And I shall not sing any more. I shall tell you something you do not know and have never heard; something that is no dream and no whopper, but is what I know to have happened. Not very long ago there lived here, on the beach beside this very lagoon, a young boy whose name was Keikiwai, which, as you know, means Water Baby. He was truly a water baby. His gods were the sea and fish gods, and he was born with knowledge of the language of fishes, which the fishes did not know until the sharks found it out one day when they heard him talk it.

"It happened this way. The word had been brought, and the commands, by swift runners, that the king was making a progress around the island, and that on the next day a luau was to be served him by the dwellers here of Waihee. It was always a hardship, when the king made a progress, for the few dwellers in small places to fill his many stomachs with food. For he came always with his wife and her women, with his priests and sorcerers, his dancers and flute players and hula singers, and fighting men and servants, and his high chiefs with their wives, and sorcerers and fighting men and servants.

"Sometimes, in small places like Waihee, the path of his journey was marked afterward by leanness and famine. But a king must be fed, and it is not good to anger a king. So, like warning in advance of disaster, Waihee heard of his coming, and all food-getters of field and pond and mountain and sea were busied with getting food for the feast. And behold, everything was got, from the choicest of royal taro to sugar-cane joints for the roasting, from opihis to limu, from fowl to wild pig and poi-fed puppies — everything save one thing. The fishermen failed to get lobsters.

"Now be it known that the king's favorite food was lobster. He esteemed it above all kao-kao (food), and his runners had made special mention of it. And there were no lobsters, and it is not good to anger a king in the belly of him. Too many sharks had come inside the reef. That was the trouble. A young girl and an old man had been eaten by them. And of the young men who dared dive for lobsters, one was eaten, and one lost an arm, and another lost one hand and one foot.

"But there was Keikiwai, the Water Baby, only eleven years old, but half fish himself and talking the language of fishes. To his father the head men came, begging him to send the Water Baby to get lobsters to fill the king's belly and divert his anger.

"Now this, what happened, was known and observed. For the fishermen and their women, and the taro growers and the bird catchers, and the head men, and all Waihee, came down and stood back from the edge of the rock where the Water Baby stood and looked down at the lobsters far beneath on the bottom.

"And a shark, looking up with its cat's eyes, observed him, and sent out the shark call of `fresh meat' to assemble all the sharks in the lagoon. For the sharks work thus together, which is why they are strong. And the sharks answered the call till there were forty of them, long ones and short ones and lean ones and round ones, forty of them by count; and they talked to one another, saying: 'Look at that titbit of a child, that morsel delicious of human-flesh sweetness without the salt of the sea in it, of which salt we have too much, savory and good to eat, melting to delight under our hearts as our bellies embrace it and extract from it its sweet.'

"Much more they said, saying: 'He has come for the lobsters. When he dives in he is for one of us. Not like the old man we ate yesterday, tough to dryness with age, nor like the young men whose members were too hard-muscled, but tender, so tender that he will melt in our gullets ere our bellies receive him. When he dives in, we will all rush for him, and the lucky one of us will get him, and, gulp, he will be gone, one bite and one swallow, into the belly of the luckiest one of us.'

"And Keikiwai, the Water Baby, heard the conspiracy, knowing the shark language; and he addressed a prayer, in the shark language, to the shark god Moku-halii, and the sharks heard and waved their tails to one another and winked their cat's eyes in token that they understood his talk. And then he said: 'I shall now dive for a lobster for the king. And no hurt shall befall me, because the shark with the shortest tail is my friend and will protect me.'

"And, so saying, he picked up a chunk of lava rock and tossed it into the water, with a big splash, twenty feet to one side. The forty sharks rushed for the splash, while he dived, and by the time they discovered they had missed him, he had gone to the bottom and come back and climbed out, within his hand a fat lobster, a wahine lobster, full of eggs, for the king.

"'Ha!' said the sharks, very angry. 'There is among us a traitor. The titbit of a child, the morsel of sweetness, has spoken, and has exposed the one among us who has saved him. Let us now measure the length of our tails!'

"Which they did, in a long row, side by side, the shorter-tailed ones cheating and stretching to gain length on themselves, the longer-tailed ones cheating and stretching in order not to be out-cheated and out-stretched. They were very angry with the one with the shortest tail, and him they rushed upon from every side and devoured till nothing was left of him.

"Again they listened while they waited for the Water Baby to dive in. And again the Water Baby made his prayer in the shark language to Moku-halii, and said: 'The shark with the shortest tail is my friend and will protect me.' And again the Water Baby tossed in a chunk of lava, this time twenty feet away off to the other side. The sharks rushed for the splash, and in their haste ran into one another, and splashed with their tails till the water was all foam and they could see nothing, each thinking some other was swallowing the titbit. And the Water Baby came up and climbed out with another fat lobster for the king.

"And the thirty-nine sharks measured tails, devouring the one with the shortest tail, so that there were only thirty-eight sharks. And the Water Baby continued to do what I have said, and the sharks to do what I have told you, while for each shark that was eaten by his brothers there was another fat lobster laid on the rock for the king. Of course, there was much quarreling and argument among the sharks when it came to measuring tails; but in the end it worked out in rightness and justice, for, when only two sharks were left, they were the two biggest of the original forty.

"And the Water Baby again claimed the shark with the shortest tail was his friend, fooled the two sharks with another lava chunk, and brought up another lobster. The two sharks each claimed the other had the shorter tail, and each fought to eat the other, and the one with the longer tail won — "

"Hold, O Kohokumu!" I interrupted. "Remember that that shark had already — " "I know just what you are going to say," he snatched his recital back from me. "And you are right. It took him so long to eat the thirty-ninth shark, for inside the thirty-ninth shark were already the nineteen other sharks he had eaten, and inside the fortieth shark were already the nineteen other sharks he had eaten, and he did not have the appetite he had started with. But do not forget he was a very big shark to begin with.

"It took him so long to eat the other shark, and the nineteen sharks inside the other shark, that he was still eating when darkness fell and the people of Waihee went away home with all the lobsters for the king. And didn't they find the last shark on the beach next morning dead and burst wide open with all he had eaten?"

Kohokumu fetched a full stop and held my eyes with his own shrewd ones.

"Hold, O Lakana!" he checked the speech that rushed to my tongue. "I know what next you would say. You would say that with my own eyes I did not see this, and therefore that I do not know what have been telling you. But I do know, and I can prove it. My father's father knew the grandson of the Water Baby's father's uncle. Also, there, on the rocky point to which I point my finger now, is where the Water Baby stood and dived. I have dived for lobsters there myself. It is a great place for lobsters. Also, and often, have I seen sharks there. And there, on the bottom, as I should know, for I have seen and counted them, are the thirty-nine lava rocks thrown in by the Water Baby as I have described."

"But — " I began.

"Ha!" he baffled me. "Look! While we have talked the fish have begun again to bite."

He pointed to three of the bamboo poles erect and devil-dancing in token that fish were hooked and struggling on the lines beneath. As he bent to his paddle, he muttered, for my benefit:

"Of course I know. The thirty-nine lava rocks are still there. You can count them any day for yourself. Of course I know, and I know for a fact."

The Whale Tooth

It was in the early days in Fiji, when John Starhurst arose in the mission house at Rewa Village and announced his intention of carrying the gospel throughout all Viti Levu. Now Viti Levu means the “Great Land,” it being the largest island in a group composed of many large islands, to say nothing of hundreds of small ones. Here and there on the coasts, living by most precarious tenure, was a sprinkling of missionaries, traders, bêche-de-mer fishers, and whaleship deserters. The smoke of the hot ovens arose under their windows, and the bodies of the slain were dragged by their doors on the way to the feasting.

The Lotu, or the Worship, was progressing slowly, and, often, in crablike fashion. Chiefs, who announced themselves Christians and were welcomed into the body of the chapel, had a distressing habit of backsliding in order to partake of the flesh of some favorite enemy. Eat or be eaten had been the law of the land; and eat or be eaten promised to remain the law of the land for a long time to come. There were chiefs, such as Tanoa, Tuiveikoso, and Tuikilakila, who had literally eaten hundreds of their fellow men. But among these gluttons Ra Undreundre ranked highest. Ra Undreundre lived at Takiraki. He kept a register of his gustatory exploits. A row of stones outside his house marked the bodies he had eaten. This row was two hundred and thirty paces long, and the stones in it numbered eight hundred and seventy-two. Each stone represented a body. The row of stones might have been longer, had not Ra Undreundre unfortunately received a spear in the small of his back in a bush skirmish on Somo Somo and been served up on the table of Naungavuli, whose mediocre string of stones numbered only forty-eight.

The hard-worked, fever-stricken missionaries stuck doggedly to their task, at times despairing, and looking forward for some special manifestation, some outburst of Pentecostal fire that would bring a glorious harvest of souls. But cannibal Fiji had remained obdurate. The frizzle-headed man-eaters were loath to leave their fleshpots so long as the harvest of human carcases was plentiful. Sometimes, when the harvest was too plentiful, they imposed on the missionaries by letting the word slip out that on such a day there would be a killing and a barbecue. Promptly the missionaries would buy the lives of the victims with stick tobacco, fathoms of calico, and quarts of trade beads. Natheless the chiefs drove a handsome trade in thus disposing of their surplus live meat. Also, they could always go out and catch more.

It was at this juncture that John Starhurst proclaimed that he would carry the Gospel from coast to coast of the Great Land, and that he would begin by penetrating the mountain fastnesses of the headwaters of the Rewa River. His words were received with consternation.

The native teachers wept softly. His two fellow missionaries strove to dissuade him. The King of Rewa warned him that the mountain dwellers would surely kai-kai him--kai-kai meaning “to eat”--and that he, the King of Rewa, having become Lotu, would be put to the necessity of going to war with the mountain dwellers. That he could not conquer them he was perfectly aware. That they might come down the river and sack Rewa Village he was likewise perfectly aware. But what was he to do? If John Starhurst persisted in going out and being eaten, there would be a war that would cost hundreds of lives.

Later in the day a deputation of Rewa chiefs waited upon John Starhurst. He heard them patiently, and argued patiently with them, though he abated not a whit from his purpose. To his fellow missionaries he explained that he was not bent upon martyrdom; that the call had come for him to carry the Gospel into Viti Levu, and that he was merely obeying the Lord’s wish.

To the traders who came and objected most strenuously of all, he said: “Your objections are valueless. They consist merely of the damage that may be done your businesses. You are interested in making money, but I am interested in saving souls. The heathen of this dark land must be saved.”

John Starhurst was not a fanatic. He would have been the first man to deny the imputation. He was eminently sane and practical.

He was sure that his mission would result in good, and he had private visions of igniting the Pentecostal spark in the souls of the mountaineers and of inaugurating a revival that would sweep down out of the mountains and across the length and breadth of the Great Land from sea to sea and to the isles in the midst of the sea. There were no wild lights in his mild gray eyes, but only calm resolution and an unfaltering trust in the Higher Power that was guiding him.

One man only he found who approved of his project, and that was Ra Vatu, who secretly encouraged him and offered to lend him guides to the first foothills. John Starhurst, in turn, was greatly pleased by Ra Vatu’s conduct. From an incorrigible heathen, with a heart as black as his practices, Ra Vatu was beginning to emanate light. He even spoke of becoming Lotu. True, three years before he had expressed a similar intention, and would have entered the church had not John Starhurst entered objection to his bringing his four wives along with him. Ra Vatu had had economic and ethical objections to monogamy. Besides, the missionary's hair-splitting objection had offended him; and, to prove that he was a free agent and a man of honor, he had swung his huge war club over Starhurst's head. Starhurst had escaped by rushing in under the club and holding on to him until help arrived. But all that was now forgiven and forgotten. Ra Vatu was coming into the church, not merely as a converted heathen, but as a converted polygamist as well. He was only waiting, he assured Starhurst, until his oldest wife, who was very sick, should die.

John Starhurst journeyed up the sluggish Rewa in one of Ra Vatu's canoes. This canoe was to carry him for two days, when, the head of navigation reached, it would return. Far in the distance, lifted into the sky, could be seen the great smoky mountains that marked the backbone of the Great Land. All day John Starhurst gazed at them with eager yearning.

Sometimes he prayed silently. At other times he was joined in prayer by Narau, a native teacher, who for seven years had been Lotu, ever since the day he had been saved from the hot oven by Dr. James Ellery Brown at the trifling expense of one hundred sticks of tobacco, two cotton blankets, and a large bottle of painkiller. At the last moment, after twenty hours of solitary supplication and prayer, Narau's ears had heard the call to go forth with John Starhurst on the mission to the mountains.

"Master, I will surely go with thee," he had announced.

John Starhurst had hailed him with sober delight. Truly, the Lord was with him thus to spur on so broken-spirited a creature as Narau.

"I am indeed without spirit, the weakest of the Lord's vessels," Narau explained, the first day in the canoe.

"You should have faith, stronger faith," the missionary chided him.

Another canoe journeyed up the Rewa that day. But it journeyed an hour astern, and it took care not to be seen. This canoe was also the property of Ra Vatu. In it was Erirola, Ra Vatu's first cousin and trusted henchman; and in the small basket that never left his hand was a whale tooth. It was a magnificent tooth, fully six inches long, beautifully proportioned, the ivory turned yellow and purple with age. This tooth was likewise the property of

Ra Vatu; and in Fiji, when such a tooth goes forth, things usually happen. For this is the virtue of the whale tooth: Whoever accepts it cannot refuse the request that may accompany it or follow it. The request may be anything from a human life to a tribal alliance, and no Fijian is so dead to honor as to deny the request when once the tooth has been accepted. Sometimes the request hangs fire, or the fulfilment is delayed, with untoward consequences.

High up the Rewa, at the village of a chief, Mongondro by name, John Starhurst rested at the end of the second day of the journey. In the morning, attended by Narau, he expected to start on foot for the smoky mountains that were now green and velvety with nearness. Mongondro was a sweet-tempered, mild-mannered little old chief, short-sighted and afflicted with elephantiasis, and no longer inclined toward the turbulence of war. He received the missionary with warm hospitality, gave him food from his own table, and even discussed religious matters with him. Mongondro was of an inquiring bent of mind, and pleased John Starhurst greatly by asking him to account for the existence and beginning of things. When the missionary had finished his summary of the Creation according to Genesis, he saw that Mongondro was deeply affected. The little old chief smoked silently for some time. Then he took the pipe from his mouth and shook his head sadly.

“It cannot be,” he said. “I, Mongondro, in my youth, was a good workman with the adze. Yet three months did it take me to make a canoe--a small canoe, a very small canoe. And you say that all this land and water was made by one man--“

“Nay, was made by one God, the only true God,” the missinary interrupted.

“It is the same thing,” Mongondro went on, “that all the land and all the water, the trees, the fish, and bush and mountains, the sun, the moon, and the stars, were made in six days! No, no. I tell you that in my youth I was an able man, yet did it require me three months for one small canoe. It is a story to frighten children with; but no man can believe it.”

“I am a man,” the missionary said.

“True, you are a man. But it is not given to my dark understanding to know what you believe.”

“I tell you, I do believe that everything was made in six days.”

“So you say, so you say,” the old cannibal murmured soothingly.

It was not until after John Starhurst and Narau had gone off to bed that Erirola crept into the chief's house, and, after diplomatic speech, handed the whale tooth to Mongondro.

The old chief held the tooth in his hands for a long time. It was a beautiful tooth, and he yearned for it. Also, he divined the request that must accompany it. "No, no; whale teeth were beautiful," and his mouth watered for it, but he passed it back to Erirola with many apologies.

In the early dawn John Starhurst was afoot, striding along the bush trail in his big leather boots, at his heels the faithful Narau, himself at the heels of a naked guide lent him by Mongondro to show the way to the next village, which was reached by midday. Here a new guide showed the way. A mile in the rear plodded Erirola, the whale tooth in the basket slung on his shoulder. For two days more he brought up the missionary's rear, offering the tooth to the village chiefs. But village after village refused the tooth. It followed so quickly the missionary's advent that they divined the request that would be made, and would have none of it.

They were getting deep into the mountains, and Erirola took a secret trail, cut in ahead of the missionary, and reached the stronghold of the Buli of Gatoka. Now the Buli was unaware of John Starhurst's imminent arrival. Also, the tooth was beautiful--an extraordinary specimen, while the coloring of it was of the rarest order. The tooth was presented publicly. The Buli of Gatoka, seated on his best mat, surrounded by his chief men, three busy fly-brushers at his back, deigned to receive from the hand of his herald the whale tooth presented by Ra Vatu and carried into the mountains by his cousin, Erirola. A clapping of hands went up at the acceptance of the present, the assembled headman, heralds, and fly-brushers crying aloud in chorus:

"A! woi! woi! woi! A! woi! woi! woi! A tabua levu! woi! woi! A mudua, mudua, mudua!'

"Soon will come a man, a white man," Erirola began, after the proper pause. "He is a missionary man, and he will come today. Ra Vatu is pleased to desire his boots. He wishes to present them to his good friend, Mongondro, and it is in his mind to send them with the feet along in them, for Mongondro is an old man and his teeth are not good. Be sure, O Buli, that the feet go along in the boots. As for the rest of him, it may stop here."

The delight in the whale tooth faded out of the Buli's eyes, and he glanced about him dubiously. Yet had he already accepted the tooth.

“A little thing like a missionary does not matter,” Erirola prompted.

“No, a little thing like a missionary does not matter,” the Buli answered, himself again. “Mongondro shall have the boots. Go, you young men, some three or four of you, and meet the missionary on the trail. Be sure you bring back the boots as well.”

“It is too late,” said Erirola. “Listen! He comes now.”

Breaking through the thicket of brush, John Starhurst, with Narau close on his heels, strode upon the scene. The famous boots, having filled in wading the stream, squirted fine jets of water at every step. Starhurst looked about him with flashing eyes. Upborne by an unwavering trust, untouched by doubt or fear, he exulted in all he saw. He knew that since the beginning of time he was the first white man ever to tread the mountain stronghold of Gatoka.

The grass houses clung to the steep mountain side or overhung the rushing Rewa. On either side towered a mighty precipice. At the best, three hours of sunlight penetrated that narrow gorge. No cocoanuts nor bananas were to be seen, though dense, tropic vegetation overran everything, dripping in airy festoons from the sheer lips of the precipices and running riot in all the crannied ledges. At the far end of the gorge the Rewa leaped eight hundred feet in a single span, while the atmosphere of the rock fortress pulsed to the rhythmic thunder of the fall.

From the Buli's house, John Starhurst saw emerging the Buli and his followers.

“I bring you good tidings,” was the missionary's greeting.

“Who has sent you?” the Buli rejoined quietly.

“God.”

“It is a new name in Viti Levu,” the Buli grinned. “Of what islands, villages, or passes may he be chief?”

“He is the chief over all islands, all villages, all passes,” John Starhurst answered solemnly. “He is the Lord over heaven and earth, and I am come to bring His word to you.”

“Has he sent whale teeth?” was the insolent query.

“No, but more precious than whale teeth is the--”

“It is the custom, between chiefs, to send whale teeth,” the Buli interrupted.

“Your chief is either a niggard, or you are a fool, to come empty-handed into the mountains. Behold, a more generous than you is before you.”

So saying, he showed the whale tooth he had received from Erirola.

Narau groaned.

“It is the whale tooth of Ra Vatu,” he whispered to Starhurst. “I know it well. Now are we undone.”

“A gracious thing,” the missionary answered, passing his hand through his long beard and adjusting his glasses. “Ra Vatu has arranged that we should be well received.”

But Narau groaned again, and backed away from the heels he had dogged so faithfully.

“Ra Vatu is soon to become Lotu,” Starhurst explained, “and I have come bringing the Lotu to you.”

“I want none of your Lotu,” said the Buli, proudly. “And it is in my mind that you will be clubbed this day.”

The Buli nodded to one of his big mountaineers, who stepped forward, swinging a club. Narau bolted into the nearest house, seeking to hide among the woman and mats; but John Starhurst sprang in under the club and threw his arms around his executioner's neck. From this point of vantage he proceeded to argue. He was arguing for his life, and he knew it; but he was neither excited nor afraid.

“It would be an evil thing for you to kill me,” he told the man. “I have done you no wrong, nor have I done the Buli wrong.”

So well did he cling to the neck of the one man that they dared not strike with their clubs. And he continued to cling and to dispute for his life with those who clamored for his death.

“I am John Starhurst,” he went on calmly. “I have labored in Fiji for three years, and I have done it for no profit. I am here among you for good. Why should any man kill me? To kill me will not profit any man.”

The Buli stole a look at the whale tooth. He was well paid for the deed.

The missionary was surrounded by a mass of naked savages, all struggling to get at him. The death song, which is the song of the oven, was raised, and his expostulations could no longer be heard. But so cunningly did he twine and wreathe his body about his captor's that the death blow could not be struck. Erirola smiled, and the Buli grew angry.

“Away with you!” he cried. “A nice story to go back to the coast--a dozen of you and one missionary, without weapons, weak as a woman, overcoming all of you.”

“Wait, O Buli,” John Starhurst called out from the thick of the scuffle, “and I will overcome even you. For my weapons are Truth and Right, and no man can withstand them.”

“Come to me, then,” the Buli answered, “for my weapon is only a poor miserable club, and, as you say, it cannot withstand you.”

The group separated from him, and John Starhurst stood alone, facing the Buli, who was leaning on an enormous, knotted warclub.

“Come to me, missionary man, and overcome me,” the Buli challenged.

“Even so will I come to you and overcome you,” John Starhurst made answer, first wiping his spectacles and settling them properly, then beginning his advance.

The Buli raised the club and waited.

“In the first place, my death will profit you nothing,” began the argument.

“I leave the answer to my club,” was the Buli's reply.

And to every point he made the same reply, at the same time watching the missionary closely in order to forestall that cunning run-in under the lifted club. Then, and for the first time, John Starhurst knew that his death was at hand. He made no attempt to run in. Bareheaded, he stood in the sun and prayed aloud--the mysterious figure of the inevitable white man, who, with Bible, bullet, or rum bottle, has confronted the amazed savage in his every stronghold. Even so stood John Starhurst in the rock fortress of the Buli of Gatoka.

“Forgive them, for they know not what they do,” he prayed. “O Lord! Have mercy upon Fiji. Have compasssion for Fiji. O Jehovah, hear us for His sake, Thy Son, whom Thou didst give that through Him all men might also become Thy children. From Thee we came, and our mind is that to Thee we may return. The land is dark, O Lord, the land is dark. But Thou art mighty to save. Reach out Thy hand, O Lord, and save Fiji, poor cannibal Fiji.”

The Buli grew impatient.

“Now will I answer thee,” he muttered, at the same time swinging his club with both hands.

Narau, hiding among the women and the mats, heard the impact of the blow and shuddered. Then the death song arose, and he knew his beloved missionary's body was being dragged to the oven as he heard the words:

“Drag me gently. Drag me gently.”

“For I am the champion of my land.”

“Give thanks! Give thanks! Give thanks!”

Next, a single voice arose out of the din, asking:

“Where is the brave man?”

A hundred voices bellowed the answer:

“Gone to be dragged into the oven and cooked.”

“Where is the coward?” the single voice demanded.

“Gone to report!” the hundred voices bellowed back. “Gone to report! Gone to report!”

Narau groaned in anguish of spirit. The words of the old song were true. He was the coward, and nothing remained to him but to go and report.

When Alice Told Her Soul

This, of Alice Akana, is an affair of Hawaii, not of this day, but of days recent enough, when Abel Ah Yo preached his famous revival in Honolulu and persuaded Alice Akana to tell her soul. But what Alice told concerned itself with the earlier history of the then surviving generation.

For Alice Akana was fifty years old, had begun life early, and, early and late, lived it spaciously. What she knew went back into the roots and foundations of families, businesses, and plantations. She was the one living repository of accurate information that lawyers sought out, whether the information they required related to land-boundaries and land gifts, or to marriages, births, bequests, or scandals. Rarely, because of the tight tongue she kept behind her teeth, did she give them what they asked; and when she did was when only equity was served and no one was hurt.

For Alice had lived, from early in her girlhood, a life of flowers, and song, and wine, and dance; and, in her later years, had herself been mistress of these revels by office of mistress of the hula house. In such atmosphere, where mandates of God and man and caution are inhibited, and where woozled tongues will wag, she acquired her historical knowledge of things never otherwise whispered and rarely guessed. And her tight tongue had served her well, so that, while the old-timers knew she must know, none ever heard her gossip of the times of Kalakaua's boathouse, nor of the high times of officers of visiting warships, nor of the diplomats and ministers and councils of the countries of the world.

So, at fifty, loaded with historical dynamite sufficient, if it were ever exploded, to shake the social and commercial life of the Islands, still tight of tongue, Alice Akana was mistress of the hula house, manageress of the dancing girls who hula'd for royalty, for luaus (feasts), house-parties, poi suppers, and curious tourists. And, at fifty, she was not merely buxom, but short and fat in the Polynesian peasant way, with a constitution and lack of organic weakness that promised incalculable years. But it was at fifty that she strayed, quite by chance of time and curiosity, into Abel Ah Yo's revival meeting.

Now Abel Ah Yo, in his theology and word wizardry, was as much mixed a personage as Billy Sunday. In his genealogy he was much more mixed, for he was compounded of one-fourth Portuguese, one-fourth Scotch, one-fourth Hawaiian, and one-fourth Chinese. The Pentecostal fire he flamed forth was hotter and more variegated than could any one of the four races of him alone have flamed forth. For in him were gathered together the cannyness and the cunning, the wit and the wisdom, the subtlety and the rawness, the passion and the philosophy, the agonizing spirit-groping and he legs up to the knees in the dung of reality, of the four radically different breeds that contributed to the sum of him. His, also, was the clever self-deceivement of the entire clever compound.

When it came to word wizardry, he had Billy Sunday, master of slang and argot of one language, skinned by miles. For in Abel Ah Yo were the five verbs, and nouns, and adjectives, and metaphors of four living languages. Intermixed and living promiscuously and vitally together, he possessed in these languages a reservoir of expression in which a myriad Billy Sundays could drown. Of no race, a mongrel par excellence, a heterogeneous scrabble, the genius of the admixture was superlatively Abel Ah Yo's. Like a chameleon, he titubated and scintillated grandly between the diverse parts of him, stunning by frontal attack and surprising and confouding by flanking sweeps the mental homogeneity of the more simply constituted souls who came in to his revival to sit under him and flame to his flaming.

Abel Ah Yo believed in himself and his mixedness, as he believed in the mixedness of his weird concept that God looked as much like him as like any man, being no mere tribal god, but a world god that must look equally like all races of all the world, even if it led to piebaldness. And the concept worked. Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Hawaiian, Porto Rican, Russian, English, French--members of all races--knelt without friction, side by side, to his revision of deity.

Himself in his tender youth an apostate to the Church of England, Abel Ah Yo had for years suffered the lively sense of being a Judas sinner. Essentially religious, he had foresworn the Lord. Like Judas therefore he was. Judas was damned. Wherefore he, Abel Ah Yo, was damned; and he did not want to be damned. So, quite after the manner of humans, he squirmed and twisted to escape damnation. The day came when he solved his escape. The doctrine that Judas was damned, he concluded, was a misinterpretation of God, who, above all things, stood for justice. Judas had been God's servant, specially selected to perform a particularly nasty job. Therefore Judas, ever faithful, a betrayer only by divine command, was a saint. Ergo, he, Abel Ah Yo, was a saint by very virtue of his apostasy to a particular sect, and he could have access with clear grace any time to God.

This theory became one of the major tenets of his preaching, and was especially efficacious in cleansing the consciences of the back-sliders from all other faiths who else, in the secrecy of their subconscious selves, were being crushed by the weight of the Judas sin. To Abel Ah Yo, God's plan was as clear as if he, Abel Ah Yo, had planned it himself. All would be saved in the end, although some took longer than others, and would win only to backseats. Man's place in the ever-fluxing chaos of the world was definite and pre-ordained--if by no other token, then by denial that there was any ever-fluxing chaos. This was a mere bugbear of mankind's addled fancy; and, by stinging audacities of thought and speech, by vivid slang that bit home by sheerest intimacy into his listeners' mental processes, he drove the bugbear from their brains, showed them the loving clarity of God's design, and, thereby, induced in them spiritual serenity and calm.

What chance had Alice Akana, herself pure and homogeneous Hawaiian, against his subtle, democratic-tinged, four-race-engendered, slang-munitioned attack? He knew, by contact, almost as much as she about the waywardness of living and sinning--having been singing boy on the passenger-ships between Hawaii and California, and, after that, bar boy, afloat and ashore, from the Barbary Coast to Heinie's Tavern. In point of fact, he had left his job of Number One Bar Boy at the University Club to embark on his great preachment revival.

So, when Alice Akana strayed in to scoff, she remained to pray to Abel Ah Yo's god, who struck her hard-headed mind as the most sensible god of which she had ever heard. She gave money into Abel Ah Yo's collection plate, closed up the hula house, and dismissed the hula dancers to more devious ways of earning a livelihood, shed her bright colours and raiments and flower garlands, and bought a Bible.

It was a time of religious excitement in the purlieus of Honolulu. The thing was a democratic movement of the people toward God. Place and caste were invited, but never came. The stupid lowly, and the humble lowly, only, went down on its knees at the penitent form, admitted its pathological weight and hurt of sin, eliminated and purged all its bafflements, and walked forth again upright under the sun, child-like and pure, upborne by Abel Ah Yo's god's arm around it. In short, Abel Ah Yo's revival was a clearing house for sin and sickness of spirit, wherein sinners were relieved of their burdens and made light and bright and spiritually healthy again.

But Alice was not happy. She had not been cleared. She bought and dispersed Bibles, contributed more money to the plate, contralto'd gloriously in all the hymns, but would not tell her soul. In vain Abel Ah Yo wrestled with her. She would not go down on her knees at the penitent form and voice the things of tarnish within her--the ill things of good friends of the old days. "You cannot serve two masters," Abel Ah Yo told her. "Hell is full of those who have tried. Single of heart and pure of heart must you make your peace with God. Not until you tell your soul to God right out in meeting will you be ready for redemption. In the meantime you will suffer the canker of the sin you carry about within you."

Scientifically, though he did not know it and though he continually jeered at science, Abel Ah Yo was right. Not could she be again as a child and become radiantly clad in God's grace, until she had eliminated from her soul, by telling, all the sophistications that had been hers, including those she shared with others. In the Protestant way, she must bare her soul in public, as in the Catholic way it was done in the privacy of the confessional. The result of such baring would be unity, tranquillity, happiness, cleansing, redemption, and immortal life.

"Choose!" Abel Ah Yo thundered. "Loyalty to God, or loyalty to man." And Alice could not choose. Too long had she kept her tongue locked with the honour of man. "I will tell all my soul about myself," she contended. "God knows I am tired of my soul and should like to have it clean and shining once again as when I was a little girl at Kaneohe--"

"But all the corruption of your soul has been with other souls," was Abel Ah Yo's invariable reply. "When you have a burden, lay it down. You cannot bear a burden and be quit of it at the same time."

"I will pray to God each day, and many times each day," she urged. "I will approach God with humility, with sighs and with tears. I will contribute often to the plate, and I will buy Bibles, Bibles, Bibles without end."

"And God will not smile upon you," God's mouthpiece retorted. "And you will remain weary and heavy-laden. For you will not have told all your sin, and not until you have told all will you be rid of any."

"This rebirth is difficult," Alice sighed.

"Rebirth is even more difficult than birth." Abel Ah Yo did anything but comfort her. "'Not until you become as a little child . . . '"

“If ever I tell my soul, it will be a big telling,” she confided.

“The bigger the reason to tell it then.”

And so the situation remained at deadlock, Abel Ah Yo demanding absolute allegiance to God, and Alice Akana flirting on the fringes of paradise.

“You bet it will be a big telling, if Alice ever begins,” the beach-combing and disreputable kamaainas (old-timers) gleefully told one another over their Palm Tree gin.

In the clubs the possibility of her telling was of more moment. The younger generation of men announced that they had applied for front seats at the telling, while many of the older generation of men joked hollowly about the conversion of Alice. Further, Alice found herself abruptly popular with friends who had forgotten her existence for twenty years.

One afternoon, as Alice, Bible in hand, was taking the electric street car at Hotel and Fort, Cyrus Hodge, sugar factor and magnate, ordered his chauffeur to stop beside her. Willy nilly, in excess of friendliness, he had her into his limousine beside him and went three-quarters of an hour out of his way and time personally to conduct her to her destination.

“Good for sore eyes to see you,” he burbled. “How the years fly! You’re looking fine. The secret of youth is yours.”

Alice smiled and complimented in return in the royal Polynesian way of friendliness.

“My, my,” Cyrus Hodge reminisced. “I was such a boy in those days!”

“SOME boy,” she laughed acquiescence.

“But knowing no more than the foolishness of a boy in those long-ago days.”

“Remember the night your hack-driver got drunk and left you--“

“S-s-sh!” he cautioned. “That Jap driver is a high-school graduate and knows more English than either of us. Also, I think he is a spy for his Government. So why should we tell him anything? Besides, I was so very young. You remember . . . “

“Your cheeks were like the peaches we used to grow before the Mediterranean fruit fly got into them,” Alice agreed. “I don’t think you shaved more than once a week then. You were a pretty boy. Don’t you remember the hula we composed in your honour, the--“

“S-s-sh!” he hushed her. “All that’s buried and forgotten. May it remain forgotten.”

And she was aware that in his eyes was no longer any of the ingenuousness of youth she remembered. Instead, his eyes were keen and speculative, searching into her for some assurance that she would not resurrect his particular portion of that buried past.

“Religion is a good thing for us as we get along into middle age,” another old friend told her. He was building a magnificent house on Pacific Heights, but had recently married a second time, and was even then on his way to the steamer to welcome home his two daughters just graduated from Vassar. “We need religion in our old age, Alice. It softens, makes us more tolerant and forgiving of the weaknesses of others--especially the weaknesses of youth of--of others, when they played high and low and didn’t know what they were doing.”

He waited anxiously.

“Yes,” she said. “We are all born to sin and it is hard to grow out of sin. But I grow, I grow.”

“Don’t forget, Alice, in those other days I always played square. You and I never had a falling out.”

“Not even the night you gave that luau when you were twenty-one and insisted on breaking the glassware after every toast. But of course you paid for it.”

“Handsomely,” he asserted almost pleadingly.

“Handsomely,” she agreed. “I replaced more than double the quantity with what you paid me, so that at the next luau I catered one hundred and twenty plates without having to rent or borrow a dish or glass. Lord Mainweather gave that luau--you remember him.”

“I was pig-sticking with him at Mana,” the other nodded. “We were at a two weeks’ house-party there. But say, Alice, as you know, I think this religion stuff is all right and better than all right. But don’t let it carry you off your feet. And don’t get to telling your soul on me. What would my daughters think of that broken glassware!”

“I always did have an aloha” (warm regard) “for you, Alice,” a member of the Senate, fat and bald-headed, assured her.

And another, a lawyer and a grandfather: “We were always friends, Alice. And remember, any legal advice or handling of business you may require, I’ll do for you gladly, and without fees, for the sake of our old-time friendship.”

Came a banker to her late Christmas Eve, with formidable, legal-looking envelopes in his hand which he presented to her.

“Quite by chance,” he explained, “when my people were looking up land-records in Iapio Valley, I found a mortgage of two thousand on your holdings there--that rice land leased to Ah Chin. And my mind drifted back to the past when we were all young together, and wild--a bit wild, to be sure. And my heart warmed with the memory of you, and, so, just as an aloha, here’s the whole thing cleared off for you.”

Nor was Alice forgotten by her own people. Her house became a Mecca for native men and women, usually performing pilgrimage privily after darkness fell, with presents always in their hands--squid fresh from the reef, opihis and limu, baskets of alligator pears, roasting corn of the earliest from windward Cahu, mangoes and star-apples, taro pink and royal of the finest selection, sucking pigs, banana poi, breadfruit, and crabs caught the very day from Pearl Harbour. Mary Mendana, wife of the Portuguese Consul, remembered her with a five-dollar box of candy and a mandarin coat that would have fetched three-quarters of a hundred dollars at a fire sale. And Elvira Miyahara Makaena Yin Wap, the wife of Yin Wap the wealthy Chinese importer, brought personally to Alice two entire bolts of pina cloth from the Philippines and a dozen pairs of silk stockings.

The time passed, and Abel Ah Yo struggled with Alice for a properly penitent heart, and Alice struggled with herself for her soul, while half of Honolulu wickedly or apprehensively hung on the outcome. Carnival week was over, polo and the races had come and gone, and the celebration of Fourth of July was ripening, ere Abel Ah Yo beat down by brutal psychology the citadel of her reluctance. It was then that he gave his famous exhortation which might be summed up as Abel Ah Yo’s definition of eternity. Of course, like Billy Sunday on certain occasions, Abel Ah Yo had cribbed the definition. But no one in the Islands knew it, and his rating as a revivalist uprose a hundred per cent.

So successful was his preaching that night, that he reconverted many of his converts, who fell and moaned about the penitent form and crowded for room amongst scores of new converts burnt by the pentecostal fire, including half a company of negro soldiers from the garrisoned Twenty-Fifth Infantry, a dozen troopers from the Fourth Cavalry on its way to the

Philippines, as many drunken man-of-war's men, divers ladies from Iwilei, and half the riff-raff of the beach.

Abel Ah Yo, subtly sympathetic himself by virtue of his racial admixture, knowing human nature like a book and Alice Akana even more so, knew just what he was doing when he arose that memorable night and exposited God, hell, and eternity in terms of Alice Akana's comprehension. For, quite by chance, he had discovered her cardinal weakness. First of all, like all Polynesians, an ardent lover of nature, he found that earthquake and volcanic eruption were the things of which Alice lived in terror. She had been, in the past, on the Big Island, through cataclysms that had slacken grass houses down upon her while she slept, and she had beheld Madame Pele (the Fire or Volcano Goddess) fling red-fluxing lava down the long slopes of Mauna Loa, destroying fish-ponds on the sea-brim and licking up droves of beef cattle, villages, and humans on her fiery way.

The night before, a slight earthquake had shaken Honolulu and given Alice Akana insomnia. And the morning papers had stated that Mauna Kea had broken into eruption, while the lava was rising rapidly in the great pit of Kilauea. So, at the meeting, her mind vexed between the terrors of this world and the delights of the eternal world to come, Alice sat down in a front seat in a very definite state of the "jumps."

And Abel Ah Yo arose and put his finger on the sorest part of her soul. Sketching the nature of God in the stereotyped way, but making the stereotyped alive again with his gift of tongues in Pidgin-English and Pidgin-Hawaiian, Abel Ah Yo described the day when the Lord, even His infinite patience at an end, would tell Peter to close his day book and ledgers, command Gabriel to summon all souls to Judgment, and cry out with a voice of thunder: "Welakahao!"

This anthromorphic deity of Abel Ah Yo thundering the modern Hawaiian-English slang of welakahao at the end of the world, is a fair sample of the revivalist's speech-tools of discourse. Welakahao means literally "hot iron." It was coined in the Honolulu Iron-works by the hundreds of Hawaiian men there employed, who meant by it "to hustle," "to get a move on," the iron being hot meaning that the time had come to strike.

"And the Lord cried 'Welakahao,' and the Day of Judgment began and was over wiki-wiki" (quickly) "just like that; for Peter was a better bookkeeper than any on the Waterhouse Trust Company Limited, and, further, Peter's books were true."

Swiftly Abel Ah Yo divided the sheep from the goats, and hastened the latter down into hell.

"And now," he demanded, perforce his language on these pages being properly Englished, "what is hell like? Oh, my friends, let me describe to you, in a little way, what I have beheld with my own eves on earth of the possibilities of hell. I was a young man, a boy, and I was at Hilo. Morning began with earthquakes. Throughout the day the mighty land continued to shake and tremble, till strong men became seasick, and women clung to trees to escape falling, and cattle were thrown down off their feet. I beheld myself a young calf so thrown. A night of terror indescribable followed. The land was in motion like a canoe in a Kona gale. There was an infant crushed to death by its fond mother stepping upon it whilst fleeing her falling house.

"The heavens were on fire above us. We read our Bibles by the light of the heavens, and the print was fine, even for young eyes. Those missionary Bibles were always too small of print. Forty miles away from us, the heart of hell burst from the lofty mountains and gushed red-blood of fire-melted rock toward the sea. With the heavens in vast conflagration and the earth hulaing beneath our feet, was a scene too awful and too majestic to be enjoyed. We could think only of the thin bubble-skin of earth between us and the everlasting lake of fire and brimstone, and of God to whom we prayed to save us. There were earnest and devout souls who there and then promised their pastors to give not their shaved tithes, but five-tenths of their all to the church, if only the Lord would let them live to contribute.

"Oh, my friends, God saved us. But first he showed us a foretaste of that hell that will yawn for us on the last day, when he cries 'Welakahao!' in a voice of thunder. When the iron is hot! Think of it! When the iron is hot for sinners!

"By the third day, things being much quieter, my friend the preacher and I, being calm in the hand of God, journeyed up Mauna Loa and gazed into the awful pit of Kilauea. We gazed down into the fathomless abyss to the lake of fire far below, roaring and dashing its fiery spray into billows and fountaining hundreds of feet into the air like Fourth of July fireworks you have all seen, and all the while we were suffocating and made dizzy by the immense volumes of smoke and brimstone ascending.

"And I say unto you, no pious person could gaze down upon that scene without recognizing fully the Bible picture of the Pit of Hell. Believe me, the writers of the New Testament had nothing on us. As for me, my eyes were fixed upon the exhibition before me, and I stood mute and trembling under a sense never before so fully realized of the power, the majesty, and terror of Almighty God--the resources of His wrath, and the untold horrors of the finally impenitent who do not tell their souls and make their peace with the Creator. {1}

"But oh, my friends, think you our guides, our native attendants, deep-sunk in heathenism, were affected by such a scene? No. The devil's hand was upon them. Utterly regardless and unimpressed, they were only careful about their supper, chatted about their raw fish, and stretched themselves upon their mats to sleep. Children of the devil they were, insensible to the beauties, the sublimities, and the awful terror of God's works. But you are not heathen I now address. What is a heathen? He is one who betrays a stupid insensibility to every elevated idea and to every elevated emotion. If you wish to awaken his attention, do not bid him to look down into the Pit of Hell. But present him with a calabash of poi, a raw fish, or invite him to some low, grovelling, and sensuous sport. Oh, my friends, how lost are they to all that elevates the immortal soul! But the preacher and I, sad and sick at heart for them, gazed down into hell. Oh, my friends, it WAS hell, the hell of the Scriptures, the hell of eternal torment for the undeserving . . . "

Alice Akana was in an ecstasy or hysteria of terror. She was mumbling incoherently: "O Lord, I will give nine-tenths of my all. I will give all. I will give even the two bolts of pina cloth, the mandarin coat, and the entire dozen silk stockings . . . "

By the time she could lend ear again, Abel Ah Yo was launching out on his famous definition of eternity.

"Eternity is a long time, my friends. God lives, and, therefore, God lives inside eternity. And God is very old. The fires of hell are as old and as everlasting as God. How else could there be everlasting torment for those sinners cast down by God into the Pit on the Last Day to burn for ever and for ever through all eternity? Oh, my friends, your minds are small--too small to grasp eternity. Yet is it given to me, by God's grace, to convey to you an understanding of a tiny bit of eternity.

"The grains of sand on the beach of Waikiki are as many as the stars, and more. No man may count them. Did he have a million lives in which to count them, he would have to ask for more time. Now let us consider a little, dinky, old minah bird with one broken wing that cannot fly. At Waikiki the minah bird that cannot fly takes one grain of sand in its beak and hops, hops, all day lone and for many days, all the day to Pearl Harbour and drops that one grain of sand into the harbour. Then it hops, hops, all day and for many days, all the way back to Waikiki for another grain of sand. And again it hops, hops all the way back to Pearl Harbour. And it continues to do this through the years and centuries, and the thousands and thousands of centuries, until, at last, there remains not one grain of sand at Waikiki and Pearl Harbour is filled up with land and growing coconuts and pine-apples. And then, oh my friends, even then, IT WOULD NOT YET BE SUNRISE IN HELL!

Here, at the smashing impact of so abrupt a climax, unable to withstand the sheer simplicity and objectivity of such artful measurement of a trifle of eternity, Alice Akana's mind broke down and blew up. She uprose, reeled blindly, and stumbled to her knees at the penitent form. Abel Ah Yo had not finished his preaching, but it was his gift to know crowd psychology, and to feel the heat of the pentecostal conflagration that scorched his audience. He called for a rousing revival hymn from his singers, and stepped down to wade among the hallelujah-shouting negro soldiers to Alice Akana. And, ere the excitement began to ebb, nine-tenths of his congregation and all his converts were down on knees and praying and shouting aloud an immensity of contriteness and sin.

Word came, via telephone, almost simultaneously to the Pacific and University Clubs, that at last Alice was telling her soul in meeting; and, by private machine and taxi-cab, for the first time Abel Ah Yo's revival was invaded by those of caste and place. The first comers beheld the curious sight of Hawaiian, Chinese, and all variegated racial mixtures of the smelting-pot of Hawaii, men and women, fading out and slinking away through the exits of Abel Ah Yo's tabernacle. But those who were sneaking out were mostly men, while those who remained were avid-faced as they hung on Alice's utterance.

Never was a more fearful and damning community narrative enunciated in the entire Pacific, north and south, than that enunciated by Alice Akana; the penitent Phryne of Honolulu.

"Huh!" the first comers heard her saying, having already disposed of most of the venial sins of the lesser ones of her memory. "You think this man, Stephen Makekau, is the son of Moses Makekau and Minnie Ah Ling, and has a legal right to the two hundred and eight dollars he draws down each month from Parke Richards Limited, for the lease of the fish-pond to

Bill Kong at Amana. Not so. Stephen Makekau is not the son of Moses. He is the son of Aaron Kama and Tillie Naone. He was given as a present, as a feeding child, to Moses and Minnie, by Aaron and Tillie. I know. Moses and Minnie and Aaron and Tillie are dead. Yet I know and can prove it. Old Mrs. Poepoe is still alive. I was present when Stephen was born, and in the night-time, when he was two months old, I myself carried him as a present to Moses and Minnie, and old Mrs. Poepoe carried the lantern. This secret has been one of my sins. It has kept me from God. Now I am free of it. Young Archie Makekau, who collects bills for the Gas Company and plays baseball in the afternoons, and drinks too much gin, should get that two hundred and eight dollars the first of each month from Parke Richards Limited. He will blow it in on gin and a Ford automobile. Stephen is a good man. Archie is no good. Also he is a liar, and he has served two sentences on the reef, and was in reform school before that. Yet God demands the truth, and Archie will get the money and make a bad use of it."

And in such fashion Alice rambled on through the experiences of her long and full-packed life. And women forgot they were in the tabernacle, and men too, and faces darkened with passion as they learned for the first time the long-buried secrets of their other halves.

"The lawyers' offices will be crowded to-morrow morning," MacIlwaine, chief of detectives, paused long enough from storing away useful information to lean and mutter in Colonel Stilton's ear.

Colonel Stilton grinned affirmation, although the chief of detectives could not fail to note the ghastliness of the grin.

"There is a banker in Honolulu. You all know his name. He is 'way up, swell society because of his wife. He owns much stock in General Plantations and Inter-Island."

MacIlwaine recognized the growing portrait and forbore to chuckle.

"His name is Colonel Stilton. Last Christmas Eve he came to my house with big aloha" (love) "and gave me mortgages on my land in Iapio Valley, all cancelled, for two thousand dollars' worth. Now why did he have such big cash aloha for me? I will tell you . . . "

And tell she did, throwing the searchlight on ancient business transactions and political deals which from their inception had lurked in the dark.

"This," Alice concluded the episode, "has long been a sin upon my conscience, and kept my heart from God.

"And Harold Miles was that time President of the Senate, and next week he bought three town lots at Pearl Harbour, and painted his Honolulu house, and paid up his back dues in his clubs. Also the Ramsay home at Honokiki was left by will to the people if the Government would keep it up. But if the Government, after two years, did not begin to keep it up, then would it go to the Ramsay heirs, whom old Ramsay hated like poison. Well, it went to the heirs all right. Their lawyer was Charley Middleton, and he had me help fix it with the Government men. And their names were . . . " Six names, from both branches of the Legislature, Alice recited, and added: "Maybe they all painted their houses after that. For the first time have I spoken. My heart is much lighter and softer. It has been coated with an armour of house-paint against the Lord. And there is Harry Werther. He was in the Senate that time. Everybody said bad things about him, and he was never re-elected. Yet his house was not painted. He was honest. To this day his house is not painted, as everybody knows.

"There is Jim Lokendamper. He has a bad heart. I heard him, only last week, right here before you all, tell his soul. He did not tell all his soul, and he lied to God. I am not lying to God. It is a big telling, but I am telling everything. Now Azalea Akau, sitting right over there, is his wife. But Lizzie Lokendamper is his married wife. A long time ago he had the great aloha for Azalea. You think her uncle, who went to California and died, left her by will that two thousand five hundred dollars she got. Her uncle did not. I know. Her uncle cried broke in California, and Jim Lokendamper sent eighty dollars to California to bury him. Jim Lokendamper had a piece of land in Kohala he got from his mother's aunt. Lizzie, his married wife, did not know this. So he sold it to the Kohala Ditch Company and wave the twenty-five hundred to Azalea Akau--"

Here, Lizzie, the married wife, upstood like a fury long-thwarted, and, in lieu of her husband, already fled, flung herself tooth and nail on Azalea.

"Wait, Lizzie Lokendamper!" Alice cried out. "I have much weight of you on my heart and some house-paint too . . . "

And when she had finished her disclosure of how Lizzie had painted her house, Azalea was up and raging.

"Wait, Azalea Akau. I shall now lighten my heart about you. And it is not house-paint. Jim always paid that. It is your new bath-tub and modern plumbing that is heavy on me . . . "

Worse, much worse, about many and sundry, did Alice Akana have to say, cutting high in business, financial, and social life, as well as low. None was too high nor too low to escape; and not until two in the morning, before an entranced audience that packed the tabernacle to the doors, did she complete her recital of the personal and detailed iniquities she knew of the community in which she had lived intimately all her days. Just as she was finishing, she remembered more.

"Huh!" she sniffed. "I gave last week one lot worth eight hundred dollars cash market price to Abel Ah Yo to pay running expenses and add up in Peter's books in heaven. Where did I get that lot? You all think Mr. Fleming Jason is a good man. He is more crooked than the entrance was to Pearl Lochs before the United States Government straightened the channel. He has liver disease now; but his sickness is a judgment of God, and he will die crooked. Mr. Fleming Jason gave me that lot twenty-two years ago, when its cash market price was thirty-five dollars. Because his aloha for me was big? No. He never had aloha inside of him except for dollars.

"You listen. Mr. Fleming Jason put a great sin upon me. When Frank Lomiloli was at my house, full of gin, for which gin Mr. Fleming Jason paid me in advance five times over, I got Frank Lomiloli to sign his name to the sale paper of his town land for one hundred dollars. It was worth six hundred then. It is worth twenty thousand now. Maybe you want to know where that town land is. I will tell you and remove it off my heart. It is on King Street, where is now the Come Again Saloon, the Japanese Taxicab Company garage, the Smith & Wilson plumbing shop, and the Ambrosia lee Cream Parlours, with the two more stories big Addison Lodging House overhead. And it is all wood, and always has been well painted. Yesterday they started painting it attain. But that paint will not stand between me and God. There are no more paint pots between me and my path to heaven."

The morning and evening papers of the day following held an unholy hush on the greatest news story of years; but Honolulu was half a-giggle and half aghast at the whispered reports, not always basely exaggerated, that circulated wherever two Honoluluans chanced to meet.

"Our mistake," said Colonel Chilton, at the club, "was that we did not, at the very first, appoint a committee of safety to keep track of Alice's soul."

Bob Cristy, one of the younger islanders, burst into laughter, so pointed and so loud that the meaning of it was demanded.

“Oh, nothing much,” was his reply. “But I heard, on my way here, that old John Ward had just been run in for drunken and disorderly conduct and for resisting an officer. Now Abel Ah Yo fine-toothcombs the police court. He loves nothing better than soul-snatching a chronic drunkard.”

Colonel Chilton looked at Lask Finneston, and both looked at Gary Wilkinson. He returned to them a similar look.

“The old beachcomber!” Lask Finneston cried. “The drunken old reprobate! I’d forgotten he was alive. Wonderful constitution. Never drew a sober breath except when he was shipwrecked, and, when I remember him, into every deviltry afloat. He must be going on eighty.”

“He isn’t far away from it,” Bob Cristy nodded. “Still beach-combs, drinks when he gets the price, and keeps all his senses, though he’s not spry and has to use glasses when he reads. And his memory is perfect. Now if Abel Ah Yo catches him . . . “

Gary Wilkinson cleared his throat preliminary to speech.

“Now there’s a grand old man,” he said. “A left-over from a forgotten age. Few of his type remain. A pioneer. A true kamaaina” (old-timer). “Helpless and in the hands of the police in his old age! We should do something for him in recognition of his yeoman work in Hawaii. His old home, I happen to know, is Sag Harbour. He hasn’t seen it for over half a century. Now why shouldn’t he be surprised to-morrow morning by having his fine paid, and by being presented with return tickets to Sag Harbour, and, say, expenses for a year’s trip? I move a committee. I appoint Colonel Chilton, Lask Finneston, and . . . and myself. As for chairman, who more appropriate than Lask Finneston, who knew the old gentleman so well in the early days? Since there is no objection, I hereby appoint Lask Finneston chairman of the committee for the purpose of raising and donating money to pay the police-court fine and the expenses of a year’s travel for that noble pioneer, John Ward, in recognition of a lifetime of devotion of energy to the upbuilding of Hawaii.”

There was no dissent.

“The committee will now go into secret session,” said Lask Finneston, arising and indicating the way to the library.

When God Laughs

“The gods, the gods are stronger; time

Falls down before them, all men’s knees

Bow, all men’s prayers and sorrows climb

Like incense toward them; yea, for these

Are gods, Felise.”

CARQUINEZ had relaxed finally. He stole a glance at the rattling windows, looked upward at the beamed roof, and listened for a moment to the savage roar of the southeaster as it caught the bungalow in its bellowing jaws. Then he held his glass between him and the fire and laughed for joy through the golden wine.

“It is beautiful,” he said. “It is sweetly sweet. It is a woman’s wine and it was made for gray-robed saints to drink.”

“We grow it on our own warm hills,” I said, with pardonable California pride. “You rode up yesterday through the vines from which it was made.”

It was worth while to get Carquinez to loosen up. Nor was he ever really himself until he felt the mellow warmth of the vine singing in his blood He was an artist, it is true, always an artist; but somehow, sober the high pitch and lilt went out of his thought-processes and he was prone to be as deadly dull as a British Sunday — not dull as other men are dull, but dull when measured by the sprightly wight that Monte Carquinez was when he was really himself.

From all this it must not be inferred that Carquinez, who is my dear friend and dearer comrade, was a sot. Far from it. He rarely erred. As I have said, he was an artist. He knew when he had enough, and enough, with him, was equilibrium — the equilibrium that is yours and mine when we are sober.

His was a wise and instinctive temperateness that savored of the Greek. Yet he was far from Greek. “I am Aztec, I am Inca, I am Spaniard, “ I have heard him say. And in truth he looked it, a compound of strange and ancient races, what of his swarthy skin and the asymmetry and primitiveness of his features. His eyes, under massively arched brows, were wide apart and black with the blackness that is barbaric, while before them was perpetually falling down a great black mop of hair through which he gazed like a roguish satyr from a thicket. He invariably wore a soft flannel shirt under his velvet-corduroy jacket, and his necktie was red. This latter stood for the red flag (he had once lived with the socialists of Paris), and it symbolized the blood and brotherhood of man. Also, he had never been known to wear anything on his head save a leather-banded sombrero. It was even rumored that he had been born with this particular piece of headgear. And in my experience it was provocative of nothing short of sheer delight to see that Mexican sombrero hailing a cab in Piccadilly or storm-tossed in the crush for the New York Elevated.

As I have said, Carquinez was made quick by wine — ”as the clay was made quick when God breathed the breath of life into it,” was his way of saying it. I confess that he was blasphemously intimate with God; and I must add that there was no blasphemy in him. He was at all times honest, and, because he was compounded of paradoxes, greatly misunderstood by those who did not know him. He could be as elementally raw at times as a screaming savage; and at other times as delicate as a maid, as subtle as a Spaniard. And — well, was he not Aztec? Inca? Spaniard?

And now I must ask pardon for the space I have given him. (He is my friend, and I love him.) The house was shaking to the storm, as he drew closer to the fire and laughed at it through his wine. He looked at me, and by the added lustre of his eye, and by the alertness of it, I knew that at last he was pitched in his proper key.

“And so you think you’ve won out against the gods ?” he demanded.

“Why the gods?”

“Whose will but theirs has put satiety upon man?” he cried.

“And whence the will in me to escape satiety?” I asked triumphantly.

“Again the gods,” he laughed. “It is their game we play. They deal and shuffle all the cards . . . and take the stakes. Think not that you have escaped by fleeing from the mad cities. You with your vine-clad hills, your sunsets and your sunrises, your homely fare and simple round of living!

“I’ve watched you ever since I came. You have not won. You have surrendered. You have made terms with the enemy. You have made confession that you are tired. You have flown the white flag of fatigue. You have nailed up a notice to the effect that life is ebbing down in you. You have run away from life. You have played a trick, shabby trick. You have balked at the game. You refuse to play. You have thrown your cards under the table and run away to hide, here amongst your hills.”

He tossed his straight hair back from his flashing eyes, and scarcely interrupted to roll a long, brown, Mexican cigarette.

“But the gods know. It is an old trick. All the generations of man have tried it . . . and lost. The gods know how to deal with such as you. To pursue is to possess, and to possess is to be sated. And so you, in your wisdom, have refused any longer to pursue. You have elected surcease. Very well. You will become sated with surcease. You say you have escaped satiety! You have merely bartered it for senility. And senility is another name for satiety. It is satiety’s masquerade. Bah!”

“But look at me!” I cried.

Carquinez was ever a demon for haling one’s soul out and making rags and tatters of it.

He looked me witheringly up and down.

“You see no signs,” I challenged.

“Decay is insidious,” he retorted. “You are rotten ripe.”

I laughed and forgave him for his very deviltry. But he refused to be forgiven.

“Do I not know?” he asked. “The gods always win. I have watched men play for years what seemed a winning game. In the end they lost.”

“Don’t you ever make mistakes ?” I asked.

He blew many meditative rings of smoke before replying.

“Yes, I was nearly fooled, once. Let me tell you. There was Marvin Fiske. You remember him? And his Dantesque face and poet’s soul singing his chant of the flesh, the very priest of Love? And there was Ethel Baird, whom also you must remember.”

“A warm saint,” I said.

“That is she! Holy as Love, and sweeter! Just a woman, made for love; and yet — how shall I say? — drenched through with holiness as your own air here is with the perfume of flowers. Well, they married. They played a hand with the gods — ”

“And they won, they gloriously won! “ I broke in.

Carquinez looked at me pityingly, and his voice was like a funeral bell.

“They lost. They supremely, colossally lost.”

“But the world believes otherwise,” I ventured coldly.

“The world conjectures. The world sees only the face of things. But I know. Has it ever entered your mind to wonder why she took the veil, buried herself in that dolorous convent of the living dead?”

"Because she loved him so, and when he died . . ."

Speech was frozen on my lips by Carquinez's sneer.

"A pat answer," he said, "machine-made like a piece of cotton-drill. The world's judgment! And much the world knows about it. Like you, she fled from life. She was beaten. She flung out the white flag of fatigue. And no beleaguered city ever flew that flag in such bitterness and tears.

"Now I shall tell you the whole tale, and you must believe me, for I know. They had pondered the problem of satiety. They loved Love. They knew to the uttermost farthing the value of Love. They loved him so well that they were fain to keep him always, warm and athrill in their hearts. They welcomed his coming; they feared to have him depart.

"Love was desire, they held, a delicious pain. He was ever seeking easement, and when he found that for which he sought, he died. Love denied was Love alive; Love granted was Love deceased. Do you follow me? They saw it was not the way of life to be hungry for what it has. To eat and still be hungry — man has never accomplished that feat. The problem of satiety. That is it. To have and to keep the sharp famine-edge of appetite at the groaning board. This was their problem, for they loved Love. Often did they discuss it, with all Love's sweet ardors brimming in their eyes; his ruddy blood spraying their cheeks; his voice playing in and out with their voices, now hiding as a tremolo in their throats, and again shading a tone with that ineffable tenderness which he alone can utter.

"How do I know all this? I saw — much. More I learned from her diary. This I found in it, from Fiona Macleod: 'For, truly, that wandering voice, that twilight-whisper, that breath so dewy-sweet, that flame-winged lute-player whom none sees but for a moment, in a rainbow-shimmer of joy, or a sudden lightning-flare of passion, this exquisite mystery we call Amor, comes, to some rapt visionaries at least, not with a song upon the lips that all may hear, or with blithe viol of public music, but as one wrought by ecstasy, dumbly eloquent with desire.'

"How to keep the flame-winged lute-player with his dumb eloquence of desire? To feast him was to lose him. Their love for each other was a great love. Their granaries were overflowing with plenitude; yet they wanted to keep the sharp famine-edge of their love undulled.

"Nor were they lean little fledglings theorizing on the threshold of Love. They were robust and realized souls. They had loved before, with others, in the days before they met; and in those days they had throttled Love with caresses, and killed him with kisses, and buried him in the pit of satiety.

"They were not cold wraiths, this man and woman. They were warm human. They had no Saxon soberness in their blood. The color of it was sunset-red. They glowed with it. Temperamentally theirs was the French joy in the flesh. They were idealists, but their idealism was Gallic. It was not tempered by the chill and sombre fluid that for the English serves as blood. There was no stoicism about them. They were Americans, descended out of the English, and yet the refraining and self-denying of the English spirit-groping were not theirs.

"They were all this that I have said, and they were made for joy, only they achieved a concept. A curse on concepts! They played with logic, and this was their logic. — But first let me tell you of a talk we had one night. It was of Gautier's Madeline de Maupin. You remember the maid? She kissed once, and once only, and kisses she would have no more. Not that she found kisses were not sweet, but that she feared with repetition they would cloy. Satiety again! She tried to play without stakes against the gods. Now this is contrary to a rule of the game the gods themselves have made. Only the rules are not posted over the table. Mortals must play in order to learn the rules.

"Well, to the logic. The man and the woman argued thus: Why kiss once only? If to kiss once were wise, was it not wiser to kiss not at all? Thus could they keep Love alive. Fasting, he would knock forever at their hearts.

"Perhaps it was out of their heredity that they achieved this unholy concept. The breed will out, and sometimes most fantastically. Thus in them did cursed Albion array herself a scheming wanton, a bold, cold-calculating, and artful hussy. After all, I do not know. But this I know: it was out of their inordinate desire for joy that they forewent joy.

"As he said (I read it long afterward in one of his letters to her): 'To hold you in my arms, close, and yet not close. To yearn for you, and never to have you, and so always to have you.' And she: 'For you to be always just beyond my reach. To be ever attaining you, and yet never attaining you, and for this to last forever, always fresh and new, and always with the first flush upon us.'

"That is not the way they said it. On my lips their love-philosophy is mangled. And who am I to delve into their soul-stuff ? I am a frog, on the dank edge of a great darkness, gazing goggle-eyed at the mystery and wonder of their flaming souls.

"And they were right, as far as they went. Everything is good . . . as long as it is unpossessed. Satiety and possession are Death's horses; they run in span.

"'And time could only tutor us to eke
Our rapture's warmth with custom's afterglow.'

"They got that from a sonnet of Alfred Austin's. It was called 'Love's Wisdom.' It was the one kiss of Madeline de Maupin. How did it run?

"'Kiss we and part; no further can we go;
And better death than we from high to low
Should dwindle, or decline from strong to weak.'

"But they were wiser. They would not kiss and part. They would not kiss at all, and thus they planned to stay at Love's topmost peak. They married. You were in England at the time. And never was there such a marriage. They kept their secret to themselves. I did not know, then. Their rapture's warmth did not cool. Their love burned with increasing brightness. Never was there anything like it. The time passed, the months, the years, and ever the flame-winged lute-player grew more resplendent.

"Everybody marvelled. They became the wonderful lovers, and they were greatly envied. Sometimes women pitied her because she was childless; it is the form the envy of such creatures takes.

"And I did not know their secret. I pondered and I marvelled. As first I had expected, subconsciously I imagine, the passing of their love. Then I became aware that it was Time that passed and Love that remained. Then I became curious. What was their secret? What were the magic fetters with which they bound Love to them ? How did they hold the graceless elf? What elixir of eternal love had they drunk together as had Tristram and Iseult of old time? And whose hand had brewed the fairy drink?

"As I say, I was curious, and I watched them. They were love-mad. They lived in an unending revel of Love. They made a pomp and ceremonial of it. They saturated themselves in the art and poetry of Love. No, they were not neurotics. They were sane and healthy, and they were artists. But they had accomplished the impossible. They had achieved deathless desire.

"And I? I saw much of them and their everlasting miracle of Love. I puzzled and wondered, and then one day — "

Carquinez broke off abruptly and asked, “Have you ever read, ‘Love’s Waiting Time’?”

I shook my head.

“Page wrote it — Curtis Hidden Page, I think. Well, it was that bit of verse that gave me the clew. One day, in the window-seat near the big piano — you remember how she could play? She used to laugh, sometimes, and doubt whether it was for them I came, or for the music. She called me a ‘music-sot,’ once, a ‘sound-debauchee.’ What a voice he had! When he sang I believed in immortality, my regard for the gods grew almost patronizing, and I devised ways and means whereby I surely could outwit them and their tricks.

“It was a spectacle for God, that man and woman, years married, and singing love-songs with a freshness virginal as new-born Love himself, with a ripeness and wealth of ardor that young lovers can never know. Young lovers were pale and anaemic beside that long-married pair. To see them, all fire and flame and tenderness, at a trembling distance, lavishing caresses of eye and voice with every action, through every silence — their love driving them toward each other, and they withholding like fluttering moths, each to the other a candle-flame, and revolving each about the other in the mad gyrations of an amazing orbit-flight! It seemed, in obedience to some great law of physics, more potent than gravitation and more subtle, that they must corporeally melt each into each there before my very eyes. Small wonder they were called the wonderful lovers.

“I have wandered. Now to the clew. One day in the window-seat I found a book of verse. It opened of itself, betraying long habit, to ‘Love’s Waiting Time.’ The page was thumbed and limp with overhandling, and there I read: —

“‘So sweet it is to stand but just apart,
To know each other better, and to keep
The soft, delicious sense of two that touch . . .
O love, not yet! . . . Sweet, let us keep our love
Wrapped round with sacred mystery awhile,
Waiting the secret of the coming years,
That come not yet, not yet . . . sometime . . . not yet . . .
Oh, yet a little while our love may grow!
When it has blossomed it will haply die.
Feed it with lipless kisses, let it sleep,

Bedded in dead denial yet some while . . .
Oh, yet a little while, a little while.’

“I folded the book on my thumb and sat there silent and without moving for a long time. I was stunned by the clearness of vision the verse had imparted to me. It was illumination. It was like a bolt of God’s lightning in the Pit. They would keep Love, the fickle sprite, the forerunner of young life — young life that is imperative to be born!

“I conned the lines over in my mind — ’Not yet, sometime’ — ’O Love, not yet’ — ’Feed it with lipless kisses, let it sleep.’ And I laughed aloud, ha! ha! I saw with white vision their blameless souls. They were children. They did not understand. They played with Nature’s fire and bedded with a naked sword. They laughed at the gods. They would stop the cosmic sap. They had invented a system, and brought it to the gaming-table of life, and expected to win out. ‘Beware!’ I cried. ‘The gods are behind the table. They make new rules for every system that is devised. You have no chance to win.’

“But I did not so cry to them. I waited. They would learn that their system was worthless and throw it away. They would be content with whatever happiness the gods gave them and not strive to wrest more away.

“I watched. I said nothing. The months continued to come and go, and still the famine-edge of their love grew the sharper. Never did they dull it with a permitted love-clasp. They ground and whetted it on self-denial, and sharper and sharper it grew. This went on until even I doubted. Did the gods sleep? I wondered. Or were they dead? I laughed to myself. The man and the woman had made a miracle. They had outwitted God. They had shamed the flesh, and blackened the face of the good Earth Mother. They had played with her fire and not been burned. They were immune. They were themselves gods, knowing good from evil and tasting not. ‘Was this the way gods came to be?’ I asked myself. ‘I am a frog,’ I said. ‘But for my mud-ridded eyes I should have been blinded by the brightness of this wonder I have witnessed. I have puffed myself up with my wisdom and passed judgment upon gods.’

“Yet even in this, my latest wisdom, I was wrong. They were not gods. They were man and woman — soft clay that sighed and thrilled shot through with desire, thumbed with strange weaknesses which the gods have not.”

Carquinez broke from his narrative to roll another cigarette and to laugh harshly. It was not a pretty laugh; it was like the mockery of a devil, and it rose over and rode the roar of the storm that came muffled to our ears from the crashing outside world.

"I am a frog," he said apologetically. "How were they to understand? They were artists, not biologists. They knew the clay of the studio, but they did not know the clay of which they themselves were made. But this I will say — they played high. Never was there such a game before, and I doubt me if there will ever be such a game again.

"Never was lovers' ecstasy like theirs. They had not killed Love with kisses. They had quickened him with denial. And by denial they drove him on till he was all aburst with desire. And the flame-winged luteplayer fanned them with his warm wings till they were all but swooning. It was the very delirium of Love, and it continued undiminished and increasing through the weeks and months.

"They longed and yearned, with all the fond pangs and sweet delicious agonies, with an intensity never felt by lovers before nor since.

"And then one day the drowsy gods ceased nodding. They aroused and looked at the man and woman who had made a mock of them. And the man and woman looked into each other's eyes one morning and knew that something was gone. It was the flame-winged one. He had fled, silently, in the night, from their anchorites' board.

"They looked into each other's eyes and knew that they did not care. Desire was dead. Do you understand? Desire was dead. And they had never kissed. Not once had they kissed. Love was gone. They would never yearn and burn again. For them there was nothing left — no more tremblings and flutterings and delicious anguishes, no more throbbing and pulsing, and sighing and song. Desire was dead. It had died in the night, on a couch cold and unattended; nor had they witnessed its passing. They learned it for the first time in each other's eyes.

"The gods may not be kind, but they are often merciful. They had twirled the little ivory ball and swept the stakes from the table. All that remained was the man and woman gazing into each other's cold eyes. And then he died. That was the mercy. Within the week Marvin Fiske was dead — you remember the accident. And in her diary, written at this time, I long afterward read Mitchell Kennerly's: —

"'There was not a single hour we might have kissed and did not kiss.'"

“Oh, the irony of it!” I cried out.

And Carquinez, in the firelight a veritable Mephistopheles in velvet jacket, fixed me with his black eyes.

“And they won, you said? The world’s judgment! I have told you, and I know. They won as you are winning, here in your hills.”

“But you,” I demanded hotly; “you with your orgies of sound and sense, with your mad cities and madder frolics — bethink you that you win?”

He shook his head slowly. “Because you, with your sober bucolic regime, lose, is no reason that I should win. We never win. Sometimes we think we win. That is a little pleasantry of the gods.”

When the World Was Young

He was a very quiet, self-possessed sort of man, sitting a moment on top of the wall to sound the damp darkness for warnings of the dangers it might conceal. But the plummet of his hearing brought nothing to him save the moaning of wind through invisible trees and the rustling of leaves on swaying branches. A heavy fog drifted and drove before the wind, and though he could not see this fog, the wet of it blew upon his face, and the wall on which he sat was wet.

Without noise he had climbed to the top of the wall from the outside, and without noise he dropped to the ground on the inside. From his pocket he drew an electric night-stick, but he did not use it. Dark as the way was, he was not anxious for light. Carrying the night-stick in his hand, his finger on the button, he advanced through the darkness. The ground was velvety and springy to his feet, being carpeted with dead pine-needles and leaves and mold which evidently bad been undisturbed for years. Leaves and branches brushed against his body, but so dark was it that he could not avoid them. Soon he walked with his hand stretched out gropingly before him, and more than once the hand fetched up against the solid trunks of massive trees. All about him he knew were these trees; he sensed the loom of them everywhere; and he experienced a strange feeling of microscopic smallness in the midst of great bulks leaning toward him to crush him. Beyond, he knew, was the house, and he expected to find some trail or winding path that would lead easily to it.

Once, he found himself trapped. On every side he groped against trees and branches, or blundered into thickets of underbrush, until there seemed no way out. Then he turned on his light, circumspectly, directing its rays to the ground at his feet. Slowly and carefully he moved it about him, the white brightness showing in sharp detail all the obstacles to his progress. He saw, an opening between huge-trunked trees, and advanced through it, putting out the light and treading on dry footing as yet protected from the drip of the fog by the dense foliage overhead. His sense of direction was good, and he knew he was going toward the house.

And then the thing happened – the thing unthinkable and unexpected. His descending foot came down upon something that was soft and alive, and that arose with a snort under the weight of his body. He sprang clear, and crouched for another spring, anywhere, tense and expectant, keyed for the onslaught of the unknown. He waited a moment, wondering what manner of animal it was that had arisen from under his foot and that now made no sound nor movement and that must be crouching and waiting just as tensely and expectantly as he. The strain became unbearable. Holding the night-stick before him, he pressed the button, saw, and screamed aloud in terror. He was prepared for anything, from a frightened calf or fawn to a belligerent lion, but he was not prepared for what he saw. In that instant his tiny searchlight, sharp and white, had shown him what a thousand years would not en. able him to forget – a man, huge and blond, yellow-haired and yellow-bearded, naked except for soft-tanned moccasins and what seemed a goat-skin about his middle. Arms and legs were bare, as were his shoulders and most of his chest. The skin was smooth and hairless, but browned by sun and wind, while under it heavy muscles were knotted like fat snakes. Still, this alone, unexpected as it well was, was not what had made the man scream out. What had caused his terror was the unspeakable ferocity of the face, the wild-animal glare of the blue eyes scarcely dazzled by the light, the pine-needles matted and clinging in the beard and hair, and the whole formidable body crouched and in the act of springing at him. Practically in the instant he saw all this, and while his scream still rang, the thing leaped, he flung his night-stick full at it, and threw himself to the ground. He felt its feet and shins strike against his ribs, and he bounded up and away while the thing itself hurled onward in a heavy crashing fall into the underbrush.

As the noise of the fall ceased, the man stopped and on hands and knees waited. He could hear the thing moving about, searching for him, and he was afraid to advertise his location by attempting further flight. He knew that inevitably he would crackle the underbrush and be pursued. Once he drew out his revolver, then changed his mind. He had recovered his composure and hoped to get away without noise. Several times he heard the thing beating up the thickets for him, and there were moments when it, too, remained still and listened. This gave an idea to the man. One of his hands was resting on a chunk of dead wood. Carefully, first feeling about him in the darkness to know that the full swing of his arm was clear, he raised the chunk of wood and threw it. It was not a large piece, and it went far, landing noisily in a bush. He heard the thing bound into the bush, and at the same time himself crawled steadily away. And on hands and knees, slowly and cautiously, he crawled on, till his knees were wet on the soggy mold, When he listened he heard naught but the moaning wind and the drip-drip of the fog from the branches. Never abating his caution, he stood erect and went on to the stone wall, over which he climbed and dropped down to the road outside.

Feeling his way in a clump of bushes, he drew out a bicycle and prepared to mount. He was in the act of driving the gear around with his foot for the purpose of getting the opposite pedal in position, when he heard the thud of a heavy body that landed lightly and evidently on its feet. He did not wait for more, but ran, with hands on the handles of his bicycle, until he was able to vault astride the saddle, catch the pedals, and start a spurt. Behind he could hear the quick thud-thud of feet on the dust of the road, but he drew away from it and lost it. Unfortunately, he had started away from the direction of town and was heading higher up into the hills. He knew that on this particular road there were no cross roads. The only way back was past that terror, and he could not steel himself to face it. At the end of half an hour, finding himself on an ever increasing grade, he dismounted. For still greater safety, leaving the wheel by the roadside, he climbed through a fence into what he decided was a hillside pasture, spread a newspaper on the ground, and sat down.

“Gosh!” he said aloud, mopping the sweat and fog from his face.

And “Gosh!” he said once again, while rolling a cigarette and as he pondered the problem of getting back.

But he made no attempt to go back. He was resolved not to face that road in the dark, and with head bowed on knees, he dozed, waiting for daylight.

How long afterward he did not know, he was awakened by the yapping bark of a young coyote. As he looked about and located it on the brow of the hill behind him, he noted the change that had come over the face of the night. The fog was gone; the stars and moon were out; even the wind had died down. It had transformed into a balmy California summer night. He tried to doze again, but the yap of the coyote disturbed him. Half asleep, he heard a wild and eery chant. Looking about him, he noticed that the coyote had ceased its noise and was running away along the crest of the hill, and behind it, in full pursuit, no longer chanting, ran the naked creature he had encountered in the garden. It was a young coyote, and it was being overtaken when the chase passed from view. The man trembled as with a chill as he started to his feet, clambered over the fence, and mounted his wheel. But it was his chance and he knew it. The terror was no longer between him and Mill Valley.

He sped at a breakneck rate down the hill, but in the turn at the bottom, in the deep shadows, he encountered a chuck-hole and pitched headlong over the handle bar.

"It's sure not my night," he muttered, as he examined the broken fork of the machine.

Shouldering the useless wheel, he trudged on. In time he came to the stone wall, and, half disbelieving his experience, he sought in the road for tracks, and found them – moccasin tracks, large ones, deep-bitten into the dust at the toes. It was while bending over them, examining, that again he heard the eery chant. He had seen the thing pursue the coyote, and he knew he had no chance on a straight run. He did not attempt it, contenting himself with hiding in the shadows on the off side of the road.

And again he saw the thing that was like a naked man, running swiftly and lightly and singing as it ran. Opposite him it paused, and his heart stood still. But instead of coming toward his hiding-place, it leaped into the air, caught the branch of a roadside tree, and swung swiftly upward, from limb to limb, like an ape. It swung across the wall, and a dozen feet above the top, into the branches of another tree, and dropped out of sight to the ground. The man waited a few wondering minutes, then started on.

II

Dave Slotter leaned belligerently against the desk that barred the way to the private office of James Ward, senior partner of the firm of Ward, Knowles & Co. Dave was angry. Every one in the outer office had looked him over suspiciously, and the man who faced him was excessively suspicious.

"You just tell Mr. Ward it's important," he urged.

"I tell you he is dictating and cannot be disturbed," was the answer. "Come to-morrow."

"To-morrow will be too late. You just trot along and tell Mr. Ward it's a matter of life and death."

The secretary hesitated and Dave seized the advantage.

"You just tell him I was across the bay in Mill Valley last night, and that I want to put him wise to something."

"What name?" was the query.

"Never mind the name. He don't know me."

When Dave was shown into the private office, he was still in the belligerent frame of mind, but when he saw a large fair man whirl in a revolving chair from dictating to a stenographer to face him, Dave's demeanor abruptly changed. He did not know why it changed, and he was secretly angry with himself.

"You are Mr. Ward?" Dave asked with a fatuousness that still further irritated him. He had never intended it at all.

"Yes," came the answer.

"And who are you?"

"Harry Bancroft," Dave lied. "You don't know me, and my name don't matter."

"You sent in word that you were in Mill Valley last night?"

"You live there, don't you?" Dave countered, looking suspiciously at the stenographer.

"Yes. What do you mean to see me about? I am very busy."

"I'd like to see you alone, sir."

Mr. Ward gave him a quick, penetrating look, hesitated, then made up his mind.

"That will do for a few minutes, Miss Potter."

The girl arose, gathered her notes together, and passed out. Dave looked at Mr. James Ward wonderingly, until that gentleman broke his train of inchoate thought.

"Well?"

"I was over in Mill Valley last night," Dave began confusedly.

"I've heard that before. What do you want?"

And Dave proceeded in the face of a growing conviction that was unbelievable. "I was at your house, or in the grounds, I mean."

"What were you doing there?"

"I came to break in," Dave answered in all frankness.

"I heard you lived all alone with a Chinaman for cook, and it looked good to me. Only I didn't break in. Something happened that prevented. That's why I'm here. I come to warn you. I found a wild man loose in your grounds – a regular devil. He could pull a guy like me to pieces. He gave me the run of my life. He don't wear any clothes to speak of, he climbs trees like a monkey, and he runs like a deer. I saw him chasing a coyote, and the last I saw of it, by God, he was gaining on it."

Dave paused and looked for the effect that would follow his words. But no effect came. James Ward was quietly curious, and that was all.

"Very remarkable, very remarkable," he murmured. "A wild man, you say. Why have you come to tell me?"

"To warn you of your danger. I'm something of a hard proposition myself, but I don't believe in killing people …that is, unnecessarily. I realized that you was in danger. I thought I'd warn you. Honest, that's the game. Of course, if you wanted to give me anything for my trouble, I'd take it. That was in my mind, too. But I don't care whether you give me anything or not. I've warned you any way, and done my duty." Mr. Ward meditated and drummed on the surface of his desk. Dave noticed they were large, powerful hands, withal well-cared for despite their dark sunburn. Also, he noted what had already caught his eye before – a tiny strip of flesh-colored courtplaster on the forehead over one eve. And still the thought that forced itself into his mind was unbelievable.

Mr. Ward took a wallet from his inside coat pocket, drew out a greenback, and passed it to Dave, who noted as he pocketed it that it was for twenty dollars.

"Thank you," said Mr. Ward, indicating that the interview was at an end.

"I shall have the matter investigated. A wild man running loose IS dangerous."

But so quiet a man was Mr. Ward, that Dave's courage returned. Besides, a new theory had suggested itself. The wild man was evidently Mr. Ward's brother, a lunatic privately confined. Dave had heard of such things. Perhaps Mr. Ward wanted it kept quiet. That was why he had given him the twenty dollars.

"Say," Dave began, "now I come to think of it that wild man looked a lot like you — "

That was as far as Dave got, for at that moment he witnessed a transformation and found himself gazing into the same unspeakably ferocious blue eyes of the night before, at the same clutching talon-like hands, and at the same formidable bulk in the act of springing upon him. But this time Dave had no night-stick to throw, and he was caught by the biceps of both arms in a grip so terrific that it made him groan with pain. He saw the large white teeth exposed, for all the world as a dog's about to bite. Mr. Ward's beard brushed his face as the teeth went in for the grip on his throat. But the bite was not given. Instead, Dave felt the other's body stiffen as with an iron restraint, and then he was flung aside, without effort but with such force that only the wall stopped his momentum and dropped him gasping to the floor.

"What do you mean by coming here and trying to blackmail me?" Mr. Ward was snarling at him. "Here, give me back that money."

Dave passed the bill back without a word.

"I thought you came here with good intentions. I know you now. Let me see and hear no more of you, or I'll put you in prison where you belong. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," Dave gasped.

"Then go."

And Dave went, without further word, both his biceps aching intolerably from the bruise of that tremendous grip. As his hand rested on the door knob, he was stopped.

"You were lucky," Mr. Ward was saying, and Dave noted that his face and eyes were cruel and gloating and proud.

"You were lucky. Had I wanted, I could have torn your muscles out of your arms and thrown them in the waste basket there."

"Yes, sir," said Dave; and absolute conviction vibrated in his voice.

He opened the door and passed out. The secretary looked at him interrogatively.

"Gosh!" was all Dave vouchsafed, and with this utterance passed out of the offices and the story.

III

James G. Ward was forty years of age, a successful business man, and very unhappy. For forty years he had vainly tried to solve a problem that was really himself and that with increasing years became more and more a woeful affliction. In himself he was two men, and, chronologically speaking, these men were several thousand years or so apart. He had studied the question of dual personality probably more profoundly than any half dozen of the leading specialists in that intricate and mysterious psychological field. In himself he was a different case from any that had been recorded. Even the most fanciful flights of the fiction-writers had not quite hit upon him. He was not a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, nor was he like the unfortunate young man in Kipling's "Greatest Story in the World." His two personalities were so mixed that they were practically aware of themselves and of each other all the time.

His other self he had located as a savage and a barbarian living under the primitive conditions of several thousand years before. But which self was he, and which was the other, he could never tell. For he was both selves, and both selves all the time. Very rarely indeed did it happen that one self did not know what the other was doing. Another thing was that he had no visions nor memories of the past in which that early self had lived. That early self lived in the present; but while it lived in the present, it was under the compulsion to live the way of life that must have been in that distant past.

In his childhood he had been a problem to his father and mother, and to the family doctors, though never had they come within a thousand miles of hitting upon the clue to his erratic, conduct. Thus, they could not understand his excessive somnolence in the forenoon, nor his excessive activity at night. When they found him wandering along the hallways at night, or climbing over giddy roofs, or running in the hills, they decided he was a somnambulist. In reality he was wide-eyed awake and merely under the nightroaming compulsion of his early self. Questioned by an obtuse medico, he once told the truth and suffered the ignominy of having the revelation contemptuously labeled and dismissed as "dreams."

The point was, that as twilight and evening came on he became wakeful. The four walls of a room were an irk and a restraint. He heard a thousand voices whispering to him through the darkness. The night called to him, for he was, for that period of the twenty-four hours, essentially a night-prowler. But nobody understood, and never again did he attempt to explain. They classified him as a sleep-walker and took precautions accordingly – precautions that very often were futile. As his childhood advanced, he grew more cunning, so that the major portion of all his nights were spent in the open at realizing his other self. As a result, he slept in the forenoons. Morning studies and schools were impossible, and it was discovered that only in the afternoons, under private teachers, could he be taught anything. Thus was his modern self educated and developed.

But a problem, as a child, he ever remained. He was known as a little demon, of insensate cruelty and viciousness. The family medicos privately adjudged him a mental monstrosity and degenerate. Such few boy companions as he had, hailed him as a wonder, though they were all afraid of him. He could outclimb, outswim, outrun, outdevil any of them; while none dared fight with him. He was too terribly strong, madly furious.

When nine years of age he ran away to the hills, where he flourished, night-prowling, for seven weeks before he was discovered and brought home. The marvel was how he had managed to subsist and keep in condition during that time. They did not know, and he never told them, of the rabbits he had killed, of the quail, young and old, he had captured and devoured, of the farmers' chicken-roosts he had raided, nor of the cave-lair he had made and carpeted with dry leaves and grasses and in which he had slept in warmth and comfort through the forenoons of many days.

At college he was notorious for his sleepiness and stupidity during the morning lectures and for his brilliance in the afternoon. By collateral reading and by borrowing the notebook of his fellow students he managed to scrape through the detestable morning courses, while his afternoon courses were triumphs. In football he proved a giant and a terror, and, in almost every form of track athletics, save for strange Berserker rages that were sometimes displayed, he could be depended upon to win. But his fellows were afraid to box with him, and he signalized his last wrestling bout by sinking his teeth into the shoulder of his opponent.

After college, his father, in despair, sent him among the cow-punchers of a Wyoming ranch. Three months later the doughty cowmen confessed he was too much for them and telegraphed his father to come and take the wild man away. Also, when the father arrived to take him away, the cowmen allowed that they would vastly prefer chumming with howling cannibals, gibbering lunatics, cavorting gorillas, grizzly bears, and man-eating tigers than with this particular Young college product with hair parted in the middle.

There was one exception to the lack of memory of the life of his early self, and that was language. By some quirk of atavism, a certain portion of that early self's language had come down to him as a racial memory. In moments of happiness, exaltation, or battle, he was prone to burst out in wild barbaric songs or chants. It was by this means that he located in time and space that strayed half of him who should have been dead and dust for thousands of years. He sang, once, and deliberately, several of the ancient chants in the presence of Professor Wertz, who gave courses in old Saxon and who was a philogist of repute and passion. At the first one, the professor pricked up his ears and demanded to know what mongrel tongue or hog-German it was. When the second chant was rendered, the professor was highly excited. James Ward then concluded the performance by giving a song that always irresistibly rushed to his lips when he was engaged in fierce struggling or fighting. Then it was that Professor Wertz proclaimed it no hog-German, but early German, or early Teuton, of a date that must far precede anything that had ever been discovered and handed down by the scholars. So early was it that it was beyond him; yet it was filled with haunting reminiscences of word-forms he knew and which his trained intuition told him were true and real. He demanded the source of the songs, and asked to borrow the precious book that contained them. Also, he demanded to know why young Ward had always posed as being profoundly ignorant of the German language. And Ward could neither explain his ignorance nor lend the book. Whereupon, after pleadings and entreaties that extended through weeks, Professor Wert took a dislike to the young man, believed him a liar, and classified him as a man of monstrous selfishness for not giving him a glimpse of this wonderful screed that was older than the oldest any philologist had ever known or dreamed.

But little good did it do this much-mixed young man to know that half of him was late American and the other half early Teuton. Nevertheless, the late American in him was no weakling, and he (if he were a he and had a shred of existence outside of these two) compelled an adjustment or compromise between his one self that was a nightprowling savage that kept his other self sleepy of mornings, and that other self that was cultured and refined and that wanted to be normal and live and love and prosecute business like other people. The afternoons and early evenings he gave to the one, the nights to the other; the forenoons and parts of the nights were devoted to sleep for the twain. But in the mornings he slept in bed like a civilized man. In the night time he slept like a wild animal, as he had slept Dave Slotter stepped on him in the woods.

Persuading his father to advance the capital, he went into business and keen and successful business he made of it, devoting his afternoons whole-souled to it, while his partner devoted the mornings. The early evenings he spent socially, but, as the hour grew to nine or ten, an irresistible restlessness overcame him and he disappeared from the haunts of men until the next afternoon. Friends and acquaintances thought that he spent much of his time in sport. And they were right, though they never would have dreamed of the nature of the sport, even if they had seen him running coyotes in night-chases over the hills of Mill Valley. Neither were the schooner captains believed when they reported seeing, on cold winter mornings, a man swimming in the tide-rips of Raccoon Straits or in the swift currents between Goat island and Angel Island miles from shore.

In the bungalow at Mill Valley he lived alone, save for Lee Sing, the Chinese cook and factotum, who knew much about the strangeness of his master, who was paid well for saying nothing, and who never did say anything. After the satisfaction of his nights, a morning's sleep, and a breakfast of Lee Sing's, James Ward crossed the bay to San Francisco on a midday ferryboat and went to the club and on to his office, as normal and conventional a man of business as could be found in the city. But as the evening lengthened, the night called to him. There came a quickening of all his perceptions and a restlessness. His hearing was suddenly acute; the myriad night-noises told him a luring and familiar story; and, if alone, he would begin to pace up and down the narrow room like any caged animal from the wild.

Once, he ventured to fall in love. He never permitted himself that diversion again. He was afraid. And for many a day the young lady, scared at least out of a portion of her young ladyhood, bore on her arms and shoulders and wrists divers black-and-blue bruises – tokens of caresses which he had bestowed in all fond gentleness but too late at night. There was the mistake. Had he ventured love-making in the afternoon, all would have been well, for it would have been as the quiet gentleman that he would have made love – but at night it was the uncouth, wife-stealing savage of the dark German forests. Out of his wisdom, he decided that afternoon love-making could be prosecuted successfully; but out of the same wisdom he was convinced that marriage as would prove a ghastly failure. He found it appalling to imagine being married and encountering his wife after dark.

So he had eschewed all love-making, regulated his dual life, cleaned up a million in business, fought shy of match-making mamas and bright-eyed and eager young ladies of various ages, met Lilian Gersdale and made it a rigid observance never to see her later than eight o'clock in the evening, run of nights after his coyotes, and slept in forest lairs – and through it all had kept his secret safe save Lee Sing …and now, Dave Slotter. It was the latter's discovery of both his selves that frightened him. In spite of the counter fright he had given the burglar, the latter might talk. And even if he did not, sooner or later he would be found out by some one else.

Thus it was that James Ward made a fresh and heroic effort to control the Teutonic barbarian that was half of him. So well did he make it a point to see Lilian in the afternoons, that the time came when she accepted him for better or worse, and when he prayed privily and fervently that it was not for worse. During this period no prize-fighter ever trained more harshly and faithfully for a contest than he trained to subdue the wild savage in him. Among other things, he strove to exhaust himself during the day, so that sleep would render him deaf to the call of the night. He took a vacation from the office and went on long hunting trips, following the deer through the most inaccessible and rugged country he could find – and always in the daytime. Night found him indoors and tired. At home he installed a score of exercise machines, and where other men might go through a particular movement ten times, he went hundreds. Also, as a compromise, he built a sleeping porch on the second story. Here he at least breathed the blessed night air. Double screens prevented him from escaping into the woods, and each night Lee Sing locked him in and each morning let him out.

The time came, in the month of August, when he engaged additional servants to assist Lee Sing and dared a house party in his Mill Valley bungalow. Lilian, her mother and brother, and half a dozen mutual friends, were the guests. For two days and nights all went well. And on the third night, playing bridge till eleven o'clock, he had reason to be proud of himself. His restlessness fully hid, but as luck would have it, Lilian Gersdale was his opponent on his right. She was a frail delicate flower of a woman, and in his night-mood her very frailty incensed him. Not that he loved her less, but that he felt almost irresistibly impelled to reach out and paw and maul her. Especially was this true when she was engaged in playing a winning hand against him.

He had one of the deer-hounds brought in and, when it seemed he must fly to pieces with the tension, a caressing hand laid on the animal brought him relief. These contacts with the hairy coat gave him instant easement and enabled him to play out the evening. Nor did anyone guess the while terrible struggle their host was making, the while he laughed so carelessly and played so keenly and deliberately.

When they separated for the night, he saw to it that he parted from Lilian in the presence or the others. Once on his sleeping porch and safely locked in, he doubled and tripled and even quadrupled his exercises until, exhausted, he lay down on the couch to woo sleep and to ponder two problems that especially troubled him. One was this matter of exercise. It was a paradox. The more he exercised in this excessive fashion, the stronger he became. While it was true that he thus quite tired out his night-running Teutonic self, it seemed that he was merely setting back the fatal day when his strength would be too much for him and overpower him, and then it would be a strength more terrible than he had yet known. The other problem was that of his marriage and of the stratagems he must employ in order to avoid his wife after dark. And thus, fruitlessly pondering, he fell asleep.

Now, where the huge grizzly bear came from that night was long a mystery, while the people of the Springs Brothers' Circus, showing at Sausalito, searched long and vainly for "Big Ben, the Biggest Grizzly in Captivity." But Big Ben escaped, and, out of the mazes of half a thousand bungalows and country estates, selected the grounds of James J. Ward for visitation. The self first Mr. Ward knew was when he found him on his feet, quivering and tense, a surge of battle in his breast and on his lips the old war-chant. From without came a wild baying and bellowing of the hounds. And sharp as a knife-thrust through the pandemonium came the agony of a stricken dog – his dog, he knew.

Not stopping for slippers, pajama-clad, he burst through the door Lee Sing had so carefully locked, and sped down the stairs and out into the night. As his naked feet struck the graveled driveway, he stopped abruptly, reached under the steps to a hiding-place he knew well, and pulled forth a huge knotty club – his old companion on many a mad night adventure on the hills. The frantic hullabaloo of the dogs was coming nearer, and, swinging the club, he sprang straight into the thickets to meet it.

The aroused household assembled on the wide veranda. Somebody turned on the electric lights, but they could see nothing but one another's frightened faces. Beyond the brightly illuminated driveway the trees formed a wall of impenetrable blackness. Yet somewhere in that blackness a terrible struggle was going on. There was an infernal outcry of animals, a great snarling and growling, the sound of blows being struck and a smashing and crashing of underbrush by heavy bodies.

The tide of battle swept out from among the trees and upon the driveway just beneath the onlookers. Then they saw. Mrs. Gersdale cried out and clung fainting to her son. Lilian, clutching the railing so spasmodically that a bruising hurt was left in her finger-ends for days, gazed horror-stricken at a yellow-haired, wild-eyed giant whom she recognized as the man who was to be her husband. He was swinging a great club, and fighting furiously and calmly with a shaggy monster that was bigger than any bear she had ever seen. One rip of the beast's claws had dragged away Ward's pajama-coat and streaked his flesh with blood.

While most of Lilian Gersdale's fright was for the man beloved, there was a large portion of it due to the man himself. Never had she dreamed so formidable and magnificent a savage lurked under the starched shirt and conventional garb of her betrothed. And never had she had any conception of how a man battled. Such a battle was certainly not modern; nor was she there beholding a modern man, though she did not know it. For this was not Mr. James J. Ward, the San Francisco business man, but one, unnamed and unknown, a crude, rude savage creature who, by some freak of chance, lived again after thrice a thousand years.

The hounds, ever maintaining their mad uproar, circled about the fight, or dashed in and out, distracting the bear. When the animal turned to meet such flanking assaults, the man leaped in and the club came down. Angered afresh by every such blow, the bear would rush, and the man, leaping and skipping, avoiding the dogs, went backwards or circled to one side or the other. Whereupon the dogs, taking advantage of the opening, would again spring in and draw the animal's wrath to them.

The end came suddenly. Whirling, the grizzly caught a hound with a wide sweeping cuff that sent the brute, its ribs caved in and its back broken, hurtling twenty feet. Then the human brute went mad. A foaming rage flecked the lips that parted with a wild inarticulate cry, as it sprang in, swung the club mightily in both hands, and brought it down full on the head of the uprearing grizzly. Not even the skull of a grizzly could withstand the crushing force of such a blow, and the animal went down to meet the worrying of the hounds. And through their scurrying leaped the man, squarely upon the body, where, in the white electric light, resting on his club, he chanted a triumph in an unknown tongue – a song so ancient that Professor Wertz would have given ten years of his life for it.

His guests rushed to possess him and acclaim him, but James Ward, suddenly looking out of the eyes of the early Teuton, saw the fair frail Twentieth Century girl he loved, and felt something snap in his brain. He staggered weakly toward her, dropped the club, and nearly fell. Something had gone wrong with him. Inside his brain was an intolerable agony. It seemed as if the soul of him were flying asunder. Following the excited gaze of the others, he glanced back and saw the carcass of the bear. The sight filled him with fear. He uttered a cry and would have fled, had they not restrained him and led him into the bungalow.

. . . .

James J. Ward is still at the head of the firm of Ward, Knowles & Co. But he no longer lives in the country; nor does he run of nights after the coyotes under the moon. The early Teuton in him died the night of the Mill Valley fight with the bear. James J. Ward is now wholly James J. Ward, and he shares no part of his being with any vagabond anachronism from the younger world. And so wholly is James J. Ward modern, that he knows in all its bitter fullness the curse of civilized fear. He is now afraid of the dark, and night in the forest is to him a thing of abysmal terror. His city house is of the spick and span order, and he evinces a great interest in burglarproof devices. His home is a tangle of electric wires, and after bed-time a guest can scarcely breathe without setting off an alarm. Also, he had invented a combination keyless door-lock that travelers may carry in their vest pockets and apply immediately and successfully under all circumstances. But his wife does not deem him a coward. She knows better. And, like any hero, he is content to rest on his laurels. His bravery is never questioned by those friends who are aware of the Mill Valley episode.

Where the Trail Forks

“Must I, then, must I, then, now leave this town-And you, my love, stay here?”--Schwabian Folk-song.

The singer, clean-faced and cheery-eyed, bent over and added water to a pot of simmering beans, and then, rising, a stick of firewood in hand, drove back the circling dogs from the grub-box and cooking-gear. He was blue of eye, and his long hair was golden, and it was a pleasure to look upon his lusty freshness. A new moon was thrusting a dim horn above the white line of close-packed snow-capped pines which ringed the camp and segregated it from all the world. Overhead, so clear it was and cold, the stars danced with quick, pulsating movements. To the southeast an evanescent greenish glow heralded the opening revels of the aurora borealis. Two men, in the immediate foreground, lay upon the bearskin which was their bed. Between the skin and naked snow was a six-inch layer of pine boughs. The blankets were rolled back. For shelter, there was a fly at their backs,--a sheet of canvas stretched between two trees and angling at forty-five degrees. This caught the radiating heat from the fire and flung it down upon the skin. Another man sat on a sled, drawn close to the blaze, mending moccasins. To the right, a heap of frozen gravel and a rude windlass denoted where they toiled each day in dismal groping for the pay-streak. To the left, four pairs of snowshoes stood erect, showing the mode of travel which obtained when the stamped snow of the camp was left behind.

That Schwabian folk-song sounded strangely pathetic under the cold northern stars, and did not do the men good who lounged about the fire after the toil of the day. It put a dull ache into their hearts, and a yearning which was akin to belly-hunger, and sent their souls questing southward across the divides to the sun-lands.

“For the love of God, Sigmund, shut up!” expostulated one of the men. His hands were clenched painfully, but he hid them from sight in the folds of the bearskin upon which he lay.

“And what for, Dave Wertz?” Sigmund demanded. “Why shall I not sing when the heart is glad?”

“Because you’ve got no call to, that’s why. Look about you, man, and think of the grub we’ve been defiling our bodies with for the last twelvemonth, and the way we’ve lived and worked like beasts!”

Thus abjured, Sigmund, the golden-haired, surveyed it all, and the frost-rimmed wolf-dogs and the vapor breaths of the men. “And why shall not the heart be glad?” he laughed. “It is good; it is all good. As for the grub--“ He doubled up his arm and caressed the swelling biceps. “And if we have lived and worked like beasts, have we not been paid like kings? Twenty dollars to the pan the streak is running, and we know it to be eight feet thick. It is another Klondike--and we know it--Jim Hawes there, by your elbow, knows it and complains not. And there’s Hitchcock! He sews moccasins like an old woman, and waits against the time. Only you can’t wait and work until the wash-up in the spring. Then we shall all be rich, rich as kings, only you cannot wait. You want to go back to the States. So do I, and I was born there, but I can wait, when each day the gold in the pan shows up yellow as butter in the churning. But you want your good time, and, like a child, you cry for it now. Bah! Why shall I not sing:

“In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe, I shall stay no more away. Then if you still are true, my love, It will be our wedding day. In a year, in a year, when my time is past, Then I’ll live in your love for aye. Then if you still are true, my love, It will be our wedding day.”

The dogs, bristling and growling, drew in closer to the firelight. There was a monotonous crunch-crunch of webbed shoes, and between each crunch the dragging forward of the heel of the shoe like the sound of sifting sugar. Sigmund broke off from his song to hurl oaths and firewood at the animals. Then the light was parted by a fur-clad figure, and an Indian girl slipped out of the webs, threw back the hood of her squirrel-skin parka, and stood in their midst. Sigmund and the men on the bearskin greeted her as “Sipsu,” with the customary “Hello,” but Hitchcock made room on the sled that she might sit beside him.

“And how goes it, Sipsu?” he asked, talking, after her fashion, in broken English and bastard Chinook. “Is the hunger still mighty in the camp? and has the witch doctor yet found the cause wherefore game is scarce and no moose in the land?”

“Yes; even so. There is little game, and we prepare to eat the dogs. Also has the witch doctor found the cause of all this evil, and to-morrow will he make sacrifice and cleanse the camp.”

“And what does the sacrifice chance to be?--a new-born babe or some poor devil of a squaw, old and shaky, who is a care to the tribe and better out of the way?”

“It chanced not that wise; for the need was great, and he chose none other than the chief’s daughter; none other than I, Sipsu.”

“Hell!” The word rose slowly to Hitchcock’s lips, and brimmed over full and deep, in a way which bespoke wonder and consideration.

“Wherefore we stand by a forking of the trail, you and I,” she went on calmly, “and I have come that we may look once more upon each other, and once more only.”

She was born of primitive stock, and primitive had been her traditions and her days; so she regarded life stoically, and human sacrifice as part of the natural order. The powers which ruled the day-light and the dark, the flood and the frost, the bursting of the bud and the withering of the leaf, were angry and in need of propitiation. This they exacted in many ways,--death in the bad water, through the treacherous ice-crust, by the grip of the grizzly, or a wasting sickness which fell upon a man in his own lodge till he coughed, and the life of his lungs went out through his mouth and nostrils. Likewise did the powers receive sacrifice. It was all one. And the witch doctor was versed in the thoughts of the powers and chose unerringly. It was very natural. Death came by many ways, yet was it all one after all,--a manifestation of the all-powerful and inscrutable.

But Hitchcock came of a later world-breed. His traditions were less concrete and without reverence, and he said, “Not so, Sipsu. You are young, and yet in the full joy of life. The witch doctor is a fool, and his choice is evil. This thing shall not be.”

She smiled and answered, “Life is not kind, and for many reasons. First, it made of us twain the one white and the other red, which is bad. Then it crossed our trails, and now it parts them again; and we can do nothing. Once before, when the gods were angry, did your brothers come to the camp. They were three, big men and white, and they said the thing shall not be. But they died quickly, and the thing was.”

Hitchcock nodded that he heard, half-turned, and lifted his voice. “Look here, you fellows! There’s a lot of foolery going on over to the camp, and they’re getting ready to murder Sipsu. What d’ye say?”

Wertz looked at Hawes, and Hawes looked back, but neither spoke. Sigmund dropped his head, and petted the shepherd dog between his knees. He had brought Shep in with him from the outside, and thought a great deal of the animal. In fact, a certain girl, who was much in his thoughts, and whose picture in the little locket on his breast often inspired him to sing, had given him the dog and her blessing when they kissed good-by and he started on his Northland quest.

“What d’ye say?” Hitchcock repeated.

“Mebbe it’s not so serious,” Hawes answered with deliberation. “Most likely it’s only a girl’s story.”

“That isn’t the point!” Hitchcock felt a hot flush of anger sweep over him at their evident reluctance. “The question is, if it is so, are we going to stand it? What are we going to do?”

“I don’t see any call to interfere,” spoke up Wertz. “If it is so, it is so, and that’s all there is about it. It’s a way these people have of doing. It’s their religion, and it’s no concern of ours. Our concern is to get the dust and then get out of this God-forsaken land. ‘T isn’t fit for naught else but beasts? And what are these black devils but beasts? Besides, it’d be damn poor policy.”

“That’s what I say,” chimed in Hawes. “Here we are, four of us, three hundred miles from the Yukon or a white face. And what can we do against half-a-hundred Indians? If we quarrel with them, we have to vamose; if we fight, we are wiped out. Further, we’ve struck pay, and, by God! I, for one, am going to stick by it!”

“Ditto here,” supplemented Wertz.

Hitchcock turned impatiently to Sigmund, who was softly singing,-

“In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe, I shall stay no more away.”

“Well, it’s this way, Hitchcock,” he finally said, “I’m in the same boat with the rest. If three-score bucks have made up their mind to kill the girl, why, we can’t help it. One rush, and we’d be wiped off the landscape. And what good’d that be? They’d still have the girl. There’s no use in going against the customs of a people except you’re in force.”

“But we are in force!” Hitchcock broke in. “Four whites are a match for a hundred times as many reds. And think of the girl!”

Sigmund stroked the dog meditatively. “But I do think of the girl. And her eyes are blue like summer skies, and laughing like summer seas, and her hair is yellow, like mine, and braided in ropes the size of a big man’s arms. She’s waiting for me, out there, in a better land. And she’s waited long, and now my pile’s in sight I’m not going to throw it away.”

“And shamed I would be to look into the girl’s blue eyes and remember the black ones of the girl whose blood was on my hands,” Hitchcock sneered; for he was born to honor and championship, and to do the thing for the thing's sake, nor stop to weigh or measure.

Sigmund shook his head. "You can't make me mad, Hitchcock, nor do mad things because of your madness. It's a cold business proposition and a question of facts. I didn't come to this country for my health, and, further, it's impossible for us to raise a hand. If it is so, it is too bad for the girl, that's all. It's a way of her people, and it just happens we're on the spot this one time. They've done the same for a thousand-thousand years, and they're going to do it now, and they'll go on doing it for all time to come. Besides, they're not our kind. Nor's the girl. No, I take my stand with Wertz and Hawes, and--"

But the dogs snarled and drew in, and he broke off, listening to the crunch-crunch of many snowshoes. Indian after Indian stalked into the firelight, tall and grim, fur-clad and silent, their shadows dancing grotesquely on the snow. One, the witch doctor, spoke gutturally to Sipsu. His face was daubed with savage paint blotches, and over his shoulders was drawn a wolfskin, the gleaming teeth and cruel snout surmounting his head. No other word was spoken. The prospectors held the peace. Sipsu arose and slipped into her snowshoes.

"Good-by, O my man," she said to Hitchcock. But the man who had sat beside her on the sled gave no sign, nor lifted his head as they filed away into the white forest.

Unlike many men, his faculty of adaptation, while large, had never suggested the expediency of an alliance with the women of the Northland. His broad cosmopolitanism had never impelled toward covenanting in marriage with the daughters of the soil. If it had, his philosophy of life would not have stood between. But it simply had not. Sipsu? He had pleasured in camp-fire chats with her, not as a man who knew himself to be man and she woman, but as a man might with a child, and as a man of his make certainly would if for no other reason than to vary the tedium of a bleak existence. That was all. But there was a certain chivalric thrill of warm blood in him, despite his Yankee ancestry and New England upbringing, and he was so made that the commercial aspect of life often seemed meaningless and bore contradiction to his deeper impulses.

So he sat silent, with head bowed forward, an organic force, greater than himself, as great as his race, at work within him. Wertz and Hawes looked askance at him from time to time, a faint but perceptible trepidation in their manner. Sigmund also felt this. Hitchcock was strong, and his strength had been impressed upon them in the course of many an event in their precarious life. So they stood in a certain definite awe and curiosity as to what his conduct would be when he moved to action.

But his silence was long, and the fire nigh out, when Wertz stretched his arms and yawned, and thought he'd go to bed. Then Hitchcock stood up his full height.

"May God damn your souls to the deepest hells, you chicken-hearted cowards! I'm done with you!" He said it calmly enough, but his strength spoke in every syllable, and every intonation was advertisement of intention. "Come on," he continued, "whack up, and in whatever way suits you best. I own a quarter-interest in the claims; our contracts show that. There're twenty-five or thirty ounces in the sack from the test pans. Fetch out the scales. We'll divide that now. And you, Sigmund, measure me my quarter-share of the grub and set it apart. Four of the dogs are mine, and I want four more. I'll trade you my share in the camp outfit and mining-gear for the dogs. And I'll throw in my six or seven ounces and the spare 45-90 with the ammunition. What d'ye say?"

The three men drew apart and conferred. When they returned, Sigmund acted as spokesman. "We'll whack up fair with you, Hitchcock. In everything you'll get your quarter-share, neither more nor less; and you can take it or leave it. But we want the dogs as bad as you do, so you get four, and that's all. If you don't want to take your share of the outfit and gear, why, that's your lookout. If you want it, you can have it; if you don't, leave it."

"The letter of the law," Hitchcock sneered. "But go ahead. I'm willing. And hurry up. I can't get out of this camp and away from its vermin any too quick."

The division was effected without further comment. He lashed his meagre belongings upon one of the sleds, rounded in his four dogs, and harnessed up. His portion of outfit and gear he did not touch, though he threw onto the sled half a dozen dog harnesses, and challenged them with his eyes to interfere. But they shrugged their shoulders and watched him disappear in the forest.

A man crawled upon his belly through the snow. On every hand loomed the moose-hide lodges of the camp. Here and there a miserable dog howled or snarled abuse upon his neighbor. Once, one of them approached the creeping man, but the man became motionless. The dog came closer and sniffed, and came yet closer, till its nose touched the strange object which had not been there when darkness fell. Then Hitchcock, for it was Hitchcock, upreared suddenly, shooting an unmittened hand out to the brute's shaggy throat. And the dog knew its death in that clutch, and when the man moved on, was left broken-necked under the stars. In this manner Hitchcock made the chief's lodge. For long he lay in the snow without, listening to the voices of the occupants and striving to locate Sipsu. Evidently there were many in the tent, and from the sounds they were in high excitement. At last he heard the girl's voice, and crawled around so that only the moose-hide divided them. Then burrowing in the snow, he slowly wormed his head and shoulders underneath. When the warm inner air smote his face, he stopped and waited, his legs and the greater part of his body still on the outside. He could see nothing, nor did he dare lift his head. On one side of him was a skin bale. He could smell it, though he carefully felt to be certain. On the other side his face barely touched a furry garment which he knew clothed a body. This must be Sipsu. Though he wished she would speak again, he resolved to risk it.

He could hear the chief and the witch doctor talking high, and in a far corner some hungry child whimpering to sleep. Squirming over on his side, he carefully raised his head, still just touching the furry garment. He listened to the breathing. It was a woman's breathing; he would chance it.

He pressed against her side softly but firmly, and felt her start at the contact. Again he waited, till a questioning hand slipped down upon his head and paused among the curls. The next instant the hand turned his face gently upward, and he was gazing into Sipsu's eyes.

She was quite collected. Changing her position casually, she threw an elbow well over on the skin bale, rested her body upon it, and arranged her parka. In this way he was completely concealed. Then, and still most casually, she reclined across him, so that he could breathe between her arm and breast, and when she lowered her head her ear pressed lightly against his lips.

"When the time suits, go thou," he whispered, "out of the lodge and across the snow, down the wind to the bunch of jackpine in the curve of the creek. There wilt thou find my dogs and my sled, packed for the trail. This night we go down to the Yukon; and since we go fast, lay thou hands upon what dogs come nigh thee, by the scruff of the neck, and drag them to the sled in the curve of the creek."

Sipsu shook her head in dissent; but her eyes glistened with gladness, and she was proud that this man had shown toward her such favor. But she, like the women of all her race, was born to obey the will masculine, and when Hitchcock repeated "Go!" he did it with authority, and though she made no answer he knew that his will was law.

"And never mind harness for the dogs," he added, preparing to go. "I shall wait. But waste no time. The day chaseth the night alway, nor does it linger for man's pleasure."

Half an hour later, stamping his feet and swinging his arms by the sled, he saw her coming, a surly dog in either hand. At the approach of these his own animals waxed truculent, and he favored them with the butt of his whip till they quieted. He had approached the camp up the wind, and sound was the thing to be most feared in making his presence known.

"Put them into the sled," he ordered when she had got the harness on the two dogs. "I want my leaders to the fore."

But when she had done this, the displaced animals pitched upon the aliens. Though Hitchcock plunged among them with clubbed rifle, a riot of sound went up and across the sleeping camp.

"Now we shall have dogs, and in plenty," he remarked grimly, slipping an axe from the sled lashings. "Do thou harness whichever I fling thee, and betweenwhiles protect the team."

He stepped a space in advance and waited between two pines. The dogs of the camp were disturbing the night with their jangle, and he watched for their coming. A dark spot, growing rapidly, took form upon the dim white expanse of snow. It was a forerunner of the pack, leaping cleanly, and, after the wolf fashion, singing direction to its brothers. Hitchcock stood in the shadow. As it sprang past, he reached out, gripped its forelegs in mid-career, and sent it whirling earthward. Then he struck it a well-judged blow beneath the ear, and flung it to Sipsu. And while she clapped on the harness, he, with his axe, held the passage between the trees, till a shaggy flood of white teeth and glistening eyes surged and crested just beyond reach. Sipsu worked rapidly. When she had finished, he leaped forward, seized and stunned a second, and flung it to her. This he repeated thrice again, and when the sled team stood snarling in a string of ten, he called, "Enough!"

But at this instant a young buck, the forerunner of the tribe, and swift of limb, wading through the dogs and cuffing right and left, attempted the passage. The butt of Hitchcock's rifle drove him to his knees, whence he toppled over sideways. The witch doctor, running lustily, saw the blow fall.

Hitchcock called to Sipsu to pull out. At her shrill "Chook!" the maddened brutes shot straight ahead, and the sled, bounding mightily, just missed unseating her. The powers were evidently angry with the witch doctor, for at this moment they plunged him upon the trail. The lead-dog fouled his snowshoes and tripped him up, and the nine succeeding dogs trod him under foot and the sled bumped over him. But he was quick to his feet, and the night might have turned out differently had not Sipsu struck backward with the long dog-whip and smitten him a blinding blow across the eyes. Hitchcock, hurrying to overtake her, collided against him as he swayed with pain in the middle of the trail. Thus it was, when this primitive theologian got back to the chief's lodge, that his wisdom had been increased in so far as concerns the efficacy of the white man's fist. So, when he orated then and there in the council, he was wroth against all white men.

"Tumble out, you loafers! Tumble out! Grub'll be ready before you get into your footgear!"

Dave Wertz threw off the bearskin, sat up, and yawned.

Hawes stretched, discovered a lame muscle in his arm, and rubbed it sleepily. "Wonder where Hitchcock bunked last night?" he queried, reaching for his moccasins. They were stiff, and he walked gingerly in his socks to the fire to thaw them out. "It's a blessing he's gone," he added, "though he was a mighty good worker."

"Yep. Too masterful. That was his trouble. Too bad for Sipsu. Think he cared for her much?"

"Don't think so. Just principle. That's all. He thought it wasn't right--and, of course, it wasn't,--but that was no reason for us to interfere and get hustled over the divide before our time."

"Principle is principle, and it's good in its place, but it's best left to home when you go to Alaska. Eh?" Wertz had joined his mate, and both were working pliability into their frozen moccasins. "Think we ought to have taken a hand?"

Sigmund shook his head. He was very busy. A scud of chocolate-colored foam was rising in the coffee-pot, and the bacon needed turning. Also, he was thinking about the girl with laughing eyes like summer seas, and he was humming softly.

His mates chuckled to each other and ceased talking. Though it was past seven, daybreak was still three hours distant. The aurora borealis had passed out of the sky, and the camp was an oasis of light in the midst of deep darkness. And in this light the forms of the three men were sharply defined. Emboldened by the silence, Sigmund raised his voice and opened the last stanza of the old song:-

“In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe--“

Then the night was split with a rattling volley of rifle-shots. Hawes sighed, made an effort to straighten himself, and collapsed. Wertz went over on an elbow with drooping head. He choked a little, and a dark stream flowed from his mouth. And Sigmund, the Golden-Haired, his throat a-gurgle with the song, threw up his arms and pitched across the fire.

The witch doctor’s eyes were well blackened, and his temper none of the best; for he quarrelled with the chief over the possession of Wertz’s rifle, and took more than his share of the part-sack of beans. Also he appropriated the bearskin, and caused grumbling among the tribesmen. And finally, he tried to kill Sigmund’s dog, which the girl had given him, but the dog ran away, while he fell into the shaft and dislocated his shoulder on the bucket. When the camp was well looted they went back to their own lodges, and there was a great rejoicing among the women. Further, a band of moose strayed over the south divide and fell before the hunters, so the witch doctor attained yet greater honor, and the people whispered among themselves that he spoke in council with the gods.

But later, when all were gone, the shepherd dog crept back to the deserted camp, and all the night long and a day it wailed the dead. After that it disappeared, though the years were not many before the Indian hunters noted a change in the breed of timber wolves, and there were dashes of bright color and variegated markings such as no wolf bore before.

Which Make Men Remember

Fortune La Pearle crushed his way through the snow, sobbing, straining, cursing his luck, Alaska, Nome, the cards, and the man who had felt his knife. The hot blood was freezing on his hands, and the scene yet bright in his eyes,--the man, clutching the table and sinking slowly to the floor; the rolling counters and the scattered deck; the swift shiver throughout the room, and the pause; the game-keepers no longer calling, and the clatter of the chips dying away; the startled faces; the infinite instant of silence; and then the great blood-roar and the tide of vengeance which lapped his heels and turned the town mad behind him.

“All hell’s broke loose,” he sneered, turning aside in the darkness and heading for the beach. Lights were flashing from open doors, and tent, cabin, and dance-hall let slip their denizens upon the chase. The clamor of men and howling of dogs smote his ears and quickened his feet. He ran on and on. The sounds grew dim, and the pursuit dissipated itself in vain rage and aimless groping. But a flitting shadow clung to him. Head thrust over shoulder, he caught glimpses of it, now taking vague shape on an open expanse of snow, how merging into the deeper shadows of some darkened cabin or beach-listed craft.

Fortune La Pearle swore like a woman, weakly, with the hint of tears that comes of exhaustion, and plunged deeper into the maze of heaped ice, tents, and prospect holes. He stumbled over taut hawsers and piles of dunnage, tripped on crazy guy-ropes and insanely planted pegs, and fell again and again upon frozen dumps and mounds of hoarded driftwood. At times, when he deemed he had drawn clear, his head dizzy with the painful pounding of his heart and the suffocating intake of his breath, he slackened down; and ever the shadow leaped out of the gloom and forced him on in heart-breaking flight. A swift intuition lashed upon him, leaving in its trail the cold chill of superstition. The persistence of the shadow he invested with his gambler’s symbolism. Silent, inexorable, not to be shaken off, he took it as the fate which waited at the last turn when chips were cashed in and gains and losses counted up. Fortune La Pearle believed in those rare, illuminating moments, when the intelligence flung from it time and space, to rise naked through eternity and read the facts of life from the open book of chance. That this was such a moment he had no doubt; and when he turned inland and sped across the snow-covered tundra he was not startled because the shadow took upon it greater definiteness and drew in closer. Oppressed with his own impotence, he halted in the midst of the white waste and whirled about. His right hand slipped from its mitten, and a revolver, at level, glistened in the pale light of the stars.

"Don't shoot. I haven't a gun."

The shadow had assumed tangible shape, and at the sound of its human voice a trepidation affected Fortune La Pearle's knees, and his stomach was stricken with the qualms of sudden relief.

Perhaps things fell out differently because Uri Bram had no gun that night when he sat on the hard benches of the El Dorado and saw murder done. To that fact also might be attributed the trip on the Long Trail which he took subsequently with a most unlikely comrade. But be it as it may, he repeated a second time, "Don't shoot. Can't you see I haven't a gun?"

"Then what the flaming hell did you take after me for?" demanded the gambler, lowering his revolver.

Uri Bram shrugged his shoulders. "It don't matter much, anyhow. I want you to come with me."

"Where?"

"To my shack, over on the edge of the camp."

But Fortune La Pearle drove the heel of his moccasin into the snow and attested by his various deities to the madness of Uri Bram. "Who are you," he perorated, "and what am I, that I should put my neck into the rope at your bidding?"

"I am Uri Bram," the other said simply, "and my shack is over there on the edge of camp. I don't know who you are, but you've thrust the soul from a living man's body,--there's the blood red on your sleeve,--and, like a second Cain, the hand of all mankind is against you, and there is no place you may lay your head. Now, I have a shack--"

"For the love of your mother, hold your say, man," interrupted Fortune La Pearle, "or I'll make you a second Abel for the joy of it. So help me, I will! With a thousand men to lay me by the heels, looking high and low, what do I want with your shack? I want to get out of here--away! away! away! Cursed swine! I've half a mind to go back and run amuck, and settle for a few of them, the pigs! One gorgeous, glorious fight, and end the whole damn business! It's a skin game, that's what life is, and I'm sick of it!"

He stopped, appalled, crushed by his great desolation, and Uri Bram seized the moment. He was not given to speech, this man, and that which followed was the longest in his life, save one long afterward in another place.

"That's why I told you about my shack. I can stow you there so they'll never find you, and I've got grub in plenty. Elsewise you can't get away. No dogs, no nothing, the sea closed, St. Michael the nearest post, runners to carry the news before you, the same over the portage to Anvik--not a chance in the world for you! Now wait with me till it blows over. They'll forget all about you in a month or less, what of stampeding to York and what not, and you can hit the trail under their noses and they won't bother. I've got my own ideas of justice. When I ran after you, out of the El Dorado and along the beach, it wasn't to catch you or give you up. My ideas are my own, and that's not one of them."

He ceased as the murderer drew a prayer-book from his pocket. With the aurora borealis glimmering yellow in the northeast, heads bared to the frost and naked hands grasping the sacred book, Fortune La Pearle swore him to the words he had spoken--an oath which Uri Bram never intended breaking, and never broke.

At the door of the shack the gambler hesitated for an instant, marvelling at the strangeness of this man who had befriended him, and doubting. But by the candlelight he found the cabin comfortable and without occupants, and he was quickly rolling a cigarette while the other man made coffee. His muscles relaxed in the warmth and he lay back with half-assumed indolence, intently studying Uri's face through the curling wisps of smoke. It was a powerful face, but its strength was of that peculiar sort which stands girt in and unrelated. The seams were deep-graven, more like scars, while the stern features were in no way softened by hints of sympathy or humor. Under prominent bushy brows the eyes shone cold and gray. The cheekbones, high and forbidding, were undermined by deep hollows. The chin and jaw displayed a steadiness of purpose which the narrow forehead advertised as single, and, if needs be, pitiless. Everything was harsh, the nose, the lips, the voice, the lines about the mouth. It was the face of one who communed much with himself, unused to seeking counsel from the world; the face of one who wrestled oft of nights with angels, and rose to face the day with shut lips that no man might know. He was narrow but deep; and Fortune, his own humanity broad and shallow, could make nothing of him. Did Uri sing when merry and sigh when sad, he could have understood; but as it was, the cryptic features were undecipherable; he could not measure the soul they concealed.

“Lend a hand, Mister Man,” Uri ordered when the cups had been emptied. “We’ve got to fix up for visitors.”

Fortune purred his name for the other’s benefit, and assisted understandingly. The bunk was built against a side and end of the cabin. It was a rude affair, the bottom being composed of drift-wood logs overlaid with moss. At the foot the rough ends of these timbers projected in an uneven row. From the side next the wall Uri ripped back the moss and removed three of the logs. The jagged ends he sawed off and replaced so that the projecting row remained unbroken. Fortune carried in sacks of flour from the cache and piled them on the floor beneath the aperture. On these Uri laid a pair of long sea-bags, and over all spread several thicknesses of moss and blankets. Upon this Fortune could lie, with the sleeping furs stretching over him from one side of the bunk to the other, and all men could look upon it and declare it empty.

In the weeks which followed, several domiciliary visits were paid, not a shack or tent in Nome escaping, but Fortune lay in his cranny undisturbed. In fact, little attention was given to Uri Bram’s cabin; for it was the last place under the sun to expect to find the murderer of John Randolph. Except during such interruptions, Fortune lolled about the cabin, playing long games of solitaire and smoking endless cigarettes. Though his volatile nature loved geniality and play of words and laughter, he quickly accommodated himself to Uri’s taciturnity. Beyond the actions and plans of his pursuers, the state of the trails, and the price of dogs, they never talked; and these things were only discussed at rare intervals and briefly. But Fortune fell to working out a system, and hour after hour, and day after day, he shuffled and dealt, shuffled and dealt, noted the combinations of the cards in long columns, and shuffled and dealt again. Toward the end even this absorption failed him, and, head bowed upon the table, he visioned the lively all-night houses of Nome, where the gamekeepers and lookouts worked in shifts and the clattering roulette ball never slept. At such times his loneliness and bankruptcy stunned him till he sat for hours in the same unblinking, unchanging position. At other times, his long-pent bitterness found voice in passionate outbursts; for he had rubbed the world the wrong way and did not like the feel of it.

"Life's a skin-game," he was fond of repeating, and on this one note he rang the changes. "I never had half a chance," he complained. "I was faked in my birth and flim-flammed with my mother's milk. The dice were loaded when she tossed the box, and I was born to prove the loss. But that was no reason she should blame me for it, and look on me as a cold deck; but she did--ay, she did. Why didn't she give me a show? Why didn't the world? Why did I go broke in Seattle? Why did I take the steerage, and live like a hog to Nome? Why did I go to the El Dorado? I was heading for Big Pete's and only went for matches. Why didn't I have matches? Why did I want to smoke? Don't you see? All worked out, every bit of it, all parts fitting snug. Before I was born, like as not. I'll put the sack I never hope to get on it, before I was born. That's why! That's why John Randolph passed the word and his checks in at the same time. Damn him! It served him well right! Why didn't he keep his tongue between his teeth and give me a chance? He knew I was next to broke. Why didn't I hold my hand? Oh, why? Why? Why?"

And Fortune La Pearle would roll upon the floor, vainly interrogating the scheme of things. At such outbreaks Uri said no word, gave no sign, save that his grey eyes seemed to turn dull and muddy, as though from lack of interest. There was nothing in common between these two men, and this fact Fortune grasped sufficiently to wonder sometimes why Uri had stood by him.

But the time of waiting came to an end. Even a community's blood lust cannot stand before its gold lust. The murder of John Randolph had already passed into the annals of the camp, and there it rested. Had the murderer appeared, the men of Nome would certainly have stopped stampeding long enough to see justice done, whereas the whereabouts of Fortune La Pearle was no longer an insistent problem. There was gold in the creek beds and ruby beaches, and when the sea opened, the men with healthy sacks would sail away to where the good things of life were sold absurdly cheap.

So, one night, Fortune helped Uri Bram harness the dogs and lash the sled, and the twain took the winter trail south on the ice. But it was not all south; for they left the sea east from St. Michael's, crossed the divide, and struck the Yukon at Anvik, many hundred miles from its mouth. Then on, into the northeast, past Koyokuk, Tanana, and Minook, till they rounded the Great Curve at Fort Yukon, crossed and recrossed the Arctic Circle, and headed south through the Flats. It was a weary journey, and Fortune would have wondered why the man went with him, had not Uri told him that he owned claims and had men working at Eagle. Eagle lay on the edge of the line; a few miles farther on, the British flag waved over the barracks at Fort Cudahy. Then came Dawson, Pelly, the Five Fingers, Windy Arm, Caribou Crossing, Linderman, the Chilcoot and Dyea.

On the morning after passing Eagle, they rose early. This was their last camp, and they were now to part. Fortune's heart was light. There was a promise of spring in the land, and the days were growing longer. The way was passing into Canadian territory. Liberty was at hand, the sun was returning, and each day saw him nearer to the Great Outside. The world was big, and he could once again paint his future in royal red. He whistled about the breakfast and hummed snatches of light song while Uri put the dogs in harness and packed up. But when all was ready, Fortune's feet itching to be off, Uri pulled an unused back-log to the fire and sat down.

"Ever hear of the Dead Horse Trail?"

He glanced up meditatively and Fortune shook his head, inwardly chafing at the delay.

"Sometimes there are meetings under circumstances which make men remember," Uri continued, speaking in a low voice and very slowly, "and I met a man under such circumstances on the Dead Horse Trail. Freighting an outfit over the White Pass in '97 broke many a man's heart, for there was a world of reason when they gave that trail its name. The horses died like mosquitoes in the first frost, and from Skaguay to Bennett they rotted in heaps. They died at the Rocks, they were poisoned at the Summit, and they starved at the Lakes; they fell off the trail, what there was of it, or they went through it; in the river they drowned under their loads, or were smashed to pieces against the boulders; they snapped their legs in the crevices and broke their backs falling backwards with their packs; in the sloughs they sank from sight or smothered in the slime, and they were disembowelled in the bogs where the corduroy logs turned end up in the mud; men shot them, worked them to death, and when they were gone, went back to the beach and bought more. Some did not bother to shoot them,--stripping the saddles off and the shoes and leaving them where they fell. Their hearts turned to stone--those which did not break--and they became beasts, the men on Dead Horse Trail.

"It was there I met a man with the heart of a Christ and the patience. And he was honest. When he rested at midday he took the packs from the horses so that they, too, might rest. He paid $50 a hundred-weight for their fodder, and more. He used his own bed to blanket their backs when they rubbed raw. Other men let the saddles eat holes the size of water-buckets. Other men, when the shoes gave out, let them wear their hoofs down to the bleeding stumps. He spent his last dollar for horseshoe nails. I know this because we slept in the one bed and ate from the one pot, and became blood brothers where men lost their grip of things and died blaspheming God. He was never too tired to ease a strap or tighten a cinch, and often there were tears in his eyes when he looked on all that waste of misery. At a passage in the rocks, where the brutes upreared hindlegged and stretched their forelegs upward like cats to clear the wall, the way was piled with carcasses where they had toppled back. And here he stood, in the stench of hell, with a cheery word and a hand on the rump at the right time, till the string passed by. And when one bogged he blocked the trail till it was clear again; nor did the man live who crowded him at such time.

"At the end of the trail a man who had killed fifty horses wanted to buy, but we looked at him and at our own,--mountain cayuses from eastern Oregon. Five thousand he offered, and we were broke, but we remembered the poison grass of the Summit and the passage in the Rocks, and the man who was my brother spoke no word, but divided the cayuses into two bunches,--his in the one and mine in the other,--and he looked at me and we understood each other. So he drove mine to the one side and I drove his to the other, and we took with us our rifles and shot them to the last one, while the man who had killed fifty horses cursed us till his throat cracked. But that man, with whom I welded blood-brothership on the Dead Horse Trail--"

"Why, that man was John Randolph," Fortune, sneering the while, completed the climax for him.

Uri nodded, and said, "I am glad you understand."

"I am ready," Fortune answered, the old weary bitterness strong in his face again. "Go ahead, but hurry."

Uri Bram rose to his feet.

"I have had faith in God all the days of my life. I believe He loves justice. I believe He is looking down upon us now, choosing between us. I believe He waits to work His will through my own right arm. And such is my belief, that we will take equal chance and let Him speak His own judgment."

Fortune's heart leaped at the words. He did not know much concerning Uri's God, but he believed in Chance, and Chance had been coming his way ever since the night he ran down the beach and across the snow. "But there is only one gun," he objected.

"We will fire turn about," Uri replied, at the same time throwing out the cylinder of the other man's Colt and examining it.

"And the cards to decide! One hand of seven up!"

Fortune's blood was warming to the game, and he drew the deck from his pocket as Uri nodded. Surely Chance would not desert him now! He thought of the returning sun as he cut for deal, and he thrilled when he found the deal was his. He shuffled and dealt, and Uri cut him the Jack of Spades. They laid down their hands. Uri's was bare of trumps, while he held ace, deuce. The outside seemed very near to him as they stepped off the fifty paces.

"If God withholds His hand and you drop me, the dogs and outfit are yours. You'll find a bill of sale, already made out, in my pocket," Uri explained, facing the path of the bullet, straight and broad-breasted.

Fortune shook a vision of the sun shining on the ocean from his eyes and took aim. He was very careful. Twice he lowered as the spring breeze shook the pines. But the third time he dropped on one knee, gripped the revolver steadily in both hands, and fired. Uri whirled half about, threw up his arms, swayed wildly for a moment, and sank into the snow. But Fortune knew he had fired too far to one side, else the man would not have whirled.

When Uri, mastering the flesh and struggling to his feet, beckoned for the weapon, Fortune was minded to fire again. But he thrust the idea from him. Chance had been very good to him already, he felt, and if he tricked now he would have to pay for it afterward. No, he would play fair. Besides Uri was hard hit and could not possibly hold the heavy Colt long enough to draw a bead.

"And where is your God now?" he taunted, as he gave the wounded man the revolver.

And Uri answered: "God has not yet spoken. Prepare that He may speak."

Fortune faced him, but twisted his chest sideways in order to present less surface. Uri tottered about drunkenly, but waited, too, for the moment's calm between the catspaws. The revolver was very heavy, and he doubted, like Fortune, because of its weight. But he held it, arm extended, above his head, and then let it slowly drop forward and down. At the instant Fortune's left breast and the sight flashed into line with his eye, he pulled the trigger. Fortune did not whirl, but gay San Francisco dimmed and faded, and as the sun-bright snow turned black and blacker, he breathed his last malediction on the Chance he had misplayed.

White and Yellow

San Francisco Bay is so large that often its storms are more disastrous to ocean-going craft than is the ocean itself in its violent moments. The waters of the bay contain all manner of fish, wherefore its surface is ploughed by the keels of all manner of fishing boats manned by all manner of fishermen. To protect the fish from this motley floating population many wise laws have been passed, and there is a fish patrol to see that these laws are enforced. Exciting times are the lot of the fish patrol: in its history more than one dead patrolman has marked defeat, and more often dead fishermen across their illegal nets have marked success.

Wildest among the fisher-folk may be accounted the Chinese shrimp-catchers. It is the habit of the shrimp to crawl along the bottom in vast armies till it reaches fresh water, when it turns about and crawls back again to the salt. And where the tide ebbs and flows, the Chinese sink great bag-nets to the bottom, with gaping mouths, into which the shrimp crawls and from which it is transferred to the boiling-pot. This in itself would not be bad, were it not for the small mesh of the nets, so small that the tiniest fishes, little new-hatched things not a quarter of an inch long, cannot pass through. The beautiful beaches of Points Pedro and Pablo, where are the shrimp-catchers' villages, are made fearful by the stench from myriads of decaying fish, and against this wasteful destruction it has ever been the duty of the fish patrol to act.

When I was a youngster of sixteen, a good sloop-sailor and all-round bay-waterman, my sloop, the Reindeer, was chartered by the Fish Commission, and I became for the time being a deputy patrolman. After a deal of work among the Greek fishermen of the Upper Bay and rivers, where knives flashed at the beginning of trouble and men permitted themselves to be made prisoners only after a revolver was thrust in their faces, we hailed with delight an expedition to the Lower Bay against the Chinese shrimp-catchers.

There were six of us, in two boats, and to avoid suspicion we ran down after dark and dropped anchor under a projecting bluff of land known as Point Pinole. As the east paled with the first light of dawn we got under way again, and hauled close on the land breeze as we slanted across the bay toward Point Pedro. The morning mists curled and clung to the water so that we could see nothing, but we busied ourselves driving the chill from our bodies with hot coffee. Also we had to devote ourselves to the miserable task of bailing, for in some incomprehensible way the Reindeer had sprung a generous leak. Half the night had been spent in overhauling the ballast and exploring the seams, but the labor had been without avail. The water still poured in, and perforce we doubled up in the cockpit and tossed it out again.

After coffee, three of the men withdrew to the other boat, a Columbia River salmon boat, leaving three of us in the Reindeer. Then the two craft proceeded in company till the sun showed over the eastern sky-line. Its fiery rays dispelled the clinging vapors, and there, before our eyes, like a picture, lay the shrimp fleet, spread out in a great half-moon, the tips of the crescent fully three miles apart, and each junk moored fast to the buoy of a shrimp-net. But there was no stir, no sign of life.

The situation dawned upon us. While waiting for slack water, in which to lift their heavy nets from the bed of the bay, the Chinese had all gone to sleep below. We were elated, and our plan of battle was swiftly formed.

“Throw each of your two men on to a junk,” whispered Le Grant to me from the salmon boat. “And you make fast to a third yourself. We’ll do the same, and there’s no reason in the world why we shouldn’t capture six junks at the least.”

Then we separated. I put the Reindeer about on the other tack, ran up under the lee of a junk, shivered the mainsail into the wind and lost headway, and forged past the stern of the junk so slowly and so near that one of the patrolmen stepped lightly aboard. Then I kept off, filled the mainsail, and bore away for a second junk.

Up to this time there had been no noise, but from the first junk captured by the salmon boat an uproar now broke forth. There was shrill Oriental yelling, a pistol shot, and more yelling.

“It’s all up. They’re warning the others,” said George, the remaining patrolman, as he stood beside me in the cockpit.

By this time we were in the thick of the fleet, and the alarm was spreading with incredible swiftness. The decks were beginning to swarm with half-awakened and half-naked Chinese. Cries and yells of warning and anger were flying over the quiet water, and somewhere a conch shell was being blown with great success. To the right of us I saw the captain of a junk chop away his mooring line with an axe and spring to help his crew at the hoisting of the huge, outlandish lug-sail. But to the left the first heads were popping up from below on another junk, and I rounded up the Reindeer alongside long enough for George to spring aboard.

The whole fleet was now under way. In addition to the sails they had gotten out long sweeps, and the bay was being ploughed in every direction by the fleeing junks. I was now alone in the Reindeer, seeking feverishly to capture a third prize. The first junk I took after was a clean miss, for it trimmed its sheets and shot away surprisingly into the wind. By fully half a point it outpointed the Reindeer, and I began to feel respect for the clumsy craft. Realizing the hopelessness of the pursuit, I filled away, threw out the main-sheet, and drove down before the wind upon the junks to leeward, where I had them at a disadvantage.

The one I had selected wavered indecisively before me, and, as I swung wide to make the boarding gentle, filled suddenly and darted away, the smart Mongols shouting a wild rhythm as they bent to the sweeps. But I had been ready for this. I luffed suddenly. Putting the tiller hard down, and holding it down with my body, I brought the main-sheet in, hand over hand, on the run, so as to retain all possible striking force. The two starboard sweeps of the junk were crumpled up, and then the two boats came together with a crash. The Reindeer's bowsprit, like a monstrous hand, reached over and ripped out the junk's chunky mast and towering sail.

This was met by a curdling yell of rage. A big Chinaman, remarkably evil-looking, with his head swathed in a yellow silk handkerchief and face badly pock-marked, planted a pike-pole on the Reindeer's bow and began to shove the entangled boats apart. Pausing long enough to let go the jib halyards, and just as the Reindeer cleared and began to drift astern, I leaped aboard the junk with a line and made fast. He of the yellow handkerchief and pock-marked face came toward me threateningly, but I put my hand into my hip pocket, and he hesitated. I was unarmed, but the Chinese have learned to be fastidiously careful of American hip pockets, and it was upon this that I depended to keep him and his savage crew at a distance.

I ordered him to drop the anchor at the junk's bow, to which he replied, "No sabbe." The crew responded in like fashion, and though I made my meaning plain by signs, they refused to understand. Realizing the inexpediency of discussing the matter, I went forward myself, overran the line, and let the anchor go.

“Now get aboard, four of you,” I said in a loud voice, indicating with my fingers that four of them were to go with me and the fifth was to remain by the junk. The Yellow Handkerchief hesitated; but I repeated the order fiercely (much more fiercely than I felt), at the same time sending my hand to my hip. Again the Yellow Handkerchief was overawed, and with surly looks he led three of his men aboard the Reindeer. I cast off at once, and, leaving the jib down, steered a course for George’s junk. Here it was easier, for there were two of us, and George had a pistol to fall back on if it came to the worst. And here, as with my junk, four Chinese were transferred to the sloop and one left behind to take care of things.

Four more were added to our passenger list from the third junk. By this time the salmon boat had collected its twelve prisoners and came alongside, badly overloaded. To make matters worse, as it was a small boat, the patrolmen were so jammed in with their prisoners that they would have little chance in case of trouble.

“You’ll have to help us out,” said Le Grant.

I looked over my prisoners, who had crowded into the cabin and on top of it. “I can take three,” I answered.

“Make it four,” he suggested, “and I’ll take Bill with me.” (Bill was the third patrolman.) “We haven’t elbow room here, and in case of a scuffle one white to every two of them will be just about the right proportion.”

The exchange was made, and the salmon boat got up its spritsail and headed down the bay toward the marshes off San Rafael. I ran up the jib and followed with the Reindeer. San Rafael, where we were to turn our catch over to the authorities, communicated with the bay by way of a long and tortuous slough, or marshland creek, which could be navigated only when the tide was in. Slack water had come, and, as the ebb was commencing, there was need for hurry if we cared to escape waiting half a day for the next tide.

But the land breeze had begun to die away with the rising sun, and now came only in failing puffs. The salmon boat got out its oars and soon left us far astern. Some of the Chinese stood in the forward part of the cockpit, near the cabin doors, and once, as I leaned over the cockpit rail to flatten down the jib-sheet a bit, I felt some one brush against my hip pocket. I made no sign, but out of the corner of my eye I saw that the Yellow Handkerchief had discovered the emptiness of the pocket which had hitherto overawed him.

To make matters serious, during all the excitement of boarding the junks the Reindeer had not been bailed, and the water was beginning to slush over the cockpit floor. The shrimp-catchers pointed at it and looked to me questioningly.

“Yes,” I said. “Bime by, allee same dlown, velly quick, you no bail now. Sabbe?”

No, they did not “sabbe,” or at least they shook their heads to that effect, though they chattered most comprehendingly to one another in their own lingo. I pulled up three or four of the bottom boards, got a couple of buckets from a locker, and by unmistakable sign-language invited them to fall to. But they laughed, and some crowded into the cabin and some climbed up on top.

Their laughter was not good laughter. There was a hint of menace in it, a maliciousness which their black looks verified. The Yellow Handkerchief, since his discovery of my empty pocket, had become most insolent in his bearing, and he wormed about among the other prisoners, talking to them with great earnestness.

Swallowing my chagrin, I stepped down into the cockpit and began throwing out the water. But hardly had I begun, when the boom swung overhead, the mainsail filled with a jerk, and the Reindeer heeled over. The day wind was springing up. George was the veriest of landlubbers, so I was forced to give over bailing and take the tiller. The wind was blowing directly off Point Pedro and the high mountains behind, and because of this was squally and uncertain, half the time bellying the canvas out and the other half flapping it idly.

George was about the most all-round helpless man I had ever met. Among his other disabilities, he was a consumptive, and I knew that if he attempted to bail, it might bring on a hemorrhage. Yet the rising water warned me that something must be done. Again I ordered the shrimp-catchers to lend a hand with the buckets. They laughed defiantly, and those inside the cabin, the water up to their ankles, shouted back and forth with those on top.

“You’d better get out your gun and make them bail,” I said to George.

But he shook his head and showed all too plainly that he was afraid. The Chinese could see the funk he was in as well as I could, and their insolence became insufferable. Those in the cabin broke into the food lockers, and those above scrambled down and joined them in a feast on our crackers and canned goods.

"What do we care?" George said weakly.

I was fuming with helpless anger. "If they get out of hand, it will be too late to care. The best thing you can do is to get them in check right now."

The water was rising higher and higher, and the gusts, forerunners of a steady breeze, were growing stiffer and stiffer. And between the gusts, the prisoners, having gotten away with a week's grub, took to crowding first to one side and then to the other till the Reindeer rocked like a cockle-shell. Yellow Handkerchief approached me, and, pointing out his village on the Point Pedro beach, gave me to understand that if I turned the Reindeer in that direction and put them ashore, they, in turn, would go to bailing. By now the water in the cabin was up to the bunks, and the bed-clothes were sopping. It was a foot deep on the cockpit floor. Nevertheless I refused, and I could see by George's face that he was disappointed.

"If you don't show some nerve, they'll rush us and throw us overboard," I said to him. "Better give me your revolver, if you want to be safe."

"The safest thing to do," he chattered cravenly, "is to put them ashore. I, for one, don't want to be drowned for the sake of a handful of dirty Chinamen."

"And I, for another, don't care to give in to a handful of dirty Chinamen to escape drowning," I answered hotly.

"You'll sink the Reindeer under us all at this rate," he whined. "And what good that'll do I can't see."

"Every man to his taste," I retorted.

He made no reply, but I could see he was trembling pitifully. Between the threatening Chinese and the rising water he was beside himself with fright; and, more than the Chinese and the water, I feared him and what his fright might impel him to do. I could see him casting longing glances at the small skiff towing astern, so in the next calm I hauled the skiff alongside. As I did so his eyes brightened with hope; but before he could guess my intention, I stove the frail bottom through with a hand-axe, and the skiff filled to its gunwales.

"It's sink or float together," I said. "And if you'll give me your revolver, I'll have the Reindeer bailed out in a jiffy."

"They're too many for us," he whimpered. "We can't fight them all."

I turned my back on him in disgust. The salmon boat had long since passed from sight behind a little archipelago known as the Marin Islands, so no help could be looked for from that quarter. Yellow Handkerchief came up to me in a familiar manner, the water in the cockpit slushing against his legs. I did not like his looks. I felt that beneath the pleasant smile he was trying to put on his face there was an ill purpose. I ordered him back, and so sharply that he obeyed.

"Now keep your distance," I commanded, "and don't you come closer!"

"Wha' fo'?" he demanded indignantly. "I t'ink-um talkee talkee heap good."

"Talkee talkee," I answered bitterly, for I knew now that he had understood all that passed between George and me. "What for talkee talkee? You no sabbe talkee talkee."

He grinned in a sickly fashion. "Yep, I sabbe velly much. I honest Chinaman."

"All right," I answered. "You sabbe talkee talkee, then you bail water plenty plenty. After that we talkee talkee."

He shook his head, at the same time pointing over his shoulder to his comrades. "No can do. Velly bad Chinamen, heap velly bad. I t'ink-um-"

"Stand back!" I shouted, for I had noticed his hand disappear beneath his blouse and his body prepare for a spring.

Disconcerted, he went back into the cabin, to hold a council, apparently, from the way the jabbering broke forth. The Reindeer was very deep in the water, and her movements had grown quite loggy. In a rough sea she would have inevitably swamped; but the wind, when it did blow, was off the land, and scarcely a ripple disturbed the surface of the bay.

"I think you'd better head for the beach," George said abruptly, in a manner that told me his fear had forced him to make up his mind to some course of action.

"I think not," I answered shortly.

"I command you," he said in a bullying tone.

"I was commanded to bring these prisoners into San Rafael," was my reply.

Our voices were raised, and the sound of the altercation brought the Chinese out of the cabin.

"Now will you head for the beach?"

This from George, and I found myself looking into the muzzle of his revolver-of the revolver he dared to use on me, but was too cowardly to use on the prisoners.

My brain seemed smitten with a dazzling brightness. The whole situation, in all its bearings, was focussed sharply before me-the shame of losing the prisoners, the worthlessness and cowardice of George, the meeting with Le Grant and the other patrol men and the lame explanation; and then there was the fight I had fought so hard, victory wrenched from me just as I thought I had it within my grasp. And out of the tail of my eye I could see the Chinese crowding together by the cabin doors and leering triumphantly. It would never do.

I threw my hand up and my head down. The first act elevated the muzzle, and the second removed my head from the path of the bullet which went whistling past. One hand closed on George's wrist, the other on the revolver. Yellow Handkerchief and his gang sprang toward me. It was now or never. Putting all my strength into a sudden effort, I swung George's body forward to meet them. Then I pulled back with equal suddenness, ripping the revolver out of his fingers and jerking him off his feet. He fell against Yellow Handkerchief's knees, who stumbled over him, and the pair wallowed in the bailing hole where the cockpit floor was torn open. The next instant I was covering them with my revolver, and the wild shrimp-catchers were cowering and cringing away.

But I swiftly discovered that there was all the difference in the world between shooting men who are attacking and men who are doing nothing more than simply refusing to obey. For obey they would not when I ordered them into the bailing hole. I threatened them with the revolver, but they sat stolidly in the flooded cabin and on the roof and would not move.

Fifteen minutes passed, the Reindeer sinking deeper and deeper, her mainsail flapping in the calm. But from off the Point Pedro shore I saw a dark line form on the water and travel toward us. It was the steady breeze I had been expecting so long. I called to the Chinese and pointed it out. They hailed it with exclamations. Then I pointed to the sail and to the water in the Reindeer, and indicated by signs that when the wind reached the sail, what of the water aboard we would capsize. But they jeered defiantly, for they knew it was in my power to luff the helm and let go the main-sheet, so as to spill the wind and escape damage.

But my mind was made up. I hauled in the main-sheet a foot or two, took a turn with it, and bracing my feet, put my back against the tiller. This left me one hand for the sheet and one for the revolver. The dark line drew nearer, and I could see them looking from me to it and back again with an apprehension they could not successfully conceal. My brain and will and endurance were pitted against theirs, and the problem was which could stand the strain of imminent death the longer and not give in.

Then the wind struck us. The main-sheet tautened with a brisk rattling of the blocks, the boom uplifted, the sail bellied out, and the Reindeer heeled over-over, and over, till the lee-rail went under, the cabin windows went under, and the bay began to pour in over the cockpit rail. So violently had she heeled over, that the men in the cabin had been thrown on top of one another into the lee bunk, where they squirmed and twisted and were washed about, those underneath being perilously near to drowning.

The wind freshened a bit, and the Reindeer went over farther than ever. For the moment I thought she was gone, and I knew that another puff like that and she surely would go. While I pressed her under and debated whether I should give up or not, the Chinese cried for mercy. I think it was the sweetest sound I have ever heard. And then, and not until then, did I luff up and ease out the main-sheet. The Reindeer righted very slowly, and when she was on an even keel was so much awash that I doubted if she could be saved.

But the Chinese scrambled madly into the cockpit and fell to bailing with buckets, pots, pans, and everything they could lay hands on. It was a beautiful sight to see that water flying over the side! And when the Reindeer was high and proud on the water once more, we dashed away with the breeze on our quarter, and at the last possible moment crossed the mud flats and entered the slough.

The spirit of the Chinese was broken, and so docile did they become that ere we made San Rafael they were out with the tow-rope, Yellow Handkerchief at the head of the line. As for George, it was his last trip with the fish patrol. He did not care for that sort of thing, he explained, and he thought a clerkship ashore was good enough for him. And we thought so too.

The White Man’s Way

“TO cook by your fire and to sleep under your roof for the night,” I had announced on entering old Ebbits’s cabin; and he had looked at me blear-eyed and vacuous, while Zilla had favored me with a sour face and a contemptuous grunt. Zilla was his wife, and no more bitter-tongued, implacable old squaw dwelt on the Yukon. Nor would I have stopped there had my dogs been less tired or had the rest of the village been inhabited. But this cabin alone had I found occupied, and in this cabin, perforce, I took my shelter.

Old Ebbits now and again pulled his tangled wits together, and hints and sparkles of intelligence came and went in his eyes. Several times during the preparation of my supper he even essayed hospitable inquiries about my health, the condition and number of my dogs, and the distance I had travelled that day. And each time Zilla had looked sourer than ever and grunted more contemptuously.

Yet I confess that there was no particular call for cheerfulness on their part. There they crouched by the fire, the pair of them, at the end of their days, old and withered and helpless, racked by rheumatism, bitten by hunger, and tantalized by the frying-odors of my abundance of meat. They rocked back and forth in a slow and hopeless way, and regularly, once every five minutes, Ebbits emitted a low groan. It was not so much a groan of pain, as of pain-weariness. He was oppressed by the weight and the torment of this thing called life, and still more was he oppressed by the fear of death. His was that eternal tragedy of the aged, with whom the joy of life has departed and the instinct for death has not come.

When my moose-meat spluttered rowdily in the frying-pan, I noticed old Ebbits’s nostrils twitch and distend as he caught the food-scent. He ceased rocking for a space and forgot to groan, while a look of intelligence seemed to come into his face.

Zilla, on the other hand, rocked more rapidly, and for the first time, in sharp little yelps, voiced her pain. It came to me that their behavior was like that of hungry dogs, and in the fitness of things I should not have been astonished had Zilla suddenly developed a tail and thumped it on the floor in right doggish fashion. Ebbits drooled a little and stopped his rocking very frequently to lean forward and thrust his tremulous nose nearer to the source of gustatory excitement.

When I passed them each a plate of the fried meat, they ate greedily, making loud mouth-noises — champings of worn teeth and sucking intakes of the breath, accompanied by a continuous spluttering and mumbling. After that, when I gave them each a mug of scalding tea, the noises ceased. Easement and content came into their faces. Zilla relaxed her sour mouth long enough to sigh her satisfaction. Neither rocked any more, and they seemed to have fallen into placid meditation. Then a dampness came into Ebbits's eyes, and I knew that the sorrow of self-pity was his. The search required to find their pipes told plainly that they had been without tobacco a long time, and the old man's eagerness for the narcotic rendered him helpless, so that I was compelled to light his pipe for him.

"Why are you all alone in the village?" I asked. "Is everybody dead? Has there been a great sickness? Are you alone left of the living?"

Old Ebbits shook his head, saying: "Nay, there has been no great sickness. The village has gone away to hunt meat. We be too old, our legs are not strong, nor can our backs carry the burdens of camp and trail. Wherefore we remain here and wonder when the young men will return with meat."

"What if the young men do return with meat?" Zilla demanded harshly.

"They may return with much meat," he quavered hopefully.

"Even so, with much meat," she continued, more harshly than before. "But of what worth to you and me? A few bones to gnaw in our toothless old age. But the back-fat, the kidneys, and the tongues — these shall go into other mouths than thine and mine, old man."

Ebbits nodded his head and wept silently.

"There be no one to hunt meat for us," she cried, turning fiercely upon me.

There was accusation in her manner, and I shrugged my shoulders in token that I was not guilty of the unknown crime imputed to me.

"Know, O White Man, that it is because of thy kind, because of all white men, that my man and I have no meat in our old age and sit without tobacco in the cold."

"Nay," Ebbits said gravely, with a stricter sense of justice. "Wrong has been done us, it be true; but the white men did not mean the wrong."

“Where be Moklan?” she demanded. “Where be thy strong son, Moklan, and the fish he was ever willing to bring that you might eat?”

The old man shook his head.

“And where be Bidarshik, thy strong son? Ever was he a mighty hunter, and ever did he bring thee the good back-fat and the sweet dried tongues of the moose and the caribou. I see no back-fat and no sweet dried tongues. Your stomach is full with emptiness through the days, and it is for a man of a very miserable and lying people to give you to eat.”

“Nay,” old Ebbits interposed in kindliness, “the white man’s is not a lying people. The white man speaks true. Always does the white man speak true.” He paused, casting about him for words wherewith to temper the severity of what he was about to say. “But the white man speaks true in different ways. To-day he speaks true one way, to-morrow he speaks true another way, and there is no understanding him nor his way.”

“To-day speak true one way, to-morrow speak true another way, which is to lie,” was Zilla’s dictum.

“There is no understanding the white man,” Ebbits went on doggedly.

The meat, and the tea, and the tobacco seemed to have brought him back to life, and he gripped tighter hold of the idea behind his age-bleared eyes. He straightened up somewhat. His voice lost its querulous and whimpering note, and became strong and positive. He turned upon me with dignity, and addressed me as equal addresses equal.

“The white man’s eyes are not shut,” he began. “The white man sees all things, and thinks greatly, and is very wise. But the white man of one day is not the white man of next day, and there is no understanding him. He does not do things always in the same way. And what way his next way is to be, one cannot know. Always does the Indian do the one thing in the one way. Always does the moose come down from the high mountains when the winter is here. Always does the salmon come in the spring when the ice has gone out of the river. Always does everything do all things in the same way, and the Indian knows and understands. But the white man does not do all things in the same way, and the Indian does not know nor understand.

“Tobacco be very good. It be food to the hungry man. It makes the strong man stronger, and the angry man to forget that he is angry. Also is tobacco of value. It is of very great value. The Indian gives one large salmon for one leaf of tobacco, and he chews the tobacco for a long time. It is the juice of the tobacco that is good. When it runs down his throat it makes him feel good inside. But the white man! When his mouth is full with the juice, what does he do? That juice, that juice of great value, he spits it out in the snow and it is lost. Does the white man like tobacco? I do not know. But if he likes tobacco, why does he spit out its value and lose it in the snow? It is a great foolishness and without understanding."

He ceased, puffed at the pipe, found that it was out, and passed it over to Zilla, who took the sneer at the white man off her lips in order to pucker them about the pipe-stem. Ebbits seemed sinking back into his senility with the tale untold, and I demanded:

"What of thy sons, Moklan and Bidarshik? And why is it that you and your old woman are without meat at the end of your years?"

He roused himself as from sleep, and straightened up with an effort.

"It is not good to steal," he said. "When the dog takes your meat you beat the dog with a club. Such is the law. It is the law the man gave to the dog, and the dog must live to the law, else will it suffer the pain of the club. When man takes your meat, or your canoe, or your wife, you kill that man. That is the law, and it is a good law. It is not good to steal, wherefore it is the law that the man who steals must die. Whoso breaks the law must suffer hurt. It is a great hurt to die."

"But if you kill the man, why do you not kill the dog?" I asked.

Old Ebbits looked at me in childlike wonder, while Zilla sneered openly at the absurdity of my question.

"It is the way of the white man," Ebbits mumbled with an air of resignation.

"It is the foolishness of the white man," snapped Zilla.

"Then let old Ebbits teach the white man wisdom," I said softly.

"The dog is not killed, because it must pull the sled of the man. No man pulls another man's sled, wherefore the man is killed."

"Oh," I murmured.

"That is the law," old Ebbits went on. "Now listen, O White Man, and I will tell you of a great foolishness. There is an Indian. His name is Mobits. From white man he steals two pounds of flour. What does the white man do? Does he beat Mobits? No. Does he kill Mobits? No. What does he do to Mobits? I will tell you, O White Man. He has a house. He puts Mobits in that house. The roof is good. The walls are thick. He makes a fire that Mobits may be warm. He gives Mobits plenty grub to eat. It is good grub.

Never in his all days does Mobits eat so good grub. There is bacon, and bread, and beans without end. Mobits have very good time.

"There is a big lock on door so that Mobits does not run away. This also is a great foolishness. Mobits will not run away. All the time is there plenty grub in that place, and warm blankets, and a big fire. Very foolish to run away. Mobits is not foolish. Three months Mobits stop in that place. He steal two pounds of flour. For that, white man take plenty good care of him. Mobits eat many pounds of flour, many pounds of sugar, of bacon, of beans without end. Also, Mobits drink much tea. After three months white man open door and tell Mobits he must go. Mobits does not want to go. He is like dog that is fed long time in one place. He want to stay in that place, and the white man must drive Mobits away. So Mobits come back to this village, and he is very fat. That is the white man's way, and there is no understanding it. It is a foolishness, a great foolishness."

"But thy sons?" I insisted. "Thy very strong sons and thine old-age hunger?"

"There was Moklan," Ebbits began.

"A strong man," interrupted the mother. "He could dip paddle all of a day and night and never stop for the need of rest. He was wise in the way of the salmon and in the way of the water. He was very wise."

"There was Moklan," Ebbits repeated, ignoring the interruption. "In the spring, he went down the Yukon with the young men to trade at Cambell Fort. There is a post there, filled with the goods of the white man, and a trader whose name is Jones. Likewise is there a white man's medicine man, what you call missionary. Also is there bad water at Cambell Fort, where the Yukon goes slim like a maiden, and the water is fast, and the currents rush this way and that and come together, and there are whirls and sucks, and always are the currents changing and the face of the water changing, so at any two times it is never the same. Moklan is my son, wherefore he is brave man — "

"Was not my father brave man?" Zilla demanded.

"Thy father was brave man," Ebbits acknowledged, with the air of one who will keep peace in the house at any cost. "Moklan is thy son and mine, wherefore he is brave. Mayhap, because of thy very brave father, Moklan is too brave. It is like when too much water is put in the pot it spills over. So too much bravery is put into Moklan, and the bravery spills over.

"The young men are much afraid of the bad water at Cambell Fort. But Moklan is not afraid. He laughs strong, Ho! ho! and he goes forth into the bad water. But where the currents come together he canoe is turned over. A whirl takes Moklan by the legs, and he goes around and around, and down and down, and is seen no more."

"Ai! ai!" wailed Zilla. "Crafty and wise was he, and my first-born!"

"I am the father of Moklan," Ebbits said, having patiently given the woman space for her noise. "I get into canoe and journey down to Cambell Fort to collect the debt!"

"Debt!" interrupted. "What debt?"

"The debt of Jones, who is chief trader," came the answer. "Such is the law of travel in a strange country."

I shook my head in token of my ignorance, and Ebbits looked compassion at me, while Zilla snorted her customary contempt.

"Look you, O White Man," he said. "In thy camp is a dog that bites. When the dog bites a man, you give that man a present because you are sorry and because it is thy dog. You make payment. Is it not so? Also, if you have in thy country bad hunting, or bad water, you must make payment. It is just. It is the law. Did not my father's brother go over into the Tanana Country and get killed by a bear? And did not the Tanana tribe pay my father many blankets and fine furs? It was just. It was bad hunting, and the Tanana people made payment for the bad hunting.

"So I, Ebbits, journeyed down to Cambell Fort to collect the debt. Jones, who is chief trader, looked at me, and he laughed. He made great laughter, and would not give payment. I went to the medicine-man, what you call missionary, and had large talk about the bad water and the payment that should be mine. And the missionary made talk about other things. He talk about where Moklan has gone, now he is dead. There be large fires in that place, and if missionary make true talk, I know that Moklan will be cold no more. Also the missionary talk about where I shall go when I am dead. And he say bad things. He say that I am blind. Which is a lie. He say that I am in great darkness. Which is a lie. And I say that the day come and the night come for everybody just the same, and that in my village it is no more dark than at Cambell Fort. Also, I say that darkness and light and where we go when we die be different things from the matter of payment of just debt for bad water. Then the missionary make large anger, and call me bad names of darkness, and tell me to go away. And so I come back from Cambell Fort, and no payment has been made, and Moklan is dead, and in my old age I am without fish and meat.”

“Because of the white man,” said Zilla.

“Because of the white man,” Ebbits concurred. “And other things because of the white man. There was Bidarshik. One way did the white man deal with him; and yet another way for the same thing did the white man deal with Yamikan. And first must I tell you of Yamikan, who was a young man of this village and who chanced to kill a white man. It is not good to kill a man of another people. Always is there great trouble. It was not the fault of Yamikan that he killed the white man. Yamikan spoke always soft words and ran away from wrath as a dog from a stick. But this white man drank much whiskey, and in the night-time came to Yamikan’s house and made much fight. Yamikan cannot run away, and the white man tries to kill him. Yamikan does not like to die, so he kills the white man.

“Then is all the village in great trouble. We are much afraid that we must make large payment to the white man’s people, and we hide our blankets, and our furs, and all our wealth, so that it will seem that we are poor people and can make only small payment. After long time white men come. They are soldier white men, and they take Yamikan away with them. His mother make great noise and throw ashes in her hair, for she knows Yamikan is dead. And all the village knows that Yamikan is dead, and is glad that no payment is asked.

“That is in the spring when the ice has gone out of the river. One year go by, two years go by. It is spring-time again, and the ice has gone out of the river. And then Yamikan, who is dead, comes back to us, and he is not dead, but very fat, and we know that he has slept warm and had plenty grub to eat. He has much fine clothes and is all the same white man, and he has gathered large wisdom so that he is very quick head man in the village.

“And he has strange things to tell of the way of the white man, for he has seen much of the white man and done a great travel into the white man’s country. First place, soldier white men take him down the river long way. All the way do they take him down the river to the end, where it runs into a lake which is larger than all the land and large as the sky. I do not know the Yukon is so big river, but Yamikan has seen with his own eyes. I do not think there is a lake larger than all the land and large as the sky, but Yamikan has seen. Also, he has told me that the waters of this lake be salt, which is a strange thing and beyond understanding.

"But the White Man knows all these marvels for himself, so I shall not weary him with the telling of them. Only will I tell him what happened to Yamikan. The white man give Yamikan much fine grub. All the time does Yamikan eat, and all the time is there plenty more grub. The white man lives under the sun, so said Yamikan, where there be much warmth, and animals have only hair and no fur, and the green things grow large and strong and become flour, and beans, and potatoes. And under the sun there is never famine. Always is there plenty grub. I do not know. Yamikan has said.

"And here is a strange thing that befell Yamikan. Never did the white man hurt him. Only did they give him warm bed at night and plenty fine grub. They take him across the salt lake which is big as the sky. He is on white man's fire-boat, what you call steamboat, only he is on boat maybe twenty times bigger than steamboat on Yukon. Also, it is made of iron, this boat, and yet does it not sink. This I do not understand, but Yamikan has said, 'I have journeyed far on the iron boat; behold! I am still alive.' It is a white man's soldier-boat with many soldier men upon it.

"After many sleeps of travel, a long, long time, Yamikan comes to a land where there is no snow. I cannot believe this. It is not in the nature of things that when winter comes there shall be no snow. But Yamikan has seen. Also have I asked the white men, and they have said yes, there is no snow in that country. But I cannot believe, and now I ask you if snow never come in that country. Also, I would hear the name of that country. I have heard the name before, but I would hear it again, if it be the same - thus will I know if I have heard lies or true talk."

Old Ebbits regarded me with a wistful face. He would have the truth at any cost, though it was his desire to retain his faith in the marvel he had never seen.

"Yes," I answered, "it is true talk that you have heard. There is no snow in that country, and its name is California."

"Cal-ee-forn-ee-yeh," he mumbled twice and thrice, listening intently to the sound of the syllables as they fell from his lips. He nodded his head in confirmation. "Yes, it is the same country of which Yamikan made talk."

I recognized the adventure of Yamikan as one likely to occur in the early days when Alaska first passed into the possession of the United States. Such a murder case, occurring before the instalment of territorial law and officials, might well have been taken down to the United States for trial before a Federal court.

"When Yamikan is in this country where there is no snow," old Ebbits continued, "he is taken to large house where many men make much talk. Long time men talk. Also many questions do they ask Yamikan. By and by they tell Yamikan he have no more trouble. Yamikan does not understand, for never has he had any trouble. All the time have they given him warm place to sleep and plenty grub.

"But after that they give him much better grub, and they give him money, and they take him many places in white man's country, and he see many strange things which are beyond the understanding of Ebbits, who is an old man and has not journeyed far. After two years, Yamikan comes back to this village, and he is head man, and very wise until he dies.

"But before he dies, many times does he sit by my fire and make talk of the strange things he has seen. And Bidarshik, who is my son, sits by the fire and listens; and his eyes are very wide and large because of the things he hears. One night, after Yamikan has gone home, Bidarshik stands up, so, very tall, and he strikes his chest with his fist, and says, 'When I am a man, I shall journey in far places, even to the land where there is no snow, and see things for myself.'"

"Always did Bidarshik journey in far places," Zilla interrupted proudly.

"It be true," Ebbits assented gravely. "And always did he return to sit by the fire and hunger for yet other and unknown far places."

"And always did he remember the salt lake as big as the sky and the country under the sun where there is no snow," quoth Zilla.

"And always did he say, 'When I have the full strength of a man, I will go and see for myself if the talk of Yamikan be true talk,'" said Ebbits.

"But there was no way to go to the white man's country," said Zilla.

"Did he not go down to the salt lake that is big as the sky?" Ebbits demanded.

"And there was no way for him across the salt lake," said Zilla.

"Save in the white man's fire-boat which is of iron and is bigger than twenty steamboats on the Yukon," said Ebbits. He scowled at Zilla, whose withered lips were again writhing into speech, and compelled her to silence. "But the white man would not let him cross the salt lake in the fire-boat, and he returned to sit by the fire and hunger for the country under the sun where there is no snow.'"

“Yet on the salt lake had he seen the fire-boat of iron that did not sink,” cried out Zilla the irrepressible.

“Ay,” said Ebbits, “and he saw that Yamikan had made true talk of the things he had seen. But there was no way for Bidarshik to journey to the white man’s land under the sun, and he grew sick and weary like an old man and moved not away from the fire. No longer did he go forth to kill meat - “

“And no longer did he eat the meat placed before him,” Zilla broke in. “He would shake his head and say, ‘Only do I care to eat the grub of the white man and grow fat after the manner of Yamikan.’“

“And he did not eat the meat,” Ebbits went on. “And the sickness of Bidarshik grew into a great sickness until I thought he would die. It was not a sickness of the body, but of the head. It was a sickness of desire. I, Ebbits, who am his father, make a great think. I have no more sons and I do not want Bidarshik to die. It is a head-sickness, and there is but one way to make it well. Bidarshik must journey across the lake as large as the sky to the land where there is no snow, else will he die. I make a very great think, and then I see the way for Bidarshik to go.

“So, one night when he sits by the fire, very sick, his head hanging down, I say, ‘My son, I have learned the way for you to go to the white man’s land.’ He looks at me, and his face is glad. ‘Go,’ I say, ‘even as Yamikan went.’ But Bidarshik is sick and does not understand. ‘Go forth,’ I say, ‘and find a white man, and, even as Yamikan, do you kill that white man. Then will the soldier white men come and get you, and even as they took Yamikan will they take you across the salt lake to the white man’s land. And then, even as Yamikan, will you return very fat, your eyes full of the things you have seen, your head filled with wisdom.’

“And Bidarshik stands up very quick, and his hand is reaching out for his gun. ‘Where do you go?’ I ask. ‘To kill the white man,’ he says. And I see that my words have been good in the ears of Bidarshik and that he will grow well again. Also do I know that my words have been wise.

“There is a white man come to this village. He does not seek after gold in the ground, nor after furs in the forest. All the time does he seek after bugs and flies. He does not eat the bugs and flies, then why does he seek after them? I do not know. Only do I know that he is a funny white man. Also does he seek after the eggs of birds. He does not eat the eggs. All that is inside he takes out, and only does he keep the shell. Eggshell is not good to eat. Nor does he eat the eggshells, but puts them away in soft boxes where they will not break. He catch many small birds. But he does not eat the birds. He takes only the skins and puts them away in boxes. Also does he like bones. Bones are not good to eat. And this strange white man likes best the bones of long time ago which he digs out of the ground.

"But he is not a fierce white man, and I know he will die very easy; so I say to Bidarshik, 'My son, there is the white man for you to kill.' And Bidarshik says that my words be wise. So he goes to a place he knows where are many bones in the ground. He digs up very many of these bones and brings them to the strange white man's camp. The white man is made very glad. His face shines like the sun, and he smiles with much gladness as he looks at the bones. He bends his head over, so, to look well at the bones, and then Bidarshik strikes him hard on the head, with axe, once, so, and the strange white man kicks and is dead.

"'Now,' I say to Bidarshik, 'will the white soldier men come and take you away to the land under the sun, where you will eat much and grow fat.' Bidarshik is happy. Already has his sickness gone from him, and he sits by the fire and waits for the coming of the white soldier men.

"How was I to know the way of the white man is never twice the same?" the old man demanded, whirling upon me fiercely. "How was I to know that what the white man does yesterday he will not do to- day, and that what he does to-day he will not do to-morrow?" Ebbits shook his head sadly. "There is no understanding the white man. Yesterday he takes Yamikan to the land under the sun and makes him fat with much grub. To-day he takes Bidarshik and - what does he do with Bidarshik? Let me tell you what he does with Bidarshik.

"I, Ebbits, his father, will tell you. He takes Bidarshik to Cambell Fort, and he ties a rope around his neck, so, and, when his feet are no more on the ground, he dies."

"Ai! ai!" wailed Zilla. "And never does he cross the lake large as the sky, nor see the land under the sun where there is no snow."

"Wherefore," old Ebbits said with grave dignity, "there be no one to hunt meat for me in my old age, and I sit hungry by my fire and tell my story to the White Man who has given me grub, and strong tea, and tobacco for my pipe."

"Because of the lying and very miserable white people," Zilla proclaimed shrilly.

“Nay,” answered the old man with gentle positiveness. “Because of the way of the white man, which is without understanding and never twice the same.”

The White Silence

Carmen won’t last more than a couple of days. “Mason spat out a chunk of ice and surveyed the poor animal ruefully, then put her foot in his mouth and proceeded to bite out the ice which clustered cruelly between the toes.

“I never saw a dog with a highfalutin’ name that ever was worth a rap,” he said, as he concluded his task and shoved her aside. “They just fade away and die under the responsibility. Did ye ever see one go wrong with a sensible name like Cassiar, Siwash, or Husky? No, sir! Take a look at Shookum here, he’s — ; “

Snap! The lean brute flashed up, the white teeth just missing Mason’s throat.

“Ye will, will ye?” A shrewd clout behind the ear with the butt of the dogwhip stretched the animal in the snow, quivering softly, a yellow slaver dripping from its fangs.

“As I was saying, just look at Shookum, here — he ‘s got the spirit. Bet ye he eats Carmen before the week’s out.”

“I’ll bank another proposition against that,” replied Malemute Kid, reversing the frozen bread placed before the fire to thaw. “We’ll eat Shookum before the trip is over. What d’ ye say, Ruth?”

The Indian woman settled the coffee with a piece of ice, glanced from Malemute Kid to her husband, then at the dogs, but vouchsafed no reply. It was such a palpable truism that none was necessary. Two hundred miles of unbroken trail in prospect, with a scant six days’ grub for themselves and none for the dogs, could admit no other alternative. The two men and the woman grouped about the fire and began their meagre meal. The dogs lay in their harnesses, for it was a midday halt, and watched each mouthful enviously.

“No more lunches after to-day,” said Malemute Kid. “And we’ve got to keep a close eye on the dogs, — they’re getting vicious. They’d just as soon pull a fellow down as not, if they get a chance.”

“And I was president of an Epworth once, and taught in the Sunday school.” Having irrelevantly delivered himself of this, Mason fell into a dreamy contemplation of his steaming moccasins, but was aroused by Ruth filling his cup. “Thank God, we’ve got slathers of tea! I’ve seen it growing, down in Tennessee. What wouldn’t I give for a hot corn pone just now!

Never mind, Ruth; you won't starve much longer, nor wear moccasins either."

The woman threw off her gloom at this, and in her eyes welled up a great love for her white lord, — the first white man she had ever seen, — the first man whom she had known to treat a woman as something better than a mere animal or beast of burden.

"Yes, Ruth," continued her husband, having recourse to the macaronic jargon in which it was alone possible for them to understand each other; "wait till we clean up and pull for the Outside. We'll take the White Man's canoe and go to the Salt Water. Yes, bad water, rough water, — great mountains dance up and down all the time. And so big, so far, so far away, — you travel ten sleep, twenty sleep, forty sleep" (he graphically enumerated the days on his fingers), "all the time water, bad water. Then you come to great village, plenty people, just the same mosquitoes next summer. Wigwams oh, so high, — ten, twenty pines. Hi-yu skookum!"

He paused impotently, cast an appealing glance at Malemute Kid, then laboriously placed the twenty pines, end on end, by sign language. Malemute Kid smiled with cheery cynicism; but Ruth's eyes were wide with wonder, and with pleasure; for she half believed he was joking, and such condescension pleased her poor woman's heart.

"And then you step into a — a box, and pouf! up you go." He tossed his empty cup in the air by way of illustration, and as he deftly caught it, cried: "And biff! down you come. Oh, great medicine-men! You go Fort Yukon, I go Arctic City, — twenty-five sleep, — big string, all the time, — I catch him string, — I say, `Hello, Ruth! How are ye?' — and you say, `Is that my good husband?' — and I say `Yes,' — and you say, `No can bake good bread, no more soda,' — then say, `Look in cache, under flour; good-by.' You look and catch plenty soda. All the time you Fort Yukon, me Arctic City. Hi-yu medicine-man!"

Ruth smiled so ingenuously at the fairy story, that both men burst into laughter. A row among the dogs cut short the wonders of the Outside, and by the time the snarling combatants were separated, she had lashed the sleds and all was ready for the trail.

"Mush! Baldy! Hi! Mush on!" Mason worked his whip smartly, and as the dogs whined low in the traces, broke out the sled with the gee-pole. Ruth followed with the second team, leaving Malemute Kid, who had helped her start, to bring up the rear. Strongman, brute that he was, capable of felling an ox at a blow, he could not bear to beat the poor animals, but humored them as a dog-driver rarely does, — nay, almost wept with them in their misery.

"Come, mush on there, you poor sore-footed brutes!" he murmured, after several ineffectual attempts to start the load. But his patience was at last rewarded, and though whimpering with pain, they hastened to join their fellows.

No more conversation; the toil of the trail will not permit such extravagance. And of all deadening labors, that of the Northland trail is the worst. Happy is the man who can weather a day's travel at the price of silence, and that on a beaten track.

And of all heart-breaking labors, that of breaking trail is the worst. At every step the great webbed shoe sinks till the snow is level with the knee. Then up, straight up, the deviation of a fraction of an inch being a certain precursor of disaster, the snowshoe must be lifted till the surface is cleared; then forward, down, and the other foot is raised perpendicularly for the matter of half a yard. He who tries this for the first time, if haply he avoids bringing his shoes in dangerous propinquity and measures not his length on the treacherous footing, will give up exhausted at the end of a hundred yards; he who can keep out of the way of the dogs for a whole day may well crawl into his sleeping-bag with a clear conscience and a pride which passeth all understanding; and he who travels twenty sleeps on the Long Trail is a man whom the gods may envy.

The afternoon wore on, and with the awe, born of the White Silence, the voiceless travelers bent to their work. Nature has many tricks wherewith she convinces man of his finity, — the ceaseless flow of the tides, the fury of the storm, the shock of the earthquake, the long roll of heaven's artillery, — but the most tremendous, the most stupefying of all, is the passive phase of the White Silence. All movement ceases, the sky clears, the heavens are as brass; the slightest whisper seems sacrilege, and man becomes timid, affrighted at the sound of his own voice. Sole speck of life journeying across the ghostly wastes of a dead world, he trembles at his audacity, realizes that his is a maggot's life, nothing more. Strange thoughts arise unsummoned, and the mystery of all things strives for utterance. And the fear of death, of God, of the universe, comes over him, — the hope of the Resurrection and the Life, the yearning for immortality, the vain striving of the imprisoned essence, — it is then, if ever, man walks alone with God.

So wore the day away. The river took a great bend, and Mason headed his team for the cut-off across the narrow neck of land. But the dogs balked at the high bank. Again and again, though Ruth and Malemute Kid were shoving on the sled, they slipped back. Then came the concerted effort. The miserable creatures, weak from hunger, exerted their last strength. Up — up — the sled poised on the top of the bank; but the leader swung the string of dogs behind him to the right, fouling Mason's snowshoes. The result was grievous. Mason was whipped off his feet; one of the dogs fell in the traces; and the sled toppled back, dragging everything to the bottom again.

Slash! the whip fell among the dogs savagely, especially upon the one which had fallen.

"Don't, Mason," entreated Malemute Kid; "the poor devil 's on its last legs. Wait and we 'll put my team on."

Mason deliberately withheld the whip till the last word had fallen, then out flashed the long lash, completely curling about the offending creature's body. Carmen — for it was Carmen — cowered in the snow, cried piteously, then rolled over on her side.

It was a tragic moment, a pitiful incident of the trail, — a dying dog, two comrades in anger. Ruth glanced solicitously from man to man. But Malemute Kid restrained himself, though there was a world of reproach in his eyes, and bending over the dog, cut the traces. No word was spoken. The teams were double-spanned and the difficulty overcome; the sleds were under way again, the dying dog dragging herself along in the rear. As long as an animal can travel, it is not shot, and this last chance is accorded it, — the crawling into camp, if it can, in the hope of a moose being killed.

Already penitent for his angry action, but too stubborn to make amends, Mason toiled on at the head of the cavalcade, little dreaming that danger hovered in the air. The timber clustered thick in the sheltered bottom, and through this they threaded their way. Fifty feet or more from the trail towered a lofty pine. For generations it had stood there, and for generations destiny had had this one end in view, — perhaps the same had been decreed of Mason.

He stooped to fasten the loosened thong of his moccasin. The sleds came to a halt and the dogs lay down in the snow without a whimper. The stillness was weird; not a breath rustled the frost-encrusted forest; the cold and silence of outer space had chilled the heart and smote the trembling lips of nature. A sigh pulsed through the air, — they did not seem to actually hear it, but rather felt it, like the premonition of movement in a motionless void. Then the great tree, burdened with its weight of years and snow, played its last part in the tragedy of life. He heard the warning crash and attempted to spring up, but almost erect, caught the blow squarely on the shoulder.

The sudden danger, the quick death, — how often had Malemute Kid faced it! The pine needles were still quivering as he gave his commands and sprang into action. Nor did the Indian girl faint or raise her voice in idle wailing, as might many of her white sisters. At his order, she threw her weight on the end of a quickly extemporized handspike, easing the pressure and listening to her husband's groans, while Malemute Kid attacked the tree with his axe. The steel rang merrily as it bit into the frozen trunk, each stroke being accompanied by a forced, audible respiration, the "Huh!" "Huh!" of the woodsman. At last the Kid laid the pitiable thing that was once a man in the snow. But worse than his comrade's pain was the dumb anguish in the woman's face, the blended look of hopeful, hopeless query. Little was said; those of the Northland are early taught the futility of words and the inestimable value of deeds. With the temperature at sixty-five below zero, a man cannot lie many minutes in the snow and live. So the sled-lashings were cut, and the sufferer, rolled in furs, laid on a couch of boughs. Before him roared a fire, built of the very wood which wrought the mishap. Behind and partially over him was stretched the primitive fly, — a piece of canvas, which caught the radiating heat and threw it back and down upon him, — a trick which men may know who study physics at the fount.

And men who have shared their bed with death know when the call is sounded. Mason was terribly crushed. The most cursory examination revealed it. His right arm, leg, and back, were broken; his limbs were paralyzed from the hips; and the likelihood of internal injuries was large. An occasional moan was his only sign of life.

No hope; nothing to be done. The pitiless night crept slowly by, — Ruth's portion, the despairing stoicism of her race, and Malemute Kid adding new lines to his face of bronze. In fact, Mason suffered least of all, for he spent his time in Eastern Tennessee, in the Great Smoky Mountains, living over the scenes of his childhood. And most pathetic was the melody of his long-forgotten Southern vernacular, as he raved of swimming-holes and coon-hunts and watermelon raids. It was as Greek to Ruth, but the Kid understood and felt, — felt as only one can feel who has been shut out for years from all that civilization means.

Morning brought consciousness to the stricken man, and Malemute Kid bent closer to catch his whispers.

“You remember when we foregathered on the Tanana, four years come next ice-run? I didn’t care so much for her then. It was more like she was pretty, and there was a smack of excitement about it, think. But d’ ye know, I’ve come to think a heap of her. She’s been a good wife to me, always at my shoulder in the pinch. And when it comes to trading, you know there isn’t her equal. D’ye recollect the time she shot the Moosehorn Rapids to pull you and me off that rock, the bullets whipping the water like hailstones? — and the time of the famine at Nuklukyeto? — or when she raced the ice-run to bring the news? Yes, she’s been a good wife to me, better’n that other one. Didn’t know I ‘d been there? Never told you, eh? Well, I tried it once, down in the States. That’s why I’m here. Been raised together, too. I came away to give her a chance for divorce. She got it.

“But that’s got nothing to do with Ruth. I had thought of cleaning up and pulling for the Outside next year, — her and I, — but it’s too late. Don’t send her back to her people, Kid. It’s beastly hard for a woman to go back. Think of it! — nearly four years on our bacon and beans and flour and dried fruit, and then to go back to her fish and cariboo. It’s not good for her to have tried our ways, to come to know they’re better’n her people’s, and then return to them. Take care of her, Kid, — why don’t you, — but no, you always fought shy of them, — and you never told me why you came to this country. Be kind to her, and send her back to the States as soon as you can. But fix it so as she can come back, — liable to get homesick, you know.

“And the youngster — it’s drawn us closer, Kid. I only hope it is a boy. Think of it! — flesh of my flesh, Kid. He mustn’t stop in this country. And if it’s a girl, why she can’t. Sell my furs; they’ll fetch at least five thousand, and I’ve got as much more with the company. And handle my interests with yours. I think that bench claim will show up. See that he gets a good schooling; and Kid, above all, don’t let him come back. This country was not made for white men. “I’m a gone man, Kid. Three or four sleeps at the best. You’ve got to go on. You must go on! Remember, it’s my wife, it’s my boy, — O God! I hope it’s a boy! You can’t stay by me, — and charge you, a dying man, to pull on.”

“Give me three days,” pleaded Malemute Kid. “You may change for the better; something may turn up.”

“No.”

“Just three days.”

“You must pull on.”

“Two days.”

“It’s my wife and my boy, Kid. You would not ask it.”

“One day.”

“No, no! I charge” —

“Only one day. We can shave it through on the grub, and might knock over a moose.”

“No, — all right; one day, but not a minute more. And Kid, don’t — don’t leave me to face it alone. Just a shot, one pull on the trigger. You understand. Think of it! Think of it! Flesh of my flesh, and I’ll never live to see him!

“Send Ruth here. I want to say good-by and tell her that she must think of the boy and not wait till I’m dead. She might refuse to go with you if I didn’t. Good-by, old man; good-by.

“Kid! I say — a — sink a hole above the pup, next to the slide. I panned out forty cents on my shovel there.

“And Kid!” he stooped lower to catch the last faint words, the dying man’s surrender of his pride. “I’m sorry — for — you know — Carmen.”

Leaving the girl crying softly over her man, Malemute Kid slipped into his parka and snowshoes, tucked his rifle under his arm, and crept away into the forest. He was no tyro in the stern sorrows of the Northland, but never had he faced so stiff a problem as this. In the abstract, it was a plain, mathematical proposition, — three possible lives as against one doomed one. But now he hesitated. For five years, shoulder to shoulder, on the rivers and trails, in the camps and mines, facing death by field and flood and famine, had they knitted the bonds of their comradeship. So close was the tie, that he had often been conscious of a vague jealousy of Ruth, from the first time she had come between. And now it must be severed by his own hand.

Though he prayed for a moose, just one moose, all game seemed to have deserted the land, and nightfall found the exhausted man crawling into camp, light-handed, heavy-hearted. An uproar from the dogs and shrill cries from Ruth hastened him.

Bursting into the camp, he saw the girl in the midst of the snarling pack, laying about her with an axe. The dogs had broken the iron rule of their masters and were rushing the grub. He joined the issue with his rifle reversed, and the hoary game of natural selection was played out with all the ruthlessness of its primeval environment. Rifle and axe went up and down, hit or missed with monotonous regularity; lithe bodies flashed, with wild eyes and dripping fangs; and man and beast fought for supremacy to the bitterest conclusion. Then the beaten brutes crept to the edge of the firelight, licking their wounds, voicing their misery to the stars.

The whole stock of dried salmon had been devoured, and perhaps five pounds of flour remained to tide them over two hundred miles of wilderness. Ruth returned to her husband, while Malemute Kid cut up the warm body of one of the dogs, the skull of which had been crushed by the axe. Every portion was carefully put away, save the hide and offal, which were cast to his fellows of the moment before.

Morning brought fresh trouble. The animals were turning on each other. Carmen, who still clung to her slender thread of life, was downed by the pack. The lash fell among them unheeded. They cringed and cried under the blows, but refused to scatter till the last wretched bit had disappeared, — bones, hide, hair, everything.

Malemute Kid went about his work, listening to Mason, who was back in Tennessee, delivering tangled discourses and wild exhortations to his brethren of other days.

Taking advantage of neighboring pines, he worked rapidly, and Ruth watched him make a cache similar to those sometimes used by hunters to preserve their meat from the wolverines and dogs. One after the other, he bent the tops of two small pines toward each other and nearly to the ground, making them fast with thongs of moosehide. Then he beat the dogs into submission and harnessed them to two of the sleds, loading the same with everything but the furs which enveloped Mason. These he wrapped and lashed tightly about him, fastening either end of the robes to the bent pines. A single stroke of his hunting knife would release them and send the body high in the air.

Ruth had received her husband’s last wishes and made no struggle. Poor girl, she had learned the lesson of obedience well. From a child, she had bowed, and seen all women bow, to the lords of creation, and it did not seem in the nature of things for woman to resist. The Kid permitted her one outburst of grief, as she kissed her husband — her won people had no such custom — then led her to the foremost sled and helped her into her snowshoes. Blindly, instinctively, she took the gee pole and whip, and “mushed” the dogs out on the trail. Then he returned to Mason, who had fallen into a come, and long after she was out of sight crouched by the fire, waiting, hoping, praying for his comrade to die.

It is not pleasant to be alone with painful thoughts in the White Silence. The silence of gloom is merciful, shrouding one as with protection and breathing a thousand intangible sympathies; but the bright White Silence, clear and cold, under steely skies, is pitiless.

An hour passed — two hours — but the man would not die. At high noon the sun, without raising its rim above the southern horizon, threw a suggestion of fire athwart the heavens, then quickly drew it back. Malemute Kid roused and dragged himself to his comrade’s side. He cast one glance about him. The White Silence seemed to sneer, and a great fear came upon him. There was a sharp report; mason swung into his aerial sepulcher, and Malemute Kid lashed the dogs into a wild gallop as he fled across the snow.

Who Believes in Ghosts!

"A REMARKABLY good one — for you; but I know of one that beats — "

"No, no, Damon. I know you always have a story to cap the last one; but I meant this in all honesty, and if you doubt its truth, at least believe my sincerity in telling it."

"George! You don't mean to tell me that you really believe in ghosts? Why, the very idea is absurd, and to connect credence in such a thing with you is — is — " and Van Buster, otherwise known as Damon, paused for lack of an expletive, and finally exploded in "Preposterous!"

"But I do believe in it, and in my faith I am not alone, for on my side I can array the greatest lights of every age from the days of Chaldean necromancy down to the cold, scientific 'to day.' Pause and reflect, O Damon and Pythias, too, for I can see the skeptical twinkle in your eye. Remember that in every time, in every land, and in every people, there have been and there are many who did believe in the soul's return after death. Can you, with this great mass of evidence staring you in the face, say that it is all the creation of diseased brains and abnormal imaginations?" And as Damon and Pythias both affirmed his accusation, he concluded with a pious hope that some day they would be forced to change their minds by a proof very unpleasantly applied.

"Come, come, Pythias! What have you to say in our mutual defense? Show our credulous friend the firm foundation on which we stand. Bring all your mighty logic to bear, and sophistry, too, for it is a very bad case. Show him that this psychic force is but the creation of man's too fertile imagination; prove to him that these earth-bound spirits, astral forms and disembodied entities are but chimeras!"

"Ah, Damon," he lazily drawled, "I care not to waste my stupendous knowledge and laborious research on such petty subjects. If I were challenged into controversy on the land, tariff or finance question, I fain would reply; but this seems too much like the nursery babble on the bogie man. Earth-bound spirits forsooth! All I can say to dear George is that he is an ass, and until he can introduce me to some astral form, I dismiss the subject."

In no wise put out by the sarcasm of his friends, George said: "I feel like singing that old doggerel —

‘Just go down to Derby town,
And see the same as I.’

For I have seen many, and what I consider authentic, proofs of the existence and activity of this force. I know that all argument is useless when I have opposed to me, two such master minds; yet so far have they sank into intellectual stagnation, that they know not, and know not that they know not.

We all view the world through colored glasses; but their glasses are so very, very green, that one almost feels — ”

“And you must confess that yours are rather smoky,” interrupted Damon. “But come, George, we’ll not quarrel over such a subject. You know the position I always assume when dealing with the unknown. I neither affirm nor deny, and I can but say that plausibility, if not possibility, is with your belief. In justice to you, to myself and to the world, all I can say is that I do not know, but would like to know. And I coincide with Pythias in asking you to bring us personally in contact with these disembodied souls.”

“There’s the old Birchall mansion,” drawled Pythias; “perhaps we can gain an introduction there. They say it’s haunted.”

“The very place!” cried Damon. “Do you think the ghost that walks the gloomy corridors at midnight’s dread hour, etc., would condescend to become visible for the edification of two such miserable, unbelieving mortals as we are? Here’s a grand opportunity — it’s only ten, and we can be there by eleven. Pythias and I will arm ourselves with a couple of dozen candles, half a dozen ounces of Durham, and ‘Trilby’ to read aloud turn about, — the last to affect and prepare our imaginations. What say you, Pythias, to the lark?”

“I am always agreeable,” he replied. “I’ve got the time to spare now from my grind. I’m through the ex’es, you know. But I move to amend by striking out ‘Trilby’ and inserting chess. Also that we bring a bunch of fire-crackers to let off when the ghost makes his appearance. It might be a Chinese devil, you know. And of course you’ll accompany us, George? No? Then you had better find a companion and keep guard outside in case of accidents, and to see that we do not run away.”

“That’s easily arranged,” answered George. “I can get Fred. He will just be going out now to hunt cats.”

“Hunt cats!” from Damon and Pythias.

"Yes, hunt cats. You see he's deep in Gray's Anatomy now, and is hard run for subjects. Why, he even did away with his sister's big Maltese, and so proud was he when he had articulated it, that he had the cheek to show it to her, telling her it was the skeleton of a rabbit."

"The brute!"

"The cat?"

"No, Fred. How poor Dora must have mourned for her lost tabby."

"He ought to be thrashed."

"No, dissected, the articulated and presented to his bereaved relatives as the missing link. They would no more recognize him than did Dora her cat."

"If cats had souls I would be afraid to venture out at night if I were he. Have they got souls, George?"

"I don't know; but don't let's waste any more time, if we intend carrying this project outt. We must all meet by eleven sharp, in front of the house."

They agreed. So paying their reckoning, they left the restaurant — George to hunt up Fred, and Damon and Pythias to invest their spare cash in candles, fire-crackers and Durham.

By eleven, the four friends had assembled in fron of the Birchall mansion. They were all high-spirited, and when they came to part, George addressed them as follows:

"O Damon, the agnostic, and Pythias, the skeptic, heed well my last words. Ye venture within a place purported by the vulgar to be haunted. The truth of this as yet remains to be proven; but remember that this power, which you will have to contend with, will not be resisted as those earthly forces of which you have knowledge. It is mysterious, imponderable and powerful; it is invisible, yet oftentimes visible; and it can exert itself in innumerable ways. Opening locked doors, putting out lights, dropping bricks, and strange sounds, cries, curses and moans, are but the lower demonstrations of this phenomena. Also, as we have in this life men inclined to good and evil, so have we, in the life to come, spirits, both good and bad. Woe betide you if you are thrown in contact with evil spirits. You may be lifted up bodily and dashed to the floor or against the walls like a football; you may see grewsome sights even beyond the conception of mortal; and so great a terror may be brought upon you, that your minds may lose their balance and leave you gibbering idiots or violently insane. And again, these evil spirits have the power to deprive you of one, two or all your senses, if they wish. They can burst your ear-drums; sear your eyes; destroy your voice; sadly impair your sense of taste and smell, and paralyze the body in any or every nerve. And even as in the days of Christ, they may make their habitation within bodies, and you will be tormented with evil spirits, and then — the asylum and padded cells stares you in the face. I have no advice to give you in dealing with this mysterious subject, for I am ignorant; but my parting words are, 'keep cool; may you prosper in your undertaking, and beware!'"

They then separated — Damon and Pythias in quest of ghosts, and George and Fred in quest of cats.

The first couple strode up to the front door; but finding it locked, and that the spirits did not respond after they had duly exercised the great, old fashioned knocker, they tried the windows on the long portico. These were also locked. After quite a scramble, they scaled the portico and found a second story window open. As soon as they gained an entrance they lighted a couple of candles and proceeded to explore.

Everything was old fashioned, dusty and musty; they had expected this. Commencing on the third floor, they thoroughly overhauled everything — opening the closets, pulling aside the rotten tapestries, looking for trapdoors and even sounding the walls. These actions, however, are accounted for by the fact that both had recently read "Emile Gaborian." Emulating Monsieur Lecoq, they even descended to the basement; but this was such a complex affair that they gave it up in despair.

Returning to the second floor with a couple of stools and a box they had found, they proceeded to make themselves comfortable in the cleanest room they could find. Though half a dozen candles illuminated the apartment, it still seemed dreary and desloate, and dampened their high spirits "to just the pitch," as Damon said, "for a good game of chess."

By the time an hour and a half had elapsed, they concluded their first game, and a magnificent game it had been. Pythias opened his watch and remarked, "Half past twelve and no ghost."

"The reason is the room is so smoky that the poor ghosts can't become visible," replied Damon. "Throw open the window and let some of it out."

This task accomplished, they arranged the board for another game. Just as Damon stretched forth his hand to advance the white king's pawn, he suddenly stopped with a startled expression on his face, as also did Pythias.

Silently, and with questioning look, they glanced at each other, and their mutual, yet incomprehensible consternation, was apparent.

Again did he essay to advance the pawn, and again did he stop, and again did they gaze, startled, into each other's faces. The silence seemed so palpable that it pressed against them like a leaden weight. The tension on their nerves was terrible, and each strove to break it, but in vain. Then they thought of the warning George had given them. Was it possible? Could it be true? Had they been deprived of the power of speech by this conscious, psychic force, which neither believed in? As in a nightmare, they longed to cry out; to break the horrible, paralyzing influence. Pythias was deathly pale. while the prespiration formed in great drops on Damon's forehead, and trickling down the bridge of his nose, fell in a minute cataract upon his clean, white tie and glossy shirt front.

For an age it seemed to them, but not more thana couple of minutes they sat staring agonized at each other. At last their intuition warned them that affairs were approaching a crisis. They knew the strain could not last much longer.

Suddenly, weird and shrill, there rose on the still night air, and was wafted in through the open window, the cry of a cat; then there was a scramble as over the fence, the sound of rocks striking against boards, and the cat's triumphant cry was changed to a yowl of pain and terror which quickly turned to a choking gurgle, and they heard the enthusiastic voice of Fred sry, "Number one!"

As a diver rising from depths of ocean feels the wondrous pleasure when he drives the vitiated air from his lungs and breathes anew the essence of life, so felt they — but for a moment. The spell was not broken. Then their consternation returned, multiplied a thousand fold. Both felt a hysterical desire to laugh, so ludicrous appeared the situation. But by the mysterious power, even this was denied, and their faces were distorted in an idiotic gibber, This so horrified them that they quickly brought their wills to bear, and their faces resumed the expression of bewilderment.

Simultaneously a light dawned upon them. They had the power of motion left. The movement of their lips had demostrated this. They half rose, as though to flee, when the cowardice of it shamed them, and they resumed their seats. Pythias touched a bunch of fire-crackers to the candle and threw them in the middle of the room.

The crackers sputtered and whizzed, snapped and banged, filling the room with a dense cloud of smoke, which hung over them like a pall, weirdly oppressive in the terrifying silence that followed.

Then a strange sensation came over Damon. All fear of the supernatural seemed to leave him, being replaced by a wild, fierce all-absorbing desire to begin the game. In a vague sort of way, he realized that he was undergoing a reincarnation. He felt himself to be rapidly evolving into some one else, or some one else was rapidly evolving into him. His own personality disappeared and as in a dream, he found another and more powerful personality had been projected into, or had overcome — swallowed up his own. To himself he seemed to have become old and feeble, as he bent under a weight of years; yet, he felt the burden to be strangely light, as though upheld by the burning, enthusiastic excitement, which boiled and bubbled and thrilled within him. He felt as though his destiny lay in the board before him; as though his life, his soul, his all, hung in the balance of the game he was to play.

Then implacable hatred and horrid desire for revenge quickened to life within him. A thousand wrongs seemed to rise before him with vivid brightness; a thousand devils seemed urging him on to the consummation of his desire. How he hated that thing — that man who was Satan incarnate, who opposed him across the chessboard. He cast a defiant glance at him, and with the swiftness of a soaring eagle, his hatred increased as he looked on the treacherous, smiling face and into the half-veiled, deceitful eyes. It was not Pythias; he was gone — why and where he did not even wonder.

As these strange things had happened to Damon, so happened they to Pythias. He despised the opponent who faced him. He felt endowed with all the cunning and low trickery of the world. The other was within his power; he knew that and was glad, as he smiled into his face with exasperating elation. The exultation to overthrow, to cast him down, rose paramount. He also desired to begin.

The game commenced. Damon boldy opened by offering the gambit. Pythias responded, but played on the defensive. Damon’s attack was brilliant and rapid; but he was met by combinations so bold and novel, that by the twenty-seventh move it was broken up and Pythias still retained the gambit pawn.

Exerting himself anew, Damon, by a most sound and enduring method of attack, so placed Pythias that he had either to lose his queen or suffer mate in four moves. But by startling series of daring moves, Pythias extricated himself with the loss of two pawns and a knight.

Elated by success, Damon attacked wildly, but was repulsed by the more cautious play of his opponent, who, by creating a diversion on the right flank, and by delicate maneuvering recovered himself, and once more grappled his adversary on equal ground. And so the game, one of the greatest the world had ever seen, proceeded. It was a mighty duel in which the participants forgot that the world still moved on, and when the first gray of dawn appeared at the window, it found Damon in a serious prdicament.

He would be forced to double his rooks to avoid checkmate — he saw that. Then his opponent would check his queen under cover, and capture his red bishop. Checkmate would then be inevitable. Suddenly, however, a light broke upon the situation. A brilliant move was apparent to him. By a series of moves which he would inaugurate, he could force his adversary's queen and turn the tables.

Fate intervened. The shrill cry of a cat rose on the air and distracted his concentration. The contemplated move was lost to him, and the threatened mate so veiled the position to his reason, that he doubled his rooks, and inevitable mate in six moves confronted him.

His brain reeled; all the wrongs of a life-time hideously clamored for vengeance; all the deceits, the lies, the betrayals of his opponent, rose to his brain in startling brightness. He cursed the smiling fiend opposite him, and staggered to his feet. Murder raged like a burning demon through his thoughts, and springing upon Pythias with an awful cry, he buried both hands in his throat. He threw him, back down, upon the chess board, and not with the rage of a fiend, but with a wonderfully sublime joy, choked him till his face grew black and agonized.

It would have gone very bad for Pythias had not a rush of feet been heard on the stairs, a couple of policemen dashed in, and with Fred and George, tore them apart.

Then Damon came, bewidered, to his senses, and helped to restore his chum.

"It was the old Birchall-Duinsmore murder, nearly enacted over again," said the sergeant, as they stood on the corner talking it over. "Duinsmore, his nephew, had been his life's curse. From boyhood he had always brought him trouble. As a man, he broke Birchall's heart a dozen different ways, and at last, by cunning, thievish financering, he robbed him of all he had, except the mansion. One night, he prevailed upon the old man to stake it on a game of chess. It was all that stood between him and the potter’s field, and when he lost it, he became demented, and throttled his nephew across the very board on which had been played the decisive game.”

“Good chess players?”

“It has been said that they were about the best the world has ever seen.”

Whose Business is To Live

STANTON DAVIES and Jim Wemple ceased from their talk to listen to an increase of uproar in the street. A volley of stones thrummed and boomed the wire mosquito nettings that protected the windows. It was a hot night, and the sweat of the heat stood on their faces as they listened. Arose the incoherent clamor of the mob, punctuated by individual cries in Mexican-Spanish. Least terrible among the obscene threats were: “Death to the Gringos!” “Kill the American pigs!” “Drown the American dogs in the sea!”

Stanton Davies and Jim Wemple shrugged their shoulders patiently to each other, and resumed their conversation, talking louder in order to make themselves heard above the uproar.

“The question is how,” Wemple said. “It’s forty-seven miles to Panuco, by river — ”

“And the land’s impossible, with Zaragoza’s and Villa’s men on the loot and maybe fraternizing,” Davies agreed.

Wemple nodded and continued: “And she’s at the East Coast Magnolia, two miles beyond, if she isn’t back at the hunting camp. We’ve got to get her — ”

“We’ve played pretty square in this matter, Wemple,” Davies said. “And we might as well speak up and acknowledge what each of us knows the other knows. You want her. I want her.”

Wemple lighted a cigarette and nodded.

“And now’s the time when it’s up to us to make a show as if we didn’t want her and that all we want is just to save her and get her down here.”

“And a truce until we do save her — I get you,” Wemple affirmed.

“A truce until we get her safe and sound back here in Tampico, or aboard a battleship. After that . . . ?”

Both men shrugged shoulders and beamed on each other as their hands met in ratification.

Fresh volleys of stones thrummed against the wire-screened windows; a boy’s voice rose shrilly above the clamor, proclaiming death to the Gringos; and the house reverberated to the heavy crash of some battering ram against the street-door downstairs. Both men, snatching up automatic rifles, ran down to where their fire could command the threatened door.

“If they break in we’ve got to let them have it,” Wemple said.

Davies nodded quiet agreement, then inconsistently burst out with a lurid string of oaths.

“To think of it!” he explained his wrath. “One out of three of those curs outside has worked for you or me — lean-bellied, bare-footed, poverty-stricken, glad for ten centavos a day if they could only get work. And we’ve given them steady jobs and a hundred and fifty centavos a day, and here they are yelling for our blood.”

“Only the half breeds;” Davies corrected.

“You know what I mean,” Wemple replied. “The only peons we’ve lost are those that have been run off or shot.”

The attack on the door ceasing, they returned upstairs. Half a dozen scattered shots from farther along the street seemed to draw away the mob, for the neighborhood became comparatively quiet.

A whistle came to them through the open windows, and a man’s voice calling:

“Wemple! Open the door! It’s Habert! Want to talk to you!”

Wemple went down, returning in several minutes with a tidily-paunched, well-built, gray-haired American of fifty. He shook hands with Davies and flung himself into a chair, breathing heavily. He did not relinquish his clutch on the Colt’s 44 automatic pistol, although he immediately addressed himself to the task of fishing a filled clip of cartridges from the pocket of his linen coat. He had arrived hatless and breathless, and the blood from a stone-cut on the cheek oozed down his face. He, too, in a fit of anger, springing to his feet when he had changed clips in his pistol, burst out with mouth-filling profanity.

“They had an American flag in the dirt, stamping and spitting on it. And they told me to spit on it.”

Wemple and Davies regarded him with silent interrogation.

“Oh, I know what you’re wondering!” he flared out. “Would I a-spit on it in the pinch? That’s what’s eating you. I’ll answer. Straight out, brass tacks, I WOULD. Put that in your pipe and smoke it.”

He paused to help himself to a cigar from the box on the table and to light it with a steady and defiant hand.

“Hell ! — I guess this neck of the woods knows Anthony Habert, and you can bank on it that it’s never located his yellow streak. Sure, in the pinch, I’d spit on Old Glory. What the hell d’ye think I’m going on the streets for a night like this? Didn't I skin out of the Southern Hotel half an hour ago, where there are forty buck Americans, not counting their women, and all armed? That was safety. What d'ye think I came here for? — to rescue you?"

His indignation lumped his throat into silence, and he seemed shaken as with an apoplexy.

"Spit it out," Davies commanded dryly.

"I'll tell you,' Habert exploded. "It's Billy Boy. Fifty miles up country and twenty-thousand throat-cutting federals and rebels between him and me. D'ye know what that boy'd do, if he was here in Tampico and I was fifty miles up the Panuco? Well, I know. And I'm going to do the same — go and get him."

"We're figuring on going up," Wemple assured him.

"And that's why I headed here — Miss Drexel, of course?"

Both men acquiesced and smiled. It was a time when men dared speak of matters which at other times tabooed speech.

"Then the thing's to get started," Habert exclaimed, looking at his watch. "It's midnight now. We've got to get to the river and get a boat — "

But the clamor of the returning mob came through the windows in answer.

Davies was about to speak, when the telephone rang, and Wemple sprang to the instrument.

"It's Carson," he interjected, as he listened. "They haven't cut the wires across the river yet. — Hello, Carson. Was it a break or a cut? . . . Bully for you. . . . Yes, move the mules across to the potrero beyond Tamcochin . . . . Who's at the water station? . . . Can you still 'phone him? . . . Tell him to keep the tanks full, and to shut off the main to Arico. Also, to hang on till the last minute, and keep a horse saddled to cut and run for it. Last thing before he runs, he must jerk out the 'phone . . . . Yes, yes, yes. Sure. No breeds. Leave full-blooded Indians in charge. Gabriel is a good hombre. Heaven knows, once we're chased out, when we'll get back . . . . You can't pinch down Jaramillo under twenty-five hundred barrels. We've got storage for ten days. Gabriel'll have to handle it. Keep it moving, if we have to run it into the river — "

"Ask him if he has a launch," Habert broke in.

"He hasn't," was Wemple's answer. "The federals commandeered the last one at noon."

“Say, Carson, how are you going to make your get-away?” Wemple queried.

The man to whom he talked was across the Panuco, on the south side, at the tank farm.

“Says there isn’t any get-away,” Wemple vouchsafed to the other two. “The federals are all over the shop, and he can’t understand why they haven’t raided him hours ago.”

“. . . Who? Campos? That skunk! . . . all right . . . Don’t be worried if you don’t hear from me. I’m going up river with Davies and Habert . . . . Use your judgment, and if you get a safe chance at Campos, pot him . . . . Oh, a hot time over here. They’re battering our doors now. Yes, by all means . . . Good-by, old man.”

Wemple lighted a cigarette and wiped his forehead.

“You know Campos, Jose H. Campos,” he volunteered. “The dirty cur’s stuck Carson up for twenty thousand pesos. We had to pay, or he’d have compelled half our peons to enlist or set the wells on fire. And you know, Davies, what we’ve done for him in past years. Gratitude? Simple decency? Great Scott!”

It was the night of April twenty-first. On the morning of the twenty-first the American marines and bluejackets had landed at Vera Cruz and seized the custom house and the city. Immediately the news was telegraphed, the vengeful Mexican mob had taken possession of the streets of Tampico and expressed its disapproval of the action of the United States by tearing down American flags and crying death to the Americans.

There was nothing save its own spinelessness to deter the mob from carrying out its threat. Had it battered down the doors of the Southern Hotel, or of other hotels, or of residences such as Wemple’s, a fight would have started in which the thousands of federal soldiers in Tampico would have joined their civilian compatriots in the laudable task of decreasing the Gringo population of that particular portion of Mexico. There should have been American warships to act as deterrents; but through some inexplicable excess of delicacy, or strategy, or heaven knows what, the United States, when it gave its orders to take Vera Cruz, had very carefully withdrawn its warships from Tampico to the open Gulf a dozen miles away. This order had come to Admiral Mayo by wireless from Washington, and thrice he had demanded the order to be repeated, ere, with tears in his eyes, he had turned his back on his countrymen and countrywomen and steamed to sea.

"Of all asinine things, to leave us in the lurch this way!" Habert was denouncing the powers that be of his country. "Mayo'd never have done it. Mark my words, he had to take program from Washington. And here we are, and our dear ones scattered for fifty miles back up country . . . . Say, if I lose Billy Boy I'll never dare go home to face the wife. — Come on. Let the three of us make a start. We can throw the fear of God into any gang on the streets."

"Come on over and take a squint," Davies invited from where he stood, somewhat back from the window, looking down into the street.

It was gorged with rioters, all haranguing, cursing, crying out death, and urging one another to smash the doors, but each hanging back from the death he knew waited behind those doors for the first of the rush.

"We can't break through a bunch like that, Habert," was Davies' comment.

"And if we die under their feet we'll be of little use to Billy Boy or anybody else up the Panuco," Wemple added. "And if — "

A new movement of the mob caused him to break off. It was splitting before a slow and silent advance of a file of white-clad men.

"Bluejackets — Mayo's come back for us after all," Habert muttered.

"Then we can get a navy launch," Davies said.

The bedlam of the mob died away, and, in silence, the sailors reached the street door and knocked for admittance. All three went down to open it, and to discover that the callers were not Americans but two German lieutenants and half a dozen German marines. At sight of the Americans, the rage of the mob rose again, and was quelled by the grounding of the rifle butts of the marines.

"No, thank you;" the senior lieutenant, in passable English, declined the invitation to enter. He unconcernedly kept his cigar alive at such times that the mob drowned his voice. "We are on the way back to our ship. Our commander conferred with the English and Dutch commanders; but they declined to cooperate, so our commander has undertaken the entire responsibility. We have been the round of the hotels. They are to hold their own until daybreak, when we'll take them off. We have given them rockets such as these. — Take them. If your house is entered, hold your own and send up a rocket from the roof. We can be here in force, in forty-five minutes. Steam is up in all our launches, launch crews and marines for shore duty are in the launches, and at the first rocket we shall start."

“Since you are going aboard now, we should like to go with you,” Davies said, after having rendered due thanks.

The surprise and distaste on both lieutenants’ faces was patent.

“Oh, no,” Davies laughed. “We don’t want refuge. We have friends fifty miles up river, and we want to get to the river in order to go up after them.”

The pleasure on the officers’ faces was immediate as they looked a silent conference at each other.

“Since our commander has undertaken grave responsibility on a night like this, may we do less than take minor responsibility?” queried the elder.

To this the younger heartily agreed. In a trice, upstairs and down again, equipped with extra ammunition, extra pistols, and a pocket-bulging supply of cigars, cigarettes and matches, the three Americans were ready. Wemple called last instructions up the stairway to imaginary occupants being left behind, ascertained that the spring lock was on, and slammed the door.

The officers led, followed by the Americans, the rear brought up by the six marines; and the spitting, howling mob, not daring to cast a stone, gave way before them.

As they came alongside the gangway of the cruiser, they saw launches and barges lying in strings to the boat-booms, filled with men, waiting for the rocket signal from the beleaguered hotels. A gun thundered from close at hand, up river, followed by the thunder of numerous guns and the reports of many rifles fired very rapidly.

“Now what’s the Topila whanging away at?” Habert complained, then joined the others in gazing at the picture.

A searchlight, evidently emanating from the Mexican gunboat, was stabbing the darkness to the middle of the river, where it played upon the water. And across the water, the center of the moving circle of light, flashed a long, lean speedboat. A shell burst in the air a hundred feet astern of it. Somewhere, outside the light, other shells were bursting in the water; for they saw the boat rocked by the waves from the explosions. They could guess the whizzing of the rifle bullets.

But for only several minutes the spectacle lasted. Such was the speed of the boat that it gained shelter behind the German, when the Mexican gunboat was compelled to cease fire. The speedboat slowed down, turned in a wide and heeling circle, and ranged up alongside the launch at the gangway.

The lights from the gangway showed but one occupant, a tow-headed, greasy-faced, blond youth of twenty, very lean, very calm, very much satisfied with himself.

“If it ain’t Peter Tonsburg!” Habert ejaculated, reaching out a hand to shake. “Howdy, Peter, howdy. And where in hell are you hell-bent for, surging by the Topila in such scandalous fashion?”

Peter, a Texas-born Swede of immigrant parents, filled with the old Texas traditions, greasily shook hands with Wemple and Davies as well, saying “Howdy,” as only the Texan born can say it.

“Me,” he answered Habert. “I ain’t hell-bent nowhere exceptin’ to get away from the shell-fire. She’s a caution, that Topila. Huh! but I limbered ‘em up some. I was goin’ every inch of twenty-five. They was like amateurs blazin’ away at canvasback.”

“Which Chill is it?” Wemple asked.

“Chill II,” Peter answered. “It’s all that’s left. Chill I a Greaser — you know ‘m — Campos — commandeered this noon. I was runnin’ Chill III when they caught me at sundown. Made me come in under their guns at the East Coast outfit, and fired me out on my neck.

“Now the boss’d gone over in this one to Tampico in the early evening, and just about ten minutes ago I spots it landin’ with a sousy bunch of Federals at the East Coast, and swipes it back according. Where’s the boss? He ain’t hurt, is he? Because I’m going after him.”

“No, you’re not, Peter,” Davies said. “Mr. Frisbie is safe at the Southern Hotel, all except a five-inch scalp wound from a brick that’s got him down with a splitting headache. He’s safe, so you’re going with us, going to take us, I mean, up beyond Panuco town.”

“Huh? — I can see myself,” Peter retorted, wiping his greasy nose on a wad of greasy cotton waste. “I got some cold. Besides, this night-drivin’ ain’t good for my complexion.”

“My boy’s up there,” Habert said.

“Well, he’s bigger’n I am, and I reckon he can take care of himself.”

“And there’s a woman there — Miss Drexel,” Davies said quietly.

“Who? Miss Drexel? Why didn’t you say so at first?” Peter demanded grievedly. He sighed and added, “Well, climb in an’ make a start. Better get your Dutch friends to donate me about twenty gallons of gasoline if you want to get anywhere.”

"Won't do you no good to lay low," Peter Tonsburg remarked, as, at full speed, headed up river, the Topila's searchlight stabbed them. "High or low, if one of them shells hits in the vicinity — good night!"

Immediately thereafter the Topila erupted. The roar of the Chill's exhaust nearly drowned the roar of the guns, but the fragile hull of the craft was shaken and rocked by the bursting shells. An occasional bullet thudded into or pinged off the Chill, and, despite Peter's warning that, high or low, they were bound to get it if it came to them, every man on board, including Peter, crouched, with chest contracted by drawn-in shoulders, in an instinctive and purely unconscious effort to lessen the area of body he presented as a target or receptacle for flying fragments of steel.

The Topila was a federal gunboat. To complicate the affair, the constitutionalists, gathered on the north shore in the siege of Tampico, opened up on the speedboat with many rifles and a machine gun.

"Lord, I'm glad they're Mexicans, and not Americans," Habert observed, after five mad minutes in which no damage had been received. "Mexicans are born with guns in their hands, and they never learn to use them."

Nor was the Chill or any man aboard damaged when at last she rounded the bend of river that shielded her from the searchlight.

"I'll have you in Panuco town in less'n three hours, . . . if we don't hit a log," Peter leaned back and shouted in Wemple's ear. "And if we do hit driftwood, I'll have you in the swim quicker than that."

Chill II tore her way through the darkness, steered by the tow-headed youth who knew every foot of the river and who guided his course by the loom of the banks in the dim starlight. A smart breeze, kicking up spiteful wavelets on the wider reaches, splashed them with sheeted water as well as fine-flung spray. And, in the face of the warmth of the tropic night, the wind, added to the speed of the boat, chilled them through their wet clothes.

"Now I know why she was named the Chill," Habert observed betwixt chattering teeth.

But conversation languished during the nearly three hours of drive through the darkness. Once, by the exhaust, they knew that they passed an unlighted launch bound down stream. And once, a glare of light, near the south bank, as they passed through the Toreno field, aroused brief debate as to whether it was the Toreno wells, or the bungalow on Merrick's banana plantation that flared so fiercely.

At the end of an hour, Peter slowed down and ran in to the bank.

“I got a cache of gasoline here — ten gallons,” he explained, “and it’s just as well to know it’s here for the back trip.” Without leaving the boat, fishing arm-deep into the brush, he announced, “All hunky-dory.” He proceeded to oil the engine. “Huh!” he soliloquized for their benefit. “I was just readin’ a magazine yarn last night. ‘Whose Business Is to Die,’ was its title. An’ all I got to say is, ‘The hell it is.’ A man’s business is to live. Maybe you thought it was our business to die when the Topila was pepperin’ us. But you was wrong. We’re alive, ain’t we? We beat her to it. That’s the game. Nobody’s got any business to die. I ain’t never goin’ to die, if I’ve got any say about it.”

He turned over the crank, and the roar and rush of the Chill put an end to speech.

There was no need for Wemple or Davies to speak further in the affair closest to their hearts. Their truce to love-making had been made as binding as it was brief, and each rival honored the other with a firm belief that he would commit no infraction of the truce. Afterward was another matter. In the meantime they were one in the effort to get Beth Drexel back to the safety of riotous Tampico or of a war vessel.

It was four o’clock when they passed by Panuco Town. Shouts and songs told them that the federal detachment holding the place was celebrating its indignation at the landing of American bluejackets in Vera Cruz. Sentinels challenged the Chill from the shore and shot at random at the noise of her in the darkness.

A mile beyond, where a lighted river steamer with steam up lay at the north bank, they ran in at the Apshodel wells. The steamer was small, and the nearly two hundred Americans — men, women, and children — crowded her capacity. Blasphemous greetings of pure joy and geniality were exchanged between the men, and Habert learned that the steamboat was waiting for his Billy Boy, who, astride a horse, was rounding up isolated drilling gangs who had not yet learned that the United States had seized Vera Cruz and that all Mexico was boiling.

Habert climbed out to wait and to go down on the steamer, while the three that remained on the Chill, having learned that Miss Drexel was not with the refugees, headed for the Dutch Company on the south shore. This was the big gusher, pinched down from one hundred and eighty-five thousand daily barrels to the quantity the company was able to handle. Mexico had no quarrel with Holland, so that the superintendent, while up, with night guards out to prevent drunken soldiers from firing his vast lakes of oil, was quite unemotional. Yes, the last he had heard was that Miss Drexel and her brother were back at the hunting lodge. No; he had not sent any warnings, and he doubted that anybody else had. Not till ten o'clock the previous evening had he learned of the landing at Vera Cruz. The Mexicans had turned nasty as soon as they heard of it, and they had killed Miles Forman at the Empire Wells, run off his labor, and looted the camp. Horses? No; he didn't have horse or mule on the place. The federals had commandeered the last animal weeks back. It was his belief, however, that there were a couple of plugs at the lodge, too worthless even for the Mexicans to take.

"It's a hike," Davies said cheerfully.

"Six miles of it," Wemple agreed, equally cheerfully. "Let's beat it."

A shot from the river, where they had left Peter in the boat, started them on the run for the bank. A scattering of shots, as from two rifles, followed. And while the Dutch superintendent, in execrable Spanish, shouted affirmations of Dutch neutrality into the menacing dark, across the gunwale of Chill II they found the body of the tow-headed youth whose business it had been not to die.

For the first hour, talking little, Davies and Wemple stumbled along the apology for a road that led through the jungle to the lodge. They did discuss the glares of several fires to the east along the south bank of Panuco River, and hoped fervently that they were dwellings and not wells.

"Two billion dollars worth of oil right here in the Ebaño field alone," Davies grumbled.

"And a drunken Mexican, whose whole carcass and immortal soul aren't worth ten pesos including hair, hide, and tallow, can start the bonfire with a lighted wad of cotton waste," was Wemple's contribution. "And if ever she starts, she'll gut the field of its last barrel."

Dawn, at five, enabled them to accelerate their pace; and six o'clock found them routing out the occupants of the lodge.

"Dress for rough travel, and don't stop for any frills," Wemple called around the corner of Miss Drexel's screened sleeping porch.

"Not a wash, nothing;" Davies supplemented grimly, as he shook hands with Charley Drexel, who yawned and slippered up to them in pajamas. "Where are those horses, Charley? Still alive?"

Wemple finished giving orders to the sleepy peons to remain and care for the place, occupying their spare time with hiding the more valuable things, and was calling around the corner to Miss Drexel the news of the capture of Vera Cruz, when Davies returned with the information that the horses consisted of a pair of moth-eaten skates that could be depended upon to lie down and die in the first half mile.

Beth Drexel emerged, first protesting that under no circumstances would she be guilty of riding the creatures, and, next, her brunette skin and dark eyes still flushed warm with sleep, greeting the two rescuers.

"It would be just as well if you washed your face, Stanton," she told Davies; and, to Wemple: "You're just as bad, Jim. You are a pair of dirty boys."

"And so will you be," Wemple assured her, "before you get back to Tampico. Are you ready?"

"As soon as Juanita packs my hand bag."

"Heavens, Beth, don't waste time!" exclaimed Wemple. "Jump in and grab up what you want."

"Make a start — make a start," chanted Davies. "Hustle! Hustle! — Charley, get the rifle you like best and take it along. Get a couple for us."

"Is it as serious as that?" Miss Drexel queried.

Both men nodded.

"The Mexicans are tearing loose," Davies explained. "How they missed this place I don't know." A movement in the adjoining room startled him. "Who's that?" he cried.

"Why, Mrs. Morgan," Miss Drexel answered.

"Good heavens, Wemple, I'd forgotten her," groaned Davies. "How will we ever get her anywhere?"

"Let Beth walk, and relay the lady on the nags."

"She weighs a hundred and eighty," Miss Drexel laughed. "Oh, hurry, Martha! We're waiting on you to start!"

Muffled speech came through the partition, and then emerged a very short, stout, much-flustered woman of middle age.

"I simply can't walk, and you boys needn't demand it of me," was her plaint. "It's no use. I couldn't walk half a mile to save my life, and it's six of the worst miles to the river."

They regarded her in despair.

“Then you’ll ride,” said Davies. “Come on, Charley. We’ll get a saddle on each of the nags.”

Along the road through the tropic jungle, Miss Drexel and Juanita, her Indian maid, led the way. Her brother, carrying the three rifles, brought up the rear, while in the middle Davies and Wemple struggled with Mrs. Morgan and the two decrepit steeds. One, a flea-bitten roan, groaned continually from the moment Mrs. Morgan’s burden was put upon him till she was shifted to the other horse. And this other, a mangy sorrel, invariably lay down at the end of a quarter of a mile of Mrs. Morgan.

Miss Drexel laughed and joked and encouraged; and Wemple, in brutal fashion, compelled Mrs. Morgan to walk every third quarter of a mile. At the end of an hour the sorrel refused positively to get up, and, so, was abandoned. Thereafter, Mrs. Morgan rode the roan alternate quarters of miles, and between times walked — if walk may describe her stumbling progress on two preposterously tiny feet with a man supporting her on either side.

A mile from the river, the road became more civilized, running along the side of a thousand acres of banana plantation.

“Parslow’s,” young Drexel said. “He’ll lose a year’s crop now on account of this mix-up.”

“Oh, look what I’ve found!” Miss Drexel called from the lead.

“First machine that ever tackled this road,” was young Drexel’s judgment, as they halted to stare at the tire-tracks.

“But look at the tracks,” his sister urged. “The machine must have come right out of the bananas and climbed the bank.”

“Some machine to climb a bank like that,” was Davies’ comment. “What it did do was to go down the bank — take a scout after it, Charley, while Wemple and I get Mrs. Morgan off her fractious mount. No machine ever built could travel far through those bananas.”

The flea-bitten roan, on its four legs up-standing, continued bravely to stand until the lady was removed, whereupon, with a long sigh, it sank down on the ground. Mrs. Morgan likewise sighed, sat down, and regarded her tiny feet mournfully.

“Go on, boys,” she said. “Maybe you can find something at the river and send back for me.”

But their indignant rejection of the plan never attained speech, for, at that instant, from the green sea of banana trees beneath them, came the sudden purr of an engine. A minute later the splutter of an exhaust told them the silencer had been taken off. The huge-fronded banana trees were violently agitated as by the threshing of a hidden Titan. They could identify the changing of gears and the reversing and going ahead, until, at the end of five minutes, a long low, black car burst from the wall of greenery and charged the soft earth bank, but the earth was too soft, and when, two-thirds of the way up, beaten, Charley Drexel braked the car to a standstill, the earth crumbled from under the tires, and he ran it down and back, the way he had come, until half-buried in the bananas.

"'A Merry Oldsmobile!"' Miss Drexel quoted from the popular song, clapping her hands. "Now, Martha, your troubles are over."

"Six-cylinder, and sounds as if it hadn't been out of the shop a week, or may I never ride in a machine again," Wemple remarked, looking to Davies for confirmation.

Davies nodded.

"It's Allison's," he said. "Campos tried to shake him down for a private loan, and — well, you know Allison. He told Campos to go to. And Campos, in revenge, commandeered his new car. That was two days ago, before we lifted a hand at Vera Cruz. Allison told me yesterday the last he'd heard of the car it was on a steamboat bound up river. And here's where they ditched it — but let's get a hustle on and get her into the running."

Three attempts they made, with young Drexel at the wheel; but the soft earth and the pitch of the grade baffled.

"She's got the power all right," young Drexel protested. "But she can't bite into that mush."

So far, they had spread on the ground the robes found in the car. The men now added their coats, and Wemple, for additional traction, unsaddled the roan, and spread the cinches, stirrup leathers, saddle blanket, and bridle in the way of the wheels. The car took the treacherous slope in a rush, with churning wheels biting into the woven fabrics; and, with no more than a hint of hesitation, it cleared the crest and swung into the road.

"Isn't she the spunky devil!" Drexel exulted. "Say, she could climb the side of a house if she could get traction."

"Better put on that silencer again, if you don't want to play tag with every soldier in the district," Wemple ordered, as they helped Mrs. Morgan in.

The road to the Dutch gusher compelled them to go through the outskirts of Panuco town. Indian and half breed women gazed stolidly at the strange vehicle, while the children and barking dogs clamorously advertised its progress. Once, passing long lines of tethered federal horses, they were challenged by a sentry; but at Wemple's "Throw on the juice!" the car took the rutted road at fifty miles an hour. A shot whistled after them. But it was not the shot that made Mrs. Morgan scream. The cause was a series of hog-wallows masked with mud, which nearly tore the steering wheel from Drexel's hands before he could reduce speed.

"Wonder it didn't break an axle," Davies growled. "Go on and take it easy, Charley. We're past any interference."

They swung into the Dutch camp and into the beginning of their real troubles. The refugee steamboat had departed down river from the Asphodel camp; Chill II had disappeared, the superintendent knew not how, along with the body of Peter Tonsburg; and the superintendent was dubious of their remaining.

"I've got to consider the owners," he told them. "This is the biggest well in Mexico, and you know it — a hundred and eighty-five thousand barrels daily flow. I've no right to risk it. We have no trouble with the Mexicans. It's you Americans. If you stay here, I'll have to protect you. And I can't protect you, anyway. We'll all lose our lives and they'll destroy the well in the bargain. And if they fire it, it means the entire Ebaño oil field. The strata's too broken. We're flowing twenty thousand barrels now, and we can't pinch down any further. As it is, the oil's coming up outside the pipe. And we can't have a fight. We've got to keep the oil moving."

The men nodded. It was cold-blooded logic; but there was no fault to it.

The harassed expression eased on the superintendent's face, and he almost beamed on them for agreeing with him.

"You've got a good machine there," he continued. "The ferry's at the bank at Panuco, and once you're across, the rebels aren't so thick on the north shore. Why, you can beat the steamboat back to Tampico by hours. And it hasn't rained for days. The road won't be at all bad."

"Which is all very good," Davies observed to Wemple as they approached Panuco, "except for the fact that the road on the other side was never built for automobiles, much less for a long-bodied one like this. I wish it were the Four instead of the Six."

"And it would bother you with a Four to negotiate that hill at Aliso where the road switchbacks above the river."

"And we're going to do it with a Six or lose a perfectly good Six in trying," Beth Drexel laughed to them.

Avoiding the cavalry camp, they entered Panuco with all the speed the ruts permitted, swinging dizzy corners to the squawking of chickens and barking of dogs. To gain the ferry, they had to pass down one side of the great plaza which was the heart of the city. Peon soldiers, drowsing in the sun or clustering around the cantinas, stared stupidly at them as they flashed past. Then a drunken major shouted a challenge from the doorway of a cantina and began vociferating orders, and as they left the plaza behind they could hear rising the familiar mob-cry "Kill the Gringos!"

"If any shooting begins, you women get down in the bottom of the car," Davies commanded. "And there's the ferry all right. Be careful, Charley."

The machine plunged directly down the bank through a cut so deep that it was more like a chute, struck the gangplank with a terrific bump, and seemed fairly to leap on board. The ferry was scarcely longer than the machine, and Drexel, visibly shaken by the closeness of the shave, managed to stop only when six inches remained between the front wheels and overboard.

It was a cable ferry, operated by gasoline, and, while Wemple cast off the mooring lines, Davies was making swift acquaintance with the engine. The third turn-over started it, and he threw it into gear with the windlass that began winding up the cable from the river's bottom.

By the time they were in midstream a score of horsemen rode out on the bank they had just left and opened a scattering fire. The party crowded in the shelter of the car and listened to the occasional ricochet of a bullet. Once, only, the car was struck.

"Here! — what are you up to?" Wemple demanded suddenly of Drexel, who had exposed himself to fish a rifle out of the car.

"Going to show the skunks what shooting is," was his answer.

"No, you don t," Wemple said. "We're not here to fight, but to get this party to Tampico." He remembered Peter Tonsburg's remark. "Whose business is to live, Charley — that's our business. Anybody can get killed. It's too easy these days."

Still under fire, they moored at the north shore, and when Davies had tossed overboard the igniter from the ferry engine and commandeered ten gallons of its surplus gasoline, they took the steep, soft road up the bank in a rush.

"Look at her climb," Drexel uttered gleefully. "That Aliso hill won't bother us at all. She'll put a crimp in it, that's what she'll do."

"It isn't the hill, it's the sharp turn of the zig-zag that's liable to put a crimp in her," Davies answered. "That road was never laid out for autos, and no auto has ever been over it. They steamboated this one up."

But trouble came before Aliso was reached. Where the road dipped abruptly into a small jag of hollow that was almost V-shaped, it arose out and became a hundred yards of deep sand. In order to have speed left for the sand after he cleared the stiff up-grade of the V, Drexel was compelled to hit the trough of the V with speed. Wemple clutched Miss Drexel as she was on the verge of being bounced out. Mrs. Morgan, too solid for such airiness, screamed from the pain of the bump; and even the imperturbable Juanita fell to crossing herself and uttering prayers with exceeding rapidity.

The car cleared the crest and encountered the sand, going slower from moment to moment, slewing and writing and squirming from side to side. The men leaped out and began shoving. Miss Drexel urged Juanita out and followed. But the car came to a standstill, and Drexel, looking back and pointing, showed the first sign of being beaten. Two things he pointed to: a constitutional soldier on horseback a quarter of a mile in the rear; and a portion of the narrow road that had fallen out bodily on the far slope of the V.

"Can't get at this sand unless we go back and try over, and we ditch the car if we try to back up that."

The ditch was a huge natural sump-hole, the stagnant surface of which was a-crawl with slime twenty feet beneath.

Davies and Wemple sprang to take the boy's place.

"You can't do it," he urged. "You can get the back wheels past, but right there you hit that little curve, and if you make it your front wheel will be off the bank. If you don't make it, your back wheel'll be off."

Both men studied it carefully, then looked at each other.

"We've got to," said Davies.

"And we're going to," Wemple said, shoving his rival aside in comradely fashion and taking the post of danger at the wheel. "You're just as good as I at the wheel, Davies," he explained. "But you're a better shot. dour job's cut out to go back and hold off any Greasers that show up."

Davies took a rifle and strolled back with so ominous an air that the lone cavalryman put spurs to his horse and fled. Mrs. Morgan was helped out and sent plodding and tottering unaided on her way to the end of the sand stretch. Miss Drexel and Juanita joined Charley in spreading the coats and robes on the sand and in gathering and spreading small branches, brush, and armfuls of a dry, brittle shrub. But all three ceased from their exertions to watch Wemple as he shot the car backward down the V and up. The car seemed first to stand on one end, then on the other, and to reel drunkenly and to threaten to turn over into the sump-hole when its right front wheel fell into the air where the road had ceased to be. But the hind wheels bit and climbed the grade and out.

Without pause, gathering speed down the perilous slope, Wemple came ahead and up, gaining fifty feet of sand over the previous failure. More of the alluvial soil of the road had dropped out at the bad place; but he took the V in reverse, overhung the front wheel as before, and from the top came ahead again. Four times he did this, gaining each time, but each time knocking a bigger hole where the road fell out, until Miss Drexel begged him not to try again.

He pointed to a squad of horsemen coming at a gallop along the road a mile in the rear, and took the V once again in reverse.

“If only we had more stuff,” Drexel groaned to his sister, as he threw down a meager, hard-gathered armful of the dry and brittle shrub, and as Wemple once more, with rush and roar, shot down the V.

For an instant it seemed that the great car would turn over into the sump, but the next instant it was past. It struck the bottom of the hollow a mighty wallop, and bounced and upended to the steep pitch of the climb. Miss Drexel, seized by inspiration or desperation, with a quick movement stripped off her short, corduroy tramping-skirt, and, looking very lithe and boyish in slender-cut pongee bloomers, ran along the sand and dropped the skirt for a foothold for the slowly revolving wheels. Almost, but not quite, did the car stop, then, gathering way, with the others running alongside and shoving, it emerged on the hard road.

While they tossed the robes and coats and Miss Drexel’s skirt into the bottom of the car and got Mrs. Morgan on board, Davies overtook them.

“Down on the bottom! — all of you!” he shouted, as he gained the running board and the machine sprang away. A scattering of shots came from the rear.

"Whose business is to live! — hunch down!" Davies yelled in Wemple's ear, accompanying the instruction with an open-handed blow on the shoulder.

"Live yourself," Wemple grumbled as he obediently hunched. "Get your head down. You're exposing yourself."

The pursuit lasted but a little while, and died away in an occasional distant shot.

"They've quit," Davies announced. "It never entered their stupid heads that they could have caught us on Aliso Hill."

"It can't be done," was Charley Drexel's quick judgment of youth, as the machine stopped and they surveyed the acute-angled turn on the stiff up-grade of Aliso. Beneath was the swift-running river.

"Get out everybody!" Wemple commanded. "Up-side, all of you, if you don't want the car to turn over on you. Spread traction wherever she needs it."

"Shoot her ahead, or back — she can't stop," Davies said quietly, from the outer edge of the road, where he had taken position. "The earth's crumbling away from under the tires every second she stands still."

"Get out from under, or she'll be on top of you," Wemple ordered, as he went ahead several yards.

But again, after the car rested a minute, the light, dry earth began to crack and crumble away from under the tires, rolling in a miniature avalanche down the steep declivity into the water. And not until Wemple had backed fifty yards down the narrow road did he find solid resting for the car. He came ahead on foot and examined the acute angle formed by the two zig-zags. Together with Davies he planned what was to be done.

"When you come you've got to come a-humping," Davies advised. "If you stop anywhere for more than seconds, it's good night, and the walking won't be fine."

"She's full of fight, and she can do it. See that hard formation right there on the inside wall. It couldn't have come at a better spot. If I don't make her hind wheels climb half way up it, we'll start walking about a second thereafter."

"She's a two-fisted piece of machinery," Davies encouraged. "I know her kind. If she can't do it, no machine can that was ever made. Am I right, Beth?"

“She’s a regular, spunky she-devil,” Miss Drexel laughed agreement. “And so are the pair of you — er — of the male persuasion, I mean.”

Miss Drexel had never seemed so fascinating to either of them as she was then, in the excitement quite unconscious of her abbreviated costume, her brown hair flying, her eyes sparkling, her lips smiling. Each man caught the other in that moment’s pause to look, and each man sighed to the other and looked frankly into each other’s eyes ere he turned to the work at hand.

Wemple came up with his usual rush, but it was a gauged rush; and Davies took the post of danger, the outside running board, where his weight would help the broad tires to bite a little deeper into the treacherous surface. If the road-edge crumbled away it was inevitable that he would be caught under the car as it rolled over and down to the river.

It was ahead and reverse, ahead and reverse, with only the briefest of pauses in which to shift the gears. Wemple backed up the hard formation on the inside bank till the car seemed standing on end, rushed ahead till the earth of the outer edge broke under the front tires and splashed in the water. Davies, now off, and again on the running board when needed, accompanied the car in its jerky and erratic progress, tossing robes and coats under the tires, calling instructions to Drexel similarly occupied on the other side, and warning Miss Drexel out of the way.

“Oh, you Merry Olds, you Merry Olds, you Merry Olds,” Wemple muttered aloud, as if in prayer, as he wrestled the car about the narrow area, gaining sometimes inches in pivoting it, sometimes fetching back up the inner wall precisely at the spot previously attained, and, once, having the car, with the surface of the roadbed under it, slide bodily and sidewise, two feet down the road.

The clapping of Miss Drexel’s hands was the first warning Davies received that the feat was accomplished, and, swinging on to the running board, he found the car backing in the straight-away up the next zigzag and Wemple still chanting ecstatically, “Oh, you Merry Olds, you Merry Olds!”

There were no more grades nor zig-zags between them and Tampico, but, so narrow was the primitive road, two miles farther were backed before space was found in which to turn around. One thing of importance did lie between them and Tampico — namely the investing lines of the constitutionalists. But here, at noon, fortune favored in the form of three American soldiers of fortune, operators of machine guns, who had fought the entire campaign with Villa from the beginning of the advance from the

Texan border. Under a white flag, Wemple drove the car across the zone of debate into the federal lines, where good fortune, in the guise of an ubiquitous German naval officer, again received them.

"I think you are nearly the only Americans left in Tampico," he told them. "About all the rest are lying out in the Gulf on the different warships. But at the Southern Hotel there are several, and the situation seems quieter."

As they got out at the Southern, Davies laid this hand on the car and murmured, "Good old girl!" Wemple followed suit. And Miss Drexel, engaging both men's eyes and about to say something, was guilty of a sudden moisture in her own eyes that made her turn to the car with a caressing hand and repeat, "Good old girl!"

A Wicked Woman

IT was because she had broken with Billy that Loretta had come visiting to Santa Clara. Billy could not understand. His sister had reported that he had walked the floor and cried all night. Loretta had not slept all night either, while she had wept most of the night. Daisy knew this, because it was in her arms that the weeping had been done. And Daisy's husband, Captain Kitt, knew, too. The tears of Loretta, and the comforting by Daisy, had lost him some sleep.

Now Captain Kitt did not like to lose sleep. Neither did he want Loretta to marry Billy--nor anybody else. It was Captain Kitt's belief that Daisy needed the help of her younger sister in the household. But he did not say this aloud. Instead, he always insisted that Loretta was too young to think of marriage. So it was Captain Kitt's idea that Loretta should be packed off on a visit to Mrs. Hemingway. There wouldn't be any Billy there.

Before Loretta had been at Santa Clara a week, she was convinced that Captain Kitt's idea was a good one. In the first place, though Billy wouldn't believe it, she did not want to marry Billy. And in the second place, though Captain Kitt wouldn't believe it, she did not want to leave Daisy. By the time Loretta had been at Santa Clara two weeks, she was absolutely certain that she did not want to marry Billy. But she was not so sure about not wanting to leave Daisy. Not that she loved Daisy less, but that she--had doubts.

The day of Loretta's arrival, a nebulous plan began shaping itself in Mrs. Hemingway's brain. The second day she remarked to Jack Hemingway, her husband, that Loretta was so innocent a young thing that were it not for her sweet guilelessness she would be positively stupid. In proof of which, Mrs. Hemingway told her husband several things that made him chuckle. By the third day Mrs. Hemingway's plan had taken recognizable form. Then it was that she composed a letter. On the envelope she wrote: "Mr. Edward Bashford, Athenian Club, San Francisco."

"Dear Ned," the letter began. She had once been violently loved by him for three weeks in her pre-marital days. But she had covenanted herself to Jack Hemingway, who had prior claims, and her heart as well; and Ned Bashford had philosophically not broken his heart over it. He merely added the experience to a large fund of similarly collected data out of which he manufactured philosophy. Artistically and temperamentally he was a Greek--a tired Greek. He was fond of quoting from Nietzsche, in token that he, too, had passed through the long sickness that follows upon the ardent search for truth; that he too had emerged too experienced, too shrewd, too profound, ever again to be afflicted by the madness of youths in their love of truth. "'To worship appearance,'" he often quoted; "'to believe in forms, in tones, in words, in the whole Olympus of appearance!' "This particular excerpt he always concluded with, " 'Those Greeks were superficial--out of profundity!'"

He was a fairly young Greek, jaded and worn. Women were faithless and unveracious, he held--at such times that he had relapses and descended to pessimism from his wonted high philosophical calm. He did not believe in the truth of women; but, faithful to his German master, he did not strip from them the airy gauzes that veiled their untruth. He was content to accept them as appearances and to make the best of it. He was superficial--out of profundity.

"Jack says to be sure to say to you, 'good swimming,' " Mrs. Hemingway wrote in her letter; "and also 'to bring your fishing duds along.'" Mrs. Hemingway wrote other things in the letter. She told him that at last she was prepared to exhibit to him an absolutely true, unsullied, and innocent woman. "A more guileless, immaculate bud of womanhood never blushed on the planet," was one of the several ways in which she phrased the inducement. And to her husband she said triumphantly, "If I don't marry Ned off this time--" leaving unstated the terrible alternative that she lacked either vocabulary to express or imagination to conceive.

Contrary to all her forebodings, Loretta found that she was not unhappy at Santa Clara. True, Billy wrote to her every day, but his letters were less distressing than his presence. Also, the ordeal of being away from Daisy was not so severe as she had expected. For the first time in her life she was not lost in eclipse in the blaze of Daisy's brilliant and mature personality. Under such favorable circumstances Loretta came rapidly to the front, while Mrs. Hemingway modestly and shamelessly retreated into the background.

Loretta began to discover that she was not a pale orb shining by reflection. Quite unconsciously she became a small centre of things. When she was at the piano, there was some one to turn the pages for her and to express preferences for certain songs. When she dropped her handkerchief, there was some one to pick it up. And there was some one to accompany her in ramblings and flower gatherings. Also, she learned to cast flies in still pools and below savage riffles, and how not to entangle silk lines and gut-leaders with the shrubbery.

Jack Hemingway did not care to teach beginners, and fished much by himself, or not at all, thus giving Ned Bashford ample time in which to consider Loretta as an appearance. As such, she was all that his philosophy demanded. Her blue eyes had the direct gaze of a boy, and out of his profundity he delighted in them and forbore to shudder at the duplicity his philosophy bade him to believe lurked in their depths. She had the grace of a slender flower, the fragility of color and line of fine china, in all of which he pleasured greatly, without thought of the Life Force palpitating beneath and in spite of Bernard Shaw--in whom he believed.

Loretta bourgeoned. She swiftly developed personality. She discovered a will of her own and wishes of her own that were not everlastingly entwined with the will and the wishes of Daisy. She was petted by Jack Hemingway, spoiled by Alice Hemingway, and devotedly attended by Ned Bashford. They encouraged her whims and laughed at her follies, while she developed the pretty little tyrannies that are latent in all pretty and delicate women. Her environment acted as a soporific upon her ancient desire always to live with Daisy. This desire no longer prodded her as in the days of her companionship with Billy. The more she saw of Billy, the more certain she had been that she could not live away from Daisy. The more she saw of Ned Bashford, the more she forgot her pressing need of Daisy.

Ned Bashford likewise did some forgetting. He confused superficiality with profundity, and entangled appearance with reality until he accounted them one. Loretta was different from other women. There was no masquerade about her. She was real. He said as much to Mrs. Hemingway, and more, who agreed with him and at the same time caught her husband’s eyelid drooping down for the moment in an unmistakable wink..

It was at this time that Loretta received a letter from Billy that was somewhat different from his others. In the main, like all his letters, it was pathological. It was a long recital of symptoms and sufferings, his nervousness, his sleeplessness, and the state of his heart. Then followed reproaches, such as he had never made before. They were sharp enough to make her weep, and true enough to put tragedy into her face. This tragedy she carried down to the breakfast table. It made Jack and Mrs. Hemingway speculative, and it worried Ned. They glanced to him for explanation, but he shook his head.

"I'll find out to-night," Mrs. Hemingway said to her husband.

But Ned caught Loretta in the afternoon in the big living-room. She tried to turn away. He caught her hands, and she faced him with wet lashes and trembling lips. He looked at her, silently and kindly. The lashes grew wetter.

"There, there, don't cry, little one," he said soothingly.

He put his arm protectingly around her shoulder. And to his shoulder, like atired child, she turned her face. He thrilled in ways unusual for a Greek who has recovered from the long sickness.

"Oh, Ned," she sobbed on his shoulder, "if you only knew how wicked I am!"

He smiled indulgently, and breathed in a great breath freighted with the fragrance of her hair. He thought of his world-experience of women, and drew another long breath. There seemed to emanate from her the perfect sweetness of a child--"the aura of a white soul," was the way he phrased it to himself.

Then he noticed that her sobs were increasing.

"What's the matter, little one?" he asked pettingly and almost paternally. "Has Jack been bullying you? Or has your dearly beloved sister failed to write?"

She did not answer, and he felt that he really must kiss her hair, that he could not be responsible if the situation continued much longer.

"Tell me," he said gently, "and we'll see what I can do."

"I can't. You will despise me.--Oh, Ned, I am so ashamed!"

He laughed incredulously, and lightly touched her hair with his lips--so lightly that she did not know.

"Dear little one, let us forget all about it, whatever it is. I want to tell you how I love--"

She uttered a sharp cry that was all delight, and then moaned--

"Too late!"

"Too late?" he echoed in surprise.

"Oh, why did I? Why did I?" she was moaning.

He was aware of a swift chill at his heart.

"What?" he asked.

"Oh, I . . . he. . . Billy.

"I am such a wicked woman, Ned. I know you will never speak to me again."

"This--er--this Billy," he began haltingly. "He is your brother?"

"No . . . he . . . I didn't know. I was so young. I could not help it. Oh, I shall go mad! I shall go mad!"

It was then that Loretta felt his shoulder and the encircling arm become limp. He drew away from her gently, and gently he deposited her in a big chair, where she buried her face and sobbed afresh. He twisted his mustache fiercely, then drew up another chair and sat down.

"I--I do not understand," he said.

"I am so unhappy," she wailed.

"Why unhappy?"

"Because . . . he . . . he wants me to marry him."

His face cleared on the instant, and he placed a hand soothingly on hers.

"That should not make any girl unhappy," he remarked sagely. "Bcause you don't love him is no reason--of course, you don't love him?"

Loretta shook her head and shoulders in a vigorous negative.

"What?"

Bashford wanted to make sure.

"No," she asserted explosively. "I don't love Billy! I don't want to love Billy!"

"Because you don't love him," Bashford resumed with confidence, "is no reason that you should be unhappy just because he has proposed to you."

She sobbed again, and from the midst of her sobs she cried:--

"That's the trouble. I wish I did love him. Oh, I wish I were dead!"

"Now, my dear child, you are worrying yourself over trifles." His other hand crossed over after its mate and rested on hers. "Women do it every day. Because you have changed your mind or did not know your mind, because you have--to use an unnecessarily harsh word--jilted a man--"

"Jilted!" She had raised her head and was looking at him with tear-dimmed eyes. "Oh, Ned, if that were all!"

"All?" he asked in a hollow voice, while his hands slowly retreated hers. He was about to speak further, then remained silent.

"But I don't want to marry him," Loretta broke forth protestingly.

"Then I shouldn't," he counselled.

"But I ought to marry him."

"Ought to marry him?"

She nodded.

“That is a strong word.”

“I know it is,” she acquiesced, while she strove to control her trembling lips. Then she spoke more calmly. “I am a wicked woman, a terribly wicked woman. No one knows how wicked I am--except Billy.”

There was a pause. Ned Bashford’s face was grave, and he looked queerly at Loretta.

“He--Billy knows?” he asked finally.

A reluctant nod and flaming cheeks was the reply.

He debated with himself for a while, seeming, like a diver, to be preparing himself for the plunge.

“Tell me about it.” He spoke very firmly. “You must tell me all of it.”

“And will you--ever--forgive me?” she asked in a faint, small voice. He hesitated, drew a long breath, and made the plunge.

“Yes,” he said desperately. “I’ll forgive you. Go ahead.”

“There was no one to tell me,” she began. “We were with each other so much. I did not know anything of the world--then.”

She paused to meditate. Bashford was biting his lip impatiently.

“If I had only known--“

She paused again.

“Yes, go on,” he urged.

“We were together almost every evening.”

“Billy?” he demanded, with a savageness that startled her.

“Yes, of course, Billy. We were with each other so much. . . . If I had only known. . . . There was no one to tell me. . . . I was so young--“‘

Her lips parted as though to speak further, and she regarded him anxiously.

“The scoundrel!”

With the explosion Ned Bashford was on his feet, no longer a tired Greek, but a violently angry young man.

“Billy is not a scoundrel; he is a good man,” Loretta defended with a firmness that surprised Bashford.

“I suppose you’ll be telling me next that it was all your fault,” he said sarcastically.

She nodded.

“What?” he shouted.

“It was all my fault,” she said steadily. “I should never have let him, I was to blame.”

Bashford ceased from his pacing up and down, and when he spoke his voice was resigned.

“All right,” he said. “I don’t blame you in the least, Loretta. And you have been very honest. But Billy is right, and you are wrong. You must get married.”

“To Billy?” she asked, in a dim, far-away voice.

“Yes, to Billy. I’ll see to it. Where does he live? I’ll make him.”

“But I don’t want to marry Billy ! “ she cried out in alarm. “Oh, Ned, you won’t do that?”

“I shall,” he answered sternly. “You must. And Billy must. Do you understand?”

Loretta buried her face in the cushioned chair back, and broke into a passionate storm of sobs.

All that Bashford could make out at first, as he listened, was: “But I don’t want to leave Daisy! I don’t want to leave Daisy!”

He paced grimly back and forth, then stopped curiously to listen.

“How was I to know?--Boo-hoo,” Loretta was crying. “He didn’t tell me. Nobody else ever kissed me. I never dreamed a kiss could be so terrible. . .until, boo-hoo. . .until he wrote to me. I only got the letter this morning.”

His face brightened. It seemed as though light was dawning on him.

“Is that what you’re crying about?”

“N-no.”

His heart sank.

“Then what are you crying about?” he asked in a hopeless voice.

“Because you said I had to marry Billy. And I don’t want to marry Billy. I don’t want to leave Daisy. I don’t know what I want. I want. I wish I were dead.”

He nerved himself for another effort.

“Now look here, Loretta, be sensible. What is this about kisses? You haven’t told me everything.”

“I--I don’t want to tell you everything.”

She looked at him beseechingly in the silence that fell.

“Must I ?” she quavered finally.

“You must,” he said imperatively. ‘You must tell me everything.”

“Well, then . . . must I?”

"You must."

"He. . . I . . . we . . ." she began flounderingly. Then blurted out, "I let him, and he kissed me."

"Go on," Bashford commanded desperately.

"That's all," she answered.

"All?" There was a vast incredulity in his voice.

"All?" In her voice was an interrogation no less vast.

"I mean--er--nothing worse?" He was overwhelmingly aware of his own awkwardness.

"Worse?" She was frankly puzzled. "As though there could be! Billy said--

"When did he say it?" Bashford demanded abruptly.

"In his letter I got this morning. Billy said that my . . . our . . . our kisses were terrible if we didn't get married." Bashford's head was swimming.

"What else did Billy say?" he asked.

"He said that when a woman allowed a man to kiss her, she always married him--that it was terrible if she didn't. It was the custom, he said; and I say it is a bad, wicked custom, and I don't like it. I know I'm terrible," she added defiantly, "but I can't help it."

Bashford absent-mindedly brought out a cigarette.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked, as he struck a match.

Then he came to himself.

"I beg your pardon," he cried, flinging away match and cigarette. "I don't want to smoke. I didn't mean that at all. What I mean is--"

He bent over Loretta, caught her hands in his, then sat on the arm of the chair and softly put one arm around her.

"Loretta, I am a fool. I mean it. And I mean something more. I want you to be my wife."

He waited anxiously in the pause that followed.

"You might answer me," he urged

"I will . . . if--"

"Yes, go on. If what?"

"If I don't have to marry Billy."

"You can't marry both of us," he almost shouted.

"And it isn't the custom . . . what . . . what Billy said?"

"No, it isn't the custom. Now, Loretta, will you marry me?"

"Don't be angry with me," she pouted demurely.

He gathered her into his arms and kissed her.

“I wish it were the custom,” she said in a faint voice, from the midst of the embrace, “because then I’d have to marry you, Ned . . . dear. . .wouldn’t I?”

The Wife of a King

ONCE when the northland was very young, the social and civic virtues were remarkably alike for their paucity and their simplicity. When the burden of domestic duties grew grievous, and the fireside mood expanded to a constant protest against its bleak loneliness, the adventurers from the Southland, in lieu of better, paid the stipulated prices and took unto themselves native wives. It was a foretaste of Paradise to the women, for it must be confessed that the white rovers gave far better care and treatment of them than did their Indian copartners. Of course, the white men themselves were satisfied with such deals, as were also the Indian men for that matter. Having sold their daughters and sisters for cotton blankets and obsolete rifles and traded their warm furs for flimsy calico and bad whisky, the sons of the soil promptly and cheerfully succumbed to quick consumption and other swift diseases correlated with the blessings of a superior civilization.

It was in these days of Arcadian simplicity that Cal Galbraith journeyed through the land and fell sick on the Lower River. It was a refreshing advent in the lives of the good Sisters of the Holy Cross, who gave him shelter and medicine; though they little dreamed of the hot elixir infused into his veins by the touch of their soft hands and their gentle ministrations. Cal Galbraith, became troubled with strange thoughts which clamored for attention till he laid eyes on the Mission girl, Madeline. Yet he gave no sign, biding his time patiently. He strengthened with the coming spring, and when the sun rode the heavens in a golden circle, and the joy and throb of life was in all the land, he gathered his still weak body together and departed.

Now, Madeline, the Mission girl, was an orphan. Her white father had failed to give a bald-faced grizzly the trail one day, and had died quickly. Then her Indian mother, having no man to fill the winter cache, had tried the hazardous experiment of waiting till the salmon-run on fifty pounds of flour and half as many of bacon. After that, the baby, Chook-ra, went to live with the good Sisters, and to be thenceforth known by another name.

But Madeline still had kinsfolk, the nearest being a dissolute uncle who outraged his vitals with inordinate quantities of the white man's whisky. He strove daily to walk with the gods, and incidentally, his feet sought shorter trails to the grave. When sober he suffered exquisite torture. He had no conscience. To this ancient vagabond Cal Galbraith duly presented himself, and they consumed many words and much tobacco in the conversation that followed. Promises were also made; and in the end the old heathen took a few pounds of dried salmon and his birch-bark canoe, and paddled away to the Mission of the Holy Cross.

It is not given the world to know what promises he made and what lies he toldthe Sisters never gossip; but when he returned, upon his swarthy chest there was a brass crucifix, and in his canoe his niece Madeline. That night there was a grand wedding and a potlach; so that for two days to follow there was no fishing done by the village. But in the morning Madeline shook the dust of the Lower River from her moccasins, and with her husband, in a poling-boat, went to live on the Upper River in a place known as the Lower Country. And in the years which followed she was a good wife, sharing her husband's hardships and cooking his food. And she kept him in straight trails, till he learned to save his dust and to work mightily. In the end, he struck it rich and built a cabin in Circle City; and his happiness was such that men who came to visit him in his home-circle became restless at the sight of it and envied him greatly.

But the Northland began to mature and social amenities to make their appearance.

Hitherto, the Southland had sent forth its sons; but it now belched forth a new exodus-this time of its daughters. Sisters and wives they were not; but they did not fail to put new ideas in the heads of the men, and to elevate the tone of things in ways peculiarly their own. No more did the squaws gather at the dances, go roaring down the center in the good, old Virginia reels, or make merry with jolly 'Dan Tucker.' They fell back on their natural stoicism and uncomplainingly watched the rule of their white sisters from their cabins.

Then another exodus came over the mountains from the prolific Southland.

This time it was of women that became mighty in the land. Their word was law; their law was steel. They frowned upon the Indian wives, while the other women became mild and walked humbly. There were cowards who became ashamed of their ancient covenants with the daughters of the soil, who looked with a new distaste upon their dark-skinned children; but there were also others--men--who remained true and proud of their aboriginal vows. When it became the fashion to divorce the native wives.

Cal Galbraith retained his manhood, and in so doing felt the heavy hand of the women who had come last, knew least, but who ruled the land.

One day, the Upper Country, which lies far above Circle City, was pronounced rich. Dog-teams carried the news to Salt Water; golden argosies freighted the lure across the North Pacific; wires and cables sang with the tidings; and the world heard for the first time of the Klondike River and the Yukon Country. Cal Galbraith had lived the years quietly. He had been a good husband to Madeline, and she had blessed him. But somehow discontent fell upon him; he felt vague yearnings for his own kind, for the life he had been shut out from--a general sort of desire, which men sometimes feel, to break out and taste the prime of living. Besides, there drifted down the river wild rumors of the wonderful El Dorado, glowing descriptions of the city of logs and tents, and ludicrous accounts of the che-cha-quas who had rushed in and were stampeding the whole country.

Circle City was dead. The world had moved on up river and become a new and most marvelous world.

Cal Galbraith grew restless on the edge of things, and wished to see with his own eyes.

So, after the wash-up, he weighed in a couple of hundred pounds of dust on the Company's big scales, and took a draft for the same on Dawson. Then he put Tom Dixon in charge of his mines, kissed Madeline good-by, promised to be back before the first mush-ice ran, and took passage on an up-river steamer.

Madeline waited, waited through all the three months of daylight. She fed the dogs, gave much of her time to Young Cal, watched the short summer fade away and the sun begin its long journey to the south. And she prayed much in the manner of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. The fall came, and with it there was mush-ice on the Yukon, and Circle City kings returning to the winter's work at their mines, but no Cal Galbraith. Tom Dixon received a letter, however, for his men sledded up her winter's supply of dry pine. The Company received a letter for its dogteams filled her cache with their best provisions, and she was told that her credit was limitless.

Through all the ages man has been held the chief instigator of the woes of woman; but in this case the men held their tongues and swore harshly at one of their number who was away, while the women failed utterly to emulate them. So, without needless delay, Madeline heard strange tales of Cal Galbraith's doings; also, of a certain Greek dancer who played with men as children did with bubbles. Now Madeline was an Indian woman, and further, she had no woman friend to whom to go for wise counsel. She prayed and planned by turns, and that night, being quick of resolve and action, she harnessed the dogs, and with Young Cal securely lashed to the sled, stole away.

Though the Yukon still ran free, the eddy-ice was growing, and each day saw the river dwindling to a slushy thread. Save him who has done the like, no man may know what she endured in traveling a hundred miles on the rim-ice; nor may they understand the toil and hardship of breaking the two hundred miles of packed ice which remained after the river froze for good. But Madeline was an Indian woman, so she did these things, and one night there came a knock at Malemute Kid's door. Thereat he fed a team of starving dogs, put a healthy youngster to bed, and turned his attention to an exhausted woman. He removed her icebound moccasins while he listened to her tale, and stuck the point of his knife into her feet that he might see how far they were frozen.

Despite his tremendous virility, Malemute Kid was possessed of a softer, womanly element, which could win the confidence of a snarling wolf-dog or draw confessions from the most wintry heart. Nor did he seek them. Hearts opened to him as spontaneously as flowers to the sun. Even the priest, Father Roubeau, had been known to confess to him, while the men and women of the Northland were ever knocking at his door--a door from which the latch-string hung always out. To Madeline, he could do no wrong, make no mistake. She had known him from the time she first cast her lot among the people of her father's race; and to her half-barbaric mind it seemed that in him was centered the wisdom of the ages, that between his vision and the future there could be no intervening veil.

There were false ideals in the land. The social strictures of Dawson were not synonymous with those of the previous era, and the swift maturity of the Northland involved much wrong. Malemute Kid was aware of this, and he had Cal Galbraith's measure accurately.

He knew a hasty word was the father of much evil; besides, he was minded to teach a great lesson and bring shame upon the man. So Stanley Prince, the young mining expert, was called into the conference the following night as was also Lucky Jack Harrington and his violin. That same night, Bettles, who owed a great debt to Malemute Kid, harnessed up

Cal Galbraith's dogs, lashed Cal Galbraith, Junior, to the sled, and slipped away in the dark for Stuart River.

II 'So; one--two--three, one--two--three. Now reverse! No, no! Start up again, Jack. See--this way.' Prince executed the movement as one should who has led the cotillion.

'Now; one--two--three, one--two--three. Reverse! Ah! that's better. Try it again. I say, you know, you mustn't look at your feet. One--two--three, one--twothree. Shorter steps! You are not hanging to the gee-pole just now. Try it over.

There! that's the way. One--two--three, one--two--three.' Round and round went Prince and Madeline in an interminable waltz. The table and stools had been shoved over against the wall to increase the room. Malemute Kid sat on the bunk, chin to knees, greatly interested. Jack Harrington sat beside him, scraping away on his violin and following the dancers.

It was a unique situation, the undertaking of these three men with the woman.

The most pathetic part, perhaps, was the businesslike way in which they went about it.

No athlete was ever trained more rigidly for a coming contest, nor wolf-dog for the harness, than was she. But they had good material, for Madeline, unlike most women of her race, in her childhood had escaped the carrying of heavy burdens and the toil of the trail. Besides, she was a clean-limbed, willowy creature, possessed of much grace which had not hitherto been realized. It was this grace which the men strove to bring out and knock into shape.

'Trouble with her she learned to dance all wrong,' Prince remarked to the bunk after having deposited his breathless pupil on the table. 'She's quick at picking up; yet I could do better had she never danced a step. But say, Kid, I can't understand this.' Prince imitated a peculiar movement of the shoulders and head--a weakness Madeline suffered from in walking.

'Lucky for her she was raised in the Mission,' Malemute Kid answered. 'Packing, you know,--the head-strap. Other Indian women have it bad, but she didn't do any packing till after she married, and then only at first. Saw hard lines with that husband of hers. They went through the Forty-Mile famine together.' 'But can we break it?' 'Don't know.

Perhaps long walks with her trainers will make the riffle. Anyway, they'll take it out some, won't they, Madeline?' The girl nodded assent. If Malemute Kid, who knew all things, said so, why it was so. That was all there was about it.

She had come over to them, anxious to begin again. Harrington surveyed her in quest of her points much in the same manner men usually do horses. It certainly was not disappointing, for he asked with sudden interest, 'What did that beggarly uncle of yours get anyway?' 'One rifle, one blanket, twenty bottles of hooch. Rifle broke.' She said this last scornfully, as though disgusted at how low her maiden-value had been rated.

She spoke fair English, with many peculiarities of her husband's speech, but there was still perceptible the Indian accent, the traditional groping after strange gutturals. Even this her instructors had taken in hand, and with no small success, too.

At the next intermission, Prince discovered a new predicament.

'I say, Kid,' he said, 'we're wrong, all wrong. She can't learn in moccasins.

Put her feet into slippers, and then onto that waxed floor--phew!' Madeline raised a foot and regarded her shapeless house-moccasins dubiously. In previous winters, both at Circle City and Forty-Mile, she had danced many a night away with similar footgear, and there had been nothing the matter.

But now--well, if there was anything wrong it was for Malemute Kid to know, not her.

But Malemute Kid did know, and he had a good eye for measures; so he put on his cap and mittens and went down the hill to pay Mrs. Eppingwell a call. Her husband, Clove Eppingwell, was prominent in the community as one of the great Government officials.

The Kid had noted her slender little foot one night, at the Governor's Ball. And as he also knew her to be as sensible as she was pretty, it was no task to ask of her a certain small favor.

On his return, Madeline withdrew for a moment to the inner room. When she reappeared Prince was startled.

'By Jove!' he gasped. 'Who'd a' thought it! The little witch! Why my sister-' 'Is an English girl,' interrupted Malemute Kid, 'with an English foot. This girl comes of a small-footed race. Moccasins just broadened her feet healthily, while she did not misshape them by running with the dogs in her childhood.' But this explanation failed utterly to allay Prince's admiration. Harrington's commercial instinct was touched, and as he looked upon the exquisitely turned foot and ankle, there ran through his mind the sordid list--'One rifle, one blanket, twenty bottles of hooch.' Madeline was the wife of a king, a king whose yellow treasure could buy outright a score of fashion's puppets; yet in all her life her feet had known no gear save red-tanned moosehide. At first she had looked in awe at the tiny white-satin slippers; but she had quickly understood the admiration which shone, manlike, in the eyes of the men. Her face flushed with pride. For the moment she was drunken with her woman's loveliness; then she murmured, with increased scorn, 'And one rifle, broke!' So the training went on. Every day Malemute Kid led the girl out on long walks devoted to the correction of her carriage and the shortening of her stride.

There was little likelihood of her identity being discovered, for Cal Galbraith and the rest of the Old-Timers were like lost children among the many strangers who had rushed into the land. Besides, the frost of the North has a bitter tongue, and the tender women of the South, to shield their cheeks from its biting caresses, were prone to the use of canvas masks. With faces obscured and bodies lost in squirrel-skin parkas, a mother and daughter, meeting on trail, would pass as strangers.

The coaching progressed rapidly. At first it had been slow, but later a sudden acceleration had manifested itself. This began from the moment Madeline tried on the white-satin slippers, and in so doing found herself. The pride of her renegade father, apart from any natural self-esteem she might possess, at that instant received its birth. Hitherto, she had deemed herself a woman of an alien breed, of inferior stock, purchased by her lord's favor. Her husband had seemed to her a god, who had lifted her, through no essential virtues on her part, to his own godlike level. But she had never forgotten, even when Young Cal was born, that she was not of his people. As he had been a god, so had his womenkind been goddesses. She might have contrasted herself with them, but she had never compared.

It might have been that familiarity bred contempt; however, be that as it may, she had ultimately come to understand these roving white men, and to weigh them.

True, her mind was dark to deliberate analysis, but she yet possessed her woman's clarity of vision in such matters. On the night of the slippers she had measured the bold, open admiration of her three man-friends; and for the first time comparison had suggested itself. It was only a foot and an ankle, but--but comparison could not, in the nature of things, cease at that point. She judged herself by their standards till the divinity of her white sisters was shattered. After all, they were only women, and why should she not exalt herself to their midst? In doing these things she learned where she lacked and with the knowledge of her weakness came her strength. And so mightily did she strive that her three trainers often marveled late into the night over the eternal mystery of woman.

In this way Thanksgiving Night drew near. At irregular intervals Bettles sent word down from Stuart River regarding the welfare of Young Cal. The time of their return was approaching. More than once a casual caller, hearing dance-music and the rhythmic pulse of feet, entered, only to find Harrington scraping away and the other two beating time or arguing noisily over a mooted step. Madeline was never in evidence, having precipitately fled to the inner room.

On one of these nights Cal Galbraith dropped in. Encouraging news had just come down from Stuart River, and Madeline had surpassed herself--not in walk alone, and carriage and grace, but in womanly roguishness. They had indulged in sharp repartee and she had defended herself brilliantly; and then, yielding to the intoxication of the moment, and of her own power, she had bullied, and mastered, and wheedled, and patronized them with most astonishing success. And instinctively, involuntarily, they had bowed, not to her beauty, her wisdom, her wit, but to that indefinable something in woman to which man yields yet cannot name.

The room was dizzy with sheer delight as she and Prince whirled through the last dance of the evening. Harrington was throwing in inconceivable flourishes, while Malemute Kid, utterly abandoned, had seized the broom and was executing mad gyrations on his own account.

At this instant the door shook with a heavy rap-rap, and their quick glances noted the lifting of the latch. But they had survived similar situations before. Harrington never broke a note. Madeline shot through the waiting door to the inner room. The broom went hurtling under the bunk, and by the time Cal Galbraith and Louis Savoy got their heads in, Malemute Kid and Prince were in each other’s arms, wildly schottisching down the room.

As a rule, Indian women do not make a practice of fainting on provocation, but Madeline came as near to it as she ever had in her life. For an hour she crouched on the floor, listening to the heavy voices of the men rumbling up and down in mimic thunder. Like familiar chords of childhood melodies, every intonation, every trick of her husband's voice swept in upon her, fluttering her heart and weakening her knees till she lay half-fainting against the door. It was well she could neither see nor hear when he took his departure.

'When do you expect to go back to Circle City?' Malemute Kid asked simply.

'Haven't thought much about it,' he replied. 'Don't think till after the ice breaks.' 'And Madeline?'

He flushed at the question, and there was a quick droop to his eyes. Malemute Kid could have despised him for that, had he known men less. As it was, his gorge rose against the wives and daughters who had come into the land, and not satisfied with usurping the place of the native women, had put unclean thoughts in the heads of the men and made them ashamed.

'I guess she's all right,' the Circle City King answered hastily, and in an apologetic manner. 'Tom Dixon's got charge of my interests, you know, and he sees to it that she has everything she wants.' Malemute Kid laid hand upon his arm and hushed him suddenly. They had stepped without. Overhead, the aurora, a gorgeous wanton, flaunted miracles of color; beneath lay the sleeping town. Far below, a solitary dog gave tongue.

The King again began to speak, but the Kid pressed his hand for silence. The sound multiplied. Dog after dog took up the strain till the full-throated chorus swayed the night.

To him who hears for the first time this weird song, is told the first and greatest secret of the Northland; to him who has heard it often, it is the solemn knell of lost endeavor. It is the plaint of tortured souls, for in it is invested the heritage of the North, the suffering of countless generations--the warning and the requiem to the world's estrays.

Cal Galbraith shivered slightly as it died away in half-caught sobs. The Kid read his thoughts openly, and wandered back with him through all the weary days of famine and disease; and with him was also the patient Madeline, sharing his pains and perils, never doubting, never complaining. His mind's retina vibrated to a score of pictures, stern, clear-cut, and the hand of the past drew back with heavy fingers on his heart. It was the psychological moment. Malemute Kid was halftempted to play his reserve card and win the game; but the lesson was too mild as yet, and he let it pass.

The next instant they had gripped hands, and the King's beaded moccasins were drawing protests from the outraged snow as he crunched down the hill.

Madeline in collapse was another woman to the mischievous creature of an hour before, whose laughter had been so infectious and whose heightened color and flashing eyes had made her teachers for the while forget. Weak and nerveless, she sat in the chair just as she had been dropped there by Prince and Harrington.

Malemute Kid frowned. This would never do. When the time of meeting her husband came to hand, she must carry things off with high-handed imperiousness. It was very necessary she should do it after the manner of white women, else the victory would be no victory at all. So he talked to her, sternly, without mincing of words, and initiated her into the weaknesses of his own sex, till she came to understand what simpletons men were after all, and why the word of their women was law.

A few days before Thanksgiving Night, Malemute Kid made another call on Mrs. Eppingwell. She promptly overhauled her feminine fripperies, paid a protracted visit to the dry-goods department of the P. C. Company, and returned with the Kid to make Madeline's acquaintance. After that came a period such as the cabin had never seen before, and what with cutting, and fitting, and basting, and stitching, and numerous other wonderful and unknowable things, the male conspirators were more often banished the premises than not. At such times the Opera House opened its double storm-doors to them.

So often did they put their heads together, and so deeply did they drink to curious toasts, that the loungers scented unknown creeks of incalculable richness, and it is known that several checha-quas and at least one Old-Timer kept their stampeding packs stored behind the bar, ready to hit the trail at a moment's notice.

Mrs. Eppingwell was a woman of capacity; so, when she turned Madeline over to her trainers on Thanksgiving Night she was so transformed that they were almost afraid of her. Prince wrapped a Hudson Bay blanket about her with a mock reverence more real than feigned, while Malemute Kid, whose arm she had taken, found it a severe trial to resume his wonted mentorship. Harrington, with the list of purchases still running through his head, dragged along in the rear, nor opened his mouth once all the way down into the town. When they came to the back door of the Opera

House they took the blanket from Madeline's shoulders and spread it on the snow. Slipping out of Prince's moccasins, she stepped upon it in new satin slippers. The masquerade was at its height. She hesitated, but they jerked open the door and shoved her in. Then they ran around to come in by the front entrance.

III 'Where is Freda?' the Old-Timers questioned, while the che-cha-quas were equally energetic in asking who Freda was. The ballroom buzzed with her name.

It was on everybody's lips. Grizzled 'sour-dough boys,' day-laborers at the mines but proud of their degree, either patronized the spruce-looking tenderfeet and lied eloquently-the 'sour-dough boys' being specially created to toy with truth--or gave them savage looks of indignation because of their ignorance. Perhaps forty kings of the Upper and Lower Countries were on the floor, each deeming himself hot on the trail and sturdily backing his judgment with the yellow dust of the realm. An assistant was sent to the man at the scales, upon whom had fallen the burden of weighing up the sacks, while several of the gamblers, with the rules of chance at their finger-ends, made up alluring books on the field and favorites.

Which was Freda? Time and again the 'Greek Dancer' was thought to have been discovered, but each discovery brought panic to the betting ring and a frantic registering of new wagers by those who wished to hedge. Malemute Kid took an interest in the hunt, his advent being hailed uproariously by the revelers, who knew him to a man. The Kid had a good eye for the trick of a step, and ear for the lilt of a voice, and his private choice was a marvelous creature who scintillated as the 'Aurora Borealis.' But the Greek dancer was too subtle for even his penetration. The majority of the gold-hunters seemed to have centered their verdict on the 'Russian Princess,' who was the most graceful in the room, and hence could be no other than Freda Moloof.

During a quadrille a roar of satisfaction went up. She was discovered. At previous balls, in the figure, 'all hands round,' Freda had displayed an inimitable step and variation peculiarly her own. As the figure was called, the 'Russian Princess' gave the unique rhythm to limb and body. A chorus of I-told-you-so's shook the squared roof-beams, when lo! it was noticed that 'Aurora Borealis' and another masque, the 'Spirit of the Pole,' were performing the same trick equally well. And when two twin 'Sun-Dogs' and a ‘Frost Queen’ followed suit, a second assistant was dispatched to the aid of the man at the scales.

Bettles came off trail in the midst of the excitement, descending upon them in a hurricane of frost. His rimed brows turned to cataracts as he whirled about; his mustache, still frozen, seemed gemmed with diamonds and turned the light in varicolored rays; while the flying feet slipped on the chunks of ice which rattled from his moccasins and German socks. A Northland dance is quite an informal affair, the men of the creeks and trails having lost whatever fastidiousness they might have at one time possessed; and only in the high official circles are conventions at all observed. Here, caste carried no significance. Millionaires and paupers, dog-drivers and mounted policemen joined hands with ‘ladies in the center,’ and swept around the circle performing most remarkable capers. Primitive in their pleasure, boisterous and rough, they displayed no rudeness, but rather a crude chivalry more genuine than the most polished courtesy.

In his quest for the ‘Greek Dancer,’ Cal Galbraith managed to get into the same set with the ‘Russian Princess,’ toward whom popular suspicion had turned.

But by the time he had guided her through one dance, he was willing not only to stake his millions that she was not Freda, but that he had had his arm about her waist before. When or where he could not tell, but the puzzling sense of familiarity so wrought upon him that he turned his attention to the discovery of her identity. Malemute Kid might have aided him instead of occasionally taking the Princess for a few turns and talking earnestly to her in low tones. But it was Jack Harrington who paid the ‘Russian Princess’ the most assiduous court. Once he drew Cal Galbraith aside and hazarded wild guesses as to who she was, and explained to him that he was going in to win. That rankled the Circle City King, for man is not by nature monogamic, and he forgot both Madeline and Freda in the new quest.

It was soon noised about that the ‘Russian Princess’ was not Freda Moloof. Interest deepened. Here was a fresh enigma. They knew Freda though they could not find her, but here was somebody they had found and did not know. Even the women could not place her, and they knew every good dancer in the camp. Many took her for one of the official clique, indulging in a silly escapade. Not a few asserted she would disappear before the unmasking. Others were equally positive that she was the woman-reporter of the Kansas City Star, come to write them up at ninety dollars per column. And the men at the scales worked busily.

At one o’clock every couple took to the floor. The unmasking began amid laughter and delight, like that of carefree children. There was no end of Oh’s and Ah’s as mask after mask was lifted. The scintillating ‘Aurora Borealis’ became the brawny negress whose income from washing the community’s clothes ran at about five hundred a month. The twin ‘Sun-Dogs’ discovered mustaches on their upper lips, and were recognized as brother Fraction-Kings of El Dorado. In one of the most prominent sets, and the slowest in uncovering, was Cal Galbraith with the ‘Spirit of the Pole.’ Opposite him was Jack Harrington and the ‘Russian Princess.’ The rest had discovered themselves, yet the ‘Greek Dancer’ was still missing. All eyes were upon the group. Cal Galbraith, in response to their cries, lifted his partner’s mask. Freda’s wonderful face and brilliant eyes flashed out upon them. A roar went up, to be squelched suddenly in the new and absorbing mystery of the ‘Russian Princess.’ Her face was still hidden, and Jack Harrington was struggling with her. The dancers tittered on the tiptoes of expectancy. He crushed her dainty costume roughly, and then--and then the revelers exploded. The joke was on them. They had danced all night with a tabooed native woman.

But those that knew, and they were many, ceased abruptly, and a hush fell upon the room.

Cal Galbraith crossed over with great strides, angrily, and spoke to Madeline in polyglot Chinook. But she retained her composure, apparently oblivious to the fact that she was the cynosure of all eyes, and answered him in English. She showed neither fright nor anger, and Malemute Kid chuckled at her well-bred equanimity. The King felt baffled, defeated; his common Siwash wife had passed beyond him.

‘Come!’ he said finally. ‘Come on home.’ ‘I beg pardon,’ she replied; ‘I have agreed to go to supper with Mr. Harrington. Besides, there’s no end of dances promised.’

Harrington extended his arm to lead her away. He evinced not the slightest disinclination toward showing his back, but Malemute Kid had by this time edged in closer. The Circle City King was stunned. Twice his hand dropped to his belt, and twice the Kid gathered himself to spring; but the retreating couple passed through the supper-room door where canned oysters were spread at five dollars the plate.

The crowd sighed audibly, broke up into couples, and followed them. Freda pouted and went in with Cal Galbraith; but she had a good heart and a sure tongue, and she spoiled his oysters for him. What she said is of no importance, but his face went red and white at intervals, and he swore repeatedly and savagely at himself.

The supper-room was filled with a pandemonium of voices, which ceased suddenly as Cal Galbraith stepped over to his wife's table. Since the unmasking considerable weights of dust had been placed as to the outcome. Everybody watched with breathless interest.

Harrington's blue eyes were steady, but under the overhanging tablecloth a Smith & Wesson balanced on his knee. Madeline looked up, casually, with little interest.

'May--may I have the next round dance with you?' the King stuttered.

The wife of the King glanced at her card and inclined her head.

Winged Blackmail

Peter Winn lay back comfortably in a library chair, with closed eyes, deep in the cogitation of a scheme of campaign destined in the near future to make a certain coterie of hostile financiers sit up. The central idea had come to him the night before, and he was now reveling in the planning of the remoter, minor details. By obtaining control of a certain up-country bank, two general stores, and several logging camps, he could come into control of a certain dinky jerkwater line which shall here be nameless, but which, in his hands, would prove the key to a vastly larger situation involving more main-line mileage almost than there were spikes in the aforesaid dinky jerkwater. It was so simple that he had almost laughed aloud when it came to him. No wonder those astute and ancient enemies of his had passed it by.

The library door opened, and a slender, middle-aged man, weak-eyed and eye glassed, entered. In his hands was an envelope and an open letter. As Peter Winn's secretary it was his task to weed out, sort, and classify his employer's mail.

"This came in the morning post," he ventured apologetically and with the hint of a titter. "Of course it doesn't amount to anything, but I thought you would like to see it."

"Read it," Peter Winn commanded, without opening his eyes.

The secretary cleared his throat.

"It is dated July seventeenth, but is without address. Postmark San Francisco. It is also quite illiterate. The spelling is atrocious. Here it is:

Mr. Peter Winn, SIR: I send you respectfully by express a pigeon worth good money. She's a loo-loo — "

"What is a loo-loo?" Peter Winn interrupted.

The secretary tittered.

"I'm sure I don't know, except that it must be a superlative of some sort. The letter continues:

Please freight it with a couple of thousand-dollar bills and let it go. If you do I wont never annoy you no more. If you dont you will be sorry.

"That is all. It is unsigned. I thought it would amuse you."

"Has the pigeon come?" Peter Winn demanded.

"I'm sure I never thought to enquire."

"Then do so."

In five minutes the secretary was back.

"Yes, sir. It came this morning."

"Then bring it in."

The secretary was inclined to take the affair as a practical joke, but Peter Winn, after an examination of the pigeon, thought otherwise.

"Look at it," he said, stroking and handling it. "See the length of the body and that elongated neck. A proper carrier. I doubt if I've ever seen a finer specimen. Powerfully winged and muscled. As our unknown correspondent remarked, she is a loo-loo. It's a temptation to keep her."

The secretary tittered.

"Why not? Surely you will not let it go back to the writer of that letter."

Peter Winn shook his head.

"I'll answer. No man can threaten me, even anonymously or in foolery."

On a slip of paper he wrote the succinct message, "Go to hell," signed it, and placed it in the carrying apparatus with which the bird had been thoughtfully supplied.

"Now we'll let her loose. Where's my son? I'd like him to see the flight."

"He's down in the workshop. He slept there last night, and had his breakfast sent down this morning."

"He'll break his neck yet," Peter Winn remarked, half-fiercely, half-proudly, as he led the way to the veranda.

Standing at the head of the broad steps, he tossed the pretty creature outward and upward. She caught herself with a quick beat of wings, fluttered about undecidedly for a space, then rose in the air.

Again, high up, there seemed indecision; then, apparently getting her bearings, she headed east, over the oak-trees that dotted the park-like grounds.

"Beautiful, beautiful," Peter Winn murmured. "I almost wish I had her back."

But Peter Winn was a very busy man, with such large plans in his head and with so many reins in his hands that he quickly forgot the incident. Three nights later the left wing of his country house was blown up. It was not a heavy explosion, and nobody was hurt, though the wing itself was ruined. Most of the windows of the rest of the house were broken, and there was a deal of general damage. By the first ferry boat of the morning half a dozen San Francisco detectives arrived, and several hours later the secretary, in high excitement, erupted on Peter Winn.

"It's come!" the secretary gasped, the sweat beading his forehead and his eyes bulging behind their glasses.

"What has come?" Peter demanded. "It – the – the loo-loo bird."

Then the financier understood.

"Have you gone over the mail yet?"

"I was just going over it, sir."

"Then continue, and see if you can find another letter from our mysterious friend, the pigeon fancier."

The letter came to light. It read:

Mr. Peter Winn, HONORABLE SIR: Now dont be a fool. If youd came through, your shack would not have blew up – I beg to inform you respectfully, am sending same pigeon. Take good care of same, thank you. Put five one thousand dollar bills on her and let her go. Dont feed her. Dont try to follow bird. She is wise to the way now and makes better time. If you dont come through, watch out.

Peter Winn was genuinely angry. This time he indited no message for the pigeon to carry. Instead, he called in the detectives, and, under their advice, weighted the pigeon heavily with shot. Her previous flight having been eastward toward the bay, the fastest motor-boat in Tiburon was commissioned to take up the chase if it led out over the water.

But too much shot had been put on the carrier, and she was exhausted before the shore was reached. Then the mistake was made of putting too little shot on her, and she rose high in the air, got her bearings and started eastward across San Francisco Bay. She flew straight over Angel Island, and here the motor-boat lost her, for it had to go around the island.

That night, armed guards patrolled the grounds. But there was no explosion. Yet, in the early morning Peter Winn learned by telephone that his sister's home in Alameda had been burned to the ground.

Two days later the pigeon was back again, coming this time by freight in what had seemed a barrel of potatoes. Also came another letter:

Mr. Peter Winn, RESPECTABLE SIR: It was me that fixed yr sisters house. You have raised hell, aint you. Send ten thousand now. Going up all the time. Dont put any more handicap weights on that bird. You sure cant follow her, and its cruelty to animals.

Peter Winn was ready to acknowledge himself beaten. The detectives were powerless, and Peter did not know where next the man would strike – perhaps at the lives of those near and dear to him. He even telephoned to

San Francisco for ten thousand dollars in bills of large denomination. But Peter had a son, Peter Winn, Junior, with the same firm-set jaw as his fathers,, and the same knitted, brooding determination in his eyes. He was only twenty-six, but he was all man, a secret terror and delight to the financier, who alternated between pride in his son's aeroplane feats and fear for an untimely and terrible end.

"Hold on, father, don't send that money," said Peter Winn, Junior. "Number Eight is ready, and I know I've at last got that reefing down fine. It will work, and it will revolutionize flying. Speed – that's what's needed, and so are the large sustaining surfaces for getting started and for altitude. I've got them both. Once I'm up I reef down. There it is. The smaller the sustaining surface, the higher the speed. That was the law discovered by Langley. And I've applied it. I can rise when the air is calm and full of holes, and I can rise when its boiling, and by my control of my plane areas I can come pretty close to making any speed I want. Especially with that new Sangster-Endholm engine."

"You'll come pretty close to breaking your neck one of these days," was his father's encouraging remark.

"Dad, I'll tell you what I'll come pretty close to-ninety miles an hour – Yes, and a hundred. Now listen! I was going to make a trial tomorrow. But it won't take two hours to start today. I'll tackle it this afternoon. Keep that money. Give me the pigeon and I'll follow her to her loft where ever it is. Hold on, let me talk to the mechanics."

He called up the workshop, and in crisp, terse sentences gave his orders in a way that went to the older man's heart. Truly, his one son was a chip off the old block, and Peter Winn had no meek notions concerning the intrinsic value of said old block.

Timed to the minute, the young man, two hours later, was ready for the start. In a holster at his hip, for instant use, cocked and with the safety on, was a large-caliber automatic pistol. With a final inspection and overhauling he took his seat in the aeroplane. He started the engine, and with a wild burr of gas explosions the beautiful fabric darted down the launching ways and lifted into the air. Circling, as he rose, to the west, he wheeled about and jockeyed and maneuvered for the real start of the race.

This start depended on the pigeon. Peter Winn held it. Nor was it weighted with shot this time. Instead, half a yard of bright ribbon was firmly attached to its leg – this the more easily to enable its flight being followed. Peter Winn released it, and it arose easily enough despite the slight drag of the ribbon. There was no uncertainty about its movements. This was the third time it had made particular homing passage, and it knew the course.

At an altitude of several hundred feet it straightened out and went due cast. The aeroplane swerved into a straight course from its last curve and followed. The race was on. Peter Winn, looking up, saw that the pigeon was outdistancing the machine. Then he saw something else. The aeroplane suddenly and instantly became smaller. It had reefed. Its high-speed plane-design was now revealed. Instead of the generous spread of surface with which it had taken the air, it was now a lean and hawklike monoplane balanced on long and exceedingly narrow wings.

. . . .

When young Winn reefed down so suddenly, he received a surprise. It was his first trial of the new device, and while he was prepared for increased speed he was not prepared for such an astonishing increase. It was better than he dreamed, and, before he knew it, he was hard upon the pigeon. That little creature, frightened by this, the most monstrous hawk it had ever seen, immediately darted upward, after the manner of pigeons that strive always to rise above a hawk.

In great curves the monoplane followed upward, higher and higher into the blue. It was difficult, from underneath to see the pigeon. and young Winn dared not lose it from his sight. He even shook out his reefs in order to rise more quickly. Up, up they went, until the pigeon, true to its instinct, dropped and struck at what it to be the back of its pursuing enemy. Once was enough, for, evidently finding no life in the smooth cloth surface of the machine, it ceased soaring and straightened out on its eastward course.

A carrier pigeon on a passage can achieve a high rate of speed, and Winn reefed again. And again, to his satisfaction, be found that he was beating the pigeon. But this time he quickly shook out a portion of his reefed sustaining surface and slowed down in time. From then on he knew he had the chase safely in hand, and from then on a chant rose to his lips which he continued to sing at intervals, and unconsciously, for the rest of the passage. It was: “Going some; going some; what did I tell you — going some.”

Even so, it was not all plain sailing. The air is an unstable medium at best, and quite without warning, at an acute angle, he entered an aerial tide which he recognized as the gulf stream of wind that poured through the drafty-mouthed Golden Gate. His right wing caught it first – a sudden, sharp puff that lifted and tilted the monoplane and threatened to capsize it. But he rode with a sensitive "loose curb," and quickly, but not too quickly, he shifted the angles of his wing-tips, depressed the front horizontal rudder, and swung over the rear vertical rudder to meet the tilting thrust of the wind. As the machine came back to an even keel, and he knew that he was now wholly in the invisible stream, he readjusted the wing-tips, rapidly away from him during the several moments of his discomfiture.

The pigeon drove straight on for the Alameda County shore, and it was near this shore that Winn had another experience. He fell into an air-hole. He had fallen into air-holes before, in previous flights, but this was a far larger one than he had ever encountered. With his eyes strained on the ribbon attached to the pigeon, by that fluttering bit of color he marked his fall. Down he went, at the pit of his stomach that old sink sensation which he had known as a boy he first negotiated quick-starting elevators. But Winn, among other secrets of aviation, had learned that to go up it was sometimes necessary first to go down. The air had refused to hold him. Instead of struggling futilely and perilously against this lack of sustension, he yielded to it. With steady head and hand, he depressed the forward horizontal rudder – just recklessly enough and not a fraction more – and the monoplane dived head foremost and sharply down the void. It was falling with the keenness of a knife-blade. Every instant the speed accelerated frightfully. Thus he accumulated the momentum that would save him. But few instants were required, when, abruptly shifting the double horizontal rudders forward and astern, he shot upward on the tense and straining plane and out of the pit.

At an altitude of five hundred feet, the pigeon drove on over the town of Berkeley and lifted its flight to the Contra Costa hills. Young Winn noted the campus and buildings of the University of California – his university – as he rose after the pigeon.

Once more, on these Contra Costa hills, he early came to grief. The pigeon was now flying low, and where a grove of eucalyptus presented a solid front to the wind, the bird was suddenly sent fluttering wildly upward for a distance of a hundred feet. Winn knew what it meant. It had been caught in an air-surf that beat upward hundreds of feet where the fresh west wind smote the upstanding wall of the grove. He reefed hastily to the uttermost, and at the same time depressed the angle of his flight to meet that upward surge. Nevertheless, the monoplane was tossed fully three hundred feet before the danger was left astern.

Two or more ranges of hills the pigeon crossed, and then Winn saw it dropping down to a landing where a small cabin stood in a hillside clearing. He blessed that clearing. Not only was it good for alighting, but, on account of the steepness of the slope, it was just the thing for rising again into the air.

A man, reading a newspaper, had just started up at the sight of the returning pigeon, when be heard the burr of Winn's engine and saw the huge monoplane, with all surfaces set, drop down upon him, stop suddenly on an air-cushion manufactured on the spur of the moment by a shift of the horizontal rudders, glide a few yards, strike ground, and come to rest not a score of feet away from him. But when he saw a young man, calmly sitting in the machine and leveling a pistol at him, the man turned to run. Before he could make the comer of the cabin, a bullet through the leg brought him down in a sprawling fall.

"What do you want!" he demanded sullenly, as the other stood over him.

"I want to take you for a ride in my new machine," Winn answered. "Believe me, she is a loo-loo."

The man did not argue long, for this strange visitor had most convincing ways. Under Winn's instructions, covered all the time by the pistol, the man improvised a tourniquet and applied it to his wounded leg. Winn helped him to a seat in the machine, then went to the pigeon-loft and took possession of the bird with the ribbon still fast to its leg.

A very tractable prisoner, the man proved. Once up in the air, he sat close, in an ecstasy of fear. An adept at winged blackmail, he had no aptitude for wings himself, and when he gazed down at the flying land and water far beneath him, he did not feel moved to attack his captor, now defenseless, both hands occupied with flight.

Instead, the only way the man felt moved was to sit closer.

. . . .

Peter Winn, Senior, scanning the heavens with powerful glasses, saw the monoplane leap into view and grow large over the rugged backbone of Angel Island. Several minutes later he cried out to the waiting detectives that the machine carried a passenger. Dropping swiftly and piling up an abrupt air-cushion, the monoplane landed.

“That reefing device is a winner!” young Winn cried, as he climbed out. “Did you see me at the start? I almost ran over the pigeon. Going some, dad! Going some! What did I tell you? Going some!”

“But who is that with you?” his father demanded.

The young man looked back at his prisoner and remembered.

“Why, that’s the pigeon-fancier,” he said. “I guess the officers can take care of him.”

Peter Winn gripped his son’s hand in grim silence, and fondled the pigeon which his son had passed to him. Again he fondled the pretty creature. Then he spoke.

“Exhibit A, for the People,” he said.

The Wisdom of the Trail

Sitka Charley had achieved the impossible. Other Indians might have known as much of the wisdom of the trail as did he; but he alone knew the white man's wisdom, the honor of the trail, and the law. But these things had not come to him in a day. The aboriginal mind is slow to generalize, and many facts, repeated often, are required to compass an understanding. Sitka Charley, from boyhood, had been thrown continually with white men, and as a man he had elected to cast his fortunes with them, expatriating himself, once and for all, from his own people. Even then, respecting, almost venerating their power, and pondering over it, he had yet to divine its secret essence--the honor and the law. And it was only by the cumulative evidence of years that he had finally come to understand. Being an alien, when he did know he knew it better than the white man himself; being an Indian, he had achieved the impossible. And of these things had been bred a certain contempt for his own people,--a contempt which he had made it a custom to conceal, but which now burst forth in a polyglot whirlwind of curses upon the heads of Kah-Chucte and Gowhee. They cringed before him like a brace of snarling wolf-dogs, too cowardly to spring, too wolfish to cover their fangs. They were not handsome creatures. Neither was Sitka Charley. All three were frightful-looking. There was no flesh to their faces; their cheek bones were massed with hideous scabs which had cracked and frozen alternately under the intense frost; while their eyes burned luridly with the light which is born of desperation and hunger. Men so situated, beyond the pale of the honor and the law, are not to be trusted. Sitka Charley knew this; and this was why he had forced them to abandon their rifles with the rest of the camp outfit ten days before. His rifle and Captain Eppingwell's were the only ones that remained.

"Come, get a fire started," he commanded, drawing out the precious match box with its attendant strips of dry birch bark.

The two Indians fell sullenly to the task of gathering dead branches and underwood. They were weak, and paused often, catching themselves, in the act of stooping, with giddy motions, or staggering to the centre of operations with their knees shaking like castanets. After each trip they rested for a moment, as though sick and deadly weary. At times their eyes took on the patient stoicism of dumb suffering; and again the ego seemed almost bursting forth with its wild cry, “I, I, I want to exist!”--the dominant note of the whole living universe.

A light breath of air blew from the south, nipping the exposed portions of their bodies and driving the frost, in needles of fire, through fur and flesh to the bones. So, when the fire had grown lusty and thawed a damp circle in the snow about it, Sitka Charley forced his reluctant comrades to lend a hand in pitching a fly. It was a primitive affair,--merely a blanket, stretched parallel with the fire and to windward of it, at an angle of perhaps forty-five degrees. This shut out the chill wind, and threw the heat backward and down upon those who were to huddle in its shelter. Then a layer of green spruce boughs was spread, that their bodies might not come in contact with the snow. When this task was completed, Kah-Chucte and Gowhee proceeded to take care of their feet. Their ice-bound moccasins were sadly worn by much travel, and the sharp ice of the river jams had cut them to rags. Their Siwash socks were similarly conditioned, and when these had been thawed and removed, the dead-white tips of the toes, in the various stages of mortification, told their simple tale of the trail.

Leaving the two to the drying of their foot-gear, Sitka Charley turned back over the course he had come. He, too, had a mighty longing to sit by the fire and tend his complaining flesh, but the honor and the law forbade. He toiled painfully over the frozen field, each step a protest, every muscle in revolt. Several times, where the open water between the jams had recently crusted, he was forced to miserably accelerate his movements as the fragile footing swayed and threatened beneath him. In such places death was quick and easy; but it was not his desire to endure no more.

His deepening anxiety vanished as two Indians dragged into view round a bend in the river. They staggered and panted like men under heavy burdens; yet the packs on their backs were a matter of but few pounds. He questioned them eagerly, and their replies seemed to relieve him. He hurried on. Next came two white men, supporting between them a woman. They also behaved as though drunken, and their limbs shook with weakness. But the woman leaned lightly upon them, choosing to carry herself forward with her own strength. At sight of her, a flash of joy cast its fleeting light across Sitka Charley’s face. He cherished a very great regard for Mrs. Eppingwell. He had seen many white women, but this was the first to travel the trail with him. When Captain Eppingwell proposed the hazardous undertaking and made him an offer for his services, he had shaken his head gravely; for it was an unknown journey through the dismal vastnesses of the Northland, and he knew it to be of the kind that try to the uttermost the souls of men. But when he learned that the Captain's wife was to accompany them, he had refused flatly to have anything further to do with it. Had it been a woman of his own race he would have harbored no objections; but these women of the Southland--no, no, they were too soft, too tender, for such enterprises.

Sitka Charley did not know this kind of woman. Five minutes before, he did not even dream of taking charge of the expedition; but when she came to him with her wonderful smile and her straight clean English, and talked to the point, without pleading or persuading, he had incontinently yielded. Had there been a softness and appeal to mercy in the eyes, a tremble to the voice, a taking advantage of sex, he would have stiffened to steel; instead her clear-searching eyes and clear-ringing voice, her utter frankness and tacit assumption of equality, had robbed him of his reason. He felt, then, that this was a new breed of woman; and ere they had been trail-mates for many days, he knew why the sons of such women mastered the land and the sea, and why the sons of his own womankind could not prevail against them. Tender and soft! Day after day he watched her, muscle-weary, exhausted, indomitable, and the words beat in upon him in a perennial refrain. Tender and soft! He knew her feet had been born to easy paths and sunny lands, strangers to the moccasined pain of the North, unkissed by the chill lips of the frost, and he watched and marveled at them twinkling ever through the weary day.

She had always a smile and a word of cheer, from which not even the meanest packer was excluded. As the way grew darker she seemed to stiffen and gather greater strength, and when Kah-Chucte and Gowhee, who had bragged that they knew every landmark of the way as a child did the skin-bales of the tepee, acknowledged that they knew not where they were, it was she who raised a forgiving voice amid the curses of the men. She had sung to them that night, till they felt the weariness fall from them and were ready to face the future with fresh hope. And when the food failed and each scant stint was measured jealously, she it was who rebelled against the machinations of her husband and Sitka Charley, and demanded and received a share neither greater nor less than that of the others.

Sitka Charley was proud to know this woman. A new richness, a greater breadth, had come into his life with her presence. Hitherto he had been his own mentor, had turned to right or left at no man's beck; he had moulded himself according to his own dictates, nourished his manhood regardless of all save his own opinion. For the first time he had felt a call from without for the best that was in him. Just a glance of appreciation from the clear-searching eyes, a word of thanks from the clear-ringing voice, just a slight wreathing of the lips in the wonderful smile, and he walked with the gods for hours to come. It was a new stimulant to his manhood; for the first time he thrilled with a conscious pride in his wisdom of the trail; and between the twain they ever lifted the sinking hearts of their comrades.

* * *

The faces of the two men and the woman brightened as they saw him, for after all he was the staff they leaned upon. But Sitka Charley, rigid as was his wont, concealing pain and pleasure impartially beneath an iron exterior, asked them the welfare of the rest, told the distance to the fire, and continued on the back-trip. Next he met a single Indian, unburdened, limping, lips compressed, and eyes set with the pain of a foot in which the quick fought a losing battle with the dead. All possible care had been taken of him, but in the last extremity the weak and unfortunate must perish, and Sitka Charley deemed his days to be few. The man could not keep up for long, so he gave him rough cheering words. After that came two more Indians, to whom he had allotted the task of helping along Joe, the third white man of the party. They had deserted him. Sitka Charley saw at a glance the lurking spring in their bodies, and knew they had at last cast off his mastery. So he was not taken unawares when he ordered them back in quest of their abandoned charge, and saw the gleam of the hunting-knives that they drew from the sheaths. A pitiful spectacle, three weak men lifting their puny strength in the face of the mighty vastness; but the two recoiled under the fierce rifle-blows of the one, and returned like beaten dogs to the leash. Two hours later, with Joe reeling between them and Sitka Charley bringing up the rear, they came to the fire, where the remainder of the expedition crouched in the shelter of the fly.

"A few words, my comrades, before we sleep," Sitka Charley said, after they had devoured their slim rations of unleavened bread. He was speaking to the Indians, in their own tongue, having already given the import to the whites. "A few words, my comrades, for your own good, that ye may yet perchance live. I shall give you the law; on his own head be the death of him that breaks it. We have passed the Hills of Silence, and we now travel the head-reaches of the Stuart. It may be one sleep, it may be several, it may be many sleeps, but in time we shall come among the Men of the Yukon, who have much grub. It were well that we look to the law. To-day,Kah-Chucte and Gowhee, whom commanded to break trail, forgot they were men, and like frightened children ran away. True, they forgot; so let us forget. But hereafter let them remember. If it should happen they do not"--He touched his rifle carelessly, grimly. "To-morrow they shall carry the flour and see that the white man Joe lies not down by the trail. The cups of flour are counted; should so much as an ounce be wanting at nightfall--Do ye understand? To-day there were others that forgot. Moose-Head and Three-Salmon left the white man Joe to lie in the snow. Let them forget no more. With the light of day shall they go forth and break trail. Ye have heard the law. Look well, lest ye break it."

* * *

Sitka Charley found it beyond him to keep the line close up. From Moose-Head and Three-Salmon, who broke trail in advance, to Kah-Chucte, Gowhee, and Joe, it straggled out over a mile. Each staggered, fell, or rested, as he saw fit. The line of march was a progression through a chain of irregular halts. Each drew upon the last remnant of his strength and stumbled onward till it was expended, but in some miraculous way there was always another last remnant. Each time a man fell, it was with the firm belief that he would rise no more; yet he did rise, and again, and again. The flesh yielded, the will conquered; but each triumph was a tragedy. The Indian with the frozen foot, no longer erect, crawled forward on hand and knee. He rarely rested, for he knew the penalty exacted by the frost. Even Mrs. Eppingwell's lips were at last set in a stony smile, and her eyes, seeing, saw not. Often, she stopped, pressing a mittened hand to her heart, gasping and dizzy.

Joe, the white man, had passed beyond the stage of suffering. He no longer begged to be let alone, prayed to die; but was soothed and content under the anodyne of delirium. Kah-Chucte and Gowhee dragged him on roughly, venting upon him many a savage glance or blow. To them it was the acme of injustice. Their hearts were bitter with hate, heavy with fear. Why should they cumber their strength with his weakness? To do so, meant death; not to do so--and they remembered the law of Sitka Charley, and the rifle.

Joe fell with greater frequency as the daylight waned, and so hard was he to raise that they dropped farther and farther behind. Sometimes all three pitched into the snow, so weak had the Indians become. Yet on their backs was life, and strength, and warmth. Within the flour-sacks were all the potentialities of existence. They could not but think of this, and it was not strange, that which came to pass. They had fallen by the side of a great timber-jam where a thousand cords of firewood waited the match. Near by was an air hole through the ice. Kah-Chucte looked on the wood and the water, as did Gowhee; then they looked on each other. Never a word was spoken. Gowhee struck a fire; Kah-Chucte filled a tin cup with water and heated it; Joe babbled of things in another land, in a tongue they did not understand. They mixed flour with the warm water till it was a thin paste, and of this they drank many cups. They did not offer any to Joe; but he did not mind. He did not mind anything, not even his moccasins, which scorched and smoked among the coals.

A crystal mist of snow fell about them, softly, caressingly, wrapping them in clinging robes of white. And their feet would have yet trod many trails had not destiny brushed the clouds aside and cleared the air. Nay, ten minutes' delay would have been salvation. Sitka Charley, looking back, saw the pillared smoke of their fire, and guessed. And he looked ahead at those who were faithful, and at Mrs. Eppingwell.

* * *

"So, my good comrades, ye have again forgotten that you were men? Good. Very good. There will be fewer bellies to feed."

Sitka Charley retied the flour as he spoke, strapping the pack to the one on his own back. He kicked Joe till the pain broke through the poor devil's bliss and brought him doddering to his feet. Then he shoved him out upon the trail and started him on his way. The two Indians attempted to slip off.

"Hold, Gowhee! And thou, too, Kah-Chucte! Hath the flour given such strength to thy legs that they may outrun the swift-winged lead? Think not to cheat the law. Be men for the last time, and be content that ye die full-stomached. Come, step up, back to the timber, shoulder to shoulder. Come!"

The two men obeyed, quietly, without fear; for it is the future which presses upon the man, not the present.

"Thou, Gowhee, hast a wife and children and a deer-skin lodge in the Chippewyan. What is thy will in the matter?"

“Give thou her of the goods which are mine by the word of the Captain--the blankets, the beads, the tobacco, the box which makes strange sounds after the manner of the white men. Say that I did die on the trail, but say not how.”

“And thou, Kah-Chucte, who hast nor wife nor child?”

“Mine is a sister, the wife of the Factor at Koshim. He beats her, and she is not happy. Give thou her the goods which are mine by the contract, and tell her it were well she go back to her own people. Shouldst thou meet the man, and be so minded, it were a good deed that he should die. He beats her, and she is afraid.”

“Are ye content to die by the law?”

“We are.”

“Then good-by, my good comrades. May ye sit by the well-filled pot, in warm lodges, ere the day is done.” As he spoke, he raised his rifle, and many echoes broke the silence. Hardly had they died away, when other rifles spoke in the distance. Sitka Charley started. There had been more than one shot, yet there was but one other rifle in the party. He gave a fleeting glance at the men who lay so quietly, smiled viciously at the wisdom of the trail, and hurried on to meet the Men of the Yukon.

The Wit of Porportuk

El-Soo had been a Mission girl. Her mother had died when she was very small, and Sister Alberta had plucked El-Soo as a brand from the burning, one summer day, and carried her away to Holy Cross Mission and dedicated her to God. El-Soo was a full-blooded Indian, yet she exceeded all the half-breed and quarter-breed girls. Never had the good sisters dealt with a girl so adaptable and at the same time so spirited.

El-Soo was quick, and deft, and intelligent; but above all she was fire, the living flame of life, a blaze of personality that was compounded of will, sweetness, and daring. Her father was a chief, and his blood ran in her veins. Obedience, on the part of El-Soo, was a matter of terms and arrangement. She had a passion for equity, and perhaps it was because of this that she excelled in mathematics.

But she excelled in other things. She learned to read and write English as no girl had ever learned in the Mission. She led the girls in singing, and into song she carried her sense of equity. She was an artist, and the fire of her flowed toward creation. Had she from birth enjoyed a more favorable environment, she would have made literature or music.

Instead, she was El-Soo, daughter of Klakee-Nah, a chief, and she lived in the Holy Cross Mission where were no artists, but only pure-souled Sisters who were interested in cleanliness and righteousness and the welfare of the spirit in the land of immortality that lay beyond the skies.

The years passed. She was eight years old when she entered the Mission; she was sixteen, and the Sisters were corresponding with their superiors in the Order concerning the sending of El-Soo to the United States to complete her education, when a man of her own tribe arrived at Holy Cross and had talk with her. El-Soo was somewhat appalled by him. He was dirty. He was a Caliban-like creature, primitively ugly, with a mop of hair that had never been combed. He looked at her disapprovingly and refused to sit down.

“Thy brother is dead,” he said, shortly.

El-Soo was not particularly shocked. She remembered little of her brother. “Thy father is an old man, and alone,” the messenger went on. “His house is large and empty, and he would hear thy voice and look upon thee.”

Him she remembered--Klakee-Nah, the head-man of the village, the friend of the missionaries and the traders, a large man thewed like a giant, with kindly eyes and masterful ways, and striding with a consciousness of crude royalty in his carriage.

“Tell him that I will come,” was El-Soo’s answer.

Much to the despair of the Sisters, the brand plucked from the burning went back to the burning. All pleading with El-Soo was vain. There was much argument, expostulation, and weeping. Sister Alberta even revealed to her the project of sending her to the United States. El-Soo stared wide-eyed into the golden vista thus opened up to her, and shook her head. In her eyes persisted another vista. It was the mighty curve of the Yukon at Tana-naw Station, with the St. George Mission on one side, and the trading post on the other, and midway between the Indian village and a certain large log house where lived an old man tended upon by slaves.

All dwellers on the Yukon bank for twice a thousand miles knew the large log house, the old man and the tending slaves; and well did the Sisters know the house, its unending revelry, its feasting and its fun. So there was weeping at Holy Cross when El-Soo departed.

There was a great cleaning up in the large house when El-Soo arrived. Klakee-Nah, himself masterful, protested at this masterful conduct of his young daughter; but in the end, dreaming barbarically of magnificence, he went forth and borrowed a thousand dollars from old Porportuk, than whom there was no richer Indian on the Yukon. Also, Klakee-Nah ran up a heavy bill at the trading post. El-Soo re-created the large house. She invested it with new splendor, while Klakee-Nah maintained its ancient traditions of hospitality and revelry.

All this was unusual for a Yukon Indian, but Klakee-Nah was an unusual Indian. Not alone did he like to render inordinate hospitality, but, what of being a chief and of acquiring much money, he was able to do it. In the primitive trading days he had been a power over his people, and he had dealt profitably with the white trading companies. Later on, with Porportuk, he had made a gold-strike on the Koyokuk River. Klakee-Nah was by training and nature an aristocrat. Porportuk was bourgeois, and Porportuk bought him out of the gold-mine. Porportuk was content to plod and accumulate. Klakee-Nah went back to his large house and proceeded to spend. Porportuk was known as the richest Indian in Alaska. Klakee-Nah was known as the whitest. Porportuk was a money-lender and a usurer. Klakee-Nah was an anachronism--a mediaeval ruin, a fighter and a feaster, happy with wine and song.

El-Soo adapted herself to the large house and its ways as readily as she had adapted herself to Holy Cross Mission and its ways. She did not try to reform her father and direct his footsteps toward God. It is true, she reproved him when he drank overmuch and profoundly, but that was for the sake of his health and the direction of his footsteps on solid earth.

The latchstring to the large house was always out. What with the coming and the going, it was never still. The rafters of the great living-room shook with the roar of wassail and of song. At table sat men from all the world and chiefs from distant tribes--Englishmen and Colonials, lean Yankee traders and rotund officials of the great companies, cowboys from the Western ranges, sailors from the sea, hunters and dog-mushers of a score of nationalities.

El-Soo drew breath in a cosmopolitan atmosphere. She could speak English as well as she could her native tongue, and she sang English songs and ballads. The passing Indian ceremonials she knew, and the perishing traditions. The tribal dress of the daughter of a chief she knew how to wear upon occasion. But for the most part she dressed as white women dress. Not for nothing was her needlework at the Mission and her innate artistry. She carried her clothes like a white woman, and she made clothes that could be so carried.

In her way she was as unusual as her father, and the position she occupied was as unique as his. She was the one Indian woman who was the social equal with the several white women at Tana-naw Station. She was the one Indian woman to whom white men honorably made proposals of marriage. And she was the one Indian woman whom no white man ever insulted.

For El-Soo was beautiful--not as white women are beautiful, not as Indian women arebeautiful. It was the flame of her, that did not depend upon feature, that was her beauty. So far as mere line and feature went, she was the classic Indian type. The black hair and the fine bronze were hers, and the black eyes, brilliant and bold, keen as sword-light, proud; and hers the delicate eagle nose with the thin, quivering nostrils, the high cheek-bones that were not broad apart, and the thin lips that were not too thin. But over all and through all poured the flame of her--the unanalyzable something that was fire and that was the soul of her, that lay mellow-warm or blazed in her eyes, that sprayed the cheeks of her, that distended the nostrils, that curled the lip, or, when the lip was in repose, that was still there in the lip, the lip palpitant with its presence.

And El-Soo had wit--rarely sharp to hurt, yet quick to search out forgivable weakness. The laughter of her mind played like lambent flame over all about her, and from all about her arose answering laughter. Yet she was never the centre of things. This she would not permit. The large house, and all of which it was significant, was her father's; and through it, to the last, moved his heroic figure--host, master of the revels, and giver of the law. It is true, as the strength oozed from him, that she caught up responsibilities from his failing hands. But in appearance he still ruled, dozing oft-times at the board, a bacchanalian ruin, yet in all seeming the ruler of the feast.

And through the large house moved the figure of Porportuk, ominous, with shaking head, coldly disapproving, paying for it all. Not that he really paid, for he compounded interest in weird ways, and year by year absorbed the properties of Klakee-Nah. Porportuk once took it upon himself to chide El-Soo upon the wasteful way of life in the large house--it was when he had about absorbed the last of Klakee-Nah's wealth--but he never ventured so to chide again. El-Soo, like her father, was an aristocrat, as disdainful of money as he, and with an equal sense of honor as finely strung.

Porportuk continued grudgingly to advance money, and ever the money flowed in golden foam away. Upon one thing El-Soo was resolved--her father should die as he had lived. There should be for him no passing from high to low, no diminution of the revels, no lessening of the lavish hospitality. When there was famine, as of old, the Indians came groaning to the large house and went away content. When there was famine and no money, money was borrowed from Porportuk, and the Indians still went away content. El-Soo might well have repeated, after the aristocrats of another time and place, that after her came the deluge. In her case the deluge was old Porportuk. With every advance of money, he looked upon her with a more possessive eye, and felt bourgeoning within him ancient fires.

But El-Soo had no eyes for him. Nor had she eyes for the white men who wanted to marry her at the Mission with ring and priest and book. For at Tana-naw Station was a young man, Akoon, of her own blood, and tribe, and village. He was strong and beautiful to her eyes, a great hunter, and, in that he had wandered far and much, very poor; he had been to all the unknown wastes and places; he had journeyed to Sitka and to the United States; he had crossed the continent to Hudson Bay and back again, and as seal-hunter on a ship he had sailed to Siberia and for Japan.

When he returned from the gold-strike in Klondike he came, as was his wont, to the large house to make report to old Klakee-Nah of all the world that he had seen; and there he first saw El-Soo, three years back from the Mission. Thereat, Akoon wandered no more. He refused a wage of twenty dollars a day as pilot on the big steamboats. He hunted some and fished some, but never far from Tana-naw Station, and he was at the large house often and long. And El-Soo measured him against many men and found him good. He sang songs to her, and was ardent and glowed until all Tana-naw Station knew he loved her. And Porportuk but grinned and advanced more money for the upkeep of the large house.

Then came the death table of Klakee-Nah. He sat at feast, with death in his throat, that he could not drown with wine. And laughter and joke and song went around, and Akoon told a story that made the rafters echo. There were no tears or sighs at that table. It was no more than fit that Klakee-Nah should die as he had lived, and none knew this better than El-Soo, with her artist sympathy. The old roystering crowd was there, and, as of old, three frost-bitten sailors were there, fresh from the long traverse from the Arctic, survivors of a ship's company of seventy-four. At Klakee-Nah's back were four old men, all that were left him of the slaves of his youth. With rheumy eyes they saw to his needs, with palsied hands filling his glass or striking him on the back between the shoulders when death stirred and he coughed and gasped.

It was a wild night, and as the hours passed and the fun laughed and roared along, death stirred more restlessly in Klakee-Nah's throat. Then it was that he sent for Porportuk. And Porportuk came in from the outside frost to look with disapproving eyes upon the meat and wine on the table for which he had paid. But as he looked down the length of flushed faces to the far end and saw the face of El-Soo, the light in his eyes flared up, and for a moment the disapproval vanished.

Place was made for him at Klakee-Nah's side, and a glass placed before him. Klakee-Nah, with his own hands, filled the glass with fervent spirits. "Drink!" he cried. "Is it not good?"

And Porportuk's eyes watered as he nodded his head and smacked his lips.

“When, in your own house, have you had such drink?” Klakee-Nah demanded.

“I will not deny that the drink is good to this old throat of mine,” Porportuk made answer, and hesitated for the speech to complete the thought.

“But it costs overmuch,” Klakee-Nah roared, completing it for him.

Porportuk winced at the laughter that went down the table. His eyes burned malevolently. “We were boys together, of the same age,” he said. “In your throat is death. I am still alive and strong.”

An ominous murmur arose from the company. Klakee-Nah coughed and strangled, and the old slaves smote him between the shoulders. He emerged gasping, and waved his hand to still the threatening rumble.

“You have grudged the very fire in your house because the wood cost overmuch!” he cried. “You have grudged life. To live cost overmuch, and you have refused to pay the price. Your life has been like a cabin where the fire is out and there are no blankets on the floor.” He signalled to a slave to fill his glass, which he held aloft. “But I have lived. And I have been warm with life as you have never been warm. It is true, you shall live long. But the longest nights are the cold nights when a man shivers and lies awake. My nights have been short, but I have slept warm.”

He drained the glass. The shaking hand of a slave failed to catch it as it crashed to the floor. Klakee-Nah sank back, panting, watching the upturned glasses at the lips of the drinkers, his own lips slightly smiling to the applause. At a sign, two slaves attempted to help him sit upright again. But they were weak, his frame was mighty, and the four old men tottered and shook as they helped him forward.

“But manner of life is neither here nor there,” he went on. “We have other business, Porportuk, you and I, to-night. Debts are mischances, and I am in mischance with you. What of my debt, and how great is it?”

Porportuk searched in his pouch and brought forth a memorandum. He sipped at his glass and began. “There is the note of August, 1889, for three hundred dollars. The interest has never been paid. And the note of the next year for five hundred dollars. This note was included in the note of two months later for a thousand dollars. Then there is the note--“

“Never mind the many notes!” Klakee-Nah cried out impatiently. “They make my head go around and all the things inside my head. The whole! The round whole! How much is it?”

Porportuk referred to his memorandum. “Fifteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents,” he read with careful precision.

“Make it sixteen thousand, make it sixteen thousand,” Klakee-Nah said grandly. “Odd numbers were ever a worry. And now--and it is for this that I have sent for you--make me out a new note for sixteen thousand, which I shall sign. I have no thought of the interest. Make it as large as you will, and make it payable in the next world, when I shall meet you by the fire of the Great Father of all Indians. Then the note will be paid. This I promise you. It is the word of Klakee-Nah.”

Porportuk looked perplexed, and loudly the laughter arose and shook the room. Klakee-Nah raised his hands. “Nay,” he cried. “It is not a joke. I but speak in fairness. It was for this I sent for you, Porportuk. Make out the note.”

“I have no dealings with the next world,” Porportuk made answer slowly.

“Have you no thought to meet me before the Great Father!” Klakee-Nah demanded. Then he added, “I shall surely be there.”

“I have no dealings with the next world,” Porportuk repeated sourly.

The dying man regarded him with frank amazement.

“I know naught of the next world,” Porportuk explained. “I do business in this world.”

Klakee-Nah’s face cleared. “This comes of sleeping cold of nights,” he laughed. He pondered for a space, then said, “It is in this world that you must be paid. There remains to me this house. Take it, and burn the debt in the candle there.”

“It is an old house and not worth the money,” Porportuk made answer.

“There are my mines on the Twisted Salmon.”

“They have never paid to work,” was the reply.

“There is my share in the steamer Koyokuk. I am half owner.”

“She is at the bottom of the Yukon.”

Klakee-Nah started. “True, I forgot. It was last spring when the ice went out.” He mused for a time, while the glasses remained untasted, and all the company waited upon his utterance.

“Then it would seem I owe you a sum of money which I cannot pay . . . in this world?” Porportuk nodded and glanced down the table.

“Then it would seem that you, Porportuk, are a poor business man,” Klakee-Nah said slyly. And boldly Porportuk made answer, “No; there is security yet untouched."

"What!" cried Klakee-Nah. "Have I still property? Name it, and it is yours, and the debt is no more."

"There it is." Porportuk pointed at El-Soo.

Klakee-Nah could not understand. He peered down the table, brushed his eyes, and peered again.

"Your daughter, El-Soo--her will I take and the debt be no more. I will burn the debt there in the candle."

Klakee-Nah's great chest began to heave. "Ho! ho!--a joke--Ho! ho! ho!" he laughed Homerically. "And with your cold bed and daughters old enough to be the mother of El-Soo! Ho! ho! ho!" He began to cough and strangle, and the old slaves smote him on the back. "Ho! ho!" he began again, and went off into another paroxysm.

Porportuk waited patiently, sipping from his glass and studying the double row of faces down the board. "It is no joke," he said finally. "My speech is well meant."

Klakee-Nah sobered and looked at him, then reached for his glass, but could not touch it. A slave passed it to him, and glass and liquor he flung into the face of Porportuk.

"Turn him out!" Klakee-Nah thundered to the waiting table that strained like a pack of hounds in leash. "And roll him in the snow!"

As the mad riot swept past him and out of doors, he signalled to the slaves, and the four tottering old men supported him on his feet as he met the returning revellers, upright, glass in hand, pledging them a toast to the short night when a man sleeps warm.

It did not take long to settle the estate of Klakee-Nah. Tommy, the little Englishman, clerk at the trading post, was called in by El-Soo to help. There was nothing but debts, notes overdue, mortgaged properties, and properties mortgaged but worthless. Notes and mortgages were held by Porportuk. Tommy called him a robber many times as he pondered the compounding of the interest.

"Is it a debt, Tommy?" El-Soo asked.

"It is a robbery," Tommy answered.

"Nevertheless, it is a debt," she persisted.

The winter wore away, and the early spring, and still the claims of Porportuk remained unpaid. He saw El-Soo often and explained to her at length, as he had explained to her father, the way the debt could be cancelled. Also, he brought with him old medicine-men, who elaborated to her the everlasting damnation of her father if the debt were not paid. One day, after such an elaboration, El-Soo made final announcement to Porportuk.

“I shall tell you two things,” she said. “First, I shall not be your wife. Will you remember that? Second, you shall be paid the last cent of the sixteen thousand dollars--“

“Fifteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents,” Porportuk corrected.

“My father said sixteen thousand,” was her reply. “You shall be paid.”

“How?”

“I know not how, but I shall find out how. Now go, and bother me no more. If you do”--she hesitated to find fitting penalty--“if you do, I shall have you rolled in the snow again as soon as the first snow flies.”

This was still in the early spring, and a little later El-Soo surprised the country. Word went up and down the Yukon from Chilcoot to the Delta, and was carried from camp to camp to the farthermost camps, that in June, when the first salmon ran, El-Soo, daughter of Klakee-Nah, would sell herself at public auction to satisfy the claims of Porportuk. Vain were the attempts to dissuade her. The missionary at St. George wrestled with her, but she replied:--

“Only the debts to God are settled in the next world. The debts of men are of this world, and in this world are they settled.”

Akoon wrestled with her, but she replied: “I do love thee, Akoon; but honor is greater than love, and who am I that I should blacken my father?” Sister Alberta journeyed all the way up from Holy Cross on the first steamer, and to no better end.

“My father wanders in the thick and endless forests,” said El-Soo. “And there will he wander, with the lost souls crying, till the debt be paid. Then, and not until then, may he go on to the house of the Great Father.”

“And you believe this?” Sister Alberta asked.

“I do not know,” El-Soo made answer. “It was my father’s belief.”

Sister Alberta shrugged her shoulders incredulously.

“Who knows but that the things we believe come true?” El-Soo went on. “Why not? The next world to you may be heaven and harps . . . because you have believed heaven and harps; to my father the next world may be a large house where he will sit always at table feasting with God.”

“And you?” Sister Alberta asked. “What is your next world?”

El-Soo hesitated but for a moment. “I should like a little of both,” she said. “I should like to see your face as well as the face of my father.”

The day of the auction came. Tana-naw Station was populous. As was their custom, the tribes had gathered to await the salmon-run, and in the meantime spent the time in dancing and frolicking, trading and gossiping. Then there was the ordinary sprinkling of white adventurers, traders, and prospectors, and, in addition, a large number of white men who had come because of curiosity or interest in the affair.

It had been a backward spring, and the salmon were late in running. This delay but keyed up the interest. Then, on the day of the auction, the situation was made tense by Akoon. He arose and made public and solemn announcement that whosoever bought El-Soo would forthwith and immediately die. He flourished the Winchester in his hand to indicate the manner of the taking-off. El-Soo was angered thereat; but he refused to speak with her, and went to the trading post to lay in extra ammunition.

The first salmon was caught at ten o’clock in the evening, and at midnight the auction began. It took place on top of the high bank alongside the Yukon. The sun was due north just below the horizon, and the sky was lurid red. A great crowd gathered about the table and the two chairs that stood near the edge of the bank. To the fore were many white men and several chiefs. And most prominently to the fore, rifle in hand, stood Akoon. Tommy, at El-Soo’s request, served as auctioneer, but she made the opening speech and described the goods about to be sold. She was in native costume, in the dress of a chief’s daughter, splendid and barbaric, and she stood on a chair, that she might be seen to advantage.

“Who will buy a wife?” she asked. “Look at me. I am twenty years old and a maid. I will be a good wife to the man who buys me. If he is a white man, I shall dress in the fashion of white women; if he is an Indian, I shall dress as”--she hesitated a moment--“a squaw. I can make my own clothes, and sew, and wash, and mend. I was taught for eight years to do these things at Holy Cross Mission. I can read and write English, and I know how to play the organ. Also I can do arithmetic and some algebra--a little. I shall be sold to the highest bidder, and to him I will make out a bill of sale of myself. I forgot to say that I can sing very well, and that I have never been sick in my life. I weigh one hundred and thirty-two pounds; my father is dead and I have no relatives. Who wants me?”

She looked over the crowd with flaming audacity and stepped down. At Tommy's request she stood upon the chair again, while he mounted the second chair and started the bidding.

Surrounding El-Soo stood the four old slaves of her father. They were age-twisted and palsied, faithful to their meat, a generation out of the past that watched unmoved the antics of younger life. In the front of the crowd were several Eldorado and Bonanza kings from the Upper Yukon, and beside them, on crutches, swollen with scurvy, were two broken prospectors. From the midst of the crowd, thrust out by its own vividness, appeared the face of a wild-eyed squaw from the remote regions of the Upper Tana-naw; a strayed Sitkan from the coast stood side by side with a Stick from Lake Le Barge, and, beyond, a half-dozen French-Canadian voyageurs, grouped by themselves. From afar came the faint cries of myriads of wild-fowl on the nesting-grounds. Swallows were skimming up overhead from the placid surface of the Yukon, and robins were singing. The oblique rays of the hidden sun shot through the smoke, high-dissipated from forest fires a thousand miles away, and turned the heavens to sombre red, while the earth shone red in the reflected glow. This red glow shone in the faces of all, and made everything seem unearthly and unreal.

The bidding began slowly. The Sitkan, who was a stranger in the land and who had arrived only half an hour before, offered one hundred dollars in a confident voice, and was surprised when Akoon turned threateningly upon him with the rifle. The bidding dragged. An Indian from the Tozikakat, a pilot, bid one hundred and fifty, and after some time a gambler, who had been ordered out of the Upper Country, raised the bid to two hundred. El-Soo was saddened; her pride was hurt; but the only effect was that she flamed more audaciously upon the crowd.

There was a disturbance among the onlookers as Porportuk forced his way to the front. "Five hundred dollars!" he bid in a loud voice, then looked about him proudly to note the effect.

He was minded to use his great wealth as a bludgeon with which to stun all competition at the start. But one of the voyageurs, looking on El-Soo with sparkling eyes, raised the bid a hundred.

"Seven hundred!" Porportuk returned promptly.

And with equal promptness came the "Eight hundred," of the voyageur.

Then Porportuk swung his club again. "Twelve hundred!" he shouted.

With a look of poignant disappointment, the voyageur succumbed. There was no further bidding. Tommy worked hard, but could not elicit a bid.

El-Soo spoke to Porportuk. “It were good, Porportuk, for you to weigh well your bid. Have you forgotten the thing I told you--that I would never marry you!”

“It is a public auction,” he retorted. “I shall buy you with a bill of sale. I have offered twelve hundred dollars. You come cheap.”

“Too damned cheap!” Tommy cried. “What if I am auctioneer? That does not prevent me from bidding. I’ll make it thirteen hundred.”

“Fourteen hundred,” from Porportuk.

“I’ll buy you in to be my--my sister,” Tommy whispered to El-Soo, then called aloud, “Fifteen hundred!”

At two thousand, one of the Eldorado kings took a hand, and Tommy dropped out.

A third time Porportuk swung the club of his wealth, making a clean raise of five hundred dollars. But the Eldorado king’s pride was touched. No man could club him. And he swung back another five hundred.

El-Soo stood at three thousand. Porportuk made it thirty-five hundred, and gasped when the Eldorado king raised it a thousand dollars. Porportuk again raised it five hundred, and again gasped when the king raised a thousand more.

Porportuk became angry. His pride was touched; his strength was challenged, and with him strength took the form of wealth. He would not be ashamed for weakness before the world. El-Soo became incidental. The savings and scrimpings from the cold nights of all his years were ripe to be squandered. El-Soo stood at six thousand. He made it seven thousand. And then, in thousand-dollar bids, as fast as they could be uttered, her price went up. At fourteen thousand the two men stopped for breath.

Then the unexpected happened. A still heavier club was swung. In the pause that ensued, the gambler, who had scented a speculation and formed a syndicate with several of his fellows, bid sixteen thousand dollars.

“Seventeen thousand,” Porportuk said weakly.

“Eighteen thousand,” said the king.

Porportuk gathered his strength. “Twenty thousand.”

The syndicate dropped out. The Eldorado king raised a thousand, and Porportuk raised back; and as they bid, Akoon turned from one to the other, half menacingly, half curiously, as though to see what manner of man it was that he would have to kill. When the king prepared to make his next bid, Akoon having pressed closer, the king first loosed the revolver at his hip, then said:--

"Twenty-three thousand."

"Twenty-four thousand," said Porportuk. He grinned viciously, for the certitude of his bidding had at last shaken the king. The latter moved over close to El-Soo. He studied her carefully, for a long while.

"And five hundred," he said at last.

"Twenty-five thousand," came Porportuk's raise.

The king looked for a long space, and shook his head. He looked again, and said reluctantly, "And five hundred."

"Twenty-six thousand," Porportuk snapped.

The king shook his head and refused to meet Tommy's pleading eye. In the meantime Akoon had edged close to Porportuk. El-Soo's quick eye noted this, and, while Tommy wrestled with the Eldorado king for another bid, she bent, and spoke in a low voice in the ear of a slave. And while Tommy's "Going--going--going--" dominated the air, the slave went up to Akoon and spoke in a low voice in his ear. Akoon made no sign that he had heard, though El-Soo watched him anxiously.

"Gone!" Tommy's voice rang out. "To Porportuk, for twenty-six thousand dollars."

Porportuk glanced uneasily at Akoon. All eyes were centred upon Akoon, but he did nothing.

"Let the scales be brought," said El-Soo.

"I shall make payment at my house," said Porportuk.

"Let the scales be brought," El-Soo repeated. "Payment shall be made here where all can see."

So the gold-scales were brought from the trading post, while Porportuk went away and came back with a man at his heels, on whose shoulders was a weight of gold-dust in moose-hide sacks. Also, at Porportuk's back, walked another man with a rifle, who had eyes only for Akoon.

"Here are the notes and mortgages," said Porportuk, "for fifteen thousand nine hundred and sixty-seven dollars and seventy-five cents."

El-Soo received them into her hands and said to Tommy, "Let them be reckoned as sixteen thousand."

"There remains ten thousand dollars to be paid in gold," Tommy said. Porportuk nodded, and untied the mouths of the sacks. El-Soo, standing at the edge of the bank, tore the papers to shreds and sent them fluttering out over the Yukon. The weighing began, but halted.

"Of course, at seventeen dollars," Porportuk had said to Tommy, as he adjusted the scales.

"At sixteen dollars," El-Soo said sharply.

"It is the custom of all the land to reckon gold at seventeen dollars for each ounce," Porportuk replied. "And this is a business transaction."

El-Soo laughed. "It is a new custom," she said. "It began this spring. Last year, and the years before, it was sixteen dollars an ounce. When my father's debt was made, it was sixteen dollars. When he spent at the store the money he got from you, for one ounce he was given sixteen dollars' worth of flour, not seventeen. Wherefore, shall you pay for me at sixteen, and not at seventeen." Porportuk grunted and allowed the weighing to proceed.

"Weigh it in three piles, Tommy," she said. "A thousand dollars here, three thousand here, and here six thousand."

It was slow work, and, while the weighing went on, Akoon was closely watched by all.

"He but waits till the money is paid," one said; and the word went around and was accepted, and they waited for what Akoon should do when the money was paid. And Porportuk's man with the rifle waited and watched Akoon.

The weighing was finished, and the gold-dust lay on the table in three dark-yellow heaps. "There is a debt of my father to the Company for three thousand dollars," said El-Soo. "Take it, Tommy, for the Company. And here are four old men, Tommy. You know them. And here is one thousand dollars. Take it, and see that the old men are never hungry and never without tobacco."

Tommy scooped the gold into separate sacks. Six thousand dollars remained on the table. El-Soo thrust the scoop into the heap, and with a sudden turn whirled the contents out and down to the Yukon in a golden shower. Porportuk seized her wrist as she thrust the scoop a second time into the heap.

"It is mine," she said calmly. Porportuk released his grip, but he gritted his teeth and scowled darkly as she continued to scoop the gold into the river till none was left.

The crowd had eyes for naught but Akoon, and the rifle of Porportuk's man lay across the hollow of his arm, the muzzle directed at Akoon a yard away, the man's thumb on the hammer. But Akoon did nothing.

"Make out the bill of sale," Porportuk said grimly.

And Tommy made out the bill of sale, wherein all right and title in the woman El-Soo was vested in the man Porportuk. El-Soo signed the document, and Porportuk folded it and put it away in his pouch. Suddenly his eyes flashed, and in sudden speech he addressed El-Soo.

"But it was not your father's debt," he said. "What I paid was the price for you. Your sale is business of to-day and not of last year and the years before. The ounces paid for you will buy at the post to-day seventeen dollars of flour, and not sixteen. I have lost a dollar on each ounce. I have lost six hundred and twenty-five dollars."

El-Soo thought for a moment, and saw the error she had made. She smiled, and then she laughed.

"You are right," she laughed. "I made a mistake. But it is too late. You have paid, and the gold is gone. You did not think quick. It is your loss. Your wit is slow these days, Porportuk. You are getting old."

He did not answer. He glanced uneasily at Akoon, and was reassured. His lips tightened, and a hint of cruelty came into his face. "Come," he said, "we will go to my house."

"Do you remember the two things I told you in the spring?" El-Soo asked, making no movement to accompany him.

"My head would be full with the things women say, did I heed them," he answered.

"I told you that you would be paid," El-Soo went on carefully. "And I told you that I would never be your wife."

"But that was before the bill of sale." Porportuk crackled the paper between his fingers inside the pouch. "I have bought you before all the world. You belong to me. You will not deny that you belong to me."

"I belong to you," El-Soo said steadily.

"I own you."

"You own me."

Porportuk's voice rose slightly and triumphantly. "As a dog, own you."

"As a dog you own me," El-Soo continued calmly. "But, Porportuk, you forget the thing I told you. Had any other man bought me, I should have been that man's wife. I should have been a good wife to that man. Such was my will. But my will with you was that I should never be your wife. Wherefore, I am your dog."

Porportuk knew that he played with fire, and he resolved to play firmly. "Then I speak to you, not as El-Soo, but as a dog," he said; "and I tell you to come with me." He half reached to grip her arm, but with a gesture she held him back.

"Not so fast, Porportuk. You buy a dog. The dog runs away. It is your loss. I am your dog. What if I run away?"

"As the owner of the dog, I shall beat you--"

"When you catch me?"

"When I catch you."

"Then catch me."

He reached swiftly for her, but she eluded him. She laughed as she circled around the table. "Catch her!" Porportuk commanded the Indian with the rifle, who stood near to her. But as the Indian stretched forth his arm to her, the Eldorado king felled him with a fist blow under the ear. The rifle clattered to the ground. Then was Akoon's chance. His eyes glittered, but he did nothing.

Porportuk was an old man, but his cold nights retained for him his activity. He did not circle the table. He came across suddenly, over the top of the table. El-Soo was taken off her guard. She sprang back with a sharp cry of alarm, and Porportuk would have caught her had it not been for Tommy. Tommy's leg went out. Porportuk tripped and pitched forward on the ground. El-Soo got her start.

"Then catch me," she laughed over her shoulder, as she fled away.

She ran lightly and easily, but Porportuk ran swiftly and savagely. He outran her. In his youth he had been swiftest of all the young men. But El-Soo dodged in a willowy, elusive way. Being in native dress, her feet were not cluttered with skirts, and her pliant body curved a flight that defied the gripping fingers of Porportuk.

With laughter and tumult, the great crowd scattered out to see the chase. It led through the Indian encampment; and ever dodging, circling, and reversing, El-Soo and Porportuk appeared and disappeared among the tents. El-Soo seemed to balance herself against the air with her arms, now one side, now on the other, and sometimes her body, too, leaned out upon the air far from the perpendicular as she achieved her sharpest curves. And

Porportuk, always a leap behind, or a leap this side or that, like a lean hound strained after her.

They crossed the open ground beyond the encampment and disappeared in the forest. Tana-naw Station waited their reappearance, and long and vainly it waited.

In the meantime Akoon ate and slept, and lingered much at the steamboat landing, deaf to the rising resentment of Tana-naw Station in that he did nothing. Twenty-four hours later Porportuk returned. He was tired and savage. He spoke to no one but Akoon, and with him tried to pick a quarrel. But Akoon shrugged his shoulders and walked away. Porportuk did not waste time. He outfitted half a dozen of the young men, selecting the best trackers and travellers, and at their head plunged into the forest.

Next day the steamer Seattle, bound up river, pulled in to the shore and wooded up. When the lines were cast off and she churned out from the bank, Akoon was on board in the pilot-house. Not many hours afterward, when it was his turn at the wheel, he saw a small birch-bark canoe put off from the shore. There was only one person in it. He studied it carefully, put the wheel over, and slowed down.

The captain entered the pilot-house. “What’s the matter?” he demanded. “The water’s good.”

Akoon grunted. He saw a larger canoe leaving the bank, and in it were a number of persons. As the Seattle lost headway, he put the wheel over some more.

The captain fumed. “It’s only a squaw,” he protested.

Akoon did not grunt. He was all eyes for the squaw and the pursuing canoe. In the latter six paddles were flashing, while the squaw paddled slowly.

“You’ll be aground,” the captain protested, seizing the wheel.

But Akoon countered his strength on the wheel and looked him in the eyes. The captain slowly released the spokes. “Queer beggar,” he sniffed to himself.

Akoon held the Seattle on the edge of the shoal water and waited till he saw the squaw’s fingers clutch the forward rail. Then he signalled for full speed ahead and ground the wheel over. The large canoe was very near, but the gap between it and the steamer was widening.

The squaw laughed and leaned over the rail. “Then catch me, Porportuk!” she cried.

Akoon left the steamer at Fort Yukon. He outfitted a small poling-boat and went up the Porcupine River. And with him went El-Soo. It was a weary journey, and the way led across the backbone of the world; but Akoon had travelled it before. When they came to the head-waters of the Porcupine, they left the boat and went on foot across the Rocky Mountains.

Akoon greatly liked to walk behind El-Soo and watch the movement of her. There was a music in it that he loved. And especially he loved the well-rounded calves in their sheaths of soft-tanned leather, the slim ankles, and the small moccasined feet that were tireless through the longest days.

"You are light as air," he said, looking up at her. "It is no labor for you to walk. You almost float, so lightly do your feet rise and fall. You are like a deer, El-Soo; you are like a deer, and your eyes are like deer's eyes, sometimes when you look at me, or when you hear a quick sound and wonder if it be danger that stirs. Your eyes are like a deer's eyes now as you look at me."

And El-Soo, luminous and melting, bent and kissed Akoon.

"When we reach the Mackenzie, we will not delay," Akoon said later. "We will go south before the winter catches us. We will go to the sunlands where there is no snow. But we will return. I have seen much of the world, and there is no land like Alaska, no sun like our sun, and the snow is good after the long summer."

"And you will learn to read," said El-Soo.

And Akoon said, "I will surely learn to read."

But there was delay when they reached the Mackenzie. They fell in with a band of Mackenzie Indians and, hunting, Akoon was shot by accident. The rifle was in the hands of a youth. The bullet broke Akoon's right arm and, ranging farther, broke two of his ribs. Akoon knew rough surgery, while El-Soo had learned some refinements at Holy Cross. The bones were finally set, and Akoon lay by the fire for them to knit. Also, he lay by the fire so that the smoke would keep the mosquitoes away.

Then it was that Porportuk, with his six young men, arrived. Akoon groaned in his helplessness and made appeal to the Mackenzies. But Porportuk made demand, and the Mackenzies were perplexed. Porportuk was for seizing upon El-Soo, but this they would not permit. Judgment must be given, and, as it was an affair of man and woman, the council of the old men was called--this that warm judgment might not be given by the young men, who were warm of heart.

The old men sat in a circle about the smudge-fire. Their faces were lean and wrinkled, and they gasped and panted for air. The smoke was not good for them. Occasionally they struck with withered hands at the mosquitoes that braved the smoke. After such exertion they coughed hollowly and painfully. Some spat blood, and one of them sat a bit apart with head bowed forward, and bled slowly and continuously at the mouth; the coughing sickness had gripped them. They were as dead men; their time was short. It was a judgment of the dead.

"And I paid for her a heavy price," Porportuk concluded his complaint. "Such a price you have never seen. Sell all that is yours--sell your spears and arrows and rifles, sell your skins and furs, sell your tents and boats and dogs, sell everything, and you will not have maybe a thousand dollars. Yet did I pay for the woman, El-Soo, twenty-six times the price of all your spears and arrows and rifles, your skins and furs, your tents and boats and dogs. It was a heavy price."

The old men nodded gravely, though their weazened eye-slits widened with wonder that any woman should be worth such a price. The one that bled at the mouth wiped his lips. "Is it true talk?" he asked each of Porportuk's six young men. And each answered that it was true.

"Is it true talk?" he asked El-Soo, and she answered, "It is true."

"But Porportuk has not told that he is an old man," Akoon said, "and that he has daughters older than El-Soo."

"It is true, Porportuk is an old man," said El-Soo.

"It is for Porportuk to measure the strength of his age," said he who bled at the mouth. "We be old men. Behold! Age is never so old as youth would measure it."

And the circle of old men champed their gums, and nodded approvingly, and coughed.

"I told him that I would never be his wife," said El-Soo.

"Yet you took from him twenty-six times all that we possess?" asked a one-eyed old man.

El-Soo was silent.

"It is true?" And his one eye burned and bored into her like a fiery gimlet.

"It is true," she said.

"But I will run away again," she broke out passionately, a moment later. "Always will I run away."

"That is for Porportuk to consider," said another of the old men. "It is for us to consider the judgment."

"What price did you pay for her?" was demanded of Akoon.

"No price did I pay for her," he answered. "She was above price. I did not measure her in gold-dust, nor in dogs, and tents, and furs."

The old men debated among themselves and mumbled in undertones. "These old men are ice," Akoon said in English. "I will not listen to their judgment, Porportuk. If you take El-Soo, I will surely kill you."

The old men ceased and regarded him suspiciously. "We do not know the speech you make," one said.

"He but said that he would kill me," Porportuk volunteered. "So it were well to take from him his rifle, and to have some of your young men sit by him, that he may not do me hurt. He is a young man, and what are broken bones to youth!"

Akoon, lying helpless, had rifle and knife taken from him, and to either side of his shoulders sat young men of the Mackenzies. The one-eyed old man arose and stood upright. "We marvel at the price paid for one mere woman," he began; "but the wisdom of the price is no concern of ours. We are here to give judgment, and judgment we give. We have no doubt. It is known to all that Porportuk paid a heavy price for the woman El-Soo. Wherefore does the woman El-Soo belong to Porportuk and none other." He sat down heavily, and coughed. The old men nodded and coughed.

"I will kill you," Akoon cried in English.

Porportuk smiled and stood up. "You have given true judgment," he said to the council, "and my young men will give to you much tobacco. Now let the woman be brought to me."

Akoon gritted his teeth. The young men took El-Soo by the arms. She did not resist, and was led, her face a sullen flame, to Porportuk.

"Sit there at my feet till I have made my talk," he commanded. He paused a moment. "It is true," he said, "I am an old man. Yet can understand the ways of youth. The fire has not all gone out of me. Yet am I no longer young, nor am I minded to run these old legs of mine through all the years that remain to me. El-Soo can run fast and well. She is a deer. This I know, for I have seen and run after her. It is not good that a wife should run so fast. I paid for her a heavy price, yet does she run away from me. Akoon paid no price at all, yet does she run to him.

"When I came among you people of the Mackenzie, I was of one mind. As I listened in the council and thought of the swift legs of El-Soo, I was of many minds. Now am I of one mind again, but it is a different mind from the one I brought to the council. Let me tell you my mind. When a dog runs once away from a master, it will run away again. No matter how many times it is brought back, each time it will run away again. When we have such dogs, we sell them. El-Soo is like a dog that runs away. I will sell her. Is there any man of the council that will buy?"

The old men coughed and remained silent.

"Akoon would buy," Porportuk went on, "but he has no money. Wherefore I will give El-Soo to him, as he said, without price. Even now will I give her to him."

Reaching down, he took El-Soo by the hand and led her across the space to where Akoon lay on his back.

"She has a bad habit, Akoon," he said, seating her at Akoon's feet. "As she has run away from me in the past, in the days to come she may run away from you. But there is no need to fear that she will ever run away, Akoon. I shall see to that. Never will she run away from you--this the word of Porportuk. She has great wit. I know, for often has it bitten into me. Yet am I minded myself to give my wit play for once. And by my wit will I secure her to you, Akoon."

Stooping, Porportuk crossed El-Soo's feet, so that the instep of one lay over that of the other; and then, before his purpose could be divined, he discharged his rifle through the two ankles. As Akoon struggled to rise against the weight of the young men, there was heard the crunch of the broken bone rebroken. "It is just," said the old men, one to another.

El-Soo made no sound. She sat and looked at her shattered ankles, on which she would never walk again.

"My legs are strong, El-Soo," Akoon said. "But never will they bear me away from you."

El-Soo looked at him, and for the first time in all the time he had known her, Akoon saw tears in her eyes.

"Your eyes are like deer's eyes, El-Soo," he said.

"Is it just?" Porportuk asked, and grinned from the edge of the smoke as he prepared to depart.

"It is just," the old men said. And they sat on in the silence.

Wonder of Woman

"Just the same, I notice you ain't tumbled over yourself to get married," Shorty remarked, continuing a conversation that had lapsed some few minutes before.

Smoke, sitting on the edge of the sleeping-robe and examining the feet of a dog he had rolled snarling on its back in the snow, did not answer. And Shorty, turning a steaming moccasin propped on a stick before the fire, studied his partner's face keenly.

"Cock your eye up at that there aurora borealis," Shorty went on. "Some frivolous, eh? Just like any shilly-shallyin', shirt-dancing woman. The best of them is frivolous, when they ain't foolish. And they's cats, all of 'em, the littlest an' the biggest, the nicest and the otherwise. They're sure devourin' lions an' roarin' hyenas when they get on the trail of a man they've cottoned to."

Again the monologue languished. Smoke cuffed the dog when it attempted to snap his hand, and went on examining its bruised and bleeding pads.

"Huh!" pursued Shorty. "Mebbe I couldn't 'a' married if I'd a mind to! An' mebbe I wouldn't 'a' been married without a mind to, if I hadn't hiked for tall timber. Smoke, d'you want to know what saved me? I'll tell you. My wind. I just kept a-runnin'. I'd like to see any skirt run me outa breath."

Smoke released the animal and turned his own steaming, stick-propped moccasins. "We've got to rest over to-morrow and make moccasins," he vouchsafed. "That little crust is playing the devil with their feet."

"We oughta keep goin' somehow," Shorty objected. "We ain't got grub enough to turn back with, and we gotta strike that run of caribou or them white Indians almighty soon or we'll be eatin' the dogs, sore feet an' all. Now who ever seen them white Indians anyway? Nothin' but hearsay. An' how can a Indian be white? A black white man'd be as natural. Smoke, we just oughta travel to-morrow. The country's plumb dead of game. We ain't seen even a rabbit-track in a week, you know that. An' we gotta get out of this dead streak into somewhere that meat's runnin'."

"They'll travel all the better with a day's rest for their feet and moccasins all around," Smoke counseled. "If you get a chance at any low divide, take a peep over at the country beyond. We're likely to strike open rolling country any time now. That's what La Perle told us to look for."

"Huh! By his own story, it was ten years ago that La Perle come through this section, an' he was that loco from hunger he couldn't know what he did see. Remember what he said of whoppin' big flags floatin' from the tops of the mountains? That shows how loco HE was. An' he said himself he never seen any white Indians--that was Anton's yarn. An', besides, Anton kicked the bucket two years before you an' me come to Alaska. But I'll take a look to-morrow. An' mebbe I might pick up a moose. What d' you say we turn in?"

Smoke spent the morning in camp, sewing dog-moccasins and repairing harnesses. At noon he cooked a meal for two, ate his share, and began to look for Shorty's return. An hour later he strapped on his snow-shoes and went out on his partner's trail. The way led up the bed of the stream, through a narrow gorge that widened suddenly into a moose-pasture. But no moose had been there since the first snow of the preceding fall. The tracks of Shorty's snow-shoes crossed the pasture and went up the easy slope of a low divide. At the crest Smoke halted. The tracks continued down the other slope. The first spruce-trees, in the creek bed, were a mile away, and it was evident that Shorty had passed through them and gone on. Smoke looked at his watch, remembered the oncoming darkness, the dogs, and the camp, and reluctantly decided against going farther. But before he retraced his steps he paused for a long look. All the eastern sky-line was saw-toothed by the snowy backbone of the Rockies. The whole mountain system, range upon range, seemed to trend to the northwest, cutting athwart the course to the open country reported by La Perle. The effect was as if the mountains conspired to thrust back the traveler toward the west and the Yukon. Smoke wondered how many men in the past, approaching as he had approached, had been turned aside by that forbidding aspect. La Perle had not been turned aside, but, then, La Perle had crossed over from the eastern slope of the Rockies.

Until midnight Smoke maintained a huge fire for the guidance of Shorty. And in the morning, waiting with camp broken and dogs harnessed for the first break of light, Smoke took up the pursuit. In the narrow pass of the canyon, his lead-dog pricked up its ears and whined. Then Smoke came upon the Indians, six of them, coming toward him. They were traveling light, without dogs, and on each man's back was the smallest of pack outfits. Surrounding Smoke, they immediately gave him several matters for surprise. That they were looking for him was clear. That they talked no Indian tongue of which he knew a word was also quickly made clear. They were not white Indians, though they were taller and heavier than the Indians of the Yukon basin. Five of them carried the old-fashioned, long-barreled Hudson Bay Company musket, and in the hands of the sixth was a Winchester rifle which Smoke knew to be Shorty's.

Nor did they waste time in making him a prisoner. Unarmed himself, Smoke could only submit. The contents of the sled were distributed among their own packs, and he was given a pack composed of his and Shorty's sleeping-furs. The dogs were unharnessed, and when Smoke protested, one of the Indians, by signs, indicated a trail too rough for sled-travel. Smoke bowed to the inevitable, cached the sled end-on in the snow on the bank above the stream, and trudged on with his captors. Over the divide to the north they went, down to the spruce-trees which Smoke had glimpsed the preceding afternoon. They followed the stream for a dozen miles, abandoning it when it trended to the west and heading directly eastward up a narrow tributary.

The first night was spent in a camp which had been occupied for several days. Here was cached a quantity of dried salmon and a sort of pemmican, which the Indians added to their packs. From this camp a trail of many snow-shoes led off--Shorty's captors, was Smoke's conclusion; and before darkness fell he succeeded in making out the tracks Shorty's narrower snow-shoes had left. On questioning the Indians by signs, they nodded affirmation and pointed to the north.

Always, in the days that followed, they pointed north; and always the trail, turning and twisting through a jumble of upstanding peaks, trended north. Everywhere, in this bleak snow-solitude, the way seemed barred, yet ever the trail curved and coiled, finding low divides and avoiding the higher and untraversable chains. The snow-fall was deeper than in the lower valleys, and every step of the way was snow-shoe work. Furthermore, Smoke's captors, all young men, traveled light and fast; and he could not forbear the prick of pride in the knowledge that he easily kept up with them. They were travel-hardened and trained to snow-shoes from infancy; yet such was his condition that the traverse bore no more of ordinary hardship to him than to them.

In six days they gained and crossed the central pass, low in comparison with the mountains it threaded, yet formidable in itself and not possible for loaded sleds. Five days more of tortuous winding, from lower altitude to lower altitude, brought them to the open, rolling, and merely hilly country La Perle had found ten years before. Smoke knew it with the first glimpse, on a sharp cold day, the thermometer forty below zero, the atmosphere so clear that he could see a hundred miles. Far as he could see rolled the open country. High in the east the Rockies still thrust their snowy ramparts heavenward. To the south and west extended the broken ranges of the projecting spur-system they had crossed. And in this vast pocket lay the country La Perle had traversed--snow-blanketed, but assuredly fat with game at some time in the year, and in the summer a smiling, forested, and flowered land.

Before midday, traveling down a broad stream, past snow-buried willows and naked aspens, and across heavily timbered flats of spruce, they came upon the site of a large camp, recently abandoned. Glancing as he went by, Smoke estimated four or five hundred fires, and guessed the population to be in the thousands. So fresh was the trail, and so well packed by the multitude, that Smoke and his captors took off their snow-shoes and in their moccasins struck a swifter pace. Signs of game appeared and grew plentiful--tracks of wolves and lynxes that without meat could not be. Once, one of the Indians cried out with satisfaction and pointed to a large area of open snow, littered with fang-polished skulls of caribou, trampled and disrupted as if an army had fought upon it. And Smoke knew that a big killing had been made by the hunters since the last snow-flurry.

In the long twilight no sign was manifested of making camp. They held steadily on through a deepening gloom that vanished under a sky of light--great, glittering stars half veiled by a greenish vapor of pulsing aurora borealis. His dogs first caught the noises of the camp, pricking their ears and whining in low eagerness. Then it came to the ears of the humans, a murmur, dim with distance, but not invested with the soothing grace that is common to distant murmurs. Instead, it was in a high, wild key, a beat of shrill sound broken by shriller sounds--the long wolf-howling of many wolf-dogs, a screaming of unrest and pain, mournful with hopelessness and rebellion. Smoke swung back the crystal of his watch and by the feel of finger-tips on the naked hands made out eleven o’clock. The men about him quickened. The legs that had lifted through a dozen strenuous hours lifted in a still swifter pace that was half a run and mostly a running jog. Through a dark spruce-flat they burst upon an abrupt glare of light from many fires and upon an abrupt increase of sound. The great camp lay before them.

And as they entered and threaded the irregular runways of the hunting-camp, a vast tumult, as in a wave, rose to meet them and rolled on with them--cries, greetings, questions and answers, jests and jests thrust back again, the snapping snarl of wolf-dogs rushing in furry projectiles of wrath upon Smoke's stranger dogs, the scolding of squaws, laughter, the whimpering of children and wailing of infants, the moans of the sick aroused afresh to pain, all the pandemonium of a camp of nerveless, primitive wilderness folk.

Striking with clubs and the butts of guns, Smoke's party drove back the attacking dogs, while his own dogs, snapping and snarling, awed by so many enemies, shrank in among the legs of their human protectors, and bristled along stiff-legged in menacing prance.

They halted in the trampled snow by an open fire, where Shorty and two young Indians, squatted on their hams, were broiling strips of caribou meat. Three other young Indians, lying in furs on a mat of spruce-boughs, sat up. Shorty looked across the fire at his partner, but with a sternly impassive face, like those of his companions, made no sign and went on broiling the meat.

"What's the matter?" Smoke demanded, half in irritation. "Lost your speech?"

The old familiar grin twisted on Shorty's face. "Nope," he answered. "I'm a Indian. I'm learnin' not to show surprise. When did they catch you?"

"Next day after you left."

"Hum," Shorty said, the light of whimsy dancing in his eyes. "Well, I'm doin' fine, thank you most to death. This is the bachelors' camp." He waved his hand to embrace its magnificence, which consisted of a fire, beds of spruce-boughs laid on top of the snow, flies of caribou skin, and wind-shields of twisted spruce and willow withes. "An' these are the bachelors." This time his hand indicated the young men, and he spat a few spoken gutturals in their own language that brought the white flash of acknowledgment from eyes and teeth. "They're glad to meet you, Smoke. Set down an' dry your moccasins, an' I'll cook up some grub. I'm gettin' the hang of the lingo pretty well, ain't I? You'll have to come to it, for it looks as if we'll be with these folks a long time. They's another white man here. Got caught six years ago. He's a Irishman they picked up over Great Slave Lake way. Danny McCan is what he goes by. He's settled down with a squaw. Got two kids already, but he'll skin out if ever the chance opens up. See that low fire over there to the right? That's his camp."

Apparently this was Smoke's appointed domicile, for his captors left him and his dogs, and went on deeper into the big camp. While he attended to his foot-gear and devoured strips of hot meat, Shorty cooked and talked.

"This is a sure peach of a pickle, Smoke--you listen to me. An' we got to go some to get out. These is the real, blowed-in-the-glass, wild Indians. They ain't white, but their chief is. He talks like a mouthful of hot mush, an' if he ain't full-blood Scotch they ain't no such thing as Scotch in the world. He's the hi-yu, skookum top-chief of the whole caboodle. What he says goes. You want to get that from the start-off. Danny McCan's been tryin' to get away from him for six years. Danny's all right, but he ain't got go in him. He knows a way out--learned it on huntin' trips--to the west of the way you an' me came. He ain't had the nerve to tackle it by his lonely. But we can pull it off, the three of us. Whiskers is the real goods, but he's mostly loco just the same."

"Who's Whiskers?" Smoke queried, pausing in the wolfing-down of a hot strip of meat.

"Why, he's the top geezer. He's the Scotcher. He's gettin' old, an' he's sure asleep now, but he'll see you to-morrow an' show you clear as print what a measly shrimp you are on his stompin'-grounds. These grounds belong to him. You got to get that into your noodle. They ain't never been explored, nor nothin', an' they're hisn. An' he won't let you forget it. He's got about twenty thousand square miles of huntin' country here all his own. He's the white Indian, him an' the skirt. Huh! Don't look at me that way. Wait till you see her. Some looker, an' all white, like her dad--he's Whiskers. An' say, caribou! I've saw 'em. A hundred thousan' of good running meat in the herd, an' ten thousan' wolves an' cats a-followin' an' livin' off the stragglers an' the leavin's. We leave the leavin's. The herd's movin' to the east, an' we'll be followin' 'em any day now. We eat our dogs, an' what we don't eat we smoke 'n cure for the spring before the salmon-run gets its sting in. Say, what Whiskers don't know about salmon an' caribou nobody knows, take it from me."

"Here comes Whiskers lookin' like he's goin' somewheres," Shorty whispered, reaching over and wiping greasy hands on the coat of one of the sled-dogs.

It was morning, and the bachelors were squatting over a breakfast of caribou-meat, which they ate as they broiled. Smoke glanced up and saw a small and slender man, skin-clad like any savage, but unmistakably white, striding in advance of a sled team and a following of a dozen Indians. Smoke cracked a hot bone, and while he sucked out the steaming marrow gazed at his approaching host. Bushy whiskers and yellowish gray hair, stained by camp smoke, concealed most of the face, but failed wholly to hide the gaunt, almost cadaverous, cheeks. It was a healthy leanness, Smoke decided, as he noted the wide flare of the nostrils and the breadth and depth of chest that gave spaciousness to the guaranty of oxygen and life.

"How do you do," the man said, slipping a mitten and holding out his bare hand. "My name is Snass," he added, as they shook hands.

"Mine's Bellew," Smoke returned, feeling peculiarly disconcerted as he gazed into the keen-searching black eyes.

"Getting plenty to eat, I see."

Smoke nodded and resumed his marrow-bone, the purr of Scottish speech strangely pleasant in his ears.

"Rough rations. But we don't starve often. And it's more natural than the hand-reared meat of the cities."

"I see you don't like cities," Smoke laughed, in order to be saying something; and was immediately startled by the transformation Snass underwent.

Quite like a sensitive plant, the man's entire form seemed to wilt and quiver. Then the recoil, tense and savage, concentered in the eyes, in which appeared a hatred that screamed of immeasurable pain. He turned abruptly away, and, recollecting himself, remarked casually over his shoulder:

"I'll see you later, Mr. Bellew. The caribou are moving east, and I'm going ahead to pick out a location. You'll all come on to-morrow."

"Some Whiskers, that, eh?" Shorty muttered, as Snass pulled on at the head of his outfit.

Again Shorty wiped his hands on the wolf-dog, which seemed to like it as it licked off the delectable grease.

Later on in the morning Smoke went for a stroll through the camp, busy with its primitive pursuits. A big body of hunters had just returned, and the men were scattering to their various fires. Women and children were departing with dogs harnessed to empty toboggan-sleds, and women and children and dogs were hauling sleds heavy with meat fresh from the killing and already frozen. An early spring cold-snap was on, and the wildness of the scene was painted in a temperature of thirty below zero. Woven cloth was not in evidence. Furs and soft-tanned leather clad all alike. Boys passed with bows in their hands, and quivers of bone-barbed arrows; and many a skinning-knife of bone or stone Smoke saw in belts or neck-hung sheaths. Women toiled over the fires, smoke-curing the meat, on their backs infants that stared round-eyed and sucked at lumps of tallow. Dogs, full-kin to wolves, bristled up to Smoke to endure the menace of the short club he carried and to whiff the odor of this newcomer whom they must accept by virtue of the club.

Segregated in the heart of the camp, Smoke came upon what was evidently Snass's fire. Though temporary in every detail, it was solidly constructed and was on a large scale. A great heap of bales of skins and outfit was piled on a scaffold out of reach of the dogs. A large canvas fly, almost half-tent, sheltered the sleeping-and living-quarters. To one side was a silk tent--the sort favored by explorers and wealthy big-game hunters. Smoke had never seen such a tent, and stepped closer. As he stood looking, the flaps parted and a young woman came out. So quickly did she move, so abruptly did she appear, that the effect on Smoke was as that of an apparition. He seemed to have the same effect on her, and for a long moment they gazed at each other.

She was dressed entirely in skins, but such skins and such magnificently beautiful fur-work Smoke had never dreamed of. Her parka, the hood thrown back, was of some strange fur of palest silver. The mukluks, with walrus-hide soles, were composed of the silver-padded feet of many lynxes. The long-gauntleted mittens, the tassels at the knees, all the varied furs of the costume, were pale silver that shimmered in the frosty light; and out of this shimmering silver, poised on slender, delicate neck, lifted her head, the rosy face blonde as the eyes were blue, the ears like two pink shells, the light chestnut hair touched with frost-dust and coruscating frost-glints.

All this and more, as in a dream, Smoke saw; then, recollecting himself, his hand fumbled for his cap. At the same moment the wonder-stare in the girl's eyes passed into a smile, and, with movements quick and vital, she slipped a mitten and extended her hand.

"How do you do," she murmured gravely, with a queer, delightful accent, her voice, silvery as the furs she wore, coming with a shock to Smoke's ears, attuned as they were to the harsh voices of the camp squaws.

Smoke could only mumble phrases that were awkwardly reminiscent of his best society manner.

“I am glad to see you,” she went on slowly and gropingly, her face a ripple of smiles. “My English you will please excuse. It is not good. I am English like you,” she gravely assured him. “My father he is Scotch. My mother she is dead. She is French, and English, and a little Indian, too. Her father was a great man in the Hudson Bay Company. Brrr! It is cold.” She slipped on her mitten and rubbed her ears, the pink of which had already turned to white. “Let us go to the fire and talk. My name is Labiskwee. What is your name?”

And so Smoke came to know Labiskwee, the daughter of Snass, whom Snass called Margaret.

“Snass is not my father’s name,” she informed Smoke. “Snass is only an Indian name.”

Much Smoke learned that day, and in the days that followed, as the hunting-camp moved on in the trail of the caribou. These were real wild Indians--the ones Anton had encountered and escaped from long years before. This was nearly the western limit of their territory, and in the summer they ranged north to the tundra shores of the Arctic, and eastward as far as the Luskwa. What river the Luskwa was Smoke could not make out, nor could Labiskwee tell him, nor could McCan. On occasion Snass, with parties of strong hunters, pushed east across the Rockies, on past the lakes and the Mackenzie and into the Barrens. It was on the last traverse in that direction that the silk tent occupied by Labiskwee had been found.

“It belonged to the Millicent-Adbury expedition,” Snass told Smoke.

“Oh! I remember. They went after musk-oxen. The rescue expedition never found a trace of them.”

“I found them,” Snass said. “But both were dead.”

“The world still doesn’t know. The word never got out.”

“The word never gets out,” Snass assured him pleasantly.

“You mean if they had been alive when you found them--?”

Snass nodded. “They would have lived on with me and my people.”

“Anton got out,” Smoke challenged.

“I do not remember the name. How long ago?”

“Fourteen or fifteen years,” Smoke answered.

"So he pulled through, after all. Do you know, I've wondered about him. We called him Long Tooth. He was a strong man, a strong man."

"La Perle came through here ten years ago."

Snass shook his head.

"He found traces of your camps. It was summer time."

"That explains it," Snass answered. "We are hundreds of miles to the north in the summer."

But, strive as he would, Smoke could get no clew to Snass's history in the days before he came to live in the northern wilds. Educated he was, yet in all the intervening years he had read no books, no newspapers. What had happened in the world he knew not, nor did he show desire to know. He had heard of the miners on the Yukon, and of the Klondike strike. Gold-miners had never invaded his territory, for which he was glad. But the outside world to him did not exist. He tolerated no mention of it.

Nor could Labiskwee help Smoke with earlier information. She had been born on the hunting-grounds. Her mother had lived for six years after. Her mother had been very beautiful--the only white woman Labiskwee had ever seen. She said this wistfully, and wistfully, in a thousand ways, she showed that she knew of the great outside world on which her father had closed the door. But this knowledge was secret. She had early learned that mention of it threw her father into a rage.

Anton had told a squaw of her mother, and that her mother had been a daughter of a high official in the Hudson Bay Company. Later, the squaw had told Labiskwee. But her mother's name she had never learned.

As a source of information, Danny McCan was impossible. He did not like adventure. Wild life was a horror, and he had had nine years of it. Shanghaied in San Francisco, he had deserted the whaleship at Point Barrow with three companions. Two had died, and the third had abandoned him on the terrible traverse south. Two years he had lived with the Eskimos before raising the courage to attempt the south traverse, and then, within several days of a Hudson Bay Company post, he had been gathered in by a party of Snass's young men. He was a small, stupid man, afflicted with sore eyes, and all he dreamed or could talk about was getting back to his beloved San Francisco and his blissful trade of bricklaying.

"You're the first intelligent man we've had," Snass complimented Smoke one night by the fire. "Except old Four Eyes. The Indians named him so. He wore glasses and was short-sighted. He was a professor of zoology."

(Smoke noted the correctness of the pronunciation of the word.) "He died a year ago. My young men picked him up strayed from an expedition on the upper Porcupine. He was intelligent, yes; but he was also a fool. That was his weakness--straying. He knew geology, though, and working in metals. Over on the Luskwa, where there's coal, we have several creditable hand-forges he made. He repaired our guns and taught the young men how. He died last year, and we really missed him. Strayed--that's how it happened--froze to death within a mile of camp."

It was on the same night that Snass said to Smoke:

"You'd better pick out a wife and have a fire of your own. You will be more comfortable than with those young bucks. The maidens' fires--a sort of feast of the virgins, you know--are not lighted until full summer and the salmon, but I can give orders earlier if you say the word."

Smoke laughed and shook his head.

"Remember," Snass concluded quietly, "Anton is the only one that ever got away. He was lucky, unusually lucky."

Her father had a will of iron, Labiskwee told Smoke.

"Four Eyes used to call him the Frozen Pirate--whatever that means--the Tyrant of the Frost, the Cave Bear, the Beast Primitive, the King of the Caribou, the Bearded Pard, and lots of such things. Four Eyes loved words like these. He taught me most of my English. He was always making fun. You could never tell. He called me his cheetah-chum after times when I was angry. What is cheetah? He always teased me with it."

She chattered on with all the eager naivete of a child, which Smoke found hard to reconcile with the full womanhood of her form and face.

Yes, her father was very firm. Everybody feared him. He was terrible when angry. There were the Porcupines. It was through them, and through the Luskwas, that Snass traded his skins at the posts and got his supplies of ammunition and tobacco. He was always fair, but the chief of the Porcupines began to cheat. And after Snass had warned him twice, he burned his log village, and over a dozen of the Porcupines were killed in the fight. But there was no more cheating. Once, when she was a little girl, there was one white man killed while trying to escape. No, her father did not do it, but he gave the order to the young men. No Indian ever disobeyed her father.

And the more Smoke learned from her, the more the mystery of Snass deepened.

“And tell me if it is true,” the girl was saying, “that there was a man and a woman whose names were Paolo and Francesca and who greatly loved each other?”

Smoke nodded.

“Four Eyes told me all about it,” she beamed happily. “And so he did not make it up, after all. You see, I was not sure. I asked father, but, oh, he was angry. The Indians told me he gave poor Four Eyes an awful talking to. Then there were Tristan and Iseult--two Iseults. It was very sad. But I should like to love that way. Do all the young men and women in the world do that? They do not here. They just get married. They do not seem to have time. I am English, and I will never marry an Indian--would you? That is why I have not lighted my maiden’s fire. Some of the young men are bothering father to make me do it. Libash is one of them. He is a great hunter. And Mahkook comes around singing songs. He is funny. To-night, if you come by my tent after dark, you will hear him singing out in the cold. But father says I can do as I please, and so I shall not light my fire. You see, when a girl makes up her mind to get married, that is the way she lets young men know. Four Eyes always said it was a fine custom. But I noticed he never took a wife. Maybe he was too old. He did not have much hair, but I do not think he was really very old. And how do you know when you are in love?--like Paolo and Francesca, I mean.”

Smoke was disconcerted by the clear gaze of her blue eyes. “Why, they say,” he stammered, “those who are in love say it, that love is dearer than life. When one finds out that he or she likes somebody better than everybody else in the world--why, then, they know they are in love. That’s the way it goes, but it’s awfully hard to explain. You just know it, that’s all.”

She looked off across the camp-smoke, sighed, and resumed work on the fur mitten she was sewing. “Well,” she announced with finality, “I shall never get married anyway.”

“Once we hit out we’ll sure have some tall runnin’,” Shorty said dismally.

“The place is a big trap,” Smoke agreed.

From the crest of a bald knob they gazed out over Snass’s snowy domain. East, west, and south they were hemmed in by the high peaks and jumbled ranges. Northward, the rolling country seemed interminable; yet they knew, even in that direction, that half a dozen transverse chains blocked the way.

“At this time of the year I could give you three days’ start,” Snass told Smoke that evening. “You can’t hide your trail, you see. Anton got away when the snow was gone. My young men can travel as fast as the best white man; and, besides, you would be breaking trail for them. And when the snow is off the ground, I’ll see to it that you don’t get the chance Anton had. It’s a good life. And soon the world fades. I have never quite got over the surprise of finding how easy it is to get along without the world.”

“What’s eatin’ me is Danny McCan,” Shorty confided to Smoke. “He’s a weak brother on any trail. But he swears he knows the way out to the westward, an’ so we got to put up with him, Smoke, or you sure get yours.”

“We’re all in the same boat,” Smoke answered.

“Not on your life. It’s a-comin’ to you straight down the pike.”

“What is?”

“You ain’t heard the news?”

Smoke shook his head.

“The bachelors told me. They just got the word. To-night it comes off, though it’s months ahead of the calendar.”

Smoke shrugged his shoulders.

“Ain’t interested in hearin’?” Shorty teased.

“I’m waiting to hear.”

“Well, Danny’s wife just told the bachelors,” Shorty paused impressively. “An’ the bachelors told me, of course, that the maidens’ fires is due to be lighted to-night. That’s all. Now how do you like it?”

“I don’t get your drift, Shorty.”

“Don’t, eh? Why, it’s plain open and shut. They’s a skirt after you, an’ that skirt is goin’ to light a fire, an’ that skirt’s name is Labiskwee. Oh, I’ve been watchin’ her watch you when you ain’t lookin’. She ain’t never lighted her fire. Said she wouldn’t marry a Indian. An’ now, when she lights her fire, it’s a cinch it’s my poor old friend Smoke.”

“It sounds like a syllogism,” Smoke said, with a sinking heart reviewing Labiskwee’s actions of the past several days.

“Cinch is shorter to pronounce,” Shorty returned. “An’ that’s always the way--just as we’re workin’ up our get-away, along comes a skirt to complicate everything. We ain’t got no luck. Hey! Listen to that, Smoke!”

Three ancient squaws had halted midway between the bachelors’ camp and the camp of McCan, and the oldest was declaiming in shrill falsetto.

Smoke recognized the names, but not all the words, and Shorty translated with melancholy glee.

“Labiskwee, the daughter of Snass, the Rainmaker, the Great Chief, lights her first maiden’s fire to-night. Maka, the daughter of Owits, the Wolf-Runner--“

The recital ran through the names of a dozen maidens, and then the three heralds tottered on their way to make announcement at the next fires.

The bachelors, who had sworn youthful oaths to speak to no maidens, were uninterested in the approaching ceremony, and to show their disdain they made preparations for immediate departure on a mission set them by Snass and upon which they had planned to start the following morning. Not satisfied with the old hunters’ estimates of the caribou, Snass had decided that the run was split. The task set the bachelors was to scout to the north and west in quest of the second division of the great herd.

Smoke, troubled by Labiskwee’s fire-lighting, announced that he would accompany the bachelors. But first he talked with Shorty and with McCan.

“You be there on the third day, Smoke,” Shorty said. “We’ll have the outfit an’ the dogs.”

“But remember,” Smoke cautioned, “if there is any slip-up in meeting me, you keep on going and get out to the Yukon. That’s flat. If you make it, you can come back for me in the summer. If I get the chance, I’ll make it, and come back for you.”

McCan, standing by his fire, indicated with his eyes a rugged mountain where the high western range out-jutted on the open country.

“That’s the one,” he said. “A small stream on the south side. We go up it. On the third day you meet us. We’ll pass by on the third day. Anywhere you tap that stream you’ll meet us or our trail.”

But the chance did not come to Smoke on the third day. The bachelors had changed the direction of their scout, and while Shorty and McCan plodded up the stream with their dogs, Smoke and the bachelors were sixty miles to the northeast picking up the trail of the second caribou herd. Several days later, through a dim twilight of falling snow, they came back to the big camp. A squaw ceased from wailing by a fire and darted up to Smoke. Harsh tongued, with bitter, venomous eyes, she cursed him, waving her arms toward a silent, fur-wrapped form that still lay on the sled which had hauled it in.

What had happened, Smoke could only guess, and as he came to McCan's fire he was prepared for a second cursing. Instead, he saw McCan himself industriously chewing a strip of caribou meat.

"I'm not a fightin' man," he whiningly explained. "But Shorty got away, though they're still after him. He put up a hell of a fight. They'll get him, too. He ain't got a chance. He plugged two bucks that'll get around all right. An' he croaked one square through the chest."

"Yes, I know," Smoke answered. "I just met the widow."

"Old Snass'll be wantin' to see you," McCan added. "Them's his orders. Soon as you come in you was to go to his fire. I ain't squealed. You don't know nothing. Keep that in mind. Shorty went off on his own along with me."

At Snass's fire Smoke found Labiskwee. She met him with eyes that shone with such softness and tenderness as to frighten him.

"I'm glad you did not try to run away," she said. "You see, I--" She hesitated, but her eyes didn't drop. They swam with a light unmistakable. "I lighted my fire, and of course it was for you. It has happened. I like you better than everybody else in the world. Better than my father. Better than a thousand Libashes and Mahkooks. I love. It is very strange. I love as Francesca loved, as Iseult loved. Old Four Eyes spoke true. Indians do not love this way. But my eyes are blue, and I am white. We are white, you and I."

Smoke had never been proposed to in his life, and he was unable to meet the situation. Worse, it was not even a proposal. His acceptance was taken for granted. So thoroughly was it all arranged in Labiskwee's mind, so warm was the light in her eyes, that he was amazed that she did not throw her arms around him and rest her head on his shoulder. Then he realized, despite her candor of love, that she did not know the pretty ways of love. Among the primitive savages such ways did not obtain. She had had no chance to learn.

She prattled on, chanting the happy burden of her love, while he strove to grip himself in the effort, somehow, to wound her with the truth. This, at the very first, was the golden opportunity.

"But, Labiskwee, listen," he began. "Are you sure you learned from Four Eyes all the story of the love of Paolo and Francesca?"

She clasped her hands and laughed with an immense certitude of gladness. "Oh! There is more! I knew there must be more and more of love!

I have thought much since I lighted my fire. I have--“

And then Snass strode in to the fire through the falling snowflakes, and Smoke’s opportunity was lost.

“Good evening,” Snass burred gruffly. “Your partner has made a mess of it. I am glad you had better sense.”

“You might tell me what’s happened,” Smoke urged.

The flash of white teeth through the stained beard was not pleasant. “Certainly, I’ll tell you. Your partner has killed one of my people. That sniveling shrimp, McCan, deserted at the first shot. He’ll never run away again. But my hunters have got your partner in the mountains, and they’ll get him. He’ll never make the Yukon basin. As for you, from now on you sleep at my fire. And there’ll be no more scouting with the young men. I shall have my eye on you.”

Smoke’s new situation at Snass’s fire was embarrassing. He saw more of Labiskwee than ever. In its sweetness and innocence, the frankness of her love was terrible. Her glances were love glances; every look was a caress. A score of times he nerved himself to tell her of Joy Gastell, and a score of times he discovered that he was a coward. The damnable part of it was that Labiskwee was so delightful. She was good to look upon. Despite the hurt to his self-esteem of every moment spent with her, he pleasured in every such moment. For the first time in his life he was really learning woman, and so clear was Labiskwee’s soul, so appalling in its innocence and ignorance, that he could not misread a line of it. All the pristine goodness of her sex was in her, uncultured by the conventionality of knowledge or the deceit of self-protection. In memory he reread his Schopenhauer and knew beyond all cavil that the sad philosopher was wrong. To know woman, as Smoke came to know Labiskwee, was to know that all woman-haters were sick men.

Labiskwee was wonderful, and yet, beside her face in the flesh burned the vision of the face of Joy Gastell. Joy had control, restraint, all the feminine inhibitions of civilization, yet, by the trick of his fancy and the living preachment of the woman before him, Joy Gastell was stripped to a goodness at par with Labiskwee’s. The one but appreciated the other, and all women of all the world appreciated by what Smoke saw in the soul of Labiskwee at Snass’s fire in the snow-land.

And Smoke learned about himself. He remembered back to all he knew of Joy Gastell, and he knew that he loved her. Yet he delighted in

Labiskwee. And what was this feeling of delight but love? He could demean it by no less a name. Love it was. Love it must be. And he was shocked to the roots of his soul by the discovery of this polygamous strain in his nature. He had heard it argued, in the San Francisco studios, that it was possible for a man to love two women, or even three women, at a time. But he had not believed it. How could he believe it when he had not had the experience? Now it was different. He did truly love two women, and though most of the time he was quite convinced that he loved Joy Gastell more, there were other moments when he felt with equal certainty that he loved Labiskwee more.

"There must be many women in the world," she said one day. "And women like men. Many women must have liked you. Tell me."

He did not reply.

"Tell me," she insisted.

"I have never married," he evaded.

"And there is no one else? No other Iseult out there beyond the mountains?"

Then it was that Smoke knew himself a coward. He lied. Reluctantly he did it, but he lied. He shook his head with a slow indulgent smile, and in his face was more of fondness than he dreamed as he noted Labiskwee's swift joy-transfiguration.

He excused himself to himself. His reasoning was jesuitical beyond dispute, and yet he was not Spartan enough to strike this child-woman a quivering heart-stroke.

Snass, too, was a perturbing factor in the problem. Little escaped his black eyes, and he spoke significantly.

"No man cares to see his daughter married," he said to Smoke. "At least, no man of imagination. It hurts. The thought of it hurts, I tell you. Just the same, in the natural order of life, Margaret must marry some time."

A pause fell; Smoke caught himself wondering for the thousandth time what Snass's history must be.

"I am a harsh, cruel man," Snass went on. "Yet the law is the law, and I am just. Nay, here with this primitive people, I am the law and the justice. Beyond my will no man goes. Also, I am a father, and all my days I have been cursed with imagination."

Whither his monologue tended, Smoke did not learn, for it was interrupted by a burst of chiding and silvery laughter from Labiskwee's tent, where she played with a new-caught wolf-cub. A spasm of pain twitched Snass's face.

"I can stand it," he muttered grimly. "Margaret must be married, and it is my fortune, and hers, that you are here. I had little hopes of Four Eyes. McCan was so hopeless I turned him over to a squaw who had lighted her fire twenty seasons. If it hadn't been you, it would have been an Indian. Libash might have become the father of my grandchildren."

And then Labiskwee came from her tent to the fire, the wolf-cub in her arms, drawn as by a magnet, to gaze upon the man, in her eyes the love that art had never taught to hide.

* * * * * *

"Listen to me," said McCan. "The spring thaw is here, an' the crust is comin' on the snow. It's the time to travel, exceptin' for the spring blizzards in the mountains. I know them. I would run with no less a man than you."

"But you can't run," Smoke contradicted. "You can keep up with no man. Your backbone is limber as thawed marrow. If I run, I run alone. The world fades, and perhaps I shall never run. Caribou meat is very good, and soon will come summer and the salmon."

Said Snass: "Your partner is dead. My hunters did not kill him. They found the body, frozen in the first of the spring storms in the mountains. No man can escape. When shall we celebrate your marriage?"

And Labiskwee: "I watch you. There is trouble in your eyes, in your face. Oh, I do know all your face. There is a little scar on your neck, just under the ear. When you are happy, the corners of your mouth turn up. When you think sad thoughts they turn down. When you smile there are three and four wrinkles at the corners of your eyes. When you laugh there are six. Sometimes I have almost counted seven. But I cannot count them now. I have never read books. I do not know how to read. But Four Eyes taught me much. My grammar is good. He taught me. And in his own eyes I have seen the trouble of the hunger for the world. He was often hungry for the world. Yet here was good meat, and fish in plenty, and the berries and the roots, and often flour came back for the furs through the Porcupines and the Luskwas. Yet was he hungry for the world. Is the world so good that you, too, are hungry for it? Four Eyes had nothing. But you have me." She sighed and shook her head. "Four Eyes died still hungry for the world. And if you lived here always would you, too, die hungry for the world? I am afraid I do not know the world. Do you want to run away to the world?"

Smoke could not speak, but by his mouth-corner lines was she convinced.

Minutes of silence passed, in which she visibly struggled, while Smoke cursed himself for the unguessed weakness that enabled him to speak the truth about his hunger for the world while it kept his lips tight on the truth of the existence of the other woman.

Again Labiskwee sighed.

“Very well. I love you more than I fear my father’s anger, and he is more terrible in anger than a mountain storm. You told me what love is. This is the test of love. I shall help you to run away back to the world.”

Smoke awakened softly and without movement. Warm small fingers touched his cheek and slid gently to a pressure on his lips. Fur, with the chill of frost clinging in it, next tingled his skin, and the one word, “Come,” was breathed in his ear. He sat up carefully and listened. The hundreds of wolf-dogs in the camp had lifted their nocturnal song, but under the volume of it, close at hand, he could distinguish the light, regular breathing of Snass.

Labiskwee tugged gently at Smoke’s sleeve, and he knew she wished him to follow. He took his moccasins and German socks in his hand and crept out into the snow in his sleeping moccasins. Beyond the glow from the dying embers of the fire, she indicated to him to put on his outer foot-gear, and while he obeyed, she went back under the fly where Snass slept.

Feeling the hands of his watch Smoke found it was one in the morning. Quite warm it was, he decided, not more than ten below zero. Labiskwee rejoined him and led him on through the dark runways of the sleeping camp. Walk lightly as they could, the frost crunched crisply under their moccasins, but the sound was drowned by the clamor of the dogs, too deep in their howling to snarl at the man and woman who passed.

“Now we can talk,” she said, when the last fire had been left half a mile behind.

And now, in the starlight, facing him, Smoke noted for the first time that her arms were burdened, and, on feeling, discovered she carried his snowshoes, a rifle, two belts of ammunition, and his sleeping-robes.

“I have everything fixed,” she said, with a happy little laugh. “I have been two days making the cache. There is meat, even flour, matches, and skees, which go best on the hard crust and, when they break through, the webs will hold up longer. Oh, I do know snow-travel, and we shall go fast, my lover."

Smoke checked his speech. That she had been arranging his escape was surprise enough, but that she had planned to go with him was more than he was prepared for. Unable to think immediate action, he gently, one by one, took her burdens from her. He put his arm around her and pressed her close, and still he could not think what to do.

"God is good," she whispered. "He sent me a lover."

Yet Smoke was brave enough not to suggest his going alone. And before he spoke again he saw all his memory of the bright world and the sun-lands reel and fade.

"We will go back, Labiskwee," he said. "You will be my wife, and we shall live always with the Caribou People."

"No! no!" She shook her head; and her body, in the circle of his arm, resented his proposal. "I know. I have thought much. The hunger for the world would come upon you, and in the long nights it would devour your heart. Four Eyes died of hunger for the world. So would you die. All men from the world hunger for it. And I will not have you die. We will go on across the snow mountains on the south traverse."

"Dear, listen," he urged. "We must go back."

She pressed her mitten against his lips to prevent further speech. "You love me. Say that you love me."

"I do love you, Labiskwee. You are my wonderful sweetheart."

Again the mitten was a caressing obstacle to utterance.

"We shall go on to the cache," she said with decision. "It is three miles from here. Come."

He held back, and her pull on his arm could not move him. Almost was he tempted to tell her of the other woman beyond the south traverse.

"It would be a great wrong to you to go back," she said. "I--I am only a wild girl, and I am afraid of the world; but I am more afraid for you. You see, it is as you told me. I love you more than anybody else in the world. I love you more than myself. The Indian language is not a good language. The English language is not a good language. The thoughts in my heart for you, as bright and as many as the stars--there is no language for them. How can I tell you them? They are there--see?"

As she spoke she slipped the mitten from his hand and thrust the hand inside the warmth of her parka until it rested against her heart. Tightly and steadily she pressed his hand in its position. And in the long silence he felt the beat, beat of her heart, and knew that every beat of it was love. And then, slowly, almost imperceptibly, still holding his hand, her body began to incline away from his and toward the direction of the cache. Nor could he resist. It was as if he were drawn by her heart itself that so nearly lay in the hollow of his hand.

So firm was the crust, frozen during the night after the previous day's surface-thaw, that they slid along rapidly on their skees.

"Just here, in the trees, is the cache," Labiskwee told Smoke.

The next moment she caught his arm with a startle of surprise. The flames of a small fire were dancing merrily, and crouched by the fire was McCan. Labiskwee muttered something in Indian, and so lashlike was the sound that Smoke remembered she had been called "cheetah" by Four Eyes.

"I was minded you'd run without me," McCan explained when they came up, his small peering eyes glimmering with cunning. "So I kept an eye on the girl, an' when I seen her caching skees an' grub, I was on. I've brought my own skees an' webs an' grub. The fire? Sure, an' it was no danger. The camp's asleep an' snorin', an' the waitin' was cold. Will we be startin' now?"

Labiskwee looked swift consternation at Smoke, as swiftly achieved a judgement on the matter, and spoke. And in the speaking she showed, child-woman though she was in love, the quick decisiveness of one who in other affairs of life would be no clinging vine.

"McCan, you are a dog," she hissed, and her eyes were savage with anger. "I know it is in your heart to raise the camp if we do not take you. Very well. We must take you. But you know my father. I am like my father. You will do your share of the work. You will obey. And if you play one dirty trick, it would be better for you if you had never run."

McCan looked up at her, his small pig-eyes hating and cringing, while in her eyes, turned to Smoke, the anger melted into luminous softness.

"Is it right, what I have said?" she queried.

Daylight found them in the belt of foothills that lay between the rolling country and the mountains. McCan suggested breakfast, but they held on. Not until the afternoon thaw softened the crust and prevented travel would they eat.

The foothills quickly grew rugged, and the stream, up whose frozen bed they journeyed, began to thread deeper and deeper canyons. The signs of spring were less frequent, though in one canyon they found foaming bits of open water, and twice they came upon clumps of dwarf willow upon which were the first hints of swelling buds.

Labiskwee explained to Smoke her knowledge of the country and the way she planned to baffle pursuit. There were but two ways out, one west, the other south. Snass would immediately dispatch parties of young men to guard the two trails. But there was another way south. True, it did no more than penetrate half-way into the high mountains, then, twisting to the west and crossing three divides, it joined the regular trail. When the young men found no traces on the regular trail they would turn back in the belief that the escape had been made by the west traverse, never dreaming that the runaways had ventured the harder and longer way around.

Glancing back at McCan, in the rear, Labiskwee spoke in an undertone to Smoke. “He is eating,” she said. “It is not good.”

Smoke looked. The Irishman was secretly munching caribou suet from the pocketful he carried.

“No eating between meals, McCan,” he commanded. “There’s no game in the country ahead, and the grub will have to be whacked in equal rations from the start. The only way you can travel with us is by playing fair.”

By one o’clock the crust had thawed so that the skees broke through, and before two o’clock the web-shoes were breaking through. Camp was made and the first meal eaten. Smoke took stock of the food. McCan’s supply was a disappointment. So many silver fox-skins had he stuffed in the bottom of the meat bag that there was little space left for meat.

“Sure an’ I didn’t know there was so many,” he explained. “I done it in the dark. But they’re worth good money. An’ with all this ammunition we’ll be gettin’ game a-plenty.”

“The wolves will eat you a-plenty,” was Smoke’s hopeless comment, while Labiskwee’s eyes flashed their anger.

Enough food for a month, with careful husbanding and appetites that never blunted their edge, was Smoke’s and Labiskwee’s judgment. Smoke apportioned the weight and bulk of the packs, yielding in the end to Labiskwee’s insistence that she, too, should carry a pack.

Next day the stream shallowed out in a wide mountain valley, and they were already breaking through the crust on the flats when they gained the harder surface of the slope of the divide.

“Ten minutes later and we wouldn’t have got across the flats,” Smoke said, when they paused for breath on the bald crest of the summit. “We must be a thousand feet higher here.”

But Labiskwee, without speaking, pointed down to an open flat among the trees. In the midst of it, scattered abreast, were five dark specks that scarcely moved.

“The young men,” said Labiskwee.

“They are wallowing to their hips,” Smoke said. “They will never gain the hard footing this day. We have hours the start of them. Come on, McCan. Buck up. We don’t eat till we can’t travel.”

McCan groaned, but there was no caribou suet in his pocket, and he doggedly brought up the rear.

In the higher valley in which they now found themselves, the crust did not break till three in the afternoon, at which time they managed to gain the shadow of a mountain where the crust was already freezing again. Once only they paused to get out McCan’s confiscated suet, which they ate as they walked. The meat was frozen solid, and could be eaten only after thawing over a fire. But the suet crumbled in their mouths and eased the palpitating faintness in their stomachs.

Black darkness, with an overcast sky, came on after a long twilight at nine o’clock, when they made camp in a clump of dwarf spruce. McCan was whining and helpless. The day’s march had been exhausting, but in addition, despite his nine years’ experience in the arctic, he had been eating snow and was in agony with his parched and burning mouth. He crouched by the fire and groaned, while they made the camp.

Labiskwee was tireless, and Smoke could not but marvel at the life in her body, at the endurance of mind and muscle. Nor was her cheerfulness forced. She had ever a laugh or a smile for him, and her hand lingered in caress whenever it chanced to touch his. Yet, always, when she looked at McCan, her face went hard and pitiless and her eyes flashed frostily.

In the night came wind and snow, and through a day of blizzard they fought their way blindly, missing the turn of the way that led up a small stream and crossed a divide to the west. For two more days they wandered, crossing other and wrong divides, and in those two days they dropped spring behind and climbed up into the abode of winter.

“The young men have lost our trail, an’ what’s to stop us restin’ a day?” McCan begged.

But no rest was accorded. Smoke and Labiskwee knew their danger. They were lost in the high mountains, and they had seen no game nor signs of game. Day after day they struggled on through an iron configuration of landscape that compelled them to labyrinthine canyons and valleys that led rarely to the west. Once in such a canyon, they could only follow it, no matter where it led, for the cold peaks and higher ranges on either side were unscalable and unendurable. The terrible toil and the cold ate up energy, yet they cut down the size of the ration they permitted themselves.

One night Smoke was awakened by a sound of struggling. Distinctly he heard a gasping and strangling from where McCan slept. Kicking the fire into flame, by its light he saw Labiskwee, her hands at the Irishman's throat and forcing from his mouth a chunk of partly chewed meat. Even as Smoke saw this, her hand went to her hip and flashed with the sheath-knife in it.

"Labiskwee!" Smoke cried, and his voice was peremptory.

The hand hesitated.

"Don't," he said, coming to her side.

She was shaking with anger, but the hand, after hesitating a moment longer, descended reluctantly to the sheath. As if fearing she could not restrain herself, she crossed to the fire and threw on more wood. McCan sat up, whimpering and snarling, between fright and rage spluttering an inarticulate explanation.

"Where did you get it?" Smoke demanded.

"Feel around his body," Labiskwee said.

It was the first word she had spoken, and her voice quivered with the anger she could not suppress.

McCan strove to struggle, but Smoke gripped him cruelly and searched him, drawing forth from under his armpit, where it had been thawed by the heat of his body, a strip of caribou meat. A quick exclamation from Labiskwee drew Smoke's attention. She had sprung to McCan's pack and was opening it. Instead of meat, out poured moss, spruce-needles, chips--all the light refuse that had taken the place of the meat and given the pack its due proportion minus its weight.

Again Labiskwee's hand went to her hip, and she flew at the culprit only to be caught in Smoke's arms, where she surrendered herself, sobbing with the futility of her rage.

"Oh, lover, it is not the food," she panted. "It is you, your life. The dog! He is eating you, he is eating you!"

"We will yet live," Smoke comforted her. "Hereafter he shall carry the flour. He can't eat that raw, and if he does I'll kill him myself, for he will be eating your life as well as mine." He held her closer. "Sweetheart, killing is men's work. Women do not kill."

"You would not love me if I killed the dog?" she questioned in surprise.

"Not so much," Smoke temporized.

She sighed with resignation. "Very well," she said. "I shall not kill him."

The pursuit by the young men was relentless. By miracles of luck, as well as by deduction from the topography of the way the runaways must take, the young men picked up the blizzard-blinded trail and clung to it. When the snow flew, Smoke and Labiskwee took the most improbable courses, turning east when the better way opened south or west, rejecting a low divide to climb a higher. Being lost, it did not matter. Yet they could not throw the young men off. Sometimes they gained days, but always the young men appeared again. After a storm, when all trace was lost, they would cast out like a pack of hounds, and he who caught the later trace made smoke signals to call his comrades on.

Smoke lost count of time, of days and nights and storms and camps. Through a vast mad phantasmagoria of suffering and toil he and Labiskwee struggled on, with McCan somehow stumbling along in the rear, babbling of San Francisco, his everlasting dream. Great peaks, pitiless and serene in the chill blue, towered about them. They fled down black canyons with walls so precipitous that the rock frowned naked, or wallowed across glacial valleys where frozen lakes lay far beneath their feet. And one night, between two storms, a distant volcano glared the sky. They never saw it again, and wondered whether it had been a dream.

Crusts were covered with yards of new snow, that crusted and were snow-covered again. There were places, in canyon-and pocket-drifts, where they crossed snow hundreds of feet deep, and they crossed tiny glaciers, in drafty rifts, wind-scurried and bare of any snow. They crept like silent wraiths across the faces of impending avalanches, or roused from exhausted sleep to the thunder of them. They made fireless camps above timber-line, thawing their meat-rations with the heat of their bodies ere they could eat. And through it all Labiskwee remained Labiskwee. Her cheer never vanished, save when she looked at McCan, and the greatest stupor of fatigue and cold never stilled the eloquence of her love for Smoke.

Like a cat she watched the apportionment of the meager ration, and Smoke could see that she grudged McCan every munch of his jaws. Once, she distributed the ration. The first Smoke knew was a wild harangue of protest from McCan. Not to him alone, but to herself, had she given a smaller portion than to Smoke. After that, Smoke divided the meat himself. Caught in a small avalanche one morning after a night of snow, and swept a hundred yards down the mountain, they emerged half-stifled and unhurt, but McCan emerged without his pack in which was all the flour. A second and larger snow-slide buried it beyond hope of recovery. After that, though the disaster had been through no fault of his, Labiskwee never looked at McCan, and Smoke knew it was because she dared not.

It was a morning, stark still, clear blue above, with white sun-dazzle on the snow. The way led up a long, wide slope of crust. They moved like weary ghosts in a dead world. No wind stirred in the stagnant, frigid calm. Far peaks, a hundred miles away, studding the backbone of the Rockies up and down, were as distinct as if no more than five miles away.

“Something is going to happen,” Labiskwee whispered. “Don’t you feel it?--here, there, everywhere? Everything is strange.”

“I feel a chill that is not of cold,” Smoke answered. “Nor is it of hunger.”

“It is in your head, your heart,” she agreed excitedly. “That is the way I feel it.”

“It is not of my senses,” Smoke diagnosed. “I sense something, from without, that is tingling me with ice; it is a chill of my nerves.”

A quarter of an hour later they paused for breath.

“I can no longer see the far peaks,” Smoke said.

“The air is getting thick and heavy,” said Labiskwee. “It is hard to breathe.”

“There be three suns,” McCan muttered hoarsely, reeling as he clung to his staff for support.

There was a mock sun on either side of the real sun.

“There are five,” said Labiskwee; and as they looked, new suns formed and flashed before their eyes.

“By Heaven, the sky is filled with suns beyant all countin’,” McCan cried in fear.

Which was true, for look where they would, half the circle of the sky dazzled and blazed with new suns forming.

McCan yelped sharply with surprise and pain. “I’m stung!” he cried out, then yelped again.

Then Labiskwee cried out, and Smoke felt a prickling stab on his cheek so cold that it burned like acid. It reminded him of swimming in the salt sea and being stung by the poisonous filaments of Portuguese men-of-war. The sensations were so similar that he automatically brushed his cheek to rid it of the stinging substance that was not there.

And then a shot rang out, strangely muffled. Down the slope were the young men, standing on their skees, and one after another opened fire.

“Spread out!” Smoke commanded. “And climb for it! We’re almost to the top. They’re a quarter of a mile below, and that means a couple of miles the start of them on the down-going of the other side.”

With faces prickling and stinging from invisible atmospheric stabs, the three scattered widely on the snow surface and toiled upward. The muffled reports of the rifles were weird to their ears.

“Thank the Lord,” Smoke panted to Labiskwee, “that four of them are muskets, and only one a Winchester. Besides, all these suns spoil their aim. They are fooled. They haven’t come within a hundred feet of us.”

“It shows my father’s temper,” she said. “They have orders to kill.”

“How strange you talk,” Smoke said. “Your voice sounds far away.”

“Cover your mouth,” Labiskwee cried suddenly. “And do not talk. I know what it is. Cover your mouth with your sleeve, thus, and do not talk.”

McCan fell first, and struggled wearily to his feet. And after that all fell repeatedly ere they reached the summit. Their wills exceeded their muscles, they knew not why, save that their bodies were oppressed by a numbness and heaviness of movement. From the crest, looking back, they saw the young men stumbling and falling on the upward climb.

“They will never get here,” Labiskwee said. “It is the white death. I know it, though I have never seen it. I have heard the old men talk. Soon will come a mist--unlike any mist or fog or frost-smoke you ever saw. Few have seen it and lived.”

McCan gasped and strangled.

“Keep your mouth covered,” Smoke commanded.

A pervasive flashing of light from all about them drew Smoke’s eyes upward to the many suns. They were shimmering and veiling. The air was filled with microscopic fire-glints. The near peaks were being blotted out by the weird mist; the young men, resolutely struggling nearer, were being engulfed in it. McCan had sunk down, squatting, on his skees, his mouth and eyes covered by his arms.

"Come on, make a start," Smoke ordered.

"I can't move," McCan moaned.

His doubled body set up a swaying motion. Smoke went toward him slowly, scarcely able to will movement through the lethargy that weighed his flesh. He noted that his brain was clear. It was only the body that was afflicted.

"Let him be," Labiskwee muttered harshly.

But Smoke persisted, dragging the Irishman to his feet and facing him down the long slope they must go. Then he started him with a shove, and McCan, braking and steering with his staff, shot into the sheen of diamond-dust and disappeared.

Smoke looked at Labiskwee, who smiled, though it was all she could do to keep from sinking down. He nodded for her to push off, but she came near to him, and side by side, a dozen feet apart, they flew down through the stinging thickness of cold fire.

Brake as he would, Smoke's heavier body carried him past her, and he dashed on alone, a long way, at tremendous speed that did not slacken till he came out on a level, crusted plateau. Here he braked till Labiskwee overtook him, and they went on, again side by side, with diminishing speed which finally ceased. The lethargy had grown more pronounced. The wildest effort of will could move them no more than at a snail's pace. They passed McCan, again crouched down on his skees, and Smoke roused him with his staff in passing.

"Now we must stop," Labiskwee whispered painfully, "or we will die. We must cover up--so the old men said."

She did not delay to untie knots, but began cutting her pack-lashings. Smoke cut his, and, with a last look at the fiery death-mist and the mockery of suns, they covered themselves over with the sleeping-furs and crouched in each other's arms. They felt a body stumble over them and fall, then heard feeble whimpering and blaspheming drowned in a violent coughing fit, and knew it was McCan who huddled against them as he wrapped his robe about him.

Their own lung-strangling began, and they were racked and torn by a dry cough, spasmodic and uncontrollable. Smoke noted his temperature rising in a fever, and Labiskwee suffered similarly. Hour after hour the coughing spells increased in frequency and violence, and not till late afternoon was the worst reached. After that the mend came slowly, and between spells they dozed in exhaustion.

McCan, however, steadily coughed worse, and from his groans and howls they knew he was in delirium. Once, Smoke made as if to throw the robes back, but Labiskwee clung to him tightly.

"No," she begged. "It is death to uncover now. Bury your face here, against my parka, and breathe gently and do no talking--see, the way I am doing."

They dozed on through the darkness, though the decreasing fits of coughing of one invariably aroused the other. It was after midnight, Smoke judged, when McCan coughed his last. After that he emitted low and bestial moanings that never ceased.

Smoke awoke with lips touching his lips. He lay partly in Labiskwee's arms, his head pillowed on her breast. Her voice was cheerful and usual. The muffled sound of it had vanished.

"It is day," she said, lifting the edge of the robes a trifle. "See, O my lover. It is day; we have lived through; and we no longer cough. Let us look at the world, though I could stay here thus forever and always. This last hour has been sweet. I have been awake, and I have been loving you."

"I do not hear McCan," Smoke said. "And what has become of the young men that they have not found us?"

He threw back the robes and saw a normal and solitary sun in the sky. A gentle breeze was blowing, crisp with frost and hinting of warmer days to come. All the world was natural again. McCan lay on his back, his unwashed face, swarthy from camp-smoke, frozen hard as marble. The sight did not affect Labiskwee.

"Look!" she cried. "A snow bird! It is a good sign."

There was no evidence of the young men. Either they had died on the other side of the divide or they had turned back.

There was so little food that they dared not eat a tithe of what they needed, nor a hundredth part of what they desired, and in the days that followed, wandering through the lone mountain-land, the sharp sting of life grew blunted and the wandering merged half into a dream. Smoke would become abruptly conscious, to find himself staring at the never-ending hated snow-peaks, his senseless babble still ringing in his ears. And the next he would know, after seeming centuries, was that again he was roused to the sound of his own maunderings. Labiskwee, too, was light-headed most of the time. In the main their efforts were unreasoned, automatic. And ever they worked toward the west, and ever they were baffled and thrust north or south by snow-peaks and impassable ranges.

"There is no way south," Labiskwee said. "The old men know. West, only west, is the way."

The young men no longer pursued, but famine crowded on the trail.

Came a day when it turned cold, and a thick snow, that was not snow but frost crystals of the size of grains of sand, began to fall. All day and night it fell, and for three days and nights it continued to fall. It was impossible to travel until it crusted under the spring sun, so they lay in their furs and rested, and ate less because they rested. So small was the ration they permitted that it gave no appeasement to the hunger pang that was much of the stomach, but more of the brain. And Labiskwee, delirious, maddened by the taste of her tiny portion, sobbing and mumbling, yelping sharp little animal cries of joy, fell upon the next day's portion and crammed it into her mouth.

Then it was given to Smoke to see a wonderful thing. The food between her teeth roused her to consciousness. She spat it out, and with a great anger struck herself with her clenched fist on the offending mouth.

It was given to Smoke to see many wonderful things in the days yet to come. After the long snow-fall came on a great wind that drove the dry and tiny frost-particles as sand is driven in a sand-storm. All through the night the sand-frost drove by, and in the full light of a clear and wind-blown day, Smoke looked with swimming eyes and reeling brain upon what he took to be the vision of a dream. All about towered great peaks and small, lone sentinels and groups and councils of mighty Titans. And from the tip of every peak, swaying, undulating, flaring out broadly against the azure sky, streamed gigantic snow-banners, miles in length, milky and nebulous, ever waving lights and shadows and flashing silver from the sun.

"Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord," Smoke chanted, as he gazed upon these dusts of snow wind-driven into sky-scarves of shimmering silken light.

And still he gazed, and still the bannered peaks did not vanish, and still he considered that he dreamed, until Labiskwee sat up among the furs.

"I dream, Labiskwee," he said. "Look. Do you, too, dream within my dream?"

“It is no dream,” she replied. “This have the old men told me. And after this will blow the warm winds, and we shall live and win west.”

Smoke shot a snow-bird, and they divided it. Once, in a valley where willows budded standing in the snow, he shot a snowshoe rabbit. Another time he got a lean, white weasel. This much of meat they encountered, and no more, though, once, half-mile high and veering toward the west and the Yukon, they saw a wild-duck wedge drive by.

“It is summer in the lower valleys,” said Labiskwee. “Soon it will be summer here.”

Labiskwee’s face had grown thin, but the bright, large eyes were brighter and larger, and when she looked at him she was transfigured by a wild, unearthly beauty.

The days lengthened, and the snow began to sink. Each day the crust thawed, each night it froze again; and they were afoot early and late, being compelled to camp and rest during the midday hours of thaw when the crust could not bear their weight. When Smoke grew snow-blind, Labiskwee towed him on a thong tied to her waist. And when she was so blinded, she towed behind a thong to his waist. And starving, in a deeper dream, they struggled on through an awakening land bare of any life save their own.

Exhausted as he was, Smoke grew almost to fear sleep, so fearful and bitter were the visions of that mad, twilight land. Always were they of food, and always was the food, at his lips, snatched away by the malign deviser of dreams. He gave dinners to his comrades of the old San Francisco days, himself, with whetting appetite and jealous eye, directing the arrangements, decorating the table with crimson-leafed runners of the autumn grape. The guests were dilatory, and while he greeted them and all sparkled with their latest cleverness, he was frantic with desire for the table. He stole to it, unobserved, and clutched a handful of black ripe olives, and turned to meet still another guest. And others surrounded him, and the laugh and play of wit went on, while all the time, hidden in his closed hand, was this madness of ripe olives.

He gave many such dinners, all with the same empty ending. He attended Gargantuan feasts, where multitudes fed on innumerable bullocks roasted whole, prying them out of smoldering pits and with sharp knives slicing great strips of meat from the steaming carcasses. He stood, with mouth agape, beneath long rows of turkeys which white-aproned shopmen sold. And everybody bought save Smoke, mouth still agape, chained by a leadenness of movement to the pavement. A boy again, he sat with spoon poised high above great bowls of bread and milk. He pursued shy heifers through upland pastures and centuries of torment in vain effort to steal from them their milk, and in noisome dungeons he fought with rats for scraps and refuse. There was no food that was not a madness to him, and he wandered through vast stables, where fat horses stood in mile-long rows of stalls, and sought but never found the bran-bins from which they fed.

Once, only, he dreamed to advantage. Famishing, shipwrecked or marooned, he fought with the big Pacific surf for rock-clinging mussels, and carried them up the sands to the dry flotsam of the spring tides. Of this he built a fire, and among the coals he laid his precious trove. He watched the steam jet forth and the locked shells pop apart, exposing the salmon-colored meat. Cooked to a turn--he knew it; and this time there was no intruding presence to whisk the meal away. At last--so he dreamed within the dream--the dream would come true. This time he would eat. Yet in his certitude he doubted, and he was steeled for the inevitable shift of vision until the salmon-colored meat, hot and savory, was in his mouth. His teeth closed upon it. He ate! The miracle had happened! The shock aroused him. He awoke in the dark, lying on his back, and heard himself mumbling little piggish squeals and grunts of joy. His jaws were moving, and between his teeth meat was crunching. He did not move, and soon small fingers felt about his lips, and between them was inserted a tiny sliver of meat. And in that he would eat no more, rather than that he was angry, Labiskwee cried and in his arms sobbed herself to sleep. But he lay on awake, marveling at the love and the wonder of woman.

The time came when the last food was gone. The high peaks receded, the divides became lower, and the way opened promisingly to the west. But their reserves of strength were gone, and, without food, the time quickly followed when they lay down at night and in the morning did not arise. Smoke weakly gained his feet, collapsed, and on hands and knees crawled about the building of a fire. But try as she would Labiskwee sank back each time in an extremity of weakness. And Smoke sank down beside her, a wan sneer on his face for the automatism that had made him struggle for an unneeded fire. There was nothing to cook, and the day was warm. A gentle breeze sighed in the spruce-trees, and from everywhere, under the disappearing snow, came the trickling music of unseen streamlets.

Labiskwee lay in a stupor, her breathing so imperceptible that often Smoke thought her dead. In the afternoon the chattering of a squirrel aroused him. Dragging the heavy rifle, he wallowed through the crust that had become slush. He crept on hands and knees, or stood upright and fell forward in the direction of the squirrel that chattered its wrath and fled slowly and tantalizingly before him. He had not the strength for a quick shot, and the squirrel was never still. At times Smoke sprawled in the wet snow-melt and cried out of weakness. Other times the flame of his life flickered, and blackness smote him. How long he lay in the last faint he did not know, but he came to, shivering in the chill of evening, his wet clothing frozen to the re-forming crust. The squirrel was gone, and after a weary struggle he won back to the side of Labiskwee. So profound was his weakness that he lay like a dead man through the night, nor did dreams disturb him.

The sun was in the sky, the same squirrel chattering through the trees, when Labiskwee's hand on Smoke's cheek awakened him.

"Put your hand on my heart, lover," she said, her voice clear but faint and very far away. "My heart is my love, and you hold it in your hand."

A long time seemed to go by, ere she spoke again.

"Remember always, there is no way south. That is well known to the Caribou People. West--that is the way--and you are almost there--and you will make it."

And Smoke drowsed in the numbness that is near to death, until once more she aroused him.

"Put your lips on mine," she said. "I will die so."

"We will die together, sweetheart," was his answer.

"No." A feeble flutter of her hand checked him, and so thin was her voice that scarcely did he hear it, yet did he hear all of it. Her hand fumbled and groped in the hood of her parka, and she drew forth a pouch that she placed in his hand. "And now your lips, my lover. Your lips on my lips, and your hand on my heart."

And in that long kiss darkness came upon him again, and when again he was conscious he knew that he was alone and he knew that he was to die. He was wearily glad that he was to die.

He found his hand resting on the pouch. With an inward smile at the curiosity that made him pull the draw-string, he opened it. Out poured a tiny flood of food. There was no particle of it that he did not recognize, all stolen by Labiskwee from Labiskwee--bread-fragments saved far back in the days ere McCan lost the flour; strips and strings of caribou-meat, partly gnawed; crumbles of suet; the hind-leg of the snowshoe rabbit, untouched; the hind-leg and part of the fore-leg of the white weasel; the wing dented still by her reluctant teeth, and the leg of the snow-bird--pitiful remnants, tragic renunciations, crucifixions of life, morsels stolen from her terrible hunger by her incredible love.

With maniacal laughter Smoke flung it all out on the hardening snow-crust and went back into the blackness.

He dreamed. The Yukon ran dry. In its bed, among muddy pools of water and ice-scoured rocks, he wandered, picking up fat nugget-gold. The weight of it grew to be a burden to him, till he discovered that it was good to eat. And greedily he ate. After all, of what worth was gold that men should prize it so, save that it was good to eat?

He awoke to another sun. His brain was strangely clear. No longer did his eyesight blur. The familiar palpitation that had vexed him through all his frame was gone. The juices of his body seemed to sing, as if the spring had entered in. Blessed well-being had come to him. He turned to awaken Labiskwee, and saw, and remembered. He looked for the food flung out on the snow. It was gone. And he knew that in delirium and dream it had been the Yukon nugget-gold. In delirium and dream he had taken heart of life from the life sacrifice of Labiskwee, who had put her heart in his hand and opened his eyes to woman and wonder.

He was surprised at the ease of his movements, astounded that he was able to drag her fur-wrapped body to the exposed thawed gravel-bank, which he undermined with the ax and caved upon her.

Three days, with no further food, he fought west. In the mid third day he fell beneath a lone spruce beside a wide stream that ran open and which he knew must be the Klondike. Ere blackness conquered him, he unlashed his pack, said good-by to the bright world, and rolled himself in the robes.

Chirping, sleepy noises awoke him. The long twilight was on. Above him, among the spruce boughs, were ptarmigan. Hunger bit him into instant action, though the action was infinitely slow. Five minutes passed before he was able to get his rifle to his shoulder, and a second five minutes passed ere he dared, lying on his back and aiming straight upward, to pull the trigger. It was a clean miss. No bird fell, but no bird flew. They ruffled and rustled stupidly and drowsily. His shoulder pained him. A second shot was spoiled by the involuntary wince he made as he pulled trigger. Somewhere, in the last three days, though he had no recollection how, he must have fallen and injured it.

The ptarmigan had not flown. He doubled and redoubled the robe that had covered him, and humped it in the hollow between his right arm and his side. Resting the butt of the rifle on the fur, he fired again, and a bird fell. He clutched it greedily and found that he had shot most of the meat out of it. The large-caliber bullet had left little else than a mess of mangled feathers. Still the ptarmigan did not fly, and he decided that it was heads or nothing. He fired only at heads. He reloaded and reloaded the magazine. He missed; he hit; and the stupid ptarmigan, that were loath to fly, fell upon him in a rain of food--lives disrupted that his life might feed and live. There had been nine of them, and in the end he clipped the head of the ninth, and lay and laughed and wept he knew not why.

The first he ate raw. Then he rested and slept, while his life assimilated the life of it. In the darkness he awoke, hungry, with strength to build a fire. And until early dawn he cooked and ate, crunching the bones to powder between his long-idle teeth. He slept, awoke in the darkness of another night, and slept again to another sun.

He noted with surprise that the fire crackled with fresh fuel and that a blackened coffee-pot steamed on the edge of the coals. Beside the fire, within arm’s length, sat Shorty, smoking a brown-paper cigarette and intently watching him. Smoke’s lips moved, but a throat paralysis seemed to come upon him, while his chest was suffused with the menace of tears. He reached out his hand for the cigarette and drew the smoke deep into his lungs again and again.

“I have not smoked for a long time,” he said at last, in a low calm voice. “For a very long time.”

“Nor eaten, from your looks,” Shorty added gruffly.

Smoke nodded and waved his hand at the ptarmigan feathers that lay all about.

“Not until recently,” he returned. “Do you know, I’d like a cup of coffee. It will taste strange. Also flapjacks and a strip of bacon.”

“And beans?” Shorty tempted.

“They would taste heavenly. I find I am quite hungry again.”

While the one cooked and the other ate, they told briefly what had happened to them in the days since their separation.

"The Klondike was breakin' up," Shorty concluded his recital, "an' we just had to wait for open water. Two polin' boats, six other men--you know 'em all, an' crackerjacks--an' all kinds of outfit. An' we've sure been a-comin'--polin', linin' up, and portagin'. But the falls'll stick 'em a solid week. That's where I left 'em a-cuttin' a trail over the tops of the bluffs for the boats. I just had a sure natural hunch to keep a-comin'. So I fills a pack with grub an' starts. I knew I'd find you a-driftin' an' all in."

Smoke nodded, and put forth his hand in a silent grip. "Well, let's get started," he said.

"Started hell!" Shorty exploded. "We stay right here an' rest you up an' feed you up for a couple of days."

Smoke shook his head.

"If you could just see yourself," Shorty protested.

And what he saw was not nice. Smoke's face, wherever the skin showed, was black and purple and scabbed from repeated frost-bite. The cheeks were fallen in, so that, despite the covering of beard, the upper rows of teeth ridged the shrunken flesh. Across the forehead and about the deep-sunk eyes, the skin was stretched drum-tight, while the scraggly beard, that should have been golden, was singed by fire and filthy with camp-smoke.

"Better pack up," Smoke said. "I'm going on."

"But you're feeble as a kid baby. You can't hike. What's the rush?"

"Shorty, I am going after the biggest thing in the Klondike, and I can't wait. That's all. Start packing. It's the biggest thing in the world. It's bigger than lakes of gold and mountains of gold, bigger than adventure, and meat-eating, and bear-killing."

Shorty sat with bulging eyes. "In the name of the Lord, what is it?" he queried huskily. "Or are you just simple loco?"

"No, I'm all right. Perhaps a fellow has to stop eating in order to see things. At any rate, I have seen things I never dreamed were in the world. I know what a woman is,--now.

Shorty's mouth opened, and about the lips and in the light of the eyes was the whimsical advertisement of the sneer forthcoming.

"Don't, please," Smoke said gently. "You don't know. I do."

Shorty gulped and changed his thought. "Huh! I don't need no hunch to guess HER name. The rest of 'em has gone up to the drainin' of Surprise Lake, but Joy Gastell allowed she wouldn't go. She's stickin' around

Dawson, waitin’ to see if I come back with you. An’ she sure swears, if I don’t, she’ll sell her holdin’s an’ hire a army of gun-fighters, an’ go into the Caribou Country an’ knock the everlastin’ stuffin’ outa old Snass an’ his whole gang. An’ if you’ll hold your horses a couple of shakes, I reckon I’ll get packed up an’ ready to hike along with you.”

Yah! Yah! Yah!

He was a whiskey-guzzling Scotchman, and he downed his whiskey neat, beginning with his first tot punctually at six in the morning, and thereafter repeating it at regular intervals throughout the day till bedtime, which was usually midnight. He slept but five hours out of the twenty-four, and for the remaining nineteen hours he was quietly and decently drunk. During the eight weeks I spent with him on Oolong Atoll, I never saw him draw a sober breath. In fact, his sleep was so short that he never had time to sober up. It was the most beautiful and orderly perennial drunk I have ever observed.

McAllister was his name. He was an old man, and very shaky on his pins. His hand trembled as with a palsy, especially noticeable when he poured his whiskey, though I never knew him to spill a drop. He had been twenty-eight years in Melanesia, ranging from German New Guinea to the German Solomons, and so thoroughly had he become identified with that portion of the world, that he habitually spoke in that bastard lingo called "bech-de-mer." Thus, in conversation with me, SUN HE COME UP meant sunrise; KAI-KAI HE STOP meant that dinner was served; and BELLY BELONG ME WALK ABOUT meant that he was sick at his stomach. He was a small man, and a withered one, burned inside and outside by ardent spirits and ardent sun. He was a cinder, a bit of a clinker of a man, a little animated clinker, not yet quite cold, that moved stiffly and by starts and jerks like an automaton. A gust of wind would have blown him away. He weighed ninety pounds.

But the immense thing about him was the power with which he ruled. Oolong Atoll was one hundred and forty miles in circumference. One steered by compass course in its lagoon. It was populated by five thousand Polynesians, all strapping men and women, many of them standing six feet in height and weighing a couple of hundred pounds. Oolong was two hundred and fifty miles from the nearest land. Twice a year a little schooner called to collect copra. The one white man on Oolong was McAllister, petty trader and unintermittent guzzler; and he ruled Oolong and its six thousand savages with an iron hand. He said come, and they came, go, and they went. They never questioned his will nor judgment. He was cantankerous as only an aged Scotchman can be, and interfered continually in their personal affairs. When Nugu, the king’s daughter, wanted to marry Haunau from the other end of the atoll, her father said yes; but McAllister said no, and the marriage never came off. When the king wanted to buy a certain islet in the lagoon from the chief priest, McAllister said no. The king was in debt to the Company to the tune of 180,000 cocoanuts, and until that was paid he was not to spend a single cocoanut on anything else.

And yet the king and his people did not love McAllister. In truth, they hated him horribly, and, to my knowledge, the whole population, with the priests at the head, tried vainly for three months to pray him to death. The devil-devils they sent after him were awe-inspiring, but since McAllister did not believe in devil-devils, they were without power over him. With drunken Scotchmen all signs fail. They gathered up scraps of food which had touched his lips, an empty whiskey bottle, a cocoanut from which he had drunk, and even his spittle, and performed all kinds of deviltries over them. But McAllister lived on. His health was superb. He never caught fever; nor coughs nor colds; dysentery passed him by; and the malignant ulcers and vile skin diseases that attack blacks and whites alike in that climate never fastened upon him. He must have been so saturated with alcohol as to defy the lodgment of germs. I used to imagine them falling to the ground in showers of microscopic cinders as fast as they entered his whiskey-sodden aura. No one loved him, not even germs, while he loved only whiskey, and still he lived.

I was puzzled. I could not understand six thousand natives putting up with that withered shrimp of a tyrant. It was a miracle that he had not died suddenly long since. Unlike the cowardly Melanesians, the people were high-stomached and warlike. In the big graveyard, at head and feet of the graves, were relics of past sanguinary history--blubber-spades, rusty old bayonets and cutlasses, copper bolts, rudder-irons, harpoons, bomb guns, bricks that could have come from nowhere but a whaler’s trying-out furnace, and old brass pieces of the sixteenth century that verified the traditions of the early Spanish navigators. Ship after ship had come to grief on Oolong. Not thirty years before, the whaler BLENNERDALE, running into the lagoon for repair, had been cut off with all hands. In similar fashion had the crew of the GASKET, a sandalwood trader, perished. There was a big French bark, the TOULON, becalmed off the atoll, which the islanders boarded after a sharp tussle and wrecked in the Lipau Passage, the captain and a handful of sailors escaping in the longboat. Then there were the

Spanish pieces, which told of the loss of one of the early explorers. All this, of the vessels named, is a matter of history, and is to be found in the SOUTH PACIFIC SAILING DIRECTORY. But that there was other history, unwritten, I was yet to learn. In the meantime I puzzled why six thousand primitive savages let one degenerate Scotch despot live.

One hot afternoon McAllister and I sat on the veranda looking out over the lagoon, with all its wonder of jeweled colors. At our backs, across the hundred yards of palm-studded sand, the outer surf roared on the reef. It was dreadfully warm. We were in four degree south latitude and the sun was directly overhead, having crossed the Line a few days before on its journey south. There was no wind--not even a catspaw. The season of the southeast trade was drawing to an early close, and the northwest monsoon had not yet begun to blow.

“They can’t dance worth a damn,” said McAllister.

I had happened to mention that the Polynesian dances were superior to the Papuan, and this McAllister had denied, for no other reason than his cantankerousness. But it was too not to argue, and I said nothing. Besides, I had never seen the Oolong people dance.

“I’ll prove it to you,” he announced, beckoning to the black New Hanover boy, a labor recruit, who served as cook and general house servant. “Hey, you, boy, you tell ‘m one fella king come along me.”

The boy departed, and back came the prime minister, perturbed, ill at ease, and garrulous with apologetic explanation. In short, the king slept, and was not to be disturbed.

“King he plenty strong fella sleep,” was his final sentence.

McAllister was in such a rage that the prime minister incontinently fled, to return with the king himself. They were a magnificent pair, the king especially, who must have been all of six feet three inches in height. His features had the eagle-like quality that is so frequently found in those of the North American Indian. He had been molded and born to rule. His eyes flashed as he listened, but right meekly he obeyed McAllister’s command to fetch a couple of hundred of the best dancers, male and female, in the village. And dance they did, for two mortal hours, under that broiling sun. They did not love him for it, and little he cared, in the end dismissing them with abuse and sneers.

The abject servility of those magnificent savages was terrifying. How could it be? What was the secret of his rule? More and more I puzzled as the days went by, and though I observed perpetual examples of his undisputed sovereignty, never a clew was there as to how it was.

One day I happened to speak of my disappointment in failing to trade for a beautiful pair of orange cowries. The pair was worth five pounds in Sydney if it was worth a cent. I had offered two hundred sticks of tobacco to the owner, who had held out for three hundred. When I casually mentioned the situation, McAllister immediately sent for the man, took the shells from him, and turned them over to me. Fifty sticks were all he permitted me to pay for them. The man accepted the tobacco and seemed overjoyed at getting off so easily. As for me, I resolved to keep a bridle on my tongue in the future. And still I mulled over the secret of McAllister's power. I even went to the extent of asking him directly, but all he did was to cock one eye, look wise, and take another drink.

One night I was out fishing in the lagoon with Oti, the man who had been mulcted of the cowries. Privily, I had made up to him an additional hundred and fifty sticks, and he had come to regard me with a respect that was almost veneration, which was curious, seeing that he was an old man, twice my age at least.

"What name you fella kanaka all the same pickaninny?" I began on him. "This fella trader he one fella. You fella kanaka plenty fella too much. You fella kanaka just like 'm dog--plenty fright along that fella trader. He no eat you, fella. He no get 'm teeth along him. What name you too much fright?"

"S'pose plenty fella kanaka kill m?" he asked.

"He die," I retorted. "You fella kanaka kill 'm plenty fella white man long time before. What name you fright this fella white man?"

"Yes, we kill 'm plenty," was his answer. "My word! Any amount! Long time before. One time, me young fella too much, one big fella ship he stop outside. Wind he no blow. Plenty fella kanaka we get 'm canoe, plenty fella canoe, we go catch 'm that fella ship. My word--we catch 'm big fella fight. Two, three white men shoot like hell. We no fright. We come alongside, we go up side, plenty fella, maybe I think fifty-ten (five hundred). One fella white Mary (woman) belong that fella ship. Never before I see 'm white Mary. Bime by plenty white man finish. One fella skipper he no die. Five fella, six fella white man no die. Skipper he sing out. Some fella white man he fight. Some fella white man he lower away boat. After that, all together over the side they go. Skipper he sling white Mary down. After that they washee (row) strong fella plenty too much. Father belong me, that time he strong fella. He throw ‘m one fella spear. That fella spear he go in one side that white Mary. He no stop. My word, he go out other side that fella Mary. She finish. Me no fright. Plenty kanaka too much no fright.”

Old Oti’s pride had been touched, for he suddenly stripped down his lava-lava and showed me the unmistakable scar of a bullet. Before I could speak, his line ran out suddenly. He checked it and attempted to haul in, but found that the fish had run around a coral branch. Casting a look of reproach at me for having beguiled him from his watchfulness, he went over the side, feet first, turning over after he got under and following his line down to bottom. The water was ten fathoms. I leaned over and watched the play of his feet, growing dim and dimmer, as they stirred the wan phosphorescence into ghostly fires. Ten fathoms--sixty feet--it was nothing to him, an old man, compared with the value of a hook and line. After what seemed five minutes, though it could not have been more than a minute, I saw him flaming whitely upward. He broke surface and dropped a ten pound rock cod into the canoe, the line and hook intact, the latter still fast in the fish’s mouth.

“It may be,” I said remorselessly. “You no fright long ago. You plenty fright now along that fella trader.”

“Yes, plenty fright,” he confessed, with an air of dismissing the subject. For half an hour we pulled up our lines and flung them out in silence. Then small fish-sharks began to bite, and after losing a hook apiece, we hauled in and waited for the sharks to go their way.

“I speak you true,” Oti broke into speech, “then you savve we fright now.”

I lighted up my pipe and waited, and the story that Oti told me in atrocious bech-de-mer I here turn into proper English. Otherwise, in spirit and order of narrative, the tale is as it fell from Oti’s lips.

“It was after that that we were very proud. We had fought many times with the strange white men who live upon the sea, and always we had beaten them. A few of us were killed, but what was that compared with the stores of wealth of a thousand thousand kinds that we found on the ships? And then one day, maybe twenty years ago, or twenty-five, there came a schooner right through the passage and into the lagoon. It was a large schooner with three masts. She had five white men and maybe forty boat’s crew, black fellows from New Guinea and New Britain; and she had come to fish bêche-de-mer. She lay at anchor across the lagoon from here, at

Pauloo, and her boats scattered out everywhere, making camps on the beaches where they cured the bêche-de-mer. This made them weak by dividing them, for those who fished here and those on the schooner at Pauloo were fifty miles apart, and there were others farther away still.

"Our king and headmen held council, and I was one in the canoe that paddled all afternoon and all night across the lagoon, bringing word to the people of Pauloo that in the morning we would attack the fishing camps at the one time and that it was for them to take the schooner. We who brought the word were tired with the paddling, but we took part in the attack. On the schooner were two white men, the skipper and the second mate, with half a dozen black boys. The skipper with three boys we caught on shore and killed, but first eight of us the skipper killed with his two revolvers. We fought close together, you see, at hand grapples.

"The noise of our fighting told the mate what was happening, and he put food and water and a sail in the small dingy, which was so small that it was no more than twelve feet long. We came down upon the schooner, a thousand men, covering the lagoon with our canoes. Also, we were blowing conch shells, singing war songs, and striking the sides of the canoes with our paddles. What chance had one white man and three black boys against us? No chance at all, and the mate knew it.

"White men are hell. I have watched them much, and I am an old man now, and I understand at last why the white men have taken to themselves all the islands in the sea. It is because they are hell. Here are you in the canoe with me. You are hardly more than a boy. You are not wise, for each day I tell you many things you do not know. When I was a little pickaninny, I knew more about fish and the ways of fish than you know now. I am an old man, but I swim down to the bottom of the lagoon, and you cannot follow me. What are you good for, anyway? I do not know, except to fight. I have never seen you fight, yet I know that you are like your brothers and that you will fight like hell. Also, you are a fool, like your brothers. You do not know when you are beaten. You will fight until you die, and then it will be too late to know that you are beaten.

"Now behold what this mate did. As we came down upon him, covering the sea and blowing our conches, he put off from the schooner in the small boat, along with the three black boys, and rowed for the passage. There again he was a fool, for no wise man would put out to sea in so small a boat. The sides of it were not four inches above the water. Twenty canoes went after him, filled with two hundred young men. We paddled five fathoms while his black boys were rowing one fathom. He had no chance, but he was a fool. He stood up in the boat with a rifle, and he shot many times. He was not a good shot, but as we drew close many of us were wounded and killed. But still he had no chance.

"I remember that all the time he was smoking a cigar. When we were forty feet away and coming fast, he dropped the rifle, lighted a stick of dynamite with the cigar, and threw it at us. He lighted another and another, and threw them at us very rapidly, many of them. I know now that he must have split the ends of the fuses and stuck in match heads, because they lighted so quickly. Also, the fuses were very short. Sometimes the dynamite sticks went off in the air, but most of them went off in the canoes. And each time they went off in a canoe, that canoe was finished. Of the twenty canoes, the half were smashed to pieces. The canoe I was in was so smashed, and likewise the two men who sat next to me. The dynamite fell between them. The other canoes turned and ran away. Then that mate yelled, Yah! Yah! Yah!' at us. Also he went at us again with his rifle, so that many were killed through the back as they fled away. And all the time the black boys in the boat went on rowing. You see, I told you true, that mate was hell.

"Nor was that all. Before he left the schooner, he set her on fire, and fixed up all the powder and dynamite so that it would go off at one time. There were hundreds of us on board, trying to put out the fire, heaving up water from overside, when the schooner blew up. So that all we had fought for was lost to us, besides many more of us being killed. Sometimes, even now, in my old age, I have bad dreams in which I hear that mate yell, Yah! Yah! Yah!' In a voice of thunder he yells, Yah! Yah! Yah!' But all those in the fishing camps were killed.

"The mate went out of the passage in his little boat, and that was the end of him we made sure, for how could so small a boat, with four men in it, live on the ocean? A month went by, and then, one morning, between two rain squalls, a schooner sailed in through our passage and dropped anchor before the village. The king and the headmen made big talk, and it was agreed that we would take the schooner in two or three days. In the meantime, as it was our custom always to appear friendly, we went off to her in canoes, bringing strings of cocoanuts, fowls, and pigs, to trade. But when we were alongside, many canoes of us, the men on board began to shoot us with rifles, and as we paddled away I saw the mate who had gone to sea in the little boat spring upon the rail and dance and yell, Yah! Yah! Yah!'

"That afternoon they landed from the schooner in three small boats filled with white men. They went right through the village, shooting every man they saw. Also they shot the fowls and pigs. We who were not killed got away in canoes and paddled out into the lagoon. Looking back, we could see all the houses on fire. Late in the afternoon we saw many canoes coming from Nihi, which is the village near the Nihi Passage in the northeast. They were all that were left, and like us their village had been burned by a second schooner that had come through Nihi Passage.

"We stood on in the darkness to the westward for Pauloo, but in the middle of the night we heard women wailing and then we ran into a big fleet of canoes. They were all that were left of Pauloo, which likewise was in ashes, for a third schooner had come in through the Pauloo Passage. You see, that mate, with his black boys, had not been drowned. He had made the Solomon Islands, and there told his brothers of what we had done in Oolong. And all his brothers had said they would come and punish us, and there they were in the three schooners, and our three villages were wiped out.

"And what was there for us to do? In the morning the two schooners from windward sailed down upon us in the middle of the lagoon. The trade wind was blowing fresh, and by scores of canoes they ran us down. And the rifles never ceased talking. We scattered like flying fish before the bonita, and there were so many of us that we escaped by thousands, this way and that, to the islands on the rim of the atoll.

"And thereafter the schooners hunted us up and down the lagoon. In the nighttime we slipped past them. But the next day, or in two days or three days, the schooners would be coming back, hunting us toward the other end of the lagoon. And so it went. We no longer counted nor remembered our dead. True, we were many and they were few. But what could we do? I was in one of the twenty canoes filled with men who were not afraid to die. We attacked the smallest schooner. They shot us down in heaps. They threw dynamite into the canoes, and when the dynamite gave out, they threw hot water down upon us. And the rifles never ceased talking. And those whose canoes were smashed were shot as they swam away. And the mate danced up and down upon the cabin top and yelled, "Yah! Yah! Yah!'

“Every house on every smallest island was burned. Not a pig nor a fowl was left alive. Our wells were defiled with the bodies of the slain, or else heaped high with coral rock. We were twenty-five thousand on Oolong before the three schooners came. Today we are five thousand. After the schooners left, we were but three thousand, as you shall see.

“At last the three schooners grew tired of chasing us back and forth. So they went, the three of them, to Nihi, in the northeast. And then they drove us steadily to the west. Their nine boats were in the water as well. They beat up every island as they moved along. They drove us, drove us, drove us day by day. And every night the three schooners and the nine boats made a chain of watchfulness that stretched across the lagoon from rim to rim, so that we could not escape back.

“They could not drive us forever that way, for the lagoon was only so large, and at last all of us that yet lived were driven upon the last sand bank to the west. Beyond lay the open sea. There were ten thousand of us, and we covered the sand bank from the lagoon edge to the pounding surf on the other side. No one could lie down. There was no room. We stood hip to hip and shoulder to shoulder. Two days they kept us there, and the mate would climb up in the rigging to mock us and yell, Yah! Yah! Yah!’ till we were well sorry that we had ever harmed him or his schooner a month before. We had no food, and we stood on our feet two days and nights. The little babies died, and the old and weak died, and the wounded died. And worst of all, we had no water to quench our thirst, and for two days the sun beat down on us, and there was no shade. Many men and women waded out into the ocean and were drowned, the surf casting their bodies back on the beach. And there came a pest of flies. Some men swam to the sides of the schooners, but they were shot to the last one. And we that lived were very sorry that in our pride we tried to take the schooner with the three masts that came to fish for bêche-de-mer.

“On the morning of the third day came the skippers of the three schooners and that mate in a small boat. They carried rifles, all of them, and revolvers, and they made talk. It was only that they were weary of killing us that they had stopped, they told us. And we told them that we were sorry, that never again would we harm a white man, and in token of our submission we poured sand upon our heads. And all the women and children set up a great wailing for water, so that for some time no man could make himself heard. Then we were told our punishment. We must fill the three schooners with copra and bêche-de-mer. And we agreed, for we wanted water, and our hearts were broken, and we knew that we were children at fighting when we fought with white men who fight like hell. And when all the talk was finished, the mate stood up and mocked us, and yelled, Yah! Yah! Yah!' After that we paddled away in our canoes and sought water.

"And for weeks we toiled at catching bêche-de-mer and curing it, in gathering the cocoanuts and turning them into copra. By day and night the smoke rose in clouds from all the beaches of all the islands of Oolong as we paid the penalty of our wrongdoing. For in those days of death it was burned clearly on all our brains that it was very wrong to harm a white man.

"By and by, the schooners full of copra and bêche-de-mer and our trees empty of cocoanuts, the three skippers and that mate called us all together for a big talk. And they said they were very glad that we had learned our lesson, and we said for the ten-thousandth time that we were sorry and that we would not do it again. Also, we poured sand upon our heads. Then the skippers said that it was all very well, but just to show us that they did not forget us, they would send a devil-devil that we would never forget and that we would always remember any time we might feel like harming a white man. After that the mate mocked us one more time and yelled, Yah! Yah! Yah!' Then six of our men, whom we thought long dead, were put ashore from one of the schooners, and the schooners hoisted their sails and ran out through the passage for the Solomons.

"The six men who were put ashore were the first to catch the devil-devil the skippers sent back after us."

"A great sickness came," I interrupted, for I recognized the trick. The schooner had had measles on board, and the six prisoners had been deliberately exposed to it.

"Yes, a great sickness," Oti went on. "It was a powerful devil-devil. The oldest man had never heard of the like. Those of our priests that yet lived we killed because they could not overcome the devil-devil. The sickness spread. I have said that there were ten thousand of us that stood hip to hip and shoulder to shoulder on the sandbank. When the sickness left us, there were three thousand yet alive. Also, having made all our cocoanuts into copra, there was a famine.

"That fella trader," Oti concluded, "he like 'm that much dirt. He like 'm clam he die KAI-KAI (meat) he stop, stink 'm any amount. He like 'm one fella dog, one sick fella dog plenty fleas stop along him. We no fright along that fella trader. We fright because he white man. We savve plenty too much no good kill white man. That one fella sick dog trader he plenty brother stop along him, white men like ‘m you fight like hell. We no fright that damn trader. Some time he made kanaka plenty cross along him and kanaka want ‘m kill m, kanaka he think devil-devil and kanaka he hear that fella mate sing out, Yah! Yah! Yah!’ and kanaka no kill m.”

Oti baited his hook with a piece of squid, which he tore with his teeth from the live and squirming monster, and hook and bait sank in white flames to the bottom.

“Shark walk about he finish,” he said. “I think we catch ‘m plenty fella fish.”

His line jerked savagely. He pulled it in rapidly, hand under hand, and landed a big gasping rock cod in the bottom of the canoe.

“Sun he come up, I make ‘m that dam fella trader one present big fella fish,” said Oti.

Yellow Handkerchief

“I’m not wanting to dictate to you, lad,” Charley said; “but I’m very much against your making a last raid. You’ve gone safely through rough times with rough men, and it would be a shame to have something happen to you at the very end.”

“But how can I get out of making a last raid?” I demanded, with the cocksureness of youth. “There always has to be a last, you know, to anything.”

Charley crossed his legs, leaned back, and considered the problem. “Very true. But why not call the capture of Demetrios Contos the last? You’re back from it safe and sound and hearty, for all your good wetting, and-and-“ His voice broke and he could not speak for a moment. “And I could never forgive myself if anything happened to you now.”

I laughed at Charley’s fears while I gave in to the claims of his affection, and agreed to consider the last raid already performed. We had been together for two years, and now I was leaving the fish patrol in order to go back and finish my education. I had earned and saved money to put me through three years at the high school, and though the beginning of the term was several months away, I intended doing a lot of studying for the entrance examinations.

My belongings were packed snugly in a sea-chest, and I was all ready to buy my ticket and ride down on the train to Oakland, when Neil Partington arrived in Benicia. The Reindeer was needed immediately for work far down on the Lower Bay, and Neil said he intended to run straight for Oakland. As that was his home and as I was to live with his family while going to school, he saw no reason, he said, why I should not put my chest aboard and come along.

So the chest went aboard, and in the middle of the afternoon we hoisted the Reindeer’s big mainsail and cast off. It was tantalizing fall weather. The sea-breeze, which had blown steadily all summer, was gone, and in its place were capricious winds and murky skies which made the time of arriving anywhere extremely problematical. We started on the first of the ebb, and as we slipped down the Carquinez Straits, I looked my last for some time upon Benicia and the bight at Turner’s Shipyard, where we had besieged the Lancashire Queen, and had captured Big Alec, the King of the Greeks. And at the mouth of the Straits I looked with not a little interest upon the spot where a few days before I should have drowned but for the good that was in the nature of Demetrios Contos.

A great wall of fog advanced across San Pablo Bay to meet us, and in a few minutes the Reindeer was running blindly through the damp obscurity. Charley, who was steering, seemed to have an instinct for that kind of work. How he did it, he himself confessed that he did not know; but he had a way of calculating winds, currents, distance, time, drift, and sailing speed that was truly marvellous.

“It looks as though it were lifting,” Neil Partington said, a couple of hours after we had entered the fog. “Where do you say we are, Charley?”

Charley looked at his watch, “Six o’clock, and three hours more of ebb,” he remarked casually.

“But where do you say we are?” Neil insisted.

Charley pondered a moment, and then answered, “The tide has edged us over a bit out of our course, but if the fog lifts right now, as it is going to lift, you’ll find we’re not more than a thousand miles off McNear’s Landing.”

“You might be a little more definite by a few miles, anyway,” Neil grumbled, showing by his tone that he disagreed.

“All right, then,” Charley said, conclusively, “not less than a quarter of a mile, not more than a half.”

The wind freshened with a couple of little puffs, and the fog thinned perceptibly.

“McNear’s is right off there,” Charley said, pointing directly into the fog on our weather beam.

The three of us were peering intently in that direction, when the Reindeer struck with a dull crash and came to a standstill. We ran forward, and found her bowsprit entangled in the tanned rigging of a short, chunky mast. She had collided, head on, with a Chinese junk lying at anchor.

At the moment we arrived forward, five Chinese, like so many bees, came swarming out of the little ‘tween-decks cabin, the sleep still in their eyes.

Leading them came a big, muscular man, conspicuous for his pock-marked face and the yellow silk handkerchief swathed about his head. It was Yellow Handkerchief, the Chinaman whom we had arrested for illegal shrimp-fishing the year before, and who, at that time, had nearly sunk the Reindeer, as he had nearly sunk it now by violating the rules of navigation.

“What d’ye mean, you yellow-faced heathen, lying here in a fairway without a horn a-going?” Charley cried hotly.

“Mean?” Neil calmly answered. “Just take a look-that’s what he means.”

Our eyes followed the direction indicated by Neil’s finger, and we saw the open amidships of the junk, half filled, as we found on closer examination, with fresh-caught shrimps. Mingled with the shrimps were myriads of small fish, from a quarter of an inch upward in size.

Yellow Handkerchief had lifted the trap-net at high-water slack, and, taking advantage of the concealment offered by the fog, had boldly been lying by, waiting to lift the net again at low-water slack.

“Well,” Neil hummed and hawed, “in all my varied and extensive experience as a fish patrolman, I must say this is the easiest capture I ever made. What’ll we do with them, Charley?”

“Tow the junk into San Rafael, of course,” came the answer. Charley turned to me. “You stand by the junk, lad, and I’ll pass you a towing line. If the wind doesn’t fail us, we’ll make the creek before the tide gets too low, sleep at San Rafael, and arrive in Oakland to-morrow by midday.”

So saying, Charley and Neil returned to the Reindeer and got under way, the junk towing astern. I went aft and took charge of the prize, steering by means of an antiquated tiller and a rudder with large, diamond-shaped holes, through which the water rushed back and forth.

By now the last of the fog had vanished, and Charley’s estimate of our position was confirmed by the sight of McNear’s Landing a short half-mile away. Following along the west shore, we rounded Point Pedro in plain view of the Chinese shrimp villages, and a great to-do was raised when they saw one of their junks towing behind the familiar fish patrol sloop.

The wind, coming off the land, was rather puffy and uncertain, and it would have been more to our advantage had it been stronger. San Rafael Creek, up which we had to go to reach the town and turn over our prisoners to the authorities, ran through wide-stretching marshes, and was difficult to navigate on a falling tide, while at low tide it was impossible to navigate at all. So, with the tide already half-ebbed, it was necessary for us to make time. This the heavy junk prevented, lumbering along behind and holding the Reindeer back by just so much dead weight.

“Tell those coolies to get up that sail,” Charley finally called to me. “We don’t want to hang up on the mud flats for the rest of the night.”

I repeated the order to Yellow Handkerchief, who mumbled it huskily to his men. He was suffering from a bad cold, which doubled him up in convulsive coughing spells and made his eyes heavy and bloodshot. This made him more evil-looking than ever, and when he glared viciously at me I remembered with a shiver the close shave I had had with him at the time of his previous arrest.

His crew sullenly tailed on to the halyards, and the strange, outlandish sail, lateen in rig and dyed a warm brown, rose in the air. We were sailing on the wind, and when Yellow Handkerchief flattened down the sheet the junk forged ahead and the tow-line went slack. Fast as the Reindeer could sail, the junk outsailed her; and to avoid running her down I hauled a little closer on the wind. But the junk likewise outpointed, and in a couple of minutes I was abreast of the Reindeer and to windward. The tow-line had now tautened, at right angles to the two boats, and the predicament was laughable.

“Cast off!” I shouted.

Charley hesitated.

“It’s all right,” I added. “Nothing can happen. We’ll make the creek on this tack, and you’ll be right behind me all the way up to San Rafael.”

At this Charley cast off, and Yellow Handkerchief sent one of his men forward to haul in the line. In the gathering darkness I could just make out the mouth of San Rafael Creek, and by the time we entered it I could barely see its banks. The Reindeer was fully five minutes astern, and we continued to leave her astern as we beat up the narrow, winding channel. With Charley behind us, it seemed I had little to fear from my five prisoners; but the darkness prevented my keeping a sharp eye on them, so I transferred my revolver from my trousers pocket to the side pocket of my coat, where I could more quickly put my hand on it.

Yellow Handkerchief was the one I feared, and that he knew it and made use of it, subsequent events will show. He was sitting a few feet away from me, on what then happened to be the weather side of the junk. I could scarcely see the outlines of his form, but I soon became convinced that he was slowly, very slowly, edging closer to me. I watched him carefully. Steering with my left hand, I slipped my right into my pocket and got hold of the revolver.

I saw him shift along for a couple of inches, and I was just about to order him back-the words were trembling on the tip of my tongue-when I was struck with great force by a heavy figure that had leaped through the air upon me from the lee side. It was one of the crew. He pinioned my right arm so that I could not withdraw my hand from my pocket, and at the same time clapped his other hand over my mouth. Of course, I could have struggled away from him and freed my hand or gotten my mouth clear so that I might cry an alarm, but in a trice Yellow Handkerchief was on top of me.

I struggled around to no purpose in the bottom of the junk, while my legs and arms were tied and my mouth securely bound in what I afterward found to be a cotton shirt. Then I was left lying in the bottom. Yellow Handkerchief took the tiller, issuing his orders in whispers; and from our position at the time, and from the alteration of the sail, which I could dimly make out above me as a blot against the stars, I knew the junk was being headed into the mouth of a small slough which emptied at that point into San Rafael Creek.

In a couple of minutes we ran softly alongside the bank, and the sail was silently lowered. The Chinese kept very quiet. Yellow Handkerchief sat down in the bottom alongside of me, and I could feel him straining to repress his raspy, hacking cough. Possibly seven or eight minutes later I heard Charley's voice as the Reindeer went past the mouth of the slough.

"I can't tell you how relieved I am," I could plainly hear him saying to Neil, "that the lad has finished with the fish patrol without accident."

Here Neil said something which I could not catch, and then Charley's voice went on:

"The youngster takes naturally to the water, and if, when he finishes high school, he takes a course in navigation and goes deep sea, I see no reason why he shouldn't rise to be master of the finest and biggest ship afloat."

It was all very flattering to me, but lying there, bound and gagged by my own prisoners, with the voices growing faint and fainter as the Reindeer slipped on through the darkness toward San Rafael, I must say I was not in quite the proper situation to enjoy my smiling future. With the Reindeer went my last hope. What was to happen next I could not imagine, for the Chinese were a different race from mine, and from what I knew I was confident that fair play was no part of their make-up.

After waiting a few minutes longer, the crew hoisted the lateen sail, and Yellow Handkerchief steered down toward the mouth of San Rafael Creek. The tide was getting lower, and he had difficulty in escaping the mud-banks. I was hoping he would run aground, but he succeeded in making the Bay without accident.

As we passed out of the creek a noisy discussion arose, which I knew related to me. Yellow Handkerchief was vehement, but the other four as vehemently opposed him. It was very evident that he advocated doing away with me and that they were afraid of the consequences. I was familiar enough with the Chinese character to know that fear alone restrained them. But what plan they offered in place of Yellow Handkerchief's murderous one, I could not make out.

My feelings, as my fate hung in the balance, may be guessed. The discussion developed into a quarrel, in the midst of which Yellow Handkerchief unshipped the heavy tiller and sprang toward me. But his four companions threw themselves between, and a clumsy struggle took place for possession of the tiller. In the end Yellow Handkerchief was overcome, and sullenly returned to the steering, while they soundly berated him for his rashness.

Not long after, the sail was run down and the junk slowly urged forward by means of the sweeps. I felt it ground gently on the soft mud. Three of the Chinese-they all wore long sea-boots-got over the side, and the other two passed me across the rail. With Yellow Handkerchief at my legs and his two companions at my shoulders, they began to flounder along through the mud. After some time their feet struck firmer footing, and I knew they were carrying me up some beach. The location of this beach was not doubtful in my mind. It could be none other than one of the Marin Islands, a group of rocky islets which lay off the Marin County shore.

When they reached the firm sand that marked high tide, I was dropped, and none too gently. Yellow Handkerchief kicked me spitefully in the ribs, and then the trio floundered back through the mud to the junk. A moment later I heard the sail go up and slat in the wind as they drew in the sheet. Then silence fell, and I was left to my own devices for getting free.

I remembered having seen tricksters writhe and squirm out of ropes with which they were bound, but though I writhed and squirmed like a good fellow, the knots remained as hard as ever, and there was no appreciable slack. In the course of my squirming, however, I rolled over upon a heap of clam-shells-the remains, evidently, of some yachting party’s clam-bake. This gave me an idea. My hands were tied behind my back; and, clutching a shell in them, I rolled over and over, up the beach, till I came to the rocks I knew to be there.

Rolling around and searching, I finally discovered a narrow crevice, into which I shoved the shell. The edge of it was sharp, and across the sharp edge I proceeded to saw the rope that bound my wrists. The edge of the shell was also brittle, and I broke it by bearing too heavily upon it. Then I rolled back to the heap and returned with as many shells as I could carry in both hands. I broke many shells, cut my hands a number of times, and got cramps in my legs from my strained position and my exertions.

While I was suffering from the cramps, and resting, I heard a familiar halloo drift across the water. It was Charley, searching for me. The gag in my mouth prevented me from replying, and I could only lie there, helplessly fuming, while he rowed past the island and his voice slowly lost itself in the distance.

I returned to the sawing process, and at the end of half an hour succeeded in severing the rope. The rest was easy. My hands once free, it was a matter of minutes to loosen my legs and to take the gag out of my mouth. I ran around the island to make sure it was an island and not by any chance a portion of the mainland. An island it certainly was, one of the Marin group, fringed with a sandy beach and surrounded by a sea of mud. Nothing remained but to wait till daylight and to keep warm; for it was a cold, raw night for California, with just enough wind to pierce the skin and cause one to shiver.

To keep up the circulation, I ran around the island a dozen times or so, and clambered across its rocky backbone as many times more-all of which was of greater service to me, as I afterward discovered, than merely to warm me up. In the midst of this exercise I wondered if I had lost anything out of my pockets while rolling over and over in the sand. A search showed the absence of my revolver and pocket-knife. The first Yellow Handkerchief had taken; but the knife had been lost in the sand.

I was hunting for it when the sound of rowlocks came to my ears. At first, of course, I thought of Charley; but on second thought I knew Charley would be calling out as he rowed along. A sudden premonition of danger seized me. The Marin Islands are lonely places; chance visitors in the dead of night are hardly to be expected. What if it were Yellow Handkerchief?

The sound made by the rowlocks grew more distinct. I crouched in the sand and listened intently. The boat, which I judged a small skiff from the quick stroke of the oars, was landing in the mud about fifty yards up the beach. I heard a raspy, hacking cough, and my heart stood still. It was Yellow Handkerchief. Not to be robbed of his revenge by his more cautious companions, he had stolen away from the village and come back alone.

I did some swift thinking. I was unarmed and helpless on a tiny islet, and a yellow barbarian, whom I had reason to fear, was coming after me. Any place was safer than the island, and I turned instinctively to the water, or rather to the mud. As he began to flounder ashore through the mud, I started to flounder out into it, going over the same course which the Chinese had taken in landing me and in returning to the junk.

Yellow Handkerchief, believing me to be lying tightly bound, exercised no care, but came ashore noisily. This helped me, for, under the shield of his noise and making no more myself than necessary, I managed to cover fifty feet by the time he had made the beach. Here I lay down in the mud. It was cold and clammy, and made me shiver, but I did not care to stand up and run the risk of being discovered by his sharp eyes.

He walked down the beach straight to where he had left me lying, and I had a fleeting feeling of regret at not being able to see his surprise when he did not find me. But it was a very fleeting regret, for my teeth were chattering with the cold.

What his movements were after that I had largely to deduce from the facts of the situation, for I could scarcely see him in the dim starlight. But I was sure that the first thing he did was to make the circuit of the beach to learn if landings had been made by other boats. This he would have known at once by the tracks through the mud.

Convinced that no boat had removed me from the island, he next started to find out what had become of me. Beginning at the pile of clamshells, he lighted matches to trace my tracks in the sand. At such times I could see his villanous face plainly, and, when the sulphur from the matches irritated his lungs, between the raspy cough that followed and the clammy mud in which I was lying, I confess I shivered harder than ever.

The multiplicity of my footprints puzzled him. Then the idea that I might be out in the mud must have struck him, for he waded out a few yards in my direction, and, stooping, with his eyes searched the dim surface long and carefully. He could not have been more than fifteen feet from me, and had he lighted a match he would surely have discovered me.

He returned to the beach and clambered about, over the rocky backbone, again hunting for me with lighted matches, The closeness of the shave impelled me to further flight. Not daring to wade upright, on account of the noise made by floundering and by the suck of the mud, I remained lying down in the mud and propelled myself over its surface by means of my hands. Still keeping the trail made by the Chinese in going from and to the junk, I held on until I reached the water. Into this I waded to a depth of three feet, and then I turned off to the side on a line parallel with the beach.

The thought came to me of going toward Yellow Handkerchief's skiff and escaping in it, but at that very moment he returned to the beach, and, as though fearing the very thing I had in mind, he slushed out through the mud to assure himself that the skiff was safe. This turned me in the opposite direction. Half swimming, half wading, with my head just out of water and avoiding splashing, I succeeded in putting about a hundred feet between myself and the spot where the Chinese had begun to wade ashore from the junk. I drew myself out on the mud and remained lying flat.

Again Yellow Handkerchief returned to the beach and made a search of the island, and again he returned to the heap of clam-shells. I knew what was running in his mind as well as he did himself. No one could leave or land without making tracks in the mud. The only tracks to be seen were those leading from his skiff and from where the junk had been. I was not on the island. I must have left it by one or the other of those two tracks. He had just been over the one to his skiff, and was certain I had not left that way. Therefore I could have left the island only by going over the tracks of the junk landing. This he proceeded to verify by wading out over them himself, lighting matches as he came along.

When he arrived at the point where I had first lain, I knew, by the matches he burned and the time he took, that he had discovered the marks left by my body. These he followed straight to the water and into it, but in three feet of water he could no longer see them. On the other hand, as the tide was still falling, he could easily make out the impression made by the junk's bow, and could have likewise made out the impression of any other boat if it had landed at that particular spot. But there was no such mark; and I knew that he was absolutely convinced that I was hiding somewhere in the mud.

But to hunt on a dark night for a boy in a sea of mud would be like hunting for a needle in a haystack, and he did not attempt it. Instead he went back to the beach and prowled around for some time. I was hoping he would give me up and go, for by this time I was suffering severely from the cold. At last he waded out to his skiff and rowed away. What if this departure of Yellow Handkerchief's were a sham? What if he had done it merely to entice me ashore?

The more I thought of it the more certain I became that he had made a little too much noise with his oars as he rowed away. So I remained, lying in the mud and shivering. I shivered till the muscles of the small of my back ached and pained me as badly as the cold, and I had need of all my self-control to force myself to remain in my miserable situation.

It was well that I did, however, for, possibly an hour later, I thought I could make out something moving on the beach. I watched intently, but my ears were rewarded first, by a raspy cough I knew only too well. Yellow Handkerchief had sneaked back, landed on the other side of the island, and crept around to surprise me if I had returned.

After that, though hours passed without sign of him, I was afraid to return to the island at all. On the other hand, I was almost equally afraid that I should die of the exposure I was undergoing. I had never dreamed one could suffer so. I grew so cold and numb, finally, that I ceased to shiver. But my muscles and bones began to ache in a way that was agony. The tide had long since begun to rise, and, foot by foot, it drove me in toward the beach. High water came at three o'clock, and at three o'clock I drew myself up on the beach, more dead than alive, and too helpless to have offered any resistance had Yellow Handkerchief swooped down upon me.

But no Yellow Handkerchief appeared. He had given me up and gone back to Point Pedro. Nevertheless, I was in a deplorable, not to say dangerous, condition. I could not stand upon my feet, much less walk. My clammy, muddy garments clung to me like sheets of ice. I thought I should never get them off. So numb and lifeless were my fingers, and so weak was I, that it seemed to take an hour to get off my shoes. I had not the strength to break the porpoise-hide laces, and the knots defied me. I repeatedly beat my hands upon the rocks to get some sort of life into them. Sometimes I felt sure I was going to die.

But in the end,-after several centuries, it seemed to me,-I got off the last of my clothes. The water was now close at hand, and I crawled painfully into it and washed the mud from my naked body. Still, I could not get on my feet and walk and I was afraid to lie still. Nothing remained but to crawl weakly, like a snail, and at the cost of constant pain, up and down the sand. I kept this up as long as possible, but as the east paled with the coming of dawn I began to succumb. The sky grew rosy-red, and the golden rim of the sun, showing above the horizon, found me lying helpless and motionless among the clam-shells.

As in a dream, I saw the familiar mainsail of the Reindeer as she slipped out of San Rafael Creek on a light puff of morning air. This dream was very much broken. There are intervals I can never recollect on looking back over it. Three things, however, I distinctly remember: the first sight of the Reindeer's mainsail; her lying at anchor a few hundred feet away and a small boat leaving her side; and the cabin stove roaring red-hot, myself swathed all over with blankets, except on the chest and shoulders, which Charley was pounding and mauling unmercifully, and my mouth and throat burning with the coffee which Neil Partington was pouring down a trifle too hot.

But burn or no burn, I tell you it felt good. By the time we arrived in Oakland I was as limber and strong as ever,-though Charlie and Neil Partington were afraid I was going to have pneumonia, and Mrs. Partington, for my first six months of school, kept an anxious eye upon me to discover the first symptoms of consumption.

Time flies. It seems but yesterday that I was a lad of sixteen on the fish patrol. Yet I know that I arrived this very morning from China, with a quick passage to my credit, and master of the barkentine Harvester. And I know that to-morrow morning I shall run over to Oakland to see Neil Partington and his wife and family, and later on up to Benicia to see Charley Le Grant and talk over old times. No; I shall not go to Benicia, now that I think about it. I expect to be a highly interested party to a wedding, shortly to take place. Her name is Alice Partington, and, since Charley has promised to be best man, he will have to come down to Oakland instead.

The Plays

Jack and Charmian London, at the old Winery Cottage, their home at Beauty Ranch, 1911

THEFT

A Play In Four Acts

1910

CONTENTS

CHARACTERS
ACTORS’ DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS
ACT I
ACT II
ACT III
ACT IV

CHARACTERS

Margaret Chalmers
Howard Knox
Thomas Chalmers
Master Thomas Chalmers
Ellery Jackson Hubbard
Anthony Starkweather
Mrs Starkweather
Connie Starkweather
Felix Dobleman
Linda Davis
Julius Rutland
John Gieford
Matsu Sakari
Dolores Ortega
Senator Dowsett Mrs Dowsett
Housekeeper, Servs
Wife of Senator Chalmers
A Congressman from Oregon
A United States Senator and several times millionaire
Son of Margaret and Senator Chalmers
A Journalist
A great magnate, and father of Margaret Chalmers
His wife
Their younger daughter
Secretary to Anthony Starkweather
Maid to Margaret Chalmers
Episcopalian Minister
Labor Agitator
Secretary of Japanese Embassy
Wife of Peruvian Minister
Agents, etc

Time of Play, To-Day, in Washington, D. C.

It Occurs in Twenty Hours

ACTORS' DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

Margaret Chalmers. Twenty-seven years of age; a strong, mature woman, but quite feminine where her heart or sense of beauty are concerned. Her eyes are wide apart. Has a dazzling smile, which she knows how to use on occasion. Also, on occasion, she can be firm and hard, even cynical An intellectual woman, and at the same time a very womanly woman, capable of sudden tendernesses, flashes of emotion, and abrupt actions. She is a finished product of high culture and refinement, and at the same time possesses robust vitality and instinctive right-promptings that augur well for the future of the race.

Howard Knox. He might have been a poet, but was turned politician. Inflamed with love for humanity. Thirty-five years of age. He has his vision, and must follow it. He has suffered ostracism because of it, and has followed his vision in spite of abuse and ridicule. Physically, a well-built, powerful man. Strong-featured rather than handsome. Very much in earnest, and, despite his university training, a trifle awkward in carriage and demeanor, lacking in social ease. He has been elected to Congress on a reform ticket, and is almost alone in fight he is making. He has no party to back him, though he has a following of a few independents and insurgents.

Thomas Chalmers. Forty-five to fifty years of age. Iron-gray mustache. Slightly stout. A good liver, much given to Scotch and soda, with a weak heart. Is liable to collapse any time. If anything, slightly lazy or lethargic in his emotional life. One of the "owned" senators representing a decadent New England state, himself master of the state political machine. Also, he is nobody's fool. He possesses the brain and strength of character to play his part. His most distinctive feature is his temperamental opportunism.

Master Thomas Chalmers. Six years of age. Sturdy and healthy despite his grandmother's belief to the contrary.

Ellery Jackson Hubbard. Thirty-eight to forty years of age. Smooth-shaven. A star journalist with a national reputation; a large, heavy-set man, with large head, large hands — everything about him is large. A man radiating prosperity, optimism and selfishness. Has no morality whatever. Is a conscious individualist, cold-blooded, pitiless, working only for himself, and believing in nothing but himself.

Anthony Starkweather. An elderly, well preserved gentleman, slenderly built, showing all the signs of a man who has lived clean and has been almost an ascetic. One to whom the joys of the flesh have had little meaning. A cold, controlled man whose one passion is for power. Distinctively a man of power. An eagle-like man, who, by keenness of brain and force of character, has carved out a fortune of hundreds of millions. In short, an industrial and financial magnate of the first water and of the finest type to be found in the United States. Essentially a moral man, his rigid New England morality has suffered a sea change and developed into the morality of the master-man of affairs, equally rigid, equally uncompromising, but essentially Jesuitical in that he believes in doing wrong that right may come of it. He is absolutely certain that civilization and progress rest on his shoulders and upon the shoulders of the small group of men like him.

Mrs. Starkweather. Of the helpless, comfortably stout, elderly type. She has not followed her husband in his moral evolution. She is the creature of old customs, old prejudices, old New England ethics. She is rather confused by the modern rush of life.

Connie Starkweather. Margaret's younger sister, twenty years old. She is nothing that Margaret is, and everything that Margaret is not. No essential evil in her, but has no mind of her own — hopelessly a creature of convention. Gay, laughing, healthy, buxom — a natural product of her care-free environment.

Feux Dobleman. Private secretary to Anthony Starkweather. A young man of correct social deportment, thoroughly and in all things just the sort of private secretary a man like Anthony Starkweather would have. He is a weak-souled creature, timorous, almost effeminate.

Linda Davis. Maid to Margaret. A young woman of twenty-five or so, blond, Scandinavian, though American-born. A cold woman, almost featureless because of her long years of training, but with a hot heart deep down, and characterized by an intense devotion to her mistress. Wild horses could drag nothing from her where her mistress is concerned.

Junus Rutland. Having no strong features about him, the type realizes itself.

John Gifford. A labor agitator. A man of the people, rough-hewn, narrow as a labor-leader may well be, earnest and sincere. He is a proper, better type of labor-leader.

Matsu Sakari. Secretary of Japanese Embassy. He is the perfection of politeness and talks classical book-English. He bows a great deal.

Dolores Ortega. Wife of Peruvian Minister; bright and vivacious, and uses her hands a great deal as she talks, in the Latin-American fashion.

Senator Dowsett. Fifty years of age; well preserved.

Mrs. Dowsett. Stout and middle-aged.

ACT I

A ROOM IN THE HOUSE OF SENATOR CHALMERS

Scene. *In Senator Chalmers' home. It is four o'clock in the afternoon, in a modern living room with appropriate furnishings. In particular, in front, on left, a table prepared for the serving of tea, all excepting the tea urn itself. At rear, right of center, is main entrance to the room. Also, doorways at sides, on left and right. Curtain discloses Chalmers and Hubbard seated loungingly at the right front.*

Hubbard

(*After an apparent pause for cogitation.*) I can't understand why an old wheel-horse like Elsworth should kick over the traces that way.

Chalmers

Disgruntled. Thinks he didn't get his fair share of plums out of the Tariff Committee. Besides, it's his last term. He's announced that he's going to retire.

Hubbard

(*Snorting contemptuously, mimicking an old man's pompous enunciation.*) "A Resolution to Investigate the High Cost of Living!" — old Senator Elsworth introducing a measure like that! The old buck! — — How are you going to handle it?

Chalmers

It's already handled.

Hubbard

Yes?

Chalmers

(*Pulling his mustache.*) Turned it over to the Committee to Audit and Control the Contingent Expenses of the Senate.

Hubbard

(*Grinning his appreciation.*) And you're chairman. Poor old Elsworth. This way to the lethal chamber, and the bill's on its way.

Chalmers

Elsworth will be retired before it's ever reported. In the meantime, say after a decent interval, Senator Hodge will introduce another resolution to investigate the high cost of living. It will be like Elsworth's, only it won't.

Hubbard

(*Nodding his head and anticipating.*) And it will go to the Committee on Finance and come back for action inside of twenty-four hours.

Chalmers

By the way, I see *Cartwright's Magazine* has ceased muck-raking.

Hubbard

Cartwrights never did muck-rake — that is, not the big Interests — only the small independent businesses that didn't advertise.

Chalmers

Yes, it deftly concealed its reactionary tendencies.

Hubbard

And from now on the concealment will be still more deft. I've gone into it myself. I have a majority of the stock right now.

Chalmers

I thought I had noticed a subtle change in the last two numbers.

Hubbard

(*Nodding.*) We're still going on muck-raking. We have a splendid series on Aged Paupers, demanding better treatment and more sanitary conditions. Also we are going to run "Barbarous Venezuela" and show up thoroughly the rotten political management of that benighted country.

Chalmers

(*Nods approvingly, and, after a pause.*) And now concerning Knox. That's what I sent for you about. His speech comes off tomorrow per schedule. At last we’ve got him where we want him.

Hubbard

I have the ins and outs of it pretty well. Everything’s arranged. The boys have their cue, though they don’t know just what’s going to be pulled off; and this time to-morrow afternoon their dispatches will be singing along the wires.

Chalmers

(*Firmly and harshly.*) This man Knox must be covered with ridicule, swamped with ridicule, annihilated with ridicule.

Hubbard

It is to laugh. Trust the great American people for that. We’ll make those little Western editors sit up. They’ve been swearing by Knox, like a little tin god. Roars of laughter for them.

Chalmers

Do you do anything yourself?

Hubbard

Trust me. I have my own article for Cartwright’s blocked out. They’re holding the presses for it. I shall wire it along hot-footed to-morrow evening. Say — — ?

Chalmers

(*After a pause.*) Well?

Hubbard

Wasn’t it a risky thing to give him his chance with that speech?

Chalmers

It was the only feasible thing. He never has given us an opening. Our service men have camped on his trail night and day. Private life as unimpeachable as his public life. But now is our chance. The gods have given him into our hands. That speech will do more to break his influence —

Hubbard

(*Interrupting.*) Than a Fairbanks cocktail.

(*Both laugh.*) But don't forget that this Knox is a live wire. Somebody might get stung. Are you sure, when he gets up to make that speech, that he won't be able to back it up?

Chalmers

No danger at all.

Hubbard

But there are hooks and crooks by which facts are sometimes obtained.

Chalmers

(*Positively.*) Knox has nothing to go on but suspicions and hints, and unfounded assertions from the yellow press.

(*Man-servant enters, goes to tea-table, looks it over, and makes slight rearrangements.*) (*Lowering his voice.*) He will make himself a laughing stock. His charges will turn into boomerangs. His speech will be like a sheet from a Sunday supplement, with not a fact to back it up. (*Glances at Servant.*) We'd better be getting out of here. They're going to have tea.

(*The Servant, however, makes exit.*) Come to the library and have a high-ball. (*They pause as Hubbard speaks.*)

Hubbard

(*With quiet glee.*) And to-morrow Ali Baba gets his.

Chalmers

Ali Baba?

Hubbard

That's what your wife calls him — Knox.

Chalmers

Oh, yes, I believe I've heard it before. It's about time he hanged himself, and now we've given him the rope.

Hubbard

(*Sinking voice and becoming deprecatingly confidential.*)

Oh, by the way, just a little friendly warning, Senator Chalmers. Not so fast and loose up New York way. That certain lady, not to be mentioned — there's gossip about it in the New York newspaper offices. Of course, all such stories are killed. But be discreet, be discreet If Gherst gets hold of it, he'll play it up against the Administration in all his papers.

(*Chalmers, who throughout this speech is showing a growing resentment, is about to speak, when voices are heard without and he checks himself.*)

(*Enter. Mrs. Starkweather, rather flustered and imminently in danger of a collapse, followed by Connie Starkweather, fresh, radiant, and joyous.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

(*With appeal and relief.*)

Oh — — Tom!

(*Chalmers takes her hand sympathetically and protectingly.*)

Connie

(*Who is an exuberant young woman, bursts forth.*) Oh, brother-in-law! Such excitement! That's what's the matter with mother. We ran into a go-cart. Our chauffeur was not to blame. It was the woman's fault. She tried to cross just as we were turning the corner. But we hardly grazed it. Fortunately the baby was not hurt — only spilled. It was ridiculous. (*Catching sight of Hubbard.*) Oh, there you are, Mr. Hubbard. How de do.

(*Steps half way to meet him and shakes hands with him.*) (*Mrs. Starkweather looks around helplessly for a chair, and Chalmers conducts her to one soothingly.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

Oh, it was terrible! The little child might have been killed. And such persons love their babies, I know.

Connie

(*To Chalmers.*) Has father come? We were to pick him up here. Where's Madge?

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Espying Hubbard, faintly.*) Oh, there is Mr. Hubbard.

(*Hubbard comes to her and shakes hands.*) I simply can't get used to these rapid ways of modern life. The motor-car is the invention of the devil. Everything is *too* quick. When I was a girl, we lived sedately, decorously. There was time for meditation and repose. But in this age there is time for nothing. How Anthony keeps his head is more than I can understand. But, then, Anthony is a wonderful man.

Hubbard

I am sure Mr. Starkweather never lost his head in his life.

Chalmers

Unless when he was courting you, mother.

Mrs. Starkweather

(*A trifle grimly.*) I'm not so sure about that.

Connie

(*Imitating a grave, business-like enunciation.*) Father probably conferred first with his associates, then turned the affair over for consideration by his corporation lawyers, and, when they reported no flaws, checked the first spare half hour in his notebook to ask mother if she would have him.

(*They laugh.*) And looked at his watch at least twice while he was proposing.

Mrs. Starkweather

Anthony was not so busy then as all that.

Hubbard

He hadn't yet taken up the job of running the United States.

Mrs. Starkweather

I'm sure I don't know what he is running, but he is a very busy man — business, politics, and madness; madness, politics, and business.

(*She stops breathlessly and glances at tea-table.*) Tea. I should like a cup of tea. Connie, I shall stay for a cup of tea, and then, if your father hasn't come, we'll go home. (*To Chalmers.*) Where is Tommy?

Chalmers

Out in the car with Madge.
(*Glances at tea-table and consults watch.*) She should be back now.

Connie

Mother, you mustn't stay long. I have to dress.

Chalmers

Oh, yes, that dinner.
(*Yawns.*) I wish I could loaf to-night.

Connie

(*Explaining to Hubbard.*) The Turkish Charge d'Affaires — I never can remember his name. But he's great fun — a positive joy. He's giving the dinner to the British Ambassador.

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Starting forward in her chair and listening intently.*) There's Tommy, now.

(*Voices of Margaret Chalmers and of Tommy heard from without. Hers is laughingly protesting, while Tommy's is gleefully insistent.*) (*Margaret and Tommy appear and pause just outside door, holding each other's hands, facing each other, too immersed in each other to be aware of the presence of those inside the room. Margaret and Tommy are in street costume.*)

Tommy

(*Laughing.*)
But mama.

Margaret

(*Herself laughing, but shaking her head.*) No. Tommy First —

Margaret

No; you must run along to Linda, now, mother's boy. And we'll talk about that some other time.

(*Tommy notices for the first time that there are persons in the room. He peeps in around the door and espies Mrs. Starkweather. At the same* *moment, impulsively, he withdraws his hands and runs in to Mrs. Starkweather.*)

Tommy

(*Who is evidently fond of his grandmother.*) Grandma!

(*They embrace and make much of each other.*)

(*Margaret enters, appropriately greeting the others — a kiss (*maybe*) to Connie, and a slightly cold handshake to Hubbard.*)

Margaret

(*To Chalmers.*) Now that you're here, Tom, you mustn't run away.

(*Greets Mrs. Starkweather.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Turning Tommy's face to the light and looking at it anxiously.*) A trifle thin, Margaret.

Margaret

On the contrary, mother — —

Mrs. Starkweather

(*To Chalmers.*) Don't you think so, Tom?

Connie

(*Aside to Hubbard.*) Mother continually worries about his health.

Hubbard

A sturdy youngster, I should say.

Tommy

(*To Chalmers.*) I'm an Indian, aren't I, daddy?

Chalmers

(*Nodding his head emphatically.*) And the stoutest-hearted in the tribe.

(*Linda appears in doorway, evidently looking for Tommy, and Chalmers notices her.*) There's Linda looking for you, young stout heart.

Margaret

Take Tommy, Linda. Run along, mother’s boy.

Tommy

Come along, grandma. I want to show you something.

(*He catches Mrs. Starkweather by the hand. Protesting, but highly pleased, she allows him to lead her to the door, where he extends his other hand to Linda. Thus, pausing in doorway, leading a woman by either hand, he looks back at Margaret.*) (*Roguishly.*) Remember, mama, we’re going to scout in a little while.

Margaret

(*Going to Tommy, and bending down with her arms around him.*) No, Tommy. Mama has to go to that horrid dinner to-night. But to-morrow we’ll play.

(*Tommy is cast down and looks as if he might pout.*) Where is my little Indian now?

Hubbard

Be an Indian, Tommy.

Tommy

(*Brightening up.*)

All right, mama. To-morrow. — — if you can’t find time to-day.

(*Margaret kisses him.*) (*Exit Tommy, Mrs. Starkweather, and Linda, Tommy leading them by a hand in each of theirs.*)

Chalmers

(*Nodding to Hubbard, in low voice to Hubbard and starting to make exit to right.*) That high-ball.

(*Hubbard disengages himself from proximity of Connie, and starts to follow.*)

Connie

(*Reproachfully.*) If you run away, I won’t stop for tea.

Margaret

Do stop, Tom. Father will be here in a few minutes.

Connie

A regular family party.

Chalmers

All right. We’ll be back. We’re just going to have a little talk.

(*Chalmers and Hubbard make exit to right.*) (*Margaret puts her arm impulsively around Connie — a sheerly spontaneous act of affection — kisses her, and at same time evinces preparation to leave.*)

Margaret

I’ve got to get my things off. Won’t you wait here, dear, in case anybody comes? It’s nearly time.

(*Starts toward exit to rear, but is stopped by Connie.*) Madge.

(*Margaret immediately pauses and waits expectantly, smiling, while Connie is hesitant.*)

I want to speak to you about something, Madge. You don’t mind?

(*Margaret, still smiling, shakes her head.*) Just a warning. Not that anybody could believe for a moment, there is anything wrong, but — —

Margaret

(*Dispelling a shadow of irritation that has crossed her face.*)

If it concerns Tom, don’t tell me, please. You know he does do ridiculous things at times. But I don’t let him worry me any more; so don’t worry me about him.

(*Connie remains silent, and Margaret grows curious.*) Well?

Connie

It’s not about Tom —

(*Pauses.*) It’s about you.

Margaret

Oh.

Connie

I don’t know how to begin.

Margaret

By coming right out with it, the worst of it, all at once, first.

Connie

It isn't serious at all, but — well, mother is worrying about it. You know how old-fashioned she is. And when you consider our position — father's and Tom's, I mean — it doesn't seem just right for you to be seeing so much of such an enemy of theirs. He has abused them dreadfully, you know. And there's that dreadful speech he is going to give to-morrow. You haven't seen the afternoon papers. He has made the most terrible charges against everybody — all of us, our friends, everybody.

Margaret

You mean Mr. Knox, of course. But he wouldn't harm anybody, Connie, dear.

Connie

(*Bridling,*) Oh, he wouldn't? He as good as publicly called father a thief.

Margaret

When did that happen? I never heard of it.

Connie

Well, he said that the money magnates had grown so unprincipled, sunk so low, that they would steal a mouse from a blind kitten.

Margaret

I don't see what father has to do with that.

Connie

He meant him just the same.

Margaret

You silly goose. He couldn't have meant father. Father? Why, father wouldn't look at anything less than fifty or a hundred millions.

Connie

And you speak to him and make much of him when you meet him places. You talked with him for half an hour at that Dugdale reception. You have him here in your own house — Tom’s house — when he’s such a bitter enemy of Tom’s. (*During the foregoing speech, Anthony Starkweather makes entrance from rear. His face is grave, and he is in a brown study, as if pondering weighty problems. At sight of the two women he pauses and surveys them. They are unaware of his presence.*)

Margaret

You are wrong, Connie. He is nobody’s enemy. He is the truest, cleanest, most right-seeking man I have ever seen.

Connie

(*Interrupting.*) He is a trouble-maker, a disturber of the public peace, a shallow-pated demagogue —

Margaret

(*Reprovingly.*)

Now you’re quoting somebody — — father, I suppose. To think of him being so abused — poor, dear Ali Baba —

Starkweather

(*Clearing his throat in advertisement of his presence.*) A-hem.

(*Margaret and Connie turn around abruptly and discover him.*)

Margaret

And Connie Father!

(*Both come forward to greet him, Margaret leading.*)

Starkweather

(*Anticipating, showing the deliberate method of the busy man saving time by eliminating the superfluous.*) Fine, thank you. Quite well in every particular. This Ali Baba? Who is Ali Baba?

(*Margaret looks amused reproach at Connie.*)

Connie

Mr. Howard Knox.

Starkweather

And why is he called Ali Baba?

Margaret

That is my nickname for him. In the den of thieves, you know. You remember your Arabian Nights.

Starkweather

(*Severely.*) I have been wanting to speak to you for some time, Margaret, about that man. You know that I have never interfered with your way of life since your marriage, nor with your and Tom's housekeeping arrangements. But this man Knox. I understand that you have even had him here in your house —

Margaret

(*Interrupting.*) He is very liable to be here this afternoon, any time, now.

(*Connie displays irritation at Margaret.*)

Starkweather

(*Continuing imperturbably.*) *Your* house — *you*, my daughter, and the wife of Senator Chalmers. As I said, I have not interfered with you since your marriage. But this Knox affair transcends household arrangements. It is of political importance. The man is an enemy to our class, a firebrand. Why do you have him here?

Margaret

Because I like him. Because he is a man I am proud to call "friend." Because I wish there were more men like him, many more men like him, in the world. Because I have ever seen in him nothing but the best and highest. And, besides, it's such good fun to see how one virtuous man can so disconcert you captains of industry and arbiters of destiny. Confess that you are very much disconcerted, father, right now. He will be here in a few minutes, and you will be more disconcerted. Why? Because it is an affair that transcends family arrangements. And it is your affair, not mine.

Starkweather

This man Knox is a dangerous character — one that I am not pleased to see any of my family take up with. He is not a gentleman.

Margaret

He is a self-made man, if that is what you mean, and he certainly hasn't any money.

Connie

(*Interrupting.*) He says that money is theft — at least when it is in the hands of a wealthy person.

Starkweather

He is uncouth — ignorant.

Margaret

I happen to know that he is a graduate of the University of Oregon.

Starkweather

(*Sneeringly.*) A cow college. But that is not what I mean. He is a demagogue, stirring up the wild-beast passions of the people.

Margaret

Surely you would not call his advocacy of that child labor bill and of the conservation of the forest and coal lands stirring up the wild-beast passions of the people?

Starkweather

(*Wearily.*) You don't understand. When I say he is dangerous it is because he threatens all the stabilities, because he threatens us who have made this country and upon whom this country and its prosperity rest.

(*Connie, scenting trouble, walks across stage away from them.*)

Margaret

The captains of industry — the banking magnates and the mergers?

Starkweather

Call it so. Call it what you will. Without us the country falls into the hands of scoundrels like that man Knox and smashes to ruin.

Margaret

(*Reprovingly.*) Not a scoundrel, father.

Starkweather

He is a sentimental dreamer, a hair-brained enthusiast. It is the foolish utterances of men like him that place the bomb and the knife in the hand of the assassin.

Margaret

He is at least a good man, even if he does disagree with you on political and industrial problems. And heaven knows that good men are rare enough these days.

Starkweather

I impugn neither his morality nor his motives — only his rationality. Really, Margaret, there is nothing inherently vicious about him. I grant that. And it is precisely that which makes him such a power for evil.

Margaret

When I think of all the misery and pain which he is trying to remedy — I can see in him only a power for good. He is not working for himself but for the many. That is why he has no money. You have heaven alone knows how many millions — you don't; you have worked for yourself.

Starkweather

I, too, work for the many. I give work to the many. I make life possible for the many. I am only too keenly alive to the responsibilities of my stewardship of wealth.

Margaret

But what of the child laborers working at the machines? Is that necessary, O steward of wealth? How my heart has ached for them! How I have longed to do something for them — to change conditions so that it will no longer be necessary for the children to toil, to have the playtime of childhood stolen away from them. Theft — that is what it is, the playtime of the children coined into profits. That is why I like Howard Knox. He calls theft theft. He is trying to do something for those children. What are you trying to do for them?

Starkweather

Sentiment. Sentiment. The question is too vast and complicated, and you cannot understand. No woman can understand. That is why you run to sentiment. That is what is the matter with this Knox — sentiment. You can't run a government of ninety millions of people on sentiment, nor on abstract ideas of justice and right.

Margaret

But if you eliminate justice and right, what remains?

Starkweather

This is a practical world, and it must be managed by practical men — by thinkers, not by near-thinkers whose heads are addled with the half-digested ideas of the French Encyclopedists and Revolutionists of a century and a half ago.

(*Margaret shows signs of impatience — she is not particularly perturbed by this passage-at-arms with her father, and is anxious to get off her street things.*)

Don't forget, my daughter, that your father knows the books as well as any cow college graduate from Oregon. I, too, in my student days, dabbled in theories of universal happiness and righteousness, saw my vision and dreamed my dream. I did not know then the weakness, and frailty, and grossness of the human clay. But I grew out of that and into a man. Some men never grow out of that stage. That is what is the trouble with Knox. He is still a dreamer, and a dangerous one.

(*He pauses a moment, and then his thin lips shut grimly. But he has just about shot his bolt.*)

Margaret

What do you mean?

Starkweather

He has let himself in to give a speech to-morrow, wherein he will be called upon to deliver the proofs of all the lurid charges he has made against the Administration — against us, the stewards of wealth if you please. He will be unable to deliver the proofs, and the nation will laugh. And that will be the political end of Mr. Ali Baba and his dream.

Margaret

It is a beautiful dream. Were there more like him the dream would come true. After all, it is the dreamers that build and that never die. Perhaps you will find that he is not so easily to be destroyed. But I can't stay and argue with you, father. I simply must go and get my things off.

(*To Connie.*) You'll have to receive, dear. I'll be right back.

(*Julius Rutland enters. Margaret advances to meet him, shaking his hand.*) You must forgive me for deserting for a moment.

Rutland

(*Greeting the others.*) A family council, I see.

Margaret

(*On way to exit at rear.*) No; a discussion on dreams and dreamers. I leave you to bear my part.

Rutland

(*Bowing.*) With pleasure. The dreamers are the true architects. But — a — what is the dream and who is the dreamer?

Margaret

(*Pausing in the doorway.*) The dream of social justice, of fair play and a square deal to everybody. The dreamer — Mr. Knox.

(*Rutland is so patently irritated, that Margaret lingers in the doorway to enjoy.*)

Rutland

That man! He has insulted and reviled the Church — my calling. He —

Connie

(*Interrupting.*) He said the churchmen stole from God. I remember he once said there had been only one true Christian and that He died on the Cross.

Margaret

He quoted that from Nietzsche.

Starkweather

(*To Rutland, in quiet glee.*) He had you there.

Rutland

(*In composed fury.*) Nietzsche is a blasphemer, sir. Any man who reads Nietzsche or quotes Nietzsche is a blasphemer. It augurs ill for the future of America when such pernicious literature has the vogue it has.

Margaret

(*Interrupting, laughing.*) I leave the quarrel in your hands, sir knight. Remember — the dreamer and the dream. (*Margaret makes exit.*)

Rutland

(*Shaking his head.*) I cannot understand what is coming over the present generation. Take your daughter, for instance. Ten years ago she was an earnest, sincere lieutenant of mine in all our little charities.

Starkweather

Has she given charity up?

Connie

It's settlement work, now, and kindergartens.

Rutland

(*Ominously.*) It's writers like Nietzsche, and men who read him, like Knox, who are responsible.

(*Senator Dowsett and Mrs. Dowsett enter from rear.*)

(*Connie advances to greet them. Rutland knows Mrs. Dowsett, and Connie introduces him to Senator Dowsett.*)

(*In the meantime, not bothering to greet anybody, evincing his own will and way, Starkweather goes across to right front, selects one of several chairs, seats himself, pulls a thin note-book from inside coat pocket, and proceeds to immerse himself in contents of same.*) (*Dowsett and Rutland pair and stroll to left rear and seat themselves, while Connie and Mrs. Dowsett seat themselves at tea-table to left front. Connie rings the bell for Servant.*)

Mrs. Dowsett

(*Glancing significantly at Starkweather, and speaking in a low voice.*) That's your father, isn't it? I have so wanted to meet him.

Connie

(*Softly.*) You know he's peculiar. He is liable to ignore everybody here this afternoon, and get up and go away abruptly, without saying good-bye.

Mrs. Dowsett

(*Sympathetically.*) Yes, I know, a man of such large affairs. He must have so much on his mind. He is a wonderful man — my husband says the greatest in contemporary history — more powerful than a dozen presidents, the King of England, and the Kaiser, all rolled into one.

(*Servant enters with tea urn and accessories, and Connie proceeds to serve tea, all accompanied by appropriate patter — "Two lumps?" "One, please." "Lemon;" etc.*)

(*Rutland and Dowsett come forward to table for their tea, where they remain.*)

(*Connie, glancing apprehensively across at her father and debating a moment, prepares a cup for him and a small plate with crackers, and hands them to Dowsett, who likewise betrays apprehensiveness.*)

Connie

Take it to father, please, senator.

(*Note: — Throughout the rest of this act, Starkweather is like a being apart, a king sitting on his throne. He divides the tea function with Margaret. Men come up to him and speak with him. He sends for men. They come and go at his bidding. The whole attitude, perhaps unconsciously on his part, is that wherever he may be he is master. This attitude is accepted by all the others; forsooth, he is indeed a great man and master. The only one who is not really afraid of him is Margaret; yet she gives in to him in so far as she lets him do as he pleases at her afternoon tea.*) (*Dowsett carries the cup of tea and small plate across stage to Starkweather. Starkweather does not notice him at first.*)

Connie

(*Who has been watching.*) Tea, father, won't you have a cup of tea?

(*Through the following scene between Starkweather and Dowsett, the latter holds cup of tea and crackers, helplessly, at a disadvantage. At the *same time Rutland is served with tea and remains at the table, talking with the two women.*)

Starkweather

(*Looking first at Connie, then peering into cup of tea. He grunts refusal, and for the first time looks up into the other man's face. He immediately closes note-book down on finger to keep the place.*) Oh, it's you. Dowsett.

(*Painfully endeavoring to be at ease.*) A pleasure, Mr. Starkweather, an entirely unexpected pleasure to meet you here. I was not aware you frequented frivolous gatherings of this nature.

Starkweather

(*Abruptly and peremptorily.*) Why didn't you come when you were sent for this morning?

Dowsett

I was sick — I was in bed.

Starkweather

That is no excuse, sir. When you are sent for you are to come. Understand? That bill was reported back. Why was it reported back? You told Dobleman you would attend to it.

Dowsett

It was a slip up. Such things will happen.

Starkweather

What was the matter with that committee? Have you no influence with the Senate crowd? If not, say so, and I'll get some one who has.

Dowsett

(*Angrily.*) I refuse to be treated in this manner, Mr. Starkweather. I have some self-respect —

(*Starkweather grunts incredulously.*) Some decency —

(*Starkweather grunts.*) A position of prominence in my state. You forget, sir, that in our state organization I occupy no mean place.

Starkweather

(*Cutting him off so sharply that Dowsett drops cup and saucer.*) Don't you show your teeth to me. I can make you or break you. That state organization of yours belongs to me.

(*Dowsett starts — he is learning something new. To hide his feelings, he stoops to pick up cup and saucer.*) Let it alone! I am talking to you.

(*Dowsett straightens up to attention with alacrity.*) (*Connie, who has witnessed, rings for Servant.*) I bought that state organization, and paid for it. You are one of the chattels that came along with the machine. You were made senator to obey my orders. Understand? Do you understand?

Dowsett

(*Beaten.*) I — I understand.

Starkweather

That bill is to be killed.

Dowsett

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Quietly, no headlines about it.

(*Dowsett nods.*) Now you can go.

(*Dowsett proceeds rather limply across to join group at tea-table.*) (*Chalmers and Hubbard enter from right, laughing about something. At sight of Starkweather they immediately become sober.*) (*No hands are shaken. Starkweather barely acknowledges Hubbard's greeting.*)

Starkweather

Tom, I want to see you.

(*Hubbard takes his cue, and proceeds across to tea-table.*)

(*Enter Servant. Connie directs him to remove broken cup and saucer. While this is being done, Starkweather remains silent. He consults notebook, and Chalmers stands, not quite at ease, waiting the other's will. At the same time, patter at tea-table. Hubbard, greeting others and accepting or declining cup of tea.*)

(*Servant makes exit*).

Starkweather

(*Closing finger on book and looking sharply at Chalmers.*) Tom, this affair of yours in New York must come to an end. Understand?

Chalmers

(*Starting.*) Hubbard has been talking.

Starkweather

No, it is not Hubbard. I have the reports from other sources.

Chalmers

It is a harmless affair.

Starkweather

I happen to know better. I have the whole record. If you wish, I can give you every detail, every meeting. I know. There is no discussion whatever. I want no more of it.

Chalmers

I never dreamed for a moment that I was — er — indiscreet.

Starkweather

Never forget that every indiscretion of a man in your position is indiscreet. We have a duty, a great and solemn duty to perform. Upon our shoulders rest the destinies of ninety million people. If we fail in our duty, they go down to destruction. Ignorant demagogues are working on the beast-passions of the people. If they have their way, they are lost, the country is lost, civilization is lost. We want no more Dark Ages.

Chalmers

Really, I never thought it was as serious as all that.

Starkweather

(*Shrugging shoulders and lifting eyebrows.*) After all, why should you? You are only a cog in the machine. I, and the several men grouped with me, am the machine. You are a useful cog — too useful to lose —

Chalmers

Lose? — Me?

Starkweather

I have but to raise my hand, any time — do you understand? — any time, and you are lost. You control your state. Very well. But never forget that to-morrow, if I wished, I could buy your whole machine out from under you. I know you cannot change yourself, but, for the sake of the big issues at stake, you must be careful, exceedingly careful. We are compelled to work with weak tools. You are a good liver, a flesh-pot man. You drink too much. Your heart is weak. — Oh, I have the report of your doctor. Nevertheless, don't make a fool of yourself, nor of us. Besides, do not forget that your wife is my daughter. She is a strong woman, a credit to both of us. Be careful that you are not a discredit to her.

Chalmers

All right, I'll be careful. But while we are — er — on this subject, there's something I'd like to speak to you about.

(*A pause, in which Starkweather waits non-committally.*) It's this man Knox, and Madge. He comes to the house. They are as thick as thieves.

Starkweather

Yes?

Chalmers

(*Hastily.*) Oh, not a breath of suspicion or anything of that sort, I assure you. But it doesn't strike me as exactly appropriate that your daughter and my wife should be friendly with this fire-eating anarchist who is always attacking us and all that we represent.

Starkweather

I started to speak with her on that subject, but was interrupted.

(*Puckers brow and thinks.*) You are her husband. Why don't you take her in hand yourself?

(*Enters Mrs. Starkweather from rear, looking about, bowing, then locating Starkweather and proceeding toward him.*)

Chalmers

What can I do? She has a will of her own — the same sort of a will that you have. Besides, I think she knows about my — about some of my — indiscretions.

Starkweather

(*Slyly.*)

Harmless indiscretions?

(*Chalmers is about to reply, but observes Mrs. Starkweather approaching.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Speaks in a peevish, complaining voice, and during her harrangue Starkweather immerses himself in notebook.*) Oh, there you are, Anthony. Talking politics, I suppose. Well, as soon as I get a cup of tea we must go. Tommy is not looking as well as I could wish. Margaret loves him, but she does not take the right care of him. I don't know what the world is coming to when mothers do not know how to rear their offspring. There is Margaret, with her slum kindergartens, taking care of everybody else's children but her own. If she only performed her church duties as eagerly! Mr. Rutland is displeased with her. I shall give her a talking to — only, you'd better do it, Anthony. Somehow, I have never counted much with Margaret. She is as set in doing what she pleases as you are. In my time children paid respect to their parents. This is what comes of speed. There is no time for anything. And now I must get my tea and run. Connie has to dress for that dinner.

(*Mrs. Starkweather crosses to table, greets others characteristically and is served with tea by Connie.*)

(*Chalmers waits respectfully on Starkweather.*)

Starkweather

(*Looking up from note-book.*) That will do, Tom.

(*Chalmers is just starting across to join others, when voices are heard outside rear entrance, and Margaret enters with Dolores Ortega, wife of the Peruvian Minister, and Matsu Sakari, Secretary of Japanese Legation — both of whom she has met as they were entering the house.*)

(*Chalmers changes his course, and meets the above advancing group. He knows Dolores Ortega, whom he greets, and is introduced to Sakari.*)

(*Margaret passes on among guests, greeting them, etc. Then she displaces Connie at tea-table and proceeds to dispense tea to the newcomers.*)

(*Groups slowly form and seat themselves about stage as follows: Chalmers and Dolores Ortega; Rutland, Dowsett, Mrs. Starkweather; Connie, Mr. Dowsett, and Hubbard.*)

(*Chalmers carries tea to Dolores Ortega.*)

(*Sakari has been lingering by table, waiting for tea and pattering with Margaret, Chalmers, etc.*)

Margaret

(*Handing cup to Sakari.*) I am very timid in offering you this, for I am sure you must be appalled by our barbarous methods of making tea.

Sakari

(*Bowing.*) It is true, your American tea, and the tea of the English, are quite radically different from the tea in my country. But one learns, you know. I served my apprenticeship to American tea long years ago, when I was at Yale. It was perplexing, I assure you — at first, only at first I really believe that I am beginning to have a — how shall I call it? — a tolerance for tea in your fashion.

Margaret

You are very kind in overlooking our shortcomings.

Sakari

(*Bowing.*) On the contrary, I am unaware, always unaware, of any shortcomings of this marvelous country of yours.

Margaret

(*Laughing.*) You are incorrigibly gracious, Mr. Sakari. (*Knox appears at threshold of rear entrance and pauses irresolutely for a moment*)

Sakari

(*Noticing Knox, and looking about him to select which group he will join.*) If I may be allowed, I shall now retire and consume this — tea.

(*Joins group composed of Connie, Mrs. Dowsett, and Hubbard.*)

(*Knox comes forward to Margaret, betraying a certain awkwardness due to lack of experience in such social functions. He greets Margaret and those in the group nearest her.*)

Knox

(*To Margaret.*) I don't know why I come here. I do not belong. All the ways are strange.

Margaret

(*Lightly, at the same time preparing his tea.*) The same Ali Baba — once again in the den of the forty thieves. But your watch and pocket-book are safe here, really they are.

(*Knox makes a gesture of dissent at her facetiousness.*) Now don't be serious. You should relax sometimes. You live too tensely.

(*Looking at Starkweather.*) There's the arch-anarch over there, the dragon you are trying to slay.

(*Knox looks at Starkweather and is plainly perplexed.*) The man who handles all the life insurance funds, who controls more strings of banks and trust companies than all the Rothschilds a hundred times over — the merger of iron and steel and coal and shipping and all the other things — the man who blocks your child labor bill and all the rest of the remedial legislation you advocate. In short, my father.

Knox

(*Looking intently at Starkweather.*) I should have recognized him from his photographs. But why do you say such things?

Margaret

Because they are true.

(*He remains silent.*) Now, aren't they? (*She laughs.*) Oh, you don't need to answer. You know the truth, the whole bitter truth. This *is* a den of thieves. There is Mr. Hubbard over there, for instance, the trusty journalist lieutenant of the corporations.

Knox

(*With an expression of disgust.*) I know him. It was he that wrote the Standard Oil side of the story, after having abused Standard Oil for years in the pseudo-muck-raking magazines. He made them come up to his price, that was all. He's the star writer on *Cartwright's*, now, since that magazine changed its policy and became subsidizedly reactionary. I know him — a thoroughly dishonest man. Truly am I Ali Baba, and truly I wonder why I am here.

Margaret

You are here, sir, because I like you to come.

Knox

We do have much in common, you and I.

Margaret

The future.

Knox

(*Gravely, looking at her with shining eyes.*) I sometimes fear for more immediate reasons than that.

(*Margaret looks at him in alarm, and at the same time betrays pleasure in what he has said.*) For you.

Margaret

(*Hastily.*) Don't look at me that way. Your eyes are flashing. Some one might see and misunderstand.

Knox

(*In confusion, awkwardly.*) I was unaware that I — that I was looking at you — — in any way that — —

Margaret

I'll tell you why you are here. Because I sent for you.

Knox

(*With signs of ardor.*) I would come whenever you sent for me, and go wherever you might send me.

Margaret

(*Reprovingly.*)

Please, please — — It was about that speech. I have been hearing about it from everybody — rumblings and mutterings and dire prophecies. I know how busy you are, and I ought not to have asked you to come. But there was no other way, and I was so anxious.

Knox

(*Pleased.*) It seems so strange that you, being what you are, affiliated as you are, should be interested in the welfare of the common people.

Margaret

(*Judicially.*) I do seem like a traitor in my own camp. But as father said a while ago, I, too, have dreamed my dream. I did it as a girl — Plato's *Republic*, Moore's *Utopia* — I was steeped in all the dreams of the social dreamers.

(*During all that follows of her speech, Knox is keenly interested, his eyes glisten and he hangs on her words.*)

And I dreamed that I, too, might do something to bring on the era of universal justice and fair play. In my heart I dedicated myself to the cause of humanity. I made Lincoln my hero-he still is. But I was only a girl, and where was I to find this cause? — how to work for it? I was shut in by a thousand restrictions, hedged in by a thousand conventions. Everybody laughed at me when I expressed the thoughts that burned in me. What could I do? I was only a woman. I had neither vote nor right of utterance. I must remain silent. I must do nothing. Men, in their lordly wisdom, did all. They voted, orated, governed. The place for women was in the home, taking care of some lordly man who did all these lordly things.

Knox

You understand, then, why I am for equal suffrage.

Margaret

But I learned — or thought I learned. Power, I discovered early. My father had power. He was a magnate — I believe that is the correct phrase. Power was what I needed. But how? I was a woman. Again I dreamed my dream — a modified dream. Only by marriage could I win to power. And there you have the clew to me and what I am and have become. I met the man who was to become my husband. He was clean and strong and an athlete, an outdoor man, a wealthy man and a rising politician. Father told me that if I married him he would make him the power of his state, make him governor, send him to the United States Senate. And there you have it all.

Knox

Yes? — — Yes?

Margaret

I married. I found that there were greater forces at work than I had ever dreamed of. They took my husband away from me and molded him into the political lieutenant of my father. And I was without power. I could do nothing for the cause. I was beaten. Then it was that I got a new vision. The future belonged to the children. There I could play my woman's part. I was a mother. Very well. I could do no better than to bring into the world a healthy son and bring him up to manhood healthy and wholesome, clean, noble, and alive. Did I do my part well, through him the results would be achieved. Through him would the work of the world be done in making the world healthier and happier for all the human creatures in it. I played the mother's part. That is why I left the pitiful little charities of the church and devoted myself to settlement work and tenement house reform, established my kindergartens, and worked for the little men and women who come so blindly and to whom the future belongs to make or mar.

Knox

You are magnificent. I know, now, why I come when you bid me come.

Margaret

And then you came. You were magnificent. You were my knight of the windmills, tilting against all power and privilege, striving to wrest the future from the future and realize it here in the present, now. I was sure you would be destroyed. Yet you are still here and fighting valiantly. And that speech of yours to-morrow —

Chalmers

(*Who has approached, bearing Dolores Ortega's cup.*) Yes, that speech. How do you do, Mr. Knox.

(*They shake hands.*) A cup of tea, Madge. For Mrs. Ortega. Two lumps, please.

(*Margaret prepares the cup of tea.*) Everybody is excited over that speech. You are going to give us particular fits, to-morrow, I understand.

Knox

(*Smiling.*) Really, no more than is deserved.

Chalmers

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Knox

Precisely.

(*Receiving back cup of tea from Margaret.*)

Chalmers

Believe me, we are not so black as we're painted. There are two sides to this question. Like you, we do our best to do what is right. And we hope, we still hope, to win you over to our side.

(*Knox shakes his head with a quiet smile.*)

Margaret

Oh, Tom, be truthful. You don't hope anything of the sort. You know you are hoping to destroy him.

Chalmers

(*Smiling grimly.*) That is what usually happens to those who are not won over.

(*Preparing to depart with cup of tea; speaking to Knox.*) You might accomplish much good, were you with us. Against us you accomplish nothing, absolutely nothing.

(*Returns to Dolores Ortega.*)

Margaret

(*Hurriedly.*) You see. That is why I was anxious — why I sent for you. Even Tom admits that they who are not won over are destroyed. This speech is a crucial event. You know how rigidly they rule the House and gag men like you. It is they, and they alone, who have given you opportunity for this speech? Why? — Why?

Knox

(*Smiling confidently.*) I know their little scheme. They have heard my charges. They think I am going to make a firebrand speech, and they are ready to catch me without the proofs. They are ready in every way for me. They are going to laugh me down. The Associated Press, the Washington correspondents — all are ready to manufacture, in every newspaper in the land, the great laugh that will destroy me. But I am fully prepared, I have —

Margaret

The proofs?

Knox

Yes.

Margaret

Now?

Knox

They will be delivered to me to-night — original documents, photographs of documents, affidavits —

Margaret

Tell me nothing. But oh, do be careful! Be careful!

Mrs. Dowsett

(*Appealing to Margaret.*) Do give me some assistance, Mrs. Chalmers. (*Indicating Sakari.*) Mr. Sakari is trying to make me ridiculous.

Margaret

Impossible.

Mrs. Dowsett

But he is. He has had the effrontery —

Chalmers

(*Mimicking Mrs. Dowsett.*) Effrontery! — O, Sakari!

Sakari

The dear lady is pleased to be facetious.

Mrs. Dowsett

He has had the effrontery to ask me to explain the cause of high prices. Mr. Dowsett says the reason is that the people are living so high.

Sakari

Such a marvelous country. They are poor because they have so much to spend.

Chalmers

Are not high prices due to the increased output of gold?

Mrs. Dowsett

Mr. Sakari suggested that himself, and when I agreed with him he proceeded to demolish it. He has treated me dreadfully.

Rutland

(*Clearing his throat and expressing himself with ponderous unction.*) You will find the solution in the drink traffic. It is liquor, alcohol, that is undermining our industry, our institutions, our faith in God — everything. Yearly the working people drink greater quantities of alcohol. Naturally, through resulting inefficiency, the cost of production is higher, and therefore prices are higher.

Dowsett

Partly so, partly so. And in line with it, and in addition to it, prices are high because the working class is no longer thrifty. If our working class saved as the French peasant does, we would sell more in the world market and have better times.

Sakari

(*Bowing.*) As I understand it then, the more thrifty you are the more you save, and the more you save the more you have to sell, the more you sell, the better the times?

Dowsett

Exactly so. Exactly.

Sakari

The less you sell, the harder are the times?

Dowsett

Just so.

Sakari

Then if the people are thrifty, and buy less, times will be harder?

Dowsett

(*Perplexed.*) Er — it would seem so.

Sakari

Then it would seem that the present bad times are due to the fact that the people are thrifty, rather than not thrifty?

(*Dowsett is nonplussed, and Mrs. Dowsett throws up her hands in despair.*)

Mrs. Dowsett

(*Turning to Knox.*) Perhaps you can explain to us, Mr. Knox, the reason for this terrible condition of affairs.

(*Starkweather closes note-book on finger and listens.*) (*Knox smiles, but does not speak.*)

Dolores Ortega

Please do, Mr. Knox. I am so dreadfully anxious to know why living is so high now. Only this morning I understand meat went up again.

(*Knox hesitates and looks questioningly at Margaret.*)

Hubbard

I am sure Mr. Knox can shed new light on this perplexing problem.

Chalmers

Surely you, the whirlwind of oratorical swords in the House, are not timid here — among friends.

Knox

(*Sparring.*) I had no idea that questions of such nature were topics of conversation at affairs like this.

Starkweather

(*Abruptly and imperatively.*) What causes the high prices?

Knox

(*Equally abrupt and just as positive as the other was imperative.*) *Theft*!

(*It is a sort of a bombshell he has exploded, but they receive it politely and smilingly, even though it has shaken them up.*)

Dolores Ortega

What a romantic explanation. I suppose everybody who has anything has stolen it.

Knox

Not quite, but almost quite. Take motorcars, for example. This year five hundred million dollars has been spent for motor-cars. It required men toiling in the mines and foundries, women sewing their eyes out in sweat-shops, shop girls slaving for four and five dollars a week, little children working in the factories and cotton-mills — all these it required to produce those five hundred millions spent this year in motor-cars. And all this has been stolen from those who did the work.

Mrs. Starkweather

I always knew those motor-cars were to blame for terrible things.

Dolores Ortega

But Mr. Knox, I have a motor-car.

Knox

Somebody’s labor made that car. Was it yours?

Dolores Ortega

Mercy, no! I bought it — — and paid for it.

Knox

Then did you labor at producing something else, and exchange the fruits of that labor for the motor-car?

(*A pause.*)

You do not answer. Then I am to understand that you have a motor-car which was made by somebody else's labor and for which you gave no labor of your own. This I call theft. You call it property. Yet it is theft.

Starkweather

(*Interrupting Dolores Ortega who was just about to speak.*)

But surely you have intelligence to see the question in larger ways than stolen motor-cars. I am a man of affairs. I don't steal motor-cars.

Knox

(*Smiling.*) Not concrete little motor-cars, no. You do things on a large scale.

Starkweather

Steal?

Knox

(*Shrugging his shoulders.*) If you will have it so.

Starkweather

I am like a certain gentleman from Missouri. You've got to show me.

Knox

And I'm like the man from Texas. It's got to be put in my hand.

Starkweather

I shift my residence at once to Texas. Put it in my hand that I steal on a large scale.

Knox

Very well. You are the great financier, merger, and magnate. Do you mind a few statistics?

Starkweather

Go ahead.

Knox

You exercise a controlling interest in nine billion dollars' worth of railways; in two billion dollars' worth of industrial concerns; in one billion dollars' worth of life insurance groups; in one billion dollars' worth of banking groups; in two billion dollars' worth of trust companies. Mind you, I do not say you own all this, but that you exercise a controlling interest. That is all that is necessary. In short, you exercise a controlling interest in such a proportion of the total investments of the United States, as to set the pace for all the rest. Now to my point. In the last few years seventy billions of dollars have been artificially added to the capitalization of the nation's industries. By that I mean water — pure, unadulterated water. You, the merger, know what water means. I say seventy billions. It doesn't matter if we call it forty billions or eighty billions; the amount, whatever it is, is a huge one. And what does seventy billions of water mean? It means, at five per cent, that three billions and a half must be paid for things this year, and every year, more than things are really worth. The people who labor have to pay this. There is theft for you. There is high prices for you. Who put in the water? Who gets the theft of the water? Have I put it in your hand?

Starkweather

Are there no wages for stewardship?

Knox

Call it any name you please.

Starkweather

Do I not make two dollars where one was before? Do I not make for more happiness than was before I came?

Knox

Is that any more than the duty any man owes to his fellowman?

Starkweather

Oh, you unpractical dreamer. (*Returns to his note-book.*)

Rutland

(*Throwing himself into the breach.*) Where do I steal, Mr. Knox? — I who get a mere salary for preaching the Lord's Word.

Knox

Your salary comes out of that water I mentioned. Do you want to know who pays your salary? Not your parishioners. But the little children toiling in the mills, and all the rest — all the slaves on the wheel of labor pay you your salary.

Rutland

I earn it.

Knox

They pay it.

Mrs. Dowsett

Why, I declare, Mr. Knox, you are worse than Mr. Sakari. You are an anarchist.

(*She simulates shivering with fear.*)

Chalmers

(*To Knox.*) I suppose that's part of your speech to-morrow.

Dolores Ortega

(*Clapping her hands.*) A rehearsal! He's trying it out on us!

Sakari

How would you remedy this — er — this theft?

(*Starkweather again closes note-book on finger and listens as Knox begins to speak.*)

Knox

Very simply. By changing the governmental machinery by which this household of ninety millions of people conducts its affairs.

Sakari

I thought — I was taught so at Yale — that your governmental machinery was excellent, most excellent.

Knox

It is antiquated. It is ready for the scrap-heap. Instead of being our servant, it has mastered us. We are its slaves. All the political brood of grafters and hypocrites have run away with it, and with us as well. In short, from the municipalities up, we are dominated by the grafters. It is a reign of theft.

Hubbard

But any government is representative of its people. No people is worthy of a better government than it possesses. Were it worthier, it would possess a better government.

(*Starkweather nods his head approvingly.*)

Knox

That is a lie. And I say to you now that the average morality and desire for right conduct of the people of the United States is far higher than that of the government which misrepresents it. The people are essentially worthy of a better government than that which is at present in the hands of the politicians, for the benefit of the politicians and of the interests the politicians represent. I wonder, Mr. Sakari, if you have ever heard the story of the four aces.

Sakari

I cannot say that I have.

Knox

Do you understand the game of poker?

Sakari

(*Considering.*) Yes, a marvelous game. I have learned it — at Yale. It was very expensive.

Knox

Well, that story reminds me of our grafting politicians. They have no moral compunctions. They look upon theft as right — eminently right. They see nothing wrong in the arrangement that the man who deals the cards should give himself the best in the deck. Never mind what he deals himself, they'll have the deal next and make up for it.

Dolores Ortega

But the story, Mr. Knox. I, too, understand poker.

Knox

It occurred out in Nevada, in a mining camp. A tenderfoot was watching a game of poker, He stood behind the dealer, and he saw the dealer deal himself four aces from the bottom of the deck.

(*From now on, he tells the story in the slow, slightly drawling Western fashion.*) The tenderfoot went around to the player on the opposite side of the table.

"Say," he says, "I just seen the dealer give himself four aces off the bottom."

The player looked at him a moment, and said, "What of it?"

"Oh, nothing," said the tenderfoot, "only I thought you might want to know. I tell you I seen the dealer give himself four aces off the bottom."

"Look here, Mister," said the player, "you'd better get out of this. You don't understand the game. It's HIS deal, ain't it?"

Margaret

(*Arising while they are laughing.*) We've talked politics long enough. Dolores, I want you to tell me about your new car.

Knox

(*As if suddenly recollecting himself.*) And I must be going.

(*In a low voice to Margaret.*) Do I have to shake hands with all these people?

Margaret

(*Shaking her head, speaking low.*) Dear delightful Ali Baba.

Knox

(*Glumly.*) I suppose I've made a fool of myself.

Margaret

(*Earnestly.*) On the contrary, you were delightful. I am proud of you.

(*As Knox shakes hands with Margaret, Sakari arises and comes forward*).

Sakari

I, too, must go. I have had a charming half hour, Mrs. Chalmers. But I shall not attempt to thank you.

(*He shakes hands with Margaret.*)

(*Knox and Sakari proceed to make exit to rear.*)

(*Just as they go out, Servant enters, carrying card-tray, and advances toward Starkweather.*)

(*Margaret joins Dolores Ortega and Chalmers, seats herself with them, and proceeds to talk motor-cars.*)

(*Servant has reached Starkweather, who has taken a telegram from tray, opened it, and is reading it.*)

Starkweather

Damnation!

Servant

I beg your pardon, sir.

Starkweather

Send Senator Chalmers to me, and Mr. Hubbard.

Servant

Yes, sir.

(*Servant crosses to Chalmers and Hubbard, both of whom immediately arise and cross to Starkweather.*)

(*While this is being done, Margaret reassembles the three broken groups into one, seating herself so that she can watch Starkweather and his group across the stage.*)

(*Servant lingers to receive a command from Margaret.*)

(*Chalmers and Hubbard wait a moment, standing, while Starkweather rereads telegram.*)

Starkweather

(*Standing up.*) Dobleman has just forwarded this telegram. It's from New York — from Martinaw. There's been rottenness. My papers and letter-files have been ransacked. It's the confidential stenographer who has been tampered with — you remember that middle-aged, youngish-oldish woman, Tom? That's the one. — Where's that servant?

(*Servant is just making exit.*) Here! Come here!

(*Servant comes over to Starkweather.*) Go to the telephone and call up Dobleman. Tell him to come here.

Servant

(*Perplexed.*) I beg pardon, sir.

Starkweather

(*Irritably.*) My secretary. At my house. Dobleman. Tell him to come at once.

(*Servant makes exit.*)

Chalmers

But who can be the principal behind this theft?

(*Starkweather shrugs his shoulders.*)

Hubbard

A blackmailing device most probably. They will attempt to bleed you —

Chalmers

Unless —

Starkweather

(*Impatiently.*) Yes?

Chalmers

Unless they are to be used to-morrow in that speech of Knox.

(*Comprehension dawns on the faces of the other two men.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Who has arisen.*) Anthony, we must go now. Are you ready? Connie has to dress.

Starkweather

I am not going now. You and Connie take the car.

Mrs. Starkweather

You mustn't forget you are going to that dinner.

Starkweather

(*Wearily.*) Do I ever forget?

(*Servant enters and proceeds toward Starkweather, where he stands waiting while Mrs. Starkweather finishes the next speech. Starkweather listens to her with a patient, stony face.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

Oh, these everlasting politics! That is what it has been all afternoon — high prices, graft, and theft; theft, graft, and high prices. It is terrible. When I was a girl we did not talk of such things. Well, come on, Connie.

Mrs. Dowsett

(*Rising and glancing at Dowsett.*) And we must be going, too.

(*During the following scene, which takes place around Starkweather, Margaret is saying good-bye to her departing guests.*)

(*Mrs. Starkweather and Connie make exit.*)

(*Dowsett and Mrs. Dowsett make exit.*)

(*The instant Mrs. Dowsett's remark puts a complete end to Mrs. Starkweather's speech, Starkweather, without answer or noticing his wife, turns and interrogates Servant with a glance.*)

Servant

Mr. Dobleman has already left some time to come here, sir.

Starkweather

Show him in as soon as he comes.

Servant

Yes, sir.

(*Servant makes exit.*)

(*Margaret, Dolores Ortega, and Rutland are left in a group together, this time around tea-table, where Margaret serves Rutland another cup of tea. From time to time Margaret glances curiously at the serious group of men across the stage.*)

(*Starkweather is thinking hard with knitted brows. Hubbard is likewise pondering.*)

Chalmers

If I were certain Knox had those papers I would take him by the throat and shake them out of him.

Starkweather

No foolish talk like that, Tom. This is a serious matter.

Hubbard

But Knox has no money. A Starkweather stenographer comes high.

Starkweather

There is more than Knox behind this. (*Enter Dobleman, walking quickly and in a state of controlled excitement.*)

Dobleman

(*To Starkweather.*) You received that telegram, sir?

(*Starkweather nods.*) I got the New York office — Martinaw — right along afterward, by long distance. I thought best to follow and tell you.

Starkweather

What did Martinaw say?

Dobleman

The files seem in perfect order.

Starkweather

Thank God!

(*During the following speech of Dobleman, Rutland says good-bye to Margaret and Dolores Ortega and makes exit.*)

(*Margaret and Dolores Ortega rise a minute afterward and go toward exit, throwing curious glances at the men but not disturbing them.*)

(*Dolores Ortega makes exit.*)

(*Margaret pauses in doorway a moment, giving a final anxious glance at the men, and makes exit.*)

Dobleman

But they are not. The stenographer, Miss Standish, has confessed. For a long time she has followed the practice of taking two or three letters and documents at a time away from the office. Many have been photographed and returned. But the more important ones were retained and clever copies returned. Martinaw says that Miss Standish herself does not know and cannot tell which of the ones she returned are genuine and which are copies.

Hubbard

Knox never did this.

Starkweather

Did Martinaw say whom Miss Standish was acting for?

Dobleman

Gherst.

(*The alarm on the three men's faces is patent.*)

Starkweather

Gherst!

(*Pauses to think.*)

Hubbard

Then it is not so grave after all. A yellow journal sensation is the best Gherst can make of it. And, documents or not, the very medium by which it is made public discredits it.

Starkweather

Trust Gherst for more ability than that. He will certainly exploit them in his newspapers, but not until after Knox has used them in his speech. Oh, the cunning dog! Never could he have chosen a better mode and moment to strike at me, at the Administration, at everything. That is Gherst all over.

Playing to the gallery. Inducing Knox to make this spectacular exposure on the floor of the House just at the critical time when so many important bills are pending.

(*To Dobleman.*)

Did Martinaw give you any idea of the nature of the stolen documents?

Dobleman

(*Referring to notes he has brought.*) Of course I don't know anything about it, but he spoke of the Goodyear letters —

(*Starkweather betrays by his face the gravity of the information.*)

the Caledonian letters, all the Black Rider correspondence. He mentioned, too, (*Referring to notes.*) the Astonbury and Glutz letters. And there were others, many others, not designated.

Starkweather

This is terrible!

(*Recollecting himself.*)

Thank you, Dobleman. Will you please return to the house at once. Get New York again, and fullest details. I'll follow you shortly. Have you a machine?

Dobleman

A taxi, sir.

Starkweather

All right, and be careful.

(*Dobleman makes exit*)

Chalmers

I don't know the import of all these letters, but I can guess, and it does seem serious.

Starkweather

(*Furiously.*) Serious! Let me tell you that there has been no exposure like this in the history of the country. It means hundreds of millions of dollars. It means more — the loss of power. And still more, it means the mob, the great mass of the child-minded people rising up and destroying all that I have labored to do for them. Oh, the fools! The fools!

Hubbard

(*Shaking his head ominously.*) There is no telling what may happen if Knox makes that speech and delivers the proofs.

Chalmers

It is unfortunate. The people are restless and excited as it is. They are being constantly prodded on by the mouthings of the radical press, of the muck-raking magazines and of the demagogues. The people are like powder awaiting the spark.

Starkweather

This man Knox is no fool, if he *is* a dreamer. He is a shrewd knave. He is a fighter. He comes from the West — the old pioneer stock. His father drove an ox-team across the Plains to Oregon. He knows how to play his cards, and never could circumstances have placed more advantageous cards in his hands.

Chalmers

And nothing like this has ever touched you before.

Starkweather

I have always stood above the muck and ruck — clear and clean and unassailable. But this — this is too much! It is the spark. There is no forecasting what it may develop into.

Chalmers

A political turnover.

Starkweather

(*Nodding savagely.*) A new party, a party of demagogues, in power. Government ownership of the railways and telegraphs. A graduated income tax that will mean no less than the confiscation of private capital.

Chalmers

And all that mass of radical legislation — the Child Labor Bill, the new Employers' Liability Act, the government control of the Alaskan coal fields, that interference with Mexico. And that big power corporation you have worked so hard to form.

Starkweather

It must not be. It is an unthinkable calamity. It means that the very process of capitalistic development is hindered, stopped. It means a setback of ten years in the process. It means work, endless work, to overcome the setback. It means not alone the passage of all this radical legislation with the consequent disadvantages, but it means the fingers of the mob clutching at our grip of control. It means anarchy. It means ruin and misery for all the blind fools and led-cattle of the mass who will strike at the very sources of their own existence and comfort.

(*Tommy enters from left, evidently playing a game, in the course of which he is running away. By his actions he shows that he is pursued. He intends to cross stage, but is stopped by sight of the men. Unobserved by them, he retraces his steps and crawls under the tea-table.*)

Chalmers

Without doubt, Knox is in possession of the letters right now.

Starkweather

There is but one thing to do, and that is — get them back.

(*He looks questioningly at the two men.*)

(*Margaret enters from left, in flushed and happy pursuit of Tommy — for it is a game she is playing with him. She startles at sight of the three men, whom she first sees as she gains the side of the tea-table, where she pauses abruptly, resting one hand on the table.*)

Hubbard

I'll undertake it.

Starkweather

There is little time to waste. In twenty hours from now he will be on the floor making his speech. Try mild measures first. Offer him inducements — any inducement. I empower you to act for me. You will find he has a price.

Hubbard

And if not?

Starkweather

Then you must get them at any cost.

Hubbard

(*Tentatively.*) You mean — ?

Starkweather

I mean just that. But no matter what happens, I must never be brought in. Do you understand?

Hubbard

Thoroughly.

Margaret

(*Acting her part, and speaking with assumed gayety.*) What are you three conspiring about? (*All three men are startled.*)

Chalmers

We are arranging to boost prices a little higher.

Hubbard

And so be able to accumulate more motorcars.

Starkweather

(*Taking no notice of Margaret and starting toward exit to rear.*) I must be going. Hubbard, you have your work cut out for you. Tom, I want you to come with me.

Chalmers

(*As the three men move toward exit.*) Home?

Starkweather

Yes, we have much to do.

Chalmers

Then I'll dress first and follow you.
(*Turning to Margaret.*) Pick me up on the way to that dinner.

(*Margaret nods. Starkweather makes exit without speaking. Hub-bard says good-bye to Margaret and makes exit, followed by Chalmers.*)

(*Margaret remains standing, one hand resting on table, the other hand to her breast. She is thinking, establishing in her mind the connection between Knox and what she has overheard, and in process of reaching the conclusion that Knox is in danger.*)

(*Tommy, having vainly waited to be discovered, crawls out dispiritedly, and takes Margaret by the hand. She scarcely notices him.*)

Tommy

(*Dolefully.*) Don't you want to play any more? (*Margaret does not reply*). I was a good Indian.

Margaret

(*Suddenly becoming aware of herself and breaking down. She stoops and clasps Tommy in her arms, crying out, in anxiety and fear, and from love of her boy.*) Oh, Tommy! Tommy!

Curtain

ACT II

Scene. *Sitting room of Howard Knox — dimly lighted. Time, eight o'clock in the evening.*

Entrance from hallway at side to right. At right rear is locked door leading to a room which dees not belong to Knox's suite. At rear center is fireplace. At left rear door leading to Knox's bedroom. At left are windows facing on street. Near these windows is a large library table littered with books, magazines, government reports, etc. To the right of center, midway forward, is a Hat-top desk. On it is a desk telephone. Behind it, so that one sitting in it faces audience, is revolving desk-chair. Also, on desk, are letters in their envelopes, etc. Against clear wall-spaces are bookcases and filing cabinets. Of special note is bookcase, containing large books, and not more than five feet high, which is against wall between fireplace and door to bedroom.

Curtain discloses empty stage.

(*After a slight interval, door at right rear is shaken and agitated. After slight further interval, door is opened inward upon stage. A Man's head appears, cautiously looking around*).

(*Man enters, turns up lights, is followed by second Man. Both are clad decently, in knock-about business suits and starched collars, cuffs, etc. They are trim, deft, determined men*).

(*Following upon them, enters Hubbard. He looks about room, crosses to desk, picks up a letter, and reads address*).

Hubbard

This is Knox's room all right

First Man

Trust us for that.

Second Man

We were lucky the guy with the whiskers moved out of that other room only this afternoon.

First Man

His key hadn't come down yet when I engaged it.

Hubbard

Well, get to work. That must be his bedroom.

(*He goes to door of bedroom, opens, and peers in, turns on electric lights of bedroom, turns them out, then turns back to men.*) You know what it is — a bunch of documents and letters. If we find it there is a clean five hundred each for you, in addition to your regular pay.

(*While the conversation goes on, all three engage in a careful search of desk, drawers, filing cabinets, bookcases, etc.*)

Second Man

Old Starkweather must want them bad.

Hubbard

Sh-h. Don't even breathe his name.

Second Man

His nibs is damned exclusive, ain't he?

First Man

I've never got a direct instruction from him, and I've worked for him longer than you.

Second Man

Yes, and you worked for him for over two years before you knew who was hiring you.

Hubbard

(*To First Man.*) You'd better go out in the hall and keep a watch for Knox. He may come in any time.

(*First Man produces skeleton keys and goes to door at right. The first key opens it. Leaving door slightly ajar, he makes exit.*)

(*Desk telephone rings and startles Hubbard.*)

Second Man

(*Grinning at Hubbard's alarm.*)

It's only the phone.

Hubbard

(*Proceeding with search.*) I suppose you've done lots of work for Stark —

Second Man

(*Mimicking him.*) Sh-h. Don't breathe his name.
(*Telephone rings again and again, insistently, urgently.*)

Hubbard

(*Disguising his voice.*) Hello — Yes.
(*Shows surprise, seems to recognize the voice, and smiles knowingly.*)
No, this is not Knox. Some mistake. Wrong number —
(*Hanging up receiver and speaking to Second Man in natural voice.*) She did hang up quick.

Second Man

You seemed to recognize her.

Hubbard

No, I only thought I did.
(*A pause, while they search.*)

Second Man

I've never spoken a word to his nibs in my life. And I've drawn his pay for years too.

Hubbard

What of it?

Second Man

(*Complainingly.*) He don't know I exist.

Hubbard

(*Pulling open a desk drawer and examining contents.*)
The pay's all right, isn't it?

Second Man

It sure is, but I guess I earn every cent of it. (*First Man enters through door at right He moves hurriedly but cautiously. Shuts door behind him, but* *neglects to re-lock it.*)

First Man

Somebody just left the elevator and is coming down the hall.

(*Hubbard, First Man, and Second Man, all start for door at right rear.*)

(*First Man pauses and looks around to see if room is in order. Sees desk-drawer which Hubbard has neglected to close, goes back and closes it.*)

(*Hubbard and Second Man make exit.*)

(*First Man turns lights low and makes exit.*)

(*Sound of locking door is heard.*)

(*A pause.*)

(*A knocking at door to right. A pause. Then door opens and Gilford enters. He turns up lights, strolls about room, looks at watch, and sits down in chair near right of fireplace.*) (*Sound of key in lock of door to right.*) (*Door opens, and Knox enters, key in hand. Sees Gifford.*)

Knox

(*Advancing to meet him at fireplace and shaking hands.*) How did you get in?

Gifford

I let myself in. The door was unlocked.

Knox

I must have forgotten it.

Gifford

(*Drawing bundle of documents from inside breast pocket and handing them to Knox.*) Well, there they are.

Knox

(*Fingering them curiously.*) You are sure they are originals? (*Gifford nods.*)

I can’t take any chances, you know. If Gherst changed his mind after I gave my speech and refused to show the originals — such things have happened.

Gifford

That's what I told him. He was firm on giving duplicates, and for awhile it looked as if my trip to New York was wasted. But I stuck to my guns. It was originals or nothing with you, I said, and he finally gave in.

Knox

(*Holding up documents.*) I can't tell you what they mean to me, nor how grateful —

Gifford

(*Interrupting.*) That's all right. Don't mention it. Gherst is wild for the chance. It will do organized labor a heap of good. And you are able to say your own say at the same time. How's that compensation act coming on?

Knox

(*Wearily.*) The same old story. It will never come before the House. It is dying in committee. What can you expect of the Committee of Judiciary? — composed as it is of ex-railroad judges and ex-railroad lawyers.

Gifford

The railroad brotherhoods are keen on getting that bill through.

Knox

Well, they won't, and they never will until they learn to vote right. When will your labor leaders quit the strike and boycott and lead your men to political action?

Gifford

(*Holding out hand.*) Well, so long. I've got to trot, and I haven't time to tell you why I think political action would destroy the trade union movement.

(*Knox tosses documents on top of low bookcase between fireplace and bedroom door, and starts to shake hands.*) You're damn careless with those papers. You wouldn't be if you knew how much Gherst paid for them.

Gifford

You don't appreciate that other crowd. It stops at nothing.

Knox

I won't take my eyes off of them. And I'll take them to bed with me to-night for safety. Besides, there is no danger. Nobody but you knows I have them.

Gifford

(*Proceeding toward door to right.*) I'd hate to be in Starkweather's office when he discovers what's happened. There'll be some bad half hours for somebody. (*Pausing at door.*) Give them hell to-morrow, good and plenty. I'm going to be in a gallery. So long. (*Makes exit.*)

(*Knox crosses to windows, which he opens, returns to desk, seats himself in revolving chair, and begins opening his correspondence.*) (*A knock at door to right.*)

Knox

Come in.

(*Hubbard enters, advances to desk, but does not shake hands. They greet each other, and Hubbard sits down in chair to left of desk.*) (*Knox, still holding an open letter, re-volves chair so as to face his visitor. He waits for Hubbabd to speak.*)

Hubbard

There is no use beating about the bush with a man like you. I know that. You are direct, and so am I. You know my position well enough to be assured that I am empowered to treat with you.

Knox

Oh, yes; I know.

Hubbard

What we want is to have you friendly.

Knox

That is easy enough. When the Interests become upright and honest —

Hubbard

Save that for your speech. We are talking privately. We can make it well worth your while —

Knox

(*Angrily.*) If you think you can bribe me —

Hubbard

(*Suavely.*) Not at all. Not the slightest suspicion of it. The point is this. You are a congressman. A congressman's career depends on his membership in good committees. At the present you are buried in the dead Committee on Coinage, Weights, and Measures. If you say the word you can be appointed to the livest committee —

Knox

(*Interrupting.*) You have these appointments to give?

Hubbard

Surely. Else why should I be here? It can be managed.

Knox

(*Meditatively.*) I thought our government was rotten enough, but I never dreamed that House appointments were hawked around by the Interests in this fashion.

Hubbard

You have not given your answer.

Knox

You should have known my answer in advance.

Hubbard

There is an alternative. You are interested in social problems. You are a student of sociology. Those whom I represent are genuinely interested in you. We are prepared, so that you may pursue your researches more deeply — we are prepared to send you to Europe. There, in that vast sociological laboratory, far from the jangling strife of politics, you will have every opportunity to study. We are prepared to send you for a period of ten years. You will receive ten thousand dollars a year, and, in addition, the day your steamer leaves New York, you will receive a lump sum of one hundred thousand dollars.

Knox

And this is the way men are bought

Hubbard

It is purely an educational matter.

Knox

Now it is you who are beating about the bush.

Hubbard

(*Decisively.*) Very well then. What price do you set on yourself?

Knox

You want me to quit — to leave politics, everything? You want to buy my soul?

Hubbard

More than that. We want to buy those documents and letters.

Knox

(*Showing a slight start.*) What documents and letters?

Hubbard

You are beating around the bush in turn. There is no need for an honest man to lie even —

Knox

(*Interrupting.*) To you.

Hubbard

(*Smiling.*) Even to me. I watched you closely when I mentioned the letters. You gave yourself away. You knew I meant the letters stolen by Gherst from Starkweather's private files — the letters you intended using to-morrow.

Knox

Intend using to-morrow.

Hubbard

Precisely. It is the same thing. What is the price? Set it.

Knox

I have nothing to sell. I am not on the market.

Hubbard

One moment. Don't make up your mind hastily. You don't know with whom you have to deal. Those letters will not appear in your speech to-morrow. Take that from me. It would be far wiser to sell for a fortune than to get nothing for them and at the same time not use them.

(*A knock at door to right startles Hubbard.*)

Knox

(*Intending to say, "Come in"*) Come —

Hubbard

(*Interrupting.*) Hush. Don't. I cannot be seen here.

Knox

(*Laughing.*) You fear the contamination of my company. (*The knock is repeated.*)

Hubbard

(*In alarm, rising, as Knox purses his lips to bid them enter.*) Don't let anybody in. I don't want to be seen here — with you. Besides, my presence will not put you in a good light.

Knox

(*Also rising, starting toward door.*) What I do is always open to the world. I see no one whom I should not permit the world to know I saw.

(*Knox starts toward door to open it.*) (*Hubbabd, looking about him in alarm, flees across stage and into bedroom, closing the door. During all the following scene, Hubbard, from time to time, opens door, and peers out at what is going on.*)

Knox

(*Opening door, and recoiling.*) Margaret! Mrs. Chalmers!

(*Margaret enters, followed by Tommy and Linda. Margaret is in evening dress covered by evening cloak.*)

Margaret

(*Shaking hands with Knox.*) Forgive me, but I had to see you. I could not get you on the telephone. I called and called, and the best I could do was to get the wrong number.

Knox

(*Recovering from his astonishment.*) Yes. I am glad.

(*Seeing Tommy.*) Hello, Tommy.

(*Knox holds out his hand, and Tommy shakes it gravely. Linda stays in back-ground. Her face is troubled.*)

Tommy

How do you do?

Margaret

There was no other way, and it was so necessary for me to warn you. I brought Tommy and Linda along to chaperon me.

(*She looks curiously around room, specially indicating filing cabinets and the stacks of government reports on table.*) Your laboratory.

Knox

Ah, if I were only as great a sociological wizard as Edison is a wizard in physical sciences.

Margaret

But you are. You labor more mightily than you admit — or dare to think. Oh, I know you — better than you do yourself.

Tommy

Do you read all those books?

Knox

Yes, I am still going to school and studying hard. What are you going to study to be when you grow up?

(*Tommy meditates but does not answer.*)

President of these great United States?

Tommy

(*Shaking his head.*) Father says the President doesn't amount to much.

Knox

Not a Lincoln?
(*Tommy is in doubt.*)

Margaret

But don't you remember what a great good man Lincoln was? You remember I told you?

Tommy

(*Shaking his head slowly.*) But I don't want to be killed. — I'll tell you what!

Knox

What?

Tommy

I want to be a senator like father. He makes them dance.
(*Margaret is shocked, and Knox's eyes twinkle.*)

Knox

Makes whom dance?

Tommy

(*Puzzled.*) I don't know.
(*With added confidence.*) But he makes them dance just the same.
(*Margaret makes a signal to Linda to take Tommy across the room.*)

Linda

(*Starting to cross stage to left.*) Come, Tommy. Let us look out of the window.

Tommy

I'd rather talk with Mr. Knox.

Margaret

Please do, Tommy. Mamma wants to talk to Mr. Knox.

(*Tommy yields, and crosses to right, where he joins Linda in looking out of the window.*)

Margaret

You might ask me to take a seat

Knox

Oh! I beg pardon.

(*He draws up a comfortable chair for her, and seats himself in desk-chair, facing her.*)

Margaret

I have only a few minutes. Tom is at father's, and I am to pick him up there and go on to that dinner, after I've taken Tommy home.

Knox

But your maid?

Margaret

Linda? Wild horses could not drag from her anything that she thought would harm me. So intense is her fidelity that it almost shames me. I do not deserve it. But this is not what I came to you about.

(*She speaks the following hurriedly.*) After you left this afternoon, something happened. Father received a telegram. It seemed most important. His secretary followed upon the heels of the telegram. Father called Tom and Mr. Hubbard to him and they held a conference. I think they have discovered the loss of the documents, and that they believe you have them. I did not hear them mention your name, yet I am absolutely certain that they were talking about you. Also, I could tell from father's face that something was terribly wrong. Oh, be careful! Do be careful!

Knox

There is no danger, I assure you.

Margaret

But you do not know them. I tell you you do not know them. They will stop at nothing — at nothing. Father believes he is right in all that he does.

Knox

I know. That is what makes him so formidable. He has an ethical sanction.

Margaret

(*Nodding.*) It is his religion.

Knox

And, like any religion with a narrow-minded man, it runs to mania.

Margaret

He believes that civilization rests on him, and that it is his sacred duty to preserve civilization.

Knox

I know. I know.

Margaret

But you? But you? You are in danger.

Knox

No; I shall remain in to-night. To-morrow, in the broad light of midday, I shall proceed to the House and give my speech.

Margaret

(*Wildly.*) Oh, if anything should happen to you!

Knox

(*Looking at her searchingly.*) You do care?

(*Margaret nods, with eyes suddenly downcast.*) For Howard Knox, the reformer? Or for me, the man?

Margaret

(*Impulsively.*) Oh, why must a woman forever remain quiet? Why should I not tell you what you already know? — what you must already know? I do care for you — for man and reformer, both — for —

(*She is aflame, but abruptly ceases and glances across at Tommy by the window, warned instinctively that she must not give way to love in her child's presence.*)

Linda! Will you take Tommy down to the machine —

Knox

(*Alarmed, interrupting, in low voice.*) What are you doing?

Margaret

(*Hushing Knox with a gesture.*) I'll follow you right down.

(*Linda and Tommy proceed across stage toward right exit.*)

Tommy

(*Pausing before Knox and gravely extending his hand.*) Good evening, Mr. Knox.

Knox

(*Awkwardly.*) Good evening, Tommy. You take my word for it, and look up this Lincoln question.

Tommy

I shall. I'll ask father about it.

Margaret

(*Significantly.*) You attend to that, Linda. Nobody must know — this.

(*Linda nods.*)

(*Linda and Tommy make exit to right.*)

(*Margaret, seated, slips back her cloak, revealing herself in evening gown, and looks at Knox sumptuously, lovingly, and willingly.*)

Knox

(*Inflamed by the sight of her.*) Don't! Don't! I can't stand it. Such sight of you fills me with madness.

(*Margaret laughs low and triumphantly.*) I don't want to think of you as a woman. I must not. Allow me.

(*He rises and attempts to draw cloak about her shoulders, but she resists him. Yet does he succeed in partly cloaking her.*)

Margaret

I want you to see me as a woman. I want you to think of me as a woman. I want you mad for me.

(*She holds out her arms, the cloak slipping from them.*)

I want — don't you see what I want? — —

(*Knox sinks back in chair, attempting to shield his eyes with his hand.*)

(*Slipping cloak fully back from her again.*)

Look at me.

Knox

(*Looking, coming to his feet, and approaching her, with extended arms, murmuring softly.*) Margaret. Margaret.

(*Margaret rises to meet him, and they are clasped in each other's arms.*)

(*Hubbard, peering forth through door, looks at them with an expression of cynical amusement. His gaze wan-ders, and he sees the documents, within arm's reach, on top of bookcase. He picks up documents, holds them to the light of stage to glance at them, and, with triumphant expression on face, disappears and closes door.*)

Knox

(*Holding Margaret from him and looking at her.*) I love you. I do love you. But I had resolved never to speak it, never to let you know.

Margaret

Silly man. I have known long that you loved me. You have told me so often and in so many ways. You could not look at me without telling me.

Knox

You saw?

Margaret

How could I help seeing? I was a woman. Only, with your voice you never spoke a word. Sit down, there, where I may look at you, and let me tell you. I shall do the speaking now.

(*She urges him back into the desk-chair, and reseats herself.*) (*She makes as if to pull the cloak around 'her.*) Shall I?

Knox

(*Vehemently.*) No, no! As you are. Let me feast my eyes upon you who are mine. I must be dreaming.

Margaret

(*With a low, satisfied laugh of triumph.*) Oh, you men! As of old, and as forever, you must be wooed through your senses. Did I display the wisdom of an Hypatia, the science of a Madam Curie, yet would you keep your iron control, throttling the voice of your heart with silence. But let me for a moment be Lilith, for a moment lay aside this garment constructed for the purpose of keeping out the chill of night, and on the instant you are fire and aflame, all voluble with love's desire.

Knox

(*Protestingly.*) Margaret! It is not fair!

Margaret

I love you — and — you?

Knox

(*Fervently and reverently.*) I love you.

Margaret

Then listen. I have told you of my girlhood and my dreams. I wanted to do what you are so nobly doing. And I did nothing. I could do nothing. I was not permitted. Always was I compelled to hold myself in check. It was to do what you are doing, that I married. And that, too, failed me. My husband became a henchman of the Interests, my own father's tool for the perpetuation of the evils against which I desired to fight.

(*She pauses.*) It has been a long fight, and I have been very tired, for always did I confront failure. My husband — I did not love him. I never loved him. I sold myself for the Cause, and the cause profited nothing. (*Pause.*) Often, I have lost faith — faith in everything, in God and man, in the hope of any righteousness ever prevailing. But again and again, by what you are doing, have you awakened me. I came to-night with no thought of self. I came to warn you, to help the good work on. I remained — thank God! — I remained to love you — and to be loved by you. I suddenly found myself, looking at you, very weary. I wanted you — you, more than anything in the world.

(*She holds out her arms.*) Come to me. I want you — now.

(*Knox, in an ecstacy, comes to her. He seats himself on the broad arm of the chair and is drawn into her arms.*)

Knox

But I have been tired at times. I was very tired to-night — and you came. And now I am glad, only glad.

Margaret

I have been wanton to-night. I confess it. I am proud of it. But it was not — professional. It was the first time in my life. Almost do I regret — almost do I regret that I did not do it sooner — it has been crowned with such success. You have held me in your arms — your arms. Oh, you will never know what that first embrace meant to me. I am not a clod. I am not iron nor stone. I am a woman — a warm, breathing woman — .

(*She rises, and draws him to his feet.*)

Kiss me, my dear lord and lover. Kiss me. (*They embrace.*)

Knox

(*Passionately, looking about him wildly as if in search of something.*) What shall we do?

(*Suddenly releasing her and sinking back in his own chair almost in collapse.*) No. It cannot be. It is impossible. Oh, why could we not have met long ago? We would have worked together. What a comradeship it would have been.

Margaret

But it is not too late.

Knox

I have no right to you.

Margaret

(*Misunderstanding.*) My husband? He has not been my husband for years. He has no rights. Who, but you whom I love, has any rights?

Knox

No; it is not that.

(*Snapping his fingers.*) That for him.

(*Breaking down.*) Oh, if I were only the man, and not the reformer! If I had no work to do!

Margaret

(*Coming to the back of his chair and caressing his hair.*) We can work together.

Knox

(*Shaking his head under her fingers.*) Don't! Don't!

(*She persists, and lays her cheek against his.*) You make it so hard. You tempt me so.

(*He rises suddenly, takes her two hands in his, leads her gently to her chair, seats her, and reseats himself in desk-chair.*) Listen. It is not your husband. But I have no right to you. Nor have you a right to me.

Margaret

(*Interrupting, jealously.*) And who but I has any right to you?

Knox

(*Smiling sadly.*) No; it is not that. There is no other woman. You are the one woman for me. But there are many others who have greater rights in me than you. I have been chosen by two hundred thousand citizens to represent them in the Congress of the United States. And there are many more —

(*He breaks off suddenly and looks at her, at her arms and shoulders.*) Yes, please. Cover them up. Help me not to forget.

(*Margaret does not obey.*) There are many more who have rights in me — the people, all the people, whose cause I have made mine. The children — there are two million child laborers in these United States. I cannot betray them. I cannot steal my happiness from them. This afternoon I talked of theft. But would not this, too, be theft?

Margaret

(*Sharply.*) Howard! Wake up! Has our happiness turned your head?

Knox

(*Sadly.*) Almost — and for a few wild moments, quite. There are all the children. Did I ever tell you of the tenement child, who when asked how he knew when spring came, answered: When he saw the saloons put up their swing doors.

Margaret

(*Irritated.*) But what has all that to do with one man and one woman loving?

Knox

Suppose we loved — you and I; suppose we loosed all the reins of our love. What would happen? You remember Gorki, the Russian patriot, when he came to New York, aflame with passion for the Russian revolution. His purpose in visiting the land of liberty was to raise funds for that revolution. And because his marriage to the woman he loved was not of the essentially legal sort worshiped by the shopkeepers, and because the newspapers made a sensation of it, his whole mission was brought to failure. He was laughed and derided out of the esteem of the American people. That is what would happen to me. I should be slandered and laughed at. My power would be gone.

Margaret

And even if so — what of it? Be slandered and laughed at. We will have each other. Other men will rise up to lead the people, and leading the people is a thankless task. Life is so short. We must clutch for the morsel of happiness that may be ours.

Knox

Ah, if you knew, as I look into your eyes, how easy it would be to throw everything to the winds. But it would be theft.

Margaret

(*Rebelliously.*) Let it be theft. Life is so short, dear. We are the biggest facts in the world — to each other.

Knox

It is not myself alone, nor all my people. A moment ago you said no one but I had any right to you. You were wrong. Your child —

Margaret

(*In sudden pain, pleadingly.*) Don’t!

Knox

I must. I must save myself — and you. Tommy has rights in you. Theft again. What other name for it if you steal your happiness from him?

Margaret

(*Bending her head forward on her hand and weeping.*) I have been so lonely — and then you — you came, and the world grew bright and warm — a few short minutes ago you held me — in your arms — a few short minutes ago and it seemed my dream of happiness had come true — and now you dash it from me —

Knox

(*Struggling to control himself now that she is no longer looking at him.*) No; I ask you to dash it from yourself. I am not too strong. You must help me. You must call your child to your aid in helping me. I could go mad for you now —

(*Rising impulsively and coming to her with arms outstretched to clasp her.*) Right now —

Margaret

(*Abruptly raising her head, and with one outstretched arm preventing the embrace.*) Wait.

(*She bows her head on her hand for a moment, to think and to win control of herself.*)

(*Lifting her head and looking at him.*) Sit down — please.

(*Knox reseats himself.*)

(*A pause, during which she looks at him and loves him.*) Dear, I do so love you —

(*Knox loses control and starts to rise.*) No! Sit there. I was weak. Yet I am not sorry. You are right. We must forego each other. We cannot be thieves, even for love’s sake. Yet I am glad that this has happened — that I have lain in your arms and had your lips on mine. The memory of it will be sweet always.

(*She draws her cloak around her, and rises.*)

(*Knox rises.*) You are right. The future belongs to the children. There lies duty — yours, and mine in my small way. I am going now. We must not see each other ever again. We must work — and forget. But remember, my heart goes with you into the fight. My prayers will accompany every stroke.

(*She hesitates, pauses, draws her cloak thoroughly around her in evidence of departure.*) Dear — will you kiss me — once — one last time? (*There is no passion in this kiss, which is the kiss of renunciation. Margaret herself terminates the embrace.*)

(*Knox accompanies her silently to the door and places hand on knob.*) I wish I had something of you to have with me always — a photograph, that little one, you remember, which I liked so. (*She nods.*) Don't run the risk of sending it by messenger. Just mail it ordinarily.

Margaret

I shall mail it to-morrow. I'll drop it in the box myself.

Knox

(*Kissing her hand.*) Good-bye.

Margaret

(*lingeringly.*) But oh, my dear, I am glad and proud for what has happened. I would not erase a single line of it.

(*She indicates for Knox to open door, which he does, but which he immediately closes as she continues speaking.*) There must be immortality. There must be a future life where you and I shall meet again. Good-bye.

(*They press each other's hands.*)

(*Exit Margaret.*)

(*Knox stands a moment, staring at closed door, turns and looks about him indecisively, sees chair in which Margaret sat, goes over to it, kneels down, and buries his face.*)

(*Door to bedroom opens slowly and Hubbard peers out cautiously. He cannot see Knox.*)

Hubbard

(*Advancing, surprised.*) What the deuce? Everybody gone?

Knox

(*Startled to his feet.*) Where the devil did you come from?

Hubbard

(*Indicating bedroom.*) In there. I was in there all the time.

Knox

(*Endeavoring to pass it off.*) Oh, I had forgotten about you. Well, my callers are gone.

Hubbard

(*Walking over close to him and laughing at him with affected amusement.*) Honest men are such dubs when they do go wrong.

Knox

The door was closed all the time. You would not have dared to spy upon me.

Hubbard

There was something familiar about the lady's voice.

Knox

You heard! — what did you hear?

Hubbard

Oh, nothing, nothing — a murmur of voices — and the woman's — I could swear I have heard her voice before.

(*Knox shows his relief.*) Well, so long.

(*Starts to move toward exit to right.*) You won't reconsider your decision?

Knox

(*Shaking his head.*)

Hubbard

(*Pausing, open door in hand, and laughing cynically.*) And yet it was but a moment ago that it seemed I heard you say there was no one whom you would not permit the world to know you saw.

(*Starting.*) What do you mean?

Hubbard

Good-bye.

(*Hubbard makes exit and closes door.*) (*Knox wanders aimlessly to his desk, glances at the letter he was reading of which had been interrupted by Hubbard's entry of first act, suddenly recollects the package of documents, and walks to low bookcase and looks on top.*)

Knox

(*Stunned.*) The thief!

(*He looks about him wildly, then rushes like a madman in pursuit of Hubbard, making exit to right and leaving the door Hying open.*) (*Empty stage for a moment.*)

Curtain

ACT III

Scene. *The library, used as a sort of semi-office by Starkweather at such times when he is in Washington. Door to right; also, door to right rear. At left rear is an alcove, without hangings, which is dark. To left are windows. To left, near windows, a fiat-top desk, with desk-chair and desk-telephone. Also, on desk, conspicuously, is a heavy dispatch box. At the center rear is a large screen. Extending across center back of room are heavy, old-fashioned bookcases, with swinging glass doors. The bookcases narrow about four feet from the floor, thus forming a ledge. Between left end of bookcases and alcove at left rear, high up on wall, hangs a large painting or steel engraving of Abraham Lincoln. In design and furnishings, it is a simple chaste room, coldly rigid and slightly old-fashioned.*

It is 9:30 in the morning of the day succeeding previous act.

Curtain discloses Starkweather seated at desk, and Dobleman, to right of desk, standing.

Starkweather

All right, though it is an unimportant publication. I'll subscribe.

Dobleman

(*Making note on pad.*) Very well, sir. Two thousand.

(*He consults his notes.*) Then there is *Vanderwater's Magazine*. Your subscription is due.

Starkweather

How much?

Dobleman

You have been paying fifteen thousand.

Starkweather

It is too much. What is the regular subscription?

Dobleman

A dollar a year.

Starkweather

(*Shaking his head emphatically.*) It is too much.

Dobleman

Professor Vanderwater also does good work with his lecturing. He is regularly on the Chautauqua Courses, and at that big meeting of the National Civic Federation, his speech was exceptionally telling.

Starkweather

(*Doubtfully, about to give in.*) All right —

(*He pauses, as if recollecting something.*) (*Dobleman has begun to write down the note.*) No. I remember there was something in the papers about this Professor Vanderwater — a divorce, wasn't it? He has impaired his authority and his usefulness to me.

Dobleman

It was his wife's fault.

Starkweather

It is immaterial. His usefulness is impaired. Cut him down to ten thousand. It will teach him a lesson.

Dobleman

Very good, sir.

Starkweather

And the customary twenty thousand to *Cartwrights*.

Dobleman

(*Hesitatingly.*) They have asked for more. They have enlarged the magazine, reorganized the stock, staff, everything.

Starkweather

Hubbard's writing for it, isn't he?

Dobleman

Yes, sir. And though I don't know, it is whispered that he is one of the heavy stockholders.

Starkweather

A very capable man. He has served me well. How much do they want?

Dobleman

They say that Nettman series of articles cost them twelve thousand alone, and that they believe, in view of the exceptional service they are prepared to render, and are rendering, fifty thousand —

Starkweather

(*Shortly.*) All right. How much have I given to University of Hanover this year?

Dobleman

Seven — nine millions, including that new library.

Starkweather

(*Sighing.*) Education does cost. Anything more this morning?

Dobleman

(*Consulting notes.*) Just one other — Mr. Rutland. His church, you know, sir, and that theological college. He told me he had been talking it over with you. He is anxious to know.

Starkweather

He's very keen, I must say. Fifty thousand for the church, and a hundred thousand for the college — I ask you, candidly, is he worth it?

Dobleman

The church is a very powerful molder of public opinion, and Mr. Rutland is very impressive. (*Running over the notes and producing a clipping.*) This is what he said in his sermon two weeks ago: "God has given to Mr. Starkweather the talent for making money as truly as God has given to other men the genius which manifests itself in literature and the arts and sciences."

Starkweather

(*Pleased.*) He says it well.

Dobleman

(*Producing another clipping.*) And this he said about you in last Sunday's sermon: "We are to-day rejoicing in the great light of the consecration of a great wealth to the advancement of the race. This vast wealth has been so consecrated by a man who all through life has walked in accord with the word, The love of Christ constraineth me.'"

Starkweather

(*Meditatively.*) Dobleman, I have meant well. I mean well. I shall always mean well. I believe I am one of those few men, to whom God, in his infinite wisdom, has given the stewardship of the people's wealth. It is a high trust, and despite the abuse and vilification heaped upon me, I shall remain faithful to it.

(*Changing his tone abruptly to businesslike briskness.*) Very well. See that Mr. Rutland gets what he has asked for.

Dobleman

Very good, sir. I shall telephone him. I know he is anxious to hear.

(*Starting to leave the room.*) Shall I make the checks out in the usual way?

Starkweather

Yes: except the Rutland one. I'll sign that myself. Let the others go through the regular channels. We take the 2:10 train for New York. Are you ready?

Dobleman

(*Indicating dispatch box.*) All, except the dispatch box.

Starkweather

I'll take care of that myself.

(*Dobleman starts to make exit to left, and Starkweather, taking notebook from pocket, glances into it, and looks up.*)

Dobleman.

Dobleman

(*Pausing.*) Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Mrs. Chalmers is here, isn’t she?

Dobleman

Yes, sir. She came a few minutes ago, with her little boy. They are with Mrs. Starkweather.

Starkweather

Please tell Mrs. Chalmers I wish to see her.

Dobleman

Yes, sir.

(*Dobleman makes exit.*) (*Maidservant enters from right rear, with card tray.*)

Starkweather

(*Examining card.*) Show him in.

(*Maidservant makes exit right rear*). (*Pause, during which Starkweather consults notebook.*) (*Maidservant re-enters, showing in Hubbard.*)

(*Hubbard advances to desk.*) (*Starkweather is so glad to see him that he half rises from his chair to shake hands.*)

Starkweather

(*Heartily.*) I can only tell you that what you did was wonderful. Your telephone last night was a great relief. Where are they?

Hubbard

(*Drawing package of documents from inside breast pocket and handing them over.*) There they are — the complete set. I was fortunate.

Starkweather

(*Opening package and glancing at a number of the documents while he talks.*) You are modest, Mr. Hubbard. — It required more — than fortune. — It required ability — of no mean order. — The time was short. — You had to think — and act — with too great immediacy to be merely fortunate.

(*Hubbard bows, while Starkweather rearranges package.*)

There is no need for me to tell you how I appreciate your service. I have increased my subscription to *Cartwright's* to fifty thousand, and I shall speak to Dobleman, who will remit to you a more substantial acknowledgment than my mere thanks for the inestimable service you have rendered.

(*Hubbard bows.*)

You — ah — you have read the documents?

Hubbard

I glanced through them. They were indeed serious. But we have spiked Knox's guns. Without them, that speech of his this afternoon becomes a farce — a howling farce. Be sure you take good care of them.

(*Indicating documents, which Starkweather still holds.*) Gherst has a long arm.

Starkweather

He cannot reach me here. Besides, I go to New York to-day, and I shall carry them with me. Mr. Hubbard, you will forgive me —

(*Starting to pack dispatch box with papers and letters lying on desk.*) I am very busy.

Hubbard

(*Taking the hint.*) Yes, I understand. I shall be going now. I have to be at the Club in five minutes.

Starkweather

(*In course of packing dispatch box, he sets certain packets of papers and several medium-sized account books to one side in an orderly pile. He talks while he packs, and Hubbard waits.*) I should like to talk with you some more — in New York. Next time you are in town be sure to see me. I am thinking of buying the *Parthenon Magazine*, and of changing its policy. I should like to have you negotiate this, and there are other important things as well. Good day, Mr. Hubbard. I shall see you in New York — soon.

(*Hubbard and Starkweather shake hands.*)

(*Hubbard starts to make exit to right rear.*)

(*Margaret enters from right rear.*)

(*Starkweather goes on packing dispatch box through following scene.*)

Hubbard

Mrs. Chalmers.

(*Holding out hand, which Margaret takes very coldly, scarcely inclining her head, and starting to pass on.*) (*Speaking suddenly and savagely.*) You needn't be so high and lofty, Mrs. Chalmers.

Margaret

(*Pausing and looking at him curiously as if to ascertain whether he has been drinking.*) I do not understand.

Hubbard

You always treated me this way, but the time for it is past. I won't stand for your superior goodness any more. You really impressed me with it for a long time, and you made me walk small. But I know better now. A pretty game you've been playing — you, who are like any other woman. Well, you know where you were last night. So do I.

Margaret

You are impudent.

Hubbard

(*Doggedly.*) I said I knew where you were last night. Mr. Knox also knows where you were. But I'll wager your husband doesn't.

Margaret

You spy!

(*Indicating her father.*) I suppose you have told — him.

Hubbard

Why should I?

Margaret

You are his creature.

Hubbard

If it will ease your suspense, let me tell you that I have not told him. But I do protest to you that you must treat me with more — more kindness.

(*Margaret makes no sign but passes on utterly oblivious of him.*) (*Hubbard stares angrily at her and makes exit*) (*Starkweather, who is finishing packing, puts the documents last inside box, and closes and locks it. To one side is the orderly stack of the several account books and packets of papers.*)

Starkweather

Good morning, Margaret. I sent for you because we did not finish that talk last night. Sit down.

(*She gets a chair for herself and sits down.*)

You always were hard to manage, Margaret. You have had too much will for a woman. Yet I did my best for you. Your marriage with Tom was especially auspicious — a rising man, of good family and a gentleman, eminently suitable —

Margaret

(*Interrupting bitterly.*) I don't think you were considering your daughter at all in the matter. I know your views on woman and woman's place. I have never counted for anything with you. Neither has mother, nor Connie, when business was uppermost, and business always is uppermost with you. I sometimes wonder if you think a woman has a soul. As for my marriage — you saw that Tom could be useful to you. He had the various distinctive points you have mentioned. Better than that he was pliable, capable of being molded to perform your work, to manipulate machine politics and procure for you the legislation you desired. You did not consider what kind of a husband he would make for your daughter whom you did not know. But you gave your daughter to him — sold her to him — because you needed him —

(*Laughs hysterically.*) In your business.

Starkweather

(*Angrily.*) Margaret! You must not speak that way. (*Relaxing.*)

Ah, you do not change. You were always that way, always bent on having your will —

Margaret

Would to God I had been more successful in having it.

Starkweather

(*Testily.*) This is all beside the question. I sent for you to tell you that this must stop — this association with a man of the type and character of Knox — a dreamer, a charlatan, a scoundrel —

Margaret

It is not necessary to abuse him.

Starkweather

It must stop — that is all. Do you understand? It must stop.

Margaret

(*Quietly.*) It has stopped. I doubt that I shall ever see him again. He will never come to my house again, at any rate. Are you satisfied?

Starkweather

Perfectly. Of course, you know I have never doubted you — that — that way.

Margaret

(*Quietly.*) How little you know women. In your comprehension we are automatons, puppets, with no hearts nor heats of desire of our own, with no springs of conduct save those of the immaculate and puritanical sort that New England crystallized a century or so ago.

Starkweather

(*Suspiciously.*) You mean that you and this man — ?

Margaret

I mean nothing has passed between us. I mean that I am Tom's wife and Tommy's mother. What I did mean, you have no more understood than you understand me — or any woman.

Starkweather

(*Relieved.*) It is well.

Margaret

(*Continuing.*) And it is so easy. The concept is simple. A woman is human. That is all. Yet I do believe it is news to you.

(*Enters Dobleman from right carrying a check in his hand. Starkweather, about to speak, pauses.*) (*Dobleman hesitates, and Starkweather nods for him to advance.*)

Dobleman

(*Greeting Margaret, and addressing Starkweather.*) This check. You said you would sign it yourself.

Starkweather

Yes, that is Rutland's. (*Looks for pen.*)

(*Dobleman offers his fountain pen.*) No; my own pen.

(*Unlocks dispatch box, gets pen, and signs check. Leaves dispatch box open.*) (*Dobleman takes check and makes exit to right.*)

Starkweather

(*Picking up documents from top of pile in open box.*)

This man Knox. I studied him yesterday. A man of great energy and ideals. Unfortunately, he is a sentimentalist. He means right — I grant him that. But he does not understand practical conditions. He is more dangerous to the welfare of the United States than ten thousand anarchists. And he is not practical. (*Holding up documents.*)

Behold, stolen from my private files by a yellow journal sneak thief and turned over to him. He thought to buttress his speech with them this afternoon. And yet, so hopelessly unpractical is he, that you see they are already back in the rightful owner's hands.

Margaret

Then his speech is ruined?

Starkweather

Absolutely. The wheels are all ready to turn. The good people of the United States will dismiss him with roars of laughter — a good phrase, that: Hubbard's, I believe.

(*Dropping documents on the open cover of dispatch box, picking up the pile of several account books and packets of papers, and rising.*) One moment. I must put these away.

(*Starkweather goes to alcove at left rear. He presses a button and alcove is lighted by electricity, discovering the face of a large safe. During the following scene he does not look around, being occupied with working the combination, opening the safe, putting away account books and packets of papers, and with examining other packets which are in safe.*)

(*Margaret looks at documents lying on open cover of dispatch box and glancing quickly about room, takes a sudden resolution. She seizes documents, makes as if to run wildly from the room, stops abruptly to reconsider, and changes her mind. She looks about room for a hiding place, and her eyes rest on portrait of Lincoln. Moving swiftly, picking up a light chair on the way, she goes to corner of bookcase nearest to portrait, steps on chair, and from chair to ledge of bookcase where, clinging, she reaches out and up and drops documents behind portrait. Stepping quickly down, with handkerchief she wipes ledge on which she has stood, also the seat of the chair. She carries chair back to where she found it, and reseats herself in chair by desk.*) (*Starkweather locks safe, emerges from alcove, turns off alcove lights, advances to desk chair, and sits down. He is about to close and lock dispatch box when he discovers documents are missing. He is very quiet about it, and examines contents of box care-fully.*)

Starkweather

(*Quietly.*) Has anybody been in the room?

Margaret

No.

Starkweather

(*Looking at her searchingly.*) A most unprecedented thing has occurred. When I went to the safe a moment ago, I left these documents on the cover of the dispatch box. Nobody has been in the room but you. The documents are gone. Give them to me.

Margaret

I have not been out of the room.

Starkweather

I know that. Give them to me.
(*A pause.*) You have them. Give them to me

Margaret

I haven’t them.

Starkweather

That is a lie. Give them to me.

Margaret

(*Rising.*) I tell you I haven’t them —

Starkweather

(*Also rising.*) That is a lie.

Margaret

(*Turning and starting to cross room.*) Very well, if you do not believe me —

Starkweather

(*Interrupting.*) Where are you going?

Margaret

Home.

Starkweather

(*Imperatively.*) No, you are not. Come back here.

(*Margaret comes back and stands by chair.*) You shall not leave this room. Sit down.

Margaret

I prefer to stand.

Starkweather

Sit down.

(*She still stands, and he grips her by arm, forcing her down into chair.*) Sit down. Before you leave this room you shall return those documents. This is more important than you realize. It transcends all ordinary things of life as you have known it, and you will compel me to do things far harsher than you can possibly imagine. I can forget that you are a daughter of mine.

I can forget that you are even a woman. If I have to tear them from you, I shall get them. Give them to me.

(*A pause.*) What are you going to do?

(*Margaret shrugs her shoulders.*) What have you to say?

(*Margaret again shrugs her shoulders.*) What have you to say?

Margaret

Nothing.

Starkweather

(*Puzzled, changing tactics, sitting down, and talking calmly.*) Let us talk this over quietly. You have no shred of right of any sort to those documents. They are mine. They were stolen by a sneak thief from my private files. Only this morning — a few minutes ago — did I get them back. They are mine, I tell you. They belong to me. Give them back.

Margaret

I tell you I haven't them.

Starkweather

You have got them about you, somewhere, concealed in your breast there. It will not save you. I tell you I shall have them. I warn you. I don't want to proceed to extreme measures. Give them to me.

(*He starts to press desk-button, pauses, and looks at her.*) Well?

(*Margaret shrugs her shoulders.*) (*He presses button twice.*) I have sent for Dobleman. You have one chance before he comes. Give them to me.

Margaret

Father, will you believe me just this once? Let me go. I tell you I haven't the documents. I tell you that if you let me leave this room, I shall not carry them away with me. I tell you this on my honor. Do you believe me? Tell me that you do believe me.

Starkweather

I do believe you. You say they are not on you. I believe you. Now tell me where they are — you have them hidden somewhere — (*Glancing about room.*) — And you can go at once.

(*Dobleman enters from right and advances to desk. Starkweather and Margaret remains silent.*)

Dobleman

You rang for me.

Starkweather

(*With one last questioning glance at Margaret, who remains impassive.*) Yes, I did. Have you been in that other room all the time?

Dobleman

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Did anybody pass through and enter this room?

Dobleman

No, sir.

Starkweather

Very well. We'll see what the maid has to say.
(*He presses button once.*) Margaret, I give you one last chance.

Margaret

I have told you that if I leave this room, I shall not take them with me.
(*Maid enters from right rear and advances.*)

Starkweather

Has anybody come into this room from the hall in the last few minutes?

Maid

No, sir; not since Mrs. Chalmers came in.

Starkweather

How do you know?

Maid

I was in the hall, sir, dusting all the time.

Starkweather

That will do.

(*Maid makes exit to right rear.*) Dobleman, a very unusual thing has occurred.

Mrs. Chalmers and I have been alone in this room. Those letters stolen by Gherst had been returned to me by Hubbard but the moment before. They were on my desk. I turned my back for a moment to go to the safe. When I came back they were gone.

Dobleman

(*Embarrassed.*) Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Mrs. Chalmers took them. She has them now.

Dobleman

(*Attempts to speak, stammers.*) Er — er — yes, sir

Starkweather

I want them back. What is to be done?

(*Dobleman remains in hopeless confusion.*) Well!

Dobleman

(*Speaking hurriedly and hopefully.*) S-send for Mr. Hubbard. He got them for you before.

Starkweather

A good suggestion. Telephone for him. You should find him at the Press Club.

(*Dobleman starts to make exit to right.*) Don't leave the room. Use this telephone. (*Indicating desk telephone.*) (*Dobleman moves around to left of desk and uses telephone standing up.*) From now on no one leaves the room. If my daughter can be guilty of such a theft, it is plain I can trust no one — no one.

Dobleman

(*Speaking in transmitter.*) Red 6-2-4. Yes, please.

(*Waits.*)

Starkweather

(*Rising.*) Call Senator Chalmers as well. Tell him to come immediately.

Dobleman

Yes, sir — immediately.

Starkweather

(*Starting to cross stage to center and speaking to Margaret.*) Come over here.

(*Margaret follows. She is obedient, frightened, very subdued — but resolved.*)

Why have you done this? Were you truthful when you said there was nothing between you and this man Knox?

Margaret

Father; don't discuss this before the —

(*Indicating Dobleman.*) — the servants.

Starkweather

You should have considered that before you stole the documents.

(*Dobleman, in the meantime, is telephoning in a low voice.*)

Margaret

There are certain dignities —

Starkweather

(*Interrupting.*) Not for a thief.

(*Speaking intensely and in a low voice.*) Margaret, it is not too late. Give them back, and no one shall know.

(*A pause, in which Margaret is silent, in the throes of indecision.*)

Dobleman

Mr. Hubbard says he will be here in three minutes. Fortunately, Senator Chalmers is with him.

(*Starkweather nods and looks at Margaret.*) (*Door at left rear opens, and enter Mrs. Starkweather and Connie. They are dressed for the street and evidently just going out.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Speaking in a rush.*) We are just going out, Anthony. You were certainly wrong in making us attempt to take that 2:10 train. I simply can't make it. I know I can't. It would have been much wiser —

(*Suddenly apprehending the strain of the situation between Starkweather and Margaret.*) — Why, what is the matter?

Starkweather

(*Patently disturbed by their entrance, speaking to Dobleman, who has finished with the telephone.*) Lock the doors.

(*Dobleman proceeds to obey.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

Mercy me! Anthony! What has happened?

(*A pause.*) Madge! What has happened?

Starkweather

You will have to wait here a few minutes, that is all.

Mrs. Starkweather

But I must keep my engagements. And I haven't a minute to spare.

(*Looking at Dobleman locking doors.*) I do not understand.

Starkweather

(*Grimly,*) You will, shortly. I can trust no one any more. When my daughter sees fit to steal —

Mrs. Starkweather

Steal! — Margaret! What have you been doing now?

Margaret

Where is Tommy?

(*Mrs. Starkwater is too confounded to answer, and can only stare from face to face.*) (*Margaret looks her anxiety to Connie.*)

Connie

He is already down in the machine waiting for us. You are coming, aren’t you?

Starkweather

Let him wait in the machine. Margaret will come when I get done with her.

(*A knock is heard at right rear.*) (*Starkweather looks at Dobleman and signifies that he is to open door.*)

(*Dobleman unlocks door, and Hubbabd and Chalmers enter. Beyond the shortest of nods and recognitions with eyes, greetings are cut short by the strain that is on all. Dobleman relocks door.*)

Starkweather

(*Plunging into it.*) Look here, Tom. You know those letters Gherst stole. Mr. Hubbard recovered them from Knox and returned them to me this morning. Within five minutes Margaret stole them from me — here, right in this room. She has not left the room. They are on her now. I want them.

Chalmers

(*Who is obviously incapable of coping with his wife, and who is panting for breath, his hand pressed to his side.*) Madge, is this true?

Margaret

I haven’t them. I tell you I haven’t them.

Starkweather

Where are they, then?

(*She does not answer.*)

If they are in the room we can find them. Search the room. Tom, Mr. Hubbard, Dobleman. They must be recovered at any cost.

(*While a thorough search of the room is being made, Mrs. Starkweather, overcome, has Connie assist her to seat at left. Margaret also seats herself, in same chair at desk.*)

Chalmers

(*Pausing from search, while others continue.*) There is no place to look for them. They are not in the room. Are you sure you didn’t mislay them?

Starkweather

Nonsense. Margaret took them. They are a bulky package and not easily hidden. If they aren’t in the room, then she has them on her.

Chalmers

Madge, give them up.

Margaret

I haven’t them.

(*Chalmers, stepping suddenly up to her, starts feeling for the papers, running his hands over her dress.*)

Margaret

(*Springing to her feet and striking him in the face with her open palm.*) How dare you!

(*Chalmers recoils, Mrs. Starkweather is threatened with hysteria and is calmed by the frightened Connie, while Starkweather looks on grimly.*)

Hubbard

(*Giving up search of room.*) Possibly it would be better to let me retire, Mr. Starkweather.

Starkweather

No; those papers are here in this room. If nobody leaves there will be no possible chance for the papers to get out of the room. What would you recommend doing, Hubbard?

Hubbard

(*Hesitatingly.*) Under the circumstances I don’t like to suggest —

Starkweather

Go on.

Hubbard

First, I would make sure that she — er — Mrs. Chalmers has taken them.

Starkweather

I have made that certain.

Chalmers

But what motive could she have for such an act?

(*Hubbard looks wise.*)

Starkweather

(*To Hubbard.*) You know more about this than would appear. What is it?

Hubbard

I'd rather not. It is too —

(*Looks significantly at Mrs. Starkweather and Connie.*) — er — delicate.

Starkweather

This affair has gone beyond all delicacy. What is it?

Margaret

No! No!

(*Chalmers and Starkweather look at her with sudden suspicion.*)

Starkweather

Go on, Mr. Hubbard.

Hubbard

I'd — I'd rather not.

Starkweather

(*Savagely.*) I say go on.

Hubbard

(*With simulated reluctance.*) Last night — I saw — I was in Knox's rooms —

Margaret

(*Interrupting.*) One moment; please. Let him speak, but first send Connie away.

Starkweather

No one shall leave this room till the documents are produced. Margaret, give me the letters, and Connie can leave quietly, and even will Hubbard's lips remain sealed. They will never breathe a word of whatever shameful thing his eyes saw. This I promise you.

(*A pause, wherein he waits vainly for Margaret to make a decision.*) Go on, Hubbard.

Margaret

(*Who is terror-stricken, and has been wavering.*) No! Don't! I'll tell. I'll give you back the documents.

(*All are expectant She wavers again, and steels herself to resolution.*) No; I haven't them. Say all you have to say.

Starkweather

You see. She has them. She said she would give them back.

(*To Hubbard.*) Go on.

Hubbard

Last night —

Connie

(*Springing up.*) I won't stay!

(*She rushes to left rear and finds door locked.*) Let me out! Let me out!

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Moaning and lying back in chair, legs stretched out and giving preliminary twitches and jerks of hysteria.*) I shall die! I shall die! I know I shall die!

Starkweather

(*Sternly, to Connie.*) Go back to your mother.

Connie

(*Returning reluctantly to side of Mrs. Starkweather, sitting down beside her, and putting fingers in her own ears.*) I won't listen! I won't listen!

Starkweather

(*Sternly.*) Take your fingers down.

Hubbard

Hang it all, Chalmers, I wish I were out of this. I don't want to testify.

Starkweather

Take your fingers down.
(*Connie reluctantly removes her fingers.*) Now, Hubbard.

Hubbard

I protest. I am being dragged into this.

Chalmers

You can't help yourself now. You have cast black suspicions on my wife.

Hubbard

All right. She — Mrs. Chalmers visited Knox in his rooms last night.

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Bursting out.*) Oh! Oh! My Madge! It is a lie! A lie! (*Kicks violently with her legs.*) (*Connie soothes her.*)

Chalmers

You've got to prove that, Hubbard. If you have made any mistake it will go hard with you.

Hubbard

(*Indicating Margaret.*) Look at her. Ask her.
(*Chalmers looks at Margaret with growing suspicion.*)

Margaret

Linda was with me. And Tommy. I had to see Mr. Knox on a very important matter. I went there in the machine. I took Linda and Tommy right into Mr. Knox's room.

Chalmers

(*Relieved.*) Ah, that puts a different complexion on it.

Hubbard

That is not all. Mrs. Chalmers sent the maid and the boy down to the machine and remained.

Margaret

(*Quickly.*) But only for a moment

Hubbard

Much longer — much, much longer. I know how long I was kicking my heels and waiting.

Margaret

(*Desperately.*) I say it was but for a moment — a short moment.

Starkweather

(*Abruptly, to Hubbard.*) Where were you?

Hubbard

In Knox's bedroom. The fool had forgotten all about me. He was too delighted with his — er — new visitor.

Starkweather

You said you saw.

Hubbard

The bedroom door was ajar. I opened it.

Starkweather

What did you see?

Margaret

(*Appealing to Hubbard.*) Have you no mercy? I say it was only a moment.

(*Hubbard shrugs his shoulders.*)

Starkweather

We'll settle the length of that moment Tommy is here, and so is the maid. Connie, Margaret's maid is here, isn't she? (*Connie does not answer.*) Answer me!

Connie

Yes.

Starkweather

Dobleman, ring for a maid and tell her to fetch Tommy and Mrs. Chalmer's maid.

(*Dobleman goes to desk and pushes button once.*)

Margaret

No! Not Tommy!

Starkweather

(*Looking shrewdly at Margaret, to Dobleman.*) Mrs. Chalmer's maid will do.

(*A knock is heard at left rear. Dobleman opens door and talks to maid. Closes door.*)

Starkweather

Lock it.

(*Dobleman locks door.*)

Chalmers

(*Coming over to Margaret.*) So you, the immaculate one, have been playing fast and loose.

Margaret

You have no right to talk to me that way, Tom —

Chalmers

I am your husband.

Margaret

You have long since ceased being that.

Chalmers

What do you mean?

Margaret

I mean just what you have in mind about yourself right now.

Chalmers

Madge, you are merely conjecturing. You know nothing against me.

Margaret

I know everything — and without evidence, if you please. I am a woman. It is your atmosphere. Faugh! You have exhaled it for years. I doubt not that proofs, as you would call them, could have been easily obtained. But I was not interested. I had my boy. When he came, I gave you up, Tom. You did not seem to need me any more.

Chalmers

And so, in retaliation, you took up with this fellow Knox.

Margaret

No, no. It is not true, Tom. I tell you it is not true.

Chalmers

You were there, last night, in his rooms, alone — how long we shall soon find out —

(*Knock is heard at left rear. Dobleman proceeds to unlock door.*) And now you have stolen your father's private papers for your lover.

Margaret

He is not my lover.

Chalmers

But you have acknowledged that you have the papers. For whom, save Knox, could you have stolen them?

(*Linda enters. She is white and strained, and looks at Margaret for some cue as to what she is to do.*)

Starkweather

That is the woman.

(*To Linda.*) Come here.

(*Linda advances reluctantly.*) Where were you last night? You know what I mean.

(*She does not speak.*) Answer me.

Linda

I don't know what you mean, sir — unless —

Starkweather

Yes, that's it. Go on.

Linda

But I don't think you have any right to ask me such questions. What if I — if I did go out with my young man —

Starkweather

(*To Margaret.*) A very faithful young woman you've got.

(*Briskly, to the others.*) There's nothing to be got out of her. Send for Tommy. Dobleman, ring the bell.

(*Dobleman starts to obey.*)

Margaret

(*Stopping Dobleman.*) No, no; not Tommy. Tell them, Linda.

(*Linda looks appealingly at her.*)

(*Kindly.*) Don't mind me. Tell them the truth.

Chalmers

(*Breaking in.*) The whole truth.

Margaret

Yes, Linda, the whole truth.

(*Linda, looking very woeful, nerves herself for the ordeal.*)

Starkweather

Never mind, Dobleman.

(*To Linda.*) Very well. You were at Mr. Knox's rooms last night, with your mistress and Tommy.

Linda

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Your mistress sent you and Tommy out of the room.

Linda

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

You waited in the machine.

Linda

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

(*Abruptly springing the point he has been working up to.*) How long?

(*Linda perceives the gist of the questioning just as she is opening her mouth to reply, and she does not speak.*)

Margaret

(*With deliberate calmness of despair.*) Half an hour — an hour — any length of time your shameful minds dictate. That will do, Linda. You can go.

Starkweather

No you don't. Stand over there to one side.

(*To the others.*) The papers are in this room, and I shall keep my mind certain on that point.

Hubbard

I think I have shown the motive.

Connie

You are a beast!

Chalmers

You haven't told what you saw.

Hubbard

I saw them in each other's arms — several times. Then I found the stolen documents where Knox had thrown them down. So I pocketed them and closed the door.

Chalmers

How long after that did they remain together?

Hubbard

Quite a time, quite a long time.

Chalmers

And when you last saw them?

Hubbard

They were in each other's arms — quite enthusiastically, I may say, in each other's arms. (*Chalmers is crushed.*)

Margaret

(*To Hubbard.*) You coward.
(*Hubbard smiles.*)
(*To Starkweather.*) When are you going to call off this hound of yours?

Starkweather

When I get the papers. You see what you've been made to pay for them already. Now listen to me closely. Tom, you listen, too. You know the value of these letters. If they are not recovered they will precipitate a turnover that means not merely money but control and power. I doubt that even you would be re-elected. So what we have heard in this room must be forgotten — absolutely forgotten. Do you understand?

Chalmers

But it is adultery.

Starkweather

It is not necessary for that word to be mentioned. The point is that everything must be as it was formerly.

Chalmers

Yes, I understand.

Starkweather

(*To Margaret.*) You hear. Tom will make no trouble. Now give me the papers. They are mine, you know.

Margaret

It seems to me the people, who have been lied to, and cajoled, and stolen from, are the rightful owners, not you.

Starkweather

Are you doing this out of love for this — this man, this demagogue?

Margaret

For the people, the children, the future.

Starkweather

Faugh! Answer me.

Margaret

(*Slowly.*) Almost I do not know. Almost I do not know.
(*A knock is heard at left rear. Dobleman answers.*)

Dobleman

(*Looking at card Maid has given him, to Starkweather.*) Mr. Rutland.

Starkweather

(*Making an impatient gesture, then abruptly changing his mind, speaking grimly.*) Very well. Bring him in. I've paid a lot for the Church, now we'll see what the Church can do for me.

Connie

(*Impulsively crossing stage to Margaret, putting arms around her, and weeping.*)

Please, please, Madge, give up the papers, and everything will be hushed up. You heard what father said. Think what it means to me if this scandal comes out. Father will hush it up. Not a soul will dare to breathe a word of it. Give him the papers.

Margaret

(*Kissing her, shaking head, and setting her aside.*) No; I can’t. But Connie, dearest —

(*Connie pauses.*) It is not true, Connie. He — he is not my lover. Tell me that you believe me.

Connie

(*Caressing her.*) I do believe you. But won’t you return the papers — for my sake?

(*A knock at door.*)

Margaret

I can’t.

(*Enter Rutland.*)

(*Connie returns to take care of Mrs. Starkweather.*)

Rutland

(*Advances beamingly upon Starkweather.*) My, what a family gathering. I hastened on at once, my dear Mr. Starkweather, to thank you in person, ere you fled away to New York, for your generously splendid — yes, generously splendid — contribution —

(*Here the strained situation dawns upon him, and he remains helplessly with mouth open, looking from one to another.*)

Starkweather

A theft has been committed, Mr. Rutland. My daughter has stolen something very valuable from me — a package of private papers, so important — well, if she succeeds in making them public I shall be injured to such an extent financially that there won’t be any more generously splendid donations for you or anybody else. I have done my best to persuade her to return what she has stolen. Now you try. Bring her to a realization of the madness of what she is doing.

Rutland

(*Quite at sea, hemming and hawing.*) As your spiritual adviser, Mrs. Chalmers — if this be true — I recommend — I suggest — I — ahem — I entreat —

Margaret

Please, Mr. Rutland, don’t be ridiculous. Father is only making a stalking horse out of you. Whatever I may have done, or not done, I believe I am doing right. The whole thing is infamous. The people have been lied to and robbed, and you are merely lending yourself to the infamy of perpetuating the lying and the robbing. If you persist in obeying my father’s orders — yes, orders — you will lead me to believe that you are actuated by desire for more of those generously splendid donations. (*Starkweather sneers.*)

Rutland

(*Embarrassed, hopelessly at sea.*) This is, I fear — ahem — too delicate a matter, Mr. Starkweather, for me to interfere. I would suggest that it be advisable for me to withdraw — ahem —

Starkweather

(*Musingly.*) So the Church fails me, too.
(*To Rutland.*) No, you shall stay right here.

Margaret

Father, Tommy is down in the machine alone. Won’t you let me go?

Starkweather

Give me the papers.

(*Mrs. Starkweather rises and totters across to Margaret, moaning and whimpering.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

Madge, Madge, it can’t be true. I don’t believe it. I know you have not done this awful thing. No daughter of mine could be guilty of such wickedness. I refuse to believe my ears —

(*Mrs. Starkweather sinks suddenly on her knees before Margaret, with clasped hands, weeping hysterically.*)

Starkweather

(*Stepping to her side.*) Get up.

(*Hesitates and thinks.*) No; go on. She might listen to you.

Margaret

(*Attempting to raise her mother.*) Don’t, mother, don’t. Please get up.

(*Mrs. Starkweather resists her hysterically.*) You don’t understand, mother. Please, please, get up.

Mrs. Starkweather

Madge, I, your mother, implore you, on my bended knees. Give up the papers to your father, and I shall forget all I have heard. Think of the family name. I don’t believe it, not a word of it; but think of the shame and disgrace. Think of me. Think of Connie, your sister. Think of Tommy. You’ll have your father in a terrible state. And you’ll kill me. (*Moaning and rolling her head.*)

I’m going to be sick. I know I am going to be sick.

Margaret

(*Bending over mother and raising her, while Connie comes across stage to help support mother.*) Mother, you do not understand. More is at stake than the good name of the family or — (*Looking at Rutland.*) — God. You speak of Connie and Tommy. There are two millions of Connies and Tommys working as child laborers in the United States to-day. Think of them. And besides, mother, these are all lies you have heard. There is nothing between Mr. Knox and me. He is not my lover. I am not the — the shameful thing — these men have said I am.

Connie

(*Appealingly.*) Madge.

Margaret

(*Appealingly.*) Connie. Trust me. I am right. I know I am right.

(*Mrs. Starkweather, supported by Connie, moaning incoherently, is led back across stage to chair.*)

Starkweather

Margaret, a few minutes ago, when you told me there was nothing between you and this man, you lied to me — lied to me as only a wicked woman can lie.

Margaret

It is clear that you believe the worst.

Starkweather

There is nothing less than the worst to be believed. Besides, more heinous than your relations with this man is what you have done here in this room, stolen from me, and practically before my very eyes. Well, you have crossed your will with mine, and in affairs beyond your province. This is a man's game in which you are attempting to play, and you shall take the consequences. Tom will apply for a divorce.

Margaret

That threat, at least, is without power.

Starkweather

And by that means we can break Knox as effectually as by any other. That is one thing the good stupid people will not tolerate in a chosen representative. We will make such a scandal of it —

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Shocked.*) Anthony!

Starkweather

(*Glancing irritably at his wife and continuing.*) Another thing. Being proven an adulterous woman, morally unfit for companionship with your child, your child will be taken away from you.

Margaret

No, no. That cannot be. I have done nothing wrong. No court, no fair-minded judge, would so decree on the evidence of a creature like that.

(*Indicating Hubbard.*)

Hubbard

My evidence is supported. In an adjoining room were two men. I happen to know, because I placed them there. They were your father's men at that. There is such a thing as seeing through a locked door. They saw.

Margaret

And they would swear to — to anything.

Hubbard

I doubt not they will know to what to swear.

Starkweather

Margaret, I have told you some, merely some, of the things I shall do. It is not too late. Return the papers, and everything will be forgotten.

Margaret

You would condone this — this adultery. You, who have just said that I was morally unfit to have my own boy, will permit me to retain him. I had never dreamed, father, that your own immorality would descend to such vile depths. Believing this shameful thing of me, you will forgive and forget it all for the sake of a few scraps of paper that stand for money, that stand for a license to rob and steal from the people. Is this your morality — money?

Starkweather

I have my morality. It is not money. I am only a steward; but so highly do I conceive the duties of my stewardship —

Margaret

(*Interrupting, bitterly.*) The thefts and lies and all common little sins like adulteries are not to stand in the way of your high duties — that the end hallows the means.

Starkweather

(*Shortly.*) Precisely.

Margaret

(*To Rutland.*) There is Jesuitism, Mr. Rutland. I would suggest that you, as my father’s spiritual adviser —

Starkweather

Enough of this foolery. Give me the papers.

Margaret

I haven’t them.

Starkweather

What’s to be done, Hubbard?

Hubbard

She has them. She has as much as acknowledged that they are not elsewhere in the room. She has not been out of the room. There is nothing to do but search her.

Starkweather

Nothing else remains to be done. Dobleman, and you, Hubbard, take her behind the screen. Strip her. Recover the papers.

(*Dobleman is in a proper funk, but Hubbard betrays no unwillingness.*)

Chalmers

No; that I shall not permit. Hubbard shall have nothing to do with this.

Margaret

It is too late, Tom. You have stood by and allowed me to be stripped of everything else. A few clothes do not matter now. If I am to be stripped and searched by men, Mr. Hubbard will serve as well as any other man. Perhaps Mr. Rutland would like to lend his assistance.

Connie

Oh, Madge! Give them up.

(*Margaret shakes her head.*)

(*To Starkweather.*) Then let me search her, father.

Starkweather

You are too willing. I don't want volunteers. I doubt that I can trust you any more than your sister.

Connie

Let mother, then.

Starkweather

(*Sneering.*) Margaret could smuggle a steamer-trunk of documents past her.

Connie

But not the men, father! Not the men!

Starkweather

Why not? She has shown herself dead to all shame.
(*Imperatively.*) Dobleman!

Dobleman

(*Thinking his time has come, and almost dying.*) Y-y-yes, sir.

Starkweather

Call in the servants.

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Crying out in protest.*) Anthony!

Starkweather

Would you prefer her to be searched by the men?

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Subsiding.*) I shall die, I shall die. I know I shall die.

Starkweather

Dobleman. Ring for the servants.

(*Dobleman, who has been hesitant, crosses to desk and pushes button, then returns toward door.*) Send in the maids and the housekeeper.

(*Linda, blindly desiring to be of some assistance, starts impulsively toward Margaret.*) Stand over there — in the corner.

(*Indicating right front.*)

(*Linda pauses irresolutely and Margaret nods to her to obey and smiles encouragement. Linda, protesting in every fiber of her, goes to right front.*)

(*A knock at right rear and Dobleman unlocks door, confers with maid, and closes and locks door.*)

Starkweather

(*To Margaret.*) This is no time for trifling, nor for mawkish sentimentality. Return the papers or take the consequences.

(*Margaret makes no answer.*)

Chalmers

You have taken a hand in a man's game, and you've got to play it out or quit. Give up the papers.

(*Margaret remains resolved and impassive.*)

Hubbard

(*Suavely.*) Allow me to point out, my dear Mrs. Chalmers, that you are not merely stealing from your father. You are playing the traitor to your class.

Starkweather

And causing irreparable damage.

Margaret

(*Firing up suddenly and pointing to Lincoln's portrait*) I doubt not he caused irreparable damage when he freed the slaves and preserved the Union. Yet he recognized no classes. I'd rather be a traitor to my class than to him.

Starkweather

Demagoguery. Demagoguery.

(*A knock at right rear. Dobleman opens door. Enter Mrs. Middleton who is the housekeeper, followed by two Housemaids. They pause at rear.*

Housekeeper to the fore and looking expectantly at Starkweather. The Maids appear timid and frightened.)

Housekeeper

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Mrs. Middleton, you have the two maids to assist you. Take Mrs. Chalmers behind that screen there and search her. Strip all her clothes from her and make a careful search. (*Maids show perturbation.*)

Housekeeper

(*Self-possessed.*) Yes, sir. What am I to search for?

Starkweather

Papers, documents, anything unusual. Turn them over to me when you find them.

Margaret

(*In a sudden panic.*) This is monstrous! This is monstrous!

Starkweather

So is your theft of the documents monstrous.

Margaret

(*Appealing to the other men, ignoring Rutland and not considering Dobleman at all.*)

You cowards! Will you stand by and permit this thing to be done? Tom, have you one atom of manhood in you?

Chalmers

(*Doggedly.*) Return the papers, then.

Margaret

Mr. Rutland —

Rutland

(*Very awkwardly and oilily.*) My dear Mrs. Chalmers. I assure you the whole circumstance is unfortunate. But you are so palpably in the wrong that I cannot interfere — (*Margaret turns from him in withering scorn.*) — That I cannot interfere.

Dobleman

(*Breaking down unexpectedly.*) I cannot stand it. I leave your employ, sir. It is outrageous. I resign now, at once. I cannot be a party to this.

(*Striving to unlock door.*) I am going at once. You brutes! You brutes!

(*Breaks into convulsive sobbings.*)

Chalmers

Ah, another lover, I see.

(*Dobleman manages to unlock door and starts to open it.*)

Starkweather

You fool! Shut that door!

(*Dobleman hesitates.*) Shut it!

(*Dobleman obeys.*) Lock it!

(*Dobleman obeys.*)

Margaret

(*Smiling wistfully, benignantly.*) Thank you, Mr. Dobleman.

(*To Starkweather.*) Father, you surely will not perpetrate this outrage, when I tell you, I swear to you —

Starkweather

(*Interrupting.*) Return the documents then.

Margaret

I swear to you that I haven’t them. You will not find them on me.

Starkweather

You have lied to me about Knox, and I have no reason to believe you will not lie to me about this matter.

Margaret

(*Steadily.*) If you do this thing you shall cease to be my father forever. You shall cease to exist so far as I am concerned.

Starkweather

You have too much of my own will in you for you ever to forget whence it came. Mrs. Middleton, go ahead.

(*Housekeeper, summoning Maids with her eyes, begins to advance on Margaret.*)

Connie

(*In a passion.*) Father, if you do this I shall never speak to you again.

(*Breaks down weeping.*) (*Mrs. Starkweather, during following scene, has mild but continuous shuddering and weeping hysteria.*)

Starkweather

(*Briskly, looking at watch.*) I've wasted enough time on this. Mrs. Middleton, proceed.

Margaret

(*Wildly, backing away from Housekeeper.*) I will not tamely submit. I will resist, I promise you.

Starkweather

Use force, if necessary.

(*The Maids are reluctant, but Housekeeper commands them with her eyes to close in on Margaret, and they obey.*)

(*Margaret backs away until she brings up against desk.*)

Housekeeper

Come, Mrs. Chalmers.

(*Margaret stands trembling, but refuses to notice Housekeeper.*) (*Housekeeper places hand on Margaret's arm.*)

Margaret

(*Violently flinging the hand off, crying imperiously.*) Stand back!

(*Housekeeper instinctively shrinks back, as do Maids. But it is only for the moment. They close in upon Margaret to seise her.*)

(*Crying frantically for help.*) Linda! Linda!

(*Linda springs forward to help her mistress, but is caught and held struggling by Chalmers, who twists her arm and finally compels her to become quiet.*)

(*Margaret, struggling and resisting, is hustled across stage and behind screen, the Maids warming up to their work. One of them emerges from behind screen for the purpose of getting a chair, upon which Margaret is evidently forced to sit. The screen is of such height, that occasionally, when standing up and struggling, Margaret's bare arms are visible above the top of it. Muttered exclamations are heard, and the voice of Housekeeper trying to persuade Margaret to sub-mit.*)

Margaret

(*Abruptly, piteously.*) No! No!

(*The struggle becomes more violent, and the screen is overturned, disclosing Margaret seated on chair, partly undressed, and clutching an envelope in her hand which they are trying to force her to relinquish.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Crying wildly.*) Anthony! They are taking her clothes off!

(*Renewed struggle of Linda with Chalmers at the sight.*)

(*Starkweather, calling Rutland to his assistance, stands screen up again, then, as an afterthought, pulls screen a little further away from Margaret.*)

Margaret

No! No!

(*Housekeeper appears triumphantly with envelope in her hand and hands it to Hubbard.*)

Hubbard

(*Immediately.*) That's not it.

(*Glances at address and starts.*) It's addressed to Knox.

Starkweather

Tear it open. Read it.

(*Hubbard tears envelope open.*) (*While this is going on, struggle behind screen is suspended.*)

Hubbard

(*Withdrawing contents of envelope.*) It is only a photograph — of Mrs. Chalmers.

(*Reading.*) “For the future — Margaret.”

Chalmers

(*Thrusting Linda back to right front and striding up to Hubbard.*) Give it to me. (*Hubbard passes it to him, and he looks at it, crumples it in his hand, and grinds it under foot.*)

Starkweather

That is not what we wanted, Mrs. Middleton. Go on with the search.

(*The search goes on behind the screen without any further struggling.*) (*A pause, during which screen is occasionally agitated by the searchers removing Margaret’s garments.*)

Housekeeper

(*Appearing around corner of screen.*) I find nothing else, sir.

Starkweather

Is she stripped?

Housekeeper

Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Every stitch?

Housekeeper

(*Disappearing behind screen instead of answering for a pause, during which it is patent that the ultimate stitch is being removed, then reappearing.*) Yes, sir.

Starkweather

Nothing?

Housekeeper

Nothing.

Starkweather

Throw out her clothes — everything.

(*A confused mass of feminine apparel is tossed out, falling near Dobleman's feet, who, in consequence, is hugely mortified and embarrassed.*)

(*Chalmers examines garments, then steps behind screen a moment, and reappears.*)

Chalmers

Nothing.

(*Chalmers, Starkweather, and Hubbard gaze at each other dumbfoundedly.*)

(*The two Maids come out from behind screen and stand near door to right rear.*)

(*Starkweather is loath to believe, and steps to Margaret's garments and overhauls them.*)

Starkweather

(*To Chalmers, looking inquiringly toward screen.*) Are you sure?

Chalmers

Yes; I made certain. She hasn't them.

Starkweather

(*To Housekeeper.*) Mrs. Middleton, examine those girls.

Housekeeper

(*Passing hands over dresses of Maids.*) No, sir.

Margaret

(*From behind screen, in a subdued, spiritless voice.*) May I dress — now?

(*Nobody answers.*) It — it is quite chilly.

(*Nobody answers.*) Will you let Linda come to me, please?

(*Starkweather nods savagely to Linda, to obey.*) (*Linda crosses to garments, gathers them up, and disappears behind screen.*)

Starkweather

(*To Housekeeper.*)
You may go.
(*Exit Housekeeper and the two Maids.*)

Dobleman

(*Hesitating, after closing door.*) Shall I lock it?

(*Starkweather does not answer, and Dobleman leaves door unlocked.*)

Connie

(*Rising.*) May I take mother away?

(*Starkweather, who is in a brown study, nods.*) (*Connie assists Mrs. Starkweather to her feet.*)

Mrs. Starkweather

(*Staggering weakly, and sinking back into chair.*) Let me rest a moment, Connie. I'll be better. (*To Starkweather, who takes no notice.*) Anthony, I am going to bed. This has been too much for me. I shall be sick. I shall never catch that train to-day.

(*Shudders and sighs, leans head back, closes eyes, and Connie fans her or administers smelling salts.*)

Chalmers

(*To Hubbard.*) What's to be done?

Hubbard

(*Shrugging shoulders.*) I'm all at sea. I had just left the letters with him, when Mrs. Chalmers entered the room. What's become of them? She hasn't them, that's certain.

Chalmers

But why? Why should she have taken them?

Hubbard

(*Dryly, pointing to crumpled photograph on floor.*) It seems very clear to me.

Chalmers

You think so? You think so?

Hubbard

I told you what I saw last night at his rooms. There is no other explanation.

Chalmers

(*Angrily.*) And that's the sort he is — vaunting his moral superiority — mouthing phrases about theft — our theft — and himself the greatest thief of all, stealing the dearest and sacredest things —

(*Margaret appears from behind screen, pinning on her hat. She is dressed, but somewhat in disarray, and Linda follows, pulling and touching and arranging. Margaret pauses near to Rutland, but does not seem to see him.*)

Rutland

(*Lamely.*) It is a sad happening — ahem — a sad happening. I am grieved, deeply grieved. I cannot tell you, Mrs. Chalmers, how grieved I am to have been compelled to be present at this — ahem — this unfortunate —

(*Margaret withers him with a look and he awkwardly ceases.*)

Margaret

After this, father, there is one thing I shall do —

Chalmers

(*Interrupting.*) Go to your lover, I suppose.

Margaret

(*Coldly.*) Have it that way if you choose.

Chalmers

And take him what you have stolen —

Starkweather

(*Arousing suddenly from brown study.*) But she hasn't them on her. She hasn't been out of the room. They are not in the room. Then where are they?

(*During the following, Margaret goes to the door, which Dobleman opens. She forces Linda to go out and herself pauses in open door to listen.*)

Hubbard

(*Uttering an exclamation of enlightenment, going rapidly across to window at left and raising it.*) It is not locked. It moves noiselessly. There's the explanation.

(*To Starkweather.*) While you were at the safe, with your back turned, she lifted the window, tossed the papers out to somebody waiting —

(*He sticks head and shoulders out of window, peers down, then brings head and shoulders back.*) — No; they are not there. Somebody was waiting for them.

Starkweather

But how should she know I had them? You had only just recovered them?

Hubbard

Didn't Knox know right away last night that I had taken them? I took the up-elevator instead of the down when I heard him running along the hall. Trust him to let her know what had happened. She was the only one who could recover them for him. Else why did she come here so immediately this morning? To steal the package, of course. And she had some one waiting outside. She tossed them out and closed the window —

(*He closes window.*) — You notice it makes no sound. — and sat down again — all while your back was turned.

Starkweather

Margaret, is this true?

Margaret

(*Excitedly.*) Yes, the window. Why didn't you think of it before? Of course, the window. He — somebody was waiting. They are gone now — miles and miles away. You will never get them. They are in his hands now. He will use them in his speech this afternoon. (*Laughs wildly.*)

(*Suddenly changing her tone to mock meekness, subtle with defiance.*) May I go — now?

(*Nobody answers, and she makes exit.*) (*A moments pause, during which Starkweather, Chalmers, and Hubbard look at each other in stupefaction.*)

Curtain

ACT IV

Scene. *Same as Act I. It is half past one of same day. Curtain discloses Knox seated at right front and waiting. He is dejected in attitude.*

(*Margaret enters from right rear, and advances to him. He rises awkwardly and shakes hands. She is very calm and self-possessed.*)

Margaret

I knew you would come. Strange that I had to send for you so soon after last night —

(*With alarm and sudden change of manner.*) What is the matter? You are sick. Your hand is cold.

(*She warms it in both of her hands.*)

Knox

It is flame or freeze with me.

(*Smiling.*) And I'd rather flame.

Margaret

(*Becoming aware that she is warming his hand.*)

Sit down and tell me what is the matter.

(*Leading him by the hand she seats him, at the same time seating herself.*)

Knox

(*Abruptly.*) After you left last night, Hubbard stole those documents back again.

Margaret

(*Very matter-of-fact.*) Yes; he was in your bedroom while I was there.

Knox

(*Startled.*) How do you know that? Anyway, he did not know who you were.

Margaret

Oh yes he did.

Knox

(*Angrily.*) And he has dared — ?

Margaret

Yes; not two hours ago. He announced the fact before my father, my mother, Connie, the servants, everybody.

Knox

(*Rising to his feet and beginning to pace perturbedly up and down.*) The cur!

Margaret

(*Quietly.*) I believe, among other things, I told him he was that myself.

(*She laughs cynically.*) Oh, it was a pretty family party, I assure you. Mother said she didn't believe it — but that was only hysteria. Of course she believes it — the worst. So does Connie — everybody.

Knox

(*Stopping abruptly and looking at her horror-stricken.*) You don't mean they charged — — ?

Margaret

No; I don't mean that. I mean more. They didn't charge. They accepted it as a proven fact that I was guilty. That you were my — lover.

Knox

On that man's testimony?

Margaret

He had two witnesses in an adjoining room.

Knox

(*Relieved.*) All the better. They can testify to nothing more than the truth, and the truth is not serious. In our case it is good, for we renounced each other.

Margaret

You don’t know these men. It is easy to guess that they have been well trained. They would swear to anything.

(*She laughs bitterly.*) They are my father’s men, you know, his paid sleuth-hounds.

Knox

(*Collapsing in chair, holding head in hands, and groaning.*) How you must have suffered. What a terrible time, what a terrible time! I can see it all — before everybody — your nearest and dearest. Ah, I could not understand, after our parting last night, why you should have sent for me today. But now I know.

Margaret

No you don’t, at all.

Knox

(*Ignoring her and again beginning to pace back and forth, thinking on his feet.*) What’s the difference? I am ruined politically. Their scheme has worked out only too well. Gifford warned me, you warned me, everybody warned me. But I was a fool, blind — with a fool’s folly. There is nothing left but you now.

(*He pauses, and the light of a new thought irradiates his face.*) Do you know, Margaret, I thank God it has happened as it has. What if my usefulness is destroyed? There will be other men — other leaders. I but make way for another. The cause of the people can never be lost. And though I am driven from the fight, I am driven to you. We are driven together. It is fate. Again I thank God for it.

(*He approaches her and tries to clasp her in his arms, but she steps back.*)

Margaret

(*Smiling sadly.*) Ah, now you flame. The tables are reversed. Last night it was I. We are fortunate that we choose diverse times for our moods — else there would be naught but one sweet melting mad disaster.

Knox

But it is not as if we had done this thing deliberately and selfishly. We have renounced. We have struggled against it until we were beaten. And now we are driven together, not by our doing but Fate’s. After this affair this morning there is nothing for you but to come to me. And as for me, despite my best, I am finished. I have failed. As I told you, the papers are stolen. There will be no speech this afternoon.

Margaret

(*Quietly.*) Yes there will.

Knox

Impossible. I would make a triple fool of myself. I would be unable to substantiate my charges.

Margaret

You will substantiate them. What a chain of theft it is. My father steals from the people. The documents that prove his stealing are stolen by Gherst. Hubbard steals them from you and returns them to my father. And I steal them from my father and pass them back to you.

Knox

(*Astounded.*) You? — You? —

Margaret

Yes; this very morning. That was the cause of all the trouble. If I hadn’t stolen them nothing would have happened. Hubbard had just returned them to my father.

Knox

(*Profoundly touched.*) And you did this for me — ?

Margaret

Dear man, I didn’t do it for you. I wasn’t brave enough. I should have given in. I don’t mind confessing that I started to do it for you, but it soon grew so terrible that I was afraid. It grew so terrible that had it been for you alone I should have surrendered. But out of the terror of it all I caught a wider vision, and all that you said last night rose before me. And I knew that you were right. I thought of all the people, and of the little children. I did it for them, after all. You speak for them. I stole the papers so that you could use them in speaking for the people. Don’t you see, dear man?

(*Changing to angry recollection.*) Do you know what they cost me? Do you know what was done to me, to-day, this morning, in my father's house? I was shamed, humiliated, as I would never have dreamed it possible. Do you know what they did to me? The servants were called in, and by them I was stripped before everybody — my family, Hubbard, the Reverend Mr. Rutland, the secretary, everybody.

Knox

(*Stunned.*) Stripped — you?

Margaret

Every stitch. My father commanded it

Knox

(*Suddenly visioning the scene.*) My God!

Margaret

(*Recovering herself and speaking cynically, with a laugh at his shocked face.*) No; it was not so bad as that. There was a screen.

(*Knox appears somewhat relieved.*) But it fell down in the midst of the struggle.

Knox

But in heaven's name why was this done to you?

Margaret

Searching for the lost letters. They knew I had taken them.

(*Speaking gravely.*)

So you see, I have earned those papers. And I have earned the right to say what shall be done with them. I shall give them to you, and you will use them in your speech this afternoon.

Knox

I don't want them.

Margaret

(*Going to bell and ringing.*) Oh yes you do. They are more valuable right now than anything else in the world.

Knox

(*Shaking his head.*) I wish it hadn't happened.

Margaret

(*Returning to him, pausing by his chair, and caressing his hair.*) What?

Knox

This morning — your recovering the letters. I had adjusted myself to their loss, and the loss of the fight, and the finding of — you.

(*He reaches up, draws down her hand, and presses it to his lips.*) So — give them back to your father.

(*Margaret draws quickly away from him.*) (*Enter Man-servant at right rear.*)

Margaret

Send Linda to me.

(*Exit Man-servant.*)

Knox

What are you doing?

Margaret

(*Sitting down.*) I am going to send Linda for them. They are still in my father's house, hidden, of all places, behind Lincoln's portrait. He will guard them safely, I know.

Knox

(*With fervor.*) Margaret! Margaret! Don't send for them. Let them go. I don't want them.

(*Rising and going toward her impulsively.*) (*Margaret rises and retreats, holding him off.*) I want you — you — you.

(*He catches her hand and kisses it. She tears it away from him, but tenderly.*)

Margaret

(*Still retreating, roguishly and tenderly.*) Dear, dear man, I love to see you so. But it cannot be.

(*Looking anxiously toward right rear.*) No, no, please, please sit down.
(*Enter Linda from right rear. She is dressed for the street.*)

Margaret

(*Surprised.*) Where are you going?

Linda

Tommy and the nurse and I were going down town. There is some shopping she wants to do.

Margaret

Very good. But go first to my father's house. Listen closely. In the library, behind the portrait of Lincoln — you know it? (*Linda nods.*)

You will find a packet of papers. It took me five seconds to put it there. It will take you no longer to get it. Let no one see you. Let it appear as though you had brought Tommy to see his grandmother and cheer her up. You know she is not feeling very well just now. After you get the papers, leave Tommy there and bring them immediately back to me. Step on a chair to the ledge of the bookcase, and reach behind the portrait. You should be back inside fifteen minutes. Take the car.

Linda

Tommy and the nurse are already in it, waiting for me.

Margaret

Be careful. Be quick.
(*Linda nods to each instruction and makes exit.*)

Knox

(*Bursting out passionately.*) This is madness. You are sacrificing yourself, and me. I don't want them. I want you. I am tired. What does anything matter except love? I have pursued ideals long enough. Now I want you.

Margaret

(*Gravely.*) Ah, there you have expressed the pith of it. You will now forsake ideals for me — (*He attempts to interrupt.*) No, no; not that I am less than an ideal. I have no silly vanity that way. But I want you to remain ideal, and you can only by going on — not by being turned back. Anybody can play the coward and assert they are fatigued. I could not love a coward. It was your strength that saved us last night. I could not have loved you as I do, now, had you been weak last night. You can only keep my love —

Knox

(*Interrupting, bitterly.*) By foregoing it — for an ideal. Margaret, what is the biggest thing in the world? Love. There is the greatest ideal of all.

Margaret

(*Playfully.*) Love of man and woman?

Knox

What else?

Margaret

(*Gravely.*) There is one thing greater — love of man for his fellowman.

Knox

Oh, how you turn my preachments back on me. It is a lesson. Nevermore shall I preach. Henceforth —

Margaret

Yes.

(*Chalmers enters unobserved at left, pauses, and looks on.*)

Knox

Henceforth I love. Listen.

Margaret

You are overwrought. It will pass, and you will see your path straight before you, and know that I am right. You cannot run away from the fight.

Knox

I can — and will. I want you, and you want me — the man's and woman's need for each other. Come, go with me — now. Let us snatch at happiness while we may.

(*He arises, approaches her, and gets her hand in his. She becomes more complaisant, and, instead of repulsing him, is willing to listen and receive.*) As I have said, the fight will go on just the same. Scores of men, better men, stronger men, than I, will rise to take my place. Why do I talk this way? Because I love you, love you, love you. Nothing else exists in all the world but love of you.

Margaret

(*Melting and wavering.*) Ah, you flame, you flame.

(*Chalmers utters an inarticulate cry of rage and rushes forward at Knox*)

(*Margaret and Knox are startled by the cry and discover Chalmer's presence.*)

Margaret

(*Confronting Chalmers and thrusting him slightly back from Knox, and continuing to hold him off from Knox.*) No, Tom, no dramatics, please. This excitement of yours is only automatic and conventional. You really don't mean it. You don't even feel it. You do it because it is expected of you and because it is your training. Besides, it is bad for your heart. Remember Dr. West's warning —

(*Chalmers, making an unusually violent effort to get at Knox, suddenly staggers weakly back, signs of pain on his face, holding a hand convulsively clasped over his heart. Margaret catches him and supports him to a chair, into which he collapses.*)

Chalmers

(*Muttering weakly.*) My heart! My heart!

Knox

(*Approaching.*) Can I do anything?

Margaret

(*Calmly.*) No; it is all right. He will be better presently.

(*She is bending over Chalmers, her hand on his wrist, when suddenly, as a sign he is recovering, he violently flings her hand off and straightens up.*)

Knox

(*Undecidedly.*) I shall go now.

Margaret

No. You will wait until Linda comes back. Besides, you can't run away from this and leave me alone to face it.

Knox

(*Hurt, showing that he will stay.*) I am not a coward.

Chalmers

(*In a stifled voice that grows stronger.*) Yes; wait I have a word for you.

(*He pauses a moment, and when he speaks again his voice is all right.*)

(*Witheringly.*) A nice specimen of a reformer, I must say. You, who babbled yesterday about theft. The most high, righteous and noble Ali Baba, who has come into the den of thieves and who is also a thief.

(*Mimicking Margaret.*) "Ah, you flame, you flame!"

(*In his natural voice.*) I should call you; you thief, you thief, you wife-stealer, you.

Margaret

(*Coolly.*) I should scarcely call it theft.

Chalmers

(*Sneeringly.*) Yes; I forgot. You mean it is not theft for him to take what already belongs to him.

Margaret

Not quite that — but in taking what has been freely offered to him.

Chalmers

You mean you have so forgotten your womanhood as to offer —

Margaret

Just that. Last night. And Mr. Knox did himself the honor of refusing me.

Knox

(*Bursting forth.*) You see, nothing else remains, Margaret.

Chalmers

(*Twittingly.*) Ah, “Margaret.”

Knox

(*Ignoring him.*) The situation is intolerable.

Chalmers

(*Emphatically*). It is intolerable. Don’t you think you had better leave this house? Every moment of your presence dishonors it.

Margaret

Don’t talk of honor, Tom.

Chalmers

I make no excuses for myself. I fancy I never fooled you very much. But at any rate I never used my own house for such purposes.

Knox

(*Springing at him.*) You cur!

Margaret

(*Interposing.*) No; don’t. His heart.

Chalmers

(*Mimicking Margaret.*) No dramatics, please.

Margaret

(*Plaintively, looking from one man to the other.*) Men are so strangely and wonderfully made. What am I to do with the pair of you? Why won’t you reason together like rational human beings?

Chalmers

(*Bitterly gay, rising to his feet.*) Yes; let us come and reason together. Be rational. Sit down and talk it over like civilized humans. This is not the stone age. Be reassured, Mr. Knox. I won’t brain you. Margaret —

(*Indicating chair,*) Sit down. Mr. Knox —
(*Indicating chair.*) Sit down.
(*All three seat themselves, in a triangle.*) Behold the problem — the ever ancient and ever young triangle of the playwright and the short story writer — two men and a woman.

Knox

True, and yet not true. The triangle is incomplete. Only one of the two men loves the woman.

Chalmers

Yes?

Knox

And I am that man.

Chalmers

I fancy you're right.
(*Nodding his head.*) But how about the woman?

Margaret

She loves one of the two men.

Knox

And what are you going to do about it?

Chalmers

(*Judicially.*) She has not yet indicated the man.
(*Margaret is about to indicate Knox.*) Be careful, Madge. Remember who is Tommy's father.

Margaret

Tom, honestly, remembering what the last years have been can you imagine that I love you?

Chalmers

I'm afraid I've not — er — not flamed sufficiently.

Margaret

You have possibly spoken nearer the truth than you dreamed. I married you, Tom, hoping great things of you. I hoped you would be a power for good —

Chalmers

Politics again. When will women learn they must leave politics alone?

Margaret

And also, I hoped for love. I knew you didn't love me when we married, but I hoped for it to come.

Chalmers

And — er — may I be permitted to ask if you loved me?

Margaret

No; but I hoped that, too, would come.

Chalmers

It was, then, all a mistake.

Margaret

Yes; yours, and mine, and my father's.

Knox

We have sat down to reason this out, and we get nowhere. Margaret and I love each other. Your triangle breaks.

Chalmers

It isn't a triangle after all. You forget Tommy.

Knox

(*Petulantly.*) Make it four-sided, then, but let us come to some conclusion.

Chalmers

(*Reflecting.*) Ah, it is more than that. There is a fifth side. There are the stolen letters which Madge has just this morning restolen from her father.

Whatever settlement takes place, they must enter into it.

(*Changing his tone.*) Look here, Madge, I am a fool. Let us talk sensibly, you and Knox and I. Knox, you want my wife. You can have her — on one consideration. Madge, you want Knox. You can have him on one consideration, the same consideration. Give up the letters and we'll forget everything.

Margaret

Everything?

Chalmers

Everything. Forgive and forget You know.

Margaret

You will forgive my — I — this — this adultery?

Chalmers

(*Doggedly.*) I'll forgive anything for the letters. I've played fast and loose with you, Madge, and I fancy your playing fast and loose only evens things up. Return the letters and you can go with Knox quietly. I'll see to that. There won't be a breath of scandal. I'll give you a divorce. Or you can stay on with me if you want to. I don't care. What I want is the letters. Is it agreed?

(*Margaret seems to hesitate.*)

Knox

(*Pleadingly.*) Margaret.

Margaret

Chalmers

(*Testily.*) Am I not giving you each other? What more do you want? Tommy stays with me. If you want Tommy, then stay with me, but you must give up the letters.

Margaret

I shall not go with Mr. Knox. I shall not give up the letters. I shall remain with Tommy.

Chalmers

So far as I am concerned, Knox doesn't count in this. I want the letters and I want Tommy. If you don't give them up, I'll divorce you on statutory grounds, and no woman, so divorced, can keep her child. In any event, I shall keep Tommy.

Margaret

(*Speaking steadily and positively.*) Listen, Tom; and you, too, Howard. I have never for a moment entertained the thought of giving up the letters. I may have led you to think so, but I wanted to see just how low, you, Tom, could sink. I saw how low you — all of you — this morning sank. I have learned — much. Where is this fine honor, Tom, which put you on a man-killing rage a moment ago? You'll barter it all for a few scraps of paper, and forgive and forget adultery which does not exist —

(*Chalmers laughs skeptically.*) — though I know when I say it you will not believe me. At any rate, I shall not give up the letters. Not if you do take Tommy away from me. Not even for Tommy will I sacrifice all the people. As I told you this morning, there are two million Tommys, child-laborers all, who cannot be sacrificed for Tommy's sake or anybody's sake.

(*Chalmers shrugs his shoulders and smiles in ridicule.*)

Knox

Surely, Margaret, there is a way out for us. Give up the letters. What are they? — only scraps of paper. Why match them against happiness — our happiness?

Margaret

But as you told me yourself, those scraps of paper represent the happiness of millions of lives. It is not our happiness that is matched against some scraps of paper. It is our happiness against millions of lives — like ours. All these millions have hearts, and loves, and desires, just like ours.

Knox

But it is a great social and cosmic process. It does not depend on one man. Kill off, at this instant, every leader of the people, and the process will go on just the same. The people will come into their own. Theft will be unseated. It is destiny. It is the process. Nothing can stop it.

Margaret

But it can be retarded.

Knox

You and I are no more than straws in relation to it. We cannot stop it any more than straws can stop an ocean tide. We mean nothing — except to each other, and to each other we mean all the world.

Margaret

(*Sadly and tenderly.*) All the world and immortality thrown in.

Chalmers

(*Breaking in.*) Nice situation, sitting here and listening to a strange man woo my wife in terms of sociology and scientific slang.

(*Both Margaret and Knox ignore him.*)

Knox

Dear, I want you so.

Margaret

(*Despairingly.*) Oh! It is so hard to do right!

Knox

(*Eagerly.*) He wants the letters very badly. Give them up for Tommy. He will give Tommy for them.

Chalmers

No; emphatically no. If she wants Tommy she can stay on; but she must give up the letters. If she wants you she may go; but she must give up the letters.

Knox

(*Pleading for a decision.*) Margaret.

Margaret

Howard. Don't tempt me and press me. It is hard enough as it is.

Chalmers

(*Standing up.*) I’ve had enough of this. The thing must be settled, and I leave it to you, Knox. Go on with your love-making. But I won’t be a witness to it. Perhaps I — er — retard the — er — the flame process. You two must make up your minds, and you can do it better without me. I am going to get a drink and settle my nerves. I’ll be back in a minute.

(*He moves toward exit to right.*) She will yield, Knox. Be warm, be warm.

(*Pausing in doorway.*) Ah, you flame! Flame to some purpose. (*Exit Chalmers.*)

(*Knox rests his head despairingly on his hand, and Margaret, pausing and looking at him sadly for a moment, crosses to him, stands beside him, and caresses his hair.*)

Margaret

It is hard, I know, dear. And it is hard for me as well.

Knox

It is so unnecessary.

Margaret

No, it is necessary. What you said last night, when I was weak, was wise. We cannot steal from my child —

Knox

But if he gives you Tommy? Margaret

(*Shaking her head.*) Nor can we steal from any other woman’s child — from all the children of all the women. And other things I heard you say, and you were right. We cannot live by ourselves alone. We are social animals. Our good and our ill — all is tied up with all humanity.

Knox

(*Catching her hand and caressing it.*) I do not follow you. I hear your voice, but I do not know a word you say. Because I am loving your voice — and you. I am so filled with love that there is no room for anything else. And you, who yesterday were so remote and unattainable, are so near and possible, so immediately possible. All you have to do is to say the word, one little word. Say it. — Say it.

(*He carries her hand to his lips and holds it there.*)

Margaret

(*Wistfully.*) I should like to. I should like to. But I can’t.

Knox

You must.

Margaret

There are other and greater things that say must to me. Oh, my dear, have you forgotten them? Things you yourself have spoken to me — the great stinging things of the spirit, that are greater than you and I, greater even than our love.

Knox

I exhaust my arguments — but still I love you.

Margaret

And I love you for it.

(*Chalmers enters from right, and sees Margaret still caressing Knox’s hair.*)

Chalmers

(*With mild elation, touched with sarcasm.*) Ah, I see you have taken my advice, and reached a decision.

(*They do not answer. Margaret moves slowly away and seats herself.*) (*Knox remains with head bowed on hand.*) No?

(*Margaret shakes her head.*) Well, I’ve thought it over, and I’ve changed my terms. Madge, go with Knox, take Tommy with you.

(*Margaret wavers, but Knox, head bowed on hand, does not see her.*) There will be no scandal. I’ll give you a proper divorce. And you can have Tommy.

Knox

(*Suddenly raising his head, joyfully, pleadingly.*) Margaret!

(*Margaret is swayed, but does not speak.*)

Chalmers

You and I never hit it off together any too extraordinarily well, Madge; but I'm not altogether a bad sort. I am easy-going. I always have been easy-going. I'll make everything easy for you now. But you see the fix I am in. You love another man, and I simply must regain those letters. It is more important than you realize.

Margaret

(*Incisively.*) You make me realize how important those letters are.

Knox

Give him the letters, Margaret

Chalmers

So she hasn't turned them over to you yet?

Margaret

No; I still have them.

Knox

Give them to him.

Chalmers

Selling out for a petticoat. A pretty reformer.

Knox

(*Proudly.*)
A better lover.

Margaret

(*To Chalmers.*)

He is weak to-day. What of it? He was strong last night. He will win back his strength again. It is human to be weak. And in his very weakness now, I have my pride, for it is the weakness of love. God knows I have been weak, and I am not ashamed of it. It was the weakness of love. It is hard to stifle one's womanhood always with morality. (*Quickly.*)

But do not mistake, Tom. This of mine is no conventional morality. I do not care about nasty gossipy tongues and sensation-mongering sheets; nor do I care what any persons of all the persons I know, would say if I went away with Mr. Knox this instant. I would go, and go gladly and proudly with him, divorce or no divorce, scandal or scandal triple-fold — if — if no one else were hurt by what I did. (*To Knox.*)

Howard, I tell you that I would go with you now, in all willingness and joy, with May-time and the songs of all singing birds in my heart — were it not for the others. But there is a higher morality. We must not hurt those others. We dare not steal our happiness from them. The future belongs to them, and we must not, dare not, sacrifice that future nor give it in pledge for our own happiness. Last night I came to you. I was weak — yes; more than that — I was ignorant. I did not know, even as late as last night, the monstrous vileness, the consummate wickedness of present-day conditions. I learned that today, this morning, and now. I learned that the morality of the Church was a pretense. Far deeper than it, and vastly more powerful, was the morality of the dollar. My father, my family, my husband, were willing to condone what they believed was my adultery. And for what? For a few scraps of paper that to them represented only the privilege to plunder, the privilege to steal from the people.

(*To Chalmers.*) Here are you, Tom, not only willing and eager to give me into the arms of the man you believe my lover, but you throw in your boy — your child and mine — to make it good measure and acceptable. And for what? Love of some woman? — any woman? No. Love of humanity? No. Love of God? No. Then for what? For the privilege of perpetuating your stealing from the people — money, bread and butter, hats, shoes, and stockings — for stealing all these things from the people.

(*To Knox.*) Now, and at last, do I realize how stern and awful is the fight that must be waged — the fight in which you and I, Howard, must play our parts and play them bravely and uncomplainingly — you as well as I, but I even more than you. This is the den of thieves. I am a child of thieves. All my family is composed of thieves. I have been fed and reared on the fruits of thievery. I have been a party to it all my life. Somebody must cease from this theft, and it is I. And you must help me, Howard.

Chalmers

(*Emitting a low long whistle.*) Strange that you never went into the suffragette business. With such speech-making ability you would have been a shining light.

Knox

(*Sadly.*) The worst of it is, Margaret, you are right. But it is hard that we cannot be happy save by stealing from the happiness of others. Yet it hurts, deep down and terribly, to forego you. (*Margaret thanks him with her eyes.*)

Chalmers

(*Sarcastically.*) Oh, believe me, I am not too anxious to give up my wife. Look at her. She's a pretty good woman for any man to possess.

Margaret

Tom, I'll accept a quiet divorce, marry Mr. Knox, and take Tommy with me — on one consideration.

Chalmers

And what is that?

Margaret

That I retain the letters. They are to be used in his speech this afternoon.

Chalmers

No they're not.

Margaret

Whatever happens, do whatever worst you can possibly do, that speech will be given this afternoon. Your worst to me will be none too great a price for me to pay.

Chalmers

No letters, no divorce, no Tommy, nothing.

Margaret

Then will you compel me to remain here. I have done nothing wrong, and I don't imagine you will make a scandal.

(*Enter Linda at right rear, pausing and looking inquiringly.*) There they are now.

(*To Linda.*) Yes; give them to me.

(*Linda, advancing, draws package of documents from her breast. As she is handing them to Margaret, Chalmers attempts to seise them.*)

Knox

(*Springing forward and thrusting Chalmers back.*) That you shall not!

(*Chalmers is afflicted with heart-seizure, and staggers.*)

Margaret

(*Maternally, solicitously.*) Tom, don't! Your heart! Be careful!

(*Chalmers starts to stagger toward bell*) Howard! Stop him! Don't let him ring, or the servants will get the letters away from us. (*Knox starts to interpose, but Chalmers, growing weaker, sinks into a chair, head thrown back and legs out straight before him.*) Linda, a glass of water.

(*Linda gives documents to Margaret, and makes running exit to right rear.*) (*Margaret bends anxiously over Chalmers.*) (*A pause.*)

Knox

(*Touching her hand.*) Give them to me.

(*Margaret gives him the documents, which he holds in his hand, at the same time she thanks him with her eyes.*) (*Enter Linda with glass of water, which she hands to Margaret.*) (*Margaret tries to place the glass to Chalmer's lips.*)

Chalmers

(*Dashing the glass violently from her hand to the floor and speaking in smothered voice.*) Bring me a whiskey and soda.

(*Linda looks at Margaret interrogatively. Margaret is undecided what to say, shrugs her shoulders in helplessness, and nods her head.*)

(*Linda makes hurried exit to right.*)

Margaret

(*To Knox.*) You will go now and you will give the speech.

Knox

(*Placing documents in inside coat pocket.*) I will give the speech.

Margaret

And all the forces making for the good time coming will be quickened by your words. Let the voices of the millions be in it.

(*Chalmers, legs still stretched out, laughs cynically.*)

You know where my heart lies. Some day, in all pride and honor, stealing from no one, hurting no one, we shall come together — to be together always.

Knox

(*Drearily.*) And in the meantime?

Margaret

We must wait

Knox

(*Decidedly.*) We will wait.

Chalmers

(*Straightening up.*) For me to die? eh?

(*During the following speech Linda enters from right with whiskey and soda and gives it to Chalmers, who thirstily drinks half of it. Margaret dismisses Linda with her eyes, and Linda makes exit to right rear.*)

Knox

I hadn't that in mind, but now that you mention it, it seems to the point. That heart of yours isn't going to carry you much farther. You have played fast and loose with it as with everything else. You are like the carter who steals hay from his horse that he may gamble. You have stolen from your heart. Some day, soon, like the horse, it will quit We can afford to wait. It won't be long.

Chalmers

(*After laughing incredulously and sipping his whiskey.*) Well, Knox, neither of us wins. You don't get the woman. Neither do I. She remains under my roof, and I fancy that is about all. I won't divorce her. What's the good? But I've got her tied hard and fast by Tommy. You won't get her.

(*Knox, ignoring hint, goes to right rear and pauses in doorway.*)

Margaret

Work. Bravely work. You are my knight. Go.

(*Knox makes exit.*)

(*Margaret stands quietly, face averted from audience and turned toward where Knox was last to be seen.*)

Chalmers

Madge.

(*Margaret neither moves nor answers.*) I say, Madge.

(*He stands up and moves toward her, holding whiskey glass in one hand.*) That speech is going to make a devil of a row. But I don't think it will be so bad as your father says. It looks pretty dark, but such things blow over. They always do blow over. And so with you and me. Maybe we can manage to forget all this and patch it up somehow.

(*She gives no sign that she is aware of his existence.*) Why don't you speak? (*Pause.*)

(*He touches her arm.*) Madge.

Margaret

(*Turning upon him in a blase of wrath and with unutterable loathing.*)

Don't touch me!

(*Chalmers recoils.*)

Curtain

DAUGHTERS OF THE RICH

A One-Act Play

Characters

John Masterson
Frank Burt
Police Officer
Edna Masterson

Scene

Library in Masterson’s house, New York City. Large room, luxuriously furnished. Table, D.R., desk telephone. Fireplace, R. Large chair near fireplace. Bookcases, R. and L. Door, U.L. Couch, L.C. Hall, back. At rise of curtain, Masterson seen asleep in chair. Clock strikes two. Edna enters. C.D. through hall. Crosses to door L. Listens. Draws curtains over window. Takes cigarette from table. Starts to light it. Masterson awakes. Edna drops cigarette.

MASTERSON:Who’s there? (*Turns in chair. Sees* EDNA.) Oh! When did you get in, my dear?

EDNA: Daddy, how you startled me,--I just came in.

Taking another cigarette.

MASTERSON: Must have fallen asleep over my paper. What time is it?

EDNA: Time all dads were in bed. Two o’clock.

MASTERSON: Did you have a nice time at the ball?

Rises, stretching, etc.

EDNA: Yes.

Crosses to chair.

MASTERSON: Danced your feet off, I suppose.

EDNA: Almost.

MASTERSON: Many there?

EDNA: Usual crowd.

MASTERSON: You sent Smithson home early.

Crosses to chair.

EDNA: Yes. The Arnolds brought me home in their car.

Sits in chair, L.C., smoking.

MASTERSON: I wish you wouldn't smoke those things.

EDNA: Old-fashioned Daddy. Everbody smokes. I have smoked ever since I was twelve years old--learned it in school, in fact.

MASTERSON: So that is what you learned at that expensive school?

EDNA: That--and other things. (*Police whistle outside.*)
The police----(*Door bell rings*) Ill go----

MASTERSON: My dear, you can't go to the door at this hour. I'll answer it.

EDNA: I suppose the servants are all in bed. Let them ring.
Someone has mistaken the house.

Masterson exits C.D. through hall.

POLICEMAN: (*Outside*): Sorry to trouble you, Sir----We traced a woman to this house. She let herself in with a latch key--she had just given us the slip.

MASTERSON: You are mistaken, officer. No woman you were after could possibly have a latch key to this house.

OFFICER: She surely came in here.

MASTERSON: Nonsense! Well, don't keep me standing here in the cold. Come in, if you must see for yourself. (*Comes down hall and enters C.D., followed by police officer and Frank Burt.*) Well----well----what's it all about?

OFFICER: Well, Sir, since this new law went into effect, we've had to keep an eye on the down-town rooming houses and restaurants. We raided a restaurant with private rooms tonight. Had orders to take everyone we found there to the station. I had this young fellow and his lady friend in tow. He stumbled and pretended to turn his foot. She cleared out and jumped into a cab. I did not see her face, she kept her fur over it----but she was a swell all right. I shoved him into another cab and we followed the young lady. She got out in the last block, we stopped a block farther down, and chased her. She came in here all right. I'll swear to that.

EDNA: You couldn't swear to it if you were on the witness stand. You simple got mixed and followed the wrong cab.

OFFICER: (*Without turning head looks at EDNA, then back to BURT.*): May----be!

MASTERSON: Tut-tut, officer, this is too much! You see there is only myself and my daughter here.

OFFICER:(*Looks pointedly at* EDNA. *To* BURT): I don't suppose you ever saw that young lady before?

BURT: Never!

MASTERSON: (*Crosses, sputtering with rage*): You blockhead! Are you daring to insinuate that my daughter was the woman you followed? This will cost you your job--do you know whose house you are in? I am John Masterson. (*Crosses, D.R.*) Good God! What's the world coming to? When a man can be insulted in his own house like this.

OFFICER: (*His manner changing*): No insult meant, Sir. Of course it was a mistake. I did not know it was your house, Mr. Masterson. I am sorr--

BURT: Haven't we inconvenienced this lady and gentleman long enough, officer?

MASTERSON: Yes,----you'll hear more of this----dragging strange men from some brothel into the homes of respectable people. A few more mistakes of this sort and you'll be in for suspension instead of promotion. (Crosses to table) Young man, this should be a lesson to you, too. Well, good-night, officer. Hope you catch the hussy, whoever she is. Take a tip from me and don't break into any more decent homes to look for her.

Officer turns to go. Stops in doorway.

OFFICER: The lady was very careless, Sir. She dropped this. (*Hands jeweled pin to* MASTERSON, *who, crossing over, examines it*) Must have cost a pretty penny.

BURT: You can't be sure that the lady who was with me dropped that.

OFFICER: I can. Dead sure! I saw it fall from her dress. Her given name and the date are engraved on the back, you see. Pity they didn't put the last one on.

MASTERSON: H--m--m. Yes, great pity. Valuable piece too. Perhaps the lady will be more careful in the future. You have aroused my curiosity, officer. What are you going to do with this? Keep it until it is advertised for?

OFFICER: Yes Sir.

MASTERSON: And then?

OFFICER: Well, after the hearing tomorrow morning nothing can bother the young lady unless it happens to get into the newspapers. I hate to think, though, that she gave me the slip. It's my duty to produce her in the police court tomorrow morning, if possible.

MASTERSON: If possible. Well, she did give you the slip and you won't find her by standing here. I did not know that the young women of position, as you seem to think this one was--er--indulged in--er----slumming.

OFFICER: You'd be surprised, Sir, to see some of the swells from the Avenue who get caught in these little affairs.

MASTERSON: I am surprised. Well, well, good-night, Officer. Sorry I could not help you out. My daughter and I came home from a dance just before you rang. We saw no one. Good-night.

OFFICER (*Starts out D.C. Turns back.*): The--pin--Sir.

MASTERSON: Oh! Yes--yes--the pin.

Hands it to the officer who exits after a searching look. at EDNA.

Masterson shows them out, then enters C.D. and stands looking down at EDNA *who is quietly sobbing.*

MASTERSON: That was the pin I gave you on your birthday--where did you meet the man?

EDNA *sobs.*

MASTERSON: (*Crosses over to her.*): Answer me.

EDNA: Here in this room.

MASTERSON: Who is he? What is he?

EDNA: He came to fix the telephone.

MASTERSON: Came to fix the telephone? Good God! What next? (*Crosses C.D.*) How long have you known him?

EDNA: Three months.

MASTERSON: And you have been meeting him ever since?

She sobs.

MASTERSON: Answer me!

EDNA: Yes.

MASTERSON: It is unbelievable----my own daughter! You have been brought up like a princess. You were all I had. (*Crosses D.R.*) And I've worked, slaved, toiled, molled at my desk day and night like the veriest laborer for you. For you lay awake nights scheming how to make money for you. (*Crosses C.*) That you could disgrace me like this, never entered my head. My reward was the thought that you were happy, that you hadn't a wish ungratified. That you were envied and pointed out as the daughter of John Masterson, and heiress to untold millions. It was my ambition to combine my fortune with an old-world title for you. You were my pride and delight, and what do you do? You get into a vulgar affair with a man who comes to fix the telephone, meet him in a down-town brothel, get caught in a raid,--and are chased to your very door by a policeman. (*Crosses C.P.*) This may leak out at any time. If the reporters get hold of it, it will cost a fortune to hush it up. (*Crosses D.C.*) How could you do it?

EDNA: I wanted to live.

MASTERSON: Wanted to live? (*Crosses D.R.*) Haven't you been living? God knows it has cost enough.

EDNA: That's it! The cost! You think only in dollars and cents. Buy and sell. Horses, houses, land, stocks, bonds, titles, flesh and blood, your own flesh and blood. You are so busy buying and selling that you forget your women are human beings, They are instead things to hang jewels on to reflect your great success.

MASTERSON: Have you ever had a wish ungratified?

Crosses to her.

EDNA: That is just the trouble. I have had too much of everything all my life. (*Rises, crosses down to couch.*) You tried to keep me in cotton-wool and you made me think I could have anything I wanted, even the moon, if I cried long enough and hard enough. (*Sits on couch.*) And I, like so many others, of my kind, was brought into the world with diseased nerves.

MASTERSON: Diseased nerves!

EDNA: Yes,----diseased by too much indulgence before my birth, on the part of those who were responsible for me.

MASTERSON: That is some of the up-to-date twaddle you learned in school.

Crosses to her.

EDNA: I learned it from life. (*Crosses to R. and sits in chair.*) I was born a neurasthenic and brought up in an expensive school with the daughters of other rich men. All of us born old, all of us tingling with curiosity, our frayed nerves crying out for new sensations, and driving us to win the mystery at the back of life.

MASTERSON: Hysteria!

EDNA: The money of our fathers meant to us only so much license. We smoked cigarettes incessantly,--we spent our pocket-money on sweets filled with alcohol, and on novels our mothers would blush to read. We told stories that you would be ashamed to tell in your club to-day, and then came out into society, still driven by our nerves. We eat and drink and dance and smoke too much in order to excite ourselves, and we dress to excite men. We listen with a laugh to unspeakable things that lecherous old men and lustful young men whisper in our ears, and all the time we are as deadly in our pursuit of out destinies as were the monkey women.

MASTERSON: That is hysterical exaggeration.

EDNA: It is the truth.

MASTERSON: (*Crosses to her.*): Now you who might have been a princess and are, after all, only a harlot, what are you going to do with yourself?

EDNA: No harlot, a free gift to the man I love.

MASTERSON: A common working man.

EDNA: Thank God!

MASTERSON: If you must indulge in a vulgar liaison why couldn't you select a man in your own set?

EDNA: And what then?

MASTERSON: Marriage, decency.

EDNA: I fail to see why a "vulgar liaison" ending in a marriage with another neurasthenic, like myself, necessarily means decency. I would then be, not only the envied daughter of John Masterson, but the envied wife also of Mr. Something or Other, therefore respectable, because our unholy matrimony.

Laughs hysterically. Crosses U.R.

MASTERSON: Couldn't you remember your responsibility to society?

EDNA: I never knew I had any. In the curriculum on which all that fortune was spent to fit me for my very high place in the world, my trainers forgot to include that. (*Crosses PL.*) They taught me only to gratify myself. All your millions failed to buy me a course in my responsibility to society.

MASTERSON: (*Crosses to her.*): I never knew you before.

EDNA: You might have known me if you had taken less time for money making. When I was a child I was always a little afraid of you.

MASTERSON: Afraid of your own father----

EDNA: You were a king to me. Never by any chance a father. (MASTERSON *crosses to couch.*) Nurse and I used often to drive by a row of clean shing little cottages out in the suburbs with flowers in front and children playing all about. Sometimes I saw a man getting off the car, just the common street car at the corner. He picked her up and carried her on his shoulder. Then one of the little girls, about my own age, left her playmates and ran to meet him with a whoop of joy. She buried her hands in his hair and held on tight. A little woman in a simple white dress came down to the gate. He put his arm around her and they all went into one of the cottages. Oh, how I used to envy that little girl.

MASTERSON: You had no need----

EDNA: Hadn't I? I could imagine her toys scattered all over the house, and her father sitting on the floor playing choo-choo cars with her. I used to beg nurse to drive me that way every day, and I made up my mind then, in my childish way, that some day I would have a little cottage like that. I used to lie on a big rug on the nursery floor, in front of the fire, such a lonely little thing--you do not know how lonely the baby of a rich man can be----but I do----I do! I tried to get courage to run and meet you when you came home.

MASTERSON: Why didn't you?

EDNA: You seldom came home, and I was afraid of what the splendid butler might think. Once when I knew you were in the library, I crept down to the door and stood there, but I was afraid to go in. So I, the poor lonely little heiress to almost untold millions, stood in the great big hall with my face pressed tight, tight, against the door, desperately longing to go in and snuggle up to you, as I knew the little girl in the cottage was sitting on her father's lap at that very moment, perhaps.

MASTERSON: Edna,----I never----

Crosses C.

EDNA: No, no, wait, Dad----you say you lived to gratify my every wish. And I want only one thing. (*Rises.*) Strip me of all this,--I don't want it. I want only my little cottage, with my mate. And I want a little girl who isn't afraid to run and meet her father. I don't know anything about my responsibility to society,----I've done with it,--its shame, its pettiness, its hysterical lean-heartedness. I want no more of it. I want to live my own life in my own way, with my common working-man. It's the only clean, the only decent, the only right way.

MASTERSON: This man who took you into a brothel----

EDNA: He never wanted to meet me in those places. I did not care where I met him, so long as I did meet him, and you may be sure there were others of my set there on that very night. (*Crosses to him.*) Dad, you must let me marry him, if he'll have me----

MASTERSON: Have you? He'll jump at the chance,----

EDNA: Oh, I'm not so sure of that. You must do this, Dad,----

MASTERSON: Edna, child, you know I would do anything for your happiness,----

EDNA: Then go quick, call up the police station. Make them let him out, now--this minute--You can fix it. You are John Masterson, you can do anything, even with the police--hurry----hurry----

MASTERSON: But this is impossible, this not for your happiness----

EDNA: You won't do it?

MASTERSON: I can't. You are mad.

EDNA *takes cloak and starts for door*.

EDNA: If your rotten society of which you think so much is sane, then thank God, I am mad.

MASTERSON: If you do----

EDNA: Well, what if I do----*Telephone rings.* MASTERSON *answers*.

MASTERSON: What is it? What? Shot himself? Why call me up at three in the morning to tell me that? A letter to my daughter in his pocket? Impossible! My daughter does not know him,----

EDNA: Dad! Frank,----killed himself----

EDNA (Breaks into hysterical laughter): Now,----no need to shock society,----you can buy me a title.

Falls in faint, dragging portieres with her.

CURTAIN

THE ACORN-PLANTER

A California Forest Play
Planned To Be Sung By Efficient Singers
Accompanied By A Capable Orchestra

1916

CONTENTS

ARGUMENT
PROLOGUE
ACT I.
ACT II
EPILOGUE

ARGUMENT

In the morning of the world, while his tribe makes its camp for the night in a grove, Red Cloud, the first man of men, and the first man of the Nishinam, save in war, sings of the duty of life, which duty is to make life more abundant. The Shaman, or medicine man, sings of foreboding and prophecy. The War Chief, who commands in war, sings that war is the only way to life. This Red Cloud denies, affirming that the way of life is the way of the acorn-planter, and that whoso slays one man slays the planter of many acorns. Red Cloud wins the Shaman and the people to his contention.

After the passage of thousands of years, again in the grove appear the Nishinam. In Red Cloud, the War Chief, the Shaman, and the Dew-Woman are repeated the eternal figures of the philosopher, the soldier, the priest, and the woman — types ever realizing themselves afresh in the social adventures of man. Red Cloud recognizes the wrecked explorers as planters and life-makers, and is for treating them with kindness. But the War Chief and the idea of war are dominant The Shaman joins with the war party, and is privy to the massacre of the explorers.

A hundred years pass, when, on their seasonal migration, the Nishinam camp for the night in the grove. They still live, and the war formula for life seems vindicated, despite the imminence of the superior life-makers, the whites, who are flooding into California from north, south, east, and west — the English, the Americans, the Spaniards, and the Russians. The massacre by the white men follows, and Red Cloud, dying, recognizes the white men as brother acorn-planters, the possessors of the superior life-formula of which he had always been a protagonist.

In the Epilogue, or Apotheosis, occur the celebration of the death of war and the triumph of the acorn-planters.

PROLOGUE

Time. *In the morning of the world.*

Scene. *A forest hillside where great trees stand with wide spaces between. A stream flows from a spring that bursts out of the hillside. It is a place of lush ferns and brakes, also, of thickets of such shrubs as inhabit a redwood forest floor. At the left, in the open level space at the foot of the hillside, extending out of sight among the trees, is visible a portion of a Nishinam Indian camp. It is a temporary camp for the night. Small cooking fires smoulder. Standing about are withe-woven baskets for the carrying of supplies and dunnage. Spears and bows and quivers of arrows lie about. Boys drag in dry branches for firewood. Young women fill gourds with water from the stream and proceed about their camp tasks. A number of older women are pounding acorns in stone mortars with stone pestles. An old man and a Shaman, or priest, look expectantly up the hillside. All wear moccasins and are skin-clad, primitive, in their garmenting. Neither iron nor woven cloth occurs in the weapons and gear.*

ACT I.

Shaman

(Looking up hillside.)

Red Cloud is late.

Old Man

(After inspection of hillside.)

He has chased the deer far. He is patient.

In the chase he is patient like an old man.

Shaman

His feet are as fleet as the deer's.

Old Man

(Nodding.)

And he is more patient than the deer.

Shaman

(Assertively, as if inculcating a lesson.)

He is a mighty chief.

Old Man

(Nodding.)

His father was a mighty chief. He is like to
his father.

Shaman

(More assertively.)

He is his father. It is so spoken. He is
his father's father. He is the first man, the
first Red Cloud, ever born, and born again, to
chiefship of his people.

Old Man

It is so spoken.

Shaman

His father was the Coyote. His mother was the Moon. And he was the first man.

Old Man

(Repeating.)

His father was the Coyote. His mother was the Moon. And he was the first man.

Shaman

He planted the first acorns, and he is very wise.

Old Man

(Repeating.)

He planted the first acorns, and he is very wise.

(Cries from the women and a turning of faces. Red Cloud appears among his hunters descending the hillside. All carry spears, and bows and arrows. Some carry rabbits and other small game. Several carry deer)

PLAINT OF THE NISHINAM

Red Cloud, the meat-bringer!
Red Cloud, the acorn-planter!
Red Cloud, first man of the Nishinam!
Thy people hunger.
Far have they fared.
Hard has the way been.
Day long they sought,
High in the mountains,
Deep in the pools,
Wide ‘mong the grasses,
In the bushes, and tree-tops,
Under the earth and flat stones.

Few are the acorns,
Past is the time for berries,
Fled are the fishes, the prawns and the grasshoppers,
Blown far are the grass-seeds,
Flown far are the young birds,
Old are the roots and withered.
Built are the fires for the meat.
Laid are the boughs for sleep,
Yet thy people cannot sleep.
Red Cloud, thy people hunger.

Red Cloud
(Still descending.)
Good hunting! Good hunting!

Hunters
Good hunting! Good hunting!

(Completing the descent, Red Cloud
motions to the meat-bearers. They throw
down their burdens before the women,
who greedily inspect the spoils.)
MEAT SONG OF THE NISHINAM

Meat that is good to eat,
Tender for old teeth,
Gristle for young teeth,
Big deer and fat deer,
Lean meat and fat meat,
Haunch-meat and knuckle-bone,
Liver and heart.
Food for the old men,
Life for all men,
For women and babes.
Easement of hunger-pangs,
Sorrow destroying,
Laughter provoking,

Joy invoking,
In the smell of its smoking
And its sweet in the mouth.

(The younger women take charge of the meat,
and the older women resume their acorn-pounding.)

(Red Cloud approaches the acorn-pounders
and watches them with pleasure.
All group about him, the Shaman to the
fore, and hang upon his every action, his
every utterance.)

Red Cloud

The heart of the acorn is good?

First Old Woman

(Nodding.)

It is good food.

Red Cloud

When you have pounded and winnowed and washed away the bitter.

Second Old Woman

As thou taught'st us, Red Cloud, when the world was very young and thou wast the first man.

Red Cloud

It is a fat food. It makes life, and life is good.

Shaman

It was thou, Red Cloud, gathering the acorns and teaching the storing, who gavest life to the Nishinam in the lean years aforetime, when the tribes not of the Nishinam passed like the dew of the morning.

(He nods a signal to the Old Man.)

Old Man

In the famine in the old time,
When the old man was a young man,
When the heavens ceased from raining,
When the grasslands parched and withered,
When the fishes left the river,
And the wild meat died of sickness,
In the tribes that knew not acorns,
All their women went dry-breasted,
All their younglings chewed the deer-hides,
All their old men sighed and perished,
And the young men died beside them,
Till they died by tribe and totem,
And o'er all was death upon them.
Yet the Nishinam unvanquished,
Did not perish by the famine.
Oh, the acorns Red Cloud gave them!
Oh, the acorns Red Cloud taught them
How to store in willow baskets
'Gainst the time and need of famine!

Shaman

(Who, throughout the Old Man's recital, has nodded approbation, turning to Red Cloud.)

Sing to thy people, Red Cloud, the song of life which is the song of the acorn.

Red Cloud

(Making ready to begin)

And which is the song of woman, O Shaman.

Shaman

(Hushing the people to listen, solemnly)
He sings with his father’s lips, and with the
lips of his father’s fathers to the beginning of time
and men.
SONG OF THE FIRST MAN

Red Cloud
I am Red Cloud,
The first man of the Nishinam.
My father was the Coyote.
My mother was the Moon.
The Coyote danced with the stars,
And wedded the Moon on a mid-summer night
The Coyote is very wise,
The Moon is very old,
Mine is his wisdom,
Mine is her age.
I am the first man.
I am the life-maker and the father of life.
I am the fire-bringer.
The Nishinam were the first men,
And they were without fire,
And knew the bite of the frost of bitter nights.
The panther stole the fire from the East,
The fox stole the fire from the panther,
The ground squirrel stole the fire from the fox,
And I, Red Cloud, stole the fire from the ground squirrel.
I, Red Cloud, stole the fire for the Nishinam,
And hid it in the heart of the wood.
To this day is the fire there in the heart of the wood.
I am the Acorn-Planter.
I brought down the acorns from heaven.
I planted the short acorns in the valley.
I planted the long acorns in the valley.
I planted the black-oak acorns that sprout, that sprout!
I planted the *sho-kum* and all the roots of the ground.
I planted the oat and the barley, the beaver-tail grass-nut,

The tar-weed and crow-foot, rock lettuce and ground lettuce,
And I taught the virtue of clover in the season of blossom,
The yellow-flowered clover, ball-rolled in its yellow dust.
I taught the cooking in baskets by hot stones from the fire,
Took the bite from the buckeye and soap-root
By ground-roasting and washing in the sweetness of water,
And of the manzanita the berry I made into flour,
Taught the way of its cooking with hot stones in sand pools,
And the way of its eating with the knobbed tail of the deer.
Taught I likewise the gathering and storing,
The parching and pounding
Of the seeds from the grasses and grass-roots;
And taught I the planting of seeds in the Nishinam home-camps,
In the Nishinam hills and their valleys,
In the due times and seasons,
To sprout in the spring rains and grow ripe in the sun.

Shaman

Hail, Red Cloud, the first man!

The People

Hail, Red Cloud, the first man!

Shaman

Who showedst us the way of our feet in the world!

The People

Who showedst us the way of our feet in the world!

Shaman

Who showedst us the way of our food in the world!

The People

Who showedst us the way of our food in the world!

Shaman

Who showedst us the way of our hearts in the world!

The People

Who showedst us the way of our hearts in the world!

Shaman

Who gavest us the law of family!

The People

Who gavest us the law of family!

Shaman

The law of tribe!

The People

The law of tribe!

Shaman

The law of totem!

The People

The law of totem!

Shaman

And madest us strong in the world among men!

The People

And madest us strong in the world among men!

Red Cloud

Life is good, O Shaman, and I have sung but
half its song. Acorns are good. So is woman
good. Strength is good. Beauty is good. So is
kindness good. Yet are all these things without
power except for woman. And by these things
woman makes strong men, and strong men make
for life, ever for more life.

War Chief

(With gesture of interruption that causes remonstrance from the Shaman but which Red Cloud acknowledges.)

I care not for beauty. I desire strength in battle and wind in the chase that I may kill my enemy and run down my meat.

Red Cloud

Well spoken, O War Chief. By voices in council we learn our minds, and that, too, is strength. Also, is it kindness. For kindness and strength and beauty are one. The eagle in the high blue of the sky is beautiful. The salmon leaping the white water in the sunlight is beautiful. The young man fastest of foot in the race is beautiful. And because they fly well, and leap well, and run well, are they beautiful. Beauty must beget beauty. The ring-tail cat begets the ring-tail cat, the dove the dove. Never does the dove beget the ring-tail cat. Hearts must be kind. The little turtle is not kind. That is why it is the little turtle. It lays its eggs in the sun-warm sand and forgets its young forever. And the little turtle is forever the Kttle turtle. But we are not little turtles, because we are kind. We do not leave our young to the sun in the sand. Our women keep our young warm under their hearts, and, after, they keep them warm with deer-skin and campfire. Because we are kind we are men and not little turtles, and that is why we eat the little turtle that is not strong because it is not kind.

War Chief

(Gesturing to be heard.)

The Modoc come against us in their strength. Often the Modoc come against us. We cannot be kind to the Modoc.

Red Cloud

That will come after. Kindness grows. First must we be kind to our own. After, long after, all men will be kind to all men, and all men will be very strong. The strength of the Nishinam is not the strength of its strongest fighter. It is the strength of all the Nishinam added together that makes the Nishinam strong. We talk, you and I, War Chief and First Man, because we are kind one to the other, and thus we add together our wisdom, and all the Nishinam are stronger because we have talked.

(A voice is heard singing. Red Cloud holds up his hand for silence.)

MATING SONG

Dew-Woman

In the morning by the river,
   In the evening at the fire,
In the night when all lay sleeping,
   Torn was I with life's desire.
There were stirrings 'neath my heart-beats
   Of the dreams that came to me;
In my ears were whispers, voices,
   Of the children yet to be.

Red Cloud

(As Red Cloud sings, Dew-Woman steals from behind a tree and approaches him.)

In the morning by the river

Saw I first my maid of dew,
Daughter of the dew and dawnlight,
Of the dawn and honey-dew.
She was laughter, she was sunlight,
Woman, maid, and mate, and wife;
She was sparkle, she was gladness,
She was all the song of life.

Dew-Woman

In the night I built my fire,
Fire that maidens foster when
In the ripe of mating season
Each builds for her man of men.

Red Cloud

In the night I sought her, proved her,
Found her ease, content, and rest,
After day of toil and struggle
Man’s reward on woman’s breast.

Dew-Woman

Came to me my mate and lover;
Kind the hands he laid on me;
Wooed me gently as a man may,
Father of the race to be.

Red Cloud

Soft her arms about me bound me,
First man of the Nishinam,
Arms as soft as dew and dawnlight,
Daughter of the Nishinam.

Red Cloud

She was life and she was woman!

Dew-Woman

He was life and he was man!

Red Cloud and Dew-Woman

(Arms about each other.)

In the dusk-time of our love-night,
   There beside the marriage fire,
Proved we all the sweets of living,
   In the arms of our desire.

War Chief

(Angrily.)

The councils of men are not the place for women.

Red Cloud

(Gently.)

As men grow kind and wise there will be women in the councils of men. As men grow their women must grow with them if they would continue to be the mothers of men.

War Chief

It is told of old time that there are women in the councils of the Sim. And is it not told that the Sun Man will destroy us?

Red Cloud

Then is the Sun Man the stronger; it may be because of his kindness and wiseness, and because of his women.

Young Brave

Is it told that the women of the Sun are good to the eye, soft to the arm, and a fire in the heart of man?

Shaman

(Holding up hand solemnly.)
It were well, lest the young do not forget, to
repeat the old word again.

War Chief
(Nodding confirmation.)
Here, where the tale is told.

(Pointing to the spring.)
Here, where the water burst from under the heel
of the Sun Man mounting into the sky.

(War Chief leads the way up the hillside
to the spring, and signals to the Old Man
to begin)

Old Man
When the world was in the making,
Here within the mighty forest,
Came the Sun Man every morning.
White and shining was the Sun Man,
Blue his eyes were as the sky-blue,
Bright his hair was as dry grass is,
Warm his eyes were as the sun is,
Fruit and flower were in his glances;
All he looked on grew and sprouted,
As these trees we see about us,
Mightiest trees in all the forest,
For the Sun Man looked upon them.

Where his glance fell grasses seeded,
Where his feet fell sprang upstarting —
Buckeye woods and hazel thickets,
Berry bushes, manzanita,
Till his pathway was a garden,
Flowing after like a river,
Laughing into bud and blossom.

There was never frost nor famine
And the Nishinam were happy,
Singing, dancing through the seasons,
Never cold and never hungered,
When the Sun Man lived among us.

But the foxes mean and cunning,
Hating Nishinam and all men,
Laid their snares within this forest,
Caught the Sun Man in the morning,
With their ropes of sinew caught him,
Bound him down to steal his wisdom
And become themselves bright Sun Men,
Warm of glance and fruitful-footed,
Masters of the frost and famine.

Swiftly the Coyote running
Came to aid the fallen Sun Man,
Swiftly killed the cunning foxes,
Swiftly cut the ropes of sinew,
Swiftly the Coyote freed him.

But the Sun Man in his anger,
Lightning flashing, thunder-throwing,
Loosed the frost and fanged the famine,
Thorned the bushes, pinched the berries,
Put the bitter in the buckeye,
Rocked the mountains to their summits,
Flung the hills into the valleys,
Sank the lakes and shoaled the rivers,
Poured the fresh sea in the salt sea,
Stamped his foot here in the forest,
Where the water burst from under
Heel that raised him into heaven —
Angry with the world forever
Rose the Sun Man into heaven.

Shaman

(Solemnly.)

I am the Shaman. I know what has gone before and what will come after. I have passed down through the gateway of death and talked with the dead. My eyes have looked upon the unseen things. My ears have heard the unspoken words. And now I shall tell you of the Sun Man in the days to come.

(Shaman stiffens suddenly with hideous facial distortions, with inturned eye-balls and loosened jaw. He waves his arms about, writhes and twists in torment, as if in epilepsy.)

(The Women break into a wailing, inarticulate chant, swaying their bodies to the accent. The men join them somewhat reluctantly, all save Red Cloud, who betrays vexation, and War Chief, who betrays truculence.)

(Shaman, leading the rising frenzy, with convulsive shiverings and tremblings tears of his skin garments so that he is quite naked save for a girdle of eagle-claws about his thighs. His long black hair flies about his face. With an abruptness that is startling, he ceases all movement and stands erect, rigid. This is greeted with a low moaning that slowly dies away.)

CHANT OF PROPHECY

Shaman

The Sun never grows cold.

The Sun Man is like the Sun.
His anger never grows cold.
The Sun Man will return.
The Sun Man will come back from the Sun.

People
The Sun Man will return.
The Sun Man will come back from the Sun.

Shaman
There is a sign.
As the water burst forth when he rose into the sky,
So will the water cease to flow when he returns from the sky.
The Sun Man is mighty.
In his eyes is blue fire.
In his hands he bears the thunder.
The lightnings are in his hair.

People
In his hands he bears the thunder.
The lightnings are in his hair.

Shaman
There is a sign.
The Sun Man is white.
His skin is white like the sun.
His hair is bright like the sunlight.’
His eyes are blue like the sky.

People
There is a sign.
The Sun Man is white.

Shaman
The Sun Man is mighty.
He is the enemy of the Nishinam.
He will destroy the Nishinam.

People

He is the enemy of the Nishinam.

He will destroy the Nishinam.

Shaman

There is a sign.

The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.

People

There is a sign.

The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.

Shaman

In the day the Sun Man comes

The water from the spring will no longer flow.

And in that day he will destroy the Nishinam.

With the thunder will he destroy the Nishinam.

The Nishinam will be like last year's grasses.

The Nishinam will be like the smoke of last year's campfires.

The Nishinam will be less than the dreams that trouble the sleeper.

The Nishinam will be like the days no man remembers.

I am the Shaman.

I have spoken.

(The People set up a sad wailing.)

War Chief

(Striking his chest with his fist.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

(The People cease from their wailing and look to the War Chief with hopeful expectancy.)

War Chief

I am the War Chief. In war I command.

Nor the Shaman nor Red Cloud may say me nay
when in war I command. Let the Sun Man
come back. I am not afraid. If the foxes snared
him with ropes, then can I slay him with spear-
thrust and war-club. I am the War Chief. In
war I command.

(The People greet War Chief's pronouncement
with warlike cries of approval.)

Red Cloud
The foxes are cunning. If they snared the Sun Man
With ropes of sinew, then let us be cunning
And snare him with ropes of kindness.
In kindness, O War Chief, is strength, much strength.

Shaman
Red Cloud speaks true. In kindness is strength.

War Chief
I am the War Chief.

Shaman
You cannot slay the Sun Man.

War Chief
I am the War Chief.

Shaman
The Sun Man fights with the thunder in his hand.

War Chief
I am the War Chief.

Red Cloud
(As he speaks the People are visibly wan by
his argument.)

You speak true, O War Chief. In war you

command. You are strong, most strong. You

have slain the Modoc. You have slain the Napa.

You have slain the Clam-Eaters of the big water

till the last one is not. Yet you have not slain

all the foxes. The foxes cannot fight, yet are

they stronger than you because you cannot slay

them. The foxes are foxes, but we are men.

When the Sun Man comes we will not be cunning

like the foxes. We will be kind. Kindness and

love will we give to the Sun Man, so that he will

be our friend. Then will he melt the frost, pull

the teeth of famine, give us back our rivers of

deep water, our lakes of sweet water, take the

bitter from the buckeye, and in all ways make

the world the good world it was before he left us.

People
Hail, Red Cloud, the first man!
Hail, Red Cloud, the Acorn-Planter!
Who showed us the way of our feet in the world!
Who showed us the way of our food in the world!
Who showed us the way of our hearts in the world!
Who gave us the law of family,
The law of tribe,
The law of totem,
And made us strong in the world among men!

(While the People sing the hillside slowly

grows dark.)

ACT I

(Ten thousand years have passed, and it is

the time of the early voyaging from Europe

to the waters of the Pacific, when the

deserted hillside is again revealed as the

moon rises. The stream no longer flows
from the spring. Since the grove is used
only as a camp for the night when the
Nishinam are on their seasonal migration
there are no signs of previous camps.)

(Enter from right, at end of day's march,
women, old men, and Shaman, the
women bending under their burdens of
camp gear and dunnage)

(Enter from left youths carrying fish-spears
and large fish)

(Appear, coming down the hillside, Red
Cloud and the hunters, many carrying
meat.)

(The various repeated characters, despite
differences of skin garmenting and decoration,
resemble their prototypes of the prologue.)

Red Cloud
Good hunting! Good hunting!

Hunters
Good hunting! Good hunting!

Youths
Good fishing! Good fishing!

Women
Good berries! Good acorns!

(The women and youths and hunters, as they
reach the campsite, begin throwing down
their burdens)

Dew-Woman

(Discovering the dry spring.)

The water no longer flows!

Shaman

(Stilling the excitement that is immediate
on the discovery.)

The word of old time that has come down to
us from all the Shamans who have gone before!
The Sun Man has come back from the Sun.

Dew-Woman

(Looking to Red Cloud.)

Let Red Cloud speak. Since the morning of
the world has Red Cloud ever been reborn with
the ancient wisdom to guide us.

War Chief

Save in war. In war I command.

(He picks out hunters by name.)

Deer Foot... Elk Man... Antelope. Run
through the forest, climb the hill-tops, seek down
the valleys, for aught you may find of this Sun Man.

(At a wave of the War Chief's hand the
three hunters depart in different directions.)

Dew-Woman

Let Red Cloud speak his mind.

Red Cloud

(Quietly)

Last night the earth shook and there was a
roaring in the air. Often have I seen, when the
earth shakes and there is a roaring, that springs

in some places dry up, and that in other places where were no springs, springs burst forth.

Shaman

There is a sign.
The Shamans told it of old.
The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.

People

There is a sign.
The Sun Man will bear the thunder in his hand.

Shaman

The roaring in the air was the thunder of the Sun Man's return. Now will he destroy the Nishinam. Such is the word.

War Chief

Hoh! Hoh!

(From right Deer Foot runs in.)

Deer Foot

(Breathless.)

They come! He comes!

War Chief

Who comes?

Deer Foot

The Sun Men. The Sun Man. He is their chief. He marches before them. And he is white.

People

There is a sign.
The Sun Man is white.

Red Cloud

Carries he the thunder in his hand?

Deer Foot

(Puzzled)

He looks hungry.

War Chief

Hoh! Hoh! The Sun Man is hungry. It will be easy to kill a hungry Sun Man.

Red Cloud

It would be easy to be kind to a hungry Sun Man and give him food. We have much. The hunting has been good.

War Chief

Better to kill the Sun Man.

(He turns upon People, indicating most commands in gestures as he prepares the ambush, making women and boys conceal all the camp outfit and game, and disposing the armed hunters among the ferns and behind trees till all are hidden.)

Elk Man and Antelope

(Running down hillside)

The Sun Man comes.

(War Chief sends them to hiding places)

War Chief

(Preparing himself to hide)

You have not hidden, O Red Cloud.

Red Cloud

(Stepping into shadow of big tree where he remains inconspicuous though dimly visible)

I would see this Sun Man and talk with him.

(The sound of singing is heard, and War Chief conceals himself)

(Sun Man, with handful of followers, singing to ease the tedium of the march, enter from right. They are patently survivors of a wrecked exploring skip, making their way inland)

Sun Men

We sailed three hundred strong
   For the far Barbaree;
Our voyage has been most long
   For the far Barbaree;
      So — it's a long pull,
      Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.

We sailed the oceans wide
   For the coast of Barbaree;
And left our ship a sinking
   On the coast of Barbaree;
      So — it's a long pull,
      Give a strong pull,
   For the far Barbaree.

Our ship went fast a-lee
   On the rocks of Barbaree;
That's why we quit the sea
   On the rocks of Barbaree.
      So — it's a long pull,

Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.

We quit the bitter seas
On the coast of Barbaree;
To seek the savag-ees
Of the far Barbaree.
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.

Our feet are lame and sore
In the far Barbaree;
From treading of the shore
Of the far Barbaree.
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.

A weary brood are we
In the far Barbaree;
Sea cunies of the sea
In the far Barbaree.
So — it's a long pull,
Give a strong pull,
For the far Barbaree.

Sun Man

(Who alone carries a musket, and who is evidently captain of the wrecked company)

No farther can we go this night. Mayhap to-morrow we may find the savages and food.

(He glances about.)

This far world grows noble trees. We shall sleep as in a temple.

First Sea Cuny

(Espying Red Cloud, and pointing.)

Look, Captain!

Sun Man

(Making the universal peace-sign, arm
raised and out, palm-outward.)
Who are you? Speak. We come in peace.
We kindness seek.

Red Cloud

(Advancing out of the shadow.)

Whence do you come?

Sun Man

From the great sea.

Red Cloud

I do not understand. No one journeys
on the great sea.

Sun Man

We have journeyed many moons.

Red Cloud

Have you come from the sun?

Sun Man

God wot! We have journeyed across the
sun, high and low in the sky, and over the sun
and under the sun the round world ‘round.

Red Cloud

(With conviction.)

You come from the Sun. Your hair is like
the summer sunburnt grasses. Your eyes are
blue. Your skin is white.

(With absolute conviction.)

You are the Sun Man.

Sun Man

(With a shrug of shoulders.)

Have it so. I come from the Sun. I am the Sun Man.

Red Cloud

Do you carry the thunder in your hand?

Sun Man

(Nonplussed for the moment, glances at his musket, then smiles.)

Yes, I carry the thunder in my hand.

(War Chief and the Hunters leap suddenly from ambush. Sun Man warns Sea Cunies not to resist. War Chief captures and holds Sun Man, and Sea Cunies are similarly captured and held. Women and boys appear, and examine prisoners curiously.)

War Chief

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh! I have captured the Sun Man! Like the foxes, I have captured the Sun Man! — Deer Foot! Elk Man! The foxes held the Sun Man. I now hold the Sun Man. Then can you hold the Sun Man.

(Deer Foot and Elk Man seize the Sun Man.)

Red Cloud

(To Shaman.)

He said he came in kindness.

War Chief

(Sneering.)

In kindness, with the thunder in his hand.

Shaman

(Deflected to partisanship of War Chief
by War Chief's success.)

By his own lips has he said it, with the thunder
in his hand.

War Chief

You are the Sun Man.

Sun Man

(Shrugging shoulders.)

My names are many as the stars. Call me
White Man.

Red Cloud

I am Red Cloud, the first man.

Sun Man

Then am I Adam, the first man and your
brother.

(Glancing about.)

And this is Eden, to look upon it.

Red Cloud

My father was the Coyote.

Sun Man

My father was Jehovah.

Red Cloud

I am the Fire-Bringer. I stole the fire from the ground squirrel and hid it in the heart of the wood.

Sun Man

Then am I Prometheus, your brother. I stole the fire from heaven and hid it in the heart of the wood.

Red Cloud

I am the Acorn-Planter. I am the Food-Bringer, the Life-Maker. I make food for more life, ever more life.

Sun Man

Then am I truly your brother. Life-Maker am I, tilling the soil in the sweat of my brow from the beginning of time, planting all manner of good seeds for the harvest.

(Looking sharply at Red Cloud's skin garments.)

Also am I the Weaver and Cloth-Maker.

(Holding out arm so that Red Cloud may examine the cloth of the coat)

From the hair of the goat and the wool of the sheep, and from beaten and spun grasses, do I make the cloth to keep man warm.

Shaman

(Breaking in boastfully.)

I am the Shaman. I know all secret things.

Sun Man

I know my pathway under the sun over all the seas, and I know the secrets of the stars that show me my path where no path is. I know when the Wolf of Darkness shall eat the moon.

(Pointing toward moon.)
On this night shall the Wolf of Darkness eat the moon.

(He turns suddenly to Red Cloud, drawing sheath-knife and passing it to him.)

More, O First Man and Acorn-Planter. I am the Iron-Maker. Behold!

(Red Cloud examines knife, understands immediately its virtue, cuts easily a strip of skin from his skin garment, and is overcome with the wonder of the knife.)

War Chief
(Exhibiting a long bow.)
I am the War Chief. No man, save me, has strength to bend this bow. I can slay farther than any man.

(A huge bear has come out among the bushes far up the hillside)

Sun Man
I, too, am War Chief over men, and I can slay farther than you.

War Chief
Hoh! Hoh!

Sun Man

(Pointing to bear)

Can you slay that with your strong bow?

War Chief

(Dubiously)

It is a far shot. Too far. No man can slay
a great bear so far.

(Sun Man, shaking off from his arms the
hands of Deer Foot and Elk Man,
aims musket and fires. The bear falls,
and the Nishinam betray astonishment
and awe)

(At a quick signal from War Chief,
Sun Man is again seized. War Chief
takes away musket and examines it.)

Shaman

There is a sign.

People

There is a sign.
He carries the thunder in his hand.
He slays with the thunder in his hand.
He is the enemy of the Nishinam.
He will destroy the Nishinam.

Shaman

There is a sign.

People

There is a sign.
In the day the Sun Man comes,
The waters from the spring will no longer flow,
And in that day will he destroy the Nishinam.

War Chief

(Exhibiting musket.)

Hoh! Hoh! I have taken the Sun Man's thunder.

Shaman

Now shall the Sun Man die that the Nishinam may live.

Red Cloud

He is our brother. He, too, is an acorn-planter. He has spoken.

Shaman

He is the Sun Man, and he is our eternal enemy. He shall die.

War Chief

In war I command.

(To Hunters.)

Tie their feet with stout thongs that they may not run. And then make ready with bow and arrow to do the deed.

(Hunters obey, urging and thrusting the Sea Cunies into a compact group behind the Sun Man.)

Red Cloud

Shaman I am not.
I know not the secret things.
I say the things I know.
When you plant kindness you harvest kindness.
When you plant blood you harvest blood.
He who plants one acorn makes way for life.
He who slays one man slays the planter of a

thousand acorns.

Shaman

Shaman I am.
I see the dark future.
I see the Sun Man's death,
The journey he must take
Through thick and endless forest
Where lost souls wander howling
A thousand moons of moons.

People

Through thick and endless forest
Where lost souls wander howling
A thousand moons of moons.

(War Chief arranges Hunters with their bows and arrows for the killing.)

Sun Man

(To Red Cloud.)

You will slay us?

Red Cloud

(Indicating War Chief.)

In war he commands.

Sun Man

(Addressing the Nishinam)

Nor am I a Shaman. But I will tell you true things to be. Our brothers are acorn-planters, cloth-weavers, iron-workers. Our brothers are life-makers and masters of life. Many are our brothers and strong. They will come after us. Your First Man has spoken true words. When you plant blood you harvest blood. Our brothers will come to the harvest with the thunder

in their hands. There is a sign. This night,
and soon, will the Wolf of Darkness eat the
moon. And by that sign will our brothers come
on the trail we have broken.

(As final preparation for the killing is
completed, and as Hunters are arranged
with their bows and arrows,
Sun Man sings.)

Sun Man
Our brothers will come after,
  On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
  With the thunder in their hands.

Sun Men
    Loud will be the weeping,
    Red will be the reaping,
    High will be the heaping
  Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man
Givers of law, our brothers,
  This is the law they say:
Who takes the life of a brother
  Ten of the slayers shall pay.

Sun Men
Our brothers will come after,
  On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
  With the thunder in their hands.
    Loud will be the weeping,
    Red will be the reaping,
    High will be the heaping
  Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man
Our brothers will come after
   By the courses that we lay;
Many and strong our brothers,
   Masters of life are they.

Sun Men
Our brothers will come after
   On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
   With the thunder in their hands.
      Loud will be the weeping,
      Red will be the reaping,
      High will be the heaping
   Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man
Plowers of land, our brothers,
   Of the hills and pleasant leas;
Under the sun our brothers
   With their keels will plow the seas.

Sun Men
Our brothers will come after,
   On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
   With the thunder in their hands.
      Loud will be the weeping,
      Red will be the reaping,
      High will be the heaping
   Of the slain their law commands.

Sun Man
Mighty men are our brothers,
   Quick to forgive and to wrath,
Sailing the seas, our brothers

  Will follow us on our path.

Sun Men

Our brothers will come after,
  On our trail to farthest lands;
Our brothers will come after
  With the thunder in their hands.
    Loud will be the weeping,
    Red will be the reaping,
    High will be the heaping
  Of the slain their law commands.

(At signal from War Chief the arrows are discharged, and repeatedly discharged. The Sun Men fall. The War Chief himself kills the Sun Man.)

(In what follows, Red Cloud and Dew-Woman stand aside, taking no part. Red Cloud is depressed, and at the same time is overcome with the wonder of the knife which he still holds.)

War Chief

(Brandishing musket and drifting stiff-legged, as he sings, into the beginning of a war dance of victory.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
I have slain the Sun Man!
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
I hold his thunder in my hand!
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
Greatest of War Chiefs am I!
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
I have slain the Sun Man!

(The dance grows wilder.)

(After a time the hillside begins to darken)

Dew-Woman

(Pointing to the moon entering eclipse)

Lo! The Wolf of Darkness eats the Moon!

(In consternation the dance is broken off
for the moment)

Shaman

(Reassuringly)

It is a sign.

The Sun Man is dead.

War Chief

(Recovering courage and resuming dance.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

The Sun Man is dead!

People

(Resuming dance.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

The Sun Man is dead!

(As darkness increases the dance grows
into a saturnalia, until complete darkness
settles down and hides the hillside.)

ACT II

(A hundred years have passed, when the hillside and the Nishinam in their temporary camp are revealed. The spring is flowing, and Women are filling gourds with water. Red Cloud and Dew-Woman stand apart from their people.)

Shaman
(Pointing.)
There is a sign.
The spring lives.
The water flows from the spring
And all is well with the Nishinam.

People
There is a sign.
The spring lives.
The water flows from the spring.

War Chief
(Boastingly.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
All is well with the Nishinam.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
It is I who have made all well with the Nishinam.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

I led our young men against the Napa.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
We left no man living of the camp.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

Shaman
Great is our War Chief!
Good is war!

No more will the Napa hunt our meat.
No more will the Napa pick our berries.
No more will the Napa catch our fish.

People
No more will the Napa hunt our meat.
No more will the Napa pick our berries.
No more will the Napa catch our fish.

War Chief
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The War Chiefs before me made all well with
the Nishinam.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The War Chief of long ago slew the Sun Man.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man said his brothers would come after.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man lied.

People
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man lied.
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man lied.

Shaman
(Derisively.)
Red Cloud is sick. He lives in dreams. Ever
he dreams of the wonders of the Sun Man.

Red Cloud
The Sun Man was strong. The Sun Man was
a life-maker. The Sun Man planted acorns,
and cut quickly with a knife not of bone nor
stone, and of grasses and hides made cunning
cloth that is better than all grasses and hides.

— Old Man, where is the cunning cloth that is
better than all grasses and hides?

Old Man
(Fumbling in his skin pouch for the doth.)
In the many moons aforetime,
Hundred moons and many hundred,
When the old man was the young man,
When the young man was the youngling,
Dragging branches for the campfire,
Stealing suet from the bear-meat,
Cause of trouble to his mother,
Came the Sun Man in the night-time.
I alone of all the Nishinam
Live to-day to tell the story;
I alone of all the Nishinam
Saw the Sun Man come among us,
Heard the Sun Man and his Sun Men
Sing their death-song here among us
Ere they died beneath our arrows,
War Chief’s arrows sharp and feathered —

War Chief
(Interrupting braggartly.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!

Old Man
(Producing cloth.)
And the Sun Man and his Sun Men
Wore nor hair nor hide nor birdskin.
Cloth they wore from beaten grasses
Woven like our willow baskets,
Willow-woven acorn baskets
Women make in acorn season.

*(Old Man hands piece of cloth to Red
Cloud.)*

Red Cloud

(Admiring cloth.)

The Sun Man was an acorn-planter, and we killed the Sun Man. We were not kind. We made a blood-debt. Blood-debts are not good.

Shaman

The Sun Man lied. His brothers did not come after. There is no blood-debt when there is no one to make us pay.

Red Cloud

He who plants acorns reaps food, and food is life. He who sows war reaps war, and war is death.

People

(Encouraged by Shaman and War Chief
to drown out Red Cloud's voice.)
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man is dead!
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
The Sun Man and his Sun Men are dead!

Red Cloud

(Shaking his head.)

His brothers of the Sun are coming after.
I have reports.

(Red Cloud beckons one after another of the young hunters to speak)

First Hunter

To the south, not far, I wandered and lived with the Petaluma. With my eyes I did not see, but it was told me by those whose eyes had seen, that still to the south, not far, were many

Sun Men — war chiefs who carry the thunder in their hands; cloth-makers and weavers of cloth like to that in Red Cloud’s hand; acorn-planters who plant all manner of strange seeds that ripen to rich harvests of food that is good. And there had been trouble. The Petaluma had killed Sun Men, and many Petaluma had the Sun Men killed.

Second Hunter

To the east, not far, I wandered and lived with the Solano. With my own eyes I did not see, but it was told me by those whose eyes had seen, that still to the east, not far, and just beyond the lands of the Tule tribes, were many Sun Men — war chiefs and cloth-makers and acorn-planters. And there had been trouble. The Solano had killed Sun Men, and many Solano had the Sun Men killed.

Third Hunter

To the north, and far, I wandered and lived with the Klamath. With my own eyes I did not see, but it was told me by those whose eyes had seen, that still to the north, and far, were many Sun Men — war chiefs and cloth-makers and acorn-planters. And there had been trouble. The Klamath had killed Sun Men, and many Klamath had the Sun Men killed.

Fourth Hunter

To the west, not far, three days gone I wandered, where, from the mountain, I looked down upon the great sea. With my own eyes I saw. It was like a great bird that swam upon the water. It had great wings like to our great trees here. And on its back I saw men, many men, and they were Sun Men. With my own eyes I saw.

Red Cloud

We shall be kind to the Sun Men when they come among us.

War Chief

(Dancing stiff-legged.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
Let the Sun Men come!
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
We will kill the Sun Men when they come!

People

(As they join in the war dance.)

Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
Let the Sun Men come!
Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!
We will kill the Sun Men when they come.

(The dance grows wilder, the Shaman and War Chief encouraging it, while Red Cloud and Dew-Woman stand sadly at a distance.)

(Rifle shots ring out from every side. Up the hillside appear Sun Men firing rifles. The Nishinam reel to death from their dancing.)

(Red Cloud shields Dew-Woman with one arm about her, and with the other arm makes the peace-sign)

(The massacre is complete, Dew-Woman and Red Cloud being the last to fall. Red Cloud, wounded, the sole survivor,

rests on his elbow and watches the Sun
Men assemble about their leader)

(The Sun Men are the type of pioneer Americans who, even before the discovery of gold, were already drifting across the Sierras and down into Oregon and California with their oxen and great wagons. With here and there a Rocky Mountain trapper or a buckskin-clad scout of the Kit Carson type, in the main they are backwoods farmers. All carry the long rifle of the period.)

(The Sun Man is buckskin-clad, with long blond hair sweeping his shoulders.)

Sun Men
(Led by Sun Man.)
We crossed the Western Ocean
   Three hundred years ago,
We cleared New England's forests
   Three hundred years ago.
      Blow high, blow low,
      Heigh hi, heigh ho,
We cleared New England's forests
   Three hundred years ago.

We climbed the Alleghanies
   Two hundred years ago,
We reached the Susquehanna
   Two hundred years ago.
      Blow high, blow low,
      Heigh hi, heigh ho,
We reached the Susquehanna
   Two hundred years ago.

We crossed the Mississippi
   One hundred years ago,
And glimpsed the Rocky Mountains
   One hundred years ago.
      Blow high, blow low,
      Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And glimpsed the Rocky Mountains
   One hundred years ago.

We passed the Rocky Mountains
   A year or so ago,
And crossed the salty deserts
   A year or so ago.
      Blow high, blow low,
      Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And crossed the salty deserts
   A year or so ago.

We topped the high Sierras
   But a few days ago,
And saw great California
   But a few days ago.
      Blow high, blow low,
      Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And saw great California
   But a few days ago.

We crossed Sonoma's mountains
   An hour or so ago,
And found this mighty forest
   An hour or so ago.
      Blow high, blow low,
      Heigh hi, heigh ho,
And found this mighty forest
   An hour or so ago.

Sun Man

(Glancing about at the slain and at the giant forest.)
Good the day, good the deed, and good this California land.

Red Cloud
Not with these eyes, but with other eyes in my lives before, have I beheld you. You are the Sun Man.

(The attention of all is drawn to Red Cloud, and they group about him and the Sun Man.)

Sun Man
Call me White Man. Though in truth we follow the sun. All our lives have we followed the sunset sun, as our fathers followed it before us.

Red Cloud
And you slay us with the thunder in your hand. You slay us because we slew your brothers.

Sun Man
(Nodding to Red Cloud and addressing his own followers)
You see, it was no mistake. He confesses it. Other white men have they slain.

Red Cloud
There will come a day when men will not slay men and when all men will be brothers. And in that day all men will plant acorns.

Sun Man
You speak well, brother.

Red Cloud

Ever was I for peace, but in war I did not command.
Ever I sought the secrets of the growing
things, the times and seasons for planting. Ever
I planted acorns, making two black oak trees
grow where one grew before. And now all is
ended. Oh my black oak acorns! My black
oak acorns! Who will plant them now?

Sun Man

Be of good cheer. We, too, are planters.
Rich is your land here. Not from poor soil can
such trees sprout heavenward. We will plant
many seeds and grow mighty harvests.

Red Cloud

I planted the short acorns in the valley. I
planted the long acorns in the valley. I made
food for life.

Sun Man

You planted well, brother, but not well enough.
It is for that reason that you pass. Your fat
valley grows food but for a handful of men. We
shall plant your fat valley and grow food for ten
thousand men.

Red Cloud

Ever I counseled peace and planting.

Sun Man

Some day all men will counsel peace. No
man will slay his fellow. All men will plant.

Red Cloud

But before that day you will slay, as you have this day slain us?

Sun Man
You killed our brothers first. Blood-debts must be paid. It is man's way upon the earth. But more, O brother! We follow the sunset sun, and the way before us is red with war. The way behind us is white with peace. Ever, before us, we make room for life. Ever we slay the squalling crawling things of the wild. Ever we clear the land and destroy the weeds that block the way of life for the seeds we plant. We are many, and many are our brothers that come after along the way of peace we blaze. Where you make two black oaks grow in the place of one, we make an hundred. And where we make one grow, our brothers who come after make an hundred hundred.

Red Cloud
Truly are you the Sun Man. We knew about you of old time. Our old men knew and sang of you:

White and shining was the Sun Man,
Blue his eyes were as the sky-blue,
Bright his hair was as dry grass is,
Warm his eyes were as the sun is,
Fruit and flower were in his glances,
All he looked on grew and sprouted,
Where his glance fell grasses seeded,
Where his feet fell sprang upstarting
Buckeye woods and hazel thickets,
Berry bushes, manzanita,
Till his pathway was a garden,
Flowing after like a river
Laughing into bud and blossom.

SONG OF THE PIONEERS

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze.
   Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
      Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
   Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
      Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

Sun Man

We cleared New England's flinty slopes and plowed
Her rocky fields to fairness in the sun,
But fared we westward always for we sought
A land of golden richness and we knew
The land was waiting on the sunset trail.
Where we found forest we left fertile fields,
We bridled rivers wild to grind our corn,
The deer-paths turned to roadways at our heels,
Our axes felled the trees that bridged the streams,
And fenced the meadow pastures for our kine.

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
   Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
   Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
   Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
      Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

Sun Man

Beyond the Mississippi still we fared,
And rested weary by the River Platte
Until the young grass velveted the Plains,
Then yoked again our oxen to the trail
That ever led us west to farthest west.
Our women toiled beside us, and our young,

And helped to break the soil and plant the corn,
And fought beside us in the battle front
To fight of arrow, whine of bullet, when
We chained our circled wagons wheel to wheel.

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
   Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
      Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
   Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
      Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

Sun Man

The rivers sank beneath the desert sand,
The tall pines dwarfed to sage-brush, and the grass
Grew sparse and bitter in the alkali,
But fared we always toward the setting sun.
Our oxen famished till the last one died
And our great wagons rested in the snow.
We climbed the high Sierras and looked down
From winter bleak upon the land we sought,
A sunny land, a rich and fruitful land,
The warm and golden California land.

Sun Men

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
   Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
      Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
   Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

(The hillside begins to darken.)

Red Cloud

(Faintly.)

The darkness is upon me. You are acorn-
planters. You are my brothers. The darkness
is upon me and I pass.

Sun Men

(As total darkness descends.)

Our brothers follow on the trail we blaze;
  Where howled the wolf and ached the naked plain
    Spring bounteous harvests at our brothers' hands;
In place of war's alarums, peaceful days;
  Above the warrior's grave the golden grain
    Turns deserts grim and stark to laughing lands.

EPILOGUE

Red Cloud

Good tidings! Good tidings
To the sons of men!
Good tidings! Good tidings!
War is dead!

(Light begins to suffuse the hillside, revealing Red Cloud far up the hillside in a commanding position on an out-jut of rock.)

Lo, the New Day dawns,
The day of brotherhood,
The day when all men
Shall be kind to all men,
And all men shall be sowers of life.

(From every side a burst of voices.)

Hail to Red Cloud!
The Acorn-Planter!
The Life-Maker!
Hail! All hail!
The New Day dawns,
The day of brotherhood,
The day of man.

(A band of Warriors appears on hillside.)

Warriors
Hail, Red Cloud!
Mightier than all fighting men!
The slayer of War!
We are not sad.
Our eyes were blinded.
We did not know one acorn planted
Was mightier than an hundred fighting men.
We are not sad.
Our red work was when

The world was young and wild.
The world has grown wise.
No man slays his brother.
Our work is done.
In the light of the new day are we glad.

(A band of Pioneers and Sea Explorers
appears.)

Pioneers and Explorers
Hail, Red Cloud!
The first planter!
The Acorn-Planter!
We sang that War would die,
The anarch of our wild and wayward past.
We sang our brothers would come after,
Turning desert into garden,
Sowing friendship, and not hatred,
Planting seeds instead of dead men,
Growing men to manhood in the sun.

(A band of Husbandmen appear, bearing
fruit and sheaves of grain and corn.)

Husbandmen
Hail, Red Cloud!
The first planter!
The Acorn-Planter!
The harvests no more are red, but golden,
We are thy children.
We plant for increase,
Increase of wheat and corn,
Of fruit and flower,
Of sheep and kine,
Of love and lovers;
Rich are our harvests
And many are our lovers.

Red Cloud

Death is a stench in the nostrils,
Life is beauty and joy.
The planters are ever brothers.
Never are the warriors brothers;
Their ways are set apart,
Their hands raised each against each.
The planters' ways are the one way.
Ever they plant for life,
For life more abundant,
For beauty of head and hand,
For the voices of children playing,
And the laughter of maids in the twilight
And the lover's song in the gloom.

All Voices

Hail, Red Cloud!
The first planter!
The Acorn-Planter!
The maker of life!
Hail! All hail!
The New Day dawns,
The day of brotherhood,
The day of man!

THE END

A WICKED WOMAN

[Curtain rises on a conventional living room of a country house in California. It is the Hemingway house at Santa Clara. The room is remarkable for magnificent stone fireplace at rear centre. On either side of fireplace are generous, diamond-paned windows. Wide, curtained doorways to right and left. To left, front, table, with vase of flowers and chairs. To right, front, grand piano.]

[Curtain discovers LORETTA seated at piano, not playing, her back to it, facing NED BASHFORD, who is standing.]

LORETTA. [Petulantly, fanning herself with sheet of music.] No, I won't go fishing. It's too warm. Besides, the fish won't bite so early in the afternoon.

NED. Oh, come on. It's not warm at all. And anyway, we won't really fish. I want to tell you something.

LORETTA. [Still petulantly.] You are always wanting to tell me something.

NED. Yes, but only in fun. This is different. This is serious. Our . . . my happiness depends upon it.

LORETTA. [Speaking eagerly, no longer petulant, looking, serious and delighted, divining a proposal.] Then don't wait. Tell me right here.

NED. [Almost threateningly.] Shall I?

LORETTA. [Challenging.] Yes.

[He looks around apprehensively as though fearing interruption, clears his throat, takes resolution, also takes LORETTA's hand.]

[LORETTA is startled, timid, yet willing to hear, naïvely unable to conceal her love for him.]

NED. [Speaking softly.] Loretta . . . I, . . . ever since I met you I have —

[JACK HEMINGWAY appears in the doorway to the left, just entering.]

[NED suddenly drops LORETTA's hand. He shows exasperation.]

[LORETTA shows disappointment at interruption.]

NED. Confound it

LORETTA. [Shocked.] Ned! Why will you swear so?

NED. [Testily.] That isn't swearing.

LORETTA. What is it, pray?

NED. Displeasuring.

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Who is crossing over to right.] Squabbling again?

LORETTA. [Indignantly and with dignity.] No, we're not.

NED. [Gruffly.] What do you want now?

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Enthusiastically.] Come on fishing.

NED. [Snappily.] No. It's too warm.

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Resignedly, going out right.] You needn't take a fellow's head off.

LORETTA. I thought you wanted to go fishing.

NED. Not with Jack.

LORETTA. [Accusingly, fanning herself vigorously.] And you told me it wasn't warm at all.

NED. [Speaking softly.] That isn't what I wanted to tell you, Loretta. [He takes her hand.] Dear Loretta —

[Enter abruptly ALICE HEMINGWAY from right.]

[LORETTA sharply jerks her hand away, and looks put out.]

[NED tries not to look awkward.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Goodness! I thought you'd both gone fishing!

LORETTA. [Sweetly.] Is there anything you want, Alice?

NED. [Trying to be courteous.] Anything I can do?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Speaking quickly, and trying to withdraw.] No, no. I only came to see if the mail had arrived.

LORETTA AND NED

[Speaking together.] No, it hasn't arrived.

LORETTA. [Suddenly moving toward door to right.] I am going to see.

[NED looks at her reproachfully.]

[LORETTA looks back tantalisingly from doorway and disappears.]

[NED flings himself disgustedly into Morris chair.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Moving over and standing in front of him. Speaks accusingly.] What have you been saying to her?

NED. [Disgruntled.] Nothing.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Threateningly.] Now listen to me, Ned.

NED. [Earnestly.] On my word, Alice, I've been saying nothing to her.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With sudden change of front.] Then you ought to have been saying something to her.

NED. [Irritably. Getting chair for her, seating her, and seating himself again.] Look here, Alice, I know your game. You invited me down here to make a fool of me.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Nothing of the sort, sir. I asked you down to meet a sweet and unsullied girl — the sweetest, most innocent and ingenuous girl in the world.

NED. [Dryly.] That's what you said in your letter.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. And that's why you came. Jack had been trying for a year to get you to come. He did not know what kind of a letter to write.

NED. If you think I came because of a line in a letter about a girl I'd never seen —

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Mockingly.] The poor, jaded, world-worn man, who is no longer interested in women . . . and girls! The poor, tired pessimist who has lost all faith in the goodness of women —

NED. For which you are responsible.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Incredulously.] I?

NED. You are responsible. Why did you throw me over and marry Jack?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Do you want to know?

NED. Yes.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Judiciously.] First, because I did not love you. Second, because you did not love me. [She smiles at his protesting hand and at the protesting expression on his face.] And third, because there were just about twenty-seven other women at that time that you loved, or thought you loved. That is why I married Jack. And that is why you lost faith in the goodness of women. You have only yourself to blame.

NED. [Admiringly.] You talk so convincingly. I almost believe you as I listen to you. And yet I know all the time that you are like all the rest of your sex — faithless, unveracious, and . . .

[He glares at her, but does not proceed.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Go on. I'm not afraid.

NED. [With finality.] And immoral.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Oh! You wretch!

NED. [Gloatingly.] That's right. Get angry. You may break the furniture if you wish. I don't mind.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With sudden change of front, softly.] And how about Loretta?

[NED gasps and remains silent.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. The depths of duplicity that must lurk under that sweet and innocent exterior . . . according to your philosophy!

NED. [Earnestly.] Loretta is an exception, I confess. She is all that you said in your letter. She is a little fairy, an angel. I never dreamed of anything like her. It is remarkable to find such a woman in this age.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Encouragingly.] She is so naive.

NED. [Taking the bait.] Yes, isn't she? Her face and her tongue betray all her secrets.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Nodding her head.] Yes, I have noticed it.

NED. [Delightedly.] Have you?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. She cannot conceal anything. Do you know that she loves you?

NED. [Falling into the trap, eagerly.] Do you think so?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Laughing and rising.] And to think I once permitted you to make love to me for three weeks!

[NED rises.]

[MAID enters from left with letters, which she brings to ALICE HEMINGWAY.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Running over letters.] None for you, Ned. [Selecting two letters for herself.] Tradesmen. [Handing remainder of letters to MAID.] And three for Loretta. [Speaking to MAID.] Put them on the table, Josie.

[MAID puts letters on table to left front, and makes exit to left.]

NED. [With shade of jealousy.] Loretta seems to have quite a correspondence.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With a sigh.] Yes, as I used to when I was a girl.

NED. But hers are family letters.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Yes, I did not notice any from Billy.

NED. [Faintly.] Billy?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Nodding.] Of course she has told you about him?

NED. [Gasping.] She has had lovers . . . already?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. And why not? She is nineteen.

NED. [Haltingly.] This . . . er . . . this Billy . . . ?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Laughing and putting her hand reassuringly on his arm.] Now don't be alarmed, poor, tired philosopher. She doesn't love Billy at all.

[LORETTA enters from right.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [To LORETTA, nodding toward table.] Three letters for you.

LORETTA. [Delightedly.] Oh! Thank you.

[LORETTA trips swiftly across to table, looks at letters, sits down, opens letters, and begins to read.]

NED. [Suspiciously.] But Billy?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. I am afraid he loves her very hard. That is why she is here. They had to send her away. Billy was making life miserable for her. They were little children together — playmates. And Billy has been, well, importunate. And Loretta, poor child, does not know anything about marriage. That is all.

NED. [Reassured.] Oh, I see.

[ALICE HEMINGWAY starts slowly toward right exit, continuing conversation and accompanied by NED.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Calling to LORETTA.] Are you going fishing, Loretta?

[LORETTA looks up from letter and shakes head.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [To NED.] Then you're not, I suppose?

NED. No, it's too warm.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Then I know the place for you.

NED. Where?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Right here. [Looks significantly in direction of LORETTA.] Now is your opportunity to say what you ought to say.

[ALICE HEMINGWAY laughs teasingly and goes out to right.]

[NED hesitates, starts to follow her, looks at LORETTA, and stops. He twists his moustache and continues to look at her meditatively.]

[LORETTA is unaware of his presence and goes on reading. Finishes letter, folds it, replaces in envelope, looks up, and discovers NED.]

LORETTA. [Startled.] Oh! I thought you were gone.

NED. [Walking across to her.] I thought I'd stay and finish our conversation.

LORETTA. [Willingly, settling herself to listen.] Yes, you were going to . . . [Drops eyes and ceases talking.]

NED. [Taking her hand, tenderly.] I little dreamed when I came down here visiting that I was to meet my destiny in — [Abruptly releases LORETTA's hand.]

[MAID enters from left with tray.]

[LORETTA glances into tray and discovers that it is empty. She looks inquiringly at MAID.]

MAID. A gentleman to see you. He hasn't any card. He said for me to tell you that it was Billy.

LORETTA. [Starting, looking with dismay and appeal to NED.] Oh! . . . Ned!

NED [Gracefully and courteously, rising to his feet and preparing to go.] If you'll excuse me now, I'll wait till afterward to tell you what I wanted.

LORETTA. [In dismay.] What shall I do?

NED. [Pausing.] Don't you want to see him? [LORETTA shakes her head.] Then don't.

LORETTA. [Slowly.] I can't do that. We are old friends. We . . . were children together. [To the MAID.] Send him in. [To NED, who has started to go out toward right.] Don't go, Ned.

[MAID makes exit to left.]

NED. [Hesitating a moment.] I'll come back.

[NED makes exit to right.]

[LORETTA, left alone on stage, shows perturbation and dismay.]

[BILLY enters from left. Stands in doorway a moment. His shoes are dusty. He looks overheated. His eyes and face brighten at sight of LORETTA.]

BILLY. [Stepping forward, ardently.] Loretta!

LORETTA. [Not exactly enthusiastic in her reception, going slowly to meet him.] You never said you were coming.

[BILLY shows that he expects to kiss her, but she merely shakes his hand.]

BILLY. [Looking down at his very dusty shoes.] I walked from the station.

LORETTA. If you had let me know, the carriage would have been sent for you.

BILLY. [With expression of shrewdness.] If I had let you know, you wouldn't have let me come.

[BILLY looks around stage cautiously, then tries to kiss her.]

LORETTA. [Refusing to be kissed.] Won't you sit down?

BILLY. [Coaxingly.] Go on, just one. [LORETTA shakes head and holds him off.] Why not? We're engaged.

LORETTA. [With decision.] We're not. You know we're not. You know I broke it off the day before I came away. And . . . and . . . you'd better sit down.

[BILLY sits down on edge of chair. LORETTA seats herself by table. Billy, without rising, jerks his chair forward till they are facing each other, his knees touching hers. He yearns toward her. She moves back her chair slightly.]

BILLY. [With supreme confidence.] That's what I came to see you for — to get engaged over again.

[BILLY hudges chair forward and tries to take her hand.]

[LORETTA hudges her chair back.]

BILLY. [Drawing out large silver watch and looking at it.] Now look here, Loretta, I haven't any time to lose. I've got to leave for that train in ten minutes. And I want you to set the day.

LORETTA. But we're not engaged, Billy. So there can't be any setting of the day.

BILLY. [With confidence.] But we're going to be. [Suddenly breaking out.] Oh, Loretta, if you only knew how I've suffered. That first night I didn't sleep a wink. I haven't slept much ever since. [Hudges chair forward.] I walk the floor all night. [Solemnly.] Loretta, I don't eat enough to keep a canary bird alive. Loretta . . . [Hudges chair forward.]

LORETTA. [Hudging her chair back maternally.] Billy, what you need is a tonic. Have you seen Doctor Haskins?

BILLY. [Looking at watch and evincing signs of haste.] Loretta, when a girl kisses a man, it means she is going to marry him.

LORETTA. I know it, Billy. But . . . [She glances toward letters on table.] Captain Kitt doesn't want me to marry you. He says . . . [She takes letter and begins to open it.]

BILLY. Never mind what Captain Kitt says. He wants you to stay and be company for your sister. He doesn't want you to marry me because he knows she wants to keep you.

LORETTA. Daisy doesn't want to keep me. She wants nothing but my own happiness. She says — [She takes second letter from table and begins to open it.]

BILLY. Never mind what Daisy says —

LORETTA. [Taking third letter from table and beginning to open it.] And Martha says —

BILLY. [Angrily.] Darn Martha and the whole boiling of them!

LORETTA. [Reprovingly.] Oh, Billy!

BILLY. [Defensively.] Darn isn't swearing, and you know it isn't.

[There is an awkward pause. Billy has lost the thread of the conversation and has vacant expression.]

BILLY. [Suddenly recollecting.] Never mind Captain Kitt, and Daisy, and Martha, and what they want. The question is, what do you want?

LORETTA. [Appealingly.] Oh, Billy, I'm so unhappy.

BILLY. [Ignoring the appeal and pressing home the point.] The thing is, do you want to marry me? [He looks at his watch.] Just answer that.

LORETTA. Aren't you afraid you'll miss that train?

BILLY. Darn the train!

LORETTA. [Reprovingly.] Oh, Billy!

BILLY. [Most irascibly.] Darn isn't swearing. [Plaintively.] That's the way you always put me off. I didn't come all the way here for a train. I came for you. Now just answer me one thing. Do you want to marry me?

LORETTA. [Firmly.] No, I don't want to marry you.

BILLY. [With assurance.] But you've got to, just the same.

LORETTA. [With defiance.] Got to?

BILLY. [With unshaken assurance.] That's what I said — got to. And I'll see that you do.

LORETTA. [Blazing with anger.] I am no longer a child. You can't bully me, Billy Marsh!

BILLY. [Coolly.] I'm not trying to bully you. I'm trying to save your reputation.

LORETTA. [Faintly.] Reputation?

BILLY. [Nodding.] Yes, reputation. [He pauses for a moment, then speaks very solemnly.] Loretta, when a woman kisses a man, she's got to marry him.

LORETTA. [Appalled, faintly.] Got to?

BILLY. [Dogmatically.] It is the custom.

LORETTA. [Brokenly.] And when . . . a . . . a woman kisses a man and doesn't . . . marry him . . . ?

BILLY. Then there is a scandal. That's where all the scandals you see in the papers come from.

[BILLY looks at watch.]

[LORETTA in silent despair.]

LORETTA. [In abasement.] You are a good man, Billy. [Billy shows that he believes it.] And I am a very wicked woman.

BILLY. No, you're not, Loretta. You just didn't know.

LORETTA. [With a gleam of hope.] But you kissed me first.

BILLY. It doesn't matter. You let me kiss you.

LORETTA. [Hope dying down.] But not at first.

BILLY. But you did afterward and that's what counts. You let me you in the grape-arbour. You let me —

LORETTA. [With anguish] Don't! Don't!

BILLY. [Relentlessly.] — kiss you when you were playing the piano. You let me kiss you that day of the picnic. And I can't remember all the times you let me kiss you good night.

LORETTA. [Beginning to weep.] Not more than five.

BILLY. [With conviction.] Eight at least.

LORETTA. [Reproachfully, still weeping.] You told me it was all right.

BILLY. [Emphatically.] So it was all right — until you said you wouldn't marry me after all. Then it was a scandal — only no one knows it yet. If you marry me no one ever will know it. [Looks at watch.] I've got to go. [Stands up.] Where's my hat?

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] This is awful.

BILLY. [Approvingly.] You bet it's awful. And there's only one way out. [Looks anxiously about for hat.] What do you say?

LORETTA. [Brokenly.] I must think. I'll write to you. [Faintly.] The train? Your hat's in the hall.

BILLY. [Looks at watch, hastily tries to kiss her, succeeds only in shaking hand, starts across stage toward left.] All right. You write to me. Write to-morrow. [Stops for a moment in doorway and speaks very solemnly.] Remember, Loretta, there must be no scandal.

[Billy goes out.]

[LORETTA sits in chair quietly weeping. Slowly dries eyes, rises from chair, and stands, undecided as to what she will do next.]

[NED enters from right, peeping. Discovers that LORETTA is alone, and comes quietly across stage to her. When NED comes up to her she begins weeping again and tries to turn her head away. NED catches both her hands in his and compels her to look at him. She weeps harder.]

NED. [Putting one arm protectingly around her shoulder and drawing her toward him.] There, there, little one, don't cry.

LORETTA. [Turning her face to his shoulder like a tired child, sobbing.] Oh, Ned, if you only knew how wicked I am.

NED. [Smiling indulgently.] What is the matter, little one? Has your dearly beloved sister failed to write to you? [LORETTA shakes head.] Has Hemingway been bullying you? [LORETTA shakes head.] Then it must have been that caller of yours? [Long pause, during which LORETTA's weeping grows more violent.] Tell me what's the matter, and we'll see what I can do. [He lightly kisses her hair — so lightly that she does not know.]

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] I can't. You will despise me. Oh, Ned, I am so ashamed.

NED. [Laughing incredulously.] Let us forget all about it. I want to tell you something that may make me very happy. My fondest hope is that it will make you happy, too. Loretta, I love you —

LORETTA. [Uttering a sharp cry of delight, then moaning.] Too late!

NED. [Surprised.] Too late?

LORETTA. [Still moaning.] Oh, why did I? [NED somewhat stiffens.] I was so young. I did not know the world then.

NED. What is it all about anyway?

LORETTA. Oh, I . . . he . . . Billy . . . I am a wicked woman, Ned. I know you will never speak to me again.

NED. This . . . er . . . this Billy — what has he been doing?

LORETTA. I . . . he . . . I didn't know. I was so young. I could not help it. Oh, I shall go mad, I shall go mad!

[NED's encircling arm goes limp. He gently disengages her and deposits her in big chair.]

[LORETTA buries her face and sobs afresh.]

NED. [Twisting moustache fiercely, regarding her dubiously, hesitating a moment, then drawing up chair and sitting down.] I . . . I do not understand.

LORETTA. [Wailing.] I am so unhappy!

NED. [Inquisitorially.] Why unhappy?

LORETTA. Because . . . he . . . he wants to marry me.

NED. [His face brightening instantly, leaning forward and laying a hand soothingly on hers.] That should not make any girl unhappy. Because you don't love him is no reason — [Abruptly breaking off.] Of course you don't love him? [LORETTA shakes her head and shoulders vigorously.] What?

LORETTA. [Explosively.] No, I don't love Billy! I don't want to love Billy!

NED. [With confidence.] Because you don't love him is no reason that you should be unhappy just because he has proposed to you.

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] That's the trouble. I wish I did love him. Oh, I wish I were dead.

NED. [Growing complacent.] Now my dear child, you are worrying yourself over trifles. [His second hand joins the first in holding her hands.] Women do it every day. Because you have changed your mind, or did not know you mind, because you have — to use an unnecessarily harsh word — jilted a man —

LORETTA. [Interrupting, raising her head and looking at him.] Jilted? Oh Ned, if that were a all!

NED. [Hollow voice.] All!

[NED's hands slowly retreat from hers. He opens his mouth as though to speak further, then changes his mind and remains silent.]

LORETTA. [Protestingly.] But I don't want to marry him!

NED. Then I shouldn't.

LORETTA. But I ought to marry him.

NED. *Ought* to marry him? [LORETTA nods.] That is a strong word.

LORETTA. [Nodding.] I know it is. [Her lips are trembling, but she strives for control and manages to speak more calmly.] I am a wicked woman. A terrible wicked woman. No one knows how wicked I am . . . except Billy.

NED. [Starting, looking at her queerly.] He . . . Billy knows? [LORETTA nods. He debates with himself a moment.] Tell me about it. You must tell me all of it.

LORETTA. [Faintly, as though about to weep again.] All of it?

NED. [Firmly.] Yes, all of it.

LORETTA. [Haltingly.] And . . . will . . . you . . . ever . . . forgive . . . me?

NED. [Drawing a long, breath, desperately.] Yes, I'll forgive you. Go ahead.

LORETTA. There was no one to tell me. We were with each other so much. I did not know anything of the world . . . then. [Pauses.]

NED. [Impatiently.] Go on.

LORETTA. If I had only known. [Pauses.]

NED. [Biting his lip and clenching his hands.] Yes, yes. Go on.

LORETTA. We were together almost every evening.

NED. [Savagely.] Billy?

LORETTA. Yes, of course, Billy. We were with each other so much . . . If I had only known . . . There was no one to tell me . . . I was so young . . . [Breaks down crying.]

NED. [Leaping to his feet, explosively.] The scoundrel!

LORETTA. [Lifting her head.] Billy is not a scoundrel . . . He . . . he . . . is a good man.

NED. [Sarcastically.] I suppose you'll be telling me next that it was all your fault. [LORETTA nods.] What!

LORETTA. [Steadily.] It was all my fault. I should never have let him. I was to blame.

NED. [Paces up and down for a minute, stops in front of her, and speaks with resignation.] All right. I don't blame you in the least, Loretta. And you have been very honest. It is . . . er . . . commendable. But Billy is right, and you are wrong. You must get married.

LORETTA. [In dim, far-away voice.] To Billy?

NED. Yes, to Billy. I'll see to it. Where does he live? I'll make him. If he won't I'll . . . I'll shoot him!

LORETTA. [Crying out with alarm.] Oh, Ned, you won't do that?

NED. [Sternly.] I shall.

LORETTA. But I don't want to marry Billy.

NED. [Sternly.] You must. And Billy must. Do you understand? It is the only thing.

LORETTA. That's what Billy said.

NED. [Triumphantly.] You see, I am right.

LORETTA. And if . . . if I don't marry him . . . there will be . . . scandal?

NED. [Calmly.] Yes, there will be scandal.

LORETTA. That's what Billy said. Oh, I am so unhappy!

[LORETTA breaks down into violent weeping.]

[NED paces grimly up and down, now and again fiercely twisting his moustache.]

LORETTA. [Face buried, sobbing and crying all the time.]

I don't want to leave Daisy! I don't want to leave Daisy! What shall I do? What shall I do? How was I to know? He didn't tell me. Nobody else ever kissed me. [NED stops curiously to listen. As he listens his face brightens.] I never dreamed a kiss could be so terrible . . . until . . . until he told me. He only told me this morning.

NED. [Abruptly.] Is that what you are crying about?

LORETTA. [Reluctantly.] N-no.

NED. [In hopeless voice, the brightness gone out of his face, about to begin pacing again.] Then what are you crying about?

LORETTA. Because you said I had to marry Billy. I don't want to marry Billy. I don't want to leave Daisy. I don't know what I want. I wish I were dead.

NED. [Nerving himself for another effort.] Now look here, Loretta, be sensible. What is this about kisses? You haven't told me everything after all.

LORETTA. I . . . I don't want to tell you everything.

NED. [Imperatively.] You must.

LORETTA. [Surrendering.] Well, then . . . must I?

NED. You must.

LORETTA. [Floundering.] He . . . I . . . we . . . I let him, and he kissed me.

NED. [Desperately, controlling himself.] Go on.

LORETTA. He says eight, but I can't think of more than five times.

NED. Yes, go on.

LORETTA. That's all.

NED. [With vast incredulity.] All?

LORETTA. [Puzzled.] All?

NED. [Awkwardly.] I mean . . . er . . . nothing worse?

LORETTA. [Puzzled.] Worse? As though there could be. Billy said —

NED. [Interrupting.] When?

LORETTA. This afternoon. Just now. Billy said that my . . . our . . . our . . . our kisses were terrible if we didn't get married.

NED. What else did he say?

LORETTA. He said that when a woman permitted a man to kiss her she always married him. That it was awful if she didn't. It was the custom, he said; and I say it is a bad, wicked custom, and it has broken my heart. I shall never be happy again. I know I am terrible, but I can't help it. I must have been born wicked.

NED. [Absent-mindedly bringing out a cigarette and striking a match.] Do you mind if I smoke? [Coming to himself again, and flinging away match and cigarette.] I beg your pardon. I don't want to smoke. I didn't mean that at all. What I mean is . . . [He bends over LORETTA, catches her hands in his, then sits on arm of chair, softly puts one arm around her, and is about to kiss her.]

LORETTA. [With horror, repulsing him.] No! No!

NED. [Surprised.] What's the matter?

LORETTA. [Agitatedly.] Would you make me a wickeder woman than I am?

NED. A kiss?

LORETTA. There will be another scandal. That would make two scandals.

NED. To kiss the woman I love . . . a scandal?

LORETTA. Billy loves me, and he said so.

NED. Billy is a joker . . . or else he is as innocent as you.

LORETTA. But you said so yourself.

NED. [Taken aback.] I?

LORETTA. Yes, you said it yourself, with your own lips, not ten minutes ago. I shall never believe you again.

NED. [Masterfully putting arm around her and drawing her toward him.] And I am a joker, too, and a very wicked man. Nevertheless, you must trust me. There will be nothing wrong.

LORETTA. [Preparing to yield.] And no . . . scandal?

NED. Scandal fiddlesticks. Loretta, I want you to be my wife. [He waits anxiously.]

[JACK HEMINGWAY, in fishing costume, appears in doorway to right and looks on.]

NED. You might say something.

LORETTA. I will . . . if . . .

[ALICE HEMINGWAY appears in doorway to left and looks on.]

NED. [In suspense.] Yes, go on.

LORETTA. If I don't have to marry Billy.

NED. [Almost shouting.] You can't marry both of us!

LORETTA. [Sadly, repulsing him with her hands.] Then, Ned, I cannot marry you.

NED. [Dumbfounded.] W-what?

LORETTA. [Sadly.] Because I can't marry both of you.

NED. Bosh and nonsense!

LORETTA. I'd like to marry you, but . . .

NED. There is nothing to prevent you.

LORETTA. [With sad conviction.] Oh, yes, there is. You said yourself that I had to marry Billy. You said you would s-s-shoot him if he didn't.

NED. [Drawing her toward him.] Nevertheless . . .

LORETTA. [Slightly holding him off.] And it isn't the custom . . . what . . . Billy said?

NED. No, it isn't the custom. Now, Loretta, will you marry me?

LORETTA. [Pouting demurely.] Don't be angry with me, Ned. [He gathers her into his arms and kisses her. She partially frees herself, gasping.] I wish it were the custom, because now I'd have to marry you, Ned, wouldn't I?

[NED and LORETTA kiss a second time and profoundly.]

[JACK HEMINGWAY chuckles.]

[NED and LORETTA, startled, but still in each other's arms, look around. NED looks sillily at ALICE HEMINGWAY. LORETTA looks at JACK HEMINGWAY.]

LORETTA. I don't care.

CURTAIN

THE BIRTH MARK

SKETCH BY JACK LONDON written for Robert and Julia Fitzsimmons

SCENE — One of the club rooms of the West Bay Athletic Club. Near centre front is a large table covered with newspapers and magazines. At left a punching-bag apparatus. At right, against wall, a desk, on which rests a desk-telephone. Door at rear toward left. On walls are framed pictures of pugilists, conspicuous among which is one of Robert Fitzsimmons. Appropriate furnishings, etc., such as foils, clubs, dumb-bells and trophies.

[Enter MAUD SYLVESTER.]

[She is dressed as a man, in evening clothes, preferably a Tuxedo. In her hand is a card, and under her arm a paper-wrapped parcel. She peeps about curiously and advances to table. She is timorous and excited, elated and at the same time frightened. Her eyes are dancing with excitement.]

MAUD. [Pausing by table.] Not a soul saw me. I wonder where everybody is. And that big brother of mine said I could not get in. [She reads back of card.] “Here is my card, Maudie. If you can use it, go ahead. But you will never get inside the door. I consider my bet as good as won.” [Looking up, triumphantly.] You do, do you? Oh, if you could see your little sister now. Here she is, inside. [Pauses, and looks about.] So this is the West Bay Athletic Club. No women allowed. Well, here I am, if I don’t look like one. [Stretches out one leg and then the other, and looks at them. Leaving card and parcel on table, she struts around like a man, looks at pictures of pugilists on walls, reading aloud their names and making appropriate remarks. But she stops before the portrait of Fitzsimmons and reads aloud.] “Robert Fitzsimmons, the greatest warrior of them all.” [Clasps hands, and looking up at portrait murmurs.] Oh, you dear!

[Continues strutting around, imitating what she considers are a man’s stride and swagger, returns to table and proceeds to unwrap parcel.] Well, I’ll go out like a girl, if I did come in like a man. [Drops wrapping paper on table and holds up a woman’s long automobile cloak and a motor bonnet. Is suddenly startled by sound of approaching footsteps and glances in a frightened way toward door.] Mercy! Here comes somebody now! [Glances about her in alarm, drops cloak and bonnet on floor close to table, seizes a handful of newspapers, and runs to large leather chair to right of table, where she seats herself hurriedly. One paper she holds up before her, hiding her face as she pretends to read. Unfortunately the paper is upside down. The other papers lie on her lap.]

[Enter ROBERT FITZSIMMONS.]

[He looks about, advances to table, takes out cigarette case and is about to select one, when he notices motor cloak and bonnet on floor. He lays cigarette case on table and picks them up. They strike him as profoundly curious things to be in a club room. He looks at MAUD, then sees card on table. He picks it up and reach it to himself, then looks at her with comprehension. Hidden by her newspaper, she sees nothing. He looks at card again and reads and speaks in an aside.]

FITZSIMMONS. “Maudie. John H. Sylvester.” That must be Jack Sylvester’s sister Maud. [FITZSIMMONS shows by his expression that he is going to play a joke. Tossing cloak and bonnet under the table he places card in his vest pocket, selects a chair, sits down, and looks at MAUD. He notes paper is upside down, is hugely tickled, and laughs silently.] Hello! [Newspaper is agitated by slight tremor. He speaks more loudly.] Hello! [Newspaper shakes badly. He speaks very loudly.] Hello!

MAUD. [Peeping at him over top of paper and speaking hesitatingly.] H-h-hello!

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] You are a queer one, reading a paper upside down.

MAUD. [Lowering newspaper and trying to appear at ease.] It’s quite a trick, isn’t it? I often practise it. I’m real clever at it, you know.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grunts, then adds.] Seems to me I have seen you before.

MAUD. [Glancing quickly from his face to portrait and back again.] Yes, and I know you — You are Robert Fitzsimmons.

FITZSIMMONS. I thought I knew you.

MAUD. Yes, it was out in San Francisco. My people still live there. I’m just — ahem — doing New York.

FITZSIMMONS. But I don’t quite remember the name.

MAUD. Jones — Harry Jones.

FITZSIMMONS. [Hugely delighted, leaping from chair and striding over to her.] Sure. [Slaps her resoundingly on shoulder.]

[She is nearly crushed by the weight of the blow, and at the same time shocked. She scrambles to her feet.]

FITZSIMMONS. Glad to see you, Harry. [He wrings her hand, so that it hurts.] Glad to see you again, Harry. [He continues wringing her hand and pumping her arm.]

MAUD. [Struggling to withdraw her hand and finally succeeding. Her voice is rather faint.] Ye-es, er . . . Bob . . . er . . . glad to see you again. [She looks ruefully at her bruised fingers and sinks into chair. Then, recollecting her part, she crosses her legs in a mannish way.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Crossing to desk at right, against which he leans, facing her.] You were a wild young rascal in those San Francisco days. [Chuckling.] Lord, Lord, how it all comes back to me.

MAUD. [Boastfully.] I was wild — some.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grinning.] I should say! Remember that night I put you to bed?

MAUD. [Forgetting herself, indignantly.] Sir!

FITZSIMMONS. You were . . . er . . . drunk.

MAUD. I never was!

FITZSIMMONS. Surely you haven’t forgotten that night! You began with dropping champagne bottles out of the club windows on the heads of the people on the sidewalk, and you wound up by assaulting a cabman. And let me tell you I saved you from a good licking right there, and squared it with the police. Don’t you remember?

MAUD. [Nodding hesitatingly.] Yes, it is beginning to come back to me. I was a bit tight that night.

FITZSIMMONS. [Exultantly.] A bit tight! Why, before I could get you to bed you insisted on telling me the story of your life.

MAUD. Did I? I don’t remember that.

FITZSIMMONS. I should say not. You were past remembering anything by that time. You had your arms around my neck —

MAUD. [Interrupting.] Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. And you kept repeating over and over, “Bob, dear Bob.”

MAUD. [Springing to her feet.] Oh! I never did! [Recollecting herself.] Perhaps I must have. I was a trifle wild in those days, I admit.

But I'm wise now. I've sowed my wild oats and steadied down.

FITZSIMMONS. I'm glad to hear that, Harry. You were tearing off a pretty fast pace in those days. [Pause, in which MAUD nods.] Still punch the bag?

MAUD. [In quick alarm, glancing at punching bag.] No, I've got out of the hang of it.

FITZSIMMONS. [Reproachfully.] You haven't forgotten that right-and-left, arm, elbow and shoulder movement I taught you?

MAUD. [With hesitation.] N-o-o.

FITZSIMMONS. [Moving toward bag to left.] Then, come on.

MAUD. [Rising reluctantly and following.] I'd rather see you punch the bag. I'd just love to.

FITZSIMMONS. I will, afterward. You go to it first.

MAUD. [Eyeing the bag in alarm.] No; you. I'm out of practice.

FITZSIMMONS. [Looking at her sharply.] How many drinks have you had to-night?

MAUD. Not a one. I don't drink — that is — er — only occasionally.

FITZSIMMONS. [Indicating bag.] Then go to it.

MAUD. No; I tell you I am out of practice. I've forgotten it all. You see, I made a discovery.

[Pauses.]

FITZSIMMONS. Yes?

MAUD. I — I — you remember what a light voice I always had — almost soprano?

[FITZSIMMONS nods.]

MAUD. Well, I discovered it was a perfect falsetto.

[FITZSIMMONS nods.]

MAUD. I've been practising it ever since. Experts, in another room, would swear it was a woman's voice. So would you, if you turned your back and I sang.

FITZSIMMONS. [Who has been laughing incredulously, now becomes suspicious.] Look here, kid, I think you are an impostor. You are not Harry Jones at all.

MAUD. I am, too.

FITZSIMMONS. I don't believe it. He was heavier than you.

MAUD. I had the fever last summer and lost a lot of weight.

FITZSIMMONS. You are the Harry Jones that got sousesd and had to be put to bed?

MAUD. Y-e-s.

FITZSIMMONS. There is one thing I remember very distinctly. Harry Jones had a birth mark on his knee. [He looks at her legs searchingly.]

MAUD. [Embarrassed, then resolving to carry it out.] Yes, right here. [She advances right leg and touches it.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Triumphantly.] Wrong. It was the other knee.

MAUD. I ought to know.

FITZSIMMONS. You haven't any birth mark at all.

MAUD. I have, too.

FITZSIMMONS. [Suddenly springing to her and attempting to seize her leg.] Then we'll prove it. Let me see.

MAUD. [In a panic backs away from him and resists his attempts, until grinning in an aside to the audience, he gives over. She, in an aside to audience.] Fancy his wanting to see my birth mark.

FITZSIMMONS. [Bullying.] Then take a go at the bag. [She shakes her head.] You're not Harry Jones.

MAUD. [Approaching punching bag.] I am, too.

FITZSIMMONS. Then hit it.

MAUD. [Resolving to attempt it, hits bag several nice blows, and then is struck on the nose by it.] Oh!

[Recovering herself and rubbing her nose.] I told you I was out of practice. You punch the bag, Bob.

FITZSIMMONS. I will, if you will show me what you can do with that wonderful soprano voice of yours.

MAUD. I don't dare. Everybody would think there was a woman in the club.

FITZSIMMONS. [Shaking his head.] No, they won't. They've all gone to the fight. There's not a soul in the building.

MAUD. [Alarmed, in a weak voice.] Not — a — soul — in — the building?

FITZSIMMONS. Not a soul. Only you and I.

MAUD. [Starting hurriedly toward door.] Then I must go.

FITZSIMMONS. What's your hurry? Sing.

MAUD. [Turning back with new resolve.] Let me see you punch the bag, — er — Bob.

FITZSIMMONS. You sing first.

MAUD. No; you punch first.

FITZSIMMONS. I don't believe you are Harry —

MAUD. [Hastily.] All right, I'll sing. You sit down over there and turn your back.

[FITZSIMMONS obeys.]

[MAUD walks over to the table toward right. She is about to sing, when she notices FITZSIMMONS' cigarette case, picks it up, and in an aside reads his name on it and speaks.]

MAUD. "Robert Fitzsimmons." That will prove to my brother that I have been here.

FITZSIMMONS. Hurry up.

[MAUD hastily puts cigarette case in her pocket and begins to sing.]

SONG

[During the song FITZSIMMONS turns his head slowly and looks at her with growing admiration.]

MAUD. How did you like it?

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] Rotten. Anybody could tell it was a boy's voice —

MAUD. Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. It is rough and coarse and it cracked on every high note.

MAUD. Oh! Oh!

[Recollecting herself and shrugging her shoulders.] Oh, very well. Now let's see if you can do any better with the bag.

[FITZSIMMONS takes off coat and gives exhibition.]

[MAUD looks on in an ecstasy of admiration.]

MAUD. [As he finishes.] Beautiful! Beautiful!

[FITZSIMMONS puts on coat and goes over and sits down near table.] Nothing like the bag to limber one up. I feel like a fighting cock. Harry, let's go out on a toot, you and I.

MAUD. Wh-a-a-t?

FITZSIMMONS. A toot. You know — one of those rip-snorting nights you used to make.

MAUD. [Emphatically, as she picks up newspapers from leather chair, sits down, and places them on her lap.] I'll do nothing of the sort. I've — I've reformed.

FITZSIMMONS. You used to joy-ride like the very devil.

MAUD. I know it.

FITZSIMMONS. And you always had a pretty girl or two along.

MAUD. [Boastfully, in mannish, fashion.] Oh, I still have my fling. Do you know any — well, — er, — nice girls?

FITZSIMMONS. Sure.

MAUD. Put me wise.

FITZSIMMONS. Sure. You know Jack Sylvester?

MAUD. [Forgetting herself.] He's my brother —

FITZSIMMONS. [Exploding.] What!

MAUD. — In-law's first cousin.

FITZSIMMONS. Oh!

MAUD. So you see I don't know him very well. I only met him once — at the club. We had a drink together.

FITZSIMMONS. Then you don't know his sister?

MAUD. [Starting.] His sister? I — I didn't know he had a sister.

FITZSIMMONS. [Enthusiastically.] She's a peach. A queen. A little bit of all right. A — a loo-loo.

MAUD. [Flattered.] She is, is she?

FITZSIMMONS. She's a scream. You ought to get acquainted with her.

MAUD. [Slyly.] You know her, then?

FITZSIMMONS. You bet.

MAUD. [Aside.] Oh, ho! [To FITZSIMMONS.] Know her very well?

FITZSIMMONS. I've taken her out more times than I can remember. You'll like her, I'm sure.

MAUD. Thanks. Tell me some more about her.

FITZSIMMONS. She dresses a bit loud. But you won't mind that. And whatever you do, don't take her to eat.

MAUD. [Hiding her chagrin.] Why not?

FITZSIMMONS. I never saw such an appetite —

MAUD. Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. It's fair sickening. She must have a tapeworm. And she thinks she can sing.

MAUD. Yes?

FITZSIMMONS. Rotten. You can do better yourself, and that's not saying much. She's a nice girl, really she is, but she is the black sheep of the family. Funny, isn't it?

MAUD. [Weak voice.] Yes, funny.

FITZSIMMONS. Her brother Jack is all right. But he can't do anything with her. She's a — a —

MAUD. [Grimly.] Yes. Go on.

FITZSIMMONS. A holy terror. She ought to be in a reform school.

MAUD. [Springing to her feet and slamming newspapers in his face.] Oh! Oh! Oh! You liar! She isn't anything of the sort!

FITZSIMMONS. [Recovering from the onslaught and making believe he is angry, advancing threateningly on her.] Now I'm going to put a head on you. You young hoodlum.

MAUD. [All alarm and contrition, backing away from him.] Don't! Please don't! I'm sorry! I apologise. I — I beg your pardon, Bob. Only I don't like to hear girls talked about that way, even — even if it is true. And you ought to know.

FITZSIMMONS. [Subsiding and resuming seat.] You've changed a lot, I must say.

MAUD. [Sitting down in leather chair.] I told you I'd reformed. Let us talk about something else. Why is it girls like prize-fighters? I should think — ahem — I mean it seems to me that girls would think prize-fighters horrid.

FITZSIMMONS. They are men.

MAUD. But there is so much crookedness in the game. One hears about it all the time.

FITZSIMMONS. There are crooked men in every business and profession. The best fighters are not crooked.

MAUD. I — er — I thought they all faked fights when there was enough in it.

FITZSIMMONS. Not the best ones.

MAUD. Did you — er — ever fake a fight?

FITZSIMMONS. [Looking at her sharply, then speaking solemnly.] Yes. Once.

MAUD. [Shocked, speaking sadly.] And I always heard of you and thought of you as the one clean champion who never faked.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gently and seriously.] Let me tell you about it. It was down in Australia. I had just begun to fight my way up. It was with old Bill Hobart out at Rushcutters Bay. I threw the fight to him.

MAUD. [Repelled, disgusted.] Oh! I could not have believed it of you.

FITZSIMMONS. Let me tell you about it. Bill was an old fighter. Not an old man, you know, but he'd been in the fighting game a long time. He was about thirty-eight and a gamer man never entered the ring. But he was in hard luck. Younger fighters were coming up, and he was being crowded out. At that time it wasn't often he got a fight and the purses were small. Besides it was a drought year in Australia. You don't know what that means. It means that the rangers are starved. It means that the sheep are starved and die by the millions. It means that there is no money and no work, and that the men and women and kiddies starve.

Bill Hobart had a missus and three kids and at the time of his fight with me they were all starving. They did not have enough to eat. Do you understand? They did not have enough to eat. And Bill did not have enough to eat. He trained on an empty stomach, which is no way to train you'll admit. During that drought year there was little enough money in the ring, but he had failed to get any fights. He had worked at long-shoring, ditch-digging, coal-shovelling — anything, to keep the life in the missus and the kiddies. The trouble was the jobs didn't hold out. And there he was, matched to fight with me, behind in his rent, a tough old chopping-block, but weak from lack of food. If he did not win the fight, the landlord was going to put them into the street.

MAUD. But why would you want to fight with him in such weak condition?

FITZSIMMONS. I did not know. I did not learn till at the ringside just before the fight. It was in the dressing rooms, waiting our turn to go on. Bill came out of his room, ready for the ring. "Bill," I said — in fun, you know. "Bill, I've got to do you to-night." He said nothing, but he looked at me with the saddest and most pitiful face I have ever seen. He went back into his dressing room and sat down.

"Poor Bill!" one of my seconds said. "He's been fair starving these last weeks. And I've got it straight, the landlord chucks him out if he loses to-night."

Then the call came and we went into the ring. Bill was desperate. He fought like a tiger, a madman. He was fair crazy. He was fighting for more than I was fighting for. I was a rising fighter, and I was fighting for the money and the recognition. But Bill was fighting for life — for the life of his loved ones.

Well, condition told. The strength went out of him, and I was fresh as a daisy. "What's the matter, Bill?" I said to him in a clinch. "You're weak." "I ain't had a bit to eat this day," he answered. That was all.

By the seventh round he was about all in, hanging on and panting and sobbing for breath in the clinches, and I knew I could put him out any time. I drew back my right for the short-arm jab that would do the business. He knew it was coming, and he was powerless to prevent it.

"For the love of God, Bob," he said; and — [Pause.]

MAUD. Yes? Yes?

FITZSIMMONS. I held back the blow. We were in a clinch.

"For the love of God, Bob," he said again, "the misses and the kiddies!"

And right there I saw and knew it all. I saw the hungry children asleep, and the missus sitting up and waiting for Bill to come home, waiting to know whether they were to have food to eat or be thrown out in the street.

"Bill," I said, in the next clinch, so low only he could hear. "Bill, remember the La Blanche swing. Give it to me, hard."

We broke away, and he was tottering and groggy. He staggered away and started to whirl the swing. I saw it coming. I made believe I didn't and started after him in a rush. Biff! It caught me on the jaw, and I went down. I was young and strong. I could eat punishment. I could have got up the first second. But I lay there and let them count me out. And making believe I was still dazed, I let them carry me to my corner and work to bring me to. [Pause.]

Well, I faked that fight.

MAUD. [Springing to him and shaking his hand.] Thank God! Oh! You are a man! A — a — a hero!

FITZSIMMONS. [Dryly, feeling in his pocket.] Let's have a smoke. [He fails to find cigarette case.]

MAUD. I can't tell you how glad I am you told me that.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] Forget it. [He looks on table, and fails to find cigarette case. Looks at her suspiciously, then crosses to desk at right and reaches for telephone.]

MAUD. [Curiously.] What are you going to do?

FITZSIMMONS. Call the police.

MAUD. What for?

FITZSIMMONS. For you.

MAUD. For me?

FITZSIMMONS. You are not Harry Jones. And not only are you an impostor, but you are a thief.

MAUD. [Indignantly.] How dare you?

FITZSIMMONS. You have stolen my cigarette case.

MAUD. [Remembering and taken aback, pulls out cigarette case.] Here it is.

FITZSIMMONS. Too late. It won't save you. This club must be kept respectable. Thieves cannot be tolerated.

MAUD. [Growing alarm.] But you won't have me arrested?

FITZSIMMONS. I certainly will.

MAUD. [Pleadingly.] Please! Please!

FITZSIMMONS. [Obdurately.] I see no reason why I should not.

MAUD. [Hurriedly, in a panic.] I'll give you a reason — a — a good one. I — I — am not Harry Jones.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grimly.] A good reason in itself to call in the police.

MAUD. That isn't the reason. I'm — a — Oh! I'm so ashamed.

FITZSIMMONS. [Sternly.] I should say you ought to be. [Reaches for telephone receiver.]

MAUD. [In rush of desperation.] Stop! I'm a — I'm a — a girl. There! [Sinks down in chair, burying her face in her hands.]

[FITZSIMMONS, hanging up receiver, grunts.]

[MAUD removes hands and looks at him indignantly. As she speaks her indignation grows.]

MAUD. I only wanted your cigarette case to prove to my brother that I had been here. I — I'm Maud Sylvester, and you never took me out once. And I'm not a black sheep. And I don't dress loudly, and I haven't a — a tapeworm.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grinning and pulling out card from vest pocket.] I knew you were Miss Sylvester all the time.

MAUD. Oh! You brute! I'll never speak to you again.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gently.] You'll let me see you safely out of here.

MAUD. [Relenting.] Ye-e-s. [She rises, crosses to table, and is about to stoop for motor cloak and bonnet, but he forestall her, holds cloak and helps her into it.] Thank you. [She takes off wig, fluffs her own hair becomingly, and puts on bonnet, looking every inch a pretty young girl, ready for an automobile ride.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Who, all the time, watching her transformation, has been growing bashful, now handing her the cigarette case.] Here's the cigarette case. You may k-k-keep it.

MAUD. [Looking at him, hesitates, then takes it.] I thank you — er — Bob. I shall treasure it all my life. [He is very embarrassed.] Why, I do believe you're bashful. What is the matter?

FITZSIMMONS. [Stammering.] Why — I — you — You are a girl — and — a — a — deuced pretty one.

MAUD. [Taking his arm, ready to start for door.] But you knew it all along.

FITZSIMMONS. But it's somehow different now when you've got your girl's clothes on.

MAUD. But you weren't a bit bashful — or nice, when — you — you — [Blurting it out.] Were so anxious about birth marks.

[They start to make exit.]

CURTAIN

THE FIRST POET

A ONE ACT PLAY

SCENE: *A summer plain, the eastern side of which is bounded by grassy hills of limestone, the other sides by a forest. The hill nearest to the plain terminates in a cliff, in the face of which, nearly at the level of the ground, are four caves, with low, narrow entrances. Before the caves, and distant from them less than one hundred feet, is a broad, flat rock, on which are laid several sharp slivers of flint, which, like the rock, are blood-stained. Between the rock and the cave-entrances, on a low pile of stones, is squatted a man, stout and hairy. Across his knees is a thick club, and behind him crouches a woman. At his right and left are two men somewhat resembling him, and like him, bearing wooden clubs. These four face the west, and between them and the bloody rock squat some threescore of cave-folk, talking loudly among themselves. It is late afternoon. The name of him on the pile of stones is Uk, the name of his mate, Ala; and of those at his right and left, Ok and Un.*

Uk:

Be still!

(*Turning to the woman behind him*)

Thou seest that they become still. None save me can make his kind be still, except perhaps the chief of the apes, when in the night he deems he hears a serpent.... At whom dost thou stare so long? At Oan? Oan, come to me!

Oan:

I am thy cub.

Uk:

Oan, thou art a fool!

Ok and Un:

Ho! ho! Oan is a fool!

All the Tribe:

Ho! ho! Oan is a fool!

Oan:

Why am I a fool?

Uk:

Dost thou not chant strange words? Last night I heard thee chant strange words at the mouth of thy cave.

Oan:

Ay! they are marvellous words; they were born within me in the dark.

Uk:

Art thou a woman, that thou shouldst bring forth? Why dost thou not sleep when it is dark?

Oan:

I did half sleep; perhaps I dreamed.

Uk:

And why shouldst thou dream, not having had more than thy portion of flesh? Hast thou slain a deer in the forest and brought it not to the Stone?

All the Tribe:

Wa! Wa! He hath slain in the forest, and brought not the meat to the Stone!

Uk:

Be still, ye!

(*To Ala*)

Thou seest that they become still.... Oan, hast thou slain and kept to thyself?

Oan:

Nay, thou knowest that I am not apt at the chase. Also it irks me to squat on a branch all day above a path, bearing a rock upon my thighs. Those words did but awaken within me when I was peaceless in the night.

Uk:

And why wast thou peaccless in the night?

Oan:

Thy mate wept, for that thou didst heat her.

Uk:

Ay! she lamented loudly. But thou shalt make thy half-sleep henceforth at the mouth of the cave, so that when Gurr the tiger cometh, thou shalt hear him sniff between the boulders, and shalt strike the flints, whose stare he hatest. Gurr cometh nightly to the caves.

One of the Tribe:

Ay! Gurr smelleth the Stone!

Uk:

Be still!

(*To Ala*)

Had he not become still, Ok and Un would have beaten him with their clubs.... But, Oan, tell us those words that were born to thee when Ala did weep.

Oan (arising):

They are wonderful words. They are such:

The bright day is gone —

Uk:

Now I see thou art liar as well as fool: behold, the day is not gone!

Oan:

But the day was gone in that hour when my song was born to me.

Uk:

Then shouldst thou have sung it only at that time, and not when it is yet day. But beware lest thou awaken me in the night. Make thou many stars, that they fly in the whiskers of Gurr.

Oan:

My song is even of stars.

Uk:

It was Ul, thy father's wont, ere I slew him with four great stones, to climb to the tops of the tallest trees and reach forth his hand, to see if he might not pluck a star. But I said: "Perhaps they be as chestnut-burs." And all the tribe did laugh. Ul was also a fool. But what dost thou sing of stars?

Oan:

I will begin again:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad, sad, sad —

Uk:

Nay, the night maketh thee sad; not sad, sad, sad. For when I say to Ala, "Gather thou dried leaves," I say not, "Gather thou dried leaves, leaves, leaves." Thou art a fool!

Ok and Un:

Thou art a fool!

All the Tribe:

Thou art a fool!

Uk:

Yea, he is a fool. But say on, Oan, and tell us of thy chestnut-burs.

Oan:

I will begin again:

The bright day is gone —

Uk:

Thou dost not say, “gone, gone, gone!”

Oan:

I am thy cub. Suffer that I speak: so shall the tribe admire greatly.

Uk:

Speak on!

Oan:

I will begin once more:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad, sad —

Uk:

Said I not that “sad” should be spoken but once? Shall I set Ok and Un upon thee with their branches?

Oan:

But it was so born within me — even “sad, sad — ”

Uk:

If again thou twice or thrice say “sad,” thou shalt be dragged to the Stone.

Oan:

Owl Ow! I am thy cub! Yet listen:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad —

Ow! Ow! thou makest me more sad than the night doth! The song —

Uk:

Ok! Un! Be prepared!

Oan (hastily):

Nay! have mercy! I will begin afresh:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad. The — the — the —

Uk:

Thou hast forgotten, and art a fool! See, Ala, he is a fool!

Ok and Un:

He is a fool!

All the Tribe:

He is a fool!

Oan:

I am not a fool! This is a new thing. In the past, when ye did chant, O men, ye did leap about the Stone, beating your breasts and crying, “Hai, hai,

hai!” Or, if the moon was great, “Hai, hai! hai, hai, hai!” But this song is made even with such words as ye do speak, and is a great wonder. One may sit at the cave’s mouth, and moan it many times as the light goeth out of the sky.

One of the Tribe:

Ay! even thus doth he sit at the mouth of our cave, making us marvel, and more especially the women.

Uk:

Be still!... When I would make women marvel, I do show them a wolf’s brains upon my club, or the great stone that I cast, or perhaps do whirl my arms mightily, or bring home much meat. How should a man do otherwise? I will have no songs in this place.

Oan:

Yet suffer that I sing my song unto the tribe. Such things have not been before. It may be that they shall praise thee, seeing that I who do make this song am thy cub.

Uk:

Well, let us have the song.

Oan (facing the tribe):

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sa — sad. But the stars are very white. They whisper that the day shall return. O stars; little pieces of the day!

Uk:

This is indeed madness. Hast thou heard a star whisper? Did Ul, thy father, tell thee that he heard the stars whisper when he was in the tree-top? And of what moment is it that a star be a piece of the day, seeing that its light is of no value? Thou art a fool!

Ok and Un:

Thou art a fool!

All the Tribe:

Thou art a fool!

Oan:

But it was so born unto me. And at that birth it was as though I would weep, yet had not been stricken; I was moreover glad, yet none had given me a gift of meat.

Uk:

It is a madness. How shall the stars profit us? Will they lead us to a bear's den, or where the deer foregather, or break for us great bones that we come at their marrow? Will they tell us anything at all? Wait thou until the night, and we shall peer forth from between the boulders, and all men shall take note that the stars cannot whisper.... Yet it may be that they are pieces of the day. This is a deep matter.

Oan:

Ay! they are pieces of the moon!

Uk:

What further madness is this? How shall they be pieces of two things that are not the same? Also it was not thus in the song.

Oan:

I will make me a new song. We do change the shape of wood and stone, but a song is made out of nothing. Ho! ho! I can fashion things from nothing! Also I say that the stars come down at morning and become the dew.

Uk:

Let us have no more of these stars. It may be that a song is a good thing, if it be of what a man knoweth. Thus, if thou singest of my club, or of the bear that I slew, of the stain on the Stone, or the cave and the warm leaves in the cave, it might be well.

Oan:

I will make thee a song of Ala!

Uk (furiously):

Thou shalt make me no such song! Thou shalt make me a song of the deer-liver that thou hast eaten! Did I not give to thee of the liver of the she-deer, because thou didst bring me crawfish?

Oan:

Truly I did eat of the liver of the she-deer; but to sing thereof is another matter.

Uk:

It was no labour for thee to sing of the stars. See now our clubs and casting-stones, with which we slay flesh to eat; also the caves in which we dwell, and the Stone whereon we make sacrifice; wilt thou sing no song of those?

Oan:

It may be that I shall sing thee songs of them. But now, as I strive here to sing of the doe's liver, no words are born unto me: I can but sing, "O liver! O red liver!"

Uk:

That is a good song: thou seest that the liver is red. It is red as blood.

Oan:

But I love not the liver, save to eat of it.

Uk:

Yet the song of it is good. When the moon is full we shall sing it about the Stone. We shall beat upon our breasts and sing, "O liver! O red liver!" And all the women in the caves shall be affrightened.

Oan:

I will not have that song of the liver! It shall be Ok's song; the tribe must say, "Ok hath made the song!"

Ok:

Ay! I shall be a great singer; I shall sing of a wolf's heart, and say, "Behold, it is red!"

Uk:

Thou art a fool, and shalt sing only, "Hai, hai!" as thy father before thee. But Oan shall make me a song of my club, for the women listen to his songs.

Oan:

I will make thee no songs, neither of thy club, nor thy cave, nor thy doe's-liver. Yea! though thou give me no more flesh, yet will I live alone in the forest, and eat the seed of grasses, and likewise rabbits, that are easily snared. And I will sleep in a tree-top, and I will sing nightly:

The bright day is gone. The night maketh me sad, sad, sad, sad, sad, sad —

Uk:

Ok and Un, arise and slay!

(*Ok and Un rush upon Oan, who stoops and picks up two casting-stones, with one of which he strikes Ok between the eyes, and with the other mashes the hand of Un, so that he drops his club. Uk arises.*)

Uk:

Behold! Gurr cometh! he cometh swiftly from the wood!

(*The Tribe, including Oan and Ala, rush for the cave-mouths. As Oan passes Uk, the latter runs behind Oan and crushes his skull with a blow of* *his club.*)

Uk:

O men! O men with the heart of hyenas! Behold, Gurr cometh not! I did but strive to deceive you, that I might the more easily slay this singer, who is very swift of foot.... Gather ye before me, for I would speak wisdom.... It is not well that there be any song among us other than what our fathers sang in the past, or, if there be songs, let them be of such matters as are of common understanding. If a man sing of a deer, so shall he be drawn, it may be, to go forth and slay a deer, or even a moose. And if he sing of his casting-stones, it may be that he become more apt in the use thereof. And if he sing of his cave, it may be that he shall defend it more stoutly when Gurr teareth at the boulders. But it is a vain thing to make songs of the stars, that seem scornful even of me; or of the moon, which is never two nights the same; or of the day, which goeth about its business and will not linger though one pierce a she-babe with a flint. But as for me, I would have none of these songs. For if I sing of such in the council, how shall I keep my wits? And if I think thereof, when at the chase, it may be that I babble it forth, and the meat hear and escape. And ere it be time to eat, I do give my mind solely to the care of my hunting-gear. And if one sing when eating, he may fall short of his just portion. And when, one hath eaten, doth not he go straightway to sleep? So where shall men find a space for singing? But do ye as ye will: as for me, I will have none of these songs and stars.

Be it also known to all the women that if, remembering these wild words of Oan, they do sing them to themselves, or teach them to the young ones, they shall be beaten with brambles. Cause swiftly that the wife of Ok cease from her wailing, and bring hither the horses that were slain yesterday, that I may apportion them. Had Oan wisdom, he might have eaten thereof; and had a mammoth fallen into our pit, he might have feasted many days. But Oan was a fool!

Un:

Oan was a fool!

All the Tribe:

Oan was a fool!

THE RETURN OF ULYSSES--A MODERN VERSION

Scene--a club lounging room.
George (Just back from Klondike) Jack (invalided from Manila)
Harry (who stayed at home)
(Enter George and Harry by opposite doors)
Harry (with hearty surprise)
By Jove! It's George, this is a joy!
George (as they grip hands)
How goes it any way, old boy?
You're looking well--how wags the town?"
And you? It's time you've settled down?
Harry
I have, old man; no more abroad,
The wee sma' hours--
George
Say, how is Maud?
You know, Miss Smith, that slim brunette –
Remember on the parapet
How she and I made poor Jack sweat?
Yes, yes, I know it was a sin,
But then I had my doubts of him
She liked me best, as you'll allow,
Better than all the rest. And now –
Well, I shall try my luck to-night
Pay her a call; if all goes right
You'll be best man-there, there, don't scold,
I know you will do that for--
Harry
Hold!
You do not understand; let me
Explain. You see--I--that is--we--

(Enter Jack, who pounces upon them effusively. All shake hands and clap each other on the shoulder.)

Jack

How's Klondike, George? Let's heft your sack;
Of dust I hope you have no lack;
And Harry, here, who will not roam,
Our gorgeous, glorious stay-at-home –
How fares the world with you? Hast yet
A wife unto your hearth to fret
You to an early grave? But come,
The news,--(steward, your jolliest mumm)--
Who's born? who's dead? who's crossed the line?
The married? the divorced?--in fine,
The news, 0 man, the news. And say,
Er--Maud, Miss Smith, the little fay,
How is she? Is her name the same
As when I left?

George

Another flame!
Hal Ha!

Jack

What! You! 0, I forgot;
It's "I love you,
I love you not" –
A merry game for us to play,
In which, I wage, she'll say you nay.
Why you may have unmeasured gold,
But now-a-days, the soldier bold,
The hero of the camp and field,
Is all the rage; beneath his shield
Stalks Love, triumphant, and the fair
Can rest none other place than there,
Yes, they'll be wild over my scars,
Wild over me, just from the wars,
While you, who did a-mining go,
Tell me, what have you got to show?

George (mock-heroically)

Show? I? What have I got to show?
‘Mid vasty wastes of Arctic snow,
Where blackness shrouds the silent world,
And death broods over all, I hurled
My challenge to the stars, unfurled
My standard and did mighty deeds.
I led a dozen wild stampedes;
I lived for months on moose-meat straight;
I froze my feet, nor did I wait
Their healing, till I froze my nose.
Aye, to great hazards I arose,
And had I proper speech to tell
My “ventures in that frozen hell,
I would your inmost soul affright
With. deeds done by the Northern Light.
(descending to the colloquial manner)
Well, here I am, and I am rich,
‘Yea, in experience--the which
Will mot advance my suit, you see.
But as for dust — between us three,
I’m broke, I haven’t got a red;
And yet, I think, when all is said,
I stand as good a chance as you.
You went to war--how did you do
In way of gold? What is your wealth?
And further, how’s your state of health?
You’re looking yellow--quid pro quo,
Speak up, what: have you got to show?
Jack
No more. I did not play polo
With Northern Lights below zero –
No, but I starved on the transports,
With empty stomach stormed the forts,
Or ate poor grub in poorer camp,
Shivered and shook out in the damp,
Was shot through arm, and thigh, and breast,
And caught a cold upon my chest,

Then fever claimed me for his own,
And I was invalided home.
So, like a gory son of Mars,
I've nothing else to show but scars.
And George, old chap, forgive me, do,
For my most foolish words to you;
We're comrades in misfortune, now,
And to. her choice. Maud's choice, we'll bow,
And still be friends.
George (as they shake hands)
And one word more –
He who shall win the lady's door,
Shall recollect his friend forlorn,
And the proud hour of his first born
Shall see him praise and bless the same
By giving it his comrade's name.
Thus is our brotherhood begun,
And. he who wins or loses--
Jack (wildly signalling the steward)
Done!
What will--
Harry (sarcastically)
Suppose it is a girl?
Jack
That is the question of a churl –
We shall call her, and not man her,
Jacqueline or Georgiana.
George (as the steward waits their order)
Ye gods! well done! An answer meet
For the occasion--'tis Harry's treat,
And treat you shall, before you go–
Besides, what have you got to show?
(Harry rises to his feet and is followed by George and Jack.
The steward returns and they raise their glasses.)
Harry,
I stayed at home; I cannot show
War's ravages, nor Klondike's woe.

I’ve not gained much of which to boast,
But to yourselves I drink a toast:
Here’s to Mars’ son, who bravely stopped
A brace of Spanish balls – and dropped;
Here’s to the son of Mammon, bold,
Wealthy in lore, if not in gold’
And. now a health to the first born–
Here’s to her god-papa forlorn;
Here-‘s to her dad, who blessed the same
By giving her his rival’s name;
And. here’s to Maud, the last of all –
Just shake the tree, she’s sure to fall.

(They laughingly drink and depart together; but before they have gone a block, who do they meet but the very Maud in question.)

Maud (most graciously, as she extends both hands to George and Jack, while Harry drops into the background.)

What a surprise--both George and Jack–
I did not know that you were back.
Why Jack, how brown you are, and so –
Come up this evening--don’t say no,
I’m home to you at any time,
That is if you will deign to climb –
We’re living in a flat, you know.

(She indicates Harry and lovingly takes his arm. George and Jack act as though they had a pressing engagement.)

Harry (very modestly)
And this is all I have to show.
Maud
Be sure and come--please don’t forget.
Harry (sotto voice)
She’ll wait in vain for them, I bet.
(Exit, with Maud clinging to his arm.)
(Jack and George fall upon each other’s breast.)
Jack
Our Maud, our dainty Maud, is wed!
George
Woe! Woe! Our eldest born is dead!

(Exit, limply.)

THE RETURN OF ULYSSES--A MODERN VERSION
(December 1898)

Scene--a club lounging room.
George (Just back from Klondike) Jack (invalided from Manila)
Harry (who stayed at home)
(Enter George and Harry by opposite doors)
Harry (with hearty surprise)
By Jove! It's George, this is a joy!
George (as they grip hands)
How goes it any way, old boy?
You're looking well--how wags the town?"
And you? It's time you've settled down?
Harry
I have, old man; no more abroad,
The wee sma' hours--
George
Say, how is Maud?
You know, Miss Smith, that slim brunette –
Remember on the parapet
How she and I made poor Jack sweat?
Yes, yes, I know it was a sin,
But then I had my doubts of him
She liked me best, as you'll allow,
Better than all the rest. And now –
Well, I shall try my luck to-night
Pay her a call; if all goes right
You'll be best man-there, there, don't scold,
I know you will do that for--
Harry
Hold!
You do not understand; let me
Explain. You see--I--that is--we--
(Enter Jack, who pounces upon them effusively. All shake hands and clap each other on the shoulder.)
Jack
How's Klondike, George? Let's heft your sack;
Of dust I hope you have no lack;

And Harry, here, who will not roam,
Our gorgeous, glorious stay-at-home –
How fares the world with you? Hast yet
A wife unto your hearth to fret
You to an early grave? But come,
The news,--(steward, your jolliest mumm)--
Who's born? who's dead? who's crossed the line?
The married? the divorced?--in fine,
The news, 0 man, the news. And say,
Er--Maud, Miss Smith, the little fay,
How is she? Is her name the same
As when I left?
George
Another flame!
Hal Ha!
Jack
What! You! 0, I forgot;
It's "I love you,
I love you not" –
A merry game for us to play,
In which, I wage, she'll say you nay.
Why you may have unmeasured gold,
But now-a-days, the soldier bold,
The hero of the camp and field,
Is all the rage; beneath his shield
Stalks Love, triumphant, and the fair
Can rest none other place than there,
Yes, they'll be wild over my scars,
Wild over me, just from the wars,
While you, who did a-mining go,
Tell me, what have you got to show?
George (mock-heroically)
Show? I? What have I got to show?
'Mid vasty wastes of Arctic snow,
Where blackness shrouds the silent world,
And death broods over all, I hurled
My challenge to the stars, unfurled

My standard and did mighty deeds.
I led a dozen wild stampedes;
I lived for months on moose-meat straight;
I froze my feet, nor did I wait
Their healing, till I froze my nose.
Aye, to great hazards I arose,
And had I proper speech to tell
My “ventures in that frozen hell,
I would your inmost soul affright
With. deeds done by the Northern Light.
(descending to the colloquial manner)
Well, here I am, and I am rich,
‘Yea, in experience--the which
Will mot advance my suit, you see.
But as for dust — between us three,
I’m broke, I haven’t got a red;
And yet, I think, when all is said,
I stand as good a chance as you.
You went to war--how did you do
In way of gold? What is your wealth?
And further, how’s your state of health?
You’re looking yellow--quid pro quo,
Speak up, what: have you got to show?
Jack
No more. I did not play polo
With Northern Lights below zero –
No, but I starved on the transports,
With empty stomach stormed the forts,
Or ate poor grub in poorer camp,
Shivered and shook out in the damp,
Was shot through arm, and thigh, and breast,
And caught a cold upon my chest,
Then fever claimed me for his own,
And I was invalided home.
So, like a gory son of Mars,
I’ve nothing else to show but scars.
And George, old chap, forgive me, do,

For my most foolish words to you;
We're comrades in misfortune, now,
And to. her choice. Maud's choice, we'll bow,
And still be friends.
        George (as they shake hands)
        And one word more –
He who shall win the lady's door,
Shall recollect his friend forlorn,
And the proud hour of his first born
Shall see him praise and bless the same
By giving it his comrade's name.
Thus is our brotherhood begun,
And. he who wins or loses--
        Jack (wildly signalling the steward)
        Done!
What will--
Harry (sarcastically)
        Suppose it is a girl?
        Jack
        That is the question of a churl –
We shall call her, and not man her,
Jacqueline or Georgiana.
        George (as the steward waits their order)
        Ye gods! well done! An answer meet
For the occasion--'tis Harry's treat,
And treat you shall, before you go–
Besides, what have you got to show?
        (Harry rises to his feet and is followed by George and Jack. The steward returns and they raise their glasses.)
        Harry,
        I stayed at home; I cannot show
War's ravages, nor Klondike's woe.
I've not gained much of which to boast,
But to yourselves I drink a toast:
Here's to Mars' son, who bravely stopped
A brace of Spanish balls – and dropped;
Here's to the son of Mammon, bold,

Wealthy in lore, if not in gold'
And. now a health to the first born–
Here's to her god-papa forlorn;
Here-'s to her dad, who blessed the same
By giving her his rival's name;
And. here's to Maud, the last of all –
Just shake the tree, she's sure to fall.
(They laughingly drink and depart together; but before they have gone a block, who do they meet but the very Maud in question.)
Maud (most graciously, as she extends both hands to George and Jack, while Harry drops into the background.)
What a surprise--both George and Jack–
I did not know that you were back.
Why Jack, how brown you are, and so –
Come up this evening--don't say no,
I'm home to you at any time,
That is if you will deign to climb –
We're living in a flat, you know.
(She indicates Harry and lovingly takes his arm. George and Jack act as though they had a pressing engagement.)
Harry (very modestly)
And this is all I have to show.
Maud
Be sure and come--please don't forget.
Harry (sotto voice)
She'll wait in vain for them, I bet.
(Exit, with Maud clinging to his arm.)
(Jack and George fall upon each other's breast.)
Jack
Our Maud, our dainty Maud, is wed!
George
Woe! Woe! Our eldest born is dead!
(Exit, limply.)

The Poetry

LIST OF THE COMPLETE POETRY

A HEART
ABALONE SONG
AND SOME NIGHT
BALLADE OF THE FALSE LOVER
CUPID’S DEAL
DAYBREAK
EFFUSION
GEORGE STERLING
GOLD
HE CHORTLED WITH GLEE
HE NEVER TRIED AGAIN
HIS TRIP TO HADES (Triolet)
HOMELAND
HORS DE SAISON
IF I WERE GOD
IN A YEAR
IN AND OUT
JE RIS EN ESPOIR
MEMORY
MOODS
MY CONFESSION
MY LITTLE PALMIST
OF MAN OF THE FUTURE
ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH YOU ARE THE ONE
REPUBLICAN RALLYING SONG
SONNET
THE GIFT OF GOD
THE KLONDYKER’S DREAM
THE LOVER’S LITURGY
THE MAMMON WORSHIPPERS
RAINBOWS END
THE REPUBLICAN BATTLE-HYMN
THE SEA SPRITE AND THE SHOOTING STAR

THE SOCIALIST’S DREAM
THE SONG OF THE FLAMES
TICK! TICK! TICK!
TOO LATE
THE WAY OF WAR
THE WORKER AND THE TRAMP
WHEN ALL THE WORLD SHOUTED MY NAME
WHERE THE RAINBOW FELL
YOUR KISS

A HEART

(February 1899)

A lonely dwelling in a garden bowered,
Far from the world, the haunts of busy men,
It stood alone. No traveler yet had ventured
        Down the shaded walk to where the door,
        Scented with jessamine sweet and climbing rose,
        Extended half a welcome, and again,
        Half shyly turned away.
        And cradled here,
        A home of pretty fancies and strange dreams,
        It had beheld, untroubled, the nesting birds,
        And flowering lawns and budding trees, and seen,
        With blinded eyes, the scheme of life unfold;
        Often it had wondered how the river met the sea,
        And stealing glimpses of the far highway,
        Had watched the hurrying forms and tried to guess
        The deeds of valor or the remote lands
        Which called them on and on and would not let
        Them lift their eyes or idle by the way.
        The languid hours had crept by unawares,
        And years slipped into years until at last
        The door was all a-tremble, like a ripe
        Rose petal, fluttering to the wind's soft kiss;
        And now there was a spirit of unrest
        Through all its halls and inmost recesses,
        A pulse of richer life and consciousness
        Of things to come, a hum of preparation
        As for a guest, unsummoned, yet expected
    Once, a young wayfarer turned aside,
        Lured by the noonday peace and pleasant shades,
        And sought some quiet, fern-wreathed spot where he
        Might rest his weary limbs and cool his brow.
        But ló a swift turn in the walk disclosed

The house. Doffed was his plumed cap in awe
And slow amazement; he half turned, as though
It were a trespass, then his hand, quick-raised,
Lifted the latch to enter.
Ah' the door
Was all but pressed ajar'
But comrades called,
And minded him of other quests. The world
Shrilled keenly through the trees, and trumpets blared;
The latch fell softly and the garden knew
No more his presence; his proud plume was lost
Among the many thronged upon the highway.
At last, all unannounced, the guest arrived;
Nor did he know whither the path did lead,
But with high pride, brushing aside the dew
And crushing under heel the scattered flowers,
He hastened toward the river's marge. A rose,
Swaying on dainty stem, essayed to bar
His passage, but, rough-flung, his mantle snapped
Her slender life and trailed her in the dust.
The waiting door received him, and the latch
Shot rudely upward to his heavy hand;
The shock aroused no echoes, but the rose
Which clung above let fall its ripened petals
In fluttering flakes of ruddy light. They fell
Unnoticed, for he thrust the door apart
And sounded down the hall with sweeping tread.
'Twas plain that he had trod such halls before;
His bold eyes ranged unerringly to where
The shimmering gauze but told the secret which
It strove to hide, the entrance to the shrine,
The inner sanctuary where as yet
No priest had entered and no flame had burned.
Swift the strong hand, the veil was rent in twain,
He stood within the holiest of holies.
At first, the somber light and brooding calm,
Withheld him and he paused in reverent awe,

Abashed before a presence by whose side
His soul was dwarfed, and on his inner sight
There smote a consciousness of nobler things.
He turned, as to retrace his path, when ló
The air grew heavy with the perfumed freight
Of unseen censers and a mellow flood
Of rapturous music stole upon his ear,
Dim lamps awoke, the altar burst in flame,
A dazzling light, a mighty glory fell
Upon him and his soul was kissed with fire.
Yet he had kissed and thus been kissed before,
By many altars had he knelt and laid
Fat firstling lambs and lavish hecatombs,
In many shrines had waited till the dawn
Reddened the east and called him forth again.
And so he rested through the sweet long night,
And when the day awoke, aroused himself,
Stepped lightly o'er the shattered veil, nor thought
To bend his head in last obeisance;
Again he brushed aside the dew and crushed
The flowers; his laugh rang loud and he was gone.
'Twas then the flame upon the altar died.
A lonely dwelling in a garden hidden,
Far from the world, the haunts of busy men,
It stands unknown. The walk where once He trod
Is weed-grown and the brambles bar the way;
No more the scent of jessamine or of rose
Lingers about the open door; chill winds
Go out and in, rustling sad memories,
Dead leaves and musty draperies of gauze.
The shrine is cold and lifeless, and the house
No longer dreams of things to come, nor waits
A guest. It still beholds the hurrying forms
Along the highway, but it does not question
Whence or whither, it has learned the quest
And knows the way the river meets the sea.

ABALONE SONG

Oh, some folks boast of quail on toast
Because they think it’s toney,
But I’m content to owe my rent
And live on abalone.
Oh! Mission Point’s a friendly joint,
Where ev’ry crab’s a crony,
And true and kind you’ll ever find
The clinging abalone.
He wanders free beside the sea,
Where’er the coast is stony;
He flaps his wings and madly sings —
The plaintive abalone.
By Carmel Bay, the people say,
We feed on lazzaroni
On Boston beans and fresh sardines,
A toothesome abalone.
Some live on hope, and some on dope
And some on alimony;
But my tom-cat, he lives on fat
And tender abalone.
Oh! some drink rain and some champagne,
Or brandy by the pony;
But I will try a little rye
With a dash of abalone.
Oh! some like jam, and some like ham,
And some like macaroni;
But bring me a pail of gin
A tub of abalone.
He hides in caves beneath the waves, —
His ancient patrimony;
And so ‘tis shown that faith alone
Reveals the abalone.
The more we take the more they make
In deep-sea matrimony;

Race suicide cannot betide
The fertile abalone.
I telegraph my better half
By Morse or by Marconi;
But if the need arise for speed,
I send an abalone.

AND SOME NIGHT

“And some night,
You will find me in your arms,
Pleading---
For the eventual white flame
of your lips!”

BALLADE OF THE FALSE LOVER

(November 1898)

He asked me there to be his bride,
0 long and long ago;
He drew me close, my tears he dried,
His face was all aglow;
And I, poor me! how could I show
My love? What could I say?
I lay upon his breast--and lo,
He kissed and rode away.
He spoke me fair, and from my side,
He swore he would not go;
Said Heaven nor Hell could not divide
Us, for he loved me so.
Ah woe is me, I did not know,
I could not say him nay;
I lay upon his breast--and lo,
He kissed and rode away.
There lost I both my heart and pride,

And all I could bestow;
For when he looked and longed and sighed,
My tongue would not say no;
And when he whispered, soft and low,
That I was his for aye,
I lay upon his breast--and lo,
He kissed and rode away.
Envoi
Sister, ‘twas thus: I did not know,
Nor dream that love would stray;
I lay upon his breast--and lo,
He kissed and rode away.

CUPID’S DEAL

(September 1898)

“Me tell your fortune? Nay’ “ she cried;
And then, in mood relenting,
And roughish air, was by my side----
“And mind, there’s no resenting.
The things I tell are true as true
As ever yet were told to you
By gifted seer or Gypsy crew---
Don’t think that I’m inventing.
“First make your wish, but don’t tell me,”
(Ah well she knew my yearning)
“For then I can’t tell true, you see;
Some things are past discerning.
But what is this? A lady fair,
Of sprightly mien and debonair-----
Next Five of Clubs, which means beware!”
(Ah me, my ears are burning)
“And then yourself, the Knave of Hearts,
In dangerous conjunction
With Cupid’s ace, who aims his darts
At you without compunction.
Twixt you and her he bends his bow-

And my advice? ‘Tis that you go
To Cupid’s Court, and bending low,
Pray him for an injunction.
        “Your fortune’s told, I see no more;
The cards are counterpointing;
But hold’ What’s this? Within a Four?
Regarding an appointing?---
‘Tis on its way, “Twill come to you,
A sweetly scented billet-doux,
A very charming Billet-doux,
And very disappointing.
        “Your wish is blank; but for the rest,
Remember what’s foretold you,
Add---nay, you must not, shan’t protest,
And say that I’ve cajoled you.
Come sir, confess; you can’t deny
The truths which I have given---why
The cards say so.” And I reply,
“I’d like to know who told you.”
        And this is how it all began,
And why she called me “Mister”;
For she was at the depot when
I’d gone to meet my sister.
Because she did not know her, she
Thought the very worst of me---
That is---I---Well I kissed her.

DAYBREAK

The blushing dawn the easy illumes,
The birds their merry matins sing,
The buds breath forth their sweet perfumes,
And butterflies are on the wing.
I pause beneath the window high,
The door is locked, the house is quiet;

‘Tis there, abed, she sure must lie, —
To Wake her, — ah! I’ll try it.
And pebbles hurtling through the air,
Strike full upon the window-pane,
Awakening her who slumbers there
With their insistent hurricane.
Ye gods! in my imagination,
The wondrous scene do I behold —
A nymph’s bewildered consternation
At summons thus so fierce and bold.
A moment passes, then I see
The gauzy curtains drawn aside,
And sweet eyes beaming down on me,
And then a window upward glide.
Fair as the morn, with rosy light,
She blushes with a faint surprise,
Then thinking of the previous night,
In dulcet tones she softly cries:
“It should have been put out by Nan,
But I’ll be down within a minute —
No, never mind, leave your own can,
And put two quarts, please, in it.”

EFFUSION

Thou canst not weep;
Nor ask I for a year
To rid me of my woes
Or make my life more dear.
The mystic chains that bound
Thy all-fond heart to mine,
Alas! asundered are
For now and for all time.

   In vain you strove to hide,
From vulgar gaze of man,
The burning glance of love
That none but Love can scan.
   Go on thy starlit way
And leave me to my fate;
Our souls must needs unite —
But, God! 'twill be too late.

GEORGE STERLING

I saw a man open an iris petal.
He ran his finger underneath the edge,
unfolded it, and smoothed it out a little,
not as one guilty of a sacrilege —
because he knew flowers, and understood
that what he did would maybe help them grow--
though for a moment he was almost God.
Alone as we are, growing is so slow.
I think of one who tried like that to unfold
the margin of his life where it was curled,
to see into the shadows shot with gold
that lie in iris hues about the world.
Because he dared to touch the sacred rim,
does God resent this eagerness in him?

GOLD

(May 1897)

Strange was the alchemy through which you passed,
Before, deep-sunk in earth and massive rock,
Thou layest concealed whilst centuries o'er thee passed;
Nor felt the rush of life, the toil, the shock
Of man above thee-torn with emotions wild--
Living, dying, existing but a space;

Enduring sorrows.or with joys beguiled;
Crushing his fellows in that fierce onward race,
Where brute survived and true nobility was lost;
Where souls pursuing hot desire were passion tost.

In cosmos vague, mysterious, unknown,
'Mid elemental war pregnant with life,
Where valleys fell and mountains were upthrown,
Wert thou vanquished and banished from the strife. .
Crushed 'neath a weight of overwhelming earth,
The struggle o'er thee ceaselessly did wage;
But thou didst sleep and wait thy second birth,
When, with the strange, ungrateful genie's rage,
Who swore to slay the first that loosed him, gave him light,
Didst thou mankind with fierce, unholy avarice smite.

As in the fabled tales of ancient days,
Within a casket were imprisoned ills,
The lid of which Pandora fain did raise,
So wert thou guarded by the silent hills.
Till one, more brave or curious than the rest,
Cast wide your portals, let the light of day
Behold the future goal of envious quest-

The deadly drug to lure manhood away;
To steep in evanescent dreams the groping souls;
To cast them, 'wildered and forsaken, on treacherous shoals.

The hot, incestuous love, the rude desire
Of man for woman or of brute for brute,
Were icebergs floating in a sea of fire,
Contrasted with the agony acute,
Which seized on man with love impure and base,
When first beholding thee, he stood aghast.
And felt within him shrivel up the grace,
The joy of perfect love before thy blast
Of all-consuming heat--hotter than that which wells

From crater mouths, or leaps from fond imagined hells.

Yet wherein lies thy subtle, wondrous charm?
The meteor flashing athwart the sky;
The firefly in a summer evening's calm;
Or meek glow-worm; thy warmest light outvie.
Precious ? Art thou as rare, as true, as good,
As she who blushes with the first surprise
At conscious knowledge of her womanhood;
Who glorious, peerless, hears with downcast eyes
And heaving breast, a lover's tale of love unfold,
Nor who, in that sweet moment, can her own withhold?

Thou sprang'st into dominion, vast, supreme;
Became the lodestar of man's pathless sea —
The dreamer, 'wakening from his happy dream,
Returns to earth, beholds and chases thee:
The youth whose-scheme of life has just begun;
The man who walks erect in manhood's prime;
The aged one whose race is nearly run;
Forget the aim of life, the thought sublime,
And stifling conscience, yielding to covetous thirst,
Seek thee, and seeking, fall, degraded and accurst.

HE CHORTLED WITH GLEE

He Chortled with glee
As he read me the letter —
And why shouldn't he?
He Chortled with glee,
'Twas a boy, you see,
And she was much better.
He Chortled with glee
As he read me the letter.

HE NEVER TRIED AGAIN

(Spring 1897)

(With apologies to Henry of England)
He heard the wondrous tale and went
To Klondyke’s golden shore;
A year of trial and toil he spent,
And found not gold galore.
And starved and frozen he returned,
Singing a sad refrain;
For nuggets he no longer yearned-
He never tried again.
The air rang loud with war’s alarms,
And a soldier he became;
But Romance soon lost all her charms,
And life in camp was tame.
The drill was stiff, the grub was bad;
He slept out in the rain;
His captain was a beastly cad---
He never tried again.
He met a pretty Summer Girl,
Who stole his heart away;
She was a precious little pearl
And could not say him nay.
But when he asked her for her heart,
She searched and searched in vain;
For sad to say she had no heart---
He never tried again.
Three times he’d tried, three times he’d failed;
It could not last alway;
On Harlem Bridge he wept and wailed,
And leaped into the bay.
The water cold, he called for aid,
And struggled might and main;
He could not swim, so there he stayed---
He never tried again.

HIS TRIP TO HADES (Triolet)

(January 1899)

Trying to miss his trip to Hades,
Jack returned my umbrella;
Still you see I am afraid he's
Failed to miss his trip to Hades.
Mine? No, Some mistake he's made, he's
Borrowed from some other fellah,
Trying to miss his trip to Hades,
Jack returned my umbrella

HOMELAND

I.
Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
Deep in my heart dwells a love for Thee evermore;
To Thee returning, my heart Is yearning,
For Thy great mountains. Thy peaceful green vales.
In many foreign lands a wanderer I strolled,
Oft have their wonders and their beauties been extolled;
But none can compare with Thee, oh fairest on earth
And none shall I love as Thee, 0 land of my birth . . . . . .
Homeland . . . . . Homeland
Refrain:
Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
Where hearts are loyal and friendship is ever true;
Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
Hope of all mankind that loves peace and freedom;
Embraced by oceans and God's sunny skies.
II.
Beautiful Homeland, my own dear Homeland,
Prom pine to palm and from glasier to cottonfield;
Great rivers flowing, sweet breezes blowing
O'er Thy vast prairies, Thy forest clad hills.
Fair are those other lands that lure from o'er the sea,

Fair are their maidens who have often smiled on me;
But I shall be true to Thee, oh homeland of mine
And my heart shall evermore your dear earth enshrine.
Homeland . . . . . Homeland
Repeat refrain.

HORS DE SAISON

(July 1897)

Nothing but comes too late with me,
No matter how I reason;
The fashions swiftly from me flee;
I'm always out of season.
My slim income with care I eke,
To gratify some passion;
But when I do it is antique,
Having gone out of fashion.
I struggle 'mid temptations great,
To take a brief vacation;
But upward climbs the railroad rate,
'Yond all anticipation,
When at the seaside I arrive,
The crowd is in the city;
No matter how I do contrive,
I miss them--more's the pity.
I never bought the latest hat,
Nor other 'bomination;
But that my friends said "Look at that,
It's older than creation."
And thus it is with all my clothes;
My neckties, trousers, waistcoats;
My cuffs, my studs, my shoes, my hose;
My summer suits and greatcoats.
I learned to waltz with hop and jump;
And then the dancers glided;
My friends thought me the biggest chump,
And all my 'tempts derided,

The cigarette I learned to smoke
With nausea most horrible;
But custom changed with one fell stroke
To briarwood pipes intolerable.
In. politics it is the same;
When tariff-struck, hilaric,
‘Gainst free trade’s evils I disclaim,
The crowd’s gone bimetallic,
I never loved but that too late
I plead my adoration:
Another man had been there first,
To my great consternation.
At last one day, cursing my fate,
In dark despair to ‘scape her,
‘Twas told me on the brink, “Too late,
Suicide’s no more the caper.”
Nothing but comes too late with me,
No matter how I reason;
The fashions swiftly from me flee;
I’m always out of season.

IF I WERE GOD

If I were God one hour
  And, gazing down from heaven’s dizzy stair,
Should see you idling in the garden there;
  If I were God one hour,
And saw you flirting with that grinning cad —
Yes, flirting, don’t deny! — why, I’d get mad;
I’d loose the bolts of my mighty wrath
And turn the wretch to cinders in your path —
  If I were God one hour.
  If I were God one hour
And saw you in that garden, fair and tall,
I’m sure I’d fail to watch the sparrows fall;

If I were God one hour,
And haply you should raise your eyes to mine,
Right then and there I know that I'd resign
And fling away my scepter, dearest Nan,
Descend to earth and make myself a man —
If I were God one hour.

IN A YEAR

In a year, in a year, when the grapes are ripe,
I shall stay no more away —
Then if you still are true, my love,
It will be our wedding day.
In a year, in a year, when my time is past —
Then I'll live in your love for aye.
Then if you still are true, my love,
It will be our wedding day.

IN AND OUT

When he came in
Why, I was out;
To borrow some tin
Was why he came in,
And I had to grin,
For he went without;
So I was in
And he was out.

JE RIS EN ESPOIR

(May 1897)

I live in hope from day to day,
Of a joyous consummation;
When all my friends in manner gay,
Give me congratulation.
I live in hope that quick the hour,
Still in the dim perspective,
Shall me all happiness endower,
And cease to be subjective.
I live in hope that bells shall ring
In peals magnificent,
And to me tidings haply bring
From fate omnipotent
I live in hope the day to see,
When with a thrill electric,
I'll merry hail with greatest glee,
A victory majestic.
My hope is this: that there may pass.
An uncle wisely provident,
From earth, who great wealth did amass.
And leave it me, an indigent.

MEMORY

(June 1899)

Grim prompter of forgotten lines
With wings of sable night,
Stealing the light of day,
Why have you come
In this, my perfect port,
O why?
O why?
In this, my perfect port,
Why have you come
Stealing the light of day
With wings of sable night,
Grim prompter of forgotten lines.

MOODS

(October 1898)

Who has not laughed with the skylark,
And bid his heart rejoice?
Laughed till the mirth-loving heavens
Echoed his laughter back?
Joyed in the sheer joy of living,
And sung with gladsome voice,
Lays that were cheerful and merry,
And bid his heart rejoice?
Who has not frowned in the gloaming,
And felt the skies grow black;
While o'er him spread the dark mantle
Of sullen, solemn Gloom,
Whose mutterings broke the silence
Like echoes from the tomb--
Like echoes of lost endeavors-
Reproaches from the tomb?
Who has not cursed in his passion,
As Anger's stinging lash,
Biting and smarting and racking,
Fell on his naked back?
Felt in his veins feverish tumult,
The strife, the savage clash,
As when hot steel, leaped from the scabbard,
Meets steel with crash on crash?
Who has not wept in his sorrow,
And looked in vain for morn;
Waiting with hopeless yearning,
The sun from out the bourn?
Heard from the world the sad sobbing
Of Faith and Hope forlorn?
Known that the sun had forever
Gone down into the bourn?

MY CONFESSION

(May 1897)

I love to feel the wind’s great power
On my silken sails on high;
As I upon my ivied, tower
My Dragon Kite do fly.
Each gusty breeze that stirs the trees
Strikes on my silken kite
Sending melodies like these
Down from the living light.
The silken string (a dainty thing,
And white and “bright and neat),
I fasten to a phonograph
And make the breezes speak.
That’s how I write my stories,
The wind upon the string
Makes clear the sun-sky glories
And tells me everything.

MY LITTLE PALMIST

(November 1898)

The leaves stirred softly overhead,
While from my hand a tale was read,
By laughing lips of rosy red;
My little Palmist.
0 that slight form so dainty-fair,
That pulsing breast, beyond compare,
That cadenced rise and fall of air!--
Of breaths the balm’est.
“This line, unbroken, deep and long,
Assurance gives of health most strong,
And truely ‘twill thy days prolong;
The line Vitalis.

While this, so clear and firm and fine,
Say Cupid's toils about thee twine,
And happiest wedlock will be thine —
'Tis called Mensalis.
"And here, thy disposition gay,
Is quickly learned from lines which say,
That where you go or where you stay,
Your ways are jolly.
And yet again, these furrows blent,
One thing alone for thee is meant,
In Love's fond dalliance you've spent
Fair hours in folly.
"By this, and this, and this, is told,
Good friends about thee are enrolled,
While Love's delights, so manifold,
Thy life shall gladden.
Nor sudden sorrow, or swift pain,
Nor misery shall thee enchain;
Nor blighting curse, or dread murrain,
Thy heart shall sadden.
"Yet least among thy pleasures great,
There will a little maiden wait,
With love, as bird feels for its mate,
With love sincerest."
Ere yet she ceased, I knelt, a thrall,
As to my heart her last words fall,---
"I've held naught back, so this is all,
For thee, my Dearest."
0 sweet that rippling flow of sound,
That fairy speech which wrapped me 'roundl
Those magic meshes 'bout me bound,
I would not sever.
0 sweet those pure, pellucid eyes,
Whose slightest glance I fondly prize!--
Ah God! in this, my paradise,
I'd-stay forever.

It seems but yesterday that we,
With hand in hand, and knee to knee,
Spent one sweet hour in childish glee;
My little Palmist.
But yesterday,---Ah well-a-day!
And where is now my little fay,
Who scanned my hand and went away?
O sing thou Psalmist.

OF MAN OF THE FUTURE

Of man of the future! Who is able to describe him?
Perhaps he breaks our globe into fragments
In a time of warlike games.
Perhaps he hurls death through the firmament.
Man of the future! He is able to aim at the stars,
To harness the comets,
And to travel in space among the planets.

ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH YOU ARE THE ONE

I am your Adam, you are my Eve,
As in the days of old,
Just like Adam, he loved his Eve.
My love for you is bold.
My eyes are blinded by love that's true.
I see no one in this world but you,
Sweetheart divine,
Say you'll be mine,
I love you, you. you.

Chorus
On the face of the earth you are the one.

My one, only one, only one.
You are my love,
Like the sun up above,
Only one, only one, only one — dear,
Since the birth of the earth you are one,
My battle of love has begun,
I'll answer your calls,
Till life's curtain falls,
On the face of the earth you are one. one.

I strolled mongst flowers. I picked a rose.
That was my vision so true,
Among all those flowers,
One flower I chose, The rose. I chose, was you,
I longed for you since the world began.
I'll long for you till the end of man,
A vision of you,
Is my whole life's view,
I love you, you, you,

Chorus

REPUBLICAN RALLYING SONG

(Air of "Marching through. Georgia")

Gathered round our standards, boys, we face the fray again;
We have gathered in our might and here we will remain,
Till we win to victory and sweep the whole campaign,
While we are counting majorities.
(Chorus) Hurrah! Hurrah! Our platform's here to stay!
Hurray! Hurray! 0 hear the donkeys bray!
Won't they sing another song before we go away!
While we are counting majorities.To the next election, boys, 'twill find us side by side;

To the Grand Old Party, boys, its men so true and tried:
Let the toast go round the board and drink it in all pride,
While we are counting majorities
(Chorus)
We've a candidate who'll win, or else his name's not GAGE;
He will put the "Little Giant" in a little cage —
Won't he make them gnash their teeth and. kick themselves with rage,
While we are counting majorities.
(Chorus)
There is something coming, boys, we feel it in the air:
'Tis a tidal wave that's made to mash them 'yond repair —
Where will we be at? Oho! You bet we'll all be there,
While we are counting majorities.
(Chorus)
When election day has come we'll vote our ticket straight;
Then will they be out of it for all they feel so great —
We won't do a thing to them but rub them off the slate,
While we are counting majorities.
(Chorus)

SONNET

(1901)
A Trumpet call, a bursting of the sod,
  And lo! I flung aside the clinging clay
  Lifted my flight along the star-strewn way
Among the white-robed saints that fled to God.
And he that held the gate, with holy nod,
  Did bid me enter that my feet might stray
  Amid the flowers with those that God obey;
The just, the good, and pure on earth there trod.
Dear heart: I questioned him if thou wert there,
  One of that bright-browed throng whos voices led
  The heavenly hymn of praise, the wondrous strain
That kissed in ecstacy the trembling air?
  But he that held the gate did shake his head,

Thou wast not there; I turned away again.

THE GIFT OF GOD

(June 1899)

I

"Name me the gift of God!"
A man commanded.
His brow was furrowed
With thought.
He wished to know all things.

II

There was a clamor among the peoples;
Many strove to answer,
And many were silent.
Some did not care,
Yet none were too busy to listen.
At first,
They named all things,
In loud voices,
Till the weak were hushed.

III

Then the strong ones became as one:
"Life is the gift of God!" they cried,
In a mighty chant,
Which shook the heavens.
But in time,
They became tired,
And no longer outraged the sky

IV

Then a graybeard,
Doddering on the edge of his grave,
Raised a thin voice.

He had seen three generations
Come and go;
He knew all tricks;
He said. “Death is the gift of God.”
He knew.
But the people were angry,
And in a great clamor,
Drowned his thin voice.

THE KLONDYKER’S DREAM

(October 1898)

In slumbers of midnight the Klondyker lay;
The snow was fast falling, the cold was intense;
But weary and hungry, his cares flew away,
And visions of dinners were calling him hence.
He dreamed of his home, of the dining-room table,
And servants that waited his every behest;
He longed 0 to eat, to eat all he was able,
For ah! of all dreams he had dreamed ‘twas the best.
Then Fancy her marvelous miracles wrought,
And bade the thin starved one get out of his bed;
The Klondyke he left far behind him, he sought
The place where the hungered could always be fed.
He came in good season, the table was laid;
The rich, fragrant coffee was steaming and hot;
The pastries and puddings were there all arrayed;
The beefsteak was done, aye was done to a dot.
His fingers were trembling, so rich was the fare,
And when Grace was ended he murmured Amen!
And took, of all dishes, the beefsteak so rare;
Ah! he was the happiest man of all men.
The jaws of the sleeper are moving with joy;
Food quickens his palate, his hardships seem o’er;
A feeling of plenty steals over the boy —
”0 God! thou hast fed me, I ask for no more.”

Ah! whence is that form which now bursts on his eye?
Ah! what is that sound that now catches his ear?
"Tis the dog of the Klondyke thieving so sly!
"Tis a crunching of jaws, a crunching quite near!
He springs from the blankets, he seizes his gun;
Gaunt Famine confronts him with images dire;
But out of the tent goes the dog on the run,
For well he knows when it's time to retire.
The last piece of bacon is gone from the sack;
He weeps, 0 he weeps, for he knows what it means;
The last piece of bacon — 'twill never come back;
Henceforth his diet must be sour bread and beans.
0 'Klondyker, woe to thy dreams of good fare!
In waking they left thee, they left on the fly;
Where now is that beefsteak so juicy and rare;
The coffee, the pudding, the pastry and pie?

THE LOVER'S LITURGY

Ah! my brothers, we are mortals,
Atoms on Time's ebb and flow,
Soon we pass the dreary portals,
Soon to dreamless sleep we go;
We are sparkles, evanescent,
Doomed to perish in the hour,
And our time is in the present,
Ours but a moment's power.
Love, my brothers, is the essence,
In the scheme of life and light;
Birth and death are fearful lessons —
Out of darkness into night, —
Thus we flash, a moment's living,
'Twixt the silent walls of death,
Flashing for a moment, giving
Song but for a moment's breath.

Then that moment do not sadden,
  Prayers, nor beads, nor aves tell;
Then that moment do not madden
  With mad dreams of heaven or hell;
Trust that he who cast you idly,
  Asked of you nor aye nor nay,
Flung you idly, wildly, widely,
  For his whim will not ask pay.
For a whim of bubble-blowing,
  Perhaps to while an empty day,
For a whim of stubble-sowing,
  For a game at godlike play,
Shall the bubbles in the drifting,
  Pay the whim of Him who played?
Shall the seedlets in the shifting,
  Of the sifter be afraid?
Shall the playthings of a master,
  Falling idly from his hand,
Meet meritless disaster,
  Meet with unearned reprimand?
Shall the children of fancy,
  Born a certain race to run,
By an absurd necromancy,
  Penance pay when it is done?
O, my brothers, go not questing
  For some mystic grail in vain —
Why should ye a Master's jesting,
  Strive to fathom or make plain?
Wake ye from your fevered dreaming,
  Groping for forbidden toys,
All about you life is teeming,
  Singing of ungarnered joys.
Surely He who somewhere hovers,
  'Yond the reach of mortal ken,
Gazing down on love and lovers,
  Cannot blame the sons of men;
Cannot blame his bubbles bursting,

Heart to heart and lips to lips;
Cannot blame his seedlets thirsting
For the dew of honeyed lips.
Then again the golden chalice,
Once again a lingering draught;
Surely He will bear no malice
For the pledge divinely quaffed.
Thus, with sweet and fond caresses,
Hearts that beat with mutual bliss,
He who loves is he who blesses,
Sealing heaven with a kiss.

THE MAMMON WORSHIPPERS

We worshipped at alien altars;
we bowed our heads in the dust;
Our law was might is the mightiest;
our creed was unholy lust;
Our Law and our Creed we followed —
strange is the tale to tell —
For our Law and our Creed
we followed into the pit of hell.

RAINBOWS END

Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I knew I would find a treasure of gold,
So I clambered over the fence pell mell,
Just over the way where the rainbow fell;
But I promised her I never would tell,
And I know if I tell you'll tell her I told.
Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I certainly found a treasure of gold.

THE REPUBLICAN BATTLE-HYMN

0 Fathers of the Nation,
We struggle in thy name;
Each man was at his station
Ere yet the summons came.
We felt our country calling,
And sprang into the fray —
0 in thy might appalling,
Withhold not victory.
We ask that right be given,
And justice where ‘tis due;
Reward for those who’ve striven
And did the best they knew.
But punish those, who lying,
Have wrought thee evil deeds;
And pardon those denying,
Who follow other creeds.
Our country is far dearer
Than closer bonds of blood;
For we would see far clearer,
The nation’s common good.
Enlighten thou our labor;
Invest us with thy might;
So that we may not waver
While battling for the right.
We would our country flourished;
That all may at her breast,
Suckling as babes, be nourished,
Nor fail in fruitless quest;
That she, our mighty mother,
Will see the day come by,
When man calls man “0 brother!”
And all shall know the tie.

0 Fathers of the Nation,
We struggle in thy name;
Each man was at his station
Ere yet the summons came.
We felt our country calling,
And sprang into the fray —
0 in thy might appalling,
Withhold not victory.

THE SEA SPRITE AND THE SHOOTING STAR

(1899)

A little sea sprite,
on the sea one night,
Cried “Now is the time for me,”
And he looked above,
And he looked for his love;
For he was in love, you see.
But his love was a star
In the sky a-far,
And she knew not his love so true;
So he tried to think
Of a magic link
‘Twixt the sea and the sky so blue.
Then out of the sky,
From the moon on high,
A silvery moonbeam fell;
And it fell on the brine,
With its wonderful shine,
On the brine where the sea sprites dwell.
Though the siren sing
Where the sea bells ring
And the sleepy poppies dream —
Though the sea sprite knew

Their songs untrue,
He knew not the false moonbeam.
For the way seemed clear
To his love so dear,
And he needn’t have wings to fly;
Up its silvery stream
He would climb by the beam,
He would climb right into the sky.
Up the glittering step
He carefully crept,
While his heart beat a merry tune;
But O what a fright
To the poor little sprite,
When he came to the crescent moon.
Alas! and A-lack!
He couldn’t get back,
For the moonbeams flew away;
And the stars in the sky
Knew not he was nigh,
Or that he had lost his way.
There he sat forlorn,
On the crescent horn,
And thought of his home in the sea
Of his brothers at play
All the livelong day
On the foam so fresh and free.
Then he saw his star,
In her golden car,
As she twinkled above his head;
And he sobbed and sighed,
And woefully cried
That he wished — he wished he was dead.
But the little the star heard
His every word,
And thrilled at his musical voice
Like the tinkling of bells,
Or the songs of shells,

And it bade her heart rejoice,
For she was lonely and sad,
And no lover had;
And she'd twinkled so long up there,
It had often been said
That she never would wed —
And yet she was wonderous fair,
But often she'd seen,
On the ocean green,
The sea sprite who had loved her so;
Though he came not to woo,
She had loved him too,
Yet she never would tell him — oh no.
But as she looked down
On the lover she'd found —
The story is strange to relate —
She sprang from her car,
For the height was no bar,
And hurried to join her mate.
Oh how her heart beat,
As she leaped from her seat,
And fell to the moon below;
And the stars were aghast,
As she darted past,
And they all said "I told you so."
And her golden hair,
As she fell through the air,
Shown bright like a comet's tail;
While the people on earth,
All ceased from their mirth
As they watched her fiery trail.
Not a bit too soon,
She came to the moon,
Where she grasped her lover's hand;
And they sang with glee,
As they splashed in the sea,
Right into the sea sprite's land.

And the sea o' nights
Is bright with lights,
Whenever they're out to play
For the white sea foam
Is their beautiful home,
Where they live forever and aye.

THE SOCIALIST'S DREAM

(May 1897)

The room was narrow and cold and grim;
He reigned supreme, a king of dirt;
Beneath a slouched hat's shadowed brim,
He viewed the kingdom about him girt:
But thoughts he held of fairer mold
Than filth and stench so manifold.

Vanished the press of misery,
The stamp of vice and poverty's face,
The scenes he was so used to see,
The things so low, so vile, so base:
For dreaming, did he a long behold,
Where truth was worshipped as of old.

A land of honesty and thrift,
Where labor had its due reward;
Where each applied his special gift;
Nor turned from plowshare unto sword
To rob his neighbor of his gold,
But worked him weal instead of wold.

He saw the soil enriched by men,
Who gloried in such honest life,
Ranking with those of greater ken
Whose pleasures were in mental strife;
But who, as comrades true and bold,

Were in man’s brotherhood enrolled.

He heard the hum of joy arise
From merry hearts and housefires bright;
A joy, that climbing, scaled the skies,
And cried “Rejoice! There is no night!”
‘Twas but a melody uprolled
Of souls secure within the fold.

Truth and honor were upraised,
And purity of thought and deed.
The multitudes, adoring, gazed,
And in their hearts received the seed;
And righteousness, with firmest hold,
Sweet truths and many to them told.

The vision fair, before him shone;
His heart in ecstasies was rapt;
He awoke--he was no more alone,
For some one had quite loudly tapped:
The door was op’ed and in there strolled
A woman of demeanor cold.
“Your rent is due,” this female said.
“ ‘Tis due these many, many days:
Your lazy body I have fed —
Say! How much can you raise?
Nay, not in looks so fierce and bold,
But in bright silver or hard gold.”

The socialist, in accents mild,
Told her a lie upon the spot,
And her soft soul with ease beguiled
Of treasure wondrous he had got:
His aunt had died; the bells had tolled;
His was the money; hers the mould.

Then hied him to a laboring man--
Forgotten was his vision pure —

Whose hand was rough and face was wan,
And did a greater lie conjure.
The man from his scant pittance doled
The price for which the lie was sold.

The visions are in pleasure spent,
Regardless of his dream so bright,
The money which his friend had lent;
Beholding ‘mid a magic light
The fond Utopia unrolled,
Of which the seers so often told,

Vanished all sin and foul desire;
Forgotten were deeds low and base;
Nor thinking of their vengeful ire,
He walked amid another race
Of men who ne’er their friends cajoled,
But truth and virtue did uphold.

‘Tis thus with all poor mortals here,
Whose dual natures struggles wage;
Who for misfortune drop a tear,
Then in the war of life engage,
And with their passions uncontrolled,
Rage on in wild pursuit of gold.

THE SONG OF THE FLAMES

(March 1899)

We are motes of sunshine stolen
When the world was fair and young,
Stolen from our joytime golden,
Into earth’s black bowels flung;
Kissed of light and born of passion,
Thrilling with the wine of life,
Ravished in most cruel fashion,
We were banished from the strife.

Pent in prisons dark and loathsome,
Cells of sorrow, ‘reft of mirth,
In our rocky chamber, lonesome,
Slept we till our second birth,--
Slept we through the long, long ages,
Dreaming of the time to be,
Till God, turning many pages,
Deemed it fit to set us free.

TICK! TICK! TICK!

And the clock went, tick, tick, tick,
While she’d rest her little head on his shoulder.
And they’d kiss so quick, quick, quick,
And oh, how tight he’d hold her.
T’was a lovely trick, trick, trick,
And they played it oh so slick.
When the clock, went tick, then his heart, went click.
And it ended in a quick, slick, tick, tick, tick.

TOO LATE

Too late’ Even Is death too late’
Had it but come---silence’ Put out
These sniffling fools that wait,
With hungry jowl and, slobbered snout,
My end---foregathered, at the feast
Like jackals when the lion is dead.
But you, who were among the least
Of all my friends, stay by my bed.

THE WAY OF WAR

Man primeval hurled a rock,
Torn with angry passions, he;
To escape the which rude shock.
Foeman ducked behind a tree.
Man primeval made a spear,
Swifth of death on battle field;
Foeman fashioned other gear,
Fought behind his hidebound shield.
Man mediaeval built a wall,
Said he didn't give a dam;
Foeman not put out at all,
Smashed it with a battering ram.
Man mediaeval, just for fun,
Made himself a coat of mail;
Foeman laughed and forged a gun,
Peppered him with iron hail.
Modern man bethought a change,
Cast most massive armor-plate;
Foeman just increased his range,
Tipped his ball to penetrate.
Modern man, with toil untold,
Deftly built torpedo boats;
Foeman launched "destroyer" bold,
Swept the sea of all that floats.
Future man — ah! who can say? —
May blow to smithereens our earth;
In the course of warrior play
Fling death across the heavens' girth.
Future man may hurl the stars,
Leash the comets, o'er-ride space,
Sear the universe with scars,
In the fight 'twixt race and race.
Yet foeman will be just as cute —
Amid the rain falling suns,
Leave the world by parachute,
And build ethereal forts and guns.
And when the skies begin to fall

The foeman still will new invent —
Into a star-proof world he'll crawl,
Heaven insured from accident.

THE WORKER AND THE TRAMP

Heaven bless you, my friend —
   You, the man who won't sweat;
Here's a quarter to spend.
If you did but mend,
   My job you would get; —
Heaven bless you, my friend. —
On you I depend
   For my work, don't forget; —
Here's a quarter to spend.
My hand I extend,
   For I love you, you bet: —
Here's a quarter to spend.
Ah! you comprehend
   That I owe a debt;
Heaven bless you, my friend,
Here's a quarter to spend.

WHEN ALL THE WORLD SHOUTED MY NAME

When all the world shouted my name,
Did, I remember you, dear friend?
You, who "by closest "bonds could claim
My memory? Yes, in the end,

When all the world no longer cried
My name, but mocked my nakedness,
Spat In my face, and sneered, and lied,
And damned in very wantoness.

You---why it seems but yesterday,
We cradled, in the self-same nook,
And dreamed, as foolish childhood may,
Of Life's great game, and undertook
Wild, youthful oaths--swore full and strong,
To share alike each joy and. pain,
To face the utmost, right the wrong,
Let nothing come between us twain.

And, then---our paths did twist apart.
You led your uneventful life
In quiet places, played your part
Softly, took to your breast a wife,
Whose soul was so attuned to yours,
That hand in hand---nor vain the guest---
You sought, you found the golden shores,
The Happy Islands of the Blest.

Not so with me: I trod the path
Of my own choosing--and alone.
Naught could obstruct my course---the wrath
Of men, tile hot curse, nor the moan
Of those who sank beneath my arm,
Could stay my arm, or ease the blow.
I grasped for greater things--the charm
Of life like yours I did not know.

A score of phantoms did I chase,
And when, in turn, each grasped, in hand,
I paused a moment from the race,
Panting, I could not understand---
They were but phantoms, nothing more;
The time had passed, I could not joy

In what I had so struggled for---
A bright bauble---a pretty toy.

Success did crown my every effort;
But herein lay the great mistake---
I, who from all things could extort
Subservience, did, not partake
Of the reward until too late;
When I at last did grasp the thing
For which I strove, it was my fate
To find desire had taken wing.

WHERE THE RAINBOW FELL

(January 1899)

Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I knew I would find a treasure of gold,
So I clambered over the fence pell mell,
Just over the way where the rainbow fell;
But I promised her I never would tell,
And I know if I tell you'll tell her I told.
Just over the way where the rainbow fell,
I certainly found a treasure of gold.

YOUR KISS

Your kiss, "beloved, was to me
As if all flowers of Araby,
And every fresh and fragrant rose
That ever blew, shall blow, or blows
Had all her sweetness taken up
And poured into one perfect cup
For me to drain . . .
Kiss me again!

The Memoirs

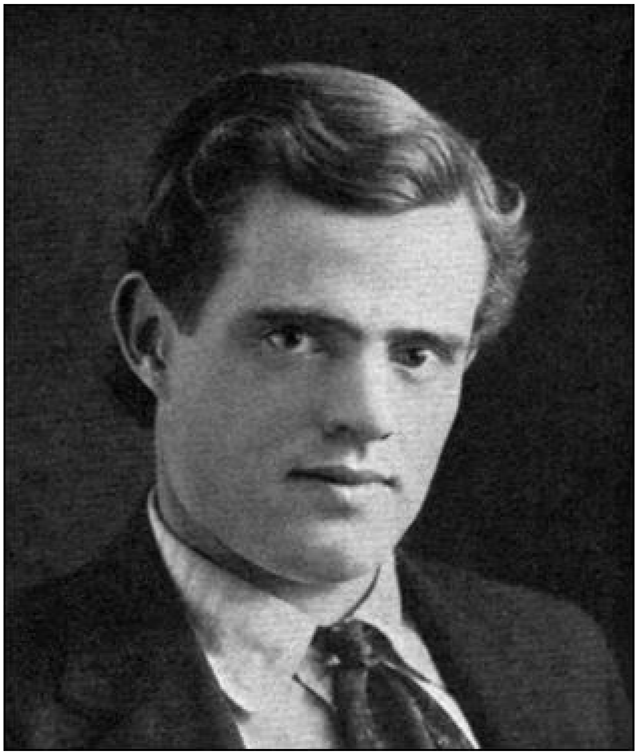

THE ROAD

This is London’s first memoir, which was published in 1907.

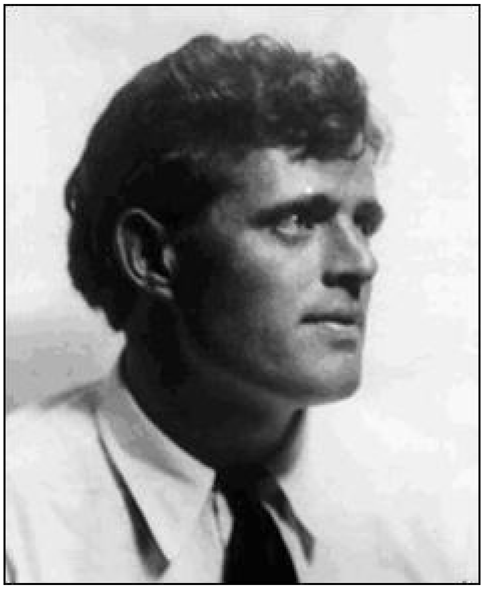

London, close to the time of publication

THE ROAD

CONTENTS

Confession
Holding Her Down
Pictures
“Pinched”
The Pen
Hoboes That Pass in the Night
Road-Kids and Gay-Cats
Two Thousand Stiffs
Bulls

“Speakin’ in general, I ‘ave tried ‘em all,
The ‘appy roads that take you o’er the world.
Speakin’ in general, I ‘ave found them good
For such as cannot use one bed too long,
But must get ‘ence, the same as I ‘ave done,
An’ go observin’ matters till they die.”
— *Sestina of the Tramp-Royal*

Confession

There is a woman in the state of Nevada to whom I once lied continuously, consistently, and shamelessly, for the matter of a couple of hours. I don’t want to apologize to her. Far be it from me. But I do want to explain. Unfortunately, I do not know her name, much less her present address. If her eyes should chance upon these lines, I hope she will write to me.

It was in Reno, Nevada, in the summer of 1892. Also, it was fair-time, and the town was filled with petty crooks and tin-horns, to say nothing of a vast and hungry horde of hoboes. It was the hungry hoboes that made the town a “hungry” town. They “battered” the back doors of the homes of the citizens until the back doors became unresponsive.

A hard town for “scoffings,” was what the hoboes called it at that time. I know that I missed many a meal, in spite of the fact that I could “throw my feet” with the next one when it came to “slamming a gate” for a “poke-out” or a “set-down,” or hitting for a “light piece” on the street. Why, I was so hard put in that town, one day, that I gave the porter the slip and invaded the private car of some itinerant millionnaire. The train started as I made the platform, and I headed for the aforesaid millionnaire with the porter one jump behind and reaching for me. It was a dead heat, for I reached the millionnaire at the same instant that the porter reached me. I had no time for formalities. “Gimme a quarter to eat on,” I blurted out. And as I live, that millionnaire dipped into his pocket and gave me ... just ... precisely ... a quarter. It is my conviction that he was so flabbergasted that he obeyed automatically, and it has been a matter of keen regret ever since, on my part, that I didn’t ask him for a dollar. I know that I’d have got it. I swung off the platform of that private car with the porter manoeuvring to kick me in the face. He missed me. One is at a terrible disadvantage when trying to swing off the lowest step of a car and not break his neck on the right of way, with, at the same time, an irate Ethiopian on the platform above trying to land him in the face with a number eleven. But I got the quarter! I got it!

But to return to the woman to whom I so shamelessly lied. It was in the evening of my last day in Reno. I had been out to the race-track watching the ponies run, and had missed my dinner (*i.e.* the mid-day meal). I was hungry, and, furthermore, a committee of public safety had just been organized to rid the town of just such hungry mortals as I. Already a lot of my brother hoboes had been gathered in by John Law, and I could hear the sunny valleys of California calling to me over the cold crests of the Sierras. Two acts remained for me to perform before I shook the dust of Reno from my feet. One was to catch the blind baggage on the westbound overland that night. The other was first to get something to eat. Even youth will hesitate at an all-night ride, on an empty stomach, outside a train that is tearing the atmosphere through the snow-sheds, tunnels, and eternal snows of heaven-aspiring mountains.

But that something to eat was a hard proposition. I was “turned down” at a dozen houses. Sometimes I received insulting remarks and was informed of the barred domicile that should be mine if I had my just deserts. The worst of it was that such assertions were only too true. That was why I was pulling west that night. John Law was abroad in the town, seeking eagerly for the hungry and homeless, for by such was his barred domicile tenanted.

At other houses the doors were slammed in my face, cutting short my politely and humbly couched request for something to eat. At one house they did not open the door. I stood on the porch and knocked, and they looked out at me through the window. They even held one sturdy little boy aloft so that he could see over the shoulders of his elders the tramp who wasn’t going to get anything to eat at their house.

It began to look as if I should be compelled to go to the very poor for my food. The very poor constitute the last sure recourse of the hungry tramp. The very poor can always be depended upon. They never turn away the hungry. Time and again, all over the United States, have I been refused food by the big house on the hill; and always have I received food from the little shack down by the creek or marsh, with its broken windows stuffed with rags and its tired-faced mother broken with labor. Oh, you charity-mongers! Go to the poor and learn, for the poor alone are the charitable. They neither give nor withhold from their excess. They have no excess. They give, and they withhold never, from what they need for themselves, and very often from what they cruelly need for themselves. A bone to the dog is not charity. Charity is the bone shared with the dog when you are just as hungry as the dog.

There was one house in particular where I was turned down that evening. The porch windows opened on the dining room, and through them I saw a man eating pie — a big meat-pie. I stood in the open door, and while he talked with me, he went on eating. He was prosperous, and out of his prosperity had been bred resentment against his less fortunate brothers.

He cut short my request for something to eat, snapping out, “I don’t believe you want to work.”

Now this was irrelevant. I hadn’t said anything about work. The topic of conversation I had introduced was “food.” In fact, I didn’t want to work. I wanted to take the westbound overland that night.

“You wouldn’t work if you had a chance,” he bullied.

I glanced at his meek-faced wife, and knew that but for the presence of this Cerberus I’d have a whack at that meat-pie myself. But Cerberus sopped himself in the pie, and I saw that I must placate him if I were to get a share of it. So I sighed to myself and accepted his work-morality.

“Of course I want work,” I bluffed.

“Don’t believe it,” he snorted.

“Try me,” I answered, warming to the bluff.

“All right,” he said. “Come to the corner of blank and blank streets” — (I have forgotten the address) — ”to-morrow morning. You know where that burned building is, and I’ll put you to work tossing bricks.”

“All right, sir; I’ll be there.”

He grunted and went on eating. I waited. After a couple of minutes he looked up with an I-thought-you-were-gone expression on his face, and demanded: —

“Well?”

“I ... I am waiting for something to eat,” I said gently.

“I knew you wouldn’t work!” he roared.

He was right, of course; but his conclusion must have been reached by mind-reading, for his logic wouldn’t bear it out. But the beggar at the door must be humble, so I accepted his logic as I had accepted his morality.

“You see, I am now hungry,” I said still gently. “To-morrow morning I shall be hungrier. Think how hungry I shall be when I have tossed bricks all day without anything to eat. Now if you will give me something to eat, I'll be in great shape for those bricks."

He gravely considered my plea, at the same time going on eating, while his wife nearly trembled into propitiatory speech, but refrained.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said between mouthfuls. "You come to work to-morrow, and in the middle of the day I'll advance you enough for your dinner. That will show whether you are in earnest or not."

"In the meantime — " I began; but he interrupted.

"If I gave you something to eat now, I'd never see you again. Oh, I know your kind. Look at me. I owe no man. I have never descended so low as to ask any one for food. I have always earned my food. The trouble with you is that you are idle and dissolute. I can see it in your face. I have worked and been honest. I have made myself what I am. And you can do the same, if you work and are honest."

"Like you?" I queried.

Alas, no ray of humor had ever penetrated the sombre work-sodden soul of that man.

"Yes, like me," he answered.

"All of us?" I queried.

"Yes, all of you," he answered, conviction vibrating in his voice.

"But if we all became like you," I said, "allow me to point out that there'd be nobody to toss bricks for you."

I swear there was a flicker of a smile in his wife's eye. As for him, he was aghast — but whether at the awful possibility of a reformed humanity that would not enable him to get anybody to toss bricks for him, or at my impudence, I shall never know.

"I'll not waste words on you," he roared. "Get out of here, you ungrateful whelp!"

I scraped my feet to advertise my intention of going, and queried: —

"And I don't get anything to eat?"

He arose suddenly to his feet. He was a large man. I was a stranger in a strange land, and John Law was looking for me. I went away hurriedly. "But why ungrateful?" I asked myself as I slammed his gate. "What in the dickens did he give me to be ungrateful about?" I looked back. I could still see him through the window. He had returned to his pie.

By this time I had lost heart. I passed many houses by without venturing up to them. All houses looked alike, and none looked "good." After walking half a dozen blocks I shook off my despondency and gathered my "nerve." This begging for food was all a game, and if I didn't like the cards, I could always call for a new deal. I made up my mind to tackle the next house. I approached it in the deepening twilight, going around to the kitchen door.

I knocked softly, and when I saw the kind face of the middle-aged woman who answered, as by inspiration came to me the "story" I was to tell. For know that upon his ability to tell a good story depends the success of the beggar. First of all, and on the instant, the beggar must "size up" his victim. After that, he must tell a story that will appeal to the peculiar personality and temperament of that particular victim. And right here arises the great difficulty: in the instant that he is sizing up the victim he must begin his story. Not a minute is allowed for preparation. As in a lightning flash he must divine the nature of the victim and conceive a tale that will hit home. The successful hobo must be an artist. He must create spontaneously and instantaneously — and not upon a theme selected from the plenitude of his own imagination, but upon the theme he reads in the face of the person who opens the door, be it man, woman, or child, sweet or crabbed, generous or miserly, good-natured or cantankerous, Jew or Gentile, black or white, race-prejudiced or brotherly, provincial or universal, or whatever else it may be. I have often thought that to this training of my tramp days is due much of my success as a story-writer. In order to get the food whereby I lived, I was compelled to tell tales that rang true. At the back door, out of inexorable necessity, is developed the convincingness and sincerity laid down by all authorities on the art of the short-story. Also, I quite believe it was my tramp-apprenticeship that made a realist out of me. Realism constitutes the only goods one can exchange at the kitchen door for grub.

After all, art is only consummate artfulness, and artfulness saves many a "story." I remember lying in a police station at Winnipeg, Manitoba. I was bound west over the Canadian Pacific. Of course, the police wanted my story, and I gave it to them — on the spur of the moment. They were landlubbers, in the heart of the continent, and what better story for them than a sea story? They could never trip me up on that. And so I told a tearful tale of my life on the hell-ship *Glenmore*. (I had once seen the *Glenmore* lying at anchor in San Francisco Bay.)

I was an English apprentice, I said. And they said that I didn't talk like an English boy. It was up to me to create on the instant. I had been born and reared in the United States. On the death of my parents, I had been sent to

England to my grandparents. It was they who had apprenticed me on the *Glenmore*. I hope the captain of the *Glenmore* will forgive me, for I gave him a character that night in the Winnipeg police station. Such cruelty! Such brutality! Such diabolical ingenuity of torture! It explained why I had deserted the *Glenmore* at Montreal.

But why was I in the middle of Canada going west, when my grandparents lived in England? Promptly I created a married sister who lived in California. She would take care of me. I developed at length her loving nature. But they were not done with me, those hard-hearted policemen. I had joined the *Glenmore* in England; in the two years that had elapsed before my desertion at Montreal, what had the *Glenmore* done and where had she been? And thereat I took those landlubbers around the world with me. Buffeted by pounding seas and stung with flying spray, they fought a typhoon with me off the coast of Japan. They loaded and unloaded cargo with me in all the ports of the Seven Seas. I took them to India, and Rangoon, and China, and had them hammer ice with me around the Horn and at last come to moorings at Montreal.

And then they said to wait a moment, and one policeman went forth into the night while I warmed myself at the stove, all the while racking my brains for the trap they were going to spring on me.

I groaned to myself when I saw him come in the door at the heels of the policeman. No gypsy prank had thrust those tiny hoops of gold through the ears; no prairie winds had beaten that skin into wrinkled leather; nor had snow-drift and mountain-slope put in his walk that reminiscent roll. And in those eyes, when they looked at me, I saw the unmistakable sun-wash of the sea. Here was a theme, alas! with half a dozen policemen to watch me read — I who had never sailed the China seas, nor been around the Horn, nor looked with my eyes upon India and Rangoon.

I was desperate. Disaster stalked before me incarnate in the form of that gold-ear-ringed, weather-beaten son of the sea. Who was he? What was he? I must solve him ere he solved me. I must take a new orientation, or else those wicked policemen would orientate me to a cell, a police court, and more cells. If he questioned me first, before I knew how much he knew, I was lost.

But did I betray my desperate plight to those lynx-eyed guardians of the public welfare of Winnipeg? Not I. I met that aged sailorman glad-eyed and beaming, with all the simulated relief at deliverance that a drowning man would display on finding a life-preserver in his last despairing clutch. Here was a man who understood and who would verify my true story to the faces of those sleuth-hounds who did not understand, or, at least, such was what I endeavored to play-act. I seized upon him; I volleyed him with questions about himself. Before my judges I would prove the character of my savior before he saved me.

He was a kindly sailorman — an “easy mark.” The policemen grew impatient while I questioned him. At last one of them told me to shut up. I shut up; but while I remained shut up, I was busy creating, busy sketching the scenario of the next act. I had learned enough to go on with. He was a Frenchman. He had sailed always on French merchant vessels, with the one exception of a voyage on a “lime-juicer.” And last of all — blessed fact! — he had not been on the sea for twenty years.

The policeman urged him on to examine me.

“You called in at Rangoon?” he queried.

I nodded. “We put our third mate ashore there. Fever.”

If he had asked me what kind of fever, I should have answered, “Enteric,” though for the life of me I didn’t know what enteric was. But he didn’t ask me. Instead, his next question was: —

“And how is Rangoon?”

“All right. It rained a whole lot when we were there.”

“Did you get shore-leave?”

“Sure,” I answered. “Three of us apprentices went ashore together.”

“Do you remember the temple?”

“Which temple?” I parried.

“The big one, at the top of the stairway.”

If I remembered that temple, I knew I’d have to describe it. The gulf yawned for me.

I shook my head.

“You can see it from all over the harbor,” he informed me. “You don’t need shore-leave to see that temple.”

I never loathed a temple so in my life. But I fixed that particular temple at Rangoon.

“You can’t see it from the harbor,” I contradicted. “You can’t see it from the town. You can’t see it from the top of the stairway. Because — ” I paused for the effect. “Because there isn’t any temple there.”

“But I saw it with my own eyes!” he cried.

“That was in — ?” I queried.

“Seventy-one.”

“It was destroyed in the great earthquake of 1887,” I explained. “It was very old.”

There was a pause. He was busy reconstructing in his old eyes the youthful vision of that fair temple by the sea.

“The stairway is still there,” I aided him. “You can see it from all over the harbor. And you remember that little island on the right-hand side coming into the harbor?” I guess there must have been one there (I was prepared to shift it over to the left-hand side), for he nodded. “Gone,” I said. “Seven fathoms of water there now.”

I had gained a moment for breath. While he pondered on time’s changes, I prepared the finishing touches of my story.

“You remember the custom-house at Bombay?”

He remembered it.

“Burned to the ground,” I announced.

“Do you remember Jim Wan?” he came back at me.

“Dead,” I said; but who the devil Jim Wan was I hadn’t the slightest idea.

I was on thin ice again.

“Do you remember Billy Harper, at Shanghai?” I queried back at him quickly.

That aged sailorman worked hard to recollect, but the Billy Harper of my imagination was beyond his faded memory.

“Of course you remember Billy Harper,” I insisted. “Everybody knows him. He’s been there forty years. Well, he’s still there, that’s all.”

And then the miracle happened. The sailorman remembered Billy Harper. Perhaps there was a Billy Harper, and perhaps he had been in Shanghai for forty years and was still there; but it was news to me.

For fully half an hour longer, the sailorman and I talked on in similar fashion. In the end he told the policemen that I was what I represented myself to be, and after a night’s lodging and a breakfast I was released to wander on westward to my married sister in San Francisco.

But to return to the woman in Reno who opened her door to me in the deepening twilight. At the first glimpse of her kindly face I took my cue. I became a sweet, innocent, unfortunate lad. I couldn’t speak. I opened my mouth and closed it again. Never in my life before had I asked any one for food. My embarrassment was painful, extreme. I was ashamed. I, who looked upon begging as a delightful whimsicality, thumbed myself over into a true son of Mrs. Grundy, burdened with all her bourgeois morality. Only the harsh pangs of the belly-need could compel me to do so degraded and ignoble a thing as beg for food. And into my face I strove to throw all the wan wistfulness of famished and ingenuous youth unused to mendicancy.

“You are hungry, my poor boy,” she said.

I had made her speak first.

I nodded my head and gulped.

“It is the first time I have ever ... asked,” I faltered.

“Come right in.” The door swung open. “We have already finished eating, but the fire is burning and I can get something up for you.”

She looked at me closely when she got me into the light.

“I wish my boy were as healthy and strong as you,” she said. “But he is not strong. He sometimes falls down. He just fell down this afternoon and hurt himself badly, the poor dear.”

She mothered him with her voice, with an ineffable tenderness in it that I yearned to appropriate. I glanced at him. He sat across the table, slender and pale, his head swathed in bandages. He did not move, but his eyes, bright in the lamplight, were fixed upon me in a steady and wondering stare.

“Just like my poor father,” I said. “He had the falling sickness. Some kind of vertigo. It puzzled the doctors. They never could make out what was the matter with him.”

“He is dead?” she queried gently, setting before me half a dozen soft-boiled eggs.

“Dead,” I gulped. “Two weeks ago. I was with him when it happened. We were crossing the street together. He fell right down. He was never conscious again. They carried him into a drug-store. He died there.”

And thereat I developed the pitiful tale of my father — how, after my mother’s death, he and I had gone to San Francisco from the ranch; how his pension (he was an old soldier), and the little other money he had, was not enough; and how he had tried book-canvassing. Also, I narrated my own woes during the few days after his death that I had spent alone and forlorn on the streets of San Francisco. While that good woman warmed up biscuits, fried bacon, and cooked more eggs, and while I kept pace with her in taking care of all that she placed before me, I enlarged the picture of that poor orphan boy and filled in the details. I became that poor boy. I believed in him as I believed in the beautiful eggs I was devouring. I could have wept for myself. I know the tears did get into my voice at times. It was very effective.

In fact, with every touch I added to the picture, that kind soul gave me something also. She made up a lunch for me to carry away. She put in many boiled eggs, pepper and salt, and other things, and a big apple. She provided me with three pairs of thick red woollen socks. She gave me clean handkerchiefs and other things which I have since forgotten. And all the time she cooked more and more and I ate more and more. I gorged like a savage; but then it was a far cry across the Sierras on a blind baggage, and I knew not when nor where I should find my next meal. And all the while, like a death's-head at the feast, silent and motionless, her own unfortunate boy sat and stared at me across the table. I suppose I represented to him mystery, and romance, and adventure — all that was denied the feeble flicker of life that was in him. And yet I could not forbear, once or twice, from wondering if he saw through me down to the bottom of my mendacious heart.

"But where are you going to?" she asked me.

"Salt Lake City," said I. "I have a sister there — a married sister." (I debated if I should make a Mormon out of her, and decided against it.) "Her husband is a plumber — a contracting plumber."

Now I knew that contracting plumbers were usually credited with making lots of money. But I had spoken. It was up to me to qualify.

"They would have sent me the money for my fare if I had asked for it," I explained, "but they have had sickness and business troubles. His partner cheated him. And so I wouldn't write for the money. I knew I could make my way there somehow. I let them think I had enough to get me to Salt Lake City. She is lovely, and so kind. She was always kind to me. I guess I'll go into the shop and learn the trade. She has two daughters. They are younger than I. One is only a baby."

Of all my married sisters that I have distributed among the cities of the United States, that Salt Lake sister is my favorite. She is quite real, too. When I tell about her, I can see her, and her two little girls, and her plumber husband. She is a large, motherly woman, just verging on beneficent stoutness — the kind, you know, that always cooks nice things and that never gets angry. She is a brunette. Her husband is a quiet, easy-going fellow. Sometimes I almost know him quite well. And who knows but some day I may meet him? If that aged sailorman could remember Billy Harper, I see no reason why I should not some day meet the husband of my sister who lives in Salt Lake City.

On the other hand, I have a feeling of certitude within me that I shall never meet in the flesh my many parents and grandparents — you see, I invariably killed them off. Heart disease was my favorite way of getting rid of my mother, though on occasion I did away with her by means of consumption, pneumonia, and typhoid fever. It is true, as the Winnipeg policemen will attest, that I have grandparents living in England; but that was a long time ago and it is a fair assumption that they are dead by now. At any rate, they have never written to me.

I hope that woman in Reno will read these lines and forgive me my gracelessness and unveracity. I do not apologize, for I am unashamed. It was youth, delight in life, zest for experience, that brought me to her door. It did me good. It taught me the intrinsic kindliness of human nature. I hope it did her good. Anyway, she may get a good laugh out of it now that she learns the real inwardness of the situation.

To her my story was “true.” She believed in me and all my family, and she was filled with solicitude for the dangerous journey I must make ere I won to Salt Lake City. This solicitude nearly brought me to grief. Just as I was leaving, my arms full of lunch and my pockets bulging with fat woollen socks, she bethought herself of a nephew, or uncle, or relative of some sort, who was in the railway mail service, and who, moreover, would come through that night on the very train on which I was going to steal my ride. The very thing! She would take me down to the depot, tell him my story, and get him to hide me in the mail car. Thus, without danger or hardship, I would be carried straight through to Ogden. Salt Lake City was only a few miles farther on. My heart sank. She grew excited as she developed the plan and with my sinking heart I had to feign unbounded gladness and enthusiasm at this solution of my difficulties.

Solution! Why I was bound west that night, and here was I being trapped into going east. It *was* a trap, and I hadn’t the heart to tell her that it was all a miserable lie. And while I made believe that I was delighted, I was busy cudgelling my brains for some way to escape. But there was no way. She would see me into the mail-car — she said so herself — and then that mail-clerk relative of hers would carry me to Ogden. And then I would have to beat my way back over all those hundreds of miles of desert.

But luck was with me that night. Just about the time she was getting ready to put on her bonnet and accompany me, she discovered that she had made a mistake. Her mail-clerk relative was not scheduled to come through that night. His run had been changed. He would not come through until two nights afterward. I was saved, for of course my boundless youth would never permit me to wait those two days. I optimistically assured her that I'd get to Salt Lake City quicker if I started immediately, and I departed with her blessings and best wishes ringing in my ears.

But those woollen socks were great. I know. I wore a pair of them that night on the blind baggage of the overland, and that overland went west.

Holding Her Down

Barring accidents, a good hobo, with youth and agility, can hold a train down despite all the efforts of the train-crew to “ditch” him — given, of course, night-time as an essential condition. When such a hobo, under such conditions, makes up his mind that he is going to hold her down, either he does hold her down, or chance trips him up. There is no legitimate way, short of murder, whereby the train-crew can ditch him. That train-crews have not stopped short of murder is a current belief in the tramp world. Not having had that particular experience in my tramp days I cannot vouch for it personally.

But this I have heard of the “bad” roads. When a tramp has “gone underneath,” on the rods, and the train is in motion, there is apparently no way of dislodging him until the train stops. The tramp, snugly ensconced inside the truck, with the four wheels and all the framework around him, has the “cinch” on the crew — or so he thinks, until some day he rides the rods on a bad road. A bad road is usually one on which a short time previously one or several trainmen have been killed by tramps. Heaven pity the tramp who is caught “underneath” on such a road — for caught he is, though the train be going sixty miles an hour.

The “shack” (brakeman) takes a coupling-pin and a length of bell-cord to the platform in front of the truck in which the tramp is riding. The shack fastens the coupling-pin to the bell-cord, drops the former down between the platforms, and pays out the latter. The coupling-pin strikes the ties between the rails, rebounds against the bottom of the car, and again strikes the ties. The shack plays it back and forth, now to this side, now to the other, lets it out a bit and hauls it in a bit, giving his weapon opportunity for every variety of impact and rebound. Every blow of that flying coupling-pin is freighted with death, and at sixty miles an hour it beats a veritable tattoo of death. The next day the remains of that tramp are gathered up along the right of way, and a line in the local paper mentions the unknown man, undoubtedly a tramp, assumably drunk, who had probably fallen asleep on the track.

As a characteristic illustration of how a capable hobo can hold her down, I am minded to give the following experience. I was in Ottawa, bound west over the Canadian Pacific. Three thousand miles of that road stretched before me; it was the fall of the year, and I had to cross Manitoba and the

Rocky Mountains. I could expect “crimpy” weather, and every moment of delay increased the frigid hardships of the journey. Furthermore, I was disgusted. The distance between Montreal and Ottawa is one hundred and twenty miles. I ought to know, for I had just come over it and it had taken me six days. By mistake I had missed the main line and come over a small “jerk” with only two locals a day on it. And during these six days I had lived on dry crusts, and not enough of them, begged from the French peasants.

Furthermore, my disgust had been heightened by the one day I had spent in Ottawa trying to get an outfit of clothing for my long journey. Let me put it on record right here that Ottawa, with one exception, is the hardest town in the United States and Canada to beg clothes in; the one exception is Washington, D.C. The latter fair city is the limit. I spent two weeks there trying to beg a pair of shoes, and then had to go on to Jersey City before I got them.

But to return to Ottawa. At eight sharp in the morning I started out after clothes. I worked energetically all day. I swear I walked forty miles. I interviewed the housewives of a thousand homes. I did not even knock off work for dinner. And at six in the afternoon, after ten hours of unremitting and depressing toil, I was still shy one shirt, while the pair of trousers I had managed to acquire was tight and, moreover, was showing all the signs of an early disintegration.

At six I quit work and headed for the railroad yards, expecting to pick up something to eat on the way. But my hard luck was still with me. I was refused food at house after house. Then I got a “hand-out.” My spirits soared, for it was the largest hand-out I had ever seen in a long and varied experience. It was a parcel wrapped in newspapers and as big as a mature suit-case. I hurried to a vacant lot and opened it. First, I saw cake, then more cake, all kinds and makes of cake, and then some. It was all cake. No bread and butter with thick firm slices of meat between — nothing but cake; and I who of all things abhorred cake most! In another age and clime they sat down by the waters of Babylon and wept. And in a vacant lot in Canada’s proud capital, I, too, sat down and wept ... over a mountain of cake. As one looks upon the face of his dead son, so looked I upon that multitudinous pastry. I suppose I was an ungrateful tramp, for I refused to partake of the bounteousness of the house that had had a party the night before. Evidently the guests hadn’t liked cake either.

That cake marked the crisis in my fortunes. Than it nothing could be worse; therefore things must begin to mend. And they did. At the very next house I was given a "set-down." Now a "set-down" is the height of bliss. One is taken inside, very often is given a chance to wash, and is then "set-down" at a table. Tramps love to throw their legs under a table. The house was large and comfortable, in the midst of spacious grounds and fine trees, and sat well back from the street. They had just finished eating, and I was taken right into the dining room — in itself a most unusual happening, for the tramp who is lucky enough to win a set-down usually receives it in the kitchen. A grizzled and gracious Englishman, his matronly wife, and a beautiful young Frenchwoman talked with me while I ate.

I wonder if that beautiful young Frenchwoman would remember, at this late day, the laugh I gave her when I uttered the barbaric phrase, "two-bits." You see, I was trying delicately to hit them for a "light piece." That was how the sum of money came to be mentioned. "What?" she said. "Two-bits," said I. Her mouth was twitching as she again said, "What?" "Two-bits," said I. Whereat she burst into laughter. "Won't you repeat it?" she said, when she had regained control of herself. "Two-bits," said I. And once more she rippled into uncontrollable silvery laughter. "I beg your pardon," said she; "but what ... what was it you said?" "Two-bits," said I; "is there anything wrong about it?" "Not that I know of," she gurgled between gasps; "but what does it mean?" I explained, but I do not remember now whether or not I got that two-bits out of her; but I have often wondered since as to which of us was the provincial.

When I arrived at the depot, I found, much to my disgust, a bunch of at least twenty tramps that were waiting to ride out the blind baggages of the overland. Now two or three tramps on the blind baggage are all right. They are inconspicuous. But a score! That meant trouble. No train-crew would ever let all of us ride.

I may as well explain here what a blind baggage is. Some mail-cars are built without doors in the ends; hence, such a car is "blind." The mail-cars that possess end doors, have those doors always locked. Suppose, after the train has started, that a tramp gets on to the platform of one of these blind cars. There is no door, or the door is locked. No conductor or brakeman can get to him to collect fare or throw him off. It is clear that the tramp is safe until the next time the train stops. Then he must get off, run ahead in the darkness, and when the train pulls by, jump on to the blind again. But there are ways and ways, as you shall see.

When the train pulled out, those twenty tramps swarmed upon the three blinds. Some climbed on before the train had run a car-length. They were awkward dubs, and I saw their speedy finish. Of course, the train-crew was "on," and at the first stop the trouble began. I jumped off and ran forward along the track. I noticed that I was accompanied by a number of the tramps. They evidently knew their business. When one is beating an overland, he must always keep well ahead of the train at the stops. I ran ahead, and as I ran, one by one those that accompanied me dropped out. This dropping out was the measure of their skill and nerve in boarding a train.

For this is the way it works. When the train starts, the shack rides out the blind. There is no way for him to get back into the train proper except by jumping off the blind and catching a platform where the car-ends are not "blind." When the train is going as fast as the shack cares to risk, he therefore jumps off the blind, lets several cars go by, and gets on to the train. So it is up to the tramp to run so far ahead that before the blind is opposite him the shack will have already vacated it.

I dropped the last tramp by about fifty feet, and waited. The train started. I saw the lantern of the shack on the first blind. He was riding her out. And I saw the dubs stand forlornly by the track as the blind went by. They made no attempt to get on. They were beaten by their own inefficiency at the very start. After them, in the line-up, came the tramps that knew a little something about the game. They let the first blind, occupied by the shack, go by, and jumped on the second and third blinds. Of course, the shack jumped off the first and on to the second as it went by, and scrambled around there, throwing off the men who had boarded it. But the point is that I was so far ahead that when the first blind came opposite me, the shack had already left it and was tangled up with the tramps on the second blind. A half dozen of the more skilful tramps, who had run far enough ahead, made the first blind, too.

At the next stop, as we ran forward along the track, I counted but fifteen of us. Five had been ditched. The weeding-out process had begun nobly, and it continued station by station. Now we were fourteen, now twelve, now eleven, now nine, now eight. It reminded me of the ten little niggers of the nursery rhyme. I was resolved that I should be the last little nigger of all.

And why not? Was I not blessed with strength, agility, and youth? (I was eighteen, and in perfect condition.) And didn't I have my "nerve" with me? And furthermore, was I not a tramp-royal? Were not these other tramps mere dubs and "gay-cats" and amateurs alongside of me? If I weren't the last little nigger, I might as well quit the game and get a job on an alfalfa farm somewhere.

By the time our number had been reduced to four, the whole train-crew had become interested. From then on it was a contest of skill and wits, with the odds in favor of the crew. One by one the three other survivors turned up missing, until I alone remained. My, but I was proud of myself! No Croesus was ever prouder of his first million. I was holding her down in spite of two brakemen, a conductor, a fireman, and an engineer.

And here are a few samples of the way I held her down. Out ahead, in the darkness, — so far ahead that the shack riding out the blind must perforce get off before it reaches me, — I get on. Very well. I am good for another station. When that station is reached, I dart ahead again to repeat the manoeuvre. The train pulls out. I watch her coming. There is no light of a lantern on the blind. Has the crew abandoned the fight? I do not know. One never knows, and one must be prepared every moment for anything. As the first blind comes opposite me, and I run to leap aboard, I strain my eyes to see if the shack is on the platform. For all I know he may be there, with his lantern doused, and even as I spring upon the steps that lantern may smash down upon my head. I ought to know. I have been hit by lanterns two or three times.

But no, the first blind is empty. The train is gathering speed. I am safe for another station. But am I? I feel the train slacken speed. On the instant I am alert. A manoeuvre is being executed against me, and I do not know what it is. I try to watch on both sides at once, not forgetting to keep track of the tender in front of me. From any one, or all, of these three directions, I may be assailed.

Ah, there it comes. The shack has ridden out the engine. My first warning is when his feet strike the steps of the right-hand side of the blind. Like a flash I am off the blind to the left and running ahead past the engine. I lose myself in the darkness. The situation is where it has been ever since the train left Ottawa. I am ahead, and the train must come past me if it is to proceed on its journey. I have as good a chance as ever for boarding her.

I watch carefully. I see a lantern come forward to the engine, and I do not see it go back from the engine. It must therefore be still on the engine, and it is a fair assumption that attached to the handle of that lantern is a shack. That shack was lazy, or else he would have put out his lantern instead of trying to shield it as he came forward. The train pulls out. The first blind is empty, and I gain it. As before the train slackens, the shack from the engine boards the blind from one side, and I go off the other side and run forward.

As I wait in the darkness I am conscious of a big thrill of pride. The overland has stopped twice for me — for me, a poor hobo on the bum. I alone have twice stopped the overland with its many passengers and coaches, its government mail, and its two thousand steam horses straining in the engine. And I weigh only one hundred and sixty pounds, and I haven't a five-cent piece in my pocket!

Again I see the lantern come forward to the engine. But this time it comes conspicuously. A bit too conspicuously to suit me, and I wonder what is up. At any rate I have something else to be afraid of than the shack on the engine. The train pulls by. Just in time, before I make my spring, I see the dark form of a shack, without a lantern, on the first blind. I let it go by, and prepare to board the second blind. But the shack on the first blind has jumped off and is at my heels. Also, I have a fleeting glimpse of the lantern of the shack who rode out the engine. He has jumped off, and now both shacks are on the ground on the same side with me. The next moment the second blind comes by and I am aboard it. But I do not linger. I have figured out my countermove. As I dash across the platform I hear the impact of the shack's feet against the steps as he boards. I jump off the other side and run forward with the train. My plan is to run forward and get on the first blind. It is nip and tuck, for the train is gathering speed. Also, the shack is behind me and running after me. I guess I am the better sprinter, for I make the first blind. I stand on the steps and watch my pursuer. He is only about ten feet back and running hard; but now the train has approximated his own speed, and, relative to me, he is standing still. I encourage him, hold out my hand to him; but he explodes in a mighty oath, gives up and makes the train several cars back.

The train is speeding along, and I am still chuckling to myself, when, without warning, a spray of water strikes me. The fireman is playing the hose on me from the engine. I step forward from the car-platform to the rear of the tender, where I am sheltered under the overhang. The water flies harmlessly over my head. My fingers itch to climb up on the tender and lam that fireman with a chunk of coal; but I know if I do that, I'll be massacred by him and the engineer, and I refrain.

At the next stop I am off and ahead in the darkness. This time, when the train pulls out, both shacks are on the first blind. I divine their game. They have blocked the repetition of my previous play. I cannot again take the second blind, cross over, and run forward to the first. As soon as the first blind passes and I do not get on, they swing off, one on each side of the train. I board the second blind, and as I do so I know that a moment later, simultaneously, those two shacks will arrive on both sides of me. It is like a trap. Both ways are blocked. Yet there is another way out, and that way is up.

So I do not wait for my pursuers to arrive. I climb upon the upright ironwork of the platform and stand upon the wheel of the hand-brake. This has taken up the moment of grace and I hear the shacks strike the steps on either side. I don't stop to look. I raise my arms overhead until my hands rest against the down-curving ends of the roofs of the two cars. One hand, of course, is on the curved roof of one car, the other hand on the curved roof of the other car. By this time both shacks are coming up the steps. I know it, though I am too busy to see them. All this is happening in the space of only several seconds. I make a spring with my legs and "muscle" myself up with my arms. As I draw up my legs, both shacks reach for me and clutch empty air. I know this, for I look down and see them. Also I hear them swear.

I am now in a precarious position, riding the ends of the down-curving roofs of two cars at the same time. With a quick, tense movement, I transfer both legs to the curve of one roof and both hands to the curve of the other roof. Then, gripping the edge of that curving roof, I climb over the curve to the level roof above, where I sit down to catch my breath, holding on the while to a ventilator that projects above the surface. I am on top of the train — on the "decks," as the tramps call it, and this process I have described is by them called "decking her." And let me say right here that only a young and vigorous tramp is able to deck a passenger train, and also, that the young and vigorous tramp must have his nerve with him as well.

The train goes on gathering speed, and I know I am safe until the next stop — but only until the next stop. If I remain on the roof after the train stops, I know those shacks will fusillade me with rocks. A healthy shack can "dewdrop" a pretty heavy chunk of stone on top of a car — say anywhere from five to twenty pounds. On the other hand, the chances are large that at the next stop the shacks will be waiting for me to descend at the place I climbed up. It is up to me to climb down at some other platform.

Registering a fervent hope that there are no tunnels in the next half mile, I rise to my feet and walk down the train half a dozen cars. And let me say that one must leave timidity behind him on such a *passear*. The roofs of passenger coaches are not made for midnight promenades. And if any one thinks they are, let me advise him to try it. Just let him walk along the roof of a jolting, lurching car, with nothing to hold on to but the black and empty air, and when he comes to the down-curving end of the roof, all wet and slippery with dew, let him accelerate his speed so as to step across to the next roof, down-curving and wet and slippery. Believe me, he will learn whether his heart is weak or his head is giddy.

As the train slows down for a stop, half a dozen platforms from where I had decked her I come down. No one is on the platform. When the train comes to a standstill, I slip off to the ground. Ahead, and between me and the engine, are two moving lanterns. The shacks are looking for me on the roofs of the cars. I note that the car beside which I am standing is a “four-wheeler” — by which is meant that it has only four wheels to each truck. (When you go underneath on the rods, be sure to avoid the “six-wheelers,” — they lead to disasters.)

I duck under the train and make for the rods, and I can tell you I am mighty glad that the train is standing still. It is the first time I have ever gone underneath on the Canadian Pacific, and the internal arrangements are new to me. I try to crawl over the top of the truck, between the truck and the bottom of the car. But the space is not large enough for me to squeeze through. This is new to me. Down in the United States I am accustomed to going underneath on rapidly moving trains, seizing a gunnel and swinging my feet under to the brake-beam, and from there crawling over the top of the truck and down inside the truck to a seat on the cross-rod.

Feeling with my hands in the darkness, I learn that there is room between the brake-beam and the ground. It is a tight squeeze. I have to lie flat and worm my way through. Once inside the truck, I take my seat on the rod and wonder what the shacks are thinking has become of me. The train gets under way. They have given me up at last.

But have they? At the very next stop, I see a lantern thrust under the next truck to mine at the other end of the car. They are searching the rods for me.

I must make my get-away pretty lively. I crawl on my stomach under the brake-beam. They see me and run for me, but I crawl on hands and knees across the rail on the opposite side and gain my feet. Then away I go for the head of the train. I run past the engine and hide in the sheltering darkness. It is the same old situation. I am ahead of the train, and the train must go past me.

The train pulls out. There is a lantern on the first blind. I lie low, and see the peering shack go by. But there is also a lantern on the second blind. That shack spots me and calls to the shack who has gone past on the first blind. Both jump off. Never mind, I'll take the third blind and deck her. But heavens, there is a lantern on the third blind, too. It is the conductor. I let it go by. At any rate I have now the full train-crew in front of me. I turn and run back in the opposite direction to what the train is going. I look over my shoulder. All three lanterns are on the ground and wobbling along in pursuit. I sprint. Half the train has gone by, and it is going quite fast, when I spring aboard. I know that the two shacks and the conductor will arrive like ravening wolves in about two seconds. I spring upon the wheel of the hand-brake, get my hands on the curved ends of the roofs, and muscle myself up to the decks; while my disappointed pursuers, clustering on the platform beneath like dogs that have treed a cat, howl curses up at me and say unsocial things about my ancestors.

But what does that matter? It is five to one, including the engineer and fireman, and the majesty of the law and the might of a great corporation are behind them, and I am beating them out. I am too far down the train, and I run ahead over the roofs of the coaches until I am over the fifth or sixth platform from the engine. I peer down cautiously. A shack is on that platform. That he has caught sight of me, I know from the way he makes a swift sneak inside the car; and I know, also, that he is waiting inside the door, all ready to pounce out on me when I climb down. But I make believe that I don't know, and I remain there to encourage him in his error. I do not see him, yet I know that he opens the door once and peeps up to assure himself that I am still there.

The train slows down for a station. I dangle my legs down in a tentative way. The train stops. My legs are still dangling. I hear the door unlatch softly. He is all ready for me. Suddenly I spring up and run forward over the roof. This is right over his head, where he lurks inside the door. The train is standing still; the night is quiet, and I take care to make plenty of noise on the metal roof with my feet. I don't know, but my assumption is that he is now running forward to catch me as I descend at the next platform. But I don't descend there. Halfway along the roof of the coach, I turn, retrace my way softly and quickly to the platform both the shack and I have just abandoned. The coast is clear. I descend to the ground on the off-side of the train and hide in the darkness. Not a soul has seen me.

I go over to the fence, at the edge of the right of way, and watch. Ah, ha! What's that? I see a lantern on top of the train, moving along from front to rear. They think I haven't come down, and they are searching the roofs for me. And better than that — on the ground on each side of the train, moving abreast with the lantern on top, are two other lanterns. It is a rabbit-drive, and I am the rabbit. When the shack on top flushes me, the ones on each side will nab me. I roll a cigarette and watch the procession go by. Once past me, I am safe to proceed to the front of the train. She pulls out, and I make the front blind without opposition. But before she is fully under way and just as I am lighting my cigarette, I am aware that the fireman has climbed over the coal to the back of the tender and is looking down at me. I am filled with apprehension. From his position he can mash me to a jelly with lumps of coal. Instead of which he addresses me, and I note with relief the admiration in his voice.

"You son-of-a-gun," is what he says.

It is a high compliment, and I thrill as a schoolboy thrills on receiving a reward of merit.

"Say," I call up to him, "don't you play the hose on me any more."

"All right," he answers, and goes back to his work.

I have made friends with the engine, but the shacks are still looking for me. At the next stop, the shacks ride out all three blinds, and as before, I let them go by and deck in the middle of the train. The crew is on its mettle by now, and the train stops. The shacks are going to ditch me or know the reason why. Three times the mighty overland stops for me at that station, and each time I elude the shacks and make the decks. But it is hopeless, for they have finally come to an understanding of the situation. I have taught them that they cannot guard the train from me. They must do something else.

And they do it. When the train stops that last time, they take after me hot-footed. Ah, I see their game. They are trying to run me down. At first they herd me back toward the rear of the train. I know my peril. Once to the rear of the train, it will pull out with me left behind. I double, and twist, and turn, dodge through my pursuers, and gain the front of the train. One shack still hangs on after me. All right, I'll give him the run of his life, for my wind is good. I run straight ahead along the track. It doesn't matter. If he chases me ten miles, he'll nevertheless have to catch the train, and I can board her at any speed that he can.

So I run on, keeping just comfortably ahead of him and straining my eyes in the gloom for cattle-guards and switches that may bring me to grief. Alas! I strain my eyes too far ahead, and trip over something just under my feet, I know not what, some little thing, and go down to earth in a long, stumbling fall. The next moment I am on my feet, but the shack has me by the collar. I do not struggle. I am busy with breathing deeply and with sizing him up. He is narrow-shouldered, and I have at least thirty pounds the better of him in weight. Besides, he is just as tired as I am, and if he tries to slug me, I'll teach him a few things.

But he doesn't try to slug me, and that problem is settled. Instead, he starts to lead me back toward the train, and another possible problem arises. I see the lanterns of the conductor and the other shack. We are approaching them. Not for nothing have I made the acquaintance of the New York police. Not for nothing, in box-cars, by water-tanks, and in prison-cells, have I listened to bloody tales of man-handling. What if these three men are about to man-handle me? Heaven knows I have given them provocation enough. I think quickly. We are drawing nearer and nearer to the other two trainmen. I line up the stomach and the jaw of my captor, and plan the right and left I'll give him at the first sign of trouble.

Pshaw! I know another trick I'd like to work on him, and I almost regret that I did not do it at the moment I was captured. I could make him sick, what of his clutch on my collar. His fingers, tight-gripping, are buried inside my collar. My coat is tightly buttoned. Did you ever see a tourniquet? Well, this is one. All I have to do is to duck my head under his arm and begin to twist. I must twist rapidly — very rapidly. I know how to do it; twisting in a violent, jerky way, ducking my head under his arm with each revolution. Before he knows it, those detaining fingers of his will be detained. He will be unable to withdraw them. It is a powerful leverage. Twenty seconds after I have started revolving, the blood will be bursting out of his finger-ends, the delicate tendons will be rupturing, and all the muscles and nerves will be mashing and crushing together in a shrieking mass. Try it sometime when somebody has you by the collar. But be quick — quick as lightning. Also, be sure to hug yourself while you are revolving — hug your face with your left arm and your abdomen with your right. You see, the other fellow might try to stop you with a punch from his free arm. It would be a good idea, too, to revolve away from that free arm rather than toward it. A punch going is never so bad as a punch coming.

That shack will never know how near he was to being made very, very sick. All that saves him is that it is not in their plan to man-handle me. When we draw near enough, he calls out that he has me, and they signal the train to come on. The engine passes us, and the three blinds. After that, the conductor and the other shack swing aboard. But still my captor holds on to me. I see the plan. He is going to hold me until the rear of the train goes by. Then he will hop on, and I shall be left behind — ditched.

But the train has pulled out fast, the engineer trying to make up for lost time. Also, it is a long train. It is going very lively, and I know the shack is measuring its speed with apprehension.

“Think you can make it?” I query innocently.

He releases my collar, makes a quick run, and swings aboard. A number of coaches are yet to pass by. He knows it, and remains on the steps, his head poked out and watching me. In that moment my next move comes to me. I’ll make the last platform. I know she’s going fast and faster, but I’ll only get a roll in the dirt if I fail, and the optimism of youth is mine. I do not give myself away. I stand with a dejected droop of shoulder, advertising that I have abandoned hope. But at the same time I am feeling with my feet the good gravel. It is perfect footing. Also I am watching the poked-out head of the shack. I see it withdrawn. He is confident that the train is going too fast for me ever to make it.

And the train *is* going fast — faster than any train I have ever tackled. As the last coach comes by I sprint in the same direction with it. It is a swift, short sprint. I cannot hope to equal the speed of the train, but I can reduce the difference of our speed to the minimum, and, hence, reduce the shock of impact, when I leap on board. In the fleeting instant of darkness I do not see the iron hand-rail of the last platform; nor is there time for me to locate it. I reach for where I think it ought to be, and at the same instant my feet leave the ground. It is all in the toss. The next moment I may be rolling in the gravel with broken ribs, or arms, or head. But my fingers grip the hand-hold, there is a jerk on my arms that slightly pivots my body, and my feet land on the steps with sharp violence.

I sit down, feeling very proud of myself. In all my hoboing it is the best bit of train-jumping I have done. I know that late at night one is always good for several stations on the last platform, but I do not care to trust myself at the rear of the train. At the first stop I run forward on the off-side of the train, pass the Pullmans, and duck under and take a rod under a day-coach. At the next stop I run forward again and take another rod.

I am now comparatively safe. The shacks think I am ditched. But the long day and the strenuous night are beginning to tell on me. Also, it is not so windy nor cold underneath, and I begin to doze. This will never do. Sleep on the rods spells death, so I crawl out at a station and go forward to the second blind. Here I can lie down and sleep; and here I do sleep — how long I do not know — for I am awakened by a lantern thrust into my face. The two shacks are staring at me. I scramble up on the defensive, wondering as to which one is going to make the first "pass" at me. But slugging is far from their minds.

"I thought you was ditched," says the shack who had held me by the collar.

"If you hadn't let go of me when you did, you'd have been ditched along with me," I answer.

"How's that?" he asks.

"I'd have gone into a clinch with you, that's all," is my reply.

They hold a consultation, and their verdict is summed up in: —

"Well, I guess you can ride, Bo. There's no use trying to keep you off."

And they go away and leave me in peace to the end of their division.

I have given the foregoing as a sample of what "holding her down" means. Of course, I have selected a fortunate night out of my experiences, and said nothing of the nights — and many of them — when I was tripped up by accident and ditched.

In conclusion, I want to tell of what happened when I reached the end of the division. On single-track, transcontinental lines, the freight trains wait at the divisions and follow out after the passenger trains. When the division was reached, I left my train, and looked for the freight that would pull out behind it. I found the freight, made up on a side-track and waiting. I climbed into a box-car half full of coal and lay down. In no time I was asleep.

I was awakened by the sliding open of the door. Day was just dawning, cold and gray, and the freight had not yet started. A “con” (conductor) was poking his head inside the door.

“Get out of that, you blankety-blank-blank!” he roared at me.

I got, and outside I watched him go down the line inspecting every car in the train. When he got out of sight I thought to myself that he would never think I’d have the nerve to climb back into the very car out of which he had fired me. So back I climbed and lay down again.

Now that con’s mental processes must have been paralleling, mine, for he reasoned that it was the very thing I would do. For back he came and fired me out.

Now, surely, I reasoned, he will never dream that I’d do it a third time. Back I went, into the very same car. But I decided to make sure. Only one side-door could be opened. The other side-door was nailed up. Beginning at the top of the coal, I dug a hole alongside of that door and lay down in it. I heard the other door open. The con climbed up and looked in over the top of the coal. He couldn’t see me. He called to me to get out. I tried to fool him by remaining quiet. But when he began tossing chunks of coal into the hole on top of me, I gave up and for the third time was fired out. Also, he informed me in warm terms of what would happen to me if he caught me in there again.

I changed my tactics. When a man is paralleling your mental processes, ditch him. Abruptly break off your line of reasoning, and go off on a new line. This I did. I hid between some cars on an adjacent side-track, and watched. Sure enough, that con came back again to the car. He opened the door, he climbed up, he called, he threw coal into the hole I had made. He even crawled over the coal and looked into the hole. That satisfied him. Five minutes later the freight was pulling out, and he was not in sight. I ran alongside the car, pulled the door open, and climbed in. He never looked for me again, and I rode that coal-car precisely one thousand and twenty-two miles, sleeping most of the time and getting out at divisions (where the freights always stop for an hour or so) to beg my food. And at the end of the thousand and twenty-two miles I lost that car through a happy incident. I got a “set-down,” and the tramp doesn’t live who won’t miss a train for a set-down any time.

Pictures

"What do it matter where or 'ow we die,
So long as we've our 'ealth to watch it all?"
— *Sestina of the Tramp-Royal*

Perhaps the greatest charm of tramp-life is the absence of monotony. In Hobo Land the face of life is protean — an ever changing phantasmagoria, where the impossible happens and the unexpected jumps out of the bushes at every turn of the road. The hobo never knows what is going to happen the next moment; hence, he lives only in the present moment. He has learned the futility of telic endeavor, and knows the delight of drifting along with the whimsicalities of Chance.

Often I think over my tramp days, and ever I marvel at the swift succession of pictures that flash up in my memory. It matters not where I begin to think; any day of all the days is a day apart, with a record of swift-moving pictures all its own. For instance, I remember a sunny summer morning in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and immediately comes to my mind the auspicious beginning of the day — a "set-down" with two maiden ladies, and not in their kitchen, but in their dining room, with them beside me at the table. We ate eggs, out of egg-cups! It was the first time I had ever seen egg-cups, or heard of egg-cups! I was a bit awkward at first, I'll confess; but I was hungry and unabashed. I mastered the egg-cup, and I mastered the eggs in a way that made those two maiden ladies sit up.

Why, they ate like a couple of canaries, dabbling with the one egg each they took, and nibbling at tiny wafers of toast. Life was low in their bodies; their blood ran thin; and they had slept warm all night. I had been out all night, consuming much fuel of my body to keep warm, beating my way down from a place called Emporium, in the northern part of the state. Wafers of toast! Out of sight! But each wafer was no more than a mouthful to me — nay, no more than a bite. It is tedious to have to reach for another piece of toast each bite when one is potential with many bites.

When I was a very little lad, I had a very little dog called Punch. I saw to his feeding myself. Some one in the household had shot a lot of ducks, and we had a fine meat dinner. When I had finished, I prepared Punch's dinner — a large plateful of bones and tidbits. I went outside to give it to him. Now it happened that a visitor had ridden over from a neighboring ranch, and with him had come a Newfoundland dog as big as a calf. I set the plate on the ground. Punch wagged his tail and began. He had before him a blissful half-hour at least. There was a sudden rush. Punch was brushed aside like a straw in the path of a cyclone, and that Newfoundland swooped down upon the plate. In spite of his huge maw he must have been trained to quick lunches, for, in the fleeting instant before he received the kick in the ribs I aimed at him, he completely engulfed the contents of the plate. He swept it clean. One last lingering lick of his tongue removed even the grease stains.

As that big Newfoundland behaved at the plate of my dog Punch, so behaved I at the table of those two maiden ladies of Harrisburg. I swept it bare. I didn't break anything, but I cleaned out the eggs and the toast and the coffee. The servant brought more, but I kept her busy, and ever she brought more and more. The coffee was delicious, but it needn't have been served in such tiny cups. What time had I to eat when it took all my time to prepare the many cups of coffee for drinking?

At any rate, it gave my tongue time to wag. Those two maiden ladies, with their pink-and-white complexions and gray curls, had never looked upon the bright face of adventure. As the "Tramp-Royal" would have it, they had worked all their lives "on one same shift." Into the sweet scents and narrow confines of their uneventful existence I brought the large airs of the world, freighted with the lusty smells of sweat and strife, and with the tangs and odors of strange lands and soils. And right well I scratched their soft palms with the callous on my own palms — the half-inch horn that comes of pull-and-haul of rope and long and arduous hours of caressing shovel-handles. This I did, not merely in the braggadocio of youth, but to prove, by toil performed, the claim I had upon their charity.

Ah, I can see them now, those dear, sweet ladies, just as I sat at their breakfast table twelve years ago, discoursing upon the way of my feet in the world, brushing aside their kindly counsel as a real devilish fellow should, and thrilling them, not alone with my own adventures, but with the adventures of all the other fellows with whom I had rubbed shoulders and exchanged confidences. I appropriated them all, the adventures of the other fellows, I mean; and if those maiden ladies had been less trustful and guileless, they could have tangled me up beautifully in my chronology. Well, well, and what of it? It was fair exchange. For their many cups of coffee, and eggs, and bites of toast, I gave full value. Right royally I gave them entertainment. My coming to sit at their table was their adventure, and adventure is beyond price anyway.

Coming along the street, after parting from the maiden ladies, I gathered in a newspaper from the doorway of some late-riser, and in a grassy park lay down to get in touch with the last twenty-four hours of the world. There, in the park, I met a fellow-hobo who told me his life-story and who wrestled with me to join the United States Army. He had given in to the recruiting officer and was just about to join, and he couldn't see why I shouldn't join with him. He had been a member of Coxey's Army in the march to Washington several months before, and that seemed to have given him a taste for army life. I, too, was a veteran, for had I not been a private in Company L of the Second Division of Kelly's Industrial Army? — said Company L being commonly known as the "Nevada push." But my army experience had had the opposite effect on me; so I left that hobo to go his way to the dogs of war, while I "threw my feet" for dinner.

This duty performed, I started to walk across the bridge over the Susquehanna to the west shore. I forget the name of the railroad that ran down that side, but while lying in the grass in the morning the idea had come to me to go to Baltimore; so to Baltimore I was going on that railroad, whatever its name was. It was a warm afternoon, and part way across the bridge I came to a lot of fellows who were in swimming off one of the piers. Off went my clothes and in went I. The water was fine; but when I came out and dressed, I found I had been robbed. Some one had gone through my clothes. Now I leave it to you if being robbed isn't in itself adventure enough for one day. I have known men who have been robbed and who have talked all the rest of their lives about it. True, the thief that went through my clothes didn't get much — some thirty or forty cents in nickels and pennies, and my tobacco and cigarette papers; but it was all I had, which is more than most men can be robbed of, for they have something left at home, while I had no home. It was a pretty tough gang in swimming there. I sized up, and knew better than to squeal. So I begged "the makings," and I could have sworn it was one of my own papers I rolled the tobacco in.

Then on across the bridge I hiked to the west shore. Here ran the railroad I was after. No station was in sight. How to catch a freight without walking to a station was the problem. I noticed that the track came up a steep grade, culminating at the point where I had tapped it, and I knew that a heavy freight couldn't pull up there any too lively. But how lively? On the opposite side of the track rose a high bank. On the edge, at the top, I saw a man's head sticking up from the grass. Perhaps he knew how fast the freights took the grade, and when the next one went south. I called out my questions to him, and he motioned to me to come up.

I obeyed, and when I reached the top, I found four other men lying in the grass with him. I took in the scene and knew them for what they were — American gypsies. In the open space that extended back among the trees from the edge of the bank were several nondescript wagons. Ragged, half-naked children swarmed over the camp, though I noticed that they took care not to come near and bother the men-folk. Several lean, unbeautiful, and toil-degraded women were pottering about with camp-chores, and one I noticed who sat by herself on the seat of one of the wagons, her head drooped forward, her knees drawn up to her chin and clasped limply by her arms. She did not look happy. She looked as if she did not care for anything — in this I was wrong, for later I was to learn that there was something for which she did care. The full measure of human suffering was in her face, and, in addition, there was the tragic expression of incapacity for further suffering. Nothing could hurt any more, was what her face seemed to portray; but in this, too, I was wrong.

I lay in the grass on the edge of the steep and talked with the men-folk. We were kin — brothers. I was the American hobo, and they were the American gypsy. I knew enough of their argot for conversation, and they knew enough of mine. There were two more in their gang, who were across the river "mushing" in Harrisburg. A "musher" is an itinerant fakir. This word is not to be confounded with the Klondike "musher," though the origin of both terms may be the same; namely, the corruption of the French *marche ons*, to march, to walk, to "mush." The particular graft of the two mushers who had crossed the river was umbrella-mending; but what real graft lay behind their umbrella-mending, I was not told, nor would it have been polite to ask.

It was a glorious day. Not a breath of wind was stirring, and we basked in the shimmering warmth of the sun. From everywhere arose the drowsy hum of insects, and the balmy air was filled with scents of the sweet earth and the green growing things. We were too lazy to do more than mumble on in intermittent conversation. And then, all abruptly, the peace and quietude was jarred awry by man.

Two bare-legged boys of eight or nine in some minor way broke some rule of the camp — what it was I did not know; and a man who lay beside me suddenly sat up and called to them. He was chief of the tribe, a man with narrow forehead and narrow-slitted eyes, whose thin lips and twisted sardonic features explained why the two boys jumped and tensed like startled deer at the sound of his voice. The alertness of fear was in their faces, and they turned, in a panic, to run. He called to them to come back, and one boy lagged behind reluctantly, his meagre little frame portraying in pantomime the struggle within him between fear and reason. He wanted to come back. His intelligence and past experience told him that to come back was a lesser evil than to run on; but lesser evil that it was, it was great enough to put wings to his fear and urge his feet to flight.

Still he lagged and struggled until he reached the shelter of the trees, where he halted. The chief of the tribe did not pursue. He sauntered over to a wagon and picked up a heavy whip. Then he came back to the centre of the open space and stood still. He did not speak. He made no gestures. He was the Law, pitiless and omnipotent. He merely stood there and waited. And I knew, and all knew, and the two boys in the shelter of the trees knew, for what he waited.

The boy who had lagged slowly came back. His face was stamped with quivering resolution. He did not falter. He had made up his mind to take his punishment. And mark you, the punishment was not for the original offence, but for the offence of running away. And in this, that tribal chieftain but behaved as behaves the exalted society in which he lived. We punish our criminals, and when they escape and run away, we bring them back and add to their punishment.

Straight up to the chief the boy came, halting at the proper distance for the swing of the lash. The whip hissed through the air, and I caught myself with a start of surprise at the weight of the blow. The thin little leg was so very thin and little. The flesh showed white where the lash had curled and bitten, and then, where the white had shown, sprang up the savage welt, with here and there along its length little scarlet oozings where the skin had broken. Again the whip swung, and the boy’s whole body winced in anticipation of the blow, though he did not move from the spot. His will held good. A second welt sprang up, and a third. It was not until the fourth landed that the boy screamed. Also, he could no longer stand still, and from then on, blow after blow, he danced up and down in his anguish, screaming;

but he did not attempt to run away. If his involuntary dancing took him beyond the reach of the whip, he danced back into range again. And when it was all over — a dozen blows — he went away, whimpering and squealing, among the wagons.

The chief stood still and waited. The second boy came out from the trees. But he did not come straight. He came like a cringing dog, obsessed by little panics that made him turn and dart away for half a dozen steps. But always he turned and came back, circling nearer and nearer to the man, whimpering, making inarticulate animal-noises in his throat. I saw that he never looked at the man. His eyes always were fixed upon the whip, and in his eyes was a terror that made me sick — the frantic terror of an inconceivably maltreated child. I have seen strong men dropping right and left out of battle and squirming in their death-throes, I have seen them by scores blown into the air by bursting shells and their bodies torn asunder; believe me, the witnessing was as merrymaking and laughter and song to me in comparison with the way the sight of that poor child affected me.

The whipping began. The whipping of the first boy was as play compared with this one. In no time the blood was running down his thin little legs. He danced and squirmed and doubled up till it seemed almost that he was some grotesque marionette operated by strings. I say "seemed," for his screaming gave the lie to the seeming and stamped it with reality. His shrieks were shrill and piercing; within them no hoarse notes, but only the thin sexlessness of the voice of a child. The time came when the boy could stand it no more. Reason fled, and he tried to run away. But now the man followed up, curbing his flight, herding him with blows back always into the open space.

Then came interruption. I heard a wild smothered cry. The woman who sat in the wagon seat had got out and was running to interfere. She sprang between the man and boy.

"You want some, eh?" said he with the whip. "All right, then."

He swung the whip upon her. Her skirts were long, so he did not try for her legs. He drove the lash for her face, which she shielded as best she could with her hands and forearms, drooping her head forward between her lean shoulders, and on the lean shoulders and arms receiving the blows. Heroic mother! She knew just what she was doing. The boy, still shrieking, was making his get-away to the wagons.

And all the while the four men lay beside me and watched and made no move. Nor did I move, and without shame I say it; though my reason was compelled to struggle hard against my natural impulse to rise up and interfere. I knew life. Of what use to the woman, or to me, would be my being beaten to death by five men there on the bank of the Susquehanna? I once saw a man hanged, and though my whole soul cried protest, my mouth cried not. Had it cried, I should most likely have had my skull crushed by the butt of a revolver, for it was the law that the man should hang. And here, in this gypsy group, it was the law that the woman should be whipped.

Even so, the reason in both cases that I did not interfere was not that it was the law, but that the law was stronger than I. Had it not been for those four men beside me in the grass, right gladly would I have waded into the man with the whip. And, barring the accident of the landing on me with a knife or a club in the hands of some of the various women of the camp, I am confident that I should have beaten him into a mess. But the four men *were* beside me in the grass. They made their law stronger than I.

Oh, believe me, I did my own suffering. I had seen women beaten before, often, but never had I seen such a beating as this. Her dress across the shoulders was cut into shreds. One blow that had passed her guard, had raised a bloody welt from cheek to chin. Not one blow, nor two, not one dozen, nor two dozen, but endlessly, infinitely, that whip-lash smote and curled about her. The sweat poured from me, and I breathed hard, clutching at the grass with my hands until I strained it out by the roots. And all the time my reason kept whispering, “Fool! Fool!” That welt on the face nearly did for me. I started to rise to my feet; but the hand of the man next to me went out to my shoulder and pressed me down.

“Easy, pardner, easy,” he warned me in a low voice. I looked at him. His eyes met mine unwaveringly. He was a large man, broad-shouldered and heavy-muscled; and his face was lazy, phlegmatic, slothful, withal kindly, yet without passion, and quite soulless — a dim soul, unmalicious, unmoral, bovine, and stubborn. Just an animal he was, with no more than a faint flickering of intelligence, a good-natured brute with the strength and mental caliber of a gorilla. His hand pressed heavily upon me, and I knew the weight of the muscles behind. I looked at the other brutes, two of them unperturbed and incurious, and one of them that gloated over the spectacle; and my reason came back to me, my muscles relaxed, and I sank down in the grass.

My mind went back to the two maiden ladies with whom I had had breakfast that morning. Less than two miles, as the crow flies, separated them from this scene. Here, in the windless day, under a beneficent sun, was a sister of theirs being beaten by a brother of mine. Here was a page of life they could never see — and better so, though for lack of seeing they would never be able to understand their sisterhood, nor themselves, nor know the clay of which they were made. For it is not given to woman to live in sweet-scented, narrow rooms and at the same time be a little sister to all the world.

The whipping was finished, and the woman, no longer screaming, went back to her seat in the wagon. Nor did the other women come to her — just then. They were afraid. But they came afterward, when a decent interval had elapsed. The man put the whip away and rejoined us, flinging himself down on the other side of me. He was breathing hard from his exertions. He wiped the sweat from his eyes on his coat-sleeve, and looked challengingly at me. I returned his look carelessly; what he had done was no concern of mine. I did not go away abruptly. I lay there half an hour longer, which, under the circumstances, was tact and etiquette. I rolled cigarettes from tobacco I borrowed from them, and when I slipped down the bank to the railroad, I was equipped with the necessary information for catching the next freight bound south.

Well, and what of it? It was a page out of life, that's all; and there are many pages worse, far worse, that I have seen. I have sometimes held forth (facetiously, so my listeners believed) that the chief distinguishing trait between man and the other animals is that man is the only animal that maltreats the females of his kind. It is something of which no wolf nor cowardly coyote is ever guilty. It is something that even the dog, degenerated by domestication, will not do. The dog still retains the wild instinct in this matter, while man has lost most of his wild instincts — at least, most of the good ones.

Worse pages of life than what I have described? Read the reports on child labor in the United States, — east, west, north, and south, it doesn't matter where, — and know that all of us, profit-mongers that we are, are typesetters and printers of worse pages of life than that mere page of wife-beating on the Susquehanna.

I went down the grade a hundred yards to where the footing beside the track was good. Here I could catch my freight as it pulled slowly up the hill, and here I found half a dozen hoboes waiting for the same purpose. Several were playing seven-up with an old pack of cards. I took a hand. A coon began to shuffle the deck. He was fat, and young, and moon-faced. He beamed with good-nature. It fairly oozed from him. As he dealt the first card to me, he paused and said: —

“Say, Bo, ain’t I done seen you befo’?”

“You sure have,” I answered. “An’ you didn’t have those same duds on, either.”

He was puzzled.

“D’ye remember Buffalo?” I queried.

Then he knew me, and with laughter and ejaculation hailed me as a comrade; for at Buffalo his clothes had been striped while he did his bit of time in the Erie County Penitentiary. For that matter, my clothes had been likewise striped, for I had been doing my bit of time, too.

The game proceeded, and I learned the stake for which we played. Down the bank toward the river descended a steep and narrow path that led to a spring some twenty-five feet beneath. We played on the edge of the bank. The man who was “stuck” had to take a small condensed-milk can, and with it carry water to the winners.

The first game was played and the coon was stuck. He took the small milk-tin and climbed down the bank, while we sat above and guyed him. We drank like fish. Four round trips he had to make for me alone, and the others were equally lavish with their thirst. The path was very steep, and sometimes the coon slipped when part way up, spilled the water, and had to go back for more. But he didn’t get angry. He laughed as heartily as any of us; that was why he slipped so often. Also, he assured us of the prodigious quantities of water he would drink when some one else got stuck.

When our thirst was quenched, another game was started. Again the coon was stuck, and again we drank our fill. A third game and a fourth ended the same way, and each time that moon-faced darky nearly died with delight at appreciation of the fate that Chance was dealing out to him. And we nearly died with him, what of our delight. We laughed like careless children, or gods, there on the edge of the bank. I know that I laughed till it seemed the top of my head would come off, and I drank from the milk-tin till I was nigh waterlogged. Serious discussion arose as to whether we could successfully board the freight when it pulled up the grade, what of the weight of water secreted on our persons. This particular phase of the situation just about finished the coon. He had to break off from water-carrying for at least five minutes while he lay down and rolled with laughter.

The lengthening shadows stretched farther and farther across the river, and the soft, cool twilight came on, and ever we drank water, and ever our ebony cup-bearer brought more and more. Forgotten was the beaten woman of the hour before. That was a page read and turned over; I was busy now with this new page, and when the engine whistled on the grade, this page would be finished and another begun; and so the book of life goes on, page after page and pages without end — when one is young.

And then we played a game in which the coon failed to be stuck. The victim was a lean and dyspeptic-looking hobo, the one who had laughed least of all of us. We said we didn't want any water — which was the truth. Not the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind, nor the pressure of a pneumatic ram, could have forced another drop into my saturated carcass. The coon looked disappointed, then rose to the occasion and guessed he'd have some. He meant it, too. He had some, and then some, and then some. Ever the melancholy hobo climbed down and up the steep bank, and ever the coon called for more. He drank more water than all the rest of us put together. The twilight deepened into night, the stars came out, and he still drank on. I do believe that if the whistle of the freight hadn't sounded, he'd be there yet, swilling water and revenge while the melancholy hobo toiled down and up.

But the whistle sounded. The page was done. We sprang to our feet and strung out alongside the track. There she came, coughing and spluttering up the grade, the headlight turning night into day and silhouetting us in sharp relief. The engine passed us, and we were all running with the train, some boarding on the side-ladders, others "springing" the side-doors of empty box-cars and climbing in. I caught a flat-car loaded with mixed lumber and crawled away into a comfortable nook. I lay on my back with a newspaper under my head for a pillow. Above me the stars were winking and wheeling in squadrons back and forth as the train rounded the curves, and watching them I fell asleep. The day was done — one day of all my days. To-morrow would be another day, and I was young.

“Pinched”

I rode into Niagara Falls in a “side-door Pullman,” or, in common parlance, a box-car. A flat-car, by the way, is known amongst the fraternity as a “gondola,” with the second syllable emphasized and pronounced long. But to return. I arrived in the afternoon and headed straight from the freight train to the falls. Once my eyes were filled with that wonder-vision of down-rushing water, I was lost. I could not tear myself away long enough to “batter” the “privates” (domiciles) for my supper. Even a “set-down” could not have lured me away. Night came on, a beautiful night of moonlight, and I lingered by the falls until after eleven. Then it was up to me to hunt for a place to “kip.”

“Kip,” “doss,” “flop,” “pound your ear,” all mean the same thing; namely, to sleep. Somehow, I had a “hunch” that Niagara Falls was a “bad” town for hoboes, and I headed out into the country. I climbed a fence and “flopped” in a field. John Law would never find me there, I flattered myself. I lay on my back in the grass and slept like a babe. It was so balmy warm that I woke up not once all night. But with the first gray daylight my eyes opened, and I remembered the wonderful falls. I climbed the fence and started down the road to have another look at them. It was early — not more than five o’clock — and not until eight o’clock could I begin to batter for my breakfast. I could spend at least three hours by the river. Alas! I was fated never to see the river nor the falls again.

The town was asleep when I entered it. As I came along the quiet street, I saw three men coming toward me along the sidewalk. They were walking abreast. Hoboes, I decided, like myself, who had got up early. In this surmise I was not quite correct. I was only sixty-six and two-thirds per cent correct. The men on each side were hoboes all right, but the man in the middle wasn’t. I directed my steps to the edge of the sidewalk in order to let the trio go by. But it didn’t go by. At some word from the man in the centre, all three halted, and he of the centre addressed me.

I piped the lay on the instant. He was a “fly-cop” and the two hoboes were his prisoners. John Law was up and out after the early worm. I was a worm. Had I been richer by the experiences that were to befall me in the next several months, I should have turned and run like the very devil. He might have shot at me, but he’d have had to hit me to get me. He’d have never run after me, for two hoboes in the hand are worth more than one on the get-away. But like a dummy I stood still when he halted me. Our conversation was brief.

"What hotel are you stopping at?" he queried.

He had me. I wasn't stopping at any hotel, and, since I did not know the name of a hotel in the place, I could not claim residence in any of them. Also, I was up too early in the morning. Everything was against me.

"I just arrived," I said.

"Well, you turn around and walk in front of me, and not too far in front. There's somebody wants to see you."

I was "pinched." I knew who wanted to see me. With that "fly-cop" and the two hoboes at my heels, and under the direction of the former, I led the way to the city jail. There we were searched and our names registered. I have forgotten, now, under which name I was registered. I gave the name of Jack Drake, but when they searched me, they found letters addressed to Jack London. This caused trouble and required explanation, all of which has passed from my mind, and to this day I do not know whether I was pinched as Jack Drake or Jack London. But one or the other, it should be there to-day in the prison register of Niagara Falls. Reference can bring it to light. The time was somewhere in the latter part of June, 1894. It was only a few days after my arrest that the great railroad strike began.

From the office we were led to the "Hobo" and locked in. The "Hobo" is that part of a prison where the minor offenders are confined together in a large iron cage. Since hoboes constitute the principal division of the minor offenders, the aforesaid iron cage is called the Hobo. Here we met several hoboes who had already been pinched that morning, and every little while the door was unlocked and two or three more were thrust in on us. At last, when we totalled sixteen, we were led upstairs into the court-room. And now I shall faithfully describe what took place in that court-room, for know that my patriotic American citizenship there received a shock from which it has never fully recovered.

In the court-room were the sixteen prisoners, the judge, and two bailiffs. The judge seemed to act as his own clerk. There were no witnesses. There were no citizens of Niagara Falls present to look on and see how justice was administered in their community. The judge glanced at the list of cases before him and called out a name. A hobo stood up. The judge glanced at a bailiff. "Vagrancy, your Honor," said the bailiff. "Thirty days," said his

Honor. The hobo sat down, and the judge was calling another name and another hobo was rising to his feet.

The trial of that hobo had taken just about fifteen seconds. The trial of the next hobo came off with equal celerity. The bailiff said, “Vagrancy, your Honor,” and his Honor said, “Thirty days.” Thus it went like clockwork, fifteen seconds to a hobo — and thirty days.

They are poor dumb cattle, I thought to myself. But wait till my turn comes; I’ll give his Honor a “spiel.” Part way along in the performance, his Honor, moved by some whim, gave one of us an opportunity to speak. As chance would have it, this man was not a genuine hobo. He bore none of the ear-marks of the professional “stiff.” Had he approached the rest of us, while waiting at a water-tank for a freight, should have unhesitatingly classified him as a “gay-cat.” Gay-cat is the synonym for tenderfoot in Hobo Land. This gay-cat was well along in years — somewhere around forty-five, I should judge. His shoulders were humped a trifle, and his face was seamed by weather-beat.

For many years, according to his story, he had driven team for some firm in (if I remember rightly) Lockport, New York. The firm had ceased to prosper, and finally, in the hard times of 1893, had gone out of business. He had been kept on to the last, though toward the last his work had been very irregular. He went on and explained at length his difficulties in getting work (when so many were out of work) during the succeeding months. In the end, deciding that he would find better opportunities for work on the Lakes, he had started for Buffalo. Of course he was “broke,” and there he was. That was all.

“Thirty days,” said his Honor, and called another hobo’s name.

Said hobo got up. “Vagrancy, your Honor,” said the bailiff, and his Honor said, “Thirty days.”

And so it went, fifteen seconds and thirty days to each hobo. The machine of justice was grinding smoothly. Most likely, considering how early it was in the morning, his Honor had not yet had his breakfast and was in a hurry.

But my American blood was up. Behind me were the many generations of my American ancestry. One of the kinds of liberty those ancestors of mine had fought and died for was the right of trial by jury. This was my heritage, stained sacred by their blood, and it devolved upon me to stand up for it. All right, I threatened to myself; just wait till he gets to me.

He got to me. My name, whatever it was, was called, and I stood up. The bailiff said, “Vagrancy, your Honor,” and I began to talk. But the judge began talking at the same time, and he said, “Thirty days.” I started to protest, but at that moment his Honor was calling the name of the next hobo on the list. His Honor paused long enough to say to me, “Shut up!” The bailiff forced me to sit down. And the next moment that next hobo had received thirty days and the succeeding hobo was just in process of getting his.

When we had all been disposed of, thirty days to each stiff, his Honor, just as he was about to dismiss us, suddenly turned to the teamster from Lockport — the one man he had allowed to talk.

“Why did you quit your job?” his Honor asked.

Now the teamster had already explained how his job had quit him, and the question took him aback.

“Your Honor,” he began confusedly, “isn’t that a funny question to ask?”

“Thirty days more for quitting your job,” said his Honor, and the court was closed. That was the outcome. The teamster got sixty days all together, while the rest of us got thirty days.

We were taken down below, locked up, and given breakfast. It was a pretty good breakfast, as prison breakfasts go, and it was the best I was to get for a month to come.

As for me, I was dazed. Here was I, under sentence, after a farce of a trial wherein I was denied not only my right of trial by jury, but my right to plead guilty or not guilty. Another thing my fathers had fought for flashed through my brain — habeas corpus. I’d show them. But when I asked for a lawyer, I was laughed at. Habeas corpus was all right, but of what good was it to me when I could communicate with no one outside the jail? But I’d show them. They couldn’t keep me in jail forever. Just wait till I got out, that was all. I’d make them sit up. I knew something about the law and my own rights, and I’d expose their maladministration of justice. Visions of damage suits and sensational newspaper headlines were dancing before my eyes when the jailers came in and began hustling us out into the main office.

A policeman snapped a handcuff on my right wrist. (Ah, ha, thought I, a new indignity. Just wait till I get out.) On the left wrist of a negro he snapped the other handcuff of that pair. He was a very tall negro, well past six feet — so tall was he that when we stood side by side his hand lifted mine up a trifle in the manacles. Also, he was the happiest and the raggedest negro I have ever seen.

We were all handcuffed similarly, in pairs. This accomplished, a bright nickel-steel chain was brought forth, run down through the links of all the handcuffs, and locked at front and rear of the double-line. We were now a chain-gang. The command to march was given, and out we went upon the street, guarded by two officers. The tall negro and I had the place of honor. We led the procession.

After the tomb-like gloom of the jail, the outside sunshine was dazzling. I had never known it to be so sweet as now, a prisoner with clanking chains, I knew that I was soon to see the last of it for thirty days. Down through the streets of Niagara Falls we marched to the railroad station, stared at by curious passers-by, and especially by a group of tourists on the veranda of a hotel that we marched past.

There was plenty of slack in the chain, and with much rattling and clanking we sat down, two and two, in the seats of the smoking-car. Afire with indignation as I was at the outrage that had been perpetrated on me and my forefathers, I was nevertheless too prosaically practical to lose my head over it. This was all new to me. Thirty days of mystery were before me, and I looked about me to find somebody who knew the ropes. For I had already learned that I was not bound for a petty jail with a hundred or so prisoners in it, but for a full-grown penitentiary with a couple of thousand prisoners in it, doing anywhere from ten days to ten years.

In the seat behind me, attached to the chain by his wrist, was a squat, heavily-built, powerfully-muscled man. He was somewhere between thirty-five and forty years of age. I sized him up. In the corners of his eyes I saw humor and laughter and kindliness. As for the rest of him, he was a brute-beast, wholly unmoral, and with all the passion and turgid violence of the brute-beast. What saved him, what made him possible for me, were those corners of his eyes — the humor and laughter and kindliness of the beast when unaroused.

He was my “meat.” I “cottoned” to him. While my cuff-mate, the tall negro, mourned with chucklings and laughter over some laundry he was sure to lose through his arrest, and while the train rolled on toward Buffalo, I talked with the man in the seat behind me. He had an empty pipe. I filled it for him with my precious tobacco — enough in a single filling to make a dozen cigarettes. Nay, the more we talked the surer I was that he was my meat, and I divided all my tobacco with him.

Now it happens that I am a fluid sort of an organism, with sufficient kinship with life to fit myself in ‘most anywhere. I laid myself out to fit in with that man, though little did I dream to what extraordinary good purpose I was succeeding. He had never been in the particular penitentiary to which we were going, but he had done “one-,” “two-,” and “five-spots” in various other penitentiaries (a “spot” is a year), and he was filled with wisdom. We became pretty chummy, and my heart bounded when he cautioned me to follow his lead. He called me “Jack,” and I called him “Jack.”

The train stopped at a station about five miles from Buffalo, and we, the chain-gang, got off. I do not remember the name of this station, but I am confident that it is some one of the following: Rocklyn, Rockwood, Black Rock, Rockcastle, or Newcastle. But whatever the name of the place, we were walked a short distance and then put on a street-car. It was an old-fashioned car, with a seat, running the full length, on each side. All the passengers who sat on one side were asked to move over to the other side, and we, with a great clanking of chain, took their places. We sat facing them, I remember, and I remember, too, the awed expression on the faces of the women, who took us, undoubtedly, for convicted murderers and bank-robbers. I tried to look my fiercest, but that cuff-mate of mine, the too happy negro, insisted on rolling his eyes, laughing, and reiterating, “O Lawdy! Lawdy!”

We left the car, walked some more, and were led into the office of the Erie County Penitentiary. Here we were to register, and on that register one or the other of my names will be found. Also, we were informed that we must leave in the office all our valuables: money, tobacco, matches, pocketknives, and so forth.

My new pal shook his head at me.

“If you do not leave your things here, they will be confiscated inside,” warned the official.

Still my pal shook his head. He was busy with his hands, hiding his movements behind the other fellows. (Our handcuffs had been removed.) I watched him, and followed suit, wrapping up in a bundle in my handkerchief all the things I wanted to take in. These bundles the two of us thrust into our shirts. I noticed that our fellow-prisoners, with the exception of one or two who had watches, did not turn over their belongings to the man in the office. They were determined to smuggle them in somehow, trusting to luck; but they were not so wise as my pal, for they did not wrap their things in bundles.

Our erstwhile guardians gathered up the handcuffs and chain and departed for Niagara Falls, while we, under new guardians, were led away into the prison. While we were in the office, our number had been added to by other squads of newly arrived prisoners, so that we were now a procession forty or fifty strong.

Know, ye unimprisoned, that traffic is as restricted inside a large prison as commerce was in the Middle Ages. Once inside a penitentiary, one cannot move about at will. Every few steps are encountered great steel doors or gates which are always kept locked. We were bound for the barber-shop, but we encountered delays in the unlocking of doors for us. We were thus delayed in the first "hall" we entered. A "hall" is not a corridor. Imagine an oblong cube, built out of bricks and rising six stories high, each story a row of cells, say fifty cells in a row — in short, imagine a cube of colossal honeycomb. Place this cube on the ground and enclose it in a building with a roof overhead and walls all around. Such a cube and encompassing building constitute a "hall" in the Erie County Penitentiary. Also, to complete the picture, see a narrow gallery, with steel railing, running the full length of each tier of cells and at the ends of the oblong cube see all these galleries, from both sides, connected by a fire-escape system of narrow steel stairways.

We were halted in the first hall, waiting for some guard to unlock a door. Here and there, moving about, were convicts, with close-cropped heads and shaven faces, and garbed in prison stripes. One such convict I noticed above us on the gallery of the third tier of cells. He was standing on the gallery and leaning forward, his arms resting on the railing, himself apparently oblivious of our presence. He seemed staring into vacancy. My pal made a slight hissing noise. The convict glanced down. Motioned signals passed between them. Then through the air soared the handkerchief bundle of my pal. The convict caught it, and like a flash it was out of sight in his shirt and he was staring into vacancy. My pal had told me to follow his lead. I watched my chance when the guard's back was turned, and my bundle followed the other one into the shirt of the convict.

A minute later the door was unlocked, and we filed into the barber-shop. Here were more men in convict stripes. They were the prison barbers. Also, there were bath-tubs, hot water, soap, and scrubbing-brushes. We were ordered to strip and bathe, each man to scrub his neighbor's back — a needless precaution, this compulsory bath, for the prison swarmed with vermin. After the bath, we were each given a canvas clothes-bag.

"Put all your clothes in the bags," said the guard. "It's no good trying to smuggle anything in. You've got to line up naked for inspection. Men for thirty days or less keep their shoes and suspenders. Men for more than thirty days keep nothing."

This announcement was received with consternation. How could naked men smuggle anything past an inspection? Only my pal and I were safe. But it was right here that the convict barbers got in their work. They passed among the poor newcomers, kindly volunteering to take charge of their precious little belongings, and promising to return them later in the day. Those barbers were philanthropists — to hear them talk. As in the case of Fra Lippo Lippi, never was there such prompt disemburdening. Matches, tobacco, rice-paper, pipes, knives, money, everything, flowed into the capacious shirts of the barbers. They fairly bulged with the spoil, and the guards made believe not to see. To cut the story short, nothing was ever returned. The barbers never had any intention of returning what they had taken. They considered it legitimately theirs. It was the barber-shop graft. There were many grafts in that prison, as I was to learn; and I, too, was destined to become a grafter — thanks to my new pal.

There were several chairs, and the barbers worked rapidly. The quickest shaves and hair-cuts I have ever seen were given in that shop. The men lathered themselves, and the barbers shaved them at the rate of a minute to a man. A hair-cut took a trifle longer. In three minutes the down of eighteen was scraped from my face, and my head was as smooth as a billiard-ball just sprouting a crop of bristles. Beards, mustaches, like our clothes and everything, came off. Take my word for it, we were a villainous-looking gang when they got through with us. I had not realized before how really altogether bad we were.

Then came the line-up, forty or fifty of us, naked as Kipling's heroes who stormed Lungtungpen. To search us was easy. There were only our shoes and ourselves. Two or three rash spirits, who had doubted the barbers, had the goods found on them — which goods, namely, tobacco, pipes, matches, and small change, were quickly confiscated. This over, our new clothes were brought to us — stout prison shirts, and coats and trousers conspicuously striped. I had always lingered under the impression that the convict stripes were put on a man only after he had been convicted of a felony. I lingered no longer, but put on the insignia of shame and got my first taste of marching the lock-step.

In single file, close together, each man's hands on the shoulders of the man in front, we marched on into another large hall. Here we were ranged up against the wall in a long line and ordered to strip our left arms. A youth, a medical student who was getting in his practice on cattle such as we, came down the line. He vaccinated just about four times as rapidly as the barbers shaved. With a final caution to avoid rubbing our arms against anything, and to let the blood dry so as to form the scab, we were led away to our cells. Here my pal and I parted, but not before he had time to whisper to me, "Suck it out."

As soon as I was locked in, I sucked my arm clean. And afterward I saw men who had not sucked and who had horrible holes in their arms into which I could have thrust my fist. It was their own fault. They could have sucked.

In my cell was another man. We were to be cell-mates. He was a young, manly fellow, not talkative, but very capable, indeed as splendid a fellow as one could meet with in a day's ride, and this in spite of the fact that he had just recently finished a two-year term in some Ohio penitentiary.

Hardly had we been in our cell half an hour, when a convict sauntered down the gallery and looked in. It was my pal. He had the freedom of the hall, he explained. He was unlocked at six in the morning and not locked up again till nine at night. He was in with the "push" in that hall, and had been promptly appointed a trusty of the kind technically known as "hall-man." The man who had appointed him was also a prisoner and a trusty, and was known as "First Hall-man." There were thirteen hall-men in that hall. Ten of them had charge each of a gallery of cells, and over them were the First, Second, and Third Hall-men.

We newcomers were to stay in our cells for the rest of the day, my pal informed me, so that the vaccine would have a chance to take. Then next morning we would be put to hard labor in the prison-yard.

"But I'll get you out of the work as soon as I can," he promised. "I'll get one of the hall-men fired and have you put in his place."

He put his hand into his shirt, drew out the handkerchief containing my precious belongings, passed it in to me through the bars, and went on down the gallery.

I opened the bundle. Everything was there. Not even a match was missing. I shared the makings of a cigarette with my cell-mate. When I started to strike a match for a light, he stopped me. A flimsy, dirty comforter lay in each of our bunks for bedding. He tore off a narrow strip of the thin cloth and rolled it tightly and telescopically into a long and slender cylinder. This he lighted with a precious match. The cylinder of tight-rolled cotton cloth did not flame. On the end a coal of fire slowly smouldered. It would last for hours, and my cell-mate called it a "punk." And when it burned short, all that was necessary was to make a new punk, put the end of it against the old, blow on them, and so transfer the glowing coal. Why, we could have given Prometheus pointers on the conserving of fire.

At twelve o'clock dinner was served. At the bottom of our cage door was a small opening like the entrance of a runway in a chicken-yard. Through this were thrust two hunks of dry bread and two pannikins of "soup." A portion of soup consisted of about a quart of hot water with floating on its surface a lonely drop of grease. Also, there was some salt in that water.

We drank the soup, but we did not eat the bread. Not that we were not hungry, and not that the bread was uneatable. It was fairly good bread. But we had reasons. My cell-mate had discovered that our cell was alive with bed-bugs. In all the cracks and interstices between the bricks where the mortar had fallen out flourished great colonies. The natives even ventured out in the broad daylight and swarmed over the walls and ceiling by hundreds. My cell-mate was wise in the ways of the beasts. Like Childe Roland, dauntless the slug-horn to his lips he bore. Never was there such a battle. It lasted for hours. It was shambles. And when the last survivors fled to their brick-and-mortar fastnesses, our work was only half done. We chewed mouthfuls of our bread until it was reduced to the consistency of putty. When a fleeing belligerent escaped into a crevice between the bricks, we promptly walled him in with a daub of the chewed bread. We toiled on until the light grew dim and until every hole, nook, and cranny was closed. I shudder to think of the tragedies of starvation and cannibalism that must have ensued behind those bread-plastered ramparts.

We threw ourselves on our bunks, tired out and hungry, to wait for supper. It was a good day's work well done. In the weeks to come we at least should not suffer from the hosts of vermin. We had foregone our dinner, saved our hides at the expense of our stomachs; but we were content. Alas for the futility of human effort! Scarcely was our long task completed when a guard unlocked our door. A redistribution of prisoners was being made, and we were taken to another cell and locked in two galleries higher up.

Early next morning our cells were unlocked, and down in the hall the several hundred prisoners of us formed the lock-step and marched out into the prison-yard to go to work. The Erie Canal runs right by the back yard of the Erie County Penitentiary. Our task was to unload canal-boats, carrying huge stay-bolts on our shoulders, like railroad ties, into the prison. As I worked I sized up the situation and studied the chances for a get-away. There wasn't the ghost of a show. Along the tops of the walls marched guards armed with repeating rifles, and I was told, furthermore, that there were machine-guns in the sentry-towers.

I did not worry. Thirty days were not so long. I'd stay those thirty days, and add to the store of material I intended to use, when I got out, against the harpies of justice. I'd show what an American boy could do when his rights and privileges had been trampled on the way mine had. I had been denied my right of trial by jury; I had been denied my right to plead guilty or not guilty; I had been denied a trial even (for I couldn't consider that what I had received at Niagara Falls was a trial); I had not been allowed to communicate with a lawyer nor any one, and hence had been denied my right of suing for a writ of habeas corpus; my face had been shaved, my hair cropped close, convict stripes had been put upon my body; I was forced to toil hard on a diet of bread and water and to march the shameful lock-step with armed guards over me — and all for what? What had I done? What crime had I committed against the good citizens of Niagara Falls that all this vengeance should be wreaked upon me? I had not even violated their "sleeping-out" ordinance. I had slept outside their jurisdiction, in the country, that night. I had not even begged for a meal, or battered for a "light piece" on their streets. All that I had done was to walk along their sidewalk and gaze at their picayune waterfall. And what crime was there in that? Technically I was guilty of no misdemeanor. All right, I'd show them when I got out.

The next day I talked with a guard. I wanted to send for a lawyer. The guard laughed at me. So did the other guards. I really was *incommunicado* so far as the outside world was concerned. I tried to write a letter out, but I learned that all letters were read, and censured or confiscated, by the prison authorities, and that “short-timers” were not allowed to write letters anyway. A little later I tried smuggling letters out by men who were released, but I learned that they were searched and the letters found and destroyed. Never mind. It all helped to make it a blacker case when I did get out.

But as the prison days went by (which I shall describe in the next chapter), I “learned a few.” I heard tales of the police, and police-courts, and lawyers, that were unbelievable and monstrous. Men, prisoners, told me of personal experiences with the police of great cities that were awful. And more awful were the hearsay tales they told me concerning men who had died at the hands of the police and who therefore could not testify for themselves. Years afterward, in the report of the Lexow Committee, I was to read tales true and more awful than those told to me. But in the meantime, during the first days of my imprisonment, I scoffed at what I heard.

As the days went by, however, I began to grow convinced. I saw with my own eyes, there in that prison, things unbelievable and monstrous. And the more convinced I became, the profounder grew the respect in me for the sleuth-hounds of the law and for the whole institution of criminal justice.

My indignation ebbed away, and into my being rushed the tides of fear. I saw at last, clear-eyed, what I was up against. I grew meek and lowly. Each day I resolved more emphatically to make no rumpus when I got out. All I asked, when I got out, was a chance to fade away from the landscape. And that was just what I did do when I was released. I kept my tongue between my teeth, walked softly, and sneaked for Pennsylvania, a wiser and a humbler man.

The Pen

For two days I toiled in the prison-yard. It was heavy work, and, in spite of the fact that I malingered at every opportunity, I was played out. This was because of the food. No man could work hard on such food. Bread and water, that was all that was given us. Once a week we were supposed to get meat; but this meat did not always go around, and since all nutriment had first been boiled out of it in the making of soup, it didn't matter whether one got a taste of it once a week or not.

Furthermore, there was one vital defect in the bread-and-water diet. While we got plenty of water, we did not get enough of the bread. A ration of bread was about the size of one's two fists, and three rations a day were given to each prisoner. There was one good thing, I must say, about the water — it was hot. In the morning it was called "coffee," at noon it was dignified as "soup," and at night it masqueraded as "tea." But it was the same old water all the time. The prisoners called it "water bewitched." In the morning it was black water, the color being due to boiling it with burnt bread-crusts. At noon it was served minus the color, with salt and a drop of grease added. At night it was served with a purplish-auburn hue that defied all speculation; it was darn poor tea, but it was dandy hot water.

We were a hungry lot in the Erie County Pen. Only the "long-timers" knew what it was to have enough to eat. The reason for this was that they would have died after a time on the fare we "short-timers" received. I know that the long-timers got more substantial grub, because there was a whole row of them on the ground floor in our hall, and when I was a trusty, I used to steal from their grub while serving them. Man cannot live on bread alone and not enough of it.

My pal delivered the goods. After two days of work in the yard I was taken out of my cell and made a trusty, a "hall-man." At morning and night we served the bread to the prisoners in their cells; but at twelve o'clock a different method was used. The convicts marched in from work in a long line. As they entered the door of our hall, they broke the lock-step and took their hands down from the shoulders of their line-mates. Just inside the door were piled trays of bread, and here also stood the First Hall-man and two ordinary hall-men. I was one of the two. Our task was to hold the trays of bread as the line of convicts filed past. As soon as the tray, say, that I was holding was emptied, the other hall-man took my place with a full tray. And when his was emptied, I took his place with a full tray. Thus the line tramped steadily by, each man reaching with his right hand and taking one ration of bread from the extended tray.

The task of the First Hall-man was different. He used a club. He stood beside the tray and watched. The hungry wretches could never get over the delusion that sometime they could manage to get two rations of bread out of the tray. But in my experience that sometime never came. The club of the First Hall-man had a way of flashing out — quick as the stroke of a tiger's claw — to the hand that dared ambitiously. The First Hall-man was a good judge of distance, and he had smashed so many hands with that club that he had become infallible. He never missed, and he usually punished the offending convict by taking his one ration away from him and sending him to his cell to make his meal off of hot water.

And at times, while all these men lay hungry in their cells, I have seen a hundred or so extra rations of bread hidden away in the cells of the hall-men. It would seem absurd, our retaining this bread. But it was one of our grafts. We were economic masters inside our hall, turning the trick in ways quite similar to the economic masters of civilization. We controlled the food-supply of the population, and, just like our brother bandits outside, we made the people pay through the nose for it. We peddled the bread. Once a week, the men who worked in the yard received a five-cent plug of chewing tobacco. This chewing tobacco was the coin of the realm. Two or three rations of bread for a plug was the way we exchanged, and they traded, not because they loved tobacco less, but because they loved bread more. Oh, I know, it was like taking candy from a baby, but what would you? We had to live. And certainly there should be some reward for initiative and enterprise. Besides, we but patterned ourselves after our betters outside the walls, who, on a larger scale, and under the respectable disguise of merchants, bankers, and captains of industry, did precisely what we were doing. What awful things would have happened to those poor wretches if it hadn't been for us, I can't imagine. Heaven knows we put bread into circulation in the Erie County Pen. Ay, and we encouraged frugality and thrift ... in the poor devils who forewent their tobacco. And then there was our example. In the breast of every convict there we implanted the ambition to become even as we and run a graft. Saviours of society — I guess yes.

Here was a hungry man without any tobacco. Maybe he was a profligate and had used it all up on himself. Very good; he had a pair of suspenders. I exchanged half a dozen rations of bread for it — or a dozen rations if the suspenders were very good. Now I never wore suspenders, but that didn’t matter. Around the corner lodged a long-timer, doing ten years for manslaughter. He wore suspenders, and he wanted a pair. I could trade them to him for some of his meat. Meat was what I wanted. Or perhaps he had a tattered, paper-covered novel. That was treasure-trove. I could read it and then trade it off to the bakers for cake, or to the cooks for meat and vegetables, or to the firemen for decent coffee, or to some one or other for the newspaper that occasionally filtered in, heaven alone knows how. The cooks, bakers, and firemen were prisoners like myself, and they lodged in our hall in the first row of cells over us.

In short, a full-grown system of barter obtained in the Erie County Pen. There was even money in circulation. This money was sometimes smuggled in by the short-timers, more frequently came from the barber-shop graft, where the newcomers were mulcted, but most of all flowed from the cells of the long-timers — though how they got it I don’t know.

What of his preeminent position, the First Hall-man was reputed to be quite wealthy. In addition to his miscellaneous grafts, he grafted on us. We farmed the general wretchedness, and the First Hall-man was Farmer-General over all of us. We held our particular grafts by his permission, and we had to pay for that permission. As I say, he was reputed to be wealthy; but we never saw his money, and he lived in a cell all to himself in solitary grandeur.

But that money was made in the Pen I had direct evidence, for I was cell-mate quite a time with the Third Hall-man. He had over sixteen dollars. He used to count his money every night after nine o’clock, when we were locked in. Also, he used to tell me each night what he would do to me if I gave away on him to the other hall-men. You see, he was afraid of being robbed, and danger threatened him from three different directions. There were the guards. A couple of them might jump upon him, give him a good beating for alleged insubordination, and throw him into the “solitaire” (the dungeon); and in the mix-up that sixteen dollars of his would take wings. Then again, the First Hall-man could have taken it all away from him by threatening to dismiss him and fire him back to hard labor in the prison-yard. And yet again, there were the ten of us who were ordinary hall-men. If we got an inkling of his wealth, there was a large liability, some quiet day, of the whole bunch of us getting him into a corner and dragging him down.

Oh, we were wolves, believe me — just like the fellows who do business in Wall Street.

He had good reason to be afraid of us, and so had I to be afraid of him. He was a huge, illiterate brute, an ex-Chesapeake-Bay-oyster-pirate, an "ex-con" who had done five years in Sing Sing, and a general all-around stupidly carnivorous beast. He used to trap sparrows that flew into our hall through the open bars. When he made a capture, he hurried away with it into his cell, where I have seen him crunching bones and spitting out feathers as he bolted it raw. Oh, no, I never gave away on him to the other hall-men. This is the first time I have mentioned his sixteen dollars.

But I grafted on him just the same. He was in love with a woman prisoner who was confined in the "female department." He could neither read nor write, and I used to read her letters to him and write his replies. And I made him pay for it, too. But they were good letters. I laid myself out on them, put in my best licks, and furthermore, I won her for him; though I shrewdly guess that she was in love, not with him, but with the humble scribe. I repeat, those letters were great.

Another one of our grafts was "passing the punk." We were the celestial messengers, the fire-bringers, in that iron world of bolt and bar. When the men came in from work at night and were locked in their cells, they wanted to smoke. Then it was that we restored the divine spark, running the galleries, from cell to cell, with our smouldering punks. Those who were wise, or with whom we did business, had their punks all ready to light. Not every one got divine sparks, however. The guy who refused to dig up, went sparkless and smokeless to bed. But what did we care? We had the immortal cinch on him, and if he got fresh, two or three of us would pitch on him and give him "what-for."

You see, this was the working-theory of the hall-men. There were thirteen of us. We had something like half a thousand prisoners in our hall. We were supposed to do the work, and to keep order. The latter was the function of the guards, which they turned over to us. It was up to us to keep order; if we didn't, we'd be fired back to hard labor, most probably with a taste of the dungeon thrown in. But so long as we maintained order, that long could we work our own particular grafts.

Bear with me a moment and look at the problem. Here were thirteen beasts of us over half a thousand other beasts. It was a living hell, that prison, and it was up to us thirteen there to rule. It was impossible, considering the nature of the beasts, for us to rule by kindness. We ruled by fear. Of course, behind us, backing us up, were the guards. In extremity we called upon them for help; but it would bother them if we called upon them too often, in which event we could depend upon it that they would get more efficient trusties to take our places. But we did not call upon them often, except in a quiet sort of way, when we wanted a cell unlocked in order to get at a refractory prisoner inside. In such cases all the guard did was to unlock the door and walk away so as not to be a witness of what happened when half a dozen hall-men went inside and did a bit of man-handling.

As regards the details of this man-handling I shall say nothing. And after all, man-handling was merely one of the very minor unprintable horrors of the Erie County Pen. I say "unprintable"; and in justice I must also say "unthinkable." They were unthinkable to me until I saw them, and I was no spring chicken in the ways of the world and the awful abysses of human degradation. It would take a deep plummet to reach bottom in the Erie County Pen, and I do but skim lightly and facetiously the surface of things as I there saw them.

At times, say in the morning when the prisoners came down to wash, the thirteen of us would be practically alone in the midst of them, and every last one of them had it in for us. Thirteen against five hundred, and we ruled by fear. We could not permit the slightest infraction of rules, the slightest insolence. If we did, we were lost. Our own rule was to hit a man as soon as he opened his mouth — hit him hard, hit him with anything. A broom-handle, end-on, in the face, had a very sobering effect. But that was not all. Such a man must be made an example of; so the next rule was to wade right in and follow him up. Of course, one was sure that every hall-man in sight would come on the run to join in the chastisement; for this also was a rule. Whenever any hall-man was in trouble with a prisoner, the duty of any other hall-man who happened to be around was to lend a fist. Never mind the merits of the case — wade in and hit, and hit with anything; in short, lay the man out.

I remember a handsome young mulatto of about twenty who got the insane idea into his head that he should stand for his rights. And he did have the right of it, too; but that didn't help him any. He lived on the topmost gallery. Eight hall-men took the conceit out of him in just about a minute and a half — for that was the length of time required to travel along his gallery to the end and down five flights of steel stairs. He travelled the whole distance on every portion of his anatomy except his feet, and the eight hall-men were not idle. The mulatto struck the pavement where I was standing watching it all. He regained his feet and stood upright for a moment. In that moment he threw his arms wide apart and omitted an awful scream of terror and pain and heartbreak. At the same instant, as in a transformation scene, the shreds of his stout prison clothes fell from him, leaving him wholly naked and streaming blood from every portion of the surface of his body. Then he collapsed in a heap, unconscious. He had learned his lesson, and every convict within those walls who heard him scream had learned a lesson. So had I learned mine. It is not a nice thing to see a man's heart broken in a minute and a half.

The following will illustrate how we drummed up business in the graft of passing the punk. A row of newcomers is installed in your cells. You pass along before the bars with your punk. "Hey, Bo, give us a light," some one calls to you. Now this is an advertisement that that particular man has tobacco on him. You pass in the punk and go your way. A little later you come back and lean up casually against the bars. "Say, Bo, can you let us have a little tobacco?" is what you say. If he is not wise to the game, the chances are that he solemnly avers that he hasn't any more tobacco. All very well. You condole with him and go your way. But you know that his punk will last him only the rest of that day. Next day you come by, and he says again, "Hey, Bo, give us a light." And you say, "You haven't any tobacco and you don't need a light." And you don't give him any, either. Half an hour after, or an hour or two or three hours, you will be passing by and the man will call out to you in mild tones, "Come here, Bo." And you come. You thrust your hand between the bars and have it filled with precious tobacco. Then you give him a light.

Sometimes, however, a newcomer arrives, upon whom no grafts are to be worked. The mysterious word is passed along that he is to be treated decently. Where this word originated I could never learn. The one thing patent is that the man has a "pull." It may be with one of the superior hall-men; it may be with one of the guards in some other part of the prison; it may be that good treatment has been purchased from grafters higher up; but be it as it may, we know that it is up to us to treat him decently if we want to avoid trouble.

We hall-men were middle-men and common carriers. We arranged trades between convicts confined in different parts of the prison, and we put through the exchange. Also, we took our commissions coming and going. Sometimes the objects traded had to go through the hands of half a dozen middle-men, each of whom took his whack, or in some way or another was paid for his service.

Sometimes one was in debt for services, and sometimes one had others in his debt. Thus, I entered the prison in debt to the convict who smuggled in my things for me. A week or so afterward, one of the firemen passed a letter into my hand. It had been given to him by a barber. The barber had received it from the convict who had smuggled in my things. Because of my debt to him I was to carry the letter on. But he had not written the letter. The original sender was a long-timer in his hall. The letter was for a woman prisoner in the female department. But whether it was intended for her, or whether she, in turn, was one of the chain of go-betweens, I did not know. All that I knew was her description, and that it was up to me to get it into her hands.

Two days passed, during which time I kept the letter in my possession; then the opportunity came. The women did the mending of all the clothes worn by the convicts. A number of our hall-men had to go to the female department to bring back huge bundles of clothes. I fixed it with the First Hall-man that I was to go along. Door after door was unlocked for us as we threaded our way across the prison to the women's quarters. We entered a large room where the women sat working at their mending. My eyes were peeled for the woman who had been described to me. I located her and worked near to her. Two eagle-eyed matrons were on watch. I held the letter in my palm, and I looked my intention at the woman. She knew I had something for her; she must have been expecting it, and had set herself to divining, at the moment we entered, which of us was the messenger. But one of the matrons stood within two feet of her. Already the hall-men were picking up the bundles they were to carry away. The moment was passing. I delayed with my bundle, making believe that it was not tied securely. Would that matron ever look away? Or was I to fail? And just then another woman cut up playfully with one of the hall-men — stuck out her foot and tripped him, or pinched him, or did something or other. The matron looked that way and reprimanded the woman sharply. Now I do not know whether or not this was all planned to distract the matron's attention, but I did know that it was my opportunity. My particular woman's hand dropped from her lap down by her side. I stooped to pick up my bundle. From my stooping position I slipped the letter into her hand, and received another in exchange. The next moment the bundle was on my shoulder, the matron's gaze had returned to me because I was the last hall-man, and I was hastening to catch up with my companions. The letter I had received from the woman I turned over to the fireman, and thence it passed through the hands of the barber, of the convict who had smuggled in my things, and on to the long-timer at the other end.

Often we conveyed letters, the chain of communication of which was so complex that we knew neither sender nor sendee. We were but links in the chain. Somewhere, somehow, a convict would thrust a letter into my hand with the instruction to pass it on to the next link. All such acts were favors to be reciprocated later on, when I should be acting directly with a principal in transmitting letters, and from whom I should be receiving my pay. The whole prison was covered by a network of lines of communication. And we who were in control of the system of communication, naturally, since we were modelled after capitalistic society, exacted heavy tolls from our customers. It was service for profit with a vengeance, though we were at times not above giving service for love.

And all the time I was in the Pen I was making myself solid with my pal. He had done much for me, and in return he expected me to do as much for him. When we got out, we were to travel together, and, it goes without saying, pull off "jobs" together. For my pal was a criminal — oh, not a jewel of the first water, merely a petty criminal who would steal and rob, commit burglary, and, if cornered, not stop short of murder. Many a quiet hour we sat and talked together. He had two or three jobs in view for the immediate future, in which my work was cut out for me, and in which I joined in planning the details. I had been with and seen much of criminals, and my pal never dreamed that I was only fooling him, giving him a string thirty days long. He thought I was the real goods, liked me because I was not stupid, and liked me a bit, too, I think, for myself. Of course I had not the slightest intention of joining him in a life of sordid, petty crime; but I'd have been an idiot to throw away all the good things his friendship made possible. When one is on the hot lava of hell, he cannot pick and choose his path, and so it was with me in the Erie County Pen. I had to stay in with the "push," or do hard labor on bread and water; and to stay in with the push I had to make good with my pal.

Life was not monotonous in the Pen. Every day something was happening: men were having fits, going crazy, fighting, or the hall-men were getting drunk. Rover Jack, one of the ordinary hall-men, was our star "oryide." He was a true "profesh," a "blowed-in-the-glass" stiff, and as such received all kinds of latitude from the hall-men in authority. Pittsburg Joe, who was Second Hall-man, used to join Rover Jack in his jags; and it was a saying of the pair that the Erie County Pen was the only place where a man could get "slopped" and not be arrested. I never knew, but I was told that bromide of potassium, gained in devious ways from the dispensary, was the dope they used. But I do know, whatever their dope was, that they got good and drunk on occasion.

Our hall was a common stews, filled with the ruck and the filth, the scum and dregs, of society — hereditary inefficients, degenerates, wrecks, lunatics, addled intelligences, epileptics, monsters, weaklings, in short, a very nightmare of humanity. Hence, fits flourished with us. These fits seemed contagious. When one man began throwing a fit, others followed his lead. I have seen seven men down with fits at the same time, making the air hideous with their cries, while as many more lunatics would be raging and gibbering up and down. Nothing was ever done for the men with fits except to throw cold water on them. It was useless to send for the medical student or the doctor. They were not to be bothered with such trivial and frequent occurrences.

There was a young Dutch boy, about eighteen years of age, who had fits most frequently of all. He usually threw one every day. It was for that reason that we kept him on the ground floor farther down in the row of cells in which we lodged. After he had had a few fits in the prison-yard, the guards refused to be bothered with him any more, and so he remained locked up in his cell all day with a Cockney cell-mate, to keep him company. Not that the Cockney was of any use. Whenever the Dutch boy had a fit, the Cockney became paralyzed with terror.

The Dutch boy could not speak a word of English. He was a farmer's boy, serving ninety days as punishment for having got into a scrap with some one. He prefaced his fits with howling. He howled like a wolf. Also, he took his fits standing up, which was very inconvenient for him, for his fits always culminated in a headlong pitch to the floor. Whenever I heard the long wolf-howl rising, I used to grab a broom and run to his cell. Now the trusties were not allowed keys to the cells, so I could not get in to him.

He would stand up in the middle of his narrow cell, shivering convulsively, his eyes rolled backward till only the whites were visible, and howling like a lost soul. Try as I would, I could never get the Cockney to lend him a hand. While he stood and howled, the Cockney crouched and trembled in the upper bunk, his terror-stricken gaze fixed on that awful figure, with eyes rolled back, that howled and howled. It was hard on him, too, the poor devil of a Cockney. His own reason was not any too firmly seated, and the wonder is that he did not go mad.

All that I could do was my best with the broom. I would thrust it through the bars, train it on Dutchy's chest, and wait. As the crisis approached he would begin swaying back and forth. I followed this swaying with the broom, for there was no telling when he would take that dreadful forward pitch. But when he did, I was there with the broom, catching him and easing him down. Contrive as I would, he never came down quite gently, and his face was usually bruised by the stone floor. Once down and writhing in convulsions, I'd throw a bucket of water over him. I don't know whether cold water was the right thing or not, but it was the custom in the Erie County Pen. Nothing more than that was ever done for him. He would lie there, wet, for an hour or so, and then crawl into his bunk. I knew better than to run to a guard for assistance. What was a man with a fit, anyway?

In the adjoining cell lived a strange character — a man who was doing sixty days for eating swill out of Barnum's swill-barrel, or at least that was the way he put it. He was a badly addled creature, and, at first, very mild and gentle. The facts of his case were as he had stated them. He had strayed out to the circus ground, and, being hungry, had made his way to the barrel that contained the refuse from the table of the circus people. "And it was good bread," he often assured me; "and the meat was out of sight." A policeman had seen him and arrested him, and there he was.

Once I passed his cell with a piece of stiff thin wire in my hand. He asked me for it so earnestly that I passed it through the bars to him. Promptly, and with no tool but his fingers, he broke it into short lengths and twisted them into half a dozen very creditable safety pins. He sharpened the points on the stone floor. Thereafter I did quite a trade in safety pins. I furnished the raw material and peddled the finished product, and he did the work. As wages, I paid him extra rations of bread, and once in a while a chunk of meat or a piece of soup-bone with some marrow inside.

But his imprisonment told on him, and he grew violent day by day. The hall-men took delight in teasing him. They filled his weak brain with stories of a great fortune that had been left him. It was in order to rob him of it that he had been arrested and sent to jail. Of course, as he himself knew, there was no law against eating out of a barrel. Therefore he was wrongly imprisoned. It was a plot to deprive him of his fortune.

The first I knew of it, I heard the hall-men laughing about the string they had given him. Next he held a serious conference with me, in which he told me of his millions and the plot to deprive him of them, and in which he appointed me his detective. I did my best to let him down gently, speaking vaguely of a mistake, and that it was another man with a similar name who was the rightful heir. I left him quite cooled down; but I couldn't keep the hall-men away from him, and they continued to string him worse than ever. In the end, after a most violent scene, he threw me down, revoked my private detectiveship, and went on strike. My trade in safety pins ceased. He refused to make any more safety pins, and he peppered me with raw material through the bars of his cell when I passed by.

I could never make it up with him. The other hall-men told him that I was a detective in the employ of the conspirators. And in the meantime the hall-men drove him mad with their stringing. His fictitious wrongs preyed upon his mind, and at last he became a dangerous and homicidal lunatic. The guards refused to listen to his tale of stolen millions, and he accused them of being in the plot. One day he threw a pannikin of hot tea over one of them, and then his case was investigated. The warden talked with him a few minutes through the bars of his cell. Then he was taken away for examination before the doctors. He never came back, and I often wonder if he is dead, or if he still gibbers about his millions in some asylum for the insane.

At last came the day of days, my release. It was the day of release for the Third Hall-man as well, and the short-timer girl I had won for him was waiting for him outside the wall. They went away blissfully together. My pal and I went out together, and together we walked down into Buffalo. Were we not to be together always? We begged together on the "main-drag" that day for pennies, and what we received was spent for "shupers" of beer — I don't know how they are spelled, but they are pronounced the way I have spelled them, and they cost three cents. I was watching my chance all the time for a get-away. From some bo on the drag I managed to learn what time a certain freight pulled out. I calculated my time accordingly. When the moment came, my pal and I were in a saloon. Two foaming shupers were before us. I'd have liked to say good-by. He had been good to me. But I did not dare. I went out through the rear of the saloon and jumped the fence. It was a swift sneak, and a few minutes later I was on board a freight and heading south on the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad.

Hoboes That Pass in the Night

In the course of my tramping I encountered hundreds of hoboes, whom I hailed or who hailed me, and with whom I waited at water-tanks, “boiled-up,” cooked “mulligans,” “battered” the “drag” or “privates,” and beat trains, and who passed and were seen never again. On the other hand, there were hoboes who passed and repassed with amazing frequency, and others, still, who passed like ghosts, close at hand, unseen, and never seen.

It was one of the latter that I chased clear across Canada over three thousand miles of railroad, and never once did I lay eyes on him. His “monica” was Skysail Jack. I first ran into it at Montreal. Carved with a jack-knife was the skysail-yard of a ship. It was perfectly executed. Under it was “Skysail Jack.” Above was “B.W. 9-15-94.” This latter conveyed the information that he had passed through Montreal bound west, on October 15, 1894. He had one day the start of me. “Sailor Jack” was my monica at that particular time, and promptly I carved it alongside of his, along with the date and the information that I, too, was bound west.

I had misfortune in getting over the next hundred miles, and eight days later I picked up Skysail Jack’s trail three hundred miles west of Ottawa. There it was, carved on a water-tank, and by the date I saw that he likewise had met with delay. He was only two days ahead of me. I was a “comet” and “tramp-royal,” so was Skysail Jack; and it was up to my pride and reputation to catch up with him. I “railroaded” day and night, and I passed him; then turn about he passed me. Sometimes he was a day or so ahead, and sometimes I was. From hoboes, bound east, I got word of him occasionally, when he happened to be ahead; and from them I learned that he had become interested in Sailor Jack and was making inquiries about me.

We’d have made a precious pair, I am sure, if we’d ever got together; but get together we couldn’t. I kept ahead of him clear across Manitoba, but he led the way across Alberta, and early one bitter gray morning, at the end of a division just east of Kicking Horse Pass, I learned that he had been seen the night before between Kicking Horse Pass and Rogers’ Pass. It was rather curious the way the information came to me. I had been riding all night in a “side-door Pullman” (box-car), and nearly dead with cold had crawled out at the division to beg for food. A freezing fog was drifting past, and I “hit” some firemen I found in the round-house. They fixed me up with the leavings from their lunch-pails, and in addition I got out of them nearly a quart of heavenly “Java” (coffee). I heated the latter, and, as I sat down to eat, a freight pulled in from the west. I saw a side-door open and a road-kid climb out. Through the drifting fog he limped over to me. He was stiff with cold, his lips blue. I shared my Java and grub with him, learned about Skysail Jack, and then learned about him. Behold, he was from my own town, Oakland, California, and he was a member of the celebrated Boo Gang — a gang with which I had affiliated at rare intervals. We talked fast and bolted the grub in the half-hour that followed. Then my freight pulled out, and I was on it, bound west on the trail of Skysail Jack.

I was delayed between the passes, went two days without food, and walked eleven miles on the third day before I got any, and yet I succeeded in passing Skysail Jack along the Fraser River in British Columbia. I was riding “passengers” then and making time; but he must have been riding passengers, too, and with more luck or skill than I, for he got into Mission ahead of me.

Now Mission was a junction, forty miles east of Vancouver. From the junction one could proceed south through Washington and Oregon over the Northern Pacific. I wondered which way Skysail Jack would go, for I thought I was ahead of him. As for myself I was still bound west to Vancouver. I proceeded to the water-tank to leave that information, and there, freshly carved, with that day’s date upon it, was Skysail Jack’s monica. I hurried on into Vancouver. But he was gone. He had taken ship immediately and was still flying west on his world-adventure. Truly, Skysail Jack, you were a tramp-royal, and your mate was the “wind that tramps the world.” I take off my hat to you. You were “blowed-in-the-glass” all right. A week later I, too, got my ship, and on board the steamship Umatilla, in the forecastle, was working my way down the coast to San Francisco. Skysail Jack and Sailor Jack — gee! if we’d ever got together.

Water-tanks are tramp directories. Not all in idle wantonness do tramps carve their monicas, dates, and courses. Often and often have I met hoboes earnestly inquiring if I had seen anywhere such and such a “stiff” or his monica. And more than once I have been able to give the monica of recent date, the water-tank, and the direction in which he was then bound. And promptly the hobo to whom I gave the information lit out after his pal. I have met hoboes who, in trying to catch a pal, had pursued clear across the continent and back again, and were still going.

“Monicas” are the nom-de-rails that hoboes assume or accept when thrust upon them by their fellows. Leary Joe, for instance, was timid, and was so named by his fellows. No self-respecting hobo would select Stew Bum for himself. Very few tramps care to remember their pasts during which they ignobly worked, so monicas based upon trades are very rare, though I remember having met the following: Moulder Blackey, Painter Red, Chi Plumber, Boiler-Maker, Sailor Boy, and Printer Bo. “Chi” (pronounced shy), by the way, is the argot for “Chicago.”

A favorite device of hoboes is to base their monicas on the localities from which they hail, as: New York Tommy, Pacific Slim, Buffalo Smithy, Canton Tim, Pittsburg Jack, Syracuse Shine, Troy Mickey, K.L. Bill, and Connecticut Jimmy. Then there was “Slim Jim from Vinegar Hill, who never worked and never will.” A “shine” is always a negro, so called, possibly, from the high lights on his countenance. Texas Shine or Toledo Shine convey both race and nativity.

Among those that incorporated their race, I recollect the following: Frisco Sheeny, New York Irish, Michigan French, English Jack, Cockney Kid, and Milwaukee Dutch. Others seem to take their monicas in part from the color-schemes stamped upon them at birth, such as: Chi Whitey, New Jersey Red, Boston Blackey, Seattle Browney, and Yellow Dick and Yellow Belly — the last a Creole from Mississippi, who, I suspect, had his monica thrust upon him.

Texas Royal, Happy Joe, Bust Connors, Burley Bo, Tornado Blackey, and Touch McCall used more imagination in rechristening themselves. Others, with less fancy, carry the names of their physical peculiarities, such as: Vancouver Slim, Detroit Shorty, Ohio Fatty, Long Jack, Big Jim, Little Joe, New York Blink, Chi Nosey, and Broken-backed Ben.

By themselves come the road-kids, sporting an infinite variety of monicas. For example, the following, whom here and there I have encountered: Buck Kid, Blind Kid, Midget Kid, Holy Kid, Bat Kid, Swift Kid, Cookey Kid, Monkey Kid, Iowa Kid, Corduroy Kid, Orator Kid (who could tell how it happened), and Lippy Kid (who was insolent, depend upon it).

On the water-tank at San Marcial, New Mexico, a dozen years ago, was the following hobo bill of fare: —

(1) Main-drag fair.
(2) Bulls not hostile.

(3) Round-house good for kipping.
(4) North-bound trains no good.
(5) Privates no good.
(6) Restaurants good for cooks only.
(7) Railroad House good for night-work only.

Number one conveys the information that begging for money on the main street is fair; number two, that the police will not bother hoboes; number three, that one can sleep in the round-house. Number four, however, is ambiguous. The north-bound trains may be no good to beat, and they may be no good to beg. Number five means that the residences are not good to beggars, and number six means that only hoboes that have been cooks can get grub from the restaurants. Number seven bothers me. I cannot make out whether the Railroad House is a good place for any hobo to beg at night, or whether it is good only for hobo-cooks to beg at night, or whether any hobo, cook or non-cook, can lend a hand at night, helping the cooks of the Railroad House with their dirty work and getting something to eat in payment.

But to return to the hoboes that pass in the night. I remember one I met in California. He was a Swede, but he had lived so long in the United States that one couldn’t guess his nationality. He had to tell it on himself. In fact, he had come to the United States when no more than a baby. I ran into him first at the mountain town of Truckee. “Which way, Bo?” was our greeting, and “Bound east” was the answer each of us gave. Quite a bunch of “stiffs” tried to ride out the overland that night, and I lost the Swede in the shuffle. Also, I lost the overland.

I arrived in Reno, Nevada, in a box-car that was promptly side-tracked. It was a Sunday morning, and after I threw my feet for breakfast, I wandered over to the Piute camp to watch the Indians gambling. And there stood the Swede, hugely interested. Of course we got together. He was the only acquaintance I had in that region, and I was his only acquaintance. We rushed together like a couple of dissatisfied hermits, and together we spent the day, threw our feet for dinner, and late in the afternoon tried to “nail” the same freight. But he was ditched, and I rode her out alone, to be ditched myself in the desert twenty miles beyond.

Of all desolate places, the one at which I was ditched was the limit. It was called a flag-station, and it consisted of a shanty dumped inconsequentially into the sand and sagebrush. A chill wind was blowing, night was coming on, and the solitary telegraph operator who lived in the shanty was afraid of me. I knew that neither grub nor bed could I get out of him. It was because of his manifest fear of me that I did not believe him when he told me that east-bound trains never stopped there. Besides, hadn't I been thrown off of an east-bound train right at that very spot not five minutes before? He assured me that it had stopped under orders, and that a year might go by before another was stopped under orders. He advised me that it was only a dozen or fifteen miles on to Wadsworth and that I'd better hike. I elected to wait, however, and I had the pleasure of seeing two west-bound freights go by without stopping, and one east-bound freight. I wondered if the Swede was on the latter. It was up to me to hit the ties to Wadsworth, and hit them I did, much to the telegraph operator's relief, for I neglected to burn his shanty and murder him. Telegraph operators have much to be thankful for. At the end of half a dozen miles, I had to get off the ties and let the east-bound overland go by. She was going fast, but I caught sight of a dim form on the first "blind" that looked like the Swede.

That was the last I saw of him for weary days. I hit the high places across those hundreds of miles of Nevada desert, riding the overlands at night, for speed, and in the day-time riding in box-cars and getting my sleep. It was early in the year, and it was cold in those upland pastures. Snow lay here and there on the level, all the mountains were shrouded in white, and at night the most miserable wind imaginable blew off from them. It was not a land in which to linger. And remember, gentle reader, the hobo goes through such a land, without shelter, without money, begging his way and sleeping at night without blankets. This last is something that can be realized only by experience.

In the early evening I came down to the depot at Ogden. The overland of the Union Pacific was pulling east, and I was bent on making connections. Out in the tangle of tracks ahead of the engine I encountered a figure slouching through the gloom. It was the Swede. We shook hands like long-lost brothers, and discovered that our hands were gloved. "Where'd ye glahm 'em?" I asked. "Out of an engine-cab," he answered; "and where did you?" "They belonged to a fireman," said I; "he was careless."

We caught the blind as the overland pulled out, and mighty cold we found it. The way led up a narrow gorge between snow-covered mountains, and we shivered and shook and exchanged confidences about how we had covered the ground between Reno and Ogden. I had closed my eyes for only an hour or so the previous night, and the blind was not comfortable enough to suit me for a snooze. At a stop, I went forward to the engine. We had on a “double-header” (two engines) to take us over the grade.

The pilot of the head engine, because it “punched the wind,” I knew would be too cold; so I selected the pilot of the second engine, which was sheltered by the first engine. I stepped on the cowcatcher and found the pilot occupied. In the darkness I felt out the form of a young boy. He was sound asleep. By squeezing, there was room for two on the pilot, and I made the boy budge over and crawled up beside him. It was a “good” night; the “shacks” (brakemen) didn’t bother us, and in no time we were asleep. Once in a while hot cinders or heavy jolts aroused me, when I snuggled closer to the boy and dozed off to the coughing of the engines and the screeching of the wheels.

The overland made Evanston, Wyoming, and went no farther. A wreck ahead blocked the line. The dead engineer had been brought in, and his body attested the peril of the way. A tramp, also, had been killed, but his body had not been brought in. I talked with the boy. He was thirteen years old. He had run away from his folks in some place in Oregon, and was heading east to his grandmother. He had a tale of cruel treatment in the home he had left that rang true; besides, there was no need for him to lie to me, a nameless hobo on the track.

And that boy was going some, too. He couldn’t cover the ground fast enough. When the division superintendents decided to send the overland back over the way it had come, then up on a cross “jerk” to the Oregon Short Line, and back along that road to tap the Union Pacific the other side of the wreck, that boy climbed upon the pilot and said he was going to stay with it. This was too much for the Swede and me. It meant travelling the rest of that frigid night in order to gain no more than a dozen miles or so. We said we’d wait till the wreck was cleared away, and in the meantime get a good sleep.

Now it is no snap to strike a strange town, broke, at midnight, in cold weather, and find a place to sleep. The Swede hadn’t a penny. My total assets consisted of two dimes and a nickel. From some of the town boys we learned that beer was five cents, and that the saloons kept open all night. There was our meat. Two glasses of beer would cost ten cents, there would be a stove and chairs, and we could sleep it out till morning. We headed for the lights of a saloon, walking briskly, the snow crunching under our feet, a chill little wind blowing through us.

Alas, I had misunderstood the town boys. Beer was five cents in one saloon only in the whole burg, and we didn't strike that saloon. But the one we entered was all right. A blessed stove was roaring white-hot; there were cosey, cane-bottomed arm-chairs, and a none-too-pleasant-looking barkeeper who glared suspiciously at us as we came in. A man cannot spend continuous days and nights in his clothes, beating trains, fighting soot and cinders, and sleeping anywhere, and maintain a good "front." Our fronts were decidedly against us; but what did we care? I had the price in my jeans.

"Two beers," said I nonchalantly to the barkeeper, and while he drew them, the Swede and I leaned against the bar and yearned secretly for the arm-chairs by the stove.

The barkeeper set the two foaming glasses before us, and with pride I deposited the ten cents. Now I was dead game. As soon as I learned my error in the price I'd have dug up another ten cents. Never mind if it did leave me only a nickel to my name, a stranger in a strange land. I'd have paid it all right. But that barkeeper never gave me a chance. As soon as his eyes spotted the dime I had laid down, he seized the two glasses, one in each hand, and dumped the beer into the sink behind the bar. At the same time, glaring at us malevolently, he said: —

"You've got scabs on your nose. You've got scabs on your nose. You've got scabs on your nose. See!"

I hadn't either, and neither had the Swede. Our noses were all right. The direct bearing of his words was beyond our comprehension, but the indirect bearing was clear as print: he didn't like our looks, and beer was evidently ten cents a glass.

I dug down and laid another dime on the bar, remarking carelessly, "Oh, I thought this was a five-cent joint."

"Your money's no good here," he answered, shoving the two dimes across the bar to me.

Sadly I dropped them back into my pocket, sadly we yearned toward the blessed stove and the arm-chairs, and sadly we went out the door into the frosty night.

But as we went out the door, the barkeeper, still glaring, called after us, "You've got scabs on your nose, see!"

I have seen much of the world since then, journeyed among strange lands and peoples, opened many books, sat in many lecture-halls; but to this day, though I have pondered long and deep, I have been unable to divine the meaning in the cryptic utterance of that barkeeper in Evanston, Wyoming. Our noses *were* all right.

We slept that night over the boilers in an electric-lighting plant. How we discovered that "kipping" place I can't remember. We must have just headed for it, instinctively, as horses head for water or carrier-pigeons head for the home-cote. But it was a night not pleasant to remember. A dozen hoboes were ahead of us on top the boilers, and it was too hot for all of us. To complete our misery, the engineer would not let us stand around down below. He gave us our choice of the boilers or the outside snow.

"You said you wanted to sleep, and so, damn you, sleep," said he to me, when, frantic and beaten out by the heat, I came down into the fire-room.

"Water," I gasped, wiping the sweat from my eyes, "water."

He pointed out of doors and assured me that down there somewhere in the blackness I'd find the river. I started for the river, got lost in the dark, fell into two or three drifts, gave it up, and returned half-frozen to the top of the boilers. When I had thawed out, I was thirstier than ever. Around me the hoboes were moaning, groaning, sobbing, sighing, gasping, panting, rolling and tossing and floundering heavily in their torment. We were so many lost souls toasting on a griddle in hell, and the engineer, Satan Incarnate, gave us the sole alternative of freezing in the outer cold. The Swede sat up and anathematized passionately the wanderlust in man that sent him tramping and suffering hardships such as that.

"When I get back to Chicago," he perorated, "I'm going to get a job and stick to it till hell freezes over. Then I'll go tramping again."

And, such is the irony of fate, next day, when the wreck ahead was cleared, the Swede and I pulled out of Evanston in the ice-boxes of an "orange special," a fast freight laden with fruit from sunny California. Of course, the ice-boxes were empty on account of the cold weather, but that didn't make them any warmer for us. We entered them through hatchways in the top of the car; the boxes were constructed of galvanized iron, and in that biting weather were not pleasant to the touch. We lay there, shivered and shook, and with chattering teeth held a council wherein we decided that we'd stay by the ice-boxes day and night till we got out of the inhospitable plateau region and down into the Mississippi Valley.

But we must eat, and we decided that at the next division we would throw our feet for grub and make a rush back to our ice-boxes. We arrived in the town of Green River late in the afternoon, but too early for supper. Before meal-time is the worst time for "battering" back-doors; but we put on our nerve, swung off the side-ladders as the freight pulled into the yards, and made a run for the houses. We were quickly separated; but we had agreed to meet in the ice-boxes. I had bad luck at first; but in the end, with a couple of "hand-outs" poked into my shirt, I chased for the train. It was pulling out and going fast. The particular refrigerator-car in which we were to meet had already gone by, and half a dozen cars down the train from it I swung on to the side-ladders, went up on top hurriedly, and dropped down into an ice-box.

But a shack had seen me from the caboose, and at the next stop a few miles farther on, Rock Springs, the shack stuck his head into my box and said: "Hit the grit, you son of a toad! Hit the grit!" Also he grabbed me by the heels and dragged me out. I hit the grit all right, and the orange special and the Swede rolled on without me.

Snow was beginning to fall. A cold night was coming on. After dark I hunted around in the railroad yards until I found an empty refrigerator car. In I climbed — not into the ice-boxes, but into the car itself. I swung the heavy doors shut, and their edges, covered with strips of rubber, sealed the car air-tight. The walls were thick. There was no way for the outside cold to get in. But the inside was just as cold as the outside. How to raise the temperature was the problem. But trust a "profesh" for that. Out of my pockets I dug up three or four newspapers. These I burned, one at a time, on the floor of the car. The smoke rose to the top. Not a bit of the heat could escape, and, comfortable and warm, I passed a beautiful night. I didn't wake up once.

In the morning it was still snowing. While throwing my feet for breakfast, I missed an east-bound freight. Later in the day I nailed two other freights and was ditched from both of them. All afternoon no east-bound trains went by. The snow was falling thicker than ever, but at twilight I rode out on the first blind of the overland. As I swung aboard the blind from one side, somebody swung aboard from the other. It was the boy who had run away from Oregon.

Now the first blind of a fast train in a driving snow-storm is no summer picnic. The wind goes right through one, strikes the front of the car, and comes back again. At the first stop, darkness having come on, I went forward and interviewed the fireman. I offered to "shove" coal to the end of his run, which was Rawlins, and my offer was accepted. My work was out on the tender, in the snow, breaking the lumps of coal with a sledge and shovelling it forward to him in the cab. But as I did not have to work all the time, I could come into the cab and warm up now and again.

"Say," I said to the fireman, at my first breathing spell, "there's a little kid back there on the first blind. He's pretty cold."

The cabs on the Union Pacific engines are quite spacious, and we fitted the kid into a warm nook in front of the high seat of the fireman, where the kid promptly fell asleep. We arrived at Rawlins at midnight. The snow was thicker than ever. Here the engine was to go into the round-house, being replaced by a fresh engine. As the train came to a stop, I dropped off the engine steps plump into the arms of a large man in a large overcoat. He began asking me questions, and I promptly demanded who he was. Just as promptly he informed me that he was the sheriff. I drew in my horns and listened and answered.

He began describing the kid who was still asleep in the cab. I did some quick thinking. Evidently the family was on the trail of the kid, and the sheriff had received telegraphed instructions from Oregon. Yes, I had seen the kid. I had met him first in Ogden. The date tallied with the sheriff's information. But the kid was still behind somewhere, I explained, for he had been ditched from that very overland that night when it pulled out of Rock Springs. And all the time I was praying that the kid wouldn't wake up, come down out of the cab, and put the "kibosh" on me.

The sheriff left me in order to interview the shacks, but before he left he said: —

"Bo, this town is no place for you. Understand? You ride this train out, and make no mistake about it. If I catch you after it's gone ..."

I assured him that it was not through desire that I was in his town; that the only reason I was there was that the train had stopped there; and that he wouldn't see me for smoke the way I'd get out of his darn town.

While he went to interview the shacks, I jumped back into the cab. The kid was awake and rubbing his eyes. I told him the news and advised him to ride the engine into the round-house. To cut the story short, the kid made the same overland out, riding the pilot, with instructions to make an appeal to the fireman at the first stop for permission to ride in the engine. As for myself, I got ditched. The new fireman was young and not yet lax enough to break the rules of the Company against having tramps in the engine; so he turned down my offer to shove coal. I hope the kid succeeded with him, for all night on the pilot in that blizzard would have meant death.

Strange to say, I do not at this late day remember a detail of how I was ditched at Rawlins. I remember watching the train as it was immediately swallowed up in the snow-storm, and of heading for a saloon to warm up. Here was light and warmth. Everything was in full blast and wide open. Faro, roulette, craps, and poker tables were running, and some mad cow-punchers were making the night merry. I had just succeeded in fraternizing with them and was downing my first drink at their expense, when a heavy hand descended on my shoulder. I looked around and sighed. It was the sheriff.

Without a word he led me out into the snow.

"There's an orange special down there in the yards," said he.

"It's a damn cold night," said I.

"It pulls out in ten minutes," said he.

That was all. There was no discussion. And when that orange special pulled out, I was in the ice-boxes. I thought my feet would freeze before morning, and the last twenty miles into Laramie I stood upright in the hatchway and danced up and down. The snow was too thick for the shacks to see me, and I didn't care if they did.

My quarter of a dollar bought me a hot breakfast at Laramie, and immediately afterward I was on board the blind baggage of an overland that was climbing to the pass through the backbone of the Rockies. One does not ride blind baggages in the daytime; but in this blizzard at the top of the Rocky Mountains I doubted if the shacks would have the heart to put me off. And they didn't. They made a practice of coming forward at every stop to see if I was frozen yet.

At Ames' Monument, at the summit of the Rockies, — I forget the altitude, — the shack came forward for the last time.

"Say, Bo," he said, "you see that freight side-tracked over there to let us go by?"

I saw. It was on the next track, six feet away. A few feet more in that storm and I could not have seen it.

"Well, the 'after-push' of Kelly's Army is in one of them cars. They've got two feet of straw under them, and there's so many of them that they keep the car warm."

His advice was good, and I followed it, prepared, however, if it was a "con game" the shack had given me, to take the blind as the overland pulled out. But it was straight goods. I found the car — a big refrigerator car with the leeward door wide open for ventilation. Up I climbed and in. I stepped on a man's leg, next on some other man's arm. The light was dim, and all I could make out was arms and legs and bodies inextricably confused. Never was there such a tangle of humanity. They were all lying in the straw, and over, and under, and around one another. Eighty-four husky hoboes take up a lot of room when they are stretched out. The men I stepped on were resentful. Their bodies heaved under me like the waves of the sea, and imparted an involuntary forward movement to me. I could not find any straw to step upon, so I stepped upon more men. The resentment increased, so did my forward movement. I lost my footing and sat down with sharp abruptness. Unfortunately, it was on a man's head. The next moment he had risen on his hands and knees in wrath, and I was flying through the air. What goes up must come down, and I came down on another man's head.

What happened after that is very vague in my memory. It was like going through a threshing-machine. I was bandied about from one end of the car to the other. Those eighty-four hoboes winnowed me out till what little was left of me, by some miracle, found a bit of straw to rest upon. I was initiated, and into a jolly crowd. All the rest of that day we rode through the blizzard, and to while the time away it was decided that each man was to tell a story. It was stipulated that each story must be a good one, and, furthermore, that it must be a story no one had ever heard before. The penalty for failure was the threshing-machine. Nobody failed. And I want to say right here that never in my life have I sat at so marvellous a story-telling debauch. Here were eighty-four men from all the world — I made eighty-five; and each man told a masterpiece. It had to be, for it was either masterpiece or threshing-machine.

Late in the afternoon we arrived in Cheyenne. The blizzard was at its height, and though the last meal of all of us had been breakfast, no man cared to throw his feet for supper. All night we rolled on through the storm, and next day found us down on the sweet plains of Nebraska and still rolling. We were out of the storm and the mountains. The blessed sun was shining over a smiling land, and we had eaten nothing for twenty-four hours. We found out that the freight would arrive about noon at a town, if I remember right, that was called Grand Island.

We took up a collection and sent a telegram to the authorities of that town. The text of the message was that eighty-five healthy, hungry hoboes would arrive about noon and that it would be a good idea to have dinner ready for them. The authorities of Grand Island had two courses open to them. They could feed us, or they could throw us in jail. In the latter event they'd have to feed us anyway, and they decided wisely that one meal would be the cheaper way.

When the freight rolled into Grand Island at noon, we were sitting on the tops of the cars and dangling our legs in the sunshine. All the police in the burg were on the reception committee. They marched us in squads to the various hotels and restaurants, where dinners were spread for us. We had been thirty-six hours without food, and we didn't have to be taught what to do. After that we were marched back to the railroad station. The police had thoughtfully compelled the freight to wait for us. She pulled out slowly, and the eighty-five of us, strung out along the track, swarmed up the side-ladders. We "captured" the train.

We had no supper that evening — at least the "push" didn't, but I did. Just at supper time, as the freight was pulling out of a small town, a man climbed into the car where I was playing pedro with three other stiffs. The man's shirt was bulging suspiciously. In his hand he carried a battered quart-measure from which arose steam. I smelled "Java." I turned my cards over to one of the stiffs who was looking on, and excused myself. Then, in the other end of the car, pursued by envious glances, I sat down with the man who had climbed aboard and shared his "Java" and the hand-outs that had bulged his shirt. It was the Swede.

At about ten o'clock in the evening, we arrived at Omaha.

"Let's shake the push," said the Swede to me.

"Sure," said I.

As the freight pulled into Omaha, we made ready to do so. But the people of Omaha were also ready. The Swede and I hung upon the side-ladders, ready to drop off. But the freight did not stop. Furthermore, long rows of policemen, their brass buttons and stars glittering in the electric lights, were lined up on each side of the track. The Swede and I knew what would happen to us if we ever dropped off into their arms. We stuck by the side-ladders, and the train rolled on across the Missouri River to Council Bluffs.

“General” Kelly, with an army of two thousand hoboes, lay in camp at Chautauqua Park, several miles away. The after-push we were with was General Kelly’s rear-guard, and, detraining at Council Bluffs, it started to march to camp. The night had turned cold, and heavy wind-squalls, accompanied by rain, were chilling and wetting us. Many police were guarding us and herding us to the camp. The Swede and I watched our chance and made a successful get-away.

The rain began coming down in torrents, and in the darkness, unable to see our hands in front of our faces, like a pair of blind men we fumbled about for shelter. Our instinct served us, for in no time we stumbled upon a saloon — not a saloon that was open and doing business, not merely a saloon that was closed for the night, and not even a saloon with a permanent address, but a saloon propped up on big timbers, with rollers underneath, that was being moved from somewhere to somewhere. The doors were locked. A squall of wind and rain drove down upon us. We did not hesitate. Smash went the door, and in we went.

I have made some tough camps in my time, “carried the banner” in infernal metropolises, bedded in pools of water, slept in the snow under two blankets when the spirit thermometer registered seventy-four degrees below zero (which is a mere trifle of one hundred and six degrees of frost); but I want to say right here that never did I make a tougher camp, pass a more miserable night, than that night I passed with the Swede in the itinerant saloon at Council Bluffs. In the first place, the building, perched up as it was in the air, had exposed a multitude of openings in the floor through which the wind whistled. In the second place, the bar was empty; there was no bottled fire-water with which we could warm ourselves and forget our misery. We had no blankets, and in our wet clothes, wet to the skin, we tried to sleep. I rolled under the bar, and the Swede rolled under the table. The holes and crevices in the floor made it impossible, and at the end of half an hour I crawled up on top the bar. A little later the Swede crawled up on top his table.

And there we shivered and prayed for daylight. I know, for one, that I shivered until I could shiver no more, till the shivering muscles exhausted themselves and merely ached horribly. The Swede moaned and groaned, and every little while, through chattering teeth, he muttered, “Never again; never again.” He muttered this phrase repeatedly, ceaselessly, a thousand times; and when he dozed, he went on muttering it in his sleep.

At the first gray of dawn we left our house of pain, and outside, found ourselves in a mist, dense and chill. We stumbled on till we came to the railroad track. I was going back to Omaha to throw my feet for breakfast; my companion was going on to Chicago. The moment for parting had come. Our palsied hands went out to each other. We were both shivering. When we tried to speak, our teeth chattered us back into silence. We stood alone, shut off from the world; all that we could see was a short length of railroad track, both ends of which were lost in the driving mist. We stared dumbly at each other, our clasped hands shaking sympathetically. The Swede's face was blue with the cold, and I know mine must have been.

"Never again what?" I managed to articulate.

Speech strove for utterance in the Swede's throat; then faint and distant, in a thin whisper from the very bottom of his frozen soul, came the words:—

"Never again a hobo."

He paused, and, as he went on again, his voice gathered strength and huskiness as it affirmed his will.

"Never again a hobo. I'm going to get a job. You'd better do the same. Nights like this make rheumatism."

He wrung my hand.

"Good-by, Bo," said he.

"Good-by, Bo," said I.

The next we were swallowed up from each other by the mist. It was our final passing. But here's to you, Mr. Swede, wherever you are. I hope you got that job.

Road-Kids and Gay-Cats

Every once in a while, in newspapers, magazines, and biographical dictionaries, I run upon sketches of my life, wherein, delicately phrased, I learn that it was in order to study sociology that I became a tramp. This is very nice and thoughtful of the biographers, but it is inaccurate. I became a tramp — well, because of the life that was in me, of the wanderlust in my blood that would not let me rest. Sociology was merely incidental; it came afterward, in the same manner that a wet skin follows a ducking. I went on "The Road" because I couldn't keep away from it; because I hadn't the price of the railroad fare in my jeans; because I was so made that I couldn't work all my life on "one same shift"; because — well, just because it was easier to than not to.

It happened in my own town, in Oakland, when I was sixteen. At that time I had attained a dizzy reputation in my chosen circle of adventurers, by whom I was known as the Prince of the Oyster Pirates. It is true, those immediately outside my circle, such as honest bay-sailors, longshoremen, yachtsmen, and the legal owners of the oysters, called me "tough," "hoodlum," "smoudge," "thief," "robber," and various other not nice things — all of which was complimentary and but served to increase the dizziness of the high place in which I sat. At that time I had not read "Paradise Lost," and later, when I read Milton's "Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven," I was fully convinced that great minds run in the same channels.

It was at this time that the fortuitous concatenation of events sent me upon my first adventure on The Road. It happened that there was nothing doing in oysters just then; that at Benicia, forty miles away, I had some blankets I wanted to get; and that at Port Costa, several miles from Benicia, a stolen boat lay at anchor in charge of the constable. Now this boat was owned by a friend of mine, by name Dinny McCrea. It had been stolen and left at Port Costa by Whiskey Bob, another friend of mine. (Poor Whiskey Bob! Only last winter his body was picked up on the beach shot full of holes by nobody knows whom.) I had come down from "up river" some time before, and reported to Dinny McCrea the whereabouts of his boat; and Dinny McCrea had promptly offered ten dollars to me if I should bring it down to Oakland to him.

Time was heavy on my hands. I sat on the dock and talked it over with Nickey the Greek, another idle oyster pirate. "Let's go," said I, and Nickey was willing. He was “broke.” I possessed fifty cents and a small skiff. The former I invested and loaded into the latter in the form of crackers, canned corned beef, and a ten-cent bottle of French mustard. (We were keen on French mustard in those days.) Then, late in the afternoon, we hoisted our small spritsail and started. We sailed all night, and next morning, on the first of a glorious flood-tide, a fair wind behind us, we came booming up the Carquinez Straits to Port Costa. There lay the stolen boat, not twenty-five feet from the wharf. We ran alongside and doused our little spritsail. I sent Nickey forward to lift the anchor, while I began casting off the gaskets.

A man ran out on the wharf and hailed us. It was the constable. It suddenly came to me that I had neglected to get a written authorization from Dinny McCrea to take possession of his boat. Also, I knew that constable wanted to charge at least twenty-five dollars in fees for capturing the boat from Whiskey Bob and subsequently taking care of it. And my last fifty cents had been blown in for corned beef and French mustard, and the reward was only ten dollars anyway. I shot a glance forward to Nickey. He had the anchor up-and-down and was straining at it. “Break her out,” I whispered to him, and turned and shouted back to the constable. The result was that he and I were talking at the same time, our spoken thoughts colliding in mid-air and making gibberish.

The constable grew more imperative, and perforce I had to listen. Nickey was heaving on the anchor till I thought he’d burst a blood-vessel. When the constable got done with his threats and warnings, I asked him who he was. The time he lost in telling me enabled Nickey to break out the anchor. I was doing some quick calculating. At the feet of the constable a ladder ran down the dock to the water, and to the ladder was moored a skiff. The oars were in it. But it was padlocked. I gambled everything on that padlock. I felt the breeze on my cheek, saw the surge of the tide, looked at the remaining gaskets that confined the sail, ran my eyes up the halyards to the blocks and knew that all was clear, and then threw off all dissimulation.

“In with her!” I shouted to Nickey, and sprang to the gaskets, casting them loose and thanking my stars that Whiskey Bob had tied them in square-knots instead of “grannies.”

The constable had slid down the ladder and was fumbling with a key at the padlock. The anchor came aboard and the last gasket was loosed at the same instant that the constable freed the skiff and jumped to the oars.

“Peak-halyards!” I commanded my crew, at the same time swinging on to the throat-halyards. Up came the sail on the run. I belayed and ran aft to the tiller.

“Stretch her!” I shouted to Nickey at the peak. The constable was just reaching for our stern. A puff of wind caught us, and we shot away. It was great. If I’d had a black flag, I know I’d have run it up in triumph. The constable stood up in the skiff, and paled the glory of the day with the vividness of his language. Also, he wailed for a gun. You see, that was another gamble we had taken.

Anyway, we weren’t stealing the boat. It wasn’t the constable’s. We were merely stealing his fees, which was his particular form of graft. And we weren’t stealing the fees for ourselves, either; we were stealing them for my friend, Dinny McCrea.

Benicia was made in a few minutes, and a few minutes later my blankets were aboard. I shifted the boat down to the far end of Steamboat Wharf, from which point of vantage we could see anybody coming after us. There was no telling. Maybe the Port Costa constable would telephone to the Benicia constable. Nickey and I held a council of war. We lay on deck in the warm sun, the fresh breeze on our cheeks, the flood-tide rippling and swirling past. It was impossible to start back to Oakland till afternoon, when the ebb would begin to run. But we figured that the constable would have an eye out on the Carquinez Straits when the ebb started, and that nothing remained for us but to wait for the following ebb, at two o’clock next morning, when we could slip by Cerberus in the darkness.

So we lay on deck, smoked cigarettes, and were glad that we were alive. I spat over the side and gauged the speed of the current.

“With this wind, we could run this flood clear to Rio Vista,” I said.

“And it’s fruit-time on the river,” said Nickey.

“And low water on the river,” said I. “It’s the best time of the year to make Sacramento.”

We sat up and looked at each other. The glorious west wind was pouring over us like wine. We both spat over the side and gauged the current. Now I contend that it was all the fault of that flood-tide and fair wind. They appealed to our sailor instinct. If it had not been for them, the whole chain of events that was to put me upon The Road would have broken down.

We said no word, but cast off our moorings and hoisted sail. Our adventures up the Sacramento River are no part of this narrative. We subsequently made the city of Sacramento and tied up at a wharf. The water was fine, and we spent most of our time in swimming. On the sand-bar above the railroad bridge we fell in with a bunch of boys likewise in swimming. Between swims we lay on the bank and talked. They talked differently from the fellows I had been used to herding with. It was a new vernacular. They were road-kids, and with every word they uttered the lure of The Road laid hold of me more imperiously.

“When I was down in Alabama,” one kid would begin; or, another, “Coming up on the C. & A. from K.C.”; whereat, a third kid, “On the C. & A. there ain’t no steps to the ‘blinds.’“ And I would lie silently in the sand and listen. “It was at a little town in Ohio on the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern,” a kid would start; and another, “Ever ride the Cannonball on the Wabash?”; and yet another, “Nope, but I’ve been on the White Mail out of Chicago.” “Talk about railroadin’ — wait till you hit the Pennsylvania, four tracks, no water tanks, take water on the fly, that’s goin’ some.” “The Northern Pacific’s a bad road now.” “Salinas is on the ‘hog,’ the ‘bulls’ is ‘horstile.’“ “I got ‘pinched’ at El Paso, along with Moke Kid.” “Talkin’ of ‘poke-outs,’ wait till you hit the French country out of Montreal — not a word of English — you say, ‘Mongee, Madame, mongee, no spika da French,’ an’ rub your stomach an’ look hungry, an’ she gives you a slice of sow-belly an’ a chunk of dry ‘punk.’“

And I continued to lie in the sand and listen. These wanderers made my oyster-piracy look like thirty cents. A new world was calling to me in every word that was spoken — a world of rods and gunnels, blind baggages and “side-door Pullmans,” “bulls” and “shacks,” “floppings” and “chewin’s,” “pinches” and “get-aways,” “strong arms” and “bindle-stiffs,” “punks” and “profesh.” And it all spelled Adventure. Very well; I would tackle this new world. I “lined” myself up alongside those road-kids. I was just as strong as any of them, just as quick, just as nervy, and my brain was just as good.

After the swim, as evening came on, they dressed and went up town. I went along. The kids began “battering” the “main-stem” for “light pieces,” or, in other words, begging for money on the main street. I had never begged in my life, and this was the hardest thing for me to stomach when I first went on The Road. I had absurd notions about begging. My philosophy, up to that time, was that it was finer to steal than to beg; and that robbery was finer still because the risk and the penalty were proportionately greater. As an oyster pirate I had already earned convictions at the hands of justice, which, if I had tried to serve them, would have required a thousand years in state's prison. To rob was manly; to beg was sordid and despicable. But I developed in the days to come all right, all right, till I came to look upon begging as a joyous prank, a game of wits, a nerve-exerciser.

That first night, however, I couldn't rise to it; and the result was that when the kids were ready to go to a restaurant and eat, I wasn't. I was broke. Meeny Kid, I think it was, gave me the price, and we all ate together. But while I ate, I meditated. The receiver, it was said, was as bad as the thief; Meeny Kid had done the begging, and I was profiting by it. I decided that the receiver was a whole lot worse than the thief, and that it shouldn't happen again. And it didn't. I turned out next day and threw my feet as well as the next one.

Nickey the Greek's ambition didn't run to The Road. He was not a success at throwing his feet, and he stowed away one night on a barge and went down river to San Francisco. I met him, only a week ago, at a pugilistic carnival. He has progressed. He sat in a place of honor at the ring-side. He is now a manager of prize-fighters and proud of it. In fact, in a small way, in local sportdom, he is quite a shining light.

"No kid is a road-kid until he has gone over 'the hill'" — such was the law of The Road I heard expounded in Sacramento. All right, I'd go over the hill and matriculate. "The hill," by the way, was the Sierra Nevadas. The whole gang was going over the hill on a jaunt, and of course I'd go along. It was French Kid's first adventure on The Road. He had just run away from his people in San Francisco. It was up to him and me to deliver the goods. In passing, I may remark that my old title of "Prince" had vanished. I had received my "monica." I was now "Sailor Kid," later to be known as "'Frisco Kid," when I had put the Rockies between me and my native state.

At 10.20 P.M. the Central Pacific overland pulled out of the depot at Sacramento for the East — that particular item of time-table is indelibly engraved on my memory. There were about a dozen in our gang, and we strung out in the darkness ahead of the train ready to take her out. All the local road-kids that we knew came down to see us off — also, to "ditch" us if they could. That was their idea of a joke, and there were only about forty of them to carry it out. Their ring-leader was a crackerjack road-kid named Bob. Sacramento was his home town, but he'd hit The Road pretty well everywhere over the whole country. He took French Kid and me aside and gave us advice something like this: “We’re goin’ to try an’ ditch your bunch, see? Youse two are weak. The rest of the push can take care of itself. So, as soon as youse two nail a blind, deck her. An’ stay on the decks till youse pass Roseville Junction, at which burg the constables are horstile, sloughin’ in everybody on sight.”

The engine whistled and the overland pulled out. There were three blinds on her — room for all of us. The dozen of us who were trying to make her out would have preferred to slip aboard quietly; but our forty friends crowded on with the most amazing and shameless publicity and advertisement. Following Bob’s advice, I immediately “decked her,” that is, climbed up on top of the roof of one of the mail-cars. There I lay down, my heart jumping a few extra beats, and listened to the fun. The whole train crew was forward, and the ditching went on fast and furious. After the train had run half a mile, it stopped, and the crew came forward again and ditched the survivors. I, alone, had made the train out.

Back at the depot, about him two or three of the push that had witnessed the accident, lay French Kid with both legs off. French Kid had slipped or stumbled — that was all, and the wheels had done the rest. Such was my initiation to The Road. It was two years afterward when I next saw French Kid and examined his “stumps.” This was an act of courtesy. “Cripples” always like to have their stumps examined. One of the entertaining sights on The Road is to witness the meeting of two cripples. Their common disability is a fruitful source of conversation; and they tell how it happened, describe what they know of the amputation, pass critical judgment on their own and each other’s surgeons, and wind up by withdrawing to one side, taking off bandages and wrappings, and comparing stumps.

But it was not until several days later, over in Nevada, when the push caught up with me, that I learned of French Kid’s accident. The push itself arrived in bad condition. It had gone through a train-wreck in the snow-sheds; Happy Joe was on crutches with two mashed legs, and the rest were nursing skins and bruises.

In the meantime, I lay on the roof of the mail-car, trying to remember whether Roseville Junction, against which burg Bob had warned me, was the first stop or the second stop. To make sure, I delayed descending to the platform of the blind until after the second stop. And then I didn’t descend. I was new to the game, and I felt safer where I was. But I never told the push that I held down the decks the whole night, clear across the Sierras, through snow-sheds and tunnels, and down to Truckee on the other side, where I arrived at seven in the morning. Such a thing was disgraceful, and I'd have been a common laughing-stock. This is the first time I have confessed the truth about that first ride over the hill. As for the push, it decided that I was all right, and when I came back over the hill to Sacramento, I was a full-fledged road-kid.

Yet I had much to learn. Bob was my mentor, and he was all right. I remember one evening (it was fair-time in Sacramento, and we were knocking about and having a good time) when I lost my hat in a fight. There was I bare-headed in the street, and it was Bob to the rescue. He took me to one side from the push and told me what to do. I was a bit timid of his advice. I had just come out of jail, where I had been three days, and I knew that if the police "pinched" me again, I'd get good and "soaked." On the other hand, I couldn't show the white feather. I'd been over the hill, I was running full-fledged with the push, and it was up to me to deliver the goods. So I accepted Bob's advice, and he came along with me to see that I did it up brown.

We took our position on K Street, on the corner, I think, of Fifth. It was early in the evening and the street was crowded. Bob studied the head-gear of every Chinaman that passed. I used to wonder how the road-kids all managed to wear "five-dollar Stetson stiff-rims," and now I knew. They got them, the way I was going to get mine, from the Chinese. I was nervous — there were so many people about; but Bob was cool as an iceberg. Several times, when I started forward toward a Chinaman, all nerved and keyed up, Bob dragged me back. He wanted me to get a good hat, and one that fitted. Now a hat came by that was the right size but not new; and, after a dozen impossible hats, along would come one that was new but not the right size. And when one did come by that was new and the right size, the rim was too large or not large enough. My, Bob was finicky. I was so wrought up that I'd have snatched any kind of a head-covering.

At last came the hat, the one hat in Sacramento for me. I knew it was a winner as soon as I looked at it. I glanced at Bob. He sent a sweeping look-about for police, then nodded his head. I lifted the hat from the Chinaman's head and pulled it down on my own. It was a perfect fit. Then I started. I heard Bob crying out, and I caught a glimpse of him blocking the irate Mongolian and tripping him up. I ran on. I turned up the next corner, and around the next. This street was not so crowded as K, and I walked along in quietude, catching my breath and congratulating myself upon my hat and my get-away.

And then, suddenly, around the corner at my back, came the bare-headed Chinaman. With him were a couple more Chinamen, and at their heels were half a dozen men and boys. I sprinted to the next corner, crossed the street, and rounded the following corner. I decided that I had surely played him out, and I dropped into a walk again. But around the corner at my heels came that persistent Mongolian. It was the old story of the hare and the tortoise. He could not run so fast as I, but he stayed with it, plodding along at a shambling and deceptive trot, and wasting much good breath in noisy imprecations. He called all Sacramento to witness the dishonor that had been done him, and a goodly portion of Sacramento heard and flocked at his heels. And I ran on like the hare, and ever that persistent Mongolian, with the increasing rabble, overhauled me. But finally, when a policeman had joined his following, I let out all my links. I twisted and turned, and I swear I ran at least twenty blocks on the straight away. And I never saw that Chinaman again. The hat was a dandy, a brand-new Stetson, just out of the shop, and it was the envy of the whole push. Furthermore, it was the symbol that I had delivered the goods. I wore it for over a year.

Road-kids are nice little chaps — when you get them alone and they are telling you “how it happened”; but take my word for it, watch out for them when they run in pack. Then they are wolves, and like wolves they are capable of dragging down the strongest man. At such times they are not cowardly. They will fling themselves upon a man and hold on with every ounce of strength in their wiry bodies, till he is thrown and helpless. More than once have I seen them do it, and I know whereof I speak. Their motive is usually robbery. And watch out for the “strong arm.” Every kid in the push I travelled with was expert at it. Even French Kid mastered it before he lost his legs.

I have strong upon me now a vision of what I once saw in “The Willows.” The Willows was a clump of trees in a waste piece of land near the railway depot and not more than five minutes walk from the heart of Sacramento. It is night-time and the scene is illumined by the thin light of stars. I see a husky laborer in the midst of a pack of road-kids. He is infuriated and cursing them, not a bit afraid, confident of his own strength. He weighs about one hundred and eighty pounds, and his muscles are hard; but he doesn’t know what he is up against. The kids are snarling. It is not pretty. They make a rush from all sides, and he lashes out and whirls. Barber Kid is standing beside me. As the man whirls, Barber Kid leaps forward and does the trick. Into the man's back goes his knee; around the man's neck, from behind, passes his right hand, the bone of the wrist pressing against the jugular vein. Barber Kid throws his whole weight backward. It is a powerful leverage. Besides, the man's wind has been shut off. It is the strong arm.

The man resists, but he is already practically helpless. The road-kids are upon him from every side, clinging to arms and legs and body, and like a wolf at the throat of a moose Barber Kid hangs on and drags backward. Over the man goes, and down under the heap. Barber Kid changes the position of his own body, but never lets go. While some of the kids are "going through" the victim, others are holding his legs so that he cannot kick and thresh about. They improve the opportunity by taking off the man's shoes. As for him, he has given in. He is beaten. Also, what of the strong arm at his throat, he is short of wind. He is making ugly choking noises, and the kids hurry. They really don't want to kill him. All is done. At a word all holds are released at once, and the kids scatter, one of them lugging the shoes — he knows where he can get half a dollar for them. The man sits up and looks about him, dazed and helpless. Even if he wanted to, barefooted pursuit in the darkness would be hopeless. I linger a moment and watch him. He is feeling at his throat, making dry, hawking noises, and jerking his head in a quaint way as though to assure himself that the neck is not dislocated. Then I slip away to join the push, and see that man no more — though I shall always see him, sitting there in the starlight, somewhat dazed, a bit frightened, greatly dishevelled, and making quaint jerking movements of head and neck.

Drunken men are the especial prey of the road-kids. Robbing a drunken man they call "rolling a stiff"; and wherever they are, they are on the constant lookout for drunks. The drunk is their particular meat, as the fly is the particular meat of the spider. The rolling of a stiff is ofttimes an amusing sight, especially when the stiff is helpless and when interference is unlikely. At the first swoop the stiff's money and jewellery go. Then the kids sit around their victim in a sort of pow-wow. A kid generates a fancy for the stiff's necktie. Off it comes. Another kid is after underclothes. Off they come, and a knife quickly abbreviates arms and legs. Friendly hoboes may be called in to take the coat and trousers, which are too large for the kids. And in the end they depart, leaving beside the stiff the heap of their discarded rags.

Another vision comes to me. It is a dark night. My push is coming along the sidewalk in the suburbs. Ahead of us, under an electric light, a man crosses the street diagonally. There is something tentative and desultory in his walk. The kids scent the game on the instant. The man is drunk. He blunders across the opposite sidewalk and is lost in the darkness as he takes a short-cut through a vacant lot. No hunting cry is raised, but the pack flings itself forward in quick pursuit. In the middle of the vacant lot it comes upon him. But what is this? — snarling and strange forms, small and dim and menacing, are between the pack and its prey. It is another pack of road-kids, and in the hostile pause we learn that it is their meat, that they have been trailing it a dozen blocks and more and that we are butting in. But it is the world primeval. These wolves are baby wolves. (As a matter of fact, I don’t think one of them was over twelve or thirteen years of age. I met some of them afterward, and learned that they had just arrived that day over the hill, and that they hailed from Denver and Salt Lake City.) Our pack flings forward. The baby wolves squeal and screech and fight like little demons. All about the drunken man rages the struggle for the possession of him. Down he goes in the thick of it, and the combat rages over his body after the fashion of the Greeks and Trojans over the body and armor of a fallen hero. Amid cries and tears and wailings the baby wolves are dispossessed, and my pack rolls the stiff. But always I remember the poor stiff and his befuddled amazement at the abrupt eruption of battle in the vacant lot. I see him now, dim in the darkness, titubating in stupid wonder, good-naturedly essaying the role of peacemaker in that multitudinous scrap the significance of which he did not understand, and the really hurt expression on his face when he, unoffending he, was clutched at by many hands and dragged down in the thick of the press.

“Bindle-stiffs” are favorite prey of the road-kids. A bindle-stiff is a working tramp. He takes his name from the roll of blankets he carries, which is known as a “bindle.” Because he does work, a bindle-stiff is expected usually to have some small change about him, and it is after that small change that the road-kids go. The best hunting-ground for bindle-stiffs is in the sheds, barns, lumber-yards, railroad-yards, etc., on the edges of a city, and the time for hunting is the night, when the bindle-stiff seeks these places to roll up in his blankets and sleep.

“Gay-cats” also come to grief at the hands of the road-kid. In more familiar parlance, gay-cats are short-horns, *chechaquos*, new chums, or tenderfeet. A gay-cat is a newcomer on The Road who is man-grown, or, at least, youth-grown. A boy on The Road, on the other hand, no matter how green he is, is never a gay-cat; he is a road-kid or a “punk,” and if he travels with a “profesh,” he is known possessively as a “prushun.” I was never a prushun, for I did not take kindly to possession. I was first a road-kid and then a profesh. Because I started in young, I practically skipped my gay-cat apprenticeship. For a short period, during the time I was exchanging my ‘Frisco Kid monica for that of Sailor Jack, I labored under the suspicion of being a gay-cat. But closer acquaintance on the part of those that suspected me quickly disabused their minds, and in a short time I acquired the unmistakable airs and ear-marks of the blowed-in-the-glass profesh. And be it known, here and now, that the profesh are the aristocracy of The Road. They are the lords and masters, the aggressive men, the primordial noblemen, the *blond beasts* so beloved of Nietzsche.

When I came back over the hill from Nevada, I found that some river pirate had stolen Dinny McCrea’s boat. (A funny thing at this day is that I cannot remember what became of the skiff in which Nickey the Greek and I sailed from Oakland to Port Costa. I know that the constable didn’t get it, and I know that it didn’t go with us up the Sacramento River, and that is all I do know.) With the loss of Dinny McCrea’s boat, I was pledged to The Road; and when I grew tired of Sacramento, I said good-by to the push (which, in its friendly way, tried to ditch me from a freight as I left town) and started on a *passear* down the valley of the San Joaquin. The Road had gripped me and would not let me go; and later, when I had voyaged to sea and done one thing and another, I returned to The Road to make longer flights, to be a “comet” and a profesh, and to plump into the bath of sociology that wet me to the skin.

Two Thousand Stiffs

The March of Kelly's Army

A "stiff" is a tramp. It was once my fortune to travel a few weeks with a "push" that numbered two thousand. This was known as "Kelly's Army." Across the wild and woolly West, clear from California, General Kelly and his heroes had captured trains; but they fell down when they crossed the Missouri and went up against the effete East. The East hadn't the slightest intention of giving free transportation to two thousand hoboes. Kelly's Army lay helplessly for some time at Council Bluffs. The day I joined it, made desperate by delay, it marched out to capture a train.

It was quite an imposing sight. General Kelly sat a magnificent black charger, and with waving banners, to the martial music of fife and drum corps, company by company, in two divisions, his two thousand stiffs countermarched before him and hit the wagon-road to the little burg of Weston, seven miles away. Being the latest recruit, I was in the last company, of the last regiment, of the Second Division, and, furthermore, in the last rank of the rear-guard. The army went into camp at Weston beside the railroad track — beside the tracks, rather, for two roads went through: the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul, and the Rock Island.

Our intention was to take the first train out, but the railroad officials "coppered" our play — and won. There was no first train. They tied up the two lines and stopped running trains. In the meantime, while we lay by the dead tracks, the good people of Omaha and Council Bluffs were bestirring themselves. Preparations were making to form a mob, capture a train in Council Bluffs, run it down to us, and make us a present of it. The railroad officials coppered that play, too. They didn't wait for the mob. Early in the morning of the second day, an engine, with a single private car attached, arrived at the station and side-tracked. At this sign that life had renewed in the dead roads, the whole army lined up beside the track.

But never did life renew so monstrously on a dead railroad as it did on those two roads. From the west came the whistle of a locomotive. It was coming in our direction, bound east. We were bound east. A stir of preparation ran down our ranks. The whistle tooted fast and furiously, and the train thundered at top speed. The hobo didn't live that could have boarded it. Another locomotive whistled, and another train came through at top speed, and another, and another, train after train, train after train, till toward the last the trains were composed of passenger coaches, box-cars, flat-cars, dead engines, cabooses, mail-cars, wrecking appliances, and all the riff-raff of worn-out and abandoned rolling-stock that collects in the yards of great railways. When the yards at Council Bluffs had been completely cleaned, the private car and engine went east, and the tracks died for keeps.

That day went by, and the next, and nothing moved, and in the meantime, pelted by sleet, and rain, and hail, the two thousand hoboes lay beside the track. But that night the good people of Council Bluffs went the railroad officials one better. A mob formed in Council Bluffs, crossed the river to Omaha, and there joined with another mob in a raid on the Union Pacific yards. First they captured an engine, next they knocked a train together, and then the united mobs piled aboard, crossed the Missouri, and ran down the Rock Island right of way to turn the train over to us. The railway officials tried to copper this play, but fell down, to the mortal terror of the section boss and one member of the section gang at Weston. This pair, under secret telegraphic orders, tried to wreck our train-load of sympathizers by tearing up the track. It happened that we were suspicious and had our patrols out. Caught red-handed at train-wrecking, and surrounded by twenty hundred infuriated hoboes, that section-gang boss and assistant prepared to meet death. I don't remember what saved them, unless it was the arrival of the train.

It was our turn to fall down, and we did, hard. In their haste, the two mobs had neglected to make up a sufficiently long train. There wasn't room for two thousand hoboes to ride. So the mobs and the hoboes had a talkfest, fraternized, sang songs, and parted, the mobs going back on their captured train to Omaha, the hoboes pulling out next morning on a hundred-and-forty-mile march to Des Moines. It was not until Kelly's Army crossed the Missouri that it began to walk, and after that it never rode again. It cost the railroads slathers of money, but they were acting on principle, and they won.

Underwood, Leola, Menden, Avoca, Walnut, Marno, Atlantic, Wyoto, Anita, Adair, Adam, Casey, Stuart, Dexter, Carlham, De Soto, Van Meter, Booneville, Commerce, Valley Junction — how the names of the towns come back to me as I con the map and trace our route through the fat Iowa country! And the hospitable Iowa farmer-folk! They turned out with their wagons and carried our baggage; gave us hot lunches at noon by the wayside; mayors of comfortable little towns made speeches of welcome and hastened us on our way; deputations of little girls and maidens came out to meet us, and the good citizens turned out by hundreds, locked arms, and marched with us down their main streets. It was circus day when we came to town, and every day was circus day, for there were many towns.

In the evenings our camps were invaded by whole populations. Every company had its campfire, and around each fire something was doing. The cooks in my company, Company L, were song-and-dance artists and contributed most of our entertainment. In another part of the encampment the glee club would be singing — one of its star voices was the "Dentist," drawn from Company L, and we were mighty proud of him. Also, he pulled teeth for the whole army, and, since the extractions usually occurred at meal-time, our digestions were stimulated by variety of incident. The Dentist had no anæsthetics, but two or three of us were always on tap to volunteer to hold down the patient. In addition to the stunts of the companies and the glee club, church services were usually held, local preachers officiating, and always there was a great making of political speeches. All these things ran neck and neck; it was a full-blown Midway. A lot of talent can be dug out of two thousand hoboes. I remember we had a picked baseball nine, and on Sundays we made a practice of putting it all over the local nines. Sometimes we did it twice on Sundays.

Last year, while on a lecturing trip, I rode into Des Moines in a Pullman — I don't mean a "side-door Pullman," but the real thing. On the outskirts of the city I saw the old stove-works, and my heart leaped. It was there, at the stove-works, a dozen years before, that the Army lay down and swore a mighty oath that its feet were sore and that it would walk no more. We took possession of the stove-works and told Des Moines that we had come to stay — that we'd walked in, but we'd be blessed if we'd walk out. Des Moines was hospitable, but this was too much of a good thing. Do a little mental arithmetic, gentle reader. Two thousand hoboes, eating three square meals, make six thousand meals per day, forty-two thousand meals per week, or one hundred and sixty-eight thousand meals per shortest month in the calendar. That's going some. We had no money. It was up to Des Moines.

Des Moines was desperate. We lay in camp, made political speeches, held sacred concerts, pulled teeth, played baseball and seven-up, and ate our six thousand meals per day, and Des Moines paid for it. Des Moines pleaded with the railroads, but they were obdurate; they had said we shouldn’t ride, and that settled it. To permit us to ride would be to establish a precedent, and there weren’t going to be any precedents. And still we went on eating. That was the terrifying factor in the situation. We were bound for Washington, and Des Moines would have had to float municipal bonds to pay all our railroad fares, even at special rates, and if we remained much longer, she’d have to float bonds anyway to feed us.

Then some local genius solved the problem. We wouldn’t walk. Very good. We should ride. From Des Moines to Keokuk on the Mississippi flowed the Des Moines River. This particular stretch of river was three hundred miles long. We could ride on it, said the local genius; and, once equipped with floating stock, we could ride on down the Mississippi to the Ohio, and thence up the Ohio, winding up with a short portage over the mountains to Washington.

Des Moines took up a subscription. Public-spirited citizens contributed several thousand dollars. Lumber, rope, nails, and cotton for calking were bought in large quantities, and on the banks of the Des Moines was inaugurated a tremendous era of shipbuilding. Now the Des Moines is a picayune stream, unduly dignified by the appellation of “river.” In our spacious western land it would be called a “creek.” The oldest inhabitants shook their heads and said we couldn’t make it, that there wasn’t enough water to float us. Des Moines didn’t care, so long as it got rid of us, and we were such well-fed optimists that we didn’t care either.

On Wednesday, May 9, 1894, we got under way and started on our colossal picnic. Des Moines had got off pretty easily, and she certainly owes a statue in bronze to the local genius who got her out of her difficulty. True, Des Moines had to pay for our boats; we had eaten sixty-six thousand meals at the stove-works; and we took twelve thousand additional meals along with us in our commissary — as a precaution against famine in the wilds; but then, think what it would have meant if we had remained at Des Moines eleven months instead of eleven days. Also, when we departed, we promised Des Moines we’d come back if the river failed to float us.

It was all very well having twelve thousand meals in the commissary, and no doubt the commissary “ducks” enjoyed them; for the commissary promptly got lost, and my boat, for one, never saw it again. The company formation was hopelessly broken up during the river-trip. In any camp of men there will always be found a certain percentage of shirks, of helpless, of just ordinary, and of hustlers. There were ten men in my boat, and they were the cream of Company L. Every man was a hustler. For two reasons I was included in the ten. First, I was as good a hustler as ever "threw his feet," and next, I was "Sailor Jack." I understood boats and boating. The ten of us forgot the remaining forty men of Company L, and by the time we had missed one meal we promptly forgot the commissary. We were independent. We went down the river "on our own," hustling our "chewin's," beating every boat in the fleet, and, alas that I must say it, sometimes taking possession of the stores the farmer-folk had collected for the Army.

For a good part of the three hundred miles we were from half a day to a day or so in advance of the Army. We had managed to get hold of several American flags. When we approached a small town, or when we saw a group of farmers gathered on the bank, we ran up our flags, called ourselves the "advance boat," and demanded to know what provisions had been collected for the Army. We represented the Army, of course, and the provisions were turned over to us. But there wasn't anything small about us. We never took more than we could get away with. But we did take the cream of everything. For instance, if some philanthropic farmer had donated several dollars' worth of tobacco, we took it. So, also, we took butter and sugar, coffee and canned goods; but when the stores consisted of sacks of beans and flour, or two or three slaughtered steers, we resolutely refrained and went our way, leaving orders to turn such provisions over to the commissary boats whose business was to follow behind us.

My, but the ten of us did live on the fat of the land! For a long time General Kelly vainly tried to head us off. He sent two rowers, in a light, round-bottomed boat, to overtake us and put a stop to our piratical careers. They overtook us all right, but they were two and we were ten. They were empowered by General Kelly to make us prisoners, and they told us so. When we expressed disinclination to become prisoners, they hurried ahead to the next town to invoke the aid of the authorities. We went ashore immediately and cooked an early supper; and under the cloak of darkness we ran by the town and its authorities.

I kept a diary on part of the trip, and as I read it over now I note one persistently recurring phrase, namely, "Living fine." We did live fine. We even disdained to use coffee boiled in water. We made our coffee out of milk, calling the wonderful beverage, if I remember rightly, “pale Vienna.”

While we were ahead, skimming the cream, and while the commissary was lost far behind, the main Army, coming along in the middle, starved. This was hard on the Army, I’ll allow; but then, the ten of us were individualists. We had initiative and enterprise. We ardently believed that the grub was to the man who got there first, the pale Vienna to the strong. On one stretch the Army went forty-eight hours without grub; and then it arrived at a small village of some three hundred inhabitants, the name of which I do not remember, though I think it was Red Rock. This town, following the practice of all towns through which the Army passed, had appointed a committee of safety. Counting five to a family, Red Rock consisted of sixty households. Her committee of safety was scared stiff by the eruption of two thousand hungry hoboes who lined their boats two and three deep along the river bank. General Kelly was a fair man. He had no intention of working a hardship on the village. He did not expect sixty households to furnish two thousand meals. Besides, the Army had its treasure-chest.

But the committee of safety lost its head. “No encouragement to the invader” was its programme, and when General Kelly wanted to buy food, the committee turned him down. It had nothing to sell; General Kelly’s money was “no good” in their burg. And then General Kelly went into action. The bugles blew. The Army left the boats and on top of the bank formed in battle array. The committee was there to see. General Kelly’s speech was brief.

“Boys,” he said, “when did you eat last?”

“Day before yesterday,” they shouted.

“Are you hungry?”

A mighty affirmation from two thousand throats shook the atmosphere. Then General Kelly turned to the committee of safety: —

“You see, gentlemen, the situation. My men have eaten nothing in forty-eight hours. If I turn them loose upon your town, I’ll not be responsible for what happens. They are desperate. I offered to buy food for them, but you refused to sell. I now withdraw my offer. Instead, I shall demand. I give you five minutes to decide. Either kill me six steers and give me four thousand rations, or I turn the men loose. Five minutes, gentlemen.”

The terrified committee of safety looked at the two thousand hungry hoboes and collapsed. It didn't wait the five minutes. It wasn't going to take any chances. The killing of the steers and the collecting of the requisition began forthwith, and the Army dined.

And still the ten graceless individualists soared along ahead and gathered in everything in sight. But General Kelly fixed us. He sent horsemen down each bank, warning farmers and townspeople against us. They did their work thoroughly, all right. The erstwhile hospitable farmers met us with the icy mit. Also, they summoned the constables when we tied up to the bank, and loosed the dogs. I know. Two of the latter caught me with a barbed-wire fence between me and the river. I was carrying two buckets of milk for the pale Vienna. I didn't damage the fence any; but we drank plebian coffee boiled with vulgar water, and it was up to me to throw my feet for another pair of trousers. I wonder, gentle reader, if you ever essayed hastily to climb a barbed-wire fence with a bucket of milk in each hand. Ever since that day I have had a prejudice against barbed wire, and I have gathered statistics on the subject.

Unable to make an honest living so long as General Kelly kept his two horsemen ahead of us, we returned to the Army and raised a revolution. It was a small affair, but it devastated Company L of the Second Division. The captain of Company L refused to recognize us; said we were deserters, and traitors, and scalawags; and when he drew rations for Company L from the commissary, he wouldn't give us any. That captain didn't appreciate us, or he wouldn't have refused us grub. Promptly we intrigued with the first lieutenant. He joined us with the ten men in his boat, and in return we elected him captain of Company M. The captain of Company L raised a roar. Down upon us came General Kelly, Colonel Speed, and Colonel Baker. The twenty of us stood firm, and our revolution was ratified.

But we never bothered with the commissary. Our hustlers drew better rations from the farmers. Our new captain, however, doubted us. He never knew when he'd see the ten of us again, once we got under way in the morning, so he called in a blacksmith to clinch his captaincy. In the stern of our boat, one on each side, were driven two heavy eye-bolts of iron. Correspondingly, on the bow of his boat, were fastened two huge iron hooks. The boats were brought together, end on, the hooks dropped into the eye-bolts, and there we were, hard and fast. We couldn't lose that captain. But we were irrepressible. Out of our very manacles we wrought an invincible device that enabled us to put it all over every other boat in the fleet.

Like all great inventions, this one of ours was accidental. We discovered it the first time we ran on a snag in a bit of a rapid. The head-boat hung up and anchored, and the tail-boat swung around in the current, pivoting the head-boat on the snag. I was at the stern of the tail-boat, steering. In vain we tried to shove off. Then I ordered the men from the head-boat into the tail-boat. Immediately the head-boat floated clear, and its men returned into it. After that, snags, reefs, shoals, and bars had no terrors for us. The instant the head-boat struck, the men in it leaped into the tail-boat. Of course, the head-boat floated over the obstruction and the tail-boat then struck. Like automatons, the twenty men now in the tail-boat leaped into the head-boat, and the tail-boat floated past.

The boats used by the Army were all alike, made by the mile and sawed off. They were flat-boats, and their lines were rectangles. Each boat was six feet wide, ten feet long, and a foot and a half deep. Thus, when our two boats were hooked together, I sat at the stern steering a craft twenty feet long, containing twenty husky hoboes who “spelled” each other at the oars and paddles, and loaded with blankets, cooking outfit, and our own private commissary.

Still we caused General Kelly trouble. He had called in his horsemen, and substituted three police-boats that travelled in the van and allowed no boats to pass them. The craft containing Company M crowded the police-boats hard. We could have passed them easily, but it was against the rules. So we kept a respectful distance astern and waited. Ahead we knew was virgin farming country, unbegged and generous; but we waited. White water was all we needed, and when we rounded a bend and a rapid showed up we knew what would happen. Smash! Police-boat number one goes on a boulder and hangs up. Bang! Police-boat number two follows suit. Whop! Police-boat number three encounters the common fate of all. Of course our boat does the same things; but one, two, the men are out of the head-boat and into the tail-boat; one, two, they are out of the tail-boat and into the head-boat; and one, two, the men who belong in the tail-boat are back in it and we are dashing on. “Stop! you blankety-blank-blanks!” shriek the police-boats. “How can we? — blank the blankety-blank river, anyway!” we wail plaintively as we surge past, caught in that remorseless current that sweeps us on out of sight and into the hospitable farmer-country that replenishes our private commissary with the cream of its contributions. Again we drink pale Vienna and realize that the grub is to the man who gets there.

Poor General Kelly! He devised another scheme. The whole fleet started ahead of us. Company M of the Second Division started in its proper place in the line, which was last. And it took us only one day to put the "kibosh" on that particular scheme. Twenty-five miles of bad water lay before us — all rapids, shoals, bars, and boulders. It was over that stretch of water that the oldest inhabitants of Des Moines had shaken their heads. Nearly two hundred boats entered the bad water ahead of us, and they piled up in the most astounding manner. We went through that stranded fleet like hemlock through the fire. There was no avoiding the boulders, bars, and snags except by getting out on the bank. We didn't avoid them. We went right over them, one, two, one, two, head-boat, tail-boat, head-boat, tail-boat, all hands back and forth and back again. We camped that night alone, and loafed in camp all of next day while the Army patched and repaired its wrecked boats and straggled up to us.

There was no stopping our cussedness. We rigged up a mast, piled on the canvas (blankets), and travelled short hours while the Army worked overtime to keep us in sight. Then General Kelly had recourse to diplomacy. No boat could touch us in the straight-away. Without discussion, we were the hottest bunch that ever came down the Des Moines. The ban of the police-boats was lifted. Colonel Speed was put aboard, and with this distinguished officer we had the honor of arriving first at Keokuk on the Mississippi. And right here I want to say to General Kelly and Colonel Speed that here's my hand. You were heroes, both of you, and you were men. And I'm sorry for at least ten per cent of the trouble that was given you by the head-boat of Company M.

At Keokuk the whole fleet was lashed together in a huge raft, and, after being wind-bound a day, a steamboat took us in tow down the Mississippi to Quincy, Illinois, where we camped across the river on Goose Island. Here the raft idea was abandoned, the boats being joined together in groups of four and decked over. Somebody told me that Quincy was the richest town of its size in the United States. When I heard this, I was immediately overcome by an irresistible impulse to throw my feet. No "blowed-in-the-glass profesh" could possibly pass up such a promising burg. I crossed the river to Quincy in a small dug-out; but I came back in a large riverboat, down to the gunwales with the results of my thrown feet. Of course I kept all the money I had collected, though I paid the boat-hire; also I took my pick of the underwear, socks, cast-off clothes, shirts, “kicks,” and “sky-pieces”; and when Company M had taken all it wanted there was still a respectable heap that was turned over to Company L. Alas, I was young and prodigal in those days! I told a thousand “stories” to the good people of Quincy, and every story was “good”; but since I have come to write for the magazines I have often regretted the wealth of story, the fecundity of fiction, I lavished that day in Quincy, Illinois.

It was at Hannibal, Missouri, that the ten invincibles went to pieces. It was not planned. We just naturally flew apart. The Boiler-Maker and I deserted secretly. On the same day Scotty and Davy made a swift sneak for the Illinois shore; also McAvoy and Fish achieved their get-away. This accounts for six of the ten; what became of the remaining four I do not know. As a sample of life on The Road, I make the following quotation from my diary of the several days following my desertion.

“Friday, May 25th. Boiler-Maker and I left the camp on the island. We went ashore on the Illinois side in a skiff and walked six miles on the C.B. & Q. to Fell Creek. We had gone six miles out of our way, but we got on a hand-car and rode six miles to Hull’s, on the Wabash. While there, we met McAvoy, Fish, Scotty, and Davy, who had also pulled out from the Army.

“Saturday, May 26th. At 2.11 A.M. we caught the Cannonball as she slowed up at the crossing. Scotty and Davy were ditched. The four of us were ditched at the Bluffs, forty miles farther on. In the afternoon Fish and McAvoy caught a freight while Boiler-Maker and I were away getting something to eat.

“Sunday, May 27th. At 3.21 A.M. we caught the Cannonball and found Scotty and Davy on the blind. We were all ditched at daylight at Jacksonville. The C. & A. runs through here, and we’re going to take that. Boiler-Maker went off, but didn’t return. Guess he caught a freight.

“Monday, May 28th. Boiler-Maker didn’t show up. Scotty and Davy went off to sleep somewhere, and didn’t get back in time to catch the K.C. passenger at 3.30 A.M. I caught her and rode her till after sunrise to Masson City, 25,000 inhabitants. Caught a cattle train and rode all night.

“Tuesday, May 29th. Arrived in Chicago at 7 A.M....”

And years afterward, in China, I had the grief of learning that the device we employed to navigate the rapids of the Des Moines — the one-two-one-two, head-boat-tail-boat proposition — was not originated by us. I learned that the Chinese river-boatmen had for thousands of years used a similar device to negotiate “bad water.” It is a good stunt all right, even if we don’t get the credit. It answers Dr. Jordan’s test of truth: “Will it work? Will you trust your life to it?”

Bulls

Some Adventures With the Police

If the tramp were suddenly to pass away from the United States, widespread misery for many families would follow. The tramp enables thousands of men to earn honest livings, educate their children, and bring them up God-fearing and industrious. I know. At one time my father was a constable and hunted tramps for a living. The community paid him so much per head for all the tramps he could catch, and also, I believe, he got mileage fees. Ways and means was always a pressing problem in our household, and the amount of meat on the table, the new pair of shoes, the day's outing, or the text-book for school, were dependent upon my father's luck in the chase. Well I remember the suppressed eagerness and the suspense with which I waited to learn each morning what the results of his past night's toil had been — how many tramps he had gathered in and what the chances were for convicting them. And so it was, when later, as a tramp, I succeeded in eluding some predatory constable, I could not but feel sorry for the little boys and girls at home in that constable's house; it seemed to me in a way that I was defrauding those little boys and girls of some of the good things of life.

But it's all in the game. The hobo defies society, and society's watch-dogs make a living out of him. Some hoboes like to be caught by the watch-dogs — especially in winter-time. Of course, such hoboes select communities where the jails are "good," wherein no work is performed and the food is substantial. Also, there have been, and most probably still are, constables who divide their fees with the hoboes they arrest. Such a constable does not have to hunt. He whistles, and the game comes right up to his hand. It is surprising, the money that is made out of stone-broke tramps. All through the South — at least when I was hoboing — are convict camps and plantations, where the time of convicted hoboes is bought by the farmers, and where the hoboes simply have to work. Then there are places like the quarries at Rutland, Vermont, where the hobo is exploited, the unearned energy in his body, which he has accumulated by "battering on the drag" or "slamming gates," being extracted for the benefit of that particular community.

Now I don't know anything about the quarries at Rutland, Vermont. I'm very glad that I don't, when I remember how near I was to getting into them. Tramps pass the word along, and I first heard of those quarries when I was in Indiana. But when I got into New England, I heard of them continually, and always with danger-signals flying. "They want men in the quarries," the passing hoboes said; "and they never give a 'stiff' less than ninety days." By the time I got into New Hampshire I was pretty well keyed up over those quarries, and I fought shy of railroad cops, "bulls," and constables as I never had before.

One evening I went down to the railroad yards at Concord and found a freight train made up and ready to start. I located an empty box-car, slid open the side-door, and climbed in. It was my hope to win across to White River by morning; that would bring me into Vermont and not more than a thousand miles from Rutland. But after that, as I worked north, the distance between me and the point of danger would begin to increase. In the car I found a "gay-cat," who displayed unusual trepidation at my entrance. He took me for a "shack" (brakeman), and when he learned I was only a stiff, he began talking about the quarries at Rutland as the cause of the fright I had given him. He was a young country fellow, and had beaten his way only over local stretches of road.

The freight got under way, and we lay down in one end of the box-car and went to sleep. Two or three hours afterward, at a stop, I was awakened by the noise of the right-hand door being softly slid open. The gay-cat slept on. I made no movement, though I veiled my eyes with my lashes to a little slit through which I could see out. A lantern was thrust in through the doorway, followed by the head of a shack. He discovered us, and looked at us for a moment. I was prepared for a violent expression on his part, or the customary "Hit the grit, you son of a toad!" Instead of this he cautiously withdrew the lantern and very, very softly slid the door to. This struck me as eminently unusual and suspicious. I listened, and softly I heard the hasp drop into place. The door was latched on the outside. We could not open it from the inside. One way of sudden exit from that car was blocked. It would never do. I waited a few seconds, then crept to the left-hand door and tried it. It was not yet latched. I opened it, dropped to the ground, and closed it behind me. Then I passed across the bumpers to the other side of the train. I opened the door the shack had latched, climbed in, and closed it behind me. Both exits were available again. The gay-cat was still asleep.

The train got under way. It came to the next stop. I heard footsteps in the gravel. Then the left-hand door was thrown open noisily. The gay-cat awoke, I made believe to awake; and we sat up and stared at the shack and his lantern. He didn't waste any time getting down to business.

"I want three dollars," he said.

We got on our feet and came nearer to him to confer. We expressed an absolute and devoted willingness to give him three dollars, but explained our wretched luck that compelled our desire to remain unsatisfied. The shack was incredulous. He dickered with us. He would compromise for two dollars. We regretted our condition of poverty. He said uncomplimentary things, called us sons of toads, and damned us from hell to breakfast. Then he threatened. He explained that if we didn't dig up, he'd lock us in and carry us on to White River and turn us over to the authorities. He also explained all about the quarries at Rutland.

Now that shack thought he had us dead to rights. Was not he guarding the one door, and had he not himself latched the opposite door but a few minutes before? When he began talking about quarries, the frightened gay-cat started to sidle across to the other door. The shack laughed loud and long. "Don't be in a hurry," he said; "I locked that door on the outside at the last stop." So implicitly did he believe the door to be locked that his words carried conviction. The gay-cat believed and was in despair.

The shack delivered his ultimatum. Either we should dig up two dollars, or he would lock us in and turn us over to the constable at White River — and that meant ninety days and the quarries. Now, gentle reader, just suppose that the other door had been locked. Behold the precariousness of human life. For lack of a dollar, I'd have gone to the quarries and served three months as a convict slave. So would the gay-cat. Count me out, for I was hopeless; but consider the gay-cat. He might have come out, after those ninety days, pledged to a life of crime. And later he might have broken your skull, even your skull, with a blackjack in an endeavor to take possession of the money on your person — and if not your skull, then some other poor and unoffending creature's skull.

But the door was unlocked, and I alone knew it. The gay-cat and I begged for mercy. I joined in the pleading and wailing out of sheer cussedness, I suppose. But I did my best. I told a "story" that would have melted the heart of any mug; but it didn’t melt the heart of that sordid money-grasper of a shack. When he became convinced that we didn’t have any money, he slid the door shut and latched it, then lingered a moment on the chance that we had fooled him and that we would now offer him the two dollars.

Then it was that I let out a few links. I called him a son of a toad. I called him all the other things he had called me. And then I called him a few additional things. I came from the West, where men knew how to swear, and I wasn’t going to let any mangy shack on a measly New England “jerk” put it over me in vividness and vigor of language. At first the shack tried to laugh it down. Then he made the mistake of attempting to reply. I let out a few more links, and I cut him to the raw and therein rubbed winged and flaming epithets. Nor was my fine frenzy all whim and literary; I was indignant at this vile creature, who, in default of a dollar, would consign me to three months of slavery. Furthermore, I had a sneaking idea that he got a “drag” out of the constable fees.

But I fixed him. I lacerated his feelings and pride several dollars’ worth. He tried to scare me by threatening to come in after me and kick the stuffing out of me. In return, I promised to kick him in the face while he was climbing in. The advantage of position was with me, and he saw it. So he kept the door shut and called for help from the rest of the train-crew. I could hear them answering and crunching through the gravel to him. And all the time the other door was unlatched, and they didn’t know it; and in the meantime the gay-cat was ready to die with fear.

Oh, I was a hero — with my line of retreat straight behind me. I slanged the shack and his mates till they threw the door open and I could see their infuriated faces in the shine of the lanterns. It was all very simple to them. They had us cornered in the car, and they were going to come in and man-handle us. They started. I didn’t kick anybody in the face. I jerked the opposite door open, and the gay-cat and I went out. The train-crew took after us.

We went over — if I remember correctly — a stone fence. But I have no doubts of recollection about where we found ourselves. In the darkness I promptly fell over a grave-stone. The gay-cat sprawled over another. And then we got the chase of our lives through that graveyard. The ghosts must have thought we were going some. So did the train-crew, for when we emerged from the graveyard and plunged across a road into a dark wood, the shacks gave up the pursuit and went back to their train. A little later that night the gay-cat and I found ourselves at the well of a farmhouse. We were after a drink of water, but we noticed a small rope that ran down one side of the well. We hauled it up and found on the end of it a gallon-can of cream. And that is as near as I got to the quarries of Rutland, Vermont.

When hoboes pass the word along, concerning a town, that “the bulls is horstile,” avoid that town, or, if you must, go through softly. There are some towns that one must always go through softly. Such a town was Cheyenne, on the Union Pacific. It had a national reputation for being “horstile,” — and it was all due to the efforts of one Jeff Carr (if I remember his name aright). Jeff Carr could size up the “front” of a hobo on the instant. He never entered into discussion. In the one moment he sized up the hobo, and in the next he struck out with both fists, a club, or anything else he had handy. After he had man-handled the hobo, he started him out of town with a promise of worse if he ever saw him again. Jeff Carr knew the game. North, south, east, and west to the uttermost confines of the United States (Canada and Mexico included), the man-handled hoboes carried the word that Cheyenne was “horstile.” Fortunately, I never encountered Jeff Carr. I passed through Cheyenne in a blizzard. There were eighty-four hoboes with me at the time. The strength of numbers made us pretty nonchalant on most things, but not on Jeff Carr. The connotation of “Jeff Carr” stunned our imagination, numbed our virility, and the whole gang was mortally scared of meeting him.

It rarely pays to stop and enter into explanations with bulls when they look “horstile.” A swift get-away is the thing to do. It took me some time to learn this; but the finishing touch was put upon me by a bull in New York City. Ever since that time it has been an automatic process with me to make a run for it when I see a bull reaching for me. This automatic process has become a mainspring of conduct in me, wound up and ready for instant release. I shall never get over it. Should I be eighty years old, hobbling along the street on crutches, and should a policeman suddenly reach out for me, I know I’d drop the crutches and run like a deer.

The finishing touch to my education in bulls was received on a hot summer afternoon in New York City. It was during a week of scorching weather. I had got into the habit of throwing my feet in the morning, and of spending the afternoon in the little park that is hard by Newspaper Row and the City Hall. It was near there that I could buy from pushcart men current books (that had been injured in the making or binding) for a few cents each.

Then, right in the park itself, were little booths where one could buy glorious, ice-cold, sterilized milk and buttermilk at a penny a glass. Every afternoon I sat on a bench and read, and went on a milk debauch. I got away with from five to ten glasses each afternoon. It was dreadfully hot weather.

So here I was, a meek and studious milk-drinking hobo, and behold what I got for it. One afternoon I arrived at the park, a fresh book-purchase under my arm and a tremendous buttermilk thirst under my shirt. In the middle of the street, in front of the City Hall, I noticed, as I came along heading for the buttermilk booth, that a crowd had formed. It was right where I was crossing the street, so I stopped to see the cause of the collection of curious men. At first I could see nothing. Then, from the sounds I heard and from a glimpse I caught, I knew that it was a bunch of gamins playing pee-wee. Now pee-wee is not permitted in the streets of New York. I didn’t know that, but I learned pretty lively. I had paused possibly thirty seconds, in which time I had learned the cause of the crowd, when I heard a gamin yell “Bull!” The gamins knew their business. They ran. I didn’t.

The crowd broke up immediately and started for the sidewalk on both sides of the street. I started for the sidewalk on the park-side. There must have been fifty men, who had been in the original crowd, who were heading in the same direction. We were loosely strung out. I noticed the bull, a strapping policeman in a gray suit. He was coming along the middle of the street, without haste, merely sauntering. I noticed casually that he changed his course, and was heading obliquely for the same sidewalk that I was heading for directly. He sauntered along, threading the strung-out crowd, and I noticed that his course and mine would cross each other. I was so innocent of wrong-doing that, in spite of my education in bulls and their ways, I apprehended nothing. I never dreamed that bull was after me. Out of my respect for the law I was actually all ready to pause the next moment and let him cross in front of me. The pause came all right, but it was not of my volition; also it was a backward pause. Without warning, that bull had suddenly launched out at me on the chest with both hands. At the same moment, verbally, he cast the bar sinister on my genealogy.

All my free American blood boiled. All my liberty-loving ancestors clamored in me. “What do you mean?” I demanded. You see, I wanted an explanation. And I got it. Bang! His club came down on top of my head, and I was reeling backward like a drunken man, the curious faces of the onlookers billowing up and down like the waves of the sea, my precious book falling from under my arm into the dirt, the bull advancing with the club ready for another blow. And in that dizzy moment I had a vision. I saw that club descending many times upon my head; I saw myself, bloody and battered and hard-looking, in a police-court; I heard a charge of disorderly conduct, profane language, resisting an officer, and a few other things, read by a clerk; and I saw myself across in Blackwell's Island. Oh, I knew the game. I lost all interest in explanations. I didn't stop to pick up my precious, unread book. I turned and ran. I was pretty sick, but I ran. And run I shall, to my dying day, whenever a bull begins to explain with a club.

Why, years after my tramping days, when I was a student in the University of California, one night I went to the circus. After the show and the concert I lingered on to watch the working of the transportation machinery of a great circus. The circus was leaving that night. By a bonfire I came upon a bunch of small boys. There were about twenty of them, and as they talked with one another I learned that they were going to run away with the circus. Now the circus-men didn't want to be bothered with this mess of urchins, and a telephone to police headquarters had "coppered" the play. A squad of ten policemen had been despatched to the scene to arrest the small boys for violating the nine o'clock curfew ordinance. The policemen surrounded the bonfire, and crept up close to it in the darkness. At the signal, they made a rush, each policeman grabbing at the youngsters as he would grab into a basket of squirming eels.

Now I didn't know anything about the coming of the police; and when I saw the sudden eruption of brass-buttoned, helmeted bulls, each of them reaching with both hands, all the forces and stability of my being were overthrown. Remained only the automatic process to run. And I ran. I didn't know I was running. I didn't know anything. It was, as I have said, automatic. There was no reason for me to run. I was not a hobo. I was a citizen of that community. It was my home town. I was guilty of no wrong-doing. I was a college man. I had even got my name in the papers, and I wore good clothes that had never been slept in. And yet I ran — blindly, madly, like a startled deer, for over a block. And when I came to myself, I noted that I was still running. It required a positive effort of will to stop those legs of mine.

No, I'll never get over it. I can't help it. When a bull reaches, I run. Besides, I have an unhappy faculty for getting into jail. I have been in jail more times since I was a hobo than when I was one. I start out on a Sunday morning with a young lady on a bicycle ride. Before we can get outside the city limits we are arrested for passing a pedestrian on the sidewalk. I resolve to be more careful. The next time I am on a bicycle it is night-time and my acetylene-gas-lamp is misbehaving. I cherish the sickly flame carefully, because of the ordinance. I am in a hurry, but I ride at a snail's pace so as not to jar out the flickering flame. I reach the city limits; I am beyond the jurisdiction of the ordinance; and I proceed to scorch to make up for lost time. And half a mile farther on I am "pinched" by a bull, and the next morning I forfeit my bail in the police court. The city had treacherously extended its limits into a mile of the country, and I didn't know, that was all. I remember my inalienable right of free speech and peaceable assemblage, and I get up on a soap-box to trot out the particular economic bees that buzz in my bonnet, and a bull takes me off that box and leads me to the city prison, and after that I get out on bail. It's no use. In Korea I used to be arrested about every other day. It was the same thing in Manchuria. The last time I was in Japan I broke into jail under the pretext of being a Russian spy. It wasn't my pretext, but it got me into jail just the same. There is no hope for me. I am fated to do the Prisoner-of-Chillon stunt yet. This is prophecy.

I once hypnotized a bull on Boston Common. It was past midnight and he had me dead to rights; but before I got done with him he had ponied up a silver quarter and given me the address of an all-night restaurant. Then there was a bull in Bristol, New Jersey, who caught me and let me go, and heaven knows he had provocation enough to put me in jail. I hit him the hardest I'll wager he was ever hit in his life. It happened this way. About midnight I nailed a freight out of Philadelphia. The shacks ditched me. She was pulling out slowly through the maze of tracks and switches of the freight-yards. I nailed her again, and again I was ditched. You see, I had to nail her "outside," for she was a through freight with every door locked and sealed.

The second time I was ditched the shack gave me a lecture. He told me I was risking my life, that it was a fast freight and that she went some. I told him I was used to going some myself, but it was no go. He said he wouldn't permit me to commit suicide, and I hit the grit. But I nailed her a third time, getting in between on the bumpers. They were the most meagre bumpers I had ever seen — I do not refer to the real bumpers, the iron bumpers that are connected by the coupling-link and that pound and grind on each other;

what I refer to are the beams, like huge cleats, that cross the ends of freight cars just above the bumpers. When one rides the bumpers, he stands on these cleats, one foot on each, the bumpers between his feet and just beneath.

But the beams or cleats I found myself on were not the broad, generous ones that at that time were usually on box-cars. On the contrary, they were very narrow — not more than an inch and a half in breadth. I couldn't get half of the width of my sole on them. Then there was nothing to which to hold with my hands. True, there were the ends of the two box-cars; but those ends were flat, perpendicular surfaces. There were no grips. I could only press the flats of my palms against the car-ends for support. But that would have been all right if the cleats for my feet had been decently wide.

As the freight got out of Philadelphia she began to hit up speed. Then I understood what the shack had meant by suicide. The freight went faster and faster. She was a through freight, and there was nothing to stop her. On that section of the Pennsylvania four tracks run side by side, and my east-bound freight didn't need to worry about passing west-bound freights, nor about being overtaken by east-bound expresses. She had the track to herself, and she used it. I was in a precarious situation. I stood with the mere edges of my feet on the narrow projections, the palms of my hands pressing desperately against the flat, perpendicular ends of each car. And those cars moved, and moved individually, up and down and back and forth. Did you ever see a circus rider, standing on two running horses, with one foot on the back of each horse? Well, that was what I was doing, with several differences. The circus rider had the reins to hold on to, while I had nothing; he stood on the broad soles of his feet, while I stood on the edges of mine; he bent his legs and body, gaining the strength of the arch in his posture and achieving the stability of a low centre of gravity, while I was compelled to stand upright and keep my legs straight; he rode face forward, while I was riding sidewise; and also, if he fell off, he'd get only a roll in the sawdust, while I'd have been ground to pieces beneath the wheels.

And that freight was certainly going some, roaring and shrieking, swinging madly around curves, thundering over trestles, one car-end bumping up when the other was jarring down, or jerking to the right at the same moment the other was lurching to the left, and with me all the while praying and hoping for the train to stop. But she didn't stop. She didn't have to. For the first, last, and only time on The Road, I got all I wanted. I abandoned the bumpers and managed to get out on a side-ladder; it was ticklish work, for I had never encountered car-ends that were so parsimonious of hand-holds and foot-holds as those car-ends were.

I heard the engine whistling, and I felt the speed easing down. I knew the train wasn't going to stop, but my mind was made up to chance it if she slowed down sufficiently. The right of way at this point took a curve, crossed a bridge over a canal, and cut through the town of Bristol. This combination compelled slow speed. I clung on to the side-ladder and waited. I didn't know it was the town of Bristol we were approaching. I did not know what necessitated slackening in speed. All I knew was that I wanted to get off. I strained my eyes in the darkness for a street-crossing on which to land. I was pretty well down the train, and before my car was in the town the engine was past the station and I could feel her making speed again.

Then came the street. It was too dark to see how wide it was or what was on the other side. I knew I needed all of that street if I was to remain on my feet after I struck. I dropped off on the near side. It sounds easy. By "dropped off" I mean just this: I first of all, on the side-ladder, thrust my body forward as far as I could in the direction the train was going — this to give as much space as possible in which to gain backward momentum when I swung off. Then I swung, swung out and backward, backward with all my might, and let go — at the same time throwing myself backward as if I intended to strike the ground on the back of my head. The whole effort was to overcome as much as possible the primary forward momentum the train had imparted to my body. When my feet hit the grit, my body was lying backward on the air at an angle of forty-five degrees. I had reduced the forward momentum some, for when my feet struck, I did not immediately pitch forward on my face. Instead, my body rose to the perpendicular and began to incline forward. In point of fact, my body proper still retained much momentum, while my feet, through contact with the earth, had lost all their momentum. This momentum the feet had lost I had to supply anew by lifting them as rapidly as I could and running them forward in order to keep them under my forward-moving body. The result was that my feet beat a rapid and explosive tattoo clear across the street. I didn't dare stop them. If I had, I'd have pitched forward. It was up to me to keep on going.

I was an involuntary projectile, worrying about what was on the other side of the street and hoping that it wouldn't be a stone wall or a telegraph pole. And just then I hit something. Horrors! I saw it just the instant before the disaster — of all things, a bull, standing there in the darkness. We went down together, rolling over and over; and the automatic process was such in that miserable creature that in the moment of impact he reached out and clutched me and never let go. We were both knocked out, and he held on to a very lamb-like hobo while he recovered.

If that bull had any imagination, he must have thought me a traveller from other worlds, the man from Mars just arriving; for in the darkness he hadn't seen me swing from the train. In fact, his first words were: "Where did you come from?" His next words, and before I had time to answer, were: "I've a good mind to run you in." This latter, I am convinced, was likewise automatic. He was a really good bull at heart, for after I had told him a "story" and helped brush off his clothes, he gave me until the next freight to get out of town. I stipulated two things: first, that the freight be east-bound, and second, that it should not be a through freight with all doors sealed and locked. To this he agreed, and thus, by the terms of the Treaty of Bristol, I escaped being pinched.

I remember another night, in that part of the country, when I just missed another bull. If I had hit him, I'd have telescoped him, for I was coming down from above, all holds free, with several other bulls one jump behind and reaching for me. This is how it happened. I had been lodging in a livery stable in Washington. I had a box-stall and unnumbered horse-blankets all to myself. In return for such sumptuous accommodation I took care of a string of horses each morning. I might have been there yet, if it hadn't been for the bulls.

One evening, about nine o'clock, I returned to the stable to go to bed, and found a crap game in full blast. It had been a market day, and all the negroes had money. It would be well to explain the lay of the land. The livery stable faced on two streets. I entered the front, passed through the office, and came to the alley between two rows of stalls that ran the length of the building and opened out on the other street. Midway along this alley, beneath a gas-jet and between the rows of horses, were about forty negroes. I joined them as an onlooker. I was broke and couldn't play. A coon was making passes and not dragging down. He was riding his luck, and with each pass the total stake doubled. All kinds of money lay on the floor. It was fascinating. With each pass, the chances increased tremendously against the coon making another pass. The excitement was intense. And just then there came a thundering smash on the big doors that opened on the back street.

A few of the negroes bolted in the opposite direction. I paused from my flight a moment to grab at the all kinds of money on the floor. This wasn't theft: it was merely custom. Every man who hadn't run was grabbing. The doors crashed open and swung in, and through them surged a squad of bulls. We surged the other way. It was dark in the office, and the narrow door would not permit all of us to pass out to the street at the same time. Things became congested. A coon took a dive through the window, taking the sash along with him and followed by other coons. At our rear, the bulls were nailing prisoners. A big coon and myself made a dash at the door at the same time. He was bigger than I, and he pivoted me and got through first. The next instant a club swatted him on the head and he went down like a steer. Another squad of bulls was waiting outside for us. They knew they couldn't stop the rush with their hands, and so they were swinging their clubs. I stumbled over the fallen coon who had pivoted me, ducked a swat from a club, dived between a bull's legs, and was free. And then how I ran! There was a lean mulatto just in front of me, and I took his pace. He knew the town better than I did, and I knew that in the way he ran lay safety. But he, on the other hand, took me for a pursuing bull. He never looked around. He just ran. My wind was good, and I hung on to his pace and nearly killed him. In the end he stumbled weakly, went down on his knees, and surrendered to me. And when he discovered I wasn't a bull, all that saved me was that he didn't have any wind left in him.

That was why I left Washington — not on account of the mulatto, but on account of the bulls. I went down to the depot and caught the first blind out on a Pennsylvania Railroad express. After the train got good and under way and I noted the speed she was making, a misgiving smote me. This was a four-track railroad, and the engines took water on the fly. Hoboes had long since warned me never to ride the first blind on trains where the engines took water on the fly. And now let me explain. Between the tracks are shallow metal troughs. As the engine, at full speed, passes above, a sort of chute drops down into the trough. The result is that all the water in the trough rushes up the chute and fills the tender.

Somewhere along between Washington and Baltimore, as I sat on the platform of the blind, a fine spray began to fill the air. It did no harm. Ah, ha, thought I; it's all a bluff, this taking water on the fly being bad for the bo on the first blind. What does this little spray amount to? Then I began to marvel at the device. This was railroading! Talk about your primitive Western railroading — and just then the tender filled up, and it hadn't reached the end of the trough. A tidal wave of water poured over the back of the tender and down upon me. I was soaked to the skin, as wet as if I had fallen overboard.

The train pulled into Baltimore. As is the custom in the great Eastern cities, the railroad ran beneath the level of the streets on the bottom of a big "cut." As the train pulled into the lighted depot, I made myself as small as possible on the blind. But a railroad bull saw me, and gave chase. Two more joined him. I was past the depot, and I ran straight on down the track. I was in a sort of trap. On each side of me rose the steep walls of the cut, and if I ever essayed them and failed, I knew that I'd slide back into the clutches of the bulls. I ran on and on, studying the walls of the cut for a favorable place to climb up. At last I saw such a place. It came just after I had passed under a bridge that carried a level street across the cut. Up the steep slope I went, clawing hand and foot. The three railroad bulls were clawing up right after me.

At the top, I found myself in a vacant lot. On one side was a low wall that separated it from the street. There was no time for minute investigation. They were at my heels. I headed for the wall and vaulted it. And right there was where I got the surprise of my life. One is used to thinking that one side of a wall is just as high as the other side. But that wall was different. You see, the vacant lot was much higher than the level of the street. On my side the wall was low, but on the other side — well, as I came soaring over the top, all holds free, it seemed to me that I was falling feet-first, plump into an abyss. There beneath me, on the sidewalk, under the light of a street-lamp was a bull. I guess it was nine or ten feet down to the sidewalk; but in the shock of surprise in mid-air it seemed twice that distance.

I straightened out in the air and came down. At first I thought I was going to land on the bull. My clothes did brush him as my feet struck the sidewalk with explosive impact. It was a wonder he didn't drop dead, for he hadn't heard me coming. It was the man-from-Mars stunt over again. The bull did jump. He shied away from me like a horse from an auto; and then he reached for me. I didn't stop to explain. I left that to my pursuers, who were dropping over the wall rather gingerly. But I got a chase all right. I ran up one street and down another, dodged around corners, and at last got away.

After spending some of the coin I'd got from the crap game and killing off an hour of time, I came back to the railroad cut, just outside the lights of the depot, and waited for a train. My blood had cooled down, and I shivered miserably, what of my wet clothes. At last a train pulled into the station. I lay low in the darkness, and successfully boarded her when she pulled out, taking good care this time to make the second blind. No more water on the fly in mine. The train ran forty miles to the first stop. I got off in a lighted depot that was strangely familiar. I was back in Washington. In some way, during the excitement of the get-away in Baltimore, running through strange streets, dodging and turning and retracing, I had got turned around. I had taken the train out the wrong way. I had lost a night's sleep, I had been soaked to the skin, I had been chased for my life; and for all my pains I was back where I had started. Oh, no, life on The Road is not all beer and skittles. But I didn't go back to the livery stable. I had done some pretty successful grabbing, and I didn't want to reckon up with the coons. So I caught the next train out, and ate my breakfast in Baltimore.

JOHN BARLEYCORN

This memoir concerns London’s struggles with alcohol addiction. It was published in 1913 and the title is taken from the British folksong “John Barleycorn”. The memoir has themes of masculinity and male comradeship. London discusses various life experiences he has had with alcohol, and at widely different stages in his life. Key stages are his late teen years when he earned money as a sailor and later in life when he was a wealthy, successful writer.

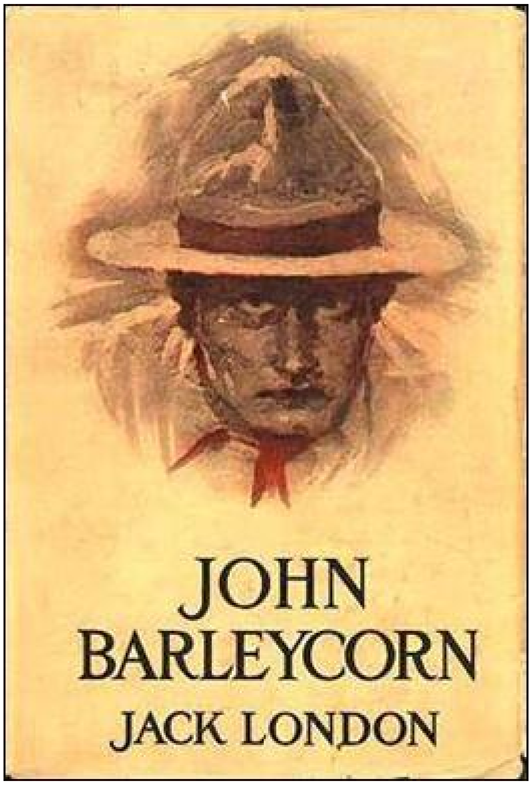
JOHN
BARLEYCORN
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I
CHAPTER II
CHAPTER III
CHAPTER IV
CHAPTER V
CHAPTER VI
CHAPTER VII
CHAPTER VIII
CHAPTER IX
CHAPTER X
CHAPTER XI
CHAPTER XII
CHAPTER XIII
CHAPTER XIV
CHAPTER XV
CHAPTER XVI
CHAPTER XVII
CHAPTER XVIII
CHAPTER XIX
CHAPTER XX
CHAPTER XXI
CHAPTER XXII
CHAPTER XXIII
CHAPTER XXIV
CHAPTER XXV
CHAPTER XXVI
CHAPTER XXVII
CHAPTER XXVIII
CHAPTER XXIX
CHAPTER XXX
CHAPTER XXXI
CHAPTER XXXII
CHAPTER XXXIII
CHAPTER XXXIV
CHAPTER XXXV
CHAPTER XXXVI

CHAPTER XXXVII
CHAPTER XXXVIII
CHAPTER XXXIX

CHAPTER I

It all came to me one election day. It was on a warm California afternoon, and I had ridden down into the Valley of the Moon from the ranch to the little village to vote Yes and No to a host of proposed amendments to the Constitution of the State of California. Because of the warmth of the day I had had several drinks before casting my ballot, and divers drinks after casting it. Then I had ridden up through the vine-clad hills and rolling pastures of the ranch, and arrived at the farm-house in time for another drink and supper.

“How did you vote on the suffrage amendment?” Charmian asked.

“I voted for it.”

She uttered an exclamation of surprise. For, be it known, in my younger days, despite my ardent democracy, I had been opposed to woman suffrage. In my later and more tolerant years I had been unenthusiastic in my acceptance of it as an inevitable social phenomenon.

“Now just why did you vote for it?” Charmian asked.

I answered. I answered at length. I answered indignantly. The more I answered, the more indignant I became. (No; I was not drunk. The horse I had ridden was well named “The Outlaw.” I’d like to see any drunken man ride her.)

And yet — how shall I say? — I was lighted up, I was feeling “good,” I was pleasantly jingled.

“When the women get the ballot, they will vote for prohibition,” I said. “It is the wives, and sisters, and mothers, and they only, who will drive the nails into the coffin of John Barleycorn — — ”

“But I thought you were a friend to John Barleycorn,” Charmian interpolated.

“I am. I was. I am not. I never am. I am never less his friend than when he is with me and when I seem most his friend. He is the king of liars. He is the frankest truthsayer. He is the august companion with whom one walks with the gods. He is also in league with the Noseless One. His way leads to truth naked, and to death. He gives clear vision, and muddy dreams. He is the enemy of life, and the teacher of wisdom beyond life’s wisdom. He is a red-handed killer, and he slays youth.”

And Charmian looked at me, and I knew she wondered where I had got it.

I continued to talk. As I say, I was lighted up. In my brain every thought was at home. Every thought, in its little cell, crouched ready-dressed at the door, like prisoners at midnight a jail-break. And every thought was a vision, bright-imaged, sharp-cut, unmistakable. My brain was illuminated by the clear, white light of alcohol. John Barleycorn was on a truth-telling rampage, giving away the choicest secrets on himself. And I was his spokesman. There moved the multitudes of memories of my past life, all orderly arranged like soldiers in some vast review. It was mine to pick and choose. I was a lord of thought, the master of my vocabulary and of the totality of my experience, unerringly capable of selecting my data and building my exposition. For so John Barleycorn tricks and lures, setting the maggots of intelligence gnawing, whispering his fatal intuitions of truth, flinging purple passages into the monotony of one's days.

I outlined my life to Charmian, and expounded the make-up of my constitution. I was no hereditary alcoholic. I had been born with no organic, chemical predisposition toward alcohol. In this matter I was normal in my generation. Alcohol was an acquired taste. It had been painfully acquired. Alcohol had been a dreadfully repugnant thing — more nauseous than any physic. Even now I did not like the taste of it. I drank it only for its "kick." And from the age of five to that of twenty-five I had not learned to care for its kick. Twenty years of unwilling apprenticeship had been required to make my system rebelliously tolerant of alcohol, to make me, in the heart and the deeps of me, desirous of alcohol.

I sketched my first contacts with alcohol, told of my first intoxications and revulsions, and pointed out always the one thing that in the end had won me over — namely, the accessibility of alcohol. Not only had it always been accessible, but every interest of my developing life had drawn me to it. A newsboy on the streets, a sailor, a miner, a wanderer in far lands, always where men came together to exchange ideas, to laugh and boast and dare, to relax, to forget the dull toil of tiresome nights and days, always they came together over alcohol. The saloon was the place of congregation. Men gathered to it as primitive men gathered about the fire of the squatting place or the fire at the mouth of the cave.

I reminded Charmian of the canoe houses from which she had been barred in the South Pacific, where the kinky-haired cannibals escaped from their womenkind and feasted and drank by themselves, the sacred precincts taboo to women under pain of death. As a youth, by way of the saloon I had escaped from the narrowness of woman's influence into the wide free world of men. All ways led to the saloon. The thousand roads of romance and adventure drew together in the saloon, and thence led out and on over the world.

"The point is," I concluded my sermon, "that it is the accessibility of alcohol that has given me my taste for alcohol. I did not care for it. I used to laugh at it. Yet here I am, at the last, possessed with the drinker's desire. It took twenty years to implant that desire; and for ten years more that desire has grown. And the effect of satisfying that desire is anything but good. Temperamentally I am wholesome-hearted and merry. Yet when I walk with John Barleycorn I suffer all the damnation of intellectual pessimism.

"But," I hastened to add (I always hasten to add), "John Barleycorn must have his due. He does tell the truth. That is the curse of it. The so-called truths of life are not true. They are the vital lies by which life lives, and John Barleycorn gives them the lie."

"Which does not make toward life," Charmian said.

"Very true," I answered. "And that is the perfectest hell of it. John Barleycorn makes toward death. That is why I voted for the amendment to-day. I read back in my life and saw how the accessibility of alcohol had given me the taste for it. You see, comparatively few alcoholics are born in a generation. And by alcoholic I mean a man whose chemistry craves alcohol and drives him resistlessly to it. The great majority of habitual drinkers are born not only without desire for alcohol, but with actual repugnance toward it. Not the first, nor the twentieth, nor the hundredth drink, succeeded in giving them the liking. But they learned, just as men learn to smoke; though it is far easier to learn to smoke than to learn to drink. They learned because alcohol was so accessible. The women know the game. They pay for it — the wives and sisters and mothers. And when they come to vote, they will vote for prohibition. And the best of it is that there will be no hardship worked on the coming generation. Not having access to alcohol, not being predisposed toward alcohol, it will never miss alcohol. It will mean life more abundant for the manhood of the young boys born and growing up — ay, and life more abundant for the young girls born and growing up to share the lives of the young men."

"Why not write all this up for the sake of the men and women coming?" Charmian asked. "Why not write it so as to help the wives and sisters and mothers to the way they should vote?"

“The ‘Memoirs of an Alcoholic,’“ I sneered — or, rather, John Barleycorn sneered; for he sat with me there at table in my pleasant, philanthropic jingle, and it is a trick of John Barleycorn to turn the smile to a sneer without an instant’s warning.

“No,” said Charmian, ignoring John Barleycorn’s roughness, as so many women have learned to do. “You have shown yourself no alcoholic, no dipsomaniac, but merely an habitual drinker, one who has made John Barleycorn’s acquaintance through long years of rubbing shoulders with him. Write it up and call it ‘Alcoholic Memoirs.’“

CHAPTER II

And, ere I begin, I must ask the reader to walk with me in all sympathy; and, since sympathy is merely understanding, begin by understanding me and whom and what I write about. In the first place, I am a seasoned drinker. I have no constitutional predisposition for alcohol. I am not stupid. I am not a swine. I know the drinking game from A to Z, and I have used my judgment in drinking. I never have to be put to bed. Nor do I stagger. In short, I am a normal, average man; and I drink in the normal, average way, as drinking goes. And this is the very point: I am writing of the effects of alcohol on the normal, average man. I have no word to say for or about the microscopically unimportant excessivist, the dipsomaniac.

There are, broadly speaking, two types of drinkers. There is the man whom we all know, stupid, unimaginative, whose brain is bitten numbly by numb maggots; who walks generously with wide-spread, tentative legs, falls frequently in the gutter, and who sees, in the extremity of his ecstasy, blue mice and pink elephants. He is the type that gives rise to the jokes in the funny papers.

The other type of drinker has imagination, vision. Even when most pleasantly jingled, he walks straight and naturally, never staggers nor falls, and knows just where he is and what he is doing. It is not his body but his brain that is drunken. He may bubble with wit, or expand with good fellowship. Or he may see intellectual spectres and phantoms that are cosmic and logical and that take the forms of syllogisms. It is when in this condition that he strips away the husks of life's healthiest illusions and gravely considers the iron collar of necessity welded about the neck of his soul. This is the hour of John Barleycorn's subtlest power. It is easy for any man to roll in the gutter. But it is a terrible ordeal for a man to stand upright on his two legs unswaying, and decide that in all the universe he finds for himself but one freedom — namely, the anticipating of the day of his death. With this man this is the hour of the white logic (of which more anon), when he knows that he may know only the laws of things — the meaning of things never. This is his danger hour. His feet are taking hold of the pathway that leads down into the grave.

All is clear to him. All these baffling head-reaches after immortality are but the panics of souls frightened by the fear of death, and cursed with the thrice-cursed gift of imagination. They have not the instinct for death; they lack the will to die when the time to die is at hand. They trick themselves into believing they will outwit the game and win to a future, leaving the other animals to the darkness of the grave or the annihilating heats of the crematory. But he, this man in the hour of his white logic, knows that they trick and outwit themselves. The one event happeneth to all alike. There is no new thing under the sun, not even that yearned-for bauble of feeble souls — immortality. But he knows, HE knows, standing upright on his two legs unswaying. He is compounded of meat and wine and sparkle, of sun-mote and world-dust, a frail mechanism made to run for a span, to be tinkered at by doctors of divinity and doctors of physic, and to be flung into the scrap-heap at the end.

Of course, all this is soul-sickness, life-sickness. It is the penalty the imaginative man must pay for his friendship with John Barleycorn. The penalty paid by the stupid man is simpler, easier. He drinks himself into sottish unconsciousness. He sleeps a drugged sleep, and, if he dream, his dreams are dim and inarticulate. But to the imaginative man, John Barleycorn sends the pitiless, spectral syllogisms of the white logic. He looks upon life and all its affairs with the jaundiced eye of a pessimistic German philosopher. He sees through all illusions. He transvalues all values. Good is bad, truth is a cheat, and life is a joke. From his calm-mad heights, with the certitude of a god, he beholds all life as evil. Wife, children, friends — in the clear, white light of his logic they are exposed as frauds and shams. He sees through them, and all that he sees is their frailty, their meagreness, their sordidness, their pitifulness. No longer do they fool him. They are miserable little egotisms, like all the other little humans, fluttering their May-fly life-dance of an hour. They are without freedom. They are puppets of chance. So is he. He realises that. But there is one difference. He sees; he knows. And he knows his one freedom: he may anticipate the day of his death. All of which is not good for a man who is made to live and love and be loved. Yet suicide, quick or slow, a sudden spill or a gradual oozing away through the years, is the price John Barleycorn exacts. No friend of his ever escapes making the just, due payment.

CHAPTER III

I was five years old the first time I got drunk. It was on a hot day, and my father was ploughing in the field. I was sent from the house, half a mile away, to carry to him a pail of beer. “And be sure you don’t spill it,” was the parting injunction.

It was, as I remember it, a lard pail, very wide across the top, and without a cover. As I toddled along, the beer slopped over the rim upon my legs. And as I toddled, I pondered. Beer was a very precious thing. Come to think of it, it must be wonderfully good. Else why was I never permitted to drink of it in the house? Other things kept from me by the grown-ups I had found good. Then this, too, was good. Trust the grown-ups. They knew. And, anyway, the pail was too full. I was slopping it against my legs and spilling it on the ground. Why waste it? And no one would know whether I had drunk or spilled it.

I was so small that, in order to negotiate the pail, I sat down and gathered it into my lap. First I sipped the foam. I was disappointed. The preciousness evaded me. Evidently it did not reside in the foam. Besides, the taste was not good. Then I remembered seeing the grown-ups blow the foam away before they drank. I buried my face in the foam and lapped the solid liquid beneath. It wasn’t good at all. But still I drank. The grown-ups knew what they were about. Considering my diminutiveness, the size of the pail in my lap, and my drinking out of it my breath held and my face buried to the ears in foam, it was rather difficult to estimate how much I drank. Also, I was gulping it down like medicine, in nauseous haste to get the ordeal over.

I shuddered when I started on, and decided that the good taste would come afterward. I tried several times more in the course of that long half-mile. Then, astounded by the quantity of beer that was lacking, and remembering having seen stale beer made to foam afresh, I took a stick and stirred what was left till it foamed to the brim.

And my father never noticed. He emptied the pail with the wide thirst of the sweating ploughman, returned it to me, and started up the plough. I endeavoured to walk beside the horses. I remember tottering and falling against their heels in front of the shining share, and that my father hauled back on the lines so violently that the horses nearly sat down on me. He told me afterward that it was by only a matter of inches that I escaped disembowelling. Vaguely, too, I remember, my father carried me in his arms to the trees on the edge of the field, while all the world reeled and swung about me, and I was aware of deadly nausea mingled with an appalling conviction of sin.

I slept the afternoon away under the trees, and when my father roused me at sundown it was a very sick little boy that got up and dragged wearily homeward. I was exhausted, oppressed by the weight of my limbs, and in my stomach was a harp-like vibrating that extended to my throat and brain. My condition was like that of one who had gone through a battle with poison. In truth, I had been poisoned.

In the weeks and months that followed I had no more interest in beer than in the kitchen stove after it had burned me. The grown-ups were right. Beer was not for children. The grown-ups didn’t mind it; but neither did they mind taking pills and castor oil. As for me, I could manage to get along quite well without beer. Yes, and to the day of my death I could have managed to get along quite well without it. But circumstance decreed otherwise. At every turn in the world in which I lived, John Barleycorn beckoned. There was no escaping him. All paths led to him. And it took twenty years of contact, of exchanging greetings and passing on with my tongue in my cheek, to develop in me a sneaking liking for the rascal.

CHAPTER IV

My next bout with John Barleycorn occurred when I was seven. This time my imagination was at fault, and I was frightened into the encounter. Still farming, my family had moved to a ranch on the bleak sad coast of San Mateo County, south of San Francisco. It was a wild, primitive countryside in those days; and often I heard my mother pride herself that we were old American stock and not immigrant Irish and Italians like our neighbours. In all our section there was only one other old American family.

One Sunday morning found me, how or why I cannot now remember, at the Morrisey ranch. A number of young people had gathered there from the nearer ranches. Besides, the oldsters had been there, drinking since early dawn, and, some of them, since the night before. The Morriseys were a huge breed, and there were many strapping great sons and uncles, heavy-booted, big-fisted, rough-voiced.

Suddenly there were screams from the girls and cries of “Fight!” There was a rush. Men hurled themselves out of the kitchen. Two giants, flush-faced, with greying hair, were locked in each other’s arms. One was Black Matt, who, everybody said, had killed two men in his time. The women screamed softly, crossed themselves, or prayed brokenly, hiding their eyes and peeping through their fingers. But not I. It is a fair presumption that I was the most interested spectator. Maybe I would see that wonderful thing, a man killed. Anyway, I would see a man-fight. Great was my disappointment. Black Matt and Tom Morrisey merely held on to each other and lifted their clumsy-booted feet in what seemed a grotesque, elephantine dance. They were too drunk to fight. Then the peacemakers got hold of them and led them back to cement the new friendship in the kitchen.

Soon they were all talking at once, rumbling and roaring as big-chested open-air men will, when whisky has whipped their taciturnity. And I, a little shaver of seven, my heart in my mouth, my trembling body strung tense as a deer’s on the verge of flight, peered wonderingly in at the open door and learned more of the strangeness of men. And I marvelled at Black Matt and Tom Morrisey, sprawled over the table, arms about each other’s necks, weeping lovingly.

The kitchen-drinking continued, and the girls outside grew timorous. They knew the drink game, and all were certain that something terrible was going to happen. They protested that they did not wish to be there when it happened, and some one suggested going to a big Italian rancho four miles away, where they could get up a dance. Immediately they paired off, lad and lassie, and started down the sandy road. And each lad walked with his sweetheart — trust a child of seven to listen and to know the love-affairs of his countryside. And behold, I, too, was a lad with a lassie. A little Irish girl of my own age had been paired off with me. We were the only children in this spontaneous affair. Perhaps the oldest couple might have been twenty. There were chits of girls, quite grown up, of fourteen and sixteen, walking with their fellows. But we were uniquely young, this little Irish girl and I, and we walked hand in hand, and, sometimes, under the tutelage of our elders, with my arm around her waist. Only that wasn't comfortable. And I was very proud, on that bright Sunday morning, going down the long bleak road among the sandhills. I, too, had my girl, and was a little man.

The Italian rancho was a bachelor establishment. Our visit was hailed with delight. The red wine was poured in tumblers for all, and the long dining-room was partly cleared for dancing. And the young fellows drank and danced with the girls to the strains of an accordion. To me that music was divine. I had never heard anything so glorious. The young Italian who furnished it would even get up and dance, his arms around his girl, playing the accordion behind her back. All of which was very wonderful for me, who did not dance, but who sat at a table and gazed wide-eyed at the amazingness of life. I was only a little lad, and there was so much of life for me to learn. As the time passed, the Irish lads began helping themselves to the wine, and jollity and high spirits reigned. I noted that some of them staggered and fell down in the dances, and that one had gone to sleep in a corner. Also, some of the girls were complaining, and wanting to leave, and others of the girls were titteringly complacent, willing for anything to happen.

When our Italian hosts had offered me wine in a general sort of way, I had declined. My beer experience had been enough for me, and I had no inclination to traffic further in the stuff, or in anything related to it. Unfortunately, one young Italian, Peter, an impish soul, seeing me sitting solitary, stirred by a whim of the moment, half-filled a tumbler with wine and passed it to me. He was sitting across the table from me. I declined. His face grew stern, and he insistently proffered the wine. And then terror descended upon me — a terror which I must explain.

My mother had theories. First, she steadfastly maintained that brunettes and all the tribe of dark-eyed humans were deceitful. Needless to say, my mother was a blonde. Next, she was convinced that the dark-eyed Latin races were profoundly sensitive, profoundly treacherous, and profoundly murderous. Again and again, drinking in the strangeness and the fearsomeness of the world from her lips, I had heard her state that if one offended an Italian, no matter how slightly and unintentionally, he was certain to retaliate by stabbing one in the back. That was her particular phrase — ”stab you in the back.”

Now, although I had been eager to see Black Matt kill Tom Morrisey that morning, I did not care to furnish to the dancers the spectacle of a knife sticking in my back. I had not yet learned to distinguish between facts and theories. My faith was implicit in my mother’s exposition of the Italian character. Besides, I had some glimmering inkling of the sacredness of hospitality. Here was a treacherous, sensitive, murderous Italian, offering me hospitality. I had been taught to believe that if I offended him he would strike at me with a knife precisely as a horse kicked out when one got too close to its heels and worried it. Then, too, this Italian, Peter, had those terrible black eyes I had heard my mother talk about. They were eyes different from the eyes I knew, from the blues and greys and hazels of my own family, from the pale and genial blues of the Irish. Perhaps Peter had had a few drinks. At any rate, his eyes were brilliantly black and sparkling with devilry. They were the mysterious, the unknown, and who was I, a seven-year-old, to analyse them and know their prankishness? In them I visioned sudden death, and I declined the wine half-heartedly. The expression in his eyes changed. They grew stern and imperious as he shoved the tumbler of wine closer.

What could I do? I have faced real death since in my life, but never have I known the fear of death as I knew it then. I put the glass to my lips, and Peter’s eyes relented. I knew he would not kill me just then. That was a relief. But the wine was not. It was cheap, new wine, bitter and sour, made of the leavings and scrapings of the vineyards and the vats, and it tasted far worse than beer. There is only one way to take medicine, and that is to take it. And that is the way I took that wine. I threw my head back and gulped it down. I had to gulp again and hold the poison down, for poison it was to my child’s tissues and membranes.

Looking back now, I can realise that Peter was astounded. He half-filled a second tumbler and shoved it across the table. Frozen with fear, in despair at the fate which had befallen me, I gulped the second glass down like the first. This was too much for Peter. He must share the infant prodigy he had discovered. He called Dominick, a young moustached Italian, to see the sight. This time it was a full tumbler that was given me. One will do anything to live. I gripped myself, mastered the qualms that rose in my throat, and downed the stuff.

Dominick had never seen an infant of such heroic calibre. Twice again he refilled the tumbler, each time to the brim, and watched it disappear down my throat. By this time my exploits were attracting attention. Middle-aged Italian labourers, old-country peasants who did not talk English, and who could not dance with the Irish girls, surrounded me. They were swarthy and wild-looking; they wore belts and red shirts; and I knew they carried knives; and they ringed me around like a pirate chorus. And Peter and Dominick made me show off for them.

Had I lacked imagination, had I been stupid, had I been stubbornly mulish in having my own way, I should never have got in this pickle. And the lads and lassies were dancing, and there was no one to save me from my fate. How much I drank I do not know. My memory of it is of an age-long suffering of fear in the midst of a murderous crew, and of an infinite number of glasses of red wine passing across the bare boards of a wine-drenched table and going down my burning throat. Bad as the wine was, a knife in the back was worse, and I must survive at any cost.

Looking back with the drinker’s knowledge, I know now why I did not collapse stupefied upon the table. As I have said, I was frozen, I was paralysed, with fear. The only movement I made was to convey that never-ending procession of glasses to my lips. I was a poised and motionless receptacle for all that quantity of wine. It lay inert in my fear-inert stomach. I was too frightened, even, for my stomach to turn. So all that Italian crew looked on and marvelled at the infant phenomenon that downed wine with the sang-froid of an automaton. It is not in the spirit of braggadocio that I dare to assert they had never seen anything like it.

The time came to go. The tipsy antics of the lads had led a majority of the soberer-minded lassies to compel a departure. I found myself, at the door, beside my little maiden. She had not had my experience, so she was sober. She was fascinated by the titubations of the lads who strove to walk beside their girls, and began to mimic them. I thought this a great game, and I, too, began to stagger tipsily. But she had no wine to stir up, while my movements quickly set the fumes rising to my head. Even at the start, I was more realistic than she. In several minutes I was astonishing myself. I saw one lad, after reeling half a dozen steps, pause at the side of the road, gravely peer into the ditch, and gravely, and after apparent deep thought, fall into it. To me this was excruciatingly funny. I staggered to the edge of the ditch, fully intending to stop on the edge. I came to myself, in the ditch, in process of being hauled out by several anxious-faced girls.

I didn't care to play at being drunk any more. There was no more fun in me. My eyes were beginning to swim, and with wide-open mouth I panted for air. A girl led me by the hand on either side, but my legs were leaden. The alcohol I had drunk was striking my heart and brain like a club. Had I been a weakling of a child, I am confident that it would have killed me. As it was, I know I was nearer death than any of the scared girls dreamed. I could hear them bickering among themselves as to whose fault it was; some were weeping — for themselves, for me, and for the disgraceful way their lads had behaved. But I was not interested. I was suffocating, and I wanted air. To move was agony. It made me pant harder. Yet those girls persisted in making me walk, and it was four miles home. Four miles! I remember my swimming eyes saw a small bridge across the road an infinite distance away. In fact, it was not a hundred feet distant. When I reached it, I sank down and lay on my back panting. The girls tried to lift me, but I was helpless and suffocating. Their cries of alarm brought Larry, a drunken youth of seventeen, who proceeded to resuscitate me by jumping on my chest. Dimly I remember this, and the squalling of the girls as they struggled with him and dragged him away. And then I knew nothing, though I learned afterward that Larry wound up under the bridge and spent the night there.

When I came to, it was dark. I had been carried unconscious for four miles and been put to bed. I was a sick child, and, despite the terrible strain on my heart and tissues, I continually relapsed into the madness of delirium. All the contents of the terrible and horrible in my child's mind spilled out. The most frightful visions were realities to me. I saw murders committed, and I was pursued by murderers. I screamed and raved and fought. My sufferings were prodigious. Emerging from such delirium, I would hear my mother's voice: "But the child's brain. He will lose his reason." And sinking back into delirium, I would take the idea with me and be immured in madhouses, and be beaten by keepers, and surrounded by screeching lunatics.

One thing that had strongly impressed my young mind was the talk of my elders about the dens of iniquity in San Francisco's Chinatown. In my delirium I wandered deep beneath the ground through a thousand of these dens, and behind locked doors of iron I suffered and died a thousand deaths. And when I would come upon my father, seated at table in these subterranean crypts, gambling with Chinese for great stakes of gold, all my outrage gave vent in the vilest cursing. I would rise in bed, struggling against the detaining hands, and curse my father till the rafters rang. All the inconceivable filth a child running at large in a primitive countryside may hear men utter was mine; and though I had never dared utter such oaths, they now poured from me, at the top of my lungs, as I cursed my father sitting there underground and gambling with long-haired, long-nailed Chinamen.

It is a wonder that I did not burst my heart or brain that night. A seven-year-old child's arteries and nerve-centres are scarcely fitted to endure the terrific paroxysms that convulsed me. No one slept in the thin, frame farm-house that night when John Barleycorn had his will of me. And Larry, under the bridge, had no delirium like mine. I am confident that his sleep was stupefied and dreamless, and that he awoke next day merely to heaviness and moroseness, and that if he lives to-day he does not remember that night, so passing was it as an incident. But my brain was seared for ever by that experience. Writing now, thirty years afterward, every vision is as distinct, as sharp-cut, every pain as vital and terrible, as on that night.

I was sick for days afterward, and I needed none of my mother's injunctions to avoid John Barleycorn in the future. My mother had been dreadfully shocked. She held that I had done wrong, very wrong, and that I had gone contrary to all her teaching. And how was I, who was never allowed to talk back, who lacked the very words with which to express my psychology — how was I to tell my mother that it was her teaching that was directly responsible for my drunkenness? Had it not been for her theories about dark eyes and Italian character, I should never have wet my lips with the sour, bitter wine. And not until man-grown did I tell her the true inwardness of that disgraceful affair.

In those after days of sickness, I was confused on some points, and very clear on others. I felt guilty of sin, yet smarted with a sense of injustice. It had not been my fault, yet I had done wrong. But very clear was my resolution never to touch liquor again. No mad dog was ever more afraid of water than was I of alcohol.

Yet the point I am making is that this experience, terrible as it was, could not in the end deter me from forming John Barleycorn's cheek-by-jowl acquaintance. All about me, even then, were the forces moving me toward him. In the first place, barring my mother, ever extreme in her views, it seemed to me all the grown-ups looked upon the affair with tolerant eyes. It was a joke, something funny that had happened. There was no shame attached. Even the lads and lassies giggled and snickered over their part in the affair, narrating with gusto how Larry had jumped on my chest and slept under the bridge, how So-and-So had slept out in the sandhills that night, and what had happened to the other lad who fell in the ditch. As I say, so far as I could see, there was no shame anywhere. It had been something ticklishly, devilishly fine — a bright and gorgeous episode in the monotony of life and labour on that bleak, fog-girt coast.

The Irish ranchers twitted me good-naturedly on my exploit, and patted me on the back until I felt that I had done something heroic. Peter and Dominick and the other Italians were proud of my drinking prowess. The face of morality was not set against drinking. Besides, everybody drank. There was not a teetotaler in the community. Even the teacher of our little country school, a greying man of fifty, gave us vacations on the occasions when he wrestled with John Barleycorn and was thrown. Thus there was no spiritual deterrence. My loathing for alcohol was purely physiological. I didn't like the damned stuff.

CHAPTER V

This physical loathing for alcohol I have never got over. But I have conquered it. To this day I conquer it every time I take a drink. The palate never ceases to rebel, and the palate can be trusted to know what is good for the body. But men do not drink for the effect alcohol produces on the body. What they drink for is the brain-effect; and if it must come through the body, so much the worse for the body.

And yet, despite my physical loathing for alcohol, the brightest spots in my child life were the saloons. Sitting on the heavy potato wagons, wrapped in fog, feet stinging from inactivity, the horses plodding slowly along the deep road through the sandhills, one bright vision made the way never too long. The bright vision was the saloon at Colma, where my father, or whoever drove, always got out to get a drink. And I got out to warm by the great stove and get a soda cracker. Just one soda cracker, but a fabulous luxury. Saloons were good for something. Back behind the plodding horses, I would take an hour in consuming that one cracker. I took the smallest nibbles, never losing a crumb, and chewed the nibble till it became the thinnest and most delectable of pastes. I never voluntarily swallowed this paste. I just tasted it, and went on tasting it, turning it over with my tongue, spreading it on the inside of this cheek, then on the inside of the other cheek, until, at the end, it eluded me and in tiny drops and oozelets, slipped and dribbled down my throat. Horace Fletcher had nothing on me when it came to soda crackers.

I liked saloons. Especially I liked the San Francisco saloons. They had the most delicious dainties for the taking — strange breads and crackers, cheeses, sausages, sardines — wonderful foods that I never saw on our meagre home-table. And once, I remember, a barkeeper mixed me a sweet temperance drink of syrup and soda-water. My father did not pay for it. It was the barkeeper's treat, and he became my ideal of a good, kind man. I dreamed day-dreams of him for years. Although I was seven years old at the time, I can see him now with undiminished clearness, though I never laid eyes on him but that one time. The saloon was south of Market Street in San Francisco. It stood on the west side of the street. As you entered, the bar was on the left. On the right, against the wall, was the free lunch counter. It was a long, narrow room, and at the rear, beyond the beer kegs on tap, were small, round tables and chairs. The barkeeper was blue-eyed, and had fair, silky hair peeping out from under a black silk skull-cap. I remember he wore a brown Cardigan jacket, and I know precisely the spot, in the midst of the array of bottles, from which he took the bottle of red-coloured syrup. He and my father talked long, and I sipped my sweet drink and worshipped him. And for years afterward I worshipped the memory of him.

Despite my two disastrous experiences, here was John Barleycorn, prevalent and accessible everywhere in the community, luring and drawing me. Here were connotations of the saloon making deep indentations in a child's mind. Here was a child, forming its first judgments of the world, finding the saloon a delightful and desirable place. Stores, nor public buildings, nor all the dwellings of men ever opened their doors to me and let me warm by their fires or permitted me to eat the food of the gods from narrow shelves against the wall. Their doors were ever closed to me; the saloon's doors were ever open. And always and everywhere I found saloons, on highway and byway, up narrow alleys and on busy thoroughfares, bright-lighted and cheerful, warm in winter, and in summer dark and cool. Yes, the saloon was a mighty fine place, and it was more than that.

By the time I was ten years old, my family had abandoned ranching and gone to live in the city. And here, at ten, I began on the streets as a newsboy. One of the reasons for this was that we needed the money. Another reason was that I needed the exercise. I had found my way to the free public library, and was reading myself into nervous prostration. On the poor ranches on which I had lived there had been no books. In ways truly miraculous, I had been lent four books, marvellous books, and them I had devoured. One was the life of Garfield; the second, Paul du Chaillu's African travels; the third, a novel by Ouida with the last forty pages missing; and the fourth, Irving's "Alhambra." This last had been lent me by a school-teacher. I was not a forward child. Unlike Oliver Twist, I was incapable of asking for more. When I returned the "Alhambra" to the teacher I hoped she would lend me another book. And because she did not — most likely she deemed me unappreciative — I cried all the way home on the three-mile tramp from the school to the ranch. I waited and yearned for her to lend me another book. Scores of times I nerved myself almost to the point of asking her, but never quite reached the necessary pitch of effrontery.

And then came the city of Oakland, and on the shelves of that free library I discovered all the great world beyond the skyline. Here were thousands of books as good as my four wonder-books, and some were even better. Libraries were not concerned with children in those days, and I had strange adventures. I remember, in the catalogue, being impressed by the title, “The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle.” I filled an application blank and the librarian handed me the collected and entirely unexpurgated works of Smollett in one huge volume. I read everything, but principally history and adventure, and all the old travels and voyages. I read mornings, afternoons, and nights. I read in bed, I read at table, I read as I walked to and from school, and I read at recess while the other boys were playing. I began to get the “jerks.” To everybody I replied: “Go away. You make me nervous.”

And so, at ten, I was out on the streets, a newsboy. I had no time to read. I was busy getting exercise and learning how to fight, busy learning forwardness, and brass and bluff. I had an imagination and a curiosity about all things that made me plastic. Not least among the things I was curious about was the saloon. And I was in and out of many a one. I remember, in those days, on the east side of Broadway, between Sixth and Seventh, from corner to corner, there was a solid block of saloons.

In the saloons life was different. Men talked with great voices, laughed great laughs, and there was an atmosphere of greatness. Here was something more than common every-day where nothing happened. Here life was always very live, and, sometimes, even lurid, when blows were struck, and blood was shed, and big policemen came shouldering in. Great moments, these, for me, my head filled with all the wild and valiant fighting of the gallant adventurers on sea and land. There were no big moments when I trudged along the street throwing my papers in at doors. But in the saloons, even the sots, stupefied, sprawling across the tables or in the sawdust, were objects of mystery and wonder.

And more, the saloons were right. The city fathers sanctioned them and licensed them. They were not the terrible places I heard boys deem them who lacked my opportunities to know. Terrible they might be, but then that only meant they were terribly wonderful, and it is the terribly wonderful that a boy desires to know. In the same way pirates, and shipwrecks, and battles were terrible; and what healthy boy wouldn’t give his immortal soul to participate in such affairs?

Besides, in saloons I saw reporters, editors, lawyers, judges, whose names and faces I knew. They put the seal of social approval on the saloon. They verified my own feeling of fascination in the saloon. They, too, must have found there that something different, that something beyond, which I sensed and groped after. What it was, I did not know; yet there it must be, for there men focused like buzzing flies about a honey pot. I had no sorrows, and the world was very bright, so I could not guess that what these men sought was forgetfulness of jaded toil and stale grief.

Not that I drank at that time. From ten to fifteen I rarely tasted liquor, but I was intimately in contact with drinkers and drinking places. The only reason I did not drink was because I didn't like the stuff. As the time passed, I worked as boy-helper on an ice-wagon, set up pins in a bowling alley with a saloon attached, and swept out saloons at Sunday picnic grounds.

Big jovial Josie Harper ran a road house at Telegraph Avenue and Thirty-ninth Street. Here for a year I delivered an evening paper, until my route was changed to the water-front and tenderloin of Oakland. The first month, when I collected Josie Harper's bill, she poured me a glass of wine. I was ashamed to refuse, so I drank it. But after that I watched the chance when she wasn't around so as to collect from her barkeeper.

The first day I worked in the bowling alley, the barkeeper, according to custom, called us boys up to have a drink after we had been setting up pins for several hours. The others asked for beer. I said I'd take ginger ale. The boys snickered, and I noticed the barkeeper favoured me with a strange, searching scrutiny. Nevertheless, he opened a bottle of ginger ale. Afterward, back in the alleys, in the pauses between games, the boys enlightened me. I had offended the barkeeper. A bottle of ginger ale cost the saloon ever so much more than a glass of steam beer; and it was up to me, if I wanted to hold my job, to drink beer. Besides, beer was food. I could work better on it. There was no food in ginger ale. After that, when I couldn't sneak out of it, I drank beer and wondered what men found in it that was so good. I was always aware that I was missing something.

What I really liked in those days was candy. For five cents I could buy five "cannon-balls" — big lumps of the most delicious lastingness. I could chew and worry a single one for an hour. Then there was a Mexican who sold big slabs of brown chewing taffy for five cents each. It required a quarter of a day properly to absorb one of them. And many a day I made my entire lunch off one of those slabs. In truth, I found food there, but not in beer.

CHAPTER VI

But the time was rapidly drawing near when I was to begin my second series of bouts with John Barleycorn. When I was fourteen, my head filled with the tales of the old voyagers, my vision with tropic isles and far sea-rims, I was sailing a small centreboard skiff around San Francisco Bay and on the Oakland Estuary. I wanted to go to sea. I wanted to get away from monotony and the commonplace. I was in the flower of my adolescence, a-thrill with romance and adventure, dreaming of wild life in the wild man-world. Little I guessed how all the warp and woof of that man-world was entangled with alcohol.

So, one day, as I hoisted sail on my skiff, I met Scotty. He was a husky youngster of seventeen, a runaway apprentice, he told me, from an English ship in Australia. He had just worked his way on another ship to San Francisco; and now he wanted to see about getting a berth on a whaler. Across the estuary, near where the whalers lay, was lying the sloop-yacht Idler. The caretaker was a harpooner who intended sailing next voyage on the whale ship Bonanza. Would I take him, Scotty, over in my skiff to call upon the harpooner?

Would I! Hadn't I heard the stories and rumours about the Idler? — the big sloop that had come up from the Sandwich Islands where it had been engaged in smuggling opium. And the harpooner who was caretaker! How often had I seen him and envied him his freedom. He never had to leave the water. He slept aboard the Idler each night, while I had to go home upon the land to go to bed. The harpooner was only nineteen years old (and I have never had anything but his own word that he was a harpooner); but he had been too shining and glorious a personality for me ever to address as I paddled around the yacht at a wistful distance. Would I take Scotty, the runaway sailor, to visit the harpooner, on the opium-smuggler Idler? WOULD I!

The harpooner came on deck to answer our hail, and invited us aboard. I played the sailor and the man, fending off the skiff so that it would not mar the yacht's white paint, dropping the skiff astern on a long painter, and making the painter fast with two nonchalant half-hitches.

We went below. It was the first sea-interior I had ever seen. The clothing on the wall smelled musty. But what of that? Was it not the sea-gear of men? — leather jackets lined with corduroy, blue coats of pilot cloth, sou'westers, sea-boots, oilskins. And everywhere was in evidence the economy of space — the narrow bunks, the swinging tables, the incredible lockers. There were the tell-tale compass, the sea-lamps in their gimbals, the blue-backed charts carelessly rolled and tucked away, the signal-flags in alphabetical order, and a mariner's dividers jammed into the woodwork to hold a calendar. At last I was living. Here I sat, inside my first ship, a smuggler, accepted as a comrade by a harpooner and a runaway English sailor who said his name was Scotty.

The first thing that the harpooner, aged nineteen, and the sailor, aged seventeen, did to show that they were men was to behave like men. The harpooner suggested the eminent desirableness of a drink, and Scotty searched his pockets for dimes and nickels. Then the harpooner carried away a pink flask to be filled in some blind pig, for there were no licensed saloons in that locality. We drank the cheap rotgut out of tumblers. Was I any the less strong, any the less valiant, than the harpooner and the sailor? They were men. They proved it by the way they drank. Drink was the badge of manhood. So I drank with them, drink by drink, raw and straight, though the damned stuff couldn't compare with a stick of chewing taffy or a delectable "cannon-ball." I shuddered and swallowed my gorge with every drink, though I manfully hid all such symptoms.

Divers times we filled the flask that afternoon. All I had was twenty cents, but I put it up like a man, though with secret regret at the enormous store of candy it could have bought. The liquor mounted in the heads of all of us, and the talk of Scotty and the harpooner was upon running the Easting down, gales off the Horn and pamperos off the Plate, lower topsail breezes, southerly busters, North Pacific gales, and of smashed whaleboats in the Arctic ice.

"You can't swim in that ice water," said the harpooner confidentially to me. "You double up in a minute and go down. When a whale smashes your boat, the thing to do is to get your belly across an oar, so that when the cold doubles you you'll float."

"Sure," I said, with a grateful nod and an air of certitude that I, too, would hunt whales and be in smashed boats in the Arctic Ocean. And, truly, I registered his advice as singularly valuable information, and filed it away in my brain, where it persists to this day.

But I couldn't talk — at first. Heavens! I was only fourteen, and had never been on the ocean in my life. I could only listen to the two sea-dogs, and show my manhood by drinking with them, fairly and squarely, drink and drink.

The liquor worked its will with me; the talk of Scotty and the harpooner poured through the pent space of the Idler's cabin and through my brain like great gusts of wide, free wind; and in imagination I lived my years to come and rocked over the wild, mad, glorious world on multitudinous adventures.

We unbent. Our inhibitions and taciturnities vanished. We were as if we had known each other for years and years, and we pledged ourselves to years of future voyagings together. The harpooner told of misadventures and secret shames. Scotty wept over his poor old mother in Edinburgh — a lady, he insisted, gently born — who was in reduced circumstances, who had pinched herself to pay the lump sum to the ship-owners for his apprenticeship, whose sacrificing dream had been to see him a merchantman officer and a gentleman, and who was heartbroken because he had deserted his ship in Australia and joined another as a common sailor before the mast. And Scotty proved it. He drew her last sad letter from his pocket and wept over it as he read it aloud. The harpooner and I wept with him, and swore that all three of us would ship on the whaleship Bonanza, win a big pay-day, and, still together, make a pilgrimage to Edinburgh and lay our store of money in the dear lady's lap.

And, as John Barleycorn heated his way into my brain, thawing my reticence, melting my modesty, talking through me and with me and as me, my adopted twin brother and alter ego, I, too, raised my voice to show myself a man and an adventurer, and bragged in detail and at length of how I had crossed San Francisco Bay in my open skiff in a roaring southwester when even the schooner sailors doubted my exploit. Further, I — or John Barleycorn, for it was the same thing — told Scotty that he might be a deep-sea sailor and know the last rope on the great deep-sea ships, but that when it came to small-boat sailing I could beat him hands down and sail circles around him.

The best of it was that my assertion and brag were true. With reticence and modesty present, I could never have dared tell Scotty my small-boat estimate of him. But it is ever the way of John Barleycorn to loosen the tongue and babble the secret thought.

Scotty, or John Barleycorn, or the pair, was very naturally offended by my remarks. Nor was I loath. I could whip any runaway sailor seventeen years old. Scotty and I flared and raged like young cockerels, until the harpooner poured another round of drinks to enable us to forgive and make up. Which we did, arms around each other's necks, protesting vows of eternal friendship — just like Black Matt and Tom Morrisey, I remembered, in the ranch kitchen in San Mateo. And, remembering, I knew that I was at last a man — despite my meagre fourteen years — a man as big and manly as those two strapping giants who had quarrelled and made up on that memorable Sunday morning of long ago.

By this time the singing stage was reached, and I joined Scotty and the harpooner in snatches of sea songs and chanties. It was here, in the cabin of the Idler, that I first heard "Blow the Man Down," "Flying Cloud," and "Whisky, Johnny, Whisky." Oh, it was brave. I was beginning to grasp the meaning of life. Here was no commonplace, no Oakland Estuary, no weary round of throwing newspapers at front doors, delivering ice, and setting up ninepins. All the world was mine, all its paths were under my feet, and John Barleycorn, tricking my fancy, enabled me to anticipate the life of adventure for which I yearned.

We were not ordinary. We were three tipsy young gods, incredibly wise, gloriously genial, and without limit to our powers. Ah! — and I say it now, after the years — could John Barleycorn keep one at such a height, I should never draw a sober breath again. But this is not a world of free freights. One pays according to an iron schedule — for every strength the balanced weakness; for every high a corresponding low; for every fictitious god-like moment an equivalent time in reptilian slime. For every feat of telescoping long days and weeks of life into mad magnificent instants, one must pay with shortened life, and, oft-times, with savage usury added.

Intenseness and duration are as ancient enemies as fire and water. They are mutually destructive. They cannot co-exist. And John Barleycorn, mighty necromancer though he be, is as much a slave to organic chemistry as we mortals are. We pay for every nerve marathon we run, nor can John Barleycorn intercede and fend off the just payment. He can lead us to the heights, but he cannot keep us there, else would we all be devotees. And there is no devotee but pays for the mad dances John Barleycorn pipes.

Yet the foregoing is all in after wisdom spoken. It was no part of the knowledge of the lad, fourteen years old, who sat in the Idler's cabin between the harpooner and the sailor, the air rich in his nostrils with the musty smell of men's sea-gear, roaring in chorus: "Yankee ship come down de ribber — pull, my bully boys, pull!"

We grew maudlin, and all talked and shouted at once. I had a splendid constitution, a stomach that would digest scrap-iron, and I was still running my marathon in full vigour when Scotty began to fail and fade. His talk grew incoherent. He groped for words and could not find them, while the ones he found his lips were unable to form. His poisoned consciousness was leaving him. The brightness went out of his eyes, and he looked as stupid as were his efforts to talk. His face and body sagged as his consciousness sagged. (A man cannot sit upright save by an act of will.) Scotty's reeling brain could not control his muscles. All his correlations were breaking down. He strove to take another drink, and feebly dropped the tumbler on the floor. Then, to my amazement, weeping bitterly, he rolled into a bunk on his back and immediately snored off to sleep.

The harpooner and I drank on, grinning in a superior way to each other over Scotty's plight. The last flask was opened, and we drank it between us, to the accompaniment of Scotty's stertorous breathing. Then the harpooner faded away into his bunk, and I was left alone, unthrown, on the field of battle.

I was very proud, and John Barleycorn was proud with me. I could carry my drink. I was a man. I had drunk two men, drink for drink, into unconsciousness. And I was still on my two feet, upright, making my way on deck to get air into my scorching lungs. It was in this bout on the Idler that I discovered what a good stomach and a strong head I had for drink — a bit of knowledge that was to be a source of pride in succeeding years, and that ultimately I was to come to consider a great affliction. The fortunate man is the one who cannot take more than a couple of drinks without becoming intoxicated. The unfortunate wight is the one who can take many glasses without betraying a sign, who must take numerous glasses in order to get the "kick."

The sun was setting when I came on the Idler's deck. There were plenty of bunks below. I did not need to go home. But I wanted to demonstrate to myself how much I was a man. There lay my skiff astern. The last of a strong ebb was running out in channel in the teeth of an ocean breeze of forty miles an hour. I could see the stiff whitecaps, and the suck and run of the current was plainly visible in the face and trough of each one.

I set sail, cast off, took my place at the tiller, the sheet in my hand, and headed across channel. The skiff heeled over and plunged into it madly. The spray began to fly. I was at the pinnacle of exaltation. I sang "Blow the Man

Down" as I sailed. I was no boy of fourteen, living the mediocre ways of the sleepy town called Oakland. I was a man, a god, and the very elements rendered me allegiance as I bitted them to my will.

The tide was out. A full hundred yards of soft mud intervened between the boat-wharf and the water. I pulled up my centreboard, ran full tilt into the mud, took in sail, and, standing in the stern, as I had often done at low tide, I began to shove the skiff with an oar. It was then that my correlations began to break down. I lost my balance and pitched head-foremost into the ooze. Then, and for the first time, as I floundered to my feet covered with slime, the blood running down my arms from a scrape against a barnacled stake, I knew that I was drunk. But what of it? Across the channel two strong sailormen lay unconscious in their bunks where I had drunk them. I WAS a man. I was still on my legs, if they were knee-deep in mud. I disdained to get back into the skiff. I waded through the mud, shoving the skiff before me and yammering the chant of my manhood to the world.

I paid for it. I was sick for a couple of days, meanly sick, and my arms were painfully poisoned from the barnacle scratches. For a week I could not use them, and it was a torture to put on and take off my clothes.

I swore, "Never again!" The game wasn't worth it. The price was too stiff. I had no moral qualms. My revulsion was purely physical. No exalted moments were worth such hours of misery and wretchedness. When I got back to my skiff, I shunned the Idler. I would cross the opposite side of the channel to go around her. Scotty had disappeared. The harpooner was still about, but him I avoided. Once, when he landed on the boat-wharf, I hid in a shed so as to escape seeing him. I was afraid he would propose some more drinking, maybe have a flask full of whisky in his pocket.

And yet — and here enters the necromancy of John Barleycorn — that afternoon's drunk on the Idler had been a purple passage flung into the monotony of my days. It was memorable. My mind dwelt on it continually. I went over the details, over and over again. Among other things, I had got into the cogs and springs of men's actions. I had seen Scotty weep about his own worthlessness and the sad case of his Edinburgh mother who was a lady. The harpooner had told me terribly wonderful things of himself. I had caught a myriad enticing and inflammatory hints of a world beyond my world, and for which I was certainly as fitted as the two lads who had drunk with me. I had got behind men's souls. I had got behind my own soul and found unguessed potencies and greatnesses.

Yes, that day stood out above all my other days. To this day it so stands out. The memory of it is branded in my brain. But the price exacted was too high. I refused to play and pay, and returned to my cannon-balls and taffy-slabs. The point is that all the chemistry of my healthy, normal body drove me away from alcohol. The stuff didn't agree with me. It was abominable. But, despite this, circumstance was to continue to drive me toward John Barleycorn, to drive me again and again, until, after long years, the time should come when I would look up John Barleycorn in every haunt of men — look him up and hail him gladly as benefactor and friend. And detest and hate him all the time. Yes, he is a strange friend, John Barleycorn.

CHAPTER VII

I was barely turned fifteen, and working long hours in a cannery. Month in and month out, the shortest day I ever worked was ten hours. When to ten hours of actual work at a machine is added the noon hour; the walking to work and walking home from work; the getting up in the morning, dressing, and eating; the eating at night, undressing, and going to bed, there remains no more than the nine hours out of the twenty-four required by a healthy youngster for sleep. Out of those nine hours, after I was in bed and ere my eyes drowsed shut, I managed to steal a little time for reading.

But many a night I did not knock off work until midnight. On occasion I worked eighteen and twenty hours on a stretch. Once I worked at my machine for thirty-six consecutive hours. And there were weeks on end when I never knocked off work earlier than eleven o'clock, got home and in bed at half after midnight, and was called at half-past five to dress, eat, walk to work, and be at my machine at seven o'clock whistle blow.

No moments here to be stolen for my beloved books. And what had John Barleycorn to do with such strenuous, Stoic toil of a lad just turned fifteen? He had everything to do with it. Let me show you. I asked myself if this were the meaning of life — to be a work-beast? I knew of no horse in the city of Oakland that worked the hours I worked. If this were living, I was entirely unenamoured of it. I remembered my skiff, lying idle and accumulating barnacles at the boat-wharf; I remembered the wind that blew every day on the bay, the sunrises and sunsets I never saw; the bite of the salt air in my nostrils, the bite of the salt water on my flesh when I plunged overside; I remembered all the beauty and the wonder and the sense-delights of the world denied me. There was only one way to escape my deadening toil. I must get out and away on the water. I must earn my bread on the water. And the way of the water led inevitably to John Barleycorn. I did not know this. And when I did learn it, I was courageous enough not to retreat back to my bestial life at the machine.

I wanted to be where the winds of adventure blew. And the winds of adventure blew the oyster pirate sloops up and down San Francisco Bay, from raided oyster-beds and fights at night on shoal and flat, to markets in the morning against city wharves, where peddlers and saloon-keepers came down to buy. Every raid on an oyster-bed was a felony. The penalty was State imprisonment, the stripes and the lockstep. And what of that? The men in stripes worked a shorter day than I at my machine. And there was vastly more romance in being an oyster pirate or a convict than in being a machine slave. And behind it all, behind all of me with youth abubble, whispered Romance, Adventure.

So I interviewed my Mammy Jennie, my old nurse at whose black breast I had suckled. She was more prosperous than my folks. She was nursing sick people at a good weekly wage. Would she lend her “white child” the money? WOULD SHE? What she had was mine.

Then I sought out French Frank, the oyster pirate, who wanted to sell, I had heard, his sloop, the Razzle Dazzle. I found him lying at anchor on the Alameda side of the estuary near the Webster Street bridge, with visitors aboard, whom he was entertaining with afternoon wine. He came on deck to talk business. He was willing to sell. But it was Sunday. Besides, he had guests. On the morrow he would make out the bill of sale and I could enter into possession. And in the meantime I must come below and meet his friends. They were two sisters, Mamie and Tess; a Mrs. Hadley, who chaperoned them; “Whisky” Bob, a youthful oyster pirate of sixteen; and “Spider” Healey, a black-whiskered wharf-rat of twenty. Mamie, who was Spider’s niece, was called the Queen of the Oyster Pirates, and, on occasion, presided at their revels. French Frank was in love with her, though I did not know it at the time; and she steadfastly refused to marry him.

French Frank poured a tumbler of red wine from a big demijohn to drink to our transaction. I remembered the red wine of the Italian rancho, and shuddered inwardly. Whisky and beer were not quite so repulsive. But the Queen of the Oyster Pirates was looking at me, a part-emptied glass in her own hand. I had my pride. If I was only fifteen, at least I could not show myself any less a man than she. Besides, there were her sister, and Mrs. Hadley, and the young oyster pirate, and the whiskered wharf-rat, all with glasses in their hands. Was I a milk-and-water sop? No; a thousand times no, and a thousand glasses no. I downed the tumblerful like a man.

French Frank was elated by the sale, which I had bound with a twenty-dollar goldpiece. He poured more wine. I had learned my strong head and stomach, and I was certain I could drink with them in a temperate way and not poison myself for a week to come. I could stand as much as they; and besides, they had already been drinking for some time.

We got to singing. Spider sang “The Boston Burglar” and “Black Lulu.” The Queen sang “Then I Wisht I Were a Little Bird.” And her sister Tess sang “Oh, Treat My Daughter Kindily.” The fun grew fast and furious. I found myself able to miss drinks without being noticed or called to account. Also, standing in the companionway, head and shoulders out and glass in hand, I could fling the wine overboard.

I reasoned something like this: It is a queerness of these people that they like this vile-tasting wine. Well, let them. I cannot quarrel with their tastes. My manhood, according to their queer notions, must compel me to appear to like this wine. Very well. I shall so appear. But I shall drink no more than is unavoidable.

And the Queen began to make love to me, the latest recruit to the oyster pirate fleet, and no mere hand, but a master and owner. She went upon deck to take the air, and took me with her. She knew, of course, but I never dreamed, how French Frank was raging down below. Then Tess joined us, sitting on the cabin; and Spider, and Bob; and at the last, Mrs. Hadley and French Frank. And we sat there, glasses in hand, and sang, while the big demijohn went around; and I was the only strictly sober one.

And I enjoyed it as no one of them was able to enjoy it. Here, in this atmosphere of bohemianism, I could not but contrast the scene with my scene of the day before, sitting at my machine, in the stifling, shut-in air, repeating, endlessly repeating, at top speed, my series of mechanical motions. And here I sat now, glass in hand, in warm-glowing camaraderie, with the oyster pirates, adventurers who refused to be slaves to petty routine, who flouted restrictions and the law, who carried their lives and their liberty in their hands. And it was through John Barleycorn that I came to join this glorious company of free souls, unashamed and unafraid.

And the afternoon seabreeze blew its tang into my lungs, and curled the waves in mid-channel. Before it came the scow schooners, wing-and-wing, blowing their horns for the drawbridges to open. Red-stacked tugs tore by, rocking the Razzle Dazzle in the waves of their wake. A sugar barque towed from the “boneyard” to sea. The sun-wash was on the crisping water, and life was big. And Spider sang:

“Oh, it’s Lulu, black Lulu, my darling,
Oh, it’s where have you been so long?
Been layin’ in jail,
A-waitin’ for bail,
Till my bully comes rollin’ along.”

There it was, the smack and slap of the spirit of revolt, of adventure, of romance, of the things forbidden and done defiantly and grandly. And I knew that on the morrow I would not go back to my machine at the cannery. To-morrow I would be an oyster pirate, as free a freebooter as the century and the waters of San Francisco Bay would permit. Spider had already agreed to sail with me as my crew of one, and, also, as cook while I did the deck work. We would outfit our grub and water in the morning, hoist the big mainsail (which was a bigger piece of canvas than any I had ever sailed under), and beat our way out the estuary on the first of the seabreeze and the last of the ebb. Then we would slack sheets, and on the first of the flood run down the bay to the Asparagus Islands, where we would anchor miles off shore. And at last my dream would be realised: I would sleep upon the water. And next morning I would wake upon the water; and thereafter all my days and nights would be on the water.

And the Queen asked me to row her ashore in my skiff, when at sunset French Frank prepared to take his guests ashore. Nor did I catch the significance of his abrupt change of plan when he turned the task of rowing his skiff over to Whisky Bob, himself remaining on board the sloop. Nor did I understand Spider's grinning side-remark to me: "Gee! There's nothin' slow about YOU." How could it possibly enter my boy's head that a grizzled man of fifty should be jealous of me?

CHAPTER VIII

We met by appointment, early Monday morning, to complete the deal, in Johnny Heinhold's "Last Chance " — a saloon, of course, for the transactions of men. I paid the money over, received the bill of sale, and French Frank treated. This struck me as an evident custom, and a logical one — the seller, who receives, the money, to wet a piece of it in the establishment where the trade was consummated. But, to my surprise, French Frank treated the house. He and I drank, which seemed just; but why should Johnny Heinhold, who owned the saloon and waited behind the bar, be invited to drink? I figured it immediately that he made a profit on the very drink he drank. I could, in a way, considering that they were friends and shipmates, understand Spider and Whisky Bob being asked to drink; but why should the longshoremen, Bill Kelley and Soup Kennedy, be asked?

Then there was Pat, the Queen's brother, making a total of eight of us. It was early morning, and all ordered whisky. What could I do, here in this company of big men, all drinking whisky? "Whisky," I said, with the careless air of one who had said it a thousand times. And such whisky! I tossed it down. A-r-r-r-gh! I can taste it yet.

And I was appalled at the price French Frank had paid — eighty cents. EIGHTY CENTS! It was an outrage to my thrifty soul. Eighty cents — the equivalent of eight long hours of my toil at the machine, gone down our throats, and gone like that, in a twinkling, leaving only a bad taste in the mouth. There was no discussion that French Frank was a waster.

I was anxious to be gone, out into the sunshine, out over the water to my glorious boat. But all hands lingered. Even Spider, my crew, lingered. No hint broke through my obtuseness of why they lingered. I have often thought since of how they must have regarded me, the newcomer being welcomed into their company standing at bar with them, and not standing for a single round of drinks.

French Frank, who, unknown to me, had swallowed his chagrin since the day before, now that the money for the Razzle Dazzle was in his pocket, began to behave curiously toward me. I sensed the change in his attitude, saw the forbidding glitter in his eyes, and wondered. The more I saw of men, the queerer they became. Johnny Heinhold leaned across the bar and whispered in my ear, "He's got it in for you. Watch out."

I nodded comprehension of his statement, and acquiescence in it, as a man should nod who knows all about men. But secretly I was perplexed. Heavens! How was I, who had worked hard and read books of adventure, and who was only fifteen years old, who had not dreamed of giving the Queen of the Oyster Pirates a second thought, and who did not know that French Frank was madly and Latinly in love with her — how was I to guess that I had done him shame? And how was I to guess that the story of how the Queen had thrown him down on his own boat, the moment I hove in sight, was already the gleeful gossip of the water-front? And by the same token, how was I to guess that her brother Pat's offishness with me was anything else than temperamental gloominess of spirit?

Whisky Bob got me aside a moment. "Keep your eyes open," he muttered. "Take my tip. French Frank's ugly. I'm going up river with him to get a schooner for oystering. When he gets down on the beds, watch out. He says he'll run you down. After dark, any time he's around, change your anchorage and douse your riding light. Savve?"

Oh, certainly, I savve'd. I nodded my head, and, as one man to another, thanked him for his tip; and drifted back to the group at the bar. No; I did not treat. I never dreamed that I was expected to treat. I left with Spider, and my ears burn now as I try to surmise the things they must have said about me.

I asked Spider, in an off-hand way, what was eating French Frank. "He's crazy jealous of you," was the answer. "Do you think so?" I said, and dismissed the matter as not worth thinking about.

But I leave it to any one — the swell of my fifteen-years-old manhood at learning that French Frank, the adventurer of fifty, the sailor of all the seas of all the world, was jealous of me — and jealous over a girl most romantically named the Queen of the Oyster Pirates. I had read of such things in books, and regarded them as personal probabilities of a distant maturity. Oh, I felt a rare young devil, as we hoisted the big mainsail that morning, broke out anchor, and filled away close-hauled on the three-mile beat to windward out into the bay.

Such was my escape from the killing machine-toil, and my introduction to the oyster pirates. True, the introduction had begun with drink, and the life promised to continue with drink. But was I to stay away from it for such reason? Wherever life ran free and great, there men drank. Romance and Adventure seemed always to go down the street locked arm in arm with

John Barleycorn. To know the two, I must know the third. Or else I must go back to my free library books and read of the deeds of other men and do no deeds of my own save slave for ten cents an hour at a machine in a cannery.

No; I was not to be deterred from this brave life on the water by the fact that the water-dwellers had queer and expensive desires for beer and wine and whisky. What if their notions of happiness included the strange one of seeing me drink? When they persisted in buying the stuff and thrusting it upon me, why, I would drink it. It was the price I would pay for their comradeship. And I didn’t have to get drunk. I had not got drunk the Sunday afternoon I arranged to buy the Razzle Dazzle, despite the fact that not one of the rest was sober. Well, I could go on into the future that way, drinking the stuff when it gave them pleasure that I should drink it, but carefully avoiding over-drinking.

CHAPTER IX

Gradual as was my development as a heavy drinker among the oyster pirates, the real heavy drinking came suddenly, and was the result, not of desire for alcohol, but of an intellectual conviction.

The more I saw of the life, the more I was enamoured of it. I can never forget my thrills the first night I took part in a concerted raid, when we assembled on board the Annie — rough men, big and unafraid, and weazened wharf-rats, some of them ex-convicts, all of them enemies of the law and meriting jail, in sea-boots and sea-gear, talking in gruff low voices, and "Big" George with revolvers strapped about his waist to show that he meant business.

Oh, I know, looking back, that the whole thing was sordid and silly. But I was not looking back in those days when I was rubbing shoulders with John Barleycorn and beginning to accept him. The life was brave and wild, and I was living the adventure I had read so much about.

Nelson, "Young Scratch" they called him, to distinguish him from "Old Scratch," his father, sailed in the sloop Reindeer, partners with one "Clam." Clam was a dare-devil, but Nelson was a reckless maniac. He was twenty years old, with the body of a Hercules. When he was shot in Benicia, a couple of years later, the coroner said he was the greatest-shouldered man he had ever seen laid on a slab.

Nelson could not read or write. He had been "dragged" up by his father on San Francisco Bay, and boats were second nature with him. His strength was prodigious, and his reputation along the water-front for violence was anything but savoury. He had Berserker rages and did mad, terrible things. I made his acquaintance the first cruise of the Razzle Dazzle, and saw him sail the Reindeer in a blow and dredge oysters all around the rest of us as we lay at two anchors, troubled with fear of going ashore.

He was some man, this Nelson; and when, passing by the Last Chance saloon, he spoke to me, I felt very proud. But try to imagine my pride when he promptly asked me in to have a drink. I stood at the bar and drank a glass of beer with him, and talked manfully of oysters, and boats, and of the mystery of who had put the load of buckshot through the Annie's mainsail.

We talked and lingered at the bar. It seemed to me strange that we lingered. We had had our beer. But who was I to lead the way outside when great Nelson chose to lean against the bar? After a few minutes, to my surprise, he asked me to have another drink, which I did. And still we talked, and Nelson evinced no intention of leaving the bar.

Bear with me while I explain the way of my reasoning and of my innocence. First of all, I was very proud to be in the company of Nelson, who was the most heroic figure among the oyster pirates and bay adventurers. Unfortunately for my stomach and mucous membranes, Nelson had a strange quirk of nature that made him find happiness in treating me to beer. I had no moral disinclination for beer, and just because I didn't like the taste of it and the weight of it was no reason I should forgo the honour of his company. It was his whim to drink beer, and to have me drink beer with him. Very well, I would put up with the passing discomfort.

So we continued to talk at the bar, and to drink beer ordered and paid for by Nelson. I think, now, when I look back upon it, that Nelson was curious. He wanted to find out just what kind of a gink I was. He wanted to see how many times I'd let him treat without offering to treat in return.

After I had drunk half a dozen glasses, my policy of temperateness in mind, I decided that I had had enough for that time. So I mentioned that I was going aboard the Razzle Dazzle, then lying at the city wharf, a hundred yards away.

I said good-bye to Nelson, and went on down the wharf. But, John Barleycorn, to the extent of six glasses, went with me. My brain tingled and was very much alive. I was uplifted by my sense of manhood. I, a truly-true oyster pirate, was going aboard my own boat after hob-nobbing in the Last Chance with Nelson, the greatest oyster pirate of us all. Strong in my brain was the vision of us leaning against the bar and drinking beer. And curious it was, I decided, this whim of nature that made men happy in spending good money for beer for a fellow like me who didn't want it.

As I pondered this, I recollected that several times other men, in couples, had entered the Last Chance, and first one, then the other, had treated to drinks. I remembered, on the drunk on the Idler, how Scotty and the harpooner and myself had raked and scraped dimes and nickels with which to buy the whisky. Then came my boy code: when on a day a fellow gave another a "cannon-ball" or a chunk of taffy, on some other day he would expect to receive back a cannon-ball or a chunk of taffy.

That was why Nelson had lingered at the bar. Having bought a drink, he had waited for me to buy one. I HAD, LET HIM BUY SIX DRINKS AND NEVER ONCE OFFERED TO TREAT. And he was the great Nelson! I could feel myself blushing with shame. I sat down on the stringer-piece of the wharf and buried my face in my hands. And the heat of my shame burned up my neck and into my cheeks and forehead. I have blushed many times in my life, but never have I experienced so terrible a blush as that one.

And sitting there on the stringer-piece in my shame, I did a great deal of thinking and transvaluing of values. I had been born poor. Poor I had lived. I had gone hungry on occasion. I had never had toys nor playthings like other children. My first memories of life were pinched by poverty. The pinch of poverty had been chronic. I was eight years old when I wore my first little undershirt actually sold in a store across the counter. And then it had been only one little undershirt. When it was soiled I had to return to the awful home-made things until it was washed. I had been so proud of it that I insisted on wearing it without any outer garment. For the first time I mutinied against my mother — mutinied myself into hysteria, until she let me wear the store undershirt so all the world could see.

Only a man who has undergone famine can properly value food; only sailors and desert-dwellers know the meaning of fresh water. And only a child, with a child's imagination, can come to know the meaning of things it has been long denied. I early discovered that the only things I could have were those I got for myself. My meagre childhood developed meagreness. The first things I had been able to get for myself had been cigarette pictures, cigarette posters, and cigarette albums. I had not had the spending of the money I earned, so I traded "extra" newspapers for these treasures. I traded duplicates with the other boys, and circulating, as I did, all about town, I had greater opportunities for trading and acquiring.

It was not long before I had complete every series issued by every cigarette manufacturer — such as the Great Race Horses, Parisian Beauties, Women of All Nations, Flags of All Nations, Noted Actors, Champion Prize Fighters, etc. And each series I had three different ways: in the card from the cigarette package, in the poster, and in the album.

Then I began to accumulate duplicate sets, duplicate albums. I traded for other things that boys valued and which they usually bought with money given them by their parents. Naturally, they did not have the keen sense of values that I had, who was never given money to buy anything. I traded for postage-stamps, for minerals, for curios, for birds' eggs, for marbles (I had a more magnificent collection of agates than I have ever seen any boy possess — and the nucleus of the collection was a handful worth at least three dollars, which I had kept as security for twenty cents I loaned to a messenger-boy who was sent to reform school before he could redeem them).

I'd trade anything and everything for anything else, and turn it over in a dozen more trades until it was transmuted into something that was worth something. I was famous as a trader. I was notorious as a miser. I could even make a junkman weep when I had dealings with him. Other boys called me in to sell for them their collections of bottles, rags, old iron, grain, and gunny-sacks, and five-gallon oil-cans — aye, and gave me a commission for doing it.

And this was the thrifty, close-fisted boy, accustomed to slave at a machine for ten cents an hour, who sat on the stringer-piece and considered the matter of beer at five cents a glass and gone in a moment with nothing to show for it. I was now with men I admired. I was proud to be with them. Had all my pinching and saving brought me the equivalent of one of the many thrills which had been mine since I came among the oyster pirates? Then what was worth while — money or thrills? These men had no horror of squandering a nickel, or many nickels. They were magnificently careless of money, calling up eight men to drink whisky at ten cents a glass, as French Frank had done. Why, Nelson had just spent sixty cents on beer for the two of us.

Which was it to be? I was aware that I was making a grave decision. I was deciding between money and men, between niggardliness and romance. Either I must throw overboard all my old values of money and look upon it as something to be flung about wastefully, or I must throw overboard my comradeship with these men whose peculiar quirks made them like strong drink.

I retraced my steps up the wharf to the Last Chance, where Nelson still stood outside. "Come on and have a beer," I invited. Again we stood at the bar and drank and talked, but this time it was I who paid ten cents! a whole hour of my labour at a machine for a drink of something I didn't want and which tasted rotten. But it wasn't difficult. I had achieved a concept. Money no longer counted. It was comradeship that counted. "Have another?" I said. And we had another, and I paid for it. Nelson, with the wisdom of the skilled drinker, said to the barkeeper, "Make mine a small one, Johnny." Johnny nodded and gave him a glass that contained only a third as much as the glasses we had been drinking. Yet the charge was the same — five cents.

By this time I was getting nicely jingled, so such extravagance didn't hurt me much. Besides, I was learning. There was more in this buying of drinks than mere quantity. I got my finger on it. There was a stage when the beer didn't count at all, but just the spirit of comradeship of drinking together. And, ha! — another thing! I, too, could call for small beers and minimise by two-thirds the detestable freightage with which comradeship burdened one.

"I had to go aboard to get some money," I remarked casually, as we drank, in the hope Nelson would take it as an explanation of why I had let him treat six consecutive times.

"Oh, well, you didn't have to do that," he answered. "Johnny'll trust a fellow like you — won't you, Johnny!"

"Sure," Johnny agreed, with a smile.

"How much you got down against me?" Nelson queried.

Johnny pulled out the book he kept behind the bar, found Nelson's page, and added up the account of several dollars. At once I became possessed with a desire to have a page in that book. Almost it seemed the final badge of manhood.

After a couple more drinks, for which I insisted on paying, Nelson decided to go. We parted true comradely, and I wandered down the wharf to the Razzle Dazzle. Spider was just building the fire for supper.

"Where'd you get it?" he grinned up at me through the open companion.

"Oh, I've been with Nelson," I said carelessly, trying to hide my pride.

Then an idea came to me. Here was another one of them. Now that I had achieved my concept, I might as well practise it thoroughly. "Come on," I said, "up to Johnny's and have a drink."

Going up the wharf, we met Clam coming down. Clam was Nelson's partner, and he was a fine, brave, handsome, moustached man of thirty — everything, in short, that his nickname did not connote. "Come on," I said, "and have a drink." He came. As we turned into the Last Chance, there was Pat, the Queen's brother, coming out.

"What's your hurry?" I greeted him. "We're having a drink. Come on along." "I've just had one," he demurred. "What of it? — we're having one now," I retorted. And Pat consented to join us, and I melted my way into his good graces with a couple of glasses of beer. Oh! I was learning things that afternoon about John Barleycorn. There was more in him than the bad taste when you swallowed him. Here, at the absurd cost of ten cents, a gloomy, grouchy individual, who threatened to become an enemy, was made into a good friend. He became even genial, his looks were kindly, and our voices mellowed together as we talked water-front and oyster-bed gossip.

"Small beer for me, Johnny," I said, when the others had ordered schooners. Yes, and I said it like the accustomed drinker, carelessly, casually, as a sort of spontaneous thought that had just occurred to me. Looking back, I am confident that the only one there who guessed I was a tyro at bar-drinking was Johnny Heinhold.

"Where'd he get it?" I overheard Spider confidentially ask Johnny.

"Oh, he's been sousin' here with Nelson all afternoon," was Johnny's answer.

I never let on that I'd heard, but PROUD? Aye, even the barkeeper was giving me a recommendation as a man. "HE'S BEEN SOUSIN' HERE WITH NELSON ALL AFTERNOON." Magic words! The accolade delivered by a barkeeper with a beer glass!

I remembered that French Frank had treated Johnny the day I bought the Razzle Dazzle. The glasses were filled and we were ready to drink. "Have something yourself, Johnny," I said, with an air of having intended to say it all the time, but of having been a trifle remiss because of the interesting conversation I had been holding with Clam and Pat.

Johnny looked at me with quick sharpness, divining, I am positive, the strides I was making in my education, and poured himself whisky from his private bottle. This hit me for a moment on my thrifty side. He had taken a ten-cent drink when the rest of us were drinking five-cent drinks! But the hurt was only for a moment. I dismissed it as ignoble, remembered my concept, and did not give myself away.

"You'd better put me down in the book for this," I said, when we had finished the drink. And I had the satisfaction of seeing a fresh page devoted to my name and a charge pencilled for a round of drinks amounting to thirty cents. And I glimpsed, as through a golden haze, a future wherein that page would be much charged, and crossed off, and charged again.

I treated a second time around, and then, to my amazement, Johnny redeemed himself in that matter of the ten-cent drink. He treated us around from behind the bar, and I decided that he had arithmetically evened things up handsomely.

“Let’s go around to the St. Louis House,” Spider suggested when we got outside. Pat, who had been shovelling coal all day, had gone home, and Clam had gone upon the Reindeer to cook supper.

So around Spider and I went to the St. Louis House — my first visit — a huge bar-room, where perhaps fifty men, mostly longshoremen, were congregated. And there I met Soup Kennedy for the second time, and Bill Kelley. And Smith, of the Annie, drifted in — he of the belt-buckled revolvers. And Nelson showed up. And I met others, including the Vigy brothers, who ran the place, and, chiefest of all, Joe Goose, with the wicked eyes, the twisted nose, and the flowered vest, who played the harmonica like a roystering angel and went on the most atrocious tears that even the Oakland water-front could conceive of and admire.

As I bought drinks — others treated as well — the thought flickered across my mind that Mammy Jennie wasn’t going to be repaid much on her loan out of that week’s earnings of the Razzle Dazzle. “But what of it?” I thought, or rather, John Barleycorn thought it for me. “You’re a man and you’re getting acquainted with men. Mammy Jennie doesn’t need the money as promptly as all that. She isn’t starving. You know that. She’s got other money in the bank. Let her wait, and pay her back gradually.”

And thus it was I learned another trait of John Barleycorn. He inhibits morality. Wrong conduct that it is impossible for one to do sober, is done quite easily when one is not sober. In fact, it is the only thing one can do, for John Barleycorn’s inhibition rises like a wall between one’s immediate desires and long-learned morality.

I dismissed my thought of debt to Mammy Jennie and proceeded to get acquainted at the trifling expense of some trifling money and a jingle that was growing unpleasant. Who took me on board and put me to bed that night I do not know, but I imagine it must have been Spider.

CHAPTER X

And so I won my manhood's spurs. My status on the water-front and with the oyster pirates became immediately excellent. I was looked upon as a good fellow, as well as no coward. And somehow, from the day I achieved that concept sitting on the stringer-piece of the Oakland City Wharf, I have never cared much for money. No one has ever considered me a miser since, while my carelessness of money is a source of anxiety and worry to some that know me.

So completely did I break with my parsimonious past that I sent word home to my mother to call in the boys of the neighbourhood and give to them all my collections. I never even cared to learn what boys got what collections. I was a man now, and I made a clean sweep of everything that bound me to my boyhood.

My reputation grew. When the story went around the water-front of how French Frank had tried to run me down with his schooner, and of how I had stood on the deck of the Razzle Dazzle, a cocked double-barrelled shotgun in my hands, steering with my feet and holding her to her course, and compelled him to put up his wheel and keep away, the water-front decided that there was something in me despite my youth. And I continued to show what was in me. There were the times I brought the Razzle Dazzle in with a bigger load of oysters than any other two-man craft; there was the time when we raided far down in Lower Bay, and mine was the only craft back at daylight to the anchorage off Asparagus Island; there was the Thursday night we raced for market and I brought the Razzle Dazzle in without a rudder, first of the fleet, and skimmed the cream of the Friday morning trade; and there was the time I brought her in from Upper Bay under a jib, when Scotty burned my mainsail. (Yes; it was Scotty of the Idler adventure. Irish had followed Spider on board the Razzle Dazzle, and Scotty, turning up, had taken Irish's place.)

But the things I did on the water only partly counted. What completed everything, and won for me the title of "Prince of the Oyster Beds," was that I was a good fellow ashore with my money, buying drinks like a man. I little dreamed that the time would come when the Oakland water-front, which had shocked me at first would be shocked and annoyed by the devilry of the things I did.

But always the life was tied up with drinking. The saloons are poor men's clubs. Saloons are congregating places. We engaged to meet one another in saloons. We celebrated our good fortune or wept our grief in saloons. We got acquainted in saloons.

Can I ever forget the afternoon I met "Old Scratch," Nelson's father? It was in the Last Chance. Johnny Heinhold introduced us. That Old Scratch was Nelson's father was noteworthy enough. But there was more in it than that. He was owner and master of the scow-schooner Annie Mine, and some day I might ship as a sailor with him. Still more, he was romance. He was a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, raw-boned Viking, big-bodied and strong-muscled despite his age. And he had sailed the seas in ships of all nations in the old savage sailing days.

I had heard many weird tales about him, and worshipped him from a distance. It took the saloon to bring us together. Even so, our acquaintance might have been no more than a hand-grip and a word — he was a laconic old fellow — had it not been for the drinking.

"Have a drink," I said, with promptitude, after the pause which I had learned good form in drinking dictates. Of course, while we drank our beer, which I had paid for, it was incumbent on him to listen to me and to talk to me. And Johnny, like a true host, made the tactful remarks that enabled us to find mutual topics of conversation. And of course, having drunk my beer, Captain Nelson must now buy beer in turn. This led to more talking, and Johnny drifted out of the conversation to wait on other customers.

The more beer Captain Nelson and I drank, the better we got acquainted. In me he found an appreciative listener, who, by virtue of book-reading, knew much about the sea-life he had lived. So he drifted back to his wild young days, and spun many a rare yarn for me, while we downed beer, treat by treat, all through a blessed summer afternoon. And it was only John Barleycorn that made possible that long afternoon with the old sea-dog.

It was Johnny Heinhold who secretly warned me across the bar that I was getting pickled and advised me to take small beers. But as long as Captain Nelson drank large beers, my pride forbade anything else than large beers. And not until the skipper ordered his first small beer did I order one for myself. Oh, when we came to a lingering fond farewell, I was drunk. But I had the satisfaction of seeing Old Scratch as drunk as I. My youthful modesty scarcely let me dare believe that the hardened old buccaneer was even more drunk.

And afterwards, from Spider, and Pat, and Clam, and Johnny Heinhold, and others, came the tips that Old Scratch liked me and had nothing but good words for the fine lad I was. Which was the more remarkable, because he was known as a savage, cantankerous old cuss who never liked anybody. (His very nickname, “Scratch,” arose from a Berserker trick of his, in fighting, of tearing off his opponent’s face.) And that I had won his friendship, all thanks were due to John Barleycorn. I have given the incident merely as an example of the multitudinous lures and draws and services by which John Barleycorn wins his followers.

CHAPTER XI

And still there arose in me no desire for alcohol, no chemical demand. In years and years of heavy drinking, drinking did not beget the desire. Drinking was the way of the life I led, the way of the men with whom I lived. While away on my cruises on the bay, I took no drink along; and while out on the bay the thought of the desirableness of a drink never crossed my mind. It was not until I tied the Razzle Dazzle up to the wharf and got ashore in the congregating places of men, where drink flowed, that the buying of drinks for other men, and the accepting of drinks from other men, devolved upon me as a social duty and a manhood rite.

Then, too, there were the times, lying at the city wharf or across the estuary on the sand-spit, when the Queen, and her sister, and her brother Pat, and Mrs. Hadley came aboard. It was my boat, I was host, and I could only dispense hospitality in the terms of their understanding of it. So I would rush Spider, or Irish, or Scotty, or whoever was my crew, with the can for beer and the demijohn for red wine. And again, lying at the wharf disposing of my oysters, there were dusky twilights when big policemen and plain-clothes men stole on board. And because we lived in the shadow of the police, we opened oysters and fed them to them with squirts of pepper sauce, and rushed the growler or got stronger stuff in bottles.

Drink as I would, I couldn’t come to like John Barleycorn. I valued him extremely well for his associations, but not for the taste of him. All the time I was striving to be a man amongst men, and all the time I nursed secret and shameful desires for candy. But I would have died before I’d let anybody guess it. I used to indulge in lonely debauches, on nights when I knew my crew was going to sleep ashore. I would go up to the Free Library, exchange my books, buy a quarter’s worth of all sorts of candy that chewed and lasted, sneak aboard the Razzle Dazzle, lock myself in the cabin, go to bed, and lie there long hours of bliss, reading and chewing candy. And those were the only times I felt that I got my real money’s worth. Dollars and dollars, across the bar, couldn’t buy the satisfaction that twenty-five cents did in a candy store.

As my drinking grew heavier, I began to note more and more that it was in the drinking bouts the purple passages occurred. Drunks were always memorable. At such times things happened. Men like Joe Goose dated existence from drunk to drunk. The longshoremen all looked forward to their Saturday night drunk. We of the oyster boats waited until we had disposed of our cargoes before we got really started, though a scattering of drinks and a meeting of a chance friend sometimes precipitated an accidental drunk.

In ways, the accidental drunks were the best. Stranger and more exciting things happened at such times. As, for instance, the Sunday when Nelson and French Frank and Captain Spink stole the stolen salmon boat from Whisky Bob and Nicky the Greek. Changes had taken place in the personnel of the oyster boats. Nelson had got into a fight with Bill Kelley on the Annie and was carrying a bullet-hole through his left hand. Also, having quarrelled with Clam and broken partnership, Nelson had sailed the Reindeer, his arm in a sling, with a crew of two deep-water sailors, and he had sailed so madly as to frighten them ashore. Such was the tale of his recklessness they spread, that no one on the water-front would go out with Nelson. So the Reindeer, crewless, lay across the estuary at the sandspit. Beside her lay the Razzle Dazzle with a burned mainsail and Scotty and me on board. Whisky Bob had fallen out with French Frank and gone on a raid "up river" with Nicky the Greek.

The result of this raid was a brand-new Columbia River salmon boat, stolen from an Italian fisherman. We oyster pirates were all visited by the searching Italian, and we were convinced, from what we knew of their movements, that Whisky Bob and Nicky the Greek were the guilty parties. But where was the salmon boat? Hundreds of Greek and Italian fishermen, up river and down bay, had searched every slough and tule patch for it. When the owner despairingly offered a reward of fifty dollars, our interest increased and the mystery deepened.

One Sunday morning old Captain Spink paid me a visit. The conversation was confidential. He had just been fishing in his skiff in the old Alameda ferry slip. As the tide went down, he had noticed a rope tied to a pile under water and leading downward. In vain he had tried to heave up what was fast on the other end. Farther along, to another pile, was a similar rope, leading downward and unheavable. Without doubt, it was the missing salmon boat. If we restored it to its rightful owner there was fifty dollars in it for us. But I had queer ethical notions about honour amongst thieves, and declined to have anything to do with the affair.

But French Frank had quarrelled with Whisky Bob, and Nelson was also an enemy. (Poor Whisky Bob! — without viciousness, good-natured, generous, born weak, raised poorly, with an irresistible chemical demand for alcohol, still prosecuting his vocation of bay pirate, his body was picked up, not long afterward, beside a dock where it had sunk full of gunshot wounds.) Within an hour after I had rejected Captain Spink's proposal, I saw him sail down the estuary on board the Reindeer with Nelson. Also, French Frank went by on his schooner.

It was not long ere they sailed back up the estuary, curiously side by side. As they headed in for the sandspit, the submerged salmon boat could be seen, gunwales awash and held up from sinking by ropes fast to the schooner and the sloop. The tide was half out, and they sailed squarely in on the sand, grounding in a row, with the salmon boat in the middle.

Immediately Hans, one of French Frank's sailors, was into a skiff and pulling rapidly for the north shore. The big demijohn in the stern-sheets told his errand. They couldn't wait a moment to celebrate the fifty dollars they had so easily earned. It is the way of the devotees of John Barleycorn. When good fortune comes, they drink. When they have no fortune, they drink to the hope of good fortune. If fortune be ill, they drink to forget it. If they meet a friend, they drink. If they quarrel with a friend and lose him, they drink. If their love-making be crowned with success, they are so happy they needs must drink. If they be jilted, they drink for the contrary reason. And if they haven't anything to do at all, why, they take a drink, secure in the knowledge that when they have taken a sufficient number of drinks the maggots will start crawling in their brains and they will have their hands full with things to do. When they are sober they want to drink; and when they have drunk they want to drink more.

Of course, as fellow comrades, Scotty and I were called in for the drinking. We helped to make a hole in that fifty dollars not yet received. The afternoon, from just an ordinary common summer Sunday afternoon, became a gorgeous, purple afternoon. We all talked and sang and ranted and bragged, and ever French Frank and Nelson sent more drinks around. We lay in full sight of the Oakland water-front, and the noise of our revels attracted friends. Skiff after skiff crossed the estuary and hauled up on the sandspit, while Hans' work was cut out for him — ever to row back and forth for more supplies of booze.

Then Whisky Bob and Nicky the Greek arrived, sober, indignant, outraged in that their fellow pirates had raised their plant. French Frank, aided by John Barleycorn, orated hypocritically about virtue and honesty, and, despite his fifty years, got Whisky Bob out on the sand and proceeded to lick him. When Nicky the Greek jumped in with a short-handled shovel to Whisky Bob's assistance, short work was made of him by Hans. And of course, when the bleeding remnants of Bob and Nicky were sent packing in their skiff, the event must needs be celebrated in further carousal.

By this time, our visitors being numerous, we were a large crowd compounded of many nationalities and diverse temperaments, all aroused by John Barleycorn, all restraints cast off. Old quarrels revived, ancient hates flared up. Fight was in the air. And whenever a longshoreman remembered something against a scow-schooner sailor, or vice versa, or an oyster pirate remembered or was remembered, a fist shot out and another fight was on. And every fight was made up in more rounds of drinks, wherein the combatants, aided and abetted by the rest of us, embraced each other and pledged undying friendship.

And, of all times, Soup Kennedy selected this time to come and retrieve an old shirt of his, left aboard the Reindeer from the trip he sailed with Clam. He had espoused Clam's side of the quarrel with Nelson. Also, he had been drinking in the St. Louis House, so that it was John Barleycorn who led him to the sandspit in quest of his old shirt. Few words started the fray. He locked with Nelson in the cockpit of the Reindeer, and in the mix-up barely escaped being brained by an iron bar wielded by irate French Frank — irate because a two-handed man had attacked a one-handed man. (If the Reindeer still floats, the dent of the iron bar remains in the hardwood rail of her cockpit.)

But Nelson pulled his bandaged hand, bullet-perforated, out of its sling, and, held by us, wept and roared his Berserker belief that he could lick Soup Kennedy one-handed. And we let them loose on the sand. Once, when it looked as if Nelson were getting the worst of it, French Frank and John Barleycorn sprang unfairly into the fight. Scotty protested and reached for French Frank, who whirled upon him and fell on top of him in a pummelling clinch after a sprawl of twenty feet across the sand. In the course of separating these two, half a dozen fights started amongst the rest of us. These fights were finished, one way or the other, or we separated them with drinks, while all the time Nelson and Soup Kennedy fought on. Occasionally we returned to them and gave advice, such as, when they lay exhausted in the sand, unable to strike a blow, "Throw sand in his eyes."

And they threw sand in each other’s eyes, recuperated, and fought on to successive exhaustions.

And now, of all this that is squalid, and ridiculous, and bestial, try to think what it meant to me, a youth not yet sixteen, burning with the spirit of adventure, fancy-filled with tales of buccaneers and sea-rovers, sacks of cities and conflicts of armed men, and imagination-maddened by the stuff I had drunk. It was life raw and naked, wild and free — the only life of that sort which my birth in time and space permitted me to attain. And more than that. It carried a promise. It was the beginning. From the sandspit the way led out through the Golden Gate to the vastness of adventure of all the world, where battles would be fought, not for old shirts and over stolen salmon boats, but for high purposes and romantic ends.

And because I told Scotty what I thought of his letting an old man like French Frank get away with him, we, too, brawled and added to the festivity of the sandspit. And Scotty threw up his job as crew, and departed in the night with a pair of blankets belonging to me. During the night, while the oyster pirates lay stupefied in their bunks, the schooner and the Reindeer floated on the high water and swung about to their anchors. The salmon boat, still filled with rocks and water, rested on the bottom.

In the morning, early, I heard wild cries from the Reindeer, and tumbled out in the chill grey to see a spectacle that made the water-front laugh for days. The beautiful salmon boat lay on the hard sand, squashed flat as a pancake, while on it were perched French Frank’s schooner and the Reindeer. Unfortunately two of the Reindeer’s planks had been crushed in by the stout oak stem of the salmon boat. The rising tide had flowed through the hole, and just awakened Nelson by getting into his bunk with him. I lent a hand, and we pumped the Reindeer out and repaired the damage.

Then Nelson cooked breakfast, and while we ate we considered the situation. He was broke. So was I. The fifty dollars reward would never be paid for that pitiful mess of splinters on the sand beneath us. He had a wounded hand and no crew. I had a burned main sail and no crew.

“What d’ye say, you and me?” Nelson queried. “I’ll go you,” was my answer. And thus I became partners with “Young Scratch” Nelson, the wildest, maddest of them all. We borrowed the money for an outfit of grub from Johnny Heinhold, filled our water-barrels, and sailed away that day for the oyster-beds.

CHAPTER XII

Nor have I ever regretted those months of mad devilry I put in with Nelson. He COULD sail, even if he did frighten every man that sailed with him. To steer to miss destruction by an inch or an instant was his joy. To do what everybody else did not dare attempt to do, was his pride. Never to reef down was his mania, and in all the time I spent with him, blow high or low, the Reindeer was never reefed. Nor was she ever dry. We strained her open and sailed her open and sailed her open continually. And we abandoned the Oakland water-front and went wider afield for our adventures.

And all this glorious passage in my life was made possible for me by John Barleycorn. And this is my complaint against John Barleycorn. Here I was, thirsting for the wild life of adventure, and the only way for me to win to it was through John Barleycorn's mediation. It was the way of the men who lived the life. Did I wish to live the life, I must live it the way they did. It was by virtue of drinking that I gained that partnership and comradeship with Nelson. Had I drunk only the beer he paid for, or had I declined to drink at all, I should never have been selected by him as a partner. He wanted a partner who would meet him on the social side, as well as the work side of life.

I abandoned myself to the life, and developed the misconception that the secret of John Barleycorn lay in going on mad drunks, rising through the successive stages that only an iron constitution could endure to final stupefaction and swinish unconsciousness. I did not like the taste, so I drank for the sole purpose of getting drunk, of getting hopelessly, helplessly drunk. And I, who had saved and scraped, traded like a Shylock and made junkmen weep; I, who had stood aghast when French Frank, at a single stroke, spent eighty cents for whisky for eight men, I turned myself loose with a more lavish disregard for money than any of them.

I remember going ashore one night with Nelson. In my pocket were one hundred and eighty dollars. It was my intention, first, to buy me some clothes, after that, some drinks. I needed the clothes. All I possessed were on me, and they were as follows: a pair of sea-boots that providentially leaked the water out as fast as it ran in, a pair of fifty-cent overalls, a forty-cent cotton shirt, and a sou'wester. I had no hat, so I had to wear the sou'wester, and it will be noted that I have listed neither underclothes nor socks. I didn't own any.

To reach the stores where clothes could be bought, we had to pass a dozen saloons. So I bought me the drinks first. I never got to the clothing stores. In the morning, broke, poisoned, but contented, I came back on board, and we set sail. I possessed only the clothes I had gone ashore in, and not a cent remained of the one hundred and eighty dollars. It might well be deemed impossible, by those who have never tried it, that in twelve hours a lad can spend all of one hundred and eighty dollars for drinks. I know otherwise.

And I had no regrets. I was proud. I had shown them I could spend with the best of them. Amongst strong men I had proved myself strong. I had clinched again, as I had often clinched, my right to the title of “Prince.” Also, my attitude may be considered, in part, as a reaction from my childhood’s meagreness and my childhood’s excessive toil. Possibly my inchoate thought was: Better to reign among booze-fighters a prince than to toil twelve hours a day at a machine for ten cents an hour. There are no purple passages in machine toil. But if the spending of one hundred and eighty dollars in twelve hours isn’t a purple passage, then I’d like to know what is.

Oh, I skip much of the details of my trafficking with John Barleycorn during this period, and shall only mention events that will throw light on John Barleycorn’s ways. There were three things that enabled me to pursue this heavy drinking: first, a magnificent constitution far better than the average; second, the healthy open-air life on the water; and third, the fact that I drank irregularly. While out on the water, we never carried any drink along.

The world was opening up to me. Already I knew several hundred miles of the water-ways of it, and of the towns and cities and fishing hamlets on the shores. Came the whisper to range farther. I had not found it yet. There was more behind. But even this much of the world was too wide for Nelson. He wearied for his beloved Oakland water-front, and when he elected to return to it we separated in all friendliness.

I now made the old town of Benicia, on the Carquinez Straits, my headquarters. In a cluster of fishermen’s arks, moored in the tules on the water-front, dwelt a congenial crowd of drinkers and vagabonds, and I joined them. I had longer spells ashore, between fooling with salmon fishing and making raids up and down bay and rivers as a deputy fish patrolman, and I drank more and learned more about drinking. I held my own with any one, drink for drink; and often drank more than my share to show the strength of my manhood. When, on a morning, my unconscious carcass was disentangled from the nets on the drying-frames, whither I had stupidly, blindly crawled the night before; and when the water-front talked it over with many a giggle and laugh and another drink, I was proud indeed. It was an exploit.

And when I never drew a sober breath, on one stretch, for three solid weeks, I was certain I had reached the top. Surely, in that direction, one could go no farther. It was time for me to move on. For always, drunk or sober, at the back of my consciousness something whispered that this carousing and bay-adventuring was not all of life. This whisper was my good fortune. I happened to be so made that I could hear it calling, always calling, out and away over the world. It was not canniness on my part. It was curiosity, desire to know, an unrest and a seeking for things wonderful that I seemed somehow to have glimpsed or guessed. What was this life for, I demanded, if this were all? No; there was something more, away and beyond. (And, in relation to my much later development as a drinker, this whisper, this promise of the things at the back of life, must be noted, for it was destined to play a dire part in my more recent wrestlings with John Barleycorn.)

But what gave immediacy to my decision to move on was a trick John Barleycorn played me — a monstrous, incredible trick that showed abysses of intoxication hitherto undreamed. At one o’clock in the morning, after a prodigious drunk, I was tottering aboard a sloop at the end of the wharf, intending to go to sleep. The tides sweep through Carquinez Straits as in a mill-race, and the full ebb was on when I stumbled overboard. There was nobody on the wharf, nobody on the sloop. I was borne away by the current. I was not startled. I thought the misadventure delightful. I was a good swimmer, and in my inflamed condition the contact of the water with my skin soothed me like cool linen.

And then John Barleycorn played me his maniacal trick. Some maundering fancy of going out with the tide suddenly obsessed me. I had never been morbid. Thoughts of suicide had never entered my head. And now that they entered, I thought it fine, a splendid culminating, a perfect rounding off of my short but exciting career. I, who had never known girl’s love, nor woman’s love, nor the love of children; who had never played in the wide joy-fields of art, nor climbed the star-cool heights of philosophy, nor seen with my eyes more than a pin-point's surface of the gorgeous world; I decided that this was all, that I had seen all, lived all, been all, that was worth while, and that now was the time to cease. This was the trick of John Barleycorn, laying me by the heels of my imagination and in a drug-dream dragging me to death.

Oh, he was convincing. I had really experienced all of life, and it didn't amount to much. The swinish drunkenness in which I had lived for months (this was accompanied by the sense of degradation and the old feeling of conviction of sin) was the last and best, and I could see for myself what it was worth. There were all the broken-down old bums and loafers I had bought drinks for. That was what remained of life. Did I want to become like them? A thousand times no; and I wept tears of sweet sadness over my glorious youth going out with the tide. (And who has not seen the weeping drunk, the melancholic drunk? They are to be found in all the bar-rooms, if they can find no other listener telling their sorrows to the barkeeper, who is paid to listen.)

The water was delicious. It was a man's way to die. John Barleycorn changed the tune he played in my drink-maddened brain. Away with tears and regret. It was a hero's death, and by the hero's own hand and will. So I struck up my death-chant and was singing it lustily, when the gurgle and splash of the current-riffles in my ears reminded me of my more immediate situation.

Below the town of Benicia, where the Solano wharf projects, the Straits widen out into what bay-farers call the "Bight of Turner's Shipyard." I was in the shore-tide that swept under the Solano wharf and on into the bight. I knew of old the power of the suck which developed when the tide swung around the end of Dead Man's Island and drove straight for the wharf. I didn't want to go through those piles. It wouldn't be nice, and I might lose an hour in the bight on my way out with the tide.

I undressed in the water and struck out with a strong, single-overhand stroke, crossing the current at right-angles. Nor did I cease until, by the wharf lights, I knew I was safe to sweep by the end. Then I turned over and rested. The stroke had been a telling one, and I was a little time in recovering my breath.

I was elated, for I had succeeded in avoiding the suck. I started to raise my death-chant again — a purely extemporised farrago of a drug-crazed youth. "Don't sing — yet," whispered John Barleycorn. "The Solano runs all night. There are railroad men on the wharf. They will hear you, and come out in a boat and rescue you, and you don't want to be rescued." I certainly didn't. What? Be robbed of my hero's death? Never. And I lay on my back in the starlight, watching the familiar wharf-lights go by, red and green and white, and bidding sad sentimental farewell to them, each and all.

When I was well clear, in mid-channel, I sang again. Sometimes I swam a few strokes, but in the main I contented myself with floating and dreaming long drunken dreams. Before daylight, the chill of the water and the passage of the hours had sobered me sufficiently to make me wonder what portion of the Straits I was in, and also to wonder if the turn of the tide wouldn't catch me and take me back ere I had drifted out into San Pablo Bay.

Next I discovered that I was very weary and very cold, and quite sober, and that I didn't in the least want to be drowned. I could make out the Selby Smelter on the Contra Costa shore and the Mare Island lighthouse. I started to swim for the Solano shore, but was too weak and chilled, and made so little headway, and at the cost of such painful effort, that I gave it up and contented myself with floating, now and then giving a stroke to keep my balance in the tide-rips which were increasing their commotion on the surface of the water. And I knew fear. I was sober now, and I didn't want to die. I discovered scores of reasons for living. And the more reasons I discovered, the more liable it seemed that I was going to drown anyway.

Daylight, after I had been four hours in the water, found me in a parlous condition in the tide-rips off Mare Island light, where the swift ebbs from Vallejo Straits and Carquinez Straits were fighting with each other, and where, at that particular moment, they were fighting the flood tide setting up against them from San Pablo Bay. A stiff breeze had sprung up, and the crisp little waves were persistently lapping into my mouth, and I was beginning to swallow salt water. With my swimmer's knowledge, I knew the end was near. And then the boat came — a Greek fisherman running in for Vallejo; and again I had been saved from John Barleycorn by my constitution and physical vigour.

And, in passing, let me note that this maniacal trick John Barleycorn played me is nothing uncommon. An absolute statistic of the per centage of suicides due to John Barleycorn would be appalling. In my case, healthy, normal, young, full of the joy of life, the suggestion to kill myself was unusual; but it must be taken into account that it came on the heels of a long carouse, when my nerves and brain were fearfully poisoned, and that the dramatic, romantic side of my imagination, drink-maddened to lunacy, was delighted with the suggestion. And yet, the older, more morbid drinkers, more jaded with life and more disillusioned, who kill themselves, do so usually after a long debauch, when their nerves and brains are thoroughly poison-soaked.

CHAPTER XIII

So I left Benicia, where John Barleycorn had nearly got me, and ranged wider afield in pursuit of the whisper from the back of life to come and find. And wherever I ranged, the way lay along alcohol-drenched roads. Men still congregated in saloons. They were the poor-man's clubs, and they were the only clubs to which I had access. I could get acquainted in saloons. I could go into a saloon and talk with any man. In the strange towns and cities I wandered through, the only place for me to go was the saloon. I was no longer a stranger in any town the moment I had entered a saloon.

And right here let me break in with experiences no later than last year. I harnessed four horses to a light trap, took Charmian along, and drove for three months and a half over the wildest mountain parts of California and Oregon. Each morning I did my regular day's work of writing fiction. That completed, I drove on through the middle of the day and the afternoon to the next stop. But the irregularity of occurrence of stopping-places, coupled with widely varying road conditions, made it necessary to plan, the day before, each day's drive and my work. I must know when I was to start driving in order to start writing in time to finish my day's output. Thus, on occasion, when the drive was to be long, I would be up and at my writing by five in the morning. On easier driving days I might not start writing till nine o'clock.

But how to plan? As soon as I arrived in a town, and put the horses up, on the way from the stable to the hotel I dropped into the saloons. First thing, a drink — oh, I wanted the drink, but also it must not be forgotten that, because of wanting to know things, it was in this very way I had learned to want a drink. Well, the first thing, a drink. "Have something yourself," to the barkeeper. And then, as we drink, my opening query about roads and stopping-places on ahead.

"Let me see," the barkeeper will say, "there's the road across Tarwater Divide. That used to be good. I was over it three years ago. But it was blocked this spring. Say, I'll tell you what. I'll ask Jerry — — " And the barkeeper turns and addresses some man sitting at a table or leaning against the bar farther along, and who may be Jerry, or Tom, or Bill. "Say, Jerry, how about the Tarwater road? You was down to Wilkins last week."

And while Bill or Jerry or Tom is beginning to unlimber his thinking and speaking apparatus, I suggest that he join us in the drink. Then discussions arise about the advisability of this road or that, what the best stopping-places may be, what running time I may expect to make, where the best trout streams are, and so forth, in which other men join, and which are punctuated with more drinks.

Two or three more saloons, and I accumulate a warm jingle and come pretty close to knowing everybody in town, all about the town, and a fair deal about the surrounding country. I know the lawyers, editors, business men, local politicians, and the visiting ranchers, hunters, and miners, so that by evening, when Charmian and I stroll down the main street and back, she is astounded by the number of my acquaintances in that totally strange town.

And thus is demonstrated a service John Barleycorn renders, a service by which he increases his power over men. And over the world, wherever I have gone, during all the years, it has been the same. It may be a cabaret in the Latin Quarter, a cafe in some obscure Italian village, a boozing ken in sailor-town, and it may be up at the club over Scotch and soda; but always it will be where John Barleycorn makes fellowship that I get immediately in touch, and meet, and know. And in the good days coming, when John Barleycorn will have been banished out of existence along with the other barbarisms, some other institution than the saloon will have to obtain, some other congregating place of men where strange men and stranger men may get in touch, and meet, and know.

But to return to my narrative. When I turned my back on Benicia, my way led through saloons. I had developed no moral theories against drinking, and I disliked as much as ever the taste of the stuff. But I had grown respectfully suspicious of John Barleycorn. I could not forget that trick he had played on me — on me who did not want to die. So I continued to drink, and to keep a sharp eye on John Barleycorn, resolved to resist all future suggestions of self-destruction.

In strange towns I made immediate acquaintances in the saloons. When I hoboed, and hadn’t the price of a bed, a saloon was the only place that would receive me and give me a chair by the fire. I could go into a saloon and wash up, brush my clothes, and comb my hair. And saloons were always so damnably convenient. They were everywhere in my western country.

I couldn’t go into the dwellings of strangers that way. Their doors were not open to me; no seats were there for me by their fires. Also, churches and preachers I had never known. And from what I didn't know I was not attracted toward them. Besides, there was no glamour about them, no haze of romance, no promise of adventure. They were the sort with whom things never happened. They lived and remained always in the one place, creatures of order and system, narrow, limited, restrained. They were without greatness, without imagination, without camaraderie. It was the good fellows, easy and genial, daring, and, on occasion, mad, that I wanted to know — the fellows, generous-hearted and-handed, and not rabbit-hearted.

And here is another complaint I bring against John Barleycorn. It is these good fellows that he gets — the fellows with the fire and the go in them, who have bigness, and warmness, and the best of the human weaknesses. And John Barleycorn puts out the fire, and soddens the agility, and, when he does not more immediately kill them or make maniacs of them, he coarsens and grossens them, twists and malforms them out of the original goodness and fineness of their natures.

Oh! — and I speak out of later knowledge — Heaven forefend me from the most of the average run of male humans who are not good fellows, the ones cold of heart and cold of head who don't smoke, drink, or swear, or do much of anything else that is brase, and resentful, and stinging, because in their feeble fibres there has never been the stir and prod of life to well over its boundaries and be devilish and daring. One doesn't meet these in saloons, nor rallying to lost causes, nor flaming on the adventure-paths, nor loving as God's own mad lovers. They are too busy keeping their feet dry, conserving their heart-beats, and making unlovely life-successes of their spirit-mediocrity.

And so I draw the indictment home to John Barleycorn. It is just those, the good fellows, the worth while, the fellows with the weakness of too much strength, too much spirit, too much fire and flame of fine devilishness, that he solicits and ruins. Of course, he ruins weaklings; but with them, the worst we breed, I am not here concerned. My concern is that it is so much of the best we breed whom John Barleycorn destroys. And the reason why these best are destroyed is because John Barleycorn stands on every highway and byway, accessible, law-protected, saluted by the policeman on the beat, speaking to them, leading them by the hand to the places where the good fellows and daring ones forgather and drink deep. With John Barleycorn out of the way, these daring ones would still be born, and they would do things instead of perishing.

Always I encountered the camaraderie of drink. I might be walking down the track to the water-tank to lie in wait for a passing freight-train, when I would chance upon a bunch of “alki-stiffs.” An alki-stiff is a tramp who drinks druggist’s alcohol. Immediately, with greeting and salutation, I am taken into the fellowship. The alcohol, shrewdly blended with water, is handed to me, and soon I am caught up in the revelry, with maggots crawling in my brain and John Barleycorn whispering to me that life is big, and that we are all brave and fine — free spirits sprawling like careless gods upon the turf and telling the two-by-four, cut-and-dried, conventional world to go hang.

CHAPTER XIV

Back in Oakland from my wanderings, I returned to the water-front and renewed my comradeship with Nelson, who was now on shore all the time and living more madly than before. I, too, spent my time on shore with him, only occasionally going for cruises of several days on the bay to help out on short-handed scow-schooners.

The result was that I was no longer reinvigorated by periods of open-air abstinence and healthy toil. I drank every day, and whenever opportunity offered I drank to excess; for I still laboured under the misconception that the secret of John Barleycorn lay in drinking to bestiality and unconsciousness. I became pretty thoroughly alcohol-soaked during this period. I practically lived in saloons; became a bar-room loafer, and worse.

And right here was John Barleycorn getting me in a more insidious though no less deadly way than when he nearly sent me out with the tide. I had a few months still to run before I was seventeen; I scorned the thought of a steady job at anything; I felt myself a pretty tough individual in a group of pretty tough men; and I drank because these men drank and because I had to make good with them. I had never had a real boyhood, and in this, my precocious manhood, I was very hard and woefully wise. Though I had never known girl's love even, I had crawled through such depths that I was convinced absolutely that I knew the last word about love and life. And it wasn't a pretty knowledge. Without being pessimistic, I was quite satisfied that life was a rather cheap and ordinary affair.

You see, John Barleycorn was blunting me. The old stings and prods of the spirit were no longer sharp. Curiosity was leaving me. What did it matter what lay on the other side of the world? Men and women, without doubt, very much like the men and women I knew; marrying and giving in marriage and all the petty run of petty human concerns; and drinks, too. But the other side of the world was a long way to go for a drink. I had but to step to the corner and get all I wanted at Joe Vigy's. Johnny Heinhold still ran the Last Chance. And there were saloons on all the corners and between the corners.

The whispers from the back of life were growing dim as my mind and body soddened. The old unrest was drowsy. I might as well rot and die here in Oakland as anywhere else. And I should have so rotted and died, and not in very long order either, at the pace John Barleycorn was leading me, had the matter depended wholly on him. I was learning what it was to have no appetite. I was learning what it was to get up shaky in the morning, with a stomach that quivered, with fingers touched with palsy, and to know the drinker's need for a stiff glass of whisky neat in order to brace up. (Oh! John Barleycorn is a wizard dopester. Brain and body, scorched and jangled and poisoned, return to be tuned up by the very poison that caused the damage.)

There is no end to John Barleycorn's tricks. He had tried to inveigle me into killing myself. At this period he was doing his best to kill me at a fairly rapid pace. But, not satisfied with that, he tried another dodge. He very nearly got me, too, and right there I learned a lesson about him — became a wiser, a more skilful drinker. I learned there were limits to my gorgeous constitution, and that there were no limits to John Barleycorn. I learned that in a short hour or two he could master my strong head, my broad shoulders and deep chest, put me on my back, and with a devil's grip on my throat proceed to choke the life out of me.

Nelson and I were sitting in the Overland House. It was early in the evening, and the only reason we were there was because we were broke and it was election time. You see, in election time local politicians, aspirants for office, have a way of making the rounds of the saloons to get votes. One is sitting at a table, in a dry condition, wondering who is going to turn up and buy him a drink, or if his credit is good at some other saloon and if it's worth while to walk that far to find out, when suddenly the saloon doors swing wide, and enters a bevy of well-dressed men, themselves usually wide and exhaling an atmosphere of prosperity and fellowship.

They have smiles and greetings for everybody — for you, without the price of a glass of beer in your pocket, for the timid hobo who lurks in the corner and who certainly hasn't a vote, but who may establish a lodging-house registration. And do you know, when these politicians swing wide the doors and come in, with their broad shoulders, their deep chests, and their generous stomachs which cannot help making them optimists and masters of life, why, you perk right up. It's going to be a warm evening after all, and you know you'll get a souse started at the very least.

And — who knows? — the gods may be kind, other drinks may come, and the night culminate in glorious greatness. And the next thing you know, you are lined up at the bar, pouring drinks down your throat and learning the gentlemen's names and the offices which they hope to fill.

It was during this period, when the politicians went their saloon rounds, that I was getting bitter bits of education and having illusions punctured — I, who had pored and thrilled over “The Rail-Splitter,” and “From Canal Boy to President.” Yes, I was learning how noble politics and politicians are.

Well, on this night, broke, thirsty, but with the drinker’s faith in the unexpected drink, Nelson and I sat in the Overland House waiting for something to turn up, especially politicians. And there entered Joe Goose — he of the unquenchable thirst, the wicked eyes, the crooked nose, the flowered vest.

“Come on, fellows — free booze — all you want of it. I didn’t want you to miss it.”

“Where?” we wanted to know.

“Come on. I’ll tell you as we go along. We haven’t a minute to lose.” And as we hurried up town, Joe Goose explained: “It’s the Hancock Fire Brigade. All you have to do is wear a red shirt and a helmet, and carry a torch.

“They’re going down on a special train to Haywards to parade.”

(I think the place was Haywards. It may have been San Leandro or Niles. And, to save me, I can’t remember whether the Hancock Fire Brigade was a republican or a democratic organisation. But anyway, the politicians who ran it were short of torch-bearers, and anybody who would parade could get drunk if he wanted to.)

“The town’ll be wide open,” Joe Goose went on. “Booze? It’ll run like water. The politicians have bought the stocks of the saloons. There’ll be no charge. All you got to do is walk right up and call for it. We’ll raise hell.”

At the hall, on Eighth Street near Broadway, we got into the firemen’s shirts and helmets, were equipped with torches, and, growling because we weren’t given at least one drink before we started, were herded aboard the train. Oh, those politicians had handled our kind before. At Haywards there were no drinks either. Parade first, and earn your booze, was the order of the night.

We paraded. Then the saloons were opened. Extra barkeepers had been engaged, and the drinkers jammed six deep before every drink-drenched and unwiped bar. There was no time to wipe the bar, nor wash glasses, nor do anything save fill glasses. The Oakland water-front can be real thirsty on occasion.

This method of jamming and struggling in front of the bar was too slow for us. The drink was ours. The politicians had bought it for us. We'd paraded and earned it, hadn't we? So we made a flank attack around the end of the bar, shoved the protesting barkeepers aside, and helped ourselves to bottles.

Outside, we knocked the necks of the bottles off against the concrete curbs, and drank. Now Joe Goose and Nelson had learned discretion with straight whisky, drunk in quantity. I hadn't. I still laboured under the misconception that one was to drink all he could get — especially when it didn't cost anything. We shared our bottles with others, and drank a good portion ourselves, while I drank most of all. And I didn't like the stuff. I drank it as I had drunk beer at five, and wine at seven. I mastered my qualms and downed it like so much medicine. And when we wanted more bottles, we went into other saloons where the free drink was flowing, and helped ourselves.

I haven't the slightest idea of how much I drank — whether it was two quarts or five. I do know that I began the orgy with half-pint draughts and with no water afterward to wash the taste away or to dilute the whisky.

Now the politicians were too wise to leave the town filled with drunks from the water-front of Oakland. When train time came, there was a round-up of the saloons. Already I was feeling the impact of the whisky. Nelson and I were hustled out of a saloon, and found ourselves in the very last rank of a disorderly parade. I struggled along heroically, my correlations breaking down, my legs tottering under me, my head swimming, my heart pounding, my lungs panting for air.

My helplessness was coming on so rapidly that my reeling brain told me I would go down and out and never reach the train if I remained at the rear of the procession. I left the ranks and ran down a pathway beside the road under broad-spreading trees. Nelson pursued me, laughing. Certain things stand out, as in memories of nightmare. I remember those trees especially, and my desperate running along under them, and how, every time I fell, roars of laughter went up from the other drunks. They thought I was merely antic drunk. They did not dream that John Barleycorn had me by the throat in a death-clutch. But I knew it. And I remember the fleeting bitterness that was mine as I realised that I was in a struggle with death, and that these others did not know. It was as if I were drowning before a crowd of spectators who thought I was cutting up tricks for their entertainment.

And running there under the trees, I fell and lost consciousness. What happened afterward, with one glimmering exception, I had to be told. Nelson, with his enormous strength, picked me up and dragged me on and aboard the train. When he had got me into a seat, I fought and panted so terribly for air that even with his obtuseness he knew I was in a bad way. And right there, at any moment, I know now, I might have died. I often think it is the nearest to death I have ever been. I have only Nelson's description of my behaviour to go by.

I was scorching up, burning alive internally, in an agony of fire and suffocation, and I wanted air. I madly wanted air. My efforts to raise a window were vain, for all the windows in the car were screwed down. Nelson had seen drink-crazed men, and thought I wanted to throw myself out. He tried to restrain me, but I fought on. I seized some man's torch and smashed the glass.

Now there were pro-Nelson and anti-Nelson factions on the Oakland water-front, and men of both factions, with more drink in them than was good, filled the car. My smashing of the window was the signal for the antis. One of them reached for me, and dropped me, and started the fight, of all of which I have no knowledge save what was told me afterward, and a sore jaw next day from the blow that put me out. The man who struck me went down across my body, Nelson followed him, and they say there were few unbroken windows in the wreckage of the car that followed as the free-for-all fight had its course.

This being knocked cold and motionless was perhaps the best thing that could have happened to me. My violent struggles had only accelerated my already dangerously accelerated heart, and increased the need for oxygen in my suffocating lungs.

After the fight was over and I came to, I did not come to myself. I was no more myself than a drowning man is who continues to struggle after he has lost consciousness. I have no memory of my actions, but I cried "Air! Air!" so insistently, that it dawned on Nelson that I did not contemplate self-destruction. So he cleared the jagged glass from the window-ledge and let me stick my head and shoulders out. He realised, partially, the seriousness of my condition, and held me by the waist to prevent me from crawling farther out. And for the rest of the run in to Oakland I kept my head and shoulders out, fighting like a maniac whenever he tried to draw me inside.

And here my one glimmering streak of true consciousness came. My sole recollection, from the time I fell under the trees until I awoke the following evening, is of my head out of the window, facing the wind caused by the train, cinders striking and burning and blinding me, while I breathed with will. All my will was concentrated on breathing — on breathing the air in the hugest lung-full gulps I could, pumping the greatest amount of air into my lungs in the shortest possible time. It was that or death, and I was a swimmer and diver, and I knew it; and in the most intolerable agony of prolonged suffocation, during those moments I was conscious, I faced the wind and the cinders and breathed for life.

All the rest is a blank. I came to the following evening, in a water-front lodging-house. I was alone. No doctor had been called in. And I might well have died there, for Nelson and the others, deeming me merely "sleeping off my drunk," had let me lie there in a comatose condition for seventeen hours. Many a man, as every doctor knows, has died of the sudden impact of a quart or more of whisky. Usually one reads of them so dying, strong drinkers, on account of a wager. But I didn't know — then. And so I learned; and by no virtue nor prowess, but simply through good fortune and constitution. Again my constitution had triumphed over John Barleycorn. I had escaped from another death-pit, dragged myself through another morass, and perilously acquired the discretion that would enable me to drink wisely for many another year to come.

Heavens! That was twenty years ago, and I am still very much and wisely alive; and I have seen much, done much, lived much, in that intervening score of years; and I shudder when I think how close a shave I ran, how near I was to missing that splendid fifth of a century that has been mine. And, oh, it wasn't John Barleycorn's fault that he didn't get me that night of the Hancock Fire Brigade.

CHAPTER XV

It was during the early winter of 1892 that I resolved to go to sea. My Hancock Fire Brigade experience was very little responsible for this. I still drank and frequented saloons — practically lived in saloons. Whisky was dangerous, in my opinion, but not wrong. Whisky was dangerous like other dangerous things in the natural world. Men died of whisky; but then, too, fishermen were capsized and drowned, hoboes fell under trains and were cut to pieces. To cope with winds and waves, railroad trains, and bar-rooms, one must use judgment. To get drunk after the manner of men was all right, but one must do it with discretion. No more quarts of whisky for me.

What really decided me to go to sea was that I had caught my first vision of the death-road which John Barleycorn maintains for his devotees. It was not a clear vision, however, and there were two phases of it, somewhat jumbled at the time. It struck me, from watching those with whom I associated, that the life we were living was more destructive than that lived by the average man.

John Barleycorn, by inhibiting morality, incited to crime. Everywhere I saw men doing, drunk, what they would never dream of doing sober. And this wasn’t the worst of it. It was the penalty that must be paid. Crime was destructive. Saloon-mates I drank with, who were good fellows and harmless, sober, did most violent and lunatic things when they were drunk. And then the police gathered them in and they vanished from our ken. Sometimes I visited them behind the bars and said good-bye ere they journeyed across the bay to put on the felon’s stripes. And time and again I heard the one explanation “IF I HADN’T BEEN DRUNK I WOULDN’T A-DONE IT.” And sometimes, under the spell of John Barleycorn, the most frightful things were done — things that shocked even my case-hardened soul.

The other phase of the death-road was that of the habitual drunkards, who had a way of turning up their toes without apparent provocation. When they took sick, even with trifling afflictions that any ordinary man could pull through, they just pegged out. Sometimes they were found unattended and dead in their beds; on occasion their bodies were dragged out of the water; and sometimes it was just plain accident, as when Bill Kelley, unloading cargo while drunk, had a finger jerked off, which, under the circumstances, might just as easily have been his head.

So I considered my situation and knew that I was getting into a bad way of living. It made toward death too quickly to suit my youth and vitality. And there was only one way out of this hazardous manner of living, and that was to get out. The sealing fleet was wintering in San Francisco Bay, and in the saloons I met skippers, mates, hunters, boat-steerers, and boat-pullers. I met the seal-hunter, Pete Holt, and agreed to be his boat-puller and to sign on any schooner he signed on. And I had to have half a dozen drinks with Pete Holt there and then to seal our agreement.

And at once awoke all my old unrest that John Barleycorn had put to sleep. I found myself actually bored with the saloon life of the Oakland water-front, and wondered what I had ever found fascinating in it. Also, with this death-road concept in my brain, I began to grow afraid that something would happen to me before sailing day, which was set for some time in January. I lived more circumspectly, drank less deeply, and went home more frequently. When drinking grew too wild, I got out. When Nelson was in his maniacal cups, I managed to get separated from him.

On the 12th of January, 1893, I was seventeen, and the 20th of January I signed before the shipping commissioner the articles of the Sophie Sutherland, a three topmast sealing schooner bound on a voyage to the coast of Japan. And of course we had to drink on it. Joe Vigy cashed my advance note, and Pete Holt treated, and I treated, and Joe Vigy treated, and other hunters treated. Well, it was the way of men, and who was I, just turned seventeen, that I should decline the way of life of these fine, chesty, man-grown men?

CHAPTER XVI

There was nothing to drink on the Sophie Sutherland, and we had fifty-one days of glorious sailing, taking the southern passage in the north-east trades to Bonin Islands. This isolated group, belonging to Japan, had been selected as the rendezvous of the Canadian and American sealing fleets. Here they filled their water-barrels and made repairs before starting on the hundred days' harrying of the seal-herd along the northern coasts of Japan to Behring Sea.

Those fifty-one days of fine sailing and intense sobriety had put me in splendid fettle. The alcohol had been worked out of my system, and from the moment the voyage began I had not known the desire for a drink. I doubt if I even thought once about a drink. Often, of course, the talk in the forecastle turned on drink, and the men told of their more exciting or humorous drunks, remembering such passages more keenly, with greater delight, than all the other passages of their adventurous lives.

In the forecastle, the oldest man, fat and fifty, was Louis. He was a broken skipper. John Barleycorn had thrown him, and he was winding up his career where he had begun it, in the forecastle. His case made quite an impression on me. John Barleycorn did other things beside kill a man. He hadn't killed Louis. He had done much worse. He had robbed him of power and place and comfort, crucified his pride, and condemned him to the hardship of the common sailor that would last as long as his healthy breath lasted, which promised to be for a long time.

We completed our run across the Pacific, lifted the volcanic peaks, jungle-clad, of the Bonin Islands, sailed in among the reefs to the land-locked harbour, and let our anchor rumble down where lay a score or more of sea-gypsies like ourselves. The scents of strange vegetation blew off the tropic land. Aborigines, in queer outrigger canoes, and Japanese, in queerer sampans, paddled about the bay and came aboard. It was my first foreign land; I had won to the other side of the world, and I would see all I had read in the books come true. I was wild to get ashore.

Victor and Axel, a Swede and a Norwegian, and I planned to keep together. (And so well did we, that for the rest of the cruise we were known as the "Three Sports.") Victor pointed out a pathway that disappeared up a wild canyon, emerged on a steep bare lava slope, and thereafter appeared and disappeared, ever climbing, among the palms and flowers. We would go over that path, he said, and we agreed, and we would see beautiful scenery, and strange native villages, and find, Heaven alone knew, what adventure at the end. And Axel was keen to go fishing. The three of us agreed to that, too. We would get a sampan, and a couple of Japanese fishermen who knew the fishing grounds, and we would have great sport. As for me, I was keen for anything.

And then, our plans made, we rowed ashore over the banks of living coral and pulled our boat up the white beach of coral sand. We walked across the fringe of beach under the cocoanut-palms and into the little town, and found several hundred riotous seamen from all the world, drinking prodigiously, singing prodigiously, dancing prodigiously — and all on the main street to the scandal of a helpless handful of Japanese police.

Victor and Axel said that we'd have a drink before we started on our long walk. Could I decline to drink with these two chesty shipmates? Drinking together, glass in hand, put the seal on comradeship. It was the way of life. Our teetotaler owner-captain was laughed at, and sneered at, by all of us because of his teetotalism. I didn't in the least want a drink, but I did want to be a good fellow and a good comrade. Nor did Louis' case deter me, as I poured the biting, scorching stuff down my throat. John Barleycorn had thrown Louis to a nasty fall, but I was young. My blood ran full and red; I had a constitution of iron; and — well, youth ever grins scornfully at the wreckage of age.

Queer, fierce, alcoholic stuff it was that we drank. There was no telling where or how it had been manufactured — some native concoction most likely. But it was hot as fire, pale as water, and quick as death with its kick. It had been filled into empty "square-face" bottles which had once contained Holland gin, and which still bore the fitting legend "Anchor Brand." It certainly anchored us. We never got out of the town. We never went fishing in the sampan. And though we were there ten days, we never trod that wild path along the lava cliffs and among the flowers.

We met old acquaintances from other schooners, fellows we had met in the saloons of San Francisco before we sailed. And each meeting meant a drink; and there was much to talk about; and more drinks; and songs to be sung; and pranks and antics to be performed, until the maggots of imagination began to crawl, and it all seemed great and wonderful to me, these lusty hard-bitten sea-rovers, of whom I made one, gathered in wassail on a coral strand. Old lines about knights at table in the great banquet halls, and of those above the salt and below the salt, and of Vikings feasting fresh from sea and ripe for battle, came to me; and I knew that the old times were not dead and that we belonged to that selfsame ancient breed.

By mid-afternoon Victor went mad with drink, and wanted to fight everybody and everything. I have since seen lunatics in the violent wards of asylums that seemed to behave in no wise different from Victor's way, save that perhaps he was more violent. Axel and I interfered as peacemakers, were roughed and jostled in the mix-ups, and finally, with infinite precaution and intoxicated cunning, succeeded in inveigling our chum down to the boat and in rowing him aboard our schooner.

But no sooner did Victor's feet touch the deck than he began to clean up the ship. He had the strength of several men, and he ran amuck with it. I remember especially one man whom he got into the chain-boxes but failed to damage through inability to hit him. The man dodged and ducked, and Victor broke all the knuckles of both his fists against the huge links of the anchor chain. By the time we dragged him out of that, his madness had shifted to the belief that he was a great swimmer, and the next moment he was overboard and demonstrating his ability by floundering like a sick porpoise and swallowing much salt water.

We rescued him, and by the time we got him below, undressed, and into his bunk, we were wrecks ourselves. But Axel and I wanted to see more of shore, and away we went, leaving Victor snoring. It was curious, the judgment passed on Victor by his shipmates, drinkers themselves. They shook their heads disapprovingly and muttered: "A man like that oughtn't to drink." Now Victor was the smartest sailor and best-tempered shipmate in the forecastle. He was an all-round splendid type of seaman; his mates recognised his worth, and respected him and liked him. Yet John Barleycorn metamorphosed him into a violent lunatic. And that was the very point these drinkers made. They knew that drink — and drink with a sailor is always excessive — made them mad, but only mildly mad. Violent madness was objectionable because it spoiled the fun of others and often culminated in tragedy. From their standpoint, mild madness was all right. But from the standpoint of the whole human race, is not all madness objectionable? And is there a greater maker of madness of all sorts than John Barleycorn?

But to return. Ashore, snugly ensconced in a Japanese house of entertainment, Axel and I compared bruises, and over a comfortable drink talked of the afternoon's happenings. We liked the quietness of that drink and took another. A shipmate dropped in, several shipmates dropped in, and we had more quiet drinks. Finally, just as we had engaged a Japanese orchestra, and as the first strains of the samisens and taikos were rising, through the paper-walls came a wild howl from the street. We recognised it. Still howling, disdaining doorways, with blood-shot eyes and wildly waving muscular arms, Victor burst upon us through the fragile walls. The old amuck rage was on him, and he wanted blood, anybody's blood. The orchestra fled; so did we. We went through doorways, and we went through paper-walls — anything to get away.

And after the place was half wrecked, and we had agreed to pay the damage, leaving Victor partly subdued and showing symptoms of lapsing into a comatose state, Axel and I wandered away in quest of a quieter drinking-place. The main street was a madness. Hundreds of sailors rollicked up and down. Because the chief of police with his small force was helpless, the governor of the colony had issued orders to the captains to have all their men on board by sunset.

What! To be treated in such fashion! As the news spread among the schooners, they were emptied. Everybody came ashore. Men who had had no intention of coming ashore climbed into the boats. The unfortunate governor's ukase had precipitated a general debauch for all hands. It was hours after sunset, and the men wanted to see anybody try to put them on board. They went around inviting the authorities to try to put them on board. In front of the governor's house they were gathered thickest, bawling sea-songs, circulating square faces, and dancing uproarious Virginia reels and old-country dances. The police, including the reserves, stood in little forlorn groups, waiting for the command the governor was too wise to issue. And I thought this saturnalia was great. It was like the old days of the Spanish Main come back. It was license; it was adventure. And I was part of it, a chesty sea-rover along with all these other chesty sea-rovers among the paper houses of Japan.

The governor never issued the order to clear the streets, and Axel and I wandered on from drink to drink. After a time, in some of the antics, getting hazy myself, I lost him. I drifted along, making new acquaintances, downing more drinks, getting hazier and hazier. I remember, somewhere, sitting in a circle with Japanese fishermen, Kanaka boat-steerers from our own vessels, and a young Danish sailor fresh from cowboying in the Argentine and with a penchant for native customs and ceremonials. And with due and proper and most intricate Japanese ceremonial we of the circle drank saki, pale, mild, and lukewarm, from tiny porcelain bowls.

And, later, I remember the runaway apprentices — boys of eighteen and twenty, of middle class English families, who had jumped their ships and apprenticeships in various ports of the world and drifted into the forecastles of the sealing schooners. They were healthy, smooth-skinned, clear-eyed, and they were young — youths like me, learning the way of their feet in the world of men. And they WERE men. No mild saki for them, but square faces illicitly refilled with corrosive fire that flamed through their veins and burst into conflagrations in their heads. I remember a melting song they sang, the refrain of which was:

"'Tis but a little golden ring,
I give it to thee with pride,
Wear it for your mother's sake
When you are on the tide."

They wept over it as they sang it, the graceless young scamps who had all broken their mothers' prides, and I sang with them, and wept with them, and luxuriated in the pathos and the tragedy of it, and struggled to make glimmering inebriated generalisations on life and romance. And one last picture I have, standing out very clear and bright in the midst of vagueness before and blackness afterward. We — the apprentices and I — are swaying and clinging to one another under the stars. We are singing a rollicking sea song, all save one who sits on the ground and weeps; and we are marking the rhythm with waving square faces. From up and down the street come far choruses of sea-voices similarly singing, and life is great, and beautiful and romantic, and magnificently mad.

And next, after the blackness, I open my eyes in the early dawn to see a Japanese woman, solicitously anxious, bending over me. She is the port pilot's wife and I am lying in her doorway. I am chilled and shivering, sick with the after-sickness of debauch. And I feel lightly clad. Those rascals of runaway apprentices! They have acquired the habit of running away. They have run away with my possessions. My watch is gone. My few dollars are gone. My coat is gone. So is my belt. And yes, my shoes.

And the foregoing is a sample of the ten days I spent in the Bonin Islands. Victor got over his lunacy, rejoined Axel and me, and after that we caroused somewhat more discreetly. And we never climbed that lava path among the flowers. The town and the square faces were all we saw.

One who has been burned by fire must preach about the fire. I might have seen and healthily enjoyed a whole lot more of the Bonin Islands, if I had done what I ought to have done. But, as I see it, it is not a matter of what one ought to do, or ought not to do. It is what one DOES do. That is the everlasting, irrefragable fact. I did just what I did. I did what all those men did in the Bonin Islands. I did what millions of men over the world were doing at that particular point in time. I did it because the way led to it, because I was only a human boy, a creature of my environment, and neither an anaemic nor a god. I was just human, and I was taking the path in the world that men took — men whom I admired, if you please; full-blooded men, lusty, breedy, chesty men, free spirits and anything but niggards in the way they foamed life away.

And the way was open. It was like an uncovered well in a yard where children play. It is small use to tell the brave little boys toddling their way along into knowledge of life that they mustn't play near the uncovered well. They'll play near it. Any parent knows that. And we know that a certain percentage of them, the livest and most daring, will fall into the well. The thing to do — we all know it — is to cover up the well. The case is the same with John Barleycorn. All the no-saying and no-preaching in the world will fail to keep men, and youths growing into manhood, away from John Barleycorn when John Barleycorn is everywhere accessible, and where John Barleycorn is everywhere the connotation of manliness, and daring, and great-spiritedness.

The only rational thing for the twentieth-century folk to do is to cover up the well; to make the twentieth century in truth the twentieth century, and to relegate to the nineteenth century and all the preceding centuries the things of those centuries, the witch-burnings, the intolerances, the fetiches, and, not least among such barbarisms. John Barleycorn.

CHAPTER XVII

North we raced from the Bonin Islands to pick up the seal-herd, and north we hunted it for a hundred days into frosty, mitten weather and into and through vast fogs which hid the sun from us for a week at a time. It was wild and heavy work, without a drink or thought of drink. Then we sailed south to Yokohama, with a big catch of skins in our salt and a heavy pay-day coming.

I was eager to be ashore and see Japan, but the first day was devoted to ship's work, and not until evening did we sailors land. And here, by the very system of things, by the way life was organised and men transacted affairs, John Barleycorn reached out and tucked my arm in his. The captain had given money for us to the hunters, and the hunters were waiting in a certain Japanese public house for us to come and get it. We rode to the place in rickshaws. Our own crowd had taken possession of it. Drink was flowing. Everybody had money, and everybody was treating. After the hundred days of hard toil and absolute abstinence, in the pink of physical condition, bulging with health, over-spilling with spirits that had long been pent by discipline and circumstance, of course we would have a drink or two. And after that we would see the town.

It was the old story. There were so many drinks to be drunk, and as the warm magic poured through our veins and mellowed our voices and affections we knew it was no time to make invidious distinctions — to drink with this shipmate and to decline to drink with that shipmate. We were all shipmates who had been through stress and storm together, who had pulled and hauled on the same sheets and tackles, relieved one another's wheels, laid out side by side on the same jib-boom when she was plunging into it and looked to see who was missing when she cleared and lifted. So we drank with all, and all treated, and our voices rose, and we remembered a myriad kindly acts of comradeship, and forgot our fights and wordy squabbles, and knew one another for the best fellows in the world.

Well, the night was young when we arrived in that public house, and for all of that first night that public house was what I saw of Japan — a drinking-place which was very like a drinking-place at home or anywhere else over the world.

We lay in Yokohama harbour for two weeks, and about all we saw of Japan was its drinking-places where sailors congregated. Occasionally, some one of us varied the monotony with a more exciting drunk. In such fashion I managed a real exploit by swimming off to the schooner one dark midnight and going soundly to sleep while the water-police searched the harbour for my body and brought my clothes out for identification.

Perhaps it was for things like that, I imagined, that men got drunk. In our little round of living what I had done was a noteworthy event. All the harbour talked about it. I enjoyed several days of fame among the Japanese boatmen and ashore in the pubs. It was a red-letter event. It was an event to be remembered and narrated with pride. I remember it to-day, twenty years afterward, with a secret glow of pride. It was a purple passage, just as Victor's wrecking of the tea-house in the Bonin Islands and my being looted by the runaway apprentices were purple passages.

The point is that the charm of John Barleycorn was still a mystery to me. I was so organically a non-alcoholic that alcohol itself made no appeal; the chemical reactions it produced in me were not satisfying because I possessed no need for such chemical satisfaction. I drank because the men I was with drank, and because my nature was such that I could not permit myself to be less of a man than other men at their favourite pastime. And I still had a sweet tooth, and on privy occasions when there was no man to see, bought candy and blissfully devoured it.

We hove up anchor to a jolly chanty, and sailed out of Yokohama harbour for San Francisco. We took the northern passage, and with the stout west wind at our back made the run across the Pacific in thirty-seven days of brave sailing. We still had a big pay-day coming to us, and for thirty-seven days, without a drink to addle our mental processes, we incessantly planned the spending of our money.

The first statement of each man — ever an ancient one in homeward-bound forecastles — was: “No boarding-house sharks in mine.” Next, in parentheses, was regret at having spent so much money in Yokohama. And after that, each man proceeded to paint his favourite phantom. Victor, for instance, said that immediately he landed in San Francisco he would pass right through the water-front and the Barbary Coast, and put an advertisement in the papers. His advertisement would be for board and room in some simple working-class family. “Then,” said Victor, “I shall go to some dancing-school for a week or two, just to meet and get acquainted with the girls and fellows. Then I'll get the run of the different dancing crowds, and be invited to their homes, and to parties, and all that, and with the money I've got I can last out till next January, when I'll go sealing again."

No; he wasn't going to drink. He knew the way of it, particularly his way of it, wine in, wit out, and his money would be gone in no time. He had his choice, based on bitter experience, between three days' debauch among the sharks and harpies of the Barbary Coast and a whole winter of wholesome enjoyment and sociability, and there wasn't any doubt of the way he was going to choose.

Said Axel Gunderson, who didn't care for dancing and social functions: "I've got a good pay-day. Now I can go home. It is fifteen years since I've seen my mother and all the family. When I pay off, I shall send my money home to wait for me. Then I'll pick a good ship bound for Europe, and arrive there with another pay-day. Put them together, and I'll have more money than ever in my life before. I'll be a prince at home. You haven't any idea how cheap everything is in Norway. I can make presents to everybody, and spend my money like what would seem to them a millionaire, and live a whole year there before I'd have to go back to sea."

"The very thing I'm going to do," declared Red John. "It's three years since I've received a line from home and ten years since I was there. Things are just as cheap in Sweden, Axel, as in Norway, and my folks are real country folk and farmers. I'll send my pay-day home and ship on the same ship with you for around the Horn. We'll pick a good one."

And as Axel Gunderson and Red John painted the pastoral delights and festive customs of their respective countries, each fell in love with the other's home place, and they solemnly pledged to make the journey together, and to spend, together, six months in the one's Swedish home and six months in the other's Norwegian home. And for the rest of the voyage they could hardly be pried apart, so infatuated did they become with discussing their plans.

Long John was not a home-body. But he was tired of the forecastle. No boarding-house sharks in his. He, too, would get a room in a quiet family, and he would go to a navigation school and study to be a captain. And so it went. Each man swore that for once he would be sensible and not squander his money. No boarding-house sharks, no sailor-town, no drink, was the slogan of our forecastle.

The men became stingy. Never was there such economy. They refused to buy anything more from the slopchest. Old rags had to last, and they sewed patch upon patch, turning out what are called “homeward-bound patches” of the most amazing proportions. They saved on matches, even, waiting till two or three were ready to light their pipes from the same match.

As we sailed up the San Francisco water-front, the moment the port doctors passed us, the boarding-house runners were alongside in whitehall boats. They swarmed on board, each drumming for his own boarding-house, and each with a bottle of free whisky inside his shirt. But we waved them grandly and blasphemously away. We wanted none of their boarding-houses and none of their whisky. We were sober, thrifty sailormen, with better use for our money.

Came the paying off before the shipping commissioner. We emerged upon the sidewalk, each with a pocketful of money. About us, like buzzards, clustered the sharks and harpies. And we looked at each other. We had been seven months together, and our paths were separating. One last farewell rite of comradeship remained. (Oh, it was the way, the custom.) “Come on, boys,” said our sailing master. There stood the inevitable adjacent saloon. There were a dozen saloons all around. And when we had followed the sailing master into the one of his choice, the sharks were thick on the sidewalk outside. Some of them even ventured inside, but we would have nothing to do with them.

There we stood at the long bar — the sailing master, the mate, the six hunters, the six boat-steerers, and the five boat-pullers. There were only five of the last, for one of our number had been dropped overboard, with a sack of coal at his feet, between two snow squalls in a driving gale off Cape Jerimo. There were nineteen of us, and it was to be our last drink together. With seven months of men’s work in the world, blow high, blow low, behind us, we were looking on each other for the last time. We knew it, for sailors’ ways go wide. And the nineteen of us, drank the sailing master’s treat. Then the mate looked at us with eloquent eyes and called another round. We liked the mate just as well as the sailing master, and we liked them both. Could we drink with one, and not the other?

And Pete Holt, my own hunter (lost next year in the Mary Thomas, with all hands), called a round. The time passed, the drinks continued to come on the bar, our voices rose, and the maggots began to crawl. There were six hunters, and each insisted, in the sacred name of comradeship, that all hands drink with him just once. There were six boat-steerers and five boat-pullers and the same logic held with them. There was money in all our pockets, and our money was as good as any man's, and our hearts were as free and generous.

Nineteen rounds of drinks. What more would John Barleycorn ask in order to have his will with men? They were ripe to forget their dearly cherished plans. They rolled out of the saloon and into the arms of the sharks and harpies. They didn't last long. From two days to a week saw the end of their money and saw them being carted by the boarding-house masters on board outward-bound ships. Victor was a fine body of a man, and through a lucky friendship managed to get into the life-saving service. He never saw the dancing-school nor placed his advertisement for a room in a working-class family. Nor did Long John win to navigation school. By the end of the week he was a transient lumper on a river steamboat. Red John and Axel did not send their pay-days home to the old country. Instead, and along with the rest, they were scattered on board sailing ships bound for the four quarters of the globe, where they had been placed by the boarding-house masters, and where they were working out advance money which they had neither seen nor spent.

What saved me was that I had a home and people to go to. I crossed the bay to Oakland, and, among other things, took a look at the death-road. Nelson was gone — shot to death while drunk and resisting the officers. His partner in that affair was lying in prison. Whisky Bob was gone. Old Cole, Old Smoudge, and Bob Smith were gone. Another Smith, he of the belted guns and the Annie, was drowned. French Frank, they said, was lurking up river, afraid to come down because of something he had done. Others were wearing the stripes in San Quentin or Folsom. Big Alec, the King of the Greeks, whom I had known well in the old Benicia days, and with whom I had drunk whole nights through, had killed two men and fled to foreign parts. Fitzsimmons, with whom I had sailed on the Fish Patrol, had been stabbed in the lung through the back and had died a lingering death complicated with tuberculosis. And so it went, a very lively and well-patronised road, and, from what I knew of all of them, John Barleycorn was responsible, with the sole exception of Smith of the Annie.

CHAPTER XVIII

My infatuation for the Oakland water-front was quite dead. I didn’t like the looks of it, nor the life. I didn’t care for the drinking, nor the vagrancy of it, and I wandered back to the Oakland Free Library and read the books with greater understanding. Then, too, my mother said I had sown my wild oats and it was time I settled down to a regular job. Also, the family needed the money. So I got a job at the jute mills — a ten-hour day at ten cents an hour. Despite my increase in strength and general efficiency, I was receiving no more than when I worked in the cannery several years before. But, then, there was a promise of a rise to a dollar and a quarter a day after a few months. And here, so far as John Barleycorn is concerned, began a period of innocence. I did not know what it was to take a drink from month end to month end. Not yet eighteen years old, healthy and with labour-hardened but unhurt muscles, like any young animal I needed diversion, excitement, something beyond the books and the mechanical toil.

I strayed into Young Men’s Christian Associations. The life there was healthful and athletic, but too juvenile. For me it was too late. I was not boy, nor youth, despite my paucity of years. I had bucked big with men. I knew mysterious and violent things. I was from the other side of life so far as concerned the young men I encountered in the Y.M.C.A. I spoke another language, possessed a sadder and more terrible wisdom. (When I come to think it over, I realise now that I have never had a boyhood.) At any rate, the Y.M.C.A. young men were too juvenile for me, too unsophisticated. This I would not have minded, could they have met me and helped me mentally. But I had got more out of the books than they. Their meagre physical experiences, plus their meagre intellectual experiences, made a negative sum so vast that it overbalanced their wholesome morality and healthful sports.

In short, I couldn’t play with the pupils of a lower grade. All the clean splendid young life that was theirs was denied me — thanks to my earlier tutelage under John Barleycorn. I knew too much too young. And yet, in the good time coming when alcohol is eliminated from the needs and the institutions of men, it will be the Y.M.C.A., and similar unthinkably better and wiser and more virile congregating-places, that will receive the men who now go to saloons to find themselves and one another. In the meantime, we live to-day, here and now, and we discuss to-day, here and now.

I was working ten hours a day in the jute mills. It was hum-drum machine toil. I wanted life. I wanted to realise myself in other ways than at a machine for ten cents an hour. And yet I had had my fill of saloons. I wanted something new. I was growing up. I was developing unguessed and troubling potencies and proclivities. And at this very stage, fortunately, I met Louis Shattuck and we became chums.

Louis Shattuck, without one vicious trait, was a real innocently devilish young fellow, who was quite convinced that he was a sophisticated town boy. And I wasn't a town boy at all. Louis was handsome, and graceful, and filled with love for the girls. With him it was an exciting and all-absorbing pursuit. I didn't know anything about girls. I had been too busy being a man. This was an entirely new phase of existence which had escaped me. And when I saw Louis say good-bye to me, raise his hat to a girl of his acquaintance, and walk on with her side by side down the sidewalk, I was made excited and envious. I, too, wanted to play this game.

"Well, there's only one thing to do," said Louis, "and that is, you must get a girl."

Which is more difficult than it sounds. Let me show you, at the expense of a slight going aside. Louis did not know girls in their home life. He had the entree to no girl's home. And of course, I, a stranger in this new world, was similarly circumstanced. But, further, Louis and I were unable to go to dancing-schools, or to public dances, which were very good places for getting acquainted. We didn't have the money. He was a blacksmith's apprentice, and was earning but slightly more than I. We both lived at home and paid our way. When we had done this, and bought our cigarettes, and the inevitable clothes and shoes, there remained to each of us, for personal spending, a sum that varied between seventy cents and a dollar for the week. We whacked this up, shared it, and sometimes loaned all of what was left of it when one of us needed it for some more gorgeous girl-adventure, such as car-fare out to Blair's Park and back — twenty cents, bang, just like that; and ice-cream for two — thirty cents; or tamales in a tamale-parlour, which came cheaper and which for two cost only twenty cents.

I did not mind this money meagreness. The disdain I had learned for money from the oyster pirates had never left me. I didn't care over-weeningly for it for personal gratification; and in my philosophy I completed the circle, finding myself as equable with the lack of a ten-cent piece as I was with the squandering of scores of dollars in calling all men and hangers-on up to the bar to drink with me.

But how to get a girl? There was no girl's home to which Louis could take me and where I might be introduced to girls. I knew none. And Louis' several girls he wanted for himself; and anyway, in the very human nature of boys' and girls' ways, he couldn't turn any of them over to me. He did persuade them to bring girl-friends for me; but I found them weak sisters, pale and ineffectual alongside the choice specimens he had.

"You'll have to do like I did," he said finally. "I got these by getting them. You'll have to get one the same way."

And he initiated me. It must be remembered that Louis and I were hard situated. We really had to struggle to pay our board and maintain a decent appearance. We met each other in the evening, after the day's work, on the street corner, or in a little candy store on a side street, our sole frequenting-place. Here we bought our cigarettes, and, occasionally, a nickel's worth of "red-hots." (Oh, yes; Louis and I unblushingly ate candy — all we could get. Neither of us drank. Neither of us ever went into a saloon.)

But the girl. In quite primitive fashion, as Louis advised me, I was to select her and make myself acquainted with her. We strolled the streets in the early evenings. The girls, like us, strolled in pairs. And strolling girls will look at strolling boys who look. (And to this day, in any town, city, or village, in which I, in my middle age, find myself, I look on with the eye trained of old experience, and watch the sweet innocent game played by the strolling boys and girls who just must stroll when the spring and summer evenings call.)

The trouble was that in this Arcadian phase of my history, I, who had come through, case-hardened, from the other side of life, was timid and bashful. Again and again Louis nerved me up. But I didn't know girls. They were strange and wonderful to me after my precocious man's life. I failed of the bold front and the necessary forwardness when the crucial moment came.

Then Louis would show me how — a certain, eloquent glance of eye, a smile, a daring, a lifted hat, a spoken word, hesitancies, giggles, coy nervousnesses — and, behold, Louis acquainted and nodding me up to be introduced. But when we paired off to stroll along boy and girl together, I noted that Louis had invariably picked the good-looker and left to me the little lame sister.

I improved, of course, after experiences too numerous to enter upon, so that there were divers girls to whom I could lift my hat and who would walk beside me in the early evenings. But girl's love did not immediately come to me. I was excited, interested, and I pursued the quest. And the thought of drink never entered my mind. Some of Louis' and my adventures have since given me serious pause when casting sociological generalisations. But it was all good and innocently youthful, and I learned one generalisation, biological rather than sociological, namely, that the "Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under their skins."

And before long I learned girl's love, all the dear fond deliciousness of it, all the glory and the wonder. I shall call her Haydee. She was between fifteen and sixteen. Her little skirt reached her shoe-tops. We sat side by side in a Salvation Army meeting. She was not a convert, nor was her aunt who sat on the other side of her, and who, visiting from the country where at that time the Salvation Army was not, had dropped in to the meeting for half an hour out of curiosity. And Louis sat beside me and observed — I do believe he did no more than observe, because Haydee was not his style of girl.

We did not speak, but in that great half-hour we glanced shyly at each other, and shyly avoided or as shyly returned and met each other's glances more than several times. She had a slender oval face. Her brown eyes were beautiful. Her nose was a dream, as was her sweet-lipped, petulant-hinting mouth. She wore a tam-o'-shanter, and I thought her brown hair the prettiest shade of brown I had ever seen. And from that single experience of half an hour I have ever since been convinced of the reality of love at first sight.

All too soon the aunt and Haydee departed. (This is permissible at any stage of a Salvation Army meeting.) I was no longer interested in the meeting, and, after an appropriate interval of a couple of minutes or less, started to leave with Louis. As we passed out, at the back of the hall a woman recognised me with her eyes, arose, and followed me. I shall not describe her. She was of my own kind and friendship of the old time on the water-front. When Nelson was shot, he had died in her arms, and she knew me as his one comrade. And she must tell me how Nelson had died, and I did want to know; so I went with her across the width of life from dawning boy's love for a brown-haired girl in a tam-o'-shanter back to the old sad savagery I had known.

And when I had heard the tale, I hurried away to find Louis, fearing that I had lost my first love with the first glimpse of her. But Louis was dependable. Her name was — Haydee. He knew where she lived. Each day she passed the blacksmith's shop where he worked, going to or from the Lafayette School. Further, he had seen her on occasion with Ruth, another schoolgirl, and, still further, Nita, who sold us red-hots at the candy store, was a friend of Ruth. The thing to do was to go around to the candy store and see if we could get Nita to give a note to Ruth to give to Haydee. If this could be arranged, all I had to do was write the note.

And it so happened. And in stolen half-hours of meeting I came to know all the sweet madness of boy's love and girl's love. So far as it goes it is not the biggest love in the world, but I do dare to assert that it is the sweetest. Oh, as I look back on it! Never did girl have more innocent boy-lover than I who had been so wicked-wise and violent beyond my years. I didn't know the first thing about girls. I, who had been hailed Prince of the Oyster Pirates, who could go anywhere in the world as a man amongst men; who could sail boats, lay aloft in black and storm, or go into the toughest hang-outs in sailor town and play my part in any rough-house that started or call all hands to the bar — I didn't know the first thing I might say or do with this slender little chit of a girl-woman whose scant skirt just reached her shoe-tops and who was as abysmally ignorant of life as I was, or thought I was, profoundly wise.

I remember we sat on a bench in the starlight. There was fully a foot of space between us. We slightly faced each other, our near elbows on the back of the bench; and once or twice our elbows just touched. And all the time, deliriously happy, talking in the gentlest and most delicate terms that might not offend her sensitive ears, I was cudgelling my brains in an effort to divine what I was expected to do. What did girls expect of boys, sitting on a bench and tentatively striving to find out what love was? What did she expect me to do? Was I expected to kiss her? Did she expect me to try? And if she did expect me, and I didn't what would she think of me?

Ah, she was wiser than I — I know it now — the little innocent girl-woman in her shoe-top skirt. She had known boys all her life. She encouraged me in the ways a girl may. Her gloves were off and in one hand, and I remember, lightly and daringly, in mock reproof for something I had said, how she tapped my lips with a tiny flirt of those gloves. I was like to swoon with delight. It was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to me. And I remember yet the faint scent that clung to those gloves and that I breathed in the moment they touched my lips.

Then came the agony of apprehension and doubt. Should I imprison in my hand that little hand with the dangling, scented gloves which had just tapped my lips? Should I dare to kiss her there and then, or slip my arm around her waist? Or dared I even sit closer?

Well, I didn’t dare. I did nothing. I merely continued to sit there and love with all my soul. And when we parted that evening I had not kissed her. I do remember the first time I kissed her, on another evening, at parting — a mighty moment, when I took all my heart of courage and dared. We never succeeded in managing more than a dozen stolen meetings, and we kissed perhaps a dozen times — as boys and girls kiss, briefly and innocently, and wonderingly. We never went anywhere — not even to a matinee. We once shared together five cents worth of red-hots. But I have always fondly believed that she loved me. I know I loved her; and I dreamed day-dreams of her for a year and more, and the memory of her is very dear.

CHAPTER XIX

When I was with people who did not drink, I never thought of drinking. Louis did not drink. Neither he nor I could afford it; but, more significant than that, we had no desire to drink. We were healthy, normal, non-alcoholic. Had we been alcoholic, we would have drunk whether or not we could have afforded it.

Each night, after the day’s work, washed up, clothes changed, and supper eaten, we met on the street corner or in the little candy store. But the warm fall weather passed, and on bitter nights of frost or damp nights of drizzle, the street corner was not a comfortable meeting-place. And the candy store was unheated. Nita, or whoever waited on the counter, between waitings lurked in a back living-room that was heated. We were not admitted to this room, and in the store it was as cold as out-of-doors.

Louis and I debated the situation. There was only one solution: the saloon, the congregating-place of men, the place where men hobnobbed with John Barleycorn. Well do I remember the damp and draughty evening, shivering without overcoats because we could not afford them, that Louis and I started out to select our saloon. Saloons are always warm and comfortable. Now Louis and I did not go into this saloon because we wanted a drink. Yet we knew that saloons were not charitable institutions. A man could not make a lounging-place of a saloon without occasionally buying something over the bar.

Our dimes and nickels were few. We could ill spare any of them when they were so potent in paying car-fare for oneself and a girl. (We never paid car-fare when by ourselves, being content to walk.) So, in this saloon, we desired to make the most of our expenditure. We called for a deck of cards and sat down at a table and played euchre for an hour, in which time Louis treated once, and I treated once, to beer — the cheapest drink, ten cents for two. Prodigal! How we grudged it!

We studied the men who came into the place. They seemed all middle-aged and elderly work-men, most of them Germans, who flocked by themselves in old-acquaintance groups, and with whom we could have only the slightest contacts. We voted against that saloon, and went out cast down with the knowledge that we had lost an evening and wasted twenty cents for beer that we didn’t want.

We made several more tries on succeeding nights, and at last found our way into the National, a saloon on Tenth and Franklin. Here was a more congenial crowd. Here Louis met a fellow or two he knew, and here I met fellows I had gone to school with when a little lad in knee pants. We talked of old days, and of what had become of this fellow, and what that fellow was doing now, and of course we talked it over drinks. They treated, and we drank. Then, according to the code of drinking, we had to treat. It hurt, for it meant forty to fifty cents a clatter.

We felt quite enlivened when the short evening was over; but at the same time we were bankrupt. Our week's spending money was gone. We decided that that was the saloon for us, and we agreed to be more circumspect thereafter in our drink-buying. Also, we had to economise for the rest of the week. We didn't even have car-fare. We were compelled to break an engagement with two girls from West Oakland with whom we were attempting to be in love. They were to meet us up town the next evening, and we hadn't the car-fare necessary to take them home. Like many others financially embarrassed, we had to disappear for a time from the gay whirl — at least until Saturday night pay-day. So Louis and I rendezvoused in a livery stable, and with coats buttoned and chattering teeth played euchre and casino until the time of our exile was over.

Then we returned to the National Saloon and spent no more than we could decently avoid spending for the comfort and warmth. Sometimes we had mishaps, as when one got stuck twice in succession in a five-handed game of Sancho Pedro for the drinks. Such a disaster meant anywhere between twenty-five to eighty cents, just according to how many of the players ordered ten-cent drinks. But we could temporarily escape the evil effects of such disaster, by virtue of an account we ran behind the bar. Of course, this only set back the day of reckoning and seduced us into spending more than we would have spent on a cash basis. (When I left Oakland suddenly for the adventure-path the following spring, I well remember I owed that saloon-keeper one dollar and seventy cents. Long after, when I returned, he was gone. I still owe him that dollar and seventy cents, and if he should chance to read these lines I want him to know that I'll pay on demand.)

The foregoing incident of the National Saloon I have given in order again to show the lure, or draw, or compulsion, toward John Barleycorn in society as at present organised with saloons on all the corners. Louis and I were two healthy youths. We didn’t want to drink. We couldn’t afford to drink. And yet we were driven by the circumstance of cold and rainy weather to seek refuge in a saloon, where we had to spend part of our pitiful dole for drink. It will be urged by some critics that we might have gone to the Y.M.C.A., to night school, and to the social circles and homes of young people. The only reply is that we didn’t. That is the irrefragable fact. We didn’t. And to-day, at this moment, there are hundreds of thousands of boys like Louis and me doing just what Louis and I did with John Barleycorn, warm and comfortable, beckoning and welcoming, tucking their arms in his and beginning to teach them his mellow ways.

CHAPTER XX

The jute mills failed of its agreement to increase my pay to a dollar and a quarter a day, and I, a free-born American boy whose direct ancestors had fought in all the wars from the old pre-Revolutionary Indian wars down, exercised my sovereign right of free contract by quitting the job.

I was still resolved to settle down, and I looked about me. One thing was clear. Unskilled labour didn't pay. I must learn a trade, and I decided on electricity. The need for electricians was constantly growing. But how to become an electrician? I hadn't the money to go to a technical school or university; besides, I didn't think much of schools. I was a practical man in a practical world. Also, I still believed in the old myths which were the heritage of the American boy when I was a boy.

A canal boy could become a President. Any boy who took employment with any firm could, by thrift, energy, and sobriety, learn the business and rise from position to position until he was taken in as a junior partner. After that the senior partnership was only a matter of time. Very often — so ran the myth — the boy, by reason of his steadiness and application, married his employ's daughter. By this time I had been encouraged to such faith in myself in the matter of girls that I was quite certain I would marry my employer's daughter. There wasn't a doubt of it. All the little boys in the myths did it as soon as they were old enough.

So I bade farewell for ever to the adventure-path, and went out to the power plant of one of our Oakland street railways. I saw the superintendent himself, in a private office so fine that it almost stunned me. But I talked straight up. I told him I wanted to become a practical electrician, that I was unafraid of work, that I was used to hard work, and that all he had to do was look at me to see I was fit and strong. I told him that I wanted to begin right at the bottom and work up, that I wanted to devote my life to this one occupation and this one employment.

The superintendent beamed as he listened. He told me that I was the right stuff for success, and that he believed in encouraging American youth that wanted to rise. Why, employers were always on the lookout for young fellows like me, and alas, they found them all too rarely. My ambition was fine and worthy, and he would see to it that I got my chance. (And as I listened with swelling heart, I wondered if it was his daughter I was to marry.)

“Before you can go out on the road and learn the more complicated and higher details of the profession,” he said, “you will, of course, have to work in the car-house with the men who install and repair the motors. (By this time I was sure that it was his daughter, and I was wondering how much stock he might own in the company.)

“But,” he said, “as you yourself so plainly see, you couldn’t expect to begin as a helper to the car-house electricians. That will come when you have worked up to it. You will really begin at the bottom. In the car-house your first employment will be sweeping up, washing the windows, keeping things clean. And after you have shown yourself satisfactory at that, then you may become a helper to the car-house electricians.”

I didn’t see how sweeping and scrubbing a building was any preparation for the trade of electrician; but I did know that in the books all the boys started with the most menial tasks and by making good ultimately won to the ownership of the whole concern.

“When shall I come to work?” I asked, eager to launch on this dazzling career.

“But,” said the superintendent, “as you and I have already agreed, you must begin at the bottom. Not immediately can you in any capacity enter the car-house. Before that you must pass through the engine-room as an oiler.”

My heart went down slightly and for the moment as I saw the road lengthen between his daughter and me; then it rose again. I would be a better electrician with knowledge of steam engines. As an oiler in the great engine-room I was confident that few things concerning steam would escape me. Heavens! My career shone more dazzling than ever.

“When shall I come to work?” I asked gratefully.

“But,” said the superintendent, “you could not expect to enter immediately into the engine-room. There must be preparation for that. And through the fire-room, of course. Come, you see the matter clearly, I know. And you will see that even the mere handling of coal is a scientific matter and not to be sneered at. Do you know that we weigh every pound of coal we burn? Thus, we learn the value of the coal we buy; we know to a tee the last penny of cost of every item of production, and we learn which firemen are the most wasteful, which firemen, out of stupidity or carelessness, get the least out of the coal they fire.” The superintendent beamed again. “You see how very important the little matter of coal is, and by as much as you learn of this little matter you will become that much better a workman — more valuable to us, more valuable to yourself. Now, are you prepared to begin?"

"Any time," I said valiantly. "The sooner the better."

"Very well," he answered. "You will come to-morrow morning at seven o'clock."

I was taken out and shown my duties. Also, I was told the terms of my employment — a ten-hour day, every day in the month including Sundays and holidays, with one day off each month, with a salary of thirty dollars a month. It wasn't exciting. Years before, at the cannery, I had earned a dollar a day for a ten-hour day. I consoled myself with the thought that the reason my earning capacity had not increased with my years and strength was because I had remained an unskilled labourer. But it was different now. I was beginning to work for skill, for a trade, for career and fortune, and the superintendent's daughter.

And I was beginning in the right way — right at the beginning. That was the thing. I was passing coal to the firemen, who shovelled it into the furnaces, where its energy was transformed into steam, which, in the engine-room, was transformed into the electricity with which the electricians worked. This passing coal was surely the very beginning-unless the superintendent should take it into his head to send me to work in the mines from which the coal came in order to get a completer understanding of the genesis of electricity for street railways.

Work! I, who had worked with men, found that I didn't know the first thing about real work. A ten-hour day! I had to pass coal for the day and night shifts, and, despite working through the noon-hour, I never finished my task before eight at night. I was working a twelve-to thirteen-hour day, and I wasn't being paid overtime as in the cannery.

I might as well give the secret away right here. I was doing the work of two men. Before me, one mature able-bodied labourer had done the day shift and another equally mature able-bodied labourer had done the night-shift. They had received forty dollars a month each. The superintendent, bent on an economical administration, had persuaded me to do the work of both men for thirty dollars a month. I thought he was making an electrician of me. In truth and fact, he was saving fifty dollars a month operating expenses to the company.

But I didn’t know I was displacing two men. Nobody told me. On the contrary, the superintendent warned everybody not to tell me. How valiantly I went at it that first day. I worked at top speed, filling the iron wheelbarrow with coal, running it on the scales and weighing the load, then trundling it into the fire-room and dumping it on the plates before the fires.

Work! I did more than the two men whom I had displaced. They had merely wheeled in the coal and dumped it on the plates. But while I did this for the day coal, the night coal I had to pile against the wall of the fire-room. Now the fire-room was small. It had been planned for a night coal-passer. So I had to pile the night coal higher and higher, buttressing up the heap with stout planks. Toward the top of the heap I had to handle the coal a second time, tossing it up with a shovel.

I dripped with sweat, but I never ceased from my stride, though I could feel exhaustion coming on. By ten o’clock in the morning, so much of my body’s energy had I consumed, I felt hungry and snatched a thick double-slice of bread and butter from my dinner pail. This I devoured, standing, grimed with coal-dust, my knees trembling under me. By eleven o’clock, in this fashion I had consumed my whole lunch. But what of it? I realised that it would enable me to continue working through the noon hour. And I worked all the afternoon. Darkness came on, and I worked under the electric lights. The day fireman went off and the night fireman came on. I plugged away.

At half-past eight, famished, tottering, I washed up, changed my clothes, and dragged my weary body to the car. It was three miles to where I lived, and I had received a pass with the stipulation that I could sit down as long as there were no paying passengers in need of a seat. As I sank into a corner outside seat I prayed that no passenger might require my seat. But the car filled up, and, half-way in, a woman came on board, and there was no seat for her. I started to get up, and to my astonishment found that I could not. With the chill wind blowing on me, my spent body had stiffened into the seat. It took me the rest of the run in to unkink my complaining joints and muscles and get into a standing position on the lower step. And when the car stopped at my corner I nearly fell to the ground when I stepped off.

I hobbled two blocks to the house and limped into the kitchen. While my mother started to cook, I plunged into bread and butter; but before my appetite was appeased, or the steak fried, I was sound asleep. In vain my mother strove to shake me awake enough to eat the meat. Failing in this, with the assistance of my father she managed to get me to my room, where I collapsed dead asleep on the bed. They undressed me and covered me up. In the morning came the agony of being awakened. I was terribly sore, and, worst of all, my wrists were swelling. But I made up for my lost supper, eating an enormous breakfast, and when I hobbled to catch my car I carried a lunch twice as big as the one the day before.

Work! Let any youth just turned eighteen try to out-shovel two man-grown coal-shovellers. Work! Long before midday I had eaten the last scrap of my huge lunch. But I was resolved to show them what a husky young fellow determined to rise could do. The worst of it was that my wrists were swelling and going back on me. There are few who do not know the pain of walking on a sprained ankle. Then imagine the pain of shovelling coal and trundling a loaded wheelbarrow with two sprained wrists.

Work! More than once I sank down on the coal where no one could see me, and cried with rage, and mortification, and exhaustion, and despair. That second day was my hardest, and all that enabled me to survive it and get in the last of the night coal at the end of thirteen hours was the day fireman, who bound both my wrists with broad leather straps. So tightly were they buckled that they were like slightly flexible plaster casts. They took the stresses and pressures which hitherto had been borne by my wrists, and they were so tight that there was no room for the inflammation to rise in the sprains.

And in this fashion I continued to learn to be an electrician. Night after night I limped home, fell asleep before I could eat my supper, and was helped into bed and undressed. Morning after morning, always with huger lunches in my dinner pail, I limped out of the house on my way to work.

I no longer read my library books. I made no dates with the girls. I was a proper work beast. I worked, and ate, and slept, while my mind slept all the time. The whole thing was a nightmare. I worked every day, including Sunday, and I looked far ahead to my one day off at the end of a month, resolved to lie abed all that day and just sleep and rest up.

The strangest part of this experience was that I never took a drink nor thought of taking a drink. Yet I knew that men under hard pressure almost invariably drank. I had seen them do it, and in the past had often done it myself. But so sheerly non-alcoholic was I that it never entered my mind that a drink might be good for me. I instance this to show how entirely lacking from my make-up was any predisposition toward alcohol. And the point of this instance is that later on, after more years had passed, contact with John Barleycorn at last did induce in me the alcoholic desire.

I had often noticed the day fireman staring at me in a curious way. At last, one day, he spoke. He began by swearing me to secrecy. He had been warned by the superintendent not to tell me, and in telling me he was risking his job. He told me of the day coal-passer and the night coal-passer, and of the wages they had received. I was doing for thirty dollars a month what they had received eighty dollars for doing. He would have told me sooner, the fireman said, had he not been so certain that I would break down under the work and quit. As it was, I was killing myself, and all to no good purpose. I was merely cheapening the price of labour, he argued, and keeping two men out of a job.

Being an American boy, and a proud American boy, I did not immediately quit. This was foolish of me, I know; but I resolved to continue the work long enough to prove to the superintendent that I could do it without breaking down. Then I would quit, and he would realise what a fine young fellow he had lost.

All of which I faithfully and foolishly did. I worked on until the time came when I got in the last of the night coal by six o'clock. Then I quit the job of learning electricity by doing more than two men's work for a boy's wages, went home, and proceeded to sleep the clock around.

Fortunately, I had not stayed by the job long enough to injure myself — though I was compelled to wear straps on my wrists for a year afterward. But the effect of this work orgy in which I had indulged was to sicken me with work. I just wouldn't work. The thought of work was repulsive. I didn't care if I never settled down. Learning a trade could go hang. It was a whole lot better to royster and frolic over the world in the way I had previously done. So I headed out on the adventure-path again, starting to tramp East by beating my way on the railroads.

CHAPTER XXI

But behold! As soon as I went out on the adventure-path I met John Barleycorn again. I moved through a world of strangers, and the act of drinking together made one acquainted with men and opened the way to adventures. It might be in a saloon with jingled townsmen, or with a genial railroad man well lighted up and armed with pocket flasks, or with a bunch of alki stiffs in a hang-out. Yes; and it might be in a prohibition state, such as Iowa was in 1894, when I wandered up the main street of Des Moines and was variously invited by strangers into various blind pigs — I remember drinking in barber-shops, plumbing establishments, and furniture stores.

Always it was John Barleycorn. Even a tramp, in those halcyon days, could get most frequently drunk. I remember, inside the prison at Buffalo, how some of us got magnificently jingled, and how, on the streets of Buffalo after our release, another jingle was financed with pennies begged on the main-drag.

I had no call for alcohol, but when I was with those who drank, I drank with them. I insisted on travelling or loafing with the livest, keenest men, and it was just these live, keen ones that did most of the drinking. They were the more comradely men, the more venturous, the more individual. Perhaps it was too much temperament that made them turn from the commonplace and humdrum to find relief in the lying and fantastic sureties of John Barleycorn. Be that as it may, the men I liked best, desired most to be with, were invariably to be found in John Barleycorn’s company.

In the course of my tramping over the United States I achieved a new concept. As a tramp, I was behind the scenes of society — aye, and down in the cellar. I could watch the machinery work. I saw the wheels of the social machine go around, and I learned that the dignity of manual labour wasn’t what I had been told it was by the teachers, preachers, and politicians. The men without trades were helpless cattle. If one learned a trade, he was compelled to belong to a union in order to work at his trade. And his union was compelled to bully and slug the employers’ unions in order to hold up wages or hold down hours. The employers’ unions like-wise bullied and slugged. I couldn’t see any dignity at all. And when a workman got old, or had an accident, he was thrown into the scrap-heap like any worn-out machine. I saw too many of this sort who were making anything but dignified ends of life.

So my new concept was that manual labour was undignified, and that it didn’t pay. No trade for me, was my decision, and no superintendent’s daughters. And no criminality, I also decided. That would be almost as disastrous as to be a labourer. Brains paid, not brawn, and I resolved never again to offer my muscles for sale in the brawn market. Brain, and brain only, would I sell.

I returned to California with the firm intention of developing my brain. This meant school education. I had gone through the grammar school long ago, so I entered the Oakland High School. To pay my way I worked as a janitor. My sister helped me, too; and I was not above mowing anybody’s lawn or taking up and beating carpets when I had half a day to spare. I was working to get away from work, and I buckled down to it with a grim realisation of the paradox.

Boy and girl love was left behind, and, along with it, Haydee and Louis Shattuck, and the early evening strolls. I hadn’t the time. I joined the Henry Clay Debating Society. I was received into the homes of some of the members, where I met nice girls whose skirts reached the ground. I dallied with little home clubs wherein we discussed poetry and art and the nuances of grammar. I joined the socialist local where we studied and orated political economy, philosophy, and politics. I kept half a dozen membership cards working in the free library and did an immense amount of collateral reading.

And for a year and a half on end I never took a drink, nor thought of taking a drink. I hadn’t the time, and I certainly did not have the inclination. Between my janitor-work, my studies, and innocent amusements such as chess, I hadn’t a moment to spare. I was discovering a new world, and such was the passion of my exploration that the old world of John Barleycorn held no inducements for me.

Come to think of it, I did enter a saloon. I went to see Johnny Heinhold in the Last Chance, and I went to borrow money. And right here is another phase of John Barleycorn. Saloon-keepers are notoriously good fellows. On an average they perform vastly greater generosities than do business men. When I simply had to have ten dollars, desperate, with no place to turn, I went to Johnny Heinhold. Several years had passed since I had been in his place or spent a cent across his bar. And when I went to borrow the ten dollars I didn’t buy a drink, either. And Johnny Heinhold let me have the ten dollars without security or interest.

More than once, in the brief days of my struggle for an education, I went to Johnny Heinhold to borrow money. When I entered the university, I borrowed forty dollars from him, without interest, without security, without buying a drink. And yet — and here is the point, the custom, and the code — in the days of my prosperity, after the lapse of years, I have gone out of my way by many a long block to spend across Johnny Heinhold’s bar deferred interest on the various loans. Not that Johnny Heinhold asked me to do it, or expected me to do it. I did it, as I have said, in obedience to the code I had learned along with all the other things connected with John Barleycorn. In distress, when a man has no other place to turn, when he hasn’t the slightest bit of security which a savage-hearted pawn-broker would consider, he can go to some saloon-keeper he knows. Gratitude is inherently human. When the man so helped has money again, depend upon it that a portion will be spent across the bar of the saloon-keeper who befriended him.

Why, I recollect the early days of my writing career, when the small sums of money I earned from the magazines came with tragic irregularity, while at the same time I was staggering along with a growing family — a wife, children, a mother, a nephew, and my Mammy Jennie and her old husband fallen on evil days. There were two places at which I could borrow money; a barber shop and a saloon. The barber charged me five per cent. per month in advance. That is to say, when I borrowed one hundred dollars, he handed me ninety-five. The other five dollars he retained as advance interest for the first month. And on the second month I paid him five dollars more, and continued so to do each month until I made a ten strike with the editors and lifted the loan.

The other place to which I came in trouble was the saloon. This saloon-keeper I had known by sight for a couple of years. I had never spent my money in his saloon, and even when I borrowed from him I didn’t spend any money. Yet never did he refuse me any sum I asked of him. Unfortunately, before I became prosperous, he moved away to another city. And to this day I regret that he is gone. It is the code I have learned. The right thing to do, and the thing I’d do right now did I know where he is, would be to drop in on occasion and spend a few dollars across his bar for old sake’s sake and gratitude.

This is not to exalt saloon-keepers. I have written it to exalt the power of John Barleycorn and to illustrate one more of the myriad ways by which a man is brought in contact with John Barleycorn until in the end he finds he cannot get along without him.

But to return to the run of my narrative. Away from the adventure-path, up to my ears in study, every moment occupied, I lived oblivious to John Barleycorn's existence. Nobody about me drank. If any had drunk, and had they offered it to me, I surely would have drunk. As it was, when I had spare moments I spent them playing chess, or going with nice girls who were themselves students, or in riding a bicycle whenever I was fortunate enough to have it out of the pawnbroker's possession.

What I am insisting upon all the time is this: in me was not the slightest trace of alcoholic desire, and this despite the long and severe apprenticeship I had served under John Barleycorn. I had come back from the other side of life to be delighted with this Arcadian simplicity of student youths and student maidens. Also, I had found my way into the realm of the mind, and I was intellectually intoxicated. (Alas! as I was to learn at a later period, intellectual intoxication too, has its katzenjammer.)

CHAPTER XXII

Three years was the time required to go through the high school. I grew impatient. Also, my schooling was becoming financially impossible. At such rate I could not last out, and I did greatly want to go to the state university. When I had done a year of high school, I decided to attempt a short cut. I borrowed the money and paid to enter the senior class of a “cramming joint” or academy. I was scheduled to graduate right into the university at the end of four months, thus saving two years.

And how I did cram! I had two years’ new work to do in a third of a year. For five weeks I crammed, until simultaneous quadratic equations and chemical formulas fairly oozed from my ears. And then the master of the academy took me aside. He was very sorry, but he was compelled to give me back my tuition fee and to ask me to leave the school. It wasn’t a matter of scholarship. I stood well in my classes, and did he graduate me into the university he was confident that in that institution I would continue to stand well. The trouble was that tongues were gossiping about my case. What! In four months accomplished two years’ work! It would be a scandal, and the universities were becoming severer in their treatment of accredited prep schools. He couldn’t afford such a scandal, therefore I must gracefully depart.

I did. And I paid back the borrowed money, and gritted my teeth, and started to cram by myself. There were three months yet before the university entrance examinations. Without laboratories, without coaching, sitting in my bedroom, I proceeded to compress that two years’ work into three months and to keep reviewed on the previous year’s work.

Nineteen hours a day I studied. For three months I kept this pace, only breaking it on several occasions. My body grew weary, my mind grew weary, but I stayed with it. My eyes grew weary and began to twitch, but they did not break down. Perhaps, toward the last, I got a bit dotty. I know that at the time I was confident, I had discovered the formula for squaring the circle; but I resolutely deferred the working of it out until after the examinations. Then I would show them.

Came the several days of the examinations, during which time I scarcely closed my eyes in sleep, devoting every moment to cramming and reviewing. And when I turned in my last examination paper I was in full possession of a splendid case of brain-fag. I didn’t want to see a book. I didn’t want to think or to lay eyes on anybody who was liable to think.

There was but one prescription for such a condition, and I gave it to myself — the adventure-path. I didn’t wait to learn the result of my examinations. I stowed a roll of blankets and some cold food into a borrowed whitehall boat and set sail. Out of the Oakland Estuary I drifted on the last of an early morning ebb, caught the first of the flood up bay, and raced along with a spanking breeze. San Pablo Bay was smoking, and the Carquinez Straits off the Selby Smelter were smoking, as I picked up ahead and left astern the old landmarks I had first learned with Nelson in the unreefer Reindeer.

Benicia showed before me. I opened the bight of Turner’s Shipyard, rounded the Solano wharf, and surged along abreast of the patch of tules and the clustering fishermen’s arks where in the old days I had lived and drunk deep.

And right here something happened to me, the gravity of which I never dreamed for many a long year to come. I had had no intention of stopping at Benicia. The tide favoured, the wind was fair and howling — glorious sailing for a sailor. Bull Head and Army Points showed ahead, marking the entrance to Suisun Bay which I knew was smoking. And yet, when I laid eyes on those fishing arks lying in the water-front tules, without debate, on the instant, I put down my tiller, came in on the sheet, and headed for the shore. On the instant, out of the profound of my brain-fag, I knew what I wanted. I wanted to drink. I wanted to get drunk.

The call was imperative. There was no uncertainty about it. More than anything else in the world, my frayed and frazzled mind wanted surcease from weariness in the way it knew surcease would come. And right here is the point. For the first time in my life I consciously, deliberately, desired to get drunk. It was a new, a totally different manifestation of John Barleycorn’s power. It was not a body need for alcohol. It was a mental desire. My over-worked and jaded mind wanted to forget.

And here the point is drawn to its sharpest. Granted my prodigious brain-fag, nevertheless, had I never drunk in the past, the thought would never have entered my mind to get drunk now. Beginning with physical intolerance for alcohol, for years drinking only for the sake of comradeship and because alcohol was everywhere on the adventure-path, I had now reached the stage where my brain cried out, not merely for a drink, but for a drunk. And had I not been so long used to alcohol, my brain would not have so cried out. I should have sailed on past Bull Head, and in the smoking white of Suisun Bay, and in the wine of wind that filled my sail and poured through me, I should have forgotten my weary brain and rested and refreshed it.

So I sailed in to shore, made all fast, and hurried up among the arks. Charley Le Grant fell on my neck. His wife, Lizzie, folded me to her capacious breast. Billy Murphy, and Joe Lloyd, and all the survivors of the old guard, got around me and their arms around me. Charley seized the can and started for Jorgensen's saloon across the railroad tracks. That meant beer. I wanted whisky, so I called after him to bring a flask.

Many times that flask journeyed across the railroad tracks and back. More old friends of the old free and easy times dropped in, fishermen, Greeks, and Russians, and French. They took turns in treating, and treated all around in turn again. They came and went, but I stayed on and drank with all. I guzzled. I swilled. I ran the liquor down and joyed as the maggots mounted in my brain.

And Clam came in, Nelson's partner before me, handsome as ever, but more reckless, half insane, burning himself out with whisky. He had just had a quarrel with his partner on the sloop Gazelle, and knives had been drawn, and blows struck, and he was bent on maddening the fever of the memory with more whisky. And while we downed it, we remembered Nelson and that he had stretched out his great shoulders for the last long sleep in this very town of Benicia; and we wept over the memory of him, and remembered only the good things of him, and sent out the flask to be filled and drank again.

They wanted me to stay over, but through the open door I could see the brave wind on the water, and my ears were filled with the roar of it. And while I forgot that I had plunged into the books nineteen hours a day for three solid months, Charley Le Grant shifted my outfit into a big Columbia River salmon boat. He added charcoal and a fisherman's brazier, a coffee pot and frying pan, and the coffee and the meat, and a black bass fresh from the water that day.

They had to help me down the rickety wharf and into the salmon boat. Likewise they stretched my boom and sprit until the sail set like a board. Some feared to set the sprit; but I insisted, and Charley had no doubts. He knew me of old, and knew that I could sail as long as I could see. They cast off my painter. I put the tiller up, filled away before it, and with dizzy eyes checked and steadied the boat on her course and waved farewell.

The tide had turned, and the fierce ebb, running in the teeth of a fiercer wind, kicked up a stiff, upstanding sea. Suisun Bay was white with wrath and sea-lump. But a salmon boat can sail, and I knew how to sail a salmon boat. So I drove her into it, and through it, and across, and maundered aloud and chanted my disdain for all the books and schools. Cresting seas filled me a foot or so with water, but I laughed at it sloshing about my feet, and chanted my disdain for the wind and the water. I hailed myself a master of life, riding on the back of the unleashed elements, and John Barleycorn rode with me. Amid dissertations on mathematics and philosophy and spoutings and quotations, I sang all the old songs learned in the days when I went from the cannery to the oyster boats to be a pirate — such songs as: "Black Lulu," "Flying Cloud," "Treat my Daughter Kind-i-ly," "The Boston Burglar," "Come all you Rambling, Gambling Men," "I Wisht I was a Little Bird," "Shenandoah," and "Ranzo, Boys, Ranzo."

Hours afterward, in the fires of sunset, where the Sacramento and the San Joaquin tumble their muddy floods together, I took the New York Cut-Off, skimmed across the smooth land-locked water past Black Diamond, on into the San Joaquin, and on to Antioch, where, somewhat sobered and magnificently hungry, I laid alongside a big potato sloop that had a familiar rig. Here were old friends aboard, who fried my black bass in olive oil. Then, too, there was a meaty fisherman's stew, delicious with garlic, and crusty Italian bread without butter, and all washed down with pint mugs of thick and heady claret.

My salmon boat was a-soak, but in the snug cabin of the sloop dry blankets and a dry bunk were mine; and we lay and smoked and yarned of old days, while overhead the wind screamed through the rigging and taut halyards drummed against the mast.

CHAPTER XXIII

My cruise in the salmon boat lasted a week, and I returned ready to enter the university. During the week's cruise I did not drink again. To accomplish this I was compelled to avoid looking up old friends, for as ever the adventure-path was beset with John Barleycorn. I had wanted the drink that first day, and in the days that followed I did not want it. My tired brain had recuperated. I had no moral scruples in the matter. I was not ashamed nor sorry because of that first day's orgy at Benicia, and I thought no more about it, returning gladly to my books and studies.

Long years were to pass ere I looked back upon that day and realised its significance. At the time, and for a long time afterward, I was to think of it only as a frolic. But still later, in the slough of brain-fag and intellectual weariness, I was to remember and know the craving for the anodyne that resides in alcohol.

In the meantime, after this one relapse at Benicia, I went on with my abstemiousness, primarily because I didn't want to drink. And next, I was abstemious because my way led among books and students where no drinking was. Had I been out on the adventure-path, I should as a matter of course have been drinking. For that is the pity of the adventure-path, which is one of John Barleycorn's favourite stamping grounds.

I completed the first half of my freshman year, and in January of 1897 took up my courses for the second half. But the pressure from lack of money, plus a conviction that the university was not giving me all that I wanted in the time I could spare for it, forced me to leave. I was not very disappointed. For two years I had studied, and in those two years, what was far more valuable, I had done a prodigious amount of reading. Then, too, my grammar had improved. It is true, I had not yet learned that I must say "It is I"; but I no longer was guilty of a double negative in writing, though still prone to that error in excited speech.

I decided immediately to embark on my career. I had four preferences: first, music; second, poetry; third, the writing of philosophic, economic, and political essays; and, fourth, and last, and least, fiction writing. I resolutely cut out music as impossible, settled down in my bedroom, and tackled my second, third, and fourth choices simultaneously. Heavens, how I wrote! Never was there a creative fever such as mine from which the patient escaped fatal results. The way I worked was enough to soften my brain and send me to a mad-house. I wrote, I wrote everything — ponderous essays, scientific and sociological short stories, humorous verse, verse of all sorts from triolets and sonnets to blank verse tragedy and elephantine epics in Spenserian stanzas. On occasion I composed steadily, day after day, for fifteen hours a day. At times I forgot to eat, or refused to tear myself away from my passionate outpouring in order to eat.

And then there was the matter of typewriting. My brother-in-law owned a machine which he used in the day-time. In the night I was free to use it. That machine was a wonder. I could weep now as I recollect my wrestlings with it. It must have been a first model in the year one of the typewriter era. Its alphabet was all capitals. It was informed with an evil spirit. It obeyed no known laws of physics, and overthrew the hoary axiom that like things performed to like things produce like results. I'll swear that machine never did the same thing in the same way twice. Again and again it demonstrated that unlike actions produce like results.

How my back used to ache with it! Prior to that experience, my back had been good for every violent strain put upon it in a none too gentle career. But that typewriter proved to me that I had a pipe-stem for a back. Also, it made me doubt my shoulders. They ached as with rheumatism after every bout. The keys of that machine had to be hit so hard that to one outside the house it sounded like distant thunder or some one breaking up the furniture. I had to hit the keys so hard that I strained my first fingers to the elbows, while the ends of my fingers were blisters burst and blistered again. Had it been my machine I'd have operated it with a carpenter's hammer.

The worst of it was that I was actually typing my manuscripts at the same time I was trying to master that machine. It was a feat of physical endurance and a brain storm combined to type a thousand words, and I was composing thousands of words every day which just had to be typed for the waiting editors.

Oh, between the writing and the typewriting I was well a-weary. I had brain and nerve fag, and body fag as well, and yet the thought of drink never suggested itself. I was living too high to stand in need of an anodyne. All my waking hours, except those with that infernal typewriter, were spent in a creative heaven. And along with this I had no desire for drink because I still believed in many things — in the love of all men and women in the matter of man and woman love; in fatherhood; in human justice; in art — in the whole host of fond illusions that keep the world turning around.

But the waiting editors elected to keep on waiting. My manuscripts made amazing round-trip records between the Pacific and the Atlantic. It might have been the weirdness of the typewriting that prevented the editors from accepting at least one little offering of mine. I don’t know, and goodness knows the stuff I wrote was as weird as its typing. I sold my hard-bought school books for ridiculous sums to second-hand bookmen. I borrowed small sums of money wherever I could, and suffered my old father to feed me with the meagre returns of his failing strength.

It didn’t last long, only a few weeks, when I had to surrender and go to work. Yet I was unaware of any need for the drink anodyne. I was not disappointed. My career was retarded, that was all. Perhaps I did need further preparation. I had learned enough from the books to realise that I had only touched the hem of knowledge’s garment. I still lived on the heights. My waking hours, and most of the hours I should have used for sleep, were spent with the books.

CHAPTER XXIV

Out in the country, at the Belmont Academy, I went to work in a small, perfectly appointed steam laundry. Another fellow and myself did all the work from sorting and washing to ironing the white shirts, collars and cuffs, and the “fancy starch” of the wives of the professors. We worked like tigers, especially as summer came on and the academy boys took to the wearing of duck trousers. It consumes a dreadful lot of time to iron one pair of duck trousers. And there were so many pairs of them. We sweated our way through long sizzling weeks at a task that was never done; and many a night, while the students snored in bed, my partner and I toiled on under the electric light at steam mangle or ironing board.

The hours were long, the work was arduous, despite the fact that we became past masters in the art of eliminating waste motion. And I was receiving thirty dollars a month and board — a slight increase over my coal-shovelling and cannery days, at least to the extent of board, which cost my employer little (we ate in the kitchen), but which was to me the equivalent of twenty dollars a month. My robuster strength of added years, my increased skill, and all I had learned from the books, were responsible for this increase of twenty dollars. Judging by my rate of development, I might hope before I died to be a night watchman for sixty dollars a month, or a policeman actually receiving a hundred dollars with pickings.

So relentlessly did my partner and I spring into our work throughout the week that by Saturday night we were frazzled wrecks. I found myself in the old familiar work-beast condition, toiling longer hours than the horses toiled, thinking scarcely more frequent thoughts than horses think. The books were closed to me. I had brought a trunkful to the laundry, but found myself unable to read them. I fell asleep the moment I tried to read; and if I did manage to keep my eyes open for several pages, I could not remember the contents of those pages. I gave over attempts on heavy study, such as jurisprudence, political economy, and biology, and tried lighter stuff, such as history. I fell asleep. I tried literature, and fell asleep. And finally, when I fell asleep over lively novels, I gave up. I never succeeded in reading one book in all the time I spent in the laundry.

And when Saturday night came, and the week’s work was over until Monday morning, I knew only one desire besides the desire to sleep, and that was to get drunk. This was the second time in my life that I had heard the unmistakable call of John Barleycorn. The first time it had been because of brain-fag. But I had no over-worked brain now. On the contrary, all I knew was the dull numbness of a brain that was not worked at all. That was the trouble. My brain had become so alert and eager, so quickened by the wonder of the new world the books had discovered to it, that it now suffered all the misery of stagnancy and inaction.

And I, the long time intimate of John Barleycorn, knew just what he promised me — maggots of fancy, dreams of power, forgetfulness, anything and everything save whirling washers, revolving mangles, humming centrifugal wringers, and fancy starch and interminable processions of duck trousers moving in steam under my flying iron. And that's it. John Barleycorn makes his appeal to weakness and failure, to weariness and exhaustion. He is the easy way out. And he is lying all the time. He offers false strength to the body, false elevation to the spirit, making things seem what they are not and vastly fairer than what they are.

But it must not be forgotten that John Barleycorn is protean. As well as to weakness and exhaustion, does he appeal to too much strength, to superabundant vitality, to the ennui of idleness. He can tuck in his arm the arm of any man in any mood. He can throw the net of his lure over all men. He exchanges new lamps for old, the spangles of illusion for the drabs of reality, and in the end cheats all who traffic with him.

I didn't get drunk, however, for the simple reason that it was a mile and a half to the nearest saloon. And this, in turn, was because the call to get drunk was not very loud in my ears. Had it been loud, I would have travelled ten times the distance to win to the saloon. On the other hand, had the saloon been just around the corner, I should have got drunk. As it was, I would sprawl out in the shade on my one day of rest and dally with the Sunday papers. But I was too weary even for their froth. The comic supplement might bring a pallid smile to my face, and then I would fall asleep.

Although I did not yield to John Barleycorn while working in the laundry, a certain definite result was produced. I had heard the call, felt the gnaw of desire, yearned for the anodyne. I was being prepared for the stronger desire of later years.

And the point is that this development of desire was entirely in my brain. My body did not cry out for alcohol. As always, alcohol was repulsive to my body. When I was bodily weary from shovelling coal the thought of taking a drink had never flickered into my consciousness. When I was brain-wearied after taking the entrance examinations to the university, I promptly got drunk. At the laundry I was suffering physical exhaustion again, and physical exhaustion that was not nearly so profound as that of the coal-shovelling. But there was a difference. When I went coal-shovelling my mind had not yet awakened. Between that time and the laundry my mind had found the kingdom of the mind. While shovelling coal my mind was somnolent. While toiling in the laundry my mind, informed and eager to do and be, was crucified.

And whether I yielded to drink, as at Benicia, or whether I refrained, as at the laundry, in my brain the seeds of desire for alcohol were germinating.

CHAPTER XXV

After the laundry my sister and her husband grubstaked me into the Klondike. It was the first gold rush into that region, the early fall rush of 1897. I was twenty-one years old, and in splendid physical condition. I remember, at the end of the twenty-eight-mile portage across Chilcoot from Dyea Beach to Lake Linderman, I was packing up with the Indians and out-packing many an Indian. The last pack into Linderman was three miles. I back-tripped it four times a day, and on each forward trip carried one hundred and fifty pounds. This means that over the worst trails I daily travelled twenty-four miles, twelve of which were under a burden of one hundred and fifty pounds.

Yes, I had let career go hang, and was on the adventure-path again in quest of fortune. And of course, on the adventure-path, I met John Barleycorn. Here were the chesty men again, rovers and adventurers, and while they didn't mind a grub famine, whisky they could not do without. Whisky went over the trail, while the flour lay cached and untouched by the trail-side.

As good fortune would have it, the three men in my party were not drinkers. Therefore I didn't drink save on rare occasions and disgracefully when with other men. In my personal medicine chest was a quart of whisky. I never drew the cork till six months afterward, in a lonely camp, where, without anaesthetics, a doctor was compelled to operate on a man. The doctor and the patient emptied my bottle between them and then proceeded to the operation.

Back in California a year later, recovering from scurvy, I found that my father was dead and that I was the head and the sole bread-winner of a household. When I state that I had passed coal on a steamship from Behring Sea to British Columbia, and travelled in the steerage from there to San Francisco, it will be understood that I brought nothing back from the Klondike but my scurvy.

Times were hard. Work of any sort was difficult to get. And work of any sort was what I had to take, for I was still an unskilled labourer. I had no thought of career. That was over and done with. I had to find food for two mouths beside my own and keep a roof over our heads — yes, and buy a winter suit, my one suit being decidedly summery. I had to get some sort of work immediately. After that, when I had caught my breath, I might think about my future.

Unskilled labour is the first to feel the slackness of hard times, and I had no trades save those of sailor and laundryman. With my new responsibilities I didn't dare go to sea, and I failed to find a job at laundrying. I failed to find a job at anything. I had my name down in five employment bureaux. I advertised in three newspapers. I sought out the few friends I knew who might be able to get me work; but they were either uninterested or unable to find anything for me.

The situation was desperate. I pawned my watch, my bicycle, and a mackintosh of which my father had been very proud and which he had left to me. It was and is my sole legacy in this world. It had cost fifteen dollars, and the pawnbroker let me have two dollars on it. And — oh, yes — a water-front comrade of earlier years drifted along one day with a dress suit wrapped in newspapers. He could give no adequate explanation of how he had come to possess it, nor did I press for an explanation. I wanted the suit myself. No; not to wear. I traded him a lot of rubbish which, being unpawnable, was useless to me. He peddled the rubbish for several dollars, while I pledged the dress-suit with my pawnbroker for five dollars. And for all I know the pawnbroker still has the suit. I had never intended to redeem it.

But I couldn't get any work. Yet I was a bargain in the labour market. I was twenty-two years old, weighed one hundred and sixty-five pounds stripped, every pound of which was excellent for toil; and the last traces of my scurvy were vanishing before a treatment of potatoes chewed raw. I tackled every opening for employment. I tried to become a studio model, but there were too many fine-bodied young fellows out of jobs. I answered advertisements of elderly invalids in need of companions. And I almost became a sewing machine agent, on commission, without salary. But poor people don't buy sewing machines in hard times, so I was forced to forgo that employment.

Of course, it must be remembered that along with such frivolous occupations I was trying to get work as wop, lumper, and roustabout. But winter was coming on, and the surplus labour army was pouring into the cities. Also I, who had romped along carelessly through the countries of the world and the kingdom of the mind, was not a member of any union.

I sought odd jobs. I worked days, and half-days, at anything I could get. I mowed lawns, trimmed hedges, took up carpets, beat them, and laid them again. Further, I took the civil service examinations for mail carrier and passed first. But alas! there was no vacancy, and I must wait. And while I waited, and in between the odd jobs I managed to procure, I started to earn ten dollars by writing a newspaper account of a voyage I had made, in an open boat down the Yukon, of nineteen hundred miles in nineteen days. I didn't know the first thing about the newspaper game, but I was confident I'd get ten dollars for my article.

But I didn't. The first San Francisco newspaper to which I mailed it never acknowledged receipt of the manuscript, but held on to it. The longer it held on to it the more certain I was that the thing was accepted.

And here is the funny thing. Some are born to fortune, and some have fortune thrust upon them. But in my case I was clubbed into fortune, and bitter necessity wielded the club. I had long since abandoned all thought of writing as a career. My honest intention in writing that article was to earn ten dollars. And that was the limit of my intention. It would help to tide me along until I got steady employment. Had a vacancy occurred in the post office at that time, I should have jumped at it.

But the vacancy did not occur, nor did a steady job; and I employed the time between odd jobs with writing a twenty-one-thousand-word serial for the "Youth's Companion." I turned it out and typed it in seven days. I fancy that was what was the matter with it, for it came back.

It took some time for it to go and come, and in the meantime I tried my hand at short stories. I sold one to the "Overland Monthly" for five dollars. The "Black Cat" gave me forty dollars for another. The "Overland Monthly" offered me seven dollars and a half, pay on publication, for all the stories I should deliver. I got my bicycle, my watch, and my father's mackintosh out of pawn and rented a typewriter. Also, I paid up the bills I owed to the several groceries that allowed me a small credit. I recall the Portuguese groceryman who never permitted my bill to go beyond four dollars. Hopkins, another grocer, could not be budged beyond five dollars.

And just then came the call from the post office to go to work. It placed me in a most trying predicament. The sixty-five dollars I could earn regularly every month was a terrible temptation. I couldn't decide what to do. And I'll never be able to forgive the postmaster of Oakland. I answered the call, and I talked to him like a man. I frankly told him the situation. It looked as if I might win out at writing. The chance was good, but not certain. Now, if he would pass me by and select the next man on the eligible list and give me a call at the next vacancy —

But he shut me off with: “Then you don’t want the position?”

“But I do,” I protested. “Don’t you see, if you will pass me over this time — ”

“If you want it you will take it,” he said coldly.

Happily for me, the cursed brutality of the man made me angry.

“Very well,” I said. “I won’t take it.”

CHAPTER XXVI

Having burned my ship, I plunged into writing. I am afraid I always was an extremist. Early and late I was at it — writing, typing, studying grammar, studying writing and all the forms of writing, and studying the writers who succeeded in order to find out how they succeeded. I managed on five hours' sleep in the twenty-four, and came pretty close to working the nineteen waking hours left to me. My light burned till two and three in the morning, which led a good neighbour woman into a bit of sentimental Sherlock-Holmes deduction. Never seeing me in the day-time, she concluded that I was a gambler, and that the light in my window was placed there by my mother to guide her erring son home.

The trouble with the beginner at the writing game is the long, dry spells, when there is never an editor's cheque and everything pawnable is pawned. I wore my summer suit pretty well through that winter, and the following summer experienced the longest, dryest spell of all, in the period when salaried men are gone on vacation and manuscripts lie in editorial offices until vacation is over.

My difficulty was that I had no one to advise me. I didn't know a soul who had written or who had ever tried to write. I didn't even know one reporter. Also, to succeed at the writing game, I found I had to unlearn about everything the teachers and professors of literature of the high school and university had taught me. I was very indignant about this at the time; though now I can understand it. They did not know the trick of successful writing in the years 1895 and 1896. They knew all about "Snow Bound" and "Sartor Resartus"; but the American editors of 1899 did not want such truck. They wanted the 1899 truck, and offered to pay so well for it that the teachers and professors of literature would have quit their jobs could they have supplied it.

I struggled along, stood off the butcher and the grocer, pawned my watch and bicycle and my father's mackintosh, and I worked. I really did work, and went on short commons of sleep. Critics have complained about the swift education one of my characters, Martin Eden, achieved. In three years, from a sailor with a common school education, I made a successful writer of him. The critics say this is impossible. Yet I was Martin Eden. At the end of three working years, two of which were spent in high school and the university and one spent at writing, and all three in studying immensely and intensely, I was publishing stories in magazines such as the “Atlantic Monthly,” was correcting proofs of my first book (issued by Houghton, Mifflin Co.), was selling sociological articles to “Cosmopolitan” and “McClure’s,” had declined an associate editorship proffered me by telegraph from New York City, and was getting ready to marry.

Now the foregoing means work, especially the last year of it, when I was learning my trade as a writer. And in that year, running short on sleep and tasking my brain to its limit, I neither drank nor cared to drink. So far as I was concerned, alcohol did not exist. I did suffer from brain-fag on occasion, but alcohol never suggested itself as an ameliorative. Heavens! Editorial acceptances and cheques were all the amelioratives I needed. A thin envelope from an editor in the morning’s mail was more stimulating than half a dozen cocktails. And if a cheque of decent amount came out of the envelope, such incident in itself was a whole drunk.

Furthermore, at that time in my life I did not know what a cocktail was. I remember, when my first book was published, several Alaskans, who were members of the Bohemian Club, entertained me one evening at the club in San Francisco. We sat in most wonderful leather chairs, and drinks were ordered. Never had I heard such an ordering of liqueurs and of highballs of particular brands of Scotch. I didn’t know what a liqueur or a highball was, and I didn’t know that “Scotch” meant whisky. I knew only poor men’s drinks, the drinks of the frontier and of sailor-town — cheap beer and cheaper whisky that was just called whisky and nothing else. I was embarrassed to make a choice, and the steward nearly collapsed when I ordered claret as an after-dinner drink.

CHAPTER XXVII

As I succeeded with my writing, my standard of living rose and my horizon broadened. I confined myself to writing and typing a thousand words a day, including Sundays and holidays; and I still studied hard, but not so hard as formerly. I allowed myself five and one-half hours of actual sleep. I added this half-hour because I was compelled. Financial success permitted me more time for exercise. I rode my wheel more, chiefly because it was permanently out of pawn; and I boxed and fenced, walked on my hands, jumped high and broad, put the shot and tossed the caber, and went swimming. And I learned that more sleep is required for physical exercise than for mental exercise. There were tired nights, bodily, when I slept six hours; and on occasion of very severe exercise I actually slept seven hours. But such sleep orgies were not frequent. There was so much to learn, so much to be done, that I felt wicked when I slept seven hours. And I blessed the man who invented alarm clocks.

And still no desire to drink. I possessed too many fine faiths, was living at too keen a pitch. I was a socialist, intent on saving the world, and alcohol could not give me the fervours that were mine from my ideas and ideals. My voice, on account of my successful writing, had added weight, or so I thought. At any rate, my reputation as a writer drew me audiences that my reputation as a speaker never could have drawn. I was invited before clubs and organisations of all sorts to deliver my message. I fought the good fight, and went on studying and writing, and was very busy.

Up to this time I had had a very restricted circle of friends. But now I began to go about. I was invited out, especially to dinner, and I made many friends and acquaintances whose economic lives were easier than mine had been. And many of them drank. In their own houses they drank and offered me drink. They were not drunkards any of them. They just drank temperately, and I drank temperately with them as an act of comradeship and accepted hospitality. I did not care for it, neither wanted it nor did not want it, and so small was the impression made by it that I do not remember my first cocktail nor my first Scotch highball.

Well, I had a house. When one is asked into other houses, he naturally asks others into his house. Behold the rising standard of living. Having been given drink in other houses, I could expect nothing else of myself than to give drink in my own house. So I laid in a supply of beer and whisky and table claret. Never since that has my house not been well supplied.

And still, through all this period, I did not care in the slightest for John Barleycorn. I drank when others drank, and with them, as a social act. And I had so little choice in the matter that I drank whatever they drank. If they elected whisky, then whisky it was for me. If they drank root beer or sarsaparilla, I drank root beer or sarsaparilla with them. And when there were no friends in the house, why, I didn't drink anything. Whisky decanters were always in the room where I wrote, and for months and years I never knew what it was, when by myself, to take a drink.

When out at dinner I noticed the kindly, genial glow of the preliminary cocktail. It seemed a very fitting and gracious thing. Yet so little did I stand in need of it, with my own high intensity and vitality, that I never thought it worth while to have a cocktail before my own meal when I ate alone.

On the other hand, I well remember a very brilliant man, somewhat older than I, who occasionally visited me. He liked whisky, and I recall sitting whole afternoons in my den, drinking steadily with him, drink for drink, until he was mildly lighted up and I was slightly aware that I had drunk some whisky. Now why did I do this? I don't know, save that the old schooling held, the training of the old days and nights glass in hand with men, the drinking ways of drink and drinkers.

Besides, I no longer feared John Barleycorn. Mine was that most dangerous stage when a man believes himself John Barleycorn's master. I had proved it to my satisfaction in the long years of work and study. I could drink when I wanted, refrain when I wanted, drink without getting drunk, and to cap everything I was thoroughly conscious that I had no liking for the stuff. During this period I drank precisely for the same reason I had drunk with Scotty and the harpooner and with the oyster pirates — because it was an act that men performed with whom I wanted to behave as a man. These brilliant ones, these adventurers of the mind, drank. Very well. There was no reason I should not drink with them — I who knew so confidently that I had nothing to fear from John Barleycorn.

And the foregoing was my attitude of mind for years. Occasionally I got well jingled, but such occasions were rare. It interfered with my work, and I permitted nothing to interfere with my work. I remember, when spending several months in the East End of London, during which time I wrote a book and adventured much amongst the worst of the slum classes, that I got drunk several times and was mightily wroth with myself because it interfered with my writing. Yet these very times were because I was out on the adventure-path where John Barleycorn is always to be found.

Then, too, with the certitude of long training and unholy intimacy, there were occasions when I engaged in drinking bouts with men. Of course, this was on the adventure-path in various parts of the world, and it was a matter of pride. It is a queer man-pride that leads one to drink with men in order to show as strong a head as they. But this queer man-pride is no theory. It is a fact.

For instance, a wild band of young revolutionists invited me as the guest of honour to a beer bust. It is the only technical beer bust I ever attended. I did not know the true inwardness of the affair when I accepted. I imagined that the talk would be wild and high, that some of them might drink more than they ought, and that I would drink discreetly. But it seemed these beer busts were a diversion of these high-spirited young fellows whereby they whiled away the tedium of existence by making fools of their betters. As I learned afterward, they had got their previous guest of honour, a brilliant young radical, unskilled in drinking, quite pipped.

When I found myself with them, and the situation dawned on me, up rose my queer man-pride. I'd show them, the young rascals. I'd show them who was husky and chesty, who had the vitality and the constitution, the stomach and the head, who could make most of a swine of himself and show it least. These unlicked cubs who thought they could out-drink ME!

You see, it was an endurance test, and no man likes to give another best. Faugh! it was steam beer. I had learned more expensive brews. Not for years had I drunk steam beer; but when I had, I had drunk with men, and I guessed I could show these youngsters some ability in beer-guzzling. And the drinking began, and I had to drink with the best of them. Some of them might lag, but the guest of honour was not permitted to lag.

And all my austere nights of midnight oil, all the books I had read, all the wisdom I had gathered, went glimmering before the ape and tiger in me that crawled up from the abysm of my heredity, atavistic, competitive and brutal, lustful with strength and desire to outswine the swine.

And when the session broke up I was still on my feet, and I walked, erect, unswaying — which was more than can be said of some of my hosts. I recall one of them in indignant tears on the street corner, weeping as he pointed out my sober condition. Little he dreamed the iron clutch, born of old training, with which I held to my consciousness in my swimming brain, kept control of my muscles and my qualms, kept my voice unbroken and easy and my thoughts consecutive and logical. Yes, and mixed up with it all I was privily a-grin. They hadn't made a fool of me in that drinking bout. And I was proud of myself for the achievement. Darn it, I am still proud, so strangely is man compounded.

But I didn't write my thousand words next morning. I was sick, poisoned. It was a day of wretchedness. In the afternoon I had to give a public speech. I gave it, and I am confident it was as bad as I felt. Some of my hosts were there in the front rows to mark any signs on me of the night before. I don't know what signs they marked, but I marked signs on them and took consolation in the knowledge that they were just as sick as I.

Never again, I swore. And I have never been inveigled into another beer bust. For that matter, that was my last drinking bout of any sort. Oh, I have drunk ever since, but with more wisdom, more discretion, and never in a competitive spirit. It is thus that the seasoned drinker grows seasoned.

To show that at this period in my life drinking was wholly a matter of companionship, I remember crossing the Atlantic in the old Teutonic. It chanced, at the start, that I chummed with an English cable operator and a younger member of a Spanish shipping firm. Now the only thing they drank was "horse's neck" — a long, soft, cool drink with an apple peel or an orange peel floating in it. And for that whole voyage I drank horse's, necks with my two companions. On the other hand, had they drunk whisky, I should have drunk whisky with them. From this it must not be concluded that I was merely weak. I didn't care. I had no morality in the matter. I was strong with youth, and unafraid, and alcohol was an utterly negligible question so far as I was concerned.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Not yet was I ready to tuck my arm in John Barleycorn's. The older I got, the greater my success, the more money I earned, the wider was the command of the world that became mine and the more prominently did John Barleycorn bulk in my life. And still I maintained no more than a nodding acquaintance with him. I drank for the sake of sociability, and when alone I did not drink. Sometimes I got jingled, but I considered such jingles the mild price I paid for sociability.

To show how unripe I was for John Barleycorn, when, at this time, I descended into my slough of despond, I never dreamed of turning to John Barleycorn for a helping hand. I had life troubles and heart troubles which are neither here nor there in this narrative. But, combined with them, were intellectual troubles which are indeed germane.

Mine was no uncommon experience. I had read too much positive science and lived too much positive life. In the eagerness of youth I had made the ancient mistake of pursuing Truth too relentlessly. I had torn her veils from her, and the sight was too terrible for me to stand. In brief, I lost my fine faiths in pretty well everything except humanity, and the humanity I retained faith in was a very stark humanity indeed.

This long sickness of pessimism is too well known to most of us to be detailed here. Let it suffice to state that I had it very bad. I meditated suicide coolly, as a Greek philosopher might. My regret was that there were too many dependent directly upon me for food and shelter for me to quit living. But that was sheer morality. What really saved me was the one remaining illusion — the PEOPLE.

The things I had fought for and burned my midnight oil for had failed me. Success — I despised it. Recognition — it was dead ashes. Society, men and women above the ruck and the muck of the water-front and the forecastle — I was appalled by their unlovely mental mediocrity. Love of woman — it was like all the rest. Money — I could sleep in only one bed at a time, and of what worth was an income of a hundred porterhouses a day when I could eat only one? Art, culture — in the face of the iron facts of biology such things were ridiculous, the exponents of such things only the more ridiculous.

From the foregoing it can be seen how very sick I was. I was born a fighter. The things I had fought for had proved not worth the fight.

Remained the PEOPLE. My fight was finished, yet something was left still to fight for — the PEOPLE.

But while I was discovering this one last tie to bind me to life, in my extremity, in the depths of despond, walking in the valley of the shadow, my ears were deaf to John Barleycorn. Never the remotest whisper arose in my consciousness that John Barleycorn was the anodyne, that he could lie me along to live. One way only was uppermost in my thought — my revolver, the crashing eternal darkness of a bullet. There was plenty of whisky in the house — for my guests. I never touched it. I grew afraid of my revolver — afraid during the period in which the radiant, flashing vision of the PEOPLE was forming in my mind and will. So obsessed was I with the desire to die that I feared I might commit the act in my sleep, and I was compelled to give my revolver away to others who were to lose it for me where my subconscious hand might not find it.

But the PEOPLE saved me. By the PEOPLE was I handcuffed to life. There was still one fight left in me, and here was the thing for which to fight. I threw all precaution to the winds, threw myself with fiercer zeal into the fight for socialism, laughed at the editors and publishers who warned me and who were the sources of my hundred porterhouses a day, and was brutally careless of whose feelings I hurt and of how savagely I hurt them. As the “well-balanced radicals” charged at the time, my efforts were so strenuous, so unsafe and unsane, so ultra-revolutionary, that I retarded the socialist development in the United States by five years. In passing, I wish to remark, at this late date, that it is my fond belief that I accelerated the socialist development in the United States by at least five minutes.

It was the PEOPLE, and no thanks to John Barleycorn, who pulled me through my long sickness. And when I was convalescent came the love of woman to complete the cure and lull my pessimism asleep for many a long day, until John Barleycorn again awoke it. But in the meantime, I pursued Truth less relentlessly, refraining from tearing her last veils aside even when I clutched them in my hand. I no longer cared to look upon Truth naked. I refused to permit myself to see a second time what I had once seen. And the memory of what I had that time seen I resolutely blotted from my mind.

And I was very happy. Life went well with me, I took delight in little things. The big things I declined to take too seriously. I still read the books, but not with the old eagerness. I still read the books to-day, but never again shall I read them with that old glory of youthful passion when I harked to the call from over and beyond that whispered me on to win to the mystery at the back of life and behind the stars.

The point of this chapter is that, in the long sickness that at some time comes to most of us, I came through without any appeal for aid to John Barleycorn. Love, socialism, the PEOPLE — healthful figments of man’s mind — were the things that cured and saved me. If ever a man was not a born alcoholic, I believe that I am that man. And yet — well, let the succeeding chapters tell their tale, for in them will be shown how I paid for my previous quarter of a century of contact with ever-accessible John Barleycorn.

CHAPTER XXIX

After my long sickness my drinking continued to be convivial. I drank when others drank and I was with them. But, imperceptibly, my need for alcohol took form and began to grow. It was not a body need. I boxed, swam, sailed, rode horses, lived in the open an arrantly healthful life, and passed life insurance examinations with flying colours. In its inception, now that I look back upon it, this need for alcohol was a mental need, a nerve need, a good-spirits need. How can I explain?

It was something like this. Physiologically, from the standpoint of palate and stomach, alcohol was, as it had always been, repulsive. It tasted no better than beer did when I was five, than bitter claret did when I was seven. When I was alone, writing or studying, I had no need for it. But — I was growing old, or wise, or both, or senile as an alternative. When I was in company I was less pleased, less excited, with the things said and done. Erstwhile worth-while fun and stunts seemed no longer worth while; and it was a torment to listen to the insipidities and stupidities of women, to the pompous, arrogant sayings of the little half-baked men. It is the penalty one pays for reading the books too much, or for being oneself a fool. In my case it does not matter which was my trouble. The trouble itself was the fact. The condition of the fact was mine. For me the life, and light, and sparkle of human intercourse were dwindling.

I had climbed too high among the stars, or, maybe, I had slept too hard. Yet I was not hysterical nor in any way overwrought. My pulse was normal. My heart was an amazement of excellence to the insurance doctors. My lungs threw the said doctors into ecstasies. I wrote a thousand words every day. I was punctiliously exact in dealing with all the affairs of life that fell to my lot. I exercised in joy and gladness. I slept at night like a babe. But —

Well, as soon as I got out in the company of others I was driven to melancholy and spiritual tears. I could neither laugh with nor at the solemn utterances of men I esteemed ponderous asses; nor could I laugh, nor engage in my old-time lightsome persiflage, with the silly superficial chatterings of women, who, underneath all their silliness and softness, were as primitive, direct, and deadly in their pursuit of biological destiny as the monkeys women were before they shed their furry coats and replaced them with the furs of other animals.

And I was not pessimistic. I swear I was not pessimistic. I was merely bored. I had seen the same show too often, listened too often to the same songs and the same jokes. I knew too much about the box office receipts. I knew the cogs of the machinery behind the scenes so well that the posing on the stage, and the laughter and the song, could not drown the creaking of the wheels behind.

It doesn't pay to go behind the scenes and see the angel-voiced tenor beat his wife. Well, I'd been behind, and I was paying for it. Or else I was a fool. It is immaterial which was my situation. The situation is what counts, and the situation was that social intercourse for me was getting painful and difficult. On the other hand, it must be stated that on rare occasions, on very rare occasions, I did meet rare souls, or fools like me, with whom I could spend magnificent hours among the stars, or in the paradise of fools. I was married to a rare soul, or a fool, who never bored me and who was always a source of new and unending surprise and delight. But I could not spend all my hours solely in her company.

Nor would it have been fair, nor wise, to compel her to spend all her hours in my company. Besides, I had written a string of successful books, and society demands some portion of the recreative hours of a fellow that writes books. And any normal man, of himself and his needs, demands some hours of his fellow men.

And now we begin to come to it. How to face the social intercourse game with the glamour gone? John Barleycorn. The ever patient one had waited a quarter of a century and more for me to reach my hand out in need of him. His thousand tricks had failed, thanks to my constitution and good luck, but he had more tricks in his bag. A cocktail or two, or several, I found, cheered me up for the foolishness of foolish people. A cocktail, or several, before dinner, enabled me to laugh whole-heartedly at things which had long since ceased being laughable. The cocktail was a prod, a spur, a kick, to my jaded mind and bored spirits. It recrudesced the laughter and the song, and put a lilt into my own imagination so that I could laugh and sing and say foolish things with the liveliest of them, or platitudes with verve and intensity to the satisfaction of the pompous mediocre ones who knew no other way to talk.

A poor companion without a cocktail, I became a very good companion with one. I achieved a false exhilaration, drugged myself to merriment. And the thing began so imperceptibly that I, old intimate of John Barleycorn, never dreamed whither it was leading me. I was beginning to call for music and wine; soon I should be calling for madder music and more wine.

It was at this time I became aware of waiting with expectancy for the pre-dinner cocktail. I WANTED it, and I was CONSCIOUS that I wanted it. I remember, while war-corresponding in the Far East, of being irresistibly attracted to a certain home. Besides accepting all invitations to dinner, I made a point of dropping in almost every afternoon. Now, the hostess was a charming woman, but it was not for her sake that I was under her roof so frequently. It happened that she made by far the finest cocktail procurable in that large city where drink-mixing on the part of the foreign population was indeed an art. Up at the club, down at the hotels, and in other private houses, no such cocktails were created. Her cocktails were subtle. They were masterpieces. They were the least repulsive to the palate and carried the most "kick." And yet, I desired her cocktails only for sociability's sake, to key myself to sociable moods. When I rode away from that city, across hundreds of miles of rice-fields and mountains, and through months of campaigning, and on with the victorious Japanese into Manchuria, I did not drink. Several bottles of whisky were always to be found on the backs of my pack-horses. Yet I never broached a bottle for myself, never took a drink by myself, and never knew a desire to take such a drink. Oh, if a white man came into my camp, I opened a bottle and we drank together according to the way of men, just as he would open a bottle and drink with me if I came into his camp. I carried that whisky for social purposes, and I so charged it up in my expense account to the newspaper for which I worked.

Only in retrospect can I mark the almost imperceptible growth of my desire. There were little hints then that I did not take, little straws in the wind that I did not see, little incidents the gravity of which I did not realise.

For instance, for some years it had been my practice each winter to cruise for six or eight weeks on San Francisco Bay. My stout sloop yacht, the Spray, had a comfortable cabin and a coal stove. A Korean boy did the cooking, and I usually took a friend or so along to share the joys of the cruise. Also, I took my machine along and did my thousand words a day. On the particular trip I have in mind, Cloudesley and Toddy came along. This was Toddy's first trip. On previous trips Cloudesley had elected to drink beer; so I had kept the yacht supplied with beer and had drunk beer with him.

But on this cruise the situation was different. Toddy was so nicknamed because of his diabolical cleverness in concocting toddies. So I brought whisky along — a couple of gallons. Alas! Many another gallon I bought, for Cloudesley and I got into the habit of drinking a certain hot toddy that actually tasted delicious going down and that carried the most exhilarating kick imaginable.

I liked those toddies. I grew to look forward to the making of them. We drank them regularly, one before breakfast, one before dinner, one before supper, and a final one when we went to bed. We never got drunk. But I will say that four times a day we were very genial. And when, in the middle of the cruise, Toddy was called back to San Francisco on business, Cloudesley and I saw to it that the Korean boy mixed toddies regularly for us according to formula.

But that was only on the boat. Back on the land, in my house, I took no before breakfast eye-opener, no bed-going nightcap. And I haven't drunk hot toddies since, and that was many a year ago. But the point is, I LIKED those toddies. The geniality of which they were provocative was marvellous. They were eloquent proselyters for John Barleycorn in their own small insidious way. They were tickles of the something destined to grow into daily and deadly desire. And I didn't know, never dreamed — I, who had lived with John Barleycorn for so many years and laughed at all his unavailing attempts to win me.

CHAPTER XXX

Part of the process of recovering from my long sickness was to find delight in little things, in things unconnected with books and problems, in play, in games of tag in the swimming pool, in flying kites, in fooling with horses, in working out mechanical puzzles. As a result, I grew tired of the city. On the ranch, in the Valley of the Moon, I found my paradise. I gave up living in cities. All the cities held for me were music, the theatre, and Turkish baths.

And all went well with me. I worked hard, played hard, and was very happy. I read more fiction and less fact. I did not study a tithe as much as I had studied in the past. I still took an interest in the fundamental problems of existence, but it was a very cautious interest; for I had burned my fingers that time I clutched at the veils of Truth and wrested them from her. There was a bit of lie in this attitude of mine, a bit of hypocrisy; but the lie and the hypocrisy were those of a man desiring to live. I deliberately blinded myself to what I took to be the savage interpretation of biological fact. After all, I was merely forswearing a bad habit, forgoing a bad frame of mind. And I repeat, I was very happy. And I add, that in all my days, measuring them with cold, considerative judgment, this was, far and away beyond all other periods, the happiest period of my life.

But the time was at hand, rhymeless and reasonless so far as I can see, when I was to begin to pay for my score of years of dallying with John Barleycorn. Occasionally guests journeyed to the ranch and remained a few days. Some did not drink. But to those who did drink, the absence of all alcohol on the ranch was a hardship. I could not violate my sense of hospitality by compelling them to endure this hardship. I ordered in a stock — for my guests.

I was never interested enough in cocktails to know how they were made. So I got a bar-keeper in Oakland to make them in bulk and ship them to me. When I had no guests I didn't drink. But I began to notice, when I finished my morning's work, that I was glad if there were a guest, for then I could drink a cocktail with him.

Now I was so clean of alcohol that even a single cocktail was provocative of pitch. A single cocktail would glow the mind and tickle a laugh for the few minutes prior to sitting down to table and starting the delightful process of eating. On the other hand, such was the strength of my stomach, of my alcoholic resistance, that the single cocktail was only the glimmer of a glow, the faintest tickle of a laugh. One day, a friend frankly and shamelessly suggested a second cocktail. I drank the second one with him. The glow was appreciably longer and warmer, the laughter deeper and more resonant. One does not forget such experiences. Sometimes I almost think that it was because I was so very happy that I started on my real drinking.

I remember one day Charmian and I took a long ride over the mountains on our horses. The servants had been dismissed for the day, and we returned late at night to a jolly chafing-dish supper. Oh, it was good to be alive that night while the supper was preparing, the two of us alone in the kitchen. I, personally, was at the top of life. Such things as the books and ultimate truth did not exist. My body was gloriously healthy, and healthily tired from the long ride. It had been a splendid day. The night was splendid. I was with the woman who was my mate, picnicking in gleeful abandon. I had no troubles. The bills were all paid, and a surplus of money was rolling in on me. The future ever-widened before me. And right there, in the kitchen, delicious things bubbled in the chafing-dish, our laughter bubbled, and my stomach was keen with a most delicious edge of appetite.

I felt so good, that somehow, somewhere, in me arose an insatiable greed to feel better. I was so happy that I wanted to pitch my happiness even higher. And I knew the way. Ten thousand contacts with John Barleycorn had taught me. Several times I wandered out of the kitchen to the cocktail bottle, and each time I left it diminished by one man’s size cocktail. The result was splendid. I wasn’t jingled, I wasn’t lighted up; but I was warmed, I glowed, my happiness was pyramided. Munificent as life was to me, I added to that munificence. It was a great hour — one of my greatest. But I paid for it, long afterwards, as you will see. One does not forget such experiences, and, in human stupidity, cannot be brought to realise that there is no immutable law which decrees that same things shall produce same results. For they don’t, else would the thousandth pipe of opium be provocative of similar delights to the first, else would one cocktail, instead of several, produce an equivalent glow after a year of cocktails.

One day, just before I ate midday dinner, after my morning’s writing was done, when I had no guest, I took a cocktail by myself. Thereafter, when there were no guests, I took this daily pre-dinner cocktail. And right there John Barleycorn had me. I was beginning to drink regularly. I was beginning to drink alone. And I was beginning to drink, not for hospitality's sake, not for the sake of the taste, but for the effect of the drink.

I WANTED that daily pre-dinner cocktail. And it never crossed my mind that there was any reason I should not have it. I paid for it. I could pay for a thousand cocktails each day if I wanted. And what was a cocktail — one cocktail — to me who on so many occasions for so many years had drunk inordinate quantities of stiffer stuff and been unharmed?

The programme of my ranch life was as follows: Each morning, at eight-thirty, having been reading or correcting proofs in bed since four or five, I went to my desk. Odds and ends of correspondence and notes occupied me till nine, and at nine sharp, invariably, I began my writing. By eleven, sometimes a few minutes earlier or later, my thousand words were finished. Another half-hour at cleaning up my desk, and my day's work was done, so that at eleven-thirty I got into a hammock under the trees with my mail-bag and the morning newspaper. At twelve-thirty I ate dinner and in the afternoon I swam and rode.

One morning, at eleven-thirty, before I got into the hammock, I took a cocktail. I repeated this on subsequent mornings, of course, taking another cocktail just before I ate at twelve-thirty. Soon I found myself, seated at my desk in the midst of my thousand words, looking forward to that eleven-thirty cocktail.

At last, now, I was thoroughly conscious that I desired alcohol. But what of it? I wasn't afraid of John Barleycorn. I had associated with him too long. I was wise in the matter of drink. I was discreet. Never again would I drink to excess. I knew the dangers and the pitfalls of John Barleycorn, the various ways by which he had tried to kill me in the past. But all that was past, long past. Never again would I drink myself to stupefaction. Never again would I get drunk. All I wanted, and all I would take, was just enough to glow and warm me, to kick geniality alive in me and put laughter in my throat and stir the maggots of imagination slightly in my brain. Oh, I was thoroughly master of myself, and of John Barleycorn.

CHAPTER XXXI

But the same stimulus to the human organism will not continue to produce the same response. By and by I discovered there was no kick at all in one cocktail. One cocktail left me dead. There was no glow, no laughter tickle. Two or three cocktails were required to produce the original effect of one. And I wanted that effect. I drank my first cocktail at eleven-thirty when I took the morning’s mail into the hammock, and I drank my second cocktail an hour later just before I ate. I got into the habit of crawling out of the hammock ten minutes earlier so as to find time and decency for two more cocktails ere I ate. This became schedule — three cocktails in the hour that intervened between my desk and dinner. And these are two of the deadliest drinking habits: regular drinking and solitary drinking.

I was always willing to drink when any one was around. I drank by myself when no one was around. Then I made another step. When I had for guest a man of limited drinking calibre, I took two drinks to his one — one drink with him, the other drink without him and of which he did not know. I STOLE that other drink, and, worse than that, I began the habit of drinking alone when there was a guest, a man, a comrade, with whom I could have drunk. But John Barleycorn furnished the extenuation. It was a wrong thing to trip a guest up with excess of hospitality and get him drunk. If I persuaded him, with his limited calibre, into drinking up with me, I’d surely get him drunk. What could I do but steal that every second drink, or else deny myself the kick equivalent to what he got out of half the number?

Please remember, as I recite this development of my drinking, that I am no fool, no weakling. As the world measures such things, I am a success — I dare to say a success more conspicuous than the success of the average successful man, and a success that required a pretty fair amount of brains and will power. My body is a strong body. It has survived where weaklings died like flies. And yet these things which I am relating happened to my body and to me. I am a fact. My drinking is a fact. My drinking is a thing that has happened, and is no theory nor speculation; and, as I see it, it but lays the emphasis on the power of John Barleycorn — a savagery that we still permit to exist, a deadly institution that lingers from the mad old brutal days and that takes its heavy toll of youth and strength, and high spirit, and of very much of all of the best we breed.

To return. After a boisterous afternoon in the swimming pool, followed by a glorious ride on horseback over the mountains or up or down the Valley of the Moon, I found myself so keyed and splendid that I desired to be more highly keyed, to feel more splendid. I knew the way. A cocktail before supper was not the way. Two or three, at the very least, was what was needed. I took them. Why not? It was living. I had always dearly loved to live. This also became part of the daily schedule.

Then, too, I was perpetually finding excuses for extra cocktails. It might be the assembling of a particularly jolly crowd; a touch of anger against my architect or against a thieving stone-mason working on my barn; the death of my favourite horse in a barbed wire fence; or news of good fortune in the morning mail from my dealings with editors and publishers. It was immaterial what the excuse might be, once the desire had germinated in me. The thing was: I WANTED alcohol. At last, after a score and more of years of dallying and of not wanting, now I wanted it. And my strength was my weakness. I required two, three, or four drinks to get an effect commensurate with the effect the average man got out of one drink.

One rule I observed. I never took a drink until my day's work of writing a thousand words was done. And, when done, the cocktails reared a wall of inhibition in my brain between the day's work done and the rest of the day of fun to come. My work ceased from my consciousness. No thought of it flickered in my brain till next morning at nine o'clock when I sat at my desk and began my next thousand words. This was a desirable condition of mind to achieve. I conserved my energy by means of this alcoholic inhibition. John Barleycorn was not so black as he was painted. He did a fellow many a good turn, and this was one of them.

And I turned out work that was healthful, and wholesome, and sincere. It was never pessimistic. The way to life I had learned in my long sickness. I knew the illusions were right, and I exalted the illusions. Oh, I still turn out the same sort of work, stuff that is clean, alive, optimistic, and that makes toward life. And I am always assured by the critics of my super-abundant and abounding vitality, and of how thoroughly I am deluded by these very illusions I exploit.

And while on this digression, let me repeat the question I have repeated to myself ten thousand times. WHY DID I DRINK? What need was there for it? I was happy. Was it because I was too happy? I was strong. Was it because I was too strong? Did I possess too much vitality? I don't know why I drank. I cannot answer, though I can voice the suspicion that ever grows in me. I had been in too-familiar contact with John Barleycorn through too many years. A left-handed man, by long practice, can become a right-handed man. Had I, a non-alcoholic, by long practice become an alcoholic?

I was so happy. I had won through my long sickness to the satisfying love of woman. I earned more money with less endeavour. I glowed with health. I slept like a babe. I continued to write successful books, and in sociological controversy I saw my opponents confuted with the facts of the times that daily reared new buttresses to my intellectual position. From day's end to day's end I never knew sorrow, disappointment, nor regret. I was happy all the time. Life was one unending song. I begrudged the very hours of blessed sleep because by that much was I robbed of the joy that would have been mine had I remained awake. And yet I drank. And John Barleycorn, all unguessed by me, was setting the stage for a sickness all his own.

The more I drank the more I was required to drink to get an equivalent effect. When I left the Valley of the Moon, and went to the city, and dined out, a cocktail served at table was a wan and worthless thing. There was no pre-dinner kick in it. On my way to dinner I was compelled to accumulate the kick — two cocktails, three, and, if I met some fellows, four or five, or six, it didn't matter within several. Once, I was in a rush. I had no time decently to accumulate the several drinks. A brilliant idea came to me. I told the barkeeper to mix me a double cocktail. Thereafter, whenever I was in a hurry, I ordered double cocktails. It saved time.

One result of this regular heavy drinking was to jade me. My mind grew so accustomed to spring and liven by artificial means that without artificial means it refused to spring and liven. Alcohol became more and more imperative in order to meet people, in order to become sociably fit. I had to get the kick and the hit of the stuff, the crawl of the maggots, the genial brain glow, the laughter tickle, the touch of devilishness and sting, the smile over the face of things, ere I could join my fellows and make one with them.

Another result was that John Barleycorn was beginning to trip me up. He was thrusting my long sickness back upon me, inveigling me into again pursuing Truth and snatching her veils away from her, tricking me into looking reality stark in the face. But this came on gradually. My thoughts were growing harsh again, though they grew harsh slowly.

Sometimes warning thoughts crossed my mind. Where was this steady drinking leading? But trust John Barleycorn to silence such questions. “Come on and have a drink and I’ll tell you all about it,” is his way. And it works. For instance, the following is a case in point, and one which John Barleycorn never wearied of reminding me:

I had suffered an accident which required a ticklish operation. One morning, a week after I had come off the table, I lay on my hospital bed, weak and weary. The sunburn of my face, what little of it could be seen through a scraggly growth of beard, had faded to a sickly yellow. My doctor stood at my bedside on the verge of departure. He glared disapprovingly at the cigarette I was smoking.

“That’s what you ought to quit,” he lectured. “It will get you in the end. Look at me.”

I looked. He was about my own age, broad-shouldered, deep-chested, eyes sparkling, and ruddy-cheeked with health. A finer specimen of manhood one would not ask.

“I used to smoke,” he went on. “Cigars. But I gave even them up. And look at me.”

The man was arrogant, and rightly arrogant, with conscious well-being. And within a month he was dead. It was no accident. Half a dozen different bugs of long scientific names had attacked and destroyed him. The complications were astonishing and painful, and for days before he died the screams of agony of that splendid manhood could be heard for a block around. He died screaming.

“You see,” said John Barleycorn. “He took care of himself. He even stopped smoking cigars. And that’s what he got for it. Pretty rotten, eh? But the bugs will jump. There’s no forefending them. Your magnificent doctor took every precaution, yet they got him. When the bug jumps you can’t tell where it will land. It may be you. Look what he missed. Will you miss all I can give you, only to have a bug jump on you and drag you down? There is no equity in life. It’s all a lottery. But I put the lying smile on the face of life and laugh at the facts. Smile with me and laugh. You’ll get yours in the end, but in the meantime laugh. It’s a pretty dark world. I illuminate it for you. It’s a rotten world, when things can happen such as happened to your doctor. There’s only one thing to do: take another drink and forget it.”

And, of course, I took another drink for the inhibition that accompanied it. I took another drink every time John Barleycorn reminded me of what had happened. Yet I drank rationally, intelligently. I saw to it that the quality of the stuff was of the best. I sought the kick and the inhibition, and avoided the penalties of poor quality and of drunkenness. It is to be remarked, in passing, that when a man begins to drink rationally and intelligently that he betrays a grave symptom of how far along the road he has travelled.

But I continued to observe my rule of never taking my first drink of the day until the last word of my thousand words was written. On occasion, however, I took a day's vacation from my writing. At such times, since it was no violation of my rule, I didn't mind how early in the day I took that first drink. And persons who have never been through the drinking game wonder how the drinking habit grows!

CHAPTER XXXII

When the Snark sailed on her long cruise from San Francisco there was nothing to drink on board. Or, rather, we were all of us unaware that there was anything to drink, nor did we discover it for many a month. This sailing with a “dry” boat was malice aforethought on my part. I had played John Barleycorn a trick. And it showed that I was listening ever so slightly to the faint warnings that were beginning to arise in my consciousness.

Of course, I veiled the situation to myself and excused myself to John Barleycorn. And I was very scientific about it. I said that I would drink only while in ports. During the dry sea-stretches my system would be cleansed of the alcohol that soaked it, so that when I reached a port I should be in shape to enjoy John Barleycorn more thoroughly. His bite would be sharper, his kick keener and more delicious.

We were twenty-seven days on the traverse between San Francisco and Honolulu. After the first day out, the thought of a drink never troubled me. This I take to show how intrinsically I am not an alcoholic. Sometimes, during the traverse, looking ahead and anticipating the delightful lanai luncheons and dinners of Hawaii (I had been there a couple of times before), I thought, naturally, of the drinks that would precede those meals. I did not think of those drinks with any yearning, with any irk at the length of the voyage. I merely thought they would be nice and jolly, part of the atmosphere of a proper meal.

Thus, once again I proved to my complete satisfaction that I was John Barleycorn’s master. I could drink when I wanted, refrain when I wanted. Therefore I would continue to drink when I wanted.

Some five months were spent in the various islands of the Hawaiian group. Being ashore, I drank. I even drank a bit more than I had been accustomed to drink in California prior to the voyage. The people in Hawaii seemed to drink a bit more, on the average, than the people in more temperate latitudes. I do not intend the pun, and can awkwardly revise the statement to “latitudes more remote from the equator;” Yet Hawaii is only sub-tropical. The deeper I got into the tropics, the deeper I found men drank, the deeper I drank myself.

From Hawaii we sailed for the Marquesas. The traverse occupied sixty days. For sixty days we never raised land, a sail, nor a steamer smoke. But early in those sixty days the cook, giving an overhauling to the galley, made a find. Down in the bottom of a deep locker he found a dozen bottles of angelica and muscatel. These had come down from the kitchen cellar of the ranch along with the home-preserved fruits and jellies. Six months in the galley heat had effected some sort of a change in the thick sweet wine — branded it, I imagine.

I took a taste. Delicious! And thereafter, once each day, at twelve o'clock, after our observations were worked up and the Snark's position charted, I drank half a tumbler of the stuff. It had a rare kick to it. It warmed the cockles of my geniality and put a fairer face on the truly fair face of the sea. Each morning, below, sweating out my thousand words, I found myself looking forward to that twelve o'clock event of the day.

The trouble was I had to share the stuff, and the length of the traverse was doubtful. I regretted that there were not more than a dozen bottles. And when they were gone I even regretted that I had shared any of it. I was thirsty for the alcohol, and eager to arrive in the Marquesas.

So it was that I reached the Marquesas the possessor of a real man's size thirst. And in the Marquesas were several white men, a lot of sickly natives, much magnificent scenery, plenty of trade rum, an immense quantity of absinthe, but neither whisky nor gin. The trade rum scorched the skin off one's mouth. I know, because I tried it. But I had ever been plastic, and I accepted the absinthe. The trouble with the stuff was that I had to take such inordinate quantities in order to feel the slightest effect.

From the Marquesas I sailed with sufficient absinthe in ballast to last me to Tahiti, where I outfitted with Scotch and American whisky, and thereafter there were no dry stretches between ports. But please do not misunderstand. There was no drunkenness, as drunkenness is ordinarily understood — no staggering and rolling around, no befuddlement of the senses. The skilled and seasoned drinker, with a strong constitution, never descends to anything like that. He drinks to feel good, to get a pleasant jingle, and no more than that. The things he carefully avoids are the nausea of over-drinking, the after-effect of over-drinking, the helplessness and loss of pride of over-drinking.

What the skilled and seasoned drinker achieves is a discreet and canny semi-intoxication. And he does it by the twelve-month around without any apparent penalty. There are hundreds of thousands of men of this sort in the United States to-day, in clubs, hotels, and in their own homes — men who are never drunk, and who, though most of them will indignantly deny it, are rarely sober. And all of them fondly believe, as I fondly believed, that they are beating the game.

On the sea-stretches I was fairly abstemious; but ashore I drank more. I seemed to need more, anyway, in the tropics. This is a common experience, for the excessive consumption of alcohol in the tropics by white men is a notorious fact. The tropics is no place for white-skinned men. Their skin-pigment does not protect them against the excessive white light of the sun. The ultra-violet rays, and other high-velocity and invisible rays from the upper end of the spectrum, rip and tear through their tissues, just as the X-ray ripped and tore through the tissues of so many experimenters before they learned the danger.

White men in the tropics undergo radical changes of nature. They become savage, merciless. They commit monstrous acts of cruelty that they would never dream of committing in their original temperate climate. They become nervous, irritable, and less moral. And they drink as they never drank before. Drinking is one form of the many forms of degeneration that set in when white men are exposed too long to too much white light. The increase of alcoholic consumption is automatic. The tropics is no place for a long sojourn. They seem doomed to die anyway, and the heavy drinking expedites the process. They don’t reason about it. They just do it.

The sun sickness got me, despite the fact that I had been in the tropics only a couple of years. I drank heavily during this time, but right here I wish to forestall misunderstanding. The drinking was not the cause of the sickness, nor of the abandonment of the voyage. I was strong as a bull, and for many months I fought the sun sickness that was ripping and tearing my surface and nervous tissues to pieces. All through the New Hebrides and the Solomons and up among the atolls on the Line, during this period under a tropic sun, rotten with malaria, and suffering from a few minor afflictions such as Biblical leprosy with the silvery skin, I did the work of five men.

To navigate a vessel through the reefs and shoals and passages and unlighted coasts of the coral seas is a man’s work in itself. I was the only navigator on board. There was no one to check me up on the working out of my observations, nor with whom I could advise in the ticklish darkness among uncharted reefs and shoals. And I stood all watches. There was no sea-man on board whom I could trust to stand a mate’s watch. I was mate as well as captain. Twenty-four hours a day were the watches I stood at sea, catching cat-naps when I might. Third, I was doctor. And let me say right here that the doctor's job on the Snark at that time was a man's job. All on board suffered from malaria — the real, tropical malaria that can kill in three months. All on board suffered from perforating ulcers and from the maddening itch of ngari-ngari. A Japanese cook went insane from his too numerous afflictions. One of my Polynesian sailors lay at death's door with blackwater fever. Oh, yes, it was a full man's job, and I dosed and doctored, and pulled teeth, and dragged my patients through mild little things like ptomaine poisoning.

Fourth, I was a writer. I sweated out my thousand words a day, every day, except when the shock of fever smote me, or a couple of nasty squalls smote the Snark, in the morning. Fifth, I was a traveller and a writer, eager to see things and to gather material into my note-books. And, sixth, I was master and owner of the craft that was visiting strange places where visitors are rare and where visitors are made much of. So here I had to hold up the social end, entertain on board, be entertained ashore by planters, traders, governors, captains of war vessels, kinky-headed cannibal kings, and prime ministers sometimes fortunate enough to be clad in cotton shifts.

Of course I drank. I drank with my guests and hosts. Also, I drank by myself. Doing the work of five men, I thought, entitled me to drink. Alcohol was good for a man who over-worked. I noted its effect on my small crew, when, breaking their backs and hearts at heaving up anchor in forty fathoms, they knocked off gasping and trembling at the end of half an hour and had new life put into them by stiff jolts of rum. They caught their breaths, wiped their mouths, and went to it again with a will. And when we careened the Snark and had to work in the water to our necks between shocks of fever, I noted how raw trade rum helped the work along.

And here again we come to another side of many-sided John Barleycorn. On the face of it, he gives something for nothing. Where no strength remains he finds new strength. The wearied one rises to greater effort. For the time being there is an actual accession of strength. I remember passing coal on an ocean steamer through eight days of hell, during which time we coal-passers were kept to the job by being fed with whisky. We toiled half drunk all the time. And without the whisky we could not have passed the coal.

This strength John Barleycorn gives is not fictitious strength. It is real strength. But it is manufactured out of the sources of strength, and it must ultimately be paid for, and with interest. But what weary human will look so far ahead? He takes this apparently miraculous accession of strength at its face value. And many an overworked business and professional man, as well as a harried common labourer, has travelled John Barleycorn’s death road because of this mistake.

CHAPTER XXXIII

I went to Australia to go into hospital and get tinkered up, after which I planned to go on with the voyage. And during the long weeks I lay in hospital, from the first day I never missed alcohol. I never thought about it. I knew I should have it again when I was on my feet. But when I regained my feet I was not cured of my major afflictions. Naaman's silvery skin was still mine. The mysterious sun-sickness, which the experts of Australia could not fathom, still ripped and tore my tissues. Malaria still festered in me and put me on my back in shivering delirium at the most unexpected moments, compelling me to cancel a double lecture tour which had been arranged.

So I abandoned the Snark voyage and sought a cooler climate. The day I came out of hospital I took up drinking again as a matter of course. I drank wine at meals. I drank cocktails before meals. I drank Scotch highballs when anybody I chanced to be with was drinking them. I was so thoroughly the master of John Barleycorn I could take up with him or let go of him whenever I pleased, just as I had done all my life.

After a time, for cooler climate, I went down to southermost Tasmania in forty-three South. And I found myself in a place where there was nothing to drink. It didn't mean anything. I didn't drink. It was no hardship. I soaked in the cool air, rode horseback, and did my thousand words a day save when the fever shock came in the morning.

And for fear that the idea may still lurk in some minds that my preceding years of drinking were the cause of my disabilities, I here point out that my Japanese cabin boy, Nakata, still with me, was rotten with fever, as was Charmian, who in addition was in the slough of a tropical neurasthenia that required several years of temperate climates to cure, and that neither she nor Nakata drank or ever had drunk.

When I returned to Hobart Town, where drink was obtainable, I drank as of old. The same when I arrived back in Australia. On the contrary, when I sailed from Australia on a tramp steamer commanded by an abstemious captain, I took no drink along, and had no drink for the forty-three days' passage. Arrived in Ecuador, squarely under the equatorial sun, where the humans were dying of yellow fever, smallpox, and the plague, I promptly drank again — every drink of every sort that had a kick in it. I caught none of these diseases. Neither did Charmian nor Nakata who did not drink.

Enamoured of the tropics, despite the damage done me, I stopped in various places, and was a long while getting back to the splendid, temperate climate of California. I did my thousand words a day, travelling or stopping over, suffered my last faint fever shock, saw my silvery skin vanish and my sun-torn tissues healthily knit again, and drank as a broad-shouldered chesty man may drink.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Back on the ranch, in the Valley of the Moon, I resumed my steady drinking. My programme was no drink in the morning; first drink-time came with the completion of my thousand words. Then, between that and the midday meal, were drinks numerous enough to develop a pleasant jingle. Again, in the hour preceding the evening meal, I developed another pleasant jingle. Nobody ever saw me drunk, for the simple reason that I never was drunk. But I did get a jingle twice each day; and the amount of alcohol I consumed every day, if loosed in the system of one unaccustomed to drink, would have put such a one on his back and out.

It was the old proposition. The more I drank, the more I was compelled to drink in order to get an effect. The time came when cocktails were inadequate. I had neither the time in which to drink them nor the space to accommodate them. Whisky had a more powerful jolt. It gave quicker action with less quantity. Bourbon or rye, or cunningly aged blends, constituted the pre-midday drinking. In the late afternoon it was Scotch and soda.

My sleep, always excellent, now became not quite so excellent. I had been accustomed to read myself back asleep when I chanced to awake. But now this began to fail me. When I had read two or three of the small hours away and was as wide awake as ever, I found that a drink furnished the soporific effect. Sometimes two or three drinks were required.

So short a period of sleep then intervened before early morning rising that my system did not have time to work off the alcohol. As a result I awoke with mouth parched and dry, with a slight heaviness of head, and with a mild nervous palpitation in the stomach. In fact I did not feel good. I was suffering from the morning sickness of the steady, heavy drinker. What I needed was a pick-me-up, a bracer. Trust John Barleycorn, once he has broken down a man’s defences! So it was a drink before breakfast to put me right for breakfast — the old poison of the snake that has bitten one! Another custom begun at this time was that of the pitcher of water by the bedside to furnish relief to my scorched and sizzling membranes.

I achieved a condition in which my body was never free from alcohol. Nor did I permit myself to be away from alcohol. If I travelled to out-of-the-way places, I declined to run the risk of finding them dry. I took a quart, or several quarts, along in my grip. In the past I had been amazed by other men guilty of this practice. Now I did it myself unblushingly. And when I got out with the fellows, I cast all rules by the board. I drank when they drank, what they drank, and in the same way they drank.

I was carrying a beautiful alcoholic conflagration around with me. The thing fed on its own heat and flamed the fiercer. There was no time, in all my waking time, that I didn't want a drink. I began to anticipate the completion of my daily thousand words by taking a drink when only five hundred words were written. It was not long until I prefaced the beginning of the thousand words with a drink.

The gravity of this I realised too well. I made new rules. Resolutely I would refrain from drinking until my work was done. But a new and most diabolical complication arose. The work refused to be done without drinking. It just couldn't be done. I had to drink in order to do it. I was beginning to fight now. I had the craving at last, and it was mastering me. I would sit at my desk and dally with pad and pen, but words refused to flow. My brain could not think the proper thoughts because continually it was obsessed with the one thought that across the room in the liquor cabinet stood John Barleycorn. When, in despair, I took my drink, at once my brain loosened up and began to roll off the thousand words.

In my town house, in Oakland, I finished the stock of liquor and wilfully refused to purchase more. It was no use, because, unfortunately, there remained in the bottom of the liquor cabinet a case of beer. In vain I tried to write. Now beer is a poor substitute for strong waters: besides, I didn't like beer, yet all I could think of was that beer so singularly accessible in the bottom of the cabinet. Not until I had drunk a pint of it did the words begin to reel off, and the thousand were reeled off to the tune of numerous pints. The worst of it was that the beer caused me severe heart-burn; but despite the discomfort I soon finished off the case.

The liquor cabinet was now bare. I did not replenish it. By truly heroic perseverance I finally forced myself to write the daily thousand words without the spur of John Barleycorn. But all the time I wrote I was keenly aware of the craving for a drink. And as soon as the morning's work was done, I was out of the house and away down-town to get my first drink. Merciful goodness! — if John Barleycorn could get such sway over me, a non-alcoholic, what must be the sufferings of the true alcoholic, battling against the organic demands of his chemistry while those closest to him sympathise little, understand less, and despise and deride him!

CHAPTER XXXV

But the freight has to be paid. John Barleycorn began to collect, and he collected not so much from the body as from the mind. The old long sickness, which had been purely an intellectual sickness, recrudesced. The old ghosts, long laid, lifted their heads again. But they were different and more deadly ghosts. The old ghosts, intellectual in their inception, had been laid by a sane and normal logic. But now they were raised by the White Logic of John Barleycorn, and John Barleycorn never lays the ghosts of his raising. For this sickness of pessimism, caused by drink, one must drink further in quest of the anodyne that John Barleycorn promises but never delivers.

How to describe this White Logic to those who have never experienced it! It is perhaps better first to state how impossible such a description is. Take Hasheesh Land, for instance, the land of enormous extensions of time and space. In past years I have made two memorable journeys into that far land. My adventures there are seared in sharpest detail on my brain. Yet I have tried vainly, with endless words, to describe any tiny particular phase to persons who have not travelled there.

I use all the hyperbole of metaphor, and tell what centuries of time and profounds of unthinkable agony and horror can obtain in each interval of all the intervals between the notes of a quick jig played quickly on the piano. I talk for an hour, elaborating that one phase of Hasheesh Land, and at the end I have told them nothing. And when I cannot tell them this one thing of all the vastness of terrible and wonderful things, I know I have failed to give them the slightest concept of Hasheesh Land.

But let me talk with some other traveller in that weird region, and at once am I understood. A phrase, a word, conveys instantly to his mind what hours of words and phrases could not convey to the mind of the non-traveller. So it is with John Barleycorn's realm where the White Logic reigns. To those untravelled there, the traveller's account must always seem unintelligible and fantastic. At the best, I may only beg of the untravelled ones to strive to take on faith the narrative I shall relate.

For there are fatal intuitions of truth that reside in alcohol. Philip sober vouches for Philip drunk in this matter. There seem to be various orders of truth in this world. Some sorts of truth are truer than others. Some sorts of truth are lies, and these sorts are the very ones that have the greatest use-value to life that desires to realise and live. At once, O untravelled reader, you see how lunatic and blasphemous is the realm I am trying to describe to you in the language of John Barleycorn's tribe. It is not the language of your tribe, all of whose members resolutely shun the roads that lead to death and tread only the roads that lead to life. For there are roads and roads, and of truth there are orders and orders. But have patience. At least, through what seems no more than verbal yammerings, you may, perchance, glimpse faint far vistas of other lands and tribes.

Alcohol tells truth, but its truth is not normal. What is normal is healthful. What is healthful tends toward life. Normal truth is a different order, and a lesser order, of truth. Take a dray horse. Through all the vicissitudes of its life, from first to last, somehow, in unguessably dim ways, it must believe that life is good; that the drudgery in harness is good; that death, no matter how blind-instinctively apprehended, is a dread giant; that life is beneficent and worth while; that, in the end, with fading life, it will not be knocked about and beaten and urged beyond its sprained and spavined best; that old age, even, is decent, dignified, and valuable, though old age means a ribby scare-crow in a hawker's cart, stumbling a step to every blow, stumbling dizzily on through merciless servitude and slow disintegration to the end — the end, the apportionment of its parts (of its subtle flesh, its pink and springy bone, its juices and ferments, and all the sensateness that informed it) to the chicken farm, the hide-house, the glue-rendering works, and the bone-meal fertiliser factory. To the last stumble of its stumbling end this dray horse must abide by the mandates of the lesser truth that is the truth of life and that makes life possible to persist.

This dray horse, like all other horses, like all other animals, including man, is life-blinded and sense-struck. It will live, no matter what the price. The game of life is good, though all of life may be hurt, and though all lives lose the game in the end. This is the order of truth that obtains, not for the universe, but for the live things in it if they for a little space will endure ere they pass. This order of truth, no matter how erroneous it may be, is the sane and normal order of truth, the rational order &f truth that life must believe in order to live.

To man, alone among the animals, has been given the awful privilege of reason. Man, with his brain, can penetrate the intoxicating show of things and look upon the universe brazen with indifference toward him and his dreams. He can do this, but it is not well for him to do it. To live, and live abundantly, to sting with life, to be alive (which is to be what he is), it is good that man be life-blinded and sense-struck. What is good is true. And this is the order of truth, lesser though it be, that man must know and guide his actions by with unswerving certitude that it is absolute truth and that in the universe no other order of truth can obtain. It is good that man should accept at face value the cheats of sense and snares of flesh and through the fogs of sentiency pursue the lures and lies of passion. It is good that he shall see neither shadows nor futilities, nor be appalled by his lusts and rapacities.

And man does this. Countless men have glimpsed that other and truer order of truth and recoiled from it. Countless men have passed through the long sickness and lived to tell of it and deliberately to forget it to the end of their days. They lived. They realised life, for life is what they were. They did right.

And now comes John Barleycorn with the curse he lays upon the imaginative man who is lusty with life and desire to live. John Barleycorn sends his White Logic, the argent messenger of truth beyond truth, the antithesis of life, cruel and bleak as interstellar space, pulseless and frozen as absolute zero, dazzling with the frost of irrefragable logic and unforgettable fact. John Barleycorn will not let the dreamer dream, the liver live. He destroys birth and death, and dissipates to mist the paradox of being, until his victim cries out, as in “The City of Dreadful Night”: “Our life’s a cheat, our death a black abyss.” And the feet of the victim of such dreadful intimacy take hold of the way of death.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Back to personal experiences and the effects in the past of John Barleycorn's White Logic on me. On my lovely ranch in the Valley of the Moon, brain-soaked with many months of alcohol, I am oppressed by the cosmic sadness that has always been the heritage of man. In vain do I ask myself why I should be sad. My nights are warm. My roof does not leak. I have food galore for all the caprices of appetite. Every creature comfort is mine. In my body are no aches nor pains. The good old flesh-machine is running smoothly on. Neither brain nor muscle is overworked. I have land, money, power, recognition from the world, a consciousness that I do my meed of good in serving others, a mate whom I love, children that are of my own fond flesh. I have done, and am doing, what a good citizen of the world should do. I have built houses, many houses, and tilled many a hundred acres. And as for trees, have I not planted a hundred thousand? Everywhere, from any window of my house, I can gaze forth upon these trees of my planting, standing valiantly erect and aspiring toward the sun.

My life has indeed fallen in pleasant places. Not a hundred men in a million have been so lucky as I. Yet, with all this vast good fortune, am I sad. And I am sad because John Barleycorn is with me. And John Barleycorn is with me because I was born in what future ages will call the dark ages before the ages of rational civilisation. John Barleycorn is with me because in all the unwitting days of my youth John Barleycorn was accessible, calling to me and inviting me on every corner and on every street between the corners. The pseudo-civilisation into which I was born permitted everywhere licensed shops for the sale of soul-poison. The system of life was so organised that I (and millions like me) was lured and drawn and driven to the poison shops.

Wander with me through one mood of the myriad moods of sadness into which one is plunged by John Barleycorn. I ride out over my beautiful ranch. Between my legs is a beautiful horse. The air is wine. The grapes on a score of rolling hills are red with autumn flame. Across Sonoma Mountain wisps of sea fog are stealing. The afternoon sun smoulders in the drowsy sky. I have everything to make me glad I am alive. I am filled with dreams and mysteries. I am all sun and air and sparkle. I am vitalised, organic. I move, I have the power of movement, I command movement of the live thing I bestride. I am possessed with the pomps of being, and know proud passions and inspirations. I have ten thousand august connotations. I am a king in the kingdom of sense, and trample the face of the uncomplaining dust....

And yet, with jaundiced eye I gaze upon all the beauty and wonder about me, and with jaundiced brain consider the pitiful figure I cut in this world that endured so long without me and that will again endure without me. I remember the men who broke their hearts and their backs over this stubborn soil that now belongs to me. As if anything imperishable could belong to the perishable! These men passed. I, too, shall pass. These men toiled, and cleared, and planted, gazed with aching eyes, while they rested their labour-stiffened bodies on these same sunrises and sunsets, at the autumn glory of the grape, and at the fog-wisps stealing across the mountain. And they are gone. And I know that I, too, shall some day, and soon, be gone.

Gone? I am going now. In my jaw are cunning artifices of the dentists which replace the parts of me already gone. Never again will I have the thumbs of my youth. Old fights and wrestlings have injured them irreparably. That punch on the head of a man whose very name is forgotten settled this thumb finally and for ever. A slip-grip at catch-as-catch-can did for the other. My lean runner's stomach has passed into the limbo of memory. The joints of the legs that bear me up are not so adequate as they once were, when, in wild nights and days of toil and frolic, I strained and snapped and ruptured them. Never again can I swing dizzily aloft and trust all the proud quick that is I to a single rope-clutch in the driving blackness of storm. Never again can I run with the sled-dogs along the endless miles of Arctic trail.

I am aware that within this disintegrating body which has been dying since I was born I carry a skeleton, that under the rind of flesh which is called my face is a bony, noseless death's head. All of which does not shudder me. To be afraid is to be healthy. Fear of death makes for life. But the curse of the White Logic is that it does not make one afraid. The world-sickness of the White Logic makes one grin jocosely into the face of the Noseless One and to sneer at all the phantasmagoria of living.

I look about me as I ride and on every hand I see the merciless and infinite waste of natural selection. The White Logic insists upon opening the long-closed books, and by paragraph and chapter states the beauty and wonder I behold in terms of futility and dust. About me is murmur and hum, and I know it for the gnat-swarm of the living, piping for a little space its thin plaint of troubled air.

I return across the ranch. Twilight is on, and the hunting animals are out. I watch the piteous tragic play of life feeding on life. Here is no morality. Only in man is morality, and man created it — a code of action that makes toward living and that is of the lesser order of truth. Yet all this I knew before, in the weary days of my long sickness. These were the greater truths that I so successfully schooled myself to forget; the truths that were so serious that I refused to take them seriously, and played with gently, oh! so gently, as sleeping dogs at the back of consciousness which I did not care to waken. I did but stir them, and let them lie. I was too wise, too wicked wise, to wake them. But now White Logic willy-nilly wakes them for me, for White Logic, most valiant, is unafraid of all the monsters of the earthly dream.

"Let the doctors of all the schools condemn me," White Logic whispers as I ride along. "What of it? I am truth. You know it. You cannot combat me. They say I make for death. What of it? It is truth. Life lies in order to live. Life is a perpetual lie-telling process. Life is a mad dance in the domain of flux, wherein appearances in mighty tides ebb and flow, chained to the wheels of moons beyond our ken. Appearances are ghosts. Life is ghost land, where appearances change, transfuse, permeate each the other and all the others, that are, that are not, that always flicker, fade, and pass, only to come again as new appearances, as other appearances. You are such an appearance, composed of countless appearances out of the past. All an appearance can know is mirage. You know mirages of desire. These very mirages are the unthinkable and incalculable congeries of appearances that crowd in upon you and form you out of the past, and that sweep you on into dissemination into other unthinkable and incalculable congeries of appearances to people the ghost land of the future. Life is apparitional, and passes. You are an apparition. Through all the apparitions that preceded you and that compose the parts of you, you rose gibbering from the evolutionary mire, and gibbering you will pass on, interfusing, permeating the procession of apparitions that will succeed you."

And of course it is all unanswerable, and as I ride along through the evening shadows I sneer at that Great Fetish which Comte called the world. And I remember what another pessimist of sentiency has uttered: "Transient are all. They, being born, must die, and, being dead, are glad to be at rest."

But here through the dusk comes one who is not glad to be at rest. He is a workman on the ranch, an old man, an immigrant Italian. He takes his hat off to me in all servility, because, forsooth, I am to him a lord of life. I am food to him, and shelter, and existence. He has toiled like a beast all his days, and lived less comfortably than my horses in their deep-strawed stalls. He is labour-crippled. He shambles as he walks. One shoulder is twisted higher than the other. His hands are gnarled claws, repulsive, horrible. As an apparition he is a pretty miserable specimen. His brain is as stupid as his body is ugly.

"His brain is so stupid that he does not know he is an apparition," the White Logic chuckles to me. "He is sense-drunk. He is the slave of the dream of life. His brain is filled with superrational sanctions and obsessions. He believes in a transcendent over-world. He has listened to the vagaries of the prophets, who have given to him the sumptuous bubble of Paradise. He feels inarticulate self-affinities, with self-conjured non-realities. He sees penumbral visions of himself titubating fantastically through days and nights of space and stars. Beyond the shadow of any doubt he is convinced that the universe was made for him, and that it is his destiny to live for ever in the immaterial and supersensuous realms he and his kind have builded of the stuff of semblance and deception.

"But you, who have opened the books and who share my awful confidence — you know him for what he is, brother to you and the dust, a cosmic joke, a sport of chemistry, a garmented beast that arose out of the ruck of screaming beastliness by virtue and accident of two opposable great toes. He is brother as well to the gorilla and the chimpanzee. He thumps his chest in anger, and roars and quivers with cataleptic ferocity. He knows monstrous, atavistic promptings, and he is composed of all manner of shreds of abysmal and forgotten instincts."

"Yet he dreams he is immortal," I argue feebly. "It is vastly wonderful for so stupid a clod to bestride the shoulders of time and ride the eternities."

"Pah!" is the retort. "Would you then shut the books and exchange places with this thing that is only an appetite and a desire, a marionette of the belly and the loins?"

"To be stupid is to be happy," I contend.

"Then your ideal of happiness is a jelly-like organism floating in a tideless, tepid twilight sea, eh?"

Oh, the victim cannot combat John Barleycorn!

"One step removed from the annihilating bliss of Buddha's Nirvana," the White Logic adds. "Oh well, here's the house. Cheer up and take a drink. We know, we illuminated, you and I, all the folly and the farce."

And in my book-walled den, the mausoleum of the thoughts of men, I take my drink, and other drinks, and roust out the sleeping dogs from the recesses of my brain and hallo them on over the walls of prejudice and law and through all the cunning labyrinths of superstition and belief.

"Drink," says the White Logic. "The Greeks believed that the gods gave them wine so that they might forget the miserableness of existence. And remember what Heine said."

Well do I remember that flaming Jew's "With the last breath all is done: joy, love, sorrow, macaroni, the theatre, lime-trees, raspberry drops, the power of human relations, gossip, the barking of dogs, champagne."

"Your clear white light is sickness," I tell the White Logic. "You lie."

"By telling too strong a truth," he quips back.

"Alas, yes, so topsy-turvy is existence," I acknowledge sadly.

"Ah, well, Liu Ling was wiser than you," the White Logic girds. "You remember him?"

I nod my head — Liu Ling, a hard drinker, one of the group of bibulous poets who called themselves the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove and who lived in China many an ancient century ago.

"It was Liu Ling," prompts the White Logic, "who declared that to a drunken man the affairs of this world appear but as so much duckweed on a river. Very well. Have another Scotch, and let semblance and deception become duck-weed on a river."

And while I pour and sip my Scotch, I remember another Chinese philosopher, Chuang Tzu, who, four centuries before Christ, challenged this dreamland of the world, saying: "How then do I know but that the dead repent of having previously clung to life? Those who dream of the banquet, wake to lamentation and sorrow. Those who dream of lamentation and sorrow, wake to join the hunt. While they dream, they do not know that they dream. Some will even interpret the very dream they are dreaming; and only when they awake do they know it was a dream.... Fools think they are awake now, and flatter themselves they know if they are really princes or peasants. Confucius and you are both dreams; and I who say you are dreams — I am but a dream myself.

“Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzu, dreamt I was a butterfly, fluttering hither and thither, to all intents and purposes a butterfly. I was conscious only of following my fancies as a butterfly, and was unconscious of my individuality as a man. Suddenly, I awaked, and there I lay, myself again. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly dreaming I am a man.”

CHAPTER XXXVII

"Come," says the White Logic, "and forget these Asian dreamers of old time. Fill your glass and let us look at the parchments of the dreamers of yesterday who dreamed their dreams on your own warm hills."

I pore over the abstract of title of the vineyard called Tokay on the rancho called Petaluma. It is a sad long list of the names of men, beginning with Manuel Micheltoreno, one time Mexican "Governor, Commander-in-Chief, and Inspector of the Department of the Californias," who deeded ten square leagues of stolen Indian land to Colonel Don Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo for services rendered his country and for moneys paid by him for ten years to his soldiers.

Immediately this musty record of man's land lust assumes the formidableness of a battle — the quick struggling with the dust. There are deeds of trust, mortgages, certificates of release, transfers, judgments, foreclosures, writs of attachment, orders of sale, tax liens, petitions for letters of administration, and decrees of distribution. It is like a monster ever unsubdued, this stubborn land that drowses in this Indian summer weather and that survives them all, the men who scratched its surface and passed.

Who was this James King of William, so curiously named? The oldest surviving settler in the Valley of the Moon knows him not. Yet only sixty years ago he loaned Mariano G. Vallejo eighteen thousand dollars on security of certain lands including the vineyard yet to be and to be called Tokay. Whence came Peter O'Connor, and whither vanished, after writing his little name of a day on the woodland that was to become a vineyard? Appears Louis Csomortanyi, a name to conjure with. He lasts through several pages of this record of the enduring soil.

Comes old American stock, thirsting across the Great American Desert, mule-backing across the Isthmus, wind-jamming around the Horn, to write brief and forgotten names where ten thousand generations of wild Indians are equally forgotten — names like Halleck, Hastings, Swett, Tait, Denman, Tracy, Grimwood, Carlton, Temple. There are no names like those to-day in the Valley of the Moon.

The names begin to appear fast and furiously, flashing from legal page to legal page and in a flash vanishing. But ever the persistent soil remains for others to scrawl themselves across. Come the names of men of whom I have vaguely heard but whom I have never known. Kohler and Frohling — who built the great stone winery on the vineyard called Tokay, but who built upon a hill up which other vineyardists refused to haul their grapes. So Kohler and Frohling lost the land; the earthquake of 1906 threw down the winery; and I now live in its ruins.

La Motte — he broke the soil, planted vines and orchards, instituted commercial fish culture, built a mansion renowned in its day, was defeated by the soil, and passed. And my name of a day appears. On the site of his orchards and vine-yards, of his proud mansion, of his very fish ponds, I have scrawled myself with half a hundred thousand eucalyptus trees.

Cooper and Greenlaw — on what is called the Hill Ranch they left two of their dead, "Little Lillie" and "Little David," who rest to-day inside a tiny square of hand-hewn palings. Also, Gooper and Greenlaw in their time cleared the virgin forest from three fields of forty acres. To-day I have those three fields sown with Canada peas, and in the spring they shall be ploughed under for green manure.

Haska — a dim legendary figure of a generation ago, who went back up the mountain and cleared six acres of brush in the tiny valley that took his name. He broke the soil, reared stone walls and a house, and planted apple trees. And already the site of the house is undiscoverable, the location of the stone walls may be deduced from the configuration of the landscape, and I am renewing the battle, putting in angora goats to browse away the brush that has overrun Haska's clearing and choked Haska's apple trees to death. So I, too, scratch the land with my brief endeavour and flash my name across a page of legal script ere I pass and the page grows musty.

"Dreamers and ghosts," the White Logic chuckles.

"But surely the striving was not altogether vain," I contend.

"It was based on illusion and is a lie."

"A vital lie," I retort.

"And pray what is a vital lie but a lie?" the White Logic challenges. "Come. Fill your glass and let us examine these vital liars who crowd your bookshelves. Let us dabble in William James a bit."

"A man of health," I say. "From him we may expect no philosopher's stone, but at least we will find a few robust tonic things to which to tie."

"Rationality gelded to sentiment," the White Logic grins. "At the end of all his thinking he still clung to the sentiment of immortality. Facts transmuted in the alembic of hope into terms of faith. The ripest fruit of reason the stultification of reason. From the topmost peak of reason James teaches to cease reasoning and to have faith that all is well and will be well — the old, oh, ancient old, acrobatic flip of the metaphysicians whereby they reasoned reason quite away in order to escape the pessimism consequent upon the grim and honest exercise of reason.

"Is this flesh of yours you? Or is it an extraneous something possessed by you? Your body — what is it? A machine for converting stimuli into reactions. Stimuli and reactions are remembered. They constitute experience. Then you are in your consciousness these experiences. You are at any moment what you are thinking at that moment. Your I is both subject and object; it predicates things of itself and is the things predicated. The thinker is the thought, the knower is what is known, the possessor is the things possessed.

"After all, as you know well, man is a flux of states of consciousness, a flow of passing thoughts, each thought of self another self, a myriad thoughts, a myriad selves, a continual becoming but never being, a will-of-the-wisp flitting of ghosts in ghostland. But this, man will not accept of himself. He refuses to accept his own passing. He will not pass. He will live again if he has to die to do it.

"He shuffles atoms and jets of light, remotest nebulae, drips of water, prick-points of sensation, slime-oozings and cosmic bulks, all mixed with pearls of faith, love of woman, imagined dignities, frightened surmises, and pompous arrogances, and of the stuff builds himself an immortality to startle the heavens and baffle the immensities. He squirms on his dunghill, and like a child lost in the dark among goblins, calls to the gods that he is their younger brother, a prisoner of the quick that is destined to be as free as they — monuments of egotism reared by the epiphenomena; dreams and the dust of dreams, that vanish when the dreamer vanishes and are no more when he is not.

"It is nothing new, these vital lies men tell themselves, muttering and mumbling them like charms and incantations against the powers of Night. The voodoos and medicine men and the devil-devil doctors were the fathers of metaphysics. Night and the Noseless One were ogres that beset the way of light and life. And the metaphysicians would win by if they had to tell lies to do it. They were vexed by the brazen law of the Ecclesiast that men die like the beasts of the field and their end is the same. Their creeds were their schemes, their religions their nostrums, their philosophies their devices, by which they half-believed they would outwit the Noseless One and the Night.

"Bog-lights, vapours of mysticism, psychic overtones, soul orgies, wailings among the shadows, weird gnosticisms, veils and tissues of words, gibbering subjectivisms, gropings and maunderings, ontological fantasies, pan-psychic hallucinations — this is the stuff, the phantasms of hope, that fills your bookshelves. Look at them, all the sad wraiths of sad mad men and passionate rebels — your Schopenhauers, your Strindbergs, your Tolstois and Nietzsches.

"Come. Your glass is empty. Fill and forget."

I obey, for my brain is now well a-crawl with the maggots of alcohol, and as I drink to the sad thinkers on my shelves I quote Richard Hovey:

"Abstain not! Life and Love like night and day
Offer themselves to us on their own terms,
Not ours. Accept their bounty while ye may,
Before we be accepted by the worms,"

"I will cap you," cries the White Logic.

"No," I answer, while the maggots madden me. "I know you for what you are, and I am unafraid. Under your mask of hedonism you are yourself the Noseless One and your way leads to the Night. Hedonism has no meaning. It, too, is a lie, at best the coward's smug compromise."

"Now will I cap you!" the White Logic breaks in.

"But if you would not this poor life fulfil,
Lo, you are free to end it when you will,
Without the fear of waking after death."

And I laugh my defiance; for now, and for the moment, I know the White Logic to be the arch-impostor of them all, whispering his whispers of death. And he is guilty of his own unmasking, with his own genial chemistry turning the tables on himself, with his own maggots biting alive the old illusions, resurrecting and making to sound again the old voice from beyond of my youth, telling me again that still are mine the possibilities and powers which life and the books had taught me did not exist.

And the dinner gong sounds to the reversed bottom of my glass. Jeering at the White Logic, I go out to join my guests at table, and with assumed seriousness to discuss the current magazines and the silly doings of the world's day, whipping every trick and ruse of controversy through all the paces of paradox and persiflage. And, when the whim changes, it is most easy and delightfully disconcerting to play with the respectable and cowardly bourgeois fetishes and to laugh and epigram at the flitting god-ghosts and the debaucheries and follies of wisdom.

The clown's the thing! The clown! If one must be a philosopher, let him be Aristophanes. And no one at the table thinks I am jingled. I am in fine fettle, that is all. I tire of the labour of thinking, and, when the table is finished, start practical jokes and set all playing at games, which we carry on with bucolic boisterousness.

And when the evening is over and good-night said, I go back through my book-walled den to my sleeping porch and to myself and to the White Logic which, undefeated, has never left me. And as I fall to fuddled sleep I hear youth crying, as Harry Kemp heard it:

"I heard Youth calling in the night:
'Gone is my former world-delight;
For there is naught my feet may stay;
The morn suffuses into day,
It dare not stand a moment still
But must the world with light fulfil.
More evanescent than the rose
My sudden rainbow comes and goes,
Plunging bright ends across the sky —
Yea, I am Youth because I die!'"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The foregoing is a sample roaming with the White Logic through the dusk of my soul.

To the best of my power I have striven to give the reader a glimpse of a man's secret dwelling when it is shared with John Barleycorn. And the reader must remember that this mood, which he has read in a quarter of an hour, is but one mood of the myriad moods of John Barleycorn, and that the procession of such moods may well last the clock around through many a day and week and month.

My alcoholic reminiscences draw to a close. I can say, as any strong, chesty drinker can say, that all that leaves me alive to-day on the planet is my unmerited luck — the luck of chest, and shoulders, and constitution. I dare to say that a not large percentage of youths, in the formative stage of fifteen to seventeen, could have survived the stress of heavy drinking that I survived between my fifteenth and seventeenth years; that a not large percentage of men could have punished the alcohol I have punished in my manhood years and lived to tell the tale. I survived, through no personal virtue, but because I did not have the chemistry of a dipsomaniac and because I possessed an organism unusually resistant to the ravages of John Barleycorn. And, surviving, I have watched the others die, not so lucky, down all the long sad road.

It was my unmitigated and absolute good fortune, good luck, chance, call it what you will, that brought me through the fires of John Barleycorn. My life, my career, my joy in living, have not been destroyed. They have been scorched, it is true; like the survivors of forlorn hopes, they have by unthinkably miraculous ways come through the fight to marvel at the tally of the slain.

And like such a survivor of old red war who cries out, "Let there be no more war!" so I cry out, "Let there be no more poison-fighting by our youths!" The way to stop war is to stop it. The way to stop drinking is to stop it. The way China stopped the general use of opium was by stopping the cultivation and importation of opium. The philosophers, priests, and doctors of China could have preached themselves breathless against opium for a thousand years, and the use of opium, so long as opium was ever accessible and obtainable, would have continued unabated. We are so made, that is all.

We have with great success made a practice of not leaving arsenic and strychnine, and typhoid and tuberculosis germs lying around for our children to be destroyed by. Treat John Barleycorn the same way. Stop him. Don't let him lie around, licensed and legal, to pounce upon our youth. Not of alcoholics nor for alcoholics do I write, but for our youths, for those who possess no more than the adventure-stings and the genial predispositions, the social man-impulses, which are twisted all awry by our barbarian civilisation which feeds them poison on all the corners. It is the healthy, normal boys, now born or being born, for whom I write.

It was for this reason, more than any other, and more ardently than any other, that I rode down into the Valley of the Moon, all a-jingle, and voted for equal suffrage. I voted that women might vote, because I knew that they, the wives and mothers of the race, would vote John Barleycorn out of existence and back into the historical limbo of our vanished customs of savagery. If I thus seem to cry out as one hurt, please remember that I have been sorely bruised and that I do dislike the thought that any son or daughter of mine or yours should be similarly bruised.

The women are the true conservators of the race. The men are the wastrels, the adventure-lovers and gamblers, and in the end it is by their women that they are saved. About man's first experiment in chemistry was the making of alcohol, and down all the generations to this day man has continued to manufacture and drink it. And there has never been a day when the women have not resented man's use of alcohol, though they have never had the power to give weight to their resentment. The moment women get the vote in any community, the first thing they proceed to do is to close the saloons. In a thousand generations to come men of themselves will not close the saloons. As well expect the morphine victims to legislate the sale of morphine out of existence.

The women know. They have paid an incalculable price of sweat and tears for man's use of alcohol. Ever jealous for the race, they will legislate for the babes of boys yet to be born; and for the babes of girls, too, for they must be the mothers, wives, and sisters of these boys.

And it will be easy. The only ones that will be hurt will be the topers and seasoned drinkers of a single generation. I am one of these, and I make solemn assurance, based upon long traffic with John Barleycorn, that it won't hurt me very much to stop drinking when no one else drinks and when no drink is obtainable. On the other hand, the overwhelming proportion of young men are so normally non-alcoholic, that, never having had access to alcohol, they will never miss it. They will know of the saloon only in the pages of history, and they will think of the saloon as a quaint old custom similar to bull-baiting and the burning of witches.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Of course, no personal tale is complete without bringing the narrative of the person down to the last moment. But mine is no tale of a reformed drunkard. I was never a drunkard, and I have not reformed.

It chanced, some time ago, that I made a voyage of one hundred and forty-eight days in a windjammer around the Horn. I took no private supply of alcohol along, and, though there was no day of those one hundred and forty-eight days that I could not have got a drink from the captain, I did not take a drink. I did not take a drink because I did not desire a drink. No one else drank on board. The atmosphere for drinking was not present, and in my system there was no organic need for alcohol. My chemistry did not demand alcohol.

So there arose before me a problem, a clear and simple problem: THIS IS SO EASY, WHY NOT KEEP IT UP WHEN YOU GET BACK ON LAND? I weighed this problem carefully. I weighed it for five months, in a state of absolute non-contact with alcohol. And out of the data of past experience, I reached certain conclusions.

In the first place, I am convinced that not one man in ten thousand or in a hundred thousand is a genuine, chemical dipsomaniac. Drinking, as I deem it, is practically entirely a habit of mind. It is unlike tobacco, or cocaine, or morphine, or all the rest of the long list of drugs. The desire for alcohol is quite peculiarly mental in its origin. It is a matter of mental training and growth, and it is cultivated in social soil. Not one drinker in a million began drinking alone. All drinkers begin socially, and this drinking is accompanied by a thousand social connotations such as I have described out of my own experience in the first part of this narrative. These social connotations are the stuff of which the drink habit is largely composed. The part that alcohol itself plays is inconsiderable when compared with the part played by the social atmosphere in which it is drunk. The human is rarely born these days, who, without long training in the social associations of drinking, feels the irresistible chemical propulsion of his system toward alcohol. I do assume that such rare individuals are born, but I have never encountered one.

On this long, five-months’ voyage, I found that among all my bodily needs not the slightest shred of a bodily need for alcohol existed. But this I did find: my need was mental and social. When I thought of alcohol, the connotation was fellowship. When I thought of fellowship, the connotation was alcohol. Fellowship and alcohol were Siamese twins. They always occurred linked together.

Thus, when reading in my deck chair or when talking with others, practically any mention of any part of the world I knew instantly aroused the connotation of drinking and good fellows. Big nights and days and moments, all purple passages and freedoms, thronged my memory. “Venice” stares at me from the printed page, and I remember the cafe tables on the sidewalks. “The Battle of Santiago,” some one says, and I answer, “Yes, I’ve been over the ground.” But I do not see the ground, nor Kettle Hill, nor the Peace Tree. What I see is the Cafe Venus, on the plaza of Santiago, where one hot night I drank and talked with a dying consumptive.

The East End of London, I read, or some one says; and first of all, under my eyelids, leap the visions of the shining pubs, and in my ears echo the calls for “two of bitter” and “three of Scotch.” The Latin Quarter — at once I am in the student cabarets, bright faces and keen spirits around me, sipping cool, well-dripped absinthe while our voices mount and soar in Latin fashion as we settle God and art and democracy and the rest of the simple problems of existence.

In a pampero off the River Plate we speculate, if we are disabled, of running in to Buenos Ayres, the “Paris of America,” and I have visions of bright congregating places of men, of the jollity of raised glasses, and of song and cheer and the hum of genial voices. When we have picked up the North-east Trades in the Pacific we try to persuade our dying captain to run for Honolulu, and while I persuade I see myself again drinking cocktails on the cool lanais and fizzes out at Waikiki where the surf rolls in. Some one mentions the way wild ducks are cooked in the restaurants of San Francisco, and at once I am transported to the light and clatter of many tables, where I gaze at old friends across the golden brims of long-stemmed Rhine-wine glasses.

And so I pondered my problem. I should not care to revisit all these fair places of the world except in the fashion I visited them before. GLASS IN HAND! There is a magic in the phrase. It means more than all the words in the dictionary can be made to mean. It is a habit of mind to which I have been trained all my life. It is now part of the stuff that composes me. I like the bubbling play of wit, the chesty laughs, the resonant voices of men, when, glass in hand, they shut the grey world outside and prod their brains with the fun and folly of an accelerated pulse.

No, I decided; I shall take my drink on occasion. With all the books on my shelves, with all the thoughts of the thinkers shaded by my particular temperament, I decided coolly and deliberately that I should continue to do what I had been trained to want to do. I would drink — but oh, more skilfully, more discreetly, than ever before. Never again would I be a peripatetic conflagration. Never again would I invoke the White Logic. I had learned how not to invoke him.

The White Logic now lies decently buried alongside the Long Sickness. Neither will afflict me again. It is many a year since I laid the Long Sickness away; his sleep is sound. And just as sound is the sleep of the White Logic. And yet, in conclusion, I can well say that I wish my forefathers had banished John Barleycorn before my time. I regret that John Barleycorn flourished everywhere in the system of society in which I was born, else I should not have made his acquaintance, and I was long trained in his acquaintance.

The Non-Fiction

London, 1914

THE PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS

This 1903 non-fiction book concerns life in the East End of London. London wrote this first-hand account by living in the infamous Whitechapel District for several months, sometimes staying in workhouses or sleeping on the streets. The conditions he experienced and wrote about were the same as those endured by an estimated 500,000 of the contemporary London poor.

Whitechapel 1902-the district of London that London campaigned to change

CONTENTS

PREFACE
CHAPTER I — THE DESCENT
CHAPTER II — JOHNNY UPRIGHT
CHAPTER III — MY LODGING AND SOME OTHERS
CHAPTER IV — A MAN AND THE ABYSS
CHAPTER V — THOSE ON THE EDGE
CHAPTER VI — FRYING-PAN ALLEY AND A GLIMPSE OF INFERNO
CHAPTER VII — A WINNER OF THE VICTORIA CROSS
CHAPTER VIII — THE CARTER AND THE CARPENTER
CHAPTER IX — THE SPIKE
CHAPTER X — CARRYING THE BANNER
CHAPTER XI — THE PEG
CHAPTER XII — CORONATION DAY
CHAPTER XIII — DAN CULLEN, DOCKER
CHAPTER XIV — HOPS AND HOPPERS
CHAPTER XV — THE SEA WIFE
CHAPTER XVI — PROPERTY VERSUS PERSON
CHAPTER XVII — INEFFICIENCY
CHAPTER XVIII — WAGES
CHAPTER XIX — THE GHETTO
CHAPTER XX — COFFEE-HOUSES AND DOSS-HOUSES
CHAPTER XXI — THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF LIFE
CHAPTER XXII — SUICIDE
CHAPTER XXIII — THE CHILDREN
CHAPTER XXIV — A VISION OF THE NIGHT
CHAPTER XXV — THE HUNGER WAIL
CHAPTER XXVI — DRINK, TEMPERANCE, AND THRIFT
CHAPTER XXVII — THE MANAGEMENT
CHALLENGE

THE PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS

The chief priests and rulers cry:-
“O Lord and Master, not ours the guilt,
We build but as our fathers built;
Behold thine images how they stand
Sovereign and sole through all our land.
  “Our task is hard — with sword and flame,
To hold thine earth forever the same,
And with sharp crooks of steel to keep,
Still as thou leftest them, thy sheep.”
  Then Christ sought out an artisan,
A low-browed, stunted, haggard man,
And a motherless girl whose fingers thin
Crushed from her faintly want and sin.
  These set he in the midst of them,
And as they drew back their garment hem
For fear of defilement, “Lo, here,” said he,
“The images ye have made of me.”
  JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

PREFACE

The experiences related in this volume fell to me in the summer of 1902. I went down into the under-world of London with an attitude of mind which I may best liken to that of the explorer. I was open to be convinced by the evidence of my eyes, rather than by the teachings of those who had not seen, or by the words of those who had seen and gone before. Further, I took with me certain simple criteria with which to measure the life of the under-world. That which made for more life, for physical and spiritual health, was good; that which made for less life, which hurt, and dwarfed, and distorted life, was bad.

It will be readily apparent to the reader that I saw much that was bad. Yet it must not be forgotten that the time of which I write was considered "good times" in England. The starvation and lack of shelter I encountered constituted a chronic condition of misery which is never wiped out, even in the periods of greatest prosperity.

Following the summer in question came a hard winter. Great numbers of the unemployed formed into processions, as many as a dozen at a time, and daily marched through the streets of London crying for bread. Mr. Justin McCarthy, writing in the month of January 1903, to the New York *Independent*, briefly epitomises the situation as follows:-

"The workhouses have no space left in which to pack the starving crowds who are craving every day and night at their doors for food and shelter. All the charitable institutions have exhausted their means in trying to raise supplies of food for the famishing residents of the garrets and cellars of London lanes and alleys. The quarters of the Salvation Army in various parts of London are nightly besieged by hosts of the unemployed and the hungry for whom neither shelter nor the means of sustenance can be provided."

It has been urged that the criticism I have passed on things as they are in England is too pessimistic. I must say, in extenuation, that of optimists I am the most optimistic. But I measure manhood less by political aggregations than by individuals. Society grows, while political machines rack to pieces and become "scrap." For the English, so far as manhood and womanhood and health and happiness go, I see a broad and smiling future. But for a great deal of the political machinery, which at present mismanages for them, I see nothing else than the scrap heap.

JACK LONDON.
PIEDMONT, CALIFORNIA.

CHAPTER I — THE DESCENT

“But you can’t do it, you know,” friends said, to whom I applied for assistance in the matter of sinking myself down into the East End of London. “You had better see the police for a guide,” they added, on second thought, painfully endeavouring to adjust themselves to the psychological processes of a madman who had come to them with better credentials than brains.

“But I don’t want to see the police,” I protested. “What I wish to do is to go down into the East End and see things for myself. I wish to know how those people are living there, and why they are living there, and what they are living for. In short, I am going to live there myself.”

“You don’t want to *live* down there!” everybody said, with disapprobation writ large upon their faces. “Why, it is said there are places where a man’s life isn’t worth tu’pence.”

“The very places I wish to see,” I broke in.

“But you can’t, you know,” was the unfailing rejoinder.

“Which is not what I came to see you about,” I answered brusquely, somewhat nettled by their incomprehension. “I am a stranger here, and I want you to tell me what you know of the East End, in order that I may have something to start on.”

“But we know nothing of the East End. It is over there, somewhere.” And they waved their hands vaguely in the direction where the sun on rare occasions may be seen to rise.

“Then I shall go to Cook’s,” I announced.

“Oh yes,” they said, with relief. “Cook’s will be sure to know.”

But O Cook, O Thomas Cook & Son, path-finders and trail-clearers, living sign-posts to all the world, and bestowers of first aid to bewildered travellers — unhesitatingly and instantly, with ease and celerity, could you send me to Darkest Africa or Innermost Thibet, but to the East End of London, barely a stone’s throw distant from Ludgate Circus, you know not the way!

“You can’t do it, you know,” said the human emporium of routes and fares at Cook’s Cheapside branch. “It is so — hem — so unusual.”

“Consult the police,” he concluded authoritatively, when I had persisted. “We are not accustomed to taking travellers to the East End; we receive no call to take them there, and we know nothing whatsoever about the place at all."

"Never mind that," I interposed, to save myself from being swept out of the office by his flood of negations. "Here's something you can do for me. I wish you to understand in advance what I intend doing, so that in case of trouble you may be able to identify me."

"Ah, I see! should you be murdered, we would be in position to identify the corpse."

He said it so cheerfully and cold-bloodedly that on the instant I saw my stark and mutilated cadaver stretched upon a slab where cool waters trickle ceaselessly, and him I saw bending over and sadly and patiently identifying it as the body of the insane American who *would* see the East End.

"No, no," I answered; "merely to identify me in case I get into a scrape with the 'bobbies.'" This last I said with a thrill; truly, I was gripping hold of the vernacular.

"That," he said, "is a matter for the consideration of the Chief Office."

"It is so unprecedented, you know," he added apologetically.

The man at the Chief Office hemmed and hawed. "We make it a rule," he explained, "to give no information concerning our clients."

"But in this case," I urged, "it is the client who requests you to give the information concerning himself."

Again he hemmed and hawed.

"Of course," I hastily anticipated, "I know it is unprecedented, but — "

"As I was about to remark," he went on steadily, "it is unprecedented, and I don't think we can do anything for you."

However, I departed with the address of a detective who lived in the East End, and took my way to the American consul-general. And here, at last, I found a man with whom I could "do business." There was no hemming and hawing, no lifted brows, open incredulity, or blank amazement. In one minute I explained myself and my project, which he accepted as a matter of course. In the second minute he asked my age, height, and weight, and looked me over. And in the third minute, as we shook hands at parting, he said: "All right, Jack. I'll remember you and keep track."

I breathed a sigh of relief. Having burnt my ships behind me, I was now free to plunge into that human wilderness of which nobody seemed to know anything. But at once I encountered a new difficulty in the shape of my cabby, a grey-whiskered and eminently decorous personage who had imperturbably driven me for several hours about the "City."

"Drive me down to the East End," I ordered, taking my seat.

"Where, sir?" he demanded with frank surprise.

"To the East End, anywhere. Go on."

The hansom pursued an aimless way for several minutes, then came to a puzzled stop. The aperture above my head was uncovered, and the cabman peered down perplexedly at me.

"I say," he said, "wot plyce yer wanter go?"

"East End," I repeated. "Nowhere in particular. Just drive me around anywhere."

"But wot's the haddress, sir?"

"See here!" I thundered. "Drive me down to the East End, and at once!"

It was evident that he did not understand, but he withdrew his head, and grumblingly started his horse.

Nowhere in the streets of London may one escape the sight of abject poverty, while five minutes' walk from almost any point will bring one to a slum; but the region my hansom was now penetrating was one unending slum. The streets were filled with a new and different race of people, short of stature, and of wretched or beer-sodden appearance. We rolled along through miles of bricks and squalor, and from each cross street and alley flashed long vistas of bricks and misery. Here and there lurched a drunken man or woman, and the air was obscene with sounds of jangling and squabbling. At a market, tottery old men and women were searching in the garbage thrown in the mud for rotten potatoes, beans, and vegetables, while little children clustered like flies around a festering mass of fruit, thrusting their arms to the shoulders into the liquid corruption, and drawing forth morsels but partially decayed, which they devoured on the spot.

Not a hansom did I meet with in all my drive, while mine was like an apparition from another and better world, the way the children ran after it and alongside. And as far as I could see were the solid walls of brick, the slimy pavements, and the screaming streets; and for the first time in my life the fear of the crowd smote me. It was like the fear of the sea; and the miserable multitudes, street upon street, seemed so many waves of a vast and malodorous sea, lapping about me and threatening to well up and over me.

"Stepney, sir; Stepney Station," the cabby called down.

I looked about. It was really a railroad station, and he had driven desperately to it as the one familiar spot he had ever heard of in all that wilderness.

“Well,” I said.

He spluttered unintelligibly, shook his head, and looked very miserable. “I’m a strynger ’ere,” he managed to articulate. “An’ if yer don’t want Stepney Station, I’m blessed if I know wotcher do want.”

“I’ll tell you what I want,” I said. “You drive along and keep your eye out for a shop where old clothes are sold. Now, when you see such a shop, drive right on till you turn the corner, then stop and let me out.”

I could see that he was growing dubious of his fare, but not long afterwards he pulled up to the curb and informed me that an old-clothes shop was to be found a bit of the way back.

“Won’tcher py me?” he pleaded. “There’s seven an’ six owin’ me.”

“Yes,” I laughed, “and it would be the last I’d see of you.”

“Lord lumme, but it’ll be the last I see of you if yer don’t py me,” he retorted.

But a crowd of ragged onlookers had already gathered around the cab, and I laughed again and walked back to the old-clothes shop.

Here the chief difficulty was in making the shopman understand that I really and truly wanted old clothes. But after fruitless attempts to press upon me new and impossible coats and trousers, he began to bring to light heaps of old ones, looking mysterious the while and hinting darkly. This he did with the palpable intention of letting me know that he had “piped my lay,” in order to bulldose me, through fear of exposure, into paying heavily for my purchases. A man in trouble, or a high-class criminal from across the water, was what he took my measure for — in either case, a person anxious to avoid the police.

But I disputed with him over the outrageous difference between prices and values, till I quite disabused him of the notion, and he settled down to drive a hard bargain with a hard customer. In the end I selected a pair of stout though well-worn trousers, a frayed jacket with one remaining button, a pair of brogans which had plainly seen service where coal was shovelled, a thin leather belt, and a very dirty cloth cap. My underclothing and socks, however, were new and warm, but of the sort that any American waif, down in his luck, could acquire in the ordinary course of events.

"I must sy yer a sharp 'un," he said, with counterfeit admiration, as I handed over the ten shillings finally agreed upon for the outfit. "Blimey, if you ain't ben up an' down Petticut Lane afore now. Yer trouseys is wuth five bob to hany man, an' a docker 'ud give two an' six for the shoes, to sy nothin' of the coat an' cap an' new stoker's singlet an' hother things."

"How much will you give me for them?" I demanded suddenly. "I paid you ten bob for the lot, and I'll sell them back to you, right now, for eight! Come, it's a go!"

But he grinned and shook his head, and though I had made a good bargain, I was unpleasantly aware that he had made a better one.

I found the cabby and a policeman with their heads together, but the latter, after looking me over sharply, and particularly scrutinizing the bundle under my arm, turned away and left the cabby to wax mutinous by himself. And not a step would he budge till I paid him the seven shillings and sixpence owing him. Whereupon he was willing to drive me to the ends of the earth, apologising profusely for his insistence, and explaining that one ran across queer customers in London Town.

But he drove me only to Highbury Vale, in North London, where my luggage was waiting for me. Here, next day, I took off my shoes (not without regret for their lightness and comfort), and my soft, grey travelling suit, and, in fact, all my clothing; and proceeded to array myself in the clothes of the other and unimaginable men, who must have been indeed unfortunate to have had to part with such rags for the pitiable sums obtainable from a dealer.

Inside my stoker's singlet, in the armpit, I sewed a gold sovereign (an emergency sum certainly of modest proportions); and inside my stoker's singlet I put myself. And then I sat down and moralised upon the fair years and fat, which had made my skin soft and brought the nerves close to the surface; for the singlet was rough and raspy as a hair shirt, and I am confident that the most rigorous of ascetics suffer no more than I did in the ensuing twenty-four hours.

The remainder of my costume was fairly easy to put on, though the brogans, or brogues, were quite a problem. As stiff and hard as if made of wood, it was only after a prolonged pounding of the uppers with my fists that I was able to get my feet into them at all. Then, with a few shillings, a knife, a handkerchief, and some brown papers and flake tobacco stowed away in my pockets, I thumped down the stairs and said good-bye to my foreboding friends. As I paused out of the door, the “help,” a comely middle-aged woman, could not conquer a grin that twisted her lips and separated them till the throat, out of involuntary sympathy, made the uncouth animal noises we are wont to designate as “laughter.”

No sooner was I out on the streets than I was impressed by the difference in status effected by my clothes. All servility vanished from the demeanour of the common people with whom I came in contact. Presto! in the twinkling of an eye, so to say, I had become one of them. My frayed and out-at-elbows jacket was the badge and advertisement of my class, which was their class. It made me of like kind, and in place of the fawning and too respectful attention I had hitherto received, I now shared with them a comradeship. The man in corduroy and dirty neckerchief no longer addressed me as “sir” or “governor.” It was “mate” now — and a fine and hearty word, with a tingle to it, and a warmth and gladness, which the other term does not possess. Governor! It smacks of mastery, and power, and high authority — the tribute of the man who is under to the man on top, delivered in the hope that he will let up a bit and ease his weight, which is another way of saying that it is an appeal for alms.

This brings me to a delight I experienced in my rags and tatters which is denied the average American abroad. The European traveller from the States, who is not a Croesus, speedily finds himself reduced to a chronic state of self-conscious sordidness by the hordes of cringing robbers who clutter his steps from dawn till dark, and deplete his pocket-book in a way that puts compound interest to the blush.

In my rags and tatters I escaped the pestilence of tipping, and encountered men on a basis of equality. Nay, before the day was out I turned the tables, and said, most gratefully, “Thank you, sir,” to a gentleman whose horse I held, and who dropped a penny into my eager palm.

Other changes I discovered were wrought in my condition by my new garb. In crossing crowded thoroughfares I found I had to be, if anything, more lively in avoiding vehicles, and it was strikingly impressed upon me that my life had cheapened in direct ratio with my clothes. When before I inquired the way of a policeman, I was usually asked, “Bus or ’ansom, sir?” But now the query became, “Walk or ride?” Also, at the railway stations, a third-class ticket was now shoved out to me as a matter of course.

But there was compensation for it all. For the first time I met the English lower classes face to face, and knew them for what they were. When loungers and workmen, at street corners and in public-houses, talked with me, they talked as one man to another, and they talked as natural men should talk, without the least idea of getting anything out of me for what they talked or the way they talked.

And when at last I made into the East End, I was gratified to find that the fear of the crowd no longer haunted me. I had become a part of it. The vast and malodorous sea had welled up and over me, or I had slipped gently into it, and there was nothing fearsome about it — with the one exception of the stoker's singlet.

CHAPTER II — JOHNNY UPRIGHT

I shall not give you the address of Johnny Upright. Let it suffice that he lives in the most respectable street in the East End — a street that would be considered very mean in America, but a veritable oasis in the desert of East London. It is surrounded on every side by close-packed squalor and streets jammed by a young and vile and dirty generation; but its own pavements are comparatively bare of the children who have no other place to play, while it has an air of desertion, so few are the people that come and go.

Each house in this street, as in all the streets, is shoulder to shoulder with its neighbours. To each house there is but one entrance, the front door; and each house is about eighteen feet wide, with a bit of a brick-walled yard behind, where, when it is not raining, one may look at a slate-coloured sky. But it must be understood that this is East End opulence we are now considering. Some of the people in this street are even so well-to-do as to keep a "slavey." Johnny Upright keeps one, as I well know, she being my first acquaintance in this particular portion of the world.

To Johnny Upright's house I came, and to the door came the "slavey." Now, mark you, her position in life was pitiable and contemptible, but it was with pity and contempt that she looked at me. She evinced a plain desire that our conversation should be short. It was Sunday, and Johnny Upright was not at home, and that was all there was to it. But I lingered, discussing whether or not it was all there was to it, till Mrs. Johnny Upright was attracted to the door, where she scolded the girl for not having closed it before turning her attention to me.

No, Mr. Johnny Upright was not at home, and further, he saw nobody on Sunday. It is too bad, said I. Was I looking for work? No, quite the contrary; in fact, I had come to see Johnny Upright on business which might be profitable to him.

A change came over the face of things at once. The gentleman in question was at church, but would be home in an hour or thereabouts, when no doubt he could be seen.

Would I kindly step in? — no, the lady did not ask me, though I fished for an invitation by stating that I would go down to the corner and wait in a public-house. And down to the corner I went, but, it being church time, the "pub" was closed. A miserable drizzle was falling, and, in lieu of better, I took a seat on a neighbourly doorstep and waited.

And here to the doorstep came the “slavey,” very frowzy and very perplexed, to tell me that the missus would let me come back and wait in the kitchen.

“So many people come ’ere lookin’ for work,” Mrs. Johnny Upright apologetically explained. “So I ’ope you won’t feel bad the way I spoke.”

“Not at all, not at all,” I replied in my grandest manner, for the nonce investing my rags with dignity. “I quite understand, I assure you. I suppose people looking for work almost worry you to death?”

“That they do,” she answered, with an eloquent and expressive glance; and thereupon ushered me into, not the kitchen, but the dining room — a favour, I took it, in recompense for my grand manner.

This dining-room, on the same floor as the kitchen, was about four feet below the level of the ground, and so dark (it was midday) that I had to wait a space for my eyes to adjust themselves to the gloom. Dirty light filtered in through a window, the top of which was on a level with a sidewalk, and in this light I found that I was able to read newspaper print.

And here, while waiting the coming of Johnny Upright, let me explain my errand. While living, eating, and sleeping with the people of the East End, it was my intention to have a port of refuge, not too far distant, into which could run now and again to assure myself that good clothes and cleanliness still existed. Also in such port I could receive my mail, work up my notes, and sally forth occasionally in changed garb to civilisation.

But this involved a dilemma. A lodging where my property would be safe implied a landlady apt to be suspicious of a gentleman leading a double life; while a landlady who would not bother her head over the double life of her lodgers would imply lodgings where property was unsafe. To avoid the dilemma was what had brought me to Johnny Upright. A detective of thirty-odd years’ continuous service in the East End, known far and wide by a name given him by a convicted felon in the dock, he was just the man to find me an honest landlady, and make her rest easy concerning the strange comings and goings of which I might be guilty.

His two daughters beat him home from church — and pretty girls they were in their Sunday dresses; withal it was the certain weak and delicate prettiness which characterises the Cockney lasses, a prettiness which is no more than a promise with no grip on time, and doomed to fade quickly away like the colour from a sunset sky.

They looked me over with frank curiosity, as though I were some sort of a strange animal, and then ignored me utterly for the rest of my wait. Then Johnny Upright himself arrived, and I was summoned upstairs to confer with him.

"Speak loud," he interrupted my opening words. "I've got a bad cold, and I can't hear well."

Shades of Old Sleuth and Sherlock Holmes! I wondered as to where the assistant was located whose duty it was to take down whatever information I might loudly vouchsafe. And to this day, much as I have seen of Johnny Upright and much as I have puzzled over the incident, I have never been quite able to make up my mind as to whether or not he had a cold, or had an assistant planted in the other room. But of one thing I am sure: though I gave Johnny Upright the facts concerning myself and project, he withheld judgment till next day, when I dodged into his street conventionally garbed and in a hansom. Then his greeting was cordial enough, and I went down into the dining-room to join the family at tea.

"We are humble here," he said, "not given to the flesh, and you must take us for what we are, in our humble way."

The girls were flushed and embarrassed at greeting me, while he did not make it any the easier for them.

"Ha! ha!" he roared heartily, slapping the table with his open hand till the dishes rang. "The girls thought yesterday you had come to ask for a piece of bread! Ha! ha! ho! ho! ho!"

This they indignantly denied, with snapping eyes and guilty red cheeks, as though it were an essential of true refinement to be able to discern under his rags a man who had no need to go ragged.

And then, while I ate bread and marmalade, proceeded a play at cross purposes, the daughters deeming it an insult to me that I should have been mistaken for a beggar, and the father considering it as the highest compliment to my cleverness to succeed in being so mistaken. All of which I enjoyed, and the bread, the marmalade, and the tea, till the time came for Johnny Upright to find me a lodging, which he did, not half-a-dozen doors away, in his own respectable and opulent street, in a house as like to his own as a pea to its mate.

CHAPTER III — MY LODGING AND SOME OTHERS

From an East London standpoint, the room I rented for six shillings, or a dollar and a half, per week, was a most comfortable affair. From the American standpoint, on the other hand, it was rudely furnished, uncomfortable, and small. By the time I had added an ordinary typewriter table to its scanty furnishing, I was hard put to turn around; at the best, I managed to navigate it by a sort of vermicular progression requiring great dexterity and presence of mind.

Having settled myself, or my property rather, I put on my knockabout clothes and went out for a walk. Lodgings being fresh in my mind, I began to look them up, bearing in mind the hypothesis that I was a poor young man with a wife and large family.

My first discovery was that empty houses were few and far between — so far between, in fact, that though I walked miles in irregular circles over a large area, I still remained between. Not one empty house could I find — a conclusive proof that the district was "saturated."

It being plain that as a poor young man with a family I could rent no houses at all in this most undesirable region, I next looked for rooms, unfurnished rooms, in which I could store my wife and babies and chattels. There were not many, but I found them, usually in the singular, for one appears to be considered sufficient for a poor man's family in which to cook and eat and sleep. When I asked for two rooms, the sublettees looked at me very much in the manner, I imagine, that a certain personage looked at Oliver Twist when he asked for more.

Not only was one room deemed sufficient for a poor man and his family, but I learned that many families, occupying single rooms, had so much space to spare as to be able to take in a lodger or two. When such rooms can be rented for from three to six shillings per week, it is a fair conclusion that a lodger with references should obtain floor space for, say, from eightpence to a shilling. He may even be able to board with the sublettees for a few shillings more. This, however, I failed to inquire into — a reprehensible error on my part, considering that I was working on the basis of a hypothetical family.

Not only did the houses I investigated have no bath-tubs, but I learned that there were no bath-tubs in all the thousands of houses I had seen.

Under the circumstances, with my wife and babies and a couple of lodgers suffering from the too great spaciousness of one room, taking a bath in a tin wash-basin would be an unfeasible undertaking. But, it seems, the compensation comes in with the saving of soap, so all's well, and God's still in heaven.

However, I rented no rooms, but returned to my own Johnny Upright's street. What with my wife, and babies, and lodgers, and the various cubby-holes into which I had fitted them, my mind's eye had become narrow-angled, and I could not quite take in all of my own room at once. The immensity of it was awe-inspiring. Could this be the room I had rented for six shillings a week? Impossible! But my landlady, knocking at the door to learn if I were comfortable, dispelled my doubts.

"Oh yes, sir," she said, in reply to a question. "This street is the very last. All the other streets were like this eight or ten years ago, and all the people were very respectable. But the others have driven our kind out. Those in this street are the only ones left. It's shocking, sir!"

And then she explained the process of saturation, by which the rental value of a neighbourhood went up, while its tone went down.

"You see, sir, our kind are not used to crowding in the way the others do. We need more room. The others, the foreigners and lower-class people, can get five and six families into this house, where we only get one. So they can pay more rent for the house than we can afford. It *is* shocking, sir; and just to think, only a few years ago all this neighbourhood was just as nice as it could be."

I looked at her. Here was a woman, of the finest grade of the English working-class, with numerous evidences of refinement, being slowly engulfed by that noisome and rotten tide of humanity which the powers that be are pouring eastward out of London Town. Bank, factory, hotel, and office building must go up, and the city poor folk are a nomadic breed; so they migrate eastward, wave upon wave, saturating and degrading neighbourhood by neighbourhood, driving the better class of workers before them to pioneer, on the rim of the city, or dragging them down, if not in the first generation, surely in the second and third.

It is only a question of months when Johnny Upright's street must go. He realises it himself.

"In a couple of years," he says, "my lease expires. My landlord is one of our kind. He has not put up the rent on any of his houses here, and this has enabled us to stay. But any day he may sell, or any day he may die, which is the same thing so far as we are concerned. The house is bought by a money breeder, who builds a sweat shop on the patch of ground at the rear where my grapevine is, adds to the house, and rents it a room to a family. There you are, and Johnny Upright's gone!"

And truly I saw Johnny Upright, and his good wife and fair daughters, and frowzy slavey, like so many ghosts flitting eastward through the gloom, the monster city roaring at their heels.

But Johnny Upright is not alone in his flitting. Far, far out, on the fringe of the city, live the small business men, little managers, and successful clerks. They dwell in cottages and semi-detached villas, with bits of flower garden, and elbow room, and breathing space. They inflate themselves with pride, and throw out their chests when they contemplate the Abyss from which they have escaped, and they thank God that they are not as other men. And lo! down upon them comes Johnny Upright and the monster city at his heels. Tenements spring up like magic, gardens are built upon, villas are divided and subdivided into many dwellings, and the black night of London settles down in a greasy pall.

CHAPTER IV — A MAN AND THE ABYSS

“I say, can you let a lodging?”

These words I discharged carelessly over my shoulder at a stout and elderly woman, of whose fare I was partaking in a greasy coffee-house down near the Pool and not very far from Limehouse.

“Oh yus,” she answered shortly, my appearance possibly not approximating the standard of affluence required by her house.

I said no more, consuming my rasher of bacon and pint of sickly tea in silence. Nor did she take further interest in me till I came to pay my reckoning (fourpence), when I pulled all of ten shillings out of my pocket. The expected result was produced.

“Yus, sir,” she at once volunteered; “I ’ave nice lodgin’s you’d likely tyke a fancy to. Back from a voyage, sir?”

“How much for a room?” I inquired, ignoring her curiosity.

She looked me up and down with frank surprise. “I don’t let rooms, not to my reg’lar lodgers, much less casuals.”

“Then I’ll have to look along a bit,” I said, with marked disappointment.

But the sight of my ten shillings had made her keen. “I can let you have a nice bed in with two hother men,” she urged. “Good, respectable men, an’ steady.”

“But I don’t want to sleep with two other men,” I objected.

“You don’t ’ave to. There’s three beds in the room, an’ hit’s not a very small room.”

“How much?” I demanded.

“’Arf a crown a week, two an’ six, to a regular lodger. You’ll fancy the men, I’m sure. One works in the ware’ouse, an’ ’e’s been with me two years now. An’ the hother’s bin with me six — six years, sir, an’ two months comin’ nex’ Saturday. ’E’s a scene-shifter,” she went on. “A steady, respectable man, never missin’ a night’s work in the time ’e’s bin with me. An’ ’e likes the ’ouse; ’e says as it’s the best ’e can do in the w’y of lodgin’s. I board ’im, an’ the hother lodgers too.”

“I suppose he’s saving money right along,” I insinuated innocently.

“Bless you, no! Nor can ’e do as well helsewhere with ’is money.”

And I thought of my own spacious West, with room under its sky and unlimited air for a thousand Londons; and here was this man, a steady and reliable man, never missing a night’s work, frugal and honest, lodging in one room with two other men, paying two dollars and a half per month for it, and out of his experience adjudging it to be the best he could do! And here was I, on the strength of the ten shillings in my pocket, able to enter in with my rags and take up my bed with him. The human soul is a lonely thing, but it must be very lonely sometimes when there are three beds to a room, and casuals with ten shillings are admitted.

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Thirteen years, sir; an' don't you think you'll fancy the lodgin'?"

The while she talked she was shuffling ponderously about the small kitchen in which she cooked the food for her lodgers who were also boarders. When I first entered, she had been hard at work, nor had she let up once throughout the conversation. Undoubtedly she was a busy woman. "Up at half-past five," "to bed the last thing at night," "workin' fit ter drop," thirteen years of it, and for reward, grey hairs, frowzy clothes, stooped shoulders, slatternly figure, unending toil in a foul and noisome coffee-house that faced on an alley ten feet between the walls, and a waterside environment that was ugly and sickening, to say the least.

"You'll be hin hagain to 'ave a look?" she questioned wistfully, as I went out of the door.

And as I turned and looked at her, I realized to the full the deeper truth underlying that very wise old maxim: "Virtue is its own reward."

I went back to her. "Have you ever taken a vacation?" I asked.

"Vycytion!"

"A trip to the country for a couple of days, fresh air, a day off, you know, a rest."

"Lor' lumme!" she laughed, for the first time stopping from her work. "A vycytion, eh? for the likes o' me? Just fancy, now! — Mind yer feet!" — this last sharply, and to me, as I stumbled over the rotten threshold.

Down near the West India Dock I came upon a young fellow staring disconsolately at the muddy water. A fireman's cap was pulled down across his eyes, and the fit and sag of his clothes whispered unmistakably of the sea.

"Hello, mate," I greeted him, sparring for a beginning. "Can you tell me the way to Wapping?"

"Worked yer way over on a cattle boat?" he countered, fixing my nationality on the instant.

And thereupon we entered upon a talk that extended itself to a public-house and a couple of pints of "arf an' arf." This led to closer intimacy, so that when I brought to light all of a shilling’s worth of coppers (ostensibly my all), and put aside sixpence for a bed, and sixpence for more arf an’ arf, he generously proposed that we drink up the whole shilling.

“My mate, ’e cut up rough las’ night,” he explained. “An’ the bobbies got ’m, so you can bunk in wi’ me. Wotcher say?”

I said yes, and by the time we had soaked ourselves in a whole shilling’s worth of beer, and slept the night on a miserable bed in a miserable den, I knew him pretty fairly for what he was. And that in one respect he was representative of a large body of the lower-class London workman, my later experience substantiates.

He was London-born, his father a fireman and a drinker before him. As a child, his home was the streets and the docks. He had never learned to read, and had never felt the need for it — a vain and useless accomplishment, he held, at least for a man of his station in life.

He had had a mother and numerous squalling brothers and sisters, all crammed into a couple of rooms and living on poorer and less regular food than he could ordinarily rustle for himself. In fact, he never went home except at periods when he was unfortunate in procuring his own food. Petty pilfering and begging along the streets and docks, a trip or two to sea as mess-boy, a few trips more as coal-trimmer, and then a full-fledged fireman, he had reached the top of his life.

And in the course of this he had also hammered out a philosophy of life, an ugly and repulsive philosophy, but withal a very logical and sensible one from his point of view. When I asked him what he lived for, he immediately answered, “Booze.” A voyage to sea (for a man must live and get the wherewithal), and then the paying off and the big drunk at the end. After that, haphazard little drunks, sponged in the “pubs” from mates with a few coppers left, like myself, and when sponging was played out another trip to sea and a repetition of the beastly cycle.

“But women,” I suggested, when he had finished proclaiming booze the sole end of existence.

“Wimmen!” He thumped his pot upon the bar and orated eloquently. “Wimmen is a thing my edication ’as learnt me t’ let alone. It don’t pay, matey; it don’t pay. Wot’s a man like me want o’ wimmen, eh? jest you tell me. There was my mar, she was enough, a-bangin’ the kids about an’ makin’ the ole man mis’rable when ’e come ’ome, w’ich was seldom, I grant. An’ fer w’y? Becos o’ mar! She didn’t make ’is ’ome ’appy, that was w'y. Then, there's the other wimmen, 'ow do they treat a pore stoker with a few shillin's in 'is trouseys? A good drunk is wot 'e's got in 'is pockits, a good long drunk, an' the wimmen skin 'im out of his money so quick 'e ain't 'ad 'ardly a glass. I know. I've 'ad my fling, an' I know wot's wot. An' I tell you, where's wimmen is trouble — screechin' an' carryin' on, fightin', cuttin', bobbies, magistrates, an' a month's 'ard labour back of it all, an' no pay-day when you come out."

"But a wife and children," I insisted. "A home of your own, and all that. Think of it, back from a voyage, little children climbing on your knee, and the wife happy and smiling, and a kiss for you when she lays the table, and a kiss all round from the babies when they go to bed, and the kettle singing and the long talk afterwards of where you've been and what you've seen, and of her and all the little happenings at home while you've been away, and — "

"Garn!" he cried, with a playful shove of his fist on my shoulder. "Wot's yer game, eh? A missus kissin' an' kids clim'in', an' kettle singin', all on four poun' ten a month w'en you 'ave a ship, an' four nothin' w'en you 'aven't. I'll tell you wot I'd get on four poun' ten — a missus rowin', kids squallin', no coal t' make the kettle sing, an' the kettle up the spout, that's wot I'd get. Enough t' make a bloke bloomin' well glad to be back t' sea. A missus! Wot for? T' make you mis'rable? Kids? Jest take my counsel, matey, an' don't 'ave 'em. Look at me! I can 'ave my beer w'en I like, an' no blessed missus an' kids a-crying for bread. I'm 'appy, I am, with my beer an' mates like you, an' a good ship comin', an' another trip to sea. So I say, let's 'ave another pint. Arf an' arf's good enough for me."

Without going further with the speech of this young fellow of two-and-twenty, I think I have sufficiently indicated his philosophy of life and the underlying economic reason for it. Home life he had never known. The word "home" aroused nothing but unpleasant associations. In the low wages of his father, and of other men in the same walk in life, he found sufficient reason for branding wife and children as encumbrances and causes of masculine misery. An unconscious hedonist, utterly unmoral and materialistic, he sought the greatest possible happiness for himself, and found it in drink.

A young sot; a premature wreck; physical inability to do a stoker's work; the gutter or the workhouse; and the end — he saw it all as clearly as I, but it held no terrors for him. From the moment of his birth, all the forces of his environment had tended to harden him, and he viewed his wretched, inevitable future with a callousness and unconcern I could not shake.

And yet he was not a bad man. He was not inherently vicious and brutal. He had normal mentality, and a more than average physique. His eyes were blue and round, shaded by long lashes, and wide apart. And there was a laugh in them, and a fund of humour behind. The brow and general features were good, the mouth and lips sweet, though already developing a harsh twist. The chin was weak, but not too weak; I have seen men sitting in the high places with weaker.

His head was shapely, and so gracefully was it poised upon a perfect neck that I was not surprised by his body that night when he stripped for bed. I have seen many men strip, in gymnasium and training quarters, men of good blood and upbringing, but I have never seen one who stripped to better advantage than this young sot of two-and-twenty, this young god doomed to rack and ruin in four or five short years, and to pass hence without posterity to receive the splendid heritage it was his to bequeath.

It seemed sacrilege to waste such life, and yet I was forced to confess that he was right in not marrying on four pounds ten in London Town. Just as the scene-shifter was happier in making both ends meet in a room shared with two other men, than he would have been had he packed a feeble family along with a couple of men into a cheaper room, and failed in making both ends meet.

And day by day I became convinced that not only is it unwise, but it is criminal for the people of the Abyss to marry. They are the stones by the builder rejected. There is no place for them, in the social fabric, while all the forces of society drive them downward till they perish. At the bottom of the Abyss they are feeble, besotted, and imbecile. If they reproduce, the life is so cheap that perforce it perishes of itself. The work of the world goes on above them, and they do not care to take part in it, nor are they able. Moreover, the work of the world does not need them. There are plenty, far fitter than they, clinging to the steep slope above, and struggling frantically to slide no more.

In short, the London Abyss is a vast shambles. Year by year, and decade after decade, rural England pours in a flood of vigorous strong life, that not only does not renew itself, but perishes by the third generation. Competent authorities aver that the London workman whose parents and grand-parents were born in London is so remarkable a specimen that he is rarely found.

Mr. A. C. Pigou has said that the aged poor, and the residuum which compose the "submerged tenth," constitute 71 per cent, of the population of London. Which is to say that last year, and yesterday, and to-day, at this very moment, 450,000 of these creatures are dying miserably at the bottom of the social pit called "London." As to how they die, I shall take an instance from this morning's paper.

SELF-NEGLECT

Yesterday Dr. Wynn Westcott held an inquest at Shoreditch, respecting the death of Elizabeth Crews, aged 77 years, of 32 East Street, Holborn, who died on Wednesday last. Alice Mathieson stated that she was landlady of the house where deceased lived. Witness last saw her alive on the previous Monday. She lived quite alone. Mr. Francis Birch, relieving officer for the Holborn district, stated that deceased had occupied the room in question for thirty-five years. When witness was called, on the 1st, he found the old woman in a terrible state, and the ambulance and coachman had to be disinfected after the removal. Dr. Chase Fennell said death was due to blood-poisoning from bed-sores, due to self-neglect and filthy surroundings, and the jury returned a verdict to that effect.

The most startling thing about this little incident of a woman's death is the smug complacency with which the officials looked upon it and rendered judgment. That an old woman of seventy-seven years of age should die of SELF-NEGLECT is the most optimistic way possible of looking at it. It was the old dead woman's fault that she died, and having located the responsibility, society goes contentedly on about its own affairs.

Of the "submerged tenth" Mr. Pigou has said: "Either through lack of bodily strength, or of intelligence, or of fibre, or of all three, they are inefficient or unwilling workers, and consequently unable to support themselves . . . They are often so degraded in intellect as to be incapable of distinguishing their right from their left hand, or of recognising the numbers of their own houses; their bodies are feeble and without stamina, their affections are warped, and they scarcely know what family life means."

Four hundred and fifty thousand is a whole lot of people. The young fireman was only one, and it took him some time to say his little say. I should not like to hear them all talk at once. I wonder if God hears them?

CHAPTER V — THOSE ON THE EDGE

My first impression of East London was naturally a general one. Later the details began to appear, and here and there in the chaos of misery I found little spots where a fair measure of happiness reigned — sometimes whole rows of houses in little out-of-the-way streets, where artisans dwell and where a rude sort of family life obtains. In the evenings the men can be seen at the doors, pipes in their mouths and children on their knees, wives gossiping, and laughter and fun going on. The content of these people is manifestly great, for, relative to the wretchedness that encompasses them, they are well off.

But at the best, it is a dull, animal happiness, the content of the full belly. The dominant note of their lives is materialistic. They are stupid and heavy, without imagination. The Abyss seems to exude a stupefying atmosphere of torpor, which wraps about them and deadens them. Religion passes them by. The Unseen holds for them neither terror nor delight. They are unaware of the Unseen; and the full belly and the evening pipe, with their regular "arf an' arf," is all they demand, or dream of demanding, from existence.

This would not be so bad if it were all; but it is not all. The satisfied torpor in which they are sunk is the deadly inertia that precedes dissolution. There is no progress, and with them not to progress is to fall back and into the Abyss. In their own lives they may only start to fall, leaving the fall to be completed by their children and their children's children. Man always gets less than he demands from life; and so little do they demand, that the less than little they get cannot save them.

At the best, city life is an unnatural life for the human; but the city life of London is so utterly unnatural that the average workman or workwoman cannot stand it. Mind and body are sapped by the undermining influences ceaselessly at work. Moral and physical stamina are broken, and the good workman, fresh from the soil, becomes in the first city generation a poor workman; and by the second city generation, devoid of push and go and initiative, and actually unable physically to perform the labour his father did, he is well on the way to the shambles at the bottom of the Abyss.

If nothing else, the air he breathes, and from which he never escapes, is sufficient to weaken him mentally and physically, so that he becomes unable to compete with the fresh virile life from the country hastening on to London Town to destroy and be destroyed.

Leaving out the disease germs that fill the air of the East End, consider but the one item of smoke. Sir William Thiselton-Dyer, curator of Kew Gardens, has been studying smoke deposits on vegetation, and, according to his calculations, no less than six tons of solid matter, consisting of soot and tarry hydrocarbons, are deposited every week on every quarter of a square mile in and about London. This is equivalent to twenty-four tons per week to the square mile, or 1248 tons per year to the square mile. From the cornice below the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral was recently taken a solid deposit of crystallised sulphate of lime. This deposit had been formed by the action of the sulphuric acid in the atmosphere upon the carbonate of lime in the stone. And this sulphuric acid in the atmosphere is constantly being breathed by the London workmen through all the days and nights of their lives.

It is incontrovertible that the children grow up into rotten adults, without virility or stamina, a weak-kneed, narrow-chested, listless breed, that crumples up and goes down in the brute struggle for life with the invading hordes from the country. The railway men, carriers, omnibus drivers, corn and timber porters, and all those who require physical stamina, are largely drawn from the country; while in the Metropolitan Police there are, roughly, 12,000 country-born as against 3000 London-born.

So one is forced to conclude that the Abyss is literally a huge man-killing machine, and when I pass along the little out-of-the-way streets with the full-bellied artisans at the doors, I am aware of a greater sorrow for them than for the 450,000 lost and hopeless wretches dying at the bottom of the pit. They, at least, are dying, that is the point; while these have yet to go through the slow and preliminary pangs extending through two and even three generations.

And yet the quality of the life is good. All human potentialities are in it. Given proper conditions, it could live through the centuries, and great men, heroes and masters, spring from it and make the world better by having lived.

I talked with a woman who was representative of that type which has been jerked out of its little out-of-the-way streets and has started on the fatal fall to the bottom. Her husband was a fitter and a member of the Engineers' Union. That he was a poor engineer was evidenced by his inability to get regular employment. He did not have the energy and enterprise necessary to obtain or hold a steady position.

The pair had two daughters, and the four of them lived in a couple of holes, called “rooms” by courtesy, for which they paid seven shillings per week. They possessed no stove, managing their cooking on a single gas-ring in the fireplace. Not being persons of property, they were unable to obtain an unlimited supply of gas; but a clever machine had been installed for their benefit. By dropping a penny in the slot, the gas was forthcoming, and when a penny’s worth had forthcome the supply was automatically shut off. “A penny gawn in no time,” she explained, “an’ the cookin’ not arf done!”

Incipient starvation had been their portion for years. Month in and month out, they had arisen from the table able and willing to eat more. And when once on the downward slope, chronic innutrition is an important factor in sapping vitality and hastening the descent.

Yet this woman was a hard worker. From 4.30 in the morning till the last light at night, she said, she had toiled at making cloth dress-skirts, lined up and with two flounces, for seven shillings a dozen. Cloth dress-skirts, mark you, lined up with two flounces, for seven shillings a dozen! This is equal to $1.75 per dozen, or 14.75 cents per skirt.

The husband, in order to obtain employment, had to belong to the union, which collected one shilling and sixpence from him each week. Also, when strikes were afoot and he chanced to be working, he had at times been compelled to pay as high as seventeen shillings into the union’s coffers for the relief fund.

One daughter, the elder, had worked as green hand for a dressmaker, for one shilling and sixpence per week — 37.5 cents per week, or a fraction over 5 cents per day. However, when the slack season came she was discharged, though she had been taken on at such low pay with the understanding that she was to learn the trade and work up. After that she had been employed in a bicycle store for three years, for which she received five shillings per week, walking two miles to her work, and two back, and being fined for tardiness.

As far as the man and woman were concerned, the game was played. They had lost handhold and foothold, and were falling into the pit. But what of the daughters? Living like swine, enfeebled by chronic innutrition, being sapped mentally, morally, and physically, what chance have they to crawl up and out of the Abyss into which they were born falling?

As I write this, and for an hour past, the air has been made hideous by a free-for-all, rough-and-tumble fight going on in the yard that is back to back with my yard. When the first sounds reached me I took it for the barking and snarling of dogs, and some minutes were required to convince me that human beings, and women at that, could produce such a fearful clamour.

Drunken women fighting! It is not nice to think of; it is far worse to listen to. Something like this it runs —

Incoherent babble, shrieked at the top of the lungs of several women; a lull, in which is heard a child crying and a young girl's voice pleading tearfully; a woman's voice rises, harsh and grating, "You 'it me! Jest you 'it me!" then, swat! challenge accepted and fight rages afresh.

The back windows of the houses commanding the scene are lined with enthusiastic spectators, and the sound of blows, and of oaths that make one's blood run cold, are borne to my ears. Happily, I cannot see the combatants.

A lull; "You let that child alone!" child, evidently of few years, screaming in downright terror. "Awright," repeated insistently and at top pitch twenty times straight running; "you'll git this rock on the 'ead!" and then rock evidently on the head from the shriek that goes up.

A lull; apparently one combatant temporarily disabled and being resuscitated; child's voice audible again, but now sunk to a lower note of terror and growing exhaustion.

Voices begin to go up the scale, something like this:-

"Yes?"

"Yes!"

"Yes?"

"Yes!"

"Yes?"

"Yes!"

"Yes?"

"Yes!"

Sufficient affirmation on both sides, conflict again precipitated. One combatant gets overwhelming advantage, and follows it up from the way the other combatant screams bloody murder. Bloody murder gurgles and dies out, undoubtedly throttled by a strangle hold.

Entrance of new voices; a flank attack; strangle hold suddenly broken from the way bloody murder goes up half an octave higher than before;

general hullaballoo, everybody fighting.

Lull; new voice, young girl’s, “I’m goin’ ter tyke my mother’s part;” dialogue, repeated about five times, “I’ll do as I like, blankety, blank, blank!” “I’d like ter see yer, blankety, blank, blank!” renewed conflict, mothers, daughters, everybody, during which my landlady calls her young daughter in from the back steps, while I wonder what will be the effect of all that she has heard upon her moral fibre.

CHAPTER VI — FRYING-PAN ALLEY AND A GLIMPSE OF INFERNO

Three of us walked down Mile End Road, and one was a hero. He was a slender lad of nineteen, so slight and frail, in fact, that, like Fra Lippo Lippi, a puff of wind might double him up and turn him over. He was a burning young socialist, in the first throes of enthusiasm and ripe for martyrdom. As platform speaker or chairman he had taken an active and dangerous part in the many indoor and outdoor pro-Boer meetings which have vexed the serenity of Merry England these several years back. Little items he had been imparting to me as he walked along; of being mobbed in parks and on tram-cars; of climbing on the platform to lead the forlorn hope, when brother speaker after brother speaker had been dragged down by the angry crowd and cruelly beaten; of a siege in a church, where he and three others had taken sanctuary, and where, amid flying missiles and the crashing of stained glass, they had fought off the mob till rescued by platoons of constables; of pitched and giddy battles on stairways, galleries, and balconies; of smashed windows, collapsed stairways, wrecked lecture halls, and broken heads and bones — and then, with a regretful sigh, he looked at me and said: “How I envy you big, strong men! I’m such a little mite I can’t do much when it comes to fighting.”

And I, walking head and shoulders above my two companions, remembered my own husky West, and the stalwart men it had been my custom, in turn, to envy there. Also, as I looked at the mite of a youth with the heart of a lion, I thought, this is the type that on occasion rears barricades and shows the world that men have not forgotten how to die.

But up spoke my other companion, a man of twenty-eight, who eked out a precarious existence in a sweating den.

“I’m a ’earty man, I am,” he announced. “Not like the other chaps at my shop, I ain’t. They consider me a fine specimen of manhood. W’y, d’ ye know, I weigh ten stone!”

I was ashamed to tell him that I weighed one hundred and seventy pounds, or over twelve stone, so I contented myself with taking his measure. Poor, misshapen little man! His skin an unhealthy colour, body gnarled and twisted out of all decency, contracted chest, shoulders bent prodigiously from long hours of toil, and head hanging heavily forward and out of place! A “’earty man,’ ’e was!”

"How tall are you?"

"Five foot two," he answered proudly; "an' the chaps at the shop . . . "

"Let me see that shop," I said.

The shop was idle just then, but I still desired to see it. Passing Leman Street, we cut off to the left into Spitalfields, and dived into Frying-pan Alley. A spawn of children cluttered the slimy pavement, for all the world like tadpoles just turned frogs on the bottom of a dry pond. In a narrow doorway, so narrow that perforce we stepped over her, sat a woman with a young babe, nursing at breasts grossly naked and libelling all the sacredness of motherhood. In the black and narrow hall behind her we waded through a mess of young life, and essayed an even narrower and fouler stairway. Up we went, three flights, each landing two feet by three in area, and heaped with filth and refuse.

There were seven rooms in this abomination called a house. In six of the rooms, twenty-odd people, of both sexes and all ages, cooked, ate, slept, and worked. In size the rooms averaged eight feet by eight, or possibly nine. The seventh room we entered. It was the den in which five men "sweated." It was seven feet wide by eight long, and the table at which the work was performed took up the major portion of the space. On this table were five lasts, and there was barely room for the men to stand to their work, for the rest of the space was heaped with cardboard, leather, bundles of shoe uppers, and a miscellaneous assortment of materials used in attaching the uppers of shoes to their soles.

In the adjoining room lived a woman and six children. In another vile hole lived a widow, with an only son of sixteen who was dying of consumption. The woman hawked sweetmeats on the street, I was told, and more often failed than not to supply her son with the three quarts of milk he daily required. Further, this son, weak and dying, did not taste meat oftener than once a week; and the kind and quality of this meat cannot possibly be imagined by people who have never watched human swine eat.

"The w'y 'e coughs is somethin' terrible," volunteered my sweated friend, referring to the dying boy. "We 'ear 'im 'ere, w'ile we're workin', an' it's terrible, I say, terrible!"

And, what of the coughing and the sweetmeats, I found another menace added to the hostile environment of the children of the slum.

My sweated friend, when work was to be had, toiled with four other men in his eight-by-seven room. In the winter a lamp burned nearly all the day and added its fumes to the over-loaded air, which was breathed, and breathed, and breathed again.

In good times, when there was a rush of work, this man told me that he could earn as high as “thirty bob a week.” — Thirty shillings! Seven dollars and a half!

“But it’s only the best of us can do it,” he qualified. “An’ then we work twelve, thirteen, and fourteen hours a day, just as fast as we can. An’ you should see us sweat! Just running from us! If you could see us, it’d dazzle your eyes — tacks flyin’ out of mouth like from a machine. Look at my mouth.”

I looked. The teeth were worn down by the constant friction of the metallic brads, while they were coal-black and rotten.

“I clean my teeth,” he added, “else they’d be worse.”

After he had told me that the workers had to furnish their own tools, brads, “grindery,” cardboard, rent, light, and what not, it was plain that his thirty bob was a diminishing quantity.

“But how long does the rush season last, in which you receive this high wage of thirty bob?” I asked.

“Four months,” was the answer; and for the rest of the year, he informed me, they average from “half a quid” to a “quid” a week, which is equivalent to from two dollars and a half to five dollars. The present week was half gone, and he had earned four bob, or one dollar. And yet I was given to understand that this was one of the better grades of sweating.

I looked out of the window, which should have commanded the back yards of the neighbouring buildings. But there were no back yards, or, rather, they were covered with one-storey hovels, cowsheds, in which people lived. The roofs of these hovels were covered with deposits of filth, in some places a couple of feet deep — the contributions from the back windows of the second and third storeys. I could make out fish and meat bones, garbage, pestilential rags, old boots, broken earthenware, and all the general refuse of a human sty.

“This is the last year of this trade; they’re getting machines to do away with us,” said the sweated one mournfully, as we stepped over the woman with the breasts grossly naked and waded anew through the cheap young life.

We next visited the municipal dwellings erected by the London County Council on the site of the slums where lived Arthur Morrison’s “Child of the Jago." While the buildings housed more people than before, it was much healthier. But the dwellings were inhabited by the better-class workmen and artisans. The slum people had simply drifted on to crowd other slums or to form new slums.

"An' now," said the sweated one, the 'earty man who worked so fast as to dazzle one's eyes, "I'll show you one of London's lungs. This is Spitalfields Garden." And he mouthed the word "garden" with scorn.

The shadow of Christ's Church falls across Spitalfields Garden, and in the shadow of Christ's Church, at three o'clock in the afternoon, I saw a sight I never wish to see again. There are no flowers in this garden, which is smaller than my own rose garden at home. Grass only grows here, and it is surrounded by a sharp-spiked iron fencing, as are all the parks of London Town, so that homeless men and women may not come in at night and sleep upon it.

As we entered the garden, an old woman, between fifty and sixty, passed us, striding with sturdy intention if somewhat rickety action, with two bulky bundles, covered with sacking, slung fore and aft upon her. She was a woman tramp, a houseless soul, too independent to drag her failing carcass through the workhouse door. Like the snail, she carried her home with her. In the two sacking-covered bundles were her household goods, her wardrobe, linen, and dear feminine possessions.

We went up the narrow gravelled walk. On the benches on either side arrayed a mass of miserable and distorted humanity, the sight of which would have impelled Doré to more diabolical flights of fancy than he ever succeeded in achieving. It was a welter of rags and filth, of all manner of loathsome skin diseases, open sores, bruises, grossness, indecency, leering monstrosities, and bestial faces. A chill, raw wind was blowing, and these creatures huddled there in their rags, sleeping for the most part, or trying to sleep. Here were a dozen women, ranging in age from twenty years to seventy. Next a babe, possibly of nine months, lying asleep, flat on the hard bench, with neither pillow nor covering, nor with any one looking after it. Next half-a-dozen men, sleeping bolt upright or leaning against one another in their sleep. In one place a family group, a child asleep in its sleeping mother's arms, and the husband (or male mate) clumsily mending a dilapidated shoe. On another bench a woman trimming the frayed strips of her rags with a knife, and another woman, with thread and needle, sewing up rents. Adjoining, a man holding a sleeping woman in his arms. Farther on, a man, his clothing caked with gutter mud, asleep, with head in the lap of a woman, not more than twenty-five years old, and also asleep.

It was this sleeping that puzzled me. Why were nine out of ten of them asleep or trying to sleep? But it was not till afterwards that I learned. *It is a law of the powers that be that the homeless shall not sleep by night*. On the pavement, by the portico of Christ's Church, where the stone pillars rise toward the sky in a stately row, were whole rows of men lying asleep or drowsing, and all too deep sunk in torpor to rouse or be made curious by our intrusion.

"A lung of London," I said; "nay, an abscess, a great putrescent sore."

"Oh, why did you bring me here?" demanded the burning young socialist, his delicate face white with sickness of soul and stomach sickness.

"Those women there," said our guide, "will sell themselves for thru'pence, or tu'pence, or a loaf of stale bread."

He said it with a cheerful sneer.

But what more he might have said I do not know, for the sick man cried, "For heaven's sake let us get out of this."

CHAPTER VII — A WINNER OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

I have found that it is not easy to get into the casual ward of the workhouse. I have made two attempts now, and I shall shortly make a third. The first time I started out at seven o'clock in the evening with four shillings in my pocket. Herein I committed two errors. In the first place, the applicant for admission to the casual ward must be destitute, and as he is subjected to a rigorous search, he must really be destitute; and fourpence, much less four shillings, is sufficient affluence to disqualify him. In the second place, I made the mistake of tardiness. Seven o'clock in the evening is too late in the day for a pauper to get a pauper's bed.

For the benefit of gently nurtured and innocent folk, let me explain what a ward is. It is a building where the homeless, bedless, penniless man, if he be lucky, may *casually* rest his weary bones, and then work like a navvy next day to pay for it.

My second attempt to break into the casual ward began more auspiciously. I started in the middle of the afternoon, accompanied by the burning young socialist and another friend, and all I had in my pocket was thru'pence. They piloted me to the Whitechapel Workhouse, at which I peered from around a friendly corner. It was a few minutes past five in the afternoon but already a long and melancholy line was formed, which strung out around the corner of the building and out of sight.

It was a most woeful picture, men and women waiting in the cold grey end of the day for a pauper's shelter from the night, and I confess it almost unnerved me. Like the boy before the dentist's door, I suddenly discovered a multitude of reasons for being elsewhere. Some hints of the struggle going on within must have shown in my face, for one of my companions said, "Don't funk; you can do it."

Of course I could do it, but I became aware that even thru'pence in my pocket was too lordly a treasure for such a throng; and, in order that all invidious distinctions might be removed, I emptied out the coppers. Then I bade good-bye to my friends, and with my heart going pit-a-pat, slouched down the street and took my place at the end of the line. Woeful it looked, this line of poor folk tottering on the steep pitch to death; how woeful it was I did not dream.

Next to me stood a short, stout man. Hale and hearty, though aged, strong-featured, with the tough and leathery skin produced by long years of sunbeat and weatherbeat, his was the unmistakable sea face and eyes; and at once there came to me a bit of Kipling's "Galley Slave":-

"By the brand upon my shoulder, by the gall of clinging steel;
By the welt the whips have left me, by the scars that never heal;
By eyes grown old with staring through the sun-wash on the brine,
I am paid in full for service . . . "

How correct I was in my surmise, and how peculiarly appropriate the verse was, you shall learn.

"I won't stand it much longer, I won't," he was complaining to the man on the other side of him. "I'll smash a windy, a big 'un, an' get run in for fourteen days. Then I'll have a good place to sleep, never fear, an' better grub than you get here. Though I'd miss my bit of bacey" — this as an after-thought, and said regretfully and resignedly.

"I've been out two nights now," he went on; "wet to the skin night before last, an' I can't stand it much longer. I'm gettin' old, an' some mornin' they'll pick me up dead."

He whirled with fierce passion on me: "Don't you ever let yourself grow old, lad. Die when you're young, or you'll come to this. I'm tellin' you sure. Seven an' eighty years am I, an' served my country like a man. Three good-conduct stripes and the Victoria Cross, an' this is what I get for it. I wish I was dead, I wish I was dead. Can't come any too quick for me, I tell you."

The moisture rushed into his eyes, but, before the other man could comfort him, he began to hum a lilting sea song as though there was no such thing as heartbreak in the world.

Given encouragement, this is the story he told while waiting in line at the workhouse after two nights of exposure in the streets.

As a boy he had enlisted in the British navy, and for two score years and more served faithfully and well. Names, dates, commanders, ports, ships, engagements, and battles, rolled from his lips in a steady stream, but it is beyond me to remember them all, for it is not quite in keeping to take notes at the poorhouse door. He had been through the "First War in China," as he termed it; had enlisted with the East India Company and served ten years in India; was back in India again, in the English navy, at the time of the Mutiny; had served in the Burmese War and in the Crimea; and all this in addition to having fought and toiled for the English flag pretty well over the rest of the globe.

Then the thing happened. A little thing, it could only be traced back to first causes: perhaps the lieutenant's breakfast had not agreed with him; or he had been up late the night before; or his debts were pressing; or the commander had spoken brusquely to him. The point is, that on this particular day the lieutenant was irritable. The sailor, with others, was "setting up" the fore rigging.

Now, mark you, the sailor had been over forty years in the navy, had three good-conduct stripes, and possessed the Victoria Cross for distinguished service in battle; so he could not have been such an altogether bad sort of a sailorman. The lieutenant was irritable; the lieutenant called him a name — well, not a nice sort of name. It referred to his mother. When I was a boy it was our boys' code to fight like little demons should such an insult be given our mothers; and many men have died in my part of the world for calling other men this name.

However, the lieutenant called the sailor this name. At that moment it chanced the sailor had an iron lever or bar in his hands. He promptly struck the lieutenant over the head with it, knocking him out of the rigging and overboard.

And then, in the man's own words: "I saw what I had done. I knew the Regulations, and I said to myself, 'It's all up with you, Jack, my boy; so here goes.' An' I jumped over after him, my mind made up to drown us both. An' I'd ha' done it, too, only the pinnace from the flagship was just comin' alongside. Up we came to the top, me a hold of him an' punchin' him. This was what settled for me. If I hadn't ben strikin' him, I could have claimed that, seein' what I had done, I jumped over to save him."

Then came the court-martial, or whatever name a sea trial goes by. He recited his sentence, word for word, as though memorised and gone over in bitterness many times. And here it is, for the sake of discipline and respect to officers not always gentlemen, the punishment of a man who was guilty of manhood. To be reduced to the rank of ordinary seaman; to be debarred all prize-money due him; to forfeit all rights to pension; to resign the Victoria Cross; to be discharged from the navy with a good character (this being his first offence); to receive fifty lashes; and to serve two years in prison.

"I wish I had drowned that day, I wish to God I had," he concluded, as the line moved up and we passed around the corner.

At last the door came in sight, through which the paupers were being admitted in bunches. And here I learned a surprising thing: *this being Wednesday, none of us would be released till Friday morning*. Furthermore, and oh, you tobacco users, take heed: *we would not be permitted to take in any tobacco*. This we would have to surrender as we entered. Sometimes, I was told, it was returned on leaving and sometimes it was destroyed.

The old man-of-war's man gave me a lesson. Opening his pouch, he emptied the tobacco (a pitiful quantity) into a piece of paper. This, snugly and flatly wrapped, went down his sock inside his shoe. Down went my piece of tobacco inside my sock, for forty hours without tobacco is a hardship all tobacco users will understand.

Again and again the line moved up, and we were slowly but surely approaching the wicket. At the moment we happened to be standing on an iron grating, and a man appearing underneath, the old sailor called down to him, —

"How many more do they want?"

"Twenty-four," came the answer.

We looked ahead anxiously and counted. Thirty-four were ahead of us. Disappointment and consternation dawned upon the faces about me. It is not a nice thing, hungry and penniless, to face a sleepless night in the streets. But we hoped against hope, till, when ten stood outside the wicket, the porter turned us away.

"Full up," was what he said, as he banged the door.

Like a flash, for all his eighty-seven years, the old sailor was speeding away on the desperate chance of finding shelter elsewhere. I stood and debated with two other men, wise in the knowledge of casual wards, as to where we should go. They decided on the Poplar Workhouse, three miles away, and we started off.

As we rounded the corner, one of them said, "I could a' got in 'ere today. I come by at one o'clock, an' the line was beginnin' to form then — pets, that's what they are. They let 'm in, the same ones, night upon night."

CHAPTER VIII — THE CARTER AND THE CARPENTER

The Carter, with his clean-cut face, chin beard, and shaved upper lip, I should have taken in the United States for anything from a master workman to a well-to-do farmer. The Carpenter — well, I should have taken him for a carpenter. He looked it, lean and wiry, with shrewd, observant eyes, and hands that had grown twisted to the handles of tools through forty-seven years' work at the trade. The chief difficulty with these men was that they were old, and that their children, instead of growing up to take care of them, had died. Their years had told on them, and they had been forced out of the whirl of industry by the younger and stronger competitors who had taken their places.

These two men, turned away from the casual ward of Whitechapel Workhouse, were bound with me for Poplar Workhouse. Not much of a show, they thought, but to chance it was all that remained to us. It was Poplar, or the streets and night. Both men were anxious for a bed, for they were "about gone," as they phrased it. The Carter, fifty-eight years of age, had spent the last three nights without shelter or sleep, while the Carpenter, sixty-five years of age, had been out five nights.

But, O dear, soft people, full of meat and blood, with white beds and airy rooms waiting you each night, how can I make you know what it is to suffer as you would suffer if you spent a weary night on London's streets! Believe me, you would think a thousand centuries had come and gone before the east paled into dawn; you would shiver till you were ready to cry aloud with the pain of each aching muscle; and you would marvel that you could endure so much and live. Should you rest upon a bench, and your tired eyes close, depend upon it the policeman would rouse you and gruffly order you to "move on." You may rest upon the bench, and benches are few and far between; but if rest means sleep, on you must go, dragging your tired body through the endless streets. Should you, in desperate slyness, seek some forlorn alley or dark passageway and lie down, the omnipresent policeman will rout you out just the same. It is his business to rout you out. It is a law of the powers that be that you shall be routed out.

But when the dawn came, the nightmare over, you would hale you home to refresh yourself, and until you died you would tell the story of your adventure to groups of admiring friends. It would grow into a mighty story. Your little eight-hour night would become an Odyssey and you a Homer.

Not so with these homeless ones who walked to Poplar Workhouse with me. And there are thirty-five thousand of them, men and women, in London Town this night. Please don't remember it as you go to bed; if you are as soft as you ought to be you may not rest so well as usual. But for old men of sixty, seventy, and eighty, ill-fed, with neither meat nor blood, to greet the dawn unrefreshed, and to stagger through the day in mad search for crusts, with relentless night rushing down upon them again, and to do this five nights and days — O dear, soft people, full of meat and blood, how can you ever understand?

I walked up Mile End Road between the Carter and the Carpenter. Mile End Road is a wide thoroughfare, cutting the heart of East London, and there were tens of thousands of people abroad on it. I tell you this so that you may fully appreciate what I shall describe in the next paragraph. As I say, we walked along, and when they grew bitter and cursed the land, I cursed with them, cursed as an American waif would curse, stranded in a strange and terrible land. And, as I tried to lead them to believe, and succeeded in making them believe, they took me for a "seafaring man," who had spent his money in riotous living, lost his clothes (no unusual occurrence with seafaring men ashore), and was temporarily broke while looking for a ship. This accounted for my ignorance of English ways in general and casual wards in particular, and my curiosity concerning the same.

The Carter was hard put to keep the pace at which we walked (he told me that he had eaten nothing that day), but the Carpenter, lean and hungry, his grey and ragged overcoat flapping mournfully in the breeze, swung on in a long and tireless stride which reminded me strongly of the plains wolf or coyote. Both kept their eyes upon the pavement as they walked and talked, and every now and then one or the other would stoop and pick something up, never missing the stride the while. I thought it was cigar and cigarette stumps they were collecting, and for some time took no notice. Then I did notice.

From the slimy, spittle-drenched, sidewalk, they were picking up bits of orange peel, apple skin, and grape stems, and, they were eating them. The pits of greengage plums they cracked between their teeth for the kernels inside. They picked up stray bits of bread the size of peas, apple cores so *black and dirty one would not take them to be apple cores, and these things these two men took into their mouths, and chewed them, and swallowed them; and this, between six and seven o'clock in the evening of August 20, year of our Lord 1902, in the heart of the greatest, wealthiest, and most powerful empire the world has ever seen*.

These two men talked. They were not fools, they were merely old. And, naturally, their guts a-reek with pavement offal, they talked of bloody revolution. They talked as anarchists, fanatics, and madmen would talk. And who shall blame them? In spite of my three good meals that day, and the snug bed I could occupy if I wished, and my social philosophy, and my evolutionary belief in the slow development and metamorphosis of things — in spite of all this, I say, I felt impelled to talk rot with them or hold my tongue. Poor fools! Not of their sort are revolutions bred. And when they are dead and dust, which will be shortly, other fools will talk bloody revolution as they gather offal from the spittle-drenched sidewalk along Mile End Road to Poplar Workhouse.

Being a foreigner, and a young man, the Carter and the Carpenter explained things to me and advised me. Their advice, by the way, was brief, and to the point; it was to get out of the country. "As fast as God'll let me," I assured them; "I'll hit only the high places, till you won't be able to see my trail for smoke." They felt the force of my figures, rather than understood them, and they nodded their heads approvingly.

"Actually make a man a criminal against 'is will," said the Carpenter. "'Ere I am, old, younger men takin' my place, my clothes gettin' shabbier an' shabbier, an' makin' it 'arder every day to get a job. I go to the casual ward for a bed. Must be there by two or three in the afternoon or I won't get in. You saw what happened to-day. What chance does that give me to look for work? S'pose I do get into the casual ward? Keep me in all day to-morrow, let me out mornin' o' next day. What then? The law sez I can't get in another casual ward that night less'n ten miles distant. Have to hurry an' walk to be there in time that day. What chance does that give me to look for a job? S'pose I don't walk. S'pose I look for a job? In no time there's night come, an' no bed. No sleep all night, nothin' to eat, what shape am I in the mornin' to look for work? Got to make up my sleep in the park somehow" (the vision of Christ's Church, Spitalfield, was strong on me) "an' get something to eat. An' there I am! Old, down, an' no chance to get up."

"Used to be a toll-gate 'ere," said the Carter. "Many's the time I've paid my toll 'ere in my cartin' days."

"I've 'ad three 'a'penny rolls in two days," the Carpenter announced, after a long pause in the conversation. "Two of them I ate yesterday, an' the third to-day," he concluded, after another long pause.

"I ain't 'ad anything to-day," said the Carter. "An' I'm fagged out. My legs is hurtin' me something fearful."

"The roll you get in the 'spike' is that 'ard you can't eat it nicely with less'n a pint of water," said the Carpenter, for my benefit. And, on asking him what the "spike" was, he answered, "The casual ward. It's a cant word, you know."

But what surprised me was that he should have the word "cant" in his vocabulary, a vocabulary that I found was no mean one before we parted.

I asked them what I might expect in the way of treatment, if we succeeded in getting into the Poplar Workhouse, and between them I was supplied with much information. Having taken a cold bath on entering, I would be given for supper six ounces of bread and "three parts of skilly." "Three parts" means three-quarters of a pint, and "skilly" is a fluid concoction of three quarts of oatmeal stirred into three buckets and a half of hot water.

"Milk and sugar, I suppose, and a silver spoon?" I queried.

"No fear. Salt's what you'll get, an' I've seen some places where you'd not get any spoon. 'Old 'er up an' let 'er run down, that's 'ow they do it."

"You do get good skilly at 'Ackney," said the Carter.

"Oh, wonderful skilly, that," praised the Carpenter, and each looked eloquently at the other.

"Flour an' water at St. George's in the East," said the Carter.

The Carpenter nodded. He had tried them all.

"Then what?" I demanded

And I was informed that I was sent directly to bed. "Call you at half after five in the mornin', an' you get up an' take a 'sluice' — if there's any soap. Then breakfast, same as supper, three parts o' skilly an' a six-ounce loaf."

"'Tisn't always six ounces," corrected the Carter.

"'Tisn't, no; an' often that sour you can 'ardly eat it. When first I started I couldn't eat the skilly nor the bread, but now I can eat my own an' another man's portion."

"I could eat three other men's portions," said the Carter. "I 'aven't 'ad a bit this blessed day."

"Then what?"

"Then you've got to do your task, pick four pounds of oakum, or clean an' scrub, or break ten to eleven hundredweight o' stones. I don't 'ave to break stones; I'm past sixty, you see. They'll make you do it, though. You're young an' strong."

"What I don't like," grumbled the Carter, "is to be locked up in a cell to pick oakum. It's too much like prison."

"But suppose, after you've had your night's sleep, you refuse to pick oakum, or break stones, or do any work at all?" I asked.

"No fear you'll refuse the second time; they'll run you in," answered the Carpenter. "Wouldn't advise you to try it on, my lad."

"Then comes dinner," he went on. "Eight ounces of bread, one and a arf ounces of cheese, an' cold water. Then you finish your task an' 'ave supper, same as before, three parts o' skilly any six ounces o' bread. Then to bed, six o'clock, an' next mornin' you're turned loose, provided you've finished your task."

We had long since left Mile End Road, and after traversing a gloomy maze of narrow, winding streets, we came to Poplar Workhouse. On a low stone wall we spread our handkerchiefs, and each in his handkerchief put all his worldly possessions, with the exception of the "bit o' baccy" down his sock. And then, as the last light was fading from the drab-coloured sky, the wind blowing cheerless and cold, we stood, with our pitiful little bundles in our hands, a forlorn group at the workhouse door.

Three working girls came along, and one looked pityingly at me; as she passed I followed her with my eyes, and she still looked pityingly back at me. The old men she did not notice. Dear Christ, she pitied me, young and vigorous and strong, but she had no pity for the two old men who stood by my side! She was a young woman, and I was a young man, and what vague sex promptings impelled her to pity me put her sentiment on the lowest plane. Pity for old men is an altruistic feeling, and besides, the workhouse door is the accustomed place for old men. So she showed no pity for them, only for me, who deserved it least or not at all. Not in honour do grey hairs go down to the grave in London Town.

On one side the door was a bell handle, on the other side a press button.

"Ring the bell," said the Carter to me.

And just as I ordinarily would at anybody’s door, I pulled out the handle and rang a peal.

“Oh! Oh!” they cried in one terrified voice. “Not so ’ard!”

I let go, and they looked reproachfully at me, as though I had imperilled their chance for a bed and three parts of skilly. Nobody came. Luckily it was the wrong bell, and I felt better.

“Press the button,” I said to the Carpenter.

“No, no, wait a bit,” the Carter hurriedly interposed.

From all of which I drew the conclusion that a poorhouse porter, who commonly draws a yearly salary of from seven to nine pounds, is a very finicky and important personage, and cannot be treated too fastidiously by — paupers.

So we waited, ten times a decent interval, when the Carter stealthily advanced a timid forefinger to the button, and gave it the faintest, shortest possible push. I have looked at waiting men where life or death was in the issue; but anxious suspense showed less plainly on their faces than it showed on the faces of these two men as they waited on the coming of the porter.

He came. He barely looked at us. “Full up,” he said and shut the door.

“Another night of it,” groaned the Carpenter. In the dim light the Carter looked wan and grey.

Indiscriminate charity is vicious, say the professional philanthropists. Well, I resolved to be vicious.

“Come on; get your knife out and come here,” I said to the Carter, drawing him into a dark alley.

He glared at me in a frightened manner, and tried to draw back. Possibly he took me for a latter-day Jack-the-Ripper, with a penchant for elderly male paupers. Or he may have thought I was inveigling him into the commission of some desperate crime. Anyway, he was frightened.

It will be remembered, at the outset, that I sewed a pound inside my stoker’s singlet under the armpit. This was my emergency fund, and I was now called upon to use it for the first time.

Not until I had gone through the acts of a contortionist, and shown the round coin sewed in, did I succeed in getting the Carter’s help. Even then his hand was trembling so that I was afraid he would cut me instead of the stitches, and I was forced to take the knife away and do it myself. Out rolled the gold piece, a fortune in their hungry eyes; and away we stampeded for the nearest coffee-house.

Of course I had to explain to them that I was merely an investigator, a social student, seeking to find out how the other half lived. And at once they shut up like clams. I was not of their kind; my speech had changed, the tones of my voice were different, in short, I was a superior, and they were superbly class conscious.

"What will you have?" I asked, as the waiter came for the order.

"Two slices an' a cup of tea," meekly said the Carter.

"Two slices an' a cup of tea," meekly said the Carpenter.

Stop a moment, and consider the situation. Here were two men, invited by me into the coffee-house. They had seen my gold piece, and they could understand that I was no pauper. One had eaten a ha'penny roll that day, the other had eaten nothing. And they called for "two slices an' a cup of tea!" Each man had given a tu'penny order. "Two slices," by the way, means two slices of bread and butter.

This was the same degraded humility that had characterised their attitude toward the poorhouse porter. But I wouldn't have it. Step by step I increased their order — eggs, rashers of bacon, more eggs, more bacon, more tea, more slices and so forth — they denying wistfully all the while that they cared for anything more, and devouring it ravenously as fast as it arrived.

"First cup o' tea I've 'ad in a fortnight," said the Carter.

"Wonderful tea, that," said the Carpenter.

They each drank two pints of it, and I assure you that it was slops. It resembled tea less than lager beer resembles champagne. Nay, it was "water-bewitched," and did not resemble tea at all.

It was curious, after the first shock, to notice the effect the food had on them. At first they were melancholy, and talked of the divers times they had contemplated suicide. The Carter, not a week before, had stood on the bridge and looked at the water, and pondered the question. Water, the Carpenter insisted with heat, was a bad route. He, for one, he knew, would struggle. A bullet was "'andier," but how under the sun was he to get hold of a revolver? That was the rub.

They grew more cheerful as the hot "tea" soaked in, and talked more about themselves. The Carter had buried his wife and children, with the exception of one son, who grew to manhood and helped him in his little business. Then the thing happened. The son, a man of thirty-one, died of the smallpox. No sooner was this over than the father came down with fever and went to the hospital for three months. Then he was done for. He came out weak, debilitated, no strong young son to stand by him, his little business gone glimmering, and not a farthing. The thing had happened, and the game was up. No chance for an old man to start again. Friends all poor and unable to help. He had tried for work when they were putting up the stands for the first Coronation parade. "An' I got fair sick of the answer: 'No! no! no!' It rang in my ears at night when I tried to sleep, always the same, 'No! no! no!'" Only the past week he had answered an advertisement in Hackney, and on giving his age was told, "Oh, too old, too old by far."

The Carpenter had been born in the army, where his father had served twenty-two years. Likewise, his two brothers had gone into the army; one, troop sergeant-major of the Seventh Hussars, dying in India after the Mutiny; the other, after nine years under Roberts in the East, had been lost in Egypt. The Carpenter had not gone into the army, so here he was, still on the planet.

"But 'ere, give me your 'and," he said, ripping open his ragged shirt. "I'm fit for the anatomist, that's all. I'm wastin' away, sir, actually wastin' away for want of food. Feel my ribs an' you'll see."

I put my hand under his shirt and felt. The skin was stretched like parchment over the bones, and the sensation produced was for all the world like running one's hand over a washboard.

"Seven years o' bliss I 'ad," he said. "A good missus and three bonnie lassies. But they all died. Scarlet fever took the girls inside a fortnight."

"After this, sir," said the Carter, indicating the spread, and desiring to turn the conversation into more cheerful channels; "after this, I wouldn't be able to eat a workhouse breakfast in the morning."

"Nor I," agreed the Carpenter, and they fell to discussing belly delights and the fine dishes their respective wives had cooked in the old days.

"I've gone three days and never broke my fast," said the Carter.

"And I, five," his companion added, turning gloomy with the memory of it. "Five days once, with nothing on my stomach but a bit of orange peel, an' outraged nature wouldn't stand it, sir, an' I near died. Sometimes, walkin' the streets at night, I've ben that desperate I've made up my mind to win the horse or lose the saddle. You know what I mean, sir — to commit some big robbery. But when mornin’ come, there was I, too weak from ’unger an’ cold to ’arm a mouse.”

As their poor vitals warmed to the food, they began to expand and wax boastful, and to talk politics. I can only say that they talked politics as well as the average middle-class man, and a great deal better than some of the middle-class men I have heard. What surprised me was the hold they had on the world, its geography and peoples, and on recent and contemporaneous history. As I say, they were not fools, these two men. They were merely old, and their children had undutifully failed to grow up and give them a place by the fire.

One last incident, as I bade them good-bye on the corner, happy with a couple of shillings in their pockets and the certain prospect of a bed for the night. Lighting a cigarette, I was about to throw away the burning match when the Carter reached for it. I proffered him the box, but he said, “Never mind, won’t waste it, sir.” And while he lighted the cigarette I had given him, the Carpenter hurried with the filling of his pipe in order to have a go at the same match.

“It’s wrong to waste,” said he.

“Yes,” I said, but I was thinking of the wash-board ribs over which I had run my hand.

CHAPTER IX — THE SPIKE

First of all, I must beg forgiveness of my body for the vileness through which I have dragged it, and forgiveness of my stomach for the vileness which I have thrust into it. I have been to the spike, and slept in the spike, and eaten in the spike; also, I have run away from the spike.

After my two unsuccessful attempts to penetrate the Whitechapel casual ward, I started early, and joined the desolate line before three o’clock in the afternoon. They did not “let in” till six, but at that early hour I was number twenty, while the news had gone forth that only twenty-two were to be admitted. By four o’clock there were thirty-four in line, the last ten hanging on in the slender hope of getting in by some kind of a miracle. Many more came, looked at the line, and went away, wise to the bitter fact that the spike would be “full up.”

Conversation was slack at first, standing there, till the man on one side of me and the man on the other side of me discovered that they had been in the smallpox hospital at the same time, though a full house of sixteen hundred patients had prevented their becoming acquainted. But they made up for it, discussing and comparing the more loathsome features of their disease in the most cold-blooded, matter-of-fact way. I learned that the average mortality was one in six, that one of them had been in three months and the other three months and a half, and that they had been “rotten wi’ it.” Whereat my flesh began to creep and crawl, and I asked them how long they had been out. One had been out two weeks, and the other three weeks. Their faces were badly pitted (though each assured the other that this was not so), and further, they showed me in their hands and under the nails the smallpox “seeds” still working out. Nay, one of them worked a seed out for my edification, and pop it went, right out of his flesh into the air. I tried to shrink up smaller inside my clothes, and I registered a fervent though silent hope that it had not popped on me.

In both instances, I found that the smallpox was the cause of their being “on the doss,” which means on the tramp. Both had been working when smitten by the disease, and both had emerged from the hospital “broke,” with the gloomy task before them of hunting for work. So far, they had not found any, and they had come to the spike for a “rest up” after three days and nights on the street.

It seems that not only the man who becomes old is punished for his involuntary misfortune, but likewise the man who is struck by disease or accident. Later on, I talked with another man — “Ginger” we called him — who stood at the head of the line — a sure indication that he had been waiting since one o’clock. A year before, one day, while in the employ of a fish dealer, he was carrying a heavy box of fish which was too much for him. Result: “something broke,” and there was the box on the ground, and he on the ground beside it.

At the first hospital, whither he was immediately carried, they said it was a rupture, reduced the swelling, gave him some vaseline to rub on it, kept him four hours, and told him to get along. But he was not on the streets more than two or three hours when he was down on his back again. This time he went to another hospital and was patched up. But the point is, the employer did nothing, positively nothing, for the man injured in his employment, and even refused him “a light job now and again,” when he came out. As far as Ginger is concerned, he is a broken man. His only chance to earn a living was by heavy work. He is now incapable of performing heavy work, and from now until he dies, the spike, the peg, and the streets are all he can look forward to in the way of food and shelter. The thing happened — that is all. He put his back under too great a load of fish, and his chance for happiness in life was crossed off the books.

Several men in the line had been to the United States, and they were wishing that they had remained there, and were cursing themselves for their folly in ever having left. England had become a prison to them, a prison from which there was no hope of escape. It was impossible for them to get away. They could neither scrape together the passage money, nor get a chance to work their passage. The country was too overrun by poor devils on that “lay.”

I was on the seafaring-man-who-had-lost-his-clothes-and-money tack, and they all condoled with me and gave me much sound advice. To sum it up, the advice was something like this: To keep out of all places like the spike. There was nothing good in it for me. To head for the coast and bend every effort to get away on a ship. To go to work, if possible, and scrape together a pound or so, with which I might bribe some steward or underling to give me chance to work my passage. They envied me my youth and strength, which would sooner or later get me out of the country. These they no longer possessed. Age and English hardship had broken them, and for them the game was played and up.

There was one, however, who was still young, and who, I am sure, will in the end make it out. He had gone to the United States as a young fellow, and in fourteen years' residence the longest period he had been out of work was twelve hours. He had saved his money, grown too prosperous, and returned to the mother-country. Now he was standing in line at the spike.

For the past two years, he told me, he had been working as a cook. His hours had been from 7 a.m. to 10.30 p.m., and on Saturday to 12.30 p.m. — ninety-five hours per week, for which he had received twenty shillings, or five dollars.

"But the work and the long hours was killing me," he said, "and I had to chuck the job. I had a little money saved, but I spent it living and looking for another place."

This was his first night in the spike, and he had come in only to get rested. As soon as he emerged, he intended to start for Bristol, a one-hundred-and-ten-mile walk, where he thought he would eventually get a ship for the States.

But the men in the line were not all of this calibre. Some were poor, wretched beasts, inarticulate and callous, but for all of that, in many ways very human. I remember a carter, evidently returning home after the day's work, stopping his cart before us so that his young hopeful, who had run to meet him, could climb in. But the cart was big, the young hopeful little, and he failed in his several attempts to swarm up. Whereupon one of the most degraded-looking men stepped out of the line and hoisted him in. Now the virtue and the joy of this act lies in that it was service of love, not hire. The carter was poor, and the man knew it; and the man was standing in the spike line, and the carter knew it; and the man had done the little act, and the carter had thanked him, even as you and I would have done and thanked.

Another beautiful touch was that displayed by the "Hopper" and his "ole woman." He had been in line about half-an-hour when the "ole woman" (his mate) came up to him. She was fairly clad, for her class, with a weather-worn bonnet on her grey head and a sacking-covered bundle in her arms. As she talked to him, he reached forward, caught the one stray wisp of the white hair that was flying wild, deftly twirled it between his fingers, and tucked it back properly behind her ear. From all of which one may conclude many things. He certainly liked her well enough to wish her to be neat and tidy. He was proud of her, standing there in the spike line, and it was his desire that she should look well in the eyes of the other unfortunates who stood in the spike line. But last and best, and underlying all these motives, it was a sturdy affection he bore her; for man is not prone to bother his head over neatness and tidiness in a woman for whom he does not care, nor is he likely to be proud of such a woman.

And I found myself questioning why this man and his mate, hard workers I knew from their talk, should have to seek a pauper lodging. He had pride, pride in his old woman and pride in himself. When I asked him what he thought I, a greenhorn, might expect to earn at “hopping,” he sized me up, and said that it all depended. Plenty of people were too slow to pick hops and made a failure of it. A man, to succeed, must use his head and be quick with his fingers, must be exceeding quick with his fingers. Now he and his old woman could do very well at it, working the one bin between them and not going to sleep over it; but then, they had been at it for years.

“I ’ad a mate as went down last year,” spoke up a man. “It was ’is fust time, but ’e come back wi’ two poun’ ten in ’is pockit, an’ ’e was only gone a month.”

“There you are,” said the Hopper, a wealth of admiration in his voice. “’E was quick. ’E was jest nat’rally born to it, ’e was.”

Two pound ten — twelve dollars and a half — for a month’s work when one is “jest nat’rally born to it!” And in addition, sleeping out without blankets and living the Lord knows how. There are moments when I am thankful that I was not “jest nat’rally born” a genius for anything, not even hop-picking,

In the matter of getting an outfit for “the hops,” the Hopper gave me some sterling advice, to which same give heed, you soft and tender people, in case you should ever be stranded in London Town.

“If you ain’t got tins an’ cookin’ things, all as you can get’ll be bread and cheese. No bloomin’ good that! You must ’ave ’ot tea, an’ wegetables, an’ a bit o’ meat, now an’ again, if you’re goin’ to do work as is work. Cawn’t do it on cold wittles. Tell you wot you do, lad. Run around in the mornin’ an’ look in the dust pans. You’ll find plenty o’ tins to cook in. Fine tins, wonderful good some o’ them. Me an’ the ole woman got ours that way.” (He pointed at the bundle she held, while she nodded proudly, beaming on me with good-nature and consciousness of success and prosperity.) “This overcoat is as good as a blanket,” he went on, advancing the skirt of it that I might feel its thickness. “An’ ’oo knows, I may find a blanket before long.”

Again the old woman nodded and beamed, this time with the dead certainty that he *would* find a blanket before long.

"I call it a 'oliday, 'oppin'," he concluded rapturously. "A tidy way o' gettin' two or three pounds together an' fixin' up for winter. The only thing I don't like" — and here was the rift within the lute — "is paddin' the 'oof down there."

It was plain the years were telling on this energetic pair, and while they enjoyed the quick work with the fingers, "paddin' the 'oof," which is walking, was beginning to bear heavily upon them. And I looked at their grey hairs, and ahead into the future ten years, and wondered how it would be with them.

I noticed another man and his old woman join the line, both of them past fifty. The woman, because she was a woman, was admitted into the spike; but he was too late, and, separated from his mate, was turned away to tramp the streets all night.

The street on which we stood, from wall to wall, was barely twenty feet wide. The sidewalks were three feet wide. It was a residence street. At least workmen and their families existed in some sort of fashion in the houses across from us. And each day and every day, from one in the afternoon till six, our ragged spike line is the principal feature of the view commanded by their front doors and windows. One workman sat in his door directly opposite us, taking his rest and a breath of air after the toil of the day. His wife came to chat with him. The doorway was too small for two, so she stood up. Their babes sprawled before them. And here was the spike line, less than a score of feet away — neither privacy for the workman, nor privacy for the pauper. About our feet played the children of the neighbourhood. To them our presence was nothing unusual. We were not an intrusion. We were as natural and ordinary as the brick walls and stone curbs of their environment. They had been born to the sight of the spike line, and all their brief days they had seen it.

At six o'clock the line moved up, and we were admitted in groups of three. Name, age, occupation, place of birth, condition of destitution, and the previous night's "doss," were taken with lightning-like rapidity by the superintendent; and as I turned I was startled by a man's thrusting into my hand something that felt like a brick, and shouting into my ear, "any knives, matches, or tobacco?" "No, sir," I lied, as lied every man who entered. As I passed downstairs to the cellar, I looked at the brick in my hand, and saw that by doing violence to the language it might be called “bread.” By its weight and hardness it certainly must have been unleavened.

The light was very dim down in the cellar, and before I knew it some other man had thrust a pannikin into my other hand. Then I stumbled on to a still darker room, where were benches and tables and men. The place smelled vilely, and the sombre gloom, and the mumble of voices from out of the obscurity, made it seem more like some anteroom to the infernal regions.

Most of the men were suffering from tired feet, and they prefaced the meal by removing their shoes and unbinding the filthy rags with which their feet were wrapped. This added to the general noisomeness, while it took away from my appetite.

In fact, I found that I had made a mistake. I had eaten a hearty dinner five hours before, and to have done justice to the fare before me I should have fasted for a couple of days. The pannikin contained skilly, three-quarters of a pint, a mixture of Indian corn and hot water. The men were dipping their bread into heaps of salt scattered over the dirty tables. I attempted the same, but the bread seemed to stick in my mouth, and I remembered the words of the Carpenter, “You need a pint of water to eat the bread nicely.”

I went over into a dark corner where I had observed other men going and found the water. Then I returned and attacked the skilly. It was coarse of texture, unseasoned, gross, and bitter. This bitterness which lingered persistently in the mouth after the skilly had passed on, I found especially repulsive. I struggled manfully, but was mastered by my qualms, and half-a-dozen mouthfuls of skilly and bread was the measure of my success. The man beside me ate his own share, and mine to boot, scraped the pannikins, and looked hungrily for more.

“I met a ‘towny,’ and he stood me too good a dinner,” I explained.

“An’ I ’aven’t ’ad a bite since yesterday mornin’,” he replied.

“How about tobacco?” I asked. “Will the bloke bother with a fellow now?”

“Oh no,” he answered me. “No bloomin’ fear. This is the easiest spike goin’. Y’oughto see some of them. Search you to the skin.”

The pannikins scraped clean, conversation began to spring up. “This super’tendent ’ere is always writin’ to the papers ’bout us mugs,” said the man on the other side of me.

"What does he say?" I asked.

"Oh, 'e sez we're no good, a lot o' blackguards an' scoundrels as won't work. Tells all the ole tricks I've bin 'earin' for twenty years an' w'ich I never seen a mug ever do. Las' thing of 'is I see, 'e was tellin' 'ow a mug gets out o' the spike, wi' a crust in 'is pockit. An' w'en 'e sees a nice ole gentleman comin' along the street 'e chucks the crust into the drain, an' borrows the old gent's stick to poke it out. An' then the ole gent gi'es 'im a tanner."

A roar of applause greeted the time-honoured yarn, and from somewhere over in the deeper darkness came another voice, orating angrily:

"Talk o' the country bein' good for tommy [food]; I'd like to see it. I jest came up from Dover, an' blessed little tommy I got. They won't gi' ye a drink o' water, they won't, much less tommy."

"There's mugs never go out of Kent," spoke a second voice, "they live bloomin' fat all along."

"I come through Kent," went on the first voice, still more angrily, "an' Gawd blimey if I see any tommy. An' I always notices as the blokes as talks about 'ow much they can get, w'en they're in the spike can eat my share o' skilly as well as their bleedin' own."

"There's chaps in London," said a man across the table from me, "that get all the tommy they want, an' they never think o' goin' to the country. Stay in London the year 'round. Nor do they think of lookin' for a kip [place to sleep], till nine or ten o'clock at night."

A general chorus verified this statement

"But they're bloomin' clever, them chaps," said an admiring voice.

"Course they are," said another voice. "But it's not the likes of me an' you can do it. You got to be born to it, I say. Them chaps 'ave ben openin' cabs an' sellin' papers since the day they was born, an' their fathers an' mothers before 'em. It's all in the trainin', I say, an' the likes of me an' you 'ud starve at it."

This also was verified by the general chorus, and likewise the statement that there were "mugs as lives the twelvemonth 'round in the spike an' never get a blessed bit o' tommy other than spike skilly an' bread."

"I once got arf a crown in the Stratford spike," said a new voice. Silence fell on the instant, and all listened to the wonderful tale. "There was three of us breakin' stones. Winter-time, an' the cold was cruel. T'other two said they'd be blessed if they do it, an' they didn't; but I kept wearin' into mine to warm up, you know. An’ then the guardians come, an’ t’other chaps got run in for fourteen days, an’ the guardians, w’en they see wot I’d been doin’, gives me a tanner each, five o’ them, an’ turns me up.”

The majority of these men, nay, all of them, I found, do not like the spike, and only come to it when driven in. After the “rest up” they are good for two or three days and nights on the streets, when they are driven in again for another rest. Of course, this continuous hardship quickly breaks their constitutions, and they realise it, though only in a vague way; while it is so much the common run of things that they do not worry about it.

“On the doss,” they call vagabondage here, which corresponds to “on the road” in the United States. The agreement is that kipping, or dossing, or sleeping, is the hardest problem they have to face, harder even than that of food. The inclement weather and the harsh laws are mainly responsible for this, while the men themselves ascribe their homelessness to foreign immigration, especially of Polish and Russian Jews, who take their places at lower wages and establish the sweating system.

By seven o’clock we were called away to bathe and go to bed. We stripped our clothes, wrapping them up in our coats and buckling our belts about them, and deposited them in a heaped rack and on the floor — a beautiful scheme for the spread of vermin. Then, two by two, we entered the bathroom. There were two ordinary tubs, and this I know: the two men preceding had washed in that water, we washed in the same water, and it was not changed for the two men that followed us. This I know; but I am also certain that the twenty-two of us washed in the same water.

I did no more than make a show of splashing some of this dubious liquid at myself, while I hastily brushed it off with a towel wet from the bodies of other men. My equanimity was not restored by seeing the back of one poor wretch a mass of blood from attacks of vermin and retaliatory scratching.

A shirt was handed me — which I could not help but wonder how many other men had worn; and with a couple of blankets under my arm I trudged off to the sleeping apartment. This was a long, narrow room, traversed by two low iron rails. Between these rails were stretched, not hammocks, but pieces of canvas, six feet long and less than two feet wide. These were the beds, and they were six inches apart and about eight inches above the floor. The chief difficulty was that the head was somewhat higher than the feet, which caused the body constantly to slip down. Being slung to the same rails, when one man moved, no matter how slightly, the rest were set rocking; and whenever I dozed somebody was sure to struggle back to the position from which he had slipped, and arouse me again.

Many hours passed before I won to sleep. It was only seven in the evening, and the voices of children, in shrill outcry, playing in the street, continued till nearly midnight. The smell was frightful and sickening, while my imagination broke loose, and my skin crept and crawled till I was nearly frantic. Grunting, groaning, and snoring arose like the sounds emitted by some sea monster, and several times, afflicted by nightmare, one or another, by his shrieks and yells, aroused the lot of us. Toward morning I was awakened by a rat or some similar animal on my breast. In the quick transition from sleep to waking, before I was completely myself, I raised a shout to wake the dead. At any rate, I woke the living, and they cursed me roundly for my lack of manners.

But morning came, with a six o'clock breakfast of bread and skilly, which I gave away, and we were told off to our various tasks. Some were set to scrubbing and cleaning, others to picking oakum, and eight of us were convoyed across the street to the Whitechapel Infirmary where we were set at scavenger work. This was the method by which we paid for our skilly and canvas, and I, for one, know that I paid in full many times over.

Though we had most revolting tasks to perform, our allotment was considered the best and the other men deemed themselves lucky in being chosen to perform it.

"Don't touch it, mate, the nurse sez it's deadly," warned my working partner, as I held open a sack into which he was emptying a garbage can.

It came from the sick wards, and I told him that I purposed neither to touch it, nor to allow it to touch me. Nevertheless, I had to carry the sack, and other sacks, down five flights of stairs and empty them in a receptacle where the corruption was speedily sprinkled with strong disinfectant.

Perhaps there is a wise mercy in all this. These men of the spike, the peg, and the street, are encumbrances. They are of no good or use to any one, nor to themselves. They clutter the earth with their presence, and are better out of the way. Broken by hardship, ill fed, and worse nourished, they are always the first to be struck down by disease, as they are likewise the quickest to die.

They feel, themselves, that the forces of society tend to hurl them out of existence. We were sprinkling disinfectant by the mortuary, when the dead waggon drove up and five bodies were packed into it. The conversation turned to the “white potion” and “black jack,” and I found they were all agreed that the poor person, man or woman, who in the Infirmary gave too much trouble or was in a bad way, was “polished off.” That is to say, the incurables and the obstreperous were given a dose of “black jack” or the “white potion,” and sent over the divide. It does not matter in the least whether this be actually so or not. The point is, they have the feeling that it is so, and they have created the language with which to express that feeling — “black jack” “white potion,” “polishing off.”

At eight o’clock we went down into a cellar under the infirmary, where tea was brought to us, and the hospital scraps. These were heaped high on a huge platter in an indescribable mess — pieces of bread, chunks of grease and fat pork, the burnt skin from the outside of roasted joints, bones, in short, all the leavings from the fingers and mouths of the sick ones suffering from all manner of diseases. Into this mess the men plunged their hands, digging, pawing, turning over, examining, rejecting, and scrambling for. It wasn’t pretty. Pigs couldn’t have done worse. But the poor devils were hungry, and they ate ravenously of the swill, and when they could eat no more they bundled what was left into their handkerchiefs and thrust it inside their shirts.

“Once, w’en I was ’ere before, wot did I find out there but a ’ole lot of pork-ribs,” said Ginger to me. By “out there” he meant the place where the corruption was dumped and sprinkled with strong disinfectant. “They was a prime lot, no end o’ meat on ’em, an’ I ’ad ’em into my arms an’ was out the gate an’ down the street, a-lookin’ for some ’un to gi’ ’em to. Couldn’t see a soul, an’ I was runnin’ ’round clean crazy, the bloke runnin’ after me an’ thinkin’ I was ‘slingin’ my ’ook’ [running away]. But jest before ’e got me, I got a ole woman an’ poked ’em into ’er apron.”

O Charity, O Philanthropy, descend to the spike and take a lesson from Ginger. At the bottom of the Abyss he performed as purely an altruistic act as was ever performed outside the Abyss. It was fine of Ginger, and if the old woman caught some contagion from the “no end o’ meat” on the pork-ribs, it was still fine, though not so fine. But the most salient thing in this incident, it seems to me, is poor Ginger, “clean crazy” at sight of so much food going to waste.

It is the rule of the casual ward that a man who enters must stay two nights and a day; but I had seen sufficient for my purpose, had paid for my skilly and canvas, and was preparing to run for it.

“Come on, let’s sling it,” I said to one of my mates, pointing toward the open gate through which the dead waggon had come.

“An’ get fourteen days?”

“No; get away.”

“Aw, I come ’ere for a rest,” he said complacently. “An’ another night’s kip won’t ’urt me none.”

They were all of this opinion, so I was forced to “sling it” alone.

“You cawn’t ever come back ’ere again for a doss,” they warned me.

“No fear,” said I, with an enthusiasm they could not comprehend; and, dodging out the gate, I sped down the street.

Straight to my room I hurried, changed my clothes, and less than an hour from my escape, in a Turkish bath, I was sweating out whatever germs and other things had penetrated my epidermis, and wishing that I could stand a temperature of three hundred and twenty rather than two hundred and twenty.

CHAPTER X — CARRYING THE BANNER

“To carry the banner” means to walk the streets all night; and I, with the figurative emblem hoisted, went out to see what I could see. Men and women walk the streets at night all over this great city, but I selected the West End, making Leicester Square my base, and scouting about from the Thames Embankment to Hyde Park.

The rain was falling heavily when the theatres let out, and the brilliant throng which poured from the places of amusement was hard put to find cabs. The streets were so many wild rivers of cabs, most of which were engaged, however; and here I saw the desperate attempts of ragged men and boys to get a shelter from the night by procuring cabs for the cabless ladies and gentlemen. I use the word “desperate” advisedly, for these wretched, homeless ones were gambling a soaking against a bed; and most of them, I took notice, got the soaking and missed the bed. Now, to go through a stormy night with wet clothes, and, in addition, to be ill nourished and not to have tasted meat for a week or a month, is about as severe a hardship as a man can undergo. Well fed and well clad, I have travelled all day with the spirit thermometer down to seventy-four degrees below zero — one hundred and six degrees of frost {1}; and though I suffered, it was a mere nothing compared with carrying the banner for a night, ill fed, ill clad, and soaking wet.

The streets grew very quiet and lonely after the theatre crowd had gone home. Only were to be seen the ubiquitous policemen, flashing their dark lanterns into doorways and alleys, and men and women and boys taking shelter in the lee of buildings from the wind and rain. Piccadilly, however, was not quite so deserted. Its pavements were brightened by well-dressed women without escort, and there was more life and action there than elsewhere, due to the process of finding escort. But by three o’clock the last of them had vanished, and it was then indeed lonely.

At half-past one the steady downpour ceased, and only showers fell thereafter. The homeless folk came away from the protection of the buildings, and slouched up and down and everywhere, in order to rush up the circulation and keep warm.

One old woman, between fifty and sixty, a sheer wreck, I had noticed earlier in the night standing in Piccadilly, not far from Leicester Square. She seemed to have neither the sense nor the strength to get out of the rain or keep walking, but stood stupidly, whenever she got the chance, meditating on past days, I imagine, when life was young and blood was warm. But she did not get the chance often. She was moved on by every policeman, and it required an average of six moves to send her doddering off one man's beat and on to another's. By three o'clock, she had progressed as far as St. James Street, and as the clocks were striking four I saw her sleeping soundly against the iron railings of Green Park. A brisk shower was falling at the time, and she must have been drenched to the skin.

Now, said I, at one o'clock, to myself; consider that you are a poor young man, penniless, in London Town, and that to-morrow you must look for work. It is necessary, therefore, that you get some sleep in order that you may have strength to look for work and to do work in case you find it.

So I sat down on the stone steps of a building. Five minutes later a policeman was looking at me. My eyes were wide open, so he only grunted and passed on. Ten minutes later my head was on my knees, I was dozing, and the same policeman was saying gruffly, "'Ere, you, get outa that!"

I got. And, like the old woman, I continued to get; for every time I dozed, a policeman was there to rout me along again. Not long after, when I had given this up, I was walking with a young Londoner (who had been out to the colonies and wished he were out to them again), when I noticed an open passage leading under a building and disappearing in darkness. A low iron gate barred the entrance.

"Come on," I said. "Let's climb over and get a good sleep."

"Wot?" he answered, recoiling from me. "An' get run in fer three months! Blimey if I do!"

Later on I was passing Hyde Park with a young boy of fourteen or fifteen, a most wretched-looking youth, gaunt and hollow-eyed and sick.

"Let's go over the fence," I proposed, "and crawl into the shrubbery for a sleep. The bobbies couldn't find us there."

"No fear," he answered. "There's the park guardians, and they'd run you in for six months."

Times have changed, alas! When I was a youngster I used to read of homeless boys sleeping in doorways. Already the thing has become a tradition. As a stock situation it will doubtless linger in literature for a century to come, but as a cold fact it has ceased to be. Here are the doorways, and here are the boys, but happy conjunctions are no longer effected. The doorways remain empty, and the boys keep awake and carry the banner.

"I was down under the arches," grumbled another young fellow. By "arches" he meant the shore arches where begin the bridges that span the Thames. "I was down under the arches wen it was ryning its 'ardest, an' a bobby comes in an' chyses me out. But I come back, an' 'e come too. ''Ere,' sez 'e, 'wot you doin' 'ere?' An' out I goes, but I sez, 'Think I want ter pinch [steal] the bleedin' bridge?'"

Among those who carry the banner, Green Park has the reputation of opening its gates earlier than the other parks, and at quarter-past four in the morning, I, and many more, entered Green Park. It was raining again, but they were worn out with the night's walking, and they were down on the benches and asleep at once. Many of the men stretched out full length on the dripping wet grass, and, with the rain falling steadily upon them, were sleeping the sleep of exhaustion.

And now I wish to criticise the powers that be. They *are* the powers, therefore they may decree whatever they please; so I make bold only to criticise the ridiculousness of their decrees. All night long they make the homeless ones walk up and down. They drive them out of doors and passages, and lock them out of the parks. The evident intention of all this is to deprive them of sleep. Well and good, the powers have the power to deprive them of sleep, or of anything else for that matter; but why under the sun do they open the gates of the parks at five o'clock in the morning and let the homeless ones go inside and sleep? If it is their intention to deprive them of sleep, why do they let them sleep after five in the morning? And if it is not their intention to deprive them of sleep, why don't they let them sleep earlier in the night?

In this connection, I will say that I came by Green Park that same day, at one in the afternoon, and that I counted scores of the ragged wretches asleep in the grass. It was Sunday afternoon, the sun was fitfully appearing, and the well-dressed West Enders, with their wives and progeny, were out by thousands, taking the air. It was not a pleasant sight for them, those horrible, unkempt, sleeping vagabonds; while the vagabonds themselves, I know, would rather have done their sleeping the night before.

And so, dear soft people, should you ever visit London Town, and see these men asleep on the benches and in the grass, please do not think they are lazy creatures, preferring sleep to work. Know that the powers that be have kept them walking all the night long, and that in the day they have nowhere else to sleep.

CHAPTER XI — THE PEG

But, after carrying the banner all night, I did not sleep in Green Park when morning dawned. I was wet to the skin, it is true, and I had had no sleep for twenty-four hours; but, still adventuring as a penniless man looking for work, I had to look about me, first for a breakfast, and next for the work.

During the night I had heard of a place over on the Surrey side of the Thames, where the Salvation Army every Sunday morning gave away a breakfast to the unwashed. (And, by the way, the men who carry the banner are unwashed in the morning, and unless it is raining they do not have much show for a wash, either.) This, thought I, is the very thing — breakfast in the morning, and then the whole day in which to look for work.

It was a weary walk. Down St. James Street I dragged my tired legs, along Pall Mall, past Trafalgar Square, to the Strand. I crossed the Waterloo Bridge to the Surrey side, cut across to Blackfriars Road, coming out near the Surrey Theatre, and arrived at the Salvation Army barracks before seven o'clock. This was "the peg." And by "the peg," in the argot, is meant the place where a free meal may be obtained.

Here was a motley crowd of woebegone wretches who had spent the night in the rain. Such prodigious misery! and so much of it! Old men, young men, all manner of men, and boys to boot, and all manner of boys. Some were drowsing standing up; half a score of them were stretched out on the stone steps in most painful postures, all of them sound asleep, the skin of their bodies showing red through the holes, and rents in their rags. And up and down the street and across the street for a block either way, each doorstep had from two to three occupants, all asleep, their heads bent forward on their knees. And, it must be remembered, these are not hard times in England. Things are going on very much as they ordinarily do, and times are neither hard nor easy.

And then came the policeman. "Get outa that, you bloomin' swine! Eigh! eigh! Get out now!" And like swine he drove them from the doorways and scattered them to the four winds of Surrey. But when he encountered the crowd asleep on the steps he was astounded. "Shocking!" he exclaimed. "Shocking! And of a Sunday morning! A pretty sight! Eigh! eigh! Get outa that, you bleeding nuisances!"

Of course it was a shocking sight, I was shocked myself. And I should not care to have my own daughter pollute her eyes with such a sight, or come within half a mile of it; but — and there we were, and there you are, and “but” is all that can be said.

The policeman passed on, and back we clustered, like flies around a honey jar. For was there not that wonderful thing, a breakfast, awaiting us? We could not have clustered more persistently and desperately had they been giving away million-dollar bank-notes. Some were already off to sleep, when back came the policeman and away we scattered only to return again as soon as the coast was clear.

At half-past seven a little door opened, and a Salvation Army soldier stuck out his head. “Ayn’t no sense blockin’ the wy up that wy,” he said. “Those as ’as tickets cawn come hin now, an’ those as ’asn’t cawn’t come hin till nine.”

Oh, that breakfast! Nine o’clock! An hour and a half longer! The men who held tickets were greatly envied. They were permitted to go inside, have a wash, and sit down and rest until breakfast, while we waited for the same breakfast on the street. The tickets had been distributed the previous night on the streets and along the Embankment, and the possession of them was not a matter of merit, but of chance.

At eight-thirty, more men with tickets were admitted, and by nine the little gate was opened to us. We crushed through somehow, and found ourselves packed in a courtyard like sardines. On more occasions than one, as a Yankee tramp in Yankeeland, I have had to work for my breakfast; but for no breakfast did I ever work so hard as for this one. For over two hours I had waited outside, and for over another hour I waited in this packed courtyard. I had had nothing to eat all night, and I was weak and faint, while the smell of the soiled clothes and unwashed bodies, steaming from pent animal heat, and blocked solidly about me, nearly turned my stomach. So tightly were we packed, that a number of the men took advantage of the opportunity and went soundly asleep standing up.

Now, about the Salvation Army in general I know nothing, and whatever criticism I shall make here is of that particular portion of the Salvation Army which does business on Blackfriars Road near the Surrey Theatre. In the first place, this forcing of men who have been up all night to stand on their feet for hours longer, is as cruel as it is needless. We were weak, famished, and exhausted from our night’s hardship and lack of sleep, and yet there we stood, and stood, and stood, without rhyme or reason.

Sailors were very plentiful in this crowd. It seemed to me that one man in four was looking for a ship, and I found at least a dozen of them to be American sailors. In accounting for their being “on the beach,” I received the same story from each and all, and from my knowledge of sea affairs this story rang true. English ships sign their sailors for the voyage, which means the round trip, sometimes lasting as long as three years; and they cannot sign off and receive their discharges until they reach the home port, which is England. Their wages are low, their food is bad, and their treatment worse. Very often they are really forced by their captains to desert in the New World or the colonies, leaving a handsome sum of wages behind them — a distinct gain, either to the captain or the owners, or to both. But whether for this reason alone or not, it is a fact that large numbers of them desert. Then, for the home voyage, the ship engages whatever sailors it can find on the beach. These men are engaged at the somewhat higher wages that obtain in other portions of the world, under the agreement that they shall sign off on reaching England. The reason for this is obvious; for it would be poor business policy to sign them for any longer time, since seamen’s wages are low in England, and England is always crowded with sailormen on the beach. So this fully accounted for the American seamen at the Salvation Army barracks. To get off the beach in other outlandish places they had come to England, and gone on the beach in the most outlandish place of all.

There were fully a score of Americans in the crowd, the non-sailors being “tramps royal,” the men whose “mate is the wind that tramps the world.” They were all cheerful, facing things with the pluck which is their chief characteristic and which seems never to desert them, withal they were cursing the country with lurid metaphors quite refreshing after a month of unimaginative, monotonous Cockney swearing. The Cockney has one oath, and one oath only, the most indecent in the language, which he uses on any and every occasion. Far different is the luminous and varied Western swearing, which runs to blasphemy rather than indecency. And after all, since men will swear, I think I prefer blasphemy to indecency; there is an audacity about it, an adventurousness and defiance that is better than sheer filthiness.

There was one American tramp royal whom I found particularly enjoyable. I first noticed him on the street, asleep in a doorway, his head on his knees, but a hat on his head that one does not meet this side of the

Western Ocean. When the policeman routed him out, he got up slowly and deliberately, looked at the policeman, yawned and stretched himself, looked at the policeman again as much as to say he didn't know whether he would or wouldn't, and then sauntered leisurely down the sidewalk. At the outset I was sure of the hat, but this made me sure of the wearer of the hat.

In the jam inside I found myself alongside of him, and we had quite a chat. He had been through Spain, Italy, Switzerland, and France, and had accomplished the practically impossible feat of beating his way three hundred miles on a French railway without being caught at the finish. Where was I hanging out? he asked. And how did I manage for "kipping"? — which means sleeping. Did I know the rounds yet? He was getting on, though the country was "horstyl" and the cities were "bum." Fierce, wasn't it? Couldn't "batter" (beg) anywhere without being "pinched." But he wasn't going to quit it. Buffalo Bill's Show was coming over soon, and a man who could drive eight horses was sure of a job any time. These mugs over here didn't know beans about driving anything more than a span. What was the matter with me hanging on and waiting for Buffalo Bill? He was sure I could ring in somehow.

And so, after all, blood is thicker than water. We were fellow-countrymen and strangers in a strange land. I had warmed to his battered old hat at sight of it, and he was as solicitous for my welfare as if we were blood brothers. We swapped all manner of useful information concerning the country and the ways of its people, methods by which to obtain food and shelter and what not, and we parted genuinely sorry at having to say good-bye.

One thing particularly conspicuous in this crowd was the shortness of stature. I, who am but of medium height, looked over the heads of nine out of ten. The natives were all short, as were the foreign sailors. There were only five or six in the crowd who could be called fairly tall, and they were Scandinavians and Americans. The tallest man there, however, was an exception. He was an Englishman, though not a Londoner. "Candidate for the Life Guards," I remarked to him. "You've hit it, mate," was his reply; "I've served my bit in that same, and the way things are I'll be back at it before long."

For an hour we stood quietly in this packed courtyard. Then the men began to grow restless. There was pushing and shoving forward, and a mild hubbub of voices. Nothing rough, however, nor violent; merely the restlessness of weary and hungry men. At this juncture forth came the adjutant. I did not like him. His eyes were not good. There was nothing of the lowly Galilean about him, but a great deal of the centurion who said: "For I am a man in authority, having soldiers under me; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it."

Well, he looked at us in just that way, and those nearest to him quailed. Then he lifted his voice.

"Stop this 'ere, now, or I'll turn you the other wy an' march you out, an' you'll get no breakfast."

I cannot convey by printed speech the insufferable way in which he said this. He seemed to me to revel in that he was a man in authority, able to say to half a thousand ragged wretches, "you may eat or go hungry, as I elect."

To deny us our breakfast after standing for hours! It was an awful threat, and the pitiful, abject silence which instantly fell attested its awfulness. And it was a cowardly threat. We could not strike back, for we were starving; and it is the way of the world that when one man feeds another he is that man's master. But the centurion — I mean the adjutant — was not satisfied. In the dead silence he raised his voice again, and repeated the threat, and amplified it.

At last we were permitted to enter the feasting hall, where we found the "ticket men" washed but unfed. All told, there must have been nearly seven hundred of us who sat down — not to meat or bread, but to speech, song, and prayer. From all of which I am convinced that Tantalus suffers in many guises this side of the infernal regions. The adjutant made the prayer, but I did not take note of it, being too engrossed with the massed picture of misery before me. But the speech ran something like this: "You will feast in Paradise. No matter how you starve and suffer here, you will feast in Paradise, that is, if you will follow the directions." And so forth and so forth. A clever bit of propaganda, I took it, but rendered of no avail for two reasons. First, the men who received it were unimaginative and materialistic, unaware of the existence of any Unseen, and too inured to hell on earth to be frightened by hell to come. And second, weary and exhausted from the night's sleeplessness and hardship, suffering from the long wait upon their feet, and faint from hunger, they were yearning, not for salvation, but for grub. The "soul-snatchers" (as these men call all religious propagandists), should study the physiological basis of psychology a little, if they wish to make their efforts more effective.

All in good time, about eleven o'clock, breakfast arrived. It arrived, not on plates, but in paper parcels. I did not have all I wanted, and I am sure that no man there had all he wanted, or half of what he wanted or needed. I gave part of my bread to the tramp royal who was waiting for Buffalo Bill, and he was as ravenous at the end as he was in the beginning. This is the breakfast: two slices of bread, one small piece of bread with raisins in it and called "cake," a wafer of cheese, and a mug of "water bewitched." Numbers of the men had been waiting since five o'clock for it, while all of us had waited at least four hours; and in addition, we had been herded like swine, packed like sardines, and treated like curs, and been preached at, and sung to, and prayed for. Nor was that all.

No sooner was breakfast over (and it was over almost as quickly as it takes to tell), than the tired heads began to nod and droop, and in five minutes half of us were sound asleep. There were no signs of our being dismissed, while there were unmistakable signs of preparation for a meeting. I looked at a small clock hanging on the wall. It indicated twenty-five minutes to twelve. Heigh-ho, thought I, time is flying, and I have yet to look for work.

"I want to go," I said to a couple of waking men near me.

"Got ter sty fer the service," was the answer.

"Do you want to stay?" I asked.

They shook their heads.

"Then let us go and tell them we want to get out," I continued. "Come on."

But the poor creatures were aghast. So I left them to their fate, and went up to the nearest Salvation Army man.

"I want to go," I said. "I came here for breakfast in order that I might be in shape to look for work. I didn't think it would take so long to get breakfast. I think I have a chance for work in Stepney, and the sooner I start, the better chance I'll have of getting it."

He was really a good fellow, though he was startled by my request. "Wy," he said, "we're goin' to 'old services, and you'd better sty."

"But that will spoil my chances for work," I urged. "And work is the most important thing for me just now."

As he was only a private, he referred me to the adjutant, and to the adjutant I repeated my reasons for wishing to go, and politely requested that he let me go.

“But it cawn’t be done,” he said, waxing virtuously indignant at such ingratitude. “The idea!” he snorted. “The idea!”

“Do you mean to say that I can’t get out of here?” I demanded. “That you will keep me here against my will?”

“Yes,” he snorted.

I do not know what might have happened, for I was waxing indignant myself; but the “congregation” had “piped” the situation, and he drew me over to a corner of the room, and then into another room. Here he again demanded my reasons for wishing to go.

“I want to go,” I said, “because I wish to look for work over in Stepney, and every hour lessens my chance of finding work. It is now twenty-five minutes to twelve. I did not think when I came in that it would take so long to get a breakfast.”

“You ’ave business, eh?” he sneered. “A man of business you are, eh? Then wot did you come ’ere for?”

“I was out all night, and I needed a breakfast in order to strengthen me to find work. That is why I came here.”

“A nice thing to do,” he went on in the same sneering manner. “A man with business shouldn’t come ’ere. You’ve tyken some poor man’s breakfast ’ere this morning, that’s wot you’ve done.”

Which was a lie, for every mother’s son of us had come in.

Now I submit, was this Christian-like, or even honest? — after I had plainly stated that I was homeless and hungry, and that I wished to look for work, for him to call my looking for work “business,” to call me therefore a business man, and to draw the corollary that a man of business, and well off, did not require a charity breakfast, and that by taking a charity breakfast I had robbed some hungry waif who was not a man of business.

I kept my temper, but I went over the facts again, and clearly and concisely demonstrated to him how unjust he was and how he had perverted the facts. As I manifested no signs of backing down (and I am sure my eyes were beginning to snap), he led me to the rear of the building where, in an open court, stood a tent. In the same sneering tone he informed a couple of privates standing there that “’ere is a fellow that ’as business an’ ’e wants to go before services.”

They were duly shocked, of course, and they looked unutterable horror while he went into the tent and brought out the major. Still in the same sneering manner, laying particular stress on the "business," he brought my case before the commanding officer. The major was of a different stamp of man. I liked him as soon as I saw him, and to him I stated my case in the same fashion as before.

"Didn't you know you had to stay for services?" he asked.

"Certainly not," I answered, "or I should have gone without my breakfast. You have no placards posted to that effect, nor was I so informed when I entered the place."

He meditated a moment. "You can go," he said.

It was twelve o'clock when I gained the street, and I couldn't quite make up my mind whether I had been in the army or in prison. The day was half gone, and it was a far fetch to Stepney. And besides, it was Sunday, and why should even a starving man look for work on Sunday? Furthermore, it was my judgment that I had done a hard night's work walking the streets, and a hard day's work getting my breakfast; so I disconnected myself from my working hypothesis of a starving young man in search of employment, hailed a bus, and climbed aboard.

After a shave and a bath, with my clothes all off, I got in between clean white sheets and went to sleep. It was six in the evening when I closed my eyes. When they opened again, the clocks were striking nine next morning. I had slept fifteen straight hours. And as I lay there drowsily, my mind went back to the seven hundred unfortunates I had left waiting for services. No bath, no shave for them, no clean white sheets and all clothes off, and fifteen hours' straight sleep. Services over, it was the weary streets again, the problem of a crust of bread ere night, and the long sleepless night in the streets, and the pondering of the problem of how to obtain a crust at dawn.

CHAPTER XII — CORONATION DAY

O thou that sea-walls sever
From lands unwalled by seas!
Wilt thou endure forever,
O Milton’s England, these?
Thou that wast his Republic,
Wilt thou clasp their knees?
These royalties rust-eaten,
These worm-corroded lies
That keep thy head storm-beaten,
And sun-like strength of eyes
From the open air and heaven
Of intercepted skies!
SWINBURNE.

Vivat Rex Eduardus! They crowned a king this day, and there has been great rejoicing and elaborate tomfoolery, and I am perplexed and saddened. I never saw anything to compare with the pageant, except Yankee circuses and Alhambra ballets; nor did I ever see anything so hopeless and so tragic.

To have enjoyed the Coronation procession, I should have come straight from America to the Hotel Cecil, and straight from the Hotel Cecil to a five-guinea seat among the washed. My mistake was in coming from the unwashed of the East End. There were not many who came from that quarter. The East End, as a whole, remained in the East End and got drunk. The Socialists, Democrats, and Republicans went off to the country for a breath of fresh air, quite unaffected by the fact that four hundred millions of people were taking to themselves a crowned and anointed ruler. Six thousand five hundred prelates, priests, statesmen, princes, and warriors beheld the crowning and anointing, and the rest of us the pageant as it passed.

I saw it at Trafalgar Square, “the most splendid site in Europe,” and the very innermost heart of the empire. There were many thousands of us, all checked and held in order by a superb display of armed power. The line of march was double-walled with soldiers. The base of the Nelson Column was triple-fringed with bluejackets. Eastward, at the entrance to the square, stood the Royal Marine Artillery. In the triangle of Pall Mall and Cockspur Street, the statue of George III. was buttressed on either side by the Lancers and Hussars. To the west were the red-coats of the Royal Marines, and from the Union Club to the embouchure of Whitehall swept the glittering, massive curve of the 1st Life Guards — gigantic men mounted on gigantic chargers, steel-breastplated, steel-helmeted, steel-caparisoned, a great war-sword of steel ready to the hand of the powers that be. And further, throughout the crowd, were flung long lines of the Metropolitan Constabulary, while in the rear were the reserves — tall, well-fed men, with weapons to wield and muscles to wield them in ease of need.

And as it was thus at Trafalgar Square, so was it along the whole line of march — force, overpowering force; myriads of men, splendid men, the pick of the people, whose sole function in life is blindly to obey, and blindly to kill and destroy and stamp out life. And that they should be well fed, well clothed, and well armed, and have ships to hurl them to the ends of the earth, the East End of London, and the "East End" of all England, toils and rots and dies.

There is a Chinese proverb that if one man lives in laziness another will die of hunger; and Montesquieu has said, "The fact that many men are occupied in making clothes for one individual is the cause of there being many people without clothes." So one explains the other. We cannot understand the starved and runty {2} toiler of the East End (living with his family in a one-room den, and letting out the floor space for lodgings to other starved and runty toilers) till we look at the strapping Life Guardsmen of the West End, and come to know that the one must feed and clothe and groom the other.

And while in Westminster Abbey the people were taking unto themselves a king, I, jammed between the Life Guards and Constabulary of Trafalgar Square, was dwelling upon the time when the people of Israel first took unto themselves a king. You all know how it runs. The elders came to the prophet Samuel, and said: "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations."

And the Lord said unto Samuel: Now therefore hearken unto their voice; howbeit thou shalt show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king, and he said:

This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you; he will take your sons, and appoint them unto him, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and they shall run before his chariots.

And he will appoint them unto him for captains of thousands, and captains of fifties; and he will set some to plough his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and the instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take a tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.

And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

He will take a tenth of your flocks; and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall call out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not answer you in that day.

All of which came to pass in that ancient day, and they did cry out to Samuel, saying: "Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." And after Saul, David, and Solomon, came Rehoboam, who "answered the people roughly, saying: My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

And in these latter days, five hundred hereditary peers own one-fifth of England; and they, and the officers and servants under the King, and those who go to compose the powers that be, yearly spend in wasteful luxury $1,850,000,000, or £370,000,000, which is thirty-two per cent. of the total wealth produced by all the toilers of the country.

At the Abbey, clad in wonderful golden raiment, amid fanfare of trumpets and throbbing of music, surrounded by a brilliant throng of masters, lords, and rulers, the King was being invested with the insignia of his sovereignty. The spurs were placed to his heels by the Lord Great Chamberlain, and a sword of state, in purple scabbard, was presented him by the Archbishop of Canterbury, with these words:-

Receive this kingly sword brought now from the altar of God, and delivered to you by the hands of the bishops and servants of God, though unworthy.

Whereupon, being girded, he gave heed to the Archbishop's exhortation:-

With this sword do justice, stop the growth of iniquity, protect the Holy Church of God, help and defend widows and orphans, restore the things that are gone to decay, maintain the things that are restored, punish and reform what is amiss, and confirm what is in good order.

But hark! There is cheering down Whitehall; the crowd sways, the double walls of soldiers come to attention, and into view swing the King's watermen, in fantastic mediaeval garbs of red, for all the world like the van of a circus parade. Then a royal carriage, filled with ladies and gentlemen of the household, with powdered footmen and coachmen most gorgeously arrayed. More carriages, lords, and chamberlains, viscounts, mistresses of the robes — lackeys all. Then the warriors, a kingly escort, generals, bronzed and worn, from the ends of the earth come up to London Town, volunteer officers, officers of the militia and regular forces; Spens and Plumer, Broadwood and Cooper who relieved Ookiep, Mathias of Dargai, Dixon of Vlakfontein; General Gaselee and Admiral Seymour of China; Kitchener of Khartoum; Lord Roberts of India and all the world — the fighting men of England, masters of destruction, engineers of death! Another race of men from those of the shops and slums, a totally different race of men.

But here they come, in all the pomp and certitude of power, and still they come, these men of steel, these war lords and world harnessers. Pell-mell, peers and commoners, princes and maharajahs, Equerries to the King and Yeomen of the Guard. And here the colonials, lithe and hardy men; and here all the breeds of all the world-soldiers from Canada, Australia, New Zealand; from Bermuda, Borneo, Fiji, and the Gold Coast; from Rhodesia, Cape Colony, Natal, Sierra Leone and Gambia, Nigeria, and Uganda; from Ceylon, Cyprus, Hong-Kong, Jamaica, and Wei-Hai-Wei; from Lagos, Malta, St. Lucia, Singapore, Trinidad. And here the conquered men of Ind, swarthy horsemen and sword wielders, fiercely barbaric, blazing in crimson and scarlet, Sikhs, Rajputs, Burmese, province by province, and caste by caste.

And now the Horse Guards, a glimpse of beautiful cream ponies, and a golden panoply, a hurricane of cheers, the crashing of bands — "The King! the King! God save the King!" Everybody has gone mad. The contagion is sweeping me off my feet — I, too, want to shout, "The King! God save the King!" Ragged men about me, tears in their eyes, are tossing up their hats and crying ecstatically, "Bless 'em! Bless 'em! Bless 'em!" See, there he is, in that wondrous golden coach, the great crown flashing on his head, the woman in white beside him likewise crowned.

And I check myself with a rush, striving to convince myself that it is all real and rational, and not some glimpse of fairyland. This I cannot succeed in doing, and it is better so. I much prefer to believe that all this pomp, and vanity, and show, and mumbo-jumbo foolery has come from fairyland, than to believe it the performance of sane and sensible people who have mastered matter and solved the secrets of the stars.

Princes and princelings, dukes, duchesses, and all manner of coroneted folk of the royal train are flashing past; more warriors, and lackeys, and conquered peoples, and the pagent is over. I drift with the crowd out of the square into a tangle of narrow streets, where the public-houses are a-roar with drunkenness, men, women, and children mixed together in colossal debauch. And on every side is rising the favourite song of the Coronation:-

“Oh! on Coronation Day, on Coronation Day,
We’ll have a spree, a jubilee, and shout, Hip, hip, hooray,
For we’ll all be marry, drinking whisky, wine, and sherry,
We’ll all be merry on Coronation Day.”

The rain is pouring down. Up the street come troops of the auxiliaries, black Africans and yellow Asiatics, beturbaned and befezed, and coolies swinging along with machine guns and mountain batteries on their heads, and the bare feet of all, in quick rhythm, going *slish, slish, slish* through the pavement mud. The public-houses empty by magic, and the swarthy allegiants are cheered by their British brothers, who return at once to the carouse.

“And how did you like the procession, mate?” I asked an old man on a bench in Green Park.

“’Ow did I like it? A bloomin’ good chawnce, sez I to myself, for a sleep, wi’ all the coppers aw’y, so I turned into the corner there, along wi’ fifty others. But I couldn’t sleep, a-lyin’ there an’ thinkin’ ’ow I’d worked all the years o’ my life an’ now ’ad no plyce to rest my ’ead; an’ the music comin’ to me, an’ the cheers an’ cannon, till I got almost a hanarchist an’ wanted to blow out the brains o’ the Lord Chamberlain.”

Why the Lord Chamberlain I could not precisely see, nor could he, but that was the way he felt, he said conclusively, and them was no more discussion.

As night drew on, the city became a blaze of light. Splashes of colour, green, amber, and ruby, caught the eye at every point, and "E. R.," in great crystal letters and backed by flaming gas, was everywhere. The crowds in the streets increased by hundreds of thousands, and though the police sternly put down mafficking, drunkenness and rough play abounded. The tired workers seemed to have gone mad with the relaxation and excitement, and they surged and danced down the streets, men and women, old and young, with linked arms and in long rows, singing, "I may be crazy, but I love you," "Dolly Gray," and "The Honeysuckle and the Bee" — the last rendered something like this:-

"Yew aw the enny, ennyseckle, Oi em ther bee,
Oi'd like ter sip ther enny from those red lips, yew see."

I sat on a bench on the Thames Embankment, looking across the illuminated water. It was approaching midnight, and before me poured the better class of merrymakers, shunning the more riotous streets and returning home. On the bench beside me sat two ragged creatures, a man and a woman, nodding and dozing. The woman sat with her arms clasped across the breast, holding tightly, her body in constant play — now dropping forward till it seemed its balance would be overcome and she would fall to the pavement; now inclining to the left, sideways, till her head rested on the man's shoulder; and now to the right, stretched and strained, till the pain of it awoke her and she sat bolt upright. Whereupon the dropping forward would begin again and go through its cycle till she was aroused by the strain and stretch.

Every little while boys and young men stopped long enough to go behind the bench and give vent to sudden and fiendish shouts. This always jerked the man and woman abruptly from their sleep; and at sight of the startled woe upon their faces the crowd would roar with laughter as it flooded past.

This was the most striking thing, the general heartlessness exhibited on every hand. It is a commonplace, the homeless on the benches, the poor miserable folk who may be teased and are harmless. Fifty thousand people must have passed the bench while I sat upon it, and not one, on such a jubilee occasion as the crowning of the King, felt his heart-strings touched sufficiently to come up and say to the woman: "Here's sixpence; go and get a bed." But the women, especially the young women, made witty remarks upon the woman nodding, and invariably set their companions laughing.

To use a Briticism, it was “cruel”; the corresponding Americanism was more appropriate — it was “fierce.” I confess I began to grow incensed at this happy crowd streaming by, and to extract a sort of satisfaction from the London statistics which demonstrate that one in every four adults is destined to die on public charity, either in the workhouse, the infirmary, or the asylum.

I talked with the man. He was fifty-four and a broken-down docker. He could only find odd work when there was a large demand for labour, for the younger and stronger men were preferred when times were slack. He had spent a week, now, on the benches of the Embankment; but things looked brighter for next week, and he might possibly get in a few days’ work and have a bed in some doss-house. He had lived all his life in London, save for five years, when, in 1878, he saw foreign service in India.

Of course he would eat; so would the girl. Days like this were uncommon hard on such as they, though the coppers were so busy poor folk could get in more sleep. I awoke the girl, or woman, rather, for she was “Eyght an’ twenty, sir,” and we started for a coffee-house.

“Wot a lot o’ work puttin’ up the lights,” said the man at sight of some building superbly illuminated. This was the keynote of his being. All his life he had worked, and the whole objective universe, as well as his own soul, he could express in terms only of work. “Coronations is some good,” he went on. “They give work to men.”

“But your belly is empty,” I said.

“Yes,” he answered. “I tried, but there wasn’t any chawnce. My age is against me. Wot do you work at? Seafarin’ chap, eh? I knew it from yer clothes.”

“I know wot you are,” said the girl, “an Eyetalian.”

“No ’e ayn’t,” the man cried heatedly. “’E’s a Yank, that’s wot ’e is. I know.”

“Lord lumne, look a’ that,” she exclaimed, as we debauched upon the Strand, choked with the roaring, reeling Coronation crowd, the men bellowing and the girls singing in high throaty notes:-

“Oh! on Coronation D’y, on Coronation D’y,
We’ll ’ave a spree, a jubilee, an’ shout ’Ip, ’ip, ’ooray;
For we’ll all be merry, drinkin’ whisky, wine, and sherry,
We’ll all be merry on Coronation D’y.”

"'Ow dirty I am, bein' around the w'y I 'ave," the woman said, as she sat down in a coffee-house, wiping the sleep and grime from the corners of her eyes. "An' the sights I 'ave seen this d'y, an' I enjoyed it, though it was lonesome by myself. An' the duchesses an' the lydies 'ad sich gran' w'ite dresses. They was jest bu'ful, bu'ful."

"I'm Irish," she said, in answer to a question. "My nyme's Eyethorne."

"What?" I asked.

"Eyethorne, sir; Eyethorne."

"Spell it."

"H-a-y-t-h-o-r-n-e, Eyethorne.'

"Oh," I said, "Irish Cockney."

"Yes, sir, London-born."

She had lived happily at home till her father died, killed in an accident, when she had found herself on the world. One brother was in the army, and the other brother, engaged in keeping a wife and eight children on twenty shillings a week and unsteady employment, could do nothing for her. She had been out of London once in her life, to a place in Essex, twelve miles away, where she had picked fruit for three weeks: "An' I was as brown as a berry w'en I come back. You won't b'lieve it, but I was."

The last place in which she had worked was a coffee-house, hours from seven in the morning till eleven at night, and for which she had received five shillings a week and her food. Then she had fallen sick, and since emerging from the hospital had been unable to find anything to do. She wasn't feeling up to much, and the last two nights had been spent in the street.

Between them they stowed away a prodigious amount of food, this man and woman, and it was not till I had duplicated and triplicated their original orders that they showed signs of easing down.

Once she reached across and felt the texture of my coat and shirt, and remarked upon the good clothes the Yanks wore. My rags good clothes! It put me to the blush; but, on inspecting them more closely and on examining the clothes worn by the man and woman, I began to feel quite well dressed and respectable.

"What do you expect to do in the end?" I asked them. "You know you're growing older every day."

"Work'ouse," said he.

"Gawd blimey if I do," said she. "There's no 'ope for me, I know, but I'll die on the streets. No work'ouse for me, thank you. No, indeed," she sniffed in the silence that fell.

"After you have been out all night in the streets," I asked, "what do you do in the morning for something to eat?"

"Try to get a penny, if you 'aven't one saved over," the man explained. "Then go to a coffee-'ouse an' get a mug o' tea."

"But I don't see how that is to feed you," I objected.

The pair smiled knowingly.

"You drink your tea in little sips," he went on, "making it last its longest. An' you look sharp, an' there's some as leaves a bit be'ind 'em."

"It's s'prisin', the food wot some people leaves," the woman broke in.

"The thing," said the man judicially, as the trick dawned upon me, "is to get 'old o' the penny."

As we started to leave, Miss Haythorne gathered up a couple of crusts from the neighbouring tables and thrust them somewhere into her rags.

"Cawn't wyste 'em, you know," said she; to which the docker nodded, tucking away a couple of crusts himself.

At three in the morning I strolled up the Embankment. It was a gala night for the homeless, for the police were elsewhere; and each bench was jammed with sleeping occupants. There were as many women as men, and the great majority of them, male and female, were old. Occasionally a boy was to be seen. On one bench I noticed a family, a man sitting upright with a sleeping babe in his arms, his wife asleep, her head on his shoulder, and in her lap the head of a sleeping youngster. The man's eyes were wide open. He was staring out over the water and thinking, which is not a good thing for a shelterless man with a family to do. It would not be a pleasant thing to speculate upon his thoughts; but this I know, and all London knows, that the cases of out-of-works killing their wives and babies is not an uncommon happening.

One cannot walk along the Thames Embankment, in the small hours of morning, from the Houses of Parliament, past Cleopatra's Needle, to Waterloo Bridge, without being reminded of the sufferings, seven and twenty centuries old, recited by the author of "Job":-

There are that remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks and feed them.

They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow’s ox for a pledge.

They turn the needy out of the way; the poor of the earth hide themselves together.

Behold, as wild asses in the desert they go forth to their work, seeking diligently for meat; the wilderness yieldeth them food for their children.

They cut their provender in the field, and they glean the vintage of the wicked.

They lie all night naked without clothing, and have no covering in the cold.

They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.

There are that pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor.

So that they go about naked without clothing, and being an hungered they carry the sheaves. — Job xxiv. 2-10.

Seven and twenty centuries agone! And it is all as true and apposite to-day in the innermost centre of this Christian civilisation whereof Edward VII. is king.

CHAPTER XIII — DAN CULLEN, DOCKER

I stood, yesterday, in a room in one of the "Municipal Dwellings," not far from Leman Street. If I looked into a dreary future and saw that I would have to live in such a room until I died, I should immediately go down, plump into the Thames, and cut the tenancy short.

It was not a room. Courtesy to the language will no more permit it to be called a room than it will permit a hovel to be called a mansion. It was a den, a lair. Seven feet by eight were its dimensions, and the ceiling was so low as not to give the cubic air space required by a British soldier in barracks. A crazy couch, with ragged coverlets, occupied nearly half the room. A rickety table, a chair, and a couple of boxes left little space in which to turn around. Five dollars would have purchased everything in sight. The floor was bare, while the walls and ceiling were literally covered with blood marks and splotches. Each mark represented a violent death — of an insect, for the place swarmed with vermin, a plague with which no person could cope single-handed.

The man who had occupied this hole, one Dan Cullen, docker, was dying in hospital. Yet he had impressed his personality on his miserable surroundings sufficiently to give an inkling as to what sort of man he was. On the walls were cheap pictures of Garibaldi, Engels, Dan Burns, and other labour leaders, while on the table lay one of Walter Besant's novels. He knew his Shakespeare, I was told, and had read history, sociology, and economics. And he was self-educated.

On the table, amidst a wonderful disarray, lay a sheet of paper on which was scrawled: *Mr. Cullen, please return the large white jug and corkscrew I lent you* — articles loaned, during the first stages of his sickness, by a woman neighbour, and demanded back in anticipation of his death. A large white jug and a corkscrew are far too valuable to a creature of the Abyss to permit another creature to die in peace. To the last, Dan Cullen's soul must be harrowed by the sordidness out of which it strove vainly to rise.

It is a brief little story, the story of Dan Cullen, but there is much to read between the lines. He was born lowly, in a city and land where the lines of caste are tightly drawn. All his days he toiled hard with his body; and because he had opened the books, and been caught up by the fires of the spirit, and could "write a letter like a lawyer," he had been selected by his fellows to toil hard for them with his brain. He became a leader of the fruit-porters, represented the dockers on the London Trades Council, and wrote trenchant articles for the labour journals.

He did not cringe to other men, even though they were his economic masters, and controlled the means whereby he lived, and he spoke his mind freely, and fought the good fight. In the "Great Dock Strike" he was guilty of taking a leading part. And that was the end of Dan Cullen. From that day he was a marked man, and every day, for ten years and more, he was "paid off" for what he had done.

A docker is a casual labourer. Work ebbs and flows, and he works or does not work according to the amount of goods on hand to be moved. Dan Cullen was discriminated against. While he was not absolutely turned away (which would have caused trouble, and which would certainly have been more merciful), he was called in by the foreman to do not more than two or three days' work per week. This is what is called being "disciplined," or "drilled." It means being starved. There is no politer word. Ten years of it broke his heart, and broken-hearted men cannot live.

He took to his bed in his terrible den, which grew more terrible with his helplessness. He was without kith or kin, a lonely old man, embittered and pessimistic, fighting vermin the while and looking at Garibaldi, Engels, and Dan Burns gazing down at him from the blood-bespattered walls. No one came to see him in that crowded municipal barracks (he had made friends with none of them), and he was left to rot.

But from the far reaches of the East End came a cobbler and his son, his sole friends. They cleansed his room, brought fresh linen from home, and took from off his limbs the sheets, greyish-black with dirt. And they brought to him one of the Queen's Bounty nurses from Aldgate.

She washed his face, shook up his conch, and talked with him. It was interesting to talk with him — until he learned her name. Oh, yes, Blank was her name, she replied innocently, and Sir George Blank was her brother. Sir George Blank, eh? thundered old Dan Cullen on his death-bed; Sir George Blank, solicitor to the docks at Cardiff, who, more than any other man, had broken up the Dockers' Union of Cardiff, and was knighted? And she was his sister? Thereupon Dan Cullen sat up on his crazy couch and pronounced anathema upon her and all her breed; and she fled, to return no more, strongly impressed with the ungratefulness of the poor.

Dan Cullen's feet became swollen with dropsy. He sat up all day on the side of the bed (to keep the water out of his body), no mat on the floor, a thin blanket on his legs, and an old coat around his shoulders. A missionary brought him a pair of paper slippers, worth fourpence (I saw them), and proceeded to offer up fifty prayers or so for the good of Dan Cullen's soul. But Dan Cullen was the sort of man that wanted his soul left alone. He did not care to have Tom, Dick, or Harry, on the strength of fourpenny slippers, tampering with it. He asked the missionary kindly to open the window, so that he might toss the slippers out. And the missionary went away, to return no more, likewise impressed with the ungratefulness of the poor.

The cobbler, a brave old hero himself, though unaneled and unsung, went privily to the head office of the big fruit brokers for whom Dan Cullen had worked as a casual labourer for thirty years. Their system was such that the work was almost entirely done by casual hands. The cobbler told them the man's desperate plight, old, broken, dying, without help or money, reminded them that he had worked for them thirty years, and asked them to do something for him.

"Oh," said the manager, remembering Dan Cullen without having to refer to the books, "you see, we make it a rule never to help casuals, and we can do nothing."

Nor did they do anything, not even sign a letter asking for Dan Cullen's admission to a hospital. And it is not so easy to get into a hospital in London Town. At Hampstead, if he passed the doctors, at least four months would elapse before he could get in, there were so many on the books ahead of him. The cobbler finally got him into the Whitechapel Infirmary, where he visited him frequently. Here he found that Dan Cullen had succumbed to the prevalent feeling, that, being hopeless, they were hurrying him out of the way. A fair and logical conclusion, one must agree, for an old and broken man to arrive at, who has been resolutely "disciplined" and "drilled" for ten years. When they sweated him for Bright's disease to remove the fat from the kidneys, Dan Cullen contended that the sweating was hastening his death; while Bright's disease, being a wasting away of the kidneys, there was therefore no fat to remove, and the doctor's excuse was a palpable lie. Whereupon the doctor became wroth, and did not come near him for nine days.

Then his bed was tilted up so that his feet and legs were elevated. At once dropsy appeared in the body, and Dan Cullen contended that the thing was done in order to run the water down into his body from his legs and kill him more quickly. He demanded his discharge, though they told him he would die on the stairs, and dragged himself, more dead than alive, to the cobbler’s shop. At the moment of writing this, he is dying at the Temperance Hospital, into which place his staunch friend, the cobbler, moved heaven and earth to have him admitted.

Poor Dan Cullen! A Jude the Obscure, who reached out after knowledge; who toiled with his body in the day and studied in the watches of the night; who dreamed his dream and struck valiantly for the Cause; a patriot, a lover of human freedom, and a fighter unafraid; and in the end, not gigantic enough to beat down the conditions which baffled and stifled him, a cynic and a pessimist, gasping his final agony on a pauper’s couch in a charity ward, — “For a man to die who might have been wise and was not, this I call a tragedy.”

CHAPTER XIV — HOPS AND HOPPERS

So far has the divorcement of the worker from the soil proceeded, that the farming districts, the civilised world over, are dependent upon the cities for the gathering of the harvests. Then it is, when the land is spilling its ripe wealth to waste, that the street folk, who have been driven away from the soil, are called back to it again. But in England they return, not as prodigals, but as outcasts still, as vagrants and pariahs, to be doubted and flouted by their country brethren, to sleep in jails and casual wards, or under the hedges, and to live the Lord knows how.

It is estimated that Kent alone requires eighty thousand of the street people to pick her hops. And out they come, obedient to the call, which is the call of their bellies and of the lingering dregs of adventure-lust still in them. Slum, stews, and ghetto pour them forth, and the festering contents of slum, stews, and ghetto are undiminished. Yet they overrun the country like an army of ghouls, and the country does not want them. They are out of place. As they drag their squat, misshapen bodies along the highways and byways, they resemble some vile spawn from underground. Their very presence, the fact of their existence, is an outrage to the fresh, bright sun and the green and growing things. The clean, upstanding trees cry shame upon them and their withered crookedness, and their rottenness is a slimy desecration of the sweetness and purity of nature.

Is the picture overdrawn? It all depends. For one who sees and thinks life in terms of shares and coupons, it is certainly overdrawn. But for one who sees and thinks life in terms of manhood and womanhood, it cannot be overdrawn. Such hordes of beastly wretchedness and inarticulate misery are no compensation for a millionaire brewer who lives in a West End palace, sates himself with the sensuous delights of London's golden theatres, hobnobs with lordlings and princelings, and is knighted by the king. Wins his spurs — God forbid! In old time the great blonde beasts rode in the battle's van and won their spurs by cleaving men from pate to chine. And, after all, it is finer to kill a strong man with a clean-slicing blow of singing steel than to make a beast of him, and of his seed through the generations, by the artful and spidery manipulation of industry and politics.

But to return to the hops. Here the divorcement from the soil is as apparent as in every other agricultural line in England. While the manufacture of beer steadily increases, the growth of hops steadily decreases. In 1835 the acreage under hops was 71,327. To-day it stands at 48,024, a decrease of 3103 from the acreage of last year.

Small as the acreage is this year, a poor summer and terrible storms reduced the yield. This misfortune is divided between the people who own hops and the people who pick hops. The owners perforce must put up with less of the nicer things of life, the pickers with less grub, of which, in the best of times, they never get enough. For weary weeks headlines like the following have appeared in the London papers.-

TRAMPS PLENTIFUL, BUT THE HOPS ARE FEW AND NOT YET READY.

Then there have been numberless paragraphs like this:-

From the neighbourhood of the hop fields comes news of a distressing nature. The bright outburst of the last two days has sent many hundreds of hoppers into Kent, who will have to wait till the fields are ready for them. At Dover the number of vagrants in the workhouse is treble the number there last year at this time, and in other towns the lateness of the season is responsible for a large increase in the number of casuals.

To cap their wretchedness, when at last the picking had begun, hops and hoppers were well-nigh swept away by a frightful storm of wind, rain, and hail. The hops were stripped clean from the poles and pounded into the earth, while the hoppers, seeking shelter from the stinging hail, were close to drowning in their huts and camps on the low-lying ground. Their condition after the storm was pitiable, their state of vagrancy more pronounced than ever; for, poor crop that it was, its destruction had taken away the chance of earning a few pennies, and nothing remained for thousands of them but to "pad the hoof" back to London.

"We ayn't crossin'-sweepers," they said, turning away from the ground, carpeted ankle-deep with hops.

Those that remained grumbled savagely among the half-stripped poles at the seven bushels for a shilling — a rate paid in good seasons when the hops are in prime condition, and a rate likewise paid in bad seasons by the growers because they cannot afford more.

I passed through Teston and East and West Farleigh shortly after the storm, and listened to the grumbling of the hoppers and saw the hops rotting on the ground. At the hothouses of Barham Court, thirty thousand panes of glass had been broken by the hail, while peaches, plums, pears, apples, rhubarb, cabbages, mangolds, everything, had been pounded to pieces and torn to shreds.

All of which was too bad for the owners, certainly; but at the worst, not one of them, for one meal, would have to go short of food or drink. Yet it was to them that the newspapers devoted columns of sympathy, their pecuniary losses being detailed at harrowing length. "Mr. Herbert L--- calculates his loss at £8000;" "Mr. F---, of brewery fame, who rents all the land in this parish, loses £10,000;" and "Mr. L---, the Wateringbury brewer, brother to Mr. Herbert L---, is another heavy loser." As for the hoppers, they did not count. Yet I venture to assert that the several almost-square meals lost by underfed William Buggles, and underfed Mrs. Buggles, and the underfed Buggles kiddies, was a greater tragedy than the £10,000 lost by Mr. F---. And in addition, underfed William Buggles' tragedy might be multiplied by thousands where Mr. F---'s could not be multiplied by five.

To see how William Buggles and his kind fared, I donned my seafaring togs and started out to get a job. With me was a young East London cobbler, Bert, who had yielded to the lure of adventure and joined me for the trip. Acting on my advice, he had brought his "worst rags," and as we hiked up the London road out of Maidstone he was worrying greatly for fear we had come too ill-dressed for the business.

Nor was he to be blamed. When we stopped in a tavern the publican eyed us gingerly, nor did his demeanour brighten till we showed him the colour of our cash. The natives along the coast were all dubious; and "bean-feasters" from London, dashing past in coaches, cheered and jeered and shouted insulting things after us. But before we were done with the Maidstone district my friend found that we were as well clad, if not better, than the average hopper. Some of the bunches of rags we chanced upon were marvellous.

"The tide is out," called a gypsy-looking woman to her mates, as we came up a long row of bins into which the pickers were stripping the hops.

"Do you twig?" Bert whispered. "She's on to you."

I twigged. And it must be confessed the figure was an apt one. When the tide is out boats are left on the beach and do not sail, and a sailor, when the tide is out, does not sail either. My seafaring togs and my presence in the hop field proclaimed that I was a seaman without a ship, a man on the beach, and very like a craft at low water.

"Can yer give us a job, governor?" Bert asked the bailiff, a kindly faced and elderly man who was very busy.

His "No" was decisively uttered; but Bert clung on and followed him about, and I followed after, pretty well all over the field. Whether our persistency struck the bailiff as anxiety to work, or whether he was affected by our hard-luck appearance and tale, neither Bert nor I succeeded in making out; but in the end he softened his heart and found us the one unoccupied bin in the place — a bin deserted by two other men, from what I could learn, because of inability to make living wages.

"No bad conduct, mind ye," warned the bailiff, as he left us at work in the midst of the women.

It was Saturday afternoon, and we knew quitting time would come early; so we applied ourselves earnestly to the task, desiring to learn if we could at least make our salt. It was simple work, woman's work, in fact, and not man's. We sat on the edge of the bin, between the standing hops, while a pole-puller supplied us with great fragrant branches. In an hour's time we became as expert as it is possible to become. As soon as the fingers became accustomed automatically to differentiate between hops and leaves and to strip half-a-dozen blossoms at a time there was no more to learn.

We worked nimbly, and as fast as the women themselves, though their bins filled more rapidly because of their swarming children, each of which picked with two hands almost as fast as we picked.

"Don'tcher pick too clean, it's against the rules," one of the women informed us; and we took the tip and were grateful.

As the afternoon wore along, we realised that living wages could not be made — by men. Women could pick as much as men, and children could do almost as well as women; so it was impossible for a man to compete with a woman and half-a-dozen children. For it is the woman and the half-dozen children who count as a unit, and by their combined capacity determine the unit's pay.

"I say, matey, I'm beastly hungry," said I to Bert. We had not had any dinner.

"Blimey, but I could eat the 'ops," he replied.

Whereupon we both lamented our negligence in not rearing up a numerous progeny to help us in this day of need. And in such fashion we whiled away the time and talked for the edification of our neighbours. We quite won the sympathy of the pole-puller, a young country yokel, who now and again emptied a few picked blossoms into our bin, it being part of his business to gather up the stray clusters torn off in the process of pulling.

With him we discussed how much we could "sub," and were informed that while we were being paid a shilling for seven bushels, we could only "sub," or have advanced to us, a shilling for every twelve bushels. Which is to say that the pay for five out of every twelve bushels was withheld — a method of the grower to hold the hopper to his work whether the crop runs good or bad, and especially if it runs bad.

After all, it was pleasant sitting there in the bright sunshine, the golden pollen showering from our hands, the pungent aromatic odour of the hops biting our nostrils, and the while remembering dimly the sounding cities whence these people came. Poor street people! Poor gutter folk! Even they grow earth-hungry, and yearn vaguely for the soil from which they have been driven, and for the free life in the open, and the wind and rain and sun all undefiled by city smirches. As the sea calls to the sailor, so calls the land to them; and, deep down in their aborted and decaying carcasses, they are stirred strangely by the peasant memories of their forbears who lived before cities were. And in incomprehensible ways they are made glad by the earth smells and sights and sounds which their blood has not forgotten though unremembered by them.

"No more 'ops, matey," Bert complained.

It was five o'clock, and the pole-pullers had knocked off, so that everything could be cleaned up, there being no work on Sunday. For an hour we were forced idly to wait the coming of the measurers, our feet tingling with the frost which came on the heels of the setting sun. In the adjoining bin, two women and half-a-dozen children had picked nine bushels: so that the five bushels the measurers found in our bin demonstrated that we had done equally well, for the half-dozen children had ranged from nine to fourteen years of age.

Five bushels! We worked it out to eight-pence ha'penny, or seventeen cents, for two men working three hours and a half. Fourpence farthing apiece! a little over a penny an hour! But we were allowed only to "sub" fivepence of the total sum, though the tally-keeper, short of change, gave us sixpence. Entreaty was in vain. A hard-luck story could not move him. He proclaimed loudly that we had received a penny more than our due, and went his way.

Granting, for the sake of the argument, that we were what we represented ourselves to be — namely, poor men and broke — then here was out position: night was coming on; we had had no supper, much less dinner; and we possessed sixpence between us. I was hungry enough to eat three sixpenn'orths of food, and so was Bert. One thing was patent. By doing 16.3 per cent. justice to our stomachs, we would expend the sixpence, and our stomachs would still be gnawing under 83.3 per cent. injustice. Being broke again, we could sleep under a hedge, which was not so bad, though the cold would sap an undue portion of what we had eaten. But the morrow was Sunday, on which we could do no work, though our silly stomachs would not knock off on that account. Here, then, was the problem: how to get three meals on Sunday, and two on Monday (for we could not make another "sub" till Monday evening).

We knew that the casual wards were overcrowded; also, that if we begged from farmer or villager, there was a large likelihood of our going to jail for fourteen days. What was to be done? We looked at each other in despair —

— Not a bit of it. We joyfully thanked God that we were not as other men, especially hoppers, and went down the road to Maidstone, jingling in our pockets the half-crowns and florins we had brought from London.

CHAPTER XV — THE SEA WIFE

You might not expect to find the Sea Wife in the heart of Kent, but that is where I found her, in a mean street, in the poor quarter of Maidstone. In her window she had no sign of lodgings to let, and persuasion was necessary before she could bring herself to let me sleep in her front room. In the evening I descended to the semi-subterranean kitchen, and talked with her and her old man, Thomas Mugridge by name.

And as I talked to them, all the subtleties and complexities of this tremendous machine civilisation vanished away. It seemed that I went down through the skin and the flesh to the naked soul of it, and in Thomas Mugridge and his old woman gripped hold of the essence of this remarkable English breed. I found there the spirit of the wanderlust which has lured Albion's sons across the zones; and I found there the colossal unreckoning which has tricked the English into foolish squabblings and preposterous fights, and the doggedness and stubbornness which have brought them blindly through to empire and greatness; and likewise I found that vast, incomprehensible patience which has enabled the home population to endure under the burden of it all, to toil without complaint through the weary years, and docilely to yield the best of its sons to fight and colonise to the ends of the earth.

Thomas Mugridge was seventy-one years old and a little man. It was because he was little that he had not gone for a soldier. He had remained at home and worked. His first recollections were connected with work. He knew nothing else but work. He had worked all his days, and at seventy-one he still worked. Each morning saw him up with the lark and afield, a day labourer, for as such he had been born. Mrs. Mugridge was seventy-three. From seven years of age she had worked in the fields, doing a boy's work at first, and later a man's. She still worked, keeping the house shining, washing, boiling, and baking, and, with my advent, cooking for me and shaming me by making my bed. At the end of threescore years and more of work they possessed nothing, had nothing to look forward to save more work. And they were contented. They expected nothing else, desired nothing else.

They lived simply. Their wants were few — a pint of beer at the end of the day, sipped in the semi-subterranean kitchen, a weekly paper to pore over for seven nights hand-running, and conversation as meditative and vacant as the chewing of a heifer's cud. From a wood engraving on the wall a slender, angelic girl looked down upon them, and underneath was the legend: “Our Future Queen.” And from a highly coloured lithograph alongside looked down a stout and elderly lady, with underneath: “Our Queen — Diamond Jubilee.”

“What you earn is sweetest,” quoth Mrs. Mugridge, when I suggested that it was about time they took a rest.

“No, an’ we don’t want help,” said Thomas Mugridge, in reply to my question as to whether the children lent them a hand.

“We’ll work till we dry up and blow away, mother an’ me,” he added; and Mrs. Mugridge nodded her head in vigorous indorsement.

Fifteen children she had borne, and all were away and gone, or dead. The “baby,” however, lived in Maidstone, and she was twenty-seven. When the children married they had their hands full with their own families and troubles, like their fathers and mothers before them.

Where were the children? Ah, where were they not? Lizzie was in Australia; Mary was in Buenos Ayres; Poll was in New York; Joe had died in India — and so they called them up, the living and the dead, soldier and sailor, and colonist’s wife, for the traveller’s sake who sat in their kitchen.

They passed me a photograph. A trim young fellow, in soldier’s garb looked out at me.

“And which son is this?” I asked.

They laughed a hearty chorus. Son! Nay, grandson, just back from Indian service and a soldier-trumpeter to the King. His brother was in the same regiment with him. And so it ran, sons and daughters, and grand sons and daughters, world-wanderers and empire-builders, all of them, while the old folks stayed at home and worked at building empire too.

“There dwells a wife by the Northern Gate,
  And a wealthy wife is she;
She breeds a breed o’ rovin’ men
  And casts them over sea.
“And some are drowned in deep water,
  And some in sight of shore;
And word goes back to the weary wife,
  And ever she sends more.”

But the Sea Wife’s child-bearing is about done. The stock is running out, and the planet is filling up. The wives of her sons may carry on the breed, but her work is past. The erstwhile men of England are now the men of

Australia, of Africa, of America. England has sent forth “the best she breeds” for so long, and has destroyed those that remained so fiercely, that little remains for her to do but to sit down through the long nights and gaze at royalty on the wall.

The true British merchant seaman has passed away. The merchant service is no longer a recruiting ground for such sea dogs as fought with Nelson at Trafalgar and the Nile. Foreigners largely man the merchant ships, though Englishmen still continue to officer them and to prefer foreigners for’ard. In South Africa the colonial teaches the islander how to shoot, and the officers muddle and blunder; while at home the street people play hysterically at mafficking, and the War Office lowers the stature for enlistment.

It could not be otherwise. The most complacent Britisher cannot hope to draw off the life-blood, and underfeed, and keep it up forever. The average Mrs. Thomas Mugridge has been driven into the city, and she is not breeding very much of anything save an anaemic and sickly progeny which cannot find enough to eat. The strength of the English-speaking race to-day is not in the tight little island, but in the New World overseas, where are the sons and daughters of Mrs. Thomas Mugridge. The Sea Wife by the Northern Gate has just about done her work in the world, though she does not realize it. She must sit down and rest her tired loins for a space; and if the casual ward and the workhouse do not await her, it is because of the sons and daughters she has reared up against the day of her feebleness and decay.

CHAPTER XVI — PROPERTY VERSUS PERSON

In a civilisation frankly materialistic and based upon property, not soul, it is inevitable that property shall be exalted over soul, that crimes against property shall be considered far more serious than crimes against the person. To pound one's wife to a jelly and break a few of her ribs is a trivial offence compared with sleeping out under the naked stars because one has not the price of a doss. The lad who steals a few pears from a wealthy railway corporation is a greater menace to society than the young brute who commits an unprovoked assault upon an old man over seventy years of age. While the young girl who takes a lodging under the pretence that she has work commits so dangerous an offence, that, were she not severely punished, she and her kind might bring the whole fabric of property clattering to the ground. Had she unholily tramped Piccadilly and the Strand after midnight, the police would not have interfered with her, and she would have been able to pay for her lodging.

The following illustrative cases are culled from the police-court reports for a single week:-

Widnes Police Court. Before Aldermen Gossage and Neil. Thomas Lynch, charged with being drunk and disorderly and with assaulting a constable. Defendant rescued a woman from custody, kicked the constable, and threw stones at him. Fined 3s. 6d. for the first offence, and 10s. and costs for the assault.

Glasgow Queen's Park Police Court. Before Baillie Norman Thompson. John Kane pleaded guilty to assaulting his wife. There were five previous convictions. Fined £2, 2s.

Taunton County Petty Sessions. John Painter, a big, burly fellow, described as a labourer, charged with assaulting his wife. The woman received two severe black eyes, and her face was badly swollen. Fined £1, 8s., including costs, and bound over to keep the peace.

Widnes Police Court. Richard Bestwick and George Hunt, charged with trespassing in search of game. Hunt fined £1 and costs, Bestwick £2 and costs; in default, one month.

Shaftesbury Police Court. Before the Mayor (Mr. A. T. Carpenter). Thomas Baker, charged with sleeping out. Fourteen days.

Glasgow Central Police Court. Before Bailie Dunlop. Edward Morrison, a lad, convicted of stealing fifteen pears from a lorry at the railroad station. Seven days.

Doncaster Borough Police Court. Before Alderman Clark and other magistrates. James M'Gowan, charged under the Poaching Prevention Act with being found in possession of poaching implements and a number of rabbits. Fined £2 and costs, or one month.

Dunfermline Sheriff Court. Before Sheriff Gillespie. John Young, a pit-head worker, pleaded guilty to assaulting Alexander Storrar by beating him about the head and body with his fists, throwing him on the ground, and also striking him with a pit prop. Fined £1.

Kirkcaldy Police Court. Before Bailie Dishart. Simon Walker pleaded guilty to assaulting a man by striking and knocking him down. It was an unprovoked assault, and the magistrate described the accused as a perfect danger to the community. Fined 30s.

Mansfield Police Court. Before the Mayor, Messrs. F. J. Turner, J. Whitaker, F. Tidsbury, E. Holmes, and Dr. R. Nesbitt. Joseph Jackson, charged with assaulting Charles Nunn. Without any provocation, defendant struck the complainant a violent blow in the face, knocking him down, and then kicked him on the side of the head. He was rendered unconscious, and he remained under medical treatment for a fortnight. Fined 21s.

Perth Sheriff Court. Before Sheriff Sym. David Mitchell, charged with poaching. There were two previous convictions, the last being three years ago. The sheriff was asked to deal leniently with Mitchell, who was sixty-two years of age, and who offered no resistance to the gamekeeper. Four months.

Dundee Sheriff Court. Before Hon. Sheriff-Substitute R. C. Walker. John Murray, Donald Craig, and James Parkes, charged with poaching. Craig and Parkes fined £1 each or fourteen days; Murray, £5 or one month.

Reading Borough Police Court. Before Messrs. W. B. Monck, F. B. Parfitt, H. M. Wallis, and G. Gillagan. Alfred Masters, aged sixteen, charged with sleeping out on a waste piece of ground and having no visible means of subsistence. Seven days.

Salisbury City Petty Sessions. Before the Mayor, Messrs. C. Hoskins, G. Fullford, E. Alexander, and W. Marlow. James Moore, charged with stealing a pair of boots from outside a shop. Twenty-one days.

Horncastle Police Court. Before the Rev. W. F. Massingberd, the Rev. J. Graham, and Mr. N. Lucas Calcraft. George Brackenbury, a young labourer, convicted of what the magistrates characterised as an altogether unprovoked and brutal assault upon James Sargeant Foster, a man over seventy years of age. Fined £1 and 5s. 6d. costs.

Worksop Petty Sessions. Before Messrs. F. J. S. Foljambe, R. Eddison, and S. Smith. John Priestley, charged with assaulting the Rev. Leslie Graham. Defendant, who was drunk, was wheeling a perambulator and pushed it in front of a lorry, with the result that the perambulator was overturned and the baby in it thrown out. The lorry passed over the perambulator, but the baby was uninjured. Defendant then attacked the driver of the lorry, and afterwards assaulted the complainant, who remonstrated with him upon his conduct. In consequence of the injuries defendant inflicted, complainant had to consult a doctor. Fined 40s. and costs.

Rotherham West Riding Police Court. Before Messrs. C. Wright and G. Pugh and Colonel Stoddart. Benjamin Storey, Thomas Brammer, and Samuel Wilcock, charged with poaching. One month each.

Southampton County Police Court. Before Admiral J. C. Rowley, Mr. H. H. Culme-Seymour, and other magistrates. Henry Thorrington, charged with sleeping out. Seven days.

Eckington Police Court. Before Major L. B. Bowden, Messrs. R. Eyre, and H. A. Fowler, and Dr. Court. Joseph Watts, charged with stealing nine ferns from a garden. One month.

Ripley Petty Sessions. Before Messrs. J. B. Wheeler, W. D. Bembridge, and M. Hooper. Vincent Allen and George Hall, charged under the Poaching Prevention Act with being found in possession of a number of rabbits, and John Sparham, charged with aiding and abetting them. Hall and Sparham fined £1, 17s. 4d., and Allen £2, 17s. 4d., including costs; the former committed for fourteen days and the latter for one month in default of payment.

South-western Police Court, London. Before Mr. Rose. John Probyn, charged with doing grievous bodily harm to a constable. Prisoner had been kicking his wife, and also assaulting another woman who protested against his brutality. The constable tried to persuade him to go inside his house, but prisoner suddenly turned upon him, knocking him down by a blow on the face, kicking him as he lay on the ground, and attempting to strangle him.

Finally the prisoner deliberately kicked the officer in a dangerous part, inflicting an injury which will keep him off duty for a long time to come. Six weeks.

Lambeth Police Court, London. Before Mr. Hopkins. “Baby” Stuart, aged nineteen, described as a chorus girl, charged with obtaining food and lodging to the value of 5s. by false pretences, and with intent to defraud Emma Brasier. Emma Brasier, complainant, lodging-house keeper of Atwell Road. Prisoner took apartments at her house on the representation that she was employed at the Crown Theatre. After prisoner had been in her house two or three days, Mrs. Brasier made inquiries, and, finding the girl’s story untrue, gave her into custody. Prisoner told the magistrate that she would have worked had she not had such bad health. Six weeks’ hard labour.

CHAPTER XVII — INEFFICIENCY

I stopped a moment to listen to an argument on the Mile End Waste. It was night-time, and they were all workmen of the better class. They had surrounded one of their number, a pleasant-faced man of thirty, and were giving it to him rather heatedly.

"But 'ow about this 'ere cheap immigration?" one of them demanded. "The Jews of Whitechapel, say, a-cutting our throats right along?"

"You can't blame them," was the answer. "They're just like us, and they've got to live. Don't blame the man who offers to work cheaper than you and gets your job."

"But 'ow about the wife an' kiddies?" his interlocutor demanded.

"There you are," came the answer. "How about the wife and kiddies of the man who works cheaper than you and gets your job? Eh? How about his wife and kiddies? He's more interested in them than in yours, and he can't see them starve. So he cuts the price of labour and out you go. But you mustn't blame him, poor devil. He can't help it. Wages always come down when two men are after the same job. That's the fault of competition, not of the man who cuts the price."

"But wyges don't come down where there's a union," the objection was made.

"And there you are again, right on the head. The union cheeks competition among the labourers, but makes it harder where there are no unions. There's where your cheap labour of Whitechapel comes in. They're unskilled, and have no unions, and cut each other's throats, and ours in the bargain, if we don't belong to a strong union."

Without going further into the argument, this man on the Mile End Waste pointed the moral that when two men were after the one job wages were bound to fall. Had he gone deeper into the matter, he would have found that even the union, say twenty thousand strong, could not hold up wages if twenty thousand idle men were trying to displace the union men. This is admirably instanced, just now, by the return and disbandment of the soldiers from South Africa. They find themselves, by tens of thousands, in desperate straits in the army of the unemployed. There is a general decline in wages throughout the land, which, giving rise to labour disputes and strikes, is taken advantage of by the unemployed, who gladly pick up the tools thrown down by the strikers.

Sweating, starvation wages, armies of unemployed, and great numbers of the homeless and shelterless are inevitable when there are more men to do work than there is work for men to do. The men and women I have met upon the streets, and in the spikes and pegs, are not there because as a mode of life it may be considered a "soft snap." I have sufficiently outlined the hardships they undergo to demonstrate that their existence is anything but "soft."

It is a matter of sober calculation, here in England, that it is softer to work for twenty shillings a week, and have regular food, and a bed at night, than it is to walk the streets. The man who walks the streets suffers more, and works harder, for far less return. I have depicted the nights they spend, and how, driven in by physical exhaustion, they go to the casual ward for a "rest up." Nor is the casual ward a soft snap. To pick four pounds of oakum, break twelve hundredweight of stones, or perform the most revolting tasks, in return for the miserable food and shelter they receive, is an unqualified extravagance on the part of the men who are guilty of it. On the part of the authorities it is sheer robbery. They give the men far less for their labour than do the capitalistic employers. The wage for the same amount of labour, performed for a private employer, would buy them better beds, better food, more good cheer, and, above all, greater freedom.

As I say, it is an extravagance for a man to patronise a casual ward. And that they know it themselves is shown by the way these men shun it till driven in by physical exhaustion. Then why do they do it? Not because they are discouraged workers. The very opposite is true; they are discouraged vagabonds. In the United States the tramp is almost invariably a discouraged worker. He finds tramping a softer mode of life than working. But this is not true in England. Here the powers that be do their utmost to discourage the tramp and vagabond, and he is, in all truth, a mightily discouraged creature. He knows that two shillings a day, which is only fifty cents, will buy him three fair meals, a bed at night, and leave him a couple of pennies for pocket money. He would rather work for those two shillings than for the charity of the casual ward; for he knows that he would not have to work so hard, and that he would not be so abominably treated. He does not do so, however, because there are more men to do work than there is work for men to do.

When there are more men than there is work to be done, a sifting-out process must obtain. In every branch of industry the less efficient are crowded out. Being crowded out because of inefficiency, they cannot go up, but must descend, and continue to descend, until they reach their proper level, a place in the industrial fabric where they are efficient. It follows, therefore, and it is inexorable, that the least efficient must descend to the very bottom, which is the shambles wherein they perish miserably.

A glance at the confirmed inefficients at the bottom demonstrates that they are, as a rule, mental, physical, and moral wrecks. The exceptions to the rule are the late arrivals, who are merely very inefficient, and upon whom the wrecking process is just beginning to operate. All the forces here, it must be remembered, are destructive. The good body (which is there because its brain is not quick and capable) is speedily wrenched and twisted out of shape; the clean mind (which is there because of its weak body) is speedily fouled and contaminated.

The mortality is excessive, but, even then, they die far too lingering deaths.

Here, then, we have the construction of the Abyss and the shambles. Throughout the whole industrial fabric a constant elimination is going on. The inefficient are weeded out and flung downward. Various things constitute inefficiency. The engineer who is irregular or irresponsible will sink down until he finds his place, say as a casual labourer, an occupation irregular in its very nature and in which there is little or no responsibility. Those who are slow and clumsy, who suffer from weakness of body or mind, or who lack nervous, mental, and physical stamina, must sink down, sometimes rapidly, sometimes step by step, to the bottom. Accident, by disabling an efficient worker, will make him inefficient, and down he must go. And the worker who becomes aged, with failing energy and numbing brain, must begin the frightful descent which knows no stopping-place short of the bottom and death.

In this last instance, the statistics of London tell a terrible tale. The population of London is one-seventh of the total population of the United Kingdom, and in London, year in and year out, one adult in every four dies on public charity, either in the workhouse, the hospital, or the asylum. When the fact that the well-to-do do not end thus is taken into consideration, it becomes manifest that it is the fate of at least one in every three adult workers to die on public charity.

As an illustration of how a good worker may suddenly become inefficient, and what then happens to him, I am tempted to give the case of

M’Garry, a man thirty-two years of age, and an inmate of the workhouse. The extracts are quoted from the annual report of the trade union.

I worked at Sullivan’s place in Widnes, better known as the British Alkali Chemical Works. I was working in a shed, and I had to cross the yard. It was ten o’clock at night, and there was no light about. While crossing the yard I felt something take hold of my leg and screw it off. I became unconscious; I didn’t know what became of me for a day or two. On the following Sunday night I came to my senses, and found myself in the hospital. I asked the nurse what was to do with my legs, and she told me both legs were off.

There was a stationary crank in the yard, let into the ground; the hole was 18 inches long, 15 inches deep, and 15 inches wide. The crank revolved in the hole three revolutions a minute. There was no fence or covering over the hole. Since my accident they have stopped it altogether, and have covered the hole up with a piece of sheet iron. . . . They gave me £25. They didn’t reckon that as compensation; they said it was only for charity’s sake. Out of that I paid £9 for a machine by which to wheel myself about.

I was labouring at the time I got my legs off. I got twenty-four shillings a week, rather better pay than the other men, because I used to take shifts. When there was heavy work to be done I used to be picked out to do it. Mr. Manton, the manager, visited me at the hospital several times. When I was getting better, I asked him if he would be able to find me a job. He told me not to trouble myself, as the firm was not cold-hearted. I would be right enough in any case . . . Mr. Manton stopped coming to see me; and the last time, he said he thought of asking the directors to give me a fifty-pound note, so I could go home to my friends in Ireland.

Poor M’Garry! He received rather better pay than the other men because he was ambitious and took shifts, and when heavy work was to be done he was the man picked out to do it. And then the thing happened, and he went into the workhouse. The alternative to the workhouse is to go home to Ireland and burden his friends for the rest of his life. Comment is superfluous.

It must be understood that efficiency is not determined by the workers themselves, but is determined by the demand for labour. If three men seek one position, the most efficient man will get it. The other two, no matter how capable they may be, will none the less be inefficients. If Germany, Japan, and the United States should capture the entire world market for iron, coal, and textiles, at once the English workers would be thrown idle by hundreds of thousands. Some would emigrate, but the rest would rush their labour into the remaining industries. A general shaking up of the workers from top to bottom would result; and when equilibrium had been restored, the number of the inefficients at the bottom of the Abyss would have been increased by hundreds of thousands. On the other hand, conditions remaining constant and all the workers doubling their efficiency, there would still be as many inefficients, though each inefficient were twice as capable as he had been and more capable than many of the efficients had previously been.

When there are more men to work than there is work for men to do, just as many men as are in excess of work will be inefficients, and as inefficients they are doomed to lingering and painful destruction. It shall be the aim of future chapters to show, by their work and manner of living, not only how the inefficients are weeded out and destroyed, but to show how inefficients are being constantly and wantonly created by the forces of industrial society as it exists to-day.

CHAPTER XVIII — WAGES

When I learned that in Lesser London there were 1,292,737 people who received twenty-one shillings or less a week per family, I became interested as to how the wages could best be spent in order to maintain the physical efficiency of such families. Families of six, seven, eight or ten being beyond consideration, I have based the following table upon a family of five — a father, mother, and three children; while I have made twenty-one shillings equivalent to $5.25, though actually, twenty-one shillings are equivalent to about $5.11.

Rent	$1.50	or 6/0
Bread	1.00	“ 4/0
Meat	O.87.5	“ 3/6
Vegetables	O.62.5	“ 2/6
Coals	0.25	“ 1/0
Tea	0.18	“ 0/9
Oil	0.16	“ 0/8
Sugar	0.18	“ 0/9
Milk	0.12	“ 0/6
Soap	0.08	“ 0/4
Butter	0.20	“ 0/10
Firewood	0.08	“ 0/4
Total	$5.25	21/2

An analysis of one item alone will show how little room there is for waste. *Bread*, $1: for a family of five, for seven days, one dollar’s worth of bread will give each a daily ration of 2.8 cents; and if they eat three meals a day, each may consume per meal 9.5 mills’ worth of bread, a little less than one halfpennyworth. Now bread is the heaviest item. They will get less of meat per mouth each meal, and still less of vegetates; while the smaller items become too microscopic for consideration. On the other hand, these food articles are all bought at small retail, the most expensive and wasteful method of purchasing.

While the table given above will permit no extravagance, no overloading of stomachs, it will be noticed that there is no surplus. The whole guinea is spent for food and rent. There is no pocket-money left over. Does the man buy a glass of beer, the family must eat that much less; and in so far as it eats less, just that far will it impair its physical efficiency. The members of this family cannot ride in busses or trams, cannot write letters, take outings, go to a “tu’penny gaff” for cheap vaudeville, join social or benefit clubs, nor can they buy sweetmeats, tobacco, books, or newspapers.

And further, should one child (and there are three) require a pair of shoes, the family must strike meat for a week from its bill of fare. And since there are five pairs of feet requiring shoes, and five heads requiring hats, and five bodies requiring clothes, and since there are laws regulating indecency, the family must constantly impair its physical efficiency in order to keep warm and out of jail. For notice, when rent, coals, oil, soap, and firewood are extracted from the weekly income, there remains a daily allowance for food of 4.5d. to each person; and that 4.5d. cannot be lessened by buying clothes without impairing the physical efficiency.

All of which is hard enough. But the thing happens; the husband and father breaks his leg or his neck. No 4.5d. a day per mouth for food is coming in; no halfpennyworth of bread per meal; and, at the end of the week, no six shillings for rent. So out they must go, to the streets or the workhouse, or to a miserable den, somewhere, in which the mother will desperately endeavour to hold the family together on the ten shillings she may possibly be able to earn.

While in London there are 1,292,737 people who receive twenty-one shillings or less a week per family, it must be remembered that we have investigated a family of five living on a twenty-one shilling basis. There are larger families, there are many families that live on less than twenty-one shillings, and there is much irregular employment. The question naturally arises, How do *they* live? The answer is that they do not live. They do not know what life is. They drag out a subterbestial existence until mercifully released by death.

Before descending to the fouler depths, let the case of the telephone girls be cited. Here are clean, fresh English maids, for whom a higher standard of living than that of the beasts is absolutely necessary. Otherwise they cannot remain clean, fresh English maids. On entering the service, a telephone girl receives a weekly wage of eleven shillings. If she be quick and clever, she may, at the end of five years, attain a minimum wage of one pound. Recently a table of such a girl’s weekly expenditure was furnished to Lord Londonderry. Here it is:-

	s.	d.
Rent, fire, and light	7	6
Board at home	3	6

Board at the office	4	6
Street car fare	1	6
Laundry	1	0
Total	18	0

This leaves nothing for clothes, recreation, or sickness. And yet many of the girls are receiving, not eighteen shillings, but eleven shillings, twelve shillings, and fourteen shillings per week. They must have clothes and recreation, and —

Man to Man so oft unjust,
Is always so to Woman.

At the Trades Union Congress now being held in London, the Gasworkers' Union moved that instructions be given the Parliamentary Committee to introduce a Bill to prohibit the employment of children under fifteen years of age. Mr. Shackleton, Member of Parliament and a representative of the Northern Counties Weavers, opposed the resolution on behalf of the textile workers, who, he said, could not dispense with the earnings of their children and live on the scale of wages which obtained. The representatives of 514,000 workers voted against the resolution, while the representatives of 535,000 workers voted in favour of it. When 514,000 workers oppose a resolution prohibiting child-labour under fifteen, it is evident that a less-than-living wage is being paid to an immense number of the adult workers of the country.

I have spoken with women in Whitechapel who receive right along less than one shilling for a twelve-hour day in the coat-making sweat shops; and with women trousers finishers who receive an average princely and weekly wage of three to four shillings.

A case recently cropped up of men, in the employ of a wealthy business house, receiving their board and six shillings per week for six working days of sixteen hours each. The sandwich men get fourteenpence per day and find themselves. The average weekly earnings of the hawkers and costermongers are not more than ten to twelve shillings. The average of all common labourers, outside the dockers, is less than sixteen shillings per week, while the dockers average from eight to nine shillings. These figures are taken from a royal commission report and are authentic.

Conceive of an old woman, broken and dying, supporting herself and four children, and paying three shillings per week rent, by making match boxes at 2.25d. per gross. Twelve dozen boxes for 2.25d., and, in addition, finding her own paste and thread! She never knew a day off, either for sickness, rest, or recreation. Each day and every day, Sundays as well, she toiled fourteen hours. Her day's stint was seven gross, for which she received 1s. 3.75d. In the week of ninety-eight hours' work, she made 7066 match boxes, and earned 4s. 10.25d., less per paste and thread.

Last year, Mr. Thomas Holmes, a police-court missionary of note, after writing about the condition of the women workers, received the following letter, dated April 18, 1901:-

Sir, — Pardon the liberty I am taking, but, having read what you said about poor women working fourteen hours a day for ten shillings per week, I beg to state my case. I am a tie-maker, who, after working all the week, cannot earn more than five shillings, and I have a poor afflicted husband to keep who hasn't earned a penny for more than ten years.

Imagine a woman, capable of writing such a clear, sensible, grammatical letter, supporting her husband and self on five shillings per week! Mr. Holmes visited her. He had to squeeze to get into the room. There lay her sick husband; there she worked all day long; there she cooked, ate, washed, and slept; and there her husband and she performed all the functions of living and dying. There was no space for the missionary to sit down, save on the bed, which was partially covered with ties and silk. The sick man's lungs were in the last stages of decay. He coughed and expectorated constantly, the woman ceasing from her work to assist him in his paroxysms. The silken fluff from the ties was not good for his sickness; nor was his sickness good for the ties, and the handlers and wearers of the ties yet to come.

Another case Mr. Holmes visited was that of a young girl, twelve years of age, charged in the police court with stealing food. He found her the deputy mother of a boy of nine, a crippled boy of seven, and a younger child. Her mother was a widow and a blouse-maker. She paid five shillings a week rent. Here are the last items in her housekeeping account: Tea. 0.5d.; sugar, 0.5d.; bread, 0.25d.; margarine, 1d.; oil, 1.5d.; and firewood, 1d. Good housewives of the soft and tender folk, imagine yourselves marketing and keeping house on such a scale, setting a table for five, and keeping an eye on your deputy mother of twelve to see that she did not steal food for her little brothers and sisters, the while you stitched, stitched, stitched at a nightmare line of blouses, which stretched away into the gloom and down to the pauper's coffin a-yawn for you.

CHAPTER XIX — THE GHETTO

Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the time,
City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?
There among the gloomy alleys Progress halts on palsied feet;
Crime and hunger cast out maidens by the thousand on the street;
There the master scrimps his haggard seamstress of her daily bread;
There the single sordid attic holds the living and the dead;
There the smouldering fire of fever creeps across the rotted floor,
And the crowded couch of incest, in the warrens of the poor.

At one time the nations of Europe confined the undesirable Jews in city ghettos. But to-day the dominant economic class, by less arbitrary but none the less rigorous methods, has confined the undesirable yet necessary workers into ghettos of remarkable meanness and vastness. East London is such a ghetto, where the rich and the powerful do not dwell, and the traveller cometh not, and where two million workers swarm, procreate, and die.

It must not be supposed that all the workers of London are crowded into the East End, but the tide is setting strongly in that direction. The poor quarters of the city proper are constantly being destroyed, and the main stream of the unhoused is toward the east. In the last twelve years, one district, "London over the Border," as it is called, which lies well beyond Aldgate, Whitechapel, and Mile End, has increased 260,000, or over sixty per cent. The churches in this district, by the way, can seat but one in every thirty-seven of the added population.

The City of Dreadful Monotony, the East End is often called, especially by well-fed, optimistic sightseers, who look over the surface of things and are merely shocked by the intolerable sameness and meanness of it all. If the East End is worthy of no worse title than The City of Dreadful Monotony, and if working people are unworthy of variety and beauty and surprise, it would not be such a bad place in which to live. But the East End does merit a worse title. It should be called The City of Degradation.

While it is not a city of slums, as some people imagine, it may well be said to be one gigantic slum. From the standpoint of simple decency and clean manhood and womanhood, any mean street, of all its mean streets, is a slum. Where sights and sounds abound which neither you nor I would care to have our children see and hear is a place where no man's children should live, and see, and hear. Where you and I would not care to have our wives pass their lives is a place where no other man's wife should have to pass her life. For here, in the East End, the obscenities and brute vulgarities of life are rampant. There is no privacy. The bad corrupts the good, and all fester together. Innocent childhood is sweet and beautiful: but in East London innocence is a fleeting thing, and you must catch them before they crawl out of the cradle, or you will find the very babes as unholily wise as you.

The application of the Golden Rule determines that East London is an unfit place in which to live. Where you would not have your own babe live, and develop, and gather to itself knowledge of life and the things of life, is not a fit place for the babes of other men to live, and develop, and gather to themselves knowledge of life and the things of life. It is a simple thing, this Golden Rule, and all that is required. Political economy and the survival of the fittest can go hang if they say otherwise. What is not good enough for you is not good enough for other men, and there's no more to be said.

There are 300,000 people in London, divided into families, that live in one-room tenements. Far, far more live in two and three rooms and are as badly crowded, regardless of sex, as those that live in one room. The law demands 400 cubic feet of space for each person. In army barracks each soldier is allowed 600 cubic feet. Professor Huxley, at one time himself a medical officer in East London, always held that each person should have 800 cubic feet of space, and that it should be well ventilated with pure air. Yet in London there are 900,000 people living in less than the 400 cubic feet prescribed by the law.

Mr. Charles Booth, who engaged in a systematic work of years in charting and classifying the toiling city population, estimates that there are 1,800,000 people in London who are *poor* and *very poor*. It is of interest to mark what he terms poor. By *poor* he means families which have a total weekly income of from eighteen to twenty-one shillings. The *very poor* fall greatly below this standard.

The workers, as a class, are being more and more segregated by their economic masters; and this process, with its jamming and overcrowding, tends not so much toward immorality as unmorality. Here is an extract from a recent meeting of the London County Council, terse and bald, but with a wealth of horror to be read between the lines:-

Mr. Bruce asked the Chairman of the Public Health Committee whether his attention had been called to a number of cases of serious overcrowding in the East End. In St. Georges-in-the-East a man and his wife and their family of eight occupied one small room. This family consisted of five daughters, aged twenty, seventeen, eight, four, and an infant; and three sons, aged fifteen, thirteen, and twelve. In Whitechapel a man and his wife and their three daughters, aged sixteen, eight, and four, and two sons, aged ten and twelve years, occupied a smaller room. In Bethnal Green a man and his wife, with four sons, aged twenty-three, twenty-one, nineteen, and sixteen, and two daughters, aged fourteen and seven, were also found in one room. He asked whether it was not the duty of the various local authorities to prevent such serious overcrowding.

But with 900,000 people actually living under illegal conditions, the authorities have their hands full. When the overcrowded folk are ejected they stray off into some other hole; and, as they move their belongings by night, on hand-barrows (one hand-barrow accommodating the entire household goods and the sleeping children), it is next to impossible to keep track of them. If the Public Health Act of 1891 were suddenly and completely enforced, 900,000 people would receive notice to clear out of their houses and go on to the streets, and 500,000 rooms would have to be built before they were all legally housed again.

The mean streets merely look mean from the outside, but inside the walls are to be found squalor, misery, and tragedy. While the following tragedy may be revolting to read, it must not be forgotten that the existence of it is far more revolting.

In Devonshire Place, Lisson Grove, a short while back died an old woman of seventy-five years of age. At the inquest the coroner's officer stated that "all he found in the room was a lot of old rags covered with vermin. He had got himself smothered with the vermin. The room was in a shocking condition, and he had never seen anything like it. Everything was absolutely covered with vermin."

The doctor said: "He found deceased lying across the fender on her back. She had one garment and her stockings on. The body was quite alive with vermin, and all the clothes in the room were absolutely grey with insects. Deceased was very badly nourished and was very emaciated. She had extensive sores on her legs, and her stockings were adherent to those sores. The sores were the result of vermin."

A man present at the inquest wrote: "I had the evil fortune to see the body of the unfortunate woman as it lay in the mortuary; and even now the memory of that gruesome sight makes me shudder. There she lay in the mortuary shell, so starved and emaciated that she was a mere bundle of skin and bones. Her hair, which was matted with filth, was simply a nest of vermin. Over her bony chest leaped and rolled hundreds, thousands, myriads of vermin!"

If it is not good for your mother and my mother so to die, then it is not good for this woman, whosoever's mother she might be, so to die.

Bishop Wilkinson, who has lived in Zululand, recently said, "No human of an African village would allow such a promiscuous mixing of young men and women, boys and girls." He had reference to the children of the overcrowded folk, who at five have nothing to learn and much to unlearn which they will never unlearn.

It is notorious that here in the Ghetto the houses of the poor are greater profit earners than the mansions of the rich. Not only does the poor worker have to live like a beast, but he pays proportionately more for it than does the rich man for his spacious comfort. A class of house-sweaters has been made possible by the competition of the poor for houses. There are more people than there is room, and numbers are in the workhouse because they cannot find shelter elsewhere. Not only are houses let, but they are sublet, and sub-sublet down to the very rooms.

"A part of a room to let." This notice was posted a short while ago in a window not five minutes' walk from St. James's Hall. The Rev. Hugh Price Hughes is authority for the statement that beds are let on the three-relay system — that is, three tenants to a bed, each occupying it eight hours, so that it never grows cold; while the floor space underneath the bed is likewise let on the three-relay system. Health officers are not at all unused to finding such cases as the following: in one room having a cubic capacity of 1000 feet, three adult females in the bed, and two adult females under the bed; and in one room of 1650 cubic feet, one adult male and two children in the bed, and two adult females under the bed.

Here is a typical example of a room on the more respectable two-relay system. It is occupied in the daytime by a young woman employed all night in a hotel. At seven o'clock in the evening she vacates the room, and a bricklayer's labourer comes in. At seven in the morning he vacates, and goes to his work, at which time she returns from hers.

The Rev. W. N. Davies, rector of Spitalfields, took a census of some of the alleys in his parish. He says:-

In one alley there are ten houses — fifty-one rooms, nearly all about 8 feet by 9 feet — and 254 people. In six instances only do 2 people occupy one room; and in others the number varied from 3 to 9. In another court with six houses and twenty-two rooms were 84 people — again 6, 7, 8, and 9 being the number living in one room, in several instances. In one house with eight rooms are 45 people — one room containing 9 persons, one 8, two 7, and another 6.

This Ghetto crowding is not through inclination, but compulsion. Nearly fifty per cent. of the workers pay from one-fourth to one-half of their earnings for rent. The average rent in the larger part of the East End is from four to six shillings per week for one room, while skilled mechanics, earning thirty-five shillings per week, are forced to part with fifteen shillings of it for two or three pokey little dens, in which they strive desperately to obtain some semblance of home life. And rents are going up all the time. In one street in Stepney the increase in only two years has been from thirteen to eighteen shillings; in another street from eleven to sixteen shillings; and in another street, from eleven to fifteen shillings; while in Whitechapel, two-room houses that recently rented for ten shillings are now costing twenty-one shillings. East, west, north, and south the rents are going up. When land is worth from £20,000 to £30,000 an acre, some one must pay the landlord.

Mr. W. C. Steadman, in the House of Commons, in a speech concerning his constituency in Stepney, related the following:-

This morning, not a hundred yards from where I am myself living, a widow stopped me. She has six children to support, and the rent of her house was fourteen shillings per week. She gets her living by letting the house to lodgers and doing a day's washing or charring. That woman, with tears in her eyes, told me that the landlord had increased the rent from fourteen shillings to eighteen shillings. What could the woman do? There is no accommodation in Stepney. Every place is taken up and overcrowded.

Class supremacy can rest only on class degradation; and when the workers are segregated in the Ghetto, they cannot escape the consequent degradation. A short and stunted people is created — a breed strikingly differentiated from their masters' breed, a pavement folk, as it were lacking stamina and strength. The men become caricatures of what physical men ought to be, and their women and children are pale and anaemic, with eyes ringed darkly, who stoop and slouch, and are early twisted out of all shapeliness and beauty.

To make matters worse, the men of the Ghetto are the men who are left — a deteriorated stock, left to undergo still further deterioration. For a hundred and fifty years, at least, they have been drained of their best. The strong men, the men of pluck, initiative, and ambition, have been faring forth to the fresher and freer portions of the globe, to make new lands and nations. Those who are lacking, the weak of heart and head and hand, as well as the rotten and hopeless, have remained to carry on the breed. And year by year, in turn, the best they breed are taken from them. Wherever a man of vigour and stature manages to grow up, he is haled forthwith into the army. A soldier, as Bernard Shaw has said, "ostensibly a heroic and patriotic defender of his country, is really an unfortunate man driven by destitution to offer himself as food for powder for the sake of regular rations, shelter, and clothing."

This constant selection of the best from the workers has impoverished those who are left, a sadly degraded remainder, for the great part, which, in the Ghetto, sinks to the deepest depths. The wine of life has been drawn off to spill itself in blood and progeny over the rest of the earth. Those that remain are the lees, and they are segregated and steeped in themselves. They become indecent and bestial. When they kill, they kill with their hands, and then stupidly surrender themselves to the executioners. There is no splendid audacity about their transgressions. They gouge a mate with a dull knife, or beat his head in with an iron pot, and then sit down and wait for the police. Wife-beating is the masculine prerogative of matrimony. They wear remarkable boots of brass and iron, and when they have polished off the mother of their children with a black eye or so, they knock her down and proceed to trample her very much as a Western stallion tramples a rattlesnake.

A woman of the lower Ghetto classes is as much the slave of her husband as is the Indian squaw. And I, for one, were I a woman and had but the two choices, should prefer being a squaw. The men are economically dependent on their masters, and the women are economically dependent on the men. The result is, the woman gets the beating the man should give his master, and she can do nothing. There are the kiddies, and he is the bread-winner, and she dare not send him to jail and leave herself and children to starve. Evidence to convict can rarely be obtained when such cases come into the courts; as a rule, the trampled wife and mother is weeping and hysterically beseeching the magistrate to let her husband off for the kiddies' sakes.

The wives become screaming harridans or, broken-spirited and doglike, lose what little decency and self-respect they have remaining over from their maiden days, and all sink together, unheeding, in their degradation and dirt.

Sometimes I become afraid of my own generalizations upon the massed misery of this Ghetto life, and feel that my impressions are exaggerated, that I am too close to the picture and lack perspective. At such moments I find it well to turn to the testimony of other men to prove to myself that I am not becoming over-wrought and addle-pated. Frederick Harrison has always struck me as being a level-headed, well-controlled man, and he says:-

To me, at least, it would be enough to condemn modern society as hardly an advance on slavery or serfdom, if the permanent condition of industry were to be that which we behold, that ninety per cent. of the actual producers of wealth have no home that they can call their own beyond the end of the week; have no bit of soil, or so much as a room that belongs to them; have nothing of value of any kind, except as much old furniture as will go into a cart; have the precarious chance of weekly wages, which barely suffice to keep them in health; are housed, for the most part, in places that no man thinks fit for his horse; are separated by so narrow a margin from destitution that a month of bad trade, sickness, or unexpected loss brings them face to face with hunger and pauperism . . . But below this normal state of the average workman in town and country, there is found the great band of destitute outcasts — the camp followers of the army of industry — at least one-tenth the whole proletarian population, whose normal condition is one of sickening wretchedness. If this is to be the permanent arrangement of modern society, civilization must be held to bring a curse on the great majority of mankind.

Ninety per cent.! The figures are appalling, yet Mr. Stopford Brooke, after drawing a frightful London picture, finds himself compelled to multiply it by half a million. Here it is:-

I often used to meet, when I was curate at Kensington, families drifting into London along the Hammersmith Road. One day there came along a labourer and his wife, his son and two daughters. Their family had lived for a long time on an estate in the country, and managed, with the help of the common-land and their labour, to get on. But the time came when the common was encroached upon, and their labour was not needed on the estate, and they were quietly turned out of their cottage. Where should they go? Of course to London, where work was thought to be plentiful. They had a little savings, and they thought they could get two decent rooms to live in. But the inexorable land question met them in London. They tried the decent courts for lodgings, and found that two rooms would cost ten shillings a week. Food was dear and bad, water was bad, and in a short time their health suffered. Work was hard to get, and its wage was so low that they were soon in debt. They became more ill and more despairing with the poisonous surroundings, the darkness, and the long hours of work; and they were driven forth to seek a cheaper lodging. They found it in a court I knew well — a hotbed of crime and nameless horrors. In this they got a single room at a cruel rent, and work was more difficult for them to get now, as they came from a place of such bad repute, and they fell into the hands of those who sweat the last drop out of man and woman and child, for wages which are the food only of despair. And the darkness and the dirt, the bad food and the sickness, and the want of water was worse than before; and the crowd and the companionship of the court robbed them of the last shreds of self-respect. The drink demon seized upon them. Of course there was a public-house at both ends of the court. There they fled, one and all, for shelter, and warmth, and society, and forgetfulness. And they came out in deeper debt, with inflamed senses and burning brains, and an unsatisfied craving for drink they would do anything to satiate. And in a few months the father was in prison, the wife dying, the son a criminal, and the daughters on the street. *Multiply this by half a million, and you will be beneath the truth*.

No more dreary spectacle can be found on this earth than the whole of the "awful East," with its Whitechapel, Hoxton, Spitalfields, Bethnal Green, and Wapping to the East India Docks. The colour of life is grey and drab. Everything is helpless, hopeless, unrelieved, and dirty. Bath tubs are a thing totally unknown, as mythical as the ambrosia of the gods. The people themselves are dirty, while any attempt at cleanliness becomes howling farce, when it is not pitiful and tragic. Strange, vagrant odours come drifting along the greasy wind, and the rain, when it falls, is more like grease than water from heaven. The very cobblestones are scummed with grease.

Here lives a population as dull and unimaginative as its long grey miles of dingy brick. Religion has virtually passed it by, and a gross and stupid materialism reigns, fatal alike to the things of the spirit and the finer instincts of life.

It used to be the proud boast that every Englishman's home was his castle. But to-day it is an anachronism. The Ghetto folk have no homes. They do not know the significance and the sacredness of home life. Even the municipal dwellings, where live the better-class workers, are overcrowded barracks. They have no home life. The very language proves it. The father returning from work asks his child in the street where her mother is; and back the answer comes, "In the buildings."

A new race has sprung up, a street people. They pass their lives at work and in the streets. They have dens and lairs into which to crawl for sleeping purposes, and that is all. One cannot travesty the word by calling such dens and lairs "homes." The traditional silent and reserved Englishman has passed away. The pavement folk are noisy, voluble, high-strung, excitable — when they are yet young. As they grow older they become steeped and stupefied in beer. When they have nothing else to do, they ruminate as a cow ruminates. They are to be met with everywhere, standing on curbs and corners, and staring into vacancy. Watch one of them. He will stand there, motionless, for hours, and when you go away you will leave him still staring into vacancy. It is most absorbing. He has no money for beer, and his lair is only for sleeping purposes, so what else remains for him to do? He has already solved the mysteries of girl's love, and wife's love, and child's love, and found them delusions and shams, vain and fleeting as dew-drops, quick-vanishing before the ferocious facts of life.

As I say, the young are high-strung, nervous, excitable; the middle-aged are empty-headed, stolid, and stupid. It is absurd to think for an instant that they can compete with the workers of the New World. Brutalised, degraded, and dull, the Ghetto folk will be unable to render efficient service to England in the world struggle for industrial supremacy which economists declare has already begun. Neither as workers nor as soldiers can they come up to the mark when England, in her need, calls upon them, her forgotten ones; and if England be flung out of the world's industrial orbit, they will perish like flies at the end of summer. Or, with England critically situated, and with them made desperate as wild beasts are made desperate, they may become a menace and go "swelling" down to the West End to return the “slumming” the West End has done in the East. In which case, before rapid-fire guns and the modern machinery of warfare, they will perish the more swiftly and easily.

CHAPTER XX — COFFEE-HOUSES AND DOSS-HOUSES

Another phrase gone glimmering, shorn of romance and tradition and all that goes to make phrases worth keeping! For me, henceforth, “coffee-house” will possess anything but an agreeable connotation. Over on the other side of the world, the mere mention of the word was sufficient to conjure up whole crowds of its historic frequenters, and to send trooping through my imagination endless groups of wits and dandies, pamphleteers and bravos, and bohemians of Grub Street.

But here, on this side of the world, alas and alack, the very name is a misnomer. Coffee-house: a place where people drink coffee. Not at all. You cannot obtain coffee in such a place for love or money. True, you may call for coffee, and you will have brought you something in a cup purporting to be coffee, and you will taste it and be disillusioned, for coffee it certainly is not.

And what is true of the coffee is true of the coffee-house. Working-men, in the main, frequent these places, and greasy, dirty places they are, without one thing about them to cherish decency in a man or put self-respect into him. Table-cloths and napkins are unknown. A man eats in the midst of the débris left by his predecessor, and dribbles his own scraps about him and on the floor. In rush times, in such places, I have positively waded through the muck and mess that covered the floor, and I have managed to eat because I was abominably hungry and capable of eating anything.

This seems to be the normal condition of the working-man, from the zest with which he addresses himself to the board. Eating is a necessity, and there are no frills about it. He brings in with him a primitive voraciousness, and, I am confident, carries away with him a fairly healthy appetite. When you see such a man, on his way to work in the morning, order a pint of tea, which is no more tea than it is ambrosia, pull a hunk of dry bread from his pocket, and wash the one down with the other, depend upon it, that man has not the right sort of stuff in his belly, nor enough of the wrong sort of stuff, to fit him for big day’s work. And further, depend upon it, he and a thousand of his kind will not turn out the quantity or quality of work that a thousand men will who have eaten heartily of meat and potatoes, and drunk coffee that is coffee.

As a vagrant in the “Hobo” of a California jail, I have been served better food and drink than the London workman receives in his coffee-houses; while as an American labourer I have eaten a breakfast for twelvepence such as the British labourer would not dream of eating. Of course, he will pay only three or four pence for his; which is, however, as much as I paid, for I would be earning six shillings to his two or two and a half. On the other hand, though, and in return, I would turn out an amount of work in the course of the day that would put to shame the amount he turned out. So there are two sides to it. The man with the high standard of living will always do more work and better than the man with the low standard of living.

There is a comparison which sailormen make between the English and American merchant services. In an English ship, they say, it is poor grub, poor pay, and easy work; in an American ship, good grub, good pay, and hard work. And this is applicable to the working populations of both countries. The ocean greyhounds have to pay for speed and steam, and so does the workman. But if the workman is not able to pay for it, he will not have the speed and steam, that is all. The proof of it is when the English workman comes to America. He will lay more bricks in New York than he will in London, still more bricks in St. Louis, and still more bricks when he gets to San Francisco. {3}. His standard of living has been rising all the time.

Early in the morning, along the streets frequented by workmen on the way to work, many women sit on the sidewalk with sacks of bread beside them. No end of workmen purchase these, and eat them as they walk along. They do not even wash the dry bread down with the tea to be obtained for a penny in the coffee-houses. It is incontestable that a man is not fit to begin his day’s work on a meal like that; and it is equally incontestable that the loss will fall upon his employer and upon the nation. For some time, now, statesmen have been crying, “Wake up, England!” It would show more hard-headed common sense if they changed the tune to “Feed up, England!”

Not only is the worker poorly fed, but he is filthily fed. I have stood outside a butcher-shop and watched a horde of speculative housewives turning over the trimmings and scraps and shreds of beef and mutton — dog-meat in the States. I would not vouch for the clean fingers of these housewives, no more than I would vouch for the cleanliness of the single rooms in which many of them and their families lived; yet they raked, and pawed, and scraped the mess about in their anxiety to get the worth of their coppers. I kept my eye on one particularly offensive-looking bit of meat, and followed it through the clutches of over twenty women, till it fell to the lot of a timid-appearing little woman whom the butcher bluffed into taking it. All day long this heap of scraps was added to and taken away from, the dust and dirt of the street falling upon it, flies settling on it, and the dirty fingers turning it over and over.

The costers wheel loads of specked and decaying fruit around in the barrows all day, and very often store it in their one living and sleeping room for the night. There it is exposed to the sickness and disease, the effluvia and vile exhalations of overcrowded and rotten life, and next day it is carted about again to be sold.

The poor worker of the East End never knows what it is to eat good, wholesome meat or fruit — in fact, he rarely eats meat or fruit at all; while the skilled workman has nothing to boast of in the way of what he eats. Judging from the coffee-houses, which is a fair criterion, they never know in all their lives what tea, coffee, or cocoa tastes like. The slops and water-witcheries of the coffee-houses, varying only in sloppiness and witchery, never even approximate or suggest what you and I are accustomed to drink as tea and coffee.

A little incident comes to me, connected with a coffee-house not far from Jubilee Street on the Mile End Road.

“Cawn yer let me ’ave somethin’ for this, daughter? Anythin’, Hi don’t mind. Hi ’aven’t ’ad a bite the blessed dy, an’ Hi’m that fynt . . . ”

She was an old woman, clad in decent black rags, and in her hand she held a penny. The one she had addressed as “daughter” was a careworn woman of forty, proprietress and waitress of the house.

I waited, possibly as anxiously as the old woman, to see how the appeal would be received. It was four in the afternoon, and she looked faint and sick. The woman hesitated an instant, then brought a large plate of “stewed lamb and young peas.” I was eating a plate of it myself, and it is my judgment that the lamb was mutton and that the peas might have been younger without being youthful. However, the point is, the dish was sold at sixpence, and the proprietress gave it for a penny, demonstrating anew the old truth that the poor are the most charitable.

The old woman, profuse in her gratitude, took a seat on the other side of the narrow table and ravenously attacked the smoking stew. We ate steadily and silently, the pair of us, when suddenly, explosively and most gleefully, she cried out to me, —

"Hi sold a box o' matches! Yus," she confirmed, if anything with greater and more explosive glee. "Hi sold a box o' matches! That's 'ow Hi got the penny."

"You must be getting along in years," I suggested.

"Seventy-four yesterday," she replied, and returned with gusto to her plate.

"Blimey, I'd like to do something for the old girl, that I would, but this is the first I've 'ad to-dy," the young fellow alongside volunteered to me. "An' I only 'ave this because I 'appened to make an odd shilling washin' out, Lord lumme! I don't know 'ow many pots."

"No work at my own tryde for six weeks," he said further, in reply to my questions; "nothin' but odd jobs a blessed long wy between."

* * * * *

One meets with all sorts of adventures in coffee-house, and I shall not soon forget a Cockney Amazon in a place near Trafalgar Square, to whom I tendered a sovereign when paying my score. (By the way, one is supposed to pay before he begins to eat, and if he be poorly dressed he is compelled to pay before he eats).

The girl bit the gold piece between her teeth, rang it on the counter, and then looked me and my rags witheringly up and down.

"Where'd you find it?" she at length demanded.

"Some mug left it on the table when he went out, eh, don't you think?" I retorted.

"Wot's yer gyme?" she queried, looking me calmly in the eyes.

"I makes 'em," quoth I.

She sniffed superciliously and gave me the change in small silver, and I had my revenge by biting and ringing every piece of it.

"I'll give you a ha'penny for another lump of sugar in the tea," I said.

"I'll see you in 'ell first," came the retort courteous. Also, she amplified the retort courteous in divers vivid and unprintable ways.

I never had much talent for repartee, but she knocked silly what little I had, and I gulped down my tea a beaten man, while she gloated after me even as I passed out to the street.

While 300,000 people of London live in one-room tenements, and 900,000 are illegally and viciously housed, 38,000 more are registered as living in common lodging-houses — known in the vernacular as “doss-houses.” There are many kinds of doss-houses, but in one thing they are all alike, from the filthy little ones to the monster big ones paying five per cent. and blatantly lauded by smug middle-class men who know but one thing about them, and that one thing is their uninhabitableness. By this I do not mean that the roofs leak or the walls are draughty; but what I do mean is that life in them is degrading and unwholesome.

“The poor man’s hotel,” they are often called, but the phrase is caricature. Not to possess a room to one’s self, in which sometimes to sit alone; to be forced out of bed willy-nilly, the first thing in the morning; to engage and pay anew for a bed each night; and never to have any privacy, surely is a mode of existence quite different from that of hotel life.

This must not be considered a sweeping condemnation of the big private and municipal lodging-houses and working-men’s homes. Far from it. They have remedied many of the atrocities attendant upon the irresponsible small doss-houses, and they give the workman more for his money than he ever received before; but that does not make them as habitable or wholesome as the dwelling-place of a man should be who does his work in the world.

The little private doss-houses, as a rule, are unmitigated horrors. I have slept in them, and I know; but let me pass them by and confine myself to the bigger and better ones. Not far from Middlesex Street, Whitechapel, I entered such a house, a place inhabited almost entirely by working men. The entrance was by way of a flight of steps descending from the sidewalk to what was properly the cellar of the building. Here were two large and gloomily lighted rooms, in which men cooked and ate. I had intended to do some cooking myself, but the smell of the place stole away my appetite, or, rather, wrested it from me; so I contented myself with watching other men cook and eat.

One workman, home from work, sat down opposite me at the rough wooden table, and began his meal. A handful of salt on the not over-clean table constituted his butter. Into it he dipped his bread, mouthful by mouthful, and washed it down with tea from a big mug. A piece of fish completed his bill of fare. He ate silently, looking neither to right nor left nor across at me. Here and there, at the various tables, other men were eating, just as silently. In the whole room there was hardly a note of conversation. A feeling of gloom pervaded the ill-lighted place. Many of them sat and brooded over the crumbs of their repast, and made me wonder, as Childe Roland wondered, what evil they had done that they should be punished so.

From the kitchen came the sounds of more genial life, and I ventured into the range where the men were cooking. But the smell I had noticed on entering was stronger here, and a rising nausea drove me into the street for fresh air.

On my return I paid fivepence for a "cabin," took my receipt for the same in the form of a huge brass check, and went upstairs to the smoking-room. Here, a couple of small billiard tables and several checkerboards were being used by young working-men, who waited in relays for their turn at the games, while many men were sitting around, smoking, reading, and mending their clothes. The young men were hilarious, the old men were gloomy. In fact, there were two types of men, the cheerful and the sodden or blue, and age seemed to determine the classification.

But no more than the two cellar rooms did this room convey the remotest suggestion of home. Certainly there could be nothing home-like about it to you and me, who know what home really is. On the walls were the most preposterous and insulting notices regulating the conduct of the guests, and at ten o'clock the lights were put out, and nothing remained but bed. This was gained by descending again to the cellar, by surrendering the brass check to a burly doorkeeper, and by climbing a long flight of stairs into the upper regions. I went to the top of the building and down again, passing several floors filled with sleeping men. The "cabins" were the best accommodation, each cabin allowing space for a tiny bed and room alongside of it in which to undress. The bedding was clean, and with neither it nor the bed do I find any fault. But there was no privacy about it, no being alone.

To get an adequate idea of a floor filled with cabins, you have merely to magnify a layer of the pasteboard pigeon-holes of an egg-crate till each pigeon-hole is seven feet in height and otherwise properly dimensioned, then place the magnified layer on the floor of a large, barnlike room, and there you have it. There are no ceilings to the pigeon-holes, the walls are thin, and the snores from all the sleepers and every move and turn of your nearer neighbours come plainly to your ears. And this cabin is yours only for a little while. In the morning out you go. You cannot put your trunk in it, or come and go when you like, or lock the door behind you, or anything of the sort. In fact, there is no door at all, only a doorway. If you care to remain a guest in this poor man's hotel, you must put up with all this, and with prison regulations which impress upon you constantly that you are nobody, with little soul of your own and less to say about it.

Now I contend that the least a man who does his day's work should have is a room to himself, where he can lock the door and be safe in his possessions; where he can sit down and read by a window or look out; where he can come and go whenever he wishes; where he can accumulate a few personal belongings other than those he carries about with him on his back and in his pockets; where he can hang up pictures of his mother, sister, sweet-heart, ballet dancers, or bulldogs, as his heart listeth — in short, one place of his own on the earth of which he can say: "This is mine, my castle; the world stops at the threshold; here am I lord and master." He will be a better citizen, this man; and he will do a better day's work.

I stood on one floor of the poor man's hotel and listened. I went from bed to bed and looked at the sleepers. They were young men, from twenty to forty, most of them. Old men cannot afford the working-man's home. They go to the workhouse. But I looked at the young men, scores of them, and they were not bad-looking fellows. Their faces were made for women's kisses, their necks for women's arms. They were lovable, as men are lovable. They were capable of love. A woman's touch redeems and softens, and they needed such redemption and softening instead of each day growing harsh and harsher. And I wondered where these women were, and heard a "harlot's ginny laugh." Leman Street, Waterloo Road, Piccadilly, The Strand, answered me, and I knew where they were.

CHAPTER XXI — THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF LIFE

I was talking with a very vindictive man. In his opinion, his wife had wronged him and the law had wronged him. The merits and morals of the case are immaterial. The meat of the matter is that she had obtained a separation, and he was compelled to pay ten shillings each week for the support of her and the five children. “But look you,” said he to me, “wot’ll ’appen to ’er if I don’t py up the ten shillings? S’posin’, now, just s’posin’ a accident ’appens to me, so I cawn’t work. S’posin’ I get a rupture, or the rheumatics, or the cholera. Wot’s she goin’ to do, eh? Wot’s she goin’ to do?”

He shook his head sadly. “No ’ope for ’er. The best she cawn do is the work’ouse, an’ that’s ’ell. An’ if she don’t go to the work’ouse, it’ll be a worse ’ell. Come along ’ith me an’ I’ll show you women sleepin’ in a passage, a dozen of ’em. An’ I’ll show you worse, wot she’ll come to if anythin’ ’appens to me and the ten shillings.”

The certitude of this man’s forecast is worthy of consideration. He knew conditions sufficiently to know the precariousness of his wife’s grasp on food and shelter. For her game was up when his working capacity was impaired or destroyed. And when this state of affairs is looked at in its larger aspect, the same will be found true of hundreds of thousands and even millions of men and women living amicably together and co-operating in the pursuit of food and shelter.

The figures are appalling: 1,800,000 people in London live on the poverty line and below it, and 1,000,000 live with one week’s wages between them and pauperism. In all England and Wales, eighteen per cent. of the whole population are driven to the parish for relief, and in London, according to the statistics of the London County Council, twenty-one per cent. of the whole population are driven to the parish for relief. Between being driven to the parish for relief and being an out-and-out pauper there is a great difference, yet London supports 123,000 paupers, quite a city of folk in themselves. One in every four in London dies on public charity, while 939 out of every 1000 in the United Kingdom die in poverty; 8,000,000 simply struggle on the ragged edge of starvation, and 20,000,000 more are not comfortable in the simple and clean sense of the word.

It is interesting to go more into detail concerning the London people who die on charity.

In 1886, and up to 1893, the percentage of pauperism to population was less in London than in all England; but since 1893, and for every succeeding year, the percentage of pauperism to population has been greater in London than in all England. Yet, from the Registrar-General's Report for 1886, the following figures are taken:-

Out of 81,951 deaths in London (1884):-

In workhouses	9,909
In hospitals	6,559
In lunatic asylums	278
Total in public refuges	16,746

Commenting on these figures, a Fabian writer says: "Considering that comparatively few of these are children, it is probable that one in every three London adults will be driven into one of these refuges to die, and the proportion in the case of the manual labour class must of course be still larger."

These figures serve somewhat to indicate the proximity of the average worker to pauperism. Various things make pauperism. An advertisement, for instance, such as this, appearing in yesterday morning's paper:-

"Clerk wanted, with knowledge of shorthand, typewriting, and invoicing: wages ten shillings ($2.50) a week. Apply by letter," &c.

And in to-day's paper I read of a clerk, thirty-five years of age and an inmate of a London workhouse, brought before a magistrate for non-performance of task. He claimed that he had done his various tasks since he had been an inmate; but when the master set him to breaking stones, his hands blistered, and he could not finish the task. He had never been used to an implement heavier than a pen, he said. The magistrate sentenced him and his blistered hands to seven days' hard labour.

Old age, of course, makes pauperism. And then there is the accident, the thing happening, the death or disablement of the husband, father, and bread-winner. Here is a man, with a wife and three children, living on the ticklish security of twenty shillings per week — and there are hundreds of thousands of such families in London. Perforce, to even half exist, they must live up to the last penny of it, so that a week's wages (one pound) is all that stands between this family and pauperism or starvation. The thing happens, the father is struck down, and what then? A mother with three children can do little or nothing. Either she must hand her children over to society as juvenile paupers, in order to be free to do something adequate for herself, or she must go to the sweat-shops for work which she can perform in the vile den possible to her reduced income. But with the sweat-shops, married women who eke out their husband's earnings, and single women who have but themselves miserably to support, determine the scale of wages. And this scale of wages, so determined, is so low that the mother and her three children can live only in positive beastliness and semi-starvation, till decay and death end their suffering.

To show that this mother, with her three children to support, cannot compete in the sweating industries, I instance from the current newspapers the two following cases:-

A father indignantly writes that his daughter and a girl companion receive 8.5d. per gross for making boxes. They made each day four gross. Their expenses were 8d. for car fare, 2d. for stamps, 2.5d. for glue, and 1d. for string, so that all they earned between them was 1s. 9d., or a daily wage each of 10.5d.

In the second ewe, before the Luton Guardians a few days ago, an old woman of seventy-two appeared, asking for relief. "She was a straw-hat maker, but had been compelled to give up the work owing to the price she obtained for them — namely, 2.25d. each. For that price she had to provide plait trimmings and make and finish the hats."

Yet this mother and her three children we are considering have done no wrong that they should be so punished. They have not sinned. The thing happened, that is all; the husband, father and bread-winner, was struck down. There is no guarding against it. It is fortuitous. A family stands so many chances of escaping the bottom of the Abyss, and so many chances of falling plump down to it. The chance is reducible to cold, pitiless figures, and a few of these figures will not be out of place.

Sir A. Forwood calculates that —

1 of every 1400 workmen is killed annually.
1 of every 2500 workmen is totally disabled.
1 of every 300 workmen is permanently partially disabled.
1 of every 8 workmen is temporarily disabled 3 or 4 weeks.

But these are only the accidents of industry. The high mortality of the people who live in the Ghetto plays a terrible part. The average age at death among the people of the West End is fifty-five years; the average age at death among the people of the East End is thirty years. That is to say, the person in the West End has twice the chance for life that the person has in the East End. Talk of war! The mortality in South Africa and the Philippines fades away to insignificance. Here, in the heart of peace, is where the blood is being shed; and here not even the civilised rules of warfare obtain, for the women and children and babes in the arms are killed just as ferociously as the men are killed. War! In England, every year, 500,000 men, women, and children, engaged in the various industries, are killed and disabled, or are injured to disablement by disease.

In the West End eighteen per cent. of the children die before five years of age; in the East End fifty-five per cent. of the children die before five years of age. And there are streets in London where out of every one hundred children born in a year, fifty die during the next year; and of the fifty that remain, twenty-five die before they are five years old. Slaughter! Herod did not do quite so badly.

That industry causes greater havoc with human life than battle does no better substantiation can be given than the following extract from a recent report of the Liverpool Medical Officer, which is not applicable to Liverpool alone:-

In many instances little if any sunlight could get to the courts, and the atmosphere within the dwellings was always foul, owing largely to the saturated condition of the walls and ceilings, which for so many years had absorbed the exhalations of the occupants into their porous material. Singular testimony to the absence of sunlight in these courts was furnished by the action of the Parks and Gardens Committee, who desired to brighten the homes of the poorest class by gifts of growing flowers and window-boxes; but these gifts could not be made in courts such as these, *as flowers and plants were susceptible to the unwholesome surroundings, and would not live*.

Mr. George Haw has compiled the following table on the three St. George's parishes (London parishes):-

	Percentage of Population Overcrowded	Death-rate per 1000
St. George's West	10	13.2
St. George's South	35	23.7
St. George's East	40	26.4

Then there are the “dangerous trades,” in which countless workers are employed. Their hold on life is indeed precarious — far, far more precarious than the hold of the twentieth-century soldier on life. In the linen trade, in the preparation of the flax, wet feet and wet clothes cause an unusual amount of bronchitis, pneumonia, and severe rheumatism; while in the carding and spinning departments the fine dust produces lung disease in the majority of cases, and the woman who starts carding at seventeen or eighteen begins to break up and go to pieces at thirty. The chemical labourers, picked from the strongest and most splendidly-built men to be found, live, on an average, less than forty-eight years.

Says Dr. Arlidge, of the potter’s trade: “Potter’s dust does not kill suddenly, but settles, year after year, a little more firmly into the lungs, until at length a case of plaster is formed. Breathing becomes more and more difficult and depressed, and finally ceases.”

Steel dust, stone dust, clay dust, alkali dust, fluff dust, fibre dust — all these things kill, and they are more deadly than machine-guns and pom-poms. Worst of all is the lead dust in the white-lead trades. Here is a description of the typical dissolution of a young, healthy, well-developed girl who goes to work in a white-lead factory:-

Here, after a varying degree of exposure, she becomes anaemic. It may be that her gums show a very faint blue line, or perchance her teeth and gums are perfectly sound, and no blue line is discernible. Coincidently with the anaemia she has been getting thinner, but so gradually as scarcely to impress itself upon her or her friends. Sickness, however, ensues, and headaches, growing in intensity, are developed. These are frequently attended by obscuration of vision or temporary blindness. Such a girl passes into what appears to her friends and medical adviser as ordinary hysteria. This gradually deepens without warning, until she is suddenly seized with a convulsion, beginning in one half of the face, then involving the arm, next the leg of the same side of the body, until the convulsion, violent and purely epileptic form in character, becomes universal. This is attended by loss of consciousness, out of which she passes into a series of convulsions, gradually increasing in severity, in one of which she dies — or consciousness, partial or perfect, is regained, either, it may be, for a few minutes, a few hours, or days, during which violent headache is complained of, or she is delirious and excited, as in acute mania, or dull and sullen as in melancholia, and requires to be roused, when she is found wandering, and her speech is somewhat imperfect. Without further warning, save that the pulse, which has become soft, with nearly the normal number of beats, all at once becomes low and hard; she is suddenly seized with another convulsion, in which she dies, or passes into a state of coma from which she never rallies. In another case the convulsions will gradually subside, the headache disappears and the patient recovers, only to find that she has completely lost her eyesight, a loss that may be temporary or permanent.

And here are a few specific cases of white-lead poisoning:-

Charlotte Rafferty, a fine, well-grown young woman with a splendid constitution — who had never had a day's illness in her life — became a white-lead worker. Convulsions seized her at the foot of the ladder in the works. Dr. Oliver examined her, found the blue line along her gums, which shows that the system is under the influence of the lead. He knew that the convulsions would shortly return. They did so, and she died.

Mary Ann Toler — a girl of seventeen, who had never had a fit in her life — three times became ill, and had to leave off work in the factory. Before she was nineteen she showed symptoms of lead poisoning — had fits, frothed at the mouth, and died.

Mary A., an unusually vigorous woman, was able to work in the lead factory for *twenty years*, having colic once only during that time. Her eight children all died in early infancy from convulsions. One morning, whilst brushing her hair, this woman suddenly lost all power in both her wrists.

Eliza H., aged twenty-five, *after five months* at lead works, was seized with colic. She entered another factory (after being refused by the first one) and worked on uninterruptedly for two years. Then the former symptoms returned, she was seized with convulsions, and died in two days of acute lead poisoning.

Mr. Vaughan Nash, speaking of the unborn generation, says: "The children of the white-lead worker enter the world, as a rule, only to die from the convulsions of lead poisoning — they are either born prematurely, or die within the first year."

And, finally, let me instance the case of Harriet A. Walker, a young girl of seventeen, killed while leading a forlorn hope on the industrial battlefield. She was employed as an enamelled ware brusher, wherein lead poisoning is encountered. Her father and brother were both out of employment. She concealed her illness, walked six miles a day to and from work, earned her seven or eight shillings per week, and died, at seventeen.

Depression in trade also plays an important part in hurling the workers into the Abyss. With a week's wages between a family and pauperism, a month's enforced idleness means hardship and misery almost indescribable, and from the ravages of which the victims do not always recover when work is to be had again. Just now the daily papers contain the report of a meeting of the Carlisle branch of the Dockers' Union, wherein it is stated that many of the men, for months past, have not averaged a weekly income of more than from four to five shillings. The stagnated state of the shipping industry in the port of London is held accountable for this condition of affairs.

To the young working-man or working-woman, or married couple, there is no assurance of happy or healthy middle life, nor of solvent old age. Work as they will, they cannot make their future secure. It is all a matter of chance. Everything depends upon the thing happening, the thing with which they have nothing to do. Precaution cannot fend it off, nor can wiles evade it. If they remain on the industrial battlefield they must face it and take their chance against heavy odds. Of course, if they are favourably made and are not tied by kinship duties, they may run away from the industrial battlefield. In which event the safest thing the man can do is to join the army; and for the woman, possibly, to become a Red Cross nurse or go into a nunnery. In either case they must forego home and children and all that makes life worth living and old age other than a nightmare.

CHAPTER XXII — SUICIDE

With life so precarious, and opportunity for the happiness of life so remote, it is inevitable that life shall be cheap and suicide common. So common is it, that one cannot pick up a daily paper without running across it; while an attempt-at-suicide case in a police court excites no more interest than an ordinary "drunk," and is handled with the same rapidity and unconcern.

I remember such a case in the Thames Police Court. I pride myself that I have good eyes and ears, and a fair working knowledge of men and things; but I confess, as I stood in that court-room, that I was half bewildered by the amazing despatch with which drunks, disorderlies, vagrants, brawlers, wife-beaters, thieves, fences, gamblers, and women of the street went through the machine of justice. The dock stood in the centre of the court (where the light is best), and into it and out again stepped men, women, and children, in a stream as steady as the stream of sentences which fell from the magistrate's lips.

I was still pondering over a consumptive "fence" who had pleaded inability to work and necessity for supporting wife and children, and who had received a year at hard labour, when a young boy of about twenty appeared in the dock. "Alfred Freeman," I caught his name, but failed to catch the charge. A stout and motherly-looking woman bobbed up in the witness-box and began her testimony. Wife of the Britannia lock-keeper, I learned she was. Time, night; a splash; she ran to the lock and found the prisoner in the water.

I flashed my gaze from her to him. So that was the charge, self-murder. He stood there dazed and unheeding, his bonny brown hair rumpled down his forehead, his face haggard and careworn and boyish still.

"Yes, sir," the lock-keeper's wife was saying. "As fast as I pulled to get 'im out, 'e crawled back. Then I called for 'elp, and some workmen 'appened along, and we got 'im out and turned 'im over to the constable."

The magistrate complimented the woman on her muscular powers, and the court-room laughed; but all I could see was a boy on the threshold of life, passionately crawling to muddy death, and there was no laughter in it.

A man was now in the witness-box, testifying to the boy's good character and giving extenuating evidence. He was the boy's foreman, or had been. Alfred was a good boy, but he had had lots of trouble at home, money matters. And then his mother was sick. He was given to worrying, and he worried over it till he laid himself out and wasn't fit for work. He (the foreman), for the sake of his own reputation, the boy's work being bad, had been forced to ask him to resign.

"Anything to say?" the magistrate demanded abruptly.

The boy in the dock mumbled something indistinctly. He was still dazed.

"What does he say, constable?" the magistrate asked impatiently.

The stalwart man in blue bent his ear to the prisoner's lips, and then replied loudly, "He says he's very sorry, your Worship."

"Remanded," said his Worship; and the next case was under way, the first witness already engaged in taking the oath. The boy, dazed and unheeding, passed out with the jailer. That was all, five minutes from start to finish; and two hulking brutes in the dock were trying strenuously to shift the responsibility of the possession of a stolen fishing-pole, worth probably ten cents.

The chief trouble with these poor folk is that they do not know how to commit suicide, and usually have to make two or three attempts before they succeed. This, very naturally, is a horrid nuisance to the constables and magistrates, and gives them no end of trouble. Sometimes, however, the magistrates are frankly outspoken about the matter, and censure the prisoners for the slackness of their attempts. For instance Mr. R. S---, chairman of the S---B---magistrates, in the case the other day of Ann Wood, who tried to make away with herself in the canal: "If you wanted to do it, why didn't you do it and get it done with?" demanded the indignant Mr. R. S---. "Why did you not get under the water and make an end of it, instead of giving us all this trouble and bother?"

Poverty, misery, and fear of the workhouse, are the principal causes of suicide among the working classes. "I'll drown myself before I go into the workhouse," said Ellen Hughes Hunt, aged fifty-two. Last Wednesday they held an inquest on her body at Shoreditch. Her husband came from the Islington Workhouse to testify. He had been a cheesemonger, but failure in business and poverty had driven him into the workhouse, whither his wife had refused to accompany him.

She was last seen at one in the morning. Three hours later her hat and jacket were found on the towing path by the Regent's Canal, and later her body was fished from the water. *Verdict: Suicide during temporary insanity*.

Such verdicts are crimes against truth. The Law is a lie, and through it men lie most shamelessly. For instance, a disgraced woman, forsaken and spat upon by kith and kin, doses herself and her baby with laudanum. The baby dies; but she pulls through after a few weeks in hospital, is charged with murder, convicted, and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. Recovering, the Law holds her responsible for her actions; yet, had she died, the same Law would have rendered a verdict of temporary insanity.

Now, considering the case of Ellen Hughes Hunt, it is as fair and logical to say that her husband was suffering from temporary insanity when he went into the Islington Workhouse, as it is to say that she was suffering from temporary insanity when she went into the Regent's Canal. As to which is the preferable sojourning place is a matter of opinion, of intellectual judgment. I, for one, from what I know of canals and workhouses, should choose the canal, were I in a similar position. And I make bold to contend that I am no more insane than Ellen Hughes Hunt, her husband, and the rest of the human herd.

Man no longer follows instinct with the old natural fidelity. He has developed into a reasoning creature, and can intellectually cling to life or discard life just as life happens to promise great pleasure or pain. I dare to assert that Ellen Hughes Hunt, defrauded and bilked of all the joys of life which fifty-two years' service in the world has earned, with nothing but the horrors of the workhouse before her, was very rational and level-headed when she elected to jump into the canal. And I dare to assert, further, that the jury had done a wiser thing to bring in a verdict charging society with temporary insanity for allowing Ellen Hughes Hunt to be defrauded and bilked of all the joys of life which fifty-two years' service in the world had earned.

Temporary insanity! Oh, these cursed phrases, these lies of language, under which people with meat in their bellies and whole shirts on their backs shelter themselves, and evade the responsibility of their brothers and sisters, empty of belly and without whole shirts on their backs.

From one issue of the *Observer*, an East End paper, I quote the following commonplace events:-

A ship's fireman, named Johnny King, was charged with attempting to commit suicide. On Wednesday defendant went to Bow Police Station and stated that he had swallowed a quantity of phosphor paste, as he was hard up and unable to obtain work. King was taken inside and an emetic administered, when he vomited up a quantity of the poison. Defendant now said he was very sorry. Although he had sixteen years' good character, he was unable to obtain work of any kind. Mr. Dickinson had defendant put back for the court missionary to see him.

Timothy Warner, thirty-two, was remanded for a similar offence. He jumped off Limehouse Pier, and when rescued, said, "I intended to do it."

A decent-looking young woman, named Ellen Gray, was remanded on a charge of attempting to commit suicide. About half-past eight on Sunday morning Constable 834 K found defendant lying in a doorway in Benworth Street, and she was in a very drowsy condition. She was holding an empty bottle in one hand, and stated that some two or three hours previously she had swallowed a quantity of laudanum. As she was evidently very ill, the divisional surgeon was sent for, and having administered some coffee, ordered that she was to be kept awake. When defendant was charged, she stated that the reason why she attempted to take her life was she had neither home nor friends.

I do not say that all people who commit suicide are sane, no more than I say that all people who do not commit suicide are sane. Insecurity of food and shelter, by the way, is a great cause of insanity among the living. Costermongers, hawkers, and pedlars, a class of workers who live from hand to mouth more than those of any other class, form the highest percentage of those in the lunatic asylums. Among the males each year, 26.9 per 10,000 go insane, and among the women, 36.9. On the other hand, of soldiers, who are at least sure of food and shelter, 13 per 10,000 go insane; and of farmers and graziers, only 5.1. So a coster is twice as likely to lose his reason as a soldier, and five times as likely as a farmer.

Misfortune and misery are very potent in turning people's heads, and drive one person to the lunatic asylum, and another to the morgue or the gallows. When the thing happens, and the father and husband, for all of his love for wife and children and his willingness to work, can get no work to do, it is a simple matter for his reason to totter and the light within his brain go out. And it is especially simple when it is taken into consideration that his body is ravaged by innutrition and disease, in addition to his soul being torn by the sight of his suffering wife and little ones.

"He is a good-looking man, with a mass of black hair, dark, expressive eyes, delicately chiselled nose and chin, and wavy, fair moustache." This is the reporter's description of Frank Cavilla as he stood in court, this dreary month of September, "dressed in a much worn grey suit, and wearing no collar."

Frank Cavilla lived and worked as a house decorator in London. He is described as a good workman, a steady fellow, and not given to drink, while all his neighbours unite in testifying that he was a gentle and affectionate husband and father.

His wife, Hannah Cavilla, was a big, handsome, light-hearted woman. She saw to it that his children were sent neat and clean (the neighbours all remarked the fact) to the Childeric Road Board School. And so, with such a man, so blessed, working steadily and living temperately, all went well, and the goose hung high.

Then the thing happened. He worked for a Mr. Beck, builder, and lived in one of his master's houses in Trundley Road. Mr. Beck was thrown from his trap and killed. The thing was an unruly horse, and, as I say, it happened. Cavilla had to seek fresh employment and find another house.

This occurred eighteen months ago. For eighteen months he fought the big fight. He got rooms in a little house in Batavia Road, but could not make both ends meet. Steady work could not be obtained. He struggled manfully at casual employment of all sorts, his wife and four children starving before his eyes. He starved himself, and grew weak, and fell ill. This was three months ago, and then there was absolutely no food at all. They made no complaint, spoke no word; but poor folk know. The housewives of Batavia Road sent them food, but so respectable were the Cavillas that the food was sent anonymously, mysteriously, so as not to hurt their pride.

The thing had happened. He had fought, and starved, and suffered for eighteen months. He got up one September morning, early. He opened his pocket-knife. He cut the throat of his wife, Hannah Cavilla, aged thirty-three. He cut the throat of his first-born, Frank, aged twelve. He cut the throat of his son, Walter, aged eight. He cut the throat of his daughter, Nellie, aged four. He cut the throat of his youngest-born, Ernest, aged sixteen months. Then he watched beside the dead all day until the evening, when the police came, and he told them to put a penny in the slot of the gas-meter in order that they might have light to see.

Frank Cavilla stood in court, dressed in a much worn grey suit, and wearing no collar. He was a good-looking man, with a mass of black hair, dark, expressive eyes, delicately chiselled nose and chin, and wavy, fair moustache.

CHAPTER XXIII — THE CHILDREN

“Where home is a hovel, and dull we grovel,
Forgetting the world is fair.”

There is one beautiful sight in the East End, and only one, and it is the children dancing in the street when the organ-grinder goes his round. It is fascinating to watch them, the new-born, the next generation, swaying and stepping, with pretty little mimicries and graceful inventions all their own, with muscles that move swiftly and easily, and bodies that leap airily, weaving rhythms never taught in dancing school.

I have talked with these children, here, there, and everywhere, and they struck me as being bright as other children, and in many ways even brighter. They have most active little imaginations. Their capacity for projecting themselves into the realm of romance and fantasy is remarkable. A joyous life is romping in their blood. They delight in music, and motion, and colour, and very often they betray a startling beauty of face and form under their filth and rags.

But there is a Pied Piper of London Town who steals them all away. They disappear. One never sees them again, or anything that suggests them. You may look for them in vain amongst the generation of grown-ups. Here you will find stunted forms, ugly faces, and blunt and stolid minds. Grace, beauty, imagination, all the resiliency of mind and muscle, are gone. Sometimes, however, you may see a woman, not necessarily old, but twisted and deformed out of all womanhood, bloated and drunken, lift her draggled skirts and execute a few grotesque and lumbering steps upon the pavement. It is a hint that she was once one of those children who danced to the organ-grinder. Those grotesque and lumbering steps are all that is left of the promise of childhood. In the befogged recesses of her brain has arisen a fleeting memory that she was once a girl. The crowd closes in. Little girls are dancing beside her, about her, with all the pretty graces she dimly recollects, but can no more than parody with her body. Then she pants for breath, exhausted, and stumbles out through the circle. But the little girls dance on.

The children of the Ghetto possess all the qualities which make for noble manhood and womanhood; but the Ghetto itself, like an infuriated tigress turning on its young, turns upon and destroys all these qualities, blots out the light and laughter, and moulds those it does not kill into sodden and forlorn creatures, uncouth, degraded, and wretched below the beasts of the field.

As to the manner in which this is done, I have in previous chapters described it at length; here let Professor Huxley describe it in brief:-

"Any one who is acquainted with the state of the population of all great industrial centres, whether in this or other countries, is aware that amidst a large and increasing body of that population there reigns supreme . . . that condition which the French call *la misère*, a word for which I do not think there is any exact English equivalent. It is a condition in which the food, warmth, and clothing which are necessary for the mere maintenance of the functions of the body in their normal state cannot be obtained; in which men, women, and children are forced to crowd into dens wherein decency is abolished, and the most ordinary conditions of healthful existence are impossible of attainment; in which the pleasures within reach are reduced to brutality and drunkenness; in which the pains accumulate at compound interest in the shape of starvation, disease, stunted development, and moral degradation; in which the prospect of even steady and honest industry is a life of unsuccessful battling with hunger, rounded by a pauper's grave."

In such conditions, the outlook for children is hopeless. They die like flies, and those that survive, survive because they possess excessive vitality and a capacity of adaptation to the degradation with which they are surrounded. They have no home life. In the dens and lairs in which they live they are exposed to all that is obscene and indecent. And as their minds are made rotten, so are their bodies made rotten by bad sanitation, overcrowding, and underfeeding. When a father and mother live with three or four children in a room where the children take turn about in sitting up to drive the rats away from the sleepers, when those children never have enough to eat and are preyed upon and made miserable and weak by swarming vermin, the sort of men and women the survivors will make can readily be imagined.

"Dull despair and misery
Lie about them from their birth;
Ugly curses, uglier mirth,
Are their earliest lullaby."

A man and a woman marry and set up housekeeping in one room. Their income does not increase with the years, though their family does, and the man is exceedingly lucky if he can keep his health and his job. A baby comes, and then another. This means that more room should be obtained; but these little mouths and bodies mean additional expense and make it absolutely impossible to get more spacious quarters. More babies come. There is not room in which to turn around. The youngsters run the streets, and by the time they are twelve or fourteen the room-issue comes to a head, and out they go on the streets for good. The boy, if he be lucky, can manage to make the common lodging-houses, and he may have any one of several ends. But the girl of fourteen or fifteen, forced in this manner to leave the one room called home, and able to earn at the best a paltry five or six shillings per week, can have but one end. And the bitter end of that one end is such as that of the woman whose body the police found this morning in a doorway in Dorset Street, Whitechapel. Homeless, shelterless, sick, with no one with her in her last hour, she had died in the night of exposure. She was sixty-two years old and a match vendor. She died as a wild animal dies.

Fresh in my mind is the picture of a boy in the dock of an East End police court. His head was barely visible above the railing. He was being proved guilty of stealing two shillings from a woman, which he had spent, not for candy and cakes and a good time, but for food.

“Why didn’t you ask the woman for food?” the magistrate demanded, in a hurt sort of tone. “She would surely have given you something to eat.”

“If I ’ad arsked ’er, I’d got locked up for beggin’,” was the boy’s reply.

The magistrate knitted his brows and accepted the rebuke. Nobody knew the boy, nor his father or mother. He was without beginning or antecedent, a waif, a stray, a young cub seeking his food in the jungle of empire, preying upon the weak and being preyed upon by the strong.

The people who try to help, who gather up the Ghetto children and send them away on a day’s outing to the country, believe that not very many children reach the age of ten without having had at least one day there. Of this, a writer says: “The mental change caused by one day so spent must not be undervalued. Whatever the circumstances, the children learn the meaning of fields and woods, so that descriptions of country scenery in the books they read, which before conveyed no impression, become now intelligible.”

One day in the fields and woods, if they are lucky enough to be picked up by the people who try to help! And they are being born faster every day than they can be carted off to the fields and woods for the one day in their lives. One day! In all their lives, one day! And for the rest of the days, as the boy told a certain bishop, "At ten we 'ops the wag; at thirteen we nicks things; an' at sixteen we bashes the copper." Which is to say, at ten they play truant, at thirteen steal, and at sixteen are sufficiently developed hooligans to smash the policemen.

The Rev. J. Cartmel Robinson tells of a boy and girl of his parish who set out to walk to the forest. They walked and walked through the never-ending streets, expecting always to see it by-and-by; until they sat down at last, faint and despairing, and were rescued by a kind woman who brought them back. Evidently they had been overlooked by the people who try to help.

The same gentleman is authority for the statement that in a street in Hoxton (a district of the vast East End), over seven hundred children, between five and thirteen years, live in eighty small houses. And he adds: "It is because London has largely shut her children in a maze of streets and houses and robbed them of their rightful inheritance in sky and field and brook, that they grow up to be men and women physically unfit."

He tells of a member of his congregation who let a basement room to a married couple. "They said they had two children; when they got possession it turned out that they had four. After a while a fifth appeared, and the landlord gave them notice to quit. They paid no attention to it. Then the sanitary inspector who has to wink at the law so often, came in and threatened my friend with legal proceedings. He pleaded that he could not get them out. They pleaded that nobody would have them with so many children at a rental within their means, which is one of the commonest complaints of the poor, by-the-bye. What was to be done? The landlord was between two millstones. Finally he applied to the magistrate, who sent up an officer to inquire into the case. Since that time about twenty days have elapsed, and nothing has yet been done. Is this a singular case? By no means; it is quite common."

Last week the police raided a disorderly house. In one room were found two young children. They were arrested and charged with being inmates the same as the women had been. Their father appeared at the trial. He stated that himself and wife and two older children, besides the two in the dock, occupied that room; he stated also that he occupied it because he could get no other room for the half-crown a week he paid for it. The magistrate discharged the two juvenile offenders and warned the father that he was bringing his children up unhealthily.

But there is no need further to multiply instances. In London the slaughter of the innocents goes on on a scale more stupendous than any before in the history of the world. And equally stupendous is the callousness of the people who believe in Christ, acknowledge God, and go to church regularly on Sunday. For the rest of the week they riot about on the rents and profits which come to them from the East End stained with the blood of the children. Also, at times, so peculiarly are they made, they will take half a million of these rents and profits and send it away to educate the black boys of the Soudan.

CHAPTER XXIV — A VISION OF THE NIGHT

All these were years ago little red-coloured, pulpy infants, capable of being kneaded, baked, into any social form you chose. — CARLYLE.

Late last night I walked along Commercial Street from Spitalfields to Whitechapel, and still continuing south, down Leman Street to the docks. And as I walked I smiled at the East End papers, which, filled with civic pride, boastfully proclaim that there is nothing the matter with the East End as a living place for men and women.

It is rather hard to tell a tithe of what I saw. Much of it is untenable. But in a general way I may say that I saw a nightmare, a fearful slime that quickened the pavement with life, a mess of unmentionable obscenity that put into eclipse the "nightly horror" of Piccadilly and the Strand. It *was* a menagerie of garmented bipeds that looked something like humans and more like beasts, and to complete the picture, brass-buttoned keepers kept order among them when they snarled too fiercely.

I was glad the keepers were there, for I did not have on my "seafaring" clothes, and I was what is called a "mark" for the creatures of prey that prowled up and down. At times, between keepers, these males looked at me sharply, hungrily, gutter-wolves that they were, and I was afraid of their hands, of their naked hands, as one may be afraid of the paws of a gorilla. They reminded me of gorillas. Their bodies were small, ill-shaped, and squat. There were no swelling muscles, no abundant thews and wide-spreading shoulders. They exhibited, rather, an elemental economy of nature, such as the cave-men must have exhibited. But there was strength in those meagre bodies, the ferocious, primordial strength to clutch and gripe and tear and rend. When they spring upon their human prey they are known even to bend the victim backward and double its body till the back is broken. They possess neither conscience nor sentiment, and they will kill for a half-sovereign, without fear or favour, if they are given but half a chance. They are a new species, a breed of city savages. The streets and houses, alleys and courts, are their hunting grounds. As valley and mountain are to the natural savage, street and building are valley and mountain to them. The slum is their jungle, and they live and prey in the jungle.

The dear soft people of the golden theatres and wonder-mansions of the West End do not see these creatures, do not dream that they exist. But they are here, alive, very much alive in their jungle. And woe the day, when

England is fighting in her last trench, and her able-bodied men are on the firing line! For on that day they will crawl out of their dens and lairs, and the people of the West End will see them, as the dear soft aristocrats of Feudal France saw them and asked one another, "Whence came they?" "Are they men?"

But they were not the only beasts that ranged the menagerie. They were only here and there, lurking in dark courts and passing like grey shadows along the walls; but the women from whose rotten loins they spring were everywhere. They whined insolently, and in maudlin tones begged me for pennies, and worse. They held carouse in every boozing ken, slatternly, unkempt, bleary-eyed, and towsled, leering and gibbering, overspilling with foulness and corruption, and, gone in debauch, sprawling across benches and bars, unspeakably repulsive, fearful to look upon.

And there were others, strange, weird faces and forms and twisted monstrosities that shouldered me on every side, inconceivable types of sodden ugliness, the wrecks of society, the perambulating carcasses, the living deaths — women, blasted by disease and drink till their shame brought not tuppence in the open mart; and men, in fantastic rags, wrenched by hardship and exposure out of all semblance of men, their faces in a perpetual writhe of pain, grinning idiotically, shambling like apes, dying with every step they took and each breath they drew. And there were young girls, of eighteen and twenty, with trim bodies and faces yet untouched with twist and bloat, who had fetched the bottom of the Abyss plump, in one swift fall. And I remember a lad of fourteen, and one of six or seven, white-faced and sickly, homeless, the pair of them, who sat upon the pavement with their backs against a railing and watched it all.

The unfit and the unneeded! Industry does not clamour for them. There are no jobs going begging through lack of men and women. The dockers crowd at the entrance gate, and curse and turn away when the foreman does not give them a call. The engineers who have work pay six shillings a week to their brother engineers who can find nothing to do; 514,000 textile workers oppose a resolution condemning the employment of children under fifteen. Women, and plenty to spare, are found to toil under the sweat-shop masters for tenpence a day of fourteen hours. Alfred Freeman crawls to muddy death because he loses his job. Ellen Hughes Hunt prefers Regent's Canal to Islington Workhouse. Frank Cavilla cuts the throats of his wife and children because he cannot find work enough to give them food and shelter.

The unfit and the unneeded! The miserable and despised and forgotten, dying in the social shambles. The progeny of prostitution — of the prostitution of men and women and children, of flesh and blood, and sparkle and spirit; in brief, the prostitution of labour. If this is the best that civilisation can do for the human, then give us howling and naked savagery. Far better to be a people of the wilderness and desert, of the cave and the squatting-place, than to be a people of the machine and the Abyss.

CHAPTER XXV — THE HUNGER WAIL

"My father has more stamina than I, for he is country-born."

The speaker, a bright young East Ender, was lamenting his poor physical development.

"Look at my scrawny arm, will you." He pulled up his sleeve. "Not enough to eat, that's what's the matter with it. Oh, not now. I have what I want to eat these days. But it's too late. It can't make up for what I didn't have to eat when I was a kiddy. Dad came up to London from the Fen Country. Mother died, and there were six of us kiddies and dad living in two small rooms.

"He had hard times, dad did. He might have chucked us, but he didn't. He slaved all day, and at night he came home and cooked and cared for us. He was father and mother, both. He did his best, but we didn't have enough to eat. We rarely saw meat, and then of the worst. And it is not good for growing kiddies to sit down to a dinner of bread and a bit of cheese, and not enough of it.

"And what's the result? I am undersized, and I haven't the stamina of my dad. It was starved out of me. In a couple of generations there'll be no more of me here in London. Yet there's my younger brother; he's bigger and better developed. You see, dad and we children held together, and that accounts for it."

"But I don't see," I objected. "I should think, under such conditions, that the vitality should decrease and the younger children be born weaker and weaker."

"Not when they hold together," he replied. "Whenever you come along in the East End and see a child of from eight to twelve, good-sized, well-developed, and healthy-looking, just you ask and you will find that it is the youngest in the family, or at least is one of the younger. The way of it is this: the older children starve more than the younger ones. By the time the younger ones come along, the older ones are starting to work, and there is more money coming in, and more food to go around."

He pulled down his sleeve, a concrete instance of where chronic semi-starvation kills not, but stunts. His voice was but one among the myriads that raise the cry of the hunger wail in the greatest empire in the world. On any one day, over 1,000,000 people are in receipt of poor-law relief in the United Kingdom. One in eleven of the whole working-class receive poor-law relief in the course of the year; 37,500,000 people receive less than £12 per month, per family; and a constant army of 8,000,000 lives on the border of starvation.

A committee of the London County school board makes this declaration: "At times, *when there is no special distress*, 55,000 children in a state of hunger, which makes it useless to attempt to teach them, are in the schools of London alone." The italics are mine. "When there is no special distress" means good times in England; for the people of England have come to look upon starvation and suffering, which they call "distress," as part of the social order. Chronic starvation is looked upon as a matter of course. It is only when acute starvation makes its appearance on a large scale that they think something is unusual

I shall never forget the bitter wail of a blind man in a little East End shop at the close of a murky day. He had been the eldest of five children, with a mother and no father. Being the eldest, he had starved and worked as a child to put bread into the mouths of his little brothers and sisters. Not once in three months did he ever taste meat. He never knew what it was to have his hunger thoroughly appeased. And he claimed that this chronic starvation of his childhood had robbed him of his sight. To support the claim, he quoted from the report of the Royal Commission on the Blind, "Blindness is more prevalent in poor districts, and poverty accelerates this dreadful affliction."

But he went further, this blind man, and in his voice was the bitterness of an afflicted man to whom society did not give enough to eat. He was one of an enormous army of blind in London, and he said that in the blind homes they did not receive half enough to eat. He gave the diet for a day:-

Breakfast — 0.75 pint of skilly and dry bread.
Dinner — 3 oz. meat.
1 slice of bread.
0.5 lb. potatoes.
Supper — 0.75 pint of skilly and dry bread.

Oscar Wilde, God rest his soul, voices the cry of the prison child, which, in varying degree, is the cry of the prison man and woman:-

"The second thing from which a child suffers in prison is hunger. The food that is given to it consists of a piece of usually bad-baked prison bread and a tin of water for breakfast at half-past seven. At twelve o'clock it gets dinner, composed of a tin of coarse Indian meal stirabout (skilly), and at half-past five it gets a piece of dry bread and a tin of water for its supper.

This diet in the case of a strong grown man is always productive of illness of some kind, chiefly of course diarrhoea, with its attendant weakness. In fact, in a big prison astringent medicines are served out regularly by the warders as a matter of course. In the case of a child, the child is, as a rule, incapable of eating the food at all. Any one who knows anything about children knows how easily a child’s digestion is upset by a fit of crying, or trouble and mental distress of any kind. A child who has been crying all day long, and perhaps half the night, in a lonely dim-lit cell, and is preyed upon by terror, simply cannot eat food of this coarse, horrible kind. In the case of the little child to whom Warder Martin gave the biscuits, the child was crying with hunger on Tuesday morning, and utterly unable to eat the bread and water served to it for its breakfast. Martin went out after the breakfasts had been served and bought the few sweet biscuits for the child rather than see it starving. It was a beautiful action on his part, and was so recognised by the child, who, utterly unconscious of the regulations of the Prison Board, told one of the senior wardens how kind this junior warden had been to him. The result was, of course, a report and a dismissal.”

Robert Blatchford compares the workhouse pauper’s daily diet with the soldier’s, which, when he was a soldier, was not considered liberal enough, and yet is twice as liberal as the pauper’s.

PAUPER	DIET	SOLDIER
3.25 oz.	Meat	12 oz.
15.5 oz.	Bread	24 oz.
6 oz.	Vegetables	8 oz.

The adult male pauper gets meat (outside of soup) but once a week, and the paupers “have nearly all that pallid, pasty complexion which is the sure mark of starvation.”

Here is a table, comparing the workhouse officer’s weekly allowance:-

OFFICER	DIET	PAUPER
7 lb.	Bread	6.75 lb.
5 lb.	Meat	1 lb. 2 oz.
12 oz.	Bacon	2.5 oz.
8 oz.	Cheese	2 oz.
7 lb.	Potatoes	1.5 lb.
6 lb.	Vegetables	none.
1 lb.	Flour	none.
2 oz.	Lard	none.

12 oz.	Butter	7 oz.
none.	Rice Pudding	1 lb.

And as the same writer remarks: "The officer's diet is still more liberal than the pauper's; but evidently it is not considered liberal enough, for a footnote is added to the officer's table saying that 'a cash payment of two shillings and sixpence a week is also made to each resident officer and servant.' If the pauper has ample food, why does the officer have more? And if the officer has not too much, can the pauper be properly fed on less than half the amount?"

But it is not alone the Ghetto-dweller, the prisoner, and the pauper that starve. Hodge, of the country, does not know what it is always to have a full belly. In truth, it is his empty belly which has driven him to the city in such great numbers. Let us investigate the way of living of a labourer from a parish in the Bradfield Poor Law Union, Berks. Supposing him to have two children, steady work, a rent-free cottage, and an average weekly wage of thirteen shillings, which is equivalent to $3.25, then here is his weekly budget:-

	s.	d.
Bread (5 quarterns)	1	10
Flour (0.5 gallon)	0	4
Tea (0.25 lb.)	0	6
Butter (1 lb.)	1	3
Lard (1 lb.)	0	6
Sugar (6 lb.)	1	0
Bacon or other meat (about 0.25 lb.)	2	8
Cheese (1 lb.)	0	8
Milk (half-tin condensed)	0	3.25
Coal	1	6
Beer	none	
Tobacco	none	
Insurance ("Prudential")	0	3
Labourers' Union	0	1
Wood, tools, dispensary, &c.	0	6
Insurance ("Foresters") and margin for clothes	1	1.75
Total	13	0

The guardians of the workhouse in the above Union pride themselves on their rigid economy. It costs per pauper per week:-

	s.	d.
Men	6	1.5
Women	5	6.5
Children	5	1.25

If the labourer whose budget has been described should quit his toil and go into the workhouse, he would cost the guardians for

	s.	d.
Himself	6	1.5
Wife	5	6.5
Two children	10	2.5
Total	21	10.5

Or roughly, $5.46

It would require more than a guinea for the workhouse to care for him and his family, which he, somehow, manages to do on thirteen shillings. And in addition, it is an understood fact that it is cheaper to cater for a large number of people — buying, cooking, and serving wholesale — than it is to cater for a small number of people, say a family.

Nevertheless, at the time this budget was compiled, there was in that parish another family, not of four, but eleven persons, who had to live on an income, not of thirteen shillings, but of twelve shillings per week (eleven shillings in winter), and which had, not a rent-free cottage, but a cottage for which it paid three shillings per week.

This must be understood, and understood clearly: *Whatever is true of London in the way of poverty and degradation, is true of all England.* While Paris is not by any means France, the city of London is England. The frightful conditions which mark London an inferno likewise mark the United Kingdom an inferno. The argument that the decentralisation of London would ameliorate conditions is a vain thing and false. If the 6,000,000 people of London were separated into one hundred cities each with a population of 60,000, misery would be decentralised but not diminished. The sum of it would remain as large.

In this instance, Mr. B. S. Rowntree, by an exhaustive analysis, has proved for the country town what Mr. Charles Booth has proved for the metropolis, that fully one-fourth of the dwellers are condemned to a poverty which destroys them physically and spiritually; that fully one-fourth of the dwellers do not have enough to eat, are inadequately clothed, sheltered, and warmed in a rigorous climate, and are doomed to a moral degeneracy which puts them lower than the savage in cleanliness and decency.

After listening to the wail of an old Irish peasant in Kerry, Robert Blatchford asked him what he wanted. “The old man leaned upon his spade and looked out across the black peat fields at the lowering skies. ‘What is it that I’m wantun?’ he said; then in a deep plaintive tone he continued, more to himself than to me, ‘All our brave bhoys and dear gurrls is away an’ over the says, an’ the agent has taken the pig off me, an’ the wet has spiled the praties, an’ I’m an owld man, *an’ I want the Day av Judgment*.’”

The Day of Judgment! More than he want it. From all the land rises the hunger wail, from Ghetto and countryside, from prison and casual ward, from asylum and workhouse — the cry of the people who have not enough to eat. Millions of people, men, women, children, little babes, the blind, the deaf, the halt, the sick, vagabonds and toilers, prisoners and paupers, the people of Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales, who have not enough to eat. And this, in face of the fact that five men can produce bread for a thousand; that one workman can produce cotton cloth for 250 people, woollens for 300, and boots and shoes for 1000. It would seem that 40,000,000 people are keeping a big house, and that they are keeping it badly. The income is all right, but there is something criminally wrong with the management. And who dares to say that it is not criminally mismanaged, this big house, when five men can produce bread for a thousand, and yet millions have not enough to eat?

CHAPTER XXVI — DRINK, TEMPERANCE, AND THRIFT

The English working classes may be said to be soaked in beer. They are made dull and sodden by it. Their efficiency is sadly impaired, and they lose whatever imagination, invention, and quickness may be theirs by right of race. It may hardly be called an acquired habit, for they are accustomed to it from their earliest infancy. Children are begotten in drunkenness, saturated in drink before they draw their first breath, born to the smell and taste of it, and brought up in the midst of it.

The public-house is ubiquitous. It flourishes on every corner and between corners, and it is frequented almost as much by women as by men. Children are to be found in it as well, waiting till their fathers and mothers are ready to go home, sipping from the glasses of their elders, listening to the coarse language and degrading conversation, catching the contagion of it, familiarising themselves with licentiousness and debauchery.

Mrs. Grundy rules as supremely over the workers as she does over the bourgeoisie; but in the case of the workers, the one thing she does not frown upon is the public-house. No disgrace or shame attaches to it, nor to the young woman or girl who makes a practice of entering it.

I remember a girl in a coffee-house saying, “I never drink spirits when in a public-’ouse.” She was a young and pretty waitress, and she was laying down to another waitress her pre-eminent respectability and discretion. Mrs. Grundy drew the line at spirits, but allowed that it was quite proper for a clean young girl to drink beer, and to go into a public-house to drink it.

Not only is this beer unfit for the people to drink, but too often the men and women are unfit to drink it. On the other hand, it is their very unfitness that drives them to drink it. Ill-fed, suffering from innutrition and the evil effects of overcrowding and squalor, their constitutions develop a morbid craving for the drink, just as the sickly stomach of the overstrung Manchester factory operative hankers after excessive quantities of pickles and similar weird foods. Unhealthy working and living engenders unhealthy appetites and desires. Man cannot be worked worse than a horse is worked, and be housed and fed as a pig is housed and fed, and at the same time have clean and wholesome ideals and aspirations.

As home-life vanishes, the public-house appears. Not only do men and women abnormally crave drink, who are overworked, exhausted, suffering from deranged stomachs and bad sanitation, and deadened by the ugliness and monotony of existence, but the gregarious men and women who have no home-life flee to the bright and clattering public-house in a vain attempt to express their gregariousness. And when a family is housed in one small room, home-life is impossible.

A brief examination of such a dwelling will serve to bring to light one important cause of drunkenness. Here the family arises in the morning, dresses, and makes its toilet, father, mother, sons, and daughters, and in the same room, shoulder to shoulder (for the room is small), the wife and mother cooks the breakfast. And in the same room, heavy and sickening with the exhalations of their packed bodies throughout the night, that breakfast is eaten. The father goes to work, the elder children go to school or into the street, and the mother remains with her crawling, toddling youngsters to do her housework — still in the same room. Here she washes the clothes, filling the pent space with soapsuds and the smell of dirty clothes, and overhead she hangs the wet linen to dry.

Here, in the evening, amid the manifold smells of the day, the family goes to its virtuous couch. That is to say, as many as possible pile into the one bed (if bed they have), and the surplus turns in on the floor. And this is the round of their existence, month after month, year after year, for they never get a vacation save when they are evicted. When a child dies, and some are always bound to die, since fifty-five per cent. of the East End children die before they are five years old, the body is laid out in the same room. And if they are very poor, it is kept for some time until they can bury it. During the day it lies on the bed; during the night, when the living take the bed, the dead occupies the table, from which, in the morning, when the dead is put back into the bed, they eat their breakfast. Sometimes the body is placed on the shelf which serves as a pantry for their food. Only a couple of weeks ago, an East End woman was in trouble, because, in this fashion, being unable to bury it, she had kept her dead child three weeks.

Now such a room as I have described is not home but horror; and the men and women who flee away from it to the public-house are to be pitied, not blamed. There are 300,000 people, in London, divided into families that live in single rooms, while there are 900,000 who are illegally housed according to the Public Health Act of 1891 — a respectable recruiting-ground for the drink traffic.

Then there are the insecurity of happiness, the precariousness of existence, the well-founded fear of the future — potent factors in driving people to drink. Wretchedness squirms for alleviation, and in the public-house its pain is eased and forgetfulness is obtained. It is unhealthy. Certainly it is, but everything else about their lives is unhealthy, while this brings the oblivion that nothing else in their lives can bring. It even exalts them, and makes them feel that they are finer and better, though at the same time it drags them down and makes them more beastly than ever. For the unfortunate man or woman, it is a race between miseries that ends with death.

It is of no avail to preach temperance and teetotalism to these people. The drink habit may be the cause of many miseries; but it is, in turn, the effect of other and prior miseries. The temperance advocates may preach their hearts out over the evils of drink, but until the evils that cause people to drink are abolished, drink and its evils will remain.

Until the people who try to help realise this, their well-intentioned efforts will be futile, and they will present a spectacle fit only to set Olympus laughing. I have gone through an exhibition of Japanese art, got up for the poor of Whitechapel with the idea of elevating them, of begetting in them yearnings for the Beautiful and True and Good. Granting (what is not so) that the poor folk are thus taught to know and yearn after the Beautiful and True and Good, the foul facts of their existence and the social law that dooms one in three to a public-charity death, demonstrate that this knowledge and yearning will be only so much of an added curse to them. They will have so much more to forget than if they had never known and yearned. Did Destiny to-day bind me down to the life of an East End slave for the rest of my years, and did Destiny grant me but one wish, I should ask that I might forget all about the Beautiful and True and Good; that I might forget all I had learned from the open books, and forget the people I had known, the things I had heard, and the lands I had seen. And if Destiny didn’t grant it, I am pretty confident that I should get drunk and forget it as often as possible.

These people who try to help! Their college settlements, missions, charities, and what not, are failures. In the nature of things they cannot but be failures. They are wrongly, though sincerely, conceived. They approach life through a misunderstanding of life, these good folk. They do not understand the West End, yet they come down to the East End as teachers and savants. They do not understand the simple sociology of Christ, yet they come to the miserable and the despised with the pomp of social redeemers. They have worked faithfully, but beyond relieving an infinitesimal fraction of misery and collecting a certain amount of data which might otherwise have been more scientifically and less expensively collected, they have achieved nothing.

As some one has said, they do everything for the poor except get off their backs. The very money they dribble out in their child's schemes has been wrung from the poor. They come from a race of successful and predatory bipeds who stand between the worker and his wages, and they try to tell the worker what he shall do with the pitiful balance left to him. Of what use, in the name of God, is it to establish nurseries for women workers, in which, for instance, a child is taken while the mother makes violets in Islington at three farthings a gross, when more children and violet-makers than they can cope with are being born right along? This violet-maker handles each flower four times, 576 handlings for three farthings, and in the day she handles the flowers 6912 times for a wage of ninepence. She is being robbed. Somebody is on her back, and a yearning for the Beautiful and True and Good will not lighten her burden. They do nothing for her, these dabblers; and what they do not do for the mother, undoes at night, when the child comes home, all that they have done for the child in the day.

And one and all, they join in teaching a fundamental lie. They do not know it is a lie, but their ignorance does not make it more of a truth. And the lie they preach is "thrift." An instant will demonstrate it. In overcrowded London, the struggle for a chance to work is keen, and because of this struggle wages sink to the lowest means of subsistence. To be thrifty means for a worker to spend less than his income — in other words, to live on less. This is equivalent to a lowering of the standard of living. In the competition for a chance to work, the man with a lower standard of living will underbid the man with a higher standard. And a small group of such thrifty workers in any overcrowded industry will permanently lower the wages of that industry. And the thrifty ones will no longer be thrifty, for their income will have been reduced till it balances their expenditure.

In short, thrift negates thrift. If every worker in England should heed the preachers of thrift and cut expenditure in half, the condition of there being more men to work than there is work to do would swiftly cut wages in half.

And then none of the workers of England would be thrifty, for they would be living up to their diminished incomes. The short-sighted thrift-preachers would naturally be astounded at the outcome. The measure of their failure would be precisely the measure of the success of their propaganda. And, anyway, it is sheer bosh and nonsense to preach thrift to the 1,800,000 London workers who are divided into families which have a total income of less than 21s. per week, one quarter to one half of which must be paid for rent.

Concerning the futility of the people who try to help, I wish to make one notable, noble exception, namely, the Dr. Barnardo Homes. Dr. Barnardo is a child-catcher. First, he catches them when they are young, before they are set, hardened, in the vicious social mould; and then he sends them away to grow up and be formed in another and better social mould. Up to date he has sent out of the country 13,340 boys, most of them to Canada, and not one in fifty has failed. A splendid record, when it is considered that these lads are waifs and strays, homeless and parentless, jerked out from the very bottom of the Abyss, and forty-nine out of fifty of them made into men.

Every twenty-four hours in the year Dr. Barnardo snatches nine waifs from the streets; so the enormous field he has to work in may be comprehended. The people who try to help have something to learn from him. He does not play with palliatives. He traces social viciousness and misery to their sources. He removes the progeny of the gutter-folk from their pestilential environment, and gives them a healthy, wholesome environment in which to be pressed and prodded and moulded into men.

When the people who try to help cease their playing and dabbling with day nurseries and Japanese art exhibits and go back and learn their West End and the sociology of Christ, they will be in better shape to buckle down to the work they ought to be doing in the world. And if they do buckle down to the work, they will follow Dr. Barnardo's lead, only on a scale as large as the nation is large. They won't cram yearnings for the Beautiful, and True, and Good down the throat of the woman making violets for three farthings a gross, but they will make somebody get off her back and quit cramming himself till, like the Romans, he must go to a bath and sweat it out. And to their consternation, they will find that they will have to get off that woman's back themselves, as well as the backs of a few other women and children they did not dream they were riding upon.

CHAPTER XXVII — THE MANAGEMENT

In this final chapter it were well to look at the Social Abyss in its widest aspect, and to put certain questions to Civilisation, by the answers to which Civilisation must stand or fall. For instance, has Civilisation bettered the lot of man? "Man," I use in its democratic sense, meaning the average man. So the question re-shapes itself: *Has Civilisation bettered the lot of the average man*?

Let us see. In Alaska, along the banks of the Yukon River, near its mouth, live the Innuit folk. They are a very primitive people, manifesting but mere glimmering adumbrations of that tremendous artifice, Civilisation. Their capital amounts possibly to £2 per head. They hunt and fish for their food with bone-headed spews and arrows. They never suffer from lack of shelter. Their clothes, largely made from the skins of animals, are warm. They always have fuel for their fires, likewise timber for their houses, which they build partly underground, and in which they lie snugly during the periods of intense cold. In the summer they live in tents, open to every breeze and cool. They are healthy, and strong, and happy. Their one problem is food. They have their times of plenty and times of famine. In good times they feast; in bad times they die of starvation. But starvation, as a chronic condition, present with a large number of them all the time, is a thing unknown. Further, they have no debts.

In the United Kingdom, on the rim of the Western Ocean, live the English folk. They are a consummately civilised people. Their capital amounts to at least £300 per head. They gain their food, not by hunting and fishing, but by toil at colossal artifices. For the most part, they suffer from lack of shelter. The greater number of them are vilely housed, do not have enough fuel to keep them warm, and are insufficiently clothed. A constant number never have any houses at all, and sleep shelterless under the stars. Many are to be found, winter and summer, shivering on the streets in their rags. They have good times and bad. In good times most of them manage to get enough to eat, in bad times they die of starvation. They are dying now, they were dying yesterday and last year, they will die to-morrow and next year, of starvation; for they, unlike the Innuit, suffer from a chronic condition of starvation. There are 40,000,000 of the English folk, and 939 out of every 1000 of them die in poverty, while a constant army of 8,000,000 struggles on the ragged edge of starvation. Further, each babe that is born, is born in debt to the sum of £22. This is because of an artifice called the National Debt.

In a fair comparison of the average Innuit and the average Englishman, it will be seen that life is less rigorous for the Innuit; that while the Innuit suffers only during bad times from starvation, the Englishman suffers during good times as well; that no Innuit lacks fuel, clothing, or housing, while the Englishman is in perpetual lack of these three essentials. In this connection it is well to instance the judgment of a man such as Huxley. From the knowledge gained as a medical officer in the East End of London, and as a scientist pursuing investigations among the most elemental savages, he concludes, “Were the alternative presented to me, I would deliberately prefer the life of the savage to that of those people of Christian London.”

The creature comforts man enjoys are the products of man’s labour. Since Civilisation has failed to give the average Englishman food and shelter equal to that enjoyed by the Innuit, the question arises: *Has Civilisation increased the producing power of the average man*? If it has not increased man’s producing power, then Civilisation cannot stand.

But, it will be instantly admitted, Civilisation has increased man’s producing power. Five men can produce bread for a thousand. One man can produce cotton cloth for 250 people, woollens for 300, and boots and shoes for 1000. Yet it has been shown throughout the pages of this book that English folk by the millions do not receive enough food, clothes, and boots. Then arises the third and inexorable question: *If Civilisation has increased the producing power of the average man, why has it not bettered the lot of the average man*?

There can be one answer only — MISMANAGEMENT. Civilisation has made possible all manner of creature comforts and heart’s delights. In these the average Englishman does not participate. If he shall be forever unable to participate, then Civilisation falls. There is no reason for the continued existence of an artifice so avowed a failure. But it is impossible that men should have reared this tremendous artifice in vain. It stuns the intellect. To acknowledge so crushing a defeat is to give the death-blow to striving and progress.

One other alternative, and one other only, presents itself. *Civilisation must be compelled to better the lot of the average men*. This accepted, it becomes at once a question of business management. Things profitable must be continued; things unprofitable must be eliminated. Either the Empire is a profit to England, or it is a loss. If it is a loss, it must be done away with. If it is a profit, it must be managed so that the average man comes in for a share of the profit.

If the struggle for commercial supremacy is profitable, continue it. If it is not, if it hurts the worker and makes his lot worse than the lot of a savage, then fling foreign markets and industrial empire overboard. For it is a patent fact that if 40,000,000 people, aided by Civilisation, possess a greater individual producing power than the Innuit, then those 40,000,000 people should enjoy more creature comforts and heart's delights than the Innuits enjoy.

If the 400,000 English gentlemen, "of no occupation," according to their own statement in the Census of 1881, are unprofitable, do away with them. Set them to work ploughing game preserves and planting potatoes. If they are profitable, continue them by all means, but let it be seen to that the average Englishman shares somewhat in the profits they produce by working at no occupation.

In short, society must be reorganised, and a capable management put at the head. That the present management is incapable, there can be no discussion. It has drained the United Kingdom of its life-blood. It has enfeebled the stay-at-home folk till they are unable longer to struggle in the van of the competing nations. It has built up a West End and an East End as large as the Kingdom is large, in which one end is riotous and rotten, the other end sickly and underfed.

A vast empire is foundering on the hands of this incapable management. And by empire is meant the political machinery which holds together the English-speaking people of the world outside of the United States. Nor is this charged in a pessimistic spirit. Blood empire is greater than political empire, and the English of the New World and the Antipodes are strong and vigorous as ever. But the political empire under which they are nominally assembled is perishing. The political machine known as the British Empire is running down. In the hands of its management it is losing momentum every day.

It is inevitable that this management, which has grossly and criminally mismanaged, shall be swept away. Not only has it been wasteful and inefficient, but it has misappropriated the funds. Every worn-out, pasty-faced pauper, every blind man, every prison babe, every man, woman, and child whose belly is gnawing with hunger pangs, is hungry because the funds have been misappropriated by the management.

Nor can one member of this managing class plead not guilty before the judgment bar of Man. "The living in their houses, and in their graves the dead," are challenged by every babe that dies of innutrition, by every girl that flees the sweater's den to the nightly promenade of Piccadilly, by every worked-out toiler that plunges into the canal. The food this managing class eats, the wine it drinks, the shows it makes, and the fine clothes it wears, are challenged by eight million mouths which have never had enough to fill them, and by twice eight million bodies which have never been sufficiently clothed and housed.

There can be no mistake. Civilisation has increased man's producing power an hundred-fold, and through mismanagement the men of Civilisation live worse than the beasts, and have less to eat and wear and protect them from the elements than the savage Innuit in a frigid climate who lives to-day as he lived in the stone age ten thousand years ago.

CHALLENGE

I have a vague remembrance
Of a story that is told
In some ancient Spanish legend
Or chronicle of old.
It was when brave King Sanche
Was before Zamora slain,
And his great besieging army
Lay encamped upon the plain.
Don Diego de Ordenez
Sallied forth in front of all,
And shouted loud his challenge
To the warders on the wall.
All the people of Zamora,
Both the born and the unborn,
As traitors did he challenge
With taunting words of scorn.
The living in their houses,
And in their graves the dead,
And the waters in their rivers,
And their wine, and oil, and bread.
There is a greater army
That besets us round with strife,
A starving, numberless army
At all the gates of life.
The poverty-stricken millions
Who challenge our wine and bread,
And impeach us all as traitors,
Both the living and the dead.
And whenever I sit at the banquet,
Where the feast and song are high,
Amid the mirth and music
I can hear that fearful cry.
And hollow and haggard faces
Look into the lighted hall,
And wasted hands are extended
To catch the crumbs that fall

And within there is light and plenty,
And odours fill the air;
But without there is cold and darkness,
And hunger and despair.
And there in the camp of famine,
In wind, and cold, and rain,
Christ, the great Lord of the Army,
Lies dead upon the plain.

LONGFELLOW

WAR OF THE CLASSES

This collection of seven essays was first published in 1905.

CONTENTS

PREFACE
THE CLASS STRUGGLE
THE TRAMP
THE SCAB
THE QUESTION OF THE MAXIMUM
A REVIEW
WANTED: A NEW LAW OF DEVELOPMENT
HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST

PREFACE

When I was a youngster I was looked upon as a weird sort of creature, because, forsooth, I was a socialist. Reporters from local papers interviewed me, and the interviews, when published, were pathological studies of a strange and abnormal specimen of man. At that time (nine or ten years ago), because I made a stand in my native town for municipal ownership of public utilities, I was branded a "red-shirt," a "dynamiter," and an "anarchist"; and really decent fellows, who liked me very well, drew the line at my appearing in public with their sisters.

But the times changed. There came a day when I heard, in my native town, a Republican mayor publicly proclaim that "municipal ownership was a fixed American policy." And in that day I found myself picking up in the world. No longer did the pathologist study me, while the really decent fellows did not mind in the least the propinquity of myself and their sisters in the public eye. My political and sociological ideas were ascribed to the vagaries of youth, and good-natured elderly men patronized me and told me that I would grow up some day and become an unusually intelligent member of the community. Also they told me that my views were biassed by my empty pockets, and that some day, when I had gathered to me a few dollars, my views would be wholly different, — in short, that my views would be their views.

And then came the day when my socialism grew respectable, — still a vagary of youth, it was held, but romantically respectable. Romance, to the bourgeois mind, was respectable because it was not dangerous. As a "red-shirt," with bombs in all his pockets, I was dangerous. As a youth with nothing more menacing than a few philosophical ideas, Germanic in their origin, I was an interesting and pleasing personality.

Through all this experience I noted one thing. It was not I that changed, but the community. In fact, my socialistic views grew solider and more pronounced. I repeat, it was the community that changed, and to my chagrin I discovered that the community changed to such purpose that it was not above stealing my thunder. The community branded me a "red-shirt" because I stood for municipal ownership; a little later it applauded its mayor when he proclaimed municipal ownership to be a fixed American policy. He stole my thunder, and the community applauded the theft. And today the community is able to come around and give me points on municipal ownership.

What happened to me has been in no wise different from what has happened to the socialist movement as a whole in the United States. In the bourgeois mind socialism has changed from a terrible disease to a youthful vagary, and later on had its thunder stolen by the two old parties, — socialism, like a meek and thrifty workingman, being exploited became respectable.

Only dangerous things are abhorrent. The thing that is not dangerous is always respectable. And so with socialism in the United States. For several years it has been very respectable, — a sweet and beautiful Utopian dream, in the bourgeois mind, yet a dream, only a dream. During this period, which has just ended, socialism was tolerated because it was impossible and non-menacing. Much of its thunder had been stolen, and the workingmen had been made happy with full dinner-pails. There was nothing to fear. The kind old world spun on, coupons were clipped, and larger profits than ever were extracted from the toilers. Coupon-clipping and profit-extracting would continue to the end of time. These were functions divine in origin and held by divine right. The newspapers, the preachers, and the college presidents said so, and what they say, of course, is so — to the bourgeois mind.

Then came the presidential election of 1904. Like a bolt out of a clear sky was the socialist vote of 435,000, — an increase of nearly 400 per cent in four years, the largest third-party vote, with one exception, since the Civil War. Socialism had shown that it was a very live and growing revolutionary force, and all its old menace revived. I am afraid that neither it nor I are any longer respectable. The capitalist press of the country confirms me in my opinion, and herewith I give a few post-election utterances of the capitalist press: —

"The Democratic party of the constitution is dead. The Social-Democratic party of continental Europe, preaching discontent and class hatred, assailing law, property, and personal rights, and insinuating confiscation and plunder, is here." — Chicago Chronicle.

"That over forty thousand votes should have been cast in this city to make such a person as Eugene V. Debs the President of the United States is about the worst kind of advertising that Chicago could receive." — Chicago Inter-Ocean.

"We cannot blink the fact that socialism is making rapid growth in this country, where, of all others, there would seem to be less inspiration for it." — Brooklyn Daily Eagle.

"Upon the hands of the Republican party an awful responsibility was placed last Tuesday. . . It knows that reforms — great, far-sweeping reforms — are necessary, and it has the power to make them. God help our civilization if it does not! . . . It must repress the trusts or stand before the world responsible for our system of government being changed into a social republic. The arbitrary cutting down of wages must cease, or socialism will seize another lever to lift itself into power." — The Chicago New World.

"Scarcely any phase of the election is more sinisterly interesting than the increase in the socialist vote. Before election we said that we could not afford to give aid and comfort to the socialists in any manner. . . It (socialism) must be fought in all its phases, in its every manifestation." — San Francisco Argonaut.

And far be it from me to deny that socialism is a menace. It is its purpose to wipe out, root and branch, all capitalistic institutions of present-day society. It is distinctly revolutionary, and in scope and depth is vastly more tremendous than any revolution that has ever occurred in the history of the world. It presents a new spectacle to the astonished world, — that of an *organized*, *international*, *revolutionary movement*. In the bourgeois mind a class struggle is a terrible and hateful thing, and yet that is precisely what socialism is, — a world-wide class struggle between the propertyless workers and the propertied masters of workers. It is the prime preachment of socialism that the struggle is a class struggle. The working class, in the process of social evolution, (in the very nature of things), is bound to revolt from the sway of the capitalist class and to overthrow the capitalist class. This is the menace of socialism, and in affirming it and in tallying myself an adherent of it, I accept my own consequent unrespectability.

As yet, to the average bourgeois mind, socialism is merely a menace, vague and formless. The average member of the capitalist class, when he discusses socialism, is condemned an ignoramus out of his own mouth. He does not know the literature of socialism, its philosophy, nor its politics. He wags his head sagely and rattles the dry bones of dead and buried ideas. His lips mumble mouldy phrases, such as, "Men are not born equal and never can be;" "It is Utopian and impossible;" "Abstinence should be rewarded;" "Man will first have to be born again;" "Coöperative colonies have always failed;" and "What if we do divide up? in ten years there would be rich and poor men such as there are today."

It surely is time that the capitalists knew something about this socialism that they feel menaces them. And it is the hope of the writer that the socialistic studies in this volume may in some slight degree enlighten a few capitalistic minds. The capitalist must learn, first and for always, that socialism is based, not upon the equality, but upon the inequality, of men. Next, he must learn that no new birth into spiritual purity is necessary before socialism becomes possible. He must learn that socialism deals with what is, not with what ought to be; and that the material with which it deals is the "clay of the common road," the warm human, fallible and frail, sordid and petty, absurd and contradictory, even grotesque, and yet, withal, shot through with flashes and glimmerings of something finer and God-like, with here and there sweetnesses of service and unselfishness, desires for goodness, for renunciation and sacrifice, and with conscience, stern and awful, at times blazingly imperious, demanding the right, — the right, nothing more nor less than the right.

JACK LONDON.

Oakland, California.

January 12, 1905.

THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Unfortunately or otherwise, people are prone to believe in the reality of the things they think ought to be so. This comes of the cheery optimism which is innate with life itself; and, while it may sometimes be deplored, it must never be censured, for, as a rule, it is productive of more good than harm, and of about all the achievement there is in the world. There are cases where this optimism has been disastrous, as with the people who lived in Pompeii during its last quivering days; or with the aristocrats of the time of Louis XVI, who confidently expected the Deluge to overwhelm their children, or their children's children, but never themselves. But there is small likelihood that the case of perverse optimism here to be considered will end in such disaster, while there is every reason to believe that the great change now manifesting itself in society will be as peaceful and orderly in its culmination as it is in its present development.

Out of their constitutional optimism, and because a class struggle is an abhorred and dangerous thing, the great American people are unanimous in asserting that there is no class struggle. And by "American people" is meant the recognized and authoritative mouth-pieces of the American people, which are the press, the pulpit, and the university. The journalists, the preachers, and the professors are practically of one voice in declaring that there is no such thing as a class struggle now going on, much less that a class struggle will ever go on, in the United States. And this declaration they continually make in the face of a multitude of facts which impeach, not so much their sincerity, as affirm, rather, their optimism.

There are two ways of approaching the subject of the class struggle. The existence of this struggle can be shown theoretically, and it can be shown actually. For a class struggle to exist in society there must be, first, a class inequality, a superior class and an inferior class (as measured by power); and, second, the outlets must be closed whereby the strength and ferment of the inferior class have been permitted to escape.

That there are even classes in the United States is vigorously denied by many; but it is incontrovertible, when a group of individuals is formed, wherein the members are bound together by common interests which are peculiarly their interests and not the interests of individuals outside the group, that such a group is a class. The owners of capital, with their dependents, form a class of this nature in the United States; the working people form a similar class. The interest of the capitalist class, say, in the matter of income tax, is quite contrary to the interest of the laboring class; and, *vice versa*, in the matter of poll-tax.

If between these two classes there be a clear and vital conflict of interest, all the factors are present which make a class struggle; but this struggle will lie dormant if the strong and capable members of the inferior class be permitted to leave that class and join the ranks of the superior class. The capitalist class and the working class have existed side by side and for a long time in the United States; but hitherto all the strong, energetic members of the working class have been able to rise out of their class and become owners of capital. They were enabled to do this because an undeveloped country with an expanding frontier gave equality of opportunity to all. In the almost lottery-like scramble for the ownership of vast unowned natural resources, and in the exploitation of which there was little or no competition of capital, (the capital itself rising out of the exploitation), the capable, intelligent member of the working class found a field in which to use his brains to his own advancement. Instead of being discontented in direct ratio with his intelligence and ambitions, and of radiating amongst his fellows a spirit of revolt as capable as he was capable, he left them to their fate and carved his own way to a place in the superior class.

But the day of an expanding frontier, of a lottery-like scramble for the ownership of natural resources, and of the upbuilding of new industries, is past. Farthest West has been reached, and an immense volume of surplus capital roams for investment and nips in the bud the patient efforts of the embryo capitalist to rise through slow increment from small beginnings. The gateway of opportunity after opportunity has been closed, and closed for all time. Rockefeller has shut the door on oil, the American Tobacco Company on tobacco, and Carnegie on steel. After Carnegie came Morgan, who triple-locked the door. These doors will not open again, and before them pause thousands of ambitious young men to read the placard: No Thorough-fare.

And day by day more doors are shut, while the ambitious young men continue to be born. It is they, denied the opportunity to rise from the working class, who preach revolt to the working class. Had he been born fifty years later, Andrew Carnegie, the poor Scotch boy, might have risen to be president of his union, or of a federation of unions; but that he would never have become the builder of Homestead and the founder of multitudinous libraries, is as certain as it is certain that some other man would have developed the steel industry had Andrew Carnegie never been born.

Theoretically, then, there exist in the United States all the factors which go to make a class struggle. There are the capitalists and working classes, the interests of which conflict, while the working class is no longer being emasculated to the extent it was in the past by having drawn off from it its best blood and brains. Its more capable members are no longer able to rise out of it and leave the great mass leaderless and helpless. They remain to be its leaders.

But the optimistic mouthpieces of the great American people, who are themselves deft theoreticians, are not to be convinced by mere theoretics. So it remains to demonstrate the existence of the class struggle by a marshalling of the facts.

When nearly two millions of men, finding themselves knit together by certain interests peculiarly their own, band together in a strong organization for the aggressive pursuit of those interests, it is evident that society has within it a hostile and warring class. But when the interests which this class aggressively pursues conflict sharply and vitally with the interests of another class, class antagonism arises and a class struggle is the inevitable result. One great organization of labor alone has a membership of 1,700,000 in the United States. This is the American Federation of Labor, and outside of it are many other large organizations. All these men are banded together for the frank purpose of bettering their condition, regardless of the harm worked thereby upon all other classes. They are in open antagonism with the capitalist class, while the manifestos of their leaders state that the struggle is one which can never end until the capitalist class is exterminated.

Their leaders will largely deny this last statement, but an examination of their utterances, their actions, and the situation will forestall such denial. In the first place, the conflict between labor and capital is over the division of the join product. Capital and labor apply themselves to raw material and make it into a finished product. The difference between the value of the raw material and the value of the finished product is the value they have added to it by their joint effort. This added value is, therefore, their joint product, and it is over the division of this joint product that the struggle between labor and capital takes place. Labor takes its share in wages; capital takes its share in profits. It is patent, if capital took in profits the whole joint product, that labor would perish. And it is equally patent, if labor took in wages the whole joint product, that capital would perish. Yet this last is the very thing labor aspires to do, and that it will never be content with anything less than the whole joint product is evidenced by the words of its leaders.

Mr. Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, has said: “The workers want more wages; more of the comforts of life; more leisure; more chance for self-improvement as men, as trade-unionists, as citizens. *These were the wants of yesterday*; *they are the wants of today*; *they will be the wants of tomorrow*, *and of tomorrow’s morrow*. The struggle may assume new forms, but the issue is the immemorial one, — an effort of the producers to obtain an increasing measure of the wealth that flows from their production.”

Mr. Henry White, secretary of the United Garment Workers of America and a member of the Industrial Committee of the National Civic Federation, speaking of the National Civic Federation soon after its inception, said: “To fall into one another’s arms, to avow friendship, to express regret at the injury which has been done, would not alter the facts of the situation. Workingmen will continue to demand more pay, and the employer will naturally oppose them. The readiness and ability of the workmen to fight will, as usual, largely determine the amount of their wages or their share in the product. . . But when it comes to dividing the proceeds, there is the rub. We can also agree that the larger the product through the employment of labor-saving methods the better, as there will be more to be divided, but again the question of the division. . . . A Conciliation Committee, having the confidence of the community, and composed of men possessing practical knowledge of industrial affairs, can therefore aid in mitigating this antagonism, in preventing avoidable conflicts, in bringing about a *truce*; I use the word ‘truce’ because understandings can only be temporary.”

Here is a man who might have owned cattle on a thousand hills, been a lumber baron or a railroad king, had he been born a few years sooner. As it is, he remains in his class, is secretary of the United Garment Workers of America, and is so thoroughly saturated with the class struggle that he speaks of the dispute between capital and labor in terms of war, — workmen *fight* with employers; it is possible to avoid some *conflicts*; in certain cases *truces* may be, for the time being, effected.

Man being man and a great deal short of the angels, the quarrel over the division of the joint product is irreconcilable. For the last twenty years in the United States, there has been an average of over a thousand strikes per year; and year by year these strikes increase in magnitude, and the front of the labor army grows more imposing. And it is a class struggle, pure and simple. Labor as a class is fighting with capital as a class.

Workingmen will continue to demand more pay, and employers will continue to oppose them. This is the key-note to *laissez faire*, — everybody for himself and devil take the hindmost. It is upon this that the rampant individualist bases his individualism. It is the let-alone policy, the struggle for existence, which strengthens the strong, destroys the weak, and makes a finer and more capable breed of men. But the individual has passed away and the group has come, for better or worse, and the struggle has become, not a struggle between individuals, but a struggle between groups. So the query rises: Has the individualist never speculated upon the labor group becoming strong enough to destroy the capitalist group, and take to itself and run for itself the machinery of industry? And, further, has the individualist never speculated upon this being still a triumphant expression of individualism, — of group individualism, — if the confusion of terms may be permitted?

But the facts of the class struggle are deeper and more significant than have so far been presented. A million or so of workmen may organize for the pursuit of interests which engender class antagonism and strife, and at the same time be unconscious of what is engendered. But when a million or so of workmen show unmistakable signs of being conscious of their class, — of being, in short, class conscious, — then the situation grows serious. The uncompromising and terrible hatred of the trade-unionist for a scab is the hatred of a class for a traitor to that class, — while the hatred of a trade-unionist for the militia is the hatred of a class for a weapon wielded by the class with which it is fighting. No workman can be true to his class and at the same time be a member of the militia: this is the dictum of the labor leaders.

In the town of the writer, the good citizens, when they get up a Fourth of July parade and invite the labor unions to participate, are informed by the unions that they will not march in the parade if the militia marches. Article 8 of the constitution of the Painters' and Decorators' Union of Schenectady provides that a member must not be a "militiaman, special police officer, or deputy marshal in the employ of corporations or individuals during strikes, lockouts, or other labor difficulties, and any member occupying any of the above positions will be debarred from membership." Mr. William Potter was a member of this union and a member of the National Guard. As a result, because he obeyed the order of the Governor when his company was ordered out to suppress rioting, he was expelled from his union. Also his union demanded his employers, Shafer & Barry, to discharge him from their service. This they complied with, rather than face the threatened strike.

Mr. Robert L. Walker, first lieutenant of the Light Guards, a New Haven militia company, recently resigned. His reason was, that he was a member of the Car Builders' Union, and that the two organizations were antagonistic to each other. During a New Orleans street-car strike not long ago, a whole company of militia, called out to protect non-union men, resigned in a body. Mr. John Mulholland, president of the International Association of Allied Metal Mechanics, has stated that he does not want the members to join the militia. The Local Trades' Assembly of Syracuse, New York, has passed a resolution, by unanimous vote, requiring union men who are members of the National Guard to resign, under pain of expulsion, from the unions. The Amalgamated Sheet Metal Workers' Association has incorporated in its constitution an amendment excluding from membership in its organization "any person a member of the regular army, or of the State militia or naval reserve." The Illinois State Federation of Labor, at a recent convention, passed without a dissenting vote a resolution declaring that membership in military organizations is a violation of labor union obligations, and requesting all union men to withdraw from the militia. The president of the Federation, Mr. Albert Young, declared that the militia was a menace not only to unions, but to all workers throughout the country.

These instances may be multiplied a thousand fold. The union workmen are becoming conscious of their class, and of the struggle their class is waging with the capitalist class. To be a member of the militia is to be a traitor to the union, for the militia is a weapon wielded by the employers to crush the workers in the struggle between the warring groups.

Another interesting, and even more pregnant, phase of the class struggle is the political aspect of it as displayed by the socialists. Five men, standing together, may perform prodigies; 500 men, marching as marched the historic Five Hundred of Marseilles, may sack a palace and destroy a king; while 500,000 men, passionately preaching the propaganda of a class struggle, waging a class struggle along political lines, and backed by the moral and intellectual support of 10,000,000 more men of like convictions throughout the world, may come pretty close to realizing a class struggle in these United States of ours.

In 1900 these men cast 150,000 votes; two years later, in 1902, they cast 300,000 votes; and in 1904 they cast 450,000. They have behind them a most imposing philosophic and scientific literature; they own illustrated magazines and reviews, high in quality, dignity, and restraint; they possess countless daily and weekly papers which circulate throughout the land, and single papers which have subscribers by the hundreds of thousands; and they literally swamp the working classes in a vast sea of tracts and pamphlets. No political party in the United States, no church organization nor mission effort, has as indefatigable workers as has the socialist party. They multiply themselves, know of no effort nor sacrifice too great to make for the Cause; and "Cause," with them, is spelled out in capitals. They work for it with a religious zeal, and would die for it with a willingness similar to that of the Christian martyrs.

These men are preaching an uncompromising and deadly class struggle. In fact, they are organized upon the basis of a class struggle. "The history of society," they say, "is a history of class struggles. Patrician struggled with plebeian in early Rome; the king and the burghers, with the nobles in the Middle Ages; later on, the king and the nobles with the bourgeoisie; and today the struggle is on between the triumphant bourgeoisie and the rising proletariat. By 'proletariat' is meant the class of people without capital which sells its labor for a living.

"That the proletariat shall conquer," (mark the note of fatalism), "is as certain as the rising sun. Just as the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century wanted democracy applied to politics, so the proletariat of the twentieth century wants democracy applied to industry. As the bourgeoisie complained against the government being run by and for the nobles, so the proletariat complains against the government and industry being run by and for the bourgeoisie; and so, following in the footsteps of its predecessor, the proletariat will possess itself of the government, apply democracy to industry, abolish wages, which are merely legalized robbery, and run the business of the country in its own interest."

"Their aim," they say, "is to organize the working class, and those in sympathy with it, into a political party, with the object of conquering the powers of government and of using them for the purpose of transforming the present system of private ownership of the means of production and distribution into collective ownership by the entire people."

Briefly stated, this is the battle plan of these 450,000 men who call themselves "socialists." And, in the face of the existence of such an aggressive group of men, a class struggle cannot very well be denied by the optimistic Americans who say: "A class struggle is monstrous. Sir, there is no class struggle." The class struggle is here, and the optimistic American had better gird himself for the fray and put a stop to it, rather than sit idly declaiming that what ought not to be is not, and never will be.

But the socialists, fanatics and dreamers though they may well be, betray a foresight and insight, and a genius for organization, which put to shame the class with which they are openly at war. Failing of rapid success in waging a sheer political propaganda, and finding that they were alienating the most intelligent and most easily organized portion of the voters, the socialists lessoned from the experience and turned their energies upon the trade-union movement. To win the trade unions was well-nigh to win the war, and recent events show that they have done far more winning in this direction than have the capitalists.

Instead of antagonizing the unions, which had been their previous policy, the socialists proceeded to conciliate the unions. "Let every good socialist join the union of his trade," the edict went forth. "Bore from within and capture the trade-union movement." And this policy, only several years old, has reaped fruits far beyond their fondest expectations. Today the great labor unions are honeycombed with socialists, "boring from within," as they picturesquely term their undermining labor. At work and at play, at business meeting and council, their insidious propaganda goes on. At the shoulder of the trade-unionist is the socialist, sympathizing with him, aiding him with head and hand, suggesting — perpetually suggesting — the necessity for political action. As the *Journal*, of Lansing, Michigan, a republican paper, has remarked: "The socialists in the labor unions are tireless workers. They are sincere, energetic, and self-sacrificing. . . . They stick to the union and work all the while, thus making a showing which, reckoned by ordinary standards, is out of all proportion to their numbers. Their cause is growing among union laborers, and their long fight, intended to turn the Federation into a political organization, is likely to win."

They miss no opportunity of driving home the necessity for political action, the necessity for capturing the political machinery of society whereby they may master society. As an instance of this is the avidity with which the American socialists seized upon the famous Taft-Vale Decision in England, which was to the effect that an unincorporated union could be sued and its treasury rifled by process of law. Throughout the United States, the socialists pointed the moral in similar fashion to the way it was pointed by the Social-Democratic Herald, which advised the trade-unionists, in view of the decision, to stop trying to fight capital with money, which they lacked, and to begin fighting with the ballot, which was their strongest weapon.

Night and day, tireless and unrelenting, they labor at their self-imposed task of undermining society. Mr. M. G. Cunniff, who lately made an intimate study of trade-unionism, says: "All through the unions socialism filters. Almost every other man is a socialist, preaching that unionism is but a makeshift." "Malthus be damned," they told him, "for the good time was coming when every man should be able to rear his family in comfort." In one union, with two thousand members, Mr. Cunniff found every man a socialist, and from his experiences Mr. Cunniff was forced to confess, "I lived in a world that showed our industrial life a-tremble from beneath with a never-ceasing ferment."

The socialists have already captured the Western Federation of Miners, the Western Hotel and Restaurant Employees' Union, and the Patternmakers' National Association. The Western Federation of Miners, at a recent convention, declared: "The strike has failed to secure to the working classes their liberty; we therefore call upon the workers to strike as one man for their liberties at the ballot box. . . . We put ourselves on record as committed to the programme of independent political action. . . . We indorse the platform of the socialist party, and accept it as the declaration of principles of our organization. We call upon our members as individuals to commence immediately the organization of the socialist movement in their respective towns and states, and to coöperate in every way for the furtherance of the principles of socialism and of the socialist party. In states where the socialist party has not perfected its organization, we advise that every assistance be given by our members to that end. . . . We therefore call for organizers, capable and well-versed in the whole programme of the labor movement, to be sent into each state to preach the necessity of organization on the political as well as on the economic field."

The capitalist class has a glimmering consciousness of the class struggle which is shaping itself in the midst of society; but the capitalists, as a class, seem to lack the ability for organizing, for coming together, such as is possessed by the working class. No American capitalist ever aids an English capitalist in the common fight, while workmen have formed international unions, the socialists a world-wide international organization, and on all sides space and race are bridged in the effort to achieve solidarity. Resolutions of sympathy, and, fully as important, donations of money, pass back and forth across the sea to wherever labor is fighting its pitched battles.

For divers reasons, the capitalist class lacks this cohesion or solidarity, chief among which is the optimism bred of past success. And, again, the capitalist class is divided; it has within itself a class struggle of no mean proportions, which tends to irritate and harass it and to confuse the situation. The small capitalist and the large capitalist are grappled with each other, struggling over what Achille Loria calls the "bi-partition of the revenues." Such a struggle, though not precisely analogous, was waged between the landlords and manufacturers of England when the one brought about the passage of the Factory Acts and the other the abolition of the Corn Laws.

Here and there, however, certain members of the capitalist class see clearly the cleavage in society along which the struggle is beginning to show itself, while the press and magazines are beginning to raise an occasional and troubled voice. Two leagues of class-conscious capitalists have been formed for the purpose of carrying on their side of the struggle. Like the socialists, they do not mince matters, but state boldly and plainly that they are fighting to subjugate the opposing class. It is the barons against the commons. One of these leagues, the National Association of Manufacturers, is stopping short of nothing in what it conceives to be a life-and-death struggle. Mr. D. M. Parry, who is the president of the league, as well as president of the National Metal Trades' Association, is leaving no stone unturned in what he feels to be a desperate effort to organize his class. He has issued the call to arms in terms everything but ambiguous:

"*There is still time in the United States to head off the socialistic programme*, *which*, *unrestrained*, *is sure to wreck our country*."

As he says, the work is for "federating employers in order that we may meet with a united front all issues that affect us. We must come to this sooner or later. . . . The work immediately before the National Association of Manufacturers is, first, *keep the vicious eight-hour Bill off the books*; second, to *destroy the Anti-injunction Bill*, which wrests your business from you and places it in the hands of your employees; third, to secure the *passage of the Department of Commerce and Industry Bill*; the latter would go through with a rush were it not for the hectoring opposition of Organized Labor." By this department, he further says, "business interests would have direct and sympathetic representation at Washington."

In a later letter, issued broadcast to the capitalists outside the League, President Parry points out the success which is already beginning to attend the efforts of the League at Washington. "We have contributed more than any other influence to the quick passage of the new Department of Commerce Bill. It is said that the activities of this office are numerous and satisfactory; but of that I must not say too much — or anything. . . . At Washington the Association is not represented too much, either directly or indirectly. Sometimes it is known in a most powerful way that it is represented vigorously and unitedly. Sometimes it is not known that it is represented at all."

The second class-conscious capitalist organization is called the National Economic League. It likewise manifests the frankness of men who do not dilly-dally with terms, but who say what they mean, and who mean to settle down to a long, hard fight. Their letter of invitation to prospective members opens boldly. "We beg to inform you that the National Economic League will render its services in an impartial educational movement *to oppose socialism and class hatred*." Among its class-conscious members, men who recognize that the opening guns of the class struggle have been fired, may be instanced the following names: Hon. Lyman J. Gage, Ex-Secretary U. S. Treasury; Hon. Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, Ex-Minister to France; Rev. Henry C. Potter, Bishop New York Diocese; Hon. John D. Long, Ex-Secretary U. S. Navy; Hon. Levi P. Morton, Ex-Vice President United States; Henry Clews; John F. Dryden, President Prudential Life Insurance Co.; John A. McCall, President New York Life Insurance Co.; J. L. Greatsinger, President Brooklyn Rapid Transit Co.; the shipbuilding firm of William Cramp & Sons, the Southern Railway system, and the Atchison, Topeka, & Santa Fé Railway Company.

Instances of the troubled editorial voice have not been rare during the last several years. There were many cries from the press during the last days of the anthracite coal strike that the mine owners, by their stubbornness, were sowing the regrettable seeds of socialism. The World's Work for December, 1902, said: "The next significant fact is the recommendation by the Illinois State Federation of Labor that all members of labor unions who are also members of the state militia shall resign from the militia. This proposition has been favorably regarded by some other labor organizations. It has done more than any other single recent declaration or action to cause a public distrust of such unions as favor it. *It hints of a class separation that in turn hints of anarchy*."

The *Outlook*, February 14, 1903, in reference to the rioting at Waterbury, remarks, "That all this disorder should have occurred in a city of the character and intelligence of Waterbury indicates that the industrial war spirit is by no means confined to the immigrant or ignorant working classes."

That President Roosevelt has smelt the smoke from the firing line of the class struggle is evidenced by his words, "Above all we need to remember that any kind of *class animosity in the political world* is, if possible, even more destructive to national welfare than sectional, race, or religious animosity." The chief thing to be noted here is President Roosevelt's tacit recognition of class animosity in the industrial world, and his fear, which language cannot portray stronger, that this class animosity may spread to the political world. Yet this is the very policy which the socialists have announced in their declaration of war against present-day society — to capture the political machinery of society and by that machinery destroy present-day society.

The New York Independent for February 12, 1903, recognized without qualification the class struggle. "It is impossible fairly to pass upon the methods of labor unions, or to devise plans for remedying their abuses, until it is recognized, to begin with, that unions are based upon class antagonism and that their policies are dictated by the necessities of social warfare. A strike is a rebellion against the owners of property. The rights of property are protected by government. And a strike, under certain provocation, may extend as far as did the general strike in Belgium a few years since, when practically the entire wage-earning population stopped work in order to force political concessions from the property-owning classes. This is an extreme case, but it brings out vividly the real nature of labor organization as a species of warfare whose object is the coercion of one class by another class."

It has been shown, theoretically and actually, that there is a class struggle in the United States. The quarrel over the division of the joint product is irreconcilable. The working class is no longer losing its strongest and most capable members. These men, denied room for their ambition in the capitalist ranks, remain to be the leaders of the workers, to spur them to discontent, to make them conscious of their class, to lead them to revolt.

This revolt, appearing spontaneously all over the industrial field in the form of demands for an increased share of the joint product, is being carefully and shrewdly shaped for a political assault upon society. The leaders, with the carelessness of fatalists, do not hesitate for an instant to publish their intentions to the world. They intend to direct the labor revolt to the capture of the political machinery of society. With the political machinery once in their hands, which will also give them the control of the police, the army, the navy, and the courts, they will confiscate, with or without remuneration, all the possessions of the capitalist class which are used in the production and distribution of the necessaries and luxuries of life. By this, they mean to apply the law of eminent domain to the land, and to extend the law of eminent domain till it embraces the mines, the factories, the railroads, and the ocean carriers. In short, they intend to destroy present-day society, which they contend is run in the interest of another class, and from the materials to construct a new society, which will be run in their interest.

On the other hand, the capitalist class is beginning to grow conscious of itself and of the struggle which is being waged. It is already forming offensive and defensive leagues, while some of the most prominent figures in the nation are preparing to lead it in the attack upon socialism.

The question to be solved is not one of Malthusianism, "projected efficiency," nor ethics. It is a question of might. Whichever class is to win, will win by virtue of superior strength; for the workers are beginning to say, as they said to Mr. Cunniff, "Malthus be damned." In their own minds they find no sanction for continuing the individual struggle for the survival of the fittest. As Mr. Gompers has said, they want more, and more, and more.

The ethical import of Mr. Kidd's plan of the present generation putting up with less in order that race efficiency may be projected into a remote future, has no bearing upon their actions. They refuse to be the "glad perishers" so glowingly described by Nietzsche.

It remains to be seen how promptly the capitalist class will respond to the call to arms. Upon its promptness rests its existence, for if it sits idly by, soothfully proclaiming that what ought not to be cannot be, it will find the roof beams crashing about its head. The capitalist class is in the numerical minority, and bids fair to be outvoted if it does not put a stop to the vast propaganda being waged by its enemy. It is no longer a question of whether or not there is a class struggle. The question now is, what will be the outcome of the class struggle?

THE TRAMP

Mr. Francis O'Neil, General Superintendent of Police, Chicago, speaking of the tramp, says: "Despite the most stringent police regulations, a great city will have a certain number of homeless vagrants to shelter through the winter." "Despite," — mark the word, a confession of organized helplessness as against unorganized necessity. If police regulations are stringent and yet fail, then that which makes them fail, namely, the tramp, must have still more stringent reasons for succeeding. This being so, it should be of interest to inquire into these reasons, to attempt to discover why the nameless and homeless vagrant sets at naught the right arm of the corporate power of our great cities, why all that is weak and worthless is stronger than all that is strong and of value.

Mr. O'Neil is a man of wide experience on the subject of tramps. He may be called a specialist. As he says of himself: "As an old-time desk sergeant and police captain, I have had almost unlimited opportunity to study and analyze this class of floating population, which seeks the city in winter and scatters abroad through the country in the spring." He then continues: "This experience reiterated the lesson that the vast majority of these wanderers are of the class with whom a life of vagrancy is a chosen means of living without work." Not only is it to be inferred from this that there is a large class in society which lives without work, for Mr. O'Neil's testimony further shows that this class is forced to live without work.

He says: "I have been astonished at the multitude of those who have unfortunately engaged in occupations which practically force them to become loafers for at least a third of the year. And it is from this class that the tramps are largely recruited. I recall a certain winter when it seemed to me that a large portion of the inhabitants of Chicago belonged to this army of unfortunates. I was stationed at a police station not far from where an ice harvest was ready for the cutters. The ice company advertised for helpers, and the very night this call appeared in the newspapers our station was packed with homeless men, who asked shelter in order to be at hand for the morning's work. Every foot of floor space was given over to these lodgers and scores were still unaccommodated."

And again: “And it must be confessed that the man who is willing to do honest labor for food and shelter is a rare specimen in this vast army of shabby and tattered wanderers who seek the warmth of the city with the coming of the first snow.” Taking into consideration the crowd of honest laborers that swamped Mr. O’Neil’s station-house on the way to the ice-cutting, it is patent, if all tramps were looking for honest labor instead of a small minority, that the honest laborers would have a far harder task finding something honest to do for food and shelter. If the opinion of the honest laborers who swamped Mr. O’Neil’s station-house were asked, one could rest confident that each and every man would express a preference for fewer honest laborers on the morrow when he asked the ice foreman for a job.

And, finally, Mr. O’Neil says: “The humane and generous treatment which this city has accorded the great army of homeless unfortunates has made it the victim of wholesale imposition, and this well-intended policy of kindness has resulted in making Chicago the winter Mecca of a vast and undesirable floating population.” That is to say, because of her kindness, Chicago had more than her fair share of tramps; because she was humane and generous she suffered whole-sale imposition. From this we must conclude that it does not do to be *humane* and *generous* to our fellow-men — when they are tramps. Mr. O’Neil is right, and that this is no sophism it is the intention of this article, among other things, to show.

In a general way we may draw the following inferences from the remarks of Mr. O’Neil: (1) The tramp is stronger than organized society and cannot be put down; (2) The tramp is “shabby,” “tattered,” “homeless,” “unfortunate”; (3) There is a “vast” number of tramps; (4) Very few tramps are willing to do honest work; (5) Those tramps who are willing to do honest work have to hunt very hard to find it; (6) The tramp is undesirable.

To this last let the contention be appended that the tramp is only *personally* undesirable; that he is *negatively* desirable; that the function he performs in society is a negative function; and that he is the by-product of economic necessity.

It is very easy to demonstrate that there are more men than there is work for men to do. For instance, what would happen tomorrow if one hundred thousand tramps should become suddenly inspired with an overmastering desire for work? It is a fair question. “Go to work” is preached to the tramp every day of his life. The judge on the bench, the pedestrian in the street, the housewife at the kitchen door, all unite in advising him to go to work. So what would happen tomorrow if one hundred thousand tramps acted upon this advice and strenuously and indomitably sought work? Why, by the end of the week one hundred thousand workers, their places taken by the tramps, would receive their time and be "hitting the road" for a job.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox unwittingly and uncomfortably demonstrated the disparity between men and work. _ She made a casual reference, in a newspaper column she conducts, to the difficulty two business men found in obtaining good employees. The first morning mail brought her seventy-five applications for the position, and at the end of two weeks over two hundred people had applied.

Still more strikingly was the same proposition recently demonstrated in San Francisco. A sympathetic strike called out a whole federation of trades' unions. Thousands of men, in many branches of trade, quit work, — draymen, sand teamsters, porters and packers, longshoremen, stevedores, warehousemen, stationary engineers, sailors, marine firemen, stewards, sea-cooks, and so forth, — an interminable list. It was a strike of large proportions. Every Pacific coast shipping city was involved, and the entire coasting service, from San Diego to Puget Sound, was virtually tied up. The time was considered auspicious. The Philippines and Alaska had drained the Pacific coast of surplus labor. It was summer-time, when the agricultural demand for laborers was at its height, and when the cities were bare of their floating populations. And yet there remained a body of surplus labor sufficient to take the places of the strikers. No matter what occupation, sea-cook or stationary engineer, sand teamster or warehouseman, in every case there was an idle worker ready to do the work. And not only ready but anxious. They fought for a chance to work. Men were killed, hundreds of heads were broken, the hospitals were filled with injured men, and thousands of assaults were committed. And still surplus laborers, "scabs," came forward to replace the strikers.

The question arises: *Whence came this second army of workers to replace the first army*? One thing is certain: the trades' unions did not scab on one another. Another thing is certain: no industry on the Pacific slope was crippled in the slightest degree by its workers being drawn away to fill the places of the strikers. A third thing is certain: the agricultural workers did not flock to the cities to replace the strikers. In this last instance it is worth while to note that the agricultural laborers wailed to High Heaven when a few of the strikers went into the country to compete with them in unskilled employments. So there is no accounting for this second army of workers. It simply was. It was there all this time, a surplus labor army in the year of our Lord 1901, a year adjudged most prosperous in the annals of the United States.

The existence of the surplus labor army being established, there remains to be established the economic necessity for the surplus labor army. The simplest and most obvious need is that brought about by the fluctuation of production. If, when production is at low ebb, all men are at work, it necessarily follows that when production increases there will be no men to do the increased work. This may seem almost childish, and, if not childish, at least easily remedied. At low ebb let the men work shorter time; at high flood let them work overtime. The main objection to this is, that it is not done, and that we are considering what is, not what might be or should be.

Then there are great irregular and periodical demands for labor which must be met. Under the first head come all the big building and engineering enterprises. When a canal is to be dug or a railroad put through, requiring thousands of laborers, it would be hurtful to withdraw these laborers from the constant industries. And whether it is a canal to be dug or a cellar, whether five thousand men are required or five, it is well, in society as at present organized, that they be taken from the surplus labor army. The surplus labor army is the reserve fund of social energy, and this is one of the reasons for its existence.

Under the second head, periodical demands, come the harvests. Throughout the year, huge labor tides sweep back and forth across the United States. That which is sown and tended by few men, comes to sudden ripeness and must be gathered by many men; and it is inevitable that these many men form floating populations. In the late spring the berries must be picked, in the summer the grain garnered, in the fall, the hops gathered, in the winter the ice harvested. In California a man may pick berries in Siskiyou, peaches in Santa Clara, grapes in the San Joaquin, and oranges in Los Angeles, going from job to job as the season advances, and travelling a thousand miles ere the season is done. But the great demand for agricultural labor is in the summer. In the winter, work is slack, and these floating populations eddy into the cities to eke out a precarious existence and harrow the souls of the police officers until the return of warm weather and work. If there were constant work at good wages for every man, who would harvest the crops?

But the last and most significant need for the surplus labor army remains to be stated. This surplus labor acts as a check upon all employed labor. It is the lash by which the masters hold the workers to their tasks, or drive them back to their tasks when they have revolted. It is the goad which forces the workers into the compulsory "free contracts" against which they now and again rebel. There is only one reason under the sun that strikes fail, and that is because there are always plenty of men to take the strikers' places.

The strength of the union today, other things remaining equal, is proportionate to the skill of the trade, or, in other words, proportionate to the pressure the surplus labor army can put upon it. If a thousand ditch-diggers strike, it is easy to replace them, wherefore the ditch-diggers have little or no organized strength. But a thousand highly skilled machinists are somewhat harder to replace, and in consequence the machinist unions are strong. The ditch-diggers are wholly at the mercy of the surplus labor army, the machinists only partly. To be invincible, a union must be a monopoly. It must control every man in its particular trade, and regulate apprentices so that the supply of skilled workmen may remain constant; this is the dream of the "Labor Trust" on the part of the captains of labor.

Once, in England, after the Great Plague, labor awoke to find there was more work for men than there were men to work. Instead of workers competing for favors from employers, employers were competing for favors from the workers. Wages went up and up, and continued to go up, until the workers demanded the full product of their toil. Now it is clear that, when labor receives its full product capital must perish. And so the pygmy capitalists of that post-Plague day found their existence threatened by this untoward condition of affairs. To save themselves, they set a maximum wage, restrained the workers from moving about from place to place, smashed incipient organization, refused to tolerate idlers, and by most barbarous legal penalties punished those who disobeyed. After that, things went on as before.

The point of this, of course, is to demonstrate the need of the surplus labor army. Without such an army, our present capitalist society would be powerless. Labor would organize as it never organized before, and the last least worker would be gathered into the unions. The full product of toil would be demanded, and capitalist society would crumble away. Nor could capitalist society save itself as did the post-Plague capitalist society. The time is past when a handful of masters, by imprisonment and barbarous punishment, can drive the legions of the workers to their tasks. Without a surplus labor army, the courts, police, and military are impotent. In such matters the function of the courts, police, and military is to preserve order, and to fill the places of strikers with surplus labor. If there be no surplus labor to instate, there is no function to perform; for disorder arises only during the process of instatement, when the striking labor army and the surplus labor army clash together. That is to say, that which maintains the integrity of the present industrial society more potently than the courts, police, and military is the surplus labor army.

* * * * *

It has been shown that there are more men than there is work for men, and that the surplus labor army is an economic necessity. To show how the tramp is a by-product of this economic necessity, it is necessary to inquire into the composition of the surplus labor army. What men form it? Why are they there? What do they do?

In the first place, since the workers must compete for employment, it inevitably follows that it is the fit and efficient who find employment. The skilled worker holds his place by virtue of his skill and efficiency. Were he less skilled, or were he unreliable or erratic, he would be swiftly replaced by a stronger competitor. The skilled and steady employments are not cumbered with clowns and idiots. A man finds his place according to his ability and the needs of the system, and those without ability, or incapable of satisfying the needs of the system, have no place. Thus, the poor telegrapher may develop into an excellent wood-chopper. But if the poor telegrapher cherishes the delusion that he is a good telegrapher, and at the same time disdains all other employments, he will have no employment at all, or he will be so poor at all other employments that he will work only now and again in lieu of better men. He will be among the first let off when times are dull, and among the last taken on when times are good. Or, to the point, he will be a member of the surplus labor army.

So the conclusion is reached that the less fit and less efficient, or the unfit and inefficient, compose the surplus labor army. Here are to be found the men who have tried and failed, the men who cannot hold jobs, — the plumber apprentice who could not become a journeyman, and the plumber journeyman too clumsy and dull to retain employment; switchmen who wreck trains; clerks who cannot balance books; blacksmiths who lame horses; lawyers who cannot plead; in short, the failures of every trade and profession, and failures, many of them, in divers trades and professions. Failure is writ large, and in their wretchedness they bear the stamp of social disapprobation. Common work, any kind of work, wherever or however they can obtain it, is their portion.

But these hereditary inefficients do not alone compose the surplus labor army. There are the skilled but unsteady and unreliable men; and the old men, once skilled, but, with dwindling powers, no longer skilled. _ And there are good men, too, splendidly skilled and efficient, but thrust out of the employment of dying or disaster-smitten industries. In this connection it is not out of place to note the misfortune of the workers in the British iron trades, who are suffering because of American inroads. And, last of all, are the unskilled laborers, the hewers of wood and drawers of water, the ditch-diggers, the men of pick and shovel, the helpers, lumpers, roustabouts. If trade is slack on a seacoast of two thousand miles, or the harvests are light in a great interior valley, myriads of these laborers lie idle, or make life miserable for their fellows in kindred unskilled employments.

A constant filtration goes on in the working world, and good material is continually drawn from the surplus labor army. Strikes and industrial dislocations shake up the workers, bring good men to the surface and sink men as good or not so good. The hope of the skilled striker is in that the scabs are less skilled, or less capable of becoming skilled; yet each strike attests to the efficiency that lurks beneath. After the Pullman strike, a few thousand railroad men were chagrined to find the work they had flung down taken up by men as good as themselves.

But one thing must be considered here. Under the present system, if the weakest and least fit were as strong and fit as the best, and the best were correspondingly stronger and fitter, the same condition would obtain. There would be the same army of employed labor, the same army of surplus labor. The whole thing is relative. There is no absolute standard of efficiency.

* * * * *

Comes now the tramp. And all conclusions may be anticipated by saying at once that he is a tramp because some one has to be a tramp. If he left the “road” and became a *very* efficient common laborer, some *ordinarily* *efficient* common laborer would have to take to the "road." The nooks and crannies are crowded by the surplus laborers; and when the first snow flies, and the tramps are driven into the cities, things become overcrowded and stringent police regulations are necessary.

The tramp is one of two kinds of men: he is either a discouraged worker or a discouraged criminal. Now a discouraged criminal, on investigation, proves to be a discouraged worker, or the descendant of discouraged workers; so that, in the last analysis, the tramp is a discouraged worker. Since there is not work for all, discouragement for some is unavoidable. How, then, does this process of discouragement operate?

The lower the employment in the industrial scale, the harder the conditions. The finer, the more delicate, the more skilled the trade, the higher is it lifted above the struggle. There is less pressure, less sordidness, less savagery. There are fewer glass-blowers proportionate to the needs of the glass-blowing industry than there are ditch-diggers proportionate to the needs of the ditch-digging industry. And not only this, for it requires a glass-blower to take the place of a striking glass-blower, while any kind of a striker or out-of-work can take the place of a ditch-digger. So the skilled trades are more independent, have more individuality and latitude. They may confer with their masters, make demands, assert themselves. The unskilled laborers, on the other hand, have no voice in their affairs. The settlement of terms is none of their business. "Free contract" is all that remains to them. They may take what is offered, or leave it. There are plenty more of their kind. They do not count. They are members of the surplus labor army, and must be content with a hand-to-mouth existence.

The reward is likewise proportioned. The strong, fit worker in a skilled trade, where there is little labor pressure, is well compensated. He is a king compared with his less fortunate brothers in the unskilled occupations where the labor pressure is great. The mediocre worker not only is forced to be idle a large portion of the time, but when employed is forced to accept a pittance. A dollar a day on some days and nothing on other days will hardly support a man and wife and send children to school. And not only do the masters bear heavily upon him, and his own kind struggle for the morsel at his mouth, but all skilled and organized labor adds to his woe. Union men do not scab on one another, but in strikes, or when work is slack, it is considered "fair" for them to descend and take away the work of the common laborers. And take it away they do; for, as a matter of fact, a well-fed, ambitious machinist or a core-maker will transiently shovel coal better than an ill-fed, spiritless laborer.

Thus there is no encouragement for the unfit, inefficient, and mediocre. Their very inefficiency and mediocrity make them helpless as cattle and add to their misery. And the whole tendency for such is downward, until, at the bottom of the social pit, they are wretched, inarticulate beasts, living like beasts, breeding like beasts, dying like beasts. And how do they fare, these creatures born mediocre, whose heritage is neither brains nor brawn nor endurance? They are sweated in the slums in an atmosphere of discouragement and despair. There is no strength in weakness, no encouragement in foul air, vile food, and dank dens. They are there because they are so made that they are not fit to be higher up; but filth and obscenity do not strengthen the neck, nor does chronic emptiness of belly stiffen the back.

For the mediocre there is no hope. Mediocrity is a sin. Poverty is the penalty of failure, — poverty, from whose loins spring the criminal and the tramp, both failures, both discouraged workers. Poverty is the inferno where ignorance festers and vice corrodes, and where the physical, mental, and moral parts of nature are aborted and denied.

That the charge of rashness in splashing the picture be not incurred, let the following authoritative evidence be considered: first, the work and wages of mediocrity and inefficiency, and, second, the habitat:

The New York Sun of February 28, 1901, describes the opening of a factory in New York City by the American Tobacco Company. Cheroots were to be made in this factory in competition with other factories which refused to be absorbed by the trust. The trust advertised for girls. The crowd of men and boys who wanted work was so great in front of the building that the police were forced with their clubs to clear them away. The wage paid the girls was $2.50 per week, sixty cents of which went for car fare.

Miss Nellie Mason Auten, a graduate student of the department of sociology at the University of Chicago, recently made a thorough investigation of the garment trades of Chicago. Her figures were published in the American Journal of Sociology, and commented upon by the Literary Digest. She found women working ten hours a day, six days a week, for forty cents per week (a rate of two-thirds of a cent an hour). Many women earned less than a dollar a week, and none of them worked every week.

The following table will best summarize Miss Auten's investigations among a portion of the garment-workers:

Industry	Average Individual Weekly Wages	Average Number Of Weeks Employed	Average Yearly Earnings
Dressmakers	$.90	42.	$37.00
Pants-Finishers	1.31	27.58	42.41
Housewives and Pants-Finishers	1.58	30.21	47.49
Seamstresses	2.03	32.78	64.10
Pants-makers	2.13	30.77	75.61
Miscellaneous	2.77	29.	81.80

Tailors
6.22
31.96
211.92

General Averages
2.48
31.18
76.74

Walter A. Wyckoff, who is as great an authority upon the worker as Josiah Flynt is on the tramp, furnishes the following Chicago experience:

"Many of the men were so weakened by the want and hardship of the winter that they were no longer in condition for effective labor. Some of the bosses who were in need of added hands were obliged to turn men away because of physical incapacity. One instance of this I shall not soon forget. It was when I overheard, early one morning at a factory gate, an interview between a would-be laborer and the boss. I knew the applicant for a Russian Jew, who had at home an old mother and a wife and two young children to support. He had had intermittent employment throughout the winter in a sweater's den, barely enough to keep them all alive, and, after the hardships of the cold season, he was again in desperate straits for work.

"The boss had all but agreed to take him on for some sort of unskilled labor, when, struck by the cadaverous look of the man, he told him to bare his arm. Up went the sleeve of his coat and his ragged flannel shirt, exposing a naked arm with the muscles nearly gone, and the blue-white transparent skin stretched over sinews and the outlines of the bones. Pitiful beyond words was his effort to give a semblance of strength to the biceps which rose faintly to the upward movement of the forearm. But the boss sent him off with an oath and a contemptuous laugh; and I watched the fellow as he turned down the street, facing the fact of his starving family with a despair at his heart which only mortal man can feel and no mortal tongue can speak."

Concerning habitat, Mr. Jacob Riis has stated that in New York City, in the block bounded by Stanton, Houston, Attorney, and Ridge streets, the size of which is 200 by 300, there is a warren of 2244 human beings.

In the block bounded by Sixty-first and Sixty-second streets, and Amsterdam and West End avenues, are over four thousand human creatures, — quite a comfortable New England village to crowd into one city block.

The Rev. Dr. Behrends, speaking of the block bounded by Canal, Hester, Eldridge, and Forsyth streets, says: "In a room 12 by 8 and 5½ feet high, it was found that nine persons slept and prepared their food. . . . In another room, located in a dark cellar, without screens or partitions, were together two men with their wives and a girl of fourteen, two single men and a boy of seventeen, two women and four boys, — nine, ten, eleven, and fifteen years old, — fourteen persons in all."

Here humanity rots. Its victims, with grim humor, call it "tenant-house rot." Or, as a legislative report puts it: "Here infantile life unfolds its bud, but perishes before its first anniversary. Here youth is ugly with loathsome disease, and the deformities which follow physical degeneration."

These are the men and women who are what they are because they were not better born, or because they happened to be unluckily born in time and space. Gauged by the needs of the system, they are weak and worthless. The hospital and the pauper's grave await them, and they offer no encouragement to the mediocre worker who has failed higher up in the industrial structure. Such a worker, conscious that he has failed, conscious from the hard fact that he cannot obtain work in the higher employments, finds several courses open to him. He may come down and be a beast in the social pit, for instance; but if he be of a certain caliber, the effect of the social pit will be to discourage him from work. In his blood a rebellion will quicken, and he will elect to become either a felon or a tramp.

If he have fought the hard fight he is not unacquainted with the lure of the "road." When out of work and still undiscouraged, he has been forced to "hit the road" between large cities in his quest for a job. He has loafed, seen the country and green things, laughed in joy, lain on his back and listened to the birds singing overhead, unannoyed by factory whistles and bosses' harsh commands; and, most significant of all, *he has lived*! That is the point! He has not starved to death. Not only has he been care-free and happy, but he has lived! And from the knowledge that he has idled and is still alive, he achieves a new outlook on life; and the more he experiences the unenviable lot of the poor worker, the more the blandishments of the "road" take hold of him. And finally he flings his challenge in the face of society, imposes a valorous boycott on all work, and joins the far-wanderers of Hoboland, the gypsy folk of this latter day.

But the tramp does not usually come from the slums. His place of birth is ordinarily a bit above, and sometimes a very great bit above. A confessed failure, he yet refuses to accept the punishment, and swerves aside from the slum to vagabondage. The average beast in the social pit is either too much of a beast, or too much of a slave to the bourgeois ethics and ideals of his masters, to manifest this flicker of rebellion. But the social pit, out of its discouragement and viciousness, breeds criminals, men who prefer being beasts of prey to being beasts of work. And the mediocre criminal, in turn, the unfit and inefficient criminal, is discouraged by the strong arm of the law and goes over to trampdom.

These men, the discouraged worker and the discouraged criminal, voluntarily withdraw themselves from the struggle for work. Industry does not need them. There are no factories shut down through lack of labor, no projected railroads unbuilt for want of pick-and-shovel men. Women are still glad to toil for a dollar a week, and men and boys to clamor and fight for work at the factory gates. No one misses these discouraged men, and in going away they have made it somewhat easier for those that remain.

* * * * *

So the case stands thus: There being more men than there is work for men to do, a surplus labor army inevitably results. The surplus labor army is an economic necessity; without it, present society would fall to pieces. Into the surplus labor army are herded the mediocre, the inefficient, the unfit, and those incapable of satisfying the industrial needs of the system. The struggle for work between the members of the surplus labor army is sordid and savage, and at the bottom of the social pit the struggle is vicious and beastly. This struggle tends to discouragement, and the victims of this discouragement are the criminal and the tramp. The tramp is not an economic necessity such as the surplus labor army, but he is the by-product of an economic necessity.

The "road" is one of the safety-valves through which the waste of the social organism is given off. And *being given off* constitutes the negative function of the tramp. Society, as at present organized, makes much waste of human life. This waste must be eliminated. Chloroform or electrocution would be a simple, merciful solution of this problem of elimination; but the ruling ethics, while permitting the human waste, will not permit a humane elimination of that waste. This paradox demonstrates the irreconcilability of theoretical ethics and industrial need.

And so the tramp becomes self-eliminating. And not only self! Since he is manifestly unfit for things as they are, and since kind is prone to beget kind, it is necessary that his kind cease with him, that his progeny shall not be, that he play the eunuch’s part in this twentieth century after Christ. And he plays it. He does not breed. Sterility is his portion, as it is the portion of the woman on the street. They might have been mates, but society has decreed otherwise.

And, while it is not nice that these men should die, it is ordained that they must die, and we should not quarrel with them if they cumber our highways and kitchen stoops with their perambulating carcasses. This is a form of elimination we not only countenance but compel. Therefore let us be cheerful and honest about it. Let us be as stringent as we please with our police regulations, but for goodness’ sake let us refrain from telling the tramp to go to work. Not only is it unkind, but it is untrue and hypocritical. We know there is no work for him. As the scapegoat to our economic and industrial sinning, or to the plan of things, if you will, we should give him credit. Let us be just. He is so made. Society made him. He did not make himself.

THE SCAB

In a competitive society, where men struggle with one another for food and shelter, what is more natural than that generosity, when it diminishes the food and shelter of men other than he who is generous, should be held an accursed thing? Wise old saws to the contrary, he who takes from a man's purse takes from his existence. To strike at a man's food and shelter is to strike at his life; and in a society organized on a tooth-and-nail basis, such an act, performed though it may be under the guise of generosity, is none the less menacing and terrible.

It is for this reason that a laborer is so fiercely hostile to another laborer who offers to work for less pay or longer hours. To hold his place, (which is to live), he must offset this offer by another equally liberal, which is equivalent to giving away somewhat from the food and shelter he enjoys. To sell his day's work for $2, instead of $2.50, means that he, his wife, and his children will not have so good a roof over their heads, so warm clothes on their backs, so substantial food in their stomachs. Meat will be bought less frequently and it will be tougher and less nutritious, stout new shoes will go less often on the children's feet, and disease and death will be more imminent in a cheaper house and neighborhood.

Thus the generous laborer, giving more of a day's work for less return, (measured in terms of food and shelter), threatens the life of his less generous brother laborer, and at the best, if he does not destroy that life, he diminishes it. Whereupon the less generous laborer looks upon him as an enemy, and, as men are inclined to do in a tooth-and-nail society, he tries to kill the man who is trying to kill him.

When a striker kills with a brick the man who has taken his place, he has no sense of wrong-doing. In the deepest holds of his being, though he does not reason the impulse, he has an ethical sanction. He feels dimly that he has justification, just as the home-defending Boer felt, though more sharply, with each bullet he fired at the invading English. Behind every brick thrown by a striker is the selfish will "to live" of himself, and the slightly altruistic will "to live" of his family. The family group came into the world before the State group, and society, being still on the primitive basis of tooth and nail, the will “to live” of the State is not so compelling to the striker as is the will “to live” of his family and himself.

In addition to the use of bricks, clubs, and bullets, the selfish laborer finds it necessary to express his feelings in speech. Just as the peaceful country-dweller calls the sea-rover a “pirate,” and the stout burgher calls the man who breaks into his strong-box a “robber,” so the selfish laborer applies the opprobrious epithet a “scab” to the laborer who takes from him food and shelter by being more generous in the disposal of his labor power. The sentimental connotation of “scab” is as terrific as that of “traitor” or “Judas,” and a sentimental definition would be as deep and varied as the human heart. It is far easier to arrive at what may be called a technical definition, worded in commercial terms, as, for instance, that *a scab is one who gives more value for the same price than another*.

The laborer who gives more time or strength or skill for the same wage than another, or equal time or strength or skill for a less wage, is a scab. This generousness on his part is hurtful to his fellow-laborers, for it compels them to an equal generousness which is not to their liking, and which gives them less of food and shelter. But a word may be said for the scab. Just as his act makes his rivals compulsorily generous, so do they, by fortune of birth and training, make compulsory his act of generousness. He does not scab because he wants to scab. No whim of the spirit, no burgeoning of the heart, leads him to give more of his labor power than they for a certain sum.

It is because he cannot get work on the same terms as they that he is a scab. There is less work than there are men to do work. This is patent, else the scab would not loom so large on the labor-market horizon. Because they are stronger than he, or more skilled, or more energetic, it is impossible for him to take their places at the same wage. To take their places he must give more value, must work longer hours or receive a smaller wage. He does so, and he cannot help it, for his will “to live” is driving him on as well as they are being driven on by their will “to live”; and to live he must win food and shelter, which he can do only by receiving permission to work from some man who owns a bit of land or a piece of machinery. And to receive permission from this man, he must make the transaction profitable for him.

Viewed in this light, the scab, who gives more labor power for a certain price than his fellows, is not so generous after all. He is no more generous with his energy than the chattel slave and the convict laborer, who, by the way, are the almost perfect scabs. They give their labor power for about the minimum possible price. But, within limits, they may loaf and malinger, and, as scabs, are exceeded by the machine, which never loafs and malingers and which is the ideally perfect scab.

It is not nice to be a scab. Not only is it not in good social taste and comradeship, but, from the standpoint of food and shelter, it is bad business policy. Nobody desires to scab, to give most for least. The ambition of every individual is quite the opposite, to give least for most; and, as a result, living in a tooth-and-nail society, battle royal is waged by the ambitious individuals. But in its most salient aspect, that of the struggle over the division of the joint product, it is no longer a battle between individuals, but between groups of individuals. Capital and labor apply themselves to raw material, make something useful out of it, add to its value, and then proceed to quarrel over the division of the added value. Neither cares to give most for least. Each is intent on giving less than the other and on receiving more.

Labor combines into its unions, capital into partnerships, associations, corporations, and trusts. A group-struggle is the result, in which the individuals, as individuals, play no part. The Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, for instance, serves notice on the Master Builders' Association that it demands an increase of the wage of its members from $3.50 a day to $4, and a Saturday half-holiday without pay. This means that the carpenters are trying to give less for more. Where they received $21 for six full days, they are endeavoring to get $22 for five days and a half, — that is, they will work half a day less each week and receive a dollar more.

Also, they expect the Saturday half-holiday to give work to one additional man for each eleven previously employed. This last affords a splendid example of the development of the group idea. In this particular struggle the individual has no chance at all for life. The individual carpenter would be crushed like a mote by the Master Builders' Association, and like a mote the individual master builder would be crushed by the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

In the group-struggle over the division of the joint product, labor utilizes the union with its two great weapons, the strike and the boycott; while capital utilizes the trust and the association, the weapons of which are the black-list, the lockout, and the scab. The scab is by far the most formidable weapon of the three. He is the man who breaks strikes and causes all the trouble. Without him there would be no trouble, for the strikers are willing to remain out peacefully and indefinitely so long as other men are not in their places, and so long as the particular aggregation of capital with which they are fighting is eating its head off in enforced idleness.

But both warring groups have reserve weapons. Were it not for the scab, these weapons would not be brought into play. But the scab takes the place of the striker, who begins at once to wield a most powerful weapon, terrorism. The will "to live" of the scab recoils from the menace of broken bones and violent death. With all due respect to the labor leaders, who are not to be blamed for volubly asseverating otherwise, terrorism is a well-defined and eminently successful policy of the labor unions. It has probably won them more strikes than all the rest of the weapons in their arsenal. This terrorism, however, must be clearly understood. It is directed solely against the scab, placing him in such fear for life and limb as to drive him out of the contest. But when terrorism gets out of hand and inoffensive non-combatants are injured, law and order threatened, and property destroyed, it becomes an edged tool that cuts both ways. This sort of terrorism is sincerely deplored by the labor leaders, for it has probably lost them as many strikes as have been lost by any other single cause.

The scab is powerless under terrorism. As a rule, he is not so good nor gritty a man as the men he is displacing, and he lacks their fighting organization. He stands in dire need of stiffening and backing. His employers, the capitalists, draw their two remaining weapons, the ownership of which is debatable, but which they for the time being happen to control. These two weapons may be called the political and judicial machinery of society. When the scab crumples up and is ready to go down before the fists, bricks, and bullets of the labor group, the capitalist group puts the police and soldiers into the field, and begins a general bombardment of injunctions. Victory usually follows, for the labor group cannot withstand the combined assault of gatling guns and injunctions.

But it has been noted that the ownership of the political and judicial machinery of society is debatable. In the Titanic struggle over the division of the joint product, each group reaches out for every available weapon. Nor are they blinded by the smoke of conflict. They fight their battles as coolly and collectedly as ever battles were fought on paper. The capitalist group has long since realized the immense importance of controlling the political and judicial machinery of society.

Taught by gatlings and injunctions, which have smashed many an otherwise successful strike, the labor group is beginning to realize that it all depends upon who is behind and who is before the gatlings and the injunctions. And he who knows the labor movement knows that there is slowly growing up and being formulated a clear and definite policy for the capture of the political and judicial machinery.

This is the terrible spectre which Mr. John Graham Brooks sees looming portentously over the twentieth century world. No man may boast a more intimate knowledge of the labor movement than he; and he reiterates again and again the dangerous likelihood of the whole labor group capturing the political machinery of society. As he says in his recent book: _ “It is not probable that employers can destroy unionism in the United States. Adroit and desperate attempts will, however, be made, if we mean by unionism the undisciplined and aggressive fact of vigorous and determined organizations. If capital should prove too strong in this struggle, the result is easy to predict. The employers have only to convince organized labor that it cannot hold its own against the capitalist manager, and the whole energy that now goes to the union will turn to an aggressive political socialism. It will not be the harmless sympathy with increased city and state functions which trade unions already feel; it will become a turbulent political force bent upon using every weapon of taxation against the rich.”

This struggle not to be a scab, to avoid giving more for less and to succeed in giving less for more, is more vital than it would appear on the surface. The capitalist and labor groups are locked together in desperate battle, and neither side is swayed by moral considerations more than skin-deep. The labor group hires business agents, lawyers, and organizers, and is beginning to intimidate legislators by the strength of its solid vote; and more directly, in the near future, it will attempt to control legislation by capturing it bodily through the ballot-box. On the other hand, the capitalist group, numerically weaker, hires newspapers, universities, and legislatures, and strives to bend to its need all the forces which go to mould public opinion.

The only honest morality displayed by either side is white-hot indignation at the iniquities of the other side. The striking teamster complacently takes a scab driver into an alley, and with an iron bar breaks his arms, so that he can drive no more, but cries out to high Heaven for justice when the capitalist breaks his skull by means of a club in the hands of a policeman. Nay, the members of a union will declaim in impassioned rhetoric for the God-given right of an eight-hour day, and at the time be working their own business agent seventeen hours out of the twenty-four.

A capitalist such as Collis P. Huntington, and his name is Legion, after a long life spent in buying the aid of countless legislatures, will wax virtuously wrathful, and condemn in unmeasured terms "the dangerous tendency of crying out to the Government for aid" in the way of labor legislation. Without a quiver, a member of the capitalist group will run tens of thousands of pitiful child-laborers through his life-destroying cotton factories, and weep maudlin and constitutional tears over one scab hit in the back with a brick. He will drive a "compulsory" free contract with an unorganized laborer on the basis of a starvation wage, saying, "Take it or leave it," knowing that to leave it means to die of hunger, and in the next breath, when the organizer entices that laborer into a union, will storm patriotically about the inalienable right of all men to work. In short, the chief moral concern of either side is with the morals of the other side. They are not in the business for their moral welfare, but to achieve the enviable position of the non-scab who gets more than he gives.

But there is more to the question than has yet been discussed. The labor scab is no more detestable to his brother laborers than is the capitalist scab to his brother capitalists. A capitalist may get most for least in dealing with his laborers, and in so far be a non-scab; but at the same time, in his dealings with his fellow-capitalists, he may give most for least and be the very worst kind of scab. The most heinous crime an employer of labor can commit is to scab on his fellow-employers of labor. Just as the individual laborers have organized into groups to protect themselves from the peril of the scab laborer, so have the employers organized into groups to protect themselves from the peril of the scab employer. The employers' federations, associations, and trusts are nothing more nor less than unions. They are organized to destroy scabbing amongst themselves and to encourage scabbing amongst others. For this reason they pool interests, determine prices, and present an unbroken and aggressive front to the labor group.

As has been said before, nobody likes to play the compulsorily generous role of scab. It is a bad business proposition on the face of it. And it is patent that there would be no capitalist scabs if there were not more capital than there is work for capital to do. When there are enough factories in existence to supply, with occasional stoppages, a certain commodity, the building of new factories by a rival concern, for the production of that commodity, is plain advertisement that that capital is out of a job. The first act of this new aggregation of capital will be to cut prices, to give more for less, — in short to scab, to strike at the very existence of the less generous aggregation of capital the work of which it is trying to do.

No scab capitalist strives to give more for less for any other reason than that he hopes, by undercutting a competitor and driving that competitor out of the market, to get that market and its profits for himself. His ambition is to achieve the day when he shall stand alone in the field both as buyer and seller, — when he will be the royal non-scab, buying most for least, selling least for most, and reducing all about him, the small buyers and sellers, (the consumers and the laborers), to a general condition of scabdom. This, for example, has been the history of Mr. Rockefeller and the Standard Oil Company. Through all the sordid villanies of scabdom he has passed, until today he is a most regal non-scab. However, to continue in this enviable position, he must be prepared at a moment's notice to go scabbing again. And he is prepared. Whenever a competitor arises, Mr. Rockefeller changes about from giving least for most and gives most for least with such a vengeance as to drive the competitor out of existence.

The banded capitalists discriminate against a scab capitalist by refusing him trade advantages, and by combining against him in most relentless fashion. The banded laborers, discriminating against a scab laborer in more primitive fashion, with a club, are no more merciless than the banded capitalists.

Mr. Casson tells of a New York capitalist who withdrew from the Sugar Union several years ago and became a scab. He was worth something like twenty millions of dollars. But the Sugar Union, standing shoulder to shoulder with the Railroad Union and several other unions, beat him to his knees till he cried, "Enough." So frightfully did they beat him that he was obliged to turn over to his creditors his home, his chickens, and his gold watch. In point of fact, he was as thoroughly bludgeoned by the Federation of Capitalist Unions as ever scab workman was bludgeoned by a labor union. The intent in either case is the same, — to destroy the scab's producing power. The labor scab with concussion of the brain is put out of business, and so is the capitalist scab who has lost all his dollars down to his chickens and his watch.

But the rôle of scab passes beyond the individual. Just as individuals scab on other individuals, so do groups scab on other groups. And the principle involved is precisely the same as in the case of the simple labor scab. A group, in the nature of its organization, is often compelled to give most for least, and, so doing, to strike at the life of another group. At the present moment all Europe is appalled by that colossal scab, the United States. And Europe is clamorous with agitation for a Federation of National Unions to protect her from the United States. It may be remarked, in passing, that in its prime essentials this agitation in no wise differs from the trade-union agitation among workmen in any industry. The trouble is caused by the scab who is giving most for least. The result of the American scab's nefarious actions will be to strike at the food and shelter of Europe. The way for Europe to protect herself is to quit bickering among her parts and to form a union against the scab. And if the union is formed, armies and navies may be expected to be brought into play in fashion similar to the bricks and clubs in ordinary labor struggles.

In this connection, and as one of many walking delegates for the nations, M. Leroy-Beaulieu, the noted French economist, may well be quoted. In a letter to the Vienna Tageblatt, he advocates an economic alliance among the Continental nations for the purpose of barring out American goods, an economic alliance, in his own language, "*which may possibly and desirably develop into a political alliance*."

It will be noted, in the utterances of the Continental walking delegates, that, one and all, they leave England out of the proposed union. And in England herself the feeling is growing that her days are numbered if she cannot unite for offence and defence with the great American scab. As Andrew Carnegie said some time ago, "The only course for Great Britain seems to be reunion with her grandchild or sure decline to a secondary place, and then to comparative insignificance in the future annals of the English-speaking race."

Cecil Rhodes, speaking of what would have obtained but for the pig-headedness of George III, and of what will obtain when England and the United States are united, said, "*No cannon would. . . be fired on either hemisphere but by permission of The English race*." It would seem that England, fronted by the hostile Continental Union and flanked by the great American scab, has nothing left but to join with the scab and play the historic labor rôle of armed Pinkerton. Granting the words of Cecil Rhodes, the United States would be enabled to scab without let or hindrance on Europe, while England, as professional strike-breaker and policeman, destroyed the unions and kept order.

All this may appear fantastic and erroneous, but there is in it a soul of truth vastly more significant than it may seem. Civilization may be expressed today in terms of trade-unionism. Individual struggles have largely passed away, but group-struggles increase prodigiously. And the things for which the groups struggle are the same as of old. Shorn of all subtleties and complexities, the chief struggle of men, and of groups of men, is for food and shelter. And, as of old they struggled with tooth and nail, so today they struggle with teeth and nails elongated into armies and navies, machines, and economic advantages.

Under the definition that a scab is *one who gives more value for the same price than another*, it would seem that society can be generally divided into the two classes of the scabs and the non-scabs. But on closer investigation, however, it will be seen that the non-scab is a vanishing quantity. In the social jungle, everybody is preying upon everybody else. As in the case of Mr. Rockefeller, he who was a scab yesterday is a non-scab today, and tomorrow may be a scab again.

The woman stenographer or book-keeper who receives forty dollars per month where a man was receiving seventy-five is a scab. So is the woman who does a man’s work at a weaving-machine, and the child who goes into the mill or factory. And the father, who is scabbed out of work by the wives and children of other men, sends his own wife and children to scab in order to save himself.

When a publisher offers an author better royalties than other publishers have been paying him, he is scabbing on those other publishers. The reporter on a newspaper, who feels he should be receiving a larger salary for his work, says so, and is shown the door, is replaced by a reporter who is a scab; whereupon, when the belly-need presses, the displaced reporter goes to another paper and scabs himself. The minister who hardens his heart to a call, and waits for a certain congregation to offer him say $500 a year more, often finds himself scabbed upon by another and more impecunious minister; and the next time it is *his* turn to scab while a brother minister is hardening his heart to a call. The scab is everywhere. The professional strike-breakers, who as a class receive large wages, will scab on one another, while scab unions are even formed to prevent scabbing upon scabs.

There are non-scabs, but they are usually born so, and are protected by the whole might of society in the possession of their food and shelter. King Edward is such a type, as are all individuals who receive hereditary food-and-shelter privileges, — such as the present Duke of Bedford, for instance, who yearly receives $75,000 from the good people of London because some former king gave some former ancestor of his the market privileges of Covent Garden. The irresponsible rich are likewise non-scabs, — and by them is meant that coupon-clipping class which hires its managers and brains to invest the money usually left it by its ancestors.

Outside these lucky creatures, all the rest, at one time or another in their lives, are scabs, at one time or another are engaged in giving more for a certain price than any one else. The meek professor in some endowed institution, by his meek suppression of his convictions, is giving more for his salary than gave the other and more outspoken professor whose chair he occupies. And when a political party dangles a full dinner-pail in the eyes of the toiling masses, it is offering more for a vote than the dubious dollar of the opposing party. Even a money-lender is not above taking a slightly lower rate of interest and saying nothing about it.

Such is the tangle of conflicting interests in a tooth-and-nail society that people cannot avoid being scabs, are often made so against their desires, and are often unconsciously made so. When several trades in a certain locality demand and receive an advance in wages, they are unwittingly making scabs of their fellow-laborers in that district who have received no advance in wages. In San Francisco the barbers, laundry-workers, and milk-wagon drivers received such an advance in wages. Their employers promptly added the amount of this advance to the selling price of their wares. The price of shaves, of washing, and of milk went up. This reduced the purchasing power of the unorganized laborers, and, in point of fact, reduced their wages and made them greater scabs.

Because the British laborer is disinclined to scab, — that is, because he restricts his output in order to give less for the wage he receives, — it is to a certain extent made possible for the American capitalist, who receives a less restricted output from his laborers, to play the scab on the English capitalist. As a result of this, (of course combined with other causes), the

American capitalist and the American laborer are striking at the food and shelter of the English capitalist and laborer.

The English laborer is starving today because, among other things, he is not a scab. He practises the policy of “ca’ canny,” which may be defined as “go easy.” In order to get most for least, in many trades he performs but from one-fourth to one-sixth of the labor he is well able to perform. An instance of this is found in the building of the Westinghouse Electric Works at Manchester. The British limit per man was 400 bricks per day. The Westinghouse Company imported a “driving” American contractor, aided by half a dozen “driving” American foremen, and the British bricklayer swiftly attained an average of 1800 bricks per day, with a maximum of 2500 bricks for the plainest work.

But, the British laborer’s policy of “ca’ canny,” which is the very honorable one of giving least for most, and which is likewise the policy of the English capitalist, is nevertheless frowned upon by the English capitalist, whose business existence is threatened by the great American scab. From the rise of the factory system, the English capitalist gladly embraced the opportunity, wherever he found it, of giving least for most. He did it all over the world whenever he enjoyed a market monopoly, and he did it at home with the laborers employed in his mills, destroying them like flies till prevented, within limits, by the passage of the Factory Acts. Some of the proudest fortunes of England today may trace their origin to the giving of least for most to the miserable slaves of the factory towns. But at the present time the English capitalist is outraged because his laborers are employing against him precisely the same policy he employed against them, and which he would employ again did the chance present itself.

Yet “ca’ canny” is a disastrous thing to the British laborer. It has driven ship-building from England to Scotland, bottle-making from Scotland to Belgium, flint-glass-making from England to Germany, and today is steadily driving industry after industry to other countries. A correspondent from Northampton wrote not long ago: “Factories are working half and third time. . . . There is no strike, there is no real labor trouble, but the masters and men are alike suffering from sheer lack of employment. Markets which were once theirs are now American.” It would seem that the unfortunate British laborer is ’twixt the devil and the deep sea. If he gives most for least, he faces a frightful slavery such as marked the beginning of the factory system. If he gives least for most, he drives industry away to other countries and has no work at all.

But the union laborers of the United States have nothing of which to boast, while, according to their trade-union ethics, they have a great deal of which to be ashamed. They passionately preach short hours and big wages, the shorter the hours and the bigger the wages the better. Their hatred for a scab is as terrible as the hatred of a patriot for a traitor, of a Christian for a Judas. And in the face of all this, they are as colossal scabs as the United States is a colossal scab. For all of their boasted unions and high labor ideals, they are about the most thoroughgoing scabs on the planet.

Receiving $4.50 per day, because of his proficiency and immense working power, the American laborer has been known to scab upon scabs (so called) who took his place and received only $0.90 per day for a longer day. In this particular instance, five Chinese coolies, working longer hours, gave less value for the price received from their employer than did one American laborer.

It is upon his brother laborers overseas that the American laborer most outrageously scabs. As Mr. Casson has shown, an English nail-maker gets $3 per week, while an American nail-maker gets $30. But the English worker turns out 200 pounds of nails per week, while the American turns out 5500 pounds. If he were as “fair” as his English brother, other things being equal, he would be receiving, at the English worker’s rate of pay, $82.50. As it is, he is scabbing upon his English brother to the tune of $79.50 per week. Dr. Schultze-Gaevernitz has shown that a German weaver produces 466 yards of cotton a week at a cost of .303 per yard, while an American weaver produces 1200 yards at a cost of .02 per yard.

But, it may be objected, a great part of this is due to the more improved American machinery. Very true, but none the less a great part is still due to the superior energy, skill, and willingness of the American laborer. The English laborer is faithful to the policy of “ca’ canny.” He refuses point-blank to get the work out of a machine that the New World scab gets out of a machine. Mr. Maxim, observing a wasteful hand-labor process in his English factory, invented a machine which he proved capable of displacing several men. But workman after workman was put at the machine, and without exception they turned out neither more nor less than a workman turned out by hand. They obeyed the mandate of the union and went easy, while Mr. Maxim gave up in despair. Nor will the British workman run machines at as high speed as the American, nor will he run so many. An American workman will "give equal attention simultaneously to three, four, or six machines or tools, while the British workman is compelled by his trade union to limit his attention to one, so that employment may be given to half a dozen men."

But for scabbing, no blame attaches itself anywhere. With rare exceptions, all the people in the world are scabs. The strong, capable workman gets a job and holds it because of his strength and capacity. And he holds it because out of his strength and capacity he gives a better value for his wage than does the weaker and less capable workman. Therefore he is scabbing upon his weaker and less capable brother workman. He is giving more value for the price paid by the employer.

The superior workman scabs upon the inferior workman because he is so constituted and cannot help it. The one, by fortune of birth and upbringing, is strong and capable; the other, by fortune of birth and upbringing, is not so strong nor capable. It is for the same reason that one country scabs upon another. That country which has the good fortune to possess great natural resources, a finer sun and soil, unhampering institutions, and a deft and intelligent labor class and capitalist class is bound to scab upon a country less fortunately situated. It is the good fortune of the United States that is making her the colossal scab, just as it is the good fortune of one man to be born with a straight back while his brother is born with a hump.

It is not good to give most for least, not good to be a scab. The word has gained universal opprobrium. On the other hand, to be a non-scab, to give least for most, is universally branded as stingy, selfish, and unchristian-like. So all the world, like the British workman, is 'twixt the devil and the deep sea. It is treason to one's fellows to scab, it is unchristian-like not to scab.

Since to give least for most, and to give most for least, are universally bad, what remains? Equity remains, which is to give like for like, the same for the same, neither more nor less. But this equity, society, as at present constituted, cannot give. It is not in the nature of present-day society for men to give like for like, the same for the same. And so long as men continue to live in this competitive society, struggling tooth and nail with one another for food and shelter, (which is to struggle tooth and nail with one another for life), that long will the scab continue to exist. His will "to live" will force him to exist. He may be flouted and jeered by his brothers, he may be beaten with bricks and clubs by the men who by superior strength and capacity scab upon him as he scabs upon them by longer hours and smaller wages, but through it all he will persist, giving a bit more of most for least than they are giving.

THE QUESTION OF THE MAXIMUM

For any social movement or development there must be a maximum limit beyond which it cannot proceed. That civilization which does not advance must decline, and so, when the maximum of development has been reached in any given direction, society must either retrograde or change the direction of its advance. There are many families of men that have failed, in the critical period of their economic evolution, to effect a change in direction, and were forced to fall back. Vanquished at the moment of their maximum, they have dropped out of the whirl of the world. There was no room for them. Stronger competitors have taken their places, and they have either rotted into oblivion or remain to be crushed under the iron heel of the dominant races in as remorseless a struggle as the world has yet witnessed. But in this struggle fair women and chivalrous men will play no part. Types and ideals have changed. Helens and Launcelots are anachronisms. Blows will be given and taken, and men fight and die, but not for faiths and altars. Shrines will be desecrated, but they will be the shrines, not of temples, but market-places. Prophets will arise, but they will be the prophets of prices and products. Battles will be waged, not for honor and glory, nor for thrones and sceptres, but for dollars and cents and for marts and exchanges. Brain and not brawn will endure, and the captains of war will be commanded by the captains of industry. In short, it will be a contest for the mastery of the world's commerce and for industrial supremacy.

It is more significant, this struggle into which we have plunged, for the fact that it is the first struggle to involve the globe. No general movement of man has been so wide-spreading, so far-reaching. Quite local was the supremacy of any ancient people; likewise the rise to empire of Macedonia and Rome, the waves of Arabian valor and fanaticism, and the mediæval crusades to the Holy Sepulchre. But since those times the planet has undergone a unique shrinkage.

The world of Homer, limited by the coast-lines of the Mediterranean and Black seas, was a far vaster world than ours of today, which we weigh, measure, and compute as accurately and as easily as if it were a child's play-ball. Steam has made its parts accessible and drawn them closer together. The telegraph annihilates space and time. Each morning, every part knows what every other part is thinking, contemplating, or doing. A discovery in a German laboratory is being demonstrated in San Francisco within twenty-four hours. A book written in South Africa is published by simultaneous copyright in every English-speaking country, and on the day following is in the hands of the translators. The death of an obscure missionary in China, or of a whiskey-smuggler in the South Seas, is served, the world over, with the morning toast. The wheat output of Argentine or the gold of Klondike are known wherever men meet and trade. Shrinkage, or centralization, has become such that the humblest clerk in any metropolis may place his hand on the pulse of the world. The planet has indeed grown very small; and because of this, no vital movement can remain in the clime or country where it takes its rise.

And so today the economic and industrial impulse is world-wide. It is a matter of import to every people. None may be careless of it. To do so is to perish. It is become a battle, the fruits of which are to the strong, and to none but the strongest of the strong. As the movement approaches its maximum, centralization accelerates and competition grows keener and closer. The competitor nations cannot all succeed. So long as the movement continues its present direction, not only will there not be room for all, but the room that is will become less and less; and when the moment of the maximum is at hand, there will be no room at all. Capitalistic production will have overreached itself, and a change of direction will then be inevitable.

Divers queries arise: What is the maximum of commercial development the world can sustain? How far can it be exploited? How much capital is necessary? Can sufficient capital be accumulated? A brief résumé of the industrial history of the last one hundred years or so will be relevant at this stage of the discussion. Capitalistic production, in its modern significance, was born of the industrial revolution in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The great inventions of that period were both its father and its mother, while, as Mr. Brooks Adams has shown, the looted treasure of India was the potent midwife. Had there not been an unwonted increase of capital, the impetus would not have been given to invention, while even steam might have languished for generations instead of at once becoming, as it did, the most prominent factor in the new method of production. The improved application of these inventions in the first decades of the nineteenth century mark the transition from the domestic to the factory system of manufacture and inaugurated the era of capitalism. The magnitude of this revolution is manifested by the fact that England alone had invented the means and equipped herself with the machinery whereby she could overstock the world's markets. The home market could not consume a tithe of the home product. To manufacture this home product she had sacrificed her agriculture. She must buy her food from abroad, and to do so she must sell her goods abroad.

But the struggle for commercial supremacy had not yet really begun. England was without a rival. Her navies controlled the sea. Her armies and her insular position gave her peace at home. The world was hers to exploit. For nearly fifty years she dominated the European, American, and Indian trade, while the great wars then convulsing society were destroying possible competitive capital and straining consumption to its utmost. The pioneer of the industrial nations, she thus received such a start in the new race for wealth that it is only today the other nations have succeeded in overtaking her. In 1820 the volume of her trade (imports and exports) was £68,000,000. In 1899 it had increased to £815,000,000, — an increase of 1200 per cent in the volume of trade.

For nearly one hundred years England has been producing surplus value. She has been producing far more than she consumes, and this excess has swelled the volume of her capital. This capital has been invested in her enterprises at home and abroad, and in her shipping. In 1898 the Stock Exchange estimated British capital invested abroad at £1,900,000,000. But hand in hand with her foreign investments have grown her adverse balances of trade. For the ten years ending with 1868, her average yearly adverse balance was £52,000,000; ending with 1878, £81,000,000; ending with 1888, £101,000,000; and ending with 1898, £133,000,000. In the single year of 1897 it reached the portentous sum of £157,000,000.

But England's adverse balances of trade in themselves are nothing at which to be frightened. Hitherto they have been paid from out the earnings of her shipping and the interest on her foreign investments. But what does cause anxiety, however, is that, relative to the trade development of other countries, her export trade is falling off, without a corresponding diminution of her imports, and that her securities and foreign holdings do not seem able to stand the added strain. These she is being forced to sell in order to pull even. As the London Times gloomily remarks, "We are entering the twentieth century on the down grade, after a prolonged period of business activity, high wages, high profits, and overflowing revenue." In other words, the mighty grasp England held over the resources and capital of the world is being relaxed. The control of its commerce and banking is slipping through her fingers. The sale of her foreign holdings advertises the fact that other nations are capable of buying them, and, further, that these other nations are busily producing surplus value.

The movement has become general. Today, passing from country to country, an ever-increasing tide of capital is welling up. Production is doubling and quadrupling upon itself. It used to be that the impoverished or undeveloped nations turned to England when it came to borrowing, but now Germany is competing keenly with her in this matter. France is not averse to lending great sums to Russia, and Austria-Hungary has capital and to spare for foreign holdings.

Nor has the United States failed to pass from the side of the debtor to that of the creditor nations. She, too, has become wise in the way of producing surplus value. She has been successful in her efforts to secure economic emancipation. Possessing but 5 per cent of the world's population and producing 32 per cent of the world's food supply, she has been looked upon as the world's farmer; but now, amidst general consternation, she comes forward as the world's manufacturer. In 1888 her manufactured exports amounted to $130,300,087; in 1896, to $253,681,541; in 1897, to $279,652,721; in 1898, to $307,924,994; in 1899, to $338,667,794; and in 1900, to $432,000,000. Regarding her growing favorable balances of trade, it may be noted that not only are her imports not increasing, but they are actually falling off, while her exports in the last decade have increased 72.4 per cent. In ten years her imports from Europe have been reduced from $474,000,000 to $439,000,000; while in the same time her exports have increased from $682,000,000 to $1,111,000,000. Her balance of trade in her favor in 1895 was $75,000,000; in 1896, over $100,000,000; in 1897, nearly $300,000,000; in 1898, $615,000,000; in 1899, $530,000,000; and in 1900, $648,000,000.

In the matter of iron, the United States, which in 1840 had not dreamed of entering the field of international competition, in 1897, as much to her own surprise as any one else's, undersold the English in their own London market. In 1899 there was but one American locomotive in Great Britain; but, of the five hundred locomotives sold abroad by the United States in 1902, England bought more than any other country. Russia is operating a thousand of them on her own roads today. In one instance the American manufacturers contracted to deliver a locomotive in four and one-half months for $9250, the English manufacturers requiring twenty-four months for delivery at $14,000. The Clyde shipbuilders recently placed orders for 150,000 tons of plates at a saving of $250,000, and the American steel going into the making of the new London subway is taken as a matter of course. American tools stand above competition the world over. Ready-made boots and shoes are beginning to flood Europe, — the same with machinery, bicycles, agricultural implements, and all kinds of manufactured goods. A correspondent from Hamburg, speaking of the invasion of American trade, says: "Incidentally, it may be remarked that the typewriting machine with which this article is written, as well as the thousands — nay, hundreds of thousands — of others that are in use throughout the world, were made in America; that it stands on an American table, in an office furnished with American desks, bookcases, and chairs, which cannot be made in Europe of equal quality, so practical and convenient, for a similar price."

In 1893 and 1894, because of the distrust of foreign capital, the United States was forced to buy back American securities held abroad; but in 1897 and 1898 she bought back American securities held abroad, not because she had to, but because she chose to. And not only has she bought back her own securities, but in the last eight years she has become a buyer of the securities of other countries. In the money markets of London, Paris, and Berlin she is a lender of money. Carrying the largest stock of gold in the world, the world, in moments of danger, when crises of international finance loom large, looks to her vast lending ability for safety.

Thus, in a few swift years, has the United States drawn up to the van where the great industrial nations are fighting for commercial and financial empire. The figures of the race, in which she passed England, are interesting:

Year	United States Exports	United Kingdom Exports
1875	$497,263,737	$1,087,497,000

1885
673,593,506
1,037,124,000

1895
807,742,415
1,100,452,000

1896
986,830,080
1,168,671,000

1897
1,079,834,296
1,139,882,000

1898
1,233,564,828
1,135,642,000

1899
1,253,466,000
1,287,971,000

1900
1,453,013,659
1,418,348,000

As Mr. Henry Demarest Lloyd has noted, “When the news reached Germany of the new steel trust in America, the stocks of the iron and steel mills listed on the Berlin Bourse fell.” While Europe has been talking and dreaming of the greatness which was, the United States has been thinking and planning and doing for the greatness to be. Her captains of industry and kings of finance have toiled and sweated at organizing and consolidating production and transportation. But this has been merely the developmental stage, the tuning-up of the orchestra. With the twentieth century rises the curtain on the play, — a play which shall have much in it of comedy and a vast deal of tragedy, and which has been well named The Capitalistic Conquest of Europe by America. Nations do not die easily, and one of the first moves of Europe will be the erection of tariff walls. America, however, will fittingly reply, for already her manufacturers are establishing works in France and Germany. And when the German trade journals refused to accept American advertisements, they found their country flamingly bill-boarded in buccaneer American fashion.

M. Leroy-Beaulieu, the French economist, is passionately preaching a commercial combination of the whole Continent against the United States, — a commercial alliance which, he boldly declares, should become a political alliance. And in this he is not alone, finding ready sympathy and ardent support in Austria, Italy, and Germany. Lord Rosebery said, in a recent speech before the Wolverhampton Chamber of Commerce: "The Americans, with their vast and almost incalculable resources, their acuteness and enterprise, and their huge population, which will probably be 100,000,000 in twenty years, together with the plan they have adopted for putting accumulated wealth into great coöperative syndicates or trusts for the purpose of carrying on this great commercial warfare, are the most formidable . . . rivals to be feared."

The London Times says: "It is useless to disguise the fact that Great Britain is being outdistanced. The competition does not come from the glut caused by miscalculation as to the home demand. Our own steel-makers know better and are alarmed. The threatened competition in markets hitherto our own comes from efficiency in production such as never before has been seen." Even the British naval supremacy is in danger, continues the same paper, "for, if we lose our engineering supremacy, our naval supremacy will follow, unless held on sufferance by our successful rivals."

And the Edinburgh Evening News says, with editorial gloom: "The iron and steel trades have gone from us. When the fictitious prosperity caused by the expenditure of our own Government and that of European nations on armaments ceases, half of the men employed in these industries will be turned into the streets. The outlook is appalling. What suffering will have to be endured before the workers realize that there is nothing left for them but emigration!"

* * * * *

That there must be a limit to the accumulation of capital is obvious. The downward course of the rate of interest, notwithstanding that many new employments have been made possible for capital, indicates how large is the increase of surplus value. This decline of the interest rate is in accord with Bohm-Bawerk's law of "diminishing returns." That is, when capital, like anything else, has become over-plentiful, less lucrative use can only be found for the excess. This excess, not being able to earn so much as when capital was less plentiful, competes for safe investments and forces down the interest rate on all capital. Mr. Charles A. Conant has well described the keenness of the scramble for safe investments, even at the prevailing low rates of interest. At the close of the war with Turkey, the Greek loan, guaranteed by Great Britain, France, and Russia, was floated with striking ease. Regardless of the small return, the amount offered at Paris, (41,000,000 francs), was subscribed for twenty-three times over. Great Britain, France, Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian States, of recent years, have all engaged in converting their securities from 5 per cents to 4 per cents, from 4½ per cents to 3½ per cents, and the 3½ per cents into 3 per cents.

Great Britain, France, Germany, and Austria-Hungary, according to the calculation taken in 1895 by the International Statistical Institute, hold forty-six billions of capital invested in negotiable securities alone. Yet Paris subscribed for her portion of the Greek loan twenty-three times over! In short, money is cheap. Andrew Carnegie and his brother bourgeois kings give away millions annually, but still the tide wells up. These vast accumulations have made possible "wild-catting," fraudulent combinations, fake enterprises, Hooleyism; but such stealings, great though they be, have little or no effect in reducing the volume. The time is past when startling inventions, or revolutions in the method of production, can break up the growing congestion; yet this saved capital demands an outlet, somewhere, somehow.

When a great nation has equipped itself to produce far more than it can, under the present division of the product, consume, it seeks other markets for its surplus products. When a second nation finds itself similarly circumstanced, competition for these other markets naturally follows. With the advent of a third, a fourth, a fifth, and of divers other nations, the question of the disposal of surplus products grows serious. And with each of these nations possessing, over and beyond its active capital, great and growing masses of idle capital, and when the very foreign markets for which they are competing are beginning to produce similar wares for themselves, the question passes the serious stage and becomes critical.

Never has the struggle for foreign markets been sharper than at the present. They are the one great outlet for congested accumulations. Predatory capital wanders the world over, seeking where it may establish itself. This urgent need for foreign markets is forcing upon the world-stage an era of great colonial empire. But this does not stand, as in the past, for the subjugation of peoples and countries for the sake of gaining their products, but for the privilege of selling them products. The theory once was, that the colony owed its existence and prosperity to the mother country; but today it is the mother country that owes its existence and prosperity to the colony. And in the future, when that supporting colony becomes wise in the way of producing surplus value and sends its goods back to sell to the mother country, what then? Then the world will have been exploited, and capitalistic production will have attained its maximum development.

Foreign markets and undeveloped countries largely retard that moment. The favored portions of the earth's surface are already occupied, though the resources of many are yet virgin. That they have not long since been wrested from the hands of the barbarous and decadent peoples who possess them is due, not to the military prowess of such peoples, but to the jealous vigilance of the industrial nations. The powers hold one another back. The Turk lives because the way is not yet clear to an amicable division of him among the powers. And the United States, supreme though she is, opposes the partition of China, and intervenes her huge bulk between the hungry nations and the mongrel Spanish republics. Capital stands in its own way, welling up and welling up against the inevitable moment when it shall burst all bonds and sweep resistlessly across such vast stretches as China and South America. And then there will be no more worlds to exploit, and capitalism will either fall back, crushed under its own weight, or a change of direction will take place which will mark a new era in history.

The Far East affords an illuminating spectacle. While the Western nations are crowding hungrily in, while the Partition of China is commingled with the clamor for the Spheres of Influence and the Open Door, other forces are none the less potently at work. Not only are the young Western peoples pressing the older ones to the wall, but the East itself is beginning to awake. American trade is advancing, and British trade is losing ground, while Japan, China, and India are taking a hand in the game themselves.

In 1893, 100,000 pieces of American drills were imported into China; in 1897, 349,000. In 1893, 252,000 pieces of American sheetings were imported against 71,000 British; but in 1897, 566,000 pieces of American sheetings were imported against only 10,000 British. The cotton goods and yarn trade (which forms 40 per cent of the whole trade with China) shows a remarkable advance on the part of the United States. During the last ten years America has increased her importation of plain goods by 121 per cent in quantity and 59½ per cent in value, while that of England and India combined has decreased 13¾ per cent in quantity and 8 per cent in value. Lord Charles Beresford, from whose "Break-up of China" these figures are taken, states that English yarn has receded and Indian yarn advanced to the front. In 1897, 140,000 piculs of Indian yarn were imported, 18,000 of Japanese, 4500 of Shanghai-manufactured, and 700 of English.

Japan, who but yesterday emerged from the mediæval rule of the Shogunate and seized in one fell swoop the scientific knowledge and culture of the Occident, is already today showing what wisdom she has acquired in the production of surplus value, and is preparing herself that she may tomorrow play the part to Asia that England did to Europe one hundred years ago. That the difference in the world's affairs wrought by those one hundred years will prevent her succeeding is manifest; but it is equally manifest that they cannot prevent her playing a leading part in the industrial drama which has commenced on the Eastern stage. Her imports into the port of Newchang in 1891 amounted to but 22,000 taels; but in 1897 they had increased to 280,000 taels. In manufactured goods, from matches, watches, and clocks to the rolling stock of railways, she has already given stiff shocks to her competitors in the Asiatic markets; and this while she is virtually yet in the equipment stage of production. Erelong she, too, will be furnishing her share to the growing mass of the world's capital.

As regards Great Britain, the giant trader who has so long overshadowed Asiatic commerce, Lord Charles Beresford says: "But competition is telling adversely; the energy of the British merchant is being equalled by other nationals. . . The competition of the Chinese and the introduction of steam into the country are also combining to produce changed conditions in China." But far more ominous is the plaintive note he sounds when he says: “New industries must be opened up, and I would especially direct the attention of the Chambers of Commerce (British) to . . . the fact that the more the native competes with the British manufacturer in certain classes of trade, the more machinery he will need, and the orders for such machinery will come to this country if our machinery manufacturers are enterprising enough.”

The Orient is beginning to show what an important factor it will become, under Western supervision, in the creation of surplus value. Even before the barriers which restrain Western capital are removed, the East will be in a fair way toward being exploited. An analysis of Lord Beresford’s message to the Chambers of Commerce discloses, first, that the East is beginning to manufacture for itself; and, second, that there is a promise of keen competition in the West for the privilege of selling the required machinery. The inexorable query arises: *What is the West to do when it has furnished this machinery*? And when not only the East, but all the now undeveloped countries, confront, with surplus products in their hands, the old industrial nations, capitalistic production will have attained its maximum development.

But before that time must intervene a period which bids one pause for breath. A new romance, like unto none in all the past, the economic romance, will be born. For the dazzling prize of world-empire will the nations of the earth go up in harness. Powers will rise and fall, and mighty coalitions shape and dissolve in the swift whirl of events. Vassal nations and subject territories will be bandied back and forth like so many articles of trade. And with the inevitable displacement of economic centres, it is fair to presume that populations will shift to and fro, as they once did from the South to the North of England on the rise of the factory towns, or from the Old World to the New. Colossal enterprises will be projected and carried through, and combinations of capital and federations of labor be effected on a cyclopean scale. Concentration and organization will be perfected in ways hitherto undreamed. The nation which would keep its head above the tide must accurately adjust supply to demand, and eliminate waste to the last least particle. Standards of living will most likely descend for millions of people. With the increase of capital, the competition for safe investments, and the consequent fall of the interest rate, the principal which today earns a comfortable income would not then support a bare existence. Saving toward old age would cease among the working classes. And as the merchant cities of Italy crashed when trade slipped from their hands on the discovery of the new route to the Indies by way of the Cape of Good Hope, so will there come times of trembling for such nations as have failed to grasp the prize of world-empire. In that given direction they will have attained their maximum development, before the whole world, in the same direction, has attained its. There will no longer be room for them. But if they can survive the shock of being flung out of the world's industrial orbit, a change in direction may then be easily effected. That the decadent and barbarous peoples will be crushed is a fair presumption; likewise that the stronger breeds will survive, entering upon the transition stage to which all the world must ultimately come.

This change of direction must be either toward industrial oligarchies or socialism. Either the functions of private corporations will increase till they absorb the central government, or the functions of government will increase till it absorbs the corporations. Much may be said on the chance of the oligarchy. Should an old manufacturing nation lose its foreign trade, it is safe to predict that a strong effort would be made to build a socialistic government, but it does not follow that this effort would be successful. With the moneyed class controlling the State and its revenues and all the means of subsistence, and guarding its own interests with jealous care, it is not at all impossible that a strong curb could be put upon the masses till the crisis were past. It has been done before. There is no reason why it should not be done again. At the close of the last century, such a movement was crushed by its own folly and immaturity. In 1871 the soldiers of the economic rulers stamped out, root and branch, a whole generation of militant socialists.

Once the crisis were past, the ruling class, still holding the curb in order to make itself more secure, would proceed to readjust things and to balance consumption with production. Having a monopoly of the safe investments, the great masses of unremunerative capital would be directed, not to the production of more surplus value, but to the making of permanent improvements, which would give employment to the people, and make them content with the new order of things. Highways, parks, public buildings, monuments, could be builded; nor would it be out of place to give better factories and homes to the workers. Such in itself would be socialistic, save that it would be done by the oligarchs, a class apart. With the interest rate down to zero, and no field for the investment of sporadic capital, savings among the people would utterly cease, and old-age pensions be granted as a matter of course. It is also a logical necessity of such a system that, when the population began to press against the means of subsistence, (expansion being impossible), the birth rate of the lower classes would be lessened. Whether by their own initiative, or by the interference of the rulers, it would have to be done, and it would be done. In other words, the oligarchy would mean the capitalization of labor and the enslavement of the whole population. But it would be a fairer, juster form of slavery than any the world has yet seen. The per capita wage and consumption would be increased, and, with a stringent control of the birth rate, there is no reason why such a country should not be so ruled through many generations.

On the other hand, as the capitalistic exploitation of the planet approaches its maximum, and countries are crowded out of the field of foreign exchanges, there is a large likelihood that their change in direction will be toward socialism. Were the theory of collective ownership and operation then to arise for the first time, such a movement would stand small chance of success. But such is not the case. The doctrine of socialism has flourished and grown throughout the nineteenth century; its tenets have been preached wherever the interests of labor and capital have clashed; and it has received exemplification time and again by the State's assumption of functions which had always belonged solely to the individual.

When capitalistic production has attained its maximum development, it must confront a dividing of the ways; and the strength of capital on the one hand, and the education and wisdom of the workers on the other, will determine which path society is to travel. It is possible, considering the inertia of the masses, that the whole world might in time come to be dominated by a group of industrial oligarchies, or by one great oligarchy, but it is not probable. That sporadic oligarchies may flourish for definite periods of time is highly possible; that they may continue to do so is as highly improbable. The procession of the ages has marked not only the rise of man, but the rise of the common man. From the chattel slave, or the serf chained to the soil, to the highest seats in modern society, he has risen, rung by rung, amid the crumbling of the divine right of kings and the crash of falling sceptres. That he has done this, only in the end to pass into the perpetual slavery of the industrial oligarch, is something at which his whole past cries in protest. The common man is worthy of a better future, or else he is not worthy of his past.

* * * * *

Note. — The above article was written as long ago as 1898. The only alteration has been the bringing up to 1900 of a few of its statistics. As a commercial venture of an author, it has an interesting history. It was promptly accepted by one of the leading magazines and paid for. The editor confessed that it was “one of those articles one could not possibly let go of after it was once in his possession.” Publication was voluntarily promised to be immediate. Then the editor became afraid of its too radical nature, forfeited the sum paid for it, and did not publish it. Nor, offered far and wide, could any other editor of bourgeois periodicals be found who was rash enough to publish it. Thus, for the first time, after seven years, it appears in print.

A REVIEW

Two remarkable books are Ghent's "Our Benevolent Feudalism" _ and Brooks's "The Social Unrest." _ In these two books the opposite sides of the labor problem are expounded, each writer devoting himself with apprehension to the side he fears and views with disfavor. It would appear that they have set themselves the task of collating, as a warning, the phenomena of two counter social forces. Mr. Ghent, who is sympathetic with the socialist movement, follows with cynic fear every aggressive act of the capitalist class. Mr. Brooks, who yearns for the perpetuation of the capitalist system as long as possible, follows with grave dismay each aggressive act of the labor and socialist organizations. Mr. Ghent traces the emasculation of labor by capital, and Mr. Brooks traces the emasculation of independent competing capital by labor. In short, each marshals the facts of a side in the two sides which go to make a struggle so great that even the French Revolution is insignificant beside it; for this later struggle, for the first time in the history of struggles, is not confined to any particular portion of the globe, but involves the whole of it.

Starting on the assumption that society is at present in a state of flux, Mr. Ghent sees it rapidly crystallizing into a status which can best be described as something in the nature of a benevolent feudalism. He laughs to scorn any immediate realization of the Marxian dream, while Tolstoyan utopias and Kropotkinian communistic unions of shop and farm are too wild to merit consideration. The coming status which Mr. Ghent depicts is a class domination by the capitalists. Labor will take its definite place as a dependent class, living in a condition of machine servitude fairly analogous to the land servitude of the Middle Ages. That is to say, labor will be bound to the machine, though less harshly, in fashion somewhat similar to that in which the earlier serf was bound to the soil. As he says, "Bondage to the land was the basis of villeinage in the old regime; bondage to the job will be the basis of villeinage in the new."

At the top of the new society will tower the magnate, the new feudal baron; at the bottom will be found the wastrels and the inefficients. The new society he grades as follows:

"I. The barons, graded on the basis of possessions.

"II. The court agents and retainers. (This class will include the editors of 'respectable' and 'safe' newspapers, the pastors of 'conservative' and 'wealthy' churches, the professors and teachers in endowed colleges and schools, lawyers generally, and most judges and politicians).

"III. The workers in pure and applied science, artists, and physicians.

"IV. The entrepreneurs, the managers of the great industries, transformed into a salaried class.

"V. The foremen and superintendents. This class has heretofore been recruited largely from the skilled workers, but with the growth of technical education in schools and colleges, and the development of fixed caste, it is likely to become entirely differentiated.

"VI. The villeins of the cities and towns, more or less regularly employed, who do skilled work and are partially protected by organization.

"VII. The villeins of the cities and towns who do unskilled work and are unprotected by organization. They will comprise the laborers, domestics, and clerks.

"VIII. The villeins of the manorial estates, of the great farms, the mines, and the forests.

"IX. The small-unit farmers (land-owning), the petty tradesmen, and manufacturers.

"X. The subtenants of the manorial estates and great farms (corresponding to the class of 'free tenants' in the old Feudalism).

"XI. The cotters.

"XII. The tramps, the occasionally employed, the unemployed — the wastrels of the city and country."

"The new Feudalism, like most autocracies, will foster not only the arts, but also certain kinds of learning — particularly the kinds which are unlikely to disturb the minds of the multitude. A future Marsh, or Cope, or Le Comte will be liberally patronized and left free to discover what he will; and so, too, an Edison or a Marconi. Only they must not meddle with anything relating to social science."

It must be confessed that Mr. Ghent's arguments are cunningly contrived and arrayed. They must be read to be appreciated. As an example of his style, which at the same time generalizes a portion of his argument, the following may well be given:

"The new Feudalism will be but an orderly outgrowth of present tendencies and conditions. All societies evolve naturally out of their predecessors. In sociology, as in biology, there is no cell without a parent cell. The society of each generation develops a multitude of spontaneous and acquired variations, and out of these, by a blending process of natural and conscious selection, the succeeding society is evolved. The new order will differ in no important respects from the present, except in the completer development of its more salient features. The visitor from another planet who had known the old and should see the new would note but few changes. Alter et Idem — another yet the same — he would say. From magnate to baron, from workman to villein, from publicist to court agent and retainer, will be changes of state and function so slight as to elude all but the keenest eyes."

And in conclusion, to show how benevolent and beautiful this new feudalism of ours will be, Mr. Ghent says: "Peace and stability it will maintain at all hazards; and the mass, remembering the chaos, the turmoil, the insecurity of the past, will bless its reign. . . . Efficiency — the faculty of getting things — is at last rewarded as it should be, for the efficient have inherited the earth and its fulness. The lowly, whose happiness is greater and whose welfare is more thoroughly conserved when governed than when governing, as a twentieth-century philosopher said of them, are settled and happy in the state which reason and experience teach is their God-appointed lot. They are comfortable too; and if the patriarchal ideal of a vine and fig tree for each is not yet attained, at least each has his rented patch in the country or his rented cell in a city building. Bread and the circus are freely given to the deserving, and as for the undeserving, they are merely reaping the rewards of their contumacy and pride. Order reigns, each has his justly appointed share, and the state rests, in security, 'lapt in universal law.'"

Mr. Brooks, on the other hand, sees rising and dissolving and rising again in the social flux the ominous forms of a new society which is the direct antithesis of a benevolent feudalism. He trembles at the rash intrepidity of the capitalists who fight the labor unions, for by such rashness he greatly fears that labor will be driven to express its aims and strength in political terms, which terms will inevitably be socialistic terms.

To keep down the rising tide of socialism, he preaches greater meekness and benevolence to the capitalists. No longer may they claim the right to run their own business, to beat down the laborer's standard of living for the sake of increased profits, to dictate terms of employment to individual workers, to wax righteously indignant when organized labor takes a hand in their business. No longer may the capitalist say “my” business, or even think “my” business; he must say “our” business, and think “our” business as well, accepting labor as a partner whose voice must be heard. And if the capitalists do not become more meek and benevolent in their dealings with labor, labor will be antagonized and will proceed to wreak terrible political vengeance, and the present social flux will harden into a status of socialism.

Mr. Brooks dreams of a society at which Mr. Ghent sneers as “a slightly modified individualism, wherein each unit secures the just reward of his capacity and service.” To attain this happy state, Mr. Brooks imposes circumspection upon the capitalists in their relations with labor. “If the socialistic spirit is to be held in abeyance in this country, businesses of this character (anthracite coal mining) must be handled with extraordinary caution.” Which is to say, that to withstand the advance of socialism, a great and greater measure of Mr. Ghent’s *benevolence* will be required.

Again and again, Mr. Brooks reiterates the danger he sees in harshly treating labor. “It is not probable that employers can destroy unionism in the United States. Adroit and desperate attempts will, however, be made, if we mean by unionism the undisciplined and aggressive fact of vigorous and determined organizations. If capital should prove too strong in this struggle, the result is easy to predict. The employers have only to convince organized labor that it cannot hold its own against the capitalist manager, and the whole energy that now goes to the union will turn to an aggressive political socialism. It will not be the harmless sympathy with increased city and state functions which trade unions already feel; it will become a turbulent political force bent upon using every weapon of taxation against the rich.”

“The most concrete impulse that now favors socialism in this country is the insane purpose to deprive labor organizations of the full and complete rights that go with federated unionism.”

“That which teaches a union that it cannot succeed as a union turns it toward socialism. In long strikes in towns like Marlboro and Brookfield strong unions are defeated. Hundreds of men leave these towns for shoe-centres like Brockton, where they are now voting the socialist ticket. The socialist mayor of this city tells me, ‘The men who come to us now from towns where they have been thoroughly whipped in a strike are among our most active working socialists.’ The bitterness engendered by this sense of defeat is turned to politics, as it will throughout the whole country, if organization of labor is deprived of its rights."

"This enmity of capital to the trade union is watched with glee by every intelligent socialist in our midst. Every union that is beaten or discouraged in its struggle is ripening fruit for socialism."

"The real peril which we now face is the threat of a class conflict. If capitalism insists upon the policy of outraging the saving aspiration of the American workman to raise his standard of comfort and leisure, every element of class conflict will strengthen among us."

"We have only to humiliate what is best in the trade union, and then every worst feature of socialism is fastened upon us."

This strong tendency in the ranks of the workers toward socialism is what Mr. Brooks characterizes the "social unrest"; and he hopes to see the Republican, the Cleveland Democrat, and the conservative and large property interests "band together against this common foe," which is socialism. And he is not above feeling grave and well-contained satisfaction wherever the socialist doctrinaire has been contradicted by men attempting to practise coöperation in the midst of the competitive system, as in Belgium.

Nevertheless, he catches fleeting glimpses of an extreme and tyrannically benevolent feudalism very like to Mr. Ghent's, as witness the following:

"I asked one of the largest employers of labor in the South if he feared the coming of the trade union. 'No,' he said, 'it is one good result of race prejudice, that the negro will enable us in the long run to weaken the trade union so that it cannot harm us. We can keep wages down with the negro and we can prevent too much organization.'

"It is in this spirit that the lower standards are to be used. If this purpose should succeed, it has but one issue, — the immense strengthening of a plutocratic administration at the top, served by an army of high-salaried helpers, with an elite of skilled and well-paid workmen, but all resting on what would essentially be a serf class of low-paid labor and this mass kept in order by an increased use of military force."

In brief summary of these two notable books, it may be said that Mr. Ghent is alarmed, (though he does not flatly say so), at the too great social restfulness in the community, which is permitting the capitalists to form the new society to their liking; and that Mr. Brooks is alarmed, (and he flatly says so), at the social unrest which threatens the modified individualism into which he would like to see society evolve. Mr. Ghent beholds the capitalist class rising to dominate the state and the working class; Mr. Brooks beholds the working class rising to dominate the state and the capitalist class. One fears the paternalism of a class; the other, the tyranny of the mass.

WANTED: A NEW LAW OF DEVELOPMENT

Evolution is no longer a mere tentative hypothesis. One by one, step by step, each division and subdivision of science has contributed its evidence, until now the case is complete and the verdict rendered. While there is still discussion as to the method of evolution, none the less, as a process sufficient to explain all biological phenomena, all differentiations of life into widely diverse species, families, and even kingdoms, evolution is flatly accepted. Likewise has been accepted its law of development: *That*, *in the struggle for existence*, *the strong and fit and the progeny of the strong and fit have a better opportunity for survival than the weak and less fit and the progeny of the weak and less fit*.

It is in the struggle of the species with other species and against all other hostile forces in the environment, that this law operates; also in the struggle between the individuals of the same species. In this struggle, which is for food and shelter, the weak individuals must obviously win less food and shelter than the strong. Because of this, their hold on life relaxes and they are eliminated. And for the same reason that they may not win for themselves adequate food and shelter, the weak cannot give to their progeny the chance for survival that the strong give. And thus, since the weak are prone to beget weakness, the species is constantly purged of its inefficient members.

Because of this, a premium is placed upon strength, and so long as the struggle for food and shelter obtains, just so long will the average strength of each generation increase. On the other hand, should conditions so change that all, and the progeny of all, the weak as well as the strong, have an equal chance for survival, then, at once, the average strength of each generation will begin to diminish. Never yet, however, in animal life, has there been such a state of affairs. Natural selection has always obtained. The strong and their progeny, at the expense of the weak, have always survived. This law of development has operated down all the past upon all life; it so operates today, and it is not rash to say that it will continue to operate in the future — at least upon all life existing in a state of nature.

Man, preëminent though he is in the animal kingdom, capable of reacting upon and making suitable an unsuitable environment, nevertheless remains the creature of this same law of development. The social selection to which he is subject is merely another form of natural selection. True, within certain narrow limits he modifies the struggle for existence and renders less precarious the tenure of life for the weak. The extremely weak, diseased, and inefficient are housed in hospitals and asylums. The strength of the viciously strong, when inimical to society, is tempered by penal institutions and by the gallows. The short-sighted are provided with spectacles, and the sickly (when they can pay for it) with sanitariums. Pestilential marshes are drained, plagues are checked, and disasters averted. Yet, for all that, the strong and the progeny of the strong survive, and the weak are crushed out. The men strong of brain are masters as of yore. They dominate society and gather to themselves the wealth of society. With this wealth they maintain themselves and equip their progeny for the struggle. They build their homes in healthful places, purchase the best fruits, meats, and vegetables the market affords, and buy themselves the ministrations of the most brilliant and learned of the professional classes. The weak man, as of yore, is the servant, the doer of things at the master's call. The weaker and less efficient he is, the poorer is his reward. The weakest work for a living wage, (when they can get work), live in unsanitary slums, on vile and insufficient food, at the lowest depths of human degradation. Their grasp on life is indeed precarious, their mortality excessive, their infant death-rate appalling.

That some should be born to preferment and others to ignominy in order that the race may progress, is cruel and sad; but none the less they are so born. The weeding out of human souls, some for fatness and smiles, some for leanness and tears, is surely a heartless selective process — as heartless as it is natural. And the human family, for all its wonderful record of adventure and achievement, has not yet succeeded in avoiding this process. That it is incapable of doing this is not to be hazarded. Not only is it capable, but the whole trend of society is in that direction. All the social forces are driving man on to a time when the old selective law will be annulled. There is no escaping it, save by the intervention of catastrophes and cataclysms quite unthinkable. It is inexorable. It is inexorable because the common man demands it. The twentieth century, the common man says, is his day; the common man's day, or, rather, the dawning of the common man's day.

Nor can it be denied. The evidence is with him. The previous centuries, and more notably the nineteenth, have marked the rise of the common man. From chattel slavery to serfdom, and from serfdom to what he bitterly terms “wage slavery,” he has risen. Never was he so strong as he is today, and never so menacing. He does the work of the world, and he is beginning to know it. The world cannot get along without him, and this also he is beginning to know. All the human knowledge of the past, all the scientific discovery, governmental experiment, and invention of machinery, have tended to his advancement. His standard of living is higher. His common school education would shame princes ten centuries past. His civil and religious liberty makes him a free man, and his ballot the peer of his betters. And all this has tended to make him conscious, conscious of himself, conscious of his class. He looks about him and questions that ancient law of development. It is cruel and wrong, he is beginning to declare. It is an anachronism. Let it be abolished. Why should there be one empty belly in all the world, when the work of ten men can feed a hundred? What if my brother be not so strong as I? He has not sinned. Wherefore should he hunger — he and his sinless little ones? Away with the old law. There is food and shelter for all, therefore let all receive food and shelter.

As fast as labor has become conscious it has organized. The ambition of these class-conscious men is that the movement shall become general, that all labor shall become conscious of itself and its class interests. And the day that witnesses the solidarity of labor, they triumphantly affirm, will be a day when labor dominates the world. This growing consciousness has led to the organization of two movements, both separate and distinct, but both converging toward a common goal — one, the labor movement, known as Trade Unionism; the other, the political movement, known as Socialism. Both are grim and silent forces, unheralded and virtually unknown to the general public save in moments of stress. The sleeping labor giant receives little notice from the capitalistic press, and when he stirs uneasily, a column of surprise, indignation, and horror suffices.

It is only now and then, after long periods of silence, that the labor movement puts in its claim for notice. All is quiet. The kind old world spins on, and the bourgeois masters clip their coupons in smug complacency. But the grim and silent forces are at work.

Suddenly, like a clap of thunder from a clear sky, comes a disruption of industry. From ocean to ocean the wheels of a great chain of railroads cease to run. A quarter of a million miners throw down pick and shovel and outrage the sun with their pale, bleached faces. The street railways of a swarming metropolis stand idle, or the rumble of machinery in vast manufactories dies away to silence. There is alarm and panic. Arson and homicide stalk forth. There is a cry in the night, and quick anger and sudden death. Peaceful cities are affrighted by the crack of rifles and the snarl of machine-guns, and the hearts of the shuddering are shaken by the roar of dynamite. There is hurrying and skurrying. The wires are kept hot between the centre of government and the seat of trouble. The chiefs of state ponder gravely and advise, and governors of states implore. There is assembling of militia and massing of troops, and the streets resound to the tramp of armed men. There are separate and joint conferences between the captains of industry and the captains of labor. And then, finally, all is quiet again, and the memory of it is like the memory of a bad dream.

But these strikes become olympiads, things to date from; and common on the lips of men become such phrases as “The Great Dock Strike,” “The Great Coal Strike,” “The Great Railroad Strike.” Never before did labor do these things. After the Great Plague in England, labor, finding itself in demand and innocently obeying the economic law, asked higher wages. But the masters set a maximum wage, restrained workingmen from moving about from place to place, refused to tolerate idlers, and by most barbarous legal methods punished those who disobeyed. But labor is accorded greater respect today. Such a policy, put into effect in this the first decade of the twentieth century, would sweep the masters from their seats in one mighty crash. And the masters know it and are respectful.

A fair instance of the growing solidarity of labor is afforded by an unimportant recent strike in San Francisco. The restaurant cooks and waiters were completely unorganized, working at any and all hours for whatever wages they could get. A representative of the American Federation of Labor went among them and organized them. Within a few weeks nearly two thousand men were enrolled, and they had five thousand dollars on deposit. Then they put in their demand for increased wages and shorter hours. Forthwith their employers organized. The demand was denied, and the Cooks’ and Waiters’ Union walked out.

All organized employers stood back of the restaurant owners, in sympathy with them and willing to aid them if they dared. And at the back of the Cooks' and Waiters' Union stood the organized labor of the city, 40,000 strong. If a business man was caught patronizing an "unfair" restaurant, he was boycotted; if a union man was caught, he was fined heavily by his union or expelled. The oyster companies and the slaughter houses made an attempt to refuse to sell oysters and meat to union restaurants. The Butchers and Meat Cutters, and the Teamsters, in retaliation, refused to work for or to deliver to non-union restaurants. Upon this the oyster companies and slaughter houses acknowledged themselves beaten and peace reigned. But the Restaurant Bakers in non-union places were ordered out, and the Bakery Wagon Drivers declined to deliver to unfair houses.

Every American Federation of Labor union in the city was prepared to strike, and waited only the word. And behind all, a handful of men, known as the Labor Council, directed the fight. One by one, blow upon blow, they were able if they deemed it necessary to call out the unions — the Laundry Workers, who do the washing; the Hackmen, who haul men to and from restaurants; the Butchers, Meat Cutters, and Teamsters; and the Milkers, Milk Drivers, and Chicken Pickers; and after that, in pure sympathy, the Retail Clerks, the Horse Shoers, the Gas and Electrical Fixture Hangers, the Metal Roofers, the Blacksmiths, the Blacksmiths' Helpers, the Stablemen, the Machinists, the Brewers, the Coast Seamen, the Varnishers and Polishers, the Confectioners, the Upholsterers, the Paper Hangers and Fresco Painters, the Drug Clerks, the Fitters and Helpers, the Metal Workers, the Boiler Makers and Iron Ship Builders, the Assistant Undertakers, the Carriage and Wagon Workers, and so on down the lengthy list of organizations.

For, over all these trades, over all these thousands of men, is the Labor Council. When it speaks its voice is heard, and when it orders it is obeyed. But it, in turn, is dominated by the National Labor Council, with which it is constantly in touch. In this wholly unimportant little local strike it is of interest to note the stands taken by the different sides. The legal representative and official mouthpiece of the Employers' Association said: "This organization is formed for defensive purposes, and it may be driven to take offensive steps, and if so, will be strong enough to follow them up. Labor cannot be allowed to dictate to capital and say how business shall be conducted. There is no objection to the formation of unions and trades councils, but membership must not be compulsory. It is repugnant to the American idea of liberty and cannot be tolerated."

On the other hand, the president of the Team Drivers' Union said: "The employers of labor in this city are generally against the trade-union movement and there seems to be a concerted effort on their part to check the progress of organized labor. Such action as has been taken by them in sympathy with the present labor troubles may, if continued, lead to a serious conflict, the outcome of which might be most calamitous for the business and industrial interests of San Francisco."

And the secretary of the United Brewery Workmen: "I regard a sympathetic strike as the last weapon which organized labor should use in its defence. When, however, associations of employers band together to defeat organized labor, or one of its branches, then we should not and will not hesitate ourselves to employ the same instrument in retaliation."

Thus, in a little corner of the world, is exemplified the growing solidarity of labor. The organization of labor has not only kept pace with the organization of industry, but it has gained upon it. In one winter, in the anthracite coal region, $160,000,000 in mines and $600,000,000 in transportation and distribution consolidated its ownership and control. And at once, arrayed as solidly on the other side, were the 150,000 anthracite miners. The bituminous mines, however, were not consolidated; yet the 250,000 men employed therein were already combined. And not only that, but they were also combined with the anthracite miners, these 400,000 men being under the control and direction of one supreme labor council. And in this and the other great councils are to be found captains of labor of splendid abilities, who, in understanding of economic and industrial conditions, are undeniably the equals of their opponents, the captains of industry.

The United States is honeycombed with labor organizations. And the big federations which these go to compose aggregate millions of members, and in their various branches handle millions of dollars yearly. And not only this; for the international brotherhoods and unions are forming, and moneys for the aid of strikers pass back and forth across the seas. The Machinists, in their demand for a nine-hour day, affected 500,000 men in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. In England the membership of working-class organizations is approximated by Keir Hardie at 2,500,000, with reserve funds of $18,000,000. There the coöperative movement has a membership of 1,500,000, and every year turns over in distribution more than $100,000,000. In France, one-eighth of the whole working class is unionized. In Belgium the unions are very rich and powerful, and so able to defy the masters that many of the smaller manufacturers, unable to resist, "are removing their works to other countries where the workmen's organizations are not so potential." And in all other countries, according to the stage of their economic and political development, like figures obtain. And Europe, today, confesses that her greatest social problem is the labor problem, and that it is the one most closely engrossing the attention of her statesmen.

The organization of labor is one of the chief acknowledged factors in the retrogression of British trade. The workers have become class conscious as never before. The wrong of one is the wrong of all. They have come to realize, in a short-sighted way, that their masters' interests are not their interests. The harder they work, they believe, the more wealth they create for their masters. Further, the more work they do in one day, the fewer men will be needed to do the work. So the unions place a day's stint upon their members, beyond which they are not permitted to go. In "A Study of Trade Unionism," by Benjamin Taylor in the "Nineteenth Century" of April, 1898, are furnished some interesting corroborations. The facts here set forth were collected by the Executive Board of the Employers' Federation, the documentary proofs of which are in the hands of the secretaries. In a certain firm the union workmen made eight ammunition boxes a day. Nor could they be persuaded into making more. A young Swiss, who could not speak English, was set to work, and in the first day he made fifty boxes. In the same firm the skilled union hands filed up the outside handles of one machine-gun a day. That was their stint. No one was known ever to do more. A non-union filer came into the shop and did twelve a day. A Manchester firm found that to plane a large bed-casting took union workmen one hundred and ninety hours, and non-union workmen one hundred and thirty-five hours. In another instance a man, resigning from his union, day by day did double the amount of work he had done formerly. And to cap it all, an English gentleman, going out to look at a wall being put up for him by union bricklayers, found one of their number with his right arm strapped to his body, doing all the work with his left arm —

forsooth, because he was such an energetic fellow that otherwise he would involuntarily lay more bricks than his union permitted.

All England resounds to the cry, “Wake up, England!” But the sulky giant is not stirred. “Let England’s trade go to pot,” he says; “what have I to lose?” And England is powerless. The capacity of her workmen is represented by 1, in comparison with the 2¼ capacity of the American workman. And because of the solidarity of labor and the destructiveness of strikes, British capitalists dare not even strive to emulate the enterprise of American capitalists. So England watches trade slipping through her fingers and wails unavailingly. As a correspondent writes: “The enormous power of the trade unions hangs, a sullen cloud, over the whole industrial world here, affecting men and masters alike.”

The political movement known as Socialism is, perhaps, even less realized by the general public. The great strides it has taken and the portentous front it today exhibits are not comprehended; and, fastened though it is in every land, it is given little space by the capitalistic press. For all its plea and passion and warmth, it wells upward like a great, cold tidal wave, irresistible, inexorable, ingulfing present-day society level by level. By its own preachment it is inexorable. Just as societies have sprung into existence, fulfilled their function, and passed away, it claims, just as surely is present society hastening on to its dissolution. This is a transition period — and destined to be a very short one. Barely a century old, capitalism is ripening so rapidly that it can never live to see a second birthday. There is no hope for it, the Socialists say. It is doomed.

The cardinal tenet of Socialism is that forbidding doctrine, the materialistic conception of history. Men are not the masters of their souls. They are the puppets of great, blind forces. The lives they live and the deaths they die are compulsory. All social codes are but the reflexes of existing economic conditions, plus certain survivals of past economic conditions. The institutions men build they are compelled to build. Economic laws determine at any given time what these institutions shall be, how long they shall operate, and by what they shall be replaced. And so, through the economic process, the Socialist preaches the ripening of the capitalistic society and the coming of the new coöperative society.

The second great tenet of Socialism, itself a phase of the materialistic conception of history, is the class struggle. In the social struggle for existence, men are forced into classes. “The history of all society thus far is the history of class strife." In existing society the capitalist class exploits the working class, the proletariat. The interests of the exploiter are not the interests of the exploited. "Profits are legitimate," says the one. "Profits are unpaid wages," replies the other, when he has become conscious of his class, "therefore profits are robbery." The capitalist enforces his profits because he is the legal owner of all the means of production. He is the legal owner because he controls the political machinery of society. The Socialist sets to work to capture the political machinery, so that he may make illegal the capitalist's ownership of the means of production, and make legal his own ownership of the means of production. And it is this struggle, between these two classes, upon which the world has at last entered.

Scientific Socialism is very young. Only yesterday it was in swaddling clothes. But today it is a vigorous young giant, well braced to battle for what it wants, and knowing precisely what it wants. It holds its international conventions, where world-policies are formulated by the representatives of millions of Socialists. In little Belgium there are three-quarters of a million of men who work for the cause; in Germany, 3,000,000; Austria, between 1895 and 1897, raised her socialist vote from 90,000 to 750,000. France in 1871 had a whole generation of Socialists wiped out; yet in 1885 there were 30,000, and in 1898, 1,000,000.

Ere the last Spaniard had evacuated Cuba, Socialist groups were forming. And from far Japan, in these first days of the twentieth century, writes one Tomoyoshi Murai: "The interest of our people on Socialism has been greatly awakened these days, especially among our laboring people on one hand and young students' circle on the other, as much as we can draw an earnest and enthusiastic audience and fill our hall, which holds two thousand. . . . It is gratifying to say that we have a number of fine and well-trained public orators among our leaders of Socialism in Japan. The first speaker tonight is Mr. Kiyoshi Kawakami, editor of one of our city (Tokyo) dailies, a strong, independent, and decidedly socialistic paper, circulated far and wide. Mr. Kawakami is a scholar as well as a popular writer. He is going to speak tonight on the subject, 'The Essence of Socialism — the Fundamental Principles.' The next speaker is Professor Iso Abe, president of our association, whose subject of address is, 'Socialism and the Existing Social System.' The third speaker is Mr. Naoe Kinosita, the editor of another strong journal of the city. He speaks on the subject, 'How to Realize the Socialist Ideals and Plans.' Next is Mr. Shigeyoshi Sugiyama, a graduate of Hartford Theological Seminary and an advocate of Social Christianity, who is to speak on 'Socialism and Municipal Problems.' And the last speaker is the editor of the 'Labor World,' the foremost leader of the labor-union movement in our country, Mr. Sen Katayama, who speaks on the subject, 'The Outlook of Socialism in Europe and America.' These addresses are going to be published in book form and to be distributed among our people to enlighten their minds on the subject."

And in the struggle for the political machinery of society, Socialism is no longer confined to mere propaganda. Italy, Austria, Belgium, England, have Socialist members in their national bodies. Out of the one hundred and thirty-two members of the London County Council, ninety-one are denounced by the conservative element as Socialists. The Emperor of Germany grows anxious and angry at the increasing numbers which are returned to the Reichstag. In France, many of the large cities, such as Marseilles, are in the hands of the Socialists. A large body of them is in the Chamber of Deputies, and Millerand, Socialist, sits in the cabinet. Of him M. Leroy-Beaulieu says with horror: "M. Millerand is the open enemy of private property, private capital, the resolute advocate of the socialization of production . . . a constant incitement to violence . . . a collectivist, avowed and militant, taking part in the government, dominating the departments of commerce and industry, preparing all the laws and presiding at the passage of all measures which should be submitted to merchants and tradesmen."

In the United States there are already Socialist mayors of towns and members of State legislatures, a vast literature, and single Socialist papers with subscription lists running up into the hundreds of thousands. In 1896, 36,000 votes were cast for the Socialist candidate for President; in 1900, nearly 200,000; in 1904, 450,000. And the United States, young as it is, is ripening rapidly, and the Socialists claim, according to the materialistic conception of history, that the United States will be the first country in the world wherein the toilers will capture the political machinery and expropriate the bourgeoisie.

* * * * *

But the Socialist and labor movements have recently entered upon a new phase. There has been a remarkable change in attitude on both sides. For a long time the labor unions refrained from going in for political action. On the other hand, the Socialists claimed that without political action labor was powerless. And because of this there was much ill feeling between them, even open hostilities, and no concerted action. But now the Socialists grant that the labor movement has held up wages and decreased the hours of labor, and the labor unions find that political action is necessary. Today both parties have drawn closely together in the common fight. In the United States this friendly feeling grows. The Socialist papers espouse the cause of labor, and the unions have opened their ears once more to the wiles of the Socialists. They are all leavened with Socialist workmen, "boring from within," and many of their leaders have already succumbed. In England, where class consciousness is more developed, the name "Unionism" has been replaced by "The New Unionism," the main object of which is "to capture existing social structures in the interests of the wage-earners." There the Socialist, the trade-union, and other working-class organizations are beginning to coöperate in securing the return of representatives to the House of Commons. And in France, where the city councils and mayors of Marseilles and Monteaules-Mines are Socialistic, thousands of francs of municipal money were voted for the aid of the unions in the recent great strikes.

For centuries the world has been preparing for the coming of the common man. And the period of preparation virtually past, labor, conscious of itself and its desires, has begun a definite movement toward solidarity. It believes the time is not far distant when the historian will speak not only of the dark ages of feudalism, but of the dark ages of capitalism. And labor sincerely believes itself justified in this by the terrible indictment it brings against capitalistic society. In the face of its enormous wealth, capitalistic society forfeits its right to existence when it permits widespread, bestial poverty. The philosophy of the survival of the fittest does not soothe the class-conscious worker when he learns through his class literature that among the Italian pants-finishers of Chicago _ the average weekly wage is $1.31, and the average number of weeks employed in the year is 27.85. Likewise when he reads: _ "Every room in these reeking tenements houses a family or two. In one room a missionary found a man ill with small-pox, his wife just recovering from her confinement, and the children running about half naked and covered with dirt. Here are seven people living in one underground kitchen, and a little dead child lying in the same room. Here live a widow and her six children, two of whom are ill with scarlet fever. In another, nine brothers and sisters, from twenty-nine years of age downward, live, eat, and sleep together." And likewise, when he reads: _ "When one man, fifty years old, who has worked all his life, is compelled to beg a little money to bury his dead baby, and another man, fifty years old, can give ten million dollars to enable his daughter to live in luxury and bolster up a decaying foreign aristocracy, do you see nothing amiss?”

And on the other hand, the class-conscious worker reads the statistics of the wealthy classes, knows what their incomes are, and how they get them. True, down all the past he has known his own material misery and the material comfort of the dominant classes, and often has this knowledge led him to intemperate acts and unwise rebellion. But today, and for the first time, because both society and he have evolved, he is beginning to see a possible way out. His ears are opening to the propaganda of Socialism, the passionate gospel of the dispossessed. But it does not inculcate a turning back. The way through is the way out, he understands, and with this in mind he draws up the programme.

It is quite simple, this programme. Everything is moving in his direction, toward the day when he will take charge. The trust? Ah, no. Unlike the trembling middle-class man and the small capitalist, he sees nothing at which to be frightened. He likes the trust. He exults in the trust, for it is largely doing the task for him. It socializes production; this done, there remains nothing for him to do but socialize distribution, and all is accomplished. The trust? “It organizes industry on an enormous, labor-saving scale, and abolishes childish, wasteful competition.” It is a gigantic object lesson, and it preaches his political economy far more potently than he can preach it. He points to the trust, laughing scornfully in the face of the orthodox economists. “You told me this thing could not be,” _ he thunders. “Behold, the thing is!”

He sees competition in the realm of production passing away. When the captains of industry have thoroughly organized production, and got everything running smoothly, it will be very easy for him to eliminate the profits by stepping in and having the thing run for himself. And the captain of industry, if he be good, may be given the privilege of continuing the management on a fair salary. The sixty millions of dividends which the Standard Oil Company annually declares will be distributed among the workers. The same with the great United States Steel Corporation. The president of that corporation knows his business. Very good. Let him become Secretary of the Department of Iron and Steel of the United States. But, since the chief executive of a nation of seventy-odd millions works for

$50,000 a year, the Secretary of the Department of Iron and Steel must expect to have his salary cut accordingly. And not only will the workers take to themselves the profits of national and municipal monopolies, but also the immense revenues which the dominant classes today draw from rents, and mines, and factories, and all manner of enterprises.

* * * * *

All this would seem very like a dream, even to the worker, if it were not for the fact that like things have been done before. He points triumphantly to the aristocrat of the eighteenth century, who fought, legislated, governed, and dominated society, but who was shorn of power and displaced by the rising bourgeoisie. Ay, the thing was done, he holds. And it shall be done again, but this time it is the proletariat who does the shearing. Sociology has taught him that m-i-g-h-t spells “right.” Every society has been ruled by classes, and the classes have ruled by sheer strength, and have been overthrown by sheer strength. The bourgeoisie, because it was the stronger, dragged down the nobility of the sword; and the proletariat, because it is the strongest of all, can and will drag down the bourgeoisie.

And in that day, for better or worse, the common man becomes the master — for better, he believes. It is his intention to make the sum of human happiness far greater. No man shall work for a bare living wage, which is degradation. Every man shall have work to do, and shall be paid exceedingly well for doing it. There shall be no slum classes, no beggars. Nor shall there be hundreds of thousands of men and women condemned, for economic reasons, to lives of celibacy or sexual infertility. Every man shall be able to marry, to live in healthy, comfortable quarters, and to have all he wants to eat as many times a day as he wishes. There shall no longer be a life-and-death struggle for food and shelter. The old heartless law of development shall be annulled.

All of which is very good and very fine. And when these things have come to pass, what then? Of old, by virtue of their weakness and inefficiency in the struggle for food and shelter, the race was purged of its weak and inefficient members. But this will no longer obtain. Under the new order the weak and the progeny of the weak will have a chance for survival equal to that of the strong and the progeny of the strong. This being so, the premium upon strength will have been withdrawn, and on the face of it the average strength of each generation, instead of continuing to rise, will begin to decline.

When the common man's day shall have arrived, the new social institutions of that day will prevent the weeding out of weakness and inefficiency. All, the weak and the strong, will have an equal chance for procreation. And the progeny of all, of the weak as well as the strong, will have an equal chance for survival. This being so, and if no new effective law of development be put into operation, then progress must cease. And not only progress, for deterioration would at once set in. It is a pregnant problem. What will be the nature of this new and most necessary law of development? Can the common man pause long enough from his undermining labors to answer? Since he is bent upon dragging down the bourgeoisie and reconstructing society, can he so reconstruct that a premium, in some unguessed way or other, will still be laid upon the strong and efficient so that the human type will continue to develop? Can the common man, or the uncommon men who are allied with him, devise such a law? Or have they already devised one? And if so, what is it?

HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST

It is quite fair to say that I became a Socialist in a fashion somewhat similar to the way in which the Teutonic pagans became Christians — it was hammered into me. Not only was I not looking for Socialism at the time of my conversion, but I was fighting it. I was very young and callow, did not know much of anything, and though I had never even heard of a school called "Individualism," I sang the pæan of the strong with all my heart.

This was because I was strong myself. By strong I mean that I had good health and hard muscles, both of which possessions are easily accounted for. I had lived my childhood on California ranches, my boyhood hustling newspapers on the streets of a healthy Western city, and my youth on the ozone-laden waters of San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. I loved life in the open, and I toiled in the open, at the hardest kinds of work. Learning no trade, but drifting along from job to job, I looked on the world and called it good, every bit of it. Let me repeat, this optimism was because I was healthy and strong, bothered with neither aches nor weaknesses, never turned down by the boss because I did not look fit, able always to get a job at shovelling coal, sailorizing, or manual labor of some sort.

And because of all this, exulting in my young life, able to hold my own at work or fight, I was a rampant individualist. It was very natural. I was a winner. Wherefore I called the game, as I saw it played, or thought I saw it played, a very proper game for MEN. To be a MAN was to write man in large capitals on my heart. To adventure like a man, and fight like a man, and do a man's work (even for a boy's pay) — these were things that reached right in and gripped hold of me as no other thing could. And I looked ahead into long vistas of a hazy and interminable future, into which, playing what I conceived to be MAN'S game, I should continue to travel with unfailing health, without accidents, and with muscles ever vigorous. As I say, this future was interminable. I could see myself only raging through life without end like one of Nietzsche's *blond-beasts*, lustfully roving and conquering by sheer superiority and strength.

As for the unfortunates, the sick, and ailing, and old, and maimed, I must confess I hardly thought of them at all, save that I vaguely felt that they, barring accidents, could be as good as I if they wanted to real hard, and could work just as well. Accidents? Well, they represented FATE, also spelled out in capitals, and there was no getting around FATE. Napoleon had had an accident at Waterloo, but that did not dampen my desire to be another and later Napoleon. Further, the optimism bred of a stomach which could digest scrap iron and a body which flourished on hardships did not permit me to consider accidents as even remotely related to my glorious personality.

I hope I have made it clear that I was proud to be one of Nature's strong-armed noblemen. The dignity of labor was to me the most impressive thing in the world. Without having read Carlyle, or Kipling, I formulated a gospel of work which put theirs in the shade. Work was everything. It was sanctification and salvation. The pride I took in a hard day's work well done would be inconceivable to you. It is almost inconceivable to me as I look back upon it. I was as faithful a wage slave as ever capitalist exploited. To shirk or malinger on the man who paid me my wages was a sin, first, against myself, and second, against him. I considered it a crime second only to treason and just about as bad.

In short, my joyous individualism was dominated by the orthodox bourgeois ethics. I read the bourgeois papers, listened to the bourgeois preachers, and shouted at the sonorous platitudes of the bourgeois politicians. And I doubt not, if other events had not changed my career, that I should have evolved into a professional strike-breaker, (one of President Eliot's American heroes), and had my head and my earning power irrevocably smashed by a club in the hands of some militant trades-unionist.

Just about this time, returning from a seven months' voyage before the mast, and just turned eighteen, I took it into my head to go tramping. On rods and blind baggages I fought my way from the open West where men bucked big and the job hunted the man, to the congested labor centres of the East, where men were small potatoes and hunted the job for all they were worth. And on this new *blond-beast* adventure I found myself looking upon life from a new and totally different angle. I had dropped down from the proletariat into what sociologists love to call the "submerged tenth," and I was startled to discover the way in which that submerged tenth was recruited.

I found there all sorts of men, many of whom had once been as good as myself and just as *blond-beast*; sailor-men, soldier-men, labor-men, all wrenched and distorted and twisted out of shape by toil and hardship and accident, and cast adrift by their masters like so many old horses. I battered on the drag and slammed back gates with them, or shivered with them in box cars and city parks, listening the while to life-histories which began under auspices as fair as mine, with digestions and bodies equal to and better than mine, and which ended there before my eyes in the shambles at the bottom of the Social Pit.

And as I listened my brain began to work. The woman of the streets and the man of the gutter drew very close to me. I saw the picture of the Social Pit as vividly as though it were a concrete thing, and at the bottom of the Pit I saw them, myself above them, not far, and hanging on to the slippery wall by main strength and sweat. And I confess a terror seized me. What when my strength failed? when I should be unable to work shoulder to shoulder with the strong men who were as yet babes unborn? And there and then I swore a great oath. It ran something like this: *All my days I have worked hard with my body, and according to the number of days I have worked, by just that much am I nearer the bottom of the Pit. I shall climb out of the Pit, but not by the muscles of my body shall I climb out. I shall do no more hard work, and may God strike me dead if I do another day's hard work with my body more than I absolutely have to do.* And I have been busy ever since running away from hard work.

Incidentally, while tramping some ten thousand miles through the United States and Canada, I strayed into Niagara Falls, was nabbed by a fee-hunting constable, denied the right to plead guilty or not guilty, sentenced out of hand to thirty days' imprisonment for having no fixed abode and no visible means of support, handcuffed and chained to a bunch of men similarly circumstanced, carted down country to Buffalo, registered at the Erie County Penitentiary, had my head clipped and my budding mustache shaved, was dressed in convict stripes, compulsorily vaccinated by a medical student who practised on such as we, made to march the lock-step, and put to work under the eyes of guards armed with Winchester rifles — all for adventuring in *blond-beastly* fashion. Concerning further details deponent sayeth not, though he may hint that some of his plethoric national patriotism simmered down and leaked out of the bottom of his soul somewhere — at least, since that experience he finds that he cares more for men and women and little children than for imaginary geographical lines.

* * * * *

To return to my conversion. I think it is apparent that my rampant individualism was pretty effectively hammered out of me, and something else as effectively hammered in. But, just as I had been an individualist without knowing it, I was now a Socialist without knowing it, withal, an unscientific one. I had been reborn, but not renamed, and I was running around to find out what manner of thing I was. I ran back to California and opened the books. I do not remember which ones I opened first. It is an unimportant detail anyway. I was already It, whatever It was, and by aid of the books I discovered that It was a Socialist. Since that day I have opened many books, but no economic argument, no lucid demonstration of the logic and inevitableness of Socialism affects me as profoundly and convincingly as I was affected on the day when I first saw the walls of the Social Pit rise around me and felt myself slipping down, down, into the shambles at the bottom.

REVOLUTION AND OTHER ESSAYS

This collection of essays was first published in 1910.

London with his daughters, 1915

CONTENTS

REVOLUTION
THE SOMNAMBULISTS
THE DIGNITY OF DOLLARS
GOLIAH
THE GOLDEN POPPY
THE SHRINKAGE OF THE PLANET
THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL
THE GOLD HUNTERS OF THE NORTH
FOMÁ GORDYÉEFF
THESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN
THE OTHER ANIMALS
THE YELLOW PERIL
WHAT LIFE MEANS TO ME

REVOLUTION

"The present is enough for common souls,
Who, never looking forward, are indeed
Mere clay, wherein the footprints of their age
Are petrified for ever."

I received a letter the other day. It was from a man in Arizona. It began, "Dear Comrade." It ended, "Yours for the Revolution." I replied to the letter, and my letter began, "Dear Comrade." It ended, "Yours for the Revolution." In the United States there are 400,000 men, of men and women nearly 1,000,000, who begin their letters "Dear Comrade," and end them "Yours for the Revolution." In Germany there are 3,000,000 men who begin their letters "Dear Comrade" and end them "Yours for the Revolution"; in France, 1,000,000 men; in Austria, 800,000 men; in Belgium, 300,000 men; in Italy, 250,000 men; in England, 100,000 men; in Switzerland, 100,000 men; in Denmark, 55,000 men; in Sweden, 50,000 men; in Holland, 40,000 men; in Spain, 30,000 men — comrades all, and revolutionists.

These are numbers which dwarf the grand armies of Napoleon and Xerxes. But they are numbers not of conquest and maintenance of the established order, but of conquest and revolution. They compose, when the roll is called, an army of 7,000,000 men, who, in accordance with the conditions of to-day, are fighting with all their might for the conquest of the wealth of the world and for the complete overthrow of existing society.

There has never been anything like this revolution in the history of the world. There is nothing analogous between it and the American Revolution or the French Revolution. It is unique, colossal. Other revolutions compare with it as asteroids compare with the sun. It is alone of its kind, the first world-revolution in a world whose history is replete with revolutions. And not only this, for it is the first organized movement of men to become a world movement, limited only by the limits of the planet.

This revolution is unlike all other revolutions in many respects. It is not sporadic. It is not a flame of popular discontent, arising in a day and dying down in a day. It is older than the present generation. It has a history and traditions, and a martyr-roll only less extensive possibly than the martyr-roll of Christianity. It has also a literature a myriad times more imposing, scientific, and scholarly than the literature of any previous revolution.

They call themselves "comrades," these men, comrades in the socialist revolution. Nor is the word empty and meaningless, coined of mere lip service. It knits men together as brothers, as men should be knit together who stand shoulder to shoulder under the red banner of revolt. This red banner, by the way, symbolizes the brotherhood of man, and does not symbolize the incendiarism that instantly connects itself with the red banner in the affrighted bourgeois mind. The comradeship of the revolutionists is alive and warm. It passes over geographical lines, transcends race prejudice, and has even proved itself mightier than the Fourth of July, spread-eagle Americanism of our forefathers. The French socialist working-men and the German socialist working-men forget Alsace and Lorraine, and, when war threatens, pass resolutions declaring that as working-men and comrades they have no quarrel with each other. Only the other day, when Japan and Russia sprang at each other's throats, the revolutionists of Japan addressed the following message to the revolutionists of Russia: "Dear Comrades — Your government and ours have recently plunged into war to carry out their imperialistic tendencies, but for us socialists there are no boundaries, race, country, or nationality. We are comrades, brothers, and sisters, and have no reason to fight. Your enemies are not the Japanese people, but our militarism and so-called patriotism. Patriotism and militarism are our mutual enemies."

In January 1905, throughout the United States the socialists held mass-meetings to express their sympathy for their struggling comrades, the revolutionists of Russia, and, more to the point, to furnish the sinews of war by collecting money and cabling it to the Russian leaders. The fact of this call for money, and the ready response, and the very wording of the call, make a striking and practical demonstration of the international solidarity of this world-revolution:

"Whatever may be the immediate results of the present revolt in Russia, the socialist propaganda in that country has received from it an impetus unparalleled in the history of modern class wars. The heroic battle for freedom is being fought almost exclusively by the Russian working-class under the intellectual leadership of Russian socialists, thus once more demonstrating the fact that the class-conscious working-men have become the vanguard of all liberating movements of modern times."

Here are 7,000,000 comrades in an organized, international, world-wide, revolutionary movement. Here is a tremendous human force. It must be reckoned with. Here is power. And here is romance — romance so colossal that it seems to be beyond the ken of ordinary mortals. These revolutionists are swayed by great passion. They have a keen sense of personal right, much of reverence for humanity, but little reverence, if any at all, for the rule of the dead. They refuse to be ruled by the dead. To the bourgeois mind their unbelief in the dominant conventions of the established order is startling. They laugh to scorn the sweet ideals and dear moralities of bourgeois society. They intend to destroy bourgeois society with most of its sweet ideals and dear moralities, and chiefest among these are those that group themselves under such heads as private ownership of capital, survival of the fittest, and patriotism — even patriotism.

Such an army of revolution, 7,000,000 strong, is a thing to make rulers and ruling classes pause and consider. The cry of this army is, “No quarter! We want all that you possess. We will be content with nothing less than all that you possess. We want in our hands the reins of power and the destiny of mankind. Here are our hands. They are strong hands. We are going to take your governments, your palaces, and all your purpled ease away from you, and in that day you shall work for your bread even as the peasant in the field or the starved and runty clerk in your metropolises. Here are our hands. They are strong hands.”

Well may rulers and ruling classes pause and consider. This is revolution. And, further, these 7,000,000 men are not an army on paper. Their fighting strength in the field is 7,000,000. To-day they cast 7,000,000 votes in the civilized countries of the world.

Yesterday they were not so strong. To-morrow they will be still stronger. And they are fighters. They love peace. They are unafraid of war. They intend nothing less than to destroy existing capitalist society and to take possession of the whole world. If the law of the land permits, they fight for this end peaceably, at the ballot-box. If the law of the land does not permit, and if they have force meted out to them, they resort to force themselves. They meet violence with violence. Their hands are strong and they are unafraid. In Russia, for instance, there is no suffrage. The government executes the revolutionists. The revolutionists kill the officers of the government. The revolutionists meet legal murder with assassination.

Now here arises a particularly significant phase which it would be well for the rulers to consider. Let me make it concrete. I am a revolutionist. Yet I am a fairly sane and normal individual. I speak, and I *think*, of these assassins in Russia as "my comrades." So do all the comrades in America, and all the 7,000,000 comrades in the world. Of what worth an organized, international, revolutionary movement if our comrades are not backed up the world over! The worth is shown by the fact that we do back up the assassinations by our comrades in Russia. They are not disciples of Tolstoy, nor are we. We are revolutionists.

Our comrades in Russia have formed what they call "The Fighting Organization." This Fighting Organization accused, tried, found guilty, and condemned to death, one Sipiaguin, Minister of Interior. On April 2 he was shot and killed in the Maryinsky Palace. Two years later the Fighting Organization condemned to death and executed another Minister of Interior, Von Plehve. Having done so, it issued a document, dated July 29, 1904, setting forth the counts of its indictment of Von Plehve and its responsibility for the assassination. Now, and to the point, this document was sent out to the socialists of the world, and by them was published everywhere in the magazines and newspapers. The point is, not that the socialists of the world were unafraid to do it, not that they dared to do it, but that they did it as a matter of routine, giving publication to what may be called an official document of the international revolutionary movement.

These are high lights upon the revolution — granted, but they are also facts. And they are given to the rulers and the ruling classes, not in bravado, not to frighten them, but for them to consider more deeply the spirit and nature of this world-revolution. The time has come for the revolution to demand consideration. It has fastened upon every civilized country in the world. As fast as a country becomes civilized, the revolution fastens upon it. With the introduction of the machine into Japan, socialism was introduced. Socialism marched into the Philippines shoulder to shoulder with the American soldiers. The echoes of the last gun had scarcely died away when socialist locals were forming in Cuba and Porto Rico. Vastly more significant is the fact that of all the countries the revolution has fastened upon, on not one has it relaxed its grip. On the contrary, on every country its grip closes tighter year by year. As an active movement it began obscurely over a generation ago. In 1867, its voting strength in the world was 30,000. By 1871 its vote had increased to

1,000,000. Not till 1884 did it pass the half-million point. By 1889 it had passed the million point, it had then gained momentum. In 1892 the socialist vote of the world was 1,798,391; in 1893, 2,585,898; in 1895, 3,033,718; in 1898, 4,515,591; in 1902, 5,253,054; in 1903, 6,285,374; and in the year of our Lord 1905 it passed the seven-million mark.

Nor has this flame of revolution left the United States untouched. In 1888 there were only 2,068 socialist votes. In 1902 there were 127,713 socialist votes. And in 1904 435,040 socialist votes were cast. What fanned this flame? Not hard times. The first four years of the twentieth century were considered prosperous years, yet in that time more than 300,000 men added themselves to the ranks of the revolutionists, flinging their defiance in the teeth of bourgeois society and taking their stand under the blood-red banner. In the state of the writer, California, one man in twelve is an avowed and registered revolutionist.

One thing must be clearly understood. This is no spontaneous and vague uprising of a large mass of discontented and miserable people — a blind and instinctive recoil from hurt. On the contrary, the propaganda is intellectual; the movement is based upon economic necessity and is in line with social evolution; while the miserable people have not yet revolted. The revolutionist is no starved and diseased slave in the shambles at the bottom of the social pit, but is, in the main, a hearty, well-fed working-man, who sees the shambles waiting for him and his children and recoils from the descent. The very miserable people are too helpless to help themselves. But they are being helped, and the day is not far distant when their numbers will go to swell the ranks of the revolutionists.

Another thing must be clearly understood. In spite of the fact that middle-class men and professional men are interested in the movement, it is nevertheless a distinctly working-class revolt. The world over, it is a working-class revolt. The workers of the world, as a class, are fighting the capitalists of the world, as a class. The so-called great middle class is a growing anomaly in the social struggle. It is a perishing class (wily statisticians to the contrary), and its historic mission of buffer between the capitalist and working-classes has just about been fulfilled. Little remains for it but to wail as it passes into oblivion, as it has already begun to wail in accents Populistic and Jeffersonian-Democratic. The fight is on. The revolution is here now, and it is the world's workers that are in revolt.

Naturally the question arises: Why is this so? No mere whim of the spirit can give rise to a world-revolution. Whim does not conduce to unanimity. There must be a deep-seated cause to make 7,000,000 men of the one mind, to make them cast off allegiance to the bourgeois gods and lose faith in so fine a thing as patriotism. There are many counts of the indictment which the revolutionists bring against the capitalist class, but for present use only one need be stated, and it is a count to which capital has never replied and can never reply.

The capitalist class has managed society, and its management has failed. And not only has it failed in its management, but it has failed deplorably, ignobly, horribly. The capitalist class had an opportunity such as was vouchsafed no previous ruling class in the history of the world. It broke away from the rule of the old feudal aristocracy and made modern society. It mastered matter, organized the machinery of life, and made possible a wonderful era for mankind, wherein no creature should cry aloud because it had not enough to eat, and wherein for every child there would be opportunity for education, for intellectual and spiritual uplift. Matter being mastered, and the machinery of life organized, all this was possible. Here was the chance, God-given, and the capitalist class failed. It was blind and greedy. It prattled sweet ideals and dear moralities, rubbed its eyes not once, nor ceased one whit in its greediness, and smashed down in a failure as tremendous only as was the opportunity it had ignored.

But all this is like so much cobwebs to the bourgeois mind. As it was blind in the past, it is blind now and cannot see nor understand. Well, then, let the indictment be stated more definitely, in terms sharp and unmistakable. In the first place, consider the caveman. He was a very simple creature. His head slanted back like an orang-outang’s, and he had but little more intelligence. He lived in a hostile environment, the prey of all manner of fierce life. He had no inventions nor artifices. His natural efficiency for food-getting was, say, 1. He did not even till the soil. With his natural efficiency of 1, he fought off his carnivorous enemies and got himself food and shelter. He must have done all this, else he would not have multiplied and spread over the earth and sent his progeny down, generation by generation, to become even you and me.

The caveman, with his natural efficiency of 1, got enough to eat most of the time, and no caveman went hungry all the time. Also, he lived a healthy, open-air life, loafed and rested himself, and found plenty of time in which to exercise his imagination and invent gods. That is to say, he did not have to work all his waking moments in order to get enough to eat. The child of the caveman (and this is true of the children of all savage peoples) had a childhood, and by that is meant a happy childhood of play and development.

And now, how fares modern man? Consider the United States, the most prosperous and most enlightened country of the world. In the United States there are 10,000,000 people living in poverty. By poverty is meant that condition in life in which, through lack of food and adequate shelter, the mere standard of working efficiency cannot be maintained. In the United States there are 10,000,000 people who have not enough to eat. In the United States, because they have not enough to eat, there are 10,000,000 people who cannot keep the ordinary 1 measure of strength in their bodies. This means that these 10,000,000 people are perishing, are dying, body and soul, slowly, because they have not enough to eat. All over this broad, prosperous, enlightened land, are men, women, and children who are living miserably. In all the great cities, where they are segregated in slum ghettos by hundreds of thousands and by millions, their misery becomes beastliness. No caveman ever starved as chronically as they starve, ever slept as vilely as they sleep, ever festered with rottenness and disease as they fester, nor ever toiled as hard and for as long hours as they toil.

In Chicago there is a woman who toiled sixty hours per week. She was a garment worker. She sewed buttons on clothes. Among the Italian garment workers of Chicago, the average weekly wage of the dressmakers is 90 cents, but they work every week in the year. The average weekly wage of the pants finishers is $1.31, and the average number of weeks employed in the year is 27.85. The average yearly earnings of the dressmakers is $37; of the pants finishers, $42.41. Such wages means no childhood for the children, beastliness of living, and starvation for all.

Unlike the caveman, modern man cannot get food and shelter whenever he feels like working for it. Modern man has first to find the work, and in this he is often unsuccessful. Then misery becomes acute. This acute misery is chronicled daily in the newspapers. Let several of the countless instances be cited.

In New York City lived a woman, Mary Mead. She had three children: Mary, one year old; Johanna, two years old; Alice, four years old. Her husband could find no work. They starved. They were evicted from their shelter at 160 Steuben Street. Mary Mead strangled her baby, Mary, one year old; strangled Alice, four years old; failed to strangle Johanna, two years old, and then herself took poison. Said the father to the police: "Constant poverty had driven my wife insane. We lived at No. 160 Steuben Street until a week ago, when we were dispossessed. I could get no work. I could not even make enough to put food into our mouths. The babies grew ill and weak. My wife cried nearly all the time."

"So overwhelmed is the Department of Charities with tens of thousands of applications from men out of work that it finds itself unable to cope with the situation." — *New York Commercial*, January 11, 1905.

In a daily paper, because he cannot get work in order to get something to eat, modern man advertises as follows:

"Young man, good education, unable to obtain employment, will sell to physician and bacteriologist for experimental purposes all right and title to his body. Address for price, box 3466, *Examiner*."

"Frank A. Mallin went to the central police station Wednesday night and asked to be locked up on a charge of vagrancy. He said he had been conducting an unsuccessful search for work for so long that he was sure he must be a vagrant. In any event, he was so hungry he must be fed. Police Judge Graham sentenced him to ninety days' imprisonment." — *San Francisco Examiner*.

In a room at the Soto House, 32 Fourth Street, San Francisco, was found the body of W. G. Robbins. He had turned on the gas. Also was found his diary, from which the following extracts are made

"*March* 3. — No chance of getting anything here. What will I do?

"*March* 7. — Cannot find anything yet.

"*March* 8. — Am living on doughnuts at five cents a day.

"*March* 9. — My last quarter gone for room rent.

"*March* 10. — God help me. Have only five cents left. Can get nothing to do. What next? Starvation or — ? I have spent my last nickel to-night. What shall I do? Shall it be steal, beg, or die? I have never stolen, begged, or starved in all my fifty years of life, but now I am on the brink — death seems the only refuge.

"*March* 11. — Sick all day — burning fever this afternoon. Had nothing to eat to-day or since yesterday noon. My head, my head. Good-bye, all."

How fares the child of modern man in this most prosperous of lands? In the city of New York 50,000 children go hungry to school every morning.

From the same city on January 12, a press despatch was sent out over the country of a case reported by Dr. A. E. Daniel, of the New York Infirmary for Women and Children. The case was that of a babe, eighteen months old, who earned by its labour fifty cents per week in a tenement sweat-shop.

"On a pile of rags in a room bare of furniture and freezing cold, Mrs. Mary Gallin, dead from starvation, with an emaciated baby four months old crying at her breast, was found this morning at 513 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, by Policeman McConnon of the Flushing Avenue Station. Huddled together for warmth in another part of the room were the father, James Gallin, and three children ranging from two to eight years of age. The children gazed at the policeman much as ravenous animals might have done. They were famished, and there was not a vestige of food in their comfortless home." — *New York Journal*, January 2, 1902.

In the United States 80,000 children are toiling out their lives in the textile mills alone. In the South they work twelve-hour shifts. They never see the day. Those on the night shift are asleep when the sun pours its life and warmth over the world, while those on the day shift are at the machines before dawn and return to their miserable dens, called "homes," after dark. Many receive no more than ten cents a day. There are babies who work for five and six cents a day. Those who work on the night shift are often kept awake by having cold water dashed in their faces. There are children six years of age who have already to their credit eleven months' work on the night shift. When they become sick, and are unable to rise from their beds to go to work, there are men employed to go on horseback from house to house, and cajole and bully them into arising and going to work. Ten per cent of them contract active consumption. All are puny wrecks, distorted, stunted, mind and body. Elbert Hubbard says of the child-labourers of the Southern cotton-mills:

"I thought to lift one of the little toilers to ascertain his weight. Straightaway through his thirty-five pounds of skin and bones there ran a tremor of fear, and he struggled forward to tie a broken thread. I attracted his attention by a touch, and offered him a silver dime. He looked at me dumbly from a face that might have belonged to a man of sixty, so furrowed, tightly drawn, and full of pain it was. He did not reach for the money — he did not know what it was. There were dozens of such children in this particular mill. A physician who was with me said that they would all be dead probably in two years, and their places filled by others — there were plenty more. Pneumonia carries off most of them. Their systems are ripe for disease, and when it comes there is no rebound — no response. Medicine simply does not act — nature is whipped, beaten, discouraged, and the child sinks into a stupor and dies."

So fares modern man and the child of modern man in the United States, most prosperous and enlightened of all countries on earth. It must be remembered that the instances given are instances only, but they can be multiplied myriads of times. It must also be remembered that what is true of the United States is true of all the civilized world. Such misery was not true of the caveman. Then what has happened? Has the hostile environment of the caveman grown more hostile for his descendants? Has the caveman's natural efficiency of 1 for food-getting and shelter-getting diminished in modern man to one-half or one-quarter?

On the contrary, the hostile environment of the caveman has been destroyed. For modern man it no longer exists. All carnivorous enemies, the daily menace of the younger world, have been killed off. Many of the species of prey have become extinct. Here and there, in secluded portions of the world, still linger a few of man's fiercer enemies. But they are far from being a menace to mankind. Modern man, when he wants recreation and change, goes to the secluded portions of the world for a hunt. Also, in idle moments, he wails regretfully at the passing of the "big game," which he knows in the not distant future will disappear from the earth.

Nor since the day of the caveman has man's efficiency for food-getting and shelter-getting diminished. It has increased a thousandfold. Since the day of the caveman, matter has been mastered. The secrets of matter have been discovered. Its laws have been formulated. Wonderful artifices have been made, and marvellous inventions, all tending to increase tremendously man's natural efficiency of in every food-getting, shelter-getting exertion, in farming, mining, manufacturing, transportation, and communication.

From the caveman to the hand-workers of three generations ago, the increase in efficiency for food-and shelter-getting has been very great. But in this day, by machinery, the efficiency of the hand-worker of three generations ago has in turn been increased many times. Formerly it required 200 hours of human labour to place 100 tons of ore on a railroad car. To-day, aided by machinery, but two hours of human labour is required to do the same task. The United States Bureau of Labour is responsible for the following table, showing the comparatively recent increase in man’s food-and shelter-getting efficiency:

	Machine Hours	Hand Hours
Barley (100 bushels)	9	211
Corn (50 bushels shelled, stalks, husks and blades cut into fodder)	34	228
Oats (160 bushels)	28	265
Wheat (50 bushels)	7	160
Loading ore (loading 100 tons iron ore on cars)	2	200
Unloading coal (transferring 200 tons from canal-boats to bins 400 feet distant)	20	240
Pitchforks (50 pitchforks, 12-inch tines)	12	200
Plough (one landside plough, oak beams and handles)	3	

According to the same authority, under the best conditions for organization in farming, labour can produce 20 bushels of wheat for 66 cents, or 1 bushel for 3½ cents. This was done on a bonanza farm of 10,000 acres in California, and was the average cost of the whole product of the farm. Mr. Carroll D. Wright says that to-day 4,500,000 men, aided by machinery, turn out a product that would require the labour of 40,000,000 men if produced by hand. Professor Herzog, of Austria, says that 5,000,000 people with the machinery of to-day, employed at socially useful labour, would be able to supply a population of 20,000,000 people with all the necessaries and small luxuries of life by working 1½ hours per day.

This being so, matter being mastered, man's efficiency for food-and shelter-getting being increased a thousandfold over the efficiency of the caveman, then why is it that millions of modern men live more miserably than lived the caveman? This is the question the revolutionist asks, and he asks it of the managing class, the capitalist class. The capitalist class does not answer it. The capitalist class cannot answer it.

If modern man's food-and shelter-getting efficiency is a thousandfold greater than that of the caveman, why, then, are there 10,000,000 people in the United States to-day who are not properly sheltered and properly fed? If the child of the caveman did not have to work, why, then, to-day, in the United States, are 80,000 children working out their lives in the textile factories alone? If the child of the caveman did not have to work, why, then, to-day, in the United States, are there 1,752,187 child-labourers?

It is a true count in the indictment. The capitalist class has mismanaged, is to-day mismanaging. In New York City 50,000 children go hungry to school, and in New York City there are 1,320 millionaires. The point, however, is not that the mass of mankind is miserable because of the wealth the capitalist class has taken to itself. Far from it. The point really is that the mass of mankind is miserable, not for want of the wealth taken by the capitalist class, *but for want of the wealth that was never created*. This wealth was never created because the capitalist class managed too wastefully and irrationally. The capitalist class, blind and greedy, grasping madly, has not only not made the best of its management, but made the worst of it. It is a management prodigiously wasteful. This point cannot be emphasized too strongly.

In face of the facts that modern man lives more wretchedly than the caveman, and that modern man's food-and shelter-getting efficiency is a thousandfold greater than the caveman's, no other solution is possible than that the management is prodigiously wasteful.

With the natural resources of the world, the machinery already invented, a rational organization of production and distribution, and an equally rational elimination of waste, the able-bodied workers would not have to labour more than two or three hours per day to feed everybody, clothe everybody, house everybody, educate everybody, and give a fair measure of little luxuries to everybody. There would be no more material want and wretchedness, no more children toiling out their lives, no more men and women and babes living like beasts and dying like beasts. Not only would matter be mastered, but the machine would be mastered. In such a day incentive would be finer and nobler than the incentive of to-day, which is the incentive of the stomach. No man, woman, or child, would be impelled to action by an empty stomach. On the contrary, they would be impelled to action as a child in a spelling match is impelled to action, as boys and girls at games, as scientists formulating law, as inventors applying law, as artists and sculptors painting canvases and shaping clay, as poets and statesmen serving humanity by singing and by statecraft. The spiritual, intellectual, and artistic uplift consequent upon such a condition of society would be tremendous. All the human world would surge upward in a mighty wave.

This was the opportunity vouchsafed the capitalist class. Less blindness on its part, less greediness, and a rational management, were all that was necessary. A wonderful era was possible for the human race. But the capitalist class failed. It made a shambles of civilization. Nor can the capitalist class plead not guilty. It knew of the opportunity. Its wise men told of the opportunity, its scholars and its scientists told it of the opportunity. All that they said is there to-day in the books, just so much damning evidence against it. It would not listen. It was too greedy. It rose up (as it rises up to-day), shamelessly, in our legislative halls, and declared that profits were impossible without the toil of children and babes. It lulled its conscience to sleep with prattle of sweet ideals and dear moralities, and allowed the suffering and misery of mankind to continue and to increase, in short, the capitalist class failed to take advantage of the opportunity.

But the opportunity is still here. The capitalist class has been tried and found wanting. Remains the working-class to see what it can do with the opportunity. "But the working-class is incapable," says the capitalist class. "What do you know about it?" the working-class replies. "Because you have failed is no reason that we shall fail. Furthermore, we are going to have a try at it, anyway. Seven millions of us say so. And what have you to say to that?"

And what can the capitalist class say? Grant the incapacity of the working-class. Grant that the indictment and the argument of the revolutionists are all wrong. The 7,000,000 revolutionists remain. Their existence is a fact. Their belief in their capacity, and in their indictment and their argument, is a fact. Their constant growth is a fact. Their intention to destroy present-day society is a fact, as is also their intention to take possession of the world with all its wealth and machinery and governments. Moreover, it is a fact that the working-class is vastly larger than the capitalist class.

The revolution is a revolution of the working-class. How can the capitalist class, in the minority, stem this tide of revolution? What has it to offer? What does it offer? Employers' associations, injunctions, civil suits for plundering of the treasuries of the labour-unions, clamour and combination for the open shop, bitter and shameless opposition to the eight-hour day, strong efforts to defeat all reform, child-labour bills, graft in every municipal council, strong lobbies and bribery in every legislature for the purchase of capitalist legislation, bayonets, machine-guns, policemen's clubs, professional strike-breakers and armed Pinkertons — these are the things the capitalist class is dumping in front of the tide of revolution, as though, forsooth, to hold it back.

The capitalist class is as blind to-day to the menace of the revolution as it was blind in the past to its own God-given opportunity. It cannot see how precarious is its position, cannot comprehend the power and the portent of the revolution. It goes on its placid way, prattling sweet ideals and dear moralities, and scrambling sordidly for material benefits.

No overthrown ruler or class in the past ever considered the revolution that overthrew it, and so with the capitalist class of to-day. Instead of compromising, instead of lengthening its lease of life by conciliation and by removal of some of the harsher oppressions of the working-class, it antagonizes the working-class, drives the working-class into revolution. Every broken strike in recent years, every legally plundered trades-union treasury, every closed shop made into an open shop, has driven the members of the working-class directly hurt over to socialism by hundreds and thousands. Show a working-man that his union fails, and he becomes a revolutionist. Break a strike with an injunction or bankrupt a union with a civil suit, and the working-men hurt thereby listen to the siren song of the socialist and are lost for ever to the *political capitalist* parties.

Antagonism never lulled revolution, and antagonism is about all the capitalist class offers. It is true, it offers some few antiquated notions which were very efficacious in the past, but which are no longer efficacious. Fourth-of-July liberty in terms of the Declaration of Independence and of the French Encyclopædists is scarcely apposite to-day. It does not appeal to the working-man who has had his head broken by a policeman's club, his union treasury bankrupted by a court decision, or his job taken away from him by a labour-saving invention. Nor does the Constitution of the United States appear so glorious and constitutional to the working-man who has experienced a bull-pen or been unconstitutionally deported from Colorado. Nor are this particular working-man's hurt feelings soothed by reading in the newspapers that both the bull-pen and the deportation were pre-eminently just, legal, and constitutional. "To hell, then, with the Constitution!" says he, and another revolutionist has been made — by the capitalist class.

In short, so blind is the capitalist class that it does nothing to lengthen its lease of life, while it does everything to shorten it. The capitalist class offers nothing that is clean, noble, and alive. The revolutionists offer everything that is clean, noble, and alive. They offer service, unselfishness, sacrifice, martyrdom — the things that sting awake the imagination of the people, touching their hearts with the fervour that arises out of the impulse toward good and which is essentially religious in its nature.

But the revolutionists blow hot and blow cold. They offer facts and statistics, economics and scientific arguments. If the working-man be merely selfish, the revolutionists show him, mathematically demonstrate to him, that his condition will be bettered by the revolution. If the working-man be the higher type, moved by impulses toward right conduct, if he have soul and spirit, the revolutionists offer him the things of the soul and the spirit, the tremendous things that cannot be measured by dollars and cents, nor be held down by dollars and cents. The revolutionist cries out upon wrong and injustice, and preaches righteousness. And, most potent of all, he sings the eternal song of human freedom — a song of all lands and all tongues and all time.

Few members of the capitalist class see the revolution. Most of them are too ignorant, and many are too afraid to see it. It is the same old story of every perishing ruling class in the world's history. Fat with power and possession, drunken with success, and made soft by surfeit and by cessation of struggle, they are like the drones clustered about the honey vats when the worker-bees spring upon them to end their rotund existence.

President Roosevelt vaguely sees the revolution, is frightened by it, and recoils from seeing it. As he says: "Above all, we need to remember that any kind of class animosity in the political world is, if possible, even more wicked, even more destructive to national welfare, than sectional, race, or religious animosity."

Class animosity in the political world, President Roosevelt maintains, is wicked. But class animosity in the political world is the preachment of the revolutionists. "Let the class wars in the industrial world continue," they say, "but extend the class war to the political world." As their leader, Eugene V. Debs says: "So far as this struggle is concerned, there is no good capitalist and no bad working-man. Every capitalist is your enemy and every working-man is your friend."

Here is class animosity in the political world with a vengeance. And here is revolution. In 1888 there were only 2,000 revolutionists of this type in the United States; in 1900 there were 127,000 revolutionists; in 1904, 435,000 revolutionists. Wickedness of the President Roosevelt definition evidently flourishes and increases in the United States. Quite so, for it is the revolution that flourishes and increases.

Here and there a member of the capitalist class catches a clear glimpse of the revolution, and raises a warning cry. But his class does not heed. President Eliot of Harvard raised such a cry:

"I am forced to believe there is a present danger of socialism never before so imminent in America in so dangerous a form, because never before imminent in so well organized a form. The danger lies in the obtaining control of the trades-unions by the socialists." And the capitalist employers, instead of giving heed to the warnings, are perfecting their strike-breaking organization and combining more strongly than ever for a general assault upon that dearest of all things to the trades-unions — the closed shop. In so far as this assault succeeds, by just that much will the capitalist class shorten its lease of life. It is the old, old story, over again and over again. The drunken drones still cluster greedily about the honey vats.

Possibly one of the most amusing spectacles of to-day is the attitude of the American press toward the revolution. It is also a pathetic spectacle. It compels the onlooker to be aware of a distinct loss of pride in his species. Dogmatic utterance from the mouth of ignorance may make gods laugh, but it should make men weep. And the American editors (in the general instance) are so impressive about it! The old "divide-up," "men-are-*not*-born-free-and-equal," propositions are enunciated gravely and sagely, as things white-hot and new from the forge of human wisdom. Their feeble vapourings show no more than a schoolboy's comprehension of the nature of the revolution. Parasites themselves on the capitalist class, serving the capitalist class by moulding public opinion, they, too, cluster drunkenly about the honey vats.

Of course, this is true only of the large majority of American editors. To say that it is true of all of them would be to cast too great obloquy upon the human race. Also, it would be untrue, for here and there an occasional editor does see clearly — and in his case, ruled by stomach-incentive, is usually afraid to say what he thinks about it. So far as the science and the sociology of the revolution are concerned, the average editor is a generation or so behind the facts. He is intellectually slothful, accepts no facts until they are accepted by the majority, and prides himself upon his conservatism. He is an instinctive optimist, prone to believe that what ought to be, is. The revolutionist gave this up long ago, and believes not that what ought to be, is, but what is, is, and that it may not be what it ought to be at all.

Now and then, rubbing his eyes, vigorously, an editor catches a sudden glimpse of the revolution and breaks out in naïve volubility, as, for instance, the one who wrote the following in the *Chicago Chronicle*: "American socialists are revolutionists. They know that they are revolutionists. It is high time that other people should appreciate the fact." A white-hot, brand-new discovery, and he proceeded to shout it out from the housetops that we, forsooth, were revolutionists. Why, it is just what we have been doing all these years — shouting it out from the housetops that we are revolutionists, and stop us who can.

The time should be past for the mental attitude: “Revolution is atrocious. Sir, there is no revolution.” Likewise should the time be past for that other familiar attitude: “Socialism is slavery. Sir, it will never be.” It is no longer a question of dialectics, theories, and dreams. There is no question about it. The revolution is a fact. It is here now. Seven million revolutionists, organized, working day and night, are preaching the revolution — that passionate gospel, the Brotherhood of Man. Not only is it a cold-blooded economic propaganda, but it is in essence a religious propaganda with a fervour in it of Paul and Christ. The capitalist class has been indicted. It has failed in its management and its management is to be taken away from it. Seven million men of the working-class say that they are going to get the rest of the working-class to join with them and take the management away. The revolution is here, now. Stop it who can.

Sacramento River.
March 1905.

THE SOMNAMBULISTS

"'Tis only fools speak evil of the clay —
The very stars are made of clay like mine."

The mightiest and absurdest sleep-walker on the planet! Chained in the circle of his own imaginings, man is only too keen to forget his origin and to shame that flesh of his that bleeds like all flesh and that is good to eat. Civilization (which is part of the circle of his imaginings) has spread a veneer over the surface of the soft-shelled animal known as man. It is a very thin veneer; but so wonderfully is man constituted that he squirms on his bit of achievement and believes he is garbed in armour-plate.

Yet man to-day is the same man that drank from his enemy's skull in the dark German forests, that sacked cities, and stole his women from neighbouring clans like any howling aborigine. The flesh-and-blood body of man has not changed in the last several thousand years. Nor has his mind changed. There is no faculty of the mind of man to-day that did not exist in the minds of the men of long ago. Man has to-day no concept that is too wide and deep and abstract for the mind of Plato or Aristotle to grasp. Give to Plato or Aristotle the same fund of knowledge that man to-day has access to, and Plato and Aristotle would reason as profoundly as the man of to-day and would achieve very similar conclusions.

It is the same old animal man, smeared over, it is true, with a veneer, thin and magical, that makes him dream drunken dreams of self-exaltation and to sneer at the flesh and the blood of him beneath the smear. The raw animal crouching within him is like the earthquake monster pent in the crust of the earth. As he persuades himself against the latter till it arouses and shakes down a city, so does he persuade himself against the former until it shakes him out of his dreaming and he stands undisguised, a brute like any other brute.

Starve him, let him miss six meals, and see gape through the veneer the hungry maw of the animal beneath. Get between him and the female of his kind upon whom his mating instinct is bent, and see his eyes blaze like an angry cat's, hear in his throat the scream of wild stallions, and watch his fists clench like an orang-outang's. Maybe he will even beat his chest. Touch his silly vanity, which he exalts into high-sounding pride — call him a liar, and behold the red animal in him that makes a hand clutching that is quick like the tensing of a tiger's claw, or an eagle's talon, incarnate with desire to rip and tear.

It is not necessary to call him a liar to touch his vanity. Tell a plains Indian that he has failed to steal horses from the neighbouring tribe, or tell a man living in bourgeois society that he has failed to pay his bills at the neighbouring grocer's, and the results are the same. Each, plains Indian and bourgeois, is smeared with a slightly different veneer, that is all. It requires a slightly different stick to scrape it off. The raw animals beneath are identical.

But intrude not violently upon man, leave him alone in his somnambulism, and he kicks out from under his feet the ladder of life up which he has climbed, constitutes himself the centre of the universe, dreams sordidly about his own particular god, and maunders metaphysically about his own blessed immortality.

True, he lives in a real world, breathes real air, eats real food, and sleeps under real blankets, in order to keep real cold away. And there's the rub. He has to effect adjustments with the real world and at the same time maintain the sublimity of his dream. The result of this admixture of the real and the unreal is confusion thrice confounded. The man that walks the real world in his sleep becomes such a tangled mass of contradictions, paradoxes, and lies that he has to lie to himself in order to stay asleep.

In passing, it may be noted that some men are remarkably constituted in this matter of self-deception. They excel at deceiving themselves. They believe, and they help others to believe. It becomes their function in society, and some of them are paid large salaries for helping their fellow-men to believe, for instance, that they are not as other animals; for helping the king to believe, and his parasites and drudges as well, that he is God's own manager over so many square miles of earth-crust; for helping the merchant and banking classes to believe that society rests on their shoulders, and that civilization would go to smash if they got out from under and ceased from their exploitations and petty pilferings.

Prize-fighting is terrible. This is the dictum of the man who walks in his sleep. He prates about it, and writes to the papers about it, and worries the legislators about it. There is nothing of the brute about *him*. He is a sublimated soul that treads the heights and breathes refined ether — in self-comparison with the prize-fighter. The man who walks in his sleep ignores the flesh and all its wonderful play of muscle, joint, and nerve. He feels that there is something godlike in the mysterious deeps of his being, denies his relationship with the brute, and proceeds to go forth into the world and express by deeds that something godlike within him.

He sits at a desk and chases dollars through the weeks and months and years of his life. To him the life godlike resolves into a problem something like this: *Since the great mass of men toil at producing wealth, how best can he get between the great mass of men and the wealth they produce, and get a slice for himself*? With tremendous exercise of craft, deceit, and guile, he devotes his life godlike to this purpose. As he succeeds, his somnambulism grows profound. He bribes legislatures, buys judges, "controls" primaries, and then goes and hires other men to tell him that it is all glorious and right. And the funniest thing about it is that this arch-deceiver believes all that they tell him. He reads only the newspapers and magazines that tell him what he wants to be told, listens only to the biologists who tell him that he is the finest product of the struggle for existence, and herds only with his own kind, where, like the monkey-folk, they teeter up and down and tell one another how great they are.

In the course of his life godlike he ignores the flesh — until he gets to table. He raises his hands in horror at the thought of the brutish prize-fighter, and then sits down and gorges himself on roast beef, rare and red, running blood under every sawing thrust of the implement called a knife. He has a piece of cloth which he calls a napkin, with which he wipes from his lips, and from the hair on his lips, the greasy juices of the meat.

He is fastidiously nauseated at the thought of two prize-fighters bruising each other with their fists; and at the same time, because it will cost him some money, he will refuse to protect the machines in his factory, though he is aware that the lack of such protection every year mangles, batters, and destroys out of all humanness thousands of working-men, women, and children. He will chatter about things refined and spiritual and godlike like himself, and he and the men who herd with him will calmly adulterate the commodities they put upon the market and which annually kill tens of thousands of babies and young children.

He will recoil at the suggestion of the horrid spectacle of two men confronting each other with gloved hands in the roped arena, and at the same time he will clamour for larger armies and larger navies, for more destructive war machines, which, with a single discharge, will disrupt and rip to pieces more human beings than have died in the whole history of prize-fighting. He will bribe a city council for a franchise or a state legislature for a commercial privilege; but he has never been known, in all his sleep-walking history, to bribe any legislative body in order to achieve any moral end, such as, for instance, abolition of prize-fighting, child-labour laws, pure food bills, or old age pensions.

"Ah, but we do not stand for the commercial life," object the refined, scholarly, and professional men. They are also sleep-walkers. They do not stand for the commercial life, but neither do they stand against it with all their strength. They submit to it, to the brutality and carnage of it. They develop classical economists who announce that the only possible way for men and women to get food and shelter is by the existing method. They produce university professors, men who claim the *rôle* of teachers, and who at the same time claim that the austere ideal of learning is passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence. They serve the men who lead the commercial life, give to their sons somnambulistic educations, preach that sleep-walking is the only way to walk, and that the persons who walk otherwise are atavisms or anarchists. They paint pictures for the commercial men, write books for them, sing songs for them, act plays for them, and dose them with various drugs when their bodies have grown gross or dyspeptic from overeating and lack of exercise.

Then there are the good, kind somnambulists who don't prize-fight, who don't play the commercial game, who don't teach and preach somnambulism, who don't do anything except live on the dividends that are coined out of the wan, white fluid that runs in the veins of little children, out of mothers' tears, the blood of strong men, and the groans and sighs of the old. The receiver is as bad as the thief — ay, and the thief is finer than the receiver; he at least has the courage to run the risk. But the good, kind people who don't do anything won't believe this, and the assertion will make them angry — for a moment. They possess several magic phrases, which are like the incantations of a voodoo doctor driving devils away. The phrases that the good, kind people repeat to themselves and to one another sound like "abstinence," "temperance," "thrift," "virtue." Sometimes they say them backward, when they sound like "prodigality," "drunkenness," "wastefulness," and "immorality." They do not really know the meaning of these phrases, but they think they do, and that is all that is necessary for somnambulists. The calm repetition of such phrases invariably drives away the waking devils and lulls to slumber.

Our statesmen sell themselves and their country for gold. Our municipal servants and state legislators commit countless treasons. The world of graft! The world of betrayal! The world of somnambulism, whose exalted and sensitive citizens are outraged by the knockouts of the prize-ring, and who annually not merely knock out, but kill, thousands of babies and children by means of child labour and adulterated food. Far better to have the front of one's face pushed in by the fist of an honest prize-fighter than to have the lining of one's stomach corroded by the embalmed beef of a dishonest manufacturer.

In a prize-fight men are classed. A lightweight fights with a light-weight; he never fights with a heavy-weight, and foul blows are not allowed. Yet in the world of the somnambulists, where soar the sublimated spirits, there are no classes, and foul blows are continually struck and never disallowed. Only they are not called foul blows. The world of claw and fang and fist and club has passed away — so say the somnambulists. A rebate is not an elongated claw. A Wall Street raid is not a fang slash. Dummy boards of directors and fake accountings are not foul blows of the fist under the belt. A present of coal stock by a mine operator to a railroad official is not a claw rip to the bowels of a rival mine operator. The hundred million dollars with which a combination beats down to his knees a man with a million dollars is not a club. The man who walks in his sleep says it is not a club. So say all of his kind with which he herds. They gather together and solemnly and gloatingly make and repeat certain noises that sound like "discretion," "acumen," "initiative," "enterprise." These noises are especially gratifying when they are made backward. They mean the same things, but they sound different. And in either case, forward or backward, the spirit of the dream is not disturbed.

When a man strikes a foul blow in the prize-ring the fight is immediately stopped, he is declared the loser, and he is hissed by the audience as he leaves the ring. But when a man who walks in his sleep strikes a foul blow he is immediately declared the victor and awarded the prize; and amid acclamations he forthwith turns his prize into a seat in the United States Senate, into a grotesque palace on Fifth Avenue, and into endowed churches, universities and libraries, to say nothing of subsidized newspapers, to proclaim his greatness.

The red animal in the somnambulist will out. He decries the carnal combat of the prize-ring, and compels the red animal to spiritual combat.

The poisoned lie, the nasty, gossiping tongue, the brutality of the unkind epigram, the business and social nastiness and treachery of to-day — these are the thrusts and scratches of the red animal when the somnambulist is in charge. They are not the upper cuts and short arm jabs and jolts and slugging blows of the spirit. They are the foul blows of the spirit that have never been disbarred, as the foul blows of the prize-ring have been disbarred. (Would it not be preferable for a man to strike one full on the mouth with his fist than for him to tell a lie about one, or malign those that are nearest and dearest?)

For these are the crimes of the spirit, and, alas! they are so much more frequent than blows on the mouth. And whosoever exalts the spirit over the flesh, by his own creed avers that a crime of the spirit is vastly more terrible than a crime of the flesh. Thus stand the somnambulists convicted by their own creed — only they are not real men, alive and awake, and they proceed to mutter magic phrases that dispel all doubt as to their undiminished and eternal gloriousness.

It is well enough to let the ape and tiger die, but it is hardly fair to kill off the natural and courageous apes and tigers and allow the spawn of cowardly apes and tigers to live. The prize-fighting apes and tigers will die all in good time in the course of natural evolution, but they will not die so long as the cowardly, somnambulistic apes and tigers club and scratch and slash. This is not a brief for the prize-fighter. It is a blow of the fist between the eyes of the somnambulists, teetering up and down, muttering magic phrases, and thanking God that they are not as other animals.

Glen Ellen, California.
June 1900.

THE DIGNITY OF DOLLARS

Man is a blind, helpless creature. He looks back with pride upon his goodly heritage of the ages, and yet obeys unwittingly every mandate of that heritage; for it is incarnate with him, and in it are embedded the deepest roots of his soul. Strive as he will, he cannot escape it — unless he be a genius, one of those rare creations to whom alone is granted the privilege of doing entirely new and original things in entirely new and original ways. But the common clay-born man, possessing only talents, may do only what has been done before him. At the best, if he work hard, and cherish himself exceedingly, he may duplicate any or all previous performances of his kind; he may even do some of them better; but there he stops, the composite hand of his whole ancestry bearing heavily upon him.

And again, in the matter of his ideas, which have been thrust upon him, and which he has been busily garnering from the great world ever since the day when his eyes first focussed and he drew, startled, against the warm breast of his mother — the tyranny of these he cannot shake off. Servants of his will, they at the same time master him. They may not coerce genius, but they dictate and sway every action of the clay-born. If he hesitate on the verge of a new departure, they whip him back into the well-greased groove; if he pause, bewildered, at sight of some unexplored domain, they rise like ubiquitous finger-posts and direct him by the village path to the communal meadow. And he permits these things, and continues to permit them, for he cannot help them, and he is a slave. Out of his ideas he may weave cunning theories, beautiful ideals; but he is working with ropes of sand. At the slightest stress, the last least bit of cohesion flits away, and each idea flies apart from its fellows, while all clamour that he do this thing, or think this thing, in the ancient and time-honoured way. He is only a clay-born; so he bends his neck. He knows further that the clay-born are a pitiful, pitiless majority, and that he may do nothing which they do not do.

It is only in some way such as this that we may understand and explain the dignity which attaches itself to dollars. In the watches of the night, we may assure ourselves that there is no such dignity; but jostling with our fellows in the white light of day, we find that it does exist, and that we ourselves measure ourselves by the dollars we happen to possess. They give us confidence and carriage and dignity — ay, a personal dignity which goes down deeper than the garments with which we hide our nakedness. The world, when it knows nothing else of him, measures a man by his clothes; but the man himself, if he be neither a genius nor a philosopher, but merely a clay-born, measures himself by his pocket-book. He cannot help it, and can no more fling it from him than can the bashful young man his self-consciousness when crossing a ballroom floor.

I remember once absenting myself from civilization for weary months. When I returned, it was to a strange city in another country. The people were but slightly removed from my own breed, and they spoke the same tongue, barring a certain barbarous accent which I learned was far older than the one imbibed by me with my mother's milk. A fur cap, soiled and singed by many camp-fires, half sheltered the shaggy tendrils of my uncut hair. My foot-gear was of walrus hide, cunningly blended with seal gut. The remainder of my dress was as primal and uncouth. I was a sight to give merriment to gods and men. Olympus must have roared at my coming. The world, knowing me not, could judge me by my clothes alone. But I refused to be so judged. My spiritual backbone stiffened, and I held my head high, looking all men in the eyes. And I did these things, not that I was an egotist, not that I was impervious to the critical glances of my fellows, but because of a certain hogskin belt, plethoric and sweat-bewrinkled, which buckled next the skin above the hips. Oh, it's absurd, I grant, but had that belt not been so circumstanced, and so situated, I should have shrunk away into side streets and back alleys, walking humbly and avoiding all gregarious humans except those who were likewise abroad without belts. Why? I do not know, save that in such way did my fathers before me.

Viewed in the light of sober reason, the whole thing was preposterous. But I walked down the gang-plank with the mien of a hero, of a barbarian who knew himself to be greater than the civilization he invaded. I was possessed of the arrogance of a Roman governor. At last I knew what it was to be born to the purple, and I took my seat in the hotel carriage as though it were my chariot about to proceed with me to the imperial palace. People discreetly dropped their eyes before my proud gaze, and into their hearts I know I forced the query, What manner of man can this mortal be? I was superior to convention, and the very garb which otherwise would have damned me tended toward my elevation. And all this was due, not to my royal lineage, nor to the deeds I had done and the champions I had overthrown, but to a certain hogskin belt buckled next the skin. The sweat of months was upon it, toil had defaced it, and it was not a creation such as would appeal to the æsthetic mind; but it was plethoric. There was the arcanum; each yellow grain conduced to my exaltation, and the sum of these grains was the sum of my mightiness. Had they been less, just so would have been my stature; more, and I should have reached the sky.

And this was my royal progress through that most loyal city. I purchased a host of things from the tradespeople, and bought me such pleasures and diversions as befitted one who had long been denied. I scattered my gold lavishly, nor did I chaffer over prices in mart or exchange. And, because of these things I did, I demanded homage. Nor was it refused. I moved through wind-swept groves of limber backs; across sunny glades, lighted by the beaming rays from a thousand obsequious eyes; and when I tired of this, basked on the greensward of popular approval. Money was very good, I thought, and for the time was content. But there rushed upon me the words of Erasmus, "When I get some money I shall buy me some Greek books, and afterwards some clothes," and a great shame wrapped me around. But, luckily for my soul's welfare, I reflected and was saved. By the clearer vision vouchsafed me, I beheld Erasmus, fire-flashing, heaven-born, while I — I was merely a clay-born, a son of earth. For a giddy moment I had forgotten this, and tottered. And I rolled over on my greensward, caught a glimpse of a regiment of undulating backs, and thanked my particular gods that such moods of madness were passing brief.

But on another day, receiving with kingly condescension the service of my good subjects' backs, I remembered the words of another man, long since laid away, who was by birth a nobleman, by nature a philosopher and a gentleman, and who by circumstance yielded up his head upon the block. "That a man of lead," he once remarked, "who has no more sense than a log of wood, and is as bad as he is foolish, should have many wise and good men to serve him, only because he has a great heap of that metal; and that if, by some accident or trick of law (which sometimes produces as great changes as chance itself), all this wealth should pass from the master to the meanest varlet of his whole family, he himself would very soon become one of his servants, as if he were a thing that belonged to his wealth, and so was bound to follow its fortune."

And when I had remembered this much, I unwisely failed to pause and reflect. So I gathered my belongings together, cinched my hogskin belt tight about me, and went away to my own country. It was a very foolish thing to do. I am sure it was. But when I had recovered my reason, I fell upon my particular gods and berated them mightily, and as penance for their watchlessness placed them away amongst dust and cobwebs. Oh no, not for long. They are again enshrined, as bright and polished as of yore, and my destiny is once more in their keeping.

It is given that travail and vicissitude mark time to man's footsteps as he stumbles onward toward the grave; and it is well. Without the bitter one may not know the sweet. The other day — nay, it was but yesterday — I fell before the rhythm of fortune. The inexorable pendulum had swung the counter direction, and there was upon me an urgent need. The hogskin belt was flat as famine, nor did it longer gird my loins. From my window I could descry, at no great distance, a very ordinary mortal of a man, working industriously among his cabbages. I thought: Here am I, capable of teaching him much concerning the field wherein he labours — the nitrogenic — why of the fertilizer, the alchemy of the sun, the microscopic cell-structure of the plant, the cryptic chemistry of root and runner — but thereat he straightened his work-wearied back and rested. His eyes wandered over what he had produced in the sweat of his brow, then on to mine. And as he stood there drearily, he became reproach incarnate. "Unstable as water," he said (I am sure he did) — "unstable as water, thou shalt not excel. Man, where are *your* cabbages?"

I shrank back. Then I waxed rebellious. I refused to answer the question. He had no right to ask it, and his presence was an affront upon the landscape. And a dignity entered into me, and my neck was stiffened, my head poised. I gathered together certain certificates of goods and chattels, pointed my heel towards him and his cabbages, and journeyed townward. I was yet a man. There was naught in those certificates to be ashamed of. But alack-a-day! While my heels thrust the cabbage-man beyond the horizon, my toes were drawing me, faltering, like a timid old beggar, into a roaring spate of humanity — men, women, and children without end. They had no concern with me, nor I with them. I knew it; I felt it. Like She, after her fire-bath in the womb of the world, I dwindled in my own sight. My feet were uncertain and heavy, and my soul became as a meal sack, limp with emptiness and tied in the middle. People looked upon me scornfully, pitifully, reproachfully. (I can swear they did.) In every eye I read the question, Man, where are your cabbages?

So I avoided their looks, shrinking close to the kerbstone and by furtive glances directing my progress. At last I came hard by the place, and peering stealthily to the right and left that none who knew might behold me, I entered hurriedly, in the manner of one committing an abomination. 'Fore God! I had done no evil, nor had I wronged any man, nor did I contemplate evil; yet was I aware of evil. Why? I do not know, save that there goes much dignity with dollars, and being devoid of the one I was destitute of the other. The person I sought practised a profession as ancient as the oracles but far more lucrative. It is mentioned in Exodus; so it must have been created soon after the foundations of the world; and despite the thunder of ecclesiastics and the mailed hand of kings and conquerors, it has endured even to this day. Nor is it unfair to presume that the accounts of this most remarkable business will not be closed until the Trumps of Doom are sounded and all things brought to final balance.

Wherefore it was in fear and trembling, and with great modesty of spirit, that I entered the Presence. To confess that I was shocked were to do my feelings an injustice. Perhaps the blame may be shouldered upon Shylock, Fagin, and their ilk; but I had conceived an entirely different type of individual. This man — why, he was clean to look at, his eyes were blue, with the tired look of scholarly lucubrations, and his skin had the normal pallor of sedentary existence. He was reading a book, sober and leather-bound, while on his finely moulded, intellectual head reposed a black skull-cap. For all the world his look and attitude were those of a college professor. My heart gave a great leap. Here was hope! But no; he fixed me with a cold and glittering eye, searching with the chill of space till my financial status stood before him shivering and ashamed. I communed with myself: By his brow he is a thinker, but his intellect has been prostituted to a mercenary exaction of toll from misery. His nerve centres of judgment and will have not been employed in solving the problems of life, but in maintaining his own solvency by the insolvency of others. He trades upon sorrow and draws a livelihood from misfortune. He transmutes tears into treasure, and from nakedness and hunger garbs himself in clean linen and develops the round of his belly. He is a bloodsucker and a vampire. He lays unholy hands on heaven and hell at cent. per cent., and his very existence is a sacrilege and a blasphemy. And yet here am I, wilting before him, an arrant coward, with no respect for him and less for myself. Why should this shame be? Let me rouse in my strength and smite him, and, by so doing, wipe clean one offensive page.

But no. As I said, he fixed me with a cold and glittering eye, and in it was the aristocrat's undisguised contempt for the *canaille*. Behind him was the solid phalanx of a bourgeois society. Law and order upheld him, while I titubated, cabbageless, on the ragged edge. Moreover, he was possessed of a formula whereby to extract juice from a flattened lemon, and he would do business with me.

I told him my desires humbly, in quavering syllables. In return, he craved my antecedents and residence, pried into my private life, insolently demanded how many children had I and did I live in wedlock, and asked divers other unseemly and degrading questions. Ay, I was treated like a thief convicted before the act, till I produced my certificates of goods and chattels aforementioned. Never had they appeared so insignificant and paltry as then, when he sniffed over them with the air of one disdainfully doing a disagreeable task. It is said, "Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury"; but he evidently was not my brother, for he demanded seventy per cent. I put my signature to certain indentures, received my pottage, and fled from his presence.

Faugh! I was glad to be quit of it. How good the outside air was! I only prayed that neither my best friend nor my worst enemy should ever become aware of what had just transpired. Ere I had gone a block I noticed that the sun had brightened perceptibly, the street become less sordid, the gutter mud less filthy. In people's eyes the cabbage question no longer brooded. And there was a spring to my body, an elasticity of step as I covered the pavement. Within me coursed an unwonted sap, and I felt as though I were about to burst out into leaves and buds and green things. My brain was clear and refreshed. There was a new strength to my arm. My nerves were tingling and I was a-pulse with the times. All men were my brothers. Save one — yes, save one. I would go back and wreck the establishment. I would disrupt that leather-bound volume, violate that black skullcap, burn the accounts. But before fancy could father the act, I recollected myself and all which had passed. Nor did I marvel at my new-horn might, at my ancient dignity which had returned. There was a tinkling chink as I ran the yellow pieces through my fingers, and with the golden music rippling round me I caught a deeper insight into the mystery of things.

Oakland, California.
February 1900.

GOLIAH

In 1924 — to be precise, on the morning of January 3 — the city of San Francisco awoke to read in one of its daily papers a curious letter, which had been received by Walter Bassett and which had evidently been written by some crank. Walter Bassett was the greatest captain of industry west of the Rockies, and was one of the small group that controlled the nation in everything but name. As such, he was the recipient of lucubrations from countless cranks; but this particular lucubration was so different from the average ruck of similar letters that, instead of putting it into the waste-basket, he had turned it over to a reporter. It was signed "Goliah," and the superscription gave his address as "Palgrave Island." The letter was as follows:

"Mr. Walter Bassett,

"Dear Sir:

"I am inviting you, with nine of your fellow-captains of industry, to visit me here on my island for the purpose of considering plans for the reconstruction of society upon a more rational basis. Up to the present, social evolution has been a blind and aimless, blundering thing. The time has come for a change. Man has risen from the vitalized slime of the primeval sea to the mastery of matter; but he has not yet mastered society. Man is to-day as much the slave to his collective stupidity, as a hundred thousand generations ago he was a slave to matter.

"There are two theoretical methods whereby man may become the master of society, and make of society an intelligent and efficacious device for the pursuit and capture of happiness and laughter. The first theory advances the proposition that no government can be wiser or better than the people that compose that government; that reform and development must spring from the individual; that in so far as the individuals become wiser and better, by that much will their government become wiser and better; in short, that the majority of individuals must become wiser and better, before their government becomes wiser and better. The mob, the political convention, the abysmal brutality and stupid ignorance of all concourses of people, give the lie to this theory. In a mob the collective intelligence and mercy is that of the least intelligent and most brutal members that compose the mob. On the other hand, a thousand passengers will surrender themselves to the wisdom and discretion of the captain, when their ship is in a storm on the sea. In such matter, he is the wisest and most experienced among them.

"The second theory advances the proposition that the majority of the people are not pioneers, that they are weighted down by the inertia of the established; that the government that is representative of them represents only their feebleness, and futility, and brutishness; that this blind thing called government is not the serf of their wills, but that they are the serfs of it; in short, speaking always of the great mass, that they do not make government, but that government makes them, and that government is and has been a stupid and awful monster, misbegotten of the glimmerings of intelligence that come from the inertia-crushed mass.

"Personally, I incline to the second theory. Also, I am impatient. For a hundred thousand generations, from the first social groups of our savage forbears, government has remained a monster. To-day, the inertia-crushed mass has less laughter in it than ever before. In spite of man's mastery of matter, human suffering and misery and degradation mar the fair world.

"Wherefore I have decided to step in and become captain of this world-ship for a while. I have the intelligence and the wide vision of the skilled expert. Also, I have the power. I shall be obeyed. The men of all the world shall perform my bidding and make governments so that they shall become laughter-producers. These modelled governments I have in mind shall not make the people happy, wise, and noble by decree; but they shall give opportunity for the people to become happy, wise, and noble.

"I have spoken. I have invited you, and nine of your fellow-captains, to confer with me. On March third the yacht *Energon* will sail from San Francisco. You are requested to be on board the night before. This is serious. The affairs of the world must be handled for a time by a strong hand. Mine is that strong hand. If you fail to obey my summons, you will die. Candidly, I do not expect that you will obey. But your death for failure to obey will cause obedience on the part of those I subsequently summon. You will have served a purpose. And please remember that I have no unscientific sentimentality about the value of human life. I carry always in the background of my consciousness the innumerable billions of lives that are to laugh and be happy in future æons on the earth.

"Yours for the reconstruction of society,

"Goliah."

The publication of this letter did not cause even local amusement. Men might have smiled to themselves as they read it, but it was so palpably the handiwork of a crank that it did not merit discussion. Interest did not arouse till next morning. An Associated Press despatch to the Eastern states, followed by interviews by eager-nosed reporters, had brought out the names of the other nine captains of industry who had received similar letters, but who had not thought the matter of sufficient importance to be made public. But the interest aroused was mild, and it would have died out quickly had not Gabberton cartooned a chronic presidential aspirant as "Goliah." Then came the song that was sung hilariously from sea to sea, with the refrain, "Goliah will catch you if you don't watch out."

The weeks passed and the incident was forgotten. Walter Bassett had forgotten it likewise; but on the evening of February 22, he was called to the telephone by the Collector of the Port. "I just wanted to tell you," said the latter, "that the yacht *Energon* has arrived and gone to anchor in the stream off Pier Seven."

What happened that night Walter Bassett has never divulged. But it is known that he rode down in his auto to the water front, chartered one of Crowley's launches, and was put aboard the strange yacht. It is further known that when he returned to the shore, three hours later, he immediately despatched a sheaf of telegrams to his nine fellow-captains of industry who had received letters from Goliah. These telegrams were similarly worded, and read: "The yacht *Energon* has arrived. There is something in this. I advise you to come."

Bassett was laughed at for his pains. It was a huge laugh that went up (for his telegrams had been made public), and the popular song on Goliah revived and became more popular than ever. Goliah and Bassett were cartooned and lampooned unmercifully, the former, as the Old Man of the Sea, riding on the latter's neck. The laugh tittered and rippled through clubs and social circles, was restrainedly merry in the editorial columns, and broke out in loud guffaws in the comic weeklies. There was a serious side as well, and Bassett's sanity was gravely questioned by many, and especially by his business associates.

Bassett had ever been a short-tempered man, and after he sent the second sheaf of telegrams to his brother captains, and had been laughed at again, he remained silent. In this second sheaf he had said: "Come, I implore you. As you value your life, come." He arranged all his business affairs for an absence, and on the night of March 2 went on board the *Energon*. The latter, properly cleared, sailed next morning. And next morning the newsboys in every city and town were crying "Extra."

In the slang of the day, Goliah had delivered the goods. The nine captains of industry who had failed to accept his invitation were dead. A sort of violent disintegration of the tissues was the report of the various autopsies held on the bodies of the slain millionaires; yet the surgeons and physicians (the most highly skilled in the land had participated) would not venture the opinion that the men had been slain. Much less would they venture the conclusion, "at the hands of parties unknown." It was all too mysterious. They were stunned. Their scientific credulity broke down. They had no warrant in the whole domain of science for believing that an anonymous person on Palgrave Island had murdered the poor gentlemen.

One thing was quickly learned, however; namely, that Palgrave Island was no myth. It was charted and well known to all navigators, lying on the line of 160 west longitude, right at its intersection by the tenth parallel north latitude, and only a few miles away from Diana Shoal. Like Midway and Fanning, Palgrave Island was isolated, volcanic and coral in formation. Furthermore, it was uninhabited. A survey ship, in 1887, had visited the place and reported the existence of several springs and of a good harbour that was very dangerous of approach. And that was all that was known of the tiny speck of land that was soon to have focussed on it the awed attention of the world.

Goliah remained silent till March 24. On the morning of that day, the newspapers published his second letter, copies of which had been received by the ten chief politicians of the United States — ten leading men in the political world who were conventionally known as "statesmen." The letter, with the same superscription as before, was as follows:

"Dear Sir:

"I have spoken in no uncertain tone. I must be obeyed. You may consider this an invitation or a summons; but if you still wish to tread this earth and laugh, you will be aboard the yacht *Energon*, in San Francisco harbour, not later than the evening of April 5. It is my wish and my will that you confer with me here on Palgrave Island in the matter of reconstructing society upon some rational basis.

"Do not misunderstand me, when I tell you that I am one with a theory. I want to see that theory work, and therefore I call upon your cooperation. In this theory of mine, lives are but pawns; I deal with quantities of lives. I am after laughter, and those that stand in the way of laughter must perish. The game is big. There are fifteen hundred million human lives to-day on the planet. What is your single life against them? It is as naught, in my theory. And remember that mine is the power. Remember that I am a scientist, and that one life, or one million of lives, mean nothing to me as arrayed against the countless billions of billions of the lives of the generations to come. It is for their laughter that I seek to reconstruct society now; and against them your own meagre little life is a paltry thing indeed.

"Whoso has power can command his fellows. By virtue of that military device known as the phalanx, Alexander conquered his bit of the world. By virtue of that chemical device, gunpowder, Cortes with his several hundred cut-throats conquered the empire of the Montezumas. Now I am in possession of a device that is all my own. In the course of a century not more than half a dozen fundamental discoveries or inventions are made. I have made such an invention. The possession of it gives me the mastery of the world. I shall use this invention, not for commercial exploitation, but for the good of humanity. For that purpose I want help — willing agents, obedient hands; and I am strong enough to compel the service. I am taking the shortest way, though I am in no hurry. I shall not clutter my speed with haste.

"The incentive of material gain developed man from the savage to the semi-barbarian he is to-day. This incentive has been a useful device for the development of the human; but it has now fulfilled its function and is ready to be cast aside into the scrap-heap of rudimentary vestiges such as gills in the throat and belief in the divine right of kings. Of course you do not think so; but I do not see that that will prevent you from aiding me to fling the anachronism into the scrap-heap. For I tell you now that the time has come when mere food and shelter and similar sordid things shall be automatic, as free and easy and involuntary of access as the air. I shall make them automatic, what of my discovery and the power that discovery gives me. And with food and shelter automatic, the incentive of material gain passes away from the world for ever. With food and shelter automatic, the higher incentives will universally obtain — the spiritual, æsthetic, and intellectual incentives that will tend to develop and make beautiful and noble body, mind, and spirit. Then all the world will be dominated by happiness and laughter. It will be the reign of universal laughter.

"Yours for that day,

"Goliah."

Still the world would not believe. The ten politicians were at Washington, so that they did not have the opportunity of being convinced that Bassett had had, and not one of them took the trouble to journey out to San Francisco to make the opportunity. As for Goliah, he was hailed by the newspapers as another Tom Lawson with a panacea; and there were specialists in mental disease who, by analysis of Goliah's letters, proved conclusively that he was a lunatic.

The yacht *Energon* arrived in the harbour of San Francisco on the afternoon of April 5, and Bassett came ashore. But the *Energon* did not sail next day, for not one of the ten summoned politicians had elected to make the journey to Palgrave Island. The newsboys, however, called "Extra" that day in all the cities. The ten politicians were dead. The yacht, lying peacefully at anchor in the harbour, became the centre of excited interest. She was surrounded by a flotilla of launches and rowboats, and many tugs and steamboats ran excursions to her. While the rabble was firmly kept off, the proper authorities and even reporters were permitted to board her. The mayor of San Francisco and the chief of police reported that nothing suspicious was to be seen upon her, and the port authorities announced that her papers were correct and in order in every detail. Many photographs and columns of descriptive matter were run in the newspapers.

The crew was reported to be composed principally of Scandinavians — fair-haired, blue-eyed Swedes, Norwegians afflicted with the temperamental melancholy of their race, stolid Russian Finns, and a slight sprinkling of Americans and English. It was noted that there was nothing mercurial and flyaway about them. They seemed weighty men, oppressed by a sad and stolid bovine-sort of integrity. A sober seriousness and enormous certitude characterized all of them. They appeared men without nerves and without fear, as though upheld by some overwhelming power or carried in the hollow of some superhuman hand. The captain, a sad-eyed, strong-featured American, was cartooned in the papers as "Gloomy Gus" (the pessimistic hero of the comic supplement).

Some sea-captain recognized the *Energon* as the yacht *Scud*, once owned by Merrivale of the New York Yacht Club. With this clue it was soon ascertained that the *Scud* had disappeared several years before. The agent who sold her reported the purchaser to be merely another agent, a man he had seen neither before nor since. The yacht had been reconstructed at Duffey's Shipyard in New Jersey. The change in her name and registry occurred at that time and had been legally executed. Then the *Energon* had disappeared in the shroud of mystery.

In the meantime, Bassett was going crazy — at least his friends and business associates said so. He kept away from his vast business enterprises and said that he must hold his hands until the other masters of the world could join with him in the reconstruction of society — proof indubitable that Goliah's bee had entered his bonnet. To reporters he had little to say. He was not at liberty, he said, to relate what he had seen on Palgrave Island; but he could assure them that the matter was serious, the most serious thing that had ever happened. His final word was that, the world was on the verge of a turnover, for good or ill he did not know, but, one way or the other, he was absolutely convinced that the turnover was coming. As for business, business could go hang. He had seen things, he had, and that was all there was to it.

There was a great telegraphing, during this period, between the local Federal officials and the state and war departments at Washington. A secret attempt was made late one afternoon to board the *Energon* and place the captain under arrest — the Attorney-General having given the opinion that the captain could be held for the murder of the ten "statesmen." The government launch was seen to leave Meigg's Wharf and steer for the *Energon*, and that was the last ever seen of the launch and the men on board of it. The government tried to keep the affair hushed up, but the cat was slipped out of the bag by the families of the missing men, and the papers were filled with monstrous versions of the affair.

The government now proceeded to extreme measures. The battleship *Alaska* was ordered to capture the strange yacht, or, failing that, to sink her. These were secret instructions; but thousands of eyes, from the water front and from the shipping in the harbour, witnessed what happened that afternoon. The battleship got under way and steamed slowly toward the *Energon*. At half a mile distant the battleship blew up — simply blew up, that was all, her shattered frame sinking to the bottom of the bay, a riff-raff of wreckage and a few survivors strewing the surface. Among the survivors was a young lieutenant who had had charge of the wireless on board the *Alaska*. The reporters got hold of him first, and he talked. No sooner had the *Alaska* got under way, he said, than a message was received from the

Energon. It was in the international code, and it was a warning to the *Alaska* to come no nearer than half a mile. He had sent the message, through the speaking tube, immediately to the captain. He did not know anything more, except that the *Energon* twice repeated the message and that five minutes afterward the explosion occurred. The captain of the *Alaska* had perished with his ship, and nothing more was to be learned.

The *Energon*, however, promptly hoisted anchor and cleared out to sea. A great clamour was raised by the papers; the government was charged with cowardice and vacillation in its dealings with a mere pleasure yacht and a lunatic who called himself "Goliah," and immediate and decisive action was demanded. Also, a great cry went up about the loss of life, especially the wanton killing of the ten "statesmen." Goliah promptly replied. In fact, so prompt was his reply that the experts in wireless telegraphy announced that, since it was impossible to send wireless messages so great a distance, Goliah was in their very midst and not on Palgrave Island. Goliah's letter was delivered to the Associated Press by a messenger boy who had been engaged on the street. The letter was as follows:

"What are a few paltry lives? In your insane wars you destroy millions of lives and think nothing of it. In your fratricidal commercial struggle you kill countless babes, women, and men, and you triumphantly call the shambles 'individualism.' I call it anarchy. I am going to put a stop to your wholesale destruction of human beings. I want laughter, not slaughter. Those of you who stand in the way of laughter will get slaughter.

"Your government is trying to delude you into believing that the destruction of the *Alaska* was an accident. Know here and now that it was by my orders that the *Alaska* was destroyed. In a few short months, all battleships on all seas will be destroyed or flung to the scrap-heap, and all nations shall disarm; fortresses shall be dismantled, armies disbanded, and warfare shall cease from the earth. Mine is the power. I am the will of God. The whole world shall be in vassalage to me, but it shall be a vassalage of peace.

"I am
"Goliah."

"Blow Palgrave Island out of the water!" was the head-line retort of the newspapers. The government was of the same frame of mind, and the assembling of the fleets began. Walter Bassett broke out in ineffectual protest, but was swiftly silenced by the threat of a lunacy commission.

Goliah remained silent. Against Palgrave Island five great fleets were hurled — the Asiatic Squadron, the South Pacific Squadron, the North Pacific Squadron, the Caribbean Squadron, and half of the North Atlantic Squadron, the two latter coming through the Panama Canal.

"I have the honour to report that we sighted Palgrave Island on the evening of April 29," ran the report of Captain Johnson, of the battleship *North Dakota*, to the Secretary of the Navy. "The Asiatic Squadron was delayed and did not arrive until the morning of April 30. A council of the admirals was held, and it was decided to attack early next morning. The destroyer, *Swift VII*, crept in, unmolested, and reported no warlike preparations on the island. It noted several small merchant steamers in the harbour, and the existence of a small village in a hopelessly exposed position that could be swept by our fire.

"It had been decided that all the vessels should rush in, scattered, upon the island, opening fire at three miles, and continuing to the edge of the reef, there to retain loose formation and engage. Palgrave Island repeatedly warned us, by wireless, in the international code, to keep outside the ten-mile limit; but no heed was paid to the warnings.

"The *North Dakota* did not take part in the movement of the morning of May 1. This was due to a slight accident of the preceding night that temporarily disabled her steering-gear. The morning of May 1 broke clear and calm. There was a slight breeze from the south-west that quickly died away. The *North Dakota* lay twelve miles off the island. At the signal the squadrons charged in upon the island, from all sides, at full speed. Our wireless receiver continued to tick off warnings from the island. The ten-mile limit was passed, and nothing happened. I watched through my glasses. At five miles nothing happened; at four miles nothing happened; at three miles, the *New York*, in the lead on our side of the island, opened fire. She fired only one shot. Then she blew up. The rest of the vessels never fired a shot. They began to blow up, everywhere, before our eyes. Several swerved about and started back, but they failed to escape. The destroyer, *Dart XXX*, nearly made the ten-mile limit when she blew up. She was the last survivor. No harm came to the *North Dakota*, and that night, the steering-gear being repaired, I gave orders to sail for San Francisco."

To say that the United States was stunned is but to expose the inadequacy of language. The whole world was stunned. It confronted that blight of the human brain, the unprecedented. Human endeavour was a jest, a monstrous futility, when a lunatic on a lonely island, who owned a yacht and an exposed village, could destroy five of the proudest fleets of Christendom. And how had he done it? Nobody knew. The scientists lay down in the dust of the common road and wailed and gibbered. They did not know. Military experts committed suicide by scores. The mighty fabric of warfare they had fashioned was a gossamer veil rent asunder by a miserable lunatic. It was too much for their sanity. Mere human reason could not withstand the shock. As the savage is crushed by the sleight-of-hand of the witch doctor, so was the world crushed by the magic of Goliah. How did he do it? It was the awful face of the Unknown upon which the world gazed and by which it was frightened out of the memory of its proudest achievements.

But all the world was not stunned. There was the invariable exception — the Island Empire of Japan. Drunken with the wine of success deep-quaffed, without superstition and without faith in aught but its own ascendant star, laughing at the wreckage of science and mad with pride of race, it went forth upon the way of war. America's fleets had been destroyed. From the battlements of heaven the multitudinous ancestral shades of Japan leaned down. The opportunity, God-given, had come. The Mikado was in truth a brother to the gods.

The war-monsters of Japan were loosed in mighty fleets. The Philippines were gathered in as a child gathers a nosegay. It took longer for the battleships to travel to Hawaii, to Panama, and to the Pacific Coast. The United States was panic-stricken, and there arose the powerful party of dishonourable peace. In the midst of the clamour the *Energon* arrived in San Francisco Bay and Goliah spoke once more. There was a little brush as the *Energon* came in, and a few explosions of magazines occurred along the war-tunnelled hills as the coast defences went to smash. Also, the blowing up of the submarine mines in the Golden Gate made a remarkably fine display. Goliah's message to the people of San Francisco, dated as usual from Palgrave Island, was published in the papers. It ran:

"Peace? Peace be with you. You shall have peace. I have spoken to this purpose before. And give you me peace. Leave my yacht *Energon* alone. Commit one overt act against her and not one stone in San Francisco shall stand upon another.

"To-morrow let all good citizens go out upon the hills that slope down to the sea. Go with music and laughter and garlands. Make festival for the new age that is dawning. Be like children upon your hills, and witness the passing of war. Do not miss the opportunity. It is your last chance to behold what henceforth you will be compelled to seek in museums of antiquities.

“I promise you a merry day,

“Goliah.”

The madness of magic was in the air. With the people it was as if all their gods had crashed and the heavens still stood. Order and law had passed away from the universe; but the sun still shone, the wind still blew, the flowers still bloomed — that was the amazing thing about it. That water should continue to run downhill was a miracle. All the stabilities of the human mind and human achievement were crumbling. The one stable thing that remained was Goliah, a madman on an island. And so it was that the whole population of San Francisco went forth next day in colossal frolic upon the hills that overlooked the sea. Brass bands and banners went forth, brewery wagons and Sunday-school picnics — all the strange heterogeneous groupings of swarming metropolitan life.

On the sea-rim rose the smoke from the funnels of a hundred hostile vessels of war, all converging upon the helpless, undefended Golden Gate. And not all undefended, for out through the Golden Gate moved the *Energon*, a tiny toy of white, rolling like a straw in the stiff sea on the bar where a strong ebb-tide ran in the teeth of the summer sea-breeze. But the Japanese were cautious. Their thirty-and forty-thousand-ton battleships slowed down half a dozen miles offshore and manoeuvred in ponderous evolutions, while tiny scout-boats (lean, six-funnelled destroyers) ran in, cutting blackly the flashing sea like so many sharks. But, compared with the *Energon*, they were leviathans. Compared with them, the *Energon* was as the sword of the arch-angel Michael, and they the forerunners of the hosts of hell.

But the flashing of the sword, the good people of San Francisco, gathered on her hills, never saw. Mysterious, invisible, it cleaved the air and smote the mightiest blows of combat the world had ever witnessed. The good people of San Francisco saw little and understood less. They saw only a million and a half tons of brine-cleaving, thunder-flinging fabrics hurled skyward and smashed back in ruin to sink into the sea. It was all over in five minutes. Remained upon the wide expanse of sea only the *Energon*, rolling white and toylike on the bar.

Goliah spoke to the Mikado and the Elder Statesmen. It was only an ordinary cable message, despatched from San Francisco by the captain of the *Energon*, but it was of sufficient moment to cause the immediate withdrawal of Japan from the Philippines and of her surviving fleets from the sea. Japan the sceptical was converted. She had felt the weight of Goliah's arm. And meekly she obeyed when Goliah commanded her to dismantle her war vessels and to turn the metal into useful appliances for the arts of peace. In all the ports, navy-yards, machine-shops, and foundries of Japan tens of thousands of brown-skinned artisans converted the war-monsters into myriads of useful things, such as ploughshares (Goliah insisted on ploughshares), gasolene engines, bridge-trusses, telephone and telegraph wires, steel rails, locomotives, and rolling stock for railways. It was a world-penance for a world to see, and paltry indeed it made appear that earlier penance, barefooted in the snow, of an emperor to a pope for daring to squabble over temporal power.

Goliah's next summons was to the ten leading scientists of the United States. This time there was no hesitancy in obeying. The savants were ludicrously prompt, some of them waiting in San Francisco for weeks so as not to miss the scheduled sailing-date. They departed on the *Energon* on June 15; and while they were on the sea, on the way to Palgrave Island, Goliah performed another spectacular feat. Germany and France were preparing to fly at each other's throats. Goliah commanded peace. They ignored the command, tacitly agreeing to fight it out on land where it seemed safer for the belligerently inclined. Goliah set the date of June 19 for the cessation of hostile preparations. Both countries mobilized their armies on June 18, and hurled them at the common frontier. And on June 19, Goliah struck. All generals, war-secretaries, and jingo-leaders in the two countries died on that day; and that day two vast armies, undirected, like strayed sheep, walked over each other's frontiers and fraternized. But the great German war lord had escaped — it was learned, afterward, by hiding in the huge safe where were stored the secret archives of his empire. And when he emerged he was a very penitent war lord, and like the Mikado of Japan he was set to work beating his sword-blades into ploughshares and pruning-hooks.

But in the escape of the German Emperor was discovered a great significance. The scientists of the world plucked up courage, got back their nerve. One thing was conclusively evident — Goliah's power was not magic. Law still reigned in the universe. Goliah's power had limitations, else had the German Emperor not escaped by secretly hiding in a steel safe. Many learned articles on the subject appeared in the magazines.

The ten scientists arrived back from Palgrave Island on July 6. Heavy platoons of police protected them from the reporters. No, they had not see Goliah, they said in the one official interview that was vouchsafed; but they had talked with him, and they had seen things. They were not permitted to state definitely all that they had seen and heard, but they could say that the world was about to be revolutionized. Goliah was in the possession of a tremendous discovery that placed all the world at his mercy, and it was a good thing for the world that Goliah was merciful. The ten scientists proceeded directly to Washington on a special train, where, for days, they were closeted with the heads of government, while the nation hung breathless on the outcome.

But the outcome was a long time in arriving. From Washington the President issued commands to the masters and leading figures of the nation. Everything was secret. Day by day deputations of bankers, railway lords, captains of industry, and Supreme Court justices arrived; and when they arrived they remained. The weeks dragged on, and then, on August 25, began the famous issuance of proclamations. Congress and the Senate co-operated with the President in this, while the Supreme Court justices gave their sanction and the money lords and the captains of industry agreed. War was declared upon the capitalist masters of the nation. Martial law was declared over the whole United States. The supreme power was vested in the President.

In one day, child-labour in the whole country was abolished. It was done by decree, and the United States was prepared with its army to enforce its decrees. In the same day all women factory workers were dismissed to their homes, and all the sweat-shops were closed. "But we cannot make profits!" wailed the petty capitalists. "Fools!" was the retort of Goliah. "As if the meaning of life were profits! Give up your businesses and your profit-mongering." "But there is nobody to buy our business!" they wailed. "Buy and sell — is that all the meaning life has for you?" replied Goliah. "You have nothing to sell. Turn over your little cut-throating, anarchistic businesses to the government so that they may be rationally organized and operated." And the next day, by decree, the government began taking possession of all factories, shops, mines, ships, railroads, and producing lands.

The nationalization of the means of production and distribution went on apace. Here and there were sceptical capitalists of moment. They were made prisoners and haled to Palgrave Island, and when they returned they always acquiesced in what the government was doing. A little later the journey to Palgrave Island became unnecessary. When objection was made, the reply of the officials was "Goliah has spoken" — which was another way of saying, "He must be obeyed."

The captains of industry became heads of departments. It was found that civil engineers, for instance, worked just as well in government employ as before, they had worked in private employ. It was found that men of high executive ability could not violate their nature. They could not escape exercising their executive ability, any more than a crab could escape crawling or a bird could escape flying. And so it was that all the splendid force of the men who had previously worked for themselves was now put to work for the good of society. The half-dozen great railway chiefs co-operated in the organizing of a national system of railways that was amazingly efficacious. Never again was there such a thing as a car shortage. These chiefs were not the Wall Street railway magnates, but they were the men who formerly had done the real work while in the employ of the Wall Street magnates.

Wall Street was dead. There was no more buying and selling and speculating. Nobody had anything to buy or sell. There was nothing in which to speculate. "Put the stock gamblers to work," said Goliah; "give those that are young, and that so desire, a chance to learn useful trades." "Put the drummers, and salesmen, and advertising agents, and real estate agents to work," said Goliah; and by hundreds of thousands the erstwhile useless middlemen and parasites went into useful occupations. The four hundred thousand idle gentlemen of the country who had lived upon incomes were likewise put to work. Then there were a lot of helpless men in high places who were cleared out, the remarkable thing about this being that they were cleared out by their own fellows. Of this class were the professional politicians, whose wisdom and power consisted of manipulating machine politics and of grafting. There was no longer any graft. Since there were no private interests to purchase special privileges, no bribes were offered to legislators, and legislators for the first time legislated for the people. The result was that men who were efficient, not in corruption, but in direction, found their way into the legislatures.

With this rational organization of society amazing results were brought about. The national day's work was eight hours, and yet production increased. In spite of the great permanent improvements and of the immense amount of energy consumed in systematizing the competitive chaos of society, production doubled and tripled upon itself. The standard of living increased, and still consumption could not keep up with production. The maximum working age was decreased to fifty years, to forty-nine years, and to forty-eight years. The minimum working age went up from sixteen years to eighteen years. The eight-hour day became a seven-hour day, and in a few months the national working day was reduced to five hours.

In the meantime glimmerings were being caught, not of the identity of Goliah, but of how he had worked and prepared for his assuming control of the world. Little things leaked out, clues were followed up, apparently unrelated things were pieced together. Strange stories of blacks stolen from Africa were remembered, of Chinese and Japanese contract coolies who had mysteriously disappeared, of lonely South Sea Islands raided and their inhabitants carried away; stories of yachts and merchant steamers, mysteriously purchased, that had disappeared and the descriptions of which remotely tallied with the crafts that had carried the Orientals and Africans and islanders away. Where had Goliah got the sinews of war? was the question. And the surmised answer was: By exploiting these stolen labourers. It was they that lived in the exposed village on Palgrave Island. It was the product of their toil that had purchased the yachts and merchant steamers and enabled Goliah's agents to permeate society and carry out his will. And what was the product of their toil that had given Goliah the wealth necessary to realize his plans? Commercial radium, the newspapers proclaimed; and radiyte, and radiosole, and argatium, and argyte, and the mysterious golyte (that had proved so valuable in metallurgy). These were the new compounds, discovered in the first decade of the twentieth century, the commercial and scientific use of which had become so enormous in the second decade.

The line of fruit boats that ran from Hawaii to San Francisco was declared to be the property of Goliah. This was a surmise, for no other owner could be discovered, and the agents who handled the shipments of the fruit boats were only agents. Since no one else owned the fruit boats, then Goliah must own them. The point of which is: *that it leaked out that the major portion of the world's supply in these precious compounds was brought to San Francisco by those very fruit boats*. That the whole chain of surmise was correct was proved in later years when Goliah's slaves were liberated and honourably pensioned by the international government of the world. It was at that time that the seal of secrecy was lifted from the lips of his agents and higher emissaries, and those that chose revealed much of the mystery of Goliah's organization and methods. His destroying angels, however, remained for ever dumb. Who the men were who went forth to the high places and killed at his bidding will be unknown to the end of time — for kill they did, by means of that very subtle and then-mysterious force that Goliah had discovered and named "Energon."

But at that time Energon, the little giant that was destined to do the work of the world, was unknown and undreamed of. Only Goliah knew, and he kept his secret well. Even his agents, who were armed with it, and who, in the case of the yacht *Energon*, destroyed a mighty fleet of war-ships by exploding their magazines, knew not what the subtle and potent force was, nor how it was manufactured. They knew only one of its many uses, and in that one use they had been instructed by Goliah. It is now well known that radium, and radiyte, and radiosole, and all the other compounds, were by-products of the manufacture of Energon by Goliah from the sunlight; but at that time nobody knew what Energon was, and Goliah continued to awe and rule the world.

One of the uses of Energon was in wireless telegraphy. It was by its means that Goliah was able to communicate with his agents all over the world. At that time the apparatus required by an agent was so clumsy that it could not be packed in anything less than a fair-sized steamer trunk. To-day, thanks to the improvements of Hendsoll, the perfected apparatus can be carried in a coat pocket.

It was in December, 1924, that Goliah sent out his famous "Christmas Letter," part of the text of which is here given:

"So far, while I have kept the rest of the nations from each other's throats, I have devoted myself particularly to the United States. Now I have not given to the people of the United States a rational social organization. What I have done has been to compel them to make that organization themselves. There is more laughter in the United States these days, and there is more sense. Food and shelter are no longer obtained by the anarchistic methods of so-called individualism but are now wellnigh automatic. And the beauty of it is that the people of the United States have achieved all this for themselves. I did not achieve it for them. I repeat, they achieved it for themselves. All that I did was to put the fear of death in the hearts of the few that sat in the high places and obstructed the coming of rationality and laughter. The fear of death made those in the high places get out of the way, that was all, and gave the intelligence of man a chance to realize itself socially.

"In the year that is to come I shall devote myself to the rest of the world. I shall put the fear of death in the hearts of all that sit in the high places in all the nations. And they will do as they have done in the United States — get down out of the high places and give the intelligence of man a chance for social rationality. All the nations shall tread the path the United States is now on.

"And when all the nations are well along on that path, I shall have something else for them. But first they must travel that path for themselves. They must demonstrate that the intelligence of mankind to-day, with the mechanical energy now at its disposal, is capable of organizing society so that food and shelter be made automatic, labour be reduced to a three-hour day, and joy and laughter be made universal. And when that is accomplished, not by me but by the intelligence of mankind, then I shall make a present to the world of a new mechanical energy. This is my discovery. This Energon is nothing more nor less than the cosmic energy that resides in the solar rays. When it is harnessed by mankind it will do the work of the world. There will be no more multitudes of miners slaving out their lives in the bowels of the earth, no more sooty firemen and greasy engineers. All may dress in white if they so will. The work of life will have become play and young and old will be the children of joy, and the business of living will become joy; and they will compete, one with another, in achieving ethical concepts and spiritual heights, in fashioning pictures and songs, and stories, in statecraft and beauty craft, in the sweat and the endeavour of the wrestler and the runner and the player of games — all will compete, not for sordid coin and base material reward, but for the joy that shall be theirs in the development and vigour of flesh and in the development and keenness of spirit. All will be joy-smiths, and their task shall be to beat out laughter from the ringing anvil of life.

"And now one word for the immediate future. On New Year's Day all nations shall disarm, all fortresses and war-ships shall be dismantled, and all armies shall be disbanded.

"Goliah."

On New Year's Day all the world disarmed. The millions of soldiers and sailors and workmen in the standing armies, in the navies, and in the countless arsenals, machine-shops, and factories for the manufacture of war machinery, were dismissed to their homes. These many millions of men, as well as their costly war machinery, had hitherto been supported on the back of labour. They now went into useful occupations, and the released labour giant heaved a mighty sigh of relief. The policing of the world was left to the peace officers and was purely social, whereas war had been distinctly anti-social.

Ninety per cent. of the crimes against society had been crimes against private property. With the passing of private property, at least in the means of production, and with the organization of industry that gave every man a chance, the crimes against private property practically ceased. The police forces everywhere were reduced repeatedly and again and again. Nearly all occasional and habitual criminals ceased voluntarily from their depredations. There was no longer any need for them to commit crime. They merely changed with changing conditions. A smaller number of criminals was put into hospitals and cured. And the remnant of the hopelessly criminal and degenerate was segregated. And the courts in all countries were likewise decreased in number again and again. Ninety-five per cent. of all civil cases had been squabbles over property, conflicts of property-rights, lawsuits, contests of wills, breaches of contract, bankruptcies, etc. With the passing of private property, this ninety-five per cent. of the cases that cluttered the courts also passed. The courts became shadows, attenuated ghosts, rudimentary vestiges of the anarchistic times that had preceded the coming of Goliah.

The year 1925 was a lively year in the world's history. Goliah ruled the world with a strong hand. Kings and emperors journeyed to Palgrave Island, saw the wonders of Energon, and went away, with the fear of death in their hearts, to abdicate thrones and crowns and hereditary licenses. When Goliah spoke to politicians (so-called "statesmen"), they obeyed . . . or died. He dictated universal reforms, dissolved refractory parliaments, and to the great conspiracy that was formed of mutinous money lords and captains of industry he sent his destroying angels. "The time is past for fooling," he told them. "You are anachronisms. You stand in the way of humanity. To the scrap-heap with you." To those that protested, and they were many, he said: "This is no time for logomachy. You can argue for centuries. It is what you have done in the past. I have no time for argument. Get out of the way."

With the exception of putting a stop to war, and of indicating the broad general plan, Goliah did nothing. By putting the fear of death into the hearts of those that sat in the high places and obstructed progress, Goliah made the opportunity for the unshackled intelligence of the best social thinkers of the world to exert itself. Goliah left all the multitudinous details of reconstruction to these social thinkers. He wanted them to prove that they were able to do it, and they proved it. It was due to their initiative that the white plague was stamped out from the world. It was due to them, and in spite of a deal of protesting from the sentimentalists, that all the extreme hereditary inefficients were segregated and denied marriage.

Goliah had nothing whatever to do with the instituting of the colleges of invention. This idea originated practically simultaneously in the minds of thousands of social thinkers. The time was ripe for the realization of the idea, and everywhere arose the splendid institutions of invention. For the first time the ingenuity of man was loosed upon the problem of simplifying life, instead of upon the making of money-earning devices. The affairs of life, such as house-cleaning, dish and window-washing, dust-removing, and scrubbing and clothes-washing, and all the endless sordid and necessary details, were simplified by invention until they became automatic. We of to-day cannot realize the barbarously filthy and slavish lives of those that lived prior to 1925.

The international government of the world was another idea that sprang simultaneously into the minds of thousands. The successful realization of this idea was a surprise to many, but as a surprise it was nothing to that received by the mildly protestant sociologists and biologists when irrefutable facts exploded the doctrine of Malthus. With leisure and joy in the world; with an immensely higher standard of living; and with the enormous spaciousness of opportunity for recreation, development, and pursuit of beauty and nobility and all the higher attributes, the birth-rate fell, and fell astoundingly. People ceased breeding like cattle. And better than that, it was immediately noticeable that a higher average of children was being born. The doctrine of Malthus was knocked into a cocked hat — or flung to the scrap-heap, as Goliah would have put it.

All that Goliah had predicted that the intelligence of mankind could accomplish with the mechanical energy at its disposal, came to pass. Human dissatisfaction practically disappeared. The elderly people were the great grumblers; but when they were honourably pensioned by society, as they passed the age limit for work, the great majority ceased grumbling. They found themselves better off in their idle old days under the new regime, enjoying vastly more pleasure and comforts than they had in their busy and toilsome youth under the old regime. The younger generation had easily adapted itself too the changed order, and the very young had never known anything else. The sum of human happiness had increased enormously. The world had become gay and sane. Even the old fogies of professors of sociology, who had opposed with might and main the coming of the new regime, made no complaint. They were a score of times better remunerated than in the old days, and they were not worked nearly so hard. Besides, they were busy revising sociology and writing new text-books on the subject. Here and there, it is true, there were atavisms, men who yearned for the flesh-pots and cannibal-feasts of the old alleged "individualism," creatures long of teeth and savage of claw who wanted to prey upon their fellow-men; but they were looked upon as diseased, and were treated in hospitals. A small remnant, however, proved incurable, and was confined in asylums and denied marriage. Thus there was no progeny to inherit their atavistic tendencies.

As the years went by, Goliah dropped out of the running of the world. There was nothing for him to run. The world was running itself, and doing it smoothly and beautifully. In 1937, Goliah made his long-promised present of Energon to the world. He himself had devised a thousand ways in which the little giant should do the work of the world — all of which he made public at the same time. But instantly the colleges of invention seized upon Energon and utilized it in a hundred thousand additional ways. In fact, as Goliah confessed in his letter of March 1938, the colleges of invention cleared up several puzzling features of Energon that had baffled him during the preceding years. With the introduction of the use of Energon the two-hour work-day was cut down almost to nothing. As Goliah had predicted, work indeed became play. And, so tremendous was man's productive capacity, due to Energon and the rational social utilization of it, that the humblest citizen enjoyed leisure and time and opportunity for an immensely greater abundance of living than had the most favoured under the old anarchistic system.

Nobody had ever seen Goliah, and all peoples began to clamour for their saviour to appear. While the world did not minimize his discovery of Energon, it was decided that greater than that was his wide social vision. He was a superman, a scientific superman; and the curiosity of the world to see him had become wellnigh unbearable. It was in 1941, after much hesitancy on his part, that he finally emerged from Palgrave Island. He arrived on June 6 in San Francisco, and for the first time, since his retirement to Palgrave Island, the world looked upon his face. And the world was disappointed. Its imagination had been touched. An heroic figure had been made out of Goliah. He was the man, or the demi-god, rather, who had turned the planet over. The deeds of Alexander, Cæsar, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon were as the play of babes alongside his colossal achievements.

And ashore in San Francisco and through its streets stepped and rode a little old man, sixty-five years of age, well preserved, with a pink-and-white complexion and a bald spot on his head the size of an apple. He was short-sighted and wore spectacles. But when the spectacles were removed, his were quizzical blue eyes like a child’s, filled with mild wonder at the world. Also his eyes had a way of twinkling, accompanied by a screwing up of the face, as if he laughed at the huge joke he had played upon the world, trapping it, in spite of itself, into happiness and laughter.

For a scientific superman and world tyrant, he had remarkable weaknesses. He loved sweets, and was inordinately fond of salted almonds and salted pecans, especially of the latter. He always carried a paper bag of them in his pocket, and he had a way of saying frequently that the chemism of his nature demanded such fare. Perhaps his most astonishing failing was cats. He had an ineradicable aversion to that domestic animal. It will be remembered that he fainted dead away with sudden fright, while speaking in Brotherhood Palace, when the janitor’s cat walked out upon the stage and brushed against his legs.

But no sooner had he revealed himself to the world than he was identified. Old-time friends had no difficulty in recognizing him as Percival Stultz, the German-American who, in 1898, had worked in the Union Iron Works, and who, for two years at that time, had been secretary of Branch

369 of the International Brotherhood of Machinists. It was in 1901, then twenty-five years of age, that he had taken special scientific courses at the University of California, at the same time supporting himself by soliciting what was then known as "life insurance." His records as a student are preserved in the university museum, and they are unenviable. He is remembered by the professors he sat under chiefly for his absent-mindedness. Undoubtedly, even then, he was catching glimpses of the wide visions that later were to be his.

His naming himself "Goliah" and shrouding himself in mystery was his little joke, he later explained. As Goliah, or any other thing like that, he said, he was able to touch the imagination of the world and turn it over; but as Percival Stultz, wearing side-whiskers and spectacles, and weighing one hundred and eighteen pounds, he would have been unable to turn over a pecan — "not even a salted pecan."

But the world quickly got over its disappointment in his personal appearance and antecedents. It knew him and revered him as the master-mind of the ages; and it loved him for himself, for his quizzical short-sighted eyes and the inimitable way in which he screwed up his face when he laughed; it loved him for his simplicity and comradeship and warm humanness, and for his fondness for salted pecans and his aversion to cats. And to-day, in the wonder-city of Asgard, rises in awful beauty that monument to him that dwarfs the pyramids and all the monstrous blood-stained monuments of antiquity. And on that monument, as all know, is inscribed in imperishable bronze the prophecy and the fulfilment: "All will be joy-smiths, and their task shall be to beat out laughter from the ringing anvil of life."

[Editorial Note. — This remarkable production is the work of Harry Beckwith, a student in the Lowell High School of San Francisco, and it is here reproduced chiefly because of the youth of its author. Far be it from our policy to burden our readers with ancient history; and when it is known that Harry Beckwith was only fifteen when the fore-going was written, our motive will be understood. "Goliah" won the Premier for high school composition in 2254, and last year Harry Beckwith took advantage of the privilege earned, by electing to spend six months in Asgard. The wealth of historical detail, the atmosphere of the times, and the mature style of the composition are especially noteworthy in one so young.]

THE GOLDEN POPPY

I have a poppy field. That is, by the grace of God and the good-nature of editors, I am enabled to place each month divers gold pieces into a clerical gentleman's hands, and in return for said gold pieces I am each month reinvested with certain proprietary-rights in a poppy field. This field blazes on the rim of the Piedmont Hills. Beneath lies all the world. In the distance, across the silver sweep of bay, San Francisco smokes on her many hills like a second Rome. Not far away, Mount Tamalpais thrusts a rugged shoulder into the sky; and midway between is the Golden Gate, where sea mists love to linger. From the poppy field we often see the shimmering blue of the Pacific beyond, and the busy ships that go for ever out and in.

"We shall have great joy in our poppy field," said Bess. "Yes," said I; "how the poor city folk will envy when they come to see us, and how we will make all well again when we send them off with great golden armfuls!"

"But those things will have to come down," I added, pointing to numerous obtrusive notices (relics of the last tenant) displayed conspicuously along the boundaries, and bearing, each and all, this legend:

"*Private Grounds*. *No Trespassing*."

"Why should we refuse the poor city folk a ramble over our field, because, forsooth, they have not the advantage of our acquaintance?"

"How I abhor such things," said Bess; "the arrogant symbols of power."

"They disgrace human nature," said I.

"They shame the generous landscape," she said, "and they are abominable."

"Piggish!" quoth I, hotly. "Down with them!"

We looked forward to the coming of the poppies, did Bess and I, looked forward as only creatures of the city may look who have been long denied. I have forgotten to mention the existence of a house above the poppy field, a squat and wandering bungalow in which we had elected to forsake town traditions and live in fresher and more vigorous ways. The first poppies came, orange-yellow and golden in the standing grain, and we went about gleefully, as though drunken with their wine, and told each other that the poppies were there. We laughed at unexpected moments, in the midst of silences, and at times grew ashamed and stole forth secretly to gaze upon our treasury. But when the great wave of poppy-flame finally spilled itself down the field, we shouted aloud, and danced, and clapped our hands, freely and frankly mad.

And then came the Goths. My face was in a lather, the time of the first invasion, and I suspended my razor in mid-air to gaze out on my beloved field. At the far end I saw a little girl and a little boy, their arms filled with yellow spoil. Ah, thought I, an unwonted benevolence burgeoning, what a delight to me is their delight! It is sweet that children should pick poppies in my field. All summer shall they pick poppies in my field. But they must be little children, I added as an afterthought, and they must pick from the lower end — this last prompted by a glance at the great golden fellows nodding in the wheat beneath my window. Then the razor descended. Shaving was always an absorbing task, and I did not glance out of the window again until the operation was completed. And then I was bewildered. Surely this was not my poppy field. No — and yes, for there were the tall pines clustering austerely together on one side, the magnolia tree burdened with bloom, and the Japanese quinces splashing the driveway hedge with blood. Yes, it was the field, but no wave of poppy-flame spilled down it, nor did the great golden fellows nod in the wheat beneath my window. I rushed into a jacket and out of the house. In the far distance were disappearing two huge balls of colour, orange and yellow, for all the world like perambulating poppies of cyclopean breed.

“Johnny,” said I to the nine-year-old son of my sister, “Johnny, whenever little girls come into our field to pick poppies, you must go down to them, and in a very quiet and gentlemanly manner, tell them it is not allowed.”

Warm days came, and the sun drew another blaze from the free-bosomed earth. Whereupon a neighbour’s little girl, at the behest of her mother, duly craved and received permission from Bess to gather a few poppies for decorative purposes. But of this I was uninformed, and when I descried her in the midst of the field I waved my arms like a semaphore against the sky.

“Little girl!” called I. “Little girl!”

The little girl’s legs blurred the landscape as she fled, and in high elation I sought Bess to tell of the potency of my voice. Nobly she came to the rescue, departing forthwith on an expedition of conciliation and explanation to the little girl’s mother. But to this day the little girl seeks cover at sight of me, and I know the mother will never be as cordial as she would otherwise have been.

Came dark, overcast days, stiff, driving winds, and pelting rains, day on day, without end, and the city folk cowered in their dwelling-places like flood-beset rats; and like rats, half-drowned and gasping, when the weather cleared they crawled out and up the green Piedmont slopes to bask in the blessed sunshine. And they invaded my field in swarms and droves, crushing the sweet wheat into the earth and with lustful hands ripping the poppies out by the roots.

"I shall put up the warnings against trespassing," I said.

"Yes," said Bess, with a sigh. "I'm afraid it is necessary."

The day was yet young when she sighed again:

"I'm afraid, O Man, that your signs are of no avail. People have forgotten how to read, these days."

I went out on the porch. A city nymph, in cool summer gown and picture hat, paused before one of my newly reared warnings and read it through with care. Profound deliberation characterized her movements. She was statuesquely tall, but with a toss of the head and a flirt of the skirt she dropped on hands and knees, crawled under the fence, and came to her feet on the inside with poppies in both her hands. I walked down the drive and talked ethically to her, and she went away. Then I put up more signs.

At one time, years ago, these hills were carpeted with poppies. As between the destructive forces and the will "to live," the poppies maintained an equilibrium with their environment. But the city folk constituted a new and terrible destructive force, the equilibrium was overthrown, and the poppies wellnigh perished. Since the city folk plucked those with the longest stems and biggest bowls, and since it is the law of kind to procreate kind, the long-stemmed, big-bowled poppies failed to go to seed, and a stunted, short-stemmed variety remained to the hills. And not only was it stunted and short-stemmed, but sparsely distributed as well. Each day and every day, for years and years, the city folk swarmed over the Piedmont Hills, and only here and there did the genius of the race survive in the form of miserable little flowers, close-clinging and quick-blooming, like children of the slums dragged hastily and precariously through youth to a shrivelled and futile maturity.

On the other hand, the poppies had prospered in my field; and not only had they been sheltered from the barbarians, but also from the birds. Long ago the field was sown in wheat, which went to seed unharvested each year, and in the cool depths of which the poppy seeds were hidden from the keen-eyed songsters. And further, climbing after the sun through the wheat stalks, the poppies grew taller and taller and more royal even than the primordial ones of the open.

So the city folk, gazing from the bare hills to my blazing, burning field, were sorely tempted, and, it must be told, as sorely fell. But no sorer was their fall than that of my beloved poppies. Where the grain holds the dew and takes the bite from the sun the soil is moist, and in such soil it is easier to pull the poppies out by the roots than to break the stalk. Now the city folk, like other folk, are inclined to move along the line of least resistance, and for each flower they gathered, there were also gathered many crisp-rolled buds and with them all the possibilities and future beauties of the plant for all time to come.

One of the city folk, a middle-aged gentleman, with white hands and shifty eyes, especially made life interesting for me. We called him the "Repeater," what of his ways. When from the porch we implored him to desist, he was wont slowly and casually to direct his steps toward the fence, simulating finely the actions of a man who had not heard, but whose walk, instead, had terminated of itself or of his own volition. To heighten this effect, now and again, still casually and carelessly, he would stoop and pluck another poppy. Thus did he deceitfully save himself the indignity of being put out, and rob us of the satisfaction of putting him out, but he came, and he came often, each time getting away with an able-bodied man's share of plunder.

It is not good to be of the city folk. Of this I am convinced. There is something in the mode of life that breeds an alarming condition of blindness and deafness, or so it seems with the city folk that come to my poppy field. Of the many to whom I have talked ethically not one has been found who ever saw the warnings so conspicuously displayed, while of those called out to from the porch, possibly one in fifty has heard. Also, I have discovered that the relation of city folk to country flowers is quite analogous to that of a starving man to food. No more than the starving man realizes that five pounds of meat is not so good as an ounce, do they realize that five hundred poppies crushed and bunched are less beautiful than two or three in a free cluster, where the green leaves and golden bowls may expand to their full loveliness.

Less forgivable than the unæsthetic are the mercenary. Hordes of young rascals plunder me and rob the future that they may stand on street corners and retail “California poppies, only five cents a bunch!” In spite of my precautions some of them made a dollar a day out of my field. One horde do I remember with keen regret. Reconnoitring for a possible dog, they applied at the kitchen door for “a drink of water, please.” While they drank they were besought not to pick any flowers. They nodded, wiped their mouths, and proceeded to take themselves off by the side of the bungalow. They smote the poppy field beneath my windows, spread out fan-shaped six wide, picking with both hands, and ripped a swath of destruction through the very heart of the field. No cyclone travelled faster or destroyed more completely. I shouted after them, but they sped on the wings of the wind, great regal poppies, broken-stalked and mangled, trailing after them or cluttering their wake — the most high-handed act of piracy, I am confident, ever committed off the high seas.

One day I went a-fishing, and on that day a woman entered the field. Appeals and remonstrances from the porch having no effect upon her, Bess despatched a little girl to beg of her to pick no more poppies. The woman calmly went on picking. Then Bess herself went down through the heat of the day. But the woman went on picking, and while she picked she discussed property and proprietary rights, denying Bess’s sovereignty until deeds and documents should be produced in proof thereof. And all the time she went on picking, never once overlooking her hand. She was a large woman, belligerent of aspect, and Bess was only a woman and not prone to fisticuffs. So the invader picked until she could pick no more, said “Good-day,” and sailed majestically away.

“People have really grown worse in the last several years, I think,” said Bess to me in a tired sort of voice that night, as we sat in the library after dinner.

Next day I was inclined to agree with her. “There’s a woman and a little girl heading straight for the poppies,” said May, a maid about the bungalow. I went out on the porch and waited their advent. They plunged through the pine trees and into the fields, and as the roots of the first poppies were pulled I called to them. They were about a hundred feet away. The woman and the little girl turned to the sound of my voice and looked at me. “Please do not pick the poppies,” I pleaded. They pondered this for a minute; then the woman said something in an undertone to the little girl, and both backs jack-knifed as the slaughter recommenced. I shouted, but they had become suddenly deaf. I screamed, and so fiercely that the little girl wavered dubiously. And while the woman went on picking I could hear her in low tones heartening the little girl.

I recollected a siren whistle with which I was wont to summon Johnny, the son of my sister. It was a fearsome thing, of a kind to wake the dead, and I blew and blew, but the jack-knifed backs never unclasped. I do not mind with men, but I have never particularly favoured physical encounters with women; yet this woman, who encouraged a little girl in iniquity, tempted me.

I went into the bungalow and fetched my rifle. Flourishing it in a sanguinary manner and scowling fearsomely, I charged upon the invaders. The little girl fled, screaming, to the shelter of the pines, but the woman calmly went on picking. She took not the least notice. I had expected her to run at sight of me, and it was embarrassing. There was I, charging down the field like a wild bull upon a woman who would not get out of the way. I could only slow down, supremely conscious of how ridiculous it all was. At a distance of ten feet she straightened up and deigned to look at me. I came to a halt and blushed to the roots of my hair. Perhaps I really did frighten her (I sometimes try to persuade myself that this is so), or perhaps she took pity on me; but, at any rate, she stalked out of my field with great composure, nay, majesty, her arms brimming with orange and gold.

Nevertheless, thenceforward I saved my lungs and flourished my rifle. Also, I made fresh generalizations. To commit robbery women take advantage of their sex. Men have more respect for property than women. Men are less insistent in crime than women. And women are less afraid of guns than men. Likewise, we conquer the earth in hazard and battle by the virtues of our mothers. We are a race of land-robbers and sea-robbers, we Anglo-Saxons, and small wonder, when we suckle at the breasts of a breed of women such as maraud my poppy field.

Still the pillage went on. Sirens and gun-flourishings were without avail. The city folk were great of heart and undismayed, and I noted the habit of “repeating” was becoming general. What booted it how often they were driven forth if each time they were permitted to carry away their ill-gotten plunder? When one has turned the same person away twice and thrice an emotion arises somewhat akin to homicide. And when one has once become conscious of this sanguinary feeling his whole destiny seems to grip hold of him and drag him into the abyss. More than once I found myself unconsciously pulling the rifle into position to get a sight on the miserable trespassers. In my sleep I slew them in manifold ways and threw their carcasses into the reservoir. Each day the temptation to shoot them in the legs became more luring, and every day I felt my fate calling to me imperiously. Visions of the gallows rose up before me, and with the hemp about my neck I saw stretched out the pitiless future of my children, dark with disgrace and shame. I became afraid of myself, and Bess went about with anxious face, privily beseeching my friends to entice me into taking a vacation. Then, and at the last gasp, came the thought that saved me: *Why not confiscate*? If their forays were bootless, in the nature of things their forays would cease.

The first to enter my field thereafter was a man.

I was waiting for him — And, oh joy! it was the "Repeater" himself, smugly complacent with knowledge of past success. I dropped the rifle negligently across the hollow of my arm and went down to him.

"I am sorry to trouble you for those poppies," I said in my oiliest tones; "but really, you know, I must have them."

He regarded me speechlessly. It must have made a great picture. It surely was dramatic. With the rifle across my arm and my suave request still ringing in my ears, I felt like Black Bart, and Jesse James, and Jack Sheppard, and Robin Hood, and whole generations of highwaymen.

"Come, come," I said, a little sharply and in what I imagined was the true fashion; "I am sorry to inconvenience you, believe me, but I must have those poppies."

I absently shifted the gun and smiled. That fetched him. Without a word he passed them over and turned his toes toward the fence, but no longer casual and careless was his carriage, I nor did he stoop to pick the occasional poppy by the way. That was the last of the "Repeater." I could see by his eyes that he did not like me, and his back reproached me all the way down the field and out of sight.

From that day the bungalow has been flooded with poppies. Every vase and earthen jar is filled with them. They blaze on every mantel and run riot through all the rooms. I present them to my friends in huge bunches, and still the kind city folk come and gather more for me. "Sit down for a moment," I say to the departing guest. And there we sit in the shade of the porch while aspiring city creatures pluck my poppies and sweat under the brazen sun. And when their arms are sufficiently weighted with my yellow glories, I go down with the rifle over my arm and disburden them. Thus have I become convinced that every situation has its compensations.

Confiscation was successful, so far as it went; but I had forgotten one thing; namely, the vast number of the city folk. Though the old transgressors came no more, new ones arrived every day, and I found myself confronted with the titanic task of educating a whole cityful to the inexpediency of raiding my poppy field. During the process of disburdening them I was accustomed to explaining my side of the case, but I soon gave this over. It was a waste of breath. They could not understand. To one lady, who insinuated that I was miserly, I said:

"My dear madam, no hardship is worked upon you. Had I not been parsimonious yesterday and the day before, these poppies would have been picked by the city hordes of that day and the day before, and your eyes, which to-day have discovered this field, would have beheld no poppies at all. The poppies you may not pick to-day are the poppies I did not permit to be picked yesterday and the day before. Therefore, believe me, you are denied nothing."

"But the poppies are here to-day," she said, glaring carnivorously upon their glow and splendour.

"I will pay you for them," said a gentleman, at another time. (I had just relieved him of an armful.) I felt a sudden shame, I know not why, unless it be that his words had just made clear to me that a monetary as well as an æsthetic value was attached to my flowers. The apparent sordidness of my position overwhelmed me, and I said weakly: "I do not sell my poppies. You may have what you have picked." But before the week was out I confronted the same gentleman again. "I will pay you for them," he said. "Yes," I said, "you may pay me for them. Twenty dollars, please." He gasped, looked at me searchingly, gasped again, and silently and sadly put the poppies down. But it remained, as usual, for a woman to attain the sheerest pitch of audacity. When I declined payment and demanded my plucked beauties, she refused to give them up. "I picked these poppies," she said, "and my time is worth money. When you have paid me for my time you may have them." Her cheeks flamed rebellion, and her face, withal a pretty one, was set and determined. Now, I was a man of the hill tribes, and she a mere woman of the city folk, and though it is not my inclination to enter into details, it is my pleasure to state that that bunch of poppies subsequently glorified the bungalow and that the woman departed to the city unpaid. Anyway, they were my poppies.

"They are God's poppies," said the Radiant Young Radical, democratically shocked at sight of me turning city folk out of my field. And for two weeks she hated me with a deathless hatred. I sought her out and explained. I explained at length. I told the story of the poppy as Maeterlinck has told the life of the bee. I treated the question biologically, psychologically, and sociologically, I discussed it ethically and æsthetically. I grew warm over it, and impassioned; and when I had done, she professed conversion, but in my heart of hearts I knew it to be compassion. I fled to other friends for consolation. I retold the story of the poppy. They did not appear supremely interested. I grew excited. They were surprised and pained. They looked at me curiously. "It ill-befits your dignity to squabble over poppies," they said. "It is unbecoming."

I fled away to yet other friends. I sought vindication. The thing had become vital, and I needs must put myself right. I felt called upon to explain, though well knowing that he who explains is lost. I told the story of the poppy over again. I went into the minutest details. I added to it, and expanded. I talked myself hoarse, and when I could talk no more they looked bored. Also, they said insipid things, and soothful things, and things concerning other things, and not at all to the point. I was consumed with anger, and there and then I renounced them all.

At the bungalow I lie in wait for chance visitors. Craftily I broach the subject, watching their faces closely the while to detect first signs of disapprobation, whereupon I empty long-stored vials of wrath upon their heads. I wrangle for hours with whosoever does not say I am right. I am become like Guy de Maupassant's old man who picked up a piece of string. I am incessantly explaining, and nobody will understand. I have become more brusque in my treatment of the predatory city folk. No longer do I take delight in their disburdenment, for it has become an onerous duty, a wearisome and distasteful task. My friends look askance and murmur pityingly on the side when we meet in the city. They rarely come to see me now. They are afraid. I am an embittered and disappointed man, and all the light seems to have gone out of my life and into my blazing field. So one pays for things.

Piedmont, California.
April 1902.

THE SHRINKAGE OF THE PLANET

What a tremendous affair it was, the world of Homer, with its indeterminate boundaries, vast regions, and immeasurable distances. The Mediterranean and the Euxine were illimitable stretches of ocean waste over which years could be spent in endless wandering. On their mysterious shores were the improbable homes of impossible peoples. The Great Sea, the Broad Sea, the Boundless Sea; the Ethiopians, “dwelling far away, the most distant of men,” and the Cimmerians, “covered with darkness and cloud,” where “baleful night is spread over timid mortals.” Phœnicia was a sore journey, Egypt simply unattainable, while the Pillars of Hercules marked the extreme edge of the universe. Ulysses was nine days in sailing from Ismarus the city of the Ciconians, to the country of the Lotus-eaters — a period of time which to-day would breed anxiety in the hearts of the underwriters should it be occupied by the slowest tramp steamer in traversing the Mediterranean and Black Seas from Gibraltar to Sebastopol.

Homer’s world, restricted to less than a drummer’s circuit, was nevertheless immense, surrounded by a thin veneer of universe — the Stream of Ocean. But how it has shrunk! To-day, precisely charted, weighed, and measured, a thousand times larger than the world of Homer, it is become a tiny speck, gyrating to immutable law through a universe the bounds of which have been pushed incalculably back. The light of Algol shines upon it — a light which travels at one hundred and ninety thousand miles per second, yet requires forty-seven years to reach its destination. And the denizens of this puny ball have come to know that Algol possesses an invisible companion, three and a quarter millions of miles away, and that the twain move in their respective orbits at rates of fifty-five and twenty-six miles per second. They also know that beyond it are great chasms of space, innumerable worlds, and vast star systems.

While much of the shrinkage to which the planet has been subjected is due to the increased knowledge of mathematics and physics, an equal, if not greater, portion may be ascribed to the perfection of the means of locomotion and communication. The enlargement of stellar space, demonstrating with stunning force the insignificance of the earth, has been negative in its effect; but the quickening of travel and intercourse, by making the earth’s parts accessible and knitting them together, has been positive.

The advantage of the animal over the vegetable kingdom is obvious. The cabbage, should its environment tend to become worse, must live it out, or die; the rabbit may move on in quest of a better. But, after all, the swift-footed creatures are circumscribed in their wanderings. The first large river almost inevitably bars their way, and certainly the first salt sea becomes an impassable obstacle. Better locomotion may be classed as one of the prime aims of the old natural selection; for in that primordial day the race was to the swift as surely as the battle to the strong. But man, already pre-eminent in the common domain because of other faculties, was not content with the one form of locomotion afforded by his lower limbs. He swam in the sea, and, still better, becoming aware of the buoyant virtues of wood, learned to navigate its surface. Likewise, from among the land animals he chose the more likely to bear him and his burdens. The next step was the domestication of these useful aids. Here, in its organic significance, natural selection ceased to concern itself with locomotion. Man had displayed his impatience at her tedious methods and his own superiority in the hastening of affairs. Thenceforth he must depend upon himself, and faster-swimming or faster-running men ceased to be bred. The one, half-amphibian, breasting the water with muscular arms, could not hope to overtake or escape an enemy who propelled a fire-hollowed tree trunk by means of a wooden paddle; nor could the other, trusting to his own nimbleness, compete with a foe who careered wildly across the plain on the back of a half-broken stallion.

So, in that dim day, man took upon himself the task of increasing his dominion over space and time, and right nobly has he acquitted himself. Because of it he became a road builder and a bridge builder; likewise, he wove clumsy sails of rush and matting. At a very remote period he must also have recognized that force moves along the line of least resistance, and in virtue thereof, placed upon his craft rude keels which enabled him to beat to windward in a seaway. As he excelled in these humble arts, just so did he add to his power over his less progressive fellows and lay the foundations for the first glimmering civilizations — crude they were beyond conception, sporadic and ephemeral, but each formed a necessary part of the groundwork upon which was to rise the mighty civilization of our latter-day world.

Divorced from the general history of man's upward climb, it would seem incredible that so long a time should elapse between the moment of his first improvements over nature in the matter of locomotion and that of the radical changes he was ultimately to compass. The principles which were his before history was, were his, neither more nor less, even to the present century. He utilized improved applications, but the principles of themselves were ever the same, whether in the war chariots of Achilles and Pharaoh or the mail-coach and diligence of the European traveller, the cavalry of the Huns or of Prince Rupert, the triremes and galleys of Greece and Rome or the East India-men and clipper ships of the last century. But when the moment came to alter the methods of travel, the change was so sweeping that it may be safely classed as a revolution. Though the discovery of steam attaches to the honour of the last century, the potency of the new power was not felt till the beginning of this. By 1800 small steamers were being used for coasting purposes in England; 1830 witnessed the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway; while it was not until 1838 that the Atlantic was first crossed by the steamships *Great Western* and *Sirius*. In 1869 the East was made next-door neighbour to the West. Over almost the same ground where had toiled the caravans of a thousand generations, the Suez Canal was dug. Clive, during his first trip, was a year and a half *en route* from England to India; were he alive to-day he could journey to Calcutta in twenty-two days. After reading De Quincey's hyperbolical description of the English mail-coach, one cannot down the desire to place that remarkable man on the pilot of the White Mail or of the Twentieth Century.

But this tremendous change in the means of locomotion meant far more than the mere rapid transit of men from place to place. Until then, though its influence and worth cannot be overestimated, commerce had eked out a precarious and costly existence. The fortuitous played too large a part in the trade of men. The mischances by land and sea, the mistakes and delays, were adverse elements of no mean proportions. But improved locomotion meant improved carrying, and commerce received an impetus as remarkable as it was unexpected. In his fondest fancies James Watt could not have foreseen even the approximate result of his invention, the Hercules which was to spring from the puny child of his brain and hands. An illuminating spectacle, were it possible, would be afforded by summoning him from among the Shades to a place in the engine-room of an ocean greyhound. The humblest trimmer would treat him with the indulgence of a child; while an oiler, a greasy nimbus about his head and in his hand, as sceptre, a long-snouted can, would indeed appear to him a demigod and ruler of forces beyond his ken.

It has ever been the world's dictum that empire and commerce go hand in hand. In the past the one was impossible without the other. Rome gathered to herself the wealth of the Mediterranean nations, and it was only by an unwise distribution of it that she became emasculated and lost both power and trade. With a just system of economics it is highly probable that for centuries she could have held back the welling tide of the Germanic peoples. When upon her ruins rose the institutions of the conquering Teutons, commerce slipped away, and with it empire. In the present, empire and commerce have become interdependent. Such wonders has the industrial revolution wrought in a few swift decades, and so great has been the shrinkage of the planet, that the industrial nations have long since felt the imperative demand for foreign markets. The favoured portions of the earth are occupied. From their seats in the temperate zones the militant commercial nations proceed to the exploitation of the tropics, and for the possession of these they rush to war hot-footed. Like wolves at the end of a gorge, they wrangle over the fragments. There are no more planets, no more fragments, and they are yet hungry. There are no longer Cimmerians and Ethiopians, in wide-stretching lands, awaiting them. On either hand they confront the naked poles, and they recoil from unnavigable space to an intenser struggle among themselves. And all the while the planet shrinks beneath their grasp.

Of this struggle one thing may be safely predicated; a commercial power must be a sea power. Upon the control of the sea depends the control of trade. Carthage threatened Rome till she lost her navy; and then for thirteen days the smoke of her burning rose to the skies, and the ground was ploughed and sown with salt on the site of her most splendid edifices. The cities of Italy were the world's merchants till new trade routes were discovered and the dominion of the sea passed on to the west and fell into other hands. Spain and Portugal, inaugurating an era of maritime discovery, divided the new world between them, but gave way before a breed of sea-rovers, who, after many generations of attachment to the soil, had returned to their ancient element. With the destruction of her Armada Spain's colossal dream of colonial empire passed away. Against the new power

Holland strove in vain, and when France acknowledged the superiority of the Briton upon the sea, she at the same time relinquished her designs upon the world. Hampered by her feeble navy, her contest for supremacy upon the land was her last effort and with the passing of Napoleon she retired within herself to struggle with herself as best she might. For fifty years England held undisputed sway upon the sea, controlled markets, and domineered trade, laying, during that period, the foundations of her empire. Since then other naval powers have arisen, their attitudes bearing significantly upon the future; for they have learned that the mastery of the world belongs to the masters of the sea.

That many of the phases of this world shrinkage are pathetic, goes without question. There is much to condemn in the rise of the economic over the imaginative spirit, much for which the energetic Philistine can never atone. Perhaps the deepest pathos of all may be found in the spectacle of John Ruskin weeping at the profanation of the world by the vandalism of the age. Steam launches violate the sanctity of the Venetian canals; where Xerxes bridged the Hellespont ply the filthy funnels of our modern shipping; electric cars run in the shadow of the pyramids; and it was only the other day that Lord Kitchener was in a railroad wreck near the site of ancient Luxor. But there is always the other side. If the economic man has defiled temples and despoiled nature, he has also preserved. He has policed the world and parked it, reduced the dangers of life and limb, made the tenure of existence less precarious, and rendered a general relapse of society impossible. There can never again be an intellectual holocaust, such as the burning of the Alexandrian library. Civilizations may wax and wane, but the totality of knowledge cannot decrease. With the possible exception of a few trade secrets, arts and sciences may be discarded, but they can never be lost. And these things must remain true until the end of man's time upon the earth.

Up to yesterday communication for any distance beyond the sound of the human voice or the sight of the human eye was bound up with locomotion. A letter presupposed a carrier. The messenger started with the message, and he could not but avail himself of the prevailing modes of travel. If the voyage to Australia required four months, four months were required for communication; by no known means could this time be lessened. But with the advent of the telegraph and telephone, communication and locomotion were divorced. In a few hours, at most, there could be performed what by the old way would have required months. In 1837 the needle telegraph was invented, and nine years later the Electric Telegraph Company was formed for the purpose of bringing it into general use. Government postal systems also came into being, later to consolidate into an international union and to group the nations of the earth into a local neighbourhood. The effects of all this are obvious, and no fitter illustration may be presented than the fact that to-day, in the matter of communication, the Klondike is virtually nearer to Boston than was Bunker Hill in the time of Warren.

A contemporaneous and remarkable shrinkage of a vast stretch of territory may be instanced in the Northland. From its rise at Lake Linderman the Yukon runs twenty-five hundred miles to Bering Sea, traversing an almost unknown region, the remote recesses of which had never felt the moccasined foot of the pathfinder. At occasional intervals men wallowed into its dismal fastnesses, or emerged gaunt and famine-worn. But in the fall of 1896 a great gold strike was made — greater than any since the days of California and Australia; yet, so rude were the means of communication, nearly a year elapsed before the news of it reached the eager ear of the world. Passionate pilgrims disembarked their outfits at Dyea. Over the terrible Chilcoot Pass the trail led to the lakes, thirty miles away. Carriage was yet in its most primitive stage, the road builder and bridge builder unheard of. With heavy packs upon their backs men plunged waist-deep into hideous quagmires, bridged mountain torrents by felling trees across them, toiled against the precipitous slopes of the ice-worn mountains, and crossed the dizzy faces of innumerable glaciers. When, after incalculable toil they reached the lakes, they went into the woods, sawed pine trees into lumber by hand, and built it into boats. In these, overloaded, unseaworthy, they battled down the long chain of lakes. Within the memory of the writer there lingers the picture of a sheltered nook on the shores of Lake Le Barge, in which half a thousand gold seekers lay storm-bound. Day after day they struggled against the seas in the teeth of a northerly gale, and night after night returned to their camps, repulsed but not disheartened. At the rapids they ran their boats through, hit or miss, and after infinite toil and hardship, on the breast of a jarring ice flood, arrived at the Klondike. From the beach at Dyea to the eddy below the Barracks at Dawson, they had paid for their temerity the tax of human life demanded by the elements. A year later, so greatly had the country shrunk, the tourist, on disembarking from the ocean steamship, took his seat in a modern railway coach. A few hours later, at Lake Bennet, he stepped aboard a commodious river steamer. At the rapids he rode around on a tramway to take passage on another steamer below. And in a few hours more he was in Dawson, without having once soiled the lustre of his civilized foot-gear. Did he wish to communicate with the outside world, he strolled into the telegraph office. A few short months before he would have written a letter and deemed himself favoured above mortals were it delivered within the year.

From man's drawing the world closer and closer together, his own affairs and institutions have consolidated. Concentration may typify the chief movement of the age — concentration, classification, order; the reduction of friction between the parts of the social organism. The urban tendency of the rural populations led to terrible congestion in the great cities. There was stifling and impure air, and lo, rapid transit at once attacked the evil. Every great city has become but the nucleus of a greater city which surrounds it; the one the seat of business, the other the seat of domestic happiness. Between the two, night and morning, by electric road, steam railway, and bicycle path, ebbs and flows the middle-class population. And in the same direction lies the remedy for the tenement evil. In the cleansing country air the slum cannot exist. Improvement in road-beds and the means of locomotion, a tremor of altruism, a little legislation, and the city by day will sleep in the country by night.

What a play-ball has this planet of ours become! Steam has made its parts accessible and drawn them closer together. The telegraph annihilates space and time. Each morning every part knows what every other part is thinking, contemplating, or doing. A discovery in a German laboratory is being demonstrated in San Francisco within twenty-four hours. A book written in South Africa is published by simultaneous copyright in every English-speaking country, and on the following day is in the hands of the translators. The death of an obscure missionary in China, or of a whisky smuggler in the South Seas, is served up, the world over, with the morning toast. The wheat output of Argentine or the gold of Klondike is known wherever men meet and trade. Shrinkage or centralization has been such that the humblest clerk in any metropolis may place his hand on the pulse of the world. And because of all this, everywhere is growing order and organization. The church, the state; men, women, and children; the criminal and the law, the honest man and the thief, industry and commerce, capital and labour, the trades and the professions, the arts and the sciences

— all are organizing for pleasure, profit, policy, or intellectual pursuit. They have come to know the strength of numbers, solidly phalanxed and driving onward with singleness of purpose. These purposes may be various and many, but one and all, ever discovering new mutual interests and objects, obeying a law which is beyond them, these petty aggregations draw closer together, forming greater aggregations and congeries of aggregations. And these, in turn, vaguely merging each into each, present glimmering adumbrations of the coming human solidarity which shall be man's crowning glory.

Oakland, California.
January 1900.

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL

Speaking of homes, I am building one now, and I venture to assert that very few homes have received more serious thought in the planning. Let me tell you about it. In the first place, there will be no grounds whatever, no fences, lawns, nor flowers. Roughly, the dimensions will be forty-five feet by fifteen. That is, it will be fifteen feet wide at its widest — and, if you will pardon the bull, it will be narrower than it is wide.

The details must submit to the general plan of economy. There will be no veranda, no porch entrances, no grand staircases. I'm ashamed to say how steep the stairways are going to be. The bedrooms will be seven by seven, and one will be even smaller. A bedroom is only good to sleep in, anyway. There will be no hallway, thank goodness. Rooms were made to go through. Why a separate passage for traffic?

The bath-room will be a trifle larger than the size of the smallest bath-tub — it won't require so much work to keep in order. The kitchen won't be very much larger, but this will make it easy for the cook. In place of a drawing-room, there will be a large living-room — fourteen by six. The walls of this room will be covered with books, and it can serve as library and smoking-room as well. Then, the floor-space not being occupied, we shall use the room as a dining-room. Incidentally, such a room not being used after bedtime, the cook and the second boy can sleep in it. One thing that I am temperamentally opposed to is waste, and why should all this splendid room be wasted at night when we do not occupy it?

My ideas are cramped, you say? — Oh, I forgot to tell you that this home I am describing is to be a floating home, and that my wife and I are to journey around the world in it for the matter of seven years or more. I forgot also to state that there will be an engine-room in it for a seventy-horse-power engine, a dynamo, storage batteries, etc.; tanks for water to last long weeks at sea; space for fifteen hundred gallons of gasolene, fire extinguishers, and life-preservers; and a great store-room for food, spare sails, anchors, hawsers, tackles, and a thousand and one other things.

Since I have not yet built my land house, I haven't got beyond a few general ideas, and in presenting them I feel as cocksure as the unmarried woman who writes the column in the Sunday supplement on how to rear children. My first idea about a house is that it should be built to live in.

Throughout the house, in all the building of it, this should be the paramount idea. It must be granted that this idea is lost sight of by countless persons who build houses apparently for every purpose under the sun except to live in them.

Perhaps it is because of the practical life I have lived that I worship utility and have come to believe that utility and beauty should be one, and that there is no utility that need not be beautiful. What finer beauty than strength — whether it be airy steel, or massive masonry, or a woman's hand? A plain black leather strap is beautiful. It is all strength and all utility, and it is beautiful. It efficiently performs work in the world, and it is good to look upon. Perhaps it is because it is useful that it is beautiful. I do not know. I sometimes wonder.

A boat on the sea is beautiful. Yet it is not built for beauty. Every graceful line of it is a utility, is designed to perform work. It is created for the express purpose of dividing the water in front of it, of gliding over the water beneath it, of leaving the water behind it — and all with the least possible wastage of stress and friction. It is not created for the purpose of filling the eye with beauty. It is created for the purpose of moving through the sea and over the sea with the smallest resistance and the greatest stability; yet, somehow, it does fill the eye with its beauty. And in so far as a boat fails in its purpose, by that much does it diminish in beauty.

I am still a long way from the house I have in my mind some day to build, yet I have arrived somewhere. I have discovered, to my own satisfaction at any rate, that beauty and utility should be one. In applying this general idea to the building of a house, it may be stated, in another and better way; namely, construction and decoration must be one. This idea is more important than the building of the house, for without the idea the house so built is certain to be an insult to intelligence and beauty-love.

I bought a house in a hurry in the city of Oakland some time ago. I do not live in it. I sleep in it half a dozen times a year. I do not love the house. I am hurt every time I look at it. No drunken rowdy or political enemy can insult me so deeply as that house does. Let me tell you why. It is an ordinary two-storey frame house. After it was built, the criminal that constructed it nailed on, at the corners perpendicularly, some two-inch fluted planks. These planks rise the height of the house, and to a drunken man have the appearance of fluted columns. To complete the illusion in the eyes of the drunken man, the planks are topped with wooden Ionic capitals, nailed on, and in, I may say, bas-relief.

When I analyze the irritation these fluted planks cause in me, I find the reason in the fact that the first rule for building a house has been violated. These decorative planks are no part of the construction. They have no use, no work to perform. They are plastered gawds that tell lies that nobody believes. A column is made for the purpose of supporting weight; this is its use. A column, when it is a utility, is beautiful. The fluted wooden columns nailed on outside my house are not utilities. They are not beautiful. They are nightmares. They not only support no weight, but they themselves are a weight that drags upon the supports of the house. Some day, when I get time, one of two things will surely happen. Either I'll go forth and murder the man who perpetrated the atrocity, or else I'll take an axe and chop off the lying, fluted planks.

A thing must be true, or it is not beautiful, any more than a painted wanton is beautiful, any more than a sky-scraper is beautiful that is intrinsically and structurally light and that has a false massiveness of pillars plastered on outside. The true sky-scraper *is* beautiful — and this is the reluctant admission of a man who dislikes humanity-festering cities. The true sky-scraper is beautiful, and it is beautiful in so far as it is true. In its construction it is light and airy, therefore in its appearance it must be light and airy. It dare not, if it wishes to be beautiful, lay claim to what it is not. And it should not bulk on the city-scape like Leviathan; it should rise and soar, light and airy and fairylike.

Man is an ethical animal — or, at least, he is more ethical than any other animal. Wherefore he has certain yearnings for honesty. And in no way can these yearnings be more thoroughly satisfied than by the honesty of the house in which he lives and passes the greater part of his life.

They that dwelt in San Francisco were dishonest. They lied and cheated in their business life (like the dwellers in all cities), and because they lied and cheated in their business life, they lied and cheated in the buildings they erected. Upon the tops of the simple, severe walls of their buildings they plastered huge projecting cornices. These cornices were not part of the construction. They made believe to be part of the construction, and they were lies. The earth wrinkled its back for twenty-eight seconds, and the lying cornices crashed down as all lies are doomed to crash down. In this particular instance, the lies crashed down upon the heads of the people fleeing from their reeling habitations, and many were killed. They paid the penalty of dishonesty.

Not alone should the construction of a house be truthful and honest, but the material must be honest. They that lived in San Francisco were dishonest in the material they used. They sold one quality of material and delivered another quality of material. They always delivered an inferior quality. There is not one case recorded in the business history of San Francisco where a contractor or builder delivered a quality superior to the one sold. A seven-million-dollar city hall became thirty cents in twenty-eight seconds. Because the mortar was not honest, a thousand walls crashed down and scores of lives were snuffed out. There is something, after all, in the contention of a few religionists that the San Francisco earthquake was a punishment for sin. It was a punishment for sin; but it was not for sin against God. The people of San Francisco sinned against themselves.

An honest house tells the truth about itself. There is a house here in Glen Ellen. It stands on a corner. It is built of beautiful red stone. Yet it is not beautiful. On three sides the stone is joined and pointed. The fourth side is the rear. It faces the back yard. The stone is not pointed. It is all a smudge of dirty mortar, with here and there bricks worked in when the stone gave out. The house is not what it seems. It is a lie. All three of the walls spend their time lying about the fourth wall. They keep shouting out that the fourth wall is as beautiful as they. If I lived long in that house I should not be responsible for my morals. The house is like a man in purple and fine linen, who hasn’t had a bath for a month. If I lived long in that house I should become a dandy and cut out bathing — for the same reason, I suppose, that an African is black and that an Eskimo eats whale-blubber. I shall not build a house like that house.

Last year I started to build a barn. A man who was a liar undertook to do the stonework and concrete work for me. He could not tell the truth to my face; he could not tell the truth in his work. I was building for posterity. The concrete foundations were four feet wide and sunk three and one-half feet into the earth. The stone walls were two feet thick and nine feet high. Upon them were to rest the great beams that were to carry all the weight of hay and the forty tons of the roof. The man who was a liar made beautiful stone walls. I used to stand alongside of them and love them. I caressed their massive strength with my hands. I thought about them in bed, before I went to sheep. And they were lies.

Came the earthquake. Fortunately the rest of the building of the barn had been postponed. The beautiful stone walls cracked in all directions. I started, to repair, and discovered the whole enormous lie. The walls were shells. On each face were beautiful, massive stones — on edge. The inside was hollow. This hollow in some places was filled with clay and loose gravel. In other places it was filled with air and emptiness, with here and there a piece of kindling-wood or dry-goods box, to aid in the making of the shell. The walls were lies. They were beautiful, but they were not useful. Construction and decoration had been divorced. The walls were all decoration. They hadn't any construction in them. "As God lets Satan live," I let that lying man live, but — I have built new walls from the foundation up.

And now to my own house beautiful, which I shall build some seven or ten years from now. I have a few general ideas about it. It must be honest in construction, material, and appearance. If any feature of it, despite my efforts, shall tell lies, I shall remove that feature. Utility and beauty must be indissolubly wedded. Construction and decoration must be one. If the particular details keep true to these general ideas, all will be well.

I have not thought of many details. But here are a few. Take the bath-room, for instance. It shall be as beautiful as any room in the house, just as it will be as useful. The chance is, that it will be the most expensive room in the house. Upon that we are resolved — even if we are compelled to build it first, and to live in a tent till we can get more money to go on with the rest of the house. In the bath-room no delights of the bath shall be lacking. Also, a large part of the expensiveness will be due to the use of material that will make it easy to keep the bathroom clean and in order. Why should a servant toil unduly that my body may be clean? On the other hand, the honesty of my own flesh, and the square dealing I give it, are more important than all the admiration of my friends for expensive decorative schemes and magnificent trivialities. More delightful to me is a body that sings than a stately and costly grand staircase built for show. Not that I like grand staircases less, but that I like bath-rooms more.

I often regret that I was born in this particular period of the world. In the matter of servants, how I wish I were living in the golden future of the world, where there will be no servants — naught but service of love. But in the meantime, living here and now, being practical, understanding the rationality and the necessity of the division of labour, I accept servants. But such acceptance does not justify me in lack of consideration for them. In my house beautiful their rooms shall not be dens and holes. And on this score I foresee a fight with the architect. They shall have bath-rooms, toilet conveniences, and comforts for their leisure time and human life — if I have to work Sundays to pay for it. Even under the division of labour I recognize that no man has a right to servants who will not treat them as humans compounded of the same clay as himself, with similar bundles of nerves and desires, contradictions, irritabilities, and lovablenesses. Heaven in the drawing-room and hell in the kitchen is not the atmosphere for a growing child to breathe — nor an adult either. One of the great and selfish objections to chattel slavery was the effect on the masters themselves.

And because of the foregoing, one chief aim in the building of my house beautiful will be to have a house that will require the minimum of trouble and work to keep clean and orderly. It will be no spick and span and polished house, with an immaculateness that testifies to the tragedy of drudge. I live in California where the days are warm. I'd prefer that the servants had three hours to go swimming (or hammocking) than be compelled to spend those three hours in keeping the house spick and span. Therefore it devolves upon me to build a house that can be kept clean and orderly without the need of those three hours.

But underneath the spick and span there is something more dreadful than the servitude of the servants. This dreadful thing is the philosophy of the spick and span. In Korea the national costume is white. Nobleman and coolie dress alike in white. It is hell on the women who do the washing, but there is more in it than that. The coolie cannot keep his white clothes clean. He toils and they get dirty. The dirty white of his costume is the token of his inferiority. The nobleman's dress is always spotless white. It means that he doesn't have to work. But it means, further, that somebody else has to work for him. His superiority is not based upon song-craft nor state-craft, upon the foot-races he has run nor the wrestlers he has thrown. His superiority is based upon the fact that he doesn't have to work, and that others are compelled to work for him. And so the Korean drone flaunts his clean white clothes, for the same reason that the Chinese flaunts his monstrous finger-nails, and the white man and woman flaunt the spick-and-spanness of their spotless houses.

There will be hardwood floors in my house beautiful. But these floors will not be polished mirrors nor skating-rinks. They will be just plain and common hardwood floors. Beautiful carpets are not beautiful to the mind that knows they are filled with germs and bacilli. They are no more beautiful than the hectic flush of fever, or the silvery skin of leprosy. Besides, carpets enslave. A thing that enslaves is a monster, and monsters are not beautiful.

The fireplaces in my house will be many and large. Small fires and cold weather mean hermetically-sealed rooms and a jealous cherishing of heated and filth-laden air. With large fire-places and generous heat, some windows may be open all the time, and without hardship all the windows can be opened every little while and the rooms flushed with clean pure air. I have nearly died in the stagnant, rotten air of other people's houses — especially in the Eastern states. In Maine I have slept in a room with storm-windows immovable, and with one small pane five inches by six, that could be opened. Did I say slept? I panted with my mouth in the opening and blasphemed till I ruined all my chances of heaven.

For countless thousands of years my ancestors have lived and died and drawn all their breaths in the open air. It is only recently that we have begun to live in houses. The change is a hardship, especially on the lungs. I've got only one pair of lungs, and I haven't the address of any repair-shop. Wherefore I stick by the open air as much as possible. For this reason my house will have large verandas, and, near to the kitchen, there will be a veranda dining-room. Also, there will be a veranda fireplace, where we can breathe fresh air and be comfortable when the evenings are touched with frost.

I have a plan for my own bedroom. I spend long hours in bed, reading, studying, and working. I have tried sleeping in the open, but the lamp attracts all the creeping, crawling, butting, flying, fluttering things to the pages of my book, into my ears and blankets, and down the back of my neck. So my bedroom shall be indoors.

But it will be, not be of, indoors. Three sides of it will be open. The fourth side will divide it from the rest of the house. The three sides will be screened against the creeping, fluttering things, but not against the good fresh air and all the breezes that blow. For protection against storm, to keep out the driving rain, there will be a sliding glass, so made that when not in use it will occupy small space and shut out very little air.

There is little more to say about this house. I am to build seven or ten years from now. There is plenty of time in which to work up all the details in accord with the general principles I have laid down. It will be a usable house and a beautiful house, wherein the æsthetic guest can find comfort for his eyes as well as for his body. It will be a happy house — or else I'll burn it down. It will be a house of air and sunshine and laughter. These three cannot be divorced. Laughter without air and sunshine becomes morbid, decadent, demoniac. I have in me a thousand generations. Laughter that is decadent is not good for these thousand generations.

Glen Ellen, California.
July 1906.

THE GOLD HUNTERS OF THE NORTH

"Where the Northern Lights come down a' nights to dance on the houseless snow."

"Ivan, I forbid you to go farther in this undertaking. Not a word about this, or we are all undone. Let the Americans and the English know that we have gold in these mountains, then we are ruined. They will rush in on us by thousands, and crowd us to the wall — to the death."

So spoke the old Russian governor, Baranov, at Sitka, in 1804, to one of his Slavonian hunters, who had just drawn from his pocket a handful of golden nuggets. Full well Baranov, fur trader and autocrat, understood and feared the coming of the sturdy, indomitable gold hunters of Anglo-Saxon stock. And thus he suppressed the news, as did the governors that followed him, so that when the United States bought Alaska in 1867, she bought it for its furs and fisheries, without a thought of its treasures underground.

No sooner, however, had Alaska become American soil than thousands of our adventurers were afoot and afloat for the north. They were the men of "the days of gold," the men of California, Fraser, Cassiar, and Cariboo. With the mysterious, infinite faith of the prospector, they believed that the gold streak, which ran through the Americas from Cape Horn to California, did not "peter out" in British Columbia. That it extended farther north, was their creed, and "Farther North" became their cry. No time was lost, and in the early seventies, leaving the Treadwell and the Silver Bow Basin to be discovered by those who came after, they went plunging on into the white unknown. North, farther north, they struggled, till their picks rang in the frozen beaches of the Arctic Ocean, and they shivered by driftwood fires on the ruby sands of Nome.

But first, in order that this colossal adventure may be fully grasped, the recentness and the remoteness of Alaska must be emphasized. The interior of Alaska and the contiguous Canadian territory was a vast wilderness. Its hundreds of thousands of square miles were as dark and chartless as Darkest Africa. In 1847, when the first Hudson Bay Company agents crossed over the Rockies from the Mackenzie to poach on the preserves of the Russian Bear, they thought that the Yukon flowed north and emptied into the Arctic Ocean. Hundreds of miles below, however, were the outposts of the Russian traders. They, in turn, did not know where the

Yukon had its source, and it was not till later that Russ and Saxon learned that it was the same mighty stream they were occupying. And a little over ten years later, Frederick Whymper voyaged up the Great Bend to Fort Yukon under the Arctic Circle.

From fort to fort, from York Factory on Hudson's Bay to Fort Yukon in Alaska, the English traders transported their goods — a round trip requiring from a year to a year and a half. It was one of their deserters, in 1867, escaping down the Yukon to Bering Sea, who was the first white man to make the North-west Passage by land from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It was at this time that the first accurate description of a fair portion of the Yukon was given by Dr. W. H. Ball, of the Smithsonian Institution. But even he had never seen its source, and it was not given him to appreciate the marvel of that great natural highway.

No more remarkable river in this one particular is there in the world; taking its rise in Crater Lake, thirty miles from the ocean, the Yukon flows for twenty-five hundred miles, through the heart of the continent, ere it empties into the sea. A portage of thirty miles, and then a highway for traffic one tenth the girth of the earth!

As late as 1869, Frederick Whymper, fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, stated on hearsay that the Chilcat Indians were believed occasionally to make a short portage across the Coast Range from salt water to the head-reaches of the Yukon. But it remained for a gold hunter, questing north, ever north, to be first of all white men to cross the terrible Chilcoot Pass, and tap the Yukon at its head. This happened only the other day, but the man has become a dim legendary hero. Holt was his name, and already the mists of antiquity have wrapped about the time of his passage. 1872, 1874, and 1878 are the dates variously given — a confusion which time will never clear.

Holt penetrated as far as the Hootalinqua, and on his return to the coast reported coarse gold. The next recorded adventurer is one Edward Bean, who in 1880 headed a party of twenty-five miners from Sitka into the uncharted land. And in the same year, other parties (now forgotten, for who remembers or ever hears the wanderings of the gold hunters?) crossed the Pass, built boats out of the standing timber, and drifted down the Yukon and farther north.

And then, for a quarter of a century, the unknown and unsung heroes grappled with the frost, and groped for the gold they were sure lay somewhere among the shadows of the Pole. In the struggle with the terrifying and pitiless natural forces, they returned to the primitive, garmenting themselves in the skins of wild beasts, and covering their feet with the walrus *mucluc* and the moosehide moccasin. They forgot the world and its ways, as the world had forgotten them; killed their meat as they found it; feasted in plenty and starved in famine, and searched unceasingly for the yellow lure. They crisscrossed the land in every direction, threaded countless unmapped rivers in precarious birch-bark canoes, and with snowshoes and dogs broke trail through thousands of miles of silent white, where man had never been. They struggled on, under the aurora borealis or the midnight sun, through temperatures that ranged from one hundred degrees above zero to eighty degrees below, living, in the grim humour of the land, on "rabbit tracks and salmon bellies."

To-day, a man may wander away from the trail for a hundred days, and just as he is congratulating himself that at last he is treading virgin soil, he will come upon some ancient and dilapidated cabin, and forget his disappointment in wonder at the man who reared the logs. Still, if one wanders from the trail far enough and deviously enough, he may chance upon a few thousand square miles which he may have all to himself. On the other hand, no matter how far and how deviously he may wander, the possibility always remains that he may stumble, not alone upon a deserted cabin, but upon an occupied one.

As an instance of this, and of the vastness of the land, no better case need be cited than that of Harry Maxwell. An able seaman, hailing from New Bedford, Massachusetts, his ship, the brig *Fannie E. Lee*, was pinched in the Arctic ice. Passing from whaleship to whaleship, he eventually turned up at Point Barrow in the summer of 1880. He was *north* of the Northland, and from this point of vantage he determined to pull south of the interior in search of gold. Across the mountains from Fort Macpherson, and a couple of hundred miles eastward from the Mackenzie, he built a cabin and established his headquarters. And here, for nineteen continuous years, he hunted his living and prospected. He ranged from the never opening ice to the north as far south as the Great Slave Lake. Here he met Warburton Pike, the author and explorer — an incident he now looks back upon as chief among the few incidents of his solitary life.

When this sailor-miner had accumulated $20,000 worth of dust he concluded that civilization was good enough for him, and proceeded "to pull for the outside.” From the Mackenzie he went up the Little Peel to its headwaters, found a pass through the mountains, nearly starved to death on his way across to the Porcupine Hills, and eventually came out on the Yukon River, where he learned for the first time of the Yukon gold hunters and their discoveries. Yet for twenty years they had been working there, his next-door neighbours, virtually, in a land of such great spaces. At Victoria, British Columbia, previous to his going east over the Canadian Pacific (the existence of which he had just learned), he pregnantly remarked that he had faith in the Mackenzie watershed, and that he was going back after he had taken in the World’s Fair and got a whiff or two of civilization.

Faith! It may or may not remove mountains, but it has certainly made the Northland. No Christian martyr ever possessed greater faith than did the pioneers of Alaska. They never doubted the bleak and barren land. Those who came remained, and more ever came. They could not leave. They “knew” the gold was there, and they persisted. Somehow, the romance of the land and the quest entered into their blood, the spell of it gripped hold of them and would not let them go. Man after man of them, after the most terrible privation and suffering, shook the muck of the country from his moccasins and departed for good. But the following spring always found him drifting down the Yukon on the tail of the ice jams.

Jack McQuestion aptly vindicates the grip of the North. After a residence of thirty years he insists that the climate is delightful, and declares that whenever he makes a trip to the States he is afflicted with home-sickness. Needless to say, the North still has him and will keep tight hold of him until he dies. In fact, for him to die elsewhere would be inartistic and insincere. Of three of the “pioneer” pioneers, Jack McQuestion alone survives. In 1871, from one to seven years before Holt went over Chilcoot, in the company of Al Mayo and Arthur Harper, McQuestion came into the Yukon from the North-west over the Hudson Bay Company route from the Mackenzie to Fort Yukon. The names of these three men, as their lives, are bound up in the history of the country, and so long as there be histories and charts, that long will the Mayo and McQuestion rivers and the Harper and Ladue town site of Dawson be remembered. As an agent of the Alaska Commercial Company, in 1873, McQuestion built Fort Reliance, six miles below the Klondike River. In 1898 the writer met Jack McQuestion at Minook, on the Lower Yukon. The old pioneer, though grizzled, was hale and hearty, and as optimistic as when he first journeyed into the land along the path of the Circle. And no man more beloved is there in all the North. There will be great sadness there when his soul goes questing on over the Last Divide — “farther north,” perhaps — who can tell?

Frank Dinsmore is a fair sample of the men who made the Yukon country. A Yankee, born, in Auburn, Maine, the *Wanderlust* early laid him by the heels, and at sixteen he was heading west on the trail that led “farther north.” He prospected in the Black Hills, Montana, and in the Coeur d’Alene, then heard a whisper of the North, and went up to Juneau on the Alaskan Panhandle. But the North still whispered, and more insistently, and he could not rest till he went over Chilcoot, and down into the mysterious Silent Land. This was in 1882, and he went down the chain of lakes, down the Yukon, up the Pelly, and tried his luck on the bars of McMillan River. In the fall, a perambulating skeleton, he came back over the Pass in a blizzard, with a rag of shirt, tattered overalls, and a handful of raw flour.

But he was unafraid. That winter he worked for a grubstake in Juneau, and the next spring found the heels of his moccasins turned towards salt water and his face toward Chilcoot. This was repeated the next spring, and the following spring, and the spring after that, until, in 1885, he went over the Pass for good. There was to be no return for him until he found the gold he sought.

The years came and went, but he remained true to his resolve. For eleven long years, with snow-shoe and canoe, pickaxe and gold-pan, he wrote out his life on the face of the land. Upper Yukon, Middle Yukon, Lower Yukon — he prospected faithfully and well. His bed was anywhere. Winter or summer he carried neither tent nor stove, and his six-pound sleeping-robe of Arctic hare was the warmest covering he was ever known to possess. Rabbit tracks and salmon bellies were his diet with a vengeance, for he depended largely on his rifle and fishing-tackle. His endurance equalled his courage. On a wager he lifted thirteen fifty-pound sacks of flour and walked off with them. Winding up a seven-hundred-mile trip on the ice with a forty-mile run, he came into camp at six o’clock in the evening and found a “squaw dance” under way. He should have been exhausted. Anyway, his *muclucs* were frozen stiff. But he kicked them off and danced all night in stocking-feet.

At the last fortune came to him. The quest was ended, and he gathered up his gold and pulled for the outside. And his own end was as fitting as that of his quest. Illness came upon him down in San Francisco, and his splendid life ebbed slowly out as he sat in his big easy-chair, in the Commercial Hotel, the “Yukoner’s home.” The doctors came, discussed, consulted, the while he matured more plans of Northland adventure; for the North still gripped him and would not let him go. He grew weaker day by day, but each day he said, “To-morrow I’ll be all right.” Other old-timers, “out on furlough,”, came to see him. They wiped their eyes and swore under their breaths, then entered and talked largely and jovially about going in with him over the trail when spring came. But there in the big easy-chair it was that his Long Trail ended, and the life passed out of him still fixed on “farther north.”

From the time of the first white man, famine loomed black and gloomy over the land. It was chronic with the Indians and Eskimos; it became chronic with the gold hunters. It was ever present, and so it came about that life was commonly expressed in terms of “grub” — was measured by cups of flour. Each winter, eight months long, the heroes of the frost faced starvation. It became the custom, as fall drew on, for partners to cut the cards or draw straws to determine which should hit the hazardous trail for salt water, and which should remain and endure the hazardous darkness of the Arctic night.

There was never food enough to winter the whole population. The A. C. Company worked hard to freight up the grub, but the gold hunters came faster and dared more audaciously. When the A. C. Company added a new stern-wheeler to its fleet, men said, “Now we shall have plenty.” But more gold hunters poured in over the passes to the south, more *voyageurs* and fur traders forced a way through the Rockies from the east, more seal hunters and coast adventurers poled up from Bering Sea on the west, more sailors deserted from the whale-ships to the north, and they all starved together in right brotherly fashion. More steamers were added, but the tide of prospectors welled always in advance. Then the N. A. T. & T. Company came upon the scene, and both companies added steadily to their fleets. But it was the same old story; famine would not depart. In fact, famine grew with the population, till, in the winter of 1897-1898, the United States government was forced to equip a reindeer relief expedition. As of old, that winter partners cut the cards and drew straws, and remained or pulled for salt water as chance decided. They were wise of old time, and had learned never to figure on relief expeditions. They had heard of such things, but no mortal man of them had ever laid eyes on one.

The hard luck of other mining countries pales into insignificance before the hard luck of the North. And as for the hardship, it cannot be conveyed by printed page or word of mouth. No man may know who has not undergone. And those who have undergone, out of their knowledge, claim that in the making of the world God grew tired, and when He came to the last barrowload, "just dumped it anyhow," and that was how Alaska happened to be. While no adequate conception of the life can be given to the stay-at-home, yet the men themselves sometimes give a clue to its rigours. One old Minook miner testified thus: "Haven't you noticed the expression on the faces of us fellows? You can tell a new-comer the minute you see him; he looks alive, enthusiastic, perhaps jolly. We old miners are always grave, unless were drinking."

Another old-timer, out of the bitterness of a "home-mood," imagined himself a Martian astronomer explaining to a friend, with the aid of a powerful telescope, the institutions of the earth. "There are the continents," he indicated; "and up there near the polar cap is a country, frigid and burning and lonely and apart, called Alaska. Now, in other countries and states there are great insane asylums, but, though crowded, they are insufficient; so there is Alaska given over to the worst cases. Now and then some poor insane creature comes to his senses in those awful solitudes, and, in wondering joy, escapes from the land and hastens back to his home. But most cases are incurable. They just suffer along, poor devils, forgetting their former life quite, or recalling it like a dream." Again the grip of the North, which will not let one go — for "*most cases are incurable*."

For a quarter of a century the battle with frost and famine went on. The very severity of the struggle with Nature seemed to make the gold hunters kindly toward one another. The latch-string was always out, and the open hand was the order of the day. Distrust was unknown, and it was no hyperbole for a man to take the last shirt off his back for a comrade. Most significant of all, perhaps, in this connection, was the custom of the old days, that when August the first came around, the prospectors who had failed to locate "pay dirt" were permitted to go upon the ground of their more fortunate comrades and take out enough for the next year's grub-stake.

In 1885 rich bar-washing was done on the Stewart River, and in 1886 Cassiar Bar was struck just below the mouth of the Hootalinqua. It was at this time that the first moderate strike was made on Forty Mile Creek, so called because it was judged to be that distance below Fort Reliance of Jack McQuestion fame. A prospector named Williams started for the outside with dogs and Indians to carry the news, but suffered such hardship on the summit of Chilcoot that he was carried dying into the store of Captain John Healy at Dyea. But he had brought the news through — *coarse gold*! Within three months more than two hundred miners had passed in over Chilcoot, stampeding for Forty Mile. Find followed find — Sixty Mile, Miller, Glacier, Birch, Franklin, and the Koyokuk. But they were all moderate discoveries, and the miners still dreamed and searched for the fabled stream, "Too Much Gold," where gold was so plentiful that gravel had to be shovelled into the sluice-boxes in order to wash it.

And all the time the Northland was preparing to play its own huge joke. It was a great joke, albeit an exceeding bitter one, and it has led the old-timers to believe that the land is left in darkness the better part of the year because God goes away and leaves it to itself. After all the risk and toil and faithful endeavour, it was destined that few of the heroes should be in at the finish when Too Much Gold turned its yellow-treasure to the stars.

First, there was Robert Henderson — and this is true history. Henderson had faith in the Indian River district. For three years, by himself, depending mainly on his rifle, living on straight meat a large portion of the time, he prospected many of the Indian River tributaries, just missed finding the rich creeks, Sulphur and Dominion, and managed to make grub (poor grub) out of Quartz Creek and Australia Creek. Then he crossed the divide between Indian River and the Klondike, and on one of the "feeders" of the latter found eight cents to the pan. This was considered excellent in those simple days. Naming the creek "Gold Bottom," he recrossed the divide and got three men, Munson, Dalton, and Swanson, to return with him. The four took out $750. And be it emphasized, and emphasized again, *that this was the first Klondike gold ever shovelled in and washed out*. And be it also emphasized, *that Robert Henderson was the discoverer of Klondike*, *all lies and hearsay tales to the contrary*.

Running out of grub, Henderson again recrossed the divide, and went down the Indian River and up the Yukon to Sixty Mile. Here Joe Ladue ran the trading post, and here Joe Ladue had originally grub-staked Henderson.

Henderson told his tale, and a dozen men (all it contained) deserted the Post for the scene of his find. Also, Henderson persuaded a party of prospectors bound for Stewart River, to forgo their trip and go down and locate with him. He loaded his boat with supplies, drifted down the Yukon to the mouth of the Klondike, and towed and poled up the Klondike to Gold Bottom. But at the mouth of the Klondike he met George Carmack, and thereby hangs the tale.

Carmack was a squawman. He was familiarly known as "Siwash" George — a derogatory term which had arisen out of his affinity for the Indians. At the time Henderson encountered him he was catching salmon with his Indian wife and relatives on the site of what was to become Dawson, the Golden City of the Snows. Henderson, bubbling over with good-will, open-handed, told Carmack of his discovery. But Carmack was satisfied where he was. He was possessed by no overweening desire for the strenuous life. Salmon were good enough for him. But Henderson urged him to come on and locate, until, when he yielded, he wanted to take the whole tribe along. Henderson refused to stand for this, said that he must give the preference over Siwashes to his old Sixty Mile friends, and, it is rumoured, said some things about Siwashes that were not nice.

The next morning Henderson went on alone up the Klondike to Gold Bottom. Carmack, by this time aroused, took a short cut afoot for the same place. Accompanied by his two Indian brothers-in-law, Skookum Jim and Tagish Charley, he went up Rabbit Creek (now Bonanza), crossed into Gold Bottom, and staked near Henderson's discovery. On the way up he had panned a few shovels on Rabbit Creek, and he showed Henderson "colours" he had obtained. Henderson made him promise, if he found anything on the way back, that he would send up one of the Indians with the news. Henderson also agreed to pay for his service, for he seemed to feel that they were on the verge of something big, and he wanted to make sure.

Carmack returned down Rabbit Creek. While he was taking a sleep on the bank about half a mile below the mouth of what was to be known as Eldorado, Skookum Jim tried his luck, and from surface prospects got from ten cents to a dollar to the pan. Carmack and his brother-in-law staked and hit "the high places" for Forty Mile, where they filed on the claims before Captain Constantine, and renamed the creek Bonanza. And Henderson was forgotten. No word of it reached him. Carmack broke his promise.

Weeks afterward, when Bonanza and Eldorado were staked from end to end and there was no more room, a party of late comers pushed over the divide and down to Gold Bottom, where they found Henderson still at work. When they told him they were from Bonanza, he was nonplussed. He had never heard of such a place. But when they described it, he recognized it as Rabbit Creek. Then they told him of its marvellous richness, and, as Tappan Adney relates, when Henderson realized what he had lost through Carmack's treachery, "he threw down his shovel and went and sat on the bank, so sick at heart that it was some time before he could speak."

Then there were the rest of the old-timers, the men of Forty Mile and Circle City. At the time of the discovery, nearly all of them were over to the west at work in the old diggings or prospecting for new ones. As they said of themselves, they were the kind of men who are always caught out with forks when it rains soup. In the stampede that followed the news of Carmack's strike very few old miners took part. They were not there to take part. But the men who did go on the stampede were mainly the worthless ones, the new-comers, and the camp hangers on. And while Bob Henderson plugged away to the east, and the heroes plugged away to the west, the greenhorns and rounders went up and staked Bonanza.

But the Northland was not yet done with its joke. When fall came on and the heroes returned to Forty Mile and to Circle City, they listened calmly to the up-river tales of Siwash discoveries and loafers' prospects, and shook their heads. They judged by the calibre of the men interested, and branded it a bunco game. But glowing reports continued to trickle down the Yukon, and a few of the old-timers went up to see. They looked over the ground — the unlikeliest place for gold in all their experience — and they went down the river again, "leaving it to the Swedes."

Again the Northland turned the tables. The Alaskan gold hunter is proverbial, not so much for his unveracity, as for his inability to tell the precise truth. In a country of exaggerations, he likewise is prone to hyperbolic description of things actual. But when it came to Klondike, he could not stretch the truth as fast as the truth itself stretched. Carmack first got a dollar pan. He lied when he said it was two dollars and a half. And when those who doubted him did get two-and-a-half pans, they said they were getting an ounce, and lo! ere the lie had fairly started on its way, they were getting, not one ounce, but five ounces. This they claimed was six ounces; but when they filled a pan of dirt to prove the lie, they washed out twelve ounces. And so it went. They continued valiantly to lie, but the truth continued to outrun them.

But the Northland's hyperborean laugh was not yet ended. When Bonanza was staked from mouth to source, those who had failed to "get in," disgruntled and sore, went up the "pups" and feeders. Eldorado was one of these feeders, and many men, after locating on it, turned their backs upon their claims and never gave them a second thought. One man sold a half-interest in five hundred feet of it for a sack of flour. Other owners wandered around trying to bunco men into buying them out for a song. And then Eldorado "showed up." It was far, far richer than Bonanza, with an average value of a thousand dollars a foot to every foot of it.

A Swede named Charley Anderson had been at work on Miller Creek the year of the strike, and arrived in Dawson with a few hundred dollars. Two miners, who had staked No. 29 Eldorado, decided that he was the proper man upon whom to "unload." He was too canny to approach sober, so at considerable expense they got him drunk. Even then it was hard work, but they kept him befuddled for several days, and finally, inveigled him into buying No. 29 for $750. When Anderson sobered up, he wept at his folly, and pleaded to have his money back. But the men who had duped him were hard-hearted. They laughed at him, and kicked themselves for not having tapped him for a couple of hundred more. Nothing remained for Anderson but to work the worthless ground. This he did, and out of it he took over three-quarters of a million of dollars.

It was not till Frank Dinsmore, who already had big holdings on Birch Creek, took a hand, that the old-timers developed faith in the new diggings. Dinsmore received a letter from a man on the spot, calling it "the biggest thing in the world," and harnessed his dogs and went up to investigate. And when he sent a letter back, saying that he had never seen "anything like it," Circle City for the first time believed, and at once was precipitated one of the wildest stampedes the country had ever seen or ever will see. Every dog was taken, many went without dogs, and even the women and children and weaklings hit the three hundred miles of ice through the long Arctic night for the biggest thing in the world. It is related that but twenty people, mostly cripples and unable to travel, were left in Circle City when the smoke of the last sled disappeared up the Yukon.

Since that time gold has been discovered in all manner of places, under the grass roots of the hill-side benches, in the bottom of Monte Cristo Island, and in the sands of the sea at Nome. And now the gold hunter who knows his business shuns the "favourable looking" spots, confident in his hard-won knowledge that he will find the most gold in the least likely place. This is sometimes adduced to support the theory that the gold hunters, rather than the explorers, are the men who will ultimately win to the Pole. Who knows? It is in their blood, and they are capable of it.

Piedmont, California.
February 1902.

FOMÁ GORDYÉEFF

“What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence*?
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!”

“Fomá Gordyéeff” is a big book — not only is the breadth of Russia in it, but the expanse of life. Yet, though in each land, in this world of marts and exchanges, this age of trade and traffic, passionate figures rise up and demand of life what its fever is, in “Fomá Gordyéeff” it is a Russian who so rises up and demands. For Górky, the Bitter One, is essentially a Russian in his grasp on the facts of life and in his treatment. All the Russian self-analysis and insistent introspection are his. And, like all his brother Russians, ardent, passionate protest impregnates his work. There is a purpose to it. He writes because he has something to say which the world should hear. From that clenched fist of his, light and airy romances, pretty and sweet and beguiling, do not flow, but realities — yes, big and brutal and repulsive, but real.

He raises the cry of the miserable and the despised, and in a masterly arraignment of commercialism, protests against social conditions, against the grinding of the faces of the poor and weak, and the self-pollution of the rich and strong, in their mad lust for place and power. It is to be doubted strongly if the average bourgeois, smug and fat and prosperous, can understand this man Fomá Gordyéeff. The rebellion in his blood is something to which their own does not thrill. To them it will be inexplicable that this man, with his health and his millions, could not go on living as his class lived, keeping regular hours at desk and stock exchange, driving close contracts, underbidding his competitors, and exulting in the business disasters of his fellows. It would appear so easy, and, after such a life, well appointed and eminently respectable, he could die. “Ah,” Fomá will interrupt rudely — he is given to rude interruptions — “if to die and disappear is the end of these money-grubbing years, why money-grub?” And the bourgeois whom he rudely interrupted will not understand. Nor did Mayákin understand as he laboured holily with his wayward godson.

“Why do you brag?” Fomá, bursts out upon him. “What have you to brag about? Your son — where is he? Your daughter — what is she? Ekh, you manager of life! Come, now, you're clever, you know everything — tell me, why do you live? Why do you accumulate money? Aren't you going to die? Well, what then?" And Mayákin finds himself speechless and without answer, but unshaken and unconvinced.

Receiving by heredity the fierce, bull-like nature of his father plus the passive indomitableness and groping spirit of his mother, Fomá, proud and rebellious, is repelled by the selfish, money-seeking environment into which he is born. Ignát, his father, and Mayákin, the godfather, and all the horde of successful merchants singing the pæan of the strong and the praises of merciless, remorseless *laissez faire*, cannot entice him. Why? he demands. This is a nightmare, this life! It is without significance! What does it all mean? What is there underneath? What is the meaning of that which is underneath?

"You do well to pity people," Ignát tells Fomá, the boy, "only you must use judgment with your pity. First consider the man, find out what he is like, what use can be made of him; and if you see that he is a strong and capable man, help him if you like. But if a man is weak, not inclined to work — spit upon him and go your way. And you must know that when a man complains about everything, and cries out and groans — he is not worth more than two kopéks, he is not worthy of pity, and will be of no use to you if you do help him."

Such the frank and militant commercialism, bellowed out between glasses of strong liquor. Now comes Mayákin, speaking softly and without satire:

"Eh, my boy, what is a beggar? A beggar is a man who is forced, by fate, to remind us of Christ; he is Christ's brother; he is the bell of the Lord, and rings in life for the purpose of awakening our conscience, of stirring up the satiety of man's flesh. He stands under the window and sings, 'For Christ's sa-ake!' and by that chant he reminds us of Christ, of His holy command to help our neighbour. But men have so ordered their lives that it is utterly impossible for them to act in accordance with Christ's teaching, and Jesus Christ has become entirely superfluous to us. Not once, but, in all probability, a thousand times, we have given Him over to be crucified, but still we cannot banish Him from our lives so long as His poor brethren sing His name in the streets and remind us of Him. And so now we have hit upon the idea of shutting up the beggars in such special buildings, so that they may not roam about the streets and stir up our consciences."

But Fomá will have none of it. He is neither to be enticed nor cajoled. The cry of his nature is for light. He must have light. And in burning revolt he goes seeking the meaning of life. "His thoughts embraced all those petty people who toiled at hard labour. It was strange — why did they live? What satisfaction was it to them to live on the earth? All they did was to perform their dirty, arduous toil, eat poorly; they were miserably clad, addicted to drunkenness. One was sixty years old, but he still toiled side by side with young men. And they all presented themselves to Fomá's imagination as a huge heap of worms, who were swarming over the earth merely to eat."

He becomes the living interrogation of life. He cannot begin living until he knows what living means, and he seeks its meaning vainly. "Why should I try to live life when I do not know what life is?" he objects when Mayákin strives with him to return and manage his business. Why should men fetch and carry for him? be slaves to him and his money?

"Work is not everything to a man," he says; "it is not true that justification lies in work . . . Some people never do any work at all, all their lives long — yet they live better than the toilers. Why is that? And what justification have I? And how will all the people who give their orders justify themselves? What have they lived for? But my idea is that everybody ought, without fail, to know solidly what he is living for. Is it possible that a man is born to toil, accumulate money, build a house, beget children, and — die? No; life means something in itself. . . . A man has been born, has lived, has died — why? All of us must consider why we are living, by God, we must! There is no sense in our life — there is no sense at all. Some are rich — they have money enough for a thousand men all to themselves — and they live without occupation; others bow their backs in toil all their life, and they haven't a penny."

But Fomá can only be destructive. He is not constructive. The dim groping spirit of his mother and the curse of his environment press too heavily upon him, and he is crushed to debauchery and madness. He does not drink because liquor tastes good in his mouth. In the vile companions who purvey to his baser appetites he finds no charm. It is all utterly despicable and sordid, but thither his quest leads him and he follows the quest. He knows that everything is wrong, but he cannot right it, cannot tell why. He can only attack and demolish. "What justification have you all in the sight of God? Why do you live?" he demands of the conclave of merchants, of life's successes. "You have not constructed life — you have made a cesspool! You have disseminated filth and stifling exhalations by your deeds. Have you any conscience? Do you remember God? A five-kopék piece — that is your God! But you have expelled your conscience!"

Like the cry of Isaiah, "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your misfortunes that shall come upon you," is Fomá's: "You blood-suckers! You live on other people's strength; you work with other people's hands! For all this you shall be made to pay! You shall perish — you shall be called to account for all! For all — to the last little tear-drop!"

Stunned by this puddle of life, unable to make sense of it, Fomá questions, and questions vainly, whether of Sófya Medynsky in her drawing-room of beauty, or in the foulest depths of the first chance courtesan's heart. Linboff, whose books contradict one another, cannot help him; nor can the pilgrims on crowded steamers, nor the verse writers and harlots in dives and boozingkens. And so, wondering, pondering, perplexed, amazed, whirling through the mad whirlpool of life, dancing the dance of death, groping for the nameless, indefinite something, the magic formula, the essence, the intrinsic fact, the flash of light through the murk and dark — the rational sanction for existence, in short — Fomá Gordyéeff goes down to madness and death.

It is not a pretty book, but it is a masterful interrogation of life — not of life universal, but of life particular, the social life of to-day. It is not nice; neither is the social life of to-day nice. One lays the book down sick at heart — sick for life with all its "lyings and its lusts." But it is a healthy book. So fearful is its portrayal of social disease, so ruthless its stripping of the painted charms from vice, that its tendency cannot but be strongly for good. It is a goad, to prick sleeping human consciences awake and drive them into the battle for humanity.

But no story is told, nothing is finished, some one will object. Surely, when Sásha leaped overboard and swam to Fomá, something happened. It was pregnant with possibilities. Yet it was not finished, was not decisive. She left him to go with the son of a rich vodka-maker. And all that was best in Sófya Medynsky was quickened when she looked upon Fomá with the look of the Mother-Woman. She might have been a power for good in his life, she might have shed light into it and lifted him up to safety and honour and understanding. Yet she went away next day, and he never saw her again. No story is told, nothing is finished.

Ah, but surely the story of Fomá Gordyéeff is told; his life is finished, as lives are being finished each day around us. Besides, it is the way of life, and the art of Górky is the art of realism. But it is a less tedious realism than that of Tolstoy or Turgenev. It lives and breathes from page to page with a swing and dash and go that they rarely attain. Their mantle has fallen on his young shoulders, and he promises to wear it royally.

Even so, but so helpless, hopeless, terrible is this life of Fomá Gordyéeff that we would be filled with profound sorrow for Górky did we not know that he has come up out of the Valley of Shadow. That he hopes, we know, else would he not now be festering in a Russian prison because he is brave enough to live the hope he feels. He knows life, why and how it should be lived. And in conclusion, this one thing is manifest: Fomá Gordyéeff is no mere statement of an intellectual problem. For as he lived and interrogated living, so in sweat and blood and travail has Górky lived.

Piedmont, California.
November 1901.

THESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN

Rudyard Kipling, “prophet of blood and vulgarity, prince of ephemerals and idol of the unelect” — as a Chicago critic chortles — is dead. It is true. He is dead, dead and buried. And a fluttering, chirping host of men, little men and unseeing men, have heaped him over with the uncut leaves of *Kim*, wrapped him in *Stalky & Co.*, for winding sheet, and for headstone reared his unconventional lines, *The Lesson*. It was very easy. The simplest thing in the world. And the fluttering, chirping gentlemen are rubbing their hands in amaze and wondering why they did not do it long ago, it was so very, very simple.

But the centuries to come, of which the fluttering, chirping gentlemen are prone to talk largely, will have something to say in the matter. And when they, the future centuries, quest back to the nineteenth century to find what manner of century it was — to find, not what the people of the nineteenth century thought they thought, but what they really thought, not what they thought they ought to do, but what they really did do, then a certain man, Kipling, will be read — and read with understanding. “They thought they read him with understanding, those people of the nineteenth century,” the future centuries will say; “and then they thought there was no understanding in him, and after that they did not know what they thought.”

But this is over-severe. It applies only to that class which serves a function somewhat similar to that served by the populace of old time in Rome. This is the unstable, mob-minded mass, which sits on the fence, ever ready to fall this side or that and indecorously clamber back again; which puts a Democratic administration into office one election, and a Republican the next; which discovers and lifts up a prophet to-day that it may stone him to-morrow; which clamours for the book everybody else is reading, for no reason under the sun save that everybody else is reading it. This is the class of whim and caprice, of fad and vogue, the unstable, incoherent, mob-mouthed, mob-minded mass, the “monkey-folk,” if you please, of these latter days. Now it may be reading *The Eternal City*. Yesterday it was reading *The Master Christian*, and some several days before that it was reading Kipling. Yes, almost to his shame be it, these folk were reading him. But it was not his fault. If he depended upon them he well deserves to be dead and buried and never to rise again. But to them, let us be thankful, he never lived. They thought he lived, but he was as dead then as he is now and as he always will be.

He could not help it because he became the vogue, and it is easily understood. When he lay ill, fighting with close grapples with death, those who knew him were grieved. They were many, and in many voices, to the rim of the Seven Seas, they spoke their grief. Whereupon, and with celerity, the mob-minded mass began to inquire as to this man whom so many mourned. If everybody else mourned, it were fit that they mourn too. So a vast wail went up. Each was a spur to the other's grief, and each began privately to read this man they had never read and publicly to proclaim this man they had always read. And straightaway next day they drowned their grief in a sea of historical romance and forgot all about him. The reaction was inevitable. Emerging from the sea into which they had plunged, they became aware that they had so soon forgotten him, and would have been ashamed, had not the fluttering, chirping men said, "Come, let us bury him." And they put him in a hole, quickly, out of their sight.

And when they have crept into their own little holes, and smugly laid themselves down in their last long sleep, the future centuries will roll the stone away and he will come forth again. For be it known: *That man of us is imperishable who makes his century imperishable*. That man of us who seizes upon the salient facts of our life, who tells what we thought, what we were, and for what we stood — that man shall be the mouthpiece to the centuries, and so long as they listen he shall endure.

We remember the caveman. We remember him because he made his century imperishable. But, unhappily, we remember him dimly, in a collective sort of way, because he memorialized his century dimly, in a collective sort of way. He had no written speech, so he left us rude scratchings of beasts and things, cracked marrow-bones, and weapons of stone. It was the best expression of which he was capable. Had he scratched his own particular name with the scratchings of beasts and things, stamped his cracked marrowbones with his own particular seal, trade-marked his weapons of stone with his own particular device, that particular man would we remember. But he did the best he could, and we remember him as best we may.

Homer takes his place with Achilles and the Greek and Trojan heroes. Because he remembered them, we remember him. Whether he be one or a dozen men, or a dozen generations of men, we remember him. And so long as the name of Greece is known on the lips of men, so long will the name of Homer be known. There are many such names, linked with their times, which have come down to us, many more which will yet go down; and to them, in token that we have lived, must we add some few of our own.

Dealing only with the artist, be it understood, only those artists will go down who have spoken true of us. Their truth must be the deepest and most significant, their voices clear and strong, definite and coherent. Half-truths and partial-truths will not do, nor will thin piping voices and quavering lays. There must be the cosmic quality in what they sing. They must seize upon and press into enduring art-forms the vital facts of our existence. They must tell why we have lived, for without any reason for living, depend upon it, in the time to come, it will be as though we had never lived. Nor are the things that were true of the people a thousand years or so ago true of us to-day. The romance of Homer's Greece is the romance of Homer's Greece. That is undeniable. It is not our romance. And he who in our time sings the romance of Homer's Greece cannot expect to sing it so well as Homer did, nor will he be singing about us or our romance at all. A machine age is something quite different from an heroic age. What is true of rapid-fire guns, stock-exchanges, and electric motors, cannot possibly be true of hand-flung javelins and whirring chariot wheels. Kipling knows this. He has been telling it to us all his life, living it all his life in the work he has done.

What the Anglo-Saxon has done, he has memorialized. And by Anglo-Saxon is not meant merely the people of that tight little island on the edge of the Western Ocean. Anglo-Saxon stands for the English-speaking people of all the world, who, in forms and institutions and traditions, are more peculiarly and definitely English than anything else. This people Kipling has sung. Their sweat and blood and toil have been the motives of his songs; but underlying all the motives of his songs is the motive of motives, the sum of them all and something more, which is one with what underlies all the Anglo-Saxon sweat and blood and toil; namely, the genius of the race. And this is the cosmic quality. Both that which is true of the race for all time, and that which is true of the race for all time applied to this particular time, he has caught up and pressed into his art-forms. He has caught the dominant note of the Anglo-Saxon and pressed it into wonderful rhythms which cannot be sung out in a day and which will not be sung out in a day.

The Anglo-Saxon is a pirate, a land robber and a sea robber. Underneath his thin coating of culture, he is what he was in Morgan's time, in Drake's time, in William's time, in Alfred's time. The blood and the tradition of Hengist and Horsa are in his veins. In battle he is subject to the blood-lusts of the Berserkers of old. Plunder and booty fascinate him immeasurably. The schoolboy of to-day dreams the dream of Clive and Hastings. The Anglo-Saxon is strong of arm and heavy of hand, and he possesses a primitive brutality all his own. There is a discontent in his blood, an unsatisfaction that will not let him rest, but sends him adventuring over the sea and among the lands in the midst of the sea. He does not know when he is beaten, wherefore the term "bulldog" is attached to him, so that all may know his unreasonableness. He has "some care as to the purity of his ways, does not wish for strange gods, nor juggle with intellectual phantasmagoria." He loves freedom, but is dictatorial to others, is self-willed, has boundless energy, and does things for himself. He is also a master of matter, an organizer of law, and an administrator of justice.

And in the nineteenth century he has lived up to his reputation. Being the nineteenth century and no other century, and in so far different from all other centuries, he has expressed himself differently. But blood will tell, and in the name of God, the Bible, and Democracy, he has gone out over the earth, possessing himself of broad lands and fat revenues, and conquering by virtue of his sheer pluck and enterprise and superior machinery.

Now the future centuries, seeking to find out what the nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon was and what were his works, will have small concern with what he did not do and what he would have liked to do. These things he did do, and for these things will he be remembered. His claim on posterity will be that in the nineteenth century he mastered matter; his twentieth-century claim will be, in the highest probability, that he organized life — but that will be sung by the twentieth-century Kiplings or the twenty-first-century Kiplings. Rudyard Kipling of the nineteenth century has sung of "things as they are." He has seen life as it is, "taken it up squarely," in both his hands, and looked upon it. What better preachment upon the Anglo-Saxon and what he has done can be had than *The Bridge Builders*? what better appraisement than *The White Man's Burden*? As for faith and clean ideals — not of "children and gods, but men in a world of men" — who has preached them better than he?

Primarily, Kipling has stood for the doer as opposed to the dreamer — the doer, who lists not to idle songs of empty days, but who goes forth and does things, with bended back and sweated brow and work-hardened hands. The most characteristic thing about Kipling is his lover of actuality, his intense practicality, his proper and necessary respect for the hard-headed, hard-fisted fact. And, above all, he has preached the gospel of work, and as potently as Carlyle ever preached. For he has preached it not only to those in the high places, but to the common men, to the great sweating thong of common men who hear and understand yet stand agape at Carlyle's turgid utterance. Do the thing to your hand, and do it with all your might. Never mind what the thing is; so long as it is something. Do it. Do it and remember Tomlinson, sexless and soulless Tomlinson, who was denied at Heaven's gate.

The blundering centuries have perseveringly pottered and groped through the dark; but it remained for Kipling's century to roll in the sun, to formulate, in other words, the reign of law. And of the artists in Kipling's century, he of them all has driven the greater measure of law in the more consummate speech:

Keep ye the Law — be swift in all obedience.
Clear the land of evil, drive the road and bridge the ford.
Make ye sure to each his own
That he reap what he hath sown;
By the peace among Our peoples let men know we serve the Lord.

— And so it runs, from McAndrew's *Law*, *Order*, *Duty*, *and Restraint*, to his last least line, whether of *The Vampire* or *The Recessional*. And no prophet out of Israel has cried out more loudly the sins of the people, nor called them more awfully to repent.

"But he is vulgar, he stirs the puddle of life," object the fluttering, chirping gentlemen, the Tomlinsonian men. Well, and isn't life vulgar? Can you divorce the facts of life? Much of good is there, and much of ill; but who may draw aside his garment and say, "I am none of them"? Can you say that the part is greater than the whole? that the whole is more or less than the sum of the parts? As for the puddle of life, the stench is offensive to you? Well, and what then? Do you not live in it? Why do you not make it clean? Do you clamour for a filter to make clean only your own particular portion? And, made clean, are you wroth because Kipling has stirred it muddy again? At least he has stirred it healthily, with steady vigour and good-will. He has not brought to the surface merely its dregs, but its most significant values. He has told the centuries to come of our lyings and our lusts, but he has also told the centuries to come of the seriousness which is underneath our lyings and our lusts. And he has told us, too, and always has he told us, to be clean and strong and to walk upright and manlike.

"But he has no sympathy," the fluttering gentlemen chirp. "We admire his art and intellectual brilliancy, we all admire his art and intellectual brilliancy, his dazzling technique and rare rhythmical sense; but . . . he is totally devoid of sympathy." Dear! Dear! What is to be understood by this? Should he sprinkle his pages with sympathetic adjectives, so many to the paragraph, as the country compositor sprinkles commas? Surely not. The little gentlemen are not quite so infinitesimal as that. There have been many tellers of jokes, and the greater of them, it is recorded, never smiled at their own, not even in the crucial moment when the audience wavered between laughter and tears.

And so with Kipling. Take *The Vampire*, for instance. It has been complained that there is no touch of pity in it for the man and his ruin, no sermon on the lesson of it, no compassion for the human weakness, no indignation at the heartlessness. But are we kindergarten children that the tale be told to us in words of one syllable? Or are we men and women, able to read between the lines what Kipling intended we should read between the lines? "For some of him lived, but the most of him died." Is there not here all the excitation in the world for our sorrow, our pity, our indignation? And what more is the function of art than to excite states of consciousness complementary to the thing portrayed? The colour of tragedy is red. Must the artist also paint in the watery tears and wan-faced grief? "For some of him lived, but the most of him died" — can the heartache of the situation be conveyed more achingly? Or were it better that the young man, some of him alive but most of him dead, should come out before the curtain and deliver a homily to the weeping audience?

The nineteenth century, so far as the Anglo-Saxon is concerned, was remarkable for two great developments: the mastery of matter and the expansion of the race. Three great forces operated in it: nationalism, commercialism, democracy — the marshalling of the races, the merciless, remorseless *laissez faire* of the dominant bourgeoisie, and the practical, actual working government of men within a very limited equality. The democracy of the nineteenth century is not the democracy of which the eighteenth century dreamed. It is not the democracy of the Declaration, but it is what we have practised and lived that reconciles it to the fact of the "lesser breeds without the Law."

It is of these developments and forces of the nineteenth century that Kipling has sung. And the romance of it he has sung, that which underlies and transcends objective endeavour, which deals with race impulses, race deeds, and race traditions. Even into the steam-laden speech of his locomotives has he breathed our life, our spirit, our significance. As he is our mouthpiece, so are they his mouthpieces. And the romance of the nineteenth-century man as he has thus expressed himself in the nineteenth century, in shaft and wheel, in steel and steam, in far journeying and adventuring, Kipling has caught up in wondrous songs for the future centuries to sing.

If the nineteenth century is the century of the Hooligan, then is Kipling the voice of the Hooligan as surely as he is the voice of the nineteenth century. Who is more representative? Is *David Harum* more representative of the nineteenth century? Is Mary Johnston, Charles Major, or Winston Churchill? Is Bret Harte? William Dean Howells? Gilbert Parker? Who of them all is as essentially representative of nineteenth-century life? When Kipling is forgotten, will Robert Louis Stevenson be remembered for his *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, his *Kidnapped* and his *David Balfour*? Not so. His *Treasure Island* will be a classic, to go down with *Robinson Crusoe*, *Through the Looking-Glass*, and *The Jungle Books*. He will be remembered for his essays, for his letters, for his philosophy of life, for himself. He will be the well beloved, as he has been the well beloved. But his will be another claim upon posterity than what we are considering. For each epoch has its singer. As Scott sang the swan song of chivalry and Dickens the burgher-fear of the rising merchant class, so Kipling, as no one else, has sung the hymn of the dominant bourgeoisie, the war march of the white man round the world, the triumphant pæan of commercialism and imperialism. For that will he be remembered.

Oakland, California.
October 1901.

THE OTHER ANIMALS

American journalism has its moments of fantastic hysteria, and when it is on the rampage the only thing for a rational man to do is to climb a tree and let the cataclysm go by. And so, some time ago, when the word *nature-faker* was coined, I, for one, climbed into my tree and stayed there. I happened to be in Hawaii at the time, and a Honolulu reporter elicited the sentiment from me that I thanked God I was not an authority on anything. This sentiment was promptly cabled to America in an Associated Press despatch, whereupon the American press (possibly annoyed because I had not climbed down out of my tree) charged me with paying for advertising by cable at a dollar per word — the very human way of the American press, which, when a man refuses to come down and be licked, makes faces at him.

But now that the storm is over, let us come and reason together. I have been guilty of writing two animal-stories — two books about dogs. The writing of these two stories, on my part, was in truth a protest against the "humanizing" of animals, of which it seemed to me several "animal writers" had been profoundly guilty. Time and again, and many times, in my narratives, I wrote, speaking of my dog-heroes: "He did not think these things; he merely did them," etc. And I did this repeatedly, to the clogging of my narrative and in violation of my artistic canons; and I did it in order to hammer into the average human understanding that these dog-heroes of mine were not directed by abstract reasoning, but by instinct, sensation, and emotion, and by simple reasoning. Also, I endeavoured to make my stories in line with the facts of evolution; I hewed them to the mark set by scientific research, and awoke, one day, to find myself bundled neck and crop into the camp of the nature-fakers.

President Roosevelt was responsible for this, and he tried to condemn me on two counts. (1) I was guilty of having a big, fighting bull-dog whip a wolf-dog. (2) I was guilty of allowing a lynx to kill a wolf-dog in a pitched battle. Regarding the second count, President Roosevelt was wrong in his field observations taken while reading my book. He must have read it hastily, for in my story I had the wolf-dog kill the lynx. Not only did I have my wolf-dog kill the lynx, but I made him eat the body of the lynx as well. Remains only the first count on which to convict me of nature-faking, and the first count does not charge me with diverging from ascertained facts. It is merely a statement of a difference of opinion. President Roosevelt does not think a bull-dog can lick a wolf-dog. I think a bull-dog can lick a wolf-dog. And there we are. Difference of opinion may make, and does make, horse-racing. I can understand that difference of opinion can make dog-fighting. But what gets me is how difference of opinion regarding the relative fighting merits of a bull-dog and a wolf-dog makes me a nature-faker and President Roosevelt a vindicated and triumphant scientist.

Then entered John Burroughs to clinch President Roosevelt's judgments. In this alliance there is no difference of opinion. That Roosevelt can do no wrong is Burroughs's opinion; and that Burroughs is always right is Roosevelt's opinion. Both are agreed that animals do not reason. They assert that all animals below man are automatons and perform actions only of two sorts — mechanical and reflex — and that in such actions no reasoning enters at all. They believe that man is the only animal capable of reasoning and that ever does reason. This is a view that makes the twentieth-century scientist smile. It is not modern at all. It is distinctly mediaeval. President Roosevelt and John Burroughs, in advancing such a view, are homocentric in the same fashion that the scholastics of earlier and darker centuries were homocentric. Had the world not been discovered to be round until after the births of President Roosevelt and John Burroughs, they would have been geocentric as well in their theories of the Cosmos. They could not have believed otherwise. The stuff of their minds is so conditioned. They talk the argot of evolution, while they no more understand the essence and the import of evolution than does a South Sea Islander or Sir Oliver Lodge understand the noumena of radio-activity.

Now, President Roosevelt is an amateur. He may know something of statecraft and of big-game shooting; he may be able to kill a deer when he sees it and to measure it and weigh it after he has shot it; he may be able to observe carefully and accurately the actions and antics of tomtits and snipe, and, after he has observed it, definitely and coherently to convey the information of when the first chipmunk, in a certain year and a certain latitude and longitude, came out in the spring and chattered and gambolled — but that he should be able, as an individual observer, to analyze all animal life and to synthetize and develop all that is known of the method and significance of evolution, would require a vaster credulity for you or me to believe than is required for us to believe the biggest whopper ever told by an unmitigated nature-faker. No, President Roosevelt does not understand evolution, and he does not seem to have made much of an attempt to understand evolution.

Remains John Burroughs, who claims to be a thorough-going evolutionist. Now, it is rather hard for a young man to tackle an old man. It is the nature of young men to be more controlled in such matters, and it is the nature of old men, presuming upon the wisdom that is very often erroneously associated with age, to do the tackling. In this present question of nature-faking, the old men did the tackling, while I, as one young man, kept quiet a long time. But here goes at last. And first of all let Mr. Burroughs's position be stated, and stated in his words.

"Why impute reason to an animal if its behaviour can be explained on the theory of instinct?" Remember these words, for they will be referred to later. "A goodly number of persons seem to have persuaded themselves that animals do reason." "But instinct suffices for the animals . . . they get along very well without reason." "Darwin tried hard to convince himself that animals do at times reason in a rudimentary way; but Darwin was also a much greater naturalist than psychologist." The preceding quotation is tantamount, on Mr. Burroughs's part, to a flat denial that animals reason even in a rudimentary way. And when Mr. Burrough denies that animals reason even in a rudimentary way, it is equivalent to affirming, in accord with the first quotation in this paragraph, that instinct will explain every animal act that might be confounded with reason by the unskilled or careless observer.

Having bitten off this large mouthful, Mr. Burroughs proceeds with serene and beautiful satisfaction to masticate it in the following fashion. He cites a large number of instances of purely instinctive actions on the part of animals, and triumphantly demands if they are acts of reason. He tells of the robin that fought day after day its reflected image in a window-pane; of the birds in South America that were guilty of drilling clear through a mud wall, which they mistook for a solid clay bank: of the beaver that cut down a tree four times because it was held at the top by the branches of other trees; of the cow that licked the skin of her stuffed calf so affectionately that it came apart, whereupon she proceeded to eat the hay with which it was stuffed. He tells of the phœbe-bird that betrays her nest on the porch by trying to hide it with moss in similar fashion to the way all phœbe-birds hide their nests when they are built among rocks. He tells of the highhole that repeatedly drills through the clap-boards of an empty house in a vain attempt to find a thickness of wood deep enough in which to build its nest. He tells of the migrating lemmings of Norway that plunge into the sea and drown in vast numbers because of their instinct to swim lakes and rivers in the course of their migrations. And, having told a few more instances of like kidney, he triumphantly demands: “Where now is your much-vaunted reasoning of the lower animals?”

No schoolboy in a class debate could be guilty of unfairer argument. It is equivalent to replying to the assertion that 2+2=4, by saying: “No; because 12/4=3; I have demonstrated my honourable opponent’s error.” When a man attacks your ability as a foot-racer, promptly prove to him that he was drunk the week before last, and the average man in the crowd of gaping listeners will believe that you have convincingly refuted the slander on your fleetness of foot. On my honour, it will work. Try it some time. It is done every day. Mr. Burroughs has done it himself, and, I doubt not, pulled the sophistical wool over a great many pairs of eyes. No, no, Mr. Burroughs; you can’t disprove that animals reason by proving that they possess instincts. But the worst of it is that you have at the same time pulled the wool over your own eyes. You have set up a straw man and knocked the stuffing out of him in the complacent belief that it was the reasoning of lower animals you were knocking out of the minds of those who disagreed with you. When the highhole perforated the icehouse and let out the sawdust, you called him a lunatic . . .

But let us be charitable — and serious. What Mr. Burroughs instances as acts of instinct certainly are acts of instincts. By the same method of logic one could easily adduce a multitude of instinctive acts on the part of man and thereby prove that man is an unreasoning animal. But man performs actions of both sorts. Between man and the lower animals Mr. Burroughs finds a vast gulf. This gulf divides man from the rest of his kin by virtue of the power of reason that he alone possesses. Man is a voluntary agent. Animals are automatons. The robin fights its reflection in the window-pane because it is his instinct to fight and because he cannot reason out the physical laws that make this reflection appear real. An animal is a mechanism that operates according to fore-ordained rules. Wrapped up in its heredity, and determined long before it was born, is a certain limited capacity of ganglionic response to eternal stimuli. These responses have been fixed in the species through adaptation to environment. Natural selection has compelled the animal automatically to respond in a fixed manner and a certain way to all the usual external stimuli it encounters in the course of a usual life. Thus, under usual circumstances, it does the usual thing. Under unusual circumstances it still does the usual thing, wherefore the highhole perforating the ice-house is guilty of lunacy — of unreason, in short. To do the unusual thing under unusual circumstances, successfully to adjust to a strange environment for which his heredity has not automatically fitted an adjustment, Mr. Burroughs says is impossible. He says it is impossible because it would be a non-instinctive act, and, as is well known animals act only through instinct. And right here we catch a glimpse of Mr. Burroughs's cart standing before his horse. He has a thesis, and though the heavens fall he will fit the facts to the thesis. Agassiz, in his opposition to evolution, had a similar thesis, though neither did he fit the facts to it nor did the heavens fall. Facts are very disagreeable at times.

But let us see. Let us test Mr. Burroughs's test of reason and instinct. When I was a small boy I had a dog named Rollo. According to Mr. Burroughs, Rollo was an automaton, responding to external stimuli mechanically as directed by his instincts. Now, as is well known, the development of instinct in animals is a dreadfully slow process. There is no known case of the development of a single instinct in domestic animals in all the history of their domestication. Whatever instincts they possess they brought with them from the wild thousands of years ago. Therefore, all Rollo's actions were ganglionic discharges mechanically determined by the instincts that had been developed and fixed in the species thousands of years ago. Very well. It is clear, therefore, that in all his play with me he would act in old-fashioned ways, adjusting himself to the physical and psychical factors in his environment according to the rules of adjustment which had obtained in the wild and which had become part of his heredity.

Rollo and I did a great deal of rough romping. He chased me and I chased him. He nipped my legs, arms, and hands, often so hard that I yelled, while I rolled him and tumbled him and dragged him about, often so strenuously as to make him yelp. In the course of the play many variations arose. I would make believe to sit down and cry. All repentance and anxiety, he would wag his tail and lick my face, whereupon I would give him the laugh. He hated to be laughed at, and promptly he would spring for me with good-natured, menacing jaws, and the wild romp would go on. I had scored a point. Then he hit upon a trick. Pursuing him into the woodshed, I would find him in a far corner, pretending to sulk. Now, he dearly loved the play, and never got enough of it. But at first he fooled me. I thought I had somehow hurt his feelings and I came and knelt before him, petting him, and speaking lovingly. Promptly, in a wild outburst, he was up and away, tumbling me over on the floor as he dashed out in a mad skurry around the yard. He had scored a point.

After a time, it became largely a game of wits. I reasoned my acts, of course, while his were instinctive. One day, as he pretended to sulk in the corner, I glanced out of the woodshed doorway, simulated pleasure in face, voice, and language, and greeted one of my schoolboy friends. Immediately Rollo forgot to sulk, rushed out to see the newcomer, and saw empty space. The laugh was on him, and he knew it, and I gave it to him, too. I fooled him in this way two or three times; then be became wise. One day I worked a variation. Suddenly looking out the door, making believe that my eyes had been attracted by a moving form, I said coldly, as a child educated in turning away bill-collectors would say: “No my father is not at home.” Like a shot, Rollo was out the door. He even ran down the alley to the front of the house in a vain attempt to find the man I had addressed. He came back sheepishly to endure the laugh and resume the game.

And now we come to the test. I fooled Rollo, but how was the fooling made possible? What precisely went on in that brain of his? According to Mr. Burroughs, who denies even rudimentary reasoning to the lower animals, Rollo acted instinctively, mechanically responding to the external stimulus, furnished by me, which led him to believe that a man was outside the door.

Since Rollo acted instinctively, and since all instincts are very ancient, tracing back to the pre-domestication period, we can conclude only that Rollo’s wild ancestors, at the time this particular instinct was fixed into the heredity of the species, must have been in close, long-continued, and vital contact with man, the voice of man, and the expressions on the face of man. But since the instinct must have been developed during the pre-domestication period, how under the sun could his wild, undomesticated ancestors have experienced the close, long-continued, and vital contact with man?

Mr. Burroughs says that “instinct suffices for the animals,” that “they get along very well without reason.” But I say, what all the poor nature-fakers will say, that Rollo reasoned. He was born into the world a bundle of instincts and a pinch of brain-stuff, all wrapped around in a framework of bone, meat, and hide. As he adjusted to his environment he gained experiences. He remembered these experiences. He learned that he mustn't chase the cat, kill chickens, nor bite little girls' dresses. He learned that little boys had little boy playmates. He learned that men came into back yards. He learned that the animal man, on meeting with his own kind, was given to verbal and facial greeting. He learned that when a boy greeted a playmate he did it differently from the way he greeted a man. All these he learned and remembered. They were so many observations — so many propositions, if you please. Now, what went on behind those brown eyes of his, inside that pinch of brain-stuff, when I turned suddenly to the door and greeted an imaginary person outside? Instantly, out of the thousands of observations stored in his brain, came to the front of his consciousness the particular observations connected with this particular situation. Next, he established a relation between these observations. This relation was his conclusion, achieved, as every psychologist will agree, by a definite cell-action of his grey matter. From the fact that his master turned suddenly toward the door, and from the fact that his master's voice, facial expression, and whole demeanour expressed surprise and delight, he concluded that a friend was outside. He established a relation between various things, and the act of establishing relations between things is an act of reason — of rudimentary reason, granted, but none the less of reason.

Of course Rollo was fooled. But that is no call for us to throw chests about it. How often has every last one of us been fooled in precisely similar fashion by another who turned and suddenly addressed an imaginary intruder? Here is a case in point that occurred in the West. A robber had held up a railroad train. He stood in the aisle between the seats, his revolver presented at the head of the conductor, who stood facing him. The conductor was at his mercy.

But the conductor suddenly looked over the robber's shoulder, at the same time saying aloud to an imaginary person standing at the robber's back: "Don't shoot him." Like a flash the robber whirled about to confront this new danger, and like a flash the conductor shot him down. Show me, Mr. Burroughs, where the mental process in the robber's brain was a shade different from the mental processes in Rollo's brain, and I'll quit nature-faking and join the Trappists. Surely, when a man's mental process and a dog's mental process are precisely similar, the much-vaunted gulf of Mr. Burroughs's fancy has been bridged.

I had a dog in Oakland. His name was Glen. His father was Brown, a wolf-dog that had been brought down from Alaska, and his mother was a half-wild mountain shepherd dog. Neither father nor mother had had any experience with automobiles. Glen came from the country, a half-grown puppy, to live in Oakland. Immediately he became infatuated with an automobile. He reached the culmination of happiness when he was permitted to sit up in the front seat alongside the chauffeur. He would spend a whole day at a time on an automobile debauch, even going without food. Often the machine started directly from inside the barn, dashed out the driveway without stopping, and was gone. Glen got left behind several times. The custom was established that whoever was taking the machine out should toot the horn before starting. Glen learned the signal. No matter where he was or what he was doing, when that horn tooted he was off for the barn and up into the front seat.

One morning, while Glen was on the back porch eating his breakfast of mush and milk, the chauffeur tooted. Glen rushed down the steps, into the barn, and took his front seat, the mush and milk dripping down his excited and happy chops. In passing, I may point out that in thus forsaking his breakfast for the automobile he was displaying what is called the power of choice — a peculiarly lordly attribute that, according to Mr. Burroughs, belongs to man alone. Yet Glen made his choice between food and fun.

It was not that Glen wanted his breakfast less, but that he wanted his ride more. The toot was only a joke. The automobile did not start. Glen waited and watched. Evidently he saw no signs of an immediate start, for finally he jumped out of the seat and went back to his breakfast. He ate with indecent haste, like a man anxious to catch a train. Again the horn tooted, again he deserted his breakfast, and again he sat in the seat and waited vainly for the machine to go.

They came close to spoiling Glen's breakfast for him, for he was kept on the jump between porch and barn. Then he grew wise. They tooted the horn loudly and insistently, but he stayed by his breakfast and finished it. Thus once more did he display power of choice, incidentally of control, for when that horn tooted it was all he could do to refrain from running for the barn.

The nature-faker would analyze what went on in Glen's brain somewhat in the following fashion. He had had, in his short life, experiences that not one of all his ancestors had ever had. He had learned that automobiles went fast, that once in motion it was impossible for him to get on board, that the toot of the horn was a noise that was peculiar to automobiles. These were so many propositions. Now reasoning can be defined as the act or process of the brain by which, from propositions known or assumed, new propositions are reached. Out of the propositions which I have shown were Glen's, and which had become his through the medium of his own observation of the phenomena of life, he made the new proposition that when the horn tooted it was time for him to get on board.

But on the morning I have described, the chauffeur fooled Glen. Somehow and much to his own disgust, his reasoning was erroneous. The machine did not start after all. But to reason incorrectly is very human. The great trouble in all acts of reasoning is to include all the propositions in the problem. Glen had included every proposition but one, namely, the human proposition, the joke in the brain of the chauffeur. For a number of times Glen was fooled. Then he performed another mental act. In his problem he included the human proposition (the joke in the brain of the chauffeur), and he reached the new conclusion that when the horn tooted the automobile was *not* going to start. Basing his action on this conclusion, he remained on the porch and finished his breakfast. You and I, and even Mr. Burroughs, perform acts of reasoning precisely similar to this every day in our lives. How Mr. Burroughs will explain Glen's action by the instinctive theory is beyond me. In wildest fantasy, even, my brain refuses to follow Mr. Burroughs into the primeval forest where Glen's dim ancestors, to the tooting of automobile horns, were fixing into the heredity of the breed the particular instinct that would enable Glen, a few thousand years later, capably to cope with automobiles.

Dr. C. J. Romanes tells of a female chimpanzee who was taught to count straws up to five. She held the straws in her hand, exposing the ends to the number requested. If she were asked for three, she held up three. If she were asked for four, she held up four. All this is a mere matter of training. But consider now, Mr. Burroughs, what follows. When she was asked for five straws and she had only four, she doubled one straw, exposing both its ends and thus making up the required number. She did not do this only once, and by accident. She did it whenever more straws were asked for than she possessed. Did she perform a distinctly reasoning act? or was her action the result of blind, mechanical instinct? If Mr. Burroughs cannot answer to his own satisfaction, he may call Dr. Romanes a nature-faker and dismiss the incident from his mind.

The foregoing is a trick of erroneous human reasoning that works very successfully in the United States these days. It is certainly a trick of Mr. Burroughs, of which he is guilty with distressing frequency. When a poor devil of a writer records what he has seen, and when what he has seen does not agree with Mr. Burroughs's mediaeval theory, he calls said writer a nature-faker. When a man like Mr. Hornaday comes along, Mr. Burroughs works a variation of the trick on him. Mr. Hornaday has made a close study of the orang in captivity and of the orang in its native state. Also, he has studied closely many other of the higher animal types. Also, in the tropics, he has studied the lower types of man. Mr. Hornaday is a man of experience and reputation. When he was asked if animals reasoned, out of all his knowledge on the subject he replied that to ask him such a question was equivalent to asking him if fishes swim. Now Mr. Burroughs has not had much experience in studying the lower human types and the higher animal types. Living in a rural district in the state of New York, and studying principally birds in that limited habitat, he has been in contact neither with the higher animal types nor the lower human types. But Mr. Hornaday's reply is such a facer to him and his homocentric theory that he has to do something. And he does it. He retorts: "I suspect that Mr. Hornaday is a better naturalist than he is a comparative psychologist." Exit Mr. Hornaday. Who the devil is Mr. Hornaday, anyway? The sage of Slabsides has spoken. When Darwin concluded that animals were capable of reasoning in a rudimentary way, Mr. Burroughs laid him out in the same fashion by saying: "But Darwin was also a much greater naturalist than psychologist" — and this despite Darwin's long life of laborious research that was not wholly confined to a rural district such as Mr. Burroughs inhabits in New York. Mr. Burroughs's method of argument is beautiful. It reminds one of the man whose pronunciation was vile, but who said: "Damn the dictionary; ain't I here?"

And now we come to the mental processes of Mr. Burroughs — to the psychology of the ego, if you please. Mr. Burroughs has troubles of his own with the dictionary. He violates language from the standpoint both of logic and science. Language is a tool, and definitions embodied in language should agree with the facts and history of life. But Mr. Burroughs's definitions do not so agree. This, in turn, is not the fault of his education, but of his ego. To him, despite his well-exploited and patronizing devotion to them, the lower animals are disgustingly low. To him, affinity and kinship with the other animals is a repugnant thing. He will have none of it. He is too glorious a personality not to have between him and the other animals a vast and impassable gulf. The cause of Mr. Burroughs's mediaeval view of the other animals is to be found, not in his knowledge of those other animals, but in the suggestion of his self-exalted ego. In short, Mr. Burroughs's homocentric theory has been developed out of his homocentric ego, and by the misuse of language he strives to make the facts of life agree with his theory.

After the instances I have cited of actions of animals which are impossible of explanation as due to instinct, Mr. Burroughs may reply: "Your instances are easily explained by the simple law of association." To this I reply, first, then why did you deny rudimentary reason to animals? and why did you state flatly that "instinct suffices for the animals"? And, second, with great reluctance and with overwhelming humility, because of my youth, I suggest that you do not know exactly what you do mean by that phrase "the simple law of association." Your trouble, I repeat, is with definitions. You have grasped that man performs what is called *abstract* reasoning, you have made a definition of abstract reason, and, betrayed by that great maker of theories, the ego, you have come to think that all reasoning is abstract and that what is not abstract reason is not reason at all. This is your attitude toward rudimentary reason. Such a process, in one of the other animals, must be either abstract or it is not a reasoning process. Your intelligence tells you that such a process is not abstract reasoning, and your homocentric thesis compels you to conclude that it can be only a mechanical, instinctive process.

Definitions must agree, not with egos, but with life. Mr. Burroughs goes on the basis that a definition is something hard and fast, absolute and eternal. He forgets that all the universe is in flux; that definitions are arbitrary and ephemeral; that they fix, for a fleeting instant of time, things that in the past were not, that in the future will be not, that out of the past become, and that out of the present pass on to the future and become other things. Definitions cannot rule life. Definitions cannot be made to rule life. Life must rule definitions or else the definitions perish.

Mr. Burroughs forgets the evolution of reason. He makes a definition of reason without regard to its history, and that definition is of reason purely abstract. Human reason, as we know it to-day, is not a creation, but a growth. Its history goes back to the primordial slime that was quick with muddy life; its history goes back to the first vitalized inorganic. And here are the steps of its ascent from the mud to man: simple reflex action, compound reflex action, memory, habit, rudimentary reason, and abstract reason. In the course of the climb, thanks to natural selection, instinct was evolved. Habit is a development in the individual. Instinct is a race-habit. Instinct is blind, unreasoning, mechanical. This was the dividing of the ways in the climb of aspiring life. The perfect culmination of instinct we find in the ant-heap and the beehive. Instinct proved a blind alley. But the other path, that of reason, led on and on even to Mr. Burroughs and you and me.

There are no impassable gulfs, unless one chooses, as Mr. Burroughs does, to ignore the lower human types and the higher animal types, and to compare human mind with bird mind. It was impossible for life to reason abstractly until speech was developed. Equipped with swords, with tools of thought, in short, the slow development of the power to reason in the abstract went on. The lowest human types do little or no reasoning in the abstract. With every word, with every increase in the complexity of thought, with every ascertained fact so gained, went on action and reaction in the grey matter of the speech discoverer, and slowly, step by step, through hundreds of thousands of years, developed the power of reason.

Place a honey-bee in a glass bottle. Turn the bottom of the bottle toward a lighted lamp so that the open mouth is away from the lamp. Vainly, ceaselessly, a thousand times, undeterred by the bafflement and the pain, the bee will hurl himself against the bottom of the bottle as he strives to win to the light. That is instinct. Place your dog in a back yard and go away. He is your dog. He loves you. He yearns toward you as the bee yearns toward the light. He listens to your departing footsteps. But the fence is too high. Then he turns his back upon the direction in which you are departing, and runs around the yard. He is frantic with affection and desire. But he is not blind. He is observant. He is looking for a hole under the fence, or through the fence, or for a place where the fence is not so high. He sees a dry-goods box standing against the fence. Presto! He leaps upon it, goes over the barrier, and tears down the street to overtake you. Is that instinct?

Here, in the household where I am writing this, is a little Tahitian "feeding-child." He believes firmly that a tiny dwarf resides in the box of my talking-machine and that it is the tiny dwarf who does the singing and the talking. Not even Mr. Burroughs will affirm that the child has reached this conclusion by an instinctive process. Of course, the child reasons the existence of the dwarf in the box. How else could the box talk and sing? In that child's limited experience it has never encountered a single instance where speech and song were produced otherwise than by direct human agency. I doubt not that the dog is considerably surprised when he hears his master's voice coming out of a box.

The adult savage, on his first introduction to a telephone, rushes around to the adjoining room to find the man who is talking through the partition. Is this act instinctive? No. Out of his limited experience, out of his limited knowledge of physics, he reasons that the only explanation possible is that a man is in the other room talking through the partition.

But that savage cannot be fooled by a hand-mirror. We must go lower down in the animal scale, to the monkey. The monkey swiftly learns that the monkey it sees is not in the glass, wherefore it reaches craftily behind the glass. Is this instinct? No. It is rudimentary reasoning. Lower than the monkey in the scale of brain is the robin, and the robin fights its reflection in the window-pane. Now climb with me for a space. From the robin to the monkey, where is the impassable gulf? and where is the impassable gulf between the monkey and the feeding-child? between the feeding-child and the savage who seeks the man behind the partition? ay, and between the savage and the astute financiers Mrs. Chadwick fooled and the thousands who were fooled by the Keeley Motor swindle?

Let us be very humble. We who are so very human are very animal. Kinship with the other animals is no more repugnant to Mr. Burroughs than was the heliocentric theory to the priests who compelled Galileo to recant. Not correct human reason, not the evidence of the ascertained fact, but pride of ego, was responsible for the repugnance.

In his stiff-necked pride, Mr. Burroughs runs a hazard more humiliating to that pride than any amount of kinship with the other animals. When a dog exhibits choice, direction, control, and reason; when it is shown that certain mental processes in that dog's brain are precisely duplicated in the brain of man; and when Mr. Burroughs convincingly proves that every action of the dog is mechanical and automatic — then, by precisely the same arguments, can it be proved that the similar actions of man are mechanical and automatic. No, Mr. Burroughs, though you stand on the top of the ladder of life, you must not kick out that ladder from under your feet. You must not deny your relatives, the other animals. Their history is your history, and if you kick them to the bottom of the abyss, to the bottom of the abyss you go yourself. By them you stand or fall. What you repudiate in them you repudiate in yourself — a pretty spectacle, truly, of an exalted animal striving to disown the stuff of life out of which it is made, striving by use of the very reason that was developed by evolution to deny the possession of evolution that developed it. This may be good egotism, but it is not good science.

Papeete, Tahiti.
March 1908.

THE YELLOW PERIL

No more marked contrast appears in passing from our Western land to the paper houses and cherry blossoms of Japan than appears in passing from Korea to China. To achieve a correct appreciation of the Chinese the traveller should first sojourn amongst the Koreans for several months, and then, one fine day, cross over the Yalu into Manchuria. It would be of exceptional advantage to the correctness of appreciation did he cross over the Yalu on the heels of a hostile and alien army.

War is to-day the final arbiter in the affairs of men, and it is as yet the final test of the worth-whileness of peoples. Tested thus, the Korean fails. He lacks the nerve to remain when a strange army crosses his land. The few goods and chattels he may have managed to accumulate he puts on his back, along with his doors and windows, and away he heads for his mountain fastnesses. Later he may return, sans goods, chattels, doors, and windows, impelled by insatiable curiosity for a "look see." But it is curiosity merely — a timid, deerlike curiosity. He is prepared to bound away on his long legs at the first hint of danger or trouble.

Northern Korea was a desolate land when the Japanese passed through. Villages and towns were deserted. The fields lay untouched. There was no ploughing nor sowing, no green things growing. Little or nothing was to be purchased. One carried one's own food with him and food for horses and servants was the anxious problem that waited at the day's end. In many a lonely village not an ounce nor a grain of anything could be bought, and yet there might be standing around scores of white-garmented, stalwart Koreans, smoking yard-long pipes and chattering, chattering — ceaselessly chattering. Love, money, or force could not procure from them a horseshoe or a horseshoe nail.

"Upso," was their invariable reply. "Upso," cursed word, which means "Have not got."

They had tramped probably forty miles that day, down from their hiding-places, just for a "look see," and forty miles back they would cheerfully tramp, chattering all the way over what they had seen. Shake a stick at them as they stand chattering about your camp-fire, and the gloom of the landscape will be filled with tall, flitting ghosts, bounding like deer, with great springy strides which one cannot but envy. They have splendid vigour and fine bodies, but they are accustomed to being beaten and robbed without protest or resistance by every chance foreigner who enters their country.

From this nerveless, forsaken Korean land I rode down upon the sandy islands of the Yalu. For weeks these islands had been the dread between-the-lines of two fighting armies. The air above had been rent by screaming projectiles. The echoes of the final battle had scarcely died away. The trains of Japanese wounded and Japanese dead were trailing by.

On the conical hill, a quarter of a mile away, the Russian dead were being buried in their trenches and in the shell holes made by the Japanese. And here, in the thick of it all, a man was ploughing. Green things were growing — young onions — and the man who was weeding them paused from his labour long enough to sell me a handful. Near by was the smoke-blackened ruin of the farmhouse, fired by the Russians when they retreated from the riverbed. Two men were removing the debris, cleaning the confusion, preparatory to rebuilding. They were clad in blue. Pigtails hung down their backs. I was in China!

I rode to the shore, into the village of Kuelian-Ching. There were no lounging men smoking long pipes and chattering. The previous day the Russians had been there, a bloody battle had been fought, and to-day the Japanese were there — but what was that to talk about? Everybody was busy. Men were offering eggs and chickens and fruit for sale upon the street, and bread, as I live, bread in small round loaves or buns. I rode on into the country. Everywhere a toiling population was in evidence. The houses and walls were strong and substantial. Stone and brick replaced the mud walls of the Korean dwellings. Twilight fell and deepened, and still the ploughs went up and down the fields, the sowers following after. Trains of wheelbarrows, heavily loaded, squeaked by, and Pekin carts, drawn by from four to six cows, horses, mules, ponies, or jackasses — cows even with their newborn calves tottering along on puny legs outside the traces. Everybody worked. Everything worked. I saw a man mending the road. I was in China.

I came to the city of Antung, and lodged with a merchant. He was a grain merchant. Corn he had, hundreds of bushels, stored in great bins of stout matting; peas and beans in sacks, and in the back yard his millstones went round and round, grinding out meal. Also, in his back yard, were buildings containing vats sunk into the ground, and here the tanners were at work making leather. I bought a measure of corn from mine host for my horses, and he overcharged me thirty cents. I was in China. Antung was jammed with Japanese troops. It was the thick of war. But it did not matter. The work of Antung went on just the same. The shops were wide open; the streets were lined with pedlars. One could buy anything; get anything made. I dined at a Chinese restaurant, cleansed myself at a public bath in a private tub with a small boy to assist in the scrubbing. I bought condensed milk, bitter, canned vegetables, bread, and cake. I repeat it, cake — good cake. I bought knives, forks, and spoons, granite-ware dishes and mugs. There were horseshoes and horseshoers. A worker in iron realized for me new designs of mine for my tent poles. My shoes were sent out to be repaired. A barber shampooed my hair. A servant returned with corn-beef in tins, a bottle of port, another of cognac, and beer, blessed beer, to wash out from my throat the dust of an army. It was the land of Canaan. I was in China.

The Korean is the perfect type of inefficiency — of utter worthlessness. The Chinese is the perfect type of industry. For sheer work no worker in the world can compare with him. Work is the breath of his nostrils. It is his solution of existence. It is to him what wandering and fighting in far lands and spiritual adventure have been to other peoples. Liberty to him epitomizes itself in access to the means of toil. To till the soil and labour interminably with rude implements and utensils is all he asks of life and of the powers that be. Work is what he desires above all things, and he will work at anything for anybody.

During the taking of the Takú forts he carried scaling ladders at the heads of the storming columns and planted them against the walls. He did this, not from a sense of patriotism, but for the invading foreign devils because they paid him a daily wage of fifty cents. He is not frightened by war. He accepts it as he does rain and sunshine, the changing of the seasons, and other natural phenomena. He prepares for it, endures it, and survives it, and when the tide of battle sweeps by, the thunder of the guns still reverberating in the distant canyons, he is seen calmly bending to his usual tasks. Nay, war itself bears fruits whereof he may pick. Before the dead are cold or the burial squads have arrived he is out on the field, stripping the mangled bodies, collecting the shrapnel, and ferreting in the shell holes for slivers and fragments of iron.

The Chinese is no coward. He does not carry away his doors amid windows to the mountains, but remains to guard them when alien soldiers occupy his town. He does not hide away his chickens and his eggs, nor any other commodity he possesses. He proceeds at once to offer them for sale. Nor is he to be bullied into lowering his price. What if the purchaser be a soldier and an alien made cocky by victory and confident by overwhelming force? He has two large pears saved over from last year which he will sell for five sen, or for the same price three small pears. What if one soldier persist in taking away with him three large pears? What if there be twenty other soldiers jostling about him? He turns over his sack of fruit to another Chinese and races down the street after his pears and the soldier responsible for their flight, and he does not return till he has wrenched away one large pear from that soldier's grasp.

Nor is the Chinese the type of permanence which he has been so often designated. He is not so ill-disposed toward new ideas and new methods as his history would seem to indicate. True, his forms, customs, and methods have been permanent these many centuries, but this has been due to the fact that his government was in the hands of the learned classes, and that these governing scholars found their salvation lay in suppressing all progressive ideas. The ideas behind the Boxer troubles and the outbreaks over the introduction of railroad and other foreign devil machinations have emanated from the minds of the literati, and been spread by their pamphlets and propagandists.

Originality and enterprise have been suppressed in the Chinese for scores of generations. Only has remained to him industry, and in this has he found the supreme expression of his being. On the other hand, his susceptibility to new ideas has been well demonstrated wherever he has escaped beyond the restrictions imposed upon him by his government. So far as the business man is concerned he has grasped far more clearly the Western code of business, the Western ethics of business, than has the Japanese. He has learned, as a matter of course, to keep his word or his bond. As yet, the Japanese business man has failed to understand this. When he has signed a time contract and when changing conditions cause him to lose by it, the Japanese merchant cannot understand why he should live up to his contract. It is beyond his comprehension and repulsive to his common sense that he should live up to his contract and thereby lose money. He firmly believes that the changing conditions themselves absolve him. And in so far adaptable as he has shown himself to be in other respects, he fails to grasp a radically new idea where the Chinese succeeds.

Here we have the Chinese, four hundred millions of him, occupying a vast land of immense natural resources — resources of a twentieth-century age, of a machine age; resources of coal and iron, which are the backbone of commercial civilization. He is an indefatigable worker. He is not dead to new ideas, new methods, new systems. Under a capable management he can be made to do anything. Truly would he of himself constitute the much-heralded Yellow Peril were it not for his present management. This management, his government, is set, crystallized. It is what binds him down to building as his fathers built. The governing class, entrenched by the precedent and power of centuries and by the stamp it has put upon his mind, will never free him. It would be the suicide of the governing class, and the governing class knows it.

Comes now the Japanese. On the streets of Antung, of Feng-Wang-Chang, or of any other Manchurian city, the following is a familiar scene: One is hurrying home through the dark of the unlighted streets when he comes upon a paper lantern resting on the ground. On one side squats a Chinese civilian on his hams, on the other side squats a Japanese soldier. One dips his forefinger in the dust and writes strange, monstrous characters. The other nods understanding, sweeps the dust slate level with his hand, and with his forefinger inscribes similar characters. They are talking. They cannot speak to each other, but they can write. Long ago one borrowed the other's written language, and long before that, untold generations ago, they diverged from a common root, the ancient Mongol stock.

There have been changes, differentiations brought about by diverse conditions and infusions of other blood; but down at the bottom of their being, twisted into the fibres of them, is a heritage in common — a sameness in kind which time has not obliterated. The infusion of other blood, Malay, perhaps, has made the Japanese a race of mastery and power, a fighting race through all its history, a race which has always despised commerce and exalted fighting.

To-day, equipped with the finest machines and systems of destruction the Caucasian mind has devised, handling machines and systems with remarkable and deadly accuracy, this rejuvenescent Japanese race has embarked on a course of conquest the goal of which no man knows. The head men of Japan are dreaming ambitiously, and the people are dreaming blindly, a Napoleonic dream. And to this dream the Japanese clings and will cling with bull-dog tenacity. The soldier shouting "Nippon, Banzai!" on the walls of Wiju, the widow at home in her paper house committing suicide so that her only son, her sole support, may go to the front, are both expressing the unanimity of the dream.

The late disturbance in the Far East marked the clashing of the dreams, for the Slav, too, is dreaming greatly. Granting that the Japanese can hurl back the Slav and that the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race do not despoil him of his spoils, the Japanese dream takes on substantiality. Japan's population is no larger because her people have continually pressed against the means of subsistence. But given poor, empty Korea for a breeding colony and Manchuria for a granary, and at once the Japanese begins to increase by leaps and bounds.

Even so, he would not of himself constitute a Brown Peril. He has not the time in which to grow and realize the dream. He is only forty-five millions, and so fast does the economic exploitation of the planet hurry on the planet's partition amongst the Western peoples that, before he could attain the stature requisite to menace, he would see the Western giants in possession of the very stuff of his dream.

The menace to the Western world lies, not in the little brown man, but in the four hundred millions of yellow men should the little brown man undertake their management. The Chinese is not dead to new ideas; he is an efficient worker; makes a good soldier, and is wealthy in the essential materials of a machine age. Under a capable management he will go far. The Japanese is prepared and fit to undertake this management. Not only has he proved himself an apt imitator of Western material progress, a sturdy worker, and a capable organizer, but he is far more fit to manage the Chinese than are we. The baffling enigma of the Chinese character is no baffling enigma to him. He understands as we could never school ourselves nor hope to understand. Their mental processes are largely the same. He thinks with the same thought-symbols as does the Chinese, and he thinks in the same peculiar grooves. He goes on where we are balked by the obstacles of incomprehension. He takes the turning which we cannot perceive, twists around the obstacle, and, presto! is out of sight in the ramifications of the Chinese mind where we cannot follow.

The Chinese has been called the type of permanence, and well he has merited it, dozing as he has through the ages. And as truly was the Japanese the type of permanence up to a generation ago, when he suddenly awoke and startled the world with a rejuvenescence the like of which the world had never seen before. The ideas of the West were the leaven which quickened the Japanese; and the ideas of the West, transmitted by the Japanese mind into ideas Japanese, may well make the leaven powerful enough to quicken the Chinese.

We have had Africa for the Afrikander, and at no distant day we shall hear "Asia for the Asiatic!" Four hundred million indefatigable workers (deft, intelligent, and unafraid to die), aroused and rejuvenescent, managed and guided by forty-five million additional human beings who are splendid fighting animals, scientific and modern, constitute that menace to the Western world which has been well named the "Yellow Peril." The possibility of race adventure has not passed away. We are in the midst of our own. The Slav is just girding himself up to begin. Why may not the yellow and the brown start out on an adventure as tremendous as our own and more strikingly unique?

The ultimate success of such an adventure the Western mind refuses to consider. It is not the nature of life to believe itself weak. There is such a thing as race egotism as well as creature egotism, and a very good thing it is. In the first place, the Western world will not permit the rise of the yellow peril. It is firmly convinced that it will not permit the yellow and the brown to wax strong and menace its peace and comfort. It advances this idea with persistency, and delivers itself of long arguments showing how and why this menace will not be permitted to arise. To-day, far more voices are engaged in denying the yellow peril than in prophesying it. The Western world is warned, if not armed, against the possibility of it.

In the second place, there is a weakness inherent in the brown man which will bring his adventure to naught. From the West he has borrowed all our material achievement and passed our ethical achievement by. Our engines of production and destruction he has made his. What was once solely ours he now duplicates, rivalling our merchants in the commerce of the East, thrashing the Russian on sea and land. A marvellous imitator truly, but imitating us only in things material. Things spiritual cannot be imitated; they must be felt and lived, woven into the very fabric of life, and here the Japanese fails.

It required no revolution of his nature to learn to calculate the range and fire a field gun or to march the goose-step. It was a mere matter of training. Our material achievement is the product of our intellect. It is knowledge, and knowledge, like coin, is interchangeable. It is not wrapped up in the heredity of the new-born child, but is something to be acquired afterward. Not so with our soul stuff, which is the product of an evolution which goes back to the raw beginnings of the race. Our soul stuff is not a coin to be pocketed by the first chance comer. The Japanese cannot pocket it any more than he can thrill to short Saxon words or we can thrill to Chinese hieroglyphics. The leopard cannot change its spots, nor can the Japanese, nor can we. We are thumbed by the ages into what we are, and by no conscious inward effort can we in a day rethumb ourselves. Nor can the Japanese in a day, or a generation, rethumb himself in our image.

Back of our own great race adventure, back of our robberies by sea and land, our lusts and violences and all the evil things we have done, there is a certain integrity, a sternness of conscience, a melancholy responsibility of life, a sympathy and comradeship and warm human feel, which is ours, indubitably ours, and which we cannot teach to the Oriental as we would teach logarithms or the trajectory of projectiles. That we have groped for the way of right conduct and agonized over the soul betokens our spiritual endowment. Though we have strayed often and far from righteousness, the voices of the seers have always been raised, and we have harked back to the bidding of conscience. The colossal fact of our history is that we have made the religion of Jesus Christ our religion. No matter how dark in error and deed, ours has been a history of spiritual struggle and endeavour. We are pre-eminently a religious race, which is another way of saying that we are a right-seeking race.

“What do you think of the Japanese?” was asked an American woman after she had lived some time in Japan. “It seems to me that they have no soul,” was her answer.

This must not be taken to mean that the Japanese is without soul. But it serves to illustrate the enormous difference between their souls and this woman’s soul. There was no feel, no speech, no recognition. This Western soul did not dream that the Eastern soul existed, it was so different, so totally different.

Religion, as a battle for the right in our sense of right, as a yearning and a strife for spiritual good and purity, is unknown to the Japanese.

Measured by what religion means to us, the Japanese is a race without religion. Yet it has a religion, and who shall say that it is not as great a religion as ours, nor as efficacious? As one Japanese has written:

"Our reflection brought into prominence not so much the moral as the national consciousness of the individual. . . . To us the country is more than land and soil from which to mine gold or reap grain — it is the sacred abode of the gods, the spirit of our forefathers; to us the Emperor is more than the Arch Constable of a Reichsstaat, or even the Patron of a Kulturstaat; he is the bodily representative of heaven on earth, blending in his person its power and its mercy."

The religion of Japan is practically a worship of the State itself. Patriotism is the expression of this worship. The Japanese mind does not split hairs as to whether the Emperor is Heaven incarnate or the State incarnate. So far as the Japanese are concerned, the Emperor lives, is himself deity. The Emperor is the object to live for and to die for. The Japanese is not an individualist. He has developed national consciousness instead of moral consciousness. He is not interested in his own moral welfare except in so far as it is the welfare of the State. The honour of the individual, *per se*, does not exist. Only exists the honour of the State, which is his honour. He does not look upon himself as a free agent, working out his own personal salvation. Spiritual agonizing is unknown to him. He has a "sense of calm trust in fate, a quiet submission to the inevitable, a stoic composure in sight of danger or calamity, a disdain of life and friendliness with death." He relates himself to the State as, amongst bees, the worker is related to the hive; himself nothing, the State everything; his reasons for existence the exaltation and glorification of the State.

The most admired quality to-day of the Japanese is his patriotism. The Western world is in rhapsodies over it, unwittingly measuring the Japanese patriotism by its own conceptions of patriotism. "For God, my country, and the Czar!" cries the Russian patriot; but in the Japanese mind there is no differentiation between the three. The Emperor is the Emperor, and God and country as well. The patriotism of the Japanese is blind and unswerving loyalty to what is practically an absolutism. The Emperor can do no wrong, nor can the five ambitious great men who have his ear and control the destiny of Japan.

No great race adventure can go far nor endure long which has no deeper foundation than material success, no higher prompting than conquest for conquest's sake and mere race glorification. To go far and to endure, it must have behind it an ethical impulse, a sincerely conceived righteousness. But it must be taken into consideration that the above postulate is itself a product of Western race-egotism, urged by our belief in our own righteousness and fostered by a faith in ourselves which may be as erroneous as are most fond race fancies. So be it. The world is whirling faster to-day than ever before. It has gained impetus. Affairs rush to conclusion. The Far East is the point of contact of the adventuring Western people as well as of the Asiatic. We shall not have to wait for our children's time nor our children's children. We shall ourselves see and largely determine the adventure of the Yellow and the Brown.

Feng-Wang-Cheng, Manchuria.
June 1904,

WHAT LIFE MEANS TO ME

I was born in the working-class. Early I discovered enthusiasm, ambition, and ideals; and to satisfy these became the problem of my child-life. My environment was crude and rough and raw. I had no outlook, but an uplook rather. My place in society was at the bottom. Here life offered nothing but sordidness and wretchedness, both of the flesh and the spirit; for here flesh and spirit were alike starved and tormented.

Above me towered the colossal edifice of society, and to my mind the only way out was up. Into this edifice I early resolved to climb. Up above, men wore black clothes and boiled shirts, and women dressed in beautiful gowns. Also, there were good things to eat, and there was plenty to eat. This much for the flesh. Then there were the things of the spirit. Up above me, I knew, were unselfishnesses of the spirit, clean and noble thinking, keen intellectual living. I knew all this because I read "Seaside Library" novels, in which, with the exception of the villains and adventuresses, all men and women thought beautiful thoughts, spoke a beautiful tongue, and performed glorious deeds. In short, as I accepted the rising of the sun, I accepted that up above me was all that was fine and noble and gracious, all that gave decency and dignity to life, all that made life worth living and that remunerated one for his travail and misery.

But it is not particularly easy for one to climb up out of the working-class — especially if he is handicapped by the possession of ideals and illusions. I lived on a ranch in California, and was hard put to find the ladder whereby to climb. I early inquired the rate of interest on invested money, and worried my child's brain into an understanding of the virtues and excellences of that remarkable invention of man, compound interest. Further, I ascertained the current rates of wages for workers of all ages, and the cost of living. From all this data I concluded that if I began immediately and worked and saved until I was fifty years of age, I could then stop working and enter into participation in a fair portion of the delights and goodnesses that would then be open to me higher up in society. Of course, I resolutely determined not to marry, while I quite forgot to consider at all that great rock of disaster in the working-class world — sickness.

But the life that was in me demanded more than a meagre existence of scraping and scrimping. Also, at ten years of age, I became a newsboy on the streets of a city, and found myself with a changed uplook. All about me were still the same sordidness and wretchedness, and up above me was still the same paradise waiting to be gained; but the ladder whereby to climb was a different one. It was now the ladder of business. Why save my earnings and invest in government bonds, when, by buying two newspapers for five cents, with a turn of the wrist I could sell them for ten cents and double my capital? The business ladder was the ladder for me, and I had a vision of myself becoming a bald-headed and successful merchant prince.

Alas for visions! When I was sixteen I had already earned the title of "prince." But this title was given me by a gang of cut-throats and thieves, by whom I was called "The Prince of the Oyster Pirates." And at that time I had climbed the first rung of the business ladder. I was a capitalist. I owned a boat and a complete oyster-pirating outfit. I had begun to exploit my fellow-creatures. I had a crew of one man. As captain and owner I took two-thirds of the spoils, and gave the crew one-third, though the crew worked just as hard as I did and risked just as much his life and liberty.

This one rung was the height I climbed up the business ladder. One night I went on a raid amongst the Chinese fishermen. Ropes and nets were worth dollars and cents. It was robbery, I grant, but it was precisely the spirit of capitalism. The capitalist takes away the possessions of his fellow-creatures by means of a rebate, or of a betrayal of trust, or by the purchase of senators and supreme-court judges. I was merely crude. That was the only difference. I used a gun.

But my crew that night was one of those inefficients against whom the capitalist is wont to fulminate, because, forsooth, such inefficients increase expenses and reduce dividends. My crew did both. What of his carelessness he set fire to the big mainsail and totally destroyed it. There weren't any dividends that night, and the Chinese fishermen were richer by the nets and ropes we did not get. I was bankrupt, unable just then to pay sixty-five dollars for a new mainsail. I left my boat at anchor and went off on a bay-pirate boat on a raid up the Sacramento River. While away on this trip, another gang of bay pirates raided my boat. They stole everything, even the anchors; and later on, when I recovered the drifting hulk, I sold it for twenty dollars. I had slipped back the one rung I had climbed, and never again did I attempt the business ladder.

From then on I was mercilessly exploited by other capitalists. I had the muscle, and they made money out of it while I made but a very indifferent living out of it. I was a sailor before the mast, a longshoreman, a roustabout; I worked in canneries, and factories, and laundries; I mowed lawns, and cleaned carpets, and washed windows. And I never got the full product of my toil. I looked at the daughter of the cannery owner, in her carriage, and knew that it was my muscle, in part, that helped drag along that carriage on its rubber tyres. I looked at the son of the factory owner, going to college, and knew that it was my muscle that helped, in part, to pay for the wine and good fellowship he enjoyed.

But I did not resent this. It was all in the game. They were the strong. Very well, I was strong. I would carve my way to a place amongst them and make money out of the muscles of other men. I was not afraid of work. I loved hard work. I would pitch in and work harder than ever and eventually become a pillar of society.

And just then, as luck would have it, I found an employer that was of the same mind. I was willing to work, and he was more than willing that I should work. I thought I was learning a trade. In reality, I had displaced two men. I thought he was making an electrician out of me; as a matter of fact, he was making fifty dollars per month out of me. The two men I had displaced had received forty dollars each per month; I was doing the work of both for thirty dollars per month.

This employer worked me nearly to death. A man may love oysters, but too many oysters will disincline him toward that particular diet. And so with me. Too much work sickened me. I did not wish ever to see work again. I fled from work. I became a tramp, begging my way from door to door, wandering over the United States and sweating bloody sweats in slums and prisons.

I had been born in the working-class, and I was now, at the age of eighteen, beneath the point at which I had started. I was down in the cellar of society, down in the subterranean depths of misery about which it is neither nice nor proper to speak. I was in the pit, the abyss, the human cesspool, the shambles and the charnel-house of our civilization. This is the part of the edifice of society that society chooses to ignore. Lack of space compels me here to ignore it, and I shall say only that the things I there saw gave me a terrible scare.

I was scared into thinking. I saw the naked simplicities of the complicated civilization in which I lived. Life was a matter of food and shelter. In order to get food and shelter men sold things. The merchant sold shoes, the politician sold his manhood, and the representative of the people, with exceptions, of course, sold his trust; while nearly all sold their honour. Women, too, whether on the street or in the holy bond of wedlock, were prone to sell their flesh. All things were commodities, all people bought and sold. The one commodity that labour had to sell was muscle. The honour of labour had no price in the marketplace. Labour had muscle, and muscle alone, to sell.

But there was a difference, a vital difference. Shoes and trust and honour had a way of renewing themselves. They were imperishable stocks. Muscle, on the other hand, did not renew. As the shoe merchant sold shoes, he continued to replenish his stock. But there was no way of replenishing the labourer's stock of muscle. The more he sold of his muscle, the less of it remained to him. It was his one commodity, and each day his stock of it diminished. In the end, if he did not die before, he sold out and put up his shutters. He was a muscle bankrupt, and nothing remained to him but to go down into the cellar of society and perish miserably.

I learned, further, that brain was likewise a commodity. It, too, was different from muscle. A brain seller was only at his prime when he was fifty or sixty years old, and his wares were fetching higher prices than ever. But a labourer was worked out or broken down at forty-five or fifty. I had been in the cellar of society, and I did not like the place as a habitation. The pipes and drains were unsanitary, and the air was bad to breathe. If I could not live on the parlour floor of society, I could, at any rate, have a try at the attic. It was true, the diet there was slim, but the air at least was pure. So I resolved to sell no more muscle, and to become a vendor of brains.

Then began a frantic pursuit of knowledge. I returned to California and opened the books. While thus equipping myself to become a brain merchant, it was inevitable that I should delve into sociology. There I found, in a certain class of books, scientifically formulated, the simple sociological concepts I had already worked out for myself. Other and greater minds, before I was born, had worked out all that I had thought and a vast deal more. I discovered that I was a socialist.

The socialists were revolutionists, inasmuch as they struggled to overthrow the society of the present, and out of the material to build the society of the future. I, too, was a socialist and a revolutionist. I joined the groups of working-class and intellectual revolutionists, and for the first time came into intellectual living. Here I found keen-flashing intellects and brilliant wits; for here I met strong and alert-brained, withal horny-handed, members of the working-class; unfrocked preachers too wide in their Christianity for any congregation of Mammon-worshippers; professors broken on the wheel of university subservience to the ruling class and flung out because they were quick with knowledge which they strove to apply to the affairs of mankind.

Here I found, also, warm faith in the human, glowing idealism, sweetnesses of unselfishness, renunciation, and martyrdom — all the splendid, stinging things of the spirit. Here life was clean, noble, and alive. Here life rehabilitated itself, became wonderful and glorious; and I was glad to be alive. I was in touch with great souls who exalted flesh and spirit over dollars and cents, and to whom the thin wail of the starved slum child meant more than all the pomp and circumstance of commercial expansion and world empire. All about me were nobleness of purpose and heroism of effort, and my days and nights were sunshine and starshine, all fire and dew, with before my eyes, ever burning and blazing, the Holy Grail, Christ's own Grail, the warm human, long-suffering and maltreated, but to be rescued and saved at the last.

And I, poor foolish I, deemed all this to be a mere foretaste of the delights of living I should find higher above me in society. I had lost many illusions since the day I read "Seaside Library" novels on the California ranch. I was destined to lose many of the illusions I still retained.

As a brain merchant I was a success. Society opened its portals to me. I entered right in on the parlour floor, and my disillusionment proceeded rapidly. I sat down to dinner with the masters of society, and with the wives and daughters of the masters of society. The women were gowned beautifully, I admit; but to my naïve surprise I discovered that they were of the same clay as all the rest of the women I had known down below in the cellar. "The colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady were sisters under their skins" — and gowns.

It was not this, however, so much as their materialism, that shocked me. It is true, these beautifully gowned, beautiful women prattled sweet little ideals and dear little moralities; but in spite of their prattle the dominant key of the life they lived was materialistic. And they were so sentimentally selfish! They assisted in all kinds of sweet little charities, and informed one of the fact, while all the time the food they ate and the beautiful clothes they wore were bought out of dividends stained with the blood of child labour, and sweated labour, and of prostitution itself. When I mentioned such facts, expecting in my innocence that these sisters of Judy O'Grady would at once strip off their blood-dyed silks and jewels, they became excited and angry, and read me preachments about the lack of thrift, the drink, and the innate depravity that caused all the misery in society's cellar. When I mentioned that I couldn't quite see that it was the lack of thrift, the intemperance, and the depravity of a half-starved child of six that made it work twelve hours every night in a Southern cotton mill, these sisters of Judy O'Grady attacked my private life and called me an "agitator" — as though that, forsooth, settled the argument.

Nor did I fare better with the masters themselves. I had expected to find men who were clean, noble, and alive, whose ideals were clean, noble, and alive. I went about amongst the men who sat in the high places — the preachers, the politicians, the business men, the professors, and the editors. I ate meat with them, drank wine with them, automobiled with them, and studied them. It is true, I found many that were clean and noble; but with rare exceptions, they were not *alive*. I do verily believe I could count the exceptions on the fingers of my two hands. Where they were not alive with rottenness, quick with unclean life, there were merely the unburied dead — clean and noble, like well-preserved mummies, but not alive. In this connection I may especially mention the professors I met, the men who live up to that decadent university ideal, "the passionless pursuit of passionless intelligence."

I met men who invoked the name of the Prince of Peace in their diatribes against war, and who put rifles in the hands of Pinkertons with which to shoot down strikers in their own factories. I met men incoherent with indignation at the brutality of prize-fighting, and who, at the same time, were parties to the adulteration of food that killed each year more babies than even red-handed Herod had killed.

I talked in hotels and clubs and homes and Pullmans, and steamer-chairs with captains of industry, and marvelled at how little travelled they were in the realm of intellect. On the other hand, I discovered that their intellect, in the business sense, was abnormally developed. Also, I discovered that their morality, where business was concerned, was nil.

This delicate, aristocratic-featured gentleman, was a dummy director and a tool of corporations that secretly robbed widows and orphans. This gentleman, who collected fine editions and was an especial patron of literature, paid blackmail to a heavy-jowled, black-browed boss of a municipal machine. This editor, who published patent medicine advertisements and did not dare print the truth in his paper about said patent medicines for fear of losing the advertising, called me a scoundrelly demagogue because I told him that his political economy was antiquated and that his biology was contemporaneous with Pliny.

This senator was the tool and the slave, the little puppet of a gross, uneducated machine boss; so was this governor and this supreme court judge; and all three rode on railroad passes. This man, talking soberly and earnestly about the beauties of idealism and the goodness of God, had just betrayed his comrades in a business deal. This man, a pillar of the church and heavy contributor to foreign missions, worked his shop girls ten hours a day on a starvation wage and thereby directly encouraged prostitution. This man, who endowed chairs in universities, perjured himself in courts of law over a matter of dollars and cents. And this railroad magnate broke his word as a gentleman and a Christian when he granted a secret rebate to one of two captains of industry locked together in a struggle to the death.

It was the same everywhere, crime and betrayal, betrayal and crime — men who were alive, but who were neither clean nor noble, men who were clean and noble, but who were not alive. Then there was a great, hopeless mass, neither noble nor alive, but merely clean. It did not sin positively nor deliberately; but it did sin passively and ignorantly by acquiescing in the current immorality and profiting by it. Had it been noble and alive it would not have been ignorant, and it would have refused to share in the profits of betrayal and crime.

I discovered that I did not like to live on the parlour floor of society. Intellectually I was as bored. Morally and spiritually I was sickened. I remembered my intellectuals and idealists, my unfrocked preachers, broken professors, and clean-minded, class-conscious working-men. I remembered my days and nights of sunshine and starshine, where life was all a wild sweet wonder, a spiritual paradise of unselfish adventure and ethical romance. And I saw before me, ever blazing and burning, the Holy Grail.

So I went back to the working-class, in which I had been born and where I belonged. I care no longer to climb. The imposing edifice of society above my head holds no delights for me. It is the foundation of the edifice that interests me. There I am content to labour, crowbar in hand, shoulder to shoulder with intellectuals, idealists, and class-conscious working-men, getting a solid pry now and again and setting the whole edifice rocking. Some day, when we get a few more hands and crowbars to work, we'll topple it over, along with all its rotten life and unburied dead, its monstrous selfishness and sodden materialism. Then we'll cleanse the cellar and build a new habitation for mankind, in which there will be no parlour floor, in which all the rooms will be bright and airy, and where the air that is breathed will be clean, noble, and alive.

Such is my outlook. I look forward to a time when man shall progress upon something worthier and higher than his stomach, when there will be a finer incentive to impel men to action than the incentive of to-day, which is the incentive of the stomach. I retain my belief in the nobility and excellence of the human. I believe that spiritual sweetness and unselfishness will conquer the gross gluttony of to-day. And last of all, my faith is in the working-class. As some Frenchman has said, "The stairway of time is ever echoing with the wooden shoe going up, the polished boot descending."

Newton, Iowa.
November 1905.

THE CRUISE OF THE SNARK

Published in 1911, this illustrated book chronicles London's sailing adventure in 1907 across the south Pacific in his ketch called the Snark. Accompanying London on this voyage was his wife Charmian and a small crew. London taught himself celestial navigation and the basics of sailing and of boats during the course of this adventure and describes these details to the reader. He visits exotic locations including the Solomon Islands and Hawaii, and his first-person accounts and photographs provide insight into these remote places at the beginning of the 20th century.

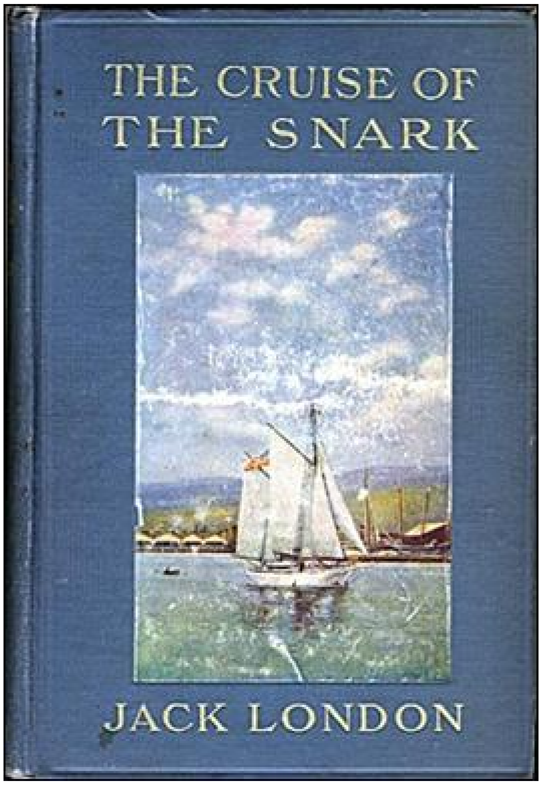
THE CRUISE OF
THE SNARK
JACK LONDON

The first edition

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I — FOREWORD
CHAPTER II — THE INCONCEIVABLE AND MONSTROUS
CHAPTER III — ADVENTURE
CHAPTER IV — FINDING ONE’S WAY ABOUT
CHAPTER V — THE FIRST LANDFALL
CHAPTER VI — A ROYAL SPORT
CHAPTER VII — THE LEPERS OF MOLOKAI
CHAPTER VIII — THE HOUSE OF THE SUN
CHAPTER IX — A PACIFIC TRAVERSE
CHAPTER X — TYPEE
CHAPTER XI — THE NATURE MAN
CHAPTER XII — THE HIGH SEAT OF ABUNDANCE
CHAPTER XIII — THE STONE-FISHING OF BORA BORA
CHAPTER XIV — THE AMATEUR NAVIGATOR
CHAPTER XV — CRUISING IN THE SOLOMONS
CHAPTER XVI — BECHE DE MER ENGLISH
“SANTA ANNA.”
“PETER.”
CHAPTER XVII — THE AMATEUR M.D.
BACK WORD

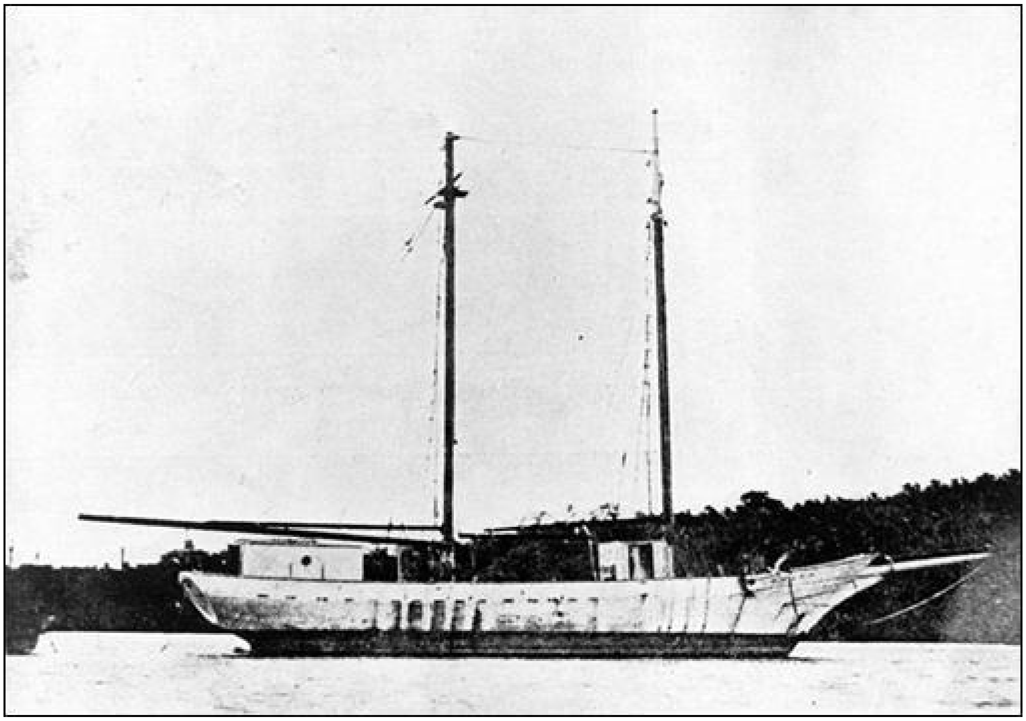

London’s boat, the Snark

CHAPTER I — FOREWORD

It began in the swimming pool at Glen Ellen. Between swims it was our wont to come out and lie in the sand and let our skins breathe the warm air and soak in the sunshine. Roscoe was a yachtsman. I had followed the sea a bit. It was inevitable that we should talk about boats. We talked about small boats, and the seaworthiness of small boats. We instanced Captain Slocum and his three years' voyage around the world in the Spray.

We asserted that we were not afraid to go around the world in a small boat, say forty feet long. We asserted furthermore that we would like to do it. We asserted finally that there was nothing in this world we'd like better than a chance to do it.

"Let us do it," we said . . . in fun.

Then I asked Charmian privily if she'd really care to do it, and she said that it was too good to be true.

The next time we breathed our skins in the sand by the swimming pool I said to Roscoe, "Let us do it."

I was in earnest, and so was he, for he said:

"When shall we start?"

I had a house to build on the ranch, also an orchard, a vineyard, and several hedges to plant, and a number of other things to do. We thought we would start in four or five years. Then the lure of the adventure began to grip us. Why not start at once? We'd never be younger, any of us. Let the orchard, vineyard, and hedges be growing up while we were away. When we came back, they would be ready for us, and we could live in the barn while we built the house.

So the trip was decided upon, and the building of the Snark began. We named her the Snark because we could not think of any other name--this information is given for the benefit of those who otherwise might think there is something occult in the name.

Our friends cannot understand why we make this voyage. They shudder, and moan, and raise their hands. No amount of explanation can make them comprehend that we are moving along the line of least resistance; that it is easier for us to go down to the sea in a small ship than to remain on dry land, just as it is easier for them to remain on dry land than to go down to the sea in the small ship. This state of mind comes of an undue prominence of the ego. They cannot get away from themselves. They cannot come out of themselves long enough to see that their line of least resistance is not necessarily everybody else's line of least resistance. They make of their own bundle of desires, likes, and dislikes a yardstick wherewith to measure the desires, likes, and dislikes of all creatures. This is unfair. I tell them so. But they cannot get away from their own miserable egos long enough to hear me. They think I am crazy. In return, I am sympathetic. It is a state of mind familiar to me. We are all prone to think there is something wrong with the mental processes of the man who disagrees with us.

The ultimate word is I LIKE. It lies beneath philosophy, and is twined about the heart of life. When philosophy has maundered ponderously for a month, telling the individual what he must do, the individual says, in an instant, "I LIKE," and does something else, and philosophy goes glimmering. It is I LIKE that makes the drunkard drink and the martyr wear a hair shirt; that makes one man a reveller and another man an anchorite; that makes one man pursue fame, another gold, another love, and another God. Philosophy is very often a man's way of explaining his own I LIKE.

But to return to the Snark, and why I, for one, want to journey in her around the world. The things I like constitute my set of values. The thing I like most of all is personal achievement — not achievement for the world's applause, but achievement for my own delight. It is the old "I did it! I did it! With my own hands I did it!" But personal achievement, with me, must be concrete. I'd rather win a water-fight in the swimming pool, or remain astride a horse that is trying to get out from under me, than write the great American novel. Each man to his liking. Some other fellow would prefer writing the great American novel to winning the water-fight or mastering the horse.

Possibly the proudest achievement of my life, my moment of highest living, occurred when I was seventeen. I was in a three-masted schooner off the coast of Japan. We were in a typhoon. All hands had been on deck most of the night. I was called from my bunk at seven in the morning to take the wheel. Not a stitch of canvas was set. We were running before it under bare poles, yet the schooner fairly tore along. The seas were all of an eighth of a mile apart, and the wind snatched the whitecaps from their summits, filling.

The air so thick with driving spray that it was impossible to see more than two waves at a time. The schooner was almost unmanageable, rolling her rail under to starboard and to port, veering and yawing anywhere between south-east and south-west, and threatening, when the huge seas lifted under her quarter, to broach to. Had she broached to, she would ultimately have been reported lost with all hands and no tidings.

I took the wheel. The sailing-master watched me for a space. He was afraid of my youth, feared that I lacked the strength and the nerve. But when he saw me successfully wrestle the schooner through several bouts, he went below to breakfast. Fore and aft, all hands were below at breakfast. Had she broached to, not one of them would ever have reached the deck. For forty minutes I stood there alone at the wheel, in my grasp the wildly careering schooner and the lives of twenty-two men. Once we were pooped. I saw it coming, and, half-drowned, with tons of water crushing me, I checked the schooner's rush to broach to. At the end of the hour, sweating and played out, I was relieved. But I had done it! With my own hands I had done my trick at the wheel and guided a hundred tons of wood and iron through a few million tons of wind and waves.

My delight was in that I had done it — not in the fact that twenty-two men knew I had done it. Within the year over half of them were dead and gone, yet my pride in the thing performed was not diminished by half. I am willing to confess, however, that I do like a small audience. But it must be a very small audience, composed of those who love me and whom I love. When I then accomplish personal achievement, I have a feeling that I am justifying their love for me. But this is quite apart from the delight of the achievement itself. This delight is peculiarly my own and does not depend upon witnesses. When I have done some such thing, I am exalted. I glow all over. I am aware of a pride in myself that is mine, and mine alone. It is organic. Every fibre of me is thrilling with it. It is very natural. It is a mere matter of satisfaction at adjustment to environment. It is success.

Life that lives is life successful, and success is the breath of its nostrils. The achievement of a difficult feat is successful adjustment to a sternly exacting environment. The more difficult the feat, the greater the satisfaction at its accomplishment. Thus it is with the man who leaps forward from the springboard, out over the swimming pool, and with a backward half-revolution of the body, enters the water head first. Once he leaves the springboard his environment becomes immediately savage, and savage the penalty it will exact should he fail and strike the water flat. Of course, the man does not have to run the risk of the penalty. He could remain on the bank in a sweet and placid environment of summer air, sunshine, and stability. Only he is not made that way. In that swift mid-air moment he lives as he could never live on the bank.

As for myself, I'd rather be that man than the fellows who sit on the bank and watch him. That is why I am building the Snark. I am so made. I like, that is all. The trip around the world means big moments of living. Bear with me a moment and look at it. Here am I, a little animal called a man — a bit of vitalized matter, one hundred and sixty-five pounds of meat and blood, nerve, sinew, bones, and brain, — all of it soft and tender, susceptible to hurt, fallible, and frail. I strike a light back-handed blow on the nose of an obstreperous horse, and a bone in my hand is broken. I put my head under the water for five minutes, and I am drowned. I fall twenty feet through the air, and I am smashed. I am a creature of temperature. A few degrees one way, and my fingers and ears and toes blacken and drop off. A few degrees the other way, and my skin blisters and shrivels away from the raw, quivering flesh. A few additional degrees either way, and the life and the light in me go out. A drop of poison injected into my body from a snake, and I cease to move — for ever I cease to move. A splinter of lead from a rifle enters my head, and I am wrapped around in the eternal blackness.

Fallible and frail, a bit of pulsating, jelly-like life — it is all I am. About me are the great natural forces — colossal menaces, Titans of destruction, unsentimental monsters that have less concern for me than I have for the grain of sand I crush under my foot. They have no concern at all for me. They do not know me. They are unconscious, unmerciful, and unmoral. They are the cyclones and tornadoes, lightning flashes and cloud-bursts, tide-rips and tidal waves, undertows and waterspouts, great whirls and sucks and eddies, earthquakes and volcanoes, surfs that thunder on rock-ribbed coasts and seas that leap aboard the largest crafts that float, crushing humans to pulp or licking them off into the sea and to death — and these insensate monsters do not know that tiny sensitive creature, all nerves and weaknesses, whom men call Jack London, and who himself thinks he is all right and quite a superior being.

In the maze and chaos of the conflict of these vast and draughty Titans, it is for me to thread my precarious way. The bit of life that is I will exult over them. The bit of life that is I, in so far as it succeeds in baffling them or in bitting them to its service, will imagine that it is godlike. It is good to ride the tempest and feel godlike. I dare to assert that for a finite speck of pulsating jelly to feel godlike is a far more glorious feeling than for a god to feel godlike.

Here is the sea, the wind, and the wave. Here are the seas, the winds, and the waves of all the world. Here is ferocious environment. And here is difficult adjustment, the achievement of which is delight to the small quivering vanity that is I. I like. I am so made. It is my own particular form of vanity, that is all.

There is also another side to the voyage of the Snark. Being alive, I want to see, and all the world is a bigger thing to see than one small town or valley. We have done little outlining of the voyage. Only one thing is definite, and that is that our first port of call will be Honolulu. Beyond a few general ideas, we have no thought of our next port after Hawaii. We shall make up our minds as we get nearer, in a general way we know that we shall wander through the South Seas, take in Samoa, New Zealand, Tasmania, Australia, New Guinea, Borneo, and Sumatra, and go on up through the Philippines to Japan. Then will come Korea, China, India, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean. After that the voyage becomes too vague to describe, though we know a number of things we shall surely do, and we expect to spend from one to several months in every country in Europe.

The Snark is to be sailed. There will be a gasolene engine on board, but it will be used only in case of emergency, such as in bad water among reefs and shoals, where a sudden calm in a swift current leaves a sailing-boat helpless. The rig of the Snark is to be what is called the “ketch.” The ketch rig is a compromise between the yawl and the schooner. Of late years the yawl rig has proved the best for cruising. The ketch retains the cruising virtues of the yawl, and in addition manages to embrace a few of the sailing virtues of the schooner. The foregoing must be taken with a pinch of salt. It is all theory in my head. I’ve never sailed a ketch, nor even seen one. The theory commends itself to me. Wait till I get out on the ocean, then I’ll be able to tell more about the cruising and sailing qualities of the ketch.

As originally planned, the Snark was to be forty feet long on the water-line. But we discovered there was no space for a bath-room, and for that reason we have increased her length to forty-five feet. Her greatest beam is fifteen feet. She has no house and no hold. There is six feet of headroom, and the deck is unbroken save for two companionways and a hatch for'ard. The fact that there is no house to break the strength of the deck will make us feel safer in case great seas thunder their tons of water down on board. A large and roomy cockpit, sunk beneath the deck, with high rail and self-bailing, will make our rough-weather days and nights more comfortable.

There will be no crew. Or, rather, Charmian, Roscoe, and I are the crew. We are going to do the thing with our own hands. With our own hands we're going to circumnavigate the globe. Sail her or sink her, with our own hands we'll do it. Of course there will be a cook and a cabin-boy. Why should we stew over a stove, wash dishes, and set the table? We could stay on land if we wanted to do those things. Besides, we've got to stand watch and work the ship. And also, I've got to work at my trade of writing in order to feed us and to get new sails and tackle and keep the Snark in efficient working order. And then there's the ranch; I've got to keep the vineyard, orchard, and hedges growing.

When we increased the length of the Snark in order to get space for a bath-room, we found that all the space was not required by the bath-room. Because of this, we increased the size of the engine. Seventy horse-power our engine is, and since we expect it to drive us along at a nine-knot clip, we do not know the name of a river with a current swift enough to defy us.

We expect to do a lot of inland work. The smallness of the Snark makes this possible. When we enter the land, out go the masts and on goes the engine. There are the canals of China, and the Yang-tse River. We shall spend months on them if we can get permission from the government. That will be the one obstacle to our inland voyaging — governmental permission. But if we can get that permission, there is scarcely a limit to the inland voyaging we can do.

When we come to the Nile, why we can go up the Nile. We can go up the Danube to Vienna, up the Thames to London, and we can go up the Seine to Paris and moor opposite the Latin Quarter with a bow-line out to Notre Dame and a stern-line fast to the Morgue. We can leave the Mediterranean and go up the Rhone to Lyons, there enter the Saone, cross from the Saone to the Maine through the Canal de Bourgogne, and from the Marne enter the Seine and go out the Seine at Havre. When we cross the Atlantic to the United States, we can go up the Hudson, pass through the Erie Canal, cross the Great Lakes, leave Lake Michigan at Chicago, gain the Mississippi by way of the Illinois River and the connecting canal, and go down the

Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. And then there are the great rivers of South America. We'll know something about geography when we get back to California.

People that build houses are often sore perplexed; but if they enjoy the strain of it, I'll advise them to build a boat like the Snark. Just consider, for a moment, the strain of detail. Take the engine. What is the best kind of engine — the two cycle? three cycle? four cycle? My lips are mutilated with all kinds of strange jargon, my mind is mutilated with still stranger ideas and is foot-sore and weary from travelling in new and rocky realms of thought. — Ignition methods; shall it be make-and-break or jump-spark? Shall dry cells or storage batteries be used? A storage battery commends itself, but it requires a dynamo. How powerful a dynamo? And when we have installed a dynamo and a storage battery, it is simply ridiculous not to light the boat with electricity. Then comes the discussion of how many lights and how many candle-power. It is a splendid idea. But electric lights will demand a more powerful storage battery, which, in turn, demands a more powerful dynamo.

And now that we've gone in for it, why not have a searchlight? It would be tremendously useful. But the searchlight needs so much electricity that when it runs it will put all the other lights out of commission. Again we travel the weary road in the quest after more power for storage battery and dynamo. And then, when it is finally solved, some one asks, "What if the engine breaks down?" And we collapse. There are the sidelights, the binnacle light, and the anchor light. Our very lives depend upon them. So we have to fit the boat throughout with oil lamps as well.

But we are not done with that engine yet. The engine is powerful. We are two small men and a small woman. It will break our hearts and our backs to hoist anchor by hand. Let the engine do it. And then comes the problem of how to convey power for'ard from the engine to the winch. And by the time all this is settled, we redistribute the allotments of space to the engine-room, galley, bath-room, state-rooms, and cabin, and begin all over again. And when we have shifted the engine, I send off a telegram of gibberish to its makers at New York, something like this: Toggle-joint abandoned change thrust-bearing accordingly distance from forward side of flywheel to face of stern post sixteen feet six inches.

Just potter around in quest of the best steering gear, or try to decide whether you will set up your rigging with old-fashioned lanyards or with turnbuckles, if you want strain of detail. Shall the binnacle be located in front of the wheel in the centre of the beam, or shall it be located to one side in front of the wheel? — there's room right there for a library of sea-dog controversy. Then there's the problem of gasolene, fifteen hundred gallons of it — what are the safest ways to tank it and pipe it? and which is the best fire-extinguisher for a gasolene fire? Then there is the pretty problem of the life-boat and the stowage of the same. And when that is finished, come the cook and cabin-boy to confront one with nightmare possibilities. It is a small boat, and we'll be packed close together. The servant-girl problem of landsmen pales to insignificance. We did select one cabin-boy, and by that much were our troubles eased. And then the cabin-boy fell in love and resigned.

And in the meanwhile how is a fellow to find time to study navigation — when he is divided between these problems and the earning of the money wherewith to settle the problems? Neither Roscoe nor I know anything about navigation, and the summer is gone, and we are about to start, and the problems are thicker than ever, and the treasury is stuffed with emptiness. Well, anyway, it takes years to learn seamanship, and both of us are seamen. If we don't find the time, we'll lay in the books and instruments and teach ourselves navigation on the ocean between San Francisco and Hawaii.

There is one unfortunate and perplexing phase of the voyage of the Snark. Roscoe, who is to be my co-navigator, is a follower of one, Cyrus R. Teed. Now Cyrus R. Teed has a different cosmology from the one generally accepted, and Roscoe shares his views. Wherefore Roscoe believes that the surface of the earth is concave and that we live on the inside of a hollow sphere. Thus, though we shall sail on the one boat, the Snark, Roscoe will journey around the world on the inside, while I shall journey around on the outside. But of this, more anon. We threaten to be of the one mind before the voyage is completed. I am confident that I shall convert him into making the journey on the outside, while he is equally confident that before we arrive back in San Francisco I shall be on the inside of the earth. How he is going to get me through the crust I don't know, but Roscoe is ay a masterful man.

P.S. — That engine! While we've got it, and the dynamo, and the storage battery, why not have an ice-machine? Ice in the tropics! It is more necessary than bread. Here goes for the ice-machine! Now I am plunged into chemistry, and my lips hurt, and my mind hurts, and how am I ever to find the time to study navigation?

CHAPTER II — THE INCONCEIVABLE AND MONSTROUS

"Spare no money," I said to Roscoe. "Let everything on the Snark be of the best. And never mind decoration. Plain pine boards is good enough finishing for me. But put the money into the construction. Let the Snark be as staunch and strong as any boat afloat. Never mind what it costs to make her staunch and strong; you see that she is made staunch and strong, and I'll go on writing and earning the money to pay for it."

And I did . . . as well as I could; for the Snark ate up money faster than I could earn it. In fact, every little while I had to borrow money with which to supplement my earnings. Now I borrowed one thousand dollars, now I borrowed two thousand dollars, and now I borrowed five thousand dollars. And all the time I went on working every day and sinking the earnings in the venture. I worked Sundays as well, and I took no holidays. But it was worth it. Every time I thought of the Snark I knew she was worth it.

For know, gentle reader, the staunchness of the Snark. She is forty-five feet long on the waterline. Her garboard strake is three inches thick; her planking two and one-half inches thick; her deck-planking two inches thick and in all her planking there are no butts. I know, for I ordered that planking especially from Puget Sound. Then the Snark has four water-tight compartments, which is to say that her length is broken by three water-tight bulkheads. Thus, no matter how large a leak the Snark may spring, Only one compartment can fill with water. The other three compartments will keep her afloat, anyway, and, besides, will enable us to mend the leak. There is another virtue in these bulkheads. The last compartment of all, in the very stern, contains six tanks that carry over one thousand gallons of gasolene. Now gasolene is a very dangerous article to carry in bulk on a small craft far out on the wide ocean. But when the six tanks that do not leak are themselves contained in a compartment hermetically sealed off from the rest of the boat, the danger will be seen to be very small indeed.

The Snark is a sail-boat. She was built primarily to sail. But incidentally, as an auxiliary, a seventy-horse-power engine was installed. This is a good, strong engine. I ought to know. I paid for it to come out all the way from New York City. Then, on deck, above the engine, is a windlass. It is a magnificent affair. It weighs several hundred pounds and takes up no end of deck-room. You see, it is ridiculous to hoist up anchor by hand-power when there is a seventy-horse-power engine on board. So we installed the windlass, transmitting power to it from the engine by means of a gear and castings specially made in a San Francisco foundry.

The Snark was made for comfort, and no expense was spared in this regard. There is the bath-room, for instance, small and compact, it is true, but containing all the conveniences of any bath-room upon land. The bath-room is a beautiful dream of schemes and devices, pumps, and levers, and sea-valves. Why, in the course of its building, I used to lie awake nights thinking about that bath-room. And next to the bathroom come the life-boat and the launch. They are carried on deck, and they take up what little space might have been left us for exercise. But then, they beat life insurance; and the prudent man, even if he has built as staunch and strong a craft as the Snark, will see to it that he has a good life-boat as well. And ours is a good one. It is a dandy. It was stipulated to cost one hundred and fifty dollars, and when I came to pay the bill, it turned out to be three hundred and ninety-five dollars. That shows how good a life-boat it is.

I could go on at great length relating the various virtues and excellences of the Snark, but I refrain. I have bragged enough as it is, and I have bragged to a purpose, as will be seen before my tale is ended. And please remember its title, “The Inconceivable and Monstrous.” It was planned that the Snark should sail on October 1, 1906. That she did not so sail was inconceivable and monstrous. There was no valid reason for not sailing except that she was not ready to sail, and there was no conceivable reason why she was not ready. She was promised on November first, on November fifteenth, on December first; and yet she was never ready. On December first Charmian and I left the sweet, clean Sonoma country and came down to live in the stifling city — but not for long, oh, no, only for two weeks, for we would sail on December fifteenth. And I guess we ought to know, for Roscoe said so, and it was on his advice that we came to the city to stay two weeks. Alas, the two weeks went by, four weeks went by, six weeks went by, eight weeks went by, and we were farther away from sailing than ever. Explain it? Who? — me? I can’t. It is the one thing in all my life that I have backed down on. There is no explaining it; if there were, I’d do it. I, who am an artisan of speech, confess my inability to explain why the Snark was not ready. As I have said, and as I must repeat, it was inconceivable and monstrous.

The eight weeks became sixteen weeks, and then, one day, Roscoe cheered us up by saying: “If we don’t sail before April first, you can use my head for a football.”

Two weeks later he said, “I’m getting my head in training for that match.”

“Never mind,” Charmian and I said to each other; “think of the wonderful boat it is going to be when it is completed.”

Whereat we would rehearse for our mutual encouragement the manifold virtues and excellences of the Snark. Also, I would borrow more money, and I would get down closer to my desk and write harder, and I refused heroically to take a Sunday off and go out into the hills with my friends. I was building a boat, and by the eternal it was going to be a boat, and a boat spelled out all in capitals — B — O — A--T; and no matter what it cost I didn’t care. So long as it was a BOAT.

And, oh, there is one other excellence of the Snark, upon which I must brag, namely, her bow. No sea could ever come over it. It laughs at the sea, that bow does; it challenges the sea; it snorts defiance at the sea. And withal it is a beautiful bow; the lines of it are dreamlike; I doubt if ever a boat was blessed with a more beautiful and at the same time a more capable bow. It was made to punch storms. To touch that bow is to rest one’s hand on the cosmic nose of things. To look at it is to realize that expense cut no figure where it was concerned. And every time our sailing was delayed, or a new expense was tacked on, we thought of that wonderful bow and were content.

The Snark is a small boat. When I figured seven thousand dollars as her generous cost, I was both generous and correct. I have built barns and houses, and I know the peculiar trait such things have of running past their estimated cost. This knowledge was mine, was already mine, when I estimated the probable cost of the building of the Snark at seven thousand dollars. Well, she cost thirty thousand. Now don’t ask me, please. It is the truth. I signed the cheques and I raised the money. Of course there is no explaining it, inconceivable and monstrous is what it is, as you will agree, I know, ere my tale is done.

Then there was the matter of delay. I dealt with forty-seven different kinds of union men and with one hundred and fifteen different firms. And not one union man and not one firm of all the union men and all the firms ever delivered anything at the time agreed upon, nor ever was on time for anything except pay-day and bill-collection. Men pledged me their immortal souls that they would deliver a certain thing on a certain date; as a rule, after such pledging, they rarely exceeded being three months late in delivery. And so it went, and Charmian and I consoled each other by saying what a splendid boat the Snark was, so staunch and strong; also, we would get into the small boat and row around the Snark, and gloat over her unbelievably wonderful bow.

"Think," I would say to Charmian, "of a gale off the China coast, and of the Snark hove to, that splendid bow of hers driving into the storm. Not a drop will come over that bow. She'll be as dry as a feather, and we'll be all below playing whist while the gale howls."

And Charmian would press my hand enthusiastically and exclaim: "It's worth every bit of it — the delay, and expense, and worry, and all the rest. Oh, what a truly wonderful boat!"

Whenever I looked at the bow of the Snark or thought of her water-tight compartments, I was encouraged. Nobody else, however, was encouraged. My friends began to make bets against the various sailing dates of the Snark. Mr. Wiget, who was left behind in charge of our Sonoma ranch was the first to cash his bet. He collected on New Year's Day, 1907. After that the bets came fast and furious. My friends surrounded me like a gang of harpies, making bets against every sailing date I set. I was rash, and I was stubborn. I bet, and I bet, and I continued to bet; and I paid them all. Why, the women-kind of my friends grew so brave that those among them who never bet before began to bet with me. And I paid them, too.

"Never mind," said Charmian to me; "just think of that bow and of being hove to on the China Seas."

"You see," I said to my friends, when I paid the latest bunch of wagers, "neither trouble nor cash is being spared in making the Snark the most seaworthy craft that ever sailed out through the Golden Gate — that is what causes all the delay."

In the meantime editors and publishers with whom I had contracts pestered me with demands for explanations. But how could I explain to them, when I was unable to explain to myself, or when there was nobody, not even Roscoe, to explain to me? The newspapers began to laugh at me, and to publish rhymes anent the Snark's departure with refrains like, "Not yet, but soon." And Charmian cheered me up by reminding me of the bow, and I went to a banker and borrowed five thousand more. There was one recompense for the delay, however. A friend of mine, who happens to be a critic, wrote a roast of me, of all I had done, and of all I ever was going to do; and he planned to have it published after I was out on the ocean. I was still on shore when it came out, and he has been busy explaining ever since.

And the time continued to go by. One thing was becoming apparent, namely, that it was impossible to finish the Snark in San Francisco. She had been so long in the building that she was beginning to break down and wear out. In fact, she had reached the stage where she was breaking down faster than she could be repaired. She had become a joke. Nobody took her seriously; least of all the men who worked on her. I said we would sail just as she was and finish building her in Honolulu. Promptly she sprang a leak that had to be attended to before we could sail. I started her for the boat-ways. Before she got to them she was caught between two huge barges and received a vigorous crushing. We got her on the ways, and, part way along, the ways spread and dropped her through, stern-first, into the mud.

It was a pretty tangle, a job for wreckers, not boat-builders. There are two high tides every twenty-four hours, and at every high tide, night and day, for a week, there were two steam tugs pulling and hauling on the Snark. There she was, stuck, fallen between the ways and standing on her stern. Next, and while still in that predicament, we started to use the gears and castings made in the local foundry whereby power was conveyed from the engine to the windlass. It was the first time we ever tried to use that windlass. The castings had flaws; they shattered asunder, the gears ground together, and the windlass was out of commission. Following upon that, the seventy-horse-power engine went out of commission. This engine came from New York; so did its bed-plate; there was a flaw in the bed-plate; there were a lot of flaws in the bed-plate; and the seventy-horse-power engine broke away from its shattered foundations, reared up in the air, smashed all connections and fastenings, and fell over on its side. And the Snark continued to stick between the spread ways, and the two tugs continued to haul vainly upon her.

"Never mind," said Charmian, "think of what a staunch, strong boat she is."

“Yes,” said I, “and of that beautiful bow.”

So we took heart and went at it again. The ruined engine was lashed down on its rotten foundation; the smashed castings and cogs of the power transmission were taken down and stored away — all for the purpose of taking them to Honolulu where repairs and new castings could be made. Somewhere in the dim past the Snark had received on the outside one coat of white paint. The intention of the colour was still evident, however, when one got it in the right light. The Snark had never received any paint on the inside. On the contrary, she was coated inches thick with the grease and tobacco-juice of the multitudinous mechanics who had toiled upon her. Never mind, we said; the grease and filth could be planed off, and later, when we fetched Honolulu, the Snark could be painted at the same time as she was being rebuilt.

By main strength and sweat we dragged the Snark off from the wrecked ways and laid her alongside the Oakland City Wharf. The drays brought all the outfit from home, the books and blankets and personal luggage. Along with this, everything else came on board in a torrent of confusion — wood and coal, water and water-tanks, vegetables, provisions, oil, the life-boat and the launch, all our friends, all the friends of our friends and those who claimed to be their friends, to say nothing of some of the friends of the friends of the friends of our crew. Also there were reporters, and photographers, and strangers, and cranks, and finally, and over all, clouds of coal-dust from the wharf.

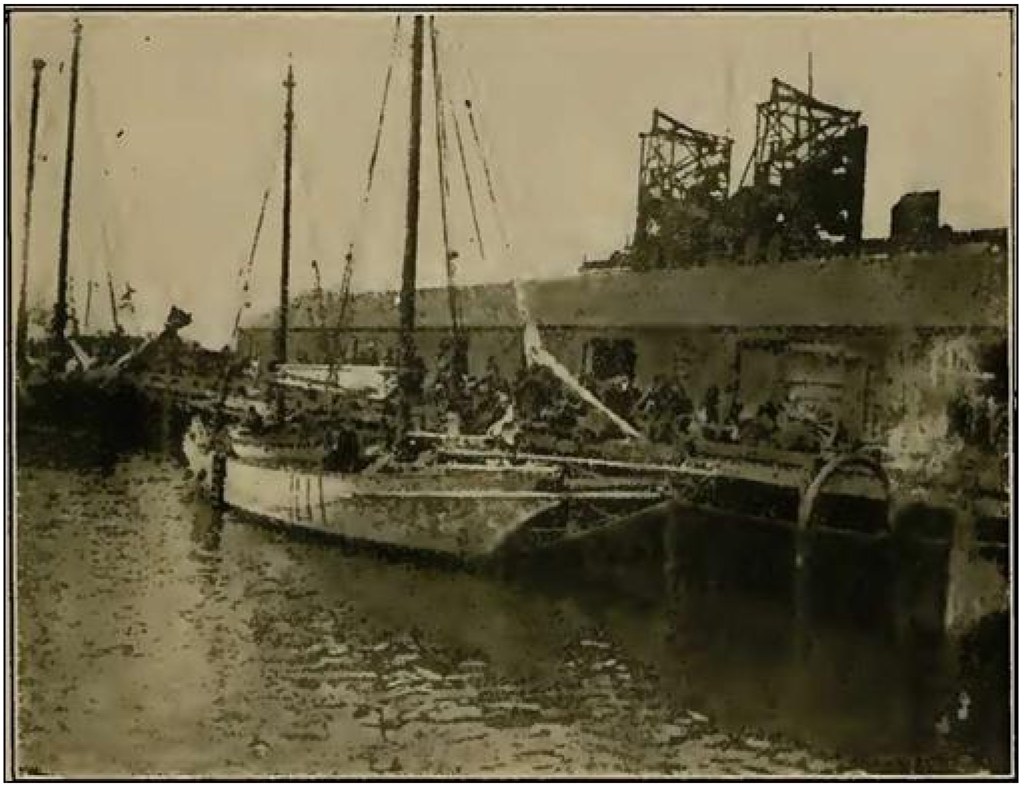

We were to sail Sunday at eleven, and Saturday afternoon had arrived. The crowd on the wharf and the coal-dust were thicker than ever. In one pocket I carried a cheque-book, a fountain-pen, a dater, and a blotter; in another pocket I carried between one and two thousand dollars in paper money and gold. I was ready for the creditors, cash for the small ones and cheques for the large ones, and was waiting only for Roscoe to arrive with the balances of the accounts of the hundred and fifteen firms who had delayed me so many months. And then-

And then the inconceivable and monstrous happened once more. Before Roscoe could arrive there arrived another man. He was a United States marshal. He tacked a notice on the Snark's brave mast so that all on the wharf could read that the Snark had been libelled for debt. The marshal left a little old man in charge of the Snark, and himself went away. I had no longer any control of the Snark, nor of her wonderful bow. The little old man was now her lord and master, and I learned that I was paying him three dollars a day for being lord and master. Also, I learned the name of the man who had libelled the Snark. It was Sellers; the debt was two hundred and thirty-two dollars; and the deed was no more than was to be expected from the possessor of such a name. Sellers! Ye gods! Sellers!

But who under the sun was Sellers? I looked in my cheque-book and saw that two weeks before I had made him out a cheque for five hundred dollars. Other cheque-books showed me that during the many months of the building of the Snark I had paid him several thousand dollars. Then why in the name of common decency hadn't he tried to collect his miserable little balance instead of libelling the Snark? I thrust my hands into my pockets, and in one pocket encountered the cheque-hook and the dater and the pen, and in the other pocket the gold money and the paper money. There was the wherewithal to settle his pitiful account a few score of times and over — why hadn't he given me a chance? There was no explanation; it was merely the inconceivable and monstrous.

To make the matter worse, the Snark had been libelled late Saturday afternoon; and though I sent lawyers and agents all over Oakland and San Francisco, neither United States judge, nor United States marshal, nor Mr. Sellers, nor Mr. Sellers' attorney, nor anybody could be found. They were all out of town for the weekend. And so the Snark did not sail Sunday morning at eleven. The little old man was still in charge, and he said no. And Charmian and I walked out on an opposite wharf and took consolation in the Snark's wonderful bow and thought of all the gales and typhoons it would proudly punch.

"A bourgeois trick," I said to Charmian, speaking of Mr. Sellers and his libel; "a petty trader's panic. But never mind; our troubles will cease when once we are away from this and out on the wide ocean."

And in the end we sailed away, on Tuesday morning, April 23, 1907. We started rather lame, I confess. We had to hoist anchor by hand, because the power transmission was a wreck. Also, what remained of our seventy-horse-power engine was lashed down for ballast on the bottom of the Snark. But what of such things? They could be fixed in Honolulu, and in the meantime think of the magnificent rest of the boat! It is true, the engine in the launch wouldn't run, and the life-boat leaked like a sieve; but then they weren't the Snark; they were mere appurtenances. The things that counted were the water-tight bulkheads, the solid planking without butts, the bath-room devices — they were the Snark. And then there was, greatest of all, that noble, wind-punching bow.

We sailed out through the Golden Gate and set our course south toward that part of the Pacific where we could hope to pick up with the north-east trades. And right away things began to happen. I had calculated that youth was the stuff for a voyage like that of the Snark, and I had taken three youths — the engineer, the cook, and the cabin-boy. My calculation was only two-thirds OFF; I had forgotten to calculate on seasick youth, and I had two of them, the cook and the cabin boy. They immediately took to their bunks, and that was the end of their usefulness for a week to come. It will be understood, from the foregoing, that we did not have the hot meals we might have had, nor were things kept clean and orderly down below. But it did not matter very much anyway, for we quickly discovered that our box of oranges had at some time been frozen; that our box of apples was mushy and spoiling; that the crate of cabbages, spoiled before it was ever delivered to us, had to go overboard instanter; that kerosene had been spilled on the carrots, and that the turnips were woody and the beets rotten, while the kindling was dead wood that wouldn't burn, and the coal, delivered in rotten potato-sacks, had spilled all over the deck and was washing through the scuppers.

But what did it matter? Such things were mere accessories. There was the boat — she was all right, wasn't she? I strolled along the deck and in one minute counted fourteen butts in the beautiful planking ordered specially from Puget Sound in order that there should be no butts in it. Also, that deck leaked, and it leaked badly. It drowned Roscoe out of his bunk and ruined the tools in the engine-room, to say nothing of the provisions it ruined in the galley. Also, the sides of the Snark leaked, and the bottom leaked, and we had to pump her every day to keep her afloat. The floor of the galley is a couple of feet above the inside bottom of the Snark; and yet I have stood on the floor of the galley, trying to snatch a cold bite, and been wet to the knees by the water churning around inside four hours after the last pumping.

Then those magnificent water-tight compartments that cost so much time and money — well, they weren't water-tight after all. The water moved free as the air from one compartment to another; furthermore, a strong smell of gasolene from the after compartment leads me to suspect that some one or more of the half-dozen tanks there stored have sprung a leak. The tanks leak, and they are not hermetically sealed in their compartment. Then there was the bath-room with its pumps and levers and sea-valves — it went out of commission inside the first twenty hours. Powerful iron levers broke off short in one's hand when one tried to pump with them. The bathroom was the swiftest wreck of any portion of the Snark.

And the iron-work on the Snark, no matter what its source, proved to be mush. For instance, the bed-plate of the engine came from New York, and it was mush; so were the casting and gears for the windlass that came from San Francisco. And finally, there was the wrought iron used in the rigging, that carried away in all directions when the first strains were put upon it. Wrought iron, mind you, and it snapped like macaroni.

A gooseneck on the gaff of the mainsail broke short off. We replaced it with the gooseneck from the gaff of the storm trysail, and the second gooseneck broke short off inside fifteen minutes of use, and, mind you, it had been taken from the gaff of the storm trysail, upon which we would have depended in time of storm. At the present moment the Snark trails her mainsail like a broken wing, the gooseneck being replaced by a rough lashing. We'll see if we can get honest iron in Honolulu.

Man had betrayed us and sent us to sea in a sieve, but the Lord must have loved us, for we had calm weather in which to learn that we must pump every day in order to keep afloat, and that more trust could be placed in a wooden toothpick than in the most massive piece of iron to be found aboard. As the staunchness and the strength of the Snark went glimmering, Charmian and I pinned our faith more and more to the Snark's wonderful bow. There was nothing else left to pin to. It was all inconceivable and monstrous, we knew, but that bow, at least, was rational. And then, one evening, we started to heave to.

How shall I describe it? First of all, for the benefit of the tyro, let me explain that heaving to is that sea manoeuvre which, by means of short and balanced canvas, compels a vessel to ride bow-on to wind and sea. When the wind is too strong, or the sea is too high, a vessel of the size of the Snark can heave to with ease, whereupon there is no more work to do on deck. Nobody needs to steer. The lookout is superfluous. All hands can go below and sleep or play whist.

Well, it was blowing half of a small summer gale, when I told Roscoe we'd heave to. Night was coming on. I had been steering nearly all day, and all hands on deck (Roscoe and Bert and Charmian) were tired, while all hands below were seasick. It happened that we had already put two reefs in the big mainsail. The flying-jib and the jib were taken in, and a reef put in the fore-staysail. The mizzen was also taken in. About this time the flying jib-boom buried itself in a sea and broke short off. I started to put the wheel down in order to heave to. The Snark at the moment was rolling in the trough. She continued rolling in the trough. I put the spokes down harder and harder. She never budged from the trough. (The trough, gentle reader, is the most dangerous position all in which to lay a vessel.) I put the wheel hard down, and still the Snark rolled in the trough. Eight points was the nearest I could get her to the wind. I had Roscoe and Bert come in on the main-sheet. The Snark rolled on in the trough, now putting her rail under on one side and now under on the other side.

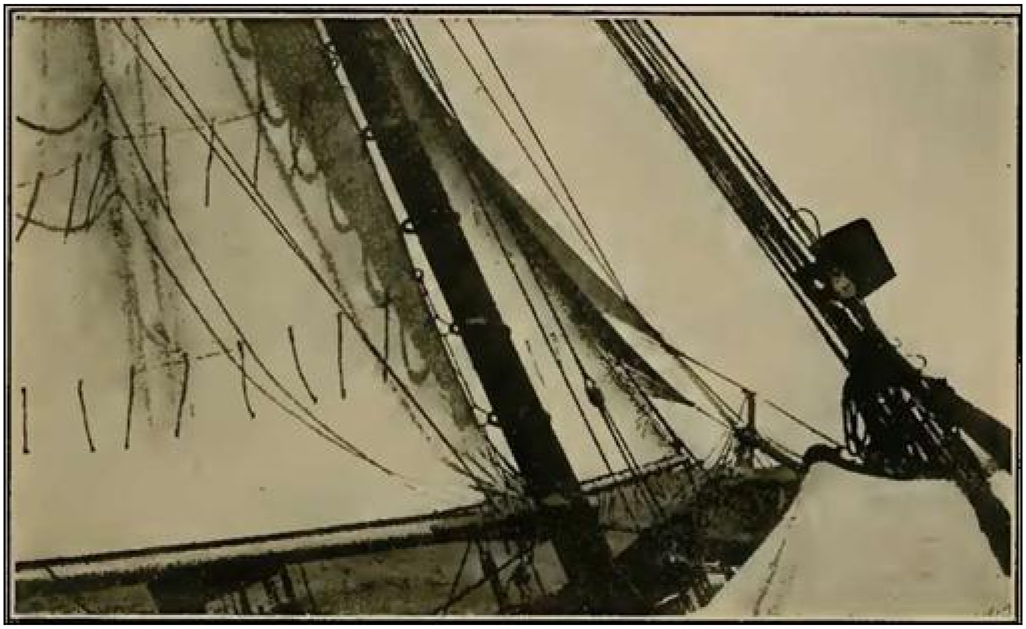

Again the inconceivable and monstrous was showing its grizzly head. It was grotesque, impossible. I refused to believe it. Under double-reefed mainsail and single-reefed staysail the Snark refused to heave to. We flattened the mainsail down. It did not alter the Snark's course a tenth of a degree. We slacked the mainsail off with no more result. We set a storm trysail on the mizzen, and took in the mainsail. No change. The Snark roiled on in the trough. That beautiful bow of hers refused to come up and face the wind.

Next we took in the reefed staysail. Thus, the only bit of canvas left on her was the storm trysail on the mizzen. If anything would bring her bow up to the wind, that would. Maybe you won't believe me when I say it failed, but I do say it failed. And I say it failed because I saw it fail, and not because I believe it failed. I don't believe it did fail. It is unbelievable, and I am not telling you what I believe; I am telling you what I saw.

Now, gentle reader, what would you do if you were on a small boat, rolling in the trough of the sea, a trysail on that small boat's stern that was unable to swing the bow up into the wind? Get out the sea-anchor. It's just what we did. We had a patent one, made to order and warranted not to dive. Imagine a hoop of steel that serves to keep open the mouth of a large, conical, canvas bag, and you have a sea-anchor. Well, we made a line fast to the sea-anchor and to the bow of the Snark, and then dropped the sea-anchor overboard. It promptly dived. We had a tripping line on it, so we tripped the sea-anchor and hauled it in. We attached a big timber as a float, and dropped the sea-anchor over again. This time it floated. The line to the bow grew taut. The trysail on the mizzen tended to swing the bow into the wind, but, in spite of this tendency, the Snark calmly took that sea-anchor in her teeth, and went on ahead, dragging it after her, still in the trough of the sea. And there you are. We even took in the trysail, hoisted the full mizzen in its place, and hauled the full mizzen down flat, and the Snark wallowed in the trough and dragged the sea-anchor behind her. Don't believe me. I don't believe it myself. I am merely telling you what I saw.

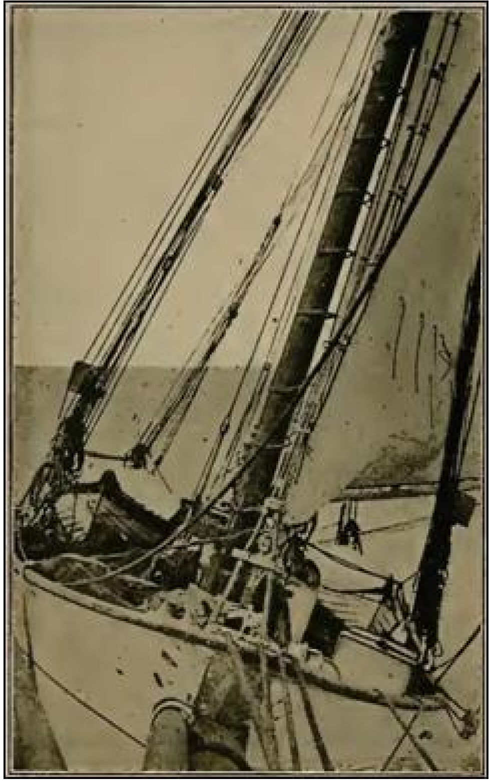

Now I leave it to you. Who ever heard of a sailing-boat that wouldn't heave to? — that wouldn't heave to with a sea-anchor to help it? Out of my brief experience with boats I know I never did. And I stood on deck and looked on the naked face of the inconceivable and monstrous — the Snark that wouldn't heave to. A stormy night with broken moonlight had come on.

There was a splash of wet in the air, and up to windward there was a promise of rain-squalls; and then there was the trough of the sea, cold and cruel in the moonlight, in which the Snark complacently rolled. And then we took in the sea-anchor and the mizzen, hoisted the reefed staysail, ran the Snark off before it, and went below — not to the hot meal that should have awaited us, but to skate across the slush and slime on the cabin floor, where cook and cabin-boy lay like dead men in their bunks, and to lie down in our own bunks, with our clothes on ready for a call, and to listen to the bilge-water spouting knee-high on the galley floor.

In the Bohemian Club of San Francisco there are some crack sailors. I know, because I heard them pass judgment on the Snark during the process of her building. They found only one vital thing the matter with her, and on this they were all agreed, namely, that she could not run. She was all right in every particular, they said, except that I'd never be able to run her before it in a stiff wind and sea. "Her lines," they explained enigmatically, "it is the fault of her lines. She simply cannot be made to run, that is all." Well, I wish I'd only had those crack sailors of the Bohemian Club on board the Snark the other night for them to see for themselves their one, vital, unanimous judgment absolutely reversed. Run? It is the one thing the Snark does to perfection. Run? She ran with a sea-anchor fast for'ard and a full mizzen flattened down aft. Run? At the present moment, as I write this, we are bowling along before it, at a six-knot clip, in the north-east trades. Quite a tidy bit of sea is running. There is nobody at the wheel, the wheel is not even lashed and is set over a half-spoke weather helm. To be precise, the wind is north-east; the Snark's mizzen is furled, her mainsail is over to starboard, her head-sheets are hauled flat: and the Snark's course is south-south-west. And yet there are men who have sailed the seas for forty years and who hold that no boat can run before it without being steered. They'll call me a liar when they read this; it's what they called Captain Slocum when he said the same of his Spray.

As regards the future of the Snark I'm all at sea. I don't know. If I had the money or the credit, I'd build another Snark that WOULD heave to. But I am at the end of my resources. I've got to put up with the present Snark or quit — and I can't quit. So I guess I'll have to try to get along with heaving the Snark to stern first. I am waiting for the next gale to see how it will work. I think it can be done. It all depends on how her stern takes the seas. And who knows but that some wild morning on the China Sea, some graybeard skipper will stare, rub his incredulous eyes and stare again, at the spectacle of a weird, small craft very much like the Snark, hove to stern-first and riding out the gale?

P.S. On my return to California after the voyage, I learned that the Snark was forty-three feet on the water-line instead of forty-five. This was due to the fact that the builder was not on speaking terms with the tape-line or two-foot rule.

CHAPTER III — ADVENTURE

No, adventure is not dead, and in spite of the steam engine and of Thomas Cook & Son. When the announcement of the contemplated voyage of the Snark was made, young men of “roving disposition” proved to be legion, and young women as well — to say nothing of the elderly men and women who volunteered for the voyage. Why, among my personal friends there were at least half a dozen who regretted their recent or imminent marriages; and there was one marriage I know of that almost failed to come off because of the Snark.

Every mail to me was burdened with the letters of applicants who were suffocating in the “man-stifled towns,” and it soon dawned upon me that a twentieth century Ulysses required a corps of stenographers to clear his correspondence before setting sail. No, adventure is certainly not dead — not while one receives letters that begin:

“There is no doubt that when you read this soul-plea from a female stranger in New York City,” etc.; and wherein one learns, a little farther on, that this female stranger weighs only ninety pounds, wants to be cabin-boy, and “yearns to see the countries of the world.”

The possession of a “passionate fondness for geography,” was the way one applicant expressed the wander-lust that was in him; while another wrote, “I am cursed with an eternal yearning to be always on the move, consequently this letter to you.” But best of all was the fellow who said he wanted to come because his feet itched.

There were a few who wrote anonymously, suggesting names of friends and giving said friends’ qualifications; but to me there was a hint of something sinister in such proceedings, and I went no further in the matter.

With two or three exceptions, all the hundreds that volunteered for my crew were very much in earnest. Many of them sent their photographs. Ninety per cent. offered to work in any capacity, and ninety-nine per cent. offered to work without salary. “Contemplating your voyage on the Snark,” said one, “and notwithstanding its attendant dangers, to accompany you (in any capacity whatever) would be the climax of my ambitions.” Which reminds me of the young fellow who was “seventeen years old and ambicious," and who, at the end of his letter, earnestly requested "but please do not let this git into the papers or magazines." Quite different was the one who said, "I would be willing to work like hell and not demand pay." Almost all of them wanted me to telegraph, at their expense, my acceptance of their services; and quite a number offered to put up a bond to guarantee their appearance on sailing date.

Some were rather vague in their own minds concerning the work to be done on the Snark; as, for instance, the one who wrote: "I am taking the liberty of writing you this note to find out if there would be any possibility of my going with you as one of the crew of your boat to make sketches and illustrations." Several, unaware of the needful work on a small craft like the Snark, offered to serve, as one of them phrased it, "as assistant in filing materials collected for books and novels." That's what one gets for being prolific.

"Let me give my qualifications for the job," wrote one. "I am an orphan living with my uncle, who is a hot revolutionary socialist and who says a man without the red blood of adventure is an animated dish-rag." Said another: "I can swim some, though I don't know any of the new strokes. But what is more important than strokes, the water is a friend of mine." "If I was put alone in a sail-boat, I could get her anywhere I wanted to go," was the qualification of a third — and a better qualification than the one that follows, “I have also watched the fish-boats unload.” But possibly the prize should go to this one, who very subtly conveys his deep knowledge of the world and life by saying: “My age, in years, is twenty-two.”

Then there were the simple straight-out, homely, and unadorned letters of young boys, lacking in the felicities of expression, it is true, but desiring greatly to make the voyage. These were the hardest of all to decline, and each time I declined one it seemed as if I had struck Youth a slap in the face. They were so earnest, these boys, they wanted so much to go. “I am sixteen but large for my age,” said one; and another, “Seventeen but large and healthy.” “I am as strong at least as the average boy of my size,” said an evident weakling. “Not afraid of any kind of work,” was what many said, while one in particular, to lure me no doubt by inexpensiveness, wrote: “I can pay my way to the Pacific coast, so that part would probably be acceptable to you.” “Going around the world is THE ONE THING I want to do,” said one, and it seemed to be the one thing that a few hundred wanted to do. “I have no one who cares whether I go or not,” was the pathetic note sounded by another. One had sent his photograph, and speaking of it, said, “I’m a homely-looking sort of a chap, but looks don’t always count.” And I am confident that the lad who wrote the following would have turned out all right: “My age is 19 years, but I am rather small and consequently won’t take up much room, but I’m tough as the devil.” And there was one thirteen-year-old applicant that Charmian and I fell in love with, and it nearly broke our hearts to refuse him.

But it must not be imagined that most of my volunteers were boys; on the contrary, boys constituted a very small proportion. There were men and women from every walk in life. Physicians, surgeons, and dentists offered in large numbers to come along, and, like all the professional men, offered to come without pay, to serve in any capacity, and to pay, even, for the privilege of so serving.

There was no end of compositors and reporters who wanted to come, to say nothing of experienced valets, chefs, and stewards. Civil engineers were keen on the voyage; "lady" companions galore cropped up for Charmian; while I was deluged with the applications of would-be private secretaries. Many high school and university students yearned for the voyage, and every trade in the working class developed a few applicants, the machinists, electricians, and engineers being especially strong on the trip. I was surprised at the number, who, in musty law offices, heard the call of adventure; and I was more than surprised by the number of elderly and retired sea captains who were still thralls to the sea. Several young fellows, with millions coming to them later on, were wild for the adventure, as were also several county superintendents of schools.

Fathers and sons wanted to come, and many men with their wives, to say nothing of the young woman stenographer who wrote: "Write immediately if you need me. I shall bring my typewriter on the first train." But the best of all is the following — observe the delicate way in which he worked in his wife: "I thought I would drop you a line of inquiry as to the possibility of making the trip with you, am 24 years of age, married and broke, and a trip of that kind would be just what we are looking for."

Come to think of it, for the average man it must be fairly difficult to write an honest letter of self-recommendation. One of my correspondents was so stumped that he began his letter with the words, “This is a hard task”; and, after vainly trying to describe his good points, he wound up with, “It is a hard job writing about one’s self.” Nevertheless, there was one who gave himself a most glowing and lengthy character, and in conclusion stated that he had greatly enjoyed writing it.

“But suppose this: your cabin-boy could run your engine, could repair it when out of order. Suppose he could take his turn at the wheel, could do any carpenter or machinist work. Suppose he is strong, healthy, and willing to work. Would you not rather have him than a kid that gets seasick and can’t do anything but wash dishes?” It was letters of this sort that I hated to decline. The writer of it, self-taught in English, had been only two years in the United States, and, as he said, “I am not wishing to go with you to earn my living, but I wish to learn and see.” At the time of writing to me he was a designer for one of the big motor manufacturing companies; he had been to sea quite a bit, and had been used all his life to the handling of small boats.

“I have a good position, but it matters not so with me as I prefer travelling,” wrote another. “As to salary, look at me, and if I am worth a dollar or two, all right, and if I am not, nothing said. As to my honesty and character, I shall be pleased to show you my employers. Never drink, no tobacco, but to be honest, I myself, after a little more experience, want to do a little writing.”

“I can assure you that I am eminently respectable, but find other respectable people tiresome.” The man who wrote the foregoing certainly had me guessing, and I am still wondering whether or not he’d have found me tiresome, or what the deuce he did mean.

“I have seen better days than what I am passing through to-day,” wrote an old salt, “but I have seen them a great deal worse also.”

But the willingness to sacrifice on the part of the man who wrote the following was so touching that I could not accept: “I have a father, a mother, brothers and sisters, dear friends and a lucrative position, and yet I will sacrifice all to become one of your crew.”

Another volunteer I could never have accepted was the finicky young fellow who, to show me how necessary it was that I should give him a chance, pointed out that “to go in the ordinary boat, be it schooner or steamer, would be impracticable, for I would have to mix among and live with the ordinary type of seamen, which as a rule is not a clean sort of life."

Then there was the young fellow of twenty-six, who had "run through the gamut of human emotions," and had "done everything from cooking to attending Stanford University," and who, at the present writing, was "A vaquero on a fifty-five-thousand-acre range." Quite in contrast was the modesty of the one who said, "I am not aware of possessing any particular qualities that would be likely to recommend me to your consideration. But should you be impressed, you might consider it worth a few minutes' time to answer. Otherwise, there's always work at the trade. Not expecting, but hoping, I remain, etc."

But I have held my head in both my hands ever since, trying to figure out the intellectual kinship between myself and the one who wrote: "Long before I knew of you, I had mixed political economy and history and deducted therefrom many of your conclusions in concrete."

Here, in its way, is one of the best, as it is the briefest, that I received: "If any of the present company signed on for cruise happens to get cold feet and you need one more who understands boating, engines, etc., would like to hear from you, etc." Here is another brief one: "Point blank, would like to have the job of cabin-boy on your trip around the world, or any other job on board. Am nineteen years old, weigh one hundred and forty pounds, and am an American."

And here is a good one from a man a "little over five feet long": "When I read about your manly plan of sailing around the world in a small boat with Mrs. London, I was so much rejoiced that I felt I was planning it myself, and I thought to write you about filling either position of cook or cabin-boy myself, but for some reason I did not do it, and I came to Denver from Oakland to join my friend's business last month, but everything is worse and unfavourable. But fortunately you have postponed your departure on account of the great earthquake, so I finally decided to propose you to let me fill either of the positions. I am not very strong, being a man of a little over five feet long, although I am of sound health and capability."

"I think I can add to your outfit an additional method of utilizing the power of the wind," wrote a well-wisher, "which, while not interfering with ordinary sails in light breezes, will enable you to use the whole force of the wind in its mightiest blows, so that even when its force is so great that you may have to take in every inch of canvas used in the ordinary way, you may carry the fullest spread with my method. With my attachment your craft could not be UPSET."

The foregoing letter was written in San Francisco under the date of April 16, 1906. And two days later, on April 18, came the Great Earthquake. And that's why I've got it in for that earthquake, for it made a refugee out of the man who wrote the letter, and prevented us from ever getting together.

Many of my brother socialists objected to my making the cruise, of which the following is typical: "The Socialist Cause and the millions of oppressed victims of Capitalism has a right and claim upon your life and services. If, however, you persist, then, when you swallow the last mouthful of salt chuck you can hold before sinking, remember that we at least protested."

One wanderer over the world who "could, if opportunity afforded, recount many unusual scenes and events," spent several pages ardently trying to get to the point of his letter, and at last achieved the following: "Still I am neglecting the point I set out to write you about. So will say at once that it has been stated in print that you and one or two others are going to take a cruize around the world a little fifty-or sixty-foot boat. I therefore cannot get myself to think that a man of your attainments and experience would attempt such a proceeding, which is nothing less than courting death in that way. And even if you were to escape for some time, your whole Person, and those with you would be bruised from the ceaseless motion of a craft of the above size, even if she were padded, a thing not usual at sea." Thank you, kind friend, thank you for that qualification, "a thing not usual at sea." Nor is this friend ignorant of the sea. As he says of himself, "I am not a land-lubber, and I have sailed every sea and ocean." And he winds up his letter with: "Although not wishing to offend, it would be madness to take any woman outside the bay even, in such a craft."

And yet, at the moment of writing this, Charmian is in her state-room at the typewriter, Martin is cooking dinner, Tochigi is setting the table, Roscoe and Bert are caulking the deck, and the Snark is steering herself some five knots an hour in a rattling good sea — and the Snark is not padded, either.

"Seeing a piece in the paper about your intended trip, would like to know if you would like a good crew, as there is six of us boys all good sailor men, with good discharges from the Navy and Merchant Service, all true Americans, all between the ages of 20 and 22, and at present are employed as riggers at the Union Iron Works, and would like very much to sail with you." — It was letters like this that made me regret the boat was not larger.

And here writes the one woman in all the world — outside of Charmian--for the cruise: "If you have not succeeded in getting a cook I would like very much to take the trip in that capacity. I am a woman of fifty, healthy and capable, and can do the work for the small company that compose the crew of the Snark. I am a very good cook and a very good sailor and something of a traveller, and the length of the voyage, if of ten years' duration, would suit me better than one. References, etc."

Some day, when I have made a lot of money, I'm going to build a big ship, with room in it for a thousand volunteers. They will have to do all the work of navigating that boat around the world, or they'll stay at home. I believe that they'll work the boat around the world, for I know that Adventure is not dead. I know Adventure is not dead because I have had a long and intimate correspondence with Adventure.

CHAPTER IV — FINDING ONE’S WAY ABOUT

“But,” our friends objected, “how dare you go to sea without a navigator on board? You’re not a navigator, are you?”

I had to confess that I was not a navigator, that I had never looked through a sextant in my life, and that I doubted if I could tell a sextant from a nautical almanac. And when they asked if Roscoe was a navigator, I shook my head. Roscoe resented this. He had glanced at the “Epitome,” bought for our voyage, knew how to use logarithm tables, had seen a sextant at some time, and, what of this and of his seafaring ancestry, he concluded that he did know navigation. But Roscoe was wrong, I still insist. When a young boy he came from Maine to California by way of the Isthmus of Panama, and that was the only time in his life that he was out of sight of land. He had never gone to a school of navigation, nor passed an examination in the same; nor had he sailed the deep sea and learned the art from some other navigator. He was a San Francisco Bay yachtsman, where land is always only several miles away and the art of navigation is never employed.

So the Snark started on her long voyage without a navigator. We beat through the Golden Gate on April 23, and headed for the Hawaiian Islands, twenty-one hundred sea-miles away as the gull flies. And the outcome was our justification. We arrived. And we arrived, furthermore, without any trouble, as you shall see; that is, without any trouble to amount to anything. To begin with, Roscoe tackled the navigating. He had the theory all right, but it was the first time he had ever applied it, as was evidenced by the erratic behaviour of the Snark. Not but what the Snark was perfectly steady on the sea; the pranks she cut were on the chart. On a day with a light breeze she would make a jump on the chart that advertised “a wet sail and a flowing sheet,” and on a day when she just raced over the ocean, she scarcely changed her position on the chart. Now when one’s boat has logged six knots for twenty-four consecutive hours, it is incontestable that she has covered one hundred and forty-four miles of ocean. The ocean was all right, and so was the patent log; as for speed, one saw it with his own eyes. Therefore the thing that was not all right was the figuring that refused to boost the Snark along over the chart. Not that this happened every day, but that it did happen. And it was perfectly proper and no more than was to be expected from a first attempt at applying a theory.

The acquisition of the knowledge of navigation has a strange effect on the minds of men. The average navigator speaks of navigation with deep respect. To the layman navigation is a deed and awful mystery, which feeling has been generated in him by the deep and awful respect for navigation that the layman has seen displayed by navigators. I have known frank, ingenuous, and modest young men, open as the day, to learn navigation and at once betray secretiveness, reserve, and self-importance as if they had achieved some tremendous intellectual attainment. The average navigator impresses the layman as a priest of some holy rite. With bated breath, the amateur yachtsman navigator invites one in to look at his chronometer. And so it was that our friends suffered such apprehension at our sailing without a navigator.

During the building of the Snark, Roscoe and I had an agreement, something like this: "I'll furnish the books and instruments," I said, "and do you study up navigation now. I'll be too busy to do any studying. Then, when we get to sea, you can teach me what you have learned." Roscoe was delighted. Furthermore, Roscoe was as frank and ingenuous and modest as the young men I have described. But when we got out to sea and he began to practise the holy rite, while I looked on admiringly, a change, subtle and distinctive, marked his bearing. When he shot the sun at noon, the glow of achievement wrapped him in lambent flame. When he went below, figured out his observation, and then returned on deck and announced our latitude and longitude, there was an authoritative ring in his voice that was new to all of us. But that was not the worst of it. He became filled with incommunicable information. And the more he discovered the reasons for the erratic jumps of the Snark over the chart, and the less the Snark jumped, the more incommunicable and holy and awful became his information. My mild suggestions that it was about time that I began to learn, met with no hearty response, with no offers on his part to help me. He displayed not the slightest intention of living up to our agreement.

Now this was not Roscoe's fault; he could not help it. He had merely gone the way of all the men who learned navigation before him. By an understandable and forgivable confusion of values, plus a loss of orientation, he felt weighted by responsibility, and experienced the possession of power that was like unto that of a god. All his life Roscoe had lived on land, and therefore in sight of land. Being constantly in sight of land, with landmarks to guide him, he had managed, with occasional difficulties, to steer his body around and about the earth. Now he found himself on the sea, wide-stretching, bounded only by the eternal circle of the sky. This circle looked always the same. There were no landmarks. The sun rose to the east and set to the west and the stars wheeled through the night. But who may look at the sun or the stars and say, "My place on the face of the earth at the present moment is four and three-quarter miles to the west of Jones's Cash Store of Smithersville"? or "I know where I am now, for the Little Dipper informs me that Boston is three miles away on the second turning to the right"? And yet that was precisely what Roscoe did. That he was astounded by the achievement, is putting it mildly. He stood in reverential awe of himself; he had performed a miraculous feat. The act of finding himself on the face of the waters became a rite, and he felt himself a superior being to the rest of us who knew not this rite and were dependent on him for being shepherded across the heaving and limitless waste, the briny highroad that connects the continents and whereon there are no mile-stones. So, with the sextant he made obeisance to the sun-god, he consulted ancient tomes and tables of magic characters, muttered prayers in a strange tongue that sounded like INDEXERRORPARALLAXREFRACTION, made cabalistic signs on paper, added and carried one, and then, on a piece of holy script called the Grail — I mean the Chart — he placed his finger on a certain space conspicuous for its blankness and said, "Here we are." When we looked at the blank space and asked, "And where is that?" he answered in the cipher-code of the higher priesthood, "31-15-47 north, 133-5-30 west." And we said "Oh," and felt mighty small.

So I aver, it was not Roscoe's fault. He was like unto a god, and he carried us in the hollow of his hand across the blank spaces on the chart. I experienced a great respect for Roscoe; this respect grew so profound that had he commanded, "Kneel down and worship me," I know that I should have flopped down on the deck and yammered. But, one day, there came a still small thought to me that said: "This is not a god; this is Roscoe, a mere man like myself. What he has done, I can do. Who taught him? Himself. Go you and do likewise — be your own teacher." And right there Roscoe crashed, and he was high priest of the Snark no longer. I invaded the sanctuary and demanded the ancient tomes and magic tables, also the prayer-wheel — the sextant, I mean.

52 THE CRUISE OF THE SNARK

The Dark Secrets of Navigation.

And now, in simple language. I shall describe how I taught myself navigation. One whole afternoon I sat in the cockpit, steering with one hand and studying logarithms with the other. Two afternoons, two hours each, I studied the general theory of navigation and the particular process of taking a meridian altitude. Then I took the sextant, worked out the index error, and shot the sun. The figuring from the data of this observation was child’s play. In the “Epitome” and the “Nautical Almanac” were scores of cunning tables, all worked out by mathematicians and astronomers. It was like using interest tables and lightning-calculator tables such as you all know. The mystery was mystery no longer. I put my finger on the chart and announced that that was where we were. I was right too, or at least I was as right as Roscoe, who selected a spot a quarter of a mile away from mine. Even he was willing to split the distance with me. I had exploded the mystery, and yet, such was the miracle of it, I was conscious of new power in me, and I felt the thrill and tickle of pride. And when Martin asked me, in the same humble and respectful way I had previously asked Roscoe, as to where we were, it was with exaltation and spiritual chest-throwing that I answered in the cipher-code of the higher priesthood and heard Martin’s self-abasing and worshipful “Oh.” As for Charmian, I felt that in a new way I had proved my right to her; and I was aware of another feeling, namely, that she was a most fortunate woman to have a man like me.

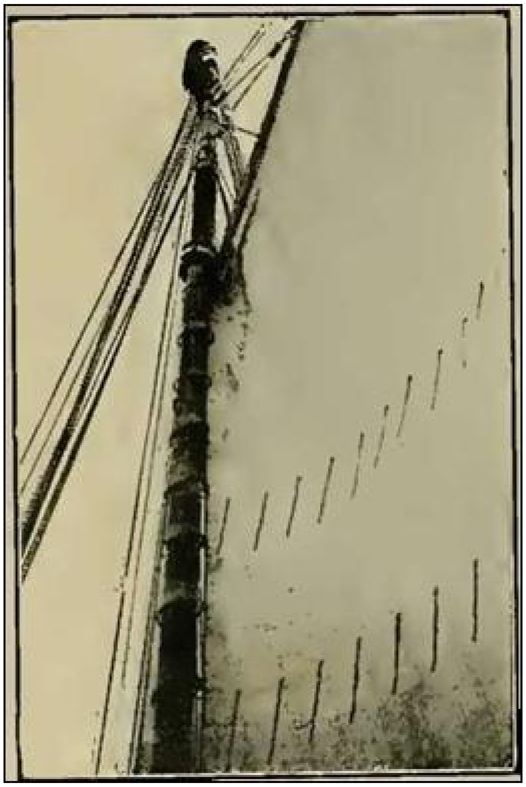

I couldn’t help it. I tell it as a vindication of Roscoe and all the other navigators. The poison of power was working in me. I was not as other men — most other men; I knew what they did not know, — the mystery of the heavens, that pointed out the way across the deep. And the taste of power I had received drove me on. I steered at the wheel long hours with one hand, and studied mystery with the other. By the end of the week, teaching myself, I was able to do divers things. For instance, I shot the North Star, at night, of course; got its altitude, corrected for index error, dip, etc., and found our latitude. And this latitude agreed with the latitude of the previous noon corrected by dead reckoning up to that moment. Proud? Well, I was even prouder with my next miracle. I was going to turn in at nine o’clock. I worked out the problem, self-instructed, and learned what star of the first magnitude would be passing the meridian around half-past eight. This star proved to be Alpha Crucis. I had never heard of the star before. I looked it up on the star map. It was one of the stars of the Southern Cross. What! thought I; have we been sailing with the Southern Cross in the sky of nights and never known it? Dolts that we are! Gudgeons and moles! I couldn’t believe it. I went over the problem again, and verified it. Charmian had the wheel from eight till ten that evening. I told her to keep her eyes open and look due south for the Southern Cross. And when the stars came out, there shone the Southern Cross low on the horizon. Proud? No medicine man nor high priest was ever prouder. Furthermore, with the prayer-wheel I shot Alpha Crucis and from its altitude worked out our latitude. And still furthermore, I shot the North Star, too, and it agreed with what had been told me by the Southern Cross. Proud? Why, the language of the stars was mine, and I listened and heard them telling me my way over the deep.

Proud? I was a worker of miracles. I forgot how easily I had taught myself from the printed page. I forgot that all the work (and a tremendous work, too) had been done by the masterminds before me, the astronomers and mathematicians, who had discovered and elaborated the whole science of navigation and made the tables in the "Epitome." I remembered only the everlasting miracle of it — that I had listened to the voices of the stars and been told my place upon the highway of the sea. Charmian did not know, Martin did not know, Tochigi, the cabin-boy, did not know. But I told them. I was God's messenger. I stood between them and infinity. I translated the high celestial speech into terms of their ordinary understanding. We were heaven-directed, and it was I who could read the sign-post of the sky! — I! I!

And now, in a cooler moment, I hasten to blab the whole simplicity of it, to blab on Roscoe and the other navigators and the rest of the priesthood, all for fear that I may become even as they, secretive, immodest, and inflated with self-esteem. And I want to say this now: any young fellow with ordinary gray matter, ordinary education, and with the slightest trace of the student-mind, can get the books, and charts, and instruments and teach himself navigation. Now I must not be misunderstood. Seamanship is an entirely different matter. It is not learned in a day, nor in many days; it requires years. Also, navigating by dead reckoning requires long study and practice. But navigating by observations of the sun, moon, and stars, thanks to the astronomers and mathematicians, is child's play. Any average young fellow can teach himself in a week. And yet again I must not be misunderstood. I do not mean to say that at the end of a week a young fellow could take charge of a fifteen-thousand-ton steamer, driving twenty knots an hour through the brine, racing from land to land, fair weather and foul, clear sky or cloudy, steering by degrees on the compass card and making landfalls with most amazing precision. But what I do mean is just this: the average young fellow I have described can get into a staunch sail-boat and put out across the ocean, without knowing anything about navigation, and at the end of the week he will know enough to know where he is on the chart. He will be able to take a meridian observation with fair accuracy, and from that observation, with ten minutes of figuring, work out his latitude and longitude. And, carrying neither freight nor passengers, being under no press to reach his destination, he can jog comfortably along, and if at any time he doubts his own navigation and fears an imminent landfall, he can heave to all night and proceed in the morning.

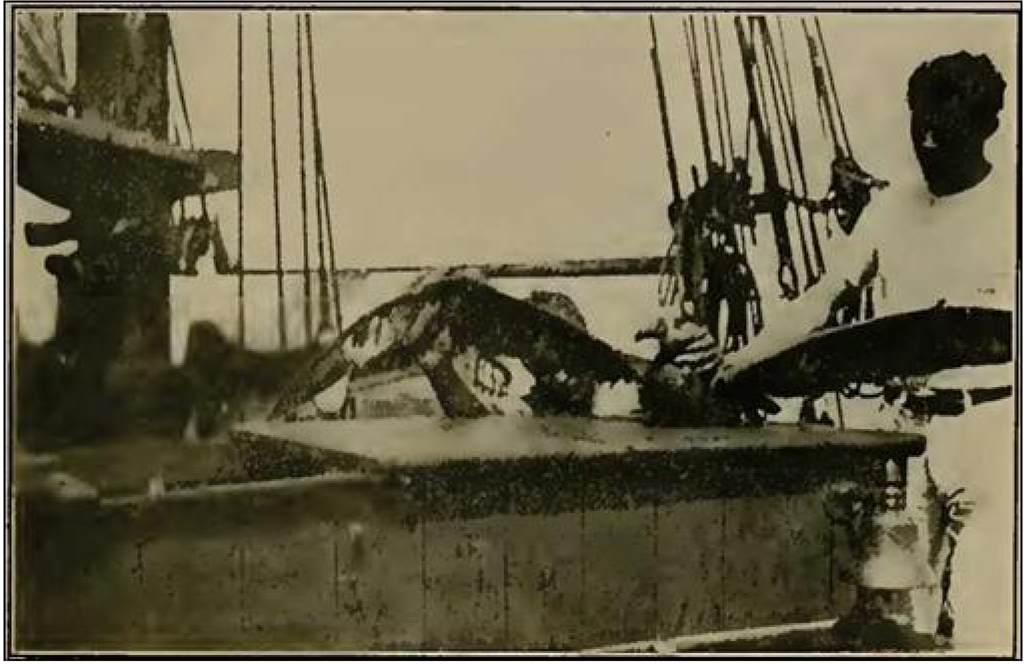

Joshua Slocum sailed around the world a few years ago in a thirty-seven-foot boat all by himself. I shall never forget, in his narrative of the voyage, where he heartily indorsed the idea of young men, in similar small boats, making similar voyage. I promptly indorsed his idea, and so heartily that I took my wife along. While it certainly makes a Cook's tour look like thirty cents, on top of that, amid on top of the fun and pleasure, it is a splendid education for a young man — oh, not a mere education in the things of the world outside, of lands, and peoples, and climates, but an education in the world inside, an education in one's self, a chance to learn one's own self, to get on speaking terms with one's soul. Then there is the training and the disciplining of it. First, naturally, the young fellow will learn his limitations; and next, inevitably, he will proceed to press back those limitations. And he cannot escape returning from such a voyage a bigger and better man. And as for sport, it is a king's sport, taking one's self around the world, doing it with one's own hands, depending on no one but one's self, and at the end, back at the starting-point, contemplating with inner vision the planet rushing through space, and saying, “I did it; with my own hands I did it. I went clear around that whirling sphere, and I can travel alone, without any nurse of a sea-captain to guide my steps across the seas. I may not fly to other stars, but of this star I myself am master.”

As I write these lines I lift my eyes and look seaward. I am on the beach of Waikiki on the island of Oahu. Far, in the azure sky, the trade-wind clouds drift low over the blue-green turquoise of the deep sea. Nearer, the sea is emerald and light olive-green. Then comes the reef, where the water is all slaty purple flecked with red. Still nearer are brighter greens and tans, lying in alternate stripes and showing where sandbeds lie between the living coral banks. Through and over and out of these wonderful colours tumbles and thunders a magnificent surf. As I say, I lift my eyes to all this, and through the white crest of a breaker suddenly appears a dark figure, erect, a man-fish or a sea-god, on the very forward face of the crest where the top falls over and down, driving in toward shore, buried to his loins in smoking spray, caught up by the sea and flung landward, bodily, a quarter of a mile. It is a Kanaka on a surf-board. And I know that when I have finished these lines I shall be out in that riot of colour and pounding surf, trying to bit those breakers even as he, and failing as he never failed, but living life as the best of us may live it. And the picture of that coloured sea and that flying sea-god Kanaka becomes another reason for the young man to go west, and farther west, beyond the Baths of Sunset, and still west till he arrives home again.

But to return. Please do not think that I already know it all. I know only the rudiments of navigation. There is a vast deal yet for me to learn. On the Snark there is a score of fascinating books on navigation waiting for me. There is the danger-angle of Lecky, there is the line of Sumner, which, when you know least of all where you are, shows most conclusively where you are, and where you are not. There are dozens and dozens of methods of finding one’s location on the deep, and one can work years before he masters it all in all its fineness.

Even in the little we did learn there were slips that accounted for the apparently antic behaviour of the Snark. On Thursday, May 16, for instance, the trade wind failed us. During the twenty-four hours that ended Friday at noon, by dead reckoning we had not sailed twenty miles. Yet here are our positions, at noon, for the two days, worked out from our observations:

Thursday 20 degrees 57 minutes 9 seconds N
152 degrees 40 minutes 30 seconds W
Friday 21 degrees 15 minutes 33 seconds N
154 degrees 12 minutes W

The difference between the two positions was something like eighty miles. Yet we knew we had not travelled twenty miles. Now our figuring was all right. We went over it several times. What was wrong was the observations we had taken. To take a correct observation requires practice and skill, and especially so on a small craft like the Snark. The violently moving boat and the closeness of the observer's eye to the surface of the water are to blame. A big wave that lifts up a mile off is liable to steal the horizon away.

But in our particular case there was another perturbing factor. The sun, in its annual march north through the heavens, was increasing its declination. On the 19th parallel of north latitude in the middle of May the sun is nearly overhead. The angle of arc was between eighty-eight and eighty-nine degrees. Had it been ninety degrees it would have been straight overhead. It was on another day that we learned a few things about taking the altitude of the almost perpendicular sun. Roscoe started in drawing the sun down to the eastern horizon, and he stayed by that point of the compass despite the fact that the sun would pass the meridian to the south. I, on the other hand, started in to draw the sun down to south-east and strayed away to the south-west. You see, we were teaching ourselves. As a result, at twenty-five minutes past twelve by the ship's time, I called twelve o'clock by the sun. Now this signified that we had changed our location on the face of the world by twenty-five minutes, which was equal to something like six degrees of longitude, or three hundred and fifty miles. This showed the Snark had travelled fifteen knots per hour for twenty-four consecutive hours — and we had never noticed it! It was absurd and grotesque. But Roscoe, still looking east, averred that it was not yet twelve o'clock. He was bent on giving us a twenty-knot clip. Then we began to train our sextants rather wildly all around the horizon, and wherever we looked, there was the sun, puzzlingly close to the sky-line, sometimes above it and sometimes below it. In one direction the sun was proclaiming morning, in another direction it was proclaiming afternoon. The sun was all right — we knew that; therefore we were all wrong. And the rest of the afternoon we spent in the cockpit reading up the matter in the books and finding out what was wrong. We missed the observation that day, but we didn't the next. We had learned.

And we learned well, better than for a while we thought we had. At the beginning of the second dog-watch one evening, Charmian and I sat down on the forecastle-head for a rubber of cribbage. Chancing to glance ahead, I saw cloud-capped mountains rising from the sea. We were rejoiced at the sight of land, but I was in despair over our navigation. I thought we had learned something, yet our position at noon, plus what we had run since, did not put us within a hundred miles of land. But there was the land, fading away before our eyes in the fires of sunset. The land was all right. There was no disputing it. Therefore our navigation was all wrong. But it wasn't. That land we saw was the summit of Haleakala, the House of the Sun, the greatest extinct volcano in the world. It towered ten thousand feet above the sea, and it was all of a hundred miles away. We sailed all night at a seven-knot clip, and in the morning the House of the Sun was still before us, and it took a few more hours of sailing to bring it abreast of us. "That island is Maui," we said, verifying by the chart. "That next island sticking out is Molokai, where the lepers are. And the island next to that is Oahu. There is Makapuu Head now. We'll be in Honolulu to-morrow. Our navigation is all right."

CHAPTER V — THE FIRST LANDFALL

Adventures in a Dream Harbour

"It will not be so monotonous at sea," I promised my fellow-voyagers on the Snark. "The sea is filled with life. It is so populous that every day something new is happening. Almost as soon as we pass through the Golden Gate and head south we'll pick up with the flying fish. We'll be having them fried for breakfast. We'll be catching bonita and dolphin, and spearing porpoises from the bowsprit. And then there are the sharks — sharks without end."

We passed through the Golden Gate and headed south. We dropped the mountains of California beneath the horizon, and daily the surf grew warmer. But there were no flying fish, no bonita and dolphin. The ocean was bereft of life. Never had I sailed on so forsaken a sea. Always, before, in the same latitudes, had I encountered flying fish.

"Never mind," I said. "Wait till we get off the coast of Southern California. Then we'll pick up the flying fish."

We came abreast of Southern California, abreast of the Peninsula of Lower California, abreast of the coast of Mexico; and there were no flying fish. Nor was there anything else. No life moved. As the days went by the absence of life became almost uncanny.

"Never mind," I said. "When we do pick up with the flying fish we'll pick up with everything else. The flying fish is the staff of life for all the other breeds. Everything will come in a bunch when we find the flying fish."

When I should have headed the Snark south-west for Hawaii, I still held her south. I was going to find those flying fish. Finally the time came when, if I wanted to go to Honolulu, I should have headed the Snark due west, instead of which I kept her south. Not until latitude 19 degrees did we encounter the first flying fish. He was very much alone. I saw him. Five other pairs of eager eyes scanned the sea all day, but never saw another. So sparse were the flying fish that nearly a week more elapsed before the last one on board saw his first flying fish. As for the dolphin, bonita, porpoise, and all the other hordes of life — there weren't any.

Not even a shark broke surface with his ominous dorsal fin. Bert took a dip daily under the bowsprit, hanging on to the stays and dragging his body through the water. And daily he canvassed the project of letting go and having a decent swim. I did my best to dissuade him. But with him I had lost all standing as an authority on sea life.

"If there are sharks," he demanded, "why don't they show up?"

I assured him that if he really did let go and have a swim the sharks would promptly appear. This was a bluff on my part. I didn't believe it. It lasted as a deterrent for two days. The third day the wind fell calm, and it was pretty hot. The Snark was moving a knot an hour. Bert dropped down under the bowsprit and let go. And now behold the perversity of things. We had sailed across two thousand miles and more of ocean and had met with no sharks. Within five minutes after Bert finished his swim, the fin of a shark was cutting the surface in circles around the Snark.

There was something wrong about that shark. It bothered me. It had no right to be there in that deserted ocean. The more I thought about it, the more incomprehensible it became. But two hours later we sighted land and the mystery was cleared up. He had come to us from the land, and not from the uninhabited deep. He had presaged the landfall. He was the messenger of the land.

Twenty-seven days out from San Francisco we arrived at the island of Oahu, Territory of Hawaii. In the early morning we drifted around Diamond

Head into full view of Honolulu; and then the ocean burst suddenly into life. Flying fish cleaved the air in glittering squadrons. In five minutes we saw more of them than during the whole voyage. Other fish, large ones, of various sorts, leaped into the air. There was life everywhere, on sea and shore. We could see the masts and funnels of the shipping in the harbour, the hotels and bathers along the beach at Waikiki, the smoke rising from the dwelling-houses high up on the volcanic slopes of the Punch Bowl and Tantalus. The custom-house tug was racing toward us and a big school of porpoises got under our bow and began cutting the most ridiculous capers. The port doctor's launch came charging out at us, and a big sea turtle broke the surface with his back and took a look at us. Never was there such a burgeoning of life. Strange faces were on our decks, strange voices were speaking, and copies of that very morning's newspaper, with cable reports from all the world, were thrust before our eyes. Incidentally, we read that the Snark and all hands had been lost at sea, and that she had been a very unseaworthy craft anyway. And while we read this information a wireless message was being received by the congressional party on the summit of Haleakala announcing the safe arrival of the Snark.

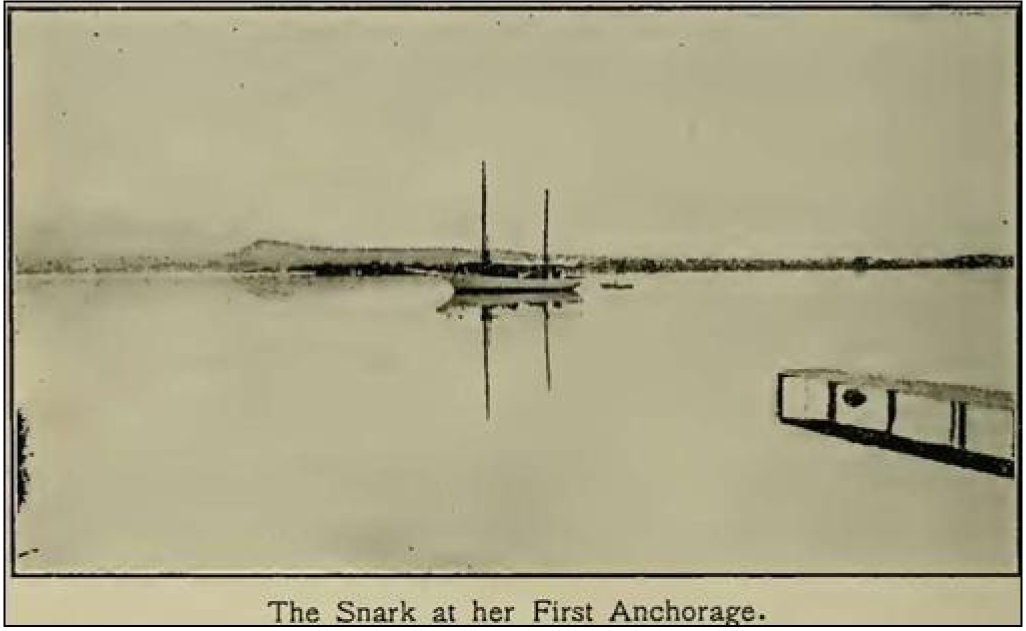

The Snark at her First Anchorage.

It was the Snark's first landfall — and such a landfall! For twenty-seven days we had been on the deserted deep, and it was pretty hard to realize that there was so much life in the world. We were made dizzy by it. We could not take it all in at once. We were like awakened Rip Van Winkles, and it seemed to us that we were dreaming. On one side the azure sea lapped across the horizon into the azure sky; on the other side the sea lifted itself into great breakers of emerald that fell in a snowy smother upon a white coral beach. Beyond the beach, green plantations of sugar-cane undulated gently upward to steeper slopes, which, in turn, became jagged volcanic crests, drenched with tropic showers and capped by stupendous masses of trade-wind clouds. At any rate, it was a most beautiful dream. The Snark turned and headed directly in toward the emerald surf, till it lifted and thundered on either hand; and on either hand, scarce a biscuit-toss away, the reef showed its long teeth, pale green and menacing.

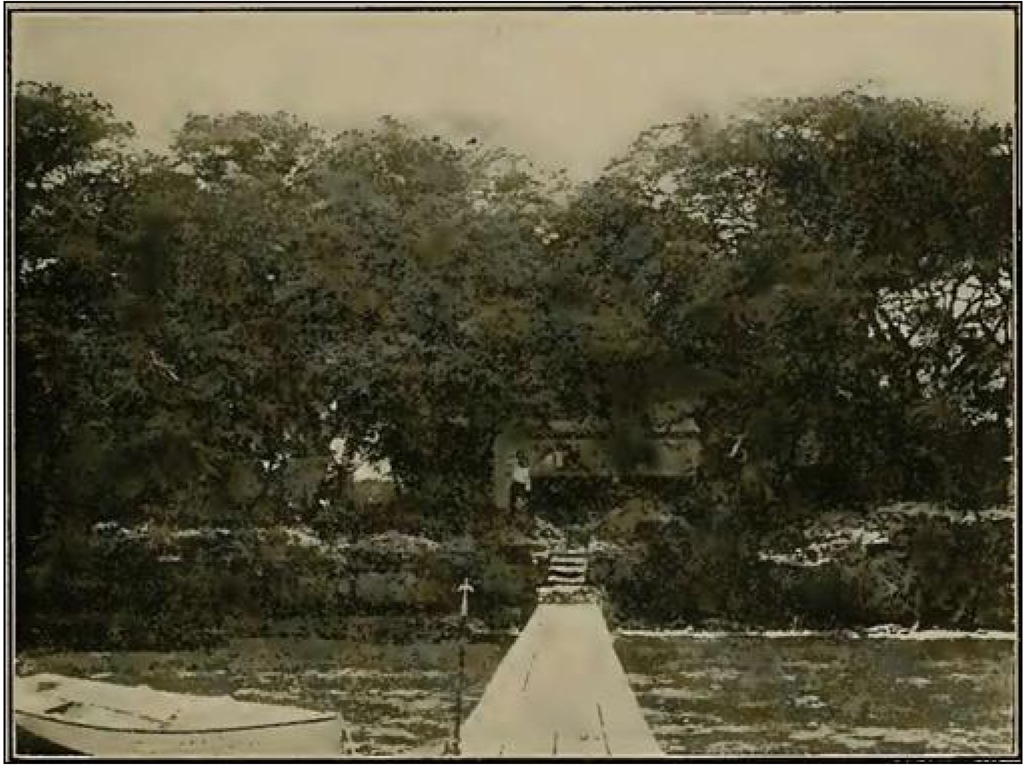

Abruptly the land itself, in a riot of olive-greens of a thousand hues, reached out its arms and folded the Snark in. There was no perilous passage through the reef, no emerald surf and azure sea — nothing but a warm soft land, a motionless lagoon, and tiny beaches on which swam dark-skinned tropic children. The sea had disappeared. The Snark's anchor rumbled the chain through the hawse-pipe, and we lay without movement on a “lineless, level floor.” It was all so beautiful and strange that we could not accept it as real. On the chart this place was called Pearl Harbour, but we called it Dream Harbour.

A launch came off to us; in it were members of the Hawaiian Yacht Club, come to greet us and make us welcome, with true Hawaiian hospitality, to all they had. They were ordinary men, flesh and blood and all the rest; but they did not tend to break our dreaming. Our last memories of men were of United States marshals and of panicky little merchants with rusty dollars for souls, who, in a reeking atmosphere of soot and coal-dust, laid grimy hands upon the Snark and held her back from her world adventure. But these men who came to meet us were clean men. A healthy tan was on their cheeks, and their eyes were not dazzled and bespectacled from gazing overmuch at glittering dollar-heaps. No, they merely verified the dream. They clinched it with their unsmirched souls.

So we went ashore with them across a level flashing sea to the wonderful green land. We landed on a tiny wharf, and the dream became more insistent; for know that for twenty-seven days we had been rocking across the ocean on the tiny Snark. Not once in all those twenty-seven days had we known a moment's rest, a moment's cessation from movement. This ceaseless movement had become ingrained. Body and brain we had rocked and rolled so long that when we climbed out on the tiny wharf kept on rocking and rolling. This, naturally, we attributed to the wharf. It was projected psychology. I spraddled along the wharf and nearly fell into the water. I glanced at Charmian, and the way she walked made me sad. The wharf had all the seeming of a ship's deck. It lifted, tilted, heaved and sank; and since there were no handrails on it, it kept Charmian and me busy avoiding falling in. I never saw such a preposterous little wharf. Whenever I watched it closely, it refused to roll; but as soon as I took my attention off from it, away it went, just like the Snark. Once, I caught it in the act, just as it upended, and I looked down the length of it for two hundred feet, and for all the world it was like the deck of a ship ducking into a huge head-sea.

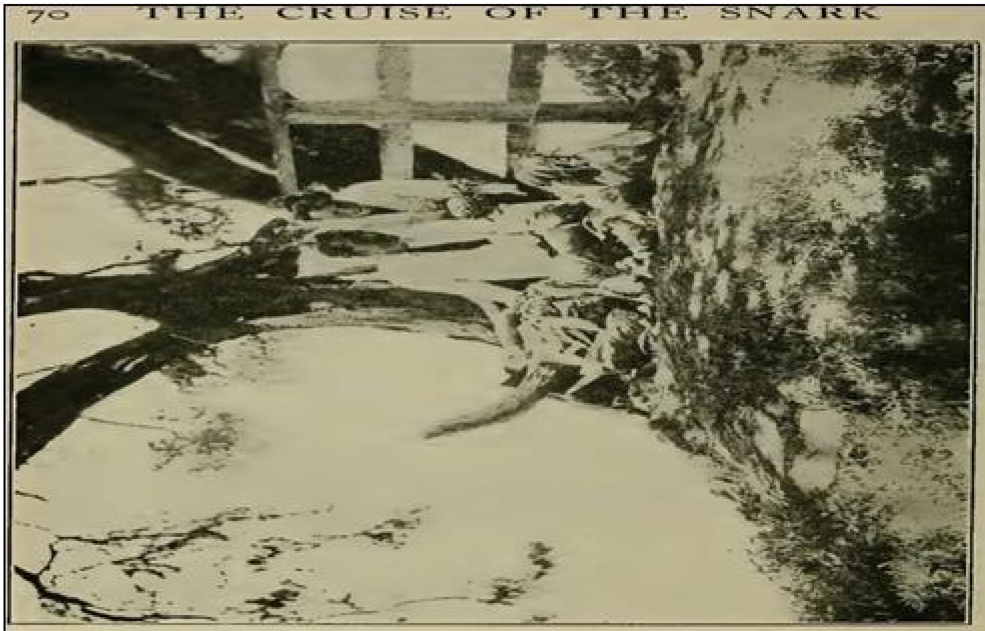

Tropic Land.

At last, however, supported by our hosts, we negotiated the wharf and gained the land. But the land was no better. The very first thing it did was to tilt up on one side, and far as the eye could see I watched it tilt, clear to its jagged, volcanic backbone, and I saw the clouds above tilt, too. This was no stable, firm-founded land, else it would not cut such capers. It was like all the rest of our landfall, unreal. It was a dream. At any moment, like shifting vapour, it might dissolve away. The thought entered my head that perhaps it was my fault, that my head was swimming or that something I had eaten had disagreed with me. But I glanced at Charmian and her sad walk, and even as I glanced I saw her stagger and bump into the yachtsman by whose side she walked. I spoke to her, and she complained about the antic behaviour of the land.

We walked across a spacious, wonderful lawn and down an avenue of royal palms, and across more wonderful lawn in the gracious shade of stately trees. The air was filled with the songs of birds and was heavy with rich warm fragrances — wafture from great lilies, and blazing blossoms of hibiscus, and other strange gorgeous tropic flowers. The dream was becoming almost impossibly beautiful to us who for so long had seen naught but the restless, salty sea. Charmian reached out her hand and clung to me — for support against the ineffable beauty of it, thought I. But no. As I supported her I braced my legs, while the flowers and lawns reeled and swung around me. It was like an earthquake, only it quickly passed without doing any harm. It was fairly difficult to catch the land playing these tricks. As long as I kept my mind on it, nothing happened. But as soon as my attention was distracted, away it went, the whole panorama, swinging and heaving and tilting at all sorts of angles. Once, however, I turned my head suddenly and caught that stately line of royal palms swinging in a great arc across the sky. But it stopped, just as soon as I caught it, and became a placid dream again.

Next we came to a house of coolness, with great sweeping veranda, where lotus-eaters might dwell. Windows and doors were wide open to the breeze, and the songs and fragrances blew lazily in and out. The walls were hung with tapa-cloths. Couches with grass-woven covers invited everywhere, and there was a grand piano, that played, I was sure, nothing more exciting than lullabies. Servants — Japanese maids in native costume — drifted around and about, noiselessly, like butterflies. Everything was preternaturally cool. Here was no blazing down of a tropic sun upon an unshrinking sea. It was too good to be true. But it was not real. It was a dream-dwelling. I knew, for I turned suddenly and caught the grand piano cavorting in a spacious corner of the room. I did not say anything, for just then we were being received by a gracious woman, a beautiful Madonna, clad in flowing white and shod with sandals, who greeted us as though she had known us always.

Dream Harbor.

We sat at table on the lotus-eating veranda, served by the butterfly maids, and ate strange foods and partook of a nectar called poi. But the dream threatened to dissolve. It shimmered and trembled like an iridescent bubble about to break. I was just glancing out at the green grass and stately trees and blossoms of hibiscus, when suddenly I felt the table move. The table, and the Madonna across from me, and the veranda of the lotus-eaters, the scarlet hibiscus, the greensward and the trees — all lifted and tilted before my eyes, and heaved and sank down into the trough of a monstrous sea. I gripped my chair convulsively and held on. I had a feeling that I was holding on to the dream as well as the chair. I should not have been surprised had the sea rushed in and drowned all that fairyland and had I found myself at the wheel of the Snark just looking up casually from the study of logarithms. But the dream persisted. I looked covertly at the Madonna and her husband. They evidenced no perturbation. The dishes had not moved upon the table. The hibiscus and trees and grass were still there. Nothing had changed. I partook of more nectar, and the dream was more real than ever.

"Will you have some iced tea?" asked the Madonna; and then her side of the table sank down gently and I said yes to her at an angle of forty-five degrees.

"Speaking of sharks," said her husband, "up at Niihau there was a man — " And at that moment the table lifted and heaved, and I gazed upward at him at an angle of forty-five degrees.

So the luncheon went on, and I was glad that I did not have to bear the affliction of watching Charmian walk. Suddenly, however, a mysterious word of fear broke from the lips of the lotus-eaters. "Ah, ah," thought I, "now the dream goes glimmering." I clutched the chair desperately, resolved to drag back to the reality of the Snark some tangible vestige of this lotus land. I felt the whole dream lurching and pulling to be gone. Just then the mysterious word of fear was repeated. It sounded like REPORTERS. I looked and saw three of them coming across the lawn. Oh, blessed reporters! Then the dream was indisputably real after all. I glanced out across the shining water and saw the Snark at anchor, and I remembered that I had sailed in her from San Francisco to Hawaii, and that this was Pearl Harbour, and that even then I was acknowledging introductions and saying, in reply to the first question, "Yes, we had delightful weather all the way down."

CHAPTER VI — A ROYAL SPORT

RIDING THE SOUTH SEA SURF

That is what it is, a royal sport for the natural kings of earth. The grass grows right down to the water at Waikiki Beach, and within fifty feet of the everlasting sea. The trees also grow down to the salty edge of things, and one sits in their shade and looks seaward at a majestic surf thundering in on the beach to one's very feet. Half a mile out, where is the reef, the white-headed combers thrust suddenly skyward out of the placid turquoise-blue and come rolling in to shore. One after another they come, a mile long, with smoking crests, the white battalions of the infinite army of the sea. And one sits and listens to the perpetual roar, and watches the unending procession, and feels tiny and fragile before this tremendous force expressing itself in fury and foam and sound. Indeed, one feels microscopically small, and the thought that one may wrestle with this sea raises in one's imagination a thrill of apprehension, almost of fear. Why, they are a mile long, these bull-mouthed monsters, and they weigh a thousand tons, and they charge in to shore faster than a man can run. What chance? No chance at all, is the verdict of the shrinking ego; and one sits, and looks, and listens, and thinks the grass and the shade are a pretty good place in which to be.

And suddenly, out there where a big smoker lifts skyward, rising like a sea-god from out of the welter of spume and churning white, on the giddy, toppling, overhanging and downfalling, precarious crest appears the dark head of a man. Swiftly he rises through the rushing white. His black shoulders, his chest, his loins, his limbs — all is abruptly projected on one's vision. Where but the moment before was only the wide desolation and invincible roar, is now a man, erect, full-statured, not struggling frantically in that wild movement, not buried and crushed and buffeted by those mighty monsters, but standing above them all, calm and superb, poised on the giddy summit, his feet buried in the churning foam, the salt smoke rising to his knees, and all the rest of him in the free air and flashing sunlight, and he is flying through the air, flying forward, flying fast as the surge on which he stands. He is a Mercury — a brown Mercury. His heels are winged, and in them is the swiftness of the sea. In truth, from out of the sea he has leaped upon the back of the sea, and he is riding the sea that roars and bellows and cannot shake him from its back. But no frantic outreaching and balancing is his. He is impassive, motionless as a statue carved suddenly by some miracle out of the sea's depth from which he rose. And straight on toward shore he flies on his winged heels and the white crest of the breaker. There is a wild burst of foam, a long tumultuous rushing sound as the breaker falls futile and spent on the beach at your feet; and there, at your feet steps calmly ashore a Kanaka, burnt, golden and brown by the tropic sun. Several minutes ago he was a speck a quarter of a mile away. He has "bitted the bull-mouthed breaker" and ridden it in, and the pride in the feat shows in the carriage of his magnificent body as he glances for a moment carelessly at you who sit in the shade of the shore. He is a Kanaka — and more, he is a man, a member of the kingly species that has mastered matter and the brutes and lorded it over creation.

And one sits and thinks of Tristram's last wrestle with the sea on that fatal morning; and one thinks further, to the fact that that Kanaka has done what Tristram never did, and that he knows a joy of the sea that Tristram never knew. And still further one thinks. It is all very well, sitting here in cool shade of the beach, but you are a man, one of the kingly species, and what that Kanaka can do, you can do yourself. Go to. Strip off your clothes that are a nuisance in this mellow clime. Get in and wrestle with the sea; wing your heels with the skill and power that reside in you; bit the sea's breakers, master them, and ride upon their backs as a king should.

And that is how it came about that I tackled surf-riding. And now that I have tackled it, more than ever do I hold it to be a royal sport. But first let me explain the physics of it. A wave is a communicated agitation. The water that composes the body of a wave does not move. If it did, when a stone is thrown into a pond and the ripples spread away in an ever widening circle, there would appear at the centre an ever increasing hole. No, the water that composes the body of a wave is stationary. Thus, you may watch a particular portion of the ocean's surface and you will see the sane water rise and fall a thousand times to the agitation communicated by a thousand successive waves. Now imagine this communicated agitation moving shoreward. As the bottom shoals, the lower portion of the wave strikes land first and is stopped. But water is fluid, and the upper portion has not struck anything, wherefore it keeps on communicating its agitation, keeps on going. And when the top of the wave keeps on going, while the bottom of it lags behind, something is bound to happen. The bottom of the wave drops out from under and the top of the wave falls over, forward, and down, curling and cresting and roaring as it does so. It is the bottom of a wave striking against the top of the land that is the cause of all surfs.

But the transformation from a smooth undulation to a breaker is not abrupt except where the bottom shoals abruptly. Say the bottom shoals gradually for from quarter of a mile to a mile, then an equal distance will be occupied by the transformation. Such a bottom is that off the beach of Waikiki, and it produces a splendid surf-riding surf. One leaps upon the back of a breaker just as it begins to break, and stays on it as it continues to break all the way in to shore.

And now to the particular physics of surf-riding. Get out on a flat board, six feet long, two feet wide, and roughly oval in shape. Lie down upon it like a small boy on a coaster and paddle with your hands out to deep water, where the waves begin to crest. Lie out there quietly on the board. Sea after sea breaks before, behind, and under and over you, and rushes in to shore, leaving you behind. When a wave crests, it gets steeper. Imagine yourself, on your hoard, on the face of that steep slope. If it stood still, you would slide down just as a boy slides down a hill on his coaster. “But,” you object, “the wave doesn’t stand still.” Very true, but the water composing the wave stands still, and there you have the secret. If ever you start sliding down the face of that wave, you’ll keep on sliding and you’ll never reach the bottom. Please don’t laugh. The face of that wave may be only six feet, yet you can slide down it a quarter of a mile, or half a mile, and not reach the bottom. For, see, since a wave is only a communicated agitation or impetus, and since the water that composes a wave is changing every instant, new water is rising into the wave as fast as the wave travels. You slide down this new water, and yet remain in your old position on the wave, sliding down the still newer water that is rising and forming the wave. You slide precisely as fast as the wave travels. If it travels fifteen miles an hour, you slide fifteen miles an hour. Between you and shore stretches a quarter of mile of water. As the wave travels, this water obligingly heaps itself into the wave, gravity does the rest, and down you go, sliding the whole length of it. If you still cherish the notion, while sliding, that the water is moving with you, thrust your arms into it and attempt to paddle; you will find that you have to be remarkably quick to get a stroke, for that water is dropping astern just as fast as you are rushing ahead.

Standing up and lying down.

And now for another phase of the physics of surf-riding. All rules have their exceptions. It is true that the water in a wave does not travel forward. But there is what may be called the send of the sea. The water in the overtoppling crest does move forward, as you will speedily realize if you are slapped in the face by it, or if you are caught under it and are pounded by one mighty blow down under the surface panting and gasping for half a minute. The water in the top of a wave rests upon the water in the bottom of the wave. But when the bottom of the wave strikes the land, it stops, while the top goes on. It no longer has the bottom of the wave to hold it up. Where was solid water beneath it, is now air, and for the first time it feels the grip of gravity, and down it falls, at the same time being torn asunder from the lagging bottom of the wave and flung forward. And it is because of this that riding a surf-board is something more than a mere placid sliding down a hill. In truth, one is caught up and hurled shoreward as by some Titan's hand.

I deserted the cool shade, put on a swimming suit, and got hold of a surf-board. It was too small a board. But I didn't know, and nobody told me. I joined some little Kanaka boys in shallow water, where the breakers were well spent and small — a regular kindergarten school. I watched the little Kanaka boys. When a likely-looking breaker came along, they flopped upon their stomachs on their boards, kicked like mad with their feet, and rode the breaker in to the beach. I tried to emulate them. I watched them, tried to do everything that they did, and failed utterly. The breaker swept past, and I was not on it. I tried again and again. I kicked twice as madly as they did, and failed. Half a dozen would be around. We would all leap on our boards in front of a good breaker. Away our feet would churn like the stern-wheels of river steamboats, and away the little rascals would scoot while I remained in disgrace behind.

I tried for a solid hour, and not one wave could I persuade to boost me shoreward. And then arrived a friend, Alexander Hume Ford, a globe trotter by profession, bent ever on the pursuit of sensation. And he had found it at Waikiki. Heading for Australia, he had stopped off for a week to find out if there were any thrills in surf-riding, and he had become wedded to it. He had been at it every day for a month and could not yet see any symptoms of the fascination lessening on him. He spoke with authority.

"Get off that board," he said. "Chuck it away at once. Look at the way you're trying to ride it. If ever the nose of that board hits bottom, you'll be disembowelled. Here, take my board. It's a man's size."

I am always humble when confronted by knowledge. Ford knew. He showed me how properly to mount his board. Then he waited for a good breaker, gave me a shove at the right moment, and started me in. Ah, delicious moment when I felt that breaker grip and fling me.

On I dashed, a hundred and fifty feet, and subsided with the breaker on the sand. From that moment I was lost. I waded back to Ford with his board. It was a large one, several inches thick, and weighed all of seventy-five pounds. He gave me advice, much of it. He had had no one to teach him, and all that he had laboriously learned in several weeks he communicated to me in half an hour. I really learned by proxy. And inside of half an hour I was able to start myself and ride in. I did it time after time, and Ford applauded and advised. For instance, he told me to get just so far forward on the board and no farther. But I must have got some farther, for as I came charging in to land, that miserable board poked its nose down to bottom, stopped abruptly, and turned a somersault, at the same time violently severing our relations. I was tossed through the air like a chip and buried ignominiously under the downfalling breaker. And I realized that if it hadn't been for Ford, I'd have been disembowelled. That particular risk is part of the sport, Ford says. Maybe he'll have it happen to him before he leaves Waikiki, and then, I feel confident, his yearning for sensation will be satisfied for a time.

When all is said and done, it is my steadfast belief that homicide is worse than suicide, especially if, in the former case, it is a woman. Ford saved me from being a homicide. "Imagine your legs are a rudder," he said. "Hold them close together, and steer with them." A few minutes later I came charging in on a comber. As I neared the beach, there, in the water, up to her waist, dead in front of me, appeared a woman. How was I to stop that comber on whose back I was? It looked like a dead woman. The board weighed seventy-five pounds, I weighed a hundred and sixty-five. The added weight had a velocity of fifteen miles per hour. The board and I constituted a projectile. I leave it to the physicists to figure out the force of the impact upon that poor, tender woman. And then I remembered my guardian angel, Ford. "Steer with your legs!" rang through my brain. I steered with my legs, I steered sharply, abruptly, with all my legs and with all my might. The board sheered around broadside on the crest. Many things happened simultaneously. The wave gave me a passing buffet, a light tap as the taps of waves go, but a tap sufficient to knock me off the board and smash me down through the rushing water to bottom, with which I came in violent collision and upon which I was rolled over and over. I got my head out for a breath of air and then gained my feet. There stood the woman before me. I felt like a hero. I had saved her life. And she laughed at me. It was not hysteria. She had never dreamed of her danger. Anyway, I solaced myself, it was not I but Ford that saved her, and I didn't have to feel like a hero. And besides, that leg-steering was great. In a few minutes more of practice I was able to thread my way in and out past several bathers and to remain on top my breaker instead of going under it.

"To-morrow," Ford said, "I am going to take you out into the blue water."

I looked seaward where he pointed, and saw the great smoking combers that made the breakers I had been riding look like ripples. I don't know what I might have said had I not recollected just then that I was one of a kingly species. So all that I did say was, "All right, I'll tackle them to-morrow."

The water that rolls in on Waikiki Beach is just the same as the water that laves the shores of all the Hawaiian Islands; and in ways, especially from the swimmer's standpoint, it is wonderful water. It is cool enough to be comfortable, while it is warm enough to permit a swimmer to stay in all day without experiencing a chill. Under the sun or the stars, at high noon or at midnight, in midwinter or in midsummer, it does not matter when, it is always the same temperature — not too warm, not too cold, just right. It is wonderful water, salt as old ocean itself, pure and crystal-clear. When the nature of the water is considered, it is not so remarkable after all that the Kanakas are one of the most expert of swimming races.

So it was, next morning, when Ford came along, that I plunged into the wonderful water for a swim of indeterminate length. Astride of our surf-boards, or, rather, flat down upon them on our stomachs, we paddled out through the kindergarten where the little Kanaka boys were at play. Soon we were out in deep water where the big smokers came roaring in. The mere struggle with them, facing them and paddling seaward over them and through them, was sport enough in itself. One had to have his wits about him, for it was a battle in which mighty blows were struck, on one side, and in which cunning was used on the other side — a struggle between insensate force and intelligence. I soon learned a bit. When a breaker curled over my head, for a swift instant I could see the light of day through its emerald body; then down would go my head, and I would clutch the board with all my strength. Then would come the blow, and to the onlooker on shore I would be blotted out. In reality the board and I have passed through the crest and emerged in the respite of the other side. I should not recommend those smashing blows to an invalid or delicate person. There is weight behind them, and the impact of the driven water is like a sandblast. Sometimes one passes through half a dozen combers in quick succession, and it is just about that time that he is liable to discover new merits in the stable land and new reasons for being on shore.

Out there in the midst of such a succession of big smoky ones, a third man was added to our party, one Freeth. Shaking the water from my eyes as I emerged from one wave and peered ahead to see what the next one looked like, I saw him tearing in on the back of it, standing upright on his board, carelessly poised, a young god bronzed with sunburn. We went through the wave on the back of which he rode. Ford called to him. He turned an airspring from his wave, rescued his board from its maw, paddled over to us and joined Ford in showing me things. One thing in particular I learned from Freeth, namely, how to encounter the occasional breaker of exceptional size that rolled in. Such breakers were really ferocious, and it was unsafe to meet them on top of the board. But Freeth showed me, so that whenever I saw one of that calibre rolling down on me, I slid off the rear end of the board and dropped down beneath the surface, my arms over my head and holding the board. Thus, if the wave ripped the board out of my hands and tried to strike me with it (a common trick of such waves), there would be a cushion of water a foot or more in depth, between my head and the blow. When the wave passed, I climbed upon the board and paddled on. Many men have been terribly injured, I learn, by being struck by their boards.

The whole method of surf-riding and surf-fighting, learned, is one of non-resistance. Dodge the blow that is struck at you. Dive through the wave that is trying to slap you in the face. Sink down, feet first, deep under the surface, and let the big smoker that is trying to smash you go by far overhead. Never be rigid. Relax. Yield yourself to the waters that are ripping and tearing at you. When the undertow catches you and drags you seaward along the bottom, don’t struggle against it. If you do, you are liable to be drowned, for it is stronger than you. Yield yourself to that undertow. Swim with it, not against it, and you will find the pressure removed. And, swimming with it, fooling it so that it does not hold you, swim upward at the same time. It will be no trouble at all to reach the surface.

The man who wants to learn surf-riding must be a strong swimmer, and he must be used to going under the water. After that, fair strength and common-sense are all that is required. The force of the big comber is rather unexpected. There are mix-ups in which board and rider are torn apart and separated by several hundred feet. The surf-rider must take care of himself. No matter how many riders swim out with him, he cannot depend upon any of them for aid. The fancied security I had in the presence of Ford and Freeth made me forget that it was my first swim out in deep water among the big ones. I recollected, however, and rather suddenly, for a big wave came in, and away went the two men on its back all the way to shore. I could have been drowned a dozen different ways before they got back to me.

One slides down the face of a breaker on his surf-board, but he has to get started to sliding. Board and rider must be moving shoreward at a good rate before the wave overtakes them. When you see the wave coming that you want to ride in, you turn tail to it and paddle shoreward with all your strength, using what is called the windmill stroke. This is a sort of spurt performed immediately in front of the wave. If the board is going fast enough, the wave accelerates it, and the board begins its quarter-of-a-mile slide.

I shall never forget the first big wave I caught out there in the deep water. I saw it coming, turned my back on it and paddled for dear life. Faster and faster my board went, till it seemed my arms would drop off. What was happening behind me I could not tell. One cannot look behind and paddle the windmill stroke. I heard the crest of the wave hissing and churning, and then my board was lifted and flung forward. I scarcely knew what happened the first half-minute. Though I kept my eyes open, I could not see anything, for I was buried in the rushing white of the crest. But I did not mind. I was chiefly conscious of ecstatic bliss at having caught the wave. At the end, of the half-minute, however, I began to see things, and to breathe. I saw that three feet of the nose of my board was clear out of water and riding on the air. I shifted my weight forward, and made the nose come down. Then I lay, quite at rest in the midst of the wild movement, and watched the shore and the bathers on the beach grow distinct. I didn't cover quite a quarter of a mile on that wave, because, to prevent the board from diving, I shifted my weight back, but shifted it too far and fell down the rear slope of the wave.

It was my second day at surf-riding, and I was quite proud of myself. I stayed out there four hours, and when it was over, I was resolved that on the morrow I'd come in standing up. But that resolution paved a distant place. On the morrow I was in bed. I was not sick, but I was very unhappy, and I was in bed. When describing the wonderful water of Hawaii I forgot to describe the wonderful sun of Hawaii. It is a tropic sun, and, furthermore, in the first part of June, it is an overhead sun. It is also an insidious, deceitful sun. For the first time in my life I was sunburned unawares. My arms, shoulders, and back had been burned many times in the past and were tough; but not so my legs. And for four hours I had exposed the tender backs of my legs, at right-angles, to that perpendicular Hawaiian sun. It was not until after I got ashore that I discovered the sun had touched me. Sunburn at first is merely warm; after that it grows intense and the blisters come out. Also, the joints, where the skin wrinkles, refuse to bend. That is why I spent the next day in bed. I couldn't walk. And that is why, to-day, I am writing this in bed. It is easier to than not to. But to-morrow, ah, to-morrow, I shall be out in that wonderful water, and I shall come in standing up, even as Ford and Freeth. And if I fail to-morrow, I shall do it the next day, or the next. Upon one thing I am resolved: the Snark shall not sail from Honolulu until I, too, wing my heels with the swiftness of the sea, and become a sun-burned, skin-peeling Mercury.

CHAPTER VII — THE LEPERS OF MOLOKAI

When the Snark sailed along the windward coast of Molokai, on her way to Honolulu, I looked at the chart, then pointed to a low-lying peninsula backed by a tremendous cliff varying from two to four thousand feet in height, and said: “The pit of hell, the most cursed place on earth.” I should have been shocked, if, at that moment, I could have caught a vision of myself a month later, ashore in the most cursed place on earth and having a disgracefully good time along with eight hundred of the lepers who were likewise having a good time. Their good time was not disgraceful; but mine was, for in the midst of so much misery it was not meet for me to have a good time. That is the way I felt about it, and my only excuse is that I couldn’t help having a good time.

For instance, in the afternoon of the Fourth of July all the lepers gathered at the race-track for the sports. I had wandered away from the Superintendent and the physicians in order to get a snapshot of the finish of one of the races. It was an interesting race, and partisanship ran high. Three horses were entered, one ridden by a Chinese, one by an Hawaiian, and one by a Portuguese boy. All three riders were lepers; so were the judges and the crowd. The race was twice around the track. The Chinese and the Hawaiian got away together and rode neck and neck, the Portuguese boy toiling along two hundred feet behind. Around they went in the same positions. Halfway around on the second and final lap the Chinese pulled away and got one length ahead of the Hawaiian. At the same time the Portuguese boy was beginning to crawl up. But it looked hopeless. The crowd went wild. All the lepers were passionate lovers of horseflesh. The Portuguese boy crawled nearer and nearer. I went wild, too. They were on the home stretch. The Portuguese boy passed the Hawaiian. There was a thunder of hoofs, a rush of the three horses bunched together, the jockeys plying their whips, and every last onlooker bursting his throat, or hers, with shouts and yells. Nearer, nearer, inch by inch, the Portuguese boy crept up, and passed, yes, passed, winning by a head from the Chinese. I came to myself in a group of lepers. They were yelling, tossing their hats, and dancing around like fiends.

So was I. When I came to I was waving my hat and murmuring ecstatically: “By golly, the boy wins! The boy wins!”

I tried to check myself. I assured myself that I was witnessing one of the horrors of Molokai, and that it was shameful for me, under such circumstances, to be so light-hearted and light-headed. But it was no use. The next event was a donkey-race, and it was just starting; so was the fun. The last donkey in was to win the race, and what complicated the affair was that no rider rode his own donkey. They rode one another’s donkeys, the result of which was that each man strove to make the donkey he rode beat his own donkey ridden by some one else, Naturally, only men possessing very slow or extremely obstreperous donkeys had entered them for the race. One donkey had been trained to tuck in its legs and lie down whenever its rider touched its sides with his heels. Some donkeys strove to turn around and come back; others developed a penchant for the side of the track, where they stuck their heads over the railing and stopped; while all of them dawdled. Halfway around the track one donkey got into an argument with its rider. When all the rest of the donkeys had crossed the wire, that particular donkey was still arguing. He won the race, though his rider lost it and came in on foot. And all the while nearly a thousand lepers were laughing uproariously at the fun. Anybody in my place would have joined with them in having a good time.

All the foregoing is by way of preamble to the statement that the horrors of Molokai, as they have been painted in the past, do not exist. The Settlement has been written up repeatedly by sensationalists, and usually by sensationalists who have never laid eyes on it. Of course, leprosy is leprosy, and it is a terrible thing; but so much that is lurid has been written about Molokai that neither the lepers, nor those who devote their lives to them, have received a fair deal. Here is a case in point. A newspaper writer, who, of course, had never been near the Settlement, vividly described Superintendent McVeigh, crouching in a grass hut and being besieged nightly by starving lepers on their knees, wailing for food. This hair-raising account was copied by the press all over the United States and was the cause of many indignant and protesting editorials. Well, I lived and slept for five days in Mr. McVeigh’s “grass hut” (which was a comfortable wooden cottage, by the way; and there isn’t a grass house in the whole Settlement), and I heard the lepers wailing for food — only the wailing was peculiarly harmonious and rhythmic, and it was accompanied by the music of stringed instruments, violins, guitars, ukuleles, and banjos. Also, the wailing was of various sorts. The leper brass band wailed, and two singing societies wailed, and lastly a quintet of excellent voices wailed. So much for a lie that should never have been printed. The wailing was the serenade which the glee clubs always give Mr. McVeigh when he returns from a trip to Honolulu.

Leprosy is not so contagious as is imagined. I went for a week's visit to the Settlement, and I took my wife along — all of which would not have happened had we had any apprehension of contracting the disease. Nor did we wear long, gauntleted gloves and keep apart from the lepers. On the contrary, we mingled freely with them, and before we left, knew scores of them by sight and name. The precautions of simple cleanliness seem to be all that is necessary. On returning to their own houses, after having been among and handling lepers, the non-lepers, such as the physicians and the superintendent, merely wash their faces and hands with mildly antiseptic soap and change their coats.

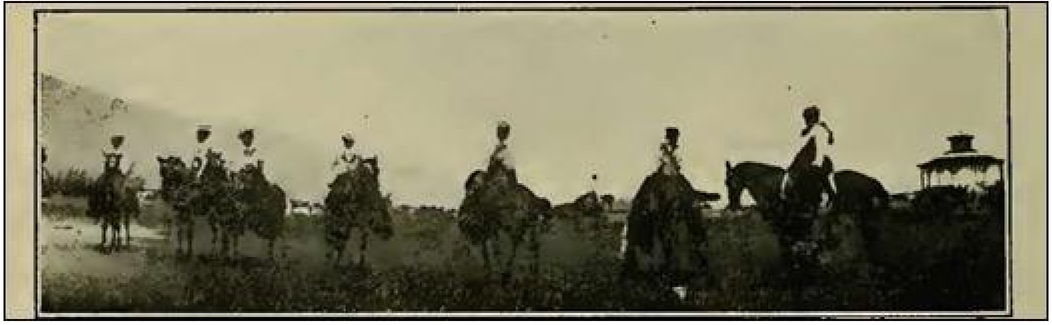

That a leper is unclean, however, should be insisted upon; and the segregation of lepers, from what little is known of the disease, should be rigidly maintained. On the other hand, the awful horror with which the leper has been regarded in the past, and the frightful treatment he has received, have been unnecessary and cruel. In order to dispel some of the popular misapprehensions of leprosy, I want to tell something of the relations between the lepers and non-lepers as I observed them at Molokai. On the morning after our arrival Charmian and I attended a shoot of the Kalaupapa Rifle Club, and caught our first glimpse of the democracy of affliction and alleviation that obtains. The club was just beginning a prize shoot for a cup put up by Mr. McVeigh, who is also a member of the club, as also are Dr. Goodhue and Dr. Hollmann, the resident physicians (who, by the way, live in the Settlement with their wives). All about us, in the shooting booth, were the lepers. Lepers and non-lepers were using the same guns, and all were rubbing shoulders in the confined space. The majority of the lepers were Hawaiians. Sitting beside me on a bench was a Norwegian. Directly in front of me, in the stand, was an American, a veteran of the Civil War, who had fought on the Confederate side. He was sixty-five years of age, but that did not prevent him from running up a good score. Strapping Hawaiian policemen, lepers, khaki-clad, were also shooting, as were Portuguese, Chinese, and kokuas — the latter are native helpers in the Settlement who are non-lepers. And on the afternoon that Charmian and I climbed the two-thousand-foot pali and looked our last upon the Settlement, the superintendent, the doctors, and the mixture of nationalities and of diseased and non-diseased were all engaged in an exciting baseball game.

Not so was the leper and his greatly misunderstood and feared disease treated during the middle ages in Europe. At that time the leper was considered legally and politically dead. He was placed in a funeral procession and led to the church, where the burial service was read over him by the officiating clergyman. Then a spadeful of earth was dropped upon his chest and he was dead-living dead. While this rigorous treatment was largely unnecessary, nevertheless, one thing was learned by it. Leprosy was unknown in Europe until it was introduced by the returning Crusaders, whereupon it spread slowly until it had seized upon large numbers of the people. Obviously, it was a disease that could be contracted by contact. It was a contagion, and it was equally obvious that it could be eradicated by segregation. Terrible and monstrous as was the treatment of the leper in those days, the great lesson of segregation was learned. By its means leprosy was stamped out.

And by the same means leprosy is even now decreasing in the Hawaiian Islands. But the segregation of the lepers on Molokai is not the horrible nightmare that has been so often exploited by YELLOW writers. In the first place, the leper is not torn ruthlessly from his family. When a suspect is discovered, he is invited by the Board of Health to come to the Kalihi receiving station at Honolulu. His fare and all expenses are paid for him. He is first passed upon by microscopical examination by the bacteriologist of the Board of Health. If the bacillus leprae is found, the patient is examined by the Board of Examining Physicians, five in number. If found by them to be a leper, he is so declared, which finding is later officially confirmed by the Board of Health, and the leper is ordered straight to Molokai. Furthermore, during the thorough trial that is given his case, the patient has the right to be represented by a physician whom he can select and employ for himself. Nor, after having been declared a leper, is the patient immediately rushed off to Molokai. He is given ample time, weeks, and even months, sometimes, during which he stays at Kalihi and winds up or arranges all his business affairs. At Molokai, in turn, he may be visited by his relatives, business agents, etc., though they are not permitted to eat and sleep in his house. Visitors' houses, kept "clean," are maintained for this purpose.

I saw an illustration of the thorough trial given the suspect, when I visited Kalihi with Mr. Pinkham, president of the Board of Health. The suspect was an Hawaiian, seventy years of age, who for thirty-four years had worked in Honolulu as a pressman in a printing office. The bacteriologist had decided that he was a leper, the Examining Board had been unable to make up its mind, and that day all had come out to Kalihi to make another examination.

When at Molokai, the declared leper has the privilege of re-examination, and patients are continually coming back to Honolulu for that purpose. The steamer that took me to Molokai had on board two returning lepers, both young women, one of whom had come to Honolulu to settle up some property she owned, and the other had come to Honolulu to see her sick mother. Both had remained at Kalihi for a month.

The Settlement of Molokai enjoys a far more delightful climate than even Honolulu, being situated on the windward side of the island in the path of the fresh north-east trades. The scenery is magnificent; on one side is the blue sea, on the other the wonderful wall of the pali, receding here and there into beautiful mountain valleys. Everywhere are grassy pastures over which roam the hundreds of horses which are owned by the lepers. Some of them have their own carts, rigs, and traps. In the little harbour of Kalaupapa lie fishing boats and a steam launch, all of which are privately owned and operated by lepers. Their bounds upon the sea are, of course, determined: otherwise no restriction is put upon their sea-faring. Their fish they sell to the Board of Health, and the money they receive is their own. While I was there, one night's catch was four thousand pounds.

Molokai. A Pa-u Rider.

And as these men fish, others farm. All trades are followed. One leper, a pure Hawaiian, is the boss painter. He employs eight men, and takes contracts for painting buildings from the Board of Health. He is a member of the Kalaupapa Rifle Club, where I met him, and I must confess that he was far better dressed than I. Another man, similarly situated, is the boss carpenter. Then, in addition to the Board of Health store, there are little privately owned stores, where those with shopkeeper's souls may exercise their peculiar instincts. The Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Waiamau, a finely educated and able man, is a pure Hawaiian and a leper. Mr. Bartlett, who is the present storekeeper, is an American who was in business in Honolulu before he was struck down by the disease. All that these men earn is that much in their own pockets. If they do not work, they are taken care of anyway by the territory, given food, shelter, clothes, and medical attendance. The Board of Health carries on agriculture, stock-raising, and dairying, for local use, and employment at fair wages is furnished to all that wish to work. They are not compelled to work, however, for they are the wards of the territory. For the young, and the very old, and the helpless there are homes and hospitals.

Major Lee, an American and long a marine engineer for the Inter Island Steamship Company, I met actively at work in the new steam laundry, where he was busy installing the machinery. I met him often, afterwards, and one day he said to me:

"Give us a good breeze about how we live here. For heaven's sake write us up straight. Put your foot down on this chamber-of-horrors rot and all the rest of it. We don't like being misrepresented. We've got some feelings. Just tell the world how we really are in here."

Man after man that I met in the Settlement, and woman after woman, in one way or another expressed the same sentiment. It was patent that they resented bitterly the sensational and untruthful way in which they have been exploited in the past.

In spite of the fact that they are afflicted by disease, the lepers form a happy colony, divided into two villages and numerous country and seaside homes, of nearly a thousand souls. They have six churches, a Young Men's Christian Association building, several assembly halls, a band stand, a race-track, baseball grounds, shooting ranges, an athletic club, numerous glee clubs, and two brass bands.

"They are so contented down there," Mr. Pinkham told me, "that you can't drive them away with a shot-gun."

This I later verified for myself. In January of this year, eleven of the lepers, on whom the disease, after having committed certain ravages, showed no further signs of activity, were brought back to Honolulu for re-examination. They were loath to come; and, on being asked whether or not they wanted to go free if found clean of leprosy, one and all answered, "Back to Molokai."

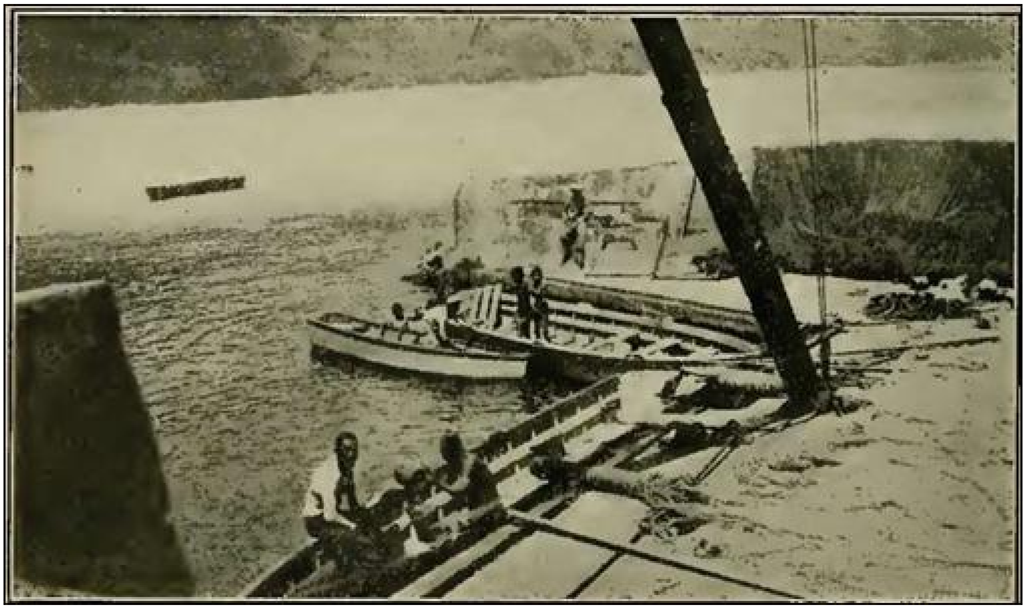

In the old days, before the discovery of the leprosy bacillus, a small number of men and women, suffering from various and wholly different diseases, were adjudged lepers and sent to Molokai. Years afterward they suffered great consternation when the bacteriologists declared that they were not afflicted with leprosy and never had been. They fought against being sent away from Molokai, and in one way or another, as helpers and nurses, they got jobs from the Board of Health and remained. The present jailer is one of these men. Declared to be a non-leper, he accepted, on salary, the charge of the jail, in order to escape being sent away.

At the present moment, in Honolulu, there is a bootblack. He is an American negro. Mr. McVeigh told me about him. Long ago, before the bacteriological tests, he was sent to Molokai as a leper. As a ward of the state he developed a superlative degree of independence and fomented much petty mischief. And then, one day, after having been for years a perennial source of minor annoyances, the bacteriological test was applied, and he was declared a non-leper.

“Ah, ha!” chortled Mr. McVeigh. “Now I’ve got you! Out you go on the next steamer and good riddance!”

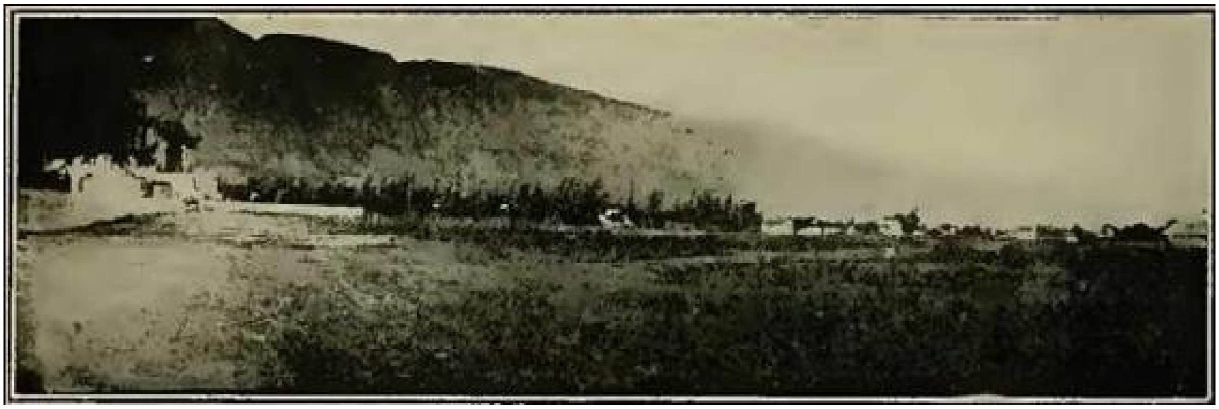

But the negro didn't want to go. Immediately he married an old woman, in the last stages of leprosy, and began petitioning the Board of Health for permission to remain and nurse his sick wife. There was no one, he said pathetically, who could take care of his poor wife as well as he could. But they saw through his game, and he was deported on the steamer and given the freedom of the world. But he preferred Molokai. Landing on the leeward side of Molokai, he sneaked down the pali one night and took up his abode in the Settlement. He was apprehended, tried and convicted of trespass, sentenced to pay a small fine, and again deported on the steamer with the warning that if he trespassed again, he would be fined one hundred dollars and be sent to prison in Honolulu. And now, when Mr. McVeigh comes up to Honolulu, the bootblack shines his shoes for him and says:

"Say, Boss, I lost a good home down there. Yes, sir, I lost a good home." Then his voice sinks to a confidential whisper as he says, "Say, Boss, can't I go back? Can't you fix it for me so as I can go back?"

He had lived nine years on Molokai, and he had had a better time there than he has ever had, before and after, on the outside.

As regards the fear of leprosy itself, nowhere in the Settlement among lepers, or non-lepers, did I see any sign of it. The chief horror of leprosy obtains in the minds of those who have never seen a leper and who do not know anything about the disease. At the hotel at Waikiki a lady expressed shuddering amazement at my having the hardihood to pay a visit to the Settlement. On talking with her I learned that she had been born in Honolulu, had lived there all her life, and had never laid eyes on a leper. That was more than I could say of myself in the United States, where the segregation of lepers is loosely enforced and where I have repeatedly seen lepers on the streets of large cities.

Leprosy is terrible, there is no getting away from that; but from what little I know of the disease and its degree of contagiousness, I would by far prefer to spend the rest of my days in Molokai than in any tuberculosis sanatorium. In every city and county hospital for poor people in the United States, or in similar institutions in other countries, sights as terrible as those in Molokai can be witnessed, and the sum total of these sights is vastly more terrible. For that matter, if it were given me to choose between being compelled to live in Molokai for the rest of my life, or in the East End of London, the East Side of New York, or the Stockyards of Chicago, I would select Molokai without debate. I would prefer one year of life in Molokai to five years of life in the above-mentioned cesspools of human degradation and misery.

In Molokai the people are happy. I shall never forget the celebration of the Fourth of July I witnessed there. At six o'clock in the morning the "horribles" were out, dressed fantastically, astride horses, mules, and donkeys (their own property), and cutting capers all over the Settlement. Two brass bands were out as well. Then there were the pa-u riders, thirty or forty of them, Hawaiian women all, superb horsewomen dressed gorgeously in the old, native riding costume, and dashing about in twos and threes and groups. In the afternoon Charmian and I stood in the judge's stand and awarded the prizes for horsemanship and costume to the pa-u riders. All about were the hundreds of lepers, with wreaths of flowers on heads and necks and shoulders, looking on and making merry. And always, over the brows of hills and across the grassy level stretches, appearing and disappearing, were the groups of men and women, gaily dressed, on galloping horses, horses and riders flower-bedecked and flower-garlanded, singing, and laughing, and riding like the wind. And as I stood in the judge's stand and looked at all this, there came to my recollection the lazar house of Havana, where I had once beheld some two hundred lepers, prisoners inside four restricted walls until they died. No, there are a few thousand places I wot of in this world over which I would select Molokai as a place of permanent residence. In the evening we went to one of the leper assembly halls, where, before a crowded audience, the singing societies contested for prizes, and where the night wound up with a dance. I have seen the Hawaiians living in the slums of Honolulu, and, having seen them, I can readily understand why the lepers, brought up from the Settlement for re-examination, shouted one and all, “Back to Molokai!”

One thing is certain. The leper in the Settlement is far better off than the leper who lies in hiding outside. Such a leper is a lonely outcast, living in constant fear of discovery and slowly and surely rotting away. The action of leprosy is not steady. It lays hold of its victim, commits a ravage, and then lies dormant for an indeterminate period. It may not commit another ravage for five years, or ten years, or forty years, and the patient may enjoy uninterrupted good health. Rarely, however, do these first ravages cease of themselves. The skilled surgeon is required, and the skilled surgeon cannot be called in for the leper who is in hiding. For instance, the first ravage may take the form of a perforating ulcer in the sole of the foot. When the bone is reached, necrosis sets in. If the leper is in hiding, he cannot be operated upon, the necrosis will continue to eat its way up the bone of the leg, and in a brief and horrible time that leper will die of gangrene or some other terrible complication. On the other hand, if that same leper is in Molokai, the surgeon will operate upon the foot, remove the ulcer, cleanse the bone, and put a complete stop to that particular ravage of the disease. A month after the operation the leper will be out riding horseback, running foot races, swimming in the breakers, or climbing the giddy sides of the valleys for mountain apples. And as has been stated before, the disease, lying dormant, may not again attack him for five, ten, or forty years.

The old horrors of leprosy go back to the conditions that obtained before the days of antiseptic surgery, and before the time when physicians like Dr. Goodhue and Dr. Hollmann went to live at the Settlement. Dr. Goodhue is the pioneer surgeon there, and too much praise cannot be given him for the noble work he has done. I spent one morning in the operating room with him and of the three operations he performed, two were on men, newcomers, who had arrived on the same steamer with me. In each case, the disease had attacked in one spot only. One had a perforating ulcer in the ankle, well advanced, and the other man was suffering from a similar affliction, well advanced, under his arm. Both cases were well advanced because the man had been on the outside and had not been treated. In each case. Dr. Goodhue put an immediate and complete stop to the ravage, and in four weeks those two men will be as well and able-bodied as they ever were in their lives. The only difference between them and you or me is that the disease is lying dormant in their bodies and may at any future time commit another ravage.

Leprosy is as old as history. References to it are found in the earliest written records. And yet to-day practically nothing more is known about it than was known then. This much was known then, namely, that it was contagious and that those afflicted by it should be segregated. The difference between then and now is that to-day the leper is more rigidly segregated and more humanely treated. But leprosy itself still remains the same awful and profound mystery. A reading of the reports of the physicians and specialists of all countries reveals the baffling nature of the disease. These leprosy specialists are unanimous on no one phase of the disease. They do not know. In the past they rashly and dogmatically generalized. They generalize no longer. The one possible generalization that can be drawn from all the investigation that has been made is that leprosy is FEEBLY CONTAGIOUS. But in what manner it is feebly contagious is not known. They have isolated the bacillus of leprosy. They can determine by bacteriological examination whether or not a person is a leper; but they are as far away as ever from knowing how that bacillus finds its entrance into the body of a non-leper. They do not know the length of time of incubation. They have tried to inoculate all sorts of animals with leprosy, and have failed.

They are baffled in the discovery of a serum wherewith to fight the disease. And in all their work, as yet, they have found no clue, no cure. Sometimes there have been blazes of hope, theories of causation and much heralded cures, but every time the darkness of failure quenched the flame. A doctor insists that the cause of leprosy is a long-continued fish diet, and he proves his theory voluminously till a physician from the highlands of India demands why the natives of that district should therefore be afflicted by leprosy when they have never eaten fish, nor all the generations of their fathers before them. A man treats a leper with a certain kind of oil or drug, announces a cure, and five, ten, or forty years afterwards the disease breaks out again. It is this trick of leprosy lying dormant in the body for indeterminate periods that is responsible for many alleged cures. But this much is certain: AS YET THERE HAS BEEN NO AUTHENTIC CASE OF A CURE.

Leprosy is FEEBLY CONTAGIOUS, but how is it contagious? An Austrian physician has inoculated himself and his assistants with leprosy and failed to catch it. But this is not conclusive, for there is the famous case of the Hawaiian murderer who had his sentence of death commuted to life imprisonment on his agreeing to be inoculated with the bacillus leprae. Some time after inoculation, leprosy made its appearance, and the man died a leper on Molokai. Nor was this conclusive, for it was discovered that at the time he was inoculated several members of his family were already suffering from the disease on Molokai. He may have contracted the disease from them, and it may have been well along in its mysterious period of incubation at the time he was officially inoculated. Then there is the case of that hero of the Church, Father Damien, who went to Molokai a clean man and died a leper. There have been many theories as to how he contracted leprosy, but nobody knows. He never knew himself. But every chance that he ran has certainly been run by a woman at present living in the Settlement; who has lived there many years; who has had five leper husbands, and had children by them; and who is to-day, as she always has been, free of the disease.

FATHER
DAMIEN

As yet no light has been shed upon the mystery of leprosy. When more is learned about the disease, a cure for it may be expected. Once an efficacious serum is discovered, and leprosy, because it is so feebly contagious, will pass away swiftly from the earth. The battle waged with it will be short and sharp. In the meantime, how to discover that serum, or some other unguessed weapon? In the present it is a serious matter. It is estimated that there are half a million lepers, not segregated, in India alone. Carnegie libraries, Rockefeller universities, and many similar benefactions are all very well; but one cannot help thinking how far a few thousands of dollars would go, say in the leper Settlement of Molokai. The residents there are accidents of fate, scapegoats to some mysterious natural law of which man knows nothing, isolated for the welfare of their fellows who else might catch the dread disease, even as they have caught it, nobody knows how. Not for their sakes merely, but for the sake of future generations, a few thousands of dollars would go far in a legitimate and scientific search after a cure for leprosy, for a serum, or for some undreamed discovery that will enable the medical world to exterminate the bacillus leprae. There’s the place for your money, you philanthropists.

CHAPTER VIII — THE HOUSE OF THE SUN

There are hosts of people who journey like restless spirits round and about this earth in search of seascapes and landscapes and the wonders and beauties of nature. They overrun Europe in armies; they can be met in droves and herds in Florida and the West Indies, at the Pyramids, and on the slopes and summits of the Canadian and American Rockies; but in the House of the Sun they are as rare as live and wriggling dinosaurs. Haleakala is the Hawaiian name for “the House of the Sun.” It is a noble dwelling, situated on the Island of Maui; but so few tourists have ever peeped into it, much less entered it, that their number may be practically reckoned as zero. Yet I venture to state that for natural beauty and wonder the nature-lover may see dissimilar things as great as Haleakala, but no greater, while he will never see elsewhere anything more beautiful or wonderful. Honolulu is six days’ steaming from San Francisco; Maui is a night’s run on the steamer from Honolulu; and six hours more if he is in a hurry, can bring the traveller to Kolikoli, which is ten thousand and thirty-two feet above the sea and which stands hard by the entrance portal to the House of the Sun. Yet the tourist comes not, and Haleakala sleeps on in lonely and unseen grandeur.

Not being tourists, we of the Snark went to Haleakala. On the slopes of that monster mountain there is a cattle ranch of some fifty thousand acres, where we spent the night at an altitude of two thousand feet. The next morning it was boots and saddles, and with cow-boys and pack-horses we climbed to Ukulele, a mountain ranch-house, the altitude of which, fifty-five hundred feet, gives a severely temperate climate, compelling blankets at night and a roaring fireplace in the living-room. Ukulele, by the way, is the Hawaiian for “jumping flea” as it is also the Hawaiian for a certain musical instrument that may be likened to a young guitar. It is my opinion that the mountain ranch-house was named after the young guitar. We were not in a hurry, and we spent the day at Ukulele, learnedly discussing altitudes and barometers and shaking our particular barometer whenever any one’s argument stood in need of demonstration. Our barometer was the most graciously acquiescent instrument I have ever seen. Also, we gathered mountain raspberries, large as hen’s eggs and larger, gazed up the pasture-covered lava slopes to the summit of Haleakala, forty-five hundred feet above us, and looked down upon a mighty battle of the clouds that was being fought beneath us, ourselves in the bright sunshine.

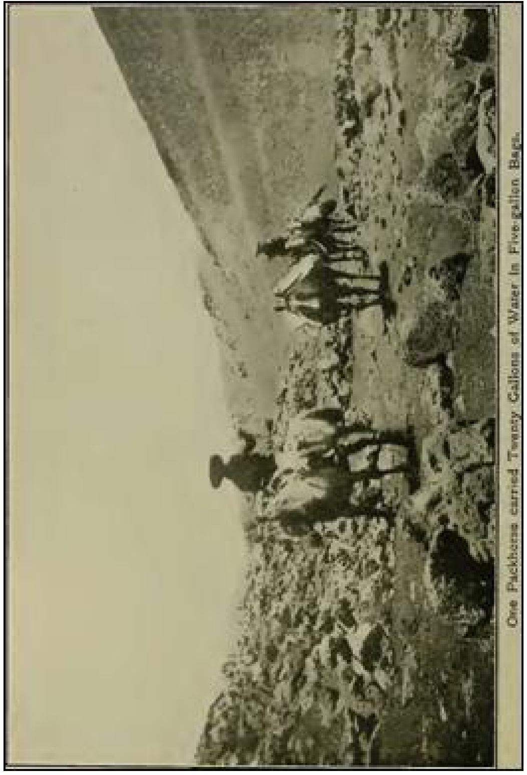

One Packhorse carried Twenty Gallons of Water in Five-gallon Bags.

Every day and every day this unending battle goes on. Ukiukiu is the name of the trade-wind that comes raging down out of the north-east and hurls itself upon Haleakala. Now Haleakala is so bulky and tall that it turns the north-east trade-wind aside on either hand, so that in the lee of Haleakala no trade-wind blows at all. On the contrary, the wind blows in the counter direction, in the teeth of the north-east trade. This wind is called Naulu. And day and night and always Ukiukiu and Naulu strive with each other, advancing, retreating, flanking, curving, curling, and turning and twisting, the conflict made visible by the cloud-masses plucked from the heavens and hurled back and forth in squadrons, battalions, armies, and great mountain ranges. Once in a while, Ukiukiu, in mighty gusts, flings immense cloud-masses clear over the summit of Haleakala; whereupon Naulu craftily captures them, lines them up in new battle-formation, and with them smites back at his ancient and eternal antagonist. Then Ukiukiu sends a great cloud-army around the eastern-side of the mountain. It is a flanking movement, well executed. But Naulu, from his lair on the leeward side, gathers the flanking army in, pulling and twisting and dragging it, hammering it into shape, and sends it charging back against Ukiukiu around the western side of the mountain. And all the while, above and below the main battle-field, high up the slopes toward the sea, Ukiukiu and Naulu are continually sending out little wisps of cloud, in ragged skirmish line, that creep and crawl over the ground, among the trees and through the canyons, and that spring upon and capture one another in sudden ambuscades and sorties. And sometimes Ukiukiu or Naulu, abruptly sending out a heavy charging column, captures the ragged little skirmishers or drives them skyward, turning over and over, in vertical whirls, thousands of feet in the air.

But it is on the western slopes of Haleakala that the main battle goes on. Here Naulu masses his heaviest formations and wins his greatest victories. Ukiukiu grows weak toward late afternoon, which is the way of all trade-winds, and is driven backward by Naulu. Naulu's generalship is excellent. All day he has been gathering and packing away immense reserves. As the afternoon draws on, he welds them into a solid column, sharp-pointed, miles in length, a mile in width, and hundreds of feet thick. This column he slowly thrusts forward into the broad battle-front of Ukiukiu, and slowly and surely Ukiukiu, weakening fast, is split asunder. But it is not all bloodless. At times Ukiukiu struggles wildly, and with fresh accessions of strength from the limitless north-east, smashes away half a mile at a time of Naulu's column and sweeps it off and away toward West Maui. Sometimes, when the two charging armies meet end-on, a tremendous perpendicular whirl results, the cloud-masses, locked together, mounting thousands of feet into the air and turning over and over. A favourite device of Ukiukiu is to send a low, squat formation, densely packed, forward along the ground and under Naulu. When Ukiukiu is under, he proceeds to buck. Naulu's mighty middle gives to the blow and bends upward, but usually he turns the attacking column back upon itself and sets it milling. And all the while the ragged little skirmishers, stray and detached, sneak through the trees and canyons, crawl along and through the grass, and surprise one another with unexpected leaps and rushes; while above, far above, serene and lonely in the rays of the setting sun, Haleakala looks down upon the conflict. And so, the night. But in the morning, after the fashion of trade-winds, Ukiukiu gathers strength and sends the hosts of Naulu rolling back in confusion and rout. And one day is like another day in the battle of the clouds, where Ukiukiu and Naulu strive eternally on the slopes of Haleakala.

Again in the morning, it was boots and saddles, cow-boys, and packhorses, and the climb to the top began. One packhorse carried twenty gallons of water, slung in five-gallon bags on either side; for water is precious and rare in the crater itself, in spite of the fact that several miles to the north and east of the crater-rim more rain comes down than in any other place in the world. The way led upward across countless lava flows, without regard for trails, and never have I seen horses with such perfect footing as that of the thirteen that composed our outfit. They climbed or dropped down perpendicular places with the sureness and coolness of mountain goats, and never a horse fell or baulked.

There is a familiar and strange illusion experienced by all who climb isolated mountains. The higher one climbs, the more of the earth's surface becomes visible, and the effect of this is that the horizon seems up-hill from the observer. This illusion is especially notable on Haleakala, for the old volcano rises directly from the sea without buttresses or connecting ranges. In consequence, as fast as we climbed up the grim slope of Haleakala, still faster did Haleakala, ourselves, and all about us, sink down into the centre of what appeared a profound abyss. Everywhere, far above us, towered the horizon. The ocean sloped down from the horizon to us. The higher we climbed, the deeper did we seem to sink down, the farther above us shone the horizon, and the steeper pitched the grade up to that horizontal line where sky and ocean met. It was weird and unreal, and vagrant thoughts of Simm's Hole and of the volcano through which Jules Verne journeyed to the centre of the earth flitted through one's mind.

We had a Lunch of Jerked Beef and Hard Poi in a Stone Corral.

And then, when at last we reached the summit of that monster mountain, which summit was like the bottom of an inverted cone situated in the centre of an awful cosmic pit, we found that we were at neither top nor bottom. Far above us was the heaven-towering horizon, and far beneath us, where the top of the mountain should have been, was a deeper deep, the great crater, the House of the Sun. Twenty-three miles around stretched the dizzy wells of the crater. We stood on the edge of the nearly vertical western wall, and the floor of the crater lay nearly half a mile beneath. This floor, broken by lava-flows and cinder-cones, was as red and fresh and uneroded as if it were but yesterday that the fires went out. The cinder-cones, the smallest over four hundred feet in height and the largest over nine hundred, seemed no more than puny little sand-hills, so mighty was the magnitude of the setting. Two gaps, thousands of feet deep, broke the rim of the crater, and through these Ukiukiu vainly strove to drive his fleecy herds of trade-wind clouds. As fast as they advanced through the gaps, the heat of the crater dissipated them into thin air, and though they advanced always, they got nowhere.

It was a scene of vast bleakness and desolation, stern, forbidding, fascinating. We gazed down upon a place of fire and earthquake. The tie-ribs of earth lay bare before us. It was a workshop of nature still cluttered with the raw beginnings of world-making. Here and there great dikes of primordial rock had thrust themselves up from the bowels of earth, straight through the molten surface-ferment that had evidently cooled only the other day. It was all unreal and unbelievable. Looking upward, far above us (in reality beneath us) floated the cloud-battle of Ukiukiu and Naulu. And higher up the slope of the seeming abyss, above the cloud-battle, in the air and sky, hung the islands of Lanai and Molokai. Across the crater, to the south-east, still apparently looking upward, we saw ascending, first, the turquoise sea, then the white surf-line of the shore of Hawaii; above that the belt of trade-clouds, and next, eighty miles away, rearing their stupendous hulks out of the azure sky, tipped with snow, wreathed with cloud, trembling like a mirage, the peaks of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa hung poised on the wall of heaven.

It is told that long ago, one Maui, the son of Hina, lived on what is now known as West Maui. His mother, Hina, employed her time in the making of kapas. She must have made them at night, for her days were occupied in trying to dry the kapas. Each morning, and all morning, she toiled at spreading them out in the sun. But no sooner were they out, than she began taking them in, in order to have them all under shelter for the night. For know that the days were shorter then than now. Maui watched his mother’s futile toil and felt sorry for her. He decided to do something — oh, no, not to help her hang out and take in the kapas. He was too clever for that. His idea was to make the sun go slower. Perhaps he was the first Hawaiian astronomer. At any rate, he took a series of observations of the sun from various parts of the island. His conclusion was that the sun’s path was directly across Haleakala. Unlike Joshua, he stood in no need of divine assistance. He gathered a huge quantity of coconuts, from the fibre of which he braided a stout cord, and in one end of which he made a noose, even as the cow-boys of Haleakala do to this day. Next he climbed into the House of the Sun and laid in wait. When the sun came tearing along the path, bent on completing its journey in the shortest time possible, the valiant youth threw his lariat around one of the sun’s largest and strongest beams. He made the sun slow down some; also, he broke the beam short off. And he kept on roping and breaking off beams till the sun said it was willing to listen to reason. Maui set forth his terms of peace, which the sun accepted, agreeing to go more slowly thereafter. Wherefore Hina had ample time in which to dry her kapas, and the days are longer than they used to be, which last is quite in accord with the teachings of modern astronomy.

We had a lunch of jerked beef and hard poi in a stone corral, used of old time for the night-impounding of cattle being driven across the island. Then we skirted the rim for half a mile and began the descent into the crater. Twenty-five hundred feet beneath lay the floor, and down a steep slope of loose volcanic cinders we dropped, the sure-footed horses slipping and sliding, but always keeping their feet. The black surface of the cinders, when broken by the horses' hoofs, turned to a yellow ochre dust, virulent in appearance and acid of taste, that arose in clouds. There was a gallop across a level stretch to the mouth of a convenient blow-hole, and then the descent continued in clouds of volcanic dust, winding in and out among cinder-cones, brick-red, old rose, and purplish black of colour. Above us, higher and higher, towered the crater-walls, while we journeyed on across innumerable lava-flows, turning and twisting a devious way among the adamantine billows of a petrified sea. Saw-toothed waves of lava vexed the surface of this weird ocean, while on either hand arose jagged crests and spiracles of fantastic shape. Our way led on past a bottomless pit and along and over the main stream of the latest lava-flow for seven miles.

At the lower end of the crater was our camping spot, in a small grove of olapa and kolea trees, tucked away in a corner of the crater at the base of walls that rose perpendicularly fifteen hundred feet. Here was pasturage for the horses, but no water, and first we turned aside and picked our way across a mile of lava to a known water-hole in a crevice in the crater-wall. The water-hole was empty. But on climbing fifty feet up the crevice, a pool was found containing half a dozen barrels of water. A pail was carried up, and soon a steady stream of the precious liquid was running down the rock and filling the lower pool, while the cow-boys below were busy fighting the horses back, for there was room for one only to drink at a time. Then it was on to camp at the foot of the wall, up which herds of wild goats scrambled and blatted, while the tent arose to the sound of rifle-firing. Jerked beef, hard poi, and broiled kid were the menu. Over the crest of the crater, just above our heads, rolled a sea of clouds, driven on by Ukiukiu. Though this sea rolled over the crest unceasingly, it never blotted out nor dimmed the moon, for the heat of the crater dissolved the clouds as fast as they rolled in. Through the moonlight, attracted by the camp-fire, came the crater cattle to peer and challenge. They were rolling fat, though they rarely drank water, the morning dew on the grass taking its place. It was because of this dew that the tent made a welcome bedchamber, and we fell asleep to the chanting of hulas by the unwearied Hawaiian cowboys, in whose veins, no doubt, ran the blood of Maui, their valiant forebear.

The camera cannot do justice to the House of the Sun. The sublimated chemistry of photography may not lie, but it certainly does not tell all the truth. The Koolau Gap may be faithfully reproduced, just as it impinged on the retina of the camera, yet in the resulting picture the gigantic scale of things would be missing. Those walls that seem several hundred feet in height are almost as many thousand; that entering wedge of cloud is a mile and a half wide in the gap itself, while beyond the gap it is a veritable ocean; and that foreground of cinder-cone and volcanic ash, mushy and colourless in appearance, is in truth gorgeous-hued in brick-red, terra-cotta rose, yellow ochre, and purplish black. Also, words are a vain thing and drive to despair. To say that a crater-wall is two thousand feet high is to say just precisely that it is two thousand feet high; but there is a vast deal more to that crater-wall than a mere statistic. The sun is ninety-three millions of miles distant, but to mortal conception the adjoining county is farther away. This frailty of the human brain is hard on the sun. It is likewise hard on the House of the Sun. Haleakala has a message of beauty and wonder for the human soul that cannot be delivered by proxy. Kolikoli is six hours from Kahului; Kahului is a night's run from Honolulu; Honolulu is six days from San Francisco; and there you are.

We climbed the crater-walls, put the horses over impossible places, rolled stones, and shot wild goats. I did not get any goats. I was too busy rolling stones. One spot in particular I remember, where we started a stone the size of a horse. It began the descent easy enough, rolling over, wobbling, and threatening to stop; but in a few minutes it was soaring through the air two hundred feet at a jump. It grew rapidly smaller until it struck a slight slope of volcanic sand, over which it darted like a startled jackrabbit, kicking up behind it a tiny trail of yellow dust. Stone and dust diminished in size, until some of the party said the stone had stopped. That was because they could not see it any longer. It had vanished into the distance beyond their ken. Others saw it rolling farther on — I know I did; and it is my firm conviction that that stone is still rolling.

Our last day in the crater, Ukiukiu gave us a taste of his strength. He smashed Naulu back all along the line, filled the House of the Sun to overflowing with clouds, and drowned us out. Our rain-gauge was a pint cup under a tiny hole in the tent. That last night of storm and rain filled the cup, and there was no way of measuring the water that spilled over into the blankets. With the rain-gauge out of business there was no longer any reason for remaining; so we broke camp in the wet-gray of dawn, and plunged eastward across the lava to the Kaupo Gap. East Maui is nothing more or less than the vast lava stream that flowed long ago through the Kaupo Gap;

and down this stream we picked our way from an altitude of six thousand five hundred feet to the sea. This was a day's work in itself for the horses; but never were there such horses. Safe in the bad places, never rushing, never losing their heads, as soon as they found a trail wide and smooth enough to run on, they ran. There was no stopping them until the trail became bad again, and then they stopped of themselves. Continuously, for days, they had performed the hardest kind of work, and fed most of the time on grass foraged by themselves at night while we slept, and yet that day they covered twenty-eight leg-breaking miles and galloped into Hana like a bunch of colts. Also, there were several of them, reared in the dry region on the leeward side of Haleakala, that had never worn shoes in all their lives. Day after day, and all day long, unshod, they had travelled over the sharp lava, with the extra weight of a man on their backs, and their hoofs were in better condition than those of the shod horses.

The scenery between Vieiras's (where the Kaupo Gap empties into the sea) and Lana, which we covered in half a day, is well worth a week or month; but, wildly beautiful as it is, it becomes pale and small in comparison with the wonderland that lies beyond the rubber plantations between Hana and the Honomanu Gulch. Two days were required to cover this marvellous stretch, which lies on the windward side of Haleakala. The people who dwell there call it the "ditch country," an unprepossessing name, but it has no other. Nobody else ever comes there. Nobody else knows anything about it. With the exception of a handful of men, whom business has brought there, nobody has heard of the ditch country of Maui. Now a ditch is a ditch, assumably muddy, and usually traversing uninteresting and monotonous landscapes. But the Nahiku Ditch is not an ordinary ditch. The windward side of Haleakala is serried by a thousand precipitous gorges, down which rush as many torrents, each torrent of which achieves a score of cascades and waterfalls before it reaches the sea. More rain comes down here than in any other region in the world. In 1904 the year’s downpour was four hundred and twenty inches. Water means sugar, and sugar is the backbone of the territory of Hawaii, wherefore the Nahiku Ditch, which is not a ditch, but a chain of tunnels. The water travels underground, appearing only at intervals to leap a gorge, travelling high in the air on a giddy flume and plunging into and through the opposing mountain. This magnificent waterway is called a “ditch,” and with equal appropriateness can Cleopatra’s barge be called a box-car.

There are no carriage roads through the ditch country, and before the ditch was built, or bored, rather, there was no horse-trail. Hundreds of inches of rain annually, on fertile soil, under a tropic sun, means a steaming jungle of vegetation. A man, on foot, cutting his way through, might advance a mile a day, but at the end of a week he would be a wreck, and he would have to crawl hastily back if he wanted to get out before the vegetation overran the passage way he had cut. O’Shaughnessy was the daring engineer who conquered the jungle and the gorges, ran the ditch and made the horse-trail. He built enduringly, in concrete and masonry, and made one of the most remarkable water-farms in the world. Every little runlet and dribble is harvested and conveyed by subterranean channels to the main ditch. But so heavily does it rain at times that countless spillways let the surplus escape to the sea.

The horse-trail is not very wide. Like the engineer who built it, it dares anything. Where the ditch plunges through the mountain, it climbs over; and where the ditch leaps a gorge on a flume, the horse-trail takes advantage of the ditch and crosses on top of the flume. That careless trail thinks nothing of travelling up or down the faces of precipices. It gouges its narrow way out of the wall, dodging around waterfalls or passing under them where they thunder down in white fury; while straight overhead the wall rises hundreds of feet, and straight beneath it sinks a thousand. And those marvellous mountain horses are as unconcerned as the trail. They fox-trot along it as a matter of course, though the footing is slippery with rain, and they will gallop with their hind feet slipping over the edge if you let them. I advise only those with steady nerves and cool heads to tackle the Nahiku Ditch trail. One of our cow-boys was noted as the strongest and bravest on the big ranch. He had ridden mountain horses all his life on the rugged western slopes of Haleakala. He was first in the horse-breaking; and when the others hung back, as a matter of course, he would go in to meet a wild bull in the cattle-pen. He had a reputation. But he had never ridden over the Nahiku Ditch. It was there he lost his reputation. When he faced the first flume, spanning a hair-raising gorge, narrow, without railings, with a bellowing waterfall above, another below, and directly beneath a wild cascade, the air filled with driving spray and rocking to the clamour and rush of sound and motion — well, that cow-boy dismounted from his horse, explained briefly that he had a wife and two children, and crossed over on foot, leading the horse behind him.

The only relief from the flumes was the precipices; and the only relief from the precipices was the flumes, except where the ditch was far under ground, in which case we crossed one horse and rider at a time, on primitive log-bridges that swayed and teetered and threatened to carry away. I confess that at first I rode such places with my feet loose in the stirrups, and that on the sheer walls I saw to it, by a definite, conscious act of will, that the foot in the outside stirrup, overhanging the thousand feet of fall, was exceedingly loose. I say “at first”; for, as in the crater itself we quickly lost our conception of magnitude, so, on the Nahiku Ditch, we quickly lost our apprehension of depth. The ceaseless iteration of height and depth produced a state of consciousness in which height and depth were accepted as the ordinary conditions of existence; and from the horse’s back to look sheer down four hundred or five hundred feet became quite commonplace and non-productive of thrills. And as carelessly as the trail and the horses, we swung along the dizzy heights and ducked around or through the waterfalls.

And such a ride! Falling water was everywhere. We rode above the clouds, under the clouds, and through the clouds! and every now and then a shaft of sunshine penetrated like a search-light to the depths yawning beneath us, or flashed upon some pinnacle of the crater-rim thousands of feet above. At every turn of the trail a waterfall or a dozen waterfalls, leaping hundreds of feet through the air, burst upon our vision. At our first night's camp, in the Keanae Gulch, we counted thirty-two waterfalls from a single viewpoint. The vegetation ran riot over that wild land. There were forests of koa and kolea trees, and candlenut trees; and then there were the trees called ohia-ai, which bore red mountain apples, mellow and juicy and most excellent to eat. Wild bananas grew everywhere, clinging to the sides of the gorges, and, overborne by their great bunches of ripe fruit, falling across the trail and blocking the way. And over the forest surged a sea of green life, the climbers of a thousand varieties, some that floated airily, in lacelike filaments, from the tallest branches others that coiled and wound about the trees like huge serpents; and one, the ei-ei, that was for all the world like a climbing palm, swinging on a thick stem from branch to branch and tree to tree and throttling the supports whereby it climbed. Through the sea of green, lofty tree-ferns thrust their great delicate fronds, and the lehua flaunted its scarlet blossoms. Underneath the climbers, in no less profusion, grew the warm-coloured, strangely-marked plants that in the United States one is accustomed to seeing preciously conserved in hot-houses. In fact, the ditch country of Maui is nothing more nor less than a huge conservatory. Every familiar variety of fern flourishes, and more varieties that are unfamiliar, from the tiniest maidenhair to the gross and voracious staghorn, the latter the terror of the woodsmen, interlacing with itself in tangled masses five or six feet deep and covering acres.

Never was there such a ride. For two days it lasted, when we emerged into rolling country, and, along an actual wagon-road, came home to the ranch at a gallop. I know it was cruel to gallop the horses after such a long, hard journey; but we blistered our hands in vain effort to hold them in. That's the sort of horses they grow on Haleakala. At the ranch there was great festival of cattle-driving, branding, and horse-breaking. Overhead Ukiukiu and Naulu battled valiantly, and far above, in the sunshine, towered the mighty summit of Haleakala.

CHAPTER IX — A PACIFIC TRAVERSE

Sandwich Islands to Tahiti. — There is great difficulty in making this passage across the trades. The whalers and all others speak with great doubt of fetching Tahiti from the Sandwich islands. Capt. Bruce says that a vessel should keep to the northward until she gets a start of wind before bearing for her destination. In his passage between them in November, 1837, he had no variables near the line in coming south, and never could make easting on either tack, though he endeavoured by every means to do so.

So say the sailing directions for the South Pacific Ocean; and that is all they say. There is not a word more to help the weary voyager in making this long traverse — nor is there any word at all concerning the passage from Hawaii to the Marquesas, which lie some eight hundred miles to the northeast of Tahiti and which are the more difficult to reach by just that much. The reason for the lack of directions is, I imagine, that no voyager is supposed to make himself weary by attempting so impossible a traverse. But the impossible did not deter the Snark, — principally because of the fact that we did not read that particular little paragraph in the sailing directions until after we had started. We sailed from Hilo, Hawaii, on October 7, and arrived at Nuka-hiva, in the Marquesas, on December 6. The distance was two thousand miles as the crow flies, while we actually travelled at least four thousand miles to accomplish it, thus proving for once and for ever that the shortest distance between two points is not always a straight line. Had we headed directly for the Marquesas, we might have travelled five or six thousand miles.

Upon one thing we were resolved: we would not cross the Line west of 130 degrees west longitude. For here was the problem. To cross the Line to the west of that point, if the southeast trades were well around to the southeast, would throw us so far to leeward of the Marquesas that a head-beat would be maddeningly impossible. Also, we had to remember the equatorial current, which moves west at a rate of anywhere from twelve to seventy-five miles a day. A pretty pickle, indeed, to be to leeward of our destination with such a current in our teeth. No; not a minute, nor a second, west of 130 degrees west longitude would we cross the Line. But since the southeast trades were to be expected five or six degrees north of the Line (which, if they were well around to the southeast or south-southeast, would necessitate our sliding off toward south-southwest), we should have to hold to the eastward, north of the Line, and north of the southeast trades, until we gained at least 128 degrees west longitude.

I have forgotten to mention that the seventy-horse-power gasolene engine, as usual, was not working, and that we could depend upon wind alone. Neither was the launch engine working. And while I am about it, I may as well confess that the five-horse-power, which ran the lights, fans, and pumps, was also on the sick-list. A striking title for a book haunts me, waking and sleeping. I should like to write that book some day and to call it "Around the World with Three Gasolene Engines and a Wife." But I am afraid I shall not write it, for fear of hurting the feelings of some of the young gentlemen of San Francisco, Honolulu, and Hilo, who learned their trades at the expense of the Snark's engines.

It looked easy on paper. Here was Hilo and there was our objective, 128 degrees west longitude. With the northeast trade blowing we could travel a straight line between the two points, and even slack our sheets off a goodly bit. But one of the chief troubles with the trades is that one never knows just where he will pick them up and just in what direction they will be blowing. We picked up the northeast trade right outside of Hilo harbour, but the miserable breeze was away around into the east. Then there was the north equatorial current setting westward like a mighty river. Furthermore, a small boat, by the wind and bucking into a big headsea, does not work to advantage. She jogs up and down and gets nowhere. Her sails are full and straining, every little while she presses her lee-rail under, she flounders, and bumps, and splashes, and that is all. Whenever she begins to gather way, she runs ker-chug into a big mountain of water and is brought to a standstill.

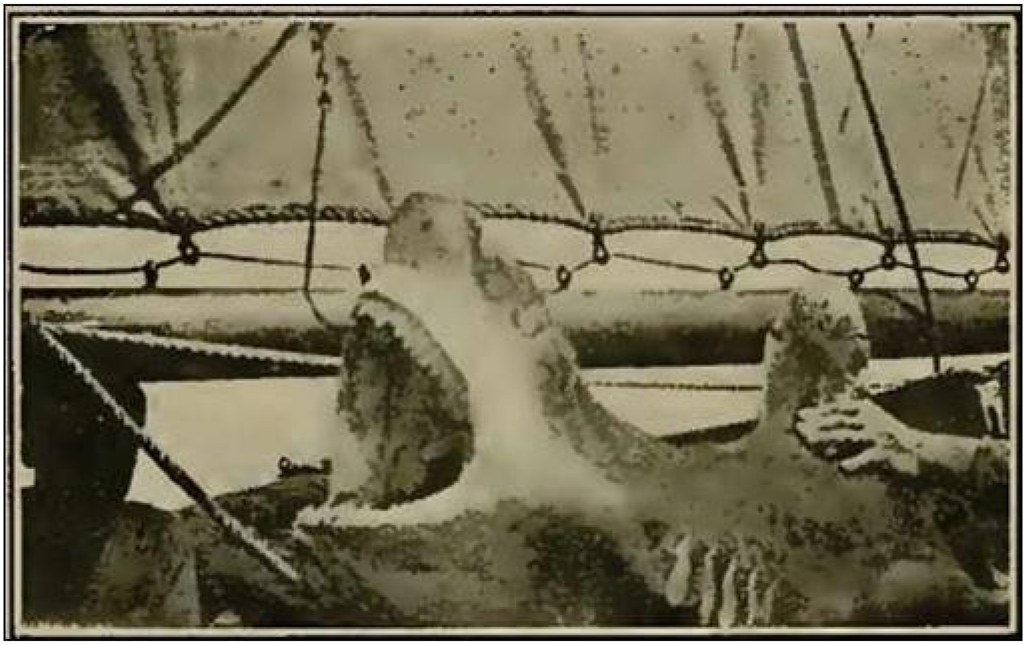

So, with the Snark, the resultant of her smallness, of the trade around into the east, and of the strong equatorial current, was a long sag south. Oh, she did not go quite south. But the easting she made was distressing. On October 11, she made forty miles easting; October 12, fifteen miles; October 13, no easting; October 14, thirty miles; October 15, twenty-three miles; October 16, eleven miles; and on October 17, she actually went to the westward four miles. Thus, in a week she made one hundred and fifteen miles easting, which was equivalent to sixteen miles a day. But, between the longitude of Hilo and 128 degrees west longitude is a difference of twenty-seven degrees, or, roughly, sixteen hundred miles. At sixteen miles a day, one hundred days would be required to accomplish this distance. And even then, our objective, l28 degrees west longitude, was five degrees north of the Line, while Nuka-hiva, in the Marquesas, lay nine degrees south of the Line and twelve degrees to the west!

There remained only one thing to do — to work south out of the trade and into the variables. It is true that Captain Bruce found no variables on his traverse, and that he “never could make easting on either tack.” It was the variables or nothing with us, and we prayed for better luck than he had had. The variables constitute the belt of ocean lying between the trades and the doldrums, and are conjectured to be the draughts of heated air which rise in the doldrums, flow high in the air counter to the trades, and gradually sink down till they fan the surface of the ocean where they are found. And they are found where they are found; for they are wedged between the trades and the doldrums, which same shift their territory from day to day and month to month.

We found the variables in 11 degrees north latitude, and 11 degrees north latitude we hugged jealously. To the south lay the doldrums. To the north lay the northeast trade that refused to blow from the northeast. The days came and went, and always they found the Snark somewhere near the eleventh parallel. The variables were truly variable. A light head-wind would die away and leave us rolling in a calm for forty-eight hours. Then a light head-wind would spring up, blow for three hours, and leave us rolling in another calm for forty-eight hours. Then — hurrah! — the wind would come out of the west, fresh, beautifully fresh, and send the Snark along, wing and wing, her wake bubbling, the log-line straight astern. At the end of half an hour, while we were preparing to set the spinnaker, with a few sickly gasps the wind would die away. And so it went. We wagered optimistically on every favourable fan of air that lasted over five minutes; but it never did any good. The fans faded out just the same.

But there were exceptions. In the variables, if you wait long enough, something is bound to happen, and we were so plentifully stocked with food and water that we could afford to wait. On October 26, we actually made one hundred and three miles of easting, and we talked about it for days afterwards. Once we caught a moderate gale from the south, which blew itself out in eight hours, but it helped us to seventy-one miles of easting in that particular twenty-four hours. And then, just as it was expiring, the wind came straight out from the north (the directly opposite quarter), and fanned us along over another degree of easting.

In years and years no sailing vessel has attempted this traverse, and we found ourselves in the midst of one of the loneliest of the Pacific solitudes. In the sixty days we were crossing it we sighted no sail, lifted no steamer’s smoke above the horizon. A disabled vessel could drift in this deserted expanse for a dozen generations, and there would be no rescue. The only chance of rescue would be from a vessel like the Snark, and the Snark happened to be there principally because of the fact that the traverse had been begun before the particular paragraph in the sailing directions had been read. Standing upright on deck, a straight line drawn from the eye to the horizon would measure three miles and a half. Thus, seven miles was the diameter of the circle of the sea in which we had our centre. Since we remained always in the centre, and since we constantly were moving in some direction, we looked upon many circles. But all circles looked alike. No tufted islets, gray headlands, nor glistening patches of white canvas ever marred the symmetry of that unbroken curve. Clouds came and went, rising up over the rim of the circle, flowing across the space of it, and spilling away and down across the opposite rim.

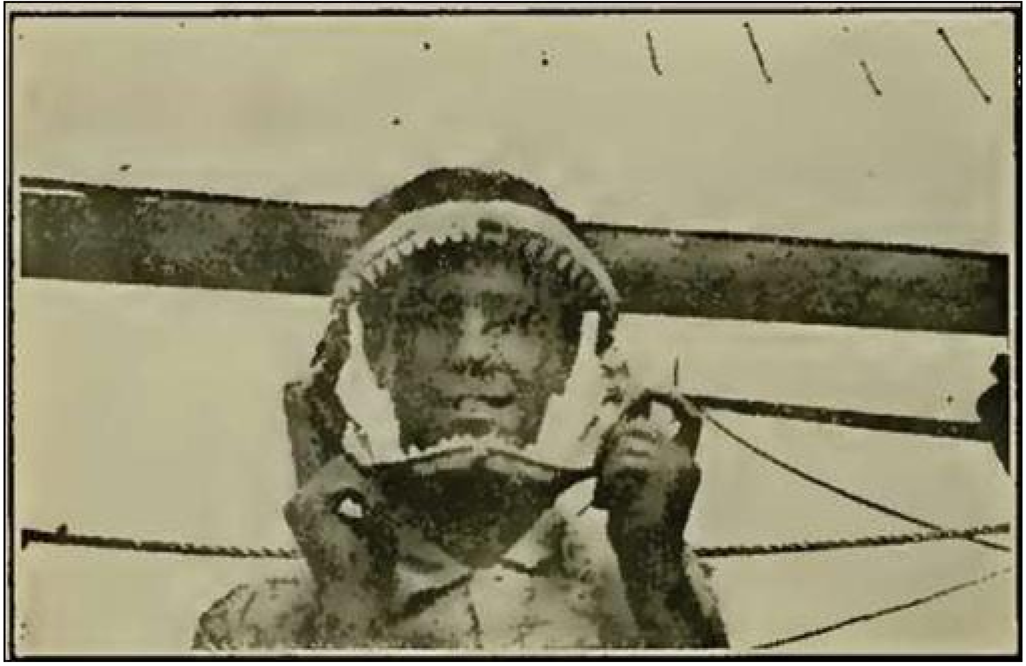

The world faded as the procession of the weeks marched by. The world faded until at last there ceased to be any world except the little world of the Snark, freighted with her seven souls and floating on the expanse of the waters. Our memories of the world, the great world, became like dreams of former lives we had lived somewhere before we came to be born on the Snark. After we had been out of fresh vegetables for some time, we mentioned such things in much the same way I have heard my father mention the vanished apples of his boyhood. Man is a creature of habit, and we on the Snark had got the habit of the Snark. Everything about her and aboard her was as a matter of course, and anything different would have been an irritation and an offence.

There was no way by which the great world could intrude. Our bell rang the hours, but no caller ever rang it. There were no guests to dinner, no telegrams, no insistent telephone jangles invading our privacy. We had no engagements to keep, no trains to catch, and there were no morning newspapers over which to waste time in learning what was happening to our fifteen hundred million other fellow-creatures.

But it was not dull. The affairs of our little world had to be regulated, and, unlike the great world, our world had to be steered in its journey through space. Also, there were cosmic disturbances to be encountered and baffled, such as do not afflict the big earth in its frictionless orbit through the windless void. And we never knew, from moment to moment, what was going to happen next. There were spice and variety enough and to spare. Thus, at four in the morning, I relieve Hermann at the wheel.

"East-northeast," he gives me the course. "She's eight points off, but she ain't steering."

Small wonder. The vessel does not exist that can be steered in so absolute a calm.

"I had a breeze a little while ago — maybe it will come back again," Hermann says hopefully, ere he starts forward to the cabin and his bunk.

The mizzen is in and fast furled. In the night, what of the roll and the absence of wind, it had made life too hideous to be permitted to go on rasping at the mast, smashing at the tackles, and buffeting the empty air into hollow outbursts of sound. But the big mainsail is still on, and the staysail, jib, and flying-jib are snapping and slashing at their sheets with every roll. Every star is out. Just for luck I put the wheel hard over in the opposite direction to which it had been left by Hermann, and I lean back and gaze up at the stars. There is nothing else for me to do. There is nothing to be done with a sailing vessel rolling in a stark calm.

Then I feel a fan on my cheek, faint, so faint, that I can just sense it ere it is gone. But another comes, and another, until a real and just perceptible breeze is blowing. How the Snark's sails manage to feel it is beyond me, but feel it they do, as she does as well, for the compass card begins slowly to revolve in the binnacle. In reality, it is not revolving at all. It is held by terrestrial magnetism in one place, and it is the Snark that is revolving, pivoted upon that delicate cardboard device that floats in a closed vessel of alcohol.

So the Snark comes back on her course. The breath increases to a tiny puff. The Snark feels the weight of it and actually heels over a trifle. There is flying scud overhead, and I notice the stars being blotted out. Walls of darkness close in upon me, so that, when the last star is gone, the darkness is so near that it seems I can reach out and touch it on every side. When I lean toward it, I can feel it loom against my face. Puff follows puff, and I am glad the mizzen is furled. Phew! that was a stiff one! The Snark goes over and down until her lee-rail is buried and the whole Pacific Ocean is pouring in. Four or five of these gusts make me wish that the jib and flying-jib were in. The sea is picking up, the gusts are growing stronger and more frequent, and there is a splatter of wet in the air. There is no use in attempting to gaze to windward. The wall of blackness is within arm's length. Yet I cannot help attempting to see and gauge the blows that are being struck at the Snark. There is something ominous and menacing up there to windward, and I have a feeling that if I look long enough and strong enough, I shall divine it. Futile feeling. Between two gusts I leave the wheel and run forward to the cabin companionway, where I light matches and consult the barometer. "29-90" it reads. That sensitive instrument refuses to take notice of the disturbance which is humming with a deep, throaty voice in the rigging. I get back to the wheel just in time to meet another gust, the strongest yet. Well, anyway, the wind is abeam and the Snark is on her course, eating up easting. That at least is well.

The jib and flying-jib bother me, and I wish they were in. She would make easier weather of it, and less risky weather likewise. The wind snorts, and stray raindrops pelt like birdshot. I shall certainly have to call all hands, I conclude; then conclude the next instant to hang on a little longer. Maybe this is the end of it, and I shall have called them for nothing. It is better to let them sleep. I hold the Snark down to her task, and from out of the darkness, at right angles, comes a deluge of rain accompanied by shrieking wind. Then everything eases except the blackness, and I rejoice in that I have not called the men.

No sooner does the wind ease than the sea picks up. The combers are breaking now, and the boat is tossing like a cork. Then out of the blackness the gusts come harder and faster than before. If only I knew what was up there to windward in the blackness! The Snark is making heavy weather of it, and her lee-rail is buried oftener than not. More shrieks and snorts of wind. Now, if ever, is the time to call the men. I WILL call them, I resolve. Then there is a burst of rain, a slackening of the wind, and I do not call. But it is rather lonely, there at the wheel, steering a little world through howling blackness. It is quite a responsibility to be all alone on the surface of a little world in time of stress, doing the thinking for its sleeping inhabitants. I recoil from the responsibility as more gusts begin to strike and as a sea licks along the weather rail and splashes over into the cockpit. The salt water seems strangely warm to my body and is shot through with ghostly nodules of phosphorescent light.

I shall surely call all hands to shorten sail. Why should they sleep? I am a fool to have any compunctions in the matter. My intellect is arrayed against my heart. It was my heart that said, “Let them sleep.” Yes, but it was my intellect that backed up my heart in that judgment. Let my intellect then reverse the judgment; and, while I am speculating as to what particular entity issued that command to my intellect, the gusts die away. Solicitude for mere bodily comfort has no place in practical seamanship, I conclude sagely; but study the feel of the next series of gusts and do not call the men. After all, it IS my intellect, behind everything, procrastinating, measuring its knowledge of what the Snark can endure against the blows being struck at her, and waiting the call of all hands against the striking of still severer blows.

Daylight, gray and violent, steals through the cloud-pall and shows a foaming sea that flattens under the weight of recurrent and increasing squalls. Then comes the rain, filling the windy valleys of the sea with milky smoke and further flattening the waves, which but wait for the easement of wind and rain to leap more wildly than before. Come the men on deck, their sleep out, and among them Hermann, his face on the broad grin in appreciation of the breeze of wind I have picked up. I turn the wheel over to Warren and start to go below, pausing on the way to rescue the galley stovepipe which has gone adrift. I am barefooted, and my toes have had an excellent education in the art of clinging; but, as the rail buries itself in a green sea, I suddenly sit down on the streaming deck. Hermann good-naturedly elects to question my selection of such a spot. Then comes the next roll, and he sits down, suddenly, and without premeditation. The Snark heels over and down, the rail takes it green, and Hermann and I, clutching the precious stove-pipe, are swept down into the lee-scuppers. After that I finish my journey below, and while changing my clothes grin with satisfaction — the Snark is making easting.

No, it is not all monotony. When we had worried along our easting to 126 degrees west longitude, we left the variables and headed south through the doldrums, where was much calm weather and where, taking advantage of every fan of air, we were often glad to make a score of miles in as many hours. And yet, on such a day, we might pass through a dozen squalls and be surrounded by dozens more. And every squall was to be regarded as a bludgeon capable of crushing the Snark. We were struck sometimes by the centres and sometimes by the sides of these squalls, and we never knew just where or how we were to be hit. The squall that rose up, covering half the heavens, and swept down upon us, as likely as not split into two squalls which passed us harmlessly on either side while the tiny, innocent looking squall that appeared to carry no more than a hogshead of water and a pound of wind, would abruptly assume cyclopean proportions, deluging us with rain and overwhelming us with wind. Then there were treacherous squalls that went boldly astern and sneaked back upon us from a mile to leeward. Again, two squalls would tear along, one on each side of us, and we would get a fillip from each of them. Now a gale certainly grows tiresome after a few hours, but squalls never. The thousandth squall in one's experience is as interesting as the first one, and perhaps a bit more so. It is the tyro who has no apprehension of them. The man of a thousand squalls respects a squall. He knows what they are.

It was in the doldrums that our most exciting event occurred. On November 20, we discovered that through an accident we had lost over one-half of the supply of fresh water that remained to us. Since we were at that time forty-three days out from Hilo, our supply of fresh water was not large. To lose over half of it was a catastrophe. On close allowance, the remnant of water we possessed would last twenty days. But we were in the doldrums; there was no telling where the southeast trades were, nor where we would pick them up.

The handcuffs were promptly put upon the pump, and once a day the water was portioned out. Each of us received a quart for personal use, and eight quarts were given to the cook. Enters now the psychology of the situation. No sooner had the discovery of the water shortage been made than I, for one, was afflicted with a burning thirst. It seemed to me that I had never been so thirsty in my life. My little quart of water I could easily have drunk in one draught, and to refrain from doing so required a severe exertion of will. Nor was I alone in this. All of us talked water, thought water, and dreamed water when we slept. We examined the charts for possible islands to which to run in extremity, but there were no such islands. The Marquesas were the nearest, and they were the other side of the Line, and of the doldrums, too, which made it even worse. We were in 3 degrees north latitude, while the Marquesas were 9 degrees south latitude — a difference of over a thousand miles. Furthermore, the Marquesas lay some fourteen degrees to the west of our longitude. A pretty pickle for a handful of creatures sweltering on the ocean in the heat of tropic calms.

We rigged lines on either side between the main and mizzen riggings. To these we laced the big deck awning, hoisting it up aft with a sailing pennant so that any rain it might collect would run forward where it could be caught. Here and there squalls passed across the circle of the sea. All day we watched them, now to port or starboard, and again ahead or astern. But never one came near enough to wet us. In the afternoon a big one bore down upon us. It spread out across the ocean as it approached, and we could see it emptying countless thousands of gallons into the salt sea. Extra attention was paid to the awning and then we waited. Warren, Martin, and Hermann made a vivid picture. Grouped together, holding on to the rigging, swaying to the roll, they were gazing intently at the squall. Strain, anxiety, and yearning were in every posture of their bodies. Beside them was the dry and empty awning. But they seemed to grow limp and to droop as the squall broke in half, one part passing on ahead, the other drawing astern and going to leeward.

But that night came rain. Martin, whose psychological thirst had compelled him to drink his quart of water early, got his mouth down to the lip of the awning and drank the deepest draught I ever have seen drunk. The precious water came down in bucketfuls and tubfuls, and in two hours we caught and stored away in the tanks one hundred and twenty gallons. Strange to say, in all the rest of our voyage to the Marquesas not another drop of rain fell on board. If that squall had missed us, the handcuffs would have remained on the pump, and we would have busied ourselves with utilizing our surplus gasolene for distillation purposes.

Then there was the fishing. One did not have to go in search of it, for it was there at the rail. A three-inch steel hook, on the end of a stout line, with a piece of white rag for bait, was all that was necessary to catch bonitas weighing from ten to twenty-five pounds. Bonitas feed on flying-fish, wherefore they are unaccustomed to nibbling at the hook. They strike as gamely as the gamest fish in the sea, and their first run is something that no man who has ever caught them will forget. Also, bonitas are the veriest cannibals. The instant one is hooked he is attacked by his fellows. Often and often we hauled them on board with fresh, clean-bitten holes in them the size of teacups.

One school of bonitas, numbering many thousands, stayed with us day and night for more than three weeks. Aided by the Snark, it was great hunting; for they cut a swath of destruction through the ocean half a mile wide and fifteen hundred miles in length. They ranged along abreast of the Snark on either side, pouncing upon the flying-fish her forefoot scared up. Since they were continually pursuing astern the flying-fish that survived for several flights, they were always overtaking the Snark, and at any time one could glance astern and on the front of a breaking wave see scores of their silvery forms coasting down just under the surface. When they had eaten their fill, it was their delight to get in the shadow of the boat, or of her sails, and a hundred or so were always to be seen lazily sliding along and keeping cool.

But the poor flying-fish! Pursued and eaten alive by the bonitas and dolphins, they sought flight in the air, where the swooping seabirds drove them back into the water. Under heaven there was no refuge for them. Flying-fish do not play when they essay the air. It is a life-and-death affair with them. A thousand times a day we could lift our eyes and see the tragedy played out. The swift, broken circling of a guny might attract one's attention. A glance beneath shows the back of a dolphin breaking the surface in a wild rush. Just in front of its nose a shimmering palpitant streak of silver shoots from the water into the air — a delicate, organic mechanism of flight, endowed with sensation, power of direction, and love of life. The guny swoops for it and misses, and the flying-fish, gaining its altitude by rising, kite-like, against the wind, turns in a half-circle and skims off to leeward, gliding on the bosom of the wind. Beneath it, the wake of the dolphin shows in churning foam. So he follows, gazing upward with large eyes at the flashing breakfast that navigates an element other than his own. He cannot rise to so lofty occasion, but he is a thorough-going empiricist, and he knows, sooner or later, if not gobbled up by the guny, that the flying-fish must return to the water. And then — breakfast. We used to pity the poor winged fish. It was sad to see such sordid and bloody slaughter. And then, in the night watches, when a forlorn little flying-fish struck the mainsail and fell gasping and splattering on the deck, we would rush for it just as eagerly, just as greedily, just as voraciously, as the dolphins and bonitas. For know that flying-fish are most toothsome for breakfast. It is always a wonder to me that such dainty meat does not build dainty tissue in the bodies of the devourers. Perhaps the dolphins and bonitas are coarser-fibred because of the high speed at which they drive their bodies in order to catch their prey. But then again, the flying-fish drive their bodies at high speed, too.

Sharks we caught occasionally, on large hooks, with chain-swivels, bent on a length of small rope. And sharks meant pilot-fish, and remoras, and various sorts of parasitic creatures. Regular man-eaters some of the sharks proved, tiger-eyed and with twelve rows of teeth, razor-sharp. By the way, we of the Snark are agreed that we have eaten many fish that will not compare with baked shark smothered in tomato dressing. In the calms we occasionally caught a fish called “hake” by the Japanese cook. And once, on a spoon-hook trolling a hundred yards astern, we caught a snake-like fish, over three feet in length and not more than three inches in diameter, with four fangs in his jaw. He proved the most delicious fish — delicious in meat and flavour — that we have ever eaten on board.

The most welcome addition to our larder was a green sea-turtle, weighing a full hundred pounds and appearing on the table most appetizingly in steaks, soups, and stews, and finally in a wonderful curry which tempted all hands into eating more rice than was good for them. The turtle was sighted to windward, calmly sleeping on the surface in the midst of a huge school of curious dolphins. It was a deep-sea turtle of a surety, for the nearest land was a thousand miles away. We put the Snark about and went back for him, Hermann driving the granes into his head and neck. When hauled aboard, numerous remora were clinging to his shell, and out of the hollows at the roots of his flippers crawled several large crabs. It did not take the crew of the Snark longer than the next meal to reach the unanimous conclusion that it would willingly put the Snark about any time for a turtle.

But it is the dolphin that is the king of deep-sea fishes. Never is his colour twice quite the same. Swimming in the sea, an ethereal creature of palest azure, he displays in that one guise a miracle of colour. But it is nothing compared with the displays of which he is capable. At one time he will appear green — pale green, deep green, phosphorescent green; at another time blue — deep blue, electric blue, all the spectrum of blue. Catch him on a hook, and he turns to gold, yellow gold, all gold. Haul him on deck, and he excels the spectrum, passing through inconceivable shades of blues, greens, and yellows, and then, suddenly, turning a ghostly white, in the midst of which are bright blue spots, and you suddenly discover that he is speckled like a trout. Then back from white he goes, through all the range of colours, finally turning to a mother-of-pearl.

For those who are devoted to fishing, I can recommend no finer sport than catching dolphin. Of course, it must be done on a thin line with reel and pole. A No. 7, O'Shaughnessy tarpon hook is just the thing, baited with an entire flying-fish. Like the bonita, the dolphin's fare consists of flying-fish, and he strikes like lightning at the bait. The first warning is when the reel screeches and you see the line smoking out at right angles to the boat. Before you have time to entertain anxiety concerning the length of your line, the fish rises into the air in a succession of leaps. Since he is quite certain to be four feet long or over, the sport of landing so gamey a fish can be realized. When hooked, he invariably turns golden. The idea of the series of leaps is to rid himself of the hook, and the man who has made the strike must be of iron or decadent if his heart does not beat with an extra flutter when he beholds such gorgeous fish, glittering in golden mail and shaking itself like a stallion in each mid-air leap. 'Ware slack! If you don't, on one of those leaps the hook will be flung out and twenty feet away. No slack, and away he will go on another run, culminating in another series of leaps. About this time one begins to worry over the line, and to wish that he had had nine hundred feet on the reel originally instead of six hundred. With careful playing the line can be saved, and after an hour of keen excitement the fish can be brought to gaff. One such dolphin I landed on the Snark measured four feet and seven inches.

Hermann caught dolphins more prosaically. A hand-line and a chunk of shark-meat were all he needed. His hand-line was very thick, but on more than one occasion it parted and lost the fish. One day a dolphin got away with a lure of Hermann's manufacture, to which were lashed four

O’Shaughnessy hooks. Within an hour the same dolphin was landed with the rod, and on dissecting him the four hooks were recovered. The dolphins, which remained with us over a month, deserted us north of the line, and not one was seen during the remainder of the traverse.

So the days passed. There was so much to be done that time never dragged. Had there been little to do, time could not have dragged with such wonderful seascapes and cloudscapes — dawns that were like burning imperial cities under rainbows that arched nearly to the zenith; sunsets that bathed the purple sea in rivers of rose-coloured light, flowing from a sun whose diverging, heaven-climbing rays were of the purest blue. Overside, in the heat of the day, the sea was an azure satiny fabric, in the depths of which the sunshine focussed in funnels of light. Astern, deep down, when there was a breeze, bubbled a procession of milky-turquoise ghosts — the foam flung down by the hull of the Snark each time she floundered against a sea. At night the wake was phosphorescent fire, where the medusa slime resented our passing bulk, while far down could be observed the unceasing flight of comets, with long, undulating, nebulous tails — caused by the passage of the bonitas through the resentful medusa slime. And now and again, from out of the darkness on either hand, just under the surface, larger phosphorescent organisms flashed up like electric lights, marking collisions with the careless bonitas skurrying ahead to the good hunting just beyond our bowsprit.

We made our easting, worked down through the doldrums, and caught a fresh breeze out of south-by-west. Hauled up by the wind, on such a slant, we would fetch past the Marquesas far away to the westward. But the next day, on Tuesday, November 26, in the thick of a heavy squall, the wind shifted suddenly to the southeast. It was the trade at last. There were no more squalls, naught but fine weather, a fair wind, and a whirling log, with sheets slacked off and with spinnaker and mainsail swaying and bellying on either side. The trade backed more and more, until it blew out of the northeast, while we steered a steady course to the southwest. Ten days of this, and on the morning of December 6, at five o’clock, we sighted land “just where it ought to have been,” dead ahead. We passed to leeward of Ua-huka, skirted the southern edge of Nuka-hiva, and that night, in driving squalls and inky darkness, fought our way in to an anchorage in the narrow bay of Taiohae. The anchor rumbled down to the blatting of wild goats on the cliffs, and the air we breathed was heavy with the perfume of flowers.

The traverse was accomplished. Sixty days from land to land, across a lonely sea above whose horizons never rise the straining sails of ships.

CHAPTER X — TYPEE

To the eastward Ua-huka was being blotted out by an evening rain-squall that was fast overtaking the Snark. But that little craft, her big spinnaker filled by the southeast trade, was making a good race of it. Cape Martin, the southeasternmost point of Nuku-hiva, was abeam, and Comptroller Bay was opening up as we fled past its wide entrance, where Sail Rock, for all the world like the spritsail of a Columbia River salmon-boat, was making brave weather of it in the smashing southeast swell.

“What do you make that out to be?” I asked Hermann, at the wheel.

“A fishing-boat, sir,” he answered after careful scrutiny.

Yet on the chart it was plainly marked, “Sail Rock.”

But we were more interested in the recesses of Comptroller Bay, where our eyes eagerly sought out the three bights of land and centred on the midmost one, where the gathering twilight showed the dim walls of a valley extending inland. How often we had pored over the chart and centred always on that midmost bight and on the valley it opened — the Valley of Typee. “Taipi” the chart spelled it, and spelled it correctly, but I prefer “Typee,” and I shall always spell it “Typee.” When I was a little boy, I read a book spelled in that manner — Herman Melville’s “Typee”; and many long hours I dreamed over its pages. Nor was it all dreaming. I resolved there and then, mightily, come what would, that when I had gained strength and years, I, too, would voyage to Typee. For the wonder of the world was penetrating to my tiny consciousness — the wonder that was to lead me to many lands, and that leads and never pails. The years passed, but Typee was not forgotten. Returned to San Francisco from a seven months’ cruise in the North Pacific, I decided the time had come. The brig Galilee was sailing for the Marquesas, but her crew was complete and I, who was an able-seaman before the mast and young enough to be overweeningly proud of it, was willing to condescend to ship as cabin-boy in order to make the pilgrimage to Typee. Of course, the Galilee would have sailed from the Marquesas without me, for I was bent on finding another Fayaway and another Kory-Kory. I doubt that the captain read desertion in my eye. Perhaps even the berth of cabin-boy was already filled. At any rate, I did not get it.

Then came the rush of years, filled brimming with projects, achievements, and failures; but Typee was not forgotten, and here I was now, gazing at its misty outlines till the squall swooped down and the Snark dashed on into the driving smother. Ahead, we caught a glimpse and took the compass bearing of Sentinel Rock, wreathed with pounding surf. Then it, too, was effaced by the rain and darkness. We steered straight for it, trusting to hear the sound of breakers in time to sheer clear. We had to steer for it. We had naught but a compass bearing with which to orientate ourselves, and if we missed Sentinel Rock, we missed Taiohae Bay, and we would have to throw the Snark up to the wind and lie off and on the whole night — no pleasant prospect for voyagers weary from a sixty days' traverse of the vast Pacific solitude, and land-hungry, and fruit-hungry, and hungry with an appetite of years for the sweet vale of Typee.

Abruptly, with a roar of sound, Sentinel Rock loomed through the rain dead ahead. We altered our course, and, with mainsail and spinnaker bellying to the squall, drove past. Under the lea of the rock the wind dropped us, and we rolled in an absolute calm. Then a puff of air struck us, right in our teeth, out of Taiohae Bay. It was in spinnaker, up mizzen, all sheets by the wind, and we were moving slowly ahead, heaving the lead and straining our eyes for the fixed red light on the ruined fort that would give us our bearings to anchorage. The air was light and baffling, now east, now west, now north, now south; while from either hand came the roar of unseen breakers. From the looming cliffs arose the blatting of wild goats, and overhead the first stars were peeping mistily through the ragged train of the passing squall. At the end of two hours, having come a mile into the bay, we dropped anchor in eleven fathoms. And so we came to Taiohae.

In the morning we awoke in fairyland. The Snark rested in a placid harbour that nestled in a vast amphitheatre, the towering, vine-clad walls of which seemed to rise directly from the water. Far up, to the east, we glimpsed the thin line of a trail, visible in one place, where it scoured across the face of the wall.

“The path by which Toby escaped from Typee!” we cried.

We were not long in getting ashore and astride horses, though the consummation of our pilgrimage had to be deferred for a day. Two months at sea, bare-footed all the time, without space in which to exercise one’s limbs, is not the best preliminary to leather shoes and walking. Besides, the land had to cease its nauseous rolling before we could feel fit for riding goat-like horses over giddy trails. So we took a short ride to break in, and crawled through thick jungle to make the acquaintance of a venerable moss-grown idol, where had foregathered a German trader and a Norwegian captain to estimate the weight of said idol, and to speculate upon depreciation in value caused by sawing him in half. They treated the old fellow sacrilegiously, digging their knives into him to see how hard he was and how deep his mossy mantle, and commanding him to rise up and save them trouble by walking down to the ship himself. In lieu of which, nineteen Kanakas slung him on a frame of timbers and toted him to the ship, where, battened down under hatches, even now he is cleaving the South Pacific Hornward and toward Europe — the ultimate abiding-place for all good heathen idols, save for the few in America and one in particular who grins beside me as I write, and who, barring shipwreck, will grin somewhere in my neighbourhood until I die. And he will win out. He will be grinning when I am dust.

Also, as a preliminary, we attended a feast, where one Taiara Tamarii, the son of an Hawaiian sailor who deserted from a whaleship, commemorated the death of his Marquesan mother by roasting fourteen whole hogs and inviting in the village. So we came along, welcomed by a native herald, a young girl, who stood on a great rock and chanted the information that the banquet was made perfect by our presence — which information she extended impartially to every arrival. Scarcely were we seated, however, when she changed her tune, while the company manifested intense excitement. Her cries became eager and piercing. From a distance came answering cries, in men's voices, which blended into a wild, barbaric chant that sounded incredibly savage, smacking of blood and war. Then, through vistas of tropical foliage appeared a procession of savages, naked save for gaudy loin-cloths. They advanced slowly, uttering deep guttural cries of triumph and exaltation. Slung from young saplings carried on their shoulders were mysterious objects of considerable weight, hidden from view by wrappings of green leaves.

Nothing but pigs, innocently fat and roasted to a turn, were inside those wrappings, but the men were carrying them into camp in imitation of old times when they carried in "long-pig." Now long-pig is not pig. Long-pig is the Polynesian euphemism for human flesh; and these descendants of man-eaters, a king's son at their head, brought in the pigs to table as of old their grandfathers had brought in their slain enemies. Every now and then the procession halted in order that the bearers should have every advantage in uttering particularly ferocious shouts of victory, of contempt for their enemies, and of gustatory desire. So Melville, two generations ago, witnessed the bodies of slain Happar warriors, wrapped in palm-leaves, carried to banquet at the Ti. At another time, at the Ti, he "observed a curiously carved vessel of wood," and on looking into it his eyes "fell upon the disordered members of a human skeleton, the bones still fresh with moisture, and with particles of flesh clinging to them here and there."

Cannibalism has often been regarded as a fairy story by ultracivilized men who dislike, perhaps, the notion that their own savage forebears have somewhere in the past been addicted to similar practices. Captain Cook was rather sceptical upon the subject, until, one day, in a harbour of New Zealand, he deliberately tested the matter. A native happened to have brought on board, for sale, a nice, sun-dried head. At Cook's orders strips of the flesh were cut away and handed to the native, who greedily devoured them. To say the least, Captain Cook was a rather thorough-going empiricist. At any rate, by that act he supplied one ascertained fact of which science had been badly in need. Little did he dream of the existence of a certain group of islands, thousands of miles away, where in subsequent days there would arise a curious suit at law, when an old chief of Maui would be charged with defamation of character because he persisted in asserting that his body was the living repository of Captain Cook's great toe. It is said that the plaintiffs failed to prove that the old chief was not the tomb of the navigator's great toe, and that the suit was dismissed.

I suppose I shall not have the chance in these degenerate days to see any long-pig eaten, but at least I am already the possessor of a duly certified Marquesan calabash, oblong in shape, curiously carved, over a century old, from which has been drunk the blood of two shipmasters. One of those captains was a mean man. He sold a decrepit whale-boat, as good as new what of the fresh white paint, to a Marquesan chief. But no sooner had the captain sailed away than the whale-boat dropped to pieces. It was his fortune, some time afterwards, to be wrecked, of all places, on that particular island. The Marquesan chief was ignorant of rebates and discounts; but he had a primitive sense of equity and an equally primitive conception of the economy of nature, and he balanced the account by eating the man who had cheated him.

We started in the cool dawn for Typee, astride ferocious little stallions that pawed and screamed and bit and fought one another quite oblivious of the fragile humans on their backs and of the slippery boulders, loose rocks, and yawning gorges. The way led up an ancient road through a jungle of hau trees. On every side were the vestiges of a one-time dense population. Wherever the eye could penetrate the thick growth, glimpses were caught of stone walls and of stone foundations, six to eight feet in height, built solidly throughout, and many yards in width and depth. They formed great stone platforms, upon which, at one time, there had been houses. But the houses and the people were gone, and huge trees sank their roots through the platforms and towered over the under-running jungle. These foundations are called pae-paes — the pi-pis of Melville, who spelled phonetically.

The Marquesans of the present generation lack the energy to hoist and place such huge stones. Also, they lack incentive. There are plenty of pae-paes to go around, with a few thousand unoccupied ones left over. Once or twice, as we ascended the valley, we saw magnificent pae-paes bearing on their general surface pitiful little straw huts, the proportions being similar to a voting booth perched on the broad foundation of the Pyramid of Cheops. For the Marquesans are perishing, and, to judge from conditions at Taiohae, the one thing that retards their destruction is the infusion of fresh blood. A pure Marquesan is a rarity. They seem to be all half-breeds and strange conglomerations of dozens of different races. Nineteen able labourers are all the trader at Taiohae can muster for the loading of copra on shipboard, and in their veins runs the blood of English, American, Dane, German, French, Corsican, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Paumotan, Tahitian, and Easter Islander. There are more races than there are persons, but it is a wreckage of races at best. Life faints and stumbles and gasps itself away. In this warm, equable clime — a truly terrestrial paradise — where are never extremes of temperature and where the air is like balm, kept ever pure by the ozone-laden southeast trade, asthma, phthisis, and tuberculosis flourish as luxuriantly as the vegetation. Everywhere, from the few grass huts, arises the racking cough or exhausted groan of wasted lungs. Other horrible diseases prosper as well, but the most deadly of all are those that attack the lungs. There is a form of consumption called "galloping," which is especially dreaded. In two months' time it reduces the strongest man to a skeleton under a grave-cloth. In valley after valley the last inhabitant has passed and the fertile soil has relapsed to jungle. In Melville's day the valley of Hapaa (spelled by him "Happar") was peopled by a strong and warlike tribe. A generation later, it contained but two hundred persons. To-day it is an untenanted, howling, tropical wilderness.

We climbed higher and higher in the valley, our unshod stallions picking their steps on the disintegrating trail, which led in and out through the abandoned pae-paes and insatiable jungle. The sight of red mountain apples, the ohias, familiar to us from Hawaii, caused a native to be sent climbing after them. And again he climbed for cocoa-nuts. I have drunk the cocoanuts of Jamaica and of Hawaii, but I never knew how delicious such draught could be till I drank it here in the Marquesas. Occasionally we rode under wild limes and oranges — great trees which had survived the wilderness longer than the motes of humans who had cultivated them.

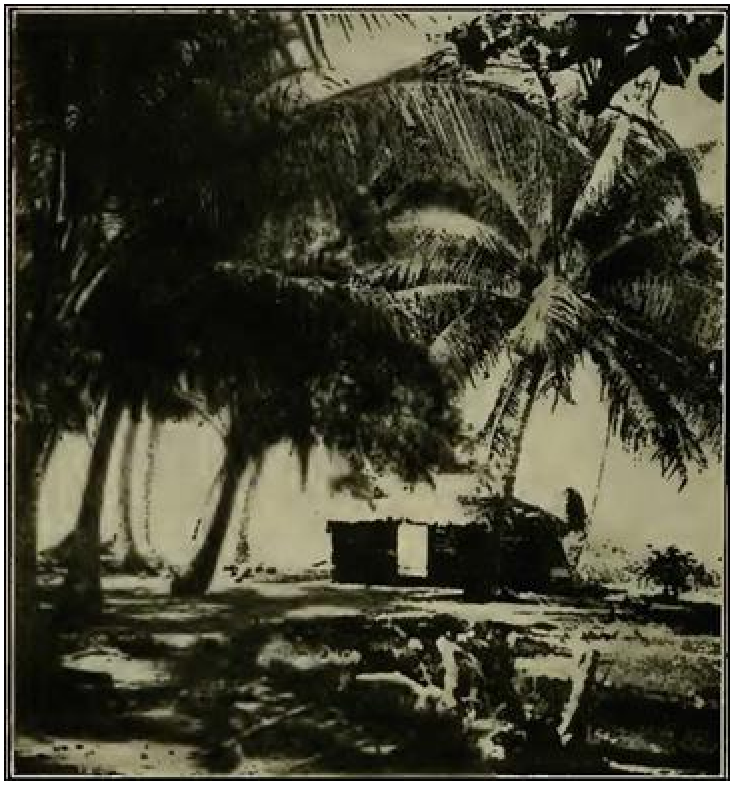

We rode through endless thickets of yellow-pollened cassi — if riding it could be called; for those fragrant thickets were inhabited by wasps. And such wasps! Great yellow fellows the size of small canary birds, darting through the air with behind them drifting a bunch of legs a couple of inches long. A stallion abruptly stands on his forelegs and thrusts his hind legs skyward. He withdraws them from the sky long enough to make one wild jump ahead, and then returns them to their index position. It is nothing. His thick hide has merely been punctured by a flaming lance of wasp virility. Then a second and a third stallion, and all the stallions, begin to cavort on their forelegs over the precipitous landscape. Swat! A white-hot poniard penetrates my cheek. Swat again!! I am stabbed in the neck. I am bringing up the rear and getting more than my share. There is no retreat, and the plunging horses ahead, on a precarious trail, promise little safety. My horse overruns Charmian's horse, and that sensitive creature, fresh-stung at the psychological moment, planks one of his hoofs into my horse and the other hoof into me. I thank my stars that he is not steel-shod, and half-arise from the saddle at the impact of another flaming dagger. I am certainly getting more than my share, and so is my poor horse, whose pain and panic are only exceeded by mine.

"Get out of the way! I'm coming!" I shout, frantically dashing my cap at the winged vipers around me.

On one side of the trail the landscape rises straight up. On the other side it sinks straight down. The only way to get out of my way is to keep on going. How that string of horses kept their feet is a miracle; but they dashed ahead, over-running one another, galloping, trotting, stumbling, jumping, scrambling, and kicking methodically skyward every time a wasp landed on them. After a while we drew breath and counted our injuries. And this happened not once, nor twice, but time after time. Strange to say, it never grew monotonous. I know that I, for one, came through each brush with the undiminished zest of a man flying from sudden death. No; the pilgrim from Taiohae to Typee will never suffer from ennui on the way.

At last we arose above the vexation of wasps. It was a matter of altitude, however, rather than of fortitude. All about us lay the jagged back-bones of ranges, as far as the eye could see, thrusting their pinnacles into the trade-wind clouds. Under us, from the way we had come, the Snark lay like a tiny toy on the calm water of Taiohae Bay. Ahead we could see the inshore indentation of Comptroller Bay. We dropped down a thousand feet, and Typee lay beneath us. "Had a glimpse of the gardens of paradise been revealed to me I could scarcely have been more ravished with the sight" —

so said Melville on the moment of his first view of the valley. He saw a garden. We saw a wilderness. Where were the hundred groves of the breadfruit tree he saw? We saw jungle, nothing but jungle, with the exception of two grass huts and several clumps of cocoanuts breaking the primordial green mantle. Where was the Ti of Mehevi, the bachelors' hall, the palace where women were taboo, and where he ruled with his lesser chieftains, keeping the half-dozen dusty and torpid ancients to remind them of the valorous past? From the swift stream no sounds arose of maids and matrons pounding tapa. And where was the hut that old Narheyo eternally builded? In vain I looked for him perched ninety feet from the ground in some tall cocoanut, taking his morning smoke.

We went down a zigzag trail under overarching, matted jungle, where great butterflies drifted by in the silence. No tattooed savage with club and javelin guarded the path; and when we forded the stream, we were free to roam where we pleased. No longer did the taboo, sacred and merciless, reign in that sweet vale. Nay, the taboo still did reign, a new taboo, for when we approached too near the several wretched native women, the taboo was uttered warningly. And it was well. They were lepers. The man who warned us was afflicted horribly with elephantiasis. All were suffering from lung trouble. The valley of Typee was the abode of death, and the dozen survivors of the tribe were gasping feebly the last painful breaths of the race.

Certainly the battle had not been to the strong, for once the Typeans were very strong, stronger than the Happars, stronger than the Taiohaeans, stronger than all the tribes of Nuku-hiva. The word “typee,” or, rather, “taipi,” originally signified an eater of human flesh. But since all the Marquesans were human-flesh eaters, to be so designated was the token that the Typeans were the human-flesh eaters par excellence. Not alone to Nuku-hiva did the Typean reputation for bravery and ferocity extend. In all the islands of the Marquesas the Typeans were named with dread. Man could not conquer them. Even the French fleet that took possession of the Marquesas left the Typeans alone. Captain Porter, of the frigate Essex, once invaded the valley. His sailors and marines were reinforced by two thousand warriors of Happar and Taiohae. They penetrated quite a distance into the valley, but met with so fierce a resistance that they were glad to retreat and get away in their flotilla of boats and war-canoes.

Of all inhabitants of the South Seas, the Marquesans were adjudged the strongest and the most beautiful. Melville said of them: “I was especially struck by the physical strength and beauty they displayed . . . In beauty of form they surpassed anything I had ever seen. Not a single instance of natural deformity was observable in all the throng attending the revels. Every individual appeared free from those blemishes which sometimes mar the effect of an otherwise perfect form. But their physical excellence did not merely consist in an exemption from these evils; nearly every individual of the number might have been taken for a sculptor’s model.” Mendana, the discoverer of the Marquesas, described the natives as wondrously beautiful to behold. Figueroa, the chronicler of his voyage, said of them: “In complexion they were nearly white; of good stature and finely formed.” Captain Cook called the Marquesans the most splendid islanders in the South Seas. The men were described, as “in almost every instance of lofty stature, scarcely ever less than six feet in height.”

And now all this strength and beauty has departed, and the valley of Typee is the abode of some dozen wretched creatures, afflicted by leprosy, elephantiasis, and tuberculosis. Melville estimated the population at two thousand, not taking into consideration the small adjoining valley of Ho-o-u-mi. Life has rotted away in this wonderful garden spot, where the climate is as delightful and healthful as any to be found in the world. Not alone were the Typeans physically magnificent; they were pure. Their air did not contain the bacilli and germs and microbes of disease that fill our own air. And when the white men imported in their ships these various micro-organisms or disease, the Typeans crumpled up and went down before them.

When one considers the situation, one is almost driven to the conclusion that the white race flourishes on impurity and corruption. Natural selection, however, gives the explanation. We of the white race are the survivors and the descendants of the thousands of generations of survivors in the war with the micro-organisms. Whenever one of us was born with a constitution peculiarly receptive to these minute enemies, such a one promptly died. Only those of us survived who could withstand them. We who are alive are the immune, the fit — the ones best constituted to live in a world of hostile micro-organisms. The poor Marquesans had undergone no such selection. They were not immune. And they, who had made a custom of eating their enemies, were now eaten by enemies so microscopic as to be invisible, and against whom no war of dart and javelin was possible. On the other hand, had there been a few hundred thousand Marquesans to begin with, there might have been sufficient survivors to lay the foundation for a new race — a regenerated race, if a plunge into a festering bath of organic poison can be called regeneration.

We unsaddled our horses for lunch, and after we had fought the stallions apart — mine with several fresh chunks bitten out of his back — and after we had vainly fought the sand-flies, we ate bananas and tinned meats, washed down by generous draughts of cocoanut milk. There was little to be seen. The jungle had rushed back and engulfed the puny works of man. Here and there pai-pais were to be stumbled upon, but there were no inscriptions, no hieroglyphics, no clues to the past they attested — only dumb stones, builded and carved by hands that were forgotten dust. Out of the pai-pais grew great trees, jealous of the wrought work of man, splitting and scattering the stones back into the primeval chaos.

We gave up the jungle and sought the stream with the idea of evading the sand-flies. Vain hope! To go in swimming one must take off his clothes. The sand-flies are aware of the fact, and they lurk by the river bank in countless myriads. In the native they are called the nau-nau, which is pronounced "now-now." They are certainly well named, for they are the insistent present. There is no past nor future when they fasten upon one's epidermis, and I am willing to wager that Omer Khayyam could never have written the Rubaiyat in the valley of Typee — it would have been psychologically impossible. I made the strategic mistake of undressing on the edge of a steep bank where I could dive in but could not climb out. When I was ready to dress, I had a hundred yards' walk on the bank before I could reach my clothes. At the first step, fully ten thousand nau-naus landed upon me. At the second step I was walking in a cloud. By the third step the sun was dimmed in the sky. After that I don't know what happened. When I arrived at my clothes, I was a maniac. And here enters my grand tactical error. There is only one rule of conduct in dealing with nau-naus. Never swat them. Whatever you do, don't swat them. They are so vicious that in the instant of annihilation they eject their last atom of poison into your carcass. You must pluck them delicately, between thumb and forefinger, and persuade them gently to remove their proboscides from your quivering flesh. It is like pulling teeth. But the difficulty was that the teeth sprouted faster than I could pull them, so I swatted, and, so doing, filled myself full with their poison. This was a week ago. At the present moment I resemble a sadly neglected smallpox convalescent.

Ho-o-u-mi is a small valley, separated from Typee by a low ridge, and thither we started when we had knocked our indomitable and insatiable riding-animals into submission. As it was, Warren's mount, after a mile run, selected the most dangerous part of the trail for an exhibition that kept us all on the anxious seat for fully five minutes. We rode by the mouth of Typee valley and gazed down upon the beach from which Melville escaped. There was where the whale-boat lay on its oars close in to the surf; and there was where Karakoee, the taboo Kanaka, stood in the water and trafficked for the sailor's life. There, surely, was where Melville gave Fayaway the parting embrace ere he dashed for the boat. And there was the point of land from which Mehevi and Mow-mow and their following swam off to intercept the boat, only to have their wrists gashed by sheath-knives when they laid hold of the gunwale, though it was reserved for Mow-mow to receive the boat-hook full in the throat from Melville's hands.

We rode on to Ho-o-u-mi. So closely was Melville guarded that he never dreamed of the existence of this valley, though he must continually have met its inhabitants, for they belonged to Typee. We rode through the same abandoned pae-paes, but as we neared the sea we found a profusion of cocoanuts, breadfruit trees and taro patches, and fully a dozen grass dwellings. In one of these we arranged to pass the night, and preparations were immediately put on foot for a feast. A young pig was promptly despatched, and while he was being roasted among hot stones, and while chickens were stewing in cocoanut milk, I persuaded one of the cooks to climb an unusually tall cocoanut palm. The cluster of nuts at the top was fully one hundred and twenty-five feet from the ground, but that native strode up to the tree, seized it in both hands, jack-knived at the waist so that the soles of his feet rested flatly against the trunk, and then he walked right straight up without stopping. There were no notches in the tree. He had no ropes to help him. He merely walked up the tree, one hundred and twenty-five feet in the air, and cast down the nuts from the summit. Not every man there had the physical stamina for such a feat, or the lungs, rather, for most of them were coughing their lives away. Some of the women kept up a ceaseless moaning and groaning, so badly were their lungs wasted. Very few of either sex were full-blooded Marquesans. They were mostly half-breeds and three-quarter-breeds of French, English, Danish, and Chinese extraction. At the best, these infusions of fresh blood merely delayed the passing, and the results led one to wonder whether it was worth while.

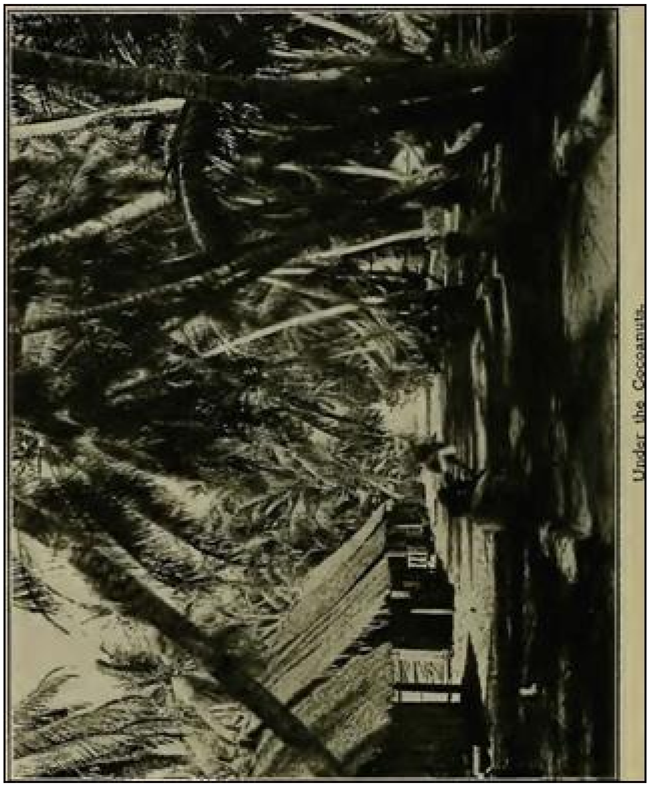

Under the Cocoanuts.

The feast was served on a broad pae-pae, the rear portion of which was occupied by the house in which we were to sleep. The first course was raw fish and poi-poi, the latter sharp and more acrid of taste than the poi of Hawaii, which is made from taro. The poi-poi of the Marquesas is made from breadfruit. The ripe fruit, after the core is removed, is placed in a calabash and pounded with a stone pestle into a stiff, sticky paste. In this stage of the process, wrapped in leaves, it can be buried in the ground, where it will keep for years. Before it can be eaten, however, further processes are necessary. A leaf-covered package is placed among hot stones, like the pig, and thoroughly baked. After that it is mixed with cold water and thinned out — not thin enough to run, but thin enough to be eaten by sticking one's first and second fingers into it. On close acquaintance it proves a pleasant and most healthful food. And breadfruit, ripe and well boiled or roasted! It is delicious. Breadfruit and taro are kingly vegetables, the pair of them, though the former is patently a misnomer and more resembles a sweet potato than anything else, though it is not mealy like a sweet potato, nor is it so sweet.

The feast ended, we watched the moon rise over Typee. The air was like balm, faintly scented with the breath of flowers. It was a magic night, deathly still, without the slightest breeze to stir the foliage; and one caught one's breath and felt the pang that is almost hurt, so exquisite was the beauty of it. Faint and far could be heard the thin thunder of the surf upon the beach. There were no beds; and we drowsed and slept wherever we thought the floor softest. Near by, a woman panted and moaned in her sleep, and all about us the dying islanders coughed in the night.

CHAPTER XI — THE NATURE MAN

I first met him on Market Street in San Francisco. It was a wet and drizzly afternoon, and he was striding along, clad solely in a pair of abbreviated knee-trousers and an abbreviated shirt, his bare feet going slick-slick through the pavement-slush. At his heels trooped a score of excited gamins. Every head — and there were thousands — turned to glance curiously at him as he went by. And I turned, too. Never had I seen such lovely sunburn. He was all sunburn, of the sort a blond takes on when his skin does not peel. His long yellow hair was burnt, so was his beard, which sprang from a soil unploughed by any razor. He was a tawny man, a golden-tawny man, all glowing and radiant with the sun. Another prophet, thought I, come up to town with a message that will save the world.

A few weeks later I was with some friends in their bungalow in the Piedmont hills overlooking San Francisco Bay. "We've got him, we've got him," they barked. "We caught him up a tree; but he's all right now, he'll feed from the hand. Come on and see him." So I accompanied them up a dizzy hill, and in a rickety shack in the midst of a eucalyptus grove found my sunburned prophet of the city pavements.

He hastened to meet us, arriving in the whirl and blur of a handspring. He did not shake hands with us; instead, his greeting took the form of stunts. He turned more handsprings. He twisted his body sinuously, like a snake, until, having sufficiently limbered up, he bent from the hips, and, with legs straight and knees touching, beat a tattoo on the ground with the palms of his hands. He whirligigged and pirouetted, dancing and cavorting round like an inebriated ape. All the sun-warmth of his ardent life beamed in his face. I am so happy, was the song without words he sang.

He sang it all evening, ringing the changes on it with an endless variety of stunts. "A fool! a fool! I met a fool in the forest!" thought I, and a worthy fool he proved. Between handsprings and whirligigs he delivered his message that would save the world. It was twofold. First, let suffering humanity strip off its clothing and run wild in the mountains and valleys; and, second, let the very miserable world adopt phonetic spelling. I caught a glimpse of the great social problems being settled by the city populations swarming naked over the landscape, to the popping of shot-guns, the barking of ranch-dogs, and countless assaults with pitchforks wielded by irate farmers.

The years passed, and, one sunny morning, the Snark poked her nose into a narrow opening in a reef that smoked with the crashing impact of the trade-wind swell, and beat slowly up Papeete harbour. Coming off to us was a boat, flying a yellow flag. We knew it contained the port doctor. But quite a distance off, in its wake, was a tiny out rigger canoe that puzzled us. It was flying a red flag. I studied it through the glasses, fearing that it marked some hidden danger to navigation, some recent wreck or some buoy or beacon that had been swept away. Then the doctor came on board. After he had examined the state of our health and been assured that we had no live rats hidden away in the Snark, I asked him the meaning of the red flag. “Oh, that is Darling,” was the answer.

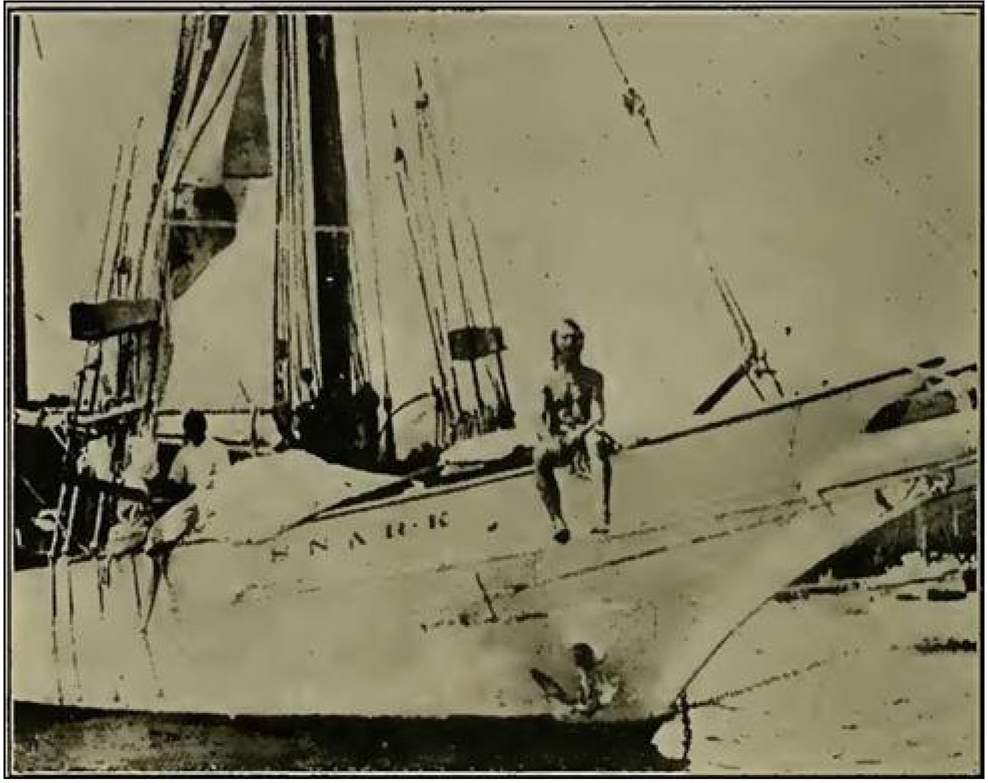

And then Darling, Ernest Darling flying the red flag that is indicative of the brotherhood of man, hailed us. “Hello, Jack!” he called. “Hello, Charmian! He paddled swiftly nearer, and I saw that he was the tawny prophet of the Piedmont hills. He came over the side, a sun-god clad in a scarlet loin-cloth, with presents of Arcady and greeting in both his hands — a bottle of golden honey and a leaf-basket filled WITH great golden mangoes, golden bananas specked with freckles of deeper gold, golden pine-apples and golden limes, and juicy oranges minted from the same precious ore of sun and soil. And in this fashion under the southern sky, I met once more Darling, the Nature Man.

Tahiti is one of the most beautiful spots in the world, inhabited by thieves and robbers and liars, also by several honest and truthful men and women. Wherefore, because of the blight cast upon Tahiti's wonderful beauty by the spidery human vermin that infest it, I am minded to write, not of Tahiti, but of the Nature Man. He, at least, is refreshing and wholesome. The spirit that emanates from him is so gentle and sweet that it would harm nothing, hurt nobody's feelings save the feelings of a predatory and plutocratic capitalist.

"What does this red flag mean?" I asked.

"Socialism, of course."

"Yes, yes, I know that," I went on; "but what does it mean in your hands?"

"Why, that I've found my message."

"And that you are delivering it to Tahiti?" I demanded incredulously.

"Sure," he answered simply; and later on I found that he was, too.

When we dropped anchor, lowered a small boat into the water, and started ashore, the Nature Man joined us. Now, thought I, I shall be pestered to death by this crank. Waking or sleeping I shall never be quit of him until I sail away from here.

But never in my life was I more mistaken. I took a house and went to live and work in it, and the Nature Man never came near me. He was waiting for the invitation. In the meantime he went aboard the Snark and took possession of her library, delighted by the quantity of scientific books, and shocked, as I learned afterwards, by the inordinate amount of fiction. The Nature Man never wastes time on fiction.

After a week or so, my conscience smote me, and I invited him to dinner at a downtown hotel.

He arrived, looking unwontedly stiff and uncomfortable in a cotton jacket. When invited to peel it off, he beamed his gratitude and joy, and did so, revealing his sun-gold skin, from waist to shoulder, covered only by a piece of fish-net of coarse twine and large of mesh. A scarlet loin-cloth completed his costume. I began my acquaintance with him that night, and during my long stay in Tahiti that acquaintance ripened into friendship.

"So you write books," he said, one day when, tired and sweaty, I finished my morning's work.

"I, too, write books," he announced.

Aha, thought I, now at last is he going to pester me with his literary efforts. My soul was in revolt. I had not come all the way to the South Seas to be a literary bureau.

"This is the book I write," he explained, smashing himself a resounding blow on the chest with his clenched fist. "The gorilla in the African jungle pounds his chest till the noise of it can be heard half a mile away."

"A pretty good chest," quoth I, admiringly; "it would even make a gorilla envious."

And then, and later, I learned the details of the marvellous book Ernest Darling had written. Twelve years ago he lay close to death. He weighed but ninety pounds, and was too weak to speak. The doctors had given him up. His father, a practising physician, had given him up. Consultations with other physicians had been held upon him. There was no hope for him. Overstudy (as a school-teacher and as a university student) and two successive attacks of pneumonia were responsible for his breakdown. Day by day he was losing strength. He could extract no nutrition from the heavy foods they gave him; nor could pellets and powders help his stomach to do the work of digestion. Not only was he a physical wreck, but he was a mental wreck. His mind was overwrought. He was sick and tired of medicine, and he was sick and tired of persons. Human speech jarred upon him. Human attentions drove him frantic. The thought came to him that since he was going to die, he might as well die in the open, away from all the bother and irritation. And behind this idea lurked a sneaking idea that perhaps he would not die after all if only he could escape from the heavy foods, the medicines, and the well-intentioned persons who made him frantic.

So Ernest Darling, a bag of bones and a death's-head, a perambulating corpse, with just the dimmest flutter of life in it to make it perambulate, turned his back upon men and the habitations of men and dragged himself for five miles through the brush, away from the city of Portland, Oregon. Of course he was crazy. Only a lunatic would drag himself out of his death-bed.

But in the brush, Darling found what he was looking for — rest. Nobody bothered him with beefsteaks and pork. No physicians lacerated his tired nerves by feeling his pulse, nor tormented his tired stomach with pellets and powders. He began to feel soothed. The sun was shining warm, and he basked in it. He had the feeling that the sun shine was an elixir of health. Then it seemed to him that his whole wasted wreck of a body was crying for the sun. He stripped off his clothes and bathed in the sunshine. He felt better. It had done him good — the first relief in weary months of pain.

As he grew better, he sat up and began to take notice. All about him were the birds fluttering and chirping, the squirrels chattering and playing. He envied them their health and spirits, their happy, care-free existence. That he should contrast their condition with his was inevitable; and that he should question why they were splendidly vigorous while he was a feeble, dying wraith of a man, was likewise inevitable. His conclusion was the very obvious one, namely, that they lived naturally, while he lived most unnaturally therefore, if he intended to live, he must return to nature.

Alone, there in the brush, he worked out his problem and began to apply it. He stripped off his clothing and leaped and gambolled about, running on all fours, climbing trees; in short, doing physical stunts, — and all the time soaking in the sunshine. He imitated the animals. He built a nest of dry leaves and grasses in which to sleep at night, covering it over with bark as a protection against the early fall rains. “Here is a beautiful exercise,” he told me, once, flapping his arms mightily against his sides; “I learned it from watching the roosters crow.” Another time I remarked the loud, sucking intake with which he drank cocoanut-milk. He explained that he had noticed the cows drinking that way and concluded there must be something in it. He tried it and found it good, and thereafter he drank only in that fashion.

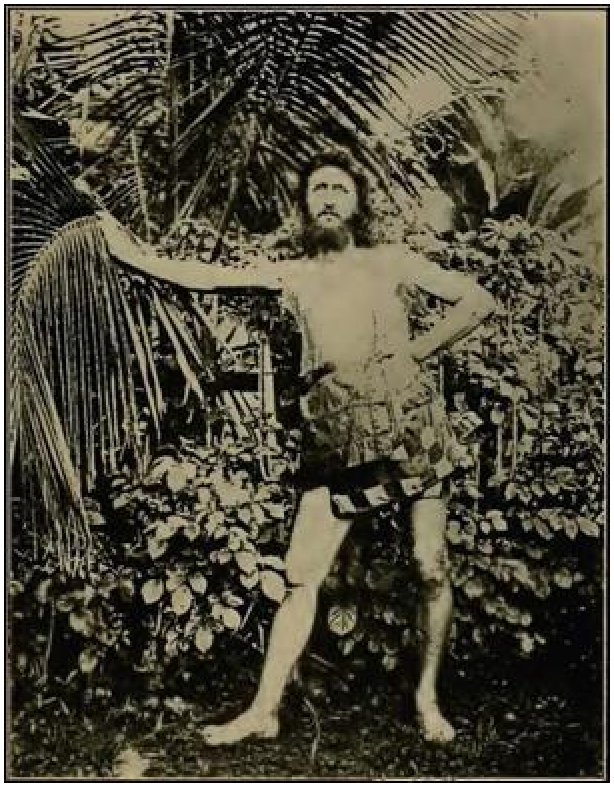

He noted that the squirrels lived on fruits and nuts. He started on a fruit-and-nut diet, helped out by bread, and he grew stronger and put on weight. For three months he continued his primordial existence in the brush, and then the heavy Oregon rains drove him back to the habitations of men. Not in three months could a ninety-pound survivor of two attacks of pneumonia develop sufficient ruggedness to live through an Oregon winter in the open.

He had accomplished much, but he had been driven in. There was no place to go but back to his father's house, and there, living in close rooms with lungs that panted for all the air of the open sky, he was brought down by a third attack of pneumonia. He grew weaker even than before. In that tottering tabernacle of flesh, his brain collapsed. He lay like a corpse, too weak to stand the fatigue of speaking, too irritated and tired in his miserable brain to care to listen to the speech of others. The only act of will of which he was capable was to stick his fingers in his ears and resolutely to refuse to hear a single word that was spoken to him. They sent for the insanity experts. He was adjudged insane, and also the verdict was given that he would not live a month.

By one such mental expert he was carted off to a sanatorium on Mt. Tabor. Here, when they learned that he was harmless, they gave him his own way. They no longer dictated as to the food he ate, so he resumed his fruits and nuts — olive oil, peanut butter, and bananas the chief articles of his diet. As he regained his strength he made up his mind to live thenceforth his own life. If he lived like others, according to social conventions, he would surely die. And he did not want to die. The fear of death was one of the strongest factors in the genesis of the Nature Man. To live, he must have a natural diet, the open air, and the blessed sunshine.

Now an Oregon winter has no inducements for those who wish to return to Nature, so Darling started out in search of a climate. He mounted a bicycle and headed south for the sunlands. Stanford University claimed him for a year. Here he studied and worked his way, attending lectures in as scant garb as the authorities would allow and applying as much as possible the principles of living that he had learned in squirrel-town. His favourite method of study was to go off in the hills back of the University, and there to strip off his clothes and lie on the grass, soaking in sunshine and health at the same time that he soaked in knowledge.

But Central California has her winters, and the quest for a Nature Man's climate drew him on. He tried Los Angeles and Southern California, being arrested a few times and brought before the insanity commissions because, forsooth, his mode of life was not modelled after the mode of life of his fellow-men. He tried Hawaii, where, unable to prove him insane, the authorities deported him. It was not exactly a deportation. He could have remained by serving a year in prison. They gave him his choice. Now prison is death to the Nature Man, who thrives only in the open air and in God's sunshine. The authorities of Hawaii are not to be blamed. Darling was an undesirable citizen. Any man is undesirable who disagrees with one. And that any man should disagree to the extent Darling did in his philosophy of the simple life is ample vindication of the Hawaiian authorities verdict of his undesirableness.

So Darling went thence in search of a climate which would not only be desirable, but wherein he would not be undesirable. And he found it in Tahiti, the garden-spot of garden-spots. And so it was, according to the narrative as given, that he wrote the pages of his book. He wears only a loin-cloth and a sleeveless fish-net shirt. His stripped weight is one hundred and sixty-five pounds. His health is perfect. His eyesight, that at one time was considered ruined, is excellent. The lungs that were practically destroyed by three attacks of pneumonia have not only recovered, but are stronger than ever before.

I shall never forget the first time, while talking to me, that he squashed a mosquito. The stinging pest had settled in the middle of his back between his shoulders. Without interrupting the flow of conversation, without dropping even a syllable, his clenched fist shot up in the air, curved backward, and smote his back between the shoulders, killing the mosquito and making his frame resound like a bass drum. It reminded me of nothing so much as of horses kicking the woodwork in their stalls.

“The gorilla in the African jungle pounds his chest until the noise of it can be heard half a mile away,” he will announce suddenly, and thereat beat a hair-raising, devil’s tattoo on his own chest.

One day he noticed a set of boxing-gloves hanging on the wall, and promptly his eyes brightened.

"Do you box?" I asked.

"I used to give lessons in boxing when I was at Stanford," was the reply.

And there and then we stripped and put on the gloves. Bang! a long, gorilla arm flashed out, landing the gloved end on my nose. Biff! he caught me, in a duck, on the side of the head nearly knocking me over sidewise. I carried the lump raised by that blow for a week. I ducked under a straight left, and landed a straight right on his stomach. It was a fearful blow. The whole weight of my body was behind it, and his body had been met as it lunged forward. I looked for him to crumple up and go down. Instead of which his face beamed approval, and he said, "That was beautiful." The next instant I was covering up and striving to protect myself from a hurricane of hooks, jolts, and uppercuts. Then I watched my chance and drove in for the solar plexus. I hit the mark. The Nature Man dropped his arms, gasped, and sat down suddenly.

"I'll be all right," he said. "Just wait a moment."

And inside thirty seconds he was on his feet — ay, and returning the compliment, for he hooked me in the solar plexus, and I gasped, dropped my hands, and sat down just a trifle more suddenly than he had.

All of which I submit as evidence that the man I boxed with was a totally different man from the poor, ninety-pound weight of eight years before, who, given up by physicians and alienists, lay gasping his life away in a closed room in Portland, Oregon. The book that Ernest Darling has written is a good book, and the binding is good, too.

Hawaii has wailed for years her need for desirable immigrants. She has spent much time, and thought, and money, in importing desirable citizens, and she has, as yet, nothing much to show for it. Yet Hawaii deported the Nature Man. She refused to give him a chance. So it is, to chasten Hawaii's proud spirit, that I take this opportunity to show her what she has lost in the Nature Man. When he arrived in Tahiti, he proceeded to seek out a piece of land on which to grow the food he ate. But land was difficult to find — that is, inexpensive land. The Nature Man was not rolling in wealth. He spent weeks in wandering over the steep hills, until, high up the mountain, where clustered several tiny canyons, he found eighty acres of brush-jungle which were apparently unrecorded as the property of any one. The government officials told him that if he would clear the land and till it for thirty years he would be given a title for it.

Immediately he set to work. And never was there such work. Nobody farmed that high up. The land was covered with matted jungle and overrun by wild pigs and countless rats. The view of Papeete and the sea was magnificent, but the outlook was not encouraging. He spent weeks in building a road in order to make the plantation accessible. The pigs and the rats ate up whatever he planted as fast as it sprouted. He shot the pigs and trapped the rats. Of the latter, in two weeks he caught fifteen hundred. Everything had to be carried up on his back. He usually did his packhorse work at night.

Gradually he began to win out. A grass-walled house was built. On the fertile, volcanic soil he had wrested from the jungle and jungle beasts were growing five hundred cocoanut trees, five hundred papaia trees, three hundred mango trees, many breadfruit trees and alligator-pear trees, to say nothing of vines, bushes, and vegetables. He developed the drip of the hills in the canyons and worked out an efficient irrigation scheme, ditching the water from canyon to canyon and paralleling the ditches at different altitudes. His narrow canyons became botanical gardens. The arid shoulders of the hills, where formerly the blazing sun had parched the jungle and beaten it close to earth, blossomed into trees and shrubs and flowers. Not only had the Nature Man become self-supporting, but he was now a prosperous agriculturist with produce to sell to the city-dwellers of Papeete.

Then it was discovered that his land, which the government officials had informed him was without an owner, really had an owner, and that deeds, descriptions, etc., were on record. All his work bade fare to be lost. The land had been valueless when he took it up, and the owner, a large landholder, was unaware of the extent to which the Nature Man had developed it. A just price was agreed upon, and Darling’s deed was officially filed.

Next came a more crushing blow. Darling’s access to market was destroyed. The road he had built was fenced across by triple barb-wire fences. It was one of those jumbles in human affairs that is so common in this absurdest of social systems. Behind it was the fine hand of the same conservative element that haled the Nature Man before the Insanity Commission in Los Angeles and that deported him from Hawaii. It is so hard for self-satisfied men to understand any man whose satisfactions are fundamentally different. It seems clear that the officials have connived with the conservative element, for to this day the road the Nature Man built is closed; nothing has been done about it, while an adamant unwillingness to do anything about it is evidenced on every hand. But the Nature Man dances and sings along his way. He does not sit up nights thinking about the wrong which has been done him; he leaves the worrying to the doers of the wrong. He has no time for bitterness. He believes he is in the world for the purpose of being happy, and he has not a moment to waste in any other pursuit.

The road to his plantation is blocked. He cannot build a new road, for there is no ground on which he can build it. The government has restricted him to a wild-pig trail which runs precipitously up the mountain. I climbed the trail with him, and we had to climb with hands and feet in order to get up. Nor can that wild-pig trail be made into a road by any amount of toil less than that of an engineer, a steam-engine, and a steel cable. But what does the Nature Man care? In his gentle ethics the evil men do him he requites with goodness. And who shall say he is not happier than they?

"Never mind their pesky road," he said to me as we dragged ourselves up a shelf of rock and sat down, panting, to rest. "I'll get an air machine soon and fool them. I'm clearing a level space for a landing stage for the airships, and next time you come to Tahiti you will alight right at my door."

Yes, the Nature Man has some strange ideas besides that of the gorilla pounding his chest in the African jungle. The Nature Man has ideas about levitation. "Yes, sir," he said to me, "levitation is not impossible. And think of the glory of it — lifting one's self from the ground by an act of will. Think of it! The astronomers tell us that our whole solar system is dying; that, barring accidents, it will all be so cold that no life can live upon it. Very well. In that day all men will be accomplished levitationists, and they will leave this perishing planet and seek more hospitable worlds. How can levitation be accomplished? By progressive fasts. Yes, I have tried them, and toward the end I could feel myself actually getting lighter."

The man is a maniac, thought I.

"Of course," he added, "these are only theories of mine. I like to speculate upon the glorious future of man. Levitation may not be possible, but I like to think of it as possible."

One evening, when he yawned, I asked him how much sleep he allowed himself.

"Seven hours," was the answer. "But in ten years I'll be sleeping only six hours, and in twenty years only five hours. You see, I shall cut off an hour's sleep every ten years."

"Then when you are a hundred you won't be sleeping at all," I interjected.

"Just that. Exactly that. When I am a hundred I shall not require sleep. Also, I shall be living on air. There are plants that live on air, you know."

"But has any man ever succeeded in doing it?"

He shook his head.

"I never heard of him if he did. But it is only a theory of mine, this living on air. It would be fine, wouldn't it? Of course it may be impossible — most likely it is. You see, I am not unpractical. I never forget the present.

When I soar ahead into the future, I always leave a string by which to find my way back again."

I fear me the Nature Man is a joker. At any rate he lives the simple life. His laundry bill cannot be large. Up on his plantation he lives on fruit the labour cost of which, in cash, he estimates at five cents a day. At present, because of his obstructed road and because he is head over heels in the propaganda of socialism, he is living in town, where his expenses, including rent, are twenty-five cents a day. In order to pay those expenses he is running a night school for Chinese.

The Nature Man is not bigoted. When there is nothing better to eat than meat, he eats meat, as, for instance, when in jail or on shipboard and the nuts and fruits give out. Nor does he seem to crystallize into anything except sunburn.

"Drop anchor anywhere and the anchor will drag — that is, if your soul is a limitless, fathomless sea, and not dog-pound," he quoted to me, then added: "You see, my anchor is always dragging. I live for human health and progress, and I strive to drag my anchor always in that direction. To me, the two are identical. Dragging anchor is what has saved me. My anchor did not hold me to my death-bed. I dragged anchor into the brush and fooled the doctors. When I recovered health and strength, I started, by preaching and by example, to teach the people to become nature men and nature women. But they had deaf ears. Then, on the steamer coming to Tahiti, a quartermaster expounded socialism to me. He showed me that an economic square deal was necessary before men and women could live naturally. So I dragged anchor once more, and now I am working for the co-operative commonwealth. When that arrives, it will be easy to bring about nature living.

“I had a dream last night,” he went on thoughtfully, his face slowly breaking into a glow. “It seemed that twenty-five nature men and nature women had just arrived on the steamer from California, and that I was starting to go with them up the wild-pig trail to the plantation.”

Ah, me, Ernest Darling, sun-worshipper and nature man, there are times when I am compelled to envy you and your carefree existence. I see you now, dancing up the steps and cutting antics on the veranda; your hair dripping from a plunge in the salt sea, your eyes sparkling, your sun-gilded body flashing, your chest resounding to the devil’s own tattoo as you chant: “The gorilla in the African jungle pounds his chest until the noise of it can be heard half a mile away.” And I shall see you always as I saw you that last day, when the Snark poked her nose once more through the passage in the smoking reef, outward bound, and I waved good-bye to those on shore. Not least in goodwill and affection was the wave I gave to the golden sun-god in the scarlet loin-cloth, standing upright in his tiny outrigger canoe.

CHAPTER XII — THE HIGH SEAT OF ABUNDANCE

On the arrival of strangers, every man endeavoured to obtain one as a friend and carry him off to his own habitation, where he is treated with the greatest kindness by the inhabitants of the district; they place him on a high seat and feed him with abundance of the finest food. — Polynesian Researches.

The Snark was lying at anchor at Raiatea, just off the village of Uturoa. She had arrived the night before, after dark, and we were preparing to pay our first visit ashore. Early in the morning I had noticed a tiny outrigger canoe, with an impossible spritsail, skimming the surface of the lagoon. The canoe itself was coffin-shaped, a mere dugout, fourteen feet long, a scant twelve inches wide, and maybe twenty-four inches deep. It had no lines, except in so far that it was sharp at both ends. Its sides were perpendicular. Shorn of the outrigger, it would have capsized of itself inside a tenth of a second. It was the outrigger that kept it right side up.

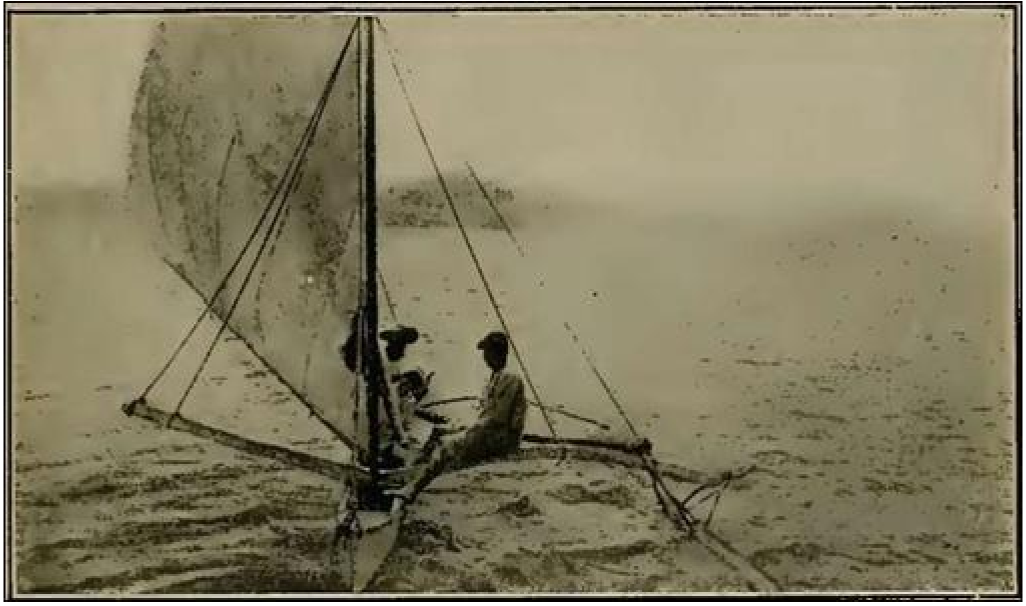

I have said that the sail was impossible. It was. It was one of those things, not that you have to see to believe, but that you cannot believe after you have seen it. The hoist of it and the length of its boom were sufficiently appalling; but, not content with that, its artificer had given it a tremendous head. So large was the head that no common sprit could carry the strain of it in an ordinary breeze. So a spar had been lashed to the canoe, projecting aft over the water. To this had been made fast a sprit guy: thus, the foot of the sail was held by the main-sheet, and the peak by the guy to the sprit.

It was not a mere boat, not a mere canoe, but a sailing machine. And the man in it sailed it by his weight and his nerve — principally by the latter. I watched the canoe beat up from leeward and run in toward the village, its sole occupant far out on the outrigger and luffing up and spilling the wind in the puffs.

“Well, I know one thing,” I announced; “I don’t leave Raiatea till I have a ride in that canoe.”

A few minutes later Warren called down the companionway, “Here’s that canoe you were talking about.”

Promptly I dashed on deck and gave greeting to its owner, a tall, slender Polynesian, ingenuous of face, and with clear, sparkling, intelligent eyes. He was clad in a scarlet loin-cloth and a straw hat. In his hands were presents — a fish, a bunch of greens, and several enormous yams. All of which acknowledged by smiles (which are coinage still in isolated spots of Polynesia) and by frequent repetitions of mauruuru (which is the Tahitian “thank you”), I proceeded to make signs that I desired to go for a sail in his canoe.

His face lighted with pleasure and he uttered the single word, “Tahaa,” turning at the same time and pointing to the lofty, cloud-draped peaks of an island three miles away — the island of Tahaa. It was fair wind over, but a head-beat back. Now I did not want to go to Tahaa. I had letters to deliver in Raiatea, and officials to see, and there was Charmian down below getting ready to go ashore. By insistent signs I indicated that I desired no more than a short sail on the lagoon. Quick was the disappointment in his face, yet smiling was the acquiescence.

“Come on for a sail,” I called below to Charmian. “But put on your swimming suit. It’s going to be wet.”

It wasn’t real. It was a dream. That canoe slid over the water like a streak of silver. I climbed out on the outrigger and supplied the weight to hold her down, while Tehei (pronounced Tayhayee) supplied the nerve. He, too, in the puffs, climbed part way out on the outrigger, at the same time steering with both hands on a large paddle and holding the mainsheet with his foot.

“Ready about!” he called.

I carefully shifted my weight inboard in order to maintain the equilibrium as the sail emptied.

“Hard a-lee!” he called, shooting her into the wind.

I slid out on the opposite side over the water on a spar lashed across the canoe, and we were full and away on the other tack.

“All right,” said Tehei.

Those three phrases, “Ready about,” “Hard a-lee,” and “All right,” comprised Tehei’s English vocabulary and led me to suspect that at some time he had been one of a Kanaka crew under an American captain. Between the puffs I made signs to him and repeatedly and interrogatively uttered the word SAILOR. Then I tried it in atrocious French. MARIN conveyed no meaning to him; nor did MATELOT. Either my French was bad, or else he was not up in it. I have since concluded that both conjectures were correct. Finally, I began naming over the adjacent islands. He nodded that he had been to them. By the time my quest reached Tahiti, he caught my drift. His thought-processes were almost visible, and it was a joy to watch him think. He nodded his head vigorously. Yes, he had been to Tahiti, and he added himself names of islands such as Tikihau, Rangiroa, and Fakarava, thus proving that he had sailed as far as the Paumotus — undoubtedly one of the crew of a trading schooner.

After our short sail, when he had returned on board, he by signs inquired the destination of the Snark, and when I had mentioned Samoa, Fiji, New Guinea, France, England, and California in their geographical sequence, he said “Samoa,” and by gestures intimated that he wanted to go along. Whereupon I was hard put to explain that there was no room for him. “Petit bateau” finally solved it, and again the disappointment in his face was accompanied by smiling acquiescence, and promptly came the renewed invitation to accompany him to Tahaa.

Charmian and I looked at each other. The exhilaration of the ride we had taken was still upon us. Forgotten were the letters to Raiatea, the officials we had to visit. Shoes, a shirt, a pair of trousers, cigarettes matches, and a book to read were hastily crammed into a biscuit tin and wrapped in a rubber blanket, and we were over the side and into the canoe.

“When shall we look for you?” Warren called, as the wind filled the sail and sent Tehei and me scurrying out on the outrigger.

“I don’t know,” I answered. “When we get back, as near as I can figure it.”

And away we went. The wind had increased, and with slacked sheets we ran off before it. The freeboard of the canoe was no more than two and a half inches, and the little waves continually lapped over the side. This required bailing. Now bailing is one of the principal functions of the vahine. Vahine is the Tahitian for woman, and Charmian being the only vahine aboard, the bailing fell appropriately to her. Tehei and I could not very well do it, the both of us being perched part way out on the outrigger and busied with keeping the canoe bottom-side down. So Charmian bailed, with a wooden scoop of primitive design, and so well did she do it that there were occasions when she could rest off almost half the time.

Raiatea and Tahaa are unique in that they lie inside the same encircling reef. Both are volcanic islands, ragged of sky-line, with heaven-aspiring peaks and minarets. Since Raiatea is thirty miles in circumference, and Tahaa fifteen miles, some idea may be gained of the magnitude of the reef that encloses them. Between them and the reef stretches from one to two miles of water, forming a beautiful lagoon. The huge Pacific seas, extending in unbroken lines sometimes a mile or half as much again in length, hurl themselves upon the reef, overtowering and falling upon it with tremendous crashes, and yet the fragile coral structure withstands the shock and protects the land. Outside lies destruction to the mightiest ship afloat. Inside reigns the calm of untroubled water, whereon a canoe like ours can sail with no more than a couple of inches of free-board.

We flew over the water. And such water! — clear as the clearest spring-water, and crystalline in its clearness, all intershot with a maddening pageant of colours and rainbow ribbons more magnificently gorgeous than any rainbow. Jade green alternated with turquoise, peacock blue with emerald, while now the canoe skimmed over reddish purple pools, and again over pools of dazzling, shimmering white where pounded coral sand lay beneath and upon which oozed monstrous sea-slugs. One moment we were above wonder-gardens of coral, wherein coloured fishes disported, fluttering like marine butterflies; the next moment we were dashing across the dark surface of deep channels, out of which schools of flying fish lifted their silvery flight; and a third moment we were above other gardens of living coral, each more wonderful than the last. And above all was the tropic, trade-wind sky with its fluffy clouds racing across the zenith and heaping the horizon with their soft masses.

Before we were aware, we were close in to Tahaa (pronounced Tah-hah-ah, with equal accents), and Tehei was grinning approval of the vahine's proficiency at bailing. The canoe grounded on a shallow shore, twenty feet from land, and we waded out on a soft bottom where big slugs curled and writhed under our feet and where small octopuses advertised their existence by their superlative softness when stepped upon. Close to the beach, amid cocoanut palms and banana trees, erected on stilts, built of bamboo, with a grass-thatched roof, was Tehei's house. And out of the house came Tehei's vahine, a slender mite of a woman, kindly eyed and Mongolian of feature — when she was not North American Indian. "Bihaura," Tehei called her, but he did not pronounce it according to English notions of spelling. Spelled "Bihaura," it sounded like Bee-ah-oo-rah, with every syllable sharply emphasized.

She took Charmian by the hand and led her into the house, leaving Tehei and me to follow. Here, by sign-language unmistakable, we were informed that all they possessed was ours. No hidalgo was ever more generous in the expression of giving, while I am sure that few hidalgos were ever as generous in the actual practice. We quickly discovered that we dare not admire their possessions, for whenever we did admire a particular object it was immediately presented to us. The two vahines, according to the way of vahines, got together in a discussion and examination of feminine fripperies, while Tehei and I, manlike, went over fishing-tackle and wild-pig-hunting, to say nothing of the device whereby bonitas are caught on forty-foot poles from double canoes. Charmian admired a sewing basket — the best example she had seen of Polynesian basketry; it was hers. I admired a bonita hook, carved in one piece from a pearl-shell; it was mine. Charmian was attracted by a fancy braid of straw sennit, thirty feet of it in a roll, sufficient to make a hat of any design one wished; the roll of sennit was hers. My gaze lingered upon a poi-pounder that dated back to the old stone days; it was mine. Charmian dwelt a moment too long on a wooden poi-bowl, canoe-shaped, with four legs, all carved in one piece of wood; it was hers. I glanced a second time at a gigantic cocoanut calabash; it was mine. Then Charmian and I held a conference in which we resolved to admire no more — not because it did not pay well enough, but because it paid too well. Also, we were already racking our brains over the contents of the Snark for suitable return presents. Christmas is an easy problem compared with a Polynesian giving-feast.

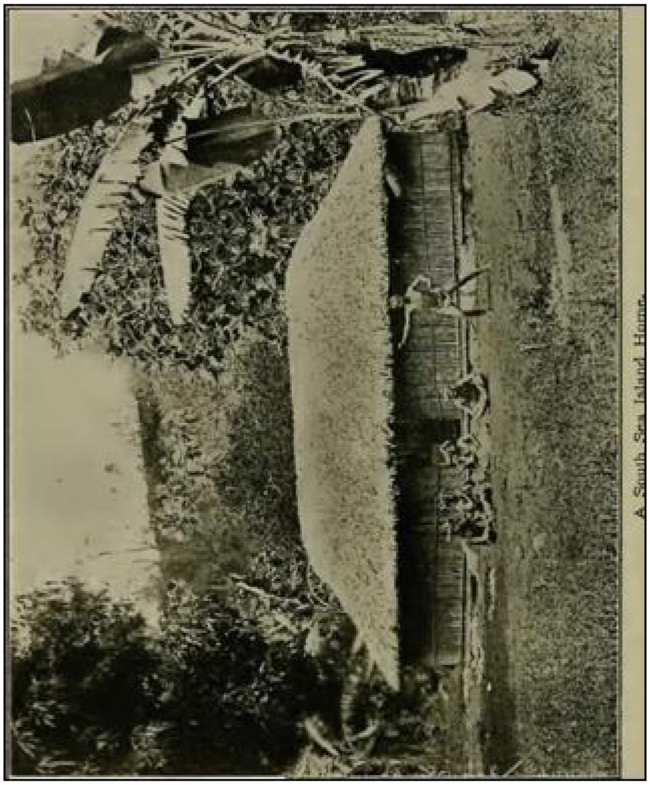

A South Sea Island Home.

We sat on the cool porch, on Bihaura’s best mats while dinner was preparing, and at the same time met the villagers. In twos and threes and groups they strayed along, shaking hands and uttering the Tahitian word of greeting — Ioarana, pronounced yo-rah-nah. The men, big strapping fellows, were in loin-cloths, with here and there no shirt, while the women wore the universal ahu, a sort of adult pinafore that flows in graceful lines from the shoulders to the ground. Sad to see was the elephantiasis that afflicted some of them. Here would be a comely woman of magnificent proportions, with the port of a queen, yet marred by one arm four times — or a dozen times — the size of the other. Beside her might stand a six-foot man, erect, mighty-muscled, bronzed, with the body of a god, yet with feet and calves so swollen that they ran together, forming legs, shapeless, monstrous, that were for all the world like elephant legs.

No one seems really to know the cause of the South Sea elephantiasis. One theory is that it is caused by the drinking of polluted water. Another theory attributes it to inoculation through mosquito bites. A third theory charges it to predisposition plus the process of acclimatization. On the other hand, no one that stands in finicky dread of it and similar diseases can afford to travel in the South Seas. There will be occasions when such a one must drink water. There may be also occasions when the mosquitoes let up biting. But every precaution of the finicky one will be useless. If he runs barefoot across the beach to have a swim, he will tread where an elephantiasis case trod a few minutes before. If he closets himself in his own house, yet every bit of fresh food on his table will have been subjected to the contamination, be it flesh, fish, fowl, or vegetable. In the public market at Papeete two known lepers run stalls, and heaven alone knows through what channels arrive at that market the daily supplies of fish, fruit, meat, and vegetables. The only happy way to go through the South Seas is with a careless poise, without apprehension, and with a Christian Science-like faith in the resplendent fortune of your own particular star. When you see a woman, afflicted with elephantiasis wringing out cream from cocoanut meat with her naked hands, drink and reflect how good is the cream, forgetting the hands that pressed it out. Also, remember that diseases such as elephantiasis and leprosy do not seem to be caught by contact.

We watched a Raratongan woman, with swollen, distorted limbs, prepare our cocoanut cream, and then went out to the cook-shed where Tehei and Bihaura were cooking dinner. And then it was served to us on a dry-goods box in the house. Our hosts waited until we were done and then spread their table on the floor. But our table! We were certainly in the high seat of abundance. First, there was glorious raw fish, caught several hours before from the sea and steeped the intervening time in lime-juice diluted with water. Then came roast chicken. Two cocoanuts, sharply sweet, served for drink. There were bananas that tasted like strawberries and that melted in the mouth, and there was banana-poi that made one regret that his Yankee forebears ever attempted puddings. Then there was boiled yam, boiled taro, and roasted feis, which last are nothing more or less than large mealy, juicy, red-coloured cooking bananas. We marvelled at the abundance, and, even as we marvelled, a pig was brought on, a whole pig, a sucking pig, swathed in green leaves and roasted upon the hot stones of a native oven, the most honourable and triumphant dish in the Polynesian cuisine. And after that came coffee, black coffee, delicious coffee, native coffee grown on the hillsides of Tahaa.

Tehei's fishing-tackle fascinated me, and after we arranged to go fishing, Charmian and I decided to remain all night. Again Tehei broached Samoa, and again my petit bateau brought the disappointment and the smile of acquiescence to his face. Bora Bora was my next port. It was not so far away but that cutters made the passage back and forth between it and

Raiatea. So I invited Tehei to go that far with us on the Snark. Then I learned that his wife had been born on Bora Bora and still owned a house there. She likewise was invited, and immediately came the counter invitation to stay with them in their house in Born Bora. It was Monday. Tuesday we would go fishing and return to Raiatea. Wednesday we would sail by Tahaa and off a certain point, a mile away, pick up Tehei and Bihaura and go on to Bora Bora. All this we arranged in detail, and talked over scores of other things as well, and yet Tehei knew three phrases in English, Charmian and I knew possibly a dozen Tahitian words, and among the four of us there were a dozen or so French words that all understood. Of course, such polyglot conversation was slow, but, eked out with a pad, a lead pencil, the face of a clock Charmian drew on the back of a pad, and with ten thousand and one gestures, we managed to get on very nicely.

At the first moment we evidenced an inclination for bed the visiting natives, with soft Iaoranas, faded away, and Tehei and Bihaura likewise faded away. The house consisted of one large room, and it was given over to us, our hosts going elsewhere to sleep. In truth, their castle was ours. And right here, I want to say that of all the entertainment I have received in this world at the hands of all sorts of races in all sorts of places, I have never received entertainment that equalled this at the hands of this brown-skinned couple of Tahaa. I do not refer to the presents, the free-handed generousness, the high abundance, but to the fineness of courtesy and consideration and tact, and to the sympathy that was real sympathy in that it was understanding. They did nothing they thought ought to be done for us, according to their standards, but they did what they divined we waited to be done for us, while their divination was most successful. It would be impossible to enumerate the hundreds of little acts of consideration they performed during the few days of our intercourse. Let it suffice for me to say that of all hospitality and entertainment I have known, in no case was theirs not only not excelled, but in no case was it quite equalled. Perhaps the most delightful feature of it was that it was due to no training, to no complex social ideals, but that it was the untutored and spontaneous outpouring from their hearts.

The next morning we went fishing, that is, Tehei, Charmian, and I did, in the coffin-shaped canoe; but this time the enormous sail was left behind. There was no room for sailing and fishing at the same time in that tiny craft. Several miles away, inside the reef, in a channel twenty fathoms deep, Tehei dropped his baited hooks and rock-sinkers. The bait was chunks of octopus flesh, which he bit out of a live octopus that writhed in the bottom of the canoe. Nine of these lines he set, each line attached to one end of a short length of bamboo floating on the surface. When a fish was hooked, the end of the bamboo was drawn under the water. Naturally, the other end rose up in the air, bobbing and waving frantically for us to make haste. And make haste we did, with whoops and yells and driving paddles, from one signalling bamboo to another, hauling up from the depths great glistening beauties from two to three feet in length.

Steadily, to the eastward, an ominous squall had been rising and blotting out the bright trade-wind sky. And we were three miles to leeward of home. We started as the first wind-gusts whitened the water. Then came the rain, such rain as only the tropics afford, where every tap and main in the sky is open wide, and when, to top it all, the very reservoir itself spills over in blinding deluge. Well, Charmian was in a swimming suit, I was in pyjamas, and Tehei wore only a loin-cloth. Bihaura was on the beach waiting for us, and she led Charmian into the house in much the same fashion that the mother leads in the naughty little girl who has been playing in mud-puddles.

It was a change of clothes and a dry and quiet smoke while kai-kai was preparing. Kai-kai, by the way, is the Polynesian for “food” or “to eat,” or, rather, it is one form of the original root, whatever it may have been, that has been distributed far and wide over the vast area of the Pacific. It is kai in the Marquesas, Raratonga, Manahiki, Niue, Fakaafo, Tonga, New Zealand, and Vate. In Tahiti “to eat” changes to amu, in Hawaii and Samoa to ai, in Ban to kana, in Nina to kana, in Nongone to kaka, and in New Caledonia to ki. But by whatsoever sound or symbol, it was welcome to our ears after that long paddle in the rain. Once more we sat in the high seat of abundance until we regretted that we had been made unlike the image of the giraffe and the camel.

Again, when we were preparing to return to the Snark, the sky to windward turned black and another squall swooped down. But this time it was little rain and all wind. It blew hour after hour, moaning and screeching through the palms, tearing and wrenching and shaking the frail bamboo dwelling, while the outer reef set no a mighty thundering as it broke the force of the swinging seas. Inside the reef, the lagoon, sheltered though it was, was white with fury, and not even Tehei’s seamanship could have enabled his slender canoe to live in such a welter.

By sunset, the back of the squall had broken though it was still too rough for the canoe. So I had Tehei find a native who was willing to venture his cutter across to Raiatea for the outrageous sum of two dollars, Chili, which is equivalent in our money to ninety cents. Half the village was told off to carry presents, with which Tehei and Bihaura speeded their parting guests — captive chickens, fishes dressed and swathed in wrappings of green leaves, great golden bunches of bananas, leafy baskets spilling over with oranges and limes, alligator pears (the butter-fruit, also called the avoca), huge baskets of yams, bunches of taro and cocoanuts, and last of all, large branches and trunks of trees — firewood for the Snark.

While on the way to the cutter we met the only white man on Tahaa, and of all men, George Lufkin, a native of New England! Eighty-six years of age he was, sixty-odd of which, he said, he had spent in the Society Islands, with occasional absences, such as the gold rush to Eldorado in ‘forty-nine and a short period of ranching in California near Tulare. Given no more than three months by the doctors to live, he had returned to his South Seas and lived to eighty-six and to chuckle over the doctors aforesaid, who were all in their graves. Fee-fee he had, which is the native for elephantiasis and which is pronounced fay-fay. A quarter of a century before, the disease had fastened upon him, and it would remain with him until he died. We asked him about kith and kin. Beside him sat a sprightly damsel of sixty, his daughter. “She is all I have,” he murmured plaintively, “and she has no children living.”

The cutter was a small, sloop-rigged affair, but large it seemed alongside Tehei’s canoe. On the other hand, when we got out on the lagoon and were struck by another heavy wind-squall, the cutter became liliputian, while the Snark, in our imagination, seemed to promise all the stability and permanence of a continent. They were good boatmen. Tehei and Bihaura had come along to see us home, and the latter proved a good boatwoman herself. The cutter was well ballasted, and we met the squall under full sail. It was getting dark, the lagoon was full of coral patches, and we were carrying on. In the height of the squall we had to go about, in order to make a short leg to windward to pass around a patch of coral no more than a foot under the surface. As the cutter filled on the other tack, and while she was in that “dead” condition that precedes gathering way, she was knocked flat. Jib-sheet and main-sheet were let go, and she righted into the wind. Three times she was knocked down, and three times the sheets were flung loose, before she could get away on that tack.

By the time we went about again, darkness had fallen. We were now to windward of the Snark, and the squall was howling. In came the jib, and down came the mainsail, all but a patch of it the size of a pillow-slip. By an accident we missed the Snark, which was riding it out to two anchors, and drove aground upon the inshore coral. Running the longest line on the Snark by means of the launch, and after an hour's hard work, we heaved the cutter off and had her lying safely astern.

The day we sailed for Bora Bora the wind was light, and we crossed the lagoon under power to the point where Tehei and Bihaura were to meet us. As we made in to the land between the coral banks, we vainly scanned the shore for our friends. There was no sign of them.

"We can't wait," I said. "This breeze won't fetch us to Bora Bora by dark, and I don't want to use any more gasolene than I have to."

You see, gasolene in the South Seas is a problem. One never knows when he will be able to replenish his supply.

But just then Tehei appeared through the trees as he came down to the water. He had peeled off his shirt and was wildly waving it. Bihaura apparently was not ready. Once aboard, Tehei informed us by signs that we must proceed along the land till we got opposite to his house. He took the wheel and conned the Snark through the coral, around point after point till we cleared the last point of all. Cries of welcome went up from the beach, and Bihaura, assisted by several of the villagers, brought off two canoe-loads of abundance. There were yams, taro, feis, breadfruit, cocoanuts, oranges, limes, pineapples, watermelons, alligator pears, pomegranates, fish, chickens galore crowing and cackling and laying eggs on our decks, and a live pig that squealed infernally and all the time in apprehension of imminent slaughter.

Under the rising moon we came in through the perilous passage of the reef of Bora Bora and dropped anchor off Vaitape village. Bihaura, with housewifely anxiety, could not get ashore too quickly to her house to prepare more abundance for us. While the launch was taking her and Tehei to the little jetty, the sound of music and of singing drifted across the quiet lagoon. Throughout the Society Islands we had been continually informed that we would find the Bora Borans very jolly. Charmian and I went ashore to see, and on the village green, by forgotten graves on the beach, found the youths and maidens dancing, flower-garlanded and flower-bedecked, with strange phosphorescent flowers in their hair that pulsed and dimmed and glowed in the moonlight. Farther along the beach we came upon a huge grass house, oval-shaped seventy feet in length, where the elders of the village were singing himines. They, too, were flower-garlanded and jolly, and they welcomed us into the fold as little lost sheep straying along from outer darkness.

Early next morning Tehei was on board, with a string of fresh-caught fish and an invitation to dinner for that evening. On the way to dinner, we dropped in at the himine house. The same elders were singing, with here or there a youth or maiden that we had not seen the previous night. From all the signs, a feast was in preparation. Towering up from the floor was a mountain of fruits and vegetables, flanked on either side by numerous chickens tethered by cocoanut strips. After several himines had been sung, one of the men arose and made oration. The oration was made to us, and though it was Greek to us, we knew that in some way it connected us with that mountain of provender.

"Can it be that they are presenting us with all that?" Charmian whispered.

"Impossible," I muttered back. "Why should they be giving it to us? Besides, there is no room on the Snark for it. We could not eat a tithe of it. The rest would spoil. Maybe they are inviting us to the feast. At any rate, that they should give all that to us is impossible."

Nevertheless we found ourselves once more in the high seat of abundance. The orator, by gestures unmistakable, in detail presented every item in the mountain to us, and next he presented it to us in toto. It was an embarrassing moment. What would you do if you lived in a hall bedroom and a friend gave you a white elephant? Our Snark was no more than a hall bedroom, and already she was loaded down with the abundance of Tahaa. This new supply was too much. We blushed, and stammered, and mauruuru'd. We mauruuru'd with repeated nui's which conveyed the largeness and overwhelmingness of our thanks. At the same time, by signs, we committed the awful breach of etiquette of not accepting the present. The himine singers' disappointment was plainly betrayed, and that evening, aided by Tehei, we compromised by accepting one chicken, one bunch of bananas, one bunch of taro, and so on down the list.

But there was no escaping the abundance. I bought a dozen chickens from a native out in the country, and the following day he delivered thirteen chickens along with a canoe-load of fruit. The French storekeeper presented us with pomegranates and lent us his finest horse. The gendarme did likewise, lending us a horse that was the very apple of his eye. And everybody sent us flowers. The Snark was a fruit-stand and a greengrocer's shop masquerading under the guise of a conservatory. We went around flower-garlanded all the time. When the himine singers came on board to sing, the maidens kissed us welcome, and the crew, from captain to cabin-boy, lost its heart to the maidens of Bora Bora. Tehei got up a big fishing expedition in our honour, to which we went in a double canoe, paddled by a dozen strapping Amazons. We were relieved that no fish were caught, else the Snark would have sunk at her moorings.

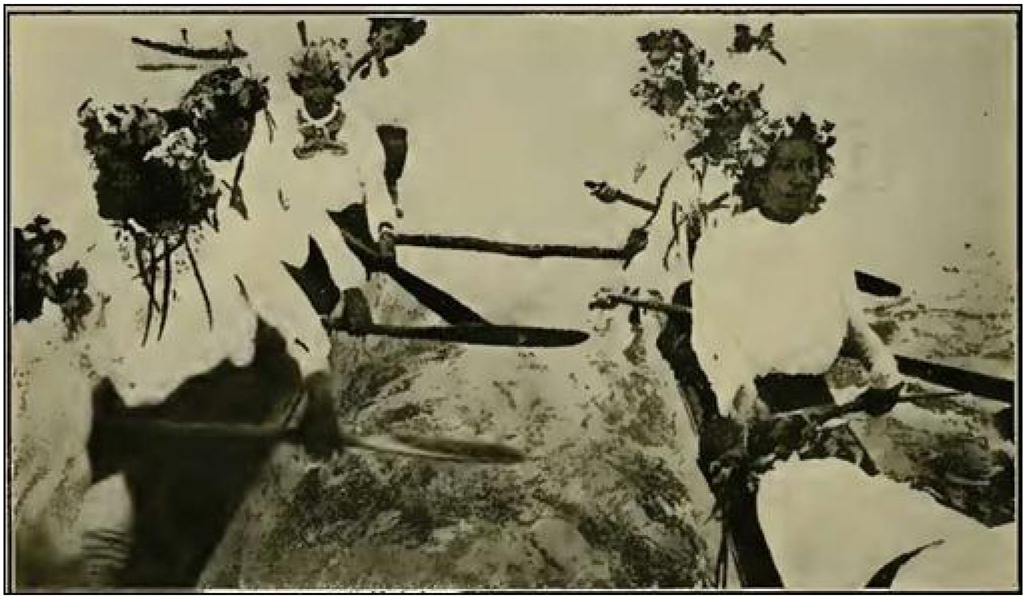

The days passed, but the abundance did not diminish. On the day of departure, canoe after canoe put off to us. Tehei brought cucumbers and a young papaia tree burdened with splendid fruit. Also, for me he brought a tiny, double canoe with fishing apparatus complete. Further, he brought fruits and vegetables with the same lavishness as at Tahaa. Bihaura brought various special presents for Charmian, such as silk-cotton pillows, fans, and fancy mats. The whole population brought fruits, flowers, and chickens. And Bihaura added a live sucking pig. Natives whom I did not remember ever having seen before strayed over the rail and presented me with such things as fish-poles, fish-lines, and fish-hooks carved from pearl-shell.

As the Snark sailed out through the reef, she had a cutter in tow. This was the craft that was to take Bihaura back to Tahaa — but not Tehei. I had yielded at last, and he was one of the crew of the Snark. When the cutter cast off and headed east, and the Snark's bow turned toward the west, Tehei knelt down by the cockpit and breathed a silent prayer, the tears flowing down his cheeks. A week later, when Martin got around to developing and printing, he showed Tehei some of the photographs. And that brown-skinned son of Polynesia, gazing on the pictured lineaments of his beloved Bihaura broke down in tears.

But the abundance! There was so much of it. We could not work the Snark for the fruit that was in the way. She was festooned with fruit. The life-boat and launch were packed with it. The awning-guys groaned under their burdens. But once we struck the full trade-wind sea, the disburdening began. At every roll the Snark shook overboard a bunch or so of bananas and cocoanuts, or a basket of limes. A golden flood of limes washed about in the lee-scuppers. The big baskets of yams burst, and pineapples and pomegranates rolled back and forth. The chickens had got loose and were everywhere, roosting on the awnings, fluttering and squawking out on the jib-boom, and essaying the perilous feat of balancing on the spinnaker-boom. They were wild chickens, accustomed to flight. When attempts were made to catch them, they flew out over the ocean, circled about, and came lack. Sometimes they did not come back. And in the confusion, unobserved, the little sucking pig got loose and slipped overboard.

"On the arrival of strangers, every man endeavoured to obtain one as a friend and carry him off to his own habitation, where he is treated with the greatest kindness by the inhabitants of the district: they place him on a high seat and feed him with abundance of the finest foods."

CHAPTER XIII — THE STONE-FISHING OF BORA BORA

At five in the morning the conches began to blow. From all along the beach the eerie sounds arose, like the ancient voice of War, calling to the fishermen to arise and prepare to go forth. We on the Snark likewise arose, for there could be no sleep in that mad din of conches. Also, we were going stone-fishing, though our preparations were few.

Tautai-taora is the name for stone-fishing, tautai meaning a "fishing instrument." And taora meaning "thrown." But tautai-taora, in combination, means "stone-fishing," for a stone is the instrument that is thrown. Stone-fishing is in reality a fish-drive, similar in principle to a rabbit-drive or a cattle-drive, though in the latter affairs drivers and driven operate in the same medium, while in the fish-drive the men must be in the air to breathe and the fish are driven through the water. It does not matter if the water is a hundred feet deep, the men, working on the surface, drive the fish just the same.

This is the way it is done. The canoes form in line, one hundred to two hundred feet apart. In the bow of each canoe a man wields a stone, several pounds in weight, which is attached to a short rope. He merely smites the water with the stone, pulls up the stone, and smites again. He goes on smiting. In the stern of each canoe another man paddles, driving the canoe ahead and at the same time keeping it in the formation. The line of canoes advances to meet a second line a mile or two away, the ends of the lines hurrying together to form a circle, the far edge of which is the shore. The circle begins to contract upon the shore, where the women, standing in a long row out into the sea, form a fence of legs, which serves to break any rushes of the frantic fish. At the right moment when the circle is sufficiently small, a canoe dashes out from shore, dropping overboard a long screen of cocoanut leaves and encircling the circle, thus reinforcing the palisade of legs. Of course, the fishing is always done inside the reef in the lagoon.

"Tres jolie," the gendarme said, after explaining by signs and gestures that thousands of fish would be caught of all sizes from minnows to sharks, and that the captured fish would boil up and upon the very sand of the beach.

It is a most successful method of fishing, while its nature is more that of an outing festival, rather than of a prosaic, food-getting task. Such fishing parties take place about once a month at Bora Bora, and it is a custom that has descended from old time. The man who originated it is not remembered. They always did this thing. But one cannot help wondering about that forgotten savage of the long ago, into whose mind first flashed this scheme of easy fishing, of catching huge quantities of fish without hook, or net, or spear. One thing about him we can know: he was a radical. And we can be sure that he was considered feather-brained and anarchistic by his conservative tribesmen. His difficulty was much greater than that of the modern inventor, who has to convince in advance only one or two capitalists. That early inventor had to convince his whole tribe in advance, for without the co-operation of the whole tribe the device could not be tested. One can well imagine the nightly pow-wow-ings in that primitive island world, when he called his comrades antiquated moss-backs, and they called him a fool, a freak, and a crank, and charged him with having come from Kansas. Heaven alone knows at what cost of grey hairs and expletives he must finally have succeeded in winning over a sufficient number to give his idea a trial. At any rate, the experiment succeeded. It stood the test of truth — it worked! And thereafter, we can be confident, there was no man to be found who did not know all along that it was going to work.

"The Polynesian barge in which we were to ride."

Our good friends, Tehei and Bihaura, who were giving the fishing in our honour, had promised to come for us. We were down below when the call came from on deck that they were coming. We dashed up the companionway, to be overwhelmed by the sight of the Polynesian barge in which we were to ride. It was a long double canoe, the canoes lashed together by timbers with an interval of water between, and the whole decorated with flowers and golden grasses. A dozen flower-crowned Amazons were at the paddles, while at the stern of each canoe was a strapping steersman. All were garlanded with gold and crimson and orange flowers, while each wore about the hips a scarlet pareu. There were flowers everywhere, flowers, flowers, flowers, without out end. The whole thing was an orgy of colour. On the platform forward resting on the bows of the canoes, Tehei and Bihaura were dancing. All voices were raised in a wild song or greeting.

"Flower-crowned maidens, hand in hand and two by two."

Three times they circled the Snark before coming alongside to take Charmian and me on board. Then it was away for the fishing-grounds, a five-mile paddle dead to windward. "Everybody is jolly in Bora Bora," is the saying throughout the Society Islands, and we certainly found everybody jolly. Canoe songs, shark songs, and fishing songs were sung to the dipping of the paddles, all joining in on the swinging choruses. Once in a while the cry Mao! was raised, whereupon all strained like mad at the paddles. Mao is shark, and when the deep-sea tigers appear, the natives paddle for dear life for the shore, knowing full well the danger they run of having their frail canoes overturned and of being devoured. Of course, in our case there were no sharks, but the cry of mao was used to incite them to paddle with as much energy as if a shark were really after them. "Hoe! Hoe!" was another cry that made us foam through the water.

On the platform Tehei and Bihaura danced, accompanied by songs and choruses or by rhythmic hand-clappings. At other times a musical knocking of the paddles against the sides of the canoes marked the accent. A young girl dropped her paddle, leaped to the platform, and danced a hula, in the midst of which, still dancing, she swayed and bent, and imprinted on our cheeks the kiss of welcome. Some of the songs, or himines, were religious, and they were especially beautiful, the deep basses of the men mingling with the altos and thin sopranos of the women and forming a combination of sound that irresistibly reminded one of an organ. In fact, "kanaka organ" is the scoffer's description of the himine. On the other hand, some of the chants or ballads were very barbaric, having come down from pre-Christian times.

And so, singing, dancing, paddling, these joyous Polynesians took us to the fishing. The gendarme, who is the French ruler of Bora Bora, accompanied us with his family in a double canoe of his own, paddled by his prisoners; for not only is he gendarme and ruler, but he is jailer as well, and in this jolly land when anybody goes fishing, all go fishing. A score of single canoes, with outriggers, paddled along with us. Around a point a big sailing-canoe appeared, running beautifully before the wind as it bore down to greet us. Balancing precariously on the outrigger, three young men saluted us with a wild rolling of drums.

The next point, half a mile farther on, brought us to the place of meeting. Here the launch, which had been brought along by Warren and Martin, attracted much attention. The Bora Borans could not see what made it go. The canoes were drawn upon the sand, and all hands went ashore to drink cocoanuts and sing and dance. Here our numbers were added to by many who arrived on foot from near-by dwellings, and a pretty sight it was to see the flower-crowned maidens, hand in hand and two by two, arriving along the sands.

"They usually make a big catch," Allicot, a half-caste trader, told us. "At the finish the water is fairly alive with fish. It is lots of fun. Of course you know all the fish will be yours."

"All?" I groaned, for already the Snark was loaded down with lavish presents, by the canoe-load, of fruits, vegetables, pigs, and chickens.

"Yes, every last fish," Allicot answered. "You see, when the surround is completed, you, being the guest of honour, must take a harpoon and impale the first one. It is the custom. Then everybody goes in with their hands and throws the catch out on the sand. There will be a mountain of them. Then one of the chiefs will make a speech in which he presents you with the whole kit and boodle. But you don't have to take them all. You get up and make a speech, selecting what fish you want for yourself and presenting all the rest back again. Then everybody says you are very generous."

"But what would be the result if I kept the whole present?" I asked.

"It has never happened," was the answer. "It is the custom to give and give back again."

The native minister started with a prayer for success in the fishing, and all heads were bared. Next, the chief fishermen told off the canoes and allotted them their places. Then it was into the canoes and away. No women, however, came along, with the exception of Bihaura and Charmian. In the old days even they would have been tabooed. The women remained behind to wade out into the water and form the palisade of legs.

The big double canoe was left on the beech, and we went in the launch. Half the canoes paddled off to leeward, while we, with the other half, headed to windward a mile and a half, until the end of our line was in touch with the reef. The leader of the drive occupied a canoe midway in our line.

He stood erect, a fine figure of an old man, holding a flag in his hand. He directed the taking of positions and the forming of the two lines by blowing on a conch. When all was ready, he waved his flag to the right. With a single splash the throwers in every canoe on that side struck the water with their stones. While they were hauling them back — a matter of a moment, for the stones scarcely sank beneath the surface — the flag waved to the left, and with admirable precision every stone on that side struck the water. So it went, back and forth, right and left; with every wave of the flag a long line of concussion smote the lagoon. At the same time the paddles drove the canoes forward and what was being done in our line was being done in the opposing line of canoes a mile and more away.

On the bow of the launch, Tehei, with eyes fixed on the leader, worked his stone in unison with the others. Once, the stone slipped from the rope, and the same instant Tehei went overboard after it. I do not know whether or not that stone reached the bottom, but I do know that the next instant Tehei broke surface alongside with the stone in his hand. I noticed this same accident occur several times among the near-by canoes, but in each instance the thrower followed the stone and brought it back.

The reef ends of our lines accelerated, the shore ends lagged, all under the watchful supervision of the leader, until at the reef the two lines joined, forming the circle. Then the contraction of the circle began, the poor frightened fish harried shoreward by the streaks of concussion that smote the water. In the same fashion elephants are driven through the jungle by motes of men who crouch in the long grasses or behind trees and make strange noises. Already the palisade of legs had been built. We could see the heads of the women, in a long line, dotting the placid surface of the lagoon. The tallest women went farthest out, thus, with the exception of those close inshore, nearly all were up to their necks in the water.

Still the circle narrowed, till canoes were almost touching. There was a pause. A long canoe shot out from shore, following the line of the circle. It went as fast as paddles could drive. In the stern a man threw overboard the long, continuous screen of cocoanut leaves. The canoes were no longer needed, and overboard went the men to reinforce the palisade with their legs. For the screen was only a screen, and not a net, and the fish could dash through it if they tried. Hence the need for legs that ever agitated the screen, and for hands that splashed and throats that yelled. Pandemonium reigned as the trap tightened.

But no fish broke surface or collided against the hidden legs. At last the chief fisherman entered the trap. He waded around everywhere, carefully. But there were no fish boiling up and out upon the sand. There was not a sardine, not a minnow, not a polly-wog. Something must have been wrong with that prayer; or else, and more likely, as one grizzled fellow put it, the wind was not in its usual quarter and the fish were elsewhere in the lagoon. In fact, there had been no fish to drive.

"About once in five these drives are failures," Allicot consoled us.

Well, it was the stone-fishing that had brought us to Bora Bora, and it was our luck to draw the one chance in five. Had it been a raffle, it would have been the other way about. This is not pessimism. Nor is it an indictment of the plan of the universe. It is merely that feeling which is familiar to most fishermen at the empty end of a hard day.

CHAPTER XIV — THE AMATEUR NAVIGATOR

There are captains and captains, and some mighty fine captains, I know; but the run of the captains on the Snark has been remarkably otherwise. My experience with them has been that it is harder to take care of one captain on a small boat than of two small babies. Of course, this is no more than is to be expected. The good men have positions, and are not likely to forsake their one-thousand-to-fifteen-thousand-ton billets for the Snark with her ten tons net. The Snark has had to cull her navigators from the beach, and the navigator on the beach is usually a congenital inefficient — the sort of man who beats about for a fortnight trying vainly to find an ocean isle and who returns with his schooner to report the island sunk with all on board, the sort of man whose temper or thirst for strong waters works him out of billets faster than he can work into them.

The Snark has had three captains, and by the grace of God she shall have no more. The first captain was so senile as to be unable to give a measurement for a boom-jaw to a carpenter. So utterly agedly helpless was he, that he was unable to order a sailor to throw a few buckets of salt water on the Snark's deck. For twelve days, at anchor, under an overhead tropic sun, the deck lay dry. It was a new deck. It cost me one hundred and thirty-five dollars to recaulk it. The second captain was angry. He was born angry. "Papa is always angry," was the description given him by his half-breed son. The third captain was so crooked that he couldn't hide behind a corkscrew. The truth was not in him, common honesty was not in him, and he was as far away from fair play and square-dealing as he was from his proper course when he nearly wrecked the Snark on the Ring-gold Isles.

It was at Suva, in the Fijis, that I discharged my third and last captain and took up gain the role of amateur navigator. I had essayed it once before, under my first captain, who, out of San Francisco, jumped the Snark so amazingly over the chart that I really had to find out what was doing. It was fairly easy to find out, for we had a run of twenty-one hundred miles before us. I knew nothing of navigation; but, after several hours of reading up and half an hour's practice with the sextant, I was able to find the Snark's latitude by meridian observation and her longitude by the simple method known as "equal altitudes." This is not a correct method. It is not even a safe method, but my captain was attempting to navigate by it, and he was the only one on board who should have been able to tell me that it was a method to be eschewed. I brought the Snark to Hawaii, but the conditions favoured me. The sun was in northern declination and nearly overhead. The legitimate "chronometer-sight" method of ascertaining the longitude I had not heard of — yes, I had heard of it. My first captain mentioned it vaguely, but after one or two attempts at practice of it he mentioned it no more.

I had time in the Fijis to compare my chronometer with two other chronometers. Two weeks previous, at Pago Pago, in Samoa, I had asked my captain to compare our chronometer with the chronometers on the American cruiser, the Annapolis. This he told me he had done — of course he had done nothing of the sort; and he told me that the difference he had ascertained was only a small fraction of a second. He told it to me with finely simulated joy and with words of praise for my splendid time-keeper. I repeat it now, with words of praise for his splendid and unblushing unveracity. For behold, fourteen days later, in Suva, I compared the chronometer with the one on the Atua, an Australian steamer, and found that mine was thirty-one seconds fast. Now thirty-one seconds of time, converted into arc, equals seven and one-quarter miles. That is to say, if I were sailing west, in the night-time, and my position, according to my dead reckoning from my afternoon chronometer sight, was shown to be seven miles off the land, why, at that very moment I would be crashing on the reef. Next I compared my chronometer with Captain Wooley's. Captain Wooley, the harbourmaster, gives the time to Suva, firing a gun signal at twelve, noon, three times a week. According to his chronometer mine was fifty-nine seconds fast, which is to say, that, sailing west, I should be crashing on the reef when I thought I was fifteen miles off from it.

I compromised by subtracting thirty-one seconds from the total of my chronometer's losing error, and sailed away for Tanna, in the New Hebrides, resolved, when nosing around the land on dark nights, to bear in mind the other seven miles I might be out according to Captain Wooley's instrument. Tanna lay some six hundred miles west-southwest from the Fijis, and it was my belief that while covering that distance I could quite easily knock into my head sufficient navigation to get me there. Well, I got there, but listen first to my troubles. Navigation IS easy, I shall always contend that; but when a man is taking three gasolene engines and a wife around the world and is writing hard every day to keep the engines supplied with gasolene and the wife with pearls and volcanoes, he hasn't much time left in which to study navigation. Also, it is bound to be easier to study said science ashore, where latitude and longitude are unchanging, in a house whose position never alters, than it is to study navigation on a boat that is rushing along day and night toward land that one is trying to find and which he is liable to find disastrously at a moment when he least expects it.

To begin with, there are the compasses and the setting of the courses. We sailed from Suva on Saturday afternoon, June 6, 1908, and it took us till after dark to run the narrow, reef-ridden passage between the islands of Viti Levu and Mbengha. The open ocean lay before me. There was nothing in the way with the exception of Vatu Leile, a miserable little island that persisted in poking up through the sea some twenty miles to the west-southwest — just where I wanted to go. Of course, it seemed quite simple to avoid it by steering a course that would pass it eight or ten miles to the north. It was a black night, and we were running before the wind. The man at the wheel must be told what direction to steer in order to miss Vatu Leile. But what direction? I turned me to the navigation books. "True Course" I lighted upon. The very thing! What I wanted was the true course. I read eagerly on:

"The True Course is the angle made with the meridian by a straight line on the chart drawn to connect the ship's position with the place bound to."

Just what I wanted. The Snark's position was at the western entrance of the passage between Viti Levu and Mbengha. The immediate place she was bound to was a place on the chart ten miles north of Vatu Leile. I pricked that place off on the chart with my dividers, and with my parallel rulers found that west-by-south was the true course. I had but to give it to the man at the wheel and the Snark would win her way to the safety of the open sea.

But alas and alack and lucky for me, I read on. I discovered that the compass, that trusty, everlasting friend of the mariner, was not given to pointing north. It varied. Sometimes it pointed east of north, sometimes west of north, and on occasion it even turned tail on north and pointed south. The variation at the particular spot on the globe occupied by the Snark was 9 degrees 40 minutes easterly. Well, that had to be taken in to account before I gave the steering course to the man at the wheel. I read:

"The Correct Magnetic Course is derived from the True Course by applying to it the variation."

Therefore, I reasoned, if the compass points 9 degrees 40 minutes eastward of north, and I wanted to sail due north, I should have to steer 9 degrees 40 minutes westward of the north indicated by the compass and which was not north at all. So I added 9 degrees 40 minutes to the left of my west-by-south course, thus getting my correct Magnetic Course, and was ready once more to run to open sea.

Again alas and alack! The Correct Magnetic Course was not the Compass Course. There was another sly little devil lying in wait to trip me up and land me smashing on the reefs of Vatu Leile. This little devil went by the name of Deviation. I read:

"The Compass Course is the course to steer, and is derived from the Correct Magnetic Course by applying to it the Deviation."

Now Deviation is the variation in the needle caused by the distribution of iron on board of ship. This purely local variation I derived from the deviation card of my standard compass and then applied to the Correct Magnetic Course. The result was the Compass Course. And yet, not yet. My standard compass was amidships on the companionway. My steering compass was aft, in the cockpit, near the wheel. When the steering compass pointed west-by-south three-quarters-south (the steering course), the standard compass pointed west-one-half-north, which was certainly not the steering course. I kept the Snark up till she was heading west-by-south-three-quarters-south on the standard compass, which gave, on the steering compass, south-west-by-west.

The foregoing operations constitute the simple little matter of setting a course. And the worst of it is that one must perform every step correctly or else he will hear “Breakers ahead!” some pleasant night, a nice sea-bath, and be given the delightful diversion of fighting his way to the shore through a horde of man-eating sharks.

Just as the compass is tricky and strives to fool the mariner by pointing in all directions except north, so does that guide post of the sky, the sun, persist in not being where it ought to be at a given time. This carelessness of the sun is the cause of more trouble — at least it caused trouble for me. To find out where one is on the earth’s surface, he must know, at precisely the same time, where the sun is in the heavens. That is to say, the sun, which is the timekeeper for men, doesn’t run on time. When I discovered this, I fell into deep gloom and all the Cosmos was filled with doubt. Immutable laws, such as gravitation and the conservation of energy, became wobbly, and I was prepared to witness their violation at any moment and to remain unastonished. For see, if the compass lied and the sun did not keep its engagements, why should not objects lose their mutual attraction and why should not a few bushel baskets of force be annihilated? Even perpetual motion became possible, and I was in a frame of mind prone to purchase Keeley-Motor stock from the first enterprising agent that landed on the

Snark’s deck. And when I discovered that the earth really rotated on its axis 366 times a year, while there were only 365 sunrises and sunsets, I was ready to doubt my own identity.

This is the way of the sun. It is so irregular that it is impossible for man to devise a clock that will keep the sun’s time. The sun accelerates and retards as no clock could be made to accelerate and retard. The sun is sometimes ahead of its schedule; at other times it is lagging behind; and at still other times it is breaking the speed limit in order to overtake itself, or, rather, to catch up with where it ought to be in the sky. In this last case it does not slow down quick enough, and, as a result, goes dashing ahead of where it ought to be. In fact, only four days in a year do the sun and the place where the sun ought to be happen to coincide. The remaining 361 days the sun is pothering around all over the shop. Man, being more perfect than the sun, makes a clock that keeps regular time. Also, he calculates how far the sun is ahead of its schedule or behind. The difference between the sun’s position and the position where the sun ought to be if it were a decent, self-respecting sun, man calls the Equation of Time. Thus, the navigator endeavouring to find his ship’s position on the sea, looks in his chronometer to see where precisely the sun ought to be according to the Greenwich custodian of the sun. Then to that location he applies the Equation of Time and finds out where the sun ought to be and isn't. This latter location, along with several other locations, enables him to find out what the man from Kansas demanded to know some years ago.

The Snark sailed from Fiji on Saturday, June 6, and the next day, Sunday, on the wide ocean, out of sight of land, I proceeded to endeavour to find out my position by a chronometer sight for longitude and by a meridian observation for latitude. The chronometer sight was taken in the morning when the sun was some 21 degrees above the horizon. I looked in the Nautical Almanac and found that on that very day, June 7, the sun was behind time 1 minute and 26 seconds, and that it was catching up at a rate of 14.67 seconds per hour. The chronometer said that at the precise moment of taking the sun's altitude it was twenty-five minutes after eight o'clock at Greenwich. From this date it would seem a schoolboy's task to correct the Equation of Time. Unfortunately, I was not a schoolboy. Obviously, at the middle of the day, at Greenwich, the sun was 1 minute and 26 seconds behind time. Equally obviously, if it were eleven o'clock in the morning, the sun would be 1 minute and 26 seconds behind time plus 14.67 seconds. If it were ten o'clock in the morning, twice 14.67 seconds would have to be added. And if it were 8: 25 in the morning, then 3.5 times 14.67 seconds would have to be added. Quite clearly, then, if, instead of being 8:25 A.M., it were 8:25 P.M., then 8.5 times 14.67 seconds would have to be, not added, but SUBTRACTED; for, if, at noon, the sun were 1 minute and 26 seconds behind time, and if it were catching up with where it ought to be at the rate of 14.67 seconds per hour, then at 8.25 P.M. it would be much nearer where it ought to be than it had been at noon.

So far, so good. But was that 8:25 of the chronometer A.M., or P.M.? I looked at the Snark's clock. It marked 8:9, and it was certainly A.M. for I had just finished breakfast. Therefore, if it was eight in the morning on board the Snark, the eight o'clock of the chronometer (which was the time of the day at Greenwich) must be a different eight o'clock from the Snark's eight o'clock. But what eight o'clock was it? It can't be the eight o'clock of this morning, I reasoned; therefore, it must be either eight o'clock this evening or eight o'clock last night.

It was at this juncture that I fell into the bottomless pit of intellectual chaos. We are in east longitude, I reasoned, therefore we are ahead of Greenwich. If we are behind Greenwich, then to-day is yesterday; if we are ahead of Greenwich, then yesterday is to-day, but if yesterday is to-day, what under the sun is to-day! — to-morrow? Absurd! Yet it must be correct. When I took the sun this morning at 8:25, the sun's custodians at Greenwich were just arising from dinner last night.

"Then correct the Equation of Time for yesterday," says my logical mind.

"But to-day is to-day," my literal mind insists. "I must correct the sun for to-day and not for yesterday."

"Yet to-day is yesterday," urges my logical mind.

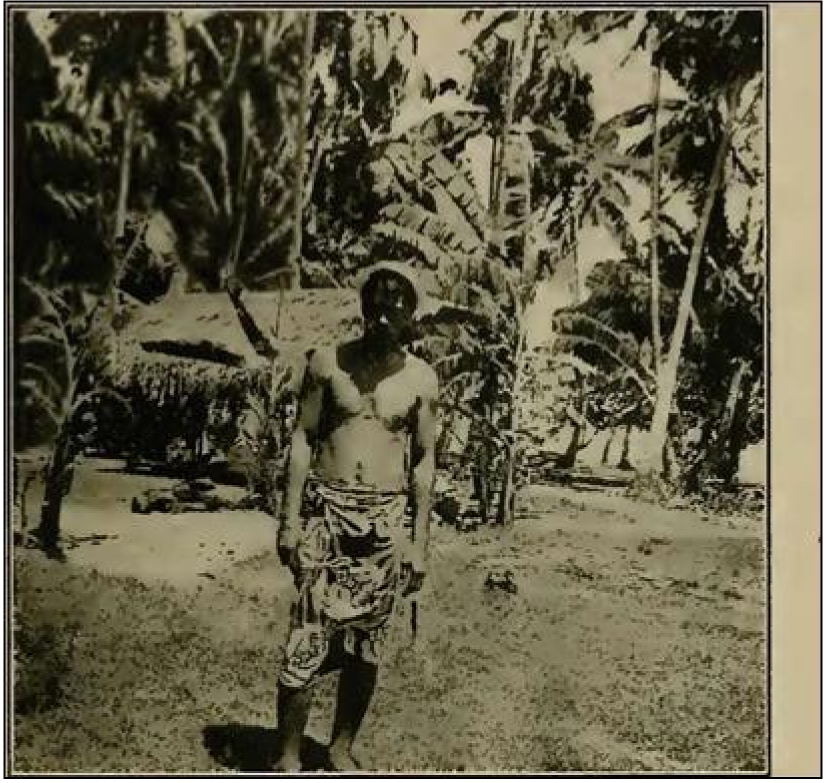

"That's all very well," my literal mind continues, "If I were in Greenwich I might be in yesterday. Strange things happen in Greenwich. But I know as sure as I am living that I am here, now, in to-day, June 7, and that I took the sun here, now, to-day, June 7. Therefore, I must correct the sun here, now, to-day, June 7."

"Bosh!" snaps my logical mind. "Lecky says — "

"Never mind what Lecky says," interrupts my literal mind. "Let me tell you what the Nautical Almanac says. The Nautical Almanac says that to-day, June 7, the sun was 1 minute and 26 seconds behind time and catching up at the rate of 14.67 seconds per hour. It says that yesterday, June 6, the sun was 1 minute and 36 seconds behind time and catching up at the rate of 15.66 seconds per hour. You see, it is preposterous to think of correcting to-day's sun by yesterday's time-table."

"Fool!"

"Idiot!"

Back and forth they wrangle until my head is whirling around and I am ready to believe that I am in the day after the last week before next.

I remembered a parting caution of the Suva harbour-master: "IN EAST LONGITUDE TAKE FROM THE NAUTICAL ALMANAC THE ELEMENTS FOR THE PRECEDING DAY."

Then a new thought came to me. I corrected the Equation of Time for Sunday and for Saturday, making two separate operations of it, and lo, when the results were compared, there was a difference only of four-tenths of a second. I was a changed man. I had found my way out of the crypt. The Snark was scarcely big enough to hold me and my experience. Four-tenths of a second would make a difference of only one-tenth of a mile — a cable-length!

All went merrily for ten minutes, when I chanced upon the following rhyme for navigators:

"Greenwich time least
Longitude east;
Greenwich best,
Longitude west."

Heavens! The Snark’s time was not as good as Greenwich time. When it was 8 25 at Greenwich, on board the Snark it was only 8:9. “Greenwich time best, longitude west.” There I was. In west longitude beyond a doubt.

“Silly!” cries my literal mind. “You are 8:9 A.M. and Greenwich is 8:25 P.M.”

“Very well,” answers my logical mind. “To be correct, 8.25 P.M. is really twenty hours and twenty-five minutes, and that is certainly better than eight hours and nine minutes. No, there is no discussion; you are in west longitude.”

Then my literal mind triumphs.

“We sailed from Suva, in the Fijis, didn’t we?” it demands, and logical mind agrees. “And Suva is in east longitude?” Again logical mind agrees. “And we sailed west (which would take us deeper into east longitude), didn’t we? Therefore, and you can’t escape it, we are in east longitude.”

“Greenwich time best, longitude west,” chants my logical mind; “and you must grant that twenty hours and twenty-five minutes is better than eight hours and nine minutes.”

“All right,” I break in upon the squabble; “we’ll work up the sight and then we’ll see.”

And work it up I did, only to find that my longitude was 184 degrees west.

“I told you so,” snorts my logical mind.

I am dumbfounded. So is my literal mind, for several minutes. Then it enounces:

“But there is no 184 degrees west longitude, nor east longitude, nor any other longitude. The largest meridian is 180 degrees as you ought to know very well.”

Having got this far, literal mind collapses from the brain strain, logical mind is dumb flabbergasted; and as for me, I get a bleak and wintry look in my eyes and go around wondering whether I am sailing toward the China coast or the Gulf of Darien.

Then a thin small voice, which I do not recognize, coming from nowhere in particular in my consciousness, says:

“The total number of degrees is 360. Subtract the 184 degrees west longitude from 360 degrees, and you will get 176 degrees east longitude.”

“That is sheer speculation,” objects literal mind; and logical mind remonstrates. “There is no rule for it.”

“Darn the rules!” I exclaim. “Ain’t I here?”

“The thing is self-evident,” I continue. “184 degrees west longitude means a lapping over in east longitude of four degrees. Besides I have been in east longitude all the time. I sailed from Fiji, and Fiji is in east longitude. Now I shall chart my position and prove it by dead reckoning.”

But other troubles and doubts awaited me. Here is a sample of one. In south latitude, when the sun is in northern declination, chronometer sights may be taken early in the morning. I took mine at eight o’clock. Now, one of the necessary elements in working up such a sight is latitude. But one gets latitude at twelve o’clock, noon, by a meridian observation. It is clear that in order to work up my eight o’clock chronometer sight I must have my eight o’clock latitude. Of course, if the Snark were sailing due west at six knots per hour, for the intervening four hours her latitude would not change. But if she were sailing due south, her latitude would change to the tune of twenty-four miles. In which case a simple addition or subtraction would convert the twelve o’clock latitude into eight o’clock latitude. But suppose the Snark were sailing southwest. Then the traverse tables must be consulted.

This is the illustration. At eight A.M. I took my chronometer sight. At the same moment the distance recorded on the log was noted. At twelve M., when the sight for latitude was taken. I again noted the log, which showed me that since eight o’clock the Snark had run 24 miles. Her true course had been west 0.75 south. I entered Table I, in the distance column, on the page for 0.75 point courses, and stopped at 24, the number of miles run. Opposite, in the next two columns, I found that the Snark had made 3.5 miles of southing or latitude, and that she had made 23.7 miles of westing. To find my eight o’clock’ latitude was easy. I had but to subtract 3.5 miles from my noon latitude. All the elements being present, I worked up my longitude.

But this was my eight o’clock longitude. Since then, and up till noon, I had made 23.7 miles of westing. What was my noon longitude? I followed the rule, turning to Traverse Table No. II. Entering the table, according to rule, and going through every detail, according to rule, I found the difference of longitude for the four hours to be 25 miles. I was aghast. I entered the table again, according to rule; I entered the table half a dozen times, according to rule, and every time found that my difference of longitude was 25 miles. I leave it to you, gentle reader. Suppose you had sailed 24 miles and that you had covered 3.5 miles of latitude, then how could you have covered 25 miles of longitude? Even if you had sailed due west 24 miles, and not changed your latitude, how could you have changed your longitude 25 miles? In the name of human reason, how could you cover one mile more of longitude than the total number of miles you had sailed?

It was a reputable traverse table, being none other than Bowditch’s. The rule was simple (as navigators’ rules go); I had made no error. I spent an hour over it, and at the end still faced the glaring impossibility of having sailed 24 miles, in the course of which I changed my latitude 3.5 miles and my longitude 25 miles. The worst of it was that there was nobody to help me out. Neither Charmian nor Martin knew as much as I knew about navigation. And all the time the Snark was rushing madly along toward Tanna, in the New Hebrides. Something had to be done.

How it came to me I know not — call it an inspiration if you will; but the thought arose in me: if southing is latitude, why isn't westing longitude? Why should I have to change westing into longitude? And then the whole beautiful situation dawned upon me. The meridians of longitude are 60 miles (nautical) apart at the equator. At the poles they run together. Thus, if I should travel up the 180 degrees meridian of longitude until I reached the North Pole, and if the astronomer at Greenwich travelled up the 0 meridian of longitude to the North Pole, then, at the North Pole, we could shake hands with each other, though before we started for the North Pole we had been some thousands of miles apart. Again: if a degree of longitude was 60 miles wide at the equator, and if the same degree, at the point of the Pole, had no width, then somewhere between the Pole and the equator that degree would be half a mile wide, and at other places a mile wide, two miles wide, ten miles wide, thirty miles wide, ay, and sixty miles wide.

All was plain again. The Snark was in 19 degrees south latitude. The world wasn't as big around there as at the equator. Therefore, every mile of westing at 19 degrees south was more than a minute of longitude; for sixty miles were sixty miles, but sixty minutes are sixty miles only at the equator. George Francis Train broke Jules Verne's record of around the world. But any man that wants can break George Francis Train's record. Such a man would need only to go, in a fast steamer, to the latitude of Cape Horn, and sail due east all the way around. The world is very small in that latitude, and there is no land in the way to turn him out of his course. If his steamer maintained sixteen knots, he would circumnavigate the globe in just about forty days.

But there are compensations. On Wednesday evening, June 10, I brought up my noon position by dead reckoning to eight P.M. Then I projected the Snark's course and saw that she would strike Futuna, one of the easternmost of the New Hebrides, a volcanic cone two thousand feet high that rose out of the deep ocean. I altered the course so that the Snark would pass ten miles to the northward. Then I spoke to Wada, the cook, who had the wheel every morning from four to six.

"Wada San, to-morrow morning, your watch, you look sharp on weather-bow you see land."

And then I went to bed. The die was cast. I had staked my reputation as a navigator. Suppose, just suppose, that at daybreak there was no land. Then, where would my navigation be? And where would we be? And how would we ever find ourselves? or find any land? I caught ghastly visions of the Snark sailing for months through ocean solitudes and seeking vainly for land while we consumed our provisions and sat down with haggard faces to stare cannibalism in the face.

I confess my sleep was not

" . . . like a summer sky That held the music of a lark."

Rather did "I waken to the voiceless dark," and listen to the creaking of the bulkheads and the rippling of the sea alongside as the Snark logged steadily her six knots an hour. I went over my calculations again and again, striving to find some mistake, until my brain was in such fever that it discovered dozens of mistakes. Suppose, instead of being sixty miles off Futuna, that my navigation was all wrong and that I was only six miles off? In which case my course would be wrong, too, and for all I knew the Snark might be running straight at Futuna. For all I knew the Snark might strike Futuna the next moment. I almost sprang from the bunk at that thought; and, though I restrained myself, I know that I lay for a moment, nervous and tense, waiting for the shock.

My sleep was broken by miserable nightmares. Earthquake seemed the favourite affliction, though there was one man, with a bill, who persisted in dunning me throughout the night. Also, he wanted to fight; and Charmian continually persuaded me to let him alone. Finally, however, the man with the everlasting dun ventured into a dream from which Charmian was absent. It was my opportunity, and we went at it, gloriously, all over the sidewalk and street, until he cried enough. Then I said, “Now how about that bill?” Having conquered, I was willing to pay. But the man looked at me and groaned. “It was all a mistake,” he said; “the bill is for the house next door.”

That settled him, for he worried my dreams no more; and it settled me, too, for I woke up chuckling at the episode. It was three in the morning. I went up on deck. Henry, the Rapa islander, was steering. I looked at the log. It recorded forty-two miles. The Snark had not abated her six-knot gait, and she had not struck Futuna yet. At half-past five I was again on deck. Wada, at the wheel, had seen no land. I sat on the cockpit rail, a prey to morbid doubt for a quarter of an hour. Then I saw land, a small, high piece of land, just where it ought to be, rising from the water on the weather-bow. At six o’clock I could clearly make it out to be the beautiful volcanic cone of Futuna. At eight o’clock, when it was abreast, I took its distance by the sextant and found it to be 9.3 miles away. And I had elected to pass it 10 miles away!

Then, to the south, Aneiteum rose out of the sea, to the north, Aniwa, and, dead ahead, Tanna. There was no mistaking Tanna, for the smoke of its volcano was towering high in the sky. It was forty miles away, and by afternoon, as we drew close, never ceasing to log our six knots, we saw that it was a mountainous, hazy land, with no apparent openings in its coast-line. I was looking for Port Resolution, though I was quite prepared to find that as an anchorage, it had been destroyed. Volcanic earthquakes had lifted its bottom during the last forty years, so that where once the largest ships rode at anchor there was now, by last reports, scarcely space and depth sufficient for the Snark. And why should not another convulsion, since the last report, have closed the harbour completely?

I ran in close to the unbroken coast, fringed with rocks awash upon which the crashing trade-wind sea burst white and high. I searched with my glasses for miles, but could see no entrance. I took a compass bearing of Futuna, another of Aniwa, and laid them off on the chart. Where the two bearings crossed was bound to be the position of the Snark. Then, with my parallel rulers, I laid down a course from the Snark's position to Port Resolution. Having corrected this course for variation and deviation, I went on deck, and lo, the course directed me towards that unbroken coast-line of bursting seas. To my Rapa islander's great concern, I held on till the rocks awash were an eighth of a mile away.

"No harbour this place," he announced, shaking his head ominously.

But I altered the course and ran along parallel with the coast. Charmian was at the wheel. Martin was at the engine, ready to throw on the propeller. A narrow silt of an opening showed up suddenly. Through the glasses I could see the seas breaking clear across. Henry, the Rapa man, looked with troubled eyes; so did Tehei, the Tahaa man.

"No passage, there," said Henry. "We go there, we finish quick, sure."

I confess I thought so, too; but I ran on abreast, watching to see if the line of breakers from one side the entrance did not overlap the line from the other side. Sure enough, it did. A narrow place where the sea ran smooth appeared. Charmian put down the wheel and steadied for the entrance. Martin threw on the engine, while all hands and the cook sprang to take in sail.

Man-eaters

A trader's house showed up in the bight of the bay. A geyser, on the shore, a hundred yards away; spouted a column of steam. To port, as we rounded a tiny point, the mission station appeared.

"Three fathoms," cried Wada at the lead-line. "Three fathoms," "two fathoms," came in quick succession.

Charmian put the wheel down, Martin stopped the engine, and the Snark rounded to and the anchor rumbled down in three fathoms. Before we could catch our breaths a swarm of black Tannese was alongside and aboard — grinning, apelike creatures, with kinky hair and troubled eyes, wearing safety-pins and clay-pipes in their slitted ears: and as for the rest, wearing nothing behind and less than that before. And I don't mind telling that that night, when everybody was asleep, I sneaked up on deck, looked out over the quiet scene, and gloated — yes, gloated — over my navigation.

CHAPTER XV — CRUISING IN THE SOLOMONS

"Why not come along now?" said Captain Jansen to us, at Penduffryn, on the island of Guadalcanar.

Charmian and I looked at each other and debated silently for half a minute. Then we nodded our heads simultaneously. It is a way we have of making up our minds to do things; and a very good way it is when one has no temperamental tears to shed over the last tin-of condensed milk when it has capsized. (We are living on tinned goods these days, and since mind is rumoured to be an emanation of matter, our similes are naturally of the packing-house variety.)

"You'd better bring your revolvers along, and a couple of rifles," said Captain Jansen. "I've got five rifles aboard, though the one Mauser is without ammunition. Have you a few rounds to spare?"

We brought our rifles on board, several handfuls of Mauser cartridges, and Wada and Nakata, the Snark's cook and cabin-boy respectively. Wada and Nakata were in a bit of a funk. To say the least, they were not enthusiastic, though never did Nakata show the white feather in the face of danger. The Solomon Islands had not dealt kindly with them. In the first place, both had suffered from Solomon sores. So had the rest of us (at the time, I was nursing two fresh ones on a diet of corrosive sublimate); but the two Japanese had had more than their share. And the sores are not nice. They may be described as excessively active ulcers. A mosquito bite, a cut, or the slightest abrasion, serves for lodgment of the poison with which the air seems to be filled. Immediately the ulcer commences to eat. It eats in every direction, consuming skin and muscle with astounding rapidity. The pin-point ulcer of the first day is the size of a dime by the second day, and by the end of the week a silver dollar will not cover it.

Worse than the sores, the two Japanese had been afflicted with Solomon Island fever. Each had been down repeatedly with it, and in their weak, convalescent moments they were wont to huddle together on the portion of the Snark that happened to be nearest to faraway Japan, and to gaze yearningly in that direction.

But worst of all, they were now brought on board the Minota for a recruiting cruise along the savage coast of Malaita. Wada, who had the worse funk, was sure that he would never see Japan again, and with bleak, lack-lustre eyes he watched our rifles and ammunition going on board the Minota. He knew about the Minota and her Malaita cruises. He knew that she had been captured six months before on the Malaita coast, that her captain had been chopped to pieces with tomahawks, and that, according to the barbarian sense of equity on that sweet isle, she owed two more heads. Also, a labourer on Penduffryn Plantation, a Malaita boy, had just died of dysentery, and Wada knew that Penduffryn had been put in the debt of Malaita by one more head. Furthermore, in stowing our luggage away in the skipper's tiny cabin, he saw the axe gashes on the door where the triumphant bushmen had cut their way in. And, finally, the galley stove was without a pipe — said pipe having been part of the loot.

The Minota was a teak-built, Australian yacht, ketch-rigged, long and lean, with a deep fin-keel, and designed for harbour racing rather than for recruiting blacks. When Charmian and I came on board, we found her crowded. Her double boat's crew, including substitutes, was fifteen, and she had a score and more of "return" boys, whose time on the plantations was served and who were bound back to their bush villages. To look at, they were certainly true head-hunting cannibals. Their perforated nostrils were thrust through with bone and wooden bodkins the size of lead-pencils. Numbers of them had punctured the extreme meaty point of the nose, from which protruded, straight out, spikes of turtle-shell or of beads strung on stiff wire. A few had further punctured their noses with rows of holes following the curves of the nostrils from lip to point. Each ear of every man had from two to a dozen holes in it — holes large enough to carry wooden plugs three inches in diameter down to tiny holes in which were carried clay-pipes and similar trifles. In fact, so many holes did they possess that they lacked ornaments to fill them; and when, the following day, as we neared Malaita, we tried out our rifles to see that they were in working order, there was a general scramble for the empty cartridges, which were thrust forthwith into the many aching voids in our passengers' ears.

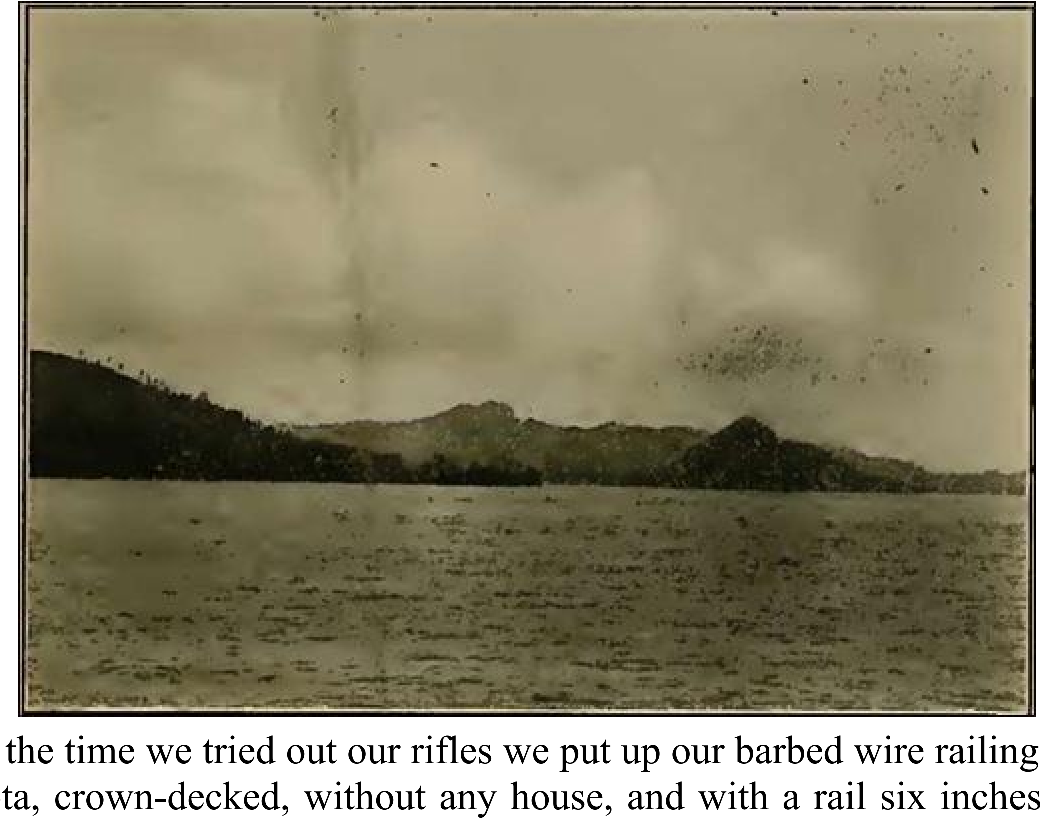

At the time we tried out our rifles we put up our barbed wire railings. The Minota, crown-decked, without any house, and with a rail six inches high, was too accessible to boarders. So brass stanchions were screwed into the rail and a double row of barbed wire stretched around her from stem to stern and back again. Which was all very well as a protection from savages, but it was mighty uncomfortable to those on board when the Minota took to jumping and plunging in a sea-way. When one dislikes sliding down upon the lee-rail barbed wire, and when he dares not catch hold of the weather-rail barbed wire to save himself from sliding, and when, with these various disinclinations, he finds himself on a smooth flush-deck that is heeled over at an angle of forty-five degrees, some of the delights of Solomon Islands cruising may be comprehended. Also, it must be remembered, the penalty of a fall into the barbed wire is more than the mere scratches, for each scratch is practically certain to become a venomous ulcer. That caution will not save one from the wire was evidenced one fine morning when we were running along the Malaita coast with the breeze on our quarter. The wind was fresh, and a tidy sea was making. A black boy was at the wheel. Captain Jansen, Mr. Jacobsen (the mate), Charmian, and I had just sat down on deck to breakfast. Three unusually large seas caught us. The boy at the wheel lost his head. Three times the Minota was swept. The breakfast was rushed over the lee-rail. The knives and forks went through the scuppers; a boy aft went clean overboard and was dragged back; and our doughty skipper lay half inboard and half out, jammed in the barbed wire. After that, for the rest of the cruise, our joint use of the several remaining eating utensils was a splendid example of primitive communism. On the Eugenie, however, it was even worse, for we had but one teaspoon among four of us — but the Eugenie is another story.

Our first port was Su’u on the west coast of Malaita. The Solomon Islands are on the fringe of things. It is difficult enough sailing on dark nights through reef-spiked channels and across erratic currents where there are no lights to guide (from northwest to southeast the Solomons extend across a thousand miles of sea, and on all the thousands of miles of coasts there is not one lighthouse); but the difficulty is seriously enhanced by the fact that the land itself is not correctly charted. Su’u is an example. On the Admiralty chart of Malaita the coast at this point runs a straight, unbroken line. Yet across this straight, unbroken line the Minota sailed in twenty fathoms of water. Where the land was alleged to be, was a deep indentation. Into this we sailed, the mangroves closing about us, till we dropped anchor in a mirrored pond. Captain Jansen did not like the anchorage. It was the first time he had been there, and Su’u had a bad reputation. There was no wind with which to get away in case of attack, while the crew could be bushwhacked to a man if they attempted to tow out in the whale-boat. It was a pretty trap, if trouble blew up.

“Suppose the Minota went ashore — what would you do?” I asked.

“She’s not going ashore,” was Captain Jansen’s answer.

“But just in case she did?” I insisted. He considered for a moment and shifted his glance from the mate buckling on a revolver to the boat’s crew climbing into the whale-boat each man with a rifle.

“We’d get into the whale-boat, and get out of here as fast as God’d let us,” came the skipper’s delayed reply.

He explained at length that no white man was sure of his Malaita crew in a tight place; that the bushmen looked upon all wrecks as their personal property; that the bushmen possessed plenty of Snider rifles; and that he had on board a dozen “return” boys for Su’u who were certain to join in with their friends and relatives ashore when it came to looting the Minota.

The first work of the whale-boat was to take the “return” boys and their trade-boxes ashore. Thus one danger was removed. While this was being done, a canoe came alongside manned by three naked savages. And when I say naked, I mean naked. Not one vestige of clothing did they have on, unless nose-rings, ear-plugs, and shell armlets be accounted clothing. The head man in the canoe was an old chief, one-eyed, reputed to be friendly, and so dirty that a boat-scraper would have lost its edge on him. His mission was to warn the skipper against allowing any of his people to go ashore. The old fellow repeated the warning again that night.

In vain did the whale-boat ply about the shores of the bay in quest of recruits. The bush was full of armed natives; all willing enough to talk with the recruiter, but not one would engage to sign on for three years’ plantation labour at six pounds per year. Yet they were anxious enough to get our people ashore. On the second day they raised a smoke on the beach at the head of the bay. This being the customary signal of men desiring to recruit, the boat was sent. But nothing resulted. No one recruited, nor were any of our men lured ashore. A little later we caught glimpses of a number of armed natives moving about on the beach.

Outside of these rare glimpses, there was no telling how many might be lurking in the bush. There was no penetrating that primeval jungle with the eye. In the afternoon, Captain Jansen, Charmian, and I went dynamiting fish. Each one of the boat's crew carried a Lee-Enfield. "Johnny," the native recruiter, had a Winchester beside him at the steering sweep. We rowed in close to a portion of the shore that looked deserted. Here the boat was turned around and backed in; in case of attack, the boat would be ready to dash away. In all the time I was on Malaita I never saw a boat land bow on. In fact, the recruiting vessels use two boats — one to go in on the beach, armed, of course, and the other to lie off several hundred feet and "cover" the first boat. The Minota, however, being a small vessel, did not carry a covering boat.

We were close in to the shore and working in closer, stern-first, when a school of fish was sighted. The fuse was ignited and the stick of dynamite thrown. With the explosion, the surface of the water was broken by the flash of leaping fish. At the same instant the woods broke into life. A score of naked savages, armed with bows and arrows, spears, and Sniders, burst out upon the shore. At the same moment our boat's crew, lifted their rifles. And thus the opposing parties faced each other, while our extra boys dived over after the stunned fish.

Three fruitless days were spent at Su'u. The Minota got no recruits from the bush, and the bushmen got no heads from the Minota. In fact, the only one who got anything was Wade, and his was a nice dose of fever. We towed out with the whale-boat, and ran along the coast to Langa Langa, a large village of salt-water people, built with prodigious labour on a lagoon sand-bank — literally BUILT up, an artificial island reared as a refuge from the blood-thirsty bushmen. Here, also, on the shore side of the lagoon, was Binu, the place where the Minota was captured half a year previously and her captain killed by the bushmen. As we sailed in through the narrow entrance, a canoe came alongside with the news that the man-of-war had just left that morning after having burned three villages, killed some thirty pigs, and drowned a baby. This was the Cambrian, Captain Lewes commanding. He and I had first met in Korea during the Japanese-Russian War, and we had been crossing each ether's trail ever since without ever a meeting. The day the Snark sailed into Suva, in the Fijis, we made out the Cambrian going out. At Vila, in the New Hebrides, we missed each other by one day. We passed each other in the night-time off the island of Santo. And the day the Cambrian arrived at Tulagi, we sailed from Penduffryn, a dozen miles away. And here at Langa Langa we had missed by several hours.

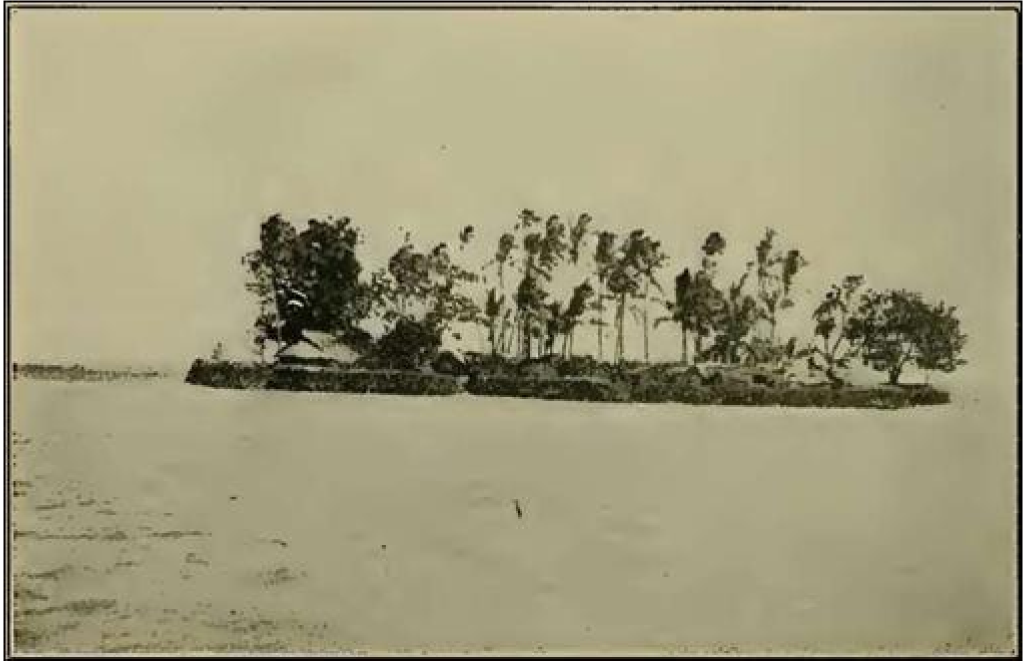

The Cambrian had come to punish the murderers of the Minota's captain, but what she had succeeded in doing we did not learn until later in the day, when a Mr. Abbot, a missionary, came alongside in his whale-boat. The villages had been burned and the pigs killed. But the natives had escaped personal harm. The murderers had not been captured, though the Minota's flag and other of her gear had been recovered. The drowning of the baby had come about through a misunderstanding. Chief Johnny, of Binu, had declined to guide the landing party into the bush, nor could any of his men be induced to perform that office. Whereupon Captain Lewes, righteously indignant, had told Chief Johnny that he deserved to have his village burned. Johnny's beche de mer English did not include the word "deserve." So his understanding of it was that his village was to be burned anyway. The immediate stampede of the inhabitants was so hurried that the baby was dropped into the water. In the meantime Chief Johnny hastened to Mr. Abbot. Into his hand he put fourteen sovereigns and requested him to go on board the Cambrian and buy Captain Lewes off. Johnny's village was not burned. Nor did Captain Lewes get the fourteen sovereigns, for I saw them later in Johnny's possession when he boarded the Minota. The excuse

Johnny gave me for not guiding the landing party was a big boil which he proudly revealed. His real reason, however, and a perfectly valid one, though he did not state it, was fear of revenge on the part of the bushmen. Had he, or any of his men, guided the marines, he could have looked for bloody reprisals as soon as the Cambrian weighed anchor.

As an illustration of conditions in the Solomons, Johnny's business on board was to turn over, for a tobacco consideration, the sprit, mainsail, and jib of a whale-boat. Later in the day, a Chief Billy came on board and turned over, for a tobacco consideration, the mast and boom. This gear belonged to a whale-boat which Captain Jansen had recovered the previous trip of the Minota. The whale-boat belonged to Meringe Plantation on the island of Ysabel. Eleven contract labourers, Malaita men and bushmen at that, had decided to run away. Being bushmen, they knew nothing of salt water nor of the way of a boat in the sea. So they persuaded two natives of San Cristoval, salt-water men, to run away with them. It served the San Cristoval men right. They should have known better. When they had safely navigated the stolen boat to Malaita, they had their heads hacked off for their pains. It was this boat and gear that Captain Jansen had recovered.

Not for nothing have I journeyed all the way to the Solomons. At last I have seen Charmian's proud spirit humbled and her imperious queendom of femininity dragged in the dust. It happened at Langa Langa, ashore, on the manufactured island which one cannot see for the houses. Here, surrounded by hundreds of unblushing naked men, women, and children, we wandered about and saw the sights. We had our revolvers strapped on, and the boat's crew, fully armed, lay at the oars, stern in; but the lesson of the man-of-war was too recent for us to apprehend trouble. We walked about everywhere and saw everything until at last we approached a large tree trunk that served as a bridge across a shallow estuary. The blacks formed a wall in front of us and refused to let us pass. We wanted to know why we were stopped. The blacks said we could go on. We misunderstood, and started. Explanations became more definite. Captain Jansen and I, being men, could go on. But no Mary was allowed to wade around that bridge, much less cross it. "Mary" is beche de mer for woman. Charmian was a Mary. To her the bridge was tambo, which is the native for taboo. Ah, how my chest expanded! At last my manhood was vindicated. In truth I belonged to the lordly sex. Charmian could trapse along at our heels, but we were MEN, and we could go right over that bridge while she would have to go around by whale-boat.

Now I should not care to be misunderstood by what follows; but it is a matter of common knowledge in the Solomons that attacks of fever are often brought on by shock. Inside half an hour after Charmian had been refused the right of way, she was being rushed aboard the Minota, packed in blankets, and dosed with quinine. I don't know what kind of shock had happened to Wada and Nakata, but at any rate they were down with fever as well. The Solomons might be healthfuller.

Also, during the attack of fever, Charmian developed a Solomon sore. It was the last straw. Every one on the Snark had been afflicted except her. I had thought that I was going to lose my foot at the ankle by one exceptionally malignant boring ulcer. Henry and Tehei, the Tahitian sailors, had had numbers of them. Wada had been able to count his by the score. Nakata had had single ones three inches in length. Martin had been quite certain that necrosis of his shinbone had set in from the roots of the amazing colony he elected to cultivate in that locality. But Charmian had escaped. Out of her long immunity had been bred contempt for the rest of us. Her ego was flattered to such an extent that one day she shyly informed me that it was all a matter of pureness of blood. Since all the rest of us cultivated the sores, and since she did not — well, anyway, hers was the size of a silver dollar, and the pureness of her blood enabled her to cure it after several weeks of strenuous nursing. She pins her faith to corrosive sublimate. Martin swears by iodoform. Henry uses lime-juice undiluted. And I believe that when corrosive sublimate is slow in taking hold, alternate dressings of peroxide of hydrogen are just the thing. There are white men in the Solomons who stake all upon boracic acid, and others who are prejudiced in favour of lysol. I also have the weakness of a panacea. It is California. I defy any man to get a Solomon Island sore in California.

We ran down the lagoon from Langa Langa, between mangrove swamps, through passages scarcely wider than the Minota, and past the reef villages of Kaloka and Auki. Like the founders of Venice, these salt-water men were originally refugees from the mainland. Too weak to hold their own in the bush, survivors of village massacres, they fled to the sand-banks of the lagoon. These sand-banks they built up into islands. They were compelled to seek their provender from the sea, and in time they became salt-water men. They learned the ways of the fish and the shellfish, and they invented hooks and lines, nets and fish-traps. They developed canoe-bodies. Unable to walk about, spending all their time in the canoes, they became thick-armed and broad-shouldered, with narrow waists and frail spindly legs. Controlling the sea-coast, they became wealthy, trade with the interior passing largely through their hands. But perpetual enmity exists between them and the bushmen. Practically their only truces are on market-days, which occur at stated intervals, usually twice a week. The bushwomen and the salt-water women do the bartering. Back in the bush, a hundred yards away, fully armed, lurk the bushmen, while to seaward, in the canoes, are the salt-water men. There are very rare instances of the market-day truces being broken. The bushmen like their fish too well, while the salt-water men have an organic craving for the vegetables they cannot grow on their crowded islets.

Thirty miles from Langa Langa brought us to the passage between Bassakanna Island and the mainland. Here, at nightfall, the wind left us, and all night, with the whale-boat towing ahead and the crew on board sweating at the sweeps, we strove to win through. But the tide was against us. At midnight, midway in the passage, we came up with the Eugenie, a big recruiting schooner, towing with two whale-boats. Her skipper, Captain Keller, a sturdy young German of twenty-two, came on board for a "gam," and the latest news of Malaita was swapped back and forth. He had been in luck, having gathered in twenty recruits at the village of Fiu. While lying there, one of the customary courageous killings had taken place. The murdered boy was what is called a salt-water bushman — that is, a salt-water man who is half bushman and who lives by the sea but does not live on an islet. Three bushmen came down to this man where he was working in his garden. They behaved in friendly fashion, and after a time suggested kai-kai. Kai-kai means food. He built a fire and started to boil some taro. While bending over the pot, one of the bushmen shot him through the head. He fell into the flames, whereupon they thrust a spear through his stomach, turned it around, and broke it off.

"My word," said Captain Keller, "I don't want ever to be shot with a Snider. Spread! You could drive a horse and carriage through that hole in his head."

Another recent courageous killing I heard of on Malaita was that of an old man. A bush chief had died a natural death. Now the bushmen don't believe in natural deaths. No one was ever known to die a natural death. The only way to die is by bullet, tomahawk, or spear thrust. When a man dies in any other way, it is a clear case of having been charmed to death. When the bush chief died naturally, his tribe placed the guilt on a certain family. Since it did not matter which one of the family was killed, they selected this old man who lived by himself. This would make it easy. Furthermore, he possessed no Snider. Also, he was blind. The old fellow got an inkling of what was coming and laid in a large supply of arrows. Three brave warriors, each with a Snider, came down upon him in the night time. All night they fought valiantly with him. Whenever they moved in the bush and made a noise or a rustle, he discharged an arrow in that direction. In the morning, when his last arrow was gone, the three heroes crept up to him and blew his brains out.

Morning found us still vainly toiling through the passage. At last, in despair, we turned tail, ran out to sea, and sailed clear round Bassakanna to our objective, Malu. The anchorage at Malu was very good, but it lay between the shore and an ugly reef, and while easy to enter, it was difficult to leave. The direction of the southeast trade necessitated a beat to windward; the point of the reef was widespread and shallow; while a current bore down at all times upon the point.

Mr. Caulfeild, the missionary at Malu, arrived in his whale-boat from a trip down the coast. A slender, delicate man he was, enthusiastic in his work, level-headed and practical, a true twentieth-century soldier of the Lord. When he came down to this station on Malaita, as he said, he agreed to come for six months. He further agreed that if he were alive at the end of that time, he would continue on. Six years had passed and he was still continuing on. Nevertheless he was justified in his doubt as to living longer than six months. Three missionaries had preceded him on Malaita, and in less than that time two had died of fever and the third had gone home a wreck.

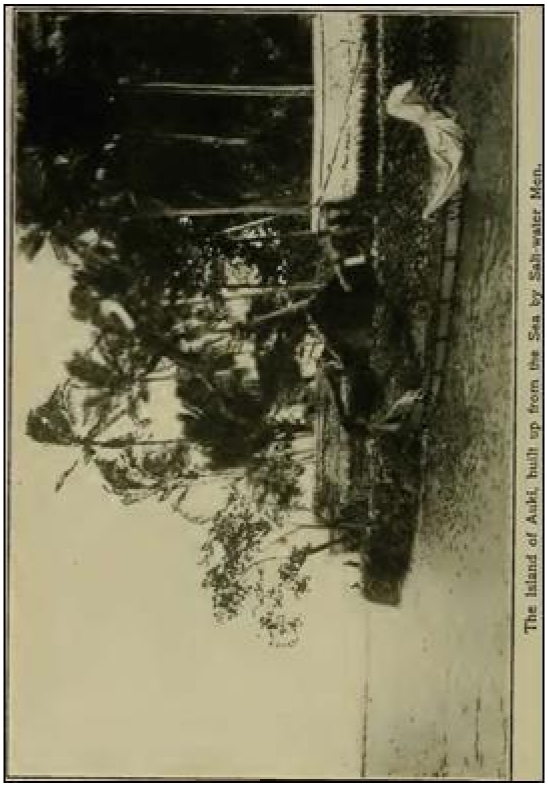

The Island of Auki, built up from the Sea by Salt-water Men.

"What murder are you talking about?" he asked suddenly, in the midst of a confused conversation with Captain Jansen.

Captain Jansen explained.

"Oh, that's not the one I have reference to," quoth Mr. Caulfeild. "That's old already. It happened two weeks ago."

It was here at Malu that I atoned for all the exulting and gloating I had been guilty of over the Solomon sore Charmian had collected at Langa Langa. Mr. Caulfeild was indirectly responsible for my atonement. He presented us with a chicken, which I pursued into the bush with a rifle. My intention was to clip off its head. I succeeded, but in doing so fell over a log and barked my shin. Result: three Solomon sores. This made five all together that were adorning my person. Also, Captain Jansen and Nakata had caught gari-gari. Literally translated, gari-gari is scratch-scratch. But translation was not necessary for the rest of us. The skipper's and Nakata's gymnastics served as a translation without words.

(No, the Solomon Islands are not as healthy as they might be. I am writing this article on the island of Ysabel, where we have taken the Snark to careen and clean her cooper. I got over my last attack of fever this morning, and I have had only one free day between attacks. Charmian's are two weeks apart. Wada is a wreck from fever. Last night he showed all the symptoms of coming down with pneumonia. Henry, a strapping giant of a Tahitian, just up from his last dose of fever, is dragging around the deck like a last year's crab-apple. Both he and Tehei have accumulated a praiseworthy display of Solomon sores. Also, they have caught a new form of gari-gari, a sort of vegetable poisoning like poison oak or poison ivy. But they are not unique in this. A number of days ago Charmian, Martin, and I went pigeon-shooting on a small island, and we have had a foretaste of eternal torment ever since. Also, on that small island, Martin cut the soles of his feet to ribbons on the coral whilst chasing a shark — at least, so he says, but from the glimpse I caught of him I thought it was the other way about. The coral-cuts have all become Solomon sores. Before my last fever I knocked the skin off my knuckles while heaving on a line, and I now have three fresh sores. And poor Nakata! For three weeks he has been unable to sit down. He sat down yesterday for the first time, and managed to stay down for fifteen minutes. He says cheerfully that he expects to be cured of his gari-gari in another month. Furthermore, his gari-gari, from too enthusiastic scratch-scratching, has furnished footholds for countless Solomon sores. Still furthermore, he has just come down with his seventh attack of fever. If I were king, the worst punishment I could inflict on my enemies would be to banish them to the Solomons. On second thought, king or no king, I don't think I'd have the heart to do it.)

Recruiting plantation labourers on a small, narrow yacht, built for harbour sailing, is not any too nice. The decks swarm with recruits and their families. The main cabin is packed with them. At night they sleep there. The only entrance to our tiny cabin is through the main cabin, and we jam our way through them or walk over them. Nor is this nice. One and all, they are afflicted with every form of malignant skin disease. Some have ringworm, others have bukua. This latter is caused by a vegetable parasite that invades the skin and eats it away. The itching is intolerable. The afflicted ones scratch until the air is filled with fine dry flakes. Then there are yaws and many other skin ulcerations. Men come aboard with Solomon sores in their feet so large that they can walk only on their toes, or with holes in their legs so terrible that a fist could be thrust in to the bone. Blood-poisoning is very frequent, and Captain Jansen, with sheath-knife and sail needle, operates lavishly on one and all. No matter how desperate the situation, after opening and cleansing, he claps on a poultice of sea-biscuit soaked in water. Whenever we see a particularly horrible case, we retire to a corner and deluge our own sores with corrosive sublimate. And so we live and eat and sleep on the Minota, taking our chance and "pretending it is good."

At Suava, another artificial island, I had a second crow over Charmian. A big fella marster belong Suava (which means the high chief of Suava) came on board. But first he sent an emissary to Captain Jansen for a fathom of calico with which to cover his royal nakedness. Meanwhile he lingered in the canoe alongside. The regal dirt on his chest I swear was half an inch thick, while it was a good wager that the underneath layers were anywhere from ten to twenty years of age. He sent his emissary on board again, who explained that the big fella marster belong Suava was condescendingly willing enough to shake hands with Captain Jansen and me and cadge a stick or so of trade tobacco, but that nevertheless his high-born soul was still at so lofty an altitude that it could not sink itself to such a depth of degradation as to shake hands with a mere female woman. Poor Charmian! Since her Malaita experiences she has become a changed woman. Her meekness and humbleness are appallingly becoming, and I should not be surprised, when we return to civilization and stroll along a sidewalk, to see her take her station, with bowed head, a yard in the rear.

Nothing much happened at Suava. Bichu, the native cook, deserted. The Minota dragged anchor. It blew heavy squalls of wind and rain. The mate, Mr. Jacobsen, and Wada were prostrated with fever. Our Solomon sores increased and multiplied. And the cockroaches on board held a combined Fourth of July and Coronation Parade. They selected midnight for the time, and our tiny cabin for the place. They were from two to three inches long; there were hundreds of them, and they walked all over us. When we attempted to pursue them, they left solid footing, rose up in the air, and fluttered about like humming-birds. They were much larger than ours on the Snark. But ours are young yet, and haven't had a chance to grow. Also, the Snark has centipedes, big ones, six inches long. We kill them occasionally, usually in Charmian's bunk. I've been bitten twice by them, both times foully, while I was asleep. But poor Martin had worse luck. After being sick in bed for three weeks, the first day he sat up he sat down on one. Sometimes I think they are the wisest who never go to Carcassonne.

Later on we returned to Malu, picked up seven recruits, hove up anchor, and started to beat out the treacherous entrance. The wind was chopping about, the current upon the ugly point of reef setting strong. Just as we were on the verge of clearing it and gaining open sea, the wind broke off four points. The Minota attempted to go about, but missed stays. Two of her anchors had been lost at Tulagi. Her one remaining anchor was let go. Chain was let out to give it a hold on the coral. Her fin keel struck bottom, and her main topmast lurched and shivered as if about to come down upon our heads. She fetched up on the slack of the anchors at the moment a big comber smashed her shoreward. The chain parted. It was our only anchor. The Minota swung around on her heel and drove headlong into the breakers.

Bedlam reigned. All the recruits below, bushmen and afraid of the sea, dashed panic-stricken on deck and got in everybody's way. At the same time the boat's crew made a rush for the rifles. They knew what going ashore on Malaita meant — one hand for the ship and the other hand to fight off the natives. What they held on with I don't know, and they needed to hold on as the Minota lifted, rolled, and pounded on the coral. The bushmen clung in the rigging, too witless to watch out for the topmast. The whale-boat was run out with a tow-line endeavouring in a puny way to prevent the Minota from being flung farther in toward the reef, while Captain Jansen and the mate, the latter pallid and weak with fever, were resurrecting a scrap-anchor from out the ballast and rigging up a stock for it. Mr. Caulfeild, with his mission boys, arrived in his whale-boat to help.

When the Minota first struck, there was not a canoe in sight; but like vultures circling down out of the blue, canoes began to arrive from every quarter. The boat's crew, with rifles at the ready, kept them lined up a hundred feet away with a promise of death if they ventured nearer. And there they clung, a hundred feet away, black and ominous, crowded with men, holding their canoes with their paddles on the perilous edge of the breaking surf. In the meantime the bushmen were flocking down from the hills armed with spears, Sniders, arrows, and clubs, until the beach was massed with them. To complicate matters, at least ten of our recruits had been enlisted from the very bushmen ashore who were waiting hungrily for the loot of the tobacco and trade goods and all that we had on board.

The Minota was honestly built, which is the first essential for any boat that is pounding on a reef. Some idea of what she endured may be gained from the fact that in the first twenty-four hours she parted two anchor-chains and eight hawsers. Our boat's crew was kept busy diving for the anchors and bending new lines. There were times when she parted the chains reinforced with hawsers. And yet she held together. Tree trunks were brought from ashore and worked under her to save her keel and bilges, but the trunks were gnawed and splintered and the ropes that held them frayed to fragments, and still she pounded and held together. But we were luckier than the Ivanhoe, a big recruiting schooner, which had gone ashore on Malaita several months previously and been promptly rushed by the natives. The captain and crew succeeded in getting away in the whale-boats, and the bushmen and salt-water men looted her clean of everything portable.

Squall after squall, driving wind and blinding rain, smote the Minota, while a heavier sea was making. The Eugenie lay at anchor five miles to windward, but she was behind a point of land and could not know of our mishap. At Captain Jansen's suggestion, I wrote a note to Captain Keller, asking him to bring extra anchors and gear to our aid. But not a canoe could be persuaded to carry the letter. I offered half a case of tobacco, but the blacks grinned and held their canoes bow-on to the breaking seas. A half a case of tobacco was worth three pounds. In two hours, even against the strong wind and sea, a man could have carried the letter and received in payment what he would have laboured half a year for on a plantation. I managed to get into a canoe and paddle out to where Mr. Caulfeild was running an anchor with his whale-boat. My idea was that he would have more influence over the natives. He called the canoes up to him, and a score of them clustered around and heard the offer of half a case of tobacco. No one spoke.

"I know what you think," the missionary called out to them. "You think plenty tobacco on the schooner and you're going to get it. I tell you plenty rifles on schooner. You no get tobacco, you get bullets."

At last, one man, alone in a small canoe, took the letter and started. Waiting for relief, work went on steadily on the Minota. Her water-tanks were emptied, and spars, sails, and ballast started shoreward. There were lively times on board when the Minota rolled one bilge down and then the other, a score of men leaping for life and legs as the trade-boxes, booms, and eighty-pound pigs of iron ballast rushed across from rail to rail and back again. The poor pretty harbour yacht! Her decks and running rigging were a raffle. Down below everything was disrupted. The cabin floor had been torn up to get at the ballast, and rusty bilge-water swashed and splashed. A bushel of limes, in a mess of flour and water, charged about like so many sticky dumplings escaped from a half-cooked stew. In the inner cabin, Nakata kept guard over our rifles and ammunition.

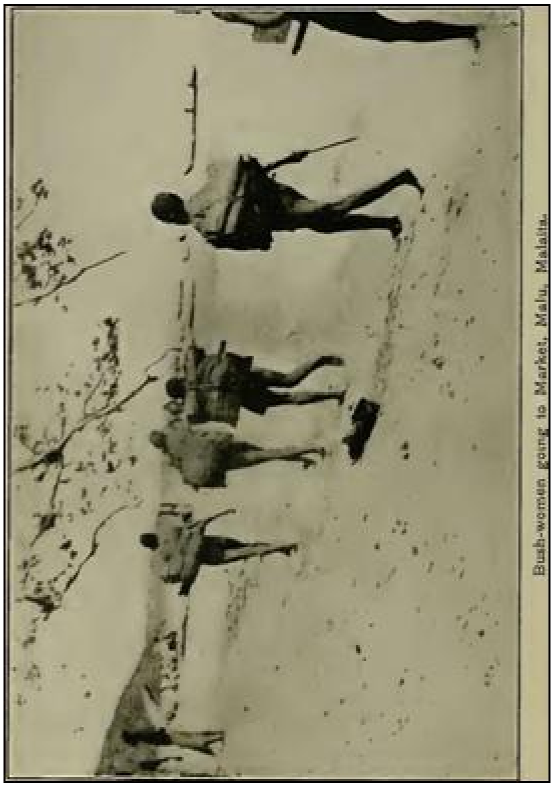

Bush-women going to Market, Malu, Malaita.

Three hours from the time our messenger started, a whale-boat, pressing along under a huge spread of canvas, broke through the thick of a shrieking squall to windward. It was Captain Keller, wet with rain and spray, a revolver in belt, his boat's crew fully armed, anchors and hawsers heaped high amidships, coming as fast as wind could drive — the white man, the inevitable white man, coming to a white man's rescue.

The vulture line of canoes that had waited so long broke and disappeared as quickly as it had formed. The corpse was not dead after all. We now had three whale-boats, two plying steadily between the vessel and shore, the other kept busy running out anchors, rebending parted hawsers, and recovering the lost anchors. Later in the afternoon, after a consultation, in which we took into consideration that a number of our boat's crew, as well as ten of the recruits, belonged to this place, we disarmed the boat's crew. This, incidently, gave them both hands free to work for the vessel. The rifles were put in the charge of five of Mr. Caulfeild's mission boys. And down below in the wreck of the cabin the missionary and his converts prayed to God to save the Minota. It was an impressive scene! the unarmed man of God praying with cloudless faith, his savage followers leaning on their rifles and mumbling amens. The cabin walls reeled about them. The vessel lifted and smashed upon the coral with every sea. From on deck came the shouts of men heaving and toiling, praying, in another fashion, with purposeful will and strength of arm.

That night Mr. Caulfeild brought off a warning. One of our recruits had a price on his head of fifty fathoms of shell-money and forty pigs. Baffled in their desire to capture the vessel, the bushmen decided to get the head of the man. When killing begins, there is no telling where it will end, so Captain Jansen armed a whale-boat and rowed in to the edge of the beach. Ugi, one of his boat's crew, stood up and orated for him. Ugi was excited. Captain Jansen's warning that any canoe sighted that night would be pumped full of lead, Ugi turned into a bellicose declaration of war, which wound up with a peroration somewhat to the following effect: "You kill my captain, I drink his blood and die with him!"

The bushmen contented themselves with burning an unoccupied mission house, and sneaked back to the bush. The next day the Eugenie sailed in and dropped anchor. Three days and two nights the Minota pounded on the reef; but she held together, and the shell of her was pulled off at last and anchored in smooth water. There we said good-bye to her and all on board, and sailed away on the Eugenie, bound for Florida Island. {1}

CHAPTER XVI — BECHE DE MER ENGLISH

‘TOO MUCH’ ENGLISH

Given a number of white traders, a wide area of land, and scores of savage languages and dialects, the result will be that the traders will manufacture a totally new, unscientific, but perfectly adequate, language. This the traders did when they invented the Chinook lingo for use over British Columbia, Alaska, and the Northwest Territory. So with the lingo of the Kroo-boys of Africa, the pigeon English of the Far East, and the beche de mer of the westerly portion of the South Seas. This latter is often called pigeon English, but pigeon English it certainly is not. To show how totally different it is, mention need be made only of the fact that the classic piecee of China has no place in it.

There was once a sea captain who needed a dusky potentate down in his cabin. The potentate was on deck. The captain’s command to the Chinese steward was “Hey, boy, you go top-side catchee one piecee king.” Had the steward been a New Hibridean or a Solomon islander, the command would have been: “Hey, you fella boy, go look ‘m eye belong you along deck, bring ‘m me fella one big fella marster belong black man.”

It was the first white men who ventured through Melanesia after the early explorers, who developed beche de mer English — men such as the beche de mer fishermen, the sandalwood traders, the pearl hunters, and the labour recruiters. In the Solomons, for instance, scores of languages and dialects are spoken. Unhappy the trader who tried to learn them all; for in the next group to which he might wander he would find scores of additional tongues. A common language was necessary — a language so simple that a child could learn it, with a vocabulary as limited as the intelligence of the savages upon whom it was to be used. The traders did not reason this out. Beche do mer English was the product of conditions and circumstances. Function precedes organ; and the need for a universal Melanesian lingo preceded beche de mer English. Beche de mer was purely fortuitous, but it was fortuitous in the deterministic way. Also, from the fact that out of the need the lingo arose, beche de mer English is a splendid argument for the Esperanto enthusiasts.

A limited vocabulary means that each word shall be overworked. Thus, fella, in beche de mer, means all that piecee does and quite a bit more, and is used continually in every possible connection. Another overworked word is belong. Nothing stands alone. Everything is related. The thing desired is indicated by its relationship with other things. A primitive vocabulary means primitive expression, thus, the continuance of rain is expressed as rain he stop. SUN HE COME UP cannot possibly be misunderstood, while the phrase-structure itself can be used without mental exertion in ten thousand different ways, as, for instance, a native who desires to tell you that there are fish in the water and who says FISH HE STOP. It was while trading on Ysabel island that I learned the excellence of this usage. I wanted two or three pairs of the large clam-shells (measuring three feet across), but I did not want the meat inside. Also, I wanted the meat of some of the smaller clams to make a chowder. My instruction to the natives finally ripened into the following "You fella bring me fella big fella clam — kai-kai he no stop, he walk about. You fella bring me fella small fella clam — kai-kai he stop."

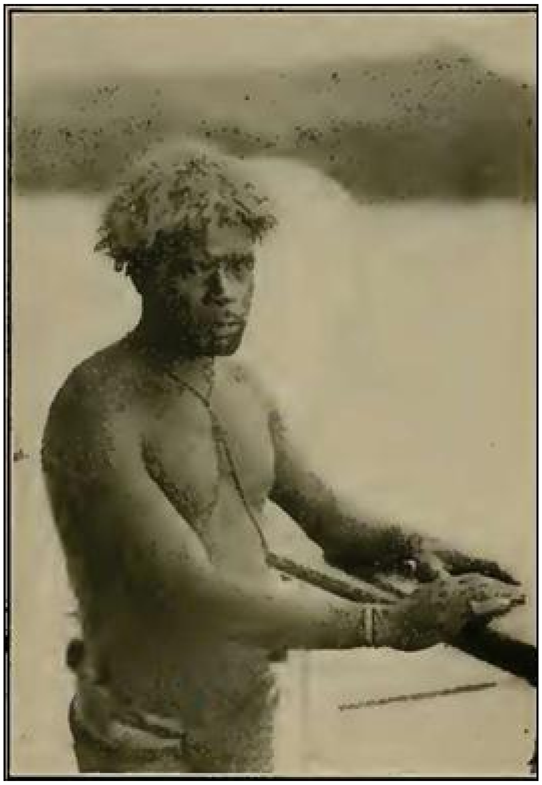

Kai-kai is the Polynesian for food, meat, eating, and to eat: but it would be hard to say whether it was introduced into Melanesia by the sandalwood traders or by the Polynesian westward drift. Walk about is a quaint phrase. Thus, if one orders a Solomon sailor to put a tackle on a boom, he will suggest, “That fella boom he walk about too much.” And if the said sailor asks for shore liberty, he will state that it is his desire to walk about. Or if said sailor be seasick, he will explain his condition by stating, “Belly belong me walk about too much.”

Too much, by the way, does not indicate anything excessive. It is merely the simple superlative. Thus, if a native is asked the distance to a certain village, his answer will be one of these four: “Close-up”; “long way little bit”; “long way big bit”; or “long way too much.” Long way too much does not mean that one cannot walk to the village; it means that he will have to walk farther than if the village were a long way big bit.

Gammon is to lie, to exaggerate, to joke. Mary is a woman. Any woman is a Mary. All women are Marys. Doubtlessly the first dim white adventurer whimsically called a native woman Mary, and of similar birth must have been many other words in beche de mer. The white men were all seamen, and so capsize and sing out were introduced into the lingo. One would not tell a Melanesian cook to empty the dish-water, but he would tell him to capsize it. To sing out is to cry loudly, to call out, or merely to speak. Sing-sing is a song. The native Christian does not think of God calling for Adam in the Garden of Eden; in the native's mind, God sings out for Adam.

Savvee or catchee are practically the only words which have been introduced straight from pigeon English. Of course, pickaninny has happened along, but some of its uses are delicious. Having bought a fowl from a native in a canoe, the native asked me if I wanted "Pickaninny stop along him fella." It was not until he showed me a handful of hen's eggs that I understood his meaning. My word, as an exclamation with a thousand significances, could have arrived from nowhere else than Old England. A paddle, a sweep, or an oar, is called washee, and washee is also the verb.

Here is a letter, dictated by one Peter, a native trader at Santa Anna, and addressed to his employer. Harry, the schooner captain, started to write the letter, but was stopped by Peter at the end of the second sentence. Thereafter the letter runs in Peter's own words, for Peter was afraid that Harry gammoned too much, and he wanted the straight story of his needs to go to headquarters.

“SANTA ANNA.”

“Trader Peter has worked 12 months for your firm and has not received any pay yet. He hereby wants 12 pounds.” (At this point Peter began dictation). “Harry he gammon along him all the time too much. I like him 6 tin biscuit, 4 bag rice, 24 tin bullamacow. Me like him 2 rifle, me savvee look out along boat, some place me go man he no good, he kai-kai along me.

“PETER.”

Bullamacow means tinned beef. This word was corrupted from the English language by the Samoans, and from them learned by the traders, who carried it along with them into Melanesia. Captain Cook and the other early navigators made a practice of introducing seeds, plants, and domestic animals amongst the natives. It was at Samoa that one such navigator landed a bull and a cow. “This is a bull and cow,” said he to the Samoans. They thought he was giving the name of the breed, and from that day to this, beef on the hoof and beef in the tin is called bullamacow.

A Solomon islander cannot say FENCE, so, in beche de mer, it becomes fennis; store is sittore, and box is bokkis. Just now the fashion in chests, which are known as boxes, is to have a bell-arrangement on the lock so that the box cannot be opened without sounding an alarm. A box so equipped is not spoken of as a mere box, but as the bokkis belong bell.

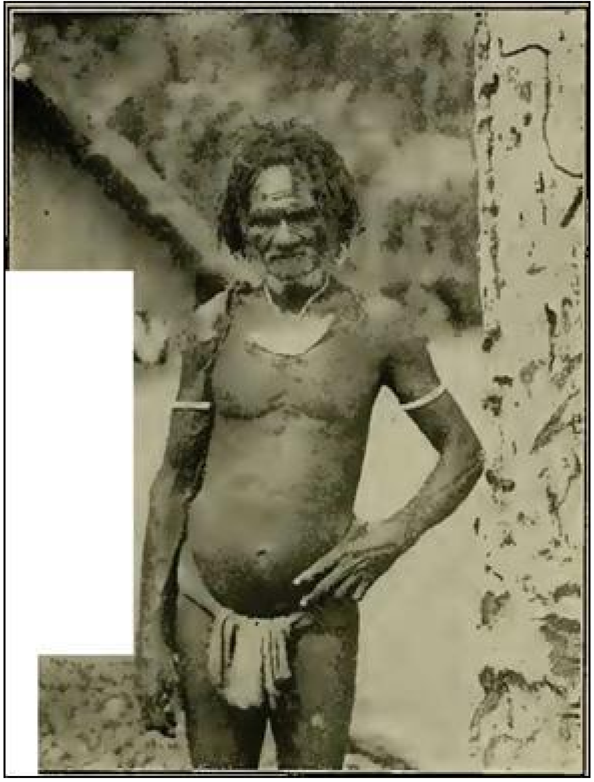

FRIGHT is the beche de mer for fear. If a native appears timid and one asks him the cause, he is liable to hear in reply: “Me fright along you too much.” Or the native may be fright along storm, or wild bush, or haunted places. CROSS covers every form of anger. A man may be cross at one when he is feeling only petulant; or he may be cross when he is seeking to chop off your head and make a stew out of you. A recruit, after having toiled three years on a plantation, was returned to his own village on Malaita. He was clad in all kinds of gay and sportive garments. On his head was a top-hat. He possessed a trade-box full of calico, beads, porpoise-teeth, and tobacco. Hardly was the anchor down, when the villagers were on board. The recruit looked anxiously for his own relatives, but none was to be seen. One of the natives took the pipe out of his mouth. Another confiscated the strings of beads from around his neck. A third relieved him of his gaudy loin-cloth, and a fourth tried on the top-hat and omitted to return it. Finally, one of them took his trade-box, which represented three years’ toil, and dropped it into a canoe alongside. “That fella belong you?” the captain asked the recruit, referring to the thief. “No belong me,” was the answer. “Then why in Jericho do you let him take the box?” the captain demanded indignantly. Quoth the recruit, “Me speak along him, say bokkis he stop, that fella he cross along me” — which was the recruit’s way of saying that the other man would murder him. God’s wrath, when He sent the Flood, was merely a case of being cross along mankind.

What name? is the great interrogation of beche de mer. It all depends on how it is uttered. It may mean: What is your business? What do you mean by this outrageous conduct? What do you want? What is the thing you are after? You had best watch out; I demand an explanation; and a few hundred other things. Call a native out of his house in the middle of the night, and he is likely to demand, “What name you sing out along me?”

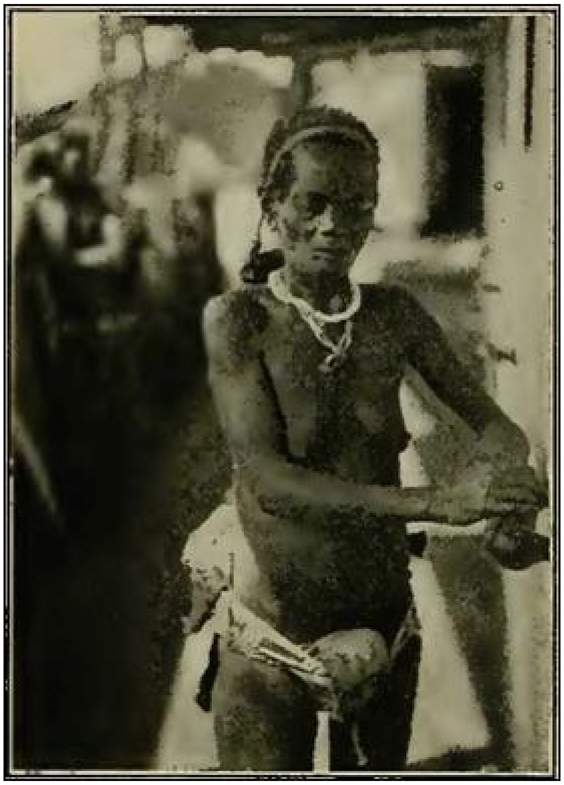

Imagine the predicament of the Germans on the plantations of Bougainville Island, who are compelled to learn beche de mer English in order to handle the native labourers. It is to them an unscientific polyglot, and there are no text-books by which to study it. It is a source of unholy delight to the other white planters and traders to hear the German wrestling stolidly with the circumlocutions and short-cuts of a language that has no grammar and no dictionary.

Some years ago large numbers of Solomon islanders were recruited to labour on the sugar plantations of Queensland. A missionary urged one of the labourers, who was a convert, to get up and preach a sermon to a shipload of Solomon islanders who had just arrived. He chose for his subject the Fall of Man, and the address he gave became a classic in all Australasia. It proceeded somewhat in the following manner:

“Altogether you boy belong Solomons you no savvee white man. Me fella me savvee him. Me fella me savvee talk along white man.

“Before long time altogether no place he stop. God big fella marster belong white man, him fella He make ‘m altogether. God big fella marster belong white man, He make ‘m big fella garden. He good fella too much. Along garden plenty yam he stop, plenty cocoanut, plenty taro, plenty kumara (sweet potatoes), altogether good fella kai-kai too much.

“Bimeby God big fella marster belong white man He make ‘m one fella man and put ‘m along garden belong Him. He call ‘m this fella man Adam. He name belong him. He put him this fella man Adam along garden, and He speak, ‘This fella garden he belong you.’ And He look ‘m this fella Adam he walk about too much. Him fella Adam all the same sick; he no savvee kai-kai; he walk about all the time. And God He no savvee. God big fella marster belong white man, He scratch ‘m head belong Him. God say: ‘What name? Me no savvee what name this fella Adam he want.’

“Bimeby God He scratch ‘m head belong Him too much, and speak: ‘Me fella me savvee, him fella Adam him want ‘m Mary.’ So He make Adam he go asleep, He take one fella bone belong him, and He make ‘m one fella Mary along bone. He call him this fella Mary, Eve. He give ‘m this fella Eve along Adam, and He speak along him fella Adam: ‘Close up altogether along this fella garden belong you two fella. One fella tree he tambo (taboo) along you altogether. This fella tree belong apple.’

“So Adam Eve two fella stop along garden, and they two fella have ‘m good time too much. Bimeby, one day, Eve she come along Adam, and she speak, ‘More good you me two fella we eat ‘m this fella apple.’ Adam he speak, ‘No,’ and Eve she speak, ‘What name you no like ‘m me?’ And Adam he speak, ‘Me like ‘m you too much, but me fright along God.’ And Eve she speak, ‘Gammon! What name? God He no savvee look along us two fella all ‘m time. God big fella marster, He gammon along you.’ But Adam he speak, ‘No.’ But Eve she talk, talk, talk, allee time — allee same Mary she talk along boy along Queensland and make ‘m trouble along boy. And bimeby Adam he tired too much, and he speak, ‘All right.’ So these two fella they go eat ‘m. When they finish eat ‘m, my word, they fright like hell, and they go hide along scrub.

“And God He come walk about along garden, and He sing out, ‘Adam!’ Adam he no speak. He too much fright. My word! And God He sing out, ‘Adam!’ And Adam he speak, ‘You call ‘m me?’ God He speak, ‘Me call ‘m you too much.’ Adam he speak, ‘Me sleep strong fella too much.’ And God He speak, ‘You been eat ‘m this fella apple.’ Adam he speak, ‘No, me no been eat ‘m.’ God He speak. ‘What name you gammon along me? You been eat ‘m.’ And Adam he speak, ‘Yes, me been eat ‘m.’

“And God big fella marster He cross along Adam Eve two fella too much, and He speak, ‘You two fella finish along me altogether. You go catch ‘m bokkis (box) belong you, and get to hell along scrub.’

“So Adam Eve these two fella go along scrub. And God He make ‘m one big fennis (fence) all around garden and He put ‘m one fella marster belong God along fennis. And He give this fella marster belong God one big fella musket, and He speak, ‘S’pose you look ‘m these two fella Adam Eve, you shoot ‘m plenty too much.’“

CHAPTER XVII — THE AMATEUR M.D.

When we sailed from San Francisco on the Snark I knew as much about sickness as the Admiral of the Swiss Navy knows about salt water. And here, at the start, let me advise any one who meditates going to out-of-the-way tropic places. Go to a first-class druggist — the sort that have specialists on their salary list who know everything. Talk the matter over with such an one. Note carefully all that he says. Have a list made of all that he recommends. Write out a cheque for the total cost, and tear it up.

I wish I had done the same. I should have been far wiser, I know now, if I had bought one of those ready-made, self-acting, fool-proof medicine chests such as are favoured by fourth-rate ship-masters. In such a chest each bottle has a number. On the inside of the lid is placed a simple table of directions: No. 1, toothache; No. 2, smallpox; No. 3, stomachache; No. 4, cholera; No. 5, rheumatism; and so on, through the list of human ills. And I might have used it as did a certain venerable skipper, who, when No. 3 was empty, mixed a dose from No. 1 and No. 2, or, when No. 7 was all gone, dosed his crew with 4 and 3 till 3 gave out, when he used 5 and 2.

So far, with the exception of corrosive sublimate (which was recommended as an antiseptic in surgical operations, and which I have not yet used for that purpose), my medicine-chest has been useless. It has been worse than useless, for it has occupied much space which I could have used to advantage.

With my surgical instruments it is different. While I have not yet had serious use for them, I do not regret the space they occupy. The thought of them makes me feel good. They are so much life insurance, only, fairer than that last grim game, one is not supposed to die in order to win. Of course, I don’t know how to use them, and what I don’t know about surgery would set up a dozen quacks in prosperous practice. But needs must when the devil drives, and we of the Snark have no warning when the devil may take it into his head to drive, ay, even a thousand miles from land and twenty days from the nearest port.

I did not know anything about dentistry, but a friend fitted me out with forceps and similar weapons, and in Honolulu I picked up a book upon teeth.

Also, in that sub-tropical city I managed to get hold of a skull, from which I extracted the teeth swiftly and painlessly. Thus equipped, I was ready, though not exactly eager, to tackle any tooth that get in my way. It was in Nuku-hiva, in the Marquesas, that my first case presented itself in the shape of a little, old Chinese. The first thing I did was to got the buck fever, and I leave it to any fair-minded person if buck fever, with its attendant heart-palpitations and arm-tremblings, is the right condition for a man to be in who is endeavouring to pose as an old hand at the business. I did not fool the aged Chinaman. He was as frightened as I and a bit more shaky. I almost forgot to be frightened in the fear that he would bolt. I swear, if he had tried to, that I would have tripped him up and sat on him until calmness and reason returned.

I wanted that tooth. Also, Martin wanted a snap-shot of me getting it. Likewise Charmian got her camera. Then the procession started. We were stopping at what had been the club-house when Stevenson was in the Marquesas on the Casco. On the veranda, where he had passed so many pleasant hours, the light was not good — for snapshots, I mean. I led on into the garden, a chair in one hand, the other hand filled with forceps of various sorts, my knees knocking together disgracefully. The poor old Chinaman came second, and he was shaking, too. Charmian and Martin brought up the rear, armed with kodaks. We dived under the avocado trees, threaded our way through the cocoanut palms, and came on a spot that satisfied Martin's photographic eye.

I looked at the tooth, and then discovered that I could not remember anything about the teeth I had pulled from the skull five months previously. Did it have one prong? two prongs? or three prongs? What was left of the part that showed appeared very crumbly, and I knew that I should have take hold of the tooth deep down in the gum. It was very necessary that I should know how many prongs that tooth had. Back to the house I went for the book on teeth. The poor old victim looked like photographs I had seen of fellow-countrymen of his, criminals, on their knees, waiting the stroke of the beheading sword.

"Don't let him get away," I cautioned to Martin. "I want that tooth."

"I sure won't," he replied with enthusiasm, from behind his camera.
"I want that photograph."

For the first time I felt sorry for the Chinaman. Though the book did not tell me anything about pulling teeth, it was all right, for on one page I found drawings of all the teeth, including their prongs and how they were set in the jaw. Then came the pursuit of the forceps. I had seven pairs, but was in doubt as to which pair I should use. I did not want any mistake. As I turned the hardware over with rattle and clang, the poor victim began to lose his grip and to turn a greenish yellow around the gills. He complained about the sun, but that was necessary for the photograph, and he had to stand it. I fitted the forceps around the tooth, and the patient shivered and began to wilt.

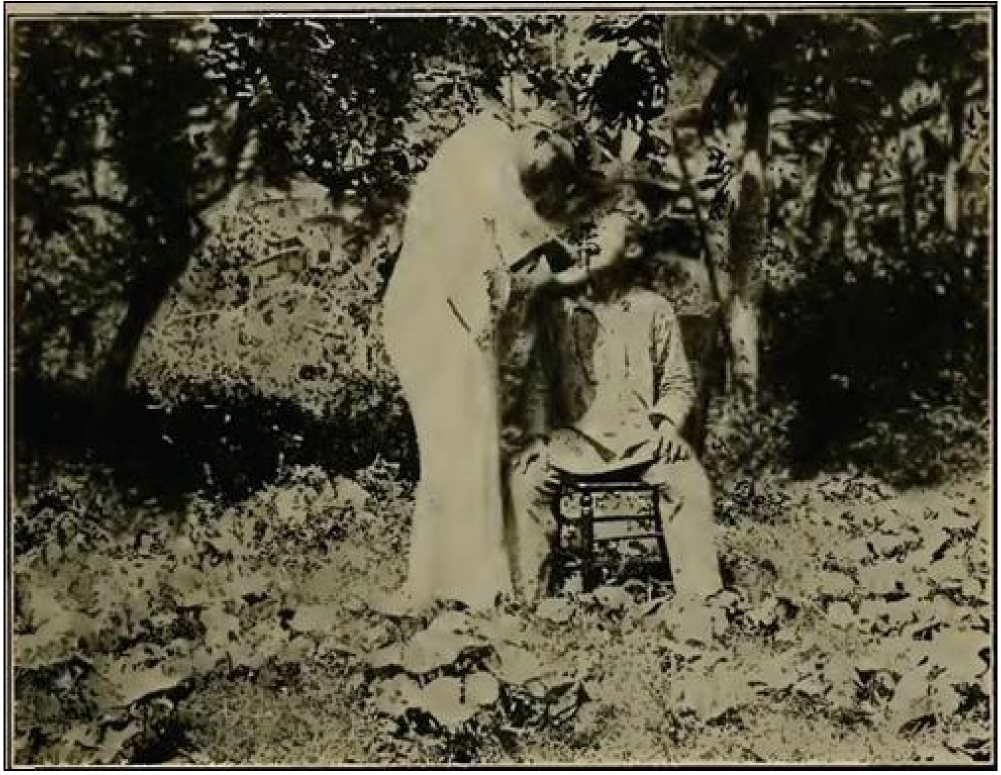

“Ready?” I called to Martin.

“All ready,” he answered.

I gave a pull. Ye gods! The tooth, was loose! Out it came on the instant. I was jubilant as I held it aloft in the forceps.

“Put it back, please, oh, put it back,” Martin pleaded. “You were too quick for me.”

And the poor old Chinaman sat there while I put the tooth back and pulled over. Martin snapped the camera. The deed was done. Elation? Pride? No hunter was ever prouder of his first pronged buck than I was of that tree-pronged tooth. I did it! I did it! With my of own hands and a pair of forceps I did it, to say nothing of the forgotten memories of the dead man’s skull.

My next case was a Tahitian sailor. He was a small man, in a state of collapse from long days and nights of jumping toothache. I lanced the gums first. I didn’t know how to lance them, but I lanced them just the same. It was a long pull and a strong pull. The man was a hero. He groaned and moaned, and I thought he was going to faint. But he kept his mouth open and let me pull. And then it came.

After that I was ready to meet all comers — just the proper state of mind for a Waterloo. And it came. Its name was Tomi. He was a strapping giant of a heathen with a bad reputation. He was addicted to deeds of violence. Among other things he had beaten two of his wives to death with his fists. His father and mother had been naked cannibals. When he sat down and I put the forceps into his mouth, he was nearly as tall as I was standing up. Big men, prone to violence, very often have a streak of fat in their make-up, so I was doubtful of him. Charmian grabbed one arm and Warren grabbed the other. Then the tug of war began. The instant the forceps closed down on the tooth, his jaws closed down on the forceps. Also, both his hands flew up and gripped my pulling hand. I held on, and he held on. Charmian and Warren held on. We wrestled all about the shop.

It was three against one, and my hold on an aching tooth was certainly a foul one; but in spite of the handicap he got away with us. The forceps slipped off, banging and grinding along against his upper teeth with a nerve-scraping sound. Out of his month flew the forceps, and he rose up in the air with a blood-curdling yell. The three of us fell back. We expected to be massacred. But that howling savage of sanguinary reputation sank back in the chair. He held his head in both his hands, and groaned and groaned and groaned. Nor would he listen to reason. I was a quack. My painless tooth-extraction was a delusion and a snare and a low advertising dodge. I was so anxious to get that tooth that I was almost ready to bribe him. But that went against my professional pride and I let him depart with the tooth still intact, the only case on record up to date of failure on my part when once I had got a grip. Since then I have never let a tooth go by me. Only the other day I volunteered to beat up three days to windward to pull a woman missionary's tooth. I expect, before the voyage of the Snark is finished, to be doing bridge work and putting on gold crowns.

I don't know whether they are yaws or not — a physician in Fiji told me they were, and a missionary in the Solomons told me they were not; but at any rate I can vouch for the fact that they are most uncomfortable. It was my luck to ship in Tahiti a French-sailor, who, when we got to sea, proved to be afflicted with a vile skin disease. The Snark was too small and too much of a family party to permit retaining him on board; but perforce, until we could reach land and discharge him, it was up to me to doctor him. I read up the books and proceeded to treat him, taking care afterwards always to use a thorough antiseptic wash. When we reached Tutuila, far from getting rid of him, the port doctor declared a quarantine against him and refused to allow him ashore. But at Apia, Samoa, I managed to ship him off on a steamer to New Zealand. Here at Apia my ankles were badly bitten by mosquitoes, and I confess to having scratched the bites — as I had a thousand times before. By the time I reached the island of Savaii, a small sore had developed on the hollow of my instep. I thought it was due to chafe and to acid fumes from the hot lava over which I tramped. An application of salve would cure it — so I thought. The salve did heal it over, whereupon an astonishing inflammation set in, the new skin came off, and a larger sore was exposed. This was repeated many times. Each time new skin formed, an inflammation followed, and the circumference of the sore increased. I was puzzled and frightened. All my life my skin had been famous for its healing powers, yet here was something that would not heal. Instead, it was daily eating up more skin, while it had eaten down clear through the skin and was eating up the muscle itself.

By this time the Snark was at sea on her way to Fiji. I remembered the French sailor, and for the first time became seriously alarmed. Four other similar sores had appeared — or ulcers, rather, and the pain of them kept me awake at night. All my plans were made to lay up the Snark in Fiji and get away on the first steamer to Australia and professional M.D.'s. In the meantime, in my amateur M.D. way, I did my best. I read through all the medical works on board. Not a line nor a word could I find descriptive of my affliction. I brought common horse-sense to bear on the problem. Here were malignant and excessively active ulcers that were eating me up. There was an organic and corroding poison at work. Two things I concluded must be done. First, some agent must be found to destroy the poison. Secondly, the ulcers could not possibly heal from the outside in; they must heal from the inside out. I decided to fight the poison with corrosive sublimate. The very name of it struck me as vicious. Talk of fighting fire with fire! I was being consumed by a corrosive poison, and it appealed to my fancy to fight it with another corrosive poison. After several days I alternated dressings of corrosive sublimate with dressings of peroxide of hydrogen. And behold, by the time we reached Fiji four of the five ulcers were healed, while the remaining one was no bigger than a pea.

I now felt fully qualified to treat yaws. Likewise I had a wholesome respect for them. Not so the rest of the crew of the Snark. In their case, seeing was not believing. One and all, they had seen my dreadful predicament; and all of them, I am convinced, had a subconscious certitude that their own superb constitutions and glorious personalities would never allow lodgment of so vile a poison in their carcasses as my anaemic constitution and mediocre personality had allowed to lodge in mine. At Port Resolution, in the New Hebrides, Martin elected to walk barefooted in the bush and returned on board with many cuts and abrasions, especially on his shins.

"You'd better be careful," I warned him. "I'll mix up some corrosive sublimate for you to wash those cuts with. An ounce of prevention, you know."

But Martin smiled a superior smile. Though he did not say so. I nevertheless was given to understand that he was not as other men (I was the only man he could possibly have had reference to), and that in a couple of days his cuts would be healed. He also read me a dissertation upon the peculiar purity of his blood and his remarkable healing powers. I felt quite humble when he was done with me. Evidently I was different from other men in so far as purity of blood was concerned.

Nakata, the cabin-boy, while ironing one day, mistook the calf of his leg for the ironing-block and accumulated a burn three inches in length and half an inch wide. He, too, smiled the superior smile when I offered him corrosive sublimate and reminded him of my own cruel experience. I was given to understand, with all due suavity and courtesy, that no matter what was the matter with my blood, his number-one, Japanese, Port-Arthur blood was all right and scornful of the festive microbe.

Wada, the cook, took part in a disastrous landing of the launch, when he had to leap overboard and fend the launch off the beach in a smashing surf. By means of shells and coral he cut his legs and feet up beautifully. I offered him the corrosive sublimate bottle. Once again I suffered the superior smile and was given to understand that his blood was the same blood that had licked Russia and was going to lick the United States some day, and that if his blood wasn't able to cure a few trifling cuts, he'd commit hari-kari in sheer disgrace.

From all of which I concluded that an amateur M.D. is without honour on his own vessel, even if he has cured himself. The rest of the crew had begun to look upon me as a sort of mild mono-maniac on the question of sores and sublimate. Just because my blood was impure was no reason that I should think everybody else's was. I made no more overtures. Time and microbes were with me, and all I had to do was wait.

"I think there's some dirt in these cuts," Martin said tentatively, after several days. "I'll wash them out and then they'll be all right," he added, after I had refused to rise to the bait.

Two more days passed, but the cuts did not pass, and I caught Martin soaking his feet and legs in a pail of hot water.

"Nothing like hot water," he proclaimed enthusiastically. "It beats all the dope the doctors ever put up. These sores will be all right in the morning."

But in the morning he wore a troubled look, and I knew that the hour of my triumph approached.

"I think I WILL try some of that medicine," he announced later on in the day. "Not that I think it'll do much good," he qualified, "but I'll just give it a try anyway."

Next came the proud blood of Japan to beg medicine for its illustrious sores, while I heaped coals of fire on all their houses by explaining in minute and sympathetic detail the treatment that should be given. Nakata followed instructions implicitly, and day by day his sores grew smaller. Wada was apathetic, and cured less readily. But Martin still doubted, and because he did not cure immediately, he developed the theory that while doctor's dope was all right, it did not follow that the same kind of dope was efficacious with everybody. As for himself, corrosive sublimate had no effect. Besides, how did I know that it was the right stuff? I had had no experience. Just because I happened to get well while using it was not proof that it had played any part in the cure. There were such things as coincidences. Without doubt there was a dope that would cure the sores, and when he ran across a real doctor he would find what that dope was and get some of it.

About this time we arrived in the Solomon Islands. No physician would ever recommend the group for invalids or sanitoriums. I spent but little time there ere I really and for the first time in my life comprehended how frail and unstable is human tissue. Our first anchorage was Port Mary, on the island of Santa Anna. The one lone white man, a trader, came alongside. Tom Butler was his name, and he was a beautiful example of what the Solomons can do to a strong man. He lay in his whale-boat with the helplessness of a dying man. No smile and little intelligence illumined his face. He was a sombre death's-head, too far gone to grin. He, too, had yaws, big ones. We were compelled to drag him over the rail of the Snark. He said that his health was good, that he had not had the fever for some time, and that with the exception of his arm he was all right and trim. His arm appeared to be paralysed. Paralysis he rejected with scorn. He had had it before, and recovered. It was a common native disease on Santa Anna, he said, as he was helped down the companion ladder, his dead arm dropping, bump-bump, from step to step. He was certainly the ghastliest guest we ever entertained, and we’ve had not a few lepers and elephantiasis victims on board.

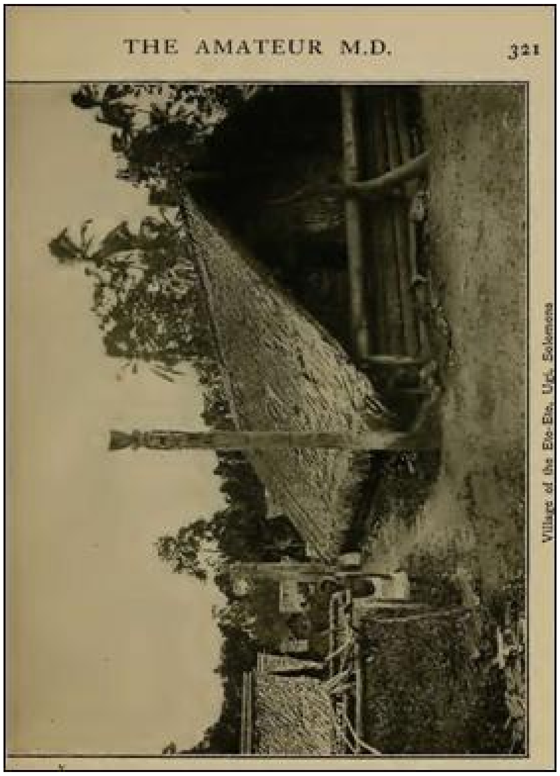
THE AMATEUR M.D. 321

Village of the Ete-Ete, Ugi, Solomons

Martin inquired about yaws, for here was a man who ought to know. He certainly did know, if we could judge by his scarred arms and legs and by the live ulcers that corroded in the midst of the scars. Oh, one got used to yaws, quoth Tom Butler. They were never really serious until they had eaten deep into the flesh. Then they attacked the walls of the arteries, the arteries burst, and there was a funeral. Several of the natives had recently died that way ashore. But what did it matter? If it wasn’t yaws, it was something else in the Solomons.

I noticed that from this moment Martin displayed a swiftly increasing interest in his own yaws. Dosings with corrosive sublimate were more frequent, while, in conversation, he began to revert with growing enthusiasm to the clean climate of Kansas and all other things Kansan. Charmian and I thought that California was a little bit of all right. Henry swore by Rapa, and

Tehei staked all on Bora Bora for his own blood's sake; while Wada and Nakata sang the sanitary paean of Japan.

One evening, as the Snark worked around the southern end of the island of Ugi, looking for a reputed anchorage, a Church of England missionary, a Mr. Drew, bound in his whaleboat for the coast of San Cristoval, came alongside and stopped for dinner. Martin, his legs swathed in Red Cross bandages till they looked like a mummy's, turned the conversation upon yaws. Yes, said Mr. Drew, they were quite common in the Solomons. All white men caught them.

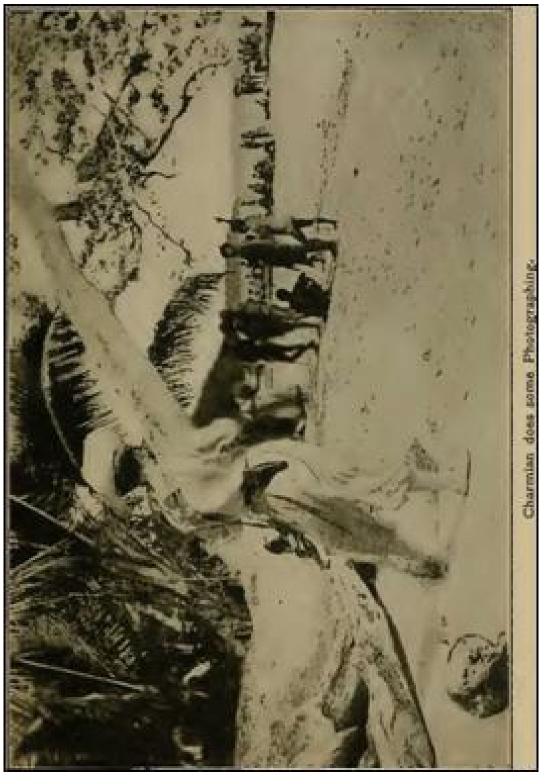

Charmian does some Photographing.

"And have you had them?" Martin demanded, in the soul of him quite shocked that a Church of England missionary could possess so vulgar an affliction.

Mr. Drew nodded his head and added that not only had he had them, but at that moment he was doctoring several.

"What do you use on them?" Martin asked like a flash.

My heart almost stood still waiting the answer. By that answer my professional medical prestige stood or fell. Martin, I could see, was quite sure it was going to fall. And then the answer — O blessed answer!

"Corrosive sublimate," said Mr. Drew.

Martin gave in handsomely, I'll admit, and I am confident that at that moment, if I had asked permission to pull one of his teeth, he would not have denied me.

All white men in the Solomons catch yaws, and every cut or abrasion practically means another yaw. Every man I met had had them, and nine out of ten had active ones. There was but one exception, a young fellow who had been in the islands five months, who had come down with fever ten days after he arrived, and who had since then been down so often with fever that he had had neither time nor opportunity for yaws.

Every one on the Snark except Charmian came down with yaws. Hers was the same egotism that Japan and Kansas had displayed. She ascribed her immunity to the pureness of her blood, and as the days went by she ascribed it more often and more loudly to the pureness of her blood. Privately I ascribed her immunity to the fact that, being a woman, she escaped most of the cuts and abrasions to which we hard-working men were subject in the course of working the Snark around the world. I did not tell her so. You see, I did not wish to bruise her ego with brutal facts. Being an M.D., if only an amateur one, I knew more about the disease than she, and I knew that time was my ally. But alas, I abused my ally when it dealt a charming little yaw on the shin. So quickly did I apply antiseptic treatment, that the yaw was cured before she was convinced that she had one. Again, as an M.D., I was without honour on my own vessel; and, worse than that, I was charged with having tried to mislead her into the belief that she had had a yaw. The pureness of her blood was more rampant than ever, and I poked my nose into my navigation books and kept quiet. And then came the day. We were cruising along the coast of Malaita at the time.

"What's that abaft your ankle-bone?" said I.

"Nothing," said she.

"All right," said I; "but put some corrosive sublimate on it just the same. And some two or three weeks from now, when it is well and you have a scar that you will carry to your grave, just forget about the purity of your blood and your ancestral history and tell me what you think about yaws anyway."

It was as large as a silver dollar, that yaw, and it took all of three weeks to heal. There were times when Charmian could not walk because of the hurt of it; and there were times upon times when she explained that abaft the ankle-bone was the most painful place to have a yaw. I explained, in turn, that, never having experienced a yaw in that locality, I was driven to conclude the hollow of the instep was the most painful place for yaw-culture. We left it to Martin, who disagreed with both of us and proclaimed passionately that the only truly painful place was the shin. No wonder horse-racing is so popular.

But yaws lose their novelty after a time. At the present moment of writing I have five yaws on my hands and three more on my shin. Charmian has one on each side of her right instep. Tehei is frantic with his. Martin's latest shin-cultures have eclipsed his earlier ones. And Nakata has several score casually eating away at his tissue. But the history of the Snark in the Solomons has been the history of every ship since the early discoverers. From the "Sailing Directions" I quote the following:

"The crews of vessels remaining any considerable time in the Solomons find wounds and sores liable to change into malignant ulcers."

Nor on the question of fever were the "Sailing Directions" any more encouraging, for in them I read:

"New arrivals are almost certain sooner or later to suffer from fever. The natives are also subject to it. The number of deaths among the whites in the year 1897 amounted to 9 among a population of 50."

Some of these deaths, however, were accidental.

Nakata was the first to come down with fever. This occurred at Penduffryn. Wada and Henry followed him. Charmian surrendered next. I managed to escape for a couple of months; but when I was bowled over, Martin sympathetically joined me several days later. Out of the seven of us all told Tehei is the only one who has escaped; but his sufferings from nostalgia are worse than fever. Nakata, as usual, followed instructions faithfully, so that by the end of his third attack he could take a two hours' sweat, consume thirty or forty grains of quinine, and be weak but all right at the end of twenty-four hours.

Wada and Henry, however, were tougher patients with which to deal. In the first place, Wada got in a bad funk. He was of the firm conviction that his star had set and that the Solomons would receive his bones. He saw that life about him was cheap. At Penduffryn he saw the ravages of dysentery, and, unfortunately for him, he saw one victim carried out on a strip of galvanized sheet-iron and dumped without coffin or funeral into a hole in the ground. Everybody had fever, everybody had dysentery, everybody had everything. Death was common. Here to-day and gone to-morrow — and Wada forgot all about to-day and made up his mind that to-morrow had come.

He was careless of his ulcers, neglected to sublimate them, and by uncontrolled scratching spread them all over his body. Nor would he follow instructions with fever, and, as a result, would be down five days at a time, when a day would have been sufficient. Henry, who is a strapping giant of a man, was just as bad. He refused point blank to take quinine, on the ground that years before he had had fever and that the pills the doctor gave him were of different size and colour from the quinine tablets I offered him. So Henry joined Wada.

But I fooled the pair of them, and dosed them with their own medicine, which was faith-cure. They had faith in their funk that they were going to die. I slammed a lot of quinine down their throats and took their temperature. It was the first time I had used my medicine-chest thermometer, and I quickly discovered that it was worthless, that it had been produced for profit and not for service. If I had let on to my two patients that the thermometer did not work, there would have been two funerals in short order. Their temperature I swear was 105 degrees. I solemnly made one and then the other smoke the thermometer, allowed an expression of satisfaction to irradiate my countenance, and joyfully told them that their temperature was 94 degrees. Then I slammed more quinine down their throats, told them that any sickness or weakness they might experience would be due to the quinine, and left them to get well. And they did get well, Wada in spite of himself. If a man can die through a misapprehension, is there any immorality in making him live through a misapprehension?

Commend me the white race when it comes to grit and surviving. One of our two Japanese and both our Tahitians funked and had to be slapped on the back and cheered up and dragged along by main strength toward life. Charmian and Martin took their afflictions cheerfully, made the least of them, and moved with calm certitude along the way of life. When Wada and Henry were convinced that they were going to die, the funeral atmosphere was too much for Tehei, who prayed dolorously and cried for hours at a time. Martin, on the other hand, cursed and got well, and Charmian groaned and made plans for what she was going to do when she got well again.

Charmian had been raised a vegetarian and a sanitarian. Her Aunt Netta, who brought her up and who lived in a healthful climate, did not believe in drugs. Neither did Charmian. Besides, drugs disagreed with her. Their effects were worse than the ills they were supposed to alleviate. But she listened to the argument in favour of quinine, accepted it as the lesser evil, and in consequence had shorter, less painful, and less frequent attacks of fever. We encountered a Mr. Caulfeild, a missionary, whose two predecessors had died after less than six months' residence in the Solomons. Like them he had been a firm believer in homeopathy, until after his first fever, whereupon, unlike them, he made a grand slide back to allopathy and quinine, catching fever and carrying on his Gospel work.

But poor Wada! The straw that broke the cook's back was when Charmian and I took him along on a cruise to the cannibal island of Malaita, in a small yacht, on the deck of which the captain had been murdered half a year before. Kai-kai means to eat, and Wada was sure he was going to be kai-kai'd. We went about heavily armed, our vigilance was unremitting, and when we went for a bath in the mouth of a fresh-water stream, black boys, armed with rifles, did sentry duty about us. We encountered English war vessels burning and shelling villages in punishment for murders. Natives with prices on their heads sought shelter on board of us. Murder stalked abroad in the land. In out-of-they-way places we received warnings from friendly savages of impending attacks. Our vessel owed two heads to

Malaita, which were liable to be collected any time. Then to cap it all, we were wrecked on a reef, and with rifles in one hand warned the canoes of wreckers off while with the other hand we toiled to save the ship. All of which was too much for Wada, who went daffy, and who finally quitted the Snark on the island of Ysabel, going ashore for good in a driving rain-storm, between two attacks of fever, while threatened with pneumonia. If he escapes being kai-kai'd, and if he can survive sores and fever which are riotous ashore, he can expect, if he is reasonably lucky, to get away from that place to the adjacent island in anywhere from six to eight weeks. He never did think much of my medicine, despite the fact that I successfully and at the first trail pulled two aching teeth for him.

The Snark has been a hospital for months, and I confess that we are getting used to it. At Meringe Lagoon, where we careened and cleaned the Snark's copper, there were times when only one man of us was able to go into the water, while the three white men on the plantation ashore were all down with fever. At the moment of writing this we are lost at sea somewhere northeast of Ysabel and trying vainly to find Lord Howe Island, which is an atoll that cannot be sighted unless one is on top of it. The chronometer has gone wrong. The sun does not shine anyway, nor can I get a star observation at night, and we have had nothing but squalls and rain for days and days. The cook is gone. Nakata, who has been trying to be both cook and cabin boy, is down on his back with fever. Martin is just up from fever, and going down again. Charmian, whose fever has become periodical, is looking up in her date book to find when the next attack will be. Henry has begun to eat quinine in an expectant mood. And, since my attacks hit me with the suddenness of bludgeon-blows I do not know from moment to moment when I shall be brought down. By a mistake we gave our last flour away to some white men who did not have any flour. We don't know when we'll make land. Our Solomon sores are worse than ever, and more numerous. The corrosive sublimate was accidentally left ashore at Penduffryn; the peroxide of hydrogen is exhausted; and I am experimenting with boracic acid, lysol, and antiphlogystine. At any rate, if I fail in becoming a reputable M.D., it won't be from lack of practice.

P.S. It is now two weeks since the foregoing was written, and Tehei, the only immune on board has been down ten days with far severer fever than any of us and is still down. His temperature has been repeatedly as high as 104, and his pulse 115.

P.S. At sea, between Tasman atoll and Manning Straits. Tehei's attack developed into black water fever — the severest form of malarial fever, which, the doctor-book assures me, is due to some outside infection as well. Having pulled him through his fever, I am now at my wit's end, for he has lost his wits altogether. I am rather recent in practice to take up the cure of insanity. This makes the second lunacy case on this short voyage.

P.S. Some day I shall write a book (for the profession), and entitle it, "Around the World on the Hospital Ship Snark." Even our pets have not escaped. We sailed from Meringe Lagoon with two, an Irish terrier and a white cockatoo. The terrier fell down the cabin companionway and lamed its nigh hind leg, then repeated the manoeuvre and lamed its off fore leg. At the present moment it has but two legs to walk on. Fortunately, they are on opposite sides and ends, so that she can still dot and carry two. The cockatoo was crushed under the cabin skylight and had to be killed. This was our first funeral — though for that matter, the several chickens we had, and which would have made welcome broth for the convalescents, flew overboard and were drowned. Only the cockroaches flourish. Neither illness nor accident ever befalls them, and they grow larger and more carnivorous day by day, gnawing our finger-nails and toe-nails while we sleep.

P.S. Charmian is having another bout with fever. Martin, in despair, has taken to horse-doctoring his yaws with bluestone and to blessing the Solomons. As for me, in addition to navigating, doctoring, and writing short stories, I am far from well. With the exception of the insanity cases, I'm the worst off on board. I shall catch the next steamer to Australia and go on the operating table. Among my minor afflictions, I may mention a new and mysterious one. For the past week my hands have been swelling as with dropsy. It is only by a painful effort that I can close them. A pull on a rope is excruciating. The sensations are like those that accompany severe chilblains. Also, the skin is peeling off both hands at an alarming rate, besides which the new skin underneath is growing hard and thick. The doctor-book fails to mention this disease. Nobody knows what it is.

P.S. Well, anyway, I've cured the chronometer. After knocking about the sea for eight squally, rainy days, most of the time hove to, I succeeded in catching a partial observation of the sun at midday. From this I worked up my latitude, then headed by log to the latitude of Lord Howe, and ran both that latitude and the island down together. Here I tested the chronometer by longitude sights and found it something like three minutes out. Since each minute is equivalent to fifteen miles, the total error can be appreciated. By repeated observations at Lord Howe I rated the chronometer, finding it to have a daily losing error of seven-tenths of a second. Now it happens that a year ago, when we sailed from Hawaii, that selfsame chronometer had that selfsame losing error of seven-tenths of a second. Since that error was faithfully added every day, and since that error, as proved by my observations at Lord Howe, has not changed, then what under the sun made that chronometer all of a sudden accelerate and catch up with itself three minutes? Can such things be? Expert watchmakers say no; but I say that they have never done any expert watch-making and watch-rating in the Solomons. That it is the climate is my only diagnosis. At any rate, I have successfully doctored the chronometer, even if I have failed with the lunacy cases and with Martin's yaws.

P.S. Martin has just tried burnt alum, and is blessing the Solomons more fervently than ever.

P.S. Between Manning Straits and Pavuvu Islands.

Henry has developed rheumatism in his back, ten skins have peeled off my hands and the eleventh is now peeling, while Tehei is more lunatic than ever and day and night prays God not to kill him. Also, Nakata and I are slashing away at fever again. And finally up to date, Nakata last evening had an attack of ptomaine poisoning, and we spent half the night pulling him through.

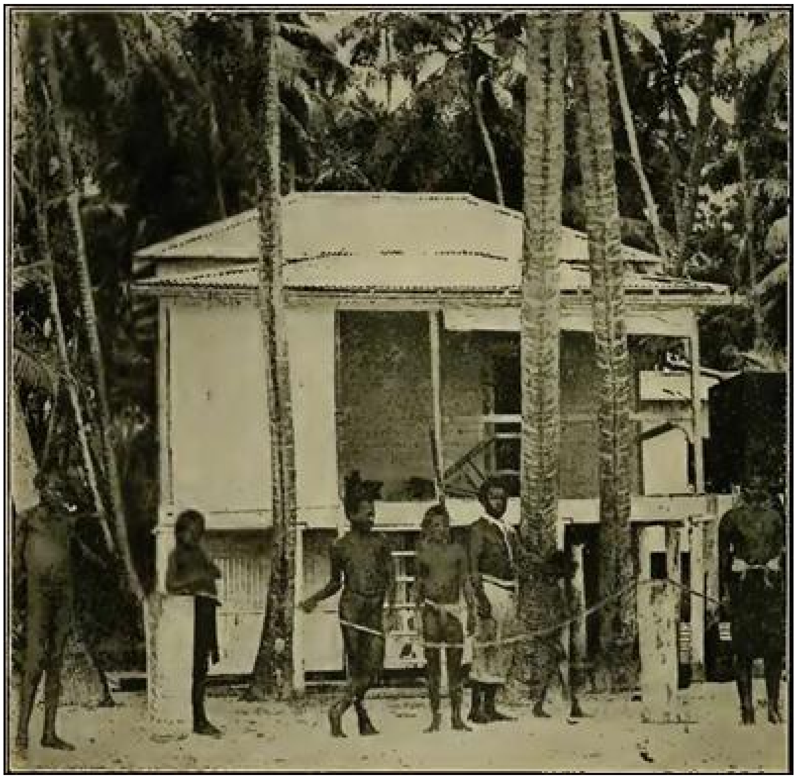

BACK WORD

The Snark was forty-three feet on the water-line and fifty-five over all, with fifteen feet beam (tumble-home sides) and seven feet eight inches draught. She was ketch-rigged, carrying flying-jib, jib, fore-staysail, mainsail, mizzen, and spinnaker. There were six feet of head-room below, and she was crown-decked and flush-decked. There were four alleged WATER-TIGHT compartments. A seventy-horse power auxiliary gas-engine sporadically furnished locomotion at an approximate cost of twenty dollars per mile. A five-horse power engine ran the pumps when it was in order, and on two occasions proved capable of furnishing juice for the search-light. The storage batteries worked four or five times in the course of two years. The fourteen-foot launch was rumoured to work at times, but it invariably broke down whenever I stepped on board.

But the Snark sailed. It was the only way she could get anywhere. She sailed for two years, and never touched rock, reef, nor shoal. She had no inside ballast, her iron keel weighed five tons, but her deep draught and high freeboard made her very stiff. Caught under full sail in tropic squalls, she buried her rail and deck many times, but stubbornly refused to turn turtle. She steered easily, and she could run day and night, without steering, close-by, full-and-by, and with the wind abeam. With the wind on her quarter and the sails properly trimmed, she steered herself within two points, and with the wind almost astern she required scarcely three points for self-steering.

The Snark was partly built in San Francisco. The morning her iron keel was to be cast was the morning of the great earthquake. Then came anarchy. Six months overdue in the building, I sailed the shell of her to Hawaii to be finished, the engine lashed to the bottom, building materials lashed on deck. Had I remained in San Francisco for completion, I'd still be there. As it was, partly built, she cost four times what she ought to have cost.

The Snark was born unfortunately. She was libelled in San Francisco, had her cheques protested as fraudulent in Hawaii, and was fined for breach of quarantine in the Solomons. To save themselves, the newspapers could not tell the truth about her. When I discharged an incompetent captain, they said

I had beaten him to a pulp. When one young man returned home to continue at college, it was reported that I was a regular Wolf Larsen, and that my whole crew had deserted because I had beaten it to a pulp. In fact the only blow struck on the Snark was when the cook was manhandled by a captain who had shipped with me under false pretences, and whom I discharged in Fiji. Also, Charmian and I boxed for exercise; but neither of us was seriously maimed.

The voyage was our idea of a good time. I built the Snark and paid for it, and for all expenses. I contracted to write thirty-five thousand words descriptive of the trip for a magazine which was to pay me the same rate I received for stories written at home. Promptly the magazine advertised that it was sending me especially around the world for itself. It was a wealthy magazine. And every man who had business dealings with the Snark charged three prices because forsooth the magazine could afford it. Down in the uttermost South Sea isle this myth obtained, and I paid accordingly. To this day everybody believes that the magazine paid for everything and that I made a fortune out of the voyage. It is hard, after such advertising, to hammer it into the human understanding that the whole voyage was done for the fun of it.

I went to Australia to go into hospital, where I spent five weeks. I spent five months miserably sick in hotels. The mysterious malady that afflicted my hands was too much for the Australian specialists. It was unknown in the literature of medicine. No case like it had ever been reported. It extended from my hands to my feet so that at times I was as helpless as a child. On occasion my hands were twice their natural size, with seven dead and dying skins peeling off at the same time. There were times when my toe-nails, in twenty-four hours, grew as thick as they were long. After filing them off, inside another twenty-four hours they were as thick as before.

The Australian specialists agreed that the malady was non-parasitic, and that, therefore, it must be nervous. It did not mend, and it was impossible for me to continue the voyage. The only way I could have continued it would have been by being lashed in my bunk, for in my helpless condition, unable to clutch with my hands, I could not have moved about on a small rolling boat. Also, I said to myself that while there were many boats and many voyages, I had but one pair of hands and one set of toe-nails. Still further, I reasoned that in my own climate of California I had always maintained a stable nervous equilibrium. So back I came.

Since my return I have completely recovered. And I have found out what was the matter with me. I encountered a book by Lieutenant-Colonel Charles E. Woodruff of the United States Army entitled “Effects of Tropical Light on White Men.” Then I knew. Later, I met Colonel Woodruff, and learned that he had been similarly afflicted. Himself an Army surgeon, seventeen Army surgeons sat on his case in the Philippines, and, like the Australian specialists, confessed themselves beaten. In brief, I had a strong predisposition toward the tissue-destructiveness of tropical light. I was being torn to pieces by the ultra-violet rays just as many experimenters with the X-ray have been torn to pieces.

In passing, I may mention that among the other afflictions that jointly compelled the abandonment of the voyage, was one that is variously called the healthy man’s disease, European Leprosy, and Biblical Leprosy. Unlike True Leprosy, nothing is known of this mysterious malady. No doctor has ever claimed a cure for a case of it, though spontaneous cures are recorded. It comes, they know not how. It is, they know not what. It goes, they know not why. Without the use of drugs, merely by living in the wholesome California climate, my silvery skin vanished. The only hope the doctors had held out to me was a spontaneous cure, and such a cure was mine.

A last word: the test of the voyage. It is easy enough for me or any man to say that it was enjoyable. But there is a better witness, the one woman who made it from beginning to end. In hospital when I broke the news to Charmian that I must go back to California, the tears welled into her eyes. For two days she was wrecked and broken by the knowledge that the happy, happy voyage was abandoned.

GLEN ELLEN, CALIFORNIA,

April 7, 1911

WHAT COMMUNITIES LOSE BY THE COMPETITIVE SYSTEM

London delivered this lecture in Oakland before the Third Ward Equality Club in September 1900.

MAN'S primacy in the animal kingdom was made possible, first, by his manifestation of the gregarious instinct; and second, by his becoming conscious of this instinct and the power within it which worked for his own good and permitted him to endure. Natural selection, undeviating, pitiless, careless of the individual, destroyed or allowed to perpetuate, as the case might be, such breeds as were unfittest or fittest to survive. In this sternest of struggles man developed the greatest variability, the highest capacity for adaptation; thus he became the favored child of the keenest competition ever waged on the planet. Drawing his strength and knowledge from the dugs of competition, he early learned the great lesson: that he stood alone, unaided, in a mighty battle wherein all the natural forces and the myriad forms of organic life seethed in one vast, precarious turmoil. From this he early drew the corollary, that his strength lay in numbers, in unity of interests, in solidarity of effort — in short, in combination against the hostile elements of his environment. His history substantiates it. From the family to the tribe, to the federation of tribes, to the nation, to the (to-day) growing consciousness of the interdependence of nations, he has obeyed it; by his successes, his mistakes and his failures, he has proved it. There is much to condemn, much which might have been better, but in the very nature of things, not one jot or tittle could have been otherwise than it has. And to-day, while he might felicitate himself on his past, none the less vigilant must be his scrutiny of the future. He cannot stop. He must go on.

But of the various forms of combination or coöperation which have marked the progress of man, none has been perfect; yet have they possessed, in a gradually ascending scale, less and less of imperfection. Every working political and social organism has maintained, during the period of its usefulness and in accordance with time and place, an equilibrium between the claims of society. When the balance was destroyed, either by too harsh an assertion of the right of the single life or the right of the type, the social organism has passed away, and another, adjusted to the changed conditions, replaced it. While the individual has made apparent sacrifices in the maintenance of this equilibrium, and likewise society, the result has been identity of interest, and good, both for the single life and the type. And in pursuance of this principle of the coöperation of man against the hostile elements of his environment, social compacts or laws have been formulated and observed. By the surrender of certain rights, the friction between the units of the social organism has been reduced, so that the organism might continue to operate. The future and inevitable rise of the type and the social organism, must necessitate a still further reduction in the friction of its units. Internal competition must be minimized, or turned into channels other that those along which it works to-day. This brings us to a discussion of the present: What the community loses by the competitive system.

DIVISION OF LAND

All things being equal, ten thousand acres of arable land, under one executive, worked en bloc, say for the purpose of growing wheat, utilizing the most improved methods of plowing, sowing and harvesting, will produce greater returns at less expense than can an equal number of acres, divided into one hundred plots, and worked individually by one hundred men. If the community, believing this friction of its units to be logical, farms in the latter manner, it must suffer a distinct pecuniary loss. And the effects of this loss — call it lack of gain if you will — though apparently borne by the agrarian population, are equally felt by the urban population. Of the many items which at once suggest themselves, consider the simple one of fences. For the division of land in the state of Indiana alone, their cost is computed at two hundred million dollars, and if placed in single file at the equator, they would encircle the globe fourteen times. Under a scientific system of agriculture they would be almost wholly dispensed with. As it is, they represent just so much waste of energy, just so much real loss of wealth. And these losses, of which the preceding is but one of a host, may be attributed to a certain asserted right of the individual to private ownership in land.

To this division of land among individuals, whether in the country, in the city or in franchises, may be traced numerous other losses and grotesque features of the community. Lack of combination in the country causes expensive crops; in the city, expensive public utilities and service, and frightful architectural monstrosities. If a street railway corporation can issue an annual dividend of ten per cent to its shareholders, the community, through lack of the cooperation necessary to that railway for itself, has lost the ten per cent, which otherwise it might have enjoyed in bettering its transit service, by the building of recreative parks, by the founding of libraries, or by increasing the efficiency of its schools. With regard to architecture, the presence of coöperation among individuals is most notable where it occurs, most notorious where it is absent. Some few of the public buildings, and many tasteful portions of the select resident districts, are examples of the one; sky-scrapers and rattle-trap tenements, of the other. A pumpkin between two planks, unable to obtain a proper rotundity, will lengthen out. Want of combination among adjacent property-owners, and the sky-scraper arises. A pumpkin is denied volition; man is not. The pumpkin cannot help itself; man may remove the planks. There is a certain identity in the raison d'être of the pumpkin and the sky-scraper. Man my remedy either, for to him is given the power of reacting against his environment.

LOSS OF EFFORT

If one were to hire two men to do his gardening when there was no more work than could reasonably be done by one, how quickly his neighbor would decry his extravagance! Yet in the course of the day, with the greatest equanimity, that same neighbor will fare forth and pay his quota for a score of services each performed by two or more men where only one is required. But he is dense to this loss to the community, which he, as a member, must pay. On his street from two to a dozen milkmen deliver their wares, likewise as many butchers, bakers and grocers; yet one policeman patrols and one postman serves the whole district. Downtown are a dozen groceries, each paying rent, maintaining fixtures and staffs of employees, and doing business within half as many blocks. One big store could operate the distributing function performed by these dozen small ones, and operate it more efficiently and as far less cost and labor. The success of the great department stores is a striking proof of this. The department store, in wiping out competition, get greater returns out of less effort. And having destroyed competition, there is no longer any reason that it should exist, save as a common property of the community's common good. It cannot be denied that the community would gain by so operating it, and not only in this but in all similar enterprises.

Take, for instance, because of this prerogative of friction the units of society maintain as their right, another series of burdens borne by the community. To make it concrete, let the drummer class serve as an illustration. Certainly fifty thousand is a conservative estimate for the drummers or traveling men of the United States. And it is very conservative to place their hotel bills, traveling expenses, commissions and salaries at five dollars a day per man. Since the producer must sell his wares at a profit or else go out of business, the consumer must pay the actual cost of the article — whether it be the legitimate cost or not — plus the per cent increment necessary for the continued existence of the producer's capital. Therefore the community, being the consumer, must support these fifty thousand five-dollar-a-day drummers; this, aggregated, forms a daily loss to the community of a quarter of a million, or an annual loss of upward of a hundred millions of dollars. Nor, from the economic view, is this the sum total of the community's loss. These drummers are not legitimate creators of wealth. The cost they add to the articles they sell is an unnecessary one. The function they carry on in society is absolutely useless. Their labor is illegitimately expended. Not only have they done nothing, but they have been paid as though they had done something. Assuming eight hours to be the normal working day, they have, in the course of the year, taking Sundays and holidays into consideration, thrown away one hundred and twenty millions of working hours. The community has paid for this and lost it. It possesses nothing to show for their labor, save a heavy item in its expense account. But what a gain there would have been had they devoted their time to the planting of potatoes or the building of public highways! And it must be borne in mind that this is but one of a long series of similar burdens which may be assembled under the head of "commercial waste." Consider the one item of advertisement. To make the advertisements which litter the streets, desecrate the air, pollute the country, and invade the sanctity of the family circle, a host of people are employed, such as draftsmen, paper-makers, printer, bill-posters, painters, carpenters, gilders, mechanics, et cetera. Soap and patent-medicine firms have been known to expend as high as a half a million dollars a year for their advertising. All this appalling commercial waste is drained from the community. Commercial waste exists in many forms, one of which is the articles made to sell, not use, such as adulterated foods and shoddy goods; or, to travesty Matthew Arnold, razors which do not shave, clothing which does not wear, watches which will not run.

Let one other example of the loss of effort suffice: that of competing corporations. Again to be concrete, let the example be a public municipal utility. A water company has the necessary water supply, the necessary facilities for distributing it, and the necessary capital with which to operate the plant. It happens to be a monopoly, and the community clamors for competition. A group of predatory capitalists invades the established company's territory, tears up the streets, parallels the older company's mains, and digs, tunnels and dams in the hills to get the necessary commodity. In view of the fact that the other company is fully capacitated to supply the community, this is just so much waste of effort; and equally so, some one must pay for it. Who? Let us see. A rate war ensues. Water becomes a drug on the market. Both companies are operating at ruinous losses which must ultimately destroy them. There are three ways by which the struggle may be concluded. First, the company with the smallest capital may go under. In this case the capitalists have lost the money invested, the community the labor. But this rarely happens. Second, the wealthier company may buy out the poorer one. In this case it has been forced to double its invested capital. Since it is now become a monopoly, and since capital requires a certain definite rate of interest, the community's water bills must rise to satisfy it. Third, both companies being of equal strength, and a Kilkenny-cat conclusion being impossible, they combine, with double capital which demands a double return. In one of these three ways the competition of corporations must inevitably result; nor can the community escape the consequent loss, save by the coöperative operation of all such industries.

COSTLINESS OF EFFORT

Because of the individual performance of many tasks which may be done collectively, effort entails a corresponding costliness. Since much that might have been included under this head has been previously discussed, such labors as may be purely individual shall be here handled. In the field of household economics there are numerous losses of this nature. Of these, choose one. Contemplate that humble but essentially necessary item, the family wash. In a hundred houses, on washing-day, are one hundred toiling housewives, one hundred homes for the time being thrown out of joint, one hundred fires, one hundred tubs being filled and emptied, and so forth and so on — soap, powder, bluing, fuel and fixtures, all bought at expensive retail prices. Two men, in a well-appointed small steam-laundry, could do their washing for them, year in and year out, at a tithe the expense and toil. Disregarding the saving gained by the wholesale purchase of supplies, by system, and by division of labor, these two men, by machinery alone, increase their power tenfold. By means of a proper domestic cooperation, if not municipal, each of these housewives would save a sum of money which would go far in purchasing little luxuries and recreations.

Again, consider the example of the poorer families of a large town, who buy their food and other necessaries from at least one hundred shops of one sort and another. Here, the costliness of effort for which they pay is not theirs but that of the people they deal with. Instead of one large distributing depot, these one hundred petty merchants each order and handle separate parcels of goods, write separate letters and checks, and keep separate books, all of which is practically unnecessary. Somebody pays for all this, for the useless letters, checks, parcels, clerks, bookkeepers and porters, and assuredly it is not the shopkeeper. And aside from all this, suppose each shop clears for its owner ten dollars a week — a very modest sum — or five hundred dollars a year. For the one hundred shops this would equal fifty thousand dollars. And this the poorer members of the community must pay.

The people have come partially to recognize this, however. To-day no man dreams of keeping his own fire-fighting or street-lighting apparatus, of maintaining his own policeman, keeping his street in repair, or seeing to the proper disposition of his sewage. Somewhere in the past his ancestors did all this for themselves, or else it was not done at all; that is to say, there was greater friction or less coöperation among the units of society then than now.

TRADE AND COMMERCIAL CRISES

At one time our forefathers, ignorant of hygiene, sanitation and quarantine, were powerless before the plagues which swept across the earth; yet we, their enlightened descendants, find ourselves impotent in the face of the great social cataclysms known as trade and commercial crises. The crises are peculiarly a modern product — made possible by the specialization of industry and the immense strides which have been taken in the invention of labor-saving machinery, but due, and directly so, to the antagonism of the units which compose society. A competent coöperative management could so operate all the implements and institutions of the present industrial civilization, that there need never be a fear of a trade or commercial crisis. Boards or departments, scientifically conducted, could ascertain, first, the consuming power of the community; second, its producing power; and then, by an orderly arrangement, adjust those two, one to the other. These boards or departments would have to study all the causes which go to make the community's producing power inconstant — such as failure of crops, drouths, et cetera — and so to direct the energy of the community that equilibrium between its production and consumption might still be maintained. And to do this is certainly within the realm of man's achievement.

But instead of this logical arrangement of industry, the community to-day possesses the chaotic system of competitive production. It is a war of producers, also of distributors. Success depends on individual knowledge of just how much and at what cost all others are producing, and of just how much and at what prices they are selling. All the factors which decide the fluctuations of the world's markets or the purchasing power of its peoples, must be taken into account. A war-cloud in the Balkans, a failure of crops in the Argentine, the thoughtless word of a kaiser, or a strike of organized labor, and success or failure depends on how closely the results of this event have been foreseen. And even then, because of a thousand and one fortuitous happenings, chance plays an important part. Even the footing of the wisest and the surest is precarious. Risk is the secret of gain. Lessen the risk, the gain is lessened; abolish it, and there can be no gain. Individual strives against individual, producing for himself, buying for himself, selling for himself, and keeping his transactions secret. Everybody is in the dark.

Each is planning, guessing, chancing; and because of this, the competitive system of industry, as a whole, may be justly characterized as planless. The effort lost is tremendous, the waste prodigal. A favorable season arrives. Increased orders accelerate production. Times are prosperous. All industries are stimulated. Little heed is taken of the overstocking of the markets, till at last they are flooded with commodities. This is the danger-point. The collapse of a land-boom in Oregon, the failure of a building association in Austria — anything may start the chain of destruction. Speculations begin to burst, credits to be called in, there is a rush to realize on commodities produced, prices fall, wages come down, factories close up, and consumption is correspondingly reduced. The interdependence of all forms of industry asserts itself. One branch of trade stops, and those branches dependent upon it, or allied with it, cannot continue. This spreads. Depression grows, failures increase, industry is paralyzed. The crisis has come! And then may be observed the paradoxical spectacle of glutted warehouses and starving multitudes. Then comes the slow and painful recovery of years, then an acceleration of planless production, and then another crisis. This is friction, the inevitable correlative of a disorderly system of production and distribution. And the losses incurred by such friction are incalculable.

COMMERCIAL SELECTION

The forces of evolution, effecting their ends under various guises are, after all, one and the same principle. They are conscious of neither good nor evil, and work blindly. In any given environment they decide which are to survive and which to perish. But the environment they do not question; it is no concern of theirs, for they work only with the material that is. Nor are they to be bribed or deceived. If it be a good environment, they will see to it that the good endure and the race be lifted; if an evil environment, they will select the evil for survival, and degeneration or race deterioration will follow.

In the world primeval, man was almost utterly the creature of his natural environment. Possessing locomotion, he could change the conditions which surrounded him only by removing himself to some other portion of the earth’s surface. But man so developed that the time came where he could change his natural environment, not by removing but by reacting upon it. If there were ferocious animals, he destroyed them; pestilential marshes, he drained them. He cleared the ground that he might till it, made roads, built bridges — in short, conquered his natural environment. Thus it was that the road-maker and bridge-builder survived, and those who would make neither roads nor bridges were stamped out.

But to-day, in all but the most primitive communities, man has conquered his natural environment and become the creature of an artificial environment which he himself has created. Natural selection has seemingly been suspended; in reality, it has taken on new forms. Among these may be noted military and commercial selection. Intertribal warfare, in which farming and fighting are carried on alike by all male members of the community, does not give rise to military selection. This arises only when tribes have united to form the state, and division of labor decides it to be more practicable that part of the community farm all the time, and part of the community fight all the time. Thus is created the standing army and the regular soldier. The stronger, the braver, the more indomitable, are selected to go to the wars, and to die early, without offspring. The weaker are sent to the plow and permitted to perpetuate their kind. As Doctor Jordan has remarked, the best are sent forth, the second-best remain. But it does not stop at this. The best of the second-best are next sent, and the third-best is left. The French peasant of to-day demonstrated what manner of man is left to the soil after one hundred years or so of military selection. Where are the soldiers of Greece, Sparta and Rome? They lie on countless fields of battle, and with them their descendents which were not. The degenerate peoples of those countries are the descendants of those who remained to the soil — “of those who were left,” Doctor Jordan aptly puts it.

To-day, however more especially among ourselves military selection has waned, but commercial selection has waxed. Those members of the social organism who are successful in the warfare of the units, are the ones selected to survive. Regardless of the real welfare of the race, those individuals who better adapt themselves to the actual environment are permitted to exist and perpetuate themselves. Under the industrial system as at present conducted, in all branches the demand for units is less than is the supply. This renders the unit helpless. Trade is unsentimental, unscrupulous. The man who succeeds in acquiring wealth, is assured of his own survival and that of his progeny. Much selfishness and little altruism must be his, and the heritage he passes down; otherwise he will not acquire his wealth, nor his descendents retain theirs, and both he and they will be relegated to the middle class. Here the keenest and usually the more conscienceless trader survives. If he be unwise or lenient in his dealings, he will fail and descend to the working class. Conditions here change. The individual who can work most, on least, and bow his head best to the captains of industry, survives. If he cannot do these things well, his place is taken by those who can, and he falls into the slum class. Again conditions change. In the slums, the person who brings with him or is born there with normal morals, et cetera, must either yield or be exterminated; for the criminal, the beggar and the thief are best fitted to survive in such an environment and to propagate their kind.

Briefly outlined, this is commercial selection. The individual asserts its claims, to the detriment and injury of the type. It is well known that the intensity of the struggle has increased many fold in the last five decades, and it is self-evident that its intensity must still further and frightfully increase in the next five decades, unless the present system of production and distribution undergoes a modification for the better. Retaining it in its entirety, there are two salutary but at the same time absurd ways of ameliorating things: either kill off half the units, or destroy all machinery. But this is as temporary as it is unwise. Only a little while and commercial select would again prevail. Besides, man must go forward; he can neither stop nor turn back. Commercial selection means race prostitution, and if continued, race deterioration. Internal competition must be minimized and industry yield more and more to the coöperative principle. For the good of the present and the future generations, certain rights of the individual must be curtailed or surrendered. Yet this is nothing new to the individual; his whole past is a history of such surrenders.

The old indictment that competitive capital is soulless, still holds. Altruism and industrial competition are mutually destructive. They cannot exist together. The struggling capitalist who may entertain philanthropic notions concerning the conduct of his business, is illogical, and false to his position and himself, and if he persists he will surely fail. Competitive industry is not concerned with right or wrong; its sole and perpetual query is, How may I undersell my competitors? And one answer only is vouchsafed: By producing more cheaply. The capitalist who wishes to keep his head above the tide must scale his labor and raw material as relentlessly as do his business rivals, or even a little more so. There are two ways of scaling raw material: by reducing quality and adulterating, or by forcing the producer to sell more cheaply. But the producer cannot scale nature; there is nothing left for him to do but scale his labor. Altruism is incompatible with business success. This being so, foul air, vile water, poor and adulterated foods, unhealthy factory work, crowding, disease, and all that drags down the physical, mental and moral tone of the community, are consistent and essential adjuncts of the competitive system.

THE ESTHETIC LOSS

As being the more striking, the only form of art here considered will be that which appeals to the mind through the eye; but what is said will apply, subject to various modifications, to all other forms of the esthetic. Art is at present enjoyed by a greatly favored but very small portion of the community — the rich and those that are permitted to mingle with them. The poor, lacking not only in time and means but in the training so essential to a just comprehension of the beautiful, and having offered to them only the inferior grades, and because of all of this, reacting upon an already harsh environment, live unlovely lives and dies without having feasted their souls on the real treasures of life.

And even to the rich and those that cling about their skirts, only fleeting visions may be had of art. Their homes and galleries may be all the soul desires; but the instant they venture on the streets of the city, they have left the realm of beauty for an unsightly dominion, where the utilitarian makes the world hideous and survives, and the idealist is banished or exterminated.

Art, to be truly effective, should be part and parcel of life, and pervade it in all it interstices. It should be work-a-day as well as idle-day. Full justice should be accorded the artist of the period; to do this the whole community should enjoy, appreciate and understand the work of on who has toiled at creating the beautiful. Nor can this be done till the belly-need is made a subsidiary accompaniment of life, instead of being, as it now is to so many, the sole and all-important aim.

Present-day art may be characterized as a few scattered oases amid a desert of industrial ugliness. Not even among the rich can all refresh themselves at the founts. The nineteenth-century business man has not time for such. He is the slave of his desk, the genie of the dollar.

The artist exerts himself for a very small audience indeed. The general public never attains a standard of comprehension; it cannot measure his work. It looks upon his wares in the light of curiosities, baubles, luxuries, blind to the fact that they are objects which should conduce to the highest pleasure. And herein great injury is done the artist, and heavy limitations are laid upon him. But so long as “society flourishes by the antagonism of its units,” art, in its full, broad scope will have neither place nor significance; the artist will not receive justice for his travail, nor the people compensation for their labor in the common drudgery of life.

INDIVIDUALITY

Variety is the essence of progress; its manifestation is the manifestation of individuality. Man advanced to his dominant position among the vertebrates because his “apelike and probably arboreal ancestors” possessed variety to an unusual degree. And in turn, the races of man possessing the greatest variability advanced to the center of the world-stage, while those possessing the least retreated to the background or to oblivion.

There should be no one type of man. A community in which all men are run in the same mold is virtually bankrupt, though its strong-boxes be overflowing with the treasures of the world. Such a community can endure only through a process of vegetation; it must remain silent or suffer ignominy. An instance of this is afforded by Spain and her Invincible Armada. The Spaniards were great fighting-men; so were the English. But the English could also build ships and sail them, cast cannon and shoot them. In short, the English possessed and utilized variety. Spain, through a vicious social selection, had lost the greater part of the variety which was hers in the former times. Nor was this loss due to an innate degeneracy of her people, but to her social, political and religious structures.

A people must have some standard by which to measure itself and its individuals; then it must shape its institutions in such manner as will permit its attaining this standard. If the measure of individual worth be, How much have I made? the present competitive system is the best medium by which to gain that end; but under all its guises it will form a certain type — from the factory hand to the millionaire there will be the one stamp of material acquisitiveness. But if the measure be, What have I made of myself? it cannot be attained by the present system. The demand of the belly-need is too strong; the friction too great: individuality is repressed, forced to manifest itself in acquisitiveness and selfishness. And after all, the greatness of a community lies not in the strength of its strong-boxes, nor in the extravagant follies of a few of its members, but in its wisdom, its power for good, and its possibility of realizing itself the highest and the best. It were well to stand, as Doctor Jordan has said, "for civic ideals, and the greatest of these, that government should make men by giving them freedom to make themselves."

THE HUMAN DRIFT

This non-fiction collection was first published in 1917. From the viewpoint of an adventurer, London comments on many things which he has seen in his world travels, the “human” element being emphasized throughout. The collection epitomises his philosophy of life.

The day London sailed from Broadway on his South Pacific adventure aboard the "Snark"

CONTENTS

THE HUMAN DRIFT
SMALL-BOAT SAILING
FOUR HORSES AND A SAILOR
NOTHING THAT EVER CAME TO ANYTHING
THAT DEAD MEN RISE UP NEVER
A CLASSIC OF THE SEA
A WICKED WOMAN
THE BIRTH MARK

THE HUMAN DRIFT

"The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd
Who rose before us, and as Prophets Burn'd,
Are all but stories, which, awoke from Sleep,
They told their comrades, and to Sleep return'd."

The history of civilisation is a history of wandering, sword in hand, in search of food. In the misty younger world we catch glimpses of phantom races, rising, slaying, finding food, building rude civilisations, decaying, falling under the swords of stronger hands, and passing utterly away. Man, like any other animal, has roved over the earth seeking what he might devour; and not romance and adventure, but the hunger-need, has urged him on his vast adventures. Whether a bankrupt gentleman sailing to colonise Virginia or a lean Cantonese contracting to labour on the sugar plantations of Hawaii, in each case, gentleman and coolie, it is a desperate attempt to get something to eat, to get more to eat than he can get at home.

It has always been so, from the time of the first pre-human anthropoid crossing a mountain-divide in quest of better berry-bushes beyond, down to the latest Slovak, arriving on our shores to-day, to go to work in the coal-mines of Pennsylvania. These migratory movements of peoples have been called drifts, and the word is apposite. Unplanned, blind, automatic, spurred on by the pain of hunger, man has literally drifted his way around the planet. There have been drifts in the past, innumerable and forgotten, and so remote that no records have been left, or composed of such low-typed humans or pre-humans that they made no scratchings on stone or bone and left no monuments to show that they had been.

These early drifts we conjecture and know must have occurred, just as we know that the first upright-walking brutes were descended from some kin of the quadrumana through having developed "a pair of great toes out of two opposable thumbs." Dominated by fear, and by their very fear accelerating their development, these early ancestors of ours, suffering hunger-pangs very like the ones we experience to-day, drifted on, hunting and being hunted, eating and being eaten, wandering through thousand-year-long odysseys of screaming primordial savagery, until they left their skeletons in glacial gravels, some of them, and their bone-scratchings in cave-men's lairs.

There have been drifts from east to west and west to east, from north to south and back again, drifts that have criss-crossed one another, and drifts colliding and recoiling and caroming off in new directions. From Central Europe the Aryans have drifted into Asia, and from Central Asia the Turanians have drifted across Europe. Asia has thrown forth great waves of hungry humans from the prehistoric "round-barrow" "broad-heads" who overran Europe and penetrated to Scandinavia and England, down through the hordes of Attila and Tamerlane, to the present immigration of Chinese and Japanese that threatens America. The Phoenicians and the Greeks, with unremembered drifts behind them, colonised the Mediterranean. Rome was engulfed in the torrent of Germanic tribes drifting down from the north before a flood of drifting Asiatics. The Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, after having drifted whence no man knows, poured into Britain, and the English have carried this drift on around the world. Retreating before stronger breeds, hungry and voracious, the Eskimo has drifted to the inhospitable polar regions, the Pigmy to the fever-rotten jungles of Africa. And in this day the drift of the races continues, whether it be of Chinese into the Philippines and the Malay Peninsula, of Europeans to the United States or of Americans to the wheat-lands of Manitoba and the Northwest.

Perhaps most amazing has been the South Sea Drift. Blind, fortuitous, precarious as no other drift has been, nevertheless the islands in that waste of ocean have received drift after drift of the races. Down from the mainland of Asia poured an Aryan drift that built civilisations in Ceylon, Java, and Sumatra. Only the monuments of these Aryans remain. They themselves have perished utterly, though not until after leaving evidences of their drift clear across the great South Pacific to far Easter Island. And on that drift they encountered races who had accomplished the drift before them, and they, the Aryans, passed, in turn, before the drift of other and subsequent races whom we to-day call the Polynesian and the Melanesian.

Man early discovered death. As soon as his evolution permitted, he made himself better devices for killing than the old natural ones of fang and claw. He devoted himself to the invention of killing devices before he discovered fire or manufactured for himself religion. And to this day, his finest creative energy and technical skill are devoted to the same old task of making better and ever better killing weapons. All his days, down all the past, have been spent in killing. And from the fear-stricken, jungle-lurking, cave-haunting creature of long ago, he won to empery over the whole animal world because he developed into the most terrible and awful killer of all the animals. He found himself crowded. He killed to make room, and as he made room ever he increased and found himself crowded, and ever he went on killing to make more room. Like a settler clearing land of its weeds and forest bushes in order to plant corn, so man was compelled to clear all manner of life away in order to plant himself. And, sword in hand, he has literally hewn his way through the vast masses of life that occupied the earth space he coveted for himself. And ever he has carried the battle wider and wider, until to-day not only is he a far more capable killer of men and animals than ever before, but he has pressed the battle home to the infinite and invisible hosts of menacing lives in the world of micro-organisms.

It is true, that they that rose by the sword perished by the sword. And yet, not only did they not all perish, but more rose by the sword than perished by it, else man would not to-day be over-running the world in such huge swarms. Also, it must not be forgotten that they who did not rise by the sword did not rise at all. They were not. In view of this, there is something wrong with Doctor Jordan's war-theory, which is to the effect that the best being sent out to war, only the second best, the men who are left, remain to breed a second-best race, and that, therefore, the human race deteriorates under war. If this be so, if we have sent forth the best we bred and gone on breeding from the men who were left, and since we have done this for ten thousand millenniums and are what we splendidly are to-day, then what unthinkably splendid and god-like beings must have been our forebears those ten thousand millenniums ago! Unfortunately for Doctor Jordan's theory, those ancient forebears cannot live up to this fine reputation. We know them for what they were, and before the monkey cage of any menagerie we catch truer glimpses and hints and resemblances of what our ancestors really were long and long ago. And by killing, incessant killing, by making a shambles of the planet, those ape-like creatures have developed even into you and me. As Henley has said in "The Song of the Sword":

"*The Sword Singing —*

Driving the darkness,
Even as the banners
And spear of the Morning;
Sifting the nations,
The Slag from the metal,
The waste and the weak
From the fit and the strong;
Fighting the brute,
The abysmal Fecundity;
Checking the gross
Multitudinous blunders,
The groping, the purblind
Excesses in service
Of the Womb universal,
The absolute drudge."

As time passed and man increased, he drifted ever farther afield in search of room. He encountered other drifts of men, and the killing of men became prodigious. The weak and the decadent fell under the sword. Nations that faltered, that waxed prosperous in fat valleys and rich river deltas, were swept away by the drifts of stronger men who were nourished on the hardships of deserts and mountains and who were more capable with the sword. Unknown and unnumbered billions of men have been so destroyed in prehistoric times. Draper says that in the twenty years of the Gothic war, Italy lost 15,000,000 of her population; "and that the wars, famines, and pestilences of the reign of Justinian diminished the human species by the almost incredible number of 100,000,000." Germany, in the Thirty Years' War, lost 6,000,000 inhabitants. The record of our own American Civil War need scarcely be recalled.

And man has been destroyed in other ways than by the sword. Flood, famine, pestilence and murder are potent factors in reducing population — in making room. As Mr. Charles Woodruff, in his "Expansion of Races," has instanced: In 1886, when the dikes of the Yellow River burst, 7,000,000 people were drowned. The failure of crops in Ireland, in 1848, caused 1,000,000 deaths. The famines in India of 1896-7 and 1899-1900 lessened the population by 21,000,000. The T'ai'ping rebellion and the Mohammedan rebellion, combined with the famine of 1877-78, destroyed scores of millions of Chinese. Europe has been swept repeatedly by great plagues. In India, for the period of 1903 to 1907, the plague deaths averaged between one and two millions a year. Mr. Woodruff is responsible for the assertion that 10,000,000 persons now living in the United States are doomed to die of tuberculosis. And in this same country ten thousand persons a year are directly murdered. In China, between three and six millions of infants are annually destroyed, while the total infanticide record of the whole world is appalling. In Africa, now, human beings are dying by millions of the sleeping sickness.

More destructive of life than war, is industry. In all civilised countries great masses of people are crowded into slums and labour-ghettos, where disease festers, vice corrodes, and famine is chronic, and where they die more swiftly and in greater numbers than do the soldiers in our modern wars. The very infant mortality of a slum parish in the East End of London is three times that of a middle-class parish in the West End. In the United States, in the last fourteen years, a total of coal-miners, greater than our entire standing army, has been killed and injured. The United States Bureau of Labour states that during the year 1908, there were between 30,000 and 35,000 deaths of workers by accidents, while 200,000 more were injured. In fact, the safest place for a working-man is in the army. And even if that army be at the front, fighting in Cuba or South Africa, the soldier in the ranks has a better chance for life than the working-man at home.

And yet, despite this terrible roll of death, despite the enormous killing of the past and the enormous killing of the present, there are to-day alive on the planet a billion and three quarters of human beings. Our immediate conclusion is that man is exceedingly fecund and very tough. Never before have there been so many people in the world. In the past centuries the world's population has been smaller; in the future centuries it is destined to be larger. And this brings us to that old bugbear that has been so frequently laughed away and that still persists in raising its grisly head — namely, the doctrine of Malthus. While man's increasing efficiency of food-production, combined with colonisation of whole virgin continents, has for generations given the apparent lie to Malthus' mathematical statement of the Law of Population, nevertheless the essential significance of his doctrine remains and cannot be challenged. Population *does* press against subsistence. And no matter how rapidly subsistence increases, population is certain to catch up with it.

When man was in the hunting stage of development, wide areas were necessary for the maintenance of scant populations. With the shepherd stages, the means of subsistence being increased, a larger population was supported on the same territory. The agricultural stage gave support to a still larger population; and, to-day, with the increased food-getting efficiency of a machine civilisation, an even larger population is made possible. Nor is this theoretical. The population is here, a billion and three quarters of men, women, and children, and this vast population is increasing on itself by leaps and bounds.

A heavy European drift to the New World has gone on and is going on; yet Europe, whose population a century ago was 170,000,000, has to-day 500,000,000. At this rate of increase, provided that subsistence is not overtaken, a century from now the population of Europe will be 1,500,000,000. And be it noted of the present rate of increase in the United States that only one-third is due to immigration, while two-thirds is due to excess of births over deaths. And at this present rate of increase, the population of the United States will be 500,000,000 in less than a century from now.

Man, the hungry one, the killer, has always suffered for lack of room. The world has been chronically overcrowded. Belgium with her 572 persons to the square mile is no more crowded than was Denmark when it supported only 500 palæolithic people. According to Mr. Woodruff, cultivated land will produce 1600 times as much food as hunting land. From the time of the Norman Conquest, for centuries Europe could support no more than 25 to the square mile. To-day Europe supports 81 to the square mile. The explanation of this is that for the several centuries after the Norman Conquest her population was saturated. Then, with the development of trading and capitalism, of exploration and exploitation of new lands, and with the invention of labour-saving machinery and the discovery and application of scientific principles, was brought about a tremendous increase in Europe's food-getting efficiency. And immediately her population sprang up.

According to the census of Ireland, of 1659, that country had a population of 500,000. One hundred and fifty years later, her population was 8,000,000. For many centuries the population of Japan was stationary. There seemed no way of increasing her food-getting efficiency. Then, sixty years ago, came Commodore Perry, knocking down her doors and letting in the knowledge and machinery of the superior food-getting efficiency of the Western world. Immediately upon this rise in subsistence began the rise of population; and it is only the other day that Japan, finding her population once again pressing against subsistence, embarked, sword in hand, on a westward drift in search of more room. And, sword in hand, killing and being killed, she has carved out for herself Formosa and Korea, and driven the vanguard of her drift far into the rich interior of Manchuria.

For an immense period of time China's population has remained at 400,000,000 — the saturation point. The only reason that the Yellow River periodically drowns millions of Chinese is that there is no other land for those millions to farm. And after every such catastrophe the wave of human life rolls up and now millions flood out upon that precarious territory. They are driven to it, because they are pressed remorselessly against subsistence. It is inevitable that China, sooner or later, like Japan, will learn and put into application our own superior food-getting efficiency. And when that time comes, it is likewise inevitable that her population will increase by unguessed millions until it again reaches the saturation point. And then, inoculated with Western ideas, may she not, like Japan, take sword in hand and start forth colossally on a drift of her own for more room? This is another reputed bogie — the Yellow Peril; yet the men of China are only men, like any other race of men, and all men, down all history, have drifted hungrily, here, there and everywhere over the planet, seeking for something to eat. What other men do, may not the Chinese do?

But a change has long been coming in the affairs of man. The more recent drifts of the stronger races, carving their way through the lesser breeds to more earth-space, has led to peace, ever to wider and more lasting peace. The lesser breeds, under penalty of being killed, have been compelled to lay down their weapons and cease killing among themselves. The scalp-talking Indian and the head-hunting Melanesian have been either destroyed or converted to a belief in the superior efficacy of civil suits and criminal prosecutions. The planet is being subdued. The wild and the hurtful are either tamed or eliminated. From the beasts of prey and the cannibal humans down to the death-dealing microbes, no quarter is given; and daily, wider and wider areas of hostile territory, whether of a warring desert-tribe in Africa or a pestilential fever-hole like Panama, are made peaceable and habitable for mankind. As for the great mass of stay-at-home folk, what percentage of the present generation in the United States, England, or Germany, has seen war or knows anything of war at first hand? There was never so much peace in the world as there is to-day.

War itself, the old red anarch, is passing. It is safer to be a soldier than a working-man. The chance for life is greater in an active campaign than in a factory or a coal-mine. In the matter of killing, war is growing impotent, and this in face of the fact that the machinery of war was never so expensive in the past nor so dreadful. War-equipment to-day, in time of peace, is more expensive than of old in time of war. A standing army costs more to maintain than it used to cost to conquer an empire. It is more expensive to be ready to kill, than it used to be to do the killing. The price of a Dreadnought would furnish the whole army of Xerxes with killing weapons. And, in spite of its magnificent equipment, war no longer kills as it used to when its methods were simpler. A bombardment by a modern fleet has been known to result in the killing of one mule. The casualties of a twentieth century war between two world-powers are such as to make a worker in an iron-foundry turn green with envy. War has become a joke. Men have made for themselves monsters of battle which they cannot face in battle. Subsistence is generous these days, life is not cheap, and it is not in the nature of flesh and blood to indulge in the carnage made possible by present-day machinery. This is not theoretical, as will be shown by a comparison of deaths in battle and men involved, in the South African War and the Spanish-American War on the one hand, and the Civil War or the Napoleonic Wars on the other.

Not only has war, by its own evolution, rendered itself futile, but man himself, with greater wisdom and higher ethics, is opposed to war. He has learned too much. War is repugnant to his common sense. He conceives it to be wrong, to be absurd, and to be very expensive. For the damage wrought and the results accomplished, it is not worth the price. Just as in the disputes of individuals the arbitration of a civil court instead of a blood feud is more practical, so, man decides, is arbitration more practical in the disputes of nations.

War is passing, disease is being conquered, and man's food-getting efficiency is increasing. It is because of these factors that there are a billion and three quarters of people alive to-day instead of a billion, or three-quarters of a billion. And it is because of these factors that the world's population will very soon be two billions and climbing rapidly toward three billions. The lifetime of the generation is increasing steadily. Men live longer these days. Life is not so precarious. The newborn infant has a greater chance for survival than at any time in the past. Surgery and sanitation reduce the fatalities that accompany the mischances of life and the ravages of disease. Men and women, with deficiencies and weaknesses that in the past would have effected their rapid extinction, live to-day and father and mother a numerous progeny. And high as the food-getting efficiency may soar, population is bound to soar after it. "The abysmal fecundity" of life has not altered. Given the food, and life will increase. A small percentage of the billion and three-quarters that live to-day may hush the clamour of life to be born, but it is only a small percentage. In this particular, the life in the man-animal is very like the life in the other animals.

And still another change is coming in human affairs. Though politicians gnash their teeth and cry anathema, and man, whose superficial book-learning is vitiated by crystallised prejudice, assures us that civilisation will go to smash, the trend of society, to-day, the world over, is toward socialism. The old individualism is passing. The state interferes more and more in affairs that hitherto have been considered sacredly private. And socialism, when the last word is said, is merely a new economic and political system whereby more men can get food to eat. In short, socialism is an improved food-getting efficiency.

Furthermore, not only will socialism get food more easily and in greater quantity, but it will achieve a more equitable distribution of that food. Socialism promises, for a time, to give all men, women, and children all they want to eat, and to enable them to eat all they want as often as they want. Subsistence will be pushed back, temporarily, an exceedingly long way. In consequence, the flood of life will rise like a tidal wave. There will be more marriages and more children born. The enforced sterility that obtains to-day for many millions, will no longer obtain. Nor will the fecund millions in the slums and labour-ghettos, who to-day die of all the ills due to chronic underfeeding and overcrowding, and who die with their fecundity largely unrealised, die in that future day when the increased food-getting efficiency of socialism will give them all they want to eat.

It is undeniable that population will increase prodigiously-just as it has increased prodigiously during the last few centuries, following upon the increase in food-getting efficiency. The magnitude of population in that future day is well nigh unthinkable. But there is only so much land and water on the surface of the earth. Man, despite his marvellous accomplishments, will never be able to increase the diameter of the planet. The old days of virgin continents will be gone. The habitable planet, from ice-cap to ice-cap, will be inhabited. And in the matter of food-getting, as in everything else, man is only finite. Undreamed-of efficiencies in food-getting may be achieved, but, soon or late, man will find himself face to face with Malthus' grim law. Not only will population catch up with subsistence, but it will press against subsistence, and the pressure will be pitiless and savage. Somewhere in the future is a date when man will face, consciously, the bitter fact that there is not food enough for all of him to eat.

When this day comes, what then? Will there be a recrudescence of old obsolete war? In a saturated population life is always cheap, as it is cheap in China, in India, to-day. Will new human drifts take place, questing for room, carving earth-space out of crowded life. Will the Sword again sing:

"Follow, O follow, then,
Heroes, my harvesters!
Where the tall grain is ripe
Thrust in your sickles!
Stripped and adust
In a stubble of empire
Scything and binding
The full sheaves of sovereignty."

Even if, as of old, man should wander hungrily, sword in hand, slaying and being slain, the relief would be only temporary. Even if one race alone should hew down the last survivor of all the other races, that one race, drifting the world around, would saturate the planet with its own life and again press against subsistence. And in that day, the death rate and the birth rate will have to balance. Men will have to die, or be prevented from being born. Undoubtedly a higher quality of life will obtain, and also a slowly decreasing fecundity. But this decrease will be so slow that the pressure against subsistence will remain. The control of progeny will be one of the most important problems of man and one of the most important functions of the state. Men will simply be not permitted to be born.

Disease, from time to time, will ease the pressure. Diseases are parasites, and it must not be forgotten that just as there are drifts in the world of man, so are there drifts in the world of micro-organisms — hunger-quests for food. Little is known of the micro-organic world, but that little is appalling;

and no census of it will ever be taken, for there is the true, literal "abysmal fecundity." Multitudinous as man is, all his totality of individuals is as nothing in comparison with the inconceivable vastness of numbers of the micro-organisms. In your body, or in mine, right now, are swarming more individual entities than there are human beings in the world to-day. It is to us an invisible world. We only guess its nearest confines. With our powerful microscopes and ultramicroscopes, enlarging diameters twenty thousand times, we catch but the slightest glimpses of that profundity of infinitesimal life.

Little is known of that world, save in a general way. We know that out of it arise diseases, new to us, that afflict and destroy man. We do not know whether these diseases are merely the drifts, in a fresh direction, of already-existing breeds of micro-organisms, or whether they are new, absolutely new, breeds themselves just spontaneously generated. The latter hypothesis is tenable, for we theorise that if spontaneous generation still occurs on the earth, it is far more likely to occur in the form of simple organisms than of complicated organisms.

Another thing we know, and that is that it is in crowded populations that new diseases arise. They have done so in the past. They do so to-day. And no matter how wise are our physicians and bacteriologists, no matter how successfully they cope with these invaders, new invaders continue to arise — new drifts of hungry life seeking to devour us. And so we are justified in believing that in the saturated populations of the future, when life is suffocating in the pressure against subsistence, that new, and ever new, hosts of destroying micro-organisms will continue to arise and fling themselves upon earth-crowded man to give him room. There may even be plagues of unprecedented ferocity that will depopulate great areas before the wit of man can overcome them. And this we know: that no matter how often these invisible hosts may be overcome by man's becoming immune to them through a cruel and terrible selection, new hosts will ever arise of these micro-organisms that were in the world before he came and that will be here after he is gone.

After he is gone? Will he then some day be gone, and this planet know him no more? Is it thither that the human drift in all its totality is trending? God Himself is silent on this point, though some of His prophets have given us vivid representations of that last day when the earth shall pass into nothingness. Nor does science, despite its radium speculations and its attempted analyses of the ultimate nature of matter, give us any other word than that man will pass. So far as man's knowledge goes, law is universal. Elements react under certain unchangeable conditions. One of these conditions is temperature. Whether it be in the test tube of the laboratory or the workshop of nature, all organic chemical reactions take place only within a restricted range of heat. Man, the latest of the ephemera, is pitifully a creature of temperature, strutting his brief day on the thermometer. Behind him is a past wherein it was too warm for him to exist. Ahead of him is a future wherein it will be too cold for him to exist. He cannot adjust himself to that future, because he cannot alter universal law, because he cannot alter his own construction nor the molecules that compose him.

It would be well to ponder these lines of Herbert Spencer's which follow, and which embody, possibly, the wildest vision the scientific mind has ever achieved:

"Motion as well as Matter being fixed in quantity, it would seem that the change in the distribution of Matter which Motion effects, coming to a limit in whichever direction it is carried, the indestructible Motion thereupon necessitates a reverse distribution. Apparently, the universally-co-existent forces of attraction and repulsion, which, as we have seen, necessitate rhythm in all minor changes throughout the Universe, also necessitate rhythm in the totality of its changes — produce now an immeasurable period during which the attractive forces predominating, cause universal concentration, and then an immeasurable period during which the repulsive forces predominating, cause universal diffusion — alternate eras of Evolution and Dissolution. *And thus there is suggested the conception of a past during which there have been successive Evolutions analogous to that which is now going on; a future during which successive other Evolutions may go on — ever the same in principle but never the same in concrete result*."

That is it — the most we know — alternate eras of evolution and dissolution. In the past there have been other evolutions similar to that one in which we live, and in the future there may be other similar evolutions — that is all. The principle of all these evolutions remains, but the concrete results are never twice alike. Man was not; he was; and again he will not be. In eternity which is beyond our comprehension, the particular evolution of that solar satellite we call the "Earth" occupied but a slight fraction of time. And of that fraction of time man occupies but a small portion. All the whole human drift, from the first ape-man to the last savant, is but a phantom, a flash of light and a flutter of movement across the infinite face of the starry night.

When the thermometer drops, man ceases — with all his lusts and wrestlings and achievements; with all his race-adventures and race-tragedies; and with all his red killings, billions upon billions of human lives multiplied by as many billions more. This is the last word of Science, unless there be some further, unguessed word which Science will some day find and utter. In the meantime it sees no farther than the starry void, where the "fleeting systems lapse like foam." Of what ledger-account is the tiny life of man in a vastness where stars snuff out like candles and great suns blaze for a time-tick of eternity and are gone?

And for us who live, no worse can happen than has happened to the earliest drifts of man, marked to-day by ruined cities of forgotten civilisation — ruined cities, which, on excavation, are found to rest on ruins of earlier cities, city upon city, and fourteen cities, down to a stratum where, still earlier, wandering herdsmen drove their flocks, and where, even preceding them, wild hunters chased their prey long after the cave-man and the man of the squatting-place cracked the knuckle-bones of wild animals and vanished from the earth. There is nothing terrible about it. With Richard Hovey, when he faced his death, we can say: "Behold! I have lived!" And with another and greater one, we can lay ourselves down with a will. The one drop of living, the one taste of being, has been good; and perhaps our greatest achievement will be that we dreamed immortality, even though we failed to realise it.

SMALL-BOAT SAILING

A sailor is born, not made. And by "sailor" is meant, not the average efficient and hopeless creature who is found to-day in the forecastle of deepwater ships, but the man who will take a fabric compounded of wood and iron and rope and canvas and compel it to obey his will on the surface of the sea. Barring captains and mates of big ships, the small-boat sailor is the real sailor. He knows — he must know — how to make the wind carry his craft from one given point to another given point. He must know about tides and rips and eddies, bar and channel markings, and day and night signals; he must be wise in weather-lore; and he must be sympathetically familiar with the peculiar qualities of his boat which differentiate it from every other boat that was ever built and rigged. He must know how to gentle her about, as one instance of a myriad, and to fill her on the other tack without deadening her way or allowing her to fall off too far.

The deepwater sailor of to-day needs know none of these things. And he doesn't. He pulls and hauls as he is ordered, swabs decks, washes paint, and chips iron-rust. He knows nothing, and cares less. Put him in a small boat and he is helpless. He will cut an even better figure on the hurricane deck of a horse.

I shall never forget my child-astonishment when I first encountered one of these strange beings. He was a runaway English sailor. I was a lad of twelve, with a decked-over, fourteen-foot, centre-board skiff which I had taught myself to sail. I sat at his feet as at the feet of a god, while he discoursed of strange lands and peoples, deeds of violence, and hair-raising gales at sea. Then, one day, I took him for a sail. With all the trepidation of the veriest little amateur, I hoisted sail and got under way. Here was a man, looking on critically, I was sure, who knew more in one second about boats and the water than I could ever know. After an interval, in which I exceeded myself, he took the tiller and the sheet. I sat on the little thwart amidships, open-mouthed, prepared to learn what real sailing was. My mouth remained open, for I learned what a real sailor was in a small boat. He couldn't trim the sheet to save himself, he nearly capsized several times in squalls, and, once again, by blunderingly jibing over; he didn't know what a centre-board was for, nor did he know that in running a boat before the wind one must sit in the middle instead of on the side; and finally, when we came back to the wharf, he ran the skiff in full tilt, shattering her nose and carrying away the mast-step. And yet he was a really truly sailor fresh from the vasty deep.

Which points my moral. A man can sail in the forecastles of big ships all his life and never know what real sailing is. From the time I was twelve, I listened to the lure of the sea. When I was fifteen I was captain and owner of an oyster-pirate sloop. By the time I was sixteen I was sailing in scow-schooners, fishing salmon with the Greeks up the Sacramento River, and serving as sailor on the Fish Patrol. And I was a good sailor, too, though all my cruising had been on San Francisco Bay and the rivers tributary to it. I had never been on the ocean in my life.

Then, the month I was seventeen, I signed before the mast as an able seaman on a three-top-mast schooner bound on a seven-months' cruise across the Pacific and back again. As my shipmates promptly informed me, I had had my nerve with me to sign on as able seaman. Yet behold, I *was* an able seaman. I had graduated from the right school. It took no more than minutes to learn the names and uses of the few new ropes. It was simple. I did not do things blindly. As a small-boat sailor I had learned to reason out and know the *why* of everything. It is true, I had to learn how to steer by compass, which took maybe half a minute; but when it came to steering "full-and-by" and "close-and-by," I could beat the average of my shipmates, because that was the very way I had always sailed. Inside fifteen minutes I could box the compass around and back again. And there was little else to learn during that seven-months' cruise, except fancy rope-sailorising, such as the more complicated lanyard knots and the making of various kinds of sennit and rope-mats. The point of all of which is that it is by means of small-boat sailing that the real sailor is best schooled.

And if a man is a born sailor, and has gone to the school of the sea, never in all his life can he get away from the sea again. The salt of it is in his bones as well as his nostrils, and the sea will call to him until he dies. Of late years, I have found easier ways of earning a living. I have quit the forecastle for keeps, but always I come back to the sea. In my case it is usually San Francisco Bay, than which no lustier, tougher, sheet of water can be found for small-boat sailing.

It really blows on San Francisco Bay. During the winter, which is the best cruising season, we have southeasters, southwesters, and occasional howling northers. Throughout the summer we have what we call the "sea-breeze," an unfailing wind off the Pacific that on most afternoons in the week blows what the Atlantic Coast yachtsmen would name a gale. They are always surprised by the small spread of canvas our yachts carry. Some of them, with schooners they have sailed around the Horn, have looked proudly at their own lofty sticks and huge spreads, then patronisingly and even pityingly at ours. Then, perchance, they have joined in a club cruise from San Francisco to Mare Island. They found the morning run up the Bay delightful. In the afternoon, when the brave west wind ramped across San Pablo Bay and they faced it on the long beat home, things were somewhat different. One by one, like a flight of swallows, our more meagrely sparred and canvassed yachts went by, leaving them wallowing and dead and shortening down in what they called a gale but which we called a dandy sailing breeze. The next time they came out, we would notice their sticks cut down, their booms shortened, and their after-leeches nearer the luffs by whole cloths.

As for excitement, there is all the difference in the world between a ship in trouble at sea, and a small boat in trouble on land-locked water. Yet for genuine excitement and thrill, give me the small boat. Things happen so quickly, and there are always so few to do the work — and hard work, too, as the small-boat sailor knows. I have toiled all night, both watches on deck, in a typhoon off the coast of Japan, and been less exhausted than by two hours' work at reefing down a thirty-foot sloop and heaving up two anchors on a lee shore in a screaming southeaster.

Hard work and excitement? Let the wind baffle and drop in a heavy tide-way just as you are sailing your little sloop through a narrow draw-bridge. Behold your sails, upon which you are depending, flap with sudden emptiness, and then see the impish wind, with a haul of eight points, fill your jib aback with a gusty puff. Around she goes, and sweeps, not through the open draw, but broadside on against the solid piles. Hear the roar of the tide, sucking through the trestle. And hear and see your pretty, fresh-painted boat crash against the piles. Feel her stout little hull give to the impact. See the rail actually pinch in. Hear your canvas tearing, and see the black, square-ended timbers thrusting holes through it. Smash! There goes your topmast stay, and the topmast reels over drunkenly above you.

There is a ripping and crunching. If it continues, your starboard shrouds will be torn out. Grab a rope — any rope — and take a turn around a pile. But the free end of the rope is too short. You can't make it fast, and you hold on and wildly yell for your one companion to get a turn with another and longer rope. Hold on! You hold on till you are purple in the face, till it seems your arms are dragging out of their sockets, till the blood bursts from the ends of your fingers. But you hold, and your partner gets the longer rope and makes it fast. You straighten up and look at your hands. They are ruined. You can scarcely relax the crooks of the fingers. The pain is sickening. But there is no time. The skiff, which is always perverse, is pounding against the barnacles on the piles which threaten to scrape its gunwale off. It's drop the peak! Down jib! Then you run lines, and pull and haul and heave, and exchange unpleasant remarks with the bridge-tender who is always willing to meet you more than half way in such repartee. And finally, at the end of an hour, with aching back, sweat-soaked shirt, and slaughtered hands, you are through and swinging along on the placid, beneficent tide between narrow banks where the cattle stand knee-deep and gaze wonderingly at you. Excitement! Work! Can you beat it in a calm day on the deep sea?

I've tried it both ways. I remember labouring in a fourteen days' gale off the coast of New Zealand. We were a tramp collier, rusty and battered, with six thousand tons of coal in our hold. Life lines were stretched fore and aft; and on our weather side, attached to smokestack guys and rigging, were huge rope-nettings, hung there for the purpose of breaking the force of the seas and so saving our mess-room doors. But the doors were smashed and the mess-rooms washed out just the same. And yet, out of it all, arose but the one feeling, namely, of monotony.

In contrast with the foregoing, about the liveliest eight days of my life were spent in a small boat on the west coast of Korea. Never mind why I was thus voyaging up the Yellow Sea during the month of February in below-zero weather. The point is that I was in an open boat, a *sampan*, on a rocky coast where there were no light-houses and where the tides ran from thirty to sixty feet. My crew were Japanese fishermen. We did not speak each other's language. Yet there was nothing monotonous about that trip. Never shall I forget one particular cold bitter dawn, when, in the thick of driving snow, we took in sail and dropped our small anchor. The wind was howling out of the northwest, and we were on a lee shore. Ahead and astern, all escape was cut off by rocky headlands, against whose bases burst the unbroken seas. To windward a short distance, seen only between the snow-squalls, was a low rocky reef. It was this that inadequately protected us from the whole Yellow Sea that thundered in upon us.

The Japanese crawled under a communal rice mat and went to sleep. I joined them, and for several hours we dozed fitfully. Then a sea deluged us out with icy water, and we found several inches of snow on top the mat. The reef to windward was disappearing under the rising tide, and moment by moment the seas broke more strongly over the rocks. The fishermen studied the shore anxiously. So did I, and with a sailor's eye, though I could see little chance for a swimmer to gain that surf-hammered line of rocks. I made signs toward the headlands on either flank. The Japanese shook their heads. I indicated that dreadful lee shore. Still they shook their heads and did nothing. My conclusion was that they were paralysed by the hopelessness of the situation. Yet our extremity increased with every minute, for the rising tide was robbing us of the reef that served as buffer. It soon became a case of swamping at our anchor. Seas were splashing on board in growing volume, and we baled constantly. And still my fishermen crew eyed the surf-battered shore and did nothing.

At last, after many narrow escapes from complete swamping, the fishermen got into action. All hands tailed on to the anchor and hove it up. For'ard, as the boat's head paid off, we set a patch of sail about the size of a flour-sack. And we headed straight for shore. I unlaced my shoes, unbottoned my great-coat and coat, and was ready to make a quick partial strip a minute or so before we struck. But we didn't strike, and, as we rushed in, I saw the beauty of the situation. Before us opened a narrow channel, frilled at its mouth with breaking seas. Yet, long before, when I had scanned the shore closely, there had been no such channel. *I had forgotten the thirty-foot tide*. And it was for this tide that the Japanese had so precariously waited. We ran the frill of breakers, curved into a tiny sheltered bay where the water was scarcely flawed by the gale, and landed on a beach where the salt sea of the last tide lay frozen in long curving lines. And this was one gale of three in the course of those eight days in the *sampan*. Would it have been beaten on a ship? I fear me the ship would have gone aground on the outlying reef and that its people would have been incontinently and monotonously drowned.

There are enough surprises and mishaps in a three-days' cruise in a small boat to supply a great ship on the ocean for a full year. I remember, once, taking out on her trial trip a little thirty-footer I had just bought. In six days we had two stiff blows, and, in addition, one proper southwester and one rip-snorting southeaster. The slight intervals between these blows were dead calms. Also, in the six days, we were aground three times. Then, too, we tied up to the bank in the Sacramento River, and, grounding by an accident on the steep slope on a falling tide, nearly turned a side somersault down the bank. In a stark calm and heavy tide in the Carquinez Straits, where anchors skate on the channel-scoured bottom, we were sucked against a big dock and smashed and bumped down a quarter of a mile of its length before we could get clear. Two hours afterward, on San Pablo Bay, the wind was piping up and we were reefing down. It is no fun to pick up a skiff adrift in a heavy sea and gale. That was our next task, for our skiff, swamping, parted both towing painters we had bent on. Before we recovered it we had nearly killed ourselves with exhaustion, and we certainly had strained the sloop in every part from keelson to truck. And to cap it all, coming into our home port, beating up the narrowest part of the San Antonio Estuary, we had a shave of inches from collision with a big ship in tow of a tug. I have sailed the ocean in far larger craft a year at a time, in which period occurred no such chapter of moving incident.

After all, the mishaps are almost the best part of small-boat sailing. Looking back, they prove to be punctuations of joy. At the time they try your mettle and your vocabulary, and may make you so pessimistic as to believe that God has a grudge against you — but afterward, ah, afterward, with what pleasure you remember them and with what gusto do you relate them to your brother skippers in the fellowhood of small-boat sailing!

A narrow, winding slough; a half tide, exposing mud surfaced with gangrenous slime; the water itself filthy and discoloured by the waste from the vats of a near-by tannery; the marsh grass on either side mottled with all the shades of a decaying orchid; a crazy, ramshackled, ancient wharf; and at the end of the wharf a small, white-painted sloop. Nothing romantic about it. No hint of adventure. A splendid pictorial argument against the alleged joys of small-boat sailing. Possibly that is what Cloudesley and I thought, that sombre, leaden morning as we turned out to cook breakfast and wash decks. The latter was my stunt, but one look at the dirty water overside and another at my fresh-painted deck, deterred me. After breakfast, we started a game of chess. The tide continued to fall, and we felt the sloop begin to list. We played on until the chess men began to fall over. The list increased, and we went on deck. Bow-line and stern-line were drawn taut. As we looked the boat listed still farther with an abrupt jerk. The lines were now very taut.

"As soon as her belly touches the bottom she will stop," I said.

Cloudesley sounded with a boat-hook along the outside.

"Seven feet of water," he announced. "The bank is almost up and down. The first thing that touches will be her mast when she turns bottom up."

An ominous, minute snapping noise came from the stern-line. Even as we looked, we saw a strand fray and part. Then we jumped. Scarcely had we bent another line between the stern and the wharf, when the original line parted. As we bent another line for'ard, the original one there crackled and parted. After that, it was an inferno of work and excitement.

We ran more and more lines, and more and more lines continued to part, and more and more the pretty boat went over on her side. We bent all our spare lines; we unrove sheets and halyards; we used our two-inch hawser; we fastened lines part way up the mast, half way up, and everywhere else. We toiled and sweated and enounced our mutual and sincere conviction that God's grudge still held against us. Country yokels came down on the wharf and sniggered at us. When Cloudesley let a coil of rope slip down the inclined deck into the vile slime and fished it out with seasick countenance, the yokels sniggered louder and it was all I could do to prevent him from climbing up on the wharf and committing murder.

By the time the sloop's deck was perpendicular, we had unbent the boom-lift from below, made it fast to the wharf, and, with the other end fast nearly to the mast-head, heaved it taut with block and tackle. The lift was of steel wire. We were confident that it could stand the strain, but we doubted the holding-power of the stays that held the mast.

The tide had two more hours to ebb (and it was the big run-out), which meant that five hours must elapse ere the returning tide would give us a chance to learn whether or not the sloop would rise to it and right herself.

The bank was almost up and down, and at the bottom, directly beneath us, the fast-ebbing tide left a pit of the vilest, illest-smelling, illest-appearing muck to be seen in many a day's ride. Said Cloudesley to me gazing down into it:

"I love you as a brother. I'd fight for you. I'd face roaring lions, and sudden death by field and flood. But just the same, don't you fall into that." He shuddered nauseously. "For if you do, I haven't the grit to pull you out. I simply couldn't. You'd be awful. The best I could do would be to take a boat-hook and shove you down out of sight."

We sat on the upper side-wall of the cabin, dangled our legs down the top of the cabin, leaned our backs against the deck, and played chess until the rising tide and the block and tackle on the boom-lift enabled us to get her on a respectable keel again. Years afterward, down in the South Seas, on the island of Ysabel, I was caught in a similar predicament. In order to clean her copper, I had careened the *Snark* broadside on to the beach and outward. When the tide rose, she refused to rise. The water crept in through the scuppers, mounted over the rail, and the level of the ocean slowly crawled up the slant of the deck. We battened down the engine-room hatch, and the sea rose to it and over it and climbed perilously near to the cabin companion-way and skylight. We were all sick with fever, but we turned out in the blazing tropic sun and toiled madly for several hours. We carried our heaviest lines ashore from our mast-heads and heaved with our heaviest purchase until everything crackled including ourselves. We would spell off and lie down like dead men, then get up and heave and crackle again. And in the end, our lower rail five feet under water and the wavelets lapping the companion-way combing, the sturdy little craft shivered and shook herself and pointed her masts once more to the zenith.

There is never lack of exercise in small-boat sailing, and the hard work is not only part of the fun of it, but it beats the doctors. San Francisco Bay is no mill pond. It is a large and draughty and variegated piece of water. I remember, one winter evening, trying to enter the mouth of the Sacramento. There was a freshet on the river, the flood tide from the bay had been beaten back into a strong ebb, and the lusty west wind died down with the sun. It was just sunset, and with a fair to middling breeze, dead aft, we stood still in the rapid current. We were squarely in the mouth of the river; but there was no anchorage and we drifted backward, faster and faster, and dropped anchor outside as the last breath of wind left us. The night came on, beautiful and warm and starry. My one companion cooked supper, while on deck I put everything in shape Bristol fashion. When we turned in at nine o'clock the weather-promise was excellent. (If I had carried a barometer I'd have known better.) By two in the morning our shrouds were thrumming in a piping breeze, and I got up and gave her more scope on her hawser. Inside another hour there was no doubt that we were in for a southeaster.

It is not nice to leave a warm bed and get out of a bad anchorage in a black blowy night, but we arose to the occasion, put in two reefs, and started to heave up. The winch was old, and the strain of the jumping head sea was too much for it. With the winch out of commission, it was impossible to heave up by hand. We knew, because we tried it and slaughtered our hands. Now a sailor hates to lose an anchor. It is a matter of pride. Of course, we could have buoyed ours and slipped it. Instead, however, I gave her still more hawser, veered her, and dropped the second anchor.

There was little sleep after that, for first one and then the other of us would be rolled out of our bunks. The increasing size of the seas told us we were dragging, and when we struck the scoured channel we could tell by the feel of it that our two anchors were fairly skating across. It was a deep channel, the farther edge of it rising steeply like the wall of a canyon, and when our anchors started up that wall they hit in and held.

Yet, when we fetched up, through the darkness we could hear the seas breaking on the solid shore astern, and so near was it that we shortened the skiff’s painter.

Daylight showed us that between the stern of the skiff and destruction was no more than a score of feet. And how it did blow! There were times, in the gusts, when the wind must have approached a velocity of seventy or eighty miles an hour. But the anchors held, and so nobly that our final anxiety was that the for’ard bitts would be jerked clean out of the boat. All day the sloop alternately ducked her nose under and sat down on her stern; and it was not till late afternoon that the storm broke in one last and worst mad gust. For a full five minutes an absolute dead calm prevailed, and then, with the suddenness of a thunderclap, the wind snorted out of the southwest — a shift of eight points and a boisterous gale. Another night of it was too much for us, and we hove up by hand in a cross head-sea. It was not stiff work. It was heart-breaking. And I know we were both near to crying from the hurt and the exhaustion. And when we did get the first anchor up-and-down we couldn’t break it out. Between seas we snubbed her nose down to it, took plenty of turns, and stood clear as she jumped. Almost everything smashed and parted except the anchor-hold. The chocks were jerked out, the rail torn off, and the very covering-board splintered, and still the anchor held. At last, hoisting the reefed mainsail and slacking off a few of the hard-won feet of the chain, we sailed the anchor out. It was nip and tuck, though, and there were times when the boat was knocked down flat. We repeated the manoeuvre with the remaining anchor, and in the gathering darkness fled into the shelter of the river's mouth.

I was born so long ago that I grew up before the era of gasolene. As a result, I am old-fashioned. I prefer a sail-boat to a motor-boat, and it is my belief that boat-sailing is a finer, more difficult, and sturdier art than running a motor. Gasolene engines are becoming fool-proof, and while it is unfair to say that any fool can run an engine, it is fair to say that almost any one can. Not so, when it comes to sailing a boat. More skill, more intelligence, and a vast deal more training are necessary. It is the finest training in the world for boy and youth and man. If the boy is very small, equip him with a small, comfortable skiff. He will do the rest. He won't need to be taught. Shortly he will be setting a tiny leg-of-mutton and steering with an oar. Then he will begin to talk keels and centreboards and want to take his blankets out and stop aboard all night.

But don't be afraid for him. He is bound to run risks and encounter accidents. Remember, there are accidents in the nursery as well as out on the water. More boys have died from hot-house culture than have died on boats large and small; and more boys have been made into strong and reliant men by boat-sailing than by lawn-croquet and dancing-school.

And once a sailor, always a sailor. The savour of the salt never stales. The sailor never grows so old that he does not care to go back for one more wrestling bout with wind and wave. I know it of myself. I have turned rancher, and live beyond sight of the sea. Yet I can stay away from it only so long. After several months have passed, I begin to grow restless. I find myself day-dreaming over incidents of the last cruise, or wondering if the striped bass are running on Wingo Slough, or eagerly reading the newspapers for reports of the first northern flights of ducks. And then, suddenly, there is a hurried pack of suit-cases and overhauling of gear, and we are off for Vallejo where the little *Roamer* lies, waiting, always waiting, for the skiff to come alongside, for the lighting of the fire in the galley-stove, for the pulling off of gaskets, the swinging up of the mainsail, and the rat-tat-tat of the reef-points, for the heaving short and the breaking out, and for the twirling of the wheel as she fills away and heads up Bay or down.

JACK LONDON
On Board *Roamer*,
Sonoma Creek,
April 15, 1911

FOUR HORSES AND A SAILOR

"Huh! Drive four horses! I wouldn't sit behind you — not for a thousand dollars — over them mountain roads."

So said Henry, and he ought to have known, for he drives four horses himself.

Said another Glen Ellen friend: "What? London? He drive four horses? Can't drive one!"

And the best of it is that he was right. Even after managing to get a few hundred miles with my four horses, I don't know how to drive one. Just the other day, swinging down a steep mountain road and rounding an abrupt turn, I came full tilt on a horse and buggy being driven by a woman up the hill. We could not pass on the narrow road, where was only a foot to spare, and my horses did not know how to back, especially up-hill. About two hundred yards down the hill was a spot where we could pass. The driver of the buggy said she didn't dare back down because she was not sure of the brake. And as I didn't know how to tackle one horse, I didn't try it. So we unhitched her horse and backed down by hand. Which was very well, till it came to hitching the horse to the buggy again. She didn't know how. I didn't either, and I had depended on her knowledge. It took us about half an hour, with frequent debates and consultations, though it is an absolute certainty that never in its life was that horse hitched in that particular way.

No; I can't harness up one horse. But I can four, which compels me to back up again to get to my beginning. Having selected Sonoma Valley for our abiding place, Charmian and I decided it was about time we knew what we had in our own county and the neighbouring ones. How to do it, was the first question. Among our many weaknesses is the one of being old-fashioned. We don't mix with gasolene very well. And, as true sailors should, we naturally gravitate toward horses. Being one of those lucky individuals who carries his office under his hat, I should have to take a typewriter and a load of books along. This put saddle-horses out of the running. Charmian suggested driving a span. She had faith in me; besides, she could drive a span herself. But when I thought of the many mountains to cross, and of crossing them for three months with a poor tired span, I vetoed the proposition and said we'd have to come back to gasolene after all. This she vetoed just as emphatically, and a deadlock obtained until I received inspiration.

"Why not drive four horses?" I said.

"But you don't know how to drive four horses," was her objection.

I threw my chest out and my shoulders back. "What man has done, I can do," I proclaimed grandly. "And please don't forget that when we sailed on the *Snark* I knew nothing of navigation, and that I taught myself as I sailed."

"Very well," she said. (And there's faith for you!) "They shall be four saddle horses, and we'll strap our saddles on behind the rig."

It was my turn to object. "Our saddle horses are not broken to harness."

"Then break them."

And what I knew about horses, much less about breaking them, was just about as much as any sailor knows. Having been kicked, bucked off, fallen over backward upon, and thrown out and run over, on very numerous occasions, I had a mighty vigorous respect for horses; but a wife's faith must be lived up to, and I went at it.

King was a polo pony from St. Louis, and Prince a many-gaited love-horse from Pasadena. The hardest thing was to get them to dig in and pull. They rollicked along on the levels and galloped down the hills, but when they struck an up-grade and felt the weight of the breaking-cart, they stopped and turned around and looked at me. But I passed them, and my troubles began. Milda was fourteen years old, an unadulterated broncho, and in temperament was a combination of mule and jack-rabbit blended equally. If you pressed your hand on her flank and told her to get over, she lay down on you. If you got her by the head and told her to back, she walked forward over you. And if you got behind her and shoved and told her to "Giddap!" she sat down on you. Also, she wouldn't walk. For endless weary miles I strove with her, but never could I get her to walk a step. Finally, she was a manger-glutton. No matter how near or far from the stable, when six o'clock came around she bolted for home and never missed the directest cross-road. Many times I rejected her.

The fourth and most rejected horse of all was the Outlaw. From the age of three to seven she had defied all horse-breakers and broken a number of them. Then a long, lanky cowboy, with a fifty-pound saddle and a Mexican bit had got her proud goat. I was the next owner. She was my favourite riding horse. Charmian said I'd have to put her in as a wheeler where I would have more control over her. Now Charmian had a favourite riding mare called Maid. I suggested Maid as a substitute. Charmian pointed out that my mare was a branded range horse, while hers was a near-thoroughbred, and that the legs of her mare would be ruined forever if she were driven for three months. I acknowledged her mare's thoroughbredness, and at the same time defied her to find any thoroughbred with as small and delicately-viciously pointed ears as my Outlaw. She indicated Maid's exquisitely thin shinbone. I measured the Outlaw's. It was equally thin, although, I insinuated, possibly more durable. This stabbed Charmian's pride. Of course her near-thoroughbred Maid, carrying the blood of "old" Lexington, Morella, and a streak of the super-enduring Morgan, could run, walk, and work my unregistered Outlaw into the ground; and that was the very precise reason why such a paragon of a saddle animal should not be degraded by harness.

So it was that Charmian remained obdurate, until, one day, I got her behind the Outlaw for a forty-mile drive. For every inch of those forty miles the Outlaw kicked and jumped, in between the kicks and jumps finding time and space in which to seize its team-mate by the back of the neck and attempt to drag it to the ground. Another trick the Outlaw developed during that drive was suddenly to turn at right angles in the traces and endeavour to butt its team-mate over the grade. Reluctantly and nobly did Charmian give in and consent to the use of Maid. The Outlaw's shoes were pulled off, and she was turned out on range.

Finally, the four horses were hooked to the rig — a light Studebaker trap. With two hours and a half of practice, in which the excitement was not abated by several jack-poles and numerous kicking matches, I announced myself as ready for the start. Came the morning, and Prince, who was to have been a wheeler with Maid, showed up with a badly kicked shoulder. He did not exactly show up; we had to find him, for he was unable to walk. His leg swelled and continually swelled during the several days we waited for him. Remained only the Outlaw. In from pasture she came, shoes were nailed on, and she was harnessed into the wheel. Friends and relatives strove to press accident policies on me, but Charmian climbed up alongside, and Nakata got into the rear seat with the typewriter — Nakata, who sailed cabin-boy on the Snark for two years and who had shown himself afraid of nothing, not even of me and my amateur jamborees in experimenting with new modes of locomotion. And we did very nicely, thank you, especially after the first hour or so, during which time the Outlaw had kicked about fifty various times, chiefly to the damage of her own legs and the paintwork, and after she had bitten a couple of hundred times, to the damage of Maid's neck and Charmian's temper. It was hard enough to have her favourite mare in the harness without also enduring the spectacle of its being eaten alive.

Our leaders were joys. King being a polo pony and Milda a rabbit, they rounded curves beautifully and darted ahead like coyotes out of the way of the wheelers. Milda's besetting weakness was a frantic desire not to have the lead-bar strike her hocks. When this happened, one of three things occurred: either she sat down on the lead-bar, kicked it up in the air until she got her back under it, or exploded in a straight-ahead, harness-disrupting jump. Not until she carried the lead-bar clean away and danced a break-down on it and the traces, did she behave decently. Nakata and I made the repairs with good old-fashioned bale-rope, which is stronger than wrought-iron any time, and we went on our way.

In the meantime I was learning — I shall not say to tool a four-in-hand — but just simply to drive four horses. Now it is all right enough to begin with four work-horses pulling a load of several tons. But to begin with four light horses, all running, and a light rig that seems to outrun them — well, when things happen they happen quickly. My weakness was total ignorance. In particular, my fingers lacked training, and I made the mistake of depending on my eyes to handle the reins. This brought me up against a disastrous optical illusion. The bight of the off head-line, being longer and heavier than that of the off wheel-line, hung lower. In a moment requiring quick action, I invariably mistook the two lines. Pulling on what I thought was the wheel-line, in order to straighten the team, I would see the leaders swing abruptly around into a jack-pole. Now for sensations of sheer impotence, nothing can compare with a jack-pole, when the horrified driver beholds his leaders prancing gaily up the road and his wheelers jogging steadily down the road, all at the same time and all harnessed together and to the same rig.

I no longer jack-pole, and I don't mind admitting how I got out of the habit. It was my eyes that enslaved my fingers into ill practices. So I shut my eyes and let the fingers go it alone. To-day my fingers are independent of my eyes and work automatically. I do not see what my fingers do. They just do it. All I see is the satisfactory result.

Still we managed to get over the ground that first day — down sunny Sonoma Valley to the old town of Sonoma, founded by General Vallejo as the remotest outpost on the northern frontier for the purpose of holding back the Gentiles, as the wild Indians of those days were called. Here history was made. Here the last Spanish mission was reared; here the Bear flag was raised; and here Kit Carson, and Fremont, and all our early adventurers came and rested in the days before the days of gold.

We swung on over the low, rolling hills, through miles of dairy farms and chicken ranches where every blessed hen is white, and down the slopes to Petaluma Valley. Here, in 1776, Captain Quiros came up Petaluma Creek from San Pablo Bay in quest of an outlet to Bodega Bay on the coast. And here, later, the Russians, with Alaskan hunters, carried skin boats across from Fort Ross to poach for sea-otters on the Spanish preserve of San Francisco Bay. Here, too, still later, General Vallejo built a fort, which still stands — one of the finest examples of Spanish adobe that remain to us. And here, at the old fort, to bring the chronicle up to date, our horses proceeded to make peculiarly personal history with astonishing success and dispatch. King, our peerless, polo-pony leader, went lame. So hopelessly lame did he go that no expert, then and afterward, could determine whether the lameness was in his frogs, hoofs, legs, shoulders, or head. Maid picked up a nail and began to limp. Milda, figuring the day already sufficiently spent and maniacal with manger-gluttony, began to rabbit-jump. All that held her was the bale-rope. And the Outlaw, game to the last, exceeded all previous exhibitions of skin-removing, paint-marring, and horse-eating.

At Petaluma we rested over while King was returned to the ranch and Prince sent to us. Now Prince had proved himself an excellent wheeler, yet he had to go into the lead and let the Outlaw retain his old place. There is an axiom that a good wheeler is a poor leader. I object to the last adjective. A good wheeler makes an infinitely worse kind of a leader than that. I know . . . now. I ought to know. Since that day I have driven Prince a few hundred miles in the lead. He is neither any better nor any worse than the first mile he ran in the lead; and his worst is even extremely worse than what you are thinking. Not that he is vicious. He is merely a good-natured rogue who shakes hands for sugar, steps on your toes out of sheer excessive friendliness, and just goes on loving you in your harshest moments.

But he won't get out of the way. Also, whenever he is reproved for being in the wrong, he accuses Milda of it and bites the back of her neck. So bad has this become that whenever I yell "Prince!" in a loud voice, Milda immediately rabbit-jumps to the side, straight ahead, or sits down on the lead-bar. All of which is quite disconcerting. Picture it yourself. You are swinging round a sharp, down-grade, mountain curve, at a fast trot. The rock wall is the outside of the curve. The inside of the curve is a precipice. The continuance of the curve is a narrow, unrailed bridge. You hit the curve, throwing the leaders in against the wall and making the polo-horse do the work. All is lovely. The leaders are hugging the wall like nestling doves. But the moment comes in the evolution when the leaders must shoot out ahead. They really must shoot, or else they'll hit the wall and miss the bridge. Also, behind them are the wheelers, and the rig, and you have just eased the brake in order to put sufficient snap into the manoeuvre. If ever team-work is required, now is the time. Milda tries to shoot. She does her best, but Prince, bubbling over with roguishness, lags behind. He knows the trick. Milda is half a length ahead of him. He times it to the fraction of a second. Maid, in the wheel, over-running him, naturally bites him. This disturbs the Outlaw, who has been behaving beautifully, and she immediately reaches across for Maid. Simultaneously, with a fine display of firm conviction that it's all Milda's fault, Prince sinks his teeth into the back of Milda's defenceless neck. The whole thing has occurred in less than a second. Under the surprise and pain of the bite, Milda either jumps ahead to the imminent peril of harness and lead-bar, or smashes into the wall, stops short with the lead-bar over her back, and emits a couple of hysterical kicks. The Outlaw invariably selects this moment to remove paint. And after things are untangled and you have had time to appreciate the close shave, you go up to Prince and reprove him with your choicest vocabulary. And Prince, gazelle-eyed and tender, offers to shake hands with you for sugar. I leave it to any one: a boat would never act that way.

We have some history north of the Bay. Nearly three centuries and a half ago, that doughty pirate and explorer, Sir Francis Drake, combing the Pacific for Spanish galleons, anchored in the bight formed by Point Reyes, on which to-day is one of the richest dairy regions in the world. Here, less than two decades after Drake, Sebastien Carmenon piled up on the rocks with a silk-laden galleon from the Philippines. And in this same bay of Drake, long afterward, the Russian fur-poachers rendezvous'd their *bidarkas* and stole in through the Golden Gate to the forbidden waters of San Francisco Bay.

Farther up the coast, in Sonoma County, we pilgrimaged to the sites of the Russian settlements. At Bodega Bay, south of what to-day is called Russian River, was their anchorage, while north of the river they built their fort. And much of Fort Ross still stands. Log-bastions, church, and stables hold their own, and so well, with rusty hinges creaking, that we warmed ourselves at the hundred-years-old double fireplace and slept under the hand-hewn roof beams still held together by spikes of hand-wrought iron.

We went to see where history had been made, and we saw scenery as well. One of our stretches in a day's drive was from beautiful Inverness on Tomales Bay, down the Olema Valley to Bolinas Bay, along the eastern shore of that body of water to Willow Camp, and up over the sea-bluffs, around the bastions of Tamalpais, and down to Sausalito. From the head of Bolinas Bay to Willow Camp the drive on the edge of the beach, and actually, for half-mile stretches, in the waters of the bay itself, was a delightful experience. The wonderful part was to come. Very few San Franciscans, much less Californians, know of that drive from Willow Camp, to the south and east, along the poppy-blown cliffs, with the sea thundering in the sheer depths hundreds of feet below and the Golden Gate opening up ahead, disclosing smoky San Francisco on her many hills. Far off, blurred on the breast of the sea, can be seen the Farallones, which Sir Francis Drake passed on a S. W. course in the thick of what he describes as a "stynking fog." Well might he call it that, and a few other names, for it was the fog that robbed him of the glory of discovering San Francisco Bay.

It was on this part of the drive that I decided at last I was learning real mountain-driving. To confess the truth, for delicious titillation of one's nerve, I have since driven over no mountain road that was worse, or better, rather, than that piece.

And then the contrast! From Sausalito, over excellent, park-like boulevards, through the splendid redwoods and homes of Mill Valley, across the blossomed hills of Marin County, along the knoll-studded picturesque marshes, past San Rafael resting warmly among her hills, over the divide and up the Petaluma Valley, and on to the grassy feet of Sonoma Mountain and home. We covered fifty-five miles that day. Not so bad, eh, for Prince the Rogue, the paint-removing Outlaw, the thin-shanked thoroughbred, and the rabbit-jumper? And they came in cool and dry, ready for their mangers and the straw.

Oh, we didn't stop. We considered we were just starting, and that was many weeks ago. We have kept on going over six counties which are comfortably large, even for California, and we are still going. We have twisted and tabled, criss-crossed our tracks, made fascinating and lengthy dives into the interior valleys in the hearts of Napa and Lake Counties, travelled the coast for hundreds of miles on end, and are now in Eureka, on Humboldt Bay, which was discovered by accident by the gold-seekers, who were trying to find their way to and from the Trinity diggings. Even here, the white man's history preceded them, for dim tradition says that the Russians once anchored here and hunted sea-otter before the first Yankee trader rounded the Horn, or the first Rocky Mountain trapper thirsted across the "Great American Desert" and trickled down the snowy Sierras to the sun-kissed land. No; we are not resting our horses here on Humboldt Bay. We are writing this article, gorging on abalones and mussels, digging clams, and catching record-breaking sea-trout and rock-cod in the intervals in which we are not sailing, motor-boating, and swimming in the most temperately equable climate we have ever experienced.

These comfortably large counties! They are veritable empires. Take Humboldt, for instance. It is three times as large as Rhode Island, one and a half times as large as Delaware, almost as large as Connecticut, and half as large as Massachusetts. The pioneer has done his work in this north of the bay region, the foundations are laid, and all is ready for the inevitable inrush of population and adequate development of resources which so far have been no more than skimmed, and casually and carelessly skimmed at that. This region of the six counties alone will some day support a population of millions. In the meanwhile, O you home-seekers, you wealth-seekers, and, above all, you climate-seekers, now is the time to get in on the ground floor.

Robert Ingersoll once said that the genial climate of California would in a fairly brief time evolve a race resembling the Mexicans, and that in two or three generations the Californians would be seen of a Sunday morning on their way to a cockfight with a rooster under each arm. Never was made a rasher generalisation, based on so absolute an ignorance of facts. It is to laugh. Here is a climate that breeds vigour, with just sufficient geniality to prevent the expenditure of most of that vigour in fighting the elements.

Here is a climate where a man can work three hundred and sixty-five days in the year without the slightest hint of enervation, and where for three hundred and sixty-five nights he must perforce sleep under blankets. What more can one say? I consider myself somewhat of climate expert, having adventured among most of the climates of five out of the six zones. I have not yet been in the Antarctic, but whatever climate obtains there will not deter me from drawing the conclusion that nowhere is there a climate to compare with that of this region. Maybe I am as wrong as Ingersoll was. Nevertheless I take my medicine by continuing to live in this climate. Also, it is the only medicine I ever take.

But to return to the horses. There is some improvement. Milda has actually learned to walk. Maid has proved her thoroughbredness by never tiring on the longest days, and, while being the strongest and highest spirited of all, by never causing any trouble save for an occasional kick at the Outlaw. And the Outlaw rarely gallops, no longer butts, only periodically kicks, comes in to the pole and does her work without attempting to vivisect Maid's medulla oblongata, and — marvel of marvels — is really and truly getting lazy. But Prince remains the same incorrigible, loving and lovable rogue he has always been.

And the country we've been over! The drives through Napa and Lake Counties! One, from Sonoma Valley, via Santa Rosa, we could not refrain from taking several ways, and on all the ways we found the roads excellent for machines as well as horses. One route, and a more delightful one for an automobile cannot be found, is out from Santa Rosa, past old Altruria and Mark West Springs, then to the right and across to Calistoga in Napa Valley. By keeping to the left, the drive holds on up the Russian River Valley, through the miles of the noted Asti Vineyards to Cloverdale, and then by way of Pieta, Witter, and Highland Springs to Lakeport. Still another way we took, was down Sonoma Valley, skirting San Pablo Bay, and up the lovely Napa Valley. From Napa were side excursions through Pope and Berryessa Valleys, on to Ætna Springs, and still on, into Lake County, crossing the famous Langtry Ranch.

Continuing up the Napa Valley, walled on either hand by great rock palisades and redwood forests and carpeted with endless vineyards, and crossing the many stone bridges for which the County is noted and which are a joy to the beauty-loving eyes as well as to the four-horse tyro driver, past Calistoga with its old mud-baths and chicken-soup springs, with St.

Helena and its giant saddle ever towering before us, we climbed the mountains on a good grade and dropped down past the quicksilver mines to the canyon of the Geysers. After a stop over night and an exploration of the miniature-grand volcanic scene, we pulled on across the canyon and took the grade where the cicadas simmered audibly in the noon sunshine among the hillside manzanitas. Then, higher, came the big cattle-dotted upland pastures, and the rocky summit. And here on the summit, abruptly, we caught a vision, or what seemed a mirage. The ocean we had left long days before, yet far down and away shimmered a blue sea, framed on the farther shore by rugged mountains, on the near shore by fat and rolling farm lands. Clear Lake was before us, and like proper sailors we returned to our sea, going for a sail, a fish, and a swim ere the day was done and turning into tired Lakeport blankets in the early evening. Well has Lake County been called the Walled-in County. But the railroad is coming. They say the approach we made to Clear Lake is similar to the approach to Lake Lucerne. Be that as it may, the scenery, with its distant snow-capped peaks, can well be called Alpine.

And what can be more exquisite than the drive out from Clear Lake to Ukiah by way of the Blue Lakes chain! — every turn bringing into view a picture of breathless beauty; every glance backward revealing some perfect composition in line and colour, the intense blue of the water margined with splendid oaks, green fields, and swaths of orange poppies. But those side glances and backward glances were provocative of trouble. Charmian and I disagreed as to which way the connecting stream of water ran. We still disagree, for at the hotel, where we submitted the affair to arbitration, the hotel manager and the clerk likewise disagreed. I assume, now, that we never will know which way that stream runs. Charmian suggests “both ways.” I refuse such a compromise. No stream of water I ever saw could accomplish that feat at one and the same time. The greatest concession I can make is that sometimes it may run one way and sometimes the other, and that in the meantime we should both consult an oculist.

More valley from Ukiah to Willits, and then we turned westward through the virgin Sherwood Forest of magnificent redwood, stopping at Alpine for the night and continuing on through Mendocino County to Fort Bragg and “salt water.” We also came to Fort Bragg up the coast from Fort Ross, keeping our coast journey intact from the Golden Gate. The coast weather was cool and delightful, the coast driving superb. Especially in the Fort

Ross section did we find the roads thrilling, while all the way along we followed the sea. At every stream, the road skirted dizzy cliff-edges, dived down into lush growths of forest and ferns and climbed out along the cliff-edges again. The way was lined with flowers — wild lilac, wild roses, poppies, and lupins. Such lupins! — giant clumps of them, of every lupin-shade and — colour. And it was along the Mendocino roads that Charmian caused many delays by insisting on getting out to pick the wild blackberries, strawberries, and thimble-berries which grew so profusely. And ever we caught peeps, far down, of steam schooners loading lumber in the rocky coves; ever we skirted the cliffs, day after day, crossing stretches of rolling farm lands and passing through thriving villages and saw-mill towns. Memorable was our launch-trip from Mendocino City up Big River, where the steering gears of the launches work the reverse of anywhere else in the world; where we saw a stream of logs, of six to twelve and fifteen feet in diameter, which filled the river bed for miles to the obliteration of any sign of water; and where we were told of a white or albino redwood tree. We did not see this last, so cannot vouch for it.

All the streams were filled with trout, and more than once we saw the side-hill salmon on the slopes. No, side-hill salmon is not a peripatetic fish; it is a deer out of season. But the trout! At Gualala Charmian caught her first one. Once before in my life I had caught two . . . on angleworms. On occasion I had tried fly and spinner and never got a strike, and I had come to believe that all this talk of fly-fishing was just so much nature-faking. But on the Gualala River I caught trout — a lot of them — on fly and spinners; and I was beginning to feel quite an expert, until Nakata, fishing on bottom with a pellet of bread for bait, caught the biggest trout of all. I now affirm there is nothing in science nor in art. Nevertheless, since that day poles and baskets have been added to our baggage, we tackle every stream we come to, and we no longer are able to remember the grand total of our catch.

At Usal, many hilly and picturesque miles north of Fort Bragg, we turned again into the interior of Mendocino, crossing the ranges and coming out in Humboldt County on the south fork of Eel River at Garberville. Throughout the trip, from Marin County north, we had been warned of “bad roads ahead.” Yet we never found those bad roads. We seemed always to be just ahead of them or behind them. The farther we came the better the roads seemed, though this was probably due to the fact that we were learning more and more what four horses and a light rig could do on a road. And thus do I save my face with all the counties. I refuse to make invidious road comparisons. I can add that while, save in rare instances on steep pitches, I have trotted my horses down all the grades, I have never had one horse fall down nor have I had to send the rig to a blacksmith shop for repairs.

Also, I am learning to throw leather. If any tyro thinks it is easy to take a short-handled, long-lashed whip, and throw the end of that lash just where he wants it, let him put on automobile goggles and try it. On reconsideration, I would suggest the substitution of a wire fencing-mask for the goggles. For days I looked at that whip. It fascinated me, and the fascination was composed mostly of fear. At my first attempt, Charmian and Nakata became afflicted with the same sort of fascination, and for a long time afterward, whenever they saw me reach for the whip, they closed their eyes and shielded their heads with their arms.

Here's the problem. Instead of pulling honestly, Prince is lagging back and manoeuvring for a bite at Milda's neck. I have four reins in my hands. I must put these four reins into my left hand, properly gather the whip handle and the bight of the lash in my right hand, and throw that lash past Maid without striking her and into Prince. If the lash strikes Maid, her thoroughbredness will go up in the air, and I'll have a case of horse hysteria on my hands for the next half hour. But follow. The whole problem is not yet stated. Suppose that I miss Maid and reach the intended target. The instant the lash cracks, the four horses jump, Prince most of all, and his jump, with spread wicked teeth, is for the back of Milda's neck. She jumps to escape — which is her second jump, for the first one came when the lash exploded. The Outlaw reaches for Maid's neck, and Maid, who has already jumped and tried to bolt, tries to bolt harder. And all this infinitesimal fraction of time I am trying to hold the four animals with my left hand, while my whip-lash, writhing through the air, is coming back to me. Three simultaneous things I must do: keep hold of the four reins with my left hand; slam on the brake with my foot; and on the rebound catch that flying lash in the hollow of my right arm and get the bight of it safely into my right hand. Then I must get two of the four lines back into my right hand and keep the horses from running away or going over the grade. Try it some time. You will find life anything but wearisome. Why, the first time I hit the mark and made the lash go off like a revolver shot, I was so astounded and delighted that I was paralysed. I forgot to do any of the multitudinous other things, tangled the whip lash in Maid's harness, and was forced to call upon Charmian for assistance. And now, confession. I carry a few pebbles handy. They're great for reaching Prince in a tight place. But just the same I'm learning that whip every day, and before I get home I hope to discard the pebbles. And as long as I rely on pebbles, I cannot truthfully speak of myself as "tooling a four-in-hand."

From Garberville, where we ate eel to repletion and got acquainted with the aborigines, we drove down the Eel River Valley for two days through the most unthinkably glorious body of redwood timber to be seen anywhere in California. From Dyerville on to Eureka, we caught glimpses of railroad construction and of great concrete bridges in the course of building, which advertised that at least Humboldt County was going to be linked to the rest of the world.

We still consider our trip is just begun. As soon as this is mailed from Eureka, it's heigh ho! for the horses and pull on. We shall continue up the coast, turn in for Hoopa Reservation and the gold mines, and shoot down the Trinity and Klamath rivers in Indian canoes to Requa. After that, we shall go on through Del Norte County and into Oregon. The trip so far has justified us in taking the attitude that we won't go home until the winter rains drive us in. And, finally, I am going to try the experiment of putting the Outlaw in the lead and relegating Prince to his old position in the near wheel. I won't need any pebbles then.

NOTHING THAT EVER CAME TO ANYTHING

It was at Quito, the mountain capital of Ecuador, that the following passage at correspondence took place. Having occasion to buy a pair of shoes in a shop six feet by eight in size and with walls three feet thick, I noticed a mangy leopard skin on the floor. I had no Spanish. The shopkeeper had no English. But I was an adept at sign language. I wanted to know where I should go to buy leopard skins. On my scribble-pad I drew the interesting streets of a city. Then I drew a small shop, which, after much effort, I persuaded the proprietor into recognising as his shop. Next, I indicated in my drawing that on the many streets there were many shops. And, finally, I made myself into a living interrogation mark, pointing all the while from the mangy leopard skin to the many shops I had sketched.

But the proprietor failed to follow me. So did his assistant. The street came in to help — that is, as many as could crowd into the six-by-eight shop; while those that could not force their way in held an overflow meeting on the sidewalk. The proprietor and the rest took turns at talking to me in rapid-fire Spanish, and, from the expressions on their faces, all concluded that I was remarkably stupid. Again I went through my programme, pointing on the sketch from the one shop to the many shops, pointing out that in this particular shop was one leopard skin, and then questing interrogatively with my pencil among all the shops. All regarded me in blank silence, until I saw comprehension suddenly dawn on the face of a small boy.

“Tigres montanya!” he cried.

This appealed to me as mountain tigers, namely, leopards; and in token that he understood, the boy made signs for me to follow him, which I obeyed. He led me for a quarter of a mile, and paused before the doorway of a large building where soldiers slouched on sentry duty and in and out of which went other soldiers. Motioning for me to remain, he ran inside.

Fifteen minutes later he was out again, without leopard skins, but full of information. By means of my card, of my hotel card, of my watch, and of the boy's fingers, I learned the following: that at six o'clock that evening he would arrive at my hotel with ten leopard skins for my inspection. Further, I learned that the skins were the property of one Captain Ernesto Becucci. Also, I learned that the boy's name was Eliceo.

The boy was prompt. At six o'clock he was at my room. In his hand was a small roll addressed to me. On opening it I found it to be manuscript piano music, the *Hora Tranquila Valse*, or "Tranquil Hour Waltz," by Ernesto Becucci. I came for leopard skins, thought I, and the owner sends me sheet music instead. But the boy assured me that he would have the skins at the hotel at nine next morning, and I entrusted to him the following letter of acknowledgment:

"DEAR CAPTAIN BECUCCI:

"A thousand thanks for your kind presentation of *Hora Tranquila Valse*. Mrs. London will play it for me this evening.

"Sincerely yours,

"Jack London."

Next morning Eliceo was back, but without the skins. Instead, he gave me a letter, written in Spanish, of which the following is a free translation:

"To my dearest and always appreciated friend, I submit myself —

"DEAR SIR:

"I sent you last night an offering by the bearer of this note, and you returned me a letter which I translated.

"Be it known to you, sir, that I am giving this waltz away in the best society, and therefore to your honoured self. Therefore it is beholden to you to recognise the attention, I mean by a tangible return, as this composition was made by myself. You will therefore send by your humble servant, the bearer, any offering, however minute, that you may be prompted to make. Send it under cover of an envelope. The bearer may be trusted.

"I did not indulge in the pleasure of visiting your honourable self this morning, as I find my body not to be enjoying the normal exercise of its functions.

"As regards the skins from the mountain, you shall be waited on by a small boy at seven o'clock at night with ten skins from which you may select those which most satisfy your aspirations.

"In the hope that you will look upon this in the same light as myself, I beg to be allowed to remain,

"Your most faithful servant,

"CAPTAIN ERNESTO BECUCCI."

Well, thought I, this Captain Ernesto Becucci has shown himself to be such an undependable person, that, while I don't mind rewarding him for his composition, I fear me if I do I never shall lay eyes on those leopard skins. So to Eliceo I gave this letter for the Captain:

"MY DEAR CAPTAIN BECUCCI:

"Have the boy bring the skins at seven o'clock this evening, when I shall be glad to look at them. This evening when the boy brings the skins, I shall be pleased to give him, in an envelope, for you, a tangible return for your musical composition.

"Please put the price on each skin, and also let me know for what sum all the skins will sell together.

"Sincerely yours,

"JACK LONDON."

Now, thought I, I have him. No skins, no tangible return; and evidently he is set on receiving that tangible return.

At seven o'clock Eliceo was back, but without leopard skins. He handed me this letter:

"SEÑOR LONDON:

"I wish to instil in you the belief that I lost to-day, at half past three in the afternoon, the key to my cubicle. While distributing rations to the soldiers I dropped it. I see in this loss the act of God.

"I received a letter from your honourable self, delivered by the one who bears you this poor response of mine. To-morrow I will burst open the door to permit me to keep my word with you. I feel myself eternally shamed not to be able to dominate the evils that afflict colonial mankind. Please send me the trifle that you offered me. Send me this proof of your appreciation by the bearer, who is to be trusted. Also give to him a small sum of money for himself, and earn the undying gratitude of

"Your most faithful servant,

"CAPTAIN ERNESTO BECUCCI."

Also, inclosed in the foregoing letter was the following original poem, à propos neither of leopard skins nor tangible returns, so far as I can make out:

EFFUSION

Thou canst not weep;
Nor ask I for a year
To rid me of my woes
Or make my life more dear.
The mystic chains that bound
Thy all-fond heart to mine,
Alas! asundered are
For now and for all time.
In vain you strove to hide,
From vulgar gaze of man,
The burning glance of love
That none but Love can scan.
Go on thy starlit way
And leave me to my fate;
Our souls must needs unite —
But, God! ’twill be too late.

To all and sundry of which I replied:

“MY DEAR CAPTAIN BECUCCI:

“I regret exceedingly to hear that by act of God, at half past three this afternoon, you lost the key to your cubicle. Please have the boy bring the skins at seven o’clock to-morrow morning, at which time, when he brings the skins, I shall be glad to make you that tangible return for your ‘Tranquil Hour Waltz.’

“Sincerely yours,

“JACK LONDON.”

At seven o’clock came no skins, but the following:

“SIR:

“After offering you my most sincere respects, I beg to continue by telling you that no one, up to the time of writing, has treated me with such lack of attention. It was a present to *gentlemen* who were to retain the piece of music, and who have all, without exception, made me a present of five dollars. It is beyond my humble capacity to believe that you, after having offered to send me money in an envelope, should fail to do so.

“Send me, I pray of you, the money to remunerate the small boy for his repeated visits to you. Please be discreet and send it in an envelope by the bearer.

“Last night I came to the hotel with the boy. You were dining. I waited more than an hour for you and then went to the theatre. Give the boy some small amount, and send me a like offering of larger proportions.

“Awaiting incessantly a slight attention on your part,

“CAPTAIN ERNESTO BECUCCI.”

And here, like one of George Moore’s realistic studies, ends this intercourse with Captain Ernesto Becucci. Nothing happened. Nothing ever came to anything. He got no tangible return, and I got no leopard skins. The tangible return he might have got, I presented to Eliceo, who promptly invested it in a pair of trousers and a ticket to the bull-fight.

(NOTE TO EDITOR. — This is a faithful narration of what actually happened in Quito, Ecuador.)

THAT DEAD MEN RISE UP NEVER

The month in which my seventeenth birthday arrived I signed on before the mast on the *Sophie Sutherland*, a three-topmast schooner bound on a seven-months' seal-hunting cruise to the coast of Japan. We sailed from San Francisco, and immediately I found confronting me a problem of no inconsiderable proportions. There were twelve men of us in the forecastle, ten of whom were hardened, tarry-thumbed sailors. Not alone was I a youth and on my first voyage, but I had for shipmates men who had come through the hard school of the merchant service of Europe. As boys, they had had to perform their ship's duty, and, in addition, by immemorial sea custom, they had had to be the slaves of the ordinary and able-bodied seamen. When they became ordinary seamen they were still the slaves of the able-bodied. Thus, in the forecastle, with the watch below, an able seaman, lying in his bunk, will order an ordinary seaman to fetch him his shoes or bring him a drink of water. Now the ordinary seaman may be lying in *his* bunk. He is just as tired as the able seaman. Yet he must get out of his bunk and fetch and carry. If he refuses, he will be beaten. If, perchance, he is so strong that he can whip the able seaman, then all the able seamen, or as many as may be necessary, pitch upon the luckless devil and administer the beating.

My problem now becomes apparent. These hard-bit Scandinavian sailors had come through a hard school. As boys they had served their mates, and as able seamen they looked to be served by other boys. I was a boy — withal with a man's body. I had never been to sea before — withal I was a good sailor and knew my business. It was either a case of holding my own with them or of going under. I had signed on as an equal, and an equal I must maintain myself, or else endure seven months of hell at their hands. And it was this very equality they resented. By what right was I an equal? I had not earned that high privilege. I had not endured the miseries they had endured as maltreated boys or bullied ordinaries. Worse than that, I was a land-lubber making his first voyage. And yet, by the injustice of fate, on the ship's articles I was their equal.

My method was deliberate, and simple, and drastic. In the first place, I resolved to do my work, no matter how hard or dangerous it might be, so well that no man would be called upon to do it for me. Further, I put ginger in my muscles. I never malingered when pulling on a rope, for I knew the eagle eyes of my forecastle mates were squinting for just such evidences of my inferiority. I made it a point to be among the first of the watch going on deck, among the last going below, never leaving a sheet or tackle for some one else to coil over a pin. I was always eager for the run aloft for the shifting of topsail sheets and tacks, or for the setting or taking in of topsails; and in these matters I did more than my share.

Furthermore, I was on a hair-trigger of resentment myself. I knew better than to accept any abuse or the slightest patronizing. At the first hint of such, I went off — I exploded. I might be beaten in the subsequent fight, but I left the impression that I was a wild-cat and that I would just as willingly fight again. My intention was to demonstrate that I would tolerate no imposition. I proved that the man who imposed on me must have a fight on his hands. And doing my work well, the innate justice of the men, assisted by their wholesome dislike for a clawing and rending wild-cat ruction, soon led them to give over their hectoring. After a bit of strife, my attitude was accepted, and it was my pride that I was taken in as an equal in spirit as well as in fact. From then on, everything was beautiful, and the voyage promised to be a happy one.

But there was one other man in the forecastle. Counting the Scandinavians as ten, and myself as the eleventh, this man was the twelfth and last. We never knew his name, contenting ourselves with calling him the "Bricklayer." He was from Missouri — at least he so informed us in the one meagre confidence he was guilty of in the early days of the voyage. Also, at that time, we learned several other things. He was a bricklayer by trade. He had never even seen salt water until the week before he joined us, at which time he had arrived in San Francisco and looked upon San Francisco Bay. Why he, of all men, at forty years of age, should have felt the prod to go to sea, was beyond all of us; for it was our unanimous conviction that no man less fitted for the sea had ever embarked on it. But to sea he had come. After a week's stay in a sailors' boarding-house, he had been shoved aboard of us as an able seaman.

All hands had to do his work for him. Not only did he know nothing, but he proved himself unable to learn anything. Try as they would, they could never teach him to steer. To him the compass must have been a profound and awful whirligig. He never mastered its cardinal points, much less the checking and steadying of the ship on her course. He never did come to know whether ropes should be coiled from left to right or from right to left. It was mentally impossible for him to learn the easy muscular trick of throwing his weight on a rope in pulling and hauling. The simplest knots and turns were beyond his comprehension, while he was mortally afraid of going aloft. Bullied by captain and mate, he was one day forced aloft. He managed to get underneath the crosstrees, and there he froze to the ratlines. Two sailors had to go after him to help him down.

All of which was bad enough had there been no worse. But he was vicious, malignant, dirty, and without common decency. He was a tall, powerful man, and he fought with everybody. And there was no fairness in his fighting. His first fight on board, the first day out, was with me, when he, desiring to cut a plug of chewing tobacco, took my personal table-knife for the purpose, and whereupon, I, on a hair-trigger, promptly exploded. After that he fought with nearly every member of the crew. When his clothing became too filthy to be bearable by the rest of us, we put it to soak and stood over him while he washed it. In short, the Bricklayer was one of those horrible and monstrous things that one must see in order to be convinced that they exist.

I will only say that he was a beast, and that we treated him like a beast. It is only by looking back through the years that I realise how heartless we were to him. He was without sin. He could not, by the very nature of things, have been anything else than he was. He had not made himself, and for his making he was not responsible. Yet we treated him as a free agent and held him personally responsible for all that he was and that he should not have been. As a result, our treatment of him was as terrible as he was himself terrible. Finally we gave him the silent treatment, and for weeks before he died we neither spoke to him nor did he speak to us. And for weeks he moved among us, or lay in his bunk in our crowded house, grinning at us his hatred and malignancy. He was a dying man, and he knew it, and we knew it. And furthermore, he knew that we wanted him to die. He cumbered our life with his presence, and ours was a rough life that made rough men of us. And so he died, in a small space crowded by twelve men and as much alone as if he had died on some desolate mountain peak. No kindly word, no last word, was passed between. He died as he had lived, a beast, and he died hating us and hated by us.

And now I come to the most startling moment of my life. No sooner was he dead than he was flung overboard. He died in a night of wind, drawing his last breath as the men tumbled into their oilskins to the cry of "All hands!" And he was flung overboard, several hours later, on a day of wind. Not even a canvas wrapping graced his mortal remains; nor was he deemed worthy of bars of iron at his feet. We sewed him up in the blankets in which he died and laid him on a hatch-cover for'ard of the main-hatch on the port side. A gunnysack, half full of galley coal, was fastened to his feet.

It was bitter cold. The weather-side of every rope, spar, and stay was coated with ice, while all the rigging was a harp, singing and shouting under the fierce hand of the wind. The schooner, hove to, lurched and floundered through the sea, rolling her scuppers under and perpetually flooding the deck with icy salt water. We of the forecastle stood in sea-boots and oilskins. Our hands were mittened, but our heads were bared in the presence of the death we did not respect. Our ears stung and numbed and whitened, and we yearned for the body to be gone. But the interminable reading of the burial service went on. The captain had mistaken his place, and while he read on without purpose we froze our ears and resented this final hardship thrust upon us by the helpless cadaver. As from the beginning, so to the end, everything had gone wrong with the Bricklayer. Finally, the captain's son, irritated beyond measure, jerked the book from the palsied fingers of the old man and found the place. Again the quavering voice of the captain arose. Then came the cue: "And the body shall be cast into the sea." We elevated one end of the hatch-cover, and the Bricklayer plunged outboard and was gone.

Back into the forecastle we cleaned house, washing out the dead man's bunk and removing every vestige of him. By sea law and sea custom, we should have gathered his effects together and turned them over to the captain, who, later, would have held an auction in which we should have bid for the various articles. But no man wanted them, so we tossed them up on deck and overboard in the wake of the departed body — the last ill-treatment we could devise to wreak upon the one we had hated so. Oh, it was raw, believe me; but the life we lived was raw, and we were as raw as the life.

The Bricklayer's bunk was better than mine. Less sea water leaked down through the deck into it, and the light was better for lying in bed and reading. Partly for this reason I proceeded to move into his bunk. My other reason was pride. I saw the sailors were superstitious, and by this act I determined to show that I was braver than they. I would cap my proved equality by a deed that would compel their recognition of my superiority. Oh, the arrogance of youth! But let that pass. The sailors were appalled by my intention. One and all, they warned me that in the history of the sea no man had taken a dead man's bunk and lived to the end of the voyage. They instanced case after case in their personal experience. I was obdurate. Then they begged and pleaded with me, and my pride was tickled in that they showed they really liked me and were concerned about me. This but served to confirm me in my madness. I moved in, and, lying in the dead man's bunk, all afternoon and evening listened to dire prophecies of my future. Also were told stories of awful deaths and gruesome ghosts that secretly shivered the hearts of all of us. Saturated with this, yet scoffing at it, I rolled over at the end of the second dog-watch and went to sleep.

At ten minutes to twelve I was called, and at twelve I was dressed and on deck, relieving the man who had called me. On the sealing grounds, when hove to, a watch of only a single man is kept through the night, each man holding the deck for an hour. It was a dark night, though not a black one. The gale was breaking up, and the clouds were thinning. There should have been a moon, and, though invisible, in some way a dim, suffused radiance came from it. I paced back and forth across the deck amidships. My mind was filled with the event of the day and with the horrible tales my shipmates had told, and yet I dare to say, here and now, that I was not afraid. I was a healthy animal, and furthermore, intellectually, I agreed with Swinburne that dead men rise up never. The Bricklayer was dead, and that was the end of it. He would rise up never — at least, never on the deck of the *Sophie Sutherland*. Even then he was in the ocean depths miles to windward of our leeward drift, and the likelihood was that he was already portioned out in the maws of many sharks. Still, my mind pondered on the tales of the ghosts of dead men I had heard, and I speculated on the spirit world. My conclusion was that if the spirits of the dead still roamed the world they carried the goodness or the malignancy of the earth-life with them. Therefore, granting the hypothesis (which I didn't grant at all), the ghost of the Bricklayer was bound to be as hateful and malignant as he in life had been. But there wasn't any Bricklayer's ghost — that I insisted upon.

A few minutes, thinking thus, I paced up and down. Then, glancing casually for'ard, along the port side, I leaped like a startled deer and in a blind madness of terror rushed aft along the poop, heading for the cabin. Gone was all my arrogance of youth and my intellectual calm. I had seen a ghost. There, in the dim light, where we had flung the dead man overboard, I had seen a faint and wavering form. Six-feet in length it was, slender, and of substance so attenuated that I had distinctly seen through it the tracery of the fore-rigging.

As for me, I was as panic-stricken as a frightened horse. I, as I, had ceased to exist. Through me were vibrating the fibre-instincts of ten thousand generations of superstitious forebears who had been afraid of the dark and the things of the dark. I was not I. I was, in truth, those ten thousand forebears. I was the race, the whole human race, in its superstitious infancy. Not until part way down the cabin-companionway did my identity return to me. I checked my flight and clung to the steep ladder, suffocating, trembling, and dizzy. Never, before nor since, have I had such a shock. I clung to the ladder and considered. I could not doubt my senses. That I had seen something there was no discussion. But what was it? Either a ghost or a joke. There could be nothing else. If a ghost, the question was: would it appear again? If it did not, and I aroused the ship's officers, I would make myself the laughing stock of all on board. And by the same token, if it were a joke, my position would be still more ridiculous. If I were to retain my hard-won place of equality, it would never do to arouse any one until I ascertained the nature of the thing.

I am a brave man. I dare to say so; for in fear and trembling I crept up the companion-way and went back to the spot from which I had first seen the thing. It had vanished. My bravery was qualified, however. Though I could see nothing, I was afraid to go for'ard to the spot where I had seen the thing. I resumed my pacing up and down, and though I cast many an anxious glance toward the dread spot, nothing manifested itself. As my equanimity returned to me, I concluded that the whole affair had been a trick of the imagination and that I had got what I deserved for allowing my mind to dwell on such matters.

Once more my glances for'ard were casual, and not anxious; and then, suddenly, I was a madman, rushing wildly aft. I had seen the thing again, the long, wavering attenuated substance through which could be seen the fore-rigging. This time I had reached only the break of the poop when I checked myself. Again I reasoned over the situation, and it was pride that counselled strongest. I could not afford to make myself a laughing-stock. This thing, whatever it was, I must face alone. I must work it out myself. I looked back to the spot where we had tilted the Bricklayer. It was vacant. Nothing moved. And for a third time I resumed my amidships pacing.

In the absence of the thing my fear died away and my intellectual poise returned. Of course it was not a ghost. Dead men did not rise up. It was a joke, a cruel joke. My mates of the forecastle, by some unknown means, were frightening me. Twice already must they have seen me run aft. My cheeks burned with shame. In fancy I could hear the smothered chuckling and laughter even then going on in the forecastle. I began to grow angry. Jokes were all very well, but this was carrying the thing too far. I was the youngest on board, only a youth, and they had no right to play tricks on me of the order that I well knew in the past had made raving maniacs of men and women. I grew angrier and angrier, and resolved to show them that I was made of sterner stuff and at the same time to wreak my resentment upon them. If the thing appeared again, I made my mind up that I would go up to it — furthermore, that I would go up to it knife in hand. When within striking distance, I would strike. If a man, he would get the knife-thrust he deserved. If a ghost, well, it wouldn’t hurt the ghost any, while I would have learned that dead men did rise up.

Now I was very angry, and I was quite sure the thing was a trick; but when the thing appeared a third time, in the same spot, long, attenuated, and wavering, fear surged up in me and drove most of my anger away. But I did not run. Nor did I take my eyes from the thing. Both times before, it had vanished while I was running away, so I had not seen the manner of its going. I drew my sheath-knife from my belt and began my advance. Step by step, nearer and nearer, the effort to control myself grew more severe. The struggle was between my will, my identity, my very self, on the one hand, and on the other, the ten thousand ancestors who were twisted into the fibres of me and whose ghostly voices were whispering of the dark and the fear of the dark that had been theirs in the time when the world was dark and full of terror.

I advanced more slowly, and still the thing wavered and flitted with strange eerie lurches. And then, right before my eyes, it vanished. I saw it vanish. Neither to the right nor left did it go, nor backward. Right there, while I gazed upon it, it faded away, ceased to be. I didn’t die, but I swear, from what I experienced in those few succeeding moments, that I know full well that men can die of fright. I stood there, knife in hand, swaying automatically to the roll of the ship, paralysed with fear. Had the Bricklayer suddenly seized my throat with corporeal fingers and proceeded to throttle me, it would have been no more than I expected. Dead men did rise up, and that would be the most likely thing the malignant Bricklayer would do.

But he didn't seize my throat. Nothing happened. And, since nature abhors a status, I could not remain there in the one place forever paralysed. I turned and started aft. I did not run. What was the use? What chance had I against the malevolent world of ghosts? Flight, with me, was the swiftness of my legs. The pursuit, with a ghost, was the swiftness of thought. And there were ghosts. I had seen one.

And so, stumbling slowly aft, I discovered the explanation of the seeming. I saw the mizzen topmast lurching across a faint radiance of cloud behind which was the moon. The idea leaped in my brain. I extended the line between the cloudy radiance and the mizzen-topmast and found that it must strike somewhere near the fore-rigging on the port side. Even as I did this, the radiance vanished. The driving clouds of the breaking gale were alternately thickening and thinning before the face of the moon, but never exposing the face of the moon. And when the clouds were at their thinnest, it was a very dim radiance that the moon was able to make. I watched and waited. The next time the clouds thinned I looked for'ard, and there was the shadow of the topmast, long and attenuated, wavering and lurching on the deck and against the rigging.

This was my first ghost. Once again have I seen a ghost. It proved to be a Newfoundland dog, and I don't know which of us was the more frightened, for I hit that Newfoundland a full right-arm swing to the jaw. Regarding the Bricklayer's ghost, I will say that I never mentioned it to a soul on board. Also, I will say that in all my life I never went through more torment and mental suffering than on that lonely night-watch on the *Sophie Sutherland*.

(TO THE EDITOR. — This is not a fiction. It is a true page out of my life.)

A CLASSIC OF THE SEA

Introduction to “*Two Years before the Mast*.”

Once in a hundred years is a book written that lives not alone for its own century but which becomes a document for the future centuries. Such a book is Dana’s. When Marryat’s and Cooper’s sea novels are gone to dust, stimulating and joyful as they have been to generations of men, still will remain “Two Years Before the Mast.”

Paradoxical as it may seem, Dana’s book is the classic of the sea, not because there was anything extraordinary about Dana, but for the precise contrary reason that he was just an ordinary, normal man, clear-seeing, hard-headed, controlled, fitted with adequate education to go about the work. He brought a trained mind to put down with untroubled vision what he saw of a certain phase of work-a-day life. There was nothing brilliant nor fly-away about him. He was not a genius. His heart never rode his head. He was neither overlorded by sentiment nor hag-ridden by imagination. Otherwise he might have been guilty of the beautiful exaggerations in Melville’s “Typee” or the imaginative orgies in the latter’s “Moby Dick.” It was Dana’s cool poise that saved him from being spread-eagled and flogged when two of his mates were so treated; it was his lack of abandon that prevented him from taking up permanently with the sea, that prevented him from seeing more than one poetical spot, and more than one romantic spot on all the coast of Old California. Yet these apparent defects were his strength. They enabled him magnificently to write, and for all time, the picture of the sea-life of his time.

Written close to the middle of the last century, such has been the revolution worked in man’s method of trafficking with the sea, that the life and conditions described in Dana’s book have passed utterly away. Gone are the crack clippers, the driving captains, the hard-bitten but efficient foremast hands. Remain only crawling cargo tanks, dirty tramps, greyhound liners, and a sombre, sordid type of sailing ship. The only records broken to-day by sailing vessels are those for slowness. They are no longer built for speed, nor are they manned before the mast by as sturdy a sailor stock, nor aft the mast are they officered by sail-carrying captains and driving mates.

Speed is left to the liners, who run the silk, and tea, and spices. Admiralty courts, boards of trade, and underwriters frown upon driving and sail-carrying. No more are the free-and-easy, dare-devil days, when fortunes were made in fast runs and lucky ventures, not alone for owners, but for captains as well. Nothing is ventured now. The risks of swift passages cannot be abided. Freights are calculated to the last least fraction of per cent. The captains do no speculating, no bargain-making for the owners. The latter attend to all this, and by wire and cable rake the ports of the seven seas in quest of cargoes, and through their agents make all business arrangements.

It has been learned that small crews only, and large carriers only, can return a decent interest on the investment. The inevitable corollary is that speed and spirit are at a discount. There is no discussion of the fact that in the sailing merchant marine the seamen, as a class, have sadly deteriorated. Men no longer sell farms to go to sea. But the time of which Dana writes was the heyday of fortune-making and adventure on the sea — with the full connotation of hardship and peril always attendant.

It was Dana's fortune, for the sake of the picture, that the *Pilgrim* was an average ship, with an average crew and officers, and managed with average discipline. Even the *hazing* that took place after the California coast was reached, was of the average sort. The *Pilgrim* savoured not in any way of a hell-ship. The captain, while not the sweetest-natured man in the world, was only an average down-east driver, neither brilliant nor slovenly in his seamanship, neither cruel nor sentimental in the treatment of his men. While, on the one hand, there were no extra liberty days, no delicacies added to the meagre forecastle fare, nor grog or hot coffee on double watches, on the other hand the crew were not chronically crippled by the continual play of knuckle-dusters and belaying pins. Once, and once only, were men flogged or ironed — a very fair average for the year 1834, for at that time flogging on board merchant vessels was already well on the decline.

The difference between the sea-life then and now can be no better epitomised than in Dana's description of the dress of the sailor of his day:

"The trousers tight around the hips, and thence hanging long and loose around the feet, a superabundance of checked shirt, a low-crowned, well-varnished black hat, worn on the back of the head, with half a fathom of black ribbon hanging over the left eye, and a peculiar tie to the black silk neckerchief."

Though Dana sailed from Boston only three-quarters of a century ago, much that is at present obsolete was then in full sway. For instance, the old word *larboard* was still in use. He was a member of the *larboard* watch. The vessel was on the *larboard* tack. It was only the other day, because of its similarity in sound to starboard, that *larboard* was changed to *port*. Try to imagine "All larboard bowlines on deck!" being shouted down into the forecastle of a present day ship. Yet that was the call used on the *Pilgrim* to fetch Dana and the rest of his watch on deck.

The chronometer, which is merely the least imperfect time-piece man has devised, makes possible the surest and easiest method by far of ascertaining longitude. Yet the *Pilgrim* sailed in a day when the chronometer was just coming into general use. So little was it depended upon that the *Pilgrim* carried only one, and that one, going wrong at the outset, was never used again. A navigator of the present would be aghast if asked to voyage for two years, from Boston, around the Horn to California, and back again, without a chronometer. In those days such a proceeding was a matter of course, for those were the days when dead reckoning was indeed something to reckon on, when running down the latitude was a common way of finding a place, and when lunar observations were direly necessary. It may be fairly asserted that very few merchant officers of to-day ever make a lunar observation, and that a large percentage are unable to do it.

"Sept. 22nd., upon coming on deck at seven bells in the morning we found the other watch aloft throwing water upon the sails, and looking astern we saw a small, clipper-built brig with a black hull heading directly after us. We went to work immediately, and put all the canvas upon the brig which we could get upon her, rigging out oars for studding-sail yards; and contined wetting down the sails by buckets of water whipped up to the mast-head . . . She was armed, and full of men, and showed no colours."

The foregoing sounds like a paragraph from "Midshipman Easy" or the "Water Witch," rather than a paragraph from the soberest, faithfullest, and most literal chronicle of the sea ever written. And yet the chase by a pirate occurred, on board the brig *Pilgrim*, on September 22nd, 1834 — something like only two generations ago.

Dana was the thorough-going type of man, not overbalanced and erratic, without quirk or quibble of temperament. He was efficient, but not brilliant. His was a general all-round efficiency. He was efficient at the law; he was efficient at college; he was efficient as a sailor; he was efficient in the matter of pride, when that pride was no more than the pride of a forecastle hand, at twelve dollars a month, in his seaman's task well done, in the smart sailing of his captain, in the clearness and trimness of his ship.

There is no sailor whose cockles of the heart will not warm to Dana's description of the first time he sent down a royal yard. Once or twice he had seen it done. He got an old hand in the crew to coach him. And then, the first anchorage at Monterey, being pretty *thick* with the second mate, he got him to ask the mate to be sent up the first time the royal yards were struck. "Fortunately," as Dana describes it, "I got through without any word from the officer; and heard the 'well done' of the mate, when the yard reached the deck, with as much satisfaction as I ever felt at Cambridge on seeing a 'bene' at the foot of a Latin exercise."

"This was the first time I had taken a weather ear-ring, and I felt not a little proud to sit astride of the weather yard-arm, past the ear-ring, and sing out 'Haul out to leeward!'" He had been over a year at sea before he essayed this able seaman's task, but he did it, and he did it with pride. And with pride, he went down a four-hundred foot cliff, on a pair of top-gallant studding-sail halyards bent together, to dislodge several dollars worth of stranded bullock hides, though all the acclaim he got from his mates was: "What a d-d fool you were to risk your life for half a dozen hides!"

In brief, it was just this efficiency in pride, as well as work, that enabled Dana to set down, not merely the photograph detail of life before the mast and hide-droghing on the coast of California, but of the untarnished simple psychology and ethics of the forecastle hands who droghed the hides, stood at the wheel, made and took in sail, tarred down the rigging, holystoned the decks, turned in all-standing, grumbled as they cut about the kid, criticised the seamanship of their officers, and estimated the duration of their exile from the cubic space of the hide-house.

JACK LONDON
Glen Ellen, California,
August 13, 1911.

A WICKED WOMAN

(Curtain Raiser)

Scene — California.

Time — Afternoon of a summer day.

CHARACTERS

LORETTA, A sweet, young thing. Frightfully innocent. About nineteen years old. Slender, delicate, a fragile flower. Ingenuous.

NED BASHFORD, A jaded young man of the world, who has philosophised his experiences and who is without faith in the veracity or purity of women.

BILLY MARSH, A boy from a country town who is just about as innocent as Loretta. Awkward. Positive. Raw and callow youth.

ALICE HEMINGWAY, A society woman, good-hearted, and a match-maker.

JACK HEMINGWAY, Her husband.

MAID.

A WICKED WOMAN

[Curtain rises on a conventional living room of a country house in California. It is the Hemingway house at Santa Clara. The room is remarkable for magnificent stone fireplace at rear centre. On either side of fireplace are generous, diamond-paned windows. Wide, curtained doorways to right and left. To left, front, table, with vase of flowers and chairs. To right, front, grand piano.]

[Curtain discovers LORETTA seated at piano, not playing, her back to it, facing NED BASHFORD, who is standing.]

LORETTA. [Petulantly, fanning herself with sheet of music.] No, I won't go fishing. It's too warm. Besides, the fish won't bite so early in the afternoon.

NED. Oh, come on. It's not warm at all. And anyway, we won't really fish. I want to tell you something.

LORETTA. [Still petulantly.] You are always wanting to tell me something.

NED. Yes, but only in fun. This is different. This is serious. Our . . . my happiness depends upon it.

LORETTA. [Speaking eagerly, no longer petulant, looking, serious and delighted, divining a proposal.] Then don't wait. Tell me right here.

NED. [Almost threateningly.] Shall I?

LORETTA. [Challenging.] Yes.

[He looks around apprehensively as though fearing interruption, clears his throat, takes resolution, also takes LORETTA's hand.]

[LORETTA is startled, timid, yet willing to hear, naïvely unable to conceal her love for him.]

NED. [Speaking softly.] Loretta . . . I, . . . ever since I met you I have —

[JACK HEMINGWAY appears in the doorway to the left, just entering.]

[NED suddenly drops LORETTA's hand. He shows exasperation.]

[LORETTA shows disappointment at interruption.]

NED. Confound it

LORETTA. [Shocked.] Ned! Why will you swear so?

NED. [Testily.] That isn't swearing.

LORETTA. What is it, pray?

NED. Displeasuring.

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Who is crossing over to right.] Squabbling again?

LORETTA. [Indignantly and with dignity.] No, we're not.

NED. [Gruffly.] What do you want now?

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Enthusiastically.] Come on fishing.

NED. [Snappily.] No. It's too warm.

JACK HEMINGWAY. [Resignedly, going out right.] You needn't take a fellow's head off.

LORETTA. I thought you wanted to go fishing.

NED. Not with Jack.

LORETTA. [Accusingly, fanning herself vigorously.] And you told me it wasn't warm at all.

NED. [Speaking softly.] That isn't what I wanted to tell you, Loretta. [He takes her hand.] Dear Loretta —

[Enter abruptly ALICE HEMINGWAY from right.]

[LORETTA sharply jerks her hand away, and looks put out.]

[NED tries not to look awkward.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Goodness! I thought you'd both gone fishing!

LORETTA. [Sweetly.] Is there anything you want, Alice?

NED. [Trying to be courteous.] Anything I can do?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Speaking quickly, and trying to withdraw.] No, no. I only came to see if the mail had arrived.

LORETTA AND NED

[Speaking together.] No, it hasn't arrived.

LORETTA. [Suddenly moving toward door to right.] I am going to see.

[NED looks at her reproachfully.]

[LORETTA looks back tantalisingly from doorway and disappears.]

[NED flings himself disgustedly into Morris chair.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Moving over and standing in front of him. Speaks accusingly.] What have you been saying to her?

NED. [Disgruntled.] Nothing.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Threateningly.] Now listen to me, Ned.

NED. [Earnestly.] On my word, Alice, I've been saying nothing to her.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With sudden change of front.] Then you ought to have been saying something to her.

NED. [Irritably. Getting chair for her, seating her, and seating himself again.] Look here, Alice, I know your game. You invited me down here to make a fool of me.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Nothing of the sort, sir. I asked you down to meet a sweet and unsullied girl — the sweetest, most innocent and ingenuous girl in the world.

NED. [Dryly.] That's what you said in your letter.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. And that's why you came. Jack had been trying for a year to get you to come. He did not know what kind of a letter to write.

NED. If you think I came because of a line in a letter about a girl I'd never seen —

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Mockingly.] The poor, jaded, world-worn man, who is no longer interested in women . . . and girls! The poor, tired pessimist who has lost all faith in the goodness of women —

NED. For which you are responsible.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Incredulously.] I?

NED. You are responsible. Why did you throw me over and marry Jack?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Do you want to know?

NED. Yes.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Judiciously.] First, because I did not love you. Second, because you did not love me. [She smiles at his protesting hand and at the protesting expression on his face.] And third, because there were just about twenty-seven other women at that time that you loved, or thought you loved. That is why I married Jack. And that is why you lost faith in the goodness of women. You have only yourself to blame.

NED. [Admiringly.] You talk so convincingly. I almost believe you as I listen to you. And yet I know all the time that you are like all the rest of your sex — faithless, unveracious, and . . .

[He glares at her, but does not proceed.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Go on. I'm not afraid.

NED. [With finality.] And immoral.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Oh! You wretch!

NED. [Gloatingly.] That's right. Get angry. You may break the furniture if you wish. I don't mind.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With sudden change of front, softly.] And how about Loretta?

[NED gasps and remains silent.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. The depths of duplicity that must lurk under that sweet and innocent exterior . . . according to your philosophy!

NED. [Earnestly.] Loretta is an exception, I confess. She is all that you said in your letter. She is a little fairy, an angel. I never dreamed of anything like her. It is remarkable to find such a woman in this age.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Encouragingly.] She is so naive.

NED. [Taking the bait.] Yes, isn't she? Her face and her tongue betray all her secrets.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Nodding her head.] Yes, I have noticed it.

NED. [Delightedly.] Have you?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. She cannot conceal anything. Do you know that she loves you?

NED. [Falling into the trap, eagerly.] Do you think so?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Laughing and rising.] And to think I once permitted you to make love to me for three weeks!

[NED rises.]

[MAID enters from left with letters, which she brings to ALICE HEMINGWAY.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Running over letters.] None for you, Ned. [Selecting two letters for herself.] Tradesmen. [Handing remainder of letters to MAID.] And three for Loretta. [Speaking to MAID.] Put them on the table, Josie.

[MAID puts letters on table to left front, and makes exit to left.]

NED. [With shade of jealousy.] Loretta seems to have quite a correspondence.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [With a sigh.] Yes, as I used to when I was a girl.

NED. But hers are family letters.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Yes, I did not notice any from Billy.

NED. [Faintly.] Billy?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Nodding.] Of course she has told you about him?

NED. [Gasping.] She has had lovers . . . already?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. And why not? She is nineteen.

NED. [Haltingly.] This . . . er . . . this Billy . . . ?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Laughing and putting her hand reassuringly on his arm.] Now don't be alarmed, poor, tired philosopher. She doesn't love Billy at all.

[LORETTA enters from right.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [To LORETTA, nodding toward table.] Three letters for you.

LORETTA. [Delightedly.] Oh! Thank you.

[LORETTA trips swiftly across to table, looks at letters, sits down, opens letters, and begins to read.]

NED. [Suspiciously.] But Billy?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. I am afraid he loves her very hard. That is why she is here. They had to send her away. Billy was making life miserable for her. They were little children together — playmates. And Billy has been, well, importunate. And Loretta, poor child, does not know anything about marriage. That is all.

NED. [Reassured.] Oh, I see.

[ALICE HEMINGWAY starts slowly toward right exit, continuing conversation and accompanied by NED.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [Calling to LORETTA.] Are you going fishing, Loretta?

[LORETTA looks up from letter and shakes head.]

ALICE HEMINGWAY. [To NED.] Then you're not, I suppose?

NED. No, it's too warm.

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Then I know the place for you.

NED. Where?

ALICE HEMINGWAY. Right here. [Looks significantly in direction of LORETTA.] Now is your opportunity to say what you ought to say.

[ALICE HEMINGWAY laughs teasingly and goes out to right.]

[NED hesitates, starts to follow her, looks at LORETTA, and stops. He twists his moustache and continues to look at her meditatively.]

[LORETTA is unaware of his presence and goes on reading. Finishes letter, folds it, replaces in envelope, looks up, and discovers NED.]

LORETTA. [Startled.] Oh! I thought you were gone.

NED. [Walking across to her.] I thought I'd stay and finish our conversation.

LORETTA. [Willingly, settling herself to listen.] Yes, you were going to . . . [Drops eyes and ceases talking.]

NED. [Taking her hand, tenderly.] I little dreamed when I came down here visiting that I was to meet my destiny in — [Abruptly releases LORETTA's hand.]

[MAID enters from left with tray.]

[LORETTA glances into tray and discovers that it is empty. She looks inquiringly at MAID.]

MAID. A gentleman to see you. He hasn't any card. He said for me to tell you that it was Billy.

LORETTA. [Starting, looking with dismay and appeal to NED.] Oh! . . . Ned!

NED [Gracefully and courteously, rising to his feet and preparing to go.] If you'll excuse me now, I'll wait till afterward to tell you what I wanted.

LORETTA. [In dismay.] What shall I do?

NED. [Pausing.] Don't you want to see him? [LORETTA shakes her head.] Then don't.

LORETTA. [Slowly.] I can't do that. We are old friends. We . . . were children together. [To the MAID.] Send him in. [To NED, who has started to go out toward right.] Don't go, Ned.

[MAID makes exit to left.]

NED. [Hesitating a moment.] I'll come back.

[NED makes exit to right.]

[LORETTA, left alone on stage, shows perturbation and dismay.]

[BILLY enters from left. Stands in doorway a moment. His shoes are dusty. He looks overheated. His eyes and face brighten at sight of LORETTA.]

BILLY. [Stepping forward, ardently.] Loretta!

LORETTA. [Not exactly enthusiastic in her reception, going slowly to meet him.] You never said you were coming.

[BILLY shows that he expects to kiss her, but she merely shakes his hand.]

BILLY. [Looking down at his very dusty shoes.] I walked from the station.

LORETTA. If you had let me know, the carriage would have been sent for you.

BILLY. [With expression of shrewdness.] If I had let you know, you wouldn't have let me come.

[BILLY looks around stage cautiously, then tries to kiss her.]

LORETTA. [Refusing to be kissed.] Won't you sit down?

BILLY. [Coaxingly.] Go on, just one. [LORETTA shakes head and holds him off.] Why not? We're engaged.

LORETTA. [With decision.] We're not. You know we're not. You know I broke it off the day before I came away. And . . . and . . . you'd better sit down.

[BILLY sits down on edge of chair. LORETTA seats herself by table. Billy, without rising, jerks his chair forward till they are facing each other, his knees touching hers. He yearns toward her. She moves back her chair slightly.]

BILLY. [With supreme confidence.] That's what I came to see you for — to get engaged over again.

[BILLY hudges chair forward and tries to take her hand.]

[LORETTA hudges her chair back.]

BILLY. [Drawing out large silver watch and looking at it.] Now look here, Loretta, I haven't any time to lose. I've got to leave for that train in ten minutes. And I want you to set the day.

LORETTA. But we're not engaged, Billy. So there can't be any setting of the day.

BILLY. [With confidence.] But we're going to be. [Suddenly breaking out.] Oh, Loretta, if you only knew how I've suffered. That first night I didn't sleep a wink. I haven't slept much ever since. [Hudges chair forward.] I walk the floor all night. [Solemnly.] Loretta, I don't eat enough to keep a canary bird alive. Loretta . . . [Hudges chair forward.]

LORETTA. [Hudging her chair back maternally.] Billy, what you need is a tonic. Have you seen Doctor Haskins?

BILLY. [Looking at watch and evincing signs of haste.] Loretta, when a girl kisses a man, it means she is going to marry him.

LORETTA. I know it, Billy. But . . . [She glances toward letters on table.] Captain Kitt doesn't want me to marry you. He says . . . [She takes letter and begins to open it.]

BILLY. Never mind what Captain Kitt says. He wants you to stay and be company for your sister. He doesn't want you to marry me because he knows she wants to keep you.

LORETTA. Daisy doesn't want to keep me. She wants nothing but my own happiness. She says — [She takes second letter from table and begins to open it.]

BILLY. Never mind what Daisy says —

LORETTA. [Taking third letter from table and beginning to open it.] And Martha says —

BILLY. [Angrily.] Darn Martha and the whole boiling of them!

LORETTA. [Reprovingly.] Oh, Billy!

BILLY. [Defensively.] Darn isn't swearing, and you know it isn't.

[There is an awkward pause. Billy has lost the thread of the conversation and has vacant expression.]

BILLY. [Suddenly recollecting.] Never mind Captain Kitt, and Daisy, and Martha, and what they want. The question is, what do you want?

LORETTA. [Appealingly.] Oh, Billy, I'm so unhappy.

BILLY. [Ignoring the appeal and pressing home the point.] The thing is, do you want to marry me? [He looks at his watch.] Just answer that.

LORETTA. Aren't you afraid you'll miss that train?

BILLY. Darn the train!

LORETTA. [Reprovingly.] Oh, Billy!

BILLY. [Most irascibly.] Darn isn't swearing. [Plaintively.] That's the way you always put me off. I didn't come all the way here for a train. I came for you. Now just answer me one thing. Do you want to marry me?

LORETTA. [Firmly.] No, I don't want to marry you.

BILLY. [With assurance.] But you've got to, just the same.

LORETTA. [With defiance.] Got to?

BILLY. [With unshaken assurance.] That's what I said — got to. And I'll see that you do.

LORETTA. [Blazing with anger.] I am no longer a child. You can't bully me, Billy Marsh!

BILLY. [Coolly.] I'm not trying to bully you. I'm trying to save your reputation.

LORETTA. [Faintly.] Reputation?

BILLY. [Nodding.] Yes, reputation. [He pauses for a moment, then speaks very solemnly.] Loretta, when a woman kisses a man, she's got to marry him.

LORETTA. [Appalled, faintly.] Got to?

BILLY. [Dogmatically.] It is the custom.

LORETTA. [Brokenly.] And when . . . a . . . a woman kisses a man and doesn't . . . marry him . . . ?

BILLY. Then there is a scandal. That's where all the scandals you see in the papers come from.

[BILLY looks at watch.]

[LORETTA in silent despair.]

LORETTA. [In abasement.] You are a good man, Billy. [Billy shows that he believes it.] And I am a very wicked woman.

BILLY. No, you're not, Loretta. You just didn't know.

LORETTA. [With a gleam of hope.] But you kissed me first.

BILLY. It doesn't matter. You let me kiss you.

LORETTA. [Hope dying down.] But not at first.

BILLY. But you did afterward and that's what counts. You let me you in the grape-arbour. You let me —

LORETTA. [With anguish] Don't! Don't!

BILLY. [Relentlessly.] — kiss you when you were playing the piano. You let me kiss you that day of the picnic. And I can't remember all the times you let me kiss you good night.

LORETTA. [Beginning to weep.] Not more than five.

BILLY. [With conviction.] Eight at least.

LORETTA. [Reproachfully, still weeping.] You told me it was all right.

BILLY. [Emphatically.] So it was all right — until you said you wouldn't marry me after all. Then it was a scandal — only no one knows it yet. If you marry me no one ever will know it. [Looks at watch.] I've got to go. [Stands up.] Where's my hat?

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] This is awful.

BILLY. [Approvingly.] You bet it's awful. And there's only one way out. [Looks anxiously about for hat.] What do you say?

LORETTA. [Brokenly.] I must think. I'll write to you. [Faintly.] The train? Your hat's in the hall.

BILLY. [Looks at watch, hastily tries to kiss her, succeeds only in shaking hand, starts across stage toward left.] All right. You write to me. Write to-morrow. [Stops for a moment in doorway and speaks very solemnly.] Remember, Loretta, there must be no scandal.

[Billy goes out.]

[LORETTA sits in chair quietly weeping. Slowly dries eyes, rises from chair, and stands, undecided as to what she will do next.]

[NED enters from right, peeping. Discovers that LORETTA is alone, and comes quietly across stage to her. When NED comes up to her she begins weeping again and tries to turn her head away. NED catches both her hands in his and compels her to look at him. She weeps harder.]

NED. [Putting one arm protectingly around her shoulder and drawing her toward him.] There, there, little one, don't cry.

LORETTA. [Turning her face to his shoulder like a tired child, sobbing.] Oh, Ned, if you only knew how wicked I am.

NED. [Smiling indulgently.] What is the matter, little one? Has your dearly beloved sister failed to write to you? [LORETTA shakes head.] Has Hemingway been bullying you? [LORETTA shakes head.] Then it must have been that caller of yours? [Long pause, during which LORETTA's weeping grows more violent.] Tell me what's the matter, and we'll see what I can do. [He lightly kisses her hair — so lightly that she does not know.]

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] I can't. You will despise me. Oh, Ned, I am so ashamed.

NED. [Laughing incredulously.] Let us forget all about it. I want to tell you something that may make me very happy. My fondest hope is that it will make you happy, too. Loretta, I love you —

LORETTA. [Uttering a sharp cry of delight, then moaning.] Too late!

NED. [Surprised.] Too late?

LORETTA. [Still moaning.] Oh, why did I? [NED somewhat stiffens.] I was so young. I did not know the world then.

NED. What is it all about anyway?

LORETTA. Oh, I . . . he . . . Billy . . . I am a wicked woman, Ned. I know you will never speak to me again.

NED. This . . . er . . . this Billy — what has he been doing?

LORETTA. I . . . he . . . I didn't know. I was so young. I could not help it. Oh, I shall go mad, I shall go mad!

[NED's encircling arm goes limp. He gently disengages her and deposits her in big chair.]

[LORETTA buries her face and sobs afresh.]

NED. [Twisting moustache fiercely, regarding her dubiously, hesitating a moment, then drawing up chair and sitting down.] I . . . I do not understand.

LORETTA. [Wailing.] I am so unhappy!

NED. [Inquisitorially.] Why unhappy?

LORETTA. Because . . . he . . . he wants to marry me.

NED. [His face brightening instantly, leaning forward and laying a hand soothingly on hers.] That should not make any girl unhappy. Because you don't love him is no reason — [Abruptly breaking off.] Of course you don't love him? [LORETTA shakes her head and shoulders vigorously.] What?

LORETTA. [Explosively.] No, I don't love Billy! I don't want to love Billy!

NED. [With confidence.] Because you don't love him is no reason that you should be unhappy just because he has proposed to you.

LORETTA. [Sobbing.] That's the trouble. I wish I did love him. Oh, I wish I were dead.

NED. [Growing complacent.] Now my dear child, you are worrying yourself over trifles. [His second hand joins the first in holding her hands.] Women do it every day. Because you have changed your mind, or did not know you mind, because you have — to use an unnecessarily harsh word — jilted a man —

LORETTA. [Interrupting, raising her head and looking at him.] Jilted? Oh Ned, if that were a all!

NED. [Hollow voice.] All!

[NED's hands slowly retreat from hers. He opens his mouth as though to speak further, then changes his mind and remains silent.]

LORETTA. [Protestingly.] But I don't want to marry him!

NED. Then I shouldn't.

LORETTA. But I ought to marry him.

NED. *Ought* to marry him? [LORETTA nods.] That is a strong word.

LORETTA. [Nodding.] I know it is. [Her lips are trembling, but she strives for control and manages to speak more calmly.] I am a wicked woman. A terrible wicked woman. No one knows how wicked I am . . . except Billy.

NED. [Starting, looking at her queerly.] He . . . Billy knows? [LORETTA nods. He debates with himself a moment.] Tell me about it. You must tell me all of it.

LORETTA. [Faintly, as though about to weep again.] All of it?

NED. [Firmly.] Yes, all of it.

LORETTA. [Haltingly.] And . . . will . . . you . . . ever . . . forgive . . . me?

NED. [Drawing a long, breath, desperately.] Yes, I'll forgive you. Go ahead.

LORETTA. There was no one to tell me. We were with each other so much. I did not know anything of the world . . . then. [Pauses.]

NED. [Impatiently.] Go on.

LORETTA. If I had only known. [Pauses.]

NED. [Biting his lip and clenching his hands.] Yes, yes. Go on.

LORETTA. We were together almost every evening.

NED. [Savagely.] Billy?

LORETTA. Yes, of course, Billy. We were with each other so much . . . If I had only known . . . There was no one to tell me . . . I was so young . . . [Breaks down crying.]

NED. [Leaping to his feet, explosively.] The scoundrel!

LORETTA. [Lifting her head.] Billy is not a scoundrel . . . He . . . he . . . is a good man.

NED. [Sarcastically.] I suppose you'll be telling me next that it was all your fault. [LORETTA nods.] What!

LORETTA. [Steadily.] It was all my fault. I should never have let him. I was to blame.

NED. [Paces up and down for a minute, stops in front of her, and speaks with resignation.] All right. I don't blame you in the least, Loretta. And you have been very honest. It is . . . er . . . commendable. But Billy is right, and you are wrong. You must get married.

LORETTA. [In dim, far-away voice.] To Billy?

NED. Yes, to Billy. I'll see to it. Where does he live? I'll make him. If he won't I'll . . . I'll shoot him!

LORETTA. [Crying out with alarm.] Oh, Ned, you won't do that?

NED. [Sternly.] I shall.

LORETTA. But I don't want to marry Billy.

NED. [Sternly.] You must. And Billy must. Do you understand? It is the only thing.

LORETTA. That's what Billy said.

NED. [Triumphantly.] You see, I am right.

LORETTA. And if . . . if I don't marry him . . . there will be . . . scandal?

NED. [Calmly.] Yes, there will be scandal.

LORETTA. That's what Billy said. Oh, I am so unhappy!

[LORETTA breaks down into violent weeping.]

[NED paces grimly up and down, now and again fiercely twisting his moustache.]

LORETTA. [Face buried, sobbing and crying all the time.]

I don't want to leave Daisy! I don't want to leave Daisy! What shall I do? What shall I do? How was I to know? He didn't tell me. Nobody else ever kissed me. [NED stops curiously to listen. As he listens his face brightens.] I never dreamed a kiss could be so terrible . . . until . . . until he told me. He only told me this morning.

NED. [Abruptly.] Is that what you are crying about?

LORETTA. [Reluctantly.] N-no.

NED. [In hopeless voice, the brightness gone out of his face, about to begin pacing again.] Then what are you crying about?

LORETTA. Because you said I had to marry Billy. I don't want to marry Billy. I don't want to leave Daisy. I don't know what I want. I wish I were dead.

NED. [Nerving himself for another effort.] Now look here, Loretta, be sensible. What is this about kisses? You haven't told me everything after all.

LORETTA. I . . . I don't want to tell you everything.

NED. [Imperatively.] You must.

LORETTA. [Surrendering.] Well, then . . . must I?

NED. You must.

LORETTA. [Floundering.] He . . . I . . . we . . . I let him, and he kissed me.

NED. [Desperately, controlling himself.] Go on.

LORETTA. He says eight, but I can't think of more than five times.

NED. Yes, go on.

LORETTA. That's all.

NED. [With vast incredulity.] All?

LORETTA. [Puzzled.] All?

NED. [Awkwardly.] I mean . . . er . . . nothing worse?

LORETTA. [Puzzled.] Worse? As though there could be. Billy said —

NED. [Interrupting.] When?

LORETTA. This afternoon. Just now. Billy said that my . . . our . . . our . . . our kisses were terrible if we didn't get married.

NED. What else did he say?

LORETTA. He said that when a woman permitted a man to kiss her she always married him. That it was awful if she didn't. It was the custom, he said; and I say it is a bad, wicked custom, and it has broken my heart. I shall never be happy again. I know I am terrible, but I can't help it. I must have been born wicked.

NED. [Absent-mindedly bringing out a cigarette and striking a match.] Do you mind if I smoke? [Coming to himself again, and flinging away match and cigarette.] I beg your pardon. I don't want to smoke. I didn't mean that at all. What I mean is . . . [He bends over LORETTA, catches her hands in his, then sits on arm of chair, softly puts one arm around her, and is about to kiss her.]

LORETTA. [With horror, repulsing him.] No! No!

NED. [Surprised.] What's the matter?

LORETTA. [Agitatedly.] Would you make me a wickeder woman than I am?

NED. A kiss?

LORETTA. There will be another scandal. That would make two scandals.

NED. To kiss the woman I love . . . a scandal?

LORETTA. Billy loves me, and he said so.

NED. Billy is a joker . . . or else he is as innocent as you.

LORETTA. But you said so yourself.

NED. [Taken aback.] I?

LORETTA. Yes, you said it yourself, with your own lips, not ten minutes ago. I shall never believe you again.

NED. [Masterfully putting arm around her and drawing her toward him.] And I am a joker, too, and a very wicked man. Nevertheless, you must trust me. There will be nothing wrong.

LORETTA. [Preparing to yield.] And no . . . scandal?

NED. Scandal fiddlesticks. Loretta, I want you to be my wife. [He waits anxiously.]

[JACK HEMINGWAY, in fishing costume, appears in doorway to right and looks on.]

NED. You might say something.

LORETTA. I will . . . if . . .

[ALICE HEMINGWAY appears in doorway to left and looks on.]

NED. [In suspense.] Yes, go on.

LORETTA. If I don’t have to marry Billy.

NED. [Almost shouting.] You can’t marry both of us!

LORETTA. [Sadly, repulsing him with her hands.] Then, Ned, I cannot marry you.

NED. [Dumbfounded.] W-what?

LORETTA. [Sadly.] Because I can’t marry both of you.

NED. Bosh and nonsense!

LORETTA. I’d like to marry you, but . . .

NED. There is nothing to prevent you.

LORETTA. [With sad conviction.] Oh, yes, there is. You said yourself that I had to marry Billy. You said you would s-s-shoot him if he didn’t.

NED. [Drawing her toward him.] Nevertheless . . .

LORETTA. [Slightly holding him off.] And it isn’t the custom . . . what . . . Billy said?

NED. No, it isn’t the custom. Now, Loretta, will you marry me?

LORETTA. [Pouting demurely.] Don’t be angry with me, Ned. [He gathers her into his arms and kisses her. She partially frees herself, gasping.] I wish it were the custom, because now I’d have to marry you, Ned, wouldn’t I?

[NED and LORETTA kiss a second time and profoundly.]

[JACK HEMINGWAY chuckles.]

[NED and LORETTA, startled, but still in each other’s arms, look around. NED looks sillily at ALICE HEMINGWAY. LORETTA looks at JACK HEMINGWAY.]

LORETTA. I don’t care.

CURTAIN

THE BIRTH MARK

SKETCH BY JACK LONDON written for Robert and Julia Fitzsimmons

SCENE — One of the club rooms of the West Bay Athletic Club. Near centre front is a large table covered with newspapers and magazines. At left a punching-bag apparatus. At right, against wall, a desk, on which rests a desk-telephone. Door at rear toward left. On walls are framed pictures of pugilists, conspicuous among which is one of Robert Fitzsimmons. Appropriate furnishings, etc., such as foils, clubs, dumb-bells and trophies.

[Enter MAUD SYLVESTER.]

[She is dressed as a man, in evening clothes, preferably a Tuxedo. In her hand is a card, and under her arm a paper-wrapped parcel. She peeps about curiously and advances to table. She is timorous and excited, elated and at the same time frightened. Her eyes are dancing with excitement.]

MAUD. [Pausing by table.] Not a soul saw me. I wonder where everybody is. And that big brother of mine said I could not get in. [She reads back of card.] "Here is my card, Maudie. If you can use it, go ahead. But you will never get inside the door. I consider my bet as good as won." [Looking up, triumphantly.] You do, do you? Oh, if you could see your little sister now. Here she is, inside. [Pauses, and looks about.] So this is the West Bay Athletic Club. No women allowed. Well, here I am, if I don't look like one. [Stretches out one leg and then the other, and looks at them. Leaving card and parcel on table, she struts around like a man, looks at pictures of pugilists on walls, reading aloud their names and making appropriate remarks. But she stops before the portrait of Fitzsimmons and reads aloud.] "Robert Fitzsimmons, the greatest warrior of them all." [Clasps hands, and looking up at portrait murmurs.] Oh, you dear!

[Continues strutting around, imitating what she considers are a man's stride and swagger, returns to table and proceeds to unwrap parcel.] Well, I'll go out like a girl, if I did come in like a man. [Drops wrapping paper on table and holds up a woman's long automobile cloak and a motor bonnet. Is suddenly startled by sound of approaching footsteps and glances in a frightened way toward door.] Mercy! Here comes somebody now!

[Glances about her in alarm, drops cloak and bonnet on floor close to table, seizes a handful of newspapers, and runs to large leather chair to right of table, where she seats herself hurriedly. One paper she holds up before her, hiding her face as she pretends to read. Unfortunately the paper is upside down. The other papers lie on her lap.]

[Enter ROBERT FITZSIMMONS.]

[He looks about, advances to table, takes out cigarette case and is about to select one, when he notices motor cloak and bonnet on floor. He lays cigarette case on table and picks them up. They strike him as profoundly curious things to be in a club room. He looks at MAUD, then sees card on table. He picks it up and reach it to himself, then looks at her with comprehension. Hidden by her newspaper, she sees nothing. He looks at card again and reads and speaks in an aside.]

FITZSIMMONS. "Maudie. John H. Sylvester." That must be Jack Sylvester's sister Maud. [FITZSIMMONS shows by his expression that he is going to play a joke. Tossing cloak and bonnet under the table he places card in his vest pocket, selects a chair, sits down, and looks at MAUD. He notes paper is upside down, is hugely tickled, and laughs silently.] Hello! [Newspaper is agitated by slight tremor. He speaks more loudly.] Hello! [Newspaper shakes badly. He speaks very loudly.] Hello!

MAUD. [Peeping at him over top of paper and speaking hesitatingly.] H-h-hello!

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] You are a queer one, reading a paper upside down.

MAUD. [Lowering newspaper and trying to appear at ease.] It's quite a trick, isn't it? I often practise it. I'm real clever at it, you know.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grunts, then adds.] Seems to me I have seen you before.

MAUD. [Glancing quickly from his face to portrait and back again.] Yes, and I know you — You are Robert Fitzsimmons.

FITZSIMMONS. I thought I knew you.

MAUD. Yes, it was out in San Francisco. My people still live there. I'm just — ahem — doing New York.

FITZSIMMONS. But I don't quite remember the name.

MAUD. Jones — Harry Jones.

FITZSIMMONS. [Hugely delighted, leaping from chair and striding over to her.] Sure. [Slaps her resoundingly on shoulder.]

[She is nearly crushed by the weight of the blow, and at the same time shocked. She scrambles to her feet.]

FITZSIMMONS. Glad to see you, Harry. [He wrings her hand, so that it hurts.] Glad to see you again, Harry. [He continues wringing her hand and pumping her arm.]

MAUD. [Struggling to withdraw her hand and finally succeeding. Her voice is rather faint.] Ye-es, er . . . Bob . . . er . . . glad to see you again. [She looks ruefully at her bruised fingers and sinks into chair. Then, recollecting her part, she crosses her legs in a mannish way.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Crossing to desk at right, against which he leans, facing her.] You were a wild young rascal in those San Francisco days. [Chuckling.] Lord, Lord, how it all comes back to me.

MAUD. [Boastfully.] I was wild — some.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grinning.] I should say! Remember that night I put you to bed?

MAUD. [Forgetting herself, indignantly.] Sir!

FITZSIMMONS. You were . . . er . . . drunk.

MAUD. I never was!

FITZSIMMONS. Surely you haven't forgotten that night! You began with dropping champagne bottles out of the club windows on the heads of the people on the sidewalk, and you wound up by assaulting a cabman. And let me tell you I saved you from a good licking right there, and squared it with the police. Don't you remember?

MAUD. [Nodding hesitatingly.] Yes, it is beginning to come back to me. I was a bit tight that night.

FITZSIMMONS. [Exultantly.] A bit tight! Why, before I could get you to bed you insisted on telling me the story of your life.

MAUD. Did I? I don't remember that.

FITZSIMMONS. I should say not. You were past remembering anything by that time. You had your arms around my neck —

MAUD. [Interrupting.] Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. And you kept repeating over and over, "Bob, dear Bob."

MAUD. [Springing to her feet.] Oh! I never did! [Recollecting herself.] Perhaps I must have. I was a trifle wild in those days, I admit. But I'm wise now. I've sowed my wild oats and steadied down.

FITZSIMMONS. I'm glad to hear that, Harry. You were tearing off a pretty fast pace in those days. [Pause, in which MAUD nods.] Still punch the bag?

MAUD. [In quick alarm, glancing at punching bag.] No, I've got out of the hang of it.

FITZSIMMONS. [Reproachfully.] You haven't forgotten that right-and-left, arm, elbow and shoulder movement I taught you?

MAUD. [With hesitation.] N-o-o.

FITZSIMMONS. [Moving toward bag to left.] Then, come on.

MAUD. [Rising reluctantly and following.] I'd rather see you punch the bag. I'd just love to.

FITZSIMMONS. I will, afterward. You go to it first.

MAUD. [Eyeing the bag in alarm.] No; you. I'm out of practice.

FITZSIMMONS. [Looking at her sharply.] How many drinks have you had to-night?

MAUD. Not a one. I don't drink — that is — er — only occasionally.

FITZSIMMONS. [Indicating bag.] Then go to it.

MAUD. No; I tell you I am out of practice. I've forgotten it all. You see, I made a discovery.

[Pauses.]

FITZSIMMONS. Yes?

MAUD. I — I — you remember what a light voice I always had — almost soprano?

[FITZSIMMONS nods.]

MAUD. Well, I discovered it was a perfect falsetto.

[FITZSIMMONS nods.]

MAUD. I've been practising it ever since. Experts, in another room, would swear it was a woman's voice. So would you, if you turned your back and I sang.

FITZSIMMONS. [Who has been laughing incredulously, now becomes suspicious.] Look here, kid, I think you are an impostor. You are not Harry Jones at all.

MAUD. I am, too.

FITZSIMMONS. I don't believe it. He was heavier than you.

MAUD. I had the fever last summer and lost a lot of weight.

FITZSIMMONS. You are the Harry Jones that got sousesd and had to be put to bed?

MAUD. Y-e-s.

FITZSIMMONS. There is one thing I remember very distinctly. Harry Jones had a birth mark on his knee. [He looks at her legs searchingly.]

MAUD. [Embarrassed, then resolving to carry it out.] Yes, right here. [She advances right leg and touches it.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Triumphantly.] Wrong. It was the other knee.

MAUD. I ought to know.

FITZSIMMONS. You haven't any birth mark at all.

MAUD. I have, too.

FITZSIMMONS. [Suddenly springing to her and attempting to seize her leg.] Then we'll prove it. Let me see.

MAUD. [In a panic backs away from him and resists his attempts, until grinning in an aside to the audience, he gives over. She, in an aside to audience.] Fancy his wanting to see my birth mark.

FITZSIMMONS. [Bullying.] Then take a go at the bag. [She shakes her head.] You're not Harry Jones.

MAUD. [Approaching punching bag.] I am, too.

FITZSIMMONS. Then hit it.

MAUD. [Resolving to attempt it, hits bag several nice blows, and then is struck on the nose by it.] Oh!

[Recovering herself and rubbing her nose.] I told you I was out of practice. You punch the bag, Bob.

FITZSIMMONS. I will, if you will show me what you can do with that wonderful soprano voice of yours.

MAUD. I don't dare. Everybody would think there was a woman in the club.

FITZSIMMONS. [Shaking his head.] No, they won't. They've all gone to the fight. There's not a soul in the building.

MAUD. [Alarmed, in a weak voice.] Not — a — soul — in — the building?

FITZSIMMONS. Not a soul. Only you and I.

MAUD. [Starting hurriedly toward door.] Then I must go.

FITZSIMMONS. What's your hurry? Sing.

MAUD. [Turning back with new resolve.] Let me see you punch the bag, — er — Bob.

FITZSIMMONS. You sing first.

MAUD. No; you punch first.

FITZSIMMONS. I don't believe you are Harry —

MAUD. [Hastily.] All right, I'll sing. You sit down over there and turn your back.

[FITZSIMMONS obeys.]

[MAUD walks over to the table toward right. She is about to sing, when she notices FITZSIMMONS' cigarette case, picks it up, and in an aside reads his name on it and speaks.]

MAUD. "Robert Fitzsimmons." That will prove to my brother that I have been here.

FITZSIMMONS. Hurry up.

[MAUD hastily puts cigarette case in her pocket and begins to sing.]

SONG

[During the song FITZSIMMONS turns his head slowly and looks at her with growing admiration.]

MAUD. How did you like it?

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] Rotten. Anybody could tell it was a boy's voice —

MAUD. Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. It is rough and coarse and it cracked on every high note.

MAUD. Oh! Oh!

[Recollecting herself and shrugging her shoulders.] Oh, very well. Now let's see if you can do any better with the bag.

[FITZSIMMONS takes off coat and gives exhibition.]

[MAUD looks on in an ecstasy of admiration.]

MAUD. [As he finishes.] Beautiful! Beautiful!

[FITZSIMMONS puts on coat and goes over and sits down near table.] Nothing like the bag to limber one up. I feel like a fighting cock. Harry, let's go out on a toot, you and I.

MAUD. Wh-a-a-t?

FITZSIMMONS. A toot. You know — one of those rip-snorting nights you used to make.

MAUD. [Emphatically, as she picks up newspapers from leather chair, sits down, and places them on her lap.] I'll do nothing of the sort. I've — I've reformed.

FITZSIMMONS. You used to joy-ride like the very devil.

MAUD. I know it.

FITZSIMMONS. And you always had a pretty girl or two along.

MAUD. [Boastfully, in mannish, fashion.] Oh, I still have my fling. Do you know any — well, — er, — nice girls?

FITZSIMMONS. Sure.

MAUD. Put me wise.

FITZSIMMONS. Sure. You know Jack Sylvester?

MAUD. [Forgetting herself.] He's my brother —

FITZSIMMONS. [Exploding.] What!

MAUD. — In-law's first cousin.

FITZSIMMONS. Oh!

MAUD. So you see I don't know him very well. I only met him once — at the club. We had a drink together.

FITZSIMMONS. Then you don't know his sister?

MAUD. [Starting.] His sister? I — I didn't know he had a sister.

FITZSIMMONS. [Enthusiastically.] She's a peach. A queen. A little bit of all right. A — a loo-loo.

MAUD. [Flattered.] She is, is she?

FITZSIMMONS. She's a scream. You ought to get acquainted with her.

MAUD. [Slyly.] You know her, then?

FITZSIMMONS. You bet.

MAUD. [Aside.] Oh, ho! [To FITZSIMMONS.] Know her very well?

FITZSIMMONS. I've taken her out more times than I can remember. You'll like her, I'm sure.

MAUD. Thanks. Tell me some more about her.

FITZSIMMONS. She dresses a bit loud. But you won't mind that. And whatever you do, don't take her to eat.

MAUD. [Hiding her chagrin.] Why not?

FITZSIMMONS. I never saw such an appetite —

MAUD. Oh!

FITZSIMMONS. It's fair sickening. She must have a tapeworm. And she thinks she can sing.

MAUD. Yes?

FITZSIMMONS. Rotten. You can do better yourself, and that's not saying much. She's a nice girl, really she is, but she is the black sheep of the family. Funny, isn't it?

MAUD. [Weak voice.] Yes, funny.

FITZSIMMONS. Her brother Jack is all right. But he can't do anything with her. She's a — a —

MAUD. [Grimly.] Yes. Go on.

FITZSIMMONS. A holy terror. She ought to be in a reform school.

MAUD. [Springing to her feet and slamming newspapers in his face.] Oh! Oh! Oh! You liar! She isn't anything of the sort!

FITZSIMMONS. [Recovering from the onslaught and making believe he is angry, advancing threateningly on her.] Now I'm going to put a head on you. You young hoodlum.

MAUD. [All alarm and contrition, backing away from him.] Don't! Please don't! I'm sorry! I apologise. I — I beg your pardon, Bob. Only I don't like to hear girls talked about that way, even — even if it is true. And you ought to know.

FITZSIMMONS. [Subsiding and resuming seat.] You've changed a lot, I must say.

MAUD. [Sitting down in leather chair.] I told you I'd reformed. Let us talk about something else. Why is it girls like prize-fighters? I should think — ahem — I mean it seems to me that girls would think prize-fighters horrid.

FITZSIMMONS. They are men.

MAUD. But there is so much crookedness in the game. One hears about it all the time.

FITZSIMMONS. There are crooked men in every business and profession. The best fighters are not crooked.

MAUD. I — er — I thought they all faked fights when there was enough in it.

FITZSIMMONS. Not the best ones.

MAUD. Did you — er — ever fake a fight?

FITZSIMMONS. [Looking at her sharply, then speaking solemnly.] Yes. Once.

MAUD. [Shocked, speaking sadly.] And I always heard of you and thought of you as the one clean champion who never faked.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gently and seriously.] Let me tell you about it. It was down in Australia. I had just begun to fight my way up. It was with old Bill Hobart out at Rushcutters Bay. I threw the fight to him.

MAUD. [Repelled, disgusted.] Oh! I could not have believed it of you.

FITZSIMMONS. Let me tell you about it. Bill was an old fighter. Not an old man, you know, but he'd been in the fighting game a long time. He was about thirty-eight and a gamer man never entered the ring. But he was in hard luck. Younger fighters were coming up, and he was being crowded out. At that time it wasn't often he got a fight and the purses were small. Besides it was a drought year in Australia. You don't know what that means. It means that the rangers are starved. It means that the sheep are starved and die by the millions. It means that there is no money and no work, and that the men and women and kiddies starve.

Bill Hobart had a missus and three kids and at the time of his fight with me they were all starving. They did not have enough to eat. Do you understand? They did not have enough to eat. And Bill did not have enough to eat. He trained on an empty stomach, which is no way to train you'll admit. During that drought year there was little enough money in the ring, but he had failed to get any fights. He had worked at long-shoring, ditch-digging, coal-shovelling — anything, to keep the life in the missus and the kiddies. The trouble was the jobs didn't hold out. And there he was, matched to fight with me, behind in his rent, a tough old chopping-block, but weak from lack of food. If he did not win the fight, the landlord was going to put them into the street.

MAUD. But why would you want to fight with him in such weak condition?

FITZSIMMONS. I did not know. I did not learn till at the ringside just before the fight. It was in the dressing rooms, waiting our turn to go on. Bill came out of his room, ready for the ring. "Bill," I said — in fun, you know. "Bill, I've got to do you to-night." He said nothing, but he looked at me with the saddest and most pitiful face I have ever seen. He went back into his dressing room and sat down.

"Poor Bill!" one of my seconds said. "He's been fair starving these last weeks. And I've got it straight, the landlord chucks him out if he loses to-night."

Then the call came and we went into the ring. Bill was desperate. He fought like a tiger, a madman. He was fair crazy. He was fighting for more than I was fighting for. I was a rising fighter, and I was fighting for the money and the recognition. But Bill was fighting for life — for the life of his loved ones.

Well, condition told. The strength went out of him, and I was fresh as a daisy. "What's the matter, Bill?" I said to him in a clinch. "You're weak." "I ain't had a bit to eat this day," he answered. That was all.

By the seventh round he was about all in, hanging on and panting and sobbing for breath in the clinches, and I knew I could put him out any time. I drew back my right for the short-arm jab that would do the business. He knew it was coming, and he was powerless to prevent it.

"For the love of God, Bob," he said; and — [Pause.]

MAUD. Yes? Yes?

FITZSIMMONS. I held back the blow. We were in a clinch.

"For the love of God, Bob," he said again, "the misses and the kiddies!"

And right there I saw and knew it all. I saw the hungry children asleep, and the missus sitting up and waiting for Bill to come home, waiting to know whether they were to have food to eat or be thrown out in the street.

"Bill," I said, in the next clinch, so low only he could hear. "Bill, remember the La Blanche swing. Give it to me, hard."

We broke away, and he was tottering and groggy. He staggered away and started to whirl the swing. I saw it coming. I made believe I didn't and started after him in a rush. Biff! It caught me on the jaw, and I went down. I was young and strong. I could eat punishment. I could have got up the first second. But I lay there and let them count me out. And making believe I was still dazed, I let them carry me to my corner and work to bring me to. [Pause.]

Well, I faked that fight.

MAUD. [Springing to him and shaking his hand.] Thank God! Oh! You are a man! A — a — a hero!

FITZSIMMONS. [Dryly, feeling in his pocket.] Let's have a smoke. [He fails to find cigarette case.]

MAUD. I can't tell you how glad I am you told me that.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gruffly.] Forget it. [He looks on table, and fails to find cigarette case. Looks at her suspiciously, then crosses to desk at right and reaches for telephone.]

MAUD. [Curiously.] What are you going to do?

FITZSIMMONS. Call the police.

MAUD. What for?

FITZSIMMONS. For you.

MAUD. For me?

FITZSIMMONS. You are not Harry Jones. And not only are you an impostor, but you are a thief.

MAUD. [Indignantly.] How dare you?

FITZSIMMONS. You have stolen my cigarette case.

MAUD. [Remembering and taken aback, pulls out cigarette case.] Here it is.

FITZSIMMONS. Too late. It won't save you. This club must be kept respectable. Thieves cannot be tolerated.

MAUD. [Growing alarm.] But you won't have me arrested?

FITZSIMMONS. I certainly will.

MAUD. [Pleadingly.] Please! Please!

FITZSIMMONS. [Obdurately.] I see no reason why I should not.

MAUD. [Hurriedly, in a panic.] I'll give you a reason — a — a good one. I — I — am not Harry Jones.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grimly.] A good reason in itself to call in the police.

MAUD. That isn't the reason. I'm — a — Oh! I'm so ashamed.

FITZSIMMONS. [Sternly.] I should say you ought to be. [Reaches for telephone receiver.]

MAUD. [In rush of desperation.] Stop! I'm a — I'm a — a girl. There! [Sinks down in chair, burying her face in her hands.]

[FITZSIMMONS, hanging up receiver, grunts.]

[MAUD removes hands and looks at him indignantly. As she speaks her indignation grows.]

MAUD. I only wanted your cigarette case to prove to my brother that I had been here. I — I'm Maud Sylvester, and you never took me out once. And I'm not a black sheep. And I don't dress loudly, and I haven't a — a tapeworm.

FITZSIMMONS. [Grinning and pulling out card from vest pocket.] I knew you were Miss Sylvester all the time.

MAUD. Oh! You brute! I'll never speak to you again.

FITZSIMMONS. [Gently.] You'll let me see you safely out of here.

MAUD. [Relenting.] Ye-e-s. [She rises, crosses to table, and is about to stoop for motor cloak and bonnet, but he forestall her, holds cloak and helps her into it.] Thank you. [She takes off wig, fluffs her own hair becomingly, and puts on bonnet, looking every inch a pretty young girl, ready for an automobile ride.]

FITZSIMMONS. [Who, all the time, watching her transformation, has been growing bashful, now handing her the cigarette case.] Here's the cigarette case. You may k-k-keep it.

MAUD. [Looking at him, hesitates, then takes it.] I thank you — er — Bob. I shall treasure it all my life. [He is very embarrassed.] Why, I do believe you're bashful. What is the matter?

FITZSIMMONS. [Stammering.] Why — I — you — You are a girl — and — a — a — deuced pretty one.

MAUD. [Taking his arm, ready to start for door.] But you knew it all along.

FITZSIMMONS. But it's somehow different now when you've got your girl's clothes on.

MAUD. But you weren't a bit bashful — or nice, when — you — you — [Blurting it out.] Were so anxious about birth marks.

[They start to make exit.]

CURTAIN

THE STORY OF AN EYEWITNESS

SAN FRANCISCO: Jack London's Lens on 1906 Earthquake — Centennial Year

, Collier's special Correspondent
Collier's, the National Weekly May 5, 1906

Upon receipt of the first news of the earthquake, Colliers telegraphed to Mr. Jack London–who lives only forty miles from San Francisco–requesting him to go to the scene of the disaster and write the story of what he saw. Mr. London started at once, and he sent the following dramatic description of the tragic events he witnessed in the burning city:

THE EARTHQUAKE SHOOK down in San Francisco hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of walls and chimneys. But the conflagration that followed burned up hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of property There is no estimating within hundreds of millions the actual damage wrought. Not in history has a modern imperial city been so completely destroyed. San Francisco is gone. Nothing remains of it but memories and a fringe of dwelling-houses on its outskirts. Its industrial section is wiped out. Its business section is wiped out. Its social and residential section is wiped out. The factories and warehouses, the great stores and newspaper buildings, the hotels and the palaces of the nabobs, are all gone. Remains only the fringe of dwelling houses on the outskirts of what was once San Francisco.

Within an hour after the earthquake shock the smoke of San Francisco's burning was a lurid tower visible a hundred miles away. And for three days and nights this lurid tower swayed in the sky, reddening the sun, darkening the day, and filling the land with smoke.

On Wednesday morning at a quarter past five came the earthquake. A minute later the flames were leaping upward In a dozen different quarters south of Market Street, in the working-class ghetto, and in the factories, fires started. There was no opposing the flames. There was no organization, no communication. All the cunning adjustments of a twentieth century city had been smashed by the earthquake. The streets were humped into ridges and depressions, and piled with the debris of fallen walls. The steel rails were twisted into perpendicular and horizontal angles. The telephone and telegraph systems were disrupted. And the great water-mains had burst. All the shrewd contrivances and safeguards of man had been thrown out of gear by thirty seconds' twitching of the earth-crust.

The Fire Made its Own Draft

By Wednesday afternoon, inside of twelve hours, half the heart of the city was gone. At that time I watched the vast conflagration from out on the bay. It was dead calm. Not a flicker of wind stirred. Yet from every side wind was pouring in upon the city. East, west, north, and south, strong winds were blowing upon the doomed city. The heated air rising made an enormous suck. Thus did the fire of itself build its own colossal chimney through the atmosphere. Day and night this dead calm continued, and yet, near to the flames, the wind was often half a gale, so mighty was the suck.

Wednesday night saw the destruction of the very heart of the city. Dynamite was lavishly used, and many of San Francisco proudest structures were crumbled by man himself into ruins, but there was no withstanding the onrush of the flames. Time and again successful stands were made by the fire-fighters, and every time the flames flanked around on either side or came up from the rear, and turned to defeat the hard-won victory.

An enumeration of the buildings destroyed would be a directory of San Francisco. An enumeration of the buildings undestroyed would be a line and several addresses. An enumeration of the deeds of heroism would stock a library and bankrupt the Carnegie medal fund. An enumeration of the dead-will never be made. All vestiges of them were destroyed by the flames. The number of the victims of the earthquake will never be known. South of Market Street, where the loss of life was particularly heavy, was the first to catch fire.

Remarkable as it may seem, Wednesday night while the whole city crashed and roared into ruin, was a quiet night. There were no crowds. There was no shouting and yelling. There was no hysteria, no disorder. I passed Wednesday night in the path of the advancing flames, and in all those terrible hours I saw not one woman who wept, not one man who was excited, not one person who was in the slightest degree panic stricken.

Before the flames, throughout the night, fled tens of thousands of homeless ones. Some were wrapped in blankets. Others carried bundles of bedding and dear household treasures. Sometimes a whole family was harnessed to a carriage or delivery wagon that was weighted down with their possessions. Baby buggies, toy wagons, and go-carts were used as trucks, while every other person was dragging a trunk. Yet everybody was gracious. The most perfect courtesy obtained. Never in all San Francisco's history, were her people so kind and courteous as on this night of terror.

A Caravan of Trunks

All night these tens of thousands fled before the flames. Many of them, the poor people from the labor ghetto, had fled all day as well. They had left their homes burdened with possessions. Now and again they lightened up, flinging out upon the street clothing and treasures they had dragged for miles.

They held on longest to their trunks, and over these trunks many a strong man broke his heart that night. The hills of San Francisco are steep, and up these hills, mile after mile, were the trunks dragged. Everywhere were trunks with across them lying their exhausted owners, men and women. Before the march of the flames were flung picket lines of soldiers. And a block at a time, as the flames advanced, these pickets retreated. One of their tasks was to keep the trunk-pullers moving. The exhausted creatures, stirred on by the menace of bayonets, would arise and struggle up the steep pavements, pausing from weakness every five or ten feet.

Often, after surmounting a heart-breaking hill. they would find another wall of flame advancing upon them at right angles and be compelled to change anew the line of their retreat. In the end, completely played out, after toiling for a dozen hours like giants, thousands of them were compelled to abandon their trunks. Here the shopkeepers and soft members of the middle class were at a disadvantage. But the working-men dug holes in vacant lots and backyards and buried their trunks.

The Doomed City

At nine o'clock Wednesday evening I walked down through the very heart of the city. I walked through miles and miles of magnificent buildings and towering skyscrapers. Here was no fire. All was in perfect order. The police patrolled the streets. Every building had its watchman at the door. And yet it was doomed, all of it. There was no water. The dynamite was giving out. And at right angles two different conflagrations were sweeping down upon it.

At one o’clock in the morning I walked down through the same section Everything still stood intact. There was no fire. And yet there was a change. A rain of ashes was falling. The watchmen at the doors were gone. The police had been withdrawn. There were no firemen, no fire-engines, no men fighting with dynamite. The district had been absolutely abandoned. I stood at the corner of Kearny and Market, in the very innermost heart of San Francisco. Kearny Street was deserted. Half a dozen blocks away it was burning on both sides. The street was a wall of flame. And against this wall of flame, silhouetted sharply, were two United States cavalrymen sitting their horses, calming watching. That was all. Not another person was in sight. In the intact heart of the city two troopers sat their horses and watched.

Spread of the Conflagration

Surrender was complete. There was no water. The sewers had long since been pumped dry. There was no dynamite. Another fire had broken out further uptown, and now from three sides conflagrations were sweeping down. The fourth side had been burned earlier in the day. In that direction stood the tottering walls of the Examiner building, the burned-out Call building, the smoldering ruins of the Grand Hotel, and the gutted, devastated, dynamited Palace Hotel.

The following will illustrate the sweep of the flames and the inability of men to calculate their spread. At eight o’clock Wednesday evening I passed through Union Square. It was packed with refugees. Thousands of them had gone to bed on the grass. Government tents had been set up, supper was being cooked, and the refugees were lining up for free meals.

At half past one in the morning three sides of Union Square were in flames. The fourth side, where stood the great St. Francis Hotel was still holding out. An hour later, ignited from top and sides the St. Francis was flaming heavenward. Union Square, heaped high with mountains of trunks, was deserted. Troops, refugees, and all had retreated.

A Fortune for a Horse!

It was at Union Square that I saw a man offering a thousand dollars for a team of horses. He was in charge of a truck piled high with trunks from some hotel. It had been hauled here into what was considered safety, and the horses had been taken out. The flames were on three sides of the Square and there were no horses.

Also, at this time, standing beside the truck, I urged a man to seek safety in flight. He was all but hemmed in by several conflagrations. He was an old man and he was on crutches. Said he: “Today is my birthday. Last night I was worth thirty-thousand dollars. I bought five bottles of wine, some delicate fish and other things for my birthday dinner. I have had no dinner, and all I own are these crutches.”

I convinced him of his danger and started him limping on his way. An hour later, from a distance, I saw the truck-load of trunks burning merrily in the middle of the street.

On Thursday morning at a quarter past five, just twenty-four hours after the earthquake, I sat on the steps of a small residence on Nob Hill. With me sat Japanese, Italians, Chinese, and negroes–a bit of the cosmopolitan flotsam of the wreck of the city. All about were the palaces of the nabob pioneers of Forty–nine. To the east and south at right angles, were advancing two mighty walls of flame.

I went inside with the owner of the house on the steps of which I sat. He was cool and cheerful and hospitable. “Yesterday morning,” he said, “I was worth six hundred thousand dollars. This morning this house is all I have left. It will go in fifteen minutes. He pointed to a large cabinet. “That is my wife’s collection of china. This rug upon which we stand is a present. It cost fifteen hundred dollars. Try that piano. Listen to its tone. There are few like it. There are no horses. The flames will be here in fifteen minutes.”

Outside the old Mark Hopkins residence a palace was just catching fire. The troops were falling back and driving the refugees before them. From every side came the roaring of flames, the crashing of walls, and the detonations of dynamite.

The Dawn of the Second Day

I passed out of the house. Day was trying to dawn through the smoke-pall. A sickly light was creeping over the face of things. Once only the sun broke through the smoke-pall, blood-red, and showing quarter its usual size. The smoke-pall itself, viewed from beneath, was a rose color that pulsed and fluttered with lavender shades Then it turned to mauve and yellow and dun. There was no sun. And so dawned the second day on stricken San Francisco.

An hour later I was creeping past the shattered dome of the City Hall. Than it there was no better exhibit of the destructive force of the earthquake. Most of the stone had been shaken from the great dome, leaving standing the naked framework of steel. Market Street was piled high with the wreckage, and across the wreckage lay the overthrown pillars of the City Hall shattered into short crosswise sections.

This section of the city with the exception of the Mint and the Post-Office, was already a waste of smoking ruins. Here and there through the smoke, creeping warily under the shadows of tottering walls, emerged occasional men and women. It was like the meeting of the handful of survivors after the day of the end of the world.

Beeves Slaughtered and Roasted

On Mission Street lay a dozen steers, in a neat row stretching across the street just as they had been struck down by the flying ruins of the earthquake. The fire had passed through afterward and roasted them. The human dead had been carried away before the fire came. At another place on Mission Street I saw a milk wagon. A steel telegraph pole had smashed down sheer through the driver's seat and crushed the front wheels. The milk cans lay scattered around.

All day Thursday and all Thursday night, all day Friday and Friday night, the flames still raged on.

Friday night saw the flames finally conquered. through not until Russian Hill and Telegraph Hill had been swept and three-quarters of a mile of wharves and docks had been licked up.

The Last Stand

The great stand of the fire-fighters was made Thursday night on Van Ness Avenue. Had they failed here, the comparatively few remaining houses of the city would have been swept. Here were the magnificent residences of the second generation of San Francisco nabobs, and these, in a solid zone, were dynamited down across the path of the fire. Here and there the flames leaped the zone, but these fires were beaten out, principally by the use of wet blankets and rugs.

San Francisco, at the present time, is like the crater of a volcano, around which are camped tens of thousands of refugees At the Presidio alone are at least twenty thousand. All the surrounding cities and towns are jammed with the homeless ones, where they are being cared for by the relief committees. The refugees were carried free by the railroads to any point they wished to go, and it is estimated that over one hundred thousand people have left the peninsula on which San Francisco stood. The Government has the situation in hand, and, thanks to the immediate relief given by the whole United States, there is not the slightest possibility of a famine. The bankers and business men have already set about making preparations to rebuild San Francisco.

EDITORIAL CRIMES – A PROTEST

First published in Dilettante, February, 1901

OW the majority of editors are excellent men, courteous and sympathetic to a degree hardly to be expected under the circumstances. But there is no disguising the fact that there are unscrupulous editors, and it were well that the beginner be made acquainted with a few of' their crimes and misdemeanors; for the results of such editorial wrong-doing are often cruel and always vexatious. And there is no reason for the perpetration of these crimes, except in the pitiable case of the mendicant journals, at the sanctum door of' which the wolf of bankruptcy is always growling. To them all things are permissible. They are brilliant exponents of the law of' self-preservation.

Not so With the rest of the fraternity. They can present no valid excuse for their misconduct. For instance: A writer spends his spare time in stamping and addressing countless envelopes and in keeping a large miscellany of manuscripts on the road. It behooves him to keep a short lookout against their being lost, strayed, or stolen with a newspaper, after the dispatch of the manuscript, he probably permits a month of silence to elapse; with a second rate magazine, six weeks; and with a first rate magazine, possibility two months. At the end of these respective periods, in the meantime having received no news of the wandering child of his head and hand, he sends off a 'trailer.' As a rule, this either brings him the return of the manuscript, or a note of acceptance. In either case the editor has been guilty of a misdemeanor. The manuscript is a commodity. The time element of the political economist enters into the determination of its value, though, forsooth, the writer is denied any monetary consideration on the same. A manufacturer, selling shoes on ninety days, demands and receives-and justly so-a larger price than if he sells for cash. Since the writer is denied this, it is the plain duty of the editor to create as little possible delay in the examination of his wares. The very fact that the 'trailer' elicited so prompt an editorial decision, proves that the editor was sinning.

But when, after long holding of the article, the editor takes no notice of the trailer, he is positively criminal. Common ethics demands a reply. And again, after several months of anxious waiting, a trailer will bring back the manuscript in the company of a stereotyped slip, upon which may be noted, among other things, the following: Should a manuscript be held as presenting features worthy of additional consideration for a longer period than suits the convenience of the author, it will be immediately returned upon a request from the author. Now the trailer distinctly stated that it did not wish the return of the manuscript, but was merely what it purported to be — an enquiry after its welfare and a desire to guard against its loss. Surely, the magazine in question could not in the practical nature of things have been holding more than a very limited number of manuscripts for 'additional consideration;' and it would have been a light task to inform the authors interested of the state of affairs.

Having had such an experience, the present writer, fearing a repetition, allowed a manuscript to remain six months with another magazine editor. But lack-a-day, it took four trailers, thirty days apart, to compass its return. So, under such circumstances, the writer finds himself 'twixt the devil and the deep sea; on the one hand the touchiness of the editor, on the other the loss of the manuscript.

From another editor, after four months of holding, a trailer resurrected the manuscript and the accompanying note: It has merit but is too long. While it does not suit our paper you will doubtless find a market. In the name of common idiocy, did it take four months to reach this conclusion?

The return of manuscript written over and scrawled upon is not so unusual an occurrence in the course of marketing one's wares. And it is in no pleasant spirit that a writer sits down to re-type an article mutilated by a criminal editor. But even then, compensation sometimes plays its small part. I once submitted an afternoon's hack-work, in the form of a fifteen hundred word skit, to a New York weekly paper. If accepted, my fondest dreams could not picture a check of greater magnitude than five dollars. After two months of silence, I trailed it; and back it came by return mail. It was OK'd and signed with the editor's name across the face, and edited for the press, and blue-penciled throughout. Utterly ruined-so I thought; but in sheer despair, without removing one of the barbarian's ravages, I dispatched it to the most prominent boy's paper in the United States. Four weeks later came a check for twenty-five dollars. My maledictions upon the head of the barbarian turned to blessings. Even now my heart goes out to him. My benefactor!

The question of payment is another matter which involves much criminality. An editor, whose rates are extremely low, has no right, in dealing with a new contributor, to rush his work into print without first ascertaining whether these low rates are agreeable to the vendor of manuscripts. Yet this is often done. There is also the newspaper editor who accepts and pays for work, and when the writer asks for the number in which it was published, advises him to buy the files, or asks why did he not subscribe. Then there is the editor who writes one a pleasant little note of acceptance, saying nice little things about the 'contribution,' but omitting to make mention of that important little matter of payment. It will be noticed that he has inserted the thin end of the wedge when he refers to the manuscript as a 'contribution.' Keep an eye on him! Some day he will express unholy surprise at your daring to ask for your pay. Likewise, there is the editor one has always to dun. There is a custom among the 'silent, sullen people who run the magazines,' to make payment within thirty days after publication. With this no fault can be found. But there certainly can be with the editor who waits sixty or ninety days, or a year, or any other length of time after publication; and who, at any time past the thirty day limit, in reply to a dun, makes instant payment and profuse apology. It is too bad, but one sometimes has to deal with such fellows. But don't be bashful with them. Give them the limit, and then dun. If it turns out to be only a mistake on their part, why, nobody is hurt and everything is rectified. If it is no mistake, then rest assured that you have made no mistake either.

But a word for the good editors. More than once, pressed for money, I have written to them promptly upon publication of my work, or shortly afterward, and without exception they have at once made remittance. If they had been sensitive, it would have been very easy to seek refuge behind their thirty day custom.

It is perhaps better to end this article while the theme runs among the good editors, and no better way can I find to do so, than by describing the ideal management of a Massachusetts' agricultural weekly. Doubtless many readers will be able to name it at sight. However, this is its method: A manuscript rarely remains with it a week pending decision. If unavailable, it is returned at once. If acceptable, it is accepted at once. In the latter case, a postal card is mailed to the writer, informing him that payment will be made thirty days after publication, and that a copy of the number containing his article will be mailed him. These promises are fulfilled to the letter. It can hardly be hyperbole to say one is as sure of it as of the rising of the sun. It will be observed that it does away with much of the editorial misconduct I have described, and were it a general institution it would surely save the souls of many editors from damnation.

THE FUTURE OF WAR

M. Bloch, the great Polish economist, throws some edifying light upon the events now transpiring in the Transvaal. The ease with which the Boers have held back the British has called forth universal surprise and contentment, and further emphasized the practical impossibility of frontal attacks on entrenched troops and the seeming impossibility of successful enveloping or flanking. In the stubbornly contested advance of General Buller to the relief of Ladysmith may be noted much evidence in favor of M. Bloch's affirmation that war is no longer possible, — not between the first-class soldiers of first-class powers. In Europe, as he points out, it is conceded to be impossible for the minor states to go to war, except by leave and license of the great powers. They in turn are almost equally matched as to possession of the machinery of war, and in the event of hostilities can mobilize their great armies upon their frontiers before invasion by the enemy.

In such a case, the Polish writer holds, a deadlock will occur, and the side that advances, advances to extermination. With forces approximately equal, all military writers are agreed that frontal attack is suicidal, and, for the same reason, flank attack unwise and impossible.

French statisticians inform us that an attacking body, in order that it shall not be inferior to the defenders when it has got within thirty-five and a half yards (the distance at which it will be able to rush upon the enemy), for each hundred men of the defenders must have six hundred and thirty-seven men; while-if it wishes to reach the actual position of the defenders not numerically inferior, it must have eight times as many men.

From the statistics of General Skugarevski we learn that a body of troops double the strength of the defenders, beginning an attack from eight hundred paces, by the time they have advanced three hundred paces will have less than half their strength available against the defense. With equal forces, the defenders may allow the enemy to approach to within a distance of two hundred and twenty yards, when they will only need to discharge the six cartridges in their magazines in order to annihilate the attacking force.

The celebrated Prussian authority, General Müller, declares that in order to avoid total extermination soldiers will be compelled, in scattered formation, and as much as possible unobserved by the enemy, to creep forward, hiding behind irregularities in the field, and burying themselves in the earth like moles.

It is the technical development of the machinery of warfare that has invested the attack with such fatality. Rapidity of fire, greater range, greater precision, and smokeless powder may be accounted the four factors which have brought about this apparently absurd state of affairs. In the last thirty years the soldier's rapidity of fire has been increased twelve times. With the new self-charging rifle of the Mauser pattern (the six-millimeter gun) a soldier can fire from six to seven times per second. But on account of reloading the magazine, he can fire only seventy-eight unaimed, or sixty aimed, shots per minute. However, this is not so bad. These improved weapons will inevitably demand the rearmament of the armies of Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and Russia, at an estimated cost of not less than $754,000,000, a sum which will tax the wits of the parliaments to wring from the groaning workers.

Better explosives and the reduction of calibers have given greater range, and by the leveling of the trajectory of the bullet, greater penetration. At half a mile a bullet will go as easily through a file of men as through the body of one. The Indians in our late trouble in Minnesota, used to the traditional method of fighting from shelter, discovered that even the solid diameter of a tree no longer afforded protection and threw down their guns in disgust. Only a fool would fight under such conditions.

The modern rifle has a range of from two to three miles; for the first mile and a half it is deadly. Because of this, attacks must be made in loose formation, and hence with great armies the line of battle will be extended over an enormous front. No longer is it possible to fight men in masses, nor can battles be opened up at close range; and if an attack be insisted upon, the increase in casualties will be frightful. During the time a body of men are attacking a modern battery across a distance of a mile and a half it is estimated that that single battery would fire fourteen hundred and fifty rounds of shell, scattering 275,000 fragments of death among the soldiers of the assaulting party.

The advantage of smokeless powder has been sufficiently demonstrated in Cuba and the Philippines, but one great disadvantage has been ignored;

the battles of the future must be fought without the merciful screen of smoke, which in the past hid the shock of the charges, the wavering and indecision, the ghastly carnage. But in the future, whether it be one man shot down or a division destroyed, it will be open to the eyes of all men. In the old-time battle no private knew how the day went, nor knew, mayhap, that they were snatching victory from the maw of defeat. But in the modern battle, where he may see the play like a chessboard, the effect of even temporary disaster upon the morale of the army may well be imagined.

Armies can no longer come into close contact. The bayonet and cavalry charge are obsolete. Cold steel is no longer possible. Since infantry can no longer drive infantry from a fortified position, the artillery has come to be greatly relied upon. Competent military experts hold that the French artillery has increased its deadlines in the last thirty years one hundred and sixteen times. This has been made possible by the use of range-finders, chemical instead of mechanical mixtures of powder, high explosives, increase of range, and rapid fire. But no infantry will be expected to occupy fortified positions without a good backing of artillery. The Boers instance this admirably. Therefore the infantry will remain quiet while an artillery duel takes place in which the chances are large for the mutual extermination of guns and gunners. With this accomplished the deadlock would still remain unbroken. The zone of rifle-fire, eleven hundred yards wide, a literal belt of death, would preclude either infantry from attacking. Should the artillery on one side be silenced, a gradual entrenched retreat would be in order, the eleven-hundred-yard zone of fire in the mean time preventing the delivery of a crushing blow by the victors. This withdrawal from the artillery range would permit a breathing spell in which the temporarily vanquished could again fortify itself; but the position would be unchanged. The consideration of these facts has brought military experts to the belief that that the decisive battle is no longer possible, and that it is highly improbable that the apparently victorious army can ever by force of arms wrest the spoils of war from the vanquished army.

As regards this question of attack, the written opinions of the great military authorities of the militant nations will bear illuminating inspection. No two agree. For every proposition in the line of attack a counter proposition is put forth for the defense. Every plausible method of attack is honeycombed by hopeless contradictions. Simmered down and summed up, they can only agree upon a successful assault taking place when the defense has become helpless, panic-stricken, and disorganized. The French expert, captain Nigote, has drawn a picture of the kind of attack to be expected in future warfare: —

The distance is 6,600 yards from the enemy. The artillery is in position and the command has been passed along the batteries to "give fire." The enemy's artillery replies. Shells tear up the soil and burst; in a short time the crew of every gun has ascertained the distance of the enemy. Then every projectile discharged bursts in the air over the heads of the enemy, raining down hundreds of fragments and bullets on his position. Men and horses are overwhelmed under this rain of lead and iron. Guns destroy one another, batteries are mutually annihilated, ammunition cases are emptied. In the midst of this fire the battalions will advance.

Now they are but 2,200 yards away. Already the rifle-bullets whistle around and kill, each not only finding a victim, but penetrating files, ricocheting, and striking again. Volley succeeds volley, bullets in great handfuls, constant as hail and swift as lightning, deluge the field of battle.

The artillery, having silenced the enemy, is now free to deal with the enemy's battalions. On his infantry, however loosely it may be formed, the guns direct thick iron rain, and soon in the positions of the enemy the earth is reddened with blood.

The firing lines will advance one after the other, battalions will march after battalions; finally, the reserves will follow. Yet with all this movement in the two armies there will be a belt a thousand paces wide, separating them as if neutral territory, swept by the fire of both sides, a belt which no living being can stand for a moment.

The ammunition will be almost exhausted, millions of cartridges, thousands of shells, will cover the soil. But the fire will continue until the empty ammunition-cases are replaced with full ones.

Melipite bombs will turn farmhouses, villages, and hamlets to dust, destroying everything that might be used as cover, obstacle, or refuge.

The moment will approach when half the combatants will be mowed down. Dead and wounded will lie in parallel rows, separated one from the other by that belt of a thousand paces swept by cross-fire of shells which no living being can pass.

The battle will continue with ferocity. But still those thousand paces unchangingly separate the foes.

Which have gained the victory? Neither.

From the consideration of the technical aspect of modern warfare, M. Bloch is led irresistibly to the conclusion that when the nations in their harness go up against each other a condition of deadlock will inevitably result. Neither army may attack; both will play for strategic gains. If one should be smaller than the other, and if it should be on the defensive, it will prevent outflanking by maneuvering on an inner and smaller circle. Clouds of invisible sharpshooters, using smokeless powder, will pick off at from half a mile to a mile the reconnoitering parties of the enemy, and by so doing, constantly veil a constantly changing position. Feeling the enemy's position by skirmish-lines and by driving in the outposts, presents unsurmountable obstacles. The zone of fire prevents rushing and learning whether the opposing force is a hundred or ten thousand soldiers strong; that is; rushing cannot be accomplished except by means of immensely superior numbers. Such an attack requires time to develop, and gives time for the defense on the inner circle to hurry up re-enforcements. In any case the embattled armies will both be stalemated. Neither can develop a general attack and escape extermination; and it is safe to predict that neither will be very apt to advance to suicide.

This leads to the economic aspect of future warfare. The maintenance of modern armies means enormous expenditure of money. The expenditure of life would correspond should they be unwise enough to even venture partial attacks in isolated portions of the field. Therefore, the question arises: How long will the working populations which are represented by these armies be able and willing to feed them, to furnish them with the munitions of war, and to replete the ranks of the soldiers from the ranks of the producers? It is inevitable, supposing the home political situation to remain unchanged, that the nation with the greater and more available resources, coupled with the tougher and more tenacious population, will be the victor. Famine, not force, will decide the issue.

Future wars must be long. No more open fields; no more decisive victories; but a succession of sieges fought over and through successive lines of wide-extending fortifications. Nothing will be accomplished quickly. The defeated army — supposing that it can be defeated — will retire slowly, intrenching itself step by step, and most likely with steam-intrenching machines. Every retrogressive movement would be protected by the invisible sharpshooters and by the zone of fire, precluding any possibility of rout through a general advance of the victorious army.

In a war between the Triple and Dual Alliance, ten millions of men would be under arms. To feed and keep them going would require $20,000,000 per day, or 7,300,000,000 per year. How long may such prodigality endure? The increase in the costliness of modern warfare may be best instanced from the navy. The cost of a first-class line-of-battle sailing ship was $500,000; of the first English iron-clad Warrior, in 1860, $1,850,000; of the German ironclad Koenig Wilhelm, in 1868, $2,500,000; of the Italian Duilo, in 1876, $3,500,000; and of the Italia, in 1886, $5,000,000. Taking the engines, boilers, and coal-bunkers from out a modern cruiser and filling the empty space with water, a frigate of the old time, guns and all, could be floated within, and room would still remain in which to steer a pinnace completely around her. In 1896, Austria spent four and a half times more on her army and navy than an education; Italy in the same year, eight times more; France, five times more; and Russia, twelve times more. Eloquent figures for the intellectual and moral culture of the enlightened nations!

M. Bloch, for 1893, has given the following table of the aggregate expenditures of the six European powers on armies and fleets: —

The civil population will decide the future war by its capacity for enduring all the privations consequent upon a state of semi-famine when the whole industrial system is thrown out of joint, and by its power and willingness to fill the mouths of the million non-producing soldiers and to furnish them with the sinews of war. At the front will be the chess-game; at home the workers feeding the players. All will depend upon the stamina of the civil population.

And the civil population will have need for all its stamina. Conditions have changed. Modern complex civilization, with its intricate systems of production and distribution, cannot sow and harvest the crops and fight between times. It is very easily thrown out of gear. When M. Burdeau was in the French Ministry an attempt was made to ascertain how the social organism would continue to carry on its functions in time of war, — how, from day to day, the population was to receive its bread. But the military authorities protested and the inquiry was shelved. With dislocation and stagnation of industry, the rise of breadstuffs, and the front, the population must needs be a very patient one, or else the authorities will find much trouble on their hands.

In the event of such a war, securities, which are now held largely by the middle classes, would go tumbling and crashing, rending it difficult for the government to float loans on a disrupted and frightened market. The disastrous effect to-day of of a war rumor on any seat of exchange, is common knowledge. If paper money were issued under such conditions, its depreciation would be instant and great. The rise of the necessaries of life will tend to do this and to set into motion the remorseless pendulum of action and reaction. The countries in which more live by trade than by agriculture — the wheat-importing countries — will feel the pinch of famine quickly and bitterly. In the time of the Crimean war, wheat rose in England eighty per cent. The Alabama, decades ago, demonstrated how precarious was the sea for carrying. She, a single cruiser, caused a perceptible rise in the price of wheat. The very fear of this, on the sensitive capitalistic system, even with danger afar off, is bound to make the market panicky and to send prices skyward. And under such circumstances speculation is sure to exact its exorbitant penalty. The ravages of the commercial crisis in time of peace are too well known to make necessary further comment on what they would be in time of war.

The interruption of the operation of the productive forces, and the difficulty in satisfying the vital needs of the population, lead up to the political aspect of future warfare. Are the peoples, especially of the European countries, homogeneous enough in their political beliefs to stand in the strain? Labor troubles, bread riots, and rebellion are factors, subversive all, which must be taken into account. The mobilization of a whole working population may lead to unpleasant results, conscription to revolution. There are strong tendencies threatening the present social order which cannot be lightly passed over. Also, a strong anti-military propaganda has grown up. The small protesting voices of the past have merged into the roar of the peoples. The world has lifted itself to a higher morality. The aim of the human is to alleviate the ills of the human. Among all classes the opposition to war is keen and growing. In Germany, one anti-military factor alone is the Socialists. What may be expected of them, three millions strong, when the nation puts on its harness? In the same country, in 1893, those who opposed the new military project received 1,097,000 more votes than did its supporters. Between 1887 and 1893 the opposition to militarism increased seven times. In France, in 1893, the Socialist vote (utterly opposed to militarism), was 600,000; three years later it was 1,000,000. It must not be forgotten that such bodies of men are thoroughly and centrally organized. The discontented rabbles which would inevitably follow their lead swell the numbers to such vast proportions that a Continental nation may well pause and consider before it rushes into war.

Such, in short, is a rapid and incomplete resumé of the facts which have led M. Bloch to predicate the impossibility of future war. From the technical standpoint, the improvement in the mechanism of war has made war impossible. Economics, and not force of arms, will decide; not battles, but famine. And behind all, ready and anxious to say the last word, looms the ominous figure of Revolution.

MEXICO’S ARMY AND OURS

Published in Colliers’ magazine, 1914

MANY officers and men have I shaken hands with in the brief days since this wave of war rolled south and broke on the shore of Mexico, and no officer nor man have I found who was immune to a certain infection. This infection, however, might be described in surgical jargon as “beneficent.” On the face of it every mother’s son of them has told me something that cannot possibly be true. Only one out of all of them could have told the truth, and it is beyond my powers of discernment to pick out this man. But I have yet to meet an officer of soldiers or marines who has not only solemnly assured me but with glistening eyes of enthusiasm has averred that his regiment or battalion, officers and men, for discipline and efficiency, is the finest in the entire army of the United States. Furthermore, each one disclaims any personal prejudice in the matter, and usually concludes with the statement that it is generally conceded in army circles that his regiment or battalion is the finest. I wonder if such esprit de corps exists in the Mexican army. What our army and navy is was splendidly demonstrated when our bluejackets marched aboard their ships before our drawn-up soldiers while Admiral Fletcher transferred the command of Vera Cruz to General Funston. Boys they were, all boys, the flower of the young men of our land, and they marched with the clacking rhythm of “boots, boots” on the pavement along the broad lane formed by the regulars on one side presenting arms and on the other side cheering American civilians. It was a joy to see the faces that tried not to smile with pleasure over the applause for work well done, and to catch the involuntary sideward glances of boyish eyes not yet quite disciplined to the level impassive look of war.

These thousands of sailors marched straight down the dock end and disappeared. The effect was uncanny. What was becoming of them? The smokestacks of a couple of tugs showed at the dock end, and that was all. And yet the river of men flowed on and on, sailors and marines, officers, bands, hospital squads, and moving banners, sun-tanned men of the Arkansas, the Florida, the Utah, the San Francisco, the New Hampshire, the South Carolina, the Vermont, the Chester, and the New Jersey, all without a hitch or halt, and disappeared. It reminded one of the tank of the New York Hippodrome, when the long lines of stage soldiers march down into the water, knee-high, hip-high, shoulder-high, then heads under and are gone.

But out at the dock end, besides the tugs, was a flotilla of launches and cutters that received those thousands as fast as they arrived and carried them at a single trip to the battleships lying in the inner and outer harbors.

Two Types of “Gringo” Fighting Men

OUR soldiers and sailors are markedly different in type. It must be curious how this happens to be so. Do land life and sea life make the difference? Or does one common type of man elect the sea and another common type elect the land? The sailors are shorter, broader shouldered, thicker set. The soldiers are taller, leaner, longer legged. Their faces are leaner, their lips thinner. They seem to the eye tougher, stringier, sterner. The sailors’ faces seem broader across the cheek bones. Their lips seem fuller, their bodies more rounded.

Most notable is the difference when they are grouped into marching masses. The sailors have a swinging, springing, elastic stride. The soldiers’ legs move more mechanically, more like clockwork legs, with a very tiny minimum of waste motion. It is prettier to watch the sailors marching with all the swaying elasticity of their bodies, and yet one receives the impression that, when it comes to the long killing hiking, the soldiers would easily outwalk their comrades of the sea. A great throng of Mexicans, numbers of them without a doubt having sniped our sailors during the first days, looked on this display of what manner of men we send to war. The haste and advertisement with which they doffed their hats to the Stars and Stripes was absurd and laughable.

One cannot but imagine what the situation would be like were it reversed — were Vera Cruz populated by Americans and in the possession of a Mexican army. First of all, our jefe politico, or mayor, would have been taken out and shot against a wall. Against walls all over the city our oldiers and civilians would have been lined up and shot. Our jails would have been emptied of criminals, who would be made soldiers and looters. No American’s life would be safe, especially if he were known to possess any money. Law, save for harshest military law, such as has been meted out by conquerors since the human world began, would have ceased. So would all business have ceased. He who possessed food would hide it, and there would be hungry women and children.

Quite the contrary has been our occupation of Vera Cruz. To the amazement of the Mexicans, there was no general slaughter against blank walls. Instead of turning the prisoners loose, their numbers were added to. Every riotous and disorderly citizen, every sneak thief and petty offender, was marched to the city prison the moment he displayed activity. The American conquerors bid for the old order that had obtained in the city, and began the bidding by putting the petty offenders to sweeping the streets.

No property was confiscated. Anything commandeered for the use of the army was paid for, and well paid for. Men who owned horses, mules, carts, and automobiles competed with one another to have their property commandeered. The graft which all business men suffered at the hands of their own officials immediately ceased. Never in their lives had their property been so safe and so profitable. Incidentally, the diseases that stalk at the heels of war did not stalk. On the contrary, Vera Cruz was cleaned and disinfected as it had never been in all its history.

The Various Benefits of Being Conquered

IN SHORT, American occupation gave Vera Cruz a bull market in health, order, and business. Mexican paper money appreciated. Prices rose. Profits soared. Verily, the Vera Cruzans will long remember this being conquered by the Americans, and yearn for the blissful day when the Americans will conquer them again. They would not mind thus being conquered to the end of time.

An exciting sight was the cleaning up of the Naval School, which had been so disorganized the first day by the five minutes of shell fire from the Chester. Immediately the city had been turned over to the army by the navy, the first battalion of the Fourth Infantry and Fourth Field Artillery descended upon the Naval School. In a trice every window was vomiting forth the débris that clogged the interior. And then was fought the second battle of the Naval School. Thousands of poor Mexicans — men, women, and children — surrounded the building and battled over the old shoes, shattered furniture, and discarded clothes. It was the women who fought fiercest and most vociferously, and, to the accompaniment of much hair pulling, many a pair of linen trousers and its legs irrevocably separated.

They struggled and squabbled and ran hither and thither like ants about a honey-pot. For once war was kind to them, and, instead of being looted, they were themselves tasting the joys of looting. And alas! I saw the ruined pretties rain down amid the mortar dust from my lady's boudoir and the two red, high-heeled Spanish slippers borne off in opposite directions by gleeful Indian women.

Fighting Qualities of the Peon

AS I write this, beneath my window, with a great clattering of hoofs on the asphalt, is passing a long column of mountain batteries, all carried on the backs of our big Government mules. And as I look down at our sun-bronzed troopers in their olive drab, my mind reverts to the review the other day of our soldiers and sailors. Surely, if the peon soldiers of Mexico could have been brought down to witness what manner of soldiers and equipment was ours, there would have been such a rush for the brush that ten years would not have seen the last of them dug out of their hiding places.

And yet this is not fair. The peon soldier is not a coward. Stupid he well is, just as sillily officered; but he is too much of a fatalist as well as a savage to be grossly afraid of death. The peon bends to the mailed fist of power, but never breaks. Like the fellah of Egypt, he patiently endures through the centuries and watches his rulers come and go.

Changes of government mean to the peon merely changes of the everlasting master. His harsh treatment and poorly rewarded toil are ever the same, unchanging as the sun and seasons. He has little to lose and less to gain. He is born to an unlovely place in life. It is the will of God, the law of existence.

With rare exceptions he does not dream that there may be a social order wherein can be no masters of the sort he knows. He has always been a slave. He was a slave to the Toltecs and the Aztecs, to the Spaniards, and to the Mexicans descended from the Aztecs and the Spaniards. It must not be concluded that there is no hope for him in the future. He is what he is to-day, and what he has been for so long, because he has been made so by a cruel and ruthless selection.

The Elimination of the Spirited

IF A breeder should stock his farm with the swiftest race horses obtainable, and employ a method of selection whereby only the slowest and clumsiest horses were bred, it would not be many generations before he would have a breed of very slow and very clumsy horses. Life is plastic and varies in all directions. Occasionally this breeder would find a beautiful, swift colt born on his farm. Since kind begets kind, he would eliminate such a colt and perpetuate only the slow and clumsy.

Now this is just the sort of selection that has been applied to the peon for many centuries. Whenever a peon of dream and passion and vision and spirit was born he was eliminated. His masters wanted lowly, docile, stupid slaves, and resented such a variation. Soon or late the spirit of such a peon manifested itself and the peon was shot or flogged to death. He did not beget. His kind perished with him whenever he appeared.

But life is plastic and can be molded by selection into diverse forms. The horse breeder can reverse his method of selection, and from slow and clumsy sires and dams bred up a strain of horses beautiful and swift. And so with the peon. For the present generation of him there is little hope. But for the future generations a social selection that will put a premium of living on dream and passion and vision and spirit will develop an entirely different type of peon.

A Soldier Against His Will

BUT we must not make the mistake of straying after far goals. The time is now. We live now. Our problem, the world problem, the peon problem is now. The peon we must consider is the peon as he is now — the selected burden bearer of the centuries. He has never heard of economic principles, nor a square deal. Nor has he thrilled, save vaguely, to the call of freedom — in which even freedom has meant license, and, as robber and bandit, he has treated the weak and defenseless in precisely the same way he has been accustomed to begin treated.

I was through a Mexican barracks. It was like a jail. All the windows were barred. They had to be barred so that the conscript peon soldiers might not escape. Most of them do not like to be soldiers. They are compelled to be. All over Mexico they gather the peons into the jails and force them to become soldiers. Sometimes they are arrested for petty infractions of the law. A peon seeks to gladden his existence by drinking a few cents’ worth of half-spoiled pulque. The maggots of intoxication begin to crawl in his brain, and he is happy in that for a space he has forgotten in God knows what dim drunken imaginings. Then the long arm of his ruler reaches out through the medium of many minions, and the peon, sober with an aching head, finds himself in jail waiting the next draft to the army. Often enough he does not have to commit any petty infraction. He is railroaded to the front just the same.

He does not know whom he fight for, for what, or why. He accepts it as the system of life. It is a very sad world, but it is the only world he knows. This is why he is not altogether a coward in battle. Also it is why, in the midst of battle or afterward, he so frequently changes sides. He is not fighting for any principle, for any reward. It is a sad world, in which witless, humble men are just forced to fight, to kill, and to be killed. The merits of either banner are equal, or, rather, so far as he is concerned, there are no merits to either banner.

He prays to God in some dim, dumb way, and vaguely imagines when he has been expedited from this sad world by a machete slash or bayonet thrust or high-velocity steel-jacketed bullet that all will be made square in that other world where God rules and where taskmasters are not.

Yet, deep down in the true ribs of him, there is a vein of raw savagery in the peon. Of old he delighted in human sacrifice. To-day he delights in the not always skilled butchery of bulls in the game introduced by his late Spanish masters. He likes cock-fighting with curved steel spurs that slash to the heart of life and cast a crimson splash upon the dull gray of living.

His Fatalism

AND still the peon is not exposited. There is another side to him. He is a born gambler, as well as fatalist, and he is not averse to taking a chance; though his own life be the stake, he plays against another’s life. How else can be explained his nervy conduct, deserted by his officers, in defending Vera Cruz against our landing forces?

Now I am not altogether a coward. I have everbeen guilty on occasion of taking a chance. And yet I am frank to say that I would not dream of taking a chance on the flat roofs of Vera Cruz against thousands of American soldiers and a fleet of battleships with an effective range of five thousand yards.

But this was the very chance many a peon soldier took. He sniped our men from the roofs in the fond hope that he could kill a man and escape being killed himself. Also, he was stupid in that he did not realized how little chance he had. Nevertheless, and on top of it all, he was not afraid.

They say that he and his fellows even dared to crawl unwounded, amid the wounded, into the hospital cots under the Red Cross, and to draw blankets over themselves and the Mausers, and to crawl out occasionally to the roofs for another shot at our sailors. When it became too hot for them they hid among the wounded again. Now this is a deed too risky for my nerve or for the nerve of any intelligent man. But I insist that these Mexican soldiers were stupid enough voluntarily to take the chance. From this another conclusion may be draw, namely, that the sorry soldier of Mexico is not altogether amiable and is prone to be nasty and dangerous to the American boys who have crossed the sea to take "peaceable" possession of a customhouse.

I saw the leg of a peon soldier amputated. It was a perfectly good leg, all except for a few inches of bone near the thigh which had been shattered to countless fragments by a wobbling, high-velocity American bullet. And as I gazed at that leg, limp yet with life, being carried out of the operating room, and realized that this was what men did to men in the twentieth century after Christ, I found myself in accord of sentiment with the peon: it is a sad world, a sad world!

An Example of Swift Destruction

IT IS a sad world wherein the millions of the stupid lowly are compelled to toil and moil at the making of all manner of commodities that can be and are on occasion destroyed in an instant by the hot breath of war. I have just come back from the vast Cuartel, or Barracks, of Vera Cruz. Such a destruction of the labor of men! Bales upon bales and mountains of bales of clothing, of uniforms of wool, of linen, of cotton, disrupted, torn to pieces, scattered about, infected by possible diseases that compel a final cleansing by fire. Huge squad rooms, knee-deep in the litter of things the toil of men has made — hats, caps, shirts, modern leather shoes and rude sandals of the sort worn on the north Mediterranean half a thousand years before the days of Julius Cæsar; saddles and saddle bags, spurs, bridles, and bits; entrenching tools, scattered contents of soldiers' ditty boxes, canteens and mess kits of tin, serapes from the north, mats from the hot countries, meals partly eaten, half-cooked messes of food in the kitchen pots, smashed Mausers, cymbals and tubes, drums and cornets of a brass band that had departed abruptly and bandless.

In the manner of a few minutes the feet of war had trod under foot and passed on. Those who fled had fled hastily, leaving their last-issued rations behind. Those who pursued had paused but long enough to fire a myriad of shots and race on. The empty bandoliers marked the trail of the American sailors and marines. In the stables were the officers’ automobiles and carromatas with seats for grooms behind. But there were no horses, and the automobiles had been smashed. Thousands of hours’ toil of men’s hands had been annihilated.

The streets of Vera Cruz teem with beggars. Our soldiers are pestered by the starving, ragged poor. A thousand meals cluttered the Cuartel, already mildewed and being eaten by cockroaches and stray cats; woven cloth and manufactured footgear sufficient for ten thousand poor were destined for the flames. I agree with the peon: It is a sad world. It is also a funny world.

A Square Deal?

THE query inevitably rises: How is the peon to get a square deal? And who will give him a square deal? By square deal is not meant the Utopian ideal dreamed of a far future, but the measure of fair treatment that is possible here and now in civilized nations. The men of the civilized nations are only frail, fallible, human men, with all the weaknesses common to human men just in the process of emerging from barbarism. Nevertheless, with such men a squarer deal obtains than does obtain in savagery. The much-mixed descendants of the Spaniards and Aztecs can scarcely be called civilized. They have had over four centuries of rule in Mexico, and they have done anything but build a civilization. What measure of civilization they do possess is exotic. It has been introduced by north Europeans and Americans, and by north Europeans and Americans has it been maintained. The peon of to-day, under Mexican rule, is no better off than he was under Aztec rule. It is to be doubted that he is as well off. On the face of it, his much-mixed breed of rulers cannot give him the square deal that is possible to be given by more intelligent and humane rulers — that is given to-day by such rulers in other countries in the world.

Motes and Beams

THIS is the problem to-day for the big brother to the nations of the New World. Oh, make no mistake! The big brother's hands are not clean, nor is his history immaculate. But his hands are as clean and his history is as immaculate as are the hands and histories of the other nations in the thick of transition from barbarism and savagery. He even has societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals, the members of which very frequently interfere between a horse and its owner, and hale the owner to court for punishment.

The mixed-breed rulers of Mexico seem incapable of treating the peon with the measure of fairness that is possible in the world to-day and that is practiced the world to-day. The Mexican peon residing in the United States at the present time — and there are many thousands of him — is far better treated than are his brothers south of the border.

Never mind what his legal status may be or is alleged to be. The fact is, the peon of Mexico, so far as liberty and a share in the happiness produced by his toil is concerned, is as much a slave as he ever was. He is so much property to his rulers, who work him, not with treatment equal to that a accorded a horse, but with harsher and far less considerate treatment.

Of course, the owner of a horse, when arrested by an agent of a humane society, indignantly protests that the horse is his property. But a wider social vision is growing in the foremost nations that property rights are a social responsibility, and that society can and must interfere between the owner and his mismanaged property. But somehow the old order is hard to change. There is a narcotic mangle in phrases and precedents. It is an established right for society to step in between a man and his horse, but it is still abhorrent for a nation to step in between a handful of rulers and their millions of mismanaged and ill-treated subjects. Yet such interference is logically the duty of the United States as the big brother of the countries of the New World. Nevertheless, the United States did so step in when it went to war with Spain over the ill treatment of the Cubans. But is required the blowing up of the Maine to precipitate its action.

Big Brother's Job

AND here in Mexico the United States has stepped in, still dominated by narcotic precedent, on the immediate pretext of a failure in formal courtesy about a flag. But why not have done with fooling? Why not toss the old drugs overboard and consider the matter clear-eyed? The exotic civilization introduced by America and Europe is being destroyed by the madness of a handful of rulers who do not know how to rule, who have never successfully ruled, and whose orgies at ruling have been and are similar to those indulged in by drunken miners sowing the floors of barrooms with their fortunate gold dust.

The big brother can police, organize, and manage Mexico. The so-called leaders of Mexico cannot. And the lives and happiness of a few million peons, as well as of many millions yet to be born, are at stake.

The policeman stops a man from beating his wife. The humane officer stops a man from beating his horse. May not a powerful and self-alleged enlightened nation stop a handful of inefficient and incapable rulers from making a shambles and a desert of a fair land wherein are all the natural resources of a high and happy civilization?

A LETTER TO HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.

Jack London
962 East 16th.st
Oakland, Calif
Jan. 31, 1900

Houghton, Mifflin & Co.,

Gentlemen

In reply to yours of January 25th. requesting additional xxxx biographical data. I see I shall have to piece out my previous narrative, which, in turn, will make this choppy

My father was Pennsylvania-born, a soldier, scout, backwoodsman, trapper, and wanderer. My mother was born in Ohio. Both came west independently, meeting and marrying in San Francisco, where I was born January 12, 1876. What little city life I then passed was in my babyhood. My life, from my fourth to my ninth years, was spent upon California ranches. I learned to read and write about my fifth year, though I do not remember anything about it. I always could read and write, and have no recollection antedating such a condition. Folks say I simply insisted upon being taught. Was an omniverous reader, prin-cipally because reading matter was scarce and I had to be grateful for whatever fell into my hands. Remember reading some of Trowbridge's works for boys at six years of age. At seven I was reading Paul du Chaillu's Travels, Captain Cook's Voyages, and Life of Garfield. And all through this Period I devoured what Seaside Library novels I could borrow from the womenfolk and dime novels from the farm hands. At eight I was deep in Ouida and Washington Irving. Also during this period read a great deal of American history. Also, life on a California ranch is not very nourishing to the imagination

Somewhere around my ninth year we removed to Oakland, which, to-day, I believe, is a town of about eighty thousand, and is removed by xxxx thirty minutes from the heart of San Francisco.

Here, most precious to me was a free library. Since that time Oakland has been my home seat. Here my father died, and here I yet live with my mother. I have not married---the world is too large and its call too insistent.

However, from my ninth year, with the exception of the hours spent at school(and I earned them by hard labor), my life has been one of toil. It is worthless to give the long sordid list of occupat-ions, none of them trades, all heavy manual labor. Of course I con-tinued to read. Was never without a book. My education was popular, graduating from the grammar school at about fourteen. Took a taste for the water. At fifteen left home and went upon a Bay life. San Fran-cisco Bay is no mill pond by the way. I was a salmon fisher, an oyster pirate, a schooner sailor, a fish patrolman, a longshoresman, and a general sort of bay-faring adventurer---a boy in years and a man amongst men. Always a book, and always reading when the rest were asleep; when they were awake I was one with them, for I was always a good comrade

Within a week of my seventeenth birthday I shipped be-fore the mast as sailor on a three top-mast sealing schooner. We went to Japan and hunted along the coast north to the Russian side of Bering Sea. This was my longest voyage; I could not again endure one of such length; not because it was tedious or long, but because life was so short. However, I have made short voyages, too brief to mention, and to-day am at home in any forecastle or stokehole---good comradeship, you know. I believe this comprises my travels; for I spoke at length in previous letter concerning my tramping and Klondiking. Have been all over Canada, Northwest Ty. Alaska, etc. etc, at different times, be-sides mining, prospecting and wandering through the Sierra Nevadas.

I have outlined my education. In the main I am self-educated; have had no mentor but myself. High school or college curriculums I simply selected from, finding it impossible to follow the rut---life and pocket book were both too short. I attended the first first year of high school(Oakland), then stayed at home, without coaching, and crammed the next two years into three months and took the entrance examinations, and entered the University of California at Berkeley. Was forced, much against my inclinations, to give this over just prior to the completion of my Freshman Year. My father died while I was in the Klondike, and I return-ed home to take up the reins. As to literary work: My first magazine article(I had done no newspaper work), was published in January, 1899; it is now the sixth story in the " Son of the Wolf ". Since then I have done work for the Overland Monthly, the Atlantic, the Wave, the Arena, the Youth's Companion, the Review of Reviews, etc. etc., besides a host of lesser publications, and to say nothing of newspaper and syndicate work. Hackwork all, or nearly so, from a comic joke or triolet to pseudo-scientific disquisitions upon things about which I know nothing. Hack-work for dollars, that's all, setting aside practically all ambitious efforts to some future period of less financial stringency. This, my literary life is just thirteen months old to-day

Naturally, my reading early bred in me a desire to write, but my manner of life prevented me attempting it. I have had no literary help or advice of any kind---just been sort of hammering around in the dark till I knocked holes thorugh here and there and caught glimpses of daylight. Common knowledge of magazine methids, etc., came to me asma revelation. Not a soul to say here you arr and there you mistake.

Of course, during my revolutionaire period I perpetrated my opinions upon the public through the medium of the local papers,grat-is. But that was years ago when I went to high school and was more notorious than esteemed. Once, by the way, returned from my sealing voyage, I won a prize essay of twenty-five dollars from a San Francisco paper over the heads of Stanford and California Universities, both of which were represented by second and third place through their under-graduates. This gave me hope for achieving something ultimately.

After my tramping trip I started to high school in 1895, I entered the University of California in 1896. Thus, had I continued, I would be just now preparing to take my sheepskin.

As to studies: I am always studying. The aim of the university is simply to prepare one fore a whole future life of study. I have been denied this advantage, but am knocking along somehow. Never a night(whether I have gone out or not). but the last several hours are spent in bed with my books. All things interest me---the world is so very good. Principal studies are, scientific, sociological, and ethical---these, or course, including biology, economics, psychology, phy-siology, history, etc. etc. without end. And I strive, also, to not neglect literature.

Am healthy, love exercise, and take little. Shall pay the penalty some day.

There, I can’t think of anything else. I know what data I have furnished is wretched, but autobiography is not entertaining to a narrator who is sick of it. Should you require further information, just specify, and I shall be pleased to supply it. Also, I shall be grateful for the privilege of looking over the biographical note be-fore it is printed.

Very truly yours,
Jack London

A LETTER TO WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION

Glen Ellen,
Sonoma County,
California, U. S. A.

July 18, 1906. Dear Mr.Vance:
The building of the SNARK goes on apace; but the earthquake and fire have sadly de-layed the work. Much of material and outfit that ordinarily could have been bought in San Francisco, I have been compelled to send for to New York. Also, freight is slow these days, because every merchant and builder is ordering new materials and stocks from the East, and the railroads are congested. Let me give you an instance. The oak ribs for the boat were ordered from the East and arrived the day after the earthquake. For four solid weeks we searched California for the freight car containing these ribs before we found it. And so it has been with everything else.

And now, naturally, you want to know what I am going to do for you-------or, rather, for "The Woman's Home Companion." If we are boarded by pirates and fight it out till our deck becomes a shambles-------I won't write the account of same for "The Woman's Home Companion." If we are wrecked at sea, and starve and eat one another, I shall not send you harrowing de-tails of same. Nor will I send you any account, if we are all killed and eaten by the canni-bals.

Joking aside, as I understand it, what you want me to give is the healthful, and in-teresting, and strong, and not the unpleasant, decadent, and repellant. I shall try to give what be of interest to your readers. If I go astray, it 's up to you to put me straight again.

You 'll be able to catch me by mail or cable. You see, I shall depend upon you for this; for, while I realize that your readers would not be interested in the reading matter of a sporting weekly, I have not my finger as intimately on the pulse of your readers as you have. (I hope this isn't a mixed metaphor).

I expect to deal largely with the home-life of various peoples, with especial atten-tion to the part that is played by the women and children. I shall knock around a great deal in out-of-the-way places, and shall see ways of living undreamed of by your readers.

In addition to home-life in general, a number of topics occur to me, which I present for your consideration. If you don't like any of them, let me know. Here they are: Domestic problems; social structures; problems of living; cost of living, compared with same in United States; education; opportunities for advancement; general tone of peoples, culture, morals, religion, etc.; how they amuse themselves; the marriage and divorce problems; housekeeping; charities; and last but not least, the servant-girl problem.

But say, Mr.Vance, now that I have nicely jotted down all the foregoing, sup-pose I shouldn't write a line on it! Suppose I should light upon things vastly more interest-ing to your readers, and write such things up! You see, I want latitude. Will you give it to me!

I imagine you know me well enough to guess that I 'm no Cook's tourist. I have nev-er like to travel in the well-oiled groove even in dealing with editors. I 've got to see things for myself, in my own way. I remember the way I arrived in Italy. On the train I met a Frenchman who spoke a little Italian and less English. We grew chummy. At Spezzio we were delayed by a train-wreck. We went sailing in the harbor, and on an Italian man-of-war became acquainted with a boatswain. The latter got shore liberty and proceeded to show us the town. Both he and the Frenchman were revolutionists. Birds of a feather, you know and by three in the morning there were a dozen of us, singing the Marseillaise and clashing with the police. Now I wouldn't write such an adventure for "The Woman's Home Companion," but you can bet I saw more in one night of the real human life of Spezzio than could a whole gen-eration of tourists.

As you know, the SNARK is a small craft. She is forty-five feet long on the water-line, and at sea is to be propelled solely by wind. Yet she is equipped with a seventy horse-power engine. When we strike the land, out go the masts, on goes the engine, and away we go up into the land. For instance, we plan to go up the Seine to Paris; up the Thames to London; up the Danube from the Black Sea to Vienna; up the Amazon and other big South American rivers; and in the United States, up the Hudson, along the Erie Canal and Great Lakes, and down the Mississippi to the Gulf of

Mexico. We expect to spend months on the canals of China, a summer at Venice, a winter at Naples, and certainly a winter at St.Petersburg. And because the boat is small and able to go up into the land, I consider that I shall get in far more intimate touch with peoples and conditions than if I merely hung around the ports.

I guess my first article to you will be from Hawaii. Don’t judge all my articles by what this first one may be. It may be infinitely worse than the rest of the series, and it may be infinitely better. A writer is no more infallible xx than an editor whne it comes to hitting the bulls-eye.

After Hawaii we sail for the Marquesas. Expect to fool around a lot in the South Seas. I ‘m sure we ‘ll take in the pearl-fishing. (I ‘ll wager I ‘ll be able to give your readers some new wrinkles in the cooking of fish, meat and vegetables). Then we ‘re sure to go to Samoa, New Zealand, Tasmania, and Australia. There ‘s a field in itself for you!

I ‘m sure we ‘ll do the Philippines, and I ‘m equally sure you ‘ll be interested in them. Then there ‘s Japan, and the women and children of Japan. I ‘ve already been twice to Japan, and believe me it requires more than two visits to take in all the beauty and wonder of the women and children. But life ‘s too short to go on with my whole itinerary.

By the way, fotos. I ‘ll see that you get plenty of good photographs. Incident-ally, I am myself taking along only four cameras, and I know how to use them, too.

If you get ideas, or if your readers suggest to you ideas, concerning things to write about, send them along the ideas, I mean. Of course, you can’t bully me into writing what I don’t want to write but your ideas will receive serious attention, and I am con-fident, if you are not parsimonious, that you will be able to give me many valuable sugges-tions.

In conclusion, your readers are your clients, while I am my own client. I under-stand that you ‘re a regular Cerberus. That ‘s all right, but I ‘m not going to throw any sops to you. I ‘m not going to ask you not to revise my stuff. If you promised you wouldn’t I know you ‘d revise it anyway of such stuff are editors made. I ‘ll deliver the goods, without swear-words (in the text), and do you fulfil your divinely appointed task of protect-ing your readers. But for goodness’ sake don’t turn all my good red blood to water.

Faithfully yours,
Jack London

PHENOMENA OF LITERARY EVOLUTION

As an American essayist has said, this is the moment-mad century; the century "that first discovered how large a moment was; the century that makes a moment a colossal moment, as moments have never been made before; the century that with telephone and telegraph and printing-press, discovered the present tense and made all the world a voice on a wire." It is also a very busy century. Never was the world in such a hurry as now; never were its thoughts so broad and deep, its aims and occupations so many and so diverse. It well behooves whosoever has ideas to sell to the world to seek out what impression all this makes upon the literature of the day, in what manner the century is being and should be represented by print and paper. Why have predication and sentence-length decreased? Why is the three-volume novel left behind with the rest of the rubbish of the musty past? Why is the ubiquitous short story in such demand? What bearing have the answers to these questions upon the structure of a sentence? the shaping of a figure? the drawing of a parallel? the construction of a story? the delineation of a character? or the presentation of a social phase? If the idea merchant cannot answer these questions, it is high time for him to get down to work. The world knows what it wants, but it will not trouble itself to speak up and tell him. The world has no concern with him; it is getting what it wants, and it will go on getting what it wants from others who have got down to work.

The comparison of the growth of the individual to the growth of the race, unlike most tricks of exposition, seems always to increase in strength and worth. From childhood to manhood, the mind of the individual moves from the simple to the complex. The thoughts of a child are few in number and small in stature. At first, in ratiocinative processes, its premises must cover little ground and be fully elaborated, and in the course of the deduction or induction there can be no omission of the smallest detail. Not an example can be avoided, not a step discarded. But the rounded mind of the man objects to such a slow procedure. It leaps swiftly from cause to effect, or *vice versa*, and concludes even as it leaps. The student refuses to sit under a professor who lectures after the fashion of the kindergarten. It drives him mad to have all things and the most obvious things explained at length. He would as soon sit down and read Defoe in words of one syllable or do sums in arithmetic on his fingers.

And so with the race. It has had its adolescence; it is man-grown by now. The literature which delighted the race in its youth still delights the youth of the individual; but the race is now in its prime, and its literature must be a reflection of that prime. In obedience to the general law of evolution, all thought and all methods of representing thought must be concentrative. Language, spoken and written, has not escaped the working of this law. Language, as a means of conveying thought, is primarily figurative. The commonest words, used in the commonest ways, are stereotyped figures-figures, once new-born and pink, fresh, vivid, strong, in an elementary stage when the tongues of men groped for clearer expression. A figure is the development of an analogy, the establishment of identity through resemblance. As the race's first expression of the simplest thought was figurative, so was its first aggregate of thoughts into one powerful or beautiful whole. What is the allegory but a sustained figure? And it is to allegory that all primitive peoples first resort. It appeals to them, who, if they think at all, think like children. But the race to-day no longer has need of that childish expedient. Spenser was the last great poet to use it. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the only great allegory now extant, and it owed its immediate and subsequent popularity to the illiterate masses, because they were illiterate, and because it was simple, dealt with a vital question and was powerfully, though crudely executed.

As Professor Sherman has pointed out, the use of the analogy is to give to the material truth a spiritual setting-to make the reader *feel* as well as *think*. The allegory does this, and in a most sustained and expansive way. But the tendency of language is concentrative. Hence, the passing of the allegory, and with it the parable and fable. A study of the race's literature will reveal the replacement of these, in inexorable sequence, by the running metaphor, the clause metaphor, the phrase metaphor, the compound-word metaphor, and, lastly, the word metaphor. The sustained figure has been reduced to a single figure, the allegoric analogy to a word analogy. As the standard of mentality has risen, just so has the dictum of man gone forth that he must and will do his own thinking. He no longer wishes to have the thought iterated and reiterated and hammered in upon him again and again. Pleonasm is repellent to him.

Thomson wrote, “compelled by strong Necessity.” “Compelled” is tautologised by “strong Necessity,” but none the less Pope amended the passage thus: “Compelled by strong Necessity’s supreme command.” Imagine the race to-day countenancing such bosh! But in condensing the allegory into the word analogy, neither the material nor the spiritual dare be sacrificed. Nor have they been sacrificed by the masters. In token whereof no better instance can be cited than:

The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water.

There is the figure and the fact, the spiritual and the material, all represented by one word. It was not the poet’s place to employ twenty lines of iambic pentameter in order to convey the semblance of burnished gold to fire, flames, the sun, etc., as the barge floated on the water; and it would have been highly inartistic had he done so. The reader is not a child. He receives pleasure in constructing the whole appearance from out of that one word, and he is exalted by realising the effect through his own effort. And that is just what the reader wants.

“That style which leaves most to fancy in respect to the manner in which facts or relations may be apprehended will be in so far the easiest to read.” It is in accordance with this truth that the predication has decreased, and likewise the length of sentence. The tendency of sentences has long been toward brevity and point. The race wants its reading matter to be not only concentrative, compact, but crisp, incisive, terse. It tolerates Mr. James, but it prefers Mr. Kipling. To the sins of the past let the following sentence of Spenser attest:

Marry, soe there have been divers good plottes devised, and wise counsells cast alleready about reformation of that realme; but they say, it is the fatall desteny of that land, that noe purposes, whatsoever are meant for her good, will prosper or take good effect, which, whether it proceede from the very GENIUS of the soyle, or influence of the starres, or that Allmighty God has not yet appoynted the time of her reformation, or that he reserveth her in this unquiett state till for some secrett scourdge, which shall by her come unto England, it is hard to be knowen, but yet much to be feared.

Imagine the lustful blue pencil of the twentieth-century editor wading through a sentence as that! And contrast it with this from the pen of

Emerson:

My friends, in these two errors, I think, I find the causes of a decaying Church and a wasting unbelief. And what greater calamity can fall upon a nation than the loss of worship? Then all things go to decay. Genius leaves the temple to haunt the senate or the market. Literature becomes frivolous. Science is cold. The eye of youth is not lighted by the hope of other worlds, and age is without honour. Society lives to trifles, and when men die we do not mention them.

A good illustration of the decline of sentence length is afforded by the following figures, which give the average words per sentence for five hundred periods:

Fabyan	68.28
Spenser	49.78
Hooker	41.40
Macaulay	22.45
Emerson	20.58

Every form of present-day literature exemplifies this concentrative tendency. The growth of the short story has been marked by the decay of the long novel. In the last century, and in the first portion of this, novels of one volume were acceptable; but publishers preferred those of two and three; nor were they avers to one of four, while five and six volume novels were not at all uncommon. The average novel of to-day contains from forty to seventy thousand words. What publisher would dream of even reading a MS. of the cyclopean proportions of *Les Misérables?* Poe always contended that the tale should be such that it could be read at one sitting. *The King's Jackal*, recently brought out by Richard Harding Davis, contains about twenty-seven thousand words, while Mr. Kipling seems to have set the form for a novel of forty to fifty pages.

Again advantaging from our text, what the race wants chiefly is the passing thing done in the eternal way. This makes our literature largely episodal, and this want of the race Mr. Kipling has satisfied. He is terse, bald, jerky, disconnected, but there is nothing superfluous in his work. It consists only of the essentials, and is fancy-exciting. And that is just what the race wants, for it is past the kindergarten stage; it can do its own thinking. Give it the bare essentials, and it will do the rest. It can think more rapidly than it can read the printed words of the writer, and it is in a hurry. Division of labour, labour-saving machinery, rapid transit, the telephone and the telegraph-a myriad and one devices has the race invented for the economising of its energy and time. So in all things it demands the greatest possible amount crammed into the smallest possible space. And to this demand its literature must answer. The race does not want novels and stories teeming with superfluities. The unpruned shall be cast aside unread. What it wants is the meat of the matter, and it wants it now.

Jack London

AGAIN THE LITERARY ASPIRANT

THE literary aspirant these days, or rather the literary artist-aspirant, or rather the literary artist-aspirant with active belly and empty purse, finds himself face to face with a howling paradox. Being an aspirant, he is conclusively a man who has not arrived, and a man who has not arrived has no pull on popularity. Being a man, and empty-pursed, he must eat. Being an artist, possessing the true artist-soul, his delight is to pour out in printed speech the joy of his heart. And this is the paradox he faces and must compass: How and in what fashion must he sing the joy of his heart that the printed speech thereof may bring him bread?

This does not appear a paradox. At least, it does not appear a paradox to the merely literary aspirant; nor does it so appear to the man with the artist-soul and the full purse. The one, unwitting of artistry, finds it simple enough to supply public demand. The other, unwitting of sordid necessity, is satisfied to wait till he has created public demand. As for the man who has arrived, he does not count. He has compassed the paradox. But the man dreaming greatly and pressed by sordid necessity, he is the man who must confront the absolute contradiction. He is the man who cannot pour his artist-soul into his work and exchange that work for bread and meat. The world is strangely and coldly averse to his exchanging the joy of his heart for the solace of his stomach. And to him is it given to discover that what the world prizes most it demands least, and that what it clamors the loudest after it does not prize at all.

It is a way the world has, and it is especially the way of the twentieth century, at least so far as printed speech is concerned. The streak of yellow which is condemned in journalism crops out in the magazines. Popularity is the key-note. The advertisements bring the cash; the circulation brings the advertisements; the magazine brings the circulation; problem: what must be printed in the magazine so that it may bring the circulation that brings the advertisements that bring the cash? Wherefore the editor is dominated by the business manager, who keeps his eye on the circulation, or else the editor is sufficiently capable of keeping his own eye on the circulation. And the circulation must be large, in order that the advertisements be many, in order that the cash be much. So the editor prints in the pages of his magazine that which a large number of people want to read. He does not print what they ought to read, for his function is to pander, not to propagandize.

This is frankly commercial. And why should it not be frankly commercial in a commercial age? The deepest values of life are to-day expressed in terms of cash. That which is most significant of an age must be the speech of that age. That which is most significant to-day is the making of money. When our late chief magistrate was laid to rest, the deepest respect New York City could show was to stop its railways for five minutes, to stop the sending of its telegraph messages for half a minute — to stop, respectively, making money for five minutes and for half a minute. And New York City was sincere. The depth of her grief can be plumbed only by the length of her act. So vital, so significant, was the making of money to her, that to cease making money for five minutes and for half a minute was the profoundest possible expression of her sympathy and sorrow — vastly profounder than fifty-two weeks of resolution and fast. It was the undiminished essence of the spirit of sacrifice which lurks in the well-springs of being, which impelled the shepherd of a pastoral age to offer up the fat firstlings of his flock; which impelled Abraham in the land of Moriah to offer up Isaac, the son of his loins, as a burnt offering of his fealty to God; which impelled New York City to cease making money for five minutes and for half a minute.

This being so, — the making of money the most vital fact in life to-day, — it is only fair that literature be expressed in terms of cash. And it is not only fair but it is good business sense for an editor to print in the pages of his magazine that which a large number of people want to read. This comes of admitting the mass into living, or of being force to admit the mass into living (which is the same thing); of giving the mass good houses, good clothes, free public schools, and civil and religious liberty. It is the penalty of democracy. Poise of power cannot be expected of the newly manumitted, of the newly made powerful. The uncultured mass cannot become cultured in a twinkling of an eye. The mass, totally without art-concepts, cannot, in the instant of achieving freedom, achieve the loftiest of art-concepts. And wherever the mass is admitted into living, wherever the common men for the first time grip hold of life, there must follow a falling away from all that is fine of tone and usage, a diminishing, a descending to something which is average, which is humanly average.

The Athenians of two thousand years ago present the remarkable spectacle of cultured people. But in contemplating this spectacle we are prone to forget that each Athenian stood on the heads and shoulders of ten slaves. We are prone to forget that, had every slave been given equal voice and vote in Athenian affairs, the culture of the Athenians would have presented quite another and unremarkable spectacle. And to-day we are likewise prone to forget that we have but yesterday admitted to equal voice and vote our own peasants and serfs, our villains and clouts and clowns. For as surely as a clout or clown is made into a free man, taught to read and write and to think somewhat dimly, and given three dollars a day for the labor of his head and hand, just so surely will that clout or clown, with ten cents in his hand and a desire for a magazine in his heart, become a power in the land. His free and equal voice will be heard, and the editor will listen to it; for of a majority of such is a large number of people composed.

And because a large number of people have ten cents in their hands, — or twenty-five cents, the sum matters not, — the editor must express literature, not merely in terms of cash, but in terms of the cash of the large number of people. In other words, the immediate appraisement of literature is made by the large number of people. The newly manumitted and artless determine what manner of speech the business manager may permit the editor to print on the pages of his magazine. The editor becomes the mouthpiece of the newly manumitted and artless. What they want, he wants. He is the purveyor, the middleman, the purchaser of goods for a large number of people who have not the time and training to dicker and bicker for themselves. And he goes into the highways and byways, where men hawk the wares of their brain, and selects his stock in trade. And, as the editor receives his bread from the hands of the large number of people, so, through the editor, the writers hawking their wares receive their bread. The large number of people feed them, and whosoever feeds a man is that man’s master. And as masters, making the immediate appraisement of literature, the large number of people demand literature that is immediate.

Now the ultimate appraisement of literature is none of their business. They, with their dimes and quarters in their hands, and their free and equal thumbs turned up or down, determine what shall live for to-day and for this month; and, consequently, with their dimes and quarters (which are bread and meat), they determine what writers are to live for this day and month. Ninety per cent. of what lives to-day and this month dies to-morrow and next month. And ninety per cent. of the men who write it . . . ah, no! Theirs is the gift of perennial life; they live from day to day and from month to month, their wake cluttered by the dead things of their brain which fail of ultimate appraisement. The men who die are the artist-aspirants of active belly and empty purse, who, failing to live to-day and this month, are unbenefited by any possible resurrection of to-morrow and next month.

But while the large number of people are the masters so far as immediate appraisement is concerned, a different and small number of people make the ultimate appraisement. These men, figuratively, stand upon the heads and the shoulders of the others. These final arbiters, using the word in its largest sense, may be called the “critics.” They are not to be confounded with the men who review books, so many a week, for publications in the advertising pages of which the same books appear. Nor are they necessarily the men who speak professionally, nor need they speak through print at all. But they are the men, ‘spite of deaf ears, who say the good word for the worthy thing and damn balderdash, and who continue to say the good word and to damn balderdash until they attract a crowd. They may be likened to the schoolmaster in the average classroom. The boys may find greater delight in buzzing bottlefly than in cube root; but the schoolmaster hammers, hammers, hammers, until he has painfully hammered cube root into their heads. Theirs is the immediate appraisement of knowledge, his the ultimate. And so with the large number of people and the critics. The critic hammers, hammers, hammers, praising and blaming, interpreting, explaining, making clear and plain, on his own responsibility guerdoning the artist and forcing the large number of people finally to guerdon him.

But the critics, who may be called the discerning, are the small number of people; and though they, too, hold dimes and quarters in their hands, the dimes and quarters are not many, and the editor, busily expressing literature in terms of cash, can give them little heed. Not that the editor does not slip in a worthy thing now and again. But he does it sometimes through mistake, and ofttimes without mistake and in fear and trembling, tentatively, anxiously, with a flutter of many doubts.

Comes now the artist-aspirant to spill his unsung song on the type-written page, to exchange the joy of his heart for the solace of his stomach, to make stuff that shall live and at the same time to live himself. Unless he be an extremely fortunate artist-aspirant, he quickly finds that singing into a typewriter and singing out of a magazine are quite unrelated performances; that soul's delights and heart's desires, pressed into enduring art-forms, are not necessarily immediate literature; in short, that the master he seeks to serve for bread and glory will have none of him. And while he sits down to catch his breath he sees the merely literary aspirants forging past him, droves of them, content to take the bread and let the glory go. People in general differentiate into the large number of people and the small number of people; bread and glory are divorced; and where he dreamed of serving one master he finds two masters. The one master he must serve that he may live, the other that his work may live, and what the one demands most of all the other has little or no use for.

"Go ahead," say the discerning, patting him on the shoulder. "We 're with you. Turn out your masterpieces and we 'll write your name high in the temple of fame." But they are the small number of people, their dimes and quarters few, and the editor does not listen to them. "I don't want masterpieces," says the editor. "I cater to a large number of people of a certain calibre. Give me something, anything, never mind what it is so long as it fits that calibre, and I 'll write the figures high for you on the national bank."

"Truth alone endures," whisper the discerning. "Be a far-visioner and we shall remember you, and our children and our children's children shall remember you." And the artist-aspirant sits him down and gives form and substance to eternal and beautiful truth. "Too strong," says the editor. "Which is another way of saying 'Too true,'" the artist-aspirant objects. "Quite true," the editor replies. "It would cost me a thousand subscribers. Learn, O bright-browed youth, that I want no far-visioning; my subscribers are loth to part with their honest money for far-visioning." "You . . . don't . . . want . . . truth . . .?" the artist-aspirant quavers. "Not so," says the editor, "but it were well to learn that there be truth and truth and yet again truth. We do want truth, but it must be truth toned down, truth diluted, truth insipid, harmless truth, conventionalized truth, trimmed truth. There you have it! Trim your truth, young man. Get out your shears and clip, and I'll do business with you." "But I clip my immortality," cries the artist-aspirant. "You have made a mistake," says the editor finally and firmly; "I do not run an immortality market. Good-day."

And so the artist-aspirant sits down to generalize afresh upon his unsung songs and his sordid necessities. How and in what fashion must he sing the joy of his heart that the printed speech thereof may bring him bread? And he is puzzled at the men who have arrived, who (within limits), month after month, are running the truth that is in them in the magazines. And he is more puzzled when he realizes that they have compassed the paradox which confronts him. There ‘s the sketch by Jones, the GREAT JONES, and the study by the IMMORTAL JENKINS; and yet the editor distinctly told him that such sketches and studies were not at all in demand. And there ‘s another somewhat daring bit of verse by Mrs. Maybelle, the ONLY MRS. MAYBELLE. He struck the same note in fresher and more vigorous song, yet the same editor sent it back.

“My dear sir,” says the editor in answer to his plaint, “these noted writers you mention speak with authority. They have reputations. The large number of people will always listen to the one who speaks with authority, even though they do not understand him. Go and get a reputation and I ‘ll publish anything you write, that is — er — almost anything, and at least all the rot. I ‘ll even go so far as to publish some of the very things I am now refusing.” “But if you refuse to publish them now,” demands the artist-aspirant, “how under the sun am I ever to get a reputation?” “That,” says the editor, “is your business, not mine.”

And the artist-aspirant either subsides, taking the bread and letting the glory go, or, without dying, he compasses the paradox, even as Jones, Jenkins, and Maybelle compassed it. As to how he compasses it? That, dear reader, as the editor told him, is his business. Yours to be grateful that he does compass it.

THE RED GAME OF WAR

WAR and rumors of war. That, and naught else, was what was to be heard flying across the country from west to east along its southern border. Conductors, brakemen, porters, and the desert-dusty cattlemen who boarded the train at the last stop seemed unaware of anything else under the dome of heaven but war. And none so humble that he did not know how to conduct that war impending to the south; and none so reticent but that, on the slightest provocation, he would proceed to exposit just how that war should be conducted.

Of course, the passengers, having nothing to do, talked war all the time. It was difficult, speeding through the peaceful country, to realize that these well-tailored, well-mannered, courteous men — some of them even with spectacles — could be so easily divorced from their spectacles and clothes and become raw savages, as ferocious as their talk.

Up-to-Date Destruction

THE cool way in which they discussed battleships, submarines, aerial bombs, torpedoes, and all the rest of the wonderful up-to-date machine contrivances and devices for the abrupt and violent introduction of foreign substances into the bodies of their fellow mortals would have been peculiarly edifying to the contemplative mind of a philosopher. For, come to think of it, that is just what war is — the introduction of foreign substances into men’s bodies with violent and disruptive intent.

The hunting animal so introduces claws and fangs. The savage so introduces arrowheads and spear points. We, in the clear white light of the full dawn of the twentieth century, so introduce pieces of iron which we propel enormous distances by virtue of our laboratory method of chemically mixing gunpowder. Also, we introduce pellets of lead, at high velocity, said pellets being cunningly jacketed with steel so that, while being still disruptive, they will not spread and be too disruptive.

So a concession must be made, after all, to the refining influence of civilization. Basically, the game is the same old red game of introducing foreign substance. But to-day we at least introduce it according to certain set rules, agreements and conventions. The intent, as of old, is to destroy the fellow creature who blocks our way of life or desire, but we do it with more technique and consideration.

Hearts in the Game

THE foregoing is not urged in the slightest spirit of sarcasm. What is, is beyond all peradventure. And the genus Homo is just precisely what he is — a highly intelligent animal with an amazing spiritual endowment that, on occasion, individually and collectively, functions in violent and destructive ways. War must be dreadfully human, else why did all those well-cultured, ethically trained men in the smoking room and observation car talk the way they did?

Far in the sands of western Texas our soldiers, who have been policing the border for the past two years, rode in to meet the train at every desert station in order to buy and eagerly read the newspapers for the latest war quotations. Where the heart is there the treasure is, and, to judge by the delight shown in their faces as they scanned the bull market in war stock, these soldier boys of ours certainly had their hearts in the game for which they were drilled and uniformed.

Yes, and it is a safe wager that in the heart of the last one of them, weary from long waiting was the query "How long, O Lord, how long ere things break loose and we are started on our way?"

War and the rumors of war — there was no escaping: one breathed it, read it, heard it, dreamed it — yes, and ate it. For did not the primitive humor of the negro waiter in the dining car achieve the following sally: "Good morning, sah. Two nice scrambled Mexicans this morning, sah?"

We Are Still Warriors

SAID the Pullman conductor to me: "Lucky you're getting off at Houston. Big celebration to-day. Twelve thousand of our regulars are going to parade. San Jacinto Day, you know."

Verily, it is so. We set aside holidays for the celebration of old wars and ancient battles. And we thrill, and get tickly sensations along the spine and moisten our eyes as we remember those old days and the deeds of our fathers. Not until we have evolved sufficiently to set aside days in honor of the inventions of industry and the discoveries of science will we cease going to war. In the meantime we are what we are, and it is most evident that we are still warriors.

But Houston was disappointed. The feet of war — or rather, the feet of twelve thousand of our young men — did not tramp along Houston's streets on San Jacinto Day. The feet of the young men even then were speeding south. The night before, Houston had seen them to bed in their wide-pitched camp. In the morning they were gone. Houston rubbed its eyes and stared at the great martial vacancy left on its landscape.

No finer meed of praise can be given to the evacuation of Houston, when the word came over the wire from Washington, than to state that it was equal to the celerity and dispatch of our American circuses in their palmiest days.

For Girls Will Weep

FROM Houston to Galveston, flying fast as electricity could drive, across the green flat land one caught the first far glimpse of long lines of moving, canvas-topped commissary wagons and marching columns.

In the electric car were three girls who looked as if they had been weeping. For ever girls will love a soldier and ever girls will weep when the war medicine is made and the young men go forth.

While many of the men marched, those of the Fifth Brigade, having been selected to lead the way to Mexico, were hurried to Galveston by train. One such train, a long one, we overtook and slowly passed. The windows were crowded with the bright, expectant faces. Just boys they were — a long, moving picture of live, laughing faces. Young fellows, that was all, just young fellows — all trim, fine-bodied huskies, smooth-shaven, boyish, bold, eager-eyed, efficient-looking, capable, adventurous, serving out their wanderlust of youth, as youth will do; for youth will be served, whether at Tampico or Vera Cruz, and youth is prone to like its service to be in foreign parts and oversea.

They were distinctively American faces, the great majority that laughed to us from the troop train. The percentage of blonds was high, and numbers of them were astonishingly blond. The brunets sparkled amid the blond types — ranged all the way from fairest yellow hair and palest blue eyes down through the richer tones to dark gray eyes and deep brown hair.

And as we passed that line of bright faces, first one girl, and then another, and, finally, the third, recognized her lover and was recognized. Greetings and love calls flew back and forth, until we drew ahead whereupon the three girls dissolved in fresh tears. But I'll wager, just the same, no lucky young dog in that lucky Fifth Brigade, vanguard of the advance across the Gulf of Mexico, could have been persuaded by all the lovelorn lassies in the United States to stay behind, even though staying behind could be accomplished with honor. How was it that Laurence Hope voiced the plaint of the woman against the soldier lover? ". . . Desiring in my very arms the fiercer rapture of the fight."

And war rolled south on revolving wheels while the feet of the young men dangled and rested. Yes, and the iron-shod feet of War rested likewise, for car after car was loaded with army wagons and army mules.

Galveston was buzzing. Boys were crying extras, and fresher extras. The Hotel Galvaz buzzed. Spurred officers came and went.

"Plenty of war talk in the village, eh?" queried the elevator boy.

Said the barber with impressive solemnity to the boot-black: "They's goin' to be something' doin' inside twenty-four hours — you listen to me."

Every porch in the city was a-clatter. Youth everywhere strained at home ties and duty in its desire to stampede to the nearest recruiting office. Old mothers who had lost sons and husbands in the Civil War days wept reminiscently in their rocking-chairs. And while the youngsters were eager to volunteer, the oldsters were sitting back saying:

"Let the youngsters go. When the pinch comes'll be time enough for us. Hell, ain't it, how a fellow gets patriotic when any other country gets gay with ourn?"

One soldier: "Well, what are they waitin' for? We're ready, ain't we?"

Other soldier: "Been ready two years an' over."

Not Holy War, but Adventure

AND both gaze yearningly out across the blue waters of the quiet Gulf and already see themselves upon it and steaming south for Tampico and Vera Cruz, or any other place so long as it is not this piping place of peace.

I remember the young men of Japan when they went out to war. Never did any generation of young men desire more madly to go out upon the red way. But they went almost holily to encounter the White Giant of the North, and they little expected and less desired to return.

Now our young men taking the sea path south are going out differently. Primarily, it is adventure. As a matter of course they are patriotic, but they have no sense of any seriousness before them. They feel they face no giant enemy in the south. They tell over again the tale of the Alamo, and recite with glee how Sam Houston lambasted Santa Anna at San Jacinto. Why, what they won't do to the Mexican is . . . and they discover that speech is a most frail and inadequate means of expression of young blood and rollicking spirit.

What Is Youth Without Danger?

OF COURSE, if one were to pin them down to it — these bright-blooded boys of ours whose feet itch to tread wider spaces and far-places — they would admit that a few, a very few, are going to get hurt. But their next thought, which is scarce a thought but rather a blood count of emotion, would be: Aw, what's the use of youth and where's its wages if risks are not to be run in the high tide and heyday of life?

What Texas Could Do

A SORT of picnic, that's what, a sort of picnic . . . somewhat different, of course, from a Sunday-school picnic, and on a colossal scale, but still a picnic.

"A short campaign at the outside," say the youngsters.

But the oldsters shake their heads: "Look at the Civil War — called for three-months' volunteers. You know how long that fracas lasted. You never can tell what you're goin' to do once you take holt. You can't leave go in a hurry."

A youngster: "Why, we could promenade through Mexico from end to end with twenty thousand men."

An oldster: "Yep, and take five hundred thousand men to police Mexico behind you while you promenaded on your way."

A young Texan of the Seventh Infantry: "Huh! Not if they was Texans. Why, I want to tell you we've threw the fear of — well, of Texas — into them so they ain't never forgot us. Say, d'ye know, I've heard more than one Mexican swear they could lick the whole United States if Texas was cut out of the scrap, an' d'ye know, I guess that's just about right."

"You mean . . . ?" I dared to query.

His words still ringing in his ears, he saw the trap his quick speech had led him into, and he laughed, disclaimed, and said: "I guess what I mean was cut out the whole United States and Texas could lick Mexico."

"Sure thing!" applauded the group; and the youngsters had the decision.

The Looming Figure of Huerta

A MINUTE later they were agreeing with the oldsters in one detail of managing the war, namely, that simultaneously with the movement on Tampico and Vera Cruz, the National Guards and Rangers should cross over and take possession of every Mexican border town and water hole clear to the Pacific.

"The first line of defense is the enemy's territory," was the unanimous judgment.

Little they reck, these younglings of our nation, of what is before them. Their feet are a-tingle to be out on the old red way of man. Colts and calves play in the pastures. Our young men must also play, must romp, must be doing something, either sowing their wildness of youth at home, or, preferably, fighting abroad, vindicating themselves, and the fighting machine of an army which they compose — and, deeper, unreasoned, and unguessed, vindicating the institutions which have molded them and which are woven into the fibers of them.

But always, over it all, back of this glorious dance of youth, one visions the group of the old ones at Washington, the wise ones, the graybeards.

And, over it all and back of it all, most significant and sinister of all, looms the tragic figure of the man known among men as Huerta. And a well-known man is he. This day they are chattering his name from London clubs and the war offices of world powers to the bazaars of India and the deep-matted, twilight rooms of the temples and tea houses of Nippon.

The current theory of Huerta's conduct in embroiling Mexico with the United States gives one pause to contemplate as amazing a situation as is conceivable in a particular man's affairs. Huerta, according to the classic Mexican custom established of very old, old time, has securely slated down in Europe 10,000,000 of pesos as a nest egg — or so runs the rumor on which is builded the theory. Huerta, it is said, was born a peon without a penny or a hope for two pennies all at one time to his heritage. Huerta, in the course of his dictatorship, by the devious ways long established of Mexican rulers, has accumulated and cached in Europe 10,000,000 of pesos extracted from the toil of his brother peons.

Madero saved Villa's life when Huerta desired to execute Villa. Huerta, by custom established of old time, contrived to have Madero shot to death without witnesses, while Madero was in the act of attempting to escape in the darkness of night from a guard of Huerta's soldiers. This, by the way — this attempting to escape on foot by prisoners — is also a custom of old time invariably never practiced by Mexican captives of Mexicans. Yet statistics would tend to show conclusively that it is quite generally practiced. Only — well, sometimes statistics just must be doubted.

Could the Dictator Escape?

VILLA, still the theory runs, remembering the murder of his benefactor, red of beak and claw from many victories, is advancing south upon the failing Huerta with the sworn intent of avenging Madero's death. This means taking the life of Huerta. Perhaps not exactly that. There is the possibility that Villa will merely take Huerta prisoner and that Huerta, some dark night, in an automobile, without witnesses, may inadvertently emulate Madero's feat with the same unfortunate and unforeseen end that Madero met. The how of Huerta's passing, if he falls into Villa's hands, is immaterial. The fact that he will pass is ordained.

So grows the picture and the theory of the tragedy of Huerta. Huerta, sometime peon, rules in Mexico. His ten millions reside in Europe. Death, in the form and visage of Villa, draws closer to him day by day from the north. Problem: how then may Huerta escape Villa and win to his treasure oversea? It is an interesting problem. To Huerta it is mighty interesting.

Might he not, the objection is sure to be raised, have escaped to the coast and away to Europe before ever the American flag was affronted at Tampico? Certainly not. Before he could have covered the distance between the palace and the railroad station he would have had a mob at his heels. The likelihood of getting away alive from the station would have been remote; and, even if successful in riding out his train from his capital a living man, the likelihood of his reaching Vera Cruz still alive, much less of embarking alive from Vera Cruz, would have been too remote for consideration.

At Dice With Fate

SO HUERTA remained in Mexico City with his problem. And, granting the theory, we get the picture of that desperate man in his high capital; ten millions of treasure awaiting him across the salt sea, ruler and prisoner in his great palace, playing the big game of life with death in the toss, Villa, who will kill him, sure as fate, drawing nearer day by day from the north.

And Huerta plays the game. The gringo is civilized and a humanitarian within the limits of technique. There is only one way for Huerta to escape. The gringo must come and get him. The gringo would never turn him over to the tender mercies of Villa. The gringo would see him safe out of the country and turn him loose to connect with his ten millions.

Very well. Isn't the gringo doing it? Hasn't the gringo already started to come and get him? Huerta was no idiot over the technique of formal saluting of a flag.

It is a pretty situation. Primitive, 'tis true, but splendid pictorially and dramatically.

Incidentally, it will be rather an expensive rescue of one man on the part of the United States. The price will run to hundreds of millions of money, while no one dare forecast how many of the lives of our young men will be paid — all for the saving of the miserable life of a man who is himself already redly responsible for so many miserable deaths of other men.

But, correct or not, theory or fact, that mixed-blooded man is playing a big game of some sort there in his palace on the site of the ancient Aztec palace where Cortez long ago so magnificently played a freebooting game. Strange, also, is it to contemplate that in the veins of this mixed-blooded man runs the strains of the blended races of Cortez and Montezuma.

Oh, well, not so long ago, and certainly a considerable time after Cortez and his captains were dead and dist, we, too, went a-freebooting, pilfered the owners of most of a continent of their land, and enunciated that working axiom that the only good Indian was a dead Indian. Yet there is a difference. We are reformed, and have developed quite a different and indisputably a better technique.

The Order Comes

THE last days at Galveston saw war glower red and redder. Extras appeared with increasing rapidity on the streets; and street boys, made giddy by such sudden wealth, took advantage of the excitement to sell any old paper as the very latest extra. The buzzards — for so are war correspondents named — began to gather. It is interesting to note that, within ten hours previous to the receipt from Washington of the order for the Fifth Brigade to embark, correspondents who had been on the way from New York and Chicago descended upon Galveston in a flock.

Scarcely had they arrived when the order came. The whisper invaded the dining room of the Hotel Galvez, but the news was received without excitement. Here and there an officer rose from the table and went out quietly to begin a night of unsleeping activity. That was about all.

In the ballroom the Fourth Infantry band continued to play and those officers danced who were not lucky enough to belong to the Fifth Brigade. Also, in the writing room every desk was occupied for a few minutes by young lieutenants getting off letters to the girls who just couldn't help loving a soldier at a distance.

In the misty gray of early morning the columns of marching soldiers in their dull olive drab had the seeming of long, lean torpedo-boat destroyers. They were not individuals to the eye, but war projectiles. Upon coming closer they showed a goodly, sturdy lot of trim, well-set fellows, clean and fit, marching as veterans march.

Off for Vera Cruz

THE twenty thousand spectators that flooded the transport docks did not seem to be at all in the way. There was no confusion, no shouting of orders. So quiet and orderly did the embarking of three thousand men with all their necessary gear proceed that one almost wondered if any orders were being issued.

Army wagons, buckboards, motor cars, and reluctant mules streamed steadily on board. It seemed that near the whole city was pouring into four transports without crowding them.

One pathetic note was the soldiers' dogs. Now it must be understood that solders' dogs are different from other dogs. They always accumulate about the fixed camps where the men remain for months. They are very wise. They know unerringly an officer from a soldier. They know enough never to presume or to intrude on an officer. Where officers walk they never walk.

They recognize that an officer's tent and the vicinity of an officer's tent are taboo, and never are they guilty of drinking from an officer's water bucket. And they — soldiers' dogs of the Fifth Brigade — were bound for Mexico along with their masters. They crept demurely up the gangway in the thick of the lines of ascending soldiers, and when detected by a vigilant officer at the head of the gangway, they obeyed, as soldier's dogs should, and marched back down the gangway. And when so detected they betrayed no recognition of their masters, for no soldier can recognize his dog — so heinous a circumstance is attempted stowaway. Nor did they whine or complain or voice a bark. They disappeared, these solders' dogs, and further deponent sayeth not, save that these same dogs ran down the gangway at Vera Cruz.

It may be nice to be an army woman in time of peace, but in war it is not so nice. Have our army women learned the control that plays so large a part in their husbands' business? Everything was quiet with them: there were no scenes, no violent sobbings, no hysteria. There were heavy eyes and moist eyes, last words, and yet again last words after, and that was all.

In short, in this act of saying farewell to their men folks the army women are splendid. Some I saw acceding to their husbands' wishes — saying a last good-by and departing before the whistles of the transports blew. One in particular I noted — a captain's wife. He led her down the gangway to the wharf and kissed her a long good-by, after which he returned on board. Then, her lips trembling, she turned and went straight down the dock to the shore. Not once did she turn her head and look back. A color sergeant, his wet-eyed wife beside him, held a very young baby in his arms. For a long time he gazed down on the tiny mite of life and said nothing. A young lieutenant hung about his mother, pressed the last lingering kiss on her lips, and, hand lingering in hand and loath to sever, he bowed his head in old-time gallantry and kissed her hand.

On the Face of the Waters

HIGH in the Gulf of Mexico, the lights of Galveston astern, the four transports, massed with lights from stem to stern, are being formed into a square, two abreast, under direction of destroyers that glide like a long row of shadows out of the gloom; that give orders through megaphones, and that glide away into the gloom, talking across the sea to one another in the medium of chimes and lights — red lights and white that flash and disappear in blinding lucidity on the short signal masts. Up above in the wireless room of the transport the words of the war men back at Galveston are being snatched out of the air.

Day on the Gulf of Mexico! All is peace under an azure sky. The sapphire sea is scarcely rippled by the trade wind gently blowing, and across this placid sea stream the white transports — soldier-loaded — with an ominous destroyer convoying on either flank, while a third destroyer scouts ahead.

A blur of smoke rises on the horizon and we know that the battleship Louisiana has come up from Vera Cruz to meet us. We know while all that is visible of her is the blur of smoke, for her name and errand have long been snatched out of the air by wizards' apprentices in the wireless room.

WITH FUNSTON’S MEN

Our Army and Navy in Peaceful Action

DAYBREAK on a glassy sea and startled flying fish are struggling to fly in the absence of wind. Seaward the destroyers, like cardboard silhouettes, pass across the blood-red orb of the sun just clearing the horizon.

Ahead still steams our convoying battleship, the Louisiana. Astern, in line at half speed, steam our three sister transports. Coastward are the blinking lighthouse, a long blur of land that with growing day resolves itself into a breakwater, a low shore, a towered city, and a harbor of many battleships. So many battleships are there that they have spilled out of the crowded harbor until several times as many are in the open roadstead. And there are naval supply ships, hospital ships, a wireless ship, and colliers.

And overhead, to give the last touch of modern war to the scene, a naval hydroplane burrs like some gigantic June bug through the gray of day.

Here, where Cortez burned his ships long centuries gone, and where Scott bombarded and took the city two generations ago, lie Uncle Sam’s warships with every man on his toes. Yes, and every soldier gazing eagerly ashore from crowded transports is on his toes.

All is peaceful, yet the feeling one gets of the many ships, the burring flying machines, and the thousands of men is that of being on tiptoe to begin.

On Tiptoe for Excitement

ASHORE all is as peaceful and as markedly on its toes as is the sea. Everywhere marines and bluejackets are cooking breakfast. From the roof of the Terminal Hotel sailors are wigwagging. Sailor aids of sailor officers gallop back and forth on commandeered Mexican horses, and commandeered automobiles dash by with the officers on the seats and armed sailors standing on the running boards.

American women, quite like American women at home, with never an earmark of being refugees from the interior of Mexico, are breakfasting on the cool arcaded sidewalks of hotels bordering the Plaza. Overhead whirl huge electric fans along the lines of the tables where our women breakfast so composedly and sailor sentries pace back and forth. Sentries are everywhere. So are the newsboys with their eternal extras. Through the confusion of bootblacks, flower sellers, and picture post-card peddlers stride naval and marine officers in duck and khaki, and from the hips of all of them big revolvers and automatics swing in leather holsters. Down the street, in the thick of mule carts and mounted sailors, pass bareheaded Mexican women returning from market with big fish unwrapped and glistening in the sun.

In the Hotel Diligencia's bedroom where I write these lines under lofty, gold-edged beams, there is a spatter of fresh bullet holes on the blue wall. In the lace-patterned mosquito canopy over my bed is a line of irregular rents which, folded as they were originally, show the path of a single bullet. The glass of the French windows that open on the balcony is perforated by many bullets. The wrecked door shows how our sailors entered behind the butts of their rifles in the course of the street fighting and house cleaning. From the fretted balcony one can see the ruins of plate glass and mirrors in the shops and hotels fronting the street and plaza.

Feats of Sailor Ingenuity

MEXICAN officers seem to have notions different from ours in the matter of prosecuting war. When the landing of our forces was imminent, General Maas, who was the Federal commander at Vera Cruz, released the criminal portion of the prisoners confined in the fortress of San Juan de Ulloa. These were the hard cases, the murderers and robbers and men guilty of violent and terrible crimes. The politicals General Maas was very careful not to release. And when our forces did land, General Maas fled for the hinterland before the fighting began, having first instructed his soldiers to shift for themselves. While the released prisoners did take some part in the street fighting and housetop sniping, in the main they devoted themselves to pillage. Hard cash was what they went after, as for instance the smashed safes in Mr. Tansey's office at the Pierce Oil Refinery attest. Falling back before our men, these convicts terrorized the country people, looting everything of value and not refraining from attacking the women. So merciless were they that the outraged peons captured and summarily executed two of them who had lingered behind their fellows.

Yes, there is a decided evolution in technique of war as practiced by modern soldiers. Our fighting ships are ten and fifteen million-dollar electrical, chemical, and mechanical laboratories, and they are manned by scientists and mechanicians. They had the street cleaners out ere the bodies were picked up. In a matter of several hours they repaired and ran the two scrapped locomotives which the Federals had thought too worthless to run out. And while this was going on other sailors were rigging short wireless masts on top of a day coach and equipping the car with a complete wireless apparatus.

The ice plant of Vera Cruz had broken down, and Vera Cruz without ice was a condition not to be tolerated, so by afternoon the sailors had repaired the plant, and the sick and wounded as well as all the rest of the city had its ice again. When four knocked-down automobiles were discovered, volunteers were called for and in less than three hours the cars were assembled and were being driven about the city on military business by the jackies who had assembled them. As civilians remarked, our sailors are able to practice all trades and professions under the sun with the sole exception of wet-nursing. Even so, I have seen them carrying Mexican babies for tired mothers across the stretch of railroad which the Federals destroyed.

And the way our sailors drove and rode horses, mules, and burros was even more wonderful than their other achievements. They came off our ships sailors; they will return soldiers.

Navigating a Mexican Horse

THEY tell of one young sailor who mounted a commandeered horse in a lull in the fighting. He had not minded the fighting, but it was with somewhat of the spirit one embarks on a forlorn hope that he got his legs astride the animal. “Well,” he said as he settled himself in the saddle, “commence.”

“What do I do now?” asked another jacky, mounting at the Plaza.

“Go ahead half speed,” was the advice. “Keep your helm amidships to the corner, then starboard your helm and proceed under forced draft.”

It is true that, when under forced draft, the jackies hold on inelegantly by main strength of gripping legs; but the point is that they do hold on. I have looked in vain to see one of them separated from his mount. One misadventure only have I witnessed: and then the sailor, at a dead gallop, abruptly put his helm hard over at a sharp corner and capsized his four-legged craft. When the band struck up “The Star-Spangled Banner” at Admiral Fletcher’s flag raising, a marine, mounted on a Mexican horse, took its ear and turned it forward. “Listen to that, hombre,” said the marine; “that’s real music. It’s American music.”

On the Arkansas occurred an incident which serves to show to what extent our men were on their toes prior to landing. Lieutenant Commander Keating of the Arkansas battalion had selected the best and strongest of his men for shore work. The men who were not selected were sad and sore. At the last there remained but one man more to select, and two of the youngsters urged what was considered equal claims of health, strength, and record. How to decide between them was beyond the Lieutenant Commander. The boys themselves suggested the way. They put on boxing gloves and fought for it. Those who saw the battle aver that it was the hottest bout between amateurs they had ever witnessed. At the end of four rounds it was a draw and Lieutenant Commander Keating was more perplexed than ever. His final solution of the problem was the only way it could be fairly solved. He took both lads. Later he reported that, as in everything else, they had played equally splendid parts in shore fighting and shore work.

Incredible Marksmanship

ONLY very brave men or fools without any knowledge of modern shell fire could have fired upon our sailors and marines from the Naval School. Broadside on, at close range, lay the Chester. When the first shots were fired upon our men, the Chester went into action for a hot five minutes. Had the taxpayer at home witnessed the way those upper story windows were put out by the Chester’s shells, he would never again grudge the money spent in recent years in target practice. Onlookers say that it reminded them of Buffalo Bill’s exhibitions of rifle shooting.

The outside of the Naval School was little damaged. Inside it was a vast wreck. Practically every shell entered by way of the windows and exploded inside. When I visited the building, which is a huge affair, many buzzards were appropriately perched on the broken parapets. Inside, through burst floors, rent ceilings, and masses of fallen masonry, one could trace the flight of the shells through massive partitions to the spots where they had exploded.

There was all the evidence of the hot five minutes. In the big patio were great heaps of fallen cement balustrades from second-story balconies. Some of the shells went clear through the building, crossed the patio, and burst in the rear rooms. Many years had been consumed in the constructions, equipping, and organizing of that building, and in five minutes it was to all intents and purposes destroyed. Such is the efficiency of twentieth century war machinery. Laboratories furnished with most delicate and expensive instruments were knocked into cocked hats by single shells.

One lecture room was filled with beautiful models of ships. One model, of a full-rigged ship, twenty-five feet in length, with skysail yards and all sails set, precise in every minutest detail aloft and alow, was undamaged save for a rent in her mainsail from a fragment of shell. Other and smaller models, shattered and dismasted, covered the floor with all the destruction of an armada. On a blackboard was scrawled "Captured by the U. S. S. New Hampshire, April 22, 1914."

In other lecture rooms, on blackboards alongside academic problems of war as demonstrated by Mexican cadets, were chalked records of boys from the Utah, the San Francisco, and the Arkansas.

Bloodstained cots and pillows showed that more than roof beams and masonry had been shattered. Through knee-deep riffraff of discarded uniforms, sketches, maps, and examination papers, clucked and strutted on live thing left from the bombardment — a trip Mexican rooster that bore all the marks of a fighting cock.

But it was in the second story that the worst devastation was wrought. Roofs, floors, and walls were perforated and smashed to chaos. "Mind your foot," was the constant cry as one trod gingerly over débris and wove in and out among yawning holes.

The touch of the eternal feminine was not missing. My lady's boudoir seemed to have received the severest fire. Fourteen shell holes punctured the walls, the ceiling had partly fallen in, a great hole gaped in the floor, and one shell had burst directly on the brass bed. The floor was hillocked with masses of masonry and broken furniture, and all about were scattered pretties and fripperies of the lady — empty jewel cases, powder puffs, silver-mounted brushes. Most conspicuous of all was a pair of red, high-heeled Spanish slippers.

Aboard the Rescue Train

DOWN in the railroad station, where I boarded the rescue train that runs out each day to the Federal lines, our sailors and marines were cooking, washing clothes, and teaching the Mexican youth how to pitch baseball. All along the track, until the country was reached, our men were encamped and performing sentry duty.

A guard of bluejackets, under the command of Lieutenant Fletcher of the Florida, manned the train. The engine was run by our enlisted men, who had repaired it, as was also the wireless by the men who had installed it. Even the porter of the Pullman car was an unmistakable American negro.

Two miles beyond our last outpost we came to the break where the Federals had torn up two miles of track, burning the ties and carrying the rails away with them. Here, also, was a blockhouse of advanced Federal outposts.

Under a white Turkish towel, carried by a sailor, Lieutenant Fletcher met and conferred with the Mexican Lieutenant in charge. The latter was small, stupid-tired, and a greatly embarrassed sort of man. The contrast between the two Lieutenants was striking. The Mexican Lieutenant strove to add inches to himself by standing on top of a steel rail. But in vain. The American still towered above him. The American was — well, American. Little of Mexican or of Spanish was in the other. It was patent that he was mostly Indian. Even more of Indian was in the ragged, leather-sandaled soldiers under him. They were short, squat, patient-eyed, long-enduring as the way of the peon has been even in the long centuries preceding Cortez, when Aztec and Toltec enslaved him to burden bearing.

The Oxlike Peon Soldier

ONE could not help being sorry for these sorry soldier Indians, who slouched awkwardly about while our Lieutenant scanned the far track across the break in the hope of some sign of our countrymen fleeing from the capital. Sorry soldier Indians they truly were. When I though of our own fine boys of the fleet and the army back in Vera Cruz, it seemed to me that it could not be war, but murder. What chance could such lowly, oxlike creatures, untrained themselves and without properly trained officers, have against our highly equipped, capably led young men? These soldiers of the peon type are merely descendants of the millions of stupid ones who could not withstand the several hundred ragamuffins of Cortez and who passed stupidly from the hash slavery of the Montezumas to the no less harsh slavery of the Spaniards and of the later Mexicans.

But Even Peons Can Hurl Death

AND yet one must not forget that each one of these sorry soldiers bore a modern rifle, the cartridges for which, loaded with smokeless powder, are capable of propelling a bullet to kill at a mile's distance and farther, and, at closer range, to perforate the bodies of two or three men. Also, each of these sorry soldiers, at command, by the mere crooking of index fingers, could release far-flighted messengers of death. Also, the mark of the cross, rightly applied to the steel-jacketed nose of the bullet, can turn that bullet into a dumdum that makes a small hold on entering a man's body and a hole the size of a soup plate on leaving. It requires no intelligence thus to notch a bullet. Even a peon can do it.

War is a silly thing for a rational, civilized man to contemplate. To settle matters of right and justice by means of introducing into human bodies foreign substances that tear them to pieces is no less silly than ducking elderly ladies of eccentric behavior to find out whether or not they are witches. But — and there you are — what is the rational man to do when those about him persist in settling matters at issue by violent means?

Even Peace Lovers Must Be Prepared

I AM a rational man. I firmly believe in arbitrament by police magistrates and civil courts. Nevertheless, on occasion, I find myself in contact with men who are prone, say, to rob me of my purse, and who elect to do it by violent and disruptive means. So, on such occasions, I am compelled to carry an automatic in order to dispute with such men my path in life which they are blocking and ambuscading. Personally, and for a lazy man, carrying a big automatic is a confounded nuisance. I hope for the day to come when it will not be necessary for any man to carry an automatic. But in the meantime, preferring to be a live dog rather than a dead lion, I keep thin oil on my pistol and try it out once in a while to make sure that it is working.

As it is with rational men to-day so it is with nations. The dream of a world police force and of a world court of arbitration will some day be realized. But that day is not to-day. What is is. And to cope with what is, it behooves nations to keep thin oil on their war machinery and know how to handle it.

Texas was long notorious as a gun-fighting State. To-day it is against the law for a man to carry a revolver in Texas. Times do change. But there is always the time between times. As one regarded the Mexican Lieutenant with his peon soldiers, it was patent that the old order still obtained, and that each peon was equipped with sufficient cartridges to destroy the rationality of a hundred men like me.

The Man He Could Lick

AND we stood there under our white Turkish towel, surrounded by armed men, and quested across a stretch of ruined railroad for the sight of some of our own men, women, and children making their way down to the coast from mobs that looted, plundered, and cried death to them.

"I've found him at last," said a friend, a Texas civilian and ex-roughrider.

All the way out on the train he had been lining himself up against one and another of the husky broad-shouldered sailor boys and lamenting that he could not find a man he could lick. Now he gazed with satisfaction at the little Mexican Lieutenant and muttered in my ear: "I just wish it was up to him and me to settle this whole war. Take him on on any terms — bite, gouge, or anything up to locking us, stripped, in a dark room."

The Goal of the Refugees

A TRAIN appeared in the distance between green walls of jungle. Through our glasses we could make out parasols and sunshades that advertised women of our race who had escaped the perils of the mob-ridden interior.

Permission was reluctantly accorded us, and we advanced a mile along the destroyed track to meet our countrymen. Glad as we were to see them, their gladness at seeing white men from the coast was almost pathetic. For three days and nights they had not had their clothes off nor lain in a bed, nor had they ever been certain of their lives during that time.

It seems the Mexican officers have a very simple and clever technique of waging war on civilians of the United States. The officers themselves rob civilians of revolvers. This enables the next mob of death-shouting Mexicans to put words into deeds without the slightest risk of being hurt. Of course the Mexican army cannot be held responsible for all the actions and the murders committed by such mobs. Also, officers are richer by the number of weapons they accumulate from fleeing Americans.

By the time our refugees reached the train and saw the American uniform they were stating that it was the finest thing they had ever seen in their lives. As the train backed into Vera Cruz the landscape continued to grow more beautiful, for it was covered everywhere with sailors and marines on sentry duty or in camp. But the sight of the inner and outer harbors filled with our warships was the finishing stroke.

Experiences at Mexican Hands

SAID one of the refugees, a doctor: “I just wish the fellows at Washington who are running things could have had our experience. It would change their views on diplomacy and on army and navy appropriation bills. I tell you, if they had been robbed and mobbed and thrown into jail along with their wives and children, and heard the roar going up all about them of ‘Muerto los gringos!’ and then, finally, got down the country as we have, with their tongues hanging out, and seen these warships and bluejackets — I tell you they couldn’t get back to the States quick enough to start working for a larger army and navy.”

The views of American residents of Mexico should be of value at the present time, and I shall repeat them without comment to show how blows the wind with those whose personal interests are vitally involved.

“Somehow,” said one of them, “we don’t enjoy seeing the United States call on the A B C class in Spanish and Portuguese to help her out of this mess.”

Another declared: “This waiting and watching, our Fabian offensiveness, is a whole lot easier at Washington than at Vera Cruz. Besides, I can’t help working over what the Mexicans have done or are doing to my wolfhound.

That dog — why sir, just standing on her four legs, she could reach her head over and take anything from the center of this breakfast table."

"How are the people at home feeling now?" inquired a refugee. "They got us into this mess. Are they going to get us out of it?"

Refugee Criticism of Policy

THE thorough agreement of all American residents is that the present crisis was brought on by the policy of our Government, and that the only way out is to go on through. The taking of Vera Cruz by the naval forces of the United States precipitated the bad feeling against Americans that has been fermenting during the past several years, and if the United States should recede from its present position, it will forever be impossible for Americans again to live in Mexico.

As one man, a twenty-year resident, said: "I've lived here ever since I was man-grown. I know what I am talking about. Humpty Dumpty has had a great fall. Chile, Brazil, and Argentina can never put him together again. Only our army and our navy can put us Americans back again and insure us a fair deal. And when I speak of ourselves I mean the people who have made Mexico what it is to-day, or, rather, what it was the other day before the Tampico flag incident. More than any other country — than all other countries added together — have we put in the capital, the brains, and the technical skill; we've supplied the mechanical engineers, the mining engineers, the agricultural chemists, and the scientific farmers. By virtue of what we have done in Mexico we have a right here, and we should be protected in that right, expecially since our Government by its own action has endangered that right."

"Just Turn Texas Loose"

SAID a man of action, his State obvious by his remark: "Never mind the rest of the United States. Just turn Texas loose and we'll lick them to a frazzled finish."

"Huh!" from another man of action. "Send a single man upcountry with a big bag of money and the whole thing could be settled out of hand."

Another long dweller in the land: "I've lived in Oaxaca fifteen years, and I make the statement, founded on personal knowledge, that 80 per cent of the middle class and educated Mexicans throughout Oaxaca would hail intervention by the United States. They are tired of this era of continual revolution."

A mining engineer: "My people represent millions invested in development. We are not afraid of the next step the United States may take. What we are afraid of is that she may not take any step."

A locomotive engineer: "Well, our country has got us in bad. It's up to her to get us out good."

A marine guarding a sand hill: "This is a hell of a war."

Our Diplomatic Utterances

A BUSINESS man from the City of Mexico: "They have insulted me, broken windows of my home, and looted my store. Also they have robbed me of my automobile; on the way down to Vera Cruz a Mexican officer took my revolver away from me. At the present moment I have two hundred pesos and the clothes I stand up in, and my country is talking compromise."

Another business man: "For years the United States has been watching and waiting. Now it has made one step into Mexico, imperiled all our lives, caused us incalculable losses of property and personal possessions, and is hesitating whether to withdraw form that one step or not."

A university man: "I thought I understood the English language. I find now that I don't. My brain is fuzzy and trying to get ordinary sense out of our diplomatic uutterances."

An officer of marines: "We've lost many times as many sailors as were lost in the Spanish-American War, and yet this is not war. We have merely occupied a customhouse and courteously taken the government of Vera Cruz out of the hands of Mexican officials."

A staff officer of the Second Division: "It is not a question with me of the merits or demerits of the affair. I am the servant of my country. It spent a whole lot of money training me. When it says advance, I advance; when it says retreat, I retreat. Nevertheless, I remember that my old father was always fond of quoting Davy Crockett's 'Be sure you are right and then go ahead.' Well, we've come ahead from Galveston to Vera Cruz. And here we stop. What's the matter? Did the United States go ahead and then find out that it was not right?"

Another officer: “It wasn’t the flag incident at Tampico; it was the sum of many incidents preceding the flag incident.”

A lawyer: “But, as a jury decided long ago in England, two hundred blackbirds do not make a black horse.”

“And twenty thousand looted refugee Americans plus a thousand insults to our nation make a sum no larger than the smallest of the parts, and therefore no casus belli,” was the retort of a fellow lawyer.

“Whisper!” says an American farmer from Cordova. “Within a week look to see Huerta in Vera Cruz, safely on board a foreign warship, and headed for Europe.”

Again is limned the lurid picture of that Indian dictator in his high city — with Villa threatening death from the North, with Zapata unpacified in the South, with a great treasure cached in Europe — trying to solve the desperate problem of how to get from his high city to the sea coast and to Europe.

“Against American shells?” queries the latest newspaper man from the United States.

“No,” answers the refugee. “Nor against Villa. He is sandbagging the palace to withstand attacks from the populace!”

STALKING THE PESTILENCE

IN ALL the long red history of war, disease has stalked at the heels of armies. In the present generation it bids fair to cease stalking, at least at the heels of armies that are scientifically and modernly handled. I have just been studying the mortality statistics of Vera Cruz for the last sixteen months. There is a peculiar blank space at the head of the column marked “Cerebro-spinal Meningitis.” For the first six months of 1913 there were no deaths from meningitis. In July there were three deaths. By December, in that month alone, there were twenty deaths. The abrupt appearance of this disease led me to inquire of Major F. M. Hartsock for an explanation.

The appearance of meningitis in Vera Cruz seems to have been due to Mexico’s customary way of doing business. From far up to the north a drove of Constitutionalist prisoners, infected with meningitis, was sent south. They were moved right along. No one in authority cared to segregate them and stamp out the disease. This wretched drove became a perambulating plague. It was a case, in poker parlance, of “passing the buck.”

At last they arrived in Mexico City, where they promptly infected their prison. Again the buck was passed, and they were shipped on to Vera Cruz. I do not possess the date of their arrival in the latter city, but it is patent that it must have been some time in July, 1913, at which date the death figures suddenly appear in the meningitis column.

There seems to have been no further place to which to pass them along, so they were finally segregated in prison. From the first to the twentieth of April, 1914, there were six deaths from meningitis. It was about this time that the American forces landed and took possession of Vera Cruz, while General Maas, his soldiers, and released prisoners took to the brush. And they took their meningitis with them, for there has not been a case of it since in Vera Cruz.

Conquering the Grisly Monster, Typhoid

WHAT the adventures of this meningitis will be now that it has again gone wandering may be imagined. The very clothing of these men, as well as themselves, is saturated with meningitis, and that they will spread the infection cannot be doubted. At any rate, the times have changed, for the disease left town with old-fashioned war when modern war marched in.

Smallpox appears to be endemic, rather than epidemic, in Vera Cruz, while tuberculosis, strange to say, collects a greater toll of death than all the more serious diseases added together. Here, in the tierras calientes, or hot lands, where it is so continuously warm that in a room flung wide to the outer air and every vagrant breeze even a sheet over one at night is suffocating, the natives crowd into small, unventilated rooms, weaken their lungs, and fall victims to the White Plague. Malaria, also, is a never-absent disease, the death line of it rising rhythmically in the rainy season and falling in the dry season. It, too, by its weakening effect on its victims, is the cause of their contracting other diseases from which they perish, chiefest of which, of course, is tuberculosis.

But our army surgeons, wise in tropical diseases from their service in Cuba, Porto Rico, Panama, and the Philippines, are not apprehensive of any grave epidemics in Mexico. They have learned much and rapidly in the last decade and a half, and what they have learned is demonstrable by statistics.

Typhoid has ever been a grisly monster to north European and American armies. The Latins and the Asiatics are more immune, this being doubtless due to a rigid selection, operating through many centuries, by which typhoid killed off all that were predisposed to typhoid. Thus, whenever men are gathered together in armies, there will be found a far greater proportion of nonimmunes among the north Europeans and Americans than among the Latins and Asiatics.

In 1898, in Florida, the United States mobilized 12,000 men for a period of four months. During this time there were 2,600 cases of typhoid and 480 deaths from typhoid. Nor is this the whole story. The soldiers carried the disease with them into Cuba, where many another death resulted from the four months spent in Florida.

The Weapons — Sanitation and Vaccination

IN 1911, in San Antonio, Tex., 12,000 soldiers were mobilized for four months. During this period there were two cases of typhoid and no deaths.

In 1913 and 1914, at Texas City and Galveston, 12,000 soldiers were in camp for many months, during which there was not a single death from typhoid nor a single case of typhoid. In this last long mobilization all other infectious diseases were practically negligible. In the year 1913, in the entire army of the United States, whether stationed at home, in Panama, Hawaii, or the Philippines, there were only six cases of typhoid. This remarkable record, covering so brief a period of time, has been made possible by two things: first, the education of soldiers in camp sanitation and personal hygiene; and, second, the inoculation, or vaccination, of the soldiers against typhoid.

Uncle Sam's Sure Method

THE United States was the first country to inoculate its soldiers and sailors against typhoid, and it is safe to assume, no matter in what other ways its soldiers may lose their lives in Mexico, that none will die from typhoid. The serum is hypodermically injected into the arm in a series of three injections, the intervals between injections being ten days. In a way, the injectee becomes a sort of peripatetic graveyard. The first injection puts into his blood the nicely dead carcasses of some 500,000,000 microorganisms along with all their virtues of deadness which bring about a change in the constitution of the blood that makes it resistant to future invasions of full-powered, malignant typhoid microorganisms. With this first injection, theoretically, the man has had reduced the 100 per cent of his nonimmunity to typhoid to 32 per cent.

The second injection, ten days later, consists of a thousand million nicely dead carcasses of the disease. Also, it reduces his nonimmunity to 8 per cent. The third injection introduces another billion of the same ably efficient carcasses, and reduces his nonimmunity to zero. In short, when his body has become the living cemetery of half a billion more dead bodies that there are live humans in all the world, he has become so noxious to the particularly noxious and infective typhoid that he may be classed a positive immune.

No Indisposition from Inoculation

IT IS very easy, the actual process of inoculation. I have had the pleasure of reducing my nonimmunity of 100 per cent to zero per cent. The first inoculation was perpetrated in a transport hospital, the second in a captured academy turned into an army hospital, the third in a field hospital. The stab of the hypodermic syringe, different from the manner of administering morphine just under the skin, goes straight down and squarely down into the meat of the arm for half an inch; but the pang of the stab is no severer. The hurt of the stab is over the instant the skin is punctured. It is only the nerves of the skin that protest in either case.

After an inoculation there is no indisposition. The arm is a trifle sore for several days, and that is all. Some inoculates aver that they awaken from the first night's sleep with a dark brown taste in their mouths. In rare cases a mild increase of temperature is noted, reaching its height some six hours after the inoculation and fading quickly away. I have talked with a daring one who took the total quantity at one time, and who stated that the impact was equivalent to a man's fist between the eyes and that he was not quite himself again for all of twenty-four hours.

But the big thing about the whole affair is the statistics. Individuals do not count. What counts is the results achieve by the inoculation of thousands of men. What counts is the reduction to nothing of typhoid cases in the army hospitals. What counts is the reduction to nothing of the army funerals due to typhoid. Modern war of men against men on the field of battle is now preceded by microorganic wars on the part of our surgeons before ever our men depart for the front. And, Heavens, what tremendous wars are waged by the surgeons! The mortality stuns one when endeavoring to contemplate its totality. When two billion five hundred million microorganisms are slain merely to make one soldier immune against one disease, the sum total of slain microorganisms for a whole army is much beyond mere human conception as the entire visible sidereal system along with what is invisible outside of it. Yet there can be no discussion of the efficacy of inoculation against typhoid. The morbidity and mortality tables of our large-scale army experiments tell the incontrovertible tale.

Surgeon Pioneers

NO HEALTHY recruit, having successfully passed the rigid physical examination, is any longer permitted immediately to join the organization to which he is allotted. Healthy recruits have a way of coming down with all sorts of diseases as soon as they change their environment, particularly with measles, mumps, diphtheria, whooping cough, and scarlet fever. In the old days so recent, before it was understood, the recruits spread these diseases among the regiments they joined.

But to-day, ere they are received into the ranks of their company and regiment, no matter how healthy they may be at the time, they are forced first to undergo twelve days of isolation. In this phase, the clean record of the Texas City and Galveston mobilization in such simple diseases exceeded the record of the previous mobilization at San Antonio. While all this is a very recent practice, it is a practice wider spread than the army. No scientific hog breeder to-day, whether importing a prize boar from another State, another country, or another farm, is rash enough immediately to turn it in with his herd. It must first undergo its quarantine in a segregated part of the farm.

The army surgeons to-day are our foreloopers and pioneers. Not only do they stay at home with the army and make it fit, but they scout ahead of the army so that its fitness my continue in strange lands and places. They gather the data on the diseases prevalent in all countries, and their battles and campaigns are planned and mapped and ready to be fought on an instant's notice, no matter to what intersection of latitude and longitude the army may be summoned.

So it is, first, that every soldier up to the present moment landed in Mexico is free of all disease and immune to such diseases as smallpox and typhoid; and, second, that a complete and better body of data has been gathered by our surgeons on diseases in Mexico than has been gathered by the Mexican Government. Our men start uninfected with a fair promise of escaping infection when they tread Mexican soil.

Thanks to our discoveries in Cuba some years ago regarding yellow fever, Vera Cruz was cleaned up. Hitherto, along with Panama (since cleaned up by us), it ranked with Guayanquil as one of the three plague ports of the New World. Remains Guayaquil — still revolutionizing — as great a yellow fever pesthole as ever. We have cleared yellow fever out of Panama, and it is to be doubted if a single case of yellow fever shows itself among our troops in Vera Cruz.

The Petrolero to the Front

YELLOW fever is so simple a thing to manage. Yet we paid a terrible death penalty for our ignorance through all the centuries down to just the other day. We know now that a certain breed of mosquito is the only carrier of the disease. We know that the way such a mosquito becomes infected is by biting a human being who is stricken with yellow fever. We know that only in the first three days that a human being is so stricken is it possible for the uninfected mosquito to become infected.

The remedy, or rather the preventive, is equally simple. First, wire screen the yellow fever patient so that no mosquitoes may be infected by him. Second, fumigate the house in which he lies so that no possibly infected mosquitoes therein may infect other humans. Third, and purely a prevision, destroy all mosquitoes in the neighborhood.

In the days of the Paris Commune the petroleur flourished. To-day, in the American armies on service in the tropics, the petrolero flourishes. He is the man who spreads oil on all stagnant waters. The larva of the mosquito cannot hatch in running water, nor in fish-inhabited water. But it can hatch in a sardine can or in the depression made by a cow’s hoof in soft soil when such receptacles are filled with rain water.

Not content with their own tropical experience, our army surgeons in Vera Cruz are reinforced by such experts from the Marine Hospital Service as G. M. Guiteras and Rudolph von Ezdorf, who have taken charge of the public health of this one-time death hole of Vera Cruz.

Killing two birds with one stone, or performing two actions with one movement, is a joy forever and cuts down the overhead. It so happens that the same preventative measures for yellow fever are preventative of malaria. Every wire screen about a patient, every drop of oil on the surface of standing water, performs the double duty. Further, purely as a prophylactic measure, each soldier will receive a determined number of grains of quinine daily until such time that Vera Cruz has been metamorphosed into a health resort.

Putting the Taxes at Hones Work

THE authorities at Vera Cruz did not know as much about their own water supply as did our army surgeons before our expedition started. They knew that the source of the water supply, the Jamapa River, was a fast-flowing stream and uncontaminated. Also, to make doubly sure, they were in possession of analyses of the water.

Amebic dysentery is of rare occurrence in Vera Cruz. Smallpox is no longer a thing of which to be afraid. And, further, most of it seems to have deserted Vera Cruz along with General Maas and his soldiers.

The United States is large. The United States army is small. It is scattered here and there in army posts. The average citizen knows less of his own army than he knows of north and south polar exploration. As regards the duties and activities of the army surgeons he does not dream of anything beyond the fact that they keep the soldiers well in time of peace, and in war dress wounds and amputate limbs. It would make him sit up and take notice if he could see how complex and multifarious are their activities here in Vera Cruz.

To commence with, the army is not their only problem. To keep the army well, they must keep the city well. Not only must they attend to their own sick and wounded, but they must attend to the sick and wounded of the Mexican populace and army hospitals, public hospitals, charity hospitals, women's hospitals, and orphan asylums. Now Uncle Sam is somewhat meager in such matters. The people of Vera Cruz supported these institutions before, says Uncle Sam. Therefore, make Vera Cruz support them again. Do you think I am spending my money like a drunken sailor? Uncle Sam concludes indignantly.

And our surgeons go and do it, though it takes all the rest of the army to help. Vera Cruz must pay for those institutions. But these institutions are two months behind in their bills and salaries, and there is no money in the city treasury. The last was clean looted by the officials who had charge of it. Army officers are told off to handle the collection of taxes. So far as the Vera Cruzan taxpayer is concerned, the taxes are as they always were. But for the first time in the history of Vera Cruz the taxes are expended without graft for public service. The back bills and salaries are paid, and the future bills and salaries are guaranteed.

Hosplitals First

THE hotels and cantinas are crowded with thirsty refugees, soldiers, sailors, and foreign guests, all with a penchant for long, cool drinks. More ice than ordinarily is consumed. The ice plant is a private enterprise. Its output is limited. There is not enough to go around. Hotels and cantinas are cash buyers and pay a premium for ice. Result: (a) the hospitals are skimped in ice; (b) the surgeons make the suggestion and the army takes charge of the ice plant, supplying the hospitals first and letting the hotels and cantinas have what is left.

The naval authorities have already taken possession of the island and lazaretto Sacrificios, just outside the port of Vera Cruz. There is no yellow fever at present, but if a sporadic case should appear, Sacrificios is just the place to segregate it.

I was in the field hospital just after an operation for appendicitis had been performed on one of our officers. In old San Sebastian Hospital lie many of the sick of the city and many of the soldiers that General Maas left behind to fight from the housetops. Many amputations had been performed, and more were being performed.

Also, I watched the dressing of the wounds of these poor Federals, and want to register my protest right now that modern war, for the man who gets bullet wounded, is not at all as romantic as old time war. Furthermore, a modern bullet, despite its steel jacket which keeps it from spreading, is a terrifically disruptive thing to have introduced into one’s body. I would far prefer being struck with an old-time bullet than with a modern one.

It seems that the flight or our long, sharp-nosed, lean, cylindrical, modern bullet is divided into three flights much as the spinning of a top is divided into three spins. When first a top is spun, it jumps and bounces, and bounds about in an erratic way. After a time it attains equilibrium. This is its mid-spin. It makes no perceptible movement, and to the eye seems stationary and dead. It is this stage that the small boy calls “sleeping.” Then comes its last spin. It bounds and wobbles about as it loses the last of its momentum, and it finally lies down on its side and is dead.

Sleeping and Wobbling Bullets

ALMOST precisely the same thing occurs with the modern bullet. Its first flight is something like seven hundred yards. During this period, like the top, it is erratic. It wobbles. If it hits anything while it is wobbling, a bad smashup is inevitable. In its mid flight, between seven hundred and twelve hundred yards, it “sleeps.” If it hits anything while it is sleeping, it drills a clean hole. From twelve hundred yards on, losing momentum and equilibrium, it again wobbles, and this is no time to be struck by it.

In the hospital of San Sebastian I examine the wound of a finely formed and muscular young man. Midway between knee and thigh a wobbling bullet had ploughed a path two inches wide and three inches deep. It was a clean path. Not an atom remained of the flesh that had filled that groove. You how read this, just draw with a lead pencil a groove two inches wide and three inches deep and you will more fully comprehend what happens to human flesh when a high-powered, wobbling bullet goes tearing through it.

High-Velocity Bone Shatterers

THE effect of such bullets on human bone can be readily imagined. There is no reason, with modern antiseptic surgery, why a clean-drilled hold thorough flesh and bone cannot be healed nicely. Unfortunately, such being the terrific impact and wobble of our high-velocity bullets of to-day, the bone is shattered for to great a distance into too many minute fragments. The only thing to do is take off the limb.

When leaving the amputated in the wards of San Sebastian, I chanced to wander into the hospital chapel. The Chapel of Bethlehem it had been called once upon a time. It was very old, some two centuries or so, and was a fine example of the architectural feats achieve by the Spaniards in brick and stucco in a day when reinforce concrete was unheard of. Wide arches of incredible flatness and supporting enormous weights were revealed to be of brick by the spots where the plastering had come off. High arches spanned deep-embrasured windows, in which some of the ancient, hand-hewn sashes still remained. The high walls, rising to rafters far above, had caught the dust of years on the uneven plaster, which gave a fathomless velvet depth to the surface. The floor was of great, square marble flags.

Blasters of Flesh — and Repairers

THE statues of Christ, the Virgin, and the Saints that had graced the altar were long since gone. Gone, too, was the altar. Nothing remained save the lofty alls and cool depth of shadow to suggest that it had been a chapel. And as I stood in this place whence the worship of the gentle Nazarene had departed, strong on my vision were the amputated limbs, gaping wounds, and ruined bodies caused by our wobbling bullets.

Came another picture: I seemed to glimpse a massed background of machinery and electrical apparatus, of weary-eyed astronomers searching the heavens, and chemist and physicists dissecting the atom, of teachers and preachers and great libraries of books. And against this background, well to the fore, were two groups of men whose brows were the brows of thinkers, and whose hands worked unceasingly at the making of devices. One group toiled at the mixing of chemicals and the making of mechanisms for the purpose of blasting human flesh and bone at longer distances and more efficiently. The other group toiled likewise with chemicals and instruments, seeking out new methods and greater knowledge of the constitution of man in order that they might repair the blasted flesh and bone caused by the devices of the first group.

Laughs for Our Descendants

SOME day in the far future pictures will be pained like that, and our descendants will gaze at them, shake their heads, and laugh at their silly ancestors, just as we to-day gaze at pictures of witch burning, and shake our heads and laugh at the silliness of our very immediate ancestors. Man has climbed far. It would seem that his climb has only begun.

Out across the inner and outer harbors, in the midst of a fleet of similar monsters, the grim monster, the Arkansas was a striking sample of the mechanism produced by the war makers. Twelve million dollars she cost. Her great guns, turned upon Vera Cruz for an hour or so, could level the city to the ground as a stream of water would level a house of sand. Magnificent universities have been founded on less than it cost to build and equip her. The money expended on her would save from the White Plague a hundred thousand times more lives than she will ever destroy.

The Arkansas and the Solace

OVER a thousand skilled men are required to man her — skilled men such as built the Panama Canal and whose skill might well be devoted to making the Mississippi flood proof. Why, down in the bowels of the Arkansas, imbedded in the thickest of armor plate, in the battle control station, an enlisted sailor in the course of describing the new gyro-compass, gave me a lecture that no college professor could have bettered and that no tyro in such matters could have understood. Could Columbus or Captain Cook have stood beside me, and tried to master the details of that intricate compass, I swear their brains would have flown apart and they would have bitten their veins and howled.

Quite in contrast, and lying not far away, was the solitary hospital ship, the Solace. Spick-and-span, and sweet and peaceful, and very antiseptic she was. I was followed up the gangway by two young men who just brought off form shore. I walked up the incline on my good two legs. They came up on their backs in wire-basket stretchers. A long roll of body-blasted young men had preceded them in the previous two days. Seventeen of these young men lay embalmed in caskets covered by the Stars and Stripes, waiting transshipment to their homes in the States. Two more young men lay dying. Threescore and more in various stages of recovery from body blasting lay in the bright and airy ‘tween-decks wards. A number of amputations had been performed on them. The careful doctors, waiting, knew there were yet other amputations to be performed to save the lives of some of the young men.

The Price of Service

PASSING through the wards, one was again struck by the preponderance of youth. Lord, Lord! They were boys, healthy-bodied and lusty so short a time before, now lying, lax-muscled, with drawn faces that told all the story of the body blasting they had endured. One, alive and so lively just the other day, now with one leg, searched my eyes as if for understanding and sympathy for the terrible stump that screamed advertisement of the copper he had received — smashed down, from the back of life, to be a cripple to the end of his days. Another, a very boy, red-lipped and bright-eyed with fever, smiled wistfully. There was little hope for him. He was conscious, and, perhaps as men sometimes will be in such grievous circumstances, he was aware that time would soon cease for him.

Oh, there was no whining among those lads! They tell of one, shot in two places, who was fetched aboard crying bitterly and indignantly. His plaint was that the Mexicans had got him unexpectedly before he had had a chance to get even one of them. As he said, he wouldn’t have minded his own catastrophe if he had got one of them — only one of them.

The Dove Among the Eagles

THE beautiful operating room was well appointed. There were convalescent wards, segregated wards for infectious diseases, and, here and there, offices and workrooms presided over by experts, such as ear and throat specialists, eye specialists, stomach specialists. And there was a dentist and a completely equipped dental parlor.

On deck, under the awnings, we drank long, cool drinks and gazed across the creamy-crested, pea-green saves to the big looming battleships, and on to the tiny, half-submerged atolls with lagoons of chrysoprase, and to the low-stretching breakwater, the lighthouses slim and white as votive candles, and the old fortresses of Santiago and San Juan de Ulloa. Suddenly all the panorama narrowed to a sleek gray dove that perched on the rail a dozen feet away, settled its wings, and preened its feathers.

Somehow, that little gray dove reminded me that, while a fleet of battleships lay about us, the Solace was the only hospital ship in the entire United States navy. More than that — I remembered that she had not been originally designed for the purpose, being merely a merchant vessel purchased by the Government and made over. Also, I remember having traveled, years before, in tropic steamers, mere merchant vessels built for money making, that were far better fitted for the tropics than was the Solace.

Is the Nation So Poor?

SURELY the United States, that pays twelve to fifteen million dollars for ships like the Arkansas, the Texas, and the New York, should be able to afford the modest cost of a real hospital ship, designed, not for the making of dollars, but for the alleviation of the ills and injuries that afflict its sailors and marines.

But there is justification for the existence of that array of war monsters among which we lay. As long as individuals in a wild country — say the head hunters and cannibals of the Solomon Islands — carry killing weapons, even a philosopher, traveling among them, would be wise to go armed. Neither algebraic nor high ethical arguments are efficacious dissuadements to a kinky headed man-eater with an appetite. In those Solomon Islands more than one scientist, for lack of a rifle had had his head decorate the grass huts and his body served up succulently from the hot ovents.

Arms and Savagery

ON a coral beach on the windward coast of Gudalcanar stands a monument to the memory of the “Austrian Expedition.” This was a party of professors. They were equipped to pursue the vocations that obtain in a high civilization. They carried sextants, barometers, thermometers, artificial horizons, cameras, and fountain pens. They carried naturalists’ shotguns of the tiniest caliber, butterfly nets, geologists’ hammers, and notebooks for all sorts of records, also certain instruments with which to make skull measurements of the natives they might meet. But what they did not carry was Mauser rifles and long-barreled revolvers. They were not equipped for the anthropophagi they encountered. One man came back from that expedition to tell the tail, and he was merely a man in the employ of the professors. The column stands on the beach to mark that once they had been. Their heads remain to this day up in the bush of Guadalcanar.

As with individuals, so with nations. As long as certain nations go armed in a wild and savage world, just so long must the enlightened nations go armed. The wild and savage world, with its silly man-killing devices, is doomed to pass. But until it passes, it would be silliness on the part of the enlightened nations to put aside their weapons.

An international police force and an international police court will mark the beginning of the end of war. But as yet these two institutions have not been founded. So the united States will be compelled to go on building $15,000,000 battleships and training its young men to the old red profession.

The point is: when wild and savage conditions make it imperative for a man or nation to go armed, it is equally imperative for the man or nation to go well armed. Ever has the sword, in the hands of the strong breeds, made for wider areas and longer periods of peace. In the end it is the sword that will make lasting and universal peace. When the last savage nation is compelled to lay down its weapons, war will have ceased. War itself, superior war if you please, will destroy itself.

And There We Are

BUT in the meantime — and there you are — what would have been the present situation if the United States had long since disarmed? Somehow, I, for one, cannot see the picture of Huerta listening to and accepting the high ethical advice of the United States.

THE TROUBLE MAKERS OF MEXICO

THE commonest, as well as the gravest, mistake in human intercourse is that very human weakness of creating all other individuals in one's own image. What "I like" I can see no reason but what everybody else should like. What is good for me is good for you. If I am fascinated by a certain book, I am astounded to learn that you do not like that book. If I find vegetarianism provocative of good health in me, ergo, it will be provocative of good health in you. If black coffee produces sleeplessness in me, I am appalled when you drink two cups of black coffee in the evening.

When my wife and I fall out, it is because I ignore the fact that she feels, reasons, and acts in ways different from my ways. She, likewise, makes the same mistake about me. Her entire family and mine may fail to patch the matter up, and, in the end, a judge, equipped with wisdom of the race embodied in our law, may divorce us because we are different from each other — incompatible, in short. I once knew the dearest, sweetest, and most sympathetic of women, who was unable, when she lacked in appetite, to comprehend that anybody else could be hungry.

Useless Tragedy

IN THE same way different groups of people, of the same race and country, fail to understand one another. The cowboys of the open range never understood the settler with his barbed-wire fences. The East does not understand California to-day in her attitude on the Japanese question. The East thinks California is like the East and that Californians are like Easterners. In brief, the East recreates California in her own image.

Since such mistakes of understanding are common among groups of people of the same breed and country, it is patent that deeper and more disastrous mistakes may be made among people of different races dwelling in different countries.

The chief cause of our misunderstanding to-day of the Mexicans is that we have created them in our own American image. With a comfortable sense of fairness we have put ourselves inside the Mexicans, along with our morality, our democracy, and all the rest of our points of view, and accepting therefore that the Mexicans should think, feel, and act just as we would under similar circumstances, we are shocked to find out that they won't do anything of the sort. Instead of having our eyes opened by this cardinal error, we proceed to reason that their conduct should be made to become like our conduct, and that we should treat them and deal with them as if they were still just like us, with a history behind them similar to ours, with institutions similar to ours, and with an ethic similar to ours.

Here, in the portals of Vera Cruz, the talk about Mexico and Mexicans buzzes high all day long and far into the night. Never was there a more animated and indefatigable debating society. One listens to the talk and wonders what it is all about, what bearing it has on the situation. I, for one, cannot comprehend how it is germane whether Madero was a patriot or a grafter; whether Huerta is a heroic figure of an Indian or a lunatic black Nero; whether Huerta murdered Madero or Madero committed suicide; whether the Huerta government should have been recognized by the United States long ago or that United States intervention should have taken place long ago.

What I see, with all the talk of little things filling my ears, is a torn and devastated Mexico, in which twelve million peons and all native and foreign business men are being injured and destroyed by the silly and selfish conduct of a few mixed breeds. I see a great, rich country, capable of supporting in happiness a hundred million souls, being smashed to chaos by a handful of child-minded men playing with the tragic tools of death made possible by modern mechanics and chemistry.

A Republic Where Nobody Votes

THESE child-minded men are playing with the tools of giants. It is like a family of small children playing with sticks of dynamite on the front porch, in the basement, and up in the attic of their dwelling. One can see a hurry call sent into the nearest police station by the good citizens of the neighborhood for a squad of police to take the dynamite away from the children.

From garret to basement the dwelling of Mexico is being torn to pieces by the dynamite in the hands of the contending factions. The stay-at-home American listens to the slogans uttered by the various leaders of this anarchy, makes the mistake of conceiving the leaders in his own image and of thinking that “Liberty,” “Justice,” and a “Square Deal” mean the same to them that they mean to him.

Nothing of the sort. In the four centuries of Spanish and Mexican rule, liberty, justice, and the square deal have never existed. Mexico is a republic in which nobody votes. Its liberty has ever been construed as license. Its justice has consisted of an effort at equitable division of the spoils of an exploited people. That even theives’ honor did not obtain among these thieves is shown by the numerous revolutions and dictatorships. In a country where a man is legally considered guilty of a crime until he proves himself innocent, justice must mean an entirely different thing from what it means to an American. And so it is with all the rest of the bombastic and valorous phrases in the vocabulary of the Mexican.

Now the foregoing must not be taken as a denial of any right or good in the people of Mexico. On the contrary, the great mass of the Mexicans have nothing to do with the matter at all; but, being different form the American, being unversed and uninterested in the affairs of government, they sit supinely back and let the petty handful of leaders despoil them and the country.

Proclivities

ALSO, there have even been isolated cases of leaders, such as Juarez, to go no further, who were animated by ideals somewhat resembling our own. In the Madero revolution there were similar men. The test of the matter is the whole matter, and the whole matter is that no measure of liberty, justice, and the square deal has been achieved in all Mexico in the last four hundred years.

There is all the difference in the world between fighting and government. Anybody and anything can fight. Dogs and cats, centipedes and scorpions fight. Fighting is a very primitive sort of exercise. Governing is a high achievement, especially governing with peace and honesty and fair dealing, and this is something which the Mexicans have never succeeded in doing from the day they broke away from Spain’s palsied grasp.

After the fall of Iturbide, in 1824, a republican constitution was adopted and promulgated. In the forty-seven years between 1821 and 1868 the form of government was changed ten times, federal republics, central republics, and dictatorships alternating one with another. In those forty-seven years over fifty persons succeeded one another as presidents, dictators, and emperors. One authority states that in the same period there were three hundred attempts, more or less important, at revolution. Clearly, the Mexicans have demonstrated a penchant for fighting, but what they have not demonstrated is the high ability requisite for governing.

The Turbulent Element

EVEN the deeper read and widely traveled American, able somewhat to refrain from seeing Mexico in his own image and in his image of his own country, is guilty of the error of seeing Mexico in the image of a Latin country. The people of Mexico are not Latins. They are Indians. And they are Indians, only somewhat resembling the Indians of the United States. They are not merely a different tribe. They are a different race of Indians.

Sixty-five per cent of the inhabitants are pure Indians; 15 percent are pure Spanish, Americans, English, and other foreigners. The remaining 20 per cent are mixed Indian and Spanish. It is this mixed 20 per cent that, according to the stay-at-home American notion, constitutes the Mexican, and practically the totality of the Mexican population.

And it is just precisely this 20 per cent half-breed class that foments all the trouble, plays childishly with the tools of giants, and makes a shambles and a chaos of the land. These “breeds” represent neither the great working class, nor the property-owning class, nor the picked men of the united States and Europe who have given Mexico what measure of exotic civilization it possesses. These “breeds” are the predatory class. They produce nothing. They create nothing. They aim to possess a shirt, ride on a horse, and “shake down” the people who work and the people who develop.

These “breeds” do politics, issue pronunciamentos, raise revolutions or are revolutionized against by others of them, write bombastic unveracity that is accepted as journalism in this sad, rich land, steal pay rolls of companies, and eat out hacienda after hacienda as they picnic along on what they are pleased to call wars for liberty, justice, and the square deal.

They claim the government of Mexico is theirs, these gentlemen with shirts, on the backs of stolen horses. And government, to them, means just precisely the license to batten upon the labor and industry of the country. The trouble is, so lacking are they in the ability for government, that they cannot maintain for any length of time the battening government of their dreams. They continually quarrel over the division of the spoils, and fight among themselves for a monopoly of the governmental battening privilege.

Devoid Even of Theives' Honor

AS I have said before, they are devoid even of theives' honor. They cannot trust one another. They cannot believe one another. For once, each correctly conceives the next one in his own image. Aware, in his heart of hearts, that he wants nothing less than 100 per cent of the swag, that only by accident could he ever be guilty of telling the truth to a fellow robber, that he is continually bent upon overreaching and double-crossing his fellow comrades of looters, he cannot expect anything else from his fellows.

To paraphrase Kipling, the consistency of these half-breeds is to know no shred of consistency. Because of this they are not even successful robbers. Tammany could give them cards and spades in the game they play and win out against them hands down.

They are brave on occasion. But they are not courageous. Their honor and valor reside in their tongues. They are turncoats from moment to moment. They will dine in the homes of their gringo friends one evening, and, before daylight, go gunning for their gringo friends and for the pay rolls and gold watches of their gringo friends.

They are what the mixed breed always is — neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. They are neither white men nor Indians. Like the Eurasian, they possess all the vices of their various commingled bloods and none of the virtues.

It is impossible for the average American to understand them. Honor is one thing to them, another thing to an American; so likewise with truth, probity, and sincerity. There is no comprehending them by the rules of conduct and forms of reasoning habitual to the American. As a sample of this, I relate the following Federal explanation of the killing of six Americans at San Pedro, in the State of Chiapas.

A Topsy-Turvy Attitude

THIS is they way the Mexicans authorities explain the mishap: When the Americans took possession of Vera Cruz, the authorities in Chiapas, fearful for the safety of the handful of American small farmers because of the inflamed condition of the populace, sent a detachment of rurales to rescue them. When the Americans saw the armed body of rurales approaching, fearing they were about to be attacked, they barricaded themselves in one if their houses. So intent was the rescue party on saving them that a hot fire was opened on the house. For three hours the rurales toiled heroically at the task of rescue, pouring a heavy fire into the house form every side. At the end of this time, the six American men being dead, the rurales stormed the house and saved the lives of an American girl of eighteen and an American boy of fourteen, whom they bore away to be mobbed through the streets of Tuxtla Gutiérrez ere they were safely put in jual.

Now it is not the killing that is the point of the illustration. It is the explanation made by the Mexicans of the horrible mistake made by the Americans in not understanding that the rurales were rescuing them. Surely no American brain nor north European brain could conceive of such an explanation. Cur reasoning processes are different. We could no more imagine that such an explanation would hold water than would we commit a three hours' attack on persons we were trying to save.

I should be inclined to doubt my harsh generalization on this half-breed class in Mexico were I alone in my opinion. It is because of this that I give the following extract from the "Encyclopædia Britannica," which epitomizes the condition of affairs obtaining in Mexico from the time of Mexico's independence to the beginning of Diaz's rational despotism:

"On both sides in Mexico there was an element consisting of honest doctrinaires; but rival military leaders exploited the struggles in their own interest, sometimes taking each side successively; and the instability was intensified by the extreme poverty of the peasantry, which made the soldiery reluctant to return to civil life, by the absence of a regular middle class, and by the concentration of wealth in a few hands, so that a revolutionary chief was generally sure both of money and of men."

The Self-Destoyers

NOT only is this half-caste class but one-fifth of the total population of Mexico, but only a very small portion of this half-caste class is actively engaged in fomenting the anarchy that is destroying the country and merits the harsh strictures applied to it. Educated Mexicans assert that Huerta, Carranza, Villa, and Zapata do not represent more than one hundred thousand people. There is no such thing as a national movement or a popular movement.

Here is a spectacle of fifteen millions of people, without equipment or ability for government, being harried and destroyed by a group of one hundred thousand who likewise have neither equipment nor ability for government. Surely, there can be no discussion of this. What is is. What is is incontrovertible. And the unhappy situation of misgovernment in Mexico to-day is a fact and is incontrovertible.

Two Indians at the Head of Mexico

THERE are three millions of the half-castes. When they permit, as they do, by their passivity, the pernicious and anarchic activity of the small group of one hundred thousand of them, they are themselves negatively responsible for the present state of affairs. The point is that they likewise have no aptitude for government.

Heavens, when it comes to the mere matter of ability to make organized trouble, the very half-breeds themselves are dependent on the peons! The two strongest men to-day in Mexico are the ex-bandit peon and Indian, Villa, in the north, and Huerta, the Tiaxcalan Indian, in the south.

The attitude of the hundred thousand active half-breeds is that the government belongs to them and not to the fifteen millions. It is their government, and, by the Eternal, they are going to do what they please with it. Civilization? They are not interested in civilization. Civilization can go smash, and, i' faith, they will smash it themselves if they have a mind to.

These men have talked republic since the year 1824, yet Mexico has never been a republic. Certainly it was not a republic under the capitalistic dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz. Elections here are either slates put through by dictators and their cliques, or straight-out revolutions, in either case the one object being unadulterated loot. Now they do not say this, these child-minded men. They spout patriotism and valor, liberty, justice, and the square deal — all of which glorious phrases mean nothing of the sort, but are synonymous with loot.

They are not men in a world of men, these half-breed trouble makers. They are child-minded and ignoble-purposed. The stern stuff of manhood, as we understand manhood, is not in them. This stern stuff is in the pure-blooded Indians, however; but it manifests itself all to rarely, else it would be impossible for the many millions of Indians to have endured slavery for four hundred years at the hands of their tiny group of masters.

If Only He had Settled Villa

HUERTA is the flower of the Mexican Indian. Such Indians have appeared, on occasion, in the United States. Huerta is brave. Huerta is masterful. But even Huerta has never betrayed possession of high ideals nor wide social vision.

And Huerta has made mistakes. Two of these mistakes, to be mentioned in passing but which are not apposite to the contention of this article, are: (1) his not killing Zapata when he had the chance; (2) his very grievous error in not killing Villa the time he had him backed up against a wall facing a firing squad. It was on this latter occasion that he compelled Villa, on his knees, arms clasped about Huerta's legs, to beg Huerta for his life. Villa has not forgotten that little episode. And it is fair to assume that sometimes the memory of these two mistakes flits regretfully through Huerta's mind as he sips a drink at the Country Club and contemplates Villa moving irresistibly down on him from the north; both his coasts blockaded by American warships and all arms and war munitions embargoed; Zapata at his back to the south and west like a hungry tiger; his credit exhausted, but a small portion of his own country left in his hands, and his own people in his capital city ripe to turn on him the instant he totters. I should not like to be Villa or Zapata if only for five minutes Huerta should get hold of me. Nor should I like to be Huerta if only for five minutes Zapata or Villa should get hold of me.

Will the Peon Get the Land?

EGYPTIAN and Mayan hieroglyphics cannot obfuscate the mind of the stay-at-home American as do the phrases and slogans of the Mexican "breeds." A hieroglyphic mans nothing. The phrases and slogans of the Mexicans do not mean what they seem to mean. Countless Americans think the present revolution is and expression of the peon's land hunger. Madero raised that cry. Zapata still raises the same cry. Orozco promised the peons free farms in his plan of Tacubaya, when he was already the bought tool of the great hacienda land owners who had employed him to cause confusion to Madero. Carranza, in veiled words and vague promises, shied at the division of the great haciendas. Villa still shouts “free land.”

But how about the peon? There are twelve million peons. They have had four centuries to get interested in the subject. Considering the paucity of the numbers of their masters, they have evidently not considered the matter to any purpose. I doubt, by a count of noses, if one-fourth of one per cent of the peons of Mexico are bearing arms for the purpose of gaining free land or gaining anything else their leaders desire.

Villa confiscated the great estates if Chihuahua. To each adult male in the State of Chihuahua he gave sixty acres of land. But there was a string on the gift. For ten years the land was to be inalienable. His explanation of this string is that the peon has lost his ancient land hunger, and that, if given the land outright, he would immediately sell or gamble away his holding.

Of course the peon should have the land. Some day he will have it. But when no more than one-fourth of one per cent of the peons have risen to take the land, the feebleness of the peon land hunger is fully told. So another magic phrase means one thing to the American mind and quite a different thing to the Mexican mind. It is impossible to conceive of twelve million Americans, gnawed by the land hunger, arming and sending into the field one-fourth of one percent of their number to fight for the land. Either the peon is different from the American, or land hunger is one thing to the one and another thing to the other. Apparently both contentions are true. The American is an Anglo-Saxon. The peon is an Indian, and a Mexican Indian at that. Furthermore, the Mexican Indian, before the Spaniard came, did not hold land individually; he held it communally.

Born Guerrillas

FURTHER to discredit this one-fourth of one per cent of peons bearing arms, two things must be taken into account. Numbers of them are restless and rough-natured only, rather than sustained by a belief in the rightness of the war they wage. Numbers of them are criminal and disorderly individuals. Numbers of them fight on either side according to the fortunes of battle. Numbers of them are happy-go-lucky, preferring the fun and adventure of guerrilla warfare to the stay-at-home, plodding life of the farmer.

The second thing is no less important. They like the job. They have got the habit of revolution. What peon, with any spunk in him, would elect to slave on a hacienda for a slave's reward when, in the ranks of Zapata, Carranza, or Villa, he can travel, see the country, ride a horse, carry a rifle, get a peso or so a day, loot when fortune favors, and, if lucky, on occasion kill a fellow creature — this last a particularly delightful event to a people who delight in the bloody spectacles of the bull ring.

The totality of the Mexicans being so incapable of government that a handful of disorderly and incapable "breeds" can play ducks and drakes with the whole land, poor Mexico is in such a situation to-day that, unaided from without, the game of ducks and drakes can be played interminably. There is no other Perfirio Diaz in sight. There is no strong "breed" capable of whipping the rest of the disorderly "breeds" and the country into shape. There is no popular movement on which such a strong man might depend for support. Nor is there a national cause. The educated Mexicans, the wealthy Mexicans, the business and shopkeeping Mexicans, hail American intervention with delight. The vast majority of the peons ask merely to be let alone, and not to be drafted into the fighting ranks of this leader and of that leader and of the many leaders continually arising. Victories, presidencies, and dictatorships can be only temporary. The handful of anarchs cannot pacify Mexico, because Mexico does not need pacifying. They cannot pacify themselves, which is the actual need of Mexico, because they are too weak, too inefficient, too turbulent, too disorderly.

Spain, despite her world empire, which she picked up at a lucky stroke, much as a Hottentot might pick up a Koh-i-noor, never possessed any genius for government. The descendants of the Spaniards in Mexico, interbred with the native Indians, have likewise displayed no genius for government. Facts are facts. What the Spaniards and their descendants have not succeeded in doing in Mexico during the last four hundred years is an eloquent story.

Mexico must be saved from herself. What Mexico really needs is to be saved from the insignificant portion of her half-breeds who are causing all the trouble. They should not form the government at all. And yet they are the very ones who insist on forming it, and they cannot be eliminated by those who should form it, namely, the twelve million peons and the nearly three million peaceably inclined half-breeds.

LAWGIVERS

THE bronze clangor of the cathedral bells marks the hours. Out of the night day bursts with an abruptness of light and of birdcalls. Newsboys' voices announce the first editions of Mexican morning papers and the fall of Tampico. There are dog yelps, the rattle and grind of big-wheeled mule carts, a clatter of cavalry hoofs on the asphalt, bugle calls, and Vera Cruz has begun another day.

Bareheaded women, betraying little of Spanish and much of Indian in their faces, pass on their way to market. Cargadores slither by on leather sandals, and peddlers carrying their stocks in trade on their heads. Spigotty police, in wrinkled linen uniforms, swing their clubs valiantly, and, in contrast with our husky sentries of the regular army, appear pathetically small of stature, pinched of chest, and narrow of shoulder. And in the cathedral Indians and mixed breeds pray to the gods and saints of their believing, perplexed by the incomprehensible situation of their beloved city in the possession of armed white-skinned men from over the sea.

These natives of Mexico have never possessed more than a skeleton of law. They were two entire ethnic periods behind the Spanish when Cortes landed his mail-clad adventurers on their shore. And Cortes and the generations of acquisitive adventurers that followed him, themselves no genius for government, intermarried with the Indian population and made no improvements in government.

Improvised Proconsuls

PRIMITIVE government is simple, religious, and rigid. When the Indian governmental machinery was thrown out of gear, with here and there a smashed cog, lacking in plasticity, the millions of Indians fell an easy prey to the Spanish conquistadores. The compromise, resulting from the blending of a people backward in governmental development with a people unpossessed of the genius for government, brought about the weak and inefficient government that has been Mexico's for the last four centuries.

Come now, in the year 1914, from the United States, the white-skinned armed men with an inherited genius for government. Here is Vera Cruz with a population of 30,000; here, in addition, there are thousands of American soldiers and thousands of American and Mexican refugees from the interior. Problem: how to get these many thousands up out of bed in the morning and to work or play; how to get them home and to bed at night, all in decent and orderly fashion.

There must be safety for all. They must not quarrel with one another. They must keep themselves clean and the city clean. They must pursue the multifarious activities by which only can a city exist. They must not hurt one another, either by theft or violence, or by squalidly cultivating infection. And they must not even hurt, by excess of cruelty, the scrubby four-legged creatures that are their draft animals.

And the thing is done, decency and order made to reign, and all by the white-skinned fighting men who know how to rule as well as fight. Never, in the long history of Vera Cruz, has the city been so decent, so orderly, so safe, so clean. And it is accomplished, not by civilians from the United States, but by soldiers from the United States, and it is done without graft.

Captain Turner of the Seventh Infantry makes the following interesting announcement in the Mexican newspapers:

“As I have taken charge of the administration of the State taxes for this canton, by order of the Provost Marshal General, I beg to advise the public that from the seventh day of this month this office will proceed with its usual business under my orders.

“The public is hereby advised that persons who have not paid up taxes on city property which were due on the thirtieth day of April, 1914, will be allowed until the twenty-fifth day of the present month in which to pay them; but if any or all of them are not paid by the date mentioned above the property will be subject to the usual legal processes.”

Comes Major Miller, his sword for the time being laid aside while he serves as chief of the Department of Education, with this advertisement:

“Professors and teachers formerly employed in the public schools of Vera Cruz, and who have not already signified their intention to resume work, but who desire to do so, and others who are qualified to teach and desire such employment, are requested to make application to this department. The latter class of applicants should present proper credentials and proof of qualification.”

Also, Major Miller announces that the Biblioteca del Publico will reopen on May 20.

Colonel Plummer of the Twenty-eighth Infantry advertises that the sale of cocaine and marihuana is prohibited except on a doctor's prescription, and that violation of this order will be severely punished. Since Colonel Plummer is Provost Marshal General, his advertisements include all sorts of prohibitions, from spitting on sidewalks and in public places to warning shopkeepers not to extend credit to soldiers, and pawnbrokers not to receive pledges of Government property.

General Funston serves notice that every inhabitant of Vera Cruz must forthwith be vaccinated.

The Business of Justice

THE work of war is not forgotten. The lines of outposts and trenches circle the city; the waterworks are protected; the hydroplanes scout overhead; and night and day, on lookout and in the trenches, men and officers stand their regular shifts. But, inside the lines, colonels and majors, captains and first lieutenants turn their hands to governing and operating the Departments of Law, Public Work, Public Safety, Finance, and Education. Then there is the Military Commission, with powers of life and death, grimly sitting on the cases of persons charged with infractions of the Laws of Hostile Occupation and the Laws of War. Further, there are four Inferior Provost Courts and one Superior Provost Court sitting regularly every day. The jurisdiction of the Provost Court is limited to criminal cases, and these courts are far from idle.

The Captain-Judge in Action

THE ordinary citizen in any city at home may pursue his routine of life for days, weeks, and months, and see nothing out of the way or disorderly. And yet, day and night, and all days and nights, disorderly acts will have taken place and the many offenders will have been combed by the police from the riffraff of the city and brought before the courts.

Vera Cruz, at the present time, despite its military occupation, has all the seeming of such a city. All is quiet and seemly on the streets, where just the other day men were killing one another on the sidewalks and housetops. The very spigotty police, known, some of them, to have engaged in sniping our men, have been put back to work under our army administration. And yet, for a city of this size, more than the usual combing of the riffraff is necessary. It is the desire of the military government, among other things, to rid the city of all able-bodied loafers, whether Mexican or foreign. If Mexican, they are sent out through the lines; if foreign, they are deported to their respective countries. On the other hand, there is nothing hasty in this cavalier treatment. Petty offenders continually receive dismissals or suspended sentences for first offences. Nor is the right to be represented by counsel denied anyone.

A visit to the Inferior Provost Court in the Municipal Palace proved most illuminating. Here, at a desk across which flowed a steady stream of documents, in olive-drab shirt and riding trousers, with a .45 automatic at his hip, sat a blond lawgiver, taken from the command of his company in the Nineteenth Infantry to administer the law of Mexico and the orders, above Mexican law, which have been issued by the Provost Marshal General.

At the desk beside the Captain-Judge, an enlisted man, in uniform, pounded a typewriter, kept a record of decisions, fines, imprisonments, and probations, and performed the rest of the tasks of a police-court clerk. Soldiers clacked across the square marble flags of the court-room floor, and came and went, carrying messages, appearing and disappearing through high doorways and under broad arches. In one corner a soldier telegrapher operated an army telegraph.

Strapping soldiers, with bayonets fixed, guarded the doorway that led both to freedom and to the cells. Between these guards, small people, furtive or sullen, came and went — if witnesses, summoned from without by an alert little spigotty bailiff; if prisoners, escorted by armed soldiers.

"Tell the Lady She Was Drunk," Says the Court

AS IS usual with our police courts at home, not one but many cases are going on simultaneously. A fresh witness in a case of theft, sent for half an hour before, arrives and gives evidence between the payment of a fine and the fuddled protestations of an Indian woman that she was not drunk the preceding evening. While the court interpreter has halted the testimony of a suspected fence in order to look up in the dictionary the English equivalent for a Spanish phrase the Captain-Judge admonishes a hotel keeper on the conduct of his house, dispatches a policeman to bring into court two pairs of stolen trousers evidently germane to some other case that is somehow in process of being tried, and listens to the remarks of a Spanish lawyer appearing for some man not yet brought from the cells.

The stream of many cases thins for a moment, and the Captain-Judge, who has the bluest of blue eyes and the fairest of fair hair, calls the name, “Francisco Ibanez de Paralta.”

A peon, covered with rags for the price of which six cents would be an extortion, shambles up and bows humbly.

“Tell him that he was drunk and disorderly on the street last night,” the Captain-Judge says to the interpreter.

This being duly communicated, the culprit makes brief reply, which is translated by the interpreter as: “That’s right. He says he was drunk all right and is sorry.”

“Has he steady work?” asked the Captain-Judge.

“No. He says he is a cargador and works when he can.”

“Tell him if he is brought here again he will be given sixteen days — turn him loose,” is the verdict.

Next appears Serafina Cruz. She is blear-eyed and semicomatose.

“Tell the lady she was drunk again yesterday,” says the Court to the interpreter.

Serafina acknowledges the soft impeachment with a “Si,” a nod, and a yawn.

“Second offense, sixteen days in which to sober up — she needs it,” is the Court’s judgment, and Sefafina is trailed away to the cells by a big American soldier.

Maria and the Handcart

MARIA DE LA CONCEPCION DE HENRIQUEZ, a gentle-faced, soft-voiced woman whose ancestors, by the tokens of race in her face, pronounced their names by means of many Aztec “z’s” and “x’s,” denies flatly that she was drunk the preceding morning. The arresting spigotty officer, being duly sworn, deposes that she was so drunk that he was compelled to transport her to the lockup in a handcart. Maria de la Concepcion assures the Court that the arresting officer is a dog and worse than a dog; he is the broken mustaches of a gutter cat, a grubless buzzard, a wingless pelican; that the truth is not in him; and, furthermore, that she was not drunk.

Captain Callahan, a blond Celt in American uniform, taking oath, affirms that he did see the lady arrive, dead drunk, in a handcart propelled by the aforesaid spigotty policeman.

Maria de la Concepcion rolls her eyes in an expression of grieved shock at such unveracity on the part of such a gentlemanly appearing American gentleman, and assures the Court that she was far from drunk — so far from drunk, in fact, that she had not taken even a drop.

The patient Captain-Judge settles the matter out of hand.

"Tell her," he commands the interpreter, "that it happens I saw her myself when she was brought in on the handcart. Ask her where is her home."

Back, via the interpreter, comes the information that she has no home.

"First offense — five days — what is the matter with that man?" says the Captain-Judge all in one breath.

"That man," from his bright, keen, elderly face, evidently is not a drunk. Also, in his face there are no signs of evil, so one wonders what he has done.

His name is José de Garro, the interpreter says for him. During the days of street fighting, while he lay hid, the United States sailors made use of his handcart, which happens to be his sole means of livelihood. He has now discovered his handcart. It is being used by the servants of the proprietor of the Hotel Diligencia, and said proprietor has declined to return it to him.

The Court does not ponder the matter. Like the crack of a whiplash, his orders are issued:

"Send a policeman to the Hotel Diligencia and bring the handcart and the proprietor here. Find from the complainant two men who will swear to his identity and to his ownership of the handcart, and send a policemen to bring the two men he names. Mercedes de Villagran!"

While Mercedes de Villagran is being brought from the cells, two thieves, Messrs. Bravo de Saravio and Pedro Sorez de Ulloa, already sent for and just brought from the cells, are considered. Captain Callahan is interrogated by the Court from without through an open window, and Captain Callahan's information causes the Court to command that the two thieves be remanded, the case being grave, and be kept incommunicado waiting the evidence in process of being gathered.

His Name Upon His Arm

MERCEDES DE VILLAGRAN proves to be a wizened little old woman, very worn, very miserable, very frightened, who is charged with having in her possession munitions of war. Worst of all, a double handful of Mauser cartridges is exhibited in evidence. In a thin, quavering falsetto she explains that after the street fighting, pursuing her regular vocation of garbage picking, she did find and retain possession of the munitions of war, deeming them of value and unaware that possession of them constituted a grave offense or any offense at all.

"Case dismissed — turn her loose," and the captain-judge has forgotten her on the instant and forever in the thick rush of his crowded life, but him she will ever remember, to her last breath, in her chatter of gossip with her garbage-picking sisters of Vera Cruz.

A prisoner is called, whose entry on the docket causes the Court's brows to corrugate; for the man has no name, and is entered as "P," with a note to the effect that Captain Callahan will explain.

Captain Callahan, not for the moment findable, possibly engaged in receiving another lady in a handcart, the Court tries two more cases of drunk, one, a second offense, receiving sixteen days and a warning that on a third offense he will be sent out through the lines.

Captain Callahan arrives, rolls up the sleeve of the man "P," shows a letter "P" inked on the man's arm, and explains that the defendant, arriving at jail so hopelessly drunk as to be speechless, could be entered in no other safely identifiable way, wherefore he had inked the man's arm, and there was the proof of it. Mr. "P," somewhat recovered after a night's sleep, is able to state that his name is Alonzo de Codova y Figueroa. The soldier clerk, remembering the face and searching the record, announces that Alonze de Codova y Figueroa is a second-timer, and Alonze de Codova y Figueroa, in debt to the United States with his time to the extent of sixteen days, is taken away.

Patience, Swiftness, and Certitude

THE handcart, the proprietor of the Hotel Diligencia, and the policeman arrive in high garrulity. The proprietor is a squat, stoop-shouldered, pockmarked, white-haired Cuban, whose state of mind is one of amazement in that the handcart, on which he never laid eyes before, should have been found on his premises.

The handcart man looks on his property with joy, and cannot understand why the Captain-Judge does not immediately permit him to take it away, while the Captain-Judge receives particulars of a house raid the previous night in which four Mausers and a thousand rounds of ammunition had been unearthed.

Appears Tomas Martin de Poveda, charged with the ghastly crime of maintaining unclean premises. After a brief lecture on hygiene and sanitation, the Court gives the culprit twenty-four hours in which to clean up, and Thomas Martin de Poveda departs, shaking his had at such administration of justice by the thrice lunatice gringos.

A shopkeeper and a cigar maker arrive, take oath, and testify that José de Garro is truly José de Garro and that the handcart is truly his property, and José de Garro goes on his way rejoicing that God’s still in heaven and justice in Vera Cruz.

The cases of three thieves, charged with stealing from the customhouse, and of a fence who bought the stolen property, are inquired into and continued. Follows a Jamaica negro cook and a cockney steward from an English steamer, jointly charged with stealing a gold watch from a Spanish refugee.

The Court interrogates all three, discharges the negro, holds the cockney for trial, and dispatches a summons for the master of the ship to appear in court next morning, accompanied by a polite request first to search the cockney’s belongings on board ship. More men are warned for maintaining unclean premises; and one man, for having struck his wife, a dark-skinned, bovine-eyed Indian Madonna who testifies reluctantly, receives ten days, and is thunderstruck that such maladministration of justice can be. A thin-face widow, in a blight of black, pays the fine of her roistering eldest born, who, while crazed with several centavos’ worth of ninety-proof aguardiente, demolished a window and portions of the anatomy of a spigotty policeman. The Captain-Judge has seen service in Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines, and his “Carabao English,” so learned, stands him in good stead. Not merely on occasion, but on many occasions, he corrects and checks the interpreter when that worthy fails properly to interpret shades of meaning or engages in animated discussions with prisoners and witnesses on irrelevant topics. Another thing that characterized the efficiency of this blond lawgiver of a regular army captain, whose ancestors must have been more than closely related to Hengist and Horsa, is his combined patience, swiftness, and certitude. Rough and ready his justice is, but legal always, and unswayed by the seriousness or lightness of any case. He opposes directness and simplicity to the garrulity and immateriality of the Vera Cruzans. His patient questions go to the point, he achieves his conclusion in the midst of some longwinded explanation of things concerning other things and not the things at issue, and suddenly, like a shot, he enunciates his decision: “I find you guilty — forty days”; or: “Not guilty — next case.”

Sentencing a Leech

HE finds Martin Onez de Loyola, a full-blooded Spaniard, guilty of a particularly mean crime and sentences him to six months — this merely to hold him until he can be deported to his native country, which is Spain. But the Captain-Judge is thorough. He gives instructions that when the convicted man is deported the Chief of Police of Barcelona be warned to nab him when he disembarks on his native soil.

This case of Martin Onez de Loyola merits the harshness of the sentence. A well-to-do but ignorant Mexican woman of the capital had married her deceased husband’s brother, equally well-to-do and ignorant. Loyola, becoming aware of the matter, had assured them hat it was a terrible crime, and had bled them, at different times, of over ten thousand pesos. In order to escape him they had started to flee the country; but Loyola, true leech that he was, followed them through the lines of two hostile armies to Vera Cruz. And so, thanks to the Captain-Judge, they were able to return to Mexico, while their persecutor, willy-nilly, made the voyage to Spain.

Franisco Hernandez, trouble-eyed and stupid, charged with stealing a barrel of wine, positively declares himself not guilty, and the patient Court unravels the tangle. Pedro de Valvidia, owner of a cantina, and his barkeeper, Garcia de Mendoza, testify to catching the thief in the act and to apprehending him with the barrel already rolled out on the sidewalk and merrily rolling onward.

He Stole a Barrel

TWO peon witnesses testify to having seen Francisco Hernandez captured while rolling the barrel, and the case begins to look dark for Francisco Hernandez, who has pleaded non guilty. But he receives inspiration. He acknowledges all the facts testified to. He was not the owner of the barrel. He did go into the cantina and roll out the barrel. He was caught by the owner and barkeeper in the manner described, but — and he makes the explanation that is as ancient as the first theft of portable property — it happened that as he came along the street looking for a job, his profession being that of a cargador, two strange men approached him and hired him to convey the barrel of wine, which they had just purchased, to their residence. That was all. He was innocent as a new-born babe. What did he want with a whole barrel of wine? What could he do with a whole barrel of wine, being a temperate as well as an honest man?

"Where were you going to deliver the barrel?" the Court demands.

Francisco Hernandez somehow cannot remember the address.

"Who were the men?"

Francisco Hernandez says they were strangers.

"Describe them."

And one can actually see Francisco Hernandez's imagination working at high pressure as he paints the portraits of the two mythical strangers.

The Court asks several other questions not very important, merely concerning his whereabouts earlier in the day and how often he succeeded in getting work, and Francisco Hernandez, believing that his tale is believed, grows confident.

"Describe the two men," the Court suddenly commands.

The Case of Rosalia

POOR Hernandez is taken by surprise. He stumbles and halts, tries to remember his extempore description of the two individuals, diverges, slips up, falls down, and, in the midst of his gropings and stutterings, is astounded to hear the Captain-Judge decisively utter just three words: "Guilty — six months." And while the interpreter is transposing this misfortune into understandable Spanish terms, the Captain-Judge is already into the thick of the next case.

And this is a case destined to make the entire native population of Vera Cruz sit up and take notice that never was similar justice dispensed before, albeit 4,000 soldiers and 20,000 marines and bluejackets, to say nothing of $100,000,000 worth of warships, were required to install the Captain-Judge in the Municipal Palace.

It is a sordid, squalid case. Rosalia de Xara Quemada and Cristovel de la Cerda are the culprits. Alonzo de Xara Quemada is the husband of Rosalia, and is also the complainant. He is a bulgy-eyed, cadaverous-cheeked, vulpine-faced individual, and he grins vindictively and triumphantly as he makes his charge.

Rosalia is frightened and dumbly defiant. She has a full, oval face, wavy brown hair parted in the middle and neatly bound with a light blue ribbon, and dangling earrings. There is just sufficient Spanish in the Indian of her to give her temperament and to account for the inimitable draping of the brown shawl about her shoulders and hips. Cristovel, the lover, is a depressed and gloomy young man who keeps books for a living.

A Judgment of Solomon

ROSALIA and Cristovel plead guilty, and are prepared for merciless judgment at the hands of the Captain-Judge who transacts justice with a big automatic at his hip and with armed soldiers for his attendants. But the Captain-Judge is not satisfied. He asks Rosalia and her husband, Alonzo, many penetrating questions. They have five children. For four years Alonzo has not contributed a centavo toward their support. Rosalia, by scrubbing, by peddling, by cooking, and by various other ways has given the entire support to her brood of five.

As all this comes out, Rosalia seems to take heart of courage and grows voluble, while Alonzo glowers at her in a way that would bode a beating were there none present to interfere. The reason her husband had had her arrested, Rosalia volunteers, was that just previous to the arrest she had refuse to lend him five pesos. At other times in the past she had loaned him money. No, he had never returned a single loan.

The Captain-Judge orders the culprits to step forward to receive sentence, knits his brow for a moment in thought, and proceeds:

“Cristovel de la Cerda. You have pleaded guilty of the grave offense of adultery. By the Mexican law of this State I could sentence you to two years. But I shall not be harsh. I shall sentence you to six months. The sentence, however, will be suspended and I release you here and now on probation. You will report to this court every Saturday morning at nine o’clock with a letter from your employer attesting your good behavior.”

As the interpreter turns this into Spanish, the husband's face is a rich study. At the mention of two years, it is hilarious. The six months' sentence leaves it sill hilarious, but not so hilarious. The suspension of the sentence positively floors Alonzo, and the angry blood surges darkly under his skin.

"There Is No Mexican Law Here"

ROSALIA is similarly sentenced, released on probation, told to report every Saturday morning, and admonished to be good. But the case is not over. Alonzo de Xara Quemada, distraught with this frightful miscarriage of justice, is ordered to stand forth.

"Alonzo de Xara Quemada, your conduct has been most reprehensible."

While the interpreter struggles with the dictionary for the Spanish equivalent of the introductory sentence, Alonzo looks as if he expects to be backed up against a wall the next moment and shot.

"These five children are yours just as much as they are Rosalia's. From now on you shall do your share toward supporting them. Each week you shall pay to Rosalia the sum of five pesos. Each Saturday morning at nine o'clock you shall appear before me with the receipt for the five pesos. If you don't, we will see what six months in jail will do for you."

The whole thing is too unthinkably hideous for Alonzo. He blows up, and in impassioned language forswears and disowns Rosalia, the five children, and all memory of them and responsibility for them, forever and forever. Furthermore, he will not pay the weekly five pesos. Who ever heard of such a thing? He denies the Captain-Judge's right in the matter, and all in wild harangue announces that he will appeal to the Mexican courts against such injustice.

Whereupon the Captain-Judge's fist comes down on the desk, and the Captain-Judge thunders:

"There is no Mexican law here. I am the law. You will pay the five pesos. To-day is Thursday. Next Saturday you will appear before me with the receipt for the first five pesos. Vamos."

Alonzo de Xara Quemada starts to protests, but two soldiers, with wicked-looking bayonets on the ends of their rifles, step forward, and Alonzo subsided.

A Moving Picture

I DEPARTED on his heels, greedily enjoying the maledictions he muttered down the street. And on Saturday morning I made it a point to be present at the Provost Court at nine o’clock. Sure enough, Alonzo de Xara Quemada was there, sullenly exhibiting a receipt for five pesos signed by one Rosalia de Xara Quemada.

And all the affairs and transactions I have described in this article constitute but a portion of one morning’s work in one Provost Court of the five Provost Courts sitting in Vera Cruz.

Before I cease, I cannot forbear describing a little scene I witnessed right after Alonzo’s plaint had died away down the street. Captain Callahan was engaged in receiving a lady who was more difficult to receive than if she had come in a handcart. A sweaty and disheveled spigotty policeman had brought her, and she had fought him all the way to such effect that he stood near the entrance to the cells too exhausted to move her a step further. In vain Captain Callahan ordered him to proceed with her. She was the stronger, and she had caught her second wind. Just as she flung herself on the policeman in savage onslaught, a big American soldier strode to her and tapped her authoritatively on the arm. She turned and stared up at him. He spoke no word, but with a curt thrust of his thumb over his shoulder indicated the way to the cells. She wilted into all meekness and obedience, and meekly and obediently, without a hand being laid on her, walked into the cell room.

OUR ADVENTURES IN TAMPICO

London in his office

ONE must go and see in order to know. My advance impression of Tampico, for one, was of a typical Mexican port infested with smallpox, yellow fever, and a few American adventurers of pernicious activities and doubtful antecedents. There were also oil wells, I understood, in and about Tampico, operated by the aforesaid adventurers. And that was about all I knew of the place until I went and saw.

Aboard my steamer were oilmen returning after being driven out to our warships by the Mexicans the day our forces landed in Vera Cruz, and after being shanghaied by our State Department to the United States. A big steel barge, swept by every breaker, was pounding to destruction on the end of the breakwater that projected into the Gulf.

“That’s our barge,” one of the oilmen told me. “When the Federals fired our wharf, her mooring lines burned away and she drifted down the river.”

He looked at me grimly when I remarked that they had got off lightly.

“Wait and see,” was all he said.

A Massed Front of Industry

ONCE in the mouth of the Pánuco River, the landscape on either side sprouted into the enourmous, mushroom growths of the tank farms. I was quite impressed, not having dreamed that our adventurers had done so much work. It was a creditable showing, a very creditable showing. But as we continued up the river, more and more terminals and tank farms lined both banks of it. This was the Corona terminal, and that was the Aguilla on both sides, and adjoining were the huge solid buildings of Standard Oil. And still the names of companies were rolled off to me. There was the National Petroleum, there the Waters-Pierce, the Gulf Coast, the Huasteca, the Mexican Fuel, the Magnolia Petroleum, the Texas, the International Oil, the East Coast Oil — and thereat I ceased taking account of the companies and realized that there was quite something more to Tampico than I had anticipated.

“Ah,” I remarked, “there’s the city at last,” indicating great masses of buildings on the north bank. But I was informed that the city was yet miles away, and that what I had mistaken for it was the boiler stacks, still stacks, warehouses, paraffin plants, and agitators of the refineries.

Ocean Tankers in Long Procession

THE ruined walls of a huge building were pointed out. “Six hundred thousand dollars went up there,” I was told. “Two hundred and fifty box cars went up with it. The shells from the Federal gunboats did it.”

We hoisted the doctor’s flag and dropped anchor off a quarter of a mile of burned wharf.

“You see,” it was explained, “the rebels were working two machine guns here and a bunch of sharpshooters, and the Federals from the Zaragoza let us have it good and plenty. That was all brand-new wharf. In fact, we hadn’t quite finished it. Three of our barges were sunk by the shells. Right there at the bottom lies the Topila and the Spindletop, and, just beyond, the Santa Fe. See what the fire left of that tank on the top of the hill. It gave us a hot time. While it was burning we fought to keep it inside the fire wall, and all the time the Zaragoza was shelling us. Don’t talk to me about the peon. I was right there with a gang of them. They were working for a day's wages, but no trained soldiers could have behaved better. As soon as we'd jump up to fight the fire the Zaragoza'd loosen up on us. Inside ten minutes we'd have to lie down until the shells and machine guns slackened, and then we'd up and go at it again. And not a peon showed the white feather, and we held that burning oil where it was until it burned out. Some peons, hombre, some peons."

And while we waited for the port doctor, big ocean tanker after big ocean tanker in long procession came in from the sea, flew the doctor's flag and dropped anchor.

"They come in, load, and go out all in the same day," I was told. "The Huasteca can load 9,000 barrels an hour. Why, there are tankers that have been coming in here for a year whose crews have never set foot on land."

Statistic of Pernicious Activities

I BEGAN to gather statistics of the pernicious activities of our American adventurers. One company along had two roofed concrete tanks holding 1,250,000 barrels along with 120 steel tanks holding 55,000 barrels each. Since a steel tank costs 30,000 pesos, the cost of the 120 steel tanks will total 3,600,000 pesos. At the rate of exchange prior to Mexico's present troubles, this investment in mere steel-tank equipment means 1,800,000 American gold dollars. When it is considered that this is but part of the one item of oil-storage equipment of one company, and that there are many other equally expensive items of equipment, the grand total of the equipment of the many companies is vaguely adumbrated.

The port doctor finally boarded and passes us and we continued up the river to Tampico. The Pánuco is a noble stream, deep of channel, swift of current, and wide; and as we rounded a grand bend between the interminable tank farms a whole fleet of anchored merchant steamers appeared, as well as warships, flying the flags of various nations. The Des Moines flew the only American flag.

Passing the customhouse and emerging through the Fiscal Dock, a long line of mounted Constitutionalists made me for a while forget oil and oil tanks. Before I knew what was happening, I found myself in the company of 500 of the Constitutionalists, dispatched to aid in the pursuit of General Zaragoza and his 4,000 Federals.

The Harum-Scarum Warriors

NEVER on the warpath have I encountered a bunch of warriors so harum-scarum, so happy-go-lucky, so brimming over with good food and high spirits. Everyone was mounted. Every horse was stolen. On the horses were the brands of every ranch and hacienda from the Rio Grande to the Pánuco. Occasionally there was a grizzled oldster. But the big percentage was youthful. There were boys of ten, eleven, and twelve, magnificently and monstrously spurred, astride lifted broncos, with pictures of saints in their sombreros and looted daggers and bowie knives in their leggings, with automatics and revolvers at their hips, bewaisted and beshouldered with belts and bandoliers of cartridges, and with the inevitable rifle across their saddle pommels. And there were women, young women all, mere soldaderas as well as amazons, the former skirted and on sidesaddles, the latter trousered and cross saddled, and all of them wickedly armed like their male comrades, and none of them married. When a soldadera comes along I should not like to be a stray chicken on the line of march nor a wounded enemy on the field of battle.

Crossing the Pánuco to the south bank on a barge, I tried to take the picture of a coy and skirted soldadera. But all was vain until I won the good services of the Lieutenant Colonel by snapping him and his fellow officers. They were so delighted that all that they possessed was mine, and the soldadera was commanded to face the camera. The proud Colonel even interrupted proceedings in order to decorate the soldadera with his own cartridge belt, knife and revolver. She was young, strong, uncorseted, cotton-frocked, all Indian, and she had ridden, as I learned, for two years with the revolutionists. She came from far in the North, and her near goal was Mexico City.

Ashore on the south bank, endeavoring to catch two or three of the rebels with my camera, I suffered from an embarrassment of riches. All the soldiers crowded into the immediate foreground — there were half a thousand of them — and my lens was not wide-angled. In twos and threes they struck the most bloodthirsty attitudes, and I could only escape them by patiently faking a pressure of the bulb and a rolling on of the film. They were as proud as peacocks, as excitable and naive as children. Just as I pressed the bulb on a long row of them on horseback, one of them, beside himself with too much valor, accidentally discharged his rifle. His fellows laughed at him. His officers did not even frown. It was too common an occurrence. They were merely skylarking boys on the rampage, these rebels who had exchanged the tedium of the day’s work for a year-long picnic. Picnic was what it was with a horse to ride, a peso and a half a day, good grub, a chance to loot, and, best of all, a chance to shoot their fellow men, which last is the biggest big-game hunting that ever falls to the lot of man. Through the fires of sunset — men, women, and small boys — they rode up the winding trail in single file and disappeared south on the road to Mexico City, their hearts high with the hope that they might overtake and terminate the lives of some of some of the unfortunate, limping, poor devils of Federals lagging behind the beaten army of Zaragoza.

“Klondike Faded to a Fare You Well!”

RETURNING by launch, I found that Tampico was mostly surrounded by water and was half a Venice. The backyards, or patios, rather, of the water-front dwellers overhung the canal, which teemed with dugout canoes and chalans (the open, native boat), on which lived many families. But in addition to all this was the evidence of the activity of our American adventurers. Everywhere boat building and repairing was going on. There were paint shops, machine shops, and shipways; and there were river steamers, barges, and launches, not by the score, but by the many hundred.

A carriage, drawn by the thinnest, boniest, mangiest, pair of horses I had even seen, took me to the hotel. The reason for the condition of the horses was obvious. Only such animals could have escaped for half a year the horse-stealing Federals and rebels. The hotel was modern, five-storied, had elevators, and was in every detail — from the café tables copied after Sherry’s to the Tom Collins glasses that were duplicates of Martin’s — a New York hotel. Mine host even had cold beer, having added to his stock by purchase from the Constitutional officers of a carload which they had confiscated at Monterey, and which they had run into Tampico over the Mexican Central railway, also confiscated.

But the hotel was not the interesting thing. It was the men in it — Americans all, who were already gathering back after their enforced journey to the United States. The atmosphere was of the West, of the frontier, of the mining camp. I was more nearly reminded of the men of

Klondike than of anywhere else. In truth, within an hour I encountered a dozen sourdoughs. Two of them I had known in the old days in Alaska. Said one from whom I had parted seventeen years before in Dawson City:

"Jack, this ain't no Klondike. It's got Klondike faded to a fare you well and any other gold camp the world has ever seen. You know my old claim on Eldorado, from rim rock to rim rock and 500 feet up and down steam — well, that was a humdinger and it cleaned up half a million. But shucks, that ain't anything alongside of these diggings. Why, there's the old well at Ebano, the first in the country, a gusher when they struck it twelve years ago, and still a-gushing. They ain't had to pump it yet. It just naturally gushes.

"And the Dutch up above Pánuco, have got an ornery eight-inch hole, nothing to look at, but it can throw 185,000 barrels a day when it ain't pinched down. Figure it up. Say oil at 50 cents, that makes $90,000 gold a day; in ten days $900,000; in a hundred days $9,000,000; in a year, allowing sixty-five days for delays and accidents, $27,000,000 — and that's gold, United States gold coin with the eagle and the Indian. Eldorado and Bonanza together, mouth to source, bench claims and all, didn't turn that much out in the first two years of skimming the cream."

I learned that the Pánuco field alone was estimated by conservative expert oil men to contain at least $2,000,000,000 worth of oil. One really conservative expert put it at $2,500,000,000, but after a moment, without prompting, amended his figures to $2,000,000,000. And the Pánuco was only one of three big fields, the other two being Ebano and Huasteca, while there were two lesser fields, the Chila and the Topila, each with its noteworthy producing wells, and all five fields as yet scarcely scratched.

And from oil and oilmen I drifted into war and soldier men in the shape of a couple of rebel officers. One, a colonel, with no English, presented me with a handful of Federal money confiscated at Monterey and declared worthless by the Constitutionalists. That was why he gave it to me, and, promptly and absent-mindedly, I bought cold beer with it for all of us and received good Constitutional money in change from the large bills. The other officer, a major, was soft voiced and gentle faced as a woman, and at the same time as sanguinary as any hero of the bull ring. He had been in the field four years. He had fought under Madero. He was now fighting under Villa and Caranza. Two of his brothers had been killed in battle. All his property was destroyed. He had but recently recovered from a bullet which had perforated him just under the heart, right side to left, in and out again. “We shoot our men who loot,” he said softly, with no more emphasis than if he had announced that they slapped looters on the wrists. “We shot four of our men here in Tampico. It is true we are civilized. At Monterey we shot one colonel and one captain for looting. No, it is not permitted. We are not savages.”

Yes, he was a four years’ veteran. It had been a long fight, with many a day and week of hunger when the very though of a tortilla made one sick with longing. And straight beef after a month, cooked hot from the hoof, did sometimes make one tired. Had I heard how Huerta shaved? Well, Huerta stood erect while the barber shaved him, one hand in his pocket on a revolver with which to get the barber if the barber cut his throat.

It was lies about the Constitutional atrocities. All such things were committed by the Federals. They dragged their wounded enemies to death with lariats, while the Constitutionalists took their wounded enemies to hospital and nursed them. It was true they did sometimes execute captured Federal officers, but only when such officers were known assassins and traitors.

“Zaragoza?” he repeated, after my question at parting. There was a white flash of small, even teeth, and the soft voice enunciated ever so softly: “He is in the trap. He cannot escape.”

“And when you catch him?” I queried.

“He is an assassin,” came the answer, indirect it was true, but a complete, straight-out answer.

In the morning, in a speed boat, accompanying the general superintendent of an oil company, I went up the Pánuco River. Except where there were wharves for loading oil, or where the cut banks were too steep, the rich alluvial soil was farmed by the Indians to the water’s edge. And here, amid coconut palms, banana trees, and trees of the mango and the avocado, I saw demonstrated the statement that soil and climate were such as to permit the raising of three crops of corn a year. Side by side there were patches of corn just sprouting, of corn that was in the tassel, and of corn that was being harvested.

The Vivid Mutifarious

IT WAS amazing to see the cattle drinking knee-deep in the river, and horses and mules along the bank. Not all the stock had been run off by the soldiers. From time to time our swift craft swerved in nearer to the bank in order that the superintendent might try to identify familiar-looking animals. In this he was occasionally successful, the animals having escaped from the fleeing Federals and drifted back to their own pastures.

Where the Tamesi River flowed in we passed the drawbridge wrecked by the Federals, and the sunken gunboat, the Vera Cruz, abandoned with open sea cocks when the Constitutionalists took the town.

We continued up the Pánuco, passed the tiled roofs of Americans who farmed the land, past the grass huts of the natives, and past many brown-skinned September Morns bathing in the shallows. The American farms were deserted, the owners not yet having come back from their forced trip to the United States. One such holding consisted of 1,300 acres, 1,000 of which were in bananas. Other Americans had gone in for grapefruit, and all ran stock in the rich pastures. No hay is cured in this land, nor do the natives feed grain even to their work animals. The horses and mules are grass-fed and leaf-browsed, and grass and leaves are green the year around. Rain falls every month in the year, the “rainy season” merely connoting the period of excessive rain.

The Pánuco River was alive with traffic. The first returning adventurers were already moving oil. River steamers and ocean tugs moved up and down with long tows of tank barges, and here and there, against the banks, barges were loading oil from the pipe lines of near-by wells. Also, we passed the sites of ancient towns, whose totality of inhabitants in numbers of from twenty-five to fifty thousand, had been massacred by the Aztecs or taken up for the sacrificial festivals in the lake city of the Montezumas.

There were, on the river, many hundreds of the chalans, or long poling boats of the Indians, going upstream with purchases from town, coming down on the current loaded with chickens, vegetables, charcoal, corn, raw sugar, bananas, pineapples, sugar cane, and all manner of things from the soil that fetch a price in Tampico. The honesty of these Indians is proverbial. From the headreaches of the Pánuco they are sometimes months in making the round trip, and they are often trusted with thousands of pesos with which to make purchases in Tampico.

From every foreigner in Mexico, comes the same testimony of the rock-ribbed integrity of the Indian. It is always the mixed breed who is unveracious, dishonest, and treacherous. It was the mixed breed who composed the mobs in Tampico that cried death to the gringos. And many of these half-breeds, so crying, were the very employees of the gringos they wanted to kill and whose property they wanted to destroy. And it was the peon, the Indian, who remained faithful to his salt.

Indian Faith

AS AN example of this, part way on our journey in the Topila field, the superintendent ran the boat in to a small wharf where an Indian was loading two barges with oil. When the Americans were driven out, this Indian, without instructions, threatened by the soldiers, had stuck to his post and moved the flowing oil from wells to tanks and to the emergency reservoirs. Nor had a barrel of oil been lost. Yet three times the Federals had strung him up by the neck in an effort to persuade him to volunteer in the army. As he told them, and he is legion:

"I don't want to fight. I have trouble with nobody. I don't want trouble. When I first came to work here for the gringos I had nothing. I went barefooted. Now I wear shoes. When I worked I got sixty centavos a day. Now I get four pesos a day. I have a nice house. There are chairs in my house. I have a talking machine. Before I lived like a dog. No, I won't be a soldier and fight. All I want is to be left alone."

Forty-seven miles above Tampico we came to the superintendent's wells in the Pánuco field. Two days before, his handful of American employees had returned to the looted camp and began moving oil and building new emergency reservoirs against the time when they might again be driven out. The foreman in charge, a lean, low-spoken Texan, in reply to the superintendent's query for news, said:

"Oh, everything's moving along slowly. The trouble is that our peons have taken to the brush and there'll be some time getting confidence into them to come back. You know so-and-so — well, the cuss was out here this morning, with a few drinks in him, and throwing the fear of God into the few peons I have gathered in, telling them that we'd soon be gone and that every one of them that had worked for us would be shot. Oh, and he cussed us out good and plenty to our faces, telling us that what would happen to the peons wasn't a circumstance to what was coming to us."

The superintendent turned to me with a weary smile.

"That man," he explained, "is the Mexican, the same old half-breed type, with no virtues and all vices. He runs one of the biggest stores in Tampico. Our books will show that we have spent in his store in the last twelve months over $100,000 gold. And he has been invariably courteous and friendly to us. And now he selects our particular camp in which to voice his threats."

The Blunder at Tampico

THAT a blunder was made in not landing our troops at Tampico the same time we landed them at Vera Cruz cannot be doubted by anyone who has gone over the ground and studied the situation. To make matters worse, our American warships were withdrawn from the river and anchored in the open Gulf, ten miles away. The Mexicans, inflamed by the invasion of their country at Vera Cruz, took this withdrawal of our naval forces from Tampico as a sign of timidity. Mobs formed in the streets, and the Americans — men, women, and children — took refuge in the hotels, while the mobs tore down and spat upon American flags and cried death to all Americans.

It is a curious sort of reasoning that brings about a conclusion that the only way to save the lives of our countrymen and countrywomen is to run away and leave them in such a city under such circumstances.

To make matters worse, the United States, by virtue of the old Monroe Doctrine, had warned the other powers off and announced her ability to deal with the situation. The captains of the Dutch and English war vessels declined to interfere for the deserted Americans even when the captain of the German warship approached them to join with him in a shore party to rescue the besieged Americans. This was on the night that succeeded the day of the landing at Vera Cruz.

That night, for an instance, over a hundred Americans, including their women, were sheltered in the Southern Hotel. Those who did not have guns had armed themselves with machetes and clubs for what looked like the last stand. The mob roared in the street and repeatedly attacked the doors with battering rams. And at one in the morning two German officers arrived from the battleship. The English and the Dutch captains had declined to cooperate, and the German commander was acting on his own responsibility. And so, thanks to the Germans, the Americans in Tampico were rescued.

But there were several hundred men, women, and children far up in the oil fields. From Tampico to the Pánuco field was forty-seven miles by the winding river, and ten miles away, in the opposite direction from Tampico, lay the American warships. A superintendent, accompanied by a young Texan, braved the streets in the early morning of the second day. They were spat upon and reviled, and were only saved by an armed guard. But they managed to win across the river and to get the crew of a stern-wheel steamer to volunteer to go up to Pánuco. Fired at by soldiers and looters, followed by troops of Federal cavalry along the banks, they nevertheless cleaned up every camp and brought back with them some three hundred adventurers of their kind. Yes, somebody blundered in this Tampico affair.

Salvation in a Threat

WHEN General Zaragoza, with his 4,000 Federals, evacuated Tampico, he retreated on a number of long railroad trains. But beyond Ebano the tracks were blocked by the rebels. Abandoning the trains, General Zaragoza retreated across country to the Pánuco oil fields. On this march he shot fifteen of his lagging men as a spur to the rest to keep up. In the old town of Pánuco he rested while getting horses and provisions for his men. He was a beaten man, and, but for one thing, he would have been destroyed. He sent a message to General Pablo Gonzales, commanding the rebels that had driven him out of Tampico.

“I am a beaten man,” was the tenor of Zaragoza’s message. “My men are exhausted. I am short of ammunition. If you attack me, I am lost. But the moment you attack I shall fire the oil wells.”

And the rebels did not attack. It was a pretty situation. The rebels planned to add to their treasury by shaking down the oilmen. If the oil wells were ruined, the oilmen would have nothing for which to be shaken down. Zaragoza took his time ere he drifted away south across the hot lands in his effort to find a way up the mountains to the great tableland.

Child-minded men, incapable of government, playing with the weapons of giants! A $2,000,000,000 oil body, a world asset, if you please, at the pleasure of stupid anarchs! And all that saved it, the desire of a portion of the anarchs to loot, by forced contribution, the gringos who had found and developed the oil fields!

Two thousand feet under the surface lies the Pánuco oil body. The formation overlying the oil sands is so broken and creviced by ancient upheavals that the casings are not tight. To seal a well under such conditions would force the oil to rise to the surface outside the casing. At the best, with the wells “pinched down” to the limit of safety, the flow of all the wells could not be reduced below a daily run of 100,000 barrels. From the time when the oilmen were driven out and shanghaied to the United States this great volume of oil accumulated in the tanks and in the open emergency reservoirs. A wad of cotton waste, saturated with kerosene and ignited and tossed into the oil, could have started the $2,000,000,000 bonfire. General Zaragoza could so have started it. So could any drunken peon.

Marvels of the Oil Field

PERHAPS no oil region has been tapped that will compare with the Tampico region. The wells on all the five fields are gushers, and, unlike most gushers, are slow in gushing themselves out. The well at Ebano, previously mentioned, has been flowing for twelve years. In the Huasteca field is a well that has gushed 23,000 barrels a day for four years. To-day it is still gushing its 23,000 barrles, the oil has the same twenty-two gravity, has yet to show a trace of moisture, and carries less than two-tenths of 1 per cent of sediment.

In passing, it may be remarked of the last-mentioned well that, when the Americans were forced out and the half-breed employees had gone to rioting, an old Indian employee took charge of his fellow Indians, and in twenty-two days handled the 500,000 barrels of oil and pumped it over the pipe line to the tank farm and terminal, 105 kilometers away. Not a barrel of oil was lost, and when the Americans returned they found it ready to load into the ocean tankers.

But, while the Tampico oil region is unthinkably big and rich, so much time and money have been required in development that, out of eighty-nine oil producing companies operating during the last fourteen years, only three have so far paid dividends. One particular company has invested $38,000,000 and has paid but a dividend and a half. There are other companies that have invested more than this one. A single company, which has so far paid one dividend, has 4,000 men on the pay roll, a monthly wage list of $100,000 and a monthly grocery bill of $10,000.

I spent a quiet Sunday with the chiefs of one of these companies. The superintendent and I had last parted at the tail of a glacier on the lope of Chilcoot Pass. He was a mere adventurer, of course but just the same I desire to describe just a little of this, his Mexican adventure.

We sat in a hot room. The afternoon breeze had not yet sprung up. The house stood on a hill. All about were the visible evidences of pernicious activity. The low hills were crowned with steel tanks and reservoirs. The slopes down to the river were covered with machine shops, carpenter shops, warehouses, an ice plant, an electric-light plant, a foundry, and parks of wagons, auto-trucks, road scrapers, graders, and rollers. The river was wharf-lined and the wharf was lined with tankers loading oil. There were dredgers, pile drivers, launches, barges, river steamers, harbor tugs, huge ocean-going tugs, and a fast stream yacht (bought a year before for the purpose of rushing the American employees away to the safety of the sea in case of need).

And there was more than could be seen. This particular company ran truck farms, chicken farms, and orchards of avocados, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, and figs-all for feeding its employees. I knew that to the west, in the Ebano field, were this company's hospitals, clubhouses, and railroad shops. Oh, yes, it possessed two railroads which it had built as well as run. Also, at Ebano, was its asphaltum refinery, reckoned the largest in the world, and a mere stock farm where imported Hereford bulls, Percheron stallions, and Missouri jacks graded up the inferior stock of Mexico, and where 10,000 head of animals had run prior to the raids by Federals and Constitutionalists.

From this house on the hill ran a graded wagon road through the jungle, Huasteca country, connecting with the terminal of the company's railroad at Dos Bocas. All this distance, and more, to a hundred miles away, ran the company's telephone lines. Two pipe lines for oil, one for water, and one for gas paralleled the wagon road.

Under Stress of War

IN that hot room of the house on the hill the telephone was never idle. Now the superintendent, now one chief, and now another answered it. A call would come from some distant station. Two horses had been run off by Constitutionalists. Another call: the Federals had just killed five cows and a bull for food, and the superintendent, in return, desired to know if his pony was still safe.

An employee arrives on the porch with the news that four of the auto-trucks lifted by the rebels have been recovered in Tampico and are being brought across the river on a barge. Another employee brings the word that the launch Doodle-bug has just been commandeered by the rebels.

Over the telephone comes word that General Zaragoza, with 3,400 men, has burned a village and is lifting every horse and mule in sight. The Federals are drifting toward Amatián the voice over the wire goes on.

"Getting close to our mules," remarks one of the chiefs, and then to me: "We've got 600 mules down there — 200 of them from the States."

A tidy item that — sixty to seventy thousand dollars' worth of mule flesh; and the superintendent, over the phone, orders the moving of the mule herd to another potrero away from the line of Federal driftage.

The water station at Tamcochin sends in word that he Federals are reported drifting down on Tamcochin.

"All right," advises the superintendent. "Keep the tanks full to the last moment, and be prepared to run for it. Have a horse saddled for each one of you, and run the rest off now."

Like Job's Calamities

IN a lull one of the chiefs begins inquiring over the line for the pursuing rebels, and locates a station through which 500 of them had passed two hours earlier.

A call announces that the 600 mules are on their way to portreros green and hidden.

The chiefs try to reason the drift of the Federals. It is concluded that so far they have failed to gain the tableland, but that they are bound to try again because, to the south, they are blocked by the rebels, who have captured the port of Tuxpan.

"It does hurt to be called an adventurer," one of the chiefs begins, but is interrupted by the hoofs and the eruption of a splendid specimen of an Indian who dismounts and reports that after recovering thirty of the company's horses he has just had them taken away by a bunch of rebels.

Another station telephones a rumor that the 500 rebels have run into the 3,400 Federals and are having a hot time of it.

One of the chiefs telephones a subordinate to hire a launch to take the place of the commandeered Doodle-bug. Scarcely is this done when a slender half-breed presents himself with a fresh commission to be a colonel and to raise a regiment of 500 men for the rebels. The superintendent shows the new Colonel every consideration. He is compelled to, or else the Colonel will enlist the men from the company's laborers. Also, the Colonel wants to borrow a launch for a couple of days. It is blackmail, but the superintendent smilingly lends it, and as soon as the Colonel is gone sends orders to hire another launch for the company at Tampico. Following that, at his suggestion, a chief telephones a lone man in a lone station in the path of the Federal drift to be ready to disconnect the wires and cut and run for it.

Between telephone calls a broken conference is held on the problem of moving the Ebano oil. A chief states that the company's shop at Ebano is occupied by seven engines which the rebels have captured from the Mexican Central and are repairing. Another chief, whose activities are patently diplomatic, is instructed to attempt to persuade the rebel leaders to use the repair shops at Tampico. It is decided, since the Ebano oil must be moved because of lack of further storage, to get the rebels to move it over the captured Mexican Central.

"If they won't or can't," the superintendent concludes, "then propose that they let us move it over their lines. We can furnish our own trains, crews, and everything."

Pleasant Dreams

AND the foregoing is just a sample of what went on for all that blessed day and half the night in that hot room of the house on the hill. One last thing I must give. Over the telephone came the verification of the earlier report of fighting. The 3,400 Federals had pretty well cut to pieces the 500 rebels, who were dropping back. Also, the Federals had ceased drifting and were making fast time for the mountains. And in the evening I fell asleep in my chair while the telephone rang on and on, and while the superintendent and his chiefs conferred and planned and considered immediate problems vastly profounder than any I have mentioned here.

HOUSEKEEPING IN THE KLONDIKE

London's wife 'Bessie' and their daughters

HOUSEKEEPING in the Klondike-that's bad! And by men-worse. Reverse the propositions, if you will, yet you will fail to mitigate, even by a hair's-breadth, the woe of it. It is bad, for a man to keep house, and it is equally bad to keep house in the Klondike. That's the sum and substance of it. Of course men will be men, and especially is this true of the kind who wander off to the frozen rim of the world. The glitter of gold is in their eyes, they are borne along by uplifting ambition, and in their hearts is a great disdain for everything in the culinary department save "grub." "Just so long as it's grub," they say, coming in off trail, gaunt and ravenous, "grub, and piping hot." Nor do they manifest the slightest regard for the genesis of the same; they prefer to begin at "revelations."

Yes, it would seem a pleasant task to cook for such men; but just let them lie around cabin to rest up for a week, and see with what celerity they grow high-stomached and make sarcastic comments on the way you fry the bacon or boil the coffee. And behold how each will spring his own strange and marvelous theory as to how sour-dough bread should be mixed and baked. Each has his own recipe (formulated, mark you, from personal experience only), and to him it is an idol of brass, like unto no other man's, and he'll fight for it-ay,. down to the last wee pinch of soda-and if need be, die for it. If you should happen to catch him on trail, completely exhausted, you may blacken his character, his flag, and his ancestral tree with impunity; but breathe the slightest whisper against his sour-dough bread, and he will turn upon and rend you.

From this is may be gathered what an unstable thing sour dough is. Never was coquette so fickle. You cannot depend upon it. Still, it is the simplest thing in the world. Make a batter and place it near the stove (that it may not freeze) till it ferments or sours. Then mix the dough with it, and sweeten with soda to taste-of course replenishing the batter for next time. There it is. Was there ever anything simpler? But, oh, the tribulations of the cook! It is never twice the same. If the batter could only be placed away in an equable temperature, all well and good. If one's comrades did not interfere, much vexation of spirit might be avoided. But this cannot be; for Tom fires up the stove till the cabin is become like the hot-room of a Turkish bath; Dick forgets all about the fire till the place is a refrigerator; then along comes Harry and shoves the sour-dough bucket right against the stove to make way for the drying of this mittens. Now heat is a most potent factor in accelerating the fermentation of flour and water, and hence the unfortunate cook is constantly in disgrace with Tom, Dick, and Harry. Last week his bread was yellow from a plethora of soda; this week it is sour from a prudent lack of the same; and next week-ah, who can tell save the god of the fire-box?

Some cooks aver that they have so cultivated their olfactory organs that they can tell to the fraction of a degree just how sour the batter is. Nevertheless they have never been known to bake two batches of bread which were at all alike. But this fact casts not the slightest shadow upon the infallibility of their theory. One and all, they take advantage of circumstances, and meanly crawl out by laying the blame upon the soda, which was dampened “the time the canoe overturned,” or upon the flour, which they got in trade from “that half-breed fellow with the dogs.”

The pride of the Klondike cook in his bread is something which passes understanding. The highest commendatory degree which can be passed upon a man in that country, and the one which distinguishes him from the tenderfoot, is that of being a “sour-dough boy.” Never was a college graduate prouder of his “sheepskin” than the old-timer of this appellation. There is a certain distinction about it, from which the new-comer is invidiously excluded. A tenderfoot with his baking-powder is an inferior creature, a freshman; but a “sour-dough boy” is a man of stability, a post-graduate in that art of arts-bread-making.

Next to bread a Klondike cook strives to achieve distinction by his doughnuts. This may appear frivolous at first glance, and at second, considering the materials with which he works, an impossible feat. But doughnuts are all-important to the man who goes on a trail for a journey of any length. Bread freezes easily, and there is less grease and sugar, and hence less heat in it, than in doughnuts. The latter do not solidify except at extremely low temperatures, and they are very handy to carry in the pockets of a Mackinaw jacket and munch as one travels along. They are made much after the manner of their brethren in warmer climes, with the exception that they are cooked in bacon grease-the more grease, the better they are. Sugar is the cook’s chief stumbling-block; if it is very scarce, why, add more grease. The men never mind-on trail. In the cabin?-well, that’s another matter; besides, bread is good enough for them then.

The cold, the silence, and the darkness somehow seem to be considered the chief woes of the Klondiker. But this is all wrong. There is one woe which overshadows all others-the lack of sugar. Every party which goes north signifies a manly intention to do without sugar, and after it gets there bemoans itself upon its lack of foresight. Man can endure hardship and horror with equanimity, but take from him his sugar, and he raises his lamentations to the stars. And the worst of it is that it all falls back upon the long-suffering cook. Naturally, coffee, and mush, and dried fruit, and rice, eaten without sugar, do not taste exactly as they should. A certain appeal to the palate is missing. Then the cook is blamed for his vile concoctions. Yet, if he be a man of wisdom, he may judiciously escape the major part of this injustice. When he places a pot of mush upon the table, let him see to it that it is accompanied by a pot of stewed dried apples or peaches. This propinquity will suggest the combination to the men, and the flatness of the one will be neutralized by the sharpness of the other. In the distress of a sugar famine, if he be a cook of parts, he will boil rice and fruit together in one pot; and if he cook a dish of rice and prunes properly, of a verity he will cheer up the most melancholy member of the party, and extract from him great gratitude.

Such a cook must indeed be a man of resources. Should his comrades cry out that vinegar be placed upon the beans, and there is no vinegar, he must know how to make it out of water, dried apples, and brown paper. He obtains the last from the bacon-wrappings, and it is usually saturated with grease. But that does not matter. He will early learn that in the land of low temperatures it is impossible for bacon grease to spoil anything. It is to the white man what blubber and seal oil are to the Eskimo. Soul-winning gravies may be made from it by the addition of water and browned flour over the fire. Some cooks base far-reaching fame solely upon their gravy, and their names come to be on the lips of men wherever they forgather at the feast. When the candles give out, the cook fills a sardine-can with bacon grease, manufactures a wick out of the carpenter's sail-twine, and behold! the slush-lamp stands complete. It goes by another and less complimentary name in the vernacular, and, next to sour-dough bread, is responsible for more men's souls than any other single cause of degeneracy in the Klondike.

The ideal cook should also possess a Semitic incline to his soul. Initiative in his art is not the only requisite; he must keep an eye upon the variety of his larder. He must "swap" grub with the gentile understandingly; and woe unto him should the balance of trade be against him. His comrades will thrust it into his teeth every time the bacon is done over the turn, and they will even rouse him from his sleep to remind him of it. For instance, previous to the men going out for a trip on trail, he cooks several gallons of beans in the company of numerous chunks of salt pork and much bacon grease. This mess he then moulds into blocks of convenient size and places on the roof, where it freezes into bricks in a couple of hours. Thus the men, after a weary day's travel, have but to chop off chunks with an axe and thaw out in the frying-pan. Now the chances preponderate against more than one party in ten having chilli-peppers in their outfits. But the cook, supposing him to be fitted for his position, will ferret out that one party, discover some particular shortage in its grub-supply of which he has plenty, and swop the same for chill-peppers. These in turn he will incorporate in the mess aforementioned, and behold a dish which even the hungry arctic gods may envy. Variety in the grub is a welcome to the men as nuggets. When, after eating dried peaches for months, the cook trades a few cupfuls of the same for apricots, the future at once takes on a more roseate hue. Even a change in the brand of bacon will revivify blasted faith in the country.

It is no sinecure, being cook in the Klondike. Often he must do his work in a cabin measuring ten by twelve on the inside, and occupied by three other men besides himself. When it is considered that these men eat, sleep, lounge, smoke, play cards, and entertain visitors there, and also in that small space house the bulk of their possessions, the size of the cook's orbit may be readily computed. In the morning he sits up in bed, reaches out and strikes the fire, then proceeds to dress. After that the centre of his orbit is the front of the stove, the diameter the length of his arms. Even then his comrades are continually encroaching upon his domain, and he is at constant warfare to prevent territorial grabs.

If the men are working hard on the claim, the cook is also expected to find his own wood and water. The former he chops up and sleds into camp, the latter he brings home in a sack-unless he is unusually diligent, in which case he has a ton or so of water piled up before the door. Whenever he is not cooking, he is thawing out ice, and between-whiles running out and hoisting on the windlass for his comrades in the shaft. The care of dogs also devolves upon him, and he carries his life and a long club in his hand every time he feeds them.

But there is one thing the cook does not have to do, nor any man in the Klondike-and that is, make another man's bed. In fact, the beds are never made except when the blankets become unfolded, or when the pine needles have all fallen off the boughs which form the mattress. When the cabin has a dirt floor and the men do their carpenter-work inside, the cook never sweeps it. It is much warmer to let the chips and shavings remain. Whenever he kindles a fire he uses a couple of handfuls of the floor. However, when the deposit becomes so deep that his head is knocking against the roof, he seizes a shovel and removes a foot or so of it.

Nor does he have any windows to wash; but if the carpenter is busy he must make his own windows. This is simple. He saws a hole out of the side of the cabin, inserts a home-made sash, and for panes falls back upon the treasured writing-tablet. A sheet of this paper, rubbed thoroughly with bacon grease, becomes transparent, sheds water when it thaws, and keeps the cold out and the heat in. In cold weather the ice will form upon the inside of it to the thickness of sometimes two or three inches. When the bulb of the mercurial thermometer has frozen solid, the cook turns to his window, and by the thickness of the icy coating infallibly gauges the outer cold within a couple of degrees.

A certain knowledge of astronomy is required of the Klondike cook, for another task of his is to keep track of the time. Before going to bed he wanders outside and studies the heavens. Having located the Pole Star by means of the Great Bear, he inserts two slender wands in the snow, a couple of yards apart and in line with the North Star. The next day, when the sun on the southern horizon casts the shadows of the wands to the northward and in line, he knows it to be twelve o'clock, noon, and sets his watch and those of his partners accordingly. As stray dogs are constantly knocking his wands out of line with the North Star, it becomes his habit to verify them regularly every night, and thus another burden is laid upon him.

But, after all, while the woes of the man who keeps house and cooks food in the northland are innumerable, there is one redeeming feature in his lot which does not fall to the women housewives of other lands. When things come to a pass with his feminine prototype, she throws her apron over her head and has a good cry. Not so with him, being a man and a Klondiker. He merely cooks a little more atrociously, raises a storm of grumbling, and resigns. After that he takes up his free out-door life again, and exerts himself mightily in making life miserable for the unlucky comrade who takes his place in the management of the household destinies.

The Biography

The old Winery Cottage, where London died on November 22, 1916

BOOK OF JACK LONDON By Charmian London

Published in 1921, five years following London’s death, this biographical book offers much insight into the famous writer, as viewed by his second wife. Her writings about London are considered by scholars to be an important, though sometimes flawed, source of biographical information, offering many letters from and to the great writer. The full two volumes are provided for the reader in this Delphi edition.

Jack and Charmian on the beach in Hawaii

CONTENTS

VOLUME I
PREFACE
PROLOGUE: AND A MEETING
THE STUFF OF STARS
BIRTH
BOYHOOD
LIVERMORE VALLEY
BOYHOOD TO YOUTH: OAKLAND ESTUARY, SAILORING, ETC.
QUEEN OF THE OYSTER PIRATES
OYSTER-PIRATING
FISH-PATROL
"SOPHIE SUTHERLAND," SEALING
BOY-AND-GIRL LOVE
TRAMPING — "THE ROAD"
TRAMPING
HIGH SCHOOL
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
INTO KLONDIKE
OUT OF KLONDIKE
KLONDIKE LILY MAID LETTERS
THE CLOUDESLEY JOHNS CORRESPONDENCE
INTRODUCING ANNA STRUNSKY
MARRIAGE TO BESSIE MADDERN
LETTERS: CLOUDESLEY JOHNS AND ANNA STRUNSKY
PIEDMONT
HOME FROM EUROPE; SEPARATION
JAPANESE-RUSSIAN WAR

VOLUME II
RETURN FROM KOREA; DIVORCE
SUMMER AT GLEN ELLEN
SECOND MARRIAGE; LECTURE TRIP
JAMAICA, CUBA, FLORIDA, NEW YORK CITY
RETURN TO OAKLAND; EARTHQUAKE
SNARK VOYAGE

ECUADOR; PANAMA; HOME
A DAUGHTER IS BORN
YACHT “ROAMER”
FOUR-HORSE DRIVING-TRIP
CAPE HORN VOYAGE
THE BAD YEAR; AGRICULTURE
NEW YORK; MEXICO; ROAMER
RETURN TO HAWAII; FORTIETH YEAR
THE WAR; HAWAII
THE LAST SUMMER

VOLUME I

PREFACE

HERE in his own workroom, at his own work-table, which, like himself, is deep-grained, beautiful, unshamming even to its rugged knots and imperfections, I write of the Jack London whom I knew.

"That one of us should go before the other is unthinkable," he often said. Or, "It is beyond my imagining that I should be without you. . . . By rights we should go out together in some bright hazard, gallant shipwreck in a shouting, white gale, or shoulder to shoulder in some forgotten out-land where the red gods have called us." And again, "If I should go first, Mate Woman, it would be for you to write of me if — you dare be honest," always he challenged.

"But you could hardly do it," he would consider. "I fear you'd not want to write of my shortcomings, which you know only too well, and your work would be valueless without them. — Also, neither you nor I, unless it should be when I am very old, and when others are gone past wounding, can write without restraint of the very circumstances and characters that helped to make or mar me. And, anyway, my dear," was his familiar conclusion, "I'm going to live a hundred years, because I want to; and I'm going to beat you to it some day and write my own book of myself, and call it 'Jack Liverpool' — and it's going to make everybody sit up!"

In some such fashion we would speculate, summer afternoons, perhaps riding over the Beauty Ranch, or lying on the slant deck of a ship in the Trades, or tooling our alert four-in-hand across a mountain range.

I warn, therefore, that this book is written only for those sincere and open-minded folk who want to know the real and living facts that I can tell. So unusual a man should be honored with an unusual biography, and mine is bound to be frank beyond the ordinary, since I must approach it with frankness or do a spurious piece of work. I do not minimize the criticism to which I subject myself, but my philosophy is of a sort that transcends fear on this score. For Jack London was my man of men, and because I have answered these many years to his call of "my woman", I am unafraid. I am privileged to speak my mind about him, what of his own desire; and I can but feel that I knew him somewhat, if only because he said so. I am forever enslaved to him for his love, for his teaching, for his infinitely manifested charity and sweetness, and this enslavement is guerdon of my existence, in that it has taught me freedom, and led to where, within my capacity, I might view and explore the wide spaces of life and thinking.

But only name him, — and forthwith a thousand vivid, trenchant thoughts clamor for delivery. Even more sharply than during his life I now realize how he was eternally whelmed by surging ideas, whenever his embracing mind laid hold of a theme. Often and often I have seen him near despair at the impossibility of capturing and holding, for presentment to his listener, the myriad related thoughts that crowded hard under a single impelling one.

The material at my hand is manifold and priceless. Much of it I shall forego, lest I wound where he hesitated to wound. But, within limitations dictated by like consideration for those he spared, I must in simple justice to him bring to bear all possible illumination. That is my passionate committal of myself and what of himself he lavished upon me.

One book of mine, “Our Hawaii,” has been termed by some readers as “too personal,” whatever that may signify. But in my sense of the word, “personal” is precisely what that narrative set out to be. And now, suppose that I, of all biographers, assume a conservative, too-proud-to-explain pose concerning this intimate man-soul, who of his admirers misled, or at best puzzled by popular misreport, and desiring more light upon his gripping personality, is to acquire what only I have to offer? Would a woman court happiness with such as Jack London, she needs must learn to regard life broadly. Her reward, if she be wise enough to claim reward, is obvious. What I absorbed of Jack London was by means of throwing wide a willing intelligence toward his nature and mental attitude. And since he went out in the midday of his brave years, I have sensed him in still subtler ways.

I summon the dear ghosts of all he has meant to me, in the largess of his sharing, and always he shared; all heritage from him of unclouded vision, purpose, straightness of speech; whatever I have meant to him; all these I beg to help me in my loving and difficult task. For at the outset I am appalled by what is ahead of me. Almost it looks a vain endeavor, one I would far better abandon, and confine my revelation to the commonplace, if commonplace can be found in such a life, lest I invite failure by reaching too wide and deep.

None but a fool dwells upon the small irks of a journey that has been undertaken all the way and back, for love and service and adventure. It is the long, long run that matters. The big basic considerations, the rudimental integrities, these are the saving things that buoy up life and persuade from us at the end that we "liked it all." And so, in reviewing what was in our long run a rainbow trail round the curve of the world, though I shall try to write from the height of my head, making honest this document, as he would have it, without sainting his humanness, I know I shall find myself most often directed from the depth of my heart toward a bountiful estimate of his abounding lovableness, charm, and variety.

I should be glad if I could believe that he, friend, lover, husband, for a dozen rich years, were now consciously standing over me guiding my pen — his pen, with which I begin his portrait; glad for my own sake, at the same time decrying the selfishness to stay him one moment from that Field of Ardath that ever, to him, in his fairest hours, meant dreamless rest. But since I cannot even in his loss find hope and faith in what he did not believe for himself, for me, for any one, I can yet know that what of his gift there resides in my being from those long, comprehending years together drives brain and hand to lay what I may of him "cards up on the table," as he fearlessly played his own game of living.

Shortly after his death my already awakened mettle to write of him was spurred by the remark of an American author to a common friend, "Jack London was a far greater man than some of his intimates may let us know." I, at least, shall not merit this curious implication. Jack London gave so greatly to all who could see and hear and feel. Those who gained worse than nothing from the privilege of association with him, neighbor, sharer, young patriarch whose burdens were so nobly borne, I can only designate as the deaf, the dumb, the blind.

This, then, is my goal: to strive to expound him through the evaluations he placed upon himself which untiringly he strove to make clear to me. And to my everlasting joy and benefit, my lamps were always lit that I might less and less blindly gaze into the unfailing wonder which I found him. The vision I cherish rises undimmed, definite, appealing to be revealed as he would declare himself.

Once more, as in other prefaces, I crave indulgence for that I must appear somewhat profusely in my own pages. Verily, in order to make a book about

Jack London, I should have to make a book about myself — which indeed would be all about Jack London.

Here I give to the world my Jack London — a virile creature compounded of curiosity and fearlessness, the very texture of fine sensibility, the loving heart and discerning intuitions of a woman, an ardent brain, and a divine belief in himself. And since he was first and foremost his own man, I render, as nearly as may be in the premises, also his own Jack London. If I prove candid to a degree, let it be remembered that he would be first to have it so.

CHARMIAN LONDON

Jack London Ranch,
Glen Ellen, Sonoma County, California

PROLOGUE: AND A MEETING

I WISH you'd meet this remarkable boy of mine, this Jack London," my aunt remarked one morning in the spring of 1900, with a laugh in her earnest blue eyes. "I should like to have your opinion of him. The fact is, I have only talked with him once, myself, but already I feel as if he belonged to me."

"Very well," I replied rather absently, pinning on my straw sailor before a diminutive silver-trinketed dressing-table that was my especial pride. For my mind was bent on other matters than this vague young writer whose stories in the Overland Monthly I had heard the family discussing with fervor for months past. "Very well," I repeated, "when shall it be?"

"He's coming here to-morrow afternoon," she considered, "though too early for you. But in a few days I'm to meet him at the museum in the Ferry Building, to pose him for a picture in Alaskan furs, to illustrate my article. How would this do? — I'll take you to lunch!"

"Why should you take him to lunch!" I cried, stung to protest.

"My dear child — I know he hasn't an extra cent to spend. No, I will entertain the pair of you, at half past twelve."

"I don't know what you will think of him," she called after me, in a doubtful tone, as I hurried off for Dwight Way station, which was near our home in Berkeley. "He is not a bit like your college and society friends!" But their afternoon's interview lasted until six o'clock. My latch-key was already clicking in the lock as Auntie turned the knob for the egress of a rather odd caller, clad in shabby bicycle trousers and dark gray woolen shirt. A nondescript tie, soft bicycle shoes, and a worn cap in one hand, completed his outfit, while the other held fast a copy of Boyd's Composition, borrowed from his hostess. There was a hasty introduction in the dim hall rainbowed by the sunset through a stained glass window. Then the apparently abashed young fellow ran lightly down the steps, pulling the dingy cap over a mop of brown curls, and rode away on his wheel.

"So that's your wonderful Jack London," I chaffed. "You will admit he is not a very elegant afternoon caller!"

"Granted," Auntie concurred; but added swiftly, "I do not think he missed your hardly concealed critical look, my dear. Nothing escapes that boy. And you must remember," she admonished gently, "with genius, clothing doesn't matter. Besides, I doubt if he can afford better."

"Well," I retorted, a trifle guiltily, "he is not the only genius amongst your friends, but certainly none of them ever came to our house looking like this one."

Seeing me really contrite, she told me laughingly how Hannah had come to her with puzzled brow, after answering the door bell:

"'I do not think this can be the gentleman Mrs. Eames expects. He is only a boy, in rough clothes, and walks like a sailor.'" Whereupon Hannah had flushingly received a rebuke similar to mine.

On the day set for the lunch, I exchanged noon hours with my pretty assistant. For, in a big San Francisco shipping and commission firm, my shorthand and type writing earned bed and board, party gowns, the services of Hannah, the immaculate Swedish maid, not to mention fodder and stabling for my beautiful saddle mare. For we were not in opulent circumstances. My aunt and foster mother, Ninetta Eames, wrote for the magazines, while her husband acted as business manager of the beloved old Overland Monthly, whose funds were notoriously meager — no one better than Jack London knew how meager. As for myself, I had taken a hand in my own maintenance from my fourteenth year, when I had mastered Uncle Roscoe Eames's Light Line Shorthand and assisted him with his classes, on to the year at Mills College, where I worked my way as secretary to its President, Mrs. Susan L. Mills.

Promptly at twelve-thirty I reached the entrance of the restaurant my aunt had named — Young's, I think it was, on Montgomery, not far from Market Street. If I am a shade misty, it must be borne in mind that this was almost six years before the time when the Great Fire, following upon the Great Earthquake, destroyed landmarks in this section of incomparable old San Francisco.

Already they were on the spot, my small, blue-eyed, dark-haired aunt, and beside her the boyish figure of medium height in a sack-coated gray suit, patently ready-made and almost pathetically new. He wore a small black tie, low-cut shoes, and a neat visored gray cap that did not hide a wavy brown forelock. And this was the first and last time we ever saw Jack London arrayed in waistcoat and starched collar.

My clearest vision of this moment when I first looked fairly upon the man who was destined to play such momentous part in my life, is of the cheerful-gray aspect of him; for, under the meeting low line of his brows, the wide-set, very large, direct eyes were as gray as the soft gray cloth, but more blue for the tan of his blond skin.

Another unclouded mental impression that persists across the years, is of the modest quiet of his manner, and, still more distinctly, the beauty of his mouth, full-lipped, not small, with deep, upturned ends that my aunt happily described as "pictured corners" — a designation too lovely for analysis. And there was about this feature a chastity, an untried virginity of expression, that seemed greatly at odds with recalled rumors of the romantic if rather dubious career of this sailor-shouldered, light-stepping man of twenty-four, as gamin, redoubtable member of dread hoodlum gangs in Oakland, bay pirate, vagrant, adventurer in Alaskan gold fields — not to emphasize a smear of actual jail-birding, if truth prevailed. That he was moreover an exceedingly active member of the Socialist Labor Party was no shock to my propriety, albeit his Socialism was of a ruggeder, more militant sort than that with which I was familiar in my own home.

Ever my initial picture of that baffling mouth must hold its own with the great gray eyes, in their almost appealing candor a similar unbelievable childlikeness. "Looking for something he has never known," was the fancy that drifted through my brain, as my own eyes fell from his to the small hand he extended — half-timorously it seemed to me, as I noted an absence of grip.

"Jack London is the gentlest man I have ever known," I once heard an old woman say. And that is what also comes down to me from this early contact with a personality that made its thoroughgoing masculinity only slightly felt through an alight repose of demeanor, an expectant passivity, which very little advertised vibrant nerves and quick underlying dominance. That is it — sitting across the table in the buzzing, bustling café, I seemed to sense that he was expecting something, something we two women had for him of our personalities, our ideas, our good will. In those long-lashed eyes that had mirrored much of life's most unbeautiful presentments, there was a waiting, a continual asking, and their own response was swift and sweet toward any gift of frank idea or fellowship. He displayed interest in the fact that I was self-supporting; and once, when my Aunt had addressed me, he raised that full gray look to mine and slowly pronounced, as if listening to the sound of his own pleased voice:

"Charmian . . . Charmian . . .What a beautiful name!"

I have little recollection of the conversation that lasted out the meal, nor of what Jack London ordered. It is safe to say that, “barring his half-fed tramp days, or some outlandish delicacy temporarily in favor, few privileged to contact with him remember him for his appetite. The morning’s visit to the museum came up, along with his delight in once more seeing the familiar Klondike habiliments. Then, while my Aunt drew him out concerning himself, Rudyard Kipling’s name was mentioned, and Jack’s whole face lighted as he exclaimed: “Oh, have you read The Brushwood Boy? — There is no end to Kipling, simply no end. Gone was that half-deferential diffidence; remained only his kindling enthusiasm for the work of his British idol, treasured possession of which without delay he would share with responsive companions.

It had proved inevitable, upon the appearance of young London’s “Odyssey of the North” in the Atlantic Monthly for January just past, that this new writer’s revolutionary method of presenting the primal, raw, frigid life of the savage North should call forth comparison with Kipling. I felt at a disadvantage in that I had missed reading this tale and the other eight that had been running in the Overland, beginning with “To the Man on Trail” in the January 1899 issue, and ending with “The Wisdom of the Trail” in December. The entire nine I learned were by now in the hands of Houghton, Mifflin & Company for book publication, under the title of “The Son of the Wolf” — the Arctic Indian’s name for the conquering white man. Simultaneously with the Atlantic Monthly, he had broken into two other eastern publications, with an article, “The Economics of the Klondike,” in The Review of Reviews, and a story, “Pluck and Pertinacity,” in The Youth’s Companion. “Charmian,” Mrs. Eames was suddenly struck with the idea, “why can’t you review ‘The Son of the Wolf’ — perhaps in the same number of the Overland with my article on Mr. London?”

For as has been seen, at this period we were closely associated with the old magazine of the Golden West, that had cradled the first born of Bret Harte’s genius; even I, urged on by my family, had dabbled sporadically and unambitiously at certain unimportant book reviewings. Besides, had not my maiden position, after leaving Mills College, been as assistant sub-scissors in the Overland sanctum? But far more than with literary leanings was I occupied, outside my office hours, with University of California “hops,” and “proms,” and “senior balls,” to say nothing of week-end yachting on San Francisco Bay, horseback rides, and youth’s joy of living generally.

Jack beamed upon me from under his marked, mobile brows that just touched over the square bridge of a precisely not-too-short nose:

"Is it a go, Miss Kittredge? — I'll hold you to that! And I'll send you my duplicate proof-sheets soon, so you won't have to wait for the book."

When we parted he asked, meanwhile rolling and lighting a cigarette with quick, definite motions of his tapering fingers:

"Mrs. Eames, may I bring a friend to see you! His name is Herman Whitaker, Jim we call him, and he can give you lots of points about me that I can't think of, for your article."

An early night was determined upon, and the engagement was fulfilled, shortly followed by a second. While my aunt's interviews with Mr. Whitaker were in progress, it devolved upon me to entertain their subject.

Of these occasions, nothing consecutive lives in memory, and only two incidents stand out: one, that I complied with my aunt's request to play on the piano for Mr. London, she having discovered his intense fondness for music; the other, that I introduced him to my "den" where, among other cherished objects, were my books, reproductions of my favorite marbles and paintings, and an absurdly elaborate little tea-table. I had the feeling that he was brightly aware of the feminine individuality of the room; and he showed interest in my various girlish activities, whether in music, or drawing, riding, even dancing. Years afterward that rosy little apartment, Venus Crouched and all, figured as Dede Mason's, in "Burning Daylight."

"I never danced a step in my life," he regretted bashfully. "Never seemed to have time to learn those soft, lovely ways of young people. But I like to see dancing."

For the music and the books he was almost equally hungry. Fled beyond recall is the memory of what I played, except that he asked if I had the de Koven "Recessional" — Kipling's verses; and he told me he sometimes bicycled to San Jose to visit friends, and there he had heard the song. It happened that I was able to gratify him, since I possessed quite a repertory of vocal music; for although no singer, I played accompaniments unprofessionally in the Bay region concerts.

Together we several times hummed through the stately invocation, and Jack was all alight with emotion, his great eyes shining, while he begged for it over and over. He had no apparent singing voice, although to a pleasanter, more expressive speaking tone I had never listened, especially when he descanted upon Kipling.

But more vividly than any other picture of him at that time, he rises standing by my side at the tall book-case in my den. His glowing eyes ranged rapidly over the volumes, and he seemed in a fine fervor, murmuring titles and authors or touching the backs with his small hands. Soon we were talking very fast, discussing works we had both read, and he urged me not to neglect Thomas Hardy's "Jude the Obscure." "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" had not come his way. This I lent him, together with Maurice Hewlett's "The Forest Lovers" and "Flood Tide," by Sallie P. McLean Green.

And once, turning toward him, I met a pair of fathomless sea-blue eyes, and experienced a sudden and unexpected impact of his mental and physical vitality; felt at-one with him for a high instant, knew his spiritual dignity, recognized him for the warm, human creature that he was. The moment passed quickly, and he was assuring me, unasked, that he had "a conscience about books," and would take the best care of mine. Through the irony of chance, some one spilled a bottle of ink over the cover of "Flood Tide," to Jack London's undying indignation and remorse. To this day I treasure the stained thing.

Often in later years, he and I wondered, had we been further thrown together, if we should have come to care the whole way for each other. And we usually agreed that the hour was not then. "You came in my great need," he would muse. That early my great need had not developed, or else I did not recognize it."

The second of these calls occurred, I think, in the week of March 26. I aim to be thus explicit, because of headlong happenings in the succeeding week. Of what led to our making an appointment I am not sure; most likely he was sketching his college career for me, which, owing to responsibilities and lack of money, had been limited to half his Freshman year. Be this as it may, there was to me some unfamiliar purlieu of the staid university town that he thought would be of interest. With mutual amusement over the gaiety that would be added to the academic precincts by spectacle of man a-wheel and woman a-horse, we decided upon Saturday afternoon, April the seventh.

Meanwhile, one Saturday there had arrived the promised proof-sheets of "The Son of the Wolf," and when I returned home early for my long ride, on the tiny dresser I found waiting the long, printed slips. While unpinning my hat I started to read. I neither rose nor finished removing the sailor, until my streaming eyes had lifted from the last word of the last tale.

For before the first few sheets had been turned down, I had become thrall to the wonder and wisdom and artistry of “The White Silence,” profoundly aware of the awareness of this young protagonist of nature’s primordial forces, his apperception of the world in which he lived, and of the heart of man and beast, aye, and of woman — all human and fallible, but shot through with the fineness and courage of the spirit of nobility. This story, one of his first, contains some of the most masterly of the passages which set him amongst the young lords of language. In Mason’s parting words are shown Jack’s love of his own race, and for children. Indeed, he let us in upon nearly all of himself in that story. In most of the stories I noticed that he never seemed to be far from the consideration of death. His artistry lingered caressingly about the final destiny of man and animal.

Throughout the long afternoon, thrilled alike with the splendid repose and the crackling action of the work, shaken with its power, there blended with spiritual emotion the conviction that I had no business with the reviewing or criticizing of such brain-stuff as Jack London’s. For asmuch as I was intellectually indolent, I even felt no incitement to bestir myself. I would not touch the thing, I declared first to the four walls of the den, later to my aunt, who stood petrified before this breakdown of my accustomed certitude.

In after years, many were the times Jack London half seriously if laughingly charged that my unalterable decision was due, in the last analysis, to occurrences of the ensuing week. But I plead, now as always, complete innocence. Aside from my being more or less absorbed in another and very different person, the man Jack London dwelt in my consciousness little more tenaciously than an unusual book or play.

On Wednesday evening, April fourth, I found a type written note awaiting me at home. This must have been tossed into the waste basket, for I have not seen it since. But it was worded something like this he never lost many hours weeding out formal titles:

“Dear Charmian:

“It will be impossible for me to keep that engagement next Saturday. My letter to your aunt by this mail will explain. Some time in the future, maybe.

“Sincerely yours,

“Jack London.”

As I finished reading, Auntie came in, real distress in her face, for she had grown truly fond of her lovable friend, an affection which he reciprocated. In her hand was a similarly typed missive, covering a page and a half. “Listen to this,” she said in a dead voice, and read to me the unexpected contents, which were Jack’s vindication for the suddenness of his proceeding. I copy:

“1130 East 15th St.,
“Oakland, Calif.,
“April 3, 1900.

“My dear Mrs. Eames:

“Must confess you have the advantage of me. I have not yet seen my book, nor can I possibly imagine what it looks like. Nor can you possibly imagine why I am going to beg off from going out to your place next Saturday. You know I do things quickly. Sunday morning, last, I had not the slightest intention of doing what I am going to do. I came down and looked over the house I was to move into that fathered the thought. I made up my mind. Sunday evening I opened transactions for a wife; by Monday evening had the affair well under way; and next Saturday morning I shall marry a Bessie Maddern, cousin to Minnie Maddern Fiske. Also, on said Saturday, as soon as the thing is over with we jump out on our wheels for a three days trip, and then back and to work. “‘The rash boy,’ I hear you say. Divers deep considerations have led me to do this thing; but I shall over-ride just one objection — that of being tied. I am already tied. Though single, I have had to support a household just the same. Should I wish to go to China the household would have to be provided for whether I had a wife or not.

“As it is, I shall be steadied, and can be able to devote more time to my work. One only has one life, you know, after all, and why not live it? Besides, my heart is large, and I shall be a cleaner, wholesomer man because of a restraint being laid upon me in place of being free to drift wheresoever I listed. I am sure you will understand.

“I thank you for your kind word concerning the appearance of ‘The Son of the Wolf.’ I shall let you know when I am coming out, and now, being located, want you and yours to come and see me and mine. Will settle that when I get back. Wedding is to be private.

“Send announcement later.

“Very sincerely yours,
“Jack London.”

“Heavens and earth!” wailed my aunt. “Think what the boy is doing! A sensible, considered marriage for a love-man like that! Only one life . . .

and why not live it? — The boy must be crazy to dream that marrying in cold blood is living life!"

"No, not crazy, but perhaps super-sane — or thinks he is," I commented, and went down to dinner, probably marveling how "God's own mad lover" may sometimes direct his madness into quite practical channels.

One bitter cold morning in New York City, in the winter of 1918, I was called over the telephone by Jack's longtime friend, Cloudesley Johns:

"Oh, Charmian — I've been looking over those 1899 and 1900 letters of Jack's I promised for your use, and find this, dated March 10, 1900. Listen:

"'Have just finished reading "Forest Lovers" by Maurice Hewlett. Read it by all means. . . . Have made the acquaintance of Charmian Kittredge, a charming girl who writes book reviews, and who possesses a pretty little library wherein I have found all these late books which the public libraries are afraid to have circulated.'"

Thus, Jack London, who always decried puns on my given name, was himself not guiltless in this reference to our passing acquaintance of 1900.

Except for one occasion, when he brought his wife, the pair on bicycles, to call upon us, Jack London dropped out of my sphere of interest, save insofar as I desultorily followed his work. My aunt's article duly appeared in the 1900 May Overland, while their friendship grew apace, until he came to address her in letters as Mother Mine. Later in the year I sold a piece of Berkeley land in which she had long since wisely overborne me to invest my savings, and a portion of the sum realized I spent on a fifteen months vacation in the eastern states and Europe. One icy morning, away up in Mt. Desert Island, opening an Oakland, California, paper, I stumbled upon this item:

"LONDON In this city, January 15, 1901, to the wife of Jack London, a daughter."

A comment read:

"Jack London, the brilliant young author and essayist, is receiving congratulations upon the advent of a daughter. Mr. London is satisfied that he has a real live subject for the study of psychology and other phenomena in which he is so much interested."

In this wise the young adventurer, who has been dubbed "the most picturesque figure in American literature," pursued the law-abiding domesticity he had calculated so nicely as his duty to himself, his work, and society; while I, like Masefield's "Young April on a bloodhorse with a roving eye,” rode merrily upon my own dutiful, dancing, musical way that seemed all-sufficient to my needs, unheedful of the future.

THE STUFF OF STARS

VOLUME I — CHAPTER I

ALL in all, it is a happy fate that places in one's keeping the rudimental material, blood-drift and magical spirit-stuff, that went into the syntheses of this resultant entity whom men knew as Jack London; who in his time was loved or hated as they reacted to his spacious nature with its varying levels of humannesses, its winging heights, its drowning depths.

In sifting and assembling the details bearing upon Jack London's origin, the keen enjoyment of serving his readers joins with a keener zest in singing his pride of race; in sounding the pean, manifest throughout his work, of his very own Anglo-Saxon breed, upon which he gambled his faith. And the pleasure increases as additional verification is uncovered bearing upon his direct British ancestry.

From the heart of the city of London there sprang two large families that bore the city's name, one of which branches was from Semitic seed, as witness Meyer London, erstwhile Socialist congressman at Washington, D. C., and many another in America; while in England one of my correspondents is a Jewess whom I address as "Mrs. Jack London."

The Gentile group, it seems, owned the land of which Chatham Square is now part. One of the early Londons had a sister Elizabeth, who married a Wellington, and lived at Chatham. When Jack London's sister Eliza was a child, she heard her father say, referring to politics in his part of Pennsylvania: "If the Wellingtons and McLoughlins stood together, they'd carry the elections!" In Jack's direct ancestry, the first person in my available record is Sir William London, who foreswore allegiance to Great Britain and betook himself to America. Here, under General George Washington, he fought valiantly for his ideals, thereby sacrificing no mean estates in the tight little island; for these were promptly confiscated by the jealous Crown, and thereafter figured in the mill of Chancery. I can remember Jack London saying: "One of my childhood recollections is of mysterious sessions held by my mother and father, from which I gathered that he had been approached across the water by the London heirs to lend a hand in fighting for his great-grandfather's seized properties."

But a letter from one Mary London Wilson, seventy years old, writing from Lackawanna County, Pennsylvania, in 1904, gives the following: That nearly thirty years before, an advertisement had been run in the papers, calling for information of London heirs in America. For Lord Russell London had died in England, the last of his line, leaving a half million for the American heirs if they could be located. From this letter one learns that none of the Londons knew of this advertisement for nearly two years; when a Charley London, with a lawyer, voyaged overseas, only to find that the estate had gone from Chancery to the Crown.

Sir William London's son William named his son Manley. Manley London married Sarah Hess, and became the sire of eight: Mary, Sarah, Rebecca, George, Martha, Eliza, Joseph, and John London, with whom the direct life-story of Jack London begins. And these Londons, one and all, from the redoubtable knight down to and including his great-grandson John, took part in each and every warlike uprising for American liberty. It would not be out of place here to add that the last of the paternal line, nephews of Jack London, namely, Irving Shepard and John Miller, did their part on sea and land in this twentieth century greatest of all struggles.

John London, great-grandson of Sir William, first saw the light in Springfield County, Pennsylvania, on January 11, 1828. He grew up on a farm, receiving the education attainable in small rural schools nearly a century ago, while he learned the hard, empirical way of agriculture at that early date.

He comes next into view at the age of nineteen, as boss of a section gang in the construction of a great railroad system through Pennsylvania. One day, John reported at the big farm residence of an official of the road, one Hugh Cavett, The latter being absent, his daughter Anna Jane took the message. Eyes and hands struck fire, and in two weeks the pair were married; for John London was a bonnie lad, six feet in his homespun socks, square-shouldered, well-limbed, fine-skinned, with comely hands and feet, and a wealth of soft, wavy brown hair — one of Jack London's own physical characteristics. "Finest head of hair I ever barbered!" old Barber Smith of San Francisco declared of John's luxuriant mane thirty years later. And, like Jack's, John's wide-set, gray-blue, dancing eyes and sweeping ways were not to be resisted by mortal woman. What mattered it to him, when kind called to kind, that Anna Jane's father was his employer and a rich man! He was the owner of profitable farmlands, not only in Westmorel, but in Township Patton, Alleghany County; a stockholder in the Wheeling Bridge property in Virginia, and an investor in various other lucrative schemes that were bringing fortunes to foreseeing men of Hugh Cavett's type. Besides, over and above the love that drew the man and maid so quickly together, was not the comely girl John's very ideal of a capable country-house mistress?

After the wedding John London came to live for a time in the big house, where he began the founding of his own line — a generous contribution of eleven olive branches, some sprouting twin-buds, to the family tree. He was absent frequently, sent out, I gather, by his father-in-law on business connected with the railroad. If the other man was at all put out by the forthright methods of the young couple in matters matrimonial, evidently he made the best of the situation and advanced the unexpected son-in-law in line with his abilities. Moreover, the sedately arriving yearly babies, beginning with Tom and Mary, could not have failed to erase any last vestige of their grandfather's pique.

John London's life-long gallantry is illustrated by a little incident that took place upon his homecoming from one of these trips. Finding his bride over-strained by the housewifely labor of entertaining for weeks a full complement of relatives, he expressed his solicitude by dismiss ing the whole tribe, stating his reasons. He then turned to and helped Anna Jane clear up after them. In quite another setting, half a century later, Jack London said to me:

"When we are married, much as I love an open house, if I cannot afford servants, we'll live in tents so there can't be any entertaining! No domestic drudgery for wife of mine. It's your life and my life, first. Our need of each other lies in different ways than circumscribed domesticity."

Very congenial seem to have been John and Anna Jane. "No one ever saw Jane angry or disagreeable," reads the yellowed fragment of a letter, "nor John London cross or harsh. He was always protecting some one." A roving spirit characterized the London strain, and Anna Jane appears to have been in no wise backward in aiding and abetting its development in her spouse. From the fact that she is not mentioned in Hugh Cavett's will, and by other data, one is led to conclude that he had settled her portion upon her before she and John presently went adventuring up through Wisconsin, with an eye for an abiding-place, thence drifting down to Illinois, where John's mother, a remarkable woman, managed her own stockfarm. Five sons she gave to the Civil War, meanwhile she continued to develop her holdings.

When John London enlisted in the War of the Rebellion, it was from a Missouri farm, and he left behind Anna Jane with seven children. At the close of the war, with one lung out of action as the result of a combined siege of pneumonia and smallpox, he lived with his family in the town of Moscow, Muscatine County, Iowa, in a two-story white house on the town square. Here Eliza was born. On the opposite side of the square stood the flourmill, and John, among other building work, superintended the construction of a bridge across Cedar Eiver, the stream that furnished power to the mill. Eliza remembers well the close proximity of the watercourse. Priscilla was washing and getting dinner, and asked her wee sister to run and see if papa was coming. Eliza toddled to the bench on which she was wont to climb to the window, and pulled over upon herself the steaming tub of clothing big sister had set there. She never forgot how quickly papa, returning from his bridge-building, answered the summons to aid his scalded baby. Later, they migrated to a quarter section of government land outside of Moscow. When his wife was discovered with consumption, John arranged affairs so that he could devote himself to her, and it fell in with their mutual dreams to play at gipsying. For two years they moved over the prairies in a "schooner," and during this time John came into pleasant contact with the Pawnees, by whom he swore stoutly to his dying day. "Play fair with an Indian," he held, "and you can trust him with anything, anywhere. It's wrong treatment that's made sly devils of 'em."

With the redskins this born out-doors man hunted and trapped raccoons and other prairie game; and, in bee-hunting, proved of keener sight than the aborigines in following to its honey store the flight of a homing worker. Later, when the Indians were camping near the farm, John branded his stock, and, unlike some of his neighbors, never lost a single head to any marauder. Play the game squarely, was his philosophy, and you stand to win.

That Anna Jane did not entirely subscribe to this whole sale confidence in the original American crops out in an amusing anecdote, often told by her husband. He, despite the railing of his familiars, had blithely loaned to an old brave fifty cents and a musket, but forgot to mention the little transaction to his wife. It happened that she was alone when the chief came to redeem his obligations, and being very ill, she was badly frightened when his gaunt frame filled the doorway. In round terms she ordered him away; but the Indian, when she refused to touch the fifty cents, strode furiously in a grandly threw the coins into the middle of the floor, and stood the well-cleaned gun carefully in its corner. Stalking as furiously forth, he met his benefactor coming home, to whom he clipped out that the whiteface squaw was no good — too foolish even to take money or guns offered her.

Early in the seventies, John London found himself bereft of his mate, and with an exceptionally large family to consider. One of the sons, Charles, had been injured playing our national game, a ball catching him in the chest. His father conceived a plan whereby he might leave the remaining youngest folk — three of the eleven had died — temporarily with the older sisters and willing neighbors, while he struck out farther West in the hope of benefiting the ailing boy. All was satisfactorily worked out, when John weakened to the wailing of Eliza and Ida, hardly more than babies. At the last moment a rearrangement was effected that included the pair, as well as two friends, Mr. and Mrs. Chase. They, in return for their expenses to California, were to assume the care of Charles and his two little sisters. John never again saw Iowa. Charles grew rapidly worse, and died eleven days after he looked upon his first ocean. The widower disposed of the farm, and with the proceeds established himself in a contracting business in San Francisco. Meantime he placed Eliza and Ida in the Protestant Orphan Asylum on Haight Street, paying for their living and tuition. Eliza London has always averred that the period spent in the quaint, moss-grown stone home was the happiest of her life, and with the tenaciousness of a devoted nature, she had soon fastened her shy affection upon one of the teachers. Next she came to nourish a fond hope that her beloved papa would share her own adoration for teacher, and bring to his girls a new mother. But she was doomed to secret sorrow and tears, for papa, although never blind to a pretty face and womanly traits, was even then under the influence of wholly a different person.

Many a smart beau of that winsome light-opera star of the long ago, Kate Castleton, will smile with awakened memories to learn that a sweet friendship existed between the lovable young singer and the big, quiet, long-bearded man from the Middle West who had such a way with him. But it was not she — and another ardent desire of the wee Eliza, who still wore a ring her idol had sent her, went glimmering with the first. For the lady of her father's second choice in life was not beautiful. And Eliza, who did not consider lovely her own small, expressive face with its deep-blue, black-lashed London eyes, worshiped beauty, and little considered other possible attractiveness in herself or those about her.

Now the widower, ever alert to new impressions from the world's limitless abundance, never convinced but there was something better for him just over the mutely summoning horizon, and with the death of two dear ones still quick in his consciousness, had strayed from his more or less strict Methodist outlook and observances and had become enamored of the doctrines of a spiritualistic cult. Amongst the devout sisters of this group of seekers after truth he met Flora Wellman, a tiny, fair woman in her early thirties, hailing from Massillon, Ohio. Once more in the London fashion, John wasted no moment in binding to him his desire.

The next visiting day at the orphanage, on which he had planned to escort the betrothed to meet his daughters, found him ill; and when the unsuspecting Eliza and Ida were bidden to the stiff reception-room, imagine their astonishment to see an unknown woman, hardly above their own height, rise and announce that she was to be their new mother.

In Jack London's inheritance through his mother, again the blood of Great Britain predominates, for Flora Wellman's ancestry leads back to England and Wales, and includes strains of French and Dutch. The family traces its American residence to pre-Bevolution days. Flora's father, Marshall Daniel Wellman, was born in Augusta, Oneida County, New York, in 1800, son of Betsy Baker and Joel Wellman, both of British stock. Joel was a cooper, plying his trade in the Syracuse District Salt Wells. When Betsy died, he married a second wife who in turn left him a widower. Whereupon, while Marshall and a brother were yet boys, Joel journeyed to the headwaters of the Allegheny Eiver, where the three built and launched a wondrous house boat, called a bateau, and made the voyage to Pittsburgh. Thence the bateau floated them on down to old Beavertown, where Joel had heard there was a demand for pork and whisky-barrels. In his palmy days, Marshall Wellman loved to boast that he had earned a reputation of turning out the best tight oaken barrels ever seen in the region of Beavertown.

A year afterward they moved farther West, this time to Wooster, Ohio. There, from the ashes of timber burned in clearing this new country, Joel and his sons manufactured "pot ash," which they had learned was one of the few products that sold for cash in Pittsburgh. When he was an old man, Marshall remembered well the mountain of stacked ash we piled up south of the town, Wooster, near the Robinson place." Once a sister came all the way from New York to see their land of promise; but she became homesick and Marshall escorted her, the couple on horses, back to New York. While still under twenty-one, he took a contract for building a section of the Allegheny Canal in Pennsylvania; and subsequently Marshall Wellman rose to be the wealthiest citizen of Massillon, Ohio, as wealth was accounted in those days.

Flora Wellman, born August 17, 1843, was the youngest child of Marshall Wellman's family of five, the others being Mary Marcia, Hiram B., Susan, and Louisa. Her mother, Eleanor Garrett Jones, born in 1810 at Brookfield, Trumbull County, Ohio, had married Marshall in 1852. Her father, a devout circuit-rider of Welsh extraction, called "Priest" Jones, well beloved and valued adviser to the countryside, had been a pioneer settler and upbuilder of Ohio when that state was thought of as the whole West. He passed away an honored member of Wooster's society, full of good works, and incidentally leaving a comfortable fortune to his heirs.

The mother died shortly following Flora's birth, and Wellman remarried when she was four years of age. His bride was Julia Frederica Hurxthal, the Hurxthals being another of the pioneer Massillon families that had amassed riches.

The little girl was nurtured in an atmosphere of luxury and culture, her clothes and her hats and her boots, her books, and her teachers, all especially ordered and delivered from New York City; and she has told me that she possessed distinct talents in music and elocution. That no due family observance might be neglected, Marshall Wellman even summoned a portrait painter from New York, who immortalized all the members of the household on his canvases.

"Few mothers of great men have been happy women," some one has written, and Flora Wellman seems to have been no exception. Capacity for happiness may have been a part of her heritage, but fate was extraordinarily cruel. Somewhere around her thirteenth year, I have it from her, she fell victim to a fever that physically stunted her, and probably accounted for her short sparse hair and for certain melancholic tendencies. "I cannot remember the day when my mother was not old," Jack London more than once declared, while relatives, and friends of long standing, have asserted in her advanced years, "She has always been very much as you see her now."

It would seem that the fever almost entirely robbed the unfortunate young soul of youth and gladness. Her eyes were ever fixed upon decline and dissolution, or peering into the hereafter of her spiritualistic faith.

BIRTH

VOLUME I — CHAPTER II

JACK LONDON was born in San Francisco, California, on January 12, 1876. At two o'clock of the afternoon came her woman's hour, that is the most lonely of all hours known to the human, and Flora London's voice was joined by the cry of her first and only child. He weighed nine pounds, which was one-tenth of his mother's weight. She called him John Griffith, — the middle name being in memory of Griffith Everhard, a favorite nephew. Flora and John London, having no formal church affiliations, the infant was never christened, and answered to "Johnnie" until the day when deliberately he selected, and made splendidly his own, the terse British name that has girdled the world wherever books and adventure, and abundant life are known.

The house in which he first expanded his fine young chest and made himself audible, was at Third and Bryant streets, occupied by the Slocums, friends of Flora, the master of the home being a prosperous member of a well-known printing establishment. Contrary to the more or less general belief that Jack London was born in a shanty on a sand-lot, the dwelling was a large and not inelegant one. For this had been a fashionable neighborhood in the changing fortunes of the gay western metropolis, and had not yet lapsed into the subsequent "south of Market" social disfavor.

Unluckily, Flora was unable long to nourish her lusty babe, and he speedily grew thin and blue. John London looked about and discovered among the men working for him one whose wife had lost her latest born and who was willing to become wet-nurse to the white child. Mrs. Prentiss was a full-blooded negress, and proud of it. Many a time Jack London has told how she was bartered on the block for a high price, while her mother was sold down the river. Now she became "Mammy Jenny" to an appreciative foster-son whose faithful and affectionate care years afterward she was until his death; since then, I have as naturally assumed the trust, over and above the provisions of his last will and testament.

It was a veritable cherub that the black woman under took to mother in her essential capacity, white as snow, exquisitely modeled, with dimpled hands and feet surprisingly small for his firm, plump torso. He soon became pink-cheeked, with eyes of violet, his seraphic face haloed in white-gold ringlets too fragile-fine to seem real to the worshiping African, the devotion of whose deprived heart was instant and abiding toward the "teenty, helpless angel." In the Cloudesley Johns correspondence I find this from Jack: "Hair was black when I was born, then came out during an infantile sickness and returned positively white — so white that my negress nurse called me cotton ball."

When the baby was returned to his family they had moved to a cottage on Bernal Heights. And now upon the maternal Eliza devolved most of the rearing of her half-brother, indoors and out, in the energetic year spent in the cottage. The perambulator containing the baby boy, wheeled by a no less azure-eyed girl-child, became a familiar object of an afternoon on the hilly streets.

John London, man of the open field, with clinging conservative principles in money matters, was no match for the swift Western commercial spirit. But he recognized his inability in time to avert disaster, closed his contracting office, and accepted a position with the J. M. Flaven Company's famous IXL Emporium. In his canvassing about the spreading city, built upon its many hills, he was further enlightened of this Farthest West expansive atmosphere. His bubbling sense of humor unavoidably entered into many a conflict with a fading Methodist viewpoint — as one day, on a steep cobbled declivity of Telegraph Hill, when he paused to rest his benevolent, well-shaped hand upon the towseled pate of the handsomest of a group of urchins playing in the street. "What's your name, sonny?" he asked kindly. In later years, one of the best yarns of this indefatigable story-teller wound up with the shock he had sustained from this pure, sweet little child: "'What t'e hell business is it of yourn what's my name? — an' I ain't your sonny, neither!'"

The next on the list of baby Johnnie's unremembered homes was a new six-room flat opposite the old Plaza on Folsom Street, owned by a family of Cohens who dwelt in the lower apartments. John London had steadily bettered his income, and was now employed by the Singer Sewing Machine Company, as general agent and collector. To this day one might find a few of the decayed mansions of the section's past grandeur. In one of these, even then long since converted into a boarding house, I once went to take piano lessons. My teacher dwelt in the inexhaustible fragrance of old cedar paneling, and once surreptitiously led me down a maze of marble staircases into the nether regions of the imposing pile. There my ravished eyes roved about dismantled dining halls of maple and gilt, and a fabulous, echoing ballroom walled in mirrors like Versailles; and the ceiling, I verily believe, was a copy of Rubens' plump charmers and cherubs in Queen Wilhelmina's House in the Wood, near the Hague.

But Flora, never content for long in any spot, found a home she liked better, this time at the blind end of Natoma Street. Here it seemed as if they had come upon the nearest that San Francisco ever conceded to their desire. For the two-storied roomy house was set in a sort of court shaped by the abrupt, vine-fenced termination of the thor-oughfare. It was a blossomy oasis in the engulfing metropolitan life of the ambitious city, through tacit agreement kept neat by the dwellers therein, who carefully tended their window pots and flowering strips of garden soil.

Not to restlessness, however, but to an epidemic of diphtheria was due the subsequent exodus of the Londons from San Francisco. The baby fell a victim, followed by his shadow, Eliza, agonizing doubly on his account. The terrified mother turned to and heroically nursed the pair of them — as when a girl she had with deathly fear courageously brought through smallpox her sister Mary's son, Harry Everhard. To this day Eliza holds that a certain mortuary suggestion from her stepmother whipped her to consciousness and a winning fight for life. Both she and Johnnie were lying in what the doctor pronounced a condition bordering upon dissolution. The exhausted but thrifty Flora asked him if it would be feasible to bury them in the same coffin, when the aroused girl opened horrified eyes and feebly, but unmistakably, protested.

The physician, having proved a poor judge of their resistance, dropped back upon the time-honored recommendations of a sojourn in the country. But business had to be business to the paternal provider, and with his agricultural intentions dear as ever to his heart, this change was regarded from the viewpoint of an enduring rural residence. The first lap toward this end was merely to the large San Francisco suburb of Oakland, to the east across the bay, that wide expanse of capricious waters that set in Jack London's eyes the far away look of the Argonaut. Thus Oakland, in the County of Alameda, for him came to be the center to which he always referred as his home town, from which he fared forth to the adventures in which he recaptured the spirit of romance for a growingly blasé civilization.

BOYHOOD

VOLUME I — CHAPTER III (Oakland, Alameda, San Mateo)

MY father was the best man I have ever known, "Jack London was wont to say," too intrinsically good to get ahead in the soulless scramble for a living that a man must cope with if he would survive in our anarchical capitalist system."

John London once more plunged into business for himself, working toward his pastoral goal. His savings were applied to the leasing and cultivating of a tract of land adjoining the race track at Emeryville, suburb of Oakland near the eastern bay shore, and hard by Shell Mound Park, described in Martin Eden. "With the produce, a green goods store was opened at Seventh and Campbell Streets. This junction was known as The Point by Oaklanders of that day. Here the local and main line trains left terra firma and proceeded out upon a fearsome, teredo-incrusted trestle far into the bay to where the largest ferry steamers in the world conveyed passengers to and from San Francisco. I recall an occasion, in girlhood, when I paddled in the tiny gray-green surf at The Point, and then went indoors for a salt tubbing in water pumped from the bay and heated.

Into this fresh venture John put his savings and his faith, and, despite a rigorous honesty that ranged the most luscious of his justly famed tomatoes at the lowest tiers of the boxes — the "culls" went to less fortunate — neighbors he might have prospered had he let well enough alone. But to his bosom he took a shifty partner, one Stowell, in whose slippery hands he placed the thriving little shop while he traveled in outlying districts. These absences were for the purpose of taking orders and introducing his fruit and vegetables, which were the best Oakland ever enjoyed; and also for buying, at the Stone and the Meek orchards between San Leandro and Haywards, to fill the demand of his own enlarging trade.

One week-end, arriving back unsuspecting from a trip, he discovered that he had been figuratively thrown out, sold out, cleaned out, by his partner. Stowell must have been a clever crook and known his man well, for John was quite unequal to the tangle in which he found himself when he appealed to the law. Fight he did, and manfully; only a pitiful few dollars remained to him at the end of a legal battle.

But with the recurrent youthful optimism that was his chiefest personal charm, he shook those broad spare shoulders free of the sordid morass, threw back his curly poll, and turned toward the race track garden, from which he began supplying the firm of Porter Brothers, commission merchants, who sold his fast augmenting product.

Four successive homes the family occupied during this phase in their fortunes — one at Twelfth and Wood Streets, another on Seventh near Center and Peralta, And then they essayed to cheer the premises known as the Haunted House, the rumor being that a man had hanged himself from a beam therein. Nothing daunted, Mrs. London pitched in and established a kindergarten, in business relations with a Mrs. Kegler. Flora's knowledge of music assisted capitally in this connection, and she taught a few outside pupils as well. Although Eliza and Jack both received piano instructions from her in childhood, they have always united in declaring that they never saw her play. Her method seemed based upon the mechanics of the process, with no attempt to induce the harmonies by personal example. Jack's own memories reached to this house, mainly because it was the stage of his début in trousers — albeit hidden by a jumper. But his infantile pride for once soared above shrinking self-consciousness, and rebelled at the ignominy of this concealment. He was wont, in the most public places, to lift said jumper, that all men might bear witness to the uniform of his sturdy sex. An adorable little man he must have been. Eliza found there was hardly any possession her schoolgirl friends would not part with or lend in exchange for the privilege of taking care of him, or having him sit with them at their desks. He went to the highest bidder, of course; and his sister munched many an otherwise unattainable apple or bun, or pleasured in a borrowed ring or bracelet.

Matters began to mend, and from a subsequent home on Twelfth Street near Castro, they moved upon fifteen acres of the Davenport property in Alameda, where now looms the Clark Pottery Company's factory. So full of strange happenings are our lives, it was in this selfsame Pottery the red Spanish tiling was fashioned to crown Jack London's "Wolf House" on Sonoma Mountain — futile dream-house, three years building, that in a single midnight puffed out in flame and smoke!

John’s success led him to spread operations to other convenient locations, one of which was the later site of the Smith Borax Works. Still other fruitful acres branched out from both sides of the old “Narrow Gauge” trans-bay railway on the Alameda flats. Through commission merchants his produce, ever maintaining its standard of super-excellence, now found ready market in San Francisco. Long after his death, Eliza’s ear one day was caught by a familiar note, caroled by a street hawker. She asked if the words he was singing, “J. L. Corn,” meant anything to him. Needless to say, to his bucolic intelligence, they signified nothing more nor less than mere corn. And it pleased Eliza to inform the man that her father had been, so to speak, the father of his wares.

Like a bad dream, the little Jack always remembered his first intoxication, which took place, at the tender age of five, just after he came to Alameda. It was his task to toddle at noonday with a tin lard-pail of beer out into the fields where John London mopped his brow amidst his springing green creations. One day, the frothy contents overrunning and biting into the scratches on his chubby legs, the small man was seized with a desire to taste the stuff that so refreshed his elders. It was not the first time that out of a vast latent curiosity he had fallen for the temptation to test forbidden choice morsels intended for older folk, which up to now he had found good. Also, the pail was too full, and his calves smarted. Into the crackly foam he buried his hot little face to the eyes, hoping the taste would improve when he reached the yellow liquid. It did not improve; but driven by that persistence that all through his career forced him to complete what he had begun, the doughty youngling drained what was to his tiny paunch a mighty draught. Sorely that same thirsty organ must have been crowded, for alarm spread in him to see how the beer had receded. With a stick, remembering how stale brew was made to effervesce, he stirred what was left, and was rewarded by a crop of white bubbles that would deceive the onlooker. John London, sweating prodigiously and eager to complete his furrow, unnoticing poured the liquor down his dry throat and started up the team, his small son trotting alongside.

The next the inebriated baby knew, he was coming to in the shade of a tree, in his fuzzy brain a crushing terror of flashing steel blades and great shining hooves of plunging horses. Then his eyes, dark with fear, looked up into a reassuring bearded face that bent over him, its solicitude and relief struggling with a mirth it could not quite control. Poor little wayfarer in the fields of chance — he had reeled and fallen between a plowshare and the hind feet of the beasts, and only the plowman's instant halting of the outfit had preserved the baby from being cloven and turned under with the soil.

Another vividly remembered if lesser childish tragedy on Alameda ground was connected with his building instincts, and it came about in this way: Myself a contemporary child in Oakland, transplanted from the indolent Spanish air of Southern California, I remember my aunt and uncle and the neighbors on Thirty-fifth Street discussing the wonder-operetta Satanella which they had attended in the Tivoli Opera House, forbidden pleasure to one so young as I. A magical performance it was, if my excited imagining was correct, of inexplicable appearings and vanishings of sulphurous deities, with all the glamour of intermixed Fairyland and Heaven arrayed against black-and-red but enchanting Sin. Whilst I was drinking in my elders' reminiscent snatches of libretto and score, Johnnie London actually, with his own rounded orbs, beheld the absorbing spectacle. Incited thereby, after a night of fire-illumined nightmare, he undertook to build a little hell of his own under the apple tree by the side of the house. He was assisted wonderingly by his chum, Theodore Crittenden, who, as co-creator, was to be constituted only second in importance to his superior's own Satanic Majesty. But swifter hell than had been anticipated broke loose when the Vice-Devil's assiduous spade accidentally split open the prospective Majesty's chubby nose, and Johnnie's lurid dream collapsed in gore and tears on sister Eliza's clean pinafore.

When Jack London turned sadly from the disappointing soil of human society at large, to solve some of its economic problems in the undisappointing if wearied land that he so patiently reclaimed, he sorrowed from year to year, while his terraced hillsides increased their yield, that John London could not be there to behold and rejoice:

"My one greatest regret, always, is that my father could not live to share my prosperity, he would say. Think of the lasting joy if the two dear old soldiers, your father and mine, could have lived here on the Ranch and watched my blades of grass come up out of the rejuvenated soil — two blades or more where but one grew when I came upon it!" Alas the years are many since that pair of stalwart, childhearted real Americans, born in the same year, laid themselves down untimely.

The three London young folk, Eliza, Ida, and Johnnie, attended the West End School, Alameda, on Pacific Avenue below Webster Street. Eliza was just being graduated from grammar grades when Johnnie entered his first schoolroom to study. Here the bashful but trusting little chap recited his first "piece" when he was about six, and with no more liking for public speaking than was his in adult life:

"Christmas is coming, it soon will be here,
The very best time in all of the year.
I am counting each day on my fingers and thumbs
The weeks that must pass before Santa Claus comes.
No hard words to spell, no writing, no sums;
There's nothing but playtime when Santa Claus comes."

To employ his own words, he had "no recollection of being taught to read or write," and "could do both at the age of five." Eliza remembers him as forever with a book in his hands; and, it not being a bookish household, he must have read and reread from the days when she had "read the pictures" to him out of a printed linen Mother Goose. In this manner she had beguiled him to slumber on lonely evenings in San Francisco, when Mr. and Mrs. London were out, probably with their spiritualist friends. In the ten years that the girl constantly companioned her half-brother, she found him intensely alive to impressions, quick to grasp meanings but half explained, and early to make use of his available vocabulary. Of large words he heard few; but out of his simple store he sought and applied the precise best ones adapted to express his thought.

But his glorious endowment of normality was pervaded by a sensitiveness that comported with the delicate skin, the aristocratic hands and feet and small-boned frame that never, in adolescence, bore up unharmed under the demands of contradictory sturdy muscles of shoulder and trunk and limb. This timidity, or shyness, that masked a hunger for sympathy and understanding from moment to moment, was more often expressed by the laying of a dimpled fist into Eliza's ever-receptive clasp. Deep feelings were not habitually demonstrated in the household. "I do not remember ever receiving a caress from my mother when I was young," Jack has said; "but I was at long intervals cheered by my father's comprehending hand laid upon my head, and his kind, 'There, there, sonny!' when things went wrong." Thus Eliza and the boy, both of intensely loving nature, were impelled together in a lasting relation of confidence.

One grateful spot in Alameda memories was the spic and span cottage of Mammy Jenny Prentiss near Willow Street Station. Her bright-eyed foster-baby often ran away to the crooning embrace of the colored woman whose greatest pride was her own untarnished blood, and who always was tastefully and pridefully dressed. There her spoiled white child was sure of welcome and wondrous pastry, dispensed with adoration and a lavish hand, and there "Will and Annie were like cousins." Flora Wellman's own stiff pride of race had already made its mark on Johnnie's subjective operations; but that it had not become a recognized form is shown by his ignorance of the fact that his half-white playmates were other than like himself. One day, Will Prentiss, aged six, was at the house, getting some of the "culls" of fruit and vegetables with which John London so generously favored his friends. Little Johnnie in an uproarious tomato-fight plastered a ripe red one upon the perfect nose Will had inherited from his mother, and cried out with innocent cruelty, to Will's weeping shame: "Oh, gee! Willy! I've made your nose as flat as a nigger's!"

As the savings accumulated, Flora's ambition for the Just Beyond urged her husband toward his unforgotten mecca, and they presently returned to the other side of the Bay. This time they leased a seventy-five acre farm, likely the Tobin Ranch, on the "Peninsula" south of San Francisco, in San Mateo County, and near what now shows on the map as Moss Beach. In level sandy loam not far from the ocean, John concentrated upon the perfecting of the finest potatoes in the San Francisco market — his principal triumph on that farm.

Where the money went, over and above necessities, after the expenses of moving had been squared, was a lifelong puzzle to Jack and Eliza. Jack designated himself as a "meat-eater." While there was always enough to eat in the house, flesh-food may at times have been scarce, or delayed in delivery, and he craved it perhaps out of proportion to his need, as children will. Note the following quotation from a letter, written in a fit of blank despondency, to the sweetheart of his early twenties. In view of a possible future with him, she had urged him to for sake writing and cease not from hunting a steady salary.

"Why, as you have laid down my duty in your letter, if I had followed it what would I have been to-day? I would be a laborer, and by that I mean I would be fitted for nothing else than labor. Do you know my childhood? When I was seven years old at the country school of San Pedro, this happened. Meat, I was that hungry for it I once opened a girl's basket and stole a piece of meat — a little piece the size of my two fingers. I ate it but I never repeated it. In those days, like Esau, I would have literally sold my birthright for a mess of pottage, a piece of meat. Great God! when those youngsters threw chunks of meat on the ground because of surfeit, I could have dragged it from the dirt and eaten it; but I did not. Just imagine the development of my mind, my soul, under such material conditions. This meat incident is an epitome of my whole life."

Now, from the foregoing and some other quotations, the reader is likely to gather that Jack was at times given to hyperbole when, driven and discouraged, he reviewed his thorny path. I may be forgiven, considering many years of intimate observation, if I comment upon a tendency he evinced toward self-concentration when overdone by thinking, or work, or trouble. This is a delicate matter upon which to disagree, since he is not here to argue the point. But as I see it, his excessive sensibilities, despite formidable endurance, caused him to suffer more acutely, mentally and physically, than the average run of human beings. Since his increasing ambitions to do and be, goaded him ever to superactivity, his case was hopeless, in that he must undergo weariness of heart and brain. He could not rest, therefore he did not rest. Hence, I occasionally found him prone to exaggerate, not the thing itself, but the enormity of the thing treated. Take that matter of going hungry in childhood. Once, looking up from a volume she was reading, I overheard his mother say to Eliza:

"Here Jack has written that he didn't have enough to eat. And I've heard him say the only time he ever took anything that didn't belong to him, was some meat out of another boy's lunch basket at school. Do you remember any time when we did not set a good table? I can't. He didn't go hungry in our house! He surely must mean when he was off goose-chasing on the creek, or out all night on the streets, or something of that sort. Why, you know, his father always had vegetables, and if meat was ever scarce, there were plenty of chickens."

And Eliza was equally put to it to recall slim fare.

From Jack London's recollection of this phase in his peripatetic life, he drew the rather bleak and depressing coast line, too often muffled in dreary fogs, the scarcity of English-speaking society, his mother's vaunt that she and hers were "old American stock" and not "dagoes" nor immigrant Irish — and the red brand on his gray substance of a second bout with alcohol. It would seem that from his earliest conscious observation of a beckoning world, turn where he would, alcohol appeared as playing a mysterious part in the pleasures of the god-like, enviably unshackled grown-up, and in the romance, pleasant and otherwise, but still the romance, of manly, reckless, invincible youth. His father, in no wise a "drinking-man," found smacking satisfaction in a quart-pail of mild beer; nor was his mother averse to the cooling cup. Even the incompetent who reigned supreme in the little box of a schoolhouse enjoyed ill-hidden libations behind his desk, and afterward a one-sided thrill in "licking" the pupils who were too small to retaliate, as the larger sometimes did.

At the long desk with his class, Johnnie had not sat without meditating, no matter to how little purpose, over the very evident pleasurable action upon the grown-ups of beverages other than water. For so precocious a child in book-learning, he was peculiarly and adorably a hero-worshiper of those in authority, whose opinions he accepted as inspired. Until partial disillusionment in late boyhood, this open-souled trustfulness was always a-battle with an intellectual development out of keeping with his age.

And now, the guileless little man came to grips with hitherto unknown breeds of humans upon a temperamental day of mingled Italian and Irish joviality, largely induced by heavy red grape of California, there was literally thrust upon him his second stunning brush with an ambushed enemy he had no wisdom nor preparation for with standing.

The Week of the Holy Ghost was nigh, and an invitation to unlimited hospitality for seven days and nights to the countryside dwellers of whatsoever nationality or religion, was sent out by an Italian ranchman, "old man Margo. Now, the Signor Margo had married an English woman who had given him a fair-haired, blue-eyed son, Dominic, whom it was the father's fond ambition to waste no time in marrying to the right American girl. The trim looks and competent ways of Eliza London, in her earliest teens, had attracted many an approving glance from the old man, and an exceptionally pressing bid was made for the company of her family at his house. The elders declined, but allowed the children to go.

So it came about that on Sunday the three young Londons trudged six miles to the Margo ranch, where a typical Irish-Italian merrymaking was in full blast. By this time the small brother's searching mind had begun to lead him out of his timorousness, and the tanned little fists were more often by his sides or occupied otherwise than in feeling for his elder sister's protecting hand. Life was commencing to wave her royal-colored emblems before his awakening eyes, and more and more was he lost in contemplation of her pageantry, to a growing oblivion of the old self–consciousness. But he was an infant at heart, unknowing of evil, and the occurrences of this Sabbath day were burned inerasably on the malleable stuff of his reactive brain.

From the Margo kitchen the strange clamor of a culminating situation, begun with the free drinking of the previous night, only whetted the half-fearful inquisitiveness of our trio, which drew them irresistibly into the reeking dim room. Small Johnnie's big eyes must have nearly burst their expansive spheres at this sudden introduction into a scene where the gamut of human passions was either sounded or indicated. To woman's hysteria he was no stranger — his adult aversion to such uncontrol amounted almost to a hysteria in itself; but the girls screams, frightened or loudly skittish, at the rough or drink-addled per-formances of the men with them or with one another, curdled his tender blood and nerves. He sat in a daze. His sense of proportion was all awry. Never, even under tantrums, had he beheld humans acting so illogically — flying tooth and nail at one another's throats one minute, the next clumping to ungainly embraces of forgiveness and reeling good fellowship; while yet others, too sodden to fight, mouthed their tongue-tangled approval or criticism of the changing humors of stronger-headed brethren.

The seven-year-old child, soon fascinated beyond vestige of alarm, sensed the increasing tide of lawlessness as the men poured an incessant stream of liquid down their straightened necks. He saw the now worried girls melt out of the doorways, as the clumsy brawling doubled and trebled among the rough aliens of hot and unruly bloods, until some impetus sent the whole mad company lurching down the sandy road to another ranch.

And the diminutive Jack London here put into practice the first evidence of that tactful sixth sense of fitness that early rendered him, the indomitable, fine one, into the very genius of Mixers. In a few years this intuitive faculty was to earn him the proudest title ever bestowed upon him by the sycophant earth — Prince of the Oyster Pirates. For now a wee Irish lassie, only other child of his age in the maudlin crowd, walked by his side. Like many another gay blade, he never was able to recall the name of his sweet maiden; but the favor in her blue, blue eyes commanded a chivalrous instinct to emulate her older sister's swain, walking just ahead, in all but his gait. Around her plump waist went his dutiful, sympathetic if timid arm, and they bumped along in blissful discomfort for the half of an uneven sandy mile — after which, guided by her consenting eyes, they clasped hands instead.

Turn about, the Irish ranch hilariously welcomed the partially sobered pilgrims, who “tanked up” afresh, till afresh swelled and roared the fun. A hospitable Italian offered Johnnie wine. He declined with thanks, and later a second proffer. And here renewed apprehension quickened his heart-beats, for there loomed suddenly the oft-voiced prejudice of his blonde mother toward all black-eyed men and women, as being actuated by deceitful motives, if nothing more deadly. As for Latins, “dagoes” as they were known to her confiding offspring, their ways were associated in his mind with keen-flashing knives called daggers.

When Italian Pete, with humorous diablerie unguessed by the alarmed boy, clouded his black brows over the lightning of blacker, snapping eyes, in fiery disapproval of this insult to red, red wine, Johnnie’s nerves already made him feel the thrusted two-edged metal turning between his ribs. In that semi-autobiography “John Barleycorn,” thirty years later he wrote: “I have faced real death since in my life, but never have I known the fear of death as I knew it then.” Nevertheless he steeled himself and put his dimpled hands about the heavy glass, which he lifted and drained to the nauseating bitter dregs — and dregs they were, for this was the cheap “red paint” made from the leavings of great vats after the best vintage had been casked.

Poor little lad! One’s heart wells and there is a catch in the throat to picture him sitting there in his linen jumper, dusty small feet dangling above the floor he could not reach, and, for once alone and unadvised, facing with wide, brave eyes the very certainty of violent extinction from an existence he had but lately begun to appraise and value. “One will do anything to live,” he goes on in what he called his “alcoholic memoirs.” The little chap downed a second and what seemed countless succeeding draughts of liquid fire to his unaccustomed membranes, for the loudly amused Pete had called his friends one and all to witness the valiant infant. Little the boy recked that he was inviting strangling death otherwise than from the assassin’s knife. That he did not smother, then or in the following hours, is the everlasting marvel. Out of the house and on the heavy gray road again, with his own girl like the other sweethearts sober and solicitous of him, in a tottering haze he solemnly imitated the antics of the wild Irish and Italians in the zigzagging procession that wound among the sandhills.

And finally, still imitating, he brought up in a roadside ditch, although he had not intended to overstep its dizzy edge. Out of what might have been his open grave, his sisters and several badly scared older girls fished him, and like one roused from his last sleep in the snow, they tried to keep him walking, walking, those in terminable miles home. But when Mrs. London opened the door, it was from their arms she received her raving, unconscious son.

“It is a wonder that I did not burst my heart or brain that night,” he says in “John Barleycorn,” detailing the experience in such way as the searing horror made possible at so long range of time. And in spite of the heroic reputation his prowess gave him amongst the aliens roundabout, very clear was his “resolution never to touch alcohol again.” “No mad dog was ever more afraid of water,” and “I didn’t like the damned stuff,” he recalls his subsequent childish perspective, for there was not much living language in the neighborhood that did not enter into the processes of his pliant, growing brain.

Before he was eight, this sweetly gullible boy with his remarkable contrasting outlook had somehow come into possession of an incomplete copy of Ouida’s “Signa,” which his mind absorbed like an unspotted, depthless blotter. In the spring of 1912, Jack London, one day browsing in a dingy second-hand shop in Harlem for books to add to our traveling library on a voyage around Cape Horn, came across a cheap reprint of “Signa.” Home to our Morningside apartment he carried the small-typed story which, he had all his life declared, had had more in-fluence in the shaping of his carrer than any other, not even excepting Herbert Spencer’s “Philosophy of Style.” Upon the lurching poop-deck of the big four-master “Dirigo,” off the unseen coast of Brazil, I listened, not always with dry eyes, to the rhythmic, caressing voice as Jack reread the loved romance which had opened to his groping intelligence the gates to unsurmised beauty.

“He was only a little lad,” was Signa, the warm-souled Italian peasant child who attained to heights of fame. With these very words the roseate tale commenced. And so was he, schoolboy Johnnie London, only a little lad. Therefore he speedily constituted himself a peasant likewise, in whom there might reside untold marvel of genius, even if imprisoned within a gray landscape that required closed eyes and concentration to clothe with the splendor that was Signa’s Italy.

“Reading the story,” the grown man gazed down his years, “my narrow hill-horizon was pushed back, and all the world made possible if I would dare it. And he dared, at least to contemplate greatness for himself. Like the tawny, golden-eyed bambino, he would become a musician, and a superlative one; only, his mother’s unforgotten lessons led him to think music in terms of ivory keys and certain not unpleasing harmonies he had stumbled upon. There was no piano in the farm house, and the breathy strains in dance-measure, from accordions manipulated by tipsy volunteers on that shuddering Sunday of Holy Week, were the sole music he had heard for nearly two years.

Eliza’s budding practical foresight had not hitherto made toward planning artistic achievement for her dreamy half-brother. But when he had coaxed her to read his book, with mutual infatuation they discussed it upon every possible occasion — while he dried the dishes, or they helped papa sack his smooth-coated, regularly symmetrical potatoes, or in quiet corners where she helped him with his examples. Ouida herself would doubtlessly have regretted the established denouement of her own novel, could she have listened to the hazards these two made concerning the missing last quarter of it. However, they did come to share it in the long run of their futures.

LIVERMORE VALLEY

VOLUME I — CHAPTER IV Ages 8 to 10

LIVERMORE VALLEY, where lay the last of the string of farms in John London's diminishing fate, never glowed in Jack London's memory any more rosily than the preceding San Mateo countryside. A fertile enough district it was, and undeniably torrid in midsummer, as I can attest; for here, again, our paths crossed when I as a child camped in the low hills not far from this same farm. "Livermore Valley was very flat," was his retrospect, "and even the hills around were then, to me, devoid of interest. . . . They and their valleys were eyesores and aching pits, and I never loved them till I left them."

"Signa," pored over for numberless hours here, from his eighth to tenth year, and still lacking the forty tragic final pages, had ruined him for the commonplace. "Even then there were whispers, art-promptings; my mind inclined to things beautiful." Life on a ranch became to his awakened ambition "the dullest possible existence," while every day he "thought of going out beyond the skyline to see the world." He was on his bright way to a soaring idealism, which later, combined with an enduring practicality, made of him an extraordinary entity both as Doer and Thinker.

Despite the dreary image of it which he henceforth carried, the eighty-acre Livermore holding was really the liveliest and most promising of all — and further distinguished as the first California land John London had been able to call his own. As a grown citizen, Jack would have been charmed by the fact that it was portion of an old Spanish estate, and thus bound indissolubly with the glamorous 'forties. As it was, the farm could not have been actually unattractive. There was a nine-acre orchard in full bearing, and what boy does not welcome an orchard? And pigs there were, chickens, and cooing pigeons galore — to say nothing of remunerative rabbits, fluffy, snow-white, pink jewel-eyed bunnies that could not but stir the boy's animal loving bosom as well as his innate sense of beauty; while the proud cocks and their harems were of no mean breeds. The farm house was comfortably large for all needs of family and the extra men hired in harvest time.

To be sure, everybody worked — Flora and her husband here and there and everywhere. Eliza, barely fifteen, cooked for the whole hungry establishment, and besides aided her papa with the rabbits and pigeons and the three incubators in the brooding houses — John was right up to the minute in modern appliances, — not to speak of her work in the vegetable areas. As with Jack London, there was never anything small or restricted in John's projection of an ultimate achievement. It was in judgment of character, and of investments for his hard-gained money, that he seemed wanting. He had failed to discover in civilized society the undeviating honor shown to honor by the otherwise crafty aborigine of the Middle States. Perhaps, too, he was leniently weak in the matter of capitulating to counsel even less prudent than his own. Just when he might be considering a halt in expenditures, his wife's vehemently expressed insights would make appeal, or, listening to her exposition of the way out of a difficulty, he would be overborne. Thus a mortgage was laid upon the Livermore land in order to erect a twenty-five-hundred dollar barn for his Blackhawk and Morgan horses; and proud as he was of this handsome feature of the farm, he was not content under the burden of debt. And yet, just as he had gambled on new scenes in his youth, this fresh risk was not without its allurement; and the pair of them took other long chances poorly handled investments, irresistible lottery tickets, and God knows what else.

John's aspirations were far-seeing and clean. It was more than a decade after the good man was laid to rest that Jack London's own agricultural experimentation began to open out. And he grieved for the broken dream and endeavor of this honorable, straight-aiming spirit. John's best satisfaction, even at toll of grinding labor, lay in pursuing an ideal which the younger man, guided by his cumulative data, came to regard as unerring and incalculable in its economic benefit toward humanity.

Sometimes their mysterious affairs caused Mr. and Mrs. London to drive up to San Francisco. And he, reins taut over the polished backs of the best trotting-blood in America, probably was happier then than at any other time in his middle life. Later, the beautiful Blackhawk stallion, with his mares as well as the Morgans, went to liquidate the livery stable bills incurred on these trips. Once they had remained away for two months, leaving Eliza in sole charge. She must have pondered, young thing that she was, while she worked indoors and in field, grasping what little social fun there was to be had in the sparse neighborhood, if life were all of a workaday piece. Her half-brother pondered, too, when he trudged home from school and found her hard at it, in season and out, and himself called to help at chores. Yes, everybody had to labor, it seemed, women and all. There must be some way out. And while he performed his day-long task of watching for the bees to swarm, he registered the vow that when he became a man, no women-folk of his should toil like this.

How they got into the house he never knew, but one day he came upon a "Life of Garfield," also a worn copy of "Paul du Chaillu's African Travels," in which he retained belief and admiration all his life. The school teacher lent him Washington Irving a "Alhambra," which he proceeded to bolt whole, and reread and digest for the period spent on the Livermore farm. Once again, always the Builder, he started to build, not a little Inferno as in Alameda, but an Alhambra on the plans of Washington Irving. From the mellow-red bricks of a fallen chimney he reared its towers and laid out terraces and arcades, labeling with his school chalk its various sections. All the while he existed in a world of his own making, that outstripped the humdrum existence of the hot little ranch a world so real that he could not comprehend why every one, at home or in school, did not share in the wonder of his creation. He seemed set aloof from the beginning, by means of the uncommon knowledge he acquired.

"My other reading matter," he surveyed that portion of his childhood," consisted mainly of dime novels, borrowed from the hired man, and newspapers in which they gloated over the adventures of poor but virtuous shopgirls." Through reading such trash, he goes on, his out look became ridiculously conventional; and so, when a stranger arrived from the city, very proper as to manner and boots, with fine clothes and stylish hat, the famished idealist conceived this to be the manner of man who would know all about the Alhambra and be able to discuss the enchanting subject. He possessed himself of the visitor's unwilling hand, led him to where the little red-brick Alhambra lifted its proud turrets, then stood looking up with shining expectation of an oracular approval. None was forthcoming nothing — but a laughing sneer; and the pitiful small seeker, abashed and comfortless, fell back upon the inevitable if perplexing conclusion that there must be but two clever persons in the whole desolate scheme of things — himself and Washington Irving. This "gentleman" guest from the city, heaven knows why, deliberately and with malice stole and hid the hallowed volume far underneath the house, in company with a cherished rubber ball. I have seen Jack almost weep when reviewing the tragedy it was to his trusting little self, puzzled, blameless of offense — for he was not a boisterous or troublesome child. None but a creature of distorted impulses could have tortured a young thing for days and nights as this one was tortured. Superacute as pain always was to his body, never did he suffer as keenly from physical as from mental hurt. Only an inherent normality preserved him from spiritual ruination by his non-understanding environment. I cannot recall distinctly how he recovered the book, but have a dim impression that he told me the tormenter finally guided him to the point whence he had thrown it under the house, and laughed mockingly at the scrambling bare legs of the youngster as he dived unafraid among cobwebs and ordinarily dreaded crawly things, in eagerness to clasp his treasure.

Johnnie's first acquaintance with death came during this phase in his undirected development, and furnished matter for exercise of his speculative trend. He was helping his father reset some pasture fence posts that the cows had bent down. Digging deep, John London unearthed a corpse that had not altogether returned to dust. The boy remembered it as a fearsome mess that had lain a long time. They never learned how it came there.

That he was beginning to formulate some sort of logical sequence out of the chaotic mass of observations which bivouacked in his brain, and suspect a different and improved existence, is evidenced by a well-ordered plan he outlined to Eliza for their common future. They were to live in a large dwelling almost entirely filled with books. He would not marry until he was forty and his mind stored with the knowledge he craved; for matrimony did not present itself as conducive to studious repose. Meantime Eliza would make a home for them both, and more especially stand between him and the annoying people he yearned to avoid.

It may be that I have Eliza to thank that this became my own devoted task, instead of hers. At the age of sixteen she exchanged one life of unrelieved care for another, by uniting herself to a widowed veteran of the Civil War, one Captain James H. Shepard, nearly thirty years her senior and with several children, the eldest about Johnnie's age. Captain Shepard, desiring to place his motherless brood in a country home, had written to a friend in San Francisco, who in turn inquired of Flora London if she could accommodate them. Some correspondence passed, and through misunderstanding Captain Shepard arrived at the farm with the children when John and Flora were away. Eliza drove to the station to meet the guests, and entertained them to the best of her conspicuous ability, captivating the middle-aged ex-soldier as much as anything else by her maternal ways. In three months her little brother's dream was smashed and he left desolate, for she married and went to live in Oakland. Her devotion to the stepchildren was provocative of much good-natured raillery amongst the neighbors, to the effect that she had fallen in love with and married the children.

Through a combination of disastrous investments, and poor management, things had been going from bad to worse. A few months after Eliza's departure the farm was abandoned and as much realized as possible from the sacrifice of improvements. John and his wife with their boy and Ida removed to Oakland, where they put what was left from the farm proceeds into an eight-roomed house at East Seventeenth Street between Twenty-second and Twenty-third Avenues, near where Eliza lived. Not far off dwelt Mammy Jenny Prentiss, whose joy it was to spoil more passionately than ever her "white child," for his foster-sister and-brother were both underground by now. When Prentiss died some years later, Jenny sustained herself a long time by nursing and a slight income from a bit of inherited "property" she always proudly referred to. Chided for working so hard, when she might rest upon her foster-son's bounty, she would indignantly snap: "They think I'm in my dotey (dotage), and can't take care of my self alone! This pride cost the adult Jack more trouble than her "property" was ever worth, for she looked to him to make it pay. He often advised her to sell her lots and spend the money on herself — "Buy silk dresses and theater tickets with it, Mammy Jenny," he would implore. "You know I'm never going to see you in need, now and forever, whether I live or die; and I want you to quit worrying and have a good time with your money while you can" — all the while appreciating her desire for economic independence.

In his eleventh year, the dreaming lad awakening to the gripping, harsh realties, began to perceive the under side of things. He was enrolled as one of the first pupils of the four-roomed Garfield School on Twenty-third Avenue, between Sixteenth and Seventeenth Streets, and soon progressed to the Franklin School at Eleventh Avenue and Fifteenth, where he came abruptly upon his first radical clash with another's personality. The teacher did not understand him nor even try. He, phenomenally quick in mastering lessons, which gave him more time for the ever-handy story book, could not learn from her, and failed of promotion. More than once his perturbed mother was obliged to call at the schoolhouse to straighten out alleged insubordination. He was an eminently teachable creature, but from the very first he seemed to gather that teachers were not placed on a rostrum to think, but merely to teach. Whenever he tried to elicit reasoned opinions upon his vivid ideas and their relations one to another, he faced a stone wall, and was thrown, as in the Alhambra incident, back upon himself and his lonely particular ego. Evidently the system was such that a child could not learn to the extent he was able, but must limit his most divine searchings to a gray curriculum that was, for him, only too readily compassed. He did not represent the difficulty in just this way, but clearly grasped that he was embarrassingly different from the patterned children around him, and that his gropings and probings were interpreted as impertinences. He had not yet happened upon the felicitous word "mush" to describe the interior substance of certain persons possessed or unpossessed of teachers certificates.

But what he did or did not gain from association with so blind a treatment, drove him, as did his first and very brief university education, to the ramshackle public library that leaned against the old City Hall on Fourteenth Street, for collateral reading. The little boy, hunched over the worn library table, so long deprived of all literature except the four books at Livermore, devoured print until his eyemuscles twitched and burned and he saw black spots every where; while his almost prostrated nerves jumped into the preliminary stages of St. Vitus dance. He became so irascible and rickety that he would cry out when spoken to or touched, "Don't bother me — go away, you make me nervous!" Somewhere he writes: "I filled an application blank [with "The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle"], and the librarian handed me the collected and entirely unexpurgated works of Smollett in one huge volume. I read everything, but principally history and adventure, and all the old travels and voyages. I read mornings, afternoons, and nights. I read in bed, I read at table, I read as I walked to and from school, and I read at recess while the other boys were playing." It was at the ripe age of twelve that he came to read Wilkie Collins's "The New Magdalen," and greatly shocked a nice young lady by trying to discuss it.

Presently he attracted the notice of the head librarian, Miss Ina Coolbrith, and fell shyly in love with this to him new type of womanhood — so lady-fine, and a true poetess. Hers was the first intellectual guidance under which he benefited, and he never ceased from his loving gratitude and admiration.

Straightway the boy's two families, his mother's and Eliza Shepard's, must apply for library cards, which he kept so busy that he crossed and recrossed the library threshold more often than any other subscriber. It was from this same public library that, when he joined the Klondike Rush, he calmly walked off with two volumes, upon Eliza's pledge that she would reimburse the library — a pledge which she kept, whether or not she approved of the somewhat irregular transaction. "The fact that he wanted it done, was enough," she tersely comments upon the incident.

Luckily for physical well-being, Johnnie soon realized that he must bestir himself toward his own up-keep, and the first move was on the street, selling newspapers. Home life was soon a thing forgotten, if ever it had been a normal one for this spiritually lonely creature. His mother had now determined that a boarding-house for the Scotch women-workers at the California Cotton Mills near by would recover her shrunken fortunes. At times when a cook was unobtainable, Eliza came over and helped out as a matter of course. With the boarding-house earnings in hand, Flora's project spread into a lot next door, which she mortgaged so that she might erect a rooming-house upon it. Her idea was Utopian, for was it not a fine thing for these factory women each to have her own private apartment? But her altruism did not go hand in hand with ability to see it through, and scheme as she and her good husband might, in the end both properties were forfeited to the mortgage.

Jack London's tenderest and most sympathetic memories of his father centered about occasions when the two went boating and fishing on the "Creek," an estuary lying between Oakland and Alameda. His unchained, mobile imagination had begun to take hold upon the dull tragedy of this man with the merciful lips and hands who had asked so little of a perverse destiny which had withheld success from him in even that little. He made no outcry; but from under the thoughtful heavy brows the kind gray eyes gazed forlornly enough across the green water-way to the low ground that was once blessed with his rows of corn and potato hills and succulent resetted lettuces, and the coral stalks of rhubarb that had been Eliza's especial care and pride. The minds of John London's few acquaintances who still live, are tinged by the lifeless impression carried from those years when the merry-hearted one had become a broken thing, hiding an aching sense of failure beneath his fine reticence. It is but a spiritless image of the warm and lovable character that they can reconstruct.

The average man or woman does not easily learn to search beneath the restrained exterior, the bearded visage, for the tender mouth; or behind the quiet, retrospective eye, for the gentle strength and humor — qualities that were more and more hidden as the elder London bowed to disillusionment. But Jack, being Jack, was by now able to extract more knowledge of his goodness and personal charm than at any time in their years of daily intercourse. This was enhanced by the semi-adventurous experiences they shared on that attractive body of tide water which washed the keels of idle whalers and the ornate sterns of vessels of all rigs and builds from all the world, laid up at the edge of the Alameda flats. Most of them never budged until the Great War required them. Whether digging clams in the oily, cool blue mud, or fishing for flounders and rock cod and "shiner" from wharves or anchored skiff or the old sea-wall that bounded the Creek on the north, or rowing and sailing curiously amongst those painted hulls that had thrilled to the onslaught of the Seven Seas — it was all of a fabric of romance with the books. And in those rare days of quiet communion or interesting hap and mishap, the two came to love each other in true comradely, unquestioning fashion, as they had never before loved any one. Only their eyes, blue to blue under California's blue sky, spoke the deep and holy sentiment that stirred them. Each was better and happier, back in the clattering boarding-house, for these comprehending hours out upon the waters.

Here, tugging at anchor in flood or ebb, or at the oars plunging bow-on to the glossy gray-green rollers cast by John L. Davie's big side-wheel ferry steamers, or yet learning the why and wherefore of eating into the wind under a tiny sail, the little born seaman's heart was claimed by the wave. In all his vivid life, never was he so at rest in spirit as upon the water — be it deep sea or inland stretch.

A railroad accident to John at about this juncture, which laid him up with several fractured ribs, did not improve the prospect; and the succeeding house where the growing boy passed his sleeping hours — for home to him had become a place where one slept and ate — was a small one in the "West

End," on Pine Street below Seventh, near the familiar "Point." This man Davie, who had established the new five-cent ferry route to San Francisco from where Broadway ended in the estuary, cutting the octopean Southern Pacific's rate two-thirds, gave the recuperating John London a job as night watchman. In the daytime he added to his slender means by canvassing and collecting. Presently, when John L. Davie rose in Oakland politics, he appointed his dependable friend as a special officer on the Police Force. It was the same Davie, at this writing, Mayor of Oakland for the third time, who, backed by the City Council, in 1917 transplanted from Mosswood Park a seventeen-year-old oak, twenty-four feet high, to the City Hall Park, where it was dedicated to the memory of Jack London, son of his old friend. Only a few yards from this thriving young denizen of the open, now towers the impressive building that superseded the old City Hall and public library where Jack London opened the books and began the omniverous reading he pursued unabated for the thirty years that followed. Under Officer London's protection the newsboy was convoyed about in the "tenderloin" night life of the town, and new and lurid were the reflections that flitted across his expansile mental mirror. In such conditions the two resumed their ever sweet if fragmentary companionship. Squeezed behind the door-keepers of public dance-halls, or of dives, the boy strained his eyes upon the curious performances of the under-world, as well as those of the relaxing working classes. Here again, he could not but be struck by the fool-making effects of too much alcohol; and when these effects exceeded foolishness, and drinkers were jangled off to jail in "hurry-up wagons," he was confused by the fact that drinking was a licensed pastime for the young as well as the matured, and not frowned upon by the men who sat in the high places. On the contrary, in saloons he actually beheld such exalted personages also imbibing the potent drafts, little recking that their joviality was often but a cloak for ills that drove them to the inhibitions of alcohol.

Another circumstance that throws light upon his mental strife was the recurrent enigma as to where the dollars went that his father and mother earned. He knew roughly what constituted living expenses; but where disappeared the surplus, and his own little hoardings? For Jack's inner hurt, at the time, I have recourse again to his letter to the sweetheart of his early twenties:

"I was eight years old when I put on my first undershirt made at or bought at a store. Duty! — at ten years I was on the street selling newspapers. Every cent was turned over to my people, and I went to school in constant shame of the hats, shoes, clothes I wore. Duty — from then on, I had no childhood. Up at three o'clock in the morning to carry papers. When that was finished I did not go home but continued on to school. School over, my evening papers. Saturday I worked on an ice wagon; Sunday I went to a bowling alley and set up pins for drunken Dutchmen. Duty — I turned over every cent and went dressed like a scarecrow." Delivering the afternoon paper led him into queer places and deeper bewilderment. In Temescal, at that time the "tough" northern boundary of the city, when he handed the "Enquirer" to Josie Harper, mistress of a road house at Thirty-ninth Street and Telegraph Avenue, he marveled that so immense and unladylike a female should be less forbidding in her manner than certain more refined subscribers. He could not help liking her rough-and-ready jollity, and one day when she asked the barkeeper to pour a glass of wine for him, he was powerless to refuse the honor. But it tasted no better than the "red paint" of Italian Pete, and in future he tried to pass the paper to the barkeeper rather than to that dignitary's hospitable employer.

One happening in his news-purveying always stood forth sharply if laughably in memory, an additional item that gave him pause with regard to the strangeness of human destiny. An appetizing odor of coffee drifted through the doorway of a squalid hallway where he had just shot the hard-folded morning sheet out of his dexterous hand. Now Jack was at all times a lover of coffee, and nothing would do but he must follow his twitching nose the length of the narrow passage, and stick that same nose into a kitchen to the right.

"Good morning," he remarked pleasantly, with no idea that his friendly mood would be met otherwise than friendlily; for there was about him a naturally engaging expectancy of fair treatment that neither the buffeting of childhood nor maturity could quench from his spirit.

A grizzled slattern, prey of God knows what ill-usage and despair, whirled from the hot stove, butcher-knife in hand, and made one leap for him as his foot was raised to step inside. Only the genius for keeping one jump ahead of all sentient life on his familiar planet saved his face, literally speaking, not to mention his skull. But one correlation deserted him — or was it that she beat him to the outer egress? He found himself blocked from the street entrance, with no avenue but an uninviting stairway at the rear of the hall. Up this he tore three steps at a time, barely escaping the slashing blade wielded by the crazed, panting harridan.

Doubling back along the parallel upper hallway, he broke through the door in which it ended, into a room where an unoffending elderly couple flew awake at his abrupt entry. Before they could protest, he had swept off their entire bedcovering, and faced right-about to meet the onrush of the raging bedlamite, who had been halted but an instant by the door he had not forgotten to shut. Flinging over her head the smother of blankets, he tripped and laid her impotently struggling on the floor, and made good his escape; and sweet music to his ears were her muffled shrieks.

Ida London had married. From this union was born Jack's nephew, John Miller. So, Jack's family had dwindled to three. In the little Pine Street cottage, for some cause that was justified in his mother's mind, he received his first, and last, whipping from her reluctant husband. John rebelled, but finally submitted. He and Jack, the latter far more concerned for his father than for himself, went where they could earnestly discuss the punishment from every angle. Each tried to hide from the other his own belief in the joint disaster that was to befall them, but agreed that in all the circumstances it would better be gone through and done with. And when the onerous duty had been performed, man and boy, they abolished habitual reserve and wept unashamed in each other's arms.

"But what possessed her, do you suppose?" he wound up. "Whom do you think I must have reminded her of — what dark vengeance did I suggest? — I'll never be satisfied until I know, and I'll never know!"

Jack London always retained the conviction that his original impetus toward literary leanings was supplied by a teacher under whom he sat during the last of his grammar school education, in the Cole School at Twelfth and Alice Streets. Jack had the gift of a pure and musical voice, and the spinster in authority "flatted" abominably. Ergo, Jack presently demonstrated his mettle by firmly declining to join in the offending discord, stating his reasons when asked. The lady, by nature incapable of admitting her failure, wrestled with the obdurate pupil, but was finally obliged to send him to the principal. Mr. Garlick, instead of thrashing the lad, and so trying to force him toward the destruction of a notably true sense of pitch, listened attentively to his reasoning, and talked over the question at some length. Being what he proved during many years in the Oakland halls of learning, both judicial and commendably politic, Mr. Garlick delved into the predispositions of the young brain, informed himself where the student stood highest, and returned him with a note to the school mistress. Therein she was tactfully instructed, under the guise of advice, to command Jack to occupy the vocal periods in writing compositions. And thus he, who dearly loved music and singing, was deprived of one outlet only to pour another talent upon paper, which he did with considerable gusto and resultant good, if grudged, marks.

It was upon his entry into the Cole School that he made his stand for the simple and effective name of Jack London. "Your name?" the teacher asked. "Jack London." "No," she admonished, "you mean John London." "No, ma'am," respectfully but with finality, "my name is Jack London." Some further discussion ensued, but the name Jack London went upon the roll intact, as it has stood upon a greater roll this many a year.

There were other boys in the Cole School at the same time with Jack London, who made successful names for themselves — James Hopper, first as foot-ball "giant" at the University of California, later story-writer and war correspondent; Elmer Harris, well known playwright; and Ed Boreen, since illustrator and artist. But, as "Jimmie" Hopper once said, they were "pretty tough kids, I think, who would have shied a brick at any long-nose who might have suggested we write or draw."

Another situation Mr. Garlick worked out in this manner: Jack and a classmate, balked mid-battle in a soaring exhibition of fisticuffs, were called upon the carpet. An interrogation satisfied the Principal that Jack had had cause for starting the row, but he fancied chancing an experiment. He left it to the pair of flushed and itching combatants to continue the engagement to a finish, then and there in his office, or, calmly, like "little gentlemen," to consider all sides, and kiss and make up. "I will," promptly offered the other boy, who had tasted the bitter impact of Jack's small, agile fists. The latter, not wholly unscarred, though not relishing such caress from one whom he was sure he could lick in fair fight, hesitated but a moment. Then, with heaven knows what correlations of pride, defeat, consideration for his admired superior, and his latent sense of humor, all flashing across his subjectivity, with a half-abashed grin he stuck out a grimy paw and met his late enemy's lips.

John London, once summoned to stop a fray in which his son was successively taking on the members of an entire family of brothers, each one taller than the latest vanquished, inquired as he strode to the scene: "Is my boy fighting fair? — if he is, I guess there ain't any call for me to interfere." And he puffed his pipe with earnest appreciation sitting in his eyes, until the biggest of all the brothers of the smitten line tried to deliver a foul blow to the infuriated bantam, when John called a halt. He insisted only that his boy, playing the game in clean sporting fashion, should be met by sporting methods, even by one twice his adversary's size.

Who can overestimate the blessing of the influence upon Jack London, exerted in their different fields by men like Mr. Garlick and John London? It endured as a prominent factor in the youth's wisely-timed emergence from the vicious environment that presently claimed him, and that would in short order have destroyed him as it destroyed many of his companions. The effect of these two was priceless in the expanding mental operations of the boy, as he evolved a working philosophy that enabled him to deal intelligently with boys and men of strange breeds and outlandish practices. And terribly soon it was to be almost solely from associates physically his seniors that he was to learn "the worst too young."

BOYHOOD TO YOUTH: OAKLAND ESTUARY, SAILORING, ETC.

VOLUME I — CHAPTER V

WITH an inherent aristocracy of both mental and physical being, sometimes Jack London indulged in speculation upon the effect, had this significant term been passed under cultured and leisured conditions. “I should most likely have become a poet,” he would reflect, “or a composer. As it was, an equal urge came to me later from both poetry and music. Somewhat of an exquisite, I’m afraid, if only from my excessive physical sensibilities — but I am surely not a sissy!” with a whimsical look at me. “If I had turned to sociology at all, it would have been merely in an intellectual, impersonal way, not because I felt kinship with the submerged. Curiosity, rather than sympathy, would have led me to investigate here and there out of my elect caste. You know how I love to prowl anyway — no interval is long enough to make me for get the lure of it.” And to Cloudesley Johns in March, 1899. he wrote: “It is well you appreciate the virtue in lack of wealth, and you seem to be all the better for it. Here’s what wealth would have done for me: it would have turned me into a prince of good fellows, and, barring accident, would have killed me of strong drink before I was thirty.”

By nature a leader, a master, Jack would probably have grown up elegantly autocratic, even despotic in a benevolent way, had the conditions during his adolescence been more sympathetic. As it was, there was implanted in him a second nature of protest and rebellion. However, except in so far as he bludgeoned with that puissant intellect, there was no cruelty in him. Once, and once only, in childhood, he had tortured an animal, a frog — the only assignable motive being curiosity. He never forgot this, nor ever forgave himself. In the year of his death, I happened to be present when a young fellow related humorously, and with apparent relish, how in boyhood he had suspended a puppy by its paws and enjoyed its yapping when he struck it. From the phenomenon of his face I glanced at Jack’s, which moved no muscle, yet recoiled with every nerve, while his eyes became welling pools of darkness. He had liked this man.

By land and variant waterways I have travelled with Jack London: by steamer — tramp and liner; windjammer, sampan, pleasure craft of all sorts; in railroad trains of many countries; by automobile, bicycle, saddle, and horse-drawn vehicle, from cart to tallyho; even on foot, which was least to our mutual liking; and we but awaited opportunity to take to the blue together — this chance coming to me alone after he had gone beyond that blue. But it was upon the liquid two-thirds of earth's surface that I saw him the most blissfully content. Dawn or twilight, he loved the way of a boat upon the sea. His bright inquisitive spirit might have sailed to its human birthing, so native was he to the world's watery spaces. The sea nurtured a gallant and adventurous spirit that made us all watch his banner. His influence was felt like a great vitalizing breath from the West — wide land of red-veined men — in which he lived and died. "Seamen have at all times been a people apart," curiously so, from the rest of their kind; and the sailor Jack London was a man apart from the rest of himself. Imagination, nerves, work, pleasure, all ran in smoother grooves when his feet stood between the moving surface and the blowing sky, his own intelligence the equalizing force amidst unstable elements. Seldom in waking hours without books or spoken argument exerting upon his wheeling brain, yet at the helm of his boat, braced for day-long hours, he would stand rapt in healthful ecstasy of sheer being, lord of life and the harnessed powers of nature, unheedful of physical strain, his own hand directing fate.

Graduation from grammar school came at about his thirteenth year. Pathetically enough, the poor boy did not appear at the graduation exercises, because he was ashamed of his shabby clothes. It may interest the harsh critic of Jack London's chosen careless attire, to learn that he was once slave of convention in the matter of clothing. I have heard him laugh softly, with a dimness in his eyes, at the pathos of the shrinking little figure he had cut in earliest schooling days, when his mother resolutely clad him in some garment he thought different from his schoolmates clothes, and he died a thousand deaths of shame.

It had come to the ears of busy Eliza that her brother intended to forego being class historian at the ceremonial, to which honor he had been elected. She made an effort to locate him, that she might buy him a new outfit, and left word for him to come to her. But for some cause her plans miscarried.

School finished, what play-time remained after "hustling" newspapers and performing odd jobs was spent in a fourteen-foot, decked-over skiff, equipped with center-board and flimsy sail. Questing a new world beyond the tide-ripped mouth of the estuary, out upon the treacherous water of the bay proper he ventured to Goat Island, more formally Yerba Buena, now conspicuous in all the array of a naval training station. The fish he bore home gave him economic sanction for his favorite recreation. Very important he felt with those still dimpled fists closed about the rickety little tiller — captain of his ship and soul, salt spray upon his parted lips, and the free west wind sweeping through his young lungs, that came, unlike other blessings, without price. Sitting high on the windward rail, sheet in hand, feeling out the strength of the breeze, with wistful eyes he watched great vessels tow Golden Gateward, breaking out their gleaming canvas, and longed to run away to sea. Or, slipping along with slack sheet before a light zephyr, one eye on the sail, one hand at the helm, he devoured countless tales of voyagers, the covers of which he first protected with newspaper against injury by dampness or salt spray.

In this wise he applied himself to master the manners of little craft until their management should become automatic to hand and brain. Here he laid foundation for the consummate small-boat sailor to whom I, yachtswoman long in advance of our meeting, entrusted my life seventeen years later in ocean voyaging on a forty-five-foot ketch. "The small-boat sailor is the real sailor," was his opinion, although he courteously prefaces the remark with "barring captains and mates of big ships." And he goes on: "He knows — he must know — how to make the wind carry his craft from one given point to another given point. He must know about tides and rips and eddies, bar and channel markings, and day and night signals; he must be wise in weather-lore; and he must be sympathetically familiar with the peculiar qualities of his boat which differentiate it from every other boat that was ever built and rigged. He must know how to gentle her about, as one instance of a myriad, and to fill her on the other tack without deadening her way or allowing her to fall off too far." As for the captains of liners as well as officers and able seamen, I have heard them frankly admit: "No, I can't swim; and I don't know the first thing about handling small sailing vessels." It is an art by itself, and Jack London became a past master of it during his early teens.

Never did he forget his astonishment upon encountering his first modern deep-water sailor — runaway from an English merchantman. He sat in breathless wonder-worship of this sea-god who discoursed lightly of hair-raising hurricanes and violent deeds in strange lands and oceans. One day the superior being consented to sail with him. “With all the trepidation of the veriest little amateur I hoisted sail and got under way. Here was a man, looking on critically, I was sure, who knew more in one second about boats and the water than I could ever know. After an interval in which I exceeded myself he took the tiller and the sheet. I sat on the little thwart amidships open-mouthed, prepared to learn what real sailing was. My mouth remained open, for I learned what a real sailor was in a small boat.

“He couldn’t trim the sheet to save himself, he nearly capsized several times in squalls, and once again by blunderingly jibing over. He didn’t know what a centerboard was for, nor did he know that in running a boat before the wind one must sit in the middle instead of on the side; and, finally, when we came back to the wharf, he ran the skiff in full tilt, shattering her nose and carrying away the mast-step. . . . A man can sail in the forecastle of big ships all his life and never know what real sailing is.”

Sometimes a boy companion was his on the thrilling traverse to Goat Island, athwart the churning wakes of leviathan ferry steamers. But most often he occupied unshared his domain of free fair solitude, milling out his own problems, empirical or spiritual the former rooted in one sure test, “Will it work — will you trust your life to it?” — the latter resolving into an equal conviction that the existence he escaped on shore was sordid and meaningless compared with this. Unaided by man, he was engaged in identifying himself with the universe as it unfolded to his unboyish perspective, establishing his separate ego, and making toward the polymorphic entity he was to become.

And here, fleeing from the crowded turmoil ashore, thrilling with beauty and wonder of sea and sky, in the “vast indifference of heaven and sea,” he fell into a cool gravity of contemplation that few realized of him in his manhood. I knew; for with him, speeding away from cities, in peace and truth I was “ . . . as one that leaves
The heat and babble of a crowded room
And steps into the great, cool, silent night.”

“No one has helped me vitally — name me one,” he has challenged in bald moments when the struggling past arose. Indeed, in reviewing what I know from him and of him, it does seem that after eliminating all who tried to help, one finds the history of a success that was won almost in spite of proffered assistance, which was for the most part misdirected. This because in the main the effort, through misconception of his superb free quality, made toward conventionalizing, holding him back and down. The only souls who may rest in joy of having helped are those (to whom my gratitude!) who gave him moments of happiness.

Dreamer though he was, and dream though he did, the boy learned withal that a boat would capsize and he be brine-soaked, or worse, if he did not apply practical system in handling her. While his ardent boyish heart was conscious of beauty and pleasure, he respected the means of their attainment. “I have been real,” he adjudged his mental method, “and did not cheat reality any step of the way.

Those who choose for the foundation of their judgments the sensational aspects of his career, are surprised that his approach by water was not heralded by much noise of steam or gasolene-driven enginery, or, upon terra firma, by dust-rimed, red devil touring-car. Once, indeed, during a period of dangerous depression, he had contemplated the big red devil, biggest and reddest, for the outrunning of his blue fiends. But he never owned an automobile, although, when in 1916 we planned a world-around voyage after the War, the finest purchasable car was to be an item of dunnage in a remodeled three-topmast schooner such as we had seen in the Alameda Basin.

“We shall be anachronisms, you and I, Mate Woman,” he would prophesy gleefully, “for when we are seventy and beyond, still shall we be riding and driving horses on the highways, still shall we be sailing boats. I do believe that boat sailing is a finer, more difficult art than running a motor. It would not be right to insist that any one can run the newest fool-proof gasolene machinery, but most of us can. This is not true of sailing a boat. It takes more skill and intelligence, and certainly more training.”

Picturing the embryo sailor steering the frail fabric of wood and cotton, clinging almost a part of this workable thing of his dreams, curls blown back from the uplifted face with its marveling smile, I am reminded of what Edwin Markham wrote me in the shadows:

“I think of him as part of the heroic youth and courage of the world.”

One fails to discern where he passed from boyhood into youth. Paradoxically, we might say, as he so often said, that there never was a boyhood for him. Hardly did he experience even a youth. From first to last it was as boy-man and man-boy that he came face to face with life. “I never had a boyhood,” were his own words, “and I seem to be hunting for that lost boyhood.” One passion of my wifehood, was, that to son of his and mine, I might have part in making up for that ineffable treasure of childhood that Jack London had missed.

Now see how, in physical immaturity, striving as always for fuller scope, he foregathered in all lawlessness with youths and men. With a rare apperception of their foreignness, soon he was able so to coordinate with it as to bridge incongruity of years and step forth indistinguishable, — to them, — from their own essential quality. Not with foreign bloods, however, was his initiation into the man-game. It took place in the familiar “creek,” aboard the large sloop yacht, Idler, lying not far from the wide-waisted unused whalers. To the romancing eye of the youngster, head crammed with enticing stories of seafar-ing, she was shrouded in fabulous mist. Rumor had it that she was interned for a questionable but dare-devil transaction known as opium smuggling in savage isles on the western sea-rim, none other than the Sandwich Islands of glib geography recitation. On more than one occasion his skiff had tacked at respectful distance about the slim white hull and raking scraped mast, and he had vaguely envied the husky, bronzed caretaker, who kept the elegant craft shipshape.

One day came the golden opportunity to meet with this brawny man of nineteen, who was reputed to be a harpooner, waiting his chance to put to sea in professional capacity on one of the whalers, the Bonanza. Her tumble down sides even now resounded to the tinkering incident to outfitting for a new voyage. It was the before mentioned runaway English sailor who made possible the event, by asking Jack to put him aboard the Idler for a “gam” with the harpooner. The boy, inwardly trembling with delight, hoisted his tiny sail and directly they were zipping across the estuary. He and the sailor were bidden hospitably on deck by the caretaker. Jack, before going below, in precise seamanlike method dropped his boat astern on a long painter, “with two nonchalant half-hitches,” that there might be no scratching of the yacht’s shining white paint. Then he followed with bated breath down the brassy companionway, and filled his lungs with the musty, damp odor of the first sea-interior he had ever entered.

If we may trace any definite line betwixt his youth and manhood, it leads to this cabin of the opium smuggler, Idler, where, though he lapsed for a time thereafter, he became indissolubly bound with the affairs of men. And such men! “At last I was living. Here I sat, inside my first ship, a smuggler, accepted as comrade by a harpooner and a runaway English sailor who said his name was Scotty.” Preserving discreet silence, that he might display no jarring immaturity, he was taken for granted. Newly conscious of his uncouth land-lubberly garments, he regarded the clothing that gently swayed on the cabin walls to the roll left by passing tugs: “. . . leather jackets lined with corduroy, blue coats of pilot cloth, sou’westers, sea boots, oilskins.” It all gave out a musty smell, “but what of that? Was it not the seagear of men?” And the cabin — it and its appointments were photographed on his retina for all time, and their like registered as the dearest and most desirable of surroundings;”. . . everywhere was in evidence the economy of space — the narrow bunks, the swinging tables, the blue-backed charts carelessly rolled and tucked away, the signal-flags in alphabetical order, and a mariner’s dividers jammed into the woodwork to hold a calendar.”

The swift-evolving lad of fourteen, shrewdly observing by aid of the usual allotment of senses and that extra one of fitness which was the flower of the other five, renewed acquaintance with the oblique concomitant of manhood’s prowess and comradery. Where could they get something to drink! Nothing aboard, and no licensed saloons anywhere near. The harpooner knew; and with flask in pocket disappeared overside. The flask was full when again the click of his rowlocks was heard, and the smallest member of the law-scoffing company was deeply mystified concerning the relation between “rot-gut” — euphonious name by which the adulterated fire-water was known by these swagger adventurers — and certain sightless swine. But it was not many moments before the significance of “blind pig” burst upon him.

Vinegar and gall the liquor was to his lips and throat; but he “drank with them, drink by drink, raw and straight, though the damned stuff couldn’t compare with a stick of chewing taffy or a delectable ‘cannon-ball.’“ And to spend fortunes of cents on such debatable nectar! He carried twenty in his man-length jeans, and could not do less than contribute them with offhand smile toward the many refillings of the square-face bottle, “though with regret at the enormous store of candy” they represented.

As the hours flew, and the fumes rose and worked within his hard young skull, he became aware of the virtue of the potion that unbound diffidences and true modesties. Absorbing the unloosed confidences of these suddenly established cronies, his ego began to loom like a genii within its narrow house, realizing an unsuspected stature side by side with taller egos. All attention to a self-glorying tale of valor from Scotty, and its lurid fellow from the harpooner, he came to think that he had not done so badly either, in his solitary wanderings. Waiting for a pause, he launched into bold narrative of how he had sailed his skiff across the bay in a big south-easter that held deep-water tonnage at none too safe anchorage in port. Spurred by the respect he seemed to command, a step further he dared, charging Scotty with being a “bum” hand in a small sailboat. Only another round of whisky disengaged the inflamed pair, who, now outside of all reticence, vowed in maudlin embrace, that, inseparable, they would navigate the round world around. Jack beheld himself one of the Bonanza’s crew in the North Pacific, thence in other keels to Far Ind. They all three roared sea chanteys, and boasted to the pitying skies.

“The fortunate man is he who cannot take a couple of drinks without becoming intoxicated,” was Jack London’s opinion. “The unfortunate wight is the one who can take many glasses without betraying a sign.” Though the young Jack had betrayed signs a-many on this day of infinite consequence, it was he, the virgin carouser, full to the guards, who put the two seasoned sinners to bed. Yearning to lose consciousness in another of the tempting mattressed bunks, he yet felt called upon to demonstrate, new-made giant that he was, that no tottering weakness moved within him. Again at his tiller, sail set, he plunged the skiff’s bow into the crisping channel and angled, madly careering, across to the Oakland shore. “I was now at the pinnacle of exaltation. I sang ‘Blow the Man Down’ as I sailed. I was no boy of fourteen, living the mediocre ways of a town. . . . I was a man, a god, and the very elements rendered me allegiance as I bitted them to my will.

The water was at lowest mark, and hundreds of feet of greasy grey mud intervened between its lapping edge and the boat landing. With centerboard lifted, he drove full speed into the ooze, and when the skiff lost headway, stood up in the sternsheets and punted with an oar. And here outraged mind and flesh refused to function in common. As tho one gave in to the poison, the other crumpled over board into the unspeakable slime; and the poor little man-of-the-world knew painfully, as his skin tore against the barnacles of a broken pile, that he was nauseatingly drunk. But not as the others were drunk, he still contended as he scrambled to his feet, for in the sinuous maze of his struggling wits there stirred a lofty satisfaction that he had beaten two strong men at their own game.

Once more, as in San Mateo six years before, he swore “never again.” Not even the limitless vision he had been vouchsafed, in addled ecstasy, of the glories of a conquered world, could compensate for the come-back of miserable days of sickness and depression. Purple as had been the dream, it and the means of it he repudiated, spent his next savings on taffy and “all-day suckers,” and returned to his odd jobs and life on the streets. The inexhaustible trove of the library seemed ample foreign adventuring for the nonce.

QUEEN OF THE OYSTER PIRATES

VOLUME I — CHAPTER VI 15 to 16 years

ALTHOUGH the hero of this book more than once ran JL away bodily from manual labor, before final desertion of it through conviction of its conflict with his remote ends, a sense of responsibility never released him for long, if at all. He was destined to become a sort of patriarch to a group of dependents.

Barely fifteen, shore life for him had begun to reveal itself as a serious and manacling thing, and from the needs of the household there were left but few cents of his slender earnings, and fewer hours of leisure, for amusements and taffy. His first steady servitude was in an Oakland cannery, established in an insanitary old stable which was ventilated by drafty interstices in its ramshackle frame. Here he became an unconscious example of child-exploitation — that most incredible of all the shames of civilized society. His broadening shoulders that had shaken free under the open sky, or braced squarely against the shock of brave west wind and drenching southeaster, were now rounded above dangerous machinery for an average of ten hours a day, with as many cents compensation per hour. Roofed from their divine right of sunshine, boys and girls alike they sat and stood before their unprotected machines, the safety of tender young hands and fingers depending solely upon deft mental correlation. Some, slower by nature than others, were beaten in the unfair contest, accidents were frequent, and the victims went mutilated for the rest of their lives; the girls more sadly in proportion than their male companions.

“We could not spare a look or a qualm from our own wariness of the machinery, when one of us was hurt,” Jack has visualized the scene for me. “A frightened look aside, a moment’s let-down of tensest attention to the thing in hand, and slap! off would go your own finger. I guess I was just lucky,” he disclaimed credit for his own keen correlations.

Those fittest to cope with the work could talk back and forth down the bowed rows, boys and girls chaffing one another and making “dates” for noon-hour and street-corner trysts; but even this intermittent social chatter was confined to the forenoon and for a short time after lunch. The later of the ten actual working hours were passed under almost unendurable strain of taut nerves.

Even if in spirit of blindly humorous yet grim reprisal against fate in general, one sort of revenge for their toil and pain seems to have been taken by the overdriven employees. From Jack's reminiscences to me, I have gathered that other extraneous matter than tears of weariness and rebellion was often closed and soldered into the shiny tin cans of tomatoes and peaches, berries and corn; and none felt called upon, in absence of the overseer, to skim off dust blown into the toothsome contents by streams of wind that forced through the apertures of the old barn. One of the filth-collecting ledges on the wall that faced the workers was almost on a level with their eyes, and now and again contributed its quota of menace to the health of others than the cannery's workers. And thus the public, also, was ill served by the masters of labor — all valuable mental pabulum for the fiery reformer Jack London was soon to become.

To him perhaps alone of these slaves of the old cannery was given a capacity to react in good time, and make him self heard in no uncertain voice, for the education of the mole-minded workers toward protest and demand for pro-tection and adequate compensation, even to the seizing of the very machinery of production. That his mind was set astir even in the thick of the gruelling experience, one reads from his own view of that drab period:

"I asked myself if this were the meaning of life — to be a work-beast? I knew no horse in the City of Oakland that worked the hours I worked. If this were living, I was entirely unenamored of it."

And the girls: here again, those beings he heard referred to as he "weaker" sex, and therefore to be cherished, were being despoiled by the same iron lot that befell their brothers. At the same time, for some reason which he had not fathomed, they were denied the relaxations and robust recreations allowed these brothers; else they were not considered "nice" girls. Maintaining pace with awakening sex-consciousness, curiosity urged him to speculate widely concerning these pretty, fun-loving creatures of more delicate frame than himself. More marvelous became contemplation and reality of his trysts with the little maids of the cannery whose lash-veiled affirmative glances in stolen instants from work answered the questioning lift of his own brows. Whatever knowledge his curiosity and their complacence yielded in time, he never forgot the exquisite spiritual quality of the aura that surrounded his first love, a couple of years later.

The while he remained a slave, an irreproachable slave he was. None could criticize his faithfulness nor the product of his effort. But when his moment struck, through he was with restraint and all its works. Insurrectionary he stood forth; though along with a radical shifting of viewpoint, an amazingly careful estimate of values coordinated with the flinging off of bonds. Up to a certain stage, the marshalling of values must have been unconscious; but his bursts of action in any premise were as if well-considered from every angle. That he did not func-tion without some measure of deliberate thought, there is ample evidence from his own reminiscences.

What I am trying to present is this: Out of a free range of conscious or unconscious thought-material, garnered as consciously or unconsciously from his already varied experience, he abruptly formed concepts that led him as abruptly to rise and throw off any complication that proved unendurable and unprofitable to his logic. Back in his small but independent flat-bottomed shallop on the wicked currents of one of the greatest and most treacherous of harbors, he suddenly came to reckon with the absurdity of the groveling, destructive existence he had let himself sink into. Which held the meaning of life? — the turbulent waters with their "careless captains," alcohol and all, or a "viewless, hueless deep" of dehumanizing labor? Perhaps his thrilling heritage of physical ardor determined the issue. At all events, selfhood asserted overnight, and heaved the burden from off his spirit. And the only outlet that was shown to him was the water-way he so loved. Money he must bring home — there was no discussion about that, and no idea of evading responsibility crossed his mind. But why not combine his heart's-desire with bread-getting?

He "remembered the wind that blew every day on the bay . . . all the beauty and wonder and the sense-delights of the world denied . . . the bite of the salt air . . . the bite of the salt water " when he plunged overside. The pulsing colors of forgotten sunrises and sunsets flushed in his jaded brain.

Still again, I draw on that "duty" letter to his later sweetheart:

". . . worked in the cannery for a short summer vacation — the reward was to be a term at college. I worked in the same cannery, not for a vacation but for a year. . . . My wages were small, but I worked such long hours that I sometimes made as high as fifty dollars a month. Duty — I turned every cent over. Duty — I have worked in that hell hole for thirty-six straight hours, at a machine, and I was only a child. I remember how I was trying to save the money to buy a skiff — eight dollars. All that summer I saved and scraped. In the fall I had five dollars as a result of absolutely doing without all pleasure. My mother had to have the money — she came to the machine where I worked and asked me for it. I could have killed myself that night. . . . Duty — had I followed your conception of duty, I should never have gone to High School, never to the University, never — I should have remained a laborer."

Once more at the sun-warped tiller of his barnacled skiff, leg o mutton sail trimmed, frayed sheet slipping deliciously through his fingers as he blew down the ebb tide before the wind, tremulous with joy of returning to what appealed as his natural habitat, the clear-eyed young viking of the West expanded long-cramped lungs and gave himself over to taking inventory of his assets: One good, average think-box, he calmly flattered himself, and one good average body that could, at need, surpass in resistance others of its age and size, not to mention certain older and bulkier physiques. And his priceless asset, of which he was then ignorant, was the cogency of that brain which enabled him to focus swiftly and surely upon an aggregation of data and set each item where it best would serve his ends.

I think it must have been right here, aligning his equipment for immediate benefit of all concerned in his province, that the budding philosopher forever renounced idle dreaming. Henceforward he appeared to range his conclusions with more or less logical application to practical solutions.

Reviewing the months just past, during which he had availed himself of law-abiding means of making, not his way in the world, but mere bread and butter, he was "unenamored" of the process. Body and soul had been outraged by the sodden, bestial dullness, and he was ripe to swerve into an equally pernicious if more attractive abyss. The Seabreeze bore him tidings of incommunicable lure, and his would have been the bliss of blindly answering the call, had he not felt the cords of duty. It was not in him to flee from the failing ones at home. A sturdy, law-respecting quality that ran in his composition would best have been sustained if the water had offered some honest method of livelihood. Plainly he could not contribute his share to ward family expenses by mere angling from a skiff.

What wonder, if his reading had limned the charmed word “pirate” in illuminated characters! Suppressed boyhood and adventure-lusting youth rose to the word and all its glamor. Why not! What boy is withheld from “playing pirates,” or “burglars,” or Indian or white-man atrocities, with their lurid imagery? The fancied evil of it leaves no more mark on the playing-child’s perceptions than did the actual evil cling to this working-child. Besides, drudgery had not impressed him as innocent and unharmful. The sin of filching oysters at the risk of limb and liberty, enmeshed as it was with exaltation of adventure, appeared a lesser harm. Besides, were there not plenty of oysters for everybody. Again, that threshing mind flayed out the “irrefragable fact” that lurked in all seeming contradiction, and went on finding itself through agency of empirical research. Who was to tell him what was right and what wrong! He must discover for himself — and the exploration promised delight in its manful hazard.

“I wanted to be where the winds of adventure blew,” his desire ran. “And the winds of adventure blew the oyster pirate sloops up and down San Francisco Bay, from raided oyster-beds and fights at night on shoal and flat, to markets in the morning against city wharves, where peddlers and saloon-keepers came down to buy. Every raid . . . was a felony. The penalty was state imprisonment, the stripes and the lockstep. And what of that! The men in stripes worked a shorter day than I at my machine. And there was vastly more romance in being an oyster pirate than in being a machine slave. And behind it all, behind all of me with youth a-bubble, whispered Romance, Adventure.”

“French Frank,” a man of fifty, a notorious “oyster-pirate,” had stirred Jack’s interest in the water-front circle. Slight, graceful, debonair, a dandy with the brave ladies of his hot-headed class, French Frank’s very foreignness surrounded him with romance. Young Jack heard that French Frank had a boat to sell, a nifty sloop with the dizzy name of Razzle Dazzle zigzagged across her saucy stern. Three hundred dollars was her price — three hundred cart-wheels! But he did not take time to gasp, for his ramping fancy entertained no obstacle. Upon his vision, roving for possibilities, impinged Mammy Jenny’s thrifty purse, that purse which ever sagged open-mouth toward her “white child.” What of the social exigencies of his new profession of swashbuckling, he was a long time paying back that three hundred dollars of her wages for nursing the sick; and it was a happy day when at last he laid the final instalment in her soft, dark hand.

The Sunday when he dropped his skiff on a long painter astern of the Razzle Dazzle, and stood on his “two hindlegs like a man” talking business with a real pirate, albeit of defenseless bivalves, carried Jack across the moat into man’s estate. A twenty-dollar gold piece ratified the agreement, which was to be drawn up on the morrow. Then the prospective owner, treading almost reverently the deck of his first boat worthy of the name, moved in a dream down into the stuffy little cabin that reeked of tobacco and the flowing “red paint” of abhorrent memory.

In “John Barleycorn” is given an euphemistic account of the affair and how it terminated. The sloop was anchored near the Alameda bank of the Creek, not far from Webster Street Bridge. French Frank, scintillating with joy of much wine and feminine companionship, made Jack acquainted with his friends — ”Whiskey” Bob, a hardened character only a year older than himself, “Spider” Healey, “black-whiskered wharf-rat of twenty,” and, for the most approved piratical garnishing, though not the spoils of sea-raiding, two young and attractive females whom Jack has named Mamie and Tess. Mamie, unbeknown to the boy, was the object of a frantic French passion; but the honorable offer of wifehood from the elderly if dapper Frank had not proved sufficient prize to make her forswear free-lancing as Queen of the Oyster Pirates.

When the bulgy demijohn of red wine tipped to another tumbler, Jack, with the eye of the gay Queen upon him, all his childish bridges crashing, swallowed first his rising gorge and then with befitting sang-froid the tumblerful — and kept it down with a set smile that he hoped was natural in its seeming. The others had been drinking for hours and, with the exception of the Queen, were soon paying all their attention to the singing of popular ditties, at first in uninterrupted solos and presently in discordant medley, each singing on his or her own account.

Jack found himself “able to miss drinks without being noticed or called to account.” Also, “standing in the companionway, head and shoulders out and glass in hand,” he could cool his head and fling the wine overboard. “My manhood,” he reasoned, “must compel me to appear to like this wine . . . I shall so appear. But I shall drink no more than is unavoidable . . . And we sat there, glasses in hand, and sang, while the demijohn went around; and I was the only strictly sober one . . . And I enjoyed it as no one of them was able to enjoy it,” he illustrates his growing wisdom and observation. “Here, in this atmosphere of bohemianism, I could not but contrast the scene with my scene of the day before, sitting at my machine, in the stifling, shut-in air, repeating, endlessly repeating, at top speed, my series of mechanical motions. And here I sat now, glass in hand, in warm-glowing camaraderie, with the oyster pirates, adventurers who refused to be slaves to petty routine, who flouted restrictions and the law, who carried their lives and their liberties in their hands."

He did not try to resist the Queen, wise beyond her years. Before the native pentration of this girl, who was less commonplace than the average run of her sisterhood, well as he succeeded in merging with her social stratum, he could not altogether dissemble his almost pristine freshness. Disregarding any peril to him from her hot-headed suitor of nearly four times Jack's age, she swept the hand some boy into her train. Oh, no — he did not lose his head; show him the petticoat who could bring about such lamentable disaster, indeed! No Mark Antony he, but an Augustus capable of taking feminine wiles at their proper worth in his career. He knew his history books, and Augustus had earned his distinct approval.

As always, a woman's-man, still women never interfered with his playing the man's game. I do not think any woman ever made him miss an engagement with a man. In short, passionate lover though he might be, he was no follower of petticoats to the extent of clouding his manly attitude toward his own sex. It might be said, reviewing his rise to prominence, that he succeeded in spite of petticoats.

The Queen abstracted him from the maudlin crew, and more especially from her not uninterested sister, and made love to him where they sat on the cabin roof; while the boy, entirely unaware that he was poaching upon Frank's preserve, added the charm of her presence into the crucible of his perfect hour. Even at that, her charm was negligible in comparison with the thrill he knew at prospect of endless days that had no business with routine, but were concerned with life, more life. That was it — too long he had made one with the unburied dead; and the renascent desire for life, boundless life, bore him out beyond the reef of old clock-watching, whistle-obeying standards.

His capacity for happiness had no horizon on that day of days. Faultless was the round blue universe, he was its conscious center, and his princely ego paced out upon its conquering way. "The afternoon breeze blew its tang into my lungs, and curled the waves in mid-channel. Before it came the scow schooners, wing-and-wing, blowing their horns for the drawbridges to open. Bed-stacked tugs tore by, rocking the Razzle Dazzle in the waves of their wake. A sugar bark towed from the ‘boneyard’ to sea. The sunwash was on the crisping water, and life was big. . . . There it was, the smack and slap of the spirit of revolt, of adventure, of romance, of the things forbidden and done defiantly and grandly. . . . To-morrow I would be an oyster pirate, as free a freebooter as the century and the waters of San Francisco Bay would permit. Spider had already agreed to sail with me as my crew of one, and, also, as cook while I did the deck work. We would outfit our grub and water in the morning, hoist the big mainsail, and beat our way out the estuary on the last of the ebb. Then we would slack sheets, and on the first of the flood run down the bay to the Asparagus Islands, where we would anchor miles off shore. And at last my dream would be realized: I would sleep upon the water. And next morning I would wake upon the water; and thereafter all my days and nights would be on the water.”

OYSTER-PIRATING

VOLUME I — CHAPTER VII

I NEVER told you, did I, Mate Woman, the essential reason for my title ‘Prince of the Oyster Pirates’?” This from Jack London to me twenty years thereafter. And here I warn that the story may seem unpretty to those who pharisaically shrink from the facts of life.

“Why, you see when I, the youngest of the pirates, commanded my own Razzle Dazzle, the Queen went along with me! I was the only skipper in the fleet sailing with a woman aboard, and it made a sensation. Spider had told me French Frank was ‘crazy jealous’ the night she asked me to row her ashore from his boat; but I couldn’t believe that a man of his age could be jealous of a boy like myself. So I dismissed the matter from mind until one night he tried to run me down in a black squall on the oyster-flats.

“Spider I paid to do the cooking and help me generally, and I did the deck-work and sailorizing — I had already learned pride in a boat. I guess the Queen had an easy time enough. — Why did I take her? It would be hard to say it all,” he retrospected, an odd bashful expression flitting across his face. “I was making a career for myself, after a picture I had created out of the books I always kept on exchanging at the old library. I was in revolt from the beastly hopelessness of the labor I had been performing, and had not yet seen ahead to the other kinds of beastly consequences of the life I was entering inescapable — to any one who stayed in it. All I saw was glamor of conquest, of scarlet adventure and yellow gold which latter I needed badly. — Men did these reckless things; only, I would do them better than I saw them done around me: I would preserve the romance and leave out the brutality if possible.

“The Queen again? — you’ll never know her real name, my dear. . . . It was largely a hard-headed manifestation of myself as a man among men. And she wanted to go with me. But in all my life, in its roughest, toughest aspects, surrounded by brutal men and brutal acts, I never laid my hand on a woman except in gentleness — I hardly need tell you this. But my personal feeling — why, I liked the girl. She was good-looking, and warm and kind, and best of all she made a real home in that little bit of a cabin. It stirred my imagination — I glimpsed, beyond adventure, dim visions of a future in which wife and children and home figured. Besides, she was a sort of waif herself and we had that unspoken sympathy between us. Then, too, I could not help admiring a certain pluck she had about her, good fellow all through, unafraid of God or man or devil. But along with a prestige that obtained from holding my own woman against all comers, I knew the handicap of being considered tied by apron-strings; and there were times when the Queen knew better than to show her head above deck. — And then you must take into account," he referred to the human passion of a body that ever remained incorruptibly normal, I was a husky man at sixteen, and already knew girls — my first wondering knowledge had been presented to me by one much older than myself; and the Queen met more than one need I had come to recognize."

The real comradeship that existed between them partially redeemed the precocity of the affair. There was nothing of the moral imbecile about the Queen. In her make-up was no weakness of "squealing" at danger, nor for hurt feelings nor even the desertions incident to her chosen adventurings. She took the world as it came, and this remarkable new friend's very unsentimentality appealed to her along with his vital charm. That he did not spill over nor deceive her as to the shallowness of his ultimate regard, was to her in his favor. She asked no more than he gave, and she appreciated his humanity.

As one wise woman has remembered him: "Sincerity was the greatest trait of his character. He never made pretensions and he built neither his work nor his life on sophisms and evasions."

"I'm a funny sort of fellow, I guess," he pursued the self-revelation. "Because I have sung the paean of the strong, and despite the whole heart I threw into showing the weak how to become strong, as I saw it, the world has given me the personal reputation of a cave-man! How much of a cave-man have you, or has any one, found me? . . . Sometimes I almost wonder if even you would not have more respect for me, love me more if I'd beat you up soundly once in a while" — laughingly whirling me into an embrace. "You know my opinion of woman in general, and that it s not all flattering by any means; but even in my violent youth a woman was always to me something to handle tenderly. Oh, I'll rough-house with a bunch of romping boy-girls and give as good as I take, and then some. But that's different.” And once he mused: “I cannot understand the type of man who, having held a woman in his arms, thinks less of her. Girls have told me of such lovers, and I was aghast. To you I say solemnly that no woman, howsoever little dear to me, whom I have ever held in my arms, but has been dearer to me for it.”

And so, the Queen of the Oyster Pirates, now herself long dead, clasped the shadow of the lover he was in ripeness of time to discover himself. Indeed, she clasped but the shadow of what he then was, for he gave her no more of himself than was expedient, not even yet having been touched with the shy madness of first love.

The maturing philosopher would perform no uncon-genial work, so long as there were others willing to receive his pay for the same; yet he would rupture a blood-vessel or rip off his sensitive nail-quick, jumping into a breach or doing what appealed to a whim, or to accomplish an end. And he asked no man to do what he could not himself do. That he did not break his neck or cripple himself for life, was due to his exquisite balance. Waste motion was a crime against common sense. Master of life that he intended to become, he would eliminate every effort that did not bear directly upon his success. And success in what? Merely living to the full while he earned something over and above his bread and butter. The cannery masters worked with their heads — why not he? Seven years later, and a year before his precipitate first marriage, he wrote to Cloudesley Johns:

“I, too, have worked like a horse, and eaten like an ox; but as to work while no comrade can ever say Jack London shirked in the slightest, I hate the very thought of thus wasting my time. It s so deadening I mean hard labor. . . . While I have a strong will, I deliberately withhold it when it happens to clash with desire. I simply refuse to draw the curb. When I was just sixteen I broke loose and went off on my own hook. Took unto myself a mistress of the same age, lived a year of wildest risk in which I made more money in one week than I do in a year now, and then, to escape the inevitable downward drift, broke away from every thing and went to sea.”

During school days and afterward, he had been an in defatigable trader and collector of everything under the sun. There were his painstakingly hunted and labeled birdeggs; a treasure of marbles — finest collection of agates he had even seen, won by skill in schoolyard or street games; and his cigarette-pictures and posters and albums had been the envy of associates. Not having had the spending of his own money, he had made use of duplicate papers in trading with the newsboys. Foreshadowing what was to become a perfect system in larger matters, he

amassed a series of pictures complete from every cigarette manufacturer, “such as the Great Eacehorses, Parisian Beauties, Women of All Nations, Flags of All Nations, Noted Actors, Champion Prizefighters. And each series he had in three different ways: “in the card from the cigarette package, in the poster, and in the album.” After which, he set out to gather sets for trading purposes. In addition, through barter he had accumulated an excellent album of postage stamps, a fair shelf of minerals, and some good curios that whetted his instinct to rove in far countries.

Because this hoarding depended, not upon money, but upon his wits, he achieved a name as a sharp trader, and trading became to him a game. “I could make even a junkman weep when I had dealings with him, he refers to one branch of operations that lasted into his pirate days. “Other boys called me in to sell for them their collections of bottles, rags, old iron, grain and gunny sacks, and five-gallon oil-cans — aye, and gave me a commission for doing it.”

And now, determined fledgling in a cutthroat crowd who sneered at boyish sports which to some of them were in deed unknown, he steadily strengthened his pinions among “birds” vain of titles like “Whiskey” Bob, Joe Goose, Nicky the Greek, “Scratch” Nelson, “Soup” and “Stew” Kennedy, “Clam” Bart, “Irish” and “Oyster” Kelly, Patsy Haggerty, “Harmonica” Joe, “Hell and Blazes.” He wrote to his dumbfounded mother to distribute his wealth according to the choices of his erstwhile cronies. Here it must have been that he commenced to foster that distaste for looking behind him with which I came to reckon early in our friendship. “We are now concerned with to day,” was his familiar adjuration. “Forget the mistakes of yesterday, except as warning against making the same mistake twice.” He would have no commerce with what he termed “the rule of the dead.” The living present was the thing. Inimical he knew this new world to be: therefore he would concentrate upon becoming one with it only insofar as it gave him pleasure and profit. Oh, he did not reason it in so many words; but his cerebration was to that effect. The old shackling sense of poverty he resolutely disowned, and with free fist spent all of eighty cents upon detested liquor when it served the purpose of educating himself in mastership of the human elements that surrounded him. Abandoning a measure of caution, drink for drink he tossed them down. And he marveled and gloated upon the patent fact that he could as before win laurels from the well pickled villains with whom he had cast lot. If the whiskey route was the only one by which he, the rank tyro, could overtake his book-heroes, the whiskey route for him — on the surface at any rate. But there were stolen occasions when the Razzle Dazzle's snug cabin, locked from the inside, was the scene of blissful secret orgies of reading and sucking "cannon-balls" and taffy. For "dollars and dollars, across the bar, couldn't buy the satisfaction that twenty-five cents did in a candy store."

"I was aware that I was making a grave decision," he declared. "I was deciding between money and men, between niggardliness and romance. Either I must throw overboard all my old values of money and look upon it as something to be flung about wastefully, or I must throw overboard ray comradeship with those men whose peculiar quirks made them care for strong drink."

The very embodiment of the thrilling baresark of the boy s Norse mythology was "Young Scratch" Nelson — one day to be the mightiest-shouldered cadaver that the Benicia undertaker ever laid out. That he could neither read nor write, far from diminishing, rather enhanced the figure he was to Jack. What had his Viking ancestral drift to do with type and ink? "Squarehead" did not suit the younger boy as a just or beautiful appellation for this blond beast of unconsidered rages that flared in terrible, admiration-compelling deeds. The first of these which came under Jack's observation was a mad freak in a nasty blow one starless night, when the Scandinavian sailed his piratical sloop Reindeer, dredging a record burglary of oysters, around and around the other boats that fearfully clung at anchor in the pounding shallow waves.

As for "Old Scratch," young Nelson's sire, blue-eyed and yellow-maned, owner and master of the great scow schooner Annie Mine — what wonder Jack's most exalted pinnacle seemed reached on the day when Old Scratch accepted quite as a matter of course his shyly-dared invitation to have a drink! Treat by treat, mere "beer-bust" though it was, the session was protracted until the distended brace of salts succumbed. But what of that? Old Scratch was as helpless as he, the novice — more helpless than he, was the one thing of which the latter felt sure. And before the hops and the heat of the summer afternoon had reduced him to slumbrous defeat, out of his book-lore and the connivance of his and the bartender s combined tact in supplying beers large and small, he had led the old sea dog into unbelievable reminiscence of his youth in northern seas. The telling sobriquet of “Scratch,” by the way, had been won by virtue of a tigerish mode of clawing off the faces of opponents in his Berserker brawls. And when the rumor came to Jack’s ravished ears that he had been “soused all afternoon with Old Scratch,” his cup of self-esteem brimmed.

Little had he dreamed, that day aboard the Idler, filled as he was with idolatry of the runaway sailor Scotty and the harpooner and the whole neighborhood, that he would so soon be his own fearless buccaneer. But here he was, causing the water-front of his home town, that once had been his awe, in turn to feel the shock of his dare-devil exploits, and beholding his one-time hero, Scotty, and the impish “Irish,” and “Spider,” successively taking orders aboard his own ship. For government was in his veins, unguessed by the very ones who submitted to his vital charm and admirable ability to make good in the matter of their wages. The very air whispered deviltry, and the whimsy of his altered relation must have shaken thoughtful moments with silent mirth. Gone were parsimonious days, flung to the four winds. I can see the glint of eye and firm clutch of jaw, when he ranged the sloop alongside the wharf with the biggest load of stolen oysters of any two-man craft in the raffish fleet. I can see him with a cocked double-barreled shotgun in his small salt-grimed hands, crouched feet-on-wheel holding the plunging Razzle Dazzle on her course under a racing dark sky, that exciting night French Frank failed to ram him.

“And there was the time when we raided far down in Lower Bay,” he recounts, “and mine was the only craft back at daylight to the anchorage off Asparagus Island. . . . And the Thursday night we raced for market and I brought the Razzle Dazzle in without a rudder, first of the fleet, and skimmed the cream of the Friday morning trade. . . . And the time I brought her in from Upper Bay under jib, when Scotty burned my mainsail.” (In 1909, among those seeing us off on the steamer Loongana from Melbourne to Launceston, Tasmania, was Scotty of the Razzle Dazzle days. Jack, grinning at the recollection, could not forbear a reference to the burned mainsail. “But you burned the mainsail,” Mr. Scott disputed stoutly, where upon argument waxed. But after we had waved our last to the receding quay, my ex-oyster-pirate smiled, “Well, after all, if it makes him happy to think I burned that mainsail, why shouldn’t I let him have it that way!”)

As for fear of the law and its enforcement, read this: “ . . . lying at the wharf disposing of my oysters, there were dusky twilights when big policemen and plainclothes men stole on board. And because we lived in the shadow of the police, we opened oysters and fed them to them with squirts of pepper sauce, and rushed the growler or got stronger stuff in bottles." Jack would ruffle with pride at remembrance of the "A. No. 1" oyster-cocktails he had mixed.

"Mayn't I meet Johnny Heinold some time?" I once asked Jack, learning that he had been into the "First and Last Chance" Saloon on Webster Street, to see his old friend. The stamping-ground of the water-front habitues, where the boy's intrepid foot had rested upon the brass rail, bore this two-faced pseudonym by reason of its accommodating relation to comers as well as goers across the drawbridge. "Why, I'd like you to see Johnny," he acknowledged pleasedly. "I'll ask him up to the Ranch some time. It would be pretty difficult to manage so you could meet him in the old place," he hesitated at my suggestion. "It's a rough crowd that congregates there — though I might slip you in at a slack hour. But the time never was decided upon in our busy lives, and Heinold never found his way up to Glen Ellen; so that I have yet to shake his hand.

Jack first crossed Johnny's threshold on that fateful Monday morning he turned up missing at the cannery. French Frank, dissembling his choler toward the lad for the unwitting theft of his inamorata, had met him here by appointment to receive the price of the Razzle Dazzle in exchange for a bill of sale. The transaction completed, the new-made skipper of the tidy sloop underwent initiation, unsuspected save by the proprietor of the bar, into public-house etiquette. French Frank, once with Jack's funds in pocket, proceeded to demonstrate the wastrel progress of camaraderie amongst men of his loose profession. Beadily could Jack grasp the logic of the seller, which caused him "to wet a piece of it [the money] in the establishment where the trade was consummated." But on top of this, Frank "treated the house." The boy speedily concluded that the saloonkeeper made a profit on the drink he accepted which reasoning was upset when Johnny treated in return. He could also see why Spider and Whiskey Bob were included in the invitation, along with Pat, the Queen's brother. But why in the name of sense should every one else standing about the sawdusted floor be bidden to help squander the Frenchman's money — Mammy Jenny's hard-won savings?

Although it was early morning, the entire company ordered whiskey. So "whiskey for mine," the freshman out law registered indifference. But his soul sickened that he must make of himself a martyr to this silly custom of pouring a nauseous and expensive draught down his throat, when his desire was to be off to his new command.

With his thoughts upon the sloop, he failed to notice an awkwardness that crept into the manner of the others, though he did vaguely sense a growing antagonism in French Frank, which also seemed to tincture the Queen's brother. All waited for him, the boat-buyer, to treat as the seller had treated. And here Johnny Heinold rendered the first of many kind services to the youth, whom he alone of the foolish gang understood in his ignorance of drinking usages. "Watch out for French Frank," Heinold breathed, bending close as he reached for the soiled glasses. On many another occasion, closely following the amateur drinker's unwilling matriculation into the brotherhood of the saloon, Johnny took it upon his elastic conscience to save Jack from himself by warning when he had had enough small beers or other liquor, by which magic potions the student of raw human nature beguiled its traditions from this same human nature.

Whiskey Bob, and Spider, too, softly articulated, "Keep your eye peeled for Frenchy," or "Frank's ugly, take my tip and look out." To their friendly signals he nodded comprehension where comprehension was not, and perhaps this very bepuzzlement preserved him, what of his apparent cool poise in a tense and vibrant situation. How was he, hardly sixteen, who had worked sordidly for his living and gleaned his romance from the books, "who had not dreamed of giving the Queen of the Oyster Pirates a second thought, and who did not know that French Frank was madly and Latinly in love with her — " how was he to know? "And how was I to guess that the story of how the Queen had thrown him down on his own boat, the moment I hove in sight, was already the gleeful gossip of the water-front? " When he presently learned the inwardness of his celebrity as a bold gallant, he could not help feeling elation "that French Frank, the adventurer of fifty, the sailor of all the seas of all the world, was jealous . . . and jealous over a girl most romantically named the Queen of the Oyster Pirates. I had read of such things in books, and regarded them as personal probabilities of a distant maturity. Oh, I felt a rare young devil, as we hoisted the big mainsail that morning, broke out anchor, and filled away close-hauled on the three-mile beat to windward out into the bay. . . . Such was my escape from the killing machine-toil, and my introduction to the oyster-pirates. True, the introduction had begun with drink. But was I to stay away from it for such reason? Wherever life ran free and great, there men drank. Romance and adventure seemed always to go down the street locked arm in arm with John Barleycorn. To know the two, I must know the third. Or else I must go back to my free-library books and read of the deeds of other men and do no deeds of my own save to slave for ten cents an hour at a machine in a cannery."

Even after losing one hundred and eighty dollars in one glorious night of inchoate induction, ashore with Nelson, his sobered aching head still deduced: "Better to reign among booze-fighters, a prince, than to toil twelve hours a day at a machine for ten cents an hour. There are no purple passages in machine toil. But if the spending of one hundred and eighty dollars in twelve hours isn't a purple passage, then I'd like to know what is." But he would avoid over-drinking when drink was thrust upon him, he forewarned himself, and there should be no alcoholic beverage of whatsoever description aboard his own sloop except in port at anchor when it devolved upon him to entertain. Alcohol and his austere ideal of seamanship had nothing in common.

Ashore, however, one of his proudest moments after he had adjusted to the necessity of "boozing" with those whose temper he must discern, was when Johnny Heinold, quite as a matter of course, reached down his book and opened a charge account for the young reveler's convenience, his name at the top of a clean page. A trusted customer he was established, as behooved one in this man-world wherein he had elected to distinguish himself.

The vicissitudes of several months' living, earning, spending, landed him metaphorically high and dry one comfortless foggy dawn after a wild orgy on the sand-flats, with empty pockets, a burned mainsail, and a breach with Scotty resulting from an overnight fistic engagement. Young Nelson in similar fashion had forfeited his crew, and bore one wounded hand in a sling to boot. Their mutual plight and a consultation terminated in a pact whereby Jack and Nelson cast together their fortunes as partners in rakish crime on the smart Reindeer, and forth with departed for the oyster-beds. But first Johnny Heinold was approached for a loan with which to buy stores, and he, knowing their ethics in such matters, trusted them without misgiving. Reviewing that night, Jack London makes an appeal for sympathy of understanding of the unsatisfied boy-soul that was his:

“And now, of all this that is squalid, and ridiculous, and bestial, try to think what it meant to me, a youth not yet sixteen, burning with the spirit of adventure, fancy-filled with tales of buccaneers and sea-rovers, sacks of cities and conflicts of armed men, and imagination-maddened by the stuff I had drunk. It was life raw and naked, wild and free — the only life of that sort which my birth in time and space permitted me to attain. And more than that. It carried a promise. It was the beginning. From the sand-pit the way led out through the Golden Gate to the vastness of adventure of all the world, where battles would be fought, not for old shirts and over stolen salmon boats, but high purposes and romantic ends.”

His own boat was raided by a rival gang of pirates, dismantled and set adrift. By the time Jack found the battered hulk, she was hardly worth the twenty dollars he got for her.

“Never have I regretted those months of mad deviltry I put in with Nelson,” Jack always averred. The Norseman was a blind genius in affairs nautical, and luck played its part in that the pair escaped with their lives. “To steer to miss destruction was his joy. . . . Never to reef down was his mania, and in all the time I spent with him, blow high or low, the Reindeer was never reefed. Nor was she ever dry. We strained her open and sailed her open continually. “

The odd thing is that far from the making of Jack a reckless sailor, he became an exceptionally cautious one. The only tangible harm that seemed wrought by association with Nelson was the ruination of his vocal cords and his ear, and by the same process that had been worked on him by the teacher in East Oakland. Nelson had no sense of pitch, and bawled endless rowdy songs and sea chanteys regardless of key. Jack, doing his valorous best toward augmenting the unmelodious din, bereft himself of what he has told me was a “golden voice.” (His speaking tone remained pleasant, even musical; but the mellow timbre was gone, to return wholly, but once. When he was about twenty-five, on the lecture platform one evening he discovered himself listening to a voice that had been asleep for nearly a decade. “It was the ‘golden voice,’ Mate — I’d give anything if you could have heard it,” he said long afterward. “I don’t believe it — but I heard it, I’m telling you. I reveled in it, turned it over on my tongue, sounded its clarion for all I was worth. When I stopped speaking — just to show you this is no fairytale — people came up the hall and told me what a beautiful voice I had! And that was the one and only time, since Nelson finished the spoiling of my ear. It's the only thing I've got against Nelson!")

To the mad-cap masters of the Reindeer the lower-bay haunts soon became inadequate. In the opposite direction they ranged over the vast and devious waters behind the Golden Gate, and eastward into the terrific narrowed tides of the tributary San Pablo and Suisun Bays. Well Jack fixed in mind the Forbidden Anchorages of the traffic routes of the main harbor, and the violent habits of Raccoon Straits, between Angel Island and Tiburon. And high and quiet his happiness, the time they first voyaged northwest across the big waters of the inland sea, Golden Gate and Angel Island sliding by on the left; on past that sunset cabochon jewel, Red Rock, so long coveted from afar; northerly skirting The Brothers, with Marin Islands to port; thence entering San Pablo Bay. Then the joy of running into anchorage in the purpling dusk on the flats; heaving over the sturdy hook; watching the vessel swing to the proper length of cable that slipped through his measuring hands; while the heavenly odor of frizzling bacon and strong, rich coffee floated up the companionway from the hot little galley stove, and the wild geese honked over head. Life was sweeter than honey on his tongue, and he dreamed dreams of seeing the whole wide world some day, in a boat of his very own. How well I know it all — ah, do I not? who have done it with him in that very boat of his own!

Steadily, through the muck and ruck that mixed with the healthier material of his experience at this time, there burned the pure flame of adventure's passionate en-chantment: the falling asleep peacefully to the rocking of the sloop to the rippled ebb and flow of tides along her sleek sides; the opening of happy eyes each morning upon a different spaciousness of sky and water; the adjusting and stabilizing of himself in relation to undependable mankind and the rolling planet, victory resting upon his acuity in gauging the capriciousness of all things.

Intermittently within this succession of months between the ages of a little under sixteen and up to say twenty-one, the incipient sage, adding to his knowledge of man kind and its singular way upon the earth, must have committed nearly every natural crime in the calendar, save disloyalty and murder. Nothing, in his view or temperament in any period, was meet to invite him to the taking of life, little as he came to respect life; and even when it was merely the question of honor among thieves, his instinctive ethic, if an ethic may be instinctive, was that disloyalty was the only real sin. And he died reverencing this self-made axiom. To me he has confessed:

“If I should serve sentences on end for pranks I did in sheer pursuit of the tang of living, from time to time during the scattered months I was busy finding myself on the Bay, or tramping, or ashore with the ‘Boo Gang’ and the ‘Sporting Life Gang’ that terrorized Oakland, I’d languish behind prison bars for a hundred years!”

As for unnatural crimes, these were not admissible in his magnificently balanced body and mind. No inbred fastidiousness was weak enough to unfit him for eating and sleeping, playing or working, with the unmoral and the unwashed, to their complete befoolment as to his intrinsic difference from them. He could love with them, and fight with them; for he had “kissed his woman and struck his man,” although he did not know the lusty old phrase. But in all his days, let the unnatural, the abnormal, creep near, and his trigger-like recoil of sense and perception and swift reaction left no uncertain impact upon the aggressor, be he brutal or subtle. Except in one or two defensive incidents, such as when French Frank was out hunting for him on the oyster-beds, either with the pirates or the subsequent fish-patrol contingent, Jack went unprotected by other arms than an ordinary table-fork. The sole provocation under which this ridiculous but effective weapon was drawn, was in the case of a degenerate Greek fisherman he had aboard in capacity of sailor. The happening does not lend itself to polite literature, and should be treated by some one compounded of a Balzac and a Havelock Ellis.

FISH-PATROL

VOLUME I — CHAPTER VIII 17th Year

HERE Jack London differed most essentially from his rough-neck associates was in the divine unrest that forever withheld him from content with any static condition. One thing or a group of things mastered, he was done with it so far as it represented an end, and hot on the trail of the unexplored. Each experience, or succession of experiences of a kind, was automatically retired to its due niche in a mind that had become surfeited with that particular phase, laid by for reference when needed. With him, only in minor details did habit replace definite thought; whereas his comrades, as time passed, reflected less and functioned more through blind habit.

Vital in his phychology was that law-respecting tendency which drew him to realize, under all paint of romance, the unsavoriness, the rotten structure of this "pirate" society. It had looked so bright on the surface. Even Nelson, through blood if not brain the truest, maddest adventurer of all whom Jack had overtaken and passed in their own game, even he, young Scratch, urged by his eager partner to new fields of exploit up country, wavered. He was unenthusiastic from sheer lack of capacity, and melted back into the Oakland water-front life that was now outworn of value to the superior youth. Jack had touched at all points upon its restrictedness — exhausted the most intricate processes of its once mysterious denizens, as well as become familiar to boredom with the hundreds of miles of indented shore line of the lower and main harbor and the peculiar currents thereof. Wider activities were calling to be shared, and far-stretching water lanes to be investigated, some of which he and Nelson had sailed but not lingered upon.

And so, the two parted in all friendliness.

Almost a foreign port seemed the quaint interior town of Benicia. From its great wharf the Solano, the largest ferry steamer in the world, conveyed transcontinental trains of imposing railway carriages, with their leviathan locomotives, to and from the main-line tracks at Port Costa across the risky

Carquinez Straits. On the voyage from Oakland, nearing Benicia, Jack had passed Vallejo, and Mare Island Navy Yard with its fascinating old training-ship that was none other than the historic, many-decked hull of the 1812 battleship Independence.

Once at Benicia, he proceeded to become at one with the fisherman element which housed in a floating suburb of little arks moored or half-grounded in the rustling tules. And never far from this bachelor purlieu flickered the scarlet night lights of one or another of the pleasure barges that swung to anchor on the fringes of such communities. Sometimes, as in his initiation with the lower-bay people, he was struck afresh with the belief that he, newest in their midst, was having a much better time than these older, more experienced men, whether workers or vagabonds. Their obtuse sensibilities were in greater or less degree numb to the very romance of which they were part. Sheer animal spirits might be theirs; but to Jack's glorious and contagious animal spirits that brought to him admiration and affection from the most unlit of the roystering inhabitants, was added comprehension. Not only did he envision the romance of the present, but further romance for which the day at hand was a preparation, a stepping-stone.

Missing no smallest sheaf of joy-gleaning by the way, he still must keep a circumspect eye to business chance; and surely it tickled his fancy that the most lucrative employ-ment in sight should be with the Fish Patrol service. Combing for possibilities, he had fallen in with a trio of deputy patrolmen, one Charley Le Grant, Billy Murphy, and Joe Boyd, who put the idea into his head. The patrolman proper, under whose orders they worked, was a salaried employee, while the deputies depended for their pay upon a certain percentage of the fines collected from violators of Fish Patrol rules.

Knowing so well the illicit side of the shield, Jack naturally found the other face of it keenly interesting; and being anything but retrogressive in his bent, the restraining of a felony was more to his liking and logic than the committing. His all-round nature at the same time responded warmly to a pity for even the most insubordinate Italian and Greek and Chinese desperadoes he must assist in holding down. To these, who had to abstract their living from the waters, the half-understood Fish Patrol laws and the drastic punishments for trifling with them seemed captious and unjust. To Jack this eternal strife for existence, by land or sea, often appeared a dog-eat-dog matter at best. As he says: "We menaced their lives, or their living, which is the same thing. . . . We confiscated illegal traps and nets, the materials of which had cost them considerable sums and the making of which required weeks of labor. We prevented them from catching fish at many times and seasons, which was equivalent to preventing them from making as good a living as they might have made had we not been in existence. . . . As a result, they hated us vindictively. . . . They looked upon the men of the Fish Patrol as their natural enemies."

Following his calling, he knew hazards many and hair breadth. Sometimes it was a perilous contest outmaneuvering a clever Greek or Italian or vicious oriental fisherman whom he was trying to apprehend; sometimes it was a battle with the shouting waves when terrific Northers from across the illimitable valleys whipped the frenzied incoming and outgoing ocean tides into mighty upstanding tide-rips; sometimes it was all together. Pitting his seamanship against enemies and elements was to him the acme of high living, and he won praise for both that seamanship and his cunning from the smartest of his companions as well as from the outwitted law-breakers. His capacity for enjoyment is expressed in a tale of that time:

"I was as wildly excited as the water. The boat was behaving splendidly, leaping and lurching through the welter like a racehorse. I could hardly contain myself with the joy of it. The huge sail, the plunging boat I, a pygmy, a mere speck in the midst of it, was mastering the elemental strife, flying through it and over it, triumphant and victorious. . . . Conflicting currents tore about in all directions, colliding, forming whirlpools, sucks, and boils, and shooting up spitefully into hollow waves which fell aboard as often from leeward as from windward. And through it all, confused, driven into a madness of motion, thundered the great smoking seas from San Pablo Bay," through which he "roared like a conquering hero." He knew of deep-sea vessels that had confidently made their way here and ignominiously capsized, drowning their astounded captains. There would be no capsizing for him.

Leaving out the factors of his robustness, luck, and common sense, Jack's survival of this taxing period in his growth is due to two things: out-door, active days, and his unconquerable aversion to the taste of alcohol, which prevented him from being a regular tippler. Even so, it is a marvel that the quantities of whiskey consumed at intervals did not wreck him beyond nature's repairing. He had not glimpsed the delicate esthetic of imbibing artistically for the sake of stimulating wit and other social graces, nor yet for the purpose of inhibiting sorrow and the disillusion of merciless truth. He cast off from his moorings of caution for a time and, in the frequent leisure spaces between raids on the fishermen, abandoned himself to becoming congenial to the men with whom he made headquarters. Gradually he "developed the misconception that the secret of John Barleycorn lay in going on mad drunks, rising through the successive stages that only an iron constitution could endure to final stupefaction and swinish unconsciousness." Wherever he walked, saloon doors swung open to him, the "poor man's clubs" that drew together those who knew no higher amusement and relaxation. On the way home to ark or sloop, the youngster would accumulate enough "snake poison" to deprive his bed of its occupant; and when, of a morning, his "unconscious carcass was disentangled from the nets of the drying frames" whither he had "stupidly, blindly crawled," and when the waterfront buzzed over it "with many a giggle and laugh and another drink," he quite excusably regarded his inebriation as something to be vain of.

An eminent American writer who, desiring to be a realist, yet recoiled temperamently from observing realism at first hand, once appealed to Jack London in this strain: "Must I, in order to describe a saloon, myself become familiar with saloon life?" Jack, true apostle of the real, was uncompromising in his counsel. "But," quavered the would-be realist, "do you mean to say that you ever have been actually drunk?"

"Man, I have not only been drunk, beastly, hopelessly drunk unnumbered times," Jack assured him, with inward cheer at the jolt he was delivering, "but once I was drunk for three weeks on end. I mean, literally, that I did not draw one single, sober breath for twenty-one days and nights."

It was this very debauch, coupled with a fearful incident which grew out of it, which first, if not permanently, aroused the decision that he was making little progress toward the fair ideals he had set for himself. He discovered, when it was almost too late, "abysses of intoxication hitherto undreamed." His was too fine an organism to trifle, unscathed, with this insidious destruction of mental as well as physical fiber. He, who loved life so vitally, to whom the idea of suicide had always appeared an abnormal ferment in the cowardly and unfit, suddenly came to consider death. Poisoned through and through, it seemed to his undermined vision that he had lived life to the last, lowest ebb, and the dregs, plainly to be drunk with the bums and loafers at world's end, should not be for him.

It came about by his stumbling overboard from the sloop where he had reeled to sleep. In his stupefaction, the best the shock could do for him was to show up the worthlessness of this mundane existence. A powerful channel run-out laid hold and swept him seaward, while he, keeping afloat effortlessly as any untutored young animal, developed a dream of going out literally and figuratively with the tide, yielding his useless sordid self to the all-embracing sea that was his mother o'dreams. With contradictory fervor he luxuriated in tipsy sentiment and the silken flood that enveloped him, exalted in deliberate, kingly choice of a romantic passing that proved him, after all, not entirely devoid of definite will and ambition. Then, as is the way of alcoholic sentimentality, he broke down and reveled unctuously in tears.

Greatly fancying the courage of his non-resistance, he began to chant heaven knows what funereal song, as the still tide carried him past the town. But he was not yet clear of Dead Man's Island, around the end of which he knew the strong suck and sweep of the tide under the long steamboat wharf. Abruptly remembering the menace of barnacled piling, he worked off all clothing and swam for his life so that he might better court death according to program. Only when he had left behind the last of the wharf-end lights did he cease to swim, and rest on his back under the stars. Again in mid-channel, with none to hear and interfere with his disposal of his fate, the enthusiastically lugubrious death-song was resumed.

But the worst alcoholic fever must give way to hours in cold water, and the ever-moving currents hereabout are far from tropical. Before dawn the boy was thoroughly chilled, soberly wretched, and in a fine panic at thought of drowning, which was now imminent enough by reason of weakness. Swinging resistlessly into the ugly tide-rips between Vallejo and the Contra Costa shore, he was becoming exhausted and already swallowing salt water. And he would indeed have been lost, unwillingly doomed, except for a Greek salmon fisherman who chanced along in the smother.

One last raid, he concluded, and he would move on. In that raid, he nearly forfeited his life at the hands of a murderous Chinese shrimp poacher who marooned him gagged and bound, on one of the Marin Islands, and returned alone to kill him. How Jack outwitted the would-be assassin, he tells in "Yellow Handkerchief," one of the stories in "Tales of the Fish Patrol."

The “vast good luck” in which at all times he liked to think he believed, preserved him then and thereafter in all his cool chance-taking. He made himself acquainted with other towns on the straits and bays and rivers, towns with alluring names — Martinez, Black Diamond, Antioch, Rio Vista — knocking about seeing what he could see, and finding as always, look where he would, that the swinging portals of “poor man’s clubs” were the only doors to companion ship for such as he. In a short while he had drifted back to Nelson and the old Oakland crowd, although only socially. He had quit pirating for good.

But he never referred with much pleasure to this period. Gone was the zest he had known when the Estuary and the public-house and the gilded sin of pirating shellfish were untried domain. Nothing new presenting itself, he loafed between sporadic jobs ashore, spending far more time carousing and running with the hoodlum gangs than was good for his best self, especially in lack of the out-door life he had become used to. Occasionally there was chance to cruise for a few days as an extra hand on one of the scow schooners peculiar to this region — great, flat-bottomed, square-ended hulls that carry cargo and sail incredible, and that have made more than one fine yacht, built for speed championship, lose her laurels in the racing winds and seas of the harbor.

He went on drinking, sometimes to excess; and it took another knockout jolt from this source to set his face toward deep water, the thought of which had at no time been entirely buried. It was during a free-for-all saloon rouse, incident to electioneering in Oakland. He awoke one evening, quite alone, with aching jaw and head, from nearly twenty-four hours of unconsciousness, in a strange room in a dingy lodging house where Nelson and the boys, for whom he had been fighting, had put him to bed. All of the details of the ridiculous but dangerous exploit he had figured in, and which had so effectually put him out, were not clear in his mind. He could not remember whether it was a Democratic or a Republican parade he had joined, in another town whither the politicians had given a train-ride gratis to as many loafers as were willing to assume a fire brigade helmet and red shirt and carry a torch to the glory of the party. He recalled that the saloons had been reported as bought for the day by the merry politicians, and that he and his clique had not been backward in testing the validity of the rumor. There was a head-splitting memory of smashed train windows on the return trip, when the maniacally-drunken anti-Nelson and pro-Nelson factions locked in a fray that wrecked the in terior of the coach. And his last conscious impression was of the start toward him of an anti-Nelson fist that had sent him, too whiskey-suffocated to defend himself, for a night and a day, into the black as of death. He was sickened with the unlovely spectacle of himself and the mean-ingless madness of the conditions that had laid him so low. Body and soul, he was very, very sick.

“So I considered my situation,” he writes, “and knew that I was getting into a bad way of living. It made toward death too quickly to suit my youth and vitality. And there was only one way out . . . and that was to get out. . . . Whiskey was dangerous, like other dangerous things in the natural world. Men died of whiskey; but then, too,” his wide-awake philosophical twist asserted, “fishermen were capsized and drowned, hoboes fell under trains and were cut to pieces.” At the same time, while in a moral sense he did not consider drinking wrong, he reverted to a former conviction that it must be done with discretion.

“It struck me,” he sums up, “from watching those with whom I associated, that the life we were living was more destructive than that lived by the average man.” He could see no fun in becoming a helpless, dependent sot, nor yet in giving up the ghost. His one experiment had cured any desire, even in his silliest cups, for suicide. There was something ahead — he felt it in his bones. Also, he could never quite disabuse himself of that old pride in the captaincy of his own powers.

In line with this, “Everywhere,” he reasoned, “I saw men doing, drunk, what they would never dream of doing sober. . . . Saloon mates I drank with, who were good fellows and harmless, sober, did most violent and lunatic things when they were drunk. And then the police gathered them in and they vanished from our ken. Sometimes I visited them behind the bars and said good-by ere they journeyed across the bay to put on the felon’s stripes. . . . If I hadn’t been drunk I wouldn’t a-done it.’“ He listened to their pitiful and unavailing plea as they reviewed the cause of their undoing. The boy did a world of thinking about these, for in those days a criminal was a criminal, — whether he was or not, so he was convicted of crime. Jack London lived to see a glimmer of the light that psy-chologists are increasingly permitted to sift into the courts and punitive institutions. But in the years of his untrained observation of the sightless legal disposition of misguided human souls and bodies, he was puzzled and distressed at the very apparent contradictions that outraged his embryonic logic of justice.

So it will be seen that this second unmistakable warning dealt by John Barleycorn was but one item in the mass of data which pointed a conclusion that he was on the road to destroy his efficiency as master of his own destiny. Realizing, beyond all loyalty to his late congenial heroes and friends, that he was unendurably bored with them and their standards, he shook the mislaid dreams of conquest into the forefront of his curly head. He began without delay, although of course in the saloons, to affect the society of the seasoned personnel of a sealing fleet then wintering in San Francisco Bay. Mingling freely with them, from boat-pullers and steerers, up to the keen-eyed hunters, the chesty mates, and the to him imposing captains, grown men all, he felt his way to the big adventure. A friend he made of one of the seal-hunters, Pete Holt, who was looking for a likely schooner, and in a half-dozen glasses they pledged that Jack sign on as his boat-puller for the next cruise to the coast of Japan and Bering Sea. So possessed with relief and recrudescent joy was the boy at cutting loose from the old life which now gloomed so dun to his retrospective eye, that he fell victim to momentary fear lest its ginny "death-road" might trip him before the day of departure. "I lived more circumspectly," he confesses, "drank less deeply, and went home more frequently. When drinking grew too wild, I got out."

"Home" at this juncture meant a plain, unattractive cottage at Clinton Station, one of several built from the materials of torn-down recreation buildings on the site of old Badger Park, where once Jack had set up ninepins and swept out lemonade booths, and which he subsequently employed under the name of Weasel Park as setting for a scene in "Martin Eden." From this house he went forth to see the world. With a regret in his heart that he could not share this supreme adventure, he noted the wistful look in John London's gray eyes at parting.

Never, since the day he paid over the Razzle Dazzle's price to French Frank, had he known quite such thrilling contentment as upon his seventeenth birthday. On that date, January 12, 1893, before a real shipping commissioner, he signed as boat-puller on the articles of a real sea-going vessel, the beautiful three-topmast schooner Sophie Sutherland, bound for Japan and Bering Sea. And in his being swelled the lofty purpose of making good in all respects with man-size men in a man-size universe.

“SOPHIE SUTHERLAND,” SEALING

VOLUME I — CHAPTER IX 17 to nearly 18 years

WHENEVER Jack London set foot upon deck-planking, he left behind more than the solid earth. Whatsoever load of soul-sickness or care he had borne to the water’s edge fell from him, or, more fitly, shrank to its true scant measure under the springing arch of life. Any embarcadero was a wharf of dreams where, glad face to sweeping river or to open sea, he felt the burthen upon his shoulders transfigured into blithe immateriality as of wings.

Even so early, the dollar had ceased to stand as an unqualified goal; it was but a means to an end, or to many ends. Money bought larger life, and life to the full, was all his goal. Good indeed it was to know that he possessed ability to earn gold and silver which in turn was good to spend in playing the game as he saw it, the game wherein duty and pleasure were two of many points to win. The concept which had caused that clean break with a miserly past when he gave away his boyish treasures, had rendered it unlikely that mere money-getting should ever again hold him from the joy of living. “And somehow,” he puts his case, “from the day I achieved that concept . . . I have never cared much for money. No one has ever considered me a miser since, while my carelessness of money is a source of anxiety to some that know me.”

Descending the steep companionway into the fresh-paint air of the Sophie Sutherland’s renovated forecastle, he de-posited his bulging canvas sea-bag, packed the previous night at Eliza’s, in a bunk selected for the best lighting from the hatch. And in that moment he relegated to its expedient limbo all worry as to finances. Fixed wages would be accumulating against the day of his return, and in that day the coin should be applied where it would benefit the most. Meantime thought of the same need not vex his head, a head which must be bent upon the study, moment by moment, of fitting himself into his exact place, be it audacious first or humble twelfth, among the round dozen deep-sea veterans in this deep-sea bottom. There was no call for currency in the fo’c’s’le, and thank heaven the last round of drinks for many a month had been bought. The schooner carried no liquor of any sort.

Do not conceive of him as reflecting at any length with idle hands. A "busy child" he had been; a busier man he now was. Child-dreamer or man-dreamer, he worked while he dreamed, he "thought on his feet," to use his words, and with him action was quick as the thought. Throughout his complex mechanism there resided that unity which defied either misapplied effort or unproductive inertia.

While the handsome schooner's crew was typical of its rough Scandinavian class, Jack was immediately struck by an incongruity higher up. The sealer's owner, a somewhat unusual circumstance, sailed in her for personal reasons unfathomed by the ship's company, unless it was to make a sailor of his son, who was also on board. Apparently the father was a land-lubberly soul in a quiet, pensive way — his exterior, to their simple judgment, even suggesting piousness. Little he seemed to know or care about seamanship, always preserving an air of detachment from the management of his vessel, which was left entirely in the hands of the sailing master. "He thinks he's on his yacht, one of the men guffawed below deck a few days out.

Jack, one eye on sailing-master and mate, the other alert to his companions of the forecastle, kept tongue between teeth as he had done with unprofessional ones of their stripe, and walked warily. Things were different now — no longer was he master of his own keel, nor even partner, as on the Reindeer. No authority of any kind was his, except over his inner self, and that was a confidential matter. He had had the "nerve," as Pete Holt had grinned, to sign on as A. B., he, who had never been more than a mile outside the Golden Gate. But what of that? — he was able-bodied if any of them were, and he was a seaman or he did not know what the word meant. He would see to it that he was an able one.

"I was an able seaman," he asserts. "I had graduated from the right school. It took no more than minutes to learn the names and uses of the few new ropes. It was simple. I did not do things blindly. As a small-boat sailor I had learned to reason out and know the why of everything. It is true, I had to learn to steer by compass, which took maybe half a minute; but when it came to steering full-and-by and close-and-by, I could beat the average of my shipmates, because that was the very way I had always sailed. Inside fifteen minutes I could box the compass around and back again. And there was little else to learn during that seven-months cruise, except fancy rope-sailorizing, such as the more complicated lanyard knots and the making of various kinds of sennit and rope-mats."

It must be remembered that, while he realized he was measuring against better-informed sailors than those he had known, his undue reverence for deep-water men had been shaken when they came to managing small sailing craft. Scotty's fiasco with the little old skiff of tender remembrance was not the only one he had witnessed.

Of him there should be no complaint from captain or officers. Simultaneously he appreciated that any difficulty in making good lay in relation to the forecastle rather than to the deck. He sensed a sneering antagonism, in certain able-bodied salts for'ard, toward the mere undersized bay-sailor he indubitably was, and his chest rose and his eye darkened with the zest of strife against odds. Oh, not strife with his hands, unless forced ; he would make no hasty nor false moves. But the conquesting of minds of their caliber he well knew was easily possible, though only by keeping one jump ahead of them. One did it with animals, and he had found the same method practicable with most boys he had known and with some men.

Swiftly "sizing up" the seamed visages of the elder A. B. s, he divined without error the ones he must deal with from the word go. Not for nothing had he pondered the weird unreckonable quality of the order of Scandinavian intelligence that had come his way in the past. And here he uncovered the same mental quirks, although not one of these "squareheads" could boast of the physical beauty or charm of either of the "Scratches."

He must make no blunders. These seasoned tars would make capital of the raw material they deemed him, as they were traditionally accustomed. He would degenerate to a mere cabin-boy, a door-mat, and worse, if he were not cautious and more than cautious. Obliging he would be, of course; but he must firmly entrench himself short of being imposed upon. He gave them credit for a primitive cunning that would pounce upon an unguarded weakening. Difficult clay this for a youngster to mold for his own survival, but malleable clay nevertheless, which he must steel himself to thumb without fumbling. Here he laid foundation for the tactician without hypocrisy which in time he came to be.

Reviewing his problem, he writes: "These hard-bit Scandinavian sailors had come through a hard school. As boys they had served their mates, and as able seamen they looked to be served by other boys. I was a boy . . . I had never been to sea before — withal I was a good sailor and knew my business . . . I had signed on as an equal, and an equal I must maintain myself, or else endure seven months of hell at their hands. And it was this very equality they resented. By what right was I an equal? I had not earned that high privilege. I had not endured the miseries they had endured as maltreated boys or bullied ordinaries. Worse than that, I was a land-lubber making his first voyage. And yet, by the injustice of fate, on the ship's articles I was their equal.

"My method was deliberate, and simple, and drastic. In the first place, I resolved to do my work, no matter how hard or dangerous it might be, so well that no man would be called upon to do it for me. Further, I put ginger in my muscles. I never malingered when pulling on a rope, for I knew the eagle eyes of my forecastle mates were squinting for just such evidence of my inferiority. I made it a point to be among the first of the watch going on deck, among the last going below, never leaving a sheet or tackle for some one else to coil over a pin. I was always eager for the run aloft for the shifting of topsail sheets and tacks, or for the setting or taking in of topsails ; and in these matters I did more than my share."

While he adjusted and outlined further adjustment, he was sensible of being very much alone; but he was always that, in almost any group. It was his fate to be isolate, owing to a faculty for anticipating, which left him little to learn from the average run of individuals. And in his predicament aboard the schooner, as usual there seemed to be none to help him; he must work everything out for himself. Although he did not know it then, this was be cause he was actually preeminent in judgment of the fitness, of things. Seldom did he come in contact with persons who could discriminate as quickly as he, due to that supreme awareness which quickened his every wakeful moment. His keynote was awareness, consciousness.

Making this appraisement of the Sophie Sutherland's complement and his relation to it, meanwhile exerting his mightiest in setting sail and making fast and coiling down, he retained capacity to glory in the fact that he was at last clearing the Golden Gate on the beautiful, lifting highway to Heart s Desire. When the tug had cast off outside the Heads, and the trim sailer breasted the Bar and filled to her course on "the sea's blue swerve," surging past the rocky Farallones and slowly burying the high coastline, the young voyager filled his lungs with the flowing Seabreeze and realized with enormous relief that he was also clearing the moral morass ashore that had threatened to engulf him. “I shudder to think how close a shave I ran,” once he referred to his escape. Never again, he promised himself, would he more than skim the surface of that morass — for the sake of old times and friends to whom he felt and owed loyalty.

But there was another and very important factor that entered into his calculations, namely his own temper, which was itself “on a hair-trigger of resentment” in face of “any abuse or the slightest patronizing.” And the men were not unnoting of the warning advertised by an involuntary setting of that square jaw or a tightening curl at one corner of the full mouth, nor of the sudden omen of darkening eyes behind their long crescent lashes. Several times he “mixed” hotly with one or another of them, in sudden flares that as suddenly subsided; but “I left the impression that I was a wildcat and that I would just as willingly fight again,” he recalls. I proved that the man that imposed upon me must have a fight on his hands. And, doing my work well, the innate justice of the men, assisted by their wholesome dislike for a clawing and rending wildcat ruction, soon led them to give over their hectoring.”

Comparatively seldom, considering the way of his life, had he hit out with his fists. There had been the usual school and street “scraps,” in the course of determining his status among the boys. Once, when he was running with the hoodlum crowd, one real battle royal between the two bad Oakland gangs, had taken place on a bridge which spanned the neck of water separating Lake Merritt from the Bay. The water-front brawls had drawn him in on more than one occasion. He never forgot the day he made good his threat, twice repeated, to knock the daylights out of a stupid lunkhead of a sailor on the Reindeer, who had as many times let go the mainsheet in a delicate maneuver Jack was essaying in a tight corner. Practically, these were the only times he had used his hands in this way. And he was punctilious always in a determination never to threaten unless he intended to make good. “I hope I’ll never have to draw a gun,” I have heard him say, “because, if I did, I’d have to use it!”

On the Sophie Sutherland, however, it remained for one decisive victory to clarify the atmosphere for all the voyage.

Red John, a huge-boned Swede, had not yet ceased looking for trouble with this smooth-cheeked boy who declined to be mere boy, nor heeded the signs that boy hung out in plain sight from time to time as the other tried to incite him to protest. But one day, when Jack, on watch below, was sitting in his bunk engaged in the unoffending task of weaving a rope-yarn mat for sister Eliza at home, the inevitable moment presented, and he recognized and dealt with it for all it was worth.

It was Red John’s peggy-day — his turn at cleaning house in the sailor s quarters; and Red John’s eagerness to impress the greenest hand into personal service cost him his caution and a distinct loss of dignity. Some rough order he flung at Jack, who woke from pleasant reverie and bristled and tensed, but paid no other attention to the bully, while he went on making his love-gift.

Red John mumbled and cursed without noticeable effect on the mat-weaver. Suddenly boiling over, the incensed giant let go the coffee-pot he was carrying, and gave the boy a back-handed blow across the mouth. Like a flash Jack landed on the other’s eye, dodged the return swing of the sledge-hammer fist, and the combat was on — the strangest ever seen by their mates, who scuttled into bunks to be out of the way and enjoy the show. With that cat-like swiftness he later ascribed to his “Sea Wolf,” Jack had outflanked the foe and sprung upon his shoulders, where he clasped powerful short legs in a strangle-hold about the roaring bull-throat, while his fingers sought eyes and windpipe of the confounded, raging brute under him. The only recourse left the Swede was main strength, which he used, perhaps by mere instinct, in butting his captor against the deck beams. This inflicted bloody and painful damage to the young tiger’s scalp and crouched shoulders. But those excruciating pointed digits in larynx and eye-sockets settled the issue, and the tormented Berserker was forced to give in by hoarsely bellowing assent to Jack’s breathless repetition of “Will y’leave me alone, now? Will y’let up on me for keeps? Will y’leave me be? — Will yuh? Will yuh?”

Once more on his feet, quivering and weak amidst the wreck of the forecastle, but wrapt in the solicitous congratulations of admiring colleagues, he cemented their respectful regard by an utter lack of swank over his victory. “That’s all right, boys,” and a “Thank you kindly,” was all they could get out of him as he grinned through the blood that dripped from his lacerated scalp, and went about cleansing it. Hardly needful to mention, Red John became the staunchest admirer and champion of this valiant cub whom he had failed to whip. As for the others, “It was my pride that I was taken in as an equal, in spirit as well as in fact. From then on, everything was beautiful, and the voyage promised to be a happy one.” Quite opposed, it will be seen, to accounts from inexcusably careless biographers, that the friendly schooner was a hell-ship in which Jack London had a fight on his hands, or provoked one, every day of the voyage!

And very happy it was. While he could get along com-fortably without approbation, his content was enhanced by it; and the pleasure of camaraderie with his fellows below or on deck, or aloft in the shrieking rigging in a gale, was not to be calculated. No exhausting strain could dampen the ardor of holding his own with the best in sheer muscular rivalry. Even in middle age, for him to be able to say, "I have toiled all night, both watches on deck, off the coast of Japan," meant more to him than the best passage he had ever written. It should be remembered that eye-to-eye, strain-to-strain, blow-to-blow, with these rougher forces, he overbore the unjust handicap of supersensitiveness — making no allowance for small-boned wrists and ankles that were foredoomed to injury. But whatever his disgruntlement may have been as regarded those fragile extremities, he could be secretly pleased with the augmenting bulge of muscle on back and shoulders, legs and biceps, although it may be the strenuousness of his hit-or-miss education in hardship cost him an inch or so of stature.

He was never apathetic to the beauty of the world about the pretty schooner he took prideful hand in sailing. His trick at the wheel, ably and faithfully discharged, brought him inexhaustible delights, not the least of which was the satisfaction of holding his own as a helmsman among helmsmen. The chronometer, that "least imperfect time-piece that man has devised," and the nautical instruments, were things almost of enchantment, and again he dreamed dreams of some day working his own ship by their aid under sun and star. The wide sea and dome of sky, with all their moods of color and motion, pervaded him with a never-palling joyance of eye and spirit. In the night watches, swinging majestically under the wintry steel-blue stars, or fighting through big seas beneath low scudding moonlit cloud-masses, with only the pale-glimmering bin nacle for company, he knew again those lofty, cool levels of contemplation wherein his vision was extended into ever-receding distances of thought.

Because of the extravagant and unappeased hunger of his mind, sleeping hours he divided with the books he had smuggled aboard. At the nearest possible inch to the inner wall of his confined bunk, he crept with a tiny improvised light, fitted with a shade so that he might not disturb the men. I think he has described the contrivance as a saucer of slush-oil containing a floating bit of wick, which “lamp” he was obliged to hold in his hand. To such lengths he went to feed that mind-hunger. Two reasons there were for this stealth — a decent consideration toward the men, and, still more important, an unmistaken intuition that good fellowship depended upon hiding propensities they might construe as “airish.” There was too much at stake.

It was some years since this inquisitive pilgrim, with his disturbing aptitude for looking aside into the amazing by-ways of cause and effect, had begun to outstrip the childish methods of argument common amongst sailor folk. He concealed his advanced opinions, thrashing out in busy solitude the questions that arose in him, and nursing an increasing wonder at what Dana has called “the simple psychology of the forecastle.” Hour upon hour he harkened to these huge men argue prodigiously and earnestly, and even come to blows, over the most obviously infantile details, splitting hairs ad infinitum and ad nauseam. He had to play down to their intelligence — caught himself time and again anticipating their conclusions, with leisure to indulge in speculations of his own while automatically following their talk.

Nevertheless certain simplicities of code were beneficial, and perhaps in the Sophie Sutherland’s crowded forecastle were fixed in him economies of habit that stayed with him always, such as orderliness with personal belongings, and a notable scarcity of the same. It was only right that one’s private possessions and convictions should not get in the way of others. There were places for both groups, and they should not be misplaced to the harassment of persons one had to live with and vice versa. Besides, such encroachment was promptly resented in no uncertain terms and actions.

Though they were really children mentally, he noted vital differences of character. Victor and Axel, Swede and Norwegian respectively, were the youngest and most congenial to the antic side of his own personality, and after the wild adventure of the first landfall, they became known as “the Three Sports “ aboard ship and ashore. Pete Holt, the hunter, Jack always liked to work with in the boats. For the vanquished Red John he felt good-humored tolerance along with ungrudged admiration for his gigantic proportions. And Long John was a fair sport. The senior member of the crew, poor fat Louis, old at fifty, was in Jack’s sailor psychology that most unfortunate of wrecks, a broken skipper. He was deeply impressed to learn that drink had been the cause of Louis going to pieces and losing his papers.

There it was again — drink had “thrown” a good man, “and he was winding up his career where he had begun it, in the forecastle. The worst of this, the boy was almost convinced, was that it had not killed the reduced skipper outright, but had done “much worse . . . robbed him of power and place and comfort, crucified his pride,” and sailor-pride remained to Jack a superfine quality. And now the luckless Louis, once master of a ship, was “condemned to the hardships of the common sailor.”

But when this youngest A. B. discovered himself repeating that solemn vow of Never Again, there would leap behind his eyes the rollicking high times, the “purple passages that went hand in hand with lusty drinking. Often, of course,” he relates, “the talk in the forecastle turned on drink, and the men told of their more exciting and hu-morous drunks, remembering such passages keenly, with greater delight, than all the other passages of their adventurous lives.” The eternal riddle propounded by alcohol took place in his thinking as a cosmic contradiction.

Then, when he had failed to reach any congenial solution, he would turn to another sort of derelict, the man in their midst whom he always thought of as the twelfth and last of the dozen. No one knew his name. The only personal items he had let slip were that he was a Missouri bricklayer, and had never seen salt water before. That would have been enough to disqualify him; for not only in this respect was he an insult to the forecastle “he was vicious, malignant, dirty, and without common decency.” Apparently he was strong, and perpetually he looked for a fight, though an unfair opponent. The first day out, he had reached for Jack’s table knife to cut a plug of chewing tobacco. Jack “promptly exploded,” and the first row of the voyage ensued. Subsequently, the man came to blows with every one of the other ten men. Combined with personal nastiness, his uselessness fomented the hatred of the crew, whom he bullied by indirection. Try as they would, they could never teach him to steer. . . . He never mastered its [the compass’s] cardinal points, much less the checking and steadying of the ship on her course. It was mentally impossible for him to learn the easy muscular trick of throwing his weight on a rope in pulling and hauling. . . . He was mortally afraid of going aloft. He managed to get under the cross-trees, and there he froze to the ratlines. Two sailors had to go after him to help him down.”

Fifteen years later, the subject of “praying to death” by the Kahunas (witch doctors) one day came up when we were in Hawaii. Jack declared a wholesome respect for the belief, soberly enough recalling the uncanny ending of the “Bricklayer” in the forecastle of the Sophie Sutherland, in the sealing grounds off Japan. “He was a beast, and we treated him like a beast,” I find him saying. “It is only by looking back through the years that I realize how heartless we were. . . . He had not made himself, and for his making he was not responsible. Yet we treated him as a free agent and held him personally responsible for all that he was and that he should not have been. As a result, our treatment was as terrible as he was himself terrible.” The man was ill of some mysterious ailment, but he had long since forfeited kindness from any one. Nor did he want kindness. Instead, he repelled any tentative offer. “For weeks before he died we neither spoke to him nor did he speak to us. And for weeks he moved among us, or lay in his bunk in our crowded house, grinning at us his hatred and malignancy. . . . He encumbered our life with his presence, and ours was a rough life that made rough men of us. And so he died, in a small space crowded by twelve men and as much alone as if he had died on some desolate mountain peak. . . He died as he had lived, a beast, and he died hating us and hated by us.

Strange mental food for one so young and so thoughtful as Jack. But whatever remorse he may have felt was neutralized by the inevitable memory of the man’s awfulness. Yet after the body had been flung overboard from the ice-rimed vessel, he did what no one else dared do — calmly moved his belongings into the thoroughly cleansed deserted bunk, mainly for the reason that it was dryer than his and commanded a better light for reading. By now the boys had accepted his little row of books as an amiable idiosyncrasy. “My other reason was pride,” he explains. “I saw the sailors were superstitious, and I determined to show that I was braver than they. I would cap my proved equality by a deed that would compel their recognition of my superiority. Oh, the arrogance of youth! . . . Then they begged and pleaded with me, and my pride was tickled in that they showed they really liked me and were concerned. . . . I moved in, and lying in the dead man’s bunk, all afternoon and evening listened to dire prophecies of my future. . . . Also stories of awful deaths and grewsome ghosts that secretly shivered the hearts of all of us.”

Although not recorded that the Bricklayer’s obscene wraith was cognizant, it had its revenge upon at least one hated survivor. That night, hovering just above the identical spot where the unsavory corpse had been consigned to the deep, followed by his belongings, which the most avaricious had no stomach to appropriate, Jack saw wavering what seemed a long, gaunt ghost, and himself stood not upon the order of his going, but “leaped like a startled deer and in a blind madness of terror rushed aft along the poop, heading for the cabin.” His “arrogance of youth and intellectual calm” deserted him cold, and he was “panic-stricken as a frightened horse.” Through him “were vibrating the fiber-instincts of ten thousand generations of superstitious forebears who had been afraid of the dark and the things of the dark.” He excuses or explains his abrupt terror on a biological basis: “I was not I. I was, in truth, those ten thousand forebears. I was the race, the whole human race, in its superstitious infancy.”

He came to himself descending the cabin companionway, “suffocating, trembling, dizzy. . . . I clung to the ladder and considered. I could not doubt my senses. . . . But what was it? Either a ghost or a joke. . . . If a ghost. . . would it appear again?” and pride rushed to his rescue: if it did not appear again and he awoke the ship’s officers, he would become the laughing stock of all on board which, of course, was unthinkable dishonor. Even more unthinkable would be his plight if the officers turned out to witness a practical joke. So he figured, “If I were to retain my hard-won place of equality, it would never do to arouse any one until I ascertained the nature of the thing.”

“I am a brave man,” he asserts. “I dare to say so; for in fear and trembling I crept up the companionway and went back. . . . It had vanished. My bravery was qualified, however, “ he temporizes. “Though I could see nothing, I was afraid to go forward to the spot where I had seen the thing. . . As my equanimity returned. . . I concluded that the whole affair had been a trick of the imagination and that I had got what I deserved for allowing my mind to dwell on such matters . . . and then, suddenly, I was a madman, rushing wildly aft. I had seen the thing again, the long, wavering attenuated substance through which could be seen the fore-rigging. This time I only reached the break of the poop. . . . Again I reasoned . . . and it was pride that counseled strongest. . . . And for a third time I resumed my amidships pacing.” Growing angrier and angrier with the idea that he was the butt of hoaxers who had seen him twice run, at the third demonstration he drew his sheathe-knife and started for the Thing, though almost curdled with fear. “Step by step, nearer and nearer, the effort to control myself grew more severe. The struggle was between my will, my identity, my very self, on the one hand, and on the other, the ten thousand ancestors. . . .”

“And then, right before my eyes, it vanished . . . faded away, ceased to be. . . . I swear, from what I experienced in those few succeeding moments, that I know full well that men can die of fright. . . . In all my life I never went through more torment and mental suffering than on that lonely night watch.”

Of course, he never mentioned the incident aboard the schooner, nor how, in despair at the impossibility of running away from “the malevolent world of ghosts” to which he had suddenly given credence, he had as suddenly discovered the cause of the apparition in the shadow of a rocking topmast against the cloud-dimmed moon radiance on the fore-rigging. “Once again I have seen a ghost,” he admits, and he was done with ghosts forever. “It proved to be a Newfoundland dog, and I don’t know which of us was the more frightened, for I hit that Newfoundland a full right-arm swing to the jaw.”

It may have been it was the happiest period of his whole life, that voyage in the Sophie Sutherland; for then even his disillusionments were healthy, and the compensations ample. Within him, as the active days of the exceptionally fine passage rolled by, was the delicious anticipation of his first foreign port, which was to be in the Bonin Islands, a cluster to the southeast of Japan, once known as the Arzo-bispo group. And they would be wholly foreign. Thus he foretasted the bliss of lifting their heads above the sea-rim, for he had read that since recognition of their Japanese ownership over thirty years before, American and English settlements had been deserted. And even though dead, these were volcanic isles, which was another thrilling consideration albeit not the first he had seen. For the Sophie Sutherland had navigated the southern route, skirting Hawaii, the highest island in the world; and he had gazed spellbound upon the night-glow and day-smoke of the world s greatest active crater, Kilauea, in the foreground of a snow-capped mountain nearly fourteen thousand feet high.

The young Argonaut was deeply affected when at last the blue-distant peaks of the Bonins pierced the horizon, steadily growing less mirage-like, until he could make out the heavy green forestage, and smell what no voyager ever forgets, that scent, borne on the ocean breeze, of a tropic garden-isle of fruit and flowers and cocoa-palms. And presently the schooner was threading the surfy reefs and sounding her way into a landlocked harbor. Here were anchored twenty-odd sail of the American and Canadian fleets, put in for repairs and replenishing of water supplies, in readiness for the seal-hunting to the north. All about were sampans and queer native canoes paddled by oriental aborigines, who made for the latest arrival and swarmed aboard as Jack had read in old chronicles.

"I had won to the other side of the world," he rejoiced, "and I would see all I had read in the books come true. I was wild to get ashore."

He could hardly wait, when on leave they rowed across the clear green water above a fairy jungle of branching coral, to beach on the gleaming coral sands. Such fishing as they would have on that reef, from those outlandish sampans, after all that was possible had been seen of the palmy, blossomy heights. Somehow he did not think so much about the village itself. He wanted to stretch himself out of doors, on that mountainside, and perhaps find other villages, much more strange and picturesque than the one on the beach, which was alive with white-skinned mariners anyway. And so, he and Victor and Axel "walked across the fringe of beach under the cocoanut palms and into the little town, and found several hundred riotous seamen from all the world drinking prodigiously, singing prodigiously, dancing prodigiously — and all on the main street, to the scandal of a helpless handful of Japanese police."

Victor and Axel proposed that they have one drink for old sake's sake, before starting on their long, warm hike. Jack did not want the drink — but what should be his troubles to them? "Could I decline to drink with these two chesty shipmates? Drinking together, glass in hand, put the seal on comradeship." Fifty-one days had worked all the alcohol out of his system, and he swears he had not known the desire for it, doubting if he once thought of a drink. But apparently "It was the way of life. Our teetotaler owner-captain was laughed at, and sneered at, by all of us because of his teetotalism. I didn't in the least want a drink, but I did want to be a good fellow and a good comrade." He thought of poor old Louis's case, but his own swamp was far behind him, and he felt too strong, from the splendid conditioning of the voyage, to be fearful. "My blood ran full and red," he was healthily conscious; "I had a constitution of iron; and — well, youth ever grins scornfully at the wreckage of age."

The feet of the Sailors Three never trod that flowery path into the perfumed fastnesses of the mountain isle. The pitfalls of the town were too numerous to step over or around. Their long-deprived eyes were captivated by the flower-faces of the impossibly tiny, doll-like girls, dressed in bright kimonos with their reversed obis. "Little bits of things off a fan," Jack once described the Japanese women to me. And provokingly unreal they appeared to his young fancy, the little butterfly courtesans. So Jack and Axel left the turbulent village only in order to carry Victor, a lunatic from vast quantities of adulterated whiskey and the pale-golden native saké', back to the schooner, which he proceeded to "clean up." Balked in this, he threw himself overboard. The other two followed to the rescue, for though the keenest of the older crew, Victor evidently was one of the notorious able seamen who could swim little. Jack and Axel were not so tipsy but they wanted to return to the delights ashore, which they did after getting the subdued Victor into his bunk. "It was curious," Jack reflected later, "the judgment passed on Victor by his shipmates, drinkers themselves. They shook their heads disapprovingly and muttered: 'A man like that oughtn't drink.'"

Jack seems to have kept his head long enough to capture his meed of the saturnalian orgy that ran wide open that night. "Ashore, snugly ensconsed in a Japanese house of entertainment," he and Axel had several quiet nips of saké, first alone together, then with succeeding shipmates who dropped in. Just as they were luxuriously settling on their native wooden head-rests to enjoy the novelty of music made on samisens and taikos they had engaged, "came a wild howl from the street . . howling, disdaining doorways, with bloodshot eyes and wildly waving muscular arms, Victor burst upon us through the fragile walls." It developed later that Victor had dreamed that a pretty Japanese girl whom he had known earlier in the afternoon was appropriated by Jack, and he forthwith ran amuck. "The orchestra fled," Jack recounts; "so did we. We went through doorways, and we went through paper walls — anything to get away." They returned, however, to pay for the demolished house.

"The main street was a madness. Because the chief of police with his small force was helpless, the Governor of the colony had issued orders to the captains to have all their men on board by sunset. This was the signal for a "general debauch for all hands." The men "went around inviting the authorities to try to put them aboard." Jack, still sober enough to take it all in, "thought it was great. It was like the old days of the Spanish Main come back. It was license; it was adventure. And I was part of it, a chesty sea-rover along with all these other chesty sea-rovers among the paper houses of Japan."

Many pictures he remembered, in which he unconsciously posed, the last one “standing out very clear and bright in the midst of vagueness before and blackness afterward.” He and several angel-faced apprentices of his own age from the Canadian sealers, “are swaying and clinging to one another under the stars . . . singing a rollicking sea-song, all save one who sits on the ground and weeps; and we are marking the rhythm with waving square-faces. From up and down the street come far choruses of sea-voices similarly singing, and life is great, and beautiful, and romantic, and magnificently mad.”

As in his babyhood beer-bust, returning intelligence was under the anxious eyes of some one, this time a strange Japanese woman, the port pilot’s wife, where Jack, stripped of everything but his trousers — money, watch, shoes, belt, everything — had been left upon her threshold as a joke by the angelic blond apprentices. For ten days it was the same story, except that the Three Sports “caroused somewhat more discreetly.” Even Victor, repentant of excesses, saw the wisdom of discretion. But why regret that one adventure went wrong? Jack undoubtedly figured, then and after, that because he missed exploring the island he perhaps lived more than he would have in all the mountain climbing on earth. Of him I have observed, when on occasion one arrangement was interfered with by some other, that he forgot regret, or at least replaced regret, with wholesouled interest in the substitution. Eventually he summed up the entire Bonin incident in his customary philosophical way, though in this instance pointing the immorality of alcohol s accessibility to the young.

“I might have seen and healthily enjoyed a whole lot more of the Bonin Islands if I had done what I ought to have done. But, as I see it, it is not a matter of what one ought to do, or ought not to do. It is what one does do. That is the everlasting, irrefragable fact. I did just what I did. I did what all those men did in the Bonin Islands. I did what millions of men over the world were doing at that particular point in time. I did it because the way led to it, because I was only a human boy, a creature of my environment, and neither an anemic nor a god. I was just human, and I was taking the path in the world that men took — men whom I admired, if you please ; full-blooded men, lusty, breedy, chesty men, free spirits and anything but niggards in the way they foamed life away.

“And the way was open.”

Each daybreak on the northward run brought its fresh excitement of locating the positions of other vessels in their race for the sealing grounds. These reached, for twelve weeks they saw the sun hardly as many times. Jack, boat-puller, did his man's work at the oars, and skinning as well as packing the fabulously valuable pelts which he could scarce credit were the same furs that made the lovely, plushy coats he had seen on fine ladies who could not forego wearing them even in California's mild winters. With habitual thoroughness he had soon informed himself of the process of plucking and softening the unbeautiful slimy hides he was instrumental in securing.

"The deck was a slaughter-house, week in and week out," he has told me. "There wasn't a malingerer left among us since the Bricklayer slid overside; and we kept up a lively competition to see who would have the biggest number of skins salted down at the close of the season. It was wild, heavy work off the coast of Siberia, with no let-up weeks on end. We had our fun, though — savage fun it sometimes was, but wholly good-natured. One horrid practical joke I remember," he exploded in that giggle which every one about him always enjoyed, " — oh, it was silly, and dirty and disgusting and everything else — and it did nearly cost us Long John's friendship; but he got back at us in some way, I forget how, and all was for given.

"Maybe it was Long John's length that put the idea into some one s mind, or his custom of sleeping naked — there'd be so much of him to shock! Now a skinned seal is not a pretty object nor nice to touch — all grease and blood, and colder than hell. We had a time getting it into the forecastle unknown to Long John — it was a whale for size — and into his bunk, where we laid it close to the ship's side, and covered it all up. When we went to bed those nights, we were so dog-tired we turned in all-standing, never looked first but just grabbed up the bedclothes, flopped in with them on top, raised our feet to swoop the blankets under and around, and were dead to the world. No reading for me those nights. — You can follow, can't you," he interrupted himself, "how I got the habit you've noticed, of spoiling my nicely made bed, pulling the blankets out with my feet and rolling up in them. I'm a savage anyway, in spite of my tender skin!

"But anyway — we were all on hand for the show; and some show! It went like a charm. Long John ripped off his oilskins and woollens, everything, and in one big movement landed under the covers full length of his bare, warm body against that horrible, blood-slimy, half-frozen corpse.

God! — but he let out the most soul-curdling yell I've ever heard, and shot out of that bunk a hundredfold quicker than he went in. I'll bet his first thought was of the Bricklayer — but his next was no slower, for he tried to lay out the whole fo'c's'le. When a slow man does get mad. . . . I can tell you no one of us ever turned in again on that voyage without examining the bed!"

About the only relaxation the crew got was an occasional "gam" aboard the other sealers, scattered widely over the face of the gray sea, One of these, the schooner Herman, in 1907 under the name of the Roberta trading in the South Seas, put into Taiohae while we were visiting the Marquesas Islands in the Snark.

The sole indisposition I know of, that claimed Jack on the Sutherland voyage, was a sudden and severe attack upon his sensory nerves by the excruciating "shingles" (herpes zoster) — an intercostal manifestation that came near to proving fatal.

One more adventure Jack was promised, and they would be bound home with a big catch. Into the capacious Bay of Tokyo the Sophie Sutherland made her way, and let go anchor off Yokohama's imposing docks. Those docks, with the modern public buildings, invested the Far East metropolis with a-disappointingly European character. It was the largest city he had ever seen, its population totaling upward of 200,000, and incredulously he referred to one of the history books he had brought on the voyage, which stated that Yokohama had been a mere fishing hamlet less than thirty-five years earlier. Ever afterward he nourished an admir-ing respect for these short-legged, canoe-bodied, brilliant-minded sub-Mongolians and the shorter-legged, gentle-voiced, flower-faced mothers of the wonderful race. The preceding generation of average Californians is apt to be slipshod to a degree not understood by citizens of the Atlantic seaboard, concerning both Chinese and Japanese immigrants of whatsoever station. This because the familiar cook and coolie, house-servant, laundryman, and vegetable peddler, of western pioneer occupation, were usually Mongolian. Jack, in his hoodlum antics, had undoubtedly not been guiltless of teasing a Japanese or Chinese boy or two. Still, I have heard him indignantly descant upon how he had seen a ruthless gang jump off a moving Seventh Street "local" in order to besmirch and tear to bits the clean laundry on a wagon, first binding the helplessly chattering Chinese driver by his long queue to a telegraph post. “Teasing” of this criminal sort seems not to have been funny to Jack.

In skiff-voyaging on San Francisco Bay, then populous with lofty-masted ships of all the world, toward which his eyes had yearned so worshipfully, he had dwelt upon the scented cargoes which he imagined lay in their holds — rarest teas and glossy silks, perfumed fans of carven sandalwood, lacquered furniture and bamboo wares. And now he was making ready to land upon one of the massive piers of the very emporium of Japan’s silk industry.

The sailors were kept aboard at ship’s work all the first day; and none more anxious than Jack London that his American vessel should be the most immaculate and trim in port. That ship-pride kept pace with his years, and be came as natural as his efficiency or his sense of the beautiful.

Evening came at last, and spic and span the young mariners disembarked from their rowboat upon a warf, and pursued their laughing way in ‘rickshaws directly to a Japanese public-house. There they were to meet the hunters, to whom the Captain had given their pay. The hunters were already in full possession of the gay, paper-partitioned building and its engratiating entertainers.

When the fortnight was ended, and he bent to the windlass to break out the schooner’s hook, and braced to her heeling pace before the homing West Wind of the northern passage, he knew what his undeviating course was to be when he landed in Oakland: steady work of some sort and what schooling he could cram in. As the thirty-seven days of the voyage neared completion, each of the crew conceived a plan of sheerest virtue for himself. They were all going to cut out this drink stuff for good, and make up for wasted time and money. A good pay-day was still due, despite those wastrel Japan nights — they could live, if they lived decently, until next year s sealing, on what was coming to them. And warmly they vowed to sail together the following season.

“They refused to buy anything more from the slopchest. Old rags had to last, and they sewed patch upon patch, turning out what are called ‘homeward-bound patches’ of the most amazing dimensions. They even saved on matches, waiting till two or three were ready to light their pipes from the same match.”

When they had reëntered the Golden Gate and were towing slowly past the San Francisco wharves, the crew in profane language warned off predacious sailor-boardinghouse runners who flocked aboard from Whitehall boats. Once ashore, and the owner departed for his home, all the Sophie Sutherland's family, from sailing-master and mate to her youngest sailor, Jack, agreed that they must have one drink to pledge friendship and safe return. There were nineteen all told, and each of course must treat. And so it went. Every good intention of the older men was shattered that night, as it had been shattered on former returns. "From two days to a week saw the end of their money and saw them being carted by the boarding-house masters on board outward-bound ships." Jack, lucky enough to have a home, did not spend all his pay-day nor get shanghai'd. In the early morning he withdrew and crossed to Oakland.*

The following year, Pete Holt reminded Jack of his promise to sail another voyage with him as boat-puller, this time on the schooner Mary Thomas. But Jack declined on some pretext, for his reading had by then fired him to inspect quite a different part of the world — the South Seas. The Mary Thomas never was spoken after she passed the Farallones. Her disappearance, remains, in so far as I know, a mystery to this day.

* Referring to his first sea voyage, in the "duty" letter to his girl in 1898, he says: "Aye, I at last kicked over the traces; but even then, did I wholly run away from duty? Many a gold piece went into the family when I returned from seven months at sea. What did I do with my pay day? I bought a second-hand hat, some forty-cent shirts, two fifty-cent suits of underclothes, and a second-hand coat and vest. I spent exactly seventy cents for drinks among the crowd I had known before I went to sea. The rest went to pay some debts of my father and to the family.

BOY-AND-GIRL LOVE

VOLUME I — CHAPTER X 17-18 years

SOMETHING was wrong, very wrong. There was a sense of confusion, and he could not see the light. Here he was, man-strong with mighty shoulders and chest and biceps developed in fair competition with veteran seamen. He had measured up in work and endurance with the best, and felt entitled to all the arrogance of individuality that welled up at thought of his "hard-won place of equality" with the professionally able-bodied; he had experience of the world — a being far removed from the mere boy of less than a year before who had worked in a cannery for ten cents an hour. And yet, the best job that offered to him, big sailor with a rolling gait, was at "hum-drum machine toil" in a jute-mill — at the same old ten cents an hour for the same old ten hours and more a day. He was thoroughly persuaded by his mother that he had roamed enough; that his allotment of dreaming and blond-beasting had ended; that he must acquire a trade and settle down. But for the accident of a restless intellect which could not tolerate unrelieved routine, Jack London might have lived and died an artisan instead of artist and greatly more.

No outrage was so ill-entertained by him as outrage to his common-sense. And this thing was ridiculous. Like Kipling's tramp-royal, "Me that have been what I ve been" — and still ten cents an hour, "me!" Notwithstanding, he must get to work, and immediately, for his parents needed his strength to lean upon. So he dismissed the unresolved and confused issues, and buckled to in that single-minded way he could assume which made him such an exemplary asset to employers of unskilled labor. Once going straight in the shafts, being an artist he took pride in his work, and became quite a conventional member of the proletariat, pleased with his own capability. "As for the unfortunates, the sick . . . and old and maimed," he reviewed his position, "I vaguely felt that they, barring accidents, could be as good as I if they wanted to real hard. . . . Further, the optimism bred of a stomach which could digest scrap iron, and a body which flourished on hardships, did not permit me to consider accidents as even remotely related to my glorious personality.

He has also declared that to him at that time the dignity of labor came to be the most impressive thing in the world, and he evolved a "gospel of work" that put Kipling's and Carlyle's in the shade, though he knew it not. "The pride I took in a hard day's work," he marveled, "would be inconceivable to you. It is almost inconceivable to me now as I look back upon it." For him to shirk on the man who paid him wages was a sin second only to that greatest sin, disloyalty; indeed, it was a disloyalty. In short, as he says in an essay, "my joyous individuality was dominated by the orthodox bourgeois ethics. I read the bourgeois papers, listened to the bourgeois preachers, and shouted at the sonorous platitudes of the bourgeois politicians." Such a virtuous conformist did he become that he could not understand his old infatuation for the water-front. "I didn't care for the drinking, nor the vagrancy of it," he affirms.

Back he wandered to the Free Library, and read and reread the books, with eyes made wide by experience. Boyish enthusiasm had been satiated for a time and he felt superior, steadied. He had done some of these slashing and romantic things himself — and could tell a few more that were not in the books if he were so minded. This several months interval between the sealing voyage and his next abrupt break-away from Oakland is notable especially for producing his first literary effort viewed as such. In a letter to a friend he says: "When I was working in the jute-mills, I received forty dollars pay and at the same time twenty-five dollars from a prize in a literary contest. I bought a ten dollar suit of clothes and got my watch out of hock. That was all I spent. Two days afterward, I had to soak my watch to get money for tobacco."

It was his mother who noticed the prize-offer from the San Francisco Call for the best descriptive article submitted within a given time. Jack was slaving for thirteen hours a day, finding it difficult to get enough rest as it was. Finally he gave in to her urge that he try for the prize. "Only, what shall I write about?" he complained. It was evening, and in his wearied eye was the prospect of rising at half-past five. "Oh, why not tell about something you did or saw in Japan, or at sea," Flora pricked his memory. This he mulled with knit brows. All at once, with a grin, he swooped down upon the kitchen table with an old school tablet, where he wrote furiously without note of the clock until breakfast. Two thousand words was the limit fixed by the Call, and he had already exceeded this, with his idea but half worked out.

“The next night, under the same conditions,” he says, “I continued, adding another two thousand.” And the third night, in a wakeful trance from exhaustion, he revised his story into the proper length. The manuscript, signed “John London,” published in The Morning Call, Sunday, November 12, 1893, and entitled “Typhoon Off the Coast of Japan,” to his amazement, carried off the first prize, probably because it had been whipped out hot from the mind of one who possessed exceptional powers of observation and instinct for beauty. Still more amazing, the contestants who took second and third awards were stu-dents of Stanford and the University of California respectively. Jack’s father was so elated that he bought up every copy he could lay his hands on, to distribute to friends.

Jack himself, greatly excited, harking back to dreams in the days when he had pored over “Signa,” could hardly wait to catch up with sleep before putting his hand again to such fascinating and lucrative work, which had been mere amusement so far. But what he next sent to the Call editor he designates as “gush.” It was promptly rejected, and he contented himself with his regular employment.

But some sort of recreation beside reading did the subdued and amiable young factory hand naturally crave. He did not drink. He did not want to drink. He never in his whole life wanted to drink for drink’s sake. He devoutly wished, from beginning to end, that drinking never had been invented as a social function. “I wish there had never been any alcohol in the world.” I have heard him say, “it is all to the bad.”

And here lies the pity of his preceding youthful experience. It had for the most part unfitted him for the healthful, normal youngness of fellows of his own age. He knew of the opportunities for athletics as well as education in the Young Men’s Christian Association. All his future, in deed, he spoke warmly in appreciation of the work and scope of this organization.

The Y. M. C. A. was all right, he conceded; it was he who was at fault, or, more concisely, so unfortunate as to be too worldly-wise to find its atmosphere congenial. To him, the sophisticated, it proved juvenile to boredom. It had come too late, even though he was for the moment the perfect conformist in a bourgeois environment. “I had bucked big with men,” was his regret. “I knew mysterious and violent things. I was from the other side of life so far as concerned the young men I encountered in the Y.

M. C. A. I spoke another language, possessed a sadder and more terrible wisdom" — although it seemed far from "terrible" to him then. And he "got more out of the books than they. . . . Their meager physical experiences, plus their meager intellectual experiences, made a negative sum so vast that it overbalanced their wholesome normality and healthful sports."

Still, though he could not command social advantages that would have helped, these months formed a clean and pleasing period, singularly innocent and satisfying to one so lately roughing his way over the world. He always recalled the purity of his first love and the idyllic way of its pursuit, idyllic despite its setting; and his companionship with Louis Shattuck, who led him into its sweet paths.

Louis Shattuck, blacksmith's apprentice and dandy, considered himself quite a devil of a Lothario. Nevertheless it was through his tutelage in town ways of their class that Jack happily regressed to boyhood's simple consciousness, and overtook somewhat of the pristine ecstasy which had not come to him in the usual order of adolescence.

Remember, in their stratum, there were no chaperoned calls in cozy parlors of the working class homes, no formality of any sort in the mode of getting acquainted, no dancing schools other than the dubious and expensive public dance-halls and picnic-park Sunday whirls. And neither Louis nor Jack could afford these. At sunset and twilight of Sunday afternoon, in linked pairs the young girls strolled the sidewalks, the boys likewise. The head-gear of the boys tilted at angles esteemed smart: the smarter the angle of "tile" and glance, the greater impression upon the demure or tittering female of the species in her "fresh print gown."

Jack was suddenly devastated of the pride he had nourished in his manhood's prowess toward man and woman. He discovered himself without knowledge of the guileless methods of boys like Louis, who was "without one vicious trait . . . handsome, and graceful, and filled with love for the girls." In Louis's manner, alas, Jack did not know girls at all. He "had been too busy being a man" in all departments of his buccaneering life. "And when I saw Louis say good-bye to me, raise his hat to a girl of his acquaintance, and walk by her side down the sidewalk, I was made excited and envious. I, too, wanted to play this game.

Recalling personal ways of my husband, it seems to me I often lingered pleasantly upon the movement with which he lifted his cap or hat — almost diffidently, with an expression as if it were a practice newly sweet and consciously lovable. When he was Louis s chum, of course he already knew that hats were “tipped” to ladies, but with him it was far from having become an involuntary gesture. Louis, modestly charmed that he could teach anything whatsoever to such a traveled hero, planned how Jack should “get a girl.” Which was more difficult than it sounded, Jack found: “We both lived at home and paid our way. When we had done this, and bought our cigarettes” (Jack had smoked steadily since his newsboy days) “and . . . clothes and shoes, there remained to each of us . . . a sum that varied between seventy cents and a dollar for the week. We whacked this up, shared it, and sometimes loaned all of what was left when one of us needed it for some more gorgeous girl-adventure, such as carfare out to Blair’s Park and back — twenty cents, bang, just like that; and ice cream for two — thirty cents; or tamales, which came cheaper and which for two cost only twenty cents.” He, who as pirate had squandered nearly two hundred dollars in one night! And right here he reiterates that disdain of his for money; but characteristically, in his philosophy he completed the circle, finding himself “as equable with the lack of a ten-cent piece” as he had been in the lurid months passed by.

Listen how they went about it: “Louis’s several girls he wanted for himself. . . . He did persuade them to bring girl-friends for me; but I found them weak sisters, pale and ineffectual alongside the choice specimens he had.” So Louis had to initiate Jack, who was bordering on panic worthy of a lad of thirteen, in the accepted manner of getting acquainted with some one whose looks did appeal to him. All spruced up, the two boys met of evenings in a little candy shop, where they bought their smokes and sometimes a nickel’s worth of “ red-hots.” Louis was as frankly fond of sweets as Jack.

Consider this quondam lover of cannery maidens; Prince of the Queen of the Oyster Pirates; gay reveler of red-lanterned barges on the winding rivers; squire of more than one lowly Madame Chrysanthéme on her native heath: it would seem that he was yet undespoiled of delicacy and virginity of imagination. Struggling with diffidence, he entered into what he has termed the “Arcadian phase” of his career, and learned how to overtake with a jaunty lift of his hat the pretty young things who did not look unapproachable; and how to walk and joke lightly and make speeches that commanded approving glances and laughter. But the infatuation he craved, as he saw it working in Louis, did not immediately descend upon him, although he “pursued the quest,” Looking back upon it all, he wrote: “Some of Louis’s and my adventures have since given me serious pause when casting sociological generalizations. But it was all good and innocently youthful.”

At length it came, “All the dear fond deliciousness of it, all the glory and the wonder” of boy-love and girl-love. I almost think it was the most wonderful, beautiful, uplifting thing in his whole life of learning how the world was made. One evening he had found himself, out of curiosity, at a Salvation Army meeting, and the little woman of under sixteen, there for the same reason, sat next to him beside her aunt.

He has called her Haydee, and never divulged her true name. She was somehow different from the other good little girls he had flirted with; and he caught himself think-ing the shape of her face and delicate coloring, her brown sweet eyes and tip-tilted nose, her pretty brown hair and petulant rosy mouth, were the loveliest he had ever seen. I can see now why he always favored a tam o’ shanter. Haydee wore a tam o’shanter. It must have been about this time that he bought for a nickel, at a rummage sale, an old brown “tam” which made an item of his wardrobe aboard the Snark into the South Seas, from Australia to Ecuador in the tramp collier Tymeric, up-river in California on the Roamer, and around Cape Horn on the Dirigo; the which I darned, darn upon darn, and which finally with regret he pronounced too far gone for further service, and had laid away in the attic with other beloved old “gear.”

To this blond, awkward-bashful sailor, already tanned for life, face and hands, it was a “great half-hour” they spent in the Salvation tent, the while they “glanced shyly at each other, and shyly avoided or as shyly returned and met each other’s glances more than several times.” Indeed, so great was that half-hour that he was solemnly ever afterward “convinced of the reality of love at first sight.”

As stern fate would have it, when he followed the girl and her aunt from the tent, that he might learn where they lived, he in turn was followed by quite another sort of woman, and accosted by her. She was not unknown to him — I wonder if it was the Queen herself? — and wished to tell him of young Nelson, who when he was shot had died in her arms. But when he had listened to all she had to relate, he pulled himself back from a host of undesired memories of his rampaging past, bade her farewell and hurried on after his love. Although he lost her that evening, Louis was able to tell him something of Haydee: she was a Lafayette School pupil, he knew girl friends of hers, and an introduction would be easy. Jack could not wait, and begged one of the girls to carry a note to her from him.

His experience with regard to Haydee is almost incred-ible. That he, "who could sail boats, lay aloft in black and storm, or go into the toughest hang-outs in sailor town" and be quite at home, "didn't know the first thing I might say or do with this slender little chit of a girl-woman whose scant skirt just reached her shoe-tops and who was as abysmally ignorant of life, as I was, or thought I was, profoundly wise"! He came to know, in brief meetings, sitting on a bench under the stars, with "fully a foot of space" between them, "all the sweet madness of boy's love and girl's love." He goes on to record that "so far as it goes it is not the biggest love in the world, but I do dare to assert that it is the sweetest. . . . Never did girl have a more innocent boy-lover than I who had been so wicked-wise and violent beyond my years."

He could not believe, as in all ages, first-lovers have failed to believe, that so exquisite a creature as his worship made her could be merely human; that she really had to eat to live — though once she daintily shared with him a nickel's worth of red-hots; that she could be similar in any mere human way to other humans. I have heard him tell it! He did not know how to act. Should he kiss her? She, the chrysalis Eve, tapped his lips with her glove. Hear this: "I was like to swoon with delight. It was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to me." Then followed an "agony of apprehension and doubt." Should he imprison that little hand along with the glove? "Should I dare to kiss her there and then, or slip my arm around her waist? Or dared I even sit closer?" But he dared nothing. I merely continued to sit there and love with all my soul.

They never met more than a dozen stolen half-hours, and "kissed perhaps a dozen times — as boys and girls kiss, briefly and innocently, and wonderingly." The quality of his adoration was so mysteriously holy, passionless, clean — as if for an angel or a bird. This is the way he closes the incident: I have always fondly believed that she loved me. I know I loved her; and I dreamed day dreams of her for a year and more, and the memory of her is very dear."

When winter came on, social recreation perforce terminated. It was too wet and shivery to promenade, and Louis and Jack, unable to buy overcoats, were driven to search for the most quiet saloon where they could keep warm whilst playing cards — they were deep in the intricacies of two-handed euchre. They did not want to drink, but self-respect pressed them each evening to indulge in a small beer apiece, as tacit rent for the table and the boon of the big stove. Sorely they grudged the two nickel pieces, wishing they could be spent on red-hots. But Louis's girl friends who waited on customers in the little candy shop were not allowed to entertain in the sitting room where their idle moments between customers were lived.

The saloon least distasteful in its crowd was the old National, at Tenth and Franklin Streets, where the two young men met some of their childhood schoolmates. But the inevitable consequent treating " skinned" them of forty to fifty cents a "clatter," and the two were "broke" until next pay-day. The National was too speedy for them; and meantime their thin coats were buttoned higher at the necks while they played euchre and casino in a livery stable. Sometimes discomfort made them cast tentative glances at the Y. M. C. A. reading and social rooms, and their speculations even strayed as far as Sunday-school socials, where girls whom they knew told of jolly good times. But Jack for one felt distressedly alien, the very delicacies of his diffidences standing in the way.

Unskilled labor, reason presently unfolded to Jack, was getting him nowhere — in a favorite phrase, "buying him nothing"; even a promised increase to $1.25 a day was not made good. He looked about, and with his usual deliberation selected a trade he believed would give him the chance to rise. As an electrician he could go far; and ambition, which never was denied for long, swelled afresh.

"He saw me coming, all right," Jack reminisced a bit grimly, telling the story of his call upon the superintendent of the power plant of an Oakland street railway. This man, by name Grimm, was of a towering patriarchal presence, his face winged with huge, snowy burnside whiskers. "How could I know he was mad that morning at the quitting of two coal-passers who didn't like their pay, and that I looked good to him merely from the standpoint of coal-passing! I, young fool, intent on learning electrical engineering from the ground up, listened entranced to his suave elucidation of the necessity of beginning on the lowest floor, literally, in this case; and I calculated I could shovel coal with anybody. I could, too, it seems, for until I learned through an admiringly compassionate fireman that I, a youth of eighteen, was doing by day, for thirty a month, with only one day off, what two horny-handed laborers, working day-and-night shifts and getting eighty, had thrown down as too stiff for them — well, until I found out this, under binding seal not to give the fireman away, I staid with it though it nearly laid me out."

I have listened to his account of how he had to strap the swelling of those small-boned, sprained wrists that were so ill-suited to obey the driving muscles of his over-developed sailor shoulders; of how he would eat his daily-larger packet of lunch ere the forenoon was half over, and be famished and almost done before quitting-time; how he would fall asleep on the car going home, and when the conductor shook him at his corner he had already stiffened so that other passengers helped him to the ground, where he almost fell; and how, struggling in a dual nightmare agony of hunger and drowsiness, he would drop asleep "wolfing" bread and butter while his mother put the hot dinner on the table, rouse to partake of it, and almost immediately fall into slumber so profound that Flora and John carried him to his room, night after night, undressed him and put him to bed.

"He would have told me sooner, the fireman said, except that he thought I would soon get enough of it and clear out. I was just about killing myself, I admitted; and he pointed out that I was keeping two men out of a job anyway, and cheapening the price of labor. This sounded reasonable; but I was proud of my ancestors who had fought in all the wars of the U. S. A., and I wasn t going to give up the job till I showed I could hold it down without breaking. So one day, when I had concluded my purpose was accomplished, I spread myself getting in the last of the night coal (you see I'd already got in the day-coal!) and resigned. And I did some thinking, too, after I had slept for twenty-four hours without waking."

TRAMPING — “THE ROAD”

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XI

The Sailor on Foot and Rod — 1894
19th Year

MANY become tramps, not through a reasoned mental attitude, but because their bodies rebel against the maiming from overwork that precludes natural gladness of being. Not so with Jack London. When hard toil was a game, winning its own delights, as he found it on the water, all was fair enough. But long-continued and under-paid grind that left neither time nor strength for recreation, not even for reading, held no reward that he could see, no matter how earnestly he had gone in for “settling down.” The coöperation of logic and adventurousness worked a revolt in thought, which went hand in hand with revolt in action. He was intelligently resentful toward what he felt was merciless exploitation of his manifest and enviable muscle. As far back as the cannery episode, despite the pretty picture he had been struck unpleasantly by the luxury of the carriage in which a daughter of one of the cannery-owners rolled about the city. It had almost seemed that his own muscle had something to do with the pulling of her elegant equipage.

The revulsion was now more portentous than ever before, coming as it did near the end of that state of flux which precedes full growth, when youth’s beliefs are likely to crystallize for bad or good, and what he did or did not do exerted an increasingly grave bearing upon his ultimate manhood. For the time being he cared little if he never “settled down.” It was an irritating phrase, now he came to think of it. Settling down did not look good to him. “Learning a trade” could go hang. He would break loose, at least until rested in body and spirit, and that would be a long way off. After all, he owed a little something to himself. So even duty went by the board for once. The result of his orgy of work, brief though it had been, was to sicken him of toil. The memory of the overdose of hard graft he had let himself in for was actually nauseating. When he presently ran across, and approved, Milton’s “Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven,” more firmly than ever was he persuaded, as in the case of Washington Irving and others, that great minds ran in the same channels.

Probably this was the most critical juncture in his life. Only that magnificent balance preserved him from ruin. He had had sense enough to stop before any vital physical deformity had been wrought. Even at that, when he shook those unharmed shoulders defiantly once more, his very liberty was tainted with disgust at his inadequate wrists, bandaged with tight straps that for a year he was never without.

He strolled along the waterfront and considered going to sea. He was not tired of the water. Never did he tire of going down to the sea in ships; "the savor of the salt" could not stale. And here he might from sheer bleakness of soul have slid along the weakest line of resistance that stretched before his uncaring vision. As it was, out of a complex of temporarily dulled desires there glimmered the undying one that had influenced him to decline another sealing expedition. He had only one life: there were more varied experiences than he could ever get around to in that one life; therefore no hour was too soon to get about the business of pursuit. Anyhow, as he said of himself, "I was so made that I couldn t work all my life on one same shift." In his final decision there was no intention other than for adventure and surcease from deathly routine, no notion of gathering data for sociological conclusions. In all the vivid plannings of his adult years, adventure was the prime factor. The fact of his office being located under his hat was a secondary, if important, consideration. Any port would incidentally provide grist for his lucrative literature-mill; but the port, in relation to personal enjoyment — the port was the thing. That his present unmitigated lark of loafing across the continent made him into a socialist philosopher was but an inevitable sequence in a passionately adventuring intellect. As he put it: "Sociology was merely incidental. It came afterward, in the same manner that a wet skin follows a ducking."

What Jack's next move might have been if the notorious "Kelly's Army" had not just then been forming in his home town, one can only speculate. It was shortly before Easter, in the year of 1894. "Industrial Army" he heard it called, and this unvarnished phraseology would not have enticed one in his irritated mood toward industrial connotations; but certain sneering remarks that accompanied the words in connection with the unique organization had fixed in him the picture of a tatterdemalion crew of bums and hoboes and other wearied rebels like himself. He would join the thing and have whatever fun there was to be got out of it, and Coxey's Army farther east. He would "just as leave" wind up at Washington, D. C., as any other city; besides, once that far on the way, he stood a chance to see other big Eastern centers.

When he went to bid Eliza farewell, it took her but a moment to find out that he had only a few cents in his pocket. Concealing under a bright demeanor any disapproval she may have harbored for this new wild-goose chase, briskly she stepped to the bureau, and lifted her snowy pile of best handkerchiefs from the top drawer, beneath which reposed a ten-dollar gold piece. "Run out and get this changed," she said, "and I'll give you half. I'm afraid, if you have it all, some of the bunch of do-nothings will get it away from you." But when he came back with the change, conscience smote her that he should depart with only five dollars, and she pressed the entire sum upon him. And I have not a doubt that when upon Easter Sunday she put on the last Easter's retrimmed straw, it made her twice as happy as would the coveted new one she had set her heart on previous to her brother's leave-taking.

On a Friday morning — to be accurate, April 6, 1894 — Oakland's city fathers were to forward the "Army" by free-rail conveyance to the unappreciative capital, Sacramento; but when Jack arrived at the stated hour of seven, to make one with the "push," he found they had been packed incontinently off two hours earlier. The only thing to do was to spend part of his precious ten dollars in following by fast passenger-train.

According to his penciled diary, he and a companion he calls Frank arrived in Sacramento at eight P. M., and supped at the Mississippi Kitchen. On the trip from Oakland, whirring by the old scenes of wild times he had known on land and boat, his somber mantle of discouragement had fallen from him as it had fallen when he boarded the Sophie Sutherland on that morning of dawning world-adventure. Again he felt "the prod and stir of life," not to go back into the debilitating commercial treadmill — heaven forbid; but to conquer life in the open once more, to "royster and frolic" over the face of the earth.

Sacramento had been too quick for him; she had not delayed in passing the hungry hundreds on to an unreceptive Nevada. Jack and Frank drifted to the arks and fishing-boats on Sacramento's river-front, where they came upon a scanty remnant of indigent young riffraff left be hind for lack of rolling-stock.

"The water was fine," Jack remembered, "and we spent most of our time in swimming. " The men "talked differently from the fellows I had been used to herding with, . . . and with every word they uttered the lure of the road laid hold of me more imperiously."

Every moment, with alert ear and eye, this latest recruit was absorbing each scrap of information that would instruct him in the idiom of the road. No, not the idiom, but the language; for a language it surely is, living, picturesque and foreign. And this he had to do while learning the fine art of dodging horrid accident to body and limb on stolen rides by way of the whirling, clanking machinery underneath "limited" railway coaches.

The wanderlust had returned to flame as fresh as on that day he sat in the Idler's cabin with Scotty and the alleged harpooner; as lawlessly as the evening he took the Queen with him aboard his own Razzle Dazzle, broke out anchor, and hoisted sail for the oyster flats. Although the learning amassed when he had been one with hoodlum and pirate and common sailor stood him in good stead in the present emergency, it was only to a quickly reached and limited degree. The "road-kids," by misfortune of birth or later mischance, seemed a lower sort of human animal, unemployed by choice or physical inability, on their backs and in their pockets only such clothing and money as they could beg or pilfer.

These reckless ones regarded life from a contrary angle to the independent, carelessly free-handed spenders he had known, who made a generous, if sometimes haphazard, livelihood upon the waters. Revolutionary that he was, Jack slammed the brakes upon previous norms, took a square look at himself and the eccentric crowd, then eased into their rate of going. The road-kids did not like his hat. Neither did he. So they showed him, just off K Street that night, how to remedy matters.

"But you did not join that raid years before when the Oakland gang destroyed the poor Chinaman's laundry," I demurred to his confession of the hat.

"The laundry," he declared, "was not that Chinaman's property; he had to pay his customers for their lost raiment. The Chinaman from whom I lifted the hat owned the hat, and he was not a poor 'Chink,' for the hat was a beauty, and he was otherwise well dressed. You will admit there is a difference, no? Yes?" And to me, I having meekly admitted the difference, he melted.

“It was not nice; it was wrong and wilful. Yet I did not do it in sheer viciousness. It was part of the new game that I must learn in a hurry. I’d like this very minute to pay that frantic, jabbering Chinaman the five dollars he must have spent for that beautiful Stetson.” He giggled at the comical fracas that had ensued. “What? Wearing a Chinaman’s hat? Oh, it was never my habit to let squeamishness stand in the way when expediency was sufficiently pressing. And I’ve worn more suspicious articles than Chinaman’s hats! A tramp cannot be an exquisite, my dear. I washed my face and took a bath of some sort whenever there was opportunity, which wasn’t every day, because chances for swimming were scarce. Don’t forget, I’m pretty much of a savage when amongst savages. Yes, I’ve slept with them and eaten with them and begged with them and loused with them, which was the awfullest. And you, thank God!” he broke in with beaming eyes, — ”you, tender woman in your pretty gown, you don’t blanch in my face at the raw facts. What a lot most women miss by shuddering from playing some part of their men’s adventure-game or even from trying to understand it. Wait a minute — where did I say it?” He reached for his shelf of first editions. “Here it is; listen, ‘It is not given to woman to live in sweet-scented narrow rooms and at the same time be a little sister to all the world.’ You, Mate Woman, he concluded, “I don’t ever want you to know real hardship at first hand, and you have never known it yet; but I do want you to know and face facts as they exist. Shrink your closest from the thing itself, and no blame to you; but not from the fact that the thing exists.”

Still, he himself was never physically inured to the hardships youth put upon him. Irritation of burning cinders, grit, exposure, strains on wrists, jarrings of unexpected long jumps on slender ankles — all such hardships showed a rare endowment of beautiful elasticity. What I mean to make clear is that wherever he excelled in this and that arduous game, the price he paid was greater than that of the average man.

On the river-front that April day he was very busy under an amiably nonchalant exterior, acquiring the qualifications of a proper “blowed-in-the-glass” hobo. Since he had elected the road, nothing less than tramp-royal would he aim to be, and by the shortest cut possible.

What he did not take to himself of the tramps’ oblique psychology would make very small additions to the literature of America’s mighty army of Weary Willies as the country knew it before the Great War.

So well did he listen and apply that under his own “monaker,” Sailor Jack, presented by his mates, he, the absolute tyro, was the only one of the crowd except Frank, who acted upon his example, to make a clean get-away on the late Overland Limited train of the Central Pacific. The “shacks” (brakemen) accounted for all the rest, and one luckless road-kid lost both legs in the scuffle. Of course, Jack registered automatic brain-notes upon the incompetence of the poor dubs at their own calling.

Sailor Jack had been warned beforehand to stay on the mail-car’s deck — this being its roof, — to which he had clawed like the seaman he was, until a certain junction had been passed where the constables were especially unpopular with the “stiffs.” Afterward he would descend to a less unsheltered nook on the platform of a blind-baggage. But this particular stiff made security from shacks doubly sure by holding down his precarious up-ended bed clear over the “hill,” as the Sierra Nevada summits were styled by the “profesh,” all through those smoke-stifling miles of snow-sheds. These somehow reminded him of the beamed ceiling of the Sophie Sutherland when he had bestridden Red John’s heaving shoulders. He let himself down, almost congealed with cold, gritty, and scarred with hot cinders, only when Truckee was reached. Having beaten the railroad “over the hill,” he had won his spurs as a proper road-kid, and he never owned up to the “bunch” when they overtook him at Reno, watching some Piute Indians gambling, that he had spent the night on the “deck.” He arrived at Reno in a “side-door Pullman,” which is a box car, and was thrown off a passenger-coach he tried to ride out.

“It was no time at all,” he told me, “before I was riding the rods on a ‘ticket.’ Oh, no, not a pasteboard one; but a little bit of a piece of wood, with a groove across the middle to hold it on the rod.” One day he came across the old “ticket” that had been part of his slender equipment, and at my request labeled it. How different from most lavendered mementoes a widow may cherish! I step to his huge fire-proof safe and take it out — a weather-grayed section of four-inch board less than an inch thick, irregularly six inches long, with the shallow crosswise groove hacked out by his jack-knife long ago. And how eloquent is the high polish on the originally unplaned surface! The tag reads, in his own hand:

My “Ticket” used by me, in 1894, when tramping.
The notch rested on the rod inside the truck of
the four-wheel passenger coaches.

Jack London, Aug. 12, 1914.

His agility in ducking under rapidly moving cars and invading the internal mechanism of four-wheel trucks always remained a matter of pride to him, calling as it did for the smoothest coordination of nerve and muscle. This meant the grasping of a gunnel and swinging his feet under to the brake-beam, thence crawling over the top of the truck to let his body down inside to a seat on the cross-rod, made somewhat easier by sitting on the "ticket" — all this in darkness and deafening noise of grinding, revolving wheels. How he, or any tramp, could dare even drowse in what one may be excused for calling an extreme predicament, is an enigma. Yet I have Jack's word that he was able so to drowse, although many a time he "burned" his boots or trousers-legs, and even his flesh, on a whizzing steel periphery.

I have heard him swear with exasperation at the in correct descriptions of this nimble feat — an exasperation which reached its just climax when his own description, in "The Road," was wrongly illustrated by photograph.

Together with his big sincerity, sometimes of the bluntest, in Jack London there dwelt a prominent trait of the play-actor, and this served him well in beating his way across the States. Unwilling cooks and housewives, loath to part with "hand-out" or "set-down," burly policemen, temporary employers, with all classes he practiced his wits to see how far this play-acting gift would carry him into their hearts for the attainment of his ends.

Owing to his natural penchant for independence, how ever, one sharp disinclination he had to overcome was this very begging, whether on the street for a "light-piece" or from door to door for the "hand-out" or "set-down." His first lesson in the gentle art was undergone even before he saw the last of Eliza's ten dollars, and it was almost beyond him to bend to the humble posture. But very shortly he adjusted his focus, and thereafter encouraged that latent histrionic talent, much to his own amusement. Time and again he nearly landed into trouble when a glib use of invention led him too far into piteous fiction that unfolded the circumstances which had reduced his estate. Or else his originality was too much for the gravity of some appreciative, if less talented, companion whom Jack was also bent upon victualing. Having cast himself for this purposeful mummery, he hesitated not to make capital of all the seraphic facial advantages he was heir to. Still, he never ceased to feel a half-serious guilt regarding certain kind-souled women who, as reward for the best their larders afforded, fed upon the almost unbelievable misadventures that had brought this guileless child, with the innocent mouth, to the dire strait of begging food. However, he was able to offset this uneasiness by considering that there had been no palpable harm.

"If those ladies had been less trustful . . . they could have tangled me up beautifully in my chronology. Well, well, and what of it? It was fair exchange. For their many cups of coffee and eggs and bites of toast I gave full value. Eight royally I gave them entertainment. My coming to sit at their table was their adventure, and adventure is beyond price, anyway."

Many editors and publishers have wondered how they came to sign certain contracts which, to his own enrichment, Jack London had defaced with initialed amendments on their margins. During one of our visits in New York I said that I would give anything to hear him talk business with these men when he was discussing new contracts or renewing expiring ones. But he would never consent.

"I will confess to you that I do a good deal of play-acting at such times," he said, salving my disappointment. "It's a game or a play. We're all acting. The best actor wins most. If I were under your scrutiny, it would spoil my play-acting, and thereby lose money for us both, you and me. You know me too well. And once, referring to the subject, he said: "Somehow, I don't know exactly why, but I don't seem to want you to see me in this rôle. Maybe I'm not especially proud of it."

Many were his chances to learn what it really meant to go hungry, but in his case even clawing emptiness of stomach did not discourage. It was part of the big play in which he was more or less a puppet; and, too, his was the consciousness of stored efficiency so lacking in the bulk of his associates, which kept him atop the heap of the more dispirited and the hopeless ones. While it still made him curiously uneasy to contemplate steady work or routine of any sort, he was highly enjoying this great picnic of irresponsibility. Occasionally, too, he was in funds of a few dollars that dribbled along his lengthening trail from the hand of Sister Eliza; while several times his mother, terrified lest vagrancy land him in jail, spared him small sums.

No loveliness of mountain or desert or prairie-land, morning, noonday or night, escaped his ranging eyes. No morning too cold, no aching muscles too painful after a night on the unprotected blind-baggage, no headache too violent from sleeping over a round-house boiler, to deprive him of the beauty of the new day that was the herald of unguessed variety.

"Sweet plains of Nebraska" they were to him, and it was not until he had made his way across them as far as Council Bluffs that he came up with the elusive, more or less orderly mob under command of General Kelly. That undisappointing figure on "a magnificent black charger" fired Jack's imagination with the human romance of the exploit of this man who had marshaled an augmenting force of the dissatisfied clear from the Pacific coast. Nor had they walked, but proceeded upon captured trains to the double-intentioned cheerings of citizens of a West only too anxious to see the shape of their backs. Jack's, by the way, was adorned by a huge blackened rent caused by fire from a cinder that had caught his overcoat one night of ride-stealing.

The Eastern railroads took a sterner view, and the Army hung up at Council Bluffs. Jack dropped into the last rank of the rear-guard as the procession, stepping to martial music, swung out on the several miles of road to the town of Weston. There its advent tied up two important railway lines that declined on principle to operate any trains whatsoever rather than oblige the invaders. A state of mild anarchy prevailed, for Council Bluffs, to obviate a return of the divisions, prepared to commandeer a train and run it to Weston for General Kelly's use. In the end the Army arrived at Des Moines on foot, and never rode again, except when it lifted its feet on river boats. Jack's dislike for "hiking" increased rapidly, for the soles of his shoes wore into holes until, I find in his diary, he was walking on "eight blisters and more coming." No shoes were to be had from the commissary, and finally his feet were in so "horrible a condition" that he dropped out and waited for a chance to ride with some farmer. The process of reducing the Army to the pass of tramping by foot cost the railroad companies "slathers" of money; but they established what they knew was an important precedent. In the end the Army arrived in Des Moines, and on Monday, April 30, I read in Jack's faded penciling, he "walked 15 miles into Des Moines, arriving in time for supper." That diary, incidentally, is absorbing reading, and his boyishly conventional comments on the good people who came to camp are delicious, though it is too long to quote entire.

Jack forever nursed a soft spot in his heart for the Iowans, who, though not wholly with disinterest, welcomed, banqueted, and bade God-speed to the "two thousands stiffs" that composed General Kelly's following. Jack voted it the time of his young life.

"It was a circus day when we came to town, and every day was circus day, for there were many towns. Sure; they enjoyed it as much as we. We played their local nines with our picked baseball team; and we gave them better vaudeville than they'd often had, for there was good talent left in some of the decayed artists in the Army." Years afterward, from our drawing-room on the Limited, pulling out of Des Moines, Jack pointed out to me the old stove-works where he with the Army had camped and invited the city either to furnish six thousand meals a day or to make the railroads come across with unremunerated accommodation. They continuing to decline, the riddle was solved by General Weaver's brilliant idea of building, at the city's expense, enough ten-foot flatboats to float the whole two thousand "soldiers" down the Des Moines River to Keokuk, on the Mississippi, and good riddance at the rice.

Sailor Jack selected nine of the likeliest fellows from Company L, of which he was a member, known as the "Nevada Push," and contrived to get his boat out first of the string. Thence on, the ten graceless scamps proceeded to raise Cain for everybody along three hundred miles of the shallow stream, helping themselves to the cream of the provisions collected by farmers in advance of the main Army's descent. In the diary I note a recurrent phrase, "living fine." Jack was not impressed with the dignity of the Army's management, looking upon the whole scheme as bound directly toward failure, which it eventually reached.

Meanwhile, having been outwitted by General Kelly in the continuance of their high-handed methods of preceding the main body, Jack and his contingent returned and disbanded one division, reorganizing it pretty much to suit themselves; after which they resumed and enlarged upon the scope of their cussedness. It is to be hoped that General Kelly and his sorely tried officers, for the sake of their own remembered youth, reaped a little fun out of the in corrigible pranks of these prodigals, whose ringleader was the irrepressible and resourceful John Drake, an alias under which Jack received some of his mail. As for the latter's own sober retrospect, he wrote:

"I want to say to General Kelly and Colonel Speed that here's my hand. You were heroes, both of you, and you were men. And I'm sorry for at least ten per cent of the trouble that was given you."

From Quincy, Illinois, to Hannibal, Missouri, Jack had opportunity to become acquainted with twenty-odd miles of the Mississippi of Tom

Sawyer, and enjoyed it as much as was possible from the questionable vantage of an enormous raft formed by lashing together all the flat-boats. Somewhere along the way there caught up with him a letter from his mother, addressed to John Drake, Quincy, Illinois, and variously forwarded, as the scrawled envelop attests, to St. Louis, Cairo and Louisville.

Oakland, Tuesday, May 22, 1894.

"Dear Son —

"I sent you a few lines this afternoon as soon as I received your postal of the 16th and mailed it immediately that you should know immediately that there were some 8 or ten letters at Chicago waiting for you each one of which contained stamps, paper and envelopes, two of which contains money in greenbacks, one 2 dollars and the other $3.00, which you must stand very much in need of. John just as soon as we know whether you have got what we have already sent, we will try and send you some more. John take good care of yourself, and do not under any circumstances fight, if it should come to that. Remember you are all I have and both papa and I are growing old and you are all we have to look to in our old age. . . . When we did not get a letter for three weeks I worried so that I could neither eat or sleep, but Papa would always say 'never mind Jack, he knows how to take care of himself, and he will make his mark yet.' John, Papa builds great expectations of your future success. . . . John under no circumstances place yourself in a position to be imprisoned, you have gone to see the country and not to spend your time behind the bars. Be careful of fever and ague that is the bane of the East. Keep your liver and kidneys all right and you need not fear it. If you succeed in getting your Chicago mail, be careful not to fall into the water with what money we have sent you, for as it is in greenbacks it might be spoiled like your writing paper. Now my dear son take good care of yourself and remem-ber our thoughts and best wishes for your success, happiness and safe return are always with you. With lots of love, Papa, Mama and Sister."

On Thursday, May 24, arriving at Hannibal, Jack remarks:

"We went supperless to bed. Am going to pull out in the morning. I can't stand starvation." Truth to tell, he and several others had gleaned all they wanted of this particular class of adventure. So they hit out in a borrowed skiff, thence by hand-car and blind-baggage, with many vicissitudes, for Jacksonville. Jack was the only one of the party who was successful in staying aboard a "K. C. Passenger" to Mason City. On the twenty-ninth, at seven in the morning, he slipped circumspectly off a cattle-train in Chicago. First, at the general delivery window of the post-office he was handed the letters referred to by his mother, and the five dollars in greenbacks which he found therein were partly spent "amongst the Jews of South Clark Street," where, "after a great deal of wrangling," he fitted himself out with "shoes, overcoat, hat, pants and shirt." Thus equipped, "with a shave and a good dinner," he started out to "see the sights. Went to the theater in the evening, and then to bed," the first bed, he records, that he had lain in since leaving home nearly two months before. The next day he passed at the White City of the World's Fair, and "in the evening went to the Salvation Army and then to another fifteen cent bed."

"Your mother's people" had always been a familiar phrase to Jack's ears, enunciated by Flora London; also "my sister Susie," or "your Aunt Mary." So he had been specially exhorted to make a side-trip to "St. Joe," Michigan, that Aunt Mary Everhard and her sons might have a look at Flora's shoot of the family oak. Mrs. London must have lived in some trepidation as to the appearance he would present after tattering weeks on the road. Evidently Jack's shopping in South Clark Street had only slightly improved his appearance, for I have it from one of Aunt Mary's sons, Mr. P. H. "Harry" Everhard, that his cousin Jack "landed in St. Joe in somewhat ragged condition, but in good health and spirits, having enjoyed his experiences. . . . Mother," he goes on, "was greatly pleased at his coming. Took him down town and rigged him out in a suit of store clothes, and gave little parties for him, inviting those of his age or a little older."

Somehow the spectacle of this world-wise, weather-seasoned sapling sunning himself in the mild social atmosphere of Mrs. Everhard's carefully selected companions of his years or even "a little older," is delightfully comical. Chances are, however, that her not ungrateful nephew's deportment toward her and her friends was above reproach, for his instinctive manner, from earliest childhood, had been one of responsive gentleness. While he was hail-fellow-well-met in all sympathy of understanding when the going was rough, refined surroundings, with affection in the balance, always saw him sympathetic, even anticipatory of well meaning and courteousness. Hence, far from being shocked by what she may have learned or guessed of his bold past, in Aunt Mary's eye he was, according to her son, "a 'hero,' and she just worshiped him."

Undoubtedly owing to the quality of her love for Jack, which was responsible for certain unintentional injustices that she wreaked upon her own affronted offspring, he did not make any hit at all with my brother or myself," Harry Everhard recalls. He adds that this want of appreciation by himself and Ernest was repaid in kind and with interest by their guest. Jack was enjoying his bespoiling for all there was in it as a brand-new sensation, save for his life long indulgence from Eliza. It is easily possible, too, that he had let loose upon these well-raised cousins a few salient sketches of his tour, and that their mother would not listen to not nice reports of surreptitious introductions into vari-ous sorts of "blind-pigs" in prohibition Iowa, accessible to any wide-awake male of any tender age; nor unthinkably loathsome camp-fire meetings of "alki-stiffs" (those dregs of tramphood who imbibe druggists alcohol undiluted, "stuff that would take the bark off your throat.") And Jack, even allowing for the latent artistry in him, probably did not greatly exaggerate his doings with the outcasts he had, in passing, made good with.

One incident alone told me by Harry Everhard will absolve the wrathful brothers from the onus of inhospitality.

"There was a good-sized lawn or yard of possibly an acre of ground with big elm trees, well covered with timothy and clover. With the exception of the grass close to the house it was allowed to grow high enough to make hay. . . . My brother on the day covered by this incident had the hay all cut and in small stacks and called to Jack to help him load it on the wagon.

"It was a pretty hot day and with a rain in sight that would have spoiled the hay. Jack jumped to the work and was pitching hay like an old hand when mother got sight of him and called, 'Ernest, don't you know better than to expose Jack to that hot sun?' And she forthwith made Jack go in the shade and protect himself. Now he had been sleeping in box-cars and had crossed the desert where the sun roasted one as if in an oven, but according to Mother's view of it our summer sun of St. Joe was too strong for his literary habits. Anyhow, I had to finish out helping to get in the hay and Jack got a shady place under the trees."

The beautiful name of Ernest Everhard always dwelt in Jack's memory, and he used it for one of his own favorite characters — hero of "The Iron Heel." It is not to be marveled at, however, that his cousin, inoffensively pursuing a serener pathway in life, was not markedly pleased with this bestowment of his name upon even the noblest conceivable of labor agitators and revolutionists, no matter how much a pet of his creator. Little wonder that Jack lingered several weeks in the easeful environment of the roomy, vine-trailed brick home; and it would seem that he had not entirely abandoned thought of writing, which made decided impression upon his fond aunt. Mr. Everhard remembers him “sorting up notes he had taken during his trip,” and that he “had a sort of ledger and journal system of keeping his data. He did not call these books by that name, but they had the same relation to keeping account of his thoughts as a bookkeeper uses in keeping account of business transactions.” This was an outcropping of a future relentless system with his myriad notes, and further pointed an ingrained brain-saving executiveness that goes side by side with government.

Two strong motives appear to have been struggling for possession of the genius that was in Jack. One, of art-expression, was controlled by a conventionality he had not yet been impelled to pluck from out his consciousness, as shown by his diary, as well as a number of amateurish stories he wrote of knights and ladies and such hackneyed themes, submitted the following months to Aunt Mary for her criticism. The other motive, quite apart, was based upon his expansive lore of the under-world of down-and-outs. It was, still unrealized, his desire to coalesce ideal and reality into tangible art.

TRAMPING

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XII

From St. Joseph, Mich., to Washington, D. C. New York, Boston, Canada, and Home — 1894

MANY day of all the days is a day apart, with a record of swift-moving pictures all its own," Jack has said. Still charmed with the absence of monotony in a peripatetic existence "for such as cannot use one bed too long," he, being one of these, pulled out upon the brake-beams again some time in July. He was now wearer of the proud nom-de-rail of "Frisco Kid," and would "go observin' matters" first in Washington, D. C., thence up the Atlantic railroad lines to other cities.

I have before me an eloquently battered note-book of cheapest imitation red leather. It contains names and addresses of friends at home, including Louis Shattuck and a Mr. Darnell; and there is a string of girls — Lizzie Connolly, who figures as a character in "Martin Eden"; Katie, Nellie, Dollie, and Bernice; and a few eastern names, among them Eugene J. McCarthy, 69 Barton Street, Boston. One item reads: "Mrs. Logan's house — her house used to be the old stone hospital during the war." Captain Shepard and Eliza, both for some time past engaged in the business of prosecuting pension claims, had been guests of General Logan's widow during the Grand Encampment of the G. A. E. in Washington two years before Jack blew into the city, and Eliza wished Jack to meet her friends. Her brother's annotations reveal the intention of seeing every thing possible relating to the war in which John London had fought Abraham Lincoln's fight to preserve the Union. Follows an itinerary of sight-seeing, such as "Alexander, Va., by steamer, fare 15c," and short historical references to Arlington, Mount Vernon, and other suburbs. And of course this was his first chance to see the Atlantic ocean and dream of further travel. The first deciperable data in the scrappy little journal is Thursday, August 9, 1894, on which he made a tour of the United States government buildings, the name of each crossed off as done with.

A couple of tiny pages are devoted to prose on the subject of "Beauty," which, though without grace of quotation marks, he credits to Frank D. Sherman. Evidently Jack had been dipping into wells of theological speculation, for several sheets are covered by a dissertation on Deism and Theism based on the query: "Which came into the world first, the chicken or the egg?" One may judge from his remarks that biologically he was far from satisfied with the Bible story of Adam and Eve and the succeeding generation or two.

There are copies of quite commonplace sentimental songs of the day, with their refrains; and his current notion of humor may be guessed from this:

"Johnny! Johnny!" said the minister, as he met an urchin one Sunday afternoon carrying a string of fish, "do these belong to you?"

"Ye-es, sir; you see that's what they got for chasing worms on Sunday."

Fragments of dialogue that struck him as worth preserving, perhaps for use in the yarns submitted to Aunt Mary, are interspersed with copies of poems, good and bad, conundrums lacking answers, and streaks of tramp vernacular. And midmost of this living stuff one meets a quoted verse that speak's the boy's awareness of life's unrest: "Twere best at once to sink to peace

Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness, and to cease."

Some years ago, sorting over keepsakes he had stored in the Oakland residence where Jack London housed his mother and his Mammy Jennie, he came across that little worn memorandum-book. "Look, Mate — here's one of the diaries I kept in my tramp days," he cried, and fell to running over the penciled notations. Presently he looked up with a moist luster over the profound gray of those deep-fringed eyes, and the expression of untried chastity upon his mouth which made him into a beautiful boy-child hesitant to divulge his deeper emotions. "It brings up my groping ideals of that time," very softly he went on, "and I want you to mark especially how I recurred to my old ambition for fatherhood and stability in life, in spite of my vagabonding tastes. Listen to this." And what he read quite solemnly to me, I now give from the same source, reverently word for word:

"In Washington, D. C., Thursday, August 9, 1894, in the afternoon, suddenly there came over me a great longing for paternity. A longing for children; not a sensuous longing for the accompanying pleasure of begetting them, but a pure spiritual longing for something in this world to look up to me; to depend on me; trust me, and be akin to me, as I must have been to my father and mother. Now I must confess that this is rather foolish of me, a lad of eighteen, to think of. It was brought on by contemplating the hopeless, friendless condition of a tramp I had been talking with in particular, and of the whole of mankind in general. I always said that I would not marry till 26 or 27, and I still think that holds good. But I will look around me in the meantime and try and profit by the experience, obtained by others through the lottery of marriage.”

Evidences of his awakening interest in economics are to be found in scattered quotations, as well as through observations of his own. Having attached himself to a job that he might make a better appearance whilst seeing the metropolis and his sister’s friends, it is inconceivable that he did not spend some of his spare hours at the libraries. He was plainly studying for a vocabulary, as well as facile punctuation, attested, as one reads on, by a strict following of the latter in quoting authors.

At some period of his stay in Washington he seems to have put up at the “Hillman House, at 226 North Capitol St.” Hard upon some comments on immortality and the merits and demerits of a man’s taking his own life, by Jas. E. Barker, a number of narrow pages are filled by Hamlet’s Soliloquy, followed by a couplet from Longfellow’s “Golden Legend” that might have been the suggestion for Jack London’s disposal of the hero in “Martin Eden”:

“A single step and all is o’er.
A plunge, a bubble, and no more.”

The job above referred to might be classified as janitorship in a livery-stable, where he also made his sleeping quarters. In line of relaxation and easement of his gambling proclivities, he was not averse to sit in at various highly exciting and illicit crap-games by gas-light with negro horse-boys and their friends. A concerted police raid upon a session one evening, when as luck would have it, he was only a “broke” onlooker, was the cause of Jack’s resigning his position. This he did by way of a window, first dodging on all fours between the irate legs of an officer with that catlike quickness of his. That he could put up a better sprint than the star-breasted “bull” who decorated with the window-sash, lit out upon his heels, was the reason Jack did not sleep behind bars.

Indeed, he did not rest at all that night. Added to the fact that the “cops” were on his track, he had seen and done all the things for which he had come to Washington, and now seemed the fateful moment for him to quit the beautiful city. So he worked his discreet flight around toward the railroad yards, where he caught the first “blind” out on the Pennsylvania Express. At Baltimore a railroad bull reached for him before he had swung off the platform, and the night s second Marathon was on for many confusing blocks in a strange “burg.” His prided sense of direction helped him back to the tracks, where successfully eluding “bull” and “shack” he ensconsed himself damp and winded on a baggage platform. But that sense of direction suffered a grievous set-back when, after forty shivering miles, he discovered himself again in the bright station at Washington. He had squandered the whole night in a fatuous round-trip to Baltimore. Mad as a wet hen, spraining even his robust Western vocabulary, he rested not or breakfasted until, late in the morning, again in Baltimore, he “threw his feet for grub.”

Thence up through Pennsylvania he adventured, always overtaking the variety upon which his nature feasted. Little he asked of the world, it seemed to him just the privilege of going and coming quite harmlessly at his own sweet will, with gift of an occasional meal, infrequent loan of cigarette “makin’s,” and a place under roof or stars to “pound his ear,” meaning to slumber.

One day when he was swimming alone in the Susquehanna, some one went through his clothing. He bewailed the loss of his tobacco more than the small change. But “I leave it to you,” he laughed it off, “if being robbed isn’t adventure enough for one day. Glad that the thieves had spared his clothes, shortly he had the pleasure of borrowing what he could have sworn were his own “makin’s” from a bunch of waifs who were not wide awake enough to perceive that he was “on.”

There was that fearful afternoon, he, a hobo, suffered mental and emotional torture in a camp of American gipsies, when one of the men dispassionately flogged his children and their protesting mother. Here Jack, most passionate of champions of the weak of either sex, had to call upon a philosophy out of keeping with his age to control all knightly inheritance of his long line of fighting forefathers, that he might refrain from interference. It would have made the woman s plight more desperate, and undoubtedly brought about his annihilation. Eight or wrong in the abstract struggled in his brain with man's civil-and uncivil-practices. But in his own anguish in the woman's anguish, which made him clench longing fists till a gipsy man, noting, for Jack's own safety warned "Easy, pardner, easy," there came to his succor one face of the uncommon common-sense that reinforced sensitiveness all his difficult life. In her ethic, this woman gipsy among gipsies would not thank a rank outsider for "butting in." Jack had marveled before this upon the notorious ingratitude of certain females, oftenest of foreign blood, when their husbands were deterred, by outsiders, from fistic manifestation of possessiveness. As well might Jack's deep-burnt emotion have justified him in trying to halt with his hands an execution by hanging which later in youth he witnessed at San Quentin. These were not hazards in the open, where the best man or beast wins. Outrageous, hurtful, abysmal wrongs, in his profoundest deeps he felt them to be. But they were the law: one, the law of the outlaw, if you please; the other, alas, the strange law of that most free of all civilized nations, for which his father and his father's father and grandfathers had bled.

So he drew himself together with a mighty effort and met, cool steel for steel, the glitter of the gipsyman's narrowed black eye. He could fake an indifferent aspect; but his flesh was clammy and he was sick to his marrow every crack of the wicked thong laid on the cowering woman's frame striped his soul with red as few experiences ever marked it. It did more; it lashed him to swifter sifting of the tares from the wheat in his abundant thought-harvest.

But Jack was healthy-minded and-bodied, and it would have been a morbidity not to dismiss the occurrence as best he could. The development of that mind had not reached a point where he could even think he knew the remedy for such demonstration as he had witnessed. The searing day was done — ". . . one day of all my days. To-morrow would be another day, and I was young," he said.

As he "pointed his toes" northward, unknown to him self adventure was undergoing a transmutation into something potentially different from the ideal which had quickened imagination and footstep to the varied gifts of earth. His unquieting perceptiveness was getting in under the skin of things the while he paid a lessening if still bright and discerning attention to the world of landscape and architecture and industry. From these, indeed, he wrested progression and sustenance, alone or in company with specimens of the floating population of incompetents that coasted this same smiling prospect.

Men were so wonderful, he could not fail to be impressed, when he looked about his father's great state and the Quaker City, in a similar way that he had been impressed by any large town since his careless days in Yokohama. When men could be so wonderful, why were many of them such hopeless derelicts? This early he was exhibiting a penchant for inviting secrets from the most furtive and cryptic human sources. In his life's periodical " prowlings," done out of driven curiosity to see how society was managed or mismanaged, many a woman of the street or brothel who earned her price with a surprised willingness, by merely treating the friendly searcher to a correct study of causes she had hidden with a reticence that had been her one pride.

As he held up and turned inside-out before his mind the unlovely confidences to which this sympathetic faculty made him. confessor, Jack was blest if he could see where he himself had anything on most men in the matter of opportunity. Some, indeed, had been maimed — they did not count in this strain of reasoning. And yet, and yet, come to think of it, they did count, at least a large per cent. From that night in Sacramento when he, the novice, had left behind him some two-score professional hoboes, one of whom had been cut in two, he had noticed how man after man was beaten by inefficiency at his business of run ning away from useful efficiency. Jack's own survival could not be all blind luck, he thought. The others must be failures from aforetime, hereditary inefficients. He got the phrase reading of afternoons in free grassy parks, where he loafed and warmed up after a chilly or wakeful night, and invited knowledge from book, or newspaper he had "frisked" by dawnlight off some doorstep. Book or folded paper formed his sleeping pillow. And of course — always of course, it seemed — there was the toll of alcohol's vanquished. His own luck apparently resided in the inheritance of a good body that was informed by a good brain — a brain at least of ability to withhold him from becoming permanently a piece of the floatsam of mankind with whom he now drifted.

Moreover, time and again he met hoboes who were from the first ranks of a culture he had only glimpsed, as when with the poetess-librarian friend of his childhood, Ina Coolbrith. From these abodeless ones, who had lapsed to a plane that seemed scarcely related to the every-day world of men, he learned of the arts or professions that had been their callings, and was stirred afresh to his own ambitions. The majority of the decayed gentlemen who slouched within his radius, he could not reason clearly otherwise, were foreordained wrecks. One had been a Philadelphia attorney, university graduate and the rest, and upon his intellect of many facets Jack sharpened his own while they traveled together. Oddly enough, it was in this companion ship that he fell into the only serious difficulty he encountered in trampdom.

Something that had disturbed him for long; something definite, hard and fine, yet palpitating warm and tender, was coming into being in his heart. And though he knew it not, it was Love, the most selfless of all loves — nor love of blood, nor for woman, but the brother-love for the unlovely and unloved forsaken of men, which was destined to break that heart of his in the end.

But not yet was he possessed. It was a hell of a note, to be sure; but what could a fellow do? So he went on his way, "a beggar gay," rejoicing in glorious well-being and freedom, in his stomach "that could digest scrap-iron," and in his own fortune generally. He took chances with that luck, in a manner that challenged weary outwitted brakemen and even policemen who had not forgotten their youth or else remembered their sons who were chips off the old block, challenged them to implore him not to commit suicide. This they argued he was bound to do if he persisted in riding two fast-freight cars at once, as a circus rider divides himself between two or more horses in the sawdust ring. Many the officer he drove to incoherent very despair of wrath, until he would give up to Jack's uncapturable agility or the eloquence or humor of his ready slanging. But his supreme wide-awakeness guarded the young wilful from extermination, even upon that night he took out on a freight from Philadelphia in fashion so precarious that for once he "had enough, and then some."

The wonder-city of New York held him spellbound; but no astonishment nor admiration could slow down the heated mechanism of his brain. What he saw only caused its wheels to move faster. If he was impressed by the spectacle of the city's incomputable wealth and power, he was stirred even more deeply by the reflection that so mighty a capital should permit the wretchedness of its own East Side.

What must conditions be if New York's cold of winter were as severe as was this smothering torridity, which drove him to spend long afternoons in a green square that gave on Newspaper Row and the city hall? It was some years before he learned for himself what New York winter meant to the submerged.

He rather enjoyed “battering the main drag” of a morning for nickels and pennies, and found the public not ungenerous. Meantime it was great sport seeing all he could of the promenading bon ton of America. With the money solicited, he lived well, largely on milk, never spending a cent upon liquor unless obliged in chance company. In fact, during all his tramp experience, he avoided drink as much as was compatible with the men he picked as the most worth-while companions. As usual, the crying pity was that the lives t and keenest, most individual and adventurous, were the drinkers. It was proved to him an inescapable truth; and he did not let them know the radical point where they and he differed, which was in his personal antipathy to alcohol as a beverage.

He had enough money left over to buy books from itinerant push-cart men, who vended imperfect volumes culled out by publishers. The serious incident before mentioned, that divided his New York visit in two sections, made him more avid than ever for reading matter. In narrational sequence this incident belongs here; but I have reason for moving it to the end of the chapter.

In that shady square, little booths did a cool trade in sterilized milk and buttermilk at a penny a glass, and we have Jack’s word that he “got away with from five to ten glasses each afternoon” in the “dreadfully hot weather,” which goes to show where his throat’s refreshment lay rather than in alcohol. That he did not surfeit that throat for life I have ample evidence. Particularly do I remember a soft-drink “hole-in-the-wall” in Sydney, where, in 1909, strolling home from theater or organ festival in the great town hall, Jack would stop for a long draft, maybe two or three drafts, toward his unslakable thirst for ice-cold milkshake or buttermilk, in frank preference over any drink dispensed in the mezzanine of the Hotel Australia close by. Only once in New York did he suffer from contact with the police; and, just as fate would have it, the club thwacked upon his unsuspecting and blameless skull without rhyme or reason that he was ever able to fathom, he being a mere detached spectator of a street-corner row. “Was it always to be that way with — him that he would “get away” with real things he set out to do, and then run into punishment when he happened to be innocent? He could only class the riddle of this New York cop’s landing upon him along with that of the Temescal harridan who had taken after him with a butcher knife. Tom Sawyer’s Aunt Polly oiled her conscience and saved her face by declaring it wasn’t a lick amiss, when she once thrashed her nephew undeservedly. But so tireless was Jack in digging to the bottom of human enigmas, that even so trivial elusions as these two bothered him.

The railroad journey to Boston was as full of mishaps as any short trip he made in the East. For one thing, he started in the blaze of a hot Sunday afternoon, catching a freight at Harlem, after bidding farewell to the Bowery and the friendly City Hall Park. I have before me an article entitled “Jack London in Boston,” written in Oakland about 1904, and never published in book form. It was the Old Colony Railroad, he thinks, and he was systematically thrown off section after section by zealous shacks, until finally he came to rest inside one of a load of huge iron pipes on a flat-car, “gondóla” in tramp parlance, where he “curled up and read the New York Sunday papers, and, as the light waned, dozed off and regained the sleep lost the previous night in the company of a pessimistic printer out of a job.” But the stow-away had been observed by a busy shack who awaited his own convenience to strike the ringing iron and forcibly invite the trespasser to “hit the grit.” Jack goes on:

“As behooved a tramp of parts, my mastery of intensive adjectives and vituperative English was such as invariably to move men in my direction. This was what I desired, and this the shack proceeded to do by crawling in after me. On the outside he controlled both exits (a pipe having two ends), but once inside he surrendered this tactical advantage. So I withdrew by the opposite end, while I bandied words with the man, criticized his general make-up, and dissertated upon the vascular action of the heart and the physiological cataclysms caused by intemperate anger. I also commented upon his ancestry and blackened his genealogical tree.

“I found the town in which I had alighted, on my own feet, which is a nicer way to alight, all things considered, to be Attleboro, a place where the inhabitants solved the scheme of life by manufacturing jewelry. As a traveler and a student of economics and sociology [he had become both by now], it was perhaps my duty to visit those establishments, but I preferred going around to the back doors of the more imposing residences. After breakfasting with a pretty and charming matron, to whom I had never been introduced and with whom I failed to leave my card, I returned to the depot. It was raining, and I sought shelter on the covered platform and rolled a cigarette. This action, being essentially Californian, at once aroused attention, and forthwith I was surrounded by a group of curious idlers. This was in 1894, so I suppose they have in the interim grown sufficiently degenerate to roll their own cig arettes. Nevertheless, I often wonder if any of them recollect the lad with the gray suit and cloth cap, smooth-faced and badly sunburned, who taught them how to do the trick.

"I must be treated leniently if it chanced that I saw but the surface of Boston. Remember, I was without letters of credit or introduction, while my only entrée was the police station. Entertaining peculiar tenets regarding cleanliness," he describes the reputation of Boston jails of the period, "it is not to be wondered that I avoided this place and sought a park bench instead. I wandered hit or miss till I came to the Common." He comments upon the raw September wind that blows in The Hub around 2 a, m., and says that he shivered and shook, collar pulled up the cap down, vainly trying to sleep, till a policeman tapped him. "Always placate the policeman," he advises the penniless wanderluster. "He is at once the dispenser and obfuscator of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. He shapes the destinies of lesser creatures, and free air or dungeon lurk in his gruff 'Move on,' or 'Come on.'" Jack drew upon his histrionic abilities, and simulated mumbling in his sleep. "What?" the officer peremptorily demanded, and Jack answered, Oh, never mind. I wasn't awake yet, and I was dreaming about Ueno Park." He asked, "Where's that?" and Jack replied, "Japan." Then he tells how for two hours he led that policeman's interest uphill and down dale, in Yokohama and Tokio, or Fujiyama, through tea houses and temples the narrator had never seen, bazaar and marketplace, till his listener forgot the municipality he served and the malefactors who feared him. "At the end of that time he discovered that my teeth were chattering, said he was sorry he hadn't any whiskey about him, gave me a silver quarter instead, and departed — he and his club."

Having feasted upon the juicy steak and "Java" the silver quarter made possible, the young rascal spent the rest of the night in the winding streets, trying to get back to the Common, which eluded him for two days. Meantime, he found himself on the bridge to Charlestown, and fell in with one of his fraternity, looking for a residence section that would furnish breakfast.

"'You're no gay cat,' he remarked, after a comprehensive glance.

"I signified in the appropriate terms that such was not my rating, and we unified our pace.

“‘New to the town, eh?’ he asked. ‘How’d you find the floppings? Pretty crimpy, eh? Well, I know the old jerk like a book, and I’ll put you wise.’“

Yet this tramp was an erstwhile gentleman, Jack soon found out, “with more knowledge and culture under his rags than falls to the average man who sits in the high places.” Two days they spent together, and, “discovering an affinity of tastes and studies, discussed the possibilities of a reconciliation of Kant and Spencer, and talked Karl Marx and the German economists, until, in a sort of bashful way, he announced the possession of antiquarian propensities. Thereat I was haled across the bridge to the North End, where he resurrected all manner of architectural antiquities and fairly bubbled with the histories of the old buildings. Needless to speak of my delight in all this, for I was fresh from the ‘new and naked lands’ of the great West. But I lost him one day, as men will lose comrades on the Road, and next picked up with a Dissolute Plumber’s Apprentice of Celtic descent and cursed with the Curse of Reuben. He had read Arthur McEwen’s ‘San Francisco News Letter,’ and my heart warmed to him. He was possessed of the modern spirit, exulted in modernity in fact, and bent his efforts toward showing me the latest achievements and newest improvements. I remember he took me to the public gymnasiums. And he it was who led my erring feet back to the Common.”

But winter was coming on, and Jack’s eye was fixed on Montreal and Ottawa. One night Boston turned bitter cold, so he “beat it” for Lawrence, where he forsook his tenets “and slept in the police station” for warmth and shelter.

Tramping for recreation in summer weather was all very well, but once he was in autumnal Canada, neither gorgeous scenery nor new cities could restrain the thinly clad homing vagabond from making the best westward speed consonant with prudence. At Ottawa he succeeded in partly outfitting with an eccentric assortment of winter garments, but the difficult process and unsatisfactory yield filled him with disgust and haste to be gone from so uncharitable a “burg.” It was, he declared, second city to Washington, D. C., where he had for a fortnight vainly begged a pair of shoes. The day in Ottawa he swears he walked forty miles, the reward of his “work” being “shy” of a shirt; while the pair of trousers acquired was tight to absurdity and showed “all the signs of an early disintegration.” It was equally hard for a “bo” to extort food; but finally this one obtained a surprisingly large parcel. When hungrily opened in a vacant lot, it turned out to be inexplicably composed of more kinds of cake than he had ever thought possible of man’s — or woman’s — ingenuity; Cake being the pet aversion of the blowed-in-the-glass stiff, he owns to fairly shedding tears over that “multitudinous pastry. Not yet having cut his eventually large and cavernous sugar-tooth, he declined in choicest idiom to partake of the saccharine muchness. However, at the very next house, his appealing orbs bought him an entirely edible setdown from a beautiful French woman.

Across from Canada he stole passage, the determined train crews granting little margin of repose. It amused him, those thousands of miles of the ten thousand he computed that he covered that year, to attempt overtaking one hobo whose “monaker” of “Skysail Jack,” carved with its latest-passing dates along the route, aroused sleeping sea memories. Himself now long since a “comet” and “tramp-royal” in his own right, Jack managed one night to pass the other and keep ahead all across Manitoba, carving or painting his old monaker of “Sailor Jack” for the other’s benefit. Then “Skysail” went by also at night, and led across Alberta, always a day in advance. Again our Jack, in company with a member of the old Boo Gang of Oakland who had fallen upon evil times, nearly caught the fleeing “Skysail” somewhere along the Fraser Eiver, in British Columbia; but when he reached Vancouver the jaunty, elusive sailorman had taken ship across the Western ocean, and never did the two meet.

“Truly, Skysail Jack,” his brother-tramp Jack London rendered honor, “you were a tramp-royal, and your mate was the wind that tramps the world.”

A week after Jack had crawled out from under a passenger coach in Vancouver, British Columbia, he, too, took passage on his homeland coast waters, stoking his way southward on the Umatilla to San Francisco.

And now for the account of the interruption in his New York sojourn. I place it here in order better to illustrate Jack London’s outlook upon his return to California, in relation to immediate issues as regarded their telling weight upon his whole future.

This happening was but the climax to inductions he had already made as corollaries of his entire history to date. It set immovably certain malleable stuff of his being, impelling him to synthesize, out of an extraordinary practical knowledge for one still so young, a simple, forthright philosophy of economics. At least, it appealed to him as the most applicable of any he had found to the anarchic social scheme that had arisen and persisted through Capitalism, and which he could contemplate only as man s shame to man under the free light of heaven.

Jack and the aforementioned fallen member of the Pennsylvania Bar had left Gotham together for a side-jaunt to Niagara Falls. And no one was ever more rapt than Jack London over the incomparable cascade. “Once my eyes were filled with that wonder-vision of down-rushing water, I was lost,” he says. Afternoon and sunset, he could not tear himself away. “Night came on, a beautiful night of moonlight,” and still he lingered upon that sounding glory of waters. Near midnight, dinnerless except for the feast of beauty, he pulled himself together and looked about for a place to sleep. The night being warm, without covering he slept in the grass of a field. Waking at five, too early to “batter” for breakfast, still mazed with the splendor of what he had seen overnight, he thought to return to the falls for a couple of hours. In the silent town of Niagara Falls he saw walking toward him three men, apparently hoboes. Two of them were so, and one of the two at close range he knew for his lawyer friend, who had separated from him at the falls in the evening, in the (to him) larger interest of “grub.”

Alas for the close range that brought Jack within recognizing distance of the rueful ex-attorney. It was also within nabbing reach of the central figure, an industrious “bull” who, because Jack was unable to name a hotel in a town unfamiliar to him, promptly took him into custody, despite his glib lie that he had just arrived. Into the city jail the trio were marshaled, and searched and registered. Jack’s case was the most dubious, for the name he gave, Jack Drake, did not tally with some letters in his pockets that happened to be addressed in his true name. He was never able to recall which was recorded on the blotter.

So far so good, he thought — the town was strict in the matter of vagrants, and he had been hauled in through his own carelessness. He felt a bit sheepish to recollect his mother’s warnings. But in court, where he made one of sixteen prisoners, there were no official personages save a judge and a pair of bailiffs — no counsel, no witnesses, NO CHANCE. Simplicity of procedure was all very well; but this clockwork execution of justice outdistanced his utmost dreams of efficacy. The judge called a name. A hobo stood up. A bailiff droned, “Vagrancy, your honor.” “Thirty days,” enunciated the court, and the hobo sat down while another rose to his name.

And Jack, even he, no milk-and-water stripling innocent of the careless injustice of the world at large, could not believe his ears that were still ringing with the thunderous organ music of Niagara River. He thought of his American school history; of Sir William London's sacrifices in the cause of freedom; of all his male progenitors down the fighting line for democracy. He reviewed what he could remember of the Constitution of the United States as he had studied it for recitation; and then he dropped back with a thud to the cold, irrefragable fact that his turn was approaching in this chamber of relentless practises. . . . Bosh, he brought himself up presently; these hoboes were dubs, and deserved all they'd get of the city jail. Hell! he'd show them a few. His ideals recrudesced warm and bright. One of the liberties those ancestors of his had scrapped for was the right of trial by jury. A demand for this could not be denied in any court of law in the Republic of America. Could it not? Why, his own "trial" was ended and the next hobo's begun before Jack could realize that the judge's peremptory "Shut up!" had cut short the blossom of his first sentence that had burst simultaneously with the court's utterance.

He was dazed. "Here was I, under sentence, after a farce of a trial wherein I was denied not only my right of trial by jury, but my right to plead guilty or not guilty." — Habeas corpus! there, he knew about that. So he asked for a lawyer. They laughed at him in the jail corridor. Well, they had him — that judge was the quickest man he had ever tried to talk against. But wait till he got out of jail. He d be good as gold while inside — it paid; and he was a diplomat, even if he did sometimes nap. But let him once get out, and there'd be the biggest noise and odor of a scandal that ever was let loose in the uninformed press of the U. S. A.

Jail? It turned out to be not mere jail but Penitentiary stripes for all the sixteen, the only offense of the most of whom had been homelessness. Jack, erstwhile patriotic son of a patriotic veteran, was handcuffed small white wrist to big black paw of a huge, happy-go-lucky negro, equally guiltless of felony, and placed in the very vanguard of the beaten procession that marched to the train for Buffalo.

Please, I beg, picture it, just once and honestly, anyone of you who fought to impede Jack London, man and artist, every hard-won, invincible inch of his way until your tardy homage only bent at last to tired eyes and lips closed in death. Just once and honestly, I beg, put yourself in the fine skin of that burning young patriot being unmade because men were needed for the rock-pile. Then, just once and honestly, do you marvel that patriotism took on new lineaments in his ideal? For the rest of his life, until

Mexico and Germania threatened his country, Jack London's only tender connotation of the word patriotism as applied to capitalist civilization was the fact that his father and mine were single-minded veterans of Abraham Lincoln's victorious forces.

Talk about sudden conversions at the Mercy Seat! He had pretended them, even striven to experience them, more than once at revivals, but had emerged spiritually untouched. But here in New York State there was no mercy. And the ruling class of America, finally, upon that day of ultimate outrage to his logic and his sensibilities, through its own uncaring stupidity forfeited that which might have become an ornament to itself, what of Jack London's temperamental leaning toward the excellence of strength. It was of such a being as this exuberant, protest ing boy, that one who has been acclaimed Dean of American Letters, many years afterward, even in the face of favors received, declared: "Jack London is a self-confessed felon, and ought to be behind the bars to-day."

That he was not made into a dangerous criminal, as were many of his chance mates, was not due to the masters. His brain and eye missed no iota of cruel wrong of the penal institution in itself and in its administration. His common sense that made him from moment to moment follow the lead of the wiser convicts to the playing of politics that in short order created him a trusty — these faculties enabled him to convert the month of durance into a powerful ally of mental growth. With customary abandon he gave himself to the game, and went observing instant by instant.

Here, to be sure, he might have been deflected into a consideration of the wisdom of eliminating the unfit, which would have led him to the pursuance whole-souled of oligarchy's high awards. It was the hot heart of him that interposed before the cool weighing of his reason, and he would make no terms with the enemy of the underdog. But true to his quality, that abiding saneness just as uncompromisingly determined that he scale the social shambles he saw butchering the careers of unprophetic or indolent comrades. Although he honored the martyrs of old, their method could never be for him. He would himself first climb out of the pit, that he might live to reach a hand to the fellow who could not rise by himself.

One may thank that princely ego of Jack London's which triumphed to serve, that there was any boyhood left in him when he had doffed the stripes and emerged shaven headed from the great gray house where he had been consigned by the majesty of Niagara Falls police court. And he had learned how best to serve both himself and those still incarcerated, which was by making himself, upon his release, very small in the matter of immediate protest. Loud mouthed ones discharged during his own occupancy of a cell, had shortly returned very silent and very sore. So he walked exceeding soft; exceeding quietly he stole under the first New York and Pennsylvania train bound southeast. More carefully than all else did he avoid coming within tagging reach of any cop in Buffalo, for amongst other teachers in the “pen” were the men who had served their thirty days for vagrancy and run forthwith again into the winnowing arms of the same or other officers. Some had been committed a second and third time, according to their degree of stupidity.

Remembering the monstrous cruelties of the penitentiary in the course of administering criminal “justice,” Jack not unnaturally concluded all State prisons were alike. It became almost second-nature for him to take to nimble heels whenever a policeman hove in sight. In the “pen” he had soon ceased from cursing his failure to jump out that morning in Niagara Falls, because of the tremendous eye-opener the prison was to him upon the nether-scenes of society. Nothing could better exhibit the rottenness of the social structure than this mad manhandling of human potentialities, in need rather of wise physicians for mental as well as physical deficiencies. Jack, being essentially healthy, shook himself free as of yore from the unnormality of the thing, and went on his way rejoicing in escape. But this time it was with a deeper difference than ever before. Read in “The Road” his two sections entitled “Pinched” and “The Pen,” for a hint of what he calls the “unprintable” details of what with his own eyes he saw in the Erie County Penitentiary in 1894. “They were unthinkable to me until I saw them,” he avows, “and I was no spring chicken in the ways of the world and the awful abysses of human degradation.”

“When Jack this time passed homeward through the Golden Gate of the West, it was eyes front to the exigencies of his future; and there was a new look in those eyes — wide, grave, imperious. He had figured it out, once and for all. He had been wont to glorify his beautiful youth’s muscle and “silk.” Where had it got him? What had it bought him? Where would it land him? Tell him that! Each time he had tried it out, he, fit among the fit, had been exploited for a paltry wage — or none, when it came to a penitentiary rock-pile. Being obsessed with love of life that should go with such a physique, he confessed terror as to what would happen when he grew older and had lost his silk, whenas he should be "unable to work shoulder to shoulder with the strong." The vaunted dignity of manual labor, as he had heard it expounded by teacher and preacher and politician, suffered a total eclipse. He had informed himself as to the doings in the cellar-pit of society. These had shown him that the men without trades were helpless, and the ones with trades were obliged to belong to unions in order to work at those trades. Unions were forced to maintain constant war with employers unions, which came back at them in turn. Therefore, no trade for him and no criminality either. He would work up out of the pit, but not with his muscle. In short, brains paid, properly used, and not brawn. His economic interpretations sanctioned the decision, for himself, that brain, and brain only, would he sell.

Here he might have switched to the track taken by the hero he created in "Martin Eden," and become technically an aristocrat, with little care for those he was easily superior enough to leave in the shambles. But no; he would use his potent intelligence to double purpose. His choice, and the use he put it to, are the most eloquent illustrations of his nobility and integrity.

HIGH SCHOOL

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XIII 19th Year

WHEN Jack London, too late to enter at the beginning, jumped midway into his first High School term, he was "driving many horses," to use a favorite expression. One was Book Education, another Socialism, a third the requisite Job, the fourth Social Usage, and so on, with all their intricate harness.

With very unorthodox views on labor and capital, he was still orthodox enough to believe that the success he craved must rest upon classical learning. Even before the Lily Maid brought her refining influence to bear upon his training, he was soaring along in his High School classes toward Berkeley's academic eucalyptus groves. It will not do for any woman, or man, either, to rise after Jack London's death and say, "It was I who educated Jack London, or started him to educate himself toward college; I put the idea into his head. I taught him the English that made him famous. In short, I made Jack London." There has been a tendency on the part of a few self-advertising souls to hint such claims; but any one truly acquainted with any part of Jack's makeup must in all honesty realize that, no matter what the helping hand, he "made himself," upon rigid lines that he had established for himself, until of his large ness he spread the lines to embrace all attainable life and erudition. He was by far too unique to be influenced vitally or permanently by any single restraining or even propelling touch.

Relentlessly, as the illuminating months went by, head high he repudiated convention after convention of belief as it proved non-essential to his advancement; still, he held to the belief that "education" was indispensable. Fellows who did things, big things, must finish their schooling first; he heard it on every side. Schooling it should be, from its first word to his last degree at the University. He had not meditated the apt query as to why some of man kind's brightest adornments had neglected to march up the grades in the way properly constituted individuals are supposed to march; nor had he then spurned what he came to scorn as "the bourgeois valuation put upon the university pigskin." This I take from a letter written to a schoolgirl two years before his death. But in the year 1894, to be called “a college man” was his ambition as guaranty of unquestionable excellence. So far there had not dawned upon him the priceless worth of his first-hand experience to a writing career; or, if this treasure did suggest itself as part of the equipment, it was in secondary measure. At least, it must pass through the alembic of rule-of-thumb culture.

Upon Jack’s return to Oakland from The Road, his good luck it was to find John London improved in health and holding down his situation as special officer on the police force, with pay sufficient for the little household. This left the boy, all on fire to study, at liberty to concentrate.

He set about forming work-habits that clung all his life. In the pretty white cottage on Twenty-second Avenue, between Sixteenth and Seventeenth Streets, his mother fixed up a roomy bed-chamber for his “den.” In the matter of a bed, he asserted himself in favor of a large and comfortable one — ”Because I shall spend much of my time in it, keeping warm while I study,” he planned. Since good beds were a weakness of his mother, the wish was gratified without protest, “I always have good beds in my house if I haven’t anything else,” was her boast.

Opposite the big bed, squarely against the window-sill, Jack set a plain table large enough for study books and writing materials, to buy which Eliza had advanced him money; and by the bed a small stand to carry a reading-lamp, one of the “student” variety, with books, scribble-pads, and pencils. In one corner a dresser, of the style with a long mirror, two large drawers, and several small ones rising on the right of the glass, took care of his meager wardrobe and shaving outfit.

The furnishing was completed by a chair at the table which at night supplemented the small bedside lamp-stand to hold a dish of fruit and his cigarettes and matches. And woe to any who should from a motive of whatsoever virtuous orderliness misplace an item of his paraphernalia. After his mother had been possessed of one of her “cleaning streaks” in his absence (who of us has not agonized from this uncomprehending and indefensible madness in one’s elders!), Jack would rage through the cottage, storming that he couldn’t find a damned thing. Flora, in self-defense, learned to intimate mildly that “Eliza was over, and thought she’d tidy up a bit,” because, forsooth, he never dared storm at Eliza. As he admitted: “I knew better than to yell at Eliza, for she’d talk back at me twice as hard.”

Here in the den, air blue with smoke of cigarettes, he made his smashing offensive on the books, and prepared himself for “exams,” picking up where he had left off when he had been graduated years before from Grammar. When exhausted from bending unheeded hours over the table, he retreated to the wide bed where, propped on huge pillows, he continued to “dig” until dawn. Night after night, a well meaning neighbor, Mrs. Aldridge, seeing the light, worked herself into a state of pity for Jack’s mother, poor worried soul that she must be, sitting up all hours waiting for a wastrel son to return. Finally she and her daughter walked over one evening to make Mrs. London’s acquaintance and, if agreeable, to sit up with her, only to be informed by Flora that the lamp illumined the pages of her student son.

But he must have some sort of exercise, and the loan of a bicycle by another neighbor gave him something to cope with bodily. It was one of those fearful and wonderful pioneer objects comprised of a wheel of expansive diameter with another and tiny one behind — the old “ordinary” of painful memory. Before an early breakfast, that he might practise unseen of delighted passers, Jack proceeded to master the thing with vigor and dispatch. “At first,” Eliza relates, “he was most of the time sprawled about the ground; and he’d come over to my house for breakfast — bruised, dripping wet and red in the face, his curls all tousled, fighting mad, and explaining carefully what slow work it was getting the best of the “infernal machine!” Then he’d burst out laughing at the idea of how he must look when he tangled up and went down in a heap with it.”

When he started going daily to the “Oakland High” on Twelfth between Jefferson and Clay Streets, Eliza presented him with a latest model of the low “safety wheel.” Speeding to and fro, bent above the handle-bars, he sometimes looked aside wistfully to the estuary that several blocks down paralleled the Avenue, wishing he had leisure for a sailboat. But the days and nights were all too short for the multitudinous activities he had engaged in. There were shadows beneath his eyes from lack of sleep and pallor under the vagabond brown. In addition to class work, he wanted to contribute stories to the High School paper, The AEgis. One of these, done in the medium of colloquial road-kid diction, appeared in a February 1895 issue, entitled “Frisco Kid’s Story,” and its fresh tone and touch of sincere pathos created a breeze in school circles. The yarns I wrote at that time drew little upon my imagination, but were more relations of real incidents than anything else," he described them.

With an instinct for live diction, the dead, formalized instruction worked a bepuzzlement in him. Miss Mollie Connors, instructor in languages, gives the following example:

"One morning," she relates, "I noticed Jack sitting at his desk with a gloomy, heart-breaking look on his face. In front of him lay a manuscript that had been so marked with a criticizing pencil that it was difficult to read the original. It's no use, Miss Mollie, he said in reply to my inquiry as to what ailed him. I'm going to quit. I came here to study English because I thought I could write; but I can't — look at this! I managed to read the article, corrected by a teacher to whom pure English meant so much more than talent: 'Never mind, Jack,' I said. I'm going to tell you a secret: 'The only trouble is that you can write, and she can't. You keep right on.'"

He had deliberated earnestly upon a pursuit for which he should qualify, and it seemed that he must definitely abandon music, and poetry, and other alluring ways of what he had thought of as "the wide joyfields of art." The more he pondered, the more convinced he became that fiction writing would pay the best, bringing to him the means of good living for himself and others. In writing he would still be creating art, which seemed necessary to a full realization of himself. It would not take him long, he figured, to get where he could incorporate art and beauty into form that would sell for several dollars a column, if rumors were dependable.

From one ancestor of his mother at least, Jack London inherited stern fixity of purpose and perseverance. This Wellman had "blown in" his own bank and all others of his interests for the construction and maintaining of what was in its time the largest blasting furnace in the iron districts; but, like some of Jack's ideas, it was in advance not of its need but its recognition. I cannot refrain from wondering if he had not set up for his motto Washington Irving's "Great minds have purposes; others have wishes." "And no brother of mine is going to take any chewing tobacco into High School in my town," Eliza announced her disapproval of an unsavory habit he had brought home from his tramp society. Whereupon Jack submitted the excuse that he had to keep chewing incessantly, when he was not smoking incessantly, to prevent his teeth from aching. Suiting action to his defense, he opened his square jaws and exhibited an array of cavities, in every tooth that the Kelly's Army dentist had spared from his forceps.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself — you needn’t have had a mouth like that if you’d taken half-decent care of it,” Eliza scolded full righteously. He owned she was justified, and then proffered the bargain that if she would get him some new upper-fronts, and have the cavities filled, he would abandon the abhorred “chewing.” Which he did, except on one or two surreptitious occasions when, sailing and fishing up-river for a rest, alone or with some unregenerate compatriot, he renewed acquaintance with “plug cut.”

“Well,” he remarked when the plate had been adjusted, “here I am with my first store teeth and my first toothbrush I ever bought — I got them both at the same time, at nineteen years of age.”

“Well, it’s nothing to be proud of,” his sister flashed back with rising color. “It’s your own fault, because you knew better. I didn’t bring you up that way! And I wouldn’t brag about it before anybody. It’s no credit to you.”

For quite beyond her it was that he, always shouting for bath and towels, “nice woolly ones, you know,” or brush and comb and razor, and who used a whisk-broom assiduously on his shabbiest suit, should have slipped up in this matter of caring for his teeth. He had no excuse save “Oh, I was always busy, or reading, or interested in something, and forgot it!”

Jack’s first mishap while he and the new plate were be-coming accustomed, was upon a day when he rode the spic and span “safety” to call upon a girl schoolmate. Coasting down hill, a violent sneeze ejected the teeth, and in his lightning effort to catch them midfall, they and he and the wheel went down together. Although his sensitiveness was acute, he would hide it at such times under a bold brusquerie. Once, I remember, at the Piedmont Swimming Baths in Oakland, he lost his plate in the tank, and failing to recover it by crawling along the bottom in eight feet of water, he finally gave up secret methods and offered a dollar to the boy who would find it for him. Great hilarity ensued, in which he as noisily shared, and there followed a mighty splashing and engulfment of small divers. And when one strangling brat had emerged successful, the owner concealed his blushes under water while he slipped the teeth into place. “Be a good sport, no matter how it hurts,” was the word.

Already Jack was conspicuous in propaganda work for the old Socialist Labor Party. Yes, he had some time back discovered the name for what he had become: Socialist — though he had been made aware from his fearless start that the word was a grief in the ears of “nice” persons regardful of bourgeois peace and order. But, born rebel against anything less than a square deal, and personally ambitious into the bargain, he subscribed in effect to the maxim that “Satisfaction with existing things is damnation.” Eager though he was to benefit mankind, early in the game, to the questions “You hope to cure social ills with socialism! Do you think it will be long in coming?” Jack replied: “I don’t know; the student quits prophesying early in the action.

Now this particular steed in his speeding team, Socialism, did not seem to step precisely with sedate ethics in the High School; but he had much information to plunder, and would not worry. Blithely would he remove obstacles as they arose, and it should be easy enough. He would reduce all difficulties to their simplest forms — which indeed often abolishes difficulty — and proceed to handle the same as simply. In a fine degree Jack had that consciousness which Wells has said is discord evoking the will to adjust itself.

No Laodicean, Jack. His facing to the world must be direct and unmistakable, though composed of many and mobile features, for the countenance of his soul was not created rigid except in the basic integrities. Rampant individual was he, in every fiber. But how about the next fellow, his brother or sister individual? Evidently, from his observation about the world, just the right chance was not accorded them all. He happened to be husky and could make his own berth, though even he had to strain unduly to survive, and he had come to see that countless ones were unable to endure the race. He thought of child-labor as he had known it and as he saw it progressing in the land. And the mangling mercilessness of commerce — the industrial accidents, the scrap-heap of cripples and mendicants; for the unprotected machine, since he had worked at it, had not been improved upon. He did not have to take the say-so of others: he had his own experience to tally by. The boy’s heart beat for poor blind humanity; and perhaps, after all, the higher-ups did not know how wrong things were, just as the cannery owner’s daughter, lying in the cushions of her rumbling victoria with its silver-clanking high-steppers, could not possibly have dreamed of the conditions in the converted stable cannery.

So he founded his early and persistent hopes upon the latent nobilities he felt were leaven in the human of all classes. These classes should be got together. He groped for the best way of helping. The spreading of Socialism was the best solution that presented as he reared in protest against the injustice of life — and of nature, too: never did he cease to marvel at the slight consideration of nature toward her children. There seemed to be so much wrong all down the line. Justice appealed as such a simple thing, if only everybody could agree on ways and means. Why could not every one perceive what was right and what wrong? Surely, any veriest boob could see that it was not fair or even sensible for an unformed child of school age, or an invalid female of whatsoever age, to be obliged to do hard work for bread and meat! It was worth fighting for, to try to bring things right. He would do his part in showing them what he had found. But why should he, particularly he, who was so very busy, have to do the fighting? Why were not those with leisure and money doing the work of balancing things? Why could not they see for themselves, without being shown? And, worse, he found that some who were convinced, actually took the opposite tack, and fought against the obvious right. It was not as if the down-and-outs he had known had originated from the slums. Quite the reverse; in his travel he had learned that more often they were drafted from the more sensitive ones, well above the slum class, while many were far above it, and then some. Besides, there ought not to be any slums.

So it should be Socialism for him. “And socialism, when the last word is said,” he saw it, “is merely a new economic and political system whereby more men can get food to eat. In short, Socialism is an improved food-getting efficiency.” One must have food, and plenty of food, to attain to other kinds of efficiency. From his first socialistic conceptions, there was never anything of the soft-headed genus of humanitarian about the boy. His small feet were rooted in the soil of practicality, the while his young head plotted emancipation of the common man who was his blood-brother under the red banner of democracy. The anarchists made him laugh — every man for himself, and devil take the hind most; anarchy would abolish law, and mankind could not thrive socially without law and obedience to the same, for the good of the many. He had played ducks and drakes with some pretty good laws himself, laws he had known were fairly just even in his trifling with them. That had been in youth’s free prankishness, and in protest against laws that had already been broken over his own back; so he could not take his past evasions too seriously.

Very well, Socialism, as flatly opposed to Anarchism, stood for law, more law, better law, and law enforced as it should be — for everybody, employer and employed, for man, and woman, and child. His old diffidence cropped up, and he did not then or ever like to speak publicly; but he would enter the lists in the holy cause of propaganda for this lofty religion that had come to him.

With eloquent tongue preaching, and eye, rejoicing in the smack of the game that entered into his every activity, slanted on the listening, closing police, he was promptly arrested for street speaking. Thus he scored the first telling notoriety that accompanied bringing his politics into prominence.

And then he, clarion trumpet of law-building Socialism, was contrariously and ignominiously dubbed by the capitalist papers as Anarchist, red-shirt, dynamiter, and what not! He could only foam at the mouth over the impotence of justice and the unfairness of destiny. Oh, well — it was all right; he had expected too much at the beginning. Anyway, he had done something toward waving the sacred blood-red flag of the Brotherhood of Man, and would keep on waving if he died for it!

Jack's efforts on curb and soap-box did not make for any especial popularity with Mr. McChesney, principal of the High School, nor with the teachers; any more than did certain baffling fallacies he introduced into algebraic problems for his own entertainment and their undoing. His general progress was meteoric enough to command their respect and forgiveness, however. Those photographic retinas of his wide eyes, together with an alert brain that missed nothing, and long-pursued omniverous reading, made most of his studies mere play and granted much time for further reading which a half-dozen family-cards helped the old public library furnish him. He has told that it was possible for him to repeat almost word for word a column once gone over, say of a newspaper; but except in sofar as it served to facilitate recitations or entertain socially, he soon gave up developing the faculty. "That sort of thing, carried to excess, is a detriment to larger functioning," he once explained me his view. "I made use of it for skimming the cream from pages, as you see me do. Before long, I had fixed the habit of making written notes of details, in order to save my brain for general principles. If one forms and retains principles, the details can be reconstructed easily enough." When Jack London's elder daughter, Joan, entered High School precociously early, remembering his own youth he modified a disapproval he had harbored as to cramming young minds too full and fast:

"If her brain works as rapidly and effortlessly as did mine," he capitulated, "it's all right for her to go ahead this way if she wishes, so long as her body is being properly nourished and cared for. I learned so quickly that I had time on my hands at my school desk, and if I did not have a book handy, I fretted and fumed at the sinful waste of time."

Another interest during his first term was the stimulating one of argument, not only with the instructors but with the members of a club that met under the name of the Henry Clay Debating Society. There he also became acquainted with girls who did their hair high and who wore longer skirts than those of little Haydee. He found himself invited into some of their pleasant and cultured homes, for these young women did not make casual street friends with men. While he oriented himself, he often thought of his wild and woolly past on land and sea. And in the long run of his days, there in Oakland and in more glittering ranks of society about the world, he founded his agreement with Kipling, that "The Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady are sisters under their skins."

Some of the well-raised maidens' brothers were prone to look askance upon the "Boy Socialist" who was attracting altogether too much unflattering comment about town. But in spite of prejudice, they and their sisters could not fail to admire the arresting personality of the bright, incessant young student, the beauty of whose well-set-up body with its free sailor-shoulders could not be hidden even under ill-fitting, shiny-seamed cloth. Still, I have met one elegant matron who remembers him principally by his "untidy clothes."

He kept them "guessing" every minute by the poignant charm of voice and manner, even if it sometimes lapsed in polish, for it was hard to discern where self-confidence gave place to a suspected clever bluff born of old sensitiveness and timidity; and his adroit tongue was apt to prove a wily snare to their best laid arguments.

But let him once come under the empery of serious thought, and he was transformed into a commanding figure. I have seen Jack London enter a room full of people, wearing that half-diffident smile of lips and eyes that so disarmed them all — just a human boy, all human, all boy — until some question set the keener mechanism of his brain in movement. Instantly! the whole man changed, a mind appeared to take the place of the human personality, a mind sure, insolent with surety, a very autocrat of minds. He impressed the onlooker as removed, set above, exalted over common thought and thing. The usual engaging expectancy of his justly featured face changed into lines of stern imperiousness, the very repose of which seemed to mark him as a consecrated vessel of some austere purpose.

To return: He "dallied with little home clubs wherein were dicussed poetry and art and the nuances of grammar." The socialist local kept his wits on razor edge with study and oration upon philosophy, political economy, and poli tics state and national. He wrote letters to the Oakland Times, The Item, and other papers, which were published under leaded titles such as: "Is against single tax; Jack London disagrees with John McLees: claims it will not regulate present difficulties. " And again: "Socialistic views on coin. Jack London takes issue with the Populists. Where he thinks them weak. The small capitalists trying to ride on the backs of laborers." When the People's Party in Oakland offered a prize for the best essay written by a pupil of the schools, Jack's was the winner. It was entitled "Direct Legislation through the Initiative and the Referendum," and was given publicity in The Item. Two stories, "Old Baldy," and "An Old Soldier's Story," were printed in a magazine, Evenings at Home; and a Socialist article in The Amateur Bohemian.

As if he had not already assumed enough to wear down that Titan energy which made possible his fame, want of money urged him into an assistant janitorship in the school. That position was an eminently convenient one though it did strain even his breadth of beam and buoyancy of endurance, when added to myriad other tasks and interests.

"Poverty made me hustle," he wrote long afterward, and included this among the items of what he called his "vast good luck" — others being "good health; good brain; good mental and muscular correlation." So he turned his beautiful muscle to stoking the furnace, and his blithe walk to account upon wooden miles traversed in the course of cleansing floors and wainscot and furniture of the educational pile that was a stepping-block to college. Still furthere to eke out his earnings, he kept an eye for unmown lawns and dusty carpets, putting in chance holidays and spare evenings at this kind of exercise, to a further lessening of closely-scaled sleeping hours.

The securing of the janitor work came about through his sister. Soon after entering High School, Jack had noticed that the janitor, Jacob Winkler, seemed to have more duties than a veteran of the Sixties could well accomplish. He had once been the Commander of Lyon Post Number Eight of the G. A. E., and Eliza Shepard simultaneously having been President of the Woman's Auxiliary Belief Corps, Lyon Post, Department of California and Nevada, Jack went to her. In his behalf she manipulated such strings as she could, and despite her brother's political leanings, got him the berth. It was slyly whispered that Winkler's advancement to a "better and easier place" in another school was coincidentally an expression of the School Board's disapproval at the appointment of the handsome young firebrand in unmodish garments over the head of a boy previously named. Years later, after delivering a lecture on Socialism at the old Dietz Opera House in Oakland, Jack was approached by the selfsame Jacob Winkler, who wrung his hand with the assurance of his warm sympathy with the Cause.

To his daughter entering High School, again Jack wrote, in order to circumvent possible ill-advised snobbery due to his renown, adjuring her never to forget that her daddy once swept the very woodwork upon which she was now treading.

One afternoon, to her stepdaughter Jessie Shepard — she with whom Jack had played piano duets at school and church concerts in earlier East Oakland years — Eliza declared:

"There! I know I've just seen that girl Jack's been raving about lately, for she exactly fits his descriptions. She's a pretty little wisp of a thing — big blue eyes, hair yellow as spun gold — you know, the perfect blonde. Pale, though, and looks delicate. She was all tricked out in fluffy white things, with a wonderful picture-hat, and had an English bull-pup on a chain — and she was laughing at the way it was leading her . . . I know she's the girl!"

(The occasion of Eliza's introduction to the young lady, however, was somewhat undignified, if gallant. Jack had taken the Lily rowing upon the estuary. Anchored off the Derby Lumber Yards, while she read aloud he fell asleep in the bottom of the boat. He awoke to find the tide had ebbed until they were high and dry; and so, removing his footwear, he "packed" his friend through the oily ooze to the shore, where Eliza met them.)

Eliza had made no mistake. It was she, Jack's Lily Maid of Britain. He thought of her as the Lily Maid, although he had never read "Idyls of the King." And she might have hailed from Astolat or any other romantic hamlet in her English isle, for all he knew or cared. In the exquisiteness of her appeal she was the Haydee of his riper youth, a patrician Haydee, imperious of homage in her dainty femininity, and he was all a-fevered to compass the ways of chivalry that would command her smile and the touch of her well-groomed white hands. He acknowledged no frailty of chin or of that pale profile against the Rembrandt velvet brim she wore. Frailty, in her, was delicacy. She seemed set apart from all the other girls in the Henry Clay Society — so lofty-cool sweet, so superior, so spirituelle compared with his rougher masculine clay. It was her complementing unlikeness to him, in whatsoever the unlikeness consisted, that made him lift worshiping eyes to her fairness, white woman of his own breed, clay of his clay, though clay sublimated.

Her brother had invited him to dinner. In her home he found no snobbery, no slanting glances at his well-worn ready-made suit that pulled into wrinkles across swelling muscle of shoulder and back — only helpfulness and a likable courtesy. They were real people, he decided, the sort he had dreamed about in his aspiring ideals. Before he had grown intimate enough to pit his mind against their minds, he betrayed some awkwardness, especially when it turned out that the daughter of the house was in the University. The experience began in pleased wonderment, for little did he credit any sense which might have whispered that he him-self was of closer-fibered integrity than she or her family, more subtly fine than any woman he had yet gazed upon or perhaps should ever meet, He adored her culture and herself who guided him so sympathetically to the books she loved, who opened for him sublime gates to a higher world of poetry and art. He was wrapped in a new gladsomeness of existence that kept him company while he dusted, swept, and scrubbed the big schoolhouse or beat germ-laden breadths of brussels and monstrously floral carpeting in obscure back yards.

When there showed weaknesses or thinnesses of quality he had glamored as almost virtues in her porcelain delicateness, he still brushed them lightly aside; they should not be estimated as faults, but rather components of a tem peramental daintiness — somewhat in the way certain tiny pellets and potions out of slender vials seemed part of her fragility. Why, maybe she was right — he was eager to grant when they had clashed, as clash they did — and he, from his mere clayness, coarsely in error. Thus he felt his tentative way into the labyrinths of culture, from the nice ties of table etiquette to a mental etiquette he presently hesitated to employ, sensing its restrictedness.

Meantime the Lily Maid’s drawing room was his oasis of refinement where intellectual converse, or so it then appeared to him, with well-bred deportment was carried on in modulated tones. Here he laved his thirsting soul in the best poetry, and was at liberty to take away with him any book he wished. He fell deeply interested in the science of chess, playing with the Lily's brother, though he noticed it was hard to concentrate if his lady were near. She and he were as different as the poles and their very difference charged the atmosphere with sparks of living fire. She could not have told why she vibrated so thrillingly in the presence of this unconventional boy who was apt, in any moment of mental excitation, to throw to the winds the example set him of gentler conduct, and "talk with his hands," rumple wildly his adorable sun-gilded curls and fling himself about all over the place. And only too often he was showing a tendency to flout with merry tongue and baffling, teasing eyes, her most cherished ikons that she had chiseled as changeless deities. But the sheer inexplicableness of his magnetic attraction preserved its charm, and she ceased from troubling to reason "about it and about," but gave herself true womanly to her due of the palpitant sweetness of loving, blushing herself warm with the secret and unmaidenly desire to lay her two hands about that muscular tanned neck which in its smooth round shortness was like a tender baby's, notwithstanding its power.

How distant glimmered the days and deeds of the old water-front and river life. Occasionally Jack ran into one or another of the men, and these could detect no alteration in his breezy comradeliness, although he confessed to having "cut out the booze, you fellows — water-wagon for me now — got too much to do; no, not even one!" For a year and a half on end, he never took a drink. Drink did not enter his mind. A different thirst had taken hold, a purely mental appetite. With his studies, janitor-duties, and "innocent amusements such as chess," he had no moment for unprofitable idiling in saloon society. Such was the passion of his exploration into the new world he had entered, that the former destructive one held no inducements even to trifle on its margin. In fact, the only public-house threshold he stepped across was that of The Last Chance, and this to solicit a loan from the ready friendliness of Johnny Heinold, against pay-day for janitor-work. Not a single drink did he take to "wet the transaction." Heinold was an understanding man; and the ringing gold eagle Jack borrowed on several occasions was the only article that passed across the reflecting polish of the bar into the hand of the resolute disciple of concentration upon large issues.

The dreams of his father and mother, that made them invest in irresponsible "securities," knew no abate as the years waxed. The money went somewhere — ”God only knows where,” Jack and Eliza would disclaim all comprehension. To the Lily Maid, referring to High School struggles, in 1898 Jack in a fit of despondency wrote:

“Do you know what I suffered during that High School and University period? The imps of hell would have wept had they been with me. Does any one know? Can any one know? Oh the hours I have eaten out my heart in bitterness! You say Duty? I fought it off for two long years without cessation, and I am glad. You knew me before those two years did they do me any good?”

Excess of application is an exhausting process, and Jack nearly broke beneath the load, added to the nerve-strain of inadequate sleep and financial cramp. At the end of a year he sat down by himself and mulled his progress and prospects. There were two full years of High School yet to go before he could be graduated into the first of four long years at college. Six years! — and he was close upon twenty. It couldn’t be done. He must devise a short cut. An obvious drollery occurred to him — that fate should matriculate certain hare-brained, financially carefree and equally uncaring fellows into the university; while for himself, with a self-recognized serious future at stake, the way was made so difficult. But he wasted no time in repining, for he must be up and doing.

He had heard of a “cramming joint” over in Alameda, Anderson’s I think he said it was, that bridged the spread-out years of High School. Unfortunately, it was an expensive academy, and where was the money to come from for the advance fee? Eliza — but could she spare so much at one time? She had multifarious uses for the money she earned in partnership with her husband. He would find out. She did have the needed amount, and was glad he had come to her.

Jack bade farewell to his classmen and women who were going into Junior High School without him, and daily pedaled his wheel back and forth over the Webster Street bridge to Alameda, too introspective to grant more than a reminiscent glance to the passing show of the pictureful estuary he spanned.

He began in the senior class of this “prep” school, “scheduled to graduate right into the university at the end of four months, thus saving two years.” In other words, he had a third of a year in which to do the final two years work of High School. Night and day he crammed for five weeks. And then, out of a clear sky, a curious and hurtful blow fell. The reason was that his speed had become a matter of dissatisfaction in the classes, and it would raise a scandal for any preparatory establishment to permit a student to enter college who had annihilated two years learning in twelve weeks. The master of the academy said he was sorry to lose so splendid a pupil, but the universities were growing more severe in their accrediting of prep schools, and he had to consider the reputation of his own.

The shock to Jack was not dissimilar to that inflicted by the city visitor to the little old Alhambra at Livermore. But he was proud and angry now, and departed without a word. His face in such crisis, when recourse was out of the question, was masked with a baffling sweetness, a trifle pale, the pain so withdrawn behind quiet unflinching eyes that an onlooker was conscious of it only after he had passed from sight.

Eliza's money was paid back intact, and the boy shut himself in the den, where without laboratories or coaching of any sort he dug and clawed with renewed ferocity into chemical formulas and simultaneous quadratic equations, so as to be ready for the entrance examinations at Berkeley. His vitality was taxed almost to bursting. His muscles twitched as once before they had nearly twitched into St. Vitus dance. Even those dependable sailor-eyes wavered and quivered and saw jumbled spots, but as always through life, he won out. Twelve weeks at nineteen hours a day, with rare moments off, he maintained the killing pace. Reviewing the period, he thought that he may have been a bit "dotty" toward the last, for he caught himself believing he had unearthed the formula for squaring the circle, though he would defer advertising the fact until he had passed the exams that were to put him inside the college portals. When the day of handing in his papers had come and gone, he collapsed with brain-fag, at least to a degree where he "didn't want to see a book . . . or to think nor to lay eyes on anybody who was liable to think," too utterly tired to be even interested in waiting to learn the report on his examination sheets.

The next he knew he was drifting upon a morning ebb in a loaned Whitehall boat, toward the great free medicine of that island sea beloved of all his years. Quintessential seaman that he was, his ills fell from him when the clean white spritsail sphered in the outside breeze. I have had to ask about that canvas — whether it was a spritsail or a leg o'mutton. One friend who had sailed with him, tells me either canvas is used in a Whitehall, but adds: "Jack always liked a spritsail." So much for the seaman who may read.

The first of the flood up the main bay set him fairly on his course into the San Pablo waters, where Carquinez Straits were ripping against the incoming tide; and now the released burner of daylight and candle-wick sang hail and good-by to this and that reminding landmark, left astern in his white flight. The sea was up and the wind was whistling and he would keep right on across Suisun Bay and up the San Joaquin. Nothing could stop him except a drop in the wind in league with turn of tide when he could anchor or tie up to the river-edge tules, songful with blackbirds.

As Benicia grew larger on the port bow, he got to thinking of Young Scratch and his dreadful death that in this very town had stretched out the giant shoulders for the last sleep. He wondered were any of the old Patrol crowd there now. It seemed as if he had been upon another planet a weary space in eternity, and had heard no tidings of the good comrades of other aeons. What was the matter with stopping off for an hour or two and hunting them up? The wind showed no sign of easing, and he could resume the drive and surge through the smoking combers he wotted of in Suisun Bay. And what he needed was an old-fashioned glass of whiskey. For once it would do him nothing but good to invite a mild jingle — you know, just to let down tension after that awful overdraft of study he wanted to forget. Besides, he was close to twenty now, and not an infant blind to consequences.

By the time he had opened the bight of Turner's Ship yard, the notion of the drink had intensified into a real desire — the first instance of such in his not unbibulous youth. As his Whitehall rounded the old Solano's long wharf, he grinned at the recollection of his suicidal death-chant on that inebriate midnight in the not so long ago, and surged along abreast of the patch of tules and the clustering fishermen's arks" where he had cronied and reveled deep with the bunch. Lord! Lord! what a lot he had seen and done since then. How could any man work always at one job?

He sailed in, made fast, and poked about among the arks. Good it was to find them there, all the survivors of the "old guard," and gladdest of all to welcome him, Charley Le Grant himself, who positively embraced his old friend, assisted by a capacious and motherly wife. And when Charley hit across the railroad tracks for Jorgenson's Saloon of dizzy memory, Jack yelled gaily after, "No beer for me this time, Kid! Whiskey's my tea for this afternoon!"

Quite deliberately, with purpose throughout, Jack proceeded on a thoroughgoing "jag," drinking every treat and his own treats in return. Many old acquaintances dropped in, among them Clem, once partner of Young Nel-son of the unreefed Reindeer, and Jack listened, weeping, in the too-sudden slackening of his nerve-cords, to the tragic account of the violent passing of his Berserker friend. There were sorry tales of other friends who had passed or even worse. "Nearly all my oyster-pirate comrades are long since hanged, shot, drowned, killed by disease, or are spending their declining years in prison," he once pointed what he insisted was his own good luck in escaping disaster.

While Jack held high jubilee with the old "push," Charley went out and worked hard shifting the Whitehall outfit into a roomy Columbia River salmon boat that was a boat, and stretched boom and sprit scandalously for such a breezy day; but Le Grant knew his friend could sail as long as he could see. No urging succeeded in staying the migrating bird over night, not within hearing of the clash and slash of the upstanding seas of that fierce strait-confined run-out which hurled against the brave west wind now filling his ears with its shouting. And this time the receding tule-marsh echoed to a different music from his funeral song of years gone, as now he voiced unmeasured disdain for the bitted elements and all books and institutions of learning. Together with maudlin spoutings on higher mathematics, economics, philosophy and art, he rendered such airs of his riotous, swashbuckling memories as "Black Lulu," "I Wisht I was a Little Bird, Little Bird," and a dozen more, including a rare medley of sea chanteys.

Much fun he had in later years, attempting the old ditties for my benefit, two fingers to his temple, or vertically on his scalp-lock — a little mannerism when cudgeling memory under embarrassment. The verse which came easiest was something as follows:

"O treat my daughter kind-i-ly,
And keep her safe from harm;
And I will leave you
My house, my farm, and-all-the-little
chickens in the gar-den." The pulse of his life roared like a gale in the rigging. He nearly sailed the salmon boat under in his renewed enthusiasm of battling with wave and wind. When at even tide, sobered with the beauty of the lagoon-like river delta and the velvet rose and fawn of the

Montezuma Hills across a pearl-gray flood, he laid alongside a friendly potato sloop at Antioch, above Black Diamond, he was kneedeep in sloshing, washing brine. And his was a glorious sharp appetite for black bass fried in olive oil, meaty stew redolent of fresh garlic, and crusty Italian loaf that taxed his precious "front plate" near to cracking. Aboard the sloop, in a dry bunk that was pressed upon him, he and the boys "lay and smoked and yarned of old days, while overhead the wind screamed through the rigging and taut halyards drummed against the mast.

With his unexcelled resiliency of brain and body tissue, a week of cruising in the staunch salmon boat restored him to where the fearful toll he had exacted of himself for a score of months was as if it had never been, or so it seemed. Who is to prove that super-normal effort does not weaken the whole structure of a growing lad?

That one revel he had permitted himself was the last; but the determination to keep it so cost him much in that he must avoid looking up any more old chums. That was the perfect hell of sobriety — just the live, "breedy, chesty" men one wanted to mingle with as a tonic for brain-fag were the ones with whom it was necessary to practise this injurious custom. So he held, all his student days, to an almost puritanical abstemiousness, through expediency coupled with want of desire when among people who were strangers to alcohol.

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XIV 1896-7

AND here he was, in the fall of 1896, after all his struggling, two years ahead of his High School classmates, at last “a college man,” fellow to the Lily Maid’s brother, and James Hopper, and a Henry Clay Club friend, Fred Jacobs, with others he had known previously, albeit they were Juniors and he but a verdant “Freshie.” High time, too, for in January he would be twenty-one, though to save his soul he could not figure how the four years were to be managed on the slim and uncertain income he had little leisure to pick up outside of study and lecture and reading hours. But he was a-thrill with having won to a paramount desire. It was worth all the striving and scrimping.

James Hopper, ‘98, and Jack met one day on the Campus, for the first time, knowingly, since they had played marbles, and scrapped together in the Cole Grammar. Mr. Hopper’s notes on the meeting, written the day after his friend’s death, compose one of the most sympathetic pictures I know upon the radiant subject; and from them I draw a few lights:

He possessed already then a certain vague reputation among us boys as one who had done man things and wild things and romantic things. . . . His latest exploit that of passing the University entrance examinations after three months vigorous cramming while stoking the furnace of the Oakland High School — was in many mouths. His already was a colorful personality, and when the boy who had been telling me about him said suddenly: ‘There he is, see? Coming down the steps,’ I moved up and braced him.

“But — but — well, I hate to say it. Perhaps if I explain carefully people will understand. You see, he was a newly-entered freshman . . . and I was a full-fledged junior, and on the football team and editor of the Occident, also holding a well-defined place in a very regular organization a bit of a bourgeois prig, in fact. So that when I went to Jack London, I did so — God forgive me — thinking consciously how nice and democratic this was of me!

“If he felt my condescension — and he must have, for under his sturdiness ran a fine net of fine nerves — he did not show it. I may say right here that the dominating quality of Jack London’s character was bigness. ‘Attend to the big things and let the little things go’ — if he ever made for himself a motto it must have been that. He let the little things go that time, and met my advance with an open frankness that was like a flood of sunshine.

“Sunshine — the word leaps of itself to the end of my pen. . . . He had a curly mop of hair which seemed spun of its gold; his strong neck, with a loose, low, soft shirt, was bronzed with it; and his eyes were like a sunlit sea. His clothes were flappy and careless; the forecastle had left a suspicion of a roll in his broad shoulders;” — and here Mr. Hopper appreciates the notable beauty of the man: “he was a strange combination of Scandinavian sailor and Greek god, made altogether boyish and lovable by the lack of two front teeth, lost cheerfully somewhere in a fight.”

As for Jack’s irrepressible enthusiasm: “He was full of gigantic plans — just as, indeed, I was to find him always whenever I came upon him later in life. . . . He was going to take all the courses in English, all of them, nothing less. Also, of course, he meant to take most of the courses in the natural sciences, many in history, and bite a respectable chunk out of the philosophies.

“And as he unfolded his intentions to me, there in the sun in front of North Hall, radiating himself at least as much light and warmth as the sun, I, all of twenty years old and hence disillusioned, frozen (lightly frozen) in a gentle pessimism, polished with a worldly skepticism, I listened to him and smiled, and tried to make my smile just a bit ironical and withal kindly. You see, I had taken some of the courses of which he was going to take all, and I found there — well, not all I had sought. Three or four times I came near telling him that. But his enthusiasm was so in trepid, so young and touching, so pure and vibrant — that I didn’t have the heart.”

Jack concentrated especially upon the English branches and biological sciences, and took other things by the way, one of them French; but I retain the impression from a reference he made to me that for some reason he did not continue long with the latter “extra.” Probably, in the super-urgency of his state, he weeded it as a non-essential if graceful perquisite toward the English literature he felt he was to father into being. In fact, he never seems to have laid stress upon the value of etymological intricacies. Rather the reverse, it strikes me, as I recall uncompromising utterances on the wisdom of eliminating Latin and Greek and Sanskrit and what not, made to his own offspring and to other youth of both sexes who flocked in quest of advice for the shortest cut to a career of letters. This is the more surprising because of his strong predisposition toward investigating basic components of whatsoever interested him — from subduing to saddle or harness an incorrigible "outlaw," to overcoming on the high sea loftier mathematics of navigation seldom disturbed from musty repose by professional masters, or in possessing himself of the colorful why and wherefore of opals bought in the Antipodes for his wife.

For all it had absorbed, his brain was as a perpetual dry sponge — impossible of saturation in its myriad folds. The instruction he sat under, far from appeasing, impelled him to the library, where he read volume after volume, each leading indefinitely on to other volumes over and above recommended collateral reading. "I can do the work quicker than they can teach me, he once put into the mouth of an autobiographical character; and I have heard him seriously hold forth that the method and content of university education were of slight benefit to him. This estimate and library cramming were the chiefest bestowments of the university upon his particular ego. His abiding belief was that he could have done as well without those months of attendance. To be sure, he did not always try to discourage others from seeking their training in this way; but in his own case he claimed he had "succeeded in spite of it, rather than because of it," what of the to him untenable formalizing process upon "the wheel of university subservience to the ruling class," as he wrote his daughter. And of course he came to respect Experience as the Teacher of Teachers.

The following exploit has been told, as instance of Jack's clear-headedness and daring: The college advertised for a steeplejack to furbish up the flagpole which stood midcenter of the campus. Weeks elapsed, and none volunteered. Then, one morning, students on the way to early classes were amazed to behold their curly-headed freshman slowly working his way earthward from the lofty golden ball, meanwhile plying a paintbrush dipped in the pail on his left arm. He had grown impatient at the sight of the weather-soiled eyesore on his campus, and with the breed of youth that had not learned to "shinny" heights. There was a norther blowing, but his experience as sailor made the work real play — it felt good to wrap his long-unaccustomed legs about the swaying land-mast that had once been a storm-swept living pine, like the sturdy stick of the Sophie Sutherland, and to feel the high breeze humming through his hair. When the thing was done to his taste, he rolled his paint-soaked overalls in a bundle, and unlimbered his cramped legs quick-stepping to classrooms.

In the month of his twenty-first birthday, the first half of the freshman year at his back, despite the growing if grudged apprehension that college was not yielding quite all he had hoped of it, Jack went about preparation for the second term. And if it had not been that he was unable to spare enough time from study to coin the where withal for a living, he would doubtless have seen through at least the one year of university work before finally discarding it as to him a telic non-essential.

Hunched over the inky, ashy table in his den, with might and main he cut loose and embarked upon the career of fiction he had chosen. I have heard him laugh to recall the madness of desire to arrive at a style that would serve his ends. “Never was there such a creative fever as mine from which the patient escaped fatal results. . . . I wrote everything — ponderous essays, scientific and sociological, short stories, humorous verse,” — and all other metrical and irregular poetic matter from triolet to lugubrious blank verse and “elephantine epic in Spenserian stanza.” Steadily day by day he composed at the rate of fifteen hours out of the twenty-four.

During these weeks of nerve-wracking application, in his brief family contacts Jack was about as soothing a house-mate as a ruffled porcupine, and irascible at the racket of his sister Ida’s two-year-old boy, whom Flora was tending for a consideration while its mother, now separated from her husband, went out to work. But at last, neat sheaves of manuscript were mailed with importance by the expectant author to eastern editors, who made use of Jack’s return stamps with a celerity that modified his hot confidence to a not uncheerful hope. Not one single line of all the output of devoted days and nights elicted one single line of approbation from the stony-hearted men who, tilted in swivel chairs back in New York, Boston, and Philadel-phia, controlled the food supply of literary aspirants. It was incredible. He wondered what an editor really was like. He had never seen one and felt a colossal awe that was in inverse ratio to the regard with which only too soon he began to favor the phenomena of their own disappointed intellects.

Almost his only recreation was an occasional game of chess at the Lily Maid’s house. Although he continued resolutely to pluck his deportment and tongue of roughnesses in her presence, he could not be "good" all the time, and out of immediate earshot relaxed vigilance. For example, one afternoon, he was deep in a game with her brother in the garden. Oversure, Jack suddenly realized as the other quietly reached for the next move, that he had tripped in his calculation, and faced disaster. Tipping back in his chair, he coolly and dispassionately gave unhurried vent to a selection of eight words, choice, succinct, most unsaintliest of his unsaintly sea-and-road expletive.

As the last syllable issued close-clipped but deliberate from betwixt his teeth, a horrible certainty overtook him that the two men of them were not alone. A queer smother ing look spread upon his opponent's face, in which embarrassment struggled with mirth. Then all doubt vanished as a stray zephyr from behind Jack wafted a wisp of white mull within eye-tail vision. Let us drop the curtain as the balancing front-legs of his chair come slowly to the grass.

What really hurt most, though, in this blank failure of immediate victory over grateful magazine staffs, was the associated failure to shower upon his father the shining gold returns; for he had allowed this beloved and patient friend of all his singular fortunes to feed him, which had been done with a willingness that John could ill afford, and in natural expectation of the needed reimbursement.

One ray of light that always struck athwart Jack's darkest hours, was his father's quiet, persistent faith in him. "Don't you worry about Jack, mama," he would say to his wife. "He'll win out, I tell you — he was built to win, and nothing can stop him from winning, nothing at all," firmly he met Jack's own dependence upon his ability to pull through in the big way.

At first appalled by untempered condemnation from every invaded sanctum on the Atlantic coast, coldly expressed by prompt rejection slips, the author then reëxamined his prolific pages. This was not done alone in appraisal of their quaint appearance resulting from his brother-in-law's old "boiler factory" that typed only in capital letters, but from the severest critical standpoint of rhetorical construction; and finally, and what should be of gravest importance, thought and subject matter that would be acceptable to panderers of a misguided public. He could not help laughing at the first consideration — the unrelieved capitals were weird enough to put the most amiable editor in panic fear of losing his eyes and reason. As for the other two, Jack suddenly came to see a lengthening road of endeavor to be traversed ere he could hope to command attention. He thought of the easy money earned from that prize-story in the San Francisco Call, but realized that he had won out then by an unvarnished narrative of events eye-witnessed; whereas, in his present difficulty, he had tried to be erudite, to infuse his own subjective processes, without sufficient preparation. He was fair and modest enough to feel shame that he had ever had the nerve to try putting over such amateurish practice-stuff upon men old in the game. He would not again be so hasty in his judgment of them.

On the other hand, no acknowledged rawness could shake a divine trust in himself, for he knew his thinking and his writing were not all worthless. He refused to be discouraged. Success was merely delayed for further preparation, and he went about it, reading and studying mightily. But all too soon there was no blinking that things could not go on this way. John London, while uncomplaining, was not well — that war-ravaged lung gave increasing trouble; and the mother was oppressed by temperamental foreboding. Jack surrendered to pressure of necessity and innate affection, and capitulated to manual labor, little as he favored it since he had harnessed his wagon to a star. He must eventually make his brain pay, and pay well. Others did it; he must and would do it. Therefore it was an aching distress to waste precious, fleeting time for the small wages to be gleaned by bodily strain — all for the want of a few niggardly dollars that the predatory rich could so easily spare and never miss. Notwithstanding, he asked no alms of them. Fair field and no favor for him no — matter how unfair he esteemed the race to be.

A young man of his acquaintance, an expert launderer who needed an assistant, opened the way to a job in the country — oddly enough, down on the "Peninsula," not many miles from the old San Mateo County ranch. This unfamiliar work was in the model steam laundry of a military school — Belmont Academy; and for "long sizzling weeks," all day and part of many a night of rest for all the institution except these two, Jack sweated as laundryman for the munificent sum of thirty dollars per month. Just the same, it was a sort of vicarious pleasure to work hard, when the prize hung high, at even so uncongenial a shift as cleansing other people's dirty linen. Indeed, for all that his ideal of university value had been partially undermined, it was of the laundry experience that he wrote: "This was the only time that I worked because I loved it," in view of continuing at college. When he should have earned enough money to go on, he would have to shorten time in making up what he had lost by enforced absence from the classes of 1900.

As summer came on, the space in eternity consumed ironing the white ducks of the students nearly broke him body and spirit. So heavy was the work that even the up-to-date appointments of the laundry and the combined expertness of the two boys in cutting out waste motion scarce made possible the handling of it. "What I don't know about mangling, and handwork, bluing and 'fancy starch' — which was what we called the faculty's wives' thin waists and fine embroidered and lace-trimmed linen — would make you weep," Jack told me; "and so help me God, no circumstances could ever make me touch an iron again if I died for it! The only ray of fun we two sweating fools got out of the whole brutal toil was a silly vengeance we took on all creatures of unearned luxury. This was by starching stiff the dainty linen of the women — and of course the comicalest appeal of the naughty prank was that we could securely depend upon their hide-bound conventional modesties to seal their lips from complaint against us. Lord, Lord, when I think of the boards we made of those garments . . . " he exploded into a wicked giggle.

The worst of this work-orgy, as with former harmful outlay of strength for an insufficient living-wage, was that no snap was left in him to respond to the trunkful of books he had begged and borrowed, and which formed his main luggage. By the deferred bedtime he was so played out that try as he might his eyelids would not stay propped open. He would drop asleep from exhaustion, cigarette on relaxed lips, until some profound falling sensation, or singeing forelock or insistence of the electric light burning through closed lids, jumped him awake. Then he bestirred to fasten again upon the blurring print, and repeated the performance of falling unconscious a couple of times — habit of long-enforced concentration — until finally, with a swearing sigh, he laid down the futile volume, turned off the irritating bulb, plumped into the air with the loosened covers wrapped about him, and sank into dream-driven slumber which was interrupted for the new day's steaming task that began under artificial lighting.

He gave over trying to cram the heavier subjects — biology, jurisprudence, political economy — and substituted history as lighter and more arresting to a drowning attentiveness he could not fix. No use — he would just read the novels; they would hold him awake longer and at the same time guide to what was expected of an author in the manufacture of fiction. This method failing, in blue disgust he threw the books back into the trunk. I know the deep dented “picture corners “ of his mouth that sagged with a pathos he could not hide from his own soul and the smolder of hurt and disillusion that darkened the depths of his tired eyes. Why were things made so difficult for a fellow who really wanted to get ahead?

Damn it all! It was the same old fight over again — the slippery rock wall that reared before a man who submitted everlastingly to manual labor. It was a long time since he had coal-shoveled himself into a state of cool irresponsibility on the Road. Meanwhile money and time had been spent upon equipping himself for a profession . . . but now look at him! — once more a stupid human animal bound to longer hours than any horse, too wearied to exert his superior intelligence for compensations much above those of the horse.

But he was no quitter. His time would come. Better and better socialist all this made him. And there should be no more vagabondage, he thought, though the rosy hands of adventure waved temptingly toward the wide free highway that he knew slanted ever downward. He must stick it out, earn enough to tide over another period of writing-practice and digging which would fit him to produce that which should make editors sit up and take notice.

Then one day it occurred to him that no alleged perfection of labor-saving apparatus but could be questioned and improved upon. Here was tonic for one’s inventive ideas that might lighten the back-breaking, torrid afternoons of ironing or running articles through the revolving mangle. I wish I had made notes at the time he explained to me his device to relieve some of the more arduous laun-dry tasks. It was so simple he laughed to think he had not sooner happened upon it. When attached to whatever mechanism it was intended to control, he could regulate it by one foot from the chair where he rested and read, with an occasional eye to the accelerated progress of work theretofore done by hand.

A tyrannical ancestor of my own, no shirker himself and a rabid dissuader of leisure for others, whenever a child of his made bid for praise in the quick accomplishment of a set duty, would sardonically grin: “Well, that’s fine, now; and I guess, since you’re so smart in saving time, you can do about twice as much to-morrow in the time saved.”

Which is by way of illustrating how Jack lost his place, or at least declined to lapse into time-squandering methods. Vaguely I recall his intimating that his superior in the laundry, though rendering a grudged appreciation of the invention, got word of it to whosoever had upper charge of the department, but who seldom meddled so long as there was no complaint about the work turned out.

Either Jack was “fired,” or else his logic was too outraged by the demand that he forego this progressive social contribution to mechanics. At any rate, incontinently he left, rode his neglected “bike” to San Jose before wheeling northward for Oakland, and in a large bottle drank confusion to all sightless subservience to stupid custom. The bottle furnished a relaxation that was indulged in by choice — as others take drugs for their ills — before he should bury himself in another sober stretch of hard graft whatever it be. He acknowledged no harmfulness in this day’s mellow forgetting, alone under a grand old oak in a pasture with the China-blue valley sky over-arching, where he was not even setting an example to weaker brethren. And of course he did not for a moment reckon with any insidious foe that might lurk behind this unusual desire to recuperate in solitude. He hated to think what that bottle had cost; but a man must “pay for his fancies,” and he had denied himself fancies of all sorts for a long, long time. Indeed, that altogether delightful, comradely jingle in Charley’s ark was the sole instance when he had punished the booze since he could clearly remember.

He scorched up to Oakland, and dug himself once more into the den, writing furiously.

INTO KLONDIKE

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XV 1897 — 21st Year

IF Jack London's roving feet had failed to be drawn into the Klondike stampede of 1897, his future audiences would have ceased not from asking why. But of course he could not fail of response to the lure of this golden adventure — accent on adventure. With all the naïveté of previous self-justifications when yielding to his passion for boating, the material treasure-trove in itself formed but an adjunct that made all at ease with his conscience.

It was Klondike or bust. But how, how, HOW? — he beat at the obstacle poverty. The steamer Umatilla, of recent memory, carrying the great jam of mad gold-seekers, was to sail in four days on the irresistible tide of the enterprise. Klondike or bust — oh, he would somehow get to go; but there was not a cent in sight for grub and gear, and his practical sense warned of meager welcome for the unprepared in the bleak Northland.

Two days moved swiftly by, while he hustled about Oakland to find some one reckless enough to grubstake him into the Arctic. He even called upon Joaquin Miller; — blockhead! why hadn't it occurred to him sooner! There was a man, a true sport who would understand. Would he! He had understood so well that when Jack reached the door, the Sweet Singer of the Sierras had already pulled out on his own hook "The son of a gun!" Jack ruefully appreciated.

As the hours lessened, he grew reckless; he would depend upon strength and luck, and chance the thing, outfit or no outfit. Unavoidably, he had thought of his sister; but this was an expensive undertaking, and she had done much for him of late without his having proved he could make good. For once he could not bring himself further to burden her.

Yet it was from her household that help emanated, although from an unanticipated member. Jack was stricken dumb when his brother-in-law fell as sudden and hopeless — or hopeful — victim to the gold-fever as any youngster in his unlicked teens, boldly announcing his own intention of Klondike or bust. He furthermore declared that if Jack would trade the benefit of his youth and experience and see him through, he should be grubstaked in partnership. Jack, with shrewd judgment born of bedding with hardship by land and sea, was markedly unenthusiastic in view of the slender and ailing veteran's age and other disqualifications. Still, he was up against a disappointment he could not brook; it was Klondike or bust, and he could ill balk at such last-moment opportunity. Upon the instant he decided, as was his habit in crises.

The elder man's generosity of a grubstake consisted in sinking his own earnings of the firm of Shepard & Company, along with his wife-partner's in addition to the hundreds she promptly realized by mortgaging the home, which was her own. Then, having bowed her sensible head to the impregnable fusion of their juvenile insanity — "both as crazy as loons, one no worse than the other!" — she abetted with might and main. Since they were minded to make idiots of themselves, they should have the best outfit that could be purchased with money; moreover, she would shop with them to see that it was complete in every detail. And the following year her brother was able happily to assure her that nothing to beat it went over Chilcoot that fall of 1897.

Jack shot back across Lake Merritt bridge on his wheel, to start rustling the books he would not sail without, Eliza and her husband to meet him in town a little later. On the way, Captain Shepard's senile excitement precipitated a heart-attack that brought on a deadly faint. The conductor of the street car helped Eliza lay him on a lawn, and some passer-by ran for a doctor, who ordered the patient to bed for two weeks. But next morning he was up and away to San Francisco, with his wife and Jack on either side supporting him through a shopping tour that revived all their spirits.

Such a buying jamboree Jack had never enjoyed. Eliza's hundreds flowed like water: fur-lined coats, fur caps, heavy high boots, thick mittens; and red-flannel shirts and underdrawers of the warmest quality — so warm that Jack had to shed his outer garments packing over Chilcoot Pass, and blossom against the snow a scarlet admiration to Indian and squaw. The brace of gold-seekers agreed upon the advisability of raw materials for the construction of dog-sleds — runners, thongs, and tools. The average outfit of the Klondiker also must include a year's supply of grub, mining implements, tents, blankets, "Klondike stoves," everything requisite to maintain life, build boats and cabins. Jack's dunnage alone weighed nearly 2,000 pounds.

I have no way of knowing how the Lily Maid regarded this latest goose-chase of her strange swain who refused to forfeit the independence of his soul for sweet love or pity or any other meek consideration. There is no record of protest; but if her mother's letter to Jack is any criterion of the girl's opinion, it shows the reverse of a high estimate of his wisdom. I cannot refrain from quoting the cheerful document and she called him John:

"July 22nd, 1897.

"Dear John:

"We have just received your letter with the awful news that you are about to start for Alaska. Oh, dear John, do be persuaded to give up the idea for we feel certain that you are going to meet your death and we shall never see you again. What your object can be in going we cannot even think, but we feel as though we should never see you again. John, do give up the thought for you will never come back again, never. Your Father and Mother must be nearly crazed over it. Now, even at the eleventh hour, dear John, do change your mind and stay. With lots of love to all and hoping to hear better news, I remain, your sincere friend."

The day following the buying orgy, July 25, 1897, two hours late because of the heavy traffic, the Umatilla carried the ill-assorted pair away through the Golden Gate and set her northwesterly course. Aside from a feeble and vaporing "sidekicker," there was but one drawback to Jack's perfection of bliss — his father's condition, which was very poorly. He had lain for weeks in what proved his death bed several months later. With unshed tears in the patient gray eyes, he had even begged Jack to take him along; he could go into Alaska on a sled as well as not — "Why, if you could only get me up there in the snows, Jack, I'd get strong right off." And Jack with a sob in his voice cried to Eliza: "God! — if I could only take him!"

They never saw each other again, those two good pals. By the first mail in after the spring thaw of '98, word came to Jack of John London's death on October 15, and how to the last he had hoped that he might be spared to see Jack come home triumphant from the gold-fields. Faith in his boy still burned with unwavering flame. "He'll come out all right, you watch his smoke," he would beam with quiet surety upon doubters; "and come out big, mark my words." After Jack had gone North, his father foretold not once but many times, "Jack is going to make a success out of the Klondike — whether he digs it out of the grassroots or not."

Only in the last fortnight did his mind blur to a hallucination. Before that he bravely held to it that he would soon be up and about. But later on he would beg Eliza to sit the first-night spell with him, since he could depend upon her unsleeping help in that nightly tug-of-war with the man at the other end of the stick. If he could fall to sleep by one o'clock, before she went home, the danger would be over the man could not get him, and he could live through till morning; anyway, till Jack came home.

Captain Shepard, after one good stare at Chilcoot Pass, had turned his back on all such rigors, leaving his stuff for Jack to dispose of. Much improved from the vacation, he arrived in Oakland shortly before the death of his wife's father, and resumed his part in the pension-claim work, which during his absence Eliza had borne. And now, out of her own earnings, she paid the bills of her father's funeral.

At Port Townsend, the Umatilla's hordes had been transferred to the steamer City of Topeka, which arrived at Juneau on August 2. Forty-two miles farther northwest, they reached the end of their crowded voyage and stretched themselves on the beach at the Indian village of Dyea, a mere cluster of huts above the reach of high tide on the Chilkoot Inlet of Lynn Canal. The party — now swelled to five, for Jack and Captain Shepard had formed a partner ship with Fred Thompson, "Jim" Goodman, and one Merritt Sloper — found the beach a shouting bedlam of goldrushers amid an apparently inextricable dump of ten thousand tons of luggage. Many of the arrivals were like lunatics, fully as responsible as newly headless fowl in this scramble into an unpitying frozen land. (It was in this same Lynn Canal, in 1918, that the steamer Princess Sophia foundered, with the loss of all on board — miners and their families coming south for the winter.)

Although a-tingle with his own excitement, a large share of which was from the stirring spectacle on the beach, Jack's level head had counseled speedy withdrawal of himself and his elderly charge from the mass of humans that appeared to be falling over one another. With open eye and ear to every hint from the knowing ones, he applied his faculties to getting hold of the outfit and pushing onward toward the Chilkoot trail. The more he listened, the better he realized that there was no moment to lose if they were not to be left behind all winter in the impending freeze-up. Only the most alert and fittest could obviate such unthinkable misfortune. How his sister's husband could make it through was the question. Not unnaturally the young man was in terror of losing his own chance through the other's insufficiency.

But that night they slept on the Flats five miles above Dyea, at the head of canoe navigation where the Dyea River narrows to a torrent bursting from a snowy canyon, fed by far glaciers. For once Jack was willing to own that he was dead tired. Captain Shepard, of course, was of negligible worth as a draft partner, and Jack, soft from the inactivity of long days on shipboard, ached in every muscle and in his scarified shoulders, from towing their thousands of pounds of belongings up-stream.

Every one had been confident, from reports, that the loading up-trail would be done by Indians for sums within reason. Imagine the chagrin, consternation to many, when the Indians, awake to their own idea of a gold-rush, imperturbably demanded thirty cents a pound shoulder-portage for the twenty-eight miles between Dyea Beach, across the Pass to Lake Linderman. Six hundred dollars a ton! Beaten at the outset, vast numbers of the cruelly chilled enthusiasts watched the few physically equipped, born to victory, attack the first stage to Happy Camp. Sheep Camp, some miles upward, was the next stop; thence on, scaling the whole of Chilkoot s tragic trail, along whose margin the weaker ones fell and expired. One sour-dough assures me Chilkoot is "the worst trail this side of hell."

It was one of the happiest moments of Jack's life when Captain Shepard of free choice abandoned the venture, and the two parted in good feeling. Now he was quit of encumbrance other than the deadweight of luggage. He has told me how he experimented with adding to and shift-ing his pack, readjusting straps, and padding the raw sections of his strong but tender-skinned back and shoulders until he outpacked in honest pounds any white man who made it through to Lake Linderman, and surpassed many an Indian. Indeed, such feat was a boon to the men who could afford Indian assistance to the summit, as could Fred Thompson; for Jack's example put the sly aborigines on their mettle not to be outdone by this puffing, steaming, white human engine in scarlet flannels. I give his own version.:

"This last pack into Linderman was three miles. I back-tripped it four times a day, and on each forward trip carried one hundred and fifty pounds. This means that over the worst trails I daily traveled twenty-four miles, twelve of which were under a burden of one hundred and fifty pounds."

The men had to ford swift and icy rivers, and a swamp that some sardonic wit had yclept Pleasant Valley, where the weight of a pack would drive one to the knees in freezing ooze and muck. The earlier stretches of the trail ascended a long mountain slope largely covered with tundra, which did not afford solid footing. This was superseded by sharp and broken shale. Beaching "The Scales," at the actual foot of the steepest aspect of a mountain wall which looked to topple over backward, Jack found himself preparing for the most grinding test of endurance. For sheer as was the terrific rise, it was yet not sheer enough to prevent huge boulders from finding lodgment in the path, which formed serious obstacles. "A man's job" it was, and Jack London could do no other than make good as a real man among real men.

Of all the anecdotes of this bitter climb that he told in my hearing, only one stands out — the incident of a man bearing a great load, who, in sitting down upon a fallen tree to catch breath, had been overweighted and fallen backward, head and shoulders deep in the snow so that he could make no outcry. Jack, plodding painfully upward, happened to glance aside to where his keen eyes saw a pair of feet above the log. In curiosity he turned and backed up to the log where carefully, slowly, lest he be outbalanced, he rested his pack and freed arms and chest of the straps. Then he plucked the victim, red and spluttering with gratitude, out of his unprogressive posture which, though comical, was of extreme danger; for it was by merest chance that any heavily-laden miner, bent only upon topping Chilkoot's rise, should have spied his snow-crusted boot-soles.

At the summit, the young men faced a fierce driving rain, then negotiated a glacier that descended to Crater Lake; after which a chain of small lakes compelled detours over rugged hills, or the hiring of boats, of which they availed themselves. The last lake, however, before reaching Linderman, was shallow alongshore and could be waded, soft deep mud on the bottom adding to the difficulties of travel. Little marvel that Jack London ever afterward eschewed protracted walking. (I think it was Frederick Palmer, writing of the hardships of soldiers on the Flanders front, who said that one who had crossed Chilkoot in the fall of 1897 would have a fairly comprehensive idea of what the Tommies were up against.)

Eight or nine miles up-river from Lake Linderman, where the timber was good, the boys whipsawed their own lumber and in company with another party constructed two boats, Yukon Belle and Belle of the Yukon. In this capacity Jack and Sloper were in their element, for the latter knew ship-carpentering and building from keel to main-truck. It became the pride of the owners that never were their well-stored cargoes of supplies removed, though they shot every rapid on the perilous route. Jack, ready shoulder-to shoulder in any sort of emergency, was yet especially in valuable when aqueous portions of the way were encountered. He loved to tell the story of how he navigated the infamous Box Canyon and White Horse Rapids, that sank and drowned crew after crew of doomed men.

By unabating zeal the boys kept just ahead of the for bidding freeze-up that set a bar of iron to the progress of the less forehanded. Lakes froze on their flying heels, so slim was the margin. Jack learned what it meant to pit one's raging impotence against the imperturbability of nature. Never a waking moment did they lose, and allowed no more time for sleep than was absolutely required. At the head of Lake Bennett, news from before was of famine, and that the Northwest Mounted Police stationed at the foot of Lake Marsh, where the gold-hunters entered Canadian territory, refused to let past any man not fortified with seven hundred pounds of grub. The rest were sent down river and interned at Dawson.

Their sternest battle was across Lake Le Barge, the freeze-up of which threatened in the gale. Three days they had been thrown back by cresting seas that fell aboard in tinkling ice. On the fourth Jack said: "To-day we've got to make it — or we camp here all winter with the others." They almost died at the oars, but "died to live again" and fight on. All night, like driven automatons they pulled, and at daybreak entered the river, with behind them a fast-frozen lake. And their pilot, from what I know of him, I can swear did not realize half his weariness, so elated must he have been to be thus forward — one of the very few who had made it through.

Undaunted, without wasting precious minutes in discussion, the trio pushed on as one man. The blizzard luckily moved into the south, and they ran before it under a huge sail Jack had devised. With the heavy ballast of outfit, he dared to crack on sail Nelson-fashion when moments so counted. Luck was with him when they came to Caribou Crossing, for a shift of wind at the right time sent them humming down the connecting link between Lakes Taggish and Marsh. Nothing could stop them, and Jack, his experienced mittened hands nearly frozen to the tiller he had rigged, held on in high fettle across the menacing Windy Arm, where in a stormy twilight he saw two other boat-loads of men turn over and miserably perish. It was sickening to be unable to lend a hand; but the very law of life in this inimical cold-crystal sphere of the Northland was to keep one's head in just such temptation. And three other souls beside his own depended entirely upon his sailor competence.

Sixty Mile River, really a head reach of the Yukon, flows out of Lake Marsh, its greatest breadth a quarter of a mile. Deep and swift, it suddenly narrows with a curve into Box Canyon, only eighty feet in width, rocky walls towering on either side. The suddenly confined volume of water gathers terrific speed, marked by great boilings and stiffly upthrust waves, and its action against the canyon walls causes the water to rise in a sort of hog-back in the center.

It was owing to a blinding headache, for liquor had been cut out of his calculations except for medicinal use, that Jack had accepted a drink of whiskey before undertaking to shoot the bad water. Tying their boat, Yukon Belle, in the eddy above the Box, the four partners walked ahead to investigate, meanwhile consulting a book written by Miner W. Bruce, Alaskan pioneer. They discovered that hundreds were portaging outfits on their backs. “Nothing doing,” Jack scorned. If he took the chance and ran through by water, in two minutes they would save two days of severest toil. According to their custom, a vote was called, which was unanimous for the two-minute route. Jack, as captain, placed Merritt Sloper in the bow with a paddle. Fred Thompson and Jim Goodman, confessed landlubbers, sat side by side amidship at the oars. The boat, twenty-seven feet in length, carrying over 5000 pounds in addition to its human freight, did not possess the buoyancy desirable for such an undertaking.

Jack’s head whirled from the unwonted alcohol upon an empty stomach, and he caught himself wondering if that head would serve in his need, where again lives hung upon the perfect coordination of his faculties. But the instant the bow swung downstream into the jaws of the Box, and his lashed steering-oar bore against the cork screwing anarchy of waters, something went cool and calm through him, and he rose to the work. Afraid that the rowers might “catch a crab” or otherwise fumble disastrously, he ordered in the oars. “Then we met it on the fly,” and he went on to picture how he caught a passing glimpse of spectators fringing the brink of the cliffs above, and another glimpse of serrated walls dashing by like twin express trains. Then his undivided energy was centered upon keeping atop the racing hogback. The deep-laden boat, instead of mounting the waves, went dead into them. Despite the peril, Jack could not help giggling at poor Sloper, who, just as he let drive for a tremendous stroke, would quite miss the water as the stern fell in a trough, jerking the bow skyward. “But Sloper never lost his grit,” he praised.

In a transverse current Jack threw himself against the sweep till it cracked, and Sloper’s paddle snapped short off. They nearly filled, yet went flying downstream breakneck, less than two yards from the rocky wall. Another instant, and they took a header through a smoking comber and shot into the whirlpool of the great circular court that widens midway of the Box, thence spilling over into the second half of the race.

Jack and his crew then walked back and brought through the outfit of a man and his wife, a Mr. and Mrs. Ket. That done, they baled out the Yukon Belle and essayed two miles of ordinary rapids to the head of the White Horse, passing several of the Box Canyon wrecks in which lives had been lost. Save for a few who had been drowned, no one had tried to run the White Horse in late years; but our quartette looked it over, and then, with an audience of a thousand souls, went down. Jack nearly lost his boat when he tried to buck the whirlpool, not knowing he had come within its coils; and again Sloper had his paddle snap off. When they had reached the friendly eddy below the Rapids, they returned as before, and piloted down the Rets’ boat.

Not until October 9, when the Stewart River was reached, did the invincibles halt. I have obtained the date through the courtesy of Mr. Fred Thompson, of Santa Rosa, who has lent his Diary. On Upper Island, one of two islets off the eastern bank of the Yukon, half-way between the Stewart and Henderson Creek, and eighty miles above Dawson, they set up housekeeping in one of a group of log cabins that had been abandoned by the Bering Sea fur traders. The fact of empty quarters is indicative of Jack and his crowd being among the first over Chilkoot. Lower Island was inhabited mostly by Swedes, and Jack jocularly referred to it as “the slums.”

I think it must have been within the restricted four walls of this little fortress against the Arctic cold, that there was born in Jack London that vision of hospitality which animated him all his unpenurious days. It could not consist of wastefulness as regarded food, but of warmth and shelter, and, inestimable comfort to a certain few who gathered about the red-hot stove, converse of long nights that was the sole entertainment of the frozen-in gold prospectors from all points of the compass.

Studying Mr. Thompson's journal, I find that on the 12th Jack and several others went up Henderson Creek, and staked their claims. Four days later, the party was on its way to Dawson City in the Yukon Belle, to record claims and freshen up with news of the country. Camped near the cabin of Louis W. Bond, of Santa Clara County, California, they made the acquaintance of the dog Buck, subsequent noble hero of "The Call of the Wild." They did not leave Dawson until December 3, on the 7th arriving back on Upper Island.

Dawson City — Metropolis of the World to the World's Adventurers! — its snow-packed thoroughfare crunching under the muclucs of the motliest crowd that ever congregated from the remotest arcs of the planet, and splendidly policed by the heroic "yellow-legs," as the Mounted Constabulary was called from the hue of its leggins. And what Jack London's ductile mind took unto itself of the gorgeous romance enacted under the Union Jack that dominated the log-built capital of the Northwest Territory, is free to all who will read between the boards of one or another of a dozen-odd books he devoted to its diverse picturings.

A prize has come to me for the asking, in the recollections of one sympathetic mind that measured blades with Jack London's in the log-cabin on Upper Island — Mr. W. B. Hargrave, of Coif ax, Washington — "Bert" Hargrave, or "Kid," as the younger with winsome irreverence bridged a disparity of years. Mr. Hargrave has also furnished me a chart illustrating the geographical situation of the camp, upon which he has jotted: "You must imagine high hills sloping back from the river banks, buttressed by an occasional ridge that had been cleft by the stream, leaving precipitous walls. Forests of spruce, of dense growth in the ravines and along the streams. The islands flat and also covered with spruce timber. A mantle of snow of the average depth of four feet in the lower latitudes." From his letters to me since the death of his friend, not only have we a valuable presentment of both the physical but the mental Jack London of that season:

"It was in October of 1897 that I first met him . . . No other man has left so indelible an impression upon my memory as Jack London. He was but a boy then, in years . . . But he possessed the mental equipment of a mature man, and I have never thought of him as a boy except in the heart of him . . . the clean, joyous, tender, unembittered heart of youth. His personality would challenge attention anywhere. Not only in his beauty for he was a handsome lad but there was about him that indefinable something that distinguishes genius from mediocrity. Though a youth, he displayed none of the insolent egotism of youth; he was an idealist who went after the attainable; a dreamer who was a man among strong men; a man who faced life with superb assurance and who could face death serenely imperturbable. These were my first impressions; which months of companionship only confirmed.

“He was one of the few adventurers, of the thousands whom the lure of gold enticed to the frozen fastnesses of the Klondike, whose hardihood and pluck scaled the summit of Chilkoot Pass that year. His cabin was on the bank of the Yukon, near the month of the Stewart River. I remember well the first time I entered it. London was seated on the edge of a bunk, rolling a cigarette. He smoked incessantly and it would have taken no Sherlock Holmes to tell what the stains on his fingers meant. One of his partners, Goodman, was preparing a meal, and the other, Sloper, was doing some carpentry work. From the few words which I overheard as I entered, I surmised that Jack had challenged some of Goodman’s orthodox views, and that the latter was doggedly defending himself in an unequal contest of wits. Many times afterward I myself felt the rapier thrust of London’s, and knew how to sympathize with Goodman.

“Jack interrupted the conversation to welcome me, and his hospitality was so cordial, his smile so genial, his goodfellowship so real, that it instantly dispelled all reserve. I was invited to participate in the discussion, which I did, much to my subsequent discomfiture.

“That day — the day on which our friendship began — has become consecrated in my memory. I find it difficult to write about Jack without laying myself open to the charge of adulation. During the course of my life . . . I have met men who were worth while; but Jack was the one man with whom I have come in personal contact who possessed the qualities of heart and mind that made him one of the world’s overshadowing geniuses.

“He was intrinsically kind and irrationally generous. . . . With an innate refinement, a gentleness that had survived the roughest of associations. Sometimes he would become silent and reflective, but he was never morose or sullen. His silence was an attentive silence. I have known him to end a discussion by merely assuming the attitude of a courteous listener, and when his indiscreet opponent had tangled himself in the web of his own illogic, and had perhaps fallen back upon invective to bolster his position, Jack would calmly roll another cigarette, and throwing his head back, give vent to infectious laughter — infectious be cause it was never bitter or derisive. . . . He was always good-natured; he was more he was charmingly cheerful. If in those days he was beset by melancholia, he concealed it from his companions.

“There were not many of us that winter in the little mining camp on the Yukon; but the isolated group of cabins housed some lovable and adventurous souls. I will tell you about them, because it was about them that Jack London wrote, and because there is hardly one of them whom he has not immortalized in his writings.

“There was Louis Savard, a French-Canadian. So reticent was he that it was almost impossible to get him to utter more than a monosyllabic answer to a categorical question. He had a pronounced French-Canadian accent, the drollness of which so delighted London that he never ceased in his attempts to draw Louis into conversation. It was Louis who owned ‘Nig,’ a dog that showed a striking Newfoundland strain, and I have thought it was Nig’s antics that gave Jack his inspiration to write ‘The Call of the Wild.’ Louis once took the dog on a ‘hike’ up Sixty Mile, and when Nig saw his master preparing for the return journey he deserted and came back to camp alone, leaving to the indignant Louis the task of hauling a loaded sledge some thirty or forty miles. Savard was so incensed that he threatened to kill the dog, and it was only Jack London’s eloquent appeal that saved Nig from a dishonored end. One of Savard’s partners was Elam Harnish. [Elam Harnish’s nickname was “Burning Daylight,” and he formed the basis of the hero of Jack’s novel by that name.] . . . And there was Carthy (his name was Courthè, I believe!). . . . London mentions him, I think, by name in one story. . . . Peacock was another, a Texan. He was one of the few among us who realized the golden dream of the Argonauts. . . . Then there were John Thorsen, Prewitt, and Keogh, a giant Irishman. . . . And a professional gambler, Hank Putnam by name. . . . And Judge Sullivan he was one of my partners, as was Doctor Harvey. I must not forget Stevens, because he, perhaps, has been used in Jack’s Klondike stories more than any of the others.”

“Inasmuch as Louis Savard’s cabin was the largest and most comfortable it became the popular meeting place for the denizens of the camp. Louis had constructed a large fireplace, and my recollections of London are intertwined with the many hours we spent together in front of its cheerful light. Many a long night he and I, outlasting the vigil of the others, sat before the blazing spruce logs, and talked the hours away. A brave figure of a man he was, lounging by the crude fireplace, its light playing on his handsome features — a face that one would look at twice even in the crowded city street. In appearance older than his years; a body lithe and strong; neck bared at the throat; a tangled cluster of brown hair that fell low over his brow and which he was wont to brush back impatiently when engaged in animated conversation; a sensitive mouth, but lips, nevertheless, that could set in serious and masterful lines; a radiant smile, marred by two missing teeth (lost, he told me, in a fight on shipboard); eyes that often carried an introspective expression; the face of an artist and a dreamer, but with strong lines denoting will power and boundless energy. An outdoor man — in short, a real man, a man's man.

"He had a mental craving for the truth. He applied one test to religion, to economics, to everything. 'What is the truth?' 'What is just?' It was with these questions that he confronted the baffling enigma of life. He could think great thoughts. One could not meet him without feeling the impact of a superior intellect. Once in a cabin I saw a man who had presided for many years as the magistrate of a high court, and a surgeon who had achieved more than a local reputation — each Jack's senior by many years — sitting in his presence like children facing their school master, while he expounded some of Herbert Spencer's complex theories. And I remember that Jack once engaged Dr. Harvey in a discussion on the immortality of the soul. The Doctor was an educated and brilliant man, unorthodox, but absolutely convinced of the certainty of a future life. Jack, with eager and incisive questioning, was demanding from him a positively scientific corrobation of his belief. The Doctor had a logical mind, and his inability to comply with Jack's request vexed him much, although he gave far better reasons than can the average man. On September 23rd of this year , in answer to a brief note I sent to Jack apprising him of the Doctor's death, he wrote on the flyleaf of 'When God Laughs' and sent it to me: . . . 'Hurrah for Doctor Harvey! He was a good scout, and he's scouting ahead of us now, though he never sends back a report.'

"Many and diverse were the subjects we discussed, often with the silent Louis as our only listener. Our views did not always coincide, and on one occasion when argument had waxed long and hot and London had finally left us, with only the memory of his glorious smile to salve my defeat, Louis looked up from his game of solitaire (which I think he played because it required no conversation) and became veritably verbose. This is what he said: 'You mak' ver' good talk, but zat London he too damn smart for you.'"

It was Jack's irrepressible entertaining that caused friction between himself and Sloper and Goodman. The good and thrifty souls could not look unmoved upon generosity of grub to a "siwash" when flour was worth $120 a sack. It appears that seldom did the three sit to dine in absence of a visitor or two, for when the beans and bacon and "dough-gods" were ready to serve, Jack, who if he had thought about it would have starved himself rather than be inhospitable, would bid every one to join the family at table. This in the face of Sloper's eloquent frown and Goodman's mild expression of disapproval. The boys be longing to the camp usually declined to participate, know ing Jack's weakness — often a weakness of their own — which but endeared him to them. The domestic atmosphere did not clear, and matters came to a head through a laughable incident that involved Sloper a favorite ax, which with other treasured carpenter tools he kept in spic and span order.

Jack, by mistake, one night laid hold of Sloper's ax to chop the ice from the water hole. The chopping of this particular hole had been so many times repeated, with the repeated freezing of whatever water was left from each successive chopping, that the river at that spot was frozen to the bottom, leaving a shaft through the ice from its mean surface to the bed. Jack, unaware in the dark that the hole had been "worked out," drove the nice edge of Sloper's ax full and fair into the gravel. When the fellows in the cabin heard him calling, they ran out to find him peering into the hole. "Say, boys," quoth Jack, "did you ever see ice so hard that it would strike sparks from an ax?" and again he struck fire with the ax. Sloper, suddenly suspicious, sprang into the hole. Sure enough, it was his ax — the apple of his eye. By common, unspoken consent, partners and guests adjourned to the cabin where the row could be held without their freezing to death. On the way Hargrave whispered to Jack: "Why did you do it?" And Jack: "Well — I broke off the edge of that ax before I knew it was his, and I thought that was the best way to let him know it!"

Arrived at the cabin, the aggrieved Sloper started in on a comprehensive job of cursing, which disconcerted Goodman, a religious man, far more than it did Jack, although he felt much worse over what he had done than he was able to express. He lighted a cigarette and listened, almost respectfully, answering nothing. But there was a glint in his eye that warned Sloper to stop just short of the fighting phrase. And that night Hargrave, shortly bound for Dawson, told Harvey he would better "hook up with London." So Jack moved over for the rest of his stay on Upper Island, for the Doctor had told Hargrave: "After you, I'd rather have Jack London for a partner than any man on the river."

Hank Putnam, the gambler, had gone to Dawson, leaving his outfit with Doctor Harvey. Presently a stranger appeared in camp, claiming to be half owner of Putnam's belongings. The claimant, being refused by Harvey for lack of written authority, called a miners meeting to adjudicate the dispute. Very few sour-doughs were left in camp, their places being taken by "chechahcos" or newcomers. These sustained the stranger by vote, and demanded that the Doctor turn over half the goods to which it later developed he had no right. The Doctor consulted Jack: "What shall we do!"

"Fight!" advised Jack.

So they hastily converted the cabin into a fort by knock-ing out chinking in several places, for loopholes. The chechahcos descended in a body, but when in response to their summons the two defenders of the fort each shoved a thirty-eight fifty-five through a loophole, they withdrew to discuss a plan of campaign.

Of all persons, it was the unloquacious Savard who settled the bloodless fray. Suddenly his cabin door flew wide, and Louis issued with a wicked looking Winchester.

"By gar! you go!" he barked, covering the enemy.

They went. There was no more trouble.

Another there was whom Jack London loved, and admired to the extent that he recurred to the memory of him with the superlative sentiment: "Emil Jensen is one of the very rare persons in this world to whom the word noble can be applied. I put some of him into my 'Malemute Kid.' I wish I knew where he is, for I'd give anything to see him again, and have him come to the Ranch." After Jack was dead, Emil Jensen wrote to me, but gave no specific address. I replied to General Delivery, San Francisco, and the letter was returned. I want Mr. Jensen to know how Jack esteemed him. If his eye should happen upon these pages, it is my earnest hope that he will write me once more.

Then there was his friend Del Bishop, whom he has used by name in Klondike yarns; and Sam Adams, and Mason, and John Dillon. Good sour-doughs all, these beardless youths. Illustrators are wont lamentably to adorn the visage of a sour-dough with “sufficient whiskers to stuff a horse-collar,” as one long-suffering veteran complains. The public never, at this rate, can be made to realize that the Klondike was no place for old or even elderly men unless they were very exceptional ones, as say Joaquin Miller and a few others who escaped deportation by the authorities. I do not think Jack ran across Miller; but Hargrave, one day, laboriously coaxing a sack of flour over a trail that had melted into a bottomless bog from Dawson up to “Number Five Below” on Bonanza, came upon a picturesque figure, long-haired, bearded, resting on the bank of a creek. And Hargrave sat there and listened to his discourse of the far future, when the ice-locked land — they were in the “lower sixties” — would be the scene of great cities, marts of commerce reached by tracks of steel that would conquer the now untrodden valleys and mountains. Not until an hour had passed did young Hargrave learn that he had been audience to the Poet of the Sierras.

But speaking in general of whiskers, the less of this sort of incumbrance the better, for the same ensnared dampness, and dampness had a way of freezing. It was bad enough to have one’s eyelashes and nostril-fuzz congealed. So a razor and its accessories were given place in every kit, though it was often difficult to put one’s hand upon a mirror.

Of course, nothing would do but Jack must achieve bread that would be second to none in his neighborhood, and to his last day he boasted of his prowess in turning out proper sour-dough loaves. But, as with exhausting “fancy starch” of old, or foot-blistering hiking, and other manual efforts that he came to repudiate, in later years he swore he had had enough, and would always travel with helpers who would make his “roughing” smooth, so that he could devote working hours to the brain-toil he had elected to pursue instead. Strange — some of his nearest and dearest could never compass his viewpoint, but persisted, to his impotent wrath, in trying to explain away his statement, about “running away from bodily labor,” on the grounds of fictional license.

Many and altruistic were the services of young men thrown so closely together in a common need. One of Jack’s acts — and I never heard it from him — was in the spring of ‘98 before the ice went out, when he broke an arduous trail eighty miles each way, in company with Doctor Harvey, to bring in a moose for “Kid” Hargrave, who had sorely suffered with scurvy from the many months lack of fresh meat.

There is no telling how long Jack London would have stayed in Klondike, nor what treasure he might have wrested and panned from the detritus of his claims, could he have obtained green vegetable food from time to time. As ill luck would have it, the scurvy undermined him to such extent that he was forced to move out of the country as soon as the breaking ice would permit. He did not leave the region by the way he came in. It was characteristic that he seldom retraced a road, though this did not apply to the water routes of his travel.

It was during May, he and Dr. Harvey, with whom he had been bunking for some time, dismantled the latter's cabin (Hargrave had already gone to Dawson for his scurvy), and constructed a raft from the logs, which they floated down the Yukon to Dawson. Here the two realized several hundred dollars from the sale of the raft to the sawmill. The trip was fraught with incident, for their lives, and the raft which represented their fortune, were momentarily threatened in the break-up of the mighty stream. During Jack's brief visit in Dawson, he and the Doctor made better than miner's wages — $15.00 — per day picking up logs from out the Yukon, and towing them by rowboat to the mill, where they brought a fabulous price. One accident of the raft-voyage had been the grounding of the craft on a bar. During their strenuous efforts to get it afloat, Jack cracked the big sweep they had fashioned with much labor, which provoked this comment from the disgusted sailor: "Doctor — I don't know who made this world, but I believe I could make a damn sight better one myself!" — "which," the Doctor was fond of repeating, "was the most blasphemous thing I ever heard."

Far greater treasure than yellow dust of Eldorado or Discovery or Bonanza to Jack and Harvey, were a raw potato and a lemon they shared as medicine for their ravaging ailment. I have heard one of them descant with great feeling upon the miraculously quick benefits from the half of a raw potato and as for his part of the lemon, words failed. Jack's case became so alarming that he was advised in the little hospital at the foot of the hill that it would be well for him to get out to fresh food without delay. But ill as he was, this did not withhold him from renewing acquaintance with the places he had known and the social life therein. How good it was to see a woman's face again even if at the bar or in the dance-hall of the "M. & M." Saloon, or in Frank Helen's gambling den, and "Monte Carlo," or in the questionable show houses. Jack admired the “grit of women” who, for any reason, had entered the frozen territory.

There were all sorts, of many lands and breeds and mixed-breeds. Freda Moloof, dancer, and alleged Grecian, touched his imagination brightly enough later to employ her romantic personality as a note of color in this tale and that — and, in a much transmogrified form, probably due to a lavish introduction of Lucille’s characteristics, as the astute heroine of the play “Scorn of Women,” which is based upon his short story of that name.

Jack once wrote me from Oakland: “And who, of all people, do you suppose I ran into last evening, when Eliza and I was rummaging around the street-fair in Oakland? — Freda Moloof, fat and forty doing the muscle dance in the Streets of Cairo! It was good to see her and talk over old times when I, all doubled up with scurvy, used to admire her dancing and her plucky spirit in Dawson. I’ve promised to send her a book I mentioned her in.” Which promise he redeemed, and her letter of thanks is pasted in his copy of “The God of His Fathers.”

And Lucille, she of patrician features, beautiful speaking voice, and versatile tongue that could converse in his own language with almost any foreigner in Dawson. No one knew her history; but more than one scurvy-ruined unfortunate or lung-frozen pneumonia patient well knew the heart of her. Passing along the main street one day in her magnificent furs, she heard a man tell another that his “pardner” could not last long.

“Some one sick?” she inquired.

“My pardner,” replied the one addressed, “dying of scurvy.”

Lucille stepped quietly into his house, shed her furs, and fell to mothering the sick boy. When she rose to go, he clung and whimpered like a baby. Just before he died, “May I kiss you?” he said. Lucille, like a merciful death angel, nothing loath, folded him scurvy and all to her splendid bosom. I can imagine that Jack London liked her well.

Not at all, except as they represented their tribal differences, was he entangled by the brown maidens of the Indian peoples, nor, personally, in the half-and-less breeds who were sometimes very and elusively beautiful and unusual. Again, as usual, he drew the line. Once, privily, after hearing his familiar insistence, to some pilgrim, that he wrote mostly of what he knew at first hand, I mischievously queried: “You’ve written considerably and most wonderfully about the squaw-man and his psychology — as well as that of the squaw herself! How about it?”

“Silly!” he broke into his delicious giggle, “thought you had me that time, didn’t the wicked woman, who knew better? — No, my dear, I never was a squaw-man. When I make the statement that I write only of what I know, I must not be taken too literally, of course — an artist must have some latitude to spill over into.”

At the close of the first week in June, that year of 1898, Jack bade farewell to Hargrave and Harvey. With two companions, Taylor and big-bodied, big-hearted John Thorson, in an unsubstantial mere row-boat, he left Dawson City for the Outside — a traverse of 1500-odd miles of the Yukon, which swerved northward till it touched the Arctic Circle before bending down toward Bering Sea. The Doctor and Hargrave followed a month later, and though they made diligent inquiry at the few sparsely settled camps on the icy river, no trace of the three who preceded them was picked up until Holy Cross Mission gave information. The priest there recognized their description and gave assurance that Jack’s boat had gone safely through.

OUT OF KLONDIKE

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XVI 1898

I HAVE often heard Jack say that he had no idea of using the Klondike as a literary asset, until his dream of gold fell through and he was bound out of the country, penniless to all intents and purposes. It must have come suddenly to him that the adventure had been sufficient in itself, for he had been smitten with discouragement, before leaving home, as to any success in the coveted direction of a writing future. But now, floating half-frozen down the river of defeat, as the gray and white Yukon seemed to him in his predicament, his assertive buoyancy of brain could not help reviving what he had seen and done and felt in the year just past. Surely something could be realized out of it all, to enhance his chance of making a name, earning a voice in the affairs of men.

The idea grew. Meager as the notes appear, he cheered up and went on with a penciled diary started on the day he and the boys had swung into the current out of Dawson and begun to drop downstream. I can do no better than give the entire Journal, dating from June 8 to 30 inclusive. In view of his vaulting achievement at no far distant day, it is amusing to note that at this time his ambition ventured no higher than Outing Magazine and The Youth's Companion. Also, that in spite of pitiable suffering those three unsheltered weeks in a frail open boat in the mush-ice, only one reference is made to his scurvy crippled body and limbs. Here is his lean ac-count of the voyage:. The ONLY NOTES he kept on the Klondike experience:

"Tuesday, June 8, 1898.

Steamboat anticipation.

We start [from Dawson] at 4 P.M. for Outside — last words — sailor and miner friends parting injunctions, "see so and so, & such, a one" — love and business messages frankly expressed envy of many who had decided to remain Dawson slowly fading away.

Pitched camp at 10 P.M. — no bunk in boat slight rain. Day light & broad day light all the time.

Indian Camp at 12 mile Creek. How we were fooled — ”Come back Dawson two days ago.”

Wednesday, June 8.

Arranged bunk & pulled out at 11 A.M. Reached 40 Mile at 3 P.M. Place practically deserted. Found that the small river steamer May Mist — Mayor Woods — had passed us the night before — with 6 tons of whiskey aboard — hot time in Dawson as a consequence. Fort Cudahy likewise deserted. Saw W. A. & T. store and Barracks.

Thursday, June 9.

Arrangement of watches — Taylor cook — objects to watches as has been accustomed to regular hours.

2 A.M. — my watch on deck, sighted the A. C. Co. Steamer Victoria, 9 miles above Eagle City — loaded with hardware — no passengers possible.

3:30 A.M. — arrive at Eagle City — once again in Uncle Sam’s dominions. 50 people in town, engaged in bucking faro layout and waiting for some steamer to take them to Dawson — short of grub.

9 A.M. — Moose incident, excitement.

Mountains rugged & sternly outlined — few islands in river — stiff 6 mile (average) current.

4 P.M. Passed steamer Wears, W. A. T. & T. Co.

10 P.M. Hailed, hospitality a passenger for C.

Friday, June 10.

6:30 A.M. — Passed Seattle No. One — Mayor Woods high and dry on a bar with 170 passengers. How they started last summer — frozen in 100 miles below Minook — etc., etc. Some discouraged & starting for St. Michaels by our method.

Circle City 8:20. Stopped & laid in tobacco — same as 40 Mile, no sugar, butter nor milk. Deserted — Mosquitos make a demonstration in force — now, just inside the terrible (so called) 300 miles of Yukon flats. All mountains, after receding & growing smaller above & to Circle City, now utterly disappear.

Description of Flats — not Thousand Islands of St. Lawrence nor “thousands of thousands,” but thousands of millions — mosquito’s, woods, sloughs, immense piles of drift, all kinds of life what we had been told about, geese & goose eggs, our experiences, the shot gun, etc.

Saturday, June 11.

11 :45 to 12 :15 no sun, 23 hrs. 30 min. sunshine, warmth at mid night, intense heat at noonday — sweltering in a tropical temperature under Arctic Skies. Cross the Arctic Circle at 3 A.M.

148

Governor Stoneman hard and fast. 98

John driven out of bed by mosquitos episode at A. C. Co.'s

Cache. 146

133

Fort Yukon 4 A.M. Bella (W. A. T. &T. Co.) emptying cache. Description of Indians working at stevedoring. Indian Squaws & children. Very warm in the sun, more likely some holiday festival at 3 in afternoon.

Capt. Ray defense of caches incident. Nearly all engaged have sledged to Circle City or otherwise disappeared.

Smudges burning on every hand. Mosquito Rig.

9 A.M. Passed steamer Hamilton (W.A.T.&T.) 5 hrs. run from Fort Yukon.

Porcupine enters on right.

Scattered Indian camps, deserted log cabins; woodyards.

(Outing) [Must have had the magazine in deliberate mind]

Beauty of the night — drifting down the river, midnight & broad daylight, robins & other song birds singing on the islands; partridges drumming tern, sea-gulls & loons discordant crys echo-ing across the glassy river stretches; kildees, plover, ducks, foolish or silly cries of wild geese. Martins, owls, hawks.

Heat of sun, sleeping on top blankets at 12 P.M.

Only country where Indians work; wood choppers, deck hands, etc. Big prices for moccasins, moose meat, furs, etc., at Dawson. River-pilots get from $5 a day to $1800 a gradually all year round. Big husky fellows, & — here and there plain traces of white blood apparent.

Sunday, June 12.

All day, Yukon flats. Fun shooting goose. Loaded 4½ drams, with 15 large buckshot; kicked John's arm.

Water sluggish. Evening burned smudges. Mountains becoming visible again.

Monday, June 13.

A.M. Arrived at Fort Hamilton, none but Indians left, every body else gone to Dawson 65 miles to Minook.

12 M. Coal mine on right 25 miles above Minook.

R. E. Russell of Seattle & an Ohio (Toledo) man working it — cabin, coal bunker, etc., carried away & mine flooded by high water. Sell to steamers $25 per ton. Faces covered with clay, hard job fighting mosquitos. Bid them farewell amid clouds of the same personified ubiquity.

Arrived at Minook at 4 P.M. The first man to greet me as I climbed ashore was Chestnut & old acquaintance & a university man. Had had a rough time coming in. All about barge, Gov. Stoneman, etc., to buying men out $50 a piece. All hands to hoist anchor at 4 A.M. Getting out on bank and lining steamboat & cargo, etc. Minook gold (Little Minook) runs $18.75 per ounce. Probably, at favorable estimate, Minook district will turn out $85,000. Some company faking a number of creeks here and selling stock on outside at $1.00 per share — 1,000,000 shares.

Introduced to Capt. Mayo — Thirty years in country. Getting stout — very pleasant to converse with. About 500 people in town.

All along river asking for news — war — football, Sharkey, Jeffries, Corbett, Fitz — Did Durrant really hang — what did he say, etc. Went through Rampart.

11 P.M. Ran Rapids. Tuesday, June 14.

Passed Tanana River & stopped at Tanana Station just above St. James' Mission & situated at the Indian town of Muklukyeto, at the junction of the Yukon & Toyikakat Rivers. The camp was large and the Indians had arrived from the Tanana & were in full force, waiting the fishing. Dance in progress, white man's dances — low room in log cabin.

Effect — In the crowded heated room, discerned the fair, bronzed skin & blonde mustache of the ubiquitous adventurous Anglo Saxon, always at home in any environment.

5 A.M. & everybody was up, children playing, bucks skylarking; squaws giggling & flirting, dogs fighting, etc. Soon all will be asleep, for they sleep all day, and work and play at night.

Banks lined with birch bark canoes, nets in evidence everywhere, everything ready for the fish. Put up netting & fooled mosquitos.

Wednesday, June 15.

Went on watch at Midnight — mosquitos thick. Chant of Indians from miles down river. Arrive at camp (100 miles below Tanana) at 1 :30 A.M. Bucks singing, women dancing, raven hair, etc. Skylarking, etc. Pointing at mountain, "When sun appears, fun ceases and all go to bed."

Lafcadio Hearn & Japanese Half Caste — Beautiful, half-breed woman saw here, Caucasian features, slender form, delicate oval of face & head, describe her environment. How much harder her lot than the Japanese Half Caste.

Ubiquitous Anglo Saxon White man from Sacramento living with them, brother-in-law, etc. They also waiting fishing, chopping cordwood & jumping price of same.

Pull out at 3:30 A.M.

6 A.M. Passed Steamer Alice bound up river & much enquired about, & followed by the Marguerite. Many thought Alice lost in the ice.

2:30 P.M. W. C. Merwin.

8 P.M. White man, starting a store. Indians, camps, etc.

10 P.M. Indian village, only old people left. The perpetual cry for medicine. Stoicism of the sufferers. Traces of white blood among the papooses everywhere apparent. Thursday, June 16.

3 P.M. Stopped at temporary camp of N. A. T. & T. Co.'s station. Station flooded and people camped on hillside. Bought whitefish.

Party preparing to go up the Koyokuk River.

6 P.M. Indian camp. Squaw three quarter breed with a white baby (girl) (2 yrs.) such as would delight any American mother. Unusual love she lavished upon it. An erstwhile sad expression. Talked good English.

"I have no man."

Father of child had deserted her." Good natured joking, "I'11 be your man — I go St. Michaels, come back plenty flour, bacon, blankets, clothes & grub of all kinds. You marry me."

Ring in saving bead work for Charlie.

"Maybe I be married when you come back."

"You marry Charlie?"

"No, I marry Indian, white man always leave Indian girl."

Mountains from Toyikakat have been getting quite snowy, & now, even those with a southern exposure are no exception. I take for a sign of greater snowfall & that we are nearing the coast with its climatic conditions so dissimilar to those of the interior.

9:30 P.M. Nulato. More men preparing to go up Koyokuk. First heard talk of Koyokuk & Minook. Two small steamers are getting ready also. Is looked upon as coming Alaskan Clondyke.

Visited Roman Catholic Mission during service. Shrill chanting of Indian women combining with the basses of the father and brother — weird effect. Delicate features of the mocassined black-stoled priest officiating at the altar.

Father Monroe, make acquaintance. Cultured Frenchman who has devoted his life to his task. For 5 years has labored at this place zealously.

Indians have better appearance — always do around missions.

Educational work of missions.

Between 6 & 700 miles to St. Michaels.

Friday, June 17.

Uneventful. Evidences of the ice run all along the line, but here more plentiful than ever and more striking. Whole islands swept clear of trees. Some of mainland in many places. Early Spring & greatest high water known in many years, as a proof, flooding of old established towns, stations & native villages.

Geese have long since disappeared but ducks becoming quite thick as we near the mouth.

Indian camps fresh bear skins hanging in the sun.

Indians all along the line spoiled by rush. Demanding all kinds of prices for their labor or products. Steamer Co.'s will raise grub in proportion. If this will not do will bring in own men under contract. Indian seems unable to comprehend the fact that he can never get the better of the white man.

Passed the steamer---------at 2 P.M.

IMPORTANT FEATURE — Indian graves along Yukon banks. Do not bury in trees like many N. A. tribes. Older graves more roughly made (palings), later, neatly made, often pointed. Shed rain. Once in a while a curiously carved totem pole. Catholic missions seem to get bulk of converts — else what becomes of protestant graves, as all in evidence have crosses. But the more impressive ritual of the Catholic service, so pregnant with mysticism to the barbaric mind, as opposed to the bare meetinghouse puritanical mode of protestant, may doubtless explain away some of this, but beyond a doubt, much is due to the indefatigable efforts of the fathers.

Saturday, June 18.

Among birds, woodpeckers, swallows, kingfishers, sea-gulls (many could not classify) Remember "Outing" "Youth's Companion.

Large trees uprooted or literally sawed in two by ice. Small trees tender bark stripped, and stand stretching their bleached limbs heavenward, mute witnesses to the Ice God's wrath.

Drifting the boat along the low, flooded banks during midnight watches while comrades snore under the mosquito netting, gun in hand, & dropping the wild fowl as they rise or metaphorically blessing the crazy gun for snapping. I will always recommend such a gun for amateurs. Always a reliable object at hand to lay bad markmanship to.

Sun rises like a ball of copper.

Mosquitos — One night badly bitten under netting — couldn't vouch for it but John watched them & said they rushed the netting in a body, one gang holding up the edge while a second gang crawled under. Charley swore that he has seen several of the largest ones pull the mesh apart & let a small one squeeze through. I have seen them with their proboscis bent and twisted after an assault on sheet iron stove. Bite me through overalls & heavy underwear.

A deserted malemute dog swam off to us. Injured in hind legs. Gave him away at Anvik.

Indians come off in canoes to trade. Made Anvik at 10 P.M. Town under water. Pressed by Episcopal missionary to stop over & spend "at least one Christian Sunday." Traveling west and setting our watches back. Pulled on to station. Pickett in charge. Hearty welcome we received. Given some fresh potatoes & a can of tomatoes for my scurvy, which has now almost entirely crippled me from my waist down. Right leg drawing up, can no longer straighten it, even in walking must put my whole weight on toes. These few raw potatoes & tomatoes are worth more to me at the present stage of the game than an Eldorado claim — What wots it, though a man gain illimitable wealth & lose his own life?

How they got the potatoes? Quite a sacrifice on their part.

White through and through.

Left at 11:30 P.M.

Icogmute next stop.

Sunday, June 19.

At Anvik, Yukon, on 38 ft. Spring rise & 40 miles wide. — Shagluk Slough, etc. Get into a slough ourselves. Hoarse croak of the raven, blackbirds.

In afternoon made Holy Cross Mission, headquarters Catholic Missionary work in Alaska. From here four sisters have just been sent to aid Father Judge at Dawson.

At first sight — make homesick — Grassy hills, etc., fences, farm, etc. (Would give 4% for a cow) Indian girls playing in school yard. Homelike.

Trading with Indians. Ducks, Grouse, Goose & Duck eggs, berries, fish, etc. All busy doing something. Making nets, birch barks, rope, peeling slender rods for fish traps, etc. etc.

How make bark rope. Bark off roots — slit into strings, wetted in water and braided into a three stranded rope, very strong and durable. — How squaws work at all such things, tanning leather, making nets, nmc luc, mocassins, etc. etc. Weaving grass matting, minding dogs, papooses, etc. etc. Getting among Malenmtes now.

Monday, June 20.

Bad weather, went ashore 1 P.M. Pitched Camp.

Tuesday, June 21.

Native village Malemutes — holes in the ground, fire place in middle, hole in roof, etc. etc. Deck of cards for Russian Cross.

6 P.M. — Icogmute Russian Mission. Very sleepy, flooded, etc. One Russian, could not understand English. Very miserable place.

9 P.M. Native village king salmon 2 cups of flour.

Wednesday, June 22.

Trading native villiages. Nothing important.

Thursday, June 23.

Long stretches of flats. Once in a while river strikes bluffs of low barren hills — the same lined with Malemute villages — then flats again. — Raven's hoarse croak —

11 P.M. Andreasky. 2 miles.

Up Andreasky river. Native villiage at confluence. How miserable their condition yet how happy. How they come out & sit on bank, naked legs, bodies, etc. in chill north wind. Trading for curios, etc. flour for fish and game. Method of trading.

At midnight, Malemute paddling kyak & singing — weird effect. They seem never to sleep, are always up.

At Andreasky last low hills are left, save to the south beyond Kusiluf, a snow covered jagged mountain — a land-mark to avoid. And we enter the great Yukon Delta, for a 126 mile run to Kutlik.

Threading the maze, keeping to right, etc. Took no guides at Andreasky, avoiding said custom. Fishing villages all deserted. No signs of human life. No white man since Holy Cross Mission, where sick steward of Str.

Hamilton was down. One Russian at Icogmute who could not speak English.

Terrible racket maintained by wild fowl between 2 & 5 A.M. Above Andreasky had our last experience with eggs — large goose eggs — Beautiful king salmon, cool, firm flesh fresh from icy Yukon.

Friday, June 24.

Threaded Yukon Delta all day. Aphorn Mouth. Saturday, June 25. Hamilton Station

Last N. A. T. & T. Station, 11 :30 A.M. Learned that we passed the Str. Healy lying at Andreasky. Inquired after war news — had the latest.

Up to 16th no ocean strs. had reached St. Michaels.

Indians all absent hunting seal in the south channel.

8 miles on passed Bill Moore's. Settled down with Indian wife (years in country) satisfied to remain — ambition lost — hurry-scurry devil take the hindmost competition of civilization has no attraction — sure thing for the rest of life — but how bleak and blank his existence. Pride of Indian in calling him brother-in-law.

Kutlik in evening — low tide — round bottom sea boats — first smack of old ocean.

5 miles on the mouth of River — Slept with open sea in sight.

Sunday, June 26.

N.W. wind. Point Romanoff in sight. Sailed till on shore. Beached boat. Episode of Taylor & Roubeau. (Also at Eagle City on being awakened.)

Monday, June 27.

Off Point Romanoff pick up Father Roubeau on edge of surf in 3 hatch kyak or as Russians call it, Bidarka. Take him aboard — how unlike a father on first sight. Sits alongside of me while steering — ask him if smoke objectionable — on contrary pipe in bidarka. So all light up and are content.

Quite a linguist. French, Italian, Spanish, English, Indian dialects, etc. A native of Nice. Pleasant anecdotes of Jesuit brotherhood. Obedience, poverty, chastity. Alaska 12 years. Reducing Innuit language to a grammar — pride of his life. Revel for hours in eulogy of same, moods, tenses, genders, articles, adverbs, etc. fill the air.

First coming aboard, argument over day, Sunday or Monday.

Dress — fur cap, coarse blue shirt, muc luc sea boots, etc. etc.

Possessed of fatal faculty of getting lost.

Camp, beaching boat in afternoon.

11 P.M. turned out, etc.

Tuesday, June 28.

Midnight — southeast wind blowing — squally, increasing, splash of rain. Dirty sky to southard. Quite a task of running boat out through surf. Shorten down to storm canvas & rush on before it. Big sea tumbling after. Bidarka in tow performs strange feats.

Looking for canal. Spots it. Small boat in mouth. Men asleep. Jibe over sail and run in.

Laugh at us. Keep a-going. Stay so long they finally follow. Fooled. 7 hours lost.

Run on and make canal at 1 P.M.

Father at an oar or on the towline.

5 P.M. Father bids good-by & goes on. Never heard of again — lost in some back slough most likely.

How misleading maps [here torn and cannot make out word — Follows something that looks like Towing now.]

Wednesday, June 29.

Camp at mouth of canal.

Thursday, June 30.

St. Michaels early in morning — Find it to be Wednesday 28.

Russian priest seen no sign of Jesuit. Tanned skin, brilliant black eyes, of Italian quickness of speech, vivid play of emotion so different from the sterner, colder Anglo-Saxon.

Leave St. Michaels — unregrettable moment.

Jack stoked his steamship passage from St. Michaels to British Columbia, thence proceeded steerage to Seattle. So it will be seen that his homecoming from the fabulous region of names to conjure with — Eldorado and Dominion, Bonanza and Sulphur — was the reverse of spectacular, and with a few twinges of scurvy still within him to remind of the unlucrative year.

He found his widowed mother in a tiny cottage on Sixteenth street between Nineteenth and Twentieth Avenues, and worrying about the rent, although in face of Eliza’s assurance that she would help out. Eliza was absent on a much-needed vacation, camping in Monterey; but she hurried home to greet her brother, whom she saw bronzed and bigger-muscled than ever, showing marked physical gain from his rough experience.

KLONDIKE LILY MAID LETTERS

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XVII 1898-9

WITH John London removed by death, Jack must buckle to in earnest to support his mother and the little nephew in whom she was entirely wrapped up — an infatuation which never abated. There was no question of choice as to what work he should do. There were unpaid bills of his father's which he felt in honor bound to discharge — petty sums in themselves, but hugely troublesome in Jack's creditless plight. He must snap up the first job that came to hand, and that quickly. It sounded simple, if uninspiring; but the fact is there was no place offering to an unskilled laborer for hard times were on.

His only trades were those of sailor and laundryman. The long absences of seafaring did not fit in with his domestic responsibility, and he could not uncover any opening in the laundries of Oakland. Writing was not to be thought of. He must be sure of roof and grub, and a decent suit of ready-mades, before he could raise eyes again, if ever, to the literary heavens.

Five employment bureaus and advertisements in three dailies failed to land a situation of any sort, and he be gan pawning his few personal effects — the silver watch Captain Shepard had given him for the Klondike, the bicycle Eliza had bought, and a raincoat much prized by his father, whose dying wish it had been that Jack inherit. Some curious newspaper items were followed up, but nothing came of them. He owns to having proffered for studio-model his one hundred and sixty-four pounds of well set up, twenty-two years growth of brawn, but some one of several fine-bodied fellows likewise out of employment won the prize. And of course, as he reminds us, along with such frivolous occupations he was trying with might and main to become wop, lumper, or roustabout. The surplus labor army, with winter not far off, pressed hard upon the scarcity of work. "Also I," Jack adds, "who had romped along carelessly through the countries of the world and the kingdom of the mind, was not a member of any union."

While preforming small odd tasks he took civil service examinations for mailcarrier, and passed in the lead, only to face disappointment in that no vacancy existed. Awaiting his chance he penned an article, “Down the River,” describing his Yukon voyage. The San Francisco newspaper on which he tried it, neither acknowledged nor returned it. This was not encouraging; but he set that square jaw and launched into a 20,000-word serial especially designed for The Youth’s Companion. It was completed, even to typing, in one week. “I fancy that was what was the matter with it,” he afterward surveyed, “for it came back.” To the Lily Maid he wrote: “The art of omission is the hardest of all to learn, and I am weak at it yet. I am too long-winded, and it is hard training to cut down.” But here enters a touch of faith in his star: “As yet, this prevents me from writing perfect little gems, examples of which your brother sometimes sends me.”

He shortened his tools, focused more intently, and began hewing unique art forms, of unmistakable purity, cut from the blocks of empirical and idealistic material so long storing in the house of his mind against this inevitable day. Out of the stuff of earth, and flesh, mind, and heart, that he knew of his own contact, with head and hand he wrought the transmutation of the mass, molded it into restrained shapes that he felt were new — at least he had met nothing like them; shapes of beauty, or strength, or truth, as desire and his latent genius dictated. In the dynamic, dramatic power of his creation he dared but a hesitant confidence, because he had been unable to conform to conventional patternings revered by those of his acquaintance not big enough in themselves to reassure him of the worth of their authority. He was still fearful of being on the wrong track, no matter how the gleam of it lured.

Even the Lily Maid, to whose perceptions he still rendered a measure of fidelity, failed him with wholly unintentional cruelty. Passionately anxious to polish his astonishing outlines, though sensing unquestionable beauties and excellences, she was overborne by the spectacle of her friend hollow-eyed and pasty-pale from lack of sleep and beefsteak. Moreover and most important to her possessive and protective femininity, he was unsuccessful financially. And so, by means of a tact that would have deceived and influenced a less perspicacious lover, with veiled promptings toward some position that would bring in a regular stipend, she chilled him with hopeful references to the mail-carrier opportunity. For she had distinctly approved of his taking the examinations; he needed steadying — some reliable outlook for the future.

More than vaguely was he now disillusioned. Perhaps his very tenderness increased in proportion as his recoil doubled back from her restricted horizon. She was so softly pretty, white woman of his own race — her eyes so blue and true, her long mantle of perfect golden hair as lovely as Lady Godiva's, when she let it ripple down for the pleasuring of his eyes. And then her delicate health made him shrink from wounding by determination to assert his own ego's imperious challenge. Yet it was in the fiber of him to be honest. Although he drained her culture of its last drop that could further the form of his work, in exorably he cast aside what his unerring senses warned him as weakening to it — leaving the pallid girl breathless with a bafflement due to her fate of not understanding.

She is dead, and he is dead. She did her best. But her mold was too narrowed to confine his best, though all the while Jack appreciated her effort to help. She was strong enough in no possible way either to restrain or to fly with the eagle she would have caged. Even in the days of her warmest attractiveness, he would find himself, quite with out forethinking, involved by the magnetism of a woman met in her very company, some one entirely her antithesis. Earlier, he marveled at the phenomenon — perhaps, he searched, the reason lay in his own imperfectness of refinement. But he learned about women from both of them. Then abruptly he would overtake the discovery that the Lily Maid's small, vivacious, quick-tongued mother, herself young, was more compellingly enticing than the daughter he had almost been sure was his accomplished dream of womanhood. He was learning about women from them all. His opportunities were of the best — not only in the drawing room, but out of doors on foot or wheel, even to the notoriously illuminating exigencies of camp life; for he made one of their party to Yosemite Valley, which included her immediate family and some outside relatives, as well as friends. And what Jack learned, he never forgot. If detail were lost, the broad principles remained, to play a timely part in maturing tenets and conduct.

Further, and finally, an apparently slight happening marked the passing of his old ineffable instinct of worship toward the girl. In reality it was a trenchant manifestation of essential fraility and lack of poise that forever lost the man to her.

It was an unconsidered climax of petty irritation to her vanity that he should spend hours of his rare play-time at chess, when they might be out on their wheels or otherwise enjoying each other's society. Right in front of him she flung her fateful bolt, out of a clear sky so far as Jack's mood was concerned. Shoulders hunched, brows drawn, he bent over the checquered board, his whole soul gathered in still ecstasy of calculation, unconscious of any universe beyond the problem represented by the carven images.

The slender, white-robed blonde angel stood beside the unheeding mathematician for one exasperated moment, then swooped, lightly in the flesh but oh! how heavily in spiritual consequences, and swept the table clean with her two small hands.

"What did you do?" I asked with bated breath, when years later in reminiscent mood over the Lily's death he recalled the garden tragedy.

"Nothing — what was there to do?" slowly he reconstructed his bleak state of mind. "I felt every bit of blood leave my face; and from her brother's expression, mine must have been something awful. The thing was unforgivable, don't you see? To me it was sheer, brutal, blind-mad outrage to every decency of human fair play. It was a sin against the Holy Ghost! It was a vicious act, to wipe a half-solved problem out of existence in that way — from small jealousy of a bloodless rival. . . . No, I did not say a word — then or ever. But when I looked up at her after what seemed a frozen century, and her frightened eyes met mine, she knew what had really happened." For a fleeting moment the young woman glimpsed the import of her pettish deed — that what she had done reached into the very body of their incompatibility. In the biology of things, no superior human entity of vibrating atoms, no matter how little ill-met, can perfectly complement any other entity of similar superiority. Jack, once at rest as to the fundamental largenesses in a given person, could generously discount incidental light qualities, except as they might indicate some abysmal vacuity. And in the Lily Maid he came to discern the stamp of an incomprehension too vast for the two ever to dwell together in mutual satisfaction of any kind. By now, for all the tenderness of what was become passionless, if staunch and lasting, friendship toward the loving girl, he still beat against the bars of her inadequacy, bars which she fain would have laid down had hers been the ability to do so.

If ever I knew how he came by the following letters written to the Lily Maid, all memory has fled. It is likely that at some stage of their long acquaintance — perhaps after his marriage in 1900 — the pair may have exchanged their old correspondence. Much of the matter in these letters was combed for the creating of Martin Eden's Ruth, as the author's blue-penciling bears witness. This proves what I had forgotten: that he had the letters with him in Hawaii and aboard the yacht Snark to Tahiti in 1907, since it was during this interval he composed the novel, which originally he had cynically entitled "Success."

Here is the first of the letters remaining in his files, typed by him at 962 East 16th street, November 27, 1898, and sent to the Lily Maid at College Park:

"Forgive my not writing, for I have been miserable and half sick. So nervous this morning that I could hardly shave myself.

"Everything seems to have gone wrong — why, I haven't received my twenty dollars for those essays yet. Not a word as to how I stood in my Civil Service Exs. Not a word from the Youth's Companion, and it means to me what no one can possibly realize.

"You seem to misunderstand. I thought I made it perfectly plain, that those squibs of poetry were merely diversions and experiments; yet you say — But always the same theme. Theme has nothing to do with it; they were studies in structure and versification. Though it took me a long while, I have learned my lesson, and thanks to no one. I made ambitious efforts once. It makes me laugh to look back on them, though sometimes I am nearer weeping. I was the greenest of tyros, dipping my brush into whitewash and coal-tar, and without the slightest knowledge of perspective, proportion or color, attempted masterpieces — without a soul to say 'you are all wrong; herein you err; there is your mistake.'

"Why, that poem on gold is one of the finest object-lessons in my possession. I was ambitious in that. With no more comprehension of the aims and principles of poetry, than a crab, I proposed or rather, purposed to make something which would be something. I would strike out on new trails; I would improve on the Spencerian Stanza; I would turn things upside down. So I tried what has been probably tried a thousand times and discarded because it was worthless; one Alexandrine at the end of the stanza was not enough; I added a second. I treated my theme as Dryden or Thompson would have treated it. My elephantine diction was superb — I out-Johnsoned Johnson. I was a fool — and no one to tell me.

"So you see, to-day, I am unlearning and learning anew, and as such things are merely principles, you can readily see why I don't care a snap for the theme. I have played Darius Green once, and if my neck is broken a second time it will be my own fault. I shall not be ready for any flights till my machine is perfected, and to that perfection I am now applying myself. Until then, to the deuce with themes. I shall subordinate thought to technique till the latter is mastered; then I shall do vice versa.

"I do not know when I can be down — I may be digging sewers or shoveling coal next week. Am glad to hear you are better. Give my regards to everybody.

"Good-by,

"Jack."

Three days later in blackest mood he wrote to her the letter from which I have already drawn portions from time to time as they fitted into my mosaic. I present the remainder:

'962 East 16th St. Nov. 30, 1898.

Dear — — :

"I do appreciate your interest in my affairs, but — we have no common ground. In a general, vaguely general, way, you know my aspirations; but of the real Jack, his thoughts, feelings, etc., you are positively ignorant. Yet, little as you do know, you know more about me than anybody else. I have fought and am fighting my battle alone.

You speak of going to — — — : I know how well she loves me; do you know how? or why? I spent years in Oakland and we saw nothing of each other — perhaps once a year looked on each other's face. If I had followed what she would have advised, had I sought her I would to-day be a clerk at forty dollars a month, a railroad man, or something similar. I would have winter clothes, would go to the theater, have a nice circle of acquaintances, belong to some horrible little society like the — — , talk as they talk, think as they think, do as they do — in short, I would have a full stomach, a warm body, no qualms of conscience, no bitterness of heart, no worrying ambition, no aim but to buy furniture on the instalment plan and marry. I would be satisfied to live a puppet and die a puppet. Yes, and she would not like me half as well as she does. Because I felt that I was or wanted to be something more than a laborer, a dummy; because I showed that my brain was a little bit better than it should have been, considering my advantages and lack of advantages; because I was different from most fellows in my station; because of all this she took a liking to me. But all this was secondary; primarily, she was lonely, had no children, a husband who was no husband, etc., she wanted some one to love.

“If the world was at my feet to-morrow, none would be happier than she, and she would say she knew it would be so all the time. But until that time — well, she would advise to not think of it, to sink myself in two score years of oblivion with a full belly and no worry, to die as I had lived, an animal. “Why should I so study that I may extract joy from reading some poem? She does not, and does not miss anything: Tom, Dick and Harry do not, and they are happy. Why should I develop my mind? It is not necessary for happiness. A babble of voices, petty scandals, and foolish nothings, should satisfy me. It does Tom, Dick and Harry, and they are happy.

“As long as my mother lives, I would not do this; but with her gone to-morrow, if I knew that my life would be such, that I was destined to live in Oakland, labor in Oakland at some steady occupation, and die in Oakland — then to-morrow I would cut my throat and call quits with the whole cursed business. You may call this the foolish effervescence of youthful ambition, and say that it will all tone down in time; but I have had my share of toning down. (Here follows the paragraph upon Duty, already quoted, and the incident of the meat at school.) He goes on:

“You say, ‘It is your duty, if you wish to hold the esteem of those whose approval or companionship is worth having.’ If I had followed that, would I have known you? If I had followed that, who would I know whose companionship I would esteem? If I had followed that from childhood, whose companionship would I he fitted to enjoy? — Tennyson’s, or a bunch of brute hoodlums on a street corner?

“I cannot lay bare, cannot put my heart on paper, but I have merely stated a few material facts of my life. These may be cues to my feelings. But unless you know the instrument on which they play, you will not know the music. Me — how I have felt and thought through all this struggle; how I feel and think now — you do not know. Hungry! Hungry! Hungry! From the time I stole the meat and knew no call above my belly, to now when the call is higher, it has been hunger, nothing but hunger.

“You cannot understand, nor never will.

“Nor has anybody ever understood. The whole thing has been by itself. Duty said ‘Do not go on; go to work.’ So said others, though they would not say it to my face. Everybody looked askance; though they did not speak, I knew what they thought. Not a word of approval, but much of disapproval. If only some one had said, ‘I understand.’ From the hunger of my childhood, cold eyes have looked upon me, or questioned, or snickered and sneered. What hurt above all was that they were some of my friends not professed but real friends. I have calloused my exterior and receive the strokes as though they were not; as to how they hurt, no one knows but my own soul and me.

"So be it. The end is not yet. If I die I shall die hard, fighting to the last, and hell shall receive no fitter inmate than myself. But for good or ill, it shall be as it has been — alone.

And you, remember this: the time is past when any John Halifax, Gentleman, ethics can go down with me. I don't care if the whole present, all I possess, were swept away from me — I will build a new present; if I am left naked and hungry — to-morrow before I give in I will go naked and hungry. . . .

". . . . Frank [Frank Atherton, an old friend] has been play-ing the violin and Johnny the devil in the room while I have been writing this, so you will forgive its disconnectedness. . . .

"Yours,

"Jack."

The next missive is of December 6, 1898, and records the debatable success of a manuscript entitled "To The Man On Trail," which he had submitted to the Overland Monthly. The Uncle referred to in my Prologue as business manager of the magazine, from this time on began speaking of the remarkable work being turned in by "this boy, Jack London."

"Frank is at last gone and I can do a little writing. Why did you not send me what you had written? Were you afraid of hurting my feelings it seems your previous frankness, extending through several years, had precluded any such possibility. . . .

"Sent out in this mail, 'trailers' after articles I mailed last September, and which have vanished utterly. Received a letter from the Overland Monthly. This is the substance of it: We have read your MS and are so greatly pleased with it, that, though we have an enormous quantity of accepted and paid-for material on hand, we will at once publish it in the January number, if — aye, if you can content yourself with five dollars.

"There are between three and four thousand words in it. Worth far more than five dollars, at the ordinary reportorial rate of so much per column. What do you think of that for a first class magazine like the Overland? . . .

"We are getting ready to sue the Republican Club for our prizes. No word from Youth's Companion.

"If I could only come down. Hope this will find you in better health — I hate to think of you lying sick."

Jack had won first award for an essay in a contest held by the Fifth Ward Republican Club for campaign songs, essays, cartoons and poems, the song prize being taken by his friend Rev. Robert J. Whitaker. The Club seems to have defaulted in payment, and hence was sued by the various winners. On December 22, he wrote the Lily Maid:

"All this week and part of last I have spent in the superior court of San Francisco. One of my Klondike partners, Sloper, has returned, and because he had not struck it rich, his wife, to whom he had deeded over four thousand dollars worth of property before he left, has sued him for divorce, alleging desertion. I had to serve as witness on various points. It sickens one to find a woman can be so small and cold-blooded.

"No news from Republican Club. Overland has not paid five dollars yet. Youth's Companion yarn came back prime cause of rejection they state to be unusual length of each chapter, which length is never allowed, they say, 'except in very special instances.' In the beginning, in response to my queries, I was told that 3000 words made an average chapter, and in the end, none of my chapters exceeded that amount. I take it to be merely an alleged cause, or else a mistake on the part of the one who first advised me.

"Enclosed, you will find the successful Examiner story. [Jack's own contribution to this newpaper's contest had been rejected.] Please keep it, remembering that strength of narrative and originality of plot were demanded by those in charge of contest. Some day, when the MSS. I submitted are published elsewhere, I shall forward to you so that you may compare. Also, in the successful story I send you, please endeavor to find what plot there is, if any, or if it is a study, or pseudo-study."

The Christmas of 1898 was a blue one. He faced losing his typewriter, for want of its small rent, and the day brings up dreams that make him evince a trace of unthinking masculine cruelty to the deprived girl who loves him, in his picture of that ever latent desire for fatherhood.

"About the loneliest Christmas I ever faced — guess I'll write to you. Nothing to speak of, though — everything quiet. How I wish I were down at College Park, if for no more than a couple of hours. Nobody to talk to, no friend to visit — nay, if there were, and if I so desired, I would not be in position to. Hereafter and for some time to come, you'll have to content yourself with my beastly scrawl, for this is, most probably, the last machine-made letter I shall send you. . . . The typewriter goes back on the thirty-first of December. . . . Then the New Year, and an entire change of front.

"I have profited greatly, have learned much during the last three months. How much I cannot even approximate — I feel its worth and greatness, but it is too impalpable to put down in black and white. I have studied, read, and thought a great deal, and believe I am at last beginning to grasp the situation — the general situation, my situation, and the correlative situation between the two. But I am modest, as I say, I am only beginning to grasp — I realize, that with all I have learned, I know less about it than I thought I did a couple of years ago.

"Are you aware of the paradox entailed by progress? It makes me both jubilant and sad. You cannot help feeling sad when looking over back work and realizing its weak places, its errors, its inanities; and again, you cannot but rejoice at having so improved that you are aware of it, and feel capable of better things. I have learned more in the past three months than in all my High School and College; yet, of course, they were necessary from a preparatory standpoint.

"And to-day is Christmas — it is at such periods that the vagabondage of my nature succumbs to a latent taste for domesticity. Away with the many corners of this round world! I am deaf to the call of the East and West, the North and South — a picture such as Fred [Jacobs] used to draw is before me. A comfortable little cottage, a couple of servants, a select coterie of friends, and above all, a neat little wife and a couple of diminutive models of us twain — a hanging of stockings last evening, a merry surprise this morning, the genial interchange of Christmas greeting; a cosy grate fire, the sleepy children cuddling on the floor ready for bed, a sort of dreamy communion between the fire, my wife, and myself; an assured, though quiet and monotonous, future in prospect; a satisfied knowledge of the many little amenities of civilized life which are mine and shall be mine; a genial, optimistical

contemplation — —

"Ever feel that way? Fred dreamed of it, but never tasted; I suppose I am destined likewise. So be it. . . . The whole thing is a gamble, and those least fitted to understand the game win the most. The most unfortunate gamblers are those who have or think they have systems to beat the game — they always go broke. . . .

"I shall forsake my old dogmas, and henceforth, worship the true god. 'There is no God but Chance, and Luck shall be his prophet.' He who stops to think or beget a system is lost. As in other creeds, faith alone atones. Numerous hecatombs and many a fat firstling shall I sacrifice you just watch my smoke (I beg pardon, I mean incense).

"I started to write a letter; I became nonsensical; forgive me. I go to dine at my sister's. Happy New Year to all!"

The January, 1899, Overland published his story, "To the Man on Trail." I find part of a letter written about this time, containing a reference to the skepticism of the Black Cat concerning himself; likewise his discovery of the non-existence of inspiration:

"I, from a stylistic and constructive standpoint, have wandered afar after strange gods, and find it difficult to get back to the right trails. My conversation is still learning to walk, as you will have observed. . . . Don't criticize punctuation in my letters; I type them off as fast as I can think. . . .

"The only other reason of refusal by Youth's Companion, was loosely strung narrative, which I can't exactly see; at least the Companion is publishing much worsely strung, balder stuff every issue. So be it. . . .

"I have reached a conclusion: there is no such thing as inspiration. I thought so once, and made an ass of myself accordingly. Dig is the arcana of literature, as it is of all things save being born with a silver spoon and going to Klondike. The only inspiration is that which comes to an orator when addressing a vast multitude which is in sympathy with him.

"Poor child! You took four guesses as to the fate of my wheel and missed it, every one — soaked with my Hebrew uncle. Also other articles too numerous to mention. Lots of fun working under such conditions. You are in luck to obtain this Overland. It's the only one I possess, and I had to borrow the dime to buy it. . . .

"The Black Cat writes me concerning an MS. submitted to them. They want references, as I am unknown. Then they wish to know if I wrote it myself, if the idea is mine, if it has ever been in print in part or whole, if it has ever been submitted else where, and if others have or will have a copy of it. . . . Wonder what they'll pay? It is a pseudo-scientific tale, founded on hypothetical chemical, biological, and pathological laws, dealing with the diametric converse of chemical affinity and the mysteries of protoplasmic coagulation. Very sorry, but can't forward definitions.

"I have Cyrano de Bergerac, but no stamps to forward; besides, I would vastly prefer reading it with you. . . . Would like to talk Ella Wheeler Wilcox over with you. You seem to misunderstand her. . . .

"'Magnificent.' No word bears exactly the same significance to any two persons. Barbaric splendor is magnificence to the barbaric mind. Two such specimens as Jack and Lucille, fur-dressed, be-moccasined, etc., may strike you as bizarre — it strikes me as possessing a crude magnificence.

"Yes, some of the qualities of Jensen go into Malemute Kid. But Malemute Kid is still something more. I shall tell more about Lucille, some day."

And here is a lovely fragment, treating of an expectant young mother, a mutual friend:

"I have seen a woman in such condition, but the feeling of wonder, of sacred mystery about it, never stales upon me. It's such a natural event, but somehow, I cannot bring my own practical self to view it exactly in that light — there's a something, a vague and intangible something over and beyond, which eludes the grasp. As reason is excluded, suppose it must be classified under the head of emotion, sentiment. Well, sentiment within bounds is one of the redeeming traits of the world."

Another fragment, January 13, 1899, attests his loneliness and restlessness:

"I doubt if you can understand how disappointed I have been — thirteen days since I wrote you, and no sign. At last I thought, 'Perhaps she remembers my birthday and is waiting so her letter may arrive on that day.' Yesterday morning I thought surely it would arrive. When it did not the afternoon became invested with an infallible certainty. Alas! The postman brought a dun!

"Well, yesterday was my birthday. I did not look for 'many happy returns of the day'; nor did I receive many. My sister was the only one who wished me that, or anything else. Thought I would break the tediousness of my endless prose writing and take a little holiday. . . . So I read the morning papers; answered a couple of pressing letters; stood off the butcher and baker to satisfy the absurd cravings of life; wooed the Muse; and sat down to write poetry. The funniest part of the whole thing is that I did it from a sense of duty."

In the course of the next letter, dated January, 1899, again he takes up arms for Ella Wheeler Wilcox; and singularly enough the paragraph he quotes from the “sweet singer,” as he termed her in later life, expresses what he had felt for the Lily Maid to whom he offers the paragraph with a challenge to criticize it:

“Right in the neck — don’t mention it. Tisn’t exactly right to ask for criticism, and then criticize — I understand that, but, well, I wanted to show the point of view by which I worked. I was wrong in doing it, and besides, did it rather rudely. Still, I believe you’re none the worse for it. I wish I could talk with you; I might explain better.

“One other thing. I don’t know whether you share this belief with your brother, but think you do — that I do not take time enough; do not let a thing cool; do not write and write and rewrite; do not, in short, exhibit the peculiar, or rather, exercise the peculiar methods of the lapidary. To this, I believe, you attribute the weakness of the characters I have drawn. Two other possibilities arise. First, as I stated before, the lack of effect may be laid to your egregious ignorance of such types. Secondly, the fault may lie in me, but not in the trick of the hand or phrase. The latter may do their work very thoroughly, admirably, and through no weakness on their part, produce a puerile result. This then, is due to insincerity of vision on my part; and all the polishing of the MS. will never succeed in bettering it. You see what I am driving at. I am sure what I have written reflects almost perfectly the thought, the image in my mind. I know, if I draw the complete character of Malemute Kid in one short story, all raison de etre of a Malemute Kid series ceases.

“Am very sorry to hear you are worse; and you had been so hopeful, too. Hope my last letter had no bad effects — if it stirred you up, as it evidently did your brother, it was really criminal on my part. Forgive me. Though I guess you know already what a rough-shod barbarian I am, even at my best. At least you cannot say I am anything but candid. Unless your brother mentions it, don’t let him know you know I was lectured — it’s only Jack, anyway.

“By the way, forgot to tell you in my last letter, that I stand first on the eligible list for carriers. My percent was 85.38. My postman tells me I stand a good show for appointment. At first one goes on as extra man, making about forty-five dollars per month. After about six months of that he becomes regular with sixty-five dollars. But the whole year may elapse before I get anything at all. . . .

“You are unusually prejudiced against Ella Wheeler Wilcox; your brother shares it with you; I am sure your mother does too; and hence, with no further search, you fan each other s distaste. Tell me what you think of the following — style and thought:

“‘The effect of the sweetly good woman upon man is like the perfume of a flower that grew in his childhood’s garden, or a strain of music heard in his youth. He is ashamed of his grosser appetites when he is in her presence. He would not like her to know of his errors and vices. He feels like an other man when near her and realizes that he has a spiritual nature. Yet as the effect of the strain of music or the perfume of the flower is necessary, so often her influence ceases when he is absent from her, unless she be the woman who rules his life.’

“Speaking of marriage — the following is what Zangwill calls Spinoza’s ‘aphorism on marriage’: ‘It is plain that Marriage is in accordance with Reason, if the desire is engendered not merely by external form, but by love of begetting children and wisely educating them; and if, in addition, the love both of husband and wife has for its cause not external form merely, but chiefly liberty of mind.’

“John Keats wrote to Miss Jeffry: ‘One of the reasons that the English have produced the finest writers in the world is that the English world has ill treated them during their lives and fostered them after their deaths.’

“What do you think of it? Don’t harbor the idea for a minute that I deem myself in that category. I consider myself a clumsy apprentice, learning from the master craftsmen and striving to get my hand in.

“It’s midnight, and I m going to mail this before I turn in. Your brother is over in ‘Frisco, gone to the theater I believe. I shall read in bed till his return. If the Overland, Black Cat, and Republicans pay me next week, within a couple of days of each other, I may be able to come down. Good-night — — ”

Follows the last of this correspondence in my possession, with its opportune dovetailing as will be seen in the final paragraph; into the Cloudesley Johns series of letters; letters which carry on the evidence of Jack London’s unfolding in the crucial beginnings of his rapid elevation to prominence. In the closing paragraph one marvels upon the boy’s perspective on his own work, from his heartstick reference to “The White Silence,” that masterly story of which George Hamlin Fitch a year thence wrote: “I would rather have written ‘The White Silence’ than any thing that has seen the light in fiction in ten years.

“962 East 16th St. Feb. 28, 1899.

Dear — — — : —

“Yours came to hand not half an hour ago. Am very sorry to hear of your brother’s illness, and can appreciate just about how well worn out every one is. Now as to my coming down. If absolutely necessary, telegraph, and I will be there. Yet much as I would like to, my hands are so full and there is so much to be done, that I could not be just to my family and myself did I come when it was not absolutely necessary. You know how we are living from hand to mouth, nothing coming in except what is earned, even yet much of my stuff is in pawn and bills running galore.

“And I wish to turn out some good work in this coming month, for I expect a call from the Post Office in April if not sooner. As to the good work I will explain. James Howard Bridge, editor of the Overland, has at last returned. He at once sent for me. . . . This is the essence of our conversation:

“While advising the majority of candidates for the magazine field to seek other pursuits, he would not do so in my case. I showed the proper touch, only needed bringing out. Different people had been asking about me, Sunday Editors of the Examiner, etc. He had bought the Feb. Overland on the train West, and was quite taken with my ‘White Silence.’ Said it was the most powerful thing which had appeared in the magazine for a year; but he was afraid it was a fluke and perhaps it would be impossible for me to repeat it, etc. Now to his proposition. The Overland prints forty pages of advertisements at thirty dollars per page, while McClure’s print one hundred pages three hundred dollars per page; yet printing, plates, paper, mail service, etc. cost just as much for the Overland. The only thing the Overland could scale down was the writers, and these it had to. While not in position to pay me well, he thought he could give me most valuable returns for my work. If I sustained the promise I had given, he would give me a prominent place in the pages of his magazine, see that the newspapers, reviews, etc. puffed me, and inaugurate a boom to put my name before the public. You can readily see how valuable this would be — putting future employment into my hands from publications which could afford to pay well. Yet the best he could do would be $7.50 per sketch. It would take too long to go over all we said. I may be called over again some day.

"You understand my position, I hope; yet frankly, should it be necessary you know you can call upon me. As I expect it to rain this week, the roads will be impassible and I will have to have recourse to Ferry to Alviso. . . .

"From what I have told you above, you may see that things are brightening, only as yet in the future. I may not fulfil expectations, break down, and have to still further develop before I come out; and if I do not, even present success is a matter of much waiting. Enclosed letter from Cloudesley Johns, return with what you think of it. Don't think I've got the swellhead. I was sick at heart when I read printed 'White Silence,' and I yet fail to see anything in it. Give my regards to all, not excepting a good share to yourself, and believe me ready to come if you cannot get along without me,

"Jack."

THE CLOUDESLEY JOHNS CORRESPONDENCE

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XVIII CLOUDESLEY

JOHNS was the first person who ever wrote to me about my work, I have heard Jack say. Mr. Johns had read "To the Man On Trail" and "The White Silence" in the January and February numbers of the Overland, and was unreserved in praise. At the head of Jack's reply is penciled, for the guidance of some one to whom Mr. Johns may have sent it for perusal:

"I prophesied greatness, and told him not to disappoint me. He won't. "Cloudesley Johns."

Jack's reply is dated at 962 East 16th St., Oakland, February 10, 1899:

"Dear sir:

What an encouragement your short note was! From the same I judge you can appreciate one s groping in the dark on strange trails. It's the first word of cheer I have received (a cheer, far more potent than publisher's checks).

"If a strong chin and a perhaps deceptive consciousness of growing strength, will aid in the fulfilment of your prophecy, it may to a certain extent be realized. Yes, my name is Jack London — rather an un-American heritage from a Yankee ancestry, dating beyond the French and Indian wars.

"Thanking you for your kindness, I am,

"Very truly yours,

"Jack London."

With his second letter, Mr. Johns sent Jack a manuscript to pass upon. And pass upon it did Jack, with no uncertain touch. It is a pity I have not space to print his critique in full, the advice is so pertinent. As an example: "It's hard to explain what I mean. Thus, for the Mexican — Statistics are not emotional, when stated in statistical manner. Don't say the Co. treated the men this way, or cheated them that way. Let the reader learn these facts through the minds of the men themselves, let the reader look at the question through their eyes. There are a variety of ways by which to do this — the most common would be to have them talk with each other. Let them carambo! and speak out the bitterness of their hearts, the injustice they suffer or think they suffer from the Co., the hatred they bear their bosses etc., etc."

He is generous in extolling wherever he honestly can:

"Your style occasionally reminds me of Bierce," or "a true stroke and a strong stroke." And I smile, in view of the clamor that often arose from frightened editorial staffs anent Jack London's offensive redbloodedness, to read his uncompromising advice: "I would not be so ghastly with that intestine; strike out 'and hung down' — (my taste only, yet I appreciate such things for I have seen much of them)."

It will be noticed that Jack had not yet conquered his own over-niceness, for the word "intestine" is used, whereas not so long thereafter he would have employed the shorter and more commanding "guts," in grim defiance of horrified friends and public — who nevertheless continued to read and extoll him.

Jack softens his forthright rending of Johns's manuscript:

"I never did any criticizing anyway; so I just say what I think hence, you gain sincerity of me, if nothing else."

He continues:

"Thanks for tip to Western Press; I have some of my earlier, immature work with them now. Suppose I'll some day call my present work just as immature. . . .

"Will take advantage of tip to Vanity Fair. . . . As to photo of myself. You shall be one of a number of friends who wait and wait in vain for a likeness of yours truly. My last posed foto was taken in sailor costume with a Joro girl in Yokohama. Have but one. But I'll do this: tell you all about me. 23 years of age last January. Stand five foot seven or eight in stocking feet — sailor life shortened me. [He measured five feet nine inches at full stature.] At present time weight 168 Ibs.; but readily jump same pretty close to 180 when I take up outdoor life and go to roughing it. Am clean shaven — when I let 'em come, blonde mustache and black whiskers — but they don't come long. Clean face makes my age enigmatical, and equally competent judges variously estimate my age from twenty to thirty. Greenish-gray eyes, heavy brows which meet; brown hair, which, by the way, was black when I was born. . . . Face bronzed through many long-continued liaisons with the sun, though just now, owing to bleaching process of sedentary life, it is positively yellow. Several scars — hiatus of eight front upper teeth, usually disguised with false plate. There I am in toto.

“Tell me what you think of inclosed verse — get your mother’s criticism too. Tender my thanks to your mother for her short note.” [Mr. Johns’ mother, Mrs. Jeania Peet, to whom Jack at intervals refers, is an exceptionally talented woman — writer, sculptress, and “artist of happiness” as Jack expressed it; mother of gifted sons, and once stepmother of our American poet Percy Mackaye.]

“Feb. 27, 1899.

“Dear sir:

“. . . I cannot express the effect of hearing that what I have written has pleased others, for you know, of all people in the world, the author is the least competent to judge what he produces. . . . When I have finished a thing I cannot, as a rule, tell whether it is good or trash. . . .

“My life has been such a wandering one that there are great gaps in my reading and education, and I am so conscious of them that I am afraid of myself — besides, in the course of a sketch, I become saturated with the theme till at last it palls upon me.

“I appreciate, in a way, the high praise of being likened to Tourgenieff. Though aware of the high place he occupies in literature, we are as strangers. I think it was in Japan I read his ‘House of Gentlefolk’; but that is the only book of his I have ever seen — I do not even know if the title is correct. There is so much good stuff to read and so little time to do it in. It sometimes makes me sad to think of the many hours I have wasted over mediocre works, simply for want of better.

“I can only thank you for your kindness: it has put new life into me and at the same time placed a few landmarks on the uncharted path the beginner must travel. Would you tell me of the error you mentioned? The compositors made some bad mistakes, the worst being a wilful change in the title, and a most jarring one. It was plainly typewritten ‘To the Man On Trail’; this they printed ‘To the Man on the Trail.’ What trail? The thing was abstract.

“Yours sincerely,”

“My dear sir:

How I appreciate your complaining of your friends when they say of your work, ‘Splendid,’ ‘Excellent,’ etc. That was my one great trouble. The farther I wandered from the beaten track (I mean the proper trend of modern style and literary art), the more encomiums were heaped upon me — by my friends. And believe me, the darkness I strayed into was heartbreaking.

Surely, I have since thought, they must have seen where I was blind. So I grew to distrust them, and one day, between four and five months ago, awoke to the fact that I was all wrong. Everything crumbled away, and I started, from the beginning, to learn all over again. . . .

“. . . I do join with you, and heartily, in admiration of Robert Louis Stevenson. What an example he was of application and self development! As a story-teller there isn’t his equal; the same might almost be said of his essays. While the fascination of his other works is simply irresistible. To me, the most powerful of all is his ‘Ebb Tide.’ There is no comparison possible between him and that other wonderful countryman of his; there is no common norm by which we may judge them. And I see I do not share with you in my admiration of Kipling. He touches the soul of things. ‘He draws the Thing as he sees it for the God of Things as they Are.’ It were useless for me to mention all my favorites of his; let one example suffice. The Song of the Banjo, and just one line from it. Away in the wilderness where younger sons are striving for hearth and saddle of their own, the banjo is singing, reminding them of the world from which they are exiled:

“‘Hear me babble what the maddest won’t confess:
I am memory and torment; I am town;
I am all that ever went with evening dress.’

How often, a thousand miles beyond the bounds of civilization, thirsting for a woman’s face, a daily paper, a good book, or better music, — sick for the charms of the old life — have I had that line recalled by the tumpy tum of a banjo, epitomizing the whole mood. . . .

“No; I appreciate how educating my roving has been. At the same time I am sorry that my years could not have been condensed in some magic way, so as to have introduced an equal amount of the scholar’s life. That’s the trouble of having one’s nature dominated by conflicting impulses.

“0 yes: I have children constantly footing it to the silent sullen peoples who run the magazines! The Overland . . . ‘The Son of the Wolf’ was sent to them a week ago; they will have it out in the April number, if possible, illustrated by Dixon. I have seen some of his Indian work and think he s just the man for my types. . . .

“Speaking of the Black Cat: sometime since, they accepted a pseudo-scientific tale from me. I want to warn you, in case it comes out in the next year or so, that it was written several years ago — so you will forgive it. I hardly remember what it is like. The title is enough — ’By a Thousand Deaths.’

“Another friend made the same criticism of ‘sole speck of life.’ I was saturated with my thought — on the relation of the soul to infinity, etc. — was dealing with the soul of Malemute Kid and did not at the time recognize the dogs. Such slips are liable, since, like you, I can’t revise manuscript. My favorite method of composition is to write from fifty to three hundred words, then type it in the Ms. to be submitted. Whatever emendations are made, are put in in the course of typing or inserted with ink in the Ms. . . . Have at last learned to compose first, to the very conclusion, before touching pen to paper. I find I can thus do better work.

“. . . And I warn you, I am as harsh on others as I expect them to be on me. This primrose dalliance among friends never leads anywhere. I once had a friend [this was Fred Jacobs] — we went to college and did much of our studying together — with whom we could candidly discuss each other, holding back nothing. But he lies dead in Manila now. Yet once in a while even he got angry when I expressed my opinion too plainly.

“. . . How are you off for humor? To save my life, while I can appreciate extremely well, I cannot develop a creative faculty for the same.”

“Mar. 15, 1899.

“Dear sir:

“. . . I agree with you that R. L. S. never turned out a foot of polished trash, and that Kipling has; but — well, Stevenson never had to worry about ways or means, while Kipling, a mere journalist, hurt himself by having to seek present sales rather than pothumous fame. . . . Kipling has his hand upon the ‘fatted soul of things.’

“. . . Speaking of humor — find enclosed triolets, the first, and also the last, I ever attempted. Perhaps there’s no market for such things. Judge and Life refused them and I quit.

“So you have completed a novel? Lucky dog! How I envy you! I have only got from ten to twenty mapped out but God knows when I’11 ever get a chance to begin one, much less finish it. I have figured that it is easier to make one of from thirty-five to sixty thousand words and well written, then one three or four times as long and poorly written. What do you think about it?”

Mar. 30, 1899.

“My dear friend:

“Three or four months on the edge of the desert, all alone — how I envy you; and again, how I thank Heaven I am not in a similar position. What a glorious place it must be in which to write! That’s one of the drawbacks of my present quarters. Everybody comes dropping in, and I haven’t the heart to turn them away. Every once in a while, some old shipmate turns up. With but one exception, this is their story: just returned from a long voyage; what a wonderful fellow Jack London is; what a good comrade he always was; never liked anybody in all the world so much; have a barrel of curios aboard which will bring over in a couple of days for a present; big payday coming; expect to get paid off to-morrow — ’Say, Jack old boy, can you lend us a couple of dollars till to-morrow? That’s the way they always wind up. And then I scale them down about half, give them the money and let them go. Some I never hear from again; others come back the third and fourth time.

“But I have the fatal gift of making friends without exertion. And they never forget me. Of course they are not of the above caliber; but I’d just as soon give them the money and let them go, as to have them eat up my time as they always do. Among my feminine friends I am known as ‘only Jack’ ‘Nough said. Any trouble, tangles, etc., finds me called upon to straighten out. Since Saturday morning I have spent my whole time for one of them, and have accomplished what she and her friends failed to do in five years. This evening I shall finally have settled the whole thing to her satisfaction but look at the time I have lost. Of course, remuneration is out of the question; but it will have so endeared me to her, that she ll call again the next time she gets into a scrape. And so it goes — time — time — time. How precious the hours are!

“But I should not be unjust. The other afternoon I met an old friend on the car. Delighted to see me; must go back to the ‘society’ again. I finally promised to go down the following night; but lo, he had spread the news among other friends who had not seen me for two long years. I really did not think they or people in general ever had cared so much for me, and I was ready to weep with sheer happiness at the sincerity of their delight. . . . Couldn’t escape; the whole night was lost among them; supper had been ordered, other forgotten friends invited, etc.

“And to me, the strangest part is, that while considering myself blessed above all with the best of friends, I know that I have never done anything to deserve them or to hold them. Mind you, the crowd I have reference to in previous paragraph, has never received a favor of me, nor is bound to me by the slightest social, racial, or perhaps intellectual tie. And so it goes.

"But I have been isolated so much, that I can no longer bear to be torn away for long at a time from the city life. In this particular you will see my thankfulness at not filling your position. Yet you may keep in touch with the world with those trains ever passing.

"I suppose you see many of the genus hobo, do you not? I, too, was a tramp once. . . . I remember, one night, leaving a swell function in Michigan and crossing the lake to Chicago. There, the following morning found me hustling at back doors for a breakfast. That night I made over two hundred miles into Ohio before they finally put me off the train. I wonder what the young lady whom I took into supper would have thought, had she seen me anywhere from twelve to twenty-four hours after.

". . . How I chatter — all about self! . . . I cannot rewrite; but in turn, I write more slowly. I used to go at it like a hurricane, but found I failed to do myself justice. . . . After sending criticism, and being reminded by the same of Bierce, I dug up 'Soldiers and Civilians.' I notice in his work the total absence of sympathy. They are wonderful in their way, yet owe nothing to grace of style; I might almost characterize them as having a metallic intellectual brilliancy. They appeal to the mind, but not to the heart. Yes; they appeal to the nerves, too; but you will notice in a psychological and not emotional manner. I am a great admirer of him, by the way, and never tire of his Sunday work in the Examiner.

". . . A strong will can accomplish anything — I believe you to be possessed of the same — why not form the habit of studying? There is no such thing as inspiration, and very little of genius. Dig, blooming under opportunity, results in what appears to be the former, and certainly makes possible the development of what original modicum of the latter one may possess. Dig is a wonderful thing, and will move more mountains than faith ever dreamed of. In fact, Dig should be the legitimate father of all self-faith.

" . . . And by the way, what do you think of Le Gallienne? As a writer I like him. . . . I know nothing about him as a man. . . . In his version of the Rubaiyat, I was especially struck by the following, describing his search for the secret of life:

"'Up, up where Parrius hoofs stamp heaven's floor,
My soul went knocking at each starry door,
Till on the stilly top of heaven's stair,

Clear-eyed I looked — and laughed — and climbed no more.'

". . . My one great weakness is the study of human nature. Knowing no God, I have made of man my worship; and surely I have learned how vile he can be. But this only strengthens my regard, because it enhances the mighty heights he can bring himself to tread. How small he is, and how great he is! But this weakness, this desire to come in touch with every strange soul I meet, has caused me many a scrape.

"I may go to Paris in 1900; but great things must occur first. I like the story you sent. No sentimental gush, no hysteria, but the innate pathos of it! . . . Our magazines are so goody-goody, that I wonder they would print a thing as risque and as good as that. This undue care to not bring the blush to the virgin cheek of the American young girl, is disgusting. And yet she is permitted to read the daily papers! Ever read Paul Bourget's comparison of the American and French young women?"

To a warning from Cloudesley Johns, Jack had replied:

"I realize the truth in your criticism of ringing the changes on Malemute Kid. . . . But you will notice in 'The Son of the Wolf' that he appears only cursorily. In the June tale he will not appear at all, or even be mentioned. You surprise me with the aptness of your warning, telling me I may learn to love him too well myself. I am afraid I am rather stuck on him — not on the one in print, but the one in my brain. I doubt if I ever shall get him in print."

"April 17, 1899.

"My dear friend: —

"Am afraid you will suffer offense every time I write to you. I never wrote a letter yet without forcing myself to it, and I never completed one without sighing a great sigh of relief. As a correspondent I shall never shine. But O how dearly I love to read the letters which come to me from those who little know how I dislike answering. And I never would answer, did I not know they would also cease. . . .

". . . I see you are opposed to Jingoism. Yet I dare not express my views, for to so do myself adequate justice, would require at least one hundred thousand words. An evolutionist, believing in Natural Selection, half believing Maithus' 'Law of Population,' and a myriad other factors thrown in, I cannot but hail as unavoidable, the Black and the Brown going down before the White. I see, after stating that I would not express my views, I have done the contrary. Will shut up at once.

“ . . . Town Topics has accepted a two eight-line stanza humor ous fancy. Have you ever dealt with them? [This was “If I were God One Hour,” published May 11, 1899.]

“. . . But enemies — bah! . . . Lick a man, when it comes to a pinch, or be licked, but never hold a grudge. Settle it once and all, and forgive.

“All my life I have sought an ideal chum — such things as ideals are never attainable, anyway. I never found the man in whom the elements were so mixed that he could satisfy, or come any where near satisfying my ideal. A brilliant brain — good; and then the same united with physical cowardice — nit. And vice versa. So it goes and has gone. . . .

“It’s a great thing, this coming to believe ‘that the universe can continue to exist and operate in a satisfactory manner, without the perpetuation of one s own individuality.’ I am an agnostic, with one exception: I do believe in the soul. But in the latter case, I can only see with death, the disintegration of the spirit’s individuality, similar to that of the flesh. If people could come to realize the utter absurdity, logically, of the finite contemplating the infinite!

“. . . Don’t agree with you regarding your criticism of face torn away by bear. Had forgotten Kipling’s ‘Truce,’ but anyway it does not matter. Many men are killed yearly, up there, and many more fearfully mangled. If we should allow the successful men to copyright any topic they once happen to camp upon, what the devil would you and I and a very numerous tribe do?

“. . . Ran across these lines of Helen Hunt Jackson; have been haunting me ever since:

“His thoughts were song, his life was singing,
Men’s hearts like harps he held and smote,
But ever in his heart went ringing,
Ringing the song he never wrote

“Yours, as ever, sincerely,” “April 22, 1899.

“My dear friend:

“I remember ‘Thomas the Doubter.’ A friend of mine quoted portions of it one night, but I was just dozing off and failed to follow him. It is very good, and how one can, in the face of it, stomach such things as the infinite mercy of the most infinitely merciless of creators, is more than I can understand. Pardon the double superlative. . . .

“. . . I sometimes fear that, while I shall surely develop expression some day, I lack in origination. Perhaps this feeling is due to the fact that almost every field under the sun, and over it too, has been so thoroughly exploited by others. Sometimes I hit upon a catchy title, and just as sure as I do I find some one else has already used it.

“. . . Ha! ha! You demand comfort in place of conventionality, eh? Ditto here. To-morrow I shall put on a white shirt, and I shall do it under protest. I wear a sweater most of the time, and pay calls, etc., in a bicycle suit. My friends have passed through the stage of being shocked, and no matter what I should do henceforth, would, I know, remark It’s only Jack. I once rode a saddle horse from Fresno to the Yosemite Valley, clad in almost tropical nudity, with a ball room fan and a silk parasol. It was amusing to witness the countryside turn out as I went along. Some of my party who lagged behind, heard guesses hazarded as to whether I was male or female. The women of the party were tenderly nurtured, and I hardly know if they have recovered yet, or if their proprieties rather have yet come down to normal. In fact, there was only one I failed to disturb, and he was the rugged old Chinese cook — nothing shocked him except the Mariposa Big Trees. Coming unexpectedly upon the first one . . . he blurted forth ‘Gee Glist! Chop’m up four foot ties, make’m one damn railroad!’ . . .

“As to evening dress, I think many a man looks extremely well in it. Of course, not all by a large majority. I like that clean feeling of well fitting clothes, etc. — which is strange for one who has passed through as many dirty periods as I have. But there are very few women I care to see in décolleté. . . . As to the breeding of cripples, I shall try to get something uncompressed before marrying, and then, if I have to take her off to a desert isle, I’ll see that no compression goes on while she is carrying any flesh and bone of mine. Barrenness is a terrible thing for a woman; but the paternal instinct is so strong in me that it would almost kill me to be the father of a child not physically or men tally sound. Sometimes I think, because this is so very strong in me, that I am destined to die childless. I can understand a Napoleon divorcing a Josephine, even casting aside state reasons. At the same time, I could not do likewise under similar circumstances. I can condone in others what I haven’t the heart, or have too much heart to do myself.

“How one wanders on!

“I also send you some of my schoolboy work. Stuff written years ago. . . . Through reading it you may gain a comprehension of one of my many sides, though of course you must take into consideration my youth at the time of writing, if you should try to weigh my presentation of the subjects in hand. People thought I would outgrow that condition and fall back into the conservative ways of thinking. I am happy to say they were mistaken. But believe me, while a radical, I am not fanatical; nor am I anything but normal, and fallible, in all affairs of reason. Emotion is quite another matter. The trouble is so few understand Socialism or its advocates. But I shall cut this short, else I will be delivering a diatribe on the dismal science.

". . . There is only one kind of infallibility that I can tolerate, nay, I can enjoy it, and that is the infallibility of the good-natured fool. As for cowardice in man: I can forgive the errors of a generation of women far more easily than one poltroon of the opposite gender.

"'In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeoning of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.'

Such, in all things, is what I admire in men. The 'fine frenzy' of the poet can rouse no greater number of tingles along my spine than a Captain going down on the bridge with his ship; the leading of a forlorn hope, or even a criminal who puts up a plucky fight against overwhelming odds. . . . Say what you will, I love that magnificent scoundrel, Rupert of Hentzau. And a man who can take a blow or an insult unmoved, without retaliating — Paugh! — I care not if he can voice the sublimest sentiments, I sicken."

April 30, 1899.

"My dear friend: —

". . . I like the form of refusal you sent me. Here you will find a couple I received the middle of this week. Disagree with both as a matter of course. Can t see any other ending, in the nature of things, to the McClure Ms., while Frank Leslie's well, that poor young American girl who mustn't be shocked, nor receive anything less insipid than mare s milk she seems to rule our destinies.

". . . So you, also, are a Socialist? How we are growing! I remember when you could almost count them on one s great toes in Oakland. Job Harriman is considered to be the best popular socialist speaker on the Coast; Austin Lewis the best historical, and Strawn-Hamilton the best philosophical. The latter has just gone to his old home in Mississippi, where he remains until December. Then he will go to Washington to fill a private secretaryship under some legislative relative. He spent 48 straight hours with me a couple of days before he went. He has a marvelous brain, one, I think, which could put that of Macaulay s to shame. He has served no less than twenty-nine sentences for vagrancy, to say nothing of the times turned up on trial, in the several years preceding his joining the socialists. As interesting a character in his way as your Holt, who, by the way, I would like to run across. The world is full of such, only the world does not generally know it. But I don t agree with you regarding the death stroke to individuality coming with the change of system. There will always be leaders, and no man can lead without fighting for his position — leaders in all branches. Sometimes I feel as you do about it, but not for long at a time.

“I see we at least agree about courage. A man without courage is to me the most despicable thing under the sun, a travesty on the whole scheme of creation.

“. . . You misunderstand me. It was the very strength of paternal desire, coupled with the perversity of things, which made me feel doubtful of ever realizing it. The things we wish the most for usually pass us by — at least that has been my experience. He who fears death usually dies, unless he is too contemptible, and then the gods suffer him to live on and damn his fellow creatures.

“. . . See Frank Norris has been taken up by the McClures. Have you read his ‘Moran of the Lady Letty’? It’s well done.

“ . . . My mother also wishes to be cremated. I think it is the cleanest and healthiest, and best; but somehow, I don’t care what becomes of my carcass when I have done with it. As for being buried alive — he’s a lucky devil who can die twice, and no matter how severe the pang, it’s only for a moment. I am sure the pain of dissolution can be no greater than the moment the forceps are laid upon a jumping tooth. If it is greater, then it must be stunning in its effect.

“Do you remember Robert Louis Stevenson moralizing on death in his ‘Inland Voyage’? It is a beautiful expansion of ‘Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die.’

You asked about the age of Prof. Markham: I saw him down at the Section last Sunday night, when Jordan spoke on ‘The Man Who Was Left.’ He (Markham) is a noble looking man, snow white hair and beard, and very close to sixty. I send you a miserable reporter’s account of the meeting, in which nobody or nothing is done justice.

"You really must pardon this letter; my mind is dead for the time being. Have been reading a little too heavily. Just as a sample, I shall give you a list of what I am as present working on, to say nothing of three daily papers, and a stagger of an attempt at current literature:

"Saint-Amand's Revolution of 1848.'

Brewster's 'Studies in Structure and Style.'

Jordan's 'Footnotes to Evolution.'

Tyrell's 'Sub-Arctics,'

and Böhm-Bawerk's 'Capital and Interest' — this latter is a refutation of Carl Marx's theory of values, as determined or measured by labor.

"Good night — By the way, I have forgotten to inform you that an unwelcome guest has annoyed me all evening, and is now getting ready to crawl into bed. This has bothered me not a little. He is such a fool."

This was one of the drawbacks of Jack's quarters — that he must share his bed with no matter what guest chose to remain, invited or otherwise. "And I'd as soon sleep with a snake as with a man," he complained to his sister.

And now I come across an incomplete letter to the Lily Maid, of date May 4, 1899:

"Dear: — — —

"Yours to hand yesterday morning; caught me in bed, and sick abed for the first time in over three years. But I couldn't stand the pressure, so got up in the afternoon. Feeling too heavy and forlorn to-day to do anything, hence, this prompt reply. Your brother has already remarked that little trait of mine; inflicting letters upon my friends, only at such periods that I cannot do anything else.

"What am I doing? Same old thing. Got a twenty-five dollar offer from Youth and Age. Not so bad, or at least better than having the thing die in my drawer. It stands for ten days work, so I get two and a half per day for it. I notice in to-day's want column of the Examiner an ad. which runs to the following purpose: 'Wanted: a bright, intelligent, well educated young man, thoroughly competent at stenography and typewriting, for office work. References required. $4 per week to commence.' He who runs may read — he'd have to work nearly two months to get what I expect to get.

"And there's this redeeming feature in thus getting rid of my earlier work: it cleans up my books ; reduces my stamp outlay; and gives me the wherewithal to send new things a-traveling. . . .

"Sea Sprite and Shooting Star: Held the 'Call' up to find out whether they paid or not. Their reply was 'not.' Then I told them to return; they replied by giving me hogwash and sending proofsheets. Subsequent letter from me to them was courteously sententious, and if, on top of that, they dare to publish, I'll sue them.

". . . Have you seen this month's Black Cat? It has my story, written a couple of years ago, revised hastily and then sadly man-gled by those at the other end. It can only be taken for a penny's worth of rot. You have not told me of 'The Son of the Wolf.' May Overland, have you seen it? Maynard Dixon has done excellent work — excellent is even too weak to do him justice. . . .

"Then I received a refusal from Frank Leslie's Monthly. . . . 'Well written, too risque for our use. We would be glad to consider a short story if you wish to submit one in the Fall.' . . . Encouraging, to say the least. Well, well, plenty of dig, and an equal amount of luck may enable me some day to make perhaps a small livelihood out of the pen. But what's the diff.? I get so hungry sometimes, hungry for all I have not, that I'd rather quit the whole thing and lie down for the good long sleep, did I not have my mother to look out for. This world holds so much, and it takes but such a little to get a fair share of it" — —

The remainder is missing.

I take up the Johns correspondence at May 18, 1899.

"My dear friend: —

"Back again at the machine. How one grows to miss it ! And you did not mention my scrawl — said scrawl feels slighted. . . .

"I do most heartily agree with you as regards drowning. My stock statement is that I should prefer hanging to drowning. From this you may infer that I, as a strong swimmer, have had some experience. One notable instance was similar to the one you mention as happening to you: that of being dragged down by another, who, perhaps, wasn't worth saving. It happened to me by the dock, with a crowd above but not a boat or boat hook to be had, and the tide very low — twenty feet nearly from the water to the top of the wharf. I was about sixteen, and the lad I was trying to pull out, a wharf-rat of about twelve or thirteen. Really, I saw nothing of my past life, nor beautiful scenes, nor blissful sensations. My whole consciousness was concentrated upon the struggle, my sensation upon the awful feeling of suffocation. An other time, I fought a lonely battle in the ocean surf on a coral beach. Carelessly going in swimming from a sheltered nook, I had drifted too far out and along the shore, and not having the strength to stem my way back, was forced to a landing on the open beach. Not a soul in sight. The seas would swat me onto the beach and jerk me clear again. I'd dig hand and foot into the sand, but fail to hold. It was a miracle that I finally did pull out, nearly gone, in a fainting condition, and pounded into a jelly-like condition." Here he gives a brief account of his attempted suicide by drowning in the Carquinez Straits, ending with "And I was about gone, paddling as the man in the Black Cat paddled, with the land breeze sending each snappy little wave into my mouth. Was still keeping afloat mechanically, when a couple of fishermen from Vallejo picked me up, and can dimly recollect being hauled over the side. No, drowning is not a pleasant shuffle.

". . . As with you, socialism was evolutionary, though I came to it quite a while ago. You say, 'that to retain a leadership one must possess, or acquire, all the virtues which society and politics demand of their favorites — hypocricy, insincerity, deceit, etc.' Robt. Louis Stevenson was a man looked up to, a leader of certain very large classes, in certain very fine ways. I am sure he lacked those virtues. So it would be in all the arts, sciences, professions, sports, etc. . . . Of course, I realize you mainly applied your statement to politics. But have you ever figured how much of this fawning and low trickery, etc., is due to party politics; and with the removal of party politics and the whole spoils system from the field, cannot you figure a better class of men coming to the fore as political leaders — men, whose sterling qualities to-day prevent them crawling through the muck necessary to attain party chieftainship?

". . . How concisely you analyzed the lack of unity in the May tale — a lack of unity which you may see is recognized in the very title, 'The Men of Forty Mile.' The sub-heading was not of my doing, as were none of the others. I wonder what you will think of 'In a Far Country,' which comes out in the June Number, and which contains no reference to Malemute Kid or any other character which has previously appeared. As I recollect my own judgment of it, it is either bosh, or good; either the worst or the best of the series I have turned out. I shall await your opinion of it with impatience.

". . . We live and learn. With such letters as this, the stereotyped forms of ending have always tortured me. I now comprehend the beauty of yours and make haste to adopt it.

"Jack London." "May 28, 1899.

"My dear friend: —

". . . further, believe me, I do not look for the regeneration of mankind in a day: nor do I think man must be born again before socialism can attain its ends. The first motor principle of the movement is selfishness, pure, downright selfishness; the elevation merely an ultimate and imperative result of better environment.

". . . As you have lost your respect for Roosevelt, so had I long ago lost mine for George Washington, because of the ill manner in which he, too, treated Paine — Paine, who in this case was a contemporary, and who had in his own way done probably as much for the American Revolution as had his immortal traducer. However, I believe you to be less tolerant than I, at least concerning religion. Apropos of Dewey's alleged remark that God superintended the fight in Manila Bay, and your conjecture as to whether he (Dewey) ever took the trouble to notice that God didn't prevent the blowing up of the Maine, brings to recollection a similar query from the 'Social Contract' of Jean Jacques Rosseau: 'All power comes from God, I acknowledge it; but all sickness comes from Him, too: does that mean that it is forbidden to call a physician?'" Jack then devotes a paragraph to Schopenhauer's "terrific arraignment of women, or rather his philippic against them," and precedes some extracts: "Don't believe that I endorse them in toto."

"June 7, 1899.

"Dear friend: —

". . . I have been busy. Have been going out more than at any other time in the past eight months; have been studying harder than ever in my life before; and have been turning out more copy than hitherto. Finding that I must go out more and that I was becoming stale and dead, I have really ventured to be gay in divers interesting ways.

"Yes; the time for Utopias and dreamers is past. Coöperative colonies, etc., are at best impossible (I don't mean religious ones), and never was there less chance for their survival than to-day."

"June 12, 1899.

"My dear friend:

"Yes, I agree with you, 'In a Far Country' should have been the best of the series, but was not. As to the clumsiness of struc-ture, you have certainly hit it. I doubt if I shall ever be able to polish. I permit too short a period — one to fifteen minutes — to elapse between the longhand and the final MS. You see, I am groping, groping for my own particular style, for the style which should be mine but which I have not yet found.

“As to plagiarism: you seem very hyper-sensitive on the subject. Know thou, that ‘In a Far Country’ was written long after I had read your ‘Norton-Drake Co.’ Yet I had no thought of the coincidence till you mentioned it. Great God! Neither you nor I have been the first to make use of a broken back, nor, because of this fact, should we be debarred from using it. How many broken legs, broken backs, broken hearts, etc., have been worked up, over and over again? . . . Take ‘White Silence,’ how many have made use of a falling tree. For instance, Captain Kettle in June Pearson’s. . . . I see no reason in the world why you should cut the broken back out of ‘Charge it to the Company.’ . . .

“Pardon brevity. I have been writing this and entertaining half a dozen friends at the same time. Really don’t know what I have been saying.”

A second letter of June 12:

“. . . How I envy you the thrill of life, such as must surely have been gained through your mix-up with the Greasers. In this prosy city existence I have even failed to tangle up with a lone footpad. And one cannot really come to appreciate one s life, save by playing with it and hazarding it a little.

“. . . Have also tried my hand at storiettes for Munsey, but without success, then I ship same off to Tillitson & Son, 203 Broadway, N. Y. C. Figuring it up, it seems to me they pay some where around four dollars per thousand. . . . They are a syndicate . . . but their demand for such stuff seems unlimited. I don t like that kind of work, myself, as I can readily see you do not. . . .

Yes; going out more isn’t a bad idea; but as to the less study, can’t agree with you. My mind has at least reached partial maturity and I believe I know how far I may go without injury to it. And when I do go out, I assure you I go out with a vengeance, and throw utterly to the winds all thought and worry of my every-day life. And it has been my luck never to be without the one companion to share with me temporary oblivion. No; I don’t mean dope, but a proper unadulterated good time with one who knows a good time when it is seen.

“How rabid you are! I feel called upon, for that matter, to tell you that you are really narrow in some things. Remember, the infidel that positively asserts that there is no God, no first cause, is just as imbecile a creature as the deist that asserts positively that there is a God, a first cause. Have you ever read Herbert Spencer's First Principles of synthetic philosophy, and noted the line, the adamantine line of demarkation he draws between the knowable and the unknowable. Pardon me, I should not have allowed myself this discursion, for I have never heard you make that rash negative assertion. But, as regards your Anglo-Saxon views. In one breath you say you are of pure Anglo-Saxon descent on both sides and that your descent (evidently on one side at least) can be traced to the Welsh kings. Know thou, that the Welsh blood is really no nearer (save geographically) and no farther away from the Anglo-Saxon, than is the Hindoo blood of India or the Iranic of Persia. The Welsh, of which breed were the Welsh kings you mention, belongs to the Celtic branch of the Aryan Family, as the pure Russian does to the Slavonic, the Hindoo and Persian to the Indo-Iranic. All the same family, but distinctly different branches. What is the Anglo-Saxon, as we understand it to-day? Let me make you miserable with a little history and ethnology." And he goes on at some length polishing up his memory of what he has read, continuing :

"But enough, this is not my hobby, as you may think, but only one portion of my philosophy or whatever you wish to call the entire edifice of my views. Some day we shall meet and I may be able to explain myself better."

His next letter, of June 23, proceeds with the racial discussion. This paragraph is of especial note as regards his biological attitude toward women:

"Remember, there is even a higher logic than moral or formal logic. Moral and formal logic demonstrate thoroughly that woman shall vote; but the higher logic says she shall not. Why? Because she is woman; because she carries that within her that will prevent, that which will no more permit her economic and suffragal inde-pendence, that it will permit her to refrain from sacrificing herself to the uttermost to man. I speak of woman in general. So, with the race problem. The different families of man must yield to law — to LAW, inexorable, blind, unreasoning law, which has no knowledge of good or ill, right or wrong; which has no preference, grants no favors, whether to the atoms in a molecule of water or to any of the units in our whole sidereal system; which is unconscious, abstract, just as is Time, Space, Matter, Motion; of which it is impossible to postulate a beginning nor an end. This is the law, the higher logic, which the petty worms of men must bow to, whether they will or no.

"Socialism is not an ideal system, devised by man for the happiness of all life; nor for the happiness of all men; but it is devised for the happiness of certain kindred races. It is devised so as to give more strength to these certain kindred favored races so that they may survive and inherit the earth to the extinction of the lesser, weaker races. The very men who advocate socialism, may tell you of the brotherhood of all men, and I know they are sincere; but that does not alter the law — they are simply instruments, working blindly for the betterment of these certain kindred races, and working detriment to the inferior races they would call brothers. It is the law; they do not know it, perhaps; but that does not change the logic of events."

"War," Jack declared upon a later occasion, "is a divine beneficence compared with mixed breeding!" During the several years before his death, his experimentation with livestock only cemented his convictions. As witness this letter, written in his last year, to a young Athenian who had dared pit his unripened opinions against the elder's philosophy:

In reply to yours of Dec. 24, 1915. . . . God abhors a mongrel. In nature there is no place for a mixed-breed. The purest breeds, when they are interbred, produce mongrels. Breed a Shire stallion to a Thoroughbred mare, and you get a mongrel. Breed a pure specimen of greyhound to a pure specimen of bulldog, and you get mongrels. The purity of the original strains of blood seems only to increase the mongrelization that takes place when these strains are interbred or cross-bred.

"Consult the entire history of the human world in all past ages, and you will find that the world has ever belonged to the pure breed and has never belonged to the mongrel. I give you this as a challenge: Read up your history of the human race. Remember, Nature permits no mongrel to live — or, rather, Nature permits no mongrel to endure.

"There's no use in your talking to me about the Greeks. There are not any Greeks. You are not a Greek. The Greeks died two thousand years ago, when they became mongrelized. Just because a lot of people talk the Greek language, does not make those people pure Greeks. Because a lot of people talk Italian, does not make them Roman. The Greeks were strong as long as they remained pure. They were possessed with power, achievement, culture, creativeness, individuality. When they mongrelized themselves by breeding with the slush of conquered races, they faded away, and have played nothing but a despicable part ever since in the world's history. This is true of the Roman; this is true of the Lombards; this is true of the Phoenicians; this is true of the Chaldeans; this is true of the Egyptians; this is not true of the Gipsies, who have kept themselves pure. This is not true of the Chinese, it is not true of the Japanese, this is not true of the Germans, this is not true of the Anglo-Saxons. This is not true of the Yaquis of Mexico. It is true of the fifteen million mongrels of Mexico; it is true of the mongrels that inhabit the greater portion of the West Indies, and who inhabit South America and Central America from Cape Horn to the Rio Grande. This is true of the mongrelized Hindoos.

"Read up your history. It is all there on the shelves. And find me one case where you can breed a greyhound with a bulldog and get anything but a mongrel. Read up your history. You will find it all there on the shelves. And find me one race that has retained its power of civilization, culture, and creativeness, after it mongrelized itself. Read up your history, and try to find any remnant of a pure Roman race, of a pure Hindoo race. . . .

"You know how I am. I talk straight out. When I am asked to hit straight from the shoulder, I hit straight from the shoulder. It is now up to you to come back at me on the very question at issue. . . .

"And, in conclusion, let me repeat — you know the straight talker I am — that no matter how straight-out and savagely I talk, my hand rests no less warmly upon your shoulder, and that only you can be offended by me, and that you cannot offend me.

"Affectionately yours."

To Cloudesley he goes on:

". . . 'The artist is known by what he omits.' That is my chiefest obstacle, one that I am fully aware of, and one that I struggle ceaselessly to overcome. That is why I am trying my hand at storiettes. I do not like them, but I realize what excellent training they give. Also, the shekels they bring in are not exactly distasteful to me. To me, all my work is practice, experimentative, and I consider myself lucky to be able to sell the sheets of my copybook.

"Forty-six stories — I have not written that many in all my life — why it's a book! Neither have I ever written a book. Nor shall I till I consider myself prepared, and time and place, and man are met."

On July 5, 1899, reference, I believe, is made to the young woman he subsequently married:

"Just got home this morning, and have been hard at it ever since. Have written fifteen hundred words of a new story, transacted all my business, started a few more of my returned children on the turf (as you put it), and am now winding up the last letter of my correspondence. Go away again on Friday, for a jaunt on wheels down country with a young lady whom I have been promising for some time. She made me a call to-day and fore-closed. We stop with mutual friends along the way."

Then he comments upon some editorial errors in his story "The Priestly Prerogative," published in the July Overland, ending his letter: "Damn editors!"

The letter of July 22, illustrates Jack London's law-abiding proclivity, as well as his determination to be an artist: "As for myself, I believe in these present marriage customs and laws, but that is no reason why I should sway my tale one way or the other for aught save the tale's sake. As for my judgment of the tale, I like it least of the series. Just about as much as I do the next which is now in press and which is the last of the Overland series. ["The Wife of a King."]

"As to the hog-train — when a passenger goes by in the daylight, shunning six-wheelers it has been my custom to swing under between the trucks and ride the rods — by this I do not mean the gunnels, brake-beams, or springs, or brake-rods. I have often gone along that way in the daytime, with feet cocked up, reading a novel, peering out at the scenery, and enjoying a comfortable if sometimes dusty smoke.

" . . . As soon as I get well ahead of the game — very problematical — I shall escape all my friends, and creditors alas! by engaging cabin passage on a big English ship for a voyage round the Horn to Europe. Shall go aboard with a box of books, a typewriter, and several boxes of paper, and say! I won't do a thing to things in general and particular. I'll write some sea yarns soaked in the atmosphere, besides other and what I would consider more important work, and do no end of reading up all that which the present and continuous flood of current literature will not permit me to enjoy. Ah plans, plans! How many have I builded! and how few have I realized.

"July 29, 1899.

"My dear friend:

“Trip knocked out in the middle. Whole lot of company came to house — very small house. . . . Well, we had some of our fun anyway.

“Guests are at last gone, and am too flabbergasted to get to work. Have all kinds of work awaiting me, too. Did you ever write a yarn of, say, twelve thousand words, every word essential to atmosphere, and then get an order to cut out three thousand of these words, somewhere, somehow? That’s what the Atlantic has just done to me. Hardly know whether I shall do it or not. It’s like the pound of flesh. [This was “An Odyssey of the North,” published in Atlantic the following January.] Say, am hammering away at that Cosmopolitan essay, at spare intervals. . . . Am thoroughly satisfied, as far as I have gone, which is saying a good deal for me — am usually sick at this stage, and it’s such dry, dissertative stuff after all.

“. . . Drop in on us when you do come. Small house, but usually plenty of fair steak, chops, etc., in the larder. I am a heavy eater, but a plain one, fruit, vegetables and meat, and plenty of them, but with small regard for pastries, etc. If you ve a sweet tooth you will not receive accommodation here except in the fruit line and the candy stores.

“. . . 0, by the way, just to show how this business of placing MSS. is a despairing one. Long years ago — three, anyway, I wrote a synopsis of ‘The Road,’ under that title, describing tramps and their ways of living, etc. It has been everywhere — every syndicate and big Sunday edition refused it as a feature article; but I kept it going. And lo, to-day, came a note of acceptance of same from the Arena. Think I’ll resurrect some of my old returned third rate work and send it to Harper’s, Century, etc. That is, if there is any chance of their accepting what tenth class publications have refused. . . .

“And say, when a third rate magazine publishes something of yours, and you wait thirty days after publication for pay, and then dun them, and then they do not even answer your note, what do you do? Is there any way of proceeding against them? Or must one suffer dumbly? Tell me, tell me — I’d like to make it hot for some of those Eastern sharks.

“And in these pay-on-acceptance fellows, did you ever get your check at the same time you were notified of acceptance? They always make me an offer, first, and then I needs must sit idly and grow weary and sick at heart waiting during the period between my closing with offer and the arrival of the all-needful. . . .

“. . . As you say, I am firm. I may sometimes appear impatient at nothing at all, and all that; but this everybody who has had a chance to know me well have noticed: things come my way even though they take years; no one sways me, save in little things of the moment; I am not stubborn but I swing to my purpose as steadily as the needle to the pole; delay, evade, oppose secretly or openly, it’s all immaterial, the thing comes my way. To-day I have met my first serious wall. For three long years the fight has been on; to-day it balances; is a deadlock; I may have met my master; I may not; the future will tell, and one or the other of us will break and on top of it all I may say it concerns neither my interest or theirs, nothing except the personal vanity and the clash of our wills. ‘I won’t’ and ‘I will’ sums the whole thing up.

“Firm? But I am firm in foolishness, as well as other things. Take things more seriously than you? Bosh! You don’t know me. Ask my very intimate friends. Ask my creditors. Pshaw — let this illustrate: a very dear friend, a woman charming enough to be my wife, and old enough to be my mother, discovered that my most precious possession, my wheel, was hocked. You know I only live for the day. She at once put up the all-needful so that I might regain it. She could well afford it, so that was all right; but mark you, she virtually had a lien upon it. Well, to top it — had been extravagant on the strength of receiving money which did not materialize. Creditors waxed clamorous; a few dollars judiciously scattered among them would have eased things; but credit exhausted; along comes a particularly nice person for a good time. A very nice person who wished to see things; wheel hypothecated and things seen for some forty odd hours. This is me all the time and all over — seriously take things of life — does it look like it? Pshaw. Ask those who know me.

“And I am firm in my foolishness.

“I am glad you took Jordan in the right way. He is, to a certain extent, a hero of mine. He is so clean, and broad, and wholesome. Would to God he were duplicated a few thousand times in the U. S. Working for a sheep-skin! That’s what most fools do who go in for education, and most of the rest are geniuses and cranks, who get the kernel and then don’t or won’t use it.

“. . . As for my writing histories and works on economics — I may, some day but I have little ambition to do so. The same may be said of any kind of writing under the sun. My only wish that way is the all-needful — it seems the easiest way. Had I an assured income, my ambition would be for music, music, music. As it is, impossible — I bend."

Aug. 10, 1899.

"Dear Friend:

"Same old tale. Wound off one visitor the first of last week, to receive at once two more — they have just now gone home. I'll get even with them yet, so that even their letters, much less them-selves shall not reach me. I see you have been suffering a similar affliction.

"Say, remember telling me if I got a check from Town Topics to frame it? After acceptance I let them slip for several months, then wrote them a nice little note of enquiry — five lines — and behold! They dug up a dollar for that triolet — 'He Chortled with Glee', and two twenty-five for the poem 'If I Were God One Hour.' You mentioned the Owl as a snare and a delusion. Well, they haven't got the best of me yet, at least that's all I can say. You know I wrote long ago a lot of stuff upon which I wasted many stamps. Nor would I retire it if hope of getting my postage back still lived. And I must say I have succeeded in disposing of quite a lot of rubbish that way by sending it to the way down publications. The Owl published a skit of mine a couple of months ago. When they made the offer for it, I almost fainted — One Dollar and Fifty cents for two thousand words. But it more than paid for the stamps I had wasted on the thing, and gave promise of release from at least one of my early night-mares, so I closed with the offer. But they have not yet paid me. Then the question arises: why should they have made such a miserable offer if they intended to take the whole works ? And one answer suggests itself: that from very shame at the smallness of the selling price, the author would refrain from making any trouble in the event of non-payment. However, I am devoid of that kind of shame.

"Yes, I cut the story for the Atlantic. There were 12,250 words; but while they wanted it reduced three thousand, I only succeeded in getting it down to an even ten thousand. So I don't know what they will do about it. They seem very nice people from their letters, but that, however, remains to be substantiated by something solid. Have also sent Houghton, Mifflin & Co., collection of tales. [This was "The Son of the Wolf" collection.]

"I closed with a cash offer of ten dollars, and five yearly subscriptions with the Arena, so probably it is alright with them. Say, it's great, learning the inner nature of some of these concerns!

“O but I do take myself seriously. My self-estimation has been made in very sober moments. I early learned that there were two natures in me. This caused me a great deal of trouble, till I worked out a philosophy of life and struck a compromise between the flesh and the spirit. Too great an ascendancy of either was to be abnormal, and since normality is almost a fetish of mine, I finally succeeded in balancing both natures. Ordinarily they are at equilibrium; yet as frequently as one is permitted to run rampant, so is the other. I have small regard for an utter brute or for an utter saint.

“A choice of ultimate happiness in preference to proximate happiness, when the element of chance is given due consideration, is, I believe, the wisest course for a man to follow under the sun. He that chooses proximate happiness is a brute; he that chooses immortal happiness is an ass; but he that chooses ultimate happiness knows his business.

“. . . I doubt if even you would consider the novel avowedly with a purpose to be real literature. If you do, then let us abandon fiction altogether and give the newspaper its due, for the fixing or changing of public opinion especially on lesser things. But Spencer’s ‘First Principles’ alone, leaving out all the rest of his work, has done more for mankind, and through the ages will have done far more for mankind than a thousand books like ‘Nicholas Nickleby,’ ‘Hard Cash,’ ‘Book of Snobs,’ and ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ Why, take the enormous power for human good contained in Darwin’s ‘Origin of Species’ and ‘Descent of Man.’ Or in the work of Ruskin, Mill, Huxley, Carlyle, Ingersoll. . . .

“As to ‘that retired stuff’ — many thanks for your kind offer; but really, I shall never resurrect it again. Whenever I get to thinking too much of myself I simply look some of it up, and am at once reduced to a more becoming modesty. No, it’s put away for good. I have very little out, just now. And it’s growing less all the time. It will soon catch me up, I’m afraid, if I don’t get down and dig.

“Well, say, hold on a minute. Let me explain. But first let me say how glad I was that you liked ‘The Wife of a King.’ But I was candid, though I cannot for the life of me remember what ‘shameful comparison’ I made in letter to you concerning it. This is the way it happened. I had the most terrific dose of blues I ever was afflicted with in my life. I couldn’t think of anything original, so I made a composite of three retired MSS., slapped them together, as I at the time considered, haphazard, with the crudest of dovetailing. Shipped the result off in disgust, and forgot all about it, save a most uncomfortable sense of general dissatisfaction. And for the first time, when I looked upon it printed, I was not wholly disgusted with myself — not because it was the best I had done, but because I had rated it so low that disappointment or disgust seemed impossible.

"Are there any phases of humanity, under any combinations which have not already been exploited? Yet I think I have for some time had an entirely original field in view, so why should I ask? But who knows. . . . I should think the only way to write a novel would be to do it at a fair rate per day, and then ship off at once. If I can only get ahead of the game, I'm going to jump back to Jerusalem in the time of Christ, and write one giving an entirely new interpretation of many things which occurred at that time. I think I can do it, so that while it may rattle the slats of the Christians they will still be anxious to read it."

The next is a handwritten note dated:

"College Park, May 13/99.

"Dear Friend: —

"A friend has taken it into his head to die; so, in resultant tangle, am at present wasting time at present quarters. Must acknowledge receipt of 'Splendid Spur,' also of two letters, which same I shall answer on my return home. Yes, 'Q' did good work when he completed 'St. Ives.' . . . How do you like my scrawl?"

"962 East 16th St.,

"Aug. 24, 1899.

"My dear friend: —

"'Frisco and Oakland have been roaring since last evening, when the Sherman was sighted. Nor will things quiet down till the week is past. So no work for me — besides, have had another friend to stop with me.

". . . Am going down country the first of next month to pose as best man for a foolish friend of mine who has abandoned the torturing of catgut for the harmony of matrimony. And I have to dig up a wedding present besides! Wow! . . .

"Have you read anything of Weismann's? He has struck a heavy blow to the accepted idea of acquired characters being in herited, and as yet his opponents have not proved conclusively one case in which such a character has been inherited. Another idea he advances well, is that death is not the indispensable correlative of life, as hitherto it has been supposed to be. In fact, his researches in the germ-plasm have proven quite the contrary. Read him up, you will find him interesting. But it s heavy. If you have not studied evolution well, I would not advise you to tackle him. He takes a thorough grounding in the subject for granted.

"Are you going in for that Black Cat Prize Competition? It has just been announced, and the time is not up till the 31st of March, 1900. The style, etc., is worth imitating for the money — if one thinks he is able to do it. I intend having a go at it. I . . . to-day received confirmation of acceptance of my MS. from the Atlantic. But say, can you explain this to me? I understand that they pay on acceptance. Well, to-day acceptance comes with assurance of publication in an early number, and that is all. No check, no nothing concerning rate of payment, when, or how.

". . . Was there ever a luckier fellow than I when it comes to friends? I doubt it. And between you and myself, I likewise greatly fear for the bit of femininity who takes me for little better and much worse. . . .

". . . But really, I shall have to ask you to accept this stuff as a letter. I have striven and striven and striven. It is warm; doors and windows are open. Three youngsters are playing on the porch before my window. Their elders are in the parlor. My guest and a temporary visitor are in the same room with me, waxing hotter and hotter over some mooted point in that much mooted question of telepathy, so I must call quits, . . ."

"Sept. 6, 1899.

"My dear friend: —

"Back again, but not yet settled down. Have blown myself for a new wheel ('99 Cleveland), and hence, between appearing at weddings in knickerbockers and rampaging over the country with bloomer-clad lassies, and celebrating the return of the Californians, I have been unable to chase ink. The way I happened to get said wheel is an illustration of how little rhyme or reason there is in placing MSS. Some time ago I wrote an avowedly hack article for an agricultural paper, expecting to receive five dollars for the same, and to receive it anywhere from sixty to ninety days after acceptance. But it was rejected, and, being short at the time, I was correspondingly dejected. But straight away I shipped off the MS. to the Youth's Companion, and lo and behold, without any warnings, they forwarded me a check for thirty-five dollars — eleven dollars per thousand. How's that for luck?

". . . Don't weep over what the National did they pay poorly. Some time ago they accepted one of my ancient efforts, for which they gave me five yearly subscriptions, and five dollars cash, pay on publication. I expect it to come out in the September number. God bless the publishers.

". . . Go it for the Black Cat! I cannot even think of a suit able plot — my damnable lack of origination you see. I think I had better become an interpreter of the things which are, rather than a creator of the things which might be.

44 . . . Well, time is flying; I've got a visitor as usual, spending a few days with me, and as I hear the tinkle of his bicycle bell approaching, I must cut off. But just you watch my smoke some of these days — I intend shaking every mortal who knows me and going off all by myself."

"Sept. 12, 1899.

"My dear friend: —

"Between engagements, visitors, and friends, I have not yet succeeded in doing a tap. And to-morrow I start out on that postponed trip of mine to Stanford University and Mt. Hamilton, to say nothing of way points. And when I return from that I am going to lock myself up." [In an unimportant handwritten post script he signs himself "J. G. L." — the only instance I know where he used his middle initial.]

"Sept. 20, 1899.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Back again. Had a glorious time. Stopped over at Stanford, where I met several students I know, sat under the various profs., etc. And looked through the thirty-six inch reflector on top of Mt. Hamilton. There we saw the moon, Saturn and his rings, and quite a number of bourgeois pigs. Yes, they were pigs, dressed like tourists. My companion and I, after seeing them, were exceeding proud of the fact that we were mere proletarians. . . .

". . . Ah, therein you differ from me — it's money I want, or rather, the things money will buy; and I could never possibly have too much. As to living on practically nothing — I propose to do as little of that as I possibly can. Remember, it's the feed not the breed which makes the man. . . .

". . . As an artisan cannot work without tools, so a man cannot think without a vocabulary, and the greater his vocabulary the better fitted he is to think. Of course, an ass may acquire the tools of an artisan and be unable to work with them, so with words. But that does not interfere with the broad statement I have laid down." . . .

"Sept. 26, 1899.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

“. . . Did I ever mention a MS. I received in response to a trailer, which same MS. had been O.K’d and blue-penciled? Well, such happened to me some time ago. Without removing marks or anything I shipped it off to Youth’s Companion. There were fifteen hundred words to it. Last week a check comes for twenty-five. Say I m having lots of luck with the Companion, sending them my old, almost-ready-to-be-retired stuff. . . . They pay good and promptly. Though such work won’t live, it at least brings the ready cash.

“. . . How I envy you when you say that you do not write for publication. There is certainly far greater chance for you to gain the goal you have picked out than for me who am in pursuit of dollars, dollars, dollars. Yet I cannot see how I can do otherwise, for a fellow must live, and then there are also others depending upon me. However, I shall once and a while make it a point to sit down and deliberately not write for publication. . . .

“. . . Have begun to isolate myself from my friends — a few at a time. But those I have managed to dispense with are the easy ones. I can’t see my way clear to the others except by running away. But instead of the desert I’11 take to sea. Many who know me, ask why I, with my knowledge of the sea, do not write some sea fiction. But you see I have been away from it so long that I have lost touch. I must first get back and saturate myself with its atmosphere. Then perhaps I may do something good. . . .

“. . . Viewing this world through the eyes of science I can see no reason at all why a person should be the slightest bit pessimistic. Why, it’s all good, considering man’s relation to it. . . . P.S. — Did I inform you that I am once more an uncle. It was born nearly a month ago. [This was Eliza Shepard’s only child, Irving, before mentioned.]

“Oct. 3, 1899.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“. . . Last Sunday I went off with a very nice young lady on a bicycle trip up to Mill Valley, among the redwoods at the base of Mt. Tamalpais. To do this we had to go to ‘Frisco and take the ferry to Sausalito, and from thence to destination via pedals. Any number of lively young Frisco people take the same outing on Sundays, except that they do not ordinarily or extraordinarily go on bikes. They patronize the railroad. Well, on the back trip to ‘Frisco, a bunch of them took the deck and raised hell generally, to the shocking of many of the more sedate passengers. Am happy to state, however, that the girl I was with, while the kingdoms of the earth could not have lured her into getting up and doing like wise, at least highly enjoyed the performance. All of which is neither here nor there. But for myself, I was attacked by all kinds of feelings. Therein you and I differ — dissipation is alluring to me. Why, my longing was intense to jump in and join them after the fashion of my wild young days, and go on after we arrived in 'Frisco and make the night of it which I knew they were going to make. Alluring? I guess yes.

"And then again, I could feel how I had grown away from so much of that lost — touch. I knew if I should happen to join them, how strangely out of place it would seem to me — duck-out-of-water sort of feeling. This made me sad; for, while I cultivate new classes, I hate to be out of grip with the old. But say, it wouldn't take me long to get my hand in again. Just a case of lost practice.

". . . Have been going on chess drunks of late. Did you ever yield to the toils of the game? — toils in more ways than one. It's a most fascinating game, and one which has devoured well nigh as many of my hours as cards. However, I've done very little chess in the last year or so, and this is merely a temporary relapse.

Have also been feasting my soul with some of the new books: Kipling galore, Bullen's 'Sea Idyls,' Grant Allen's 'Adventure of Miss Gayly,' and among others, Beatrice Harraden's 'Fowler'. . . ." At this period Jack London put into practice his thousand-words-a-day stint, which he maintained for the rest of his life:

"Am now doing a thousand words per day, six days per week. Last week I finished 1100 words ahead of the required amount. To-day (Tuesday), I am 172 ahead of my stint. I have made it a rule to make up next day what I fall behind; but when I run ahead, to not permit it to count on the following day. I am sure a man can turn out more, and much better in the long run, working this way, than if he works by fits and starts. . . .

"How time flies! Here is Christmas at hand, and Paris approaching — ah! I wonder if the gods will smile so that I may go."

"October 24, 1899.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

Everything in confusion, visitors still here. So you're a chess player. And it's the one form of dissipation which has any attraction for you. As I can hardly look upon it in that light concerning myself, I can but conclude that you are by far the better player. Why, I have never met a good player —

spent all my time teaching beginners, and you know nothing is worse for chess than that. And besides, I have never had the time to devote to it. For a year at a stretch I never see a board, and then, for a few short weeks I happen to mildly indulge. As I have not taken the time to learn properly, so I cannot play an intensive game; instead, I play viciously, not more than four moves ahead at the best, and endeavor to break up combinations as fast as my opponent forms them — that is, first, if they are threatening; and second, if the slightest and most insignificant gain will accrue to myself, such as the getting of another piece of mine in position by a trade, or by double-banking my opponent's pawns, or preventing his castling by forcing him to move his king in a trade. For the sake of this latter, when the gambit goes my way, I always trade queens. But a heavy player, once growing accustomed to my play, doesn't do a thing to me. So be it. I shall never learn chess.

"Last article published by me, had, among other typographical errors, 'Something fresh for the jaded care of the world,' instead of 'something fresh for the jaded ear of the world.' On second thought it might have been worse.

"Think you could train yourself into becoming a hermit? For me that would be far harder than to train myself to become a suicide. I like to rub against my kind, with a gregarious instinct far stronger than in most men. A hermitage — synonym for hell.

". . . Lucrative mediocrity? I know, if I escape drink, that I shall be surely driven to it. By God! if I have to dedicate my life to it, I shall sell work to Frank A. Munsey. I'll buck up against them just as long as I can push a pen or they can retain a MS. reader about the premises. Just on general principles, you know.

". . . Am reading Stevenson's 'Virginibus Puerisque' just now. Find in this mail his 'Inland Voyage.' Return it when you have finished, as I wish to pass it along. Have read it myself. Get such books for 'Bull Durham' tobacco tags. Have sent for his 'Silverado Squatters' don't think much of it from previous read ing, but it was a long time ago, and I did it too hurriedly, I'm afraid. . . .

"So you try experiments in letter writing. I never do nor never have. Haven't the slightest idea what I'm going to say when I sit down just hammer it out as fast as I can. And right well am I pleased when I have finished the hateful task. I wouldn't do it at all, no more than I would work, were it not for the compensation. As for you, I get more originality in your letters than from all my rest put together rather jerky and jagged but refreshing and interesting. Believe me, I'm not fishing for a loan.

". . . Have been reading Jacobs' 'More Cargoes'. . . . Also have been going through Kendricks Bangs' 'The Dreamers' and 'The Bicyclers and Other Farces.' He's clever and humorous, in a mild sort of way.

"Have been digging at 'Norman's Eastern Question,' preparatory to a certain economic dissertative article I intend writing — Asia touches one of the phases I wish to deal with. Besides, I have gone through Curzon's similar work, and wish to take up soon Beresford's 'Break-up of China.' Am going through Drummond on evolution, Hudson on psychology, and reviewing Macaulay and De Quincey in the course of English in Minto which I am giving to a friend — the photographer. She's well up in the higher Math., etc., but not in general culture — coaches in the exact sciences for would-be university students, etc. Say, that reviewing does a fellow good. I had no idea how lazy I had gotten.

"Society will never injure me — the world calls too loudly for that."

"Oct. 31, 1899.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

". . . So you deem the world as fair a synonym for hell as I do hermitage. Can't see it. There are some redeeming features. As long as there is one good woman in it, it will not hold. Why, I remember, once, when for several weeks I meditated profoundly on the policy of shuffling off. Seemed the clouds would never break. But at last they did, and I doubt if you could imagine the cause of my sweetened mood. A memory of a day, of an hour — nay, a few paltry minutes — came back to me, of a time almost lost in the dim past. I remembered — what? A woman's foot. We were by the sea. In a dare, we went wading: had to stick our feet in the hot sand till they dried; and it was those few moments which came back to me, dripping with 'sweetness and light.' Hell? Nay, not so long as one woman s foot remains above ground.

"Please don't thing I'm in love. Simply sentiment. Don't get that way often.

"Well, some time since, I started in to write a twenty-five hundred word article on 'Housekeeping in the Klondike.' [This was published in Harper's Bazaar, on September 15, 1900.] In choice of theme I had been forced to narrow, being aware of my miserable predilection. And lo, before I had got into full swing, I found that the whole article could be comfortably taken up in a discussion of bread-making. And, still narrowing, it was soon apparent that this should be divided, one single subhead to be discussed, viz.: sourdough bread-making. And so it goes. Never did a person need the gift of selection more than I.

“. . . Have just completed Horace Vachell’s ‘The Procession of Life’ . . . quite interesting, but not of the first water. . . . And any way, did you ever read that boyhood classic, ‘Phaeton Rogers’? Rossiter Johnson, who edits the Whispering Gallery of the Overland, is the author. . . .

“My Atlantic story will come out, I believe, in the January number. Received a check for one hundred and twenty dollars yesterday for it, with a year’s subscription thrown in. They are very slow, but very painstaking. They even questioned the propriety of using my given name — unconventional. But they came around all right.

“Have heard nothing more concerning my collection. They do take their time about it. Nothing from the Cosmopolitan prize essay either.

“How do you like my new machine? Haven’t got used to it yet. Came to-day. When I get married, guess I’ll have to marry a typewriter girl. I do most heartily hate the job.

“So the poor little Boers have risen in their might. God bless them! I can admire their pluck, while at the same time laughing at their absurdity. There be higher things than formal logic or formal ethics. When a detached, antiquated fragment of a race attempts to buck that race, a spectacle is presented at once pitiful and impotent. Fools, to think that man is the object of his own volition, inasmuch that a few of him may oppose the many in a movement which does not spring from the individual but from the race, and which received its inception before even they had differentiated from the parent branch!”

“November 11, 1899.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“You say: ‘This is the beginning of the end — you’ll see — and within ten years the British Empire will have followed its predecessors, the Greek, the Roman, and the French.’ Well, well, well. I’d like to talk with you for a few moments. It’s simply impossible to take it up on paper. The day England goes under, that day sees sealed the doom of the United States. It’s the Anglo-Saxon people against the world, and economics at the foundation of the whole business; but said economics only a manifestation of the blood differentiations which have come down from the hoary past.

"This movement, dimly felt and working in strange ways, is not to be stopped in a day, or by a lesser people, or by a bunch of the same which have become anachronisms. The Boers are anachronisms. There is no place for them in the whirl of the world unless they whirl with it.

"You say, if subjugated they will still be Boers. Do you remember the Norman invasion of England? How long the Saxons held strictly apart? And how in the end, the Saxon, as a Saxon, vanished from the face of the earth? Took several centuries, but it was accomplished.

". . . I believe Bret Harte wrote a story of a natural fool who got along nicely till he struck it rich. I'm hard at it. Am just finishing an ambitious Klondike yarn which is a failure, and before the twenty-fifth of this month have to write and read up for two essays and prepare for a speech before the Oakland Section. Haven't addressed an audience for three years; it'll seem strange.

". . . As to your suggestion regarding the finish of 'To the Man on Trail': I had never been satisfied with that ending, though too lazy to even think for an instant of attempting to better it. Your ending could not be bettered, and I shall hasten to take advantage of it. Many thanks for same. It will then leave one with a pleasant taste in the mouth. The alliterative effect you mention strikes my gaudy ear; I shall certainly use it. I want you to read my 'Odessey of the North' when it comes out. . . ."

"Nov. 21, 1899.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Hard at it — mostly history and economics. And yet I don't work a tithe of what you work. Why should you work seventeen hours a day? As regards your writing you positively should not do more than six — four were better. But any excess of six cannot be good stuff. . . .

". . . I never pity anybody but myself. Life is too short.

"The Overland declined my offer on specious grounds. Twenty-five dollars was stiff under the circumstances. However, I have placed a yarn with them to come out in the Christmas number. ["The Wisdom of the Trail."] O they're great people, of great heart: but heart and finance do not usually go together. . . .

". . . Very few American educated people have little else but rancor for England — a rancor which is bred by the school histories and the school traditions. All of which is utterly wrong. I have to laugh when you call Kipling a narrow, hidebound, childishly pettish, mean little man. . . . Any masculine who delights in taking down a woman's back hair will find a warm welcome in my heart.

". . . Find, with 'Editor,' when it comes along, some more proofs of yours truly, taken down by the sounding sea. Also one of the young woman who sometimes accompanies me in my far from conventional rambles. Last Sunday, threatening rain, we wandered off into the hills, cooked our dinner (broiled steak, baked sweet potatoes, coffee, etc., crab, French bread, and a patty of dairy butter), and were a couple of gipsies. To-morrow we may jump on our wheels and ride off forty or fifty miles. And yesterday we may have taken in the opera and dined fashionably. Never the same, except the camera, which same I am slowly mastering.

Yes; I read 'A New Magdalen' when I was about twelve, and then shocked a very nice young lady by starting to discuss it with her."

Continuing the discussion that runs throughout the correspondence, and which I must cut, he argues:

"When England is so decadent as to lose her colonies, then England falls. When England falls the United States will be shaken to its foundations, and the chances are one hundred to one that it ever recovers again. Why, England is our greatest purchaser, and our greatest maker of markets, and the only nation which is not deep down hostile to us. Germany, France, Austria and Russia can supply the world with all that the world needs, if they could only get a chance by having England and the United States eliminated from the proposition. And once one were eliminated the ruin of the other were easy. But England is not going to fall. It is not possible. To court such a possibility is to court destruction for the English speaking people. We are the salt of the earth, and it is because we have it in us to frankly say so that we really are so. No hemming or hawing; we state the bald fact. It is for the world to take or leave. Take it may, but it shall always leave us. . . .

" . . . So? Why, the United States never had but one fight in its history; that was when it fought with itself. England never bothered her. Read up history and you will find that England's hands were full of other things, and preferring other matters, she let the colonies slip away. Do you really think we whipped the whole of England in the Revolution? Or in 1812, when her hands were full with Napoleon, and she was fighting in every quarter of the globe? Mexico was play. But the civil war was a war, a death grapple. And all hail to the South for the fight it put up against stiff odds.

"You little know Canada. Why don't those other European countries, standing by themselves, fall? Because, they are but ostensibly alone. In reality they stand together — whenever it comes to bucking the Anglo-Saxon.

Dropping to the personal, he announces:

"If cash comes with fame, come fame; if cash comes without fame, come cash."

"Dec. 5, 1899.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"First letter-writing I have done for quite a while. . . . Have not had an evening at home for nigh on to two weeks, what with suppers, speaking, functions, and last but not least, FOOTBALL. Did you see what we did to Stanford? In case that benighted region in which you reside has not yet received the score, let me have the privilege of blazoning it forth. Thirty to nothing, Berkeley.

"It was magnificent, to sit under the blue and gold and see the Berkeley giants wade through the Cardinals, and especially so when one looks back to the times he sat and watched the Stanfordites pile up the score and hammer our line into jelly. Do you care for football? In case you do not, I shall not permit my enthusiasm to bore you further.

". . . Heaven save us from our friends! Last Sunday evening I spoke before the San Francisco Section. Unknown to me, and on the strength of divers newspaper puffs which recently have appeared, they posted San Francisco, and also perpetrated the enclosed hand bill. I knew nothing about it till just the moment before I was to go on the platform. Can I sue them for libel? [I find the hand bill in Jack's scrapbook for 1899-1900, advertising his name in blatant type, "The Distinguished Magazine Writer," a lecture in Union Square Hall, 421 Post Street, Sunday Ev'g, Dec. 3rd, 1899.]

". . . Your criticism of my 'Editor' article is exactly my own criticism. We could not disagree on that if we tried. By the way, there were 1750 words in it. The 'Editor' was billed to pay liber-ally, and they told me on acceptance, promptly. It was published last October, I received for it five dollars which came to hand day before yesterday.

"0 Lord! Good-by."

"Dec. 12, 1899.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“. . . You mistake, I do not believe in the universal brotherhood of man. I think I have said so before. I believe my race is the salt of the earth. I am a scientific socialist, not a Utopian, an economic man as opposed to an imaginative man. The latter is becoming an anachronism.

“Nay, nay, bankruptcy is not an ideal state, at least for me. It’s too horrible for words. Give me the millions and I’ll take the responsibilities.

“Later on I shall forward you an article of mine on the ‘Question of the Maximum,’ which contains within it, though not the main theme, the economic basis for imperialism or expansion. This, I know, is directly opposed to the current ethics. But it is the one which will dominate the current ethics.”

INTRODUCING ANNA STRUNSKY

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XIX

JUST about this time Jack London's orbit crossed that of Anna Strunsky. Anna was a Stanford University student a round, brown slip of a girl, a Russian Jewess, no older than the little women of his precocious boyhood, for she was barely seventeen. A glowing, flaming creature she was, intellectual, brilliant and friendly, with a deep and lasting loyalty that we were all to learn. She was so different from anything he had ever known of woman neither lily-pallid nor boldly passionate; but wide-hearted like all her family, and deliciously, naively frank. She met one so wondrous-comradely. Every one loved Anna, women as well as men; no one could resist the drawing power of her, she the Much-Desired. Who was Jack, to hold aloof from the warmth of her presence? Who, indeed! As naturally as breathing, their friendship waxed, and they could not but regard their need of each other in the big world that is lovely to souls like theirs, stainless of deceit toward each other. But it was their mental and spiritual companionship that most counted, and that endured.

Rose, Anna's younger sister, was likewise uncommonly brilliant for her years — no less remarkable than Anna: "There's Rose," Jack once said to me, — "She's as wonderful, in her way, as Anna. Watch Rose." Rose has indeed been worth watching, from her early work to her extraordinary book on Abraham Lincoln, her translation of Tolstoi's "Journals," and Gorky's "My Confession."

The whole Strunsky family, with its arms-around hos-pitality, its long table always laid for a problematical number of interesting guests (for no dull one ever drew chair to its abundance) — the whole Strunsky brood stamped its intelligence and its lovableness and its charm upon Jack London until he came in after years to call it his Love Family. Once in a letter to me, he said: "They are fine splendid people to know. They are individuals, not a mess. And they stand for high things, and are good to know."

Anna Strunsky, co-author with Jack of "The Kempton-Wace Letters," (and since, of "Violette of Pere La Chaise,") loved mate of a distinguished husband, William English Walling, and mother of four glorious children, wrote me from her home in Greenwich, Connecticut, under date of January 17, 1919:

“Dearest Charmian:

“This is perhaps a pretty complete statement of the psychical aspect of our friendship. I have nothing but love and gratitude for him, and that he has lived at all and I have known him is a miracle of happiness, a miracle of miracles. . . . If there is any thing more that suggests itself, please ask. . . . Your loving sister, always,

“Anna.”

What she sends me I give in advance of the letters written her by Jack, which she has as freely contributed to my picture of her friend:

“Jack and I met for the first time at a lecture by Austin Lewis, I believe, in the fall of 1899 at the old Turk Street Temple. It was either Cameron King or Strawn-Hamilton who introduced us. Herman Whitaker had ‘discovered’ Hamilton and had made him acquainted with Jack, and Hamilton and Cameron were intimate friends.

“It is owing to a kind of spiritual secret diplomacy that the details of our meeting are vague in inverse ratio to the importance of the moment. The essentials, however, are stamped on my mind. He and I gravitated towards the platform to congratulate the speaker. A whispered ‘Do you want to meet him?’ from either Strawn-Hamilton or Cameron — ’he is Jack London, a Comrade who has been speaking in the street in Oakland. He has been to Klondike and writes short stories for a living.’ We shook hands, and remained talking to each other. I had a feeling of wonderful happiness. To me it was as if I were meeting in their youth, Lasalle, Karl Marx or Byron, so instantly did I feel that I was in the presence of a historical character. Why? I cannot say, except perhaps because it was the truth and he did belong to the undying few. This certainty with which he inspired me was the vital subjective fact about our meeting.

“Objectively, I confronted a young man of about twenty-two, and saw a pale face illumined by large, blue eyes fringed with dark lashes, and a beautiful mouth which, opening in its ready laugh, revealed an absence of front teeth, adding to the boyishness of his appearance. The brow, the nose, the contour of the cheeks, the massive throat, were Greek. His form gave an impression of grace and athletic strength, though he was a little under the American, or rather Californian, average in height. He was dressed in gray, and was wearing the soft white shirt and collar which he had already adopted.

"Then began our friendship. If at the time, to the inexperienced heart of our youth, it seemed tempestuous, almost terrible, storm-bound as it was by our intellectual and psychical differences, now I see in it only the dearness and beauty of a force that outlasts life, a world, indeed, without end, something more precious and more significant to both of us than we could then understand. Those differences — what were they but the healthy expression of our immaturity, of our aspirations toward the absolute of truth and right and justice, the normal expression, perhaps, of the man and woman equation in the abstract questions concerning life? The differences tortured us as they did precisely because in the great essentials we were at one — but this, youth could not know! Did he not years later write 'The People of the Abyss,' 'The Dream of Debs,' 'The Iron Heel'? How then, could I have challenged his Socialism? Was he not an ardent feminist and suffragist? Why then, did I suspect him of thinking women the inferiors of men? Did he not finally marry with love and for love, and exemplify in his own life the need of love that men and women have in common, the greatest miracle of all, the miracle of interdependence? Why, then, did we spend twenty-two months writing 'The Kempton-Wace Letters,' trying to convert each other to positions which, at bottom, we must both have held?

"Individualized as his personality was he was yet symbolic. In him was expressed what a human being escaping from the Abyss might become. Charles Ferguson, the other day, spoke of Jack London as having been the most aristocratic of men. If to be gifted beyond others, stronger than others, more beautiful in person, warmer of heart than others is to be a natural aristocrat, then this super-democrat, this man identified with the People and with the Class War was one. To me his qualities were interesting more because they showed what was in all of us than because they were exceptional. He was a genius and yet that was only to be — the ordinary human being extended. To know him was immediately to receive an accelerated enthusiasm about everybody.

"Our friendship can be described as a struggle — constantly I strained to reach that in him which I felt he was 'born to be.' I looked for the Social Democrat, the Revolutionist, the moral and romantic idealist; I sought the Poet. Exploring his personality was like exploring mountains, and the valleys which stretched between troubled my heart. They did not seem to belong to the grandiose character he was, or could, by an effort of the will, become. He was a Socialist, but he wanted to beat the Capitalist at his own game. To succeed in doing this, he thought was in itself a service to the Cause; to 'show them' that Socialists were not derelicts and failures had a certain propaganda value. So he succeeded — became a kind of Napoleon of the pen. This dream of his, even when projected and before it became a reality, was repellant to me. The greatest natures, I thought, the surest Social Democrats, would be incapable of harboring it. To pile up wealth, or personal success — surely anybody who was a beneficiary of the Old Order must belong to it to some extent in spirit and in fact.

"So it was that our ancient quarrel, and many, many others took their rise in the same source — a doubt, not as to himself — I never doubted the beauty and the warmth and the purity of his own nature — but as to the ideas and the principles which he invited to guide his life. They were not worthy of him, I thought; they belittled him and eventually they might eat away his strength and grandeur. . . . ". . . I have felt so much for Jack London because I saw in him potential martyrs and heroes. . . . He was symbolic of the Movement and its struggle and its sorrow; he was the dawn of the future, and in his beauty was the pristine beauty and greatness of the race. So I said when I first beheld him; so I say now, after his death. . . ."

Herewith are her friend's first impression of Anna Strunsky:

"Jack London,
"962 East 16th St.,
"Oakland, Calif.,
"Dec. 19, 1899.

"My dear Miss Strunsky: —

"Seems as if I have known you for an age — you and your Mr. Browning. I shall certainly have to reread him, in the hope after all these years of obtaining a fuller understanding.

"What did I start to write you about, anyway? Oh! First, that toasting the old year out affair — does it take place on the last Friday or Thursday of the month; and secondly — well, it doesn't matter. I have forgotten.

"Please don't carry a wrong impression of my feelings regarding Hamilton. Because I happen to condemn his deficiencies is no reason that I do not appreciate his good qualities, nor that I should not love him. Indeed I do. Do you remember how I said I ran down the street after him on a circus day, our engagements, etc.? My feelings and personal liking swayed me there; but in summing up the man I set such things to one side and perform the operation with the cold-bloodedness of the economic man. I hope you will understand. My regard for him is such that were I to accumulate a treasure I think I would advertise for him in the agony columns throughout the United States and bring him to me, give him a home, a monthly allowance, and let him live out his life whatsoever way he willed.

"You said at parting that you also were a literary aspirant. I may be able to help you, perhaps — not in the higher criticism but in the more prosaic but none the less essential work of submitting MS. Through much travail I have learned the customs of the silent sullen peoples who run the magazines. Their rates, avail-ability, acceptability, etc. Should you stand in need of anything in this line (economic man), believe me sincerely at your service.

"Of course, I do not know what lines you deem yourself best fitted for: however, as I sat there listening to you, I seemed to sum you up somewhat in this way: A woman to whom it is given to feel the deeps and the heights of emotion in an extraordinary degree; who can grasp the intensity of transcendantal feeling, the dramatic force of situation, as few women, or men either, can. But, this question at once arose: Has she expression? By this, I mean simply the literary technique. And again, supposing that she has not, has she the 'dig', the quality of application, so that she might attain it.

"In a nut-shell — you have the material, which is your own soul, for a career: have you the requisite action to hew your way to it?"

"Dec. 21, 1899.

"Dear Miss Strunsky: —

"Surely am I a barbarian, lacking in cunning of speech and deftness of touch. Perhaps I am only a Philistine. Mayhap the economic man incarnate. At least blundering and rough-shod, lacking even that expression which should properly voice my thoughts. I call for a trial by jury. I throw myself on the mercy of the Court. Nay, after all is said and done, I plead not guilty.

"'Somehow it is a new note to me, that of being seen as aimless, helpless, hopeless," and I am uneasy under it all.'

"I rarely remember what I say in letters, sometimes retaining only vague recollections of what I do not say; but in the present case I am sure I said nothing like the above. I speculated on you as impartially as had you been a hod-carrier, a Hottentot, or a Christ. It was a first speculation; it dealt with but one portion of your being. And as I could not divorce Christ or the

Hottentot from the rest of humanity as having nothing in common with it, so I could not divest you of the weaknesses which I know your fellows to suffer from. But such weaknesses are not to be classed under your threefold caption, ‘aimless, helpless, hopeless.’ I granted aim. I then asked myself whether you had the qualities by which to realize it. I did not answer that question, for verily I did not nor do I know. I was even more generous, I granted the basic qualities, all-necessary for attainment, and only questioned the existence of the medium by which they could be made to meet with their proper end. And that question I did not answer (to myself), for I did not know, nor do I know.

“This is my case. I call for your verdict.

“Somehow I am like a fish out of water. I take to conventionality uneasily, rebelliously. I am used to saying what I think, neither more nor less. Soft equivocation is no part of me. As had I spoken to a man who came out of nowhere, shared my bed and board for a night, and passed on, so did I speak to you. Life is very short. The melancholy of materialism can never be better expressed than by Fitzgerald’s ‘O make haste.’ One should have no time to dally. And further, should you know me, understand this: I, too, was a dreamer, on a farm, nay, a California ranch. But early, at only nine, the hard hand of the world was laid upon me. It was never relaxed. It has left me sentiment, but destroyed sentimentalism. It has made me practical, so that I am known as harsh, stern, uncompromising. It has taught me that reason is mightier than imagination; that the scientific man is superior to the emotional man. It has also given me a truer and a deeper romance of things, an idealism which is an inner sanctuary and which must be resolutely throttled in dealing with my kind, but which yet remains within the Holy of Holies, like an oracle, to be cherished always but to be made manifest or be consulted not on every occasion I go to market. To do this latter would bring upon me the ridicule of my fellows and make me a failure; to sum up, simply the eternal fitness of things:

“All of which goes to show that people are prone to misunderstand me. May I have the privilege of not so classing you?

“Nay, I did not walk down the street after Hamilton — I ran. And I had a heavy overcoat, and I was very warm and breathless. The emotional man in me had his will, and I was ridiculous.

* I shall be over Saturday night. If you draw back upon yourself, what have I left ? Take me this way : a stray guest, a bird of passage, splashing

with salt-rimed wings through a brief moment of your life — a rude and blundering bird, used to large airs and great spaces, unaccustomed to the amenities of confined existence. An unwelcome visitor, to be tolerated only because of the sacred law of food and blanket.

“Very sincerely,” “Dec. 29, 1899.

“My dear Miss Strunsky: —

“. . . Expression? I think you have it, if this last letter may be any criterion. How have I felt since I received it? How shall I say? At any rate, know this: I do agree, unqualifiedly, with your diagnosis of where I missed and how. If I recollect aright, it was my first and last attempt at a psychological study. I say that I had much before me yet to gain before I should put my hand to such work. I glanced over several pages just before sending, noted the frightful diction and did not dare go on to the meat of it. I knew, I felt that there was so much which was wrong with it, that the ending was inadequate, etc., and that was all. But you have given me clearer vision, far clearer vision. For my vague feelings of what was wrong, you have given me the why. It is you who are the missionary. . . . My extenuation is my youth and inexperience. ... It really was false-winged, you see, that flight of mine. Not only have you shown me my main flaw, but you have exposed a second the lack of artistic selection.

“And above all, you have conveyed to me my lack of spirituality, idealized spirituality — I know not if I use the terms correctly. Don’t you understand? I came to you like a parched soul out of the wilderness, thirsting for I knew not what. The highest and the best had been stamped out of me. You knew my life, typified, maybe, by the hastily drawn picture of the forecastle. I was troubled. Groping after shadows, mocking, disbelieving, giving my own heart the lie oftentimes, doubting that which very doubt made me believe. And for all, I was a-thirst. Stiff-necked, I flaunted my physical basis, hoping that the clear water might gush forth. But not then, for there I played the barbarian. Still, from the little I have seen of you my lips have been moistened, my head lifted. Do you remember ‘It was my duty to have loved the highest; it was my pleasure had I known?’ Pray do not think me hysterical. In the bright light of day I might flush at my weakness, but in the darkness I let it pass.

“Only, I do hope we shall be friends.

“. . . I see this ‘just a line’ has grown. Please do not answer until after your examinations. Know that I pray for the best possible best. And please let me know the outcome, for I shall be as anxious almost as yourself . . . .

“Very sincerely,” Either Jack was economizing on ink, or on energy, or improving his chirography, or using a finer pen-point; for his signatures early in 1900 present a reduced appearance. Evidently, from these letters, he is in a low state of cheer and funds and is putting pressure on himself, since on January 22, 1900, still dating from 962 East 16th Street, he writes to Cloudesley Johns:

“Have pawned my wheel, bought stamps, and got things in running order again. . . . Have to get in and dig now — have jumped my stint to 1500 words per diem till I get out of the hole.” And on the 30th: “Am hard at it. Have not missed a day in which I have turned out at least 1500 words, and sometimes as high as 2000. How’s that? And at the same time I have broken no engagements, gone on with my studying, and corrected daily from 16 to 48 pages of proofsheets. Sometimes forty-eight hours pass without my even stepping foot on the ground or seeing more of out-doors than the front porch when I go to get the evening paper. Hurrah for hell. . . . So you fell! Sensible lad! The damn dollars do carry some weight after all. I am frankly and brutally consistent about money; you are neither, nor are you consistent. . . .”

Nine days earlier he had written to Anna Strunsky, at Stanford:

“Dear Miss Strunsky: —

“0 Pshaw!

“Dear Anna: —

“There! Let’s get our friendship down to a comfortable basis. The superscription, ‘Miss Strunsky,’ is as disagreeable as the putting on of a white collar, and both are equally detestable. . . . Now I feel comfortable. Nobody ever ‘Mr. Londons’ me, so every time I opened a letter of yours I felt a starched collar draw round my neck. Pray permit me softer neck-gear for the remainder of our correspondence. . . . I did not read your last till Friday morning, and the day and evening were taken up. But at last I am free. My visitors are gone, the one back to his desert hermitage, and the other to his own country. And I have much work to make up. Do you know, I have the fatal faculty of making friends, and lack the blessed trait of being able to quarrel with them. And they are constantly turning up. My home is the Mecca of every returned Klondiker, sailor, or soldier of fortune I ever met. Some day I shall build an establishment, invite them all, and turn them loose upon each other. Such a mingling of castes and creeds and characters could not be duplicated. The destruction would be great. . . .

"Find inclosed, review of Mary Austin's book. Had I not known you I could not have understood the little which I do. Somehow we must ever build upon the concrete. To illustrate: do you notice the same in excerpt from her, beginning, 'I thought of tempests and shipwrecks.' How I would like to know the girl, to see her, to talk with her, to do a little toward cherishing her imagination. I sometimes weep at the grave of mine. It was sown on arid soil, gave vague promises of budding, but was crushed out by the harshness of things — a mixed metaphor, I believe. . . .

"Ho! ho! I have just returned from the window. Turmoil and strife called me from the machine, and behold! My nephew, into whom it is my wish to inoculate some of the saltiness of the earth, had closed in combat with an ancient enemy in the form of a truculent Irish boy. There they were, hard at it, boxing gloves of course, and it certainly did me good to see the way in which he stood up to it. Only, alas, I see I shall have to soon give him instructions, especially in defense — all powder and flash and snappy in attach, but forgetful of guarding himself. 'For life is strife.' and a physical coward the most unutterable of abominations.

"Tell me what you think of MS. It was the work of my golden youth. "When I look upon it I feel very old. It has knocked from pillar to post and reposed in all manner of places. When my soul waxes riotous, I bring it forth, and lo! I am again a lamb. It cures all ills of the age and is a sovereign remedy for self-conceit. 'Mistake' is writ broad in fiery letters. The influences at work in me, from Zangwill to Marx, are obvious. I would have portrayed types and ideals of which I know nothing, and so, trusted myself to false wings. You showed me your earliest printed production last night; reciprocating. I show you one written at the time I first knew Hamilton. I felt I had something there, but I certainly missed it. . . . Tell me the weak points, not of course in diction, etc. Tell me what rings false to you. And be unsparing, else shall I have to class you with the rest of my friends, and it is not complimentary to them if they only knew it. . . ."

Here, in form of query, one comes upon his first enunciation of a civil policy which he often repeated as the years went by:

"Feb. 10, 1900.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

“. . . What do you think about marriage being made more difficult, and divorce correspondingly easy?

“I have had quite good success with McClure’s. You remember my mailing that story of a minister who apostasizes? And the vile sinner who did not? McClure’s accepted it if I would agree to the cutting of the opening and the elimination of certain swear words. Of course I agreed, as it was an affair of 6000 words. Two days after that came an acceptance, from McClure’s, of ‘The Question of the Maximum’ — that socialistic essay I read to you. What do you think of that for a conservative house? I mean conservative politically. . . . They also wanted to see more of my fiction, wanted to have me submit a long story if I had one, and if I had a collection of short stories they wanted to examine them for publication.

“Have finished ‘The Son of the Wolf’ proofsheets — 251 pages of print in it.

“. . . ‘I have told you that I consider absolute pauperism almost as objectionable as wealth.’ Now, say, I wonder if you mean it? Of course you are inconsistent. Of course you sacrificed (serially) your name and workmanship by changing the story. And further, you did it for money. You can’t defend yourself, you know you can’t. Why not come out and be brutally frank about it like I am? You are doing the very same thing when you write hack-work. Press or Journal and Black Cat prize stories — money, that’s all. Simmer yourself down and sum yourself up in a square way for just once. Be consistent, even though you be vile as I in the matter of dollars and cents.

“. . . Have lost steerage way in the matter of writing. Have done twenty-two hundred words in five days, and gone out every night, and feel as though I can never write again. Isn’t it fright-ful! Lord! Who wouldn’t sell a farm and go to writing! Say, I think I have stuck Munsey’s with a thirty-two hundred word essay. I wonder if it can be possible. Wave has not ponied up yet.”

And he tenders a bit of futile prophesy:

“Have evolved new ideas about warfare, or rather, assimilated them. If my article is published soon, upon that subject, I shall send it to you. Anyway, to make it short, war as a direct attainment of an end, is no longer possible. The world has seen its last decisive battle. Economics, not force, will decide future wars. Of course all this is postulated between first-class powers, or first-class soldiers; not frontier squabbles. Nor would I classify the fighting in the Transvaal as a squabble. Unless there is a grave blunder, and unless the British do not too heavily reinforce, it will be found that neither British nor Boers can advance. Which ever side advances, advances to its own destruction.

Miss Strunsky had "enticed" him into abrogating a "pet aversion" — the reading of a magazine serial being Mr. J. M. Barrie's "Tommy and Grizel." "I found I could not lay it down," he confesses to Cloudesley, "so I am stuck to the job for a year."

Then come a few remarks upon lost manuscripts:

"Your Call and 'Wave' rackets remind me of what happened to me recently. Last fall I lost a forty-six hundred word story with Colliers Weekly. I wrote them, after due time, and they sent me a full-page letter explaining that it had never reached them, and that they had no record of it. To show them I still had confidence, I later on sent them another. It too became overdue and I trailed it. And lo and behold, the other day arrived both MSS. The first one I had long since retyped.

"My dear fellow, had I not been 'an animal with a logical nature' I should not be here to-day. It is only because I was so that I did not perish or stagnate by the wayside. I have been called stern, cold, cruel, unyielding, etc., and why? Because I did not wish to stop off at their particular station and remain for the rest of my days. Money? Money will give me all things, or at least more of all things than I could otherwise possess. It may even take me over to the other side of the world to meet my affinity; while without it I might mismate at home and live miserable till the game was played out.

"Got an acceptance from Youth's Companion the other day — qualified — if I would make the opening a little longer. . . . You remember the 'Wave'? I sent them yesterday a brief note, enclosing with it half a dozen pawn checks and a two-cent stamp. I am wondering what they will do."

"Feb. 17, 1900.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Thanks for Julian Ralph's 'Picture of New War Problems.' Find it herewith returned. If it has interested you, I am sure my article will, for I treat the machinery of war at length, and then go into the economic and political aspects. . . . I am intending to write an essay entitled 'They That Rise by the Sword' shortly. And just you wait till I come out with my 'Salt of the Earth.'

"So, when you are doing your best work you only do about four or five hundred a day. Good. Most good. I hope you will live up to it. I insist that good work cannot be done at the rate of three or four thousand a day. Good work is not strung out from the inkwell. It is built like a wall, every brick carefully selected, etc., etc.

". . . Ruskin, at the height of his fame, and turning out his best work in the Cornhill, had the series of essays stopped in the middle by Thackeray because they were daring. And daring, mark you, not for their attacks on religion, but for their attacks on the prevailing school of political economy. The same Thackeray refused one of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's best poems because it was risque. . . . I'm afraid Thackeray was a snob, a cad, and a whole lot of other things which he in turn has so successfully impaled for the regard of the British reading public."

In a letter dated March 1 after a dissertation upon an article by William H. Maple, "Does Matter Think?" Jack concludes with:

"Why, the man positively reeks of Herbert Spencer interpreted by Prof. Haeckel. Not that I am impugning his article; far from it. But he has simply put into his own words what he has learned from them, and he has done it well. Spencer was not openly, that is, didactically favorable to a material basis for thought, mind, soul, etc., but John Fiske has done many queer gymnastics in order to reconcile Spencer, whose work he worships, to his own beliefs in immortality and God. But he doesn't succeed very well. He jumps on Haeckel, with both feet, but in my modest opinion, Haeckel's position is as yet unassailable.

"Am working busily away; have to finish a McClure's story, an Atlantic story, and my speech before the Oakland Section for the eleventh of this month. Then I positively must write a Black Cat story. As yet haven t even worked out a plot, or idea. Was going to send them my 'Man with the Gash,' but McClure's accepted it. It was the MS. which I recently told you of — lost at Collier's Weekly, etc., and returned after I had taken a duplicate from the original longhand. Been refused by all sorts of publications and now McClure's are to publish it in the magazine. They paid me well. The two stories and essay which they accepted aggregated fifteen thousand words, for which they sent me three hundred dollars — twenty dollars per thousand. Best pay I have yet received. Why certes, if they wish to buy me, body and soul, they are welcome — if they pay the price. I am writing for money; if I can procure fame, that means more money. More money means more life to me. I shall always hate the task of getting money; every time I sit down to write it is with great disgust. I'd sooner be out in the open wandering around most any old place. So the habit of money-getting will never become one of my vices. But the habit of money spending, ah God! I shall always be its victim. I received the three hundred last Monday. I have now about four dollars in pocket, have not moved, don't see how I can financially; owe a few debts yet, etc. How's that for about three days?

". . . If a man, in controversy, becomes undignified, he certainly is beneath your notice, and you likewise lose your dignity if you do notice him. And surely, if he remains dignified, you are the last in the world to become undignified. Life is strife, but it also happens to stand for certain amenities."

". . . Sold Youth's Companion a four thousand word story which they say is the best I have yet sent them; that makes two since you were up." About this juncture, shortly after the first of March, I made the acquaintance of this vivid character, so paradoxical to the chance observer, but whom I have failed to find paradoxical. In the next letter, dated March 10, 1900, Jack mentions our meeting, which I have treated in detail in the Prologue of this book.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

". . . Honestly, though, rubbing with the world will not harm you if you take the rubs aright. Not only wild and woolly rubbing, but intellectual rubbing. The most healthful experience in the world for you who are rather versatile and universal, would be bumping into specialists who would handle you without gloves. Such has been for me the best education in the world, and I look for it more and more. Man must have better men to measure himself against, else his advance will be nil, or if at all, one-sided and whimsical. The paced rider makes better speed than the unpaced.

"I can sympathize with you in your disgust for Harold. [A town.] A year of it would drive me mad, judging from the pictures. Outside of your own work what intellectual life can you have? You are thrown back upon yourself. Too apt to become self-centered; to measure other things by yourself than to measure yourself by other things. . . . Man is gregarious, and never more so when intellectual companions are harder to find than mere species companions.

". . . I am only averaging about 350 words per day, now, and can't increase the speed to save me; but, it s either very good work, or else it is trash; in either case I am losing nothing, for I am measuring myself and learning things which will bring returns some future day." [Here follows the reference to his call at my home.]

"March 15, 1910.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Your Wave episode reminds me of my Journal one. I have sold 2000 words for one dollar and a half; but the work was bad and I would do the same again. But I can't exactly see it when I am offered three fifty for 2200 words of very good work. I wonder what such people think a fellow lives on. ". . . To be well fitted for the tragedy of existence (intellectual existence) one must have a working philosophy, a synthesis of things. Do you write, and talk, and build upon a foundation which, you know is securely laid? Or do you not rather build with a hazy idea of 'to hell with the foundation?' In token of this: What significance do the following generalities have for you: Matter is indestructible; motion is continuous; Force is persistent; the relations among forces are persistent; the transformation of forces is the equivalence of forces; etc., etc.? And if you do find in these generalities some significance relating to the foundation (way down) of your philosophy of life, what general single idea of the Cosmos do they (which are relative manifestations of the absolute), convey to you? How may you, therefore, without having mastered this idea or law (they are all laws), put down the very basic stone of your foundation? Have you ever thought that all life, all the universe of which you may in any way have knowledge of, bows to a law of continuous redistribution of matter? Have you read or thought that there is a dynamic principle, true of the metamorphosis of the universe, of the metamorphoses of the details of the universe, which will express these ever-changing relations? Nobody can tell you what this dynamic principle is, or why; but you may learn how it works. Do you know what this principle is? If you do, have you studied it, ay, carefully and painstakingly? And if you have not done these things, which have naught to do with creeds, or dogmas, with politics or economics, with race prejudices or passions; but which are the principles upon which they all work, to which they all answer because of law; if you have not, then can you say that you have a firm foundation for your philosophy of life? . . . .

". . . 'Screaming nonsense' — my article on war. You amuse me. Permit me to demolish you. What do you know of the Mauser rifles which are not as yet even in use in South Africa? They have only recently been tested in

Holland. Let me demolish you out of your own mouth. Can you conceive of a man pointing, without removing from shoulder, a gun in any given direction for one second, or moving it, during that second at an approximately same elevation for a second? (this isn't sharpshooting, but repelling a rush attack of a body of men). Also, can you conceive that man is capable of pressing a finger steadily (no clicking, no removing or ejecting of shells on his part) upon a trigger for one second? And can you conceive a man capable of inventing a device, which, under steady pressure, will deliver six blows sufficiently heavy to explode by impact six caps set in the ends of six cartridges? If you cannot conceive these things, then I do sincerely pity you; it would be then the fault of your ancestors.

"Did you think that it was necessary for a sharpshooter to shoot so rapidly as all that? Did you think I was fool enough to think so? Cloudesley! Cloudesley! You say that you firmly believe that any position which can be approached at doublequick can be carried at the point of the bayonet by a body twice the strength of the defenders. Cold steel, mind you. Do you happen to know that Hiram Maxim writes his name with a Maxim gun upon a target at two thousand yards? Cold steel!

"You misunderstand the whole trend of my article, which meant first the struggle between first-class soldiers of the first-class European powers, and said powers are on about an equal war-footing. Secondly, my aim was to show, that war being so impossible, that men would not go up against each other to be exterminated, but that a deadlock would happen instead. Thus bringing in the economic factor. Because I stated that warfare was so deadly, I did not state that it would be applied. Rather would the deadlock occur. Read my article again. You missed the whole drift of it.

"Here comes Whitaker, I have to speak over in Alameda in an hour, so must quit.

". . . I expect to have a try at the Black Cat in a couple of days, if only the damned plot will come. Am too busy now to think upon it."

It is noteworthy that in the article referred to above, "The Impossibility of War," Jack London actually foretold the method of warfare that obtained in the Great War fourteen years thereafter:

"Soldiers will be compelled to creep forward, burying themselves in the earth like moles. Future wars must be long. No more open fields; no more decisive victories; but a succession of sieges, fought over and through successive lines of widely-extending fortifications. The defeated army —

supposing it can be defeated — will retire slowly, entrenching itself step by step, and most likely with steam entrenching machines. And he went on to emphasize the greater deadliness of artillery owing to “the use of range-finders, chemical instead of mechanical mixtures of powder, high explosives, increase of range, and rapid fire.”

To Anna Strunsky, March 15, 1900, whom he had sent a box of his early MSS:

“Dear Anna: —

“Regarding box . . . please remember that I have disclosed myself in my nakedness — all those vain efforts and passionate strivings are so many weaknesses of mine which I put into your possession. Why, the grammar is often frightful, and always bad, while artistically, the whole boxful is atrocious. Now don’t say I am piling it on. If I did not realize and condemn those faults I would be unable to try to do better. But — why, I think in sending that box to you I did the bravest thing I ever did in my life.

“Say, do you know I am getting nervous and soft as a woman. I’ve got to get out again and stretch my wings or I shall become a worthless wreck. I am getting timid, do you hear? Timid! It must stop. Enclosed letter I received to-day, and it brought a contrast to me of my then ‘unfailing nerve’ and my present nervousness and timidity. Return it, as I suppose I shall have to answer it some day.

“. . . I have to speak in Alameda to-night — ’Question of the Maximum.’ Might as well work it for all there is in it, before it is published. [In “War of the Classes.”]

“Am thinking about moving — getting cramped in my present quarters; but O the turmoil and confusion and time lost during such an operation!

“Freda and Mrs. Eppingwell [Characters in short story ‘Scorn of Women’] have fought it out, and I have just reached the climax of the scene with Floyd Vanderlip in Freda’s cabin. I did not treat it in the way I suggested. Instead of her wasting a sacredly shameful experience upon a man of his stamp, I had her appeal to him sensuously (I think I handled it all right). So the conclusion of the story is only about a day away from now. Then hurrah for the East — if McClure accepts it, it will mean about one hundred and eighty dollars. He (McClure) sent me a photograph, large and framed, yesterday, and when I could find no free place upon my walls to hang it, I decided to perambulate. Almost wish a fire would come along and burn me out. It would be quicker, you know.

“ . . . I am cursed with friends. I have grown accustomed to their clamoring for my company, and unconsciously feel that my presence (to them) is desirable. This mood is dangerously apt to become chronic. Need I say it so manifested itself Saturday night? And need I say that your company has ever been a great delight to me? That I would not have sought it had I not desired it? That (like you have said of yourself), when you no longer interest me I shall no longer be with you? Need I say these things to prove my candor?

“As to the box. Please take good care of the contents. And don’t mix them up, please. I haven’t written any poetry for months. Those you see are my experiments . . . and though they be failures I have not surrendered. When I am financially secure, some day, I shall continue with them — unless I have prostituted myself beyond redemption.

“To-day I am just learning to write all over again. When you can display as many failures, and have yet achieved nothing, then it is time for you to say that you cannot write. You have no right to say that now. And if you do say so, then you are a coward. Better not begin unless you are not afraid to work, work, work, to work early and late, unremittingly and always.

“. . . Do you show them to no one. Like the leper, I have exposed my sores; be gentle with me, and merciful in your judgment. And remember, they are for your encouragement. Anna, you have a good brain, also magnificent emotional qualities, and insofar you are favored above women in possession. But carry Strawn-Hamilton before you. No system, no application. But carry also Mr. Bamford’s quoted warning from ‘Watson’s Hymn to the Sea.’ Don’t apply what you have, wrongly. Don’t beat yourself away vainly, etc. This was not the lecture I intended giving you; that was on other lines.

“But Anna, don’t let the world lose you; for insomuch that it does lose you, insomuch you have sinned.” “962 East 16th St., March 24, 1910.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“Am pulling out on my wheel for San José; so pardon rush.

“I, at the eleventh hour, from a chance newspaper clipping, caught the motif for a Black Cat yarn. Behold, it is finished and off. How’s this for a title? ‘The Minions of Midas’? . . . 5000 words in length. [‘Moon-Face’ collection.] I did not write it for a first, second or third prize, but for one of the minor ones. I knew what motif was necessary for a first prize Black Cat story, but I could not invent such a motif.

“. . . Shall be back next Tuesday 27th.”

MARRIAGE TO BESSIE MADDERN

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XX

“1130 East 15th St.,
“Oakland, Calif.,
“April 3, 1900.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“Thanks for the stamps. And by the way, before I get on to more serious things, let me speak of ‘The Son of the Wolf.’ For fear you invest in a copy if I don’t I want to tell you that I shall send you one as soon as they come to hand. There is only one advance copy on the Coast, and I haven’t seen that one yet. They say it is all right.

“You must be amused, lest you die. Here goes. You will observe that I have moved. Good! Next Saturday I shall be married. Better? Eh? Will send announcement of the funeral later.

“Jack London.”

Mr. Johns’s acknowledgment of the foregoing was laconic in the extreme, consisting of a sacred name of two words with an initial between, followed by an exclamation point. The same mail had brought to my Aunt, Mrs. Eames, the letter quoted in the Prologue. In her hands was the one advance copy of “The Son of the Wolf,” to which Jack refers above.

Briefly, it seems to have come about in this way: Pressed for space in the small cottage, especially in the 10 by 10 den which served as work-room, bedroom for himself and any chance guest, and for living-room as well, Jack at last found means to make a change and move his mother and nephew and himself to a nice two-story house at 1130 East Fifteenth Street, flanked by a neat garden. In it were seven rooms, including a large bay-windowed parlor, and an upstairs study 13 by 15 feet. And joy upon joy, an attic where Jack could store his accumulating “gear.”

Jack and Elizabeth Maddern had been exchanging instruction in English and “math” in the Fifteenth Street dwelling and the young woman had joined with Eliza in fixing up Jack’s new den. His idea of adding a member to the household was born of the moment. He lay on his back in the middle of the floor, lost in a book, while sister and friend put his small but swelling library on some shelves he had had thrown together by a carpenter. Eliza, happening to glance aside, saw him turn over on his elbows, and, supporting his head on his hands, regard Miss Maddern fixedly as she moved about. His eyes filled with visions, and he dropped his face and lay still for a long time. Eliza, with a pang, sensed what had come to him, but held her peace. Looking back upon it, he wrote: “I was convinced absolutely that I knew the last word about love and life.”

That evening, by force of argument, Jack convinced the girl of the wisdom of a union such as he proposed, or at least gained her consent, and next morning dropped into his sister’s house:

“I am going to be married,” he said without preamble. Eliza, as mask-like of face and feelings as ever he could be, replied, Good! I’m glad of it!” and undertook, at her brother’s request, to break the news to his mother. Flora London, who had been basking in the dream of this large, new, clean house where she would be mistress, was not enthusiastic at the idea of being superseded. Jack’s cozy little plan did not work out so automatically as he had hoped; three months after the return of the bride from honeymoon to home all decorated with flowers by Eliza, that same sister-in-law, again at Jack’s plea, superintended another removal, namely of Flora London and Johnnie Miller, into a cottage on Sixteenth Street, almost behind Jack’s home. Eliza appears to have avoided all interference and only consented to step in from time to time when Jack’s feminine affairs tangled to the imminence of his great disgust. Little was said upon these occasions between brother and sister. One look at his gray face, a word or two from the tightened bow of his lips concerning the nature of his need, and Eliza, without undue antagonizing of the others, set about regulating matters as fairly as possible.

While one delves for further enlightenment upon Jack London’s sanction for this abrupt and loveless union, it may well be surmised that his feeling for Anna Strunsky played its part. Up to now, and beyond, his head determined the way of his life, for the day had not come when the big, ripe, man-heart of him overturned the fanes he had so carefully erected, and caused him to volunteer that “Love is the greatest thing in the world.” As for Anna, the very dart and smart of their intellectual comradery rendered her an unrest. His plans for the future were so nicely ordered toward a systematic schedule of writing — to the aim of successful living, to be sure

— that he could not consider the feverish temperamental life that was likely to be if he joined his with Anna's. How much the very fear of being drawn into such a situation entered into his sudden resolve to take no chances on that side, and to marry, as he did marry, we shall never know.

Cloudesley Johns, upon receipt of the printed announcement, wrote Jack:

"Harold, Cal., April 12, 1900.

"Dear Jack: —

May I defer my congratulations of you and Mrs. Jack for ten years? Then I shall hope to tender them — Thursday, April 7th, 1910. Don't forget: try to expect them.

"Your mind will be much occupied for a time with your change of residence and condition, and mine is hibernating at present, so I would suggest that you take up my last letter, and reply to it, — say June 1st.

"I heartily wish you both permanent satisfaction.

"Cloudesley Johns."

"1130 East 15th St., April 16, 1900.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Why certainly you may defer congratulations till April 7, 1910. Permit me to felicitate you upon your last letter bar this one I am answering. We all had a good laugh over it and enjoyed it immensely. I was away on the little wedding trip when it arrived, and my sister (you met her), looked at it and said she'd give ten dollars to see what you had to say. And it was worth it.

"No, I'll not answer it. Am not laconic enough.

". . . Got settled down to work to-day, and did the first thousand words in three weeks, and hereafter the old rate must continue. Say, a year ago I wrote a two thousand word skit or storiette called 'Their Alcove.' First, second, and third raters refused out of hand. Sent it to the Women's Home Companion, and with out a word of warning, and in quick time, came back an acceptance accompanied by a twenty dollar check. Most took my breath away.

"May 2, 1900.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

" . . . No; at the moment I get a good phrase I am not thinking of how much it will fetch in the market, but when I sit down to write I am; and all the time I am writing, deep down, underneath the whole business, is that same commercial spirit. I don't think I would write very much if I didn't have to."

Also on May 2, Jack wrote to Anna:

"How sorry I am. Friday I am chairman at the Ruskin Club dinner and cannot possibly escape. Thursday I speak in 'Frisco, and Saturday am bound out to dinner. . . . However, may I put you down for afternoon and dinner on Wednesday, May 9th?

"How enthusiastic your letters always make me feel. Makes it seem as though some new energy had been projected into the world and that I cannot fail gathering part of it to myself. No; God does not punish confidence; but he grinds between the upper and the nether millstone all those of little faith and little heart, and he grinds them very fine. Of course you will succeed if — you will work — and certainly you seem to suffer from a superabundance of energy. Apply this energy, rightly and steadily, and the world will open its arms to you. You are all right; the world is all right; the question is: will you have the patience to gain the ear of the world. You will have to shout loud, for the world is rather deaf, and you may have to shout long. But the world sometimes opens its ears at the first call. May it be thus with you.

"Jack."

In a letter of June 3, he mentioned having received a letter from Charles Warren Stoddard. The correspondence between these two prospered for years, during which the older man addressed Jack "Dear Son," and Jack responded with "Dear Dad." They never met. In this same letter of June 3 to Mr. Johns, Jack goes on:

"Have sold a couple of hundred more dollars worth of good stuff to McClure's at least I think it is good — 'The Grit of Women' [published August, 1900] and 'The Law of Life' [published March, 1901, both stories in McClure's, and later collected in volumes 'The God of His Fathers' and 'Children of the Frost.' respectively.]

"Got the proof sheets of a 'S. F. Examiner' story in and am correcting them . . . 'Which Makes Men Remember.' [Published June 24, 1900, under title 'Uri Bram's God.']

". . . So! I am married, and I cannot start to Paris in July, dough or no dough — that's why I got married.

"But none the less I heartily envy you your trip. I think maybe I'11 take a vacation on the road this summer just for ducks and to gather material, or rather, to freshen up what I have long since accreted — how would you judge of my use of that last word?

"Smart Set? I may go in for one of the lesser prizes. Can't tell yet. Outing has asked a bunch of Northland stories of me and I am busy hammering away at them just now." In the next letter, June 16, he winds up advice to writers:

". . . Pour all yourself into your work until your work becomes you, but nowhere let yourself be apparent. When, in the 'Ebb Tide,' the schooner is at the pearl island, and the missionary pearler meets those three desperate men and puts his will against theirs for life or death, does the reader think Stevenson? . . . Nay, nay. Afterwards, when all is over, he recollects, and wonders and loves Stevenson — but at the time? Not he . . . study your Be loved's 'Ebb Tide.' . . . Study your detestable Kipling. Study them and see how they eliminate themselves and create things that live, and breathe, and grip men, and cause reading lamps to burn overtime. Atmosphere stands always for the elimination of the artist, that is to say, the atmosphere is the artist. . . .

". . . Think it over and see if you catch what I am driving at. Of course, if you intend fiction, then write fiction from the highest standpoint of fiction. . . . Put in life, and movement — and for God's sake no creaking. Damn you! Forget you! And then the world will remember you. . . . Pour all yourself into your work until your work becomes you, but nowhere let yourself be apparent."

Upon a long-coveted day when, debts cleared and cash left in pocket, for once square with the world, Jack strolled along Oakland's Broadway, it occurred to him that he could actually step into any of the familiar shops and purchase things that had burned in his desire since he could remember. Smiling to himself, he stopped before one window after another until he came to halt beside some small boys gloating and whispering before a candy store display. And suddenly an emptiness gnawed in him — something had gone out of his life. It was too late — desire had fled upon tired wings, and there was nothing that he, with silver at last heavy in his pocket of excellent cloth, cared to buy. It came with a shock. From the pocket he withdrew a hand bulging with loose change and bestowed it upon the little boys, with a catch in his throat almost marveling at the eagerness in their faces — which turned into something akin to suspicion, for a man must be crazy to shell out so much money at one time. And Jack passed on sadly enough, doubtlessly a trifle sorry for himself. "There wasn't a thing I wanted any more," he told his sister. "It had come too late."

Jack and his wife take a holiday at the seashore, at Santa Cruz, upon return from which he writes:

"July 23, 1900.

"Dear Cloudesley:

"Back from vacation at last! And hard at it. This is thirty-fifth letter. Ye Gods!

"Did I tell you McClure has bought me (as you would call it), but as I would say, has agreed to advance me one hundred and twenty-five per month for five months in order that I may try my hand at a novel? Well, it is so, and I start in shortly, though filled with dismay in anticipation.

"Did you read that storiette of mine Semper Idem; Semper Fidelis? About fifteen hundred words, dealing with a man who cut his throat, bungled it, was cautioned by the doctor at the hospital as to how he might bungle it, and who went out, profited by the advice, and did it successfully? Well, I have sent it everywhere. At last I sent it to Black Cat. I would have sold it for a dollar. But the Black Cat gave me a sort of poor mouth, said it had hospital stuff to last it two years, etc., and that under the circumstances it could only offer me fifty dollars for it! Say! Most took my breath away. A fifteen hundred word sketch, The Husky, I refused to sell some time ago for $3.50, and Harper's Weekly bought it for twenty dollars. Say, those hang fire MSS. seem the best after all."

The next letter, dated July 31, 1900, is to Anna Strunsky:

"Comrades! and surely it seems so. For all the petty surface turmoil which marked our coming to know each other, really, deep down, there was no confusion at all. Did you not notice it? To me, while I said, 'You do not understand,' I none the less felt the happiness of satisfaction — how shall I say? felt, rather, that there was no inner conflict; that we were attuned, somehow; that a real unity underlaid everything. The ship, new-launched, rushes to the sea; the sliding-ways rebel in weakling creaks and groans; but sea and ship hear them not: So with us when we rushed into each other's lives — we, the real we, were undisturbed. Comrades! Ay, world without end!

"And now, comrade mine, how long are those Shakespeare papers to keep you from 'Consciousness of Kind?' You know how anxiously I wait the outcome, and how much you have improved. And Anna, read your classics, but don't forget to read that which is of to-day, the new-born literary art. You must get the modern touch; form must be considered; and while art is eternal, form is born of the generations. And O, Anna, if you will only put your flashing soul with its protean moods on paper! What you need is the form, or, in other words, the expression. Get this and the world is at your feet.

"And when are we to read 'The Flight of the Duchess'? And when are you coming over?"

"Sept. 9/00.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"So am I up against it — and just got started against it. Am winding up the first chapter of novel ['A Daughter of the Snows']. Since it is my first attempt, I have chosen a simple subject and shall simply endeavor to make it true, artistic, and interesting. But afterward, when I have learned better how to handle a sustained effort, I shall choose a greater subject. I wish I were done.

". . . There are a number of Le Gallienne's quatrains which I like better than corresponding quatrains of Fitzgerald's. Perhaps the literary mentors will not bear me out in this, but none the less, so far as I am concerned, it is so. . . .

"Am beginning to take exercise once again. Indian clubs, jumping, etc., every day, wheelrides every day, and baths three or four times per week — swimming I mean. Am just back from practising in diving, and am stiff and sore with practising front and back somersaults. . . . Expect to take up fencing later on, and the gloves, and shooting. It is Voltaire, I believe, who said: 'The body of an athlete and the soul of a sage; that is happiness.' I am trying to assimilate Spencer's philosophy just now, so there is a chance that I may yet attain to happiness." Meanwhile, Jack and Anna had formulated the project of writing in collaboration, to thresh out their opposing ideas by means of a correspondence as between two men, upon the subject of Love.

To Mr. Johns, Oct. 17, 1900, Jack mentions this work:

"Didn't I explain my volume of letters? Well, it's this way: A young Russian Jewess of 'Frisco and myself have often quarreled over our conceptions of love. She happens to be a genius. She is also a materialist by philosophy, and an idealist by innate preference, and is constantly being forced to twist all the facts of the universe in order to reconcile herself with herself. So, finally, we decided that the only way to argue the question out would be by letter. Then we wondered if a collection of such letters should happen to be worth publishing. Then we assumed characters, threw in a real objective love element, and started to work. Of course, don't know yet how it will turn out. We're both doing some very good work — in spots; but we are agreed, in case they merit it, to go over when we are done."

"Nov. 27th.

"Dear Anna:

"I have been sitting here crying, like a big baby. I have just finished reading 'Jude the Obscure.' Perhaps it is not as great as 'Tess,' but in a way it is greater. When are you coming over that I may lend it to you? With two such books to his name Hardy should die content. Well may he look upon his work and call it good.

"Jack."

To Mr. Johns, Dec. 10, 1900:

"You can't get away from the materialistic conception of history. . . . Ideas do not rule, never have ruled; where they have appeared to rule, it was merely because economic or material conditions were such as to have first generated the ideas, and secondly, to have been in harmony with the working of them."

And Dec. 22:

"Yes, after much delay, I captured Cosmopolitan prize. I flatter myself that I am one of the rare socialists who have ever suc-ceeded in making money out of their socialism. Apropos of this, I send you copy of a letter received day before yesterday from Brisbane Walker. Of course I shall not accept it. I do not wish to be bound. Which same you do think I am. Not so. McClure's have not bound me, nor will they. [This refers to the offer of an editorship.] I want to be free, to write of what delights me, whensoever and wheresoever it delights me. No office work for me; no routine; no doing this set task and that set task. No man over me. I think McClure's have recognized this, and will treat me accordingly. Aside from pecuniary considerations, I think they are the best publishers, or magazine editors, in their personal dealings, that I have run across.

"Speaking of illustrations, did you see how beautifully Ainslie's did by my story in December number? Incidentally, without asking my permission, here and there they succeeded in cutting out fully five hundred words, which I shall reinsert when published in book form. I suppose the one hundred and twenty-five they paid for it was considered sufficient justification for mangling."

On the day after Christmas, he wrote to Anna:

“Comrade Mine: —

“Thus it was I intended addressing you a Christmas greeting, saying, as it seemed to me, for you, the finest thing in the world. But it was impossible. For a week I have been suffering from the blues, during which time I have not done a stroke of work. Am writing this with cold fingers, at six in the morning — going for a day on the water, fishing, shooting, etc., to see if there are any curative forces left in the universe.

“Ah, we refuse not to speak, and yet we speak brokenly and stumblingly! True, too true. The paradox of social existence, to be truthful, we lie; to live true, we live untruthfully. The social wisdom is a thing of great worth — to the mass. For the few it is a torment, upon it they are crucified — not for their salvation, but for the salvation of the mass. I grow, sometimes, almost to hate the mass, to sneer at dreams of reform. To be superior to the mass is to be the slave of the mass. The mass knows no slavery. It is the task master.

“But how does this concern you and me! Ah, does it not con-cern us? We may refuse not to speak, yet we speak brokenly and stumblingly — because of the mass. The tyranny of the crowd, as I suppose Gerald Stanley Lee would put it. As for me, just when freedom seems opening up to me, I feel the bands tightening and the riveting of the gyves. I remember, now, when I was free. When there was no restraint, and I did what the heart willed. Yes, one restraint, the Law; but when one willed, one could fight the law, and break or be broken. But now, one’s hands are tied, one may not fight, but only yield and bow the neck. After all, the sailor on the sea and the worker in the shop are not so burdened. To break or be broken, there they stand. But to be broken while not daring to break, there s the rub.

“I could almost advocate a return to nature this dark morning. A happiness to me? — added unto me? — why, you have been a delight to me, dear, and a glory. Need I add, a trouble? For the things we love are the things which hurt us as well as the things we hurt. Ah, believe me, believe me. ‘I have not winced or cried aloud.’ The things unsaid are the greatest. Surely, sitting here, gathering data, classifying, arranging ; writing stories for boys with moral purposes insidiously inserted; hammering away at a thousand words a day; growing genuinely excited over biological objections; thrusting a bit of fun at you and raising a laugh, when it should have been a sob — surely all this is not all. What you have been to me? I am not great enough or brave enough to say. This false thing, which the world would call my conscience, will not permit me. But it is not mine: it is the social conscience, the world's which goes with the world's leg-bar chain. A white beautiful friendship? — between a man and a woman? — the world cannot imagine such a thing, would deem it inconceivable as infinity or non-infinity."

LETTERS: CLOUDESLEY JOHNS AND ANNA STRUNSKY

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XXI

LETTERS opening the year 1901, hint at Jack's general state of inner consciousness, his worldly condition, and sentiments on the consummation of fatherhood, so dearly desired from merest boyhood.

"1130 East 15th St., Jan. 5/01.

"Dear Cloudesley:

". . . I have written probably one hundred and ten thousand this [past] year, against your ninety-odd; but I think that I loafed or did other things less, and that each thousand took me longer than each of your thousands did you.

To tell you the truth, Cloudesley, I haven't had any decent work published recently — work which I would care to have you read — socialistic essay excepted, and that I was unable to get a whack at in the proof sheets.

". . . Christmas is just past. Further a friend has taken up writing with seven children and an undeveloped ability, which said friend I have been helping to finance. Another, both ankles broken badly some time since. Then my mother, to whose pension I add thirty dollars each month, got back in her debts and I have just finished straightening her out. And my Mammie Jennie (negro foster mother) came down upon me for December quarterly payment of interest on mortgage, and delinquent taxes. Furthermore, within a week I expect my wife to be confined. . . . January check non est, and I have been going along on borrowed money since before Christmas."

"Sunday Morning, Jan. 6/01.

"Dear Anna: —

"I had intended writing you yesterday, asking you to come over Monday evening and go with me to that equal suffragist club before which Whitaker was to read. Then Tuesday I could have taken your picture. But I had forgotten Mrs. Gowell's lectures. . . . Also found out that Monday was not the night and that we would have our regular boxing bout.

"So Saturday, but come early . . . so that I may take advantage of the sun. This, then, be the qualification: if I do not telephone you otherwise. Possibly ere that time, the boy — I do pray for a boy — shall have arrived. In which case, you must come. So Saturday, early. . . . My birthday. A quarter of a century of breath. I feel very old.

"Of the New Comer, I thank you for what you say. It will be in itself a dear consummation. Then must come the patient determining. And, O Anna, it must be make or break. No whining puny breed. It must be great and strong. Or — the penalty must be paid. By it, by me; one or the other. So be.

"I shall be glad to go in for the Ibsen circle. I need more of that in my life."

"Feb. 4/01.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Not dead, but rushed as usual. Have got down to my regular five hours and a half sleep again and running by the clock. Am just answering a whole stack of letters.

"Well, there's no accounting for things. I did so ardently long to be a father, that it seemed impossible that such a happiness should be mine. But it is. And a damn fine, healthy youngster. Weighed nine and a half pounds at birth, which they say is good for a girl. Up to date has shown a good stomach and lack of ailments, for it does nothing but eat and sleep, or lie awake for a straight hour without a whimper. Intend to call her 'Joan.' Tell me how you like it, what associations it calls up.

". . . As regards 'bumming by force from peoples inhabiting lands we cannot thrive in?' Does not our modern slavery serve to deteriorate us, affecting our own government? While counting the profit you must not ignore the loss. . . . Do you not realize that whatever is 'is right and wise.' Certainly it may be made wiser and more right in the natural course of evolution (and then again it mayn't), but the point is that it is the best possible under the circumstances. Given so much matter, and so much force, and beginning at the beginning of things as regards this our world, do you not know that it could not have worked out in any other way, nay, not in the least jot or tittle could it have been other than it was. We may make it better; and then again we may not.

"As Dr. Ross somewhere says: 'Evolution is no kindly mother to us. We do not know what moment it may turn against us and destroy us.' Don't you see; I speak not of the things that should be; nor of the things I should like to be; but I do speak of the things that are and will be. I should like to have socialism; yet I know that socialism is not the very next step; I know that capitalism must live its life first. That the world must be exploited to the utmost first; that first must intervene a struggle for life among the nations, severer, intenser, more widespread, than ever before. I should much more prefer to wake to-morrow in a smoothly-running socialistic state; but I know I shall not; I know it cannot come that way. I know that a child must go through its child's sicknesses ere it becomes a man. So, always, remember that I speak of the things that are; not of the things that should be.

"Find enclosed Cosmopolitan letters. I stood off first one and wrote to McClure's. They have agreed to go on with me, giving me utter freedom. So you see, at least they have not bought me body and soul. Honestly, they are the most human editors I ever dealt with. When I think about them, it is more as very dear friends, than people I am doing business with. However, in refusing Cosmopolitan offer, which meant giving up freedom, I think I have acted for the best. What think you?"

"Feb. 13/01.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Well, I am on the home stretch of the novel, and it is a failure. This is not said in a fit of the blues, but from calm conviction. However, on the other hand, I have learned a great deal concerning the writing of novels. On this one which I have attempted, I could write three books of equal size showing wherein I failed, and why, and laying down principles violated, etc. 0, it's been a great study. I shall be at work finishing it for the rest of the month — you know I always finish whatever I begin. I never leave a thing in such a state that in the time to come haunting thoughts may creep in — 'If I only had gone on,' etc. "McClure's are getting ready to bring out a second collection of Klondike stories — not so good as the first, however.

"March I shall take a vacation, and April I intend writing my long-deferred 'Salt of the Earth.' . . .

"I see you laugh at me and my optimistic philosophy. So be. I only wish you would study up the materialistic conception of history, then you would understand my position."

Again Jack moves his family, this time to an ornate Italian villa, “La Capriccioso,” on the shores of Oakland’s pleasure-pond, Lake Merritt, designed and built by his good friend the sculptor, Felix Peano:

“1062 First Avenue,
“Oakland, Calif.,

“March 15/01.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“Note by address that I have moved. Last seen of old house there was a foot and a half of water under it, and the back yard a lake. Am much more finely situated now, nearer to Oakland, with finer view, surroundings, air, etc., etc. Do you remember Lake Merritt? — a body of water which you might have seen from the electric cars on the way to my place from down town. I am located right near it, and believe, with a sling shot from the roof of the house, that I could throw a stone into it.

“Shall have the novel done in ten days, now — N.G. [“No Good”]. But I know I shall be able to do a good one yet.

“. . . Mr. Whitaker is selling some of his work, — now Ainslie’s, The S. S. McClure, Munsey’s, etc., etc. He’s picking up.

“Jack.”

“April 1/01.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“The novel is off at last, and right glad am I that it is. . . .

“I send herewith a letter from Town Topics. They are paying two dollars for jokes now, and if you have any it wouldn’t be a bad idea to send them along. I do not know much about joke writing, but I wouldn t send jokes in a bunch. I sent four triolets (the only four I ever wrote), to Town Topics. They took one, and sent three back. Later I resent one of the triolets: they took it. Later I resent another: they took it. But they balked on the fourth. “. . . By all means . . . come somewhere and live in the center of things. In this day one cannot isolate one’s self and do anything. Get you a big city anywhere, and plunge into it and live and meet people and things. If you believe that man is the creature of his environment, then you cannot afford to remain way off there on the edge of things.”

“April 3/01.

“Dear Anna: —

“Did I say that the human might be filed in categories? Well, and if I did, let me qualify — not all humans. You elude me. I cannot place you, cannot grasp you. I may boast that of nine out of ten, under given circumstances, I can forecast their action; that of nine out of ten, by their word, or action, I may feel the pulse of their hearts. But the tenth I despair. It is beyond me. You are that tenth.

“Were ever two souls, with dumb lips, more incongruously matched! We may feel in common — surely, we ofttimes do — and when we do not feel in common, yet do we understand; and yet we have no common tongue. Spoken words do not come to us. We are unintelligible. God must laugh at the mummery.

“The one gleam of sanity through it all is that we are both large temperamentally, large enough to often misunderstand. True, we often understand but in vague glimmering ways, by dim perceptions, like ghosts, which, while we doubt, haunt us with their truth. And still, I, for one, dare not believe; for you are that tenth which I may not forecast.

“Am I unintelligible now? I do not know. I imagine so. I cannot find the common tongue.

“Largely temperamentally — that is it. It is the one thing that brings us at all in touch. We have, flashed through us, you and I, each a bit of the universal, and so we draw together. And yet we are so different.

“I smile at you when you grow enthusiastic? It is a forgivable smile — nay, almost an envious smile. I have lived twenty-five years of repression. I learned not to be enthusiastic. It is a hard lesson to forget. I begin to forget, but it is so little. At the best, before I die, I cannot hope to forget all or most. I can exult, now that I am learning, in little things, in other things; but of my things, and secret things double mine, I cannot, I cannot. Do I make myself intelligible? Do you hear my voice? I fear not. There are poseurs. I am the most successful of them all.

Jack.”

“April 8/01.

Dear Cloudesley: —

I am sending you herewith pictures of the youngster at three weeks and two months.

“Every man, at the beginning of his career (whether laying bricks or writing books or anything else), has two choices. He may choose immediate happiness, or ultimate happiness. . . . He who chooses ultimate happiness, and has the ability, and works hard, will find that the reward for effort is cumulative, that the interest on his energy invested is compounded. The artisan who is industrious, steady, reliant, is suddenly, one day, advanced to a foremanship with increased wages. Now is that advance due to what he did that day, or the day before ? Ah, no, it is due to the long years of industry and steadiness. The same with the reputation of a business man or artist. The thing grows, compounds. 'He is not only paid for having done something once upon a time,' as you put it, but he has been paid for continuing to do something through quite a period of time. . . .

"O no. My 'incentive' is not the 'assurance of being able some day to sell any sort of work on the strength of a name.' Every year we have writers, old writers, crowded out — men, who once had names, but who had gained them wrongfully, or had not done the work necessary to maintain them. In its way, the struggle for a man with a name, to maintain the standard by which he gained that name, is as severe as the struggle for the unknown to make a name.

"Jack London."

"Harold, April 13, 1901.

"Dear Jack: —

". . . Thanks for photos: my mother asked a while ago if you had sent any of the 'small one' yet. They are woefully helpless and stupid things — human infants — yet it is wonderful what expression they sometimes have. That of Miss London at two months impresses me as distinctly weird, as if she were perplexed by some weighty problem. I believe the mystery of existence agitates the mind at even so early a stage of its development as that.

"N.B. I think your machine needs boiling — try brushing the types for a starter though.

"Cloudesley Johns."

April 19/01.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"I agree with you in some of your criticism of 'The Law of Life,' but not in all. For instance, 'What was that?' Remember, the words occur, not in the writer's narrative — in such a place your criticism would hold good. But the words do occur in the mind of the Indian. He thinks them. And that it is the most natural thing in the world for a person to so think when something unknown or unusual occurs, you cannot deny.

“. . . Did I tell you? — novel is accepted to be brought out this fall. In the meantime immediate serial publication is being sought.

Have to go read a poem over a coffin to satisfy the whim of a man who was quick and is now dead; so so long.”

Saturday evening, April 26, 1901, he lectured in Forrester’s Hall, Alameda, at corner of Santa Clara Avenue and Park Street, upon tramp experiences.

Home July 12, from a vacation which he wrote Cloudesley was a longer absence than he had intended, Jack sends Anna the letter quoted below. And right here it is well to insert Jack London’s own words on his outlook toward newspaper work: “I could have made a good deal at newspaper work; but I had sufficient sense to refuse to be a slave to that man-killing machine, for such I hold a newspaper to be to a young man in his forming period. Not until I was well on my feet as a magazine writer did I do much work for newspapers.” “July 24/01.

“My Little Collaborator: —

“Yes, and the Yellow is dead — at least for some little time to come. For all I know, I may be doing prize fights next.

“Explanations are hardly necessary between you and me, but this case merits one I think. Didn’t get home till the middle of the day, Monday. Went to see my mother, sister, etc. Tuesday went to Santa Cruz to speak. Came back Wednesday and pitched into work on back correspondence. All the time intending to take up reply to Dane Kempton’s last and surprise you with it. But the Sunday Examiner rushed me Thursday to have a freak story in by Friday noon. And Thursday also the Daily Examiner clamored to see me instanter. Put daily off, finished Sunday work on time, and on Friday also went to see Daily Examiner. They proposed the Schutzenfest to me. Saturday I started reply to Dane Kempton and paid bills. And on Sunday took up the Schutzenfest and have been at it steadily for ten days, publishing in to-day’s Examiner the last of that work. My whole life has stood still for ten days. During that time I have done nothing else. Why, so exhausting was it that my five and one-half hours would not suffice and I had to sleep over seven.

“And just now, to-day, as I sat down to send you greeting, along comes yours to me. I kind of looked for you to be over to-day, though little right had I to, and I have now given up that idea.

"And further, I find I must do something for McClure's at once, or they will be shutting off on me. So I am springing at once into a short story, which will be finished by end of week, and then the Letters. You know I have striven to be on time, so forgive me this once. Tell you what I'll do, if you don't expect to be out — see you on Friday afternoon. Won't be able to stop to dinner, though, for have to go to 6:30 supper. [This was the delightful 'Six-Thirty Club,' of San Francisco.] If I do miss the supper, will be dropped from the rolls, for it will have been my third consecutive absence.

"Haven't finished 'Aurora Leigh' yet, but it is fine, greater, I think, than Wordsworth's ('Excursion' is it?) from the little you read me of it." Early October finds Jack broken with S. S. McClure, and again moved, this time a little higher toward the western hills, with a long-envied view of the Golden Gate across the Bay. With each change of residence, he had a new rubber-stamp made for letter-heading:

"Jack London,
"56 Bayo Vista Avenue,
"Oakland, Calif.,
"October 9/01.

"Dear Cloudesley:

"Note change of address. Am now living out on the hills. . . .And how's New York? Are you going to settle down to writing for the winter? I nearly shipped across on a cattle boat when I was on the road, but somehow didn't.

"Am free lance again. Have just finished a 3700-word defense of Kipling against the rising tide of adverse criticism. Did you see the attack in current Cosmopolitan?

". . . "Well, haven't much news. Am hard at it. That series of letters with Miss Strunsky is three-fifths through. That is to say, we have three-fifths of a book done. Though the Lord only knows what publisher will dare tackle it. Also, am hammering away at a series of Klondike tales, which I shall assemble under the title 'The Children of the Frost.' They are all to be done from the Indian approach, you know."

Two letters unfold the first intimation that Jack London wanted to widen his field by getting away from Alaska:

"Nov. 8/01.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

“Of course the painter has to quit painting bears, but he has first to gather together his itinerary and select his route. (Say, is that what they call a mixed metaphor?)

“Anyway, it’s the same old story. A man does one thing in a passable manner and the dear public insists on his continuing to do it to the end of his days. O the humorists who try to be serious!

“. . . that letter series Miss Strunsky and I are writing? Well, we’ve got past the forty-thousand mark and the goal is in sight. Gee! I wonder how you’ll jump upon it. My contention is the same as I heard you make once: That propinquity determines choice. Yet I am sure you will be after my scalp before you finish it — that is, if we can entice a publisher into getting it out.

“Whitaker has just sold a story to Cosmopolitan. Rah for Whitaker! 0, he’s going it scientifically.

“I wouldn’t mind being with you next spring when you pull out for the old countries.

“Cosgrave mentioned having several interesting conversations with you, and that he expected to get some tramp work from you. How is it coming on?”

“Dec. 6/01.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“Nothing doing. Am hammering away in seclusion, trying to get out of Alaska. Guess I’ll succeed in accomplishing it in a couple of years.

“. . . Wyekoff is not a tramp authority. He doesn’t understand the real tramp. Josiah Flynt is the tramp authority. Wyckoff only knows the workingman, the stake-man, and the bindle-stiff. The profesh are unknown to him. Wyckoff is a gay-cat. That was his rating when he wandered over the States.

“Well, good luck on the way to Cuba! Wish I were with you. I am rotting here in town. Really, I can feel the bourgeois fear crawling up and up and twining around me. If I don’t get out soon I shall be emasculated. The city folk are a poor folk anyway. To hell with them.”

Upon a not much later date, Jack London wrote: “Although primarily of the city, I like to be near it rather than in it. The country, though, is the best, the only natural life.”

At the time he expressed the foregoing, I also find this: “I think the best work I have done is in the ‘League of the Old Men,’ [“Children of the

Frost” collection] and parts of ‘The Kempton-Wace Letters.’ Other people don’t like the former. They prefer brighter and more cheerful things. Perhaps I shall feel like that, too, when the days of my youth are behind me. But he never changed, always con-sidering “The League of the Old Men” his finest story. Concerning the “Kempton-Wace Letters,” note the following two communications, undated, to Anna Strunsky:

“Dear Anna: —

“Your letter is a splendid, a delicately splendid addition to the book. I am anxious to see it in type. I want to see it shape up.

“Your letter impelled me to work, and find here my attempt at rewriting my first letter. I have been two whole days on it, and working hard. From the trouble I have had with it, and from its original horribleness, I now know that I shall have to write it a third time (at the general revision), ere it is worth looking at. However, I send it for what it is worth. How bad my first letters were I never dreamed. I know now.

“You will notice that I have devoted little space to Hester, and more space to other and unimportant things. I have described her mental characteristics, her intellectual constitution, that which appeals to the non-loving Herbert Wace. For the reader I have already opened the breach between you (Dane Kempton) and me. When the book opens we are both aware of the slipping away, vaguely aware; one certain function of the book will be to differentiate us so that the breach becomes sharply defined. I change my landlord to my friend Gwynne. I shall develop a love experience for him, which shall culminate in one of the inserted letters — naturally the love experience will be evidence on my side of the contention.

“Dear Anna:

“Find here letter No. 2. And I must plead guilty to the same feeling which you were under when you wrote me. I don’t know what to make of it. Seem all at sea. Feel that I am all wrong, that I am not building characters as I should, or even writing letters as they should be written. But I suppose the whole thing will grow, in time. Anyway, it’s a good method for getting a fair conception of one’s limitations.

“What do you think of my making a poet of Hester? Should it be poet or poetess? I detest poetess. Is there such a word as ‘lyricist’? There is the word ‘lyrist’, meaning the same thing, but I do not like it. Do you catch my new school possibly to be founded by Hester? — Poetry of a Machine Age. I may exploit it in later letters. Do you, Dane Kempton, behold that I have not told you anything about Hester physically? I don't like the wind up, the treatment of the minor conflict. It seemed as though I begged the question, and yet I couldn't conceive a way of arguing it out. To me it seems almost unarguable. I do not know. Perhaps not. Can't tell.

". . . And please criticize unsparingly, especially in errors of taste."

In an article written after Jack London's death, Mrs. Walling said, referring to the period when they were collaborating:

"He held that love is only a trap set by nature for the individual. One must not marry for love but for certain qualities discerned by the mind. This he argued in 'The Kempton-Wace Letters' brilliantly and passionately; so passionately as to again make one suspect that he was not as certain of his position as he claimed to be."

PIEDMONT

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XXII 1902 — PIEDMONT — 27th YEAR

RETURNING at Christmas, 1901, from a fifteen-months visit in the eastern states, broken by several weeks of Europe, at my Aunt's suggestion I went to call at the Bayo Vista Avenue home of the Londons, but found no one at home. When I did renew acquaintance, that spring of 1902, it was in the old Worcester bungalow at Piedmont, set on a breezy high-hill slope amid pine and swaying eucalyptus, with a rich spread of golden poppy-field slanting toward the westering sun, across the blue bay to the bluer sea. George Sterling, the poet, had called Jack's attention to this neglected, picturesque spot beyond his own home, and it came nearer to Jack London's ideal than any house he ever dwelt in.

The squat, weathered thatch of shingle sheltered a large-beamed living hall, a small dining room, and three or four bedchambers, in one of which Jack eventually combined his sleeping-with working-quarters. Kitchen, laundry, and servants' rooms rambled like aimless if charming after thoughts, with scant mercy to impatient feet, up-step and down, to the dismay of mistress and nursemaids and cook, of which assistants, whenever obtainable, there were, at one time or another, from one to three.

The long-deserted premises lacked certain modern touches, and Eliza was called in to oversee the rehabilition. A pretty box of a cottage in the grounds was furnished for Jack's mother, the which, after voluble objection, she had at length consented to occupy. By now Flora London had grown as averse to pulling up stakes as ever she had welcomed such diversion in a by-gone day. While on Bayo Vista Avenue, Jack had pursued the custom of receiving all and sundry callers upon one afternoon and evening a week, with welcome to dinner. Other days he must be uninterrupted. This was the untheatrical practicality of his dream — "keeping my house in order." All things, work and play, should be subject to an efficient discipline. "I am a disciple of regular work," he had to say, and never wait for an inspiration. Temperamentally I am not only careless and irregular, but melancholy; still I have fought both down. The discipline I had as a sailor had full effect on me. Perhaps my old sea days are also responsible for the regularity and limitations of my sleep. Five and a half hours is the precise average I allow myself, and no circumstance has yet arisen in my life that could keep me awake when the time comes to 'turn in.'"

As for the domestic wear and tear involved to insure his one half-day of relaxation out of six or seven (he did not always rest on Sundays, and one day a week he devoted to helping a brother writer, since successful, and now deceased), he would cry:

"If there are not enough servants, get more; your credit is good. Our slim days are passing. Go ahead — get all that are needful to put a good hospitable meal on my table on my Wednesdays!"

Those Wednesday afternoons and evenings will never fade to the lucky souls privileged to share in them, filled as they were with merriest and noisest of jollity and sport; card-games — whist, poker, pedro, "black-jack;" rapid-fire of wits. And there was no lack of music — piano and singing, ringing voices — and poetry. Arthur Symons, Le Gallienne, Swinburne, the Rosettis, Fitzgerald, Bierce, Henley — these and many others were read aloud around the long oaken table, or lolling about the roomy veranda where swung the hammock. Now it would be George Sterling's hushed recitation, or Jack's vibrant tone, or Anna's mellow, golden throat — all the others hanging tremulous on the music of speech from these receptive ones who could not wait to make known their beloved of the poets. Blessing it was to sit under the involuntary young teachers of good and gracious ways of the spirit.

Frolicking outdoors and in, the company assisted their sparkling-eyed gay host, his formidably wise head "sunning over with curls," in the flying of huge box kites from stationary reels set about the acre or so of garden both tended and wild-poppied. Or sparred lustily with the gloves, or fenced with him or with the rising story-writer Herman Whitaker, who was Jack's English-pupil and incidentally his fencing instructor. Or with one another. Or rolled clamoring downhill in the tall grasses bloomed thickly amongst by the great, flaunting-orange poppies.

On working-days, for his conditioning Jack would inveigle anyone he could into a boxing-bout — even the little nurse-maids in their early teens had a rare chance to learn scientific self-defense with the well-padded gymnasium gloves. For in sport, as in everything else, Jack London adhered to the scientific approach. It was always an irk to him when hasty young male opponents lost their heads at his insistent, repetitive light-tapping on some persistently unguarded spot, and took to "slugging" in hot blood. In such case Jack necessarily defended himself with an occasional judicious "slug" of his own, until the other should learn the error of his ways. But more often he simply stalled and let the heated fighter absorb the disconcerting lesson of being hurt only by his own headstrongness.

Indoors, in the large room that was the apple of his eye, games were played of intellectual as well as hilarious "rough-house" varieties, in which all joined, boys and girls, men and women and children; and no one could surpass the joyous roar of Jack's fresh boyish lungs, nor out-invent him in bedevilment and sporting feats. Then suddenly he might shout, "Oh, wait — I've got to read you something! Have you seen W. W. Jacobs' 'Many Cargoes' and 'More Cargoes?' You've simply got to listen to 'In Borrowed Plumes.'" Thereupon, light-stepping with his blithe walk from fetching the book, he would settle deep into the yarn, perhaps propped on the floor with cushions, and repeatedly break down until he rolled and wept in a near-hysteria of uncontrollable mirth over the psychology of Jacobs's outraged skipper.

Romping, they were all one to Jack in this hearty crowd, the president of a great eastern publishing house, or say Sterling's several young and beautiful sisters, and the brilliant Partington sisters and brothers from San Francisco. They had to "take their medicine," Jack vowed, and they knew he despised a coward. The only difference he made with the girls was that he avoided being truly rough, except in such desperate encounters when they might overbear him by conspiracy or numbers or both. As, for instance, during a camping week in the farther hills, when these resourceful maidens, returning from a rattlesnake hunt one warm afternoon, sewed him napping in a hammock and built beneath him a crackling bonfire; or when, after a succession of clever indignities heaped upon him by their teeming trickery, he let them have a large panful of well-dressed salad of ripe red tomatoes, slung precisely chest-high in a sanguinary line the length of a picnic-table. After which perforce he took swift heels to the loftiest reaches of the landscape, pursued by a mad avenging mob of petticoats. Well I remember a day when Joaquin Miller strayed in upon us from his own home, "The Hights," not far away, and found Jack breathing hard and at wary distance from the exhausted feminine element of the camp. Some of the girls, as outcome of a blackberry "scrap," in which the August dust had also been used as ammunition, looked much like the day-after upon a battlefield. "I wish you would go and tidy your hair, young woman," Mr. Miller said to myself, who, though not one of the opposing factions, had accidentally intercepted a pailful of flying water. But presently, everything had quieted down, and the Poet of the Sierras, high-booted, hoary-bearded, serene, was reciting his own verses at our unanimous request. Still can I see Jack's drooped eyes, violet behind the longlashes, and hear the musical voice of the poet:

"Many to-morrows, my love, my dove,
Only one to-day, to-day."

Again, all frolic ceased, Jack could be so still, so low-toned with sudden access of beauty, or the sharing of beauty; as when, it may be, he would lead a friend into the rosy gloom of his redwood living-hall, that the glory of a single poppy, or two, or three poppies in a stem-slender vase, might be viewed against a window where a late sunray touched to burnished, palpitant gold the sumptuous petals. Many an one, thus favored, took to heart the unforgetable lesson in simplicity of detail, just as Jack had profited in Japan even with so youthful observation.

But in the many times I rode my chestnut mare to Piedmont that year, dropping in at one home or another where "The Crowd" forgathered in the best times they were ever to know, or at the picnic revels sometimes held Sunday afternoons, or sailed of a Sunday aboard some hired yacht like the Jessie E., or Jack's own little sloop Spray, never once did I see or hear aught that was not all good, and clean, and wholesome. The healthful romping, be it ever so boisterous, of these "children of a larger growth," will never be misunderstood by the true hearts that still beat high at thought of those bright California days and nights — when care and spirit-ache were haply laid aside, days and nights "gone, alas, like our youth, too soon." In the very month of his passing, talking with one who had been of the Crowd, Jack wound up with: "Well, we were a pretty clean bunch all 'round."

Nor did I notice much drinking, though Jack, with that hospitableness which was one of his strongest passions, had stored a moderate supply of wines, beer, and whiskey behind the redwood-paneled doors of a built-in wall cabinet to one side the yawning fireplace; to say nothing of ginger ale and sodas and mineral waters. I think he would have loved great banquets in that roomy apartment, or at least a table resembling the Strunskys', always ready laid with abundance for the chance wayfarer. Perhaps Jack most strikingly embodied his magnificent ideal of entertainment in that succession of word-pictures painted in “The Wit of Porportuk,” the last story in the collection “Lost Face.” Limitless, uncalculated hospitality, as attained in later years — but this belongs to another page.

I can see Jack London now, glass in hand, elbow lip-high, the freedom of the blue ocean in his deep sailor-eyes, joining departing guests each with stirrup-cup of whatsoever beverage raised for the pledging, his bright face and hair, played over by the firelight, standing out clearly from the dull-red paneling. Who, that knew him even slightly in those days, but can conjure a vision of him in one or another of his endless phases? Anna Strunsky Walling has given an authentic impression of him:

“I see him in pictures, steering his bicycle with one hand and with the other clasping a great bunch of yellow roses which he had just gathered out of his own garden, a cap moved back on his thick brown hair, the large blue eyes with their long lashes looking out star-like upon the world — an indescribably virile and beautiful boy, the wisdom of his expression somehow belying his mouth.

“I see him lying face-down among the poppies, or following with his eyes his kites soaring against the high blue of the California skies, past the tops of the giant eucalyptus which he so dearly loved.

“I see him becalmed, on the Spray, the moon rising behind us, and hear him rehearse his generalizations made from his studies in the watches of the night before of Spencer and Darwin. His personality invested his every movement and every detail of his life with an alluring charm. One took his genius for granted, even in those early years when he was struggling with all his unequaled energies to impress himself upon the world.”

And yet, and yet, with his dream in effect, at least in its ordered intention, tied to the mate he had chosen, fatherhood in his hungry grasp at last, at last, and the deepest love in him for the tiny daughter with face so wistfully like his own — the Boy-Man was not happy. Some few of the merrymaking friends and neighbors may have suspected that his scheme of life had failed of triumphant joyousness; but he spoke no word to them, nor looked the sorrow that was his. Only to Anna and to Cloudesley did he let go ever so little the leash he put upon his tongue, and hint the barrenness of his soul for even the year last past. As Anna said of him at that time:

“His standard of life was high. He for one would have the happiness of power, of genius, of love, and the vast comforts and ease of wealth.

Napoleon and Nietzsche had a part in him, but Nietzschean philosophy became transmuted into Socialism — the movement of his time — and it was by the force of his Napoleonic temperament that he conceived the idea of incredible success, and had the will to achieve it. Sensitive and emotional as his nature was, he forbade himself any deviation from the course that would lead him to his goal. He systematized his life. Such colossal energy, and yet he could not trust himself! He lived by rule. Law, Order and Restraint was the creed of this vital, passionate youth."

The first of Jack's 1902 letters is to Anna Strunsky, written on January 5:

"Your greeting came good to me. And then there was the dear little token for Joan. And it all impresses me with how much I am and always shall be in your debt. . . .

"You look back on a tumultuous and bankrupt year; and so I. And for me the New Year begins full of worries, harassments, and disappointments. So you? I wonder.

"I look back and remember, at one in the morning, the faces I saw go wan and wistful — do you remember? or didn't you notice? — and I wonder what all the ferment is about.

"I dined yesterday, on canvasback and terrapin, with champagne sparkling and all manner of wonderful drinks I had never before tasted warming me heart and brain, and I remembered the sordid orgies and carouses of my youth. We were ill-clad, ill-mannered beasts, and the drink was cheap and poor and nauseating. And then I dreamed dreams, and pulled myself up out of the slime to canvasback and terrapin and champagne, and learned that it was solely a difference of degree which art introduced into the fermenting. . . .

"Sordid necessities: For me Yorick has not lived in vain. I am grateful to him for the phrase. Am I incoherent? It seems very clear to me.

"And now to facts. Bessie wants me to ask you, if, on January 12th, we can stop all night, and if we can put Joan to bed also. You see, in Piedmont here, we have to leave San Francisco an hour earlier than we used to on account of the street cars. And Bessie cannot bring herself to be away from Joan a whole night."

This occasion was a birthday party given for Jack by the Strunsky family, on January 12. "The Crowd" were all there, and among them a young Norwegian writer, Johannes Reimers, whose novel, "The Heights of Simplicity," just out, he presented to Jack. This man became one of Jack's close friends, and in time one of his favorite painters. I asked Mr. Reimers the other day concerning the meeting with Jack that birthday night at the Strunskys' on Sutter Street:

"Jack looked like a young, ardent, hopeful fellow brimful of conviction. He instantly inspired me with his open comradeship. In appearance? — oh, I should say he struck me as resembling a powerful, healthy young Scandinavian, of a sea-roving type. I tried to get him into conversation about contemporary literature, and was impressed with an apparent bashfulness in him, for he seemed quite reticent of his opinions. And when we said good night, he asked me to come and see him in Piedmont — to come over and have lunch when there was to be nobody else there. And that's the way our friendship began. I read aloud one of my Overland Monthly stories to him, and when I had finished, Jack sat quietly for a minute or two, thinking; then he pointed: 'Look at that stack of manuscripts there? Those are just your kind of stories, and nobody wants to buy them.' — Whenever I saw him, he was always the center of a group; people flocked to his vital magnetism; every one who came within its radius, loved him."

The day after his letter to Anna, whom he had nicknamed "Protean," and who honored him with "Sahib," in unrelieved despair Jack wrote to

Cloudesley — January 6:

"Dear Cloudesley:

"But after all, what squirming, anywhere, damned or otherwise, means anything? That's the question I am always prone to put: What's this chemical ferment called life all about? Small wonder that small men down the ages have conjured gods in answer. A little god is a snug little possession and explains it all. But how about you and me, who have no god?

"I have at last discovered what I am. I am a materialistic monist, and there's damn little satisfaction in it.

"I am at work on a short story that no self-respecting bourgeois magazine will ever have anything to do with. In conception it is really one of your stories. It's a cracker jack. If it's ever published I'll let you know. If not, we'll wait until you come west again.

"As regards 'effete respectability,' I haven't any, and I don't have anything to do with any who have . . . except magazines. Nevertheless I shall be impelled to strong drink if something exciting doesn't happen along pretty soon.

My dear boy, nobody can help himself in anything, and heaven helps no one. Man is not a free agent, and free will is a fallacy exploded by science long ago. Here is what we are: — or, better still, I'll give you Fisk's definition: 'Philosophical materialism holds that matter and the motion of matter make up the sum total of existence, and that what we know as psychical phenomena in man and other animals are to be interpreted in an ultimate analysis as simply the peculiar aspect which is assumed by certain enormously complicated motions of matter.' This is what we are, and we move along the line of least resistance. Whatever we do, we do because it is easier to than not to. No man ever lived who didn't do the easiest thing (for him).

"Or, as Pascal puts it: 'In the just and the unjust we find hardly anything which does not change its character in changing its climate. Three degrees of an elevation of the pole reverses the whole jurisprudence. A meridian is decisive of truth; and a few years, of possession. Fundamental laws change. Right has its epochs. A pleasant justice which a river or a mountain limits. Truth this side the Pyrenees; error on the other.'

"Nay, nay. We are what we are, and we cannot help ourselves. No man is to be blamed, and no man praised.

"Yes, Cosgrave wrote me instanter about the Letters. I'm afraid they're not for him. They would be utter Greek. Say, Cloudesley, did you ever reflect on the yellow magazinism of the magazines? — — — says I ought not to write for the Examiner.

And in the same breath he says he will take what I write if I write what he wants. O ye gods! Neither the Examiner nor Everybody's wants masterpieces, art, and where's the difference in the sacrifice on my part? . . .

". . . Well, in six days I shall be twenty-six years old, and in nine days Joan will be one year old. . . ."

Here are excerpts from letters to Anna, showing his effort to bend her great talent to disciplined work on the Kempton-Wace correspondence:

"I have been in despair over this letter. Four days I have devoted to it. . . . Well, well, there will have to be no end of revising when we have finished. . . . The great thing after all is to get the letters shaped.

"The movement of this is too rapid and sketchy. It is too much in the form of a narrative, and narrative, in a short story, is only good when it is in the first person. The subject merits greater length. Make longer scenes, dialogues, between them.

"My criticism is, in short, that you have taken a splendid subject and not extracted its full splendor. You have mastery of it (the subject), full mastery — you understand; yet you have not so expressed your understanding as to make the reader understand. . . .

"Remember this — confine a short story within the shortest possible time-limit — a day, an hour, if possible or, if, as sometimes with the best of short stories, a long period must be covered months merely limit or sketch (incidentally) the passage of time, and tell the story only in its crucial moments.

". . . Now, don't think me egotistical because I refer you to my stories I have them at the ends of my fingers, so I save time by mentioning them. Take down and open Son of the Wolf.

On January 18, he wrote:

"You are getting a big grip on the written word. And I am whistling over my work at the way the Letters are coming on. We must finish them on this lap. I begin a reply to-day to your last in the series. But, Oh! won't we need to lick those first letters into shape!

"As for my not having read Stevenson's letters — my dear child! When the day comes that I have achieved a fairly fit scientific foundation and a bank account of a thousand dollars, then come and be with me when I lie on my back all day long and read, and read, and read, and read.

"The temptation of the books — if you could know! And I hammer away at Spencer and hack-work — try to forget the joys of the things unread."

He writes to Cloudesley on "Jan. 27/02":

"Dear Cloudesley:

"So you've been oystering? And at a beautiful time of the year — November, on the Atlantic seaboard! How did you like it? I note that you are non-committal on your postal.

"A line from Stoddard [Charles Warren], telling me that you had dropped in on him, led me into looking for your arrival in California at any time. When are you coming West? If you are not, then go on East, but don't stop in that man-killer New York. Mate with the 'wind that tramps the world,' do anything except stay in that 'fierce' burg. It will kill anybody with guts, even you.

If you hit California you must drop in on me and stop for a spell. I am always hard up, but I’11 never again be as hard up as during your previous visit. You see, I do not have to worry about grub from day to day. I’m doing credit on a larger and Napoleonic scale. And gee! if at any moment I should die, won’t I be ahead of the game!”

“Jack London,
“Piedmont,
“Alameda County, Calif.
“Feb. 23/02.

“Dear Cloudesley: —

“Behold, I have moved! Wherefore my long silence. I have been very busy. Also, I went to see a man hanged yesterday. It was one of the most scientific things I have ever seen. From the time he came through the door which leads from the death-chamber to the gallows-room, to the time he was dangling at the end of the rope, but 21 seconds elapsed.

“And in those twenty-one seconds all the following things occurred: He walked from the door to the gallows, ascended a flight of thirteen stairs to the top of the gallows, walked across the top of the gallows to the trap, took his position upon the trap, his legs were strapped, the noose slipped over his head, drawn tight and the knot adjusted, the black cap pulled down over his face, the trap sprung, his neck broken, and the spinal cord severed — all in twenty-one seconds, so simple a thing is life and so easy it is to kill a man.

“Why, he made never the slightest twitch. It took fourteen and one-half minutes for the heart to run down, but he was not aware of it. 1/5 of a second elapsed between the springing of the trap and the breaking of his neck and severing of his spinal cord. So far as he was concerned, he was dead at the end of that one-fifth of a second. He killed a man for twenty-five cents.

“You ask what else beside matter moves. How about force? Waves of light, for instance.

“We’ll have to reserve the free will argument till God brings us together again. I’ve got the cinch on you.

“Did you go in on the Black Cat? I went in for a couple of stories, though I have little hope of pulling down even the least prize. I imagine I can sell the stuff somewhere else, however.

“Lord, what stacks of hack I’m turning out! Five mouths and ten feet, and sometimes more, so one hustles. I wonder if ever I’11 get clear of debt.

"Am beautifully located in new house. We have a big livingroom, every inch of it, floor and ceiling, finished in redwood. We could put the floor space of almost four cottages (of the size of the one you can remember) into this one living room alone. The rest of the house is finished in redwood, too, and is very, very comfortable. We have also the cutest, snuggest little cottage right on the same ground with us, in which live my mother and my nephew. Chicken houses and yards for 500 chickens. Barn for a dozen horses, big pigeon houses, laundry, creamery, etc., etc. A most famous porch, broad and long and cool, a big clump of magnificent pines, flowers and flowers and flowers galore, five acres of ground sold the last time at $2000 per acre, half of ground in bearing orchard and half sprinkled with California poppies; we are twenty-four minutes from the door to the heart of Oakland and an hour and five minutes to San Francisco; our nearest neighbor is a block away (and there isn't a vacant lot within a mile), our view commands all of San Francisco Bay for a sweep of thirty or forty miles, and all the opposing shores such as San Francisco, Marin County and Mount Tamalpais (to say nothing of the Golden Gate and the Pacific Ocean) and all for $35.00 per month. I couldn't buy the place for $15,000. And some day I'll have to be fired out."

But on March 14, 1902, he writes to Anna from the Piedmont eyrie, showing his sincere attitude toward debt:

"I find myself forced to get up at four o'clock now, in order to turn out my day s work. And of course, so long as tradesmen bicker and landlords clatter, that long must the day's work be turned out.

"Also, Joan has been under the weather, my sister's boy on the edge of dying for a number of days, my other sister very close to death herself, and the many and varied demands have consumed every minute of my time.

"Do run over and see us when you're in town. We are nearly settled now, and things will be more comfortable. . . . It will be delightful here this summer." A week later:

"Many happy returns of the year, since I am too late for the day. And after all, it is the year that must count, and not the day. May it be a full year.

"And may it be an empty one, too — empty of heartache, and soul-silences, and the many trials which have been yours in the past twelve months.

". . . I look out across the bay to a nook in the Marin shore where I know San Rafael clusters, and I wonder how it fares with you and how you are doing.

"I would suggest . . . that you gather together your belongings, gipsy fashion, and seek a change. New scenes, new inspiration. . . . Also, do not worry. Things are not worth worrying over, except bills and rent. Other things do not count.

". . . And say, next Sunday, to-morrow, what's the matter with running over to see us? Charmian Kittredge, charmingly different from the average kind, is liable to be here. Perhaps you will like her. Also, Jensen, an old Klondike friend (the sailor whose letters I once showed you), is to be here. Also, possibly several others who will pitch quoits, and fence, and what not. Also, I am scheduled, in the company of Jim and George, to take hasheesh as a matter of scientific investigation. . . . Do come."

The "scientific investigation" proved a very unpleasant passage. Jack deliberately buttered a piece of bread with an excessive amount of the drug, and the overdosage counteracted all the promised joys of his dreaming. A horrible nightmare was the result, and much nausea to follow.

A fragment of a letter to Anna:

"In the last twelve days I have done over eleven thousand words, and that's the rate I have, and am keeping up. 'Writer's cramp,' you know. Do run over and see us some day any day. . . . The rest is bound to do you good. And stop all night we've a little more room in our new quarters.

"And O, before I close, Whitaker has sold a story to Harper's Monthly for one hundred dollars, a story which had been refused divers times by lesser publications. "I am to proceed right now to a review of "Foma Gordyeeff" for Impressions. Have you read it yet? I am saving it for you to read first of all if you haven't. It is a wonderful book. I wish I could allow myself the freshness of a whole day to it instead of going at it, as I now shall, jaded and tired."

To Cloudesley, from Piedmont, March 26, 1902:

"Have got another collection of stories done, 'Children of the Frost,' though they are waiting publication at various magazines."

To Anna, three days later:

"I had intended to write you a good long letter . . . but people have come, must shave now or never, and have some toning to do in dark room . . . do you know, leaving out the letters to be inserted, we have now 50,000 done on the book?

"I must get a Letter from you (Dane Kempton) saying that you are coming to California, and also, somewhere in your Stanford Letters a limit must be given to the effect of our meeting, which meeting I should imagine must precede your meeting with Hester.

"What ho! now, for the revision! You must come and live with us during the momentous period. It's glorious here, more like a poppy dream than real living. . . . Let me know if Letter fits, or if another is needed.

And a little later:

"I have just finished reading your last Letter, Dane Kempton, preparatory to replying to it, and before replying, I must tell you that I feel the Letters will go! Go! Go!

"Your last is good, is great! You do get your position stated better than I had thought it possible it could be stated. Come to-morrow. The reply will await you. How goes the novel? I must see and hear of it, all of it.

"Jack."

In the month of May, Jack suffered some newspaper notoriety of an unexpected and to him unusual sort. It was his custom to run accounts at the tradesmen's, pending the receipt of checks from the publishers, which were often delayed, sometimes for impatient weeks. A grocery bill, among others, was still unpaid when he moved to Piedmont, and he was waiting funds with which to liquidate all outstanding obligations when the grocer, sole one of the debtors to voice anxiety, to Jack's indignation dunned him over the telephone. His indignation was eloquently expounded, it may be taken for granted, the while he explained his position with regard to the delayed check. When the man persisted in refusal to deliver bread that day, Jack, now thoroughly aroused, assured him that the bill would be paid when and only when he, Jack London, thought fit and proper. And furthermore, if the groceryman made any undue fuss, or complained, as threatened, to carry the matter up to the Grocers' Association — it never would be paid. The dealer promptly, in council convened, did precisely what he was warned not to do; and Jack did precisely what he had warned he would do: the bill never was paid. Evidently the Groceryman's Association appreciated his contention, or did not wish to encourage the onus of discourtesy in their ranks, for they failed to back up the complainant. As soon as Jack's check finally arrived, he settled all bills except this one, seeing to it that word of the same reached the groceryman.

"It's the only bill of mine that I ever defaulted on in my life," Jack said when relating the affair, "except $1.67, I think it was, I owed a man in Oakland at the time I jumped out tramping. And I've never been happy that I couldn't find that man after I came back, try as I would."

At the beginning of this incident of the grocery bill, I said that Jack "suffered" notoriety. It was only a way of speaking. I do not know that he suffered. In fact, whether or not his elation extended to the notoriety, no matter how jocosely stated in the press, in this affair or any other that made him conspicuous, is one of the few things about him which I have never fathomed with satisfaction to myself. He appeared to enjoy any kind of contest, as well as its at tendant fruits; but I have oftentimes suspected though never divulging this to him — a bold front to carry on a bluff that protested an underlying shrinking.

"Piedmont, June 7/02.

"Dear Anna: —

". . . Bills are beginning to press, and I am behind in all my work. Just now I am hammering out juvenile stuff — the Fish Patrol stories for the Youth's Companion. [Book of this collection published 1905.] The proofsheets of the novel are giving me endless trouble. It is terrible to doctor sick things. Last night was business meeting of Kuskin. In morning did day's juvenile work. Expected to get off 7 pages of proofs in afternoon and go down town on business. At one o'clock I started in on proofs (7 sheets), at quarter past five I finished them! Every batch seems the worst till the next batch comes along.

"Second Tuesday in June, June 10th, is night you are billed for the lecture at 528 27th St."

On July 3, he writes her:

"I am wondering and wonder what you are doing, and as usual am too rushed to write. For three months I have been steadily dropping behind in all my work, and I have sworn a great vow to catch up. Yesterday I worked eighteen hours, and did clean up quite a lot — the same, the day before, and day before that, etc.

"Sahib."

In a letter to Cloudesley, who was still in New York, of date July 12, 1902, I come upon Jack's first voicing of his fear and regret concerning the gathering of too much knowledge — "opening the books" was his life-long phrase:

"You must have been having one hell of a time. Aren't you disgusted with metropolitan life? If you aren't you ought to be. I am, and I've never seen it.

"This world is made up chiefly of fools. Besides the fools there are the others, and they're fools, too. It doesn't matter much which class you and I belong to, while the best we can do is not to increase our foolishness. One of the ways to increase our foolishness is to live in cities with the other fools. They, in turn, would be bigger fools if they should try to live the way you and I ought to live. Wherefore, you may remark that I am pessimistic.

"Speaking of suicide, have you ever noticed that a man is more prone to commit suicide on a full stomach than on an empty one? It's one of nature's tricks to make the creature live, I suppose, for the old Dame knows she can get more effort out of an empty-bellied individual than a full-bellied one.

"Concerning myself, I am moving along slowly, about $3000 in debt, working out a philosophy of life, or rather, the details of a philosophy of life, and slowly getting a focus on things. Some day I shall begin to do things, until then I merely scratch a living.

"Between you and me, I wish I had never opened the books. That's where I was the fool."

It was in this summer, "pitifully, tragically hard at work," as Anna once phrased it, that about the middle of July an offer from the American Press Association found Jack London. This came by wire, and the following day he left for New York, the proposition being that he sail for South Africa to write a series of articles on the Boer War and the political and commercial status of the British Colonies. Sorely in need of diversion, and money with which to meet the lengthening scale of living, this commission, promising both, was welcomed and accepted with celerity, and Jack was the very picture of enthusiasm and relief when a God-speeding crowd of us saw him off on the Overland Limited at Oakland Pier. The only regret he showed was in his face, when he pressed Baby Joan in his arms at parting.

By the time he reached New York, it had been learned that the Boer generals had set sail for England. His plans were altered, but he continued on, in tbe hope of intercepting and interviewing these men. Meanwhile he had made tentative arrangements with the Macmillan Company to publish a contemplated book upon the slums of London. For through lack of foresight and faith, the McClures had let the bright young star slip through their fingers. But Mr. George P. Brett, President of the Macmillan Company, made no such blunder.

On the 29th of July, Jack wrote to Cloudesley Johns, who had temporarily left New York:

"It's a damned shame we missed each other. I sail to-morrow evening for Liverpool. I received your letter last night at 8 o'clock at the Harvard Club — too late to write you. . . . Write me, care of Am. Press Association, 45 Park Place, N. Y. C."

And to Anna, on the 31st, from "B. M. S. Majestic":

"I sailed yesterday from New York at noon. A week from to-day I shall be in London. I shall then have two days in which to make my arrangements and sink down out of sight in order to view the Coronation from the standpoint of the East Enders, with their stray flashes of divinity.

"I meet the men of the world in Pullman coaches, New York clubs, and Atlantic liner smoking rooms, and, truth to say, I am made more hopeful for the Cause by their total ignorance and non-understanding of the forces at work. They are blissfully ignorant of the coming upheaval, while they have grown bitterer and bitterer towards the workers. You see, the growing power of the workers is hurting them and making them bitter while it does not open their eyes."

Richard Lloyd Jones met Jack in New York at this time, and was impressed by the many facets he observed of the boy. "To me," Jack said in his hearing, "the world looks like a play that needs perfecting. The lines we speak are not well thought out. The stage business we perform is not well conceived. And the plots we put together are too often poor and mean. We need to work on higher and finer lines."

And the next day the young fellow was roystering through the recreational city of Coney Island, nothing too absurd or too wild for him to attempt. He insisted upon looping the loop. Mr. Jones accompanied him — once, which was the measure of his fun. "But London went down again and then again, and still again. He went down eleven times. After he was about half way of these trials, I asked him why he wanted to keep on, and he replied: I'm going down that thing until I can go clear around the loop without grabbing hold of it. And he did, an evidence of his perseverance."

By the end of the first week in August Jack was installed in the East End of London, working under forced draft, and on the 17th scribbled a card to Cloudesley:

“Your letter, forwarded from California, just received. I enjoyed it immensely. I am located in the East End and am hard at work. Have finished 6000 words. Latter part of this week I go down into Kent to do the hop-picking.

“Been in England 11 days, and it has rained every day. Small wonder the Anglo-Saxon is such a colonizer.”

On the 25th, to Anna:

“Saturday night I was out all night with the homeless ones, walking the streets in the bitter rain, and, drenched to the skin, wondering when dawn would come. Sunday I spent with the homeless ones, in the fierce struggle for something to eat. I returned to my rooms Sunday evening, after thirty-six hours continuous work and short one night s sleep. To-day I have composed, typed and revised 4000 words and over. I have just finished. It is one in the morning. I am worn out and exhausted and my nerves are blunted with what I have seen and the suffering it has cost me. . . . I am made sick by this human hell-hole called the East End.”

By the close of September, roughly in seven weeks he had lived his book, written his book, taken the photographs to illustrate his book, tried out some English publishers on his work, and was ready for a fleeting jaunt on the Continent. He had written Cloudesley on September 22: “Yours of Sept. 9th received. I quite agree with you that not to be a free agent is hell. But I don’t quite follow you when you say the particular hell lies in not being able to blame anybody, anything, and not even yourself. I don’t see how that will help matters in the least. If you throw me down and break my back, of course I can blame you; but that doesn’t mend my back.

“I am glad you liked ‘Nam-Bok the Unveracious.’ The idea of it always appealed to me (including the satire), but I was not satisfied when I wrote it. I feel that I missed somewhere. . . .

“In another week I shall have finished my book of 60,000 words. It’s rather hysterical, I think. Look up a brief article of mine in the Critic somewhere in the last numbers. Also tell me how you like the ‘Story of Jees Uck’ in current Smart Set.”

Near the end of his life, “Of all my books on the long shelf,” Jack said to me, “I love most ‘The People of the Abyss.’ No other book of mine took so much of my young heart and tears as that study of the economic degradation of the poor.” Always he was made wroth from a technical standpoint, when this work was ignorantly and maliciously termed a “socialistic treatise.” “I merely state the disease, as I saw it, he would explain. “I have not, within the the pages of that book, stated the cure as I see it.” Jack’s earliest method seems to have been to entrench himself behind facts that others had overlooked or neglected, and deliver his challenge. To the wavering and hesitant tongue and eye of the unprepared or unwilling, he showed no mercy whatever. All the satisfaction he won from trying to stir the dead mass was his knowledge that he knew what he knew. Facts were facts, and the only foundation upon which to build righteous certitudes. Of work like “The People of the Abyss, he would say: “I treat of the thing that is, not of the thing that ought to be. To critics who rail at Ms propaganda, I like to point out how deliberately little he cluttered his art, his fiction, with propaganda.

As if in negation of his consistent attitude on the mighty dollar, Jack put his heart and precious time into this exposition of London’s East End with full belief that it would not prove a money maker, either as a bound book or serially. No bourgeois magazine, able to pay its worth as a human document, would risk reputation on one so forthright of unsavory truths. So “The People of the Abyss” appeared in Gaylord Wilshire’s socialist monthly, Wilshire’s, and of course the price could not have been large. Only one of many instances was this, where Jack London acted what seemed paradoxically when sternest values were at stake. It was only a manifestation of his necessity, while perchance building temples in the sky, of keeping his feet on the ground — as he had written Anna, “Somehow, one must always build in the concrete.” One critic has said, “With sincerity one may cleave to greatness and sit among the giants.” And Jack was eminently sincere in all he did — whether pursuing a hard-headed course in order to discharge his patriarchial duties, or flaming his unremunerative soul-stuff upon the incombustible wall of public opinion. He must weave his best into a dog-story or other fiction medium; straight, unvarnished Truth about the human, no matter how gloriously portrayed, did not command an approval that paid for the beds and bread and coats he must supply his charges.

In Paris, Jack fell in with a spirit kindred to his own vein of French, who assured him: “Ah-h-h, we will not only see Paris: we will live Paris!”

It grimly amused him, in the early days of the Great War, to read or hear denial on the part of Germany and the Germans of their hatred for England and the English. His sharpest impression of Germany was of a day’s journey that ended in Berlin. The compartment contained a half-dozen men besides himself, all Germans of the educated classes; but though they spoke English perfectly, any bid for companionship or request from Jack for information was met with boorish discourtesy of briefest reply, or no reply except lowering looks and cold shoulders. Upon alighting at Berlin, these men suddenly learned from some remark he dropped that he was American:

"Why didn't you tell us?" was the burden of their lament. "We thought you were an Englishman — your face, your figure, your clothes."

And thereafter nothing was too good to be done to make amends.

Italy he loved, and took many photographs with his big "panoram," which he enjoyed developing later in the little dark-room in Piedmont, and framing for his walls. And he climbed Vesuvius.

In all the great centers of civilization, as in New York City, his personal touches with and too-keen observation of the rich, set against his intimate knowledge of the Submerged, contributed toward a vast melancholy. Again he wished that he had never "opened the books." But having opened them, it was not in his nature to turn back; he must continue to the end to keep his eyes open their uttermost, for weal or woe.

While still on the Continent, a cable apprised him of the birth of his second child, Bess, who came along eighteen months after Joan, and Jack lost no time in terminating the vacation. On the evening of November 4, 1902, from New York he wrote to Cloudesley:

"Just arrived, and if I can raise $150 by to-morrow morning, shall put out for California to-morrow afternoon.

"Sorry I didn't have your room address, for I could have looked you up and talked the evening with you. As it is, shall have to be on the jump to get away to-morrow.

That autumn of 1902, as Jack London sped west once more, saw his bewildered reviewers facing three new volumes just on the bookstalls, from as many different publishers — namely, "Children of the Frost," (Macmillan); "The Cruise of the Dazzler," (Century); and "A Daughter of the Snows," (Lippincott.) In all, he had five books to his credit, with enough manuscript on hand for an equal number. There ensued lengthy reviews in America, where he was hailed alliteratively as "The Kipling of the Klondike," while England sat up and dared venture the assertion that he was America's most promising writer of fiction. "A Daughter of the Snows" called out much diversity of opinion, and no reviewer thought as poorly of it as the author himself. But in future years, looking over this his first long romance, Jack concluded: “It’s not so bad, after all. I really believe I think it’s rather good for a starter. Lord, Lord, how I squandered into it enough stuff for a dozen novels!”

HOME FROM EUROPE; SEPARATION

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XXIII 1903

BACK from Europe, Jack's solemn purpose was to achieve harmony within himself when he should again be at home in the Piedmont bungalow. He devoted himself to this idea, with earnest intention toward the development of his children, and strove to convince himself that all was well with him. As note this paragraph to Cloudesley, dated January 27, 1903:

"By the way, I think your long-deferred congratulations upon my marriage are about due. So fire away. Or, come and take a look at us, and at the kids, and then congratulate."

The Wednesday evenings and Sunday outings were resumed, new acquaintances came and went. Among other writers who shared in the Piedmont gaieties were W. C. Morrow, Dr. C. W. Doyle, and Philip Verrill Mighels, whose novel, "The Inevitable," made simultaneous appearance on Lippincott's fall list with "A Daughter of the Snows." Frank Norris, with whom Jack London had previously gotten tangled in press controversy, had died the year before, or undoubtedly he would have been one in the Crowd.

To me Jack was always friendly, if a trifle impersonal; and once in a while he referred with genial quizzicalness to my failure to review his first book. He presented me with a copy of "The Cruise of the Dazzler," inscribing it: "Dear Charmian:

"In memory of the Jessie E. and the run home before the wind.

"Jack London.

"The Bungalow, February 25, 1903."

Journalists came thousands of miles to interview him, and of them all I think he most cared for that brilliant and lovable soul Fannie K. Hamilton, whose surpassing appreciation of him was a sustained joy for all his years. As to his mode of life he said to her:

"I have adaptability, and can endure cities; but this suits me best. I like room."

Odd little experiences came his way, hurts delivered by pinch-natured debtors to his kindness. Two of them were totally unexpected — one, when a friend he had assisted in various ways spent an entire night showing him conclusively why he, Jack London, was doomed to failure in literature; the second, when another, far more indebted, cut him dead in a Piedmont home, before "The Crowd," He seemed a veritable mark for slights from persons whose touchiness and jealousies restrained them from truly knowing his unsuspecting good-nature and fellowship:

"Did you see — — cut you when he came into the room Sunday, when you and George were playing pedro?" asked his indignant hostess.

"No!" with incredulous, bright interest. "You don't say so! I was so intent on my rotten hand that I never noticed . . . why, I said Hello, didn't I? I'm sure I did. . . . Now I do remember just for an instant it seemed the air was chilly, and then it went right out of my head. Why, the son of a gun!" he added amiably, "what did he do that for! What have I done to him?"

And the short-lived wonder gave place to other and more profitable curiosities about the world in which he lived. For the largest part of his life, he stedfastly refrained to take to himself slights or petty humors of men and women. Near the end, sadly enough, they began to gather in a formidable cloud upon his horizon of values. To Anna, in a letter, he commented upon the incident:

"Oh, by the way. I have lost a friend. W. has canceled my name from his list and even cut me in public. For what reason I cannot imagine, for he has said nothing to me at all, though I have heard he was incensed because I told Leonard D. Abbot when I was in New York that he (W.) was a backslider from the Cause."

But it would appear that the young husband and father waged a losing fight for the livable contentment of his resolutions. As early as the middle of February, when again he wrote Cloudesley, his final words bespeak a desire for solitude:

"Feb. 21/03.

"Dear Cloudesley: —

"Well, I must say, from your letter, that my predictions concerning you and New York came pretty close to being verified. And I m glad to hear you reshaking its dust from your shoes by May. Do it, by all means. The city life is too unnatural and monstrous for us folk of the West. To hell with it. There's more in life than what the social shambles offers.

"Do, by all means, stop over and see us. I hope, by May, to have a sloop on the Bay and be writing a sea novel. You and I can have some fine voyaging together."

A letter to Anna Strunsky, written a month later during an illness, illustrates the heavy pressure he was putting upon himself to gain financial footing to do justice to his little family, as well as an almost superhuman struggle to shake free from "hack-work" and get down to worthy achievement. (I remember dropping in one day to see the babies, and noticing Jack, much tousled, very pale, and with a don't-disturb-me look appealing through the wel-coming smile. Jack, who a few short years earlier had been striving to master common grammar, to develop "grammatical nerves," was now typing the manuscript of a story that was destined to ring around the world and be treasured in the universities of his country as a jewel of English literature — "The Call of the Wild." At the same time he was shaping up material for the sea novel referred to in the above letter to Cloudesley, which was "The Sea Wolf," hardly less noted; while arrangements had been perfected with Macmillans to bring out "The Kempton-Wace Letters.") Below is the letter to Anna:

"March 13/03.

"Dear Anna: —

"I quite wondered if you were ever going to write to me again. And I should have wondered more, only I have been head over heels in work, getting things cleaned up, books partly finished, etc., so that I might start in on the sea novel for Mr. Brett.

"You found him reading the manuscript of what was probably my dog story. ["The Call of the Wild."] I started it as a companion to my other dog-story Batard, which you may remember; but it got away from me, and instead of 4000 words it ran 32000 before I could call a halt. I hope you will like it when it appears.

"I wrote Hyman [her brother] a letter which he must have received just about the time he arrived in San Francisco. I have been unable to get over and see him. I go nowhere any more. Since my return, I have been to San Francisco but twice and do not dream of when I shall again go there.

"I have just finished writing two lectures, each 6000 words long and something like the 'Tramp.' They are 'The Scab' and 'The Class Struggle.' [Collected under title of "War of the Classes."]

"I can hardly contain myself, looking forward to seeing the Letters in print. Be sure to question anything and everything in mine that strikes you as wrong.

“. . . I am quite a hermit these days, going nowhere and seeing nobody. Between my crippled condition and the excessive delayed work it heaped upon me, I have been unable to see your people. . . . “. . . I hear all kinds of flattering bits of news concerning you from Don and Wilshire, and know that you are glowing and rampant, living always at the pitch of life as is your way, pleasuring in your sorrows as ardently as in your joys, carelessly austere, critically wanton, getting more living out of hours and minutes than we colder mortals, God pity us, get out of months and years. Child, how one envies you. For child you are, as essentially a child as saliently you are a woman.

“I have reread what I have written. Believe me, there is nothing in it — only envy, honest envy, for one who will always titillate with desire, and with a thousand desires, who is content to pursue without attaining, and who enjoys more in anticipation than do others who grasp and satisfy and feel the pangs of hunger that is sated and yet can never be sated. Am I wrong? I hope not.”

Desperate for funds, with bills pressing, Jack London hesitated not to accept two thousand dollars flat from The Macmillan Company for “The Call of the Wild,” which was to be brought out in July, following serial publication begun immediately in the Saturday Evening Post, for which he received seven hundred dollars. And “The Call of the Wild,” for which he pocketed only this total of twenty-seven hundred dollars, scored an instantaneous hit, leaped into the front ranks of the “best-sellers” and made money for everyone but the author. However, lest there be misunderstanding on this ground, let me go on record with the fact that Jack London came to maintain that he gained rather than sacrificed in the transaction, in view of the world-wide advertising upon which the Macmillans spent enormous sums.

“Mr. Brett took a gamble, and a big chance to lose. It was the game, and I have no kick,” he stoutly asserted. “Also,” Jack would add, “Mr. Brett stood almost certainly to lose on ‘The Kempton-Wace Letters,’ and I’m willing to lay a bet that the Company never much more than cleaned up expenses on that splendid but misunderstood and unpopular book.”

“The Kempton-Wace Letters” subsequently went out of print in both the United States and England. In 1921 the book was resurrected, and reprinted in London by Mills & Boon, Ltd.

Jack's aptness for titles was never more happily evidenced than in "The Call of the Wild." And yet, both serial and book publishers entreated a different one. Jack concurred with their dissatisfaction, and told them he was quite willing they should invent a better. That they could not, or at least did not, gives one pause.

Jack was systematically criticized by a certain type of reviewers of all times, for his "brutality." I am inclined to think the following, from a letter to Mr. Johns of March 16/03, must have been the most surprising commission he ever received:

"If you have any 'horror' stories, submit them to Book man. I have the following from Bookman:

"'Don't you happen to have up your sleeve a dramatic tale with plenty of battle, murder, and sudden death — a story with real horror in it? Remember, the more gore the better."

One New York critic of "The God of His Fathers" had pleased Jack.

"Mr. Jack London's strength never degenerates into brutality. He deals with brutal things, with naked things, with the primitive life in a world barren of all save hardship, ice and snow, rich only in gold; but he remains an artist to the last. Whatever he tells us we accept because we feel its truth and the skill of its telling."

And an English reviewer characterized this collection as "Epic Stories of the North."

In another note to Anna, Jack is seen emerging from his hermit mood in a reference to the pleasure of a fortnight's visit each from the Lily Maid and Cloudesley Johns. And below are brief communications to his two friends upon one matter or another:

"Dear Anna: —

"Telegram received. I have no copy of the quotations lost by the printers. So book ["Kempton-Wace Letters"] will have to go without them. Too bad!

". . . Am in tremendous rush. Hope you'll make this out. Wilshire was out to see me, with Rose, the Waitings, etc. All went to Ruskin Annual Dinner together.

"Shall send fotos of Joan and Bess as soon as I can get around to the making of them. . . .

"By the way, the contract you signed with Macmillan Company is for the U. S. only. I feel quite certain that you and I will receive the same royalties from England from Messrs. Isbister & Co. . . . (This Isbister proposition is due to certain publishing arrangements I have on that side of the water.)”

“April 24/03.

“Dear Anna: —

“This is the first writing I have done for some time. Easter Sunday I elected to cut off the end of my thumb, and not finding the piece, have had a painful wound to heal. . . . Have a heart beating in the end of my thumb. . . . Am glad you liked the dog story. . . .”

Of same date to Cloudesley:

“Sedgwick has accepted ‘Marriage of Lit-Lit’ [In collection entitled “The Faith of Men”] if I put a snapper on the end of it As it s already sold in England I guess 111 obey.”

Referring to “People of the Abyss”:

“May 5/03.

“Dear Cloudesley:

“Thank you very much for your criticism. The proofs are in, but I shall save your points (almost all of which I bow to) until I get another whack at the proofs, which I will get when I place the illustrations in it. “My thumb is growing nicely — quite a chunk of new and very tender meat on the end of it. We went out sailing yesterday, and about everybody aboard, and there were fifteen, ran into it.”

“May 29, 1903.

“Dear Cloudesley:

“When are you coming up? Am just in from a cracking good trip, in which I blew the Spray’s sails to ribbons. Am waiting ashore now while new ones are being bent. I find that I can work splendidly upon her.

“Nothing doing, no news, nothing. Thumb is getting along and have finished 30,000 words of sea story. [“The Sea Wolf.”] When it is done am going to send you a MS. copy for criticism (if you don’t mind), before I submit it.”

“The Kempton-Wace Letters” was published in May, and Jack received his first copy of the book through the Glen Ellen post office, in Sonoma County, whither he had removed his family to camp on my Aunt’s place on Sonoma Mountain, “Wake Robin Lodge.” Here a congenial company of acquaintances met in the summers, making merry in the incomparable woods bordering Graham and Sonoma Creeks, swimming in the pools, tramping, boxing, fencing, kiting, and gathering about the campfire at dusk for discussion and reading. On one such night Jack, in firelight supplemented by a lantern, read aloud the “Letters.” While several members of my family participated in all this rural delight, I was able to be present upon only an occasional week-end. I was fortunate enough to make one of the thralled circle that formed about the flickering logs on the June evening Jack London read aloud in his musical voice, at one sitting, “The Call of the Wild,” which had just come to his hand.

Jack’s state, and his method of speculation upon that of another, is shadowed in the following, written to George Sterling in June of 1903: “. . . this I know, that in these later days you have frequently given me cause for honest envy. And you have made me speculate a great deal. You know that I do not know you no more than you know me. We have really never touched the intimately personal note in all the time of our friendship. I suppose we never shall.

“And so I speculate and speculate, trying to make you out, trying to lay hands on the inner side of you what you are to yourself, in short. Sometimes I conclude that you have a cunning and deep philosophy of life, for yourself alone, worked out on a basis of disappointment and disillusion. Sometimes, I say, I am firmly convinced of this, and then it all goes glimmering, and I think that you don’t want to think, or that you have thought no more than partly, if at all, and are living your life out blindly and naturally.

“So I do not know you, George, and for that matter I do not know how I came to write this.”

During this period, some of his friends sensed the breaking strain the young man was undergoing, and that all was not well in the Londons’ ruddy-brown tent cottage and environs amidst the spicy-perfumed laurels edging the Graham’s bank; but they would have been shocked had they known the strain was so taut that for some time back Jack had avoided sleeping with his old familiar pistol in the same room, lest he do himself an injury in his trouble-ridden slumber. Which would point to the surmise that unhappy as he thought himself, he valued existence sufficiently to take steps to preserve his own.

Much suffering he concealed in the solitude of a leafy study on a mossy shelf down the bank, where at a rustic table he worked steadily on his novel, “The Sea Wolf”; or under an hilarious exterior as he played water-tag with a bevy of camp children, or blind-man’s bluff among the trees and blossomy undergrowth on the Sonoma’s marge. Mornings he rose betimes and went out ostensibly for small game, with a conspicuous absence of bags upon his returnings. This gave rise to an endless string of verses, goodnaturedly taunting and wholly affectionate, composed by little Dorothy Reynolds and Henry Breck and their playmates, and chanted shrilly by the juvenile company by campfire, to the tune of "Mr. Dooley." Here are some of the verses:

"O Mr. London,
Mr. London,
The finest man the rabbits ever knew;
He always sought them
But never shot them,
For that was Mr. London's way to do.

"He started early
One Sunday morning:
He said, I will be sure to get one now!'
And gazing upward
Upon the hillside,
He saw a rabbit there as big as a cow.

"He raised his rifle,
He shook a trifle;
The rabbit looked at him reproachfully.
He said, I cannot,'
He said, I will not,'
And so he let the rabbit turn and flee.
CHORUS
"O it's strange when upon returning,
  How his hunter's skill he'd praise,
About those monstrous rabbits
  In his early morning chase.
O it's then that our hearts are gladdest,
  And it seems it can't be true,
When he has to eat that bacon
  Instead of rabbit stew."

It was during these dawn and sunrise hauntings of this sloping wall of Sonoma's valley that Jack London fell hopelessly in love with the "Sweet

Land” he evermore was to adore and make his heart-home.

Evidently his plans were to spend as little time thence forth as he could possibly avoid at the once desirable bungalow in Piedmont, as cited by his next contemplated absence, in a letter of July 2:

“Dear Cloudesley:

“Here I am, camping and knocking out 1500 words per day seven days in the week. If you re coming to see me, come just the same. Am only 2½ hours ride from San Francisco. So bring your traps right on up to camp here. Have a girl to do the cooking, plenty of grub, and plenty of blankets. So come along. Expect to stay here for a month yet. Then for the sloop!

“. . , You remember the rig we rode in the day I cut my thumb. Five of us were coming in on it, same road, down hill, horse hitting it up — when king-bolt broke and we spilled. I had five different places on arms and legs in bandages, also a stiff knee. Am almost recovered now.

“No, the Kempton Letters were written entirely by Anna Strunsky, though the ear-marks of each are to be found in the other’s work unconscious absorptions of style, I suppose.”

In answer to some question from George Sterling, he again outlines his philosophy of work: “No, I don’t approve of Pegasus plowing if he can fly. But I believe in his plugging like hell in order to fly.”

Of course this tension of spirit could not last, in one so dynamic and intense as he. In spite of every effort, struggle as he would to carry out his scientific-mating experiment, he became beaten at his own game; and it was by a curious irony of events that his ultimate failure should have been coincident with the appearance of “The Kempton-Wace Letters,” dealing the lie direct to his once boasted rule-of-thumb program.

Indeed, not long afterward we learned that in a copy of this book presented to a young cousin of mine, he had written refuting a brave argument once held with her in camp:

“One hour of love is worth a century of science.”

This he repeated in my own copy three months after our marriage.

For now, abruptly, “out flew the web and floated wide,” the fabric he had so carefully designed, so faithfully woven to its last least pattern of fidelity. It had got beyond him and he tore it and cast it to the winds. He did not care whither he went, nor how, nor with whom. He caught at a wild unthought-out suggestion for a northern trip without an ending and not without a companion. Largely owing to restlessness, he renounced the steamer voyage as lightly as he had conceived it. But he remained unshaken in determination to start living by himself, at the first moment he could break up at the bungalow and see his family housed comfortably where he would have convenient access to his little ones.

Let no one, quick to condemn his action, dream that all this chaos of the established was easy for a man of Jack London's stamp. Deeply he loved his children, bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh. But he had committed a boundless mistake in his arrogant youth, and the penalty that was inevitable had overwhelmed him commensurately. "I must work hard to bring things out as right as I can," with sad eyes he said to one of us, "though it be work that shall wring my heart" — thinking of his babies, and not a little of the radical disturbance of their mother s round of existence. Sometimes, it seemed, he almost doubted his own strength to go through with what he had been driven to undertake.

But desire for freedom had wrung him vitally from all other considerations — he who could never be really free, in his whole life of responsibility for others. From Piedmont, in the midst of the rack of tearing up — everyone concerned oppressed with the impermanence of what had seemed so secure — Jack wrote:

"Dear Cloudesley:

"Just a line to let you know I am suddenly back from camping, that my affairs are all in confusion, that I do not know yet what I shall do, that I need and can use no help other than my own strength may give me, and that you do not come North till you hear from me again."

And on the 29th:

"Thank you, old man. Am moving house and splitting up, just now. Poor, sad little Bungalow!

"Should I need you, I will call upon you unhesitatingly."

He found a cozy five-room flat in Oakland, at what was then 1216 Telegraph Avenue, to which he moved his mother and Johnnie, setting aside space for his own belongings while he should be away in the sloop. The two babies and their mother were quartered in another flat a few blocks distant. From his new habitation he wrote Cloudesley:

"Aug. 21, 1903.

"Well, good luck to you, old man. If you love, that is all there is to it. I thought you downed my Herbert Wace philosophy rather squeamishly.

"And so we go zigzagging through life. When we first knew each other we were on the same tack. Then I filled away on the other tack and married. Now I have come about once more, and I find that you have put your helm down and are away on the opposite tack. May your reach be a longer one than-mine much longer."

That there was no lack of anguish on Jack's part for pain inflicted throughout this separation, may be judged, reticent though he was in general, from the closing remark of the next letter. Also he gives a line on his expectation of benefit to his work in the new order of life. To his mind, there could be no two ways about the latter, for the double homes demanded his very best effort to earn big prizes, although meanwhile he must deliver a certain amount of "hack:"

"1216 Telegraph Avenue,

"Oakland, Cal., Aug. 26, 1903.

"Dear Cloudesley:

"Yes, I shouldn't mind living for a while in Los Angeles; but, you see, I'm settled, am three months behind in all my work, letting my contracted work go and hammering away at hack in order to catch up with a few of my debts, and do not see my way to getting even with my work for all of a year hence.

"Hard-a-lee with me will not affect my work — in fact, I am confident it will be far otherwise.

"I laugh when I think of what a hypocrite I was, when, at the Bungalow, I demanded from you your long-deferred congratulations for my marriage — but, believe me, I was a hypocrite grinning on a grid.

"Concerning your affair, let me say this: It's all right for a man sometimes to marry philosophically, but remember, it's damned hard on the woman."

To Cloudesley, September 5, 1903:

"Tell you what I'll do. I'll take a flying trip down to Los Angeles, say somewhere in January if not December, as soon as 'The Sea Wolf' is done and providing the Century takes it serially for 1904. The dicker is now on, and the only thing Gilder hesitates about is the last half (unwritten) wherein a man and woman are all by themselves on an island. I have just tried to assure him that I won't shock the American Prude, and, anyway, that he can blue-pencil all he wants.

“If Century doesn’t take the novel, why, when I get done with it I’11 have to plunge into hack-work up to my ears to escape bankruptcy. If Century does take it, why then I can take a vacation.

“As for living in Los Angeles — nay, nay. I am wedded to ‘Frisco Bay.

I should like to take the ride you mention. I love motion and can never go too fast. . . . “I wouldn’t care much for a woman capable of saying: ‘A woman can lose everything, even her loved ones and her life, and still be rich in her purity.’ I may respect her, but I could not admire her. She is a little cloudy and small in her ethical concepts even though it be not her fault.”

The next letter shows his desire again to roam the world:

“Sept. 5, 1903.

“Dear Anna: —

“As usual, hard at work. It s been so long since I had a real vacation that I hardly know what such a thing would be like. Even when I was in Europe last year, instead of resting I wrote a book. Well, in about a year I am starting off around the world, and I expect to take years in going around.

“. . . Our Book — — I haven’t the least idea how it has sold; but, when all is said and done, it has been received far more favorably than might have been expected. It is a good book, a big book, and, as we anticipated, too good and too big to be popular. . . .”

On the 21st he wrote Cloudesley:

“I’m sending you, this mail, a copy of ‘Call of the Wild.’ You don’t seem to care for the ‘Daughter of the Snows.’ I don’t blame you. I wonder how you’11 like the ‘Sea Wolf.’ I’11 bet you’11 wonder how the Century dares to publish it.”

“Sept. 26, 1903.

“Dear Cloudesley:

“ . . . By the way, I learn Macmillan Company has made ‘People of Abyss into a $2.00 net book.”

The reviewers, again with three new books thrown suddenly at their heads, making eight within three meteoric years since this astonishing young writer had shot into vision, were stunned not only by numbers but by the total dissimilarity of the three — ”The Call of the Wild,” “The Kempton-Wace Letters,” and now “The People of the Abyss.” British critics, theretofore gathering in enthus-iasm, were of two minds about “The People of the Abyss.” Mainly it was resented and condemned as an inexcusable infringement on his part to come to their shores and turn out the London slums for the world to view. They thought he would be better occupied in those of his own land. A minority, however, accorded the book its due. And two years later, the Archbishop of Canterbury, inspecting New York's East Side, exclaimed: "Amazing! I am astonished at it all. The slums of New York are not nearly so bad as the slums of London. And the mean streets are not so mean as the East End of our great English city."

"Oct. 9, 1903.

"Say, Cloudesley:

"Thursday, Oct. 22nd, I set sail on the Spray for a couple of months cruising about the Bay, and up the Sacramento, San Joaquin and Napa rivers. Do you want to come along, just you and I?

"We can both get our writing in each day and have a jolly time. Also, I'll have a shotgun and rifle along and we can get in plenty of duck-shooting. It won't cost you anything. . . . Also, I have that Smith-Premier typewriter, and if you can use such a machine you won't have to bring your own along.

"What'd ye say? Let's hear soon."

"Oct. 13, 1903.

"All right, old man. I shall look for you, then, on Oct. 21st. You may desert or receive dishonorable discharge, whichever you will, whenever you wish. . . . We ought both of us get in plenty of work, and have a good time, and get health and strength.

JAPANESE-RUSSIAN WAR

VOLUME I — CHAPTER XXIV Spring 1904

WITH war threatening to flare up any moment between Japan and Russia, the San Francisco Examiner asked Jack London if he would be ready to go out at call. Jack, near the close of his sea novel, sorely needing funds, held himself awaiting the summons. He arranged his finances so that regular payments would be made to his mother as well as to his children, with instructions to his eastern publishers to stand prepared to advance any necessary further sums should his wife call for the same. Meanwhile the Managing Editor haled him to San Francisco, to sit for photographs against the day of featuring a sensational departure. The pictures were posed on the roof of the Examiner Building, and portray a very lovable, very boyish, unmodish person, with tousled curls.

Although hostilities had not yet been actually declared, Jack was dispatched on the S. S. Siberia. To Cloudesley on January 7 he dashed off: “Sail to-day for Yokohama. Am going for Hearst. Could have gone for Harper’s, Collier’s, and N. Y. Herald — but Hearst made the best offer “ Other newspapermen aboard were Captain Lionel James, London Times; Percival Phillips, London Daily Express; Sheldon Inglis Williams, artist for London Sphere; 0. K. Davis, New York Herald; Frederick Palmer and R. L. Dunn, for Collier’s Weekly, and Collier’s veteran war photographer, James H. Hare.

En masse “The Crowd” saw Jack off at the dock; and of the Crowd, George Sterling and I were entrusted jointly with the Century Magazine and the Macmillan proof-reading of “The Sea Wolf,” the manuscript of which had been completed and signed the previous evening, and shipped off to the Century Magazine for immediate serialization. The original script of this novel lay in a steel safe throughout San Francisco’s Great Earthquake and Fire of 1906, and to this day the incinerated sheets preserve their form, the only visible markings being lead-penciled corrections, which withstood the heat.

Five days later, at the Sterlings' in Piedmont, a few of us gathered to celebrate Jack's twenty-eighth birthday.

Early in the voyage, he had an attack of grippe; and the day the Siberia cleared from Honolulu, during deck sports Jack's left foot was badly injured.

There is not space in this biography to incorporate Jack London's articles on the Japanese-Russian War. But I quote excerpts from letters written to me, and these will serve to illustrate the almost intolerable irk endured under the rigors of Japanese discipline toward the newspaper man. "They settled the war correspondent forever," he often exclaimed, " — — and they proved that he was a dispensable feature of warfare."

Near the time of Jack's death, among other collections of unpublished book material, he had arranged his Japanese-Russian and also his 1914 Mexican War-Notes, which shall presently be issued as he intended. His utter disgust with the lack of opportunity given the journalist, to deliver what would be really worth-while articles, accounts for his long delay in bringing out his notes. His 3-A Kodak, however, had the distinction of being the first to supply pictures for the American public, although so poor was the mail service in and out of Korea, he never knew until his return six months afterward whether or not his films and cables had been received.

One can give no better idea of his experience and frame of mind than by quoting from his letters to myself:

"S.S. Siberia,

"Jan. 13/04.

"Somewhat weak and wobbly, but still in the ring. Came down with a beautiful attack of La Grippe. Of course, didn't go to bed with it, but spent the time in a steamer chair, for one day half out of my head. And oh, how all my bones ache, even now! And what wild dreams I had! . . .

"Honolulu is in sight, and in an hour I shall be ashore mailing this, and learning whether or not there is war.

". . . Am, Grippe excepted, having a nice trip. The weather is perfect. So is the steamer. Sit at the Captain's table, and all the rest you know. . . ."

"Jan. 15/04.

". . . Well, we sailed yesterday from Honolulu. . . . Am still miserable with my Grippe, but getting better. Had a swim in the surf at Waikiki. Took in the concert at the Hawaiian Hotel, and had a general nice time.

"Had some fun. I bucked a game run by the Chinese firemen of the Siberia, and in twenty-five minutes broke three banks and won $14.85! So, you see, I have discovered a new career for myself.

"The war correspondents, the 'Vultures,' are a jolly crowd. We are bunched up at the Captain's table, now that the passenger list has been reduced by the lot who left at Honolulu. In fact, the trip to Honolulu had three bridal couples which sat at the upper end of the table. This is a funny letter the correspondents are cutting up all around me; and just now I am being joshed good and plenty."

"S.S. Siberia, Jan. 20/04.

". . . Quite a time since I last wrote. You'll wonder why. Well, know that I am the most fortunate of unfortunate men. The evening of the day we left Honolulu I smashed my left ankle. For sixty-five sweaty hours I lay on my back. Yesterday I was carried on deck, on the back of one of the English correspondents. And to-day I have been carried on deck again.

"The smashed ankle is the misfortune; the fortune . . . is the crowd of friends I seem to have collected. From six o'clock in the morning till eleven at night, there was never a moment that my stateroom did not have at least one visitor. As a rule there were three or four, and very often twice as many. I had thought, when the accident happened, that I should have plenty of time for reading; but I was not left alone long enough to read a line.

"I am looking forward with interest to the sixth day, when, if the surgeon does not change his mind, I may put my foot to the deck and try to walk with the aid of crutches.

Of course, what you want to know is what the smash consists in. I was jumping and coming down from a height of three feet and a half. I landed on my left foot — having 'taken off' with my right. But my left foot did not land on the deck. It landed on a round stick, and lengthwise with the stick. Stick about diameter of broom-handle. Of course, my foot went up alongside my leg. My ankle was strained on one side, sprained on the other. That is, the tendons on the inside were stretched and ruptured, the bones on the outside ground against each other, bruising themselves and pinching the nerves — result, an irresistible combination.

"Now I have two weak ankles. I fear me I am getting old. Both my knees have been smashed, and now both my ankles. It might be worse, however. What bothers me just now is that I don't know just how bad this last ankle is. Absolute rest, in a rigid bandage, has been the treatment, so not even the surgeon will know till I try to walk on it.

“. . . Don’t worry because I have let my worry out in this letter. Anyway, I’ll be able to write you later, before we make Yokohama, and let you know more. I hope the report will be promising.”

“S.S. Siberia, Jan. 21/04.

“You should see me to-day. Quite the cripple, hobbling around on a pair of crutches. I can’t stand on the ankle yet, but hope to be able to walk by the time we make Yokohama. To-day is Thursday, and we expect to arrive next Monday morning. I hope war isn’t declared for at least a month after I arrive in Japan — will give my ankle a chance to strengthen.

“All hands are very good to me, and I might say I am almost worn out by being made comfortable. . . . I am in for a game of cards now, so more anon.”

“S.S. Siberia, Jan. 24/04.

“Yesterday I dragged about on crutches to the boat deck and to tiffin, and to bed. To-day I have ventured without crutches. But I walk very little just from stateroom to boat deck.

“A young gale is on, but the Siberia is behaving splendidly.

“P.S. The young gale is still growing.”

“S.S. Siberia, Jan. 24/04.

“Just packing up. Shall be in Yokohama at six to-morrow morning. Ankle is improving. Am walking (very slowly, and limpingly, and carefully) without crutches. I just missed breaking the leg — so you can see what a twist it was. Hope the war holds off for a month yet. . . .”

“Thursday, Jan. 28/04.

“. . . If you can read this. The train is joggling, and the temperature inside the car is 40. I am on the express bound for Kobe — where, on Jan. 31, if not sooner, I expect to get a steamer for Korea. I am bound for Seoul, the capital. Was pretty busy in Yokohama and Tokio. Arrived Monday, and have been on the jump until now, though this writing looks as though I were still jumping.

“Ankle is getting better very slowly.”

“Jan. 29/04.

“You should have seen me plunging out of Kobe this morning, myself and luggage in three ‘rickshaws, with push-boys and pull-boys and all the rest, and racing to catch the express for Nagasaki. No steamer out of Kobe till Feb. 3rd, so am going to try my luck at Nagasaki, twenty-two hours’ ride on the train and no sleeping car.

“Weather is warmer down here. It was bitter cold up Yokohama-way.

“If I do not refer to war doings, know that there is a censor ship, and cables, etc., are held up. . . .”

“Shimonoseki, Feb. 3/04.

“Still trying to sail to Chemulpo. Made an all-day ride back from Nagasaki to Moji to catch a steamer, Feb. 1 (Monday). Bought ticket, stepped outside and snapped three street scenes. Now Moji is a fortified place. Japanese police Very sorry, but they arrested me. Spent the day examining me. Of course, I missed steamer. Very sorry. Carted me down country Monday night to town of Kokura. Examined me again. Committed. Tried Tuesday. Found guilty. Fined five yen, and camera confiscated. Have telegraphed American Minister at Tokio, who is now trying to recover camera.

Received last night a deputation from all the Japanese Newspaper correspondents in this vicinity. Present their good offices, and ‘Very sorry.’ They are my brothers in the craft. They are to-day to petition the judges (three judges sat on me in black caps) to get up mock auction of camera, when they will bid it in and present it to me with their compliments. ‘Very uncertain,’ how ever, they say.

“Expect to leave for Chemulpo on the 6th or 7th hist.”

“On board Junk, off Korean Coast,

“Tuesday, Feb. 9, 1904.

“The wildest and most gorgeous thing ever! If you could see me just now, captain of a junk with a crew of three Koreans who speak neither English nor Japanese and with five Japanese guests (strayed travelers) who speak neither English nor Korean — that is, all but one, which last knows a couple of dozen English words. And with this polyglot following I am bound on a voyage of several hundred miles along the Korean coast to Chemulpo.

“And how did it happen? I was to sail Monday, Feb. 8th, on the Keigo Maru for Chemulpo. Saturday, Feb. 6th, returning in the afternoon from Kokura (where my camera had been returned to me) — returning to Shimonoseki, I learned the Keigo Maru had been taken off its run by the Jap Government. Learned also that many Jap warships had passed the straits bound out, and that soldiers had been called from their homes to join their regiments in the middle of the night.

“And I made a dash right away. Caught, just as it was getting under way, a small steamer for Fusan. Had to take a third class passage — and it was a native steamer — no white man’s chow (food) even first class, and I had to sleep on deck. Dashing aboard in steam launch, got one trunk overboard but saved it. Got wet myself, and my rugs and baggage, crossing the Japan Sea. At Fusan, caught a little 120-ton steamer loaded with Koreans and Japs, and deck load piled to the sky, for Chemulpo. Made Mokpo with a list to starboard of fully thirty degrees. It would take a couple of hundred of such steamers to make a Siberia. But this morning all passengers and freight were fired ashore, willy nilly, for Jap. Government had taken the steamer to use. We had traveled the preceding night convoyed by two torpedo boats.

“Well, fired ashore this morning, I chartered this junk, took five of the Japanese passengers along, and here I am, still bound for Chemulpo. Hardest job I ever undertook. Have had no news for several days, do not know if war has been declared and shall not know until I make Chemulpo — or maybe Kun San, at which place I drop my passengers. God, but I’d like to have a mouthful of white man s speech. It’s not quite satisfying to do business with a 24-word vocabulary and gesticulations.”

“Thursday, Feb. 11, 1904.

“On board another junk. Grows more gorgeous. Night and day traveled for Kun San. Caught on lee-shore yesterday, and wind howling over Yellow Sea. You should have seen us clawing off — one man at the tiller and a man at each sheet (Koreans), four scared Japanese, and the fifth too seasick to be scared. Of course, we cleared off, or you wouldn t be reading this.

“Made Kun San at nightfall, after having carried away a mast and smashed the rudder. And we arrived in driving rain, wind cutting like a knife. And then, you should have seen me being made comfortable last night — five Japanese maidens helping me undress, take a bath, and get into bed, the while visitors, male and female, were being entertained (my visitors). And the maidens passing remarks upon my beautiful white skin, etc. And this morning, same thing repeated — the Mayor of Kun San, the captain of police, leading citizens, all in my bed-room, visiting while I was being shaved, dressed, washed, and fed.

“And all the leading citizens of the town came to see me off, and cheered me, and cried ‘Sayonara’ countless times.

“New junk, manned by Japanese — five and not one knows one word of English; and here I am, adrift with them, off the Korean Coast. “No white man’s news for a long time. Hear native rumors of sea-fights, and of landing of troops, but nothing I may believe without doubting. But when I get to Chemulpo, I’ll know ‘where I’m at.’

“And maybe you think it isn’t cold, traveling as I am, by junk. . . . The snow is on the land, and in some places, on north slopes, comes down to the water’s edge.

“And there are no stoves by which to keep warm — charcoal boxes, with half a dozen small embers, are not to be sneered — at I am beside one now, which I just bought for 12½ cents from a Korean at a village, where we have landed for water.”

“Saturday, Feb. 11, 1904.

“Still wilder, but can hardly say so ‘gorgeous,’ unless landscapes and seascapes seen between driving snow squalls, be gorgeous. You know the tides on this Coast range from 40 to 60 feet (we’re at anchor now, in the midst of ten thousand islands, reefs, and shoals, waiting four hours until the tide shall turn toward Chemulpo — 30 li — which means 75 miles away).

“Well, concerning tides. Yesterday morning found us on a lee shore, all rocks, with a gale pounding the whole Yellow Sea down upon us. Our only chance for refuge, dead to leeward, a small bay, and high and dry. Had to wait on the 40-ft. tide. And we waited, anchored under a small reef across which the breakers broke, until, tide rising, they submerged it. Never thought a sampan (an open crazy boat) could live through what ours did. A gale of wind, with driving snow — you can imagine how cold it was. But I’m glad I have Japanese sailors. They’re braver and cooler and more daring than the Koreans. Well, we waited till eleven A.M. It was ‘twixt the devil and the deep sea — stay and be swamped, run for the little bay and run the chance of striking in the surf. We couldn’t possibly stay longer, so we showed a piece of sail and ran for it. Well, I was nearly blind with a headache which I had brought away with me from Kun San, and which had been increasing ever since; and I did not much care what happened; yet I remember, when we drove in across, that I took off my overcoat, and loosened my shoes — and I didn't bother a bit about trying to save the camera.

"But we made it half full of water but we made it. And maybe it didn't howl all night, so cold that it froze the salt water.

"All of which I wouldn't mind, if it weren't for my ankles. I used to favor the right with the left, but with the left now smashed worse than the right, you can imagine how careful I have to be (where it is impossible to be careful) in a crazy junk going through such rough weather. And yet I have escaped any bad twists so far.

"Junks, crazy — I should say so. Rags, tatters, rotten — something always carrying away how they navigate is a miracle. I wonder if Hearst thinks I'm lost."

"Monday, Feb. 15, 1904.

Oh, yes, we waited four hours! When four hours had passed, wind came down out of the north, dead in our teeth. Lay all night in confounded tide-rip, junk standing on both ends, and driving me crazy what of my headache.

"At four in the morning turned out in the midst of driving snow to change anchorage on account of sea.

"It was a cruel day-break we witnessed; at 8 A.M. we showed a bit of sail and ran for shelter.

"My sailors live roughly, and we put up at a fishing village (Korean) where they live still more roughly, and we spent Sunday and Sunday night there — my five sailors, myself — and about 20 men, women and children jammed into a room in a hut, the floor space of which room was about equivalent to that of a good double-bed.

"And my foreign food is giving out, and I was compelled to begin on native chow. I hope my stomach will forgive me some of the things I have thrust upon it: Filth, dirt, indescribable, and the worst of it is that I can't help thinking of the filth and dirt as I take each mouthful.

"In some of these villages, I am the first white man, and a curiosity.

"I showed one old fellow my false teeth at midnight. He proceeded to rouse the house. Must have given him bad dreams, for he crept in to me at three in the morning and woke me in order to have another look.

"We are under way this morning — for Chemulpo. I hope I don't drop dead when I finally arrive there.

"The land is covered with snow. The wind has just hauled ahead again. Our sail has come in, and the men are at the oars. If it blows up it'll be another run for shelter. O, this is a wild and bitter coast."

"Tuesday night, Feb. 16, Chemulpo.

"Just arrived. Am preparing outfit — horses, interpreter, coolies, etc., for campaign into the North toward the Yalu and most probably into Manchuria."

"Buy everything in sight and get ready to start for Ping-Yang!" Jack was greeted when he landed at Chemulpo. It was the first white-man s speech he had heard in eight days. The welcome tongues were those of Jones and MacLeod, who had preceded him. One of these men, who had known Jack, did not recognize him, so disfigured and cadaverous was he from sunburn and illness, and so crippled. And now, for the first time, he learned that war was on — had been on for five days.

"Chemulpo, Feb. 17/04.

". . . Am preparing to advance north — campaign to the Yalu and perhaps into Manchuria. I shall accompany. Am busy getting interpreters, coolies, horses, saddles, provisions, etc. Only four outside newspapermen here. The rest, a host, cannot get here."

"Grand Hotel, Seoul, Feb. 24/04.

". . . Am starting in five minutes for the North. Have been about crazy trying to outfit and start:

"3 pack ponies
"2 riding horses
"1 interpreter (Jap.)
"1 cook (Korean)
"2 mapus (Korean grooms)."

Of all the correspondents in the field, Jack was the last to reach Seoul, but the first to the Front. At Seoul, no one seemed to have any orders about him, so he lost not a moment hitting the road for the North. But from Sunan, the farthest point yet reached by any correspondent, and near the firing line, he was ruthlessly ordered back to Seoul.

“Ping-Yang, March 4/04.

“Have made 180 miles on horseback to this place. I shall be able to ride a little with you when I return, for it appears there are months of riding before me. I have one of the best horses in Korea — was the Russian Minister’s at Seoul before he went away.

Very little chance to write these days am not writing enough for the Examiner as it is. Worked to death with the trouble of traveling.

“Have received no more letters from you nor anybody.

“Am pulling North soon for Anju and maybe the Yalu. Am now in the midst of accounts with correspondents, interpreters, mapus and what not, so cannot think. . . . I do not know when I shall ever be able to write you a real letter lack of time.

“But I’m learning about horses last two days traveled 50 miles a day, and I was saddle-sore and raw.

I am living in a Japanese hotel crammed with soldiers. (Only three of us — 1 English correspondent — 1 American photographer.) Am ordering whiskey just now for them.”

“Poral-Colli, March 8/04.

“How the letters have roused me up! . . . Furthermore, they have proved to me, or, rather, reassured me, that I am a white man.

“As a sample of many days, let me give to-day. Was for bidden departure by Gen. Sasaki at Ping-Yang — argued it out through interpreters — vexations, delays, drive me mad. Should have started at 7 A.M. Scarcely started to load pack horses, when summoned by Japanese Consul — more interpreter — distraction — successful bluff — pull out late in afternoon.

“Arrive at this forlorn village; people scared to death. Already have had Russian and Japanese soldiers — we put the finishing touch to their fright. They swear they have no room for us, no fuel, no charcoal, no food for our horses, no room for our horses, nothing — no grub for our mapus and interpreters. We storm the village — force our way into the stables — capture 25 Ibs. barley hidden in man’s trousers — and so forth and so forth, for two mortal hours — chatter and chin-chin to drive one mad. “And this is but one of all the days. One can scarcely think white man’s thoughts. . . . As I write this, the horses are breaking loose in the stable — native horses are fiends, and I have desisted writing long enough to stir up the mapus.

“The horse I was astride of to-day is named Belle. I named her after your Belle. She is as sweet and gentle as yours, and she is the only sweet and gentle horse in Korea. She is an Australian barb, and have I told you she was the Russian Minister’s at Seoul? She is gigantic compared with all other horses in Korea — Chinese, Japanese, and Korean horses — and excites universal wonder and admiration.

“As I write this a cold wind is blowing from the North, and snow is driving. Also, before my door are groaning and creaking a hundred bullock-carts loaded with army supplies and pushing North.

“My interpreter comes in with his daily report. Manyoungi, my Korean cook and interpreter, comes in with tea and toast. Dunn sends down half a can of hot pork and beans — and there are a thousand interruptions.”

“Wednesday, Mar. 9/04.

Here we are — captured and detained, while the wires are working hot between here and Ping-Yang and Seoul. I mean captured by Japanese soldiers who will not let us proceed North to Anjou. And five more vexatious hours have just elapsed — chin-chin and delay galore.

“As I write this, a thousand soldiers are passing through the village past my door. My men are busy drawing rations for themselves and horses from the Army.

“Red cross ponies, pioneers, pack horses loaded with munitions and supplies, for foot soldiers, are streaming by. Captains are dropping in to shake hands and leave their cards, and then going on.

“IMPORTANT. ANOTHER VEXATION!

“Just caught five body lice on my undershirt. That is, I discovered them, Manyoungi picked them off, the while he interpreted for me an invitation from a Korean nobleman to come to his place and occupy better quarters! The nobleman looked on, while the lice were caught and I changed my clothes. Lice drive me clean crazy. I am itching all over. I am sure, every second, that a score of them are on me. And how under the sun am I to write for the Examiner or write to you!

“Intermission — the horses, stabled within ten feet of me, have been kicking up a rumpus — kicking, biting, stampeding my Belle and my three other horses — and broken legs would not be welcome just now. I am advised to get my life insured.

"And the troops stream by, the horses fight — and mapus, cook and interpreter, are squabbling 4 feet away from me. And the frost is in the air. I must close my doors and light my candles.

"A Korean family of refugees — their household goods on their backs, just went by."

"Japanese Consulate,

"The 9th March, 1904.

"To Mr. Jack London:

"Sir:

"I have the honor to inform you by the order that you would stay here until our Land Forces under Major General Sasaki proceed for the North.

"Yours truly,

(Signed) "C. Chinjo,

"Jap. Acting Consul."

Jack, referring to the foregoing, notes as follows:

"This is one of many commands not heeded. This was issued yesterday at Ping-Yang. I am now North of that city and in advance of General Sasaki.

"The first command, had I obeyed it, would have held me in Tokio to this day, where are 50 other correspondents who did heed. I am prepared, however, to be held up by Japanese scouts at any moment and be brought back to Ping-Yang. But it's all in the game. I am the only correspondent thus far in advance. With me is Dunn, a photographer for Collier's Weekly. . . . In Ping-Yang are two other correspondents — and that is all the regular correspondents in Korea at present moment."

"Sunan, Mar. 11/04.

"Have just returned from a ride on Belle — doesn't that strike you familiarly? North I may ride for a hundred yards, and when I come thundering up at a lope the Japanese guard turns out on the run, presenting bayonets to me in token that I may proceed no farther. East, West, and South I may ride as far as I wish, but North, where fighting is soon to begin, I may not go. Nor may I go until I receive permission from Lieut.-General Inouye, commander of the 12th Division of 12,000 men, and just now at Seoul, a couple of hundred miles to the South.

" . . . Your two letters I received several days ago were brought up, horseback, from Seoul. As I write I look out my door and a dozen feet from where I am sitting, see Belle munching away at her barley ration which I have drawn for her from the Army. She is a joy! . . . I am my own riding teacher. I hope I don't learn to ride all wrong. But anyway, I'll manage to stick on a horse somehow, and we'll have some glorious rides together."

"Sunan, March 12/04.

". . . You needn't worry about my welfare. The Japanese are taking very good care of me. Here I am, 40 miles from the front, and here I stay. The only other newspaperman who reached this far, Dunn, has gone back. So I'm farthest north of all the correspondents. Furthermore, no others may now pass out of Ping-Yang."

He quotes several short poems from the Korean, and comments:

"These are sweet, are they not? They are the only sweet things I have seen among the Koreans!"

"Ping-Yang, March 14/04.

". . . Ordered back to Ping-Yang yesterday by the authorities — so here I am, and a chance to mail this."

"Ping-Yang, March 16/04.

"Here beginneth the retrograde movement. Have been ordered back 50 li from Sunan to this place. Am now ordered back 540 li from this place to Seoul — the Japanese are disciplining us for our rush ahead and the scoop we made — and they are doing it for the sake of the correspondents who remained in Japan by advice of Japanese and who have made life miserable for the Japanese by pointing out that we have been ahead gathering all the plums.

"540 li to Seoul and 540 li back = 1080 useless li I have to ride, plus 100 (Sunan and return) = 1180 useless li. Well, I'll become used to the saddle at any rate."

"Seoul, March 18/04.

"Just arrived, fired hence from the North. Pull out on a little side jump to Wei-hai-wei to-morrow morning early. Learn that a bunch of letters is chasing around after me up at Ping-Yang. . . . Shall get them a week hence when return from Wei-hai-wei."

"March 19/04.

". . . Didn't go to Wei-hai-wei after all."

“Seoul, Korea, March 29/04.

“Here I am, still in Seoul, assigned to the first column but not permitted to go to the Front. None of the correspondents at front. All held back by Japanese, and in this matter we are being treated abominably.

“. . . I have decided that I shall remain away no more than a year. Ten months from the time I left San Francisco, I shall cable Hearst to send out another man to take my place at the front — if I’ve got to the front by that time.

“. . . Since writing you from north of Ping-Yang at Sunan, I have not only received not one letter from any one else, but not one letter from you. . . . You, at least, have my miserable letters to the Examiner to read. Have never been so disgusted with anything I have done. Perfect rot I am turning out. It’s not war correspondence at all, and the Japs are not allowing us to see any war. Photographs inclosed taken at table upon which I am writing this.”

“Grand Hotel, Seoul, Korea, April 1/04.

And still no mail. . . . I’ll never go to a war between Orientals again. The vexation and delay are too great. Here I am, still penned up in Seoul, my 5 horses and interpreters at Chemulpo, my outfit at Ping-Yang, my post at Anjou — and eating my heart out with inactivity. Such inactivity, such irritating inactivity, that I cannot even write letters.

“Mark you, while inactive, I am busy all the time. What worries is that I am busy with worries and nothing is accomplished. Never mind, I may not ride beautifully or correctly, but I’11 wager that I stick on and keep up with you in the rides we may have to gether.

“Just now I’m riding all kinds of Chinese ponies, with all kinds of saddles, in all kinds of places (and some of the ponies are vicious brutes). I was out yesterday, without stirrups, and loped all over the shop with another fellow, down crowded streets, narrow streets, crooked streets, over sprawling babies, for the ponies are hard-mouthed and headstrong (a thousand shaves), and live to tell the tale.”

Here is a letter received by Jack from Mr. James, Chemulpo, at this juncture:

“Dear London:

“Your mare and the ponies are well looked after. Only a little influenza in her and she wants a lot more exercise. She is quite fat.

“Chin-chin, old chap.

Yours as a Sourdough,

“James.”

And at foot, this note from Jack’s interpreter, K. Yamada:

“For you don’t returned within long time there happened trouble yesterday that I had been arrested to Japanese gendarme as reporting military secret to you and after 10 hours examined several questions, I could come back to my boarding house. Received telegram and I shall do your order.

“Y.ff’ly [affectionately?!],

“K. Yamada.”

“If you don’t come back I can’t help plenty troubles.”

Jack comments upon the two communications above:

“These two letters, on same sheet, as indicative of some of my troubles. Here I am, compelled to remain in Seoul, my horses at Chemulpo. My interpreter, K. Yamada, left in charge of horses, arrested. My mare with influenza, and suffering from ‘hay-belly,’ which James mistakes for being in foal. Hay I had sternly for bidden, for I had learned effect on mare. James (an Ex-Klondiker) and making a dash for Chemulpo, I asked to take a look at my horses.”

In very bad humor over the holding up of his mail, he writes:

“Seoul, Korea, April 5/04.

“. . . I am going out to ride off steam now on a jockey saddle and a spanking big horse, and if we don’t kill each other we’11 kill a few native babies or blind men. Had the horse out yesterday — hardest mouth — took half a block to bring it to a walk and half a dozen to hold it when I got off to pay a call. How I stuck on I don’t know — but I never took the reins in both hands, a la Japanaise, nor did I throw my arms around his neck. Oh, I’m learning, I’m learning. I never had time in my life to learn to play billiards, but I’m learning now. I never had time to learn to dance, but if this war keeps on I’ll learn that, too — only the missionaries don’t dance, and the Kresang (Korean dancing girls) can’t dance because the Emperor’s mother is dead and the court is in mourning.

“To-morrow night I give a reading from ‘Call of Wild’ before foreign residents for benefit of local Y. M. C. A. — and I give it in evening dress! ! ! Custom of the country and I had to come to it. In Japan, however, one has to have a frock coat and top hat — imagine me in a Prince Albert and a stovepipe. Anyway, if Japan wins this war the Japs will be so cocky that white people will be unable to live in Japan. . . .

“. . . Here’s the horse, and I go. Say, I have learned a new swear-word (Korean), ‘Jamie.’ Whenever you want to swear just say ‘Jamie’ softly, and people won’t know you are swearing.”

“O-Pay, Korea, April 16/04.

“In the saddle again . . . and riding long hours. Roads are muddy. Was putting Belle in up to the shoulders as darkness fell last night. Have breakfast eaten and am under way at 6 a.m. It is now 9 :30 p.m., and I have just finished supper and am going (in about one minute) rather tired to bed.”

“Anjou House, April 17/04.

“Plugging along in the race for Japanese Headquarters. Four men ahead of me, but expect to overhaul them, though I am bringing my packs along and they are traveling light. The rest of the bunch is left in the rear.

“Beautiful long hours in the saddle, and beautiful mud. . . . Am prouder than a peacock, for I am able to keep Belle’s shoes on her, to tighten them when they get loose, and to put on a shoe when she casts and loses one. Of course, it is coldshoeing, but they work! they work!”

Wiju, April 24th.

“Well, I didn’t overtake the four men ahead of me, though I caught up with them where they were stopped farther back along the road, and arrived here with them, where we shall stop for some time.

“Now, to business. As I understand it, Macmillans expect to bring out ‘The Sea Wolf’ late this Fall. I shall not be able to go over the proof-sheets. And you must do this for me. I shall write Macmillans telling them this and asking them to get into communication with you. In the first place, before any of the book is set up in print, you must get from them the original MS. in their possession. Much in this MS. will have been cut out in the Century published part. What was cut out I want put back in the book. On the other hand, many GOOD alterations have been made by you and George [Sterling], and by the Century people — these alterations I want in the book. So here’s the task — take the Macmillan MS., and, reading the Century published stuff, put into Macmillan MS. the good alterations.

"Furthermore, anything that offends you, strike out or change on your own responsibility. You know me well enough to know that I won't kick."

"Headquarters 1st Japanese Army,
"Manchuria, May 6/04.
". . . I am well, in splendid health, though profoundly irritated by the futility of my position in this Army and sheer inability (caused by the position) to do decent work. Whatever I have done I am ashamed of. The only compensation for these months of irritation is a better comprehension of Asiatic geography and Asiatic character. Only in another war, with a whiteman's army, may I Hope to redeem myself. It can never be done here by any possibility."

"Headqrs. First Jap. Army,
"Feng-Wang-Cheng,
"Manchuria,
May 17, 1904.
". . . I have so far done no decent work. Have lost enthusiasm and hardly hope to do anything decent. Another war will be required for me to redeem myself, when I can accompany our army or an English army. Well, time rolls on. In six weeks the rainy season will be here. The chances are that I'll pull out for some point in China where I can get in touch with a cable. . . .

"Do you know — beyond my camera experience at Moji (mailed before the War) I do not know whether the Examiner has received one article of mine (I have sent 19) or one film (and I have sent hundreds of photographs)."

"Headquarters First Japanese Army,
"Feng-Wang-Cheng,
"Manchuria,
"May 22, 1904.
"My heart does not incline to writing these days. It could only wail, for I am disgusted at being here. War? Bosh! Let me give you my daily life.

"I am camped in a beautiful grove of pine trees on a beautiful hill-slope. Near-by is a temple. It is glorious summer weather. I am awakened in the early morning by the songs of birds. Cuckoo calls through the night. At 6 :30 I shave. Manyoungi, my Korean boy, is cooking breakfast and waiting on me. Sakai, my interpreter, is shining my boots and receiving instructions for the morning. Yuen-hi-kee, a Chinese, is lending a hand at various things. My Seoul mapu is helping in the breakfast and cleaning up generally. My Ping-Yang mapu is feeding the horses.

"Breakfast at 7. Then try to grind something out of nothing for the Examiner. Perhaps go out and take some photographs, which I may not send any more for the Censor will not permit them to go out undeveloped and I have no developing outfit or chemicals with me.

"I am at liberty to ride in to headquarters at Feng-Wang-Cheng, less than a mile away. And I am at liberty to ride about in a circle around the city of a radius little more than a mile. Never were correspondents treated in any war as they have been in this. It's absurd, childish, ridiculous, rich, comedy.

"In the afternoon, the call goes forth, and we (the correspondents) go swimming in a glorious pool — clear water, over our heads, plenty of it. It all reminds me of Glen Ellen. A campfire at night, whereby we curse God, or Fate, and divers peoples and things which I shall not mention for the Censor's sake, and the day is ended.

"Disgusted, utterly disgusted.

"I have this day written the Examiner that in a month or six weeks (at outside) I shall pull out of the country and go to someplace where I can get in direct communication with them; that my position here is futile; that there is no reason for my continuing here, and that, unless arrangements have been made for me to go on the Russian side, I shall return to the United States — unless they expressly bid me remain.

"Now I don't think it is possible for them to make arrangements for me to go on the Russian side, so . . . as you read this I may be starting on my way back to the States, to God's country, the Whiteman's country. . . . Who knows? Who knows? At any rate, believe me . . . it would take a many times bigger salary than I am receiving to persuade me to put in a year again in Japan much less pay for the year out of my own pocket. In the past I have preached the Economic Yellow Peril; henceforth I shall preach the Militant Yellow Peril.

"And just imagine the Censor reading all this. . . . Not a letter, not a line. I know not what is happening.

". . . I have no heart, no head, no hand, for anything. In preposterous good health, but ungodly sick of soul. . . ."

Jack London always cherished a high regard for Richard Harding Davis. Mr. Davis, together with John Fox, Jr., and a large contingent of other writers, were held tightly, though courteously and hospitably, bottled up in Tokyo by the Nippon Government. Here they were eating out their hearts in enforced inaction, doubtlessly envious, and excusably, of the seven men who, Jack among them, had somehow got ahead with the First Army. And yet, when it was rumored in Tokyo that Jack London, a white man, a countryman, was in sore straits with the brown military authorities away up in Korea, and like to be summarily dealt with, it was Richard Harding Davis, white man to white man's rescue, although personally he knew him not, who first set the wires burning to Washington, where Theodore Roosevelt sat in the President's chair.

I have heard Jack's account of the fracas that "put him in wrong" with General Kuroki. Later on, someone circulated that he had been sent back to America for "violation of neutrality." Being very rusty on the facts, I took occasion, during a visit from James H. Hare in 1917, to refresh my memory. When Jack renewed acquaintance with both "Jimmie" Hare and "Dick" Davis in 1914 at Vera Cruz, I had the pleasure of meeting them.

The seven who were lucky enough to be members of the Japanese First Army were Jack London, Captain Thomas (French), William Maxwell (British), Mr. Fraser, and, for Collier's Weekly, Mr. Hare, Mr. Palmer, and Mr. O. K. Davis — all absolute subjects of the iron machine of which they were part. Each possessed his own outfit and servants, including a mapu (horse-boy), and every week these mapus went to the Japanese quartermaster to obtain feed for their masters beasts. On one such day, Jack's boy had some dispute with another mapu. Going to see what the row was about, Jack's boy explained that the other had prevented him from getting his proper share of the feed. This same offender Jack recognized as one who had been stealing his "grub" for some time back; but knowing how risky it would be for an unwelcome white correspondent to strike a Japanese, no matter how low in station, had regretfully refrained from taking it out on the other's hide. On the present occasion Jack interposed, by word of mouth, and the impudent thief, presuming too far upon a fancied security, made a threatening bluff in his direction. Jack watched carefully, and only when the fellow came actually at him, did he let out that small, scientific fist. "Lord, Lord," I can hear him muse, "I only hit him once — stopped him with my fist, rather — you know, he fell right into it; and then down with a thud. And he went around whimpering in bandages for two weeks."

But Jack nor his friends minimized the danger he was in, for the beaten mapu lost no time reporting to headquarters, and there were black looks everywhere. Jack was called on the carpet by General Kuroki's chief of staff, General Fuji, while the six other white men armed themselves, determined to stand with their comrade against the whole brown Army if need be, and go down together — a lovely thing, the most inspiring and romantic in the world.

Matters looked very serious for a while, although General Fuji did at length condescend to listen to Jack's side. Richard Harding Davis's effort undoubtedly halted any sudden execution by court martial that might have been in the minds of the staff. At any rate the storm blew over; but for days the seven men kept closely together, ready for emergency. Again, in 1914, Mr. Davis extended a second white-man's hand in an unforeseen difficulty; but that story belongs elsewhere.

And when Jack sailed from Yokohama, coming home, he left Mr. Davis still awaiting, with the other soul-sick correspondents, their permission to go to the Front.

VOLUME II

RETURN FROM KOREA; DIVORCE

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXV Autumn, 1904

ON June 30, 1904, still in the ocean aboard the in coming S.S. Korea, from Yokohama, Jack London was served with papers for “separation and maintenance.” Moreover, he learned from the inhospitable messenger that an attachment had been levied by the plaintiff upon his personal property, even to his books, “My very tools of trade,” as he designated his library. The attachment spread to whatever funds might be due from his publishers, and covered his balance with The Examiner for the war articles — all of it revenue which in his provident integrity he had sought almost solely for the benefit of his dependents.

He was generous until taken advantage of, and then — divinely generous still, even to generosity becoming, in the nature of things, a mere duty. When questioned as to a seemingly short-sighted attitude that might work disadvantage to himself, his philosophy dictated the following:

“If — — should sell off everything I possess, I would say, ‘cheap at the price.’ The dollars do not amount to anything to me where human relations are concerned. I think I am the same way with my neck. I would trust it willingly to a friend, a dear friend, and if that friend should chop off my head, my head, rolling on the ground, would say, I am sure, ‘Cheap at the price.’ So I shall let certain powers remain in So-and-So’s hands. If such power is misused, why, what of it? The extent of its misuse would be as nothing to the fact that So-and-So had misused it, and I prefer to give the chance.”

To Cloudesley he sent a scribbled note: “Am back, rushed to death, and trying to straighten things out. At present all money tied up (earned and unearned) and don’t know where I’m at.”

And this was not the worst. A dear and wonderful friend had been ruthlessly named as co-respondent in the separation complaint and of course there ensued all the malodorous notoriety which accompanies such attacks. A hue and cry went up from a hypocritical capitalist press, quite as if Jack London were the first youth who ever repented of a marital mistake.

The girl's chief reply to the astonishing accusations, as recorded in the Bay dailies, was that the same were "merely vulgar." Jack, grieved to the heart that his beloved friends should be soiled in his unfortunate affairs, declined to comment upon the latter otherwise than: "I refuse to say a word about my separation. . . . A man's private affairs are his private affairs." And as might be surmised, the "Herbert Wace" of the "Letters" was widely quoted. To the girl herself, Jack wrote, in part:

"I do most earnestly hope that your name will not be linked any more with my troubles. It will soon die away, I believe. And so it goes, I wander through life delivering hurts to all that know me. . . . And so one pays . . . only, it is the woman who always pays.

"Unspoilt in your idealism? And think of me as unsaved in my materialism. . . . However, I am changed. Though a materialist when I first knew you, I had the saving grace of enthusiasm. That enthusiasm is the thing that is spoiled, and I have become too sorry a thing for you to remember."

The original complaint, a lengthy arraignment abounding in curious charges, was eventually withdrawn and another, this time for complete divorce instead of mere separation and maintenance, and on the ground of simple "desertion," went before the court on August 2, 1904. This was allowed by default, Jack London not appearing. Property interests were adjusted out of court.

Shortening down already insufficient sleep, beating his head with his fist to keep awake, Jack plunged deeper than ever into work. For he must immediately start building the new home for his little girls; and this home, in addition to his other driven obligations, he personally superintended. As if all this were not enough, the death of Mammy Jennie's husband made it incumbent upon him to take over her affairs.

The events of this summer of 1904 threw Jack into a melancholia that he tried to conceal under a carefree manner when with the "The Crowd" picnicking in the hills, or rollicking in the Piedmont swimming baths — his main recreations. A letter to me aired his depression over the minuteness of human generosity and fair play:

"It's sometimes a dreary thing to sit and watch the game played in the small and petty way. One who not only takes a hand in the game, but calmly sits outside as well and watches, usually sees the small and petty way, and is content to face immediate losses, knowing that the ultimate gain is his. It is so small, so pitifully small, that at worst it can produce only a passing glow of anger, and after that, pity only remains, and tolerance without confidence. — Oh, why can't the men and women of this world learn that playing the game in the small way is the losing way? They are always doomed to failure when they play against the one who plays in the large way."

So bleak was his spirit for a while, that more than once he considered, though with a terrible cheerlessness, returning to the old order, what of love and sorrow for the babies. In a letter: "Believe me, . . . it has taken all the resolution I could summon to prevent my going back, for the children's sake. I have been sadly shaken during the last forty-eight hours — so shaken that it almost seemed easier for me to sacrifice myself for the little ones. They are such joys, such perfect little human creatures." But in after years he reviewed his state at that time: "If I had gone back, it would have meant suicide or insanity."

As it was, he was with the children frequently, either in their home or his own.

My people wrote to me, in the east, that he had come to spend a week at Wake Robin Lodge, and his regard for the beautiful mountainside had only extended.

Manyoungi, the brightest Korean in Jack's train with the Japanese First Army, had been brought by him to California, for he needed just such a servitor to relieve him of all domestic friction in the little flat. This boy, resourceful and comely, took prideful charge from kitchen to study, and made entertaining an irresponsible pleasure to "Master, as he continued to designate his employer, to the playful horror of jeering friends, radical and otherwise. Finding it useless, Jack gave up trying to dissuade Manyoungi from his long-time custom with European travelers to Korea, and submitted willingly to the ministrations of the perfect servant who assumed entire care of his wardrobe, even to dressing him in the morning. Jack's attitude upon personal service was to the effect that it saved him priceless minutes for work and reading. "Why tie my own shoes when I can have it done by some one whose business it is, while I am improving my mind or entertaining the fellows who drop in!"

And many were the fellows who dropped in, persons from near and far flocking to look upon the face and hang upon the speech of the young writer. Jack, jealously conserving his every moment, saved hours by meeting them at mealtime:

"Manyoungi, there'll be two to dinner this evening — " or a dozen, or six; and the table blossomed forthwith by virtue of a complete set of exquisite Haviland china, with silver and crystal and napery as faultless; to all of which beauty Jack, hospitality in his eye, had treated his longing soul upon taking up bachelor life.

"If I had to be a servant," he would muse, "I'd be just such an one as Manyoungi. He possesses what I understand as 'the spirit of service' to the finest degree."

"The spirit of service" — he appeared to love the quality, despite the popular idea of his socialism. Out of his own mouth: "If I were a servant, I'd make myself the finest servant in the world."

"The Faith of Men," another series of Klondike yarns, and ninth volume on the stretching shelf, had been published by Macmillans in the spring, and autumn saw "The Sea Wolf" beside it. The latter was given especially high acclaim by the reviewers. However, they persisted in pigeonholing it as essentially a man's book — a book women would not care for;" and it was with loud glee that Jack later on received word that The Ladies Home Journal had purchased several thousand copies to be used as premiums to subscribers. Meanwhile, he tried his hand at writing a play, based upon his short story "Scorn of Women" — frankly an experiment. This play at various times intrigued the fancy of one and another of "America's foremost actresses," but was never performed. Referring to the comment of one star, Jack wrote me:

" — — ,in suggestion of making a struggle between Freda and Mrs. E. for Capt. E., violates the eternal art canon of UNITY. It is ANOTHER story.

"I violated all the conventional art-canons, but not one eternal art canon.

"I wrote a play without a hero, without a villain, without a love-motif, and with two leading ladies."

And to Anna Strunsky:

"Am on third and last act of play, adapted from 'Scorn of Women,' to be called 'The Way of Women.' Not a big effort. Wouldn't dare a big effort.

An experiment merely — lots of horse play, etc., and every character, even Sitka Charley, is belittled."

Then, in another paragraph, concerning his health:

"I have been working hard, and what of my physical afflictions have been a pretty good recluse. . . . Yes, I am thin — seven pounds off weight, and soft, which is equivalent to twelve pounds off weight altogether. My grippe was followed by a nervous itch, which heat aggravated, and I was prevented from exercising for weeks."

The "nervous itch" referred to gave Jack much disquietude both mental and physical, and to the skin-and nerve-specialists not a little thought and experimentation. Under the most minute scrutiny, the skin revealed nothing that would lead to a diagnosis. Remained only to go into the question of nerves. The patient's dynamic habits of overwork in every department of his intellectual life, and his relentless limitation of repose, afforded good reason; on the other hand, he had pursued this system for many years, with no such warning as the present.

By a process of elimination common to his drastic fashion, he hit upon an apparently innocent custom indulged for some months past — that of munching salted pecans and almonds while reading in bed. Possibly he had saturated himself with an excess of salt. (Physicians often reduce sodium chloride in the tissues and fluids for remedial purposes, a method known as dechloridation.) He dropped this saline element from his dietary. The itch disappeared. Resuming the nut-refreshment, the affliction took a new lease of his hypersensitive surfaces, which flamed intolerably at the slightest exertion. So acute was the disorder, that even the thought of it precipitated an attack.

After convincing himself that salt was the offending factor, Jack went gaily to the specialists with his findings, and they agreed with his conclusion. His diagnosis was verified to his entire satisfaction when in tropic climes re-lapses followed long exposure to salt air and water; and even under a bright California sky in long periods of midwinter yachting.

But there was no diminishing of his work; rather, he increased the staggering pace. Having reeled off an article entitled "The Yellow Peril" (now in collection "Revolution"), in which his sage views on the Asiatic situation were presented, he tackled a short novel. This was "The Game," which might be termed a prizefight idyl its overarching motif being man's eternal struggle between woman and career. He wrote me:

"Am slowly weaving The Game. You wouldn't think it difficult if you read it. Most likely a failure, but it is a splendid exercise for me. I am learning more of my craft. Some day I may master my tools."

He loved the writing of it, for, like Keats, he loved a fair contest between man and man. It was not for the prize nor for brutality s sake, but for the cleanness of a scientific game — Anglo-Saxon sport, square and true, as say against some other national sports like bull-fighting, where as a rule one contestant is doomed through trickery of superior intelligence.

He enjoyed the creating of Genevieve, line for line. "Why, you'd never guess where I got my model for her," he said to me afterward. "She was a candy-girl in a poor little sweet-shop in London. I never saw such a skin — sprayed with color like your Duchesse roses out the window there. I used to hunt up a thirst for gallons of soft drinks just for excuse to go and sit at the dingy little counter and look shyly at her face, as a silly boy might. I did not even want to touch her — and she hadn't a thing in her yellow head to talk about. It was just an abandonment to the prettiness and fragility of her English bloom."

"The Game" was serialized in The Metropolitan Magazine, illustrated by Henry Hutt in water-colors. And Jack had been right: it was for the most part a failure, so far as concerned the American public. For readers listened to the uncomprehending words of space-writers who totally missed the big motif, and neither knew nor cared to know aught of "the game" itself. Timely to the subject, I quote entire a letter Jack London wrote on August 18, 1905, to the editor of the New York Times:

"As one interested in the play of life, and in the mental processes of his fellow-creatures, I have been somewhat amused by a certain feature of the criticisms of my prize-fighting story, 'The Game.' This feature is the impeachment of my realism, the challenging of the facts of life as put down by me in that story. It is rather hard on a poor devil of a writer, when he has written what he has seen with his own eyes, or experienced in his own body, to have it charged that said sights and experiences are unreal and impossible.

"But this is no new experience, after all. I remember a review of 'The Sea Wolf' by an Atlantic Coast critic who seemed very familiar with the sea. Said critic laughed hugely at me because I sent one of my characters aloft to shift over a gaff-topsail. The critic said that no one ever went aloft to shift over a gaff-topsail, and that he knew what he was talking about because he had seen many gaff-topsails shifted over from the deck. Yet I, on a seven-months' cruise in a topmast schooner, had gone aloft, I suppose, a hundred times, and with my own hands shifted tacks and sheets of gaff-topsails.

“Now to come back to ‘The Game.’ As reviewed in the New York Saturday Times, fault was found with my realism. I doubt if this reviewer has had as much experience in such matters as I have. I doubt if he knows what it is to be knocked out, or to knock out another man. I have had these experiences, and it was out of these experiences, plus a fairly intimate knowledge of prize-fighting in general, that I wrote The Game.

“I quote from the critic in the Saturday Times:

Still more one gently doubts in this particular case, that a blow delivered by Ponta on the point of Fleming’s chin could throw the latter upon the padded canvas floor of the ring with enough force to smash in the whole back of his skull, as Mr. London describes.

All I can say in reply is, that a young fighter in the very club described in my book, had his head smashed in this manner. Incidentally, this young fighter worked in a sail-loft and took remarkably good care of his mother, brother and sisters.

“And oh, — one word more. I have just received a letter from Jimmy Britt, light-weight champion of the world, in which he tells me that he particularly enjoyed ‘The Game,’ on account of its trueness to life.

“Very truly yours,

“Jack London.”

Jack always remained a champion of this book of his, not only in view of its subject but also of his workmanship. When Great Britain received it with intense appreciation, placing “this cameo of the ring” alongside other favorites like “Cashel Byron’s Profession,” the author was exultant with vindication. And yet, only the other day in fact, I picked up an American newspaper clipping in which The Game” was tossed aside as “that Jack London novel with out an excuse!”

With reference to some tentative and evidently short sighted criticism I had made of the manuscript, he responded:

“And, by the way, remember that anybody, by hard work, can achieve precision of language, but that very few can achieve strength of style. What knocks E — ? Precision. To be precise he has pruned away all strength. What the world wants is strength of utterance, not precision of utterance. Remember that about all the precise ways of saying things have already been said; the person who would be precise is merely an echo of all the precise people who have gone before, and such a person's work is bound to be colorless and insipid. Think it over. Let us talk all these things over." I remember, when he referred to a rusty pipe as "a streak of rust," wishing that I had thought of it first!

Ere the ink was dry on the packet that inclosed his manuscript of "The Game" to the editor, he was busy upon memoranda for his next novel in mind, "White Fang." On December 6, I received a handful of notes by mail, with the following comments:

"Find here, and please return, the motif for my very next book. A companion to 'The Call of the Wild.' Beginning at the very opposite end — evolution instead of devolution; civilization instead of decivilization. It is distinctly NOT to be a sequel. Merely same length, dog-story, and companion story. I shall not call it 'Call of the Tame,' but shall have title quite dissimilar to 'Call of Wild.' There are lots of difficulties in the way, but I believe I can make a cracker jack of it — have quit the play for a day to think about it.

"May go East in January after all for two or three months — lecturing."

By now, I was back from the east and living at Wake Robin Lodge with my Aunt, putting in hours a day at the piano. Meanwhile my services were offered to Jack in the matter of relieving him of typewriting, a suggestion that met with glad response; and I was thus brought into closer touch with his work and aims. My remuneration — and that a treasure — was the possession of his handwritten pages. Except for a few short stories and articles, the play "Scorn of Women" was my first typing for him, and by mail we exchanged some lively discussions of its technique before final completion. One of his letters contains this lamentation:

"I did 1000 words (dialogue and direction) on the first act of the play to-day. Oh, how it puzzles me and worries me, that play. Sometimes all seems clear (and good) and next it seems all rot and a rotten failure. But I don't care. Though I never get a cent for it, I'm learning a whole lot about play-writing." Here are the last two 1904 communications to Cloudesley Johns:

"1216 Telegraph Avenue,

"Dec. 8, 1904.

"I had to tell Black Cat that the idea of my story was not original [this was 'A Nose for the King,' published in The Black Cat for March, 1906, and collected in 'When God Laughs'] having been told me by a Korean. So I don't know whether my chance is spoiled or not.

"Sure, I'll come to stay with you — I can bring Manyoungi. Only too glad. Expect to be down in first part of January.

I went to look at the Spray to-day. First time since that night we came in from Petaluma. Won't be able to get out on her this year."

I have heard Jack London remark that Miss Mary Shaw, whom he met after a San Francisco performance of "Mrs. Warren's Profession," was the most intellectual actress he had ever talked with. And to Cloudesley:

"Yes — met Miss Shaw — went to dinner. Liked her better than any actress ever met."

Every moment energy incarnate, he rushed and crowded as if to preclude thinking of aught except the work or recreation of the moment. Speed, speed — and he began saving for a big red motor-car to mend the general pace. He fell ill — another severe attack of grippe that compelled him to ease up ; but the instant his brain cleared of dizziness, his incredible activities were resumed. And he always made it a religious duty personally to answer every letter received. Often I read the following, at the end of hastily scrawled notes to me: "This is the last of 30 [or 40, or 50] letters I have just reeled off."

And this:

"I never had time to bore myself — Do you know I never have a moment with myself — am always doing something when I am alone — I shall work till midnight to-night, then bed, and read myself to sleep."

To which I, tinged with sorrow and foreboding:

"You make me sad. You haven't time to live; so what's the use of living?"

One of Jack's relaxations, if the word can apply to the tense interest he took in game and sport, and his unquenchable joy in the pard-like beauty of an athlete, was following the monthly boxing bouts at the West Oakland Athletic Club, the scene of the prizefight in "The Game." A characteristic incident has been offered me by a newspaperman, Mr. Fred Goodcell, who made his acquaintance one day when Jack had, for the first time in years, dropped in to see his old friend Johnny Heinold in the First and Last Chance. I give Mr. Goodcell's version of one evening that Jack described to me at the time:

"It was some weeks later that I met Jack again. I call him Jack, not because close acquaintanceship would permit, but because I believe all the world thinks of him in that intimate way. He wasn't a man to be Mistered.

“This second meeting was at the box office of the West Oakland Athletic Club. The bouts were staged in an upstairs hall, far too small for the crowds that came, a fire trap that would make a Hun bomb thrower envious, but sweating, shouting, smoking fight-fans gathered there and cheered the ‘ham and egg’ boys as they slugged through four rounds, unless a knockout brought earlier surcease.

“Jack was at the box office trying to buy a front seat. There was none to be had. Just then I arrived and with an extra press ticket in my pocket invited Jack to be my guest. He accepted and we occupied ringside seats.

“On the card this night there was one fighter called ‘The Rat.’ I never knew him by any other name. I knew ‘The Rat’ to be an Italian huckster. . . . To me he was a fifth-rate fighter, lacking brains to be anything better. But Jack became enthusiastic:

“‘What a beauty, he remarked.

“‘That’s The Rat, I answered.

“‘A beauty, he resumed, enthusiastically. ‘A perfect speci-men. Can’t you see it? Beautifully molded, young, full of life; the cautious tread of an animal and perfect symmetry in every limb.”

“As a matter of fact, The Rat’ possessed a face that became a fighter accustomed to taking the short end of the purse. He was homely — his face was, but Jack London looked and saw beauty in the perfection of his naked body. To me he was ‘The Rat’ and he was homely; to Jack he was ‘a beauty.’ He had seen beauty where I had missed it. Perhaps that is one of the secrets of his success — his ability to see more than the rest of us, to pick out the beauty from the drab.

“The fight over, I asked Jack to write me a brief account of the show. He agreed, but his 150 or 200 words were about ‘The Rat.’ His story, signed ‘By Jack London,’ was published in the Oakland Herald. The one story led to others. London yearned for the ringside seats, not because of any ambition to be ‘up in front,’ but because from the ringside he could have an unobstructed view of the ring, could watch every blow, see everything that took place. And so we made a deal, I to supply a ringside seat for each show and London to write a signed story regarding the show, or some feature of it. This continued three or four months and the Jack London stories became big features, features that are undoubtedly to-day prized by many old-time fighters, too old now to enter the padded arena, but proud that Jack London wrote about them.”

In addition to all else, he dashed off requested "stories" for The Examiner, one of which was "The Great Socialist Vote Explained" a similar article going to Wilshire's Magazine. Many an evening was filled with a reading or a lecture at this club and that. One night he talked at the Home Club of Oakland, on Japan ; on another, he spoke at the Nile Club, in acknowledgment of an honorary membership; he read to the New Era Club, the men's league of the Methodist Church, from "The People of the Abyss"; "The Call of the Wild" of course was often asked for; and whenever Mr. Bamford sent out invitations to a Ruskin Club dinner, Jack was expected to be on the program. At one dinner he gave them "The Class Struggle," and again "The Scab." Both these papers were later collected in "War of the Classes," proof-sheets of which in the spring he sent me for correction. In among Jack's correspondence with me is laid away a little handwritten sheet from which he made a statement to the Ruskin Club of his Socialistic position:

"I am a socialist, first, because I was born a proletarian and early discovered that for the proletariat socialism was the only way out; second, ceasing to be a proletarian and becoming a parasite (an artist parasite, if you please), I discovered that socialism was the only way out for art and the artist."

The Ruskin Club several times mentioned was composed of what might be termed the intellectual aristocracy of the socialists about the Bay. Its father and moving spirit was Professor Frederick Irons Bamford, "the lion-hearted one," Jack lovingly called him, for despite an agonizingly supersensitive nature he was made of the stuff of martyrs. And to Comrade Lyon Jack one evening observed: "Bamford is the only man in the Ruskin Club who makes me feel small." The Club would meet here and there, at irregular intervals, say at Piedmont Park Clubhouse, or the Hotel Metropole of "Martin Eden" fame. Notable were these affairs, often in honor of big men in the movement, as well as in honor of men whom the Club strove to convert to its banner.

He would even go out of the Bay region to lecture, perhaps to San José where, as guest of Professor Henry Meade Bland, he addressed the State Normal; or to Vallejo where ashore from the Spray he had made friends; once or twice to Stockton, making headquarters with Johannes Reimers. One of Mr. Reimers' sons found himself abruptly unpopular with his teachers because of his father's firebrand socialist guest; a circumstance in which Jack's quick natural regret was tempered by the reflection: "That young fellow is the stuff that opposition will make a man of!" Perhaps I have not mentioned that Jack never attended any lectures except his own. "I do not waste my time listening to lectures," he put it. "I'd rather read. I get more for myself, without the personality of the speaker coming between. And I cover more ground." The following, from another's pen, seems to expess what Jack meant: "To attend a motion picture play is to be primitive; to listen to an orator is to be a cave man; to read is to be civilized!"

In a vast ledger, clipping-book of 1904, pasted by his children's mother and Eliza Shepard, I find several humorous newspaper squibs upon Jack's being made a member of the Bohemian Club despite his soft-collared silk shirt and other ineradicable preferences. Indeed, this was not the first capitulation of clubdom to his apparel. And the press was often the reverse of reliable, as in the case of a certain affair in Jack's honor given by the exclusive feminine Ebell Club of Oakland, when, it is to this day firmly believed by newspaper readers, he lectured in a red flannel shirt. I have Jack's word that outside of those brilliant Klondike undergarments, and possibly while stoking a steamship passage, never in his whole existence did he affect scarlet flannel. When he did don woolens at all, as say at sea, it was of navy-blue. Even his trusty sweater, though as described in my Prologue he early wore it in making social calls on his bicycle, never appeared upon the platform. A white, soft shirt, with flowing tie, worn with a black, sack-coated suit, was his evening dress.

Handling the item of Jack London's entrance into the Bohemian Club, one San Francisco sheet, The Wasp, avoided the humorous note to such a virulent extent as to defeat its ends. Being by all counts the most venomous slam in all the scrapbooks, it is too comical not to quote entire — especially in view of the fact that at about the date of its publication a portion of "The Call of the Wild" had been incorporated into a text-book on English used in the University of California, forerunner of others of his books to be adjudged "classics" by that institution:

"Jack London's Shirt Vindicated.

"The Bohemian Club has relented toward Jack London's negligee shirt and taken the novelist into membership — honorary membership at that. Why honorary, I cannot say. Certainly, it is not on the strength of Mr. London's 'The Call of the Wild,' which deserves to take rank as an average Sunday supplement story in a yellow newspaper. Neither can it be his 'Sea

Wolf' that has raised him into a niche in the Bohemian Temple of Honor beside Charles Warren Stoddard, Henry Irving, and Joaquin Miller. The Wasp would be only too glad to help in placing laurels on the brow of Mr. London if he deserved them, but he must furnish better evidence of his literary quality before this journal will assist in decorating him. The Wasp decorates as masters no apprentices whose work is more conspicuous for its blemishes than its finish. I have said that Mr. Jack London's 'Call of the Wild' belongs to the Sunday supplement order. His 'Sea Wolf' is better adapted as a serial for the Coast Seamen's Journal and the habitues of the 'Fair Wind' and the 'Blue Anchor' saloons on the city front than for the shelves of libraries or the tables of reading rooms frequented by people of even superficial culture. It lacks every essential of a thoroughly good novel except nice binding, careful printing, and excellent illustrations. The best that can be said of it is that it is a poor and clumsy imitation of the new Russian school of tramp literature, which has given to the world a series of novels dealing with the scum of humanity, with brutal frankness. When one has waded through 'The Sea Wolf' by a laborious effort the conviction is irresistible that the author shows more fitness for the post of second mate of a whaler than a leader of the great army of imaginative scribblers."

While on the theme, I might say in passing that Jack London was not at any period a zealous clubman. He belonged to no large club bodies otherwise than the Bohemian; and the famous rooms in San Francisco saw him little and at prolonged intervals, when he chanced to be in the neighborhood for some other purpose. After the Great Earth-quake and Fire, the new clubrooms and the Sultan Turkish Baths were rebuilt in close proximity. We often, Jack and I, finished off a theater night at the Baths, but first he would drop in at the Club for poker or pedro or bridge, and I can still hear his drowsy-happy voice over the Baths telephone from the men's floor, telling me of his luck — for the voice was sure to be happy from his pleasure in the game, be luck good or ill. And whenever feasible, our world-wanderings led homeward in midsummer, that he might spend at least one week of High Jinks at Bohemian Grove, situated but a few miles from the Ranch. For he dreaded foregoing the marvelous annual Grove Play, words and music, acting and staging, all done by members of the Club only.

January, 1905, was an especially full month. The first week saw Jack in Los Angeles, visiting Cloudesley Johns in the quaint rambling home at 500 North Soto Street, where he reveled in the companionship of his friend s family. The grandmother, Mrs. Rebecca Spring, was Jack’s particular joy. She was one of California s most remarkable women, friend of Margaret Fuller, Emerson, Holmes, Longfellow; and she subsequently died in dissatisfaction with Life, because Life cheated her by a few short weeks of attaining her centenary.

He also visited the Mathers in Pasadena, for the daughter of the house, Miss Katherine, had been a fellow passenger on the Siberia to Japan. And of course he attended the yearly winter Rose Carnival of her city. This vacation, like his life in Oakland, was without repose of spirit or body — rush, rush from daybreak to even-fall, and for the best hours of the night. While in Los Angeles, he spoke for the Socialists, who rented the Simpson Auditorium for the occasion. Miss Constance L. Skinner, poet and historian, another member of the Johns’ fascinating household, who evoked Jack’s admiration and regard, ably reported the lecture, which was on the subject of “Rev-olution,” for the Los Angeles Examiner. Strangely enough, the radicals of the “City of Angels,” when publishing their favorite picture of Jack, replaced the sweater by a formal suit and collar, drawn quite to order, beneath which Jack scratched a disgusted comment.

His introduction at that meeting was not to his liking, according to his comrade J. B. Osborne, of Oakland: “The Chairman introduced him as a ripe scholar, a profound philosopher, a literary genius and the foremost man of letters in America. . . . When London arose, dressed in good clothes but wearing a soft shirt, he said:

“Comrade Chairman and Fellow Workers: I was not flattered by all the encomiums heaped upon me by the chairman, for the reason that before people had given me any of these titles which the chairman so lavishly credits me, I was working in a cannery, a pickle factory, had my application in with Murray and Ready for common labor, was a sailor before the mast, and worked months at a time looking for work in the ranks of the unemployed; and it is the proletarian side of my life that I revere the most and to which I will cling as long as I live.”

Once more in his home town, Jack set others than the County of Alameda by the ears by consenting to an oft-repeated request from the President of the University of California, Dr. Benjamin Ide Wheeler (in 1919, Emeritus), to address the students in Harmon Gymnasium. And “choose your own subject — anything at all,” Jack was left to consult his fancy. Now was his big chance to let loose a thunderbolt in the sacred groves, and he armed for the fray.

The day was the 20th of January. Humming across the campus from North Berkeley in the morning sunlight, fresh from an hour with my piano teacher, Mrs. Fred Gutterson, herself pupil of Bauer and Leschetizsky and Carreno, I turned westerly toward the “Gym” where I had danced so many an evening away. And who should come stepping along with a smile in his eyes but our young friend, who explained that he had come out early in order to think quietly upon what he was going to say and how he was going to say it.

At the entrance we parted, I to become one of the several thousand, students and citizens, who packed the huge elongated octagon, Jack London to take his seat with the faculty convened upon the platform. President Wheeler presented the speaker, and the speaker went into action without preamble, head high, eyes grave and dark, voice challenging as he rapped out the short crisp sentences:

“I received a letter the other day. It was from a man in Arizona, It began, ‘Dear Comrade.’ It ended, ‘Yours for the Revolution.’ I replied to the letter, and my letter began, ‘Dear Comrade.’ It ended ‘Yours for the Revolution.’“

The house thereupon settled to listen spellbound to the strangest statement of facts and opinions ever enunciated within the college walls. Dr. Wheeler, conventional embodiment of what by all tradition the head of a great university should be, sat aghast at what he had done. But it must be said that he was game; for when Jack, on the stroke of noon, realizing he was over his time, paused on tiptoe and asked, “Shall I stop?” the President came back hurriedly and with perfect courtesy: “No, go on — go on.”

The last words of unequivocal indictment of society’s mismanagement of society rang out clear from the upraised young face that had been imperially stern throughout, “The revolution is here, now. Stop it who can!” The audience, from whatever mixture of emotions, resounded in mighty applause. This was followed by a rouse from the Glee Club, composed for the renowned ex-student of the college. Meanwhile the faculty crowded about him, some in protest, some in curiosity, all with keen interest from one motive or another. One humorous incident crept in: Jack in the course of his indictment had attacked the antiquated methods common to institutions of learning. When he stepped from the rostrum, according to one who stood near, “Professor Charles Mills Gayley greeted him and congratulated him upon his literary success. The author during their conversation reiterated his opinion of the deficiencies in teaching methods. He said:

"'Dr. Gayley, permit me to make the criticism that English is not being taught in the right way. You are giving the students for their textbooks such antiquated authors as Macaulay, Emerson and others of the same school. What you need in your course is a few of the more modern types of literature — — .

"Here Dr. Gayley interrupted with a dry smile:

"'Perhaps you are not aware, Mr. London, that we are using your own "Call of the Wild" as a textbook in the University?'"

Jack surrendered, laughing with the others.

The evening papers and their morning associates treated the lecture with unexpected leniency. But when the press in general (Jack meantime repeating the speech at every opportunity) had had time to catch its breath, there was nothing too vicious nor unfair that could be printed of his utterances. There were exceptions, to be sure, the Oakland Tribune being one of those which remained loyal to "our own Jack." But the majority deliberately distorted his words, and robbed of its context the quoted phrase "To Hell with the Constitution" — notorious exclamation made by Sherman Bell, when that capitalistic leader of troops for the employers in Colorado, during the recent scandalous labor war that had raged there, was reproved for riding roughshod over the Constitution. Jack was held up as a dangerous anarchist — the same platitudinous old charge of the capitalist press against the socialist. And carefully editors refrained from embodying in their columns the statement that the social revolution was, as announced by the speaker, "to be fought, not with bombs, but with votes." Nor did President Wheeler escape his share of criticism for having allowed so incendiary a character to sully the choice air of Berkeley. Again he was game, if a little condescending as befitted the dignity of his years and position, and the closing sentence in this excerpt from his letter to The Argonaut held him inviolate as concerned misapprehension of his own views:

"I think you ought to know that we never stipulate or inquire concerning the subject a speaker is to discuss at such a meeting. We intend to ask only such to speak as have by achievement earned the personal right to be heard. We seek the man and not the subject. I conceive it to be of highest value for students to meet and hear men who have honorably wrought and done in various fields. I introduce them to the students, and rarely, if ever, mention any subject. Jack London is a former student of the university, and has surely won an honorable distinction in the field of letters. And, after all, is it best for us to start an Index of tabooed subjects? One way to deal with a hard boiling tea-kettle is to take off the lid."

One paper, however, noted that Jack London, socialist, affected illustrious company, naming amongst others, H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw.

Some of the students of the old Oakland High wanted Jack to lecture, but promptly went up against the bars shut by Superintendent of Schools McClymonds and Principal Pond. Also, was he not a divorced man, inimical to the sanctity of hearth and home? How pitifully trivial and pettish all this hullabaloo of little editors squeaks amidst the slashing, smashing events following the World War!

On the 29th of January Jack read "The Tramp" — another "War of the Classes" article, at Socialist Headquarters in Oakland. And a few weeks afterward I wrote him:

"Probably you already know it, but I'11 repeat it anyway — that following your lecture at the University a few of the students organized a socialist club. This was announced at the Ruskin Club dinner last Friday evening. I know it will please you — I remember what you said to me the day of your lecture: that you would be satisfied if perhaps only a half dozen of the students were impressed.

This club was the nucleus of the subsequent Intercollegiate Socialist Society, of which Jack London was elected the first President.

Near the end of January, he went one evening to see Blanche Bates at the Macdonough Theatre in Oakland, in "The Darling of the Gods." Turning over in his mind the suitability of Miss Bates to the character of Freda Moloof in his own play "Scorn of Women," he attended three consecutive performances from front-row vantage, the eager-eyed boy studying the young star carefully to this end. And naturally, by the time he had schemed an introduction, called upon her at the Hotel Metropole, and given a dinner in her honor, the papers had blazoned their plighted troth — the vigorous denials of both parties rendering new headlines in the next issues, and causing no end of mirth to the pair as well as the public.

It was not until the first week in February, 1905, that Jack and Cloudesley got the Spray up-river. Just before sailing from Oakland City Wharf, Jack accepted the socialist nomination for Mayor of Oakland. On the same ticket were Austin Lewis for City Attorney, with J. B. Osborne councilman for third ward. And who should be nominee for Mayor on the Independent Ticket, but John London's old friend John L. Davie? On the morning of election, one local sheet had it: "All the nominees for Mayor, with the exception of Jack London, socialist candidate, were conspicuous about the polls. And Jack polled 981 votes at that. Knowing how personally distasteful the holding of public office would be to him, I once asked: "What would you do if you should accidentally be elected to some of these political positions you let yourself in for?"

"There's not the least chance, my dear," he replied; then realizing he had not answered my question, he laughed, "I wouldn't let my name be used if I thought there was the slightest possibility of winning. If I did by chance get elected, I guess I'd run away to sea or somewhere with you!"

Meantime, I had taken to my room with an abscess in the left ear, made doubly torturing by neuralgia. For it is a nipping winter one may experience on Sonoma Mountain. The trouble was assumably due to long hours swimming and diving in the Oakland baths on cold days, and more especially a certain oft-repeated, twenty-two-foot jump in which Jack had coached me. Such an anomaly as unhealth on the part of "the Cheery One," as he liked to call me, was sufficient to make Jack desert the sloop somewhere along Petaluma Creek, leaving his friend and Manyoungi aboard, and footing it to the nearest railway for Glen Ellen. Reaching Wake Robin Lodge after nightfall, he stood for long contemplative minutes at the low casement of the redwooded living room, gazing in at the unwonted spectacle of said Cheery One supine upon a couch, her head swathed in warm bandages.

Two days he remained, reading aloud to me by the hour; and I can vouch that no one ever knew tenderer nurse. So improved was I that on the second evening I rose hungry for the first time in weeks, and joined my nurse in a stealthy raid upon Auntie's sweet-smelling pantry. Returning to the big fireplace with our spoils of honey and biscuits and sun-dried figs, we feasted and giggled like truant schoolfellows. Truly, in our long years together, so few are the memories of irresponsible tranquil hiatuses in Jack's driven habit, that they stand forth in relief apparently out of all proportion to their importance. Not so, however; they showed him capable of the purest en-joyment of that sheer nonsense which relaxes a brain ordinarily over-conscious.

I recall an uproarious afternoon a few months later, when we two spent hours in a hammock under the laurels, doing nothing more profitable than manufacturing the most absurdly banal of limericks. Again, years afterward, I see in memory the twain of us, replete with picnic luncheon and good nature, prone upon the green outer declivity of a fern-lined crater in Hawaii euphoniously styled Puuhuuluhulu. We peered over-edge into the giddy emerald cup and planned, in very extravagance of lazy foolishness, all the details of a country home in the pit, even to an adjustable glass roof against tropic showers!

Pain and house-confinement were happily mitigated by Jack's sympathy, both during his visit and thereafter, when such notes as these drifted to me from the Spray's pleasant course up the Sacramento river:

"Rio Vista, Feb. 10, 1905.

"I think continually of you, lying there through the long days and longer nights, and I look forward almost as keenly as you, I am sure, for the blessed time when you will be up and around and your old self again.

"Got here last night. The river is booming. Flood tide is not felt at all. Current runs down all the time. Expect to go to Walnut Grove and then down through Georgiana Slough to the San Joaquin and up to Stockton."

"Rio Vista, Feb. 11, 1905.

"Your short note just received. I am haunted right along by seeing you lying there, the bandage around your head and the cloth over your eyes. I do so look for improvement, and yet the north wind is blowing to-day which is bad for you. Do let me know every bit of improvement as soon as it comes.

"I have nothing to write in the way of news. Am working hard. Did 1000 words to-day. We have been here two days now, and I have not yet been ashore, though the town is interested in my existence. Have already 3 invitations to dinner, etc., and a launch is expected off in a few minutes with admirers (!). Also, Brown came aboard with a bunch of violets in his collar, sent, so Cloudesley avers, by the prettiest girl in California.

"Guess I'll take up one dinner invite to-night."

This mention of Brown calls to mind that Jack had become unexpectedly possessed of "twa dogs," one, a valuable lost Chow who presented himself at the front door, and tarried entirely at home for some weeks, when his rightful owner was discovered. The other was an Alaskan wolfdog, a true “husky,” brown-and-white of furry coat and fine of brush, with slant, watchful eyes and pointed ears, and a limp in the off hind-leg that was eloquent of sled and trail. His master, an old Klondiker, had lately died; and though strangers to Jack London, the relatives asked him if he would accept “Brown.” Jack was willing, but the animal had other views, and sought every loophole to escape from the little yard at the rear of the flat (which sometimes was the ring for spirited bouts with the gloves), or from the front door when he was entertained within, to return to his loved one’s house. Jack, after trying every cajolement to win him over, and going himself or sending his nephew or Manyoungi countless times to retrieve the estray, swore roundly that when Brown again ran away he could stay. But the dog had been making his own adjustment, and the next fruitless pilgrimage to the old home was his last. From the second story window Jack saw him cantering cheerfully back, and bounded downstairs to welcome him right comradely. Thenceforth Brown attached himself with the mute adoration of a soul disillusioned of all else in the world. Mute? Why, that dear lonely dog-fellow of our first married year was never heard to bark except upon two occasions when he thought Jack imperilled by a fractious horse. One day in the summer I asked: “Now, what do you suppose Brown Wolf would do, if his old master should suddenly pop up beside you?”

“A story right there — don’t breathe another word for a minute,” Jack flashed at me, scribbling like mad on a notepad, his deep mouth-corners turned up pleasedly with the scent of a new motif. The tale “Brown Wolf,” in collection “Love of Life,” was the sequel of the incident. That pleased expression recalls that always when lost in his morning’s work, no matter how reluctantly begun, there was a half-smile lurking about his lips the while he bent concentrated over the broad tablet upon which the inky-wet characters sprawled and sprawled.

SUMMER AT GLEN ELLEN

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXVI 1905

THE Spray's ramblings were to lead aside into Napa River to the pretty city of the same name that lies in the next inland valley to Sonoma. Here Jack was to visit the Winships, friends made on the voyage to Japan; and he sent me word that he would ride across the hills to spend several days with us at Wake Robin Lodge. He arrived on February 12, a showery Sunday, astride a harassing livery hack, both horse and horseman much the worse for the twenty miles. Jack wore a nerve-racked look, and my Aunt and I were solicitous, although we avoided advertising the same. The boy was in veritable distress, never quiet for a moment. His great-pupiled eyes were haunted with a hopeless weariness, and glassy as from fever. He talked very hard, as if against time, or in fear of silence. In the evening, as we clustered about the fireplace, my Aunt asked:

"Jack, my dear, why don't you get out of the city for a while, bring your work, and Manyoungi to look after your wants, take a little cottage here and rest and work far away from excitement and people?"

The eyes he raised to her face were as of some creature hunted. He shifted uneasily, almost as if embarrassed, and the corners of his mouth drooped like a child's on the verge of tears. Yet when he replied it was with a tinge of impatience, though a pitiful tiredness lay under the tone: "Oh, Mother Mine — thank you. . . You're kind. . . But. . . but I think that the very quiet would drive me crazy."

It was a wail to be left alone in his impotence, and no further reference was made to the matter until the night before he departed.

The only recurrence of the temperamental joyance that was a large part of his nature was when he related the Spray's experience. For no sadness of soul could ever rob Jack London of his native delight in a boat. In relation to this very trip, I am tempted to quote from "Small-Boat Sailing" (in "The Human Drift"):

"After all, the mishaps are almost the best part of small-boat sailing. Looking back, they prove to be punctuations of joy. There are enough surprises and mishaps in a three-days cruise in a small boat to supply a great ship on the ocean for a full year. I remember taking out a little thirty-footer I had bought. In six days we had two stiff blows, and, in addition, one proper southwester and one ripsnorting southeaster. The slight intervals between these blows were dead calms. Also, in the six days, we were aground three times. Then, too, we tied up to a bank on the Sacramento river, and, grounding by an accident on the steep slope of a falling tide, nearly turned a side somersault down the bank. In a stark calm and a heavy tide in the Carquinez Straits, where anchors skate on the channel-scoured bottom, we were sucked against a big dock and smashed and bumped down a quarter of a mile of its length before we could get clear. Two hours afterward, on San Pablo Bay, the wind was piping up and we were reefing down. It is no fun to pick up a skiff adrift in a heavy sea and gale. That was our next task, for our skiff, swamping, parted both towing painters we had bent on. Before we recovered it we had nearly killed ourselves with exhaustion, and certainly had strained the sloop in every part from keelson to truck. And to cap it all, coming into our home port, beating up the narrowest part of the San Antonio Estuary, we had a shave of inches from collision with a big ship in tow of a tug.” Once, during his five-days’ stay, I prevailed upon him to walk up the tree-embowered mountain road that skirts Graham Creek; but, to my hidden sorrow, he appeared to have grown blind to the beauty he had so loved. His tongue ran on and on incessantly — we were discussing the English poets. It was an exquisite sunset that bathed us in its waves of colored light, and upon a green eminence I halted Jack and his speech and stretched my arm toward the valley to the east, welling to its rosy wall-summits with a purple tide of shadow from the mountain on which we stood. To an earnest query if the loveliness of the world meant nothing to him any more, he stilled for a moment, then let fall very sadly:

“I don’t seem to care for anything — I’m sick, my dear. It’s Nietzsche’s ‘Long Sickness’ that is mine, I fear. This doesn’t seem to be what I want. I don’t know what I want. Oh, I’m sorry — I am, I am; it hurts me to hurt you so. But there’s nothing for me to do but go back to the city. I don’t know what the end of it will be.”

During my late convalescence at Wake Robin, slowly working at the typing and word-counting of his play, “Scorn of Women,” and brooding not a little over his mental condition, I had received from Jack several of Nietzsche’s books, of which he had written me:

Have been getting hold of some of Nietzsche. I'll turn you loose first on his 'Genealogy of Morals' and after that, something you'll like 'Thus Spake Zarathustra.'"

But I liked them all — "ate them up," as he said; and after digging through "Genealogy of Morals," "The Case of Wagner," "The Antichrist," and others, I polished off with "Zarathustra," which just happened to fill a need and accomplished more than any tonic to clear my own surcharged mental atmosphere and set my feet on the road to recovery. Here is a favorite bit I quoted to Jack: "At the foot of my height I dwell. How high my summits are? How high, no one hath yet told me. But well I know my valleys.

At Jack's side upon the grassy promontory with the west-wind in our hair, I called attention to the wholesome philosophy of Zarathustra. In return I was reminded by Jack of Nietzsche's ultimate fate. Oh, no — he was not "playing to the gallery," nor inviting sympathy to his spiritual dole. That was not his custom; he was but frankly, soul to soul, letting me know what was true of him at the time, and vouchsafing a glimpse at the worst symptom — his own uncaring attitude concerning it.

On the eve of parting I played my last stake — recurred to my Aunt's suggestion, picturing the sweetness of the spring and summer he might pass there among the redwoods by the brook that once had soothed, and the work we could accomplish. But the warning unrest leaped into his eyes and voice and he implored:

"No, no; it doesn't seem that I can. I could not stand the quiet, I tell you. I could not. It would make me mad."

"Very well, then," I gave up, with my best cheer; "the thing for you is to do what you feel you must, of course. — And we won't say any more about it."

He started, flushed, turned and looked at me. Reaching for my hand, in a hushed, changed tone that meant volumes, he breathed:

"Why — why — you're a woman in a million!"

That night he slept an unbroken eight hours, unprecedented repose for Jack at any time, and for many weeks he had been working on but three or four hours nightly — sufficient alone to account for his sorry plight.

In the morning I offered to pilot him a different way from the one he had come. It was up through Nunn's Canyon, a lovely defile out of Sonoma Valley to the east. Jack appeared pleased; in fact presented a much brighter aspect for his long night of rest, and I hoped vainly that he would have reconsidered the matter of coming to Wake Robin for the season.

Away we rode together, he and I, one of us with a heavy heart, no inkling of which was allowed to pass eyes and lips. For I felt this was the last of Jack, that he was slipping irrecoverably from us who loved and would have helped him; and, what was more grave, slipping away from himself. Flesh and blood and brain could not support much longer this race he was waging against the sum of his mental and physical vitality.

But a charm was working in him, although I think he did not know it. The morning was one of California's most blessed, a great broken blue-and-white sky showering prismatic jewels and sungold alternately. Even the jaded livery hack responded to the brightness as he vied with my golden Belle over the blossoming floor of that bird-singing vale and up the successive rises of narrow Nunn's Canyon, where, on its rustic bridges, we crossed and recrossed the serpentine torrent a dozen times.

As we forged skyward on the ancient road that lies now against one bank, now another, the fanning ferns sprinkling our faces with rain and dew, wild-flowers nodding in the cool flaws of wind, I could see my dear man quicken and sparkle as if in spite of himself and the powers of darkness. The response to my own mood in the earth's enchantment, which had been so lamentably absent from him in the few days gone by, kept mounting and bubbling and presently was overflowing in the full measure I knew so gloriously of him. Truly, as the summit drew near, I do believe he still did not know that the crisis had been reached and passed in his Long Sickness for which the mad German philosopher had given him a name, and that he had staved off despair and death itself for many a splendid, fruitful year to come.

And now, could I credit my ears? — he was talking quite naturally with his old engaging enthusiasm, as if pursuing an uninterrupted conversation upon his intention to spend the year at Wake Robin; he would rearrange the interior of the tiny shingled cabin under the laurels and oaks, and ship up this and that piece of furniture, and such and such books, dwelling upon certain of these he wanted to read to me. What fun Manyoungi would have getting settled and keeping house; and could he, Jack, dictate his damned correspondence to me? "And say, can you, do you suppose, find me a good horse? All the riding I've ever done was what my mare Belle taught me in Manchuria, and I know I'd love riding if I had another horse as good. I've got $350.00 for the Black Cat story — could you get me a horse for that? . . . How I wish I'd had that mare sent me from Korea!" and he launched into reminiscence of her virtues.

Not by word nor look did I treat his reviving humor as if it had not been the same throughout his visit. Now was the thing — he had come over and out by some sweet miracle, I cared not what, from his valley of the shadow. Far be it from me to disturb the ferment of the magic. Out of a pleasant, sunny silence as we climbed the grade, Jack suddenly reined in and laid his hand upon my shoulder. It was one of the supreme moments of my life. I met a look deeper than thankfulness, and in my heart for ay will abide his voice from the mouth that was like a child's surprised in emotion:

"You did it all, my Mate Woman. You've pulled me out. You've rested me so. And rest was what I needed — you were right. Something wonderful has happened to me. I am all right now. Dear My Woman, you need not be afraid for me any more."

My face must have answered, for I know I said no word. Solemnly at the green height of the pass, we clasped hands and kissed good-by, solemnly, joyfully, all in one. And there was that in his eyes which brought tears to mine. But it was the happy rain of a new day, for me, for him, and my heart for one ached with the joy of it. Loath to part, Jack broke out: "Why not come on the rest of the way? No, never mind that you're not fixed up — the Winships are good sports and will welcome you with open arms."

Long we waved and waved until a descending bend into the hinterland buried him from sight, and I turned and retraced the royal road we had come together, hardly able to contain myself. Years thence, the Winships and Cloudesley told me that another man than the Jack who had left them five days, rode in that afternoon on the same dispirited steed. But Cloudesley knew; once they were aboard the Spray he was told of the miracle.

Winding up his voyage mid-March in Oakland, Jack discovered through Dr. Nicholson that he was suffering from a tumor consequent upon an old injury he had thought of little moment, and which should be removed as soon as he could be put in proper condition. The red-cheeked physician had him to bed at the flat, on a diet, and "no cigarettes, young man, for a week." The "young man" compromised, of course — or was it the practitioner who compromised?

I bought a rose-pink lawn frock for his pleasure, and went daily to help a very gay patient with his piled up correspondence, dictated from high pillows. After the operation, when I called at the hospital, Jack told me he was greatly relieved by the report that his tumor had been pronounced non-malignant, and the assurance there would be no relapse — an opinion that time corroborated. “I wonder,” the bedridden philosopher speculated with a half-abashed grin, “how much of my intellectual ‘Long Sickness’ could have been traceable to this damned thing draining my system?” Then suddenly grave, he rejoined: “No, my dear — I won’t belittle the real diagnosis. I know, and you know, that when the sudden healing of that malady took place, it was before I even knew I had a physical ailment. . . . My dear, my dear.”

Back at the little flat, he resumed his dictations, and our readings progressed. During these days Jack made the better acquaintance of Tennyson, and, for the first time, “Idylls of the King,” never ceasing to mourn that he had not “grown up with them” and their pure glamour of poesy. “And I never knew the gnomes and fairies as you did, either, to my loss,” he regretted.

With boyish raptures he looked forward to summer at Wake Robin, and once interrupted himself in the middle of a sentence to say: “Oh, for the days when you can play, play for me!” One warm late afternoon, listening for the end of a pause in his dictation, something caused me to raise my eyes to Jack’s face. His thread of thought lost, he had forgotten all else in the world but the wonder of loving:

“I’m quite mad for you, my dear, my dear,” he repeated in the rare golden voice that returned in shaken moments. “Indeed, quite mad — with all the old madness of before the Long Sickness. And so we poor humans, weak and fallible, and prone to error, condemn ourselves liars, for I would not have believed I could be so mad twice!”

Then and then only, was I quite assured that he was saved to himself. But perhaps, when all is said, the best influence I had for him was the repose he said I brought — a repose that otherwise life seemed to have denied. Often I was reminded by him of the first story in which he employed any portion of his many-sided love for me. It was “Negore the Coward,” last of the “Love of Life” collection, and will be found at the ending in one of Jack London’s masterly depictions of death:

"And as even the memories dimmed and died in the darkness that fell upon him, he knew in her arms the fulfilment of all the ease and rest she had promised him. And as black night wrapped around him, his head upon her breast, he felt a great peace steal about him, and he was aware of the hush of many twilights and the mystery of silence."

I have before me the letter of the editor to whom the author first submitted this manuscript. And he comments with surprise and delight upon the intangible "new touch" in Jack's work.

In the fly-leaf of "Love of Life" stands his inscription, of date November 23, 1909:

"Dear Mate-Woman: —

"There is within these pages a story you wot of well, wherein, long ago, I told of my love for you, and, more and better, of all that you and your love meant, and mean, to me."

My friend recovered rapidly — so rapidly that the surgeon was horrified to hear from the irrepressible's a smilingly-rebellious, smoke-wreathed lips that he intended to ride his new horse as soon as ever he got to Glen Ellen, which would be on the 18th of April. The first time he left the house, was to walk around the corner to look over the beautiful animal which I brought for him to see. For I had bought the horse — Washoe Ban, blue-blooded Thoroughbred, his veins of fire throbbing through a skin of purest chestnut-gold. He was owned by Dr. H. N. Miner of Berkeley, and I had ridden him a number of times in the past. Two hundred and fifty dollars of Jack's Black Cat prize went for Ban, and I rode him from Berkeley to Oakland, thence by ferry to San Francisco, river steamer to Petaluma, where I slept, and next day sat the incomparable, exhaustless creature the twenty-two undulating green miles to Glen Ellen.

Jack further reminded Dr. Nicholson that before he spurned the haunts of men he had given his word to deliver "Revolution" in Shattuck Hall, Berkeley, on the 14th, and at the Alhambra Theatre in San Francisco on the 21st; also a talk at a Ruskin Club dinner to the Social Progress Club of the University of California. It was at one Ruskin dinner that year he "made the members take notice" most unexpectedly. Mr. Bamford had charged each guest to be ready with a definition of "Happiness," To me Jack said: "What's yours going to be?" And I: "I haven't thought it out yet. What's yours?" "A coöperative commonwealth!" he grinned. "I'd like to speak up with 'Just loving,'" I laughed. "Great!" shouted Jack, "couldn't be better.

Tell you what: I'll trade with you." "Done," said I. And at the banquet, upon the heels of Anna Strunsky's "Happiness is adjustment," my borrowed witticism raised the expected applause. "And yours?" Mr. Bamford called upon Jack London:

"Just loving," that wicked person breathed softly, his long-lashed eyelids demurely drooped.

A blank silence was broken by a smothered "Just WHAT?" from Mrs. A. A. Dennison, and Jack, raising his eyes, looked calmly about the company with a charming "What-are-you-going-to-do-about-it" expression as he repeated, "Just loving."

In passing, I want to relate, as nearly as possible in his own words, an occurrence that crystallized Jack London in certain personal habits more than any other self-argument. He put it something this way:

"You remember Dr. Nicholson? He was a magnificent specimen of a man, you will agree? Tall, straight, with the beauty of the athlete — girl's complexion and all that; not a vicious habit — drink, nor tobacco — not an injurious leaning. And he warned me that this and that vice of mine would ruin my health in a short time. Well, listen: Only a few short months after he talked so seriously to me, he died in screaming agony — rheumatism of the heart or some such horribly excruciating thing. Probably he had exposed himself in his practice; I don't know. But what I do know, is, that there are all sorts of bad habits in this world, and he must have landed on one of them peculiar to his way of life, or it landed on him. Cigarettes, or overwork — I tell you it's all one; one's as bad as the other; and I'll bet you even money that cigarettes don't kill me!" A man's argument, verily, and one that supersedes man's finest logic.

Washoe Ban and my Belle were housed amicably in a little shack-barn on a small property across the road from Wake Robin Lodge. This was the Caroline Kohler Ranch, familiarly known as the Fish Ranch because it had once been the scene of an ambitious failure in fish-hatchery. Jack had painstakingly considered the type of my Australian saddle, but decided upon a McClellan tree that we found in San Francisco, which had been fitted with a horn. Ultimately, however, he adopted my model. And he was almost as good as his challenge to Dr. Nicholson, for it was but a few days after his arrival on the 18th that he actually mounted and took his first lesson in Ban's easy, rocking-horse stride. I had yet to learn the man's giant recuperative power, and was fully as apprehensive as the man of medicine, but made no protest.

Not long afterward, at a request from Oakland, he bought a mare and surrey for his children and their mother. The animal later developed an incorrigible balk, and the family tiring of this kind of recreation, Jack brought the whole outfit up-country, where the mare came eventually to do light work and to negotiate the mountain trails under saddle. I am minded of the day she inconveniently lay down and rolled with her rider, none other than Johannes Reimers, in a pestiferous hornet-nest in the grass, as a means of escape from the stinging.

Jack's abrupt relinquishment of the city occasioned considerable press comment, with which I was connected, but even The Examiner failed to command any statement from either of us relating to matrimonial intentions. Jack informed the paper's representatives that when he had anything to say in the matter, he would give them the "scoop," and with this they had to be content. As for his new choice of residence he said to reporters: "I have forsaken the cities forever; winter and summer I shall live at Glen Ellen."

Would to heaven-upon-earth that every mating pair of men and women could know the privilege of the illuminating sort of experience which was Jack's and mine this six months before marriage. In the course of strenuous work and play of whatsoever nature, by our wedding date in November there was little of which we did not have a fair inkling as concerned each other's temperament and idiosyncrasies.

For the most part the study was smooth sailing, though at times beset by snags. Once, I shall never forget, it came to light that I had been accused by friends of Jack's, whom I had believed my own, of disloyalty and unveracity. With his invincible courage in seeking and gaging truth, he put even his Love impartially on the stand. To be other than sanely judicial even in so intimate a situation was contrary to his nature and method. True to what he called his "damned arithmetic," he undertook to thresh out the difficulty. Oh, he staked his love and his proudest judgment upon my guiltlessness; and, having satisfied himself, he set his every faculty to demonstrating to my detractors, if he perished in the attempt, that they were wrong on every count. All this not so much for personal gratification as for the pleasure of confounding them with my innocence and his faith. To be sure, he had taken the chance in a million that I prove false to his firm idea of my integrity. I met his infinitely sincere eyes on that, and laid at his disposal all that I had, and was. Amongst other expedients at my hand, a little pocket diary routed the most important charge that had been preferred. Well, indeed; but better still, when Jack, excitedly fishing up his own notebook for the same year, found it tallied with mine. Other evidence dove-tailed to his entire enlightenment of heart and brain, and I stood unassailable to our mutual joy, and the vindication of his "damned arithmetic."

"If you only knew — you can't possibly know — " he burst out one day near the end of the discussion by mail, "what it means to me to have some one fighting with me shoulder to shoulder, fighting my own fight, in my own way!"

When it was all over and certain apologies demanded by him had been written me by the unhappy complainants:

"Let me tell you something," he said. "This matter was broached to me sometime ago, before I went on the Spray trip. I want to show you a bit of my philosophy, in general as regards mankind, in particular as concerns you alone and in relation to me:

"When friends, ostensibly for my own good, came to me with a tale about you, I told them, first, that it was a pity they should soil their hands in gutter politics; and then I earnestly tried to help them know me a little better, as a matter of pride if you will, by telling them that even were these absurd things true — and I would stake my best judgment and my soul that they were not — they would make no possible difference to me. I said to them: 'I love Charmian, not for anything she may or may not have done, but for what I find her, for what she is to me. I know human beings pretty well — I make my living through my understanding of them — and I know Charmian better than to credit these calumnies. But the point is: Charmian might have murdered her father and mother, and subsisted solely upon little roast orphans — it is what I know of her, now, what she now is, that counts with me.'"

"And really," he once confessed in our married years, "I could almost have wished you'd had a past like my own, or worse, if you'd been just the same as when I knew I loved you. It would have made you seem almost greater to me — I mean, if you could have come up through degrading experiences that did not degrade but left you as I have always seen you!" Since there was no way of actually manifesting how he would have regarded me in this suppositions premise, the question remained a moot one.

He always pleaded not guilty to the passion of jealousy, despising and deriding it as a low, bestial trait. With an exceptional capacity for tolerance toward almost every human weakness save disloyalty, he could not harbor any sympathy with that calamity of the ages, sheer animal jealousy. “Should you turn from me to another man, if I could not make you happy, I’d give that man to you on a silver platter my dear,” he would declare, “and say ‘Bless you, my children.’ — But I don’t believe I could send you on a silver platter to a man — quite!”

What better place than this, further to interpret Jack London’s relation toward the element feminine? I, who have known the clasp of his soul, known him at his highest, can yet withdraw from that passionate fellowship and regard his masculinity as a whole. Asking my reader to bear in mind earlier manifestations of his philosophy and emotions toward the little woman of his adolescence, I shall enlarge upon his attitude.

He was not prone to allow women to interfere with the business of life and adventure. He liked to think of himself as in Augustus’s class — that women could not make nor mar. In short, he was not a man who lost his head easily. “God’s own mad lover dying on a kiss” was an appealing line to his sense of poesy; but Jack preferred to live, rather than die, on that kiss! Love, in brief, should be a warm and normal passion that made for fuller living. At one period, after soaking himself in the vast accumulation of erotic literature, pro and con, he told me, with a shake of his fine shoulders, that he felt himself lucky to have been born so rightly-balanced, that no abnormalities of his early rough days, nor contact with decadences of super-civilization, had touched him to his hurt. The alienists in-terested him intellectually, but he was nicely avert to perversion of any stripe.

I had supposed that there would be little of the proprietary in the regard of so broad-minded an individualist. One of my most vital surprises was to find that Jack was as delightfully medieval as many another lover in this world when it came, say, to matters financial. Having been myself independent, and believing that he would take this into consideration, I looked for him to make no matter of a separate bank account, or at least the “allowance” loved of wives, that I might not suffer a sense of bondage. But no — like the bulk of men his was the pleasure of spending his own money upon the “one small woman.” Any other arrangement was frowned upon —

at the suggestion a frost seemed to spread over his face. And, seeing that it was he, I found the bondage sweet.

Jack charmed women of all classes; and while he held a reserved opinion as to the intellectuality of the average female brain, he could not abide a stupid woman. His adventurous mentality had made him pursue women in curiosity, and learn them too well for his own good. He was of two distinct minds about them, and swung from one to the other: their innate goodness and staunchness commanded his worship, while their pitiable frailty and smallness wrung his spirit. “Pussy! Pussy!” I can hear him purr in the ear of any backbiting among his friends. Women, weighed by his biological judgment, represented the Eternal Enemy, and he liked the line:

“Her narrow feet are rooted in the ground,”

from Arthur Symons’s “The Dance of the Daughters of Herodias.” Yet this very concept, not always voiced without contempt, must have given rise to his pronouncement in “John Barleycorn”: “Women are the true conservators of the race.”

He has been heard to speak of woman as “the immodest sex.” And “Men are far more modest than women!” he would step into the heated air of argument, bringing down storms upon his unrepentant head. But he considered that he had several blazoned names to bear him out, among them Jean Paul, who said: “Love increases man’s delicacy, and lessens woman’s” and Bernard Shaw: “If women were as fastidious as men, morally and physically, there would be an end of the race!”

I must admit that I have seen him play down, not always up, to women and their vanity; but to his credit and theirs, he never left them long deceived. And he would not try to deceive those who spoke his own language, though he made it extremely difficult for them to understand his.

He had struggled against misogyny, winning out be cause he had had experience enough with exceptional women of conscience and brain to keep him healthy in viewpoint. Besides, in the last extremity, he was a one-woman man, glorying in the discovery of this. In my copy of “Before Adam,” in 1907 he wrote: “I have read Schopenhauer and Weininger, and all the German misogynists, and still I love you. Such is my chemism — our chemism, rather.” He showed an actual reverence for the woman who “informed” her beauty, or, better, her lack of beauty, who waged incessant warfare upon her imperfections, who wrought excellently with the material at her hand.

Jack owned to annoyance that the public denied he could write convincingly about women. “And yet,” he would say, “I know them too well to write too well about them! I’d never get past the editor and the censor!”

Despite that he would often merely appear to take women at their own valuation and act as if he gave them credit for logic, he was possessed of a fine sense of chivalry. As instance: Once, bound to a foreign country, war-corresponding, a girl friend, who had received a similar commission, informed him that they would be sailing on the same boat. Jack was in despair because he knew, from knowledge of her want of practicality, that she would be on his already full hands. “What would you have done?” I asked him once. He reflected, working those brows that were like a sea-bird’s wings: “I’d have had to marry her before I got through with it, I suppose!” “But,” I expostulated, “but you loved another woman!” “Surely,” he rejoined; “but what is a man to do? Her reputation would have been shattered so I say, what can a man do in such circumstances, but marry the girl!”

Women have loved Jack London, aye, and died for love of him. And I can imagine, had he been situated so that it would have been possible, that his chivalry and sweet-heartedness could have led him into marrying such, for their own happiness.

Once, I asked him how he had behaved himself toward the girls of yesterday, as he passed beyond them into the world that he was making his — the Lizzie Connollys, the Haydees. “I saw them occasionally,” he said. “One must be kind, you know.”

Little of love had he bought in his life, except in the course of laying his curiosity. A passion, with him, must be mutual, else worthless.

And so I became conversant with that “swarm of vibrating atoms” which men knew as Jack London, the youthful literary craftsman who had, as one critic put it, “Lived with storms and spaces and sunlight like a kinsman.” — That was it; the dominant note of him was spaciousness, for the inflowing and out-giving of all available knowledge and feeling — the blood of adventure, physical and mental, scorching through life’s channels.

“Visualization is everything for the teacher,” he said, “and I love to teach, to transmit to others the ideas and impressions in my own consciousness.”

It always seemed to me, observing, that while others were merely scratching the surface of events, Jack was get-ting underneath them, deeper and deeper into their significances.

Religion, as the average man knows religion, had no part in him. Spiritualism had been the belief in his childhood homes, a thing of magic and fearsomeness; but his expanding perceptions could not countenance that belief. His hope for bettering human conditions had filled depths of being which might have responded to divine philosophy. Again his norm: Somehow, we must ever build upon the concrete." Again his oft-repeated criticism rings in the ears of memory: "Will it work will you trust your life to it!"

In a little book of Ernest Untermann's, "Science and Revolution," which Jack gave me to read at that time, I come upon a sentence underscored for my benefit: "My method of investigation is that of historical materialism."

It is also to be Her narrow feet are rooted in the ground of my man that had been told and impressed upon me in the past, even by persons who should have known better or who did know better and cruelly misrepresented him. In fact, Jack forever claimed to nurse a small grievance that I should ever have been misled, no matter by whom, from my direct early conclusions upon him. I recall, however, in the old Piedmont days, that while reserving certain few uncomplimentary opinions, so ready was I to stand up to any one who made unjust remarks in his disfavor, that more than once I was accused of taking undue interest in the young celebrity.

To the exclusion of all else, I devoted myself to mastering the open book that he tried to render himself to me. Even the piano was silent except when I played for Jack, and the trips to Berkeley with my music roll became less frequent and eventually ceased, I will say to his unqualified disapproval. (He never could entertain the idea, in the long years of our brimming life, why I could not give more time to music, since he too loved it so.) I learned the eloquence of his tongue; the fine arrogance of his certitudes; convictions I came to respect for their broad wisdom; and I knew, too, and richly, the eloquence of his silences in the starry moments that come to those who loved as we loved, and, loving, understand mutely. More than once, Jack has broken a comprehending pause, or even interrupted speech to say to me the dearest and finest of all his salutations in my thrilling ears:

"My kin — my very own Twin Brother!"

One thing, in that earlier association with Jack, was almost uncanny: he never seemed to fail of my high expectation. Tremulous, I all but looked for him to fail of making good, to my ideal, in this or that small, fine particular.

But in vain: usually he surpassed the tentative demand I made upon his quality. His own failings he had, to be sure; but they were not those ordinarily suspected of lesser men.

The frankness which we continued to practise and exalt, made of our mate ship, through thick and thin, a gorgeous achievement.

So I walked softly that spring and summer and fall, dedicated to discern with my own soul's best all of him that was possible, that I might enlarge and fix this kinship for ever and forever. Upon one star I was intent: Never must our love and its expression sink into commonplace, but it must be kept from out "the ruck of casual and transitory things. "And this was Jack's answer:

"Commonplaceness shall have no part with us unless I myself should become commonplace; and I think that can never be."

And Jack London learned his woman, playing her game as she tried to play his. With his broad sympathies, to his own peculiar interests he subjoined mine; and I, in return, widened my focus to include hobbies for which I had theretofore had no caring, thus creating fresh interests for my own sphere. Jack, for example, loved keenly a good card game. I had little use for cards; but I applied myself, to the end that before long I could play a fair game of whist, or cribbage, or pinochle. And when Jack found that certain stern methods of instruction distressed and stood in the way of quick absorption on my part, in all gentleness he went right-about in his lifelong tactics, exhibiting due appreciation of the harmony that had come to prevail in his life. He had until then rather prided himself upon an ability to shake knowledge into others, and I credited him with altering his way to favor me. He told me of how he had once, in half an hour, taught a rather moronic young girl to tell time by the clock — all others having failed. But that's no reason, I laughingly contended, "that you can teach me whist by the same rules!"

With regard to our hard work together, and making toward a co-existing love and comradeship, I said: "We can't fail, because everything we do is compensatory life and living. His reply was: "So try to enjoy the fight for its own sake!"

Critics then as now were prone to dispatch the subject of Jack London's personality with words like "primitive," "uncouth," "brutal." He saw the primitiveness in all life, in himself as he saw everything else, and made all things come under the empery of his thought and written language; but he did not live primitiveness, inasmuch as he was delicate, complex, withal simple in the final analyses of him. The chastity of the last analysis is like the chastity of his art that so often showed the last least perfection of chiseling. Robustness of body and mind offset, almost contradicted, the sensitiveness to impressions, that reaction to beauty of every sort — though particularly intellectual beauty — and to sympathy from others in his mood, his aims; and his shrinking from hurt, although only from the very, very few. Yet in himself, in his actions, in his work, there existed a regnant overtone, a cogency. Again I say: there was no paradox in him. Beleaguered ever with the thousand-thousand connotations, factors, in the chaos he did not falter, but somehow achieved unity, and a great rhythm. He knew himself; and it was a day of rejoicing when one departed guest, Everett Lloyd, sent him Weininger's "Sex and Character," with the author's definition of a genius: "A genius is he who is conscious of most, and of that most acutely."

Jack's writing, his thousand words a day, was done in a little "work-room" established in the two-room cottage, quite without any of that work-fever often necessary to writers. And whensoever art conflicted with substance, he invariably maintained:

"I will sacrifice form every time, when it boils down to a final question of choice between form and matter. The thought is the thing."

As some one has said, "He cared little for writing and a great deal for what he was writing about."

Here is further expression of his unrelenting realism, "brass-tack" reality — although it seems to me, all having been said, that his materialism incarnated his idealism, and his idealism consecrated and transfigured his materialism:

"I no more believe in Art for Art's sake theory than I believe that a human and humane motive justifies the inartistic telling of a story. I believe there are saints in slime as well as saints in heaven, and it depends how the slime saints are treated — upon their environment — as to whether they will ever leave the slime or not. People find fault with me for my 'disgusting realism.' Life is full of disgusting realism. I know men and women as they are — millions of them yet in the slime state. But I am an evolutionist, therefore a broad optimist, hence my love for the human (in the slime though he be) comes from my knowing him as he is and seeing the divine possibilities ahead of him. That's the whole motive of my 'White

Fang.’ Every atom of organic life is plastic. The finest specimens now in existence were once all pulpy infants capable of being molded this way or that. Let the pressure be one way and we have atavism — the reversion to the wild; the other the domestication, civilization. I have always been impressed with the awful plasticity of life and I feel that I can never lay enough stress upon the marvelous power and influence of environment.

“No work in the world is so absorbing to me as the people of the world. I care more for personalities than for work or art.”

And he always stuck to it that Herbert Spencer’s “Philosophy of Style” helped him more in his youth, than any other book — save Ouida’s “Signa,” his initial impetus — to success in literature. “It taught me,” he said, “the subtle and manifold operations necessary to transmute thought, beauty, sensation and emotion into black symbols on white paper; which symbols through the reader’s eye, were taken into his brain, and by his brain transmuted into thought, beauty, sensation and emotion that fairly corresponded with mine. Among other things, this taught me to know the brain of my reader, in order to select the symbols that would compel his brain to realize my thought, or vision, or emotion. Also, I learned that the right symbols were the ones that would require the expenditure of the minimum of my reader s brain energy, leaving the maximum of his brain energy to realize and enjoy the content of my mind, as conveyed to his mind.” But “In my grown up years, he surveyed, the writers who have influenced me most are Karl Marx in a particular, and Spencer in a general, way.”

So never was I able to wring from him any worship of art for art’s sake, although he strove for art with every well-selected instrument of his chosen calling; attained art, high art at times; and, being a potential Teacher, he could explain the means of it — this because he knew so exactly how he produced his effects.

“You’re the genius of us two,” he flabbergasted me one day when I, who never knew how I did the very few things I did well, had excelled perhaps in a dive, or a passage in music, or the revamping of some sentence that had eluded his own skill. “You don’t know at all how you do things, you see,” he went on, “You just do them. And sometimes you fall down and cannot do them again. Now that’s genius, or of the nature of genius. Take George Sterling; hand him a problem of almost any sort, something he had probably never thought of before, certainly never studied. And ten to one in a short time he will have given a masterly solution. That's genius — big genius. No, there's no genius in mine — unless it's the Weininger kind. I'm too practical — that's why I'm a good teacher. Now you, my dear," in candidness he offset some of his praise, "make a, rotten teacher! For instance, that riding lesson to-day, — you ride as if you had ridden into the world in the first place, — but I'm damned if you can show me how to 'post' on a trot as you do!"

The pleasurable course of our companionship had its normal interruptions. I had to become familiar with his man humors. But he never moped, and seldom was taciturn. And his immoderate smoking was a trial; but after once broaching the subject and finding it a tender one with him, I dropped all reference to the matter. Although he admired frankness, courage, the pettish side that women know of the biggest men where their personal comforts are in question, prevented my courage from demanding what I had confidently hoped for. I should have known better; but then, I was learning. At no time did I ever hear him advise against smoking; yet he promised his nephew, Irving Shepard, a thousand dollars if he would refrain from smoking until he was twenty-one. From our conversation on smoking, I gathered that his habit was a rather negligible detail in comparison with the thousand and one larger issues that occupied his mind. How shall I say? . . . that this one habit, a mere habit, which required none of his conscious attention, should not be too seriously considered by him or others. Also, Jack seemed of a mind that the nerve-strain of refraining offset any advantage that might be derived from abstinence from cigarettes. Long hot afternoons of typewriter dictation under the trees sometimes got on our mutual touchy nerves, and we became cognizant of still more of each other's caprices. Or suddenly, not yet versed in his "brass-tack" reasoning, his "arithmetic, I might unwittingly start disputes in which I had no chance against the assault of his logic, and would struggle with nerves that urged me to weep in sheer feminine bafflement, hating myself the more heartily. But always before me rose an honest warning with which Jack had forearmed us both previously to his coming:

One thing I want to tell you for your own good and our happiness together. I do not think you are a hysterical woman. But don't ever have hysterics with me. You may think I'm hard. Maybe I am; but very earliest in my environment, in the very molding of the tender thing I was, I came to recoil from hysteria — all the bestiality of uncontrol and its phenomena. In my manhood I have seen tears and hysteria, and false fainting spells, all the unlovely futility of that sort of thing that gets a woman less than nothing from me. So never, never, I pray, if you love me, show yourself hysterical. I promise you I shall be cold, hard, even curious. And I will admit, in your case, that I should be hurt as well. But remember, always, this coldness is not deliberate of me: it's become second nature — a warp. I cannot help shrinking from tantrums as from unforgotten blows. . . . Once, when I was about three (and this is burned into me with a hot iron), flower in hand for a gift, I was brushed aside, kicked over, by an angry, rebellious woman striding on her ego-maniacal way. Well, I made an unhappy mouth and went on my own puzzled, dazed path, dimly wounded, non-understanding. And that woman I believed the most wonderful woman in the world, for she had said so herself. So, this and other hysterical scenes have seared me, and I cannot help myself."

It is a privilege to serve under a great captain; and I sat at his feet and endeavored with all my womanhood to come up to his fine, sane standard of companionship, the thing he had missed even with men, it would seem. His free confidence and his Grand Passion were my guerdon. And there blossomed in him a new and wonderful patience that his older friends could hardly credit — patience in the little things that, handled rightly, or ignored, make for the day's harmony. And I hastened to discount his harshness in argument, in order to partake of the kernel, realizing that when he called a spade a spade, it was a battle against artificiality, toward soundness of thought and speech upon vital truths — or vital lies.

A woman whom he greatly admired had acquired Christian Science and wanted to argue upon it with Jack. With her enunciated premise, I saw Jack's blood begin to rise: "Can no-being be?" she shot at him, and sat back waiting his verdict. Although they had it hammer and tongs for hours, they actually never got beyond the premise. Jack refused to consider such a posit — his scientific mind revolted from it and the two failed to come together on even the definition of words, without which there could be no reasoning. For days he went about muttering, "Can no-being be! Can no-being be! — "What do you think of it!"

But inasmuch as his arguing was impersonal, I think the following letter to Blanche Partington, written in 1911, after a warm discussion upon Christian Science generally and Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness in particular, is of value as an illustration:

“ Dear Blanche: —

“Bless you for taking me just as I am, and for not implying one iota more to me than what I stand for.

“I am, as you must have divined ere this, a fool truthseeker with a nerve of logic exposed and raw and screaming. Perhaps, it is my particular form of insanity.

“I grope in the mud of common facts. I fight like a wolf and a hyena. And I don’t mean a bit more, or less, than I say. That is, I am wholly concerned with the problem I am wildly discussing for the moment.

“The problem of the ‘language of the tribe,’ I fear me, is more profound than you apprehend also more disconcerting than you may imagine for the ones who attempt to talk in the lingo of two different worlds at one and the same time.

“Affectionately thine,

“Jack London.”

Sometimes, when he had been shockingly literal in language of interpretation in one field or another, with blazing unrepentant eyes he would lash out:

“Am I right? You don’t answer! Am I right? If not, show me where I am wrong. I must be shown!”

The intense effort required to “show” where I thought him wrong would keep poor me on tiptoe morning, noon and night — more especially since I nearly always had to own to myself and finally to him that he was right. Slowly I commenced to lean upon his judgment, for time and again I found he could not fail me. In the beginning I have in sheer exhaustion been guilty, though very rarely, of the unworthy ruse of giving in when I was not convinced. But let him suspect the attempted deceit, and the dawning light in his face fell into dark disapprobation. So I came to face every issue with him squarely, no matter what the price in time, inconvenience, nerves, everything.

As if in reassurance, he indited in my copy of “War of the Classes”:

“Dear Mate:

“Just to tell you that you are more Mate than ever, and that the years to come are bound to see us very happy.

“Mate.”

This is not a wail — oh, quite the opposite. The education to me was an inestimable treasure. It insured a teeming intellectual life for all my days on earth. Jack so loved, and avowedly, to jar people out of their narrow ruts and their preconceived notions about themselves. The insincere shrinking of smug souls from the onset of argument was sustenance to his missionary mind. He would make them uncomfortable to sleep with their niggling little petty viewpoints, he would. I can see the flags of battle in his eyes, hark again to the old war-note strike in his fresh young voice. And when he had reduced them to powder without a spark left in it, he was delicious, irresistible, in his expression of contrition:

"Don't mind my harshness," he would plead. "I always raise my voice and talk with my hands; I can't help it. — But don't you see! Don't you see," more often than not he would come back. "Tell me, am I right or wrong? I beg you to show me where I am wrong. It was his intrepid way of expressing the abounding life and thought that were in him. On sentry-go at the gates of observation and conscience, he was the Apostle of the Truth if ever there was one.

Luckless was the victim who could not benefit by the brusk tonic of his argument; and indeed, it was a tonic to himself, until the years when he grew too weary with the hopelessness of leavening the inert mass of humanity. H. G. "Wells's definition of the average mind — "A projection of inherent imperfections" — would have suited Jack.

He was an undisappointing wonder to us all. Despite his boredom with small minds, one would see him completely possessed, enthralled, by the simple goodness of someone in the humblest walk of life. There were in the neighborhood certain characters who had fallen into ways of hopelessness; and Jack's manly tenderness, always augmented by an unostentatious hand in his pocket, was a speechless pleasure to me, one to emulate for his sweet sake. Then there would be his unbounded appreciation of some tiny farm where perhaps a by-gone workman of Jack's with wife and child, lived happily with one cow, one horse, a few chickens. Delight shone all over him if he detected an idea of his own which had been incorporated into the other's agricultural equipment. One shining example of that manly kindness I shall never forget: Once, at sea on a great square-rigger, the skipper, probably from illness that rendered him otherwise than his usual self, issued an order that all but piled us upon a famous "graveyard of ships." But Jack, jealous of a good seaman's reputation, protected the captain's blunder from the eyes of the world.

He cared almost not at all, except as it might affect his market, or his authority, for public opinion of himself or his books. But I came to find him simply, touchingly sensitive to approval from the exceeding few whom he loved, and another exceeding few whose discrimination he revered.

It is beyond hand of mine to draw with strong and supple strokes a convincing picture of this protean man-boy. To me he stands out simple enough in all his complexity; yet I can scarcely hope to leave this impression with the reader — so numberless were the factors in the sum of his personality. The greatest, perhaps, of all ingredients in his makeup, was the surpassing lovableness that made his very deficiencies appear loveworthy. No matter what the irritability of mental stress from whatsoever source, appeal to him with love and desire of understanding, and the world was yours could he give it to you.

Needing immediate cash, Jack delayed beginning “White Fang,” and the young master of the short story went to work spilling upon tales like “Brown Wolf” the warmth and color of rural California that had got into his pounding blood; “Planchette” — the material for this last was founded upon an incident that had once come under my observation, and I passed it on to him; and presently, requiring the frozen spaces once more for scenes of other motifs, he wrote “The Sun Dog Trail,” “A Day’s Lodging,” “Love of Life,” and “The Unexpected” all these to be found in “Moon Face” and “Love of Life” collections. In a letter to me during absence in the city, answering my query if his description of death were founded upon his own late bout with chloroform, he wrote:

“Yes — the death lines of ‘All Gold Canyon’ came from my experience with the ‘little death in life,’ ‘the drunken dark,’ ‘the sweet thick mystery of chloroform,’ — you remember Henley’s ‘Hospital Sketches.’“

Meantime “The Sea Wolf” held sway among the “best sellers,” and was much discussed. Reviewers especially girded at the details of Humphrey van Weyden’s lovemaking to Maud. “I don’t think it’s silly,” Jack considered. “I think it is very natural and sweet. It’s the way I make love, and I don’t think I am silly!” As for the main motif, I find this:

I want to make a tale so plain that he who runs may read, and then there is the underlying psychological motif. In ‘The Sea Wolf’ there was, of course, the superficial descriptive story, while the underlying tendency was to prove that the superman cannot be successful in modern life. The superman is anti-social in his tendencies, and in these days of our complex society and sociology he cannot be successful in his hostile aloofness. Hence the unpopularity of the financial supermen like Rockefeller; he acts like an irritant in the social body."

"Tales of the Fish Patrol" was appearing serially in Youths' Companion, and the critics worried over what they dared commit themselves to about "The War of the Classes" group of articles. Mostly, of course, it was severely slated for its radicalism, as the young evangel of economics had naturally forecast.

Better than all other accomplishment, the boy was so happy, gone the Long Sickness, and now living a new manner of life. It was the first time he had ever "let himself go for long," to relax and rest in the assurance of an atmosphere of eager comprehension. He came to realize the value and practice of the little thing that offsets the strain of the big thing. To saddle his horse leisurely, to direct its lesser intelligence; to play with Brown Wolf and delve into that reticent comrade's brain-processes; to see that a hammock was properly swung down the mossy streamside under the maples and alders — oh, no, he did not hang it himself, but "bossed" while Manyoungi did the work. Aside from learning to saddle and harness horses, he was in the main faithful in his vow never again to work with his hands. The only exception I recall was when he became interested in cultivating French mushrooms. Spawn was ordered from the east, and he made the bed down by the Graham Creek near where he had once written on "The Sea Wolf," planted and tended and reaped, to the astonishment of all who knew him.

One peculiarity I never could fathom. Despite the smallness of his hands, the taper fingers and delicacy of their touch, he was all thumbs when it came to manipulating small objects — say rigging up fishing gear, buttoning or hooking a garment, tending his stylographic ink-pencils. He might easily have been the original model of the humorists' exasperated husband playing maid to his wife's back-buttoned raiment. He did it willingly enough when no one else was about, but with much unsaintly verbiage of which he gave due heralding. Yet with this clumsiness which was a fount of speculation to Jack, he was able to pride himself that he never destroyed anything — this all the more remarkable when taking into account that he invariably "talked with his hands." Once, waving his arms at table, I saw him sweep a "student" lamp clear, which he caught before it could reach the floor; but he never broke a dish.

Here he gives me proof of my guerdon, written in the fly-leaf of "The Game," which came to Glen Ellen in June: "Dear Mate:

"Whose voice and touch are quick to soothe, and who, with a firm hand, has helped me to emerge from my long sickness 7 so that I might look upon the world again clear-eyed.

"From your Mate."

And in "John Barleycorn," eight years later:

"Dear Mate-Woman:

"You know. You have helped me bury the Long Sickness and the White Logic.

"Your Mate-Man,

"Jack London."

We rode all over the Valley, and explored the sylvan mazes of its embracing ranges and the intricacies of little hills with their little vales, that to the north divide the valley proper. And we visited the hot-springs resorts southerly in the valley, Agua Caliente and Boyes, for the tepid swimming tanks. Once or twice we met Captain H. E. Boyes and Mrs. Boyes, who asked us into their quaint English cottage; and I remember that the Captain showed Jack a letter received from Rudyard Kipling, asking if he had run across Jack London around Sonoma, and in closing a copy of "Mainly About People" containing a flattering criticism of Jack's work.

We boxed, we swam, we did everything under the sun except walk. Jack never walked any distance save when there was no other way to progress. I was in entire accord with this, as with a thousand and one other mutual preferences. I have seen him deprive himself of a pleasure, if walking was the means of getting at it. "You're the only woman I ever walked far to keep an engagement with," he told me; then spoiled the pretty compliment by adding mischievously, "but I rode most of the way on my bicycle — that night, you remember? when I got arrested for speeding inside Oakland's city limits!" Those who regarded Jack London as physically powerful were quite right; but they would be astonished to find that his big, shapely muscles of arm and shoulder and leg, equal to any emergency whether from momentary call or of endurance, were not of the stone-hard variety, even under tension. Why, I, "small, tender woman," as he liked to say, could flex a firmer bicep than Jack's, to his eternal amusement. But we were as alike as some twins in many characteristics — particularly our supersensitive flesh. I had always been ashamed that in spite of years of horseback riding, let me be away from the saddle for a month or even less, and the first ride would lame my muscles. To my surprise Jack, who became an enthusiastic and excellent horseman, showed the identical weakness to the end of his life.

As the weeks warmed into summer, campers flocked to Wake Robin, and the swimming pool in Sonoma Creek, be low the Fish Ranch's banks, was a place of wild romping every afternoon. Jack taught the young folk to swim and dive, and to live without breathing during exciting tournaments of under-water tag, or searching for hidden objects. Certain shiny white door-knobs and iron rings that were never retrieved, must still be implanted in the bottom of the almost unrecognizable old pool beneath the willows, or else long since have traveled down the valley to the Bay.

There were madder frolics on the sandy beach at the northern edge of the bathing hole, and no child so boisterous or enthusiastic or resourceful as Jack, "joyously noisy with life's arrogance." He trained them to box and to wrestle, and all, instructor and pupils, took on their varying gilds of sun-bronze from the ardent California sky that tanned the whole land to warm russet.

I am suddenly aware of the fact that much as Jack shared his afternoons in sport with the vacation troops of campers, many as were the health-giving things of flesh and spirit which he taught them, not one learned from him in the sport of killing. Nor can I remember him ever going out hunting in this period. The only times I saw firearms in his hands were at intervals when we all practised shooting with rifle and revolver at a target tacked against the end of an ancient ruined dam across the Sonoma. Once, years afterward, in southwesern Oregon, Jack was taken bear-hunting in the mountains. When he returned to the ranch-house he said:

"Mate, these good men don t know what to make of me. They offered me what the average hunting man would give a year of his life to have — the chance of getting a bear. As it happened, we did not see any bear; but coming into a clearing, there stood the most gorgeous antlered buck you ever want to see, on a little ridge, silhouetted against the sunset. The men whispered to me that now was my chance. They were fairly trembling with anxiety for fear I might miss such a perfect shot. And I didn't even raise my gun. I just couldn't shoot that great, glorious wild thing that had no show against the long arm of my rifle."

So the children at Wake Robin — how little a child will miss — resurrected the old ditty of two summers gone, about “The kindest friend the rabbits ever knew,” and loved their big-hearted play-friend the more.

One small Oakland shaver, badly out of sorts with his maternal parent, one afternoon began “shying” pebbles at all and sundry. After every one else had gone to supper, Jack excepted, the little fellow sullenly turned his jaundiced attention to the one live mark remaining — friend or foe it mattered not. Jack admonished him to stop, but instead he selected larger missiles and went on firing them. Furious because Jack laughingly dodged them all, the mite jumped up and down in baffled wrath and shrieked: “You hoodlum! You hoodlum!”

“Now, I wonder,” Jack reflected through a cloud of cigarette smoke after supper, “Where he heard me called a hoodlum?”

Again recurring to Jack’s alleged brutality, I smile to think how considerate he usually was. In all the rough-and-tumble play with the children and often young folk of maturer growth, any one who was hurt by him quickly smothered the involuntary “ouch” because all knew it was unintentional.

With the girls and women — I speak from long experience. Yes, I have been hurt — one does not box for cool relaxation, but for the zest of rousing the good red blood and setting it free to race through sluggish veins to clear lungs and brain and give one a new lease on life. To Jack, who loved gameness above all virtues, it was his proudest boast that on two or three occasions gore had been drawn from one or the other of our respective features; but it was of his own undoing he was vainest, because “the Kid-woman squared her valiant little shoulders and stood up with her eyes wide open and unafraid and delivered and took a good straight left.”

The point I am leading to is this: I never was even jarred in any part of my feminine anatomy that Jack knew was taboo. Allowing that a woman’s head, neck and shoulders are about all it is permissible for her opponent to assail, Jack, with greater surface to cover from her quick gloves, worked out and benefitted immeasurably by a system of defense that was my despair and that few men could win through.

About the water hole, not one playfellow but would gladly drop the strenuous fun to listen to Jack read aloud; and sometimes at special urging from the charmed ring, he would with secret gratification respond to a request for some story of his own making. Joshua Slocum’s “Voyage of the

Spray” came in for its turn, and suddenly, one day, Jack laid down the book and said to Uncle Roscoe Eames:

“If Slocum could do it alone in a thirty-five-foot sloop, with an old tin clock for chronometer, why couldn’t we do it in a ten-foot-longer boat with better equipment and more company?”

Uncle Roscoe, devoted yachtsman all his life, and to all appearance as devoted as ever at nearly sixty, beamed with interest. The two fell with vim to comparing models of craft, their audience open-mouthed at the proposition. All at once Jack turned to me, and I am sure there was no misgiving in his heart:

“What do you say, Charmian? — suppose five years from now, after we’re married and have built our house somewhere, we start on a voyage around the world in a forty-five foot yacht. It’ll take a good while to build her, and we’ve got a lot of other things to do besides.”

“I’m with you, every foot of the way,” I coincided, but why wait five years? Why not begin construction in the spring and let the house wait? No use putting up a home and running right away and leaving it! I love a boat, you love a boat; let’s call the boat our house until we get ready to stay a little while in one place. We’ll never be any younger, nor want to go any more keenly than right now. — You know,” I struck home, “you’re always reminding me that we are dying, cell by cell, every minute of our lives!”

“Hoist by my own petard,” Jack growled facetiously, but inwardly approving.

This was the inception of the Snark voyage idea, most wonderful of all our glittering rosary of adventurings.

Aside from the campers, who did not invade his sanctuary, Jack saw almost no visitors. “One,” he told a reporter, “was a Russian Revolutionist; the other I avoided!” We were swinging in his hammock at the far end of “Jack’s House” from the road, when we glimpsed the latter unannounced and unwelcome figure on the pathway from my Aunt’s home. Undetected, we slipped from the hammock, and kept still invisible as we soft-padded around the cottage, always keeping on the opposite side from the searching caller, who shortly went away. “I’m going to put up two signs on my entrances, “Jack giggled.

“On the front door will be read:

NO ADMISSION EXCEPT ON BUSINESS;

NO BUSINESS TRANSACTED HERE.

On the back:
PLEASE DO NOT ENTER WITHOUT
KNOCKING. PLEASE DO NOT KNOCK."

He was as good as his word. I lettered the legends, and Manyoungi nailed them up, to the scandal of the neighbors. But this summer was the one and only period of inhospitality of any length in Jack's whole life — an instance when he really wanted to be let alone — a necessity in his development at that phase. A few months later, in Boston, he gave this out to one of the papers:

"No, I do not care for society — much. I haven't the time. And besides, society and I disagree as to how I should dress, and as to how I should do a great many other things. I haven't time for pink teas, nor for pink souls. I find that I can get along now less vexatiously and more happily without very much personal dealing with what I may call general humanity. Yet I am not a hermit; I have simply reduced my visiting list."

Society always had him at bay about his clothing. Once he wrote: "I have been real, and did not cheat reality any step of the way, even in so microscopically small, and comically ludicrous, a detail as the wearing of a starched collar when it would have hurt my neck had I worn it." How he would have bidden to his heart that "Shaw of Tailors," H. Dennis Bradley of London Town, who wishes, amidst other current post-bellum reconstruction, a revolu tion in the matter of starch: "If starch is a food," he adjures, "for goodness' sake eat it; do not plaster it on your bosom and bend it round your neck. The war has taught the value of soft silken shirts and collars; and we shall not return to the Prussianism and the Militarism of the blind, unreasoning 'boiled' shirt without a murmur."

Now and again Jack tore himself from his happy valley, to lend his voice to the Cause. One of these occasions was on May 22, when he lectured at Maple Hall, at Fourteenth and Webster Streets, Oakland. In the same month we two rode one day to Santa Rosa, to call upon Luther Burbank, who was an old friend of my family. On August 22, together he and I traveled to San Francisco to see the presentation of a one-act play done by Miss Lee Bascom, "The Great Interrogation," based upon Jack's "Story of Jees Uck," from Faith of Men collection.

Jack, as collaborator, was ferreted out from where we had made ourselves as small as possible in the Alcazar's gallery, and appeared before the curtain with Miss Bascom, to whom he gallantly attributed whatever excellence the pleasing drama possessed.

About this time a dramatization of “The Sea Wolf,” which was unintentionally farcical in the extreme, was put on at an Oakland playhouse. Catering to the finicky theater-goer, the playwright had introduced a chaperone, who evidently called for company in the shape of an ingenue. This young person was portrayed by no other than the winsome Ola Humphrey, of Oakland, whom later we were to know in Sydney, Australia, as a leading woman, and still in the future as the Princess Ibrahim Hassan.

As in the Alcazar, Jack chose the most inconspicuous position from which to view what had been done to theme of his. On the present occasion he remained undiscovered, and was able to shed his tears of mirth on either shoulder he desired, Sterling’s or mine, when the shrieking melodrama became too much for his control. “O Gawd! O Gawd!” he mimicked the Ghost’s cook, Muggridge; and “If they should hunt me out and get me on the stage, what could I say but ‘O Gawd! O Gawd!’ “ The unfortunate Van Weyden, if I remember aright, chose to wear, from rise to fall of curtain, a well polished pair of tan shoes for which the rigors of the salt sea had no terrors.

On September 9, Jack went to Colma, as one of a constellation of The Examiner’s star writers, to do the Britt-Nelson prizefight. It was in the course of this writeup he coined another catch-phrase that went into the language of the country, as “the call of the wild,” “the white silence,” and even “the game” had become almost household words. This time it was “the abysmal brute,” to which certain pugilists took exception until they came to realize the author’s meaning — the life that refuses to quit and lie down even after consciousness has ceased.

“By ‘abysmal brute,’ “ Jack would extemporize, “I mean the basic life deeper than the brain and the intellect in living things. Intelligence rests upon it; and when intelligence goes, it still remains. The abysmal brute life,” he illustrated, “that causes the heart of a gutted dog-fish to beat in one’s hand — you’ve seen them do that when we were fishing off the Key Route pier,” I was reminded. “Or the beak of a slain turtle to close and bite off a man’s finger; it’s the life force that makes a fighter go on fighting even though he is past all direction from his intelligence.” So enamored was he of his own phrase that eight years afterward he used it for title of another prize-fight novel.

In addition to his regular work, Jack would find time to review a book, as for instance "The Long Day," which critique occupied a page in an October Examiner; or to contribute an article, like "The Walking Delegate," in the May 28th issue of the same paper.

It was in August of this year that he sent to Collier's Weekly the article entitled "Revolution," based upon the lecture. He had already sent it to The Cosmopolitan, but owing to some disagreement upon the price had withdrawn the manuscript. This article was published in London in the Contemporary Review. Jack's letter to the Editor of Collier's I give below:

"I am sending you herewith an article that may strike you as a regular firebrand; but I ask you to carry into the reading of it one idea, namely, that the whole article is a statement of fact. There is no theory about it. I state the facts and the figures of the revolution. I state how many revolutionists there are, why they are revolutionists, and their views — all of which are facts.

"It seems to me that this article would be especially apposite just now, following upon the wholesale exposures of graft and rottenness in the high places, which have of late filled all the magazines and newspapers. It is the other side of the shield. It is another way of looking at the question, and half a million of voters are looking at it in this way in the United States. And it might be interesting to the capitalists to see thus depicted this great antagonistic force which they, by their present graft and rottenness, are not doing anything to fend off. But rather are they encouraging the growth of this antagonistic force by their own culpable mismanagement of society.

"Of course, should you find it in your way to publish this article, it would be very well to preface it with an editorial note to the effect that it is a statement of the situation by an avowed and militant socialist; and of course you would be quite welcome to criticize the whole article in any way you saw fit."

All those bright, vitalizing months, there was growing in his bosom a seed sown two years earlier when he had come to love Sonoma Valley. "The Valley of the Moon," he called it, having nnearthed the fact that Sonoma stood for "moon" in the early Indian tongue of the locality. I have since heard Sonoma defined as "seven moons," because, driving in the crescent of the valley, one may see seven risings of the orb behind the waving contours of the summits.

His eyes roved over the forested mountainside, and yearning heightened to make some part of it his own, for home when we should be man and wife — his very own while life should last. But it appeared not to be for sale. One prospect above all others filled our eyes whenever we rode side by side up a certain old private road three inexpressibly romantic knolls crowned with fir and redwood, rosy-limbed, blossom-perfumed madroño, and scented tapers of the buckeye — wooded islets rising out of a deep, tossing sea of tree-tops. And one day a neighbor said:

"Why, those knolls there belong to a section of over a hundred acres owned by Robert P. Hill down at Eldridge, yonder, the next station below Glen Ellen. Go and see him, and I bet he'll sell it to you. I'm sure I heard it could be bought."

In no time at all, Jack was possessor of one hundred and twenty-nine acres of the most idyllic spot we were ever to behold — later to be glorified in his novel "Burning Day light." Its irregular diamond-shape was bounded by the magnificently wooded gorge of old Asbury Creek to the southeast, and the whole sweet domain was wilderness of every sort of Californian timber and shrubbery, save some forty acres of cleared land that had once yielded wine-grapes and now waved with grain.

Jack paid $7000.00 for the property, which turned out to be a portion of the original grant of some two hundred square miles from the Mexican Government to General Vallejo. Mr. and Mrs. Hill declare to this day that they fear Jack could probably have beaten their figure if he had stood out. But there is another aspect to the happening. Jack, alas, had no chance; he accused me of precluding any such move on his side, by any unthinking ravings over the land in question. And I meekly refrained from protesting when he excluded me from all business sessions thereafter.

Mrs. Hill, who was President of the California Woman's Federation of Clubs, amongst other engaging customs displayed the one of welcoming a guest with both her hands clasping the other s one. And after a little acquaintance with our new friends, I noticed that Jack adopted the gracious habit with his own guests quite unknowingly, I am sure, for he was not addicted to copying manners. This reminds me that when I first met Jack London, it was with surprise I noted that he shook hands rather limply. It must have been a reminiscence of childhood diffidence; it could not be coldness, for he radiated warmth and sincerity from head to foot. Later, I had dared tell him of my be-puzzlement, and found that he had no idea his clasp was not a hearty one. He set about remedying the lack of firmness. Looking through his 1905 clipping book, I come upon this from an interviewer in an Iowa town where Jack had lectured:

"The words and hearty clasp were with boy-like frankness, a boy's greeting to another boy."

We called it our Land of Dear Delight, but, to the world, simply The Eanch. What Jack thought of it, and his enthusiasm, taking the place of his old unrest, in all the simplest details of his new farm, is indicated in his letters to George Sterling and Cloudesley Johns. To George he wrote:

I have long since given over my automobile scheme; it was too damned expensive on the face of it, and I have long since decided to buy land in the woods, somewhere, and build. . . . For over a year, I have been planning this home proposition, and now I am just beginning to see my way clear to it. I am really going to throw out an anchor so big and so heavy that all hell could never get it up again. In fact, it's going to be a prodigious, ponderous sort of an anchor."

What the neighbors thought of the transaction, he words in "The Iron Heel:"

"Once a writer friend of mine had owned the ranch. . . . He had bought the ranch for beauty, and paid a round price for it, much to the disgust of the local farmers. He used to tell with great glee how they were wont to shake their heads mournfully at the price, to accomplish ponderously a bit of mental arithmetic, and then to say, 'But you can't make six per cent on it.'"

"Jack London,
"Glen Ellen,
"Sonoma Co., Cal.,
"June 7, 1905.

"Dear Cloudesley:

"Yea, verily, gorgeous plans. I have just blown myself for 129 acres of land. I'11 not attempt to describe. It's beyond me.

"Also, I have just bought several horses, a colt, a cow, a calf, a plow, harrow, wagon, buggy, etc., to say nothing of chickens, turkeys, pigeons, etc., etc. All this last part was unexpected, and has left me flat broke. . . . I've taken all the money I could get from Macmillan to pay for the land, and haven t any now even to build a barn with, much less a house.

"Haven't started 'White Fang' yet. Am writing some short stories in order to get hold of some immediate cash."

And this fragment from his next, dated July 6, 1905:

"As regards the ranch — I figure the vegetables, firewood, milk, eggs, chickens, etc., procured by the hired man will come pretty close to paying the hired man's wages. The 40 acres of cleared ground (hay) I can always have farmed on shares. The other fellow furnishes all the work, seed, and care, while I furnish the land. He gets 2D3 of crop of hay. I get 1D3 — about 25 or 30 tons for my share.

"I'm going swimming. I take a book along, and read and swim, turn and turn about, until 6 P.M. It is now 1 P.M.

"Wolf."

"August 30, 1905.

"Dear Cloudesley:

". . . By the way, Collier's has accepted 'Revolution.' What d'ye think o' that? Robert J. Collier wrote the letter of acceptance himself, saying: That he was going to publish my fire-brand as a piece of literature, even if it did lose him several hundred thousand of his capitalistic subscribers. Also, wanting to know how much I asked for the article, he said, 'Don't penalize me too heavily for my nerve in publishing it.'

"I am racing along with 'White Fang.' Have got about 45,000 words done, and hope to finish it inside the next four weeks, when I pull East on the lecturing-trip.

"Have you read Jimmy Britt's review of 'The Game'? It is all right!

"Say, read 'The Divine Fire,' by May Sinclair, and then get down in the dust at her feet. She is a master.

Of all books of fiction we read at this period, "The Divine Fire" and Eden Phillpotts's "The Secret Woman" made the deepest mark upon us both.

When laying foundation for a novel, Jack would isolate himself for the forenoon, in a hilly manzanita grove adjoining the Wake Robin acres — the "wine-wooded manzanita" he named it in "All Gold Canyon." But for all short work he made his notes at a table in the redwood-paneled room where he worked and slept. He liked music while he composed, and was never so content as when open windows brought my practising to him from the other house.

One day, returning from San Francisco, he said: "We've got to have a phonograph!" "Awful!" I countered. You don't know what you're saying, he reproved in sparkling tone. "I've been listening for hours to the most wonderful records, and there's a man down in Glen Ellen who has an agency, and we're to come down to-night and hear the thing. No — don't say a word — you'll go perfectly crazy over it!"

I did; and a Victor came to stay at Wake Robin, subsequently sailing with us to the South Seas with one hundred and fifty records presented by the manufacturers. This music Jack also liked while he worked, so long as he could not distinguish the words of songs, which would distract his attention from the words he was juggling with.

At that time he cared far more for orchestral than for vocal harmonies, especially the Wagnerian operas. In the latter, as well as in qnite a repertory of other operatic work, he had been well coached by his friend Blanche Partington, musical and dramatic critic on the San Francisco Call for seven years, who had taken him with her to many performances. I, on the other hand, favored the voice records above the instrumental. After several years, as one manifestation of his searching into the human, Jack leaned more and more to the voice, until he seldom put on the orchestral disks.

"Sept. 4, 1905.

"Dear Cloudesley:

"So you're going to begin writing for money! Forgive me for rubbing it in. You've changed since several years ago when you place ART first and dollars afterward. You didn't quite sympathize with me in those days.

"After all, there's nothing like life; and I, for one, have always stood, and shall always stand, for the exalting of the life that is in me over Art, or any other extraneous thing.

"Wolf."

George Serling had affectionately dubbed him "The Wolf," or "The Fierce Wolf," or "The Shaggy Wolf." In the last month of Jack London's life, he gave me an exquisite tiny wrist-watch. "And what shall I have engraved on it!" I asked. "Oh, 'Mate from Wolf,' I guess," he replied. And I: "The same as when we exchanged engagement watches?" "Why, yes, if you don't mind," he admitted. "I have sometimes wished you would call me 'Wolf' more often."

"I wish I had called you 'Wolf,' then," I said remorsefully, "since you would have liked it. But it seemed preciously George's name for you, and that is why I seldom used it.” The wee Swiss timepiece was lettered accordingly, this after his light had gone out forever, for I had not been again in town.

Jack was generous about helping his friends out in time of need, but the following, to one of them in October, shows how closely he was running, and again mentions his intended lecturing trip:

“To buy the ranch and build barn, I had to get heavy advances from my publishers. I had already overdrawn so heavily, that they asked me, and in common decency I agreed, to pay interest on these new advances made.

“At present moment my check book shows $207.83 to my credit at the bank. It is the first of the month and I have no end of bills awaiting me, prominent among which are: (Here follows list of payments to his own mother, his children s mother, his rent, tools for the Ranch, and some smaller bills.)

“Now, I have to pay my own expenses East. Lecture Bureau afterward reimburses me. I haven’t a cent coming to me from any source, and must borrow this money in Oakland. Also, in November I must meet between seven and eight hundred dollars insurance. My mother wants me to increase her monthly allowance. So does B. I have just paid hospital bills of over $100.00 for one of my sisters. Another member of the family, whom I cannot refuse, has warned me that as soon as I arrive in Oakland he wants to make a proposition to me. I know what that means.

“And I have promised $30.00 to pay printing of appeal to Supreme Court of Joe King, a poor devil in Co. Jail with 50 yrs. sentence hanging over him and who is being railroaded.

“And so on, and so on, and so on — Oh, and a bill for over $45.00 to the hay press. So you see that I am not only sailing close to the wind but that I am dead into it and my sails flapping.”

“I’m always in debt,” Jack said to Ashton Stevens, who interviewed him for The Examiner. “Look at that hand! See where the light comes through the fingers? That hand leaks. It was explained to me by the Korean boy that took me through Manchuria. All I’d like to do is to be able to get enough money ahead to loaf for a year — that’s my little dream.”

“And buy some dress shirts and evening clothes?” Mr. Stevens slyly baited.

“Oh, I have them,” Jack grinned; “I’ve got them. But I’m willing to put ‘em on only when I can’t get in without them. I loathe the things, but if the worst comes to the worst I’ve got ‘em; I insist I’ve got ‘em.”

“Then your dream of rest realized wouldn’t be all purple teas?”

“Indeed it would not. At Glen Ellen I’ve got a farm, and I’m going to build a house and a lot of things; it’ll take me about two years to make improvements and settle down. And then I’m going to build a forty-foot sea-going yacht and with two or three others cruise around the world. We’ll be our own crew and cook and everything else, and the first port will be twenty-one hundred miles from San Francisco — Honolulu. Thence on and on. Maybe I’ll realize on that trip some of my dream of rest.”

In the months before he came to Glen Ellen that year, he would ask musical friends for “The Garden of Sleep,” a song by Clement Scott and Isidore de Lara, and for “Sing Me to Sleep,” by Clifton Bingham and Edwin Green. As time went on, he called upon me less and less for these restful melodies. When they had at length served his need, in characteristic manner of not looking backward, he was through with the songs.

Concerning the world voyage, he wrote to Anna Strunsky:

“You remember the Spray in which you sailed with me one day? Well, this new boat will be six or seven feet longer than the Spray, and I am going to sail her around the world, writing as I go. Expect to be gone on trip four or five years — around the Horn, Cape of Good Hope, Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, Australia, and everywhere else.

Jack’s “dream of rest” had more than once, in my hearing, been associated with death itself. Never was he so happy, he who at the same time so exalted life, that he could not descant upon the repose of death. One of my earliest memories of him is such a remark as this: “To me the idea of death is sweet. Think of it — to lie down and go into the dark out of all the struggle and pain of living — to go to sleep and rest, always to be resting. Oh, I do not want to die now — I’d fight like the devil to keep alive. . . . But when I come to die, it will be smiling at death, I promise you.”

Early in our married life I entreated:

“Don’t, don’t plan so many great things that you will always have to slave for the means. Make your money and loaf for a while. But in all the years we were together, the day of living rest fled before him. His vast plannings widened as widened his fund of knowledge — there was no horizon at any point of his compass. So I came to give up, and cooperate with him wherever his ambition chose to express itself.

Yes, Jack was always in debt; but never to the point of failing to see his way out. Which, after all, is merely good business. He was aware of his augmenting earning power; but timid ones lacking his vision refrained from depending upon him because their prognosis was that he would fail through poor judgment. And yet, after his death, as many as depended upon him in lifetime are still cared for by his foresight — even more than those. Any one who gave voice to the opinion that Jack London was a poor business man was a source of irritation to him, such was his realization his own efficiency.

SECOND MARRIAGE; LECTURE TRIP

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXVII 1905-1906

IT is of record, in the files of every American newspaper, that the final decree in the Jack London divorce was granted on November 18, 1905 — this after a separation of two and a half years between the parties thereto. Jack had once said to me:

"If a divorce had not been allowed me, I would not have given you up — that would be unthinkable. We would have gone somewhere, if you would, and I think you would — on the other side of the world, and dignifiedly lived out our lives, 'on the square, like a true married pair.'"

But this was thought of by him only as an extreme. For, as in most considerations, Jack supported law, holding that society rested upon monogamy; though that all-round mind of his as firmly stood behind his biology with regard to man s polygamous place in the animal kingdom. "And anyway, our love and mateship is of the stamp that bonds cannot tire, thank God, he would rejoin. Then, in a note: "We will respect the world and the way of the world."

Once, out of a spell of despondency before he came to Glen Ellen, Jack wrote me a letter which I give below, so that all may have access to the solid foundation upon which reason stood, upholding romantic love:

"Dear, dear Woman:

"Somehow, you have been very much in my thoughts these last few days, and in inexpressible ways you are dearer to me. "I will not speak of the mind-qualities, the soul-qualities — for somehow, in these, in ways beyond my speech and thought, you have suddenly loomed colossal in comparison with the ruck of women.

"Oh, believe me, in these last several days I have been doing some thinking, some comparing — and I have been made aware, not merely of pride, and greater pride, in you, but of delight in you. Dear, dear Woman, Wednesday night, how I delighted in you, for instance! Of course, I liked the look of you; but outside of that, I delighted — and not so much in what you said or did, as in what you did not say or do. You, just you — with strength and surety, and power to hold me to you for that old peace and rest which you have always had for me. I am more confident now than a year ago that we shall be happy together. I am rationally confident.

"God! and you have grit! I love you for it. You are my comrade for it. And I mean the grit of the soul.

"And the lesser grit — you have it, too. I think of you swimming, and jumping, and diving, and my arms go out to the dear, sensitive, gritty body of yours, as my arms go out to the gritty soul of you within that body.

"My first thought in the morning is of you, my last thought at night. My arms are about you, and I kiss you with my soul.

"Your Own Man."

But he was also the mad lover, gloriously, boundlessly so. As witness this, written three weeks before our wedding, after he had gone East:

"Blessed Mate:

"I do not think that I have yet parted with you, so full am I, heart and soul, with the vision of you.

"Standards are nothing, judgments are nothing; I need not reason about you except in the simplest way, and that way is that you mean everything to me and are more to me than any woman I have ever known.

"Your own man,

"The Wolf."

Editors have repeatedly approached me on the subject of publishing Jack London's letters to myself. All argu-ments were barren of result, save one: that Jack London's love nature is little known or reckoned with in the average estimate of him; or, worse, misunderstood. This slant of argument of course had not been unthought of by me. And because no just study of the man can otherwise be made, I present, throughout this book, the letters I have chosen from the uncounted ones in my possession. Below I quote the very first in which he mentions his regard, something that had theretofore been undreamed of by me. We had been discussing something about my own make-up which he said had always eluded him — and I had gathered that it was not especially complimentary. My curiosity being aroused, I wrote and asked him if he could not definitely word his feeling. Here is the reply:

I see that what I spoke of worries you. It would worry me equally, I am sure, did it come from a friend. But the very point of it was that I did not know what it was. If I had, I should not have brought it up. If you will recollect, it was one of the lesser puzzles of your make-up to which I merely casually referred. None of your guesses hits it: I have seen and measured your inordinate fondness for pretty things and for the correct thing. These are logical and consistent in you, and the fact that they are arouses nothing but satisfaction in me. I referred to something I did not know, something I felt as I felt the vision of you crying in the grass. Perhaps I used the word conventionality for lack of adequate expression, for the same reason that I spoke from lack of comprehension. A something felt of something no more than potential in you and of which I had seen no evidences. If you fail to follow me I am indeed lost, for I have strained to give definite utterance to a thing remote and obscure.

"You speak of frankness. I passionately desire it, but have come to shrink from the pain of intimacies which bring the greater frankness forth. Superficial frankness is comparatively easy, but one must pay for stripping off the dry husks of clothing, the self-conventions which masque the soul, and for standing out naked in the eyes of one who sees. I have paid, and like a child who has been burned by fire, I shrink from paying too often. You surely have known such franknesses and the penalties you paid. When I found heart's desire speaking clamorously to you, I turned my eyes away and strove to go on with my superficial self, talking, I know not what. And I did it consciously — partly so, perhaps — and I did it automatically, instinctively. Memories of old pains, incoherent hurts, a welter of remembrances, compelled me to close the mouth whereby my inner self was shouting at you a summons bound to give hurt and to bring hurt in return.

"I wonder if I make you understand. You see, in the objective facts of my life I have always been frankness personified. That I tramped or begged or festered in jail or slum meant nothing by the telling. But over the lips of my inner self I had long since put a seal — a seal indeed rarely broken, in moments when one caught fleeting glimpses of the hermit who lived inside. How can I begin to explain? . . . My child life was uncongenial. There was little responsive around me. I learned reticence, an inner reticence. I went into the world early, and I adventured among different classes. A newcomer in any class, I naturally was reticent concerning my real self, which such a class could not understand, while I was superficially loquacious in order to make my entry into such a class popular and successful. And so it went, from class to class, from clique to clique. No intimacies, a continuous hardening, a superficial loquacity so clever, and an inner reticence so secret, that the one was taken for the real, and the other never dreamed of.

“Ask people who know me to-day, what I am. A rough, savage fellow, they will say, who likes prizefights and brutalities, who has a clever turn of pen, a charlatan’s smattering of art, and the inevitable deficiencies of the untrained, unrefined, self-made man which he strives with a fair measure of success to hide beneath an attitude of roughness and unconventionality. Do I endeavor to unconvince them? It’s so much easier to leave their convictions alone.

“And now the threads of my tangled discourse draw together. I have experienced the greater frankness, several times, under provocation, with a man or two, and a woman or two, and the occasions have been great joy-givers, as they have also been great sorrow-givers. I do not wish they had never happened, but I recoil unconsciously from their happening again. It is so much easier to live placidly and complacently. Of course, to live placidly and complacently is not to live at all, but still, between prizefights and kites and one thing and another I manage to fool my inner self pretty well. Poor inner self! I wonder if it will atrophy, dry up some day and blow away.

“This is the first serious talk I have had about myself for a weary while. I hope my flood of speech has not bored you.

“When may I see you?”

When, so shortly afterward, we had discovered, almost as with love-at-first-sight, the great glory that was rising in us, this was his next message — a burst of sunshine after dark days:

“I am dumb this morning. I do not think. I do not think at all. Talk of analysis! I should have to get a year or so between me and the last of you in order to generalize, in order to answer the everlasting query: ‘What is it all about?’

“What IS it all about? I do not know. I know only that I am off my feet and drifting with the tide; drifting and singing, but it is a flood tide and the song a paean.

“Younger? I am twenty years younger. So young that I am too lazy to work. I am lying here in the hammock thinking dreamily of you. No, I am not lazy at all. I am doing no work because I am incapable of doing it. Wherever I look I see you. I close my eyes and hear you, and still see you. I try to gather my thoughts together and I think — You. But it is not a thought

— it is a picture of you, a vision a something as objective and real as when I used to see you crying in the grass.

"An hour has passed since I wrote the last word. I am still in the hammock, and what I have written is the history of that hour, as it is of all the other hours.

"Well, they are good hours. Though I never saw you again, the memory of them would be sweet. To have lived them, here in the hammock, is to have lived well and high.

And again: "This I know — that you will come to me, some time, some where. It is inevitable. The hour is already too big to become anything less than the biggest. We cannot fail, diminish, fall back into night with the dawn thus in our eyes. For it is no false dawn. Our eyes are dazzled with it, and our souls. We know not what, and yet WE KNOW. The life that is in us knows. It is crying out, and we cannot close our ears to its cry. It is reaching out yearning arms that know the truth and secret of living as we, apart from it and striving to reason it, do not know. O my dear, we give and live, we withhold and die.

"You may laugh and protest, but you ARE big. A thousand things prove it to me — to me who never needed the proof. I knew — knew from the first. I, who have felt and sounded my way through life like some mariner on a fog-bound coast, have never felt nor sounded when with you. I knew you from the first, knew you and accepted you. This is why, when the time for speech came, there was no need for speech.

"I do not know if I shall see you to-night, and, such is the certitude of our tangled destiny, I hardly think I care. Did I doubt, it would be different. But it must be so, I know, not sooner or later, but soon. It is the will of your life and mine that it shall be so, and we are not so weak that we cannot keep faith with the truth and the best that is in us.

"You are more kin to me than any woman I have ever known."

The next letter gives a deathless picturing of Jack London's loneliness of old and his new-found happiness:

"Do you know a happy moment you have given me — a wonderful moment? When you sat looking into my eyes and repeated to me: 'You are more kin to me than any woman I have ever known.' That those words should have shaped to you the one really great thought in the letter, the thought most vital to me and to my love for you, stamped our kinship irrevocably. Surely we are very One, you and I!

“Shall I tell you a dream of my boyhood and manhood? — a dream which in my rashness I thought had dreamed itself out and beyond all chance of realization? Let me. I do not know, now, what my other loves have been, how much of depth and worth there were in them; but this I know, and knew then, and know always — that there was a something greater I yearned after, a something that beat upon my imagination with a great glowing light and made those woman-loves wan things and pale, oh so pitiably wan and pale! “I have held a woman in my arms who loved me and whom I loved, and in that love-moment have told her, as one will tell a dead dream, of this great thing I had looked for, looked for vainly, and the quest of which I had at last abandoned. And the woman grew passionately angry, and I should have wondered had I not known how pale and weak it made all of her that she could ever give me.

“For I had dreamed of the great Man-Comrade. I, who have been comrades with many men, and a good comrade I believe, have never had a comrade at all, and in the deeper significance of it have never been able to be the comrade I was capable of being. Always it was here this one failed, and there that one failed until all failed. And then, one day, like Omar, ‘clear-eyed I looked, and laughed, and sought no more.’ It was plain that it was not possible. I could never hope to find that comradeship, that closeness, that sympathy and understanding, whereby the man and I might merge and become one in understanding and sympathy for love and life.

“How can I say what I mean? This man should be so much one with me that we could never misunderstand. He should love the flesh, as he should the spirit, honoring and loving each and giving each its due. There should be in him both fact and fancy. He should be practical insofar as the mechanics of life were concerned; and fanciful, imaginative, sentimental where the thrill of life was concerned. He should be delicate and tender, brave and game; sensitive as he pleased in the soul of him, and in the body of him unfearing and unwitting of pain. He should be warm with the glow of great adventure, unafraid of the harshnesses of life and its evils, and knowing all its harshness and evil.

“Do you see, my dear one, the man I am trying to picture for you! — an all-around man, who could weep over a strain of music, a bit of verse, and who could grapple with the fiercest life and fight good-naturedly or like a fiend as the case might be. . . . the man who could live at the same time in the realms of fancy and of fact; who, knowing the frailties and weaknesses of life, could look with frank fearless eyes upon them; a man who had no smallnesses or meannesses, who could sin greatly, perhaps, but who could as greatly forgive.

"I spend myself in verbiage, trying to express in a moment or two, on a sheet of paper, what I have been years and years a-dreaming. "As I say, I abandoned the dream of the great Man-Comrade who was to live Youth with me, perpetual Youth with me, down to the grave. And then You came, after your trip abroad, into my life. Before that I had met you quite perfunctorily, a couple of times, and liked you. But after that we met in fellowship, though somewhat distant and not so very frequently, and I liked you more and more. It was not long before I began to find in you the some thing all-around that I had failed to find in any man; began to grow aware of that kinship that was comradeship, and to wish you were a man. And there was a loneliness about you that appealed to me. This, perhaps, by some unconscious cerebration, may have given rise to my vision of you in the grass.

"And then, by the time I was convinced of the possibility of a great comradeship between us, and of the futility of attempting to realize it, something else began to creep in — the woman in you twining around my heart. It was inevitable. But the wonder of it is that in a woman I should find, not only the comradeship and kinship I had sought in men alone, but the great woman-love as well; and this woman is YOU, YOU!"

Let himself say what Love meant to him:

"Once you strove to write me a love letter with tolerable success. But you have now written me a love letter. When it came this morning, and I read it, I was mad — mad with sheer joy and desire. The bonds tighten, my love; we grow closer and closer. Ah, God. You are so close to me now, so dear, so dear. You are in my thought all the time. I am swimming, and as I poise for a dive, I pause a fleeting second to think of you. No matter what I do, now, I make the little pause and think of you. I do it when I am working, when I am reading, when people are talking to me. At all times it is you, you, you.

"Love? I thought I was capable of a great love, as one will think, you know. But I never dreamed so great a love as this. I have stood on my own feet all the years of my life, was independent, self-sufficient. Men and women were pleasant, of course, but they were not necessary. I could get along without them. I could not conceive a time when I could not get along without them. But the time has come. Without you I am nowhere, nothing, You are the breath of life in my nostrils. Without you, and without hope of having you, I should surely die. Oh, woman, woman, how I do love you.

“I have no doubt, now, of your love for me. You do love me, must love, or life is false as hell and there is no sanity in anything. But I do not measure your love thus. I just know you love me.

“I write this while people wait; and I kiss you thus, and thus, on the lips, and hair, and brow — thus, and thus.

Before even dreaming of coming into the country to live, Jack had pledged himself to lecture in the east and middle west. He had never really enjoyed public speaking, but was bent upon hunting a protracted session of it — a first and last tour. Moreover, and very important, here was opportunity to spread propaganda for the Cause, and it was stipulated with the Lyceum Bureau that he should be at liberty to expound Socialism wherever and whenever it did not conflict with his regular dates.

As our Indian Summer drew on, however, more and more he fretted that he must pull up stakes and tear himself from the happy camp that had wrought so marvelously upon him. But the third week in October saw him on his strenuous way, having demanded expenses for two, that Manyoungi might relieve him of all distracting personal details. My face laughed into his from the inside cover of that thin gold watch I had given him; and one unforgotten item of luggage was an exquisite miniature of his two little girls which he had had painted by Miss Wishaar months before.

Shortly after his departure, I, too, did some packing — of a simple trousseau in the pretty bureau-trunk Jack had presented me. This trunk was the result of one of his advertisement-answering hazards, as was one of the early models of wardrobe-trunk. The latter was so tall that, after expending more than its original cost in excess-length charges, he had the thing cut down to regulation size.

In Newton, Iowa, I visited my friend Mrs. Will Mc-Murray, for a November 25 lecture had been scheduled for the college town of Grinnell, but a short distance from Newton; and it was our intention to be married at the McMurrays’ and spend with them an idle week occurring in the tour. But the lecturer, fulfilling an engagement with the People’s Institute in Elyria, Ohio, upon receiving a telegram from California that he was entirely free, decided on the spur of the moment not to delay until the Grinnell date.

On the eve of the 19th, I had his wire in hand for me to be in Chicago the next night, since he was to pass through on the way to lecture in Wisconsin.

Being Sunday, he was obliged to arrange a special license with the County Clerk of Cook County. And when in obedience to his summons I stepped off my train in the Windy City at nine of the evening, three hours behind-time, a very weary but happily patient bridegroom elect was pacing the station pavement. In his pocket was the license, in mine my mother's wedding-ring; and at the curb waited two hansom cabs, one containing an interested and beaming Manyoungi, who wanted to see an American wedding.

The informal suddenness and speed of this termination to our courtship savored of the age of chivalry, when knight-errant with doughty right arm slung his lady love across the saddle bow on a foaming black charger. Let none say that ours was less romantic. What mattered it that our vows were spoken in a civil ceremony! After Notary Public J. J. Grant had made us one, we drove to the old Victoria Hotel where Jack interlined 'Mrs. Jack London" between his and Manyoungi's signatures registered the previous day. I meanwhile, by another entrance, slipped upstairs.

No one connected intimately with this "most advertised writer in America" could hope to escape the more or less notorious consequences. By me it had to be regarded as part of the game, if I were to observe my responsibilities. Therefore my philosophy of life had fortified me against the worst. Before Jack could procure his key, he was way laid by three newspapermen — but they chanced to be merely in search of items about his trip and his books. But a fourth had discovered the hardly-dry interpolation on the register, and hovered anxiously about the quartette to learn if he was the only sleuth who had made the find. Jack sensed the situation, and presently excused himself and ran upstairs. In three minutes the four reporters were at our door, imploring an interview. Reënforcements began to arrive, and into the small hours besieged by knocks, notes, telegrams, cards, telephone calls from the hotel office — streams of entreaties in every guise flowing under the door and over wire and transom. To all of which my husband remained deaf and dumb, for he must scrupulously redeem his promise made months before, to give the Hearst papers the "scoop" in return for their discretion. This he had done on Saturday, and the Chicago American city editor, Mr. Harstone, was instrumental in obtaining the special license; also, with a reporter, Mr. Harstone had served as witness to the ceremony.

The appeal which came nearest to stirring Jack was the whispered and written: “Come on through with the news, old man — be merciful; we’ve got to get it. You’re a newspaperman yourself, you know. Come across and help us out.”

When the Chicago American had appeared Monday morning with the heavily leaded item, the disappointed dailies sent representatives to call upon the bride and groom; and I must take occasion to congratulate those gentlemen upon the good-natured courtesy which cloaked their chagrin. Nevertheless, the end was not yet. Vengeance was theirs. On Tuesday morning, coming back into Chicago from Geneva Falls, Wisconsin, on the business-men s train, we had slipped into a rearmost seat. What was our horror to behold, upthrust before the greedy eyes of “commuters” the entire length of the car, full-page photo-graphs of ourselves with large headlines announcing Jack London’s marriage “Invalid.”

“What the hell!” spluttered Jack, laughing in spite of himself. “The other sheets are getting even. We’re in for it!” and thereupon delivered himself: “A fellow’s got to pay through the nose for being loyal to his own crowd!” They won’t stop to consider that I’d have done the same for them, if most of my newspaper work had been for them!”

The “other sheets” had merely endeavored to tangle the divorce laws of California and Illinois; but a noted Judge pronounced all straight. The Chicago American gave due space to the refutation, and we went on our path rejoicing. But for weeks we could not pick up a paper, great or small, that did not contain publicity of one sort or another concerning the most advertised writer in America whether reviews of his books, of our marriage, of the lectures, the round-the-world yacht voyage, the Ranch, and what not.

Jack maintained to all interviewers, “If my marriage is not legal in Illinois, I shall re-marry my wife in every state in the Union!”

A comical thing happened in California, when one of Jack’s little-girl swimming pupils hurriedly scanned the title, “Jack London’s Marriage Invalid.” Hastening to her mother, in accents of distress she cried:

“Oh, mama, mama, how awful! Mr. London did not marry Miss Kittredge after all! This paper says he’s married an invalid!”

One day, from Lynette McMurray’s parlor, there issued Jack’s irrepressible snicker, increasing to a wild call for me:

“Oh, I’ve got you now, Mate Woman! You can never look me in the face again after you hear this!” And proceeded to read aloud a libelous squib from a Washington, Iowa, weekly paper. It was to the effect that the "ugly-faced girl from California, so ugly that the children on the streets of Newton ran screaming to their mothers when-ever she passed by, had married Jack London. That it was reported the pair were soon to go to sea in a small boat, to be gone for years. That it would be a mercy to everybody if they were drowned at sea and never came back.

"You think I'm making it up, don't you!" Jack read my scornful face. "But here — look at it! — why, the old sour-ball — the wretched old slob! I wonder what he'd had for breakfast!"

But it was I who first happened upon a reference to Jack London as being possessed of a "bilaterally asymetrical countenance," and it may correctly be assumed that I pressed the same home with all dispatch.

"I'm NOT bilaterally asymetrical, though," indignantly he defended; "and anyway, I don't know what bilaterally asymetrical means. Take a look at me," studying himself in my hand-mirror. "I'd say my features are fairly straight . . . The man that said bilaterally asymetrical was looking for a chance to work off the expression!"

The time Jack was really sorry for his wife was in 1909, in Hobart, Tasmania, when another reporter with something funny to work off, wrote: "Jack London's speech is as that of an American with an Oxford education; but as for Mrs. London, hers is Americanese, undefiled, and unfiled." What irritated Jack in this instance was: "But you didn't open your head; and the man scarcely saw you, there in the dark of the carriage!"

From November 26 until December 7, on which latter day Jack spoke at Bowdoin College, Brunswick, Maine, we shared the journey, and a unique one it was for me. Seldom was I so tired from travel that I missed a lecture, whether upon Socialism, or his experiences as tramp, Klondiker, War Correspondent, Sailor, or Writer. I never wearied of seeing Jack step out upon stage or platform, with that modest-seeming, almost bashful boyishness which so charmed his audiences, and yet which so quickly, when he raised his splendid head and launched into any serious theme, changed to the imperiousness of certitude. Once, well appreciative though I was of his beauty in this one of his myriad phases, I remonstrated:

"I wonder if you realize how forbidding you look when you walk out of the wings. Your expression is positively haughty! — as if you considered your audience mere dust under your feet!"

He laughed outright.

"Why, I don't feel that way at all, of course. Don't forget — I'm making up my mind what I'm going to say, and really not thinking of my hearers busy with my thought. And then, too, he figured it out, "it may be a left-over of the system by which I first overcame stage-fright. It was something like this: I've got something to say. I've got to say it. I'm going to say it the best way I can, even if it's not oratory. If I try to make a good speech and fail — well, I shall have failed, that's all. I very soon had decided not to take too seriously any failure to speak graciously. What of it? I said. I won't be the only one; others have fallen down and why should I be proud! And anyway, diffidence arises from conceit, I don't care who disagrees with me . . . So remember, Mate, when I assume what you are pleased to call my imperial pose, it is done quite unconsciously, being an outgrowth of my early search after a shield for backwardness. I am not consciously thinking of myself at all; I am busy with my thought and the imminent business of putting my thought in the best way possible."

At the next lecture, when he moved out upon the boards he looked over at my box, his face breaking into that unstudied morning smile that wrought lovers out of enemies, and a little rustle passed through the house as if wings were ruffling and stretching. But in a flash the smile had fled behind the lordly mask of his concentration, and I knew I had ceased to exist for him.

But never, in any presentment of himself, was he so splendid, so noble, as when, with starry eyes, he flamed out the vision of his conversion to the only religion he was ever to know: "All about me were nobleness of purpose and heroism and effort, and my days were sunshine and starshine, all fire and dew, with before my eyes, ever burning and blazing, the Holy Grail, Christ's Own Grail, the warm, human, long-suffering and maltreated but to be rescued and saved at the last."

Jack swore he was getting enough train-travel to last all his life, and loathed it ever after. But very merrily, whether in Pullman or jerky day-coach, we put in hours that might otherwise have been irksome, reading aloud, playing casino and cribbage, writing letters, and altogether enjoying our companionship. Moreover, and blessed assurance of its continuance undimmed, we respected each other's solitude and independence — Jack at intervals spending hours in the smoker, listening profitably to the conversation of his own sex, or napping to make up for broken nights of travel. The all-around "good time" we invariably found together is best pointed by an incident several years later, when we were returning home from South America by way of the Gulf and New Orleans. As usual, we were bound up in each other and the interest of our occupations, at cards, sharing in books, the scenery, or in speculation upon the passengers. During one of Jack's absences, I was resting with closed eyes, when a beautiful matron in the section ahead, whom we had noticed with two younger women, came and sat beside me:

"I hope you'll not think me too rude," she opened, "but I want to ask a very personal question. Are you really Mrs. Jack London?"

There was such entire absence of offense in her eager, frank address that I could only laugh delightedly while assuring her this bliss had been mine for four years. But again she pressed:

"Are you really she?" and before I could protest in sur-prise, she hurried on, "My daughters and I have been discussing you two with the greatest curiosity, and said we were sure there must be some mistake — the thing is incredible; married people don't act as you do. Never have we seen a married couple, except possibly on their honeymoon, have such a good time together!"

All I could do, in return, was to assure her that we were on our honeymoon.

From Brunswick, where Jack averred to President Hyde that if his college days could come again he would attend Bowdoin, we filled another lecture-blank week with my father's people in Ellsworth and Mt. Desert Island, Maine. A day here, a day there, in the dear homesteads that had once been my homes for a long free year, we spent with this and that aunt or cousin — solid hearts of the very granite of old "State o' Maine," with their own glow and sparkle that renders them instantly aware of sham of any kind. One and all they pronounced the captivating boy I had wedded, with his irradiation of sweetness and sympathy and the open boyish face and heart of him, "Just one of us!" and called him their own forever and ever. Jack in turn dubbed them "salt of the earth," and gave them of his best.

Around Bar Harbor ("Somesville"), West Eden and Northeast Harbor, in an ideal "Down East" winter, we drove over the snow-packed, glinting roads that skirt the toothed coast of this isle of seafarers. Oddly enough to those who think of Jack London in terms of icy Alaska with its white ways of transportation, Jack had never before driven in a sleigh. So varied had been his adventures, that it was a prize of life for me to participate with him in an unknown one. Smothered to the ears in a borrowed coon-coat, head and hands snug in sealskin cap and gloves he had bought in Boston, he took keen interest in managing a span of spirited blacks harnessed to a smart "cutter," their red-flaring nostrils tossing white plumes of steam in the crackling, sun-gilt air.

Again in Boston, we became the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Merritt Sheldon, in their handsome colonial home at Newton — with whom I had gone to Europe. Jack's advent must, have been an illuminating if not disturbing one to them, for many and ofttimes weird characters found their way up the driveway to the pillared portico of the lofty white house on a hillock. And of course newspapermen came and went. One of those my husband hoped to meet again some time, preferably in a dark alley where a nose might be tweaked unseen by the police; for, in reply to this man's question as to how it seemed to be the wife of a celebrity, he had made me deliver the ecstatic cry, "It's just grand!"

It was nothing unusual for some inebriated derelict to press the button upon the stroke of midnight; and once an indubitably insane crank perturbed the early hours and the housemaid. But our host and hostess were ideal, sparing no pains to place their home and themselves at their guests' disposal in every finest sense and detail, and apparently enjoying it all thoroughly.

Jack was driven nearly to the limit of endurance in the week before the twenty-seventh, when, with a holiday month in store, we sailed for Jamaica. Boston cameras pictured him hollow-eyed; but be he driven or not driven, I came to learn that he was wont to look other than his fresh, virile self whenever cities laid clutch upon him. Never did he thrive in a great metropolis.

In Tremont Temple, and in historic Faneuil Hall, under the noted Gilbert Stuart of the Father of His Country, to packed audiences Jack London sent forth his voice for the Cause. In the latter auditorium, that sweet and unvanquished fighter, "Mother Jones," marched up the central aisle to the rostrum, and greeted the young protagonist of her holy mission with a sounding kiss on either cheek. He spoke also at Socialist Headquarters.

The Intercollegiate Socialist Society had been organized for a month or two, and the Harvard members got together and saw to it that the first President, Jack London, should be heard in Harvard Union.

Aside from Mrs. Sheldon, myself, and one or two others, there were no women present in Harvard Union that night. We sat with Frank Sheldon and Gelett Burgess in a tiny gallery hung upon the rear wall of the high hall. A thrilling sight it was, that throng of collegians, not only those crowded both seated and standing on the floor below, but the scores hanging by their eyebrows to window casements, welcoming Jack with round upon round of ringing shouts and cheers — an ovation, the papers did not hesitate to call it.

He gave them, unsparingly, all and more than they had bargained for, straight from the shoulder, jolting " Revolution" into them. Once, when a statement of starvation facts, concerning the Chicago slums, was so awful as to strike a number of the chesty young bloods as a bit melodramatic, a laugh started. Jack's face set like a vise, and he hung over the edge of the platform, a challenge to their better part flaming from black-blue eyes and ready, merciless tongue. Be it said that the response was instantaneous and whole-hearted, the house rising as one man and echoing to the applause until I, for one onlooker, choked and filled with emotion at the human fellowship of it. At the close of the lecture, Jack and Mr. Sheldon were carried off to the fraternity houses and royally entertained the rest of the night.

One afternoon, at the request of the Boston American, Jack attended and wrote up a performance of the Holy Jumpers, whose breezy antics, I dare opine, he did not regard as any more outlandish than certain metaphysical gymnastics he wotted of — and thought them far more whole somely cheerful.

Still another afternoon, we put in three breathless hours in Thomas W. Lawson's private office at Young's Hotel, entirely absorbed (in a room peopled with replicas of elephants of every size, breed, and composition), in that brilliant and energetic gentleman s proposed "cure" for the ills and shams of modern society. Be it known, that the assertive and vehement conversationalist Jack London was also a prince of listeners. His was the perfection of attention to any speaker who was worth while. True, he seldom squandered precious time upon one who was not, but would proceed to harry unrelentingly until he had routed the other; after which he would try to make up in various ways for his aggressiveness.

One of our most interesting acquaintances in Boston was Dr. George W. Galvin, staunch Socialist and clever surgeon; and one day he arranged to take us through the Massachusetts General Hospital. Once inside, would we care to see an operation? Dr. Eichardson was in the theater and about to remove an appendix. While my lips formed Yes, swiftly I roved my adventurously promising career beside the bright comet I had taken unto myself for better or worse, a future wherein I might be required to reckon with singular emergencies in war or travel by sea and land. I must never fail my man who despised a coward beneath all things under the sun. Here was chance for a certain kind of prepa ration. Nerves I confessed in abundance: had I nerve also?

And so, curious concomitant of a honeymoon, I witnessed the masterly elimination of an appendix from a patient who bore startling facial resemblance to my own husband; thence to a second operating theater where we were present at the sanguinary trepanning, for tumor of the brain, of a woman's skull — ”a Sea-Wolf operation, eh!” Dr. Galvin chuckled.

Through all of which, placing myself in a rigidly scientific frame of mind, I emerged with flying colors, to Jack's congratulation. Two months later, never having viewed a corpse in my life, except when too young to remember, I was introduced to such for the first time — when they ushered me into the dissecting chamber of the University of Chicago, where some dozen or so cadavers stiffly bade greeting to my unaccustomed gaze. These two trials, trials in a number of senses, reënforced by a day among the bleeding horrors of the stockyards in the same City, graduated Jack London's wife forever out of apprehension as to similar tests that might overtake her.

JAMAICA, CUBA, FLORIDA, NEW YORK CITY

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXVIII 30th Year

THE Admiral Farragut, in ballast, rode high and rolled prodigiously. Our cabin, well aft, suffered the full wallowing effect of the vessel's "sitting down in the sea-hollows," and I, for the first time in adult life, fell violently sick. Great mortification was mine, before a sailor husband, who eyed me with surprise and some misgiving, looking to our aqueous future. But on the third day out, he sat him down in the stateroom and regarded me, with eyes in which there was the pleasure of a discovery:

"I've been learning something about myself, and I may say about you," he launched forth. "I never thought I had it in me to feel any accession of tenderness toward a seasick woman! But somehow, I seem to love you more than ever before — I don't know why, unless because each new environment, whatever it may be, seems to make you still dearer to me."

Inside the month, crossing in a dirty little Spanish steamer from Jamaica to Cuba, to our mutual astonishment, Jack himself went to pieces. A slight shock precipitated the attack. Only one steamer chair being visible, we had appropriated it; and in a heavy surge the flimsy thing collapsed. A moment's pause, and Jack picked himself up and walked aft without a word. He did not return. Inquisitive, I went to investigate, and halted petrified to behold my hardened tar, hanging, green-pallid and audible, over the stern-rail, thoroughly seasick for the initial time in his nautical history. And in the years to come, he accepted a recurrence as a matter of course in rough weather. He likened the phenomenon of mal de mer to our native poison-oak — catch it just once, and immunity is a lost blessing. In passing, I must state that Jack continued immune to that irritating scourge of California, poison-oak.

The Admiral Farragut docked at Port Antonio, Jamaica, on New Year's morning, 1906. In the harbor was anchored the Howard Gould yacht, and at the Hotel Titchfield we made the acquaintance of Ella Wheeler Wilcox (whom Jack had championed so valiantly of old to the Lily Maid), and her husband, Robert.

In the afternoon I had my first revel in milk-warm, tropical waters, coral-girt, and we made sport for our party by diving for coins and practising life-saving as we had done in Wake Robin pool. The next day was spent in the saddle. Our mounts were spindly, blood-bay race-horses, and Jack's never for a moment let out of our minds the fact that he had been first under the wire in the previous day's races. But we saw the more, by our involuntary speed, of the British-neat island paradise, exploring the town itself, a pineapple plantation, and the romantic hill-stronghold of Moortown, still inhabited by the maroons — descendants of Spanish slaves.

The sharpest impressions carried away of that journey, in our first foreign clime together, were of the buxom, broad-smiling, broad-hipped negro wenches, basket-on-head, met on the dustless mountain roads that were in reality fern-hedged boulevards; the spiritual featured Hindoo women, weighed with their family wealth of silver adornment, specimens of which we purchased; the foolish luncheon out of queer, tempting tins, accompanied by English "biscuits," consumed while we dangled blissful heels from the counter of a little wayside store with a superb sea-view leagues below, the ebony proprietor and his indolent friends loafing genially about. But clearest of all re-mained the raffish spectacle, at Moortown, of a home-made merry-go-round. It was weather-grayed, witchy, rickety, and ridden by grinning black natives to a rhythmic chant from their own throats that affected us strangely — as if by some potent incantation dragging into the sunlight of civilization the most abysmal of racial reticences. It bestirred that mental unease which sometimes overtakes one who listens over-long to the primitive, disturbing call of modern "jazz" orchestration.

Leaving Port Antonio on the third day, by train for Buff Bay, we were there met by a dusky guide with horses, we having chosen this route across the green, fern-forested mountains to Kingston. It was all "unspeakably beautiful," I read in a pocket diary. We lunched and siesta'd at Cedarhurst, an English plantation, where Barbara Francis brewed incomparable coffee from beans which, by a true lady of the land, are roasted to a crisp for each meal. Three large cupfuls, black and strong, I, Jack's "insomniast," dared to tuck away; and three long hours afterwards, I, the insomniast, slumbered peacefully. "Why, our coffee cures insomnia," crooned Barbara Francis, as she snuggled me into a downy four-poster from "Home." "It's the way we roast it and percolate it, I fancy besides being the best coffee in the world to begin with!"

Her husband led us about the plantation before we swung again into our saddles for the next lap, and Jack, irresistibly enthusiastic, made it very plain to me how coffee must be served on the Ranch when we should go to housekeeping.

Out we fared into a sunset of tropically crude blue and copper and rose, slipping through swift twilight into starlit blue dark. Trustingly behind the mellow-throated guide our sure-footed little beasts dropped steeply down a fragrant trail, lighted fitfully by darting fireflies, into Chester Vale. Here, at Sedgwick's, the very picture of an ancient, rambling English country home, we spent the night. "You couldn't pack a Broadwood half a mile," Jack quoted, coming beside me where I was examining my first Broadwood pianoforte. "Try it, do." But the stately relic answered back in tones probably such as Kipling's Broadwood might have rendered up had it been "packed" to the humid river region he rimed with "mile."

In the dewy, singing morning, it was boots and saddles over the Blue Ridge Range — through Hardware Gap, Silver Hill Gap, Greenwich, Newcastle Barracks, Gordontown, sometimes in lanes and driveways made especially beautiful by tree-ferns and crimson hibiscus blossoming tree-high, and into Kingston by the sea. Here at the Park Lodge Hotel, our first caller was Ben Tillett, M. P. and labor leader, he and Jack of course being known to each other.

Ah, it was so softly exciting, so wondrous, seeing the world together, all the glamorousness enhanced by that lovely old hostelry with its long French windows that let in the scented tropic air. My husband, who had pleasured exceedingly in my wintry Boston shopping for "flimsies" to be donned in the warmer latitudes, now had the satisfaction of seeing the light apparel in use — then, as always in the future, appreciative and critical of every detail of my wardrobe. Nothing would do but he must take me curio-seeking in quaint shops, more particularly for a bejeweled, flexible silver girdle of Hindoo origin, and snaky bracelets to match.

Only one incident arose to mar the holiday perfection. It was on the very night of arrival that I came abruptly upon the stone wall of one of Jack's self-styled "disgusts." In review, I cannot place the cause perhaps it was some hitch on Manyoungi s part regarding the luggage, or Jack's dinner-clothes; at least, I saw no large concern back of his silent anger, unless . . .

unless, indeed, some trifle had connected his memory with some unhappy occurrence in his past. But it was black, that mood, from whatever deeps it rose; and ruthlessly he sent me, alone, to the viny bower that was the hotel's dining-hall, in a court of flowers that screened the musicians, to keep an engagement we both had made with a fellow traveler from Boston.

Puzzled and hurt I was, but held my peace, and made smooth wifely excuses for a severe headache that was not altogether an untruth. In the morning Jack woke his sunniest, save for a wordless penitence that looked out of eyes which went so darkly-blue under a generous emotion.

It was ages before the matter ever came up between us. But although we spoke of it, I never made sure of the underlying impulsion that had sent him agley. It was not the only instance of its kind, but I came timely to sense the causes, and avert them wherever in my power. Yet I hasten to undo any impression I may have given that in our lives such "spells" were the order of the day. On the contrary, months and years might elapse during which no trace of the old blues intervened; and, in this connection, I am reminded of the gradual disappearance, after our marriage, of certain terrible headaches to which he had been subject. This was, I think, largely due to his seeking more adequate sleep.

The Spanish steamer aforementioned, the Oteri, landed us in Santiago de Cuba on the 6th, where, from the Hotel del Alba, we drove about the city and to San Juan Hill, and strolled lace-hunting in cool little shops. And Jack bought some lovely fans to gratify my slight Spanish streak, which I called up to play its part in its own congenial habitat. A dinner which we enjoyed in the Café Venus, guests of a charming gentleman who was living out what of life was still vouchsafed by one remaining lung, was always a colorful memory to Jack, who incorporated it somewhere in his fiction. I, in a soft rosy gown, swaying languidly my spangled, pearl-handled fan to the lilt of a plaza band in the lazy warm airs under the palms, wondered if anything to come in our wanderings could approach the romance that was here.

After the final act at a theater, when the pretty victoria had left us at the hotel, we ascended to our vaulted chamber and drifted out upon a balcony railed in fretted gilt iron, and lounged a restful hour, shamelessly gazing into luxurious Spanish interiors and balconies across the narrow street, where señoras and señoritas entertained in their courtly manner. I am certain that Jack reveled in that night; but more certain am I that some seven-eighths of his content was vested in that of his bride, to whom every moment was as a pearl of price and as such abides.

Jack, his manhood revolting at the brazen falsity of a cab-driver who delivered us at the railroad station, became the nucleus of a gesticulating and to all appearances not harmless mob. As the moment of departure neared, he called to me to go aboard with Manyoungi. Only the fact that Jack had tickets and money in his possession restrained him from going to jail at the last instant rather than abase his Anglo-Saxon pride before the impudent half-breeds. As it was, mad as a hatter, he paid for an extra passenger who existed solely in the crafty imagination of the cab-man, and boarded the train after it was in motion. There was some consolation, however, when in Havana the same ruse was tried, and the American Consul, himself a Spaniard, to whom Jack appealed, in short order sent to the right-about a much-cowed coachman who had sworn by the Virgin to two extra fares!

The rich country across which we sped that golden day, and an Egyptian sunset athwart little hills for all the world so like pyramids that one’s eyes went questing through the rose and yellow and lilac for a Sphinx, all wrought upon Jack’s creative faculties. He withdrew into himself at intervals, to make notes for a novel which I now realize never was written — ”The Flight of the Duchess.” In the Spanish city of Havana, with its dream-tinted palaces, instead of putting up at a hotel, we found cool gray rooms in a flower-girt patio at Consolado and Neptune Streets. Of course, we did and saw everything there was to do and see in so short a sojourn: a launch trip around the twisted wreck of the Maine; visits to Moro Castle and Cabañas Fort, and to the swimming baths of hewn coral; and we drowned our souls in the fairy coloring of the isle and the waters of the Gulf. Notable amid our entertainment was a sportive evening watching the Basque game of Jai Alai, followed by a gorgeous banquet in the famous Hotel Miramar, originally built by a rich American for the pleasure of his guests.

A book in itself would be required to relate an afternoon we spent in the lazar-house — an experience that for all time interested us in the tragedy of the leper.

“We hated to leave Havana,” says my red booklet, “but all the world’s before us!”

The steamer Halifax set us down at Key West, where we transferred to the Shinnecock for Miami. Jack, who from his omniverous reading knew considerable about almost everything under the sky, was curious to hook a few of the six hundred-odd varieties of fish reputed to swim in Miami waters. “Just think, Mate,” he said to me, “one-fifth of the entire fauna of the American Continent, north of Panama, inhabit this part of the coast.” Boating, angling for edible fish and hooking outlandish finny shapes, driving in the Everglades, calling at the alligator and crocodile farm, and shopping for curios and snakeskins, filled the Miami visit. Next we stopped at Daytona Beach, where from the Hotel Clarendon we branched out on automobile trips over the beautiful stretches of sand, fished off the long pier, and took a day’s launch-exploration up the tropical Tomoka Kiver.

Jack had been drooping, dull and listless, for a day or two. On the return cruise he became rapidly worse, so that I was up all night with him, and in the morning sent numerous telegrams delaying New York appointments.

No doctor would he let me summon, “Because I simply can’t be laid up long, with New York and the rest of the lecture schedule to be lived up to,” he demurred. “Besides, it’s only grippe — I know the symptoms; and I also know myself and my recuperative abilities better than any doctor.

I sat by his bedside reading aloud and running to the window whenever a racing car whizzed past, while the patient grumbled and groaned with splitting head: “And I came to this damned place mainly to see those cars at practice; and now look at me!”

The next I knew, glancing up from a totally unemotional page of Shaw’s “The Irrational Knot,” was that Jack was weeping copiously, the tears coursing down his hot cheeks. Much perturbed, I yet failed to wring from him any explanation. But I was to learn through painful experience that very night, for I was struck down by the identical malady and myself fell emotional to a degree upon the mildest provocation.

Manyoungi, fortunately, remained untouched by the sickness, and nobly nursed the pair of us, sending further telegrams that moved ever ahead our New York arrival. Crawling in to Jack from my room, he received me with feeble arms and trembling voice:

“Mate Woman, I know I shall love you always!” and we both cried sumptuously over the sentiment. And how we laughed in memory of our mawkishness, once the attack of dengue, or “boo-hoo” fever, which it proved to be, was a thing of the past.

As soon as we were slightly better, we took a drawing-room for New York, stopping over at Jacksonville for an afternoon in which to totter around the Ostrich Farm. The foregoing is by way of preparing the reader for receiving into New York City a white, hollow-eyed, very miserable Jack London, burdened with an almost insupportable number of engagements to fulfil in half the days he had originally alloted them. The first was a socialist meeting in Grand Central Palace, his lecture advertised for eight p. m., and our belated train gave him scant leeway. In no wise aided by the fact that I had to go to bed, too blind with pain in head and muscles to lend cheer by word or smile, Jack, ill, travel-worn, dinnerless, got into his black suit and somehow carried off the occasion. His audience, a mixed one, totaled nearly four thousand.

More than once Jack had forewarned me, in similar strain to his remarks in the Johns Letters, of the baleful influence exercised upon him by this mighty man-trap, New York City. Even so, that early, I was inclined to discount the mental factor, laying his condition mainly at the door of fever and social over-strain. But I was forced to change my mind. His own diagnosis was that his experience with the City, first from the viewpoint of tramp and beggar, and afterward from that of successful author at whom "publishers were trying to throw money in the form of advances on unperformed work, seemed to have unbalanced his preceptions and sent him reasoning in a circle like that of certain young German philosophers.

"It's all a madness," he would gird. "'Why should anybody do any thing?' is my continual thought when I am in New York. I am being shaved: I look up into the face of the man who is using the razor on me, and wonder why he doesn't cut my throat with it. I stare with amazement at the elevator-boy in the hotel, that he doesn't throw everything to the winds and let loose in one hell of a smashup, just for the whimsey of it!"

At the opera, he brooded and made notes. If the music reached him at all, it was not as music, but as an urge toward other thoughts and speculations. "Music? It is a drug," said he. "I have asked several men and women for a definition of music. George Sterling comes the nearest to satisfying — a drug. It sets me dreaming like a hasheesh-eater."

We sat at the Winter Garden. He filled the evening agonizing mentally over the probable careers, in the theatrical shambles, of the choms girls, beautiful mere children that they were, flown like moths to the bright lights that were consuming them.

We supped at the Revolutionists' Club, and afterward inspected a mile or so of the Ghetto, peering into the unventilated gloom of "inside rooms," at the sullen pasty faces of the inmates. Jack moved about, either silently, as if playing his part in a nightmare, or arguing strenuously as if against time.

Up-town or down-town, it seemed as if all normal spontaneity had fled from him, and I could but exist in hope that the man, who was as though a thousand-thousand leagues apart from me, might one day come suddenly to his own again, to the healthy, vital boy that was himself.

After one reception that was given in our honor, when a newspaperwoman had seized the occasion to poke a little fun at the bride's obvious devotion, Jack sneered with mirthless laugh: "What did you expect? — Any natural human appreciation of anything natural and human, in New York?"

It was about this time that The Cosmopolitan Magazine had issued a challenge to a few of America's thinking writers, to contribute articles on the theme "What Life Means to Me." Jack had not yet found leisure in which even to ponder what he should say; but a conversation with Edwin Markham stirred him to action:

"How are you going about it?" asked the white-maned poet, his splendid dark eyes bent upon the younger man.

"Damned 'f I know!" smiled Jack. "How are you?"

Followed a discussion, Mr. Markham appreciating Jack's uncompromising socialist approach to the subject, but doubtful of its expediency as regarded the magazine editors.

But when the Jack London production appeared in The Cosmopolitan, it was without editorial blue elision, "Which is why I like to work for Hearst," Jack repeated an oft-voiced opinion. "Writers for Hearst, special writers like myself, are paid well for expanding their own untrammeled views. (Once he expatiated: "Why, when I returned from Manchuria and presented my expense account, the Examiner editor said, 'For God's sake, London, do itemize this a little before I send it in!' I did this, and the unquestioned total was remitted in due course." So meticulously, indeed, had The Examiner observed the details of Jack's war correspondence, that he had been greatly entertained, upon his return, to notice that wherever he had queried his own spelling, the "(Spl?)" with which he had preceded the word was left untampered!)

In Jack London's "What Life Means to Me" (final article in book entitled "Revolution"), one reads what is perhaps his most impassioned committal of himself as a rebel toward the shames and uncleannesses of the capitalist system. Here he dedicates himself to what he sees as his Holy Grail, to "the one clean, noble and alive" thing worth working for — George Sterling's definition of Socialism. In the essay Jack hints at some of his experiences, east and west, more than one of them in the immediate past of his lecturing tour, and what he learned therein concerning the women and men of the tottering edifice of the upper crust of Society. His challenge is flung to that thin and cracking upper crust as he saw it: "with all its rotten life and unburied dead, its monstrous selfishness and sodden materialism."

The only break in the New York days was when Jack went to New Haven to give the "Revolution" lecture at Yale University, under title of "The Coming Crisis." To my everlasting regret I was too weak to accompany him. He was invited to speak by the author of that exquisite, human Irish idyl, "My Lady of the Chimney Corner," Reverend Alexander Irvine, who represented the state committee and the New Haven Local. Jack cut out several less important affairs, and gave to Connecticut January 26. No theater nor hall being available, the Socialists, including members of the Intercollegiate Society, had held an informal Smoker in an ivied tower in Vanderbilt Hall of the august college, and hatched the critical scheme of getting the Faculty interested in bidding Jack London, famous young litterateur, to grace Woolsey Hall, Yale's million-dollar white marble memorial.

Dr. Irvine commissioned an astute, socialistically-bent student to take the matter up, first, with an officer of Yale Union, a debating society. The seed fell on fertile ground. "The officer of the Yale Union," says Dr. Irvine, in a delightful illustrated brochure which he afterward compiled, "was a youth of exceeding great callowness.

"'They say he's socialistically inclined, Doctor,' he said.

"'Rather, I replied.

"'Well, he said, 'I suppose we'll have to take our chances.'"

Dr. Irvine guaranteed the hall rent, advertising, and so forth, provided an admission fee of ten cents might be charged, which was agreed upon.

It really was a shame, what these graceless free-thinkers put over upon President Hadley. One of the leading Professors, although apprehensive of Jack's "radical tendencies," was yet reasonable: "Yale is a University," enounced he, “and not a monastery. Besides, Jack London is one of the most distinguished men in the world.”

Dr. Irvine tells: “A few hours after it was decided that we could have Woolsey Hall the advertising began. The factories and shops were bombarded with dodgers. Every tree on the campus bore the mysterious inscription: ‘Jack London at Woolsey Hall.’ Comrade Dellfant painted a poster which gripped men by the eyes. In it Comrade London appears in a red sweater and in the background the lurid glare of a great conflagration. . . . On the morning of the 26th Yale — official and unofficial — awoke as if she had been dreaming. She rubbed her eyes and again scanned the trees and the billboards. Then the officers of the Yale Union were run down. They had previously run each other down. Explanations were in order all around. Several of the Yale Union boys — in pugilistic parlance — lost their little goats. They were scared good and stiff. Several Yale Dons got exceedingly chesty over the affair. But the New Yale took a hand, and Professors Kent and Phelps counseled a square deal and fair play. One student, in sympathy with the meeting, said: “Yale Union and many of the Faculty are sweating under the collar for fear London might say something socialistic.’“

But it was definitely settled that the lecture could not be called off and the only thing was to make the best of it. “When we arrived on the scene,” Dr. Irvine refers to Jack and himself, “the boys still believed that any reference to Socialism would be merely incidental.” Jack’s friend, by the way, in his spirited account attires the speaker, with marked respect, in a white flannel shirt! Friends and enemies alike insisted upon his wearing flannel!

The crowd that packed Woolsey Hall represented every social phase of New Haven and its suburbs a hundred professors and ten times as many students ; many hundreds of workingmen; many hundreds of citizens; many hundreds of Socialists. “But,” the humorous Irish divine remarks, “the Socialists were so overwhelmed by the bourgeois atmosphere that there was not the slightest attempt to applaud during the entire length of the lecture.” And the Socialist “bouncers” who had been surreptitiously sta-tioned throughout the big audience, in reserve for possible ructions, held their idle hands.

“For over two hours the audience gave the lecturer a respectful hearing. A woman — a lady — went out swearing. A few students tried hard to sneer, but succeeded rather indifferently. Jack London gripped them by the intellect and held them to the close. Following the lecture, Comrade London was invited to a student's room — one of the largest — and there he answered questions until midnight. As the clock struck twelve a member of the Yale Union came to me and asked me seriously if I thought there was any hope of keeping London for a week! 'We can fit him up here,' he said, 'in fine shape.'

"There was a second conference at Mory's and some tired intellects were handled rather roughly by the guests of the evening — but the students clung to him and escorted him in the we sma hours up Chapel Street toward the Socialist parsonage where another reception was awaiting him.

"A Professor of Yale," Dr. Irvine concludes, "told me a few days after the lecture that it was the greatest intellectual stimulus Yale had had in many years, and he sincerely hoped that London would return and expound the Socialist program in the same hall."

Jack had been advised beforehand as to certain faulty acoustics in the beautiful auditorium. That he lent no deaf ear may be judged from one of the newspapers, which also gives a hint upon his platform personality at that time:

". . . he walked to the edge of the stage and began to speak in a clear voice, which reached easily to the farthest corner of the hall. He used scarcely any gestures, and rarely raised his voice even to emphasize a point. His emphasis he got by reiteration.

As for his countenance, in a photograph taken with Dr. Irvine, there can be noticed the strange, haggard look he wore during that period.

His immediate treatment by the New Haven dailies was one of leniency, not lacking the dignity of at least trying to quote him verbatim. He was not flattered by the portrait they published, since it was of some one else, youthfully apostolic in appearance, arrayed quite differently from Jack's reputed "white flannel shirt."

While the local press was minded to be indulgent and the University as little unduly excited as had been Harvard in its turn, the trustees of Derby Neck Library, in the same State, rose in a denunciatory body and repudiated, to all intents and purposes forever, the entire works of Jack London. Further misquoting his "to hell with the constitution" pronouncement, those opinion creators exhorted the public, in no uncertain terms, likewise to spurn all periodicals containing Jack's stories.

It had happened that Mr. Melville E. Stone, general manager of the Associated Press, spoke in New Haven upon the same evening with Jack London. But whenever asked, by sympathizers, regarding the policy of the Derby Neckers, if he thought Mr. Stone's presence had anything to do with the deluge of adverse newspaper notoriety which followed. Jack invariably insisted: "Not in the least. I am personally convinced that Mr. Stone had nothing to do with it.

But it was ludicrous how the tune of the press changed from "the brilliant young author" to criticisms such as, "pathologically he is a neurasthenic," or it disposed of him lightly as "that socialist sensation-monger who calls him self Jack London." It is noteworthy, however, that his mother's home town, Massillon, Ohio, supported an editor with a sense of proportion, for he naively propounded, in The Morning Gleaner, "Must a novelist necessarily admire the Constitution?"

The truth is, that the wide controversy as to black listing Jack's books caused an alarming slump in sales for some time to come. He, who always maintained his unfitness for physical martyrdom: I'd tell anything under torture!" — thus sacrificed unflinchingly for his beliefs, martyred his brain faculties in the cause of Truth.

About the nearest the capitalist editors leaned toward championing him, or at least reacting to the high-handed imposition of arbitrary standards upon readers of Derby Neck or other communities, was when they voiced something of President Wheeler's earlier sentiments as to the unlidding of highly explosive propaganda.

Came the ninth and last day that parted us from our western trek. Whisked from a luncheon of celebrities to the Twentieth Century Limited, we were settled in our section and the car gliding homeward, when Jack, suddenly, with a sigh, nodded his curly head and as suddenly fell asleep. All strain was erased from his features — it was the face of a dreaming child that slipped into the hollow of my shoulder, ordained from aforetime. When he awoke, and consciousness had focused in his eyes, they looked up into mine with a matter-of-course recognition of content. Upon his tongue was speech of home — and how were the dear Brown Wolf, and that rabbity little bay mare, Fleet, which the young Aliens had sold us along with other farm perquisites when they vacated the old house on the Hill place?

It was preciously similar to the way he had emerged from his thrall on that epochal spring day in Nunn's Canyon. And I was to learn, whensoever great Gotham claimed its price and prize of his unresting heart and brain, that I must deal with another personality than the wonted Jack London.

RETURN TO OAKLAND; EARTHQUAKE

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXIX 1906

CHICAGO, noises and drafts and sifting soot and all, seemed to reach to us east-worn travelers like home and peace, despite the rushing stop-over that had been charted.

On Sunday, January 28, Jack lectured to the Socialists at the West Side Auditorium, introduced by A. M. Simons, editor of the International Socialist Review. Standing-room only, and that all taken, was the situation long before Jack had risen to speak.

On Monday he repeated "The Social Revolution" at the University of Chicago, and the Socialists were more than ever elate that the "magnificent lecture of Comrade London" should be staged in the "intellectual stronghold of Standard Oil." Kent Hall, which had been opened to the Sociological Club, was incapable of holding the mob bent upon seeing and hearing its famous mouth-piece, to say nothing of the students themselves and a horde of citizens.

It was a fine sight to me, the hundreds overflowing on to the stage itself, sidewalks jammed outside, and more coming every second. Things were growing tense. The dissatisfied murmur of the many denied admission floated into the packed playhouse. Then an usher climbed before the foot lights and announced that the meeting would adjourn to Mandel Hall — Mandel Hall! the auditorium consecrated to the most dress-parade functions of the great University, and even known to have been refused to the minor colleges for their commencement exercises. The galleries had been barred; but when the throng had swept aside the helpless ushers and occupied every foot of space, seat and aisle, fear of infringing fire regulations caused the galleries to be thrown open.

The dailies of Chicago, still smarting under the suppressed wedding news, as well as from Jack's late attacks, from the Atlantic Coast, upon her sweat-shop atrocities, naturally let him have the broadside of their ridicule and enmity. But somehow, so fond were we of the city, it failed to offend.

Before we said good-by, Mr. Simons and his attractive and learned wife had us to the University dissecting rooms aforementioned, as well as to the Armour and Swift stockyards and slaughtering plants. And while we were on the trail of unpleasant but instructive sights of the world in which we live, we spent a night going through one section of Chicago's "red-light" district.

Our last sight-seeing, ere we left on the 31st for St. Paul, was of Hull House, where we made the acquaintance of Miss Jane Addams. It was a treat to listen to a discussion between Miss Addams and Jack London — each approaching the same heartfelt problems from widely divergent angles.

"Well," Jack observed, stretching himself in the Pullman, the Little Woman has added a number of strange experiences to her life. And you don't know," he broke out, "you can't guess, what it means to me, to have you by my side everywhere, in everything I do and see. I am not lonely any more. Wherever I go, — at least, wherever it is possible for me to take you, I want you with me — I want you to know the world as I know it, the good and the bad of it. It means the world to me that you don't flinch from any of it, so far as I can see. — In fact," his tone went grave and his brow severe, before breaking into laughing speech, "the way that you, shameless women that you are, tenderly raised a vegetarian, put away that hearty lunch after seeing animals slaughtered all forenoon, worries me about your immortal soul!"

"But you will kindly remember," I came back, "that I confined my depredations solely to bivalves and prawns!"

In the little diary of that day's ride I find: "Jack says we two are living in a Land of Love, wherever we are." There is less tender notation to the effect that I was sorely beaten at both casino and cribbage; also mention of our finishing Turgenev's "On the Eve" and beginning Gissing's "The Unclassed," reading aloud, turn about.

At St. Paul, Jack lectured for the Lyceum Bureau. We visited the handsome State Capitol, fashioned throughout, marbles and all, from native American materials. We sat through an exciting wrestling match in the Armory. And nothing would do but Jack must take part in an impromptu "curling" tournament. It was with keen enjoyment he drove the heavy but elusive disks over the constantly swept ice-rink, and the very picture of a Scotch laddie was he, in borrowed tam o'shanter and woolen plaid. We heard later, much to his amusement, that the driver of the automobile that returned us over the hard snow to the hotel, had been arrested for speeding!

Grand Forks, North Dakota, was the next jump, where we were entertained by President Merrifield of the State University, and in this city on February 3 were given Jack's two final lectures. The "first and last tour," so far as the speaking end of it was concerned, had terminated untimely, for Jack was tired and ill from the long siege, and had crossed off a number from the itinerary. On the train he wrote Cloudesley Johns:

"I called off the Mills [B. Fay Mills, The Evangelist] debate because he requested me to, and because the only alternative was a refined and sublimated statement that had nothing in it to debate about. Have been miserably sick, and have cancelled a whole string of lectures, including all California lectures. I sent you a wire canceling Owen debate. . . . I won't get down to Los Angeles this spring."

The remainder of the journey was without special event, except that our train was delayed above beautiful Dunsmuir, in California, by a freight wreck ahead in a canyon. The passengers made a picnic of it, wandering about the adjacent country; and we twain, being immersed in Selma Lagerlof's "Gosta Berling," reclined upon a grassy slope and read to each other. I think it will be seen, by now, why Jack and I were never bored, no matter how long nor uninteresting, in the estimate of some mortals, our traverse. Life was not long enough in which to read the books we desired, to do the work laid out, to talk of the myriad things suggested by other myriad things; nor to love.

At three o'clock, the last but one morning before we reached Oakland, Jack woke me in my berth. Disturbing my rest being a tacit taboo, I was startled; but his instant whisper, shaken with eagerness, reassured: "Throw on your kimono and come out on the platform with me. I want to show you something — you've got to see it!"

It was indeed "something" — great Shasta, upthrust 14,000 feet, snow-crowned, into the moonlit, night-blue dome of the sky; and the Lassen Buttes, stark and flat in the beams of a setting moon, like peaks cut from heavy dull-gold cardboard. Eight years thereafter, in Mexico, when General Funston remarked that he had read in "El Imparcial's" telegraphic column that Mt. Lassen was in eruption, my mind flew back to that hour before dawn when Jack and I, so airily clad, arm-in-arm on the lurching vestibule platform, gazed out upon the fairy scene, and spoke in hushed tones.

The Oakland reporters flocked to Jack upon his return, and to their queries he repeated that if his marriage had proved invalid in Illinois, he would have remarried in every state in the Union. Referring to some misreport about himself, I find this from the Oakland Herald:

"Yes, that was another case of being the victim of reporters readjustment of facts. Oh, I know I have been a newspaperman myself — thereby perhaps I know so well how impossible it is for reporters to avoid perverting facts. Oh, heavens, no! I am not trying to demonstrate that reporters are natural-born liars, and yet. . . .

"Why, do you know, while I was in Chicago the other day, I had two reporters struggle with my immortal soul for hours trying to get me to say that I am a believer in free love — which I am not at all. They struggled nobly, but I stood firm to the argument that the family group is the very hub of things.

"But then I rather enjoy this misrepresentation. It is amusing; and besides you know, it's fine advertising! And I don't take myself seriously, so can take all that's said about me as a joke, for I always try to laugh at the inevitable."

Jack had concluded to cease paying rent in Oakland; and shortly after our arrival, as man and wife, at the little flat in Telegraph Avenue, we set about finding a suitable house for his mother and Johnnie, as well as Mammy Jennie. One was purchased on Twenty-Seventh Street, Jack's ultimate decision influenced by the handsome woods of its interior finishing, for he was fond of good lumber. One room in the upper story we reserved for town headquarters.

By mid-month we were on the way to our true home, and were met at the Glen Ellen station by "Werner Wiget, who had long since changed his abode from the Fish Ranch to the farm-house up the mountain, where now he was in charge, under my Aunt's supervision in Jack's absence.

"Jack's House," at Wake Robin, as it has ever since been known, served as formerly for writing quarters and Manyoungi's sleeping place. Other living rooms, added to Wake Robin Lodge proper, and spoken of as the Annex, were in readiness for our use, and a neat and comely neighbor, Mrs. Grace Parrent, who wanted to swell her own family exchecquer for some special purpose, had engaged to cook and ply her deft French needle in preparing me for the round-world voyage.

It was a sort of sublimated camping. Our winter table was set in a corner of the spotless kitchen that was odorous of new pine; and later on, when spring's caprices had quieted, the table was removed out under the laurels at the brookside, where our crocked butter and cream cooled in the ripples. Mrs. Parrent's excellent repasts were enjoyed to the music of tuneful Korean treebells that Manyoungi knew well how to place to advantage among the bays and oaks. Jack and I had discovered many tastes in common, even to a fondness for olive oil as a culinary lubricator, in preference to the animal fats. He had acquired his among the Greek fishermen, I in my Aunt's vegetarian household.

Jack was not yet looking quite himself, the sunken shadows still lurking about his eyes; and a marked decrease in weight was noticeable. I was aware of an almost painful relief in that he was once more out of the turmoil of urban life and immersed in laying plans for the summer's work and play, the building of his deep-sea, boat, and the modest improvement of the "Blessed Ranch," as he lovingly referred to it. Consequently, it was with positive alarm that I regarded the managing editor of a large eastern monthly, who arrived from New York two days after our return to Wake Robin, his mission to induce Jack immediately to recross the continent, for the purpose of making a first-hand study of the southern cotton-mills in relation to child-labor.

Caring — perhaps sinfully, who shall say? — more for the imminent welfare of this man of mine than for all the serfs of all ages, I sat at the interview silently exerting every fiber of me against his going. I was certain, from observation of his internal restlessness, that if he went back into the cities so soon, there might be dire consequences. Reasoning back to his state antedating the summer of 1905, I knew he had had enough, for the time being.

The editor was plainly anxious not to find his journey in vain. Eloquently he pleaded. Jack pondered with troubled eyes, and would not give answer until he and I had talked it over. He wanted to do the thing; his conscience pressed him to do it. And though he recognized as well as I the need in which he stood of freedom from what he had only just escaped, he would not have shirked even if his actual life had depended upon it. But balanced against this new work was the work he had already pledged, together with other responsibilities; and there came to aid his ultimatum a slight misstep of the editor, who let drop that if Jack did not undertake the commission, another man, only a little less noted — Socialist — was in view. “Let the other fellow have a chance,” often a slogan of Jack London’s, was the outweighing grain in the scales.

Jack knew, and why, though I said little and tried not to look too much, that I was dead-set against his going. I never learned precisely what he thought of my attitude — whether he blamed me for being instrumental, by mere woman-mothering possessiveness and solicitude, in with holding him from a duty, or was glad I agreed that he stay west for a while. If there resided in his mind any unflattering criticism, it died with him. It may be that something restrained me from asking; and joy in his augmented well-being — always my religious care — took the place of morbid self-examination. Before I desert the subject, let it be said that the second-choice of author and investigator did a splendid piece of work — ”Better than I could have done it, by far!” Jack enunciated his satisfaction; hence the ultimate good was served. Furthermore, one of Jack’s finest bits of writing, after our return, was a story of the making of a hobo by the process of cotton-mill child-slavery. This was “The Apostate,” which, following serial publication, came to have wide circulation in pamphlet form through a Socialist publishing house in Chicago. (The book “Revolution” contains this tale.)

How more than busy we were! Aside from regular writing, which was soon resumed, Jack, with eye to homebuilding, ordered fruit-trees of all descriptions suitable to the latitude, and seventy-odd varieties of table-grapes — orchard and vineyard to be planted upon an amphitheater behind a half-circle we had chosen for the house-site. Johannes Reimers tendered the benefit of his professional advice about the trees and vines, and ordered for us a hedge of Japanese hawthorne to flourish between orchard and house-space, which in time grew into a glory of orange and red berries alternating with a season of white blossoming. The plot was on the lip of a deep wooded ravine which was the Ranch’s southern boundary, ancient redwood and spruce, lightning-riven and eagle-nested, accenting the less majestic growth. We never wearied of riding Belle and Ban to the spot, in our minds’ eyes the vision of a rugged stone house that was to rise like an indigenous growth from the grassy semi-circle.

While occupied upon two Alaskan tales, “A Day’s Lodging” and “The Wit of Porportuk” (bound in “Love of Life” and “Lost Face”), Jack arranged the manuscripts for two short-story volumes, “Moon Face” and

“Love of Life,” published in 1906 and 1907 respectively. Next, Upton Sinclair’s “The Jungle” was reviewed. Jack, who apositely dubbed it “The Uncle Tom’s Cabin of Wage-Slavery,” sadly observed thereafter that the most conspicuous result of this expose of labor conditions in the stockyards was only to make the public more careful what it put into its stomach.

While he was working on another story, “When God Laughs,” a letter was received from Mr. E. H. Sothern, asking him to write a socialistic play for himself and Miss Julia Marlowe; but nothing ever came of this.

Before starting upon a new novel, “Before Adam,” Jack had, in addition to the above-noted short work, completed an article, “The Somnambulists” (in “Revolution”), also the stories “Created He Them” and “Just Meat” (both in “When God Laughs” collection), and “Finis” (in “The Turtles of Tasman.”) Then, by way of relaxation and practice on drama form, he did a curtain-raiser from his story “The Wicked Woman” — this flick of drama going into the volume “The Human Drift,” brought out posthumously.

During March, he visited Oakland to deliver a Socialist lecture at Dietz Opera House. Following this event, Jack London was talked of for Socialist Governor at the next elections. While in Oakland, we selected a two-seated rig and a runabout. Jack had set his heart upon a buckboard, such as one in which his neighbor, Judge Carroll Cook, used to meet friends at the railroad station. But we were in urgent need of a vehicle for the same purpose, and snapped up the neat uncovered wagon with yellow wheels, looking forward to a buckboard later on. Jack never acquired that buckboard. Instead, when the Napa Winships went in for gasolene, we bought out their other rolling stock, which came to serve all purposes.

Mrs. Louise Clark, a neighbor, sold us the horse Selim, a black handful of abounding energy. Jack, in the process of subduing Selim and the silly Fleet to gentle uses, waxed in soft-spoken patience unbelievable to his old pals who came to look on. We took much interest, also, informing different spans with our four light horses, harnessed to the new four wheelers.

And oh, yes — the good Brown Wolf, tiny pointed ears flattened ingratiatingly back into his russet ruff, and long pink tongue lolling dumb delight and pride, presented us to a new family of puppies. One of these went to Jack’s children. “I don’t think much of the rest,” he ruefully surveyed them and their mongrel if excellent mother; so we kept none of the litter.

Presently the astounding booksmith had begun his atavistic “Before Adam,” which came out in Everybody’s Magazine. Upon its publication a hue and cry went up, originating in a men’s club, to the effect that Jack London had plagiarized Stanley Waterloo’s “The Story of Ab.” Be it said, however, that Mr. Waterloo did not start the trouble. Jack was frank to admit that “The Story of Ab” had been one of his sources of material. “But Waterloo was not scientific,” he stoutly defended, “and I have made a scientific book out of my re-creation on the subject.” So correct was his assumption, that “Before Adam” went into the universities of the United States as a text-book in Anthropology. To George Sterling, in June, he wrote:

“Have just expressed you MS of ‘Before Adam.’ It’s just a skit, ridiculously true, preposterously real. Jump on it.”

England, even that early, in the character of Red Eye saw a “cryptic reference to the German Emperor.”

Jack, who derived material from every available source and especially from the newspapers as representing life, was eternally dogged at the heels by small men at home and abroad who charged plagiarism — these having little commerce with one, more generous, who said, “If I could by hook or crook write anything worth Jack London’s copying, I should consider it a privilege. As for Jack, he did not try to boycott those who benefited by his creations. Rather was he pleased that he had been first!

That year of 1906, sketchy as was our domestic menage, many visitors came to the Lodge annex, and Auntie let us spill over into the main house. Among the names in my journal I come upon our good friends the Granville-Shueys — Dr. Shuey was custodian of the welfare of Jack London’s troublesome teeth to the end of the patient’s life; Mr. Bamford; I. M. Griffin, the artist, a number of whose canvases, painted in the neighborhood, Jack purchased; Henry Meade Bland, of San José, at all times one of Jack’s most tireless biographers; Felix Peano, sculptor, in whose house, La Capriccioso, Jack had once lived; young Roy Nash, of whom “The People of the Abyss” had made a Socialist; Ernest Untermann, author, and translator of Karl Marx; the George Sterlings; different members of the talented family of Partingtons; George Wharton James, who charmed with his social qualities and music, and later published most readable articles upon his visit; Elwyn Hoffman, poet; Herman Whitaker; Xavier Martinez, artist and prince of bohemians “Sometimes I think,” Jack once remarked, “that George Sterling and Marty are the realest bohemians I have ever known!”; Maud Younger, settlement worker and philanthropist; and a long list beside.

Our amusements consisted in exploring, alone or with our guests, the infinite variety of the one hundred and twenty-nine acres of Jack’s “Beauty Ranch”; driving or riding to points in the valley — say Cooper’s Grove, a stately group of redwoods; or to Hooker’s Falls across in the eastern range; or to Santa Rosa, as when we drove Professor Edgar Larkin, of Mt. Lowe Observatory, to call upon Luther Burbank; or to the valley resorts to swim, for a change from Sonoma Creek, in the warm mineral tanks.

During the Moyer-Haywood trouble in Idaho, Jack was urger by The Examiner to go there and report proceedings in his own way; but he was too involved at home to spare the time. Nevertheless, he managed to sandwich in a rousing article, which was printed by the Socialist Voice, of Oakland.

All of which reads like the crowded year it was; yet it is but a sample of eleven surpassingly full years we were to live out together. In addition to what I have set down, Jack read numberless books of all sizes and titles, and we still found opportunity to share, aloud, H. G. Wells, de Maupassant, Gertrude Atherton, Sudermann, Phillpotts, Saleeby, Herbert Spencer, and countless others, including plays — among them Bernard Shaw’s, Clyde Fitch’s, Ibsen’s; and, above all, endless poetry. It is a curious jumble, I know; but Jack read rapaciously — both of the meatiest and the trashiest. He must know “what the other fellow is doing.”

One day, he received a letter from a bank in Billings, Montana, informing him that two checks bearing his signature had been returned from Chicago marked “No Funds.” It was an instance of the “doubles” who were fast coming into being. The nearest Jack had ever been to Billings was when, a few months previous, we had passed through on our westward way. Jack promptly forwarded to the bank his photograph and signature, and also an outside cover of the current Everybody’s Magazine, on which under a sort of “footprints-on-the-sands-of-time” illustration for “Before Adam” his autograph was reproduced. The Bank was finally convinced; but from all accounts the imposter had closely resembled Jack London, and the handwriting was not dissimilar.

This was, I think, the only time a “double” passed worthless checks; but several others worked the country incapacities more or less injurious to the original. One of them stirred up revolution in Mexico, long before 1914, at which time Jack London paid his first and last visit to that restless republic, as war correspondent with General Funston. Another winnowed Oklahoma and adjoining territory, and the celebrated "101 Ranch," for all they were worth in board and lodging and information. Still others led girls astray, and many the piteous letters, addressed to places where Jack had never set foot, or when the pair of us were on the other side of the world, begging restitution for anything from stolen virtue to diamonds. Jack tried to get in touch with these floating impersonators, promising safe departure if they would only come to the Ranch and entertain him with their methods. But even when his letters never returned, there were no replies. While we were honeymooning in Cuba, according to one side of a correspondence that came into Jack's possession, a spurious J. L. was carrying on an affair with a mother of several children in Sacramento, California.

On April 18, 1906, there came, in a sense, the "shock of our lives." One need hardly mention that it was the Great Earthquake, which, most notable of consequences, destroyed the "modern imperial city" of San Francisco as no other modern imperial city has been destroyed. If it had not been for this stunning disaster to the larger place, the ruin of our county seat, Santa Rosa, in which many lives were crushed out, would have commanded the attention and sympathy of the world. As it was, refugees from the Bay metropolis began presently to straggle up-country, only to find the pretty town prone in a scarcely laid dust of brick and mortar and ashes.

Jack's nocturnal habits of reading, writing, smoking, and coughing, or sudden shifts of posture (he could not move his smallest finger without springing alive from head to foot), not being exactly a remedy for my insomnia, we ordinarily occupied beds as far apart as possible. A few minutes before five, on the morning of the 18th, upstairs at Wake Robin, my eyes flew open inexplicably, and I wondered what had stirred me so early. I curled down for a morning nap, when suddenly the earth began to heave, with a sickening onrush of motion for an eternity of seconds. An abrupt pause, and then it seemed as if some great force laid hold of the globe and shook it like a Gargantuan rat. It was the longest half-minute I ever lived through.

Now, I am free to confess, I do not like earthquakes. Never, child and woman, had I liked earthquakes. But my mind had been made up long since that while I wasted time being afraid of them, less terrified or at any rate more observant persons were able to take in phenomena which I had missed. And, so help me, when the April 18 quake got under way, and though very lonely in the conviction that my end was approaching in leaps and bounds, I lay quite still, watching the tree-tops thrash crazily, as if all the winds of all quarters were at loggerheads. The sharp undulation stopping, Jack and I met our guests, Mr. and Mrs. Reimers, in the living-room, and we all had the same tale to relate — of watching, from our pillows, the possessed antics of the trees; only, all but myself had had a view of the trunks rather than the tops.

When Jack and I ran over to the barn still rented at the Fish Ranch, we found our saddle animals had broken their halters and were still quivering and skittish. Willie, the chore-boy, said the huge madrono tree near by had lain down on the ground and got up again — which was less lurid than many impressions to which we listened that weird day.

In half an hour after the shock, we were in our saddles, riding to the Ranch, from which height could be distinguished a mighty column of smoke in the direction of San Francisco, and another northward where lies Santa Rosa. In the immediate foreground at our feet a prodigious dust obscured the buildings of the State Home for the Feeble minded.

“Why, Mate Woman, “ Jack cried, his eyes big with surmise, “I shouldn’t wonder if San Francisco had sunk. That was some earthquake. We don’t know but the Atlantic may be washing up at the feet of the Rocky Mountains!”

Our beautiful barn — the shake had disrupted its nearly finished two-foot-thick stone walls, and to our horror revealed that the rascally Italian contractor from Sonoma, despite reasonable overseeing, had succeeded in rearing mere shells of rock, filling in between with debris of the flimsiest. Jack’s face was a study.

“Jerry-built,” he murmured, hurt in his voice, “and I told him the solid, honest thing I wanted — and did not question his price. What have I done to him, or anybody, that he should do this thing?”

He turned his back upon the swindle, for there were other things to see; and I could almost vouch that his wrecked property did not enter his head for the next several days any more than he would bother about a worrisome letter or problem until the moment came to dispose of it.

“And anyway,” he dismissed the subject as we turned down-mountain, “it’s lucky the heavy tile roof wasn’t already placed, and some poor devil sleeping under it!”

One day, weeks afterward, the Italian had the ill-considered "nerve" to call at "Jack's House." I remember that we were showing the work-room to the Winships. At the knock, Jack turned and recognized the contractor. Facing back to me, he said in a low, vibrating tone: Mate, will you attend to him? — send him away, as quickly as possible!" Never fear that I did not do that same. Once outside, I said to the man: "You must get out of here quick!" And when he started to whine a remonstrance, I repeated, with glance over-shoulder: "Quick! Get out! And don't ever come back!"

Back to breakfast, after reconnoitering the neighborhood as far as the State Home, where, through the perfect discipline, no lives had been sacrificed, we prepared to board the first train to Santa Rosa, hoping to find another to San Francisco in the afternoon. And the trains ran, though not on time, what of twisted rails and litter of fallen water-tanks along the roadway. Reports of the Great Fire and broken water-mains in San Francisco made us long to be in at the incredible disaster, so long as it had to be.

With no luggage except our smallest hand-bag, which we left with the restaurant cashier of the last ferry-boat permitted to land passengers that night, we started afoot up old Broadway, and all night roamed the city of hills, prey to feelings that cannot be described. That night proved our closest to realizing a dream that came now and again to Jack in sleep, that he and I were in at the finish of all things — standing or moving hand in hand through chaos to its brink, looking upon the rest of mankind in the process of dissolution.

Having located relatives I knew had been overtaken, and found them unharmed, Jack and I were free to follow our own will.

"And I'll never write about this for anybody," he declared, as we looked our last upon one or another familiar haunt, soon to be obliterated by the ravaging flames that drove us ever westward to safer points, on and on, in our ears the muffled detonations of dynamite, as one proud commercial palace after another sank on its steel knees, in the desperate attempt of the city fathers to stay the wholesale conflagration. And no water.

"No," Jack reiterated. "I'll never write a word about it. What use trying? One could only string big words together, and curse the futility of them."

One impinging picture of those fearful hours was where two mounted officers, alone of all the population, sat their high-crested horses at Kearney and Market Streets, equestrian statues facing the oncoming flames along

Kearney. Hours earlier, we had walked here, two of many; but now the district was abandoned to destruction that could not be retarded.

In my eyes there abides the face of a stricken man, perhaps a fireman, whom we saw carried into a lofty doorway in Union Square. His back had been broken, and as the stretcher bore him past, out of a handsome, ashen young face, the dreadful darkening eyes looked right into mine. All the world was crashing about him and he, a broken thing, with death awaiting him inside the granite portals, gazed upon the last woman of his race that he was ever to see. Jack, with tender hand, drew me away.

Oh, the supreme ruth of desolation and pain, that night of fire and devastation! Yet the miracle persists, that one saw nothing but cheerful courtesy of one human to another. And I was to learn more of my mate s cool judgment in crises. Now and again it seemed as if we would surely be trapped in some square, where the fourth side had started to burn. But he had always, and accurately, sensed and chosen the moment and the way out, when we should have seen all we could risk.

Toward morning, finding ourselves in the entryway of a corner house on "Nob Hill" very near the partially-erected and already-ignited Hotel Fairmont, Jack fell into a doze; but I was unable to still the tingling of heart and nerves long enough to drop off even from exhaustion. Presently a man mounted the steps and inserted a key in the lock. Seeing Jack and myself on the top tread — he had had to pick his way through a cluster of Italians and Chinamen on the lower ones — something impelled him to invite us in. It was a luxurious interior, containing the treasures of years. His name was Ferine, the man said, and he did not learn ours. Suddenly, midway of showing us about, he asked me to try the piano, and laid bare the keys. I hesitated — it seemed almost a cruel thing to do, with annihilation of his home so very near. But Jack's whispered "Do it for him — it's the last time he'll ever hear it," sent me to the instrument. The first few touches were enough and too much for Mr. Ferine, however, and he made a restraining gesture. If he ever reads this book, I want him to know that none in poor racked San Francisco that week was more sorry for him than we.

We must have tramped forty miles that night. Jack's feet blistered, my ankles were become almost useless, when next day we sat on a convenient garbage can at Seventh and Broadway, Oakland, waiting for a street car out Telegraph Avenue. A pretty young woman accosted the dilapidated pair we made, with information that food and shelter would be supplied us refugees at such-and-such address, and laughed pleasedly when we thanked her and said we had an uninjured place of our own. Oakland had suffered comparatively little from the quake, and there were few fires. Jack of course had ascertained, before we went to San Francisco, that his mother and his children were safe and sound, with roofs over their heads.

In Glen Ellen once more, we were met with frantic telegrams from Collier's Weekly, asking for twenty-five hundred words, by wire, descriptive of San Francisco. Jack, still averse to undertake the compressing of his impressions, or, as he had said, writing at all on the subject, yet considered his now aggravated money-need, with the yacht and barn-rebuilding in view. And Collier's had offered him twenty-five cents a word by far the best figure he had yet received. It was, I may as well note here, the highest he ever obtained.

Shaking his bonny shoulders free of all else, that very day he jumped into the twenty-five hundred word article. Hot from his hand I snatched the scribbled sheets, and swiftly typed them. Our team-work soon delivered the story over the wires, and "just for luck" Jack mailed the manuscript simultaneously. Followed wild daily messages from Collier's for a week to come: "Why doesn't your story arrive?" "Must have your story immediately," and, latest, "Holding presses at enormous expense. What is the matter? Must have story for May Fifth number."

It seems that the telegraph companies were able to get service through to the Pacific Coast, but not the reverse. The posted manuscript was received in the nick of time, while the wired one straggled along subsequently to the other's appearance in the May 5th issue.

Jack, it is only fair to record, entertained the poorest opinion of his description. It's the best stagger I can make at an impossible thing," is the way he put it. And here is an excerpt from a letter to George Sterling, dated May 31:

"Hopper's article in Everybody's is great. Best story of the Quake I've seen. My congratulations to him."

Fifteen days after the Earthquake, we treated ourselves to a two-weeks' holiday. Jack bestrode Ban. Belle, occupied with maternal prospects, I passed by in favor of the rabbity Fleet. Hatless, with toilet accessories and reading matter stowed in saddle-bags behind our Australian saddles, we set out northerly to see what the quake had wreaked upon rural California. At this and that resort, we would feel one or another of the many lighter temblors that followed the big shake, marking the subsidence of the “Fault” that is supposed to enter from the sea-bed at Fort Bragg, and zigzag southeasterly across the State.

Jack, his rumpled poll sun-burned yellow, was a brave and lovesome sight on his merry steed, whose burnished chestnut coat threw out lilac gleams as the satiny muscles moved in the sunlight. The rider threw himself with vim into our little adventure. He was never tired exploring with me the nooks of Sonoma County, where Belle and I had been familiar figures before he came to dwell with us. And we always found so many common topics to discuss, and parallels in our lives. Why, old man Tarwater, immortalized in one of the very last stories Jack ever wrote (“Like Argus of the Olden Times,” published in 1919 in volume entitled “The Red One”), had been the subject of one of my Aunt’s newspaper articles. I had accompanied her, years before Jack met Tarwater in Klondike, on a pilgrimage to his mountain cabin, and sketched that abode self for an illustration. And there were our teachers in Oakland, Mrs. Harriet J. Lee and her daughter Elsie we had both sat under these charming women, Jack in High School, and I in Sunday school at Plymouth Avenue Church on Thirty-fourth Street. It was deliciously preposterous, this lining up of our mutual experiences.

Not a tap of work did we perform on this real vacation. There is ample material in my brain for a readable book, in that idyllic journey through one of California’s most attractive regions, unadvertised and undreamed to the casual tourist. Although I may not relate the details, still, for the guidance of any whose interest in Jack London’s mazy trail might lead them into these western fastnesses of great beauty and geological interest, I present the route our nimble horses bore us:

From Glen Ellen, by Rincon Valley road, through Petrified Forest, to Calistoga, in Napa Valley. Calistoga to The Geysers. Thence to Lakeport, on Clear Lake — a little Geneva — by way of Highland Springs. We sailed on Clear Lake.

Lakeport to Ukiah, via Laurel Dell, Blue Lakes. Ukiah to Willitts. Through grandeurs of mountain and redwood forest, to logging camp “Alpine.” Thence to Fort Bragg, on the Coast.

From Fort Bragg, down the coast, sleeping at lumber villages. Navarro, Albion, Greenwood. Thence to Boonville, with luncheon at Philo. Philo to

Cloverdale; thence to Burke's Sanitarium. Thence to Santa Rosa, and on down to Glen Ellen.

Jack, consciously or unconsciously, had studied the brain-processes of animals since the days of his little dog Rollo in Oakland. On this long ride, the difference, which is all the difference in the world, which he noticed between Fleet and Ban on our return, was that one was tired and it, and the other, Thoroughbred, keyed to the utter most step, was tired and did not know it. But when Jack, after unsaddling, had placed an extra large measure of oats before the splendid creature, the velvet nozzle went down with a great, blowing sigh. Brown Wolf, wriggling prodigiously, came to bury dumb, eloquent head between his idolized master's knees, after which, with a shake of rolling fur hide, he went to poke his nose into Ban's fodder, taking a generous mouthful, to our astonishment and the horse's snorting disapproval. Then, our fingers interlaced, we two dusty wayfarers trudged across to Wake Robin, happier and richer by another united experience.

Near the end of the month, during our absence of two days in Oakland to attend a rousing Euskin Club dinner in Jack's honor, Willie one night left Ban out in the Fish Ranch pasture, where he became entangled in a loose strand of that accursed invention, barbed wire, which had eluded our vigilance. Hour upon hour, the poor, helpless thing sawed one of his beautiful, fleet hind legs to the bone. It was a sad homecoming to us, and in consultation beside our drooping, ruined pet we decided he must die. Jack said, his eyes dark with sorrow:

"Wiget, I'll do it if I have to; but I don't want to. If you don't mind too much . . ." And Wiget had to avert his face as he replied: "I'll do it for you folks."

In a hammock at the Lodge we sat knowing we could not fail to hear the shot that would be the ending of our willing and beloved friend. Jack had carefully instructed his man to deposit the charge in the middle of the forehead, where cross-lines drawn from ears to eyes would intersect. When the sound of the shot rang across the waiting stillness, we wept unrestrained and unabashed in each other's arms. All I could think of to solace Jack was to offer him the gift of my own new filly, Sonoma Maid, granddaughter of the great Morella, which Belle, in the fullness of her time and in our absence, had presented to me. I remember, once, on a steamer voyage, that a fine horse injured during a rough night had to be killed. A lamentable botch was made of the execution, and I never saw Jack London worse upset than he was over the reports of the animal's inexcusably hard death. "If they'd only learn how to do a thing like that in the right way!" he exclaimed, thrashing about in his chair in a manner he had when suffering mentally.

A preverted order of humaneness, often displayed by unthinking persons, always came in for harsh language from Jack. "Men who brag of being too tender-hearted to kill an aged and suffering animal, or a hopelessly-wounded or sick one," he would rave," — I don't know anything too bad for them. Why don't people think!" And again: "The only way to kill a cat is to chop off its head," he preached. "Death is instantaneous, when the spinal cord is severed. Drowning, and suffocation by chloroform, are two of the cruelest methods you can use on a cat. The other way means instantaneous death, with no terrors of strangulation. Some people think I'm brutal to advise this, but the thing is self-evident oh, — what's the use!" he would surrender in disgust. In illustration of indirect brutality, he told me of something he had done during a short camping expedition, in 1904, with "The Crowd," on the deserted Kendall Ranch in Grizzly Canyon, near Moraga Valley.

The last tenants had left some time previously, and were too sensitive and kind-hearted to lay away the family dog, a large collie, I think Jack said, who was tottering, from starvation, too old to hunt for himself. "Nobody else wanted the job of shooting him," Jack went on, "and it was up to me. You know how I love to kill things," he interpolated with a wry mouth. "I got the shotgun ready, and went toward that poor dog, and he crouched when he saw me coming. God! no one will ever know how I shrank from that self-imposed task. That dog knew — his poor old eyes looked straight into mine and did not waver but wledge of death was in them. He'd been out with a gun too much in his life not to know what it meant when one was aimed at a living creature. . . . Oh, yes, I got it done — first charge . . . He never moved after he dropped."

Jack was capable of such adorable ways. One afternoon, that summer of 1906, he and I, with Manyoungi's help were sorting over old possessions, making ready long in advance for our voyage. The Korean came upon my old French doll, an adult-appearing, jointed model with six inches of "real" hair. Lifting it tenderly, reverence in his handsome olive face, the boy carried it to Jack, who was talking to himself amidst a tumbled mountain of dusty books he invariably talked and hummed when doing work of this kind or filing letters. And Jack, with a dewy look in his great eyes, held out both grimy hands for the relic, and kissed it! The act was devoid of affectation — just a spontaneous expression of all the complication of his love. “The little woman’s doll!” was all he said, returning to his work with an odd smile deepening the pictured corners” of his mouth. . . . Once, “after long grief and pain, in rare abandon he had pressed those lips to the hem of my garment.

Even from so brief an absence as the riding jaunt, our duties had piled up, and we were rushing all hours except for the swimming, rides to the Ranch, the campfire gatherings, moonlight romps and games, with boxing, fencing, kiting, and what not, in the camps of the Connings, the Selbys, the Brecks, the Reynolds, and my own summering families.

Blowing soap-bubbles was popular for a time, and certain long-stemmed Korean pipes, among Jack’s “loot” from the orient, came into novel requisition. There were debates of evenings in the Lodge, to which the older campers were invited, in which the materialist monist, Jack London, was somewhat unwillingly pitted against Mr. Edward B. Payne, a far older man whom Jack styled “metaphysician.” I should have said attempted debate, for the same familiar stumbling-block was encountered that had disrupted earlier discussions whenever Jack and the metaphysicians locked horns: Jack could not and would not accept the premise offered; and after several futile efforts of the instigators of the meetings, to ease him surreptitiously over the first stages of the argument, the debates were discontinued.

“Edward’s got a beautiful mind, and he’s the most logical rhetorician I ever met in my whole life,” Jack would defend himself; “but when, in his reasoning, he comes to the enchanted bridge he has tried to build, on which I am supposed to reject my solid foundation and step across to his metaphysical one, I revolt.” Martin Luther’s “Here I stand. I can do no otherwise, so help me God! Amen!” was no less firm than Jack London’s “I can’t help it. I am so made. I can’t see it any other way. I’ve got to keep my feet on the concrete.”

I have seen him quite white with distress that he had to spoil a party by depriving guests of the spectacle of himself routed from his materialistic terra firma and driven upon the impalpable ground of the metaphysicians with their, to him, “colossal evasions of mundane interpretations,” as our friend Mary Wilshire puts it. “Each of you,” he said, “goes into his own consciousness to explain anything and everything.” Again, “The metaphysician explains the universe by himself, the scientist explains himself by the universe.” Jack believed that the keenest and most irresistible impulses toward self-preservation are shown by what he termed metaphysicians. “Take the earthquake, for instance,” he would rail. “You and I, and an infidel artist, remained in our beds until well after the shock. And when we emerged, where did we find the metaphysicians of the household? — Out of doors, in unseemly attire, and unable to tell how they got there, but, from circumstantial evidence, having arrived on the unstable earth by way of a first-story window!”

There were swimming visits exchanged that year with our neighbors the Kudolf Spreckelses and a bevy of Mrs. Spreckels’s sisters, the Misses Joliffe; and once we went to Napa to see the Winships. But Jack, as a rule, was not fond of visiting, and occasionally was heard to remark that the Winships and the Sterlings were practically the only friends to whose houses he went, and these at wide intervals. He preferred, in short, to entertain rather than to be entertained.

At times, but rarely, he would treat himself to a holiday, perhaps to read aloud a book that had claimed him for the moment, or to take some special jaunt. But the fingers of one hand could easily tally the days when he failed to deliver ten pages of hand-written manuscript to my typewriter desk. It was my custom to have his previous day’s installment, typed and words counted, in readiness upon his table by nine. He loved to read me his morning’s work — and even in the writing of it, if I happened to pass by, would interrupt himself to let me share what he had done. The first writing day, in all our days, that this did not happen, was the first day upon which he wrote no more.

Evidently this life of closely-wedged activities was quite to my taste, for at the end of one date s diary-items I see: “Happy as an angel!” This may, however, have been when I had won from Jack some praise or especial appreciation; but he was wont ruefully to utter that my finest heights of bliss were attained when I had beaten him at cards (which was seldom enough to justify chortling), or won a bet upon the weather ranging anywhere from ten cents to ten dollars.

Another and sweeter source of happiness to me would be when I had played an hour for him while he sat or reclined, one hand over his eyes, dreaming upon a couch in Auntie’s cool living-room. The music he then oftenest asked for was Arthur Footers Rubaiyat Suite, and much of

Macdowell — ”The Eagle” and “Sea Pieces” remaining favorites. His disposition those days was almost always equable, and I learned to circumvent the blues he had once forewarned he might be subject to upon the day of completing a long manuscript. On June 7, he laid down his ink-pencil for the last time on “Before Adam,” first writing in my count of 40,863 words. But there was little or no depression to follow. I had seen to that, by planning a string of overlapping engagements for the day, which left him no moment for relaxing until sleep-time was at hand. Oh, no — never did I cheat myself into believing that he did not see through my machinations; rather, did he coöperate — but no word jarred the moment’s harmony.

Have I mentioned that he was fond of ordering advertised articles? “And if one out often proves a real find, I am repaid for my time and money!” was his argument. Many were the packages, great and small, that enlivened our morning mail during preparation for the small-boat voyage; for whether emanating from “ad” or catalogue, Jack meant to leave nothing behind that would contribute to the venture’s success. Fishing tackle of the most alluring; numberless strings of beads, and loose beads by the gross, of all sizes and hues to gladden savage hearts that beat under the Southern Cross; gay neckerchiefs and calicoes and ribbons — nothing was omitted. And the fun we, like veriest children, had opening our “Christmas packages” from day to day, can best be imagined.

Early in our comradeship I had noted Jack’s habit of looking ahead, not back. “Leave retrospect to old men and women. The world is all before me now,” was his pose toward the dead past. While this remained a characteristic, the general normal happiness of his new environment rendered him less averse to dwelling upon his yesterdays. As our united yesterdays lengthened in our shadow, he became as fondly addicted as I to reminiscence of them.

Before me, as I write with his own pen, lies a clipping referring to “The Iron Heel,” which begins: “In one of Jack London’s less important works, there was a description of a pitched battle in Chicago, in the near future, by way of quelling what would now be called a Bolshevist revolution.” And the commentator adds: “Now the battle is going on in Berlin.” Beside the clipping reposes a letter to me from a sociologist, from which I quote as refutation of the other’s phrase, “less important works”:

"The earlier portion of the book is the most impressive, the most unanswerable impeachment of the capitalist system to be found in all the voluminous sociological literature of our times."

And I feel free to quote Mr. George P. Brett, President of The Macmillan Company, who published the book:

"I consider 'The Iron Heel' the greatest compendium of Socialism ever written."

From week to week, in these stirring days of reconstruction following the World War, there come to me, alone upon Jack London's mountainside, appreciations from all classes concerning "The Iron Heel," once hated and derided and feared by the factions most opposed to one another. Jack had gone to work upon it that midsummer of 1906, placing some of its scenes round-about "the sweet land" in which he had elected to dwell. When the manuscript later failed to find place in any paying magazine, and saw book-covers, in 1907 during the "panic," mainly because the publishers held a blanket contract bearing Jack London's sprawling signature, the poor author said regretfully one day in Hawaii:

"I thought it would be timely, that book; but they're all afraid of it, Mate Woman." He pointed to letters just received from the States: "See: the socialists, even my own crowd, have thrown me down — they decry it as a lugubrious prophecy; and the other camp, of course, revile it as they revile everything socialistic they possibly can of mine.

"But," he broke in heatedly upon his reverie, "I didn't write the thing as a prophecy at all. I really don't think these things are going to happen in the United States. I believe the increasing socialist vote will prevent — hope for it, anyhow. But I will say that I sent out, in 'The Iron Heel,' a warning of what I think might happen if they don't look to their votes. That's all."

In the copy he gave me is written: "We that have been what we've been. . . . We that have seen what we've seen — we may not see these particular things come to pass, but certain it is that we shall see big things of some sort come to pass."

In the light of present events, the story would seem to have been more than roughly prophetic; and the end, mayhap, is not yet.

The phrase "well-balanced radicals" came to be a pet aversion of Jack's for the rest of his life. For, outside of the capitalist class, it was the self-named "well-balanced radicals," who would have none of his "Iron Heel."

Yet it was one of these, after Jack London's death, who wrote me: "The earlier portion of the book is the most impressive, the most unanswerable impeachment of the capitalist system to be found in all the voluminous socio logical literature of our times. I have read many severe criticisms of capitalist procedure, but this cuts deeper and cleaner than they all."

"The Iron Heel," once finished and started on its round of the magazines, Jack's next contemplated book was a group of tramping episodes, brought out serially as "My Life in the Underworld," and, in book-form, "The Road."

Two paragraphs from Jack's letters to George Sterling, of dates February 17, 1908, and March 3, 1909, throw illumination upon his open attitude toward his past:

"I can't get a line on why you wish I hadn't written 'The Road,'" he challenges. "It is all true. It is what I am, what I have done, and it is part of the process by which I have become. Is it a lingering taint of the bourgeois in you that makes you object? Is it because of my shamelessness! For having done things in which I saw or see no shame! Do tell me."

And this:

"Your point about "The Road," namely that it 'gave the mob a mop to bang' me with. What of it? I don't care for the mob. It can't hurt me. One word of censure or disapproval from you would hurt me a few million myriads of billions times more than all the sum total the mob would inflict on me in one hundred and forty-seven lifetimes. I thank the Lord I don't live for the mob."

This seems the place to point Jack's intolerance of restricted or anachronistic vision, by quoting further from letters to Sterling. The latter sat between the horns of a dilemma with regard to his two closest friends — Jack London and Ambrose Bierce, who were as far apart as the poles in their philosophies. Because Jack had experienced certain phases of living which were untenable to the satirist's niceties, the latter seemed entirely to discount the younger author as one entitled to consideration in the brotherhood of polite society. In short, after he had read "The Road," Mr. Bierce was emphatic in his opinion concerning what summary disposal should be made of Jack. But Jack, with a generosity and lack of bitterness which would have well become the elder man, wrote Sterling:

"For heaven's sake don't you quarrel with Ambrose about me. He's too splendid a man to be diminished because he has lacked access to a later generation of science. He crystallized before you and I were born, and it is too magnificent a crystallization to quarrel with." Earlier letters to Sterling amplify Jack's contention, and his own up-to-the-mark step with the marching world:

"If Hillquit and Hunter didn't put it all over Bierce — I'll quit thinking at all. Bierce's clever pessimism was nowhere against their science. He proved himself rudderless, compassless, and chartless. Bierce doesn't shine in a face to face battle with socialists. He's beat at long range slinging ink. He was groggy at the drop of the hat, and before they got done with him was looking anxiously around and wondering why the gong didn't ring. All he did was to back and fill and potter around, dogmatize and contradict himself. When they cornered him, he went off on another tack, wherefore they'd overtake him and lambaste him again. Bierce, with biological and sociological concepts that crystallized in the fervant heat of pessimism a generation ago, was — well, pathetic. And more pathetic still, he doesn't know it."

"I wouldn't care to lock horns with Bierce," is a later reference. "He stopped growing a generation ago. Of course, he keeps up with the newspapers, but his criteria crystallized 30 odd years ago. Had he been born a generation later he'd have been a socialist, and, more likely, an anarchist. He never reads books that aren't something like a hundred years old, and he glories in the fact!"

The latest remarks I find, in the same correspondence, are these written from Hilo, Hawaii, in July of 1907:

The quotes from Ambrose were great. What a pen he wields. Too bad he hasn't a better philosophic foundation."

SNARK VOYAGE

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXX End 1906; 1907-8-9

THE Great Earthquake proved very expensive to Jack London. Primarily because of it, the yacht-building, which he had calculated would cost seven thousand dollars, or at most ten, incredibly squandered some thirty thousand. The iron keel was to have been run on the very evening of the Earthquake, April 18. Following that event (which we of California are averse to term an “Act of God,” much less one of a beneficent Providence), what Jack should have done, too late he came to see, was to look around for a ready-built hull. At almost any time before the World War, fine deep-water yachts could be picked up on the Atlantic sea board at a tithe of their original cost. In future years, after the abandonment of our voyage, Jack pored over many a blue-print received from agents in the east, of well-appointed vessels that could be had for mere songs.

No man born of woman could forecast the insurmountable anarchy that the post-quake and fire-havoc wrought in building conditions. I shall leave it to the reader to guess at the inwardness of our spirit-trial, so lightly sketched in the first article (“The Inconceivable and Monstrous”) of the nineteen, including Foreward and Backword, that compose Jack London’s “The Cruise of the Snark.” This collection relates, in more or less disconnected fashion, a few of the main happenings and observations incident to the cruise. My own book, I wish to mention here, “The Log of the Snark,” also published by The Macmillan Company, gives, as its name implies, the consecutive journal from the day before we sailed from San Francisco until we returned to California. There is one exception to the foregoing statement. My two-years’ diary being too protracted for one volume, the five-months experiences ashore in the Hawaiian Islands, together with the general details of our 1915 and 1916 visits, form a bulky book by themselves, which also appears under the Macmillan imprint. This volume I have revised and brought up to date for a new edition in 1921. Jack, aside from his incomplete Snark record, as above, devoted himself to fiction, which I name below, inspired by the Pacific and its enchanting isles, irrespective of other books in which incidents from his South Sea lore appear, such as “Michael Brother of Jerry,” “Martin Eden,” “The Red One,” and others. Here are the strictly tropical ones:

“Adventure,” novel, 1911.

“South Sea Tales,” 1911.

“The House of Pride,” 1912.

“A Son of the Sun,” 1912.

“Jerry of the Islands,” 1918.

The opening adjuration in “The Inconceivable and Monstrous” sounds the note adhered to by Jack throughout the construction and manning of the little ship that was, we fondly believed, to be our home for indefinite years of adventure. “Spare no expense” was the slogan he impressed upon his lieutenant, Roscoe. And no matter what exasperation followed, “gipsy heart to gipsy heart,” undaunted Jack and I traced our route upon a sizable world-globe bought for our future library.

In the end, allowing for all the heartbreaking wastage and plain graft that sent the yacht, half a year late, an unfinished, internal wreck upon the high seas to Honolulu, still was she, with her sturdy sticks and her ribs of oak, pronounced by that master-small-boat-sailor, Jack London, the strongest vessel of her proportions ever launched — “Stronger, even, I tell you,” he held, “than the Goya, that made the Northwest Passage.”

Be it known, once and for all, this point having been airily misrepresented for years, that every human being of the Snark’s complement of seven, except Jack London and myself, who worked to pay them — every soul, I say, was drawing a salary for work performed or unperformed during that crazy traverse of 2200 miles to Honolulu. From every class of society over the wide world we thought to circumnavigate — doctors, lawyers, beggarmen, chiefs, thieves, multimillionaires, sailors single and in crews, poets, historians, geologists, painters, doctors of divinity — in short, men, women and children of every color and occupation, wrote or telegraphed or paid us calls, imploring to sail on any terms, or none. They even appealed for the privilege of paying lavishly for the privilege. One there was who wrote: “I can assure you that I am eminently respectable, but find other respectable people tiresome.” Since he expressed an overwhelming desire to be of our party, we could not but wonder exactly what he meant!

But Jack was no fool. Whosoever joined the Snark should do so upon a stated salary, and there could be no recriminations. Inconceivably and monstrously, there were recriminations, despite the precautionary measures. When all but one of our first company returned to San Francisco before we had left Hawaii for the equator, the mendacious papers flashed reports that there had been violence following disagreements during the first lap of the cruise. Jack London his own Sea Wolf, was the implication, of course; and what could Jack do but grind his teeth, and then laugh: “They can all go to blazes! You and I know better; and what really counts is you and me!”

Disagreements there had been — but I employ the wrong word; for it was an agreement, quietly arrived at between Jack and his sailing master before Honolulu was sighted, that the latter should go home at his leisure from that port. A younger member of the party decided to return to college; while our Japanese cabin boy, Tochigi, failed to conquer an incorrigible seasickness. So these two, also, went back to California.

It all boils down to the fact, well-established in Jack’s mind and my own from our incredulous observations of lack of discipline and neglect of property — ”appalled and bewildered” my diary states our emotions that those who deserted the Snark merely discovered they had been mistaken in thinking sea-adventure was what their natures craved. The details of certain unfairness to Jack that were so blindly practised, I omit. However inclined to garrulousness I may be on Jack’s behalf, I do want to be fair enough to all of them in their blindness, largely to lay the blame, as already hinted, to the chaotic circumstances under which the boat was built. This, in the last analysis, had worn out the patience, the grit, and the indubitably feeble adventure-lust that had been the reason for their engaging in the enterprise.

I think the difference between them and ourselves was that Jack and I knew what we wanted, and in unison over took it in spite of colossal odds from all sides; while the others simply had mistaken their desires. The secret of finding our rainbows ends always, I am sure, lay first and last in our knowledge of what we wanted. The longest search never palled, because the search was an end in itself. Of one of our men, who had failed to fill even the berth of a preceding failure, Jack said: “He caught a glimpse, in some metallic, cog-like way, of the spirit of Adventure, and he thought to woo her — Adventure, who must be served whole-souled and single-hearted and with the long patience that is so terrible that very few are capable of it.”

But I am ahead of my narrative:

Early in the year, with the framework of the yacht just begun, Jack had written to a magazine the letter given be-low, outlining the purposed voyage and offering a chance at the story of the cruise.

Here let me remark that a leading reason for the inclusion of this correspondence is to emphasize the exact proposition which Jack London made. This, in turn, because, following his death, one journalist, in an otherwise gracious and well-meaning article, created, unintentionally I wish to believe, a misapprehension in the minds of his many readers as to happenings in connection with the arrangement for the boat-articles. During a call with which this writer honored the Jack London Ranch after Jack's passing, I threatened that I should, in all friendliness, go after him in the open when I should write this book; and he, with entire good-nature, gave me his blessing to "go to it and do the worst."

Here is the opening letter. The italics are mine, guided by marginal markings of Jack's:

"Feb. 18/06.

"Dear — — :

The keel is laid. The boat is to be 45 feet long. It would have been a little bit shorter had I not found it impossible to squeeze in a bathroom otherwise. I sail in October. Hawaii is the first port of call; and from there we shall wander through the South Seas, Samoa, Tasmania, New Zealand, Australia, New Guinea, and up through the Philippines to Japan. Then Korea and China, and on down to India, Red Sea, Mediterranean, Black Sea and Baltic, and on across the Atlantic to New York, and then around the Horn to San Francisco. . . . I shall certainly put in a winter in St. Petersburg, and the chances are that I shall go up the Danube from the Black Sea to Vienna, and there isn't a European country in which I shall not spend from one to several months. This leisurely fashion will obtain throughout the whole trip. I shall not be in a rush; in fact, I calculate seven (7) years at least will be taken up by the trip.

"This boat is to be sailed by one friend and myself. There are no sailors. My wife accompanies me. Of course, I'll take a cook along, and a cabin boy; but these will be Asiatics, and will have no part in the sailorizing. [The ultimate personnel of the crew was rearranged.] The rig of the boat will be a compromise between a yawl and a schooner. It will be what is called the ketch-rig the same rig that is used by the English fishing-boats on the Dogger Bank.

Shall, however, have a small engine on board to be used only in case of emergency, such as in bad water among reefs and shoals, where a sudden calm in a fast current leaves a sailing-boat helpless. Also, this engine is to be used for another purpose. When I strike a country, say Egypt or France, I'll go up the Nile or the Seine by having the mast taken out, and under power of the engine. I shall do this a great deal in the different countries, travel inland and live on board the boat at the same time. There is no reason at all why I shouldn't in this fashion come up to Paris, and moor alongside the Latin Quarter, with a bow-line out to Notre Dame and a stern-line fast to the Morgue.

Now to business. I shall be gone a long time on this trip. No magazine can print all I have to write about it. On the other hand, it cannot be imagined that I shall write 50,000 words on the whole seven years, and then quit. As it is, the subject matter of the trip divides itself up so that there will be no clash whatever between any several publications that may be handling my stuff. For instance, here are three big natural, unconflicting divisions: news, industrial, and political articles on the various countries for newspapers; fiction; and finally, the trip itself.

"Now the question arises, if you take the trip itself (which will be the cream), how much space will The — — be able to give me? In this connection I may state that McClure's and Outing are after me; and, as I am throwing my life, seven years of my time, my earning-power as a writer of fiction, and a lot of money, into the enterprise, it behooves me to keep a sharp lookout on how expenses, etc., are to be met. And one important factor in this connection that I must consider, is that of space.

"And while I am on this matter of space, I may as well say that it is granted, always, that I deliver the goods. Of course, if my articles turn out to be mushy and inane, why I should not expect any magazine to continue publishing them. I believe too much in fair play to be a good business man, and if my work be rotten, I'd be the last fellow in the world to bind any editor to publish it. On the other hand, I have a tremendous confidence, based upon all kinds of work I have already done, that I can deliver the goods. Anybody doubting this has but to read "The People of the Abyss" to find the graphic, reportorial way I have of handling things. . . .

"While on this matter of space, I may also state that it is not so much the point of how large the space is in a given number of magazine, but how long a time the story of the trip can run in the magazine.

Here he inserts a paragraph concerning his abilities to furnish good photographic illustrations. And he goes on:

". . . We expect lots of action, and my strong point as a writer is that I am a writer of action — see all my short stories, for instance. Another point is, that while I am a writer, I am also a sailor . . . ; and a still further point is, that I am an acknowledged and successful writer of sea-matter; see 'The Sea Wolf,' 'The Cruise of the Dazzler,' and 'Stories of the Fish Patrol. . . .'

". . . Now comes the item of pay. In the first place, here is a traveler-correspondent, and traveler-correspondents are usually expensive, because their traveling expenses are paid by their employers. But in my case I'd pay my own traveling expenses. I build my boat, I outfit my boat, and I run my boat. . . . So, in whatever conclusion we arrive at, it must be stipulated that I receive in advance, in the course of the building of the boat, say $3000.00."

The editor stated his willingness to make the advance; and Jack shot back, "All right. We sail October 1," ending the letter, "I'm going to turn out some cracker jack stuff on this trip!"

April 3, 1906, is the date of Jack's agreement to "furnish The — — Magazine a series of exclusive articles descriptive of my voyage in my sailboat, which voyage is to extend, if possible, around the world." The number of contributions, he stipulated, was not to exceed ten unless more were ordered. Jack agreed to supply photographs.

Meanwhile, he had got under way a proposal to furnish land-articles, say upon domestic customs of native peoples, for a woman's magazine in the east — this in line with remarks which I have underscored in letter above quoted.

Came the Earthquake, and on May 16, he wrote: "You ask for my picture alongside the hull. There ain't no hull. The iron keel, wooden keel, and stem and a few ribs, are standing, and so they have been standing for some time. I have not been near the boat yet, and do not expect to go until it is practically finished. I am too busy." When the building had been resumed, Jack put my uncle, who had been for himself an enthusiastic boat-builder in his time, and was to be sailing-master, upon a salary to superintend the construction.

In July I find this from Jack to the first magazine:

"You will have to defer my opening article until the November number. I have finally succumbed to the California earthquake. I find it impossible to get a decent engine this side of New York, and the consequent delay throws me back a full month. I shall sail November 1, instead of October 1." Later he wrote: "This damned earthquake is just beginning to show up the delays it caused. There is scarcely a thing we want that we can buy in the local market." Then, "We are going to call her the Snark," he announced his final choice of a name for the "beautiful elliptical stern." His reason was that he could think of no other name that suited, and his friends, with bright suggestions of "The Call of the Wild," "The Sea Wolf" and eke "The Game," had worn him out. He even put it as a threat to one and all, that if nothing less silly were forthcoming, Snark she should be — this snappy title being chosen from Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark."

"I never thought about naming the boat after your magazine," he replied to the editor s suggestion. "The only objection to that name is, that boats, like horses and dogs, should have names of one syllable. Good, sharp, strong names, that can never be misheard. There's only one thing that would make me change the name Snark to that of your magazine, namely, the presentation of the Snark to me as an out-and-out present. She is costing me $10,000, and by golly, it would be worth $10,000 worth of advertising to the magazine. In return for such a present," (and I can hear Jack's titter as he dictated the outrage to me), "not only would I put up with the five-syllable name, but 'Magazine' to be appended. That would make eight syllables. Why, I'd even take subscriptions and advertisements for the magazine as I went along!"

In September the editor was succeeded by another, and I find an amusing item in his first letter to Jack: "The correction you ask to be made has been attended to and you may rest easy in the assurance that 'Roscoe' will not be misrepresented but will be placed in his true light as a 'follower of the science, though not the religion, of one Cyrus R. Teed.'" For our sailing-master, be it known, firmly believed in the Teed cellular cosmogany, and that he was to experience the Snark voyage on the inner skin of the planet.

Glancing over these letters, I discover that Jack had raised his fiction rate to fifteen cents a word to the magazines, and his story, "Just Meat," (book published in "When God Laughs"), was being discussed on this basis.

There fell more trouble. The editors of the two magazines each tried to "grab the whole show" in their advance advertising of their totally different

Snark material, and Jack, indignant with both for accusing him of bad faith, entirely clear in his own head and in his two unconflicting contracts, was made the sufferer. His retaliation is in plain and uncompromising terms. After treating the first editor to a few of his opinions of magazine offices, he quotes verbatim from his contract with the woman's magazine: "These articles are to be upon home life and social conditions in a broad sense of the term, etc., etc."

"Speaking now in connection with contents of foregoing paragraph," he enlarges, "I want to know what in hell you think 35,000 words will cover! Do you think 35,000 words will cover a tithe of the boat-trip itself, much less all the things I expect to do and see in the course of seven years! . . . Don't you think I've got a kick coming for the way you have advertised me as going around the world for The — — ? . . . hell, everybody thinks you are building my boat for me, and paying all my expenses, and giving me a princely salary on top of it . . . 35,000 words at 10 cents a word means $3500.00 and the initial cost of my boat is running past the $12,000.00 mark, to say nothing of expenses of running said boat. . . . Those are the figures up to date, and they're still going up. San Francisco is mad. Prices have climbed out of sight. I pay $200 for a bit of iron work on the boat, that should cost $40.00. Everything is in this order. The outlook is now, that I shall not sail before January. Weeks go by without a tap of work being done on the boat. Can't get the men. All my stuff is coming from the east because the earthquake destroyed the local market; and freight is congested."

On November 1, 1906, Jack wrote again: "Yes, Mr. — — [the new editor's predecessor] did write me upon the matter of distributing my cabbages in several baskets, and I must confess that he got me rather hot in the collar, what of the sized-basket he had furnished me and thought would hold all my cabbages — the crop of seven years in a 35,000-word basket! I am inclosing you a copy of the letter I sent him. . . . Since writing this, I wrote him another calling the turn on him for doing just what Mr. [the editor of the woman's magazine] had done, namely, claiming everything in sight so far as my seven-years voyage is concerned. Your periodical said that practically my total output would go to it, concerning lands, people, etc., that I would see. The mental processes of editors are beyond me. I fought with Mr. — — for 35,000 words, and couldn't get it out of him."

When the Christmas number of the magazine that was to have the story of the voyage came out, containing the first of his boat-articles, Jack let loose his "long wolf-howl" upon the liberties that had been taken with his copy. "Any tyro can cut a manuscript," he storms, "and feel that he is a co-creator with the author. But it's hell on the author. Not one man in a million, including office-boys, is to be found in the magazine office who is able properly to revise by elimination the work of a professional author. And the men in your office have certainly played ducks and drakes with the exposition in the first half of my first boat-article. . . . For instance, I have just finished the proofs of 'Just Meat.' In one place I have my burglar say, 'I put the kibosh on his time.' Some man in your office changed this to, 'I put a crimp in his time.' In the first place, 'crimp' is incorrect in such usage. In the second place, there is nothing whatever in the connotation of kibosh that would prevent its appearing in the pages of your magazine. 'Kibosh' is not vulgar, it is not obscene. Such action is wholly unwarranted and gratitously officious. Did this co-creator of mine, in your office, think that he knew what he was doing when he made such a ridiculous substitution? And if he does think so, why in the dickens doesn't he get in and do the whole thing himself?

"In our contract," he grows hot and hotter, "I take your right of revision to consist in rejecting an article as a whole or in eliminating objectionable phrases. Now I have no objection to that. I have no objection to your truckling to Mrs. Grundy, when, for instance, you cut out swear-words or change 'go to hell' to 'go to blazes.' That's the mere shell. In that sort of revision you can have full swing; but that is different matter from cutting the heart out of my work, such as you did in my first boat-article. You made my exposition look like thirty cents.

"I WEAVE my stuff; you can cut out a whole piece of it, but you can't cut out parts of it, and leave mutilated parts behind. Just think of it. Wading into my exposition and cutting out premises or proofs or anything else just to suit your length of an article, or the space, rather, that you see fit to give such article. [The editors were succeeding each other rapidly about this time, and Jack was quite in the dark as to whom, personally, he was addressing.] . . . "Don't you see my point?" he urges. "If the whole woven thing — event, narrative, description — is not suitable for your magazine, why cut it out — cut out the whole thing. I don't care. But I refuse to contemplate for one moment that there is any man in your office, or in the office of any magazine, capable of bettering my art, or the art of any other first-class professional writer.

"Now, I want to give warning right here: I won't stand for it. Before I stand for it, I'll throw over the whole proposition. If you dare to do this with my succeeding articles. . . . I'll not send you another line. By golly, you've got to give me a square deal in this matter. Do you think for one moment that I'll write my heart (my skilled, professional heart, if you please) into my work to have you fellows slaughtering it to suit your journalistic tastes? Either I'm going to write this set of articles, or you're going to write it, for know right here that I refuse definitely and flatly, to collaborate with you or with any one in your office.

"In order that this letter may not go astray," he winds up, "I am sending copies to each of the three men who, in my present hypothesis, I think may possibly be editor . . . And I want, at your earliest convenience, an assurance that the sort of mutilation I am complaining about, will not occur again."

After an unsatisfactory reply, Jack wrote: "Frankly, I'd like to call the whole thing off," following this with a still warmer letter than his former one, impressing upon the editor, "This is the first squabble I ever had in my life with a magazine. I hope it will be my last, but I'll make it hum while it lasts.

The upshot of the "squabble" was that the boat articles were actually called off, another serial, already under way, to be submitted at a still better rate. Jack was well pleased, and I was relieved for his sake, as the unsettled state of matters both with regard to his work and the exasperating Snark progress was very grilling to his nerves.

Another disappointment we had sustained was the loss of Manyoungi. For weeks, with true oriental indirection, he had set about making himself dispensable. The only motive, Jack convinced himself, was that the boy harbored a disinclination to visit the Seven Seas in an inconsequential shallop such as to him appeared the small Snark on her rickety ways at the shipyard. The heart of the sailor was not in his breast. His misbehavior, which had extended into every department of his service, culminated one evening in a very ludicrous manner. He had all day blatantly omitted his habitual address of "Master," substituting "Mr. London," or "Boss," with labored variations. His bold black eyes and studiedly nonchalant tongue advertised bid upon bid for discharge. And still new titles fell from his foolish lips, and still "Master" looked up when they became especially if unintentionally funny, and grinned at the silly boy, though one could note a peculiar absence of expression in Jack's gray eyes. For he was sad to lose Manyoungi, and in such undignified fashion — the perfect servant in so many capacities, of whom we were both personally fond into the bargain.

It was the custom each night, when we played our nightcap game of cards, for Manyoungi to ask what we would have to drink — grape-juice, or ginger-ale, lemonade, or beer. On this evening I was bending apprehensively over the cribbage-board, watching my opponent peg a shocking advantage, when an ominously quiet but impudent voice behind me asked:

"Will God have some beer?"

The only muscles I moved were in raising my eyes to Jack's face. I was braced for anything; words and tone were an invitation to wipe up the floor with Manyoungi's offending countenance. Jack went pale with surprise; but his sense of humor prevented him from thrashing the Korean, as man to man. He was not even angry, properly speaking, and I relaxed when, controlling the desire to laugh, he said composedly:

"I do not want anything at all from you, Manyoungi," and dealt another hand.

It meant the breaking of a new man to all the details of our complicated requirements, not only in relation to our present life, but to the prospective one upon the water. Tochigi, a poet-browed Japanese, later to become an ordained minister in the Episcopal clergy, came to fill the vacancy; and each day's lunch-table was a thing of artistic anticipation, for never did the same exquisite floral decoration appear twice.

Jack forever maintained that there never could be equaled Manyoungi's perfect "spirit of service" that animated his manifold accomplishments. Why, that boy could make both Charmian and me ready in half an hour for Timbuctoo!" he would praise. And it was not far from the fact.

In a letter to Cloudesley Johns, written in September, is a lovely attestation of Jack London's inner contentment as regarded the voyage: "Nay, I'll not come back in 18 months. Barring boat and financial shipwreck, shall be gone for at least seven years. Also, shall not 'come back young again.' I am long since young again. You ought to see me, and you ought to have seen me all this year at Glen Ellen."

Curiously enough, eighteen months was practically the extent of our actual residence on the Snark, although we were absent twenty-seven months altogether.

In early November, hoping soon to weigh anchor, we moved to Oakland, with Mammy Jennie and Tochigi to keep house. That month, Jack wrote Cloudesley:

"Sorrier than the devil; but can't make Los Angeles before I sail. And when I sail, I'm going to hit the high places for midocean in order to learn navigation and learn the boat where I've plenty of room. No rockbound coast for me as a starter. A thousand miles of offing isn't any too good for me as a starter. . . . Dec. 15th is sailing date."

The first week in December saw the completion of "The Iron Heel," begun in August, and Jack bent his efforts upon the tramp series. That done, too restless to concentrate upon another long stretch, he wrote the stories: "Goliah" (in "Revolution"), "The Passing of Marcus O'Brien (in "Lost Face"), "The Unparalleled Invasion" (published in "The Strength of the Strong," and interesting in view of the alleged methods during the Great War), "The Enemy of All the World" and "The Dream of Debs" (both in "The Strength of the Strong"), and "A Curious Fragment" (in "When God Laughs").

For recreation, the living-room echoed to exciting contests in poker or hearts, among the players and onlookers being George Sterling, Henry Lafler, Carlton Bierce, Richard Partington, Rob Royce, Porter Garnett, Nora May French, and the Lily Maid, with a host of others. Upon one of these occasions, the first part of December, while we wives of "the boys" were entertaining ourselves at my newly acquired Steinway "B" grand, there arrived, from Kan-sas, in a drenching southeaster, Martin Johnson, who was destined to be the only unshaken unit in the Snark's crew. After partially drying himself, he sat in at the game of hearts.

There were Sunday foregatherings with what was left of the old "Crowd" in Piedmont; Kugby at the University of California, and concerts in its Greek Theater; plays and concerts at the Macdonough Theater or the Bishop Playhouse; gay dinner-parties at the Oakland Restaurants — The Forum, The Saddle Rock, and Pabst Café. Jack consumed many ten-minute " wild ducks, canvasback, mallard, teal, washed down with his favorite wine, imported Lieb-fraumilch, in the tall opaline glasses he loved. For he, who "bothered" so little what he put in his stomach, was devoted to this type of game, excessively rare and accompanied by potatoes au gratin; and the fact that he had not missed the open season was somewhat of a solace for the almost in supportable delay in Snark affairs.

We made up frequent swimming parties for the Piedmont indoor tank; and once or twice, roved the town on rented saddlers, taking photographs of all that were left standing of Jack's many homes that had been. We boxed regularly at the house on Twenty-seventh Street, rather to the disapproval of Jack's mother, who remained silent until one day I drove my retreating opponent, beaten by his own mirth at my ferocity, into the dining-room door, cracking the redwood panel. Prizefights took Jack to the West Oakland Athletic Club, as before mentioned; and, when the Snark, after once breaking the inadequate ways, had been finally launched in San Francisco and brought to East Oakland for completion, there were steamed-mussel dinners aboard in the unfinished cabin.

I learned to ride a wheel, good horses being unobtainable, and also that I might participate with Jack in another of his old hobbies; so he bought me a "bike," and was loud in his boast that with three hours practice I was able, without mishap, to ride clear to East Oakland to inspect progress on the yacht.

We took our work to Carmel-by-the-sea, and visited the Sterlings for a fortnight; and a journey in mid-winter was made into Nevada, to Tonopah and Goldfield — in which latter mining-town we were guests of Mr. and Mrs. January Jones, who showed us everything our time permitted, above the ground, and many hundreds of feet beneath the surface, by means of the precarious rim of an iron bucket. We returned to California by way of Rhyolite and Bullfrog, booming gold-centers, and had a never-to-be-forgotten glimpse into Death Valley; then Los Angeles, and home again. This trip was succeeded by one to Stanford University, where Jack lectured upon Socialism. We were met by three "clean, noble, and alive" students, Ferguson, Tuttle and Wentz. Jack was entertained by the Delta Upsilon Fraternity; and I by the Alpha Phi Sorority.

There was a Ruskin Club dinner on February 1, which Jack addressed upon the subject of "Incentive." Like a red scarf to a bull was to Jack the stock argument so often advanced, that without material gain there would be no incentive to good deeds. His speech, which I have in manuscript, is too long to quote entire; but the opening challenges are enough to indicate what follows:

"Does a child compete in a spelling match for material gain?

"Do the boys wrestling or racing in the schoolyard compete for material gain?

Do sailors at sea volunteer to launch a boat in a mountainous sea to rescue shipwrecked strangers for material gain?

"Did Lincoln toil with his statecraft for material gain?

"Are you here to-night for material gain?

"Do the professors in all the universities toil for material gain? — you know their average salary is less than that of skilled laborers. "Do the scientists in their laboratories work for material gain?

* Did men like Spencer, Darwin, Newton, work for material gain?

"Did the half million soldiers in the Civil War endure hardships, mangling, and violent death for the material gain of thirteen dollars per month?

"And is there any incentive of material gain in the love of mothers for their children in all the world? — and remember that the mothers constitute half of all the world.

"In short, have I not mentioned incentives, that are not alone higher than the incentive of material gain, but that dominate the incentive of material gain — and that also compel to action multitudes of people, in fact, all the people of the world?

"Can you not conceive that mere material gain, a once useful device for the development of the human, has not fulfilled its function and is ready to be cast aside into the scrap-heap of rudimentary organs and ideas, such as gills in the throat and belief in the divine right of kings?"

These latter months of waiting, Jack was up and down in his temperament, and more or less continually depressed. So much so, at intervals, that for once it was I who said to myself: "Thank heaven I don't have to live in a city always!" Even Oakland, suburb of the greater town across the Bay, had a bad effect upon him. But at last the trial-trip of the Snark was heralded for February 10, and upon the breathing swell, ten miles out to sea, the saucy, if grimy, little hull bore under sail and gasolene. Our spirits soared; and Jack, where we sat together in the bows for an hour, said to me:

"And we're going around the world together in her, you and I, Mate Woman. . . ."

He presented me with "The Cruise of the Dazzler," and in it wrote: "And soon we sail on our own cruise. 'The Cruise of the Snark' — and we shall be mates around the whole round world."

So loved we our adventure, that of mornings we often exchanged overnight dreams of boat and voyage. Then, unable, on account of further "inconceivable and monstrous" excuses, to get away until April, once we went home to Glen Ellen. Snow was on the mountain, and we rode to the top, Selim and Belle, pasture-fat, sniffing suspiciously at the white earth. And we heard, to our lasting sorrow, how Brown Wolf, whose prophetic eyes and ways had wrung our hearts while preparations were afoot for the Long Separation, had died, alone and in the snow of his birthing, a week after we had left in November. No one had plucked up the courage to tell us. "After that first snow had all melted," Wiget said, "one day I saw something up the hill among the trees above my house; and when I went up, there was your dog, dead among the leaves, with snow still on his fur."

Dear Brown Wolf! It seemed hard indeed that he should have had his bleak heart wrenched so cruelly twice in his old age. Reminiscences were often upon Jack's lips: "Do you remember, Mate," he would say, "the day we started out for the afternoon on Belle and poor Ban, and Brown Wolf picked up a big juicy porterhouse some one had dropped, and nearly died because he couldn't decide between the beef steak and the run with us? The red meat won out — he knew we would come back. But nothing could change his foreboding when we got ready for the Snark. . . . Funny about dogs: sometimes, as in his case, even before the traveling-gear is brought out they seem to sense what is coming to them."

The dismantled Jack's House and Annex did not affect us cheerfully; and after a last ride to the Ranch, to see the completed stone and tile barn by moonlight, we bade final farewell to Wake Robin.

On the last night of the year, after wild funning with a chance party of acquaintances in the uproarious cafés and confetti-showered streets of Oakland, which had gained enormously in population after the great fire across the water, I closed my 1906 diary with these words:

"And so ends the happiest year of my life, with before us a great adventure"

ECUADOR; PANAMA; HOME

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXI 1907-8-9

OUR friends cannot understand why we make this voyage," Jack elucidates his and my "I like," which, he always contended, is the ultimate, obvious reason for all human decision. "They shudder, and moan, and raise their hands," somewhat, he might have added, as did the Lily Maid's mother upon his departure for Alaska. "No amount of explanation can make them comprehend that we are moving along the line of least resistance; that it is easier for us to go down to the sea in a small ship than to remain on dry land, just as it is easier for them to remain on dry land than to go down to the sea in the small ship. . . . They cannot come out of themselves long enough to see that their line of least resistance is not necessarily everybody else s line of least resistance. . . . They think I am crazy. In return, I am sympathetic. . . . The things I like constitute my set of values. The thing I like most of all is personal achievement — not achievement for the world's applause, but achievement for my own delight. It is the old 'I did it! I did it! With my own hands I did it!' But personal achievement, with me, must be concrete. I d rather win a water-fight in the swimming-pool, or remain astride a horse that is trying to get out from under me, than write the great American novel . . . Some other fellow would prefer writing the great American novel . . . That is why I am building the Snark . . . I am so made. I like it, that is all. The trip around the world means big moments of living . . . Here is the sea, the wind, and the wave. Here are the seas, the winds, and the waves of all the world . . . Here is difficult adjustment, the achievement of which is delight to the small quivering vanity that is I . . . It is my own particular form of vanity, that it all."

"The ultimate word," he says elsewhere, "is I LIKE. It lies beneath philosophy and is twined about the heart of life. When philosophy has maundered ponderously for a month, telling the individual what he must do, the individual says in an instant I LIKE — and does something else and philosophy goes glimmering. Philosophy is very often a man's way of explaining his own I LIKE."

To resume: “There is also another side to the voyage of the Snark. Being alive, I want to see, and all the world is a bigger thing to see than one small town or valley.”

At the end of the voyage, he wrote:

“The voyage was our idea of a good time. I built the Snark and paid for it, and for all expenses. I contracted to write 35,000 words descriptive of the trip for a magazine which was to pay me the same rate I received for stories written at home. Promptly the magazine advertised that it was sending me especially around the world for itself. It was a wealthy magazine. And every man who had business dealings with the Snark charged three prices because forsooth the magazine could afford it. Down in the utter most South Sea isle this myth obtained, and I paid accordingly. To this day everybody believes that the magazine paid for everything and that I made a fortune out of the voyage. It is hard, after such advertising, to hammer it into the human understanding that the whole voyage was done for the fun of it.”

The Snark exploit, so far as it lasted, was all and more to Jack London and to me than we had anticipated. Some feminine journalist, after reading my “Log,” described the cruise as “a disappointment — nothing but a disappointment.” It would have been to her, who did not care to go down to the sea in ships, or having gone down to the sea in ships, dwelt only upon the little annoyances that enter sea-living as well as land-living. But I, with a firm philosophy that it is the Big Things which count, and with the memory of my Strong Traveler beside me, ask that no one shall entertain the opinion that it was not the most wonderful, victorious thing which ever happened to the right man and woman. What we set out to attain — the “purple passages,” the glamor of Romance, the sheer emancipation from any possible boredom or commonplaceness of memory forever and forever, and, before everything, increased love and camaraderie between us two — became ours in unstinted measure.

One reporter, previously to our sailing, said: “When Jack London talks of his purposed voyage, he is all boy, all enthusiasm.” So he appeared. But I, accustomed to look beneath the surface phenomena of him, realized throughout my life at his side that no matter how sincere his enthusiasms, the keen edge had been rubbed from adventure by pre-adventure, if I may coin a word — the super-adventure of a too-early manhood. So, in his successful maturity, when he came to undertake, with all the zest in him, the conquest of dreams he had failed to capture in youth like say exploring

Typee Valley, or letting go anchor in uncharted bights of cannibal isles — it was with a difference which a less experienced, less thoughtful man would not have known.

Yet his ardors were many, once we were under way on the “Long Trail.” Hawaii, that in later years he came to call his Love-Land, warmed his veins to the very deliciousness of our venture — the keenest zest of which was that we were seeing the world together. In the midst of his morning’s thousand words, he would break off to remind me of the beauty and adventure we should find below the equator; and then, realizing that a half-hour had been lost from his busy time, he would pick up his charmed ink-pencil:

There — don’t talk to me any more, woman! How am I going to get my thousand words done, to pay for those pearls we’re going to buy in the Paumotus and Torres Straits, and all that turtle shell from Melanesia, if you keep me from work now!” — Poor me, speechless, with clasped hands of transport in his own rapturous imaginings. But, since the youngling philosopher, who always dreamed with his two feet upon solid earth, seldom failed to bring his intentions to pass, safely enough I thought to count upon the gleaming sea-seeds and polished turtle-scales, the adventuring for which was to be seven-eighths of the prize. Again, looking up with visions in his deep eyes:

“Think, think where we are bound — the very names stir all the younger red corpuscles in one! — Bankok, Celebes, Madagascar, Java, Sumatra, Natal — oh, I’ll take you to them all; and your lap shall be filled with pearls, my dear, and we shall have them set in fretted gold by the smiths of the Orient.”

As a sailor, I could not but feel that he was a consummate artist. As that matchless sea-writer, Joseph Conrad, reminds us, “an artist is a man of action, whether he creates a personality, invents an expedient, or finds the issue of a complicated situation. And Jack London’s was a facility of adjustment, a quickness of conception and execution, “upon the basis,” again to quote Conrad, “of just appreciation of means and ends which is the highest quality of the man of action.”

All a piece of wonder it was, on and round about the narrow precipitous deck of the Snark, herself a mere scudding fleck of matter advancing upon the vast undulating plane of the Pacific. How could a true sailor be bored, the longest day under the arching blue sky — the excellent trades hunting his ship to its purple havens? For Jack found me sailor, too, albeit a lamentably untechnical mariner — ever he stood aghast at the hopelessness of getting me to present, "so that the Man from Mars could understand," certain ordinary, primary principles of seamanship. But my love and true feel for the very shape of a boat, and for her perform-ance, and for the whole world of water, easily he saw were not to be questioned; while always, in entering and leaving the most dangerous passages, he sent me to the wheel to coöperate with his piloting. "It's this way:" he had it. "There are many boats, but only one woman; boats will come and go, and captains will come and go, but Charmian will be with me always, at the helm."

Here I am tempted to digress, in order to word a still but not small worry that was mine during our married life. Jack's correlations between brain and body were exceptionally balanced. But there showed in him one inexactitude that led me to nurse a dread that my own hand, under his command, might some most inopportune time wreck a boat. I do not know when I first began to notice that at intervals he would say "right" for "left," but sometimes I would promptly call his attention to the mistake while his voice was still in the air. My principal fear was that, some irretrievable consequence having occurred, the responsibility might not be easy to place; and I prided myself upon unquestioning obedience aboard ship. Jack liked that, and only once did we personally come to grief. It was upon a midnight in the Solomon Islands, dark as a hat, and Jack, sick and apprehensive, was trying to make out a certain plantation anchorage on Guadalcanal. Suddenly, though the shore signal lights were identical, he discovered that we were almost on the rocks. It eventuated that another plantation than the one we sought had irresponsibly copied the other's lights. I started to put the wheel hard down at Jack's swift, tense command. "Hard down! Hard down! quick!" he repeated. Then I, like an idiot, "Oh, I am! I am!" It was too much for the disciplined sailorman. Not of babbling courtesies nor babies nor women was he thinking, but of saving the vessel that insured the safety of all the souls on board. And I let my own silly, mawkish, fever-warped nerves go up against this intellectually-cool, efficient manipulating of a real issue. Since Jack never apologized for his sharp reproof, "Obey orders and don't talk back!" I truly believe that no realization of his harshness entered the mind so bent upon a life-and-death problem.

No, we did not know the meaning of boredom. And "Aren't you glad I'm your husband?" Jack would laugh over my enthusiasms. Or, tenderly, "You would marry a sailor!” when I floundered into the head-splitting fever attacks. But dearest of all was his assurance, reiterated in illness and discouragement: “You do not know what you mean to me. It is like being lost in the Dangerous Archipelago, and coming into safe harbor at last.”

It is all a piece of wonder, the sea, to such as we: still magic of calms, where one s boat lies with motionless grace upon a shadow-flecked expanse of mirror; or when one laughs in the pelt of warm sea-rain from a ragged gray sky of clouds; or peers for blue-black squalls darkling upon the silver moonlit waves; or lifts prideful, fond eyes to the small ship’s goodly spars standing fast in a white gale; or gazes in marvel at those same spars lighted to flame by the red-gilt morning sunrays from over some green and purple savage isle feared of God and man; or braces to the Pacific rollers bowling upon the surface of the eternal unagitated depths; or scans the configuration of coasts from inadequate charts; or steers, tense, breathless, through the gateways of but half-known reefs, into enchanted coral-rings below “the lap of the Line”; or looks with misleading candor into the eyes of man-eating human beings; or being received ashore on scented Polynesian fragments of Paradise” aplume with waving palms, with brown embraces, into the “high seat of abundance.” It is all wonder and deep delight, this “smoke of life”; and often and often we sur prised ourselves thinking or voicing our pity for the “vain people of landsmen” who have no care for such joys as ours. Jack, embodiment of fearlessness, so vivid in thought, and action, and body, was a ringing challenge to any who were not half-dead.

On November 24, 1907, in 126° 20’ W.Lon., 60° 47 N.Lat., Jack wrote George Sterling:

“Oh, You Greek: —

“I haven’t received a letter for two months, and two months more will probably elapse before I pick up a mountain of mail in Papeete. You know what my mail is — think of four months of it coming in one swat!

“49 days next Monday since last saw Hilo and land, and we’re in the Doldrums now, the Marquesas many hundreds of miles away.

Did anybody ever tell you that it’s a hard voyage from Hawaii to the Marquesas? . . . The South Sea Directory says that the whaleship captains doubted if it could be accomplished from Hawaii to Tahiti — which is much easier than the Marquesas. We’ve had to fight every inch of easting, in order to be able to make the islands when we fall in with the S. E. traders. . . . The first two weeks out of Hilo we met the N. E. trades well around to the east and even at times a bit north of east. Result was we sagged south (across a westerly current) and made practically no easting till we struck the Variables.

“But I’m working every day!

“Say, you’ve seen dolphin. Think of catching them on rod and reel! That’s what I’m doing. Gee! You ought to see them take the line out (I have 600 yards on the reel, and need it all). The first one fought me about twenty minutes, when I hauled him to gaff — four feet six inches of blazing beauty.

“When they strike, they run away like mad, leaping into the air again and again, prodigiously, and in each mid-leap, shaking their heads like young stallions.

“I find it hard to go to sleep after catching one of them. The leaping, blazing beauty of it gets on my brain.

“I never saw dolphins really until this trip. Pale-blue, after being struck, they turn golden. On deck, of course, afterward, they run the gamut of color. But in the water, after the first wild run, they are pure gold.

“I am going to write up the voyage of the Snark and entitle it: ‘Around the World with Three Gasoline Engines and a Wife.’“

And a postscript: “Talk about luck! I have played poker and I have now lost the ninth successive time, eight out of the nine times being the only loser. You can’t beat that, you ever-blessed Greek!

“Wolf.”

In Jack’s ten-weeks mail at Tahiti was a letter from his children’s mother, announcing her approaching nuptials. His natural paternal interest in the prospective stepfather of his two daughters, combined with news of the current panic in Wall Street, determined a break in the Snark voyage. We took a thirty-days round-trip to San Francisco, on the old S.S. Mariposa, whose roomy portholes were model for the means of “Martin Eden’s” suicide. Once more in Tahiti, Jack wrote Cloudesley Johns under date of February 17, 1908:

“Oh, you can’t lose the Snark. By the time Charmian and I had arrived in Frisco, we were both saying: ‘Me for the Snark’ We were honestly homesick for her. We’re a whole lot safer on the Snark than on the streets of San Francisco. Wish, often, that you could be with us on some of our jamborees and adventures. We sail from here in several days for Samoa, the Fijiis, New Caledonia, and the Solomons. Have just finished a 145,000 word novel that is an attack upon the bourgeoisie and all that the bourgeoisie stands for. It will not make me any friends. [This was “Martin Eden”.]

“‘The Iron Heel’ ought to be out by now. I wonder what you will think of it.

Have just finished Austin Lewis’ ‘American Proletariat.’ It’s good stuff.

Somewhere along our gorgeous sea highway, the mail brought Jack word of the public’s reception of “The Iron Heel,” which cast him into temporary gloom.

“Just the same,” he burst into his sunny chuckle, “I told the bourgeoisie a thing or two they didn’t know about the way their blessed laws are made!” He referred especially to the Dick Militia Bill, passed by the Senate in 1903. For some reason best known to the Solons, very few Americans knew of this bill. Practically none but the Socialist papers gave it notice. Chapter VIII of “The Iron Heel” started considerable publicity for both himself and Representative Dick of Ohio. I have in my hand a clipping as late as February 1917, headed: “State Guards in a Dilemma: Dick Bill and National Defense Act Conflict With Some of the Units.”

Jack, pressed to relate our wildest experiences in cannibaldom, would sometimes tell the following:

“We had excitement enough, as Charmian will testify; but there were no such hairbreadth escapes as that of a missionary we heard of. This good fellow was preaching in one of the islands where man-eating is practised, and was captured by a skeptical chief. To his surprise, he was immediately released, but on the condition that he carry a small sealed packet to a neighboring mountain chief. The missionary was so grateful that, meeting a detachment of English sailors from a battle cruiser, he declined to accompany them to a safer territory. The sealed packet should be delivered as he had promised. But an officer in the midst of the discussion opened it. Therein, tucked among some small onions, was a message to the chief:

“‘The bearer will be delicious with these.’“

During the space in time taken up by the Snark episode, namely between April 1907 and July 1909, Jack London, in addition to the administration of ship’s affairs, recreation, wide reading, sightseeing, and weeks idle from illnesses, wrote the equivalent of more than eight full volumes, as follows:

“The Cruise of the Snark,” published serially in The Cosmopolitan and Harper’s Weekly.

"Martin Eden," begun in Honolulu in summer of 1907, finished at Papeete, Tahiti, February 1908, and serial pub-lication commenced in The Pacific Monthly, of Portland, Oregon, in September of same year.

"Adventure," a novel depicting the manner of life we lived ashore in the Solomons. Begun while cruising among that Group, and often interrupted for the writing of timely short work.

"South Sea Tales." These splendid stories, unlike the later ones in "A Son of the Sun," were written during the voyage.

"The House of Pride" collection of Hawaii romances. "Burning Daylight." This novel was started in Quito, Ecuador.

And short stories, later dispersed throughout five different volumes:

"The Chinago" ("When God Laughs")

"A Piece of Steak" ("When God Laughs")

"Make Westing" ("When God Laughs")

"South of the Slot" ("The Night-Born")

"The Other Animals" (Article replying to Theodore Roosevelt's attack upon the "nature fakers," and collected in "Revolution.")

"Nothing that Ever Came to Anything" ("The Human Drift.")

In Australia, Jack, on condition that I should accompany him, reported the Burns-Johnson prizefight for The Star, Sydney, and the New York Herald. He also wrote a series of articles upon his general local impressions, as well as the labor situation in the Commonwealth from his socialist viewpoint. All of this work I shall collect at a future date for book publication.

Jack had much fun over the charge of "nature-faking," inasmuch as it arose over a misreading on the part of the President, of the incident, in "White Fang," of the wolfdog killing the lynx; whereas Mr. Roosevelt erroneously attacked the author for having the lynx do away with the dog. It must not be forgotten that throughout the traverse of the Pacific, Jack failed not in sounding his trumpet for the brotherhood of man. Wherever opportunity presented, he either debated, as in Honolulu, or lectured, as in Tahiti and Samoa, or used his pen when too ill to speak, as in Australia.

I might mention, if I have not previously done so, that Jack was accustomed, in the course of his literary career, to seek perspective upon his plots and motifs before developing them on paper; but during the Snark voyage he often went at the actual weaving of a story rather than merely filing notes upon it.

For the benefit of editors and readers who have scoffed at Jack London's novel "Adventure" as an inaccurate, over-drawn picture of savagery in the Twentieth Century, I select passages from his letter to George Sterling, from the Solomon Islands, October 31, 1908:

"For the last three or four months the Snark has been cruising about the Solomons. This is about the rawest edge of the world. Head-hunting, cannibalism and murder are rampant. Among the worst islands of the group, day and night we are never unarmed, and night watches are necessary. Charmian and I went on a cruise on another boat around the island of Malaita. We had a black crew. The natives we encountered, men and women, go stark naked, and are armed with bows, arrows, spears, tomahawks, warclubs and rifles. (Have Fiji and Solomon war-clubs for you.) When ashore we always had armed sailors with us, while the men in the whale-boat laid by their oars with the bow of the boat pointed seaward. We went swimming once in the mouth of a fresh-water river, and all about us in the bush our sailors were on guard, while we, when we undressed, left our clothes conspicuously in one place, and our weapons hidden in another, so that in case of surprise we would not do the obvious thing.

"And to cap it all, we got wrecked on a reef. The minute before we struck not a canoe was in sight. But they began to arrive like vultures out of the blue. Half of our sailors held them off with rifles, while the other half worked to save the vessel. And down on the beach a thousand bushmen gathered for the loot. But they didn't get it, nor us.

"Am leaving here in two days to go to Sydney, where I go into hospital for an operation. And I have other afflictions, from a medical standpoint vastly more serious than the operation."

The one and only reason that our splendid adventure terminated in two years instead of seven, or ten, or unnumbered years, was that Jack London's supersensitive organism prevented. I remember him arguing, in Hawaii, with Dr. E. S. Goodhue, the point of his working-pace in the tropics. Neither Jack nor I was willing to forego any jot of our activity, mental or physical. In the end, the ultra-violet rays exacted their toll of his nervous system, as the Doctor had forewarned. In his own words:

"I went to Australia to go into hospital, where I spent five weeks. [The operation was for a double-fistula, caused we never knew how.] I spent five months miserably sick in hotels. The mysterious malady that affected my hands was too much for the Australian specialists. . . . It extended from my hands to my feet so that at times I was helpless as a child. On occasion my hands were twice their natural size, with seven dead and dying skins peeling off at the same time. There were times when my toe-nails, in twenty-four hours, grew as thick as they were long. After filing them off, inside another twenty-four hours they were as thick as before.

"The Australian specialists agreed that the malady was nonparasitic, and that, therefore, it must be nervous. It did not mend, and it was impossible for me to continue the voyage . . . I reasoned that in my own climate of California I had always maintained a stable nervous equilibrium.

"Since my return I have completely recovered. And I have found out what was the matter with me. I encountered a book by Lieutenant Colonel Charles E. Woodruff of the United States Army, entitled 'Effects of Tropical Light on White Men.' Then I knew . . . In brief, I had a strong predisposition toward the tissue-destructiveness of tropical light. I was being torn to pieces by the ultra-violet rays just as many experimenters with the X-Ray have been torn to pieces.

"In passing, I may mention that among other afflictions that jointly compelled the abandonment of the voyage, was one that is variously called the healthy man s disease, European leprosy, and Biblical leprosy. Unlike True leprosy, nothing is known of this mysterious malady . . . The only hope the doctors had held out to me was a spontaneous cure, and such a cure was mine." [This was simply psoriasis, as known in the United States, for which many cures are advertised, but none known that is efficacious.]

Finally, as a tribute to my own whole-hearted devotion to the voyage and all that it meant, Jack offers:

"A last word: the test of the voyage. It is easy enough for me or any man to say that it was enjoyable. But there is a better witness, the one woman who made it from beginning to end. In hospital when I broke the news to Charmian that I must go back to California, the tears welled into her eyes. For two days she was wrecked and broken by the knowledge that the happy, happy voyage was abandoned."

The venture definitely thrown over, Jack dispersed his crew, laid up the Snark in one of beautiful Sydney Harbor's green crannies, and shipped home our effects. The yacht eventually netted less than one-tenth of her original inflated price, and went to trade and recruit in the New Hebrides. Jack and I, loath to retrace our way across the ocean in conventional mode, watched for chance to ship on anything but a passenger liner. Our luck it was to catch, upon extremely short notice, a rusty leviathan of a Scotch collier, the Tymeric, Captain Robert Mcllwaine, from Newcastle, N.S.W., to Guayaquil, Ecuador. With us sailed Yoshimatsu Nakata, the eighteen-year-old, fatherly Japanese soul who had joined the Snark as cabin boy when we left Hawaii. Nakata remained our loving and beloved shadow for nine responsible years; and I feel free to assert, for Jack London as well as myself, that when the faithful brown boy came to marry and resign from our service at the end of 1915, life never seemed quite the same again. Nakata is since a graduate of the San Francisco College of Physicians and Surgeons, and success fully wields his fashionable forceps in his own offices in Honolulu, with two assistants.

"No man is a hero to his valet" was not applicable in Jack London's household. Servants worshiped him, for he never tired helping them with his knowledge of all kinds.

For nearly three weeks after she stood out at sea, the Tymeric, resembling a log awash, fought a violent gale. I was time and again laid low with the terrible Solomon Island malaria. Jack and Nakata, suffering only occasional light attacks, nursed me like gentlest women. Jack was especially sympathetic in that I was missing the magnificent sight, from the bridge, of the plunging, submerging hull of the steamer, which he, "who lived with storms and spaces like a kinsman," as some one has aptly said, so reveled in. Here is his reference to the gale:

"We were a tramp collier, rusty and battered, with six thousand tons of coal in our hold. Life lines were stretched fore and aft; and on our weather side, attached to smokestack guys and rigging, were huge rope-nettings, hung there for the purpose of breaking the force of the seas and so saving our mess-room doors. But the doors were smashed and the mess-room washed out just the same."

Yet Jack compared all this as monotonous alongside sailing a small boat on San Francisco Bay.

We were forty-three days on this passage, seeing land but twice, and upon two successive days first, fair Pitcairn Island of Bounty fame, on the southernmost edge of the farflung Paumotus whose northernmost edge we had skirted when westward-bound; and next, the low isle of Ducie, its tropic scents of blossom and cocoanut borne out across the water on the warm breeze.

Captain McIlwaine proved a mine of interest to Jack, who wrote a brace of his most thoughtful stories, "Samuel" and "The Sea Farmer" (in "The Strength of the Strong") from notes made from the canny skipper's yarns. I worked up a County McGee, North of Ireland, vocabulary for Jack, often reporting the quaint speech under the table at meals. The Skipper caught me at it, I know; but he continued generously unabated in reminiscence.

Here is part of a letter Jack wrote off Pitcairn Island on May 2, to George Sterling:

"Never you mind N — and all the other little bats, but go on hammering out beauty. If the urge comes from within to write propaganda, all right; otherwise you violate yourself. There are plenty who can do propaganda, but darned few that can create beauty. Some day you may see your way to fuse both, but meanwhile do what you heart listeth.

"'Memory' is great! I've read it aloud a dozen times. (You should see us, George, when you send us a new poem! We sit and read it with tears in our eyes!)"

One could draw a sheaf of sketches upon that month in Ecuador. We climbed great Chimborazo, twelve thousand feet of its twenty-two thousand, on the wonderful American railway; thence descended two thousand feet to Quito, where, at the Hotel Royal, over a fortnight was spent; and before sailing upon the Erica for Panama, friends took us alligator-hunting up the River Guayas, where Jack, who never did anything by halves, laid in a large supply of salted skins.

As to this marvelous country, he ever afterward raved of its possibilities of agricultural development, and advised more than one ambitious young man that Ecuador would give him "the chance of his life."

There are many incidents that throw added light upon Jack London's individuality. Such as his indignation toward the unfair methods of the bull-ring, as against the "white-man's game" of prizefighting — his passion leading him to write "The Madness of John Harned" (in "The Night-Born"); and his interest, for once, in American horse-racing as practised in Quito; and the Latin-American character as displayed about him, in public, and in the clubs where he took a look-in at the gambling of Ecuadorian gentlemen and their psychology as regarded payment of losses. He was in the best of humor for most of the sojourn, little troubled with fever, and spilled some of his whimsical disgust at the undependableness of Quito's inhabitants in a humorous skit, “Nothing that Ever Came to Anything” (in “The Human Drift”), which is the narration of an actual occurrence.

One sweet manifestation of himself shone out one day when I was strolling alone. A spic-and-span victoria was sent all over the shopping district to find me, because, for sooth, a peddler with her basket of laces had come to our rooms, and Jack did not want me to miss her. He hovered about the pair of us seated on the floor in a sea of needlework, inciting me to satisfy my craving to the uttermost. A day he spent taking me to convents, in search for embroideries, and joined in a blanket-haggling revel in an old plaza — brilliant native dyes of hand-loom weaves from llama wool. He did balk, however, at adding a tiny, shivering green monkey to the menage.

In Panama, a rousing American military Fourth of July was followed by a ten days’ stay at the Hotel Tivoli, whence we explored some of the surrounding country, saw the work of the great canal, and shopped in the Chinese stores. And I must take space for something that happened on the evening of the Fourth. The hotel was jammed, and we were obliged to share our small table with an American couple. The man appeared to be much the worse for the climate, and his wife evidently spent her life soothing him into a semblance of fitness for association with his kind. We extended the ordinary courtesies to them both, but it was no use. After the man had sourly declined several things passed him, suddenly, to Jack, he burst:

“I don’t want anything from you!”

Jack gulped. I went chill, as when Manyoungi had invited destruction, but again misjudged my man. Instead of blowing up as the terrified woman expected, Jack turned to her, and quietly, without interruption, at length and sans haste, told her exactly what he thought of her husband and how sorry he was for her. The poor lady, already blanched and wilted, never raised her eyes nor opened her lips. Nor did her companion. They presently rose and left the table.

“I couldn’t help it,” Jack apologized to me. “I was sorry for her, and I did her a service, I do believe — just in telling her, before him, what a skunk he is!”

I never saw Jack smite anybody except with a tongue-lashing; and, so far as I know, during our years together he never but once struck a man.

We sailed from Colon on the Turrialba for New Orleans. My temperature on the day of arrival, if memory serves, was 104, and I continued for a year to suffer intermittent attacks of malaria. But Jack, again in his home-land, soon had cast all trace of fever, as well as of psoriaris, forever into the discard.

From New Orleans to Oakland his return was hailed by the newspapers, and reporters boarded the train at a number of towns. We stopped over but once, at the Grand Canon of the Colorado, where we found ourselves hospitably entertained by the Manager of the Hotel El Tovar and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Brandt, as guests of the proprietor, Mr. Fred Harvey. On July 24, 1909, we were once more at home in Wake Robin Lodge.

A DAUGHTER IS BORN

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXII End — 1909-1910

HOMECOMING, after twenty-seven months of absence, was not the least of our enviable experiences. There was so much to see and do. The great stone barn was completed, roofed with red Spanish tile, and sheltered, besides horses and vehicles, all of our magnificent collection of South Sea curios. Concerning this small museum, much mirth had escaped from the Custom House into the press as to its value in dollars and cents. Jack's "declaration" had perforce been couched entirely in terms of stick-tobacco, which had been the sole medium of exchange with the savages of Melanesia.

Then Ranch improvements were to be inspected, together with the modest increase in stock — colts and calves, chickens, ducks, and pigeons. Most exciting of all, my Aunt, as Jack's agent, had added to our possessions the tiny "Fish Ranch" and the La Motte hundred and thirty acres adjoining Wake Robin, as well as a broad strip connecting the same with the Hill property — Jack's "Beauty Ranch." There was but one fly in the ointment as regarded the new acquisition. Certain men had so conducted negotiations as to leave Jack's agent in ignorance of a serious drawback to ownership of the land: upon it rested a thirteen-year lease of a valuable pit which furnished clay for the Glen Ellen brickyard. This was not so bad in itself, but the lease also covered standing timber, which might be cut at any time by the lessees for use in the brick-kiln furnaces. Jack, in the face of unalterable circumstances, naturally made the most of the fact that he was entitled to "ten cents a yard" for all clay hauled down hill, and in course of time netted a tidy sum which, I must insert, did not compensate him for the annoyance of a dusty, rutted right-of-way over his land, to say nothing of the constant reminder, whenever plodding teams and creaking loads in clouds of dust crossed his vision, of the dishonest dealings of his fellow men. The nuisance was before long abated, and finally ceased altogether, for the brickyard went out of business previous to its requirement of any firewood from the La Motte land. It may interest travelers to know that the hollow brick used in the beautiful Hotel Oakland, in Jack's home town, was made at Glen Ellen from material mined on the Jack London Ranch.

Meanwhile, nothing daunted, Jack, with fabulous forests in his far-seeing eye, had hesitated not to set out 15,000 baby eucalyptus trees, bought from Stratton's in Petaluma, trying out their vitality on the most impoverished section of the La Motte holding.

My perspective of the latter months of 1909, from our return in mid-July on into the winter, is not one of unalloyed pleasure. For exuberance in our general happy estate was sorely tempered by anemia and sporadic attacks of the vicious malaria that so impaired my usefulness, as well as any fair qualities I may have possessed as hostess. And from the first week, Jack and I were not for a day without guests. Hospitality is a beautiful thing in itself; but I leave to the reader my frame of mind, when time and again I was obliged to lie up for days, my work going behind, and, not the least of my troubles, the pitiable effect this helplessness worked in Jack. Whenever anything interfered with "the Cheery One's" cheeriness, Jack, under no matter what merry dissembling, was lamentably at outs with existence.

Despair seemed to reach its height when during the duck season, I had to remain home from a long-contem-plated yachting trip up-river which was to include a house-guest, Louis Augustin, from Canada, and the Sterlings. Only at the last moment did I give in, and keep to my bed. This cruise was made in a rented sloop, Phyllis, and lasted for several weeks. Jack was not well, and returned quite ill, but was soon himself. In the interim, I had patronized Burke's Sanitarium for a week — a lovely Mecca in our own county, administered by a noble man, Mr. J. P. Burke — and felt greatly improved. Burke's, by the way, had formerly been Altruria, a coöperative colony of charming idealists, where I had spent more than one vacation, going about the country on horseback for a month at a time.

But far be it from me to draw a veil of gloom over that summer and autumn. There was ample joie du vivre sprinkled throughout. Jack's work was as always the sustaining anchor for us both. "Burning Daylight," the novel commenced in Quito, Ecuador, was duly "signed, sealed, and delivered" unto the New York Herald, where it appeared serially, and was published by Macmillans in the fall of 1910. And Jack wrote one short manuscript beside, on a request to describe the most dramatic moment of his life. This is entitled "That Dead Men Rise Up Never" (in "The Human

Drift”), a ghost-story founded upon his experience aboard the Sophie Sutherland, from which I have made quotation in an early chapter.

A short-story collection, “Lost Face,” and the novel “Martin Eden,” which has helped shape the purposes of so many, were the two volumes brought out in 1909. There was almost universal protest from readers of this novel as to its author’s wisdom in killing off the hero. Jack held that Martin, robbed both of love and of pleasure in his too-hard-won fame, and finding no faith in his fellow man to sustain him in his loneliness, had nothing left to do, logically and artistically, but terminate a life that had become a burden. “Which is where Martin Eden and I differed,” Jack smiled contentedly. “To be sure, when my own battle was won, I had little use for the spoils, so far as fame went; but I did not become self-centered. I solaced myself with warm interest in my kind, and I did find love — which is better than all.” Whereupon, he presented his wife with the first copy in hand, in which he had generously written:

“You see, Martin Eden did not have you!”

Here is a letter, dated April 26, 1910, to one Lillian Collins who, neglecting to leave a forwarding address, never came into possession of Jack’s argument in answer to her protest:

“In reply to your good letter of April 22. I don’t know whether to take it as an unconscious compliment to me, or as a subtle compliment to me. I quote from your letter: ‘He was not physically able to defend himself. He was heartsick; the nerves of action paralyzed by enormous strain, the power to weigh and analyze, compare and select, submerged under an overwhelming sense of loss.’

“From the foregoing, and much more that you have said in your letter, you point out to me that I did succeed in showing the inevitableness of his death. I was no more treacherous to Martin Eden than life is treacherous to many, many men and women. You continually point out to me where I took unfair advantages of Martin Eden, ‘cramming his newly awakened mind with abstraction which his crude mental processes were not able to assimilate.’ Granted; but do not forget that this was MY Martin Eden, and that I manufactured him in this very particular, precise and peculiar fashion. Having done so, his untimely end is accounted for. Remember that he was MY Martin Eden, and was made by me in this fashion. He certainly was not the Martin Eden that you would have made. I think the disagreement between you and me lies in that you confuse my Martin Eden with your Martin Eden.

"You say: 'I look upon Martin Eden's selfish individualism as a crudity adhering from the boy's early habits of life — a lack of perspective which time and a wider horizon would correct.' And you complain because he died. Your point is that if I had let him live, he would have got out of all this slough of despond. Again, to make a simile which I know will be distasteful to you, let me point out that the case is exactly parallel with that of a beautiful young man, with the body of an Adonis, who cannot swim, who is thrown into deep water, and who drowns. You cry out, Give the young man time to learn to swim while he is drowning, and he will not drown, but will win safely to shore. And the queer thing, reverting to the original proposition, is, that you yourself, in sharp, definite terms, point out the very reasons why Martin Eden couldn't swim, and had to drown.

"You tell me that I asserted that love had tricked and failed Martin Eden, and that you know better and that I know better. On the contrary, from what I know of love, I believe that Martin Eden had his first big genuine love when he fell in love with Ruth, and that not he alone, but that countless millions of men and women, have been tricked in one way or another in similar fashion. However, you are unfair in taking such an assertion and making the sweeping generalization that I deny all love and the greatness of all love.

"Then, it is an endless question. I don't think you and I have so much of a quarrel over Martin Eden as we have on account of our different interpretations of life. Your temperament and your training lead you one way — mine lead me another way. I think that right there is the explanation of our difference.

"Thanking you for your good letter,

"Sincerely yours,"

To one who had interpreted Martin Eden as a Socialist, Jack wrote:

"Contrary to your misinterpretation, Martin Eden was not a Socialist. On the contrary, I drew him a temperamental, and, later on, an intellectual Individualist. So much was he an Individualist, that he characterized your kind of Individualism as half-baked Socialism. Martin Eden was a proper Individualist of the extreme Nietzschean type."

As for public appearances in 1909, Jack read "The Amateur M. D.," (from "The Cruise of the Snark") in Oakland, before the Rice Institute in

Old Reliance Hall; and he spoke a number of times, here and there, on other phases of the Snark voyage. Once he lectured in San Francisco for the Socialists in Dreamland Rink. “Among those present” at Wake Robin Lodge that fall were the Sterlings; Jack’s old friend Frank Atherton; Cloudesley Johns and his bride; “Lem” Parton, author and editor; Mrs. Lucy Parsons, a plucky widow of the Hay-market tragedy in Chicago; “A No. 1,” the engaging gentleman-tramp who left his picturesque “monaker” carved on the Lodge veranda as well as along the railroad route to Glen Ellen, on which he “beat” his passage; and Emma Goldman and Dr. Ben Reitman, who, with friendly naivete, tried to divert Jack from his socialism, which they derided, toward their unconstructive anarchism, at which he jeered, while not depreciating their martyr-sincerity and courageous, if (to him) misguided sacrifices. Of these and some others he later said: “The anarchists whom I know are dear, big souls whom I like and admire immensely. But they are dreamers, idealists. I believe in law . . . you can see it in my books — all down in black and white.” I have more to say about this when presently drawing together the threads of Jack’s life near its close.

And in his two or three days’ entertainment of this woman and man, one of whom during the Great War fell into such evil fortune, he argued seriously as little as possible, devoting himself to laughing at and with them, and playing juvenile pranks. One of these was the placing at Dr. Reitman’s plate of an attractive little red book, bearing the title “Four Weeks, a Loud Book.” The guest, somewhat of a joker himself, met his Waterloo at Jack’s hands. For when, the book opened, it exploded with loud report, “Never,” Jack would laugh in retrospect, “did any one jump so high as that red anarchist! He must have thought it was a bomb, for he went positively green. He has the soul of a child — they’re such soft people, anarchists, when it comes to actual violence — and when they do try it, they usually make a mess of it because they’re dreamers and haven’t learned practical brass-tack ways of doing the very things they so vehemently preach.” The ordinary camp recreations prevailed; and Jack, upon which tenderfoot, during the establishing of himself as a farmer, certain unreliable or unsound horseflesh was palmed off by traders for substantial returns, spent much time, that year and the next, subduing the creatures to his will. I was often worried when he failed to report for the evening meal and for hours afterward. After I had satisfied myself, from repeated successes, of his prudence and wisdom in forestalling the scant and often addled gray-matter of our equine friends, I said, perhaps carelessly:

"I don't worry about you any more when you are out with your incorrigible horses!"

For once our mental lines were crossed. Jack looked as puzzled and grieved as an abandoned child. I hastened to explain the reason for my lightened emotions — confidence in his methods; whereupon he was as proud as he had been taken aback and hurt. It was not wholly true — my flat statement that I had ceased to worry. There could not fail to be an undercurrent of apprehension, while an occasional minor accident, that left its scar upon my man, or further disqualified delicate ankle or wrist, prevented my nerves from becoming unresponsive.

How he gloried in it all — how he beamed and fairly quivered with achievement when, say, he had, with months of patient "staying with it," beguiled spidery little Fleet from her custom of bolting downhill with nose high in air to the detriment of all control; or his excusable bragging when, for fifteen hundred miles, he drove the notorious outlaw, Gert, as wheeler in our four-in-hand — she who had broken the spirit of every owner who had tried to hang harness upon her rebellious frame.

When, by Christmas of 1909, there was no doubt that, barring mishap, June should crown our enduring love with parenthood, our happiness was boundless. Jack was a new man — all himself and something ineffably more. It showed in his every look, the touch of his hands, the vibration of his voice. When the latest volume, "Revolution," came in the spring, this is what he wrote in the fly-leaf:

"My Mate-Woman:

"Not that I shall be able to tell you anything about revolution — you, who in a few short weeks from now, will be prime mover in turning our Wake Robin household upside down with the most delicious and lovable revolution that we can ever hope to experience.

"Mate Man.

"Wake Robin Lodge,

"April 24, 1910."

Always I shall cherish, I think above all others, the memories of those months. Never had I been so joyful, nor so strong. It seems as if all nature with lavish hands contributed to the making of the perfect child I desired and bore. "How the birds do sing and shout!" raves my diary. " — meadowlarks, blue-jays, orioles, linnets and wild canaries bickering at bath and play; gentle mourning-doves at twilight; chattering, whirring quail in the warm woods, and quaint little owls calling by night." And "Such flowered fields I never saw!" Not the least of our blisses was wandering in the eucalyptus "forest," not yet knee-high, dreaming of when they should some day be over our heads on horse-back. "They'll only be a few months older than our boy!" Jack would say.

We did not stay strictly at home, but harnessed young Maid and Ben in our light, yellow-wheeled run-about, packed writing materials and toilet articles, and drove for a week at a time about the country, stopping over wherever it looked good to us. "We three," Jack, at this sweetest height of living, would breathe leaning to my willing ear as the bays forged up mountainsides or dropped into the exquisite valleys. I have set down these words of his on an April morning: "Wife, little mother, sweetheart — I cannot express the love I feel for you these days!" One night we spent in Petaluma, and attended a performance by an all but stranded company of itinerant players. "Tell you what, Mate Woman — if you're game for it," Jack whispered, "let me send word behind for them all to join us at supper."

It was done. The affair came off. The troupe looked hungry, but partook sparingly of a very good repast, as if hesitating to divulge their chronic emptiness. Jack was all keyed up to order cocktails, wine, champagne, anything to put them at their ease; but one spoke for light beer, and the rest, every soul of them, insisted upon milk.

Another journey was to Carmel-by-the-Sea, where we were guests of the George Sterlings.

There is a remark in the diary concerning lack of excitement in passing through the tail of Halley's Comet.

Ernest Untermann, socialist, author, painter, and perhaps best known as translator of Karl Marx, spent sometime at Wake Robin, while other friends came and went. Eliza, Shepard, with her boy Irving, had come to live in the little Fish Ranch house, under what, we always maintained, was the biggest madroño in California; and Eliza shortly began to assist Jack in the business of the ranch, attending to accounts and "overhead." For in May we had swelled our estate by the seven hundred acres of the Kohler property, and Jack needed such aid in carrying out his headful of ambitions. "He's burgeoning with all sorts of happiness," my journal recalls, "with love of the land, with his new mare, Gert the Outlaw — why, his eyes glisten when he speaks of her; and with life and its promises." In my copy of "Theft," a play he wrote for Olga Nethersole that spring, but which was never acted, he inscribed:

"Dear My-Woman:

"How our days continue to grow fuller and sweeter!

"Your Lover-Man." Speaking of "Theft," this time Jack considered he had written a fairly good play; but it went the rounds of the dramatic agencies in New York without being placed — this after Miss Nethersole had decided against it. Besides "Theft," in the first half of 1910, Jack commenced a fantastic piece of long fiction, "The Assassination Bureau." This, interrupted by the death of the baby, he never finished. Only death itself, it would seem, could compel that man to stay his hand. It is noteworthy that his only uncompleted work is this "The Assassination Bureau," and the novel left less than half finished when he himself went "into the dark."

A short Klondike story, "The Night-Born," was also written that spring, and "The Human Drift," a synthesis of years of research into the great developing forces in human history.

How much one can live through — physically, mentally — and splendidly recover from! The baby was born upon high noon of Sunday, June 19, in an Oakland hospital. In my little old record I read: "Then came on the terrible hours, when Jack helped me, breathed with me, loved me and praised me — " "We named her Joy, Mate and I." She was a beautiful baby, they told me, all who saw her. I was so near to fading out that I feared my strength would fail through sheer emotion if I looked at the little soul until I had had time to gather my forces; so they carried her away. When Eliza had come from Glen Ellen at Jack's bidding, she found him so radiant with relief after his own sharp strain, so excited telling her of the small one's fair skin and gray eyes, "Just like Mate's and mine. Anglo-Saxon through and through!" that she had difficulty in learning whether he was father to a son or a daughter. The fact that he had prayed for a boy was forgotten in the larger matter of a living, breathing child of whichever sex. What he said was: "Boy or girl, it doesn't matter — so long as it's Charmian's!"

Poor little Joy! The severity of her birth, coupled with certain unwisdom, or ignorance, in the handling of the same, within thirty-eight hours had cost her life. "A perfect child," they said, after those perfect months that went into the creation of her. I go on from some notes headed "First Thoughts":

"He came to me, and Eliza, and, one on either side my bed, Mate told me with a brave, bright face. And I did not make it harder for him than I could help. But oh! the pity of it! Our own baby, our little daughter, ours, our Joy-Baby, only thirty-eight hours old — gone in the twilight of the morning."

The New York Herald had long ahead engaged Jack to write up the Jeffries-Johnson prizefight, wherever it should be staged, together with ten days' observation, previous to the big event, of the contestants camps. Jack was no more loath to break his pledge than I to have him; and it was with great satisfaction to me, for one, that I was pronounced out of danger from a slight operation, and that Jack could go away without apprehension. The prospective scene of the fight had been moved over California several times, and finally settled upon Reno, Nevada, so I could not see my husband for the best part of two weks. He departed June 22, and sent me daily "Lettergrams." On the morning of the fight, he wired: "I wish you were by my side to-day."

It was reported, I am reminded by news clippings of that month, that "Jack London lost heavily on the Reno fight. But this could not be, since he laid but a few dollars at most, and a hat, a dinner, and so forth.

And now, an episode, further to make clear Jack London's reactions to the corrupt injustices that may surround such a man:

Having fortified myself against shock by determining not to be shocked by anything, if I would live, on the third morning after the baby came I received in quiet the spectacle of my handsome husband with one large optic neatly closed and plastered with what appeared to be pink paint.

To my studiedly calm and interested inquiry, he frankly told me "all about it." I give the facts as he related them:

Leaving me the day before, after breaking the baby's death, he had gone into Oakland's business center to attend to final arrangements for his Reno journey. Winding up at the barber's, he then strolled, miserable and grieving, down Broadway.

"You know how I hate walking," he broke in. "And I usually seem to get into trouble when I do walk! I swear I'll never walk again. Listen to what happened:"

Noticing, in the windows of the Oakland Tribune office, a display of an "Autobiography of Jeffries," he bought several copies, thinking to pass them along to other correspondents at Reno. Continuing, absorbed in the morning's disaster to our hopes, he became aware that he had strayed into old haunts, down around Webster and Eighth and Ninth streets — in his boyhood a respectable residential neighborhood, but now infested with Chinese gambling houses.

As he went along, pondering the great change, he saw an American saloon, and near its main entrance a smaller door that suggested ingress to its lavatory. Entering, he found himself in a narrow passage-way, terminating in a large room behind the barroom proper, and evidently a night resort, judging from the tables and chairs. What appeared to be two lavatory doors were at the farther end, opening out of a short hall that led into still another apart ment, where a lowering figure sat eating alone.

Jack, with a salutation to which the other growled something he did not hear, opened a door and passed through. Before he had time to shut it behind him, the man had thrust his foot inside, threateningly ordering him out. "I believe he thought I was there to post on his walls some of the gaudy literature I had under my arm," Jack told me. At any rate, I was not in the mood for trouble, especially in such cramped space, and spoke in a conciliatory way while I got into the big room and made for the passage out, intending to escape as quick as God would let me. I knew his kind, and wanted none of him. And I thought of you, and of my promise to the New York Herald."

What next took place — the man's unprovoked attack, Jack's scientific stalling, never striking a blow, the appearance from the barroom of an audience of pasty-faced night-birds who came to look on, and his difficulty, once he had worked his way to the street, of getting an officer to consent to arrest the dive-keeper — all this he has graphically described in a short story, "The Benefit of the Doubt" (in volume "The Night Born").

What he did not include in the story was that it turned out that the Hebrew police judge who dared to sit on the case, was in truth owner of the resort. Jack learned of this through a letter from a well-wishing stranger, who suggested he look up the records. When Eliza went to do this, every obstacle was put in her way; but she prevailed, and her homecoming with the notes she had made was an occasion for triumphant celebration in the London household.

The reporters, as always paid to "give Jack London the worst of it wherever possible," hinted at the vilest construction upon his presence in the low resort. The San Francisco Bulletin account was the most decent — because, according to Joseph Noel, in charge of the Oakland office, he offered to throw up his position rather than distort his friend's account of the one-sided scrimmage.

Jack was keen for the trial, but got it postponed until after the Reno prizefight. Never have I seen him so cut up as when the Judge dismissed the case, giving both complainants "the benefit of the doubt," as faithfully told in the story of that name. And the exasperating newspaper lie as to his shaking hands with the dive-proprietor and their "departing for the nearest saloon," is as accurately recorded.

Jack worked off, in the fiction, a fantastic revenge. The eastern weekly's editor, before accepting the yarn, made sure through the author that he would not be liable for libel. Quite different from his usual eventual tolerance, Jack never forgave the Hebrew Judge. "Some day, some where, I am going to 'get' him," he would say at long intervals. "I shall watch him all years, and some time, when he least looks for it, I shall get him. I don't know just how — perhaps it will be in thwarting his dearest ambition; but mark my words, I intend to get him." Jack's countenance, no matter how one sympathized with his viewpoint, was not good to look upon at such a time. But his cards were played squarely, as always, face up on the table. He sent the following open letter (I typed it for him during convalescence) to the newspapers of San Francisco and Oakland, the same post carrying a copy to the magistrate that he might be prepared for the writer's deadly interest in him:

"Some day, somewhere, somehow, I am going to get you legally, never fear. I shall not lay myself open to the law. I know nothing about your past. Only now do I begin to interest myself in your past, and to keep an eye on your future. But get you I will, some day, somehow, and I shall get you to the full hilt of the law and the legal procedure that obtains among allegedly civilized men."

One day, long afterward, out of a sudden whimsey, Jack had his sister telephone to arrange an interview for him in the office of that grafting judicator. "Oh, I intend no violence, he allayed my start; "I just want to tell him a few." But the other had hastily pleaded an imminent and important engagement elsewhere. Jack died unavenged, unless the Judge's conscience, or fear of his enemy, were punishment enough.

It was mainly grit that carried Jack through the Reno period. He was miserably ill, probably from the effects of the Muldowney struggle, and coughed exhaustingly.

The fiasco of the fight did not improve his spirits — ”It wasn’t a fight,” he wrote me, “It was awful.”

Once back in Oakland, and the afternoons with me in hospital resumed, he told me he was having his sputum examined for traces of tuberculosis, for he was thoroughly alarmed at the obstinacy of the racking cough and soreness in his chest. With our customary rebound from carking care, the battered pair of us lost no time making tentative arrangements for a lengthy sojourn in high, dry Arizona, and presently were all alive with the details of equipment, saddles, clothing, books — and work! The analysis of the sputum brought to light no evidence of active “T.B.,” although a scar that was located in Jack’s bronchial tissue proved his own diagnosis not without foundation.

“Well, that settles our Arizona vacation,” he smiled over a momentary regret.

Another hospital memory is the day Jack said to me:

“I went last night to the Macdonough to see the De Mille-Belasco production of ‘The Woman.’ And take it from me, my dear — that play never would have been written if I had not written ‘Theft.’

I made him return to his Ranch and his writing, while I devoted every atom of energy to recuperating. In a letter of July 24, he begs me to “Come home right away; I’ll cut out the Jinks this year if you will . . . I read your ‘First Thoughts’ and two of your later letters, to Eliza last night; and both she and I were in tears.”

But it was more than six weeks from June 19, before I was fit to travel. It was a deep obligation I put upon myself, then as ever, to take the best care of my health, that I might be “on deck” as much as possible. Jack’s content depended so vitally upon the brightness of his household.

The first day that I was able to mount a docile horse, Jack, bestriding his cheerful outlaw, led me from the idyllic site on the Beauty Banch where we had decided to build, into the forested ravine of Asbury Creek. To my astonished exclamation at sight of a new bridle trail engineered upon its precipitous sides, he answered:

“It’s the ‘Charmian Trail,’ Sweetheart, and I saved it for a surprise.”

From that time on, similar trail-making was continually in progress, until there came to be miles of these green zig zags within the boundaries of the Jack London Ranch, opening up breath-taking views of the surrounding valleys and mountains.

In addition to “The Benefit of the Doubt,” the author, not yet in humor, from his aggregation of past troubles, to settle down to sustained effort, turned out some light stuff — an airplane story, “Winged Blackmail”; “Bunches of Knuckles,” containing a conversation, with a skipper, just as I had heard it aboard the Snark; “When the World Was Young,” with a double-personality motif. Then he penned what he called a picture, or, rather, two successive pictures, entitled “War,” which he deemed one of his gems; and the story “To Kill a Man,” which he also greatly liked. All the foregoing are bound in “The Night Born.”

“Told in the Drooling Ward,” a delightful study of the amiable egotism of a high-class idiot’s psychology, but which Jack had difficulty in selling, was another 1910 production; also “The Hobo and the Fairy,” a dainty and wholesome tale, both of which will be found in “The Turtles of Tasman.”

While in Oakland, Jack had been called upon by “Bob” Fitzsimmons and his wife, Julia, and for their use in vaudeville he wrote a rather inconsequential skit, “The Birth Mark,” which appears in “The Human Drift.” The Fitzsimmonses visited us the first week in September, and “Bob,” to the joy of Glen Ellen, forged a mighty horseshoe in the village smithy, which adorns a door frame of our cottage. Next was begun “The Abysmal Brute,” hardly more than a long-short story, but subsequently published as a novelette — a cleanly conceived bit of propaganda for the purifying of the prize-ring. Before the year was out, Jack had made a start on a series of a dozen Alaskan yarns, which are built around the central figure of “Smoke Bellew.”

Very little public speaking was heard from him that year — a Memorial Day address in Sonoma, a lecture in Oakland, and another, in December, in the Auditorium Annex at Page and Fillmore Streets, San Francisco, in protest at the current murders of educators and reformers in Russia, in Japan, and, in particular, Spain’s inexcusable execution of Francisco Ferrer.

YACHT “ROAMER”

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXIII The End of 1910

AT last, at last, Jack’s search for a suitable inland yacht ended in mid-October, when a friend discovered for sale the thirty-foot yawl, Roamer, once the fast sloop Iris. A personal try-out convinced us of her eminent qualifications, despite her ripe years which were rumored to be at least forty. We schemed a better galley for’ard, installed a little coal-stove for winter warmth and cooking, and had the hull and rigging overhauled.

For it was meant that I, from my salt heredity, and practice both before and after marriage, should be Jack’s true shipmate. None so keenly as I, perhaps, can appreciate his own words, written on board the Roamer in Sonoma Creek, the next spring:

“Once a sailor, always a sailor. The savour of the salt never stales. The sailor never grows so old that he does not care to go back for one more wrestling bout with wind and wave. I live beyond sight of the sea. Yet I can stay away from it only so long. After several months have passed, I begin to grow restless. I find myself day-dreaming over incidents of the last cruise, or wondering if the striped bass are running on Wingo Slough, or eagerly reading the newspapers for reports of the first northern flight of ducks. And then, suddenly, there is a hurried packing of suitcases and overhauling of gear, and we are off for Vallejo where the little Roamer lies, waiting, always waiting, for the skiff to come alongside, for the lighting of the fire in the galley-stove, for the pulling off of gaskets, the swinging up of the mainsail, and the rat-tat-tat of the reef-points, for the heaving short and the break-ing out, and for the twirling of the wheel as she fills away and heads up Bay or down.”

With Nakata and the cook, Yamamoto (an intellectual socialist later abstracted back to his native islands by the long arm of the Mikado), we set sail on October 17, from Oakland, across the Bay of San Francisco, “than which,” to quote my captain, “no lustier, tougher sheet of water can be found for small boat sailing,” for an up-river cruise.

Two days earlier I had found upon my desk a fresh, skyblue volume entitled “Burning Daylight,” into which. Jack had woven so much of our daily blessedness. This is the inscription:

“A sweet land, Mate Woman, an almighty sweet land you and I have chosen — our Valley of the Moon,

“Your Own Man,

“Jack London.”

My old, old dream come true — to see with Jack this stage of his youthful performances! He looked much like his piratical early self, I fancy, in blue dungaree and the time-honored “tam” pulled down, with a handful of curls, over his sailor-blue eyes that roved incessantly for changes and found comparatively few. I had the privilege, at Vallejo near the yacht club, of seeing the meeting between Jack and an old crony or two — as Charley Le Grant, so often mentioned in “Tales of the Fish Patrol”; and another time, threading Sonoma Creek’s delta of sloughs to the tuneful sound of blackbirds’ throats, into our own valley within eye-reach of our own mountain fastnesses, to Jack’s unbounded delight we came upon a venerable, rickety little French Frank of Idler memory, keeper of a duck-hunting club shack. Debonair and gallant Frank still was, though all his jealous fires and furies had long since been drawn. And ludicrously tactful was he, before “Jack’s lady,” in references to the wild ‘90s he and the lady’s husband had shared in common. Having convinced him I was no ogress his tongue loosened in spicy reminiscence, abetted by a bottle of red wine.

What a blissful passage it was, this first Roamer voyage, only to be surpassed by the second and the third, and so on. “Snarking once more,” Jack named it; honeymooning upon the face of the winding waters; fanning into Benicia to the sunset melody of birds in the rushes; running across that “large, draughty, variegated piece of water,” Suisun Bay, where the great scows we had both learned to respect came charging down, grain-laden; picking our way in the “Middle Ground” channels, and gliding close-hauled into Black Diamond “in the fires of sunset, where the Sacramento and the San Joaquin tumble their muddy floods together” — to port the hazy, Aztec unreality of the tawny-rose Montezuma Hills palpitating in the westering sunlight; to starboard the low brown banks with green upstanding fringes of rustling tules; all about red-sailed fishing boats homing for the night; and old Black Diamond’s lazy water-front and lazier streets sloping upward toward the Contra Costa Hills; and, in the morning, Diablo crumpled against an azure dome.

Once, off a tree-plumed island in the pictureful delta, a gay “red-light” barge, with its painted ladies, anchored within hailing distance of the Roamer. “ I’ll take you aboard to-morrow evening early, if you’d like,” Jack volunteered; and I was glad enough for a new experience with him. But the next day he was invited by the principal, Professor Vickers, to speak to the school children of the town across river, which he consented to do, in a brief talk on “The Call of the Wild”; and when we were once more aboard, he said soberly:

“I guess we won’t go adventuring next-door to-night, Mate — it might offend the good people ashore if they found it out. They wouldn’t understand how you and I go about together. Also, there might possibly be folks on the barge whom you’ve seen about and who wouldn’t want you to see them there. So we’ll just give it up and wait for a better chance.

I think it was about this time Jack illustrated his belief in the innate goodness of even very low unfortunates, by telling me how, when he was a mere stripling, his pockets had been rifled by one of the women companions of his associates up-river. “But do you know — she only took exactly half of what I had,” he said. “I never forgot that. It was bad, of course, but it was only half-bad at worst, and showed she had some heart of softness left in her toward a mere boy like me.”

It was while we lay off the town of Antioch, in this region, that Jack recounted to me the laughable story of how he and his mates netted a score of illicit fishermen; but that is for all to read — ”Charley’s Coup,” in “The Fish Patrol” group.

Together we came to know the rivers and serpentine sloughs, with their foreign inhabitants, as Jack had known them aforetime; only, now, the dwellers upon and behind the willowed dykes had become increasingly foreign. This gave rise to many “human drift” speculations upon my skipper’s part, later used in “The Valley of the Moon.” I am reminded in passing, the young hero and his comrade wife run across a pseudo Roamer and its master and mate.

Among other features new to Jack, was the growth of the Japanese-Chinese village of Walnut Grove. Here we poked about among tortuous roofed streets lined with gambling dens, stores, geisha houses and tea-shops, entertained in these latter by the pretty toy-like women, with saki, and raw bonita soaked in soyu sauce, to the debatable harmony of samisens.

Jack, snugly at anchor, his work punctually disposed of, read intensively upon agriculture, devoured a plunder of countless old books he had been collecting upon western Plains migration, and laid deep and deeper foundation for Ranch development and stock-raising. “I devoted two solid years,” he has written, “to the study of the migrations toward the West of America, being moved to it perhaps by the fact that my people came from the Middle West.”

Everywhere he used his eyes, bent upon seeing what the other fellow was doing in the vast fields of California, making me the willing repository of his plans as he worked them out. Often, while I shopped or walked or rowed in the skiff for exercise, he drifted about the towns, meeting men, going to their farms, inspecting cattle and horses. He bought a draft-mare, June, a striking creature, black and proud, who came to live on the Ranch and become the mother of several colts.

Jack was living so fully — a life balanced with essential interests and endeavor and simplest of amusements. The test, I am sure, he undertook deliberately. To him relaxation consisted not in cessation but in change of thought and occupation. The vessel all in order, laid against a river-bank for the night, he would sit, placidly smoking in the blue dungarees and old tam, humped comfortably on deck, his soft-shod feet hanging over the rail, line overboard for cat-fish or black bass. Meanwhile he would argue for long with Nakata or the cook, in all the ardent simplicity of a sailor in the fo’c’s’le, some trifling point — say relative sizes of fish each had hooked the day before; or there would be a jokingly heated disagreement as to the payment of a penny wager a week old; or the three, stopping to catch laughing breath, feverishly laid new bets against the evening’s basket. Jack was always ready to chuckle over it all, should I remind him of his reversion to fo’c’s’le methods.

To a Sacramento reporter at this time, Jack said: “I am a Westerner, despite my English name. I realise that much of California’s romance is passing away, and I intend to see to it that I, at least, shall preserve as much of that romance as is possible for me. I am making of ‘The Valley of the Moon’ a purely Californian novel it starts with Oakland and ends in Sonoma.”

He was an unfailing wonder to me, my Jack London — my mentor — his continuous cerebration to every impact, mental, physical, awake, and asleep; always young, always old, always wise, with "a bigness of heart that kept conscience with itself"; efficient dreamer, harnessed to his work for the sake of Heart's Desire, which included the discharge of so many responsibilities — penalties of patriarchy. How vivid he rises, standing on his handsome legs at the wheel, those robust, muscle-rounded shoulders leaning back upon a howling norther before which we fled, tense, caution on hair-trigger, uncapturable thoughts behind his deep, wide eyes, lips parted, and that great chest expanding to breeze and effort. One man has written me: "I remember Jack London above all by his beautiful chest. It was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen."

December saw us home at Wake Robin, trying to come abreast with work that had piled up during the cruise. "Poor little woman! She has to pay for her fun!" Jack turned from his desk to where I was filing letters and notes. "But it's worth it!" Again, suddenly wheeling around, "How good it is to have a satisfying love. Mate, I love you more than I ever did in my first days of madness. It's different but I love you more." And he had a way of blowing involuntary kisses in the air when I spoke to him. How good it all was! I am reminded of Browning's:

"There's your smile!
Your hand's touch! and the long day that brings
Half-uttered nothings of delight."

While we spent hours poring over the Wolf House drawings, twenty men were setting out twenty thousand addi-tional eucalyptus. And Jack's funds, despite our boundless plans, were sinking low.

"Well, I've got five hundred dollars in bank, and an eight-hundred-dollar life-insurance premium due," he announced. "Doesn't balance up very well, does it? But never fear — 'Smoke Bellew' will pull us even with the bills. Guess we'll accept that invitation from Felix Peano to move into his Los Angeles house for a month. It'll be a nice winter change, and I can forget my creditors easier at a distance, while I'm slaving to pay them!"

He always referred to "Smoke Bellew" as "hack-work," strictly excluding the last story, "Love of Woman," which he strove to make one of his best. The "hack" turned out to be a great favorite with the male readers of his average public. It would seem that Jack London's work, third-best, or worse, could never be bad. Light it might sometimes be, comparatively unimportant; but it was impossible — reservoir of learning, and imagination, and emotion that he was — that he should ever turn out trash.

The Cosmopolitan later asked for a continuation of "Smoke Bellew," and the while Jack considered its popularity in light of means to keep up the enormous expense of house-building, I suggested sailing Smoke and Shorty into the South Seas for a series of adventurings, for he had been longing again to dip his pen into tropic colors. This he considered; but all at once he threw up the whole thing:

"I'm tired writing pot-boilers! I won't do another one unless I have to!" And in March, the twelve off his hands, he went at the David Grief series, these romances, cracker jacks," Jack referred to them, being issued as "A Son of the Sun."

So January, 1911, was spent in the Westlake District of Los Angeles, while "Smoke Bellew" went forward, and chance visitors were regaled with readings from the manuscript. We took along our two Japanese, and had my Aunt, now Mrs. Edward B. Payne, and her husband, as house-guests. It was a very jolly arrangement — we, accepting our sculptor-friend's roomy house, he, our hospitality of table and service. Jack's thirty-fifth birthday was celebrated in this pleasant cottage. Besides entertaining, our amusements numbered much attendance at the theaters, swimming in the city's salt tanks, a captive balloon ascension, canoeing on Westlake hard by, feeding the swans and reading aloud, and a run to Santa Catalina Island. On this last excursion Jack said my Aunt and her husband must go with us she having visited the big island with my own mother long before I was born.

One of my commissions while south was to look up a suitable four-in-hand of light horses for a summer trip to northern California and Oregon. I succeeded in obtaining a trio, more or less ill-assorted, which was shipped home. Upon our own return, Jack had up from Glen Ellen his old friend "Bill" Ping — mentioned in more than one of his — books to consult about reinforcing the Winship two-seated "cut-under," for the heavy going, and the proper harness. Mr. Ping, one of the splendid passing type of old-time stage-drivers, who in his day had tooled his six on the Overland Trail, was sent to San Francisco to order harness; also a whip with an eleven-foot lash which Jack, after a surprisingly short trial, learned to crack with a brave report, but seldom used.

Mr. Ping being busy with his own affairs, another stage driver, of a younger generation, was hired to put the team in shape and instruct us in the gentle art of guiding its four mouths and sixteen wayward feet. Jack, as always, mastered the thing perfectly, knowing, move by move, precisely how he did it; while I, to his laughing, almost mocking admiration, "got the hang of it" by way of emulation and my "horse instinct," doing it well one day and not so well the next. The Lily Maid was one of our guests in March, and Jack never appeared to better advantage than in his kindness to her, still pleasuring in her mantle of yellow English hair. For her health was but poorly, and when she could not come to table, with Jack's own hands Nakata's nicely appointed trays were carried to one of the little woodsy guest-cabins we had built.

We had formulated a printed slip that frequently went into Jack's correspondence along with socialist and agricultural folders, reading as follows:

"We live in a beautiful part of the country, about two hours from San Francisco by two routes, the Southern Pacific and the Northwestern Pacific.

"Both trains (or boats connecting with trains) leave San Francisco about 8 a. m.

"The p. m. Southern Pacific train (boat) leaves San Francisco about 4 o'clock.

"The p. m. Southern Pacific train can be connected with at 16th Street Station, Oakland, also.

"If you come in the afternoon, it is more convenient for us if you take the Southern Pacific route, as it arrives here in time for our supper. We usually ask our guests to dine on the boat, if they come by the Northwestern Pacific.

"Write (or telephone) in advance of your coming, because we are frequently away from home. Also, if we are at home, word from you will make it so we can have a rig at the station to meet you.

"Be sure to state by what route, and by what train, you will arrive.

"Our life here is something as follows:

"We rise early, and work in the forenoon. Therefore, we do not see our guests until afternoons and evenings. You may breakfast from 7 till 9, and then we all get together for dinner at 12:30. You will find this a good place to work, if you have work to do. Or if you prefer to play, there are horses, saddles, and rigs. In the summer we have a swimming pool.

"We have not yet built a house of our own, and are living in a small house adoining our ranch. So our friends are put up in little cabins near by, to sleep."

I have come across a verse by Foss, which so expresses Jack's deep heart of hospitality that I steal space to quote:

"Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men goes by — —
The men who are good and the men who are bad,
As good and as bad as I. I would not sit in the scorner's seat,
Or hurl the cynic's ban — —
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man."

He was always buying blankets; never so happy as when all the beds were full. His heart was soft, and all were treated alike — friend, stranger, of whatsoever estate. I remember the pleased look that crossed his face when I related how, while I was buying a riding suit in a San Francisco shop, the fitter said to me:

"Mrs. Jack London? — Oh, I heard something so lovely about your place — that no one, even when you people are not home, is ever allowed to go away without being entertained!"

It was in October Jack placed in my hands the story of his wayward flight across the continent, "The Road." The inscription is one of his most generous:

"Dearest My Woman: —

"Whose efficient hands I love — the hands that have worked for me long hours and many, swiftly and deftly, and beautifully in the making of music, the hands that have steered the Snark through wild passages and rough seas, that do not tremble on a trigger, that are sure and strong on the reins of a Thoroughbred or of an untamed Marquesan stallion; the hands that are sweet with love as they pass through my hair, firm with comradeship as they grip mine, and that soothe as only they of all hands in the world can soothe.

"Your Man and Lover," Of course many calls were made upon Jack's time and purse. And "purse" reminds me that he never carried other than the slender chamois gold-dust sack that he had learned to use in the Klondike. He was obliged to work out circular letters to cover such exigencies as he was unable to comply with. Here is an example in a copy of a letter written to a young writer:

“In reply to yours of recent date undated and returning here with your Manuscript. First of all let me tell you that, as a psychologist and as one who has been through the mill, I enjoyed your story for its psychology and point of view. Honestly and frankly, I did not enjoy it for its literary charm or value. In the first place, it has little literary value and practically no literary charm. Merely because you have got something to say that may be of interest to others does not free you from making all due effort to express that something in the best possible medium and form. Medium and form you have utterly neglected.

“Anent the foregoing paragraph; what is to be expected of any lad of twenty, without practice, in knowledge of medium and form? Heavens on earth, boy, it would take you five years to serve your apprenticeship and become a skilled blacksmith. Will you dare to say that you have spent, not five years, but as much as five months of unimpeachable, unremitting toil in trying to learn the artisan’s tools of a professional writer who can sell his stuff to the magazines and receive hard cash for same? Of course you cannot; you have not done it. And yet you should be able to reason on the face of it that the only explanation for the fact that successful writers receive such large fortunes is because very few who desire to write become successful writers. If it takes five years work to become a skilled blacksmith how many years of work intensified into nineteen hours a day, so that one year counts for five, — how many years of such work, studying medium and form, art and artisanship, do you think a man, with native talent and something to say, requires in order to reach a place in the world of letters where he receives a thousand dollars cash iron money per week?

“I think you get the drift of the point I am trying to make. If a fellow harnesses himself to a star of $1000 a week he has to work proportionately harder than if he harnesses himself to a little glowworm of $20 a week. The only reason there are more successful blacksmiths in the world than successful writers is that it is much easier, and requires far less hard work, to become a successful blacksmith than does it to become a successful writer.

“It cannot be possible that you, at twenty, should have done the work at writing that would merit you success in writing. You have not begun your apprenticeship yet. The proof of it is the fact that you dared to write this manuscript, ‘A Journal of One Who is to Die.’ Had you made any sort of study of what is published in the magazines you would have found that your short story was of the sort that never was published in the magazines. If you are going to write for success and money you must deliver to the market marketable goods. Your short story is not marketable goods, and had you taken half a dozen evenings off and gone into a free reading room and read all the stories published in the current magazines you would have learned in advance that your short story was not marketable goods.

"There's only one way to make a beginning, and that is to begin; and begin with hard work, patience, prepared for all the disappointments that were Martin Eden's before he succeeded — which were mine before I succeeded — because I merely appended to my fictional character, Martin Eden, my own experiences in the writing game.

"Jack London."

The next letter here appended, he used to send out before he came to decide to read every manuscript that came his way, and encourage the sending to him. He found that in refusing to avail of such opportunities, he was depriving himself of just so many chances to study the wayward seed of man:

"Every time a writer tells the truth about a manuscript (or book), to a friend-author, he loses that friend, or sees that friendship dim and fade away to a ghost of what it was formerly.

"Every time a writer tells the truth about a manuscript (or book), to a stranger-author, he makes an enemy. "If the writer loves his friend and fears to lose him, he lies to his friend.

"But what's the good of straining himself to lie to strangers?

"And, with like insistence, what s the good of making enemies anyway?

Furthermore, a known writer is overwhelmed by requests from strangers to read work and pass judgment upon it. This is properly the work of a literary bureau. A writer is not a literary bureau. If he is foolish enough to become a literary bureau, he will cease to be a writer. He won't have any time to write.

"Also, as a charitable literary bureau, he will receive no pay. Wherefore he will soon be bankrupt, and himself live upon the charity of his friends (if he has not already made them all enemies by telling them the truth), while he will behold his wife and children wend their melancholy way to the poorhouse.

"Sympathy for the struggling unknown is all very well. It is beautiful — but there are so many struggling unknowns, something like several millions of them. And sympathy can be worked too hard. Sympathy begins at home. The writer would far rather allow the multitudinous unknowns to remain unknown, than allow his near and dear ones to occupy pauper pallets and potter's fields.

"Sincerely yours,

"Jack London."

In extreme cases, I have known him to send out copies of Richard Le Gallienne's "Letter to an Unsuccessful Literary Man," a document that leaves little to be said.

Requests for money usually found his responsive. He used some discernment, however, declining to be " touched " too often by certain men who took him more freely for granted than he liked; with some others, he blithely kissed hand to his dollars when telling me of his gifts and "loans." And —

"Oh, well, Mate — money's only good for what it can buy. It buys me happiness to buy happiness for others. Don't hoard money. You can't take it with you when you go into the dark" — that was a concept he had inculcated for all time into the rapidly simplifying philosophy that had followed his "opening of the books." The disadvantageous, soul-belittling influence of poverty had been practically banished for the span of his existence on this competitive planet. I smile as I handle the cancelled checks of many dates, to hear that husky, half-apologetic: "They've all dreamed their dream. Who am I not to help, now that I can. And these have realized their dream only a little less, after all, than the rest of mankind. . . . But it does give me joy," with a smile into my eyes, "when what my money does for others receives some little appreciation of the pleasure or comfort it buys!"

In mid-April the Roamer all "ship-shape and Bristol fashion" from Nakata's deft brown hands, sailed on a month's cruise, while Eliza superintended architect and house construction, and colts and calves increased, and orchard and house-vineyard took root in the gentle terraced amphitheater behind the rising red-stone pile that was to be our castle.

During this absence, Eliza saw her chance to buy, at a price her brother had been waiting for, a section of some twelve acres right in the heart of the big Kohler ranch already ours, on which stood the buildings large and small of the old Kohler and Frohling winery of other days, all in sad but picturesque disrepair from neglect topped with the Great Earthquake.

This out-door life was the best thing that could happen to Jack, who had been suffering from one severe cold after another, coupled with repeated sties on his eyelids, and much nerve-rack from his teeth — this last, of course, being nothing unusual. I marvel to think of his eternal patience with pain; probably he was never, for years at a time, free from pain or at least discomfort. And there was his ever present joy in my own good teeth — ”Woman!” he would cry, “you don’t know how lucky you are!”

Before launching out for the coast on our northern trek, Jack asked me, what I had been anticipating for some time:

“Do you think we could fix up that old cottage on the Kohler, to live in until the Wolf House is done?”

It was a six-room, one-story frame house once occupied by the heads of the winery, and now in a shocking state. Subsequent Italian lessees of the vineyard had made a veritable dump of it and its old garden of foreign trees and shrubbery. I was dubious enough to reply:

“Honestly, I don’t think we can.”

But my partner had, for once, evidently made up his mind before consulting me, and presently I entered into the spirit of making the place as attractive as possible. Besides, it was, at worst, a consummation of our mutual desire to live in the very center of the Ranch activities now afoot.

The cottage came to be our sleeping and working quarters, including two guest-rooms, while in one side of the enormous winery were built others; workmen’s family quarters being created on the other, and a new roof shingled over all.

Quite a ceremonial it was with the Japanese, getting ready Jack’s bedside table for the night. Sharp pencils there must be plenty, scratch pads, big and little; many packages of “Imperiales,” and fine Korean brass ashtray; his ubiquitous little red-velvet pin-cushion with pins driven in to their heads; files of papers and magazines neatly arranged on a lower section of the table, according to dates, the latest on top; a dish of fruit, or, lacking fruit, of some favorite dried fish or other “dainty.” And finally, there were no less than three bottles of liquid of one sort or another. For Jack always maintained that it was a mercy, with his almost uninterrupted smoking, the alcohol he consumed, and certain sedentary spells when he took little exercise, that he “breathed through the skin” — by which he meant free perspiring. Therefore, he drank almost excessive quantities of this and that favorite beverage — grapejuice, buttermilk, and endless draughts of water.

These, according to the whim, in cool thermos bottles, stood in an inviting row on the bedside table, and were always empty in the morning.

Papers and magazines, ravished of whatever in the way of information he wished to file as notes, were flung upon the floor; letters, envelopes, all small matter that was finished with, he carefully crumpled lest Nakata or the house-boy should put them back where he would have to handle them again. Sometimes, dropping off to sleep, cigarette between his lips, he singed his curls, exploded a celluloid eyeshade, or burned small round holes in sheet or pillow. As for pillows, he liked them large, three of them, with a very small one for that left elbow which supported him so many, many hours.

This dwelling was the only one of his very own in which Jack London ever lived — and in which he continued to live until he died within its old book-lined walls. It was into this house we moved upon our return from the four-horse adventure, which began in early June and ended in early September, 1911.

FOUR-HORSE DRIVING-TRIP

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXIV 1911

FROM Glen Ellen to the Coast, and north to Bandon, Oregon, was our route; thence inland to Medford and Ashland, and southward through the interior — fifteen hundred miles altogether. Jack wrote forenoons before starting out, and our average drive was thirty miles. “Four Horses and a Sailor,” written primarily for a Northern Counties promotion object, published in Sunset Magazine (collected in “The Human Drift”), is based upon this summer’s journeying, as is also the wagon-travel episode in “The Valley of the Moon.”

We did not camp. Before ever Jack London and I came to “hunt in pairs” he had had enough “roughing” to last out his life, and our migrations were invariably attended by one or more helpers. Nakata packed, put up lunches, on hottest afternoons hoisted the big brown sunshade that clamped to the back of the driver’s seat, kept our “gear” in order and sometimes assisted in harnessing the antic four-footed quartet, I typed Jack’s manuscript on a small machine, and he steadily ground out the wherewithal for our subsistence as well as the big things left doing at home. Watching him in this phase, exhilarated with the youth and beauty of the summer world of out-doors, I caught myself thinking of him as driving a team of stars; for he harnessed the very stars to do his work — his lines reaching to the stuff of which the stars are made.

But sometimes, as more often on days when I was not so bright as usual (I drove little, finding my strength was not quite equal to the weight of those long leathers in my hands for hours on end) furtively I watched Jack’s face; and there was that in it I had never seen before the death of our child. It made more difference to him than any one, even I, then realized. On the evenings of such days, our goal reached, horses properly housed, and hotel or farm accommodations made sure, he was most likely to drift off alone down-street, looking for “inhibitions” — a word he worked a great deal at the time of — man-talk, new association, and an extra glass or two. When he would return, there was a more than common glisten in his always lustrous eyes, a trifle of feverishness in the telling of what he had picked up in the way of local information or backwoods lore, a super-enthusiasm about the newest antlers of elk or deer for which he was bargaining, or the bearskin so-and-so had promised to bring for my inspection.

For a period of two or three years after the baby's loss, which included a second unlooked-for disappointment, my health was not of the best; but I was wary to avoid giving any possible impression to Jack that I linked my lack of freshness in any way with maternal misfortunes. I had early discovered that the slightest suggestion of such a thing irritated him instantly and beyond sympathy. He was as automatically touchy about this as he was concerning hysteria. Not much would he say, but his few words had showed me that he harbored a deep-rooted, resentful opinion that the majority of womenfolk held their men responsible for all the consequences of reproduction!

Beside a number of the David Grief episodes, Jack wrote among other stories "The Prodigal Father," and "By the Turtles of Tasman" (both in "The Turtles of Tasman"), "The End of the Story," and "The Mexican" (in "The Night Born").

Much he enjoyed the horses — their characters and ca-prices: Prince, his sugar-tongue hanging out on all occasions, Prince the "Love-Horse," Jack called him, with his laughing eye and friendly hoof-shake and the pocket-seeking of his mischievous muzzle; Sonoma Maid, the excellent and wise; Gert the irascible outlaw who yet did her work and came to bury all the other three when Jack himself had gone; and Hilda, variously dubbed the Rabbit, the Bat, the Manger-Glutton — Milda, who asked nothing of anybody but to let her do her work and win to her supper by the least circuitous route.

For the sake of any who would care to follow in our track, I briefly outline the same. But first, there was a trial-trip of one week from Glen Ellen to Petaluma; thence to Olima on Tamales Bay; Point Reyes, and the Light House, Willow Camp on the coast; from there on the wonderful coast drive and across Mt. Tamalpais' feet to Mill Valley. The long uninterrupted trip was as follows:

Glen Ellen to Santa Rosa, and Sebastopol where one sees Luther Burbank's flowering and fruiting fields, to Bodega Corners; Duncan's Mills; Cazadero; Fort Ross, on the coast, of historic interest; Gualala — where one may fish and boat on the river; Greenwood; Fort Bragg; Hardy;

Usal; Moody's; Garberville; thence along Eel River, where deer come down to drink, to Dyerville. From this section the tourist may cut inland to the Hoopah Indian Reservation. This we did, by automobile and saddle, coming out down the Trinity and Klamath Rivers in a dugout with Indian canoemen to Requa by the sea; next, to Fortuna, with fishing and hunting and old Indians along the way; Eureka; Trinidad; Kirkpatrick's. Crescent City, in the northwest corner of California, where one gathers jewels, agates of marvelous colorings, in the ocean sands; on to Smith River Corners, and into Oregon, to Colgrove's Mountain Ranch; Laurence's on Pistol River; Gold Beach, on Rogue River; Port Orford; Langlois; then to Bandon, Coos County, whence we struck inland to Coquille; Rock Creek; Murray's, Roseburg; Can-yonville; Wolf Creek; Grant's Pass; Medford, with a motor trip to that marvel, Crater Lake; Ashland; down into California again, — Montague; Weed; driving within sight of grand Mt. Shasta; Dunsmuir; Le Moyne; Kennett; Redding; Red Bluff; Orland; Willows; Maxwell; Leesville; Lower Lake; Middleton; Calistoga — and home to Glen Ellen by way of the Petrified Forest.

One sparkling afternoon on the Bay of Eureka, I had an opportunity to observe my husband in a crucial moment of judgment and fearlessness. What a ringing challenge that man was to the courage of all (except the spiritually deaf, dumb, and blind), who were privileged to know him! How seldom he ever reached into his own vocabulary for the word fear! Burned into my memory is something he said early in our comradeship:

"I think I am really afraid of but thing — being hit over the head from behind. — Oh, not from fear of death — never! But to live with my brain addled — it's unthinkable!

It was our pastime, while visiting in a luxurious houseboat, to go fishing or to sail down the harbor and, if not too rough, cross the bar and cruise a little way toward the blue Pacific horizon that was forever a receding Paradise. On this day, tacking up-bay on the satin swell, a big rakish power-launch, full speed ahead, came bearing down upon us. There was plenty of room, and Jack, knowing the sailboat's traditional right of way, naturally kept on his course, expecting to pass the other to port. But her pilot kept right on for us, and to avoid being sliced squarely amidship, Jack in a flash spun his wheel to starboard, to bring her up into the wind, while the other, who must have been dreaming, suddenly with terrified face swerved to his left and took with him the starboard corner of our stern rail.

It all happened in the space of three seconds, but there remains, snap, snap, one of the sharpest moving-pictures in my experience. At the last least instant, with the high knife-edge bow right upon us, I, the first law of existence automatically superseding any sentimental desire to be cloven in twain even in company with the spouse of my bosom, had jumped just forward of where the crash would occur. Turning as instantly as I landed, ready to dive if necessary, I took in Jack's incredibly quick action with the wheel, his cool, calm, fighting face, and heard, saw, and felt the splintering of the rail.

"You did exactly the right thing," he reassured my tentative inquiry. "I had my hands full, and did not have to worry about you. I had to stay at the wheel and do the only thing that could be done to save the sloop. . . . Some day, though," and he more than once warned me of this, "my curiosity in seeing the thing through is going to be my finish!" But I always banked on his mental and steel-springed physical alertness to save himself just short of annihilation.

So I rested fairly comfortably upon his opinion that I had done "the right thing," until one day in his Bad Year, 1913, when he, in a dreadful depth, brought up the action. It followed upon something I had just done. We had been driving behind a wicked roan gelding, of irreproachable breeding, who bore an evil reputation for running away and smashing things — several on the Ranch, including Eliza, had at various times been thrown out and injured. The horse, this afternoon, had balked, and plunged sidewise, cramping the buggy until the wheels cracked. Unless I could have the reins in my own hands, I preferred being in Jack's care to any driver I knew — so expert had he become. But we were in a tight pinch, and without warning I sprang to the ground and to the animal's head to straighten him out. It was wrong, I admit, and mortifying to the driver. I should have stayed beside him and "seen it through," as I had before and many times afterward. It was the capstone to a series of vexations to Jack, ending in one of his superb "disgusts" with the universe of which I was an important part; and he brought up the Eureka incident.

"But I know I am not a coward, I remonstrated to an accusation he had not voiced but which smoldered in his purple eyes. "And you know it, too, you! I've nerves, but never cowardice!"

Jack's retractions and apologies, generous if rare, were among the sweetest of the silken ties that bound us forever. And, looking back over it all, the two utterances of his that now mean the most to me are his early "You are more kin to me than any one I have ever known," and this next, apropos of I know not what, in the last conversation we were ever to hold — suddenly, as if from a full heart: "Thank God, you are not afraid of anything!"

Once more, on September 6, we took up the round at home — replete with all that love, keen interest in life, work, and friends could bring. Jack began the day with a few moments in the garden:

"Gorgeous, tropic flowers!" he would murmur delightedly over the flaunting goldfish, their long tails waving like lazy veils in the sunny water of the pool, its fountain bowl an old Indian stone mortar. "And how I love the all-night drip and plash of your tiny fountain!"

He cared less for flowers in general than most men do, or are willing to own. His was joy in a single bloom. If he was caught momentarily by a mass of blossoms, it would be for a definite idea connected with it — perhaps that it was in my arms, and gave me pleasure; or that it enhanced me in some way. I can see him at his desk near a doorway, writing, interrupted by the flame of my basketful of poppies or rosies crossing his vision, coloring the sunlight. And the glance would rest, and dwell, and soften — his deep-gray, wide eyes full of the love that was my wonder and glory and guerdon.

Everything was in full swing on the Ranch, and guests' voices were in the air. "This is what I like," Jack would pause in a dictation to me at the typewriter. While we are together, carrying on our work, they can do whatever they want. Look I — love the rail out there under the oak, with our horses tied, saddled and waiting. And there go two lovers on horse back for the trails; and a married pair for a hike. Others are playing cards in the living room, where I shall join them as soon as this letter is finished. . . And if you don't mind, Mate," his eyes begging the favor, "you take the crowd that's coming for dinner, over the Wolf House trail, because I have just got to get even with George for the walloping he gave me at pedro last night! — Listen to those girls chattering up in the fig-tree — and who's practising on the piano? Mate, do you really know how I love it all!" To this day, as a friend said, the house "still breathes of the sweetness of you two toward each other."

Some notes for future work, made about this time, illustrate how simple was his initial preparation:

“Series of Stories.

“Why not write a superb short story from each of a number of diverse places, and collect in book-form under some suitable title that conveys the idea ‘from all the world.’? ‘The Purple Sea’ might make a good title.”

“Novel.

“Why not a series of past and future novels? For No. 1, I could use ‘Before Adam;’ No. 2, ‘Christ Novel;’ No. 3, ‘The Middle Ages;’ No. 4, some great proletarian-bourgeoise conflict story of the present; No. 5, 1 could use The Iron Heel; No. 6, The Far Future, the perfected and perishing human race.”

“Farthest Distant.

“Radium engines, etc., for energy — See Atoms and Evolution, in Saleeby’s The Cycle of Life.

“Collision of dark body from out of space (not large), one-tenth size of sun. And earth learns of coming by perturbations of outer planet. Then rush the earth away from the sun. “When earth travels through space, all must be inclosed; and they must use stored heat of some sort. The oceans freeze, etc. A great preparation. See Direction of Motion chapter by Herbert Spencer. The initial momentum they have. The momentum in a straight line that is altered to a curve around the sun by the pole of the sun. Nullify the pole of the sun, select the right moment, and sail off into space to reach nearest neighbor sun. They make some mistakes the first time. Something goes wrong with the machinery, and they dash around the second sun like a comet and return to the old sun. They figure it out on the way, do not check at old sun, and like a comet return to new sun, where they succeed in checking.”

The material for the Christ novel above referred to Jack had been compiling for years; but in the Christ episode of “The Star Rover” he concentrated his long-sought data. When he read me, aboard the Roamer, that chapter of “The Star Rover,” I asked him what of the Christ novel. “This will suffice,” he said. “I shall not do the longer work.”

Jesus Christ and Abraham Lincoln were names of praise upon his lips. Tolstoy said of Lincoln that be was a Christ in miniature. Jack London: “The two men I reverence most are Christ and Lincoln,” and spoke of them with shining, worshipful eyes. And Stephen French sends me the following from a letter Jack wrote him: “I don’t know whether Jesus Christ was a myth or not; but taking him just as I find him, just as I read him, I have two heroes — one is Jesus Christ, the other Abraham Lincoln."

Our main meal was at 12:30. This hour better suited our work and Ranch plans generally. At twelve the mailsack — a substantial leather one bought before we sailed on the Snark arrived at the back porch, and Nakata brought it to me to sort the contents. In the half-hour before dinner, Jack had glanced over the daily paper, read his letters, indicated replies on some of them for my guidance, and laid the more important ones in their wire tray, one of many such nested on a small table beside the Oregon myrtle rolltop desk where he transacted business. I always endeavored to have his ten pages of hand-written manuscript transcribed — an average of two and a half typewritten letter-size sheets — before the second gong (an ancient concave disk of Korean brass) belled the fifteen-minute call to table. Jack implored me to be on time to the minute's tick, and attend to seating the guests, so that he might work to the last moment.

In many minds, I am sure, still lives the vision of the hale, big-hearted man of God's out-of-doors, the beardless patriarch, his curls rumpled, like as not the green visor unremoved, pattering with that quick, light step along the narrow vine-shaded porch, through the screened doorway and the length of the tapa-brown room to his seat in the solid red koa chair at the head of the table. "Here comes a real man!" was the prevailing sentiment.

How he doted upon that board with its long double-row of friendly faces turned in greeting, ever ready with another plate and portion! It was his ideal — carried from old days with the Strunskys'. "In Jack's house," one writes me, "I met the most interesting people of my life and of the world." And perhaps, while we fell to our portions, before his own was tasted he would read aloud newspaper items or newly received letters; or he might launch out in a fine rage of his eternal enthusiasm, upon some theme that claimed him, or strike into argument, whipped hot out of his seething brain and heart. Always there was in him the potent urge to gather all about him into knowledge of whatever claimed his attention. Years only added to his capacity to function in every potentiality. There were no numb or inactive surfaces in his make-up, mentally, physically. He reached in all directions, to play, to work, to thought, to sensation. His face, smiling, cracked with thought-wrinkles, weather-wrinkles, laughter-wrinkles. At no time did he have more than a few gray hairs; and his hands, to his pride, were very firm, showing no dilated arteries. "One is as young as one's arteries," he was fond of saying. How he would pluck at the air with those young hands, in unconscious pantomime groping for illustration for the means that no man born of woman has ever been able to command by which to express a complete concept.

Many were more impressed by his eyes than any other feature or characteristic. “All steel and dew,” one man wrote of them. “All sweetness and hidden ferocity . . . as though they masked profound and terrible secrets . . . eyes common enough, mayhap, when the world was young. . . . Alert, as though to him life were a constant battlefield.”

They were eyes that look into one, and through and beyond — as if what they saw on the surface, in one s own, led his into the deeps behind, into the brain, conscious and unconscious and far behind again into the intelligence of the race down through all the drift of the human. Gray, or iris-blue, they were when mild, the large pupils giving them a splendid, brilliant darkness; but let him be angry, instantly they went cold, metallic, the enormous pupils narrowing to bitter points.

He had a way, sometimes, in common with his sister, of apparently not listening while his eyes looked through one, patently seeing beyond. “You haven t heard a word!” I would remonstrate. “Oh, yes, I have,” he would return, and repeat a sentence or two. “That doesn’t prove anything,” I would challenge. “No, my dear, I will give you your whole argument,” and he would disprove my assertion.

Another likeness of Jack’s to Eliza was expressed by a woman who had heard her speak in public: “When others get up and talk, we listen to what they say; when you get up and talk, we do what you say!”

How his “living language” of colloquialisms and slang pierces time when we call up the arguments that flew about the table like missiles in a game! “Come on, now — let’s tell sad stories of the deaths of kings! Go to it; the day is young, and we’re a long time dead!” “Oh, it’s only my shorthand, he would mourn, cutting short to a conclusion, speaking to blank faces, perhaps. Or, when he had perhaps let himself go on some subject near his heart: “You miss me you miss me totally,” in distressed tone to a solemn egotist who had dared his logic; or, “There you go trying to pass the buck; now stick to the point.” Or, “Ah ah but you’ve missed the factors. Connotations, man, factors!” Then, “Still well, but not so well.” Parsimonious was a word he enjoyed for a time: “I’m parsimonious!” he would cry in a discussion, “You’ll have to show me I don’t believe anything till I'm shown. I'm parsimonious!" "But to get back: As I was saying when I was so rudely interrupted," with a twinkle; "I'm afraid I was always an extremist; so don't mind my violence." And suddenly, in the face of non-understanding: "I'm boring you?" "Piffle!" he would exclaim, full-tilt; and irascibly, Silly! You mean to say, then . . . ?" Showing up the muddlement of a wrathful and impotent opponent." No? Then what do you mean to say? We must agree upon a working vocabulary for a basis." "What do I think about so and so? Well, if anybody should drive up in a hack and ask me, I'd say . . . " When something was well said or done, he might praise, "Fine and dandy!" or "Booful, my dear!" But always he hewed to the core of the truth of things, and his meanings were clear to any who would clearly listen. Some poet has expressed my own sentiment:

". . . well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily
The thing they seem to mean."

Once Jack wrote me: "Remember, dear, not only in being true to myself am I true to you, but before I knew you I was true to myself. I have always been true to myself. This is my highest concept of right conduct. It is my measure of right conduct."

One prejudiced person, who rather against his will had been brought by a mutual acquaintance, had this to say:

"That friend of yours, Jack London, is all and more than you said. He made me love him even when I quarreled with him. Why, he is a marvel — I never saw his like."

Another remembered Jack, the comrade-man, arm around the shoulder of a friend:

"At times he was funnily boyish, then in a flash splendidly exalted, pouring forth in his glad way his knowledge of life, his love of life, his sympathy with life, his creative force, his open-minded embrace of the most vital in life; he, life itself, impregnated by ripeness of thought and feeling most unusual for his years. And still again: "What a warmth there was about this dear fellow! Sunshine followed him everywhere. . . . Even in his harshest moments, his fine, open smile would burst forth. Never have I seen such faith, resultant of research and understanding, coupled with such doubt of the purely dreamy optimistic or the unproven."

To the youngsters of his race, entranced with his genuineness and utter lack of swank, “He was a prince!” And one associate honored him with this: “Jack London was a great man; but his friends loved him just the same.”

So much for his own countrymen; and how I wish the English, in greater numbers, could have known him personally. One, who had and appreciated that privilege, said: “I had to come to his own land to hear a word in his disfavor — though I will say it came not from any who knew him at first hand.”

One illuminating little flare of Jack’s burns up in memory. Some one at table used the contraction “Frisco,” and a very young miss rushed headlong into trouble with her host: “Oh, don’t say Frisco! Say San Francisco!”

Jack landed full wroth into the breach:

“Let Frisco alone, you! We love the western tang of it, we oldsters who knew her by that name before you were dry behind the ears! — Frisco, Frisco . . .” he rolled it sweetly on his tongue. And mingled in the fiber of his tone were scorn and pity for the greenness of her who jeered at what seemed to her the common crudity of a sobriquet the very glorious roughness of which symbolized what the old town had stood for of romance in the days Jack London had known, so dear to all who knew it then. He would seldom go far out of his way to pronounce correctly a foreign word: “You know what I mean, don’t you? — that’s the main thing!”

Despite that Jack London was an excellent subject, and was widely photographed, many have written to know of his appearance and proportions. Among some forgotten souvenirs I have come upon a typewritten record, made up at Jack’s suggestion, of our comparative measurements. His are appended:

Near the end of the midday meal, Nakata would lay beside my plate a note-pad and pencil, upon which it was my daily task to figure the horses, saddles, bridles, and riding costumes of transient guests from two to a dozen — and, in season, as many swimming-suits beside. Or, the four-in-hand would be wanted, and in his wide stiff-rim Stetson, white soft shirt and khaki trousers, Jack, noisy, gay, swinging the jingling, fleeing leaders hither and thither in his blossoming valley, would be seen pointing out the beauties of it to a packed wagonful of rapt, if sometimes apprehensive, men and women and children, enlarging to them upon the character and idiosyncracies of each horse. A neighboring editor saw him — ”Big, boyish, warm-hearted . . . Over our hills with the sunshine of his favorite vale shining upon his head he often rode or drove in carefree style the beautiful horses he loved. His manner cordial, his greeting cheery, it was little wonder he became the pal of all, and no matter how big his triumphs he was never the conceited genius but always the genial friend and natural neighbor."

As Jack himself put it: "I'm so afraid of slighting somebody I ought to recognize in the neighborhood, that I'm going to speak in good old country fashion to everybody I meet!" which became his habit; and many the prim provincial lady, loitering in her dusty old buggy under the hot midsummer sky, who sat up suddenly from daydreams to stare, first, at the abounding good cheer of the robust young driver avalanching by, and tipping a gray cowboy brim so respectfully; and, next, to melt into smiles under the warmth of the neighborly apparition.

That year the Sierra Club made its first pilgrimage to the Jack London Ranch. Also it marked the employment, of Jack's first paroled man from the State Penitentiary at San Quentin. Jack's principles in general, and in particular his own Buffalo experience, had for years made him eager to give a chance to those unfortunate enough to have come inside the forbidding gray battlements so often seen from the deck of the Roamer. For years, on our place, these men came and went. As for his opinion of ameliorating prison conditions, he wrote:

"I have little faith in prison reform. Prisons are merely a symptom. When you try to reform them, you try to reform symptoms. The disease remains."

One sojourner with us, as houseguest, was Ed. Morrell, whose astounding experience, growing out of his connection with the notorious outlaws, Sontag and Evans, was the motif for Jack's subsequent novel, "The Star Rover." I well recall Jack, fairly frothing over the straitjacket scars Morrell had been revealing, lurching in, spilling over with emotion, to tell me what he had seen.

While the foregoing busy season went forward, the Bay newspapers had Jack attending the birthday party, In Monterey County, of some one's lapdog — "Fluffy Ruffles!"

Sometimes guiding our friends on the steep trails, or riding hand in hand to look over progress at the Wolf House, we talked of the big schooner that some day we should rig out and start for another round-the-world voyage. There was never any hint of dullness in the present nor fear of future boredom.

Four books were issued in 1911: “When God Laughs,” “Adventure,” “The Cruise of the Snark,” and “South Sea Tales.” Of the inscriptions I choose two this, in the spring, from “When God Laughs”:

“My Own Dear Woman:

“The years come, and the years go, our friends come and go, some few of them stick — and you and I stick better than any or all.”

From “South Sea Tales,” in the fall:

“Dearest Mate-Woman:

“And can we say, after all these years, that we have ever been happier than we are happy right now!” There was much to do — every waking moment. The thing was, to find time to sleep; yet we regarded that as rather a leisurely year — perhaps because we did not go very far from home. My diary records: “Mate works in the evenings. He is so very busy. It makes my own head tired when I think of all his head must keep track of.”

It was in the late afternoon of October 10, 1911, that Jack returned on horseback from Glen Ellen, two miles from the house, and announced with solemnity that he had just cast his vote for “Woman Suffrage. “Woman Suffrage,” he expounded, “means Prohibition; and that is why I voted for it. The normal woman,” he went on, “has no liking for alcohol; through all the ages John Barleycorn has hurt her heart. All that will be changed when she wins political power.”

This scene stands forever in the Foreword of “John Barleycorn,” the book in which Jack London focused his sensations and viewpoints in regard to alcohol.

Some time after its publication, he received the letter below:

“Oakland, California, May 27th, 1916.

“Mr. Jack London,
“Glen Ellen, Calif.

“Dear Friend:

“I take this opportunity in forwarding these few lines reminding you of the coincidences which happened in Our Half Day along the Oakland estuary.

“I understand that my name Spider Healy, along with Soup Kennedy, Boche Pierrati, Joe Goose and M. J. Hynold has been heralded all over these United States and the rest of the world and that you have realized an abundance of wealth both in moving pictures and a book known as John Barleycorn. If you were to visit the old haunts of the oyster pirates of the present time you would find in a very decrepid condition. Financially and otherwise Soup Kennedy who you described in your book as a worthy opponent of Scratch Nelson has been following the sea as a means of livelyhood. But as time and tide wait for no man he has over-looked an opportunity of acquiring a vast wad. Many times we have sat upon the deck listening to the strains of the chanties, hoping that a time would arrive when we would again get together either to talk of the old times or to make arrangements to go salmon fishing to Alaska or sealing to the Bonin Islands.

"I was surprised on more than one occasion to have individuals acost me on the street asking if my name was the Spider Healy of John Barleycorn fame. On answering in the affirmative I was reminded that my part of your John Barleycorn was one of most importance.

There is not a day passes that tourists from the far east and all parts of the United States do not stand and gaze with astonishment at the old relics of the old St. Louis House and the first and last chance saloon where you have gained renown and fortune. A few nights ago at the foot of Franklin Street at which place you weighed anchor many a time I sat and listened to the strains of some of the Chanties of which you are quite familiar. Again it brought to mind the old day when you and I heard the same songs. (Lorenze was no sailor) (Blow the man down) (Whisky for my Johnies) (we'll pay Pattie Doyle for his boots) and (Bound for the Bio Grande and sailin Home to merry England town.)

In conclusion the main object of calling your attention to these facts is to let you know the conditions that now exist with the pirates whose names have made you fames, in that book & plan known as John Barleycorn. Johnie Hynold and Joe Yiergue are the only ones who accumulated a wad and I dare say buried it like a dog did his bone. To get a quarter from a turnip, is like extracting the same from these men.

"Johnie Hynold is estimated according to Bradstreet's to be worth about one hundred and sixty thousand dollars and Joe Viergue as you know as accumulating his fortune on our hard earned coin.

I belief that Soup Kennedy has seen his last days as a seaman. Strength gone, health gone and eyesight failing what was once a big rough rovish stalwart fellow has dwindled to a mere nothing.

I was talking to him a few days ago and in asking him what the matter was, he told me that a saw bones told him that his life was going to nicker out in a short time. He stated that it was not necessary for the old boy to put him on. On more than one occasion I felt my heart slip a cog or two. Now you know Jack when your heart slips a cog or two there is no possible way to replace it by good smooth running gear. Soup is very much enthused when I told him that I was about to ask you for a small bit of assistance. I do not know what you are estimated to be by Bradstreet or Wall Street but I certainly would be ever grateful if you generously would be aroused to such an extent that it would be possible for you to loosen up and forward at once a check with a substantial amount to pull Soup and myself out of a hole.

"Now if you want to be a good fellow and have your name heralded as such along the water front where your childhood days were spent with the rest of the pirates you will please grant this request at once.

"Your old pals,

"Soup Kennedy,

"P. S. — We are living at present 416-2nd St. Oakland, Cal., and will await your earliest convenience, a reply, also that substantial check, Joe Goose is on his last legs.

"Spider."

As Jack did not invariably let his left hand know what his right hand did, I do not know what his reply, if any, was to the foregoing.

Jack's aversion to spending Christmas in the prescribed way caused many an outing to begin on the twenty-fourth of December. And so, that date in 1911 saw Mr. Kisich opening a bottle of champagne in his "Saddle Rock," to speed us on the way east. We slept aboard the Western Pacific Limited that night, headed for New York City. Enroute on the Denver and Rio Grande we stopped over at Salt Lake City to foregather with my friends the Harry Culmers; and among other trips, Jack and I went on a little pilgrimage to Fort Douglas, where in the '60's my father, Captain Willard Kittredge, had served under General Connor, his duties including those of Provost Marshal of the beautiful, romantic city. The New Year was celebrated in New York. And this time," Jack assured me, "we'll go home by way of Cape Horn."

Almost any passage in our companionship I contemplate with more pleasure than that 1912 winter in 'Gotham." The trip had been one of our happiest; but, once off the train, and his enthusiasm expressed over the new Pennsylvania Station, it was the old story. The city reached into him and plucked to light the least admirable of his qualities. Out of the wholesome blisses of his western life, he plunged into a condition that negated his accustomed personality. Nine-tenths of the two months time we made our headquarters in Morningside Park East, he was not his usual self. During the other tenth, cropping up in unexpected moments, the manifestation of his dearest self and his love were never warmer nor more illuminating.

Coincident with our arrival, he warned that he was going to invite one last, thoroughgoing bout with alcohol, and that when he should sail on the Cape Horn voyage, it was to be "Good-by, forever, to John Barleycorn." To me, the promised end was worth the threatened means; and my comprehension and acceptance of his intention were appreciated. But I could not fail to regret that new friends should know and base their judgment of Jack London upon this unfortunate phenomenon of him.

In that Jack London, drunken, was not as other drunken men, the majority of those who contacted with him during a period of what he termed his "white logic" deemed they knew the true, sober Jack London in all his panoply of normal brilliance. Never, in all my years with him, did I see him tipsy. An old acquaintance of Jack's, asked concerning this phase of the author of "John Barleycorn," laughed: "I have known him more or less intimately for ten years, and I have never seen him intoxicated." And Jack himself: "I was never interested enough in cocktails to know how they were made." Except in rare cases when a single drink acutely poisoned his stomach, upon him the effect of alcoholic stimulus was to render preternaturally active an already superactive mind. Keen, hair-splitting in controversy, reckless of mind and body, sweeping all before him, passionately intolerant of man or woman who challenged his way — all this and more was he in his "white logic" extreme. This unnatural state, combined with the depression New York invariably put upon him, was dangerous. And there was wanting — and how were others to know? — the splendid, healthy charm of the big man he was, the finer potency of his moral integrities, the square truth of his fundamental faiths and their observance. Much, at the time, I sensed, watching the calendar day by day as the day of release from New York approached; more, beyond guesswork, afterward came to light. But I knew my man, and, content or not, waited, remembering that I had never yet waited in vain to welcome back the sane and lovable boy. More and more deeply am I convinced that it is not the irks of the wayside that should count in one s valuing of events or individuals. I knew my man. I could only wish that some others had had such vision for crises like these in Jack London's contact with his kind.

"New York is one wild maelstrom," he saw it that year. "Rome in its wildest days could not compare with this city. Here, making an impression is more important than making good. And I take an item from the N. Y. Evening World, which throws light upon another observation of Jack's:

"In this great city woman does not care for woman friends. She will boldly tell you so. She does not trust them. . . . The average so-called wise woman of New York City will not introduce her attractive men friends to her women friends.

There comes to me, across the years, something for many years forgotten. He had said to me, very early in our marriage: "Don't forget what I have been and been through. There may, mark, I only say may come times when the temptation to 'drift' — for an hour, or a day, will stick up its head; and I may follow. I have drifted all my life — curiosity, that burning desire to know. Yet, I have knocked the edge off my curiosity about a lot of things. Still — " in his honesty he anticipated the possibility.

Once, after the baby had been lost to him, I asked innocently, "Where been?" To which, with a teasing look, he replied, "Oh, pirooting, my dear — I'll tell you, maybe, when we're in our seventies!" But long afterward, when some association of ideas called for it, there would leak out, among other hinted adventurings, the story of a hard-fought game of cards in a water-front public house in San Francisco, or a weird experience of one sort or another with some nameless waif he had elected to trot around with for an afternoon or evening.

Referring to John Barleycorn and his mental condition in New York, I once asked him if it would not have been better for me to withdraw from him at such times — even to letting him go alone: "No," he reassured. "You did exactly as you should have done. If you had left me, I don't know what I should have done."

Another chance affair he divulged when in reminiscent mood. One afternoon, in the Forum Cigar store in Oakland, he ran across a man who knew an old Klondike acquaintance, whose address he gave. Some mistake was made, and Jack found himself in a curious little pocket. A door, answering his ring, let him into a hall at the foot of a narrow stairway. From the upper end a handsome, flashy woman called down:

"Hello, you Jack London!"

"How do you know I am Jack London?" he countered in his surprise at her expectant tone, and mounted several steps to have a look at her.

The woman peered down at him, then drew back, fear and puzzlement in every line and movement. To cut the tale short, it appeared that the lady had been keeping company for some time with a man who called himself Jack London, whom she had quite believed was the simon-pure article enjoying a double life. She assured Jack that he bore a strong resemblance to her friend.

Once, that winter of 1912 in New York, he had said with smoldering eyes: “If you ve got the nerve, I’ll take you drifting! It would be great fun. One lark would be to board a subway, any subway, and run to the very end of the line; get off, start in any direction, and ring the bell of the first house that took our fancy. Say ‘Good evening,’ cordially, to whoever came to the door, and get inside, talking a blue streak, acting as if we were old friends. Of course, they’d think we were crazy, and the more familiar we got, the more excited they. The police would be summoned — ” he broke off in a giggle that was the only familiar thing in his manner, “ — but what’s the use?” he finished gloomily. “You wouldn’t be game for a mess like that! but think of the fun!” and he regarded me quizzically, as if calculating the experiment he was making upon the stuff of my character. I flatly declined to be lured by this or kindred prospects. He knew I would go with him anywhere and back again, but not when he was in this extreme, unnormal state. So ho resumed his “pirooting” — I really do not know how to spell the word, and the dictionary is no help.

A wonder it is that nothing happened to him. Settling in a barber s chair one day, he noticed the man was shaking as with violent ague:

What’s the idea?” he inquired kindly. Made a night of it?”

“Several,” the barber chattered under his breath, glancing warily around. “Don’t know how I’m g-g-going to shave you or anybody.” And Jack, with the razor making oblique stabs against his windpipe, sensing the wielder was in danger of losing his job, told him to “go through the motions, anyway,” and he would make no fuss.

“But, man,” I expostulated, “you might have had your throat cut!”

“Oh, well,” he said, “he was in an awful state, and I couldn’t get up and go out and give him away to the whole shop. I didn’t enjoy it a bit, I assure you!”

I have speculated if he ever thought to liken his act to that of Robert Louis Stevenson, who is reputed to have accepted and smoked a half-consumed cigarette from a leper, rather than cause affront. Jack had often brought up that story to illustrate his conception of gameness.

He would not take care of himself. Coughing badly, week in and week out, he declined to wear other than thin "low-cuts" with sheerest of silk socks. "Don't bother I'll be all right," was all that I, or the small fatherly Nakata, could elicit.

The New York World, during the Equitable Life fire, sent him a badge that gave him the freedom of that precinct of ice and flame; but I, who should have liked to share this real adventure, was barred by my sex.

Dozens of plays we attended together; a dozen or so books Jack read aloud to me; and there was a trip to Schenectady, where Frank Hancock, whom we had met in New Orleans, introduced us to Professor Charles P. Steinmetz, genius of the General Electric, and took us through the leviathan plant; for Jack was always sharp-set to study the enormous achievements of the human in harnessing force. At Schenectady we were guests of Dr. and Mrs. Cyrus E. Baker. In their home Jack treated his soul to an orgy of music, for Mrs. Baker had been on the grand opera stage, and her husband was a masterly accompanist. Another out-of-town week-end was spent at Short Beach, Connecticut, with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Wilcox — Ella Wheeler — of our Jamaica memories.

Attending a tea at the Liberal Club on January 27, 1912, given in his honor, Jack was asked by a socialist if he was a "Direct Actionist." Jack regarded his questioner cautiously for a moment, then asked him to define what he meant by the term. "One who favors strikes and the like," was the definition:

"Yes, I am a direct actionist, as you call it. Direct Action, as I understand it, is teaching us the true fighting spirit, which is going to be the greatest asset the people of the masses possess when the great struggle finally comes between them and their present masters. There is a hard time coming. We shall have a big fight, but the masses will conquer in the end, because they form the stronger and more stable body. The story of the struggle will be written in blood. The ruling classes will not let go until it is."

Some one asked him to give his ideas on the subject of universal peace. He replied that there would come a time when all human contention would be settled amicably with the aid of referees, but that we must use our fighting spirit to bring about this condition. We must fight to stop war.

“What will you do with the fighting spirit when this ideal state comes to pass?” some one asked.

“Dig potatoes with it!” Jack shouted vehemently. “Write books with it, govern with it. By turning this energy, now wasted in building up great armaments with which to kill, into civilized channels, civilization would mean twice what it does now.”

Of writing on his novel, “The Valley of the Moon,” he did almost none; but he transacted considerable business with publishers. He had left the Macmillans, and contracted with Doubleday, Page & Company for “A Son of the Sun.” The Century Company brought out the next four volumes — ”Smoke Bellew Tales,” “The Night Born,” “The Abysmal Brute,” and “John Barleycorn.” In the fall of 1913, with “The Valley of the Moon,” Jack resumed relations with the Macmillans, and continued thenceforth with that house.

One writer whose company greatly illumined our sojourn in New York was Michael Monahan; and Jack and Richard Le Gallienne got together most pleasantly. Several afternoons were set aside for receiving callers. Alex ander Berkman came to see Jack, for the purpose of enlisting his aid in the matter of a Preface to his “Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist.” The two “scrapped” amiably, and Jack wrote the Preface, but, in the nature of their radical differences, it was repudiated by Berkman and his associate anarchists. I shall include the Preface in some future collection, together with Jack’s comments upon Berkman’s refusal, written several years thereafter. “Alexander Berkman,” I quote from the latter document, “could not see his way to using my introduction, and got some one else to write a more sympathetic one for him. Also, socially, comradely, he has forgotten my existence ever since.”

Late that year, asked by an Oakland Tribune man if, with his interest in the economic aspect of the world, he did not find New York the best place for his observations, Jack cried:

“Great Scott, no, no! I must have the open, the big open. No big city for me, and above all not New York. I think it is the cocksure feeling of superiority which the people of the metropolis feel over the rest of the country that makes me rage — when it does not remind me of something near home. Next to my Ranch is an institution for the feebleminded. When some of the inmates who are not as feeble minded as the rest, are through with their chores, one or another of them will shake his or her head and say with great thankfulness: “Well, heaven he praised, I’m not feebleminded.”

“And yet,” he concluded benevolently, “I feel that way about New Yorkers only when I see or think of them collectively. When I meet them one by one it is another story.”

This reminds one of what R. L. S. said, as remembered by Robert S. Lysaght, to a similar question:

“It is all the better for a man’s work, if he wants it to be good and not merely popular. Human nature is always the same, and you see and understand it better when you are standing outside the crowd.”

CAPE HORN VOYAGE

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXV 1912

FOUR of us sailed around Cape Horn, from Baltimore to Seattle Jack London, wife, Nakata, and an engaging fox terrier puppy, three months foolish, who was destined to play an important part in Jack's household till the end of life. "Possum" we named him, in memory of a rough-coated little Irish gentleman we had known in the South Seas — brother to dear Peggy of the Snark, immortal in our hearts. The fox Possum figures in "The Valley of the Moon," which was resumed and completed on the Cape Horn voyage, and also in "The Mutiny of the Elsinore," this book being an outgrowth of that experience on a wind jammer. Besides "The Valley of the Moon," Jack made copious notes for "John Barleycorn," and wrote a short sea story, "The Tar Pot," published serially as "The Captain of the Susan Drew," and not yet collected in book form.

It was a very subdued, much-himself Jack London who stopped over with me in Philadelphia enroute to Baltimore to take ship. And Philadelphia unconsciously perpetrated a classic joke on itself: without knowing, it entertained for three days at the leading hotel "America's most advertised writer." It seemed so strange that I had no accustomed duties to perform in the way of answering telephone calls from reporters in the lobby! For not one ever discovered the sprawling signature in the hotel register. The silence of the brotherhood of scribes was certainly not due to any boycott on Jack London, for they had hitherto appeared unanimously kind to his work.

The morning of our sailing from Baltimore, on March 2, 1912, as I sat alone writing my farewell letters home, the door opened and I heard Jack in colloquy with Nakata. I caught the words, in a giggly whisper, "Wait till Mrs. London sees me!" Something told me what I should behold, and I refrained from raising my eyes until obliged to do so. He had long threatened to do it, but until then had withheld the act because of my pleading. His head was as naked as a billiard ball. I looked him over with assumed poise, and resumed my writing. Jack tittered. I said "Yes, I see; but it isn’t funny. Jack tittered again. “But it isn’t funny,” I repeated, beginning to lose hold of myself. “Oh, now, don’t feel badly, Mate Woman,” he began, for my voice was becoming unsteady, I know. “It is such a good rest for my head — I often did it in the old days, at sea and around.”

It was the last straw in a hard winter, to mix a metaphor. I wept uncontrolledly for nearly three hours. There is a photograph of the pair of us, taken that day beside Edgar Allen Poe’s monument, in which a very heavily coated Jack London, hat pulled down most unbecomingly over a chill scalp, stands with a woman who tries to hide swollen eyes and forlorn mouth in a new set of very handsome red fox. Jack looked apprehensive when I remarked that my own head needed a rest, and started for the scissors. But I only sheared off eight inches. I did not again look directly at Jack until there was at least half an inch of hair on his head.

The Dirigo, 3000 tons net registered, seventeen years old, had been the first steel ship launched by the famous Sewalls of Bath, Maine. She was technically a four-masted barque. Jack chose the Dirigo over a much newer clipper for the reason that she carried skysails — fast becoming obso-lete. “And how I’d like to take you around the Horn on a ship with moonsails!” he lamented the impossibility.

Captain Omar Chapman, of Newcastle, Maine, was one of the fast disappearing type of lean New England aristocrat, who always presented himself on deck immaculately attired, his especial hobbies fine hats and cravats. His quiet Yankee humor extended to these little foibles and a frank contempt for the common clay of modern deep-water sailors. The calm kingliness of his character was in cool contrast to that of the Mate, Fred Mortimer, hot-hearted, determined, all-around efficient driver of a crew that was composed, with a few exceptions well along in years, of landlubbers and weaklings.

Imagine our surprise to learn that Captain Warren, of the Snark, had applied for the berth of second officer, although in ignorance of our presence in the ship. As surprising was the fact that the man who was accepted bore the same name!

We paid $1000.00 for our passage, and, since such vessels carry no passenger license, had to sign on the articles, Jack as third mate, myself as stewardess, and Nakata as cabin-boy. It must have been attributable to Yankee thrift that, when it became known we traveled with a man, no cabin boy was taken along. Therefore many duties aft fell to our private servant, over and above his service to Jack and me, and Nakata put up with the gratuitous injustice with good grace rather than create unpleasantness.

The Dirigo stood out to sea in an abating icy gale that had held her bound for exasperating weeks. Rough and bitter cold it was, but nothing mattered to me except the fact that land was left behind, in prospect long months of blissful sea life with its cleansing simplicities.

In all the one hundred and forty-eight days, our eyes rested on land but once — or in one brief period of two or three days — literally land's-end, the end of the earth, the island of Cape Horn itself, with the continuous mainland and islands. Even Diego Ramirez, sinister finger of stone to the south of the Continent, became visible in the war of water and cloud.

"Cape Horn on the starboard bow!" on May 10, was the most exciting tocsin, next to a savage war conch, I had ever awakened to.

"Gee — you folks are lucky!" Mr. Mortimer exclaimed, as, wrapped in heavy coats, we clung to the poop-rail and actually gazed upon the Cape. "I tell you, I've made this passage more times than I can remember, and I haven't laid eyes on that there island since 1882! The fog has never raised." And the day before, conditions being favorable for the risky feat, the Captain had been able to reduce time by passing through the Straits of Lemaire, instead of going around Staten Island. It was exciting business, made more breathless by sight of a great wreck, standing stark upright in her doom of shallow water off the mainland.

Our farthest south was Lat. 57° 32', Lon. 67° 28'. And though we had some little difficulty "making westing" and were driven back time and again, our traverse "from 50 to 50" was but fifteen days, which is almost better than a master mariner dare hope.

"How could you endure such a life!" women a-many have said to me. There was no single moment of wearisomeness to either Jack or me. Think of the industrious working hours — even I, suddenly inspired by one of the anecdotes from Captain or officers, wrote a sea yarn, "The Wheel," afterwards published at a round price by a newspaper syndicate. He had been much surprised and delighted when, without warning or comment, I laid my manuscript with his night-reading. And after I had benefited by suggestions from him: "It's quite good enough for you to go ahead and market!" he advised to my astonishment.

For at least three hours daily, on deck in fine weather, otherwise sitting below on his high bunk with a bright "angle-lamp" at either end, Jack read aloud while I embroidered a new supply of fine lingerie. We read everything from Chinese lore to Robert W. Chambers. “And for once, my companion grinned, “I’ve time to read Sue’s ‘Wandering Jew.’ I never could ‘see’ the time for it before.”

Oh, the vivifying salt air, and the sea-food — good old “salt horse” and beef tongue, and the cook’s inspired concoctions of tinned dainties! Captain Chapman had brought along a well-stocked hencoop solely because there was to be a woman aboard; but after he had been taken mysteriously ill the day before sighting the Horn, the fresh eggs had been a boon. Indeed, he lived many weeks because of the whites of eggs I was able to serve him; but he died two days after arriving at Seattle — and alas, before his wife could come to him from Maine. Cancer of the stomach, the doctors diagnosed. I spent a whole night, in the hotel, sadly enough, but glad of my detailed notes, writing Mrs. Chapman a log of the voyage from the day her husband was stricken.

So placidly and promptly his old self was Jack at sea, that I, slowly recuperating from acute nerve-strain, contemplated him with the amazement women must ever feel toward certain phases of their menfolk. My diary exclaims in wonder: “I do believe the man has utterly forgotten New York and its abominations!” But later, when I had hurt a finger, and developed a “runaround” that held me sleepless through nights of pain, his devotion seemed to carry a new note, and there were moments when I saw float up through the deeps of his eyes a knowledge of all that those weary eight weeks had meant to me.

The Master and Jack gathered fuel for everlasting fun at my expense. Two long connecting staterooms had been fitted up for us, that we might have separate bunks. It was to general systemic upset that I attributed an annoy-ing attack of hives that followed sailing. With tin upon tin of cream of tartar from the ship s galley my offended stomach was dosed; I tried sleeping all over the vessel aft — in the main cabin, and even in the chart-room, where I seemed to rest the best. And the consumption of cream of tartar and sympathy in the cabin went on apace. Then a suspicion began to dawn in the Captain, which precipitated an investigation of my freshly painted wooden bunk. The secret was out. All the scrubbing and painting and fumigation had failed to dislodge the last of a nest of the ubiquitous bed-bug that a ship is never able quite to eradicate. A broad grin was evident from stem to stern of the Dirigo the day a young sailor had finally eradicated the pest, and I never heard the last of my “hives.”

Would you pursue beauty indescribable, go to sea on a wind-jammer. I know no more exalted moments than when, a hundred miles off the coast of Brazil I have set my face to the four quarters of the heavens, upon which were painted as many astounding sunsets, with a heavy moon lifting to spill thick silver in a fading copper sea; or have clung in the eyes of her, the great steel body of the ship plunging enormously onward among the night-green rollers of her moonlit highway, her orderly forest of masts swaying, swerving, to the weight of full sails — gargantuan pearls, hard and bright, strung to the loftiest spars of the golden masts, white-gleaming in the very witchery of moonlight that transfigures all their majesty into the immateriality of a vision. Masefield knows it all:

“I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old chant of the sea,
And seen strange lands from under the arched white sails of ships.”

How could I live such a life? Woe is me — how can I live without it!

Night after night, fair weather or foul — and it was all of a magnificence, dead calm or great guns blowing — I took a note-book and pencil to the poop hatch, and painted, as well as I could in words, the sunsets and their mirrored reflections on the vast dome. Bits of these “sketches” are in “The Mutiny of the Elsinore.” On a day I may come upon the rest among Jack’s own notes, and drop an hour from a busy dozen to find my feet again treading the deck or the fore-and-aft bridge of the Dirigo, stately and beautiful moving house of ocean, now, along with our old friend the Tymeric, at one with the slime. For the Huns got them both. I would that mermen and mermaids could people them for ay!

For exercise we boxed lustily, trained and played with the puppy, and climbed into the “top” of the mainmast — the first foot-hold of the same above deck, reached by precarious, lurching way of the shrouds from the rail. In Jack’s pocket was a book, in mine my embroidery. Here, remote, ecstatic, above the “wrinkled sea” and the slender fabric of steel, we lived some of our finest hours, enthralled by the recurrent miracle of unbored days, love ever regenerate, and contemplation of our unwasted years.

Once around the Horn, Jack took to hooking albatross, catching quite a number. Some were liberated, but several he kept. I still have the skins — twelve feet from tip to tip, if I remember aright.

One of his activities was pulling teeth for the crew — to say nothing of assisting Possum to shed her puppy-molars which, in lack of normal food and bones, were troublesome in letting go. For Jack had not forgotten to bring along his Snark dentistry case.

The first news of an almost forgotten world in five months was of the Titanic disaster, and, next, that our old acquaintance, President Alfaro of Ecuador, and his son (a West Point man) had been murdered in Quito and their headless bodies dragged through the streets.

And would any one know what Jack London thought of “enduring such a life,” half a year away from the land spaces of the world:

“Mate,” he said in all earnestness, as the dear, gray, battered hull towed up Puget Sound, looking pensively at the sailors aloft making all snug, I wish it had been a year, or years! — You remember, don’t you? how happy I was stocking up inexhaustible reading matter, in case we got driven back from the Horn and had to double the Cape of Good Hope, and on around the world that way!”

There had been one shadow upon me. One evening about three months out, at table, the Mate, Fred Mortimer, remarked:

“I never drink on duty. I drink very little anyway; just a glass now and again on shore with the fellows.” Jack replied, to my dismay:

“That is what I am now working toward. I have, by putting myself, for the first time in my life, where I am absolutely free for months of alcohol, with alcohol entirely purged from my system — in a position, also for the first time in my life, to review the whole question of alcohol with reference to myself and that system, and my brain. I have learned, to my absolute satisfaction, that I am not an alcoholic in any sense of the word. Therefore, when I am on land again, I shall drink, as you drink, occasionally, deliberately, not because I have to have alcohol in the economy of my physical system, but because I want to, we’ll say for social purposes. I never have been so happy in my life concerning alcohol with reference to myself, as I am right now this minute. It has never mastered me, I now know; it never shall. There is no danger of it mastering me.”

Although I knew he was giving us the honest content of his best conclusions in the matter, I also felt that I knew he would fail of the perfection of such a plan. He did. But what counts in the end — is the end, and near that end he drank but little. Four days in Seattle were spent, if the newspapers were to be trusted, in a lavender satin-lined suite, Jack attired exquisitely in pink silk pajamas and reveling in perfumed ablutions.

It was the old Puebla that carried us down the coast. There were two reasons for this voyage: one, we were not wearied of the sea; the other, it was feasible for us to have Possum with us more than would have been allowed by rail. The evening of August second we sat in the front row at the Oakland Orpheum, our seats ordered by wireless from "outside" the previous day. And it was one of our happiest homecomings, as will be seen.

For, the long voyage ended, we looked for another child in March — a child love-beckoned, to fill a heart's desire once bereft. But owing solely to the ignorance in which we had been left of certain conditions that should have been corrected before another birth was to be thought of, a second blighting disappointment was suffered within a month of our return.

Jack was sadly cast down, though he said little. But his somber state cropped out indirectly in a letter to me. He was entertaining a houseful of guests who had been with us when I was obliged to go into hospital for a few days. Some criticisms had been made of his supporting a trio or more of his pet hobo philosophers so picturesquely and sympathetically delineated in "The Little Lady of the Big House" as "the seven sages of the Madroño Grove." The title was a reminiscence of his delving into Chinese Legend on the Dirigo. He wrote me in a strain that showed a cumulative discouragement with human things that had led him to take agriculture so seriously:

"As for — — , I get more sheer pleasure out of an hour's talk with him than all my inefficient Italian laborers have ever given me. He pays his way. My God, the laborers never have paid theirs. The Ranch has never lost much money on X — — , and Y — — , and Z — — , and R — — , and T — — , and all the rest of the fellows who've had a few meals and beds out of me. The Ranch has lost a hell of a lot on the weak sticks of cash-per-day laborers who've battened off of me and on me. Don't forget that the Ranch is my problem. This one and that one never helped me. It was I, when I was ripe, and when I saw a flicker of intelligence in this one and that one, who proceeded to shake things down. What all these various ones have lost for me in cash is a thousand times more than the price of the few meals and beds I've given to my bums. And I give these paltry things of paltry value out of my heart. I've not much heart throb-left for my fellow beings. Shall I cut this wee bit thing out too?"

Yet right near this time, returning from a week's absence, he brought home with him a false friend of his early writing days, an old beneficiary who, for some fancied slight, had kept away from Jack for years and talked bitterly against him. I, at sight of Jack with this man in tow, was inwardly as mad as a much dampened mother-hen, although it was incumbent upon me to be courteous in my own house. Jack had taken me aside at first opportunity:

"The poor devil," he said, " — Mate Woman, be good to him; I know you will. It gave me pleasure to bring him. After all, he's only hypersensitive — I don't know what about, in my case; but at any rate, I decided to forget his silly treatment of me — it was only silly, after all."

Home from the Bohemian Club's High Jinks, Jack settled into his stride on the new book, "John Barleycorn," by some reviewers jocosely dubbed his "alcoholic memoirs" and "a bibulous epic." But the work, containing so much autobiographical material of serious portent, was far from humorous. Despite the author's sense of artistry that made it read like fiction and placed certain exaggerations to best advantage, during my typing, as it unfolded day by day, I was conscious of shock upon shock at the content of Jack's mind. Not only with regard to his past, far and near, was I impressed; but also by a realization of the restlessness and deep-reaching melancholy he suffered from the frustration of his dearest ambition — victorious fatherhood of my children. But our days together were happy, and here is what he wrote in my copy of "Smoke Bellew":

"I am still filled with the joy of your voice that was mine last night when you sang. Sometimes, more than any clearly wrought concept of you, there are fiber-sounds in your throat that tell me all the lovableness of you, and that I love as madly as I have always loved all the rest of you."

"Oct. 2, 1912."

Four hundred acres known as the Freund Ranch, had been annexed to the upper reaches of the Kohler, though Jack had to mortgage. The "Wolf House" was slowly mounting, story by story, Jack's big draft horses laboring four and four, from a quarry three miles across the valley and up our mountain, with the great volcanic boulders that were the same red-amethystine hue of the redwood logs also to be used in construction. "We gloat over the growing red arches," my diary reads; and to me, in Oakland, Jack wrote:

The stone house grows. Two four-horse wagons hauling lumber to-day 20 loads of it. Bar accidents, we'll be in our own home next fall."

And he goes on in the same letter:

"Miss you? I've got to have you away from me for a couple of days truly to appreciate you. To myself, all the time, these days, I keep swearing: 'She's a wonder! She's a wonder!'

"For you are. You're the best thing that ever happened to me.

"When are you coming home? I miss you so dreadfully."

In early November, I went again into hospital for an overhauling that included a minor operation. We made it up that Jack should hold my hand during the taking of the ether, so that we might "keep up the lines" to the end of consciousness. I seemed to come to the Edge of Things, when another moment would yield me the Riddle of the Universe. Poised on the brink, I hung in an agony of desire to fix firmly what I should grasp, in order to pass the priceless gift to Jack — possessed by an overwhelming knowledge of what it would mean to his brain. Then something snapped, and I knew nothing until I heard:

"She's gone, Mr. London," and I felt him relax his clasp.

"Oh, no, I'm not, Mate!" protested I. But that was the last thought until I came out.

Jack's daily calls, with their tea-parties for two, were a source of joy to me; and one day, blowing into my room full of news of the day, laden with magazines and books, he burst forth:

"I simply cannot tell you what these afternoons mean to me — how I look forward to them from day to day!"

Then he went on to tell how he had signed a five-year serial contract with The Cosmopolitan, for all his fiction. This, so long as he delivered the pledged amount of fiction, was not to interfere with any non-fiction he might write and sell to other periodicals. Hence, when the semi-autobiographical "John Barleycorn" appeared serially, it was in the Saturday Evening Post. This work, while it created a sensation, had no phenomenal book-sale. Jack laid the fact to the Post's enormous circulation, and vowed that the next time he sold anything to that weekly it must pay him a larger rate to offset the diminished book-royalties. As to the Post itself, he said:

"I hate the sight of it — because, forsooth, when I open a number I can't lay it down, and it takes too much time from my other reading!"

Once, at a dance in a Honolulu hotel, Cyrus Curtis, standing alone, was pointed out to Jack. “I’m going to have some fun — watch me!” he whispered. Stepping over to the great publisher, he said: “Mr. Curtis, I believe? — I’ve done some work for you now and again.”

The older man, little dreaming that this was the author of two of his most successful serials, “The Call of the Wild” and “John Barleycorn,” looked politely inquiring, probably thinking the modest-voiced, soft-collared man might be a typesetter.

“Jack London is my name.”

“Jack London! — Man, do get me out of this!” And the two, arms linked, disappeared into a veranda and were seen no more until time to go home.

Recalling those afternoon teas in my hospital room, a very sweet thing happened one day. Somewhere I have referred to Jack’s regret that he had never learned the soft, pretty ways of social intercourse. “I never bought flowers for a woman in my life,” I had heard him say. One afternoon, lying and gazing into the sunny tree-tops, I caught myself wondering how Jack would look entering with a big bunch of double-violets. I turned to see whom the door was admitting, and there was he, red and flustering with an armful of flowers, and my double-violets a bunch as large as his head! “These are yours, Mate Woman and these others are for Joan.” His elder girl was ill at her mother’s home. Jack proceeded:

“Curious coincidence — I’ve just got your doctor-bill and Joan’s nurse-bill. And they’re identical — $125 each!”

“I’ll tell you something queerer than that,” I answered, handing him a New York check for the same amount. “This is in payment for my one and only story, ‘The Wheel,’ and I mean for you to put it into the family pot to pay Joan’s nurse!”

“I’ll do it, I’ll do it!” Jack looked at me steadily a moment, an odd expression in the eyes that were as blue at the moment as my violets.

But what could be sweeter than the tale of an incident that came from his lips one day when he had slipped into the bedside chair and taken my hand — looking with affection upon where it lay, idle for once, in his palm:

“I’m a silly fool, I suppose — I don’t know what ever made me do it; but down in the Forum Cigar Store this noon, matching for cigarettes, the men got to talking about adventure, and women, and what not. I don’t know how it came about; but I found myself telling those fellows — I can’t even remember their names — how I had once nearly signed on to go to the

Marquesas; how I longed to see those and all the isles of the South Seas, with, in my eyes, more especially the romance of conquest among the brown maidens sung by poet and sailor. . . . All very well, my dear; but I didn't stop with that; I went on, the proudest, happiest man you ever saw, and bragged, positively bragged to those city men that when I had at last gone into those same South Seas, with the memory of an old longing, it was with my small white woman by my side. And that, co-adventurers, we lived our own faithful romance of the South Seas."

When I was able to leave hospital and sail on the Roamer, he brought her from Vallejo to Oakland, accompanied by a house-guest, Laurence Godfrey Smith, a concert pianist whom he had known in Australia, To him Jack declared:

"We chose a boat as small as this so that we could flee from even our best friends once in a while; but we re going to make an exception of you, Laurie. Though, I'm afraid, dubiously, "that we'll have to put you to bed on the floor beside the centerboard, with the aid of a shoe-horn!" And when, months afterward, we saw "Laurie" off to Australia, Jack, contemplating the silent grand piano, said: "It seems as if some one had died!"

THE BAD YEAR; AGRICULTURE

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXVI 1913

1913, though it yielded a measure of good fortune, Jack was wont to name his “bad year.” It did seem as if almost everything that could hurt befell him. First, there was the death of a woman friend, an invalid, whom for years he had seen seldom. Never had I observed him so stirred by the passing of any adult person. That this one, so bright, so brave, should have ceased, for once made his philosophy waver.

“I did something last night I never did before,” he confessed. “I concentrated every thought and actually tried to call that girl back. If any one could, I think it would be myself. . . . Of course,” he smiled half-foolishly, “there was no answer.”

His sister’s boy, Irving Shepard, was nearly electrocuted while playing in a tree during school recess, and lay precariously ill for months in our house.

Jack himself had to undergo a sudden operation for appendicitis.

One of the most valuable draft brood-mares, in foal, was found dead in pasture, from a bullet.

An old man ran amuck one night and “shot up the ranch.” Jack landing upon the scene, in the space of three seconds had disarmed the lunatic, who, in retaliation, haled him into court for “choking an old man into insensibility.” “Me, choking an old man into insensibility!” Jack fumed. “Can’t you see me?” Then, there was serious want of early rains, and a “false spring” brought out blossom and young fruit untimely, only to be frosted after belated showers. On top of that, the valleys of California were visited by a plague of grasshoppers. They fastened even upon Jack’s baby eucalyptus trees, which were supposedly immune from pest and blight. Nature’s beneficence, in his view, was more than counter balanced by nature’s cruelty. “Certainly,” he would groan in unison with his harassed sister, “God doesn’t love the farmer! Look at that beautiful half-grown cornfield scorched and withered by sun and north wind!”

One of the bitterest mischances was an attack upon him, in court, by a moving-picture promoter whose name enemies metamorphosed into

“Porchclimber.” The suit was brought to establish whether or not Jack London owned any copyright in his work. A noted eastern attorney was retained, one whom we heard had had a hand in the drafting of copyright law, to take charge of the infamous prosecution. The whole affair was so baldly pernicious that the Los Angeles judge threw it out of court.

Jack had gone into the fight with every atom of his energy, and, since his downfall would mean that of all American authors, he was backed, should he lose, by the Authors’ League of America, in the determination to carry the fight into the highest courts of the Union. Very quietly the noted lawyer returned whence he came, and it has never come to my ears that he boasted of the part for which he had been cast.

Later on, as an outcome of the controversy, two film-versions of “The Sea Wolf” were being shown on opposite sides of the same street in Los Angeles. Of Hobart Bosworth’s depiction of the hero Jack said:

“When I wrote ‘The Sea Wolf,’ the physical image of Larsen that took shape in my mind was more or less vague in outline and detail. Nevertheless, it was there, in my mind, and I carried it with me for years, until it was almost real to me. But it fled, like a ghost at daybreak, when I saw on the screen Mr. Hobart Bosworth, the real, three dimension, flesh-and-blood Sea Wolf. Until I die the image of the Sea Wolf will be Mr. Bosworth as I saw him on the screen.”

There were moments, during the preparation for the copyright fight, when Jack became so enraged that I was alarmed about him. But one morning, after an untoward outbreak of “catastrophic red wrath” the preceding night, he came to me with a face of humility:

“I’m all right now, Mate. You needn’t be afraid for me any more. I’ll be good from now on. — Only, you know, it’s awfully hard to sit by quietly and let these sons of toads try to take the earnings of your whole life’s work away from you!”

“If they get me,” he said one gloomy day when I had cheered him with the reminder that I shared his trouble equally, and that we must endure everything shoulder to shoulder, “If they get me, you might as well know that we’ll lose everything we have — the Ranch, even; everything. But I’ve still my earning capacity, and we’ll buy a big ship outright, one of those we were looking at last winter in the Alameda Basin. And we’ll put in a fireplace, like Lord and Lady Brassey’s on the Sunbeam, and take your grand piano, and be quit forever of a country where a man’s life-work can be cheated out of him by a lot of theatrical sharks and their crooked copyright lawyers — and we'll tell them all to go to hell!" he wound up out of breath. And later, "Why, we could even pick up odd freights here and there over the world," he became interested in spite of his righteous wrath, and make the old tub pay for herself! What do you say?"

Ranch guests can attest the incredulous delight my attitude afforded him in this dark period. "Would you believe it!" he was never tired of acclaiming, "I actually think she wanted me to ride to my fall! I rather thought the idea did not shock her much. By next morning she had got well under way with cabin-plans — and as the days went by and my troubles and my moods smoothed out, she seemed disappointed that I was not to be driven to embarking upon the endless voyage."

Perhaps I was disappointed — why not? Had he not always proved a calmer, happier soul in a sea-existence away from the warring frictions of the land?

It may be that hardest of misfortunes was the losing of Jack's "dream house" by fire. Everything else paled, however, when one day, overheated on a long walk while suffering from a bad attack of poison-oak, I fell ill. For some time Jack had been absorbed in work, ranch, and other problems; but now, faced with a human, vital consideration, all beside could go by the board. As he said:

"Mate Woman, I always suspected I had a heart, but now I know. I am the proudest man in the world — I have a heart. And when I was face to face with the possibility of losing you, that heart seemed to come right into my throat — I ate it, I tell you, and I forced it down. Truly, truly, I was near dying!"

It was about this time that he said to a man friend, who told me long afterward, "If anything should happen to Charmian, I'd kill myself. I wouldn't try to live without her."

There were strains and wounds unhealable dealt Jack in that unlucky twelve-month, trials of spirit that caused him to say in retrospect:

"My face changed forever in that year of 1913. It has never been the same since."

Still, midmost of all this, he protested having been called a pessimist by a Jewish cub reporter:

"I am not a pessimist at all. Why, I exploited to you that love is the biggest thing in the world, and held out my arms to you and to all the world in love while I was talking to you. No man who is a lover can be a pessimist. When you have grown a few years older, you will realize that a man who disagrees with your political, economic and sociological beliefs, does not necessarily have to be a pessimist — especially if he be a self-proclaimed lover."

I was not surprised when Jack announced that he had made a gamble. Two brothers-in-law of a famous writer, with alluring credentials, had approached him with a proposition to exchange his signature for certain Mexican land stocks. Jack looked very carefully into the business, and assured me he was safe in case the project fell through. "I invest nothing, you see. They want my name in it, that is all; and I stand to win." But they got him in the end.

Then there was a so-called "fidelity" loan outfit that "trimmed" him for a similar amount. This matter was taken into court, and while the company was patently fraudulent, it won upon a technicality. Jack had chosen a youthful lawyer who had his career to make:

"Might as well give an unknown a chance! And he'll probably represent me as well as another." He was fond of saying: "A practitioner is one who practices upon his victims, anyway!"

These two ventures left Jack out of pocket about ten thousand dollars. Once I made reference to them, and he said:

"Please — I don't want to talk albout them at all." Which was unlike his usual eagerness to elucidate his affairs. It must be recorded that when he went into speculations, he labeled them frankly:

"Remember what I tell you, in case these go wrong — that they are deliberate gambles. I think they are good gambles; but sheer gambles they are. There's nothing like playing a flyer on a long chance. Pure lottery. Sometimes a chance proves a big winner. I've never won anything yet. Maybe now's my chance!"

All I had to say was that a man who "made good" as he did, in all his obligations, had a right to "take a flyer" upon occasion. Jack smiled with pleasure; and his face bore the same expression when he told some one how, one day aboard the Roamer, lying off an inland city, I had said:

"Don't let yourself get stale aboard, if you feel like having a little recreation. Why don't you go ashore and look up a good card game of some sort. It will do you good."

He took the suggestion, but returned shortly.

Oh, I pirooted around a while, and watched some playing; but I didn't see anything that looked half so good to me as this cabin and the little wife-woman who wanted me to do as I pleased! . . . Where's that pinochle deck? I can beat you a rubber of three out of five games before Sano has that fish-chowder ready."

January aboard the Roamer saw Jack drafting his first chapter of "The Mutiny of the Elsinore" — a whacking good sea-story, true, modern; beneath the romance and action a heartfelt protest against the decayed condition of the American merchant marine. It was finished in August, and serial publication, under title of "The Gangsters," begun in Hearst Magazine for November. For once, he was touched with his creation. This from my diary: "Mate has a great moment in creating the character of Captain West. Stopped me as I went by, to read me morning's work; and his eyes were shining with joy in our mutual appreciation of what he had done." In my gift-copy is written, dated September 21, 1914:

"We, too, have made this voyage together, and, in all happiness, known the winter North Atlantic, the pamperos off the Plate, and the Sou'west gales and Great West Wind Drift off the Horn. And we made westing, as we have 'made westing' in all the years since first we loved."

"Lying on the beach at Waikiki," wrote a Honolulu newspaperman, "I learned that 'The Mutiny of the Elsi-nore' was written to illustrate how the blond white man from the Northern countries of Europe is rapidly being crowded out of America, and that as he disappears, he will go down fighting to the last, but that he will go down beneath the weight of the Latin, the Slav, and other Southern European races that are pouring into America, whom he can rule as long as he lives, but with whom he cannot successfully compete in the continual struggle for existence."

Home from our blissful river-drifting, Jack plunged deeper than ever into ranch development, the while we honeymooned amidst all the quickening farm activities. A "frosty honeymoon," Jack laughed, for ice was in the ground, and there was an unwonted snowfall. In March he gave me "The Night-Born," with this in its fly-leaf:

"Dear My-Woman:

"The seasons come and go. The years slide together in the long backward trail, and yet you and I remain, welded with our arms about each other moving onward together and unafraid of any future."

In a new edition of “The Call of the Wild,” illustrated by Paul Bransom, he wrote:

“It was many dear years ago when I first gave you a copy of this book — in the days when I was hearing a love call; and never has that same love called more loudly than it calls now in this year 1913, when my arms are still full of you, and my heart still full of you.”

It was all a part of his yearning to escape from the world at large. Several times, without self-consciousness, even before others, he held out his arms to me when I came into the living room — as if he must clasp something, some one that came nearest to understanding his need. To facilitate his heavy correspondence, a dictaphone was added to our office equipment — a spring machine, in anticipation of the installation of electricity. I was seriously concerned at this innovation, realizing its threat toward the old intimacy of working hours.

“But think, my dear,” Jack explained, justly indeed, “I don’t have to wait for you; I can dictate to the damned thing any moment, in bed, even, if I please, while you pursue your precious beauty sleep!”

After which he practised on the “damned thing” for an uninterrupted afternoon, reeling off half a hundred neglected letters. When I came to transcribe them, at the end of each cylinder I was greeted with a love message in a fair imitation of my husband’s voice: “Her master’s voice!” giggled he. How could any one try to obstruct the progress of such a being!

In April, he went to Los Angeles on moving-picture business, but was back in three days: “I never stay very long where you are not,” he said upon returning.

In May “The Abysmal Brute,” that “brief for the purification of the prize-fight game,” came from the Century Company, catching its author in a darker phase than even I had guessed; for when he put the little book into my hands, I found this inside:

“The years pass, we live much, and yet, to me, I find but one vindication for living, but one bribe for living — and that vindication is you, the bribe is you.

“Your Lover,

“Jack London.”

And here is something about love:

“Woman, beyond all doubt, remains the biggest thing in the world to-day. The love-motif is the highest thing that can exist between normal humans.

To me, existence is impossible without love. Love does not lead nor direct. Love satisfies as no other thing in human knowledge satisfied. Love is the ultimate benediction of living. It ennobles; it makes the impossible possible; it makes life worth living."

A portion of Jack's hypochondria might be laid to the bodily distemper that was leading up to an acute attack of appendicitis. I think he was subsequently in lighter humor. The history of his recovery from the knife, against illustrating that magnificent physical endownment, might be written down as "uneventful" in the annals of surgery, except for its astonishing rapidity.

On July 6, we rushed him to Oakland and into hospital. On the 8th, Dr. William S. Porter operated. Four days later, an important moving-picture conference was held in Jack's room. Other afternoons were filled with callers, and his room was banked in flowers. "Only," the bed-ridden one grumbled sheepishly, "I wish men wouldn't bring me flowers — somehow it makes me feel silly." Frolich, the sculptor, unwittingly mitigated the situation by contributing an absurd corbel, a cowled monk in the ultimate throes of seasickness, and Jack racked himself with mirth. Newspaper men and women came and went, and headlines featuring "The Call of the Wild Appendix," and "Jack London Takes the Count," beguiled his morning tray.

On the seventh day, the patient stood on his feet, then inspected the building from a wheeled chair. Next morning, Dr. Porter, in his own car, conveyed Jack London to the house on Twenty-seventh Street. The obstreperous convalescent insisted upon going out to dine the following night, as well as to the theater, enjoyed a Turkish bath and a café dinner on the tenth day after the operation; and on the twelfth he left for Los Angeles to jump into "the hot test, hardest business fight" of his life with the wily but ingratiating Hebrew, Mr. "Porchclimber." The twentieth day beheld him at home and in the saddle — another tribute to his own vitality and to the cunning of his surgeon friend.

Jack could not abide ether as an anaesthetic. This time he was first given chloroform, and when, once unconscious, ether was substituted, he resisted so violently that chloroform again had to be resorted to.

With that prescience of the Builder that brooks no delay, Jack mortgaged everything in sight, even our cottage and the new one he had erected for Eliza, to obtain funds needful for his big aims. On August 18, with but $300 in bank, and large obligations pressing, he negotiated another mortgage in order to complete the Wolf House before winter. But I always knew, beyond questioning, that no matter what hazards he seemed to be taking, he divined the way out.

The Bank placed an insurance on the Hill Ranch covering half the amount loaned. There was no other insurance on the huge purple-red pile, since every one agreed that rock and concrete, massive beams and redwood logs with the bark on, were practically fireproof unless ignited in a dozen places, owing to the quadrangular construction and cement partitions.

Nevertheless, three nights later, August 22, the entire inflammable part of the high stone shell was destroyed. I was awakened by voices from Jack's porch. Tiptoeing out, I saw Eliza, by his bedside, point in the direction of the Wolf House half a mile away, where flames and smoke rose straight into the windless, star-drifted sky.

Teams were harnessed, and leaving the Japanese to keep an eye on things at home, if incendiarism was in the air, we drove leisurely across the Ranch. "What's the use of hurry?" Jack demanded. "If that is the Big House burning, nothing can stop it now!"

All the countryside, that had come to feel a personal pride and ownership in "Jack's House," had gathered or was arriving. Public sentiment ran high: and I think, had the criminal or criminals who fired it been detected that night, there would have been a stringing-up to the nearest limbs, in lusty frontier fashion. Already the beautiful red-tile roof had clattered down inside the glowing walls, and the only care that need be exercised was in regard to the adjacent forest. "Promise me," I said to Jack, so lately out of hospital, "that you won't forget yourself, and overdo." He made the pledge and kept it, very quietly walking about and directing the men.

"Why don't you cry, or get excited, or something, you two?" asked a neighbor. "You don't seem to realize what's happened to you!"

"What's the use?" Jack repeated his thought. "It won't rebuild the house. — Though it can be rebuilt!" he swore cheerfully, purpose in his eye.

But uneraseably beneath our contained exterior lay the vision of it six hours before, palpitating in the mid-summer sunset light, when we had emerged on horseback from the ravine Jack called his house-garden. He had burst out:

"How beautiful — Our House, Mate Woman! Did I tell you that Harrison Fisher, after I brought him home from the Jinks two weeks ago, told some one it was the most beautiful house in the West?"

Yes, Jack laughed and buoyed up the spirits of the Ranch while his dream castle ascended in lurid smoke that hot August night. But when at four in the dawn, the tension relaxed, and uppermost in his mind loomed the wicked, cruel, senseless destruction of the only home he had ever made for himself, he lay in my pitying arms and shook like a child. After a few moments he stilled, and said:

"It isn't the money loss — though that is grave enough just at this time. The main hurt comes from the wanton despoiling of so much beauty."

A long pause, and then, referring to the recent death of the bridegroom of a young friend:

"Do you know — thinking it all over, I'd be willing to go through this whole night again, and many times, if it could bring Tom back! We never did learn whose hand applied the torch. I had all but written assassin. For the razing of his house killed something in Jack, and he never ceased to feel the tragic inner sense of loss. To this day the ruins of amethystine stone, arch beyond arch, tower above tower, stand mute yet appealing. Total strangers, not all of them women, have wept before them, have cried out, "Poor Jack!"

From his immediate actions, however, none but Eliza and I guessed the extent of his repining. Something had to be done, and quickly. Forni, the master-mason, must be taken in hand. He was like a father who had lost a child, and in danger of losing his reason. Two of his men, the big, blue-eyed Martinelli brothers, wandered around the unapproachably hot ruins like spirits suddenly bereft of Paradise, crossing their breasts and murmuring, "Mary!" "Christ!" Even Jack had to turn away when the man who had nailed the last Spanish tile before the conflagration, said with wet eyes: "Well, my roof never leaked, anyway!"

The fire was on Friday. On Monday, Jack had the entire crew putting up a splendid retaining-wall of mossy gray stone, that had long been in his eye, on the right of a driveway to the smoking walls which came to be known simply as The Ruins. Eliza was scarred to the soul by the sudden wiping out of her work — she had superintended the building from start to finish; but she met Jack whole heartedly in showing the workmen and the country round about that the end of the world had not come. It was when we came to readjust that the loss became most evident.

My diary calls it up:

“We lay aside notes and samples, and plans drawn for this and that, and feel as if the bottom had fallen out of everything — light, queer, unreal.

I have been asked why Jack London, socialist, friend of the common man, built so large a house. And I have been glad that there were those who asked, for it has ever been my suspicion that some one who waited not to ask, set the brand to that house.

How shall I say? Jack could not traffic in small things, any more than he could deftly handle trifling objects with his fingers. All he did was in a large way. His boyish memories were of moving from one small, inadequate wooden domicile to another. Being what he could not help being, and remaining true to himself, lover of large and enduring things, he must invite spaciousness and solidity — room to breathe in, and for others to breathe in. The ancient frame cottage in which on the ranch he lived and worked and received all men at his table, was entirely disproportionate to his needs. Being so indefatigable and systematic a worker and thinker he required everything to his hand. A smoothly running domestic menage made for efficiency in other matters. Here, where he had to live during the three years while the Wolf House building went on intermittently, the rooms were crammed and jammed and spilling over with the very implements of his many branches of endeavor. Only the combined efforts of the two of us, and later a third, a secretary, made it anything less than distracting for Jack to function in the cramped apartments. Three-quarters of his library was packed away molding in the big stone barn half a mile away, and many the time he could not lay his hand upon some volume especially needed.

Wanderer, yet deeply fond of his own home, a place for the permanence of his treasures — curios, blankets, books, “gear” — he sighed with content knowing that in the big house there would be a story in one wing devoted to the library; above that, his roomy work-den; on the first floor, dining room and kitchen. The middle story of the opposing wing was to be mine — a place where I might retreat to rest and call my soul my own when the outside world was too much within our walls. Above, Jack’s sleeping tower reared. Beneath mine were the guest chambers, and, still below, servants quarters and the like. The connecting link of these two wings formed a two-story living-room, partially flanked by a gallery; and underneath this high hall lay what Jack termed the “stag room,” where no female might venture except by especial ukase from the lords of creation who might lounge and play billiards and otherwise disport themselves therein. The house foundation measured roughly eighty feet from corner to corner.

It should be thought of, that house, in relation to Jack, not as a mansion, but as a big cabin, a lofty lodge, a hospitable tepee, where he, simple and generous despite all his baffling intricacy, could stietch himself and beam upon you and me and all the world that gathered by his log-fires. I know a friend who appreciated this largeness of the man, and who with man's tenderness calls him the Big Chief.

To one who suggests that this house would have been a recreation place for guests acquired by the sole reason of Jack's fame and prosperity," I am able to protest that it would have been the contrary in the Wolf House as in the rickety cottage, our transient household would have been made up mostly of the wanderers, the intellectual (and otherwise) hoboes, sometimes washed, sometimes not, while the master drove his pen for the multitude without. As always, these would have come to sit with us, and furnish grist for Jack's unsleeping brain-mill. That was the sort of "inspiration," to quote my inquirer, he would have continued to draw about him "within such walls of stone." Why, the very form of the rough rock hacienda was an invitation, with its embracing wings, its sunny pool between the wide, arched corridors and grape-gnarled pergola! The reason that seekers after the truth about Jack London find more reminder of him in the simple red boulder that lies upon his ashes than in the aching ruins of his great house, is because they do not know the all of Jack London. He was a man before all else — big and solid, and spacious, and unvaryingly true to himself.

And so with his ranching. There, too, he wrought largely: "No picayune methods for me," he would vow. "When I go into the silence, I want to know that I have left behind me a plot of land which, after the pitiful failures of others, I have made productive. . . . Can't you see? Oh, try to see! — In the solution of the great economic problems of the present age, I see a return to the soil. I go into farming because my philosophy and research have taught me to recognize the fact that a return to the soil is the basis of economics . . . I see my farm in terms of the world, and the world in terms of my farm . . . Do you realize that I devote two hours a day to writing and ten to farming? — my thought-work, my preparation, at night, and when I am out-of-doors."

Similar revelation of himself he gave on the witness stand only a few days before his death, when suit had been brought to restrain him from using his share of the waters of a creek boundary much needed in his scheme of agriculture. But in the whole sad affair, which contributed its weight toward his break-down, not one iota of understanding was accorded him by the prosecutors, among whom were some near and dear to him.

From time to time I would ask: “When, in the years to come, do you think you will ever pull even, financially, with your ranch project?” And it was always with a laugh that he would return: “Never, my dear — at least, I want and expect to have the place eventually sustain itself. That would be the natural object. But it will never make money for me, because there is so much developing I want to keep on doing, endless experiments I want to make.”

A noted socialist lecturer, with misapprehension and prejudice in his eye, spent a day or two on the ranch. “At last I see,” said he. “I was wrong. In your work here, as you unfold it to me, I see a social creation!” Once more, let me impress: temperamentally Jack London was a Builder of books, of houses, of roads, of soil, of things that would outlast merely temporary uses. My house will be standing, act of God permitting, for a thousand years. My boat, act of God permitting, will be intact and afloat a hundred years or five hundred years hence. Little call to point out that he did not build for himself alone.

“Who will come after us, Mate Woman!” he looked into the distances. “Who will reap what I have sown here in this almighty sweet land? You and I will be forgotten. Others will come and go; these, too, shall pass, as you and I shall pass, and others take their places, each telling his love, as I tell you, that life is sweet!”

He was fond, at this time, of having me play Arthur Foote’s Rubaiyat Suite, particularly the section illustrating

“How sultan after sultan, with his pomp,
Abode his destined hour, and went his way.”

And Macdowell’s “Sea Pieces” swept him out upon the tide of his dreams.

True to his determination not to be downcast over the houseburning, Jack redoubled ranch operations. “I am the sailor on horseback!” chanted he. “Watch my dust! . . . Oh, I shall make mistakes a-many; but watch my dream come true.” And, as he loved the name of Sailor, Skipper, Captain, for the love he bore the sea, so he now loved as well to be greeted Farmer, what of his overmastering desire to make blossom the exhausted wilderness. Beauty, in his precincts, began to reveal itself more and more in the light of tillable soil, of food-getting efficiency. “Don’t grieve about the clearing of that field, or that little clump of scrubby redwoods,” he would say. “We get used to a certain view, and the idea of altering it is untenable. But when it is altered, we are surprised how soon we adjust, and even forget. Remember, there is endless wildwood farther back — it isn’t as if I were depriving you of it. Try to dream with me my dreams of fruitful acres. Do not be a slave to an old conception. Try to realize what I am after.”

In step with the day-dream went the visions of his slumber, and he loved them: “I am a keen dreamer, and I love to dream. It seems to me that my life is doubled by the amount of dreaming I do every night. Often he recounted to me a story of long hours spent in a verdant land where he seemed to be proprietor, rolling country where, just beyond each hill, great schemes of agricultural betterment were flourishing. Many times, he said, I was by his side: but for the most part he would be instructing intelligent foremen how to carry out his ideas. This trend in his unconscious mind increased until the day of his death.

The former quiet of the ranch gave place to a pervasive hum of important matters afoot. Rending blasts of dynamite far afield spoke of a new era in the somnolent order of the old land of the Spaniards. Jack founded his pure bred English Shire stable by the purchase of nothing less than Neuadd Hillside, grand champion of California, and once prize-winner in England. He weighed a ton, and was wondrously shaped withal. Cockerington Princess, champion of her own sex, also came to gladden our eyes, while the converting into stables of theretofore unused stone winery buildings went on apace. Into each barn, for the men to scan and heed, was posted a long list of rules borrowed from a great western express corporation for the care and use of the horses.

“Although the tails of these imported horses are docked, we won’t dock their colts,” Jack remarked on the day the two grand beasts, pranked out show-fashion in colored worsted, were unloaded from the stock “palace car” amidst much comment in Glen Ellen. “Do you know,” he asked me, “why horses like those aren’t common sights on the country roads of the United States? I’ll tell you: because our farmers are so stupidly wasteful about saving feed! I mean just that. Instead of crowding the development of a colt, particularly the first year, by care and feeding, he turns it out to grub for itself in pasture. That first year is like the first year of any other baby. It's what so vitally counts."

Six days before his voice was silenced, Jack said something like the following to an interviewer:

"What is the difference between this good team and that team of scrubs? Man alive! What is the difference between that field, as it is now, and the same field as it was two years ago? What is the difference between anything that is strong and fine and well arranged — be it words or stones or trees or ideas or what not — and the same elements as they were in their unorganized weakness? Man — the brain of man, the effort that man had put into man's supreme task — organizing! That is the work of man, work that is worth a man's doing — to take something second-rate and chaotic and to put himself into it until it becomes orderly and first-rate and fine."

He was, in short, really far more interested in introducing better farming into Sonoma, County and the country at large than he was in leaving behind masterpieces of literature.

As usual, for him to think out a thing was to see it done; and early he had learned, with his instinct for teaching and for effort-saving, to instruct others now to act upon what he thought out. Thus, he was pressing his sister hard and ever harder, firing her with the depth and breadth of his outlook. There were long, grilling hours of discussion — he trying to inculcate his principles, she giving him the benefit of what her practical judgment, regardless of books, prompted her to do.

Here are two loose notes among his many:

"Please, please, know that I carry only general principles in my head, and do not carry details." "You must always allow me the latitude of a mind that is filled with a million other things that have nothing whatever to do with this ranch, so that when I query, I query honestly and sincerely and without ulterior purpose, so that all I want is what I ask for, and I don t want guessed replies to what you guess are ulterior questions on my part. I ain't got no ulterior questions or motives, but, just once in a while, I have a legitimate, overwhelming desire to know what is, which what is has occurred during my periods of being away from ranch, of being immersed in problems which have nothing whatever to do with ranch, save that they enable me to keep ranch going. I make my living out of the world. I must 90% of my time devote myself to the world. Please, please, give me that 90% latitude of ignorance and of non-remembrance of the percent, of ranch happenings that hit you every moment of every day and that hit me possibly once in six months. Meet me in at least a 9 to 1 percentage sympathy.”

Discussion but infrequently took place between Jack and the workmen, for lie was fond of learning by argument. Little they could teach him. And so for the most part he kept from contact with them. “Eliza is the captain I have picked out to run this particular ship of mine,” he would say to me, repository of his deductions upon each situation as it unfolded, “and you know how much I interfere between captain and man!” But there was often the irk of those who knew less than Jack, who tried to hold him back: “You can’t make it work, Mr. London. We have never done it this way.”

“Why not?” he would blaze. “Why can’t I make it work? Do you think that I learn nothing from the greatest specialists in your profession, when I put in whole nights, month upon month, studying them? What do you know about government bulletins, government deductions based upon scientific principles that have been put to work?”

I take the following from a transcript of evidence in the water-suit before referred to: “Aren’t you a good enough agriculturist to estimate an acre of ground?” was the question put by opposing counsel.

“No,” drawled Jack. “We all have our weaknesses. I never could master an acre, by looking at it. I always send somebody out to measure it for me.” And to the question, “Have you ever acted as a farmer, practically tilling the soil yourself?” he explained as below:

“I have never had my hands on the handles of a plow in my life, but I know more about plowing than any plowman who ever worked for me. I have acquired practically every bit of my knowledge from the books. I never was a graduate of an university; I never finished the first half of my freshman year at a university; yet I have thought it nothing to face a group of thirty or forty professors hammer-and-tongs on philosophy, sociology, and all the other ologies the group including David Starr Jordan and others of the same high intellectual caliber. I was able to do that and hold a table of debate I, who had never been through a university because I had gotten my knowledge from the same books they had got their knowledge from. The same with plowing and other branches of farm knowledge. I state that I am eminently fitted from my knowledge of the books.”

He went on: “My knowledge of agriculture and farming is also derived from actual contact with the soil — looking at it, on occasion hiring experts to come and tell me their diagnoses of these thick soils or bad soils or wrong soils. I find very often that they disagree with one another; then I go back to my books and find the right clue, applying it, making my experiments year after year, whether in fertilizer or in methods of cultivation or drainage or the thousand factors that enter into successful tillage.”

His aloof supervision was expressed in notes to be passed on. “But see that they are returned and preserved, so that I may refer to them at any time.”

From a sheaf I choose almost at random: “Watch out for the first unexpected rain catching lots of our equipment exposed. As for instance the wood-saw and engine. Months in the sun and fog and dew have not done them any good. A rain will do worse.”

“Who left half a dozen sacks of cement in rain to spoil under roofless section of rock-crusher house?”

“Near rock-crusher is a shingled roof section, lying flat on the ground, going to hell.”

“In any new building operations around the ranch, such as the bath-house, etc., are the men who do the work told to keep the nails cleaned up? Because if they are so told, and continue to let the nails lie around, fire them. To-day it was King who was lamed; some time ago it was one of the Shire mares. To-morrow it may be Neuadd. Is ‘father’ to sit back and pay for the Veterinary, for the stallion man’s time, for the crippled horse’s time?”

And first, last, and always, stood his creed:

“What we do must be adequate and permanent.”

His plaint to me, aside, when confronted with the obstinate wall of farmer-brains smaller than his own, was like this:

“The reason a man works for me, is because he cannot work for himself. Stupid boobs, most of them, who do not wake up to avail themselves of the fund of knowledge ready for the asking. In the matter of government reports, over and above the price of a postcard of inquiry, knowledge is as free as air.”

Out of his despair with the incapacity of employes, their unwillingness to be educated, he coined the phrase “Down the hill,” which meant the discharge of those who could neither learn nor take orders. “The more I see of men,” he would apostrophize, “the more I turn to the land; yet, in order to manipulate that land, I must deal with those very men who hurt me so with their blind ineffectiveness and lack of foresight. And they try to teach me, who spend my nights with the books. My work on this land, and my message to America, go hand in hand!” And he would ride away, waving his cowboy quirt, bent upon appraising a worn-out plot of ground with the intention of reclaiming it.

Of course, his experiment was being advertised far and wide by the press. He had, as one farm magazine declared, “ideas on the profession of farming that will do the world more good than all the stories he ever could write.”

“When I bought one hundred and twenty-nine acres near Glen Ellen nine years ago I knew nothing of farming,” Jack gave out. “I bought the place mostly for its beauty, as a place to live and write in.

“About forty acres was cleared and I tried to raise hay for my horses, but soon found I could scarcely get the seed back. The soil had been worn out; it had been farmed for years by old-fashioned methods of taking everything off and putting nothing back.

“The region was a back-water district. Most of the ranchers were poor and hopeless; no one could make any money ranching there, they told me. They had worked the land out and their only hope was to move on somewhere else and start to work new land out and destroy its value.

I began to study the problem, wondering why the fertility of this land had been destroyed in forty or fifty years when land in China has been tilled for thousands of years, and is still fertile.

“My neighbors were typified by the man who said: “You can’t teach me anything about farming; I’ve worked three farms out! Which is as wise as the remark of the woman who said she guessed she knew all there was to know about raising children — hadn’t she buried five?

“I adopted the policy of taking nothing off the ranch. I raised stuff and fed it to the stock. I got the first manure spreader ever seen up there, and so put the fertilizer back on the land before its strength had leaked out. I began to get registered stock, and now I sell a blooded cow at nine months for $40 and an old-fashioned rancher comes along and wonders why he has to feed a scrub cow for two years and sell her for less than $40.

“An old-fashioned farmer has thirty milch cows and works eighteen hours a day taking care of them and milking them and can make no money. An up-to-date man comes along, buys the place, pays $10 for a Babcock tester and buys milk scales. Eight away he gets rid of ten of the cows as non-productive, and he makes more with two-thirds of the work.”

Jack's disappointment that so much of his main "punch" in "The Valley of the Moon" had been lost by wholesale deletion, in serial publication, was mended by the way the published book was received by the agricultural magazines. One of them declared that it "ought to be adopted for a text book by our 'back to the farm,' missionaries. Besides being a firstrate love-story, it is replete with knowledge of rural conditions. "With that familiar universal touch of Jack London's, this book, while essentially Californian, applies and appeals to America, at large. We wonder that it has not been made a part of the curriculum at the agricultural colleges. It is worth dozens of lectures some times delivered to students."

"Why isn't 'The Valley of the Moon' the 'Great American Novel'?" a correspondent wanted to know. "It lets light in upon the question of why the old American stock is dying out. The ignorant, unlettered foreigners, Italians, Japanese, Scandinavian, and the rest, crowd out the good old American, because the American will not, for one thing, if he can help it, live the way the foreigner does. And because, also, the American will not use his head for the improvement of the land. Result, the carcass of the good old superior American fertilizes his own land for the crowding, thrifty, crafty foreigner."

That one man is more fit than another to become a law giver, Jack London has laid down in "The Bones of Kahekili," written five months before he died, one of seven stories in "On the Makaloa Mat." The old Hawaiian commoner asks:

"Here is something stronger than life, stronger than woman, but what is it — and why?" And Jack, over and above his personal desire and sacrifices toward the masses, speaks his unwilling but inevitable conclusion through the mouth of Hardman Pool:

"It is because most men are fools, and therefore must be taken care of by the few men who are wise. Such is the secret of chiefship. In all the world are chiefs over men. In all the world that has been have there ever been chiefs, who must say to the many fool men: Do this; do not do that. Work, and work as we tell you, or your bellies will remain empty and you will perish. . . . You must be peace-abiding and decent, and blow your noses. You must be early to bed of nights, and up early in the morning to work if you would have beds to sleep in and not roost in trees like the silly fowls. This is the reason for the yam-planting and you must plant now. We say now, to-day, and not picnicking and hulaing to-day and yam-planting to-morrow or some other day of the many careless days. . . . All this is life for you, because you think but one day at a time, while we, your chiefs, think for you all days and far days ahead."

And the old man: "Yes, it is sad that I should be born a common man and live all my days a common man."

To which Hardman Pool: "That is because you were of yourself common. When a man is born common, and is by nature uncommon, he rises up and overthrows the chiefs and makes himself chief over the chiefs. Why do you not run my ranch, with its many thousands of cattle, and shift the pastures by the rainfall, and pick the bulls, and arrange the bargaining and selling of the meat to the sailing ships and war vessels and the people who live in the Honolulu houses, and fight with lawyers, and help make laws, and even tell the King what is wise for him to do and what is dangerous? Why does not any man do this that I do? Any man of all the men who work for me, feed out of my hand, and let me do their thinking for them? — me, who works harder than any of them, who eats no more than any of them, and who can sleep on no more than one lauhala mat at a time like any of them?"

"I am out of the cloud . . ." the old man says. "We are the careless ones of the careless days who will not plant the yam in season if our alii does not compel us, who will not think one day for ourselves. . . .

There were timely trips into the interior — Sacramento, Modesto, and to the University of California stock farm at Davis. Eliza Shepard went along further to imbibe and abet the game her brother wanted to play; and Jack came speedily to accept her judgment in the selection of livestock, for her choices came to be the prize-winners at State and County fairs.

A concrete-block silo, twelve feet in diameter, the first of two, and the first of their kind in California, was rising half a hundred feet into the air near the old cowbarns. Jack put his own and his neighbors corn into the first silo that was finished, and neglected his writing to take a hand in the fascinating work of feeding the cutter. Houseguests and servants alike were unable to keep out of the busy scene, and remained to help. Their host boasted: "No material comes up the hill except cement. My own machinery has done the crushing of the rock that my own tools and dynamite have got out of my own land, and that my own draft animals have hauled. My own mixer has made the mortar. My ten-inch drain-tile for the alfalfa fields yonder, has been made right here on the ground. And all this paraphernalia will build a dam at the mouth of that natural sink up-mountain, to impound

7,000,000 gallons of water for irrigation. And think of the pressure for fire protection!"

The "piggery" which Jack invented, and which was built during our fall Roamer cruise, became famous the world over, not only among farmers but with curious lay men as well. Entirely of rock and concrete, it is on a circular plan, surrounding, with graveled driveway between, a handsome tower wherein feed is mixed and distributed to the "suites" of apartments, with their individual runways, that came to house, first, the white Ohio Improved Chester hogs, and later, Jack's choice of what he deemed a sturdier breed for our climate, the red Duroc Jerseys. A system of flushing and antiseptizing both here and in the barns, rendered premises and vicinity "sweet as a nut," to quote an English visitor who lately registered in the tower guest-book. Crowning a knoll for perfect drainage, surrounded by blossomy madroño trees with bark like Korean red lacquer and glossy leaves so resembling the magnolia, this farm yard "sermon in stone" is an object of distinct beauty.

Jack had conceived the idea of demonstrating that he could restore exhausted grainfields by a system of terracing on a large scale — in his own words, "farming on the level."

"You increase the organic content by levelling, preventing the destructive erosive effects that draw from it the organic content — so that instead of one-tenth of one meager crop a year you can grow three rich crops a year.

"The hillsides are first ploughed along contour lines, and at intervals, depending on the slope of the land, balks, or small ridges, are thrown up. The process is slow, but its advantages from the start are great. Rains are held back to sink into the soil instead of rushing down the hillsides, tearing out great gullies and carrying rich soil down the streams to the ocean. . . . We have been letting our rich hillsides go to waste, and by ignorant cultivation have increased erosion rather than prevented it. The method I have outlined will restore even impoverished hillsides and turn them into productive fields."

A dozen acres of old French prune trees were brought up to standard; vineyards, once famous, that had gone too long neglected, were uprooted and given over to barley; and the barley was planted with inoculated vetch.

Beehives, likewise ducks, pigeons, geese, chickens, and a few pheasants, made their appearance on the Hill place as a side issue.

I heard Jack say that "the best blocks of vineyard did not have more than seventy-five percent, of the vines standing when I took over the ranch. In some cases three out of every five vines were missing." But in time he had those "best blocks" yielding as formerly.

And here are his intentions with regard to fertilizing:

"The Chinese have farmed for forty centuries without using commercial fertilizer. I am rebuilding worn-out hillside lands that were worked out and destroyed by our wasteful California pioneer farmers. I am not using commercial fertilizer. I believe the soil is our one indestructible asset, and by green manures, nitrogen-gathering cover crops, animal manures, rotation of crops, proper tillage and draining, I am getting results which the Chinese have demonstrated for forty centuries.

"We are just beginning to farm in the United States. The Chinese knew the how but not the why. We know the why, but we're dreadfully slow getting around to the how."

Before long this modern husbandman had revolutionized the sleepy neighborhood, to say nothing of his employes upon whom he sprung timesheets, rigorously insisting that these be properly filled in each night. "Any man who isn't willing to give an account of his work and time, is welcome to go down hill," was Jack's ultimatum.

A blacksmith in the village went out of business. Jack relieved him of the entire establishment, which was in stalled in one of our cool winery buildings, pleasantly shaded by a "spreading chestnut tree," while a horseshoer and general blacksmith was added to the payroll. The village thought little about the transaction until a paper in a rival community came out with: "Good boy, Jack! Why not make another trip with your wagon and take the rest of Glen Ellen up to the ranch?"

Then and always, when asked "What do you call your place?" the owner replied, "The Ranch of Good Intentions." Develop it as he might, it seemed to remain only in its merest beginning, in view of his ultimate hopes.

An old neighbor, whose boundaries carve sharply into our property, often suggested that Jack buy him out, lock, stock, and barrel. "But there are too many buildings on your place, for one thing," Jack would object. "It would cost too much to demolish them!" But once he said: "If I ever do buy the Wegener place, I'll turn it over, buildings and all, to my intellectual hobo friends. The community would wax, and oh, my!" As he had written to Anna:

"Some day I shall build an establishment, invite them all, and turn them loose upon one another. Such a mingling of castes and creeds and characters could not be duplicated. The destruction would be great!"

It has always been a sadness to me how, as before hinted, Jack's most intimate acquaintances, given every opportunity to view the magnitude of his interest in agriculture, without exception discounted the importance of it to him, and vice versa. In all the memorial gatherings met so generously after his passing, it never entered the mind of a single friend to whom Jack had expounded his dear ambition, to make mention of the great book he had begun to write upon the mountain fields. I, aghast at the vital omission, protested, and appealed to the lovers of his memory not to forget. The explanation dawned upon me before ever it was put in words by one, a sociologist, who had no inkling of the bearing of agronomy upon economics:

"You see, Jack's agriculture did not impress me as it should have done — probably because I have no interest in agriculture."

In September we made our first visit to the State Fair at Sacramento. Jack was averse to showing his own stock, holding that putting an animal in "show condition" was a harmful process. His presence at the Fair was for the purpose of getting in touch with "the other fellow" to see what he was doing in the matter of raising draft horses, beef cattle and hogs.

It was during this absence Jack told me that at intervals for months past he had had warning flutters in the region of the heart that gave him sudden moments of foreboding. "Haven't you noticed that I have got into the habit of laying my palm over my heart!" he asked. "I didn't realize I was, until I happened to catch myself at it." He also told me that there had been no report, after an examination by their physician, from a certain life insurance firm to whom he had applied some time back for an additional policy. I, to offset the tremor of my own heart at his intelligence, eliminated one reason after another for his condition, and finally asked if it might be laid to his excessive cigarette inhaling. But he did not take to the diagnosis. After a couple of years the symptoms disappeared.

In mid-October we "joy-sailed on the good, old, dear, and forever dear Roamer," to quote her skipper, spending one of our most care-free seasons, with the resilience that fortunate souls exhibit after an excess of work and emotional endurance. From my diary: "Let's look at the chart we've sailed off," says Jack at two p. m., after our exciting run in a howling norther.

Things broke; we missed stays twice on one tack, and went aground in the glistening tules, that were laid flat by the wind. Spouting surf on lee shores. A big scow aground. Ducks flying low. Sierras white with snow, and Mt. Diablo and its range clear-cut sapphire. We did not have a ribbon of canvas on the Roamer except three-reefed spanker and our dandy jib. She eats right up into the wind with that big jib.

In spite of all that has happened this year, Jack reviewed, surveying water and sky with calm, sure eyes, "somehow it seems now as if it has been one of my hap piest — at least, when I think what I have started on the Beauty Ranch! — At any rate, he finished, pulling the old Tam over his fore-top, "there has been no boredom in it all — no danger of rusting."

One morning in the midst of his work he burst out:

"I'm going to live a hundred years!"

"Yes? Why?"

"Because I want to!"

"It's a good reason — couldn't be bettered. But let me remind you that you're likely to become a widower!"

That is a consideration, reaching for me. "I'll have to think it over!"

NEW YORK; MEXICO; ROAMER

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXVII 1914

FOR us, ending one year and beginning another aboard ship was the acme of good fortune. The holidays, spent partly ashore while the cook remained to guard the Roamer where she lay moored to one city wharf or another, were full of cheer. The "Porchclimber" episode settled, our future looked brighter, though Jack remarked more than once: "I'm riding to a fall, financially; but I'm not worrying — you've never yet seen me stay down long. I'll work harder than ever!"

Our New Year was ushered in at the Saddle Rock restaurant. Two nights before Christmas, with a big southeaster blowing, Jack and Nakata got me into an evening gown aboard the yacht where she rolled at Lombard Street wharf in San Francisco, then rowed me to a float, from which we mounted to water-front street and taxi, to attend the house-warming of friends uptown. In the early hours we were back, and casting off, on the way to Sausalito. A terrific ebb was running, and Jack breathed a sigh of relief when he had his vessel safely clear of the docks and speeding on the ebb, before the gale, under a little shred of a reefed jigger. When, not far from Sausalito, we ran into the great run-out that tears down through Raccoon Straits to the Golden Gate, it seemed as if the tiny yawl could not possibly make it across. Jack, in his most congenial element, was on the pinnacle of exhilaration. And in fifty-five minutes the thirty-foot craft, under that rag of canvas, had made a passage that regularly takes the huge screw-ferryboats thirty-five.

Threading his way among the tossing sloops and schooners and motor boats at anchor off the yacht clubs at Sausalito, Jack navigated over the mud flats, well on the way into Mill Valley, where in the falling tide he laid the Roamer in the mud and went to sleep for the afternoon, upon his lips the contented murmur, "This is the Life! We've got all others skinned to death, Mate!" The next day, Christmas, Nakata rowed us to a railroad station on the shore, and we dined with friends in Mill Valley. And on the 26th we were cruising once more.

While lying off Point Richmond, Jack developed an earache, and with bandaged head called upon a doctor. In no time the dailies came out with an exciting story of how, in a blow, Jack London had been knocked senseless by the mainboom, while his wife bravely and cleverly brought the vessel to safe anchorage! Jack was aggrieved out of all apparent proportion to the matter; but the reason was that he so especially prided himself upon never having unseamanlike accidents.

He became interested in Richmond real estate to the extent of buying a lot, thereby branding himself as a "booster" for the new harbor subdivision of the Ellis Landing and Dock Company.

Just as we began congratulating ourselves that certain hindrances had been overridden, and upon the general outlook for the New Year, fresh trouble broke that necessitated Jack's jumping out for New York within twenty-four hours, leaving the yacht at San Rafael, where the ill news had found us looking over ground familiar to our childhood. There was much I must attend to at home owing to the suddenness of his departure, and so our first long separation took place.

"While I'm straightening out this snarl, I can be looking into other details that need attention, such as advances from the publishers," Jack reminded me. "I'll be having good news for you soon, I hope." He often arranged for advances, either in bulk, or in monthly payments, upon contemplated work.

The "snarl," which took him over a month to smooth out, was with reference to dramatic rights in one of his novels. An old friend had held these rights for some years without having made a successful showing. Moving pictures had never been considered in the days Jack had signed contracts for speaking performances, and there were men who tried to befog the issue; hence it behooved Jack, now interested in cinema productions, to clear his way of misunderstanding.

But his friend had entered into a dramatic contract for a production of the novel in question, and borrowed money against future box office receipts, which later did not appear to be imminent. The agent was willing to release the playwright, but to the tune of forty thousand dollars. Jack, appalled by the ridiculous sum, bent all his powers to beat down the "robber." It took him four weeks, and in the end he resorted to what he called his "play acting" to bring about the signing of a "decent" release of the rights. Early in the combat, I would have this sort of message: "Outlook dark," or

"Situation ticklish," or "Nothing good to write." But his old unnatural condition when in New York seemed to be absent.

"To hell with New York," he wrote in the midst of this and other difficulties that beset. "I am here to master this Babylon and its sad cave-dwellers, not to be mastered!"

Later: "Hereafter, either before or after Roamer winter trip, my impression is that you and I will spend a month in New York."

One night in a triple collision of taxicabs, he came near losing his life. A certain manager of burlesque had taken him to the playhouse, and afterward introduced him to the leading lights, three of whom the two men undertook to escort to their homes. When the cars crashed Jack found himself at the bottom of the heap of kindling-wood that had been his cab, his mouth full of glass, and with a sense of suffocation, since the other four passengers contributed to the weight. Aside from minor cuts and bruises, the party escaped uninjured, and in some way avoided revealing their identity, so that the newspaper clippings Jack sent lacked all names. The theatrical man longed to have the event featured with "scare-head" lines, for the advertisement of his star, but Jack would have none of it.

"I'd have looked well," he grumbled to me, "with the report flashed all over the country that I'd been 'joy-riding' with a bunch af actresses! — — I've never been joy-riding in my life," he teased; but I'm going some time, for I'll never be satisfied until I come home to you with a pink-satin slipper in my pocket!"

Whatever else Jack London did or did not do in New York City, he always spent much time upon the theatres. About this time he enthusiastically applauded the idea of the Little Theatre, and hoped that San Francisco would take up the idea. Some time before the breaking of the Great War, friends were promulgating a widely ramified plan for a new opera house and conservatory in San Francisco, and Jack made regular contributions to the promoters. So far, nothing has come of it.

Having succeeded in obtaining a "decent" release of the dramatic rights in his book, and made some very satisfactory agreements for New York, he wired: "General future never looked brighter."

A word as to the "play-acting" which caused the "robber" to throw up his hands, or, rather put his hand to the signing of the "decent release." Jack, partly as a whim, partly in order to compose undisturbed, had hidden himself in a notorious hostelry of the "theatrical tenderloin." When he had telephoned to his publisher to send his money, that person cried out, “Great Scott, man! What are you doing in a house like that! I’ll have to bring it myself!”

Jack decided to inveigle the enemy into his room. He endeavored to turn the tables, but Jack, pleading indisposition, also that he was too rushed to come out, since he must leave for California sooner than he had planned, contrived to gain the other s consent to call at an early forenoon hour. He then prepared the stage and made up for the impish part he intended to play:

“You should have seen me,” he giggled, “I was a sight to throw the fear of God into any highwayman of his feather. I had sized him up, you see.

“For two days I purposely let my beard grow, and you know how black it comes out. I opened my pajama-coat so that the mat of hair showed on my chest. And of course I left out my upper teeth, mussed up my head and wore an eyeshade. I was not pretty.

“So, when the clerk ‘phoned up that he was below, I said, ‘Send him right up.’ He answered, ‘he’s stepped outside.’ Outside,’ says I, ‘what for?’ I don’t know he said he’d wait for you there. Tell him, I ordered, That I’m in bed, and can’t come down.”

“Well, when his tap came, I sat up in bed, and the high-arm chair I had placed for him had its back to the door so that if he tried to escape me he’d be in an awkward position getting out of his chair to do it. — — It sounds awful, I can see from your face, Mate, Jack interpolated. “But remember, I had wrestled for weeks with him. He had even agreed to my figures and terms, and promised to send me the release, and then I would wait for days without a word, marking time, when I wanted to go home. It was my sheer whimsey to bring him to his senses in this fantastic way. My God! It was ten thousand times more legitimate than his slimy methods and those of his kind!

“To get back. He came in, trying not to look queer when he saw the object I was — haggard from the dark growth on my chin and neck, hair showing on my chest, and a ghastly toothless smile of welcome! In his hand was the document, which I took from him and glanced over. And every little while I looked aside to one or the other of my fists, as if gloating over them. As I talked with him without appearing to study him I took in his sick, scared face and soul. He’d have given anything not to have got himself into that chair.

“And then, I went over the whole business again, all we had talked in our many interviews, and he finally consented to release for a tithe of his original claims. He said:

“‘I’ll go right to my office to make the change, and send you the agreement immediately.’

“I had waited for just that, and didn’t mean that he should elude me again. Said I:

“‘You’ll sign that paper right here on that table, before you leave this room!’ — and when he protested, I went on, closing and unclosing my fists, to tell him just exactly what I would do to him if he refused. He looked this way and that, at the telephone, and half around at the door, and knew his situation for precisely what I had made it. He signed the release and left it with me. . . . And as it is, it will take me months to pay him, month by month.

A little ill news greeted Jack’s return — the best young shorthorn bull had broken his neck, and hog cholera had carried off nearly all his blooded hogs.

“I always seem to have to build twice — everything I undertake,” Jack said thoughtfully.

In his workroom again, The Little Lady of the Big House was begun, in which were exploited his maturing concepts on farming and stockbreeding. Many readers take for granted that the “Big House” was copied from Jack’s Wolf House. As a matter of fact, a picture of Mrs. Phoebe A. Hearst’s home at Pleasanton, California, was roughly the model for that of his hero and heroine on an imaginary ranch in the interior foothills.

Margaret Smith Cobb, a poet of the northern California forest country, whose verse Jack had been the means of placing with eastern magazines, sent me the fragmentary thoughts given below. Jack, to whom I forwarded them, commented: “The poem is most sweet, most beautiful, most true. Tell Margaret Cobb the same, for me. I care not to utter another word on that sad topic.”

“Love, let us wander, you and I,
Where but charred embers and pale ashes lie;
Here where my dreams and fancies took still shape,
In all their glory, laid in wood and stone.

* * * * * *

Here, blow thy kisses, many, for a stair,

That we may rise where was thy line of rooms — —
Rooms for thyself alone — we had them thus,
Where none might enter but the moon and I.
Dear love, the smoke is yet about my heart,
The crackle of the fire yet sears my brain.
— You will be kind, and dream and care no more,
Nor sorrow for what was my house of dreams."

About this time it was rumored that the Prohibitionists wanted to nominate Jack London for President. He, when asked about it, gave his usual breezy consent: "Sure — I'll run for anything, if it will help, especially if there's no chance of my being elected!"

A grapejuice company was formed for the manufacture, on a large scale, of the incomparable unfermented drink that we were already pressing, from wine grapes, for our own table. Jack was elated over the prospect. It created a new market for his ranch product, and by the same effort furthered the cause of prohibition. He drank regularly of the clear, natural juice that bore so little resemblance to the commercial article that smacks of stewed fruit.

"Government recipe, my dear, government recipe!" he would gurgle, holding his little glass to the light. "Free advice to every one — and they wonder how I find out these things!"

There was crookedness in the grapejuice company, as there had been in the past year's ventures. Jack, who had no money in this, only his name, was ultimately sued for $41,000; but the case never came to trial.

With travel in his eye, Jack had been plotting to convince an eastern weekly of the value of a series of articles on all the world, and there was talk of having him begin with Japan. I was joyous at the prospect of realizing our old hope to visit those fascinating isles together. But the Mexican fracas in the spring of 1914 came in between and the other articles never were undertaken. Hearst had asked Jack the preceding autumn if he would go to Mexico in case trouble broke. When the time came, there was some disagreement upon the price, and Jack went for Collier's instead. This constituted no infringement of his fiction contract, so long as he delivered the appointed measure of the fiction.

"And now," he said, hopefully, "I may be able to redeem myself as a war correspondent, after what I was held back from doing by the Japanese Army!"

If he had been able to foretell how slim was the chance of attaining his wish, he would not have gone. As it was, Collier's wired to know how long it would take him to make ready to start for Galveston, Texas, should they telegraph him to go. "Twenty-four hours," was the response. Came the bombardment of the Naval Academy at Vera Cruz, and on April 16 the summons arrived. We left Glen Ellen the next morning, and Oakland the same afternoon.

"I'll see you on your way as far as Galveston," ventured I, taking for granted that Galveston would be the end of my journey.

"You can't get ready in time!" Jack said, but with a bright expectancy that was balm to my apprehension, for I had not been enthusiastic about his going under fire.

"Oh, can't I!" and out came the trunks.

"Well," he paused from his own preparations to gladden my heart, "if you get that far, maybe we can get you to Vera Cruz at least — even if you have to stay there when we go on march to the City of Mexico."

Shortly before leaving, Jack handed me a copy of "The Valley of the Moon," inscribed:

"Dear My-Woman:

"This is our 'Book of Love,' here in our 'Valley of the Moon,' where we have lived and known our love ever since that day you rode with me to the divide of the Napa hills — Ay, and before that, before that."

It was at Galveston that Richard Harding Davis in the second instance rendered Jack London a service. Several days had passed, the date of departure with General Frederick Funston was nearing, and all the other correspondents who were to accompany him on the transport Kilpatrick had received their credentials from Washington and were gaily making ready. Jack's alone seemed to be withheld, for Edgar Sisson, editor of Collier's, kept wiring Jack to the effect that he was not to worry — everything would reach him in time.

On the morning of the transports' sailing-date, I was shocked from sleep and upon my feet by a burst of martial music that led a host of men in olive-drab who marched, with brave, ominous sound, along the sea-wall drive. Jack joined me at the window and silently we watched the stream of human life go down to the gulf in ships. Although thrilling to the spectacle, Jack could not forget, and quoted from Le Gallienne's "The Illusion of War": "'War,

I abhor,
And yet how sweet
The sound along the marching street
Of drum and fife, and I forget
Wet eyes of widows, and forget
Broken old mothers, and the whole
Dark butchery without a soul.'"

As the morning wore, and still no word from Washington, we became genuinely concerned. Before others, Jack preserved a careless demeanor; but when he looked into my eyes I saw in his the baffled, pained expression that he must have worn in childhood.

"I can't understand it, I can't understand it," he puzzled. "Each time I've called on General Funston, his aide has courteously put me off. I know the General is not well, with that abscess in his ear, poor devil; but that isn't the reason. So there seems to be simply nothing I can do."

"I don't care for myself," he would reiterate. "I want to make good to Sisson, whose idea it was for me to go for Collier's. I don't want to throw him down." Presently, having dictated to me his final letters, and sent off his Article I to Collier's, he disappeared downstairs, murmuring:

"'And even my peace-abiding feet
Go marching down the marching street,
For yonder, yonder goes the fife,
And what care I for human life !
And yet tis all unbannered lies,
A dream those little drummers make.'"

An hour passed, and I thought to reconnoitre in the lobby. Emerging from the elevator, my heart leaped to see Jack and the General's aide, Lieutenant Ball, each grasping the other by both hands, and laughing like schoolboys too pleased for words.

"Why, Mate," Jack explained as we hurried upstairs to put the last touches to his packing, "it's all up to Richard Harding Davis. He came to me and said he wondered if I knew what was going on. You remember that so-called 'Good Soldier' canard that was attributed to me? It has turned up again. As soon as Davis mentioned it, I could see the whole trouble in a flash. We looked up Lieutenant Ball, and — well, you saw us when you came down. Funny how pleased he was to get the thing cleared up!"

At luncheon, our table was near that of the General. He and his aide were consulting earnestly; and after a while the Lieutenant came toward us. Jack rose, and the two returned to the General.

I gave him my word of honor that I did not write a line of that canard," Jack reported to me, "and upon that word he takes the responsibility of adding me to his already filled quota of correspondents. It seems that he had had word from Washington that my going was left up to him, but he, personally, was up in arms about the canard."

Next, a telegram came from Secretary Josephus Daniels that if Jack could not be accommodated on the transport, he should go on one of the convoying destroyers. "And that would be an experience new to me, too," Jack exulted. But a place was shaken down on the Kilpatrick, on which he sailed Friday afternoon. Any regrets that I may have felt at my inability to accompany him were tempered by the fact that I expected to depart twenty-four hours later, and to meet him on the very date of his arrival in Vera Cruz. This was made possible by our good friend Mr. Robert T. Burge, who had proffered me passage on a vessel of the Gulf Coast Steamship Company, of which he was President.

"I'm only too glad to present you with a ticket," he smiled, "but for goodness' sake, don't go. The steamers are not suitable for ladies' travel. . . . But go if you really must!"

Never shall I forget that evening the little old Atlantis (wrecked the next voyage) approached Vera Cruz. Across the mighty slopes of the storied land, Orizaba towered blue against a sunset sky; and to the south were raised the turrets of the "far-flung battle line" of our own Navy, its smoke mingling with the low tropic clouds. " War, I abhor, and yet — " that has nothing to do, per se, with just valuation of the magnificent machinery invented by brain of man. One of Jack's Mexican articles, in want of real war news, was devoted to what he saw at Tampico's oil-fields. Certain radical contemporaries raged against him, and one, a noted socialist writer, accused him publicly of having been subsidized by the oil interests — subsidized! Jack London! None but a stupid, or at best a warped creature, it would seem to those who knew him, could seriously conceive such a thing.

"Me! subsidized?" Jack stormed, "My worst capitalist enemies have done me the honor to know better than that. Why, no human being has ever dared even to hint subsidization to me, thank God!"

Here again, friend and enemy were like to convict him of paradox. Few could comprehend that universality which made him grasp the whole through all its parts. While decrying war, he could at the same time appreciate the romantic majesty of conquest, hail the bunting of great armadas, respect the courage and deeds of men who battled according to their lights. I have seen him almost weep over the exploits of British admirals and fearless midshipmen of old. “Look!” he would cry, following me with a dusty tome in his hands, “Listen to this, and this . . . this is the sort of stuff that went into the making of you, white woman, and me, and all of us who conquer ourselves and our environment!” In order to preserve a clear view of Jack, it must be held in mind that despite the warm human emotionalism of him he always came to rest upon his intellectual conceptions.

Achievement, to him, was achievement, though he saw all around and under it. “I take off my hat to it,” he would say, whether inspecting the Culebra Cut, or the Harbor of Pago Pago, or the oil fields of Tampico, or the beneficial organization thrown into Vera Cruz by the army and navy. “If only the whole world could be made so clean and orderly,” he said. “If such cleanliness and order could emanate, not from the idea of militarism, but as a social achievement. Let us not wantonly destroy these wonderful machines, these great world assets, that produce efficiently and cheaply. Let us control them. Let us profit by their efficiency and cheapness.”

Upton Sinclair, commending upon Jack’s detractors, made no mistake:

“He wrote a series of articles that caused certain radicals to turn from him in rage. But I felt certain that the exponent of capitalist efficiency who counted upon Jack London’s backing was a child playing in a dynamite factory. . . . If a naval officer took him over a battleship, he would perceive that it was a marvelous and thrilling machine; but let the naval officer not forget that in the quiet hours of the night Jack London’s mind would turn to the white-faced stokers, to whom as a guest of an officer he had not been introduced!”

While decrying war, in time of danger Jack said: “Although I am a man of peace, I carry an automatic pistol. I might meet somebody who would not listen to my protestations of friendship and amity. And so with nations — we’re a long way from universal disarmament. The most peaceful nation to-day is likely to run up against some other nation that does riot want peace. It would look as if we shall need armies for a weary while to come, to enforce the idea of peace."

He appeared to be surprised at the personnel of the army and its officers. I must confess that my own general idea of the hard-bitten "regular" underwent a revelation. The rank and file were of a youthful and mostly blond Anglo-Saxon type. I noticed also that Jack was pleased to find many of the officers of both army and navy less "machinely crammed" than he had thought, quite able to stand on their own feet when it came to up-to-date, independent thinking. Jack held that the world would have no more big wars for a long time. "There will be wars, at one time or another," he believed. "You can't change man entirely from the primitive, fighting animal he is. But I do not think we of to-day shall see a big war. The nations are enlightened enough to stop short of that, and arbitrate their differences." I borrow this from The Human Drift:

"War is passing. It is safer to be a soldier than a workingman. The chance for life is greater in an active campaign than in a factory or a coal mine. In the matter of killing war is growing impotent, and this in the face of the fact that the machinery of war was never so expensive in the past nor so dreadful. . . . War has become a joke. Men have made for themselves monsters of battle which they cannot face in battle. Not only has war, by its own evolution, rendered itself futile, but man himself, with greater wisdom and higher ethics, is opposed to war."

But his uniformed acquaintances, sitting in the portales of the old Diligencias Hotel, sipping Bacardi rum cocktails, disagreed:

"Germany will start something before a great while — see if she doesn't. And she's dying to get her hands on the United States."

For once, Jack was a poor prophet.

Aside from his old associates of Jap-Russ memories — E. H. Davis, "Jimmy" Hare, "Bobbie" Dunn, Frederick Palmer there were present in Vera Cruz the veteran war artist, Zogbaum, and Reuterdhal, who incidentally made a Collier" cover from a sketch of Jack; J. B. Connolly, whom we had met in Boston; Burge McFall (Associated Press); John T. McCutcheon; Arthur Ruhl, Vincent Starrett, Stanton Leeds, Oliver Madox Hueffer from London, and Mrs. Dean, the "Widow" of the New York Town Topics. And from Mexico City, Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Murray, representing the New York World. There were others, whose names escape me.

Jack was not the only correspondent who chafed under the restraint imposed upon the army in Mexico; nor did the six weeks in that country strengthen his already weak regard for the Latin American. When the report came that Huerta had slipped out of Puerta Mexico to the south, the whole force was personally in mutinous humor with sitting inactive. Several of the newspapermen broke parole and made their precarious way to the capital, where some of them landed in prison. Jack had declined to go, saying he did not feel it was fair to General Funston. But later on he mitigated the control he had put upon himself, and sailed on the Mexicana for Tampico, the round-trip cover ing a week. He would not hear of my going to share any possible nip-and-tuck hazard. Realizing that I would be in his way, I did not urge, but remained, with Nakata, at the hotel. Jack charged me, in case orders should come for the army to march for Mexico City, to buy him a horse, and have all in readiness for him to go when he should jump back from Tampico. He also had me wait upon the good General, to discover if Nakata, being Japanese, might go along in such event. This the General did not think advisable; so I kept alert for some other man.

"If there is any advice you need, Mate," Jack adjured me, "any help at any time, apply to Richard Harding Davis." Which clinched what he thought of the "white man" who had so staunchly declined to see a brother correspondent labor under disadvantage. Davis died shortly before Jack; and six days before Jack's death, I heard him deliver an impassioned encomium on Davis as a man. There being no military action about which to write, Jack employed himself turning out articles upon general observations and conditions as he saw them. For recreation, there were horseback rides and drives within the proscribed radius; swims at Los Baños; dinners and luncheons aboard the fleet or with the officers of army and navy ashore; shopping for laces, Mexican blankets, serapes and opals; visits to the little provost court where the natives gaped at a kindly dispensation of justice beyond all their conception; dancing in patios along the portales of the hotels; bull fights — General Funston watched these carefully, and allowed no horses in the ring. Aboard the Solace, the hospital ship, we found the wounded boys reading J. B. Connolly and Jack London, and forgetful of suffering in their pleasure at meeting the authors.

Those broken boys were forerunners of the thousands from all classes, one in pain and purpose, for whom in the hospitals of Europe Jack was to fill so many needs. "There, in hospital," wrote one, "I read Burning

Daylight . . . then the doctor sent me to Blighty. There I left Burning Daylight — in the midst of volumes neat and clean and new, damp-stained and broken-backed, I left it . . .” And from our friend Major Harry Strange, at the Front: “I always knew somewhat, and Jack taught me more, and war has quite convinced me, that the only happiness and joy worth while is in service, good, big, noble, brave-hearted service.” The Tommies called Jack’s books “the Jacklondons”; and one of them, a hot-hearted young Celt, wrote me from Dublin: “I only know that the man who comprehends as he did is always right, and that every one else is wrong.” Which voices my own conviction. Again I listen to Jack’s appeal: “Be patient with me in the little things; I am really patient in the big ones — I have not winced nor cried aloud.” And whereas he might be hasty in little things and little judgments, upon the big issues of mankind and of his own affairs in relation to mankind, he laid a divining finger that could not touch other than wisely and rightly.

There were visits to San Juan de Ulua, with its spew of filthy, dehumanized prisoners, whom, with their unthinkable dungeons, our navy cleansed and deodorized. Some of these unfortunates had no faintest notion as to what, if any, offense had condemned them to that living burial below sea level. Others recited haltingly the most trivial of incidents that had doomed them to exist for years without standing-room or light.

“Pretty awful, isn’t it? — But don’t forget, Mate,” Jack, who never forgot anything, would point out, “that we ourselves aren’t half-civilized yet, in our treatment of convicts. Also, there’s such a thing as railroad still existing in the land of the free!”

All this time, busy working and playing in Vera Cruz, waiting while Washington held the army and navy bound in port, Jack, according to rumor in the capitalist press of the United States, was leading a band of insurrectos somewhere in the north of Mexico! Rumor, did I say? The large headlines read:

JACK LONDON LEADS ARMY OF MEXICO REBELS.

That some one was making use of his name, however, seems probable; for later on we heard of persons who had met “Jack London” in Mexico and in Lower California. And an American firm dealing in artist’s materials, waited for years for this or another spurious Jack London in Mexico to settle his account.

Whether Jack gathered the bacilli in Tampico, or whether General Maas' blockade that prevented the ingress of fresh food to the occupied town of Vera Cruz, combined with the hotel's filthy kitchen, was responsible, we shall never know. But on May 30, the day set for him to go up in an army aeroplane, instead he went to bed in our lately bullet-riddled room, with acute bacillary dysentery. Nakata and I took charge of the nursing, under the resident American physician, Dr. A. E. Goodman, in consultation with Major Williams. The latter wanted him to go into army hospital, but Jack seemed to prefer a woman nurse, being myself. Thereafter, every spoonful of water that passed his lips or was used in nursing, was first thoroughly boiled in our room by means of electric appliances, "Thanks to American efficiency," he groaned from his bed; and his food we cooked by the same process.

It was a desperate, cautious campaign against death, but as usual the patient managed by his uncommon recuperative powers to make a spectacular recovery. After a few days he insisted that I take the air with our friends, and upon my accepting dinner invitations in the portales below. "And be sure you don't stint yourself at the lace shops!" he would call after, with indulgent eyes. Or he would turn to greet a decayed Spanish gentleman who tip toed in, who must part with certain ornaments of coral and ancient gold filigree:

"Do you like it, Mate?" he would finger a bracelet or rosary. "If you do, say the word. A woman must have some loot of war, even if her husband has to buy it!"

Nine days after he was stricken, and with pleurisy to boot, he was able to go aboard the cattle transport Ossabaw, bound for Galveston. "If anything breaks in Vera Cruz, which I don't think likely, I can return, he said. "Meantime, me for the Ranch, where I can have white-man's climate and grub!"

"Do you know what are in the long boxes where those soldiers are sitting to play cards?" Jack pointed down to the main deck. And before I could gasp a reply, he finished:

"Those fellows were dead in four days of what I pulled through."

About this time occurred the riots in the hopfields at Wheatland, California, resulting from shocking conditions and treatment, and for once the high-handed methods of certain detectives had roused the ire of the public. Jack's opinion concerning this u death hole" was sought — indeed, looking over his clipping-books, I notice how frequently he was asked for his opinion upon widely variant subjects. I quote:

"The sheriff fired a shot in the air, and then, presto! it all happened at once. As a matter of fact, nobody knows what happened. I am willing to bet that if every one of these witnesses went before God Almighty and told, to the best of his recollection, no two would agree. It was the well-known crowd psychology on the job.

"These men were not organized. There was only one amongst the 2300 of them who held an I. W. W. card. They did not need organization. They had seen the cost of living soar and soar, their purchasing power grow less and less; they had all felt within them selves, 'Something must be done.' Above all, they have had force preached into them, pounded into them, from the beginning — by whom? The employers.

"The employers have always ruled the working class with force. One incident happened that is strangely typical. One of the Durst Brothers struck one of the leading workmen in the face. He said he did it 'facetiously.' Maybe he did; it isn't likely. But, facetious or not, that blow symbolized the whole relation between employer and employee. Where they do not actually strike blows, it is because they fear the blows will be struck back.

"Now, Sheriff Voss and District Attorney Manwell came on the scene not at all in the interest of equity, but in the interest of the employer. They were not there to see fair play; they were there to 'keep order.' The sheriff expected his shot in the air to cow them.

"Why didn't they cow? Simply because they are becoming more and more imbued with the belief that force is the only way. I look back over history and see that never has the ruling class relinquished a single one of its privileges except it was forced to.

"It is always the things we fight for, bleed for, that we care most for. This lesson of force is soaking into the workers — that's all." Another question upon which Jack's views were solicited was as follows: A grown man in the State of Illinois took advantage of a young girl, and was sentenced to thirty years in the penitentiary. A child being born, the young mother started a movement to free its father so that he might marry her for the sake of the child. Jack's answer to the Newspaper Enterprise Association is below:

"The world and civilization belong to the races that practice monogamy. Monogamy is set squarely against promiscuity. Wherefore monogamy, as the cornerstone of the state, demands a legal father for Vallie. Also the father and the mother of Vallie desire to make their parenthood legal. Therefore the only logical thing for the state of Illinois to do is to make possible this legalization of Vallie's birth and parentage. Otherwise the State of Illinois stultifies itself by kicking out the cornerstone of civilization on which it is found, namely, the family group that can exist only under monogamy."

No one could be more shaken than Jack, in July, by the beginning of war in Europe. And while he went on unremittingly with writing and ranch, the war was the undercurrent of every thought. More staunchly than ever before he reiterated his faith in England. "England is fighting her first popular war," he would say; and he could not forgive Germany, over and above her sworn Frightfulness, for having been stupid enough to think that England would not fight.

But to any proposition bearing upon his presence in France as correspondent, he practically turned a deaf ear, in 1914 and thenceforward until he died.

"Again I say, the Japanese settled the war correspondent forever, by proving him non-essential. Look at Davis and the rest, some of the best in the world," he would indicate as the conflict widened. "Eating out their hearts over there. Not for me. If I went, I would be unable to get what I went after. I have learned my lesson. If I ever do go to this war, it will be to fight with England and her Allies. . . . Meantime, I have a lot of mouths to feed, and irons in the fire, and I could not leave with my affairs in their present shape."

Yet I knew that had there been the ghost of an opening for him to see what he wished, he would have managed to go.

He and Collier's corresponded upon the possibility, to find, in the end, that they agreed upon the matter. They wrote him:

"We learned . . . that of the twelve English correspondents chosen to join Sir John French's army not one has as yet been allowed the privilege, and the prospect seems that the thing has been indefinitely postponed. . . . The precariousness of the whole business of war correspondents at the present time seems to make it rather futile to put first-class men in the field, so to speak, and break their hearts by making it impossible for them to get anywhere of real importance. . . . We sent you a clipping some days ago which shows that finally all belligerents have decided to do away with correspondents. The result is that we can only get certain casual articles from roving writers of one sort or another with very little or real stuff from the front."

Exasperated with the way he felt the Mexican crisis had been mishandled at Washington, Jack grew more so with the failure of his own country, as time went on, to take a hand in the European crisis. The effect of all this was to stimulate his brain to more thinking, while at the same time he increased his work and plans for work in every direction.

When in June he gave me "The Strength of the Strong," the fly leaf reminded me of that in a book he had sent me the month before our marriage, in which was written: "The red gods call to us. We fling ourselves across the world to meet again and not to part." And here, nine years later, I found: "Back again from Vera Cruz, and all the world, you back with me from the war game, I am almost driven to assert that our little war game adventure was as sweet and fine as our first honeymoon."

In the Indian summer we rejoined the Roamer at San Rafael and spent months upon the big bay. The Exposition was rising from the water's edge and many the late afternoon we pulled up our fishing-lines where we lay off Angel Island, and sailed to where we could watch that dream city of domes and minarets in the flood of sunset rose and gold.

On December 8, Jack signed and dated the manuscript of "The Little Lady of the Big House," and began working up notes for the Grove Play, which the Bohemian Club had asked him to prepare for the 1916 High Jinks.

RETURN TO HAWAII; FORTIETH YEAR

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXVIII 1915

WANT to hear some of your husband's verse?" he queried with mock gravity, inking a period to his first morning's work upon "The Acorn Planter." "Come below, and listen how it runs along!"

He had much sport writing this thin little volume. But let no one mistake that he was not in dead earnest with regard to its motif. Far from attempting formal versification, he but fixed more noticeably the runic tendency in earlier work which had dealt with the Younger World. When it was done and read aloud, he passed me the last slender sheaf to copy, sighing:

"I don't know what to think of it — and yet, I don't believe it is so bad! Good or bad, however, it is done; so send it along to the Secretary of the Bohemian Club. — One thing about it, though: I'll bet the composers in the Club are going to have merry hell putting music to it. They've done Indian stuff before now; but this goes too far back into the raw beginnings of the race, I fear. . . . Ready to cast off, Nakata?" And Jack sprang to the Roamer's wheel, and in fine disdain of wind and wave forgot "The Acorn Planter," and all its works.

It was for the very reason feared by Jack that the Grove Play was finally written by some one else. "The Acorn Planter" has never been enacted, but appeared in book-form in 1916. "And somehow, I like the little thing," he would say, passing his hand over it. "And now," he announced at nine the morning after it was finished," now for a dog-story. I just seem to have to write one every so often."

This was "Jerry," which was followed by a companion book, "Michael," as "The Call of the Wild" had preceded "White Fang." When, Jack gone beyond consulting, I was confronted with the dilemma of issuing "Jerry" simultaneously with a book of the same name from another house, I hit upon "Jerry of the Islands," with "Michael Brother of Jerry" to balance the sequel. Jack had planned, after bringing out both volumes, eventually to combine them under the title of "Jerry and Michael." I remember how he reveled in creating the Ancient Mariner.

"Michael," beneath its delightful romance and character portraiture, is frank propaganda for the stamping out of stage-training for animals. To this end, Jack had for years been quietly collecting data from every available source. No reader who would understand his motive should pass by the Preface of "Michael, Brother of Jerry," which states his views. Out of this book has grown a rapidly expanding, international organization known as The Jack London Club. There are no dues.

"Jerry" and "Michael" appeared duly in The Cosmopolitan Magazine, and the books were published in 1917 and 1918 respectively. "Jerry" was partly written in Hawaii.

Young friends in Stockton persuaded us to leave the yacht at anchor and join a week-end jaunt to Truckee, for the winter sports. There in the High Sierras we toboganned and went on sleighing parties. A visit to the lake where the ill-starred Donner Party had made its last stand against odds, affected Jack — that frontier tragedy, with others of the brave old days, having always stirred his imagination. The skiing, while he watched it by the hour, and ice-skating, Jack would not attempt with his "smashed" ankles, which had been cramping at night. "Getting old, getting old," he would grit through his teeth while I manipulated the small feet. "Do you realize that your husband is in his fortieth year?"

Then he met "Scotty," otherwise Mr. J. H. Scott, champion dog-musher, with his prize teams of Malemutes and Siberian huskies, gee-pole sleds and all. Jack's pleasure knew no bounds because, forsooth, beyond all personal joy in renewing acquaintance with the trappings of a wonderful phase in his youth, he could now show me the old way of the Northland. "Scotty" appreciated the situation, and we must drive with him. Two sleds swung up to the curb, one driven by Mr. Brady, and we took the novel airing for glistening miles to a neighboring mountain town — Jack behind the eight Malemutes, I drawn by the dozen lighter dogs, little chow-like things of fluff and steel, with plumy curled tails and the brightest, merriest eyes and manners in the world, ready to stampede the outfit any moment a rabbit hove above the white horizon.

"Gee! I wish it were possible to film 'The Call of the Wild,' Jack considered. "What good materials right here! But I don't see how it could be done — a dog hero would be necessary."

"How about your stage-training for animals?" I hinted. But he thought the "cruelty" would be negligible in preparing a dog, whose part at best could be but subsidiary.

"Remember," he worked it out, "a long time, in one place, with no harsh traveling conditions, would be taken to get the dog in shape. A few performances, at most, would do the trick, which is very different from the vaudeville circuit, my dear, where the animal is obliged, fair weather and foul, to go through the same act, often of most unnatural character, from two to four times a day, year in and year out."

Right here is a good place to make clear Jack London's position with regard to a much-mooted issue, that of vivisection. He subscribed to the use, not the abuse of vivi-section, approaching this subject, as all others, through the scientific avenue.

"No, I'll admit, I'd run a thousand miles rather than see a pet dog of mine cut up. But if it were a choice between having my dog or any dog experimented upon, and my child or any child, I'd say the dog every time."

Thus, he had little time to waste in argument with men and women who made claim that no benefit had been derived from vivisection, no human life saved by the conclusions therefrom. He considered that he knew better, what of the time he spent with the books.

"There will always be fanatics, and there will always be abuse, in any field of research," he would declare. "But the legitimate practice of vivisection should not be interfered with. It should be subject to inspection and control — but not by ignorant and prejudiced sentimentalists, who won't listen to the good features of a proposition, and who exaggerate the regretable."

There was something inimical working in Jack's blood those days. No sooner were we back on the Ranch, than the sporadic cramps were succeeded by an attack of rheumatism in one foot.

"And gaze out of that window, at the weather," he grieved, pointing from his bed to the streaming landscape. "Last winter there wasn't enough rain. This year we're swamped! God doesn't love the farmer! But the draintile is carrying off a lot of the overflow — things are working, things are working!" he cheered up.

Severe pyorrhea of long standing contributed its quota of poison; and, in his acid condition, his yachting fare of twelve-minute-roasted canvasback and mallard, and red-meated raw fish, was hazardous menu. He experimented with emetine, and had the village doctor make tri-weekly calls at the Ranch to give him intramuscular hypodermic injections. Jack's mouth altered considerably in latter years, from loss of all upper teeth and wearing a plate. The upper lip, once full and narrowing to the deep corners, grew thinner and more straight of line. It was no less beautiful — merely different from the more youthful feature. Jack's face, at whatever age, breaking into smile of lips and eyes, was one that, once seen, was never forgotten. It is undying. It will persist as long as the life of any one who beheld it.

Before sailing for Honolulu on February 24, we made several trips to that loveliest of evanescent cities, the Pan-Pacific Exposition. Jack cared little, as a rule, for that sort of spectacle and amusement. But the sunset metropolis enfolded him in its golden embrace, charmed him into hours of unwonted idleness, through afternoon and blue twilight, listening to the fountains and watching the Tower of Jewels blossom against the starlit skies. One day I particularly recall, when we had arrived early and stepped into the human, holiday atmosphere that pervaded the vast inclosure.

"I never drove a car in my life," Jack threatened. "It's time I began. Woman, climb in!" What I was so summarily invited to climb into was one of the handy electric-driven wheel-chairs that rest many tired limbs. How we laughed; and how the morning strollers laughed with the enthusiastic, noisy boy with the cap and curls, who coaxed the feeble mechanism into doing his will, and when it would not respond, talked to it eloquently before dismounting and lifting it around. It was Jack London, any of you who joined in gayety with the exuberant boy that crisp California morning. Once, stalled momentarily in a geranium nursery behind the giant arbor that was the Horticultural Building, he stopped to admire the floral flames. He did not live to learn that one of them, a large crimson single variety, had been named for himself.

Going to Hawaii had been farthest from our thoughts that winter of 1915, and our decision was a result of the merest turn of events. Jack, beneath almost more than he could stagger, even with his large earnings, intended to stay close at home and work out his financial salvation under double pressure of work. The Cosmopolitan had offered release from his fiction contract long enough for him to accompany the Atlantic Fleet, carrying the President, on its jaunt through the Panama Canal to the Exposition. Jack's personal desire, or lack of desire to leave home, is expressed in his telegraphic reply:

"Glen Ellen, December 18, 1914.

"Don't want to go anywhere. Don't want to do anything except stay in California and write two dandy novels, the first of which I am now framing up. However, since I like to be as good to my friends as I like my friends to be good to me, I am willing to fall for the Panama adventure if it does not compel me to lose too much financially.

"European war has hit me hard financially, wherefore in view of fact that Panama trip is short enough not to prevent my delivering next year's serials on time, the primary stipulation is that regular check comes to Ranch every month, including the month in which I do Panama. Wire me full business details, dates, and amount of stuff I am expected to write. Should like several days in New York before sailing."

It was not for me to sail on the battleship, and while I accepted my feminine fate, I declined again to remain in California during an absence of Jack. "I shall go to Honolulu and join Beth," referring to my cousin, Beth Wiley, who was wintering here. "I can be in San Francisco for your return."

Jack, though outwardly falling in with my plan, I think was rather taken aback at the idea of his small woman going her own way, alone. It was amusing to note his restlessness. Not once but many times he would boil over.

"I don't want to go on that damned Panama trip — I want to go to Hawaii with you, and work on 'Jerry' and 'Michael!'" Or: "Somehow, I can't be content not to see the Islands again, with you."

The exigencies of the European conflict having made it necessary to call off the Fleet's Exposition voyage, Jack's voice rang with the good news:

"Look what I've got! And now, Mate Woman, I can go to Hawaii with you!"

But when, standing on the deck of the Matsonia, we waved farewell to our friends, he confessed:

"Do you know the true reason I am aboard this ship to-day? Because I could not bear to disappoint you — and incidentally myself. I ought not to go away, with all those important things needing my attention. But I just couldn't risk the sight of your face when I should tell you that you'd have to go alone after all!"

"But I wouldn't," said I, with a great relief that our feet were on the outward-bound planking. "I should have staid home, of course, where I belonged — and beside," I put in slyly, "if you had let business keep you home, it would be the first time! You've always been able to manage things from a distance, and the mails and cable facilities are still working."

"You're right," he acknowledged.

This and our next visit, as before written, are detailed in my book "Our Hawaii." In the 1921 edition, I have included three articles written by Jack in 1916, entitled "My Hawaiian Aloha," which one of the Territory's leading men pronounced "worth millions to the Islands."

We took our own servants and set up housekeeping, in the first instance on Beach Walk, whence we came and went on inter-island travels in the group. Our daily life in the pretty cottage included the same working habits as at home; and afternoons were spent on the beach. Each day, after luncheon, saw Jack, often robed in a blue kimono of bold design, carrying a long bag of similar fabric containing reading matter and cigarettes, with a bath-towel wound turban-wise around his head, soft-footing Kalia Road bound for the Outrigger Club. They were happy hours, lying on the shady sand among the barbaric black-and-yellow canoes, reading aloud, napping, and chatting with our friends. Later in the day we swam through and beyond the breakers and spent some of the most wonderful moments of our united lives floating in the deeper water where, in the swaying, caressing element, undisturbed betwixt sky and earth, all things lost their complicated aspect, and we talked simply and solemnly of the issues that count most in human relationship.

When "The Scarlet Plague," written just before the baby was born, had been received, in it he wrote:

"My Mate-Woman:

"And here, in blessed Hawaii, eight years after our voyage here in our own speck boat, we find ourselves, not merely again, but more bound to each other than then or than ever.

In March he wrote a Preface for "The Cry for Justice," by Upton Sinclair.

The following letter, written on June 3, is interesting:

"Dear Cloudesley:

"In reply to yours of May 15. First of all, whatever you do, read Conrad's latest — VICTORY. Read it, if you have to pawn your watch to buy it. Conrad has exceeded himself. He must have deliberately set himself the challenge, and it is victory for him, because he has skinned "Ebb Tide."

"He has made a woman out of nothing — out of sweepings of life, and he has made her woman glorious. He has painted love with all love's illusion

— himself, Conrad, devoid of illusion.

“Lena goes without saying. She is Woman. But it is possible, absolutely possible, for the several such men as Mr. Jones, Ricardo, Pedro, Heyst, Schomberg, Morrison, Davidson, and Wang and his Alfuro woman, to exist. I know them all. I have met them all. I swear it. “As regards the love of this book, the sex of this book — all the love and the sex of it is correct, cursedly correct, splendidly, magnificently correct, with every curse of it and every splendid magnificence of it duly placed, shaded and balanced. Yes, and the very love of Ricardo is tremendous and correct.

“In brief, I am glad that I am alive, if, for no other reason, because of the joy of reading this book.

“Jack London.”

The next day, still filled with his emotion, he could not restrain himself from passing it on to the author of “Victory”:

“Honolulu, T. H., June 4, 1915.

“Dear Joseph Conrad:

“The mynah birds are waking the hot dawn about me. The surf is thundering in my ears where it falls on the white sand of the beach, here at Waikiki, where the green grass at the roots of the cocoanut palms insists to the lip of the wave-wash. This night has been yours — and mine.

“I had just begun to write when I read your first early work. I have merely madly appreciated you and communicated my appreciation to my friends through all these years. I never wrote you. I never dreamed to write you. But ‘Victory’ has swept me off my feet, and I am inclosing herewith a carbon copy of a letter written to a friend at the end of this lost night’s sleep. [The letter to Cloudesley.]

“Perhaps you will appreciate this lost night’s sleep when I tell you that it was immediately preceded by a day’s sail in a Japanese sampan of sixty miles from the Leper Settlement of Molokai (where Mrs. London and I had been revisiting old friends) to Honolulu.

“On your head be it.

“Aloha (which is a sweet word of greeting, the Hawaiian greeting, meaning ‘My love be with you.”)

“Jack London.”

Never, before or since, have I taken such hazards with the water as during those months at Waikiki, under Jack’s tutelage. Always relying upon that sixth sense of his in matters of life and death, I followed his lead wherever he thought by direction I could go, and accomplished what I would not have deemed possible for myself. But he never led me where he feared I could not safely swim. And when once or twice we had surmounted conditions that kept shorebound the canoes and even surfriders, and returned unexhausted, his joy and pride in his "one small woman" were unlimited.

"You're so little, so frail, white woman of my own kind," he would marvel, his great eyes looking into me as if to discern the fiber of which I was made. Look at that arm, with its delicate bones — I could snap it like a clay pipestem . . . and yet, those arms never faltered in that succession of smoking combers to-day . . ." He tapped his forehead: "That's where it resides that's what makes the trivial flesh and bone able to do what it does!"

Deep thinker though he was, and worshipful of the brain stuff of others, he ever found shining things of the spirit in courageous physical endeavor. I think, in a dozen close years with him, year in and year out, "in sickness and in health," till death did us part, that never have I seen him more elated, more uplifted with delight over feat of one dear to him, than upon one April day at Waikiki.

An out-and-out Kona gale had piled up a big, quick-following surf, threshing milk-white and ominous under a leaden, low-hanging sky. At the Outrigger beach no soul was visible; but a group of young sea-gods belonging to the Club sat with bare feet outstretched on the railing of the lanai above the canoes. Joining them, Jack inquired if they were "going out." "Nothing doing," one laughed. And another, "This is no day for surfboards — and a canoe couldn't live in that mess!" "But we are going to swim out," Jack said. "You'd better not, Mr. London," the boys frowned respectfully. "You couldn't take a woman into that water." "You watch me," Jack returned. "I could, and shall."

We went. Now, understand: it was not to be spectacular that Jack led me into the sea that day. This was not bravado. With the several weeks' training he had given me in sizable breakers, he expected as a matter of course to see me put that training to account. And I felt as one with him. The thing was, first, to get beyond the diving-stage, for a freshet had brought down the little river a tangle of thorned algaroba and other prickly vegetation, which, with a wild wrack of seaweed, made the shallow almost impassable.

Very slowly we forged outward, and at length were in position where the marching seas were forming and over-toppling. Rather stupendous they loomed, I will confess; but, remembering other and smaller ones and obeying scrupulously Jack’s quiet “Don’t get straight up and down — straighten out — keep flat, keep flat!” I managed not badly to breast and pass through a dozen or more smoking combers that followed fast and faster.

When I finally ventured, “I think I have had enough,” immediately Jack slanted our course channelward where the tide flows out toward the reef egress. But after half an hour we found we were, despite all effort, drifting willy nilly out to sea. By now, the young sea-gods had followed with their boards, fearing we might come to grief; and upon their advice we rejoined the breaking water, and “came in strong” with our best strokes to the Beach.

Which I tell, further to point his passion for physical courage and prowess that after all are but mental. “I’d like you to write books, if you wanted to,” was his final word; “but I’d rather see woman of mine win through those great seas out there than write great books!”

Jack’s health was fairly good that summer, though he seemed to be on tension, and prone to argue overlong and over-intensely. Indeed, as time went on, he battled with this and that opponent, or provoked skirmishes, with an increasing fervor and violence that ill-betokened a peaceful old age. Oh, well, I’d rather wear out than rust out!” was his verdict on the matter.

And once Jack told me a thing that will abide like a dove of peace until I die, as one of my sweetest touches with this sweetest of men:

“I never said this to you,” he began; “but many years ago, before I knew you existed, I lay one afternoon on a California beach — at Santa Cruz — in one of my great disgusts . . . you know — when I have dared look Truth in the face and become blackly pessimistic about the world and the men and women in it who cannot learn, who cannot use their puny minds. It was a warm, still day; and while I lay, with my face on my arms, over and above the steady breathing of the ocean and splashing of a small surf, there came to me, from very far off, almost like skylarks in the blue, the voices of a man and a woman.

“I couldn’t for the life of me figure where the voices came from. I raised my head, but no one was in sight on the beach; and at last, the nearing conversation guided me seaward where I could just barely make out the heads of two persons very leisurely coming in, talking cozily out there in deep water, as unconcerned and comfortable as if sitting in the sand.

“Something inside me suddenly yearned toward them — they were so blest, those two together. And I wondered, lying there sadly enough, if there was a woman in the world for me who so loved the water — the little woman who would be the right woman who would speak my own language — with whom I could go out to sea,, without boat or life-preserver; hours in the water holding long comradely talks on everything under the sun, with no more awareness of the means of locomotion than if walking. — — I could have told you this eight years ago," he mused, "that wonderful morning we swam together across Urufaru Bay in Moorea, while the Tahitians worried about the sharks. . . . I thought of it at the time. But we were not alone. The stage was not set for you and me."

I could see that the shame of civilization, the Great War, worked havoc in him. That any white nation, hunting for a place in the sun, should have made such a thing possible, was never out of his consciousness; and he raved in his choicest vocabulary concerning Germania. Still, he did not think the war would last long. We were on Hawaii, the "Big Island," with the 1915 Congressional junketing party from Washington, on which Jack had been made one of the entertainment committee, when the stunning intelligence came of the sinking of the Lusitania. Jack, for once, was shocked into something akin to silence. To his mind, the best characterization of that crime was the one made by I have forgotten whom: "When Germany, with paean of joy, committed suicide!"

To certain harsh comments upon a young English friend who, answering Great Britain's call, left his mother and his children in Honolulu, Jack pleaded with blazing eyes:

"You do not seem to understand: he had to go. There was no other way out, for him, than the one he chose; he could not have done other than he did . . . as well criticize the flame that burns, as criticize this royal thing of the spirit within him that drew him from success, and love of children, and fat security, half-way across the world to fling himself into the maelstrom of battle, pain and death — all for an Idea.

In the latter part of July, we bade good bye to Honolulu. Jack said: "We must go back soon. I feel as if our visit had been interrupted." For he had made many friends, conquered a few outstanding prejudices, and felt much at home in this neighboring "fleet of Islands" above the Line.

We landed into the annoyance of trouble with the grapejuice company, but it seemed as if difficulties of this sort were all in the day's work. "What am I to think? I go into the cleanest sort of business, to make the best nonalcoholic drink known, and I get it in the neck, pronto — just like that!"

“But the lake’s full of water for my alfalfa, he checked himself, “and that means more life, more abundance of butter-fat from your little Jerseys, bigger Shire colts, heavier beef cattle, and the rest!”

To our mutual rejoicing, the water was warm enough for swimming, and Jack asked his sister to shift a gang from some other section of the ranch, “run up” a log bathhouse of six rooms and lead the necessary piping for two showers. Inside of three days this convenience was a reality, as well as an appropriate accent in the scenery of the meadow. A rustic table and seats, set within a circle of redwoods, two canvas boats forgotten out of the Snark’s dunnage, together with a diving float, perfected our equipment for al fresco entertaining.

Jack stocked the lakelet with catfish brought from the San Joaquin river, and these proved a great advantage, both for sport and table.

A trap-shooting outfit was purchased, but he never got around to having it installed. “I can’t find a place that seems exactly right,” he omplained; “nor a good spot for a tennis court. As for golf links — ” he put it up to Joe Mather, “if you’ll make suggestions where they can be laid out, I’ll go ahead and have the work done.”

There had been correspondence with Mr. Edgar Sisson, then editor of The Cosmopolitan, as to writing a “movie” novel based upon a scenario by Charles Goddard, author of “The Perils of Pauline” and other “thrillers” of the screen. Chapters of the novel were to appear in the string of Hearst newspapers, and simultaneously illustrated in the cinema theatres. Jack was not enthusiastic at first, but saw a possible way to recoup his pocketbook from his tremendous outlay on the ranch. His suggestion being agreed upon for a lump sum running into five large figures with temporary release from his regular measure of fiction, he launched into it with glee:

“Think — it’ll be sheer recreation, though I double my usual daily portion, at double my usual rate! And I don’t have to do a thing but reel off the stuff, upon Goddard’s scenario notes. I don’t have to worry about plot, or sequence of events, or contribute a single idea if I don’t want to!”

He never ceased to maintain that he hated to write — had to drive himself to it. It made him flare when this was questioned. In reply to an unknown admirer, he wrote: “. . . Let me tell you that I envy you. You delight to write. You delight in your writing. You are enamored of writing, while I, with the publication of my first book, lost all joy in writing. I go each day to my daily task as a slave would go to his task. I detest writing.

On the other hand it is the best way I have ever found to make a very good living. So I continue to write. But his best work was conceived in passion for its own sake, and I think one feels his urge of self-expression, while many were his enthusiasms over what he was doing. One short piece of work gave him a great deal of pleasure — a Preface for a new edition of Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast." Because of absence from California, his manuscript did not reach Macmillans in season, and it was a keen disappointment to Jack that the book was published without his appreciation. So the most he could do was to include it in a book-collection, and it appears, under the title of "A Classic of the Sea," in "The Human Drift."

Mr. Sisson and Mr. Goddard paid us a visit to discuss ways and means, because Jack avowed his determination of taking this work to Hawaii, where Mr. Goddard would have to send his installments of scenario for the novelist's guidance. When in the spring of 1916, at Waikiki, he completed this manuscript of what has been called "frenzied fiction" he wrote a Foreword explaining at length how he had come to lend himself to such a bizarre undertaking. "In truth," he says, "this yarn is a celebration. By its completion I celebrate my fortieth birthday, my fiftieth book, my sixteenth year in the writing game, and a new departure. I have certainly never done anything like it before; I am pretty certain never to do anything like it again. And he then goes deeper into his subject.

"Hearts of Three," they named it; and, as a sympathetic critic has suggested, it should be viewed as something of a joke — the most adventurous, high-spirited, rollicking, ridiculous, impossible stuff in the world, an outrageous thing of delightful absurdity. In this light Jack regarded it, and had the time of his life in its fabrication. He received his money, but died before the story was published in the newspapers; and for some reason it has not, up to 1921, been presented upon the screen.

Our loss of Nakata, to marriage and career, at the end of 1915, constituted more than a domestic flurry. He had nearly every prerequisite of the close and confidential servitor, and it is hard to decide which suffered more from his absence, Jack or myself. All in all, I think it was Jack. Next, our guests missed his cheery and charming service, for "Where is Nakata?" ordinarily followed greetings from our friends.

THE WAR; HAWAII

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XXXIX 1916

AND now I come to the last and most difficult movement in my undertaking. The mere narrative is nothing that in March, with our Japanese, we sailed on the Great Northern for Honolulu, rented a spreading old bungalow at 2201 Kalia Road, Waikiki, and lived the gay life of the subtropic city, breaking the round with wonderful inter-island explorations, and returning to California after seven months.

What is so difficult is the developing of this last earthly phase of Jack London, so that all who run may read and not wonder overmuch why, through sheer neglect, he cut himself off, or caused himself to be cut off from the larger fulfilment of himself. For I truly believe that his best work was yet to come. That he believed it, I am equally convinced. “Just wait, wait until I’ve got everything going ahead smoothly, and don’t have to consider the wherewithal any more, and then I am going to write some real books!”

Jack’s life is the story of a princely ego that struggled for full expression, and realized it only in a small degree. There were so few to heed his deeper self-manifestations. As a mere lad, he was conscious of that superiority and of its environmental discrepancy, and all the while fought for the congenial environment. As he grew in mental stature, he recognized himself as part of the whole ego-substance, and proceeded to fight for the proper environment for egos other than his own. Hence, Jack the Individualist, and Jack the Socialist.

The result of his individual struggle for expression, when young, was Success, Recognition. Yet, as I have already written, such was the universal quality of his mind that he would have reached success, as the world regards it, by way of any medium of expression he had selected under ceaseless urge of that princely ego. Perhaps, as the years lapsed, if the world had demanded more, he might have been forced into an expression somewhere nearly adequate to his inner demand. But the world acclaimed what he did do, and the money that same world paid enabled him to search for happiness — a goal in itself. Yet happiness, as he saw it, was endeavor, always endeavor, the accumulation of knowledge, and to no small end. He created an environment which bade fair to balance in extent his royal requirement — the wide-reaching acres with their herds of the best, the lavish hospitality, the great house. Yet throughout he preserved the collective ideal, gave to others the unselfish help of his brain and time and money, impelled by an incorruptible ideal of making the world a better place for his having lived in it — of "causing two blades of grass to grow where one grew before."

But with all this in his grasp, the instinct to search still drove him on. He was doomed to remain unsatisfied, and unsatisfied he remained. The ultimate aim could not be fame, nor money, nor anything the world had in its gift. I had almost said that Love itself left him empty; but insofar as he loved Love, and could not live without Love and what understanding and ease of spirit Love could vouchsafe in his unguarded moments of despair, Love, I say, given and returned, kept him alive for many a year. This I know.

He had tried during his life all the ways known to man for getting away from an insatiable ego. And all he had really succeeded in was to obscure the demands that he had by his white logic interpreted, and had striven so hard to placate. It may be he sensed this long before he came face to face with and acknowledged it; and this probably led him more or less consciously to greater emphasis upon all the things with which he drugged his perception of futility — his work, his amusements, and the dream of scientific husbandry into which his unquenchable pioneering spirit had led him. And when, once in a while, he brought up and staggered before a flash of insight to the way he was bound, he called upon all the artifices of a superb intellect to prove he was right in defying the vision. It was a regal battle, and he lost — at least, so far as concerns the perceptions of most of us who are left. No man with his capacity could ever really bury the melancholy heritage that is coincident with the brain that seeks and scans too closely the fearful face of Truth. "My mistake in opening the books," he would repeat. "Sometimes I wish I had never opened the books." Still, except as he was warped by sickness, at any time he was glad to quote, " 'E liked it all." The game was worth the candle.

The conflict shows in the caliber of literature that first earned him renown, and the caliber of that which served his chosen end, preaching the things which filled his brain and hands with work that waided off the final capitulation he made to his fate. The first is distinguished by the impersonal note; the second marked equally by the personal. Had the human clay of him been equal to his mental capacity and urge, he might in time have stood out grand and free and his gift to the ages been of unequaled value. As note:

For months Jack had been reading, in his intensive method, in conjunction with the works of all the best alienists, upon the subject of Psychoanalysis — Freud, Prince, and, most of all, Jung. Much he read aloud, calling me to him, or following me about to instil certain passages. But it was one utterance, in that summer of 1916, that made me realize, distinct from the excitement that the conquest of Knowledge always produced in him, that he had at last come upon something commensurate with his highest powers of penetration. His eyes like stars, his face still with a high solemnity I had never before seen upon it, in a voice so prophetic that my soul has been listening ever since, he said:

"Mate Woman, I tell you I am standing on the edge of a world so new, so terrible, so wonderful, that I am almost afraid to look over into it."

As I came to look with him over that brink into the possibilities of that new world which is as old as Time, I began to see what it was beginning to mean to him who had sensed its abysses as long ago as when he wrote "The Call of the Wild," ay, and before that. With his synthetic mind, he would have been a splendid exponent of what bids fair to be the limitless scope and application of the principles of Psychoanalysis. At times, when he expounded his hopes of what he would be able to accomplish in this research I was caught up into his vision. But so terrific was the marvel of what he dared dream he might do, that one's every-day senses reeled away from the contemplation. I have no words, no skill, with which to transfer to my reader this look into the gulf. But why, Jack thought, if he could learn to analyze the secret soul-stuff of the individual and bring it up to the light of foreconsciousness, could not he analyze the soul of the race, back and back, ever farther into the shadows, to its murky beginnings? His eyes, when he thus speculated, were those, not in the least of a fanatic, but of a seer, deep as the ages. He walked on air, yet the actual material practically of it appealed before all.

While he laid aside the heavy volumes read and annotated, until such time — say on a voyage to Japan in 1917 — as he could review them with me, Jack applied their principle more than was entirely safe for the complacency of those with whom he came in contact. If he had ever before used the world and its inhabitants to keep him interested in the game of life, he now employed them in ways they never guessed in casual association with him. Applying his new system of approach, all in the way of social intercourse he was delving into the soul-stuff of men and women as they never would have dared analyze the significance of their own repressions. He went to startling lengths in this risky game of “playing with souls.” Old curiosities, long since laid, were resurrected, to be dipped in the alembic of psychoanalysis, and he experimented with his own caprices in the most unexpected ways.

Perhaps the majority of the minds which he laid bare were not of a quality to make his investigation profitable. However that may be, it brought to him — and this was my greatest fear — yet more disillusion with the human element that had already suffered much in his regard. When the measure of a thinker s associates steadily shrinks in his estimate, that thinker, maddened by their immobility to ideas, is facing annihilation. The situation becomes insupportable. The “will to live” weakens and breaks down, no matter how fair the world nor Love how sweet. Jack’s conclusions were saddening in the extreme. A paragraph from H. G. Wells’s “The Discovery of the Future” so appositely expresses Jack’s attitude from time to time, that I shall quote it instead of trying to reconstruct his own words:

“I do not think I could possibly join the worship of humanity with any gravity or sincerity. Think of it! Think of the positive facts. There are surely moods for all of us when one can feel Swift’s amazement, that such a being should deal in pride. There are moods when one can join in the laughter of Democritus; and they would come oftener were not the spectacle of human littleness so abundantly shot with pain.”

Wells goes on to say that the pain of the world is also shot with promise; but Jack at this stage was grudging of this expectation. I was too close to it all to see the full drift of his fall; or, better, in my characteristic way, while doing my best in a given set of circumstances, I would not admit what I shrank from facing. The test of my endurance was severe, for Jack required so greatly of me in the capacities of wife, lover, friend, even confessor, for he withheld nothing — nothing, I repeat — of what he was passing through; and my responsibility, it may be guessed, was almost more than I could bear and preserve a cheerful poise. That he missed little of this, I am assured. More than thrice he suddenly remarked: “You are the only one in the world who could live with me!" Which was with direct reference to his intellectual vagaries, and not to any personal difficulties. It is all an inexpressibly dear heritage — the memory of that with which he entrusted me. I might think I had failed in many particulars, except for the continuance of his confidence and his almost childlike dependence upon me when his burden was too great. A generous friend, talking with him shortly before his death, has given me Jack's declaration, speaking of myself: "She has never failed me. I have had the comfort of her stedfastness, and have gained strength from it. She is always ready to act with and for me at any moment."

No matter how strange he seemed at times, nor how isolate, I learned I must stand by, night and day, for his instant need. There would be, say, a tirade against the infinitesimal natures of folk, or an argument, and he might work himself into a frenzy wherein I accused him of intellectual unfairness; or, we might disagree vitally upon some personal matter. Once, twice, I withdrew and left him to work out his humor by himself. But he could not, or would not. I found myself not daring to pursue this course; and thereafter, in the Islands and later at home, when the impulsion was upon him, I did my best to maintain my end in discussion, into the small hours if necessary, until he was exhausted, when, suddenly, in his fighting-face there would dawn the sweetness that disarmed anger and criticism alike in friend and foe. He would fall asleep in my arms, awakening penitent for the pallor of my cheeks that no smile could camouflage, and gratitude for the smile. A conversation something like this would ensue:

"Bear with me, Mate Woman — you're all I've got."

"I do. I do."

"Then, do more than that!"

"I will! I will!"

Any chiding that he was not taking sufficient nourishment, and neglecting his exercise, elicited the time-honored response:

"I'm all right — don't bother. And you're never up in time to see the huge breakfast I tuck away — three cups of coffee, with heavy cream, two soft-boiled eggs, half of a big papaia!"

But it was months before I learned that every morning the ample bedside repast, which he so enjoyed with his morning Pacific Commercial Advertiser, was completely lost. That abiding pride in his "cast-iron stomach" had suffered an eclipse; and with it his God-given ability to sleep whensoever he elected. This was indeed a desperate case, and I was frightened, because from birth on I myself had bedded with insomnia, and feared its consequences upon one of Jack's temperament. Only three times did he tamper with a narcotic, for he realized its peril. "Oh, have no fear, my dear," he reassured me more than once, "I'll never go that way. I want to live a hundred years!"

It being an unwritten rule that I was never to be disturbed from sleep, I awoke in swift terror one morning in Honolulu to find Jack, his face working with pain, at my door:

"I had to call you, Mate I am sorry but you must get a doctor. I don't know what it is, but it is awful!" And he crept back to his sleeping-porch. His friend Dr. Walters was out, and Dr. Herbert responded, as best he could helping Jack through the agony, diagnosing the cause as a calculus.

I suppose it is a wise wife who, rather than make marriage hideous by nagging, lets her husband destroy himself in his own uncaring way! Even with the excruciating omen of worse to come, Jack made little or no effort to put off his day of dissolution. The friendly physicians exhorted in vain: he clung to his diet of raw aku (bonita), and, aside from the breakfast fruit and occasional poi, which he termed a "beneficent food," quite neglected the vegetable nutriment his malady demanded, while the cramping of his ankles did not lessen.

As for exercise, save for the most desultory and infrequent dips off-shore, he took none. My question, "Are you going to swim with me to-day?" was oftenest met with:

"Yes — believe I will . . . No, I'm right in the thick of this new box of reading-matter from home. Oh, I don't know — the water looks so good . . . But no; I'll go out in the hammock where I can read and watch you." And his bodily inertia won out.

But it would strike me, looking back across the seawall to where, in blue kimono, he swung under the ancient hau tree, that he read little; whenever I waved back to him there was an immediate response that bridged the jade and turquoise space. But the arm stretched out to me was all too white from seeking the shadows. If I did not ask him to go out, then, the same day or another, he would remind me of it, with a mild reproach.

Not a block would he walk to the electric tram, but called an automobile three miles from town whenever he wanted to go in for a shave. If he were not going out, and expected no company, he spent the day in bathing-trunks and kimono and sandals, not only for coolness at work, but because it was too much effort to dress. This calls up an incident that occurred one day in Honolulu, though I did not come upon the inwardness of it until long afterward. It goes to illustrate the sheep-mindedness of the mass of beings who wish to find famous men and women fashioned in the image of the quibbling, foppish, gnat-brained incarnation that is their own. Jack himself, small as was his respect for these, never failed to react to the clumsy stab of their inert yet harmful smugness — harmful because it influences and fixes the attitude of masses of humans who might, otherwise guided, attain a freer view of life.

A woman of Russian birth, passing through, wanted to meet this man Jack London, who so dominated the fancy of her countrymen. According to her story, certain tourist acquaintances warned her: But he isn't decent — he's likely as not, we hear, to receive you dressed only in a kimono!" The lady was not to be balked; and one day, unannounced, she called during Jack's working hours. In spite of his irritation at being so unceremoniously interrupted, she found him courteous and interesting, and did not stop overlong.

"What did you think of him? What is he like?" her informants asked.

"I think he is a very decent fellow," the Russian began.

But wasn't he in his kimono?"

"Why, yes — I believe he was," coolly she rejoined. "And I want to say that, in his kimono, he seemed to me more fully clothed than most of the men one meets in full conventional attire."

Except that he sat through long dinners without eating, Jack was normal enough to all intents. When anxious hostesses drew his attention to the untouched plate, he would repeat that story of the large breakfast, and declare that except at a Hawaiian luau (feast), where he made a practice of banqueting shamelessly, he would rather talk than eat; and thereupon he closed the topic by taking up the thread of his discourse where it had been cut. He drank very moderately. "Sometimes I think I'm saturated with alcohol, so that my membranes have begun to rebel," he observed upon more than one occasion. "See — how little in the glass and this is my first drink to-day!" A month before the end, in response to a telegram from Dr. W. H. Geystweit, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, San Diego, California, Jack wired:

"Never had much experience with wine-grape growing. The vineyards I bought were old, worked out, worthless, so I pulled out the vines and planted other crops. I still work a few acres of profitable wine grapes. My position on alcohol is absolute, nation-wide Prohibition. I mean absolute. I have no patience in half-way measures. Half-way measures are unfair, are tantamount to confiscation, and are provocative of underhand cheating, lying, and law-breaking. When the nation goes in for nation-wide Prohibition, that will be the end of alcohol, and there will be no cheating, lying nor law-breaking. Personally I shall continue to drink alcohol for as long as it is accessible. When absolute Prohibition makes alcohol inaccessible I shall drop drinking and it won't be any hardship on me and on men like me whose name is legion. And the generation of boys after us will not know anything about alcohol save that it was a stupid vice of their savage ancestors."

In Hawaii for the most part he ordered "soft" drinks or "small beer" during the nights we spent in the open-air cafés, I dancing, he visiting at the tables with his friends. But ever he kept an eye upon me, as if looking for some one stable in a crashing world. Seldom, swinging near, did I fail to catch his glance and a little indulgent smile he had for the "kid woman" who, loving the dance, had gone without it for so many traveling years after marrying him.

In a côterie of excellent players among Honolulu's men and women, both American and Hawaiian, much of Jack's recreation time was at cards mostly bridge, with now and then a poker game.

To show the restlessness that was in him, I can instance the entertaining we did. Day after day at our house it would be a luncheon, a bridge party, tea, swimming, a dinner, and theatre, or dancing either at home or on the Roof Garden or at "Heinie's," and, likely, a midnight swim before bed. Some of the luncheon guests might be included in the afternoon cards outside in the little jungle of that magnificent hau tree, but new players had also been bidden. A fresh bevy blew in for tea and bathing, and the diners would be still another party. Friends for noonday or dinner usually numbered an even dozen, since the round table accommodated just that number. We lived in a whirl; and many times, while I was at the telephone inviting for three different events for a certain day, Jack would come pattering in his straw sandals across the large palm-potted rooms, and whisper: "While you're about it, better plan the crowds for the day after."

A Honolulu neighbor, Charles Dana Wright, one day asked Jack:

"Why do you always have twelve at your table?"

"Because it won't hold any more!" was Jack's reply.

He seemed running away from himself, filling in every moment, as if uneasy with too many disengaged dates in prospect. Yet he would suddenly tire of it all, and there would be a lull. One night, after an undisturbed day when we had worked, and swam, read aloud, played pinochle, and eaten alone together, he breathed with satisfied demeanor: "Happiest day I ever spent in Hawaii!"

He had a way, at work in his cool green lanai (veranda) — a mile from where B.L.S. once wrote by Waikiki waters — of looking aside upon me as I walked about the long rooms; and when I caught him at it, his lips would frame kisses in the air. What was behind the inscrutable, star-blue eyes that were never so beautiful as that summer in his Happy Isles, when he made no attempt to retard an illness that could not be less than fatal if not checked? Was that mind that had "known the worst too young," and that he had systematically overworked, now longing for surcease, "restless for rest," as William Herbert Carruth so aptly put it? Does that account for the apparently deliberate want of resistance? He, the eternal fighter, patently refused to fight for the reconstruction of a failing body, or to exert his powerful will to conserve his physical strength. On the contrary, it would seem as if the longing, at least of his unconscious mind, for cessation of effort to continue existence, swung him into a non-resistance which made for destruction. When he looked at me as he would look, was he hiding something he knew would fill me with terror — did he have an intuition that I would be unthinkably alone with the falling of the autumn leaves? One late after noon, in the hammock, he read me "In Autumn," from George Sterling's "The Caged Eagle," just received from the poet. His voice broke at the last, and the eyes he raised to mine in a long, long gaze, were deep pools in which I felt us both drowning. But when at length he spoke, it was of the wonder of the man who had written the poem.

I shall never know. All I do know is that he was upon the night ward slope of living, and that all I had to cling to was what sometimes fell from his lips when I had thought him absorbed in book or writing — abruptly, as if wrung from him:

"God! — Woman, if you knew how I love you!"

And again, his eyes burning:

“Child, child — you don’t know what love is!”

Or he would murmur in a golden voice, across the length of the house, so that I must harken closely to hear:

“I love you . . . I love you.”

Once:

“Take my heart in both your hands, My Woman.”

To me, who asked nothing from fate but to serve, he said one day:

“I can refuse you nothing. Anything you ask for, in seriousness, you may have. I am so entirely yours; you can have anything you want of me. I’d do anything for you — actually, I believe I’d murder, if you asked me?” He added: “Some day, when we are seventy, you and I, in the autumn of our long years together, I’ll tell you some things about myself — how I have come to know how unthinkably I love you.”

All this intensity was part of the raw state in which he was, dying, the dear heart, and how were we to know? One morning, it seems he thought I had told him a deliberate falsehood in a vital connotation, and I was at a loss to account for his alarming recklessness throughout the day. That night, worried, for once I eavesdropped, and heard him with his own soul: “To think of it! To think of it!” he wrestled with despair. The next day, quite as unwittingly as I had dealt the erroneous impression, I undid the same. Then it all came out, with boyish jubilance in his relief, how he had agonized that “All I’ve got in the world” had thrown him down!

When he heard that the old bungalow, whispering of romance, was on the market, he came to me, his eyes dilating with the pleasure of giving :

“Do you want me to buy it for you, or do you prefer to wait till the war is done, and then get a sweet three-topmast schooner, fit her out, throw aboard your grand piano, a big launch, and a touring car, and start around the world for years!”

Naturally I chose the schooner, and told him that if for only selfish reasons, the war could not terminate any too soon to please me! — There he was, at it again — his “crowded hour of glorious life” all too short for the large plans for work, thought, play! I finger the sun-tanned notepad upon which he scribbled expense calculations for that post-bellum voyage: Six men, so much; Captain, so much; Engineer, Mate, Cook, Servants, Doctor — with loose margins for his figures. “But, Mate,” I objected, “that means no letup for you — harder work than ever.” “What of it?” cheerily he laughed it off. “I make my work easy — I’ve got ‘em all skinned to death!”

Those little note-pads of Jack's — I find them at every turn. "Always carry a notebook," he advised. "Travel with it. Eat with it. Sleep with it. Slap into it every stray thought that flutters up into your brain. Cheap paper is less perishable than gray matter, and lead pencil markings endure longer than memory."

Certain photographs, one of himself and me in the garden, and one of myself on Neuadd Hillside, he kept near his work-table, and often looked at them. And at home afterward, "Charmian, Charmian . . ." he would murmur as he had murmured the day we first met, "I love your name. You've no idea how I stop all work and reading, and lie here just looking at your face in the frame."

There were six weeks on end in Hawaii that Jack seemed quite his healthy, hearty self. This was during what can best be termed a "royal progress" upon which, in company with Miss Mary Low, a part-Hawaiian friend, diamond-trove of information and imagination, who made it possible at that time, we encircled the "Big Island." The details of this journey I have related in "Our Hawaii." It was a passage of unalloyed pleasure, fraught with plans for the future when we should return to do the thousand things that this time must be left undone. In my hand at this moment is one of Jack's yellow note-pad leaves, scribbled with the most fragmentary penciled items:

"How not to know Hawaii . . . How the Tourist does — it the tourist route — never dreams.

"How to know Hawaii. Wait — under that surface excess of hospitality — the deeps of a remarkable people — really exclusive . . . Make no quick judgments. Come back, and come back, and then, some day, you will begin to find yourselves not only in their homes but in their hearts. And you will be well beloved . . ." "I almost think," he said in retrospect, "that this has been the happiest month and a half I ever knew!"

On that trip, having finished "Michael Brother of Jerry," he wrote his last gift to the Islands, the three articles which were published in The Cosmopolitan Magazine, "My Hawaiian Aloha." A few short months there after one of the Territory's most distinguished mouthpieces said of him. "In the death of Jack London Hawaii suffered an irreparable loss. . . . Among our most lasting memories of him will be his earnest and enthusiastic assistance in the organization of the Pan-Pacific Union. There was nothing that he disliked more than making speeches; but at meeting after meeting his voice was heard advocating the principle of the brotherhood of mankind and the recognition of that principle as the guiding star of the peoples of the Pacific."

Next, Jack produced a short story, "The Hussy," dating the end of the manuscript at "Kohala, Hawaii, May 5, 1916." "The Hussy" is in book entitled "The Red One," issued posthumously. Followed the short story, "The Red One," in which is evidenced the author's profound meditation upon the reaching out of the most primordial toward the most cosmic — all in stride with his study in race consciousness. Sometimes I wonder if it can be possible, in the ponderings of the dying scientist, Bassett, that Jack London revealed more of himself than he would have been willing to admit — or else, who knows? more of himself than he himself realized. His ultimate discouragement with the endless strife of humanity even unto the modern horrors of the Great War, are in the mouth of his puppet, speculating upon the inhabitants of other planets, and playing square with the old cannibal, Ngurn, because, forsooth, the old man had, according to his lights, "played squarer than square," and "was in himself a forerunner of ethics and contract, of consideration, and gentleness in man." "Had they won Brotherhood? Or had they learned that the law of love imposed the penalty of weakness and decay? Was strife, life! Was the rule of the universe the pitiless rule of natural selection?"

Some one has written of Jack London: "This Lord of Life was never far from the consciousness that he held a brief and uncertain sovereignty. He himself has said:

"Man, the latest of the ephemera, is pitifully a creature of temperature, strutting out his brief day on the thermometer." And: "All the human drift, from the first apeman to the last savant, is but a phantom, a flash and a flutter of movement across the infinite sky of the starry night." He thrilled to George Sterling's line, "The fleeting Systems lapse like foam."

A couple of months before the "royal progress," Jack had sent in his resignation from the Socialist party, the reasons given surprising some of his radical acquaintances who had scoffed that he was becoming "soft."

"Radical!" he would snort, lurching about in his chair, "next time I go to New York, I m going to live right down in the camp of these people who call themselves radicals. I m going to tell them a few things, and make their radicalism look like thirty cents in a fog! I'll show them what radicalism is!"

Among his equipment of notes are the following addresses:

The Liberal Club, The Greenwich Village Inn (Polly's Restaurant) The Hotel Brevoort, James Donald Corley, Hippolyte Havel, Sadakichi Hartmann, Charles and Albert Boni, John Rampapas, Hutchins Hapgood, II Proletario, J. J. Ettor and Iva Shuster, Carlo Tresca, Arturo Giovannitti, McSorley's Saloon.

Jack's action in resigning, though it had been gathering momentum for some time, was precipitated by the withdrawal of a friend whose reasons were based upon the prevalent "roughneck" methods of other than the "well-balanced radicals." I can still hear Jack's battle-tread, somewhat muffled by straw slippers, as he marched toward my door, and his peremptory voice: "Take a letter please!" I can see him plant himself on the edge of my bed, curls towsled, wide eyes black with purpose under the brows that were like a sea-bird's wings, his full chest half-exposed by the blue kimono, and one perfect leg thrust forth to steady himself. And here is what he rapped out, as fast as I could click the keys:

"Honolulu, March 7, 1916.

"Glen Ellen,

"Sonoma County, California.

"Dear Comrades:

"I am resigning from the Socialist Party, because of its lack of fire and fight, and its loss of emphasis on the class struggle.

"I was originally a member of the old revolutionary, up-on-its-hind-legs, fighting, Socialist Labor Party. Since then, and to the present time, I have been a fighting member of the Socialist Party. My fighting record in the Cause is not, even at this late date, already entirely forgotten. Trained in the class struggle, as taught and practiced by the Socialist Labor Party, my own highest judgment concurring, I believed that the working class, by fighting, by never fusing, by never making terms with the enemy, could emancipate itself. Since the whole trend of Socialism in the United States during recent years has been one of peaceableness and compromise, I find that my mind refuses further sanction of my remaining a party member. Hence my resignation.

"Please include my comrade wife, Charmian K. London's, resignation with mine.

"My final word is that Liberty, freedom, and independence, are royal things that cannot be presented to, nor thrust upon, races or classes. If races and classes cannot rise up and by their strength of brain and brawn, wrest from the world liberty, freedom, and independence, they never in time can come to these royal possessions . . . and if such royal things are kindly presented to them by superior individuals, on silver platters, they will know not what to do with them, will fail to make use of them, and will be what they have always been in the past . . . inferior races and inferior classes.

"Yours for the Revolution,

"Jack London"

The foregoing, published in the Socialist press, caused much comment. Jack's grim amusement can be pictured when it was reported that a distinguished member of the Party, upon reading it remarked: "I'd have done the same long ago, for the same reasons, if I had not been so prominent a figure in the movement."

"And now," I queried, when Jack had got the letter off his mind and cooled down, "what will you call yourself henceforth — Revolutionist, Socialist, what?"

"I am not anything, I fear," he said quietly. "I am all these things. Individuals disappoint me more and more, and more and more I turn to the land. . . . Well," he reconsidered, "I might call myself a Syndicalist. It does seem as if class solidarity, expressed in terms of the general strike, would be the one means of the workers tying up the world and getting what they want. It would raise Cain, of course, but nothing ever seems to be accomplished without raising Cain. A world-wide strike would produce inconceivable results. — But they won't stick together — there is too much selfishness and too much inertia."

Surely, surely, Jack's experience with the "inertia of the masses was not unique in the annals of reform movements. In Doctor William J. Robinson's "The Medical Critic and Guide," I come across this sentence: "It is not the slave that rebels against his slavery; it is the free man who sees the injustice of slavery who starts the fight for its abolition." Other social seers had suffered unto death. I could not but pray that the healthier side of Jack's philosophy of life might preserve him from despair.

Concerning sabotage, he stood somewhat like this: Peaceful methods having failed, and with his views on the frightfulness of capitalist exploitation of labor, he would not hesitate, were he an underpaid wage-slave, insidiously to wreck the machinery of production by the means of which he had become the underpaid, underfed, overworked, exploited tool and fool of his economic masters. But when confronted with the futile, desultory methods of bombing innocent persons by mistake, his impatience knew no bounds. Following one such mishap that had shaken the country, I asked him what he thought of it; and he used a word I had never heard in seriousness from his lips:

"I think it is wicked."

Many resignations followed Jack's — quite an avalanche, in fact, when the Socialist Party at the St. Louis Convention in 1917 pledged itself to oppose, by every means within its power, the prosecution of the war against Germany.

When James Howard Moore, because of heartbreak over the world, had put a bullet through his brain, Jack was deeply moved. In his handwriting, at the head of a printed address delivered by Clarence S. Darrow at the funeral services, I find this:

"Disappointment like what made Wayland (Appeal to Reason) kill himself and many like me resign."

Reading over the mass of material for this Biography, I am struck anew by Jack's old faith in the workingman, and anew saddened by his ultimate disillusion. Let me quote a letter, written several years before he died, stating the nobilities upon which he had founded his hope:

"To the Central Labor Council,

"Alameda County:

"I cannot express to you how deeply I regret my inability to be with you this day. But, believe me, I am with you in the brotherhood of the spirit, as all you boys, in a similar brotherhood of the spirit, are with our laundry girls in Troy, New York.

"Is this not a spectacle for gods and men? — the workmen of Alameda County sending a share of their hard-earned wages three thousand miles across the continent to help the need of a lot of striking laundry girls in Troy!

"And right here I wish to point out something that you all know, but something that is so great that it cannot be pointed out too often, and that grows only greater every time it is pointed out, — AND THAT IS, THAT THE STRENGTH OF ORGANIZED LABOR LIES IN ITS BROTHERHOOD. There is no brotherhood in unorganized labor, no standing together shoulder to shoulder, and as a result unorganized labor is weak as water.

"And not only does brotherhood give organized labor more fighting strength but it gives it, as well, the strength of righteousness. The holiest reason that men can find for drawing together into any kind of an organization is BROTHERHOOD. And in the end nothing can triumph against such an organization. Let the church tell you that servants should obey their masters. This is what the church told the striking laundry girls of Troy. Stronger than this mandate is brotherhood, as the girls of Troy found out when the boys of California shared their wages with them. (Ah, these girls of Troy! Twenty weeks on strike and not a single desertion from their ranks! And ah, these boys of California, stretching out to them, across a continent the helping hand of brotherhood!)

"And so I say, against such spirit of brotherhood, all machinations of the men-of-graft-and-grab-and-the-dollar are futile. Strength lies in comradeship and brotherhood, not in a throat-cutting struggle where every man's hand is against man. This comradeship and brotherhood is yours. I cannot wish you good luck and hope that your strength will grow in the future, because brotherhood and the comrade-world are bound to grow. The growth cannot be stopped. So I can only congratulate you boys upon the fact that this is so.

"Yours in the brotherhood of man,"

That Jack London expected no glory nor even lasting appreciation from his comrades for his life-long work in the interests of Socialism, was evident to me early in our association. It was with utter absence of bitterness that he said:

"In a few years the crowd I have worked for and with, the Socialists, will have entirely forgotten that a fellow named Jack London ever did a stroke to help along. I shall be entirely forgotten, or counted out, or, at best, merely mentioned."

And when, even in his own short time he had proved his own words, in spite of a cool intellectual attitude he showed the hurt to his affections. There is bitterness and to spare, though essentially toward the race of men who had dis appointed his warm confidence, in the following, already referred to in part, written in his last months for a Socialist publication:

"Some years ago Alexander Berkman asked me to write an introduction to his 'Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist.' This is the introduction. I was naive enough to think that when one intellectual disagreed with another intellectual the only difference would be intellectual. I have since learned better. Alexander Berkman could not see his way to using my introduction, and got some one else to write a more sympathetic one for him. Also, socially, comradely, he has forgotten my existence ever since.

"By the same token, because the socialists and I disagreed about opportunism, ghetto politics, class consciousness, political slates, and party machines, they, too, have dismissed all memory, not merely of my years of fight in the cause, but of me as a social man, as a comrade of men, as a fellow they ever embraced for having at various times written or said things they described as doughty blows for the Cause. On the contrary, by their only printed utterances I have seen, they deny I ever struck a blow or did anything for the Cause, at the same time affirming that all the time they knew me for what I was — a Dreamer.

"I'm afraid I did dream some dreams about their brains, which now I find knocked into a cocked hat by their possession of the pitiful humanness that is the birthright of all sons of men. My dream was that my comrades were intellectually honest. My awakening was that they were as unfair, when prejudice entered, as all the other human cattle entered to-day in the human race."

There are some of Jack's compeers who do not forget, who give him his place, and a high place. And there are others who, perceiving him nurse his efficiency by decent living after his too-lean years, became fearful that he might lose his head through worldly success, but held judgment and were rewarded for their openmindedness. One socialist, not fussing as to whether Jack belonged to the Socialist Party, or any party, had this to say: "He was one of us. A genuine, strenuous American, he fought a good fight in the sacred cause of human progress. Against the predatory Big Interests' attempt to enslave the workers and the Booze Interests' attempt to degrade the workers, his pen was a mighty weapon. Like a true comrade he died fighting. Alas, my Comrade!" But sadly enough I note that only too often his name is missing from the roster that includes his intellectual friends such as Walling, Spargo, Hunter, Stokes, Heron.

Jack's especial bête noir was the type of socialist, of either sex, who heckled him because he declined to lecture before small groups. Wasted upon these hecklers was his argument that with a stroke of his pen, while following temperamental bents in manner of living, he could reach millions, whereas his voice could be heard by but a few. This being so, he did not see why he should misapply energy by speaking to a few, when he so disliked public appearances. Further, reports of his speeches were almost invariably garbled. His gospel as propounded in his books was not garbled. Ergo, and finally, he would write rather than talk. Incidentally, his voice had gone back on him, so that it became husky at any attempt to project it into large spaces. Far from regretting this break-down in his anatomy, he hailed it with frank delight as another excuse from lecturing. The failure of his throat was precipitated, happily enough, by an excess of laughter at the Bohemian Jinks. He had returned unable for a while to speak above a faint wheeze, the vocal cords ruptured forever.

He would add that he had done his share of platform work, and why not step out and let the younger generation have a chance. Here is his somewhat impatient reply to a suppliant who had tried sarcasm upon him:

“Dear Comrade:

“In reply to yours of September 14. I don’t see anything to laugh at. With courtesy and consideration, on an average of five letters a day, I turn down propositions of comrades that run all the way from gold mines to perpetual motion. I sent you what I thought was a fair, courteous, sweet-natured and comradely letter. If you choose to laugh at that letter and me — why, go to it! I, however, am very sorry that you should laugh.

“You say you had hoped that your letter would have inspired me to nobler things (those are your words). What nobler things? — to attend a meeting at your place which you say nobody attended? To put money in your project and raise for you a temporary fund, when I am worrying over my own overdue life-insurance? FOR heaven’s sake, dear woman, be fair, play fair, and get away from your own self-centering long enough to remember that all the others in the world may not be persuaded nor clubbed into following your immediate lead and desire, and that because they are not to be so persuaded nor clubbed is no license for you to laugh at them.

“Yours for the Revolution,”

Much earlier than that, in answer to a call that he could not afford, he had written:

“It’s this way: I feel that I have done and am doing a pretty fair share of work for the Revolution. I guess my lectures alone before Socialist organizations have netted the Cause a few hundred dollars, and my wounded feelings from the personal abuse of the Capitalist papers ought to be rated at several hundred more. There is not a day passes that I am not reading up socialism and filing socialistic clippings and notes. The amount of work that I in a year contribute to the cause of socialism would earn me a whole lot of money if spent in writing fiction for the market."

It is not remarkable, however, that Jack London was much misinterpreted by the general run of men lost in pettifogging. He would not even be circumscribed by his broadest conceptions, if I may be allowed a paradox. And there was where he invited trouble with economists, who wanted him to be what they called consistent. The many sparkling facets of his mind dazzled and befuddled merely average thought processes. I speak with feeling. Sometimes we would battle for hours, he and I, earnestly, hotly, because, although I was doing the best I knew how, he was thinking so far beyond the logic of ordinary mortals who think they think. "Don't you see? Can't you get it?" he would almost wail in ardor and onrush to convince. And we would metaphorically roll up our sleeves and go at it hammer and tongs. To me, who was more "kin" to him than the rest, he declined to "mute his trumpets. His own woman must speak his language. And then, suddenly, out would slip some little key-word he had unwittingly left unsaid, the door would fly open, and I would seem to drop a thousand light-years in space, alighting softly, happily, yet excessively puzzled at last by the cosmic simplicity of his reasoning.

In logic he bowed to no one. His supple mind that never stiffened from disuse was of a clarity that allowed of no master. He but grasped and applied the conclusions of Master-minds, used them in the mosaic of his own. Yet here is a curious thing: In his dreams, at widely separated intervals, appeared the Man who would contest Jack's self-mastership, to whom he would eventually bend a vanquished intelligence. He never met such an one in the flesh, yet that entity stalked through more than the hallucinations of sleep. It was long ago he first told me of this ominous figure in his consciousness. The last manifestation was within a very few years of his death. The man, imperial, inexorable with destiny, yet strangely human, descended, alone, a vast cascade of stairways, and Jack, at the foot, looked up and waited as imperially for the meeting that was to be his unknown fate. But the Nemesis never, in that form at least, overtook him. Was it Death? Or may it have been a reflection of his own most exalted self that he came face to face with at these times? There showed a certain pathos in his accounts. I do not think he had yet brought his inklings of psychoanalysis to bear upon his interpretations.

What gifts Jack had for all who could see and hear! But the world is prone to look askance at gifts that are tendered freely, without price. And what he offered was so open-handed, so open-hearted. He never wore nor waved a flag — his flags, his colors, were in his eyes, streamed from his pen, and waved from his printed page. Every one who tried to understand him was better for it. When persons say, “I never met him,” I can only return, “I am sorry.” If it was a privilege to know his work, it was a greater privilege to know himself, if ever so slightly, for he was greater than his work. He had few enemies among those who came into personal contact with him. With all his self-knowledge, for the most part in social dealings he preserved that unconsciousness of self which is above modesty, yet which spells modesty to the casual observer. And no matter how firmly he believed himself right, fought for it, shouted it, he also respected a similar belief existing in his opponent. This charity, however, had been sorely taxed during earlier years, by dark and helpless souls incapable alike of clear reasoning or appreciating his superiority; hence his impatience with inconsequential minds. But with the majority of acquaintances, no frown of his, no stern word, ever out weighed the morning of his smile, that beautiful smile that lured the bitterest antagonist under his charm.

Much non-understanding arose from the misleading habit of others in quoting his isolated opinions without context, deleting them of the vital connotations that his catholicity brought to ripe consideration of any theme. Only a few of his fellows could anticipate or supply the thousand factors embodied in his thought. Myself, I learned to hesitate before leaping to conclusions, to wait for the full drift. Just about the time, say, that Jack would begin to sink into lowest disheartenment over the abysmal significance of the War, and our failure to bear a hand, all at once he would flame anew to the undying wonder of the human. A case in point arose when Hall Caine wrote him from London, asking a contribution for the “King Albert Book. Jack responded:

“Belgium is rare, Belgium is unique. Among men arises on rare occasions a great man, a man of cosmic import; among nations on rare occasions arises a great nation, a nation of cosmic import. Such a nation is Belgium. Such is the place Belgium attained in a day by one mad, magnificent, heroic leap into the azure. As long as the world rolls and men live, that long will Belgium be re membered. All the human world passes, and will owe Belgium a debt of gratitude, such as was never earned by any nation in the History of Nations. It is a magnificent debt, a proud debt that all the nations of men will sacredly acknowledge.

Yet the very sending of the foregoing from Oakland brought him face to face again with human smallness. He thought to see if the cable company would share in the tribute by standing half the expense of the message. They politely declined, and Jack shrugged his habitual "Cheap at the price to learn them," under such circumstances.

The murder of Edith Cavell,

". . . a simple English nurse,
Slaughtered between a challenge and a curse,"

snapped something in Jack. Eyes and soul full of this and the rest of the mad slaughter, he became more and more furious with the brutal stupidity of the Hun. He lingered in almost speechless wonder over the monstrous bestiality of German cartoons, in nearly all of which lay a boomerang unguessed by that same bungling stupidity.

He did not believe this to be a capitalistic war, but that it was being waged for a principle at its best, and must be fought to the death. He would have stamped his approval, I know, upon the "irreduceable minimum" of peace terms, and Mr. Balfour's deliverance: "Next to being enslaved by Germany, there is no worse thing than being liberated by her."

Jack would refer to Germany as the "Mad Dog of Europe."

"I am with the allies life and death. Germany to-day is a paranoiac. She has the mad person s idea of her own ego, and the delusion of persecution she thinks all nations are against her. She possesses also the religious mania — she thinks God is on her side. These are the very commonest forms of insanity, but never before in history has a whole nation gone insane."

"God help them when the British turn savage!" he cried at the first rumor of hostilities. His opinion of the country has been very adequately expressed by one who fought in France: "Germany has no honor, no chivalry, no mercy. Germany is a bad sportsman. Germans fight like wolves in a pack, and without initiative or resource if compelled to fight singly."

A hundred times I have heard Jack say: "It will be a war of attrition." He saw no abrupt termination, no brilliant, decisive victory. But for the Armistice, he might have been proven right. He was also heard to say that he believed the nations would eventually repudiate their war debts.

The Pathé Exchange wrote on June 16, asking his views upon the meaning of the World War, and this was his reply:

"I believe the World War so far as concerns, not individuals but the entire race of man, is good.

"The World War has compelled man to return from the cheap and easy lies of illusion to the brass tacks and iron facts of reality. It is not good for man to get too high up in the air above reality.

"The World War has redeemed from the fat and gross material-ism of generations of peace, and caught mankind up in a blaze of the spirit.

"The World War has been a pentecostal cleansing of the spirit of man."

Another of his public utterances:

"I believe intensely in the Pro-Ally side of the war. I believe that the foundation of civilization rests on the pledge, the agreement, and the contract. I believe that the present war is being fought out to determine whether or not men in the future may continue in a civilized way to depend upon the word, the pledge, the agreement, and the contract.

"As regards a few million terrible deaths, there is not so much of the terrible about such a quantity of deaths as there is about the quantity of deaths that occur in peace times in all countries in the world, and that has occurred in war times in the past.

"Civilization at the present time is going through a Pentecostal cleansing that can result only in good for mankind."

That none may misconstrue the central paragraph, but may know upon what the assertion was based, I append this item from the Scientific American:

"Industrial accidents cost this country 35,000 human lives and many millions of dollars annually, according to the Arizona State Safety News. In addition, dismemberments and other serious injuries total about 350,000 yearly, while the annual number of minor accidents, causing loss of time, exceeds 2,000,000."

It is interesting, while on the War, to quote his disagreement, when a youth, with David Starr Jordan:

"There is something wrong with Dr. Jordan's war theory, which is to the effect that, the best being sent out to war, only the second best, the men who are left, remain to breed a second-best race, and that, therefore, the human race deteriorates under war. If this be so, if we have sent forth the best we bred and gone on breeding from the men who were left, and since we have done this for ten thousand milleniums and are what we splendidly are to-day, then what unthinkably splendid and god-like beings must have been our forebears those ten thousand milleniums ago. Unfortunately for Dr. Jordan's theory, these forebears can not live up to this fine reputation."

His full emotions toward the United States in with holding help from

"... the embattled hosts that kept
Their pact with freedom while we slept!"

are expressed in a telegram sent in reply to a New York daily asking his choice at election time, and of which I have no record that the paper dared print it:

"I have no choice for President. Wilson has not enamored me with past performances. Hughes has not enamored me with the promise of future performances. There is nothing to hope from either of them, except that they will brilliantly guide the United States down her fat, helpless, lonely, unhonorable, profit-seeking way to the shambles to which her shameless unpreparedness is leading her. The day is all too near when any first power or any two one-horse powers can stick her up and bleed her bankrupt. We stand for nothing except fat. We are become the fat man of the nations, whom no nation loves. My choice for President is Theodore Roosevelt, whom nobody in this fat land will vote for because he exalts honor and manhood over the cowardice and peace lovingness of the worshipers of fat."

To Henry Meade Bland, a month before his death Jack wrote:

"I am inclosing you herewith a clipping about 'Martin Eden.' 'Martin Eden,' and 'The Sea Wolf' a long time before 'Martin Eden,' were protests against the philosophy of Nietzsche, insofar as the Nietzschean philosophy expounds strength and individualism, even to the extent of war and destruction, against cooperation, democracy, and socialism. Here is the world war, the logical out come of the Nietzschean philosophy.

"Read both these books yourself to get my point of view. Also make note that no reviewer ever got my point of view in those two books, and that this is the first time I have ever shouted my point of view in those two books."

The theory of alternate eras of Evolution and Dissolution fought with his work for the human. Yet, casting back into the hopelessness of the ages, citing fourteen cities built one atop another, and all lapsed, gone, with their pomp and circumstance — yet, I say, Jack suffered unendurably over the Great War, and perished in the midst of his deepest of all Great Disgusts because of America's "Safety First" policy that held us from protesting even the Belgian atrocities. We blunder along. The times blunder along. History-making blunders along. And he saw the blundering way of the race.

His main comfort throughout that Armageddon was his Anglo-Saxonism, his pride in England in the conduct of her "popular" war. How he would have rejoiced in the invincible combination of American man-power and British seapower! I am exasperated all the time, consciously and unconsciously, that he is not alive and quick, to function in the gigantic tangle of world events growing out of the war — to see his own prognostications taking shape, and to lend a hand in the reconstruction. Indeed, it is hard to write calmly of this creature who strove so manfully for the great and simple integrities of human intercourse, looking as he did far through and beyond the small, petty thing of the moment. Always, while responding to the little tragical affairs of men, he could but compare these with the big, cosmic facts and dreams that lured him on. This verse, by I know not whom, so well envisages the Jack London whom I knew:

"Your stark vision and cold fire,
Your singing truth, your vehement desire
To cut through lies to life.
These move behind the printed echoes here,
The paper strife,
The scurry of small pens about your name,
Measuring, praising, blaming by the same
Tight rule of thumb that makes their own
Inadequacy known." How often I start up to share with him the very things he so missed and would love to know from the lips of fellow authors. "He was an honest writer," says an Englishman. That would have pleased him above all things. And another: "A strong and virile writer of clean prose — robust, honest, straightforward, and an artist." Berton Braley's "He never struck a ribald note," calls to mind a conversation in Honolulu. Alexander Hume Ford exclaimed:

"But, Jack, you have never written anything smutty — you've done almost everything else!" He had meant to be facetious, but in a flash Jack was all gravity:

"No! — and I never shall. I have never yet written a line for print that I would be ashamed for my two little girls who are growing up to see and read, and I never shall!"

To me he would say: “When I swear my worst, I really don’t mean it — only words, letting off steam. But when you say ‘Damn!’ you are positively evil in your ferocity! Wicked woman!”

Never shall I forget his indignation, too vast for any expletives at his command, when a minister of the Gospel wrote him that his novel “The Little Lady of the Big House” was unclean, unfit for the youth of America to read. “Show me!” he raged, “where there is a line in that book ‘unfit’ for any young man or woman to read!” Hard upon this accusation came a book-review in a conservative New England monthly, employing the most extraordinary nomenclature to interpret the alleged pruriency of the book. Jack could not contain his ire, but started a battle royal with the sons of Adam who had in his opinion so degenerated as not to know clean frankness when they saw it. There is no telling where the controversy might have fetched up, had he lived. “I’ve given over sitting back and listening to gross misinterpretation of my clean and healthy motives,” he said with smoldering eyes. “It is like malicious slander, and whenever it appears I am going after it and knock off its ugly head in the open!”

How does the foregoing comport with this: “He was an uplift to the young. The world is better and purer for his having lived — an inspiration to thousands of men and women to work and keep on working, to create and keep on creating, to live the full life wherever they are or whatever may be their work.”

My copy of “The Little Lady of the Big House,” dated three months before Jack died, carries this inscription:

“The years pass. You and I pass. But yet our love abides — more firmly, more deeply, more surely, for we have built our love for each other, not upon the sand, but upon the rock.

“Your Lover-Husband.”

In the last weeks of his life, that was often the burden of his talk with me — the firm foundation of the house of love we had builded in the decade of our close companionship. So, in my memories of that year of unusual vicissitudes in our fortunes, the warm and deathless love-message in his hand in “The Little Lady of the Big House” is a rock of ages, made yet more immovable by the declaration in Jack’s next volume. “The Turtles of Tasman,” the last he ever was to hold in his fingers:

“After it all, and it all, and it all, here we are, all in all, all in all.

“Sometimes I just want to get up on top of Sonoma Mountain and shout to the world about you and me. Arms ever around and around,

“Mate-Man.”

“The Ranch,

“Oct. 6, 1916.”

THE LAST SUMMER

VOLUME II – CHAPTER XL 1916

UPON returning from Hawaii in August, Jack went about making plans to get away to New York three months thence. His contract with Mr. Hearst was due to expire at the end of another year, and he wished to be timely in reconnoitering the market. His requirements, looking toward ranch expansion and rehabilitating the red ruins of the Wolf House, were not diminishing. From Honolulu he had urged his sister to gather the materials; but she has ever since contended that something more than want of funds held her back. The second cutting of logs had long been seasoning. There was what I can only call a telepathic impulse that had more than once warned her when all was not well with Jack — a sudden intuition that he was ill or in difficulties. She had not failed in this present instance, and I knew, when her eyes rested upon his telltale face at the dock, that some premonition had been verified. Jack's secretary, his sister Ida's widower, after Jack's death reported that Eliza had said that day:

"Our Jack has not come back to us."

When in Honolulu, he had first broached the New York trip, my unexpected decision to remain at home disquieted him as much as had my intention to go alone to the Islands on the occasion of his projected Fleet trip through the Canal.

"At least," he urged, "don't quite make up your mind that you are not going with me. Give it more thought." I had been seized with determination that was not to be resisted, to revise old Hawaiian notes into the companion book of my "Log of the Snark," and knew beyond question that there could never be time nor strength to give to it unless Jack were absent. When he had gone to a farther port, never to return, a railroad ticket for New York, dated for just a week after his death, lay upon the roll-top desk beside his work-table. But he had not been happy about my consistent refusal to accompany him.

August 9 to 13 he spent at Bohemian Grove, bringing home George Sterling and James Hopper. On the 17th he finished a short story begun on the steamer, "The Kanaka Surf," and before leaving for the State Fair on September 3, had completed another, "When Alice Told Her Soul," both included in "On the Makaloa Mat."

In "When Alice Told Her Soul," underlying its rollicking humor, Jack evidences that his feet had crossed the threshold of psychoanalytical understanding, and it is fascinating to note, in Jung's "Psychology of the Unconscious," marked passages showing the concepts that quickened Jack's imagination to express itself in that tale. Knowing what I already knew of Jack's last days, it was wonderful to check up this knowledge by the aid of those markings. It was my privilege to have the guidance of a pupil of Jung's, our friend Mary Wilshire. Here is an underlined section:

"The possession of a subjectively important secret generally creates a disturbance."

"It may be said that the whole art of life shrinks to the one problem of how the libido may be freed in the most harmless way possible. Therefore, the neurotic derives special benefit in treatment when he can at last rid himself of its various secrets."

Upon this Jack based his picture of the woman struggling to free her soul from a life-long accumulation of secrets which led her to the confessional of a mongrel Billy Sunday type of evangelist.

In the last story ever written by this master of the short story, "The Water Baby," completed on October 2, the theme is more subtly presented through the medium of Hawaiian mythology. Throughout Dr. Jung's chapter on "Symbolism of Mother and Rebirth," there are penciled indications of Jack's grasp of the meaning of folk-lore and mythology of recorded time. Also the comprehension of how to raise lower desires to higher expressions. He has underscored Jesus's challenge to Nicodemus, cited by Jung:

"Think not carnally or thou art carnal, but think symbolically and then thou art spirit."

"The Water Baby" is clearly a symbolic representation of the Rebirth, the return to the Mother, exemplified by the arguments of the old Hawaiian Kohokumi. A similar chord is struck in the following paragraph from Jung's book, indicated by Jack:

"The blessed state of sleep before birth and after birth is, as Joel observed, something like old shadowy memories of that unsuspecting thoughtless state of early childhood, where as yet no opposition disturbed the peaceful flow of dawning life, to which the inner longing always draws us back again and again, and from which the active life must free itself anew with struggle and death, so that it may not be doomed to destruction. Long before Joel, an Indian Chief, had said the same thing in similar words to one of the restless wise men: ‘Ah, my brother, you will never learn to know the happiness of thinking nothing and doing nothing; this is next to sleep; this is the most delightful thing there is. Thus we were before birth; thus we shall be after death.’“

Even in “Like Argus of the Ancient Times,” written in the first half of September, is exhibited, in the “Freudian dream” of old Tarwater, as he faces extinction in the Arctic forest, the influence of Jack’s probings into the stuff of the psyche. And to the lighter reader, I call attention to the fact that Jack himself walks across some of the pages as young Liverpool.

Jack’s emphasis upon the primitive elements in life did not emanate from the fact that his readers especially wanted it, because upon this point he was in conflict from first to last, tooth and nail, with editors and reviewers. He was thorough, that is all. It can easily be seen how his early instinctive use of the methods of psychoanalysis abetted this thoroughness in seeking for the noumenon of things, the better to reveal the process by which man has become what he is to-day. Look in “Before Adam” and “The Star Rover,” again to find evidence of his knowing how important a part is played in our lives by old, primal emotions, long thought extinct. To him the work of Freud and Jung and others of the school presented a psychological-philosophical key to the “understanding and practical advancement of human life” which leads to synthetic evaluation of human endeavor. It was inevitable that his brain, which was both analytic and synthetic, should first take hold of the analytic half of psychological under standing and quite as inevitably pass into the synthetic half which forms the whole of psychological understanding. With quick, incisive mind he apprehended the scope of the Freudian method in contemplation of the material thus acquired, and then with Jung moved on into the realm of cosmic urge of which man’s psychic energy is a part.

A man of Jack London’s fearless quality, who prized truth at its proper worth, could but accord a royal welcome to any form of philosophy which offered to render knowledge more complete. His was “the character and intelligence which makes it possible for him to submit himself to a facing of his naked soul, and to the pain and suffering which this often entails.” This, from Dr. Beatrice Hinkle’s Introduction to Jung’s book, Jack had heavily underlined. To face his naked soul he dared to the uttermost, but that was not new with him. It was the old tragedy that began with his earliest gropings. Yet see, in another marked passage, how in his loneliness he realized himself as brother to all other human beings:

“To those who have been able to recognize their own weakness and have suffered in the privacy of their own souls, the knowledge that these things have not set them apart from others, but that they are the common property of all and that no one can point the finger of scorn at his fellow, is one of the greatest experiences of life and is productive of the greatest relief.”

“My one great weakness, “Jack once wrote to Cloudesley Johns, “is the study of human nature.” And when human nature through its repressions baffled discernment, he suffered inexpressibly. He had us bared to the quick those last days. After a set-to with his sister, on ranch questions, or personal ones growing out of controversy, he cried, trying to pierce her brain:

“I’d give my right hand to know what you are really thinking of me!”

And to me, in privacy, after I had been almost overreaching myself in self-illumination — once or twice, alack, goaded even to resentment — he would grit out, intensely, with a gesture of despair:

“You tell me this and you tell me that, and you state your reasons. But your true inner impulsions are withheld in spite of yourself. Close as we are, you and I, hard as we strive to give ourselves to each other, the old reticences remain, repressing the utmost revelation. You do your best. It is not enough. Can’t you see, oh, my dear, can’t you let go completely, and let me see the real you that I want to fathom? . . . I’d give my soul to know what you are actually thinking!”

But when, in sudden unasked circumstances, our minds came together in almost superhuman enlightenment, the man was caught up into a supreme and wondrous exalta-tion. I can only think that to sustain such heights one must needs seek a new world in which to live!

Read this section of Dr. Hinkle’s Introduction, which, noted by Jack, throws light upon the struggle extraordinary which he was making to come breast to breast with us in mental sympathy:

“There is frequently expressed among people the idea of how fortunate it is that we cannot see each other’s thoughts, and how disturbing it would be if our real feelings could be read. But what is so shameful in these secrets of the soul? They are in reality our own egotistic desires, all striving, longing, wishing for satisfaction, for happiness; those desires which instinctively crave their own gratification, but which can only be really fulfilled by adapting them to the real world and to the social group."

"The value of self-consciousness lies in the fact that man is enabled to reflect upon himself and learn to understand the true origin and significance of his actions and opinions, that he may adequately value the real level of his development and avoid being self-deceived and therefore inhibited from finding his biological adaptation. He need no longer be unconscious of the motives underlying his actions or hide himself behind a changed exterior, in other words, be merely a series of reactions to stimuli, as the mechanists have it, but he may to a certain extent become a self-creating and self-determining being."

I shall never cease to remember the day when, all a-tip-toe with discovery, Jack entered the dining room, slipped into his chair and repeated the foregoing italicized sentence. I, knowing his theretofore immovable position regarding free will, sat aghast at the implication upon his tongue. At length:

"Do you realize what you are saying? What you are implying?"

"I know how you feel — how surprised you are," he answered. "But it almost would seem that I can grasp, from this, some sort of inkling of free will. I'll explain further — we will read together."

Bear with me, in fairness to a comprehension of the point Jack London, as an individual, a member of society, and an artist, had reached when he descended "into the dark," while I quote a few, so very few of the many, marked sentences from Dr. Hinkle's introduction:

He, Jung, saw in the term libido a concept of unknown nature, comparable with Bergson's elan vital, a hypothetical energy of life, which occupies itself not only in sexuality but in various physiological and psychological manifestations such as growth, development, hunger and all the human activities and interests. This cosmic energy or urge manifested in the human being he calls libido and compares it with the energy of physics. Although recognizing, in common with Freud as well as with many others, the primal instinct of reproduction as the basis of many functions and present-day activities of mankind no longer sexual in character, he repudiates the idea of still calling them sexual, even though their development was a growth originally out of the sexual. Sexuality and its various manifestations Jung sees as most important channels occupied by libido, but not the exclusive ones through which libido flows.

"In this achievement lies the hopeful and valuable side of this method — the development of the synthesis."

" — an absolute truth and an absolute honesty.*

" — the often quite unbearable conflict of his weaknesses with his feelings of idealism."

"The importance of this instinct (sexual) upon human life is clearly revealed by the great place given to it under the name of love in art, literature, poetry, romance and all beauty from the beginning of recorded time."

I was convinced that no mortal frame could out-last the terrific strain Jack was putting upon his own. Something had to break. And one can only give thanks forever that it was the body. That was the lesser sacrifice.

At this late date there rises out of my mind, quite humbly, the question as to whether certain independent manifestations of myself to which he had been unaccustomed, were upsetting Jack more than he cared to voice — as notably my insistence, in face of his dissatisfaction, upon remaining at home alone to do work of my own. I have come to see it as an inevitable self-liberation after an association that had held me like one enchanted, my faculties paralyzed in every function except as toward him and what of assistance I could be to him. If, as may have been the truth, my ego was unconsciously making effort to win to itself, it was probably due to the impetus of the tuition Jack's superior ego had contributed. I am only trying to clear up phenomena that it now seems might have been more or less portentous to him, and the inner meaning of which he was bending every nerve to discover.

"For the first time in my life," he remarked one day, "I see the real value to the human soul of the confessional."

The effect of this budding impetus in me did not terminate with the termination of his dominating personality. It went marching on, evident in the most amazing ways. Instead of still requiring, in order to go on, that superb domination under which I had so loved to dwell, suddenly I stood free, an ambitious, sure soul for the first time, almost unrecognizable to friends and self, bent upon making the best of that self and its remaining span upon earth; this, if only to prove its appreciation of the gifts that had been bestowed upon it, in the discharge of its tender obligation to the one who had gone. Life-long, inherited insomnia fell from me, and nights were none too long to compass the rejuvenation that was mine, and that prepared me for each looking-forward day of the many days of hard work which had descended upon my willing shoulders. No task, in contemplation, discouraged — even the most exacting, this Biography.

It hardly matters that I am ahead of my story, inasmuch as the events immediately preceding and succeeding Jack's death are all of a piece. Closely following his passing "into the Silence," on every hand speaking evidence of his thought and achievement, even lacking the maturer masterpieces we shall never know, it came to me this way:

"It seems clear that there was no limit to his mind. Could he have lived, that cerebration would have gone on and on, stretching incredibly, interminably, no bounds to its elasticity in every direction. It was enormous."

This to George Sterling, sad beyond despair above his friend's "holy ashes." And he repeated after me:

"There was no limit to his mind. It was enormous."

Jack was so tired that hot evening we arrived at Sacramento, September 3, that he went to bed after dinner instead of joining Mrs. Shepard at the Fair. We were hardly ready to "turn in" when a general fire-alarm called us to the hotel window, and in the direction of the Fair Grounds we could see the flames rising.

"It's the Exhibition going up, all right," Jack said, peering through the glare for the towers of the buildings.

"But aren't you going to dress and drive out to see if the stock is safe — Neuadd and the rest?" I asked, surprised at his lack of excitement.

"Oh, no — Eliza's there, or will get there, and she'll do everything that can be done."

And surely enough, his indomitable superintendent, already bound back to the hotel, had turned about and somehow bluffed her way through the cordon of police thrown about the place, and marshaled our stockmen to convey her precious charges to an unthreatened open space.

As before written, she and Jack had disagreed upon the question of showing animals, at least thus early in the establishment of his reputation as a stockbreeder. But having seen, upon his return from the Islands, the prime state of his beasts which she had ready for the journey, he had relented, admitted her standpoint, and was loyally on hand to see them win. That they did; and no one, even Eliza, so proud as he with his handful of gold medals and blue and gold ribbons to prove that the Jack London Ranch was "on the right track."

But not with his own eyes did he behold our proud grand champions carry off their honors. Only the one day after arrival was he able to leave the hotel, for he was obliged to keep to bed for eight days with a session of rheumatism in his left ankle. Fortunately the torture was intermittent, or it would have been unbearable without a hypodermic. As it was, the doctor had to prescribe powders for the worst nights, or there would have been no rest for either of us. I went out of the house but three times, and then to buy books for the invalid, who seemed not to want me out of his sight.

In the longer pauses between recurrences of grinding misery that drenched the poor boy with sweat, we made genuinely merry over games of pinochle and cribbage, and read aloud, turn about; or he entertained callers, while I gently rubbed the ankle by the hour. Often I could put the sufferer to sleep by this means. Evenings, from the window, Jack enjoyed following the starry trail of Boquel's aeroplane flights.

For once, stung alert by pain, he was seriously anxious about the future as regarded bodily comfort. "Although, if I became permanently crippled, I'll have endless time in bed to do all the reading I can never get around to, and be the happiest fellow that ever came down the pike," he grinned with native paradox. But I noticed that he did not hasten that glad day by disobeying the physician, who told him he was in a precarious state and must mend his diet and work off some of his excess fat. He weighed in the neighborhood of one hundred and ninety-four pounds.

So all toothsome fleshpots were missing from the tray, while I was pressed to invent salad dressings and suggest the most tempting vegetable dishes. Upon one especially precious day, when we two were reviewing our long run of years together, calling up memories sacred to our companionship, I asked Jack if he could remember a sweet thing, the idea of which, coming from him, had astonished me one day in Honolulu. I challenged:

"I'll wager anything you say, that you cannot repeat it just as you said it."

"Which sweet thing?" he came back; "There were many, if I remember aright. I'll subscribe to it, whatever it was, even if I can't remember it! Be kind, though, and give me a tip!"

When I had done so, he said very soberly:

“Yes, I not only remember and subscribe to it, but I can repeat it word for word. I told you: If I should go into the dark, and wake again — which I do not for a moment expect to do — but if I should open my eyes again, yours would be the first face I should want them to rest upon! — — And I mean it, Mate Woman. I surrender to you, you are the only one. — — Ask me for something that I can do for you!”

I have no personal evidence that Jack did not die a firm unbeliever in any hereafter — materialist monist to the end. In a story, “The Eternity of Forms,” included in “The Turtles of Tasman” collection, he has given his lifelong confession of faith, “simple, brief, unanswerable”:

“I assert, with Hobbes, that it is impossible to separate thought from matter that thinks. I assert, with Bacon, that all human understanding arises from the world of sensations. I assert, with Locke, that all human ideas are due to the functions of the senses. I assert, with Kant, the mechanical origin of the universe, and that creation is a natural and historical process. I assert, with Laplace, that there is no need of the hypothesis of a creator. And, finally, I assert, because of all the foregoing, that form is ephemeral. Form passes. Therefore we pass.”

Two years before his death, he had more briefly stated his old position in a letter to a young socialist in Chicago: “June 25, 1914.

Dear Ralph Kasper:

“. . . I have always inclined toward Haekel’s position. In fact, incline is too weak a word. I am a hopeless materialist. I see a soul as nothing else than the sum of the activities of the organism plus personal habits, memories, experiences, of the organism. I believe that when I am dead, I am dead. I believe that with my death I am just as much obliterated as the last mosquito you or I smashed.

“I have no patience with fly-by-night philosophers such as Bergson. I have no patience with the metaphysical philosophers. With them, always, the wish is parent to the thought, and their wish is parent to their profoundest philosophical conclusions. I join with Haeckel in being what, in lieu of any other phrase, I am compelled to call ‘a positive scientific thinker.’“

Yet it was the same Jack London, caressing the thought of Death at the close of “The Human Drift,” who wrote:

“There is nothing terrible about it. With Richard Hovey, when he faced his death, we can say: ‘Behold! I have lived!’ And with another and greater one, we can lay ourselves down with a will. The one drop of living, the one taste of being, has been good; and perhaps our greatest achievement will be that we dreamed immortality, even though we failed to realize it."

Jack's sister thinks he was on the way, those last weeks, to modify his uncompromising attitude. At least, she considers, judging from things said and unsaid in their closer moments, that he was shaken in his certitudes about a number of subjects. He had always smiled or good-naturedly scoffed at her telepathic "hunches," as he termed them; but himself underwent a puzzling experience. Mid-most of his forenoon work, all at once he obeyed a call that his mortal ears had not heard, and discovered himself standing by the window straining his eyes toward Eliza's cottage, on a slight eminence several hundred yards away. Everything looked as usual in the serene prospect, and he came to himself with a laugh, turned to watch the big Shire mares hauling his prided manure-spreader, and returned to the interrupted manuscript. But he continued uneasy. Odd it seems to me that Jack did not tell me of the incident; for later in the day Eliza reported that the husband of her new cook had arrived unheralded and with a gun threatened herself, who had been totally ignorant of her cook's marriage status, for keeping his wife away from him.

I repeat that I have no evidence at first hand that there was any radical change in Jack s method of thinking. He only showed an intensification of his old instinct for the "inexorable logic of the shadowland of the unconscious." What he did say to me, and more than once, was the old: "If you should ever go 'soft,' I'd never forgive you!"

It was not until after the Fair had closed and his sister gone home, that Jack was fit to make the journey by automobile. About sunset we had a breakdown, and I remember him hobbling about a little village while the repairing went forward, and halting to watch some small boys spinning tops.

"But don't you do this, and this?" he said, all interest in the new generation, taking the toy from an urchin, and trying to resurrect his own cunning. No, they couldn't spin it his way — had never seen it done, in fact; nor could they, as did he, make it spin on the vertical trunk of a tree. Suddenly one of the lads sprang away to the side of the road and glibly named the make of an approaching car while the headlights were still distant.

“Well, I’ll be — ” Jack left it becomingly unsaid. How did you know what was the name of that machine?”

Know its engines, of course — I can tell most of ‘em a long way off, the boy bragged, nicely even with his interlocutor for superior skill in the top-game.

“See, Mate,” Jack lit a cigarette and contemplated the group, “I’m getting old. I’m out of touch with the younger generation. All they know is gasolene — but I will say they know it pretty thoroughly!” He was very quiet the rest of the ride, and I recall a curious misapprehension displayed by him as we made ready to leave the town of Napa in a moonlight haze. Though we had often visited here, this time we differed as to an avenue that led into the twenty-mile road to Glen Ellen. Jack’s sense of locality was usually faultless, mine far from being so. But on that night I was so positive that finally he relapsed into silence, sending forward the parting shot:

Very well — have your way; but you’ll soon find you are entirely off the route.”

It happened otherwise; but I made no comment as the dim moonlit leagues were left behind. And then I became conscious of a pressure as Jack’s hand clasped my shoulder, and over it came the love-husky, golden whisper I knew of his most humble and generous moments:

“I love you to death, my dear.”

A return hand-caress, and “I know you do,” closed the incident, and no reference to it was ever necessary.

To the tune of a merry household, after finishing “Like Argus of the Ancient Times” Jack went at a fantastic, whimsical tramp study entitled “The Princess,” last of the “On the Makaloa Mat” cluster. The denouement is founded upon an after-dinner story once told at our table by a Bohemian clubman, an inimitable raconteur. Jack seemed to enjoy making this tale, and could hardly wait each day to catch me with his “Come on and see how it goes!” The accomplished ease of his method seemed only to increase; too much, some friends and critics thought. Yet, reading over his last stories, with their sure technique and character-drawing, profound thinking in the processes of the human soul, I cannot consider that he had fallen off.

How gay were host and guest, outside of what might be called natural sports such as swimming, and swimming the horses, “hiking,” boating, riding, and the like, may be judged by a reckless prank that broke up one noonday meal. I do not remember how it started, nor whose was the suggestion, but some one was dared to swallow, alive and whole, the tiny goldfish that swam among plants in a low cut-glass bowl on the long table. In the babble among the horrified girls, Jack shouted:

"We'll play a hand at poker for it, and the fellow who loses must not only swallow the fish, but keep it down for ten minutes, no matter what is said to him."

Remonstrance was in vain — the trio, Jack, Finn Frolich, and Joe Mather, were "on their way." Joe, slender, fastidious, was "stuck," and exhibited, in paying the forfeit, the keenest courage I ever have witnessed.

"Gee," gasped the chesty Frolich, "I couldn't have got it down!"

"I'd have died if I'd had to do it!" Jack said in awe-struck admiration when confronted by the tragic face of the man who had "put away" the scaly morsel. And "I never can feel quite the same toward you again," Joe's young wife murmured betwixt laugh and sob.

"That was an awful thing to allow," afterward I chided Jack.

"It was a wild thing," he giggled concurrence, "but think of the fun!"

"How about the fish?"

"Now you're saying something," he admitted. "Just the same, it was quicker 'curtains' for the fish than your fish in the garden pool get, slowly smothering in the gullets of the water-snakes! And how about live oysters, now, my dear . . . think, think! — Anyway, I'd rather have been the fish than Joe!" he grimaced in conclusion.

When, on October 2, "The Water Baby" was sent off to The Cosmopolitan, Jack went at his notes for a new novel, "Cherry," which was left less than half completed. This romance is laid in Hawaii. The heroine, Cherry, is a Japan-ese girl, mysteriously wrecked in the Islands when a baby, and evidently, by the trappings and the dead servitors on the abandoned sampan, infant of high degree. She is adopted and given every cultural advantage by a wealthy white couple who were childless. The motif of the work is a racial one, the climax depending upon Cherry's choice of a husband among the many, of various nationalities, who sue for the hand of this tantalizing oriental maid whose brain has divined her situation in every connotation. There are enough notes to guide a reader to the conclusion; but up to the end of the year 1921, I have not matured my plans for this book and that other incomplete manuscript, "The Assassination Bureau."

Evenings were spent in cards, or games like "packing peanuts," in which Jack nearly died of mirth. Or he would be inclined to read aloud, poetry, or perhaps his own stories. And I know there were listeners, captured and enchained by his charm, in whose ears still rings his rich and solemn voice in the stately numbers of Ecclesiastes. He had read from this favorite several times to certain friends in Honolulu, and now recurred to it with increasing appreciation. At these times Jack was extremely handsome, with something hard to describe — a fine nobility in expression and pose, but something also of the unconscious hauteur of isolation, of the aristocrat, of the imperator.

One little party that was with us for a day or two consisted of my uncle, Harley R. Wiley, of the University of California faculty, who had brought up his long poem "Dust and Flame" to read to us; and Blanche Partington, whose contribution, in this instance, beside her own ever-welcome personaliy, was the young Irish revolutionist's, Kathleen O'Brennan, whom she wanted to see lock horns with Jack London. She was not disappointed. The pair went into the arena in fine form, while the rest of us sat panting with emotions that ranged from serious to comic. "Never in my life," Blanche revives the occasion, "did I hear such a racial dressing-down as Jack gave Ireland!"

More often than he went himself, Jack sent me over the trails with parties, and never did we twain go on any of the long rides once so reveled in. When guests were absent, the ranch claimed all his daylight recreation hours, and he forewent the Outlaw, and Sonoma Maid, and Hilo, preferring Prince, the "Love-Horse" of our fore-in-hand, on whom leisurely he explored the uplands, testing with eye and hand for soils he ached to "put to work." This was not sufficient exercise for me, and I rode my colts longer distances, usually hunting for Jack in the woods, when we would descend together. Many was the day he said, though uncomplainingly:

"I got in a lot of reading last night, but not much sleep. I'll nap this afternoon."

But it was seldom, homing alone from a canter, that I failed to see his tumbled handful of curls bobbing out of the door to meet me.

"You'll never know," he said again and again, "how I love to hear your horse galloping toward me. I wouldn't miss being here to see you come in for anything!"

I was far from easy about him. There was a twilight stealing over our lives — was it to be ever this way, that I rode solitary while he must sleep? Whither were we trending?

“Near the end,” an author has told me, “he wrote me about my book, and in that letter he complained of being ill. Said he had been down with rheumatism . . . complained of having had a severe time of it. Complaint of any kind from him seemed unusual. My impression was that he was not himself when he wrote this way. It came stealing over me that his work was nearly done.”

Jack had expected to go east in the early part of October, but the water-suit intervened. He was supposed to be away, however, and I am always grateful to fate that we had those last few weeks uninterrupted save by a few loved ones. To one, my cousin Beth, he gave a book in which the inscription verified my fear in that he was going too fast, his mind increasing upon itself with an insupportable rapidity, wave upon wave, factors climbing upon the backs of factors, the thousand-thousand connotations that might have suggested the loom of madness to any who could not know his natural scope. But to me it represented an enormous sanity, a huge, normal functioning, only a madness if to be super-sane is to be mad; and the only question was, how long could a man live in so unchecked a mind-functioning, while neglecting his body?

“It is a long time,” he complained in the inscription to Beth above referred to, “since I’ve seen you to renew acquaintance with you. When you were here, the world was here, and the world was very much and too much with me. Darn the wheel of the world! Why must it continually turn over? Where is the reverse gear?”

Evening after evening he read aloud from Percy’s “Reliques of Ancient English Poetry,” and reread certain of these to Beth and to his two “saints,” my sister Emma Growall, and my uncle s wife, Villa Wiley. Two large volumes we went through, and the third and last to Page 288. The next selection is “St. George for England,” and Jack’s book-mark, the ubiquitous safety-match, still rests between the leaves. Dryden’s “Jealousie Tyrant of the Mind” was an especial treasure to us. I shall hear until I die Jack’s voice of the lover in “The Nut-Browne Mayd,” which he never tired of repeating, and which I called for over and over, if only for the spell of the “viols” in his throat, and to see, under the long curl of lashes, the eyes he raised to mine at the verse-ends:

“I love but you alone.”

He fastened upon the sweet old-English spelling of Darling — ”Dearling” — and thenceforward used it exclusively when addressing me, his voice like a prayer. Interspersed with these poems we also read the Beaumont and Fletcher Elizabethan plays, the power and beauty of some of these affecting Jack profoundly.

He frequently asked me to play or sing for him, and was strangely touched by a song-relic of my girlhood, "Recompense," in which occur the lines:

"And at the last, I found that she
Was more than all the world to me."

Handel's "Largo," Wagner's "Pilgrim's Chorus," and the trio of funeral marches, favorites of all his adult life, were resurrected and rendered him as much pleasure as ever. Whenever he went to Oakland, he put in an hour or so in some music store, after which there was sure to arrive in Glen Ellen a box of phonograph records, most of them operatic. Many he retained, and while we had supper at a card-table on my glass porch, it was the duty of Sekinè or the house-boy to run off a succession of disks laid out by Jack. In line with tracing back into race-consciousness, he showed increasing preference for folk songs, and the American negro melodies. After supper he would throw himself on the couch by my side, and have these reeled off, while he dreamed beyond all following of the significance of these human cries for rest.

"It's always been that way," he would reflect. "Mankind has always bowed under some galling yoke, physical or mental, that has made it supplicate for rest, to escape 'the dreary agitation of the dust.' Can't you hear it, beating down the ages — listen to that — play it over, Sera, so Mrs. London can hear it again."

Sometimes he was very calm, and evenings were of our sweetest, he reading aloud or talking, I embroidering the beloved "L" upon absurd little "guest-towels" for the Wolf House that was soon to be rebuilt. His dislike to see me sew had been modified these many years. My philoso-phy upon needlework had so pleased him that he incorporated it in "The Little Lady of the Big House."

Again, over-intense, on hair-trigger to snap up any word as a pretext to start an argument, if he caught me trying to placate or turn him into smoother channels he flew into a mental fury, at times hot, at others deadly cool. Sometimes, as before noted, I let him wear himself out. And when, as might happen, he was soon over the mood, resting in my embrace he would tell me what it meant to unburden to me in any way at any time.

On October 22, precisely a month before Jack went out, Neuadd Hillside, the "Great Gentleman," our incomparable Shire Horse, died overnight while we slept. Rupture, they pronounced it, and veterinaries were summoned from all quarters.

It was a heavy blow to Jack. Aside from the monetary loss this was an incalculable set-back in his far-seeing plans, already under way, for breeding and in-breeding. I learned of the event when at nine of the morning I found Jack still in bed, lying quite idle. I had not time to ask the reason for his stricken face when he said, reaching out to me:

"Come here and sit beside me. I have bad news for you — your Great Gentleman is gone."

"What? Who? — what do you mean?"

"Good old Neuadd died last night."

. . . And a little later: "I'm not ashamed, Mate-Woman," looking at me like a lost child through his man's tears. He followed me around much that day, telling more than I had ever dreamed of what the glorious animal had meant to him.

"I tell you, Mrs. London," said Hazen Cowan, our cowboy, who had had the care of the stallion, "I hadn't cried since the last time my mother spanked me, until Neuadd fell down. He wouldn't lie down till he was dead, but stood there shaking all over." Hazen pulled a freckled hand across his hazel, black-lashed eyes: "I'd really slept with him, lived with him, for months, you know."

"Cherry" was laid aside, and Jack went to making notes for a novel upon the horse. "You, too, make me some memory-pictures of him," he begged. He now believed that he had been right in the first place about "show-condition" for live stock, and that had Neuadd been maintained in proper working-flesh, he would have been saved to the farm.

He did not begin that book. After making a sufficient sketch to fix his motif, he returned to what was already begun — how vain the endeavor we were not then to know. But the death of the "chief of the herd" weighed more than we shall ever realize. At times he gave way to a listlessness I had never before seen in him.

Next, the gentle Prince developed what eventually proved an incurable rheumatism, and could not be used. One day his master charged: "If anything should happen to me, and Prince's case become hopeless, don't ever let him go off the ranch." So the "Love-Horse" came to sleep with

Neuadd, Sonoma Maid and Hilda, in a wooded ravine on the "Beauty Ranch." The only one remaining of our joyous coaching team is the indefatigable Outlaw, Gert, who lives and moves and delivers the finest of colts each and every renascent springtime.

When, in mid-October, the duck-hunting season opened, Jack flung caution to the four winds and with gusto consumed two large birds, canvasback or mallard, each day. An Oakland market kept him supplied. Poisoned as he already was with uremia, this richest of diets was nothing less than suicidal, and put him out of the world of human affairs in less than six weeks. "Oh, I love them so," was his in corrigible waive of my remonstrance. "I've been good as gold ever since Sacramento, you've seen; and now it won't hurt me to fall off my diet. Don't forget I'm naturally a meat-eater!"

The last guest Jack ever entertained, and who left three days before lie died, was a frail little stranger who came to ask if he would accept a joint guardianship of her children. "Sure!" said that obliging friend of the needy. "Put my name down with the rest!" She had studied medicine, and writing to me later inquired if Jack was accustomed to the amazing menu she had seen him consume twice daily while she was with us. None but a plowman could have survived it.

On the 28th, shaking off the dejection of the court proceedings in the water-suit begun two days previously, Jack with apparent joy read a letter from the Newspaper Enterprise Association, of New York City, and appended is his reply to their self-evident query:

"Gentlemen:

". . . When I lie on the placid beach of Waikiki, in the Hawaiian Islands, as I did last year, and a stranger introduces himself as the person who settled the estate of Captain Keller; and when that stranger explains that Captain Keller came to his death by having his head chopped off and smoke-cured by the cannibal head-hunters of the Solomon Islands in the West South Pacific; and when I remember back through the several brief years, to when Captain Keller, a youth of twenty-two and master of the schooner Eugenie, wassailed deep with me on many a night, and played poker to the dawn, and took hasheesh with me for the entertainment of the wild crew of Pennduffryn; and who, when I was wrecked on the outer reef of Malu, on the island of Malaita, with fifteen hundred naked bushmen head-hunters on the beach armed with horse-pistols, Snider rifles, tomahawks, spears, warclubs, and bows and arrows, and with scores of war-canoes, filled with salt-water head-hunters and man-eaters holding their place on the fringe of the breaking surf alongside of us, only four whites of us including my wife on board — when Captain Keller burst through the rain-squalls to windward, in a whale-boat, with a crew of niggers, himself rushing to our rescue, bare-footed and bare legged, clad in loin-cloth and sixpenny undershirt, a brace of guns strapped about his middle — I say, when I remember all this, that adventure and romance are not dead as I lie on the placid beach of Waikiki."

Here is a letter to his London agent, Mr. Hughes Massie, dated November 5:

"I have not replied by cable because of two things.

"First, I expect to be in New York sometime after the middle of November. I should then be able to talk the matter of such an autobiography of 50,000 words, about my writing, with my magazine publisher. In any such event, I would personally handle the sale of the American first serial rights.

"Second, I am not sure about what the contemplated 50,000 words would be concerned. From reading your letter it would seem that what is asked is how I obtained at first hand the experiences that are at the back of my writing. I do not see how I could write on such a subject — at least no more than several thousand words. My idea would be to give my writing experiences from my first attempt at writing right on down the line to the present date, I mean my experiences with newspaper editors, magazine editors, book publishers, etc., etc., entering intimately into my various books and short stories themselves, I mean in relation to the sale of them to the purchasers.

"If you could write me a letter conveying more adequately the subject that would be acceptable, as well as some sort of suggestions about the rate that the Wide World Magazine would pay for the first serial rights in Great Britain, I would be better equipped to discuss the matter with my people when I get to New York."

"The money I get for this," he exulted, "will buy more farm machinery, more seed to plant, and the rest!"

On the afternoon of the second court-hearing in the riparian rights contest, Jack was threatened with a repetition of the severe attack he had suffered in Honolulu, and drilled me again in the use of the hypodermic, should the pain get beyond him. He was very wretched, but the calculus passed without resort to the needle.

His fourth appearance in court was on November 10. He came home looking ill, and complained of distressing symptoms which toward evening so strongly resembled ptomaine poisoning that finally, as the pain increased, I got him to take an antidote, which produced the desired effect. Very gravely I talked with him, and he owned that he was shockingly out of condition, with an increasing tendency to dysentery. “I’ve never been quite right in that respect since my sickness and operation in Australia — and Mexico didn’t help matters any. — But don’t worry, don’t bother; I’ll be all right, my dear!”

And still he made no alteration in his diet of underdone wild fowl.

Philosophically, and helped by psychoanalysis, Jack better and better understood and sympathized with human frailty; but temperamentally, due largely to physical and nervous breakdown, he became more and more intolerant under the torment of his uncovered sensibilities. Those last days were not the first wherein he had gone stark against the apparent truism that any one who accepts benefits never forgives the benefactor.

As I sit at my typewriter, I can see him, back to me, elbows on desk, head in both hands, and hear him say, not for the initial time:

“It’s a pretty picayune world, Mate — what am I to think? Are they all alike! Every person I’ve done anything for and I’ve not been a pincher, have I? — has thrown me down: near ones, dear ones — and the rest.”

“Some of us are still standing by,” I reminded him soothingly.

“Oh, I don’t mean you, of course, nor Eliza. But the exceptions are so rare — friend and stranger alike. Run over the list. Take that socialist woman east — I’ve forgotten her name who wrote begging me to stake her to a small sum for a certain number of months, so she could devote herself to writing a book. It’s ages since she acknowledged the last check Eliza sent, and she has never written me one line of thanks, nor even reported progress. And she’s but a sample of the whole hopeless, helpless mess! And take cases nearer home. The hand I feed smites. It’s only the ones I have helped. What am I to conclude?” he finished, swallowed in gloom, suffering damnably.

“But even so,” I argued, trying to offset the somber discord induced by those raw sensibilities that made him pierce too easily through even the unconscious petty shams of civilization — ”even so, it is nothing new to you; do not forget that it has always been that way. Do not think you are the only one who suffers from this lamentable tendency of the human. Your kind has plenty of company in the world. No man who ever made money and played Santa Glaus to many, has escaped your fate. So don't isolate yourself as a martyr. Be a real philosopher, and forget it." Then in a vain attempt to sting him out of his lethargy to a normal sense of values, I dared: "Be careful, or you'll find yourself nursing a persecution mania!"

But the only reaction to this last bolt was a rather spiritless challenge to show him where he was wrong in his facts.

Although Judge Edgar Zook urged the plaintiffs to allow him to apportion the water, which he was empowered to do, their lawyer declined to consider this. "We stand or fall," was his ultimatum. On November 14, the injunction was dissolved. Jack, desiring in neighborly manner to convince the plaintiffs of the veracity of claims upon which his testimony had been based, drove around inviting one and all to break bread with us at noon on Friday the 17th, and accompany him on a little tour of inspection. Nearly all accepted, and with one or two exceptions it was their last meeting with the big neighbor whose visions for agricultural welfare were for the most part incomprehen sible to them. Jack appeared very bright during the meal, and no business was talked until its conclusion. But when we started out of doors, he became all earnest enthusiasm to persuade his opponents to the worth of his moral as well as legal rights in the matter at issue. One of them was heard to sigh:

"We should never have gone into this fight with you!"

And another: "What a pity we didn't get togelher with you in the first place and thrash out this matter instead of rushing into court with it!"

Saturday I myself went to bed. I cannot, to this day, name my illness; but looking back it seems that I was on the verge of a nerve-collapse. I must have been laboring under too great anxiety. The Thursday before, when Ernest Hopkins and two cameramen had been photographing Jack both for "movies" and "stills," I had suddenly, in one or two of the poses, noticed something in Jack's face, or an accession of something more than dimly felt of late, that struck fear into me. It might be described as a deadness — or an absence of life; something that no face, upon an upright figure, should be. Others were full of vivacity, with all that Jack could command of charm and aliveness — sitting with his rifle, laughing from the high seat of the water cart, or driving two monster Shire mares in the manure-spreader. How eloquent, like a message of the year’s increase, that oval ring of fertilizer lay for weeks upon his field until erased by the winter rains! How eloquent was the whole fruitful prospect, when he lay, in his own White Silence, in the midst of the fair land of his devising! To me, then, wandering among his kindly herds, in the effort to orient myself with a new universe, came the thought that he, our Jack, was the most eloquent dead man in all the world. That small, potent hand had written a deathless scroll upon the hills, and he seemed to live and speak and move at one with the growth he had encouraged in the pregnant dust of his Sweet Land. One could not quit and lie down in the face of such vital challenge to make short shrift of tears and rise to carry his banner as long as fate should be generous enough to let one work. When on a day I gallop along the blossoming ways to Jack’s mountain meadows, missing my Strong Traveler, it takes little effort still to hear his blithe, companionable “Toot! Toot!” I would feel no startlement did he emerge, reining the Outlaw from the shadows of the trees, laughing from under the cowboy hat.

He had been radiant in his hope that had no horizon. “I want to live a hundred years!” was his lusty slogan, repeated within a fortnight of his death. “See the dozens of boxes of notes filed away? Why, writers I know are looking about for plots, and I’ve enough here to keep me busy with twice a hundred novels!”

It was the expression of just such exuberance that Jack felt in this stanza of John G. Neihardt’s:

Let me live out my years in heat of blood!
Let me lie drunken with the dreamer’s wine!
Let me Hot see this soul-house built of mud
Go toppling to the dust — a vacant shrine!

When he was gone, I smiled with appreciation of an enthusiastic, but uninformed, reviewer who, despite Jack’s fifty-odd books written within seventeen years, credited him with more than double that number, “to say nothing of other forms of literature.”

And there was also a letter that pleased me, written on November 20, and never read by Jack:

“I have just seen your picture, driving two huge draft-horses to a manure-spreader. This is the picture of a man with a wagonload of fertilizer. He is going to spread it over an acre of ground and make it fertile. In reality the man has an inexhaustible supply of mental pabulum which he spreads over the whole world, the dark spots are made lighter, the sloughs of despond are drained and made to blossom . . . the weary and heavy laden are lifted up. . . . In reality you are subsoil-plowing the world, preparing it for the seeds of Universal Brotherhood, the while you dream dreams." It would not be hard to imagine him a happy ghost revisiting his beloved lands or the running tides of San Francisco Bay, irresistibly drawn back to

". . . The horses in the wagons with their kind long faces,
And little boats that climb upon the waves."

I could but think, viewing the excellence he left behind, the purity of his purpose, the way he went straight to his goal, that he made a shining exception to the rule that

"The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones."

I was sad when, on Saturday the nineteenth, our tenth wedding anniversary, I was unable to join Jack and a quaint woman guest at dinner. Jack brought her in to meet me, and later, having settled her somewhere with a book, returned to stroke my throbbing head. I remember reminding him of the fact that I was born and married in the same month, and that eight days hence, the twenty-seventh, would be my birthday. How little I imagined that there would intervene the date of my widowhood! Yet doom was in the air. Subtly I felt its clutch, and this was all my malady.

Jack wrote with unabated industry on Monday morning, and in the afternoon he came and coaxed me in a cheery and loving way to pull myself together and accompany him up-mountain. He wanted to see again a piece of land that adjoined the ranch, which he recalled as being well watered by springs.

"I may buy it," he said. "I could develop the springs, and that would mean bigger crops, bigger and better cattle and horses, life, more life, Mate-Woman! Oh, it's big, and I have so many plans and so much to do! Come on up with me."

It hurt to refuse, but I felt too weak and tired to face the long ride; so he went out alone, looking unusually disappointed. Yet what strength was mine but half a hun-dred hours later to meet the worst and not fail — so strangely are we constituted.

Upon his return he came breaking through the house with his merriest step to tell me every detail of his exploration.

"I found the trail without any trouble," he told me, "and when I came to the field I had in mind, there was a young farmer plowing. We talked quite a while, and I got off old Fritz to handle the soil myself. I found it of very good quality. It ran through my fingers, so friable, you know. I've discovered who owns it, and I'm going to take up the matter as soon as I can land the prospect of some money in New York. Maybe that autobiographical stuff will pay for it. Then further: "I'm planning to go on the twenty-ninth. And you're still not coming with me?" he finished wistfully. Then he resumed the tale of his projects for increasing the abundance upon his acres.

There followed a wakeful night for Jack, and he rose very late, frankly blue, and complaining of fatigue. The dysentery was so much worse that I protested at his taking no measures to check an alarming condition. He worked but a short time, and the few pages of manuscript were the last he ever set hand to. The several letters he dictated to the machine were transcribed afterward by his secretary. The very last letter he ever talked into the horn was the following:

"Editor Every Week,

"My dear sir:

"Curses on you, 'Every Week'! You keep a busy man busy over-time trying to get rid of you while unable to tear himself away. I wish the man who writes the captions for your photographs had never been born. I just can't refrain from reading every word he writes.

"And the rest of your staff bothers me the same way.

"Hereby registering my complaint,

"Sincerely yours,

"Jack London." The last literary notes he ever penciled, I take from his bed-side tablet:

"Socialist autobiography.

"Martin Eden and Sea Wolf, attacks on Nietzeschean philosophy, which even the socialists missed the point of."

Another page:

"In late autumn of 1916, when Adamson Bill (8 hrs. for Railroad Brotherhoods) rushed at the last tick of the sixtieth second of the twelfth hour, through Congress and Senate and signed by President Wilson, agreed with my forecast of favored unions in Iron Heel."

"Novel.

“Historical novel of 80,000 words — love — hate — primitiveness. Discovery of America by the Northmen — see my book on same, also see Maurice Hewlett’s ‘Frey and his Wife.’ Get in interpretation of the genesis of their myths, etc., from their own unconsciousness.”

He did not go out all day, and slept in the afternoon, rousing himself with an effort. Eliza came over to talk ranch business, and they were still at it when the first and then the second gong sounded for our supper. Having shaken off the half-stupor in which he had awakened, he had become very excited outlining his immediate intention to erect on the ranch a general store, a school, and a post-office. I heard him wind up:

“There are enough children on the ranch to open a school. The ranch people can have their homes here, trade here at better prices, be born here, grown up here, get their schooling here, and if they die they can be buried on the Little Hill, where the two Greenlaw children’s graves are. . . . No, I haven’t in mind a community in the usual sense of a reform colony. I only look forward to making the place self-sustaining for every soul upon it.”

Five days after that utterance, Jack London’s own ashes were laid there on the whispering ridge.

Eliza told me later that in those days she worried about the over-working of Jack’s brain. As far as possible she met him, yet wondered how he expected her to put into prompt execution the enormous tasks he prepared. A lesser man, in the throes of the toxemia that was destroying him, would have evinced a lesser “mania.” Jack’s mental vigor was spent logically along the lines of his ambition.

Even with modern familiarity with body chemistry, scientists are not able to determine with exactitude the nature of the toxins that produce uremia. “A gastro-intestinal type of uremia,” the doctors pronounced Jack’s disorder. The symptoms had been present for a long time — stomachic disturbances, insomnia, sporadic melancholia, dysentery, rheumatic edema in ankles, and dull headaches alternating with the speeding up of his mental enginery. Convulsions were absent, and the only coma was that in which he breathed his last.

When Jack at length parted from Eliza that night of the twenty-first, he brought with him into the warm and cozy veranda the sweeping current of his fervor, and continued talking in the same vein. But I saw that he was strung to a breaking pitch of excitement.

"Your duck was perfection half an hour ago," I said, "but I'm afraid it is far from that by now."

But he was not interested in ducks, and spoke much more than he ate, roving into a future heydey of the ranch. I distinctly recall one part of his conversation, and am again made glad for his clean soul:

There's a big slump coming in real estate, country, not city. Recollect that man who came the other day to interest me in some of the land among the little hills north of us? I didn't like the looks of his speculation. But if I cared to play the dirty business game, I could buy in largely when the slump comes, cut up the property and later on sell, as that man expects to do, to poor people at big profit. But I don't care to make money that way, Mate-Woman," he broke off earnestly. "My hands are pretty clean, aren't they?"

I could thankfully respond to that. His business was clean: his vocation, the making of books; his avocation, agriculture.

He did not ask for music, nor did he frolic with the fox terrier, Possum, as he had done so much of late, testing that keen little brain and great heart in a hundred ways. In half an hour, Jack's exuberance had worn out; and with an apprehension to which I had been no stranger of late, I saw that he was getting argumentative, as if looking for trouble lest he fall into melancholy. He picked up two wooden box-trays of reading matter that he had brought with him, and lifted them to the table on which stood his almost untasted supper.

"Look," he said, his voice low and lifeless, "see what I've got to read to-night."

"But you don't have to do it, mate," I said, trying to stir his spirit. "Always remember that you make all this work and overwork for yourself, and it must be because you choose to do it rather than to rest. My ancient argument, you know!"

There followed a colloquy upon relative values, and then he stood up abruptly, came around the small table, and flung himself on the couch into my arms.

"Mate-Woman, Mate-Woman, you're all I've got, the last straw for me to cling to, my last bribe for living. You know. I have told you before. You must understand. If you don't understand, I'm lost. You're all I've got."

"I do understand," I cried. "I understand that there's too much for you to do, and that you're straining too hard to get it done. Are you so bound on the wheel that you cannot ease up a little, both working and thinking? You are going too fast. You are too aware. And you are ill. Something will snap if you don't pull up. You are tired, perilously tired, tired almost to death. What shall we do? We can't go on this way!"

The green shade was well down over his face, and I could not see his eyes. But the corners of his mouth drooped pathetically. Poor lad, my poor boy — he was, in deed, tired to death.

We lay there for perhaps an hour, he resting, sometimes sighing, saying little except by an exchange of sympathetic pressures which were our wont. How thankfully I remember an old vow that never, under any provocation, would I ignore caress of his! A few sentences of that Hour are too sacred and too personal to be repeated, and yet they were the frequent expressions of our daily round — in the last analysis they were an expression of the ever-narrowing values of life, working the changes upon his "bribe for living."

All at once, turning slightly, he put his arms around my neck.

"I'm so worn for lack of sleep. I'm going to turn in." Rising, he gave voice to that which so startled me.

"Thank God, you're not afraid of anything!"

Never shall I know why it came from him unless it was he knew the unthinkable was upon him, that I would very shortly lose his dear comradeship, and felt that I would be gallant to cope with that disaster.

When in the days to follow Jack's holographic will was read, first in the family circle, next by Judge T. C. Denny, in court, and tacit responsibilities were made known, I could not help reverting to that fervent exclamation. Or was it an entreaty, a supplication? If a prayer, at least he had answered it by his own passive action in neglecting, during the half-decade the Will had lain in deposit, to alter a line of it. In effect it is a love letter, written by a wise man who knew our metal, and he named Eliza Shepard and my cousin Willard L. Growall, as executors. But Jack gave loophole for discontent and criticism in that, beyond trifling provision for various beneficiaries, he stipulated:

"Whatever additional may be given them shall be a benefaction and a kindness from Charmian K. London and shall arise out of Charmian K. London's goodness and desire.

Having not forfeited his trust, I am proud to append his closing paragraph:

"The reason that I give all my estate to Charmian K. London, with exceptions noted, is as follows: Charmian K. London, by her personal fortune, and, far more, by her personal aid to me in my literary work, and still vastly far more, by the love, and comfort, and joy, and happiness she has given me, is the only person in this world who has any claim or merit earned upon my estate. This merit and claim she has absolutely earned, and I hereby earnestly, sincerely, and gratefully accord it."

After he had gone to his room, I thought to cool my distressed head by a stroll in the blue starlight. The burden of my thought was that matters could not go on in this way, that I must make an effort to shake Jack into recognizing that he would have to change his physical habits.

When I reëntered the house at about nine, it was on tiptoe. Jack's light was burning. Peeping across from my own quarters, I saw that his head had fallen upon his chest, the eyeshade down. As I looked, he made a slight movement, as if settling to sleep; and knowing his sore need of repose, I did not venture a chance of disturbing his first slumber. The last work in which he read that night, was a small, rusty, calf volume, "Around Cape Horn, Maine to California in 1852, Ship James W. Paige. Myself half-exhausted from emotion and lack of rest, I went to bed, read a few moments in "The Wayside Lute," by Lizette Woodworth Reese, and fell asleep for the first unbroken eight hours I had known in weeks — thereby shat-tering any latent faith I may ever have entertained in the sweet code of telepathy between those close in sympathy. As if to me a prophesy, one of the poems on which I went to sleep was this:

"House, how still you are;
Hearth, how cold!
He was vital as a star,
As the April mold.
Friend and singer, lad and knight,
Very dear; —
Hearts, how bare the dark, the light,
Since he is not here!"

But the last lines I scanned, and which keep impinging now upon memory, were these:

"Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep;
Homer his sight, David his little lad!"

When, at ten minutes past eight the next morning, my eyes opened upon Eliza standing by my bed, with Sekinè, our Japanese boy, in the background, I said, “Yes, what is it?” knowing well that only the gravest urgency brought them there. And just as quietly Eliza replied:

“Sekinè could not wake Jack, so came right to me. I think you’d better come in and see what you can do.”

The stertorous respiration could be heard before we entered the sleeping-porch. Jack, unconscious, was doubled down sidewise, showing plain symptoms of poisoning. By means of strong coffee we had succeeded in producing some reaction before the doctors arrived and the real battle for Jack’s life began, but not at any time did we succeed in coaxing the limp form to any effort. The physicians first summoned were A. M. Thompson and W. B. Hayes of Sonoma; followed by J. Wilson Shiels from San Francisco, and Jack’s own surgeon, W. S. Porter. It was only by holding him up, one on a side, that Jack could be kept in a sitting posture on the edge of the bed; and when ranchmen, waiting all day at call, had him on his feet, equilibrium of the heavy and nerveless figure was maintained only by sheer strength of his supporters. Body and will could not coöperate, and but several times, in the middle of the day, was there a flicker of intelligence. Every legitimate kind of shock was resorted to. Physically he was for the most part beyond effort, but half-conscious response was obtained when we shouted alarming tidings across the abysm of coma:

“Man, man, wake up! The dam has burst! Wake, man, wake!” This caused a shudder in the congested, discolored countenance, the head jerked, the fixed and awful eyes made a superhuman effort to focus. There was a glimmer of consciousness, evanescent as the dying light along the wires in an electric bulb that has been snapped off. The awareness faded, faded. But oh, the pang of happiness even this brief acknowledgment lent us who stood by, together or by turn, in the struggle of those midday hours!

When the news of harm to his dam had been reiterated to the point of intolerable agony of rousing from so deadly lethargy, we were rewarded by observing that he protested, with the leaden vigor of one half-thralled in nightmare, by slowly beating the mattress with a loosely-clenched right fist. The left was never raised. Whereupon shaking and shouting were resumed, with a like outcome. Although on verge of tears of pure joy at this encouragement, I could but note, with a sickening sense of futility, that body and will were at sharp variance — the closer we forced cognition of our intent to resuscitate, the more rational became the opposition. He was, I see it, setting the last fleeting effort of his life, of his reasoned will, against rehabilitation of that life and will.

Then, realizing this in spirit, I desisted, inwardly at least, to fight, to hope. One thing, however, I must do: establish one last mental contact, to serve me all the deprived years that should befall. “Let me try something,” I said, and they set him upright upon the edge of the bed, his helpless feet upon the fur rug.

Face to face, seizing him firmly by the shoulders, I shook him, not roughly, but decisively, and repeated:

“Mate! mate! You must come back! Mate! You’ve got to come back! To me! Mate! Mate!”

He came back. Of course he came back. Slowly, as something rising from the unfathomable well of eternity, full knowledge brimmed into those eyes that drew to mine in a conscious regard, and the mouth smiled, a fleeting, writhen smile. It seemed as if my unbodied soul went out to meet his in that instant. Instant it was, ineffable, brief. But it contained as great, as glorious, a meeting of two as ever took place upon this planet. Yet it was not enough. Again I sent out the call to him upon the brink — and again the smile. Was it of hail and faiewell to life as he had known it? Or of love, and the bliss of one perfect moment of understanding? Or was it of victory, that he, by lack of resistance, had beaten us all out, and thus invited “the ultimate nothingness,” his passing behind the curtains into “The darkness that rounds the end of life”? Perhaps there was, too, upon the lips that smiled awry and vainly strove to speak, the twist of contempt for the dissolution that was upon him. What would we not give to know those words he could not frame!

What I love to believe, when all else is said, is that he, who gave life and death an equal supremacy in his affection, was redeeming a promise made so long ago that it is woven into the fabric of all memories of him.

“Death is sweet. Death is rest. Think of it! — to rest for ever! I promise you that whensoever and wheresoever Death comes to meet me, I shall greet Death with a smile.”

How the great ones have walked arm-in-arm with Death! Thus Robert Louis Stevenson to the beloved Assassin: “I have been waiting for you these many years. Give me your hand, and welcome.”

Where was he, our Jack, all that day we warred with his fate? What was it he so hated to forswear in order to answer our importunity? Judging reasonably enough by the dreams of his latter years, I hazarded that he was wandering purposefully in that same land of green fields, intent, watchful, happy. It had been the same with his father during a longer period of alternate unconscious periods — the long life-desire fulfilled. This, oh, surely, is what we tortured the son from! — But with the last breath which left his body — what of the bright dream? When the splendid head, no longer instinct with resolution, ceased from its cerebration, hard it was to agree with that same cerebration that the Thing that Thinks is one with the Thing that Dies! How I should love to believe that he, liberated, opened eyes upon the range of illimitable possibilities that had hitherto been bounded by failing mortality. Yet who am I to invoke for him, who declared for perfect rest, otherwise than Ambrose Bierce's wish to a friend:

"Light lie the earth upon his dear, dead heart,
And dreams disturb him never.
Be deeper peace than Paradise his part
For ever and for ever."

Or,"the supreme beatitude of rest," as Jack's friend John Myers O'Hara has it.

Months after Jack's death I had the first and only "vision" of my experience. When a great asking comes upon me, in ungifted hours when my lamp burns low, I think of it. Rising one morning with a renewed cheerfulness that bubbled over into song, suddenly, as clearly as ever I had looked upon the man, I saw Jack stepping blithely in a green domain, the very picture of an Elysian pastoral, whistling comradely to an unmistakable friend shadowing his heel — Peggy the Beloved, our small canine Irish saint of the Southern Seas. What was it — a miscalculation of my Unconscious that let the dear dream spill over into Foreconsciousness to rejoice the day?

The sun went down upon our endeavor. They had brought him across into my glass porch, scene of so much quiet happiness, and there he died upon the couch where, a scant twenty-four hours earlier, he had cried to me: "You must understand my need! You're all I've got left!"

We watched. The good breathing that had upborne expectation of recovery began to lag, and more labored became intake and suspiration. I became aware that one of the Sonoma physicians was leading me from where I stood at Jack's head. Mechanically we sat down in my room. Minutes passed, a few, an eternity of them, it seemed. Longer were the intervals between those breaths so plainly heard, a very great interval, another, and then silence absolute, the sheerest vacuum of sound I had ever known. No one moved until Sekinè, his face an oriental mask of ivory, stepped in and bent his head to me.

I, who had never before lost any one essentially close; I, who had been protected from all outward semblances of death, half an hour later went out with my own dead and sat by the sheeted form until, with every atom of understanding I possessed, I had reckoned for all time with the hitherto unthinkable: that ultimate silence lay upon the lips of my man. Let me review that day a thousand-thousand times, there is nothing new to face. The worst had befallen; the future was plain, a horizonless expanse of ready work in which one must in good time build out of the wreck a renewed, if different, joy of living and serving. It was good. It has worked. It has continued to work, test incontrovertible. I proclaim to these who mourn overmuch, the worth and solace of my remedy.

When, later in the evening, we crept, his true sister and I, into Jack's old sleeping-place, all was restored to order by Sekinè. The broad bed was laid and turned, the pillows piled ready for the reader, the little table set to rights, even to cigarettes, freshly-sharpened pencils, and thermos bottles of water and milk. It was incredible that the one-time tenant should be lying, cold and insensible, across the house. We looked at each other dumbly, and I sought the Japanese lad.

"We always do it in our country for those who have died," he said unsteadily. "And I thought — — " His explanation trailed into silence as he turned away. As long as he remained with the household, the bed was always in order, and we kept a single flower there and on the worktable.

Once, twice, in his later years, Jack, in chance reference to the possibility of his dying first, departed from his familiar careless injunction of Oh, if I should go, scatter my ashes to the winds, or, if you prefer, upon the bay or ocean!" Eliza and I both recalled the time, when, speaking of his love and hopes for the ranch, he remarked:

"If I should beat you to it, I wouldn't mind if you laid my ashes on the knoll where the Greenlaw children are buried. And roll over me a red boulder from the ruins of the Big House. I wouldn't want many to come. You might ask George."

But before his chosen ceremonial there were thrust in occasions which, left to his own choice, he would not have stipulated. Clothed in his favorite gray, as in gray I had first seen him sixteen years before, for a day in his work room he lay, in a gray casket that was like nothing so much as a cradle. Passing by I was touched by the smallness of it. I had thought Jack a larger man.

The neighbors came and went, in tearful awe of the unexpected demise of the lovable friend they yet had never understood. Little as he would have approved of exhibiting the discarded shell of him, it would have been needless affront to the tribute these people were accustomed to pay to the dead. And they had loved him more than they thought. As one of them said: "I tell you, the death of Jack means a sorry day to many. He gave away a meal ticket and added to it a bit, too. His heart went out to the fellow who carried a roll of blankets — or no blankets."

On Friday, at dawn, I was awakened from fitful sleep by the rumble of the death-wagon coming up the hill. When, delaying, I slipped in to the abandoned workroom, the open window through which he had so often passed alive told of the manner in which Jack London had gone from his house.

Sekinè came to where I sat, thinking, adjusting, and held out a handful of keys, the dingy Klondike coin-sack of chamois, and a few stray notes, all taken from the ranch suit Jack had last worn. Sekinè murmured something about having put some notes in the breast-pocket of the burial clothes, together with a pencil and pad — "Just as he always had them, Missis," he whispered.

"But, Sekinè, the notes, what notes?" I asked, biting back the trembling of my lips at thought of the pitiful last service the boy had rendered, but fearful lest some latest words of Jack's had gone beyond recall.

"Something I wrote, and sent with him — no one will know," Sekinè explained. "I wrote," raising his head, 'Your Speech was silver, your Silence now is golden.' That was all. It was my Good-by."

My next step was to Jack's work-table, upon which lay the unfinished manuscript of "Cherry," just as he had laid down his pen. There, in that moment, looking at what was but an example of the myriad things he had left, in a flash it came to me:

"My life cannot be long enough to mend the broken things — to carry on the tasks that are left for me."

Eliza did me a supreme service that morning, when she accompanied Jack's casket from Glen Ellen to the Crematory in Oakland. One who met the little cortège in Oakland was Yoshimatsu Nakata, whom Sekinè had succeeded. No, I was not ill, as the report went out. I pre-ferred to remain away from a funeral which represented Jack's idea so little, but which I felt should be accorded to his daughters and their mother. Several friends, including Frederick Bamford and others of the old Ruskin Club, were also there, and two or three persons who had corresponded with Jack now saw him for the first time. A short address was delivered by the Rev. Edward B. Payne, who was familiar with Jack's unorthodox views; and a poem, which had been asked of George Sterling, was read above his friend.

As regards the manner of his disposal, Jack himself, only a few weeks before, had had this to say, in reply to a query from Dr. Hugo Erichson, writing for the Cremation Association of America, the same having been submitted to a number of persons of national prominence:

"Glen Ellen, California, October 16, 1916.

"Dear Doctor Erichson: —

"In reply to yours of recent date, undated — —

"Cremation is the only decent, right, sensible way of ridding the world of us when the world has ridden itself of us. Also, it is the only fair way, toward our children, and grandchildren, and all the generations to come after us. Why should we clutter the landscape and sweet-growing ground with our moldy memories? Besides, we have the testimony of all history that all such sad egotistic efforts have been failures. The best the Pharaohs could do with their pyramids was to preserve a few shriveled relics of themselves for our museums.

I have little connected memory of Friday and Saturday. I know there was work to do, and that I slept long night hours under the ministering hands of dear women. And I walked about the farm precincts, looking rather curiously at the young life, animal and vegetable, which Jack had fostered into being. Yet he, the biggest "mote of life between the darks" had vanished in a day! Wherever I appeared, I was conscious of some workman slipping away, or a face turned aside in a handkerchief. The half hundred men, many of whom had never conversed with their employer, seemed unnerved by the sudden gap in their little universe.

Jack, himself, would not have believed the warmth there was toward him in the skeptical old earth. As one expressed it:

"To me it seems like having a light turned off, with too few already burning, leaving the road darker and more dismal and difficult."

It was almost as if his actual death purged the mankind who knew him and his work, of jealousy, hate, and carping criticism; put a seal upon the lips of the meanest. Even his bitterest detractors tried to be fair and charitable. If I needed corroboration of my own belief in this man of mine, I could recall the mourning of his world. It must have arisen from his usefulness, his big contribution of heart's blood to humanity. Praise of him from all quarters and in many tongues from every class of society, literally from rich man, poor man, beggar man, chief, doctor, lawyer, and the rest — aye, thief, and worse! Out of prisons has come to me a wail at his passing; for the immaterial sweetness of Jack and his code, squareness, his long-suffering charity, that patriarchal kindness, had passed in and still live behind the bars.

To him, so articulate in the Great Common Things: "Three common pitmen in Durham will keep his memory green while hearts are able to respond to the bounteous thought of his love," reads a letter from England. "The sweetness of his life and work can never die."

And another, no less than his trail-mate, Hargrave, wrote:

"Always I have been assaulted by doubts; and then, coincident with the message that Jack had passed the portal that bars the Unknown from the Known, those doubts (independent of mental processes) were dispelled. I gave no reason for it — the reasons of men are such vain things in the presence of the Infinite." This from one more "sour-dough": "I loved the man because because he was a man; By the Turtles of Tasman, He was a man!"

And this for the premanency of his message:

"He touched the lowly side of life with a pen horn of love and bitter experience. . . . He had lived with down and outs, and with animals. . . . And he wrote their tragic lives as no human ever wrote them before. . . . So long as there are human hearts that feel the tender touch of love, so long as there are honest souls that revolt at cruelty and oppression, so long will Jack London's books and stories live and be read."

"If Jack London had had faith, what a great preacher he would have made!" Dr. H. J. Loken, of Berkeley, exclaimed to his congregation, and went on to declare that his subject was of a deeply religious nature, pointing out that his criticisms had been of religion as found in the churches and not against Christianity itself.

One thing I do clearly recollect of those two days before Jack's ashes were placed upon the Little Hill: Eliza and I walked there alone in a wintry sunset. Hazen, who had preceded us with a spade to mark the spot, received his instructions about the red boulder. Six horses were needed to move it upon the steep knoll.

On Sunday morning, November 26, Ernest Matthews, accompanied by George Sterling, brought the urn from Oakland. We wreathed it with ferns and with yellow primroses from the sweet old garden. With the primroses, as a tribute to Jack's adopted home, Hawaii, I wound the withered rust-colored leis of ilima once given Jack in Honolulu by Frank linger and Colonel Sam Parker, now, too, both under the ground. One terrible moment was mine when, in the rain, I carried the small, light vessel to the wagon, the same in which Jack had so blithely driven his four. The urn seemed to gather weight until I thought I should be pressed to the earth, but I reached the hands that placed it upon the hight seat before it had become insupportable.

Eliza and I, together, and my people, followed the horses at a distance. When we had all gathered upon the dripping slope, Mr. G. L. Parslow, our oldest ranchman, received the urn from Ernest Matthews, and set it, with its flowers, in the tile already cemented into the ground. At that moment a great flood of sun-gold spilled upon us from a break in the leaden sky.

As the trowel relentlessly filled the space within the tile, with that curious transparency of mind in crises in which details stand out, I observed with satisfaction that was a reflection of Jack's effective sense of proportion, that exactly the right proportion of mortar had been mixed, not a trowelful too much or too little.

No word stirred the hush. No prayer, for Jack London prayed to no God but humanity. The men, uncovered, reverent, stood about among the trees, and when their senior had risen, the stone was rolled into place.

Before we turned to retrace our forlorn steps to the house, it had come to me, once and forever, that this unpretentious sepulture beneath the tall pine was but a self-chosen memorial. Death, with Jack, had not seemed like death. Nature had slipped the moorings, and he, "bold sailor of the grey-green sea," had gone out with the tide, gallant, victorious, cruising beyond the outer reef, into the West, to a paradise of green lands with an ocean of sails just over the hill. This rugged monument, by his own wish, could never be a place for mourning, a spot to sadden his sweet and happy mountainside. And, by that wish and whatever gods may be, it never has been. Beautiful, singing with birds, vocal with winds among the tree-tops, Jack's Little Hill appeals only to contemplation and tender melancholy. There is nothing better than that the pilgrim, standing above the mellow purple boulder, should say:

"By the Turtles of Tasman, he was a man!"

Jack London State Historic Park Cemetery, Glen Ellen Sonoma County, California — London’s final resting place

JACK LONDON'S GRAVE

London's grave

Table of Contents

The Novels
THE CRUISE OF THE DAZZLER
A DAUGHTER OF THE SNOWS
THE CALL OF THE WILD
THE KEMPTON-WACE LETTERS
THE SEA-WOLF
THE GAME
WHITE FANG
BEFORE ADAM
THE IRON HEEL
MARTIN EDEN
BURNING DAYLIGHT
ADVENTURE
SMOKE BELLEW
THE SCARLET PLAGUE
A SON OF THE SUN
THE ABYSMAL BRUTE
THE VALLEY OF THE MOON
THE MUTINY OF THE ELSINORE
THE STAR ROVER
THE JACKET
THE LITTLE LADY OF THE BIG HOUSE
JERRY OF THE ISLANDS
MICHAEL, BROTHER OF JERRY
HEARTS OF THREE
The Short Stories
LIST OF THE COMPLETE SHORT STORIES
The Plays
THEFT
THE ACORN-PLANTER
A WICKED WOMAN
THE BIRTH MARK
THE FIRST POET

THE RETURN OF ULYSSES--A MODERN VERSION
The Poetry
LIST OF THE COMPLETE POETRY
The Memoirs
THE ROAD
JOHN BARLEYCORN
The Non-Fiction
THE PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS
WAR OF THE CLASSES
HOW I BECAME A SOCIALIST
REVOLUTION AND OTHER ESSAYS
THE CRUISE OF THE SNARK
WHAT COMMUNITIES LOSE BY THE COMPETITIVE SYSTEM
THE HUMAN DRIFT
THE STORY OF AN EYEWITNESS
EDITORIAL CRIMES – A PROTEST
THE FUTURE OF WAR
MEXICO'S ARMY AND OURS
A LETTER TO HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & CO.
A LETTER TO WOMAN'S HOME COMPANION
PHENOMENA OF LITERARY EVOLUTION
AGAIN THE LITERARY ASPIRANT
THE RED GAME OF WAR
WITH FUNSTON'S MEN
STALKING THE PESTILENCE
THE TROUBLE MAKERS OF MEXICO
LAWGIVERS
OUR ADVENTURES IN TAMPICO
HOUSEKEEPING IN THE KLONDIKE
The Biography
BOOK OF JACK LONDON By Charmian London